

*Spongodes umbellata*, n. sp. (Pl. XXXVI. figs. 3a, 3b).

The colony forms a bush-like mass, branched from the base upwards; the terminal twigs forming flat polyp-bearing umbels.

The lower end of the stem has been torn off, so that it is impossible to decide whether we are dealing with a complete colony or perhaps only with a branch of a larger colony. The piece in the collection is, however, sufficiently characteristic to render possible a description of the species.

Horizontal, flat branches radiate on all sides from a median stem-portion. The length of the branches reaches 25 mm. Another short, ramified branch goes up from the middle. Each branch, after a short distance (7 to 8 mm.), divides into a number (two to three) of secondary branches, diverging at acute angles and turning upwards and to the sides; these always divide into three or four twigs whose small secondary twigs bear bundles of polyps. All the twigs reach to the same level, so as to give rise to copious umbels. These flat, expanded umbels mutually touch one another, only a few project beyond the remainder, so that, finally, the entire surface of the colony forms a single, flat, umbellate form, covered with polyps; while the lower surface shows the horizontally expanded ramifications.

Diameter of the colony 45 mm. Length of the twigs 3 to 4 mm. The end of each twig exhibits a bundle of ten to twelve closely crowded polyp heads. The heads are only slightly surmounted by rigid spicules. The consistency of the whole is flexible, but not flabby.

The outer covering of the stem and branches is thickly filled with larger and smaller pointed spindles. These are mostly *f*-shaped; in the branches they are more transversely placed, in the twigs, on the contrary, they are longitudinally arranged; their length reaches 4 mm., in the peduncles of the polyps the projecting spicules may reach 5 mm. in length. These spindles are generally slender, more or less rounded off at the ends, and covered with small, rigid spines. Only on the two ends are small warts developed. The size of the spindles reaches 0.8 by 0.05 mm.; 0.9 by 0.05 mm.; 1 by 0.05 mm.; 1.2 by 0.06 mm.; 5 by 0.2 mm. They are seldom straight, generally simply bent, or more or less *f*-shaped.

The polyp heads are small, surmounted from their base upwards by stout, purplish-red spicules, which project beyond the margins.

The tentacles, armed with small spicules, are white. The red spicules of the head are pointed; size, 0.72 by 0.04; 0.3 by 0.03; 0.18 by 0.01 mm.

Colour of the colony.—The umbels purple; all the polyp heads purplish-red, branches and twigs white.

*Habitat*.—Torres Strait: depth, 8 to 11 fathoms.