

An actin point-mutation neighboring the 'hydrophobic plug' causes defects in the maintenance of cell polarity and septum organization in the fission yeast *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*

Junpei Ishiguro*, Wataru Kobayashi

Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Konan University, Okamoto 8-9-1, Kobe 658, Japan

Received 18 June 1996

Abstract The fission yeast *cps8* mutation gives rise to abnormally enlarged and dispolarized cells, each of which contains several nuclei with aberrant multisepta. Molecular cloning and sequence analysis of the *cps8* gene indicated that it encodes an actin with an amino acid substitution of aspartic acid for glycine at residue 273 in the hydrophobic loop that is located between actin subdomains 3 and 4. Fluorescence microscopy using phalloidin and anti-actin antibody revealed changes in the F-actin structure and distribution in the mutant cells. These results indicate that the hydrophobic loop plays an essential role for creating normal F-actin structure, only by which cell polarity and the late mitotic events can be maintained properly.

Key words: Fission yeast; Actin mutation; *cps8*; Cell polarity; Septum organization; Spindle poison

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, yeast has been extensively used as model system for examining the regulatory mechanisms of the eukaryotic cell cycle. Because a variety of cytoskeletal mutants are available, yeast may also offer an advantage over other higher eukaryotes in studies of cytoskeletal functions during the cell cycle [1–4]. The yeast actin cytoskeleton has been shown to be involved, not only in late mitotic events such as septum formation and cytokinesis, but also in directing cell wall deposition at the growing region of the cell [5,6]. In the budding yeast *Schizosaccharomyces cerevisiae*, actin function is also required to maintain proper spindle orientation prior to the onset of anaphase [7]. All these events are, thus, essential for proper chromosome distribution, by which daughter cells inherit a complete set of genetic information required for the next cell cycle. Actin might function via interaction with a variety of its binding proteins, depending on the cell cycle stages. However, their structure/function relationships as well as the regulatory mechanisms of the interactions are poorly understood, although the three-dimensional structure of the actin molecule has been progressively refined in recent years [8–11]. To solve such problems, comparative analyses between changes in structure of functional molecules and in vivo phenotypes caused by mutations might be useful. In this report, we show that a point-mutation neighboring the hydrophobic plug of the actin molecule in the fission yeast *S. pombe* (called *cps8*) causes defects in the maintenance of cell polarity and late mitotic events, such as septum organization and cytokinesis.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Strains and culture conditions

The *S. pombe* strain, 972 (wild type) and CP18-15 (*h⁺ cps8-188 leu1-32*) were described previously [12]. Routine growth (YE) and selective (EMM) media were as described in Alfa et al. [13]. Sporulation medium contains 1% glucose, 0.1% KH₂PO₄, 40.8 nM biotin, 2.1 μM calcium-pantothenate, 81.2 μM nicotinic acid and 55.5 μM inositol. The *Escherichia coli* strains, HB101 and MV1184, were used for routine propagation of plasmids.

2.2. Isolation and characterizations of *cps8* gene

The mutant strain, CP18-15, was transformed with *S. pombe* genome library as described elsewhere [14]. A transformant capable of growing at 36°C was isolated and the plasmid recovered (called pA932). Three kinds of fragments, 4.0 kb *HindIII*–*Bam*HI, 3.0 kb *Bam*HI–*HindIII* and 4.3 kb *Sac*II–*HindIII*, generated from pA932, were subcloned into pAU-KS plasmid and tested for their ability to complement the mutant phenotype described above. Nested deletions were prepared from pUC119 subclones containing 2.0 kb *Sac*II–*Kpn*I fragment of pA932 by the modified method of Henikoff [15]. The nucleotide sequence of both DNA strands was determined by the dideoxy chain-termination method [16], using A.L.F. DNA Sequencer (Pharmacia). To determine if a cloned gene is authentic *act1⁺*, one-step gene disruption method was employed [17]. A diploid strain (*h⁺/h[−] ade6[−]–M210/ade6[−]–M216 ura4[−]–D18/ura4[−]–D18 cps8[−]–118/+*) was transformed with a 3.4 kb *Sac*II–*Xho*I fragment that contains 1.8 kb *ura4⁺* gene [18] at the *Bam*HI site, and several diploids capable of growing on a minimal medium (EMM) were isolated. Spore formation and asci dissection were carried out according to standard methods. For Southern analysis, DNAs prepared from a wild-type strain, a diploid transformant and cosmid clones 32H8c (ICRFc 60H0832), 29B5c (ICRFc 60B0529) were digested with *HindIII* followed by agar gel electrophoresis. Blotting analysis was carried out by DIG-ELISA method (Boehringer Mannheim), using 3.9 kb *HindIII*–*Kpn*I fragment as a probe. *Cps8* gene was cloned from the mutant genome by amplification with PCR [19]. Primer regions used are indicated by single-underlines in Fig. 2C. The amplified genes (1258 bp) were cloned into palsmid PCR[®]II (Invitrogen), and five independently isolated clones were sequenced.

2.3. Fluorescence microscopy

Log-phase cells grown in YE medium at 28°C were fixed with formaldehyde and stained with 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI), calcofluor and rhodamine-conjugated phalloidin as described elsewhere [20,21]. For indirect immunofluorescence microscopy, cell walls of the fixed cells were digested enzymatically and then stained with anti-actin or anti-α-tubulin monoclonal antibody [22]. In the case of temperature-shift experiments, the cells, grown at 28°C, were sedimented and immediately transferred to a fresh YE medium prewarmed at 36°C, and then cultivated for 4 h at the restrictive temperature.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Molecular characterizations of *cps8* gene

Cps8 was originally identified as a mutation responsible for supersensitivity to the spindle poison, isopropyl *N*-3-chlorophenyl carbamate [12]. At permissive temperature (28°C), the

*Corresponding author. Fax: (81) 78-435-2539

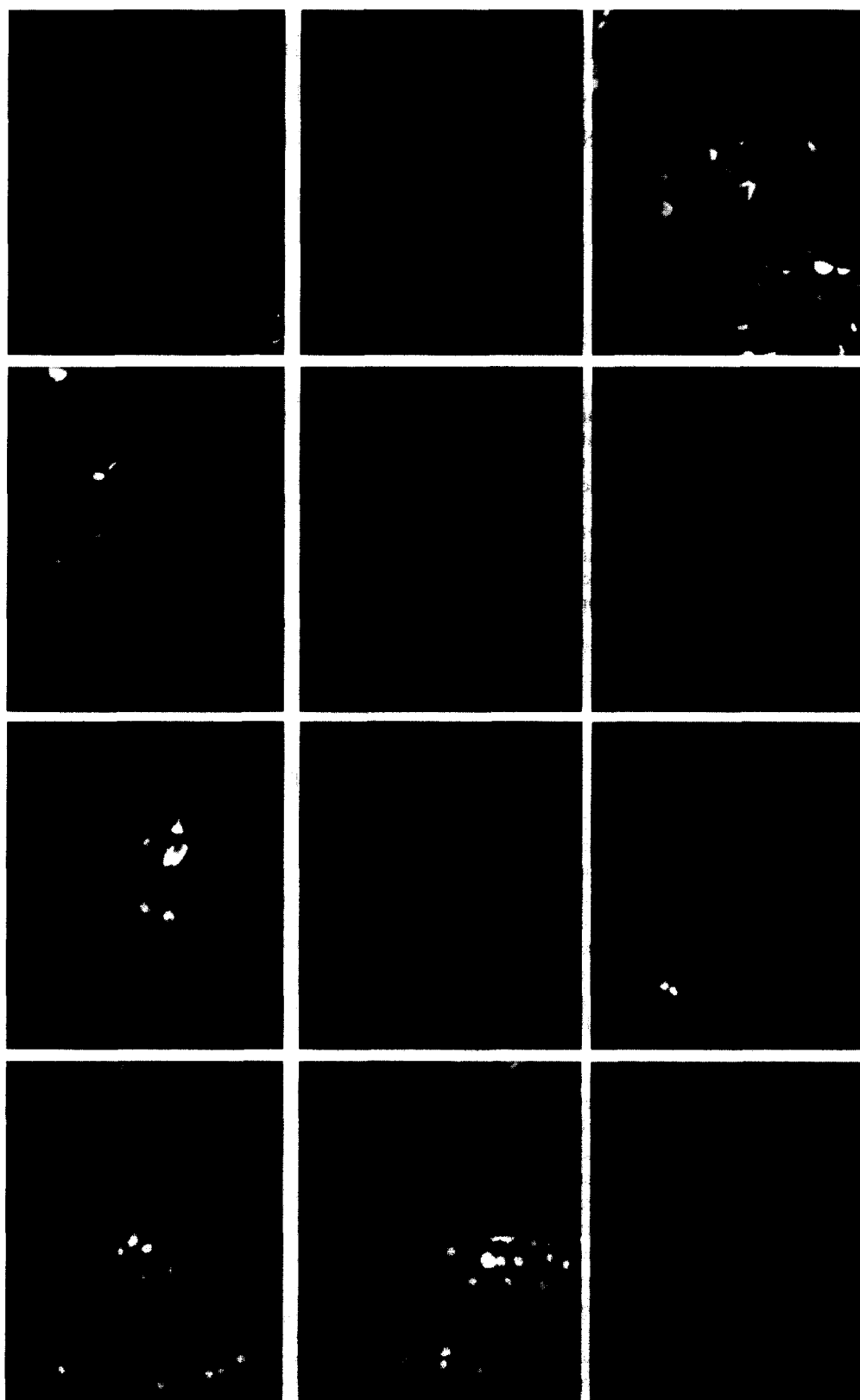


Fig. 1. Micrographs of the *S. pombe cps8* mutant cells. (A) Phase-contrast, *cps8* cells. (B) 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole (DAPI) staining, *cps8* cells. (C) Calcofluor staining, *cps8* cells. (D) Calcofluor staining, *cps8* cells in shifted culture (36°C). (E) DAPI staining, *cps8* cells in shifted culture (36°C). Arrows indicate incompletely segregated nuclei. (F) Rhodamine-conjugated phalloidin staining, wild-type cells. (G) Rhodamine-conjugated phalloidin staining, *cps8* cells. (H) Anti-actin antibody staining, *cps8* cells. (I) Anti-actin antibody staining (upper images) and DAPI staining (lower images) in the same field of *cps8* cells in shifted culture (36°C). (J) Anti-tubulin antibody staining (upper images) and DAPI staining (lower images) in the same field of wild-type cells. An arrow indicates mitotic spindle or nuclei. (K) Anti-tubulin antibody staining (upper images) and DAPI staining (lower images) in the same field of *cps8* cells. An arrow indicates mitotic spindle or nuclei. (L) Anti-tubulin antibody staining (upper images) and DAPI staining (lower images) in the same field of *cps8* cells in shifted culture (36°C).

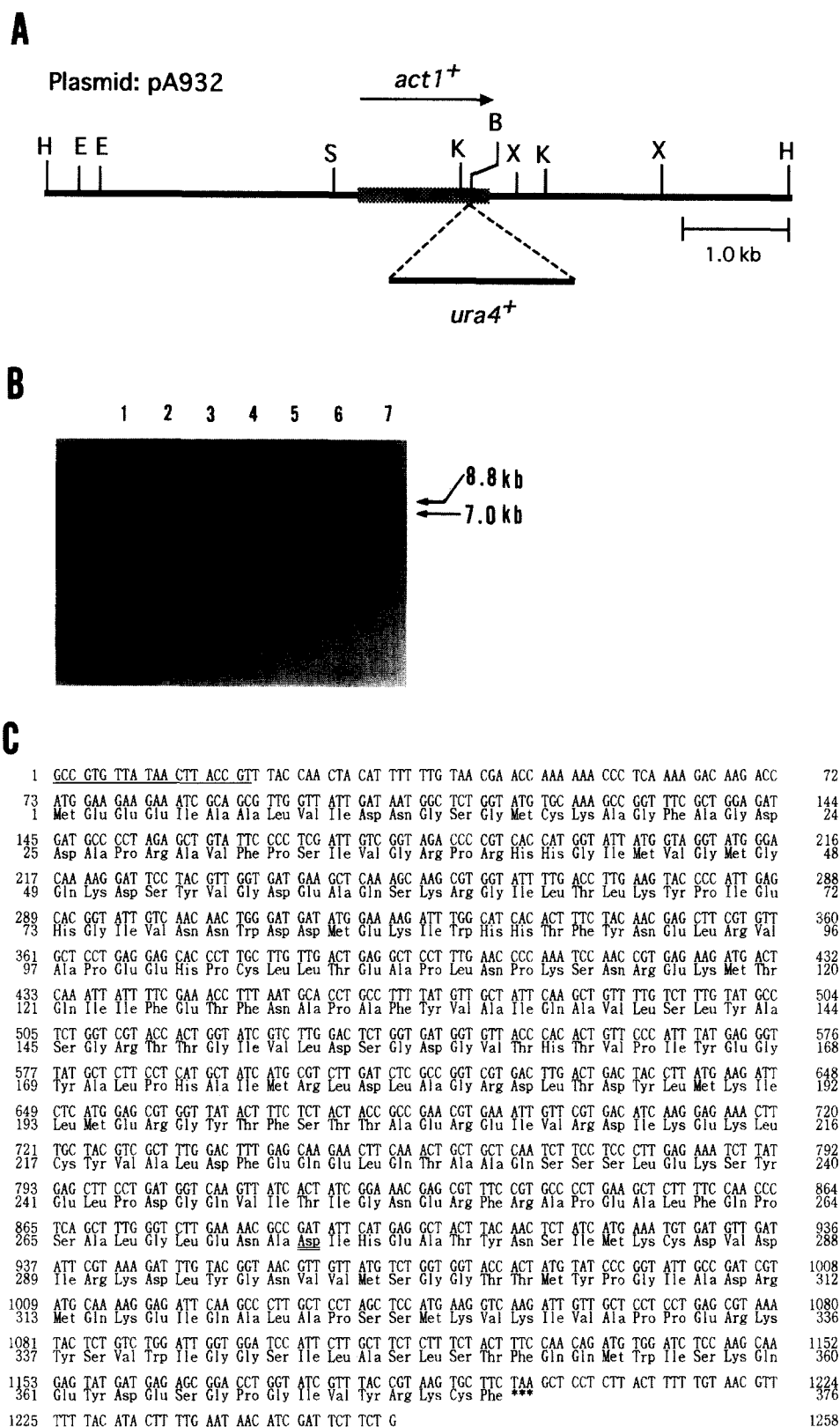


Fig. 2. Isolation and characterization of the *cps8* gene. (A) Restriction map and strategy for one-step gene disruption. A 7.0 kb fragment that complements the temperature-lethal phenotype was cloned (plasmid pA932), and a *SacII*–*KpnI* region (1964 bp) was sequenced. A 1.8 kb *ura4⁺* gene was inserted into the *Bam*HI site in the ORF. (B) Southern blot analysis. lane 1, pA932; lanes 2 and 3, wild-type genome; lanes 4 and 5, disruptant genome (diploid); lane 6, 32H8c cosmid clone (*cdc2* flanking region); lane 7, 29B5c cosmid clone (control). (C) Nucleotide and deduced amino acid sequence of the *cps8* gene (Accession No. D84318). The nucleotide sequence was identical with an *act1⁺* except that guanine at position 890 of the isolated gene (818 of the ORF) was replaced by adenine, predicting a substitution of Asp for Gly²⁷³ at protein level (the position is indicated by a double-underline). Restriction sites: H, *Hind*III; E, *Eco*RI; S, *Sac*II; B, *Bam*HI; X, *Xho*I; K, *Kpn*I.

mutant cells become enlarged and often bend or branch in a horn-like fashion (Fig. 1A). The cell contains several nuclei (Fig. 1B), and is partitioned with multiple septa which are situated diagonally along the long cell axis at irregular positions (Fig. 1C). After being transferred to a fresh medium at 36°C, the multinucleate cells rapidly divide into nearly normal-shaped cells (Fig. 1D), in which nuclear segregation is often blocked, resulting in the formation of incomplete binucleate cells which are characterized by pairs of nuclei (Fig. 1E). Under these conditions, cells suffer high lethality ($\approx 50\%$ of the cell population loses viability at 4 h of incubation [23]). In this study, a wild-type gene was cloned by rescue of the temperature lethal phenotype of the *cps8* mutant. The base sequence analysis showed that the gene is identical to an *act1+* reported by Mertins and Gallwitz [24]. To determine whether *act1+* is authentic *cps8+* itself or it is acting as an extragenic multicopy suppressor of *cps8*, one-step gene disruption using *ura4+* gene was employed (Fig. 2A). Several *ura4+* diploids were isolated and subjected to spore formation followed by tetrad analysis. Only two spores in the tetrad were capable of growing and were always *ura-* and *cps8+* in the eight asci examined. Southern blot analysis showed both 7.0 and 8.8 kilo-base (kb) bands in the diploid genome (Fig. 2B), indicating that the *cps8* gene was virtually disrupted by the *ura4+* gene. Thus, *act1+* is an authentic *cps8+* or a locus very closely linked to it, and is essential for cell division. We have previously mapped *cps8* on chromosome II tightly linked to *cdc2* by tetrad analysis [23]. To confirm this, physical mapping was performed, using an ordered cosmid library prepared by Hoheisel et al. [25]. A 3.9 kb *HindIII*–*KpnI* fragment of the cloned gene hybridized on a 7.0 kb band of *HindIII* digested cosmid clone, 32H8c (ICRFc 60H0832) (Fig. 2A,B), indicating again the linkage between *cps8* (*act1*) and *cdc2* on the telomere side. To determine the site of the mutation which occurred in the *act1+* gene, a *cps8* gene was cloned from the mutant genome by means of polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Sequence analysis of five independent clones obtained from amplified genes indicated that guanine at position 818 of ORF was changed to adenine (GGT \rightarrow GAT) in all cases examined. This indicates that, at protein level, glycine 273 would be replaced by aspartic acid (Fig. 2C). Gly273 is located at the last position of a hydrophobic loop which is composed of ten residues (264 to 273), and which is between subdomains 3 and 4 of the actin molecule. Holmes et al. [8] have proposed that the loop may generate a finger-like structure protruding from the filament axis at a right angle, with four residues in the loop, Phe266, Ile267, Gly268 and Met269 (the 'hydrophobic plug') which might then be inserted into the hydrophobic pocket formed on the opposing actin strand. Such a hydrophobic interaction might greatly stabilize the F-actin structure. Based on this hypothesis, Chen et al. [26] created a *S. cerevisiae* actin mutant in which Leu²⁶⁶ was replaced by Asp to increase hydrophilicity, and then analyzed the in vivo phenotype. Unexpectedly, no obvious altered phenotype, other than cold-temperature sensitive growth, has been observed. In contrast with these results, dramatic phenotypic alterations were observed in our case, the replacement of Gly²⁷³ by Asp, as described above. The glycine residue, located at the neck region of the loop, may be an important factor in bending the finger-like structure in a right direction, since a polypeptide chain can be easily bent at the position of a glycine residue because its side chain is a hydrogen. When the glycine is

replaced by aspartic acid by mutation, the special orientation of the finger-like structure may be changed with the result that the 'plug' region cannot interact properly with the hydrophobic pocket of the opposing actin strand. This may explain why the substitution of Asp for Gly²⁷³ in *S. pombe* caused phenotypic alterations to a much greater extent than that of Asp for Leu²⁶⁶ in *S. cerevisiae*.

3.2. Structure and distribution of F-actin and microtubules in *cps8* cells

In subsequent experiment, actin staining was carried out using rhodamine-conjugated phalloidin in order to determine F-actin structures and distributions in the mutant cells. Fig. 1F shows typical staining patterns of the wild-type cells [21]. Actin dots are localized at the growing cell tip or tips and transient actin rings appear at the region of septum deposition. In the mutant cells, however, the fluorescent phalloidin failed to detect any F-actin structure at both permissive and restrictive temperatures (Fig. 1G). This, however, may not necessarily mean that no filamentous actin exists within the cell. In *S. cerevisiae*, an actin having two altered residues (R177A, D179A) was reported to be assembled into F-actin filaments which could be visualized by anti-actin immunofluorescence but not by phalloidin [27]. To determine whether this was the case, anti-actin monoclonal antibody staining was carried out. The immunofluorescence of the *cps8* cells showed intensely stained actin dots which distribute rather randomly throughout the cell, although actin ring structure was not observed (Fig. 1H). These results suggest that *cps8* F-actin filaments are still present but in an altered conformation, rather than change in phalloidin-binding site(s) itself [27], to which phalloidin cannot bind. After being shifted to restrictive conditions, multinucleate cells divide rapidly into several cells that contain one, and often, two incompletely segregated nuclei. Actin-antibody immunofluorescence showed a substantial decline in both staining intensity and number of actin dots (Fig. 1I), suggesting that the mutant F-actin filaments collapsed to a significant extent under restrictive conditions. To examine the effects of the actin mutation on microtubules organization, tubulin-antibody staining was carried out. Fig. 1J shows a typical pattern of microtubules during the cell cycle [22,28]; cytoplasmic microtubules span the long cell axis in interphase, and the spindle microtubules, resembling a thick bar in appearance, are observed during mitotic phase. The mutant cells growing at 28°C showed both cytoplasmic and mitotic microtubules arrays nearly indistinguishable from those observed in wild-type cells (Fig. 1K). After being shifted to restrictive conditions, mitotic spindle disappeared, and instead, only cytoplasmic-like microtubules that appear to be shorter and thicker than normal ones were observed, in which two incompletely segregated nuclei were present (Fig. 1L). These observations suggest that a defect in spindle organization during mitosis occurs in the mutant cells under restrictive conditions. The multinucleate cell is capable of surviving when cell division does not take place (*cps8* cells survive completely in saline solution at 36°C with no cell division [23]). It should be noted that the mutant cells transformed with *act1+* gene displayed a significant recovery in cell morphology as well as nuclear division under either permissive and restrictive conditions. In view of these observations, it is reasonable to suspect that progression of the late mitotic events in the absence of functional cytoskeleton, including either actin fila-

ments or/and microtubules, might bring about rapid cell death at 36°C. It has been well known that the late mitotic events (from metaphase to anaphase) can be driven by switching cdc2 kinase activity off. In the normal cell cycle, checkpoint control operates to arrest the cell cycle via changes in cdc2 kinase activities, when mitotic apparatus is impaired [29–31]. Thus, it is entirely possible that cdc2 kinase activity might be affected, when cytoskeletal structures are significantly disturbed in certain ways, possibly due to changes in cellular localization of cdc2 kinase and/or its regulators (also see ref. [32]). This scenario is consistent with the previous observation that *cps8* temperature lethality was substantially suppressed in a presence of *adh-cdc25+* (over-expression of *cdc25+*) [23]. In conclusion, our results strongly support the model of Holmes et al. [8] concerning the role of the hydrophobic interstrand interaction of the actin molecules. In addition, the present study showed that the hydrophobic interaction is essential for creating normal F-actin structure, only by which cell polarity and the late mitotic events can be maintained properly.

Acknowledgements: We thank F. Chang (Univ. of California, Berkeley) for helpful comments particularly on actin staining, C. Shimoda (Osaka City University) and H. Okayama (Univ. of Tokyo) for kindly providing the plasmids. We are also grateful to T. Miyazawa (Konan Univ.) for comments on peptide structure and H. Nakamura (Konan Univ.) for supporting this work.

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