MINISTERIE VAN ONDERWIJS, KUNSTEN EN WETENSCHAPPEN

ZOOLOGISCHE MEDEDELINGEN

UITGEGEVEN DOOR HET

RIJKSMUSEUM VAN NATUURLIJKE HISTORIE TE LEIDEN

Deel 40 no. 2 18 februari 1964

# A NOTE ON THE GENUS LIOCRANIUM OGILBY (PISCES, SCORPAENIDAE)

by

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The genus *Liocranium* was established by Ogilby (1903) to contain a new species of scorpion-fish from the east coast of Queensland: *L. praepositum*. The genus remained monotypic until McCulloch (1921) placed *Paracentropogon scorpio* Ogilby in it, a species also described from the Queensland coast. Whitley (1933) did not agree, and transferred *P. scorpio* to a separate new genus *Vadesuma*.

In the meantime Weber (1913) described as *Paracentropogon pleurostigma* and *Paracentropogon cynocephalus* two scorpion-fishes from the East Indies. These two species, however, were not well placed in *Paracentropogon*, and therefore De Beaufort (1949) created the genus *Sibogapistus* for them.

Apart from McCulloch's (1921) remark that: "*Paracentropogon cynocephalus* Weber is perhaps only the young of *L. scorpio*", a remark that has apparently been overlooked by later authors, nobody seems to have made an attempt to identify the species described by Weber with Australian species, and in the latest literature (De Beaufort, 1962) they are kept in *Sibogapistus*, without mention of the genus *Liocranium*.

*Liocranium praepositum* had, since its description, also been recorded from the Northern Territory and Western Australia (Whitley, 1947, 1948, 1954). Recently I noted that specimens from Western Australia differ from Queensland material in markings and perhaps also in having a slightly blunter anterior profile; this difference was verified by direct comparison with the type (Mees, 1964).

Originally I intended to describe the specimens from Western Australia as a new race, but when De Beaufort's (1962) work became available I was

at once struck by the almost perfect agreement between the description and figure of *Sibogapistus pleurostigma* and my supposed new subspecies of *Liocranium praepositum*. Comparison of a specimen from Western Australia with the seven type specimens of *S. pleurostigma* revealed that without any doubt they are the same.

From this it follows that the only difference between *Liocranium praepositum* and *Sibogapistus pleurostigma* is one of markings (see Mees, 1964, pl. 3), the bluntness of the snout being a character of problematical value. As this slight difference is constant in all specimens examined, it deserves expression in nomenclature, but the similarity between the two is such that I regard *pleurostigma* as no more than a subspecies. At present the nominate race has been recorded from the east coast of Queensland only, while *pleurostigma* is known from New Guinea, from between Salawatti and Misol (type locality), the Northern Territory, and the north-west coast of Australia as far south as Exmouth Gulf (Mees, 1964). New Guinea is included on the basis of a specimen of 66 mm standard length from Hollandia Bay, collected on 12 June 1955, and a specimen of 64 mm standard length collected between Merauke and the Bian River on 10 February 1955 (both RMNH). This distribution suggests that the subspecific differentiation took place during the Pleistocene, when the emerged Sahoel Shelf would have separated the two populations.

For reasons given recently (Mees, 1964), I prefer to retain the species described as *Paracentropogon scorpio* in the genus *Liocranium*, and not to split it off in yet another monotypic genus. I have examined the type material of *Paracentropogon cynocephalus* Weber, and found that McCulloch's surmise that it is nothing but the young of *Liocranium scorpio* is doubtless correct. The species has a wide distribution, it is now known from the east coast of Queensland (type locality), New Guinea, the seas round Flores (type locality of *P. cynocephalus*), Singapore (Herre in Herre & Myers, 1937) and Western Australia (Mees, 1964). The New Guinea record is new, it is based on an example of 63 mm standard length collected near Merauke in 1954 (RMNH).

The synonymy is as follows:

## Genus **Liocranium** Ogilby

*Liocranium* Ogilby, Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd 18, 1903, p. 24 — type by original designation *Liocranium praepositum* Ogilby.

*Abcichthys* Whitley, Rec. Aust. Mus. 15, 1927, p. 304 — nomen novum for *Liocranium* Ogilby, allegedly preoccupied by *Liocranum* Koch.

*Vadesuma* Whitley, Rec. Aust. Mus. 19, 1933, p. 94 — type by original designation *Paracentropogon scorpio* Ogilby.

*Sibogapistus* de Beaufort, Copeia, 1949, p. 68 — type by original designation *Paracentropogon cynocephalus* Weber (= *Paracentropogon scorpio* Ogilby).

### Species 1. **Liocranium praepositum** Ogilby

### **Liocranium praepositum praepositum** Ogilby

*Liocranium praepositum* Ogilby, Proc. Roy. Soc. Qd 18, 1903, p. 25 — coast of Queensland.

Distribution: east coast of Queensland.

### **Liocranium praepositum pleurostigma** (Weber)

*Paracentropogon pleurostigma* Weber, Siboga Exp., Fische, 1913, p. 499, fig. 102 — 1° 52′ 5 S.B., 130° 47′. 5 Ö.L. Bei Neu-Guinea.

Distribution. New Guinea; between Misol and Salawatti; north coast of Australia as far west as Exmouth Gulf.

### Species 2. **Liocranium scorpio** (Ogilby)

*Paracentropogon scorpio* Ogilby, New Fish. Qd Coast, 1910, p. 115 — Fourteen miles S.E. of Cape Capricorn, Queensland (original description not available, reference copied from McCulloch, 1921).

*Paracentropogon cynocephalus* Weber, Siboga Exp., Fische, 1913, p. 501, fig. 103 — Molo-Strasse; 8° 30′ S.B., 119° 7′. 5 Ö.L. Flores-See (Specimen marked as type from Molo Strait).

Distribution. East coast of Queensland; New Guinea; seas around Flores; Singapore; Dampier Archipelago, Western Australia.

Before concluding I want to express my indebtedness to the authorities of the Zoölogisch Museum, Amsterdam, for the loan of all the type material of *Paracentropogon cynocephalus* Weber and *P. pleurostigma* Weber.

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