

A NEW SPECIES OF MOMORDICA (CUCURBITACEAE) FROM WEST AFRICA

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SUMMARY

A new *Momordica* species from Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana is described.

Key words: Cucurbitaceae, *Momordica*, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, taxonomy.

On a recent expedition in the forest in Southeast Côte d'Ivoire a specimen of Cucurbitaceae was collected that could not be identified. Back in the herbarium two older specimens of the same species were found identified as *Momordica spec.* The literature on the Cucurbitaceae for West and Central Africa made clear that this species was not yet described (see Jeffrey, 1965: 85; Keraudren, 1967: 192, Pl. 2; 1975: 33).

The new species belongs to a group of *Momordica* species with indehiscent fruits with a thin woody fruit wall and abundant, more or less colourless, translucent pulp. The seeds of these species usually have a sculptured testa. These characters, combined with entire leaves, are not seen in other genera in the Cucurbitaceae in this part of Africa. The already known species in this group differ from *M. silvatica* in fruit characters. Some species have almost round fruits with persistent large reflexed calyx lobes on top (*M. cabrae* (Cogn.) C. Jeffrey and *M. calantha* Gilg). Other species have fruits with ridges (*M. parviflora* Cogn.) or with a tuberculate fruit wall (*M. gilgiana* Cogn.).

It is more difficult to compare *M. silvatica* with the possibly related *M. camerounensis* Keraudren, because the fruits of the second species are not known yet. However, while the leaves of both species have more or less the same overall shape, the leaves of *M. camerounensis* are clearly more coriaceous and its midrib and laterals are stronger. Because of this, and the fact that the area of origin of *M. silvatica* is known as a centre of endemism, I am convinced that *M. silvatica* is really a new species.

Momordica silvatica Jongkind, *spec. nov.* — Fig. 1

Liana. Folia ovata, glabra. Flores ignoti. Fructus baccatus, 9–13 cm longus 3.5 cm in diametro. Semina margine crenulata. *Momordica parvifolia* Cogn. affinis. — Typus: *Breteler 7457* (holo WAG; iso BR, K, MO), Côte d'Ivoire, ca. 30 km SE of Yakassé Mé, 25 April 1974.

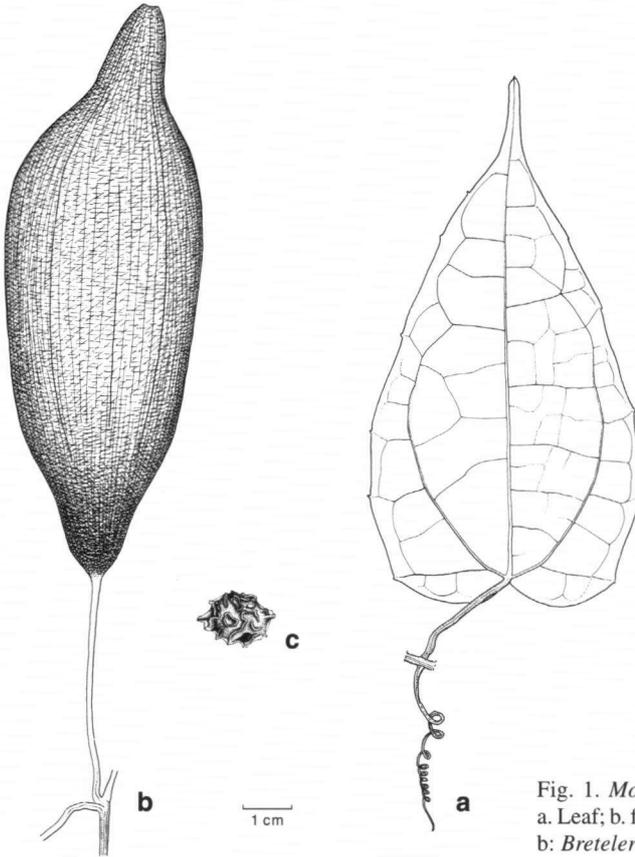


Fig. 1. *Momordica silvatica* Jongkind. a. Leaf; b. fruit; c. seed (a: Breteler 7457; b: Breteler 7444).

Small liana. Leaf-blade ovate, up to 11 cm long and 7 cm wide, cordate at base, acuminate at apex, glabrous, smooth; petiole 2–2.5 cm long. Tendrils single, up to 18 cm long. Flowers not known. Fruit oblong-fusiform, round on cross section, 9–13 cm long and 3–4.5 cm in diameter, smooth or slightly rugose, orange with paler spots and lines, fruit-wall thin woody and white on the inside; pulp greyish, translucent, sweet tasting; stipe 4–5 cm long. Seeds black, c. 18 by 12 by 6 mm, testa with an ornamentation very much resembling the ornamentation of the seeds of *M. parvifolia* Cogn. and *M. cabraei* (Cogn.) C. Jeffrey.

Distribution — SE Côte d'Ivoire and SW Ghana.

Habitat — Wet evergreen forest.

Note — From Ghana *M. silvatica* is at this moment only known to the author from photos of fruits that are unmistakably this species. These photos are made by W. Hawthorne in the middle of Boi Tano FR (Hawthorne & Gyakari W200B161 in his private collection in Oxford, UK).

Additional specimens examined:

CÔTE D'IVOIRE. Near Maféré, 23 April 1974, Breteler 7444 (WAG); Forêt Classée de la Yaya, 27 Nov. 1997, Jongkind & Assi-Yapo 4087 (WAG).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work resulting in this publication was carried out in the context of the ECOSYN project, a research project on plant biodiversity and management of West African forests. This project is funded by the European Community (CEC-DG Development Action Plan).

We are grateful to Marjolein Spitteler for preparing the illustration.

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