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THE SYSTEMATIC POSITION OF THE CHINESE FISH *MACRONES SINENSIS* BLEEKER (SILUROIDEA)

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With one plate

INTRODUCTION

Fishes of the genus *Macrones* Duméril (= *Mystus* Scopoli), family Bagridae, are mainly distributed from Syria in the north-west, through Pakistan, Ceylon, India, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand and Malaya, to the East Indies. Thirty-eight species have been described in the genus, of which six are reported as occurring in China (Jayaram, 1966: 445). In an earlier communication (Jayaram, 1968: 294) it was surmised that the genus may not be found in China and that the six species described from that country be best left out of Chinese lists, or that they may be placed under the predominantly Chinese genus *Pelteobagrus* Bleeker. Through the kind courtesy and co-operation of Dr. Volker Mahnert, Geneva, Dr. P. Kähnsbauer, Vienna and Dr. M.-L. Bauchot, Paris, it has been possible for the first author to examine the types of some of the Chinese species hitherto referred to *Mystus*. Their generic position and systematic status have been published elsewhere (Jayaram, 1974, 1977). It has been shown that, with the exception of two species, the other three are referable to *Pelteobagrus* and that even these two real *Mystus* species are only relicts, fastly disappearing from China. During the course of the present investigations, the iconotype of *Macrones*

¹⁾ The second author primarily provided some pertinent information while both authors independently came to the same conclusion regarding the status of Bleeker's species.

sinensis Bleeker, preserved in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, was examined. This paper is presumed to settle the identity and the generic and family position of this species.

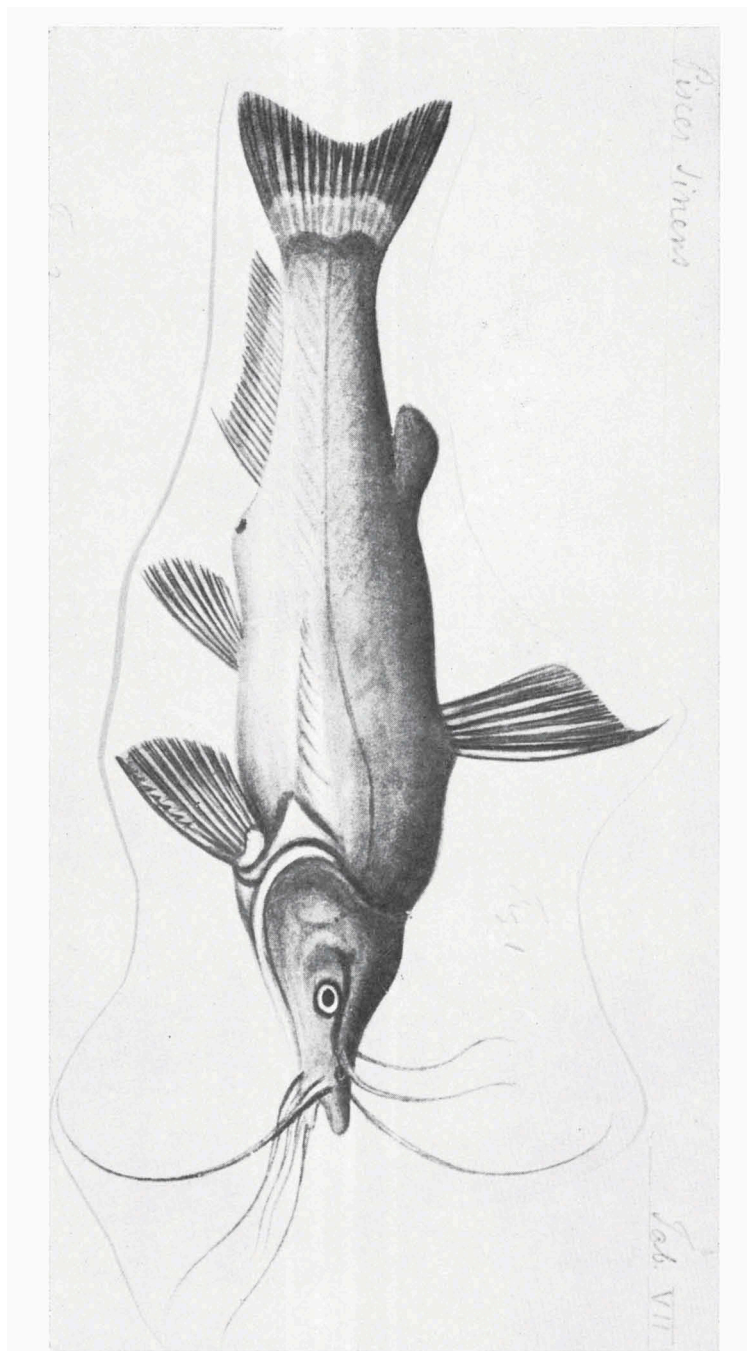
THE SYSTEMATIC POSITION

Bleeker (1873) described *Macrones sinensis* from "China", basing it on a Chinese coloured picture only. The picture was clearly made with some phantasy and is more or less inaccurate especially in details like fin ray numbers etc. The fish was described (p. 153) very briefly, highlighting the salient features such as: head strongly depressed, eye inferior, maxillary barbels longer than head, and bright colour. Evidently Bleeker did not receive any specimen. Peters (1880: 1030), probably independently and not knowing about Bleeker's earlier publication, described a similar fish 280 mm long sent to him by Dr. Gerlach from Hongkong. A new monotypic genus *Cranoglanis* was established by him to accommodate the species *C. sinensis* Peters. The chief features of this fish are the large head, with a depressed snout, uncovered rugose occipital region of the head, pelvic fin with 12-14 rays, a long anal fin with 36-41 rays, edentate palate and a free airbladder. Jayaram (1955: 260) examined three specimens of this species and published illustrations of the fish. It was demonstrated that *Bagrus boudierius* Richardson (1846: 283) is also the same species as the one described by Peters as *C. sinensis* and that therefore the generic type of *Cranoglanis* has the earlier specific name *boudierius*.

While checking the features of *Macrones sinensis* Bleeker, for its generic allocation, it was found that it can not be referred to *Mystus* or *Pelteobagrus* Bleeker in view of the pelvic fins having more than six rays. It also can not be considered as a species of *Rita* because of the four pairs of barbels and the long anal fin. It became obvious that the only species with which it has a close similarity is *Bagrus boudierius* Richardson (= *Cranoglanis boudierius* (Richardson)). The second author also came to such a conclusion while trying to identify the 25 species on the Chinese pictures described by Bleeker (1873). The slight variation in the fin ray counts and features such as the dorsal profile etc. may be ascribed to the defective illustration. For the same reason, not much value should be attached to other slight differences, especially since the general aspect is very convincing. *Macrones sinensis* Bleeker, therefore, is relegated to the synonymy of *Cranoglanis boudierius* (Richardson). *C. boudierius* belongs to family Cranoglanididae, Myers, 1931, closely related to, and evolved from, the Bagridae (see Jayaram, 1955, for further details).

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Photographic reproduction of the Chinese iconotype of *Macrones sinensis* Bleeker
(ca. $\times 4/5$).