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***Cheramus iranicus*, a new species of ghost shrimp (Decapoda: Axiidea: Callianassidae) from the Persian Gulf, Iran**

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Abstract

A new species of callianassid ghost shrimp is described from the Persian Gulf, Iran. *Cheramus iranicus* **sp. nov.** is the first member of *Cheramus* described from Iranian subtidal waters and can be differentiated by a large cheliped with a ventro-proximal spine on the merus and 7 spines on the ventral margin of the ischium, the endopod of the uropod has 4 movable spines on the distal margin and the posterior margin of the telson is strongly bilobed with a prominent medial tooth and two pairs of lateral movable spines. It is compared to other described *Cheramus*-like species showing a high degree of morphological similarity.

Key words: *Cheramus iranicus* **sp. nov.**, mud shrimp, subtidal, Persian Gulf, Iranian decapods

Introduction

The taxonomy of the callianassid genus *Cheramus* is still very controversial as Komai *et al.* (2014) recently argued. The genus was first established by Bate in 1888 and was recognized as a valid genus by Manning & Felder (1991) in their seminal work on American members of this interesting family of decapods. The generic characters of *Cheramus* are not completely clear as many species descriptions lack male specimens, and so depend heavily on female morphology. Therefore, there are some differences in the species composition of *Cheramus* between different studies (Manning & Felder 1991; Tudge *et al.* 2000; Sakai 2011).

In a recent study by Ngoc-Ho (2014), *Cheramus sibogae* (de Man, 1905), which previously was transferred to *Cheramus* by Tudge *et al.* (2000), was retained by her in *Callianassa*, as a new species—*Callianassa coriolisae*, pending further revision of this group and the genus *Cheramus*. In another study, Sakai & Türkay (2014) transferred *Biffarius pacificus* Guzmán & Thatje, 2003 to *Cheramus*. However, the assignment of *Biffarius pacificus* to *Cheramus* is questioned by Komai *et al.* (2014).

In previous studies conducted in the Persian Gulf a total of 18 species of axiideans have been recorded by Sakai & Türkay (1995), Sakai (2005), Dworschak (2009), Sepahvand & Sari (2010) and Sepahvand *et al.* (2013). In the present contribution *Cheramus iranicus* **sp. nov.** is described from the Persian Gulf and provisionally assigned to this genus. The new species represents the first assigned to *Cheramus* from the region.

Material and methods

Specimens were collected from subtidal, sandy-muddy substrate with shell fragments in the Persian Gulf (Fig. 1) (26°35'12.87"N, 55°08'0.67"E) in February 2014 by a Van Veen grab. They are deposited in the Iranian National Institute for Oceanography Collection (INIOC). Materials were measured with Vernier calipers, and illustrated