

Production of *Aspergillus niger* GH1 Tannase using Solid-State Fermentation

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(Received: 15 October 2008; accepted: 21 December 2008)

The production of tannase by *Aspergillus niger* GH1 in solid-state fermentation, under different initial concentrations of tannic acid (12.5, 25, 50 and 100 gl^{-1}). The reactors were packed with polyurethane foam impregnated with medium and inoculated with fungal spores. Tannase production was kinetically monitored by 48 h. The tannase activities extracellular and intracellular were assayed by HPLC-chromatography. Maximum extracellular and intracellular tannase activities (11.35 and 6.95 Uml^{-1} respectively) were recorded with 100 gl^{-1} of tannic acid. The substrate uptake was 100% at concentrations of 12.5, 25 and 50 gl^{-1} , while 74.4% was consumed in the presence of 100 gl^{-1} of tannic acid after 48 h of culture. These results suggest that high concentrations of tannins can be removed and tannase production can be reached in high levels. The needed to establish the production conditions under solid state fermentation, a system where the tannase is expressed extracellularly in high levels.

Key words: Tannase, Tannic acid, Solid-state fermentation, *Aspergillus niger* GH1.

Tannins are molecules considered as water-soluble phenolic compounds with molecular weights ranging from 500 to 3000 Da. Tannins are present in several plants acting as pigments¹ and protecting agents against microbial attacks². Several proposals to use the tannin-rich plants as a source of added value products have been made. One of

them, and the most frequently one, is related with its use as substrate for the production of microbial enzymes, in particular tannase³.

Tannin acyl hydrolase (E.C. 3.1.1.20), commonly called tannase is an important enzyme used industrially for the manufacture of gallic acid from tannin-rich materials. The tannase catalyzes the hydrolysis of ester and depside bonds in such hydrolysable tannins as tannic acid. It is generally used in food and beverage processing⁴ namely, in the production of instant tea, coffee flavoured soft drinks and in the clarification of beer and fruit juices⁵.

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Production of tannase by various bacterial⁶⁻⁷ and fungal strains⁸⁻¹¹ has been reported. Different works reported liquid surface, submerged or solid-state fermentation for tannase production. Among these, submerged fermentation process is mostly preferred because the sterilization and process-control methods are easier in this system². Although vast amount of tannase production was achieved by submerged fermentation. This method implies some advantages mainly in the production cost and the instability of the produced enzyme^{4, 12}. In this aspect, production of such enzyme from fungal strains through solid-state fermentation (SSF) is cheaper, less technology is required and its extraction easier¹³. An important advantage of SSF is that it produces only negligible amount of liquid effluents and thereby creates less pollution¹⁴. According our knowledge, only few reports on tannase production through SSF by *Aspergillus niger*^{15, 16, 17}, *Aspergillus acuealatus*¹⁸, *Paecilomyces variotii*¹⁹, *Aspergillus foetidus* and *Rhizopus oryzae*¹⁰ are available. Tannase production through liquid submerged fermentation and SSF by *Aspergillus niger* GH1 was reported earlier⁹ and the potential of using agro-industrial wastes as substrate for industrial tannase production through SSF has been considered. In this work, fermentation parameters for tannase production and tannic acid degradation by *Aspergillus niger* GH1 in a model SSF system were evaluated at different tannic acid concentrations.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Microorganism and culture medium.

Spores of the strain *Aspergillus niger* GH1 (DIA/UAdeC collection) were preserved at $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ in protect-crioblocks (bead storage system, Technical Service Consultants Limited). Inoculum was prepared transferring the spores to potato dextrose agar (PDA BD Bioxon®), incubated at $30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 5 days. After the fungal growth the spores were scraped into 0.01 % Tween 80 sterilized solution and counted in a Neubauer chamber. Medium for tannase production was the same as reported contained (g l^{-1}): KH_2PO_4 , 5; NH_4NO_3 , 10; $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 1; $\text{CaCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 0.1; $\text{MnCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 0.02; $\text{NaMoO}_4 \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 0.01; $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$, 0.125. Salt-containing medium was autoclaved at $121\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 15 min. Tannic acid (Sigma, U.S.A.) solution

was filter-sterilised (nylon membrane 47 mm diameter, $0.2\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ pore size, Millipore) and added to a final concentration of 12.5, 25.0, 50.0 and 100.0 g l^{-1}

Solid state fermentation (SSF)

The SSF involved the use of polyurethane foam (PUF) (Expomex, México) as a support to absorb the liquid medium. PUF was washed as reported (20) and then pulverised in a plastic-mill. Column reactors ($25 \times 180\text{ mm}$) were packed with 10 g of inoculated (2×10^7 spores g^{-1} of dry inert PUF) support. Culture conditions were: temperature $30\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$, aeration rate 20 ml of air per gram of support per min, initial pH 5.5, and initial moisture content 65 % and an incubation time of 48 h. Samples were taken every 6 h. At each sampling point, the fermented mass of reactor was removed and homogenized. For enzyme leaching, the content of each reactor was mixed with distilled water (10:1 w/v) and vortexed for 1 min. Solid particles were filtered (Whatman International Ltd. Springfield Mill, Maidstone, Kent, England, Filter No. 41) and the clear filtrate was assayed for extracellular tannase activity. The remaining solids were washed three times with 50 ml of distilled water. Intracellular enzyme was recovered by deep-freezing the cells in liquid nitrogen and by macerating in a chilled mortar. The recovery process was previously reported²¹. The process was carried out using acetate buffer, pH 5.5 to recovery the enzyme from the debris.

Analytical methods. Tannase assay was carried out using the HPLC-methodology proposed²². One unit of enzyme (U) was defined as the amount of enzyme able to release $1\text{ }\mu\text{mol}$ gallic acid per ml per min. Biomass formation in SSF was determined by technique reported²³, where 0.5 g of fermented solid is impregnated with phosphoric acid (0.15 mol l^{-1}) and heated in a boiling water bath to hydrolyse the mycelium during 7 min; the sample is then cooled and centrifuged to obtain a mycelial protein solution; finally, 200 ml of sample were mixed with 800 ml of biuret reagent and the blue color was measured at 595 nm. Tannic acid concentration was evaluated spectrophotometrically using the phenol-sulphuric acid method reported (Aguilar et al. 2001). Briefly, the method implies thermal reaction of 1 ml of sample with 2 ml of phenol-sulfuric reagent (1 mg ml^{-1}) during 5 min into a boiling water bath,

then the sample was cooled and the absorbance was recorded at 480 nm.

Kinetics parameters

Growth curves were fitted by a Maquardt "Solver" computer program (Excel, Microsoft) using logistic equation¹ as follows:

$$X = \frac{X_{\max}}{1 + \left[\frac{X_{\max} - X_0}{X_0} \right]} e^{-\mu t} \quad \dots(1)$$

Where X (gl^{-1}) represents the biomass calculated, X_0 and X_{\max} (gl^{-1}) are the initial and maximum biomass value, respectively, μ (h^{-1}) is the specific growth rate, and t (h) is the culture time. The algorithm minimizes the sum of least square errors comparing experimental data with the theoretical values obtained.

The biomass/substrate yield, $Y_{x/s}$, is calculated by the equation [2]:

$$Y_{x/s} = \frac{(X_{\max} - X_0)}{(S_0 - S_{\text{final}})} \quad \dots(2)$$

Where X_{\max} and X_0 (gl^{-1}) are the maximum and initial biomass values obtained, respectively, and S_0 and S_{final} (gl^{-1}) are the initial and final substrate concentration values, respectively.

The specific substrate uptake rate, q_s , is defined by the equation [3]:

$$q_s = \frac{\mu}{Y_{x/s}} \quad \dots(3)$$

Where q_s is giving as grams of substrate consumed per gram of biomass per hour.

Tannase/biomass yield, $Y_{E/X}$, is estimated from the linear correlation between tannase activities, E (U^{-1}) and biomass concentrations, X (gl^{-1}). The yield coefficient is defined as $Y_{E/X}$ (units of tannase per gram of X). The specific rate of formation of enzymes, q_p , is defined in [4]:

$$q_p = \frac{\mu}{Y_{E/X}} \quad \dots(4)$$

Where q_p is the units of tannase produced per gram of biomass per hour, $Y_{E/X}$ is the tannase/biomass yield.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Both extracellular as intracellular tannase activity produced by *A. niger* GH1 in the SSF process were seriously affected by the initial tannic acid concentration. Figure 1a shows the kinetics of extracellular tannase production, while Figure 1b shows the results obtained for intracellular tannase production. A consistent behaviour was found, in which the increment in the initial tannic acid concentration is related with an increase in tannase activity. In this study, a maximum of tannase activity was reached with 100 gl^{-1} of tannic acid at 48 h. In other SSF systems evaluated, a marked decrement in the tannase production after to reach the maximum level is obtained. However, in this study that decrement was not found probably due to the low level of concomitant protease activity²¹. High levels of tannase produced were excreted to the culture medium. Similar results were obtained²⁴ using sugar cane baggase as support of SSF demonstrating that the fungal tannase activity was only detected in the extracellular crude extract and not in the intracellular extract.

This study revealed that the use of higher tannic acid concentrations promotes the excretion of tannase intracellular activity; these results may be explained by the existence of a substrate monitoring inside the cells that at high substrate concentrations inhibits the tannase excretion process. In this case, the extracellular/intracellular ratio was 1.3:1 for 50 gl^{-1} and 1.6:1 for 100 gl^{-1} ; while for 12.5 and 25 gl^{-1} of tannic acid present, the intracellular activities were low and the extracellular/intracellular ratios were superior to 6:1 in both cases.

The results of tannase production obtained in SSF system can be partially explained by those reported for pectinesterase and polygalacturonase²⁵. These authors suggested that the high levels of enzymatic production obtained in SSF are due to changes in the composition of membrane fatty acids provoked by stress conditions favoured on this enzyme production process (SSF) when the substrate concentration is increased. Also, these results are explained by the previous reports of our group^{21,17} where a different pattern of induction/repression of tannase was observed depending of the culture system and the

culture conditions. The most recent idea to explain the high levels of enzyme produced by SSF was proposed²⁶ assuming the dependence of enzyme expression with the substrate and oxygen diffusivities on the solid support. However, this phenomenon has not been satisfactorily explained. Table 1 shows a summary of the kinetic parameters evaluated in SSF systems, being clearly

demonstrated the high tannic acid-degrading capacity of *A. niger* GH1. It is important point out that only at the highest substrate concentration there is no total consumption of tannic acid. This aspect is very important if the biodegradation of phenolic compounds or tannins of waste water and tannin-rich materials (i.e. coffee pulp, creosote bush, etc.) is to be considered.

Table 1. Summary of kinetic parameters considered in the tannase production and tannic acid degradation by SSF

Tannic acid(g l^{-1})	μ (h $^{-1}$)	$Y_{x/s}$ (gXgS $^{-1}$)	$Y_{E/X}$ (UmgX $^{-1}$)	q_s (gXgS $^{-1}$ h $^{-1}$)	q_p (UgX $^{-1}$ h $^{-1}$)	Substrate uptake (%)
12.5	0.288	0.306	1.385	0.942	0.399	100
25.0	0.295	0.163	1.443	1.812	0.426	100
50.0	0.223	0.091	1.469	2.440	0.328	100
100.0	0.217	0.074	2.183	2.929	0.474	73.03

On SSF, a particular behaviour of the kinetic parameters is observed, as the product yield (Y_p), specific substrate uptake rate (q_s) and specific product formation rate (q_p) were higher for the initial tannic acid concentration of 100 g l^{-1} . Also, the higher whole tannase activity and lower uptake substrate percentage conversion were obtained. The analysis of the kinetic parameters demonstrated that SSF this is a good system to be

applied in the degradation of hydrolysable tannins and tannase production.

Finally, it must be referred that several studies indicate that submerged fermentation (SmF) is not suitable for tannase production due to the long fermentation times (low productivity)²⁷⁻²⁸ and to the intracellular nature of the enzyme (2). The results presented in this work, using polyurethane foam as inert support, complement

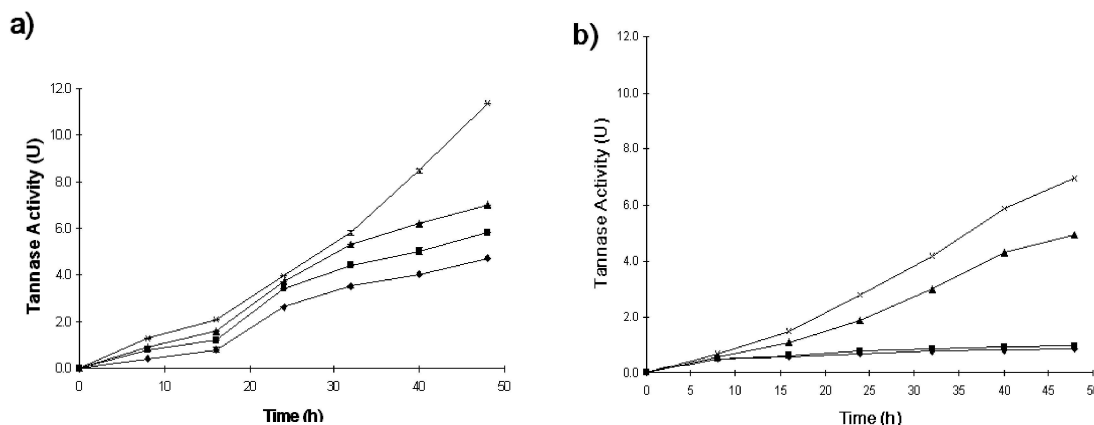


Fig. 1. Extracellular (a) and intracellular (b) tannase production by *A. niger* GH1 in SSF with tannic acid concentrations of 12.5 (◆), 25.0 (■), 50.0 (Δ) and 100.0 (×) g l^{-1} .

those reported^{15,29,18,12}, and clearly demonstrate that SSF presents significant advantages as compared to submerged fermentation for tannase production, the fermentation time is improved, significant amounts of extracellular enzyme are produced and the system is not inhibited by high concentrations of tannic acid

Obtained results clearly indicate the capability of *Aspergillus niger* GH1 to produce high levels of tannase in SSF suggesting that this production system should be considered for large-scale production of tannase and gallic acid and that cheap and simple agricultural waste like coffee pulp or creosote bush may be used in the future as substrates.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present work was performed as part of a cooperative agreement between the Universidad Autonoma de Coahuila (UAdeC, México) and the Universidade do Minho (UM, Portugal) within a specific international exchange program (VALNATURA project, alfa network from European Union) undertaken at the Biological Engineering Department (UM, Portugal). M.A. Cruz-Hernandez thanks to Concejo nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) the fellowship to study the doctoral program at the Department of Biotechnology (UAdeC).

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