



About types of arachnids (Araneae, Opiliones, Pseudoscorpiones) described by E. Schenkel from China in 1953

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The Swiss arachnologist Ehrenfried Schenkel published three large works concerning Chinese spiders and other arachnids (Schenkel 1936, 1953, 1963) in which he described over two hundred species belonging to different families. Material from the first work (Schenkel 1936) is preserved in the Natural History Museum in Stockholm and was partly redescribed by several authors. The same is true for the spiders described in 1963. Most of the material from this publication is in Paris and has been partly revised. The first and last papers were published in the Stockholm and Paris museum proceedings. The second paper (Schenkel 1953) appeared in the Boletim do Museu Nacional (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), while the material was cited as being from the “Museum Hoangho-Peiho” in Tientsin [= Huanghe (Yellow River) and Baihe (Haihe River) and Tianjin in modern English respectively]. This work dealt with 59 species of spiders, harvestmen and pseudoscorpions. Forty of them were described as new species and six as a new subspecies. One of the harvestmen species was described in a new genus. Forty new taxa belong to spiders, one to pseudoscorpions and five to harvestmen. All specimens were collected in central and northern China. Several new species were described from the center of Beijing. None of the types from this publication have since been studied. While trying to find some of the types two decades ago, the first author heard from some colleagues that the material was destroyed during shipment back to China.

When YM suggested to SL to collect new specimens from the type localities and to create neotypes for Schenkel’s 1953 species, the answer came that the “Types are in the Museum Hoangho-Peiho.” Information about types was received from the current curator of the museum. Although this information came three years ago (in 2008), it was not possible to receive a list of material or to check personally which types are stored in the museum.

On July 27, 2010, both authors obtained permission to visit the museum (currently named the Tianjin Natural History Museum) and to examine shelves with spiders to check if Schenkel’s types are there. The curator informed us that there are two collections; one was an alcohol collection and the other was dry (pinned material). They are placed in different buildings.

First we examined the alcohol collection. We found about 250 glass jars containing spiders and harvestmen. Each jar has a label and contains spiders of one or two families (Figs 1, 3). We examined one-by-one jars with Araneidae, Gnaphosidae, Thomisidae and other families, searching for species with names given by Schenkel, or even by dates equivalent to those mentioned in Schenkel’s (1953) paper. Some species we identified to genus or even to species level. Several vials contain pieces of papers with taxonomical notes and even sketch drawings made in pencil (Fig. 4). Material stored in the museum was collected between 1914 and 1936. To our surprise, these notes are in Russian, and use Russian characters used before 1917, although some of the specimens were collected in the 1930’s. The Russian labels seem to have been written by B.P. Jackovleff (=Yakovlev) and P.A. Palvov. Yakovlev was a zoologist, and published about 15 papers on birds and data about museum collections (Franquien & Shergalin 2010). He was employed by the museum in 1931 to curate zoological collections. Judging from the labels Yakovlev was familiar not only with spider families but also with species. For example he identified *Dolomedes stellatus* Kishida 1926, *Plator insolens* Simon 1880 and many other species. P.A. Pavlov was a geologist, but also knew Lepidoptera, Reptilia, as well as Anura, and published 5 papers between 1932 and 1934 (Franquien, personal communication). The names of these two Russians were mentioned in the acknowledgements by Schenkel (1953). Both of them were also mentioned among post revolution emigrants from Russia to China. One jar is labeled “1936 Peitaho, B. Jackovleff” (Fig. 2). It is not clear why only part of the material was sent to Schenkel, and not all of it.

Among jars stored in the museum we found none of Schenkel’s species and found no matches in the collection dates.