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In view of the high nutritive value of the freshly hatched naupli and the advantage of using the dry cysts as a source of live feed, brine shrimp, Artemia cysts are used very extensively throughout the world in most of the hatcheries of both fresh water and marine fishes and crustaceans. Even today ornamental fish breeders depend mostly on brine shrimp nauplii to feed their fry.

Till very recently the entire world demand of brine shrimp cysts was met by a few commercial companies from San Francisco, Utah and Canada. Because of the heavy demand, the price of Artemia cysts went up and it seems likely that the shortage of Artemia cysts might become a major constraint on the growth and development of aquaculture in future. Hence, many aquaculturists and aquarium fish breeders started either looking for natural Artemia grounds or to easily available cheaper feeds like Tubifex, Daphnia etc., As a result of this, during the last decade nearly fifty or more new geographical strains of Artemia have been located throughout the world (Sorgeloos et al., 1976). In recent years, Artemia has been successfully cultured in countries like Brazil (Persoone and Sorgeloos, 1980), Philippines (Delos Santos et al, 1980 and Vos, 1981). Thailand (Tunsutapanich, 1980), India (Royan, 1981) and Indonesia (Sorgeloos, 1982).

Sri Lanka, with the assistance from Asian Development Bank, is stepping up her activities on aquaculture - both inland and brackish water with emphasis on prawn culture. Realizing the importance of Artemia as a live feed in aquaculture, the National Aquatic Resources Agency (NARA) has initiated a project on Artemia culture. As a pre-requisite an initial survey was conducted along the southern, western and northern coast of Sri Lanka which resulted in locating new Artemia grounds at Palavi (western region) and at Hambantota and Bundala (southern region) (Fig. 1). A few years back, Artemia (strain unknown) was located in the salt pans around Elephant Pass (Costa, Personal communication). However, in this present survey, no trace of Artemia was found at Elephant Pass and Kurunchativu (northern region). In Asia, the presence of Artemia have been reported from China, India, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Japan and Turkey (Persoone and Sorgeloos, 1980), but so far the presence of Artemia in Sri Lanka has not been reported and hence this is the first report on the occurrence of Artemia in Sri Lanka.

Tuticorin (southern India) which is very close to Sri Lanka has a very potential Artemia population (Royan et al., 1970). Since both Tuticorin and Sri Lanka Artemia are pathenogenetic in nature (Vanhaecke, Personnel communication) suggest that Artemia could have been introduced in Sri Lanka from Tuticorin through the migratory aquatic birds. In fact Artemia needs active or passive dispersion vectors for its cysts, such as wind, waterbirds or man (Sorgeloos, 1983). Dispersion of Artemia to different environments through aquatic birds have already been mentioned (Royan, et al., 1970).

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NARA is currently studying the Sri Lankan strain for the various features, viz. the volume of cysts harvested from natural habitats, survival of young nauplii at different temperature and salinity combinations, ecological characteristics of the population run on nutritional value of decapsulated cysts and different instar nauplii as a food source for fishes, crustacean larvae and ornamental fishes. in on Langa

PCI-ESI (ARRIVES A MANY)

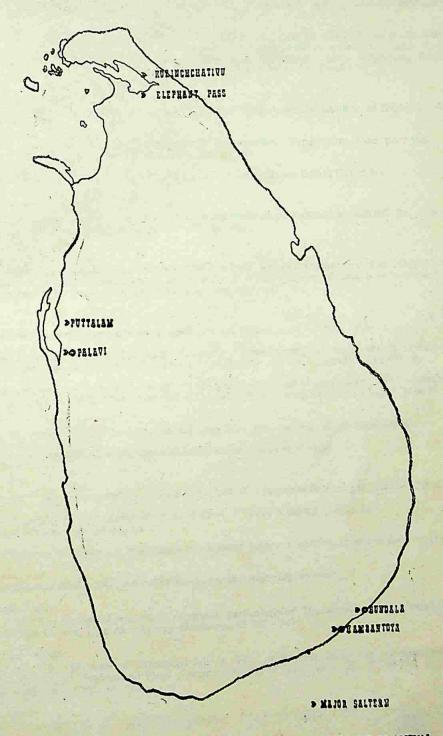
A sample of Sri Lanka Artemia strain has been sent to the Artemia Reference Centre at Belgium for further analyses and identification of the strain. SELVOST S DE ROLL OBLA SUL BURNESS IN CT - 5

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Fig. 1. Locations of Artemia in Sri Lanka,



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