POLYRHACHIS LAMA, A NEW ANT FROM THE TIBETAN PLATEAU (FORMICIDAE: FORMICINAE)

RUDOLF J. KOHOUT


*Polyrhachis lama* sp.nov. is described from the Tibetan plateau of Central Asia as the first species of the *P. viehmeyeri*-group recorded north of the equator. It is suggested that species of the group were in the past more widely distributed and that *P. lama* is a relict surviving in isolation on the high plateau of Tibet. Formicidae, Polyrhachis, viehmeyeri species-group, new species, distribution.

Rudolf J. Kohout, Queensland Museum, PO Box 3300, South Brisbane, Queensland 4101, Australia; 20 December 1993.

This new member of the *P. viehmeyeri* species-group is characterised by the absence of pronotal spines, and abundance of distinctly shaggy pubescence beneath the bristle-like pilosity.

Measurements (mm) and indices follow Kohout (1990): TL, total length; HL, maximum head length; HW, head width immediately in front of eyes; CI, cephalic index (HWx100/HL); SL, scape length excluding condyla; SI, scape index (SLx100/HW); PW, pronotal width across humeri; MTL, metathoracic tibial length.

**SYSTEMATICS**

*Polyrhachis lama* sp.nov.
(Fig.1)

**MATERIAL EXAMINED**

**Holotype:** Tibet (=Xizang Zizhiqiu, China). 'Deutsche Tibet-Expedit. 1938-39 (E. Schäfer)' (worker).

**Paratypes:** data as for holotype (4 workers, 1 dealate female).

All in the Forschungsinstitut Senckenberg; paratype worker in Queensland Museum.

**DESCRIPTION**

**Worker.** Dimensions (holotype cited first): TL c. 8.11, 8.32–8.72; HL 1.93, 1.87–2.03; HW 1.50, 1.47–1.56; CI 78, 75–79; SL 2.31, 2.21–2.40; SI 153, 150–155; PW 1.03, 0.97–1.06; MTL 2.97, 2.87–3.07 (5 measured).

Clypeus with deeply impressed basal margin; median longitudinal carina distinct anteriorly, indistinct posteriorly; median portion of anterior margin dentate laterally. Median ocellus rudimentary, lateral ocelli lacking. Pronotum unarmed; humeri produced into distinct, forward converging dorso-lateral carinae almost reaching the anterior prontal margin. Promesonotal su-
ture well impressed, metanotal groove rather ill
defined. Propodeal spines well elevated, only
slightly divergent. Dorsum of petiole convex,
 anterior and posterior margins obsolete; spines
well elevated, divergent.

Clupeus, frontal and lateral areas of head,
lateral branches of mesosoma and petiole
moderately rugose; rugosity increasing dorsally
and posteriorly with dorsa of head and mesosoma
fairly coarsely vermiculate-rugose. Gastral dor-
sum opaque, striate-rugose, with sculpture
progressively less distinct posteriorly.

Moderately long, yellowish and reddish bristle-
like hairs fairly dense on all body surfaces, in-
cluding appendages. Silvery pubescence, of
distinctly shaggy appearance, rather dense, ex-
cept on promesonotal dorsum where it is some-
what less abundant.

Generally dark reddish brown with head, meso-
soma and petiole on dorsal aspect piceous. Man-
dibles, appendages and gaster a shade lighter.

**Female.** Dimensions: TL c. 9.07; HL 1.96;
1.53; CI 78; SL 2.28; SI 149; PW 1.71; MTL 2.97
(1 measured).

Besides the usual characters identifying full
sexuality, the general appearance of the available
single female resembles the worker very closely.
Pronotal humeri with short, ill-defined carinae.
Propodeal and petiolar spines shorter, the former
slightly, the latter rather more divergent.
Sculpturation similar to that of worker, with den-
sity increasing from moderately rugose to fairly
coarsely vermiculate-rugose, namely on the head
and mesoscutum, contrasting sharply with that on
mesoscutellum where it is distinctly less coarse
with somewhat granular appearance. Bristle-like
and abundant shaggy pubescence almost obscures the underlying scupltuation.
Male and immature stages unknown.

REMARKS
Known distribution of the viehmeyeri-group is from the Moluccas through Papua New Guinea to the Solomon Islands and northern Australia (Kohout, 1990) but this could be underestimated.
With the description of P. lama it appears that the group was in the past more widely distributed and, perhaps, lama is an isolated relict. The undeniable similarity between P. lama and the viehmeyeri-group prototype shows that both probably derived from the same ancestral stock. As noted earlier (Kohout, 1990:506), most of this group exhibit variability in the length of pronotal spines even within the same population. Their complete absence and replacement by forward produced carinæ, as seen in lama, demonstrates their variability to the extreme and can be interpreted as a product of an independent development of the species in isolation.

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LITERATURE CITED