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**SURVEY OF POTENTIAL DISEASE CAUSING ORGANISMS
ASSOCIATED WITH *Gracilaria changii***

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ABSTRACT

A survey of the organisms associated with *Gracilaria changii* Abbott, Zhang and Xia and their potential ability to cause disease was conducted. Farmed and wild populations of *Gracilaria changii* were screened for the presence of organisms associated with disease symptoms. Of 43 bacterial isolates, eight induced disease symptoms in non-axenic *G. changii* incubated in seawater medium. Four of the eight isolates also induced disease symptoms in axenic thalli in marine broth. Three bacterial isolates that is K1B1, M1B26 and M1B29 which repeatedly caused disease symptoms were selected for assessing their ability to cause disease in two different culture media. The comparison of disease symptoms on axenic thalli in seawater medium and marine broth, showed that disease symptoms were manifested earlier in marine broth for isolates M1B29 and M1B26 whereas K1B1 showed stronger disease symptoms in seawater medium. Strains K1B1 and M1B26 were identified as *Deleya aesta* and strain M1B29 as *Deleya marina*.

Eleven fungal isolates were obtained. They were from the genera *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, *Cladosporium*, *Gliomastix* and *Pestalotia*. One yeast-like fungi was observed. Two of the isolates could not be identified due to the lack of fruiting bodies, thus they were designated sterile mycelia. Most of the fungal isolates, however, were soil fungi. The isolation medium: Seawater Potato Dextrose Agar and Malt Extract Agar, may not be optimum for the isolation of aquatic fungi. Baiting technique was used to isolate aquatic fungi

however, the small number of samples screened were insufficient to yield aquatic fungi.

When axenic thalli were re-infected with fungal isolates, two displayed mycelial growth. The fungal isolates which re-infected axenic thalli were *Aspergillus* sp. and *Pestalotia* sp. Cyst-like growths were observed in cross-sections of thalli incubated with *Pestalotia* sp.

Three virus-like particles from homogenates of 'sick' thalli were observed under Transmission Electron Microscope. Two were rod-like, three hexagonal and one filamentous. These VLPs are similar to VLPs found in plants. The virus-like particles were unable to re-infect *G. changii*.

Twenty-five taxa of epiphytic algae from the division Cyanophyta, Chlorophyta, Phaeophyta, Bacillariophyta and Rhodophyta were identified from the surface of *G. changii* thalli of farmed and wild populations with Chlorophyta being the predominant division. The epiphytes obtained from wild populations especially Carey Island and Morib exhibited higher species diversity compared to farmed populations. An endophytic alga *Audouinella* sp. was observed in cross-sections of *G. changii*. The presence of another endophytic alga, *Streblonema* sp. was suspected in the same cross-section.

An unicellular organism with cell-wall degrading ability was described from cells of whitened *Gracilaria* thalli.

A checklist of the microflora and disease causing organisms in *G. changii* would form an important basis for formulating disease control and proper management of seaweed mass culture systems in Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

Kajian organisma-organisma yang dikaitkan dengan *Gracilaria changii* Abbott, Zhang & Xia dan kebolehan organisma-organisma tersebut menyebabkan penyakit telah dilaksanakan.

Populasi *G. changii* yang ditanam di ladang dan yang tumbuh secara liar telah diskriminasi untuk kehadiran organisma-organisma yang berhubungkait dengan simptom-simptom penyakit. Daripada 43 isolat bakteria, didapati lapan menyebabkan simptom penyakit dalam talus bukan 'axenic' *G. changii* yang dieram dalam medium air laut. Empat daripada lapan isolat itu menyebabkan simptom penyakit dalam talus 'axenic' yang dieram dalam kaldu marin. Tiga isolat bakteria yang berulang kali menyebabkan penyakit iaitu K1B1, M1B26 dan M1B29 dipilih untuk membuat perbandingan kebolehan mereka menyebabkan penyakit dalam dua media pengkulturan yang berlainan. Perbandingan simptom penyakit ke atas talus 'axenic' dalam medium air laut dan kaldu marin bagi tiga isolat bakteria menunjukkan bahawa dua isolat menunjukkan kesan simptom penyakit yang lebih awal dalam kaldu marin manakala isolat K1B1 menunjukkan simptom penyakit yang ketara apabila dieram dalam medium air laut. Strain K1B1 dan M1B26 telah diidentifikasi sebagai *Deleya aesta* dan strain M1B29 sebagai *Deleya marina*.

Sebelas isolat fungi telah diperolehi. Mereka adalah dari genera *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, *Cladosporium*, *Gliomastix* dan *Pestalotia*. Satu jenis

fungi menyerupai yis diperhatikan. Dua daripada isolat yang diperolehi tidak dapat diidentifikasi disebabkan ketiadaan jasad buah. Oleh itu, mereka dikategorikan sebagai miselia steril. Kebanyakan daripada isolat fungi yang diperolehi adalah fungi tanah. Medium pengisolation: 'Seawater Potato Dextrose Agar' dan 'Malt Extract Agar' mungkin bukan optimum untuk pengisolation fungi akuatik. Teknik 'baiting' digunakan untuk mengisolat fungi akuatik, tetapi jumlah sampel yang kecil tidak mencukupi untuk mendapatkan fungi akuatik. Apabila talus 'axenic' dijangkiti semula dengan isolat fungi, dua menghasilkan pertumbuhan miselia. Isolat fungi yang menjangkit semula talus adalah *Aspergillus* sp. dan *Pestalotia* sp. Pertumbuhan menyerupai sist diperhatikan dalam keratan rentas talus yang dieram bersama *Pestalotia* sp.

Partikel menyerupai virus diperhatikan di bawah Mikroskop Transmissi Elektron daripada homogenat talus yang 'sakit'. Dua berbentuk batang, tiga hexagonal dan satu berfilamen. Partikel menyerupai virus ini menyerupai partikel virus yang dijumpai dalam tumbuh-tumbuhan. Partikel menyerupai virus itu tidak berupaya menjangkiti semula *G. changii*.

Sebanyak dua puluh lima taxa algae epifitik dari divisi Cyanofita, Chlorofita, Phaeofita, Bacillariofita dan Rhodofita diidentifikasi daripada permukaan talus *G. changii* dari populasi ladang dan populasi liar. Divisi Chlorofita adalah yang paling kerap dijumpai. Epifit algae dari populasi liar menunjukkan diversiti yang lebih tinggi berbanding dengan populasi ladang. Alga endofitik *Audouinella* sp. telah dijumpai dalam keratan rentas *G. changii*.

Kehadiran satu lagi alga endofit, *Streblonema* sp. disyaki dalam keratan rentas yang sama.

Organisma unisel yang berkemungkinan mempunyai kebolehan melarutkan dinding sel telah dijumpai dalam sel talus *G. changii* yang 'sakit'.

Suatu senarai-semak mikroflora dan organisma penyebab penyakit dalam *G. changii* akan membentuk asas untuk formulasi kawalan penyakit and pengurusan kultur-massa rumpair yang lebih baik di Malaysia.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ABSTRAK	v
CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF APPENDICES	xviii
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Importance of Seaweeds	1
1.2 Importance of <i>Gracilaria</i> Farming	5
1.3 Principal Farming Areas	7
1.4 <i>Gracilaria</i> Farming Prospects In Malaysia	7
1.5 Significance of Research	8
1.6 Identification of Disease Causing Agents	9
1.7 Objective	10
CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 <i>Gracilaria</i> Farming	16
2.2 Diseases of Seaweeds	19

2.2.1 Diseases Caused by Environmental Stress	20
2.2.2 Diseases Caused by Bacteria	22
2.2.3 Diseases Caused by Fungus	25
2.2.4 Diseases Caused by Virus	29
2.2.5 Diseases Caused by Epiphytic Algae	32
2.2.6 Diseases Caused by Endophytic Algae	36
2.2.7 Diseases Caused by Other Organisms	39
CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS	41
3.1 <i>Gracilaria changii</i> Abbott, Zhang & Xia	41
3.2 Sampling Sites	42
3.3 Isolation of Disease Causing Organisms	42
3.3.1 Isolation of Bacteria	44
3.3.2 Isolation of Fungi	45
3.3.3 Screening for Virus	46
3.3.4 Isolation of Algal Epiphytes, Endophytes and Unicellular Organism	46
3.4 Re-infection of Isolates into <i>G. changii</i> Thallus	48
3.4.1 Bacterial Infection of <i>G. changii</i>	48
3.4.1.1 Infection of Non-axenic Thallus with Bacteria (Seawater Medium)	48
3.4.1.2 Infection of Axenic Thallus with Bacteria (Marine Broth Medium)	51

3.4.1.3 Identification of the Bacterial Isolates	
Causing Disease Symptoms	53
3.4.2 Fungal Infection of <i>G. changii</i> Thallus	57
3.4.3 Viral Infection of <i>G. changii</i> Thallus	57
3.5 The Influence of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Bacterial Growth	58
3.5.1 Production of <i>G. changii</i> Extract	58
3.5.2 Preparation of Bacterial Suspension	58
3.6 The Effect of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Fungal Growth	60
CHAPTER 4 : RESULTS	61
4.1 Isolation and Identification of Organisms	61
4.1.1 Isolation and Identification of Bacteria	61
4.1.2 Isolation and Identification of Fungi	64
4.1.3 Screening for Virus	69
4.1.4 Description of Algal Epiphytes Isolated from the Surface of <i>G. changii</i>	72
4.1.5 Identification of an Alga Endophytic in <i>G. changii</i>	90
4.1.6 Identification of an Unicellular Organism	93
4.2 Re-infection of <i>G. changii</i> with Isolated Microorganisms	96
4.2.1 Identification of the Three Bacterial Isolates Showing Disease Symptoms in Two Growth Media	101
4.3 Re-infection of Axenic Thalli with Fungi Isolated Earlier from Diseased <i>G. changii</i> Thalli	102

4.4 Re-infection of Axenic Thalli with Virus-like Particles Obtained from Diseased Thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	105
4.5 Influence of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Bacterial Growth	105
4.6 Influence of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Fungal Isolates	105
 CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION	 106
5.1 Bacteria and <i>Gracilaria changii</i>	106
5.1.1 Bacterial Isolates Associated with <i>G. changii</i>	106
5.1.2 Agar-degrading Bacteria Associated with <i>G. changii</i>	106
5.1.3 Bacterial Infection of <i>G. changii</i>	110
5.1.4 Effect of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Bacterial Growth	115
5.1.5 Identification of Two Disease Causing Bacteria	117
5.2 Fungi and <i>Gracilaria changii</i>	119
5.2.1 Fungal Isolates Associated with <i>G. changii</i>	119
5.2.2 Fungal Infection of <i>G. changii</i> Thalli	123
5.2.3 Effect of <i>G. changii</i> Extract on Fungal Isolates of <i>G. changii</i>	125
5.3 Virus and <i>Gracilaria changii</i>	126
5.3.1 Viral Isolates Associated with <i>G. changii</i>	126
5.3.2 Viral Infection of <i>G. changii</i>	128
5.4 Algal Epiphytes and Endophytic Algae Associated with <i>Gracilaria changii</i>	129

5.5 An Unicellular Organism Associated with <i>Gracilaria changii</i>	139
5.6 Disease Symptoms and Associated Organisms	140
5.7 Appraisal of Study	141
CHAPTER 6 : CONCLUSION	146
BIBLIOGRAPHY	151
APPENDICES	179

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	PAGE
1. An epiphyte attached to the thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	33
2. Sampling site of <i>G. changii</i> on Carey Island.	43
3. Thalli of <i>G. changii</i> with 'sick' symptoms. Note the discolouration of the thalli and rotting of the thalli tip.	43
4. Marine Agar 2216E with paper discs containing different concentrations of seaweed extract plus control (sterile seawater) in the center.	59
5. Colonisation of an agar-degrading bacteria (purple colony) on Marine Agar 2216E.	63
6. <i>Penicillium</i> sp., 500X isolated from the surface of <i>G. changii</i> thalli.	67
7. Spores of <i>Pestalotia</i> sp., X200 isolated from the thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	68
8. Yeast-like fungi, 100X isolated from the thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	69
9-10. Virus C466 (Fig.9) and C463 (Fig.10) from homogenate of <i>G. changii</i> thalli (bar = 100 nm).	70
11. Virus C465 from homogenate of <i>G. changii</i> thalli (bar = 100 nm).	71
12. Virus C469 from homogenate of <i>G. changii</i> thalli (bar = 100 nm).	71

13. VLP C651 from homogenate of <i>G. changii</i> thalli (bar = 100 nm).	71
14. VLP C720 in ultrathin sectioned <i>G. changii</i> thalli (bar = 100 nm).	71
15. <i>Lyngbya ?majuscula</i> , X500.	75
16. <i>Microspora</i> sp., X200.	77
17. <i>Cladophora flexuosa</i> , X200.	79
18. <i>Chaetomorpha</i> sp. X100.	81
19. <i>Hypnea ?esperii</i> , X50. A, ultimate branchlet is spinose. B, showing alternate branching.	83
20. <i>Polysiphonia</i> sp., (PS), X100, attached to the surface of <i>G. changii</i> .	83
21. <i>Enteromorpha</i> sp. , (ET), X100, attached to the surface of <i>G. changii</i> .	84
22. <i>Ulva ?fasciata</i> , growing together with <i>G. changii</i> .	86
23. <i>Microcoleus</i> sp., X200. A diatom which is of the genus <i>Tabellaria</i> sp. is attached to the mucilage enclosing the trichomes.	87
24. <i>Ceramium</i> sp. attached by rhizoids to <i>G. changii</i> .	88
25. The diatoms A. <i>Tabellaria</i> sp. B. <i>Achnanthes</i> sp., X200 scraped from the thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	90
26. <i>Audouinella</i> sp. on <i>G. changii</i> .	91

27. <i>Audouinella</i> sp. A, cross-sectioned <i>G. changii</i> showing the penetration of the thallus by <i>Audouinella</i> sp., X20.	
B, higher magnification showing the endophyte, X500 which may also include <i>Streblonema</i> sp.	92
28. Thalli with whitening and fragmentation where unicellular organism with assumed cell-wall degrading ability was identified.	94
29-32. Cross-section of 'sick' <i>G. changii</i> thalli showing the unicellular organism appearing to digest the cell wall (bar = 3 μ m).	95
33 . Axenic thalli injected with strain K2B18 exhibiting whitening of tips.	99
34. Axenic thalli (in marine broth) injected with bacterial strain M1B29 showing whitening at injected site.	100
35. Axenic thalli (in seawater medium) injected with bacterial strain K1B1 showing whitening at injected site.	100
36. Mycelial growth of <i>Pestalotia</i> sp. along the thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	103
37. A, cross-section of thalli with fungal isolate AF10 (<i>Pestalotia</i> sp.) showing cyst-like growth within the cell, X100. B, a larger magnification, X200.	104

LIST OF TABLES

Table	PAGE
1: Main Commercial Seaweeds Worldwide and Their Uses.	4
2.1 : AGAR: World Production, 1984 (tonnes).	14
2.2 : AGAR IMPORT: Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) Countries (tonnes).	15
2.3 : AGAR EXPORTS: Bay of Bengal Programme(BOBP) Countries (tonnes).	16
3 : Composition of Synthetic Seawater Medium.	49
4 : Bacteria Isolated from Diseased Thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	62
5 : Some Characteristics of the Agar-degrading Bacteria.	63
6 : Fungi Isolated from <i>G. changii</i> .	65
7 : Description of VLPs Observed.	70
8 : Algal Epiphytes Found Growing with, Entangled and Attached to the Thalli of <i>G. changii</i> .	72
9 : Results of the Infection of Non-axenic Thallus with Bacteria (Seawater Medium).	96
10 : Results of the Infection of Axenic Thallus with Bacteria (Marine Broth Medjum).	97
11: Comparison of the Infection of Axenic Thallus with Bacteria in Marine Broth and Seawater Medium.	99

12 : Identification of Two Disease Causing Bacteria.	101
13 : Results of the Infection of Thallus with Fungi Isolates.	102
14 : Frequency Occurrence of Algal Epiphytes and Endophyte.	131
15 : Epiphytes of Cultivated <i>Gracilaria</i> Compiled from Literature.	132
16 : A Checklist of Algal Epiphytes and Endophyte Associated with <i>G. changii</i> .	148
17 : Organisms Possibly Associated with Disease Symptoms.	150

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	PAGE
1 : A GN and GP Microplate with 95 Carbon Source Utilisation Tests.	179
2 : Identification of Bacterial Isolate K1B1 Based on Biolog's Microlog Computer Programme.	180
3 : Identification of Bacterial Isolate M1B26 Based on Biolog's Microlog Computer Programme.	181
4 : Identification of Bacterial Isolate M1B29 Based on Biolog's Microlog Computer Programme.	182