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***METOLINUS PARVIOCULATUS* ASSING, 2009 SYNONYM
OF *MAHAVANA WATANABEI* BORDONI, 2009
AND GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ⁽¹⁾**

(Insecta Coleoptera Staphylinidae)

Riassunto

[*Metolinus parvioculatus* Assing, 2009 sinonimo di *Mahavana watanabei* Bordoni, 2009 e considerazioni di carattere generale (Coleoptera Staphylinidae)]

L'autore pone in sinonimia *Metolinus parvioculatus*, 2009 con *Mahavana watanabei* Bordoni, 2009 della stessa località e, sottolineando il grave errore di attribuzione generica, espone alcune considerazioni sulla difficoltà degli Staphylinidae e sul problema costituito da quegli autori che, ritenendosi specialisti in ogni gruppo di questa famiglia, con eccessiva autostima pubblicano un gran numero di contributi col rischio di infarcire le riviste di sinonimi ed errori.

Abstract

[*Metolinus parvioculatus* Assing, 2009 synonym of *Mahavana watanabei* Bordoni, 2009 and general considerations (Insecta Coleoptera Staphylinidae)]

The author puts into synonymy *Metolinus parvioculatus* Assing, 2009 from Yunnan (Gaoligong Mountains) with *Mahavana watanabei* Bordoni, 2009 from the same locality, and corrects the serious mistake of having assigned *parvioculatus* to a wrong genus. The difficulty of some groups of Staphylinidae is emphasized, and also the risk of misinterpreting their taxonomy, particularly so by colleagues who claim to be able to study all groups of that family and with excessive self-esteem publish lots of papers with possible misleading descriptions and errors.

Key words: Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, *Mahavana*, *Metolinus*, synonymy, Yunnan.

ASSING (July 2009) described *Metolinus parvioculatus* n. sp. from Yunnan, Gaoligong Mountains, Tengchong Xian on material from the same series on which BORDONI (June, 2009) described *Mahavana watanabei* n. sp. The published description and figures of *Metolinus parvioculatus* clearly show that it is conspecific with *Mahavana watanabei* and a synonym of the latter, having been published shortly after *M. watanabei*. As the two taxa were assigned to different genera, whereas no doubt their taxonomic characters are those of *Mahavana*, it must be

⁽¹⁾ 211th contribution to the knowledge of Staphylinidae.

here emphasized that *Metolinus parvioculatus* was attributed to a wrong genus and should be assigned to *Mahavana* Bordoni, 2002, a genus so far known from only 7 species (2 in press from Yunnan) represented by a few specimens from Yunnan, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia (BORDONI, 2009).

The external differences between *Metolinus* Cameron, 1920 and *Mahavana* Bordoni, 2002 are peculiar and evident, principally concerning maxillary and labial palpi, mandibles and gular sutures, and anterior tarsi dilated in *Metolinus*. The male genital segment and the aedeagus have some distinctive significant characters, which make species easily attributable to one or another genus. There is no reasonable possibility of confusing the two genera, therefore I was much surprised when I saw a species of *Mahavana* assigned to genus *Metolinus*.

I wish to add the following general considerations. The study of some groups of Staphylinidae, as well as other difficult families, requires a thorough investigation and a deep knowledge of these groups (see also the considerations concerning the genus *Gyrohypnus* Leach in BORDONI, 2005), so only a few taxonomists become specialist in such difficult groups. Besides a few specialists, there are many colleagues who trust specialists' work, as a rule, and cannot refuse their conclusions. Therefore specialists assume the responsibility for the subsequent conclusions of colleagues: whenever they make a mistake, they possibly cause confusion and mislead colleagues.

No doubt all authors make mistakes, as I made my own. Even the best specialist makes mistakes. For many years I considered the taxonomic conclusions and the figures by H. Coiffait – my mentor – as absolutely correct and not debatable. I was probably wrong. Over time I had to revise many of my views in the light of a more critical examination of the papers and figures by Coiffait and of a better understanding of morphology and taxonomy of Staphylinidae, but I always did so without haughtiness and with much respect for that important taxonomist.

As for the responsibility of misleading colleagues, the risk of wrong conclusions and mistakes is higher in case of a taxonomist dealing with too many groups and publishing hundreds of papers on all groups. The probability of making errors increases, while the chance of detecting and correcting such errors lowers, maybe due to an excessive self-esteem. This is neither a valid help to colleagues nor a good service to Science, but leads to put forth doubts on the whole work of these versatile authors, if you multiply, hypothetically but statistically, errors made in a tribe by all tribes dealt with in hundreds of papers. Therefore we recommend to gradually approach the study of difficult groups, with enough humility and respect towards colleagues, to recognize that “*errare umanum est*” but also that nobody has the revealed truth, and that derogatory sentences towards colleagues are not acceptable, such as that concerning Fagel's “notoriously wrong determinations” (ASSING, 2007: 193). Fagel described 80 genera and 1255 species, part of which

obviously placed in synonymy, and made some mistakes, as all of us. We hope that the work of future reviewers will not be too onerous. As for my preferred tribe, the Xantholinini, that I have studied for over 45 years, no doubt with many errors, I'll try to remember the principle of humility and to remedy my own mistakes and – as far as I can – those of others.

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