

POACEAE

A NEW COMBINATION IN *ERIOCHLOA*

***Eriochloa meyerana* (Nees) Pilg. subsp. grandiglumis** (Stent & Rattray) Gibbs Russell, comb. et stat. nov.

Panicum meyeranum Nees, Fl. Afr. Austr. 32 (1841), as *meyerianum*. — var. *grandiglume* Stent & Rattray in Proc. Trans. Rhod. scient. Ass. 32: 28 (1933), as *grandeglume*.

Eriochloa meyerana (Nees) Pilg. in Natürl PflFam. ed. 2, 143: 56 (1940), as *meyeriana*.

In 1841 Nees described *Panicum meyeranum* which Pilger transferred to *Eriochloa* in 1940. I am in agreement with this decision, which is also supported by Clayton [Kew Bull. 30,1 : 107 (1975)], since the species is obviously more closely allied to *Eriochloa* than to *Panicum*, in spite of the presence of a lower glume, a character not occurring in any other *Eriochloa*.

In *Eriochloa* there is a bead-like swelling at the base of the spikelet which is the result of the fusion of the lower glume and the lowest rhachilla internode. In *Eriochloa meyerana* the glume projects above this bead as a truncate, inward-turned cuff surrounding the base of the spikelet. However, specimens from Zimbabwe, the Soutpansberg and the Kruger National Park in the Transvaal and from Zululand, have an ovate flat lower glume surmounting the bead that may be $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the spikelet. These specimens are readily recognized, are confined to a discrete region within the range of the species and constitute a taxon which in our opinion merits subspecific rank. This taxon was described as var. *grandiglume* by Stent and Rattray from Zimbabwe in

1933. Clayton (1975) cites this variety in synonymy under *Eriochloa meyerana*. A new combination raising this taxon to subspecific rank is made here.

Clayton (1975) states that the spikelet and inflorescence of *E. meyerana* are intermediate between *Eriochloa* and *Brachiaria mutica* (Forssk.) Stapf and postulates that *E. meyerana* and related elements may be the result of hybridization between *B. mutica* and different local species of *Eriochloa*. However, *B. mutica* is a tropical species which does not occur naturally in southern Africa. Typical *E. meyerana* may have migrated southwards after it originated in the tropical regions. The subspecies *grandiglumis* probably originated further south and if this taxon is also of hybrid origin one should look for the other parent in this area. No obvious parental species, however, presents itself. Because the subspecies *grandiglumis* is consistently more robust than the typical subspecies, it may be that it is simply a polyploid of *E. meyerana* subsp. *meyerana*. Cytological investigation may throw more light on this possibility.

Selected specimens:

TRANSVAAL.—2231 (Pafuri): Soutpansberg (–CA), Codd 5421 (PRE). 2331 (Komatipoort): Kruger National Park (–DD), Coetzee 7028 (PRE).

NATAL.—2632 (Bela Vista): Maputaland (–DD), Maputaland Expedition s.n. (PRE). 2831 (Nkandla): Hlabisa, Zululand (–BB), Ward 2100 (PRE).