



New synonyms in neotropical Myrmicine ants (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)

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The year 2007 saw the publication of what is one of the most inadequate papers that has ever been produced in ant taxonomy. The paper, by Makhan (2007), claims to describe six new species of the ant genus *Pyramica* Roger, from Suriname.

The paper begins with a 7-line introduction in which the author claims to describe “the first species of *Pyramica* Roger, 1862 (Formicidae: Hymenoptera) from Suriname.” The first immediate problem is that only half of his species are *Pyramica* (two are *Strumigenys* and one is *Octostruma*, which is not even a member of the same tribe), and the second is that previous authors had already listed over a dozen *Pyramica* species, and even more of *Strumigenys*, from Suriname and its adjacent territories of French Guiana, Guyana, and northern Brazil (Kempf, 1961, 1972; Brandão, 1991; Bolton, 2000; Fernández & Sendoya, 2004; LaPolla *et al.* 2007, Sosa-Calvo, 2007). None of these were considered by the author, who seems blissfully unaware, or perhaps does not care, that any additional taxonomy had taken place in these groups since 1862.

Makhan then launches into the descriptions of the species. These are minimal and superficial and contain no comparative notes. The amazing thing is that he has somehow managed to omit most important characters of diagnostic value at species rank, which in itself is a genuine achievement. Each description is accompanied by two fuzzy, out of focus photographs that serve as illustrations of the inadequate descriptions.

Following the descriptions is a minimalist key that includes only the six “new” species, and a single reference completes the study. The reference is Roger (1862), which is the paper that established the genus *Pyramica* and described its type-species, *P. gundlachi*. This last species is not referred to at all by Makhan. It is not included in his key, none of his “new species” are compared to it and none of its characters are mentioned. No references to any taxonomic works after Roger (1862) are included, even though Neotropical ants in these genera have been fairly well documented (Brown 1948, 1949, 1953, 1954, 1960, 1961, 1962; Brown and Kempf 1960; Bolton 2000). All the senior synonyms of Makhan’s names, listed below, were described in the late 1800s. This is hardly a surprise, as the most common species in any group tend to be the ones collected first and described first. All that he has done is sample some of Suriname’s common species of Dacetini, and one common species of Basicerotini, and describe them all as new, without checking if any of them already had identities. His motives for writing this paper cannot be imagined and the total lack of investigation of previous endeavour defies understanding. The production of irresponsible species descriptions by Makhan has previously been recognized by workers in other arthropod groups — including beetles and spiders — and in gastropods (see Jäch 2006).

Type-material and synonymy

Makhan states that the holotypes of all six species are deposited in “University of Suriname, Department of Entomology, Paramaribo, Suriname”, referred to below by the abbreviation USPS. At present the specimens are not there (personal communication from the curator K.D.B. Dijkstra to T. Schultz (Smithsonian Institution)), nor is there any con-