

FIGULARIA PULCHERRIMA SP. NOV.

(Fig. 8A)

Material

Holotype: 1998.8.4.71, Iririki Island, Efate, Vanuatu, 11.11.1992.

Description

Colony encrusting, unilaminar, flat. Autozooids irregularly oval to rectangular, distinct, separated by deep grooves (Holotype, $\approx 0.7 \times \approx 0.4$ mm). Primary orifice longer than wide, sides almost parallel, distal border concave, anter constituting over 80% of total length, separated from the slightly concave, proximal border by very small lateral condyles that are almost hidden by the distal costae. Operculum deeper in colour than the almost translucent frontal membrane. No spines. Frontal gymnocystal calcification smooth; costal field comprising almost half length and one-third area of frontal shield. Costae comprise 8–10 flattened tubes, closely packed with a series of small lacunae between, each with a single large oval or teardrop-shaped proximal pelma (lumen pore) frontally; 4–5 distal uniporous septula and 7–8 in the lateral wall. Avicularia not seen. Ovicellate zooids with a dimorphic orifice, wider than long. Ovicell almost spherical, smooth ectooecial calcification with a longitudinal median suture and a pair of lateral fenestra (a second smaller pair may be present, appearing to be pinched off from larger fenestrae); it also bears a rounded frontal costate shield, similar in appearance to that of the autozooids, with 6–7 costae.

Etymology

The name is the superlative form of the Latin, *pulcher*, beautiful.

Remarks

Figularia pulcherrima is characterized by its distinctive costate frontal shield, but more especially by

the ovicell, which is also costate. This feature is unique within the genus, suggesting that the ovicell could be regarded as a distinct polymorph. *Figularia* species with this character perhaps ought to be segregated into a new genus.

Figularia pulcherrima is very similar to *F. jucunda* Canu & Bassler, 1929, from the Philippines, in the structure of the costate shield, but there are great differences in the morphology of the ovicells of the two species. Those of *F. jucunda* do not possess the costate shield seen in *F. pulcherrima*; instead, there are three central fenestrae, two lateral and one transverse distomedial, as well as up to eight circular marginal fenestrae. These are similar to those seen in *F. lepida* Hayward, 1988, from Mauritius, which as well as surrounding the margin of the ovicell, cover the frontal wall of the autozooids, leaving only a very small costate shield proximal to the orifice. *Figularia lepida* also has vicarious avicularia, not seen in either of the other two species.

Examination of the inside of the costal shield of *Figularia pulcherrima* shows a series of proximal pores that constitute the entrances to the costal lumina.

Distribution

A single small colony of this species was found encrusting a heavily bored shell from Iririki Island.

