

Studies on the Biosynthesis of Bialaphos (SF-1293). 18.

2-Phosphinomethylmalic Acid Synthase: A Descendant of (*R*)-Citrate Synthase?[†]

Sir:

Bialaphos is a tripeptide produced by *Streptomyces hygroscopicus* SF-1293 and consists of two L-alanine residues and the unusual glutamic acid analogue, phosphinothricin possessing a unique C–P–C bond². This metabolite acts as a potent inhibitor of glutamine synthetase and is commercially used as a herbicide.

During the biosynthetic studies of bialaphos (BA), we proved that the biosynthetic pathway of BA consisted of at least 14 and most likely more than 20 steps. The mechanism leading from 2-phosphinomethylmalic acid (PMM) to deamino- α -ketodemethylphosphinothricin (DKDPT), however, remained to be clarified (Fig. 1)³. Accumulation of PMM by *S. hygroscopicus* upon addition of monofluoroacetic acid⁴, a strong inhibitor of aconitase, suggested the operation of the TCA cycle or its related metabolic pathway for transformation of phosphinopyruvic acid (PPA) to DKDPT. Structural similarities of bialaphos biosynthetic intermediates to the members of the TCA cycle, *i.e.*, PPA, PMM, DKDPT and demethylphosphinothricin (DMPT) to oxalacetic acid, citric acid, α -ketoglutaric acid and glutamic acid, respectively, corroborated our above assumption. By analogy to the TCA

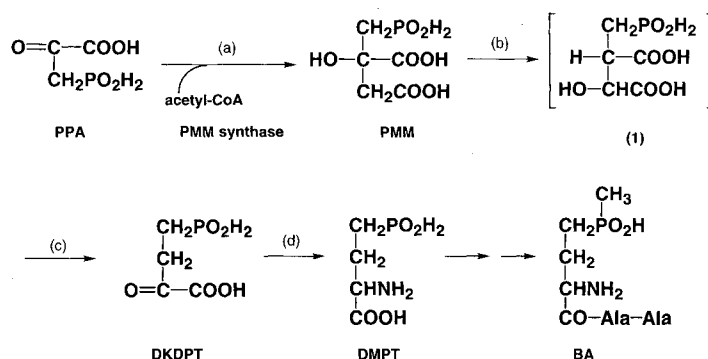
cycle, a phosphinate analog of isocitric acid (Fig. 1 (1)) yet to be identified was assumed to be a substrate for aconitase or its related enzyme of the bialaphos biosynthetic pathway.

Formation of PMM by the condensation of PPA and acetyl-CoA proceeds in a manner similar to the production of citric acid, and the catalyzing enzyme, PMM synthase, was isolated and characterized⁵. The stereochemical course of this enzyme, however, turned out to be opposite to that of citrate synthase of porcine heart origin belonging to the ubiquitous (*S*)-type citrate synthase. Interestingly, PMM synthase showed similarities to (*R*)-citrate synthase isolated from *Clostridium acidi-urici* such as metal ion requirement and sensitivity to enzyme inhibitors suggesting that PMM synthase belongs to the group of (*R*)-citrate synthase⁵. On the other hand, citrate synthase from *S. hygroscopicus* SF-1293, which was assumed to be of (*S*)-type according to its properties, exhibited quite different characteristics from of PMM synthase⁶.

To analyze the relationship between the bialaphos biosynthetic pathway and the TCA cycle in detail, transformation of PMM was attempted by using bialaphos non-producing *Brevibacterium lactofermentum*. Primary structure of PMM synthase was also determined by nucleotide sequencing of the corresponding gene. These results are reported in this paper.

Since PMM was expected to be converted to DKDPT by TCA cycle enzymes probably *via* the phosphinic acid analog of isocitric acid (Fig. 1, (1)), biotransformation of PMM was tested by utilizing bialaphos non-producing

Fig. 1. Conversion of phosphinopyruvic acid to demethylphosphinothricin.



Abbreviations: PPA, phosphinopyruvic acid; PMM, 2-phosphinomethylmalic acid; DKDPT, deamino- α -ketodemethylphosphinothricin; DMPT, demethylphosphinothricin; BA, bialaphos. Compound (1) is a putative intermediate.

[†] For part 17¹⁾.

B. lactofermentum ATCC13869 known to be a potent glutamic acid producer with high aconitase and isocitrate dehydrogenase activities⁷⁾. The organism was cultivated at 30°C for 24 hours in the medium containing glucose 50 g, KH₂PO₄ 1 g, MgSO₄ 0.4 g, MnSO₄ 2 mg, FeSO₄ 2 mg, soybean hydrolysate 200 g, thiamine-HCl 200 µg, biotin 2 µg and urea 10 g in one liter water (pH 6.6). Cells were harvested by centrifugation, washed twice with 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5) and suspended in the same buffer at a ratio of 0.1 g (wet weight) per 1ml of buffer. The cells were then disrupted by sonication and unbroken cells and cell debris were removed by centrifugation. The reaction mixture (0.5 ml) containing 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.5), 150 mM an amino donor (L-aspartic acid or NH₄Cl), 10 mM MnSO₄, 0.4 ml of the cell extract and 100 mM a plausible substrate

was incubated at 30°C for 16 hours. The amount of glutamic acid or DMPT formed in the reaction mixture was estimated using an automatic amino acid analyzer. As shown in Table, PMM and citric acid were converted into DMPT and glutamic acid, respectively, by the cell extracts of *B. lactofermentum* with citric acid being approximately 10 times more efficient. In addition, cell extracts of bialaphos non-producing *S. lividans* as well as commercial glutamic-oxaloacetic transaminase and glutamic-pyruvic transaminase of porcine muscle origin converted DKDPT to DMPT effectively (data not shown) suggesting that the transamination of DKDPT was also catalyzed by ubiquitous transaminases. These results strongly imply that the conversion of PMM to DKDPT proceeded mechanistically in a manner analogous to or identical with the TCA cycle pathway, but do not necessarily mean that the TCA cycle is the only pathway for the formation of DKDPT. Less efficient conversion of PMM to DMPT by *B. lactofermentum* as just explained may mean the presence of the hitherto unidentified enzyme system specific for the biosynthesis of bialaphos. In this regard, it may be important to note that WOHLLEBEN *et al.* recently identified *acnP* encoding an aconitase-like gene from another bialaphos producing organism, *Streptomyces viridochromogenes*⁸⁾. The gene product AcnP catalyzed the isomerization of PMM and was highly similar to the *Escherichia coli* aconitase AcnA and to other members of the aconitase family. This finding may indicate that the BA producing organisms possess a specific enzyme system required for the conversion of PPA to DKDPT.

As mentioned above, PMM synthase giving rise to a product with the (R)-configuration is apparently different from the ubiquitous (S)-citrate synthase. Thus, we then determined the nucleotide sequence of the PMM synthase gene to reveal the primary structure of this unique enzyme. We had previously reported the sequence of the amino

Table. Transformation *Brevibacterium lactofermentum*.

Substrate	Amino donor	Product	Amount of product (%)
none	NH ₄ Cl	—	0
	L-Asp	—	0
	NH ₄ Cl+L-Asp	—	0
Citric acid	NH ₄ Cl	Glu	39
	L-Asp	Glu	32
	NH ₄ Cl+L-Asp	Glu	52
PMM	NH ₄ Cl	DMPT	6.2
	L-Asp	DMPT	3.3
	NH ₄ Cl+L-Asp	DMPT	3.8
PPA	L-Asp	PA	40

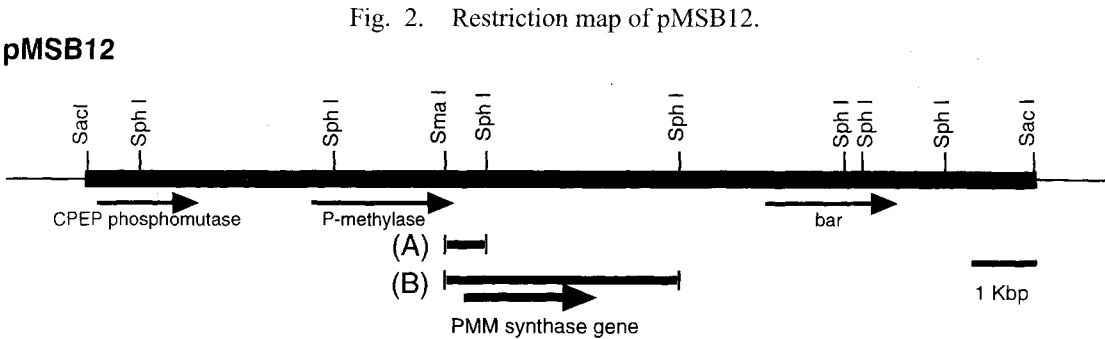


Fig. 2. Restriction map of pMSB12.

PMM synthase gene is indicated by a thick arrow. Other bialaphos biosynthetic genes, CPEP phosphonmutase gene¹¹⁾, P-methylase gene¹²⁾ and bialaphos resistance gene (*bar*)¹³⁾ located on pMSB12 are indicated by thin allows.

Fig. 3 (A).

CCGGGGGAGAGCCCCCAGACCGTGGCGAACACCATCGACTTCATCAACTCCGCGGGACCGGACACCTTCGCGGTCAACC 80
Sma I
 ACTGGTACTACATGCAGTCCACGCCCATCCAGTCCGGGGCGCCCCAGTTTCGACCTCACCGGCAACGGCCACACCTGGTTCG 160
 CACCGCACCATGAACCTCTCATCAGGCGCTCGAAGCGGCGGACGAGATATTCGACTCGGTGGTCAACGCCGCTGGATGCC 240
 CGTGAAACGGACTCGACTTCTGGGGCGTCCCTTACCTCCTGGGCAAGGGCATGAGCCACGCGAGATCGTCCGGTTCCTTCG 320
 ACCTGGCCAAACCGCTCACCGTGGCCAACTCTCCCGCGGCAGCGCGGAGGAGGCGGCCACCGCGGAGCGCGGTTCGCG 400
 GACTTCGTCACCGGCTGGACCTTGCAACCGCGCGCTACCGCACCGCAGGGAGTGAGTTTCGATGACCGTCCAGAATCCT 480
 M T V Q N P
 CAGGAACCCGAGTACTTCCCGGAGGTCTTCCCCAAGACGCTTCCCCCAGTACGCTTGGGACGAGGGCATGCGGCCGAT 560
 Q E P E Y F P E V F P Q D A F P Q Y A W D E G M R P I
 CACTCTGCCGCACGAGGTGTGGCTGTTCGAGACCACCCACCGGGACGGCCAGCAGGGGGACTGCCCTGTTCGCTGGACA 640
 T L P H E V W L S E T T H R D G Q G G L P L S L D T
 CCGCCGCGGTATCTACGACATCCTCTCGGAGATCAAGGACGACTCCACGGCGATCCGGCACGCGGAGTCTTCCCCCTAC 720
 S R R I Y D I L C E I T D D S T A I R H A E F F P Y
 CGGACTCCGACCGCAACGCCCTGATCTACGCCCTGGAAAGGCACCGGGACGGCGCTCCGATCGAGCCACACCTGGAT 800
 R D S D R N A L I Y A L E R H R D G A P I E P T T W I
 CCGGGCCCGCGGGAGGACGTTCGAGCTGATCAAGCGGATCGGTGTTCATCGAGACCGGCTGCTCAGCTCCTCCTCCGACT 880
 R A R R E D V E L I K R I G V I E T G L L S S S S D Y
 ACCACACCTTCCACAAGTTCCGGCTCGGGCGGCGGACCCAGGCGCGGTTCGATGTACCTGGACGCGGTGACCATGGCGCTC 960
 H T F H K F G S G G R T Q A A S M Y L D A V T M A L
 GACCACGGCATCCGGCCCCCGCTCCACCTGGAGGACACGACCCGGTCTCTCCCGACTTCGTCGCGCGCCTGGTTCGAAGA 1040
 D H G I R P R V H L E D T T R S S P D F V R A L V E E
 GGTACTGAAGACCGCCGAACGCTACCCGCGCGAAGTCCAGCCCCGCTTCCGGGTCTTCGACACCCCTCCGCATCGGCCCTGC 1120
 V L K T A E R Y P A E L Q P R F R V C D T L G I G L P
 CCTACGACGACGTGAGCCTGCCCCGCGACATCCCCCGCTGGATCCGGCTGCTGCGCGGCTTCGGTCTCTCCCCGTCCCGAG 1200
 Y D D V S L P R S I P R W I R L L R G F G L S P S Q
 ATCGAGCTGCACCCGCACAACGACACATGGCTGGTTCGTCGCGAAGTCCCTGGCAGCCATCCGCGAGGGCTGTGGCGTGAT 1280
 I E L H P H N D T W L V V A N C L A A I R E G C G V I
 CAGCGGGACGACGCTGGGCACGGGTGAACGCACCGGCAATGCACCGCTGGAGGCGGTCATGGTGCACCTGCTCGGGATGG 1360
 S G T T L G T G E R T G N A P L E A V M V H L L G M G
 GCTACTGGTCCGGGGCCCCGGGTCAACCTGCCCGCGGTCAACAAGCTCGTTCGAGTTGTACGAGGGCATCGGAGCCGGCCCG 1440
 Y W S G A R V N L P A V N K L V E L Y E G I G A G P
 TCGCAGAAGTACCCCTTCTTCGCGCGCGACGCTACGTCACCGGGCCGGTATCCACGCCGACGGCTGAACAAGTTCTG 1520
 S Q K Y P F F G R D A Y V T R A G I H A D G L N K F W
 GTGGATGTACGACCGTTCAACGCCCGCTGCTCACCGGCGGGAGCTGGACGTGCGCCCTACCAAGGACTCCGGCCAGG 1600
 W M Y A P F N A P L L T G R E L D V A L T K D S G Q A
 CGGGGCTGCTGTTCGTCCTGAACAAGCGGCTCGGGCTGCAGTTGGAGAAGGGCGACCCGCGGGTCCCGGAGGTGCTGGCC 1680
 G L L F V L N K R L G L Q L E K G D P R V A E V L A
 TGGATGGACCGGCAGTGGGACGCGCGCGGGTCTCGGCGTTCGAGTGGAGCGAGTTGGAGCCGGTGGTTCGAGAAGCGGTT 1760
 W M D R Q W D A G R V S A V E W S E L E P V V E K A F
 CGCCACCGAGGAAGGGGTGGGCTGACATGTCCGACCGGCGCGAGGAGGCAACCCCTCATGACCGTCGCCACATCGGGTG 1840
 A T E E G V G
 AGGCGTCGGGCAGCACCGGCGCTCCGCCGCTCTGCCCGCTCGTTCGCGGAGTTTCGAGCACAGGTGCGAACCGGCCCGGAC 1920
 CGGCCCCGCGTTCGTCCTGCCCGCGGGACGGTGGCTACCGGGAGCTGGGCGCGCGCGCGGACGCCATCGCCCCGCGGCT 2000
 CACCGACCGCGGGGCGAAGGGGACCGAAGCCGTTCCCCCTGATGGTGTGACCCGGCGCTGGATGCTCGCTTCGATCG 2079
Sph I

Nucleotide sequence of the PMM synthase gene. The deduced amino acid sequence of the enzyme is shown under the nucleotide sequence. The previously determined amino acid sequence of the N-terminus portion is underlined⁶⁾. These nucleotide sequence data have been deposited in the DDBJ, EMBL and GenBank nucleotide sequence databases under accession No. AB029822.

Fig. 3(B).

PMMS	MIVQNQPEPEYFPEVFPQDAFPQYAWDEGMRPITLPHEVWLSETTHRDGQQGGLPLSLDT
CLSA	LNLKDVEEPNLYRDIFPYHEVPKIKFSTDEIKVDIPDEIWIITDTIFRDGQQSMIPFTVEQ
	: : : : : **: : : **: . *: : . : : *: *: : : : : : : : : : *
PMMS	SRRIYDILCEITDDSTAIRHAEFFPYRDSDRNALIYALERHRDGAPIEPTWIRARREDV
CLSA	IVTIFDYLNKLNNIGVIRQTEFFLYTNRDKEALMECMNRGYKFP--QITTWIRANKDDF
	*: * * : : : : *: : : : * : : : : : : : : * . . : * : : : : *
PMMS	ELIKRIGVIETGLLSSSSDYHIFHKFGSGGRTQAASMYLDAVTMALDHGIRPRVHLEDIT
CLSA	KLVKDIGIKETGILMSCSDYHIFKKLMT-RTETYNKYVEIVEEALSNGIVPRCHLEDIT
	: *: * *: : : : * *: * : : : : : : : : * : : * : : * : : * : : *
PMMS	RSSPD-FVRALVEEVLTAEYRPAELQPRFVCDITLGLGLPYDDVSLPRSI PRWIRLLRG
CLSA	RADFFGFVVPLVNKLMELSNKG--IQVKIRACDTLGLGVAFPGVELPRSVPAIISGLRK
	*: . * * . *: : : : : : : * : * : : * : : : : * : : : * * *
PMMS	FGLSPS-QIELHPHNDIWLVVANCLAAIREGCGVISGTTLTGTGERTGNAPLEAVMVHLLG
CLSA	YCGVPSTALEWHGHNDFYVVPNATAAWLHGCSAVNTLLGIGERTGNCPLEGMVFQYCQ
	: * * : * * * : * : * . * * . *: : : . * * * : : : : : *
PMMS	MGYWSGARVNLPAVNKLVELYEGIGAGPSQ-KYPFFGRDAYVTRAGIHADGLNKFWMYA
CLSA	LKGNPG--MNLHAITEMSKYFENSMKYETPPRTPFVGTDFNVTRAGIHADGILKDQETYN
	: . * : * * *: : : : : : * : : * * * : : : : * : *
PMMS	PFNAPLLTGRELDAVLTKDSGQAGLLFVLNKRIGLQLE---KGDPRVAEVLAWMDRQWD
CLSA	IFDTEKILDRPVLVAVNEYSGLAGIAAWINTYFKLNKENEVDKKDSRVAETKKWVDNLYE
	*: : : . * : * : : : * * *: : * . : * : * * * : : * : * : *
PMMS	AGRVSAVEWSELEPVVEKAFATEEGVG
CLSA	NGRTTPITNKELE-----
	*: . : : : . * * *

Homology between the amino acid sequences of PMM synthase (PMMS) and the predicted protein of *Clostridium acetobutylicum* (CLSA).

Fig. 3 (C).

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PMMS      -MTVQNPEPEYFPEVFPQDAFPQYAWDEGMRPITLPHEVWLSETTHRDG-QQGGLPLSL
NIFV_FRAAL MMIVRDPR-----FPSSSTTAIQSDAAIK-----FCDITL RDGEQAPGVAFTA
HOSC_YEAST -MTAAKPN-----PYAAKPGDYLSNVNN-----FQLIDSTLREGEQFANAFFDT
          ** . *.          * : . . . . . : : * * : * . :

PMMS      DTSRRTYDILCEI-TDDSTAIRHAEFFPYRDSDRNALTYALERHRDGAPIETTWIRARR
NIFV_FRAAL AEKLATAAALDAIGVHQIEAGIPAMGVTERDVL R--EILATDPHAD-----IVGWCRA DH
HOSC_YEAST EKKEIETARALDDFGVDYIELTSPVASEQSRKDCE--AICKLGLKAK-----ILTHIRCHM
          . * * : .. . . * . . * : . . . *

PMMS      EDVELIKRIGVIETGLSSSSDYHTFHKFGSGGRTQAASMYLDAVIMALDHGIRPRVHLE
NIFV_FRAAL RDVEAAASCGLVTAHLTIPVSDLHLKSKLGRD-RAWARLRVRDCVADATDRGMRVSVGFE
HOSC_YEAST DDAKVAVEITGVGDVDVIGTSKFLRQYSHGKD-MNYIAKSAVEVIEFVSKSGIEIRFSSE
          *.:          *: . :          * . . * . . : : . . : * : . *

PMMS      DTTRSSPDFVRALVEEVLKTAERYPAELQPRFRVCDITLGIGLPYDDVSLPR SIPRWIRLL
NIFV_FRAAL DASRADD AFVTDLAGELRELG-----VITRLRWADTVGLLDPVS-----AHDRLGRLV
HOSC_YEAST DSFRSDLVDLLNTYKTVDKIG-----VNRVGIADTVGCANPRQ-----VYELIRTL
          *: *: . : : : : . . * . ** : * * . . * :

PMMS      RGFGLSPSQIELHPHNDIWLVVANCLAAIREGCGVISGTTLTGTGERTGNAPLEAVMVHLL
NIFV_FRAAL R---AVPGPWEIHAHDDFGLATANTIAAVQAGFTWVSTTVLGLGERAGNAPIEEVAMALR
HOSC_YEAST KS--VVSCDIECHFNDTGCAIANAYTALEGGARLIDVSVLGTIGERNGITPLGGLMARM I
          : . . * * *: * . ** : *: * . : . : ** ** * *: : :

PMMS      GMGYWSG-ARVNLPAVNKLVELYEGIGAGPSQK-YPFFGRDAYVIRAGIHADGLNKFWM M
NIFV_FRAAL HLLKLP--VDLDTTSFRSLARLVSRARRPLPAGKAVVGESVFAHESGIHVHGILRHPAT
HOSC_YEAST VAAPDVVKSKYKLHKIRDIE NLVADAVEVNIPFNNPTTGFCATFKAGIHAKAILANPST
          . . . : . * . . * . . : : ** : :

PMMS      YAPFNAPLLTGREL DVALTKDSGQAGLLFVLNKR LGLQLEKGDPRVAEVLAWMDRQWDAG
NIFV_FRAAL YEPFDPAEVGGRRR-LAIGKHSGRASVRYALEQYG-----
HOSC_YEAST YEILDPHDFGMKRYIHFANRLTGWNAIKARVDQLN---LNLTDQIKEVTAKIKKLGDVR
          * : . . : . : : * : : : :

PMMS      RVSAVEWSELEPVVEKAFATEEGV-----
NIFV_FRAAL -----
HOSC_YEAST SLNIDVDVSI IKNFHA EVSTPQVLSAKKNKNDSDVPELATIPAAKRTKPSA

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Homology between the amino acid sequences of PMM synthase and homocitrate synthase of *Frankia alni* (NIFV FRAAL, DDBJ Q47884) and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (HOSC YEAST, DDBJ P48570). The conserved amino acids are marked by asterisks. These amino acid sequences were aligned by CLUSTAL W (1.7) multiple sequence alignments program.

terminal 27 amino acids of PMM synthase and revealed that this sequence was encoded in a 600bp *SmaI-SphI* fragment of the chromosomal DNA portion of pMSB12⁶⁾ (Fig. 2, fragment (A)). In view of the molecular weight of PMM synthase, 48000 daltons, determined by SDS-PAGE⁵⁾, we assumed the PMM synthase gene to be located in a 2.1 kb *SmaI-SphI* fragment of pMSB12 (Fig. 2, fragment (B)). The nucleotide sequence of the fragment was determined on an automated sequencer (ABI PRISM 310, PE Applied Biosystems). As shown in Fig. 3 (A), an open reading frame of 441 codons, starting at nucleotide 463 and terminating at nucleotide 1785, was identified.

The deduced amino acid sequence of PMM synthase showed significant identity (38.0%) to that of the predicted protein encoded by the *Clostridium acetobutylicum* genome found in TIGR Microbial Database (accession number AE001437, nucleotide 774682 to 775959) (Fig. 3 (B)) indicating that PMM synthase and the *C. acetobutylicum* protein had the same function. In view of the close taxonomical relationship between *C. acetobutylicum* and *Clostridium acidi-urici* possessing (*R*)-citrate synthase, the predicted protein of *C. acetobutylicum* may be concluded to be (*R*)-citrate synthase. In addition, PMM synthase showed similarity to several homocitrate synthases⁹⁾ catalyzing the condensation of acetyl-CoA and α -keto-glutaric acid (Fig. 3 (B)). This synthase catalyzes the first step of the α -amino adipic acid pathway that leads to the biosynthesis of lysine in some yeast and fungi⁹⁾. This enzyme was also detected in some nitrogen-fixing bacteria as the *nifV* gene product. In these organisms, homocitrate is a component of the iron-molybdenum cofactor of nitrogenase¹⁰⁾. The absolute configuration of homocitric acid synthesized by homocitrate synthase was reported to be (*R*)^{9,10)} in both cases. Thus, the similarity between PMM synthase and homocitrate synthase means that the reaction mechanisms of these two enzymes are similar; both of them catalyze the condensation between acetyl-CoA and α -keto acid to form (*R*)-type citric acid analogs. It is thus suggested the evolutionary origin of all of three enzymes, PMM synthase, (*R*)-citrate synthase and homocitrate synthase are identical.

The analysis of the primary structure of PMM synthase has revealed that PMM synthase belongs to the group of (*R*)-citrate synthase reported only to be present in few obligate anaerobic bacteria. It is interesting to note that although (*R*)-citrate synthase of *C. acidi-urici* is inactivated by oxygen¹⁰⁾, PMM synthase is stable under aerobic conditions. It may be argued that (*R*)-citrate synthase of *C. acetobutylicum* or other obligate anaerobes was transferred to the bialaphos producing *S. hygroscopicus* and that the enzyme was converted to a protein resistant to

oxygen to be utilized for the biosynthesis of bialaphos under the aerobic conditions. Comparison of the structure of PMM synthase to that of (*R*)-citrate synthase would reveal the inactivation mechanism of (*R*)-citrate synthase of obligate anaerobic bacteria by oxygen.

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