

Morphological and serological investigations on *Lacerta laevis* Gray, 1838 (Sauria: Lacertidae) populations from Anatolia

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Abstract: A total of 51 specimens of *Lacerta laevis* (25 ♂, 26 ♀) from the area of Mersin and Hatay (southern Anatolia) were investigated morphologically, and of these 24 specimens (12 ♂, 12 ♀) were analyzed from the viewpoint of their blood-serum proteins. The populations were found to show great intra- and interpopulation variation in their pattern and colour characteristics and in their serological analyses, while their morphometric characteristics were found to be similar. It is thus concluded that, for the present, it is not possible to separate them into different subspecies.

Kurzfassung: Aus dem Gebiet von Mersin und Hatay in Süd-Anatolien wurden insgesamt 51 Exemplare von *Lacerta laevis* (25 ♂, 26 ♀) morphologisch untersucht; darüber hinaus wurden von 24 Exemplaren (12 ♂, 12 ♀) auch die Blutserum-Proteine analysiert. Es zeigte sich, dass in Bezug auf Färbung, Färbungsmuster und Serumproteine die Variation sowohl innerhalb dieser Populationen als auch zwischen den beiden Populationen sehr groß ist, dass diese Variation jedoch nicht in morphologischen Merkmalen zum Ausdruck kommt. Es wird daher vorgeschlagen, von einer Benennung einer eigenen Subspezies vorläufig abzusehen.

Key words: Geographic variation, blood serum proteins, morphology, Turkey, Middle East, Mediterranean area.

Introduction

The SW Asian range of *Lacerta laevis* Gray, 1838 includes Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel. The first record from Anatolia, Taurus Mountains, was by WERNER (1899). MERTENS (1952) included the Hatay samples in *L. laevis* while placing those from Cyprus in *L. l. troodica*. BUDAK's (1976) detailed survey of the *L. laevis* populations from Anatolia concluded that they all belong to the nominate race. According to later studies on Cyprus populations, both from the viewpoint of their morphology (BUDAK & GÖÇMEN 1995) and of their blood-serum protein characteristics (TOSUNOĞLU et al. 1999), the Cyprus material was found to be different from the Anatolian material, and so these authors proposed to raise the Cyprus populations to species level as *L. troodica*. However, BEYERLEIN & MAYER (1999) were of the opinion that the population from Cyprus should be accepted at the subspecies level.

Several authors (BISCHOFF & FRANZEN 1993, BISCHOFF & SCHMIDTLER 1994) have stated that *L. laevis* populations from Mersin are different from those from Hatay in their venter colour. BISCHOFF & SCHMIDTLER (1994) further stated that the venters of male Mersin specimens resemble those from Syria (Amasi Mts.) in being grey-white or yellowish; gular