

CATALOGUE OF HERPETOLOGICAL TYPES IN THE COLLECTION OF THE BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT.- The herpetological types of the Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay (now Mumbai), India, are listed, current to 11 October, 1998. The collection includes historical specimens collected by Major Frank Wall, from India, Myanmar (formerly Burma) and Iran, as well as those described more recently. The annotated list includes original citations, registration numbers, nature of type and present status of every taxa, with additional remarks where necessary. In all, 24 primary and secondary types are present, including 21 name-bearing taxa (including three Anura, three Sauria and 13 Serpentes). The provenance of the types include localities in China, India, Iran and Myanmar (Burma). A list of types that were not located, in addition to those erroneously mentioned as being in the collection, is included.

KEY WORDS.- Bombay Natural History Society, amphibians, reptiles, type specimens, type catalogue.

INTRODUCTION

The Bombay Natural History Society was established informally by seven men (D. McDonald, E. H. Aitken, C. Swinhoe, J. C. Anderson, J. Johnston, A. Pandurang, G. A. Maconochie and S. Arjun), who met in the rooms of the Victoria and Albert Museum at Byculla, Bombay for the first time on 15 September, 1883 (Anon., 1983a; 1983b; Hawkins, 1983). Although the initial objectives of the Society were to “meet monthly and exchange notes, exhibit interesting specimens and otherwise encourage each other” (Anon., 1983a), the Society swiftly grew in terms of both membership and reputation, to become one of the best known natural history societies in the world (Anon., 1983e). Its natural history collections, while mostly confined to the Indian region (including Sri Lanka and Myanmar), also have representatives from extralimital areas, and while the herpetological collections are not at par with those of mammals, birds and butterflies, they contain many historical specimens, including types of both amphibians

and reptiles. Important donors of material include Reverend Fr. Dreckman and H. Phipson and, especially, Major Frank Wall (Anon., 1983c).

Although the natural history collections were first housed at 6, Apollo Street (now Shahid Bhagat Singh Road), Phipson’s appointment by the Government to the Committee set up in 1904 to consider the question of a public museum for Bombay led, in 1921, to the establishment of the Prince of Wales Museum, where the collections were transferred (Anon., 1983d).

The original descriptions of most of the new species based on the Bombay Natural History Society collections have been published in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, a peer-reviewed periodical that was first published in 1886 (Anon., 1983f). Important herpetological papers to be published include the 29-part series on the common Indian snakes by Major Wall, each illustrated with exquisite water colours (a selection of which has since been re-