First record of *Antithamnion ogdeniae* Abbott (Ceramiaceae, Rhodophyta) from Italy

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The genus Antithamnion Naegeli (1847), redefined by Wollaston (1968) on the basis of the features of the type species A. cruciatum Naegeli, is essentially characterized by: axes completely lacking rhizoidal cortication; opposite, distichous or decussate whorl-branchlets, with a small basal cell nearly quadrate in form not bearing pinnae; pinnae oppositely, alternately or unilaterally ramified; gland cells on specialized branches of two-four cells.

In the Mediterranean Sea the genus Antithamnion is represented by five species (Cormaci and Furnari 1989): A. heterocladum Funk, A. piliferum Cormaci et Furnari, A. tenuissimum (Hauck) Schiffner, A. cruciatum and A. ogdeniae Abbott. The first three are endemic, while the last two are distributed also in the Atlantic.

In May and in November 1989, respectively at Ponza (Pontine Islands) and Vulcano (Aeolian Islands), at 20 m depth were collected some tetrasporangial plants of A. ogdeniae. This is the first record of this species from Italy.

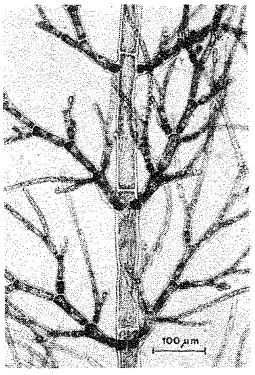

Fig.1. A. ogdeniae: middle part of the thallus showing the typical features of the species.

The thalli show the typical features of the species as described by Abbott (1979), i.e.:plants erect, 4-12 mm tall; whorl- branchlets opposite, decussate, alternately ramified; gland cells frequent throughout plant, formed on 2-3 celled branchlets growing on the abaxial side above each major furcation, each gland cell resting on 2 cells (fig. 1). The first record of A. ogdeniae from the Mediterranean, is that by Athanasiadis (1985) from the Aegean Sea. Nevertheless, on the basis of the comparative study by Athanasiadis (op. cit.) between A. ogdeniae and A. antillanum, Cormaci and Furnari (1987) consider that the species reported as A. antillanum by Boudouresque et Verlaque (1976) from Corsica, should be referred to A. ogdeniae. Moreover, on the basis of the iconography by Boisset (1987: 340) and by Barceló (1987: 374), the records of A. antillanum from the Mediterranean Spanish coast are to be referred to A. ogdeniae too. In fact, they illustrate some of the main features that differentiate this species from A. antillanum, viz.: erect axes, with equal or sub-equal whorl-branchlets; the presence of opposite pairs of pinnae at the lower part of whorl-branchlets; gland cells on 2(3) celled branches.

In conclusion, the finding of A. ogdeniae in the middle and lower Thyrrenian suggests a continuity in the distribution of this species in the Mediterranean Sea (fig. 2) from the western basin, from which it was recorded as A. antillanum, to the eastern one.

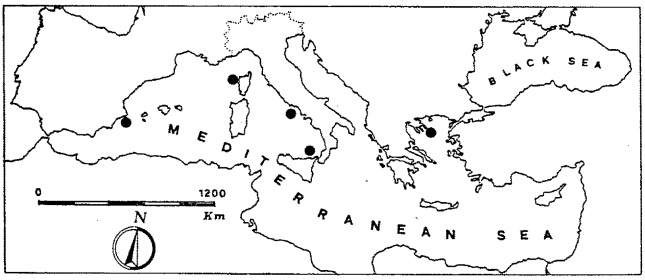

Fig.2. Distribution map of A. ogdeniae in the Mediterranean (from Spain and Corsica reported as A. antillanum).

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