

*THALAMOPORELLA GRACILATA* SP. NOV.  
(Fig. 6E,F)

*Material*

Holotype: NHM 1998.8.4.257, Erakor Island reef flat, Efate, Vanuatu.

Paratypes: NHM 1998.8.4.103, NHM 1998.8.4.193, NHM 1998.8.4.258, NHM 1998.8.4.266, all same locality and collection data as holotype.

*Description*

Colony unilaminar, encrusting. Autozooids rectangular, distinct, separated by shallow grooves. Gymnocyte reduced, present as a narrow margin, most noticeable around the anter of the orifice. Cryptocyst with a flat, finely beaded surface, becoming more granular with ontogeny, reaching two-thirds the way around either side of the orifice, punctured frontally by irregularly spaced pores; a raised, beaded mural rim proximally and laterally. Opesiules irregularly oval, almost rectangular, generally of unequal size, cryptocyst descending to basal wall proximally and laterally. Orifice wider than long; anter raised, slightly wider than poster; angular, lateral condyles positioned at edge of cryptocyst. Avicularium shorter than autozooid, uncommon; rostrum slightly raised, constituting half total length, acute triangular, with smooth distal platform; cryptocyst imperforate, finely granular; single, central, pear-shaped opesia; two pointed condyles at junction of distal gymnocyte and proximal cryptocyst. Ovicellate zooids similar to autozooids; bivalved ovicell smooth, bulbous, thin-walled, with a triangular aperture and obvious median suture.

Three types of spicules present: two sizes of almost straight compasses, small (60–80 µm) and medium (≈130 µm), the larger spicules straighter than the smaller ones; one size of small closed calipers (≈70 µm).

*Measurements*

Holotype. means and standard deviations, mm ( $n=10$ ).

Autozooid length  $0.70 \pm 0.04$ ; width  $0.47 \pm 0.03$ .

Orifice length  $0.17 \pm 0.01$ ; width  $0.22 \pm 0.01$ .

*Etymology*

From *gracilis*, L.—slender, thin, alluding to its delicate appearance.

*Remarks*

The autozooids of *Thalamoporella gracilata* are similar to those of both *T. granulata* and *T. tubifera*, which differ from each other in the shape of the avicularia and the presence in *T. granulata* of torquing i.e., twisting of the avicularium or its sibling zooid. However, *T. gracilata* differs from both species, in the extension of the cryptocyst around the autozooidal orifice, and in the shape of the avicularia as both the latter have spatulate vicarious avicularia. The shape of the avicularia in *T. gracilata* is more reminiscent of *T. stapifera*, but it has opesiules far smaller relative to the autozooid size than does *T. gracilata*.

A second species of *Thalamoporella* was also found but the colony fragment consisted of only a few autozooids and was too small for adequate description. However, the colony fragment did include an avicularium, larger than the autozooids, with a subspatulate rostrum and two large cryptocystal opesia. It is hoped that further examples of this species will be found as a result of continuing work in the area.

*Distribution*

Several small colonies of *Thalamoporella gracilata* were found encrusting large pieces of coral rubble from Erakor Island reef flat only.

