The Complement of Desmosomal Plaque Proteins in Different Cell Types

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ABSTRACT Desmosomal plaque proteins have been identified in immunoblotting and immunolocalization experiments on a wide range of cell types from several species, using a panel of monoclonal murine antibodies to desmoplakins I and II and a guinea pig antiserum to desmosomal band 5 protein. Specifically, we have taken advantage of the fact that certain antibodies react with both desmoplakins I and II, whereas others react only with desmoplakin I, indicating that desmoplakin I contains unique regions not present on the closely related desmoplakin II. While some of these antibodies recognize epitopes conserved between chick and man, others display a narrow species specificity. The results show that proteins whose size, charge, and biochemical behavior are very similar to those of desmoplakin I and band 5 protein of cow snout epidermis are present in all desmosomes examined. These include examples of simple and pseudostratified epithelia and myocardial tissue, in addition to those of stratified epithelia. In contrast, in immunoblotting experiments, we have detected desmoplakin II only among cells of stratified and pseudostratified epithelial tissues. This suggests that the desmosomal plaque structure varies in its complement of polypeptides in a cell-type specific manner. We conclude that the obligatory desmosomal plaque proteins, desmoplakin I and band 5 protein, are expressed in a coordinate fashion but independently from other differentiation programs of expression such as those specific for either epithelial or cardiac cells.

Desmosomes are domains of the plasma membrane that are structurally specialized, on their cytoplasmic face, to form membrane anchorage sites for intermediate filaments and, on their intercellular face, to mediate strong cell-cell adhesion (for reviews, see references 1–3). The architectural coincidence of these two interactions makes the desmosome–tonofilament complex ideally suited to impart tensile strength and mechanical resistance to the tissue as a whole.

Desmosomes are most abundant in stratified epithelial tissues, and our current knowledge of their biochemical composition is based on analyses of preparations enriched in desmosomes from these sources (4–11). Preparations of desmosomes from bovine snout epidermis can be resolved on gel electrophoresis into eight major polypeptide bands, and at least six individual proteins have been identified as true desmosomal constituents. These are the nonglycosylated proteins, desmoplakins I (Mr ~ 250,000), desmoplakin II (Mr ~ 215,000), and polypeptide “band 5” (Mr ~ 83,000), as well as the glycosylated proteins of bands 3 (Mr ~ 150,000), 4a (Mr ~ 130,000), and 4b (Mr ~ 115,000). In addition, a basic polypeptide band 6 (Mr ~ 75,000) co-purifies in desmosomal preparations, often together with minor amounts of a smaller glycosylated component with an Mr of approximately 22,000.

Desmosomes also occur, albeit at much lower frequency, in other epithelia, i.e., pseudostratified, transitional, and simple epithelia (for reviews, see references 1, 12, and 13). In addition, they have been found in certain arachnoidal cells of the meninges, in meningiomas derived therefrom (14) and within the intercalated discs of the myocardium, a tissue of mesenchymal origin (15, 16). Antibodies to desmoplakins I and II (10, 17, 18) and to several other desmosomal components (19–22) have been shown, using fluorescence microscopy, to react at desmosomal sites in various cell types in a wide variety of species. However, the biochemical composition of desmosomes from sources other than epidermis and a few other stratified epithelia has not been studied due to the difficulty in detecting such minor cellular components. Clearly, it is important to establish whether desmosomes from...
different sources are identical in their composition or whether they constitute, as is the case with many other cytoskeletal proteins, structures composed of members of a family of proteins showing differential expression in different cell types.

In the present study, we have addressed this question with regard to the intracellular components desmoplakins I and II and band 5 protein.\(^1\) Immunoelectron microscopy using conventional antisera has shown these polypeptides to be associated with the desmosomal plaques (8, 10, 17, 18). Desmoplakins I and II are very similar to each other in their range of isoelectric pH values (6.5–7.2), amino acid composition, and peptide maps (10, 11) but differ in all of these features from band 5 protein (10, 11, 23). Immunologically related polypeptides of similar sizes to desmoplakin I and band 5 protein have been described in certain bovine stratified tissues (10, 24), but a systematic investigation of the desmosomal plaque protein complement in the diverse kinds of desmosome-containing cell types is still lacking.

We have produced a panel of monoclonal antibodies to the desmoplakins and a guinea pig antiserum to band 5 protein and used these to identify, by immunoblotting, the cross-reacting proteins in a number of cultured cells and tissues from several species. These include, in addition to various stratified epithelia, examples of simple, transitional, and pseudostratified epithelia as well as cardiac tissue. The results show that the desmosomal plaque complement of proteins is relatively uniform in all cell types. However, while desmoplakin I and band 5 protein are present in all desmosomes, desmoplakin II has only been found among cells of stratified epithelial tissue.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Antibodies:** The monoclonal antibodies described were the result of two fusions. In the first, the antigen comprised preparations of isolated bovine snout desmosomes, and in the second, desmoplakin proteins purified from such preparations by elution from SDS PAGE (22). Two injections of 500 µg of antigen emulsified 1:1 initially with Freunds complete adjuvant and then with Freunds incomplete adjuvant were administered, subcutaneously, with a 4-wk interval, to BALB/c mice. 3 d before fusion, 500 µg of antigen suspended in PBS was injected intraperitoneally. Spleen cells were fused with a myeloma cell line NSO in a ratio of 5:1, respectively, using 40% polyethylene glycol.

After fusion, cells were distributed into 10 flat-bottomed microtiter plates. After 48 hr, wells containing fused cell mixtures were placed in 150-cm² flasks or propagated as ascites in pristane-treated BALB/c mice. Mice were subcloned twice by limiting dilution in 96-well microtiter plates. After fusion, cells were distributed into 10 flat-bottomed microtiter plates. After 48 hr, wells containing fused cell mixtures were placed in 150-cm² flasks or propagated as ascites in pristane-treated BALB/c mice.

**Enriched Desmosome Preparations:** Desmosomes were prepared from bovine snout and tongue according to the method of Gorbsky and Steinberg (6). Desmosome-enriched fractions of bovine cornea, esophagus, bladder, urethra, trachea, and rat tongue were prepared as follows: The epithelial layers were scrapped off and incubated in buffer A (96 mM NaCl, 8 mM K2HPO4, 5.6 mM Na2PO4, 1.5 mM KC1, 10 mM Na2EDTA, pH 6.8), then homogenized in a Polytron homogenizer (Kinematica, Lucerne, Switzerland) for 1 min at setting 6. The homogenate was filtered and centrifuged for 1 min at 500 g to remove large debris. The supernatant was then further centrifuged at 2,000 g for 30 min and the resulting pellet taken up in buffer B (20 mM phosphate buffer, pH 7.5, containing 1.5 M KC1, 1% Triton X-100, 0.5 M sodium dodecyl sulfate, 0.05% sodium azide, and 2% Triton X-100) for 1 hr at 4°C with gentle stirring. The homogenate was centrifuged at 10,000 g for 20 min, and the resulting pellet was washed twice in PBS, then stored as a pellet at −20°C.

**Fluorescence Microscopy:** Bovine tissues were obtained from the local slaughterhouse, and human biopsy specimens and tissues of rat (Sprague-Dawley) and White Leghorn chickens were snap-frozen in liquid nitrogen-cooled isopentane. 5-µm sections were prepared with a Reichert cryotome (Reichert Scientific Instruments, Buffalo, NY) and air-dried. Fixation for 10 min in acetone (−20°C) was followed by brief air-drying. Primary antibodies were applied for 30 min, followed by three 5-min washes in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS), 30 min of incubation with fluorescein isothiocyanate-labeled goat anti–mouse or guinea pig IgG (Medac, Hamburg, FRG) diluted 1:20, and three washes (5 min each) in PBS as before. The slides were dipped briefly in water, then in ethanol, and coverslips were mounted in Moviol (Hoechst, Frankfurt, FRG). The sections were viewed using epifluorescence illumination, with a Zeiss photomicroscope III (Carl Zeiss, Inc., Oberkochen, FRG).

**Fluorescence Microscopy:** Sections were fixed and stained as described (14).

**Cell Electrophoresis:** SDS PAGE was as described (26). For two-dimensional gel electrophoresis the method of O’Farrell et al. (27) with some modifications (10, 28) was used.

**Immunoblotting:** Polypeptides separated by electrophoresis were incubated for 2 hr in partial renaturing buffer as described (29). They were then transferred to nitrocellulose paper (30) and the efficiency of the procedure checked by staining with Ponceau S (Sigma Chemical Co., St. Louis, MO). Nonspecific binding was reduced by incubation with 0.05% Tween in PBS for 2 hr. The nitrocellulose paper was reacted with hybridoma cell culture supernatant or with IgG (0.003 mg/ml) purified from ascites fluid or with guinea pig antiserum diluted 1:500. Four 20-min washes were given with wash buffer (PBS, 0.05% Tween) containing sequentially 0.1% Triton X-100, 0.5% Triton X-100, and 0.3 M NaCl, and finally wash buffer alone. Affinity purified [\(^{125}\)I]-labeled goat antibodies to mouse IgG + IgM (5 x 10⁴ cpm/ml) or [\(^{125}\)I]-labeled protein A (Amersham International, Amersham, UK) was applied for 2 hr, and then the paper was washed again as described above.

Alternatively, a peroxidase immunoblotting method was used as follows. First and second antibodies (rabbit anti–mouse IgG + IgM from Dakoppats, Denmark; diluted 1:1,000) were each incubated for 1 hr. Washing steps comprised three 10-min washes in 0.05% Tween (in PBS). Specifically bound antibody was visualized by addition of diaminobenzidine (0.04%), nickel sulfate (0.05%), and peroxidase (0.03%) as substrate. The reaction was stopped by washing with PBS.

**RESULTS**

**Specificity of Monoclonal Antibodies**

For the purpose of this study, we have selected seven different hybridomas (all IgG1) that produce desmoplakin

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\(^1\) Steinberg and colleagues (8) have proposed the name desmoplakin III for the band 5 protein, which implies a close chemical relationship to desmoplakins I and II, similar to that of members of other protein families such as collagens, keratins, and others. However, as band 5 protein is very different in its immunological and biochemical properties from desmoplakins I and II, we think this name is misleading and prefer to refrain from using it unless sequence comparison reveals significant homologies.
FIGURE 1 Specificity of desmoplakin antibodies demonstrated by immunoblotting reaction on polypeptides of desmosomes isolated from bovine snout epidermis after separation by SDS PAGE. Lane a, Coomassie Blue staining of major polypeptides of desmosomes.

TABLE I. Reactivity of Monoclonal Antibodies to Desmoplakins

A. Species specificities of antibodies to desmoplakins

| Species | DP1&2-2.15 | DP1-2.17 | DP1-2.6 | DP1&2-2.2 | DP1-2.20 | DP1-2.21 | DP1&2-1.1 |
|---------|------------|----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Cow     | +          | +        |          | +          |          |          | +         |
| Man     | +          | +        |          | +          |          |          | -         |
| Rat     | +          | +        |          |            |          |          |           |
| Chick   | +          |          |          |            |          |          |           |

B. Desmoplakins identified in different bovine and human tissues by reaction with antibodies to desmoplakins

| Tissues | Desmoplakin I | Desmoplakin II |
|---------|---------------|----------------|
| Stratified epithelia |           |               |
| Epidermis          | +            | +              |
| Tongue             | +            | +              |
| Esophagus          |              |                |
| Cornea             | +            | +              |
| Pseudostratified epithelium |     |               |
| Trachea            | +            | +              |
| Transitional epithelium |     |               |
| Bladder            | +            | +              |
| Heart              | +            | +              |
| Myocardium         |              |                |
| Purkinje fibers    | +            |               |
| Simple epithelia   | + (+)\(^{1}\) | -              |
| Liver              |             |                |
| Intestine          |             |                |
| Endometrium        |             |                |
| Cultured cell lines |           |               |
| MDBK               | +            |               |
| BMGE               | +            |               |
| MCF-7              |              |                |
| A-431              |              |                |
| TR-146             |              |                |

* DP, desmoplakins I and II. For the designation of polypeptide bands see reference 10. Lane b, Ponceau-S staining of protein after transfer to nitrocellulose paper. Lanes c-f, autoradiographs of parallel strips showing the reaction of antibodies DP1&2-2.15 (lane c), DP1-2.17 (lane d), antibody DP1-2.21 (lane e), antibody DP1&2-1.1 (lane f), using \(^{3}H\)-labeled goat anti-mouse Ig to detect the binding of desmoplakin antibody.

\(^{1}\) Additional tissues examined include, for stratified epithelia, exocervix and human penile mucosa; for pseudostratified epithelia, human bronchial epithelium; for simple epithelia, human intestine, uterine endometrium and oviduct. Antibody DP1-2.6 gives very weak staining on simple epithelia.
has frequently been found to migrate somewhat ahead of desmoplakin I. At present we cannot determine whether this reflects a slight difference in charge or is simply due to the lower molecular size. The fact, however, that both desmoplakins appear at nearly the same pH value on isoelectric focusing (for examples see references 7 and 10) argues for the latter.

We have compared the desmoplakins from various stratified tissues with the corresponding proteins of cultured bovine cells by co-electrophoresing [35S]methionine-labeled cytoskel-

Figure 2 Identification of desmoplakin polypeptides by blotting of polypeptides separated by two-dimensional electrophoresis and a comparison, by co-electrophoresis, of desmosomal plaque proteins from stratified epithelia with those present in the cytoskeletal preparations from a cultured epithelial cell. Nonequilibrium pH gradient electrophoresis (NEPHGE) was used in the first dimension (basic polypeptides to the right) and electrophoresis in the presence of SDS in the second dimension. Markers used for co-electrophoresis are actin (A), bovine serum albumin (B), and phosphoglycerokinase (P). (a) Coomassie Blue staining of cytoskeletal proteins of bovine cornea. The positions of desmoplakins I and II and of band 5 are denoted by DP1, DP2, and 5, respectively. Brackets indicate the positions of the major cytokeratins (for details see reference 28). (b) Polypeptides of bovine cornea cytoskeleton separated on a gel parallel to that shown in a were transferred to nitrocellulose paper then reacted with antibody DP1&2-1.1 followed by staining with peroxidase-coupled rabbit anti-mouse Ig. Positive polypeptides show similar mobilities to those of desmoplakin I and II in a and also those of bovine snout epidermis (not shown; see reference 10). (c) Autoradiograph showing the co-electrophoresis of polypeptides of bovine cornea cytoskeleton (as in a) with those of a cytoskeletal preparation from [35S]methionine-labeled BMGE – H cells. The positions of labeled polypeptides with mobilities similar to those of desmoplakin I and band 5 protein from cornea are indicated. Brackets denote the major cytokeratins of this cell line (for details see reference 33). (d) Coomassie Blue staining of a gel showing cytoskeletal proteins of BMGE – H cells.
eral proteins from cultured bovine mammary gland epithelial cells (BMGE - H and BMGE + HM) with desmosomal and/or total cytoskeletal proteins from bovine snout epidermis (not shown here; for data see reference 7) or cornea (Fig. 2, a and c). On such co-electrophoreses, desmoplakin I and band 5 protein from the cultured cells appear in similar positions as desmoplakin I and band 5 protein from the stratified tissues (Fig. 2a). Frequently, we have noticed that in the pH gradient, BMGE cell desmoplakin I migrates slightly faster than the protein from the stratified tissues. So far we cannot decide whether this reflects a true cell type-specific difference. Clearly the relative amount of desmoplakin is usually much lower in the cultured cells compared with the stratified tissues (Fig. 2d).

Positive staining of plasma membranes (Fig. 3a), which may be resolved at higher magnification into typical punctate patterns between epithelial cells and along their basal membranes (see arrows in Fig. 3b), has been found with each of the antibodies in all bovine tissues (Fig. 3, a, b and c, see Table I) known to contain true desmosomes, including intercalated discs of myocardium (Fig. 3d) and intercellular borders between Purkinje fiber cells (not shown). It is also noteworthy that antibodies specific for desmoplakin I stain all layers of stratified tissues (Fig. 3e). Positive reaction has also been obtained on human (Fig. 3c), rat, and chick tissues (Table I) with antibodies recognizing these species. All monoclonal antibodies gave the typical fluorescent dotted line appearance on cell borders of monolayer cultures of desmosome-containing epithelial cell lines. A typical example is shown in Fig. 4a on human MCF-7 cells with antibody DP1&2-2.15. In addition, some fluorescent dots can be seen in variable frequencies in intracytoplasmic positions (e.g., Fig. 4, a and b), representing either hemidesmosomes or desmosome-derived endocytotic vesicles (see references 12 and 40). Some cell lines such as BMGE - H, a bovine mammary gland-derived cell line, frequently show long continuous lines of staining along cell borders (Fig. 4b). Electron microscopy has confirmed the appearance of extremely long (giant) desmosomes in such cells (Fig. 4, c and d) that appear to be formed by the fusion of many normal-sized desmosomes, as a closer examination has revealed small regions of interjunctional cell membrane (see arrows in Fig. 4c) within such giant desmosomes.

Immunoelectron microscopy has shown these monoclonal antibodies to specifically react with the plaque region of desmosomes. Typical examples are shown on the very small desmosomes of the corneal epithelium (Fig. 4, e-g) and the relatively large desmosomes of bovine tongue mucosa (Fig. 4h) and confirm our previous peroxidase localization with conventional antisera to desmoplakins (10, 17, 18, 41).

**Figure 3** Typical examples of immunofluorescence microscopy are shown with monoclonal antibodies to desmoplakins (antibody DP1&2-2.15 and DP1&2.16) on 5-µm frozen sections of various tissues. (a-c) Reaction with antibody DP1&2-2.15 recognizing both desmoplakins. (a) Bovine cornea, showing specific staining of cell boundaries of all layers. No staining is found in the underlying stroma (S). (b) Bovine tongue mucosa shown in grazing section, the punctate nature of the staining. Note also the staining of the hemidesmosomes located at the basal surface of the germinative layer, connecting them to the underlying basal lamina (arrows). (c) Endometrial epithelium of human uterus, showing dotted staining between the cells and intense staining in the subapical region toward the lumen (L), reflecting the higher concentration of desmosomes in the ring of maculae adhaerentes of this simple epithelium. Endometrial stroma (ES) is negative. (d and e) Reaction with antibody DP1-2.6 recognizing only desmoplakin I. (d) Positive reaction on the intercalated discs of bovine heart. (e) Positive reaction of the cellular boundaries in all layers of the stratified bovine tongue. Bars: (a–c) 50 µm; (d and e) 20 µm.
result from the extraction procedure. Conversely, sections of
snout epidermis boiled directly in SDS-containing sample
buffer always show two desmoplakin bands, arguing against
the possibility that desmoplakin II is produced as a proteolytic
breakdown product during the isolation procedure (not
shown; see references 10 and 42). With cultures of human
keratinocytes, which readily stratify in culture, we have ob-
tained inconsistent results. In some cultures, only desmo-
plakin I has been identified, whereas other cultures have
presented a small amount of desmoplakin II in addition to I.

Identification of Band 5 Protein in Different
Cell Types

Antibodies that react specifically with band 5 protein on
purified preparations of cow snout desmosomes have been
used to immunolocalize the cross-reacting component in
plasma membranes and, specifically, the desmosomal plaques
by fluorescence microscopy (Fig. 6) and immunoelectron
microscopy (not shown). Typical desmosomal staining is seen
in all epithelial cells, including examples of stratified and
simple epithelia, intercalated discs of heart tissue, and cultured
epithelial cells (Fig. 6, a–e).

On preparations of desmosome–tonofilament complexes
prepared by the pH 9 method (5), we have noted that, in
addition to the strongly reacting band 5 polypeptide of Mr
83,000, two minor bands of Mr 160,000 and ~300,000 react
with these antibodies (Fig. 7 a’, lane 2’); these probably result
from the presence of cross-linked products (possibly dimers
and tetramers). No reaction is seen on the cytokeratins which
are present in very large amounts in these preparations (Fig.
7 a, lane 2’). On all cell types examined, which include simple
and stratified epithelia as well as myocardium of cow and rat,
human tongue mucosa, and various cell culture lines of
bovine and human origin, the antibodies react with a poly-
peptide co-migrating with snout band 5 protein (Fig. 7, a–e;
Table I). The close similarity, if not identity, of the band 5
protein of stratified tissues to the antibody-binding polypep-
tide present in cell cultures derived from simple epithelia is
further demonstrated by the co-electrophoresis of a polypep-
tide of identical charge and mobility on two-dimensional gel
electrophoresis (cornes and BMGE–H cells are shown as
typical examples in Fig. 2, a, c and d; for other stratified
tissues see also reference 10).

DISCUSSION

Our results show that immunologically related polypeptides
of similar molecular weights and electrical charges occur in
the desmosomal plaques of all the diverse cell types examined,
which include examples of simple, stratified, pseudostratified,
and transitional epithelia as well as representatives of nonepi-
thelial cells, i.e., myocardial and Purkinje fiber cells of the
heart, and various cultured cell lines. This indicates that the
desmosomal plaque proteins of different cell types and species
are biochemically very similar, if not identical, and are rela-
tively stable throughout evolution. Our data further show that
desmosomes that differ greatly in size (e.g., cornea and tongue
in Fig. 4, e–h), substructural appearance (2, 22, 34, 43, 44),
and in the specific type of intermediate filament attached to
the plaques (e.g., desmin in myocardium, cytokeratins in
epithelia) all contain common plaque proteins, with the ex-
ception of desmoplakin II which will be discussed below.
Therefore, we conclude that the desmosomal plaque is
formed, in these diverse cell types, by a distinct set of proteins
that defines a certain kind of cell, the desmosome-forming
cells, a category of cell differentiation not congruent with
other known programs of expression.

The identification of the plaque proteins which, in many
cases, represent minor cell components in the different cell
types, has been made possible by the availability of a panel of
highly specific monoclonal antibodies to desmosomal plaque
proteins some of which recognize epitopes common to the
diverse species examined. Therefore, these antibodies should
also provide excellent probes to study desmosome formation
in embryogenesis and also to characterize certain groups of
tumors (see reference 41).

We have identified desmoplakin I to be a large polypep-
tide (Mr 250,000) localized exclusively to the desmosomal plaques
in all cell types containing true desmosomes. Both its apparent
molecular weight and isoelectric charge, which is near neu-
trality, are very similar in the different cell types, including
cultured epithelial cells and myocardial tissue. These results
extend our previous observations (10, 17) and those of Stein-
berg’s laboratory (24) on some stratified epithelia and myo-
cardium. We now conclude that desmoplakin I is an obliga-
tory constituent of the desmosomal plaque and that antibodies
to it can serve as a general probe for the identification of
desmosomes, including desmosome-derived intracytoplasmic
vesicles (2, 12, 40), and to distinguish them from other plaque-
bearing membrane domains (see reference 45). Our data also
demonstrate that desmoplakin I contains portions conserved
during evolution as well as other epitopes that have diverged
among the various species examined.

However, this is not the case for desmoplakin II, a polypep-
tide of Mr 215,000, which is very similar in isoelectric pH
value and tryptic peptide map to desmoplakin I and also

FIGURE 4 Immunofluorescent staining of monolayer cultures of human MCF-7 cells (a) and bovine BMGE–H cells (b), showing
the typical punctate staining at the cell borders and occasional spotted staining within the cell which represent either
hemidesmosomes or intracellularly accumulated desmoplakin-associated vesicles (17, 42). In addition long stretches of uninter-
rupted staining are often seen which correspond to the electron microscopic appearance of giant desmosomes often found in
the BMGE–H cells (c and d). These appear to result from the fusion of many smaller desmosomes. Membrane and midline
structures are resolved at higher magnification (d); horizontal arrow denotes the midline plate. Small regions of interdesmosomal
membrane within these fused desmosomes are marked by small arrows (c). Brackets indicate the bundles of cytokeratin filaments
that mostly run parallel to the desmosomal plaques. (e) Electron micrographs of bovine cornea, showing the presence of numerous
very small desmosomes located along the convoluted plasma membranes of adjacent cells. Immunoelectron microscopic location
of staining with antibodies DP1&2-2.15 (f) and DP1&2-1.1 (g), respectively, by 5-nm gold-coupled goat anti–mouse IgG. The gold
particles are concentrated on the desmosomal plaques. (h) Immunogold localization on plaques of the larger desmosomes of
bovine tongue mucosa. Note the restriction of label to the periphery of the plaque which reflects difficulties of the penetration
of gold–lg complexes to the deeper regions of the plaque; for plaque staining by the immunoperoxidase technique see references
10, 17, and 18. Bars: (a and b) 10 mm; (c) 1.0 mm; (d) 0.1 mm; (e–h) 0.2 mm.
Figure 5 Detection of desmoplakins in various bovine cells by immunoblotting. (a) Coomassie Blue staining of proteins after SDS PAGE. Lane 1, purified snout desmosomes; dots mark from top to bottom the positions of desmoplakins I and II, band 3, bands 4a and 4b, band 5, and band 6. Lane 2, desmosomal fraction of tongue. Cytoskeletal fractions of: cornea (lane 3; brackets indicate the large amounts of cytokeratins in such preparations; esophagus (lane 4); trachea (lane 5), BMGE - H cells (lane 7); heart (lane 8); liver (lanes 9 and 10); total cellular proteins of intact BMGE - HM cells (lane 6). (a') Autoradiograph of the corresponding immunoblot reaction with antibody DP1&2-2.15. Note the presence of two desmoplakin bands in the stratified (lanes 1'-4') and the pseudostratified (lane 5') tissues. Only one desmoplakin band is detected within the cultured BMGE - HM (lane 6') and BMGE - H (lane 7') cells and heart tissue (lane 8') as well as the representative of simple epithelium, i.e., liver (lane 9'). Even after extensive loading of the liver sample, only one band can be detected by the antibody (lane 10'). The slightly higher mobility of the band in heart (lane 8') is probably due to the large amounts of protein in this region of the gel. In parallel analyses the upper bands have also been found positive with DP1-2.17 and DP1-2.6, identifying them as desmoplakin I. (b) Identification of desmoplakins in rat tissues. Coomassie Blue-stained gel showing proteins of bovine snout desmosome-enriched fractions (citric acid method) analyzed by SDS PAGE (lane 1; dots as previous figures), a cytoskeletal fraction of rat tongue mucosa (lane 2), and a cytoskeletal fraction of rat heart (lane 3). (b') Autoradiograph of the corresponding immunoblot reaction with monoclonal antibody DP1&2-2.15. The reaction was visualized by 125I-labeled goat anti-mouse Ig. Two bands were found in the bovine snout epidermis (lane 1') and rat tongue mucosa (lane 2'). However, the rat heart shows only desmoplakin I (lane 3'), identified as such by DP1-2.6 (not shown). (c) Coomassie Blue-stained gel showing proteins of several human tissues: Cytoskeletal fractions of human tongue mucosa (lane 1) and human epidermis (lane 2) are compared with cytoskeletal fractions of cultured A-431 (lane 3), TR-146 (lane 4), and MCF-7 (lane 5). (c') Corresponding autoradiograph showing immunoblot reaction with monoclonal antibody DP1&2-2.15 visualized with radioactively labeled goat anti-mouse Ig as secondary antibody. Again, two bands are detected in the stratified tissues (lanes 1' and 2') but only one in each of the cultured cell lines that are derived from stratified (lanes 3' and 4') and simple tissues (lane 5').
FIGURE 6 Immunofluorescence microscopy showing the desmosomal location of antibodies to band 5 protein on frozen sections of the glandular ducts of the bovine snout (a); note punctate staining in some regions. (b) Bovine cornea; note the staining of cell boundaries of all layers including the basal surface of the germinative cells. (c) Human endometrial ducts. (d) Bovine heart; note specific staining of intercalated discs, cultured BMGE - H cells (e). Cells of stroma (S) and dermis (D) are negative in all cases. Bars, 50 μm.
FIGURE 7  Immunological identification of desmosomal band 5 protein in diverse cell types. (a) Coomassie Blue-stained gel showing SDS PAGE-separated proteins of bovine snout desmosome fractions prepared according to the citric acid method (lane 1; dots denote the major desmosomal polypeptides as in previous figures), bovine snout desmosome–tonofilaments fraction prepared according to the pH 9 method (lane 2; brackets denote cytokeratins which are abundant in such preparations), cytoskeletal fractions of: BMGE – H cells (lane 3), and BMGE + HM cells (lane 4). (a’) Autoradiograph of the corresponding immunoblot reaction with guinea pig antiserum to band 5 protein visualized by incubation with $^{125}$I-protein A. A single band corresponding to $M_r$ 83,000 is evident in the citric acid desmosome preparation and in the cytoskeletal extracts; however, in pH 9 fractions of snout desmosomes two additional minor bands of higher molecular weights that probably represent dimers and tetramers of band 5 protein also react with the antibodies (arrowheads in lane 2’). Minor positive components of slightly higher mobility than band 5 protein are also detectable in lane 2’ probably are the result of proteolytic breakdown. No reaction is found on the cytokeratins which are greatly abundant in such preparations (compare a, lane 2, brackets). (b) Coomassie Blue staining of polypeptides separated by SDS PAGE showing components of bovine snout desmosomes (lane 1) in comparison with cytoskeletal material of bovine heart (lane 2) and bovine liver (lane 3). Spots in all lanes mark the position of band 5 protein. (b’) Autoradiograph of a corresponding immunoblot of a parallel gel showing the reaction with antibodies to band 5 protein visualized by binding of $^{125}$I-protein A. Note that only one band co-migrating with the epidermal band 5 polypeptide reacts in all samples. (c) Identification of desmosomal band 5 protein in diverse bovine, rat, and human tissues by immunoblotting of proteins separated by SDS PAGE with specific guinea pig antibodies. (a) Coomassie Blue-stained gel of bovine snout desmosome fraction (lane 1; dots designate polypeptides as in previous figures), bovine liver cytoskeletal fraction (lane 2), cytokeratins of rat heart (lane 3), rat tongue (lane 4; brackets denote cytokeratins). (d and e) Coomassie Blue-stained gel of rat liver (d) and A-431 (e) cytoskeletal fractions. (c’–e’) Corresponding autoradiograph of immunoblot, showing exclusively reaction of a single polypeptide of $M_r$ 83,000 in all tissues and cell cultures (visualization of the immunoreaction by binding of $^{125}$I-protein A).
shares certain immunological epitopes with it (this study and references 8 and 10). Clearly, desmoplakin II differs from desmoplakin I in several epitopes as we have found a number of different monoclonal antibodies that are unique to desmoplakin I. Whether this reflects true sequence heterogeneity or simply the absence of a sizeable portion in a proteolytic product from desmoplakin I cannot be decided at present (see also reference 8).

We have found the quantity of desmoplakin II in relation to desmoplakin I to vary considerably between the different cell types (Fig. 5). Furthermore, desmosomes of the myocardial intercalated discs, a nonepithelial tissue, and those of simple epithelia and various cultured cells derived from either simple or stratified epithelia, appear to lack desmoplakin II. No trace could be found either on Coomassie Blue–stained, heavily loaded gels or by immunoblotting. Although we cannot exclude the possibility that desmoplakin II is lost during the preparation, we regard this as rather unlikely because we have also not detected desmoplakin II after boiling of intact cells directly in SDS-containing sample buffer, which minimizes proteolysis by immediate denaturation of the proteins. Therefore, we conclude that desmoplakin II is not expressed in appreciable quantities in simple epithelia, in myocardial cells, and in several cultured cell lines growing in monolayer.

In contrast, we have found considerable amounts of a protein corresponding to bovine epidermal desmoplakin II in all stratified epithelia, in the pseudostratified epithelia of the respiratory tract, and in the transitional epithelium of the bladder. This is contrary to a recent report of Giudice et al. (24) who could not detect desmoplakin II in any tissue with the exception of epithermis. This, however, could be due to their isolation methods which may tend to lose selectively plaque proteins (10, 18). Therefore, our results indicate that desmoplakin II is a protein produced under some form of cell type–specific regulation related to the stratification process. In this context it is of note that several cell lines of stratified epithelial origin such as A-431 and TR-146, which normally do not stratify in culture, also lack desmoplakin II. Whether the low level of desmoplakin II band which we have observed in some cultures of human keratinocytes, but not in all, is related to the specific degree of stratification in the culture remains to be examined.

While our immunocytochemical observations have clearly shown that desmoplakin I is present in all layers of stratified epithelia, we cannot exclude the possibility that desmoplakin II is heterogeneously distributed across such epithelia, a possibility that escapes detection when pooled tissue material is used (for discussion see also reference 42). Clearly, antibodies specific to desmoplakin II would be of great value in deciding this question.

The polypeptide band 5 of bovine epidermal desmosomes, which has an M, value of 83,000 and, on two-dimensional gel electrophoresis, is almost isoelectric to serum albumin, is chemically and immunologically different from the desmoplakins. It is encoded by a specific mRNA and, like desmoplakin I and band 5 protein, is not significantly glycosylated (11). Mueller and Franke (10) have described a polypeptide of similar size and isoelectric pH in tongue mucosa, and Steinberg and colleagues (8, 24) have reported an immunologically cross-reacting polypeptide of this size in two other stratified epithelia, i.e., cornea and esophagus. Our present results confirm the existence of this protein in stratified epithelia and further show that it occurs generally wherever desmosomes occur, i.e., in transitional, pseudostratified, and simple epithelia, various kinds of cultured epithelial cells, and in the intercalated discs of myocardial tissue. This is in agreement with previous immunofluorescence microscopy of Cowin et al. (19, 20, 22). Thus, we conclude that band 5 protein is a general desmosomal plaque constituent which in all cells examined so far is co-expressed with desmoplakin I.

From our study a remarkably uniform picture of the composition of the desmosomal plaque emerges. Desmosomes of all cell types examined so far have two major proteins in common: desmoplakin I and band 5 protein. Both are nonglycosylated proteins contributing to the formation of an insoluble protein polymer layer associated with the inner, i.e., cytoplasmic aspect of the desmosomal membrane domain. Whether both proteins are independently in contact with the membrane on the one hand and the specific kind of intermediate filaments on the other is not clear at the moment. Clearly, at least some desmoplakin I is freely accessible on the surface of the desmosomal plaque as shown by our finding that desmoplakin antibodies microinjected into cultured Madin-Darby bovine kidney cells specifically bind to the plaque (2). Future experiments will have to show the specific roles of desmoplakin I and band 5 protein in the mediation of membrane–intermediate filament interaction.

While the expression of desmoplakin I and band 5 protein is apparently correlated with desmosome formation, it is not necessarily coordinated with the expression of other cytoskeletal proteins. In fact, it is clear that expression of these two desmosomal proteins can be independent from the expression of cytokeratins and other epithelial proteins as well as from the expression program characteristic of myocardial cells. Thus the control of expression of these desmosomal plaque proteins does not seem to be linked to the synthesis of a specific type of the intermediate filament proteins. This independence of expression is also suggested by the absence of desmosomal plaques and desmosomal proteins in certain cultured epithelial cells such as those of the PiK; and various rat hepatoma lines (10, 22, 46). Work using cDNA cloning of desmosomal proteins is under way in our laboratory to provide adequate probes to study the regulation of expression of the various desmosomal plaque proteins.

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