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OBSERVATIONS ON GENITAL PAPILLAE OF PYCNONOTIC BRACHYPYLINA (ACARI : ORIBATIDA)

BY Valerie M. BEHAN-PELLETIER*

SUMMARY: The morphology of genital papillae in adults of representatives of many pycnonotic brachypyline families and genera is analysed. The Oppioidea and Carabodoidea share the apomorphy of anterior genital papillae which are tapered and narrower than the medial and posterior papillae. Adults of Eremellidae and Caleremaeidae, presently included in the Oppioidea, have unmodified anterior genital papillae, indicating that their systematic position in the Brachypylina needs reevaluation. Within the Oppiidae genital papillae are reduced to two pairs, and the posterior genital papillae are very broad, in adults of Aeroppia, Amerioppia, Oppia, and Ramusella. Examination of genital papillae in immature instars of Ramusella maculata (Hammer) and Oppia nitens (C. L. Koch) indicates that reduction in number of genital papillae is first expressed in the adult, and that enlarged posterior genital papillae can be expressed in an earlier instar than the adult. The ontogenetic sequence of expression of genital papillae in O. nitens is hypothesized to be in a postero-anterior direction.

INTRODUCTION

Genital papillae (also known as verrucae, acetabula, suckers, discs) appear to function for the uptake of water from the environment in terrestrial acariform mites and may play a role in osmoregulation in fresh water acariform mites (ALBERTI, 1979; BARR, 1982). GRANDJEAN has written extensively on the origin, ontogenetic development, and influence of genital papillae on the morphology of the genital

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region of oribatid mites (for example, see Grandjean, 1932 a, 1969). Although characters such as
the shape and number of genital papillae have been
used in studies on the systematics of early derivative
oribatid mites (Grandjean, 1932 a, b, 1954 a, b; O'Connor, 1981; Norton et al., 1983), their
morphology has been overlooked in the taxonomy
of Brachypyllina, other than in certain works of
Grandjean (1960 a, b, 1963). It is recognized that
generally adults have three pairs of papillae, and
that the protonymph, deutonymph, and tritonymph have 1, 2, and 3 pairs respectively, but authors have
rarely commented on structural differences among
the pairs, or on changes in their form during
ontogeny.

Grandjean (1960 a) first recognized the unusual
structure of genital papillae in adults of some
brachypylline Oribatida. He noted that in Autogneta penicillum Grandjean the middle and posterior pairs, Vm and Vp respectively, have normal posi-
tions and dimensions, i.e., they are rounded and
slightly expanded distally, and have a sclerotized
band of integument along their length. In contrast,
the anterior pair, Va, are different in size and taper
distally. There is no sclerotized band, rather the
tapered head is lightly sclerotized; the head is not
the widest part of the papilla, rather the whole
papilla gradually tapers distally. There is no sclerotized band, rather the
tapered head is lightly sclerotized; the head is not
the widest part of the papilla, rather the whole
papilla gradually tapers distally. In addition, Va is
positioned deeper in the body than Vm and Vp, at a
different plane than the other papillae (Grandjean,
1960 a), and as a result can often be overlooked.
Subsequently Grandjean (1960 b, 1963) observed
similar development of Va in adults of Rhaphi-
gneta, Cosmogneta and Conchogneta, (the former
with Va having a sclerotized stylet apically), and
considered the structure of Va to be one of the
distinctive characters defining Autognetidae (Grand-
jean, 1963).

I have surveyed adults of various brachypylline
taxa for evidence of modified Va papillae and have
found this character state to be much more widely
distributed among pycnonotic Brachypyllina than
previously recognized. In contrast, all pycnonotic
Brachypyllina examined (representatives of the Ori-
podoidea, Ceratozoidea, Galumnoidea, Oribatelo-
idea) have normal genital papillae, with Va
subequal in size and shape to Vm and Vp. I have
also observed an additional character state, namely
reduction in number of genital papillae to 2 pairs,
in adults of certain genera of Oppiidae; this may
prove useful to define genera or other lineages in
this family. In this paper I will discuss the distribu-
tion of each of these character states in non-
poronotic Brachypyllina.

Method and Materials

Specimens were examined in two kinds of slide
preparations. Specimens were examined in tempo-
rary mounts using cavity slides, but the shape of Va
relative to Vm, Vp was more easily determined on
permanently slide mounted, and slightly flattened,
specimens. Unfortunately, in the latter prepara-
tions, the position of genital papillae may be shifted
in respect to that of the genital plates. As Grand-
jean (1960 b) indicated, the position of genital
papillae can vary considerably among different
preparations of the same species, depending on the
position of the genital organs and whether or not
the genital plates are in their normal retracted
position. In all specimens examined for this study
the genital plates were retracted.

This study includes only those brachypylline taxa
available in the Canadian National Collection,
Biosystematics Research Centre, Ottawa, and there-
fore, is not exhaustive. In the following results,
genera examined are listed in parentheses after the
appropriate family.

Results

Structure of anterior genital papillae.

Genital papillae Va are unmodified, subequal in
size to Vm and Vp and similarly rounded apically
(though Va may be positioned slightly more dor-
sally than, and may be slightly tapered in compari-
sion with Vm and Vp) in adults of: Hermanniellidae
(Hermanniella, Sacculobates), Plasmobatidae (Plas-
omobates, Solenozetes), Liodiidae (Liodes, Platylodi-
es, Teleiolodiidae), Gymnodamaeidae (Gymnodama-
eus, Josheulla, Nortonella), Plateremaeidae (Pedro-
cortesella, Phereliodes), Cepheidae (Cepheus, Omnatoco-

pheidus, Oribatodes, Sadocephus, Eupterotegaeus), Polypterozetidae (Polypterozetes), Podopterogaeidae (Podoptergaeus), Ctenobellidae (Ctenobellus), Laiaridae (Adoristes, Liarus), Astegistidae (Cultroribula), Metrioppiidae (Ceratoppiia, Cerorocheetes, Metrioppiia), Gustaviidae (Gustavia), Kodiakellidae (Kodiakella), Tectocephidae (Tectocephus), Niphoccephidae (Niphoccephus), Oxymeridae (Oxymerus), Ererellidae (Ererella) (Fig. 3), Caleremaedae (Caleraeus, Velappa) (Fig. 4), Hydrozetidae (Hydrozetes), Limnozetidae (Limnozetes), Amero­notthidae (Ameronotthus), Cymbaeremaeidae (Cyme­roproctus), Passalogetidae (Passalogetes).

Genital papillae Va are narrower than Vm and Vp, pointed and sclerotized distally, and positioned deeper than Vm and Vp in adults of Dampfiellidae (Beckiiella) (pers. obs.), whereas Va are subequal to Vm and Vp in Dampfiella (Grandjean, 1964). Papillae Va are shorter and wider than Vm and Vp, and sclerotized apically in adults of: Eremulidae (Eremus), Eremobellidae (Eremobellus), and Microzetidae (Berlesezetes). Papillae Va are subequal in size to Vm and Vp, but may be blunter and flatter apically in adults of Damaeidae (Belba, Damaeus, Epidaeaeus, Hungarobelba, Porobelba). In adults of Amerobellidae (Grypoceramerus, Gymnodampia) Va are shorter and the same width, or wider than Vm and Vp, but have a sclerotized band in the former genus, whereas in the latter they are sclerotized apically.

Genital papillae Va are narrower than Vm and Vp, strongly tapered rather than rounded apically, and displaced dorsad of Vm and Vp in adults of: all genera in the Autognetidae (Grandjean, 1960a fig. 1A, 1960b figs. 2B, 3, 1963 fig. 1B), Suctobellidae (Allsuctobellus, Rhinosuctobellus, Suctobellus, Suctobellus, Suctobellus), Oppiidae (Arceopenia, Cosmoppiia, Machuella, Micropia, Multioppiia, Oppiella (Fig. 1), Pulchropiia, Quadroppia, Stria­toppiia, Subiassella), Anderremaeidae (Carabodoides), Spinozetidae (Spinozetes), Aceramaeidae (Tec­teremaus), Thysisomidae (Oribella, Banksinoma (Fig. 2), Gemmazetes, Pantelozetes), and Carabo­didae (Carabodes, Odontocephus, Pseudotocephus, Phyllocarabodes).

Number of genital papillae and structure of posterior genital papillae.

Among the Oppiidae four genera (Aeroppia, Amerioppia, Oppia, Ramusella) are unusual in having only 2 pairs of genital papillae in the adult. The anterior of these two pairs is strongly tapered distally. The posterior pair is very broad, with a skull-cap shape (Figs. 5, 6). A cross-sectional view indicates that the shape of the latter is a long oval. This number and shape of genital papillae is independent of the sex of the mite, papillae being similar in males and females of the same species.

Woodring and Cook (1962) reported two pairs of genital papillae in adults of Oppiella nova (Oudemans) (= Oppia neerlandica Oudemans). Their illustration (plate 5) of the adult shows two pairs of genital papillae of equal size, clearly indicating that they overlooked the tapered, more dorsally positioned papillae Va in their study. Unfortunately, this oversight has been perpetuated in acarological literature (Woolley, 1988, p. 313).

The presence of two pairs of modified genital papillae in adults raises the following questions: which pair of genital papillae is lost or consolidated in the adult, and in which instar is this loss or consolidation first expressed? To address these questions, I have examined laboratory reared populations of representatives of Oppia and Ramusella.

Oppia nitens (C. L. Koch)

In the proptonymph papillae are rounded apically, and 10-14 µm wide at the sclerotized band (n = 3) (Fig. 8).

In the deutonymph the posterior papillae are broad, 13-15 µm wide at the sclerotized band (n = 6). The anterior papillae are weakly sclerotized, positioned very slightly deeper than the posterior pair, and are 8-10 µm wide at the sclerotized band (n = 6) (Fig. 9).

In the tritonymph the posterior papillae are very broad, 15-19 µm wide at the sclerotized band (n = 6) (Fig. 10). The medial papillae are 9-10 µm wide at the sclerotized band, and positioned very slightly deeper than the posterior pair. The anterior papillae are 8-12 µm wide basally (n = 5), positioned deeper than either the medial or posterior pair, and weakly
Figs. 8, 9: Genital papillae of *Oppia nitens* (C. L. Koch); 8. — Protonymph; 9. — Deutonymph.
defined and poorly sclerotized (in one tritonymph the anterior pair were not visible).

In the adult the posterior papillae are 20-24 µm wide at the sclerotized band \( n = 5 \). The anterior papillae, 7-9 µm wide at the sclerotized band, are positioned directly anteriad of, and slightly deeper than, the posterior pair. The two pairs are positioned posteriad of the anterior two pairs of genital setae (Fig. 6).

The size progression observed in the posterior pair indicates that the papillae present in the protonymph are homologous with the posterior pair of the deutonymph, tritonymph and adult. Similarly the shape and development of the anterior pair in the deutonymph suggest that these papillae are homologous with the medial pair in the tritonymph, and the anterior pair of the adult. The position of the papillae in the adult indicates that they represent pairs \( Vm \) and \( Vp \).

The gradual size progression observed in the posterior pair from protonymph to adult, and the presence of two and three pairs of papillae in the deutonymph and tritonymph, respectively, also indicate that the enlargement of genital papillae is independent of reduction in number of papillae, at least in this species. These observations also suggest that the reduction in number of genital papillae in the adult is the result of a loss, rather than the consolidation of two pairs of papillae. Thus it appears that papillae \( Va \) are lost in adult \textit{Oppia nitens}.

\textit{Ramusella maculata} (Hammer)

Only tritonymphs and adults are available for this species. There are three pairs of subequal genital papillae in the tritonymph, each about 10 µm wide at the sclerotized band \( n = 3 \) (Fig. 7). There is no indication which pair of genital papillae is lost or consolidated in the adult, other than that the two pairs present are positioned posteriad of the anterior two pairs of genital setae. However, by comparison with \textit{Oppia nitens}, it is probable that the papillae in adult \textit{R. maculata} represent \( Vm \) and \( Vp \), with loss of \( Va \), rather than retention of \( Va \) and consolidation of the medial and posterior pairs.

\textbf{DISCUSSION}

\textit{Modified anterior genital papillae}:

The above review of the morphology of genital papillae in the pycnonotic Brachypylina indicates that shape and size of papillae \( Va \), relative to \( Vm \) and \( Vp \), can be useful characters to define taxa at the genus level or higher.

The smaller size and tapered shape of papillae \( Va \) relative to \( Vm \) and \( Vp \) are particularly useful apomorphies to define the Oppioidea, senso Balogh 1972 (with the exclusion of at least the Eremellidae and Caleremaecidae) and the Carabodoidea, senso Marshall et al., 1987 (i.e., exclusive of the Tectocepeidae and Niphocepeidae). The unmodified papillae \( Va \) in adults of Eremellidae (Fig. 3) and Caleremaecidae (Fig. 4) indicate that these taxa should not be included in the Oppioidea and that their systematic position in the Brachypylina needs reevaluation.

A close relationship between the Oppioidea and Carabodoidea is suggested by this shared apomorphy. Other similarities include nymphs of both groups being unideficient, smooth, and without sclerites (Group VIII of Wallwork, 1969). However, the former and latter character states are plesiomorphic in the Brachypylina, and the polarity of a smooth versus plicate integument in the immatures of pycnonotic Brachypylina requires further study. Unfortunately, in his detailed analysis of characters in the Oppioidea and other Brachypylina, Waas (1986) did not consider members of the Carabodidae, and, as with other systematists studying Oppiiidae, did not examine genital papillae.

\textit{Development of enlarged posterior papillae}:

Initial results on the ontogeny of genital papillae given above, indicate that there may be specific or generic differences in the stage of expression of the enlarged posterior papillae. Enlargement does not occur until the adult in \textit{Ramusella maculata}, but may appear as early as the deutonymph, as in \textit{Oppia nitens}. Although Seniczak (1975 a, b), in his excellent studies on the morphology of juvenile
stages of species of Oppia, did not discuss the morphology of genital papillae, his illustration of the tritonymph of O. nitens shows enlarged posterior papillae. Those of the tritonymphs of O. subpectinata (Oudemans), O. bicarinata (Paoli), O. glabra (Mihelcic) and O. fasciata (Paoli) show the posterior papillae similar to the medial pair. These last four species are now considered as members of Oppiella, Berniniella, Multioppia and Rectoppia, respectively (Balogh, 1983).

Reduction in number of genital papillae:

The synapomorphic loss of Va and enlargement of posterior papillae in adults possibly define a monophyletic lineage in the Oppiidae, including at least Aeroppia, Amerioppia, Oppia and Ramsella. At the minimum they are useful character states in generic classification. As yet, only genera of Oppiidae known from North America, and a few others, have been surveyed for these character states, representing only a fraction of the approximately 120 genera in this family. Reduction in number of genital papillae appears to be independent of the size of the posterior papillae. There may also prove to be specific or generic differences in the instar when reduction in number of papillae is first expressed.

Development of genital papillae:

In the analysis of the development of genital papillae in Oppia nitens in this paper, I hypothesise that pair Va are lost in the adult. It appears that papillae Vp are expressed in the protonymph, followed by Vm in the deutonymph and Va in the tritonymph, that is in a postero-anterior manner. Grandjean did extensive research on the ontogeny of genital papillae in the Palaeosomata and Enarthronota. In his study on Ctenacarus araneola (Grandjean), he hypothesized that the papillae appear in an antero-posterior manner, i.e., pair Va are formed in the protonymph, then pair Vm in the deutonymph, and lastly, pair Vp in the tritonymph (Grandjean, 1932 b). He based this hypothesis of development on his observation that in adult and tritonymphal C. araneola Va are smaller than Vm or Vp. Likewise, in the deutonymph, the anterior papillae are smaller than the posterior papillae. His study on Aphelacarus acarinus (Berlese) in the same paper, shows the presence of one pair of papillae in the protonymph and deutonymph, and two pairs of papillae in the tritonymph and adult of this species. Grandjean (1932 b) indicates clearly that the Va papillae are not developed in the tritonymph and adult of this species, as supported by a comparison of the position of the papillae in A. acarinus with that in C. araneola (Fig. 4, p. 416 and Fig. 7, p. 420). In a later work (Grandjean, 1954), he elaborated on the morphological variation in papillae and reduction in their number in the Palaeosomata. He also justified his hypothesis on antero-posterior appearance of the papillae in A. acarinus by considering that pair Va is formed in the protonymph, lost in the deutonymph, and the papillae appearing in the deutonymph are pair Vm, with Vp formed in the tritonymph.

Following Grandjean it has been generally assumed that the ontogenetic sequence of expression of genital papillae is antero-posteriorly. In this paper a postero-anterior ontogenetic sequence is proposed for Oppia nitens. It is evident therefore, that further research on the ontogeny of papillae in other species of Oppiidae is necessary before conclusions can be drawn as to whether the ontogenetic sequence in O. nitens is autapomorphic, or a possible synapomorphy defining a broader taxonomic grouping.

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