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A note on the genus *Tocantinsia* (Pisces, Nematognathi, Auchenipteridae)

by

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Abstract

It is argued that the catfish described by MEES (1974) as representing a new genus and a new species of the Auchenipteridae: *Tocantinsia depressa*, is conspecific with *Glanidium piresi* A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO (1920) and that consequently the former is a junior synonym of the latter. However, the species does not belong in the genus *Glanidium*, being sufficiently distinct from all other Auchenipteridae to be retained in the separate genus *Tocantinsia*. Therefore, its correct name is *Tocantinsia piresi* (A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO).

Keywords: **Pisces, Auchenipteridae,** *Tocantinsia.*

The genus *Tocantinsia* was based on four specimens of an auchenipterid catfish from the Rio Tocantins, which did not fit into any known genus, and which I was unable to assign to any known species. Therefore, I described them as representing a new genus and a new species: *Tocantinsia depressa* (cf. MEES, 1974: 108).

Glanidium piresi A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO (1920) was described from a single dry specimen of 49 cm in total length, collected in the Rio São Manuel (Rio Teles Pires). No other material of this species has ever been recorded in the literature, and the type is apparently lost. Thus, when I was preparing a partial revision of the Auchenipteridae, I had to rely solely on the original description and the accompanying illustrations to form an idea of its appearance. Having no new evidence, I left the species in the genus *Glanidium* (cf. MEES, 1974: 101), although even at that time I had some doubt about its generic allocation, particularly as its large size and a six-rayed dorsal fin placed it somewhat apart from other members of the genus.

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As such things happen, soon after the publication of my paper, it struck me that the three plates of *G. piresi* published by A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO showed a remarkable resemblance to *T. depressa*. One of the reasons why this had not been obvious to me from the beginning is that the plates show only the anterior part of the body of *G. piresi*, without the ventral and caudal fins. Also, in the original description, the number of ventral rays is not mentioned, and the caudal fin (deeply forked with lobes of equal length in *T. depressa*), is described as having: "o lóbo inferior mais forte", suggesting an oblique, not an equally forked caudal fin, and there is no further description of this fin. Thus, whereas it became clear to me that *G. piresi* and *T. depressa* resemble each other closely and are apparently congeneric, the question as to whether the two are also conspecific could not be answered without fresh material. In this connexion, the type-localities are sufficiently far apart to make it, a priori, not likely that they are conspecific, yet they are sufficiently close to make it feasible that they are.

Therefore, I was particularly interested when, during a visit to Leiden in the beginning of 1984, Messrs. G. Mendes dos Santos and M. Jegu (of INPA, Manaus) presented me with a rather large specimen of a fish from the Rio Tocantins, which they had, quite correctly, identified as *T. depressa*. By proving that specimens in the Rio Tocantins can also reach a larger size, one of the objections to regarding *T. depressa* as conspecific with *G. piresi* was removed and I am now convinced that *G. piresi* and *T. depressa* are indeed synonymous, the latter being the young of the former. Admittedly, there can be no absolute certainty until either the type-specimen of *G. piresi* is found again, or additional material from its type-locality is obtained.

In my opinion, *Tocantinsia* is a valid genus, so that now the synonymy is as follows:

Genus *Tocantinsia* MEES

Tocantinsia MEES, 1974: 108 – type by original designation *Tocantinsia depressa* MEES = *Glanidium piresi* A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO.

Species *Tocantinsia piresi* (A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO)

Glanidium piresi A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO, 1920: 14, pl. 15 - 17 – Rio S. Manoel.

Tocantinsia depressa MEES, 1974: 108, fig. 30 – Tocantins near Porto National, Goyaz.

Material examined. – One specimen, January 1981, Nacado de Tucurui, Rio Tocantins (leg. INPA, Projeto Tucurui, RMNH no. 29268), standard length 220 mm, total length 278 mm.

Characters. – D I.6, A 11 (ii.9), P I.7, V 7 (i.6), C 15 branched rays (i.7 + 8.i and rudiments). A sturdy-bodied fish; predorsal length 89 mm (2.47 times in standard length), distance from tip of snout to base of ventrals 142 mm (1.55 times in standard length), greatest width of body, measured between the cleithra, 69 mm (3.18 times in standard length), depth of head at the same place 38 mm (0.55 of the width), length of eyes ca. 12 mm, depth of eyes ca. 71/2 mm.

An outstanding feature of the present specimen is its very thick, leathery skin, which entirely conceals the bony structure of skull and postoccipital region, which was so well visible in the type material of *T. depressa* and is also figured for the type of *G. piresi*. The eyes, although large, are completely covered with skin and are therefore inconspicuous.

It is now evident that the type material of *T. depressa* consisted of juvenile specimens. The larger specimen described here has a somewhat more compact, heavier body (as will be apparent from the measurements and proportions given above and compared with those I provided in the description of *T. depressa*); its broad, rounded lower jaw protrudes slightly, as in the figure of *G. piresi*.

CARVALHO & KAWAKAMI (1984) have recorded from the same locality a series of 48 specimens with a maximal standard length of 330 - 350 mm. This would be equivalent to a maximum total length of 420 - 430 mm, which, although still smaller than the type of *G. piresi* (490 mm), comes close to it.

Colours. In a preserved condition, the upper parts are almost uniformly mud-grey. The under parts, in particular the under surface of the head and the belly, are unpigmented, whitish.

Discussion

Normally, I would not regard the correction of the synonymy of a little-known species of fish as being of sufficient importance to merit a separate paper, but apart from the general interest in the present species as the only representative of a quite distinctive genus, there were other reasons for doing so. First, *T. piresi* has recently been found in some numbers in the Rio Tocantins, and a paper on certain aspects of its biology has already be published (CARVALHO & KAWAKAMI 1984); this makes the correction of its nomenclature more urgent. Second, as the author of the synonym *T. depressa*, I want to acknowledge the right of priority of the name given by the great Brazilian zoologist A. de Miranda Ribeiro. He certainly cannot be blamed for having omitted from the description of *G. piresi* certain characters which sixty years later would prove important.

Resumo

É discutido que o siluro descrito por MEES (1974) como representante de um novo gênero e uma nova espécie de Auchenipteridae, *Tocantinsia depressa* é coespecífica de *Glanidium piresi* A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO (1920) e que consequentemente o primeiro é sinônimo júnior do último. Porém as espécies não pertencem ao gênero *Glanidium*, sendo suficientemente distintas de todos os outros Auchenipteridae; daí serem conservadas no gênero separado *Tocantinsia*. Portanto, seu nome correto é *Tocantinsia piresi* (A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO).

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Fig. 1:
Tocantinsia piresi (A. DE MIRANDA RIBEIRO), RMNH no. 29268