

The Occurrence of Parthenogenetic *Artemia* Leach, 1819 (Crustacea: Anostraca) in Cancun Saltern, Mexico

Ying Cao^{1†}, Jorge Castro Mejía^{2†}, Xiao-Fang Wu³, Pei-Zheng Wang^{3*}, Amin Eimanifar^{4*} and Michael Wink⁴

¹ Hainan Key Laboratory for Conservation and Utilization of Tropical Marine Fishery Resources, Hainan Tropical Ocean University, Sanya 572022, China

² Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Xochimilco. División de CBS. Depto. El Hombre y su Ambiente. Laboratorio de Producción de Alimento Vivo y Biofloc. Calzada del Hueso No.1100, Colonia Villa Quietud. Alcaldía de Coyoacán. CP. 04960. Ciudad de México

³ Key Laboratory for Coastal Marine Eco-Environment Process and Carbon Sink of Hainan Province, Hainan Tropical Ocean University, Yazhou BayInnovation Institute, Sanya 572000, China

⁴ Institute of Pharmacy and Molecular Biotechnology (IPMB), Heidelberg University, Im Neuenheimer Feld 364, 69120 Heidelberg, Germany

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† Equal contribution as the first author

*Co-corresponding authors:

✉ P-Z. Wang
condywpz@126.com
✉ A Eimanifar
amineimanifar1979@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Artemia, commonly known as brine shrimp, constitutes a globally distributed halophilic zooplankton organism, occupying hypersaline environments including inland lakes, salterns, and coastal salt lagoons. The genus *Artemia* encompasses regional endemic species and a diverse array of parthenogenetic lineages, which are characterized by various ploidy levels and distributed across Asia, Europe, Africa, and Australia. The aim of the study is to investigate and determine the taxonomic status of an unusual mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase subunit I (mtCOI) sequence among 14 different populations of *Artemia franciscana* Kellogg, 1906, collected from Cancun saltern in Mexico. DNA extraction and mtCOI gene amplification were conducted and taxonomic classification was achieved via BLAST analysis. A phylogenetic tree, constructed using Maximum Likelihood methodology, revealed the phylogenetic relationship between Mexican parthenogenetic *Artemia* and other parthenogenetic lineages of varying ploidy levels. The results unequivocally confirm the presence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in Cancun saltern, aligning with sequences from Asia and Europe. Phylogenetic analysis positions revealed the Mexican specimens within the clade of diploid parthenogenetic lineages. The competitive vigor and reproductive capabilities of *A. franciscana* appear to have limited the expansion of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in North America. Further research endeavors are essential to unravel the enigmatic biogeography of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in North America and shed light on its potential native or introduced status.

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Introduction

The brine shrimp *Artemia* Leach, 1819, (Crustacea: Anostraca), a cosmopolitan halophilic zooplankton, is an inhabitant of hypersaline inland lakes, saltern, and coastal salt lagoons. The genus *Artemia* comprises

several regional endemic species and a large number of parthenogenetic lineages (Asem *et al.*, 2010, 2023; Asem and Sun, 2014, 2016; Eimanifar *et al.*, 2020). Parthenogenesis in *Artemia* is obligatory and parthenogenetic lineages are characterized by different ploidy levels (di-, tri-, tetra-, and pentaploidy) which



are widely distributed in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Australia (Maniatsi *et al.*, 2011; Asem *et al.*, 2016; Rode *et al.*, 2022).

Nevertheless, the existence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in North America has been assumed since the end of the 19th century. There are several reports on the occurrence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* from Great Salt Lake (UT, USA) (Packard, 1883; Cuellar, 1990).

Campos-Ramos *et al.*, (2003) studied commercial eggs from the Great Salt Lake and San Francisco Bay to explore parthenogenetic *Artemia*. Regarding the parthenogenesis reproductive model and using 16S nucleotide sequences, they confirmed the presence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in the Great Salt Lake. Later, Endebu *et al.*, (2013) aimed to prove or invalidate the existence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in the Great Salt Lake using field samples which had been collected during 1997-2005. They studied two molecular sequence markers (exon-7 of the Na/K-ATPase α -1 subunit gene and exon-2 of the heat shock protein HSP26 gene) and confirmed the existence of parthenogenetic specimens in the field samples from the period 2000 to 2002.

During a study on genetic variation of 14 Mexican populations of *Artemia franciscana* Kellogg, 1906 (unpublished data), the present research observed an abnormal mtCOI sequence from a field sample collected at Cancun saltern in Mexico. This report aims to identify its taxonomic status.

Materials and methods

Ten adult *Artemia* samples were obtained from Cancun saltern (21.171N, 86.807W) in Quintana Roo State (Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico) (Fig. 1).

Total DNA was extracted from a small piece of antennal tissue using the Chelex® 100 Resin method (Bio-Rad Laboratories, USA) (see Asem *et al.*, 2016). A partial fragment of the mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase subunit I (mtCOI) was amplified utilizing the invertebrate universal primers LCOI490/HC02198 (Folmer *et al.*, 1994). The standard nucleotide BLAST online software

(<https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi>) was utilized to distinguish taxonomic status.



Fig. 1. Geographical position of Cancun saltern (21.171N, 86.807W) from Quintana Roo State (Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico). Map data ©2022 Google.

To compare the phylogenetic relationship between reported parthenogenetic *Artemia* from Mexico and other parthenogenetic lineages with different ploidy levels, a phylogenetic tree was generated based on Maximum Likelihood (ML) using MEGA X (Kumar *et al.*, 2018). Sequences of *Artemia urmiana* Günther, 1899 and *Artemia sinica* Cai, 1989 were used as ancestral reference species for parthenogenetic lineages following Asem *et al.*, (2022).

Results and discussion

The result confirms that one of the studied individuals from Cancun saltern (GenBank accession no.: ON088931; 610 bp) is a parthenogenetic specimen with 100 percent identity overlay to 43 diploid sequences of eight localities from Asia (Iran and China) and Europe (Russia and France) (Table 1). Additionally, the result of the phylogenetic tree shows that Mexican parthenogenetic *Artemia* is located in the clade of diploid parthenogenetic lineage (Fig. 2).

The parthenogenetic specimens in Mexico were previously reported by Gallardo and Castro (1987) and Torrentera and Dodson (1995) from San Crisanto (Yucatan Peninsula) and Las Colorada (Pacific coast), respectively. The present report is the third confirmed record of the occurrence of parthenogenetic *Artemia* from field samples in Mexico.

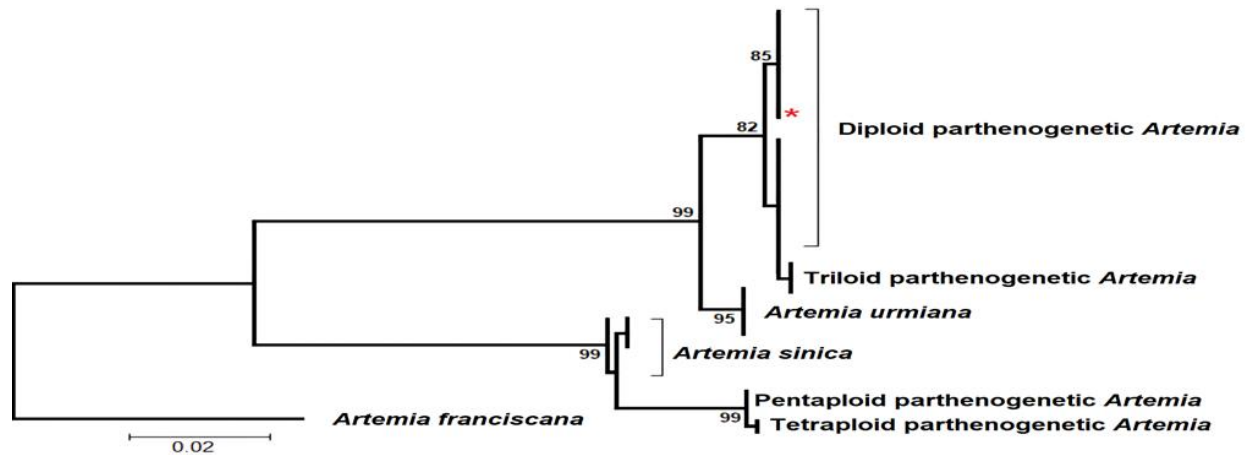


Fig. 2. A Maximum-likelihood (ML) phylogenetic tree based on mtCOI marker: The maximum-likelihood bootstrap values are shown for each major node. GenBank accession numbers are available in Table 1 and Asem et al., (2022). *Artemia franciscana* (GenBank accession no. KJ863440) was used as an outgroup. The star symbol (*) shows the position of Mexican parthenogenetic *Artemia* from Cancun saltern on phylogenetic tree

Table 1. Habitats and sequence(s) information of Cancun saltern and eight diploid parthenogenetic lineages from Asia and Europe.

| Locality | Geographic coordinates | GenBank accession no. | Sampling Year | Ref. |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|---------------|-------------------|
| Cancun saltern (Mexico) | 21.171N, 86.807W | ON088931 | 2005 | This study |
| Maharlu Lake (Iran) | 29.47N, 52.77E | MT791756-58 MT791760-64 MT791768 | 1997 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Dongjiagou (China) | 39.12N, 122.04E | MT791710-18 MT791720 MT791722-23 MT791725-26 | 1991 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Yingkou (China) | 40.55N, 122.32E | MT791795-96 | 1989 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Bameng area (China) | 23.29N, 106.37E | MT791704 | 1995 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Kulundinskoye (Russia) | 53.01N, 79.51E | MT791727 | 2007 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Aigues-Mortes (France) | 43.52N, 4.18E | MT791647 MT791649-52 MT791654-57 MT791659-63 | 2011 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Salin De Giraud (France) | 43.42N, 4.63E | MT791783 | 2011 | Rode et al., 2022 |
| Sete-Villero (France) | 43.38N, 3.62E | MT791789 | 2012 | Rode et al., 2022 |

Generally, *A. franciscana* has a high adaptation ability and reproductive rate (Amat et al., 2007; Sanchez et al., 2016); thus, it can be concluded that the competitive potential of *A. franciscana* has likely prevented the expansion of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in North America. Previous studies and current results could not provide scientific evidence to explain the origin of parthenogenetic *Artemia* in North America; it is not clear if they are native or anthropogenic. Further comprehensive studies are necessary to

investigate North America's biogeography of parthenogenetic *Artemia*.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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