

Description of a new scorpion species of the genus *Birulatus* Vachon, 1974 (Scorpiones, Buthidae) from Syria

by Iasmi Stathi and Wilson R. Lourenço

Abstract. A new species, *Birulatus astartiae* sp. n., is described based on a single specimen collected the west of As Sukhnah in Central Syria. The genus *Birulatus* Vachon, 1974 remains one of the most enigmatic of all the buthid genera. This genus is associated with genera such as *Compsobuthus* Vachon, *Cicileus* Vachon and *Buthiscus* Birula. A key to identify the three described species of the genus *Birulatus* is given.

Kurzfassung. Auf Grundlage eines Skorpions, der westlich von As Sukhnah in Zentralsyrien gesammelt wurde, wird eine neue Art beschrieben: *Birulatus astartiae* sp. n. Die Gattung *Birulatus* Vachon, 1974 bleibt weiterhin eine der am wenigsten bekannten Gattungen der Familie Buthidae, die jemals beschrieben wurden. Die Gattung ist verwandt mit anderen Gattungen wie *Compsobuthus* Vachon, *Cicileus* Vachon und *Buthiscus* Birula. Ein Schlüssel zur Bestimmung der drei bekannten Arten der Gattung *Birulatus* wird gegeben.

Key words. Arachnidae, Middle East.

Introduction

Little has been published on the scorpions of Syria (GADEAU DE KERVILLE 1926, VACHON 1966, KINZELBACH 1984, VACHON & KINZELBACH 1987, KABAKIBI et al. 1999). According to these sources, no species of the genus *Birulatus* have been recorded in Syria so far.

In recent publications (LOURENÇO 1999, 2002), the circumstances surrounding the description of the enigmatic genus *Birulatus* Vachon, 1974 have been discussed. In fact, VACHON (1974) described several genera and subgenera in a short addendum at the end of his comprehensive monograph on trichobothrial patterns in scorpions. Among these was the new genus *Birulatus*, based on a single female collected south of Tafila, near to Schauback (Shauback) in Jordan. Both the diagnosis of the new genus and the description of the type species *Birulatus haasi* were rather limited. Several important characters were neither described nor commented on. Furthermore, more recent studies on morphological characters newly observed by means of scanning electron microscopy (LOURENÇO 2002) have been shown not only that the description of certain characters was incorrect, but have also confirmed that lateral eyes are absent in this genus.

At present, the genus *Birulatus* consists of two species: *B. haasi* Vachon, 1974 from Jordan and *Birulatus israelensis* Lourenço, 2002 from Israel. In this paper a new species, *Birulatus astartiae* sp. n. is described on the basis of a single specimen collected west of As Sukhnah in Central Syria.

The measurements and terminology follow that of STAHNKE (1970) except for trichobothriotaxy, which follows that of VACHON (1974). All measurements and drawings were made using Leica Image Analysis System. The holotype (N.H.M.C.-81 1.8.1) is deposited in the Natural History Museum of Crete, University of Crete, Greece.