

Effects of low pH stress on shell traits and proteomes of the dove snail

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Effects of low pH stress on shell traits and proteomes of the dove snail, *Anachis misera* inhabiting shallow vent environments off Kueishan Islet, Taiwan

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Abstract

The effects of naturally acidified seawater on a snail species, *Anachis misera* (Family: Columbellidae) were quantified in five shallow vent-based environments off Kueishan Islet, Taiwan. An absence of *Anachis* snails was observed in the most acidic North site (pH 7.22), and the size structure differed among the remaining East, South, Southwest and Northwest sites. If a positive correlation between shell length and shell width or total weight existed, the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the equations was low, i.e., 0.207–0.444. Snails from the Northwest site (pH 7.33) exhibited a more globular shape than those of the South ones (pH 7.80). Standardized shell thickness T1 (thickness of body whorl : shell length) and T2 (thickness of penultimate whorl : shell length) from the Northwest site showed a decrease of 6.3 and 9.4 %, respectively, compared to the South ones. In a similar vein, based on the 16 examined protein spots, protein expression profiles of snails in the South were distinct. With further characterization by principle component analysis, the separation was mainly contributed by the first (i.e., spots 8, 1, 15, and 12) and second (i.e., spots 15, 13, 12, 1, and 11) principal-components. As a whole, the shallow vent-based findings provide new information from subtropics on the effects of ocean acidification on gastropod snails in natural environments.

1 Introduction

Although current evidence indicates that organisms with a CaCO_3 skeleton, e.g., mollusks, echinoderms and corals, are likely to be among the most susceptible to ocean acidification (Fabry et al., 2008), specific information obtained from field investigations has been limited, particularly in gastropod snails (Gazeau et al., 2013). Thus, the current study was performed to address this issue within an extreme hydrothermal environment.

The shallow hydrothermal vents locate east of Kueishan (KS) Islet, Taiwan, near the southern end of the Okinawa Trough (Fig. 1). The vents emit yellow or white plumes

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ratio (more globular) than those of the South site (pH 7.80) (Fig. 7). Within each sampling site, shell thickness between T1 and T2 was insignificantly different (paired t test, $p > 0.05$). In contrast, among sites, both measures of standardized shell thickness decreased under acidic environments. By comparison, T1 and T2 of the Northwest snails were 93.7 and 90.6 %, respectively, of the South ones.

3.3 Protein expression profiles

In the protein expression profiles of *Anachis* snails, 16 protein spots were selected for cluster analysis (Fig. 8). Based on Bray–Curtis Similarity (BCs) Indices, classification of the snails falls into three clusters. Snails from the high pH South were all within one cluster. In contrast, snails from the remaining sites were indistinguishable in other clusters. With further determination of the contribution of each protein variable, the data were characterized by principle component analysis (PCA). The first to the fifth principal components accounted for 35.4, 28.5, 13.2, 8.8, and 4.2% of the total variance, respectively. The separation was mainly contributed by the first (i.e., spots 8, 1, 15, and 12) and second (i.e., spots 15, 13, 12, 1, and 11) principal-components.

4 Discussion

Our results showed that *Anachis* snails survived and differed in their ecophysiological performance under varying degrees of low pH stress. More specifically, snails in the acidic Northwest site (pH 7.33) possessed thinner shells and were more globular in shape than those of the South (pH 7.80) (Fig. 7). At the biochemical level, the protein expression profiles of snails from the South were distinguished from the others (Fig. 8). Overall, the effects of vent environments on snails at physiological and biochemical levels were comparable.

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4.1 Comparison with other ocean acidification studies

To date, most ocean acidification studies have been conducted in the laboratory or controlled environments for a short period of time. As a result, it has been firmly concluded that exposures to future global change scenarios (Caldeira and Wickett, 2003; Sokolov et al., 2009) may alter the tolerance of calcifying species and, ultimately, their fitness and survival through complex physiological and ecological pathways. Under low pH (7.7 vs. 8.0), periwinkle *Littorina littorea* increased less in weight and were shorter than snails grown in current conditions (Melatunan et al., 2013). Similar results have been obtained for other calcifying organisms, e.g., the reduction in shell growth of the oysters *Crassostrea gigas* (Lannig et al., 2010) and *Crassostrea virginica* (Beniash et al., 2010), larvae of the Mediterranean pteropods *Cavolinia inflexa* (Comeau et al., 2010), and the mussels *Mytilus edulis* (Gazeau et al., 2010) and *Mytilus californianus* (Gaylord et al., 2011).

Marine snails possessing shells with a more elongated shape are found to be more vulnerable to crab predation, possibly due to higher handling efficiency compared with a more globular shell (Cotton et al., 2004). At low pH (7.7), a 2.45% change in shell shape (shell width:shell length) towards more globular and a decrease in the outer lip shell thickness of up to 27% in *L. littorea* were observed (Melatunan et al., 2013). This reduction in shell thickness may increase the organism's susceptibility to crushing predators (Boulding and Van Alstyne, 1993; Trussell and Etter, 2001). As shell thickness is reduced under low pH and elevated temperature, acquiring a more globular shape could enable snails to compensate better (Melatunan et al., 2013).

Compared with deep-sea vent studies, in the northwest Eifuku volcano, Mariana arc, the vent mussel, *Bathymodiolus brevior* inhabiting low pH environments (pH 5.36–7.29), exhibited shell thickness and daily growth increments in shells of only about half of the ones with pH > 7.8 (Tunnicliffe et al., 2009). Along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the expression profiles of 35 proteins from the gill of *Bathymodiolus azoricus* revealed clear separation among sites, which indicates that specific adaptations of *B. azoricus*

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that the precision of the regression models was low, particularly in the relationship of shell length and body weight. Although differential recruitment and acidic stress are potential factors to account for such discrepancy, further study is needed to address this question.

It is known that vent systems are not entirely representative of future ocean changes because of not only the temporal variability in pH, but also the existence of other toxic elements. However, vents' acidifying environments are sufficiently large in spatial and temporal scales. Still, it is a naturally applicable system to assess the effects of ocean acidification on the whole life cycle and across multiple generations of target organisms.

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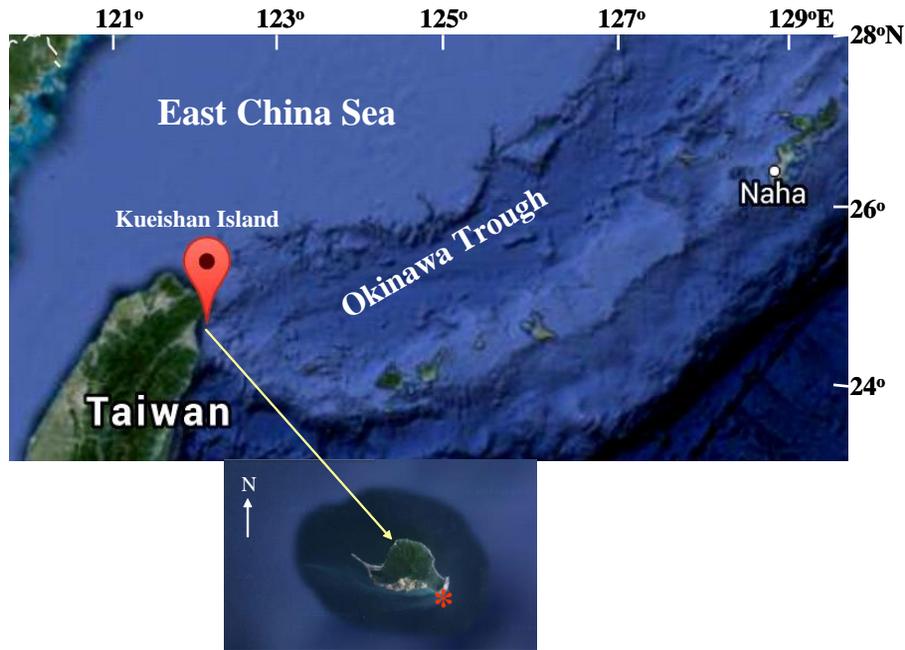


Figure 1. Map showing the collection site of *Anachis misera* (Source: Google map).

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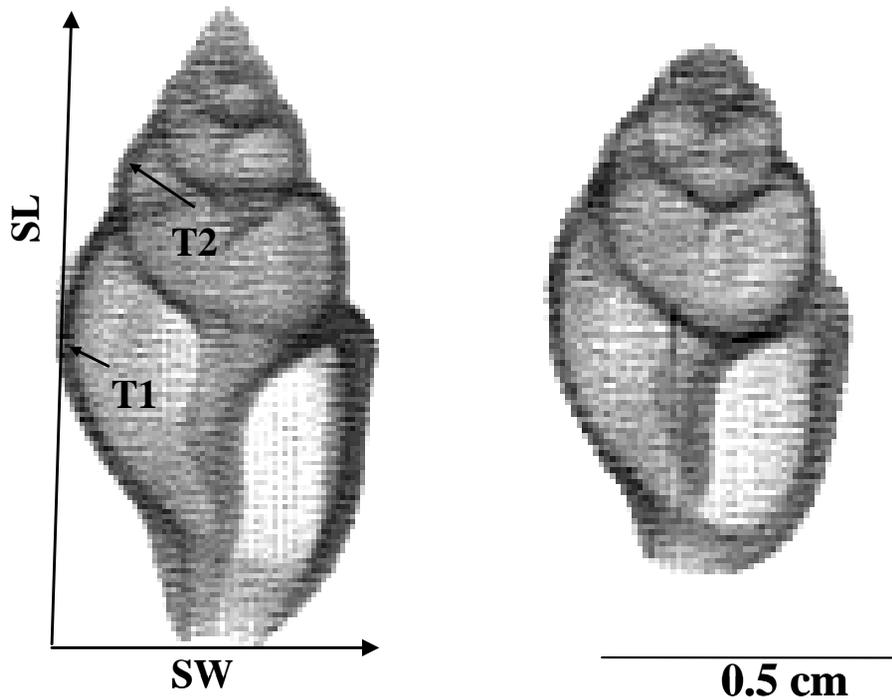


Figure 2. Biometric measurements of the shell of *Anachis misera*. SL: shell length; SW: shell width; T1: thickness of body whorl; T2: thickness of penultimate whorl; Left: Snail from the South; Right: Snail from the Northwest.

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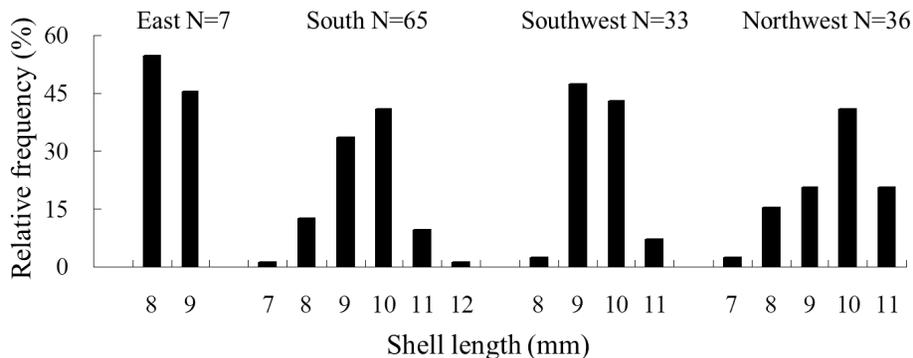
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Figure 3. Length frequency distribution of *Anachis misera* around the vent off Kueishan Islet. N= sample size.

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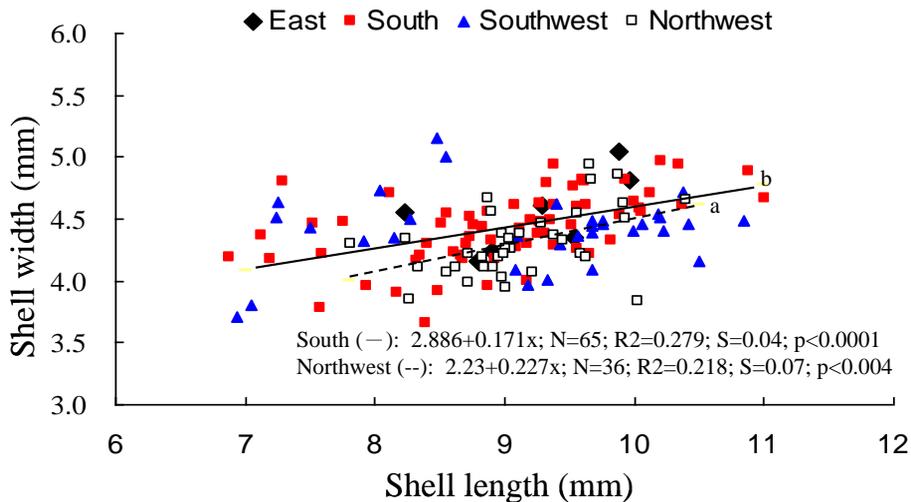


Figure 4. Relationship between shell length and shell width of *Anachis misera* from different sites. S: standard error of the regression; different letters indicate that the regression lines differ significantly ($p < 0.05$).

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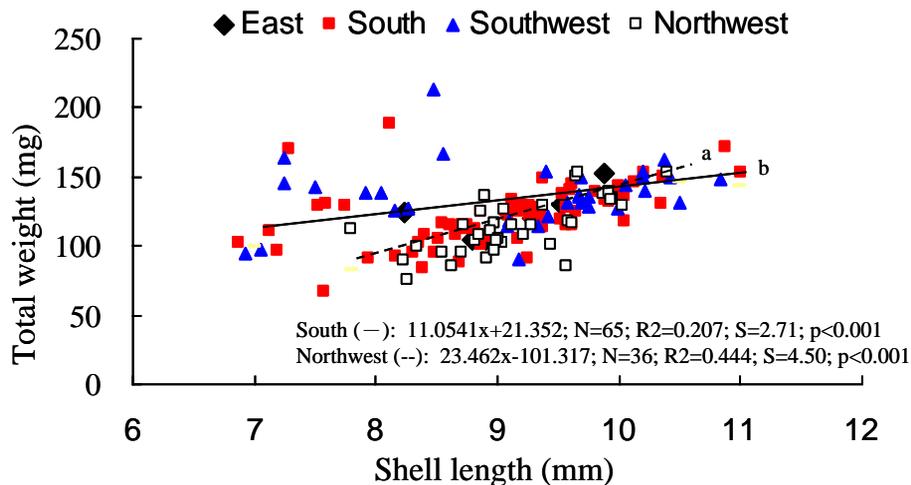


Figure 5. Relationship between shell length and total weight of *Anachis misera* from different sites. S: standard error of the regression; different letters indicate that the regression lines differ significantly ($p < 0.01$).

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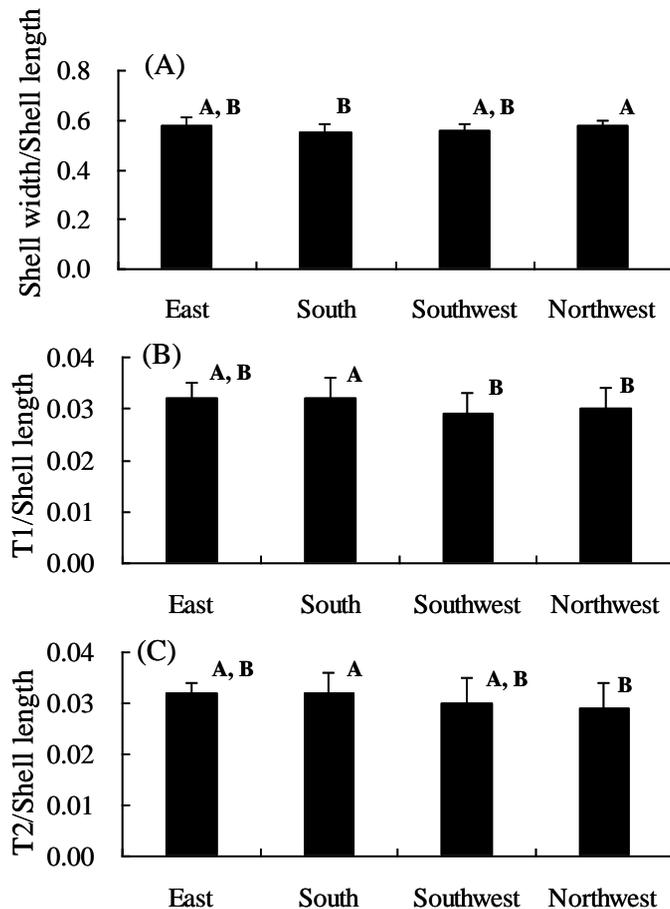


Figure 6. Standardized shell traits of *Anachis misera*. **(a)** Shell shape; **(b)** Thickness of body whorl (T1); **(c)** Thickness of penultimate whorl (T2). Data are shown as Mean \pm SD and ranges. Means that differ significantly from each other are indicated by different letters ($p < 0.05$).

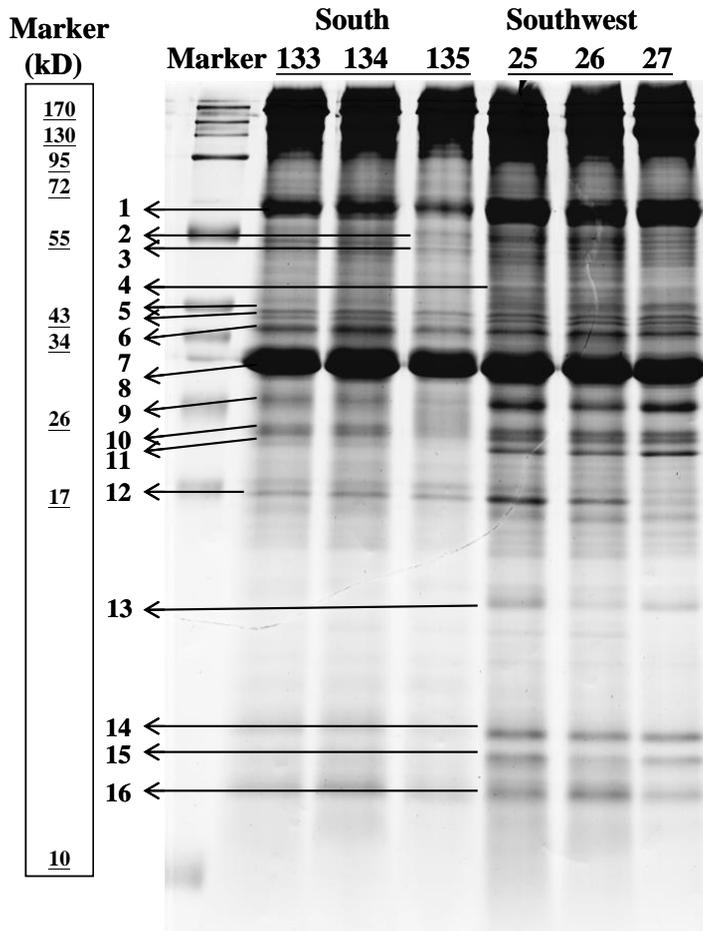


Figure 7. Gel electropherogram with molecular markers of *Anachis misera*. Number: protein band serial number.

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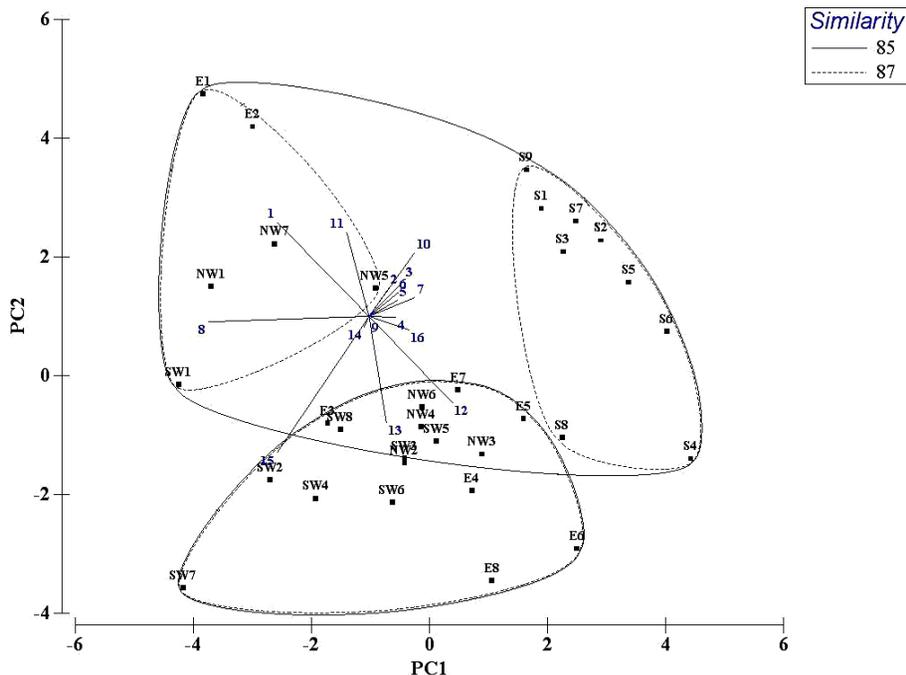


Figure 8. Results from the combined principal component analysis (PCA) and cluster analysis. The cluster analysis of Bray–Curtis Similarity (BCs) Indices using standardized overall protein expressions of *Anachis* snails from different sampling sites. E: East, S: South; SW: Southwest; NW: Northwest; 1–16: protein spot variable.