A NOTE ON THE SPINY LOBSTER DESCRIBED BY MARCGRAVE IN HIS HISTORIA NATURALIS BRASILIAE (1648)

BY

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The identification of the species which corresponds to Marcgrave's (1648: 185, fig.) spiny lobster "Potiquiquiya", as pictured in his famous Historia Naturalis Brasiliae, has been the subject of considerable controversy. With the recent rediscovery of Marcgrave’s original drawings, on which the woodcuts used to illustrate his descriptions were based, we can identify the species corresponding to his spiny lobster beyond doubt as *Panulirus echinatus* (Smith, 1869). Fig. 1 (after which Marcgrave’s woodcut is made) shows clearly the presence of interrupted abdominal grooves, and a fine white spotting over a brownish background, and light stripes over the pereiopods. These features cannot be seen in Marcgrave’s published figure. The light pencil handwriting ("Palinurus penicillatus Oliv.") below the figure seems to be W. De Haan’s, who studied the drawing in September 1826 in Berlin.

Although Marcgrave’s woodcut does not present any hint as to the nature of the species (Castro, 1962: 41, pl. 3 fig. 20), Fausto Filho & Costa (1969: 107) speculate that it could refer to *Panulirus laevicauda* (Latreille) due to the absence of abdominal grooves and the recognition that Marcgrave would never omit such characters in his drawings (... achamos dificil não ter dado destaque aos sulcos transversais do abdomen, se estes realmente existissem”). More recently, in Holthuis, Edwards & Lubbock (1980), Holthuis states: “Among sketches of animals made during Marcgraf's stay in Brazil (1638-1644), now kept in the archives of the Leningrad branch of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., there are two water colours of spiny lobster, one clearly is *P. echinatus* (Smith), the other represents *P. laevicauda* (Latreille). It is likely therefore that Marcgraf’s Potiquiquiya is based on two species”.

According to Albertin & Faria (1984) and Albertin (pers. comm.), the “Leningrad Series” are in fact two series of drawings, which are copies of originals attributed to A. Eckhout (which constitute the unpublished volumes of the so-called "Theatrum Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae") and originals attributed to G. Marcgrave (which constitute the volumes "Libri principis"). These copies were probably bought by Peter the Great in the eighteenth century and belonged to his collection, and dating studies establish that they were made after 1650. Fig. 1 is a photograph of the original drawing found in the “Libri principis”. Another drawing of a spiny lobster, in lateral view, corresponding to one of the copies mentioned by Holthuis, represents even more clearly a specimen of *P. echinatus*, and was found in the “Theatrum”. (Potificumaca, Th. I: 319. See Albertin, 1985: 307, fig. 8).
My original impression that Marcgrave’s Potiquiquiya referred to *P. echinatus*, before seeing the original drawings, came from (1) Marcgrave’s description of the dactyli: “... Cada um tem uma unha curva, aguda, coberta de muitos pelos amarelados, como um pincel de pintores” (Marcgrave, 1648); and (2) the first mention of Potiquiquiya in the literature, with a brief account of its ecology, by G. Soares de Souza (1971: 289): “Aos lagostins chama o gêntio potiquiquiá; os quais são da maneira das lagostas, mas mais pequenos alguma coisa e em tudo o mais têm a mesma feição e feitio; e criam-se nas concavidades dos arrecifes, onde se tomam em conjunção de águas vivas muitos; e em seu tempo, que é nas marés da lua nova, estão melhores que na lua cheia, na qual estão cheios de corais muito grandes as fêmeas, e os machos muito gordos; e para se tomarem bem estes lagostins, há de ser de noite, com fachos de fogo.”

The only small species of spiny lobster in the Brazilian northeast, which can be taken in large numbers by flashlighting over the reefs at night with new