

Development and collapse of a *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* red tide in the Seto Inland Sea

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ABSTRACT: A red tide due to *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* (Dinophyceae) occurred at Harima-nada, the Seto Inland Sea (Japan), in summer 1995. Throughout the development and collapse of the red tide, abundance of *G. mikimotoi* and its potential predators (heterotrophic dinoflagellates and ciliates) was monitored daily together with environmental variables. While a nitrate and phosphate cline was present at around 15 m, *G. mikimotoi* concentrations increased rapidly for about a week in the subsurface layer (5 to 15 m). Then the population suddenly accumulated at the surface layer in the daytime and formed a red tide (ca 3×10^3 ml⁻¹). Following the red tide formation, the abundance of naked heterotrophic dinoflagellates (h-dinos) started to increase. Subsequently, the abundance of the tintinnid ciliate *Favella ehrenbergii* increased (ca 10 ml⁻¹) and apparently consumed *G. mikimotoi* and h-dinos completely within a few days. On the basis of these results, the ecological differences between *G. mikimotoi* and *Chattonella antiqua* (Raphidophyceae; another representative red tide forming species in the Seto Inland Sea) are discussed, as well as the importance of microzooplankton grazing for the collapse of red tides.

KEY WORDS: Red tide · *Gymnodinium* · Microzooplankton · Ciliate · Tintinnid · Heterotrophic dinoflagellate

INTRODUCTION

Gymnodinium mikimotoi Miyake et Kominami ex Oda, conspecific with *G. nagasakiense* (Takayama & Matsuoka 1991), is a naked autotrophic dinoflagellate and is closely related to *Gyrodinium aureolum* (Hulburt) (Partensky et al. 1988). While *G. aureolum* blooms in the North Sea and in coastal waters around European countries, the United States and Argentina (e.g. Pingree et al. 1975, Jones et al. 1982, Chang & Carpenter 1985, Jiménez et al. 1992, Negri et al. 1992), *G. mikimotoi* forms severe red tides in the coastal waters around Japan and Korea during warm seasons (e.g. Iwasaki et al. 1990, Honjo 1994). Red tides by *G. mikimotoi* have killed farmed fish. For example, the damage reached 4.4 billion yen in a red tide which occurred in Kumano-nada, Japan, in 1984 (Honjo 1994).

In the last 3 decades, many ecological and physiological studies on *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* and *Gyro-*

dinium aureolum have been conducted (Honjo 1994 and references therein). However, to our knowledge, no previous studies have dealt with the population development and collapse of *G. mikimotoi* or *G. aureolum* on a daily basis together with the changes in environmental variables and potential predators. We present here the wax and wane of a *G. mikimotoi* red tide that occurred in the Seto Inland Sea in summer 1995, relative to the changes in environmental variables (e.g. temperature, salinity, nutrients) and microzooplankton (heterotrophic dinoflagellate and ciliate) populations. The main aim of the present study was to explain the outbreak mechanisms of *G. mikimotoi* red tide when the water was thermally stratified and to assess the roles of microzooplankton populations in the disappearance of the red tide.

METHODS

In summer 1995 (15 July to 8 August), a field survey was conducted at Stn B (34° 35' N, 134° 30' E, 21 m

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depth; see Nakamura et al. 1993) around the Ie-shima Islands in the Seto Inland Sea. Water temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen were monitored at 2.5 m intervals using a Surveyor II (Hydrolab Co.). Water samples for chemical analysis [NO_3^- , NO_2^- , NH_4^+ , PO_4^{3-} , $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$, chlorophyll *a* (chl *a*)] and *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* enumerations were taken at depths of 0, 5, 10, 15 and 19 m using a 10 l Van Dorn-type bottle. Samples for microzooplankton enumeration were taken at 0 and 10 m. Monitoring and sampling were conducted daily in the morning (06:20 to 07:00 h). Samples for nutrients (100 ml) and chl *a* (500 ml) were filtered through GF/F filters immediately after sampling, stored at -20°C , and analyzed after the completion of the field survey. Nutrients were analyzed with a Technicon Auto Analyzer II for PO_4^{3-} (Murphy & Riley 1962), NH_4^+ (Solórzano 1969), NO_2^- (Bandschneider & Robinson 1952), $\text{NO}_2^- + \text{NO}_3^-$ (Wood et al. 1967) and $\text{Si}(\text{OH})_4$ (Strickland & Parsons 1968). Chl *a* was measured fluorometrically (Yentsch & Menzel 1963).

Abundance of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* was measured by observing 1 ml intact samples in a Sedgewick-Rafter chamber under a microscope within 90 min after collection. Before enumeration, samples were vigorously mixed to slow down the movement of *G. mikimotoi* cells.

Samples (80 ml) for microzooplankton enumeration were fixed with glutaraldehyde (final conc. 1%), stored at 5°C for 1 h and stained with DAPI (final conc. $1 \mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$; Porter & Feig 1980). Then subsamples of 20 ml were concentrated onto $0.8 \mu\text{m}$ pore size black Nuclepore filters (25 mm \varnothing) under low ($<100 \text{ mm Hg}$) vacuum. The filters were observed with a Nikon epifluorescence microscope equipped with an Hg 100 W lamp and appropriate exciter/barrier filter sets for UV (330 to 380 nm) and blue (450 to 490 nm) excitation. The following plankton categories were enumerated for sizes of 20 to 40 μm and 40 to 200 μm in length: naked heterotrophic dinoflagellates (h-dinos), thecate h-dinos, the heterotrophic silicoflagellate *Ebria tripartita*, naked ciliates (excluding *Mesodinium rubrum*) and tintinnids. Autotrophic and heterotrophic cells were identified by the presence or absence of auto-fluorescent chloroplasts. Dinoflagellates were distinguished from other flagellates based upon morphology and structure of the nucleus and cell morphology (Verity et al. 1993). Ciliates were distinguished from other protozoa by shape, the presence of cilia and the presence of multiple dimorphic nuclei (Sherr et al. 1986). Microzooplankton populations were enumerated at $\times 200$ by observing 100 to 130 fields (970 μm \varnothing), and thus the detection limit was 0.2 ml^{-1} (volume of filtration = 20 ml, filtration area = 17 mm^2).

Cell sizes of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* and *Favella ehrenbergii* were measured ($n = 100$) in acid Lugol

fixed samples (2%) from 29 July (10 m) and 4 August (0 m), respectively, using an inverted microscope ($\times 200$).

RESULTS

Environmental conditions and development of the red tide

The weather was sunny and calm throughout the survey period except on 17 and 22 July, when some precipitation was recorded. The water was thermally stratified (Fig. 1) and salinity ranged between 30.3 and 33.0 ppt. As the development of anoxic bottom water has been suggested to play an important role in the development of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* red tides (Iizuka & Irie 1969, Iizuka 1972), it should be noted that dissolved oxygen at 20 m depth (1 m above the bottom) exceeded 4.0 ppm from 15 July to 5 August, with a minimum of 3.5 ppm on 8 August.

The abundance of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* averaged over the water column started to increase on 23 July, increased at a rate (0.63 d^{-1}) close to 1 doubling d^{-1} , reached a maximum of 380 ml^{-1} on 30 July, and then sharply decreased (Fig. 2A). From 23 to 30 July when *G. mikimotoi* concentrations increased, cells were most abundant between depths of 10 and 15 m in the morning (Fig. 2B). A dense accumulation of cells in the surface layer (red tide) was not observed until the afternoon of 29 July. From 30 July to 3 August, *G. mikimotoi* cells were most abundant at the surface in the morning.

Phytoplankton other than *Gymnodinium mikimotoi*.

From 15 to 17 July, *Skeletonema costatum* was dominant (not enumerated) throughout the water column. Then the abundance of *S. costatum* decreased and *Ceratium furca* and *Distephanus speculum* became abundant in the surface layer from 18 to 26 July (data

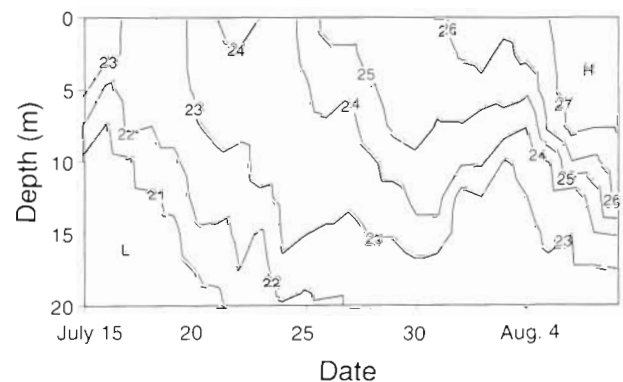


Fig. 1 Vertical and temporal changes in water temperature ($^\circ\text{C}$) at Stn B

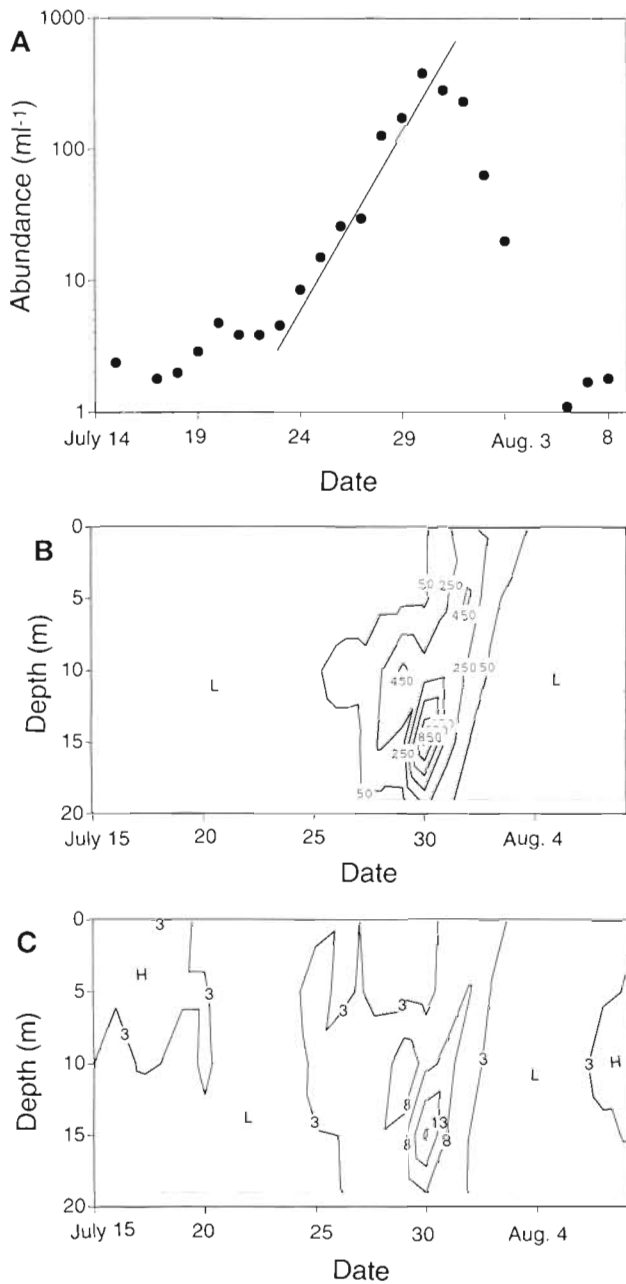


Fig. 2. Red tide formed by *Gymnodinium mikimotoi*. (A) Temporal changes in the abundance of *G. mikimotoi* (ml⁻¹) averaged over the water column; (B) vertical and temporal changes in the abundance of *G. mikimotoi* (ml⁻¹) and (C) chlorophyll a (µg l⁻¹). H: high; L: low

not shown). However, the phytoplankton was completely dominated by *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* at depths of 10 to 15 m from 26 to 30 July, throughout the water column from 31 July to 1 August, and at 0 to 10 m from 2 to 3 August. After the collapse of the *G. mikimotoi* red tide, *Chaetoceros* spp. became dominant. Chl a was within the range 0.6 and 18.9 µg l⁻¹ and the maximum was observed at 15 m on 30 July (Fig. 2C).

Nutrients. Coupled with the thermal stratification of the seawater, concentrations of nitrate and phosphate were generally low at depths of 0 to 5 m. Clines for these nutrients were present in the 10 to 15 m layer when the *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* population developed (Fig. 3A, B). The level of ammonium was usually around 1 µM (Fig. 3C), and a slight increase was observed just after the collapse of the red tide. Silicate was always higher than 13 µM throughout the water column until 4 August, and then decreased sharply to ca 3 µM at 0 to 10 m depth (data not shown) in accordance with the development of diatoms (see above).

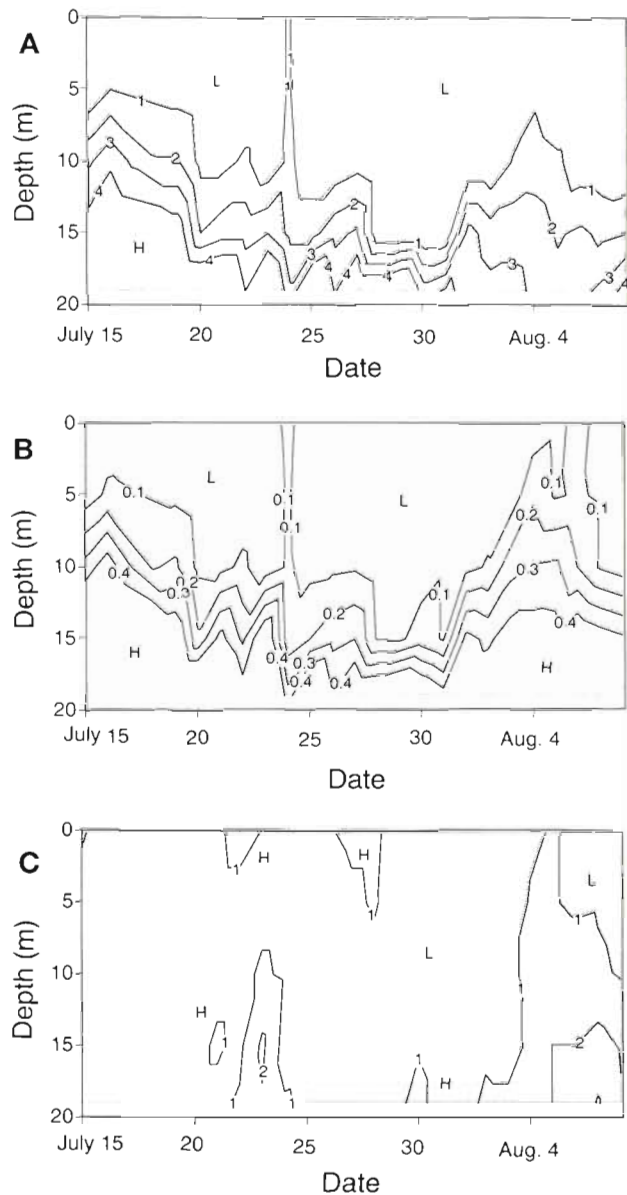


Fig. 3. Vertical and temporal changes in (A) nitrate (µM), (B) phosphate (µM), and (C) ammonium (µM). H: high; L: low

Microzooplankton

Heterotrophic dinoflagellates. Throughout the survey period, dominant species of naked h-dinos were *Gyrodinium dominans* and *G. spirale* for the 20 to 40 and >40 μm size classes, respectively, as confirmed by the observations of live samples. The abundance of naked h-dinos was relatively constant during the period of red tide development, started to increase on 30 July (the peak of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* abundance; cf. Fig. 2), reached a peak on 2 August, and then decreased sharply together with the collapse of the red tide (Fig. 4A, B). From 1 to 3 August, naked h-dinos that contained a large food vacuole (>10 μm) with red autofluorescence were often observed (not precisely enumerated, but accounting for some 10% of total naked h-dinos cells).

The abundance of thecate h-dinos was much lower than that of naked cells and no systematic trends were observed (data not shown).

Ciliates. Oligotrichs were numerically abundant among naked ciliate populations. Cone-shaped mixotrophic oligotrichs ca 40 μm and ca 90 μm in size were the dominant ciliates throughout the survey period and the smaller ciliates were more abundant. Although 2 peaks of naked ciliates were observed (20–24 July and 7–8 August), they did not respond to the outbreak of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* red tide (Fig. 4C). Throughout the red tide, naked ciliate cells with fluorescent red food vacuoles (>10 μm) were not observed.

In July, tintinnids were less abundant than naked ciliates, and cells with an oral lorica diameter of less than 30 μm were dominant. *Favella ehrenbergii* (ca 65 μm in oral lorica diameter; identified by Y. O. Kim) was first observed on 31 July and accounted for >95% of tintinnid ciliate cells ml^{-1} from 1 to 6 August. The abundance of tintinnids started to increase sharply on 31 July, reached a maximum on 3 August and then decreased (Fig. 4D). *F. ehrenbergii* was abundant at

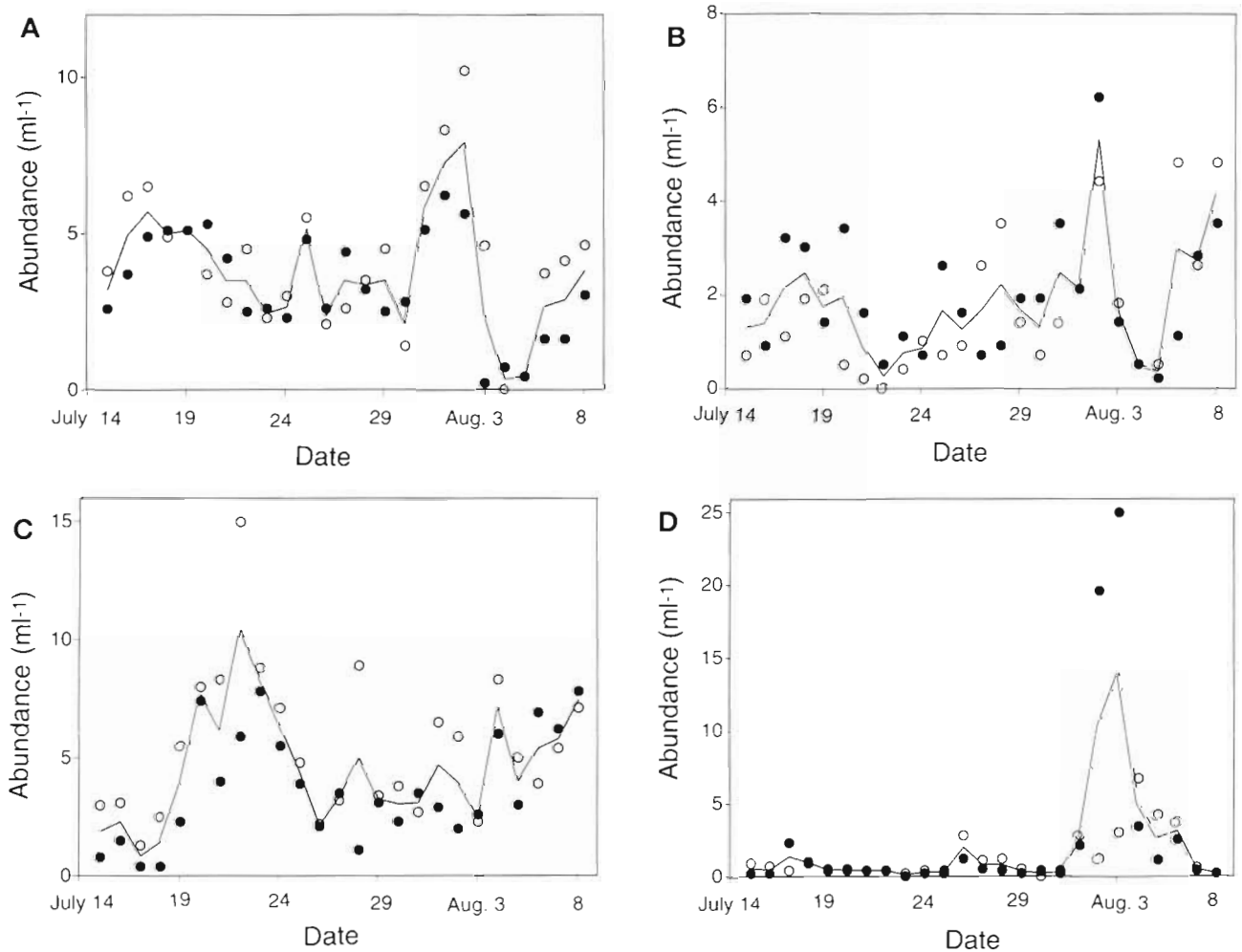


Fig. 4 Changes in the abundance (ml^{-1}) of (A) naked heterotrophic dinoflagellates with sizes of 20 to 40 μm , (B) naked heterotrophic dinoflagellates with sizes of 40 to 200 μm , (C) naked ciliates with sizes of 20 to 200 μm , and (D) tintinnids. (O) Values at 0 m; (●) values at 10 m; (—) averaged values between 2 depths

10 m in the morning but accumulated at the surface around noon (data not shown). From 31 July to 3 August most *F. ehrenbergii* cells were filled with food vacuoles apparently originating from *Gymnodinium mikimotoi*.

***Ebria tripartia*.** The abundance of the heterotrophic silicoflagellate *Ebria tripartia* (ca 35 μm) was high (2 to 4 ml^{-1}) from 16 to 20 July when a diatom *Skeletonema costatum* was abundant, and decreased to $<1 \text{ ml}^{-1}$ thereafter (data not shown). *Ebria* cells attached to *S. costatum* were often observed.

DISCUSSION

We have monitored the marine environment during summer around the Ie-shima Islands since 1985 and have encountered *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* red tides twice (1994 and 1995). Although studies of the red tide of 1994 provided information on its collapse due to microzooplankton grazing (Nakamura et al. 1995b), its sudden occurrence, due probably to advection, made it difficult to relate the population development with changes in chemical/physical variables. Thus, to our knowledge, the present data obtained in 1995 are the first to describe the development of a *G. mikimotoi* red tide together with changes in environmental variables and predators at short time intervals.

Population development

One feature of the red tide in 1995 was that *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* did not accumulate in the surface layer in the daytime during the bloom development period (Fig. 2), as was observed in the red tide that occurred in Gokasho Bay (Honjo et al. 1990). A dense accumulation of *Gyrodinium aureolum*, closely related to *G. mikimotoi*, at a pycnocline was also observed in the Kattegat, Denmark (Bjørnsen & Nielsen 1991). Since nutrient concentrations at and above 10 m were very low [e.g. $\text{NO}_3^- < 0.2 \mu\text{M}$ except 24 July (0 to 10 m) and 27 July (10 m); Fig. 3] during the period of bloom development (23 to 30 July; Fig. 2A), we infer that the ability of *G. mikimotoi* to remain in the subsurface layer makes it easier for the organism to reach the nutrient-sufficient layer at night: *G. mikimotoi* shows diurnal vertical migration at a speed of 1 to 2 m h^{-1} (Koizumi et al. 1996) and *G. aureolum* can take up nitrate at night (Paasche et al. 1984, Dixon & Holligan 1989). Thus it is reasonable to speculate that *G. mikimotoi* present at 10 m in the morning (Fig. 2B) ascends to 5 m (above the Secchi depth) around noon to photosynthesize actively, and then descends to ca 15 m at night (close to or below

the nutrient cline) and takes up nutrients for growth. However, this scenario is applicable only when *G. mikimotoi* can take up nutrients at night. Nutrient uptake and growth kinetics of this species as a function of nutrient concentration and light conditions deserve further study.

In the Seto Inland Sea, *Chattonella antiqua* (Raphidophyceae) is another representative organism that forms red tides in summer (Honjo 1994). This species can take up nutrients at night (Nakamura & Watanabe 1983) and accumulates in the surface layer during the day and at around 10 m at night (Nakamura et al. 1989). These characteristics enable *C. antiqua* to propagate when the nutrient cline is present above 10 m (Nakamura et al. 1989). In contrast, in years when the nutrient cline was deeper than 10 m, we have not observed red tides by this species around the Ie-shima Islands (Nakamura unpubl.). This was possibly because *C. antiqua* could not reach the nutrient-sufficient layer at night and could not take up sufficient nutrients for growth. Thus the ability of *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* to remain in the subsurface layer in the daytime and to migrate downward at night seems to give it an ecological advantage over *C. antiqua* when the nutrient cline is present at a depth below 10 m.

During the bloom development period, predators for *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* were restricted to naked h-dinos (cf. Nakamura et al. 1995a, b): *Favella ehrenbergii* were below the detection limit ($<0.2 \text{ ml}^{-1}$), naked ciliates with sizes of ca 40 μm or smaller cannot ingest *G. mikimotoi* (Nakamura et al. 1995b). Copepods (adult + copepodites) were minimal during the survey period ($<10 \text{ l}^{-1}$; K. Suzuki & J. Hiromi unpubl.) and furthermore some copepods reject *G. mikimotoi* as food (Uye & Takamatsu 1990). We calculated the grazing impact of h-dinos on *G. mikimotoi* during this period using an equation presented in a previous study (see Nakamura et al. 1995b). The calculated values indicated that h-dinos populations grazed ca 10% of the *G. mikimotoi* population per day. This suggests that h-dinos had a minor effect on the development of the red tide and is probably reflected in the fact that *G. mikimotoi* apparently grew at a rate (0.63 d^{-1}) close to the maximum growth rate (0.69 d^{-1} ; Iizuka & Mine 1983, Yamaguchi & Honjo 1990) obtained in laboratory cultures.

In the afternoon of 29 July, *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* accumulated in the surface layer and formed a red tide. The red tide occurred almost simultaneously (29 to 30 July) all around the Harima-nada (S. Nagai pers. comm.), suggesting that advection had a minor effect on the outbreak around the Ie-shima Islands. Although the physiological mechanisms responsible for the surface accumulation are still uncertain, escape from self-shading might be one explanation.

Collapse of the red tide

For the *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* red tide of 1994, evidence was presented suggesting that h-dinos, especially *Gyrodinium dominans* and *Gyrodinium spirale*, contributed significantly to its disappearance (Nakamura et al. 1995b). In contrast, in the red tide of 1995, we conclude that the tintinnid ciliate *Favella ehrenbergii* played a major role in the disappearance, based on the following considerations. First, the timing of the collapse of the red tide and the rapid increase in *F. ehrenbergii* abundance overlapped. Furthermore, if we assume that the population of *G. mikimotoi* at the peak [30 July; abundance = 380 ml^{-1} , equivalent spherical diameter (ESD) = $19 \mu\text{m}$] was all converted to that of *F. ehrenbergii* (ESD of the body = $49 \mu\text{m}$) with a gross growth efficiency of 0.4, the abundance of *F. ehrenbergii* would attain 10 ml^{-1} , close to the observed value (Fig. 4D). Second, *F. ehrenbergii* cells were filled with large food vacuoles ($>10 \mu\text{m}$) that fluoresced red when *G. mikimotoi* was abundant, whereas after the disappearance of the red tide, no such vacuoles were evident. Third, tintinnids can ingest particles up to 45% of the oral lorica diameter (Spitter 1973, Heinbokel 1978), and particles close to the maximum size are usually ingested at higher rates than smaller particles (Rassoulzadegan 1978, Stoecker et al. 1995). Thus *G. mikimotoi* ($28 \times 27 \times 9 \mu\text{m}$; ESD = $19 \mu\text{m}$) could be a suitable food item for *F. ehrenbergii* (oral diameter = ca $65 \mu\text{m}$). Fourth, the body volume specific clearance rate of tintinnids is ca $1 \times 10^5 \text{ h}^{-1}$ (Neuer & Cowles 1995), comparable to that of *G. dominans* (Nakamura et al. 1995a). Thus the clearance rate of *F. ehrenbergii* (body volume = $6.2 \times 10^4 \mu\text{m}^3$) is $6.2 \mu\text{l cell}^{-1} \text{ h}^{-1}$, sufficient to clear the *G. mikimotoi* population within a day if *Favella* abundance is 7 ml^{-1} or above (Fig. 4D). Although Hansen (1995) has pointed out that *F. ehrenbergii* cannot sustain its growth when fed *Gyrodinium aureolum* (closely related to *G. mikimotoi*), we conclude that *F. ehrenbergii* ingested *G. mikimotoi* actively, increased its abundance, and contributed to the disappearance of the red tide. Other studies have shown the importance of *Favella* sp. for controlling thecate dinoflagellates (Stoecker et al. 1984).

From 1 to 3 August, when *Favella ehrenbergii* concentrations increased along with the decline in *Gymnodinium mikimotoi* (Fig. 4D), the plankton community structure also changed drastically. The abundance of h-dinos decreased rapidly (Fig. 4A, B) and that of autotrophic and heterotrophic nanoflagellates decreased from 2.0×10^3 and $2.2 \times 10^3 \text{ ml}^{-1}$ to 0.7×10^3 and $0.4 \times 10^3 \text{ ml}^{-1}$, respectively (S. Suzuki unpubl). Although not conclusive, these changes seem to be due to ingestion by *F. ehrenbergii*. Furthermore, the abundance of heterotrophic bacteria and picocyanobacteria increased from 3.0×10^6 and 3.5×10^5 to 4.9×10^6 and $5.9 \times 10^5 \text{ ml}^{-1}$, respectively, probably due to the decrease of grazing pressure by heterotrophic nanoflagellates. Thus, *F. ehrenbergii* seemed to affect the nano/pico-sized plankton community structure directly or indirectly in our study area.

Our findings stress the ecological importance of *Favella ehrenbergii*. However, questions still remain. (1) Why did *F. ehrenbergii* not develop during the red tide of 1994 (Nakamura et al. 1995b)? Was the initial abundance of *F. ehrenbergii* too low? (2) Although the red tide of 1995 disappeared by 7 August in the central part of Harima-nada, why did it continue until mid August in the coastal area of Honshu and Shikoku without *F. ehrenbergii* (Nagai pers. comm.)? At present we do not have any clues that could allow us to answer these questions. However, future studies on changes in the life cycle of *F. ehrenbergii* (e.g. timing of excystment from the sediment) might help to explain these issues.

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