Bull. zool. Surv. India, 2 (1) : 103-104, 1979

OCCURRENCE OF THE SEA URCHIN, *STOMOPNEUSTES VARIOLARIS* (LAMARCK, 1816) ALONG THE COASTS OF KANYAKUMARI (S. INDIA)

During an ecological and faunistic survey of the east coast of India the author had an opportunity to collect specimens of Echinoid from rocky shores along the coasts of Kanyakumari at Chinnamutiom, Muttom and Colachal. Detailed examination of these specimens revealed that they are *Stomopneustes variolaris* (Lamarck, 1816).

Diagnosis : General colouration deep purple : spines long stout and solid (Pl. VI. Fig. A) : ratio of spine length to the test diameter is 0.90. (Pl. VI. Fig. B).

Test low and finely texture (Pl. VI. Fig C), consisting of doubly compound ambulacral plates, and the boundary between two cre-

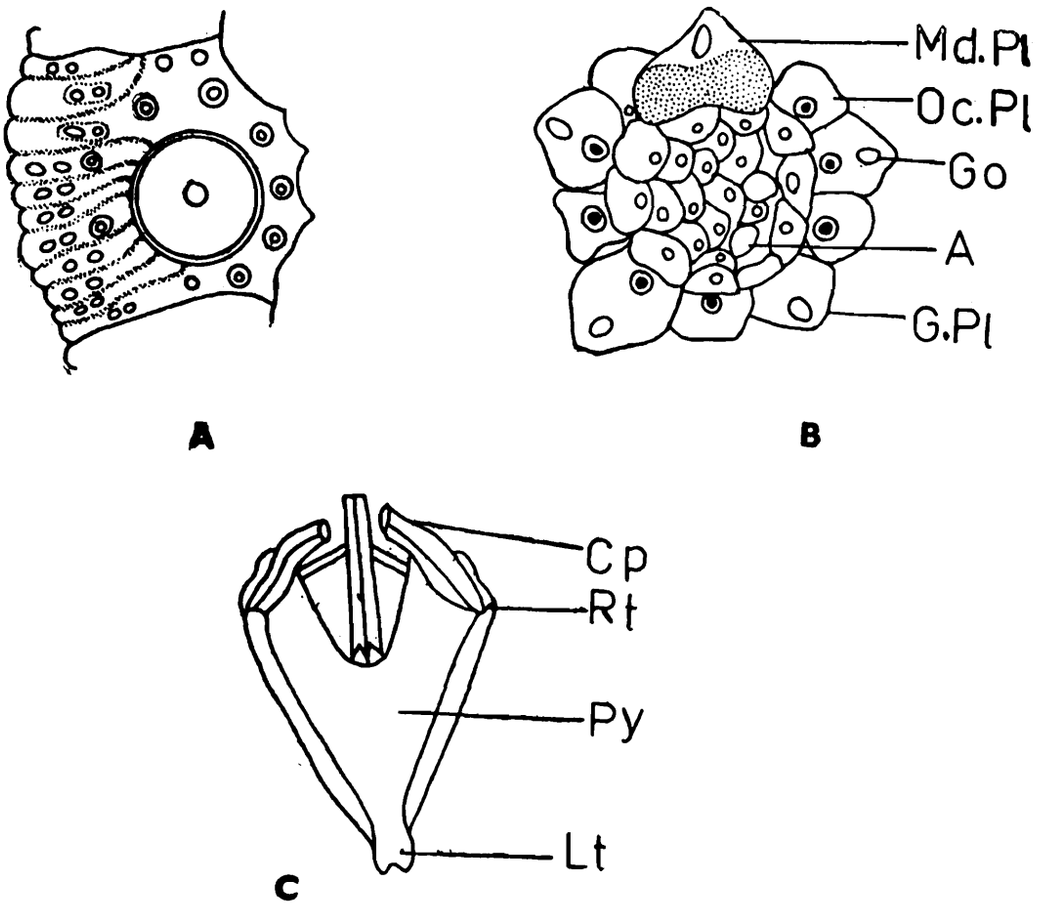

Fig. 1 (A—C) *Stomopneustes variolaris* A—Ambulacral plate, B—*S. variolaris* : Apical system, C—Aristotles lantern. A—anus ; G. O—gonadial opening ; G. pl—gonadal plate ; Oc. Pl—ocularp plates ; Md. Pl—madreporitic plate.

nulate, imperforate ; secondary tubercles vary from 468 in number 10-12 pore-pairs (polyporous) can be seen (Fig 1A) through which the pedicellarie protrude ; for a test diameter of 60 mm. there are about 12 ambulacral plates.

Interambulacral plates sutured and the boundary between one and the next one (in vertical line) is not conspicuous ; one primary tubercle and 4—8 secondary tubercles.

Apical system conspicuous : consists of five basal and five ocular plates which are insert. The basal plate, in which the madreporite opens, is very thick and large when compared to the rest of the plates (Fig. 1B) ; periproct large with numerous surnal plates ; for the test diameter of 60 mm. the apical system measures about 10 mm. in diameter. In the Aristotle's lantern the argh is not complete (Fig. 1C).

Distribution : This species is a common Indo-pacific form (Clark and Rowe, 1971). Zn India it has been recorded from Laccadives (Koehler, 1927), Kawar (Patil, 1953). Mandapam (Gulf of Mannar), Waltair, Minicoy, (James 1959) and Madras (Gravely 1941). The localities recorded in this paper extend the distribution of this species. As the species dwells among rocks, it is likely to have a wider distribution along the rocky coasts of S. India.

Remarks : The gonad of this sea urchin is eaten raw by the people of these localities as a delicacy. The study of their reproductive biology and culture of these rocky coasts wtll be of great value.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author acknowledges help in collecting the material by M. Ramalingam, Junior Zoological Assistant, Marine Biological Station, Zoological Survey of India. My thanks are due to Dr. A. Daniel, Deputy Director, Marine Biological Station, Zoological Survey of India, for his encouragement.

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