

Chemistry of Peptides and Proteins

Editors

Voelter · Wunsch

Ovchinnikov · Ivanov



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PREFACE

The USSR-FRG Symposium on the Chemistry of Peptides and Proteins was conducted to reinforce between scientists of both countries the hitherto existent contact and exchange of information at the level of the European Peptide Symposium.

Based on the scientific agreement between the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the Federal Republic of Germany, represented on the one hand by the Soviet Academy of Sciences and on the other by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the bilateral symposium series was initiated at the 1st Meeting in Dushanbe-Tadjikistan in April, 1976.

As the scientific basis of these meetings, we have attempted to combine the three main research areas in the field of chemistry of peptides and proteins, i.e. a) isolation, b) structure elucidation and c) synthesis as a discussion platform in order to reestablish the working community previously existing in chemistry of natural products. The first meeting has already confirmed the usefulness of such a programme .

Additionally, our idea was to incorporate, if required, discussions on special, closely-related topics of particular scientific interest. Consequently, at the 2nd Meeting in Grainau-Eibsee in May, 1978, membrane chemistry was added to the programme. The positive aspects of this choice were clearly confirmed at the 3rd meeting in Makhachkala in October, 1980, where a first, tentative discussion on immunological problems in connection with the chemistry of peptides and proteins took place. We believe that this widening of the scientific programme may, in future meetings, lead to a fruitful exchange of experience and knowledge in the individual sectors of this field of chemistry. The strong resonance of the scientific communications and related discussions among

the participants of both countries is clearly shown by the increasing interest in these meetings and by the continuous demand for publication of the reports. Following a simple abstract booklet on the occasion of the 1st Meeting, a proceedings volume with shortened versions of the lectures was printed for the 2nd Meeting. In the present proceedings the detailed reports of the lectures and communications of the 3rd Symposium on the Chemistry of Peptides and Proteins are published in full.

The organizers of these series of symposia on Chemistry of Peptides and Proteins would like to take the opportunity of expressing their gratitude to the Soviet Academy of Sciences as well as to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for their generous support and sponsorship.

For the Editors

E. Wunsch

CONTENTS

I. Isolation and Structure Elucidation of Peptides and Proteins

The Primary Structure of DNA-Dependent RNA Polymerase from E.coli. Nucleotide Sequence of rpoB Gene and Amino Acid Sequence of the β -Subunit V.Lipkin, G.Monastyrskaya, V.Guvanov, S.Guryev, O.Chertov, V.Grinkevich, I.Makarova, T.Marchenko, I.Polovnikova, E.Sverdlov, Y.Ovchinnikov	3
Study on the Primary Structure of the Elongation Factor G from E.coli Y.B.Alakhov, L.P.Motuz, N.V.Dovgas, Y.A.Ovchinnikov	13
Intracellular Serine Proteases of Bacilli A.Ya.Strongin, V.M.Stepanov	19
Structure and Biological Function of Proteinase Inhibitors from Yeast K.Maier, H.Holzer, R.Barth, P.Bünning, E.Kominami	29
Inhibitors of Human Neutral Granulocytic Proteinases from the Leech: Biochemical Characterization and Pathobiochemical Aspects U.Seemüller, M.Eulitz	39
Isolation of a Specific Protein Inhibitor of Fungal Proteinase and Yeast Proteinase B from the Kidney Bean Seeds V.V.Mosolov, E.L.Malova, A.N.Tcheban, V.M.Lakhtin, A.N.Bakh	47
Isolation of Membrane Glycoproteins from Paramyxovirus SV5 for Analysis of their Carbohydrate Structure P.Prehm	53
Haemoglobin Polymorphism in Chironomus (Diptera) H.Aschauer, T.Kleinschmidt, W.Steer, G.Braunitzer	61
High Altitude Respiration of the Bar-Headed Goose (Anser Indicus) and the Different Evolution of the α - and β -Chains in Avian Haemoglobins G. Braunitzer, W. Oberthür	71

The Structure of the Dicyclohexylcarbodiimide-Binding Subunit E.Wachter, T.Graf, G.Wild, W.Se bald	83
Structural Studies of the Active Ion Transport Systems N.Modyanov, A.Babakov, N.Arzamazova, K.Dzhandzhugazyan, S.Kocherginskaya	85
Isolation of the TTX-Sensitive Protein(S) of Excitable Tissues V.K.Lishko, M.K.Malysheva, A.V.Stefanov, A.M.Chagovetz, A.A.Bogomoletz	93
Fragments Formed from Neuropeptides upon Action of Hypothalamic Endopeptidases T.Akopyan, A.Arutunyan, A.Oganisyan	99
New Data about the Specific Proteins of Hypothalamus - Carriers of Cardioactive Compounds A.Galoyan, R.Srapionian	103
Isolation and Structural Study of Neurotoxin from the Venom of Spider <i>Latrodictus Tredecimguttatus</i> S.Salikhov, M.Tashmukhamedov, M.Adylbekov, J.Abdurakhmanova, A.Korneyev, A.Sadykov	109
Sea Anemone Toxins, a Minireview L.Beress	121
Structure and Properties of Mastoparan II - Oligopeptide from the Venom of Hornet <i>Vespa orientalis</i> I.Nasimov, L.Snezhkova, O.Reshetova, A.Miroshnikov	127
Isolation, Physico-Chemical and Biological Properties of the Immunity Polypeptide Bioregulator from Thymus O.A.Pisarev, V.G.Morosov, V.K.Khavinson, L.K.Shataeva, G.V.Samsonov	137
Some Recent Advances in the Methods of Protein Sequence Analysis A.Henschen, F.Lottspeich, W.Brandt, C.v.Holt	143
Field Desorption Mass Spectrometry of Oligopeptides W.Voelter, M.Przybylski	153

Sequence Analysis of Membrane-Modifying Peptide Antibiotics by Gas Chromatography and Mass Spectrometry W.A.König, M.Aydin	173
Structure Elucidation and Properties of Nikkomycins, a New Class of Nucleoside - Peptide Antibiotics H.Hagenmaier, W.A.König	187
 II. Peptide Syntheses. Biological Activity and Analytical Problems of Synthetic Peptides <hr/>	
Electrochemical Introduction and Selective Removal of a New Type of Amino- and Carboxy-Protecting Group for Peptide Synthesis G.Jung, M.H.Khalifa, A.Rieker	193
New Aspects of Peptide Synthesis by Four Component Condensations I.Ugi, W.Breuer, P.Bukall, S.Falou, G.Giesemann, R.Herrmann, G.Hübener, D.Marquarding P.Seidel, R.Urban	203
Isocyanides as Activating Reagents in Peptide Synthesis H.Aigner, G.Koch, D.Marquarding	209
Impact of Conformation on the Synthetic Strategies for Peptide Sequences M.Mutter, H.Anzinger, K.Bode, F.Maser, V.N.R. Pillai	217
Synthetic Studies of Neurotoxin II from Venom of Central Asian Cobra <i>Naja naja oxiana</i> V.Deigin, V.Ulyashin, I.Mikhaleva, V.Ivanov	229
Investigation on the Synthesis of Salmon Calcitonin II Fragments G.Vlasov, V.Glushenkova, V.Lashkov, N.Kozhevnikova, L.Nadezhdina, L.Krasnikov, I.Ditkovskaja, O.Glinskaja, T.Komogorova	239
Total Synthesis of Somatostatin without Hydroxyl Group Protection of Hydroxyl Amino Acid Residues Y.P.Shvachkin, S.K.Girin, A.P.Smirnova, A.A. Shishkina, N.M.Ermak	245

Total Synthesis of Somatostatin-28 L.Moroder, M.Gemeiner, E.Jaeger, E.Wünsch	249
Synthesis, Structure and Membrane Properties of Gramicidin A Dimer Analogs L.Fonina, A.Demina, S.Sychev, A.Irkhin, V.Iva- nov, J.Hlavaček	259
Cyclic Analogues of Bradykinin and Kallidin G.Chipens, F.Mutulic, N.Mishlyakova	269
Inhibition of RNA Polymerase by Analogs of Amaninamide T.Wieland, C.Birr, A.E.Vaisius, G.Zanotti	275
Structure-Activity Relationship of Actin- Binding Peptides H.Faulstich	279
Synthesis, Spectral and Biological Proper- ties of DSIP and its Analogs I.Mikhaleva, A.Sargsyan, T.Balashova, V.Ivanov	289
Polyoxyethyleneoxide(POE) Peptides, Models for Rhodopsin and Myoglobin E.Bayer	299
Chemical Mutation: Replacement of Reactive Site Residue P ₁ =Lys in Bovine Kunitz Inhibitor by other Amino Acids and Concomitant Specificity Change H.Tschesche, H.R.Wenzel	301
Semisynthetic Modification of the N-Terminus of the Insulin A-Chain P.Trindler, D.Brandenburg	307
Enzymatic-Chemical Transformation of Por- cine Insulin into Human Insulin E.N.Voluyskaja, S.P.Krasnoschokova, V.V.Knja- zeva, M.N.Rjabtsev, S.M.Funtova, T.I.Zujanova, A.I.Ivanova, V.P.Fedotov, Yu.P.Shvachkin	315
Trypsin Catalyzed Peptide Synthesis: Modifica- tion of the β -Chain C-Terminal Region of Insu- lin H.-G.Gattner, W.Danho, R.Knorr, H.Zahn	319

Semisynthesis with Insulin-B-Chain
E.E.Büllesbach, E.W.Schmitt, H.-G.Gattner,
V.K.Naithani, J.Föhles 327

Investigation of the Influence of A1, B29
Amino Group Modification on the Structure
and Biological Activity of Insulin
G.Vlasov, N.Izvarina, N.Illarionova 337

Bacterial Cell Wall Glycopeptides: Synthe-
sis, Conformation and Antitumor Activity
T.Andronova, L.Rostovtseva, I.Sorokina, V.Mal'-
kova, V.Ivanov 343

Use of Dipeptide Substrates in Studies of
Specific Features of Thrombin Catalysis
V.K.Kibirev, S.B.Serebryany 353

Studies on the Efficacy of Preparative and
Analytical HPLC in Peptide Chemistry
W.Göhring, M.Gemeiner, L.Moroder, R.Nyfeler,
E.Wünsch 359

A Method for Amino Acid Separation with a
Microcolumn Chromatograph
E.Ya.Kreindlin, V.S.Onoprienko, O.V.Evseeva,
L.B.Kaminir 367

An Express Method for Determination of Absolu-
te Configuration and Quantity of Amino Acid
Enantiomers in Mixtures
N.A.Voskova, V.V.Romanov, G.A.Korshunova, Yu.
P.Shvachkin 373

III. Structural Features of Proteins

Structure-Activity Studies on Neurotoxin 1
from Sea Anemone Radianthus Macroductylus
E.Kozlovskaja, H.Vozhova, G.Elyakov 379

Cobra Venom Neurotoxins: Conformation and
Interaction with the Acetylcholine Receptor
V.Tsetlin, E.Karlsson, Y.Utkin, A.Arseniev,
K.Pluzhnikov, A.Surin, V.Pashkov, V.Bystrov,
V.Ivanov 389

The Study of the Scorpion Neurotoxin Membrane Receptors N.Soldatov, V.Kovalenko, E.Grishin	399
Dehydration of Ionogenic Groups in Peptide Ligands on Receptor Surface G.V.Nikiforovich, S.A.Rozenblit, G.Chipens	407
The Study of the Structural and Functional Organization of the Somatotropin Molecule Y.A.Pankov, A.A.Bulatov, Y.M.Keda, T.A.Osipova, V.I.Pozdnyakov	415
Structural Features of <i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i> Crystal Protein V.M.Stepanov, G.G.Chestukhina, I.A.Zalunin, L.I.Kostina, A.L.Mikhailova	423
X-Ray Investigation of Three Dimensional Structure of Actinoxanthin V.Pletnev, A.Kuzin, S.Trakhanov, V.Popovich, I.Tsigannik	429
Aldimine Bond Migration in the Photochemical Cycle of Bacteriorhodopsin N.Abdulaev, V.Tsetlin, A.Kiselev, V.Zakis, Y.Ovchinnikov	435
Chemical Modification of Purple Membrane Topography of Bacteriorhodopsin H.-D.Lemke, J.Bergmeyer, D.Oesterhelt	441
Formation and Unusual Properties of Bacteriorhodopsin- Ag^+ -4-Dimethylaminochalcone Triple Complex A.Aldashev, A.Rodionov, E.Efremov, A.Shkrob	451
Peptide from Beef Heart Mitochondria Inducing Ion-Selective Channels on Planar Bilayer Membrane L.A.Pronevich, G.P.Mironov, G.D.Mironova	457
Functional Role of the Protein Component of the Ca^{2+} -Transporting Glycoprotein from Beef Heart Homogenate and Mitochondria T.V.Sirota, L.A.Pronevich, G.D.Mironova	463
Optical Spectroscopy Study of Substrate Binding by Leucine Specific and Leucine - Iso-leucine - Valine Binding Proteins from <i>E.coli</i> I.Nabiev, S.Trakhanov, A.Surin, T.Vorotyntseva, E.Efremov, V.Pletnev	467

Investigations of Immunoglobulin Structure in Solution V.Zav'yalov, V.Abramov, O.Loseva, V.Tishchenko, E.Dudich, I.Dudich	473
Conformational Lability of Immunoglobulin M Molecule E.Kaverzneva, F.Shamkova, Y.Khurgin, R.Kayushi- na	479
Structure-Functional Studies of DNA-Dependent RNA Polymerase from E.coli O.Chertov, V.Efimov, O.Chakhmakhcheva, Y.Smir- nov, S.Tsarev, N.Skiba, T.Marchenko, V.Lipkin, E.Sverdlov	485
Structure of the Proteolipid Subunit of the ATP Synthase J.Hoppe, W.Se bald	489
Quaternary Structure and Reconstitution of Acetylcholine Receptor from Torpedo cali- fornica W.Schiebler, L.Lauffer, G.Bandini, F.Hucho	499

I Isolation and Structure Elucidation of Peptides and Proteins

THE PRIMARY STRUCTURE OF DNA-DEPENDENT RNA POLYMERASE FROM
E. coli. NUCLEOTIDE SEQUENCE OF *rpoB* GENE AND AMINO ACID
SEQUENCE OF THE β -SUBUNIT

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Introduction

Elucidation of the transcription mechanism requires detailed knowledge of the active center's organization of RNA polymerase at the various stages of the RNA synthesis. This, in turn, can be obtained only after determining the primary and spatial structure of the enzyme.

Earlier we had established the amino acid sequence of the α -subunit of *E. coli* DNA-dependent RNA polymerase resorting solely to the ordinary methods of protein chemistry (1). In the case of the β - and β' -subunits with their much higher molecular weights (~155.000 and ~165.000, respectively), such an approach could no longer suffice.

Results

One of the approaches to the structure determination of large protein molecules is their initial cleavage into a small number of fragments, which then can be analyzed by conventional methods. The search for the conditions of limited proteolysis of the β - and β' -subunits was undertaken. Considerable obstacles were encountered in the course of these studies owing

to the fact that the RNA polymerase subunits are not the native proteins. However, the conditions for limited tryptic proteolysis of the β -subunit were found. These are an enzyme/substrate ratio of 1:500, temperature 0°C , 4 hr (2). Herein there seems, what we believe, to be an optimal set of large fragments (mol. wt. 62.000, 52.000, 37.000, 24.000 and 10.000). Initial separation of the resultant hydrolysate was carried out by chromatography on Sephadex G-100 in 6 M guanidine hydrochloride. This yielded 10 fractions. Their analysis by polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis showed that all large fragments mentioned above are in the first three fractions, while the rest contain about 95 smaller peptides. 53 low molecular weight peptides were isolated from the hydrolysate. They consist of approximately 400 amino acid residues. Their sequencing was very useful for a further structure investigation (3). Isolation of the high molecular peptides proved difficult because of both the little hydrolytic specificity and the low yield of most products. So we could not use limited proteolysis as the main procedure for β sequencing.

The progress in DNA sequencing methods allowed to realize the possibility of using the genetic code to obtain information on the primary protein structure from the nucleotide sequences. However, here there are many pitfalls in the way, requiring considerable caution to avoid possible sources of error.

In the first place the mRNA can undergo processing, leading to erroneous deduction of the protein structure. This holds particularly for eukaryotic cells, wherein "splicing" has been noted. Secondly, the protein itself can be processed. Thirdly, it is often difficult to recognize in the overall DNA structure the beginning of a structural gene. Moreover, one has to bear in mind that a single error (deletion or insertion) in the DNA sequence could lead to a completely erroneous amino acid sequence of the protein.

Thus, primary structure determination of DNA cannot serve as a substitute for the direct sequencing of the protein. In view of this, we decided to utilize the methods of both protein

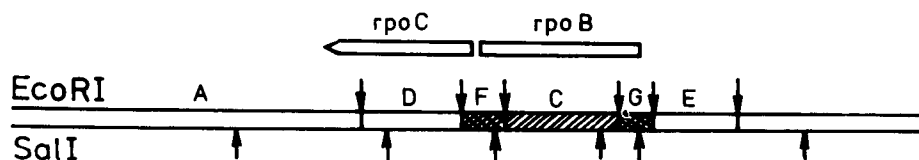


Fig. 1. EcoRI and SalI restriction cleavage map of the *E. coli* DNA region including the structural genes (*rpoB* and *rpoC*) of the β - and β' -RNA polymerase subunits.

and nucleotide chemistries, performing the parallel sequencing of the structural genes *rpoB* (β -subunit) and *rpoC* (β' -subunit) and of the corresponding proteins. Knowledge of the nucleotide sequence of the pertinent DNA segments would permit aligning of the peptide fragments from the protein analysis into an uninterrupted polypeptide chain. Such an approach provides the key to the most complicated problem in the primary structure analysis of high molecular proteins.

In Fig. 1 restriction endonucleases cleavage map of *E. coli* DNA region containing the structural genes of the β - and β' -subunits of the RNA polymerase (*rpoB* and *rpoC* correspondingly) is given. We determined the total sequence of the EcoRI-C (4), EcoRI-F (5) and EcoRI-A - HindIII fragments and partial sequence of the EcoRI-G fragment carrying the beginning of the *rpoB* gene (6). These fragments were obtained from DNA of λ_{rif}^{d47} and λ_{rif}^{d18} transducing phages, containing the *E. coli* *rpoBC* operon (7, 8), or corresponding plasmids by EcoRI restriction endonuclease digestion. In the case of EcoRI-A - HindIII fragment EcoRI and HindIII digestions were used.

The fragments were consecutively digested with one of the restriction endonucleases (Sau 3AI, Hinf I, Hpa II and Taq I) cleaving the DNA into relatively small blocks. The resulting subfragments were phosphorylated by means of $[\gamma\text{-}^{32}\text{P}]\text{-ATP}$ and phage T4 polynucleotide kinase and the mixture was separated by electrophoresis on polyacrylamide gel. As a rule both