

**A new species of the *Cyrtodactylus chauquangensis* group (Squamata, Gekkonidae) from the borderlands of extreme northern Thailand**

**ABSTRACT**

Phylogenetic and morphological analyses delimit and diagnose, respectively, a new population of a karst-dwelling *Cyrtodactylus* from extreme northern Thailand. The new species, *Cyrtodactylus phamiensis* sp. nov., of the *chauquangensis* group inhabits karst caves and outcroppings and karst vegetation in the vicinity of Pha Mi Village in Chiang Rai Province, Thailand. Within the *chauquangensis* group, *Cyrtodactylus phamiensis* sp. nov. is the earliest diverging species of a strongly supported clade composed of the granite-dwelling *C. doisuthep* and the karst-dwelling sister species *Cyrtodactylus* sp. 6 and *C. erythropros*. The nearly continuous karstic habitat between the type locality of *Cyrtodactylus phamiensis* sp. nov. and its close relatives *Cyrtodactylus* sp. 6 and *C. erythropros*, extends for approximately 200 km along the border region of Thailand and the eastern limit of the Shan Plateau of Myanmar. Further exploration of this region, especially the entire eastern ~ 95% of the Shan Plateau, will undoubtedly recover new populations whose species status will need evaluation. As in all other countries of Indochina and northern Sundaland, the continual discovery of new karst-dwelling populations of *Cyrtodactylus* shows no signs of tapering off, even in relatively well-collected areas. This only highlights the conservation priority that these unique karstic landscapes still lack on a large scale across all of Asia