

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Applications of the bacterial luciferin-luciferase system

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**Applications of the Bacterial Luciferin-luciferase System**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Philosophy**

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## Abstract

Bioluminescence is a common phenomenon found in many organisms, such as fireflies, squids and teleost fishes, these organisms depend on the bioluminescence as a light source or a lure to attract their prey. The production of the luminescence by these organisms depending on the specialized organ which is occupied and concentrated with one or more than one kinds of luminescent bacteria. The generation of the bioluminescence is a product from an oxidative reaction controlled by the Lux operon of the luminescent bacteria ( $\text{FMNH}^- + \text{RCHO} + \text{H}^+ + \text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{FMN} + \text{RCOOH} + \text{H}_2\text{O} + h\nu$ ). The Lux operon usually contains LuxCDABE genes, where the LuxC, LuxD and LuxE genes encode the enzymes for the biosynthesis of the enzyme luciferase while the LuxA and LuxB genes encode the protein synthesis of the alpha and beta subunits of the bacterial luciferin.

In the present project, bioluminescent bacteria were isolated from squids (sp. *Loligo opalescens*). A pure culture of one luminescent bacterium was obtained and was subjected to identification by gram tests and analyses by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). A gram-negative bacterium, *Photobacterium leiognathi subspecies mandapamensis*, was identified through amplification of the recA gene by PCR and subsequent DNA sequencing.

In addition, the LuxA and LuxB genes in the *P. leiognathi* was amplified and cloned to produce different kinds of mammalian and bacterial expression for the expression of bacterial luciferin at the cellular level.

Transfection of the shrimp zygotes of *Macrobrachium lanchesteri* and cysts of *Artemia* were carried out by reagent-mediated transfection and electroporation and the expression of the bacterial luciferin was driven by the human cytomegalovirus promoter. Electroporation of the *Artemia* cysts succeeded but no observable or detectable bioluminescence upon induction. In contrast, growth of the the shrimp zygotes of *Macrobrachium lanchesteri* were found arrested after the reagent-mediated transfection.

In spite of making reporter organisms expressing bacterial luciferin, several bacterial expression constructs have been made in order to compare the efficiencies of expression in dual vectors, bicistronic vector and double promoter vector. Besides, a heavy metal biosensor was produced by utilizing the promoter ZntA (PzntA) upstream the bicistronic bacterial luciferin reporter gene. The PzntA is regulated and activated by the complex formed by a regulatory protein and heavy metal ions, the special affinity and selectivity of the PzntA gene sequence make it an essential

element in the detection of the availability of heavy metal, and the biosensor made in the present study was sensitive to Cd(II), Pb(II) and Zn(II) and the production of the bacterial reporter gene generated a dose-response in the reaction of the addition of the decanal which is a bacterial luciferin substrate .

## Table of Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Background and Literature Review</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Bioluminescence	<b>1</b>
1.2 Bacterial luciferin-lucifearse system	<b>2</b>
1.3 The lux operon	<b>4</b>
1.4 Regulatory genes luxI and luxR, autoinduction and dark mutant	<b>5</b>
1.5 Transfer of Lux operon into other prokaryotes	<b>6</b>
1.6 Application of the LuxA and LuxB gene as a reporter gene	<b>7</b>
1.7 Expression of bacterial luciferase gene (lux) in mammalian cell line	<b>8</b>
1.7.1 The vector and promoter used in transfection of mammalian cell line	<b>9</b>
1.8 Transfection of shrimp zygotes and Artemia cysts and the usage of human cytomegalovirus (CMV) promoter	<b>10</b>
1.9 Protein over-expression in bacteria and construction of constructs	<b>11</b>
1.10 Heavy metals and their adverse effects	<b>12</b>
1.10.1 The microbial resistance to heavy metals	<b>14</b>
1.10.2 The mechanism that the E coli. “expel” the heavy metal	<b>14</b>
1.11 Bio-sensor and the benefits	<b>15</b>
1.11.1 Common reporter genes used in bio-sensor	<b>16</b>
1.11.2 Comparison of the bioluminescent reporter genes	<b>17</b>
1.12 Objectives of thesis	<b>18</b>

<b>Chapter 2 Materials and Methods</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1 Animals and the template DNA	20
2.2 Electrophoresis, PCR, primer design and image capturing	20
2.2.1 Electrophoresis	20
2.2.2 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)	21
2.2.3 PCR mixture	21
2.2.4 Gel documentation and excising	21
2.2.5 Primer design	22
2.3 TOPO cloning vector, transformation and screening	22
2.3.1 Usage of the pCR2.1-TOPO vector (TOPO vector, Invitrogen)	22
2.3.2 Cloning of genes by using TA cloning vector and transformation	23
2.3.3 Spreading of the transformed competent cells on LB agar plates	23
2.3.4 Blue-white colony selection and transformants analysis	24
2.4 General cloning procedures	24
2.4.1 Restriction enzyme digestion	24
2.4.2 Cloning of insert gene to the TOPO vector	25
2.4.3 Gel extraction	26
2.4.4 DNA Ligation	27
2.4.5 Transformation of the ligation mixture	28
2.4.6 Screening of the recombinant transformants	28
2.4.7 Extraction of the recombinant plasmids from the Competent cells	29
2.4.8 Dephosphorylation at the 5' ends of the linearized vector	29
2.4.9 Sticky ends blunting	30
2.5 Construction of the constructs for the trasfection of <i>Artemia</i> cysts and shrimp eggs	30
2.5.1 Construction of the constructs CMVA-Z, CMVB-Z, CMVG-Z and CMVAB	30
2.5.2 Construction of the constructs CMVA, CMVB and CMVG	31

2.6	Screening of the recombinant colonies (CMVA-Z, CMVB-Z, CMVG-Z and CMVAB)	32
2.7	Construction of the constructs for protein over-expression in the bacteria	33
2.7.1	Construction of the pET41kan and pET41amp	33
2.7.2	Construction of the constructs T7A, T7B, T7AB and BiAB	34
2.7.2.1	Construction of the constructs T7A and T7B	34
2.7.2.2	Construction of the constructs BiAB	35
2.7.2.3	Construction of the constructs T7AB	36
2.7.3	Screening of the recombinant colonies (T7A, T7B, T7AB and BiAB )	37
2.8	Construction of the construct PzntA-BiAB	37
2.9	Transfection of recombinant vector with the A375 melanoma cell line	38
2.9.1	Cell models	39
2.9.2	Confocal microscopy	39
2.10	Setup of the tanks for the shrimps and <i>Artemia</i>	40
2.10.1	Keeping of the shrimps and the <i>Artemia</i>	41
2.10.2	Breeding colonies of the shrimps and <i>Artemia</i>	41
2.11	Transfection of the shrimp zygote	42
2.12	Transfection of the <i>Artemia</i> cysts	43
2.12.1	Decapsulation of the <i>Artemia</i> cysts	44
2.13	Transfection strategy for the <i>Artemia</i> and shrimp	45
2.14	Electroporation of the <i>Artemia</i> cysts with the construct CMVA-Z	45
2.15	Measurement of the induced bioluminescence in the shrimp and <i>Artemia</i>	46
2.16	The transformation of the constructs T7A, T7B, T7AB and BiAB to the chemical competent cell E.coli BL21 (DE3) and screening of the recombinant bacterial cell	48
2.17	Induction of the protein expression in the E.coli BL21 (DE3) recombinant transformants and the induction of the	49



bioluminescence	
2.18 Assay on the induction of the bioluminescence by different volume ratio of the BiAB recombinant to the substrate	50
2.19 The preparation of the E.coli K-12 competent cell	51
2.20 Preparation of the Cadmium chloride, Zinc chloride and lead actate	52
2.21 Assay on the responsiveness of the promoter ZntA	53
2.22 Induction of the PzntA-BiAB recombinant by heavy metal and the induction of the bioluminescence	54
2.23 Statistical analysis and graphs	56
<b>Chapter 3 Isolation of luminescent bacteria and the construction of mammalian constructs for the transfection of the Shrimp eggs and Artemia cysts</b>	<b>79</b>
3.1 Introduction	79
3.2 Objectives	80
3.3 Results	81
3.3.1 Amplification of LuxA, LuxB and LuxG genes from the Photobacterium mandapamensis strain ATCC27561 by PCR	81
3.3.2 The construction of the constructs CMVA-Z and CMVB-Z and CMVG-Z	82
3.3.3 The construction of the bicistronic construct CMVAB	82
3.3.4 Transfection of the A375 human melanoma cell line with the constructs CMVA-Z and CMVB-Z and CMVG-Z	83
3.3.5 The development of the shrimp zygote	84
3.3.6 Transfection of the shrimp zygotes by the Lipofectamine 2000 (Invitrogen) and jetPEI (Polyplus)	84
3.3.7 Optimization of the electroporation	85
3.3.8 Measurement of the induced bioluminescence in electroporated Artemia	85
3.3.9 Electroporation of the Artemia cysts with the CMVA-Z	86

3.4	Discussion	88
3.5	Conclusion	94
<b>Chapter 4 Construction of bacterial constructs and over-expression of bacterial luciferase in <i>E. coli</i> competent cell</b>		
4.1	Introduction	123
4.2	Objectives	124
4.3	Results	125
4.3.1	Amplification of LuxA and LuxB genes from the Photobacterium mandapamensis strain ATCC27561 by PCR	125
4.3.2	The construction of bacterial plasmid	126
4.3.2.1	The constructs pET41kan and pET41amp	126
4.3.2.2	The construction of the T7A and T7B	126
4.3.2.3	The construction of the construct bicistronic AB (BiAB)	127
4.3.2.4	The construction of the construct T7AB	127
4.3.2.5	The element on the constructs T7A, T7B, T7AB and BiAB	129
4.3.3	Bioluminescence generated by the cloned LuxA and LuxB genes	129
4.3.4	Comparison of the level of induced bioluminescence in different transformed <i>E. coli</i> competent cell	130
4.3.5	The effect of different dosage of the decanal on the induced bioluminescence	131
4.4	Discussion	132
4.5	Conclusion	137
<b>Chapter 5 Construction of recombinant bacterial bio-sensor for the detection of cadmium, zinc and lead</b>		168
5.1	Introduction	168

5.2	Objectives	169
5.3	Results	170
5.3.1	Amplification of the promoter ZntA (PzntA) from the E. coli strain K-12	170
5.3.2	Cloning of the promoter ZntA (PzntA) to the construct BiAB upstreamed the reporter gene	171
5.3.3	The element on the construct PzntA-BiAB	171
5.3.4	The transformation of the PzntA-BiAB to the E. coli strain K-12	171
5.3.5	The response of the PzntA-BiAB to the Zn(II)	171
5.3.6	The response of the bio-sensor to the heavy metal	173
5.3.6.1	The pattern of the dose response of the bio-sensor to the heavy metal at different time point	173
5.3.6.2	The response of the bio-sensor to the Cd(II)	174
5.3.6.3	The response of the bio-sensor to the Pb(II)	174
5.3.6.4	The response of the bio-sensor to the Zn(II)	175
5.3.7	The comparison of the induction coefficient among 3 heavy metals	175
5.4	Discussion	177
5.5	Conclusion	184
<b>Chapter 6 Summary and Conclusion</b>		<b>207</b>
<b>List of References</b>		<b>211</b>
<b>Curriculum Vitae</b>		<b>226</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>		<b>227</b>
<b>Appendix II</b>		<b>229</b>