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**CHARACTERISATION OF A  
CHLORORESPIRATORY PATHWAY IN *BETA  
VULGARIS* AND *TRIFOLIUM REPENS***

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Plant Biology  
at  
Massey University, New Zealand

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**2002**

## ABSTRACT

The chloroplast respiratory pathway (chlororespiration) is postulated to interact with the photosynthetic pathway through the plastoquinone (PQ) pool. Two enzymes are proposed to operate in the pathway: an NAD(P)H dehydrogenase that is homologous to the mitochondrial NADH dehydrogenase, and a putative terminal oxidase. To study the operation and regulation of the chlororespiratory pathway in two higher plant species, silverbeet (*Beta vulgaris* L.) and white clover (*Trifolium repens* L.), two approaches have been used. The first uses salicylhydroxamic acid (SHAM), an inhibitor of the mitochondrial quinol-oxidising alternative oxidase, to identify the site of inhibition during electron transfer through the photosynthetic electron transfer chain. The second uses antibodies to two subunits of the NAD(P)H dehydrogenase complex, and examines changes in accumulation of these proteins during physiological conditions proposed to regulate the operation of the NAD(P)H dehydrogenase.

For the first part, inhibition by SHAM on the photosynthetic electron transfer chain was shown to be in the vicinity of  $Q_A$  using oxygen electrode and fluorescence analysis, and a number of specific photosynthetic electron acceptors, donors and inhibitors in order to isolate specific parts of the photosynthetic electron transfer chain. By the analysis of electron transfer through the whole chain, PS I, PS II and electron transfer from P680 through to  $Q_A$ , inhibition by SHAM was shown to be in the vicinity of  $Q_A$ . These observations are consistent with the reported effects on chlorophyll fluorescence, but do not exclude the existence of an alternative oxidase in the thylakoid membrane.

To examine the accumulation of the NAD(P)H dehydrogenase complex, antibodies to the NDH-F subunit from barley and the NDH-K subunit from pea were used.

Preliminary experiments revealed that the NDH-F antibodies recognised a protein of 79 kDa in isolated silverbeet thylakoid membranes, and the NDH-K antibody recognised a 28 kDa in a preparation of extracted thylakoid membrane proteins from silverbeet. In etiolated silverbeet seedlings, a protein of 31 kDa was recognised by the NDH-K antibody. This recognition was lost in the seedlings following exposure to 12 h and

24 h of light. A protein of 33.1 kDa was recognised by the NDH-K antibody in leaves harvested over a 24 hour period, with no notable difference in level of accumulation throughout the day/night periods. During leaf development in white clover, a protein of 69 kDa, which was more prevalent in senescent leaves, was recognised by the NDH-F antibody, while the NDH-K antibody recognised a protein of 35 kDa that was more prevalent in mature, photosynthetically competent leaves. These results are evaluated in terms of providing evidence for the developmental regulation of chlororespiration in chloroplasts of silverbeet and white clover.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to say a HUGE thank you to both my supervisors Dr Simon Brown and Dr Michael McManus. Michael, thank you for all your amazing support. I simply can't find words to thank you enough, I know it was tough!!! Simon, thank you also, so much, for believing in me, especially when I had doubts.

I would also like to thank Chris, Trish McLenachan, Liz, Alicia, Richard, Anya and Trish, who gave their time and skill in helping with practical issues. To the people in Michaels lab, who made me smile and helped me keep as sane as possible - Ning (my midnight lab buddy), Balance (thanks for the chocolate!!!!), Trish (thanks for all your wise words!), Vicki, Alicia, Anya, Ranjith, Richard, Simone and Adam. Thank you guys!

Porki, porki, porki. You are the most amazing person I have ever been lucky enough to have in my life. Thanks for all the time you have given to help me in SO many ways. Ahhhh the pool games, the V, and more V, and some more V (and the sing alongs!!) and the welly trips. Te hiki piranga te hoki mo te horo te horo!!!!!! ☺

Thanks to frucor, for the invent of the wonderous liquid, V, and to Tool, u were necessary! I need to give gynaforous hugs and kisses to those of you who, in the last three years, have looked after me. Thanks to Rob, Esther, Neil, Garreth and Lala for the numerous coffees, lunches and chats. To Kerry for your help when I asked! To God who somehow kept me at it! And BIG hugs for Wayne-o, Catherine, Adrian, Duncan, John, and Paul for kind (and stern) words when I needed it, and your love (which I always need). I love you, I love you, I love you!! ♥

Finally, but equally as important, thanks to my family especially my Momma and Dad for their financial assistance!!!!!! To Nana and Poppie for your support and love. This is for you. Thank you, thank you, thank you! ☺

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Massey University Alumni Association and the J.P. Skipworth Scholarship for financial assistance during the course of this work.

Without everyones support this would not be here now. Actually. I think I may not be here now!!!! God bless you all.

XXX

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