



GOVERNMENT OF EAST PAKISTAN
DIRECTORATE OF FISHERIES

PEARLS OF COX'S BAZAR

By
Dr. NAZIR AHMAD
Director of Fisheries, East Pakistan

Officer on Special Duty (Home Deptt.)
East Pakistan Government Press, Dacca
1958

[Reprinted from East Pakistan Information, August 14, 1957, pp.28, 29.]

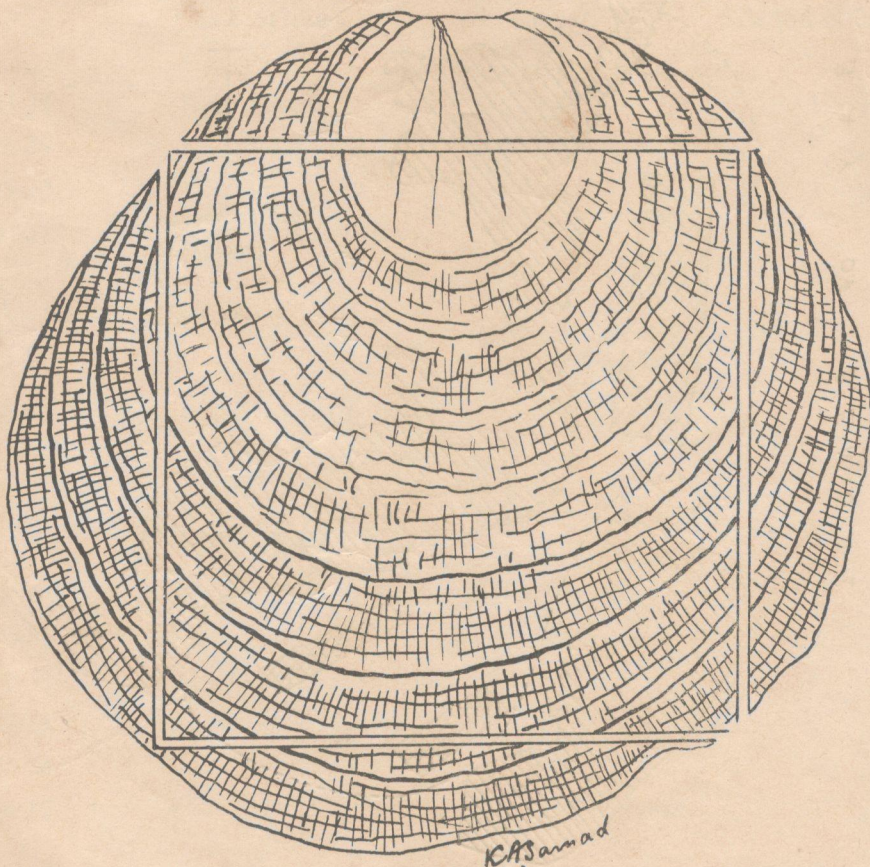
PEARLS OF COX'S BAZAR

By

Dr. NAZIR AHMAD

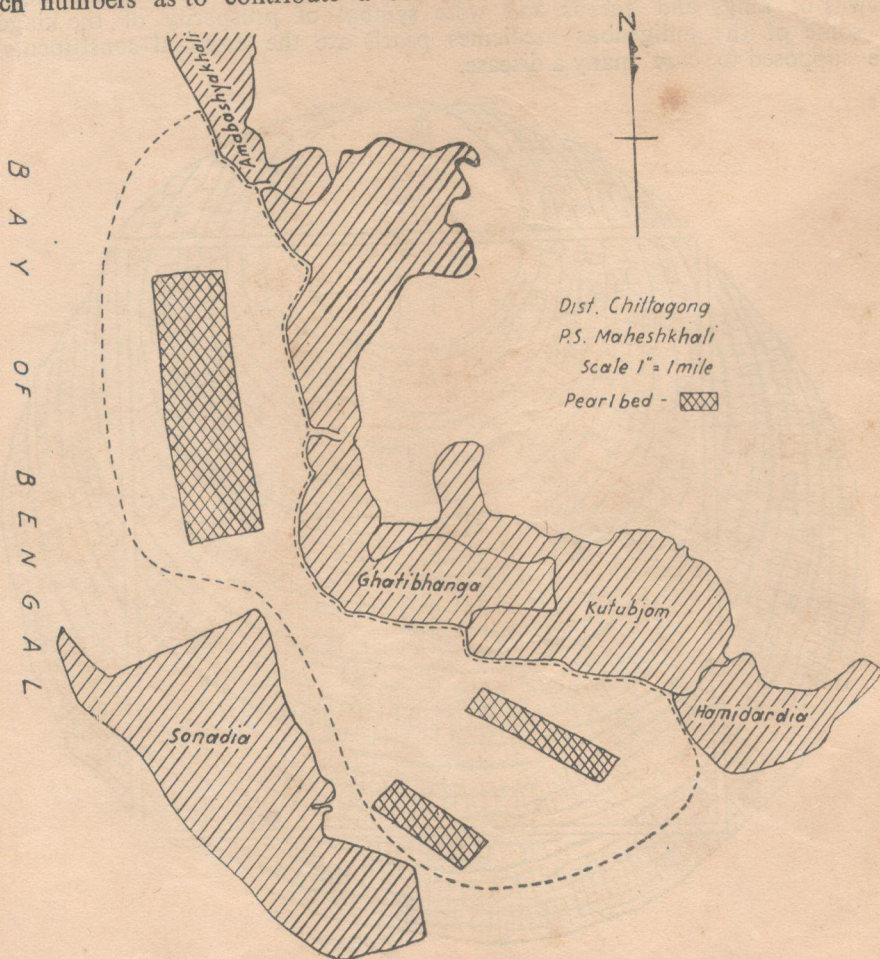
Director of Fisheries, East Pakistan.

Pearls, due to their lustre, colour and beauty are used in the manufacture of ornaments throughout the world. In olden days the pearls decorated the crowns of kings and queens and were symbol of prosperity of the kingdom. In some of the indigenous medicines pearls are the essential constituents and are supposed to cure many a disease.



The window-pane oyster.

In East Pakistan pearls are obtained either from the freshwater mussel (*Jhinuk*) or the window-pane oyster (*Placuna placenta*). The first named animal is found in various nalas, streams and beels while the second one which forms the subject matter of the present note, is available near Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar subdivision of Chittagong. The window-pane oysters are not true pearl oysters, and as the name implies their shells are used as window-panes in some countries like Thailand and Philippines. The animal has two shells, one convex and the other almost flat. The flat shell is cut into a rectangular piece and is fitted into the wooden frames of windows prepared specially for the purpose. In Philippines the shells are also used for the preparation of lampshades, picture and calendar frames, fruit and cake dishes, lanterns, trays and other novelties. The flesh of the animal is used in the preparation of sauce and omelet in Philippines and eaten by "Mug" of East Pakistan. The shells are not used for any specific purpose in our country and heaps of them are occasionally found discarded on the foreshores of East and West Pakistan. True pearl oysters which earn huge foreign exchange in Japan, and to a certain extent in Ceylon and Burma have, however, not been found in East Pakistan in such numbers as to contribute a commercial fishery till now.



Sketch map showing the window-pane oyster beds.

The window-pane oysters cover an area of approximately 83.0 acres in the Maheshkhali channel of Cox's Bazar. The location of the beds will be clear from the attached sketch map.

The pearls obtained from the window-pane oysters vary in size, shape and lustre. Sometimes the pearls obtained from them are sold from Rs.10 to Rs.40 per tola; the bigger and regular pearls, which are quite rare, however, fetch as much as Rs.100 to Rs.125 per tola.

The window-pane oyster fishery started from the year 1927 and since then it has been leased out to private parties in open bid at a nominal rate as will appear from the table given at the end of this article. Exploitation of oysters continues practically throughout the year, but September to November is the peak season when a number of persons work daily. The oysters are fished indiscriminately with the result that both the size of shells as well as their number is decreasing day by day. The fishery, although not very remunerative, should be protected by conservation and other measures to save it from further depletion. Small scale industries can be developed by utilisation of the pearls and the shells and can easily sustain a number of persons as is being done in the Philippines.

Year.	Name of lessee.	Amount. Rs.	Period of lease.
1927-28	Amir Hamja	170	1 year.
1928-29	Do.	300	1 "
1929-30	Do.	1,450	1 "
1930-31 } to 1943-44 }	Kept khas as oysters were scanty.		
1944-45	Ejaha Mia	25	1 "
1945-46	Do.	155	1 "
1946-47	Abdur Rahman Bali and Ejaha Mia	20	1 "
1947-48	Kept khas as oysters were scanty.		
1949-50	Abdur Rahman Bali	25	1 "
1950-51	Ejaha Mia and Osiuddin	20	1 "
1951-52	Osiuddin	38	1 "
1952-53	Abdur Rahman Bali	100	1 "
1953-54	Do.	100	1 "
1954-55	Do.	525 per year.	3 "