



Tanaidaceans (Crustacea: Malacostraca: Peracarida) from soft-sediment habitats off Israel, Eastern Mediterranean

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Abstract

Tanaidacean material collected by the Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research (IOLR) surveys between 2005 and 2007, in the Levant Sea off the coast of Israel, has been studied. A total of 21,731 individuals representing 15 species and 11 genera was identified from 351 samples. Of the eight species of Apseudomorpha, one, a species of *Leviapseudes*, is new to the Mediterranean, and probably to science, but the damaged immature material precludes description and diagnosis. The continued presence in this region of the Erythrean species *Cristapseudes omercooperi* was confirmed. Of the seven species of Tanaidomorpha, five are previously undescribed species, one each in the genera *Akanthophoreus*, *Leptochelia*, *Pseudotanais*, *Typhlotanais* and *Tanaissus*, the last being the commonest tanaidacean in the samples, yet the first record of the genus for the Mediterranean.

Key words: Tanaidacea, Mediterranean, Levant, Israel, *Akanthophoreus*, *Apseudes*, *Apseudopsis*, *Cristapseudes*, *Hexapleomera*, *Leptochelia*, *Leviapseudes*, *Pseudotanais*, *Tanaissus*, *Tanaopsis*, *Typhlotanais*

Introduction

The Levant Sea occupies the easternmost Mediterranean, east of the line connecting Rhodes and the coast of Cyrenaica. It is isolated from the Atlantic by the topographical and hydrological barriers posed by the shallow Gibraltar Straits and the Siculo-Tunisian sill. The Levantine surface water mass is distinguished by salinity and temperature values that are higher than in the rest of the Mediterranean (Hecht *et al.*, 1988), and is notoriously ultra-oligotrophic (Berman *et al.*, 1984).

The Israeli coast, at the southeastern corner of the Levant, describes a slightly curved line, with Haifa Bay the sole embayment in the mostly sandy coast (Figure 1). The Nilotic quartz sediments transported from the delta northwards by the prevailing inner shelf and wave-induced longshore currents produce a shallow shelf, narrowing considerably northwards (Emery and Neev, 1960; Inman and Jenkins, 1984). The most remarkable characteristic of the Levantine littoral biota is the intrusion of Erythrean species that have entered the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal—284 species have been recorded along the Israeli coast alone (Galil, 2007).

The tanaidacean fauna of the Israeli coast was studied by Băcescu (1961, 1977, 1980a, c) and Guțu (2002), and enthusiastically described as “...exceptionnellement riche et variée” (Băcescu, 1961: 167). Other Eastern Mediterranean tanaidacean species have been reported by Monod (1933: Egypt) and Larwood (1940: Alexandria, Egypt), while elsewhere in the Mediterranean the history of tanaidacean studies includes Sars (1886: central and western Mediterranean), Dolfuss (1898: Mediterranean coast of France), Smith (1906: Italy), Băcescu and Guțu (1971: France including Corsica, Monaco), Riggio (1973; 1975: Italy), Amar and