

ULTRASTRUCTURE OF VENOM GLANDS IN *TRACHINUS DRACO* (OSTEICHTHYES, TRACHINIDAE)

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The venom glands of weeverfish (*Trachinidae*) are located in the derma, completely surrounded by connective tissue coated with a thin basal lamina (0,1 μm). They are reported to be of epidermal origin (Cameron and Endean, *Toxicon*, 11, 1973). Ultrastructural examination of venom glands in *Trachinus draco* pointed out that these are composed of large polygonal cells (long axis 40-50 μm) with an heterogeneous cytoplasm in which were observed large vacuoles and granular material of different electron densities and size; a large (10 μm) peripheral nucleus with irregular shape was noticed. In a few cells breakdown of cell membrane was observed. Supporting cells (Pawlowsky, *Anat.Anz.*, 34, 1909; Perriere and Goudey-Perriere, *Toxicon*, 27, 1989) were also described. Most of supporting cells lie on basal lamina, some of them otherwise penetrate in the lobule and constitute a thin network in which adjacent cells appear to be connected by means of numerous desmosomes. Supporting cells lying on basal lamina exhibited oval nucleus and an electron-dense cytoplasm; others presented a misshape nucleus and a large electron-transparent vacuole; others else exhibited a large very irregular nucleus and a few big vacuoles. The last type of supporting cells are similar to large glandular cells. The three types of supporting cells described may correspond to different stages of developing glandular cells.