

served, either in alcohol or formalin, however the yellow parts become brownish or discoloured. The typical colour itself becomes bluish when preserved in alcohol and fades after several months or became blackish when preserved in formalin, as in the cases for other green species.

The present findings indicate that *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* shows local variations, however the typical form covers the whole range distribution of this species in South East Asia. Recognizing these distinct colour variations should then be discouraged as it was mainly based on a single character.

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#### 要 約

中央ジャワにおけるアカオレーサーの新しい色彩変異

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ジャワ中部のテプス (Tepus) で採集された5個体のアカオレーサー (*Gonyosoma oxycephalum*) は、黄色い斑点を持つ灰色の個体だった。普通の個体に見られる緑色を失った変異は、これまでにもしばしば記載されてきたが、今度のものは一地方に限って見られることから、1種の地方変異と考えられた。

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## A NEW COLOUR VARIATION OF *GONYOSOMA OXYCEPHALUM* FROM CENTRAL JAVA

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**Abstract:** A population of grey with yellow spots variety of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* from Tepus is described, based on five specimens. Except of their colouration, no other characters will differentiate this variety from the typical form.

With few exceptions, colour variations are usually constant among snakes. Most of them vary only in the presence or absence of several patterns or colours, like blotches, bands or stripes. For example in *Xenochrophis piscator* the colour variation includes stripes and blotches individuals which occur in a single population. The extent of the intensity of the colour may also vary, but a totally different hue occurs rarely. Partial and complete albinism as well as melanism have been reported in various species of snakes from Indonesia (Kopstein, 1932, 1936a, 1936c, 1937, 1938; van Hoesel, 1948) and also from various parts of the world. A completely different colouration also known in *Ptyas korros*, was regarded as flavim (Kopstein, 1936b).

A "colour variation" of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* has been reported earlier by Dumeril *et al.* (1854), a brown and black variety which was subsequently known as *Elaphe janseni* Bleeker from Celebes. Another variety was mentioned by Werner (1925) from Malay Peninsula and was described as a valid species under the name of *Coluber floweri*. Smith (1928) redescribed the colouration of the form as pale yellowish-brown above, whitish below and irregularly spotted all over with dark brown, and

considered it as a colour variety of *Elaphe oxycephala* (= *Gonyosoma oxycephalum*). In 1926, Werner again described another colour variation from Thailand under the name of *Coluber janseni elegans*. This form was also placed in the synonyms of *Elaphe oxycephala* with former forms as a colour variety of Smith (1943). On the other hand, Bourret (1936) noted the colour as violet marked with black or dark brown. And in den Bosch (1985) noticed that few specimens are completely brown. Although Taylor (1965) resurrected the forms mentioned above as valid species or subspecies, judged from the evidence that there are no other separating characters besides the colouration, they should be placed in a monotypic single species, *Gonyosoma oxycephalum*.

In the typical form, the body colouration is green with indistinct black bars, scale edges bordered with black and the tail violet with darker edges. De Rooij (1917) describes the tail as yellowish brown (probably it was based on preserved specimens). The dorsum of the head is green and the labials are light green or yellow in some specimens. The head has an obvious darker or black streak, passing through the eye. The junction between the body and the



tail is sometimes marked with several yellow scales. De Rooij (1917) furthermore noted that the juvenile specimens are olive brown with oblique light bars on the posterior part of the dorsum. However I have seen many living newborn specimens of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* from various parts of West Java and from other areas, but their colouration matches exactly that of the adults.

In 1976, Mr. Arijono Hamidjoyo brought me five specimens of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* from Tepus (2°45' S; 106°32' E) near the south coast of Central Java, Jogjakarta. These specimens are totally different compared to the typical form by having grey and yellow body colour. As the differences are slight compared to the typical form, we do not describe this form as a subspecies, but it will be necessary to put some detailed notes on these specimens. All specimens are housed in the Museum Zoologicum Bogoriense collection. The collector owns two other specimens still alive in their collection at that time, hence not available to be described here.

The first two specimens have uniformly grey body colour. The body scales are narrowly edged with black, concealed under the neighbouring scales. Supralabials are yellow. The three other specimens are also grey, but dorsum are all over spotted with

completely yellow scales which varies in quantities from several to a dozen of yellow scales, especially on the anterior part of the body. Most body scales with yellow parts on the posterior edges but black edged, especially on the anterior margins, more or less visible from above, as they are usually concealed under the overlaying scales. Ventrals light grey. Tail immaculate grey. The head is irregularly blotched with yellow. Labials yellow. Throat grey with yellow spots (Fig. 1). Eight to eleven supralabials, 5, 6 or 6, 7 or 6, 7, 8 corresponding to eye, 11 to 14 infralabials, first six in contact with anterior chinshields, 1/1 preocular, 2/2 postoculars. Temporals 1, 2, 3 or 1, 2, 4 or 1, 3, 4 or 2, 3, 4 in the primary, secondary and tertiary subsequently. Other features are figured in the table 1. The temporals are maybe the only difference worth mentioning. But as these scales are superimposed to each others, this count maybe subject to error.

It is then worth to mention that a light-green variety of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum* has been found at Wai (= river) Sekampung—Lampung, South Sumatra. The body of this specimen (MZB Oph. 1631) is light green and the tail violet as the typical form. Preserved in alcohol, the colour becomes greyish. The grey colour variation retains its original colour after it has been pre-

Table 1. Some detailed features and measurements of the grey and yellow grey variation of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum*.

Museum number	ventrals	numbers of subcaudals	body scales	length of body tail (mm)	
MZB Oph.					
1701	230	140	25	1100	355
1702	238	139	23	1400	370
1703	241	84+	23	1450	347+
1704	239	103+	23	1245	355+
1705	233	124+?	25	1495	465+?

Legend: +) indicates that the tip is broken  
+?) probably only the terminal scute is absent.



Fig. 1. The yellow grey colour variation of *Gonyosoma oxycephalum*. The whole body (upper). Head and the anterior aspect of the body (bottom).