



Figure 5: *Misumena vatia*, female with prey.  
© Hilary Grant.



Figure 6: *Misumena vatia*, spiderling on a petal,  
2 mm. © Hilary Grant.



Figure 7: *Misumena vatia*, male. © Hilary Grant.

All the half-grown specimens that I have found seem to be the greenish version. I wonder whether the glorious ability to change background colour and to take on spots and stripes only develops in a fully adult female? I shall continue to check all the different specimens that I find.

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## Third Conference of the Asian Society of Arachnology in Amravati, India

by Siddharth Kulkarni\* and Peter Jäger<sup>o</sup>

The third conference of the Asian Society of Arachnology was hosted by the Indian Society of Arachnology, in collaboration with J. D. Patil Sangludkar Mahavidyalaya, Daryapurand Satpuda Foundation at Hotel Gauri Inn, Amravati, Maharashtra, India. The organising team included Ganesh Vankhede, Priyanka Hadole, Sanyogita Deshmukh and Atul Bodkhe.

All the international participants arrived at Nagpur airport and travelled by car, arranged by the organisers, to the venue. Registration on 15th November 2015 was followed by a mouth-watering dinner with Indian delicacies which was given on the lush green lawn in the front yard of the hotel.

### Logo

The logo of the conference represented the distribution range of the genus *Nephila* in Asia (for ASA), overlapped with an image of *Nephila pilipes* which is commonly found in India. In addition to the banners in the congress hall and at the cultural event, the logo was shown as a typical Indian sand picture (*rangoli*) in front of the congress hall (we won't tell anyone who stepped into it, Yuri).



Figure 1: Logo in *rangoli* sand.

### Participants

Some 126 participants from 20 countries registered for the conference. However, some could not participate due to visa issues, which included Shuqiang Li, Secretary of ASA.

Conference began the following morning after the inauguration performed by Mr. Ranjeet Patil, Minister of State for Urban Development, Yashomati Thakur MLA, Vice-Chancellor, Mohan Khedkar, Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University and the then President of the ASA Hirotsugu Ono.

The conference consisted of a total of nine sessions held over four days. Presentations included talks about members of the families Thomisidae, Stiphropodidae, Sparassidae, Oonopidae, Hahniidae, Lycosidae, Nephiliidae, Eresidae and Araneidae. In total, 26 posters and 34 talks were presented.

The first session began after a short tea break following the inauguration ceremony. This session was chaired by Hirotsugu Ono. The first plenary talk was





Figure 2: During the inauguration.



Figure 3: The Russian Party.



Figure 4: From the conference hall.



Figure 5: Delegates during breakfast.

given by the most senior arachnologist present at the conference, Pekka T. Lehtinen, about the significance of oriental taxa in the phylogeny of Araneomorphae. This was immediately followed by the second plenary, given by Suresh Benjamin on the advances in our understanding of the phylogeny of the family Thomisidae.

After this there were student presentations given by C. I. Clayton on the 'redescription of three species of the crab spider genus *Pagida* and its phylogenetic placement'. The second presentation was by Majid Moradmand regarding an evolutionary hypothesis of the Sparassidae genus *Spariolenus*, which still needs to be tested. S. Ranasinghe talked on 'The diversity of the goblin spider genus *Brignolia*' by surveying in various parts of Sri Lanka, and demonstrated interesting differences between surveys of the central and peripheral regions of Sri Lanka.

After lunch, the second session was chaired by Ingi Agnarsson. The session started with three plenary talks. The first of these was given by Matjaž Kuntner on sexual size dimorphism in spiders and its biological correlates. The next plenary was given by Yuri Marusik on Siberian spiders with tips on studying the taxonomy of spiders from remote areas. In the third plenary of this session Peter Jäger talked about the spiders from the Nat Ma Taung in Myanmar. After the three plenary talks, a presentation was given by Simon Hodge about sampling spiders in marine strandlines.

A much needed tea/coffee break was offered after the two sessions. The third session was chaired by Yuri Marusik. Hirotsugu Ono talked on island zoogeography in spiders, followed by Ingi Agnarsson's talk on biogeography of arachnids. As Zhisheng Zhang could not participate due to visa issues, his student Zheng Cao gave a presentation on 'Hahniidae from Asia.'

The same evening a city tour was arranged to Panjabrao Deshmukh museum and the Ambadevi temple (the name of the city – Amravati – is derived from the popular temple of the Goddess Amba).

### Russian Party

In the meantime the famous Russian Party was organised by Yuri Marusik and his wife Irina with Russian delicacies: red caviar, calamari, salmon, Ukrainian Pepper Vodka and dinner.

Yuri presented types of Russian and Ukrainian vodka together with beer arranged by the organisers. The spirits were high when Peter Jäger showed some David Bowie moves during discussion of his *Heteropoda davidbowie*. The party went on until late and many new acquaintances were made.

The next morning Peter Jäger chaired the fourth session starting with a plenary talk by Hisham K. El-Hennawy on the genus *Stegodyphus* in India and South East Asia, followed by Yuri Marusik's talk on copulatory organs in "haplogyne" spiders. Peter Koomen spoke about 'Towards a spider photo guide of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China'.

After coffee break, Matjaž Kuntner chaired the fifth session of five student presentations, followed by the poster session (6th) comprising 26 posters and a lunch break!

The seventh session was chaired by Hisham El-Hennawy, and started with spider diversity and guild composition in the Nakhon Ratchasima forest, Thailand by Prasit Wongprom. This was followed by Marashetty





Figure 6: Group photo.



Figure 7: Joseph Koh's selfie stick wasn't working.



Figure 8: He tried changing the audience, still didn't work!



Figure 9: The panel discussion.

Seenappa's talk on standards in spider photography for publications. Siddharth Kulkarni presented the state of arachnological work in India and a new initiative – Araneofauna of Sahyadri. Mert Elverici reported observations on Lycosidae communities in terrestrial habitats from Turkey, followed by Suvarna More's presentation on spider diversity of Chandoli, Koyna, Sahyadri Tiger Reserve and Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary in Western Ghats, India. The session ended with a talk by Nagnath Phartale on antibacterial activity of *Pardosa brevivulva* Tanaka, 1975 silk.

### Group photo

The audience gathered on the lawns for a group photo, which featured later in Joseph Koh's selfie group photos. His selfie stick worked once in a while and amused the crowd. Announcement of a tea break wound up the photo interlude, which was followed by the discussion session (8th). It was chaired by Peter Jäger, Matjaž Kuntner, Ingi Agnarsson, Hirotsugu Ono, Hisham El-Hennawy and Ganesh Vankhede. The discussion covered preservation techniques, the needs of museums, spider photography, use of silk and the importance of voucher specimens.

During the general assembly of the Asian Society, Hirotsugu Ono presented a summarised report of ASA 2012–2015.

Agenda for general assembly:

- A summarised report of ASA 2012–2015 by Hirotsugu Ono.
- The present condition of membership and the business by the secretary (Li Shuqiang; presented by P. Jäger).
- On the homepage (website) and logo by Priyanka Hadole.
- Election of the next administration (2015–2018). Report on the results of the election by the election office (Peter Jäger).

The election officer Peter Jäger was assisted by Siddharth Kulkarni. Joseph Koh was elected as the new president for the tenure 2015–2018. Shuqiang Li retained the secretary position for the next three years. The present council includes David Court (Singapore), Seema Keswani (India), Manju Siliwal (India), Prasit Wongprom (Thailand), Feng Zhang (China), Priyanka Hadole (India) and Emma Shaw (Thailand). A total of 103 votes (101 valid, 2 invalid) were casted (58 e-votes, 43 during the congress). Ganesh Vankhede stepped down to make room for younger members. Priyanka Hadole was elected as a new council member.

Ganesh Vankhede gave an account of arrangements for the conference and acknowledged the team for their



Figure 10: During the cultural dance.





Figure 11: At the spider research lab in JDPS college.



Figure 12: Koomen beating a drum during the tribal dance.

efforts and the members for participation. Peter Jäger congratulated Ganesh Vankhede and Priyanka Hadole for the efforts and organisation of the 3rd Conference of the Asian Society of Arachnology by offering German wine and chocolates.

#### New members

84 new members were registered during this conference. In total, ASA now has 200 members representing 27 countries.

#### Future

The International Congress of Arachnology will be held at Golden, Colorado during 2–8 July 2016 hosted by Paula Cushing. Therefore, the 4th ASA conference will be held in 2017 at Baoding, China hosted by Feng Zhang. The 2018 conference was proposed to be held in Isfahan, Iran by Majid Moradmand.

#### Cultural program

Classical music, including popular Hindi *ghazals* and regional traditional dance, by the students of Shivaji College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Amravati and Vidyabharati Mahavidyalaya, Amravati were presented followed by dinner.

On the third day, Shri Shivaji College, Akot and Indian Science Congress Association, Amravati organised a symposium on the rearing of spiders. The ninth session of oral presentations was chaired by Ingi Agnarsson. After



Figure 13: Pekka!

the tea break, Reena Laharia presented a live demonstration of rearing spiders. The lunch break was followed by the departure for the field trip to Melghat tiger reserve. On the way some participants visited J. D. Patil Sangludkar Mahavidyalaya, Daryapur – spider research lab, where the students received guidance from Matjaž Kuntner and Ingi Agnarsson. It was a long journey and we reached Melghat at night, in time for dinner. A talk was delivered by the forest officer, followed by tribal dances presented by the local people of the village. The applause reached a peak, when Peter Koomen started beating drums amidst the performing artists.

The next day we left to visit the tiger reserve for some spider collecting; we saw many *Nephila pilipes* and *Argiope* species. The entourage stopped to examine a *Nephila pilipes* web (for a minute), but Pekka disappeared into the bushes and was requested to rejoin the group. Later he was seen sorting specimens with the youngest eight-year-old participant Chaitanya Satav. Then we had lunch and headed back to the conference venue.

Unfortunately Pekka had an accident and required a few stitches to his head. He was wondering where he was until he saw Peter Jäger and exclaimed “Ah! I am in India.”

Back at Hotel Gouri Inn, we had dinner which was an informal bidding good-bye session for all. There was distribution of certificates along with coffee mugs (with a conference logo on) and a memory stick.

All participants enjoyed a very well-organised meeting with interesting talks and posters, delicious Indian food (including the Indian speciality of tikka items which were much savoured by all) and meeting new friends and colleagues. The Asian Society of Arachnology is growing at a healthy pace. Thanks to all the organisers and we hope to see you in Baoding in 2017!

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