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Biology and postembryonic development of *Ommatissus binotatus* Fieber, a pest of the Dwarf Palm in Sicily

(Insecta, Homoptera, Auchenorrhyncha, Tropiduchidae)

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The five immature stages of *Ommatissus binotatus* Fieber are described and illustrated. The main characters that allow us to easily distinguish the various stages are emphasized. Moreover, data are given on the biology of this species and on the phytopathological aspects resulting from the activity of this tropiduchid on the host plant.

O. binotatus, in Sicily, is a monophagous species on *Chamaerops humilis* L. It is univoltine and overwinters in the egg stage.

The distinctive characters between the fifth instar nymphs of *Ommatissus lofoensis* Muir and *Ommatissus binotatus* Fieber are also made evident.

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Introduction

Chamaerops humilis L., commonly called "dwarf palm" because of its reduced size, is the only palm native to Europe. This species, found in the western stenomediterranean region, is typical of the mediterranean woodland and prefers dry, sandy and rocky biotopes. In Italy, it characterizes, together with other essences such as *Olea europea* var. *sylvestris* Brot., *Ceratonia siliqua* L. and *Myrtus* sp., the vegetation belt defined as "thermomediterranean".

From an economic point of view, the market of *C. humilis*, in Italy, seems to be thriving, even though, unfortunately, precise data are missing both on the number of plants sold and on the business connected to this plant. However, it is in high demand not only as an ornamental plant particularly suitable for embellishing gardens and parks, but also as foliage, used mostly in floral decorations. In the past century, the leaves were used even to make brooms and mats, or as "vegetable hair" to stuff sofas and armchairs. Today it is no longer used for this purpose but there has been emphasis on the sale of leaves for ornamental reasons, directed mostly toward Central and Northern Europe.

Two species of Auchenorrhyncha, both belonging to the family Tropiduchidae and the genus *Ommatissus* Fieber (*O. binotatus* Fieber and *O. magribus* Asche & Wilson) are associated with the dwarf palm.

The genus *Ommatissus* includes 12 species widespread in the Oriental, Afrotropical and Palearctic Regions. Among these, four are known from the Oriental Region: *Ommatissus bimaculatus* Muir from northern India and Pakistan; *Ommatissus chinsanensis* Muir from China and Hong Kong; *Ommatissus lofoensis* Muir from southern China, Japan and Korea, and *Ommatissus vietnamicus* Asche & Wilson