

## Expression and Characterization of Sweet Potato Invertase in *Pichia pastoris*

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An invertase cDNA (Ib $\beta$ fruct1) was cloned from sweet potato leaves and characterized. The deduced amino acid sequence of the Ib $\beta$ fruct1-encoded protein was closely related to vacuolar invertases and included the WECVD catalytic domain characteristic of them. An expression plasmid containing the coding region of Ib $\beta$ fruct1 under the control of the alcohol oxidase promoter was used to transform the methylotrophic yeast *Pichia pastoris*. The biochemical properties for the expressed recombinant enzyme, which was determined to be the acid  $\beta$ -fructofuranosidase with an acidic pI value (5.1), were similar to those of vacuolar invertases purified from sweet potato. Periodic acid/Schiff staining and Con A-Sepharose gel-binding experiments revealed the recombinant invertase to be a glycoprotein containing glucose and/or mannose residues. Furthermore, the carbohydrate moiety appears to be a key determinant of the enzyme's sucrose hydrolysis activity, substrate affinity, and thermal stability.

**KEYWORDS:** Vacuolar invertase; cDNA; sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*); recombinant invertase; *Pichia pastoris*; glycoprotein

### INTRODUCTION

In plants, invertase ( $\beta$ -D-fructofuranoside fructohydrolase; EC 3.2.1.26) catalyzes the conversion of sucrose to glucose and fructose and is crucially involved in phloem unloading, carbon partitioning, responding to pathogens and wounding, and controlling cell differentiation and development (1–6 and references therein). This enzyme has been purified and characterized from a variety of plants (1, 7–9), and on the basis of its solubility properties, pH optima, subcellular localizations, and isoelectric points, it has been categorized into soluble acid, soluble alkaline, and cell-wall forms. Soluble acid invertase, which exhibits optimal activity in the pH range of 3.5–5.0 and has an acidic pI value, is thought to function in the vacuoles of plant cells. Alkaline invertase, by contrast, is a cytoplasmic enzyme that exhibits optimal activity in the pH range of 7.0–7.8 and has an acidic pI value. In the apoplast, cell-wall invertase, which has an acidic pH optimum and a basic pI value, is ionically or covalently bound to the cell walls (1).

The sweet potato *Ipomoea batatas* L. is a dicotyledonous plant that belongs to the family Convolvulaceae. It is used as a food staple, vegetable, and animal feed, for industrial starch extraction, and for various processed products (10, 11). Production of sweet potatoes is affected by several internal and external factors, including net photosynthetic rate, photosynthate partitioning, storage root sink potential, temperature, moisture level, and pathogens (11, 12). To study the role of invertase in the development of the sweet potato, we have purified and

characterized several invertase isoforms from the leaves of the sweet potato plant (13). Unfortunately, further investigation of the structure–function relationships for these enzymes has been hampered by low yields of the purified proteins. In this paper, we report the cloning of a cDNA encoding vacuolar invertase from sweet potato leaves. By expression of this cDNA in the methylotrophic yeast *Pichia pastoris*, the invertase was purified and characterized. To our knowledge, this is the first report of production of plant invertase in milligram quantities in a heterologous system.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Materials.** Guanidinium thiocyanate, phenol, and agarose were purchased from AMRESCO Inc. (Solon, OH). Taq DNA polymerase and plasmid pGEM-T were from Promega Corporation (Madison, WI). Reverse transcriptase and a 5' RACE system were from Life Technologies (Rockville, MD). [ $\alpha$ - $^{32}$ P]-dCTP, a Rediprime random prime labeling system, a cDNA Synthesis System Plus Kit, and anti-His<sub>6</sub> antibody were all from Amersham Pharmacia Biotech (Uppsala, Sweden). Lambda ZAP II and Gigapack II Gold packaging extract were from Stratagene (La Jolla, CA). Plasmid pPICZ $\alpha$  B, *Pichia pastoris* strain GS115, and *Pichia* EasyComp Kit were from Invitrogen (Groningen, The Netherlands). Ni-NTA agarose was from Qiagen (Valencia, CA). Restriction endonucleases were from Life Technologies or New England BioLabs, Inc. (Beverly, MA). Other chemicals were obtained from Sigma Chemical Co. (St. Louis, MO) or Merck (Darmstadt, Germany).

**RNA Isolation.** Sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas* L. cv Tainong 57) plants were grown in a field in natural light. Young leaves (sink leaves) were cut, immediately frozen in liquid nitrogen, and stored at  $-70^{\circ}\text{C}$

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until required. For experimentation, the frozen samples were ground to a fine powder in liquid nitrogen using a mortar and pestle, after which total RNA was extracted using the method of Chomczynski and Sacchi (14). Poly(A)<sup>+</sup> RNA was isolated from the total RNA by oligo-(dT)-cellulose chromatography (15).

**Cloning of Invertase cDNA.** To prepare a DNA probe for invertase, invertase cDNA was amplified by RT-PCR using a pair of primers designed from the conserved regions of plant-invertase sequences (5'-AAAAACTGGATGAACGATCCTAATGGT-3' and 5'-TCTTCCACCTTGAGCAAAGCTTCAAC-3') and poly(A)<sup>+</sup> RNA from young sweet potato leaves as a template. The amplified product, which had the predicted size of 1.4 kb, was gel-purified and cloned into pGEM-T vector. The cloned DNA fragment encoding the expected invertase sequence was confirmed by sequencing. It was then <sup>32</sup>P-labeled using a Rediprime random prime labeling system and used as a probe for screening a cDNA library.

Poly(A)<sup>+</sup> RNA isolated from young sweet potato leaves was used for cDNA synthesis with a cDNA Synthesis System Plus kit. After the addition of an EcoRI linker and digestion with EcoRI, the cDNA was ligated into Lambda ZAP II and packaged into phages using Gigapack II Gold packaging extract. The unamplified library, containing 1.2 × 10<sup>5</sup> recombinant plaque-forming units, was then screened with the 1.4 kb <sup>32</sup>P-labeled probe. The positive plaques were isolated, subjected to *in vivo* excision, and amplified as phagemids for further analysis. To clone the 5'-end of invertase cDNA, 5' RACE was performed using a 5' RACE system with a pair of invertase-specific primers (ISPI, 5'-GCTT TCCACTTCTTCAACCGGCCATTG-3', and ISP2, 5'-CCACG-CAGTGGTCGGGTCCTAAAGTC-3'). The major 5' RACE product, a 0.9 kb fragment, was gel-purified, cloned into pGEM-T vector, and sequenced.

Both DNA strands were sequenced using the dideoxy chain-termination method of Tabor and Richardson (16). The sequences were analyzed using the Wisconsin package, version 10.3 (Accelrys Inc., San Diego, CA).

#### Construction of the Expression Plasmid and Bacterial Strains.

To construct the expression plasmid pSPIT1-Y1, the coding region of Ibβfruct1 cDNA was first amplified by PCR with primers P5', 5'-TCTTCGAAATTCACATGGCCGCCAC-3' (nucleotides 9–32), and P3', 5'-TTCATTCCGCGGCCGCAAGAGATAATG-3' (nucleotides 1980–2006) into which EcoRI and NotI restriction sites had been respectively incorporated by changing the nucleotide sequences as italicized above. The amplified fragment was then digested with EcoRI and NotI and ligated into plasmid pPICZα B, which had been digested with the same restriction enzymes.

*E. coli* strains XL1-blue, JM 109, and TOP10F' were used for plasmid propagation. For selection and maintenance of the plasmids, bacterial cultures were typically grown at 37 °C in vigorously aerated Luria–Bertani medium [1% (w/v) Bacto-tryptone, 0.5% (w/v) Bacto-yeast extract, and 1% (w/v) NaCl, pH 7.0] supplemented with 100 μg/mL zeocin for plasmid pSPIT1-Y1 and pPICZαB or 100 μg/mL ampicillin for other plasmids.

#### Expression and Purification of Recombinant Invertase in Yeast.

*Pichia pastoris* strain GS115 was transformed with plasmid pSPIT1-Y1 using the *Pichia* EasyComp kit. The transformed cells were then grown in buffered glycerol–complex medium [0.1 M potassium phosphate, pH 6.0, 1% (w/v) yeast extract, 2% (w/v) peptone, 1.34% (w/v) yeast nitrogen base (YNB), 4 × 10<sup>-5</sup>% (w/v) biotin, and 1% (v/v) glycerol] at 30 °C until the A<sub>600</sub> value reached 2.0. Culture samples were then centrifuged at 3000g for 5 min, after which the growth medium was removed, and the cells were resuspended in the buffered methanol–complex medium [0.1 M potassium phosphate, pH 6.0, 1% (w/v) yeast extract, 2% (w/v) peptone, 1.34% (w/v) YNB, 4 × 10<sup>-5</sup>% (w/v) biotin, and 0.5% (v/v) methanol] and grown at 30 °C for 72 h. Methanol (0.5% (v/v) of the growth medium) was added to the culture every 24 h.

Purification of the recombinant invertase was carried out at 0–4 °C. The methanol-induced cultures were centrifuged at 6000g for 5 min, after which the invertase-containing supernatant was concentrated by ultrafiltration. The concentrated enzyme solution was then loaded onto a Ni-NTA agarose column (1.6 cm × 5 cm) preequilibrated with buffer A (50 mM sodium phosphate, pH 8.0, and 300 mM NaCl)

containing 5 mM imidazole. The column was then washed with buffer A containing 20 mM imidazole and eluted with buffer A containing 250 mM imidazole. Fractions showing invertase activity were collected and dialyzed against PB buffer (50 mM sodium phosphate, pH 7.0, and 1 mM β-mercaptoethanol), and the purified enzyme solution was stored at –20 °C until required.

**Protein Analytic Methods.** Invertase activity was assayed at pH 5.0 as described by Sung and Huang (17). One unit of invertase was defined as the amount of enzyme that catalyzed the formation of 1 μmol of reducing sugar from sucrose in 1 h at 37 °C. The amount of reducing sugar produced was measured by the method of Somogyi–Nelson (18). The protein concentration was determined using the protein–dye binding method (19), with bovine serum albumin serving as the standard protein. Enzymatic deglycosylation of the recombinant invertase was accomplished by incubating 10 μg of the invertase for 6 h at 37 °C in PB buffer containing 10 units of *N*-glycosidase F (PNGase F), which cleaves all types of *N*-glycan chains from glycoproteins unless they carry α-1,3-linked core fucose residues (20).

Nondenaturing PAGE and SDS–PAGE were carried out according to the method of Laemmli (21), after which the resolved proteins were stained with Coomassie blue R-250. To stain the glycoproteins, the gels were incubated with 0.7% (w/v) periodic acid in 5% (v/v) acetic acid solution for 3 h, 0.2% (w/v) sodium metabisulfite in 5% (v/v) acetic acid solution for 3 h, and Schiff's reagent for 18 h, as described by Segrest and Jackson (22).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Cloning of a cDNA Encoding Vacuolar Invertase from Sweet Potato Leaves.

To clone the sweet potato invertase cDNA, a 1.4 kb screening probe was first synthesized by RT-PCR using primers containing conserved sequences of plant invertases. The deduced amino acid sequence of the resultant DNA fragment, which contained the conserved β-fructosidase motif (NDPNG) and catalytic domain (WECVD), was highly homologous to the coding sequences of acid invertases from other plants (data not shown). By use of this fragment as a probe to screen a sweet-potato-leaf cDNA library, two positively hybridizing clones each containing 1.0 and 1.5 kb of insert DNA were selected for further analysis.

Analysis of the selected clones revealed that they encoded the same amino acid sequence as the screening probe. Moreover, both sequences contained poly(A) tails but lacked translation initiation sequences and the upstream untranslated regions. The rest of the cDNA sequence was then obtained using the 5' RACE technique. The complete nucleotide sequence of the cDNA, which we named Ibβfruct1, was 2220 bp in length (GenBank accession number AF017082) and contained an open reading frame encoding 656 amino acid residues, beginning at nucleotide 22 and ending with the termination codon TAA (nucleotides 1990–1992). The deduced amino acid sequence of the Ibβfruct1-encoded protein had, respectively, 69.5%, 46.2%, and 27% identity with the vacuolar (23), cell-wall (24), and neutral (25) invertases from carrot, indicating that the Ibβfruct1-encoded protein was most closely related to vacuolar invertase. **Figure 1** shows the alignment of the deduced amino acid sequences derived from Ibβfruct1 and vacuolar invertase cDNAs from various plants. The presence of the WECVD motif characteristic of plant vacuolar invertases (1) confirms that the Ibβfruct1 gene encodes an acid invertase normally localized in vacuoles.

**Production of the Recombinant Invertase in *Pichia pastoris*.** The open reading frame of Ibβfruct1 was cloned into pPICZα B expression vector, after which the chimeric plasmid was used to transform *P. pastoris* strain GS115 cells. pPICZα B contains a methanol-inducible alcohol oxidase (AOX1) promoter for expressing the inserted foreign genes in yeast and provides the expressed products with an α-factor secretion signal

Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	MAATFSSAAK	FYDLENAAAR	YAPLP...AG	PHSCEIP...	ASHFPSLK	SSTILLSS	52
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	---MASTE	ALLPVTSLQD		PLSESRSDQI	PETRRRPIK	VHLAVYSGLL	45
Carrot_sl	--MDYHFLP	SRDLRHASS	YTPRP...DS	PEFRHEPDP	RSKTRRPIK	VYSSVLLSFL	54
Tomato_TIV1	--MATQYDB	ENS...ASR	YTHLP...DQ	PDGCH...	...RKSLL	ISGIFLSEV	41
Rice_Osfruct1	--MATSRLTP	AYDKNAAA	VYTPLP...EQ	PHSAEVE...	...IRDKPFK	ISAIILSS	51
Maize_Inv1	---MIPAVAD	PTTDDGGGAR	R...PLLEP	PRGRAAAGAE	QKRPPATP.T	VLTAVVSAV	54
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	FHCSTILLV	FNQSSSIEPD	GPVVVAGSGN	RSAREVNPGV	VLPAPSRGVS	QGVSEKAFRG	112
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	LLIAYVTLIV	THDGSKAE		IATESRFRM		CVSEKSNDC	82
Carrot_sl	LLSIVIFLLV	NPNVQVVRK	KVSKNSNGED	RNKASKSPFM	LGP.PSRGVS	QGVSEKSPFRQ	113
Tomato_TIV1	LLLSVAFFPL	...	LNNQSPD	LOIDSRSF..	AP.PSRGVS	QGVSEKTPFD	84
Rice_Osfruct1	LLLALILVAV	NYQ...	APPFSH	SSGDNSQPA	VMP.PSRGVS	QGVSEKAFRG	98
Maize_Inv1	LLLVAVTVL	ASQHVDDGAG	GVF...	...AGEDAVV	VEVAASRGVA	QGVSEK...	101
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	V...S...GGR	ISYPWSNLML	WORTAVYEPQ	PEKNWMNDPN	GPLYYKGYE	FFYQYNPDSA	167
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	V...ISSDDGKV	EAFPNNTIL	SWQRTAFYEPQ	PEKNWMNDPN	GPLYHKGWYE	VMLYQYNPDA	142
Carrot_sl	...ATAE..	PSYPWINDML	SWQRTAFYEPQ	PQKNWMNDPN	GPLYHKGWYE	FFYQYNPDSA	167
Tomato_TIV1	V...ACASH..	VSYAWSNAML	SWQRTAFYEPQ	PQKNWMNDPN	GPLYHKGWYE	FFYQYNPDSA	140
Rice_Osfruct1	A...SGAGNG	VSFANLML	SWQRTAFYEPQ	PVKNWMNDPN	GPLYHKGWYE	FFYQYNPDSA	155
Maize_Inv1	TAPLLGSGAL	QDFSWNAML	AWQRTAFYEPQ	PKKNWMNDPN	GPLYHKGWYE	FFYQYNPDSA	161
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	VWGNITWGHA	VFPDILHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	WYDVNGVWTG	SATILPDGRI	VMLYTGDT	226
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	VWGDIVWGHA	VSKDLHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	WYDANGVWTG	SATFLDDGSI	VMLYTGDT	200
Carrot_sl	IWGNITWGHA	VSRDLHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	WYDINGVWTG	SATILPDGRI	VMLYTGDT	225
Tomato_TIV1	IWGNITWGHA	VSKDLHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	WYDINGVWTG	SATILPDGRI	VMLYTGDT	198
Rice_Osfruct1	VWGNITWGHA	VSTDLHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	WYDVNGVWTG	SATILPDGRI	VMLYTGDT	213
Maize_Inv1	VWGNITWGHA	VSRDLHWL	ELPFAMVPDQ	PYDANGVWSG	SATRLPDGRI	VMLYTGSAE	220
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	DYVQVQNLAF	PANLSDPLL	DWVKYFNNEV	IYPPFGIGVK	DFRDPTTAW	TAGSQNGWL	285
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	EVVQVQNLAY	PEDPSDPLL	WVVKFSNPEV	LVPFGIGAK	DFRDPTTAW	KT...SSGKWR	257
Carrot_sl	DVYVQVQNLAY	PANLSDPLL	DWIKYFNNEV	MFPFGIGST	DFRDPTTAW	I...G...DGKWR	282
Tomato_TIV1	DYVQVQNLAY	PANLSDPLL	DWVKFKGNEV	LVPFGIGVK	DFRDPTTAW	T...G...QNGWR	256
Rice_Osfruct1	SYVQDQNLAF	PANLSDPLL	DWVKYFNNEV	IYPPFGIGVK	DFRDPTTAG	TAGMONGWR	272
Maize_Inv1	SSAQVQNLAF	PADAADPLL	DWVKSDA	LVPFGIGPT	DFRDPTTACR	TFAGNDTAR	280
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	VTIGSK...VGK	TGISLVYETT	NFTFKLLDG	VLRVAVPGTGM	WECVDLYPV	...STTGE	338
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	ITIGSK...INR	TGISLVYDIT	DFKTYEKET	LLHQVPTGM	WECVDFXPV	...SKTQL	310
Carrot_sl	ITIGSK...VNR	TGISLVYKTT	DFITVYELLDN	LLRVAVPGTGM	WECVDFXPV	...SVTVS	335
Tomato_TIV1	LTIGSK...HGK	TGVVLYYETS	NFTFKLLDG	VLRVAVPGTGM	WECVDFXPV	...STTKT	309
Rice_Osfruct1	VTIGSK...VGK	TGISLVYETT	NFTFKLLYEG	VLRVAVPGTGM	WECVDLYPV	...STTGE	325
Maize_Inv1	VITIGSKDRDR	AGLALVYRTE	DFVRYDPA	LMRVAVPGTGM	WECVDFXPV	AGSGAAAGSG	340
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	NGLDTS...VNC	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	LGTYDPAKKN	WTPDNPLD	GI...GLRLDY	395
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	NGLDTS...VNC	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	IGTYDSDNAT	WTPDNPLD	GI...GLRLDY	369
Carrot_sl	NGLDTS...VNC	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	LGTYDINDK	WTPDNPLD	GI...GLRLDY	392
Tomato_TIV1	NGLDTS...VNC	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	IGTYDLGKKN	WTPDNPLD	GI...GLRLDY	366
Rice_Osfruct1	NGLDTS...VNC	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	LGTYDPAKKN	WTPDNPLD	GI...GLRLDY	382
Maize_Inv1	DGLDTSAAAPG	LDVKHVLKAS	LDLDDKHXYA	IGTYDPAKKN	WTPDPAKKN	GI...GLRLDY	398
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	GKYYASKTFY	DONKQRRILW	GWIGETDLEA	VDLMKGWASL	QAIPTVVD	KKTCTNVLQW	455
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	GKYYASKTFY	DONKQRRILW	GWIGESDSEA	ADVQKQWSSV	QCIPTVVD	TRTKTNVLQW	429
Carrot_sl	GKYYASKTFY	DQDKERRILW	GWIGESDNEA	TDLLKQWASV	QSIPTVVD	KKTCTNVLQW	452
Tomato_TIV1	GKYYASKTFY	DEKKERRILW	GWIGETDSEA	ADLQKQWASV	QSIPTVVD	KKTCTNVLQW	426
Rice_Osfruct1	GKYYAARTFY	DONKQRRILW	GWIGETDLEA	VDLMKGWASL	QAIPTVVD	KKTCTNVLQW	442
Maize_Inv1	GKYYASKTFY	DFVLRRLVW	GWIGETDSE	ADLQKQWASV	QSIPTVVD	TKTCTNVLQW	458
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	P...DEVESLRS	GDPTTAEANL	EPGSVVPVHV	SEGTQLDITA	SFEVDETLFE	TASESHDA..	513
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	PVEEVESSLRL	SSKKF...DMTE	GPQVVPVVDV	GSATQLDIEA	RFEKTDDEK	LFFDDDSVEA	488
Carrot_sl	PVEEVESSLRS	RSYIINDVEL	KPGSIVPLKE	SSAAQLDIVA	SFEVDEEAFK	RHYEAD..A..	509
Tomato_TIV1	PVEEVESSLRV	GDPTVQVVDL	QPGSEHLLRV	DSAAQLDIEA	SFEVDKVAWQ	GIIEADHVA..	484
Rice_Osfruct1	PVEEVESSWS	GDPTITQRI	EPGSVVPVHV	SGATQLDITA	SFEVDETLFE	TASESHDA..	500
Maize_Inv1	PVEVEENLRM	SGKSFDFVAL	DRGSVVPVLDV	GKATQLDIEA	VFEVDASDAA	GVTEAD...	514
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	..GYDCSNSSG	GAVTRGSLGP	FGLLVVADEK	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGADGKAK	AHFCADQTRS	571
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	DNKFSCEANG	GSTARAGLGP	FGLVLADEG	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGKHSKLN	TVFCADQTRS	548
Carrot_sl	..SYNCTASE	GAAGRGLLGP	FGLLVLADEK	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGVDGKAK	TVFCADQTRS	567
Tomato_TIV1	..GFSCTSSG	GAASRCLLGP	FGVVIADDP	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGADGKAK	TVFCADQTRS	542
Rice_Osfruct1	..GYDCSNSSG	CAGTRGSLGP	FGLLVVADEK	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGADGKAK	AHFCADQTRS	558
Maize_Inv1	..VTFNCSSTA	GAAGRGLLGP	FGLLVLADEK	LSELTVPVYF	VAKGADGKAK	TVFCADQTRS	573
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	SMASGVKEV	YGSVAVPVDG	ENYSARILID	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	630
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	TLANDVVKPI	YGSVAVPVDG	EKLWIRILVD	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	607
Carrot_sl	STASDVKV	YGSVAVPVDG	ESLSMRLLVD	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	626
Tomato_TIV1	SEAPGVGKQV	YGSVAVPVDG	EKRSRMLVD	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	601
Rice_Osfruct1	SMASGVKEV	YGSVAVPVDG	ENYSARILID	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	617
Maize_Inv1	SKANDLVKRV	YGSVAVPVDG	ENLSVIRILVD	HSIVESPAQG	GRTVTERVY	PTSRFLQGLS	632
Sweet potato_Ibfruct1	RVSLFR...MR	AKTTC.YITF	LLFLSL.IIS	~~~~~	~~~~~	~~~~~	656
Arabidopsis_Atfruct3	KLFLFNNAID	AAVTA.SFTV	WQMNNAFIHP	YSSDDLGVPS	ST	~~~~~	648
Carrot_sl	RVFLFNATG	VSVTA.SVKA	WQMSATLKP	PFDFDL	~~~~~	~~~~~	661
Tomato_TIV1	RVFLFNATG	ASVTA.SVKA	WSLSANIQS	PLQLDL	~~~~~	~~~~~	636
Rice_Osfruct1	RCFFFNATE	ASVTA.SVKA	WQMSATLKP	YFIFPDQS	~~~~~	~~~~~	654
Maize_Inv1	RVFLFNATH	AAVTA.SVKA	WQNSAYIRP	YFATTSLS	~~~~~	~~~~~	670

Figure 1. Alignment of the deduced amino acid sequences derived from *Ibfruct1* and vacuolar invertase cDNAs from various other plants. The sequences compared were *sl* from carrot (*Daucus carota*, CAA53098), *TIV1* from tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*, P29000), *Atfruct3* from *Arabidopsis thaliana* (X99111), *Osfruct1* from rice (*Oryza sativa*, AAD10239), and *Inv1* from maize (*Zea mays*, P49175). The  $\beta$ -fructosidase motif (NDPNG) and the catalytic domain (WECVD) of the enzymes are underlined.

in the N terminus and a His tag in the C terminus, enabling purification of the expressed proteins directly from the growth medium by affinity chromatography. When the transformed cells were grown for 24 h at 30 °C in the presence of methanol, a His-tagged protein with a molecular mass of about 68 kDa was detected in the growth medium by SDS–Western analysis using an anti-His<sub>6</sub> antibody as a probe (Figure 2, panels A and B). Accumulation of acid invertase activity in the growth medium, but not in the intracellular fraction, was also observed (Figure 2C). Because *P. pastoris* strain GS115 is invertase-deficient

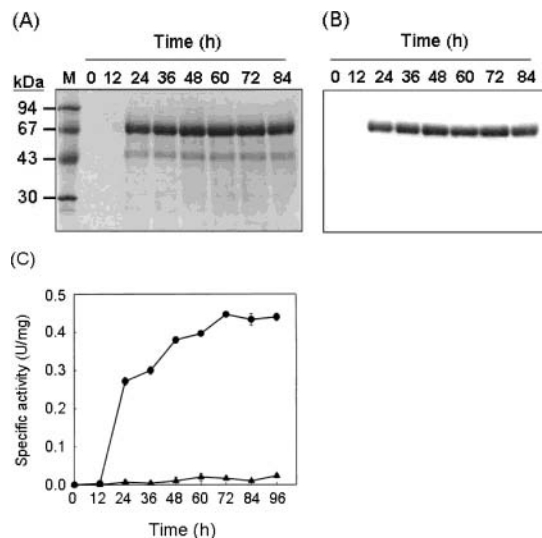
(26), the source of the activity could only have been the secreted recombinant protein encoded by *Ibfruct1*.

Maximal production of the recombinant invertase was obtained after induction for 72 h. Under those conditions, the amount of recombinant invertase secreted into the growth medium reached 4 mg/L and comprised over 27% of the total secreted proteins. Purification of the enzyme to apparent homogeneity by Ni-NTA agarose chromatography (Figure 3) produced a 2.5-fold increase in specific activity and a yield of 70% (Table 1).

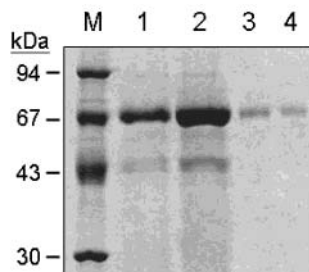
Table 1. Purification of the Recombinant Invertase from *P. pastoris*<sup>a</sup>

purification step	total protein (mg)	total activity (unit <sup>b</sup> )	specific activity (unit mg <sup>-1</sup> )	yield (%)	purification
centrifugal supernatant of the culture	1.34	0.57	0.43	100	1.0-fold
ultrafiltration	1.26	0.52	0.41	91.2	1.0-fold
Ni-NTA agarose	0.37	0.40	1.08	70.1	2.5-fold

<sup>a</sup> The data were obtained from the centrifugal supernatant of a 100 mL culture of methanol-induced *P. pastoris* transformed with the plasmid pSPIT1-Y1. <sup>b</sup> One unit of invertase was defined as the amount of enzyme that catalyzed the formation of 1  $\mu$ mol of reducing sugar from sucrose in 1 h at 37 °C.



**Figure 2.** Production of recombinant invertase in *P. pastoris* GS115 cells transformed with plasmid pSPIT1-Y1. Cells were grown in buffered glycerol–complex medium at 30 °C until  $A_{600}$  values reached 2.0 and then in buffered methanol–complex medium at 30 °C as described in Materials and Methods. Samples collected after various time intervals were centrifuged at 3000g for 5 min, after which the proteins in the supernatants were separated by 12.5% SDS–PAGE (10  $\mu$ g of protein per lane). The resolved proteins were then stained with Coomassie blue (A) or transferred to a PVDF membrane and immunodetected with anti-His<sub>6</sub> antibody (B). M indicates molecular mass markers. Proteins in the supernatants of each sample were also assayed for invertase activity at pH 5.0 (C): ●, *P. pastoris* transformed with pSPIT1-Y1; ▲, *P. pastoris* transformed with pPICZ $\alpha$  B.



**Figure 3.** Purification of the recombinant invertase. Protein samples collected at various stages of the purification were separated by 12.5% SDS–PAGE and then stained with Coomassie blue: M, molecular mass markers; lane 1, the secreted proteins from methanol-induced transformed *P. pastoris* (pSPIT1-Y1); lane 2, the secreted proteins after concentration by ultrafiltration; lanes 3 and 4, the recombinant invertase purified by Ni-NTA agarose chromatography. The amount of the purified recombinant invertase loaded in lanes 3 and 4 was about 3 and 2  $\mu$ g, respectively.

**Biochemical Properties of the Recombinant Invertase.** The molecular mass of the purified recombinant invertase was 72 and 67.61 kDa as determined by gel filtration chromatography and LC–MS, respectively. The similarity of these values to the

Sweet potato SGGRISYPWSNLM  
 Carrot AEPSPYPTNDMLSWQRTSFHFQP  
 Tomato YAWSNAMLSWQRTAYHFQPQKN  
 A. thaliana TPAFEWSNML

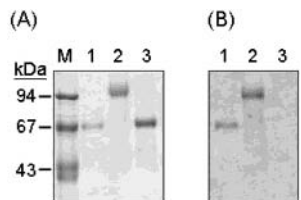
**Figure 4.** Alignment of the N-terminal sequences of the recombinant sweet potato invertase and vacuolar invertases from carrot (31), tomato (32), and *A. thaliana* (27).

estimate obtained with SDS–PAGE (see above) suggests that the native enzyme is monomeric. The optimal pH and temperature for the enzyme were 5.0 and 40 °C, and its pI value was 5.1 (data not shown). The sucrose-hydrolyzing activity of the enzyme could be stabilized with thiol reagents such as  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol and dithiothreitol, but when the enzyme solution was dialyzed for 24 h at 4 °C against phosphate buffer lacking thiol reagents, 50% of the original activity was lost. The enzyme hydrolyzed sucrose and raffinose, but not maltose or lactose, indicating it to be a  $\beta$ -fructofuranosidase. The apparent  $K_m$  values for sucrose and raffinose that were determined from Lineweaver–Burk double reciprocal plots were 10.69 and 32.19 mM, respectively.

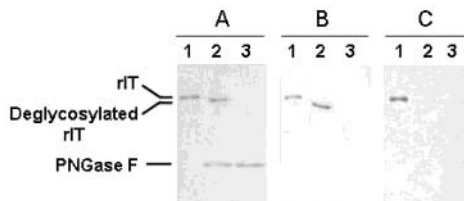
The biochemical properties detailed above are similar to those of vacuolar invertases purified from sweet potato (13) and various other plants, though the recombinant enzyme possessed a higher  $K_m$  value for sucrose than vacuolar invertases from other plants including *Arabidopsis* (5 mM for both INV1 and INV3), strawberry (3.5 mM), barley (8.1, 1.0, and 1.7 mM for invertase I, IIA, and IIB, respectively), and lily (1, 6.4, and 6.6 mM for IT1, IT2, and IT3, respectively) (27–30). This may reflect a change in the folded structure of the recombinant protein caused by the C-terminal His tag. In addition, the affinity of the enzyme for sucrose might also be affected by its glycosylation status.

Plant vacuolar invertases are synthesized as preproteins with a leader sequence containing a signal peptide and an N-terminal extension that are trimmed off during transport and protein maturation (1). The N-terminal sequence of the recombinant invertase determined by Edman degradation was SGGRISYPWSNLM, starting at amino acid residue 114 of the cDNA-derived sequence. This is very similar to the N-terminal sequences of carrot (31), tomato (32), and *Arabidopsis* (27) vacuolar invertases (Figure 4), suggesting that the leader sequence of the recombinant invertase was trimmed off in *P. pastoris* as in the plant.

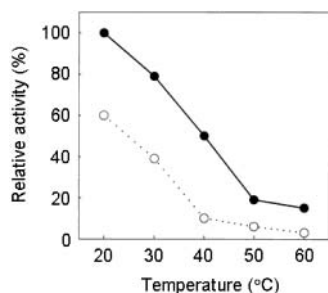
**Effect of Glycosylation on the Recombinant Invertase.** Acid invertases from various plant species have been shown to be glycosylated. Moreover, post-translational glycosylation is also involved in the secretion of heterologously expressed proteins from *P. pastoris* (33), though the glycosylation level and carbohydrate structures on the secreted recombinant proteins vary from protein to protein and may differ from those on the authentic proteins (34, 35). As shown in Figure 5, the recombinant invertase secreted from *P. pastoris* is a glycoprotein and can be stained with Schiff's reagent. Although the carbo-



**Figure 5.** Glycoprotein staining for the recombinant invertase. Purified recombinant invertase was separated on 12.5% SDS-PAGE, after which the resolved proteins were stained with Coomassie blue (A) or with periodic acid-Schiff stain (B): M, molecular mass markers; lane 1, purified recombinant invertase; lane 2, invertase from *Candida utilis* (positive control); lane 3, bovine serum albumin (negative control).



**Figure 6.** Analysis of the deglycosylated recombinant invertase. Purified recombinant invertase was incubated for 6 h at 37 °C in PB buffer with or without PNGase F. The protein mixtures were then separated on 12.5% SDS-PAGE, after which the resolved proteins were stained with Coomassie blue (A), transferred to a PVDF membrane and immunodetected with a polyclonal antiserum raised against the purified recombinant invertase (B), or stained for glycoproteins with periodic acid-Schiff stain (C). Lane 1, purified recombinant invertase (rIT); lane 2, purified recombinant invertase treated with PNGase F; lane 3, PNGase F.



**Figure 7.** Thermal stability of the recombinant invertase. Purified intact (●) and deglycosylated (○) recombinant invertases were incubated for 30 min at various temperatures. The residual invertase activity was determined at pH 5.0 and 37 °C. The residual activity of intact enzyme incubated at 20 °C was designated as 100%.

hydrate structures on the enzyme were not determined, the tight binding of the enzyme to Con A-Sepharose gel indicates that it contains glucose and/or mannose residues (data not shown).

To examine the extent of glycosylation of the recombinant invertase, the enzyme was subjected to deglycosylation with PNGase F, yielding a deglycosylated form of about 63 kDa, as estimated by SDS-PAGE (Figure 6). This value was very close to the calculated molecular mass of the deduced amino acid sequence (62.75 kDa). As we described above, the molecular mass of the purified recombinant invertase determined by LC-MS was 67.61 kDa. Therefore, this protein may contain about 7% (w/w) glycans. The optimal pH and temperature for the enzyme remained unchanged when the glycans were removed; however, the enzyme activity of the deglycosylated protein was only 61% of the native form. In addition, deglycosylation reduced the affinity of the enzyme for sucrose ( $K_m = 26.91$  vs 10.69 mM for the untreated enzyme). The thermal stability of the enzyme was also affected by deglycosylation (Figure 7).

The residual activities of PNGase F treated enzyme were 60%, 50%, 16%, 20%, and 10% of those of intact enzyme after being incubated at 20, 30, 40, 50, and 60 °C for 30 min, respectively. Although Faye et al. (36) reported that enzymatic activity and stability are not significantly affected by an enzyme's carbohydrate moiety, the results of the present study show that the carbohydrate moieties of this particular recombinant invertase are crucial for maintaining optimal functionality of the enzyme.

## CONCLUSION

We have isolated and sequenced a full-length cDNA (Ib $\beta$ fruct1) from the leaves of the sweet potato plant. By expression of Ib $\beta$ fruct1 cDNA in a yeast system, homogeneous vacuolar invertase was obtained in milligram quantities. We used the purified enzyme to elucidate the role of the carbohydrate moiety on this enzyme. The mechanistic properties, structure-function relationships, and physiological functions of the enzyme will be addressed in future research.

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Received for review October 14, 2002. Revised manuscript received December 29, 2002. Accepted December 30, 2002. This work was supported by grants from the National Science Council, Republic of China.

JF0260321