

## DOCTORAL THESIS

# Systematic Analysis of Embryonic Gap Phase Introduction through the Real-time Visualization of Cell Cycle Progression in Metazoan Embryos

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## Abstract

Early embryonic cell cycles usually progress with S and M phases without any gap phase. When and how the gap phases are developmentally introduced remains poorly defined. To systematically establish cell-specific introduction of gap phases throughout *Caenorhabditis elegans* embryogenesis, I first generated multiple transgenic strains expressing a single copy of fluorescent ubiquitin cell cycle indicators (FUCCIs) along with my colleagues. Functional and biochemical validations show expected degradation dynamics of the fluorescence reporters (indicators). Aided by time-lapse 3 dimensional live-cell imaging and automated lineage analysis, I next systematically evaluated developmental introduction of cell cycle gaps through profiling lineal accumulation of each reporter, which indicates that all embryonic terminal cells enter G1 or G0 phase. To increase the sensitivity of these FUCCIs in detecting G1 phase, I examined the G1 phase introduction with these reporters upon depletion of cyclin D or E that is required for progression of G1 to S phase. Remarkably, the accumulation dynamics revealed a G1 phase during the last two rounds of embryonic division in most cells. Intriguingly, the G1 progression involves lineage- and stage-specific use of the two cyclins. The cyclin D is only used in the asymmetric division of “AB” and “EMS” descendants when one of their daughters become terminal cell, suggesting a coupling between fate differentiation and cyclin use. Finally, I characterized G2 phase introduction with the FUCCIs through the depletion of Cdc25, which provides preliminary evidence of G2 phase introduction after initiation of robust zygotic transcription in early embryo. In summary, I developed a method for systematic monitoring of developmental introduction of gap phases with cellular resolution, and established G1 phase introduction in numerous cells before their last or second last round of embryonic division. The FUCCIs and the findings of gap phase introduction pave the way for further characterization of the relationship between gap phase introduction and fate differentiation during development.

## Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgement .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Tables.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Design and strain preparation of Worm-FUCCI.....</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Literature reviews .....	8
2.3 Material and methods.....	13
2.3.1 <i>Worm strains and maintenance</i> .....	13
2.3.2 <i>DNA constructs</i> .....	15
2.3.3 <i>Transgenesis</i> .....	16
2.4 Results.....	17
2.4.1 <i>Generation of Worm-FUCCIs</i> .....	17
2.5 Chapter summary .....	21
<b>Chapter 3 Expression and Validation of Worm-FUCCI .....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	22
3.2 Literature reviews .....	24
3.3 Material and methods.....	29
3.3.1 <i>Worm strains and maintenance</i> .....	29
3.3.2 <i>DNA constructs</i> .....	29

3.3.3	<i>Transgenesis</i> .....	30
3.3.4	<i>EdU incorporation and detection</i> .....	30
3.3.5	<i>RNAi</i> .....	31
3.3.6	<i>Fluorescence microscopy for embryo</i> .....	31
3.3.7	<i>Fluorescence microscopy for postembryonic stages</i> .....	32
3.3.8	<i>Time-lapse imaging of larvae</i> .....	33
3.3.9	<i>Automated lineaging and gene expression profiling</i> .....	33
3.4	<b>Results</b> .....	34
3.4.1	<i>Accumulation dynamics of Worm-FUCCI during embryonic development</i> .....	34
3.4.2	<i>Biochemical and functional validation of degradation dynamics of Worm-FUCCIs</i> .....	35
3.4.3	<i>Accumulation dynamics of Worm-FUCCI during postembryonic development</i> .....	42
3.5	<b>Chapter summary</b> .....	46
	<b>Chapter 4 Gap phase introduction during <i>C. elegans</i> embryogenesis</b> .....	<b>47</b>
4.1	<b>Introduction</b> .....	47
4.2	<b>Literature reviews</b> .....	49
4.3	<b>Material and methods</b> .....	54
4.3.1	<i>Worm strains and maintenance</i> .....	54
4.3.2	<i>RNAi</i> .....	54
4.3.3	<i>Fluorescence microscopy for embryo</i> .....	54
4.3.4	<i>Imaging and data analysis beyond time point when embryo starts twitching</i> .....	54
4.3.5	<i>Automated lineaging and gene expression profiling</i> .....	55
4.3.6	<i>Systematic Quantification and Comparison of Reporter Expressions</i>	55

4.4 Results.....	58
4.4.1 <i>A clear G0 or G1 phase in nearly all embryonic terminal cells</i> .....	58
4.4.2 <i>First introduction of G2 phase in intestine precursors</i> .....	62
4.4.3 <i>Introduction of both G1 and G2 phases in the last round division of the cells, “ABplapapaa” and “ABprapapaa”, that divided with an extended cell cycle length</i> .....	63
4.4.4 <i>Brief G1 phase revealed by depletion of cyclin D</i> .....	67
4.4.5 <i>Differential use of cyclin D or E for G1 phase progression in a lineage- and time-specific manner</i> .....	69
4.4.6 <i>Global introduction of brief G2 phase after the initiation of robust transcription revealed by the depletion of cdc-25.2</i> .....	86
4.5 Chapter summary .....	90
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion</b> .....	<b>92</b>
<b>Chapter 6 Summary and conclusion</b> .....	<b>99</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>101</b>
<b>List of References</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>Curriculum Vitae</b> .....	<b>120</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1. List of worm strains generated and/or used in this thesis. ....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Table 2. List of plasmids used in this thesis. ....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Table 3. Selection criteria prioritized for the examination of embryonic cells in 10 <i>cyd-1</i> RNAi embryos. ....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Table 4. List of cells with cell cycle arrest and expected accumulation of G1 Worm-FUCCI reporters after <i>cyd-1</i> RNAi.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Table 5. List of cells without cell cycle arrest and no expected accumulation of G1 Worm-FUCCI reporters after <i>cyd-1</i> RNAi.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Table 6. List of cells in “AB”, “MS” and “E” sublineages with cell cycle arrest and expected accumulation of G1 Worm-FUCCI reporters after <i>cyd-1</i> RNAi.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Table 7. List of cells in "C", "D" and "P4" sublineages with cell cycle arrest and expected accumulation of G1 Worm-FUCCI reporters after <i>cyd-1</i> RNAi.....</b>	<b>78</b>

## List of Figures

<b>Fig. 1 Automated lineaging of <i>C. elegans</i> embryos. ....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Fig. 2 A lineage tree showing the invariant lineage of an early <i>C. elegans</i> embryo. .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Fig. 3 Cell cycle remodeling from an early embryonic cell to a somatic cell. ....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Fig. 4 Overview of Worm-FUCCI design. ....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Fig. 5 Schematics of embryonic cell cycles and the expected Worm-FUCCIs accumulation dynamics. ....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Fig. 6 Biochemical and functional validation of degradation of Worm-FUCCIs.</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Fig. 7 Validation of CDT-1<sup>D</sup> degradation by RNAi against <i>cdt-2</i>, another known component of CDT-1 degradation pathway.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Fig. 8 An overview of extended CYB-1 degron reporters design and expression. .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Fig. 9 Accumulation of Worm-FUCCIs in larvae. ....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Fig. 10 Accumulation dynamics of CDT-1<sup>D</sup> in the intestine cells “int2” (circled) and “int3” (squared) in developing L1 larvae. ....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Fig. 11 Expression dynamics of Worm-FUCCIs in representative cell lineages during <i>C. elegans</i> embryogenesis.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Fig. 12 Changes in the accumulation dynamics of Worm-FUCCIs are indicative of cell cycle exit. ....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Fig. 13 Cells “ABplapapaa” and “ABprapapaa” shown in the context of a complete cell lineage tree of <i>C. elegans</i> embryo. ....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Fig. 14 Cells “V5QL” (“ABplapapaa”) and “V5QR” (“ABprapapaa”) divide with a full cell cycle during <i>C. elegans</i> embryogenesis.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Fig. 15 Worm-FUCCIs accumulation during cell cycle progression of coelomocyte</b>	

precursor “MSppapaa”.....	68
<b>Fig. 16 Involvement of cyclin E (CYE-1) and/or D (CYD-1) in the G1 progression of “ABa” descendants.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Fig. 17 Involvement of cyclin E (CYE-1) and/or D (CYD-1) in the G1 progression of “ABp” descendants as in Fig. 15. ....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Fig. 18 Involvement of cyclin E (CYE-1) and/or D (CYD-1) in the G1 progression of “P1” descendants.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Fig. 19 Lineage- and time-specific use of cyclin D and E for G1 progression. ....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>Fig. 20 Use of cyclin D for G1 progression is predictive of terminal embryonic division.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Fig. 21 Globe use of CDC-25.2 for G2 progression.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Fig. 22 Progressive gap phase introduction after the initiation of robust transcription.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Fig. 23 A schematic diagram to summarize the gap phase introduction in the <i>C. elegans</i> embryos.....</b>	<b>100</b>



**Appx. 1 Lineal accumulation dynamics of mCherry::CDT-1\_PIP-box (CDT-1<sup>D</sup>) from four-cell to comma stage of a *C. elegans* embryo. Cell deaths are indicated with a “×”.....101**

**Appx. 2 Lineal accumulation dynamics of mCherry::CYB-1\_D-box (CYB-1<sup>D</sup>) from four-cell to comma stage of a *C. elegans* embryo. Cell deaths are indicated with a “×”.....102**

**Appx. 4 A movie showing the accumulation of Worm-FUCCI (CDT-1<sup>D</sup>, CYB-1<sup>DG</sup>) in a rotating embryo. ....104**

**Appx. 5 A movie showing the accumulation dynamics of the Worm-FUCCI (CDT-1<sup>D</sup>, CYB-1<sup>DG</sup>) from comma stage to two-fold stage in an embryo perturbed by RNAi against *pat-3*.....105**