The scorpion (Arachnida, Scorpiones) collections held at the «Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali» of Turin (Italy)

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The Museum

The Zoological Museum of Turin University, or “Museo di Zoologia dell’Università di Torino” (MZUT), is one of the oldest and most important Italian university museums. Since the middle of XIX century the museum, directed by Filippo De Filippi (1814-1867), one of the first promoters of Darwinian ideas in Italy, began to acquire important and rare materials from all around the world. Under the subsequent direction of Michele Lessona (1823-1894) and Lorenzo Camerano (1856-1917), long and difficult expeditions were organized by the museum as well as by private researchers such as Enrico Festa, Alfredo Borelli and many others, increasing the collections and shaping the Turin museum as an important point of reference for the whole of Europe (Parona, 1918). Since 1980, the collections of the Zoological Museum of Turin University have been entrusted to the Regional Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin, or Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino (MRSN).

Alfredo Borelli

The scorpion collection held in Turin museum is quite large and historically important. The collection dates back to the 19th century and reflects the global perspective of the institution and the contribution of many eminent zoologists. Among them is worth to mention Alfredo Borelli. Alfredo Borelli (1859-1943), zoologist and arachnologist of a well-off family, travelled to South America (Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia) in 1893 and 1895-96 (Zavattari, 1943). His large entomological collection is renowned, but Borelli also collected important species in other invertebrate groups, especially scorpions. He was destined to attend legal studies but his vocation led him to attend the study of Natural Sciences at the University of Turin, where he graduated in 1886 with a thesis on the osteological variations in Rana fusca. In those years, in Turin, a great interest for natural history researches, conducted in different continents, was growing and several well-known specialists studied and published new species as well as Alfredo Borelli.

Table 1 - Scorpions types list

Recent collection (MRSN)

The most recent scorpions collection, which belongs to the Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali di Torino (MRSN), consists of 122 specimens, 59 tubes and 27 species belonging to 16 genera and 6 families. Except for a few Italian specimens of genus Euscorpius, the other samples are mainly from South America (sampled by C. Bordon, M. Etoni and J. Celli) and Africa, in particular Madagascar (sampled by F. Andreev et al. and C. Duvall). Although the collection is not particularly large, the type material of two species is recorded: Tityus bushi Luciferine Lorenzen, 1996 and Orobothius sp. n., the latter currently under description by Dr. Jose Ochoa.

Conclusion

The invertebrate collections of the The Zoological Museum of Turin University and the collection of the Regional Museum of Natural Sciences of Turin are particularly rich and important for the historical value and also for the high number of type species. Among them, the Scorpions collections briefly presented here worth to be mentioned. In this first attempt we tried to show off these interesting collections, neglected for too long, but that today are still useful for specialist interested in systematics and for description of new species from all over the world. Both MZUT and MRSN scorpions collections are on informatics database, however the cataloguing work is still in progress. The collections need to be fully revised and the nomenclature must be updated in order to obtain the correct number of species and specimens. Moreover, huge amount of the materials has been already determined, although there are still some samples to be sorted and examined.

References


Country is: Italy