

ON THE IDENTITY AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF *MARISCUS ANGULARIS*, *M. CHERSINUS*,  
*CYPERUS BULLATUS* AND *C. CAPENSIS* VAR. *POLYANTHEMUS*

In the course of a revision of the taxonomy of the South African species of *Mariscus*, the following type specimens were examined and found to represent one and the same species:

1. *Lugard* 142 (GRA!); *Harbor sub Rogers* 6310 (BOL!; J!): syntypes of *Mariscus chersinus* N. E. Br. in *Kew Bull.* 1921: 300 (1921).

2. *Dinter* 2354 (B!): type of *Cyperus bullatus* Kükenth. in *Reprim nov. Spec. Regni veg.* 29: 198 (1931).

3. *Schlechter* 11683 (B!; G!; Z!): type of *Cyperus capensis* (Steud.) Endl. var. *polyanthemus* Kükenth. in *Pflanzenr.* 101, 4, 20: 540 (1936).

The earliest name is *Mariscus chersinus* N. E. Br (1921) and therefore it is the correct name to use for this taxon. The synonymy is as follows:

***Mariscus chersinus* N. E. Br.**

*Cyperus bullatus* Kükenth. in *Reprim nov. Spec. Regni veg.* 29: 198 (1931).

*C. chersinus* (N. E. Br.) Kükenth. in *Pflanzenr.* l.c. p. 525 (1936).

*C. capensis* (Steud.) Endl. var. *polyanthemus* Kükenth. l.c. p. 540.

*Mariscus bullatus* (Kükenth.) Podlech in *Mitt. bot. Stsamml., Münch.* 3: 523 (1960).

It is surprising that Kükenthal maintained *C. chersinus*, *C. bullatus* and *C. capensis* var. *polyanthemus* as three distinct taxa. His recognition of spurious dif-



FIG. 13.—*Mariscus chersinus*. Portion of a mature umbel of Vorster 2637, from Sihangwane in northern Natal. Scale = 50 mm.

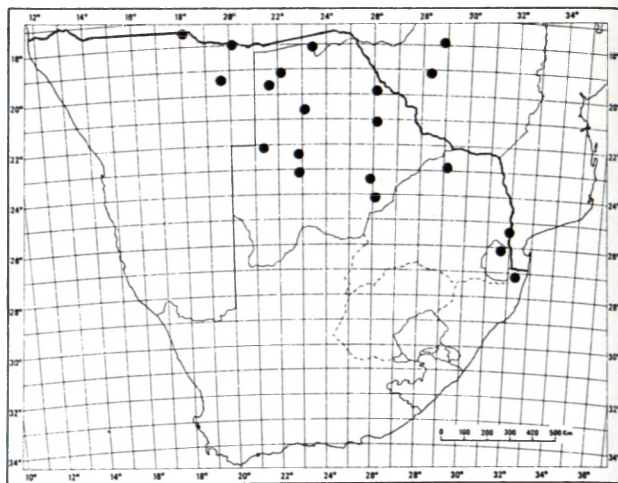


FIG. 14.—*Mariscus chersinus*. Known geographical distribution.

ferences was clearly influenced by the apparently disjoint geographical distribution of these taxa. Kükenthal placed *M. chersinus* (as *Cyperus chersinus*) in *Cyperus* sect. *Umbellati*, whereas *C. bullatus* and *C. capensis* var. *polyanthemus* were placed (correctly) in sect. *Bulbocaulis*. The type collection of *C. capensis* var. *polyanthemus* is immature, so that it is not surprising that he grouped it under *C. capensis* rather than under *C. bullatus*. However, he distinguished *C. bullatus* from *C. capensis* on the grounds of subterete versus trigonous mature spikelets, but this distinction breaks down as the type of *C. bullatus* has distinctly trigonous spikelets. In fact, this species shows remarkably little morphological variation through its wide distribution range.

Recent collections in northern Transvaal have filled in gaps in the known distribution range, and it is now clear that *M. chersinus* is distributed from the Caprivi area, throughout central Botswana, southern Zimbabwe, northern Transvaal, southern Mozambique to northern Natal (Fig. 13), practically reaching the Indian Ocean coast (Fig. 14). Up to now it has only been found in tall, open savanna on deep, loose sand.

The type specimen of *M. angularis* Turrill [Schonland 3848 (GRA, holo.!)] is a typical example of *M. macrocarpus* Kunth with several flowers to a spikelet. It falls in the subgenus *Umbellati* on account of its spherical, woody base. It is difficult to understand how Kükenthal could associate this specimen with *M. chersinus* (as *Cyperus chersinus* var. *angularis*), as that species has 1-flowered spikelets and a lanceolate pseudo-bulb, and was at that stage known only from hundreds of kilometres away in Botswana.