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Transcriptional regulation during appressorium
formation and function
in *Glomerella cingulata*

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Abstract

Glomerella cingulata, anamorph *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides*, causes bitter rot in apples and fruit rot in other subtropical fruits. In response to environmental cues such as contact with the host, *Glomerella cingulata* forms a special structure called an appressorium, which accumulates glycerol and thereby generates a sufficiently high turgor pressure to push an infection peg into the host tissue. It is known that the cAMP and MAPK signalling transduction pathways control appressorium formation and function in *Colletotrichum* species and other appressorium-forming fungi. This process is accompanied by a global change in gene expression. Little is known of transcriptional regulation during this process. The aim of this project was to study the transcriptional regulation of appressorium formation and function in *G. cingulata*.

The *G. cingulata* *SAP* gene had previously been shown to be expressed as a longer transcript during the early stage of appressorium differentiation. It was considered possible that the transcription factors that regulated expression of the longer transcript may be also involved in the regulation of appressorium differentiation. Identification of the transcription factor involved may help to understand the mechanisms that regulate appressorium differentiation. The plan was to use the yeast one-hybrid system to isolate the transcription factor. This required identification of the promoter regions responsible for expression of the longer *SAP* transcript. Therefore, the *G. cingulata* *SAP* promoter was characterized by mapping the transcription start point. Three transcription start points were determined by RLM-RACE. To further characterise the promoters, *SAP-GFP* reporter plasmids were constructed and transformed into *G. cingulata*. Even though a reasonable level of *GFP* expression was observed in RT-PCR experiments, however, no differences in fluorescence intensity were seen between the wild type and *GFP* reporter transformants. Therefore, no further attempts to study the *sap* promoter were made.

The candidate gene approach was chosen as an alternative way to study the transcriptional regulation of appressorium formation and function in *G. cingulata*. The

G. cingulata StuA gene was cloned using degenerate PCR, single specific primer PCR, subgenomic library screening and plasmid rescue from a disruption mutant. Targeted gene deletion of the *G. cingulata StuA* gene was successful. Deletion mutants display many phenotypic changes. Complementation mutants were constructed to confirm the function of this gene. A full length copy of this gene together with a second selection marker was reintroduced into the deletion mutant and the wild type phenotype was restored.

Deletion mutants form appressoria at the normal rate and with unaltered morphology. In comparison with the wild type, these appressoria did not generate high turgor pressure as shown by a cytorrhysis assay. This resulted in a defect in appressorium penetration of onion epidermal cells. Nor were these mutants able to invade unwounded apples. Therefore, the *G. cingulata StuA* gene is required for appressorium function. In addition, deletion mutants displayed stunted aerial hyphae, "wetable" mycelium, reduced conidia production, and a defect in conidiophore and perithecium formation. These results suggested that the *G. cingulata StuA* gene has multiple roles in fungal development.

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Table of contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of contents	v
List of figures	x
List of tables	xiii
Abbreviations	xiv
Chapter One Introduction	1
1.1 Plant Pathogenic Fungi	2
1.2 <i>Glomerella</i> and <i>Colletotrichum</i>	4
1.2.1 Genus <i>Glomerella</i>	4
1.2.2 <i>Glomerella cingulata</i> and <i>Colletotrichum gloeosporioides</i>	4
1.2.3 Bitter rot of apple in New Zealand	5
1.2.4 Pathogenicity of <i>G. cingulata</i>	7
1.3 The infection process in <i>Colletotrichum</i> and other fungi	7
1.3.1 Spore adhesion	9
1.3.2 Spore germination and appressorium formation	11
1.3.3 Appressorium development and penetration	12
1.3.3.1 Morphological development	12
1.3.3.2 Mechanism of appressorium penetration	15
1.3.3.3 The role of extracellular enzymes	17
1.3.4 Signal transduction during appressorium development	19
1.3.4.1 Sensing mechanism	19
1.3.4.2 cAMP-PKA signal transduction pathway	20
1.3.4.3 MAP kinase pathway	24
1.3.5 Transcriptional regulation	27
1.3.5.1 Transcription factors linked to the MAP kinase pathway	30
1.3.5.2 The APSES transcription factor family	30
1.3.5.3 Transcriptional regulation of nitrogen metabolism	34
1.3.6 Gene expression during appressorium formation	36
1.3.7 Colonisation	39
1.4 Aim of this study	42
Chapter Two Materials And Methods	43
2.1 Suppliers	44

2.1.1	Enzymes	44
2.1.2	Vectors	44
2.1.3	Laboratory chemicals	44
2.1.4	Buffers and Solutions	45
2.2	Fungal and bacterial strains, plasmids	45
2.3	Growth and maintenance of organism	47
2.3.1	Growth and maintenance of <i>Escherichia coli</i>	47
2.3.2	Growth and maintenance of <i>G. cingulata</i>	48
2.4	DNA isolation, purification and quantification	49
2.4.1	Isolation of <i>G. cingulata</i> DNA	49
2.4.2	Plasmid DNA isolation	49
2.4.3	Isolation of DNA from agarose gels	50
2.4.4	Purification of PCR products	50
2.4.5	Purification of DNA by phenol/chloroform extraction	50
2.4.6	Agarose gel electrophoresis of DNA	51
2.4.7	Determination of DNA concentration	51
2.5	DNA digestion, ligation, cloning and subcloning	52
2.5.1	Restriction endonuclease digestion of genomic DNA	52
2.5.2	Restriction endonuclease digestion of plasmid DNA	52
2.5.3	Exonuclease III digestion of DNA	53
2.5.4	Alkaline phosphatase treatment of vector DNA	53
2.5.5	Ligation of DNA fragments	54
2.5.6	Preparation and transformation of competent <i>E. coli</i> cells	54
2.5.7	Screening for transformants	55
2.5.8	Subgenomic library construction and screening	55
2.6	DNA sequencing and sequence analysis	55
2.6.1	DNA sequencing	55
2.6.2	Bioinformatic analysis	56
2.7	Southern blotting and hybridisation	56
2.7.1	Southern blotting (Capillary)	56
2.7.2	Hybridisation with Digoxigenin (DIG) labelled probe	57
2.7.3	Chemiluminescent detection of DIG-labelled probes	58
2.7.4	Hybridisation with ³² P labelled probe	58
2.8	Polymerase chain reaction (PCR) amplification	58
2.8.1	Oligonucleotide primers	59
2.8.2	Routine PCR	59
2.8.3	Degenerate PCR	59

2.8.4 Bacterial colony PCR	59
2.8.5 Single specific primer PCR	60
2.9 RNA manipulations	60
2.9.1 Isolation of total RNA	60
2.9.2 Quantification of RNA	61
2.9.3 DNase I treatment of RNA	62
2.9.4 Reverse transcription of RNA into cDNA and amplification	62
2.9.5 RACE (Rapid Amplification of cDNA Ends)	63
2.9.6 Formaldehyde gel electrophoresis of RNA	64
2.9.7 Northern blotting	65
2.9.8 Probe labeling	65
2.9.9 Northern hybridization	65
2.10 <i>G. cingulata</i> transformation	66
2.10.1 Conidium induction, collection and quantification	66
2.10.2 Protoplast preparation	66
2.10.3 <i>G. cingulata</i> transformation	67
2.10.4 Single spore isolation	68
2.10.5 Plasmid rescue	68
2.11 Phenotypic characterisation of <i>G. cingulata</i> mutants	69
2.11.1 Radial growth rate	69
2.11.2 Mycelium morphology observation	69
2.11.3 Conidia production	69
2.11.4 Induction of germination and appressorium formation	70
2.11.5 Conidium adhesion assay	70
2.11.6 Mobilisation of glycogen and lipid	71
2.11.7 Appressorium penetration assay	71
2.11.8 Appressorium cytorrhysis assay	71
2.11.9 Pathogenicity Assaay	72
2.11.10 Firmness of lesion	72
2.11.11 Statistics analysis	72
Chapter three Characterisation of the <i>SAP</i> promoter	73
3.1 Determination of the transcription start points of the <i>SAP</i> gene	74
3.1.1 Mapping the most upstream transcription start point by RT-PCR	74
3.1.2 Determination of transcription start points by RLM-RACE	75
3.2 GFP-reporter gene assay	79
3.2.1 GFP-reporter plasmid construction	84

3.2.2	Transformation of <i>G. cingulata</i>	86
3.2.3	Characterisation of transformants by PCR	88
3.2.4	Fluorescence of the transformants	92
3.2.5	Examination of <i>GFP</i> transcription in the transformants	92
3.3	Summary	96
Chapter Four Cloning and Characterisation of the <i>StuA</i> gene		97
4.1	Cloning of a 5' fragment of the <i>G. cingulata StuA</i> gene	98
4.2	Disruption of the <i>G. cingulata StuA</i> gene	109
4.3	Cloning of the remainder of the <i>StuA</i> gene and sequence analysis of the gene	125
4.3.1	Cloning of a 3' fragment of the <i>StuA</i> gene by plasmid rescue	125
4.3.2	Analysis of the sequence of the <i>StuA</i> gene and its flanking regions	131
4.3.3	Analysis of the <i>StuA</i> mRNA	131
4.4	Deletion of the <i>G. cingulata StuA</i> gene	148
4.5	Restoration of the <i>G. cingulata StuA</i> gene function	156
4.5.1	Single crossover strategy for complementation of the <i>StuA</i> deletion	156
4.5.2	Double crossover strategy for complementation of the <i>StuA</i> deletion	161
4.6	Characterisation of the <i>StuA</i> mutant phenotype	167
4.6.1	Mycelium	167
4.6.1.1	Radial growth rate	167
4.6.1.2	Mycelial morphology	168
4.6.1.3	Wettability of mycelium	179
4.6.2	Conidia and appressoria	179
4.6.2.1	Conidium shape	179
4.6.2.2	Production of conidia	183
4.6.2.3	Adhesion of conidia to a hydrophobic surface	185
4.6.2.4	Germination and appressorium formation	185
4.6.2.5	Mobilisation of glycogen and lipid	191
4.6.2.6	Cytorrhysis assay	194
4.6.2.7	Penetration assay	194
4.6.3	Pathogenicity assay	200
4.6.4	Gene expression	205
4.6.4.1	Expression of the <i>G. cingulata gpd</i> , actin, and β -tubulin genes	209

4.6.4.2	Expression of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>PKS1</i> , <i>SCD1</i> and <i>THR1</i> genes	211
4.6.4.3	Expression of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>SAP</i> and <i>pnIA</i> genes	211
4.6.4.4	Expression of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> and <i>areA</i> genes	213
4.7	Summary	216
Chapter Five Discussion		219
5.1	Characterisation of the <i>SAP</i> promoter	220
5.2	Cloning and characterization of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> gene	222
5.2.1	Cloning and sequence analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> gene	222
5.2.2	Generation of deletion mutants for the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i>	224
5.2.3	The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> protein controls mycelium morphology, sexual and asexual development	227
5.2.4	The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> may control hydrophobin expression	228
5.2.5	The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> is dispensible for conidia adhesion and appressorium formation	229
5.2.6	The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> is required for appressorium penetration	230
5.2.7	The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> is required for pathogenicity	233
5.2.8	Gene expression in the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> deletion mutants	234
5.2.9	Conclusion	235
Appendix		237
Appendix 1 Media, common solutions and buffers		238
Appendix 1.1 Growth Media		239
Appendix 1.2 Antibiotics and other supplement stocks		240
Appendix 1.3 Buffers and solutions for DNA isolation and detection		241
Appendix 1.4 Buffers and solutions for RNA work		243
Appendix 1.5 Buffers and solutions for Southern/northern blotting, hybridisation and detection		244
Appendix 1.6 Buffers and solutions for <i>G. cingulata</i> protoplast preparation and transformation		245
Appendix 2 The <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>SAP</i> gene sequence		246
Appendix 3 Oligonucleotide primers used in this study		251
Appendix 4 Characterisation of the phenotypic changes for the complementation mutants		253
Appendix 5 The gene sequences used for northern analysis		254
References		257

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	The life cycle of <i>Glomerella</i>	3
Figure 1.2	Description of <i>Glomerella cingulata</i> structures	6
Figure 1.3	An apple infected by <i>Glomerella cingulata</i>	6
Figure 1.4	Outline of the infection process	8
Figure 1.5	Extracellular matrix of a spore	10
Figure 1.6	Process of spore germination and appressorium formation	13
Figure 1.7	Appressorium ultrastructure	16
Figure 3.1	RT-PCR to map the most distant transcription start point of the SAP gene	76
Figure 3.2	Outline of the RLM-RACE procedure	78
Figure 3.3	Determination of a transcription start point (TSP) by RLM-RACE	80
Figure 3.4	Determination of two further transcription start points (TSP) by RLM-RACE	82
Figure 3.5	GFP reporter gene construction	85
Figure 3.6	Generation of a SAP promoter deletion series for the SAP promoter-GFP reporter plasmid	87
Figure 3.7	Characterisation of <i>G. cingulata</i> transformed with the plasmid pBHS	89
Figure 3.8	Characterisation of <i>G. cingulata</i> transformed with the plasmid pBHG	90
Figure 3.9	Fluorescence of appressoria	93
Figure 3.10	Fluorescence of mycelia	94
Figure 3.11	Detection of the GFP transcript in transformants by using RT-PCR	95
Figure 4.1	Design of degenerate primers for cloning the <i>G. cingulata</i> StuA gene	99
Figure 4.2	PCR products from amplification of <i>G. cingulata</i> DNA using degenerate primers designed to the APSES domain	100
Figure 4.3	Alignment of the deduced StuA432 protein sequence with fungal APSES gene products	101
Figure 4.4	Nucleotide sequence and conceptual translation of the StuA432 fragment	102
Figure 4.5	Analysis of PCR products obtained using the single specific primer PCR strategy	104
Figure 4.6	Strategy for identification of a specific PCR product based on the single specific primer PCR method	105

Figure 4.7	Southern blot analysis of <i>G. cingulata</i> genomic DNA	107
Figure 4.8	Maps of the 4114 bp <i>Xho</i> I fragment and the surrounding sequence	108
Figure 4.9	Strategy for disruption of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> gene	111
Figure 4.10	PCR analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> disruption mutants	112
Figure 4.11	Southern blot analysis of <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> disruption mutants	114
Figure 4.12	Predicted hybridisation patterns for different disruption mutants	115
Figure 4.13	Southern blot analysis of disruption mutants SC5 and SC6	116
Figure 4.14	Southern blot analysis of the disruption mutants SC10 to SC19	119
Figure 4.15	Southern blot analysis of the disruption mutants SC31 and SC40	121
Figure 4.16	Colony morphology of the disruption mutants	122
Figure 4.17	Reversion of the disruption mutant and PCR analysis of DNA from the colony	124
Figure 4.18	Southern blot analysis of pERV3	127
Figure 4.19	Physical map of the plasmid pERV3	128
Figure 4.20	Assembly of the plasmid pXHE	129
Figure 4.21	Confirmation of the structure of the insert in the plasmid pXHE	130
Figure 4.22	Sequence of the <i>StuA</i> gene and its flanking region	132
Figure 4.23	5'RACE and 3'RACE strategies	139
Figure 4.24	Determination of 5' and 3' end of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> mRNA	142
Figure 4.25	Alignment of the <i>StuA</i> protein sequence with other proteins from the APSES family	144
Figure 4.26	Construction of a <i>StuA</i> gene deletion vector	150
Figure 4.27	Strategy used for deletion of the <i>StuA</i> gene and predicted results	152
Figure 4.28	PCR analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>StuA</i> deletion mutants	154
Figure 4.29	Southern blot analysis of the deletion mutants	155
Figure 4.30	First complementation construct and a predicted integration event	159
Figure 4.31	Southern blot analysis of the complementation mutants	160
Figure 4.32	PCR analysis of reversion of the complementation mutants	162
Figure 4.33	Construction of the second complementation vector and its predicted integration into the genome of the deletion mutant	164
Figure 4.34	Southern blot analysis of the second complementation mutants	165
Figure 4.35	Predicted hybridisation pattern for the wild type, the deletion mutant and the complementation mutants	166
Figure 4.36	Morphology of mycelium grown in the dark for 2 days	170
Figure 4.37	Morphology of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 2 days	171
Figure 4.38	Morphology of mycelium grown in the dark for 4 days	172
Figure 4.39	Morphology of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 4 days	173

Figure 4.40	Microscopic observation of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 4 days	174
Figure 4.41	Morphology of mycelium grown in the dark for 7 days	175
Figure 4.42	Morphology of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 7 days	176
Figure 4.43	Microscopic observation of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 7 days	177
Figure 4.44	Morphology of mycelium grown under a light/dark cycle for 14 days	178
Figure 4.45	Wettability of the mycelium	180
Figure 4.46	Conidial shape	181
Figure 4.47	Appressorium morphology	190
Figure 4.48	Mobilisation of glycogen during appressorium development	192
Figure 4.49	Mobilisation of lipid during appressorium development	193
Figure 4.50	Collapsed appressoria	196
Figure 4.51	Wild type appressorium penetration of onion epidermal cells	197
Figure 4.52	Penetration of onion epidermal cells by the complementation mutant NR5	198
Figure 4.53	Penetration of onion epidermal cells by the complementation mutant NR13	199
Figure 4.54	Appressorium development of the deletion mutant DC42 on onion epidermal cells	201
Figure 4.55	Appressorium development of the deletion mutant DC43 on onion epidermal cells	202
Figure 4.56	Surface of apple lesions	206
Figure 4.57	Apple lesions	207
Figure 4.58	Northern blot analysis of the <i>gpd</i> , actin and β -tubulin genes	210
Figure 4.59	Northern blot analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>PKS1</i> , <i>THR1</i> and <i>SCD1</i> genes	212
Figure 4.60	Northern blot analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>pnlA</i> and <i>SAP</i> gene	214
Figure 4.61	Northern blot analysis of the <i>G. cingulata</i> <i>stuA</i> and <i>areA</i> genes	215

List of tables

Table 1.1	Summary of genes encoding components of the cAMP signal transduction pathway and the phenotypes of the corresponding deletion mutants.	28
Table 1.2	Summary of genes encoding components of the MAPK signal transduction pathway and the phenotypes of the corresponding deletion mutants.	29
Table 2.1	Fungal and bacterial strains used in this study	45
Table 2.2	Plasmids used in this study	47
Table 4.1	Summary of the three transformation experiments	120
Table 4.2	Growth rate of the <i>G. cingulata</i> wild type, disruption mutants and ectopic transformants	123
Table 4.3	Comparison of the StuA protein with homologous proteins from the APSES family	147
Table 4.4	Shape and size of conidia	182
Table 4.5	Conidia production on PDA plates	184
Table 4.6	Conidium adhesion assay	186
Table 4.7	Appressorium formation on wax coated glass slides	187
Table 4.8	Appressorium formation on polystyrene Petri dishes	188
Table 4.9	Appressorium formation and penetration on onion epidermal cells	189
Table 4.10	Cytorrhysis assay	195
Table 4.11	Pathogenicity assays on unwounded apples	203
Table 4.12	Pathogenicity on wounded apples	204
Table 4.13	Softness of apple lesions	208

Abbreviations

bp	base pair
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
cAMP	cyclic AMP
cDNA	complementary deoxyribonucleic acid
CWDE	cell wall degradation enzyme
dATP	deoxyadenosine triphosphate
dCTP	deoxycytosine triphosphate
dNTP	deoxynucleotide triphosphate
DHN	dihydroxynaphthalene
DTT	1,4-dithiothreitol
DIG	Digoxigenin
EDTA	Ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid
ECM	extracellular matrix
GFP	green fluorescence protein
kb	kilobase pair
MAPK	mitogen activated protein kinase
ORF	open reading frame
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PKA	protein kinase A
5' UTR	5' un-translated region
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
RT-PCR	Reverse transcription PCR
RACE	Rapid amplification of cDNA ends
REMI	restriction enzyme mediated integration
Sec	Second(s)
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulfate
SSC	sodium chloride/sodium citrate (buffer)