Development of novel imaging system by using firefly bioluminescence

March 2017

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SUMMARY OF Ph.D. DISSERTATION

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| Title | | |
| Development of novel imaging system by using firefly bioluminescence | | |
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Abstract

Firefly bioluminescence (BL) is generated by the reaction of firefly luciferin with the corresponding luciferase in the presence of Mg²⁺, ATP, and O₂ (λ_{max} =562 nm; ϕ_{BL} =41%). Because of its high efficiency and S/N ratio, BL has been widely used in biological studies (*in vivo* bioimaging, reporter gene assays and food hygiene control). In this study, unexplained substrate specificity between firefly luciferin and luciferase was clarified by using organic chemistry, and application of the result proposed a new imaging device.

(1) Synthesis of firefly luciferin analogues and evaluation of the luminescent properties aiming elucidation of the substrate specificity of firefly bioluminescence

Firefly luciferin consists of the benzothiazole and the thiazoline rings. It has been reported that the benzothiazole ring affects color development of BL, whereas effect of the thiazoline ring moiety to BL has not been clarified. In this study, to elucidate role of the thiazoline ring, seven luciferin analogues by replacement the thiazoline ring to acyclic amino acid side chains and heterocyclic rings derived from amino acids, were synthesized and their luminescence activities were evaluated. Consequently, only carboluciferin possessing a pyrroline-substituted benzothiazole structure, showed BL activity, whereas no activity of cyclic luciferin analogues, was observed. These results indicated that the thiazoline ring affects the enzyme reaction of firefly luciferase.

(2) Development of a luminescence-controllable firefly luciferin analogue using selective enzymatic cyclization

A new firefly luciferin analog that can switch BL activity from 'OFF' (acyclic) to 'ON' (cyclic) states, was designed and synthesized. BL inactive *N*-Ac- γ -glutamate luciferin contains an acyclic precursor of the thiazoline moiety. Enzymatic treatment of *N*-Ac- γ -glutamate luciferin with aminoacylase resulted in a smooth removal of the acyl protecting group and concomitant cyclization to provide carboluciferin carrying clear BL activity.