

**SPINAL MOTOR NEURONAL ORGANISATION
OF SELECTED LOCAL FRESHWATER FISHES
IN RELATION TO MEDIAN FIN INNERVATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Fish fins are appendages which represent the limbs in higher vertebrates. In general, fish moves in the water by body undulation with the assistance of fins. To date, most of the studies focused on the innervations of limbs especially in mammals, such as rats, cats and monkeys. On the contrary, understanding on the innervations of the fish fin is still at its infancy as studies on the relevant field are relatively scarce. Hence, this study aimed to fill the knowledge gap, i.e. to investigate the organisation of spinal motor neurons in relation to the distribution of the median fins. For comparison purposes, four species of juvenile fishes utilised in this study were divided into two groups, namely (i) fish with long and continuous dorsal fin (*Channa micropeltes, toman* and *Clarias sp., keli*), and (ii) fish with short and non-continuous dorsal fin (*Mystus nemurus, baung* and *Pangasius sp., patin*). Spinal cord tissue obtained from three different representative segments along the rostro-caudal axis were processed histologically and stained using three neurohistological staining techniques including H&E, Nissl as well as Lillie's Variant of the Weil-Weigert prior to light microscopy level observation. The organisation of motor neurons was correlated with the distribution of fins. Cell column organisation characterised the location of motor neurons into seven cell columns, namely intermediolateral (IL), dorsomedial (DM), ventromedial (VM), central (C), ventrolateral (VL), dorsoventral (DV) and retrodorsolateral (RDL) cell columns. It was observed that median motor neurons (IL, DM and VM cell columns) outnumbered central (C cell column) and lateral motor neurons (VL, DL and RDL cell columns) at all rostral, median, and caudal region of the fish body trunk. Medial motor neurons (IL and DM cell columns) were found in all three segments; thus, were probably innervating the body trunk, for instance to aid in body undulation. On the contrary, DL motor neurons were found only at the dorsal fin area of *Clarias sp.* and *Pangasius sp.*; thus, were

probably innervating the particular fin. To further investigate the innervations of caudal fin muscles through HRP histochemistry, *Clarias* sp. with rounded caudal fin and *Pangasius* sp. with forked caudal fin were selected from each group. The nerve trunks at the caudal fin were transected and soaked in 50% HRP solution. After two days, each fish was sacrificed and its spinal cord was freeze-sectioned using cryostat. The sections were stained using DAB Liquid Enhanced Substrate kit to reveal the motor neurons containing HRP in the cytoplasm which appeared as brownish precipitations. Most of the motor neurons innervating *Clarias* sp. rounded caudal fin were located medially at IL, DM and VM cell columns. In contrast, the motor neurons innervating forked caudal fin of *Pangasius* sp. were located mostly at the ventral areas, namely VM and VL cell columns. The differences of the motor neuronal organisation between the two species could be credited to further muscle differentiation in the caudal fin muscle layers of *Pangasius* sp., which exhibited more complicated organisation than that of the *Clarias* sp. In conclusion, the findings of this study were in agreement with the existing literature that medial motor neurons (IL and DM cell columns) innervate body trunk while more laterally located motor neurons (VM, VL and DL cell columns) innervate distal structure, in this case the fins. Future research can focus, specifically, on the innervations by individual nerve trunk or innervations of individual muscle and/or the research can be conducted at different stages of life cycle of the fish.

ABSTRAK

Sirip ikan merupakan appendaj yang mewakili anggota badan dalam vertebrata tinggi. Secara amnya, ikan bergerak dalam air melalui pergerakan badan dengan bantuan sirip. Pada masa kini, kebanyakan kajian memfokus kepada pensarafan anggota badan terutamanya mamalia, seperti tikus, kucing dan monyet. Sebaliknya, pemahaman tentang pensarafan sirip ikan adalah masih di peringkat awal oleh kerana kajian dalam bidang yang berkaitan adalah masih kurang. Oleh itu, kajian ini ingin mengisi ruang maklumat berkaitan, iaitu untuk mengkaji/menyiasat hubung kait organisasi neuron motor korda spina dengan kedudukan sirip tengah. Untuk tujuan perbandingan, empat spesies ikan juvenil yang digunakan dalam kajian ini telah dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan, iaitu (i) ikan dengan sirip dorsal yang panjang dan bersambung (*Channa micropeltes*, toman, dan *Clarias* sp., keli), serta (ii) ikan dengan sirip dorsal yang pendek dan tidak bersambung (*Mystus nemurus*, baung, dan *Pangasius* sp., patin). Tisu korda spina diambil dari tiga wakil segmen yang berlainan sepanjang paksi rostro-kaudal dan diproses secara histology dan diwarnakan menggunakan tiga jenis kaedah pewarnaan neurohistologi, iaitu *H&E*, *Nissl* dan *Lillie's Variant of the Weil-Weigert* sebelum penelitian tahap mikroskopik cahaya. Organisasi neuron motor dikaitkan dengan kedudukan sirip-sirip ikan. Organisasi kolum sel mencirikan lokasi neuron-neuron motor kepada tujuh kolum sel yang merangkumi kolum sel *intermediolateral* (IL), *dorsomedial* (DM), *ventromedial* (VM), *central* (C), *ventrolateral* (VL), *dorsoventral* (DV) dan *retrodorsolateral* (RDL). Didapati bahawa neuron motor median (kolum sel IL, DM and VM) melebihi neuron motor tengah (kolum sel C) dan lateral (kolum sel VL, DL and RDL) di ketiga-tiga bahagian rostral, tengah dan kaudal tubuh badan ikan. Neuron motor median (kolum sel IL dan DM) ditemui di ketiga-tiga segmen tersebut; dengan itu berkemungkinan mengawal tubuh badan, contohnya membantu

pergerakan undulasi badan ikan. Sebaliknya, neuron motor DL hanya didapati di kawasan sirip dorsal *Clarias* sp. dan *Pangasius* sp.; maka berkemungkinan mensarafi sirip ikan tersebut. Untuk mengkaji pensarafan otot sirip kaudal secara lebih mendalam melalui *HRP histochemistry*, *Clarias* sp. dengan sirip kaudal berbentuk bulat dan *Pangasius* sp. dengan sirip kaudal yang bercabang telah dipilih dari setiap kumpulan. Cabang utama saraf yang terdapat di sirip kaudal ikan telah dipotong dan direndam di dalam larutan *HRP* 50%. Selepas dua hari, setiap ikan tersebut dikorbankan dan korda spinanya telah dikerat nipis secara beku menggunakan kriostat. Keratan nipis tersebut diwarnakan dengan menggunakan *DAB Liquid Enhanced Substrate kit* untuk menyerlahkan neuron motor yang mengandungi *HRP* di dalam sitoplasma sebagai pemendakan berwarna perang. Kebanyakan neuron motor yang mensarafi sirip kaudal bulat *Clarias* sp. terletak di kawasan median pada kolum sel IL, DM dan VM. Sebaliknya, neuron motor yang mensarafi sirip kaudal bercabang *Pangasius* sp. kebanyakannya didapati di kawasan ventral, iaitu kolum sel VM dan VL. Perbezaan organisasi neuron motor antara kedua-dua spesies berkemungkinan disebabkan oleh proses pembezaan lanjut lapisan otot sirip kaudal *Pangasius* sp. yang mempamerkan organisasi lebih kompleks berbanding dengan yang terdapat pada *Clarias* sp. Secara kesimpulannya, penemuan kajian ini adalah sama dengan bahan-bahan literasi yang sedia ada, bahawa neuron motor median (kolum sel IL dan DM) mensarafi tubuh badan manakala neuron motor yang terletak secara lebih lateral (kolum sel VM, VL dan DL) mensarafi struktur distal, iaitu sirip ikan dalam kes ini. Kajian masa depan boleh memfokus, khususnya, kepada pensarafan oleh cabang utama saraf individu atau pensarafan otot individu dan/atau kajian boleh dilaksanakan pada peringkat yang berlainan dalam kitaran hidup ikan.

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Kwong Soke Chee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xvi
LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS.....	xviii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 REVIEW ON SPINAL CORD.....	1
1.1.1 SPINAL CORD ANATOMY.....	1
1.1.2 FUNCTIONS OF SPINAL CORD.....	2
1.1.3 SPINAL NERVES.....	2
1.1.4 CELLULAR BASIS OF SPINAL CORD.....	3
1.1.4.1 MOTOR NEURON.....	4
1.1.4.2 AXOPLASMIC TRANSPORTATION OF MOTOR NEURON.....	5
1.1.5 RESEARCHES ON SPINAL CORD.....	6
1.2 REVIEW OF FISH.....	7
1.2.1 FISH CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM.....	7
1.2.2 FISH FINS.....	7
1.2.2.1 FISH WITH LONG AND CONTINUOUS DORSAL FIN.....	11
1.2.2.1.1 <i>Channa micropeltes</i> (Valenciennes and Cuvier, 1840).....	11
1.2.2.1.2 <i>Clarias</i> sp.....	13
1.2.2.2 FISH WITH SHORT AND NON-CONTINUOUS DORSAL FIN.....	15
1.2.2.2.1 <i>Mystus nemurus</i> (Valenciennes and Cuvier, 1840).....	15
1.2.2.2.2 <i>Pangasius</i> sp.....	17
1.3 REVIEW OF TECHNIQUES.....	19
1.3.1 HISTOLOGY.....	19
1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	20
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	20

CHAPTER 2: FISH EXTERNAL MORPHOLOGY

2.1	INTRODUCTION	22
2.2	OBJECTIVE.....	22
2.3	METHODOLOGY	23
2.3.1	OBSERVATION ON FISH EXTERNAL MORPHOLOGY	23
2.3.1.1	ANESTHETIZATION	23
2.4	RESEARCH FINDINGS	24
2.4.1	OBSERVATION ON FISH EXTERNAL MORPHOLOGY	24
2.4.1.1	FISH WITH LONG AND CONTINUOUS DORSAL FIN.....	24
2.4.1.1.1	<i>Channa micropeltes</i>	24
2.4.1.1.2	<i>Clarias</i> sp.....	27
2.4.2.1	FISH WITH SHORT AND NON-CONTINUOUS DORSAL FIN	30
2.4.2.1.1	<i>Mystus nemurus</i>	30
2.4.2.1.2	<i>Pangasius</i> sp.	33
2.5	DISCUSSIONS	36
2.6	CONCLUSIONS.....	40

CHAPTER 3: ORGANISATION OF MOTOR NEURONS INNERVATING FISH BODY TRUNK

3.1	INTRODUCTION	41
3.2	RESEARCH OBJECTIVE.....	44
3.3	METHODOLOGY	45
3.3.1	INTRACARDIAC PERFUSION	45
3.3.2	SPINAL CORD ABSTRACTION AND POST FIXATION.....	47
3.3.3	DEHYDRATION	51
3.3.4	CLEARING.....	51
3.3.5	INFILTRATION AND EMBEDDING	51
3.3.6	SECTIONING AND MOUNTING OF THE TISSUE SECTIONS.....	52
3.3.7	STAINING	52
3.3.7.1	HAEMATOXYLIN AND EOSIN (H&E) STAINING.....	53
3.3.7.2	NISSL STAINING	53
3.3.7.3	FIBER STAINING.....	53
3.3.8	COVERSLIPPING	54
3.3.9	DATA ANALYSIS.....	54
3.4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	55
3.4.1	GROSS MORPHOLOGY OF SPINAL CORD.....	55
3.4.2	GENERAL HISTOLOGY OF SPINAL CORD.....	57

3.4.2.1	HAEMATOXYLIN AND EOSIN (H&E) STAINING.....	60
3.4.2.2	NISSL STAINING	62
3.4.2.3	FIBER STAINING.....	66
3.4.2.4	SUMMARY OF DIFFERENT STAINING TECHNIQUES.....	71
3.4.3	SPINAL CYTOARCHITECTURE AT DIFFERENT SEGMENTS.....	73
3.4.3.1	GENERAL HISTOLOGY OF SPINAL CORD	73
3.4.3.2	MOTOR NEURONAL ORGANISATION	77
3.4.3.2.1	MOTOR NEURONAL SHAPE.....	82
3.4.3.2.2	SIZE OF MOTOR NEURONS	86
3.5	CONCLUSION	87
CHAPTER 4: PROTOCOL ESTABLISHMENT ON SPINAL MOTOR INNERVATIONS OF CAUDAL FIN MUSCLES		
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	88
4.2	OBJECTIVE.....	88
4.3	METHODOLOGY	88
4.3.1	HORSERADISH PEROXIDASE (HRP) HISTOCHEMISTRY	88
4.3.1.1	COMPATIBILITY OF REAGENTS.....	89
4.3.1.2	HRP UPTAKE IN FISH NERVE.....	89
4.3.1.2.1	WHOLE MOUNT	89
4.3.1.2.2	FROZEN SECTIONS.....	90
4.3.1.3	HRP ADMINISTRATION AND TIME OF SURVIVAL.....	90
4.3.1.3.1	PRESSURE INJECTION	91
4.3.1.3.2	PLACING TISSUE PAPER SOAKED WITH HRP ON THE MUSCLE ...	91
4.3.1.3.3	EXPOSING TRANSECTED NERVES TO HRP SOLUTION PLACED ON A PARAFILM SHEET	91
4.3.1.3.4	SOAKING OF TRANSECTED NERVES IN HRP SOLUTION.....	91
4.3.1.4	METHOD OF FIXATION.....	92
4.3.1.4.1	FIXATION BY IMMERSION.....	92
4.3.1.4.2	INTRACARDIAC PERFUSION.....	92
4.3.1.5	TISSUE THICKNESS	92
4.3.1.6	SLIDES STORAGE.....	93
4.3.2	TRIAL ON FLUORESCENT DYE.....	93
4.3.2.1	LUCIFER YELLOW ADMINISTRATION.....	93
4.3.2.2	TISSUE PROCESSING	93
4.3.2.3	SLIDES VIEWING	93
4.4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	94
4.4.1	HRP HISTOCHEMISTRY	94

4.4.1.1	COMPATIBILITY OF REAGENTS.....	94
4.4.1.2	HRP UPTAKE IN FISH NERVES.....	94
4.4.1.3	HRP ADMINISTRATION AND TIME OF SURVIVAL.....	98
4.4.1.3.1	PRESSURE INJECTION	98
4.4.1.3.2	PLACING TISSUE PAPER SOAKED WITH HRP ON THE MUSCLE ...	98
4.4.1.3.3	EXPOSING TRANSECTED NERVES TO HRP SOLUTION PLACED ON A PARAFILM SHEET	98
4.4.1.3.4	SOAKING OF TRANSECTED NERVES IN HRP SOLUTION.....	98
4.4.1.4	METHOD OF FIXATION.....	100
4.4.1.4.1	FIXATION BY IMMERSION.....	100
4.4.1.4.2	INTRACARDIAC PERFUSION.....	101
4.4.1.5	TISSUE THICKNESS	102
4.4.1.6	SLIDES STORAGE.....	105
4.4.2	TRIAL ON FLUORESCENT DYE.....	107
4.5	CONCLUSIONS	111
CHAPTER 5: SPINAL MOTOR INNERVATIONS OF CAUDAL FIN MUSCLES		
5.1	INTRODUCTION	112
5.2	OBJECTIVE.....	113
5.3	METHODOLOGY	114
5.3.1	HRP EXPERIMENT	114
5.3.1.1	HRP ADMINISTRATION	114
5.3.1.2	TISSUE PROCESSING	114
5.3.1.3	ENZYMATIC REACTION.....	115
5.3.1.4	NUMBERING OF SPINAL SEGMENTS	115
5.4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	116
5.4.1	ANATOMY OF CAUDAL FIN MUSCLES	116
5.4.1.1	<i>Clarias</i> sp. (<i>Keli</i>).....	116
5.4.1.2	<i>Pangasius</i> sp. (<i>Patin</i>).....	119
5.4.2	ORGANISATION OF MOTOR NERVE IN CAUDAL FIN.....	122
5.4.2.1	<i>Clarias</i> sp. (<i>Keli</i>).....	122
5.4.2.2	<i>Pangasius</i> sp. (<i>Patin</i>).....	123
5.4.3	ORGANISATION OF CAUDAL FIN MOTOR NEURONS.....	124
5.4.3.1	GENERAL VIEW	124
5.4.3.2	DIFFERENCES OF CAUDAL FIN MOTOR NEURONS IN <i>Clarias</i> sp. AND <i>Pangasius</i> sp.	127
5.4.3.2.1	AVERAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MOTOR NEURON	127
5.4.3.2.2	MOTOR NEURONAL SHAPE.....	131

5.4.3.2.3	SIZE OF MOTOR NEURON	133
5.4.3.4	NEGATIVE CONTROL	135
5.4.4	GENERAL DISCUSSIONS ON CAUDAL FIN MOTOR NEURONS	136
5.4.5	DISCUSSIONS ON DIFFERENCES OF CAUDAL FIN MOTOR NEURONS IN <i>Clarias</i> sp. AND <i>Pangasius</i> sp.....	138
5.4.6	DISCUSSIONS ON TECHNIQUES AND PROTOCOLS.....	140
5.4.6.1	ANAESTHETIZATION.....	140
5.4.6.2	CARCINOGENICITY OF DAB.....	140
5.4.7	TROUBLESHOOTING.....	141
5.4.7.1	TISSUE TEARING	141
5.4.7.2	FALLING OF TISSUE SECTIONS	141
5.4.7.3	FALSE LOCALIZATION OF HRP-DAB REACTION PRODUCT	142
5.5	CONCLUSIONS	143
CHAPTER 6: GENERAL DISCUSSIONS		
6.1	GENERAL DISCUSSIONS.....	144
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS		
7.1	CONCLUSIONS	150
REFERENCES.....		152
APPENDIX A: PREPARATION OF CHEMICAL SOLUTIONS.....		162
APPENDIX B: PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON FISH SWIMMING BEHAVIOUR		163
APPENDIX C: HISTOLOGICAL AND STAINING PROCEDURES		172
APPENDIX D: DATA AND TABLES.....		179
APPENDIX E: SELECTED PUBLICATIONS (PROCEEDING & ABSTRACT)....		180

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures	Title	Page
1.1	Human spinal cord	1
1.2	Connections of the spinal nerve roots to the spinal cord	2
1.3	Spinal nerves pass through the intervertebral canals	3
1.4	Morphology of a motor neuron	5
1.5	Lateral view of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> (juvenile)	11
1.6	Taxonomy of <i>Channa micropeltes</i>	11
1.7	Lateral view of <i>Clarias</i> sp. (juvenile)	13
1.8	Taxonomy of <i>Clarias</i> sp.	13
1.9	Lateral view of <i>Mystus nemurus</i> (juvenile)	15
1.10	Taxonomy of <i>Mystus nemurus</i>	15
1.11	Lateral view of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. (juvenile)	17
1.12	Taxonomy of <i>Pangasius</i> sp.	17
2.1	External morphology of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> outside water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. Long and continuous dorsal fin was observed.	25
2.2	The views of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> in water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. Long and continuous dorsal fin was more clearly observed in water.	26
2.3	External morphology of <i>Clarias</i> sp. outside water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. Long and continuous dorsal fin extended along the body length.	28
2.4	The views of <i>Clarias</i> sp. in water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. Long and continuous dorsal fin was clearly observed in water.	29
2.5	External morphology of <i>Mystus nemurus</i> outside water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view, and (c) Lateral view. It has short and non-continuous median fins made up of dorsal fin and adipose fin.	31
2.6	The views of <i>Mystus nemurus</i> in water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. Short and non-continuous median fins made up of dorsal fin and adipose fin were clearly observed in water.	32

2.7	External morphology of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. outside water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. The median fins made up of dorsal fin and adipose fin were short and non-continuous.	34
2.8	The views of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. in water: (a) Dorsal view, (b) Ventral view and (c) Lateral view. It had short and non-continuous median fin. The dorsal fin composed of one hard fin ray and a few soft fin rays while adipose fin was located between dorsal fin and caudal fin.	35
2.9	Location of pelvic fins in relation to the pectoral fin. (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , with its pelvic fins located higher up the body than (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp. (c) <i>Mystus nemurus</i> , and (d) <i>Pangasius</i> sp., had a pair of more rostrally located pectoral fins	38
3.1	Rexed laminae	42
3.2	Distribution of cell columns on the ventral horn (CC: Central canal; IL: Intermediolateral; DM: Dorsomedial; VM: Ventromedial; C: Central; VL: Ventrolateral; DL: Dorsolateral; RDL: Retrodorsolateral)	43
3.3	The ventral side of fish body was cut open to expose the heart	45
3.4	Structure of the fish heart	46
3.5	Fine needle was inserted into the fish heart during intracardiac perfusion	46
3.6	Spinal cord tissue was harvested from different segments in fishes with long and continuous dorsal fins: (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , and (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp.	48
3.7	Spinal cord tissue was harvested from different segments in fishes with short and non continuous median fins: (a) <i>Mystus nemurus</i> , and (b) <i>Pangasius</i> sp.	49
3.8	Spinal cord was exposed following the excision of dorsal part of vertebral column	50
3.9	Spinal cord of (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp., (c) <i>Mystus nemurus</i> and (d) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. (indicated by arrows)	55
3.10	Midline grooves on the spinal cord of <i>Mystus nemurus</i> at the (a) dorsal and (b) ventral side	56
3.11	Spinal cord of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> stained by myelin staining as representative to demonstrate the general spinal cord architecture of the selected fishes in this study [AF: anterior funiculus; AMS: anterior median sulcus; CC: central canal; DH: dorsal horn; LF: lateral funiculus; PMF: posterior median fissure; VH: ventral horn]	57

3.12	Spinal cord of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. stained with H&E, 100X. A spinal cord cross section showed the inverted-Y shaped grey matter surrounded by white matter.	60
3.13	Delineation on grey and white matters by H&E staining. Axons were seen on white matter while motor neurons were located in grey matter.	61
3.14	Motor neuron stained by H&E staining. The motor neuron was made up of nucleus and cytoplasm.	61
3.15	Cross section of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> spinal cord stained with Nissl stain using cresyl violet as dye, 40X. The grey matter was coloured with slight violet and the white matter was left unstained.	62
3.16	Dorsal part of the spinal cord (<i>Channa micropeltes</i>) highlighted by Nissl stain. (a) 100X, (b) 200X. The two dorsal horns were joined together and only separated by posterior median fissure at the most dorsal area.	63
3.17	Distribution of motor neurons in the ventral horns at (a) 4x, (b) 20X and (c) 40x magnification (*: central canal; d: dorsal; v: ventral). The motor neurons were highlighted as the Nissl granules in the cytoplasm were stained in deep blue colour.	64-65
3.18	Distinct delineation of grey matter from the white matter at (a) 40X, (b) 100X and (c) 200X magnifications.	66-67
3.19	Axons enveloped by myelin distributed throughout the white matter.	68
3.20	Joint dorsal horns as illustrated by myelin stain, 10X.	69
3.21	Motor neurons coloured by myelin stain; cytoplasm in deep red while nucleus in purple with a prominent dark nucleolus in it.	70
3.22	Definite cellular pattern of motor neurons (indicated by arrows) in a well-defined border of grey matter.	70
3.23	Cross sections of <i>Channa micropeltes</i> spinal cord (4X) stained by (a) H&E, (b) Nissl stain and (c) fiber staining techniques.	72
3.24	Illustration of spinal cord cross sections obtained from three different segments of <i>C. micropeltes toman</i> (T), <i>Clarias</i> sp., <i>keli</i> (K), <i>M. nemurus</i> , <i>baung</i> (B), and <i>Pangasius</i> sp., <i>patin</i> (P); scale bar = 200µm (Refer nomenclature T1-T3 and K1-K3 from Figure 3.6 and B1-B3 and P1-P3 from Figure 3.7.)	75
3.25	Shapes of spinal grey matter in (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , <i>Mystus nemurus</i> , <i>Pangasius</i> sp., and (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp.; cc: central canal. The different shapes of grey matter were circled in red, where (a) had thin and (b) had broad areas of extension protruding outwards from central canal before becoming dorsal and ventral horns.	76

3.26	Organisation of motor neurons into cell columns for (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp., (c) <i>Mystus nemurus</i> , and (d) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. The organisation would be explained in details in the following text. (IL: Intermediolateral; DM: Dorsomedial; VM: Ventromedial; C: Central; VL: Ventrolateral; DL: Dorsolateral; RDL: Retrodorsolateral)	78-79
3.27	Diverse motor neuronal shapes in this research which include (a) oval (b) tear, (c) cone and (d) spindle shapes (indicated by arrows).	82
3.28	Motor neuronal organisation of different cell shapes into each cell column for (a) <i>Channa micropeltes</i> , (b) <i>Clarias</i> sp., (c) <i>Mystus nemurus</i> and (d) <i>Pangasius</i> sp.	83-84
4.1	Ventral view of longitudinally oriented spinal cord wholemount, with arrows showing some of the brown precipitations (200X).	95
4.2	Spinal cord section with stained motor neurons at 40X magnification.	96
4.3	A counterstained section with darkly stained motor neurons as indicated by arrows, 400X.	97
4.4	Non-perfused spinal tissue, 100X (cc: central canal; d: dorsal; m: midline; l: left; v: ventral)	100
4.5	Perfused spinal tissue, 100X (cc: central canal; d: dorsal; m: midline; l: left; v: ventral)	101
4.6	The brownish blood vessel was used as indicator to demonstrate the sharpness of the picture at (a) 50 μ m and (b) 20 μ m, 400X	103
4.7	Motor neurons focused at 400X magnification in (a) 50 μ m- and (b) 20 μ m- thick tissue sections.	104
4.8	(a) Normal slides (40X) and gradually decreasing intensity of brownish precipitation in spinal sections after (b) 3 days and (c) 1 week storage, 100X.	106
4.9	Motor neuron labeled by Lucifer Yellow viewed at different angles.	108
4.10	Motor neuronal shape (as indicated by arrow) was revealed when viewed at different angles.	109
5.1	Superficial muscle layer of <i>Clarias</i> sp. caudal fin, 1.943X	117
5.2	Deep muscle layer of <i>Clarias</i> sp. caudal fin, 2.9X	117
5.3	Schematic drawings of <i>Clarias</i> sp. caudal fin. (a) Superficial muscle layer; (b) Deep muscle layer (c: caudal; d: dorsal; r: rostral; v: ventral)	118

5.4	Superficial muscle layer of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. caudal fin, 1.943X	119
5.5	Deep muscle layer of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. caudal fin, 2.9X	120
5.6	Schematic drawings of <i>Clarias</i> sp. caudal fin. (a) Superficial muscle layer; (b) Deep muscle layer	121
5.7	Organisation of motor nerves supplying <i>Clarias</i> sp. caudal fin (c: caudal; d: dorsal; r: rostral; v: ventral)	122
5.8	Nerve trunk innervating medial region of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. caudal fin, 8.7X (c: caudal; d: dorsal; r: rostral; v: ventral)	123
5.9	Ipsilateral labelling of motor neurons (indicated by arrows) where only the motor neurons at left ventral horn were stained. (*:central canal)	124
5.10	a) Faint (200X) and (b) heavy (400X) labeling of motor neuron by HRP-DAB precipitation	125
5.11	Spinal cord section bearing HRP-labeled motor neurons with different intensity of brown precipitation, 40X	126
5.12	Cytoplasmic extensions of a motor neuron delineated by HRP-DAB reaction product, 400X	126
5.13	Average distribution of motor neurons innervating the caudal fin muscles of (a) <i>Clarias</i> sp. and (b) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. (n=6) at different levels (Each dot represented one motor neuron)	127
5.14	Average distribution of motor neurons innervating (a) <i>Clarias</i> sp. and (b) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. caudal fin muscles in accordance to cell column	128
5.15	Motor neurons innervating <i>Clarias</i> sp. appeared (a) singly (100X), (b) in pair (200X) and (c) in cluster (200X) (*: central canal)	130
5.16	Cluster of motor neurons in caudal region of <i>Pangasius</i> sp. spinal cord located ventrally at the ventral horn, 100X	130
5.17	Shapes of motor neurons innervating (a) <i>Clarias</i> sp. and (b) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. caudal fin found in different spinal cell column	131
5.18	Frequency distribution of the caudal fin of (a) <i>Clarias</i> sp. and (b) <i>Pangasius</i> sp. motor neuronal size (n=6)	133
5.19	Negative Control I at 200X magnifications, with red arrows indicating the motor neurons.	135

LIST OF TABLES

Tables	Title	Page
3.1	Diameter of spinal cord at three segments for the four fishes used in this study	74
3.2	Cell columns and corresponding muscles innervated	81
3.3	Range of cell size	86
4.1	Number of motor neurons at different time of survival	99
4.2	Researches utilizing retrograde tracing techniques	99
5.1	Selected list of publications on motor innervations in fish	113

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Title	Page
Appendix A	Preparation of chemical solutions	162
Appendix B	Personal observations on fish swimming behaviour	163
Appendix C	Histological and staining procedures	172
Appendix D	Data and tables	179
Appendix E	Selected publications (proceeding and abstract)	180

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

c	caudal
C	central
CC	central canal
d	dorsal
DAB	3,3'-diaminobenzidine
DL	dorsolateral
DM	dorsomedial
H ₂ O ₂	hydrogen peroxide
HRP	horseradish peroxidase
IL	intermediolateral
l	left
m	midline
MS222	tricaine methanesulfonate
NBF	neutral buffered formalin
r	rostral
RDL	retrodorsolateral
TBS	Tris-buffered saline
v	ventral
VL	ventrolateral
VM	ventromedial
μ	micro