A Patch Clamp Study of Tonoplast Electrical Properties in Vacuoles Isolated from Chenopodium rubrum Suspension Cells

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Z. Naturforsch. 40c, 886–890 (1985); received October 23, 1985

Patch Clamp, Membrane ATPase, Tonoplast, Vacuole, Chenopodium rubrum L.

The patch clamp technique has been applied to isolated vacuoles from green suspension cells of Chenopodium rubrum to record electrical parameters of the tonoplast. In a symmetrical K+ solution of 46 mM, the membrane displays a near zero voltage, whereas 2 mM ATP will hyperpolarize it to 15 or 20 mV (vacuole positive). The conductance amounts to about one S·m⁻². Fluctuations of the clamp current are explained by an unknown channel species having opening times of 5–10 ms. Together with previous work on a tonoplast vesicle preparation and unpublished data on vacuoles from our laboratory, the present results indicate an electrogenic membrane ATPase pumping protons from the cytoplasm to the vacuole.

Introduction

Presently transport processes across the tonoplast membrane are intensively studied, particularly whether energy is expended by a membrane ATPase pumping protons from the cytoplasm into the vacuole. Since direct evidence for an electrogenic proton pump, as available through standard electrophysiology with impaled microelectrodes for the plasmalemma [1], is hardly feasible, we have applied the "whole cell"-recording mode of the patch clamp technique [2] to isolated vacuoles from green suspension cells of Chenopodium rubrum. We present data on membrane potential and conductance of the tonoplast, including the activity of an ATPase.

Materials and Methods

Cell culture

Photoautotrophic and phytohormone independent suspension cells derived from hypocotyl cells of Chenopodium rubrum L. [3] are cultured as described in [4].

Isolation of protoplasts

For protoplast isolation cells from the exponential growth phase were used (for the growth pattern of the culture see [5]); cells from 6 days old cultures were harvested from the suspension by filtering through a 15 μm nylon net (Thoma GmBH, Mössingen, FRG); 15 g cells (fresh weight) were suspended in 50 ml medium I (20 mM MES/KOH, pH 5.3, 0.3 mM mannitol, 2 mM CaCl₂, 10 mM KCl, 1 mM DTT, 5 mM MgCl₂, 0.5% BSA); 50 ml medium I with 2.5 g cellulase TC from Trichoderma reesi (Serva) and 2.5 g pectinase 5S from Aspergillus niger (Serva) were added to the cell suspension and incubated on a gyratory shaker (120 rpm); after 90 min, there was no more Calcofluor white-staining [6] detectable at the cell surface (Calcofluor white ST-solution was a gift from Dr. U. Seitz, Tübingen). Protoplasts were harvested by centrifugation with 100 × g, 15 min, and washed twice with medium II (20 mM MES/KOH,
Electrophysiological experiments

The patch clamp technique was employed in the "whole cell-attached"-mode as described in [2] and [8]. During the measurement the vacuoles were bathed in 50 µl medium IV with 0.1 mM NaCl added. If not stated otherwise, the electrodes were filled with 30 µM EGTA in medium IV. Under these conditions the employed electrodes had a resistance of 10 to 20 MΩ. ATP (Tris salt; Sigma, München, FRG) solved in equimolar MgCl₂, pH 6, and FCCP in ethanol were added as 50-fold concentrated stock solutions.

All experiments shown were conducted with the voltage clamped to the given values and the current registered on a 4-track tape recorder. For I–V-curves only the stationary current more than 10 s after the last change in the clamp voltage was considered.

As the current signal (ΔI(t)) to a voltage jump (ΔU) at t = 0 for a resistance R_M with parallel capacity C_M and serial resistance R_ser is given by:

\[ \Delta I(t) = \frac{\Delta U}{R_M + R_{ser}} \left( 1 + \frac{R_M}{R_{ser}} \exp(-t/\tau) \right) \]

with \( \tau = \frac{R_{ser} R_M C_M}{R_M + R_{ser}} \)

and thus \( \Delta I(t = 0) = \Delta U/R_{ser} \) and \( \Delta I(t = \infty) = \Delta U/(R_M + R_{ser}) \); \( R_{ser} \) was calculated from the initial current peak, \( (R_M + R_{ser}) \) from the steady state current and \( C_M \) from the resistances and \( \tau \), neglecting the electrode capacity and the seal resistance; the latter was in the range of 10 to 20 GΩ (as compared to \( R_M + R_{ser} \) in the range of 200 to 1000 MΩ. The thus calculated values differed only slightly from the capacity calculated from the integral of the initial current overshoot and the serial resistance calculated from \( \tau \) and \( C_M \). For noise analysis the recorded data were low-pass filtered at 400 Hz, digitized by a Nicolet 1170 digital oscilloscope and evaluated with an HP-9830A-calculator.

Results

Immediately after the establishment of the open connection between vacuole and patch electrode interior a "transmembrane potential" of -15 mV was measured. During the first minutes this potential declined to zero corresponding to the exchange of electrode filling and vacuolar sap. This decrease in po-
potential was accompanied by an increase in the serial resistance (Fig. 1). The capacity of the non-energetized vacuole was about 5 mF·m⁻².

If the patch pipette was filled with 1 mM K⁺ instead of 46 mM K⁺, the stable transmembrane potential was 15 to 20 mV (inside positive). As Fig. 2 shows, the current-voltage-relationship of the tonoplast was linear in the range from −50 to +50 mV, and indicated a conductance range of 0.88 to 1.18 S·m⁻² with different vacuoles. Fig. 2 also demonstrates that addition of ATP did not change the slope of the current-voltage-characteristics; however the zero-current potential was shifted from 0 to 17 mV (vacuole positive), indicating a tonoplast hyperpolarization. This hyperpolarization was accompanied by decrease of the serial resistance and an increase of the membrane capacity to 8 mF·m⁻². After addition of FCCP (32 μM) all of these MgATP-dependent effects were reversed (Figs. 1 and 3).
It has not yet been possible to record single channel events from tonoplast patches. However, our whole cell recordings show very distinct fluctuations of the clamp current necessary to maintain a set transmembrane voltage. The smallest fluctuations appeared not at the zero-current voltage, but at about $-10$ to $-20$ mV corresponding to $-15$ to $-30$ pA; upon addition of ATP this minimum was shifted to even more negative values (Fig. 4).

**Discussion**

While the patch clamp technique has been applied already to the plasmalemma of a plant cell [10], this paper communicates the first study on the tonoplast. Isolated vacuoles are obviously well suited for this technique. The membrane potential of the ATP-supplied, i.e. normally energized, tonoplast of about 15 to 20 mV (vacuole positive), as indicated by the zero-current voltage of the ATP curve in Fig. 2, is in accord with numerous estimates from microelectrode impalements of whole cells. The tonoplast slope conductance is linear, as expected from a $K^+$ permeable membrane facing identical $K^+$ solutions (46 mM); its magnitude of one $Sm^{-2}$ is in the same order as of the intact *Chenopodium* suspension cell [11].

The ATP-generated tonoplast hyperpolarization (Fig. 2) and, from our unpublished data, ATP-generated acidification of isolated vacuoles strongly suggests the existence of a proton pumping membrane ATPase. Its dissipation by the protonophore FCCP (Fig. 3) is consistent with this notion. More interestingly, the difference between the two curves in Fig. 2 constitutes a constant current (about 20 pA), and nicely confirms the conclusion of our previous study on proton pumping in a tonoplast containing vesicle preparation [4]. Previously, this constant current mode has been found with plasmalemma proton pumps [1].

Finally, we analyzed the current fluctuations in terms of single channel conductance [9]. The relationship between the standard deviation of the current fluctuations and the mean clamp current can be explained by a single channel conductance of about 0.5 pS (provided the channel closing probability is assumed to be one). Whereas this value is considerably smaller than 30 pS, reported for the $K^+$ channel in the plasmalemma of *Vicia* guard cells [10], the mean channel opening times of 5—10 ms emerging from our analysis of the covariance function and 7—10 ms from the $K^+$ channel in *Vicia* fairly agree. We have not yet identified the channel(s) in *Chenopodium*; however, the ATPase is no likely candidate, as shown by the similarity of the curves in Fig. 4.

**Acknowledgements**

We thank Dipl.-Biol. K.-F. Schmidt, Physiologisches Institut der Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, for his help with the analysis of the current fluctuations. This work was supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Be 466/21 and Ba 249/17).