NOTE ON A PEARL-LIKE OBJECT FROM A SHRIMP,
*PENAEUS INDICUS* H. MILNE EDWARDS (DECAPODA, NATANTIA)

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On 1 June 1988 a sample of twenty juvenile prawns referable to *Penaeus indicus* H. Milne Edwards was obtained from Gora Bari Creek, Thatta District, Sindh, Pakistan, by Miss Safia Khanum for the study of their gut contents. There were seven males and thirteen females measuring 15 to 27 mm in carapace length, including rostrum. The sample was first washed using running tapwater, then preserved in 5% formaline for 24 hours, and later transferred to 70% alcohol. After three days when the prawns were being weighed and measured a pearl-like object was observed.

Pearl-like objects from crustaceans have been recorded earlier also. The earliest reference is that of a 'lobster pearl' from the chela of a cooked lobster, which was discovered in July 1907; Herrick (1910: 294) has given a detailed account of this pearl from *Homarus americanus* H. Milne Edwards, 1837. Herrick in 1911 also noted, in a footnote, that Calman informed him (in litt., 14 January 1911) about a similar specimen which was received from a fishmonger in London several years ago, embedded in the abdominal muscles of *Palinurus elephas* (Fabricius, 1787). A compilation of such information has been dealt with by Balss (1941) who also cited references of the occurrence of 'Dermoid cystes' in the eyes of caridean prawns *Acanthephyra* sp. and *Lobbeus polaris* (Sabine, 1821), the latter have, however, not been considered as 'true pearls' (Holthuis, personal communication).

Dexter (1954) recorded a pearl from a crayfish and again in 1962 one from the body cavity of a crayfish *Orconectes propinquus* (Girard, 1852), found while the specimen was being dissected.

As far as we know there is only one record of a 'pearl-like' object from a penaeid prawn (Chopra, 1930); here the pearl was discovered while eating the prawn, "a small penaeid'.

The present 'pearl' also comes from small specimens (juveniles of *Penaeus indicus*) measuring not more than 27 mm in carapace length. It is, however, not spherical but more like the one described by Herrick (1910) which "has a long axis at right angles to a flattened side" (p. 295). Further, the Indian
Fig. 1. Pearl-like object recovered from Penaeus indicus H. Milne Edwards.

The 'pearl' from P. indicus is nearly symmetrical, 2.09 mm in diameter and has a creamy tint. It weighs 0.0060 g on electronic balance and its hardness is 2.5 on Mohs' hardness scale, the texture is quite solid. Its specific gravity is 1.256.

The sample was carefully studied to determine the attachment of the 'pearl' but it has not been possible to indicate where, in the shrimp, the pearl was attached.

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LITERATURE CITED