RHOPTRONYMEX OPACUS, new synonymy of, and brief characterization

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Rhoptronymex opacus subsp. monodi Bernard, 1952, Mem. Inst. Fr. Afr. noire, 19 (1): 251, fig. 14F, worker. Type locality Ziefa, Mt. Nimba area, Guinea. Location of unique type unknown, but was to have been deposited in Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris; possibly still in possession of Prof. Bernard. Not seen. Provisional new synonymy.

Worker with predominantly fine, opaque reticulate-punctulate sculpture over head and alitrunk; in some smaller specimens, the cephalic sculpture may be more shallow and more nearly shining. Metanotum groove present, moderately to deeply impressed. Petiolar node moderate in height, with broadly rounded summit; postpetiolar subglobular, slightly wider than petiolar node and wider than long, its ventral surface without a prominent rounded process or tumulus. Color dull yellowish to brownish-orange; according to Bernard, the type of subsp. monodi has the occiput and alitrunk blackish-brown.

Female micromygynous, no larger than the largest worker and smaller than the male, slender. Mandibles tending towards a falcate form; masticatory margins curved, oblique, leaving a large interspace; apical two teeth large and sharp, others are only small denticles. Propodeum evenly and gently convex in profile, without any trace of teeth. Petiolar somewhat compressed, with a convex keel beneath; postpetiolar with a prominent, rounded anteroventral process. Head with spaced rugae making a mainly longitudinal pattern. Rest of body predominantly smooth, shining; gaster with small but conspicuous punctures from which arise fairly long, mostly reclinate hairs. Color dark brown.

Distribution: Central and West Africa in higher-rainfall areas; sporadic. Records for samples in the Museum of Comparative Zoology and the California Academy of Science as follows: Thyssville, Congo (J. C. Bequaert). 50 km s. of Tshela, Congo, and km 94 on Kavumu-Walikale Route, 900 m, Congo (E. S. Ross and R. E. Looch).

Biology: According to the collector, the Thyssville sample came from a populous nest in sandy soil in savanna.

Synonymy: The types of var. estasi are unremarkable specimens of opacus; the laeviceps type is just a small individual with allometrically shallow head sculpture. The figures of subsp. monodi in the original description, especially of the propodeum (fig. 14F), is particularly puzzling, color, especially since that purporting to be R. opacus on the same page (fig. 14B) bears no resemblance to the propodeum of workers of that species in my experience. I am accepting Bernard's opinion that the form belongs to opacus. It appears to be a dark variant.

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