



## The distressing case of *Polyhomoa itoi* Azuma, 1949 and *Kyidris mutica* Brown, 1949

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A recent paper (Petit 2008) briefly discussed the hundreds of molluscan taxa described in the Japanese journal *Yume-hamaguri* that were obliterated with the introduction of Article 9.1 in the *International Code of Zoological Nomenclature* in 1985. In the process of abstracting that journal for a longer and more detailed paper, the present authors found the description of an ant, obviously unexpected in a journal named for a mollusk. In attempting to discover the fate of this taxon we uncovered what must rank among the most vituperative and venomous pieces of zoological literature ever written. The history of this taxon follows, together with our comments.

Masao Azuma, a frequent contributor to the molluscan journal *Yume-hamaguri*, was proficient in several fields of natural history. In the issue of that journal for September 1948 he published a paper describing a new species of ant with a complete description and a drawing (Azuma, 1948: 26). The new species was named *Strumigenys (Cephaloxys) itoi* Azuma, n. sp (Fig. 1)

The following year, the species was again described in the journal *Hyogo Biology* (Azuma, 1949). Azuma had reconsidered the generic placement of the species and proposed the new genus *Polyhomoa* for its reception. The 1948 *Yume-hamaguri* description was noted in synonymy. It is notable that Azuma dates both the genus and species as 1949. The bottom of the cover of the preprint, reproduced here as Figure 1, is printed: Vol. I, No. 4, p. 34–37, (30th Aug. 1949). It should be made clear at this point that this is a preprint as provided for in the *Code* (Article 21.8 of the 1999 edition). It has its own pagination (pp. 1-4) as opposed to the journal pagination (pp. 34–37), its own cover, is clearly dated on the cover

and the 1949 date is cited in the text. It is notable that Azuma dates both the genus and species as 1949 instead of separately dating the species from 1948. This was because the availability of mimeographed works was in question at the time (see Petit 2008). It is interesting that the figure in the *Yume-hamaguri*, drawn on a mimeograph stencil, is much more detailed than the one published by offset printing in *Hyogo Biology*.

On September 20, 1949, an ant now considered to belong to this same species was described by W. L. Brown, Jr. as *Kyidris mutica*.

In attempting to determine the relative priority of the two names, Dr. W. S. Creighton investigated the situation and published a paper (1950) indicating that priority belonged to Brown. based on his interpretation of 30 August 1949 being “the acceptance date of the article, not its date of publication.” Creighton acknowledged in his paper that he could not read Japanese, although the determining information is actually rendered in English.

Dr. Brown was certainly upset by the discovery that Azuma’s paper may have been prior to his, but he became even more so when he found that Creighton’s conclusion was incorrect as the “acceptance date” is clearly stated on Azuma’s paper. Actually, to say that he was upset may be the understatement of the century. He published, with K. Yasumatsu, a paper that really must be read to be believed (Brown & Yasumatsu, 1951). After first referring to Azuma’s name as “this wretched synonym”, he then contradicted Creighton, stating that he had “misinterpreted the facts regarding date of acceptance of the separate.” Note this strange word-

ing, as he makes a convoluted argument about the fact that the “date printed on the bottom of the cover of the reprint (August 30, 1949) cannot refer to acceptance date, as the acceptance date is clearly given in Japanese as July 25, 1949” [July 25, 1949 is stated in English to be the date received for publication]. He proceeds to state that “Azuma’s paper *as issued in reprint form* has been deliberately pre-dated [italics in original]. Brown further states that “in a letter by Yasumatsu inquiring about the date of publication of the part of *Hyogo Biology* in question, the editor of the journal, Mr. Yutaka Murai of Koyo High School, stated it was issued precisely on January 10, 1950.” No mention is made of having asked the editor about preprints.

Brown then states that “in a letter from Azuma to Brown, dated 24 November 1950, Azuma reaffirmed the date August 30, 1949 as that on which *Polyhomoa itoi* first appeared in print, and suggested that *Kyidris mutica* Brown was a synonym. We take this statement of synonymy to be correct, but insist that *K. mutica* is the *senior* synonym, as we cannot accept Azuma’s statement of the publication date in the face of the evidence to the contrary.” Brown then continues his diatribe, stating that “the authors deplore the great amount of aberrant publications on ant taxonomy issued in the recent past by several authors who, in our opinion, should not have access to scientific journals under any circumstance.” He states his position that the Commission should take steps to nullify “the works of authors publishing in bad faith or in extreme naiveté, and should certainly be ready to condemn the publication of those suffering strong mental aberration.”

At this point Brown is just warming to his subject and we suggest that interested readers obtain his paper. We will repeat only one more section: “In the past, entomological specimens have often continued to flow to authors long after their ‘eccentricity’ (often amounting to sheer, indisputable dementia) had been noted and passed over in discreet silence. ... Mental aberrants have a way of being extremely prolific writers, and they have often wrecked the taxonomy of entire families while saner, but overcautious fellow-specialists have stood aside, sadly shaking their heads and withholding [*sic*] their pens.”

An important point here is that the earliest name for this species was published in 1948 and was available

from the publication date until the appearance of the third edition of the Code in 1985. Also, it is unbelievable that Brown could neither recognize a preprint for what it was nor accept Azuma’s word that the preprint date was correct. It is distressing that a systematist would stoop so low to retain his name for a species. Available data indicate that the species under discussion is now placed in the genus *Pyramica* but Brown’s species name *mutica* is in current use. Not being myrmecologists, we have no idea what effect the resurrection of Azuma’s species name (as of August 30, 1949) would have, and no application for such action is being made. However, we implore myrmecologists who have a sense of justice to resurrect the earliest name and thereby atone, in some small way, for the outrageous remarks of Dr. Brown.

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和歌山縣友ヶ島の蟻相について

(第 二 報)

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**On the Myrmecological-fauna of Tomogashima,  
Kii Prov., with the Description of New Genus  
and New Species.**

*by*

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*Fig. 1. The cover of Azuma's 1949 preprint.*

**NOTE**

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