

**The proper generic allocation of *Clemmys mehelyi* Kormos, 1911  
(Reptilia, Testudines)**

by

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**Abstract:** The identity of *Clemmys mehelyi* Kormos, 1911 is reviewed. On the basis of its characteristic carapacial seam arrangement and the size of its vertebral and costal scutes it is assigned to the genus *Clemmydopsis*. *Clemmydopsis sopronensis* Boda, 1927 is declared a junior synonym of *C. mehelyi*.

In 1911, KORMOS described a fragment of a fossil turtle carapace from Süttő, Komárom County, Hungary, under the name "*Clemmys Méhelyi*" as a new species. The specimen was recovered from freshwater limestone layers most probably of Late Pliocene or Early Pleistocene age (MLINARSKI 1966, KORDOS pers. comm.). SZALAI (1934) regarded this example as belonging to *Emys orbicularis*, an opinion later repeated by MLINARSKI (1966). SCHLEICH (1988), on the other hand, concluded from the description of KORMOS that *C. mehelyi* cannot be treated as a synonym of *E. orbicularis*. Instead, he classified it as a junior synonym of *Mauremys caspica*. However, SCHLEICH did not study the type specimen of *C. mehelyi*, and his conclusion is derived exclusively from an interpretation of the original description. Hence, it should be treated with caution. Consequently, FRITZ (1995) ignored SCHLEICH's (1988) publication in his revision of fossil turtles of the genus *Emys*, and listed *Clemmys mehelyi* among the junior synonyms of *Emys orbicularis antiqua*.

Recently, the junior author had the opportunity to re-examine the holotype of *Clemmys mehelyi* in the collection of the Hungarian Geological Survey, Budapest (HGS 1889). It is the hind part of a carapace, measuring 56 mm at the widest point. The specimen was compared with shells of Recent *E. orbicularis* and *M. caspica* of a similar size. It clearly differs from both.

The sutures and sulci of the bony and horny shell plates, respectively, are sufficiently preserved in HGS 1889, and a line-drawing is provided here as Figure 1. It differs in certain details from the figure furnished by KORMOS (1911), because this author did not adequately discriminate between the seams of the horny (sulci) and bony shell elements (sutures).

The position of seams of the epidermal scutes on the second metaneural and pygal scute clearly argues for a batagurid, and not an emydid (cf. MLINARSKI 1976): the pygal is divided only by the vertical seam between the epidermal supracaudals, and the

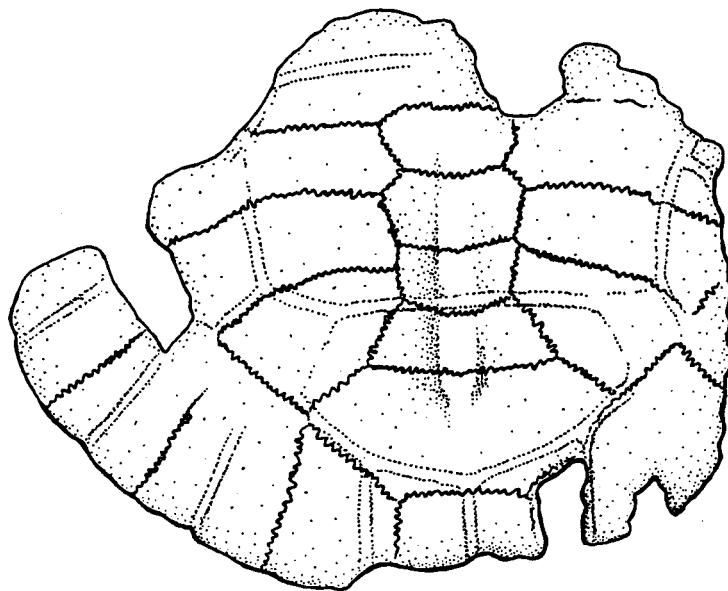


Fig. 1. The holotype of *Clemmys mehelyi* Kormos, 1911 (HGS 1889) in dorsal view

seam between the last costal and the supracaudals is positioned on the second metaneural. Therefore, it is impossible that the fossil is of an *Emys orbicularis* (family Emydidae). However, the most obvious characters of HGS 1889 are the extremely broad vertebral scutes and the reduced, small costals. Such a condition is found only in species of three fossil turtle genera, *Sakya*, *Sarmatemys* and *Clemmydopsis* (cf. CHKHIKVADZE 1983, MLINARSKI 1976, 1980, MLINARSKI & SCHLEICH 1980), but not in any Recent genus. All three fossil genera are batagurids, as is *Mauremys*. *Sakya* can be excluded because the members of this genus possess 9–10 very narrow vertebrals (“Centralia” of MLINARSKI 1976, 1980), and a correspondingly high number of costals. Despite the fact that HGS 1889 represents only the hind part of a carapace, it is obvious that a complete shell would have had too few vertebrals and costals for *Sakya*. *Sarmatemys* is known only from the Middle Miocene of Moldavia, and, therefore, it is not probable that “*Clemmys mehelyi*” is a member of this genus. The remaining genus is *Clemmydopsis*.

The compelling allocation of HGS 1889 to this genus has an important nomenclatural consequence. MLINARSKI (1980) and MLINARSKI & SCHLEICH (1980) recognize three *Clemmydopsis* species: *Clemmydopsis sopronensis* Boda, 1927 from Hungary and probably Austria (Lower Pannonian to Plio-Pleistocene border, according to MLINARSKI [1980]), *Clemmydopsis steinheimensis* (Staesche, 1931) from Germany (Sarmatian), and *Clemmydopsis turnauensis* (H. V. Meyer, 1847), recorded from Austria, Germany, and France (Badenian). “*Clemmys mehelyi*” must be identical with the youngest species, *Clemmydopsis sopronensis*, which is known already from

Hungary. Therefore, *Clemmydopsis sopronensis* Boda, 1927 is here declared a junior synonym of *Clemmydopsis mehelyi* (Kormos, 1911).

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