

Roythespis israelensis gen. et sp. n. (Dictyoptera: Mantodea: Toxoderidae), a new praying mantis from Israel

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ABSTRACT

A new genus and species of praying mantises, *Roythespis israelensis* gen et sp. n., is described from Israel. The new genus belongs in the subfamily Toxoderinae (Toxoderidae), and is most closely related to *Belomantis* Giglio-Tos, 1914 and *Calamothespis* Werner, 1907, from which it differs in having a weakly rounded and very short pseudophallus, and conspicuous but not overdeveloped juxtaocular bulges. The new species features an elongated body and slender habitus, short legs, a prognathous head and greatly extended and distally flattened cerci. The holotype of *Toxomantis sinensis* Giglio-Tos, 1914 is illustrated for the first time.

KEYWORDS: Biodiversity, Dictyoptera, Mantodea, Toxoderidae, Toxoderinae, identification key, new genus, new species, taxonomy, Levant, Middle East.

תקציר

סוג ומין חדשים של גמלי שלמה, ענפן שלוח, מתוארים מישראל. הסוג החדש שייך למשפחת הענפניים ובתוכה לתת-משפחת הענפנים, הכוללת מלבדו עוד שני סוגים אפריקאיים. מהסוגים הקרובים האלה הוא נבדל במבנה של אברי ההזדווגות הזכריים ובבליטות העינייות ניכרות אך לא גדולות. לסוג החדש מבנה גוף צר ומוארך, רגליים קצרות יחסית, ראש מופנה קדימה וגנובתנים ארוכים מאד, מורחבים בקצותיהם.

מילות מפתח: מגוון מינים, תיקאים, גמלי שלמה, טרסונומיה, סוג חדש, מין חדש, מזרח התיכון, לבנט, ישראל.

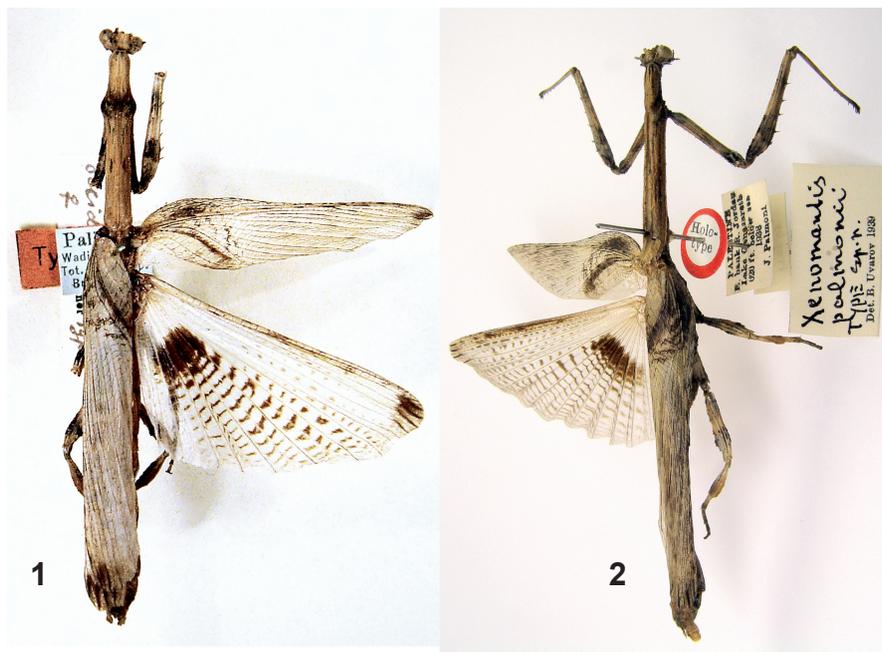
INTRODUCTION

The mantodean family Toxoderidae Giglio-Tos, 1919 comprises around 25 genera and above 100 species, distributed in mainly tropical regions of Africa and Asia, with some taxa penetrating into the Palaearctics (e.g. North Africa, Middle East and China) (Otte *et al.* 2025). The last taxonomic surveys of the Toxoderidae relevant for the present study focused on the tropical taxa. Roy and Stiewe (2016) reviewed the Afrotropical *Calamothespis* Werner, 1907 and described eight new species. Roy and Stiewe (2017) revised the genus *Belomantis* Giglio-Tos, 1914 and described two new species, *Belomantis mirei* Roy & Stiewe, 2017 from Cameroon and *B. occidentalis* Roy & Stiewe, 2017 from Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Togo. Unnahachote (2022) provided new records of Toxoderidae from Thailand with notes on *Toxomantis* Giglio-Tos, 1914. Finally, Schwarz and Unnahachote (2025) reviewed the genus *Aethalochroa* Wood-Mason, 1877 and described *Aethalochroa kaltenbachi* Schwarz & Unnahachote, 2025 from Thailand and Malaysia.

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Figs 1, 2. Endemic Toxoderidae species described from Israel: (1) *Pareuthyphlebs occidentalis* Werner, 1928, ♀ holotype (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin); (2) *Pareuthyphlebs palmonii* (Uvarov, 1939), ♂ holotype (Natural History Museum, London).

Two species of Toxoderidae have been described from Israel: *Pareuthyphlebs occidentalis* Werner, 1928 (Fig. 1) and *Pareuthyphlebs palmonii* (Uvarov, 1939) (Fig. 2). The presence of both species has recently been confirmed by Battiston *et al.* (2010) and Handal *et al.* (2018). Since 1964, when Beier described the genus *Holaptilon* Beier, 1964 and the species *Holaptilon pussillum* Beier, 1964, no further Mantodea taxa have been described from Israel.

The new monotypic genus *Roythespis* gen. n. and the species *R. israelensis* sp. n. are hereby described based on three males and one female from the southern part of the Dead Sea and the northern part of the 'Arava Valley in Israel. Therefore, it is possible to make a thorough comparison of *Roythespis* gen. n. with the closest related genera and to place it correctly within the current most comprehensive taxonomic system of Mantodea by Schwarz and Roy (2019).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

All specimens of *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n. have been discovered in the entomological collection of the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History, Tel Aviv University (SMNH-TAU), during a decade-long curation of the Israeli Mantodea by

the two junior authors. The type series consists of three males (one male is donated to Zoologische Staatssammlung München (ZSM), Munich, Germany) and one female. No specimens resembling *R. israelensis* gen. et sp. n. have been found in any other important Mantodea collections worldwide.

The morphological nomenclature and specimen preparation methods follow Brannoch *et al.* (2017) and Schwarz & Roy (2019). Genitalia were prepared according to Kaltenbach (1998), embedded in Euparal on a special glass slide and subsequently attached to the respective specimen.

The specimens were studied using Leica MZ6 Zoom and a Carl Zeiss Jena Technival 2 binocular microscopes. Colour photographs were taken with a digital Sony Alpha 7R III camera using a Sony 90 mm Macro lens and external flashes for additional lighting. Photographs of the genitalia were taken with a professional Leica Vario-Summilux Objektiv 1:1,6-2,2/15-60 ASPH.

TAXONOMY

Family Toxoderidae Saussure, 1869

Subfamily Toxoderinae Saussure, 1869

Tribe Calamothespini Giglio-Tos, 1914

Subtribe Calamothespina Giglio-Tos, 1914

Genus *Roythespis* Stiewe, gen. n.

Figs 3A, 4–27, 30, 32

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Type species: *Roythespis israelensis* sp. n., here designated.

Etymology: The new genus is dedicated to and named after the French entomologist Roger Roy (1929–2023). Roy dedicated his life to studying the praying mantises and became the chief expert of Mantodea worldwide for the last sixty years. He published extensively on all aspects of this insect order, contributing tremendously to the knowledge of Mantodea, and influencing all Mantodea researchers worldwide.

Diagnosis: At present, three genera are assigned to the tribe Calamothespini: the Asian *Toxomantis* (subtribe Toxomantina) and Afrotropical *Belomantis* and *Calamothespis* (subtribe Calamothespina). All three genera together with *Roythespis* gen. n. share a synapomorphy—the extended dorsal upper edge of the head vertex that it fits exactly to the front edge of the pronotum, being probably an adaptation to the gramminicolous lifestyle (see Schwarz & Roy 2019: 145)—which is absent in other Toxoderinae tribes, e.g. Aethalochroini Giglio-Tos, 1914, that includes *Pareuthyphlebs*, the only currently known Toxoderinae genus represented in the Southern Levant by two species (Figs 1, 2). Another character separating Calamothespini from Aethalochroini is the conspicuous lobe-like developed margin of the tibiae of the walking mid and hind legs, characteristic to Aethalochroini and lacking in Calamothespini. Therefore, *Roythespis* gen. n. is clearly a member of the tribe Calamothespini, bringing the number of known genera in this tribe to four.

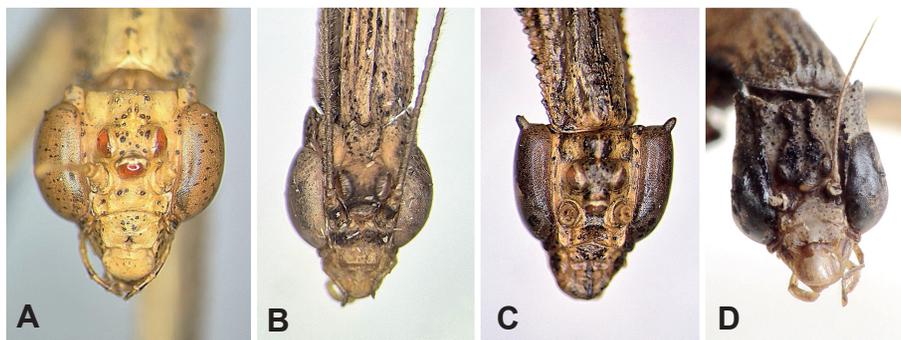


Fig. 3. Heads of Calamothespini mantises, dorsal view: (A) *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ paratype, SMNH-TAUI 233829; (B) *Calamothespis taylora* La Greca, 1952, ♂, Kenya; (C) *Toxomantis sinensis* Giglio-Tos, 1914, ♂, holotype, China; (D) *Belomantis occidentalis* Roy & Stiewe, 2017, ♀, Togo.

Within the tribe Calamothespini, *Roythespis* gen. n. lines up with the Afrotropical genera *Belomantis* and *Calamothespis* by sharing several important characteristics (e.g. pronounced juxtaocular bulges on the vertex of the head), and, thus, becomes a third member of the subtribe Calamothespina Giglio-Tos, 1914.

An important feature that distinguishes *Roythespis* gen. n. from both *Calamothespis* and *Belomantis* is the shape of the pseudophallus (pafa), which is weakly rounded and very short in the new genus (Fig. 27) and well-developed, produced either in a long thorn-like dagger or in a shorter pointed spike in its closest relative *Calamothespis* (Fig. 28; for the further comparison see Roy & Stiewe 2016, figs 1.d, 6.d). In *Belomantis*, the pseudophallus has a long pointed apex bearing a basal sclerotized bristled field with several small spikes (Roy & Stiewe 2017, figs 10.c, 14.d, 14.g).

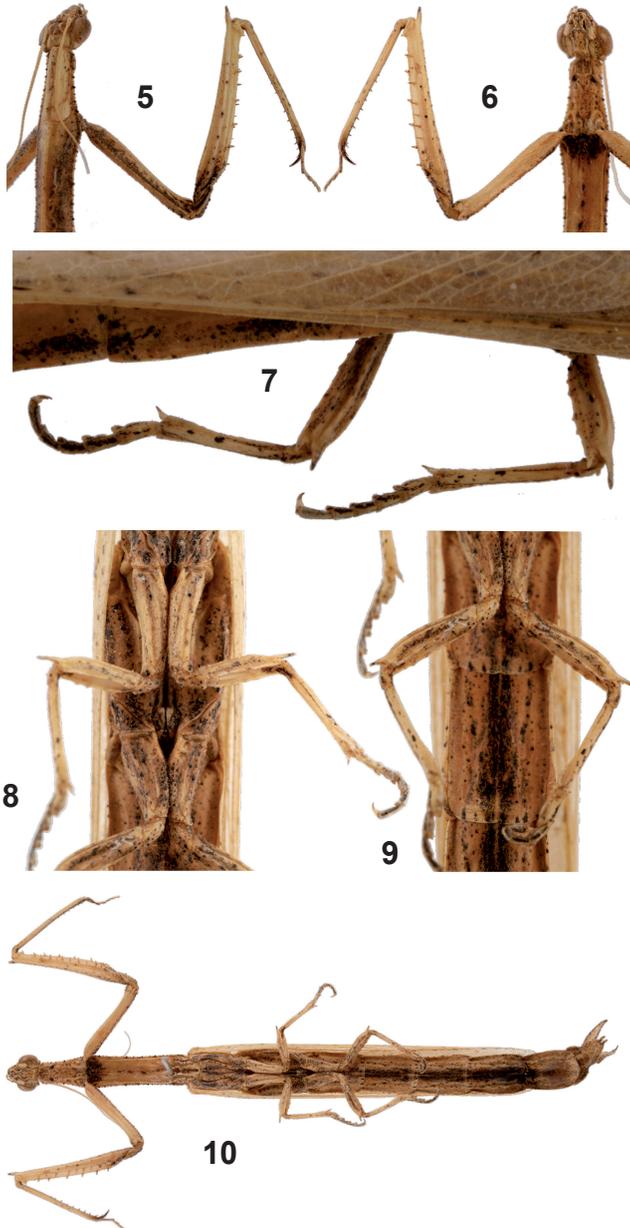
Another feature separating *Roythespis* gen. n. from *Calamothespis* is the last segment of the cercomere (CEa), which is short or only a bit longer than any other segment in *Calamothespis* (Fig. 31; for further comparison see Roy & Stiewe 2016, figs 1a,b, 3a, 4a, 6a, 7a, 8a,c, 9a–9c, 11a, 12a, 13a, 14a, 15, 16a), whereas the distal cercomere (CEa) of *Roythespis* gen. n. is distinctly long (Figs 11, 13, 30). The juxtaocular bulges are much larger, elongated and pointed, $\sim 2\times$ extending the height of the vertex in *Calamothespis* compared to *Roythespis* gen. n. (Figs 3A, 3B).

From *Belomantis*, *Roythespis* gen. n. differs in the absence of colour marks on its fore- and hindwings (Figs 15, 16), which is always the case in *Belomantis* (Fig. 35; Roy & Stiewe 2017, figs 1–4). The juxtaocular bulges in *Belomantis* (Fig. 3D) are very similar to *Calamothespis* (Fig. 3B) but much larger and dominantly developed compared to *Roythespis* gen. n. (Fig. 3A).

Roythespis gen. n. is easily distinguished from the Asian *Toxomantis* by the shape of the head and the eyes. In *Toxomantis*, the eyes bear a dorsolateral oblong thorn (Fig. 3C), and the vertex is nearly straight, as high as the eyes, without pronounced



Fig. 4. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ holotype, habitus, dorsal view. Scale bar = 10 mm.



Figs 5–10. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ holotype: (5) right prothoracic leg, dorsal view; (6) prozone of pronotum and right prothoracic leg, ventral view; (7) right mesothoracic- and metathoracic legs, dorsal view; (8) mesothoracic legs, ventral view; (9) mesothoracic legs, ventral view; (10) habitus, ventral view.

juxtaocular bulges (Fig. 3C; for further comparison see Unnahachote 2022, fig. 2b). In *Roythespis* gen. n., the vertex has very conspicuous juxtaocular bulges (Figs 3A, 14). The pseudophallus (pafa) is short and pointed in *Toxomantis* (Fig. 29) and weakly rounded and very short in *Roythespis* gen. n. (Fig. 27).

Taking into account all morphological characteristics of the genera *Calamothespis* and *Belomantis*, *Roythespis* gen. n. appears closest to the former (Fig. 34).

Description: Habitus slender, coloration light brown.

Head prognathous, black-speckled. Both sexes with nearly straight vertex and conspicuously pronounced juxtaocular bulges, extending to dorsal edge of vertex, so that vertex neatly fits anterior margin of pronotum. Ocelli large, prominent.

Eyes with small lateral tubercle.

Pronotum long, slender, lateral margins granulated, irregular black spots. Supracoxal dilatation moderate defined, prozona narrowed, supracoxal sulcus weak, metazone twice prozona length, lateral margin granulated, median keel protruding.

Scutellum much wider than high, with two blackish humps in middle.

Forelegs: forecoxal lobes divergent; forefemur with long apical spine. Spination: F = 3ds / 11–14 avfs / 5–6 pvfs; T = 10–11 avts / 4 pvts.

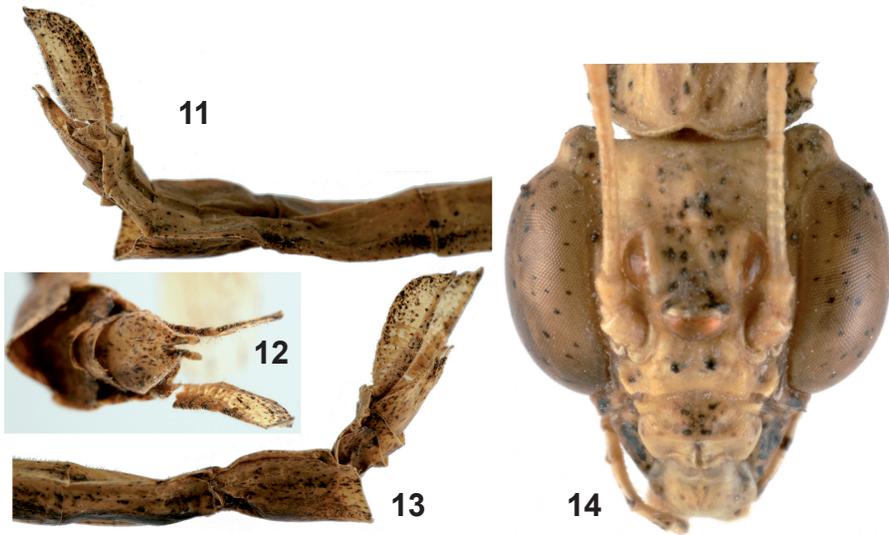
Abdomen elongate, tergites with strong median keel. Tegmina with strongly sinuate costal margin, subhyaline. Alae longer than tegmina at rest, hyaline.

Cerci very long, last distal cercomere long flattened, lateral margin bulbously rounded, apex pointed (Figs 11, 13, 19, 30).

Distribution: Israel.

Key to the genera of the tribe Calamothespini

- 1 Eyes with dorsolateral oblong thorn, vertex of head without pronounced juxtaocular bulges (Fig. 3C). Pseudophallus short and pointed (Fig. 29).....*Toxomantis*
- Eyes without dorsolateral oblong thorn; vertex of head with pronounced juxtaocular bulges (Figs 3A, 3B, 3D). Pseudophallus otherwise.....2
- 2 Last segment of cercomere (CEa) short, not or only scarcely longer than any other segment (Fig. 31).....*Calamothespis*
- Last segment of cercomere (CEa) oblong, longer than any other segment (Figs 11, 13, 30).....3
- 3 Fore or hind wings with dark brown colour marking (Fig. 35); pseudophallus with long pointed apex.....*Belomantis*
- Fore or hind wings without dark brown colour marking (Figs 14, 15, 18, 19, 21–24); pseudophallus very weakly and shortly rounded (Fig. 27).....*Roythespis* gen. n.



Figs 11–14. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ holotype: (11) abdomen with cerci, right lateral view; (12) subgenital plate, ventral view; (13) abdomen with cerci, left lateral view; (14) head, dorsal view.

Roythespis israelensis Stiewe, Weinstein & Simon, sp. n.

Figs 3A, 4–27, 30, 32

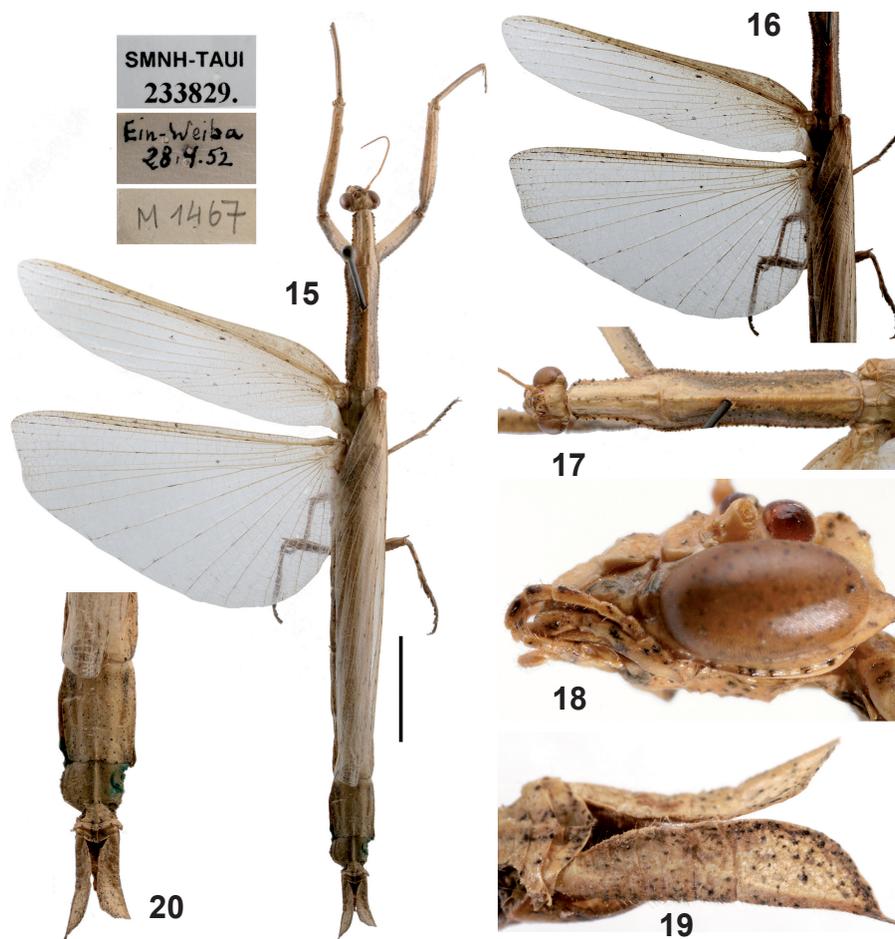
LSID: [urn:lsid:zoobank.org:act:AA17D705-C5F4-42E5-91AB-B64C7FBC2924](https://zoobank.org/act:AA17D705-C5F4-42E5-91AB-B64C7FBC2924).

Etymology: Named after Israel, the type locality country of the new species.

Description: Male: Head (Figs 14, 18): Head $1.09\times$ as wide as pronotal supracoxal dilation, much longer than wide. Vertex nearly straight, slightly above eyes. Juxta-ocular bulges very large, pronounced, extending height of vertex. Frontal scutellum transverse, arched dorsally, with two blackish middle outside positioned humps. Eyes long, oval, with small lateral tubercle. Ocelli very large, dominant. Vertex with dominant wide and short domed postocellar process, rough granulated surface. Antennae nearly as long as pronotum.

Pronotum (Figs 5, 17): Elongated, length $4.71\times$ pronotal supracoxal dilation. Lateral margins irregular, serrated, supracoxal dilation distinct. Prozone short, nearly half-length of metazone. Supracoxal sulcus slightly pronounced, surface scattered granulated. Metazone long, scattered granulate, metazone length $2.19\times$ prozone length, slightly narrowed behind supracoxal dilatation. Medial keel protruding, slightly curved. Prosternum slightly curved, scattered granulate.

Prothoracic legs (Figs 5, 6): Coxa: $0.74\times$ as long as fore femora. Lateral margin serrated, with bristles and 11 short spines. Two well-developed inner forecoxal lobes, nearly equal in size, tapered apex. Outer forecoxal lobe with round apex. Femur:



Figs 15–20. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ paratype SMNH-TAU In.233829: (15) habitus, dorsal view; (16) left wings, dorsal view; (17) pronotum, ventral view; (18) head, left lateral view; (19) cerci; (20) abdomen, dorsal view. Scale bar = 10 mm (Fig. 15).

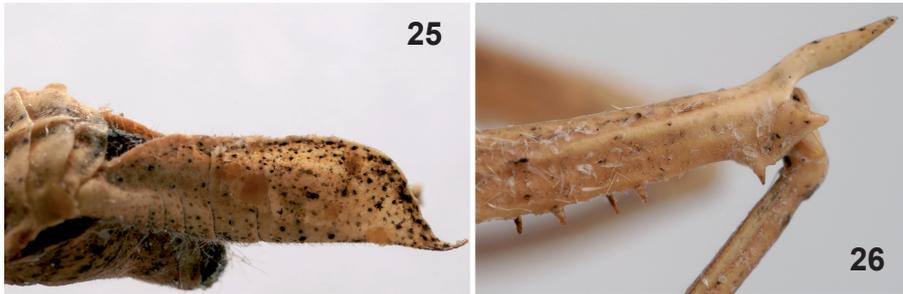
Long, 1.32× as long as fore tibia, slightly widened at base, tibial spur groove at fore femur base. Surface granulate with well-developed outer genicular spine and tapered genicular lobe. Dorsal margin with conspicuously developed long apical spine, three discoidal spines, only 2nd and 3rd are completely developed, 1st discoidal spine very small more wart-like while 2nd the biggest is. Forefemoral disc with numerous small tubercles. Spination: avfs 12–14, first two proximal spines conspicuously close to each other. Spination: pvfs 5–6. Tibiae: Very long. Spination: pvts 4, all spines distally placed with long tibial spur. Spination: avts 10–11, tarsus long, first segment same length as all following segments together.



Figs 21, 22. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ paratype SMNH-TAU In.233831, habitus, lateral (21) and dorsal (22) views. Scale bar = 10 mm.



Figs 23, 24. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♀ allotype, habitus, lateral (23) and dorsal (24) views. Scale bar = 10 mm.



Figs 25, 26. *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♀ allotype, (25) left cercus, lateral view; (26) genicular spine of right forefemur, lateral view.

Mesothoracic & metathoracic legs (Figs 7–9): short, hind femur 1.2× as long as mid femur, hind tibia as long as mid tibia, irregularly spotted with blackish dots. Inner and outer genicular lobe of femur with genicular spine and dorsally with long apical spine, posteroventral margin slightly extended, jagged margin. Hind tibia with tibial spine. Hind basitarsus shorter than following segments combined.

Wings (Figs 15, 16): Shorter than abdomen, just extending 4th abdominal tergite. Tegminae semi-opaque with some scattered blackish small dots, costal area opaque, well-developed, with many more or less simple cross-veins, subcostal vein very close to radial vein. Discoidal area reticulated. Hindwings hyaline, costal area opaque with irregular brownish dots, external margin of costal area even.

Abdomen (Figs 10, 20): Elongated with parallel lateral margins. Tergites laterally scattered with small blackish dots. Sternites medially darkened. Supra-anal plate transverse, apex rounded. Subgenital plate triangular, styli short, rounded, deeply incised (Fig. 12). Cerci well developed, long, foliaceous, last segment (CEa) much longer than wide (Figs 11, 13, 30). Exterior lateral margin of last segment (CEa) bulbously rounded, pointed apex (Figs 11, 13, 19).

Genitalia (Fig. 27): Right phallomere (rpha) with rugose lateral margin. Ventral phallomere (vpha): lateral secondary distal process (sdpl) dagger-like. Left phallomere (lpha): titillator (paa) finger-shaped, posterior lobe of phalloid apophysis (pafa) reduced, short, rounded, membranous lobe region (loa) with setae field.

Female (Figs 23–26): Habitus similar to male, but differs from the latter in following: body more robust and larger (Figs 23, 24), pronotum wider and its surface more rugose (prozone of pronotum much more slender in male). Outer genicular spine of fore femur larger and even more conspicuously developed than in male (Fig. 26). Posteroventral margin of meso- and metathoracic femur more extended with a jagged margin than in male, where it is only indicated and weakly developed. Ocelli less prominent than in male, as well as low-domed postocellar process of the vertex. Spination: avfs 13, pvfs 6, pvts 4, avts 11.

Measurements: Male (mm): length of body, 62.5–63.9; width of head, 3.7–3.8; length of prozone, 5.0–5.1; length of metazone, 11.0–11.2; width of supracoxal



Figs 27–31. Genitalia and cerci of Calamothespini: (27) *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., ♂ genitalia, paratype SMNHTAU In.233829; (28) *Calamothespis taylora* La Greca, 1952, ♂ genitalia, Kenya; (29) *Toxomantis sinensis* Giglio-Tos, 1914, ♂ holotype, genitalia; (30) *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n., cerci and CEa of paratype SMNHTAU In.233829; (31) *Calamothespis taylora*, cerci and CEa, Kenya. Abbreviations: CEa – last segment of cercomere, loa – membranous lobe, lpha – left phallomere, paa – titillator, pafa – posterior lobe of phalloid apophysis, rpha – right phallomere, sdpl – lateral secondary distal process, vpha – ventral phallomere.

dilation, 3.4–3.45; length of fore coxae, 9.3–9.5; length of fore femora, 12.5–12.8; length of fore tibiae, 9.55–9.57; length of tegmina, 33.4–33.9; length of mesothoracic femur, 3.5; length of mesothoracic tibiae, 5.0; length of mesothoracic basitarsus, 1.2; length of metathoracic femur, 4.3; length of metathoracic tibiae, 5.2; length of metathoracic basitarsus, 1.3; length of cerci, 5.5.

Female (mm): length of body, 64.8; width of head, 4.0; length of prozone, 5.3; length of metazone, 11.8; width of supracoxal dilation, 3.8; length of forecoxae, 9.8; length of forefemora, 13.3; length of tegmina, 38.5; length of mesothoracic femur, 3.6; length of mesothoracic tibiae, 4.7; length of mesothoracic basitarsus,



Fig. 32. *Roythespis israelensis* gen et sp. n., living male, Ras haShitta [30.78°N 35.25°E], Hazeva, Israel, 8.v.2021. (Photo by Dor Margalit)

1.2; length of metathoracic femur, 4.4; length of metathoracic tibiae, 4.8; length of metathoracic basitarsus, 1.2; length of cerci, 5.3.

Holotype: ♂ **Israel:** Hazeva Field School, Shezaf Nature Reserve, 30.76°N 35.24°E, 29.v.1998, Dany Simon, SMNHATAU In.233828 (Figs 4–14). *Note:* The original label is handwritten in Hebrew (Fig. 4).

Allotype: ♀ **Israel:** 'En Gedi, 31.46°N 35.38°E, 25.vi.1957, I. Guterman, SMNHATAU In.233830 (Figs 23–26). *Note:* The specimen bears two labels, one of them partly printed (Fig. 24).



Fig. 33. *Toxomantis sinensis* Giglio-Tos, 1914, ♂ holotype, habitus and labels (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin).

Paratypes: 1♂, Israel: 'En Gedi, 31.46°N 35.38°E, 30.iv.1957, J. Kugler, SMNHNTAU In.233831 (ZSM) (Figs 21, 22); 1♂, 'En Yahav [Ein-Weiba], 30.65°N 35.23°E, 28.iv.1952, SMNHNTAU In.233829 (Figs 3A, 15–20).

Distribution: Israel (Dead Sea Area and 'Arava Valley).

Biology: *Roythespis israelensis* gen. et sp. n. is a typical representative of the sub-tribe Calamothespina in its morphology, and probably so in its natural history. We know it is attracted to light at night from the single male photographed (Fig. 32). Its characteristic body pose corresponds to that of the other Calamothespina genera (Figs 34, 35). A clear adaptation to a graminicolous lifestyle is evident: when resting, the forelegs are stretched far forward next to the head, which is held in a prognathous position; the end of the abdomen is lowered slightly (see Roy & Stiewe 2016, fig. 5).

DISCUSSION

During the revision of the Afrotropical genus *Calamothespis* (Roy & Stiewe 2016), Roger Roy found in the collection of the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin the lost



Figs 34, 35. Afrotropical Calamothespini, habitus: (34) *Calamothespis vuattouxi* Gillon & Roy, 1968, ♂ holotype, Côte d'Ivoire (Museum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris); (35) *Belomantis occidentalis* Roy & Stiewe, 2017, ♀, Togo (Museum für Naturkunde Berlin).

holotype of *Toxomantis sinensis* Giglio-Tos, 1914 (Fig. 33), sorted erroneously under *Calamothespis adusta* Werner, 1907.

Giglio-Tos (1914) described *Toxomantis sinensis* from two specimens: the male holotype, having no locality data, but only the collecting date (14.x.1898), and a paratype male from China collected by Lehmann on 7.x.1898. The Chinese specimen always stayed in the Berlin collection under its name, but the holotype was missing.

Roger Roy mentioned the rediscovery of the *T. sinensis* holotype to Martin Stiewe. Roy's wish was to publish the rediscovery of the lost type in a relevant paper. We find it most appropriate to publish this information in the article in which the holotype rediscovered by Roger Roy is used for the description of the new genus named after him.

We hope that this report and the description of a new Mantodea genus and species will encourage more people to advance the Mantodea research, particularly in Israel, in the Levant and in the Middle East in general. The diversity of the Mantodea in this region suggests that further interesting discoveries are to be expected.

The taxonomic position of *Roythespis* gen. n. within the Mantodea system can be summarised as follows:

Family Toxoderidae Saussure, 1869

Subfamily Toxoderinae Saussure, 1869

Tribe Calamothespini Giglio-Tos, 1914

Subtribe Toxomantina Schwarz & Roy, 2019

Genus *Toxomantis* Giglio-Tos, 1914

Subtribe Calamothespina Giglio-Tos, 1914

Genus *Calamothespis* Werner, 1907

Roythespis gen. n.

Belomantis Giglio-Tos, 1914

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