



New data on the least known zelotines (Araneae, Gnaphosidae) of Greece and adjacent regions

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Abstract

In this paper six of the least or poorly known zelotine species from Greece belonging to the genera *Trachyzelotes* (2) and *Zelotes* (4) are presented. Following the examination of material from several islands in the East Mediterranean Sea, *Trachyzelotes stubbsi* Platnick & Murphy, 1984 is critically distinguished from *T. adriaticus* (Caporiacco, 1953). The examination of old material lead to the taxonomic re-evaluation of several poorly known species in the area of Greece and adjacent regions. Based on these studies, three new synonymies are proposed: *Z. ilotarum* Simon, 1884 as a new synonym of *Z. cingarus* (O. P.- Cambridge, 1874) and *Z. balcanicus* Deltshv, 2006 and *Z. baram* Levy, 2009 as new synonyms of *Z. argoliensis* (C.L. Koch, 1839). Furthermore, a species from Crete closely associated to *Z. ilotarum* is represented and considered as a new species, *Z. helicoides* **n.sp.** Among the species listed above, *T. stubbsi* is a new record for the Greek territory, while *Z. olympi* (Kulczyński, 1903) is excluded from the Greek list of spiders based on the present knowledge of its distribution.

Key words: ground spiders, Mediterranean, taxonomy, *Zelotini*, *Zelotes*, *Trachyzelotes*, Crete

Introduction

The spiders of Greece are poorly studied. Greek arachnologists are scarce and former surveys from non-native arachnologists were mainly focused on places of touristic interest, such as some Aegean and Ionian islands and archaeological spots around Attiki and in Peloponnisos. Bosmans & Chatzaki (2005) updated the checklist of spiders of Greece, based on a critical review of the older literature, resulting in a catalogue of 856 species. Among these species, 66 were considered as insufficiently described or known, or their occurrence in Greece was questionable. According to those authors, 42 species are in need of further study because the original descriptions were short or schematic, lacked the description of one sex, or probably referred to already described species (synonymies or misidentifications). On the other hand when thorough expeditions on the Greek territory occur (e.g., Bosmans *et al.* 2009), a large number of new records and new species are revealed, clearly indicating a very rich and still unexplored arachnofauna in the area.

Gnaphosidae is one of the most diverse families in Greece and in the entire South-East Mediterranean region. This is not surprising taking into account that this spider family is among the five largest worldwide, occurring in most kinds of terrestrial habitats and bioclimatic zones (Platnick 2010). Notwithstanding, they do not escape from the above situation of poor and insufficient knowledge, especially because of the nocturnal activity of many representatives and their fast movement on the ground which makes them difficult targets for collectors (Chatzaki 2008). Of the 124 species reported from Greece thus far, 16 are considered doubtful records or insufficiently studied (see detailed checklist in Chatzaki 2008).

In view of this, the author addressed some of the most important European museums with rich arachnological collections in order to investigate this neglected fauna. A loan request for 76 species was prepared and sent to the curators of the corresponding museums, and more than fifty species were received.