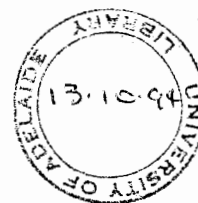


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INVESTIGATIONS OF HISTONE H1 GENE- SPECIFIC PROMOTER ELEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary	vii
Statement	ix
Note	x
Acknowledgments	xi
Dedication	xiii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Introduction	1
1.2 The Regulation of Eukaryotic Class II Gene Expression	1
1.2.1 Class II Gene Structure	2
1.2.2 Transcriptional Regulation	2
1.2.2 (a) TATA-box	2
1.2.2 (b) General Promoter Elements	3
1.2.2 (c) Specific Promoter Elements	4
1.2.2 (d) Enhancers	4
1.2.2 (e) Locus Control Regions	5
1.2.3 Post-Transcriptional Regulation	6
1.2.3 (a) RNA Splicing	6
1.2.3 (b) 3' RNA Processing	7
1.2.3 (c) RNA Stability	7
1.2.3 (d) mRNA Transport	7
1.2.3 (e) Translation	8
1.3 Histones	9
1.3.1 H1	9
1.3.2 The Core Histones	10
1.4 Histones and Chromatin Structure	10
1.4.1 The Nucleosome	11
1.4.1 (a) Structure of the Nucleosome Core Particle	11
1.4.1 (b) Attachment of H1 to the Nucleosome	12
1.4.1 (c) Role of the core histone tails	12
1.4.2 Higher Order Chromatin Structure	13
1.4.3 Non histone chromosomal proteins	14
1.5 Relationship between Histones, Chromatin Structure, and Transcription	14
1.5.1 Histone Subtypes and Variants	15
1.5.1 (a) H1 variants	16
1.5.1 (b) Core histone variants	18
1.5.2 Histone Modifications	19
1.5.2 (a) Acetylation	20
1.5.2 (b) Phosphorylation	21
1.6 Histone Gene Structure	23
1.6.1 Structure of the Major Histone Genes	23
1.6.2 Structure of variant histone genes	24
1.7 The Organisation of Histone Genes	25
1.7.1 Plants	26
1.7.2 Fungi	27
1.7.3 <i>Caenorhabditis elegans</i>	28
1.7.4 <i>Drosophila</i>	29
1.7.5 Sea Urchin	31

1.7.6 Trout	32
1.7.7 Amphibia	32
1.7.8 Chicken	33
1.7.9 Mammals	34
1.8 Regulation of Histone Gene Expression: Lower Eukaryotes	34
1.9 Regulation of Histone Gene Expression: Higher Eukaryotes	36
1.9.1 Replication Independent Expression: Embryonic Uncoupling	37
1.9.1 (a) <i>Drosophila</i>	38
1.9.1 (b) Sea urchin	38
1.9.1 (c) <i>Xenopus laevis</i>	40
1.9.2 Replication Independent Expression: Variant Histone Genes	41
1.9.3 Replication Dependent Expression: Posttranscriptional Regulation	44
1.9.3 (a) Histone Transcript Turnover	44
1.9.3 (b) 3' Processing of Histone Primary Transcripts	45
1.9.4 Replication Dependent Expression: Transcriptional Regulation	47
1.9.4 (a) H2A	47
1.9.4 (b) H2B	48
1.9.4 (c) H3	50
1.9.4 (d) H4	51
1.9.4 (e) H1	53
1.10 The H1 Histone Genes of Chicken	56

CHAPTER TWO: MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Abbreviations	58
2.2 Materials	59
2.2.1 Chemicals, Reagents and Kits	59
2.2.2 Enzymes	60
2.2.3 Isotopically Labelled Compounds	61
2.2.4 Bacterial Strains and Cell Lines	61
2.2.4 (a) <i>E. coli</i> Strains	61
2.2.4 (b) Tissue Culture Cell Lines	61
2.2.5 Media and Buffers	62
2.2.5 (a) Media	62
2.2.5 (b) Buffers	63
2.2.6 Clones and Vectors	63
2.2.6 (a) Cloned DNA Sequences	63
2.2.6 (b) Cloning Vectors	64
2.2.6 (c) Reporter Vectors	64
2.2.7 Molecular Weight Markers	64
2.2.7 (a) DNA Markers	64
2.2.7 (b) Protein Markers	64
2.2.8 Oligonucleotides	64
2.3 Methods	66
2.3.1 Isolation of Plasmid DNA	66
2.3.1 (a) General Procedure	66
2.3.1 (b) Miniscreen Procedure	67
(i) Alkaline extraction	67
(ii) STET preps	67
2.3.1 (c) Large Scale Purification on a CsCl Gradient	68
2.3.2 Restriction Enzyme Digestion and Analysis of DNA	68
2.3.2 (a) Restriction Enzyme Digestion	68
2.3.2 (b) Agarose Gel Electrophoresis	69
2.3.2 (c) Polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis	69
2.3.2 (d) Denaturing polyacrylamide gels	70
2.3.3 Subcloning of DNA fragments into plasmid vectors	70
2.3.3 (a) Isolation of DNA from agarose gels	70

(i) GeneClean	70
(ii) Spin-columns	71
2.3.3 (b) Isolation of DNA from low gelling temperature agarose gels	71
2.3.3 (c) Preparation of Vector	71
2.3.3 (d) Ligation into plasmid vectors	72
2.3.3 (e) Transformation of recombinants into bacteria	72
2.3.3 (f) Plasmid miniscreen procedure	73
2.3.4 Purification of oligonucleotides	73
2.3.5 Labelling of DNA fragments	73
2.3.5 (a) Kinasing of synthetic oligonucleotides	73
2.3.5 (b) Endfilling of restriction fragments	74
2.3.6 Manipulation and Harvesting of tissue culture cells	74
2.3.7 Nuclear extract preparation	75
2.3.7 (a) Tissue culture cells	75
(i) From Strauss and Varshavsky (1984)	75
(ii) From Lee et al (1988)	75
(iii) From Dignam et al (1983)	76
(iv) From Dalton (1987)	76
2.3.7 (b) Small scale nuclear extract preparation from chicken embryos	77
2.3.7 (c) Large scale nuclear extract preparation from chicken embryos	78
2.3.7 (d) Protein concentration determination	78
2.3.8 Detection of DNA binding factors in nuclear extracts	79
2.3.8 (a) Probe preparation	79
2.3.8 (b) Mobility shift assay	79
2.3.8 (c) Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of mobility shift assays	79
2.3.9 Chromatographic enrichment of nuclear extract components	80
2.3.9 (a) DEAE- / Heparin-Sepharose chromatography	80
2.3.9 (b) Large scale concentration of partially purified extracts	80
2.3.9 (c) Sephacryl S-300 gel filtration chromatography	80
2.3.9 (d) DNA-affinity microprecipitation	81
(i) Preparation of DNA Ligand	81
(ii) DNA affinity microprecipitation assay	81
(iii) DNA affinity column chromatography	82
2.3.10 SDS Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of proteins	83
2.3.10 (a) Gel electrophoresis	83
2.3.10 (b) Silver staining of protein gels	83
2.3.10 (c) Coomassie staining of protein gels	84
2.3.11 Electroblothing of protein to PVDF membranes	84
2.3.12 Association of DNA-binding activity with a protein	85
2.3.12 (a) South-Western transfer	85
2.3.12 (b) Renaturation of binding activity from SDS polyacrylamide gels	85
(i) Guanidine-HCl method	86
(ii) Saturated urea method	86
2.3.13 Transient transfection of tissue culture cells	86
2.3.14 CAT assays	87
2.3.15 Double Stranded Dideoxy Sequencing of DNA	88
2.3.15 (a) Preparation of Template	88
2.3.15 (b) Hybridization	88
2.3.15 (c) Extension and termination	88
2.3.16 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	89
2.3.17 Autoradiography	89
2.3.18 Laser Densitometry	90
2.3.19 Phosphorimaging	90
2.3.20 Containment facilities and animal ethics	90

CHAPTER THREE: TOWARD PURIFICATION OF AC-BOX-BINDING FACTORS IN CHICKEN

3.1 Introduction	91
3.2 Characterisation of AC-box Binding Activity	92
3.2.1 Source of AC-box Binding Factors	92
3.2.2 Choice and Preparation of Probe	92
3.2.3 Mobility Shift Assays of Chicken Embryo Extracts with the 01-40mer Probe	93
3.2.4 Analysis of AEV ts34 Nuclear Extracts with the 01-40mer Probe	93
3.2.5 Small Scale DEAE- and Heparin-Sepharose Chromatography of ts34 Crude Nuclear Extracts	94
3.2.6 Attempts to Optimise Recovery of 40-MS-e	94
3.2.7 Differences Between H1-SF and 40-MS-e	95
3.2.8 Mobility Shift Assays with the 14mer Probe	96
3.3 Large Scale Preparation and Chromatography of Chicken Embryo Extracts	98
3.3.1 Heparin-Sepharose Chromatography	98
3.3.2 Ultrafiltration of Heparin-Sepharose Extracts	98
3.4 DNA Affinity Chromatography of Partially Purified Extracts	99
3.4.1 Design of a Suitable Oligonucleotide	99
3.4.2 Preparation of the DNA Affinity Ligand	99
3.4.3 DNA Affinity Microprecipitation	100
3.4.4 Optimisation of Microprecipitation Method	100
3.4.5 Scale-up of Microprecipitation Method	102
3.5 Possible Co-purification of H1-Transcription Factors with 14-MS-b	103
3.6 SDS Polyacrylamide Gel Electrophoresis of DNA Affinity Purified Extracts	105
3.7 Direct Amino Acid Sequencing of a DNA Affinity-Purified Protein	105
3.8 2nd-Round DNA Affinity Microprecipitation	106
3.9 Alternative Purification Methods	107
3.9.1 Sephacryl S-300 Gel Filtration Chromatography	107
3.9.2 DNA Affinity Column Chromatography	108
3.10 Renaturation of 14-MS-b	109
3.10.1 Southwestern Analysis	109
3.10.2 Renaturation of Proteins from Gel Slices	109
3.10.3 Analysis of ts34 Extracts with the 01-14mer Probe	110
3.11 Identification and Renaturation of an 01-40mer Binding Factor in DNA Affinity-Purified Extracts	111
3.11.1 Characterisation of the 40-MS-1 Band Shift	111
3.11.2 Southwestern Analysis with the 01-40mer Probe	111
3.11.3 Renaturation of 40-MS-1	112
3.12 Use of Intermediate Length Oligonucleotide Probes	113
3.12.1 Design of 25 bp Oligonucleotides	113
3.12.2 Mobility Shift Assays of Chicken Embryo Extracts with the 25mers	113
3.12.3 DNA Affinity Purification with 25mers	114
3.12.4 Characterisation of a Subtype-Specific AC-box-Binding Factor in ts34 Extracts	114
3.12.5 Mobility Shift Assays of Various Cell Lines with the 25mer Probes	115
3.13 Discussion	116

CHAPTER FOUR: FUNCTIONAL ANALYSES OF THE AC-BOX AND A RELATED H1-SPECIFIC PROMOTER ELEMENT

4.1 Introduction	122
4.2 Effect of the AC-box in a non-S-phase regulated promoter	123
4.2.1 Choice of a suitable reporter system	123
4.2.2 Construction of AC-box/HSVtk promoter fusions in pTKGH	124
4.2.3 Analysis of AC-box/HSVtk promoter activity in p(AC)TKGH series	125
4.2.4 Construction of the p(AC)TKCAT series	126
4.2.5 Analysis of AC-box/HSVtk promoter activity in p(AC)TKCAT.N series	127

4.3 Investigation of a Distal Element in the H1 Histone Promoter	128
4.3.1 Comparison of H1 Histone Promoter Sequences	129
4.3.2 Sequencing of the Chicken O2 H1 Histone Promoter	130
4.3.3 Construction of H1 Promoter / CAT Fusions	131
4.3.3 (a) Generation of p(O2)TKCAT vectors	131
4.3.3 (b) Generation of p(O2)HCAT vectors	132
4.3.4 Effect of the TG-box on H1 Promoter Activity	132
4.3.5 Effect of an O2 H1 Promoter Fragment on Expression of the HSVtk Promoter	133
4.4 Discussion	134
 CHAPTER FIVE: FINAL DISCUSSION	 139
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 146

SUMMARY

The work presented in this thesis reports investigations of the histone H1 gene-specific promoter element, 5' AAACACA 3', also referred to as the "H1-box" or "AC-box" (Coles and Wells, 1985). The first approach was to isolate and purify a protein factor, H1-SF, from 9 day chicken embryos. This protein had been previously identified in nuclear extracts from AEV ts34 chicken erythroblasts, and had been demonstrated to interact specifically with the AC-box (Dalton and Wells, 1988a).

In mobility-shift assays using a 40 bp oligonucleotide probe (containing the AC-box) derived from the promoter of the chicken histone H1 gene, 01 H1, a candidate AC-box-binding factor, 40-MS-e, was identified in crude nuclear extracts from ts34 cells. Further characterisation revealed anomalies between some properties of this factor and those of H1-SF. In addition, a specific AC-box-binding factor could not be identified in crude chicken embryo extracts. However, a second AC-box-binding factor, 14-MS-b, was identified in chicken embryo extracts using a 14 bp oligonucleotide probe containing only the AC-box.

14-MS-b was purified from chicken embryo extracts on a large scale, using Heparin Sepharose-, Sephacryl S-300-, and finally DNA-affinity chromatography using concatemers of the 14-mer as the ligand. Analysis of DNA affinity-purified extracts on SDS-polyacrylamide gels revealed two enriched proteins of ~86 kD and ~70 kD. To determine whether either of these proteins was 14-MS-b, the MW of 14-MS-b was estimated by renaturation from SDS-polyacrylamide gels. Surprisingly, the renatured 14-MS-b was no greater than 30 kD: much smaller than either of the enriched proteins, or the estimated mass of H1-SF (90 kD - S. Dalton, unpublished results). Thus it was unlikely that 14-MS-b was analogous to H1-SF.

Another factor, 40-MS-1, was identified in mobility shift assays of DNA affinity-purified extracts using the 40 bp oligonucleotide probe. This factor was also renatured from SDS-polyacrylamide gels, but it too was much smaller (42-46 kD) than the estimated molecular mass of H1-SF. Further investigation of the 86 kD and 70 kD proteins indicated that they were non specific DNA binding proteins.

A final series of mobility-shift assays was conducted using four 25 bp oligonucleotides carrying either wild type or mutated AC-boxes derived from the promoters of the chicken histone 01 H1 and 02 H1 genes. In crude nuclear extracts from ts34 cells, a factor (25-MS-1) which specifically bound the wild type 02 H1 oligonucleotide was identified. 25-MS-1 was also detected in extracts from three other chicken cell lines. However, this factor was not detected in 9 day chicken embryo extracts. In addition, no AC-box-specific binding activity analogous to 25-MS-1 was detected with the wild type 01 H1 oligonucleotide.

It had been shown that deletion or mutation of the AC-box both greatly decreased the steady state levels of H1-mRNA and eliminated cell cycle regulation of H1 gene transcription in stably transfected HeLa cell lines (Dalton and Wells, 1988a). To examine the effect of the AC-box on a heterologous promoter, a series of constructs were made in which tandem repeats of the 25 bp AC-box oligonucleotides were cloned immediately 5' to the Herpes Simplex Virus thymidine kinase (HSVtk) promoter of the expression vector pBLCAT.2 (Luckow and Schütz, 1987). It was found that these oligonucleotides, regardless of copy number or orientation, had no significant effect on transcription from the HSVtk promoter in transiently transfected ts34 cells.

Concurrent with the transfection experiments, a computer alignment of the H1 promoters from several species revealed a distal promoter element which was highly conserved in sequence and position. This element (TG-box) was a near perfect inverted repeat of the AC-box, and the spacing between these elements was also well conserved. CAT reporter vectors were constructed which contained fragments of the 02 H1 and 01 H1 promoters. Deletion of a 29 bp region which included the TG-box resulted in a 50% decrease in expression of the 02 H1 promoter in transiently transfected ts34 cells. However, an H1 promoter fragment containing the TG- and AC-boxes, but no proximal H1 promoter elements, had no significant effect on expression of the HSVtk promoter. These data are discussed in relation to the possible role of the TG- and AC-boxes in the regulation of histone H1 gene expression.