Effect of Hydroxylamine Derivatives on Photorespiration in the Tobacco Aurea Mutant *Nicotiana tabacum* Su/su

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O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine affects the size of the Warburg effect measured in leaves of the tobacco aurea mutant Su/su. If leaves are treated with a 10^{-3} M aqueous solution of the hydroxylamine derivative the Warburg effect which is usually very high in this mutant, is practically reduced to zero. Thus, if in the control (the untreated leaf) the Warburg effect consists in an enhancement of CO_2-fixation from 270 μmol CO_2 fixed·mg·chlorophyll^{-1}·h^{-1} under 21% oxygen partial pressure to 530 μmol CO_2 fixed·mg·chlorophyll^{-1}·h^{-1} under 3% oxygen, the treated sample yields the maximal rate of photosynthesis already under 21% oxygen partial pressure. At concentrations around 10^{-3} M the compound is toxic to the plants and inhibits CO_2 fixation substantially. A second hydroxylamine derivative used in this study has an additional methyl group in the ortho position to the —O—NH_2 group. This compound is already toxic to the plant at concentrations around 10^{-4} M at which O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine optimally enhances CO_2 fixation at normal oxygen partial pressure. From our studies it appears that O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine binds to ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase inducing a conformational change of the enzyme. This is concluded from the observation that a monospecific antiserum to ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase is exhausted at considerably higher enzyme concentrations when the enzyme has been treated with the hydroxylamine derivative prior to the antiserum addition. The observation is interpreted as being due to a conformational change induced by the compound, leaving less antigenic determinants accessible in the enzyme surface, when compared to the untreated control. The inhibition of photosynthetic CO_2 fixation at high concentrations of both hydroxylamine derivative studied is due to the inhibition of photosynthetic electron transport on the donor side of photosystem II, a phenomenon which is known already for unsubstituted hydroxylamine from the literature. The inhibition of electron transport on the donor side is deduced from an analysis of fluorescence rise kinetics at room temperature.

Introduction

Photorespiration is a wasteful process occurring in C_3 plants in which freshly fixed CO_2 is given back to the ambient atmosphere and at the same time oxygen is taken up. The phenomenon is caused by the oxygenase function of the CO_2-fixing enzyme ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase. It is common knowledge that photorespiration appears suppressed at high CO_2 partial pressure or at low O_2 partial pressure, a fact which shows that the photorespiration is regulated by the affinity of this bifunctional enzyme towards its substrates CO_2 and O_2. As the affinity of a given enzyme towards its substrate depends on the enzyme’s conformation, we have studied changes in substrate affinity of the enzyme “Rubisco” towards its substrates CO_2 and O_2, in the presence of artificial effector molecules. More than seven years ago Okabe, Codd and Stewart have been able to demonstrate that hydroxylamine enhances the carboxylating activity and inhibits the oxygenase activity of a cyanobacterial Rubisco [1]. As plant material for the studies in the present paper we have chosen the tobacco aurea mutant Su/su [2—5] which, as shown by a number of laboratories, exhibits an especially high activity of photorespiration, when compared with the wild type [6—9]. With these tobacco plants and ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase preparations from this mutant [10] we have made an analysis of substrate affinity changes in the presence of hydroxylamine derivatives.

**Abbreviations:** Compound 368, O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine; compound 378, O-(p-nitro-o-methylphenyl)-hydroxylamine; Rubisco, ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase/oxygenase.

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**Materials and Methods**

*Plant material*: The tobacco aurea mutant *Nicotiana tabacum* Su/su used in the present study has been described first in 1964 by Burk and Menser [2].

*Chloroplast preparations* were made according to Homann and Schmid [11].

*Warburg effect* measurements were carried out as described earlier [12] using an IR-CO₂ Analyzer (Hartmann, Germany).

*Activity of ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase* was measured according to Lorimer et al. [17]. The enzyme was activated also according to Lorimer et al. [18] by incubation for 5 min at 30 °C in Tris HCl at pH 8.

*The antiserum to ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase* was prepared according to the methods described earlier [13, 14].

*The monospecificity of the antiserum* was verified as described by Radunz [15].

O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine and O-(p-nitro-o-methylphenyl)-hydroxylamine have been put at the disposition of the present study by Roussel Uclaf [21].

*Fluorescence induction kinetics* at room temperature have been analyzed with a home-made device [19] set-up according to the principles described by Joliot et al. [20].

**Results**

In the first set of experiments we have sprayed a tobacco mutant plant with $10^{-5}$ M aqueous solution of O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine “product 368” [16] or O-(p-nitro-o-methylphenyl)-hydroxylamine “product 378”. The quantity absorbed by the plant is not defined but we have wetted the plant twice within a 2-h interval. The next day we have measured the Warburg effect in leaf sections of the thus treated plant (Fig. 1a). It is clearly seen that with product
368, photosynthesis, that is the CO₂ fixing capacity under 21% oxygen, is enhanced to the value of the untreated plant at 3% oxygen partial pressure. This means that the Warburg effect by addition of product 368, is reduced to practically 0%. As van Assche et al. [21] have recently shown, O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine changes the conformation of the fully activated spinach enzyme in the sense that in the presence of the compound the number of accessible sulfhydryl groups is diminished from 12 or 13 SH groups to 8. If the result in Fig. 1a is to be interpreted in this way, this would indeed mean that the hydroxylamine derivative changes the enzyme’s function, thus yielding higher affinity towards CO₂ and diminishing at the same time the oxygenase function. If, however, product 368 is used at higher concentrations (10⁻⁴ M) the overall effect is an inhibition of photosynthesis, as shown in Fig. 1c. It seems as if a certain threshold value is not to be exceeded otherwise the effect of product 368 is generally toxic to the plant. A second product which we call in the following product 378 is a hydroxylamine derivative which differs from 368 by substitution of a methyl group in the ortho position to the hydroxylamine residue. This product has at the concentration of 10⁻⁵ M a much higher effectiveness on the overall rate of photosynthesis, hence is clearly toxic to the plant (Fig. 1a). However, at a concentration of 10⁻⁶ M at which 368 acts optimally, already an inhibitory effect on the overall rate of photosynthesis, hence is clearly toxic to the plant (Fig. 1a). However, at a certain high concentration hydroxylamine acts as a water-analogue and is electron donor for photosystem II [22]. This clearly explains the dual effect of

![Figure 2](image-url)  
**Fig. 2.** Remaining antiserum activity after incubation of 1 ml antiserum with increasing amounts of ribulose-1,5-bisphosphate carboxylase. Rubisco treated with 10⁻⁶ M O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine exhausts the antiserum at much higher concentrations than the control.

in the presence of product 368 more enzyme is necessary to exhaust the antiserum than in its absence. This fully confirms the observation by van Assche et al. [21] in which the authors conclude that the product induces a conformational change, since in the presence of the product nearly half of the otherwise detectable SH-groups become inaccessible to the test reagent [21]. At high product concentrations (see Fig. 1c) photosynthesis is strongly inhibited. This inhibition is apparently due to an inhibition of photosynthetic electron transport on the donor side of photosystem II. This is verified by measuring the induction of room temperature fluorescence with chloroplast preparations of Su/su (Fig. 3). In the presence of product 368 and even more pronounced with product 378 the fluorescence rise kinetics is substantially slowed down in comparison to the control. This is interpreted as being due to the fact that the quencher Q stays preponderantly in the oxidized condition (in which fluorescence is low), because electrons from the donor side of PS II arrive too slowly and do not compensate electron removal from Q by photosystem I. The inhibitory effect of hydroxylamine on photosynthetic electron transport is long known from the literature. According to the literature hydroxylamine in suitable concentrations inhibits on the donor side of photosystem II [22, 23]. At certain high concentrations hydroxylamine acts as a water-analogue and is electron donor for photosystem II [22]. This clearly explains the dual effect of
we used the tobacco aurea mutant Su/su which as shown by the literature [4, 6] is a plant with an especially high photorespiration. In particular Okabe [24] and Okabe and Schmid [8] have shown that Rubisco isolated from this plant had an increased affinity towards oxygen and a decreased one towards CO$_2$ when compared to the green control. On the other hand, the plant exhibits under conditions, such as high CO$_2$ partial pressure or low O$_2$ partial pressure, which exclude the functioning of photorespiration, maximal photosynthetic rates which are manyfold higher than those of any green plant [3]. With this plant material we observe that leaves treated with aqueous solutions of O-(p-nitrophenyl)-hydroxylamine exhibit less photorespiration than untreated leaves. It appears that the compound readily penetrates into tobacco leaves, being after a very few hours at its site of action, leading to a reduced photorespiration evidenced by a substantial enhancement of CO$_2$-fixation rates at the normal O$_2$ partial pressure of air (Fig. 1). Whether the effect is caused by the compound as such or a metabolite, produced from it in the plant, is not entirely clear. It appears, however, that the hydroxylamine derivative acts with isolated Rubisco from Su/su but also with the commercially available spinach enzyme from Sigma, inducing an alteration of the enzyme conformation. This conformational change is deduced from the observation that the number of SH groups accessible to the test reagent diminishes in the presence of the hydroxylamine derivative [21] and that the number of antigenic determinants accessible in the enzyme surface to a monospecific antiserum to Rubisco is reduced in the presence of the compound (Fig. 2). This seems to be at least valid for the activated enzyme. It is difficult to imagine that in this isolated system an alteration of the hydroxylamine derivative other than the binding onto the enzyme would occur. Hence, the hydroxylamine derivative bound onto the enzyme might play the role of an effector molecule that exerts its effect on the enzyme's conformation.

Discussion

In the present paper we demonstrate that photorespiration is reduced by certain hydroxylamine derivatives. As plant material for this demonstration...
[16] European Patents no 85587 and 119892.