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Unveiling the Rosetta Stone of syllids: redescription and neotype designation of *Syllis monilaris* Savigny in Lamarck, 1818, type species of type genus of family Syllidae Grube, 1850 (Annelida)

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Abstract

Syllis monilaris Savigny in Lamarck, 1818, the type species of the genus *Syllis* Savigny in Lamarck, 1818, is redescribed based on two specimens deposited in the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin (Germany). One specimen is designated as neotype, since the original type material is considered to be lost, and there is a necessity to stabilize the nomenclature of the group. The species is large sized, with long dorsal cirri on anterior segments, becoming short and fusiform from midbody, it has thick compound chaetae with short, unidentate blades, not fused to shafts. The lack of chaetae with fused shafts and blades contradicts the division of the genus *Syllis* into subgenera as proposed by Langerhans (1879), who considered the subgenus *Syllis* as having thick fused chaetae on midbody, in addition to compound chaetae, and the subgenus *Typosyllis* with only compound chaetae. A discussion about the systematics of the genus is included, and according to this new data, *Typosyllis* is a junior synonymy of *Syllis*.

Key words: Annelida, Syllidae, type species, redescription, Red Sea

Introduction

The genus *Syllis* was initially erected by Savigny in Lamarck, 1818, to include the species *Syllis monilaris* Savigny in Lamarck, 1818 (see below for authorship explanation). The genus was first included in the family “Nereides” (Savigny in Lamarck 1818; Savigny 1822), and later Grube (1850) erected the family Syllidae, with *Syllis* as the type genus of the family. The new taxa were based on material observed and collected near Suez, in the northern end of Gulf of Suez, by Jules-César Savigny himself, during the Napoleonic Campaign in Egypt (1798–1801). The morphological description seems to have been based mainly on a single, complete, large sized specimen, stated to be more than 3 inches long (“trois puces et plus” = more than 76 mm; Savigny 1822), and drawn at natural size as being 87 mm long (Savigny 1817; Figure 1). The species was stated to be “commune sur les côtes de la mer Rouge”, and its movement in the water described, implying that several living specimens were observed (Savigny 1822).

i) Napoleonic Campaign in Egypt (1798–1801)

One of the aims of the Napoleonic Campaign in Egypt was to explore the possibility to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea through a navigable canal, similar to the Canal of Pharaohs that connected the Gulf of Suez with the Nile in the antiquity. With this purpose in mind, and also as a consequence of the Enlightenment values of the French Revolution and the wish to make Egypt a model of French culture (Bouchet & Danringal 1982), the Campaign incorporated a large contingent of scientists and scholars, among which Jules-César Savigny. After the return of Napoleon to Paris a large scientific expedition, including Savigny and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, was sent to the town of Suez, occupied by the French Army in November 1798 (Hamy 1901; Pallary