

ON THE TAXONOMIC STATUS OF POLYRHACHIS KIRKAE
DONISTHORPE AND ITS PRESUMED MIMICRY
(HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE)¹

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In a previous paper (Hung, 1967) I doubted the species distinctness of *Polyrhachis kirkae* Donisthorpe and speculated that it is probably a synonym of *P. nigriceps* Fr. Smith (both known only from New Guinea). This problem was finally solved in January 1969 when I studied the types of both species at the British Museum (Natural History).

Polyrhachis nigriceps was first described as new species from Waigeu by Fr. Smith in 1863. In 1898 Emery described *P. atalanta* from Dorey. Later in 1925 Emery himself synonymized *P. atalanta* under *P. nigriceps*. Smith described *nigriceps* from a single worker. I have carefully examined this specimen and have compared it with the type series of *kirkae* and 12 other specimens identified as *kirkae* by Donisthorpe himself. The first difference I noticed is the color pattern between the types of these two species. They both have black heads and yellow gasters, but the alitrunk and petiole are different in color. The alitrunk and petiole of the type specimen of *kirkae* are almost as black as the head, but they are nearly as yellow as the gaster in *nigriceps*. However, not all *kirkae* have black alitrunk and petiole. One specimen from Waigeu has the color pattern similar to that of *nigriceps* and even two specimens among the type series have heads, alitrunks, and petioles as yellow as the gaster. Actually, only those

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