

## Two new Malagasy species of genus *Piper* L. (Piperaceae), *Piper malgassicum* and *Piper tsarasotrae*, and their phylogenetic position

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**Abstract:** Here we describe two new species of genus *Piper* L. from Madagascar: *Piper malgassicum* and *Piper tsarasotrae*, the species names referring to the currently known distribution areas. These two species contribute, at least in part, to the production of local voatsiperifery pepper, probably mixed together with *P. borbonense*, and are therefore economically relevant as spices. We used a selected set of characters (those more easily observable on herbarium samples) for principal component analysis to assess the relative distance between the species, including the analysis of the autochthonous species of *Piper* known from Africa and Madagascar. In order to check the identity and assess the phylogenetic position of the two species, we also sequenced the chloroplast gene *ndhF*, the *trnL* intron, and the nuclear gene *G3pdh*. On the basis of these results we show here the relationships between these two new *Piper* taxa and the most closely related species within the genus (excluding *P. heimii* and *P. pachyphyllum*, for which only morphological characters were available).

**Key words:** DNA sequencing, Madagascar, principal component analysis, *Piper*, *Piper malgassicum*, *Piper tsarasotrae*, Piperaceae

### 1. Introduction

Most recently, treatments of the pantropical genus *Piper* L. (Piperaceae) included more than 2000 species (Quijano-Abril et al., 2006). The phylogenetic position of *Piper* L. and of family Piperaceae was inserted within the complex basal group of dicots termed “paleoherbs” (Loconte and Stevenson, 1991). More recently, APG IV (Angiosperm Phylogeny Group et al., 2016) inserted Piperaceae in order Piperales, nested within Magnoliids.

The distribution of *Piper* is pantropical and the genus develops highly variable growth forms and biomechanical organization (Isnard et al., 2012). The highest number of species can be found in the Americas, where 500 species were listed earlier (Burger, 1972; Tebbs, 1993), which then increased to at least 1100 (Jaramillo et al., 2008) and most recently up to 1804 (Ulloa Ulloa et al., 2017).

The exact number of *Piper* species and their exact distribution is not easy to ascertain, particularly due to the high number of taxa, some of which are difficult to distinguish from one another, resulting in many synonyms (Suwanphakdee et al., 2016). Furthermore, some species are widespread, such as *P. umbellatum*, while others, actively cultivated, escaped by accident and may have been naturalized, such as *P. auritum*, *P. nigrum*, or

*P. methysticum* (Smith et al., 2008). Most species show a restricted distribution area (Marquis, 2004; Quijano-Abril et al., 2006). New species were also recently described from old herbarium collections (Görts-Van Rijn and Callejas Posada, 2005).

Only two endemic species are currently known for the African continent: *P. guineense* and *P. capense*. *Piper guineense* is a dioecious vine, relatively similar to the majority of southwestern Asian species, whereas *P. capense* is a shrub with bisexual flowers, hence resembling many species of the American continents (Smith et al., 2008). The knowledge of the genus in Madagascar is far from complete. Currently, *P. heimii* C.DC. and *P. pachyphyllum* Baker are indicated for the island, while *P. borbonense* (Miq.) C.DC. was described for the island called at that time Île Bourbon, currently La Reunion (Weil et al., 2017), belonging to the Mascarene Islands, 600 km east of Madagascar. Its presence in Madagascar is a matter of debate, even if De Candolle (1923, 1869) had assigned some samples from Madagascar and Mauritius to this species (see Appendix 1 about herbarium samples from the site <http://www.caryologia.unifi.it/tjb/Appendix1.pdf>). However, this species is cultivated, which makes it more difficult to assess its natural distribution.

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Here we describe two new species of *Piper* L. from Madagascar on the basis of their morphology, supported by molecular data. Both species are mixed with *P. borbonense* in the so-called high-quality spice voatsiperifery pepper.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Morphological characters analysis and PCA

Herbarium samples were prepared, from which the type specimens were chosen (see Appendix 1 with herbarium samples saved at the permanent link <http://www.caryologia.unifi.it/tjb/Appendix1.pdf>). A number of characters were observed and measured (where necessary) with a stereomicroscope. The herbarium samples were stored by the Tropical Herbarium of Florence (FT, Centro Studi Erbario Tropicale, Università degli Studi di Firenze).

Twenty-one characters (those that showed variation) were coded in a matrix (Table 1) and used as input for the principal component analysis (PCA) with the software PAST 3.16 (Hammer et al., 2001).

### 2.2. Anatomical characters

Inflorescence stems were cut with a blade, stained with 1% phloroglucinol (w/v) in 12% HCl for 5 min, and observed with a bright field light microscope to stain lignin (as in Mosti et al. 2012).

### 2.3. DNA extraction

For the DNA extraction, leaf samples were collected from the tropical forest of Vohiday (samples PNsv1–10, Table 2) and from the Tsarasotra area (samples PNst1–10, Table 2). Plant tissue samples were conserved and transported inside 20-mL plastic tubes filled with 96% ethanol (Murray and Pitas, 1996; Bressan et al., 2014).

For DNA extraction, 40 mg of dry leaf sample was placed into a 2-mL tube with tungsten carbide beads, frozen in liquid nitrogen, and finely ground in a tissue homogenizer (Tissue Lyser, QIAGEN). DNA was extracted using an Invisorb Spin Plant Mini Kit (Strattec Molecular). Amplification of the *trnL* intron and the low-copy nuclear gene *G3pdh* followed the protocols of Taberlet et al. (1991) and Strand et al. (1997), respectively. A set of four primer pairs were designed using the chloroplast genome sequence of *Piper kadsura* (GenBank: KT223569.1) to cover the entire *ndhF* gene.

The InstAclone PCR Cloning Kit was used to clone *G3pdh* (Thermo Scientific). Ten samples for each provenience were amplified using universal primers GPD9R2 and GPD9R4 (Olsen and Schaal, 1999). Up to 15 colonies for a single cloned sample were amplified using M13 primers. PCR products were purified using

**Table 1.** Morphological characters obtained from herbarium samples coded for principal component analysis. Characters used in the table and codification of character states: 1) stem nodes: swollen = 1; not swollen = 0; 2) habitat: arid forest = 1; humid forest = 1; shady forest = 0; 3) leaf shape: lance-ovate = 1; ovate = 0; cordate = 2; 4) leaves of the low part of the stem: presence of cordate leaves = 0; no presence of cordate leaves = 1; 5) leaf length in cm: minimum 6 cm = 1; minimum 6.5 = 0; 6) maximal leaf length in cm: less than 10 = 0; more than 10 = 1; 7) minimal leaf width in cm: less than 3 = 0; more = 1; 8) maximal leaf width in cm: less than 6.5 = 0; more = 1; 9) leaf apex: not acuminate = 0; acuminate = 1; 10) leaf base: unequal narrowly cuneate = 0; unequal cuneate = 1; cordate = 2; 11) leaves: alternate = 0; nonalternate = 1; 12) leaf petiole: max. length  $\leq 2.5$  = 0; more = 1; 13) petiole minimal length in cm: <1 cm = 0; more or equal than 1 = 1; 14) leaf nerves: palmate = 0; pinnate = 1; 15) minimum number of stigmas: 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4 = 4; 16) flower color: red = 1; not red = 0; 17) flower spike dimension: max. length less than 5 = 0; more = 1; 18) fruit spike dimension in cm: maximum less than 4 cm = 0; more than 4 = 1; 19) flower spikes opposite to leaves: yes = 0; no = 1; 20) dioecy: dioecious = 0; not dioecious = 1; 21) growth form: liana = 0; shrub = 1; 22) vegetative dimension in m: more than 6 = 0; up to 6 = 1. The interrogative mark “?” means either that the character is variable in the species or that the character state is not known. Characters obtained through direct measurements for the first two species; from Verdcourt (1996) for species 3 and 4; De Candolle (1869) for species 5; De Candolle (1911, C. DC. 1911. Notul. Syst. (Paris) 2: 51) for species 6; Baker (1885, Baker JG, Further contributions to the Flora of Central Madagascar - Second and final part. Journal of the Linnean Society, Botany 21: 436) for species 7; and Blume (1826, Blume CL, 1826 Monographie der Oost-indische Pipersorten/diir. Verh. Batav. Genootsch. Kunst. 11: 214, f. 26) for species 8. Botanical nomenclature after Simpson (2010).

Ref.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<i>tsarasotrae</i>	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	?	0	?	?	0	0	0
<i>malgassicum</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	?	1	?	?	0	1	1
<i>nigrum</i>	0	1	0	?	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	?	1	?	?	1	1	1
<i>guineense</i>	?	0	0	?	1	1	0	1	1	?	0	1	0	0	3	?	0	1	Yes	0	0	0
<i>borbonense</i>	?	0	0	?	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	3	?	?	?	?	1	0	0
<i>heimii</i>	?	?	1	?	0	1	1	0	?	0	0	0	0	1	4	?	0	?	?	0	?	?
<i>pachyphyllum</i>	?	?	0	?	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	?	?	?	Yes	?	1
<i>caninum</i>	?	1	2	?	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	?	2		0	?	?	?	?	?

**Table 2.** Geographical coordinates of the samples collected for DNA extraction. GenBank accession numbers of the corresponding *G3pdh*, *trnL*, and *ndhF* are reported on the right side of each accession. All the samples of *P. tsarasotrae* come from the locality Tsarasotra, Ambositra region (Madagascar), while all the samples of *P. malgassicum* come from the Vohiday forest, Ambositra region (Madagascar). Latitude and longitude of collection places are indicated underneath the species name.

<i>P. tsarasotrae</i> (Tsarasotra)		GenBank <i>G3pdh</i>	GenBank <i>trnL</i>	GenBank <i>ndhF</i>	<i>P. malgassicum</i> (Vohiday)		GenBank <i>G3pdh</i>	GenBank <i>trnL</i>	GenBank <i>ndhF</i>
PNSt1	20°26.716'S, 47°11.157'E	MH234634	MH234638	MH234636	PNSv1	20°31.899'S, 47°27.492'E	MH234633	MH234637	MH234635
PNSt2	20°27.146'S, 47°10.948'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv2	20°32.278'S, 47°35.298'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt3	20°27.150'S, 47°10.961'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv3	20°32.310'S, 47°35.281'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt4	20°27.165'S, 47°10.999'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv4	20°32.367'S, 47°29.198'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt5	20°27.165'S, 47°10.999'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv5	20°32.615'S, 47°35.498'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt6	20°27.169'S, 47°10.993'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv6	20°32.661'S, 47°35.301'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt7	20°27.941'S, 47°11.401'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv7	20°32.704'S, 47°35.146'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt8	20°27.941'S, 47°11.401'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv8	20°32.896'S, 47°27.492'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt9	20°95.647'S, 47°11.456'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv9	20°32.963'S, 47°35.403'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable
PNSt10	20°98.747'S, 47°11.392'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable	PNSv10	20°45.224'S, 47°28.428'E	Not variable	Not variable	Not variable

the QIAquick PCR Purification Kit (QIAGEN) and sent to the University of Florence's internal sequencing service, CIBIACI. Manual correction and assembly of the sequences was performed using software programs Multaline (Corpet, 1988) and MEGA7 (Kumar et al., 2016).

The new DNA sequences produced during our investigation were deposited in GenBank (GenBank accession numbers are indicated in Table 2).

#### 2.4. Phylogenetic analysis

Together with the new sequences produced here, other sequences used are available in GenBank, more specifically those of genus *Piper* used by Smith et al. (2008). We used one species of *Peperomia* (*Peperomia pellucida*) and *Houttuynia cordata* as outgroups on the basis of phylogenetic analysis of Piperaceae by Jaramillo and Manos (2001) and Wanke et al. (2007) showing that *Peperomia* is sister group to *Piper* s.l., while *Houttuynia* is more distantly related to both of these genera (see, for instance, fig. 5 in Wanke et al., 2007). Optimal multiple alignment was obtained with

CLUSTALW 1.81 (Thompson et al., 1994). The matrices for each of the three gene sequences employed were combined with Python (Python version 2.6.4; Biopython 1.57) program combinex2\_0.py, written by Papini (Lewke Bandara et al., 2013; Simeone et al., 2016), released under GPL license and available at [www.unifi.it/caryologia/PapiniPrograms.html](http://www.unifi.it/caryologia/PapiniPrograms.html).

A maximum likelihood (Felsenstein, 1981) search was done by preliminarily using MrMODELTEST 2.0 (Nylander, 2004) to evaluate the best likelihood model on the basis of the Akaike information criterion (Akaike, 1974). The model was used as settings for Bayesian inference with the program MrBayes 3.4b4 (Huelsenbeck and Ronquist, 2001; Ronquist et al., 2012). A maximum likelihood phylogenetic analysis was done with RaxML (Stamatakis et al., 2012) and the resulting trees were edited with Figtree (Rambaut, 2009). We mapped the support on the tree branches with the results of the Bayesian phylogenetic analysis as follows: after the 'burn-in' trees were removed from the dataset as in Papini et al. (2007,

2011). The remaining trees were used to produce a 50% majority-rule consensus tree with PAUP, in which the percentage support was considered equivalent to Bayesian posterior probabilities.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Morphological characters analysis and PCA

The characters used for the species description and for comparison were observed and measured with a stereomicroscope on herbarium samples of the two new species and of the most closely related species of *Piper* (images of the samples and original protologues can be found in Appendix 1: herbarium samples). Also in Appendix 1 (<http://www.caryologia.unifi.it/tjb/Appendix1.pdf>), a list with the investigated samples (scanned samples, in the majority of cases) of other species is reported. The characters were coded as numeric states (Table 1) and analyzed with PAST. PCA was based on a set of characters, those most variable and easily observable on herbarium samples. The results of the PCA analysis are shown in Figure 1. The samples from Tsarasotra (from now on, *P. tsarasotrae*) were quite isolated, even if quite close to *P. guineense* and to the samples from Vohiday (from now on, *P. malgassicum*) and *P. heimii* (Figure 1). Figure 1 also shows that *P. pachyphyllum* and *P. borbonense* are relatively close.

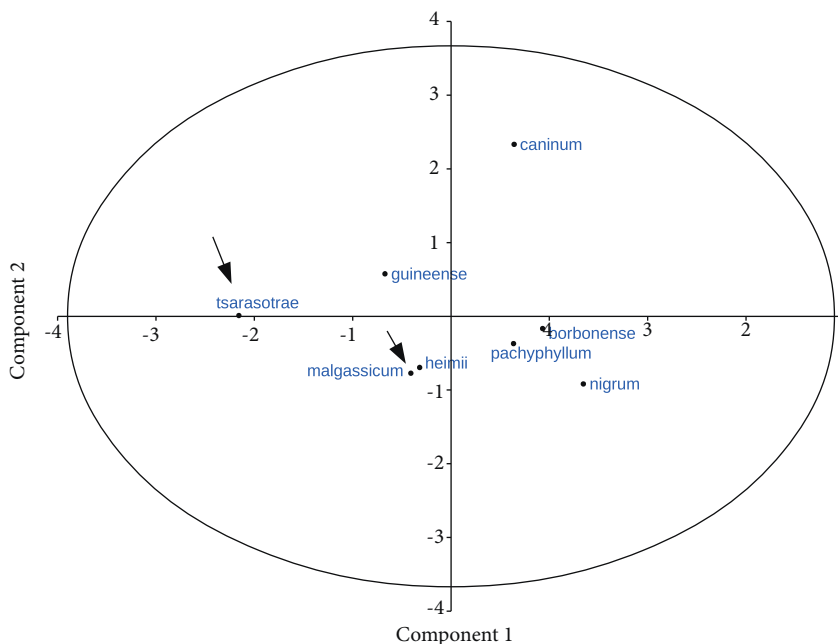
#### 3.2. Phylogenetic analysis

Phylogenetic analysis (Figure 2) showed that *P. malgassicum* and *P. tsarasotrae* are strictly related to each other and to *P. borbonense*, this last clustering together with *P. malgassicum* with 100% Bayesian support (BS). These two species formed a monophyletic group with *P. tsarasotrae* with 70% BS. The sister group of this cluster was a group of 5 sequences of the African species *P. guineense* (85% BS), while the Asian species *P. caninum* formed the sister group to the former species, but with BS of less than 50% (Figure 2).

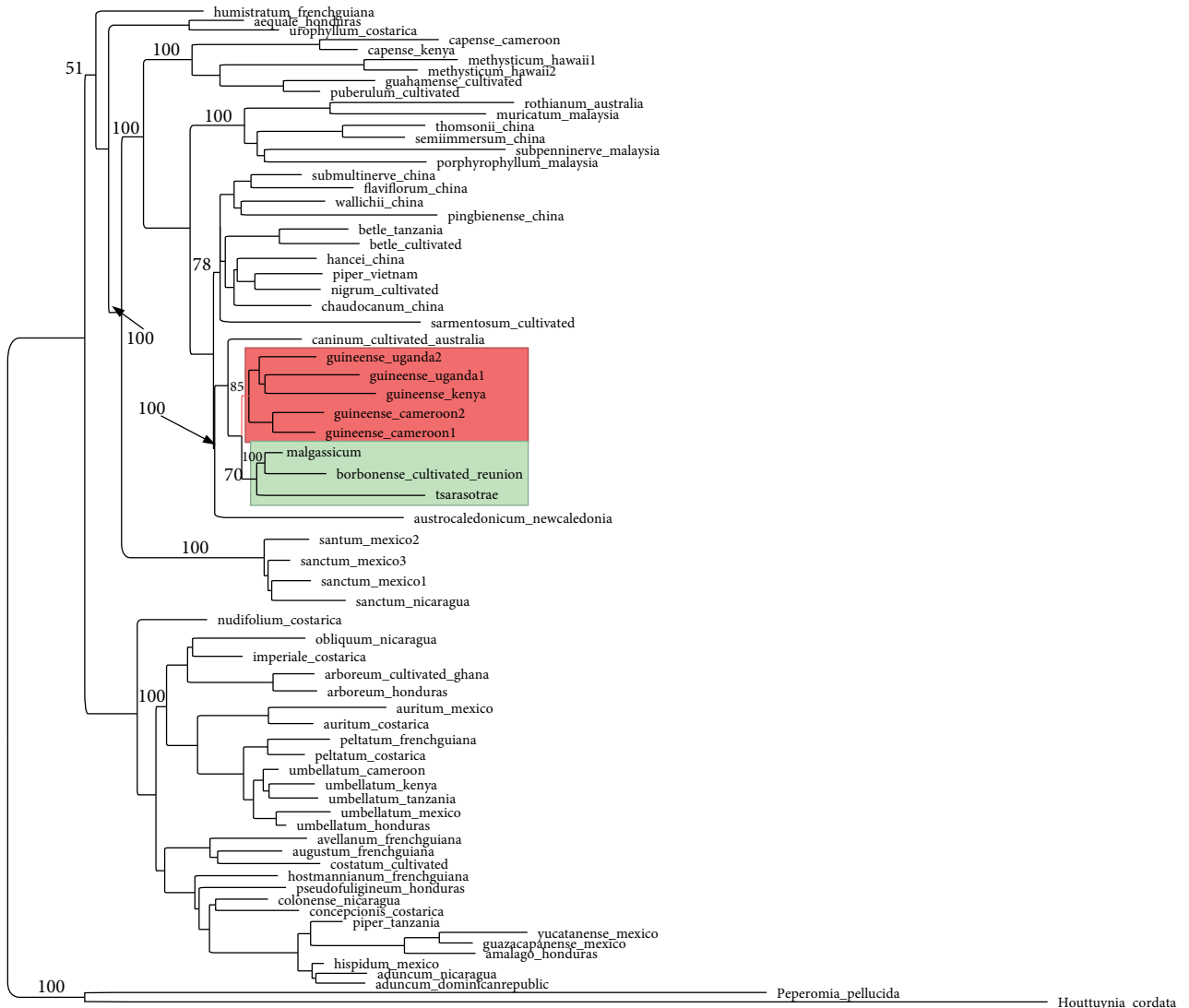
#### 3.3. Microscopy observations

Observation with a stereomicroscope was useful for the study of the micromorphological characters of the flowers necessary for the following description. In *P. tsarasotrae* male flowers, usually three (very rarely four) stamens are present (Figure 3A), with two anthers with lateral apertures (Figure 3A1). In the female flowers, the number of stigmas may vary from 3 to 4. In Figure 3B, a case with three lobed stigmas is shown. In *P. malgassicum* male flowers, stamens are sometimes solitary (Figure 3C) and show two anthers with lateral apertures (Figure 3C1). In female flowers, stigmas are most frequently three, sometimes four, still visible on the enlarged fertilized ovary (Figure 3D). The stigmas are sessile (Figure 3D1).

The observation with a light microscope of cross-sections of the stem showed that in *P. tsarasotrae* two circles



**Figure 1.** PCA analysis of two new species of *Piper* together with more strictly related species. The position of *Piper tsarasotrae* (tsarasotrae in the figure) and *Piper malgassicum* (malgassicum in the figure) are indicated by arrows.



**Figure 2.** Phylogenetic analysis with maximum likelihood based on *trnL* intron, *ndhF*, and *G3pdh* genes. Bayesian support reported on branches. The position of *Piper tsarasotrae* (SPN Tsarasotra in the figure) and *Piper malgassicum* (SPN Vohiday in the figure) are evidenced in green, together with the genetically strictly associated *P. borbonense*. The phylogenetically close *P. guineense* accessions are evidenced in red. All names refer to species of genus *Piper* L. with the exception of *Peperomia pellucida* and *Houlttuynia cordata*, whose names are reported entirely (together with the genus name) with the provenance on the right.

of bundles are present (Figure 4A): a group of larger, more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles (Figure 4B).

Also, in *P. malgassicum*, the inflorescence stem in cross-section showed two circles of bundles (Figure 4C): a group of larger, more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles (Figure 4D). In this species, a continuous layer of sclerenchyma enclosed the smaller bundles (Figure 4C).

### 3.4. Description of the two new species

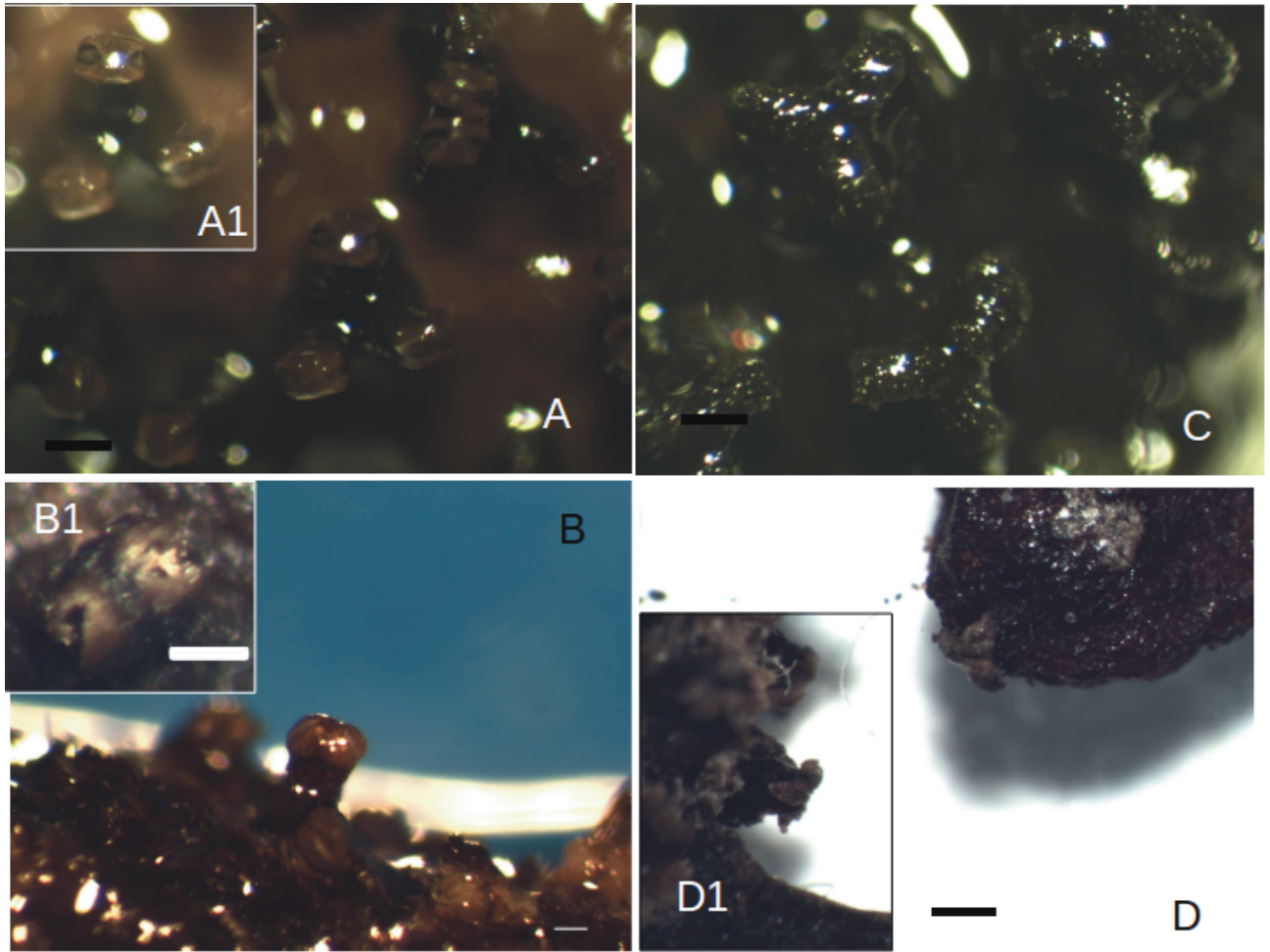
The morphological nomenclature employed here follows that of Simpson (2010).

### *Piper tsarasotrae* Papini, Palchetti, Gori & Rota Nodari sp. nov.

Typus: Collectors Enrico Palchetti and Nicola Gandolfi for samples 1.1.A (female samples, holotype) and 1.1.D (male sample, paratype, as defined in 9.6, ex. 5 of the International Code of Nomenclature for Algae, Fungi, and Plants: McNeill, 2012); locality Tsarasotra, Ambositra region (Madagascar); localization: 20°27'S, 47°10'E. Deposited by Centro Studi Erbario Tropicale, Università degli Studi di Firenze (FT).

Similar to *Piper guineense* Schumach. & Thonn. but differing since the foliar basis is uneven and acuminate





**Figure 3.** Observation with stereomicroscope. *Piper tsarasotrae*: A- A group of 3 stamens is visible. In A1 a detail of the anthers. B- Shape of the stigmas. The surface appears to be covered by appendages. *Piper malgassicum*: C- Stamen in lateral view. C1- Detail of the anthers. D- Stigmas on an already grown ovary. D1- Lateral view of an ovary with three stigmas.

instead of cordate. Dioecious. Shrub, sometimes epilithic and sometimes creeping on the ground, swollen stem nodes. Leaves alternate. Shape oblong ovate, 4.5–8 cm long and only 0.5–2 cm wide. Leaf apex acuminate, while the leaf base is uneven and acuminate. Inflorescence leaf opposite, cylindrical, and erect. Female spikes 4–6 cm long, with a peduncle 1–2 cm long, with small sessile spirally arranged flowers. Single ovary, 4 (rarely 3)-lobed white stigma, covered by short appendages. Male spikes 3–5 cm long, with a peduncle 1–2 cm long and stamens organized in groups of three. Ripe fruit reddish and rounded, 0.4–0.7 mm long, fruit pedicel 0.8–1.2 cm. Each fruit gives off a single rounded-shaped seed. Inflorescence stem in cross-section with two circles of bundles: a group of larger more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles.

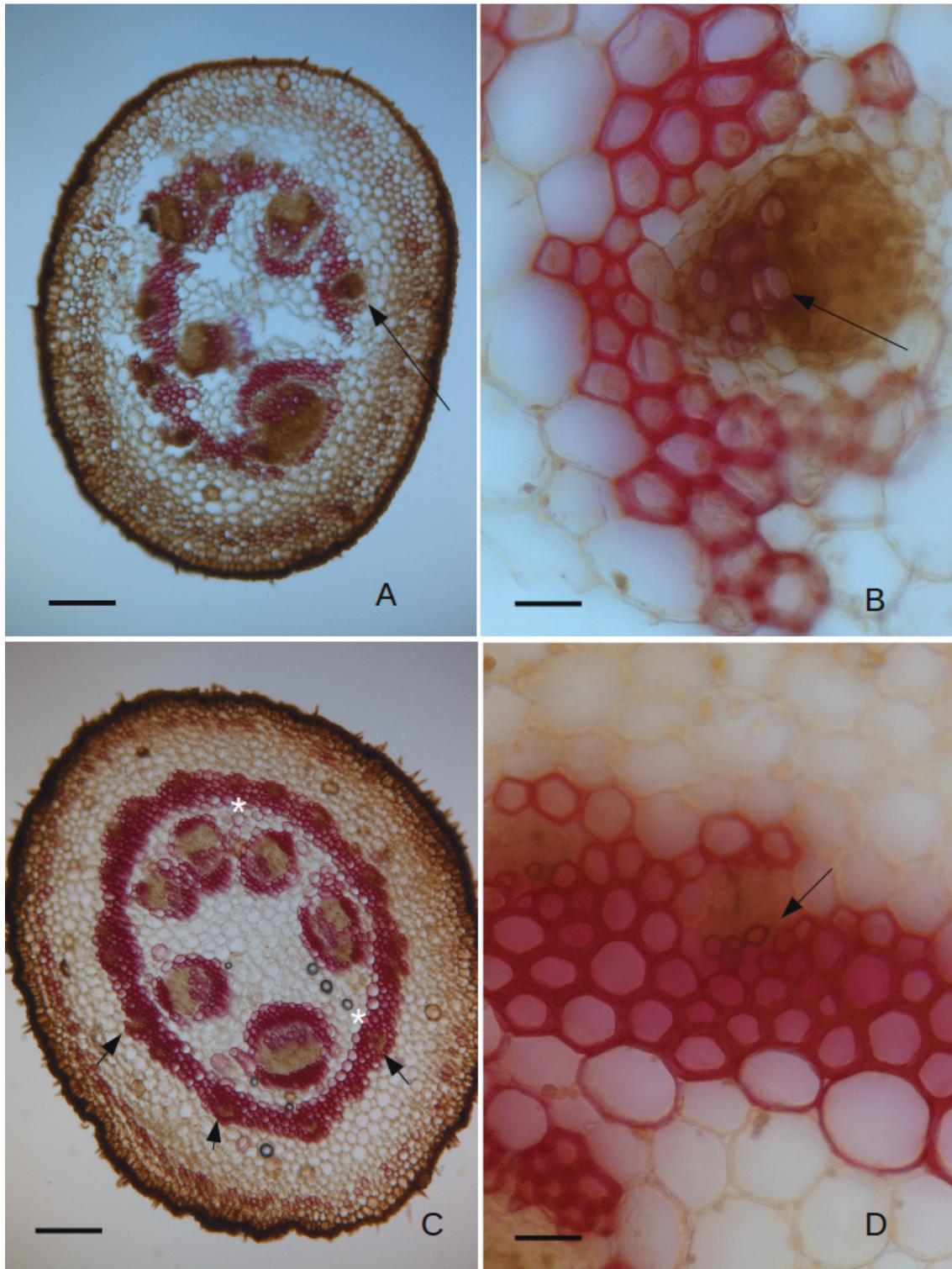
Living in arid forest. The environment of the species is shown in Figures 5A and 5B, while the female cones are shown in Figures 5C and 5D. Fruits in Figure 5E. In Figure

5F, both the inflorescence and the fruits can be observed on the same individual. Usually three (very rarely four) stamens present with two anthers with lateral apertures. Number of stigmas from 3 to 4.

***Piper malgassicum* Papini, Palchetti, Gori & Rota Nodari sp. nov.**

Typus: Collectors Enrico Palchetti and Nicola Gandolfi: PS9a (female sample, holotype) sample and PS8 sample (male sample, designed as paratype, as defined in art. 9.6, ex. 5 of the International Code of Nomenclature for Algae, Fungi, and Plants: McNeill, 2012); locality Vohiday forest, Ambositra region (Madagascar); localization 20°32'S, 47°35'E. Deposited by Centro Studi Erbario Tropicale, Università degli Studi di Firenze (FT).

Similar to *Piper borbonense* (Miq.) C.DC. but differing since its foliar basis is uneven and roundish instead of cordate. Dioecious. Liana climbing up to 10–15 m. Leaves alternate. Shape ovate-elliptic, 6.5–8 cm long and 3–5 cm



**Figure 4.** *Piper tsarasotrae*: Cross-section of the inflorescence stem. A- General aspect of the eustele with a group of larger, more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles. The arrow indicates the smaller bundle of Figure 4B. Bar = 400  $\mu$ m. B- Detail of Figure 4A. One of the smaller bundles. The arrow indicates one of the tracheal elements. Bar = 50  $\mu$ m. *Piper malgassicum*: Cross-section of the inflorescence stem. C- General aspect of the eustele with a group of larger, more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles. The arrows indicate the smaller bundles. The white asterisks indicate a continuous layer of sclerenchymatic cells. Bar = 400  $\mu$ m. D- Detail of Figure 4C. One of the smaller bundles. The arrow indicates one of the tracheal elements. Bar = 50  $\mu$ m.





**Figure 5.** *Piper tsarasotrae*: A- General habitus of the species. B- Typical environment of the species. C- Female cones, with details of the stigmas. D- Position of the female cones on the female plant. E- Ripe fruits. F- Both female inflorescence and fruits at different levels of ripeness can be observed on the same individual.



wide. Presence of adventitious roots for climbing at the nodes. Heterophylly: the lower part of the stem showing cordate leaves. Leaf apex acuminate, while the leaf base is uneven and rounded. Inflorescence leaf opposite, cylindrical and erect. Female spikes 3–8 cm long, with a peduncle 1–2 cm long, with small sessile spirally arranged flowers. Single ovary, 3–4-lobed white stigma. Male spikes 6–10 cm long, with a peduncle 2–3 cm long and stamens organized mainly in groups of two. Ripe fruit reddish and oval, 0.4 cm long, fruit pedicel 0.8–1.2 cm. Each fruit gives off a single rounded-shaped seed.

In Figure 6A the cordate leaves of the lower part of the stem are shown. Figure 6B shows the collection of the plant's climbing trees up to 10–12 m. Fruits are shown in Figures 6C and 6D. Male inflorescence is shown in Figure 6E and adventitious roots are visible in Figure 6F. Female inflorescence is shown in Figure 7A, fruits in Figure 7B, and number of stigmas in Figure 7C. Stamens sometimes solitary with two anthers with lateral apertures. Stigmas most frequently three, sometimes four, still visible on the enlarged fertilized ovary. Stigmas are sessile. Inflorescence stem in cross-section with two circles of bundles: a group of larger, more internal bundles and an external group of smaller bundles. Continuous layer of sclerenchyma enclosing the smaller bundles. Living in humid forest.

#### 4. Discussion

Morphological results show that the description of *P. tsarasotrae* does not overlap with the description of the other species known to be indigenous to Madagascar, such as *P. heimii* (quite close to *P. malgassicum*) and *P. pachyphyllum*. *Piper heimii* appears to be very close to *P. malgassicum*, but the first has lanceolate-ovate leaves 12.5 cm long according to the protologue, whereas the second has ovate leaves 6.5–8 cm long. However, *P. pachyphyllum* and *P. heimii* have not been recently sampled and should be further investigated.

Phylogenetic analysis of the two new species in the context of a subset of the matrix used by Smith et al. (2008) showed that *P. malgassicum* and *P. tsarasotrae* belong to a clade comprising *P. borbonense*, *P. guineense*, and *P. caninum*. The same clade was also identified by Smith et al. (2008) with higher Bayesian support with respect to our phylogenetic analysis. Possibly, the larger sampling in this group due to the insertion of *P. malgassicum* and *P. tsarasotrae* decreased the robustness (however, considerably high at 85%). The placement in a monophyletic group formed by *P. malgassicum*,

*P. tsarasotrae*, and *P. borbonense* (relatively close to *P. pachyphyllum* in Figure 1) in the phylogenetic analysis is also corroborated by the biogeographical position of these entities, since the first two species are endemic to Madagascar, while *P. borbonense* originates from La Reunion and Mauritius (but is also present in Madagascar according to De Candolle (1923)). The possible presence of *P. borbonense* in Madagascar, not only in cultivated form but also as a spontaneous species, also as possible further component of voatsiperifery pepper, should be ascertained.

The two new entities appear to belong to *Piper* s.s. in the sense of Jaramillo et al. (2008).

*Piper malgassicum* is probably more closely related to *P. borbonense* and *P. heimii* than to *P. tsarasotrae*, even if *P. malgassicum* appears to be wild in Madagascar, while *P. borbonense* may have been introduced on this island for spice production. *Piper tsarasotrae* has a completely different ecological niche (creeping on the soil and on the rocks, sometimes lianous, but on low plants) with respect to *P. malgassicum*, which is a more typical forest lianous species of *Piper*. These three species appear to be phylogenetically related to *P. guineense*, endemic to the African mainland. This genetic affinity was already indicated by Jaramillo et al. (2008) and appears to be more strict between *P. tsarasotrae* and *P. guineense*.

The presence of two circles of vascular bundles in the stem of many *Piper* species was defined as polystelic organization by Isnard et al. (2012) and was considered by these authors as a synapomorphy of the family Piperaceae with the exception of the genus *Verhuellia*. This character was observed in detail, for instance, in some American species such as *P. amalago* L. (Dos Santos et al., 2015), in which a continuous layer of sclerenchyma was also described, as in *P. malgassicum*. This scheme is typical of the investigated species of *Piper* (Dos Santos et al., 2015), but *P. tsarasotrae* shows some difference, since the sclerenchymatic layer is not continuous.

In conclusion, the two new species of *Piper* described here concur in the production of some of the locally produced voatsiperifery pepper, probably together with *P. borbonense*, and are hence of economic importance as spices. The association of species morphological identification with DNA sequences could be useful as a bar-coding method for identification of the components of spices and drugs in traditional mixtures (Chaveerach et al., 2006).



**Figure 6.** *Piper malgassicum*: A- Cordate leaves of the lower part of the stem are shown. B- Method of collection of fruits from plants' climbing trees (up to 10–12 m). C- Ripe fruits in the context of the plant. D- Inflorescence with fruits at various stages of ripeness. E- Detail of male inflorescence. F- Adventitious roots growing from nodes.





**Figure 7.** *Piper malgassicum*: A- Female inflorescence on the plant. B- Fruits at various stages of ripeness. C- Female inflorescences at various stages of maturation with a detail of the stigmas.



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