



Drawing the line: the problems of termites and superorganismality

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Termites have always held an uncertain position among social insects: not Hymenoptera and not haplo-diploid. Many of the classical explanations for the evolution of sociality in Hymenoptera are hard to apply to termites as social cockroaches. Here, I discuss the evolution of eusociality and superorganismality in the group, and highlight the problem of soldier, worker and pseudergate ("false worker") evolution. As all termites have either a true worker or a true soldier caste, is every termite colony a superorganism? More generally, are we losing a broader perspective by concentrating so much on the worker caste? In order to explore this I discuss the wider biotic occurrence of superorganism-like organisms and the processes that may have given rise to them.