STUDIES ON A SARCOSINE OXIDASE OF BACTERIAL ORIGIN

By Paul H. Kopper

With the Technical Assistance of Leon Robin

(From the Department of Microbiology and Public Health, The Chicago Medical School, Chicago)

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Few studies have been carried out on amino acid oxidases of bacterial origin. Stumpf and Green (1944) described an L-amino acid oxidase of Proteus vulgaris, the specificity of which could not be sharply defined due to the difficulties involved in its separation and purification. No data on the action of this enzyme on glycine and sarcosine are reported. Ratner, Nocito, and Green (1944) discovered in mammalian livers an oxidase attacking both these substrates by oxidative deamination. From the same source, Handler, Bernheim, and Klein (1941) extracted a specific sarcosine oxidase, capable of breaking down sarcosine to formaldehyde and glycine.

It was found by Kopper and Robin (1950) that a sarcosine oxidase, identical in mode of action, occurred in an atypical strain of Pseudomonas aeruginosa characterized by its ability to decompose creatinine (Kopper, 1947). The present study was undertaken to obtain information about the general properties and behavior pattern of this enzyme.

EXPERIMENTAL

1. Preparation of the "Enzyme Solution"

The organisms were grown in coli-flasks on meat extract agar in which 0.5 per cent creatinine had been incorporated. After 72 hours' incubation at room temperature they were washed off with distilled water and centrifuged. Following two subsequent washings and centrifugations, they were suspended in 2 volumes of 50 per cent toluene and allowed to autolyze for 1 hour. The autolysate was centrifuged and the supernatant discarded.

Attempts were made to purify the enzyme present in the crude bacterial autolysate. Drying over H2SO4 and lyophilization inactivated the enzyme completely. Its activity was also lost upon dialysis against distilled water for 48 hours and could not be restored by adding to the dialysates undialyzed bacterial protein heated at 55°C. for 10 minutes. Dialysis against dilute phosphate buffer of pH 7 for 96 hours did not result in loss of enzyme activity.

Autolyzed Pseudomonas cells were suspended in 4 volumes of distilled water, allowed to stand at 5°C. overnight, and centrifuged. This procedure was repeated on 3 successive days. It was found that most of the activity was retained in the super-
The supernatant, an opalescent particle suspension, seemed to resemble Stumpf and Green's cell-free L-amino acid oxidase preparation, which had been obtained by fractional centrifugation of bacteria disintegrated by exposure to ultrasonic vibrations, but, unlike the *Proteus* enzyme, it tended to become rapidly inactivated.

In view of this experience it was decided to use the unpurified bacterial autolysate. When kept at 5°C, it remained active for about 2 weeks; however, because of a gradual decrease in activity, it was used only for 1 week following its preparation. Always immediately prior to use a 1/10 dilution in phosphate buffer was prepared. This will be referred to as the "enzyme solution" or "sarcosine oxidase."

2. Materials and Methods

Eastman-Kodak's sarcosine hydrochloride was used. An amount of 141 mg., equivalent to 100 mg. of sarcosine, was dissolved in enough NaOH to neutralize it, and then made up to a volume of 10 ml. with distilled water. Dilutions were prepared from this stock solution.

Enzyme activity was measured by the amount of formaldehyde produced rather than by the quantity of oxygen consumed. Eastman-Kodak's reagent, 1,8-dihydroxy-naphthalene-3,6-disulfonic acid (chromotropic acid), was selected as most suitable for determining small quantities of HCHO, in accordance with the method outlined by MacFadyen (1945). This test allows the accurate determination of as little as 0.1 μg. of HCHO. Color intensities were read in a Leitz photoelectric colorimeter (C filter) and compared with standards obtained with known amounts of HCHO.

The basic type of experiment, before the introduction of variables, was conducted as follows: In test tubes of 1/2 inch diameter, 200 μg. of sarcosine and 0.1 ml. of enzyme solution were mixed and made up to 1 ml. with 1/15 phosphate buffer of pH 7. The tubes were placed in a 37°C. water bath and shaken at 275 to 285 oscillations per minute for 1 hour. To each tube, 0.2 ml. of a 6 N H₂SO₄ solution was then added, which caused precipitation of the bacterial protein. This was removed by centrifugation. To the supernatants, 9 volumes of chromotropic acid solution were added, the mixtures placed in a boiling water bath for 30 minutes, and the resulting colors read. The amount of HCHO obtained from 200 μg. of sarcosine fluctuated between 21 and 35 μg., which corresponds to 31 to 52 per cent substrate decomposition.

An alternative method frequently employed in estimating the activity of oxidizing enzymes is the determination of the reduction time of methylene blue in evacuated Thunberg tubes. Decolorization of methylene blue by sarcosine oxidase in the presence of the substrate was observed, but no trace of HCHO could be detected when the tubes were opened and aliquots tested with chromotropic acid. It was believed at first that HCHO, under anaerobic conditions, might be oxidized in turn by an enzyme present in the unpurified bacterial autolysate; but the latter, in the presence of HCHO, failed to reduce methylene blue to its leuco base even after 1 hour's incubation. Upon addition of reducing agents, such as sodium cyanide and cysteine, however, HCHO would disappear in evacuated Thunberg tubes, regardless of the presence or absence of enzyme solution and methylene blue. Sarcosine, when acted upon by sarcosine oxidase, also becomes a reducing agent; this might explain the absence of HCHO as a breakdown product under anaerobic conditions.
The results reported in this study were all obtained by means of the aerobic technique.

![Graph showing pH activity curve of sarcosine oxidase.](image)

**Fig. 1.** Effect of pH on the activity of sarcosine oxidase.

![Graph showing relation of enzyme concentration to the activity of sarcosine oxidase.](image)

**Fig. 2.** Relation of enzyme concentration to the activity of sarcosine oxidase.

**RESULTS**

The pH activity curve of sarcosine oxidase is shown in Fig. 1. Sørensen's m/15 phosphate buffer and Clark and Lub's m/5 borate buffer solutions were prepared and the experiments set up in the usual way. The pH optimum is reached at 7.8. The curve resembles that obtained by Handler et al. (1941) for animal sarcosine oxidase.

The effect of enzyme concentration on substrate decomposition is presented in Fig. 2. As with many enzymes, a direct relationship exists.

Fig. 3 shows the relation of substrate concentration to enzyme activity.
As with *Proteus* l-amino acid oxidase, a point is soon reached beyond which no further increase in activity occurs. The reason for this must be sought in the saturation of enzyme by substrate molecules.

Michaelis and Menten (1913) worked out general rate laws for the action of invertase on sucrose by assuming a chemical combination of the enzyme with its substrate as the governing step in the hydrolysis of the sugar. The enzyme-substrate equilibrium can be represented by the equation:

\[ k_s = \frac{(E)(S)}{(ES)} \]

The constant \( k_s \) could be determined by simple mathematical calculation leading to the equation:

\[ \frac{v}{V_m} = \frac{(S)}{k_s + (S)} \]

or

\[ k_s = (S) \left( \frac{V_m}{v} - 1 \right) \]  

(1)

in which \( v \) represents the initial velocity at the substrate concentration \( (S) \), \( V_m \) the maximum velocity, \( k_s \), therefore, being equivalent to the substrate concentration at which half the limiting velocity is reached. Lineweaver and Burk (1934) developed graphic methods for determining dissociation constants of enzyme-substrate compounds. Equation (1) can be written:

\[ \frac{1}{v} = \frac{k_s}{V_m(S)} + \frac{1}{V_m} \]  

(2)

\( V_m \) and \( k_s \) are constants. A plot of \( 1/v \) against \( 1/S \) must, therefore, give a straight line, if one molecule of enzyme combines with one molecule of sub-
strate. The intercept of this line on the $1/v$ axis is $1/V_m$ and its slope $k_v/V_m$. Thus the constants are easily determined. Fig. 4 gives the results for sarcosine oxidase. From this graph $V_m$ is calculated as 1.75 $\mu$g. of HCHO and $k_v$ as 146.7 $\mu$g. of sarcosine.

When equation (2) is multiplied by $(S)$, it assumes the form:

$$\frac{(S)}{v} = \frac{k_v}{V_m} \cdot \frac{(S)}{V_m}$$

(3)

By plotting $S/v$ against $S$ a straight line is again obtained (Fig. 5). The intercept on the $S/v$ axis is $k_v/V_m$ and the slope $1/V_m$. The values derived from this graph are: $V_m = 1.81$, $k_v = 152.5$. The importance of this plot is not only to check the values obtained from Fig. 4, but also to discover any departure from a straight line, which would be due to substrate inhibition. The results indicate that such inhibition does not occur and that enzyme and substrate combine in equimolecular proportion.

The effect of temperature on enzyme activity is shown in Fig. 6. These experiments were run for only 15 minutes. Over a longer period of time inactivation at the higher temperatures becomes appreciable.

To determine the rate of enzyme destruction at about 50°C., the following experiments were set up. Test tubes containing 0.1 ml. of enzyme solution were immersed in a water bath at the desired temperature for varying lengths of time. They were then immediately placed in ice water to check further
Sarcosine oxidase of bacterial origin

destruction of the enzyme. The residual activity of the enzyme was determined. The rates of heat inactivation of sarcosine oxidase at 48°C and 52°C are presented in Fig. 7.

![Graph of temperature vs. activity of sarcosine oxidase](image)

**Fig. 6.** Effect of temperature on the activity of sarcosine oxidase.

![Graph of time vs. log of activity](image)

**Fig. 7.** Rate of heat inactivation of sarcosine oxidase.

The thermal inactivation of the enzyme follows the equation of a first order reaction:

$$2.3 \log \frac{A_0}{A} = kt$$

where $A_0$ is the activity of the unheated enzyme solution, $A$ the activity of the enzyme heated for time $t$, and $k$ the constant of heat inactivation. The average values for $k$ are 0.0218 at 48°C and 0.1475 at 52°C. This considerable
TABLE I
Relation of Enzyme Concentration to Rate of Heat Inactivation of Sarcosine Oxidase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temperature of preheating</th>
<th>Time of preheating</th>
<th>Inactivation with enzyme concentration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>°C.</td>
<td>min.</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE II
Inhibition of Sarcosine Oxidase by Chemical Compounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chemical compound</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Inhibition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper sulfate</td>
<td>M/10,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver nitrate</td>
<td>M/10,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercurlc chloride</td>
<td>M/10,000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium cyanide</td>
<td>M/1000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/10,000</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cysteine</td>
<td>M/1000</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/10,000</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium sulfide</td>
<td>M/100</td>
<td>71.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/1000</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium sulfite</td>
<td>M/100</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/1000</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium benzoate</td>
<td>M/100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M/1000</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium fluoride</td>
<td>M/100</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sulfanilamide</td>
<td>M/100</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change over a narrow temperature range is characteristic of enzyme inactivation as well as protein denaturation.

Destruction rates are usually considered in their relation to the correspond-
ing heats of enzyme inactivation or critical thermal increments. These can be calculated with the aid of the van't Hoff-Arrhenius equation

$$\frac{d \ln k}{dT} = \frac{\Delta H}{RT^2}$$

Integrated between the limits $T_2$ and $T_1$, this equation assumes the form:

$$\ln \frac{k_2}{k_1} = \frac{\Delta H}{R} \left( \frac{1}{T_1} - \frac{1}{T_2} \right)$$

Since $k_1 = 0.0218$, $k_2 = 0.1475$, $T_1 = 321^\circ$, $T_2 = 325^\circ$, and $R = 1.99$ calories, the value of $\Delta H$ can be calculated as 103,000 calories per mol.

Casey and Laidler (1950) have pointed out that rates of heat inactivation of pepsin are dependent on enzyme activity at low enzyme concentrations. It seemed of interest to determine whether their observations would also be valid for sarcosine oxidase. Amounts of 0.1 ml. of 1/10, 1/13, 1/20, and 1/40 dilutions of the bacterial autolysate were exposed to different temperatures for varying lengths of time and their residual activity was measured. Table I summarizes the results obtained. It is to be noted that, while the values for enzyme concentrations 1/10 and 1/13 are practically identical, further dilution of the enzyme is associated with progressively higher rates of heat inactivation.

Table II presents the results of experiments on inactivation of sarcosine oxidase by various chemical substances. The enzyme is inhibited by heavy metal salts, reducing agents and benzoate, and to a lesser degree by fluoride and sulfanilamide.

**DISCUSSION**

*Pseudomonas* sarcosine oxidase displays a behavior pattern similar to that of *Proteus* l-amino acid oxidase. Both these enzymes, unlike animal amino acid oxidases, do not seem to require a dialyzable cofactor for action. The observed loss of activity of the *Pseudomonas* enzyme through continuous perfusion with distilled water could possibly be due to a shift of pH to a level at which a more rapid inactivation would take place.

The observation made in this study that HCHO disappears in the presence of reducing agents under anaerobic conditions may explain a phenomenon reported in a previous communication (Kopper and Robin, 1950), in which it was pointed out that decomposition of sarcosine by resting cells of atypical *P. aeruginosa* failed to yield any HCHO. It may be assumed that live bacteria are capable of disposing of HCHO through reduction, a process, non-enzymic in character, made possible by the high reduction potential characteristic of living cells. Further experimental work to verify this hypothesis is planned.
A "sarcosine oxidase" was prepared from a creatinine-decomposing strain of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

The enzyme is inactivated by drying, lyophilization, and dialysis against distilled water. No dialyzable cofactor was found.

Optimal activity of the enzyme is reached at pH 7.8. Enzyme activity is directly proportional to enzyme concentration and also to substrate concentration up to the point of saturation of enzyme with substrate molecules. One molecule of enzyme combines with one molecule of substrate.

Data concerning the effect of temperature and of a variety of chemical compounds on the enzyme are presented.

Its inactivation by heat follows the course of a first order reaction, and the critical thermal increment between 48° and 52°C. was calculated to be 103,000 calories per mol. The relationship of enzyme concentration to heat inactivation rates is illustrated.

REFERENCES


