

**CHEMOTAXONOMICAL EVALUATION OF THE
RED ALGA *LAURENCIA NANGII* MASUDA
(RHODOMELACEAE, CERAMIALES)
IN THE COASTAL WATERS OF SABAH**

TAN KAI LEE

**PERPUSTAKAAN
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH**



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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE**

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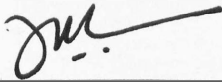
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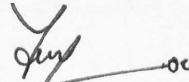
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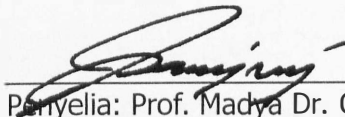
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I hereby declare that this thesis contains my original research work. Sources of findings reviewed herein have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

CHEMOTAXONOMICAL EVALUATION OF THE RED ALGA *Laurencia nangii* Masuda (RHODOMELACEAE, CERAMIALES) IN THE COASTAL WATERS OF SABAH

Species discrimination in the red alga genus *Laurencia* is difficult due to a high degree of morphological variation within individual species. Chemical studies on a worldwide basis revealed that most species of *Laurencia* can be characterized by a specific set of halogenated secondary metabolites. Some species, however, produce unrelated sets of metabolites depending on geographical distribution. The morphologically similar but chemically distinct populations can be referred to as sibling species or chemical races. This study was carried out to identify the halogenated secondary metabolites that can be utilized as taxonomic markers for *Laurencia nangii* Masuda. Samples of *L. nangii* from three localities: Pulau Sulug, Kota Kinabalu; Pantai Bak-Bak, Kudat; and Dogoton, Pulau Banggi, Kudat were investigated. Voucher herbarium specimens of each population (BORH 37572–37577, 37587–37588) were deposited in the Borneensis Collection in the Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation. Plants are purplish-green in colour and attain height of 3 – 6.5 cm, with several upright axes arise from discoid holdfast and stolon-like branches. Microscopy study showed that superficial cortical cells contain two to three *corps en cerise*, while trichoblast cells contain one or two *corps en cerise*. Tetrasporangia are formed on all four orders of branches and measure 100 – 120 μm in diameter. Ovoid cystocarps are formed on first- to fourth-order branches, measure 550 – 800 μm in height by 500 – 750 μm in diameter. Male trichoblasts are formed in the cup-shaped apical depression of first- to fourth-order branches. Samples were extracted and the crude extracts from these three populations showed different chemical profiles on TLC and RP-HPLC. Crude extracts were fractionated by column chromatography and isolation of secondary metabolites was carried out via RP-HPLC. The structures of the isolated compounds were deduced from $^1\text{H-NMR}$, $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$, and 2D NMR (COSY, HSQC, HMBC and NOESY) spectra. Three C_{15} -acetogenins (**C1** – **C3**) were isolated from Pulau Sulug's sample. **C1** present in 2.4% of crude extract, **C2**, 2.0% and **C3**, 1.0%. Five C_{15} -acetogenins (**C4** – **C8**) were isolated from Pantai Bak-Bak samples. **C4** present in 1.8%, **C5**, 1.3%, **C6**, 2.6%, **C7**, 1.1% and **C8**, 1.9%. And, one C_{15} -acetogenin, **C9** (15.0%) was isolated from Dogoton's sample. Thus it is conclusive that *L. nangii* is characterized by C_{15} -acetogenins and they could serve as chemotaxonomic markers for the species. Since these compounds are derived from similar metabolic pathway, sibling species or chemical races may not be present in this species.

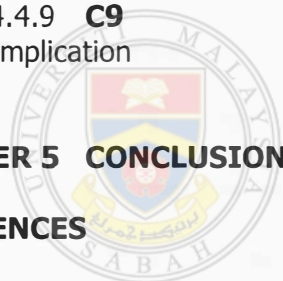
ABSTRAK

Diskriminasi spesies alga merah genus *Laurencia* adalah sukar disebabkan oleh perbezaan morfologi yang wujud dalam sesuatu spesies. Kajian atas genus ini di pelosok dunia menunjukkan bahawa kebanyakan spesies dapat dicirikan dengan suatu set metabolit sekunder berhalogen yang tersendiri bagi sesuatu spesies tersebut. Namun, terdapat juga spesies yang menghasilkan set metabolit sekunder yang berlainan bergantung pada taburan geografi. Spesies sebegini yang mempunyai ciri morfologi yang sama tetapi kandungan sebatian kimia yang berlainan dikatakan mempunyai ras kimia (chemical race). Kajian ini dilakukan untuk mengenalpasti metabolit sekunder berhalogen yang boleh dijadikan sebagai petanda taksonomi bagi *Laurencia* nangani Masuda. Persampelan dilakukan di tiga lokasi di persisiran pantai Sabah, iaitu: Pulau Sulug, Kota Kinabalu; Pantai Bak-Bak, Kudat; dan Dogoton, Pulau Banggi, Kudat. Specimen herbarium untuk setiap populasi (BORH 37572–37577, 37587–37588) didepositkan dalam Koleksi Borneensis di Institut Biologi Tropika dan Pemuliharaan. Talus berwarna hijau-keunguan dan mencapai ketinggian 3.0 – 6.5 cm; beberapa cabang tegak muncul dari pelekap berbentuk cakera dan dari cabang stolon. Kajian mikroskopi menunjukkan sel kortikal permukaan mengandungi dua hingga tiga 'corps en cerise', manakala sel trikoblas mengandungi satu atau dua 'corps en cerise'. Tetrasporangium yang berukuran 100–120 μm membentuk pada anak cabang. Sistokarpa berbentuk bujur dengan ketinggian 550 – 800 μm dan diameter 500 – 750 μm . Trikoblas jantan membentuk dalam liang pada hujung anak cabang. Sampel dari ketiga-tiga populasi diekstrak dan profil kimia (TLC dan HPLC) ekstrak kasar menunjukkan corak yang berlainan. Pembahagian ekstrak kasar dilakukan melalui kromatografi kolum dan pemencilan metabolit sekunder dilakukan melalui RP-HPLC. Struktur kimia ditentukan melalui kaedah spektroskopi $^1\text{H-RMN}$, $^{13}\text{C-RMN}$, dan RMN 2D (COSY, HSQC, HMBC and NOESY). Tiga sebatian C_{15} -acetogenin (**C1-C3**) dipencilkan daripada sampel dari Pulau Sulug: **C1**, 2.4%, **C2**, 2.0%, **C3**, 1.0%; lima sebatian C_{15} -acetogenin (**C4-C8**) dipencilkan daripada sampel dari Pantai Bak-Bak: **C4**, 1.8%, **C5**, 1.3%, **C6**, 2.6%, **C7**, 1.1%, **C8**, 1.9%; dan satu sebatian C_{15} -acetogenin, **C9** (15%) dipencilkan daripada sampel dari Dogoton. Daripada kajian ini, adalah didapati bahawa *L. nangani* dicirikan dengan sebatian C_{15} -acetogenin yang berasal dari laluan metabolik yang sama, maka ras kimia tidak wujud dalam spesies ini.

LIST OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
CERTIFICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
ABSTRAK	vi
LIST OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xiv
LIST OF APPENDIXES	xv
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Red Algae Genus <i>Laurencia</i>	1
1.2 Chemotaxonomy Research of <i>Laurencia</i>	2
1.3 <i>Laurencia</i> species in Malaysian Waters	3
1.4 Objectives	5
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Distribution and Chemical Diversity of <i>Laurencia</i> Species	6
2.1.1 <i>Laurencia brongniartii</i> Agardh	6
2.1.2 <i>Laurencia composita</i> Yamada	7
2.1.3 <i>Laurencia intricata</i> Lamouroux	8
2.1.4 <i>Laurencia japonensis</i> Abe et Masuda	11
2.1.5 <i>Laurencia majuscula</i> (Harvey) Lucas	12
2.1.6 <i>Laurencia nidifica</i> Agardh	14
2.1.7 <i>Laurencia nipponica</i> Yamada	16
2.1.8 <i>Laurencia okamurae</i> Yamada	20
2.1.9 <i>Laurencia pacifica</i> Kylin	22
2.1.10 <i>Laurencia similis</i> Nam et Saito	22
2.1.11 <i>Laurencia snackeyi</i> (Weber van Bosse) Masuda	22
2.2 Biogenesis of Halogenated Secondary Metabolites in <i>Laurencia</i>	24
2.2.1 Biogenesis of sesquiterpenes	24
2.2.2 Biogenesis of diterpenes	24
2.2.3 Biogenesis of C ₁₅ acetogenins	24
2.3 Chemotaxonomic Significance	29
CHAPTER 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS	
3.1 Collection of Samples	31
3.2 Morphological Study	32
3.2.1 Herbarium	32
3.2.2 Microscopy observation	32
3.3 Chemical Analysis	32

3.3.1	Extraction	32
3.3.2	Chemical profiling	33
3.3.3	Isolation of compounds	33
3.3.4	Spectroscopy measurements	38
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION		
4.1	Morphological Features	40
4.2	Chemical Profiles of Crude Extracts	43
4.3	Isolation of Halogenated Secondary Metabolites	46
4.3.1	Pulau Sulug	46
4.3.2	Pantai Bak-Bak	47
4.3.3	Dogoton	48
4.4	Structure Elucidation	49
4.4.1	C1	49
4.4.2	C2	52
4.4.3	C3	56
4.4.4	C4	60
4.4.5	C5	63
4.4.6	C6	67
4.4.7	C7	70
4.4.8	C8	74
4.4.9	C9	76
4.5	Implication	80
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION		82
REFERENCES		84



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LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 4.1: Yield of crude extracts of <i>Laurencia nangii</i> collected from Pulau Sulug, Pantai Bak-Bak and Dogoton	43
Table 4.2: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C1	49
Table 4.3: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C2	52
Table 4.4: Comparison of experimental and reported ^{13}C -NMR and ^1H -NMR data for obtusenyne	54
Table 4.5: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C3	56
Table 4.6: Comparison of experimental and reported ^{13}C -NMR and ^1H -NMR data for <i>cis</i> -pinnatifidenyne	58
Table 4.7: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C4	60
Table 4.8: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C5	63
Table 4.9: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C6	67
Table 4.10: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C7	70
Table 4.11: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C8	74
Table 4.12: ^{13}C -NMR, ^1H -NMR and HMBC spectral data for C9	76
Table 4.13: Comparison of experimental and reported ^{13}C -NMR and ^1H -NMR data for 3 <i>Z</i> -dihydrorhodophytin	79

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1: <i>Laurencia nangii</i> Masuda.	4
Figure 1.2: C ₁₅ acetogenins and diterpenoid isolated from <i>Laurencia nangii</i> Masuda.	5
Figure 2.1: Polybromoindoles isolated from <i>L. brongniartii</i> .	7
Figure 2.2: Sesquiterpenoids isolated from <i>L. composita</i> .	8
Figure 2.3: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. intricata</i>	9
Figure 2.4: C ₁₅ acetogenins isolated from <i>L. intricata</i> .	10
Figure 2.5: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. japonensis</i> .	11
Figure 2.6: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. majuscula</i> .	13
Figure 2.7: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. nidifica</i> .	16
Figure 2.8: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. nipponica</i> .	18
Figure 2.9: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. okamurae</i> .	21
Figure 2.10: Halogenated metabolites isolated from <i>L. snackeyi</i> .	23
Figure 2.11: Biogenesis of sesquiterpenes (route I).	25
Figure 2.12: Biogenesis of sesquiterpenes (route II).	26
Figure 2.13: Biogenesis of diterpenes (route I).	26
Figure 2.14: Biogenesis of diterpenes (route II).	27
Figure 2.15: Biogenesis of diterpenes (route III).	27
Figure 2.16: Biogenesis of some C ₁₅ acetogenins from <i>L. nipponica</i> .	28
Figure 3.1: Map of sampling locations.	31
Figure 3.2: Separation scheme for the isolation of halogenated secondary metabolites from <i>L. nangii</i> of Pulau Sulug.	35
Figure 3.3: Separation scheme for the isolation of halogenated secondary metabolites from <i>L. nangii</i> of Pantai Bak-Bak.	36

Figure 3.4:	Separation scheme for the isolation of halogenated secondary metabolites from <i>L. nangii</i> of Dogoton.	37
Figure 4.1:	Herbarium specimens of <i>Laurencia nangii</i> Masuda from three localities: A. Pulau Sulug (BORH37588), B. Pantai Bak-Bak (BORH37572) and C. Dogoton (BORH37574) (Scale bar = 1cm)	41
Figure 4.2:	Morphological features of <i>Laurencia nangii</i> Masuda.	42
Figure 4.3:	Thin Layer Chromatography (silica gel 60F ₂₅₄) chemical profiles of crude extract of <i>Laurencia nangii</i> from Pulau Sulug (1), Pantai Bak-Bak (2), and Dogoton (3) developed in: A. toluene, B. hexane: ethyl acetate (9:1 v/v), and C. hexane: ethyl acetate (3:1 v/v).	44
Figure 4.4:	HPLC profiles of crude extracts of <i>Laurencia nangii</i> from: A. Pulau Sulug, B. Pantai Bak-Bak, and C. Dogoton	45
Figure 4.5:	TLC profiles of fractions of <i>L. nangii</i> of Pulau Sulug, developed in A. toluene, and B. hexane: ethyl acetate (3:1 v/v).	46
Figure 4.6:	Thin Layer Chromatography (silica gel 60F ₂₅₄) chemical profile of fractions of <i>L. nangii</i> of Pantai Bak-Bak developed in A. toluene, and B. hexane: ethyl acetate (3:1 v/v).	47
Figure 4.7:	Thin Layer Chromatography (silica gel 60F ₂₅₄) chemical profile of fractions of <i>L. nangii</i> of Dogoton, developed in A. toluene, and B. hexane: ethyl acetate (3:1 v/v).	48
Figure 4.8:	Partial and planar structures for C1	51
Figure 4.9:	Partial, planar and stereochemical structures for C2 .	55
Figure 4.10:	Partial, planar and stereochemical structures for C3 .	59
Figure 4.11:	Partial and planar structures for C4 .	62
Figure 4.12:	Partial and planar structures for C5 .	65
Figure 4.13:	Relative stereochemistry for C5 .	66
Figure 4.14:	Partial and planar structures for C6 .	69
Figure 4.15:	Partial and planar structures for C7 .	72
Figure 4.16:	Relative stereochemistry for C7	73

Figure 4.17:	Partial and planar structures for C8 .	75
Figure 4.18:	Partial, planar and stereochemical structures for C9 .	78
Figure 5.1:	C ₁₅ -acetogenins isolated from <i>L. nangii</i> of Pulau Sulug, Pantai Bak-Bak and Dogoton.	83



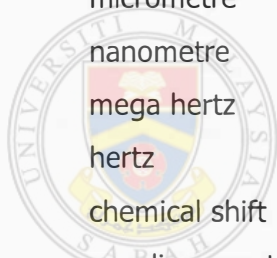
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Column chromatography
CDCl_3	Deuterated chloroform
dH_2O	Distilled water
EtOAc	Ethyl acetate
Et_2O	Diethyl ether
FTIR	Fourier transform infrared
HSQC	Heteronuclear single quantum coherence
HMBC	Heteronuclear multiple bond correlation
HREIMS	High resolution electron ionization mass spectrometry
LREIMS	Low resolution electron ionization mass spectrometry
KBr	Potassium bromide
MeOH	Methanol
MeCN	Acetonitrile
Mp	Melting point
Na_2SO_4	Anhydrous sodium sulphate
NOESY	Nuclear Overhauser effect spectroscopy
RP-HPLC	Reverse phase High performance liquid chromatography
R_f	Mobility relative to front
T_R	Retention time
Si	Silica
TLC	Thin layer chromatography
TMS	Tetramethylsilane
UV-Vis	Ultra violet – visible
^1H - ^1H COSY	Proton-proton correlation spectroscopy
^1H -NMR	Proton nuclear magnetic resonance
^{13}C -NMR	Carbon-13 nuclear magnetic resonance
2D	Two dimensions

LIST OF SYMBOLS

v/v	volume to volume
w/v	weight to volume
%	percent
°C	degree Celsius
min	minute
g	gram
L	litre
mL	millilitre
μL	microlitre
cm	centimetre
mm	millimetre
μm	micrometre
nm	nanometre
MHz	mega hertz
Hz	hertz
δ	chemical shift
<i>J</i>	coupling constant
<i>s</i>	singlet
<i>dd</i>	doublet of doublet
<i>ddd</i>	doublet of doublet of doublet
<i>dq</i>	doublet of quadruplet
<i>m</i>	multiplets
<i>t</i>	triplet
[α] _D	optical rotation
ν	wave numbers
m/z	mass to charge ratio



UMMS
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

LIST OF APPENDIXES

	Page
Appendix A-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C1	89
Appendix A-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C1	90
Appendix A-3: HSQC Spectrum for C1	91
Appendix A-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C1	92
Appendix A-5: HMBC Spectrum for C1	93
Appendix B-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C2	94
Appendix B-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C2	95
Appendix B-3: HSQC Spectrum for C2	96
Appendix B-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C2	97
Appendix B-5: HMBC Spectrum for C2	98
Appendix C-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C3	99
Appendix C-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C3	100
Appendix C-3: HSQC Spectrum for C3	101
Appendix C-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C3	102
Appendix C-5: HMBC Spectrum for C3	103
Appendix D-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C4	104
Appendix D-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C4	105
Appendix D-3: HSQC Spectrum for C4	106
Appendix D-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C4	107
Appendix D-5: HMBC Spectrum for C4	108
Appendix E-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C5	109

Appendix E-2: HSQC Spectrum for C5	110
Appendix E-3: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C5	111
Appendix E-4: HMBC Spectrum for C5	112
Appendix E-5: NOESY Spectrum for C5	113
Appendix F-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C6	114
Appendix F-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C6	115
Appendix F-3: HSQC Spectrum for C6	116
Appendix F-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C6	117
Appendix F-5: HMBC Spectrum for C6	118
Appendix G-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C7	119
Appendix G-2: HSQC Spectrum for C7	120
Appendix G-3: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C7	121
Appendix G-4: HMBC Spectrum for C7	122
Appendix G-5: NOESY Spectrum for C7	123
Appendix H-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C8	124
Appendix H-2: HSQC Spectrum for C8	125
Appendix H-3: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C8	126
Appendix H-4: HMBC Spectrum for C8	127
Appendix I-1: ^1H -NMR Spectrum for C9	128
Appendix I-2: ^{13}C -NMR Spectrum for C9	129
Appendix I-3: HSQC Spectrum for C9	130
Appendix I-4: ^1H - ^1H COSY Spectrum for C9	131
Appendix I-5: HMBC Spectrum for C9	132
Appendix I-6: NOESY Spectrum for C9	133
Appendix I-7: IR Spectrum for C9	134

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Red Algae Genus *Laurencia*

Marine red algae genus *Laurencia* was first described by Lamouroux in the year 1813. It is a relatively large genus with approximately 135 species, which spans a wide geographical range, having been documented in tropical, sub-tropical and temperate waters (Masuda *et al.*, 1996). It is classified under the phylum Rhodophyta, class Rhodophyceae, subclass Florideophyceae, order Ceramiales, family Rhodomelaceae.

Species discrimination in *Laurencia* is complicated by high degree of morphological variations within individual species, which at times, lead to reclassification or reduction of some species to heterotypic synonyms of other species (Masuda *et al.*, 1996). Members of this genus can be found in small sizes (a few mm long) to large size ones (up to 50 cm long), each of which has been characterized by a combination of many morphological features (Masuda and Suzuki, 1997). Based upon morphological and chemical studies (Masuda *et al.*, 1996), species of *Laurencia* can be generally categorized into 2 main groups: i) Species that do not possess *corps en cerise* and hence contain no halogenated secondary metabolite. Examples of species in this group include: *L. cartilaginea* Yamada, *L. capituliformis* Yamada, *L. concreta* A.B. Cribb, *L. intermedia* Yamada, *L. palisada* Yamada, *L. papillosa* (C. Agardh) Greville, and *L. undulata* Yamada, and, ii) Species that possess *corps en cerise* and produce halogenated secondary metabolites. These include: *L. aldingensis* Saito & Womersley, *L. brongniartii* J. Agardh, *L. distichophylla* J. Agardh, *L. elata* (C. Agardh) J.D. Hooker & Harvey, *L. intricata* J.V. Lamouroux, *L. japonensis* T. Abe & Masuda, *L. majuscula* (Harvey) Lucas, *L. mariannensis* Yamada, *L. microcladia* Kützinger, *L. nana* (C. Agardh) Greville, *L. nangii* Masuda, *L. nidifica* J. Agardh, *L. nipponica* Yamada, *L. obtusa* (Hudson) J.V. Lamouroux, *L. okamurae* Yamada, *L. omaezakiana* Masuda, *L. pacifica* Kylin, *L. palisada* Yamada, *L. pannosa* Zanardini, *L. pinnata* Yamada, *L.*

pinnatifida (Hudson) J.V. Lamouroux, *L. pygmaea* Weber-van Bosse, *L. saitoi* Perestenko, *L. similis* Nam & Saito, *L. snackeyi* (Weber-van Bosse) Masuda, *L. snyderae* Dawson, *L. venusta* Yamada, and *L. viridis* Gil-Rodríguez & Haroun (Suzuki and Vairappan, 2005).

Corps en cerise are intracellular refractive globular inclusions, which distribute exclusively in superficial cortical cells and trichoblast cells, where halogenated secondary metabolites are synthesized and/or stored (Young *et al.*, 1980). The presence or absence and their number have a valuable taxonomic meaning at specific level within the genus *Laurencia* (Furnari *et al.*, 2001).

1.2 Chemotaxonomy Study of *Laurencia*

The genus *Laurencia* has attracted intense interest among organic chemists due to its ability to produce diverse types of halogenated secondary metabolites. The first chemical investigation on the red algae *Laurencia* was done in 1953 when Obata and Fukushi studied the chemistry of *Laurencia nipponica* Yamada (as *Laurencia glandulifera* Kütznic) from Oshoro Bay, Hokkaido, Japan and reported the odoriferous components of the essential oil to be sesquiterpenoids. In 1963, Irie and coworkers started their continuous studies on the chemical constituents of *Laurencia* that led to the isolation of Laurencin, the first brominated acetogenin, from the same alga collected at the same location in 1965. They isolated laurinterol and debromolaurinterol from *L. okamurae* Yamada (as *L. intermedia* Yamada) the following year. Since then, various groups around the world have carried out research on this aspect of the algae. To date, more than 500 diverse and unique halogenated secondary metabolites, in particular, sesquiterpenoids, diterpenoids, triterpenoids and C₁₅ acetogenins, have been discovered from more than 60 *Laurencia* species worldwide (Suzuki and Vairappan, 2005).

Various studies (Erickson, 1983; Suzuki and Vairappan 2005) led to the observation that, while there is a certain degree of overlap, most species in this genus can be characterized by at least one specific compound not found in the others or a particular set of compounds, render them as useful taxonomic characters for species discrimination. In the year 1975, Fenical and Norris

differentiated three different entities passing under the name of *Laurencia pacifica* Kylin from the Gulf of California based on comparative thin layer chromatography of lipid components. Progressively, in the year 1980, Howard *et al.* investigated a few species of *Laurencia* under culture and found that the production of secondary metabolites were unaffected by varying photoperiod and temperature conditions and the chemical compounds produced were both quantitatively and qualitatively identical to those of the natural populations.

It is noted too that some species produce unrelated sets of metabolites depending on geographical distribution, i.e. each chemical types is characterized by a specific end product of halogenated secondary metabolism. In the case of morphologically similar but chemical distinct populations, these can be referred to as sibling species or chemical races. The difference between these two is that, reproductive isolation is presence among differentiated populations for the formal, as exemplified by *L. pacifica* Kylin (Fenical and Norris, 1975); and the opposite for the latter. *L. nipponica* Yamada is the classical example of a species that has several chemical races, the first report in marine algae (Masuda *et al.*, 1997a). By virtue of their stability of specificity, halogenated secondary metabolites proved to be useful taxonomic feature at species level when the metabolites are comprehensively studied throughout the algal geographical range (Masuda *et al.*, 1997a; Suzuki and Vairappan, 2005).

1.3 *Laurencia* species in Malaysian Waters

Documentations on the genus *Laurencia* in Malaysian waters are relatively limited (Ismail, 1995; Masuda *et al.*, 2001; Yamagishi *et al.*, 2003). Even fewer reports were published on its chemical compositions: *L. snackeyi* (Masuda *et al.*, 1997b), *L. similis* (Masuda *et al.*, 1999; Vairappan *et al.*, 2004), *L. nangii* (Masuda *et al.*, 2002a), *L. majuscula* (Vairappan *et al.*, 2001a, 2003), *L. pannosa* (Suzuki *et al.*, 2001), and *L. pygmaeae* (Vairappan *et al.*, 2001a; Yamagishi *et al.*, 2003).

Laurencia nangii Masuda (Figure 1.1) is a relatively new species originally described from Vietnam (Masuda, 1997) and was reported from Malaysian water as recent as the year 2002 (Masuda *et al.*, 2002a). It is readily recognizable by its

fleshy and soft, green colour thalli. It is characterized by several upright terete, percurrent axes (2 – 6 cm in length) arise from a common discoid holdfast and from stolon-like branches, and produce first-order branches, which are arranged in an irregular spiral and bear progressively shorter branches of up to four order. Our survey (unpublished data) revealed that this species is widely distributed along the coastal waters of Sabah, commonly found growing epiphytically on various algae or on dead coral in the lower intertidal to upper subtidal zone.



Figure 1.1: *Laurencia nangii* Masuda

Masuda *et al.* (2002) reported the isolation of three C_{15} acetogenins: *cis*-pinnatifidenyne (**1**), obtusenyne (**2**) and (3*Z*)-laurenyne (**3**) from a sample collected from Pulau Tiga, Kuala Penyu; while a sample from Pulau Bai, Sandakan, contained (**1**) and (**2**) and diterpenoid, aplysiadiol (**4**) instead of (**3**). Figure 1.2 shows the chemical structures of (**1**) – (**4**). The authors suggested the presence of two chemical races in this species in its Malaysian populations: 1) a race characterized by the production of only acetogenins and distributed on the west coast of Sabah, and 2) another race characterized by the production of acetogenins along with aplysiadiol (diterpenoid) on the east coast of Sabah.

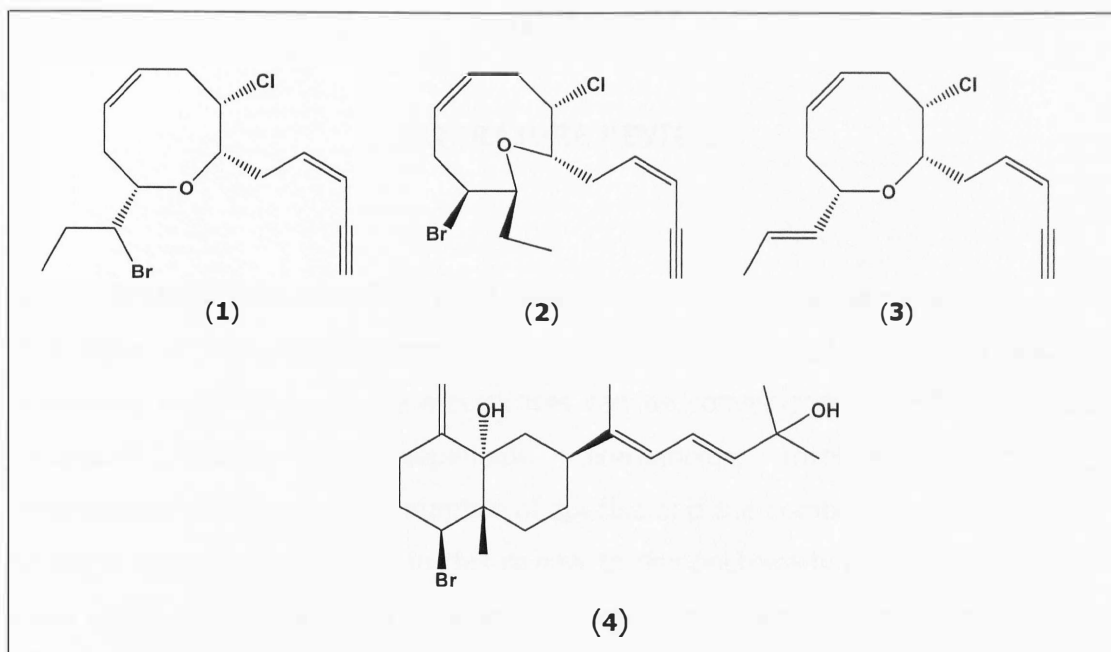


Figure 1.2: C₁₅ acetogenins and diterpenoid isolated from *Laurencia nangii* Masuda.

To date, this is the only report published on the chemical composition of *L. nangii*. Hence, present research is undertaken to identify chemotaxonomical markers for *Laurencia nangii* Masuda as part of the effort to document the distribution and the chemical composition of red algae genus *Laurencia* in Malaysian waters.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe morphological features of *L. nangii*.
2. To quantify crude extract contents and chemical profiles of *L. nangii* collected from three localities in the coastal waters of Sabah.
3. To isolate and characterize halogenated secondary metabolites from these three populations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Distribution and Chemical Diversity of *Laurencia* Species

Red algae of the genus *Laurencia* produce a wide variety of structurally unusual secondary metabolites. These metabolites can be conveniently classified into four structural classes: sesquiterpenoids, diterpenoids, triterpenoids and C₁₅ acetogenins. Due to the vast number of species and the compounds they produce, selected species are included in this review to demonstrate how these compounds have aided in species discrimination in this taxonomically troublesome genus. Information regarding the geographical distribution of the species mentioned in section 2.1.1 – 2.1.11 below was obtained from Guiry and Guiry, 2007.

2.1.1 *Laurencia brongniartii* Agardh

Laurencia brongniartii has been reported from various localities of tropical to subtropical regions in the world: Ireland, Canary Islands, Cuba, Ghana, Madagascar, South Africa, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand.

This species is characterized by polyhalogenated indoles. Sample collected in the Caribbean Sea was found to produce 1-methyl-2,3,5,6-tetrabromoindole (**5**), 2,3,5,6-tetrabromoindole (**6**), 1-methyl-2,3,5-tribromoindole (**7**), 1-methyl-2,3,6-tribromoindole (**8**). On the other hand, a Taiwanese population and a southern Japanese population were reported to contain four methylthiobromoindoles in common: (**9**), (**10**), (**11**) and (**12**). The Japanese population further contains two methylsulfanyl bromoindoles: Itomanindole A (**13**) and itomanindole B (**14**), two simple bromoindoles: (**15**) and (**16**) and methylthiobromoindoles (**17**) and (**18**) (Masuda *et al.*, 1999; Suzuki and Vairappan, 2005). Figure 2.1 shows the chemical structures of (**5**) – (**18**).

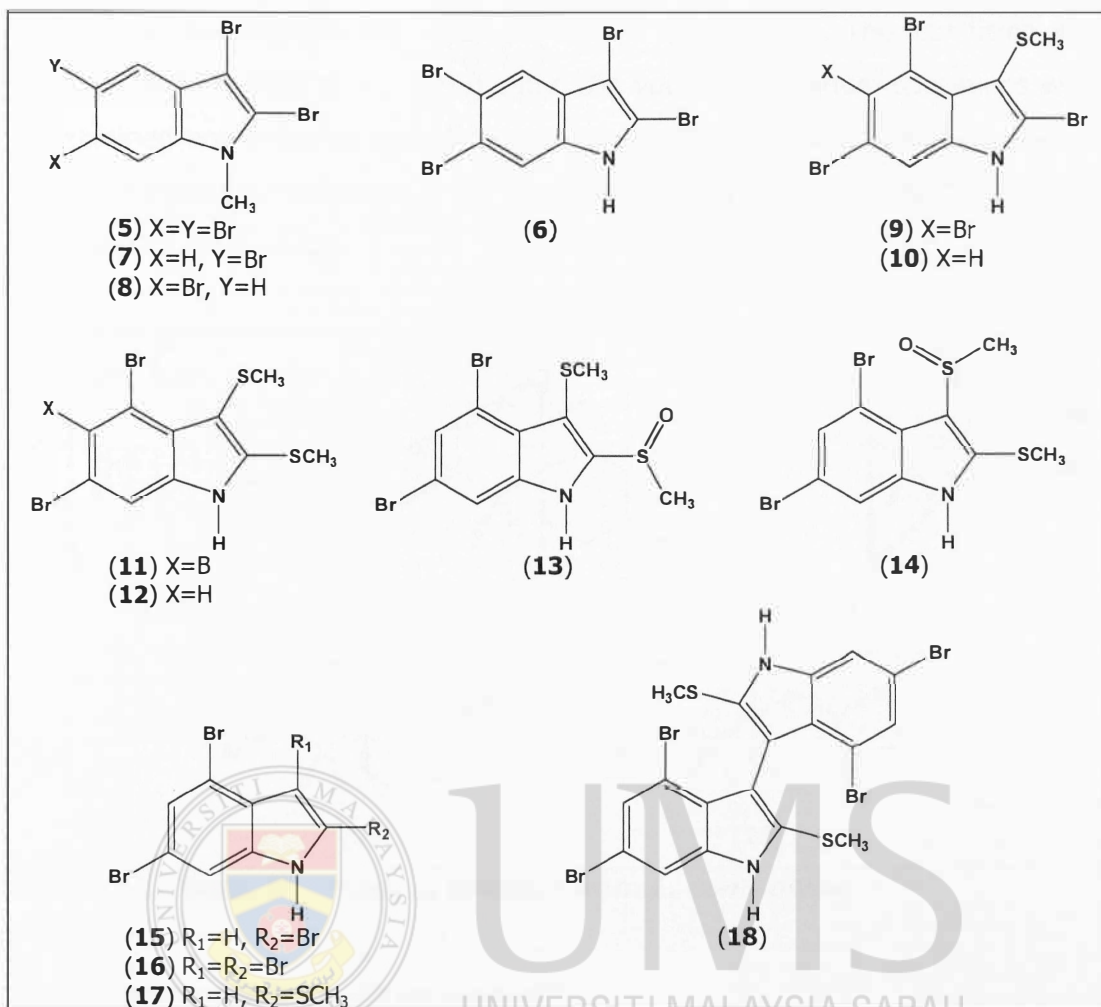


Figure 2.1: Polybromoindoles isolated from *L. brongniartii*.

2.1.2 *Laurencia composita* Yamada

Laurencia composita has been reported from Caribbean Islands, the Philippines and several localities along the Pacific coasts of Japan. This species is characterized by oxygenated chamigrane-type sesquiterpenoids. Masuda *et al.* (1996) reported pacifenol (**15**), prepacifenol epoxide (**16**) and johnstonol (**17**) from this species collected at Matsuura, Nagasaki Prefecture (Pref.), Awaji, Hyogo Pref. and Tateyama, Chiba Pref. Population collected from Tanegashima Island, Kagoshima Pref. also contains these three compounds along with another two chamigrenes: 2,10-dibromo-3-chloro- α -chamigrene (**18**) and 2,10-dibromo-3-chloro-9-hydroxy- α -chamigrene (**19**) (Masuda *et al.*, 2002b). Earlier on, Suzuki and Kurosawa (1985) confused this species as *L. okamurae* when they reported that the population from Iwaizaki, Mie Pref. contains two sets of sesquiterpenoids, chamigrenes (pacifenol,