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STUDIES ON CONIDAE (MOLLUSCA, GASTROPODA)

2. *CONUS PUSIO* SOWERBY I (NON HWASS) AND *C. MELVILLI* SOWERBY III

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ABSTRACT

The holotype of *Conus pusio* Sowerby I, 1834, is traced in the National Museum of Wales. This specimen also represents the holotype of *C. melvilli* Sowerby III, 1879, which fact makes both taxa objective synonyms. Since the name *C. pusio* is preoccupied by Hwass, 1792; the valid name for the species is *C. melvilli*. The holotype is a unique specimen; although mentioned from Key West, its locality is unknown. *Conus melvilli* "Sowerby" in Perry, 1939, from Florida was renamed *C. perryae* Clench, 1942.

INTRODUCTION

In 1792 Hwass (: 710) described *Conus pusio*, a small species from the Caribbean, which is considered a junior synonym of *C. jaspideus* Gmelin, 1791 (cf. Kohn, 1968: 480, pl. 8, fig. 99). Another small cone shell was named *Conus pusio* Sowerby I, 1834 (in Sowerby II, 1832-1841: pl. 55, fig. 69), which is a junior homonym but not a synonym of *C. pusio* Hwass. Sowerby made his *pusio* available by the sole publication of a figure, which is reproduced here (fig. 1); the holotype apparently seemed to be lost.

THE IDENTITY AND LOCALITY OF *CONUS MELVILLI*

G.B. Sowerby III described in 1879 (: 795-796, pl. 48, fig. 1) *Conus melvilli* as follows:

"Long. 20, maj.lat. 11 mill. Hab. Key West (J. Cosmo Melvill). A small obtuse Cone, with characteristic markings, somewhat resembling those of *C. lucidus* (Mawe), on a smaller scale; the transverse brown lines are more numerous, and the short longitudinal ones crossing the interstices less so. The light-brown streaks almost cover the shell, leaving small white patches between the transverse lines. The shell described was picked up on the beach by Mr. Melvill at Key West (south of Florida) in 1872, and is at present the only specimen known of the species."

This description is repeated by Sowerby III

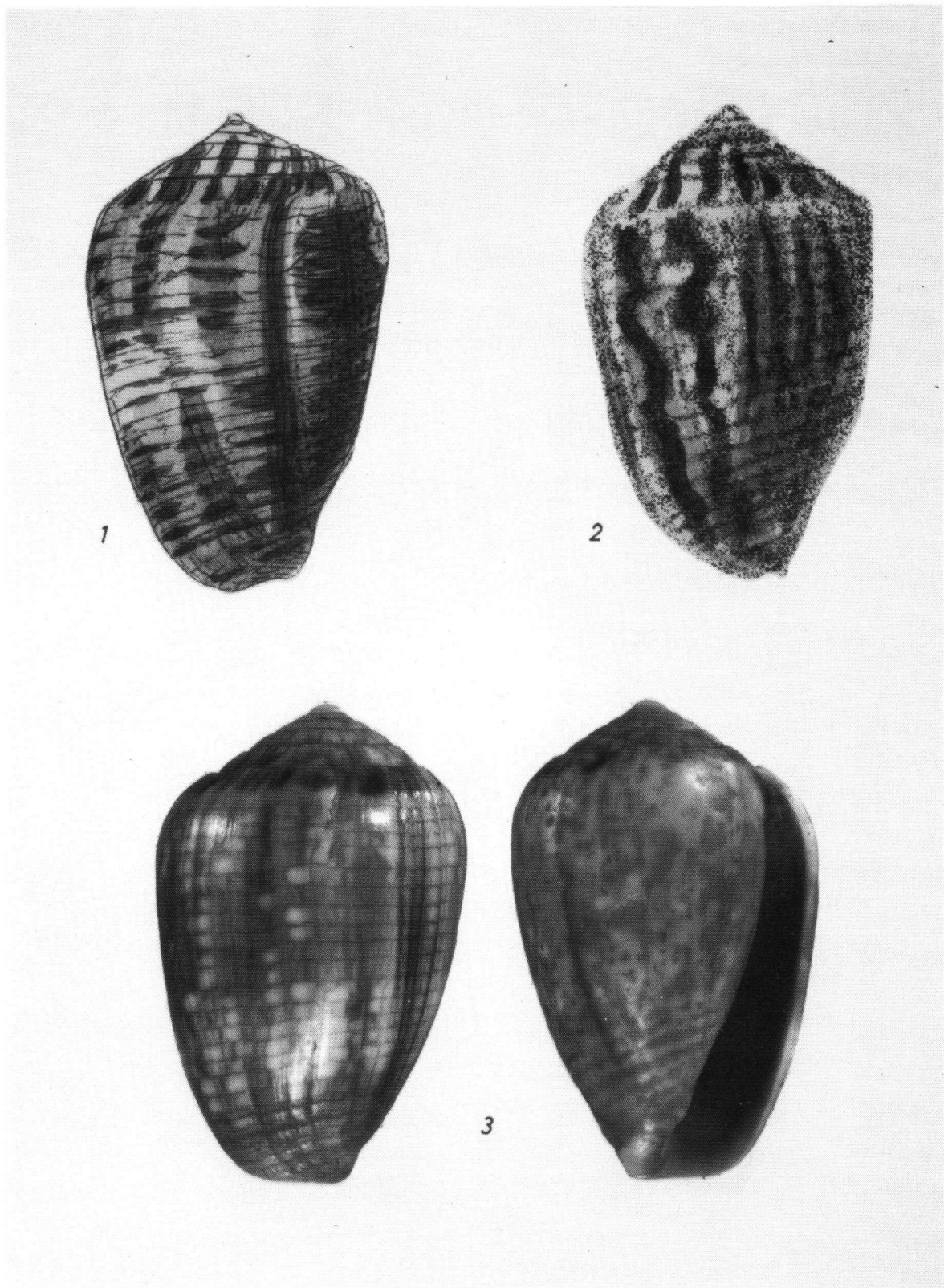


Fig. 1. Type figure of *Conus pusio* Sowerby I, length $18\frac{1}{2}$ mm (after Sowerby II, 1832-1841). Fig. 2. Type figure of *Conus melvilli* Sowerby III, length 20 mm (after Sowerby III, 1879). Fig. 3. Holotype of *Conus pusio* Sowerby I = holotype of *C. melvilli* Sowerby III, length 18.8 mm (National Mus. Wales, Cardiff).

(1887: 249, pl. 29, fig. 653). The type figure is reproduced here (fig. 2).

Many years later Melvill (1917: 222) discussed the Floridan type locality:

"I was but a beginner in the study of the mollusca in the early seventies, and during the spring and summer of 1873, just after my return home from spending the best part of a year in the United States, the great collections amassed by the late Mr. T. Norris of Preston were advertised for sale at Stevens'. I purchased a considerable number of lots, including one of small Cones, some of which I sent up to Mr. Sowerby, and at the same time I forwarded him a good many species I had gathered on the Florida and other shores of the Southern United States. My strong impression for several years has been, and still is, that this Cone really came from this lot (no. 248 in the second day's sale of the Norris Collection, June 6, 1873) and had somehow been mingled with Cones I had gathered myself, and that the place of its nativity is still, therefore, unknown."

From this statement we have to conclude that *Conus melvilli* has an unknown locality.

Because the type figure of *C. melvilli* (fig. 2) shows resemblance with *C. boschi* Clover, 1972, from Oman, we wished to compare specimens of both taxa. Dr. P.G. Oliver (National Museum of Wales) allowed us to study the holotype of *C. melvilli* (fig. 3). Dr. and Mrs. D.T. Bosch generously donated specimens of *C. boschi* to the Zoological Museum at Amsterdam (Coomans c.s., 1982: figs. 251-252). After studying these shells they showed to represent two distinct species.

When comparing the type specimen of *C. melvilli* (fig. 3) to the type figure of *C. pusio* Sowerby (fig. 1) the resemblance is striking. Also the dimensions of both are identical: the type figure of *C. pusio* Sowerby measures 18.5 x 11.8 mm, whereas the holotype of *C. melvilli* is 18.8 x 12.0 mm (in the original description was mentioned 20 x 11 mm).

Our conclusion is that the holotype of *Conus melvilli* must be the same specimen as the holotype of *C. pusio* Sowerby, and therefore both nominal species are objective synonyms. Because *C. pusio* Sowerby I, 1834, is preoccupied by *C. pusio* Hwass, 1792, the name *C. melvilli* Sowerby III, 1879, must be applied to this species.

Conus melvilli is not conspecific with *C. coronatus* Gmelin, 1791, from the Indo-Pacific,

as was suggested by Wagner & Abbott (1978: 26). We consider *C. melvilli* a distinct and valid species. Since only the holotype is known, nothing can be said about the distribution.

It is remarkable that one and the same specimen was described by Sowerby I and again with another name by Sowerby III. The history of this shell can be traced as follows. After it was named *Conus pusio* by Sowerby I in 1834, the specimen came into the private collection of Thomas Norris at Preston, who had a special interest in Conidae (Dance, 1966: 206, 211, 237). After Norris' death in 1852 the collection went to his nephew, also named Thomas Norris. Twenty years later the Norris collection was auctioned by Stevens (1873). In the sales catalogue of the Norris collection the name *Conus pusio* is not cited anywhere amongst the 907 entries. This shell was bought by Melvill with lot no. 248, containing "*Conus maculiferus*, *coccus*, *algoensis* and 30 small cones". Later on Melvill sent the shell to Sowerby III, who described it in 1879 as *Conus melvilli*, with an erroneous type locality "Key West". Many years later Melvill (1917) published about this wrong locality. The Melvill collection became part of the Tomlin collection, and finally the unique shell of *C. melvilli* was deposited into the National Museum of Wales at Cardiff.

A small cone from the west coast of Florida was incorrectly identified by Perry (1939: 40-41, pl. 8, fig. 1) as *Conus "melvilli"*. This mistake was corrected by Clench (1942: 31, pl. 15, fig. 5), who renamed the shell *Conus perryae*. Perry & Schwengel (1955: 178-179, pl. 37, fig. 258) accepted this new name.

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