Note on sampling and laboratory procedure protocols of the genetic work at the Institute of Cetacean Research

Naohisa Kanda, Mutsuo Goto, Hiroyuki Oikawa, and Luis A. Pastene

The Institute of Cetacean Research, Toyomi-cho 4-5, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-0055 Japan

Contact email: kanda@cetacean.jp

ABSTRACT
This note presents a summary of sampling and laboratory protocols for the genetic studies under the Objective 3 of the JARPAII conducted at the Institute of Cetacean Research.

KEYWORDS: ANTARCTIC, GENETICS, SCIENTIFIC PERMITS

INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the JARPAII include the elucidation of temporal and spatial changes in stock structure of Antarctic minke whale and the description of stock structure of other baleen whale species in the Antarctic feeding grounds. Genetic analyses utilizing different kinds of genetic markers are one of the important tools to address the stock structure questions in JARPAII.

In order to minimize errors in genetic data, we were recommended to follow the IWC approved guidelines for DNA data quality control for genetic studies (IWC, 2009). The purpose of this short note is thus to summarize the protocols of sampling and laboratory works for the genetic studies at the Institute of Cetacean Research (ICR), on which the population genetic structure studies under the JARPAII are based.

COLLECTION OF GENETIC SAMPLES

Since JARPA started, we have established standard sampling, sample handling, and laboratory practice procedures to ensure consistent data generation.

Catches

In JARPAII, this section applies to Antarctic minke and fin whales. Skin tissues are taken as genetic samples from each individual whale on board by experienced scientists. The sampling involved the use of sterile and single-use tools (scalpel and plastic tongs). Two pieces of approximately 5×5×5mm skin tissues are taken and are kept in a 99% ethanol filled tube. Prior to the sampling, all of the tubes are labeled with sample names following our naming rule for the catches: e.g., 10/11AM001 indicating the austral summer season (=season), the targeted species (AM= Antarctic minke) and the individual identification number (001). The same codes are applied to several other biological items and ancillary information so that these codes for the genetic samples allow for cross referencing with the comprehensive database of JARPAII.

Biopsy

Biopsy sampling procedures in JARPAII are similar to those used in the IDCR/SOWER cruises. Biopsy sampling (skin/blubber) occurs on large vessels using either a crossbow or black powder gun. Photo-id experiments are conducted in parallel to biopsy sampling. Efforts to avoid re-sampling (two biopsy samples from the same individual) are made. A small tissue sample (< 1 gram) is obtained from a free-ranging individual using a biopsy dart with a stainless tip measuring approximately 4cm in length with an external diameter of 9mm, which was fitted with a 2.5cm stop to ensure recoil and prevent deeper penetration. Between the sampling periods, the biopsy tips are thoroughly cleaned and are sterilized with bleach. The obtained biopsy samples are treated using sterile and single-use tools (scalpel and plastic tongs). Each of the samples is kept in a 99% ethanol filled tube or in a small zip plastic bag (-20 ºC). Prior to the sampling, all of the tubes are labeled with sample names following our naming rule for the biopsies: e.g., 'J03YS2H001' specifying the research program (J=JARPAII), season (03/04), vessel (YS2= Yushin Maru No. 2), target species (H= humpback whale) and individual number (001). This code allows cross referencing with ancillary information from the biopsy sampling experiment.

STORAGE OF GENETIC SAMPLES
Prior to DNA extraction, the individual tissue samples from catches in the ethanol filled tubes are stored at room temperature. The biopsy samples in the ethanol filled tubes are stored at room temperature and those in the small plastic bag are stored in a freezer (-20ºC) as frozen tissues.

DNA EXTRACTION
Total DNA of each individual is extracted from 0.05g of the collected tissue using either the standard phenol/chloroform extractions protocol of Sambrook *et al*. (1989) or the GENTRA PUREGENE DNA extraction kit (QIAGEN) following the company's manual. Extracted DNAs are stored in the TE buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 8.0).

SEQUENCING AND GENOTYPING PROCEDURE
At present, two different kinds of genetic markers, mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) and microsatellite DNA, are used in the ICR.

mtDNA
The first 490 base-pairs at the 5' end of the control region of mtDNA are sequenced for the genetic analysis. A set of primers for PCR amplification is usually MT4 (Arnason *et al*. 1993) and Dlp 5R (5'-CCA TCG AGA TGT CTT ATT TAA GGG GAA C-3'). The PCR reactions are carried out in 25 uL volumes containing 10-100ng of DNA, 2.5 pmole of each primer, 0.5 units of Ex Taq DNA polymerase (Takara), 2mM of each dNTP, and 10x reaction buffer. After an initial denaturation step at 95° C for 5 minutes, a PCR amplification cycle of 30 seconds at 94°C followed by 30 seconds at 50°C and 30 seconds at 72°C is repeated 30 times. The amplification is completed with a final extension step of 10 minutes at 72°C. Subsequent cycle sequencing reactions are performed with 100ng each of the PCR products generated in the above amplifications using the BigDye® Terminator Cycle Sequencing Kit (Applied Biosystems). The primers for the cycle sequencing reactions are the same as used in the initial PCR amplification listed above. The cycle sequencing of 10 seconds at 96°C followed by 20 seconds at 56°C and four minutes at 60°C is repeated 25 times. The nucleotide sequence of each cycle sequencing reaction is determined using Applied Biosystems 3500 Genetic Analyzer (Life Technology) under standard conditions. Both strand samples are sequenced in their entirety for all samples.

Microsatellite DNA
Different sets of the microsatellite DNA loci are used for different species.

Species	Microsatellite DNA loci
Antarctic minke whale	AC045, AC082, AC087, AC137, CA234, DlrFCB14, EV1, EV104, GT23, GT129, GT195, GT211
Fin whale	DlrFCB14, EV1, EV14, EV21, EV37, EV94, EV104, GATA28, GATA98, GAT417, GT23, GT195, GT211, GT310, GT575, TAA31
Humpback whale	AC137, CA234, EV1, EV14, EV37, GATA28, GATA53, GATA98, GATA417, GT23, GT195, GT271, GT310, TAA31
Southern right whale	DlrFCB17, EV1, EV14, EV21, EV37, EV94, GATA28, GT23, GT211, GT310, TR2F3, TR3G2, TR2G5, TR3F2

All of these loci have been already published:
Bérubé *et al*. (2005) : AC045, AC082, AC087, AC137, CA234, and GT129
Buchanan *et al*. (1996): DlrFCB14, DlrFCB17
Valsecchi and Amos (1996): EV1, EV14, EV21, EV37, EV94
Bérubé *et al*. (2000): GT23, GT195, GT211, GT271, GT310
Palsbøll *et al*. (1997): GATA28, GATA53, GATA98, GATA417, TAA31
Frasier *et al*. (2006): TR2F3, TR3G2, TR2G5, TR3F2

Although primer sequences follow those of the original authors, an annealing temperature of each of the loci is optimized for each of the whale species. Although the IWC guidelines (IWC, 2009) recommended to sequence the microsatellite loci for marker validation, we have not had the opportunity yet to do so by ourselves. The published primers were designed from the cetacean species and were checked for the reliability of amplification and scoring prior to use by the original authors.

PCR amplifications are performed in 15ml reaction mixtures containing 10-100ng of DNA, 5 pmole of each primer, 0.625 units of Ex Taq DNA polymerase (Takara), and 2mM of each dNTP, and 10x reaction buffer containing 20mM MgCl2 (Takara). The amplified products, each with an internal size standard (GENESCAN400HD, Life Technology), are run on a 6% polyacrylamide denaturating gel (Long Ranger) using BaseStation100 DNA fragment analyzer (BioRad). Although the amplified alleles are visualized and are size determined using the computer software CARTOGRAPHER specifically designed for the BaseStation, allelic sizes for the data base are determined manually in relation to the internal size standard and DNA of known sizes from the 'control' individual that is rerun on each gel.

Sex determination

For the biopsy samples, the slightly modified method of Abe *et al*. (2001) is used, which involves co-amplification of SRY locus on the Y chromosome and a microsatellite locus (usually GT23). With this combination of loci, males show the amplified products of both SRY and microsatellite loci, while females show only the product of the microsatellite locus. Molecular sex determination is not performed for the catches because the sexes of the whales were determined on board by the experienced scientists by observing the reproductive organs.

CONTROL RELIABILITY

For both mtDNA and microsatellites analyses, no attempt has been made to estimate statistical error rates. Although the IWC guidelines recommend scoring by two or more people for double-checking, scores are in general conducted by a single person.

mtDNA

For each individual sample, both forward and reverse sequences are typed for error check. After the first run, all of the ambiguous sequences, singletons, and sequences with the unusual number of transversion, are repeated for confirmation.

Microsatellites

Although typing procedure is repeated only in the case of samples not providing satisfactory results in the first attempt, some individuals, chosen arbitrarily, from the samples are genotyped more than twice for double checking. In some cases, side by side running to check genotypes is conducted when there is some uncertainty in the pattern found. For data consistency, a computer program MICRO-CHECKER (van Oosterhout *et al*., 2004) is used to check for null alleles and reading/typing errors. A computer program GENEPOP (Rousset, 2008) is used to test deviation from Hardy-Weinberg genotypic expectations and, if needed, linkage disequilibrium. Identity check, such as duplicate sampling in the biopsy samples, is conducted using a computer program CERVUS (Marshall *et al*., 1998). Re-sampled animals are not used in the statistical analyses. Input data files for the computer programs are in general made first in the GENEPOP format, and are converted to the other required formats using the computer software, such as through the file conversion option in GENEPOP.

DATA BASE STRUCTURE

Sequence and microsatellite genotype data are stored in Excel files by markers and species.

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