

CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORICAL BIOGEOGRAPHY OF THE ONISCIDEAN LINEAGE *MESONISCUS* (MICROCHETA, ISOPODA, CRUSTACEA)

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1. INTRODUCTION

As Emile Racovitza pointed out in his classical *Essai sur les problèmes biospéologiques*: "...on ne pourra se livrer à l'étude chorologique des Cavernicoles pris en bloc; car les faunes et les flores souterraines sont des faunes et des flores dérivées, formées par une agglomération d'êtres absolument différents, dont l'origine, l'âge, l'ancienneté d'immigration sont très divers. On sera donc réduit à faire des chorologies spéciales pour chaque groupe homogène, ce qui ne sera pas moins intéressant." (E. GH. RACOVIȚĂ, 1907, p. 459).

The genus *Mesoniscus* represents such a "homogeneous group": it is a morphologically well-defined group and clearly apart from the other groups of terrestrial isopods. Moreover, it has only a small number of species with the distribution strictly limited to the alpino-carpathic chain and, as such, particularly interesting from a biogeographical point of view.

2. SHORT CHARACTERIZATION OF THE GENUS *MESONISCUS* CARL, 1906

Completely depigmented body surface covered by numerous tubercles. No eyes. On the head, the tubercles have an irregular disposition, while on the pereion and pleon they form more or less regular transversal rows. The vertex is separated from the frons by a distinct frontal edge, slightly curved toward the posterior part. Antenna without squama. Antennar flagellum has up to eight articles. The antennae articles 2–5 present small tubercles with short hairs. Excepting the last 2–3 articles, all the antennar flagellum articles present distally a crown of hairs; articles 2–4 with a transversal row of sensitive rods. Antennula with two very wide basal articles and the terminal article reduced to a small sclerite with aestetascas.

Inner endite of the maxillule has 2 penicilli, the third one replaced by a terminal lobe with hairs. Maxilipeds have a wide truncated endite and a palpus of four articles. Maxilipedal segment completely fused with the cephalon. Head lacking the occipital furrow.

Elongated and narrow stomach; the superolateralia present fine hairs and a tooth directed toward the median part, on the ventral side there is a caudal row of tubercles; superomedianum elongated and narrowed in the middle. Superolateralia with