

On the discovery history of *Trichoceble torretassoi*

WITTMER, 1935 (Coleoptera: Rhadalidae)

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Abstract

A specimen of *Trichoceble torretassoi* WITTMER, 1935 found in the collection of the Natural History Museum in Vienna was identified and labeled as “*Trichoceble rhodia*” by Ludwig Ganglbauer (†1912). This shows that this species was recognized as new to science some time before its valid description. There are no nomenclatorial consequences, since the Ganglbauerian name and species discovery remained unpublished.

Key words: Coleoptera, Rhadalidae, *Trichoceble torretassoi*, history of discovery.

Zusammenfassung

Ein Exemplar von *Trichoceble torretassoi* WITTMER, 1935, das in der Sammlung des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien gefunden wurde, wurde von Ludwig Ganglbauer († 1912) als „*Trichoceble rhodia*“ identifiziert und beschriftet. Dies zeigt, dass diese Art einige Zeit vor ihrer gültigen Beschreibung als neu für die Wissenschaft erkannt wurde. Nomenklatorische Konsequenzen ergeben sich daraus nicht, da der Ganglbauersche Name bzw. Artfund unveröffentlicht blieb.

Introduction

During the ongoing revision of the *Trichoceble* collection in the Natural History Museum Vienna (hereafter NHMW), the author found one male of a putative Rhodian endemic species, which came with an undated determination label and an accompanying box floor label. Both labels bear the unpublished name “*rhodia*”. They show that the species in question was recognized by Ludwig Ganglbauer (*1856, †1912) as new to science some time before its valid description by Walter Wittmer (*1915, †1998). Both taxonomists were coryphées in coleopterology (SPAETH 1913a, b, NONVEILLER 1999, SMETANA & HERMAN 2001, BRANCUCCI 2005, CONSTANTIN 2005).

Detailed below, the author documents the above-mentioned finding together with a discussion of the data of the specimen examined, and a recapitulation of the history of the hypodigm (sensu SIMPSON 1940) on which the valid species concept regarding its name is based.

Material and methods

One male specimen of *T. torretassoi* housed in NHMW studied. For proper identification, the singleton was re-prepared and its terminalia dissected – the procedure is described in PLONSKI (2014). An Olympus SZX 10 stereo-microscope and the work of LIBERTI (2012) were used in this process.

The handwritings were characterized and compared using concepts and vocabulary of forensic handwriting identification (i.e. HARRALSON & MILLER 2018, MORRIS 2021).

Results

Trichocele torretassoi WITTMER, 1935

Trichocele Torre-Tasso WITTMER, 1935: 254 (original description).

Trichocele torretassoi: PEACOCK 1987: 159 (checklist). – LEONARDI et al. 1995: 208 (type depository). – MAYOR 2007: 414 (catalogue). – LIBERTI 2012: 237 f., fig. 52 (re-description) – LIBERTI 2018: 212 (mention).

Julistus Torre-Tasso: PIC 1937: 48 (catalogue).

= *Trichocele rhodia* GANGLBAUER (= nomen in schedula) [species inedita!].

Historical material examined: 1 male (NHMW) labelled as in Figure 1 (including box floor label).

Discussion: When and by whom was the examined exemplar collected? This question can presently not be answered with certainty. An identification of the writers of the first two labels could shed some light on the matter. Unfortunately, the author currently has no identified handwriting samples at hand. Such samples could be found in the archive of the Senckenberg Deutsches Entomologisches Institut in Eberswalde (e.g. there is correspondence between Johannes Knauth and Gustav Kraatz or Julius Lederer, respectively).

Note that the hands of NN-1 (the writer of the locality label) and NN-2 (the writer of the acquisition label) write the letter d in Rhodus (Fig. 1) very similarly, which indicates that their skills developed in a shared writing system. They differ from each other foremost in slant, intraword spacing between letters, and alignment to the imaginary baseline. Further differences are an upwards connecting stroke in the letter h in the writing by NN-1, and a differently executed suffix -us in both writings.

When was the examined specimen acquired by the museum? The second label can be interpreted as an acquisition label – indeed, Johannes Knauth (*1843, †1905) exchanged Greek material with the NMW in 1897 (viz. “40 species in 180 exemplars from Taygetus and further 16 species in 42 exemplars” (STEINDACHNER 1898)).

Unfortunately, if and when Knauth visited the island of Rhodos is currently unknown. Furthermore, it can presently not be excluded that Knauth obtained the specimen from someone else, because he was well connected with other coleopterologists (ANONYMOUS 1906, DANIEL 1906).

When was “*Trichocele rhodia*” discovered? Ganglbauer most likely recognized the specimen representing an undescribed species upon determination subsequent to its acquisition. Note that the first re-curation of the Palaearctic Melyridae-Dasytinae plus Rhadalidae happened in 1896 (STEINDACHNER 1897), and that a numbersome collection of *Trichocele* specimens – partly identified by Friedrich Julius Schilsky (*1848, †1912) – was available for comparison (Plonski, unpublished data).

Hypodigm history of *T. torretassoi*: The original type series was collected by Arturo Schatzmayr (*1880, †1950) at several sites on Rhodes from mid-April till the beginning of May in 1932. The population samples were recognized to represent an undescribed species by the young Walter Wittmer, a collaborator of Schatzmayr. WITTMER (1935) reports a total of 21 specimens (viz. one type and 20 cotypes). The types were

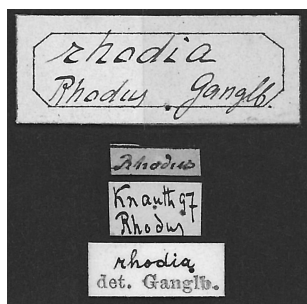


Fig. 1: Labels of “*Trichoceble rhodia*”, from top to bottom: box floor label, locality label, acquisition label, and determination label.

originally deposited in the Museo Entomologico di Duino “Pietro Rossi”, a private institution founded and owned by the Prince Alessandro Carlo della Torre e Tasso (*1881, †1937), whose curator was Schatzmayr, and were transferred to the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Milano (MSNM) in 1938, after Torre e Tasso passed away (LEONARDI et al. 1995). Gianfranco Liberti revised most specimens of the type series: LIBERTI (2012) reports that 13 specimens of *T. torretassoi* – including the name-bearing one – are housed in the MSNM, which he revised as syntypes in April 2010, and that one cotype was a misidentified male of *Aplocnemus pertusus* KIESENWETTER, 1859. Furthermore, one male cotype is currently housed in Coll. Maurice Pic (in Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris, France), which bears a typical determination label of Wittmer. The remaining six cotypes have not been revised so far. Three of them are currently housed in Coll. Walter Wittmer of the Naturhistorisches Museum Basel (M. Borer in lit., e-mail from September 23rd, 2022).

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