Immunochemical Analysis of Myosin Heavy Chain during Avian Myogenesis In Vivo and In Vitro

DAVID BADER, TOMOH MASAKI, and DONALD A. FISCHMAN
Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn, New York 11203; and Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Medical Sciences, Bunkyo-Ku, Tokyo 113, Japan. Dr. Bader's and Dr. Fischman's present address is Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy, Cornell University Medical College, New York, New York 10021.

ABSTRACT Monoclonal antibodies (McAbs) against the myosin heavy chain (MHC) of adult chicken pectoralis muscle have been tested for reactivity with pectoralis myosin at selected stages of chick development in vivo and in vitro. Three such McAbs, MF 20 and MF 14, which bind to light meromyosin, and MF 30, which binds to myosin subfragment two (S2), were used to assay the appearance and accumulation of specific MHC epitopes with: (a) indirect, solid phase radioimmune assay (RIA), (b) immunofluorescence microscopy. McAb MF 20 bound strongly and equivalently to MHC at all stages of embryonic development in vivo. In contrast, the MF 30 epitope was barely detectable at 12 d of incubation but its concentration rose rapidly just before hatching. No detectable binding of MF 14 to pectoralis myosin could be measured during myogenesis in vivo until 1 wk after hatching. Immunofluorescence studies revealed that all three epitopes accumulate in the same myocytes of the developing pectoralis muscle. Since all three McAbs bound with high activity to native and denatured forms of myosin, it is unlikely that differential antibody reactivity can be explained by conformational changes in myosin during development in vivo. When myogenesis in vitro was monitored using the same McAbs, MF 20 bound to the MHC at all stages tested while reactivity of MF 30 and MF 14 with myosin from cultured muscle was never observed. Thus, this study demonstrates three different immunochemical states of the MHC during development in vivo of chick pectoralis muscle and the absence of later occurring immunochemical transitions in the MHC of cultured embryonic muscle.

Isoforms of myosin have been demonstrated in adult (1, 3, 10, 19, 28, 37) and embryonic (11, 12, 20, 27, 30, 35, 36) striated muscles of both birds and mammals. Three experimental formats have been used to substantiate these myosin variants within embryonic muscles. First, heterogeneity of myosin can be detected by electrophoresis on native pyrophosphate gels (14). Secondly, differences exist in the peptide maps obtained by limited proteolysis of adult and embryonic myosins (27, 35, 36). Finally, immunological dissimilarities exist between myosins isolated from homologous adult and embryonic muscles (11, 12, 20, 26, 35, 36). Masaki and Yoshizaki (20) have demonstrated that myofibrils from embryonic chick pectoralis muscle bind antibodies specific for myosin of adult cardiac muscle, whereas similar myofibrils from adult pectoralis muscle do not. It was later proven that these cross-reactive determinants reside in the myosin heavy chain (MHC) subunit. More recently, Gauthier et al. (11, 12) and Rubinstein and Kelley (26) have shown that developing rat skeletal myofibers contain MHCs which share antigenic homology with myosin isolated from both adult fast- and slow-twitch muscles. However, the adult myofibers bound specifically to either the “anti-slow” myosin or “anti-fast” myosin antisera preparations. Immunochemical differences between myosin preparations purified from homologous embryonic, neonatal and adult rat muscles have also been demonstrated by Whalen et al. (36).

Until recently, immunochemical studies of myosin have been limited by the heterogeneous nature of the antisera even after extensive cross-absorption. Such heterogeneity severely hampers the detection and quantitation of subtle changes within specific domains of the MHC during development. With the advent of monoclonal antibody (McAb) technology, it is now feasible to generate homogeneous populations of antibodies.
the epitopes of which can be mapped to specific domains of a macromolecule. To this end, McAbs against adult chicken pectoralis myosin have been used to analyze immunological changes in the MHCs of the pectoralis muscle during development in vivo and in vitro. Our results demonstrate two transitions among three antigenic states of the MHC during myogenesis in vivo. Evidence is presented that these transitions represent changes in MHC primary structure rather than conformational changes of the myosin molecule. In contrast to myogenesis in vivo, these immunological transitions in the MHC were not observed during myogenesis in vitro even after long periods of cell culture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Protein Preparation

Myosin was prepared from the pectoralis muscle of adult chickens and of developing chickens at selected days before and after hatching, and from primary muscle cell cultures. Muscles from developing birds were homogenized in 100 mM NaCl, 10 mM sodium phosphate buffer, 0.1 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride (PMSF, Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, MO), pH 7.4, and in a Waring blender at 4°C. After low-speed centrifugation (16,000 g for 10 min), the pellet was resuspended in 0.6 M NaCl, 10 mM sodium phosphate buffer, 0.1 mM PMSF, pH 7.4 (13: initial muscle wt/vol), and centrifuged (16,000 g for 10 min). The resulting supernatant was brought to 0.05 with cold distilled water and centrifuged (16,000 g for 10 min) to collect the crude myosin pellet. The precipitated myosin was resuspended in 0.4 M NaCl, 10 mM sodium phosphate buffer, 0.1 mM PMSF, pH 7.4 and, after the addition of MgCl2 and sodium ATP to 5 mM, spun at 160,000 g for 1.5-2 h. The supernatant was collected and subjected to one additional low salt-high salt cycle and stored in 0.3 M NaCl/50% glycerol at -20°C. Protein concentrations were determined by the Lowry technique (18), and purity of the preparations was estimated by SDS-PAGE. Myosin was prepared from the adult pectoralis muscle (major and minor without the red strip) by mincing the tissue in a meat grinder followed by immediate extraction in Guha-Staub solution (0.3 M KCl, 0.1 M KH2PO4, 50 mM KH2PO4, 13 wt/vol) for 15 min at 4°C. Extraction was terminated by threefold dilution in water. After filtration through gauze and precipitation by adding the extraction buffer (0.6 M KCl, 1.0 M Na2SO4, 0.05 M NaOH) and centrifugation (16,000 g for 10 min) after low ionic strength precipitation, redissolved in 0.6 M KCl, and stored frozen. Myosin were prepared (as described in reference 34) and were used in RIA experiments.

Solid Phase Radioimmunoassay

A radioimmunoassay (RIA) was used for screening cell line supernatants for immunoglobulin production and for subsequent antibody titrations. A known concentration of myosin in 0.4 M NaCl was immobilized by drying in polyvinyl chloride microtiter wells. The microtiter wells were rinsed in 150 mM NaCl, 10 mM sodium phosphate, pH 7.4 (PBS), followed by another wash in PBS containing 0.1% bovine serum albumin (BSA, Sigma Chemical Co., Cohn Fraction V), and blotted dry. 30 μl of conditioned media were added to the microtiter wells for 30 min at room temperature, the wells were washed with PBS and subsequent PBS/0.1% BSA solutions, and then reacted with 50 μl of an affinity-purified 125I-labeled goat anti-mouse IgG (GAM, Cappel Laboratories, Cochranville, PA, 50,000 cpm/well) as described by Reinach et al. (24). Bound 125I-GAM was assayed by γ-spectrometry after extensive washing in PBS. The conditions of this assay system provide a qualitative indication of the amount of antigen present (22). A McAb against dog kidney-cell surface antigens (the gift of Drs. D. Herlinger and G. Oakman) was used as a control. Backgrounds were routinely less than 200 cpm/well.

Immunofluorescence Study of Developing Muscle Cells In Vivo and In Vitro

Transverse sections (10 μm) of the pectoralis muscle from chick embryos and from posthatch and adult chickens were cut at −20°C, affixed to glass slides, and treated with acetone (−20°C) for 1 min. Muscle cell cultures grown on 1% gelatinized polystyrene coverslips (30 mm, Flow Laboratories, Rockville, MD) were extracted with 0.1% Triton X-100 in PBS for 30 min, washed with PBS containing 0.1% Triton X-100, and reacted sequentially with McAb and fluorescein-labeled GAM (FITC-GAM, Cappel Laboratories; commercial FITC-GAM was affinity purified with a Sepharose 4B-mouse IgG column in our laboratory). PBS washes followed both antibody treatments. Samples were fixed in 4% formalin before mounting in 90% glycerol, 10 mM Tris HCl (pH 8) and examined by epifluorescence microscopy. Controls were similar to the RIA studies.

Primary Cell Culture Techniques

Cell cultures were prepared from pectoralis muscles of 11-d chicken embryos using trypsin (29) or mechanical (4) dissociation at a density of 3 × 105 cells/100-mm Falcon tissue culture dish (Falcon Labware, Oxnard, CA) coated with 1% gelatin. No differences in the immunochromatographic properties of the two preparations were observed. The culture medium consisted of Dulbecco’s modified Eagle’s medium (MEM; Gibco, Grand Island Biological Co., Grand Island, NY), glucose (4.5 g/liter), horse serum (10%, Gibco lot #34PS5105) and chick embryo extract (5%). Cultures were maintained in 5% CO2 and medium replaced every other day.

Results

McAb Reactivity with Adult Myosin

The three McAbs used in this study were generated in two separate cell fusions, one with splenocytes from a C3H mouse,
the other with a BALB/c mouse. The former immunization, resulting in clones MF 14 and MF 20, used adult pectoralis myosin solubilized in high salt buffer and then emulsified in Freund’s adjuvant. MF 30 resulted from an immunization with identical myosin but first denatured in 1% SDS/5% β-mercaptoethanol (17). All three McAbs react with the MHC (Fig. 1), while occasional and slight reactivity with smaller molecular weight bands is thought to be due to McAb binding to cleavage products of the MHC in stored myosin samples. Chymotryptic subfragments of myosin were reacted with the three McAbs by RIA and, as shown in Fig. 2, MF 14 and MF 20 reacted strongly with rod and LMM whereas MF 30 bound to rod and subfragment 2 (S-2). The slight cross-reactivity of MF 20 with the S-2 preparation was due to minor contamination of S-2 with LMM peptides as revealed by immunoblots with MF 14 and MF 20 (Bader, unpublished results). Immunofluorescence studies of adult pectoralis muscle have proven that all myofibers and all A-bands of all myofibrils react with these McAbs (data not shown).

Immunofluorescence microscopy, RIA and immunohistology were used to establish exclusive binding of these McAbs to striated muscle, to the protein myosin, and to the MHC subunit. When myosin from the pectoralis muscle of adult chicken was displayed by SDS PAGE, and MHC subunits were transferred to nitrocellulose, all three McAbs bound to the 200-kd MHC peptide (Fig. 1). If a fixed amount of adult myosin was reacted by solid phase RIA with serial dilutions of these three McAbs, each antibody exhibited a similar plateau binding value of 125I-GAM at high titer levels of McAb (Fig. 3). Furthermore, each had half-maximal binding values at nearly equivalent dilutions of the McAb solutions. If one interprets the half-maximal binding value for each McAb as an index of its relative affinity for its epitope, then it is likely that the epitopes bound by that antibody during development are identical to those in adult MHC.

To determine whether antigen recognition by the McAbs was dependent on higher order structure of the myosin molecule, myosin from the adult pectoralis muscle was denatured by boiling the protein in 1% SDS/5% β-mercaptoethanol or dissolving it in 8M guanidine HCl. These samples were then dried in microtiter wells at known concentrations, and the excess denaturant was removed by extensive washing with PBS. Reactivity of the McAbs to denatured myosin was then compared with antibody binding to untreated myosin by solid phase RIA (see Materials and Methods). As shown in Fig. 4, MF 20 bound strongly to denatured and nontreated myosin preparations. McAbs MF 14 and MF 30 also exhibited high binding for the denatured myosin samples although more variability in the saturation binding values was observed than with MF 20. We interpret these results to indicate that higher order conformation of the myosin molecule is not a major factor in determining the specificity of these three McAbs for their respective epitopes.

**Immunohistochemical Analysis of Myosin during In Vivo Myogenesis**

To compare the reactivities of MF 20, MF 30, and MF 14 with myosin during development, this protein was prepared from pectoralis muscles at 12, 15, 17, and 19 d of egg incubation and 2, 10, 14, and 28 d posthatching. The samples were then tested for McAb binding by solid phase RIA and immunohistologic procedures. In the RIA experiments, fixed concentrations of the various myosin samples were immobilized to the microtiter wells and reacted with serial dilutions of each McAb followed by 125I-GAM. The half-maximal and saturation-binding values were then compared for each of the assay curves (Fig. 3). McAb MF 20 reacted equivalently with myosin at all stages of development; and no significant differences were seen in plateau values of 125I-GAM bound to the microtiter wells at saturating levels of MF 20. Thus, the epitope...
denatured, and untreated adult chicken pectoralis myosin with MF 20. 1 μg of myosin with or without prior denaturation was reacted with MF 20 (1:3 dilutions from supernatant) and McAb binding measured by RIA. All myosin samples were dissolved in 0.6 M NaCl and either plated in microtiter wells directly (△) or denatured in 1% SDS/5% β-mercaptoethanol (○) or 8 M guanidine HCl (●).

![Antibody Dilution](image)

**Figure 4** RIA analysis of 1% SDS denatured, 8 M guanidine-HCl denatured, and untreated adult chicken pectoralis myosin with MF 20. 1 μg of myosin with or without prior denaturation was reacted with MF 20 (1:3 dilutions from supernatant) and McAb binding measured by RIA. All myosin samples were dissolved in 0.6 M NaCl and either plated in microtiter wells directly (△) or denatured in 1% SDS/5% β-mercaptoethanol (○) or 8 M guanidine HCl (●).

specified by MF 20 in the LMM region of myosin is present in embryonic, posthatch and adult MHC, presumably at equivalent molar values. In contrast, no significant binding of MF 14 was observed with pectoralis myosin from 12-d embryos, although low but definite reactivity of MF 30 was detected with high concentrations of this McAb (Fig. 3). With progressive embryonic development there was increased binding of MF 30 lent molar values. In contrast, no significant binding of MF 14 was observed with pectoralis myosin from 12-d embryos and, thereafter, MF 30 binding was always <25% of the adult value. Immunoblot analysis of MF 20 with myosin from cultured muscle were negative (Fig. 7). MF 14 binding was always <10% of adult values in RIA, and immunoblot analysis with MF 14 proved negative (Figs. 6 and 7).

Immunofluorescence microscopy was undertaken to determine the cellular distribution of MHCs recognized by the three McAbs during myogenesis in vivo. As previously stated, all muscle fibers of the adult pectoralis muscle contain MHC recognized by MF 20, MF 30, and MF 14. When tissue sections of the 12-d embryonic muscle were reacted with the three McAbs, the developing muscle cells were strongly reactive with only MF 20 (Fig. 5), and it appeared, although not proven definitively, that all muscle cells bound this antibody. While most muscle cells of the 12-d pectoralis muscle were completely negative when treated with MF 30, weak fluorescence was detected in some myogenic cells, and by 19 d of incubation, all pectoralis myofibers were strongly positive for MF 30 (Fig. 5). MF 14 did not bind to any embryonic pectoralis muscle cells, and only by 7 d after hatching was definite fluorescence observed (Fig. 5). These results demonstrate histochemically that all or nearly all pectoralis myofibers undergo the epitope transitions described above.

**Immunocytological Analysis of Myosin during In Vitro Myogenesis**

When MF 20 was reacted with myosin prepared from cultures at 3, 6, 10, and 28 d after plating, strong binding was observed (Fig. 6). Immunoblot analysis demonstrated the specificity of MF 20 for the 200-kd MHC of cultured muscle (Fig. 7). In contrast, MF 30 bound with low apparent affinity to myosin isolated from 3-d cultures and, thereafter, MF 30 binding was always <25% of the adult value. Immunoblot analysis of MF 20 with myosin from cultured muscle were negative (Fig. 7). MF 14 binding was always <10% of adult values in RIA, and immunoblot analysis with MF 14 proved negative (Figs. 6 and 7).

Immunofluorescence microscopy demonstrated the specificity of MF 20 for cultured myotubes and the positive reactivity of all myotubes at all stages when tested with this McAb (Fig. 8). Conversely, MF 30 and MF 14 were always negative for myotubes in parallel cultures even after 28 d in culture. Thus, the transitions in immunochemical properties of the MHC observed during myogenesis in vivo were not observed during myogenesis in vitro under our standard culture conditions.

**Discussion**

By a variety of immunocytochemical procedures, we have demonstrated that breast muscle from 12-d-old chick embryos contains low or no myosin with the antigenic properties of the adult protein. Evidence was presented that the antigenic differences between the adult and embryonic myosins are likely to reside in primary structure of the molecule, at least in the MHC subunit. Previous investigations with polyclonal antisera have demonstrated that antibodies raised against adult fast, slow, and cardiac muscle myosin cross-react with myosin from embryonic muscles (11, 12, 20, 26, 35, 36). Peptide maps of adult and embryonic fast MHC (27) or whole myosin (35, 36) also provide evidence for both primary sequence homologies and differences. In the present study, McAb MF 20 was shown to likely recognize a primary sequence determinant common to both embryonic and adult pectoralis MHC, and other studies have been performed this epitope to reside in LMM. In contrast, the
binding site for MF 14 is absent from 12-d-old embryonic breast myosin, and the binding site for MF 30 must be in very low concentration or in a form which confers very low antibody affinity. Since the latter two epitopes also appear to be predominantly primary sequence in nature, we suggest that primary structural changes must occur in the MHC in both S-2 and
RIA analysis of myosin from cell cultures at 3, 10, and 28 d after plating with MF 20, MF 30, and MF 14. 1 μg of myosin from cell cultures and adult pectoralis muscle was reacted with MF 20 (○), MF 30 (●), and MF 14 (△) in 1:3 dilutions of hybridoma supernatants.

The sequential changes in the MHC recognized by MF 20, MF 30, and MF 14 can be explained by several different hypotheses. First, it is possible that three different MHC genes are expressed in muscle development. Using immunological and biochemical means, Whalen et al. (36) have provided evidence that three different MHC isoforms are sequentially expressed during rat skeletal myogenesis and from these data proposed that embryonic, neonatal, and adult MHCs are different gene products. Evidence that embryonic pectoralis muscle contains a MHC mRNA different from that in the adult muscle has recently been reported by Bandman et al. (2). In this scheme, MF 20 would bind to embryonic, posthatch and adult MHCs, MF 30 would bind to posthatch and adult MHC, and MF 14 would recognize only adult MHC. Secondly, one might consider differential posttranslational modifications. Trayer et al. (33) and Huszar (15) have demonstrated selective posttranslational modification of the MHC in adult rabbit muscle and the absence of this modifying system in embryonic muscle. Since slight alterations in the primary structure of the antigen can dramatically affect its recognition by McAbs, the immunological changes in the MHC observed during myogenesis may reflect posttranslational modifications of the MHC. This explanation would require the sequential appearance of at least two different and selectively modifying systems in developing muscle. Finally, although it is widely assumed that MHC in adult pectoralis is homogeneous, if different heavy chains exist, the age-dependent, differential binding of the McAbs may represent the noncoordinate expression of separate "adult-type" MHC isoforms. Previous work (23, 31) has demonstrated microheterogeneity in the amino terminal region of MHCs isolated from rabbit back muscle, and Zweig (39) has recently proven that MHCs from two different adult rabbit fast muscles contain unique MHC isoforms. In addition, immunological evidence for subfragment-one heterogeneity has been reported (38).

The failure of cultured embryonic muscle cells to undergo the immunological transitions in the MHC recognized by MF 30 and MF 14, whether these differences reflect posttranslational modifications of the MHC or the expression of a new MHC gene product, provides strong evidence that the intrinsic, morphogenetic program of developing skeletal myocytes is not sufficient to direct their full terminal differentiation in monolayer culture. Several extrinsic influences such as innervation have been implicated in directing isoformic transitions of myosin in vivo (11, 36) and it is conceivable that the addition of as yet uncharacterized components to muscle cultures might serve to trigger the expression of specific MHC isoforms in vitro. It has been demonstrated that several structural genes encoding for myofibrillar proteins are coordinately expressed during early myoblast differentiation in cell cultures lacking nerve (5, 6). It now remains to be seen whether later biochemical and morphogenetic events of terminal muscle development (7, 21, 25) require environmental interactions with other cell types, extracellular matrices, or hormones for their normal appearances.

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**Figure 8.** Indirect immunofluorescent analysis of cultured muscle cells 8 d after plating reacted with McAbs MF 20 (A), MF 30 (B), and MF 14 (C). Phase contrast photomicrographs are presented at the left, and the fluorescent micrographs are seen at the right. × 250.

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