Infection of cultured and freshwater fishes with monogeneans in Syria

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Abstract
During a survey made in 2004 and 2005 in Syrian fish farms of the Orontes valley and on natural water fishes harvested in the Orontes River and in Lake Assad (a water reservoir of the Euphrates River), 145 specimens of fish belonging to 15 fish species were examined for monogenean infections. Eleven monogenean species (8 Dactylogyrus spp., 1 Silurodiscoides sp. and 2 Cychlidogyrus spp.) were found in the gills. Monogeneans infecting farm-cultured fishes were the same as those commonly occurring in cyprinids (Dactylogyrus anchoratus, D. extensus, D. lamellatus) and tilapia (Cychlidogyrus tilapiae, C. arthracanthus) cultured in Europe and in tropical countries. Among monogeneans found in fishes of natural waters, typical representatives of the Tigris-Euphrates Basin (Dactylogyrus carassobarbi, D. holciki) and species common in the Holoarctic zoogeographical zone (D. alatus, D. carpathicus, D. distinguendus and Silurodiscoides vistulensis) were equally found.

Introduction
Little is known about monogenean infections of fishes in the Middle East. From Syria there is only a single report (Samman, 1989), in which a rare parasite of the common carp, Dactylogyrus minutus is mentioned. More data is provided on the monogenean infections of both natural-water and cultured fishes in Iran and Iraq (Jalali & Molnár, 1990a, b; Molnár & Jalali, 1992; Gussev et al., 1993a, b, c). From the zoological point of view the fauna region of the Gulf basin, characterised by the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, is a very interesting territory, which represents an intermediate fauna region between the Palaearctic and Sino-Indian zoogeographical zones and is also influenced by the African fauna region. The ichthyofauna of this territory is composed mainly of endemic cyprinids and clarids, but several species of the Palaearctic fauna also inhabit its waters.

The objective of this study was to survey monogenean gill infections of some natural-water and pond-cultured fishes in Syria.

Materials and methods
In April 2004 and April 2005, two-week surveys on the parasite fauna of fishes were performed in Syria. Fishes from Lake Assad (Euphrates River) at Al-Thawra, from the Orontes River close to Homs and from fish farms of the Orontes basin (Al Ghab) were examined. Altogether 7 fish species from Lake Assad [Barbus luteus (Heckel, 1843) (17), Garra rufa (Heckel, 1843) (3), Acanthobrama marmid Heckel, 1843 (14), Chalcalburnus mossulensis (Heckel, 1843) (18), Aspius vorax Heckel, 1843

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(7), Liza abu (Heckel, 1843) (10), Silurus triostegus Heckel, 1843 (4)], 7 fish species from the Orontes River [Barbus luteus (Heckel, 1843) (4), Acanthobrama listneri Torteronese, 1952 (4), Aspius vorax Heckel, 1843 (2), Silurus triostegus Heckel, 1843 (3), Garra variabilis (Heckel, 1843) (7), Phoxinellus drusensis Pellegrin, 1933 (8), Orthrias tigris (Heckel, 1843) (3)], 4 species from fish farms (Al Ghab) [Cyprinus carpio L., 1758 (22), Carassius auratus (L., 1758) (8), Ctenopharyngodon idella (Valenciennes, 1854) (2), Tilapia zillii (Gervais, 1848) (9)] were dissected. The fish were either examined immediately at the site of capture or transported to the laboratory in plastic bags with oxygenated water. The gills were checked under a Zeiss stereomicroscope. Of the monogeneans found, only specimens belonging to Dactylogyridae were collected and preserved. Low levels of Gyrodactylus spp. and Diplozoon spp. were noted in selected hosts but data are not presented here. Monogenean specimens found were placed under a coverslip into ammonium picrate solution (Fernando et al., 1972) or in glycerine jelly (Gussev, 1983).

Discussion
This paper reports the parasite fauna of 15 fish species in Syria for the first time. The monogenean fauna of Syrian fishes bears both the marks of fishes of the Palaearctic region and those of the Persian Gulf intermediate zoogeographical zone. Seven parasite species (Dactylogyrus alatus Linstow, 1878, D. anchoratus (Dujardin, 1845), D. carpathicus Zachvatkin, 1951, D. distinguendus Nybelin, 1937, D. extensus Mueller et Van Cleave, 1932, D. lamellatus Achmerow, 1952 and Silurodiscoides vistulensis (Siwak, 1932) are common parasites of fishes in the Palaearctic zoogeographical zone, two species (D. carassobarbi Gussev et al., 1993 and D. holciki Molnár et Jalali, 1992) are typical representatives of the Gulf intermediate zone. On the other hand, Cyclidogyrus tilapia Paperna, 1960 and C. arthracanthus Paperna, 1960 are of African origin. The Monogenea of cultured cyprinids and tilapias in the current study are the same as described by Paperna (1959, 1960) in Israel and by Molnár (1971) in Hungary. It seems to be obvious that diseases caused by these parasites might be similar as described by the above authors. The monogeneans of natural-water fishes seem to be similar to those found in Iran (Jalali & Molnár, 1990a, b; Molnár & Jalali, 1992; Gussev et al., 1993a, c) and in Iraq (Gussev et al., 1993b). This means that only some of the parasites (D. carassobarbi and D. holciki) of fishes from the Euphrates region are endemic species, and the majority of parasites found in local fishes are also found in closely related fishes of the Holoarctic region. An endemic barbel species (Barbus luteus) was infected both with

Results
Of the 15 fish species examined, only 8 were infected with 11 species of dactylogyrid monogeneans of the genera Dactylogyrus, Silurodiscoides and Cyclidogyrus (Table 1). All species found are new for the Syrian fauna. In most cases, the parasites were found at a low prevalence and low intensity of infection. Garra rufa, G. variabilis, Phoxinellus drusensis and Carassius auratus were free from dactylogyrid infection.
D. carassobarbi known from the Tigris River and with D. carpathicus, a species commonly found also in the gills of the European barbel (Barbus barbus). In a similar manner, only a single monogenean species (D. holciki) of Chalcalburnus mossulensis proved to be endemic for the Gulf Basin, while D. alatus represented a parasite commonly occurring in Europe on Alburnus alburnus. The two Acanthobrama species were infected with D. distinguendus, a parasite of Abramis brama and Blicca bjoerkna, while Silurus triostegus harboured S. vistulensis, the common parasite of the European sheatfish (Silurus glanis). All monogeneans listed in this paper are new for the Syrian fauna.

Acknowledgements
The authors thank Dr. Amir Ibrahim, rector of Tishreen University, Latakia, for helping in the identification of fishes, and the management of the Al-Thawra Fisheries Company for kindly presenting fishes from Lake Assad. The work was facilitated and financed by the Syrian-Hungarian Scientific and Technological Agreement (TÉT Syr1) and partially by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA), project No. T 45891.

References


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<th>No. infect.</th>
<th>Locality</th>
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Table 1. Monogenean species found during the survey of Syrian freshwater fishes.


