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DESCRIPTION OF A NEW MEMBER OF THE *MONARCHA* *TRIVIRGATA*-GROUP FROM FLORES, LESSER SUNDA ISLANDS (AVES, MONARCHINAE)

by

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Amongst material from the island of Flores forwarded by the Rev. Fr. J. A. J. Verheijen SVD and the Rev. Fr. E. Schmutz SVD is a monarchine flycatcher which appears to represent an undescribed species. It may be known and diagnosed as follows.

Monarcha sacerdotum species nova

Type and unique specimen, ♂ ad., with large gonads (the testes measured about $7 \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ mm each), 25 September 1971, Sesok, Flores, 1000 m, collected in the lower stages of primary forest by E. Schmutz. Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie no. 68135.

Diagnosis. — A morphologically very normal member of the genus *Monarcha*; measurements, including size and shape of bill, similar to those of *M. t. trivirgata* (Temminck), but plumage different in two conspicuous characters: 1° there is no trace of rust colour or brown in the plumage, the underparts (except for the black throat patch) being pure white; 2° the outer pair of rectrices with much more white: the outer web is white to its base, the inner web is distally white over a length of 38 mm. In *M. t. trivirgata* the white part of the inner web varies from 24–33 mm in length, and on the outer web it is at most a few millimetres longer. The second and third pairs of rectrices have a decreasing amount of white, but also much more than in the corresponding pairs of *M. t. trivirgata*. The upper parts are similar to those of *M. t. trivirgata*: forehead, sides of head, chin and throat patch glossy black, central three pairs of rectrices and upper tail coverts black, remiges and

upper wing coverts blackish with grey outer edges, remainder of upper parts grey. In general appearance *M. sacerdotum* is remarkably close to *Heteranax mundus* (Sclater), but differs in the greater extent of white on the tail, the grey edges of the upper wing coverts (all black in *H. mundus*), smaller size, and of course in the very different shape of the bill.

Measurements: wing 74, tail 73, outer pair of rectrices 60, tarsus 17, culmen from skull $15\frac{1}{4}$, exposed culmen 12 mm.

Discussion. — The discovery of a new form of the *Monarcha trivirgata* relationship on Flores is surprising. The nominate race of *M. trivirgata* is known from Timor and the smaller islands to the east, Wettar, Alor, Lomblen, Sumba and Flores. On Flores the species may be not very common, for although Hellmayr (1914: 29) included Flores amongst the islands: "woher die Museen in Tring und Leiden grosse Serien erhielten", there is no material from Flores in Leiden. In literature only a single specimen appears to have been recorded, a female collected by Everett (cf. Hartert, 1897: 524), but actually Everett obtained several skins during his stay on Flores in October-November 1896, for from the American Museum of Natural History I received three specimens on loan: the adult female mentioned by Hartert, and two immature birds of uncertain sex. These birds look similar to birds from Timor (topotypical of *M. trivirgata*) in comparable plumage, and appear to be well-placed in the nominate race, *M. t. trivirgata*, to which they have always been considered to belong.

As adult males of *M. t. trivirgata* have not yet been recorded from Flores, there is a theoretical possibility that *M. sacerdotum* represents the male of the Flores population of *M. trivirgata*, of which females and immature birds would be indistinguishable from the nominate race. Although, until either certain females of *M. sacerdotum* or adult males of *M. trivirgata* from Flores become known, this possibility cannot be rejected, I regard this as unlikely. In *M. trivirgata* adult males and females are similar in plumage, including the amount of white in the tail. In related forms also, there does not appear to exist a sexual difference in amount of white in the tail. Therefore one would expect females of *M. sacerdotum* to have as much white in the tails as the male.

The evidence points therefore to *M. sacerdotum* and *M. t. trivirgata* co-occurring on Flores, and this leads inevitably to the conclusion that as long as so little is known of these birds on Flores, it is best to treat them as different species.

There may be an ecological difference, for the specimen of *M. sacerdotum* was taken in mountain-forest, whereas published evidence indicates that *M. t. trivirgata* is mainly an inhabitant of the lowlands, although I note that

on Alor von Plessen found it at altitudes of up to 1200 m (cf. Rensch, 1929: 203).

I have also considered the possibility that *M. sacerdotum* would be an aberrant specimen of *M. t. trivirgata*, lacking the rust-coloured pigment, but it would be odd if this bird had a rare (not previously recorded) aberration in its pigmentation, combined with a greater amount of white in its tail than any other individual known.

M. sacerdotum is not close to *M. everetti* from Djampea, not far from Flores, which has black upper parts with a white rump, white in the wing, etc.

The name *M. sacerdotum* is given in honour of the two priests who, in recent years, have contributed so much to the knowledge of the avifauna of Flores.

I am indebted to Mrs. M. K. LeCroy for lending me a series of *M. t. trivirgata*, including three specimens from Flores, from the collections of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

Note. There is no agreement about the gender of *Monarcha*. Salvadori, Meyer, Sharpe and Mayr have treated it as masculine, Hartert was inconsistent with a strong leaning towards masculine, whereas Brüggemann, Stresemann in his later years, Meise, and van Bemmelen treated it as feminine. Consultation of the original description (Vigors & Horsfield, 1827: 254-255) shows that its authors treated *Monarcha* as feminine, as is absolutely clear from this phrase in the description of its type-species: "1. CARINATA. *Mon. [archa] plumbea*; ...". In the International Code (Art. 30) some value is attached to the gender given to a genus by its author(s), and for that reason I have used the feminine form.

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