

ON THE SYNONYMY OF *CRIBRARULA CRIBRARIA EXMOUTHENSIS*

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**Abstract:** Raybaudi (1987b) renamed a group of populations of *Cribrarula cribraria* of West Australia by a subspecific name *C. cribraria exmouthensis* instead of the recycled name *C. cribraria fallax* (Smith, 1881) given by the Schilders, and this without giving statistical shell characteristics and other conchological information regarding this new subspecies. This act is in fact recycling of the another old name 'exmouthensis' to designate the W. Australian subspecies, but this nomenclatural act alone is not the scientific evidence that these populations deserve a subspecific rank. 'Exmouthensis' described in Melvill (1888) is but one of many interesting forms of *C. cribraria* of W. Australia and it cannot represent all the *cribraria* populations in this area. Hence *C. cribraria exmouthensis* is a synonym of *C. cribraria fallax*.

**Key words:** Mollusc, Gastropoda, Cypraeidae, *Cribrarula cribraria*, West Australia, intraspecific variation.

Melvill (1888) described a new variety of *Cribrarula cribraria* (Linnaeus, 1758) from West Australia as follows:

"Another fine form I noticed recently in the Natural History Museum, S. Kensington. In this the dorsal markings are very rich blackish brown, the white spots more sparse; long, in size about 1 inch. Habitat., Exmouth Gulf, W. Australia, collected by T.H. Haynes. Mr. J. Michael Williams has another specimen approaching this. The dorsal covering matter seems to have been twice deposited, causing a very rich effect, with partial eclipse of the round white spots. This possibly may be *C. comma* (Perry, Conch. Pl. xxi., f.5), but the plate and description are both bad, and identification difficult in consequence." see—Figs. 1-2.

Raybaudi (1987b) confined himself to picturing the holotype and citing its description. Melvill was cautious with describing new taxa. The following sentence from the same work reads:

"The *cribrariae* more nearly run into each other than do most of the sections of this genus, and though *cribraria*, *esontropia*, *cribellum*, *Gaskoini* are typically distinct, I should never be surprised at all being eventually united."

This idea might have been an epigraph to any work on the taxonomic identity of the *Cribrarula* taxa.

Raybaudi mentioned an area of distribution of the discussed taxon Kimberley-Kilbarra and South—in fact all the coastal area of West Australia—not knowing that he de facto follows the Schilders practice of recycling old cowry names: Raybaudi used the available name given to a real variety (form) to designate a subspecies of *C. cribraria* of West Australia.

This approach is the same as in his previous and subsequent works: any small batch of unusual shells can be treated as a subspecies, if it is geographically separated from the other populations of the species. But geographical separation is but one criterion of subspecies. The second important criterion is the difference of statistical shell characteristics of a subspecies from characteristics of other populations of the same species—see Heiman (2010).

In Raybaudi (1987b) there is no even attempt to discuss shell characteristics of *C. cribraria exmouthensis* as if it is clear that all shells of the subspecies are characterized by the brown dorsum with white lacunae. It is apparently not correct as the previous work Raybaudi (1986a) clearly demonstrates this showing numerous other forms of the species.

Perhaps Raybaudi did not know that diagnostic shell characteristics of *C. cribraria fallax* are already given in the Prodrôme and he did not make any attempt to use them or to present new diagnostic shell characteristics of the subspecies he now renamed.

*C. cribraria exmouthensis* sensu Raybaudi is just a subspecific name without a content, which should be treated as a synonym of *C. cribraria fallax*; the latter is still valid for W. Australian subspecies of *C. cribraria*!

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#### Literature

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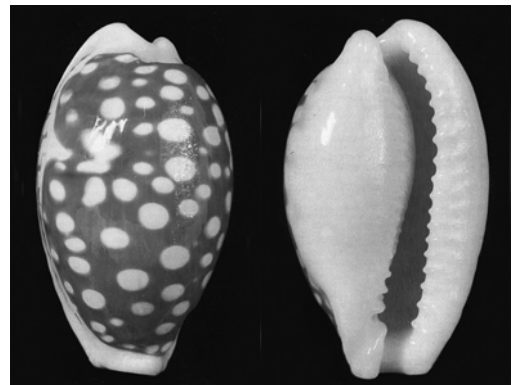
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1987b. *Cribrarula cribraria exmouthensis* Melvill, 1888. The Connoisseur 11:23-28.

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1-2. *C. cribraria* var. *exmouthensis* Melvill, 1888, the holotype preserved in the BMNH, London. After Raybaudi (1987b)