

A. T. BARRION, AND J. A. LITSINGER. 1995. Riceland spiders of south and southeast Asia. Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International, Wallingford, Oxon, England. xix + 700 pages + 16 color plates; 414 text-figures and 339 maps included in the text. Hardback, 22.1 x 28.2 cm. ISBN 0-85198-96-5. US \$225.

I have seen two very thorough reviews of this book by John Dalingwater (Newsletter of the British Arachnological Society, Number 76) and Norman Platnick (The Journal of Arachnology, Volume 24, Number 2). Rather than attempting to redo their

reviews, I will summarize their comments, then address the book from a more personal perspective. I feel qualified to do this because I spent three weeks in the Philippines with other colleagues and the first author in December 1993, and I had the opportunity to review the chapter on the family Salticidae subsequent to my visit.

Positive aspects of the book include: (1) Descriptions of new genera and species are detailed. (2) It is lavishly illustrated and most of the illustrations are of high quality, thanks to the efforts of the illustrator, Danilo Amalin. (3) It is well typeset and very well printed on high quality paper, and it has a strong and attractive hard binding. (4) The combination of a description of external anatomy and a glossary provide enough information that a novice could use the book (but not with ease). (5) A discussion of spider diversity in Philippine ricelands is included, along with lists of collecting sites and trapping methods, as well as discussions of some other arachnid groups. (6) It has a more comprehensive coverage than any similar volume which has been published from Southeast Asia.

Negative aspects of the book, which unfortunately outnumber the positive aspects, include: (1) The title is misleading, since over 95% of the records occur in the Philippines. (2) the editing stage was apparently skipped over, as there are numerous "typos" and assorted inconsistency errors (probably averaging more than one per page), as well as poor organization of accessory categories in the descriptions (some categories, e.g., Natural History and Material Examined, should have been combined to save space). (3) The distribution maps are superfluous, as they almost invariably show either only one or two records, or numerous records showing a species occurs throughout the Philippines. (4) A classification for Philippine spiders is provided which does not even include all the families listed in the volume, much less all families known from the Philippines. (5) The bibliography is scanty and does not even include some of the most relevant literature from the same geographic region. (6) Many scientific names of species are outdated and the authors' knowledge of modern spider nomenclature seems minimal; even when they show evidence of knowing otherwise, they still use names that are incorrect; furthermore, they apply generic names to species that are clearly unrelated to the genera in which they place them. (7) Adequate diagnoses are generally lacking, and, for the most part, newly described species and genera are not compared to previously described related taxa; in fact, there is no evidence that the authors looked at the types of any of the described Philippine species prior to describing new species or genera. (8) Males and females of what are probably the same species are described as different species on several occasions. (9) Some of the new names are combinations of Tagalog names that are excessively long and difficult to pronounce (at least for a person not of Philippine origin). (10) Apparent new synonyms are not noted as such, but in at least one case a new synonym inadvertently sinks a generic name (!). (11) Terminology used (e.g., the use of holotype and paratype to designate additional specimens of previously described species) is suspect. (12) Some new species do not have the genitalia adequately illustrated, and in one case, not illustrated at all. (13) Some illustrations are unnecessary (e.g., when two specimens of the same sex are illustrated, or a species is only illustrated by an immature specimen). (14) Keys are of limited value, being based in many cases on measurements of a few specimens (often one or two) per species. (15) The cost is so great that the people most likely to find the book useful will be unlikely to be able to afford it.

Mitigating circumstances: (1) The authors were instructed by their supervisors, authorities at the International Rice Research Institute, to cover all spiders occurring in Philippine ricelands; this by itself, in one of the tropical areas of the world where the spider fauna is most poorly known, verged on the impossible. (2) The authors' background was more in spider ecology than in spider systematics, yet they have put nearly 20 years worth of effort into this enormous task; even well-known specialists

on the various spider families would have some difficulty with the fauna of this region of the world as it is now known. (3) The editors apparently neglected to do any editing or find any qualified referees; could the 700+ page manuscript have been too daunting a task?

The authors made corrections when a review was provided for them. At least 90% of the minor corrections in my review of the family Salticidae were fixed. I did have concerns that of the 36 species of salticids covered, 28 were described as new species. Undoubtedly there are synonyms of previously described species among these new descriptions. Probably the male and female *Simaetha*, which were described as two new species, belong together (a similar situation exists for *Telamonia*). Unfortunately, the person with the best knowledge of the salticid fauna of the region who might know which would be synonyms, Fred Wanless at the British Natural History Museum, is no longer allowed to work on spiders. It is therefore most ironic that this book was published in this condition by a noted British entomological institution.

I have seen the collections, reprint files, and other resources at IRRI, worked in the laboratory facilities, and become aware of a little of the politics of creating such a project. Based on what I observed, the resources did not exist during most of the time dedicated to this project to properly create this book. Neither was it clear that the authors had sufficient taxonomical background to undertake such a project. Although their descriptive technique was reasonable, their inconsistencies reflect a lack of understanding of the minimum conditions necessary to support the description of new taxa, as well as a lack of familiarity with modern spider systematics. One wonders why in nearly 20 years they haven't maintained better contact with spider specialists who might have been able to help them with nomenclature and literature. Were they so isolated that they were not completely aware of the resources available to them? If aware, did they not have the ability to acquire these resources? Were there cultural conditions or politics involved which prevented them from seeking assistance, or from receiving it? Were their other job responsibilities so time-consuming that they could not spend the time to do all the extras required to make this book what it should have been? Perhaps a little of all the above reflects the true situation.

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