INTRODUCTION

In an approach to a study of the action of fungicidal drugs on the morphology of Candida albicans, we were faced with the problem of the preservation of substructures in untreated control cells. In contrast to results obtained with other yeast cells such as Cryptococcus neoformans (2, 9), chemical fixation with OsO₄ or with glutaraldehyde proved to be unsatisfactory for the preservation of the ultrastructural morphology of C. albicans (10, 11). The use of conventional fixatives offers good information about the cell wall and the plasmalemma but, with the exception of permanganate, chemical fixatives permeate very slowly so that the internal structures are barely made visible (8). Removal of cell wall constituents by mechanical or enzymatic treatment before fixation partly solves this problem, but all information about the cell wall and plasmalemma is lost.

In this study an attempt has been made to adapt conventional fixation procedures in such a way that the cell components of both the periphery and the interior are well visible. This was achieved by using a sectioning procedure in the presence of the fixative. Further interest in this preparation procedure lies in its application to enzyme cytochemistry.
and lead citrate before examination in an EM 300
electron microscope.

RESULTS

The percentage of cells that had been cut through
the cytoplasm in a 7.5-µm thick frozen section was
estimated to be about 70–80%. This was calculated
on a theoretical basis, assuming a medium cell
diameter of 5-µm and a random distribution of
cells in the pellet. A survey of cross-sectioned cells
embedded in the serum matrix is seen in Fig. 1.

The general appearance of ultrastructural or-
ganelles differed very little with the three different
modes of fixation. The cytoplasm of a small
number of cells appeared very electron-dense and
no detailed morphology could be observed (Fig. 2).
These represent probably the unbroken cells dur-
ding 7.5-µm sectioning. In the presumptive inter-
sected cells, on the other hand, the organelles were
well visualized and most of the substructures were
quite similar to those described in other yeast
species (1, 3, 9).

Cell Wall and Plasmalemma

The definition into three distinct layers of the
cell wall was observed in most cells (Fig. 3). No
artifactual separation of the wall from the plas-
lemmma due to freeze-sectioning was noted. The
plasmalemma presented short invaginations into
the cytoplasm during the growth phase (Fig. 5) to
rather extended ones during the stationary phase
(Figs. 3, 6).

Intimate contacts between the plasmalemmal
invaginations and the large cytoplasmic vacuoles
were frequent (Fig. 6).

Nucleus

The ultrastructure of the nuclei of cells in the
stationary phase is shown in Figs. 1, 4, and 6,
revealing irregularly shaped nuclei limited by
discontinuous double membranes. The eccentric
nucleolus was composed of intermingled granular
and agranular electron-dense material (Fig. 4).

Cytoplasm

The density of the cytoplasm depended largely
upon the amount of ribosomes, distributed in
polysomal arrays or as single units. Owing to the
less densely packed ribosomes, the visualization of
the other cytoplasmic components was generally
better in cells during the stationary phase than in
growing cells.

Mitochondria, containing many cristae, were
randomly distributed throughout the cytoplasm
(Figs. 2 and 8). Central constriction of their double
limiting membrane, suggestive of mitochondrial
division, was occasionally observed (Fig. 4). Well-
defined ribosomes, single or in small clusters, were
seen in the matrix of almost all mitochondria
(Figs. 2 and 4).

A vacuolar apparatus, mostly very electron-
lucent and containing amorphous and vesicular
material, occupied the central part of the cyto-
plasm (Figs. 6, 7). Part of the limiting membrane
appeared flattened and could easily be interpreted
as part of the membrane material generally desig-
nated as smooth endoplasmic reticulum. Short
fragments of smooth membranes and vesicles were
more frequent in cells in the growth phase and in
budding cells than in resting cells in the stationary
phase.

Round- to ovoid-shaped bodies, characterized
by a single limiting membrane, a moderately dense
matrix, and very often a central electron-dense
core were present in most of the cells (Fig. 8).
Lipid-like droplets were seen in the cytoplasm as
well as in the central vacuole (Fig. 8). There was no
evidence for the presence of a Golgi apparatus,
multivesicular bodies, microtubules, or microfila-
ments in cells during either phase of growth.

DISCUSSION

The slow permeation of chemical fixatives into the
cytoplasm poses a serious problem in the mor-
phologic identification of the organelles of C.
albicans. The fact that no adequately preserved
untreated control cells could be obtained makes
the interpretation of drug-induced morphologic
alterations very difficult.

Permanganate, the commonly employed fixative
for C. albicans, revealed fairly well the membra-
nous components but failed to display ribosomes
and the various nuclear and nucleolar substructures
(6, 10, 13, 14). Moreover, this fixative cannot
be used for the preservation of cells for enzyme
cytochemistry.

Previous observations on 7.5-µm sections of
mammalian tissues prepared for enzyme cyto-
chemistry, frozen on a drop of fixative and imme-
diately afterwards immersed in the fixative, re-
vealed a normal ultrastructure in the cells cut
All figures are from cells in stationary phase unless indicated.

**Figure 1** Survey picture of two cells, cut through the cytoplasm during freeze-sectioning. cw, Cell wall; pl, plasmalemma; n, nucleus, s, serum matrix. The arrows point to cytoplasmic membrane fragments. 2% glutaraldehyde, 15 min, followed by 1% OsO₄, 30 min. × 31,155.

**Figure 2** This micrograph shows the difference in organelle visualization in a cross-sectioned cell (left) and a nonintersected cell (right). Plasmalemma (pl), mitochondria (m), vesicles (v), and abundant ribosomes (r) are noted in the cell on the left side whereas substructures are barely seen in the right cell. 2% glutaraldehyde, 15 min, followed by 1% OsO₄, 30 min. × 29,128.

**Figure 3** Portion of the cell periphery. The different layers of the cell wall (cw) and irregular protrusions of the plasmalemma (pl) are seen. Chang's fixative, 30 min. × 98,208.
**Figure 4** A budding cell showing abundant ribosomes, a mitochondrion (m) with central constriction containing small clusters of ribosomes, some vesicles (v), and a nucleus (n) with a prominent nucleolus (nu) composed of granular and agranular electron-dense structures. 1% OsO₄, 30 min. × 44,640.

**Figure 5** A cell in the growth phase. The electron opacity of the cell cytoplasm is due to the densely packed ribosomes. The irregularly shaped mitochondria (m) possess only few cristae. Vesicular (v) and membranous (ms) structures are present in a moderate amount. Note the extended nucleolar mass (nu) in the nucleus. 2% glutaraldehyde, 15 min, followed by 1% OsO₄, 30 min. × 29,574.
**Figure 6** The nucleus \((n)\) is partly surrounded by a large vacuole \((v)\) containing only a few vesicular structures \((v')\). Protrusion of a cytoplasmic vesicle into the vacuole is indicated as \(v'\). The arrows point to areas of close contact between the vacuolar membrane and the plasmalemmal invaginations. 1% OsO\(_4\), 30 min. \(\times 38,688\).

**Figure 7** Detailed appearance of the vacuolar apparatus presenting a dilated part with a vesicular and agranular content and a collapsed part (arrow). A portion of the nucleus \((n)\) limited by a discontinuous double membrane and a single membrane-limited body \((b)\) are seen. Chang’s fixative, 30 min. \(\times 52,499\).
FIGURE 8 Detailed appearance of a few intracytoplasmic inclusions such as mitochondria with multiple cristae and a few ribosomal clusters, short strands of smooth membranes (sm), two ovoid-shaped bodies limited by a single membrane and presenting a dense core (b), and a lipid-like droplet (l). Note the large, somewhat dilated protrusions of the plasma membrane (pl) into the cytoplasm. 1% OsO₄, 30 min. × 70,122.
through the cytoplasm without an apparent change in organelle preservation.

In this study we tried to adapt this procedure to a solidified pellet of *C. albicans*, allowing by this procedure the free entrance of fixatives into the cell cytoplasm.

The application of the fixatives for short periods preserved adequately the 7.5-µm thick sections. Prolongation of fixation up to 24 h in either procedure did not alter the final preservation, although the subcellular organelles appeared slightly denser.

As far as the degree of preservation of subcellular organelles obtained with this procedure is concerned, the results are quite comparable to those for *C. neoformans* (2, 9). With this yeast there is apparently no major problem of permeation of chemical fixatives, since all cytoplasmic organelles were nicely demonstrated without the aid of freeze-sectioning.

Some of the cytoplasmic substructures of *C. albicans*, although clearly visible, remained difficult to interpret in terms of their nature and origin. The ovoid or round bodies limited by a single membrane could represent lysosomal structures, as reported by Günther et al. (12) in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, and by Montes et al. (13) in *C. albicans*, or microbody-like particles as found by Avers and Federman (5) in *S. cerevisiae*. Whether the short membrane fragments found in variable amounts from one cell to another are strands of smooth endoplasmic reticulum, or represent, in fact, flattened sacs of the vacuolar apparatus remains an unanswered question already posed by Agar and Douglas for *S. cerevisiae* (1).

The possible intermembranous connections between the plasmalemmal protrusions and the vacuolar membranes are difficult to elucidate by morphologic observation.

It is our aim to explore further the usefulness of this preparation procedure in the field of cytochemistry, in order to localize specific marker enzymes for the different cell organelles of *C. albicans*, and thereby to characterize more definitely the nature of these structures and the possible membranous interrelationships.

SUMMARY

The application of conventional fixatives for the visualization of the ultrastructure of *Candida albicans* has been described. The problem of inadequate permeation of chemical fixatives was solved by sectioning solidified pellets of the yeast in the presence of the fixative, a procedure that yields fairly well-preserved subcellular structures.

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Professor P. Drochmans for his valuable criticism during the course of this study. They are indebted to Mr. Van Cutsem for the preparation of the media and to Miss C. Van den Broeck and Mr. L. Leyssen for skilful technical assistance.

Received for publication 27 November 1973, and in revised form 25 March 1974.

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