

## ***Calathiscus tantillus*, a new genus and new species of scleractinian coral (Scleractinia, Poritidae) from the Gulf of Oman**

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### **Abstract**

*Calathiscus tantillus* **new genus & new species** (Scleractinia, Poritidae) is described from several specimens collected along the north coast of the Sultanate of Oman and Masirah Island. The zooxanthellate genus has a massive growth form, although colonies remain very small (< 40 mm). The skeletal characteristics are intermediate between *Porites* and *Goniopora*, with calices averaging 1.7 mm in diameter. The polyps, fully extended during the day in most specimens, have a long tubular column topped by a wide conical oral disc surrounded by 15–22 tentacles. The characteristics of this new species and genus are discussed in relation to other genera in the family: *Porites*, *Goniopora*, *Stylarea*, *Alveopora* and *Poritipora*.

**Key words:** Coelenterata, Cnidaria, Scleractinia, Poritidae, new species, new genus, Indian Ocean, Gulf of Oman, coral, coral reef

### **Introduction**

Poritid corals form the framework of most coral communities of northern Oman (Sheppard and Salm 1988). Several massive and branching species of *Porites* dominate the upper part of the reef and scattered, sometimes large, colonies of various species of *Goniopora* occupy the lower and the most protected sections of the reef.

Small colonies of an unidentified *Goniopora*-like scleractinian coral, were observed and photographed in the field. Specimens were collected and compared to existing genera and species in this family: *Alveopora*, *Goniopora*, *Stylarea*, *Poritipora* and *Porites*. Because of their characteristic polyp morphology and the unique structure of their skeleton, these specimens were attributed to a new genus and species. This series of coralla form a very distinct, although small, group which has skeletal structures intermediate between *Goniopora* and *Porites*, but polyp aspect similar to that of *Goniopora* and *Alveopora*.