A new species of *Paeonodes* (Therodamasidae, Cyclopoida), a parasitic copepod of the fish *Tilapia melanotheron* from the Sakumo-lagoon, Ghana, Africa

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**ABSTRACT**

A new species of the genus *Paeonodes* Wilson, 1944 (Therodamasidae, Cyclopoida, Copepoda), *P. lagunaris*, is described from *Tilapia melanotheron* Rüppel, 1852, of the Sakumo-lagoon, Ghana, Africa. The new species is compared with the hitherto known two species of the genus *Paeonodes* and the relationship of the genus with euryhaline waters is discussed.

**INTRODUCTION**

A collection of parasitic copepods, recently received from Mr. D. Pauly, Fishery Research Institute, Kiel, Germany, contained specimens of special interest.

The collector found the parasites during his study of the ecology, food and feeding habits of *Tilapia melanotheron*, Rüppel, 1852, *Sarotherodon melanotheron*, according to the latest systematical review (Trewavas, 1973), in the Sakumo-lagoon (Ghana, near Accra, Africa) in 1971 and passed on the material to me for identification. The parasites were buried deeply with a long slender neck in the soft tissues inside the mouth of the fishes and were more or less encapsulated by the host connective tissue. Only a small ellipsoidal part and the ovisacs were seen protruding outside in the host’s buccal cavity (fig. 1). Further study revealed that the specimens were distinct from the known African parasitic copepods occurring on cichlid and other fishes. Even an investigation of parasitic Crustacea in an adjoining lagoon (Paperna, 1969) did not mention the occurrence of this parasite. Their morphology indicated that the specimens belong to the Therodamasidae Tripathi, 1960, with similarity to the genus *Paeonodes*. However, no comparable specimens
Measurements have been made in most instances from specimens stained in methyl blue and cleared in a mixture of two parts chloral hydrate, one part carbolic and one part lactic acid; the drawings have been made with the aid of a camera lucida.

**Paeonodes lagunaris** n.sp.

*Description*

Material examined: 10 females, all bearing eggs. The specimens were all from the buccal cavity of *Tilapia melanotheron*, Sakumo-lagoon, Ghana.
Africa. Overall length, excluding egg sacs, 4.69—6.84 mm. General form as in fig. 2. Thorax consisting of a very elongated and slender neck (3.4 — 5.5 mm × 0.19 — 0.21 mm), sharply widening into a swollen trunk; neck and trunk without any sign of segmentation; neck merged into head with no obvious line of demarcation.

Head (fig. 3) only slightly wider than the neck without lateral processes, anterior median part more or less protruding, carrying an eye spot with, posterior of this, three bluish pigmented spots. Width of head 0.31 — 0.40 mm; first and second antennae situated median frontal; mouthparts minute, 0.09 — 0.17 mm from anterior margin of the head.

Trunk (fig. 7) swollen, barrel shaped with a slight narrowing at the mid-point, slightly flattened dorsoventrally, length 0.92 — 1.34 mm, width 0.67 — 0.87 mm.

First antenna (fig. 4), length 0.06 — 0.09 mm, 5-segmented, armed with setae.

Second antenna (fig. 5), length 0.18 — 0.27 mm, 3-segmented, a firm triangular tooth medially on the inner margin of the second segment; terminal segment forming a stout and slightly curved claw, reaching over the tooth of the second segment; direction of the second antennae hooks toward the midline.

Mouthparts (fig. 6) minute, scale-like labrum present, 0.03 — 0.05 mm; mouth tube approximately 0.03 — 0.07 mm in length, subcylindrical; mandibles (?), maxilla (?) and maxillipeds (?) present as minute broad-based 1 to 2-segmented appendages with shaggy tips; length of mandibles (?), maxilla (?) and maxillipeds (?) between a range of 0.03 — 0.07 mm.

Pereiopods four pairs, biramous; pereiopods 1 — 3 similar in form with 3-segmented rami, on the distal segment 5 or 6 plumose setae; fourth pereiopod with 1-segmented rami, minute, 2 setae per ramus.

First pereiopod situated just behind the mid-point of the trunk, other pereiopods close together near the posterior end of the trunk. First pereiopod: protopodite, oval shaped with a swollen part of outer margin, 0.06 — 0.07 mm × 0.03 — 0.05 mm; connecting bar 0.10 — 0.11 mm; exopod 0.05 — 0.07 mm; endopod 0.05 — 0.07 mm.

Second pereiopod: protopodite 0.07 — 0.08 mm × 0.04 — 0.06 mm; connecting bar 0.09 — 0.10 mm; exopod 0.06 — 0.07 mm; endopod 0.05 — 0.07 mm.

Third pereiopod: protopodite 0.06 — 0.08 mm × 0.04 — 0.05 mm; connecting bar 0.07 — 0.08 mm; exopod 0.05 — 0.07 mm; endopod 0.05 — 0.06 mm.

Fourth pereiopod: protopodite 0.03 — 0.05 mm × 0.03 — 0.05 mm; connecting bar 0.04 — 0.05 mm; exopod 0.02 — 0.03 mm; endopod 0.02 — 0.03 mm.

Genital segment (fig. 9) small, nearly spherical, 0.07 — 0.10 mm; egg sacs attached ventrolaterally about half way along the segment.

Egg sacs cigar-shaped 1.34 — 1.74 mm × 0.34 — 0.54 mm, with numerous eggs in multiseriate rows, diameter of eggs 0.05 — 0.08 mm.

Abdomen (fig. 9) minute, almost hemispherical, 0.07 — 0.12 mm; one
segmented, on ventral surface beset with 4 rows of extremely minute spines, which give a false indication of segmentation; each ramus of caudal rami with 2 setae.

Male: unknown.
TYPE MATERIAL

The measured specimens and specimens still anchored in T. melanotheron are deposited in the Zoological Museum, Amsterdam, reg. no. CO 102.407a (mountings on slides of the holotype), reg. no. 102.408 (paratypes), and reg. no. CO 102.407b respectively.

DISCUSSION

In the review of the Therodamasidae by Hewitt (1969) there are only 3 genera mentioned belonging to this family: Mugilicola Tripathi, Therodamas Kroyer, and Paeonodes Wilson. All the representatives of this family have the characteristics of a long slender neck buried in the host tissue and a more or less swollen trunk. The number of species known of the three genera is very few. Hitherto, specimens of the genera Mugilicola and Therodamas are known from the West Indies, Santa Lucia, Uruguay and India.

The genus Paeonodes is represented only by two species: P. exigus from the fish Verillida grayula May, 1911 (as was traced by Hewitt on a label of the U.S. National Museum enclosed with the type specimen of P. exigus) and P. namaformis from salmonids of New Zealand. The West-African specimens from Tilapia melanotheron, as described in this paper, are therefore not only interesting as a first record for Africa but also as revealing the occurrence of the genus Paeonodes in a locality far from New Zealand and the probable area in which Verillida grayula was caught *). However, the African specimens show sufficient different features to consider them as a separate species. The differences are indicated in table I.

With this new species, 3 species of Paeonodes are known now from three different, widely separated localities.

Reviewing the hitherto known hosts of the Therodamasidae, namely representatives of the Serranidae, Lutianidae and Salmonidae, Trachysurus spp., Mugil spp. and now also Tilapia melanotheron, one can note that these fishes inhabit coastal, esturine or tidal waters or pass such a zone during their migration (salmonids). This suggests that the Therodamasidae are probably linked with this kind of euryhaline waters. The relatively few known genera and species, and their widespread but local occurrence, leads one to assume that the Therodamasidae are relicts of a former widespread marine parasitic

*) Note on Verillida grayula:

I have been unable to find any data about this species, neither in a study of old and new fish systematics, nor with the help of the excellent library of the ichthyological department of the Zoölogisch Museum, Amsterdam. In Bashford Dean, 1917: A bibliography of fishes, Vol. II, The American Museum of Natural History, only one paper by May, 1911, was mentioned, but after checking this work no information or description of Verillida grayula was found. The best approach to the probable host of P. exigus may be therefore to suppose a representative of the Verillida (as is also suggested by Hewitt), which in the new systematics are incorporated in the Lutianidae (snappers). These occur along tropical coasts and include many species that enter or live in tidal estuaries.
Table I. Main differences between the species of the genus *Paeonodes*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>localisation on the host</th>
<th>overall length, excluding egg strings</th>
<th>head</th>
<th>second antenna</th>
<th>trunk</th>
<th>neck/trunk length ratio</th>
<th>structure on neck</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>P. exigus</em></td>
<td>near eye</td>
<td>3.15 mm</td>
<td>with dorso-ventral processes</td>
<td>spine on first and second segment</td>
<td>cylindrical</td>
<td>2.4 : 1</td>
<td>transverse striations on base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>P. nemaformis</em></td>
<td>gills, gill cover, pectoral fins</td>
<td>3.74 mm-4.46 mm</td>
<td>with postero-lateral bilobate processes</td>
<td>spine on first and second segment</td>
<td>pear shaped</td>
<td>2.6 : 1</td>
<td>without striations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>P. lagunaris</em></td>
<td>buccal cavity</td>
<td>4.69 mm-6.84 mm</td>
<td>without lateral processes, only a slightly protruding median part</td>
<td>spine on second segment only</td>
<td>barrel shaped</td>
<td>2.9 : 1 up to 4.8 : 1</td>
<td>without striations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
family, which have persisted by adaptation to the difficult physiological conditions of varying salinities or to fresh water. In these scattered relict areas they evolved to separate species, of which perhaps others may be found in comparable areas of tropical or subtropical coastal waters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Mr. D. Pauly, Fishery Research Institute, Kiel, Germany, for kindly allowing me to study this parasite. I am also much indebted to the kindness of Dr. G. Fryer, of the Freshwater Biological Association, The Ferry House, Ambleside, England, for his advice and for criticism of the manuscript.

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