1.4 Abdomen and its modifications

The abdomen is the 3rd region of insect body. It is more conspicuously segmented than either the head or the thorax. Superficially, the abdomen is the least specialized of the body tagma, but there are notable exceptions such as the scale insects. The abdomen characteristically lacks appendages except cerci, reproductive organs, and pregenital appendages in adult Apterygota and larval Pterygota.

Ground Plan of the Abdomen

The ground plan abdomen of an adult insect typically consists of 11-12 segments and is less strongly sclerotized than the head or thorax. Each segment of the abdomen is represented by a sclerotized tergum, sternum, and a pleurite. Terga are separated from each other and from the adjacent sterna or pleura by a membrane. Spiracles are located in the pleural area. Modification of this ground plan includes the fusion of terga or terga and sterna to form continuous dorsal or ventral shields or a conical tube. Some insects bear a sclerite in the pleural area called a laterotergite. Ventral sclerites are sometimes called laterosternites. The spiracles are often situated in the definitive tergum, sternum, laterotergite, or laterosternite.

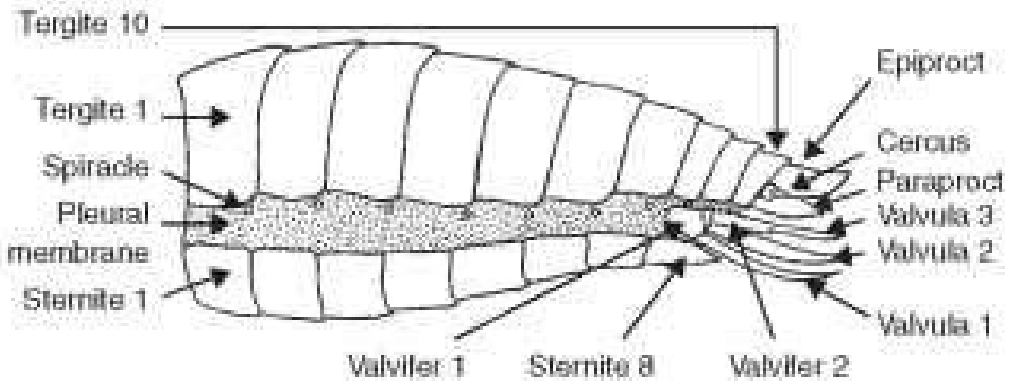

FIG. Abdominal segmentation.

During the embryonic stage of many insects and the postembryonic stage of primitive insects, 11 abdominal segments are present. In modern insects there is a tendency toward reduction in the number of the abdominal segments, but the primitive number of 11 is maintained during embryogenesis. Variation in abdominal segment number is considerable. If the Apterygota are considered to be indicative of the ground plan for pterygotes, confusion reigns: adult Protura have 12 segments, Collembola have 6. The orthopteran family Acrididae has 11 segments, and a fossil specimen of Zoraptera has a 10-segmented abdomen.

Typically, the abdominal terga show secondary segmentation with the posterior part of a segment overlapping the anterior part of the segment behind it. Such overlap prevents damage or injury to the animal while it moves through the environment, particularly in confined spaces.

The pregenital segments in male insects are numbered 1 through 8; the pregenital segments in female insects are numbered 1 through 7. Among the Apterygota, male genitalia in Collembola are positioned between segments 5 and 6 and in Protura between segments 11 and the paraproct. Genital segments of Pterygota include segment 9 in males and segments 8 and 9 in females. Postgenital segments of pterygote insects are 10 and 11 in females and 9 and 10 in males.

Modification of the genital sclerites from the ground plan is frequently observed among insects. Adult Pterygota are characterized by a well-developed reproductive system, including organs of copulation and oviposition. This duality of function has resulted in considerable differentiation of associated segments and contributed to difference of opinion regarding homology of genitalic parts. Among pterygote insects the male genitalia are generally positioned on segment 9. The gonopore (Greek, gone = seed; poros = channel) of the female reproductive system serves as the aperture through which the egg passes during oviposition. The gonopore usually is located on segment 8 or 9. Enlargement of sternum 8 in some female insects is called a subgenital plate.

Modification of post genital sclerites is frequently observed and seems to be a functional response to adaptations associated with copulation and oviposition. Some modifications include fusion of the tergum, pleuron, and sternum to form a continuous sclerotized ring. The phenomenon is notable in apterygota and pterygote insects.

The eleventh abdominal segment forms the last true somite of the insect body. Frequently, this segment is found in embryonic stages of primitive insects even when it cannot be observed in post emergent stages. When the eleventh segment is present, it forms a conical endpiece that bears an anus at the apex, flanked laterally by cerci (Greek, kerkos = tail).The dorsal surface of the eleventh segment is called an epiproct (Greek, epi = upon; proktos = anus); the ventrolateral surface is called a paraproct (Greek, para = beside;proktos = anus). A longitudinal, medial, membranous area connects the paraprocts ventrally. Primitive groups of extant insects such as Thysanura and Ephemeroptera, and some fossil groups such as Paleodictyoptera, display a conspicuous, long, median filament that apparently projects from the apex of the epiproct. This is called the appendix dorsalis or caudal style. The appendage appears annulated and similar in shape to the lateral cerci, but the function of the appendix is unknown. The twelfth abdominal segment is called the periproct in Crustacea, and it forms a telson in some embryonic insects. The periproct appears in adult Protura and naiadal Odonata.

GENITALIA

The examination of the reproductive anatomy of different insect orders helps to develop an appreciation for the evolutionary trends in the formation of the external genitalia. The male genitalia are derived from the ninth abdominal segment. The female genitalia are derived from the eighth and ninth abdominal segments. In the female, the aperture through which the egg passes is called a gonopore. The gonopore serves as a boundary between the external and internal genitalia and is usually independent of the anus. Exceptions

include some flies, such as the Tephritidae, where a common lumen termed a cloaca serves for excretion, copulation, and oviposition.

There is usually a single, medially located gonopore. The Dermaptera and Ephemeroptera are ancient groups of hemimetabolous insects. Both orders display a condition in which the lateral oviducts do not combine to form a median oviduct. Instead, the lateral oviducts independently connect with paired gonopores on the conjuctival membrane along the posterior margin of the seventh abdominal segment.

Many female insects with a genitalic opening on the posterior margin of the eighth abdominal segment display an appendicular ovipositor. The ovipositor is a structure that develops from modified abdominal appendages or segments. It functions in the precise placement of eggs. It is commonly assumed that insects that do not show an ovipositor have ancestors that had an ovipositor. Thus, the structure has been lost during the course of evolutionary adaptation to a particular lifestyle. Female insects with a genitalic opening on the posterior margin of the ninth abdominal segment typically display a rudimentary or suppressed appendicular ovipositor. These insects lack special provisions for egg placement, but sometimes they reveal other abdominal modifications intended to facilitate oviposition.

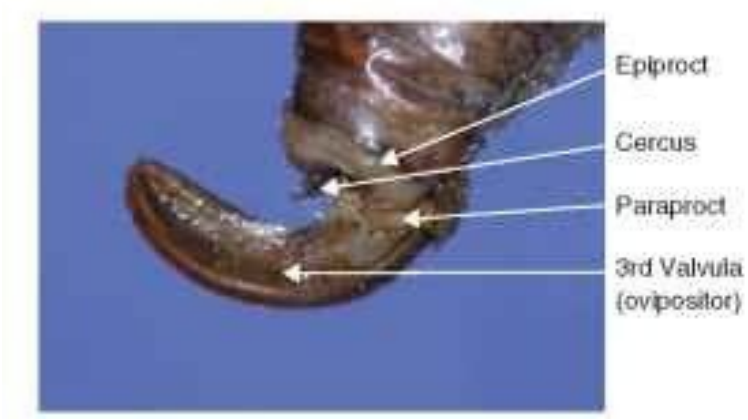

FIG. Appendicular ovipositor (Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae).

Female Genitalia

Morphologists often use the Thysanura as a starting point for developing a generalized model to explain the evolution of the external reproductive system of pterygote insects. The thysanuran abdomen has basal sclerotized plates called coxopodites on which styli are attached. These plates are serially homologous along the abdomen, and the pregenital plates are regarded as identical with the genital plates. The plates located on segments 8 and 9 are considered to be genital plates. The styli associated with these segments are called gonapophyses. There are four gonapophyses on segments 8 and 9 (i.e., a pair of styli on each segment). The gonapophyses are medially concave and directed rearward. The basal sclerite is called a gonocoxa, and in some Thysanura it may be fused with the style.

The primitive pterygote with a gonopore on segment 8 has an appendicular ovipositor that consists of three components. A basal apparatus corresponds to the basal plate or primitive gonocoxite of the thysanuran

abdominal appendage. The second part is the first valvifers (on the eighth sternum), and second valvifers (on the ninth sternum) are responsible for providing support and points of articulation for the tube through which the egg passes. Interpolated between the first and second valvifers is a small sclerite called a gonangulum, which articulates with the second gono-coxite and tergum 9. The gonangulum is present in Odonata and Grylloblatoidea. It apparently is fused with the first valvifer in Dictyoptera and Orthoptera. In the remaining orders these structures are highly variable.

The shaft of the ovipositor consists of two pairs of elongate, closely appressed sclerites called the first and second valvulae. The first pair of valvulae is positioned on the eighth abdominal sternum. The second pair of valvulae is located on the ninth abdominal sternum and is dorsal in position. Third valvulae are positioned on the posterior end of the second valvifers. These valvulae usually serve as a sheath for the shaft of the ovipositor.

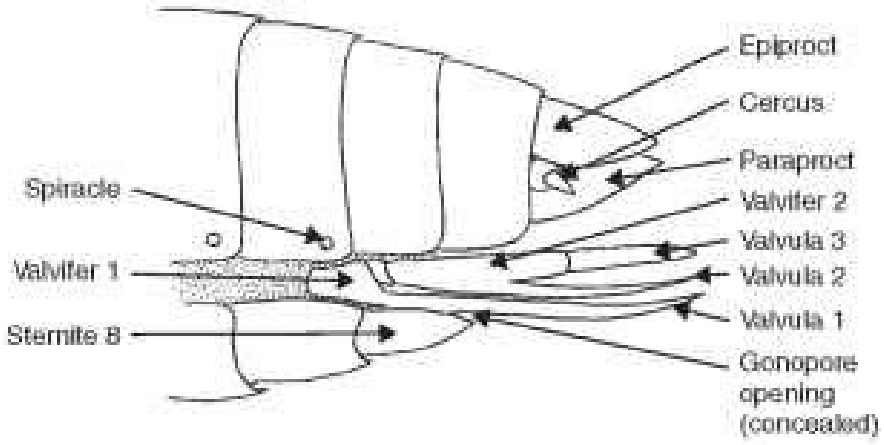

FIG. Female genitalia (diagrammatic), based on orthop-teran female.

Male Genitalia

The primary function of the male genitalia in insects is insemination of the female. Methods of achieving insemination that involve special functions of the external genitalia include clasping and holding the female, retaining the connection with the female gonopore, the construction of spermatophores, and the deposition of spermatophores or semen into the female genital tract; in some insects the injection of semen takes place directly into the female body (traumatic insemination of some Hemiptera). Other functions of the male genitalia include excretion and various sensory functions.

The genitalia of male insects exhibit such an enormous variety of shapes and constituent parts, often further complicated by structural rotation or inversion of all or some of the parts, that determination of a ground plan is virtually impossible. Examination of ancient orders shows highly variable and specialized conditions. In general, the coxites of the eighth segment in most apterygotes are reduced and without gonapophyses, and they are absent altogether in the Pterygota. Thus, the male external genitalia are derived from the ninth abdominal coxites.

Again, the Thysanura have genitalia that closely resemble that of the pterygote orders: a median intromittent organ or phallus, and paired lateral accessories. The phallus is a conical, tubular structure of variable complexity. In a ground plan condition for pterygote insects, there is a sclerotized basal portion termed the phallobase and a distal sclerotized portion called the aedeagus. The phallobase in insects is characterized by highly variable development: sometimes sclerotized and supporting the aedeagus, sometimes forming a sheath for the aedeagus. The phallobase often contains an apodeme, which may provide support or a point for muscle attachment. The phallobase and aedeagus are joined by a membranous phallotheca. The external walls of the phallobase and aedeagus are called the ectophallus. The gonopore is positioned at the apex of the ejaculatory duct and is concealed within the phallobase. The gonopore is connected to the apex of the aedeagus via a membranous tube called the endophallus. In some insects the endophallus may be everted through the aedeagus. The circular aperture at the apex of the aedeagus is called the phallotreme. In some insects the endophallus and the gonopore may be everted through the phallotreme and into the female's bursa copulatrix. Genital lobes referred to as phal-lomeres form at the sides of the gonopore in the ontogeny of some insects. Usually the phallomeres unite to form the phallus.

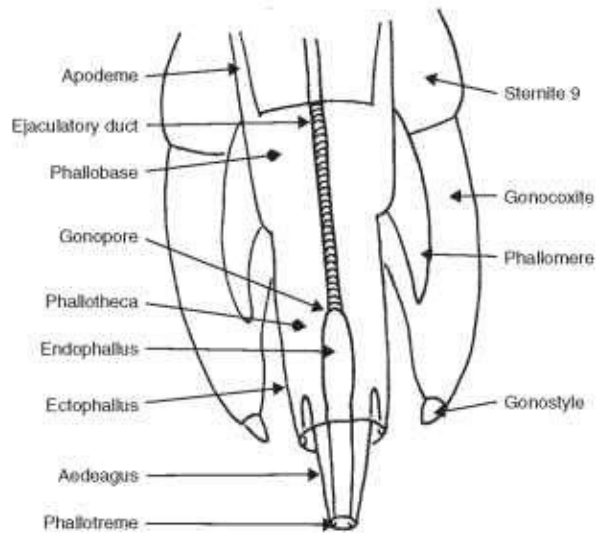

FIG. Male genitalia (diagrammatic).