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A TRIASSIC FRESHWATER FISH FAUNA FROM THE PARANÁ BASIN, IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL.

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ABSTRACT - Recent field work in new Triassic outcrops from Rio Grande do Sul State, led to the discovery of fossil fish remains near the town of São João do Polêsine. The sediments are mudstones and sandstones assigned to the Santa Maria and Caturrita formations, in the southeastern border of the Paraná Basin. The material is mainly made up of detached exoskeletal remains, such as scales, teeth and skull bones, sometimes associated with conchostracans. The anatomical and histological characters allow identifying them as Chondrichthyes and Osteichthyes. The scales are of the ganoid type (topped with ganoine) and assigned to the lower actinopterygian (paleoniscoid fishes). For the first time fossil fish remains are recorded in the Caturrita formation.

Key words: Condrichthyans, osteichthyans, Triassic, Brazil.

RESUMO - Recentes expedições em novos afloramentos triássicos do Rio Grande do Sul, levaram à descoberta de restos de peixes fósseis próximo à cidade de São João do Polêsine. Os sedimentos constituem-se em pelitos e arenitos das formações Santa Maria e Caturrita, na borda sudeste da Bacia do Paraná. O material fóssil é principalmente constituído por restos exoesqueletais dispersos, como escamas, dentes e ossos do crânio, as vezes associados a conchostráceos. Os caracteres anatômicos e histológicos permitem identificá-los como Chondrichthyes e Osteichthyes. As escamas são do tipo ganóide (cobertas por ganoína) e atribuída aos actinopterígios primitivos (peixes paleoniscóides). Restos de peixes fósseis são registrados pela primeira vez para a Formação Caturrita.

Palavras-chave: Condricties, osteícties, Triássico, Brasil.

INTRODUCTION

Vertebrates from the continental Triassic of the Rio Grande do Sul State (Southern Brazil) have been known for almost a century (Woodward, 1907). However, most publications are related to tetrapods (Barberena *et al.*, 1985; Schultz, 1995) and only a few to the ichthyofauna (Lima *et al.*, 1984; Richter, 2001). Fossil fishes from this formation have been studied on the basis of fragmentary remains that principally come from channel deposits.

These isolated actinopterygian remains, mainly scales and teeth, are fairly frequent in the worldwide fossil record. That is why there have been many attempts trying to classify detached fish remains and provide diagnostic characters based on them (Aldinger, 1937; Esin, 1990, 1995; Burrow, 1994; Goodrich, 1907; Richter, 1995; Richter & Smith, 1995; Schultze, 1996). Unfortunately, detailed information on morphology and histology of these elements is not always available in the descriptions of whole skeletons, making hard to reliably assign them to the known species.

In this paper we describe new fish materials collected in recent expeditions, which provide significant paleoecological data for the Santa Maria and Caturrita Formations. This is the first fish record for the Caturrita Formation.