Plant lipids enticed fungi to mutualism

Evolution of lipid transfer from plants to fungi allowed plants to colonize land

Bouwmeester, H.J.

DOI
10.1126/science.abi8016

Publication date
2021

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Science

License
Article 25fa Dutch Copyright Act (https://www.openaccess.nl/en/in-the-netherlands/you-share-we-take-care)

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date: 16 Sep 2023
SYMBIOSIS

Plant lipids enticed fungi to mutualism

Evolution of lipid transfer from plants to fungi allowed plants to colonize land

By Harro J. Bouwmeester

The migration of plants from water to newly emerged land some 450 million years ago required plants to acquire a number of crucial new traits. Fossil records provide compelling evidence that one of these traits is the symbiosis (or mutualism) between these early land plants and arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi. On page 864 of this issue, Rich et al. (1) show that the primitive land plant Marchantia paleacea produces lipids that are transferred to the fungus and that this process is essential for a functional symbiosis (see the image). This localized lipid biosynthesis also occurs in higher plants that engage in symbiosis with AM fungi (2, 3), but not in algae, suggesting that this process evolved 450 million years ago, allowing plants to colonize land and is conserved across the plant kingdom.

The symbiosis of plants with AM fungi is so crucial for plant growth on land that about 80% of land plants engage in it (4). The plant allows AM fungi to enter its roots and form nutrient exchange structures called arbuscules in its cells (see the figure). Outside the root, the fungal hyphae grow into the soil, up to 30 cm from the plant root, where they can take up water, phosphorus, nitrogen, and other elements that the plant cannot reach (4). For a long time, it was assumed that plants, in return for the resources supplied by the fungus, provided carbohydrates from photosynthesis to the fungus. Only recently, it was discovered that in addition to carbohydrates, plants also supply lipids to the fungus (2, 3). To investigate how old this mechanism is, Rich et al. used an elegant approach: a comparison of RNA sequencing gene expression data on the AM fungal interaction in the primitive M. paleacea with data of AM fungal interactions in higher plants. With this comparison, the authors show that orthologs of many of the known higher-plant symbiotic genes are also expressed in M. paleacea upon AM fungal colonization, confirming conservation across 450 million years of plant diversification [also see (5)]. Rich et al. report that this includes genes that have been shown in higher plants to be responsible for lipid exchange from the plant to the fungus, such as the lipid biosynthesis–related REQUIRED FOR ARBUSCULAR MYCORRHIZATION 2 (RAM2) and the lipid transporter STUNTED ARBUSCULE 1 and 2 (STRI and STR2) (see the figure). With a number of experiments, they subsequently show that M. paleacea is indeed producing lipids and that they are essential for the symbiosis with AM fungi.

Lipid biosynthesis and transfer are not the only evolutionarily conserved processes that occur in M. paleacea upon colonization by AM fungi. Rich et al. also report orthogroups of genes involved in strigolactone biosynthesis that show a conserved response across the plant kingdom, including in M. paleacea. Strigolactones are rhizosphere signaling molecules that have been shown to play a key role in the colonization of roots by AM fungi (6) and are regularly claimed to have been instrumental for terrestrialization (7) (see the figure). Rich et al. do not go into detail on these genes, but it can be safely assumed that they refer to CAROTENOID CLEAVAGE DIOXYGENASE 8a and 8b (CCD8a and CCD8b). The enzyme

REFERENCES AND NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge funding support from the National Science Foundation (Career Award grant 1847674) and a Utah State University faculty start-up. 10.1126/science.abi5911

PHOTO: CÉCILE POUZET (FRAIB/CNRS)
CCD8 catalyzes the second dedicated step in strigolactone biosynthesis (8). Of the two homologs, only CCD8a expression is notably up-regulated upon AMF colonization. In higher plants, this pattern is less clear; CCD8 expression is up-regulated in rice, petunia, and Medicago truncatula but not in sunflower and poplar. Rich et al. list other carotenoid biosynthesis–related and cytochrome P450 genes that are potentially involved in strigolactone biosynthesis. Some of these are also up-regulated under AM fungus colonization in M. paleacea, but a consistent pattern in both M. paleacea and the higher plants is lacking. Recent evidence suggests that strigolactone biosynthesis is up-regulated upon AM fungal colonization (9), whereas other studies show that AM fungal colonization results in reduced exudation of strigolactones (10).

Intriguingly, Rich et al. also describe an ABC transporter (Marpal_utg00130g0107881), which has orthologs in all the higher plants included in this study, with up-regulated expression under AM fungal colonization across the plant kingdom. The only unambiguously identified strigolactone transporter so far is the petunia ABC transporter PLEIOTROPIC DRUG RESISTANCE 1 (PDR1), with expression that is up-regulated under AM fungal colonization and was shown to be required for AM fungal symbiosis (11). It would be very exciting if this M. paleacea ABC transporter turns out to be a strigolactone transporter as well.

Rich et al. then focus on the processes that maintain the symbiotic relationship after it has been established, in particular, the transcriptional regulation of lipid biosynthesis. They identify two transcription factors that seem to be highly conserved across the plant kingdom and coincide with terrestrialization: WRINKLED (WRI) and REQUIRED FOR ARBUSCULE DEVELOPMENT 1 (RAD1). Overexpression of WRI in M. paleacea resulted in increased expression of fatty acid biosynthesis–related genes, whereas inactivation of WRI resulted in severely compromised AM fungus colonization.

Higher plants contain multiple paralogs of WRI, of which several function, apparently redundantly, in symbiosis (12). M. paleacea contains only one copy of WRI, and extensive orthology searches led Rich et al. to conclude that WRI (and RAD1) are absent from the nonsymbiotic algae. The likelihood that recruitment of WRI and RAD1 occurred specifically for this purpose is further strengthened by the observation that fatty acid and lipid biosynthesis also occur in algae (13) but are not used for symbiosis. In all, the findings of Rich et al. show that these transcription factors specifically evolved to facilitate symbiosis, which was required for terrestrialization.

The presence of a single copy of WRI in M. paleacea suggests that the multiple paralogs of WRI in higher plants (12) have evolved from a single ancestor. One of these orthologs, WRINKLED1, is involved in the regulation of lipid biosynthesis in seeds (14). Evidently, duplication and neofunctionalization of the ancestral WRI in higher plants not only resulted in the apparent specialization of its function in symbiosis but also resulted in the loss of its symbiotic function to allow for the large accumulation of lipids in the seeds of seed plants.

With their study, Rich et al. highlight the importance of the mutual exchange of resources between plants and AM fungi as a driver of the symbiosis. They show that plants have evolved transcriptional regulators, such as WRI, to allow for the production of lipids for the AM fungi in the cells where the AM symbiotic organ, the arbuscule, has formed. The further radiation of WRI during the evolution of higher plants confirms the importance of this process for symbiosis with AM fungi.

It will be of interest to see why multiplication of WRI arose in higher plants and what the specific roles and fitness benefits of these paralogs might be. The datasets generated by Rich et al. could also provide information about other symbiotic genes that may have evolved to allow terrestrialization. This could, for example, further illuminate the presumptive role of strigolactones in the terrestrialization process.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
H. J. B. is funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO/DLO) for the MiCROP Consortium program “Harnessing the second genome of plants” (grant 024.004.014) and by the European Research Council through ERC Advanced grant CHEMCOMPRESS (67021).

Published by AAAS