



## Revision of the ant genus *Prionopelta* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) in the Indo-Pacific region

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### Abstract

The ant genus *Prionopelta* is revised for the Indo-Pacific region. Six species are known, two of which are newly described, *media* sp. n., and *robynmae* sp. n. While widespread in the region the genus is not common and is largely restricted to rainforest habitats where nests are found in soil or rotten wood on the ground. These ants are most often encountered in leaf litter samples while foraging on the ground.

**Key words:** Indo-Pacific, Formicidae, Hymenoptera, new species, *Prionopelta*

### Introduction

In the most recent species-level examination of the ant genus *Prionopelta*, Brown (1960) recognised 10 species. Since then two additional species have been described (Terron, 1974) and one transferred to the genus (Brown, 1965). Thus *Prionopelta* is currently known to contain 13 species, four from Africa and Madagascar, five from Central and South America and four from the Indo-Pacific region. While Brown (1960) clarified the status of most species, he was unable to develop clear diagnoses for two Indo-Pacific species, *kraepelini* and *opaca*. As a result, the distribution information for these two was confused and his identification key did not separate them, these two taxa keying to the same lug.

The occurrence of *kraepelini* and *opaca* within the Australian fauna was left in an ambiguous state by Brown. For example, Brown's (1960:177) list of *Prionopelta* species mentions only *P. opaca* as occurring in Australia with *P. kraepelini* reported as occurring in the East Indies, the Philippines and Micronesia. Based on this, Taylor (Taylor and Brown 1985) listed only *P. opaca* as being known from Australia. However, in Brown's (1960:219–221) discussion, he says that "Together, they [*kraepelini* and *opaca*] turn out to have a vast range, from northern Queensland (at least) in the southeast to Java and the Philippines to the west and north. The typical *opaca* come chiefly from New Guinea and parts of Micronesia." Later he states that he has seen samples more or less closely agreeing with *kraepelini* from several Australian localities. Thus Brown (1960) reports that *opaca* occurs in Australia while *kraepelini* does not, and then says that *opaca* occurs "chiefly" in New Guinea and lists several Australian localities for *kraepelini* but none for *opaca*. To resolve this confusion the genus is reviewed for the entire Indo-Pacific region.

### Methods and abbreviations

Size and shape characters were quantified and are reported as lengths or indices. Measurements were made with a Zeiss Stemi SV8 stereo microscope at various magnifications using a dual-axis stage micrometer wired