

Melitoid amphipods of the genera *Ceradocus* Costa, 1853 and *Victoriopisa* Karaman and Barnard, 1979 (Crustacea: Amphipoda: Maeridae) from the South China Sea, Malaysia

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Abstract

Two new species of Melitoid amphipods from Pulau Perhentian Besar and Pulau Tinggi, east coast of Peninsular Malaysia were described and illustrated. Specimens were collected by means of an airlift suction sampler at seagrass areas of the two islands. *Ceradocus mizani* sp. nov. found commonly at seagrass areas of Malaysian waters, can be readily distinguished from any other known *Ceradocus* species by a set of distinct characters based on the asymmetrical male gnathopod 2; sculpturing on the palm of the larger gnathopod 2; serrated pleonal epimeron 1–3; and multidentate dorsal pleonites and urosomites with 11 spines on urosomite 1 and 6 spines on urosomite 2. *Victoriopisa tinggiensis* sp. nov. on the other hand is characterized by its prolonged lateral cephalic lobe; the presence of an anteroventral notch on the head; weakly developed eyes; and pereopod 7 basis with intermediate lobation. This would be the first record of the genus *Ceradocus* and *Victoriopisa* from the waters of Peninsular Malaysia. Discovery of these two new species represents an ongoing and continuous effort on amphipod taxonomical studies here in Malaysia.

Key words: Crustacea, Amphipoda, Maeridae, *Ceradocus mizani*, *Victoriopisa tinggiensis*, new species, South China Sea, Malaysia, taxonomy

Introduction

The biodiversity of gammaridean amphipods of the South China Sea is still largely unknown. Lowry (2000) listed 153 species from 67 genera and 31 families in the South China Sea region. These records however were mainly from three areas namely Hong Kong, northern and southern Vietnam and eastern central Philippine Islands which, in fact only represents a small part of the South China Sea gammaridean amphipod fauna. This low degree of knowledge about gammarideans in the South China Sea especially from Malaysian coastlines clearly calls for a dire need to explore this region. The study forms part of a greater study of the taxonomy of amphipods around the Malay Peninsula (Othman & Azman, 2007; Othman & Morino, 1996, 2006).

This study treats the hitherto poorly known gammaridean amphipods of the eastern coast of Peninsular Malaysia and is focused on two new species of melitoid amphipods (*Ceradocus mizani* sp. nov. and *Victoriopisa tinggiensis* sp. nov.), which were found at the seagrass area of Pulau Perhentian and Pulau Tinggi respectively. The discovery of *Ceradocus mizani* sp. nov. and *Victoriopisa tinggiensis* sp. nov. represents the first records of melitoid amphipods in the south-western parts of the South China Sea. Figures and descriptions of both species are provided.

Materials and methods

All appendages were dissected from the right side of the specimen except for the gnathopods whereby both left and right gnathopods were dissected. The following abbreviations are used on the plates: A, antenna;