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Title	The SKINT1-like Gene Is Inactivated in Hominoids But Not in All Primate Species : Implications for the Origin of Dendritic Epidermal T Cells [an abstract of entire text]
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Description	この博士論文全文の閲覧方法については、以下のサイトをご参照ください。 配架番号 : 2174 https://www.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/dissertations/copy-guides/
Degree Grantor	北海道大学
Degree Name	博士(医学)
Dissertation Number	甲第11692号
Issue Date	2015-03-25
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/58749
Type	doctoral thesis
File Information	Rania_Hassan_Mohamed_Hassan_summary.pdf



学 位 論 文 (要 約)

The *SKINT1*-like Gene Is Inactivated in Hominoids But
Not in All Primate Species: Implications for the Origin of
Dendritic Epidermal T Cells

(ヒト及び類人猿で不活化している SKINT1 様
遺伝子の旧世界ザルでの機能残存と樹状表皮
T 細胞の由来に関する検討)

2015 年 3 月

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List of Publications and Presentations at Academic Seminars

1. Publications:

- 1) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Yoichi Sutoh, Yasushi Itoh, Noriyuki Otsuka, Yukiko Miyatake, Kazumasa Ogasawara and Masanori Kasahara. The SKINT1-like gene is inactivated in hominoids but not in all primate species: Implications for the origin of dendritic epidermal T cells. *PLoS One*, in press.
- 2) Shigeru Yoshida, Rania Hassan Mohamed, Mizuho Kajikawa, Jun Koizumi, Minami Tanaka, Kazunori Fugo, Noriyuki Otsuka, Katsumi Maenaka, Hideo Yagita, Hitoshi Chiba and Masanori Kasahara. Involvement of an NKG2D ligand H60c in epidermal dendritic T cell-mediated wound repair. *J. Immunol* **188**, 3972-3979 (2012).

2. Presentations at academic seminars

- 1) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Shigeru Yoshida, Jun Koizumi, Kazunori Fugo, Noriyuki Otsuka, Masanori Kasahara.. Blockade of interactions between NKG2D and an NKG2D ligand H60c delays wound healing. The 91st Hokkaido Medical Congress of Pathology Association. September 10, 2011, Asahikawa, Japan.
- 2) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Shigeru Yoshida, Jun Koizumi, Kazunori Fugo, Noriyuki Otsuka, Masanori Kasahara. Blockade of interactions between NKG2D and an NKG2D ligand H60c delays wound healing. The 2012 Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Immunology. December 5-7, 2012, Kobe, Japan.
- 3) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Yoichi Sutoh, Noriyuki Otsuka, Yukiko Miyatake and Masanori Kasahara. Inactivation of *Skint1* in hominoids but not in Old World monkeys. The 32nd Annual Meeting of the Japanese association for research on the Thymus. February 9, 2013, Sapporo, Japan.
- 4) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Yoichi Sutoh, Yasushi itoh, Noriyuki Otsuka, Yukiko Miyatake, Kazumasa Ogasawara and Masanori Kasahara. Inactivation of SKINT1L in hominoids but not in Old World monkeys. The 2013 Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society of Immunology. December 11-13, 2013, Chiba, Japan.
- 5) Rania Hassan Mohamed, Yoichi Sutoh, Yasushi itoh, Noriyuki Otsuka, Yukiko Miyatake, Kazumasa Ogasawara and Masanori Kasahara. The SKINT1-like gene is inactivated in hominoids but not in Old World monkeys. The 23rd Annual Meeting of the Japanese Society for Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics. September 13-15, 2014, Nagasaki, Japan.

Introduction

$\gamma\delta$ T lymphocytes along with $\alpha\beta$ T lymphocytes act co-operatively in all vertebrate species to induce the protective immune reactions against various antigens from the inside and outside the body¹. $\gamma\delta$ T cells constitute a small proportion in blood, but they are spreading more widely within the epithelial tissue such as skin, intestine and reproductive organs. $\gamma\delta$ T cells develop in the thymus ahead of $\alpha\beta$ T cells in most species, suggesting their unique contribution in the immune system. Their development and selection mechanisms are not yet well defined as $\alpha\beta$ T cells, although they originate from a common thymic progenitor². $\gamma\delta$ T cells are characterized by the expression of heterodimeric $\gamma\delta$ T cell receptor (TCR) in a tissue restricted pattern^{1,2}, that is formed by recombination of the sequence elements; variable (V), diversity (D; for δ chains) and junctional (J) forming γ and δ loci responsible for the TCR diversity. This expression pattern is extensively defined in mice and humans, but in contrary cows lack this highly restricted TCR expression pattern as a result of the presence of more V(D)J cassettes for the $\gamma\delta$ TCR rearrangement¹. The nomenclature of the $\gamma\delta$ TCR is designed according to the number of the $V\gamma$ and the $V\delta$ segment usage in the TCR rearrangement³. The restricted expression of $\gamma\delta$ TCR reflects the specificity of the antigen recognition repertoires in different tissues^{4,5}. $\gamma\delta$ T cells express both monoclonal and oligoclonal $\gamma\delta$ TCR, which is characterized by greater potential diversity because of their capacity to use multiple copies of D elements and the junctional diversity generated by the V(D)J recombination^{1,2}.

$\gamma\delta$ T cells antigen recognition manner differs from $\alpha\beta$ T cells, where $\alpha\beta$ T cells are limited to recognize the peptide antigens via the major histocompatibility complexes (MHC), $\gamma\delta$ T cells depend on the conformational shape of the intact protein and non-protein antigens for their recognition. $\gamma\delta$ T cells carry out various functions including the secretion of IFN- γ ⁶, induction of cytotoxicity against tumor cells^{7,8}, production of multiple growth factors contributing to the process of wound healing⁹ and antigen presentation¹⁰. Moreover, the localization of $\gamma\delta$ T cells in the epithelial tissue presented as interepithelial lymphocytes (IELs) supports the barrier function. The $\gamma\delta$ IELs maintain homeostasis of epithelial tissues through direct association with self antigens expressed by epithelial cells in an “activated-yet-resting” phenotype¹¹. $\gamma\delta$ T cells are

"innate like lymphocytes" representing a cross-talk between the adaptive and innate immunity. With the usage of monoclonal and oligoclonal receptors which act as antigen recognition pattern receptors, they recognize several antigens such as phosphoantigens, nonclassical MHC-molecules and unprocessed proteins. They also perform their immunological functions in reaction with the other adaptive immune cells^{12,13}. $\gamma\delta$ T cells respond to tissue stress like injuries, cancerous transformation or inflammation within hours, not only through the binding of $\gamma\delta$ TCRs and their yet unknown ligands, but also through other co-stimulators such as the engagement between the activating receptor; natural killer group 2 member D (NKG2D) and its ligand NKG2DL^{14,15}. $\gamma\delta$ T IEL function locally by binding to the self-antigens expressed in the residing epithelial tissue and systemically by their strong interaction with the lymphocyte network surrounding them¹⁶. These reactions are induced by chemokine production to attract B cells, direct interaction with the dendritic cells (DC) and antigen presentation to the $\alpha\beta$ T cells¹³ (Figure 1).

Many properties of $\gamma\delta$ T cells were elucidated by investigating the $\gamma\delta$ IELs residing in mouse skin known as dendritic epidermal T cells (DETCs)¹⁷. These cells were found to play a key role in epidermal homeostasis, skin tumor surveillance and wound repair mainly in the regulation by the epidermal stress ligands binding to their invariant $\gamma\delta$ TCR^{18,19}.

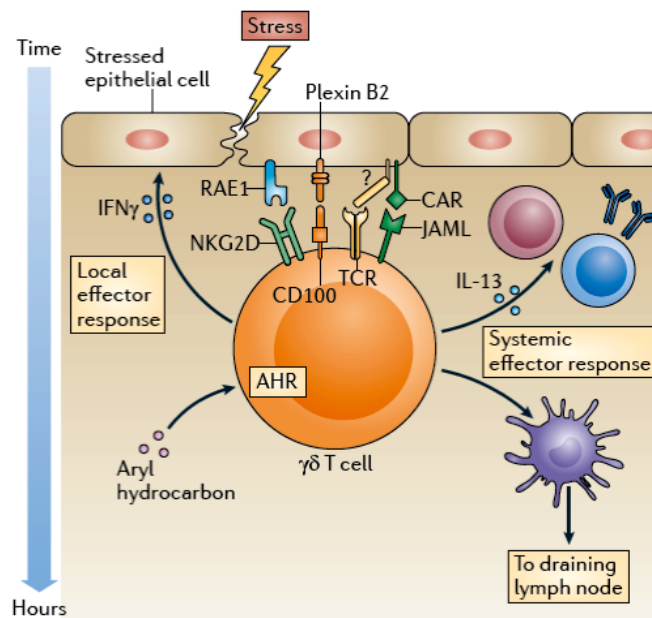


Figure 1: Mouse $\gamma\delta$ T cells lymphoid stress-surveillance: AHR, aryl hydrocarbon receptor; CAR, coxsackievirus and adenovirus receptor; IFN γ , interferon- γ ; IL, interleukin; JAML,

junctional adhesion molecule-like; TCR, T cell receptor. This figure is taken from Vantourout et al., 2013. Nature.

Dendritic epidermal T cells (DETC):

DETCs are the specialized epidermal murine $\gamma\delta$ IEL expressing monomorphic V γ 5V δ 1 TCR and forming about 95% of epidermal T cell repertoire. The monomorphic DETC TCR binds to an unknown steady state ligand expressed by keratinocytes²⁰, in addition it recognizes a limited set of “stress antigens” induced on the surface of dysregulated skin epithelial cells. After DETCs respond to the epithelial cell changes, they come in a direct contact with Langerhans cells to contribute to the systemic immune response²¹⁻²³.

$\gamma\delta$ TCR-deficient (Tcrd^{-/-}) mice are susceptible to carcinogenesis, impaired wound healing and skin diseases^{24,25}, despite the presence of intraepithelial T lymphocytes expressing $\alpha\beta$ TCRs. Likewise, the human epidermal resident $\gamma\delta$ T cells contribute in the process of acute wound healing, although human epidermis is not identified to have equivalent skin $\gamma\delta$ IEL population of limited diversity²⁶. DETC is the first wave of $\gamma\delta$ T cells to be positively selected in the fetal thymus from embryonic day 14.5 to day 18.5 of gestation, then migrate to the suprabasal epidermis^{27,28}. It is believed that DETCs proliferate *in situ* and selectively expand after homing to the skin in response to the keratinocytes, which propose existing of a keratinocyte ligand recognizes the invariant DETC TCR and enhance their expansion²⁹.

Selection and development of DETC:

The development and the acquisition of the invariant TCR repertoire of DETC are mainly supported by thymic selection. Many studies addressed normal DETC development in mice expressing transgenic $\gamma\delta$ TCR suggesting the independence of DETC development on expression of V γ 5 or V δ 1²⁸. On the other hand, DETC maturation was found to be retained by specific antibody mediating V γ 5V δ 1 TCR ligation using fetal thymocyte cell suspension of the FVB mice strains (FVB/N-Tac) which is known to be deficient in the canonical mature DETC, this phenomenon is attributed to the lack of the thymic maturation as a result of the inactivation of selection and upkeep of intraepithelial T-cells protein 1 (Skint1). This strongly suggests the essential role of V γ 5V δ 1TCR-Skint1 interaction for selection and development of the invariant

DETC in mouse skin. Up to date there is no evidence available whether Skint1 directly or indirectly engages with DETC TCR.

***Skint1* gene**

Skint1 gene is the first identified natural component of the selection machinery for a specific IEL compartment. Skint1 is expressed exclusively in the thymic epithelium and keratinocytes at embryonic day 15 and continue to adulthood^{30,31}. Skint1 is a membrane immunoglobulin protein made up of eight modular exons coding for seven domains; a signal peptide (SP), immunoglobulin variable (IgV) domain, an Ig constant (IgC) domain, three transmembrane domains (TMD) and short cytoplasmic domain, each exon expresses one domain (Figure 2)³¹. *Skint1* gene duplicated in mice and gave multiple paralogs forming *Skint* gene family which is composed of 3 subfamilies (*Skint1-6*), (*Skint7,8*) and (*Skint9-11*)^{32,33}.

It is found that in FVB/N-Tac mice, epidermis harbors T cells expressing diverse $\gamma\delta$ TCR in a comparable number to the authentic DETC in the other mouse strains. Moreover, the $\gamma\delta$ and $\alpha\beta$ T cell repertoires maturation in the other organs appear to be normal, which indicates the exclusive effect of *Skint1* gene to DETC without any impact on the rest of lymphocytic repertoires³⁴. *Skint1* gene is necessary for the functional programming of DETC to be either IFN- γ or IL-17 secreting cells, this is determined in the DETC ontogeny depending on the strength of the Skint1 signal which enhances the downstream pathway to produce those cytokines³⁵.

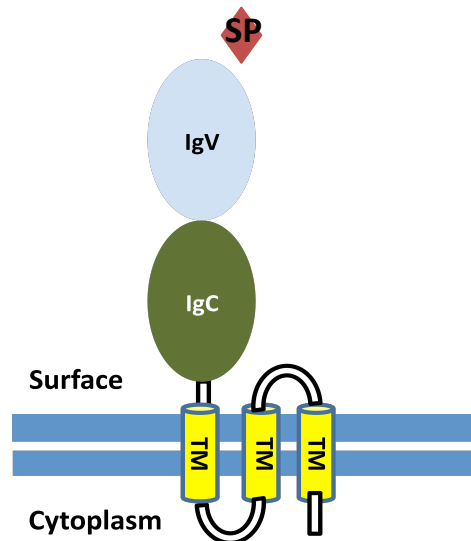


Figure 2: Mouse Skint1

Skint1 gene evolution:

Skint1 gene has been known to be highly evolved from rodents to humans. Rat and cow *Skint1* have identical organization and protein topology to mice *Skint1*. Previous work revealed that humans and chimpanzee have inactive *Skint1* gene with multiple in-frame premature termination codons³¹. Consistent with this, human epidermis lacks the comparable number of the conservative population of $\gamma\delta$ T cells found in mice³⁶⁻³⁸. Previous studies reported that *Skint1* gene duplicated in mice, but this duplication was lost within the primate lineage^{31,32}. All these previous observations we mentioned above suggested that *Skint1* underwent multiple evolutionary events, though the information available about the evolution of *Skint1* in mammals remained limited. This led us to determine at which stage in the mammalian phylogeny *Skint1* lost its function and concomitantly the invariant DETCs were lost.

In the present study, for the sake of consistency in nomenclature of the *Skint* family genes, we called *Skint1* gene of all mammalian species other than mice *SKINTIL*, we took an evolutionary approach to analyze *SKINTIL* sequences in the representative mammalian species. The bioinformatics analysis of primate *SKINTIL* sequences revealed that the inactivation of *SKINTIL* took place in the hominoid lineage and that Old World monkeys (OWM) such as olive baboons, green monkeys, cynomolgus macaques and rhesus macaques retain intact *SKINTIL* genes. As a representative of OWM, the cynomolgus macaques were chosen and we found that their epidermis contained skin-resident $\gamma\delta$ T cells expressing an invariant TCR. Comprehensive analysis of available mammalian genome sequences indicated that *SKINTL* family members emerged in an ancestor of placental mammals, but *SKINTIL* was inactivated or lost multiple times in mammalian evolution, suggesting that DETCs expressing an invariant TCR were lost in many mammalian orders.

Abbreviations List

Ab	Antibody
C γ	TCR γ chain constant segment
Der	Dermis
Epi	Epidermis
IgC	Immunoglobulin constant domain
IL	Interleukin
IgV	Immunoglobulin variable domain
J γ	TCR γ chain joining segment
mg, ml	milligram, milliliter
MHC	Major histocompatibility complex
NKG2D(L)	Natural killer group 2 member D (ligand)
NWM	New World Monkey
OMW	Old World Monkeys
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
RACE	Rapid amplification of cDNA ends
RT	Reverse transcriptase
RPMI	Endothelial cell Basal Medium
SKINT	Selection and upkeep of intraepithelial T-cells protein
Tac	Taconic
TCR	T cell receptor

Th22	T helper 22
TMD	Transmembrane domain
V γ	TCR γ chain variable segment
V δ	TCR δ chain variable segment
$\gamma\delta$ T cells	Gamma delta T cells

Materials and Methods

Animal samples

Tissue samples were obtained from cynomolgus macaques also known as crab-eating macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) maintained at Shiga University of Medical Science. Skin tissues were excised from the back or palm of adult macaques after euthanasia. All organ samples were obtained from adult female macaques except for the thymus that was biopsied from a 100-day-old male embryo. All animal experiments were conducted according to the Guidelines for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals at Shiga University of Medical Science and Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine.

Database analyses

Ensembl and NCBI databases were searched using human SKINT1L nucleotide (NR_026749.2) and mouse SKINT1 protein (NP_001096132.1) sequences as queries. Non-human primate species subjected to analysis were bushbaby (*Otolemur garnettii*), chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*), common baboon (*Papio hamadryas*), cynomolgus macaque, gibbon (*Nomascus leucogenys*), gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*), green monkey (*Chlorocebus sabaeus*), marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*), mouse lemur (*Microcebus murinus*), olive baboon (*Papio anubis*), orangutan (*Pongo abelii*), rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*), squirrel monkey (*Saimiri boliviensis*), tarsier (*Tarsius syrichta*). Protein domains were predicted using the SMART server (http://smart.embl-heidelberg.de/smart/set_mode.cgi). Signal peptides were predicted using the SignalP 4.1 Server (<http://www.cbs.dtu.dk/services/SignalP/>).

Phylogenetic analysis

Amino acid sequences were aligned using the Clustal Omega program³⁹ with default parameters. The tree was constructed using the neighbor-joining algorithm implemented in the MEGA version 6.0 software⁴⁰. The distance matrix was obtained by calculating p-distances for

all pairs of sequences. Gaps were excluded using the pairwise-deletion option. The reliability of branching patterns was assessed by bootstrap analysis (1,000 replications).

Isolation of cDNAs coding for cynomolgus macaque SKINT1L and expression analysis of cynomolgus macaque *SKINT1L* and TCR V γ /V δ gene segments

After RNA extraction from cynomolgus macaque organs including thymus, kidney, heart, liver, lung, bladder, uterus, skin and epidermal lymphocytes using the RNeasy mini Kit (Qiagen GmbH, Hilden, Germany), following the instructions of the manufacturer, the purified RNA was then treated with RNase free-DNase (Invitrogen, Camarillo, CA) and converted to cDNA using SuperScript III RT polymerase (Invitrogen). For isolation of *SKINT1L*, cDNA was amplified from skin by 3'-rapid amplification of cDNA ends (RACE) using high fidelity polymerase chain reaction (PCR) polymerase KOD -Plus- (Toyobo, Osaka, Japan). The sequences of gene-specific primers, which were designed based on the genomic sequences retrieved from the NCBI database, were 5'-TTTGGTGTACCTGGCTCAA-3' for the first round of PCR and 5'-TGGGACCATCTAGTTGCAGGAA-3' for nested PCR. PCR products were cloned into the pGEM-T easy vector (Promega, Madison, WI), and multiple clones were sequenced using an automated sequencer. The cDNA from epidermal lymphocytes was used as a template to amplify cynomolgus macaque TCR V γ /V δ gene segments. Specific primers for each segment were used for amplification. Primers are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Primers used for analyzing V γ /V δ gene usage*

Primer	Sequence
C γ reverse	5'-TGACTTTTCTGGCACCGTTA-3'
V γ 1 forward	5'-AGCACAAGGAAGAGCTGGAAT-3'
V γ 2 forward	5'- ATACACGCAAGGTGGAGT -3'
V γ 3 forward	5'-TTGTTGGGTGGCACCTGAGT-3'
V γ 2/4 forward	5'-GATAGTTATGGAAGCACAAGGAACA-3'
V γ 9 forward	5'-CCTGCAGACATGCTGTCACT-3'
V γ 10 forward	5'-ATTGCCTTCTCGTCCTTCT-3'
V δ 1 forward	5'-GTGGCCCAGAAGGTTACTCA-3'
V δ 1 reverse	5'-GGAGCTAGCTGCTTTCTGGA-3'
V δ 2 forward	5'-CTGTTGAGTTGGTGCCTGAA-3'
V δ 2 reverse	5'-CACCTTGGAAATTGTCCTTGA-3'
V δ 3 forward	5'-TTTCTACAGGGCAATGCTGT-3'
V δ 3 reverse	5'-GCTTCACAGAAAACCGTCCT-3'
Forward primer around the intronic sequence	5'-CAGATACTTTGTTGTTATGAATCTCCT-3'
Reverse primer around the intronic sequence	5'ACCCAGTGCAGCCAAGACT-3'

* V γ gene usage was evaluated using V γ /C γ primer pairs whereas V δ gene usage was evaluated using pairs of primers designed within the V δ gene segments.

Immunohistochemistry

To detect crab eating macaque skin gamma delta T cell population, skin tissues were harvested and either embedded in paraffin after formalin fixation. 4 μ m-thick paraffin sections were reacted with mouse anti-human TCR C γ M1 monoclonal antibody (Ab) (γ 3.20; Thermo Scientific, Waltham, MA) or (5A6.E91; Thermo Scientific, Waltham, MA) using an automatic stainer and visualized with 3,3'-diaminobenzidine. The sections were then counterstained with hematoxylin. For detecting CD3⁺ cells, rabbit anti-human CD3 polyclonal Ab (A0452; Dako, Glostrup, Denmark) was added for 1 h followed by incubation with Alexa Fluor 594-conjugated goat secondary Ab for 30 min at room temperature. The tissue sections were washed in PBS/T20 (0.05 %) and then mounted with VECTASHIELD mounting medium (Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA). For double staining, the sections were stained first with mouse anti-human TCR C γ M1 monoclonal Ab. After counterstaining and blocking with 10⁻² goat serum for 1 h, they were stained with rabbit anti-human CD3 polyclonal Ab, and then mounted with VECTASHIELD mounting medium. Cynomolgus macaque skin serial sections were analyzed and Epidermal CD3⁺ $\gamma\delta$ ⁺ T cells were counted and their number was calculated per mm basement membrane using the ImageJ software (version 1.46r)⁴¹. The percentage of $\gamma\delta$ TCR⁺ cells in CD3⁺ cells was scored in triplicate for each animal, and the data obtained from three animals were combined for statistical analysis.

Isolation of epidermal lymphocytes from cynomolgus macaque skin

To examine the gamma delta TCR expression in crab eating monkey epidermis, the epidermal lymphocytes were isolated as described⁴² with some modifications. Briefly, subcutaneous fat was removed from macaque skin tissues with a razor blade. They were then cut into strips, and the epidermis was separated and digested using 10 ml of RPMI 1640 containing 1 mg/ml of collagenase and 1mg/ml of dispase II overnight at 37°C. Epidermal cell suspensions were filtered through a 70- μ m pore nylon mesh (BD Biosciences) and centrifuged (300 g) for 20 min at 4°C and then enriched for lymphocytes using Ficoll-Paque gradient medium. After

washing several times with PBS, cells were immediately frozen using liquid nitrogen for subsequent RNA extraction.

Results

***SKINT1L* is inactivated in hominoids but is apparently functional in OWMs**

Although it's been detected and highly duplicated within rodents, it has been reported that *SKINT1L* ortholog is pseudogenized by multiple stop codons within the human lineage^{31,32}. To verify the existence and the status of *SKINT1L* within the primate lineages, we undertook an extensive search using the human *SKINT1L* protein as a query to recognize its orthologs in primate species ranging from prosimians to hominoids. This analysis, which involved human and 15 non-human primate species for which genome information is available, showed that despite the inactivation of *SKINT1L* within the human lineage, great apes (chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans) and lesser apes (gibbons), it is structurally active in Old World Monkeys (OWM) such as olive baboons, green monkeys, cynomolgus macaques and rhesus macaques which have apparently intact *SKINT1L* sequences lacking the common stop codon located at the ninth residue of the IgV domain of apes. This stop codon was shared by all the hominoid sequences, suggesting that this mutation was responsible for the initial inactivation of the hominoid *SKINT1L* gene. Two mutations, one located between TMD1 and TMD2, and another located downstream of TMD2 leading to the elimination of TMD3, were shared by humans and great apes, but not by gibbons, suggesting that these mutations occurred in a common ancestor of humans and great apes. Prosimians such as bushbabies also have apparently intact *SKINT1L* sequences.

Furthermore, in contrast to humans and great apes, the *SKINT1L* molecules of OWMs and prosimians have three TMDs similar to rodent *SKINT1* molecules (Figure 3). Therefore, we conclude that the stop codon at the ninth residue of the IgV domain shared by all the hominoid species took place in a common hominoid ancestor after its separation from OWMs. Interestingly, we could not identify *SKINT1L* sequences in the genome sequences of common baboons, marmosets, squirrel monkeys or mouse lemurs. It is possible that we failed to identify *SKINT1L*

sequences in squirrel monkeys or mouse lemurs because their genomes have been sequenced only to low coverage.

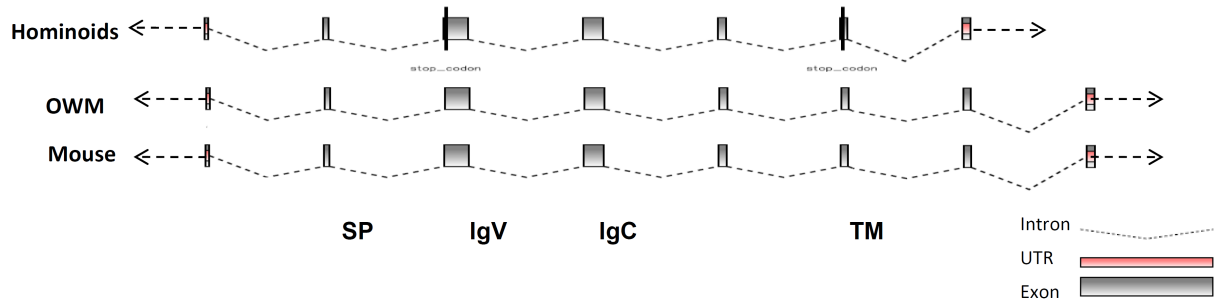


Figure 3: The exon-intron organization of hominoid *SKINTIL* was compared to that of mouse *Skint1* and OWM *SKINTIL*. Exon-intron boundaries were predicted based on the consensus splice junction sequences and similarity of the deduced amino acid sequences to the mouse SKINT1 protein sequence.

Cynomolgus macaques *SKINTIL* expression and it's splicing variants:

To confirm the structure of OWM *SKINTIL*, we chose cynomolgus macaques as a representative of OWMs and two specific oligonucleotides complementary to 5' UTR of the predicted sequence of crab eating macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) *SKINTIL* were used for its isolation from the skin tissue, then the whole sequence of *SKINTIL* was obtained by 3' RACE using skin cDNA as a template (accession number: AB974689). Cloning and sequence analysis revealed that, consistent with the predicted sequence by bioinformatics analysis, the crab eating macaque *SKINTIL* is structurally intact. Using the TMHMM program, we confirmed that it has exon-intron organization essentially identical to that of mouse and bovine *SKINTIL* genes. Macaque SKINT1L has seven exons encoding protein out of eight exons for signal peptide (SP), Ig-like domains (IgV and IgC), 3 transmembrane domains (TMD) with an extracellular N terminus and a short cytoplasmic C terminus. The alignment of Macaque *SKINTIL* mRNA shows a 77% (57% amino acids) and 93% (86% amino acids) match with mouse and human *SKINTIL* genes respectively over their entire length, with a comparable exon size between the three species. Regions with the greatest similarity are present within the predicted open reading frame of Ig-like

domains and those of less similarity lie between the predicted UTR's and TMD The cynomolgus macaque genome contains only a single copy of the *SKINT1L* gene. Furthermore, *SKINT1L* is showed a robust expression only in the thymus and skin, suggesting that it is the functional counterpart of mouse Skint1.

Sequence analysis of macaque *SKINT1L* transcripts revealed that the *SKINT1L* gene undergoes alternative splicing; besides the major transcript, we detected two splicing variants (Figure 4): one variant encodes SKINT1L molecules with only two TMRs, expressed at a very low level compared with the major transcript, and another variant produces transcripts that cannot encode functional SKINT1L protein because of insertion mutation. Sequences of both splicing variants are shown in (Figure 5A).

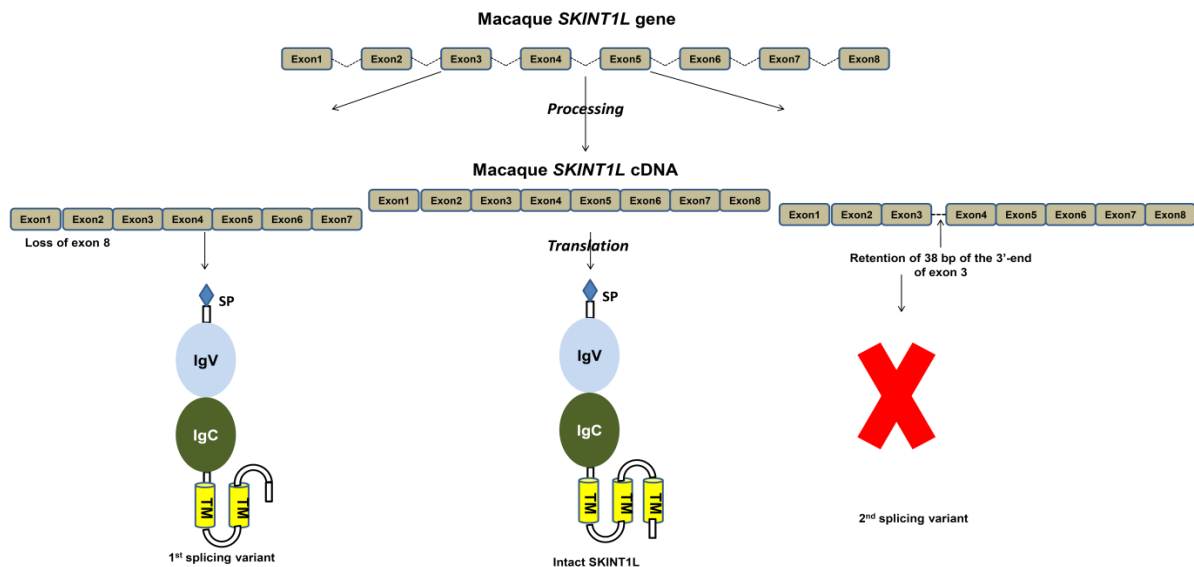


Figure 4: Schematic diagram for Crab eating macaque *SKINT1L* gene splicing variants

The second splicing variant is unfunctional due to the formation of cryptic splicing site at 38 base pairs immediately downstream of the original splice donor site in intron 3 which prevents this intronic sequence to be spliced out between exon 3 and exon 4. This insertion mutation makes a frame shift, which inactivates SKINT1L by omitting the SP (Figure 5A, B).

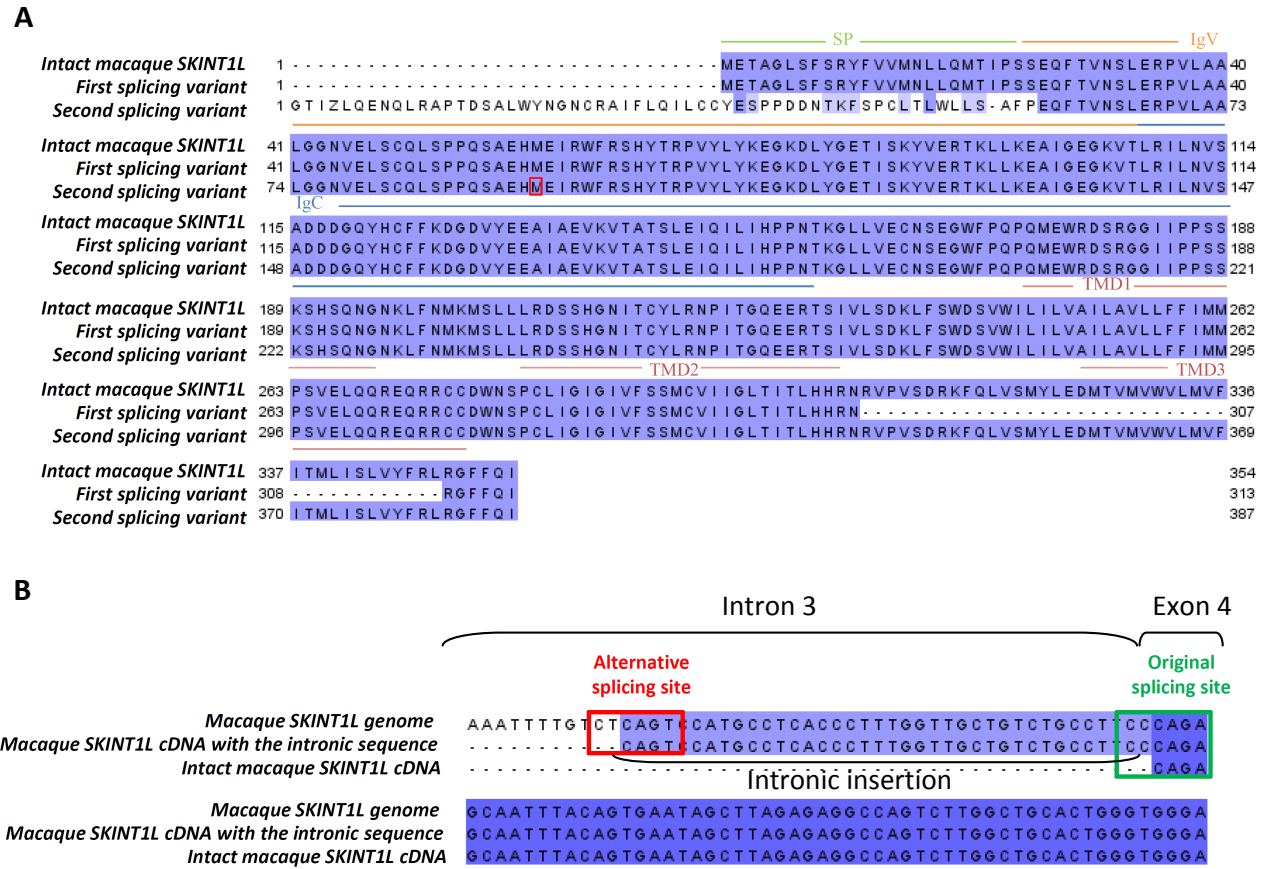


Figure 5: Sequence alignment of Cynomolgus macaque SKINT1L and its splicing variants.

(A) Amino acid alignment of SKINT1L protein sequences of all detected splicing forms were aligned using the Clustal Omega program. Strictly and highly conserved residues are indicated in dark blue and light blue, respectively. The location of predicted domains is indicated on top of the sequences. **(B)** The alternative splicing site of second splicing variant. The brackets show the intron-exon boundaries and the inserted intronic sequence length is 38 bp.

Because the inserted intronic sequence is very small, the size of this transcript using primers for the entire SKINT1L sequence is indistinguishable from that of the major transcript. To examine the expression level of the second splicing variant, we just amplified the inserted sequence using primers flanking it. We found that this variant is expressed in an individually different level (corresponding to a higher band in Figure 6).

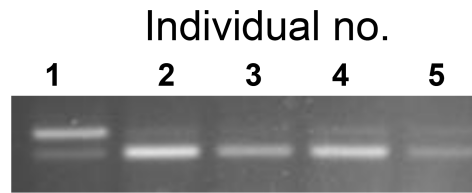


Figure 6: The *SKINT1L* second splicing variant expression: The *SKINT1L* second splicing variant expression in cynomolgus macaque skin was examined by reverse transcription PCR. Functional *SKINT1L* which doesn't have the intronic sequence is corresponding to the lower band and the unfunctional *SKINT1L*, containing the intronic sequence is represented in the upper band.

DETC-like cells in the cynomolgus macaque skin

It has been verified that *Skint1* is an essential component for development and homing of the canonical $\gamma\delta$ TCR dendritic epidermal T cells (DETC) to the mouse epidermis^{31,43}. To verify the functionality of cynomolgus macaque *SKINT1L*, we examined whether the resident T cell population of macaque skin contains invariant dendritic-shaped $\gamma\delta$ T cells. Paraffin sections of the macaque skin were immunohistochemically stained with an Ab for human CD3, and this revealed that macaque skin harbors a high population of CD3⁺ cells with a highly dendritic morphology. On average, 4.2 ± 0.85 CD3⁺ cells were detected per mm of the basement membrane. When judged by double staining, we examined this population of CD3⁺ T cells using two antibody clones for human $\gamma\delta$ TCR; clone 5A6.E91 which specifies for the human TCR- δ chain constant region and clone γ 3.20 which specifies for the human TCR γ -chain constant region. Only clone γ 3.20 could cross react with the crab eating monkey $\gamma\delta$ T cells (Figure 7B, C) and stained approximately 41% of these CD3⁺ cells (1.7 ± 0.35 TCR γ -chain⁺ cells per mm of the basement membrane).

The dendritic shape has been also detected with other CD3⁺ $\gamma\delta$ ⁻ T cells; this probably because the skin resident T lymphocytes put themselves into the cellular and extracellular matrix of the skin. We found also that, consistent with mouse DETC, the cynomolgus macaque DETC-like cells reside in the basal and suprabasal layer of the epidermis (Figure 7A, B).

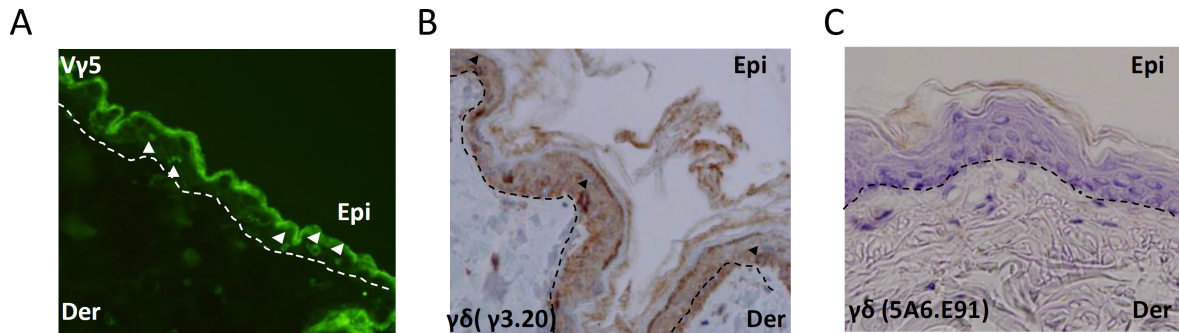


Figure 7: DETC-like cells in cynomolgus macaque populate the basal and suprabasal layer of the epidermis: Consistent with the mouse DETC (**A**), DETC-like cells in cynomolgus macaque populate the basal and suprabasal layer of the epidermis (**B**). Paraffin sections of mouse skin were stained with antibody for V γ 5 TCR (**A**), and adult macaque skin sections were stained with cross-reacting antibodies for human $\gamma\delta$ TCR (clone: γ 3.20, (**B**), clone: 5A6.E91, (**C**)). Arrowheads indicate $\gamma\delta$ TCR⁺ cells in macaque skin or V γ 5⁺ T cells in mouse. Epi, epidermis; Der, dermis.

It's noteworthy that the presence of *Skint1* is correlated with the presence of a restricted cutaneous T cell population^{30,31}. To examine whether the CD3⁺ cells described above express an invariant TCR, we first analyzed the genomic organization of cynomolgus macaque TCR γ - and δ -chain loci. The organization of the cynomolgus macaque TCR γ -chain locus was very similar to that of the rhesus macaque TCR γ -chain locus⁴⁴, and contained six functional V γ gene segments located on chromosome 3: V γ 1, V γ 2, V γ 3, V γ 2/4, V γ 9 and V γ 10 (genes named according to ref⁴⁴). On the other hand, the TCR δ -chain locus located on chromosome 7 contained three V δ gene segments: V δ 1, V δ 2 and V δ 3. The sequences of the functional V γ and V δ segments are shown in Figure 7 (A,B).

Vδ1 ... 1 CAGAGAGCTA CATGCCACAT GCTGTTCTCC AGCTTGCTGT GCATATTTGT GGCCTTCAGC
61 TACTCTGGGG ATTCAAGTGTG GCCCAGAAGG TTACTCAAGC CCAGTCATCA GTATCCATGC
121 CAGTGGAGAA AGCAGTCACC CTGAACTGCC AGTATGAAAC AAGTTCGTGG TCATATGACC
181 TTTTTTGGTA CAAGCAACTT CCCGGCAAAG AGATGATTTT CCTTATTCAC CAGGGTTCCT
241 CTCAACAGAA TGCAAGAAAT GGTGCTATT CTGTCAACTT CCAGAAAGCA GCTAGCTCCA
301 TCACCTTAAC CATTTTCAGCC TTACAGCTAG AAGACTCAGC AACATACTTC TGTGCTCTCC
361 GGGAACT

Vδ2 ... 1 ATTAACAGGC AGCAGGCCCT GTGAGCCTCC TGTGATCAGC TAGGCTTCTC TGAGGAATGA
61 AACAGCTGCT GATAGGGACT GACTTCCTCA GTCACAAGTG TTTCACAAGT GTGTTGGTTC
121 AGAGGAGGGA CCAGGCAGAA GGTGGTTCAC AGGCAGAGCT GCCCCTGAGT GAGCCATGCA
181 GAGGATCTCC TCCCTCATCC ATCTCTCCCT CTTCTGGGCA GGAGTCATGT CAGCTGTTGA
241 GTTGGTGCCT GAACACCAAA CAGTGATTGT GTCAGTGGGG GACCCTGCCA CCCTCAAGTG
301 CTCCATGAAA GGAGAAGCAA TCAGTAACTA CTATATCAAC TGGTACAGGA AGACCCAAGG
361 TAACACAATG ACTTTCATAT ACCGAGAAAA GGCATCTAT GGCCCTGGTT TCAAGGACAA
421 TTTCCAAGGT GACATTGATA CTGAAGAGAA CCAGGCTGTA CTTAAGATCC TTGCACCATC
481 AGAGAGAGAT GAAGGGTCTT ACTACTGTGC CAGTGACA

Vδ3 ... 1 TCTTTTGTGA GAACCGTCAG ATAGTCTCTG AGATCTTAGG AACCCTGTTT TGTTGTATAT
61 CCTCTGCCCT GGTATGAAGA AAAGATGATT CTTACTGTGG GCTTTAGCTT TTTGTTTTTC
121 TACAGGGGCA TGCTGTGTGA CAAAGTAACT CAGAGTCCC CGGACCAGAT GGTGGCGAGT
181 GGCAGTGAGG TGGTACTGCT CTGCACTTAC GACAGTACAT ATTCAGATCC AGGTTTATTC
241 TGGTACCGCA TAAGGCCAGA TTATAATTTT CAGTTTGTCT TCTATGGGGA TAAAAGCAGA
301 TCTCACGGTT CATATTTTGC TAAAGGACGG TTTTCTGTGA AGCACCTTCT GACCCAGAAA
361 GCCTTTTCACT TGGTAATCTC TCCAGTGAGT ACTGAAGACA GTGCCACTTA CTACTGTGCC

Figure 7 (A):cDNA sequences of the functional Vδ segments of Cynomolgus macaque.

V γ 1	1	GGCCTGAGCT	CTCCATGCC	CTGGCTCTCT	CCTGCAGAGG	GCCTGCCCTC	AGTGGCCAAA
	61	GGAGGGCGCT	GGAGAACGGA	CCTGAGCAGA	CAGGCAGGAG	CTCCTCTGCA	GGTCTCTCTCA
	121	GGCACCACCC	CTTCTGGAAG	GAAGGCTTGG	GAGTCACCTA	AGACAGATCC	TCAGTCACTT
	181	CTCTCTGCCT	GTGTCTCAGA	AAGACCAGCT	CCTCCTACTG	TCTTCTGTGC	TAGGGATTAC
	241	TTCTCTGTTG	AGTGGCACCT	GAATTTTGAG	AGGTTCTCTT	GCTCTCTCTC	ATCTTGTCCC
	301	TTTCTTTTCA	AGGCCCGGCA	GAGGAAGGCA	TGCGGTGGGC	CCTAGCCCTG	CTTCTAGCTT
	361	TCTTGTGTTT	TGCCAGTCAG	AAATCTTTCA	ACTTGGGAAG	GAAAAACGAG	TCAATCACCG
	421	GGCCTACTGG	GTCACTCTGT	GAAATCACCT	GTGATCTTCC	TGGAGTCAGT	ACCTTATACA
	481	TCCACTGGTA	CCTACACCAG	GAGGGGAAGG	CCCCACAGCG	TCTTCTGTAC	TATGAACCCCT
	541	ACTACTTCAC	GGTTGTGTG	GAATCAGGAA	TCAGTCCAGG	AAAGTATGAC	ACTGCAAGCA
V γ 2	601	CAAGGAAGAG	CTGGAATTG	AGACTGCAAA	ATCTAATTGA	AAATGATTCT	GGGGTCTATT
	661	ACTGTGCCAC	CTGGGACAGG				
	1	GGCCTGAGCG	GTCCATGCC	CGGGCTCTCT	CCTGCAGAGG	GCCTGCTCTC	AGCTGCCACA
	61	AGAGGGCGCA	GGAGAACGGA	CCTGAGCAGA	GAGGCAGGAG	CTCCACTGCC	GGGTCTCTCC
	121	AGGCACCACT	CCTTCTGGGA	GGAAGGCTTG	GGAGTCCCCT	GAGACAGATC	CTCAGTCACT
	181	TCTCTCTGCT	TGTGTCTCAG	GAAGACCAGC	TCCTCCTACT	GTCTTCTGTG	CTAGGGATCA
	241	CTTCTCTGTT	CAGTGGGACC	TGAGTTTGA	GAGGATCTTC	TGCTCCTCTT	CATCTGATCC
	301	CTTCTCTTTC	AAGGCCCAAG	AGAGGAAGGC	ATGTGGTGGG	CCCCAGTCC	GCTTCTAGCT
	361	CTCCTGTCTC	CTGCCGGTCA	GAAATCTTCC	AATTTGGAAG	GGAGAACAAA	GTCAGTCACC
	421	AGGCCAACTG	GGTCACTGTC	TGAAATAACT	TGTGATTTTT	CTGGAGACAG	TAACTTTAT
V γ 3	481	ATCCACTGGT	ACCTACACCA	GGAGGGGAAG	GTCCACACAGA	GTCTTCTGTA	CTATGACGTC
	541	TCCAACCTCA	GGGATGTGTT	GGAATCAGGA	CTCAGTCCAG	GAAAGTATTA	TACTCATACA
	601	CGCACAAAGT	GGAGTTGGAT	ATTGATACTG	CGAAATCTAA	TTGAAATGTA	TTCTGGGGTC
	661	TATTACTGTG	CCAACCTGGA	CAGG			
	1	GGCCTGAGCT	CTCCATGCC	TGGGCTCTCT	TCTGAAGCCG	GCCTGCTCTC	AGCGGGCCCA
	61	GGAGGGCGCT	GGAGAACGGA	CCTGAGCAGA	GAGGCAGGAG	CTCCTCTGCA	GGTCTTCCCA
	121	GGCACCACCT	CTTCTGGAAG	GAAGGCTTGG	GAGTCCCCTG	AGACAGATCC	TCAGTCACTT
	181	CTCTCTGCCT	GTGTCTCAGG	AAGACCAGCT	CCTCCTGCTG	TCTTCTGTGC	TAGGGATCAC
	241	TTTCTGTTTG	GGTGGCACCT	GAGTTTGTAG	AGGGTCTTCT	GCTCCTCTTC	ATCTTATCCC
	301	TTTCTTTTCA	AGGTCCCAGA	GAGGAAGGCA	TGCGGTGGGC	CCTAGCCCTG	CTTCTAGCTT
V γ 2,4	361	TCTTGTGTTT	TGCCGGTCTG	AAATCTTTCA	ACTTGGGAAG	GATAACAAAG	TCAGTCACCA
	421	GGCCAACCTG	GTCACTCTGT	GAAATAACTT	GTGATTTTTC	TGGAGACAGT	AACTTTATATA
	481	TCCACTGGTA	CCTACACCAG	GAGGGGAAGG	CCCCACAGCG	TCTTCTGTAC	TATGACGTCT
	541	CCAACCTCAAG	GGATGTGTTG	GAATCAGGAC	TCAGTCCAGG	AAAGTATTAT	ACTCATACAC
	601	GCACAAGGTC	GAGTTGGATA	TTGATACTGC	GAAATCTAAT	TGAAATGAT	TCTGGGGTCT
	661	ATTACTGTGC	CAACTGGGAC	AGG			
	1	GGCCTGAGCT	CTCCACGCTC	CGGGCTCTCT	CCTGCAGAGG	GCCTGCTATC	AGCTGCCACA
	61	AGAGGGCGCA	GGAGAACGGA	CCTGAGCAGA	GAGGCAGGAG	CTCCACTGCC	GGGTCTCTCC
	121	AGGCACCACT	CCTTCTGGGA	GGAAGGCTTG	GGAGTCCCCT	GAGACAGATC	CTCAGTCACT
	181	TCTCTCTGCC	TGTGTCTCAG	GAAGACCAGC	TCCTCCTACT	GTCTTCTGTG	CTAGGGATCA
V γ 9	241	CTTCTTGTGTT	CAGTGGGACC	TGAGTTTGA	GAGGATCTTC	TGCTCCTCTT	CATCTGATCC
	301	CTTCTCTTTC	AAGGCCCAAG	AGAGGAAGGC	ATGTGGTGGG	CCCCAGTCC	GCTTCTAGCT
	361	CTCCTGTCTC	CTGCCAGTCA	GAAATCTTCC	AATTTGGAAG	GGAGAACAAA	GTCAGTCACC
	421	AGGCCAACTG	GGTCACTGTC	TGAAATCACC	TGTGATCTTC	CTGAAGTCAG	TAGCTTCTAC
	481	ATCCACTGGT	ACCTACACCA	GGAGGGGAAG	GCCCCACAGC	GTCTTCTGTA	CTATGACTCC
	541	TCCAACCTCA	GGGTTGTGTT	GGAATCAGGA	ATCAGTCCAG	GAAAGTATGA	TAGTTATGGA
	601	AGCACAAAGG	ACAACCTGAG	ATTGAGACTG	CGAAATCTAA	TTGAAATGTA	TTCTGGGGTC
	661	TATTACTGTG	CCAACCTGGA	CAGG			
	1	AAAAAACTGC	AAGTCAATCC	ACAGAAGTGG	GTCTGGAAT	TCTAGGCAGA	GAGTGACTGA
V γ 10	61	ATGAAGATGG	AAGGACAGGG	AGGTACTGGC	CACATCACAG	AGAGCCTCTT	ATCCTAAGAA
	121	CTCTGGGCGT	CATCTTCTG	GGCAAGGTAG	AGCGAGGGAG	GAATTTAGAG	CAGGAAAAATG
	181	ACCAGGTCAG	TCTAGTGGCC	ATGGGGAAGG	TGGGTGGGAG	GGGCCAAGAT	GGGACGCACG
	241	GAAGTGCGTG	AGGTGGAGGC	AGTGGTGAGC	CAGGAAATGT	TTAGGACGTA	GAATCCTCAG
	301	GAATTGGAGT	GTGGTGAATT	AGTTAGAGGG	GAGAATTGAG	GCTGATACTC	AGGTTCCCGG
	361	CCTGGGCAAT	GTGGGTGCAT	TGCTGCTGGT	GAGCTGGGGC	AAGGTACACAT	TATGTCTTAG
	421	GGGTAGTCAT	GTACATACAG	GAACCTCGAA	GAAGATAAGG	GTTGGGAGAA	GGGAATGAGT
	481	TCACCTCTAGC	TATGAGCAGA	CTTGGTTTGA	GATCCCCGTG	CAGACGTA	TGAAAAATGTC
	541	CCAGAGTTAG	CTGGATATGG	GTACAGACAG	TTTTTGATTT	AACTAAGGTC	CAACTTAAGA
	601	TTTTTTTTTA	CTTTATGATG	GTGCAAAAGT	GACATGCATT	TGGTAGAAAA	CATAATTTGA
V γ 9	661	CCCTTGTCTCT	TTCCCCAGGA	CAGTGATATA	AGGTTTTGAT	ACTCTCTTGC	GATGCTGGGC
	721	AGTGGCAGTG	AGCCGCAGCT	CCCAGTGTGT	AAATTAAGAA	TGGAAATCTG	GAGCACAGCA
	781	GCTTTTAAAG	GGTCATTGG	GGGACAGCAG	TTTGTAAAAA	TACCTTGGGA	CAGATTAAAT
	841	GTCTTGGGTT	AGAGAAAGAA	CAACAGACAG	TAGGAACTG	TCATCGAGGA	GAAGCAGGGA
	901	TTCAGGAGAC	GTACATTATT	CAGGTAGCTG	AGGGAGGGGA	CAGGAACTCT	AATCTTCAAC
	961	AGAAGCAAA	AAACTGGCAT	GGAGGGCCCA	GCTCCATGAA	GGTGACCAGA	AGGGCCCCGT
	1021	GCTGCAGGCT	GTGTGGGTAG	CGGAGCAGAG	CTAAGCAGCT	TGACGGATCA	ACATCTCTCC
	1081	AGCTGGTTGA	AGACAAGCTC	TCAGAAGACA	AGGCTGCATG	TCACAGCCCT	GACAACCAAC
	1141	GACACCAGCC	TGACAACTTG	CTGCGGTGGC	CGCCGTGTGG	TCTGAGGTGG	TTGTCTGAAC
	1201	TATGTGGTCT	GATTTACAGC	CTCAGACCTC	GTAGGACTAT	CTTCACACAG	ACTGGAAGTG
V γ 10	1261	CTAACAGGTG	GTGAGGACAC	CACTTTACAA	TGATGCAGGA	GGCCCCATGT	CACCCTCACC
	1321	CATGGGAAGT	TTGACTTGGT	GGACTCAGCC	AAGCCACAGG	GGTCTAACGC	TTCTTTGCGG
	1381	TGATTCCAGG	CTGCCCTGGC	AGAGAGCACA	GTGCCTGCAG	ACATGCTGTC	ACTGCTCCAC
	1441	GCGTCAACAC	TGGCAGTCC	TGGGGCTCTG	TGTGTATATG	GTGCAGGTCA	CCTAGAGCAA
	1501	CCTCAAATTT	CCAGTACTAA	AATGCTGTCA	AAAACAGCCC	GCCTGGAATG	TGTGGTGTCT
	1561	GGAGTAAACAA	TTTCTGAAAC	ATCTATATAT	TGGTATCGAG	AAAGACCTGG	TGAAGTCATA
	1621	CAGTTCTCTG	TGTGCAATTT	TTATGACGGC	ACTGTCAAAA	AGGAATCCAG	CATTCCATCG
	1681	GGCAAATTTG	AGGTGGATAG	GATACCCAAA	ACGTCTACAT	CCACCCTCAC	CATTCAAAAT
	1741	GTAGAGAAAC	AGGACATAGC	TACCTACTAT	TGTGCTTGT	GGGAGGTG	
	1	ACTTTCTCTG	CTTCTCCTTG	GGGACACCAC	CCTGAAGACA	GGATGTCACT	GCTGGAAGCA
V γ 10	61	TTGCGCTTCT	CGTCTTCTG	GGCACTTGG	CTTGGATTAT	CGAAAGTGG	GCAGTTCCAG
	121	CTATCCATTT	CCACGGAAAGT	CAAGAAAAGT	ATTGACATAT	CTTGCAAGAT	AAGGAGCACA
	181	AACCTTTGAAA	ACGATGTCT	TCACTGGTAC	CGGCAGAAAC	CGAATCAGGC	TTTGGAGCAT
	241	CTGATCTATA	TTATCTCAAC	AAAATCCGCA	GCTCATGGCA	GCATGGGTAA	GAGGAGCAAC
	301	AAAGTGGAG	CGAGAAAGAA	TTCTCAAAC	CTCACTTCAA	TCTTTACCAT	CAAGTCCATA
	361	GAGAAAGAAG	ACATGGCCAT	TTACTACTGT	CGAGGATGGG	ATTA	

Figure 7 (B): cDNA sequences of the functional V γ segments of *Cynomolgus macaque*.

To determine V γ /V δ gene usage in cynomolgus macaque epidermal T cells, we prepared primers specific for each V γ or V δ gene segment. Reverse transcription PCR analysis using these primer pairs showed that macaque epidermal T cells predominantly express V γ 10V δ 1 TCR. Because V δ gene segments other than V δ 1-3 are used as V α gene segments⁴⁵, we amplified only V δ 1-3 gene segments. Interestingly, we found that as in human and mouse epidermis^{34,46}, V δ 1 is preferentially expressed in the macaque epidermis. These results indicate that cynomolgus macaque epidermal $\gamma\delta$ T cells express an invariant TCR, consistent with the existence of a structurally intact *SKINTIL* gene. The examination of the V γ /V δ expression in the whole skin revealed that there is expression of other V γ and V δ gene segments detected only at low levels. This suggested the different usage of V γ /V δ gene usage in cynomolgus macaque dermis.

Evolution of the *SKINT* gene family in mammals

Consistent with what has been observed previously^{31,32}, *SKINTIL* went through different evolutionary events such as duplication within rodents and pseudogenization within primates. For a better understanding of the *Skint1*/*SKINTIL* gene family evolution, and more generally the entire *SKINT* gene family, an extensive screening using the mouse SKINT protein sequences as query was performed to identify the *SKINT* family members of representative mammals. A total of 47 species representing 22 orders, for which genome sequences are available, were subjected to analysis. As shown previously³², phylogenetic analysis using mouse *SKINT* members protein sequences as query and based on the available amino acid sequences including IgV and IgC domains indicates that the SKINT protein family falls into three major subfamilies: SKINT1, SKINT7 and SKINT9. SKINT2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 proteins are the members of the SKINT1 subfamily; they all appear to have emerged by rodent-specific gene duplication from the *Skint1* gene. Gene duplication is more extensive in mice than in rats, with mice having six and rats having three SKINT1 subfamily members. SKINT8 protein is closely related to SKINT7 protein and seems to have emerged by duplication from the *Skint7* gene in the mouse lineage. SKINT10 and 11

proteins are the members of the SKINT9 subfamily and appear to have emerged by rodent-specific gene duplication.

Mammals phylogenetic tree of SKINT family indicated that SKINT sequences were detected only in eutherian (placental mammals) and neither marsupials nor monotremes had SKINT-like sequences. Furthermore, we were unable to identify SKINT-like sequences in non-mammalian species (data not shown). Therefore, the SKINT family has presumably emerged in a common ancestor of placental mammals. The distribution of SKINT subfamily proteins across mammalian orders indicates that an ancestor of placental mammals had at least SKINT1 and SKINT7 subfamily proteins and that a boreoeutherian ancestor had all three subfamily proteins. A striking feature of the SKINT family is that its members went through different evolutionary events in boreoeutheria. SKINT members were highly duplicated in rodents and also in small number of species including prosimians, golden moles and tree shrews with less copy number. Interestingly, SKINT family was lost or rendered nonfunctional in many mammalian orders. Indeed, some mammals such as carnivorans and NWMs appear to have lost the SKINT family in its entirety.

Discussion

Up to date, no extensive study cleared *SKINTIL* gene evolution within mammals, although *Skint1/SKINTIL* gene is appeared to be highly evolved from rodents to human^{31,32}. We provided here a direct evidence that all of the hominoids we have studied including humans, great apes and lesser apes have a single copy of *SKINTIL* gene which is inactivated by a common termination codon and inconsistent with that, *SKINTIL* gene in the Old World Monkeys (OWM) such as olive baboons, green monkeys, cynomolgus macaques and rhesus macaques is structurally active (Figure 1). We have chosen the cynomolgus macaque as a representative for the OWMs and found that, the mRNA of *SKINTIL* was expressed exclusively in the thymus and skin in a similar pattern to its mouse counterpart. We also found a high population of DETC-like cells residing the basal and suprabasal layers of the macaque epidermis and predominantly expressing V γ 10V δ 1 TCR. These observations indicate that the macaque epidermis contains authentic DETCs expressing $\gamma\delta$ TCR of limited diversity and suggest that *SKINTIL* presumably has a role in homing of these cells in the OWM epidermis. Therefore, we conclude that *SKINTIL* gene has been inactivated in the hominoid ancestor after the radiation of the OWM and seemingly DETCs expressing an invariant TCR were lost in consequence.

Interestingly, we showed here that *SKINTIL* is represented variably in the majority of primates from great apes to prosimians as structurally active in OWMs, inactivated in hominoids and lost completely in NWMs. Here, we noticed that NWMs genome of marmosets and squirrel monkeys does not have a *SKINTIL* gene sequence. Although the squirrel monkey genome has been sequenced only to low coverage, the marmoset genome is sequenced to high coverage. Thus, it seems likely that the *SKINTIL* gene was lost in marmosets. Our results demonstrated that *SKINTIL* gene is highly evolved even in the same group of species within primates, as in prosimian group, *SKINTIL* gene in bushbabies is structurally intact but is inactivated in tarsiers. Notably, The phylogeny of primates *SKINTIL* formed a clear cluster, however, some primates like the tarsier and the bushbaby

branched out of the primates with a low bootstrap confidence value. Taken together, we conclude that *SKINTIL* was lost at least twice in primate evolution, once by the gene elimination in some NWMs, and then by gene inactivation in some prosimians and hominoid ancestor.

In mammals, by analyzing the phylogeny of SKINT1L protein, we showed by evidence that *SKINTIL* gene emerged in the common ancestor of placental mammals. Also, we presented that, phylogenetically all *Skint1* family members in mice formed one cluster where they are closely related to each other more than to their orthologs which is most probably because the speciation of mice predates the duplication of their *Skint1* gene what makes the number of *skint1* gene paralogs in mice more than in rats, that made the other *Skint1* paralogs act as a co-orthologs to a single-copy gene from the other species and do not represent the true ortholog. However, we confirmed here that the structural similarities and the cellular context in which the protein works can be used as a predictor to the functional orthology⁴⁹⁻⁵³. We observed that *SKINTIL* gene has the structural and the cellular context equivalent to mouse *Skint1* gene and might have the same impact on DETC homing to the epidermis (Figure 1), suggesting that the cynomolgus macaque *SKINTIL* gene is the mouse *Skint1* ortholog and this orthology will be most probably true for the *SKINTIL* genes in the other orders of mammals. We demonstrated also that despite the emergence of *SKINTIL* in the placental mammal ancestor, it is lost in some mammalian orders such as xenarthra and carnivora. Because we suggest the functional orthology of the other mammalian *SKINTIL* to mouse *Skint1*, we propose that the DETCs expressing invariant TCR emanated in the ancestor of mammals and lost in some mammalian orders concomitant to the loss of *SKINTIL*. Besides, in common with the presence of 5 splicing variants of mouse *skint1*, we showed that macaque *SKINTIL* gene has 2 splicing variants, one of them has only 2 TMD and the other one is inactive as a result of partial retention of intron 3 (Figure 6); both of these variants mRNA are expressed in all macaque individuals committed in our study. As reported before, the mouse *Skint1*/*Skint2* domain swap chimeras and *Skint1* constructs including only one TMD could not retain the *Skint1* function in the thymus, indicating that each *Skint1* domain is not redundant⁵⁴. Thus, we

assume that both of cynomolgus macaque splicing variants are non-functional because of their domain loss.

Previous studies concluded that the cow epidermis expresses structurally intact *SKINT1L* gene with high level of $\gamma\delta$ T cells (44% of epidermal $CD3^+$ T cells) predominantly expressing V γ 3, V γ 7, J γ 5, C γ 5 and V δ sequences belonging to the V δ 1 family⁵⁵⁻⁵⁸. Likewise, in our study we presented that the macaque epidermis has a high number of predominant V γ 10V δ 1 DETC comparable to the number of the epidermal $\gamma\delta^+$ T cells found in cow, although the number of $CD3^+\gamma\delta^+$ T cells detected in our experiments retained as a minimal estimate due to lack of specific antibodies for the macaque $CD3^+\gamma\delta^+$ T cells. This result suggests that, while $\gamma\delta$ T cells which form 95% of the mouse epidermal T cell population play a unique role in its skin immunosurveillance^{11,59}, they might contribute with the other T-cells in the macaque and cow for skin homeostasis. Therefore, what remained as unresolved puzzle is the immunological solution in the orders which lost or had inactivated *SKINT1* gene. It is possible that species that lost functional *SKINT1L* have developed compensatory mechanisms for skin immunosurveillance. In humans which are all have non-functional SKINT1L molecules, CD1a molecules expressed by epidermal Langerhans cells play a crucial role for activation of Th22 cells for enhancing wound repair⁶⁰. Because rodents with functional SKINT1L molecules lack CD1a molecules and humans without functional SKINT1L molecules have CD1a molecules, it was suggested that humans and mice have evolved different strategies for immune defense in the skin⁶¹. However, the presence of SKINT1L and that of CD1a are not always mutually exclusive; for example, cattle have both CD1a⁶² and SKINT1L (Figure 1). Therefore, some species may employ both CD1a-mediated and DETC-mediated defense strategies. Furthermore, animals without DETCs expressing an invariant TCR may have other compensatory mechanisms independent of CD1a. In this case, we shall not be able to observe a clear correlation between the absence of functional SKINT1L and the presence of CD1a.

Butyrophilin (*BTN*) gene family belongs to the immunoglobulin subfamily of the transmembrane proteins and shares structural homology with *SKINTL* family members and

is considered as the most closely related family to *Skint* gene family, although the mammalian *BTN* gene emerged in the genome of the therian ancestor, then it underwent multiple duplication before the separation of the marsupials and eutherians^{32,63}, we found that *SKINTL* appears to be emerged only in the eutherians, then, it went through different evolutionary events inside the boreoeutherians. According to that, *SKINTL* gene seems to be lost more than 2 times in the mammalian phylogeny. Indeed, only a limited number of species retain all of the three *SKINTL* gene subfamilies and some mammals such as carnivorans completely lost *SKINTL* gene family. These observations indicate that the members of the *SKINT* gene family are generally dispensable and that they evolve in a highly order-specific or species-specific manner. Functional characterization of SKINT7L and SKINT9L subfamilies might help us understand why they are lost in some mammalian orders and whether animals without SKINT7L or SKINT9L have any compensatory mechanisms.

Summary and Conclusion

Skint1 gene is expressed specifically in mouse keratinocytes and thymic epithelial cells, suggesting an indispensable role for *Skint1* in the selection machinery for V γ 5V δ 1 DETC, which has an essential role in skin immunosurveillance. Phylogenetically, rodents have functional SKINT1 molecules, but humans and chimpanzees have a *SKINT1-like* (*SKINTIL*) gene with multiple inactivating mutations, urging to determine at which stage in the mammalian phylogeny *SKINTIL* lost its function.

In this study, we conclude that although *SKINTIL* is pseudogenized in the hominoid lineage, it is still structurally intact in the OWM and expressed exclusively in skin and thymus. Moreover, we demonstrated here that the epidermis of crab eating monkey contains a population of dendritic-shaped $\gamma\delta$ T cells (DETC-like cells) expressing invariant V γ 10V δ 1 TCR. These observations indicate that the cynomolgus macaque *SKINTIL* is the functional orthology to the mouse *skint1* gene.

By the extensive bioinformatic analysis of several mammalian species, we showed that *SKINT* family has been emerged in an ancestor of eutheria and lost or inactivated multiple times in the mammalian phylogeny which suggest a concomitant loss of the skin-resident $\gamma\delta$ T cells in the orders lacking *SKINTIL*.

Acknowledgement

Now at the end of my thesis and my current journey in Japan which was full of good and hard times, I would like to thank everyone who was eager to support me approaching my aims in this four year road.

First of all, it is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the support and help of my Prof. Masanori Kasahara who despite his busy time, always found time for discussion and opening the way for me to learn of his valuable knowledge, he gave me the guidance to be a good researcher and taught me what is the meaning of dedication to work.

Dr. Noriyuki Otsuka who guided me to solve many research problems eagerly and was always here for me whenever I need a support in my scientific research. I owe my deepest appreciation to Dr. Yukiko Miyatake who helped me honestly since my foot stepped inside Japan, not only in my research, but also in every personal daily issue. Dr. Yoichi Sutoh who supported me strongly from the beginning till the end of my research. This research wouldn't appear in this shape without his help.

My parents and my sister, I really can't find the words to express my gratitude to their love, support and encouragement. Despite the long distance separating us, I didn't feel in a moment they are away, they were always with me. They embrace me and my dreams all my life long and believe in me able to make my dreams come true.

And very special thanks to Dr. Utano Tamaro and Dr. Yushida Shigaro who I really feel grateful to their help and guidance through my work life here. I am also indebted to all my lab colleagues who helped me whenever I need their help without any hesitation.

Finally, I need to give special gratitude to all my friends in Egypt and every friend I have met here in Japan. I want to tell them every one of you left an unforgettable print which will keep with me forever. I need to mention thankfully in Japan, Aiman Zidan and Jumana Al-Mallahy and in Egypt, Manal Mohsen and Mira Refaat.

I want to give special thanks for the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education and Ain Shams University which gave me the chance of my life to come here to Japan and make a fortune of

knowledge which will bring to my home new technologies and fresh experience in rapidly developing area.

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