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On some sea cucumbers from Ghana (Echinodermata: Holothuroidea) with descriptions of a new genus and one new species

AHMED S. THANDAR¹ & SIFISO MJOBO

School of Life Sciences (Biology and Conservation), University of KwaZulu-Natal, Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa

¹*Corresponding author. E-mail: thandara@ukzn.ac.za*

Abstract

This paper reports on some sea cucumbers (Holothuroidea) in the collections of the NHMUK, taken off the coast of Ghana. Most result from collections around Accra during the years 1949–52. A couple of other species are included. Altogether six species are here reported, viz. *Holothuria (Holothuria) dakarensis* Panning, 1939; *Holothuria (Semperothuria) imitans* Ludwig, 1875; *Holothuria (Vaneyothuria) lentiginosa lentiginosa* (von Marenzeller, 1893); *Stereoderma congoana* (Heding, 1935); *Ocnus cruciformis* Thandar **n. sp.** and *Leptopentacta cabindaensis* (Cherbonnier, 1949) herein transferred to a new genus *Cherboconus* Thandar erected for this purpose. Another West African species, *Cladodactyla monodi* Cherbonnier, 1950 is referred to *Stereoderma*. All cucumariids are West African forms whereas the holothuriids are shared with the North-West Atlantic Ocean.

Key words: Aspidochirotida, Dendrochirotida, Holothuriidae, Cucumariidae, new genus, new species

Introduction

A general survey of the marine fauna of the coastline and sub-littoral area in and around Accra in Ghana was conducted during the years 1949–52. A comprehensive report of the survey was published by Bassindale (1961) and the materials dispatched to various specialists for identifications and/or reports. Altogether 586 species were taken of which 25 proved to be new to science and many were new records for the Ghanaian region. The collection represented mainly West African tropical forms with some shared with the North American Atlantic coast and a few were pan-tropical species (Bassindale 1961). A comprehensive report on the echinoderms from this collection was published by Ailsa Clark (1955) who reported on numerous species of which some were new to science. Regrettably her report excluded the holothuroids which were, according to her, despatched to Dr Cherbonnier of the MNHN for identifications. As far as could be ascertained no report emanated from Dr Cherbonnier on the composition of this material. It is also not certain whether the material was actually despatched to the MNHN or returned after identification. Attempts by AST to trace this material at the MNHN or to locate it at NHMUK initially proved futile. However, during examination of its rhopalodiniid holothuroids, AST uncovered a single cucumariid from Ghana, collected by the above survey but erroneously identified as a rhopalodiniid. Subsequently more Ghanaian specimens, collected by the same survey, were uncovered at the NHMUK, most of which were identified or partially identified but the records, as far as it could be established, not published. The current paper reports on this material, together with some from other sources. In total six species are here included: *Holothuria (Semperothuria) imitans* Ludwig, *Holothuria (Holothuria) dakarensis* Panning, *Holothuria (Vaneyothuria) lentiginosa* von Marenzeller, *Stereoderma congoana* (Heding), a new species described as *Ocnus cruciformis* **n. sp.** and *Leptopentacta cabindaensis* (Cherbonnier) which is transferred to the new genus *Cherboconus* Thandar erected for this purpose. In addition, *Cladodactyla monodi* Cherbonnier, 1950, described from Congo is transferred to the genus *Stereoderma*.

Acronyms: NHMUK (Natural History Museum, United Kingdom); MNHN (Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris); WoRMs (World Register of Marine Species); NRF (National Research Foundation).

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