Research Note

A Method to Determine the Number and Arrangement of Flame Cells in Cercariae

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The flame cell formula is important for identifying and classifying trematode cercariae. However, the formula is difficult to determine in species which have a lot of secretory substances in the body (Cable, 1963; Ogata, 1943). The main causes of difficulty are that flame cells are only visible when living cercariae are immobilized by pressure from a cover glass and that numerous granules in secretory cells such as those of cystogenous glands obstruct the observation of fine excretory tubules. Moreover it is impossible to re-examine the position of the flame cells after the cercaria dies. Watanabe (1983) has reported a method for finding the distribution and number of flame cells using serial paraffin sections under a light microscope (LM). It is well known, however, that tissue structure is retained better by fixation for electron microscope (EM) than for LM. Therefore we will describe an improved method using EM techniques.

In *Cercaria shikokuensis* obtained from snails, *Cerithidea rhizophorarum* (Harada, 1989), it is difficult to observe the exact number of flame cells because the cercaria body contains many cystogenous materials and other kinds of secretory granules. We used this type of cercariae in the present study.

The cercariae were fixed in Karnovsky's fixative (Karnovsky, 1965). After several washings with 0.1M cacodylate buffer solution

(pH 7.2), they were postfixed in 1% osmium tetroxide, dehydrated in ethanol series and embedded in epoxy resin (Spurr, 1969). The whole body of cercariae was successively sectioned longitudinally, into 1.4 or 1.5 μ m strips with an ultramicrotome (Reichert, Ultracut) and two or three successive sections were picked up by a wire loop and transferred to a drop of water on a glass slide. The glass slide was then warmed on a hot plate to evaporate water and leave the sections attached to it. These specimens were stained with 0.5% toluidine blue solution (pH 7.0 -7.2) for 6 min at 58 -60° C, washed in tap water for 2 min, and dried. A cover glass was mounted on the sections and fixed on a slide glass with a small amount of transparent nail coating at the four corners. After a drop of xylene was immersed between the slide and cover glass, the sections were observed under an LM. After xylene evaporates, the dried slides can be preserved for a long time without color change.

Flame cells appeared as peculiar triangular shapes in typical longitudinal sections (Fig. 1, arrow head) and were identified as circles with densely stained cores (cilia bundles) in typical cross sections (Fig. 2, arrow head). In oblique sections, they were also recognizable as variations of the two types mentioned above. As the flame cell is about 10 μ m long and 5–6 μ m wide in this species, one flame cell can be observed in at least three sections even if longitudinally cut. All sections were photographed *under an LM*, and each flame cell's position was marked on the photographs. The outline of the cercaria and the positions of flame cells on each photograph were

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Fig. 1. Photograph showing a longitudinally-sectioned flame cell (arrow head). bar = 10 μ m. ph: pharynx. Fig. 2. Photograph showing a cross-sectioned flame cell (arrow head). Bar = 10 μ m. vs: ventral sucker.

transcribed on a transparent sheet. The sheets were then three-dimensionally reconstructed and the number and distribution of flame cells were examined. We determined the number of flame cells for this species to be 36. The same results were obtained by a three-dimensional image analyzing system (Cosmozone-2S).

The major advantage of this method is that those who are acquainted with EM techniques can easily determine the distribution and the number of flame cells. However, since this method does not reveal the flame cell pattern (connection of excretory tubes) necessary for the description and identification of cercariae, an easier and more accurate method for determining the flame cell pattern must be devised.

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