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A new species of the genus *Opisthotropis* Günther, 1872 (Squamata: Colubridae: Natricinae) from Guangdong Province, China

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Abstract

A new natricid snake of the genus *Opisthotropis* Günther, 1872, *Opisthotropis laui* **sp. nov.**, is described from Mt. Gudou, Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province, China. The new species can be distinguished from other congeners by the combination of the following characters: dorsal scales weakly keeled throughout, in 25:23:23 rows; 10 supralabials; 11 infralabials; two internasals, longer than wide, not touching the loreal; one loreal, not touching the eye; one preocular; two postoculars; one anterior temporal scale; 152 ventrals; 53 subcaudals; body and tail dark olive above, with light yellow crossbars.

Key words: Natricinae, *Opisthotropis laui* **sp. nov.**, snake, taxonomy, China

Introduction

The Oriental snakes of the genus *Opisthotropis* Günther 1872, currently containing about 20 species, are distributed across southern China and mainland Southeast Asia extending to Sumatra (Indonesia), the Philippines and northward to the Ryukyu Archipelago of Japan (David *et al.* 2011; Yang *et al.* 2011). *Opisthotropis* live in flowing streams and some species may occasionally occur in nearby terrestrial habitats in mountain areas, and most are strictly nocturnal. Most of the species are known only from very few specimens, often described based on single specimens due to their secretive habits (Stuart & Chuaynkern 2007; Ziegler *et al.* 2008; David *et al.* 2011; Yang *et al.* 2011). However, three new species of the genus have been described in the last few years, indicating that the diversity of this genus is still not fully revealed (Stuart & Chuaynkern 2007; Ziegler *et al.* 2008; David *et al.* 2011).

In 2002, an aquatic natricid snake was collected from the coastal mountain Mt. Gudou, Jiangmen City, Guangdong Province, China. This single specimen is referred to the genus *Opisthotropis* based upon the following morphological characters: head depressed, indistinct from neck; eye moderate, with rounded pupil; nostril in the nasal, directly upwards and outwards; prefrontal single, very broad, forming a long suture with the frontal; body cylindrical; dorsal scales weakly keeled; anterior supralabials higher than long; ventrals rounded; cloacal scale divided; subcaudals paired (Smith, 1943; Ziegler *et al.* 2008). However, it also presents some morphological characteristics making it unique among recognized *Opisthotropis* species. Thus, we describe this specimen as a new species below.

Material and methods

Measurements were taken with a digital caliper to the nearest 0.1 mm: snout-vent length (SVL) from the tip of the snout to the anterior margin of the opening of the cloaca; tail length (TL) from the posterior margin of the opening of the cloaca to the tip of tail; head length (HL) from the tip of the snout to the posterior margin of the mandible. Scale counts were taken as follows: internasals (IN); number of preoculars (PrO); number of postoculars (PtO);