

***Dragmaxia anomala* sp.n. (Demospongiae: Halichondrida) from the southwestern Atlantic (Brazil)**

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Abstract

A new species of *Dragmaxia* Hallmann, 1916 is described from the northern sector of the São Paulo state coastline (Brazil), in the Tropical southwestern Atlantic. The new species, *Dragmaxia anomala* sp.n., differs from the other species of the genus, viz. *D. variabilis* (Whitelegge, 1907) and *D. undata* Alvarez *et al.*, 1998, due to its raphides which are not acanthose.

Keywords: Taxonomy, Porifera, sponges, Axinellidae, Brazilian coast, São Paulo, southwestern Atlantic

Introduction

Dragmaxia Hallmann, 1916 is a sponge genus represented by two species only with a disjunct distribution, viz. *D. variabilis* (Whitelegge, 1907; East coast of Australia) and *D. undata* Alvarez *et al.*, 1998 (Caribbean).

The genus is defined by the possession of a plumose skeleton with ascending and dendritically branched bundles of spicules and raphides ornamented by fine spines at terminal ends. *Dragmaxia* is provisionally kept in Axinellidae Carter, 1875 as it lacks a clear plumose or plumoreticulate skeleton. Nevertheless, some of the megascleres are rhabdostyle-like, which resembles a feature present in raspailiid sponges, and the raphides with ornamented ends do not seem to be homologous with those present in the species of *Axinella* Schmidt, 1862 or *Dragmacidon* (Alvarez & Hooper 2002).

Our efforts towards an inventory of the marine sponge fauna of São Paulo State coast (Brazil; e.g. Hajdu *et al.* 1999), yielded a species which is best identified as a new member of *Dragmaxia*. The new species is described below, and forces an amendment of the genus' diagnosis, due to its lack of any kind of ornamentation in the raphides.