



A revision of the genus *Medmassa* Simon, 1887 (Araneae: Corinnidae) in the Afrotropical Region

CHARLES R. HADDAD^{1,3} & JAN BOSSELAERS²

¹ Department of Zoology & Entomology, University of the Free State, P. O. Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa.

E-mail: haddadcr@ufs.ac.za

² Section of Invertebrates, Royal Museum for Central Africa, B-3080 Tervuren, Belgium. E-mail: dochterland@telenet.be

³ Corresponding author. E-mail: haddadcr@ufs.ac.za

Abstract

The genus *Medmassa* Simon, 1887 is revised in the Afrotropical Region. The type species is *M. frenata* (Simon, 1887) from the Philippines, described from a subadult female. The widespread, but previously poorly known *M. semiaurantiaca* Simon, 1910, appears to be the only congeneric Afrotropical species. It is redescribed, illustrated for the first time, and proposed as a senior synonym of *M. hiekae* Berland, 1922. *Medmassa laurenti* Lessert, 1946 from the Congo D.R. is proposed as a junior synonym of *Mandaneta sudana* (Karsch, 1880). *Medmassa lesserti* Strand, 1916 from the Congo D.R. is transferred to *Procopius* Thorell, 1899 and proposed as a senior synonym of *Procopius quaerens* Lessert, 1946. *Medmassa nitida* Lawrence, 1942 from South Africa is proposed as a junior synonym of *Pronophaea natalica* Simon, 1897. *Medmassa proxima* Lessert, 1923 and *M. vidua* Lessert, 1923, also from South Africa, are misplaced and their transfer to *Pronophaea* Simon, 1897 is proposed. The female holotype of *M. nyctalops* Simon, 1910 from the island of Bioko is lost and this species is considered *nomen dubium*. *M. semiaurantiaca* is recorded from Botswana, Central African Republic, Congo D.R., Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya and South Africa. Field observations indicate that it is a fast-running nocturnal hunter that forages on the bark of trees, with a preference for those with smooth bark. Most of the material was collected by canopy fogging or active searching at night.

Key words: forest, savanna, *Mandaneta*, *Procopius*, *Pronophaea*, taxonomy

Introduction

The genus *Medmassa* Simon, 1887 consists of dark sac spiders distributed in Africa, Australasia and South-East Asia (Platnick 2010), with three species described from juveniles from South America presently considered *nomina dubia* (Bonaldo 2000). The description of the type species, *M. frenata* (Simon, 1877) from the Philippines, from a subadult female, has complicated the taxonomy of the genus and resulted in considerable ambiguity regarding its somatic and genitalic morphological characteristics. No conspecifics have been collected since its description, and thus the crucial genitalic structures needed to define the genus accurately remain unknown. Simon (1898) first recognised the similarities in somatic morphology of *Medmassa* and *Astratea* Thorell, 1890 and synonymised the genera. Deeleman-Reinhold (1995) later removed *Astratea* from synonymy with *Medmassa* and provided the first figures of the genitalia of three *Astratea* species from South-East Asia. She later (2001) synonymised *Astratea* with *Medmassa*, recognising morphological similarities between the type species of the two genera (*M. frenata* and *A. insignis* Thorell, 1890), thereby giving the first indications of the genitalic morphology of species congeneric with *M. frenata*.

Medmassa can be easily recognised from other castianeirine genera. The large number of paired ventral leg spines on the anterior tibiae and large number of cheliceral teeth is atypical for the subfamily, as most castianeirines usually only have two or three pairs of paired ventral spines and two or three cheliceral teeth on both margins. Such heavily spined anterior legs are only known in Castianeirinae from the monotypic South-East Asian genus *Pranburia* Deeleman-Reinhold, 1992 (Deeleman-Reinhold 1992, 2001). The genitalic