

## Isolation and Characterization of Acid Invertase cDNA Clone in Hot Pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.) Fruits

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An acid invertase (EC 3.2.1.26.) cDNA clone, *CaAIV-18*, was isolated from the red pericarp cDNA library of the hot pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.) fruit. The *CaAIV-18* clone has 2223 nucleotides and one open reading frame encoding 641 amino acid residues. Analysis of deduced amino acid sequences reveals that *CaAIV-18* has a 24-amino acid transmembrane anchor region in its N-terminal, implying acid invertase in hot pepper may be localized in the membrane and not in the cytosol. This clone showed high homology to tomato acid invertase, *Aiv-1*, in nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequences. In the Southern blot analysis, this clone proved to exist as single or low copy numbers on the genome of hot pepper. The clones had two well-conserved regions which appears in acid invertase of other plant species (eg. tomato, *Arabidopsis*, etc.) and yeasts. During fruit development, *CaAIV-18* was expressed preferentially in the ripe red stage.

**Keywords:** hot pepper, pericarp, cDNA library, acid invertase, fruit development

Fruits of higher plants are important subjects for plant breeding studies because of their value as a food source. Generally, fruit is an organ generated from the ovary wall which undergoes continuous cell division and differentiation after fertilization. Therefore, organogenesis of fruit is regarded to be parallel to zygotic embryogenesis. As a model system of study on fruit development, the tomato has been actively studied, especially in the field of fruit ripening (Della-Penna *et al.*, 1986; Giovannoni *et al.*, 1989). Plant growth regulators play important roles in fruit development. Whereas cytokinin or gibberellic acid induces cell division or cell expansion at the early stage of development, ethylene is crucial at the ripening stage (Gillaspay *et al.*, 1993). In the ripening stage of fruit, various biochemical phenomena and active metabolism leads to accumulation of secondary metabolites and various forms of carbon assimilates (Yelle *et al.*, 1991). Considering the importance of fruit as a food source, it is very important to know how atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> is fixed, transported and sunk in fruit, because this fruit storage material is used as food. Carbon fixed in the leaf or epidermis of the fruit is transported as sucrose and stored in storage organs

as polysaccharides, sucrose, or hexoses. According to the plant species, the major form of stored sugar is unique to that species. Whereas wild tomato stores the carbon assimilate as sucrose, domesticated tomato stores it as hexoses (Yelle *et al.*, 1991). Hot pepper is also known to be a hexose accumulator. Therefore, invertase (EC 3.2.1.26.) as well as sucrose synthase or sucrose phosphate synthase are suggested to be important research subjects.

Invertase is a hydrolase which hydrolyzes sucrose into glucose and fructose, and has either alkaline or acidic pH optima. Alkaline invertase has been characterized in only a few plant species, and its cDNA has not been cloned, yet (Sturm, 1996). Acid invertase has been studied extensively, and it seems to have functions in osmoregulation (Wyse *et al.*, 1986), gravitropism (Wu *et al.*, 1993), sucrose partitioning (Eschrich, 1989) and the response against wounding (Sturm and Chrispeels, 1990). Biochemical characterization of acid invertase has already been executed in bell pepper (Michaud *et al.*, 1993). In bell pepper fruits, the activity of acid invertase changes dramatically according to the age of the fruit (Hubbard and Pharr, 1992) as compared to sucrose synthase and sucrose phosphate synthase. This implies that acid invertase may play important roles in the developmental processes of pepper fruit. In this research, we isolated

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and characterized cDNA clone of acid invertase to investigate its role during the fruit development of hot pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Plant Materials

F1 hybrid hot pepper plants (*Capsicum annuum* L.) were grown in greenhouse at  $25 \pm 5^\circ\text{C}$  under natural light. Fruits of various developmental stages were harvested and used for the experiment. Young-green (YG), mature-green (MG) and ripe-red (RR) fruits were used as a source of mRNA for the construction of the cDNA library.

### Construction of the cDNA Library

Total RNA was isolated from the pericarp tissues of YG, MG and RR fruits of hot pepper plants as described by Nagy *et al.* (1988). Two grams of pericarps were ground in mortars with liquid nitrogen to a fine powder. After transfer into 50 mL centrifuge tubes, 10 mL of RNA extraction buffer [5 M guanidium thiocyanate, 25 mM sodium citrate (pH 7.0), 0.5% (w/v) sarkosyl, 2 mM EDTA, and 5% (w/v)  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol] was added and then incubated at  $50^\circ\text{C}$  for 10 min. RNA extracts were centrifuged at 15,000 rpm for 20 min at  $20^\circ\text{C}$ . CsCl powder was added to the supernatant for the final concentration of 0.1 mg/mL, and dissolved completely. Insoluble debris and undissolved CsCl were removed by centrifugation at 15,000 rpm for 20 min at  $20^\circ\text{C}$ . Eight to ten mL of supernatant containing RNA extract was loaded onto 3-5 mL of CsCl cushion (5.7 M CsCl, 0.1 M EDTA), and then ultracentrifuged at 35,000 rpm for 18 h at  $20^\circ\text{C}$ . RNA pellets were dissolved in 400  $\mu\text{L}$  of 7 M urea/2% sarkosyl solution and extracted as an aqueous layer with 1 volume of phenol:chloroform (1:1) mixture and 1 volume of chloroform subsequently. RNAs in the aqueous layer were precipitated at  $-70^\circ\text{C}$  for 1 h, after mixing with 0.1 volume of 3 M sodium acetate (pH 5.2) and 2.5 volumes of absolute ethanol. RNAs were precipitated by centrifugation at 12,000 rpm for 10 min at  $4^\circ\text{C}$ , washed with 70% ethanol and dissolved in DEPC-treated deionized distilled water.

Poly(A) RNAs were purified with an oligo d(T) push column and used in the synthesis of the cDNA libraries. cDNA libraries were constructed using a Stratagene cDNA synthesis kit on *EcoRI/XhoI* site of Uni-ZAP<sup>TM</sup> XR vector according to the manufacturer's

instructions.

### Screening of the cDNA Library

In the first screening, the cDNA library of YG fruit was used. A total of  $5 \times 10^5$  plaques was plated at a density of  $5 \times 10^4$  plaques per 15 cm petridish, and transferred to Hybond-N<sup>+</sup> filters (Amersham) and screened using a tomato acid invertase cDNA, *Aiv-1* (Ohyama *et al.*, 1992) as a probe in the first screening. In the second screening, after obtaining a hot pepper acid invertase partial cDNA clone, *CaAIV-1*, a cDNA library of RR fruit was used and *CaAIV-1* used as a probe. The probe was labeled with [ $\alpha$ -<sup>32</sup>P] dCTP (3000 Ci/mM, Amersham) using the Prime-a-Gene system (Promega). The filters were prehybridized for about 4 h at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  in 6X SSC, 5X Denhardt's solution, 0.5% SDS and 0.1 mg/mL salmon sperm DNA. Hybridization was performed for 16 h at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  in prehybridization solution with radiolabeled probes. The filters were washed once in 2X SSC, 0.1% SDS at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  for 15 min, twice in 1X SSC, 0.1% SDS at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  for 15 min, once in 0.2X SSC, 0.1% SDS at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  for 15 min, and finally in 0.2X SSC at  $58^\circ\text{C}$  for 15 min.

### DNA Sequencing and Analysis

cDNA inserts of the isolated phage clones were recovered by *in vivo* excision from the Uni-ZAP<sup>TM</sup> XR vector following the manufacturer's instructions. Double-stranded DNA was used as the template for DNA sequence analysis following the manufacturer's instructions (USB Sequenase ver. 2.0 Kit). Nucleotide and amino acid sequence analyses were performed using DNASIS and PROSIS programs (Hitachi). Nucleotide and amino acid sequence homology comparisons were performed using the BLAST version 1.4 application programs of the Experimental GENINFO(R) BLAST Network Service (Altschul *et al.*, 1990). Multiple alignments of amino acid sequences were performed using the CLUSTALW program served by GenomeNet world wide web server (<http://www.genome.ad.jp/>). Specific secondary structures and identities of transmembrane anchors were searched through the SOSUI system ([http://www.tuat.ac.jp/~mitaku/adv\\_sosui/](http://www.tuat.ac.jp/~mitaku/adv_sosui/)).

### Southern Blot Analysis

Genomic DNA was prepared from hot pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.) leaves according to the protocol

of Shure *et al.* (1983). Thirteen  $\mu\text{g}$  samples of DNA were digested with *EcoRI*, *EcoRV*, *HindIII* and *XbaI*, subjected to electrophoresis in 0.8 % agarose gel and then blotted onto Hybond-N<sup>+</sup> filters (Amersham). The full-length *CaAIV-18* was labeled with [ $\alpha$ -<sup>32</sup>P]dCTP (3000 Ci/mM, Amersham) by random priming (Promega) and used as a probe. The filter was prehybridized, hybridized and washed with the same method used in the screening of the cDNA except for temperature, 62°C.

### Northern Blot Analysis

Total RNA was extracted from the ovary type fruit and pericarps of fruits at four different developmental stages, YG, MG, TR (turning-red) and RR, respectively, according to the protocol of Chomczynski and Sacci (1987). The *SphI-HindIII* fragment of *CaAIV-18* was used as a probe and labeled with [ $\alpha$ -<sup>32</sup>P]dCTP (3000 Ci/mM, Amersham) by random priming (Promega). RNA was electrophoresed on 1% agarose gel containing 2.2 M formaldehyde, blotted onto Nytran Plus membranes (Schleicher and Schuell) in 20 x SSC, and hybridized with the radio-labeled probe.

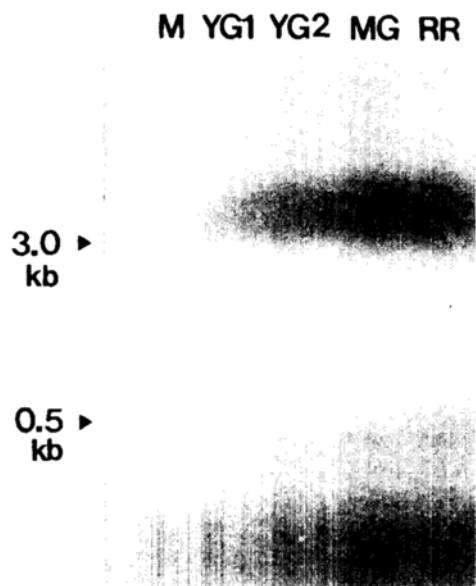
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Construction of the cDNA Library

The initial titers of the cDNA libraries were  $2.2 \times 10^6$  pfu/mL for YG,  $6.0 \times 10^5$  pfu/mL for MG and  $4.0 \times 10^5$  pfu/mL for the RR stage. After amplification and stabilization according to the manufacturer's guide, cDNA libraries were amplified by several  $10^4$  factors. The size distributions of the libraries ranged to the length of 3 kb and were considered to cover most of the full-sized cDNA clones (Fig. 1).

### Isolation of an Acid Invertase Clone; *CaAIV-18*

To isolate cDNA clones encoding acid invertase from the hot pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.) fruit cDNA library, we used the *HindIII* fragment of tomato *Aiv-1* cDNA clone (Ohyama *et al.*, 1992) as a probe. After a first screening with the YG fruit library, a partial cDNA clone, *CaAIV-1* was selected. Upon another screening with the RR fruit library, we used the *KpnI* fragment of *CaAIV-1* (1823 bps) as a probe. As the result of the screening, four near full-length acid invertase cDNA clones, *CaAIV-3*, *CaAIV-4*, *CaAIV-18* and *CaAIV-23* were selected. *CaAIV-18* clone, the longest clone among them, was



**Fig. 1.** Size distribution of inserts in the three cDNA libraries. YG1 and YG2 represent PCR products from YG (young-green fruit) cDNA library using T3 and T7 primers. YG1 used 5  $\mu\text{L}$  of YG cDNA library as a template, and YG2 used 10  $\mu\text{L}$  of same library. MG and RR represent PCR products from MG (mature-green) and RR (ripe-red) cDNA library, respectively. Both of PCR was conducted with T3 and T7 primers using 5  $\mu\text{L}$  of each cDNA library. Molecular weight marker (M) indicates 1 kb DNA ladder.

2223 nucleotides and contained the 1923 nucleotide coding region and an 18 nucleotide poly(A) tail.

### DNA Sequence Analysis

As results of sequence analysis and homology search, 5 clones selected from the cDNA library screening were identified as the same clones, except the sequences in the 3'-untranslated region. The longest clone, *CaAIV-18* was 2223 nucleotides in length containing 18 nucleotide poly (A) tails. The putative ATG initiation codons for *CaAIV-18* was located at position 9 with an open reading frame of 1929 nucleotides which encoded a polypeptide of 643 amino acids (Fig. 2). The calculated molecular weight was 7.14 kDa and pI was 5.66. Deduced amino acid sequence of *CaAIV-18* proved to have two conserved sequences of typical acid invertase, NDPNG (fructofuranosidase motif) and WECVD (catalytic site) moieties. And hot pepper acid invertase showed a high similarity with soluble acid invertases of other plant species, such as tomato (Ohyama *et al.*, 1992), carrot (Unger *et al.*, 1994) and potato (Zrenner *et al.*, 1996) in the amino acid

60 ACA TTT CTC CCG GGT CAA CCG GGT TCC GGT CAC CCG AGC TCC ATT AAA GTT GTC TCC GTC 119  
 120 ATT TTA CTC TCC TGT TTC TTT TTT LTT CTT TAT TTA CCG GCT TTT GTT ATT CTC AAC AAC CAA 179  
 180 OCT PCC ANC TTC CAA AAT AAA TCT CCG TCG ACG ACT TTC AGC CCG GCG ACC CCG 239  
 240 TCA AGA GGT GGT TCT CAG CAG GGC GAG AGC ACT TTT KAG GAT GGT TCA GGT ACT AGT 299  
 300 CAA GAT TCG TAC TGG TCG TCC NAC GCT AAT GCT AAA TGG CAA AGC ACT GCT TAT CAT TTT 359  
 360 CAA GAT TCG TAC TGG TCG TCC NAC GCT AAT GCT AAA TGG CAA AGC ACT GCT TAT CAT TTT 419  
 420 CAT TTA TTT TAT CAA TAC AAT PAA GAT TCT GCT ATT TGG CAA AAC ATC ACA TGG GGC CAT 479  
 480 GCA ATA TCC ACT GAC TTG ATC TGG CTT TAC TTG CTT TTT GGC AAT GGT TCT GAT CAA 539  
 540 TGG TAC GAT ATC AAC GGT GGT TGG ACT GGG TCC GCT AAC ATC CTA GCT GAC GGT CTG ATC 599  
 600 ATG ATG CTT TAT ACT GCT ACC GAT GAT TAT GTC CAG GTG CAA AAT CTT GCG TAC CCG 659  
 660 GGC AAC TTA TGT GAT GCT CTC CTT GAC TGG GTC AAA TAC CAG GGC AAC CCG GTC TTG 719  
 720 GTT TCC PAA CCG GGC ATT GGT GTC AAC GAC TTT AGA CCG ACT ACT GCT TGG ACC GGA 779  
 780 CCG CAA AAT CCG CAA TGG CTG CTA ACC ATT GGG TCC KAG GGT GGT AGC ACC GGT ATT CCA 839  
 840 CTT TGT TAT GAA ACT TCC AAC TTT AGA AGT TTT AGC CTA TTG GAT CAA GTT TTG CAT CCG 899  
 900 GTT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT 959  
 960 AAC GGG TGG CAC AGA TCA TAT AAC CCG GGT GGT ATA AGC CAC GGT CTA AAA CCA ACT TTA 1019  
 1020 GAT GAC AAT AAC CAA GAT CAC TAT GTC ATT GGG ACA TAT CAC CCG GTA AAC AAC AAA TTT 1079  
 1080 TCA CCG GAT AAT CAA GAT TTG GAT TGT CAA ATT CCG CTC AAC CCG GAT TAT CCG ACA TAT 1139  
 1140 TAT CAA TCA AGA TTT TAT CAG CCA AAG AAA CAA AGA AGA GTA CTT TGG GAA TGG ATT 1199  
 1200 CCG GAA ACT GAC AGT GAA TCT GCT GAC CAC CAA AGC GGA TGG CAA TCT GTA CAG AGT ATT 1259  
 1260 CCA AGG ACA GTT CTT TTT GAC AAG AAC ACA CCG ACA CTA CTT CAG TGG CCA GGT CCA 1319  
 1320 GAA ATT CAA GGC TTA AGA TCA GGT GAT GCT AAA GTC AAG GAC GTC AAT CTT CAA CCA CCG 1379  
 1380 TCA ATT GAC TTA CTC CTT GGT GAC TCA CCG GCA CAG TTT GAT ATA GAA CCG TCA TTT CAA 1439  
 1440 GTG GAC AGR GTC AGC CTC GAG GAA ATA ATT GAA CCA GAT GTA GCT TAC AAC TCC TCT ACT 1499  
 1500 AGT GGA GGT CCA AAT AGC AGA GGC ATT TTG CCA CCA TTT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT GGT 1559  
 1560 CAA ACA TTG TCC CAG TTA ACT CAA GAT TAC TAC ATT TCT AGA CCG GCT GAT GAT CCG CAA 1619  
 1620 CCA CAG GCT CAG TTT TTT GAT AAT CAA GAT TAC TAC ATT TCT AGA CCG GCT GAT GAT CCG CAA 1679  
 1680 CAA GAT TGT GGT AGT TCA GTA CTA GTC TTG GAT GGT GAA AAA CAT AGC ATG AGA TTA TTG 1739  
 1740 GTG CAC GAC TCA ATT GTG GAG AGC TTT CTA CAA GGA AGA AGA GTC ATA CTA TCC CCA 1799  
 1800 ATT TAT PAA CCA AAG CAA GTG AAT GAA CCA CCA CCG CTC TTT GCT TTC AAC AAT CCA 1859  
 1860 CCG CCA ATT GGT ACT GCT TCC CTC AAC ATT TGG TCA CTT GAG TCC GCT GAT ATT CCA TCC 1919  
 1920 TTC CCA CTG CAA AAG TTG TGA TTT AAT TCT TCT TCA TTC TTT CCA TTT TCC TTT TCC TTT 1979  
 1980 CCA CCG TCC CAT CAA GAA ATC CAA GAT AGA GAG TAC GGT AGA GGA TGT AGA TTT ATT TCC 2039  
 2040 CAT TTT ACT GGA GAA TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT 2099  
 2100 CCG AAT ACC ATA TCA TAT CCG TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT TTT 2159  
 2160 AAG TTC ACC AAA TAT GCA CAA ATA ATT TAT TGG CTT CTT ACT TCT TTA AAA AAA AAA 2219  
 2220 AAA A

Fig. 2. The nucleotide and deduced amino-acid sequences of *CaIV-18* cDNA. Underlines indicate the putative membrane anchor or transit peptide region, the  $\beta$ -fructofuranosidase motif (NDPNG), the catalytic domain (WECVD), sequentially.

sequences (Fig. 3). *CaIV-18* as well as other genes or cDNA's encoding acid invertase of plant species have disputable primary structures in the vicinity of their 5' regions. In the analysis of this region with the SOSUI system and hydropathy profile, the 24-25 amino acid region of the N-terminal is suspected to be a kind of membrane anchor because of its high hydrophobicity. If true, acid invertase must be a membrane protein targeted into the plasma membrane or

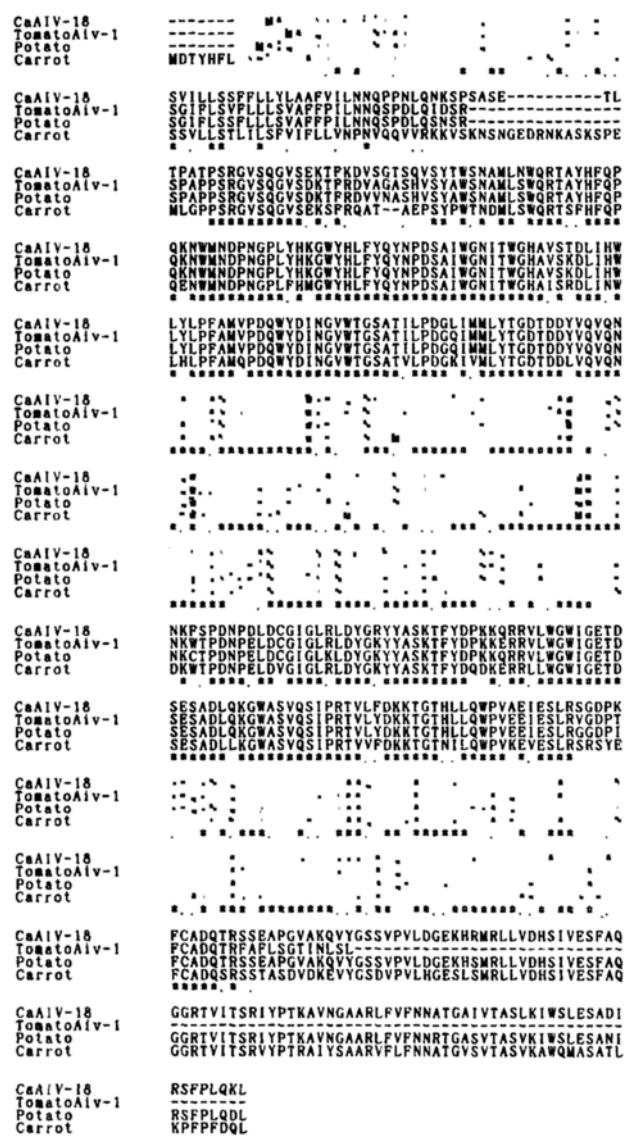
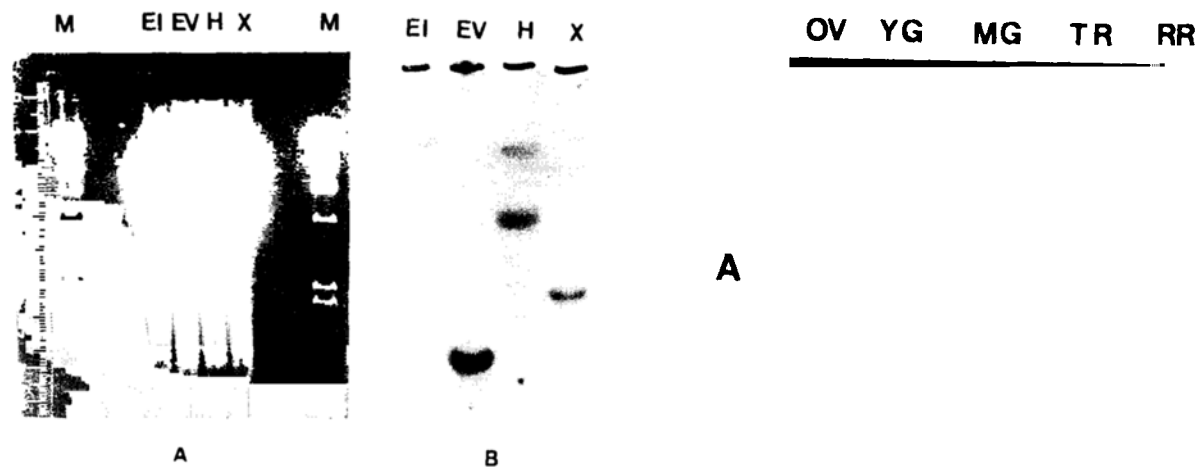


Fig. 3. Multiple alignment of four soluble acid invertases. Asterisk indicates the identical amino acid sequences; "----" was added to maximize alignment.

membrane of a certain cell organelle. Or, the hydrophobic region can be transit peptide introducing the mature peptide into a cell organelle, eg. vacuole.

Genomic Southern Analysis of the *CaIV-18* Clone

To determine the number of genes encoding acid invertase in hot pepper, genomic DNA blot analysis was performed. As shown in Fig. 4, one or two hybridizing fragments were detected. Considering that the *EcoRV*, *HindIII* and *XbaI* recognition sites are in the *CaIV-18* clone, this gene is considered to be located as single or low copies in the hot pepper



**Fig. 4.** DNA gel blot analysis of genomic DNA with *CaAIV-18* cDNA (*EcoRI*-*Apal* cut, 2.3 kb) as a probe. A, thirteen  $\mu$ g of genomic DNA digested and electrophoresed in 0.8% agarose gel; B, corresponding autoradiography of A. M,  $\lambda$ *HindIII* size marker; EI, *EcoRI*; EV, *EcoRV*; H, *HindIII*; X, *XbaI* digests, respectively.

genome.

Previous studies suggested that only one type of acid invertase might exist in bell pepper through enzyme analysis (Nielsen *et al.*, 1991; Michaud *et al.*, 1993). This fact deviates from many reports of many other plant species. *Arabidopsis*, tomato, and carrot were reported to have several isozymes of acid invertase (Schwebel-Dugue *et al.*, 1994; Ohyama *et al.*, 1992; Unger *et al.*, 1994). But, because we acquired only one or two hybridizing signals, the hot pepper genome does not seem to have any other type of acid invertase.

#### Expression Pattern of the *CaAIV-18* Clone

Some genes or cDNA clones expressed during fruit development of bell pepper were reported. Among them, ascorbate peroxidase, cysteine synthase, geranyl-geranyl pyrophosphate synthase, phytoene synthase, and capsanthin-capsorubin synthase genes were closely related to fruit ripening. Most of them show low level of expression in young fruit, but in RR fruit, they show very strong expression. In our experiment, acid invertase in hot pepper fruit showed a very interesting expression pattern (Fig. 5). In ovary type fruit, the primordium of the fruit, it was not expressed at all and then slightly expressed in YG fruit. But in MG fruit, it showed lower level of expression than in YG fruit, and finally in RR fruit, it was expressed maximally. This result suggests the role of acid invertase during the development of pepper

A

OV YG MG TR RR

B

**Fig. 5.** Northern blot analysis of total RNA with the fragment of *CaAIV-18* cDNA (*SphI*-*HindIII* cut) as a probe. A, twenty  $\mu$ g of total RNA electrophoresed in 1.0% agarose gel containing formaldehyde; B, corresponding autoradiography of A. OV, ovary type fruit; YG, young-green fruit; MG, mature-green fruit; TR, turning-red fruit; RR, ripe-red fruit.

fruit. Though it cannot play a role in fruit initiation, acid invertase may provide hexoses to pericarp tissue as an energy source for vegetative growth of the fruit in early stages and for the synthesis of ripening-related metabolites, *eg.* capsanthin and isoprenoids, *via* a glycolytic pathway.

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