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On the identity of *Syntermes noiroti* Krishna *et al.* 2013 (Isoptera: Termitidae: Syntermitinae)

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Syntermes emersoni Grassé & Noirot 1949 is an available name of uncertain taxonomic status. It was published in a paper about the nest and biology of the African termite *Sphaeroterme sphaerotherax* (Sjöstedt 1911), with a brief description and a few illustrations (Grassé & Noirot 1949). The description is limited to the following words: “les mandibles du *Syntermes emersoni* n. sp. ressemblent passablement à celles d'un *Sphaeroterme* mais sont plus grandes” [the mandibles of *Syntermes emersoni* n. sp. resemble those of *Sphaeroterme* but are larger]. Specimens examined by the authors and the localities from which they were collected are not mentioned. Although brief and limited, this description satisfies the requirements of availability (ICZN 1999, articles 10–12). Besides the inadequate description, the name is a junior primary homonym of *Syntermes emersoni* Snyder 1924 and cannot be used as valid.

The name had been overlooked by most authors and was uncovered recently by Krishna *et al.* (2013: 1494), who replaced the preoccupied name with a nomen novum, *Syntermes noiroti*. Due to a typographical error, authorship and date of the replacement name appeared incorrectly as “Grassé and Noirot 1949” in the Treatise. The correct authors of *S. noiroti* are Krishna *et al.*, and the publication year is 2013, not 1949.

According to information provided by the late Ch. Noirot (in Krishna *et al.* 2013), the type specimens were lost. Given the poor description and the absence of types, only the illustrations may help determine the identity of *S. noiroti*. Luckily the drawings are of good quality and two of them provide useful information. Fig. 1 shows a reconstruction of the soldier head based on Figs. 4G and 4H of Grassé & Noirot (1949). The soldier labrum matches that of *Syntermes molestus* (Burmeister 1839) and *S. nanus* Constantino 1995, with a large, angular median lobe and small lateral lobes (Figs. 2–3). The soldier mandibles match those of *S. nanus* (Fig. 2); the mandibles of *S. molestus* are also similar, but can be distinguished by the strongly curved tips (Fig. 3). All other known species of *Syntermes* have very different mandibles. Therefore, the illustrations indicate that *S. noiroti* is a junior subjective synonym of *S. nanus*. Given that the taxonomy of the genus *Syntermes* has been revised twice (Emerson 1945; Constantino 1995) and that this genus is well represented in collections, it is unlikely that the name *S. noiroti* corresponds to a distinct, valid, unrecognized species with similar mandibles and labrum.

Syntermes nanus is quite common and regarded as an agricultural pest. It has been present in collections for a long time and was mentioned and illustrated several times in the literature, misidentified as *S. molestus*. For instance, Silvestri (1903, Pl. Fig. 86), Snyder (1926, Pl. 2 Fig. 5), and Mathews (1977, Fig. 96) all provide figures of the soldier of *S. nanus* misidentified as *S. molestus*. Emerson (1945) treated *S. molestus* and what would be later described as *S. nanus* as comprising a single, highly variable species under the name “*S. molestus*”.

Grassé & Noirot (1949) were correct regarding the status of the species of *Syntermes* they had examined. It was indeed a new species in 1949, but the name they assigned to it was preoccupied and a replacement name was published only in 2013. Due to the principle of priority (ICZN 1999, article 23), the name *S. nanus* has precedence over *S. noiroti*. A summary of the nomenclatural information is presented below, in chronological order. For additional information, see Constantino (1995) and Krishna *et al.* (2013: 1486–1487).

Syntermes nanus Constantino 1995

Termes molestus; Silvestri 1903: 51–52, Pl. II, Figs. 84, 86 [misidentification, part]

Syntermes molestus; Snyder 1926: 14–15, Pl. 2, Fig. 5 [misidentification; description and illustration based on a soldier collected by Silvestri in Mato Grosso, Brazil]

Syntermes molestus; Emerson 1945: 467–470 [misidentification, part]