

**THE APPLICATION OF THE BRINE SHRIMP *ARTEMIA SALINA* FOR DELIVERY
OF BIOLOGICAL MOLECULES IN AQUACULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

The brine shrimp *Artemia salina* (Linn, 1758) is generally used as live feed in the aquaculture industry. The relative ease of propagation, tolerance to extreme salinity and high protein content make *Artemia salina* ideal for feeding marine organisms at the post-larval stage. The ability of *Artemia* to feed on microbes makes them amenable to application for the delivery of recombinant protein molecules and recombinant DNA into marine organisms. This investigation focuses on the application of the *Artemia* for the delivery of recombinant protein produced in *Escherichia coli* (BL21) using a Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) reporter as well as a recombinant plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP which contains eukaryotic promoter and terminator elements. The findings of this study will facilitate our understanding of the process by which *Artemia* can uptake recombinant proteins and express plasmid DNA constructs containing recombinant protein coding genes. From this study, the *Artemia* has been able to retain the GFP produced by the *Escherichia coli* (BL21) which make it suitable for the protein retention and delivery to aquaculture organisms but the *Artemia* unable to transcribe the gene from plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP which has been fed orally. However, the *Artemia* could express the protein from plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP using biolistic gun method in transformation. Therefore, from this experiment, it can be conclude that *Artemia* besides having unique characteristics, it can be manipulated for the delivery of biological molecules in aquaculture.

APLIKASI UDANG AIR GARAM *ARTEMIA SALINA* UNTUK PENGHANTARAN MOLEKUL DALAM AKUAKULTUR

ABSTRAK

Udang air garam, Artemia salina (Linn, 1758) biasanya digunakan sebagai makanan hidup dalam industri akuakultur. Pada peringkat pasca larval, Artemia salina sangat ideal untuk digunakan sebagai makanan kepada organisma laut disebabkan pembiakannya yang mudah, mampu bertoleransi terhadap air yg berkemasinan melampau, dan mengandungi kandungan protein yang tinggi. Artemia salina mempunyai kebolehan menyerap mikroorganisma sebagai makanan membolehkan ia digunakan sebagai aplikasi untuk mengangkut molekul protein rekombinan dan DNA rekombinan kepada hidupan laut. Penyiasatan ini berfokus terhadap aplikasi Artemia untuk menghantar molekul protein rekombinan yang dihasilkan di dalam bakteria Escherichia coli (BL21) menggunakan promoter Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP). Selain itu, ia juga bertujuan untuk mengkaji penghantaran molekul plasmid pDREAM2.1/MCS-ENTH-GFP yang mengandungi promoter dan terminator eukarya. Penemuan kajian ini dapat membantu dalam memahami proses pengambilan protin rekombinan oleh Artemia dan menzahirkan koding protin rekombinan yang dibina di dalam DNA plasmid. Daripada kajian ini, Artemia mampu menahan protin yang dihasilkan daripada E. coli (BL21) iaitu protin GFP yang mana sesuai untuk penampungan protin dan juga sebagai penghantaran dalam bidang akuakultur. Akan tetapi, Artemia tidak dapat mengekspres gen daripada plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP yang telah diberi sebagai bahan makanan. Manakala, Artemia dapat mengekspres gen daripada plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP melalui cara pistol biolistic yang dilakukan dalam proses transformasi. Sebagai kesimpulannya, Artemia selain mempunyai ciri-ciri yang unik, ia dapat dimanipulasi sebagai agen penghantaran molekul biologi di dalam bidang akuakultur.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

°C	Degree celcius
%	Percentage
μl	Microlitre
μm	Micromithre
L	Litre
M	Molar
cm	Centimetre
mg	Milligram
ml	Millilitre
No.	Number
Rpm	Round per min
Ppt	Part per thousand
s	Seconds
g	Gram
V	Voltan
PBS	Phosphate Buffer Saline
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Artemia Salina is classified as a species of Artemia Genus of aquatic crustaceans known as brine shrimp. In the family Artemiidae, Artemia is the only genus that has changed little externally since the Triassic period. *Artemia* is in the order of Anostroca, brings the meaning of 'no shell', which classifies the shrimp with the other species that does not have a hard, bony outer covering. Its subclass Brachiopoda literally means 'gill foot', referring to the fact that the gills are on the outer side of the limb bases. (Banister, 1985; Najarian, 1976).

Artemia Salina is extremely osmotolerant which can be found inhabiting wide variety of water salinity (Van Stappen, 1996, 2002) such as the Great Salt Lake in Northern Utah, on the rocky coast south of San Francisco, the Caspian Sea and other bodies of water with any salt contents, salt swamps near any coast and man-made saltpans around the world (Grizmek, 1972; Pennak, 1989).

Artemia Salina is an arthropod where it has segmented body to which is attached broad leaf-like appendages that greatly increase the apparent size of the animal. For adult male, they can reach total length of 8-10 mm while adult female is 10-12 mm while the width for both sexes is about 4 mm. There are three segments of their body which is head, thorax and abdomen (Criel and MacRae, 2002).

In *Artemia*, two mode of reproduction has been recognized and alternates according to thte conditions of life which are ovoviviparous reproduction (favourable condition) and oviparous reproduction (unfavourable condition) (Lochhead, 1941). In ovoviviparous reproduction, the fertilized egg develops to the stage of gastrula, but instead of being confined, it is differentiate into female body and the larvae called nauplii (free fins larvae). In oviparous reproduction, the fertilized eggs develop into gastrula stage and is surrounded by a tough brown crust consists of protein, lipoprotein, etc. The cysts formed are then released into water. The latter mode of reproduction is predominant at high salinity and lower dissolved oxygen concentrations.

In aquaculture industry, the wide size range of brine shrimp *Artemia Salina* and their different physical forms make them very versatile where the eggs, nauplii and adults of the brine shrimp has been used widely as a life feed for coral, larval fish, and other crustacean. Brine shrimp *Artemia Salina* is important for aquaculture since it is highly nutritious, low cost, and easy to culture (Sorgeloos *et al.*, 1986). In fact, there is still no artificial feed formulation available to completely substitute for *Artemia*.

Besides, its ability to produce dormant eggs, known as cysts, through oviparous reproduction when the environmental conditions are harsh (Criel and MacRae, 2002) can be stored for long periods and hatched on demand has led to extended use of *Artemia* in aquaculture (Daintith, 1996).

Due to its feeding behavior (continuous, nonselective and particle-filter feeder), *Artemia* has been manipulated by many researchers in order to enhance its application in aquaculture life. Indeed, essential nutrients, pigments, prophylatics, and therapeutics may be bioencapsulated in *Artemia* and introduced into consumer organism (Leger *et al.* 1987) and this shows the possibility of using *Artemia* (nauplii or adults) as a carrier for biological molecules components which are otherwise difficult to administer to fish and and crustacean larvae.

Artemia are extensively used as the main food source for the larviculture of marine fish and shrimp where it has successfully been applied as biological carriers for transferring essential nutrients to predator larvae (Leger *et al.*, 1986). Sorgeloos *et al.* (1992), reported on the determination of the accumulation rate of particular drugs in *Artemia* for disease treatment in larviculture.

Bioencapsulation of *Artemia* nauplii for protection against diseases has also been suggested and studied by many groups. Chair *et al.* (1996) reported that antibacterial agents like trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole can efficiently be encapsulated in *Artemia* nauplii. Accumulation of these therapeutic agents in high quantities occurred when mediated *Artemia* are fed to larvae of sea bass and post-larvae of white shrimp.

Other than acting as tool for components delivery, *Artemia* larvae also used as a screening system for toxic fungal (Harwig and Scott, 1971) and Brown *et al.* (1968) described a bioassay involving brine shrimp larvae for aflatoxin B₁. *Artemia* has been used widely for quantitation of the potency of anaesthetics (Robinson *et al.*, 1965), evaluation of toxicity of dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (Grosh, 1967) and other insecticides (Michael *et al.*, 1956) of heavy metal salts (Chanh and Mamy, 1963) and antibiotics (Delcambe, 1955).

Objectives of the study

1. To study the capability of *Artemia Salina* to accumulate Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP).
2. To study the capability of *Artemia Salina* to express a GFP gene whose expression is driven by eukaryotic promoter.
3. To investigate the application of the *Artemia Salina* for the delivery of recombinant protein produced in Escherichia Coli using a Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) reporter as well as a recombinant plasmid PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP.
4. To study the expression of the PMCS2.1-ENTH-GFP by the *Artemia Salina* after transformation using biolistic gun.

Findings of the study

The findings of this study will facilitate our understanding of the process by which *Artemia* can uptake recombinant proteins and express plasmid DNA constructs containing recombinant protein coding genes. Furthermore, the findings will aid in the enhancement of aquaculture industry.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The brine shrimp

The brine shrimp *Artemia Salina* is one of the most demanded aquatic animals used and it is organism of economically importance in the aquaculture industry because of its high nutritional value (Sorgeloos *et al.*, 1986). The brine shrimp is outstanding as one of the most researched organism due to its wide distribution all over the world (Hachem *et al.*, 2009) and have more than 500 reported sites (Abatzopoulos *et al.*, 2002).

Brine shrimp filled the food chain between the plankton and larger filter feeders, small fish and birds. According to MacGinite (1968), brine shrimp earn their common name because of their ability to live in a wide range of salinities. Moreover, brine shrimp has the ability which allow them to inhabit an extreme environment of drying salt ponds where little competition occur and able to escape from organism who cannot tolerate high salinity of water (Brown, 1960). It also has fast reproduction cycle and their eggs is able to survive desiccations.

The brine shrimp was first reported in Urmia Lake in 1982 by an Iranian geographer (Asem, 2008). After that, in 1756, Schlösser pictured both sexes of *Artemia* clearly.

Linnaeus (1758) then described it as *Cancer Salinus* before Leach (1819) transferred it to *Artemia Salina* 61 years later. *Artemia Salina* is a primitive aquatic arthropod with a history for about 100 million years (Asem, 2008).



Figure 2.1 *Artemia Salina*

2.1.1 Classification

Artemia Salina is classified as a species of *Artemia* genus of aquatic crustaceans known as brine shrimp. In the family Artemiidae, *Artemia* is the only genus that has changed little externally since the Triassic period. *Artemia* is in the order Anostroca, literally meaning 'no shell', which classifies the shrimp with either species that have no carapace (a hard, bony outer covering). Its subclass Brachiopoda literally means 'gill feet', referring to the fact that the gills are on the outer side of the limb bases (Banister, 1985; Najarian, 1976). Brachiopoda, from 'branch' meaning gill, and 'poda' meaning feet (Borror, 1988), are characterized by the fact that their appendages are used for locomotion, feeding and respiration.

Table 2.1 Scientific Classification of *Artemia Salina*

SCIENTIFIC CLASSIFICATION	
Kingdom	Animalia
Phylum	Arthropoda
Subphylum	Crustacean
Class	Branchiopoda
Order	Anostraca
Family	Artemiidae
Genus	Artemia
Species	<i>Artemia Salina</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)

2.1.2 Natural habitat

Artemia Salina inhabits inland salt lakes such as the Great Salt Lake in Northern Utah, coastal salt lagoons of San Francisco and solar saltworks (Persoone and Sorgeloss, 1980). They also can be found in many salt water bodies with high salinity which varies between 60-300 ppt. Pearse (1987) discovered that they prefer shallow, saline waters and have adapted to the hyper saline waters of drying saltwater ponds.

Artemia is the only Branchiopoda that have adapted to salt water, where this adaptation allows them to escape predation from populations of aquatic animals that cannot tolerate desiccation (Hickman, 1976). *Artemia* are also adapted to widely changeable temperature (6-35°C) and ionic composition, and their pH tolerance varies from neutral to highly alkaline (Van Stappen, 1996, 2002).

It has been shown by Croghan (1957) that *Artemia* has developed a mechanism to maintain haemolymph extreme hypotonic in saline extreme media. This proved that this animal have the ability to reduce the osmotic pressure of haemolymph by NaCl excretion agaisnts the concentration gradient. The brine shrimp also able to overcome the severe physiological demands imposed by these habitats, due to a set of various adaptations, the most salient of which is probably an interchangeable (diapausing cysts versus nauplii) life cycle (Lochhead, 1941).

2.1.3 Characteristics

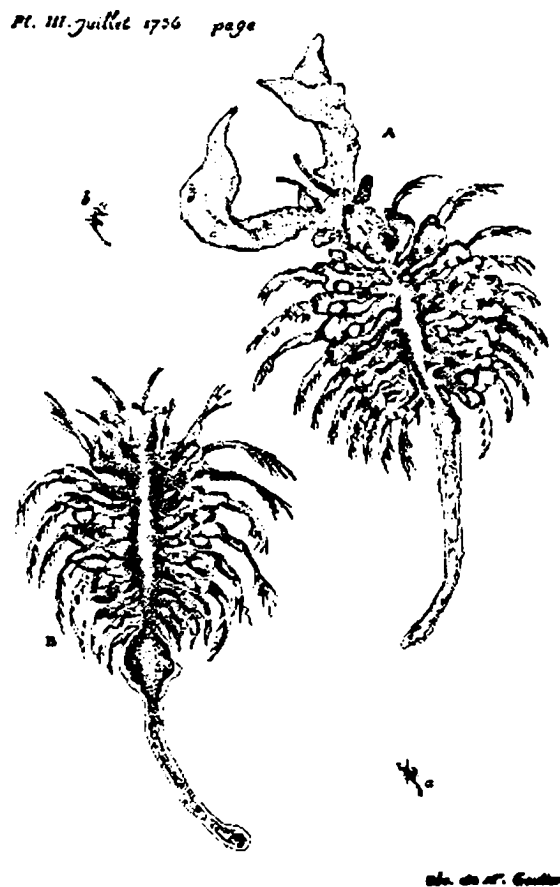


Figure 2.2 Schlösser's drawing of *Artemia* in 1756 (Source: Kuenen & Baas-Becking, 1938)

Artemia Salina's body consists of three segments which are head, thorax, and abdomen though the delineation is often difficult to detect and so the body parts are usually termed as head and trunk (Brown, 1960). A thin exoskeleton is covering the 19 segments of the *Artemia* elongated body. The first 11 of which have pairs of appendages, the next two which are often fused together carrying the reproductive organs and finally the last lead to the tail (Hickman, 1967).

The compound eyes which is located at the end of short stalks helps in detecting the light direction and intensity, though they able to aid in orientation depending on the sunlight's polarization and indicate the present of predators by detecting the light movement (Hickman, 1967).

Their locomotion is reached by the rhythmic beating of the appendages that act in pairs. Telson (a flattened tail) functions as steering and used for rapid movements in order to escape from the predators (Brown, 1960). Respiration occurs on the surface of the legs through fibrous, feather like plates (lamellar epipodites) (Hickman, 1967).

The legs or appendages also aid in the circulation of blood despite the existence of a long tube like heart. The blood which uses haemoglobins as its primary oxygen fixing pigments and lends the brine shrimp its pink colour, does not flow through veins but rather flows in the hemocoelic spaces of the head and throughout the trunk and appendages (Brown, 1960).

They are presenting a sexual dimorphism where the differences of morphological between males and females can be observed in maximum distance between compound eyes, length of first antenna, the width of the third abdominal segment, the total length, diameter of compound eye, length of abdomen.

The adult male can reach up to 8-10 mm long, and the female is 10-12 mm. besides, male brine shrimp have the second antennae markedly enlarged, and modified into clasping organs used in mating differ them from female brine shrimp (Greta, 1980). The other physical differences that can be spotted is the female brine shrimp have brood sac (for eggs storage) and is much larger than the male brine shrimp.

The *Artemia* is a planktivore where it lives on algae, protozoa and detritus. In fact, *Artemia* foraging behavior is an active non-selective filter. Dobbeleir *et al.* (1980) stated that they can ingest small feed particles ranging from 1 to 50 μm in size.

LochHead (1941) reported that the females adult reproduce viviparously or oviparously. These two types of reproduction is alternate depending on the environment condition. Ovoviviparous reproduction occurs when the conditions are favourable where the embryo develops directly into nauplii while oviparous reproduction happens when the conditions are unfavourable, cysts formed.

2.1.4 Life cycle

The life of a brine shrimp started either through ovoviviparous reproduction or oviparous reproduction (Lochhead, 1941). The mating process starts when the male depositing sperm to fertilizes the female's egg by holding the female with his claspers.

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