

## THE ANTS OF RENNELL ISLAND

### SUBFAMILY PONERINAE

#### *Trachymesopus stigma* (Fabricius)

Record: Lavanggu (Dan. Exp. L357); cultivated area with *Carica Papaya*, on decaying wood and on and in ground. The single worker was probably collected in a rotting log, the preferred if not exclusive microhabitat of the species in the remainder of Melanesia.

*T. stigma* is one of the most widespread of all ponerine species. It is found both in the New World and Old World tropics; in the latter it occurs from southern China to Queensland, Micronesia, outer Melanesia, and Samoa. As noted elsewhere (WILSON, 1858), there does not appear to be any significant geographic variation over this vast range. In both hemispheres *stigma* has been collected from the interior of relatively undisturbed native forests, where it lives in apparent compatibility with local endemic faunas of the most diverse kinds. Its ultimate origin is unknown, but the New World tropics seem the most likely possibility, since the most closely related species occur there. Perhaps it was introduced by man into the Old World and has thrived by virtue of its choice of nesting site. I have already shown (1959c) that in New Guinea it is a member of a small, ecologically isolated group of species that are mostly limited in their activities to larger rotting logs in intermediate stages of decomposition.

#### *Leptogenys ?foreli* Mann

Record: Hutuna (Brit. Exp.); Te-Uhungango (Brit. Exp.). Two males are tentatively identified as either *foreli* Mann or the closely related *truncata* Mann. Males have never been associated with either of these species, but the Rennell specimens correspond closely in size, sculpturing, and petiole form to the worker caste. Of the two possibilities, *foreli* is the more likely, since it is known to range widely from New Guinea to the New Hebrides, while *truncata* is known only from the type collection from the Santa Cruz islands.

#### *Odontomachus simillimus* Fr. Smith

Records: Lavanggu (Dan. Exp. L352, L356, L357, L372, L374, L390); Niupani (Dan. Exp. L378, L385; Brit. Exp.); Te-Avamanggu (Dan. Exp. L364, L365); Hutuna, worker and four males (Brit. Exp.). The large number of records suggests that *simillimus* is one of the more abundant species on Rennell. It was collected in a wide array of habitats: sandy grass-plain near shore, open cultivated places, low vegetation near lake, young forest (about 3 m. high) on previously cultivated area, and rain forest. This is also an extremely abundant and versatile species elsewhere in Melanesia (WILSON, 1959a). WHEELER (1934) has previously recorded it from Kaggava Bay (Lavanggu?), Rennell I., and the northwest end of Bellona Island. I have also seen workers collected on Bellona by E. S. BROWN in 1955.