



(****) **Proposal to conserve the name *Thyrsostachys siamensis* Gamble against the name *Thyrsostachys regia* (Munro) Bennet (*Poaceae*, *Bambusoideae*)**

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(****) *Thyrsostachys siamensis* Gamble in Ann. Roy. Bot. Gard. Calcutta 7: 59 (1896) *nom. cons. prop.* Lectotype (designated here): Thailand, Kurz s.n. (K).

(≡) *Thyrsostachys regia* (Munro) Bennet in Indian Forester 114 (10): 711 (1988); *Bambusa regia* Munro in Trans. Linn. Soc. London 26: 116 (1868). Lectotype (designated here): Thailand, Kurz s.n. (K).

Thyrsostachys siamensis is an illegitimate name historically and currently in use for a widely cultivated bamboo from Thailand, Burma, and Yunnan Province of China, now planted as an ornamental throughout Asia and in other tropical regions of the world. It is often reported to be of very considerable economic importance in Thailand (Smitinand & Ramyarangsi 1980, Thammincha 1990, Duriyaprapan & Jansen 1995), where it is found extensively both in natural forest and in plantations.

When describing *T. siamensis*, Gamble (1896) included the earlier, validly published name *Bambusa regia* Munro in synonymy. He cited both the unpublished *B. regia* Thomson, and *B. regia* Munro in the protologue, as well as repeating both of the syntypes of *B. regia* Munro, one of which was a collection made by Kurz in Thailand, which Kurz had annotated *B. regia* Thomson. Gamble did not use Munro's validly published name as he considered that Kurz and Munro were misapplying Thomson's (unpublished) name.

Gamble (1896) had inspected other collections from Burma in CAL that Kurz had also annotated *B. regia* Thomson, and he had identified them as *Bambusa membranacea* (Munro) Stapleton & N. H. Xia. Even though those particular collections had not been cited by Munro, and even though Gamble admitted that Munro's description of *B. regia* clearly also applied to the plant he was then

naming, he still decided not to use *B. regia* Munro, instead re-citing Munro's syntypes under the new name, *T. siamensis*.

Subsequently, Gamble's inherently superfluous name was universally used for this species until 1988. Holttum (1958) pointed out the possibility that *Bambusa regia* might actually be the first validly published name for this species, but he considered that the poor description made this open to doubt, and did not use it. Bennett (1988) agreed with Gamble (1896) that the description of *B. regia* Munro was sufficient to decide that it did match the species known as *Thyrsostachys siamensis*, and on that basis he published the combination, *Thyrsostachys regia*. He stated that the application of *B. regia* Munro was now beyond doubt, although he did not discuss or designate type material.

After Bennet's decision (1988) the name *T. regia* has apparently been adopted by only one other author (Tewari 1992). The name *T. siamensis* continues to be used for this economically important and widely planted bamboo throughout its natural range and elsewhere (Anantachote 1991, Dransfield 1992, Williams & Rao 1994, Dransfield 1994, Choldumrongkul 1994, Yang & Wang 1994, Hsueh et al 1994, Zhu et al 1994, Duriyaprapan & Jansen 1995, Wong 1995a; 1995b, Keng & Wang 1996, Shor 1997). When Bennet's combination was acknowledged (Duriyaprapan & Jansen 1995), it was treated as a synonym on the grounds that it was still a dubious name. Without proper typification for either name, there could be some sympathy for considering its application dubious, but as *T. siamensis* is currently superfluous as a nomenclatural synonym of *T. regia*, both names have the same application anyway.

The 2 syntypes of *B. regia* Munro (which also constitute 2 of the syntypes of *T. siamensis* Gamble) were a Brandis collection from Burma, and one made by Kurz in Thailand. There are two contemporary collections at K. One, from Munro's herbarium, consists merely of 2 small sprays of ambiguous young leaves, and has contradictory labelling. It is highly unsatisfactory as type material. Although it may well be the Brandis syntype, it would seem impossible to determine which species it represents with any confidence, although it seems more likely to be the species currently known as *T.*

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siamensis than any other species. The other syntype is more comprehensive and is readily identifiable with the species currently known as *T. siamensis*. It is labelled ‘*Bambusa regia* Thoms. (*B. siamensis* Kurz), Siam’ in Kurz’s handwriting, and ‘*B. regia* Thoms. ms’ in Munro’s handwriting. There can be no doubt that this is the Kurz syntype, and it is designated here as lectotype for both *B. regia* Munro and *T. siamensis* Gamble.

Other syntypes or paratypes of *T. siamensis* Gamble were not so clearly cited, with some apparent confusion concerning collectors and localities, but they all seem to represent the species currently known as *T. siamensis*.

An alternative course of action to solve this conflict between legitimacy and current use might have been to attempt to typify *B. regia* Munro according to Gamble’s implied interpretation of the name *B. regia* Thomson, in order to make it a synonym of *B. membranacea*. This is certainly not possible from the syntypes cited by Munro, and would require conservation of a new type for Munro’s name, contrary to current application of the name. As *B. regia* and *Dendrocalamus membranaceus* Munro were published in the same monograph there could also be a dispute over priority between those two names. In addition *T. siamensis* Gamble would then also become a synonym of *B. membranacea*, albeit as an illegitimate name, and it would also require conservation, or re-publication by a different author, which could then increase confusion. This course of action would be rather cumbersome and does not seem desirable.

In conclusion, it would appear from the type material that Bennet was correct in assuming that the name *B. regia* Munro applies to the bamboo known as *T. siamensis*, and it seems best to continue to interpret *B. regia* Munro in that way. However, it is also clear that the great majority of taxonomists and foresters who refer to this species still use the later, superfluous name *T. siamensis*, and are reluctant to change their habits. For stability of nomenclature either continued use of the presently illegitimate name could be officially sanctioned by conservation, or the proposal could be rejected with a statement clearly indicating that *Thyrsostachys regia* (Munro) Bennet is now beyond any doubt the

correct name, in which case this paper would serve to clarify the position and to lectotypify *T. regia* instead of *T. siamensis*.

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