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# Preferential transfer of the complete glycan is determined by the oligosaccharyltransferase complex and not by the catalytic subunit

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Contributed by Armando J. Parodi, August 15, 2006

Most eukaryotic cells show a strong preference for the transfer *in vivo* and *in vitro* of the largest dolichol-P-P-linked glycan (Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>) to protein chains over that of biosynthetic intermediates that lack the full complement of glucose units. The oligosaccharyltransferase (OST) is a multimeric complex containing eight different proteins, one of which (Stt3p) is the catalytic subunit. Trypanosomatid protozoa lack an OST complex and express only this last protein. Contrary to the OST complex from most eukaryotic cells, the Stt3p subunit of these parasites transfers in cell-free assays glycans with Man<sub>7-9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> and Glc<sub>1-3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> compositions at the same rate. We have replaced *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* Stt3p by the *Trypanosoma cruzi* homologue and found that the complex that is formed preferentially transfers the complete glycan both *in vivo* and *in vitro*. Thus, preference for Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> is a feature that is determined by the complex and not by the catalytic subunit.

N-glycosylation | *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* | *Trypanosoma cruzi*

Glycosylation of asparagine residues is one of the main posttranslational modifications in eukaryotic cells, because >80% of proteins that follow the secretory pathway carry N-linked glycans. Depending on the specific glycoprotein, this modification may be essential for the acquisition of the tertiary structure within the endoplasmic reticulum lumen, for the quality control of folding in the same subcellular location, for the correct sorting of lysosomal enzymes, or for the many roles that glycoproteins have either in the plasma membrane or in the external milieu.

The substrate donor used in the earliest description of the *en bloc* transfer of a glycan to protein from a lipid derivative was a dolichol-P-P-linked, glucose-labeled oligosaccharide that contained mannose and N-acetylglucosamine units (Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>, as was determined later) (1). Further reports showed that glycans lacking glucoses were also transferred in cell-free assays. Because glucose residues are not normally found in glycoproteins, it was initially believed that the glucose-free compounds were the true precursors in *in vivo* transfer reactions and that the glucose-containing compound was an oddity of no biological significance. A major advance in the field was the report that the glucose-containing lipid derivative was by far the main one occurring in normal cells, that its glycan was transferred to proteins at rates between 20- and 25-fold higher than those of compounds lacking the full complement of glucose units, and that both high-mannose- and complex-type glycans in mature glycoproteins were produced by intracellular processing of the fully glucosylated glycan (2, 3).

The enzyme involved in the transfer reaction (the oligosaccharyltransferase or OST) appeared to be a membrane-bound complex that was closely associated to the translocon and was formed in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* by eight subunits, five of which appeared to be essential for viability of the microorganism (4–6). Several lines of evidence indicate that one of the essential proteins (Stt3p) is the catalytic subunit and is actually responsible for the transfer of the glycan. (i) Cross-linking between

Ost1p, Ost3, and Stt3p and an acceptor polypeptide chain was obtained when a photoreactive reagent was engineered close to a N-glycosylation site (7); further, under certain experimental conditions, exclusive cross-linking to the last protein subunit was observed (8). (ii) An Stt3p homologue (PglB protein) was found to be encoded by the bacteria *Campylobacter jejuni* genome (9). Homologues to other OST complex components were absent. The PglB protein catalyzed the transfer of a variety of undecaprenol-P-P-linked glycans to asparagine residues in the canonical consensus sequence N-X-T/S. The structures of the transferred glycans differed widely from those transferred in eukaryotic cells (10). (iii) Point mutations in the sequence WWDYG, a motif present in all members of the Stt3p family, eliminated or sharply reduced OST activity (11). (iv) Genomic analysis showed that Stt3p is the only protein of the entire OST complex encoded by the genomes of trypanosomatid protozoa (6).

Trypanosomatid protozoa synthesize and transfer to protein unglucosylated glycans (Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>, Man<sub>7</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>, or Man<sub>6</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>, depending on the species) (12). In addition to species-specific deficiencies in certain dolichol-P-Man-dependent mannosyltransferases, all trypanosomatid species are unable to synthesize dolichol-P-Glc, which is the glucosyl donor in the synthesis of the complete glycan (13). Cell-free assays showed that, irrespective of the largest lipid-linked glycan synthesized and transferred *in vivo*, OSTs from all trypanosomatid protozoa tested transfer to protein Man<sub>7-9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> and Glc<sub>1-3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> at the same rate (14).

Is the capacity to transfer all glycans at the same rate a feature determined specifically by trypanosomatid Stt3p, or, alternatively, is it the complex that determines the preferential transfer of Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> in mammalian, plant, fungal, and other eukaryotic cells? To answer this question, we have replaced *S. cerevisiae* Stt3p by the *Trypanosoma cruzi* homologue in the fungal OST complex. It is worth mentioning that *T. cruzi* and *S. cerevisiae* Stt3ps (799 and 719 aa, respectively) show a 29% identity and 48% similarity according to the Blast-2-Seq program. Results obtained indicate that it is the complex, not the catalytic subunit, that determines the preferential specificity of the OST for the complete glycan.

## Results

**Incorporation of *T. cruzi* Stt3p in the Yeast OST Complex.** Yeast Stt3p was replaced in the OST complex by its *T. cruzi* homologue as described in *Materials and Methods*. Briefly, a plasmid encoding yeast Stt3p (pScSTT3) was introduced into a diploid strain harboring a disrupted *STT3* allele, and sporulation was then

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations: CPY, carboxypeptidase Y; OST, oligosaccharyltransferase; SC, synthetic complete; YPD, yeast extract/peptone/dextrose.

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sylated species were detected (Fig. 3A, lane 2), in the latter case (*T. cruzi* Stt3p, *alg5*), almost no signal corresponding to molecules containing four glycans appeared, and, in addition, completely glycan-free CPY molecules were visualized (Fig. 3A, lane 5). This difference indicated that glycan transfer in cells expressing the parasite subunit and forming Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> as the largest compound was more inefficient than that in cells able to synthesize the fully glucosylated glycan and confirmed that, *in vivo*, as in cell-free assays, preference for Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> depends on the OST complex, not on the catalytic subunit. The experiment shown in Fig. 3A was performed four times. Quantification of the average intensity of signals  $\pm$  SD is depicted in Fig. 3B. The gel shown in Fig. 3A corresponds to one of the samples.

## Discussion

We have shown that the specificity of the *T. cruzi* Stt3p homologue with respect to glucosylated and unglucosylated glycans depends on whether the protein is forming part of a multiprotein complex. In protozoan-derived microsomes (that is, in a context lacking the other components of the OST complex of higher eukaryotes), *T. cruzi* Stt3p transferred glucosylated and unglucosylated glycans at the same rate, but when forming part of the *S. cerevisiae* OST multimeric complex, the catalytic subunit preferentially used Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> as a substrate.

Early reports showed that higher eukaryotic OSTs did not show significant differences in  $K_m$  values for the dolichol-P-P derivatives containing fully glucosylated (Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>) or unglucosylated (Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>) glycans (20). A more recent study showed that saturation curves for both Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>-P-P-dolichol and Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>-P-P-dolichol are sigmoidal, not hyperbolic (21). Because the saturation curve for the acceptor substrate yielded linear Lineweaver–Burk plots, consistent with a single binding site for the acceptor peptide, the existence of sigmoidal saturation curves for both glucosylated and unglucosylated donor substrates is compatible with the occurrence of two dolichol-P-P-derivative binding sites: one regulatory and the other catalytic. Based on extensive kinetic experiments performed with proteoliposomes containing yeast OST and almost homogeneous donor substrates, R. Gilmore and coworkers (21) developed an interesting model by which binding of Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>-P-P-dolichol to the regulatory site would enhance the relative affinity of the catalytic one for the same substrate by a factor of  $\approx 1.5$ , whereas binding of Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>-P-P-dolichol to the regulatory site would result in a 7- to 10-fold enhancement of the catalytic site relative affinity for the fully glucosylated derivative. That is, even under conditions when the fully glucosylated substrate is a relative minor component of the dolichol-P-P-derivative pool, as happens, for instance, in the leaky *alg3* yeast mutant, binding of unglucosylated compounds to the regulatory site would result in the transfer of Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> (22) (*Alg3p* catalyzes the transfer of the sixth mannose unit to the dolichol-P-P derivative). Although the catalytic site has been localized to the Stt3p subunit, the location of the regulatory site is unknown. The present report supports the proposed model (21); it shows that a site not entirely localized to Stt3p (that is, different from the catalytic one) may influence the choice of the glycan transferred by the OST. It was further shown that two different mammalian OST complexes containing either the so-called STT3-A or STT3-B isoform of the catalytic subunit displayed a different preference for the transfer of glycans (STT3-A is shorter than STT3-B, and both forms share a 59% amino acid identity) (23). Thus, OST-I and OST-III complexes that contained STT3-B or STT3-A, respectively, showed a 2.6 or 14.7 times higher transfer of Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> over Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub>. Our present work suggests that this result is probably caused not by the different

catalytic subunits but by the different architecture of the resulting complexes.

What is the advantage for cells of transferring Glc<sub>3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNAc<sub>2</sub> and not a biosynthetic intermediate? First, transfer of the larger glycan would ensure uniformity in the complex- and high-mannose-type glycan structures of individual mature glycoproteins. Because processing reactions require a precise substrate structure to proceed, transfer of a variety of different glycans to the same Asn unit might result in different glycans in the fully processed glycoprotein, which would result in less efficient or even useless protein species because many of glycoprotein roles depend on precise glycan structures. Concerning transfer of a glycan containing three glucose units, it has been speculated that release of the outermost glucose unit, which occurs immediately after transfer to a peptide, likely promotes release of the substrate from the OST complex (19). The middle glucose unit thus exposed constitutes a negative signal for binding to the nonconventional chaperones calnexin and calreticulin, thus allowing certain glycoprotein molecules to attain their final conformation without assistance. Only exposure of the innermost glucose would allow initiation of the glycan-dependent cycle of glycoprotein folding (24).

Although not essential for single-cell viability, preferential transfer of the largest glycan confers subtle advantages that determine its occurrence in almost all eukaryotes. Most eukaryotic cells display two security devices to ensure the preferential transfer of the largest glycan that they are able to synthesize: an active synthetic machinery of dolichol-P-P derivatives resulting in the accumulation of the largest glycan and the existence of the OST complex. Trypanosomatid cells display only the former feature.

## Materials and Methods

**Cloning of the Gene Encoding *T. cruzi* Stt3p (pTcSTT3).** The *T. cruzi* Stt3p homologue-encoding gene (2,397 bp, Tc 00.1047053505163.80/5150.t0008, <http://tcruzidb.org/index.shtml>) was cloned in a high-copy-number yeast expression vector (p425GPD; LEU) with a very strong promoter. A plasmid bearing a strong promoter was used to ensure a high expression level of the parasite subunit because trypanosomatids and yeasts partially differ in the use of codons. Cloning was performed by PCR using genomic DNA from *T. cruzi* CL Brener isolate as a template. Primers used were as follows: TCDBATG, 5'-ATGGACACAGCACAATTAACAC-3'; TCDBTAA, 5'-TTAGCCACGCCCTTCATTG-3'. The fragment ends were filled with T4 DNA polymerase, treated with T4 PN kinase, and blunt-cloned in the *Sma*I vector site. The cloned gene was sequenced, and it seemed to be identical with that reported in the above-mentioned gene bank. The gene was also cloned with a *Haemophilus influenzae* agglutinin tag at its C terminus. In this case, the second primer used was TCDBHATAA, 5'-GCCCTAAGCGTAGTCTGGGACGTCGTATGGGTAGCCACGCCCTTCATTGCGGAT-3'.

**Cloning of the Gene Encoding *S. cerevisiae* Stt3p (pScSTT3).** The entire gene was cloned with its own promoter and terminator in the centromeric expression vector pRS316 (URA). A 3,207-bp fragment containing the entire gene (2,157 bp) plus 461 bp and 589 bp at the 5' and 3' ends, respectively, was cloned by PCR using chromosomal DNA as a template and primers that had *Sac*I and *Xho*I sites at their ends.

***S. cerevisiae* Strain.** The diploid heterozygous Y24390 strain (EUROSCARF, Frankfurt, Germany) was used. This strain has the *STT3* locus (*YGLO22w*) disrupted by a kanamycin resistance gene (*KanMX4*) in one of the alleles. It is derived from the strain whose genome was fully sequenced (BY4743) and has the following genotype: *Mata*/α; *his3Δ1/his3Δ1*;

*leu2Δ0/leu2Δ0; Lys-2/lys2Δ0; Met-15/met15Δ0; ura3Δ0/ura3Δ0; YGLO22w::KanMX4/YGLO22w.*

**Expression of *T. cruzi* Stt3p in *S. cerevisiae*.** Plasmid pScSTT3 was introduced into the above strain by electroporation. The diploid strain (URA<sup>+</sup>;LEU<sup>-</sup>;Kan<sup>R</sup>) was sporulated, and several asci were dissected; in all cases, the four spores were viable. A haploid spore was selected that carried the following genotype: *MATα; LYS2; his3Δ1; met15Δ0; ura3Δ0; leu2Δ0; stt3::KanMX4* pScSTT3. This strain was transformed with plasmid pTcSTT3, and haploids carrying both plasmids were selected in synthetic complete (SC) medium without uracil and leucine. This strain was grown in liquid yeast extract/peptone/dextrose (YPD) medium and plated in SC medium with 5'fluorotic acid for curing the strain of pScSTT3. Several colonies were picked and analyzed for growth on YPD plus kanamycin, SC medium without leucine, and SC medium without uracil and leucine. All of the colonies were resistant to kanamycin and grew in SC medium without leucine, but none of them grew in SC medium lacking uracil.

***S. cerevisiae* Mutant in *STT3* and *ALG5* Genes.** Strains *MATα; LYS2; his3Δ1; met15Δ0; ura3Δ0,leu2Δ0; stt3::KanMX4 ura3-52; lys2-801; ade2-101; his3Δ200; trp1-Δ1; leu2-Δ1; alg5::HIS3* were crossed in liquid medium, and diploids were selected in plates containing SC medium minus histidine, lysine, and uracil. Cells were sporulated and dissected; in all cases, the four spores were viable. Spores were then analyzed for mating type, kanamycin resistance, and growth on SC without uracil and histidine. Several spores had the genotype *stt3::KanMX4; alg5::HIS3* pScSTT3. To confirm the absence of a functional *ALG5* gene (genotype *alg5::HIS3*), total proteins were prepared, and CPY underglycosylation was checked by Western blotting. The plasmid pTcSTT3 was introduced into *stt3::KanMX4; alg5::HIS3; leu2-Δ1* or *leu2Δ0* pScSTT3 cells by electroporation. Transformants were selected in SC medium without uracil, leucine, and histidine, and viability in YPD plus kanamycin was checked. Selected transformants were grown in YPD with 0.6 M sorbitol and plated on 0.6 M sorbitol SC medium with 5'fluorotic acid for curing this strain of pScSTT3. Selected colonies grew in YPD without sorbitol plus kanamycin and SC medium without histidine and leucine, and absence of growth in

the same medium but lacking uracil was checked. Total DNA was prepared and electroporated into *E. coli* DH5α. Plasmid DNA prepared was shown to be pTcSTT3 by restriction analysis and sequencing of both *STT3* gene ends. Resulting cells were then *stt3::KanMX4; alg5::HIS3* pTcSTT3.

**Primers Used for Checking Yeast *STT3* Disruption.** The following primers were used for checking disruption of yeast *STT3*. Primers from outside the gene: ScProm, 5'-GACACACTATG-CAACGCAG3-'; ScTerm, 5'-TGCATCAGACTCCCTCATC-3'. These primers are located 321–303 and 440–458 bp upstream and downstream of *STT3*, respectively. Primer KanB, 5'-CTGCAGCGAGGAGCCGTAAT-3' is homologous to the non-coding strand and is located 250 bp downstream of the 5' end of the *KanMX4* module (1,576 bp). Primers specific for yeast *STT3*: ScSTT3F, 5'-CCTATCATTCCTCCGTT-3'; ScSTT3R, 5'-TGGTTCTGTCTGCCATGC-3'. These primers are located 1,027–1,044 and 1,591–1,574 bp within *STT3* (2,157 bp).

**Antisera.** CPY and OST1p antisera were generous gifts from Reid Gilmore (University of Massachusetts, Worcester, MA). HA affinity-purified antiserum was from Roche (Penzberg, Germany).

***T. cruzi* and Yeast Microsomes.** These microsomes were prepared as described in ref. 14. In the case of *S. cerevisiae*, a complete antiprotease mixture was included from the onset of the preparation. *T. cruzi* cells were from the CL Brener isolate.

**OST Assay.** This assay was performed in the presence of detergents by using a mixture of [<sup>14</sup>C]Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNac<sub>2</sub> and [<sup>14</sup>C]Glc<sub>1-3</sub>Man<sub>9</sub>GlcNac<sub>2</sub> dolichol-P-P derivatives as donor substrates and the hexapeptide Tyr-Asn-Leu-Thr-Ser-Val as an acceptor as described in ref. 14 except that 1 mM 1-deoxynojirimycin was included in the incubation mixtures.

**Other Methods.** Paper chromatographies were performed on no. 1 chromatography paper from Whatman (Maidstone, U.K.) with 1-propanol/nitromethane/water (5:2:4) as a solvent.

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