TẠP CHÍ KHOA HỌC
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM TP HỒ CHÍ MINH
Tập 18, Số 9 (2021): 1359-1367
ISSN: 2734-9918

HO CHI MINH CITY UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION
JOURNAL OF SCIENCE
Vol. 18, No. 9 (2021): 1359-1367
Website: *http://journal.hcmue.edu.vn*

Research Article

FRESHWATER SNAIL DIVERSITY IN GROWOUT PONDS OF GIANT GOURAMI WITH REFERENCE TO INTERMEDIATE HOSTS OF TREMATODE LARVAE (CERCARIAE STAGE) IN TIEN GIANG PROVINCE

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Received: September 01, 2021; Revised: September 07; Accepted: September 10, 2021

ABSTRACT

A research on the composition of freshwater snails and trematode larvae (cercariae stage) in 20 grow-out ponds of giant gourami was carried out in Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang province in October 2020 and April 2021. A total of 4,548 samples of snails including 8 species, 8 genera, 4 families was collected and identified by morphological method. The results showed that Melanoides tuberculata was infected Xiphidio cercariae and Furcocercous cercariae whereas Xiphidio cercariae and Parapleurolophocercous cercariae were recovered from Bithynia sp. *No cercariae were found in Filopaludina sumatrensis, Pomacea* sp., *Sermyla tornatella, Sinotaia lithophaga, Tarebia granifera and Thiara scabra. The trematode pond prevalence (cercariae stage) in the dry season was higher than the wet season (P>0.05). Further research on the epidemiology of trematodes in giant gourami cultured in ponds should be done to control the trematode infection in cercariae stage to contribute to the sustainable aquaculture development and food safety.*

Keywords: cercariae; giant gourami; snail; trematode

1. Introduction

Culture of giant gourami

Fish culture systems are more diverse, with most fresh water fish species raised in monoculture or polyculture, including cage culture, fish rice culture, pond monoculture and pond polyculture, and stocked at different levels of intensification. Commercial fish culture in the Mekong Delta began with the production of river catfish for export. In addition, other common grow-out systems have been developed to mainly supply fish for domestic consumption, including giant gourami. The pond area for giant gourami monoculture ranged from 200-800 m^2 with a stocking density of 5-7 fish/m^2 (Nguyen, 2005). Giant gourami typically gained only 0.4-0.6 kg after 10-12 months' culture and

Cite this article as: Pham Cu Thien, & Tran Thi Thu Thuy (2021). Using creative methodology to explore factors influencing teacher educator identity. *Ho Chi Minh City University of Education Journal of Science, 18*(9), 1359-1367.

reached 1.0-1.5 kg after two years of pond culture (Pham, 2006). In grow-out ponds, the main feed for giant gourami were vegetables, aquatic plants, household waste, agricultural by-products and commercial pelleted feed (Duong, 2003; Nguyen, 2005).

Freshwater snail distribution

Snail composition and distribution has been studied in the recent years. Dang Ngoc Thanh et al. published a book in 1980 that there were 47 freshwater snail species in the North of Vietnam. Bui et al. (2010) researched the distribution of snails in VAC ponds and associated water body and found that there were 16 snail species in two communes of Nghia Phu district, Nam Dinh province. Nguyen Phuoc Bao Ngoc et al. (2014) collected 11 snail species including *Melanoides tuberculata, Sermyla tornatella*, *Tarebia grannifera, Filopaludia sumatensis*, *Pomacea* sp., *Sinotaia lithophaga*, *Gyraulus* sp., *Lymnaea* sp., *Bithynia* sp., *Indoplanrbis exustus* and *Thiara scabra* in An My and An Hoa communes, Tuy An district, Phu Yen province. Ha Huynh Hong Vu et al. (2014) surveyed the snail composition in Vinh Long and Dong Thap provinces and found 14 freshwater snails including *Lymnaea swinhoei, Lymnaea viridis*, *Indoplanorbis exustus*, *Clea* sp., *Bithynia siamensis, Mekongia* sp., *Eyriesia* sp., *Adamietta* sp., *Melanoides tuberculata, Sermyla* sp., *Tarebia granifera*, *Pomacea canaliculata*, *Trochotaia* sp., and *Filopaludina martensi martensi.*

Snail as the second intermediate host

Foodborne trematodiasis is an emerging public health problem particularly in Southeast Asia (Keiser and Utzinger, 2005). In aquaculture systems, the main risk factors for trematode infection and transmission include contamination of pond environments with trematode eggs from infected hosts. Factors that promote the diversity and population growth of snail intermediate hosts also increase risk (Bui et al., 2010) as snail is the first intermediate host of trematodes (Thai, 2009).

In the research by Bui et al. (2010), no cercariae were found in species of Viviparidae and Ampullaridae, but *Melanoides tuberculata* beloging to genus of Thiaridae had the highest prevalence (Bui et al., 2010), Among the 7 snail species, only *Melanoides tuberculata* and *Bithynia fuchsiana* were infected cercariae (Nguyen et al., 2015). It seemed that two of these snail species were common infected cercariae. The snail intermediate hosts for the heterophyid trematode species were primarily species of the Thiaridae and Bithynidae (Madsen and Nguyen, 2014). *M. tuberculata, Thiara* and *Terabia granifera* were the first intermediate hosts of heterophyids (Waikagul and Radomyos, 2005). *M. tuberculata* was the host of *H. pumilio* (Khalifa et al. 1977; Wang et al. 2002; Dechruksa et al. 2007) and *C. formosanus* (Scholz and Salgado-Maldonado, 1999). *Melania newcombi* was the host of *S. falcatus* (Lee and Cheng, 1970). *Thiara granifera* was found commonly infected with *H. pumilio* in Taiwan (Wang et al. 2002), *C. formosanus* in Thailand (Dechruksa et al. 2007) and *S. falcatus* in Hawai (Lee and Cheng,

1970). *T. riquetti* has been found to be the host of *Procerovum calderoni* in the Philippines (Velasquez, 1973). Ten species of snails belonging to four families have shown to be the first intermediate host for *C. sinensis*. The first intermediate snail species of *C. sinensis* in China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan was *Parafossarulus manchouricus* (Yoshida, 2005). Dubey et al. (2006) reported that *Parafossarulus*, *Bythynia* and *Alocinma* spp. were the first intermdediate snail host of *C. sinensis*, and *Bythynia* spp. was also the host of *O. viverrini* and *Codiella* spp. for *O. feliensis*. Two species of *Bithynia* snails were found to be first intermediate host of *Opisthorchis viverrini* in Thailand (Tesana, 2005). Species of the families Thiaridae and Viviparidae were more abundant than other species in VAC ponds while species of the Bithyniidae, Stenothyridae and Planorbidae dominated in rice fields and small canals (Bui et al. 2010).

Trematode infection (cercariae stage)

Bui Thi Dung et al. (2010) researched on the distribution of freshwater snails and occurrence of trematode infections in VAC ponds and associated habitats in cultured fish in two communes, Nghia Lac and Nghia Phu, Nghia Hung District, Nam Dinh Province. Trematode infections were found in eight snail species. Parapleurolophocercous and pleurolophocercous cercariae constituted the most common type of cercariae recovered, contributing 40.6% of all infections followed by echinostome cercariae (35.0%) and xiphidiocercariae (17.3%). In 2013, Besprozvannykh et al. studied the presence of cercariae in three snails species of *Bithynia fuchsiana*, *Parafossarulus striatulus* (Bithyniidae) and *Melanoides tuberculata* (Thiaridae) in Nam Dinh province and recorded 12 cercariae species of 8 families including Cyathocotylidae, Pleurogenidae, Lecithodendriidae, Notocotylidae, Heterophyidae, Paramphistomidae, Psilostomidae and Echinostomatidae. Nguyen Phuoc Bao Ngoc et al. (2014) found Pleurolophocercariae, Xiphidiocercariae, Echinostome, Monostome and Gymnocephalus from 11 snail species in two communes of An My and An Hoa, Tuy An district, Phu Yen province. Krailas et al. (2014) obtained nine types of cercariae from *Melanoides tuberculata* from 120 locations in Thailand including Parapleurophocercous cercariae, Pleurophocercous cercariae, Xiphidiocercariae, Megalurous cercariae, Furcocercous cercariae, Echinostome cercariae, Amphistome cercariae, Renicolid cercariae and Cotylomicrocercous cercariae. Nguyen Manh Hung et al. (2015) recovered Xiphidiocercariae, Xiphidiocercariae, Furcocercariae, Parapleurolophocercous from 7 snail species in Gia Vien district, Ninh Binh province, in which *Melanoides tuberculata* had the highest prevalence. Pham Ngoc Doanh et al. (2019) carried out a study in Kim Son district of Ninh Binh province and Ba Vi district of Ha Noi city and got 9 snail snail species and cercariae of Echinostome, Monostome, Parapleurolophocercous, Xiphidiocercariae, Fucocercariae, Gymnocephalous, Megalurous.

The above results show that there are a lot of studies on snail composition and trematode larvae (cercariae stage) in Vietnam and other countries. However, there is no

information about the snail composition and trematode in snail in grow-out pond of giant gourami, so a research on snails and cercariae in giant gourami ponds in Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang province, Vietnam was implemented.

2. Materials and methods

Study areas

According to the data from Department of Agriculture of Chau Thanh district, Tien Giang province in 2020, giant gourami was cultured mostly in Chau Thanh district, especially in two communes namely Than Cuu Nghia and Long An. Therefore, snails in grow-out ponds of giant gourami from these two communes were chosen for research in the period of October 2020 and April 2021 (Table 1).

Table 1. *Total sampled ponds of grow-out giant gourami in Chau Thanh district (N=20)*

No	Name of communes	Sampled ponds in October 2020	Sampled ponds in April 2021
1	Than Cuu Nghia	18	18
2	Long An	2	2

Sampling of snails

Two cross-sectional studies on snails were carried out in October 2020 (the wet season) and in April 2021 (the dry season). A total of 20 grow-out ponds of giant gourami was randomly selected for snail examination. Snail sampling was done using a 25-cm wide dredge to scrape the pond bottom from 1.5 m out from the pond bank. A total of five such samples were taken at different locations in each giant gourami pond. A separate dredge and scoop was used at each farm to avoid possible spread of fish disease causing pathogens. Each sample was washed in the pond water and collected snails were transferred to cloth bags and transported to the laboratory where they were analyzed within 24 h of collection. Snails were identified to species following the keys of Dang et al. (1980), Madsen and Nguyen (2014).

Examination of snails for cecariae

Snails were examined for trematode infection (cercariae stage) by shedding method (Frandsen and Christensen, 1984; Bui et al., 2010) in different sized containers from 5mL to 100 mL small plastic beakers, depending on snail size, and left for 24 hours for shedding. Recognition of cercariae was made by using systematic key references (Frandsen and Christensen, 1984; Schell, 1985).

Specimens of snails and cercariae were preserved in 70% ethanol and 4% formalin, respectively such that identifications could later be verified.

Data analysis

Microsoft Excel 2010 was used for data entry and and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20; SPSS Inc., Chicago, Illinois) was applied for data analysis. The Chi-squared test was used to compare the difference of trematode pond prevalence (cercariae stage) between seasons. A value of $P<0.05$ was considered significant.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Snail composition in grow-out ponds of giant gourami

Eight snail species belonging to 8 genera, 4 families in Order of Mesogastropoda, Class of Gastropoda, Phylum of Mollusca was collected and identified by morphological method. The snail species were *Sermyla tornatella*, *Melanoides tuberculata*, *Tarebia granifera*, *Thiara scabra*, *Filopaludina sumatrensis*, *Sinotaia lithophaga*, *Pomacea* sp. and *Bithynia* sp. (Table 2).

Table 2. *Snail composition in grow-out ponds of giant gourami in Tien Giang province (N=20)*

Family	Genus	Species
Thiaridae	*Sermyla*	*Sermyla tornatella*
	Melanoides	*Melanoides tuberculata*
	Tarebia	*Tarebia granifera*
	Thiara	*Thiara scabra*
Viviparidae	*Filopaludina*	*Filopaludina sumatrensis*
	Sinotaia	*Sinotaia lithophaga*
Ampulariidae	*Pomacea*	*Pomacea* sp.
Bithyniidae	*Bithynia*	*Bithynia* sp.

A total of 4,548 samples of snails were collected in both of the wet season (October, 2020) and the dry season (April, 2021). The snail species had high numbers of occurrence such as *Sermyla tornatella* (55.5%), *Filopaludina sumatrensis* (16.1%), *Sinotaia lithophaga* (15.6%), *Pomacea* sp. (4.0%), *Melanoides tuberculata* (3.9%) and *Bithynia* sp. (3.5%), and the snails had low numbers such as *Thiara scabra* (0.8%) and *Tarebia granifera* (0.7%). (Table 3).

Table 3. *Total sampled snails in the wet season and the dry season (N=20)*

Snail species	Number of snails			Percentage (%)
	In the wet season (October 2020)	In the dry season (April 2021)	In two seasons	
Bithynia sp.	21	136	157	3.5
Filopaludina sumatrensis	360	372	732	16.1
Melanoides tuberculata	119	57	176	3.9
Pomacea sp.	123	58	181	4.0
Sermyla tornatella	2043	480	2523	55.5
Sinotaia lithophaga	380	328	708	15.6
Tarebia granifera	3	31	34	0.7
Thiara scabra	18	19	37	0.8
Total	3,067	1,481	4,548	100

The research result of snail diversity in giant gourami cultured in ponds provides more information about snails in aquaculture in Vietnam. The dominant families of snails in the study were Thiaridae and Viviparidae. This result is similar to the finding by Pham

et al. (2015) that most snails in the juvenile giant gourami nurseries belonged to the families of Viviparidae and Thiaridae. The explanation may be that the two study areas are located on the districts of Chau Thanh (for growout ponds) and Cai Lay (nursing ponds) but in the same province of Tien Giang, so the snails species are not different. When comparing to the research on snails in VAC ponds in Nam Dinh province of Vietnam (Bui et al., 2010), total number of snail species and families in giant gourami ponds (8 snail species in 4 families) were much smaller than VAC ponds with 14 snail species in 8 families. The main reason is that VAC ponds got water from canals and rivers while giant gourami ponds was supplied by well water; therefore, there was less chance for new snails to invade into the giant gourami ponds. Moreover, the soil structure in ponds and study areas might make the difference of snail diversity.

In the fish ponds from the research by Madsen et al. (2015), *Melanoides tuberculata* was presented a lot but only some of them were found in giant gourami ponds in this paper because of the location. However, the presence of *Bithynia* sp. in both of these fish ponds and in giant gourami ponds are alike as they were rarely found. *Sermyla tornatella*, *Filopaludina sumatrensis* and *Sinotaia lithophaga* were particularly abundant in the giant gourami ponds, but all of them had cercariae free. This result is like the research by Nguyen et al. (2014) that *Filopaludina sumatrensis* and *Sinotaia lithophaga* had no cercariae. The two snail species in giant gourami ponds infected cercariae were *Bithynia* sp. and *Melanoides tuberculata* with the prevalence of 11.5% and 6.8%, respectively. This finding agrees with the previous research that *Melanoides tuberculata* and *Bithynia* sp. was infected with the high prevalence in ponds and canals (Bui et al., 2010; Nguyen et al., 2014), in natural water bodies (Nguyen et al., 2015) and in Chao-Phraya Basin in Thailand (Anucherngchai et al., 2016). Therefore, the result in this research confirm again that *Melanoides tuberculata*, the most important host species for trematode belonging to the Heterophyidae (Madsen et al., 2015), and *Bithynia* sp., a potential host for both Heterophyidae and Opisthorchiidae, were easier to infected cercariae than the other sampled snails.

3.2. Cercariae morphotypes infected in snails

Two of eight snail species were infected cercariae including *Bithynia* sp. and *Melanoides tuberculata. Xiphidiocercariae* was recovered from both of two snails species of *Bithynia* sp. and *Melanoides tuberculata* while *Parapleurolophocercous cercariae* was recovered only from *Bithynia* sp. and *Furcocercous cercariae* was found only in *Melanoides tuberculata* (Table 4). The research result showed that the trematode pond prevalence (cercariae stage) in the dry season (30.0%) was higher than the wet season (20.0%). However, there was no significantly different from the prevalence between two seasons ($P>0.05$). For the overall prevalence in both of the two seasons for each snail

species, *Bithynia* sp. had the highest prevalence at 11.5% and *Melanoides tuberculata* at 6.8%.

Table 4. Number of snails infected with different cercariae morphotypes

No	Snail species	Infected snails/ Total samples	Prevalence (%)	Morphotypes of cercariae	
				Wet season (October 2010)	Dry season (April 2021)
1	*Bithynia* sp.	18/157	11.5	*Xiphidio cercariae*	*Xiphidio cercariae, Parapleurolophocercous cercariae*
2	*Filopaludina sumatrensis*	0/732	0	X	X
3	*Melanoides tuberculata*	12/176	6.8	*Xiphidio cercariae*	*Furcocercous cercariae*
4	*Pomacea* sp.	0/181	0	X	X
5	*Sermyla tornatella*	0/2523	0	X	X
6	*Sinotaia lithophaga*	0/708	0	X	X
7	*Tarebia granifera*	0/34	0	X	X
8	*Thiara scabra*	0/37	0	X	X

Only two morphotypes of cercariae were recovered from each snail species of *Melanoides tuberculata* (*Xiphidio cercariae* and *Furcocercous cercariae)* and *Bithynia* sp. (*Xiphidio cercariae* and *Parapleurolophocercous cercariae)* in giant gourami ponds in the research. *Xiphidio cercariae* seemed to have more frequent occurrence than the others as it was recovered from 8 snails while *Furcocercous cercariae* had in four snails and *Parapleurolophocercous cercariae* was in two snails. This is similar to Nkwengulila and Kigadye (2005) that xiphidiocercariae was the most prevalent in snails in ponds and stream. However, it is different from the result by Bui et al. (2010) researched on the VAC pond that parapleurolophocercous and pleurolophocercous cercariae constituted the most common type of cercariae recovered, followed by echinostome cercariae and then xiphidiocercariae. It is obvious that the type of cercariae in VAC ponds were more various than giant gourami ponds in this paper. It can be explained that water supply to VAC ponds was from canals and rivers, various types of feed including animal manure were put in the ponds; therefore, more type of cercariae must be presented. On the contrary, all the giant gourami ponds were supplied by well water and feed for fish were vegetables and pelleted feed, so only three morphotypes of cercariae were found. Comparing to the other research on snails in natural water bodies, morphotypes of cercariae were much more higher than in the giant gourami ponds (Nguyen et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2015; Anucherngchai et al., 2016).

Based on total numbers of snail samples, snail populations were typically more abundant in the rainy season than in the dry season. This is similar to the result by

Brockelman et al. (1986) which provided good conditions for the multiplication of snails. However, the trematode pond prevalence in snails (cercariae stage) in Tien Giang province in the dry season was higher than in the wet season, but there was no significantly different ($P>0.05$). The seasonality of trematode prevalence observed in this study is in agreement with the data reported earlier by Nguyen et al. (2014) that the occurrence of cercariae was different among the months of the year and the prevalence was higher in the dry season because of the temperature. This also agreed with the publish by Nkwengulila and Kigadye (2005) that the prevalence of cercariae was fluctuated by seasons, it was high in the dry season and decreased in the wet season. Back to the paper by Pham et al. (2007), the sampling of grow-out giant gourami in Tien Giang province showed that the trematode prevalence (metacercariae stage) in the flooding season (most of the months in this season belongs to the wet season) was significantly higher than in the non-flooding season ($P<0.05$). How season affects snail and fish infections is not known clearly yet. Therefore, more research should be done to know the relationship between the prevalence of cercariae in snail and metacercariae in giant gourami cultured in ponds.

4. Conclusions

The trematode pond prevalence (cercariae stage) in the dry season was higher than the wet season ($P>0.05$). *Melanoides tuberculata* infected *Xiphidio cercariae* and *Furcocercous cercariae* while *Bithynia* sp. infected *Xiphidio cercariae* and *Parapleurolophocercous cercariae.* No cercariae were found in the other six snail species including *Filopaludina sumatrensis, Pomacea* sp., *Sermyla tornatella, Sinotaia lithophaga, Tarebia granifera* and *Thiara scabra.* Further research on trematode infection in fish cultured in ponds should be done to contribute to the sustainable aquaculture development and food safety.

❖ ***Conflict of Interest:*** *Authors have no conflict of interest to declare.*

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THÀNH PHẦN LOÀI ỐC NƯỚC NGỌT VÀ TỈ LỆ NHIỄM SÁN LÁ SONG CHỦ TRÊN ỐC (GIAI ĐOẠN CERCARIAE) THU ĐƯỢC TRONG AO NUÔI CÁ THỊT TAI TƯỢNG Ở TỈNH TIỀN GIANG

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Ngày nhận bài: 01-9-2021; Ngày nhận bài sửa :07-9-2021; Ngày duyệt đăng: 10-9-2021

TÓM TẮT

Nghiên cứu thành phần loài ốc nước ngọt và tỉ lệ nhiễm sán lá song chủ (giai đoạn cercariae) trên ốc trong ao nuôi cá thịt tai tượng ở huyện Châu Thành, tỉnh Tiền Giang được thực hiện vào tháng 10/2020 và tháng 4/2021. Tổng cộng 4548 mẫu từ 8 loài ốc, 8 giống, 4 họ đã được thu và phân loại dựa theo đặc điểm hình thái. Kết quả cho thấy ốc Melanoides tuberculata bị nhiễm Xiphidio cercariae và Furcocercous cercariae trong khi ốc Bithynia sp. nhiễm *Xiphidio cercariae và Parapleurolophocercous cercariae. Sáu loài ốc còn lại không nhiễm cercariae bao gồm Filopaludina sumatrensis, Pomacea* sp., *Sermyla tornatella, Sinotaia lithophaga, Tarebia granifera và Thiara scabra. Tỉ lệ ao nhiễm cercariae trong mùa khô cao hơn trong mùa mưa (P>0.05). Cần tiếp tục nghiên cứu dịch tễ học của sán lá song chủ trong ao nuôi cá tai tượng nhằm góp phần phát triển nuôi trồng thủy sản bền vững và an toàn vệ sinh thực phẩm.*

Từ khóa: ốc, sán lá song chủ, cercariae, cá tai tượng