Endococcus janae, a new species from Peru on Acarospora rhabarbarina

Kerry Knudsen

ABSTRACT. – Endococcus janae is described from Acarospora rhabarbarina in Peru. It has 4-spored asci and differs from other the 4-spored species, E. zahlbrucknerellae and E. variabilis, in ascomata and spore size as well as host.

Keywords: lichenicolous fungi, Dothideales, Ascomycota.

INTRODUCTION

The lichenicolous genus Endococcus comprises at least thirty-eight species (Halici et. al. 2007), most of which have a narrow host spectrum. Three species have recently been described (Hawksworth & Itturriaga 2006; Brackel and Kocourková 2006; Halici et. al. 2007). Important work in understanding the genus was done by Hawksworth (1979) and Triebel (1989). Some species concepts are apparently too artificial, including too broad a difference in ascomata and spore size, as well as too wide a range of hosts (Sérusiaux et al. 1999; Kocourková 2000; Halici et al. 2007). The genus is in need of revision.

METHOD

Sections were prepared by hand and examined in water, 10% KOH, and I (Lugol). Amylloid reactions were tested in I and I with pre-treatment with KOH (K/I). Ascospore measurements were made in water; extreme values are given in parentheses. Ascospore measurements are indicated as (minimum-) s ± mean (-maximum), followed by the number of measurements (n); the length/breadth ratio of ascospores is indicated as l/b and given in the same way.

THE NEW SPECIES

Endococcus janae K. Knudsen sp. nov.

Mycobank #511450

PLATE 1, FIGURES 1-4.


TYPE: PERU: Ica, western foothills of Andes 36–40 km E of Nazca on road to Puquio, on thallus of Acarospora rhabarbarina, rhyolite, 2000–2250 m, Weber & Kohn, L–66453 (COLO, holotype).
Plate 1. Figure 1, 4-spored asci of *Endococcus janae* (scale bar = 20 μm). Figure 2, detail of ascospores (scale bar = 20μm). Figure 3, detail of areole of *A. rhabarbarina* showing infection of *E. janae* (scale bar = 2mm). Figure 4, holotype of *E. janae* (scale bar = 4mm).
DESCRIPTION. – Lichenicolous fungus growing on the areoles or squamules of the host, the yellow Acarospora rhabarbarina Hue, suppressing apothecial production of the host. Ascomata perithecioid, arising singly, up to twenty or more per areole or squamule, immersed to erumpent, subglobose, aplanate, black and somewhat shiny, with the ostiolar part up to 35 μm wide, with no other visible sign of infection, 125–190μm tall, 120–150μm wide; wall ca. 15–20μm thick, dark brown in upper part, hyaline to lightly reddish brown in lower half, of multiple compressed layers, cells hard to discern, mostly 1μm wide, up to 10μm long. K–. Hamathecium of periphysoids, lining ostiolar canal and upper part of ascomatal cavity, brown near ostiolar area to hyaline in upper part of ascomatal cavity, simple, or basally branched, or branched in upper third, 25–30μm in length, cells 3–4μm long, 2–3(–4)μm wide; central cavity with hymenial gel and asci, 1+ orange, K/I+ blue; Ascii arising from in base and lower sides of ascomatal cavity, sessile, densely-packed, subcylindrical, internal apical beak evident, four-spored (very rarely with five or six spores), 45–50(–60) x 14–16μm, fissitunicate, K/I–; Ascospores uniseriate or distichously arranged in asci, ellipsoid, golden brown and simple when young, becoming one-septate and dark brown at maturity, (14–)15–15.8(–18) x (6–) 6.4–6.8(–9)μm (n=100), l/b (1.6–)1.9–2.7(–3.0), not constricted at septum, with one or several small oil drops or without, the wall 0.5–1μm thick, dark, ornamented, septum in mature spores dark, 0.5–1.0μm thick, though sometimes thinner, no gelatinous perispore evident; Conidiomata, not observed.

ETYMOLOGY. – The species is named in honor of my colleague, friend, and my future wife Jana Kocourková, who has a special love for the genus Endococcus which led to our fortuitous meeting through Opuscula Philolichenum.

DISCUSSION. – Currently only one species of Endococcus is recognized as occurring on Acarospora, Endococcus stigma (Körb.) Stizenb. (Triebel 1989; Kainz & Triebel 2004). Endococcus stigma is treated in this paper as having ascomata 150–250μm in diameter, 8-spored asci, and ovoid ovoid ascospores, with thick ornamented walls, strongly attenuated apices, cells equal, mostly 12–16(–20) x 6–7(–8)μm, becoming constricted at septum in older ascospores, with l/b 2.4 or less (Kainz & Triebel 2004; Knudsen & Kocourková 2007). Endococcus stigma has somewhat larger ascomata size than E. janae (150–250 μm vs. 125–190μm), and overlapping ascospore size [12–16(–20) x 6–7(–8)μm vs. (14–)15–15.8(–18) x (6–) 6.4–6.8(–9)μm] with E. janae having usually longer and broader ascospores. Endococcus janae differs from E. stigma in having 4-spored asci instead of 8-spored asci as well as having spores with rounded or blunt apices rather than attenuated apices. Another taxon on Acarospora with 4-spored asci was reported from the Canary Islands with soleiform ascospores with strongly attenuated apices and included by Hafellner (2002) in E. stigma s. lat. Endococcus janae differs from Hafellner’s taxon in not having soleiform spores with strongly attenuated apices.

Only two described species are known to have 4-spores per ascus, E. zahlbrucknerellae (Henssen) D. Hawksw. (Hawksworth 1979; Henssen 1977), which occurs on Zahlbrucknerella calcarea (Herre) Herre, and E. variabilis Halici, Kocourk. & Diederich (Halici et al 2007), which occurs on Staurothelae areolata (Ach.) Lettau. Both species differ by their host selection from E. janae as well as size. Endococcus zahlbrucknerellae has smaller ascomata than E. janae (≤100μm vs. 125–190μm), shorter ascospores (12–15μm vs. (14–)15–15.8(–18)μm), and produces galls. Endococcus variabilis has larger ascomata than E. janae (230–260μm vs. 125–190μm) and has slightly broader spores (6.5–7.5μm vs. 6.4–6.8μm), which overlap in size.

In studying over two hundred specimens of Acarospora from South America (Knudsen et al. 2008) and numerous specimens of Acarospora from North America (Knudsen 2007), so far I have found only this single incidental collection of E. janae from Peru. I have decided to publish this species to encourage the recognition and further collection of specimens of E. janae. Its known host, A. rhabarbarina, is widespread in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru but is rare in North America in southern Arizona and California and is expected in Mexico. Endococcus janae probably occurs on other species of the genus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Javier Eayo and David Hawksworth for their reviews, Paul Diederich for his comments, Jana Kocourková for discussions, James Lendemer for the images, and Tim Hogan at COLO for his always quick and courteous help.
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