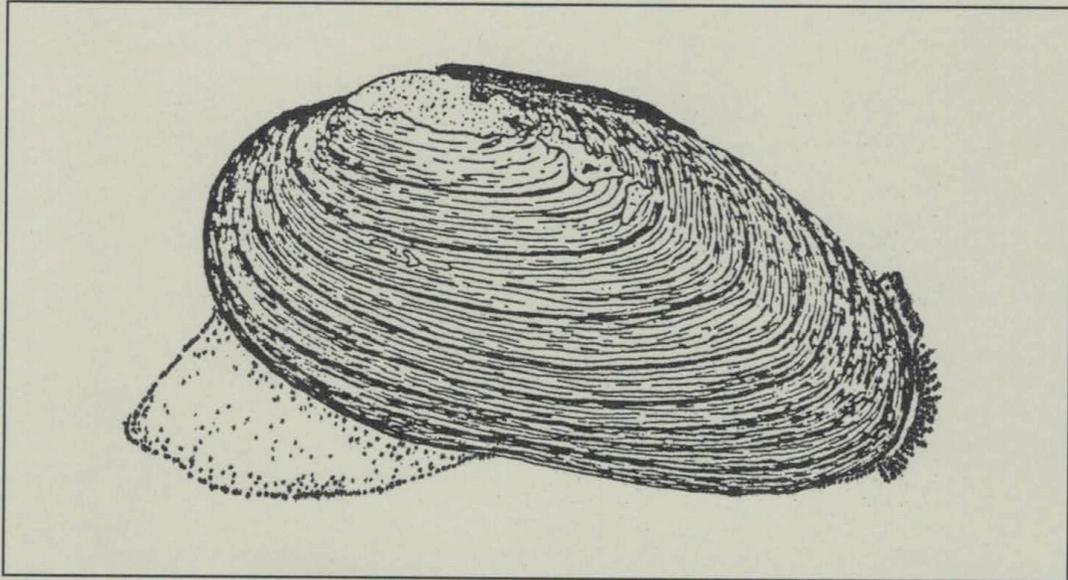


Schriften zur Malakozoologie

aus dem Haus der Natur – Cismar

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Heft 6 ²¹



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A new subspecies of *Mauritia arabica* from Birma

(Gastropoda: Cypraeidae).

By

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Lauenburg and Schwanenstadt.

Abstract: A new subspecies of *Mauritia arabica* is described on account of a unique pattern structure and differences in shell features.

Introduction: In 1983 ULF ERDMANN of Bad Salsa showed a most peculiar specimen of *Mauritia* from unknown locality to the first author of this article. In those days the specimen was believed to be a unique mutation of *M. arabica asiatica* SCHILDER & SCHILDER 1939 or even a new species. Its dorsal pattern consisted of coarse Y- and T-shaped lines instead of the typical fine regular netting normally seen in *M. arabica* and related taxa. It remained a unique shell until recently the second author presented a whole batch of shells quite identical with ERDMANN's specimen. These shells were discovered in the Mergui Archipelago, Birma, and after comparing them with numerous specimens of *M. arabica* and its subspecies we agreed on the point that we are dealing with a new subspecies we herewith describe as

Mauritia arabica merguina n. ssp.

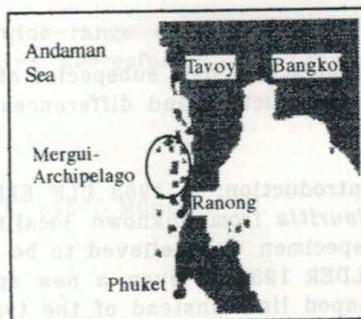
Description: The holotype is a fully adult livecollected specimen measuring 47,7 mm in length, 27,3 mm in breadth and 19,5 mm in height, 24 labral- and 24 columellar teeth. The shell is narrow, cylindrical. The extremities are rostrate, fragile and spoonlike anteriorly. The margins are rather thin, expanded, slightly flaring and distinctly separated from the dorsum throughout. The spire is projecting and pointed, partly covered by the callus of the posterior extremity. The aperture is rather narrow, slightly widening anteriorly. The teeth are pale orange-brown, fine and slightly extending onto the base. The fossula is coarsely denticulate, projecting throughout the anterior third of the columellar peristome.- The base is distinctly flattened. The dorsum has a greyish-green ground colour partly displaying darker irregular embryonal banding. The dorsal pattern consists of a very coarse, incomplete geometric dark chestnut striping, not actually forming a net-pattern but occasionally forming irregular lacunae towards the extremities. There is a dorsal line visible posteriorly, framed by distinct borders formed by the pattern. The margins are brownish grey with numerous confluent blue to black spots of variable size occasionally forming slight depressions, at the extremities there are darker and larger terminal spots. The base is yellow-grey, here the spotting is weak along the margins but absent towards the aperture.

In the paratypes the characteristic dorsal pattern is seen in variable degree of density and breadth of the dark lines. In some specimens (nos. 2, 3, 5) there are some regular lacunae, especially towards the margins, in one specimen (no. 6) the dark lines are so broad that they form elongate longitudinal blotches forming tiny lacunae within. Most specimens have a broad, distinctly bordered dorsal line. The cylindrical shape and expanded, flaring margins as well as the flat base can be observed in all adult specimens available for study. There are also dwarf specimens, the smallest of which measuring 29,7 x 19,5 x 13,5 mm (length x breadth x height) showing the same coarse dorsal pattern.

Material: Eighteen specimens were used for direct comparison and measurement in this description, several dozen specimens have been studied by the second author.

Types: Dimensions enumerated: length x breadth x height (mm)
Holotype: 47,7 x 27,3 x 19,5 (HNC 31642)
Paratype 1: 55,6 x 32,9 x 25,0 (coll. LORENZ, jun.)
Paratype 2: 57,8 x 32,8 x 23,6 (coll. FRANZ HUBER)
Paratype 3: 47,3 x 28,2 x 20,7 (coll. LORENZ, jun.)
Paratype 4: 60,8 x 35,6 x 26,1 (coll. HAUS DER NATUR, Salzburg)
Paratype 5: 48,5 x 27,7 x 20,6 (coll. FRANZ HUBER)
Paratype 6: 47,9 x 21,1 x 27,4 (coll. FRANZ HUBER)
Paratype 7: 54,6 x 32,1 x 24,7 (coll. LORENZ, jun.; subadult specimen)

Locus typicus: Mergui Archipelago, Birma, Andaman Sea (see text-fig. 1). So far, the new subspecies has only been reported from scattered spots in this restricted area. The second author collected a living specimen on a mainland-beach approximately 120 kms north of Ranong. The habitat is typical for *Mauritia arabica* and its subspecies: shallow water just below the low tide level, under rocks in muddy areas. The animal was reported similar to typical *Mauritia arabica*, with a greyish, semi-transparent mantle, showing numerous short, pointed papillae. Radula characteristics as well as internal anatomy were not available for study so far.



Text-fig. 1: Known range of *Mauritia arabica merguina* n. ssp.

Etymology: The name is chosen to indicate the origin of the new subspecies.

Discussion: There are four traditional subspecies with fairly well separated ranges recognized in *Mauritia arabica*: *M. a. arabica* (LINNAEUS 1758), *M. a. asiatica* SCHILDER & SCHILDER 1939, *M. a. immanis* SCHILDER & SCHILDER 1939 and *M. a. grayana* SCHILDER 1930 (see LORENZ & HUBERT 1993: 57-60). The distribution of the new subspecies lies within the range of *M. a. asiatica* which resembles closest in shape and dentition. Typical *M. a. asiatica* have not been reported alongside with *M. a. merguina* n. ssp. in the Mergui Archipelago as far as we have been able to learn. This supports the subspecific status of *M. a. merguina* as not only a phenotypic variation not worth naming, but a geographically separate subspecies. The new subspecies differs from all species and subspecies in the genus *Mauritia* by the coarse, incomplete dorsal pattern which makes it unmistakable. That the coarse dorsal pattern is not a result of melanism or injuries can be derived from the fact that even subadult specimens show this feature. We have tried to find aberrant specimens of *M. arabica* or any of its allies (from various localities) with a similar dorsal pattern but failed to find any specimen resembling the new subspecies. The flaring, expanded margins are also extreme, in *M. arabica asiatica* the margins may be equally expanded but then are more callous (var. *gibba* COEN 1949).

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Prof. Dr. Alex Hubert for checking the manuscript.

Literature:

An extensive bibliography is given in:

LORENZ jun., F. & HUBERT, A. (1993): A Guide to Worldwide Cowries. -- Wiesbaden, 571 pp. (Christa Hemmen).

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Explanations of Plate 9:

(Photos: V. Wiese)

Mauritia arabica merguina n. ssp.
Mergui Archipelago, Birma, Andaman Sea

(Identical numbers are showing identical shells from different views.)

Fig. 1: Holotype (HNC 31642)

Fig. 2: Paratype 1 (coll. LORENZ jun.)

Fig. 3: Paratype 2 (coll. HUBER)

Fig. 4: Paratype 5 (coll. HUBER)

Fig. 5: Paratype 4 (Haus der Natur, Salzburg)

Fig. 6: Paratype 6 (coll. HUBER)

Fig. 7: Paratype 3 (coll. LORENZ jun.)

Fig. 8: Paratype 7, subadult (coll. LORENZ jun.)



F. LORENZ & F. HUBER: A new subspecies of *Mauritia arabica* from Birmo