Translation of the L-Species dsRNA Genome of the Killer-associated Virus-like Particles of Saccharomyces cerevisiae

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Virus-like particles containing the L (P1)-species of double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) were isolated from Saccharomyces cerevisiae, and the translational activity of the virus-like particle-derived dsRNA was analyzed in the wheat germ cell-free system. Denaturation of the dsRNA immediately prior to in vitro translation resulted in the synthesis of one major and at least three minor polypeptides, whereas undenatured dsRNA, as expected, did not stimulate [35S]methionine incorporation into polypeptides, but actually slightly inhibited endogenous activity.

The major in vitro translation product of the denatured L-dsRNA was shown to be identical with the major L(dsRNA containing virus-like particle capsid polypeptide on the basis of three criteria: co-electrophoresis on sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gels, immunoprecipitation, and tryptic peptide analysis. We have therefore established that the L-dsRNA genome encodes the major virus-like particle capsid polypeptide. This result adds considerable support to the hypothesis that the L-dsRNA genome acts as a helper genome in the smaller (1.6 \times 10^6 daltons) M-dsRNA genome in killer strains of yeast by providing the M-dsRNA containing virus-like particles with their major coat protein.

The killer system in the yeast, Saccharomyces cerevisiae, is an excellent system for investigating the molecular basis of functional relationships among viral-like genomes and between viral-like genomes and the host (nuclear) genomes in fungi (see Ref. 1 and 2 for recent reviews). Killer strains of yeast secrete a toxin which kills sensitive strains (3-5). Killer strains and strains designated neutral are normally immune to toxin. Both toxin production and immunity to toxin exhibit non-Mendelian inheritance (6-8) and both aspects of the killer phenotype are correlated with the presence of a single species of dsRNA, the L (or P1) species dsRNA (3.0 \times 10^6 daltons) (9, and H. Fried, personal communication).

The abbreviations used are: dsRNA, double-stranded RNA; VLP, virus-like particle; Hepes, 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid; SDS, Sodium dodecyl sulfate.

The M- and L-dsRNA species are probably separately encapsulated (14, 24), and although the full polypeptide complement of the VLPs has not been rigorously determined, a major polypeptide of 75,000 daltons and two minor species of 53,000 and 37,000 daltons have been reported to exist in the L-dsRNA-containing particle (26). Although it is not known whether the M-dsRNA-containing particles have the same polypeptide complement, reports of cross-antigenicity of L-dsRNA- and M-dsRNA-containing particles have cross-identity for at least one polypeptide likely (4).

We have recently undertaken experiments aimed at understanding the relationship between the two dsRNA species.

1. The abbreviations used are: dsRNA, double-stranded RNA; VLP, virus-like particle; Hepes, 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid; SDS, Sodium dodecyl sulfate.
2. Electron microscope measurements yield a value closer to 1.1 \times 10^6 daltons (9, and H. Fried, personal communication).
3. G. R. Fink, personal communication.
4. G. R. Fink and A. J. Herring, personal communication.
and the role each plays in encapsulation and in toxin production and immunity. In the experiments reported here we have utilized a direct in vitro translational assay to determine the coding capacity of the L-dsRNA genome.

For the sake of clarity in discussion, we have called polypeptides derived from dsRNA-containing VLPs ScV-P1, (S. cerevisiae virus polypeptides) where ScV-P1 is the major L-dsRNA-containing VLP capsid polypeptide. Polypeptides derived from in vitro translation of denatured L-dsRNA are designated L-P1. ScV-P1 is the major polypeptide product and it co-migrates with ScV-P1. The data presented here show that these two polypeptides share all major tryptic peptides, and that the L-dsRNA genome codes for at least its major capsid polypeptide. The implications concerning the basis of the dependence of M-dsRNA on L-dsRNA are discussed.

**EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES**

**Yeast Strains and Media** – A899RKN2 (NK2), a non-killer which contains no M-dsRNA, was obtained from Dr. Gerald R. Fink (Cornell University), who derived it from a killer strain by curing with UV light. Such strains characteristically overproduce L-dsRNA (8). Strain 108-3c was from Dr. Howard Douglas (University of Washington) stock collection. 3A1, a non-killer, was received from Dr. Alan J. Herring (Queen Mary College, London) and originated from Dr. E. A. Bevan's (Queen Mary College, London) collection. Cells were grown on YEPD and phosphocreatine from GIBCO. Phosphocreatine kinase (EC 2.7.3.27) was from Unicel. Yeast nitrogen base without amino acids and phosphocreatine from GIBCO. Bacto-peptone, 6.7 g of yeast nitrogen base without amino acids and salts were of ACS analytical grade.

**Preparation, Purification, and Fractionation of Virus-like Particles** – Cells for VLP production were grown to late stationary phase (20-25 g/150 ml of culture), were harvested by centrifugation, washed twice with 50 mM Tris/HCl, pH 7.5, and resuspended in PK buffer (30 mM NaH2PO4/Na2HPO4, 600 mM KC1, pH 7.6) and loaded onto 10 to 20% (w/v) sucrose gradients in PK buffer. Gradients were spun for 3 h at 20,000 rpm in a Spinco SW 27 rotor. Fractions from these gradients containing VLPs were pooled and loaded onto 30 to 60% (w/v) sucrose gradients from which the upper tenth had been removed to accommodate the large volume of pooled fractions. These gradients were then spun for 18 to 20 h at 24,000 rpm in a Spinco SW 27 rotor, and the fractions containing purified VLPs were pooled and stored at 4°C.

**Electron Microscopy** – Preparations of purified VLPs (from 30 to 60% (w/v) sucrose gradients) were dialyzed for 5 h against 150 mM ammonium acetate, pH 7.0, and negatively stained with 1% (w/v) uranyl acetate, pH 4.5, on Formvar and carbon-coated 200-mesh copper grids pretreated with 0.01% bovine serum albumin. Specimens were examined in a Phillips 300 microscope at 80 kV with nominal magnifications of 50,000 to 90,000.

**Amino Acid Analysis** – Samples of ScV-P1 from preparative gel electrophoresis were exhaustively dialyzed against distilled, deionized H2O, and lyophilized and dried in vacuo over P2O5. Approximately 1-2 mg samples were weighed and hydrolyzed with 5 N HCl at 110°C for 24 h. The hydrolysates were then taken to dryness under vacuum over NaOH and P2O5. Hydrolysates were performed in duplicate. Samples were then taken up in lithium citrate buffer (30) and analyzed on a Durrum D-500 amino acid analyzer (31). Half-cystine and methionine were determined after performate oxidation (32) as cysteic acid and methionine sulfone.

**Preparation of Total Cellular and polysomal RNA** – The preparation of polysomal RNA from mid-log phase cells (2 x 107 cells/ml) of strain 108-3c, grown in either YEPD or YEP-Pgalactose, was carried...
out as previously described (33) except for slight modification. When small amounts of cells were used (2 to 4 g wet weight), cell breakage was accomplished by cell/1buffer/glass jar homogenization mixture blended in a 30-m1 Corex tube for four 15-s bursts at 4°C. Total cellular RNA was isolated from whole cell homogenates and extracted with phenol, as described for the extraction of dsRNA from VLPs (see above).

Separation of dsRNA and ssRNA–dsRNA was isolated from total cellular nucleic acids by two different methods. First, nucleic acids extracted from strain NK2 with phenol were hydrolyzed with pancreatic DNase followed by pancreatic RNase in the presence of 150 mM NaCl (16). The products were then fractionated on a Sephrose 4B column (12 x 1.5 cm) equilibrated in 150 mM NaCl, 10 mM Hepes, 2 mM EDTA, pH 7.2. A single peak of RNA eluted in the void volume. This material was subsequently characterized as dsRNA. Secondly, CF11 chromatography was used to separate dsRNA from ssRNA and DNA in preparations of total cellular nucleic acids from strains NK2 and S/A1, and also for RNA extracted from purified VLPs. The procedure of Franklin (34) was followed.

We routinely chromatographed the dsRNA fraction obtained from a primary CF11 column on a second column, to ensure a minimum of ssRNA or DNA contamination of the dsRNA fractions.

Preparation of Immune Serum and γ-Globulin Fraction—Sucrose gradient (30 to 60% w/w) fractions containing VLPs isolated from strain 3/A1 were pooled and dialyzed against phosphate-buffered saline buffer (7.5 mM Na2HPO4, 2.5 mM NaH2PO4, 150 mM NaCl, pH 7.2) at 4°C for 4 h. The dialyzed VLPs were added to an equal volume of Freund’s adjuvant and emulsified by sonication. Aliquots of this emulsion containing a total of 140 μg of protein were injected intradermally into four places on the back of a New Zealand White rabbit. Injections were repeated 4 weeks later, and 10 days after this second injection the rabbit was bled from the ear vein.

A crude γ-globulin fraction was prepared from the serum by three consecutive ammonium sulfate precipitations (35). The final ammonium sulfate precipitate was dialyzed against 10 mM Na2HPO4/NaH2PO4, 15 mM NaCl, pH 7.2, and the γ-globulin fraction further purified by CM-cellulose and DEAE-cellulose column chromatography as described by Palacios et al. (36).

Preparation of Wheat Germ Cell-free Protein Synthesis System—Wheat germ extracts were prepared by modifications of several procedures (33, 37–39). Seven grams of raw wheat germ were ground moderately hard with 7 g of 120-μm-acid-washed glass beads in a cold mortar for 1 min and then extracted with 25 ml of lysis buffer consisting of 40 mM KAc, 2.0 mM magnesium acetate, 20 mM Hepes, 2 mM CaCl2, 1 mM dithiothreitol, pH 7.2. The lysate was centrifuged at 23,000 x g for 10 min, and 0.01 volume of 1 M Hepes, pH 7.2, and 0.01 volume of 1 M magnesium acetate were added while mixing. After centrifugation at 23,000 x g for 20 min the supernatant was immediately applied to a column (2.6 x 30 cm) (175 ml bed volume) of Sephadex G-25 coarse equilibrated with 20 mM Hepes, pH 7.2, containing 40 mM KAc, 2 mM magnesium acetate, 1 mM dithiothreitol. The void volume of the column was approximately 70 ml, and the flow rate was maintained at approximately 1.5 ml/min. The fractions in the void volume having the highest A280 were pooled and immediately quick-frozen in small aliquots for storage at -70°C.

Cell-free Protein Synthesis—Total polysomal RNA and purified dsRNA (natured and denatured), were routinely translated in 50-μl reaction volumes containing 15 μl of wheat germ lysate (A280 of 50 to 70). Conditions used for RNA derived from dsRNA and polynucleotide preparations differed only with respect to the concentrations of KAc and RNA employed. Optima for these were 160 mM potassium acetate and 26 μg/ml of RNA for denatured dsRNA and 100 μg/ml of RNA for total polysomal-derived RNA. The concentrations of all other components used were: 1.6 mM magnesium acetate, 0.16 mM spermidine-free base, 40 μg/ml of creatine phosphokinase, 3 mg/ml of creatine phosphate, 0.6 mg/ml of ATP, 0.1 mg/ml of GTP, 1.4 mM dithiothreitol, 0.44 mM concentration of each of 19 nonradioactive amino acids, 1 μM nonradioactive methionine, and [35S]methionine to a final specific radioactivity of 4.5 x 105 cpm/pmol. Reaction mixtures were incubated at 22°C for 3 h. Samples for the determination of radioactivity in trichloroacetic acid precipitable material and for SDS-polyacrylamide slab gel electrophoresis were processed as described before (40).

Immunoprecipitation Assay—The double antibody method (indirect method) employing goat anti-rabbit γ-globulin was used. The equivalent point for the reaction of goat anti-rabbit γ-globulin against rabbit γ-globulin was determined routinely for each preparation. In a typical immunoprecipitation assay, 30 μl of 0.5% (w/v) SDS, followed by 0.25 ml of BSM buffer (100 mM H3BO3, 135 mM NaCl, 100 mM methionine, pH 8.0), was added to 20 μl of an in vitro translation reaction mixture in a glass tube. To the tubes incubated at 35°C were added 5 μl of a mixture of purified γ-globulin from immunized and nonimmunized rabbits (0.2 mg/ml immune – 1.88 mg/ml non immune). The reaction mixtures were allowed to precipitate for 40 min. Subsequently, 10 μl of goat anti-rabbit γ-globulin (26 mg/ml) was added, the reaction tubes incubated at 35°C for 30 min, and finally left at 4°C overnight. The resulting immunoprecipitates were washed three times with BSM buffer using a clinical centrifuge at 4°C, and the final pellet was prepared for SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis by dissociating in SDS-sample buffer 3 min in a boiling water bath.

Tryptic Peptide Analysis—The Scv-P1 band from SDS-gels of [35S]methionine-labeled VLP preparations and the major L-P1 band from SDS gels of [35S]methionine labeled in vitro translation products of the L-dsRNA were excised, hydrolyzed with trypsin, and fractionated in parallel by paper ionophoresis as described by Morison and Lodish (41, with slight modification. One and two-tenths milligrams of [35S]methionine-labeled VLP protein or a 1300-μl aliquot of the in vitro translation reaction mixture supplemented with 0.3 mg of unlabeled VLP protein were fractionated on 3 mm thick polycarbonate lace gel slabs, and the excised protein bands from the stained and dried gels were cut into small pieces and digested for 14 to 16 h at 37°C with stirring, in 8 ml of 1% (w/v) NH4HCO3 containing 0.1 mg/ml of trypsin. The incubation of gel slices was then repeated with 5 ml of fresh NH4HCO3 containing 0.05 mg/ml of trypsin. After 12 h at 37°C the supernatant from this second digest solution was combined with the first and the total volume was lyophilized three times and dissolved in 100 μl of solvent for paper ionophoresis. Ionophoresis was carried out for 2.5 h at 45 V/cm in pyridine acetate buffer, pH 3.5 (41). Following ionophoresis the paper was cut at 5-mm intervals from the origin and the radioactivity in each segment was determined by counting in toluene-based scintillation fluid.

RESULTS

Purification of VLPs—When crude VLP preparations from strain 3/A1 were centrifuged on 10 to 40% (w/v) sucrose gradients, and the pooled VLP fractions subsequently centrifuged on 30 to 60% (w/v) sucrose gradients, two bands were observed upon fractionation (Fig. 1). Electron microscopic examination of the major, faster sedimenting band reveals isometric virus-like particles measuring approximately 40 nm in diameter (Fig. 2), as previously reported (41). Phenol extractions of pooled fractions of this major band yield L-
dsRNA. The slower sedimenting band, representing about 5% of the A260 material, contains no dsRNA, but consist of empty particles as judged by electron microscopy.

Analysis of VLP proteins on SDS-polyacrylamide gels (7.5 or 10%) consistently gave a single major polypeptide (Fig. 3) migrating just below phosphorylase A (92,000 daltons). This major VLP protein has previously been estimated to have a size of 75,000 daltons (14), but the calculated molecular weight from these gels is about 88,000. At least three other minor bands (at approximately 140,000, 82,000, and 78,000 daltons) are always seen regardless of the conditions of VLP preparation and dissociation. The prominent bands at 53,000 and 37,000 daltons, reported by Oliver et al. (26), have not been reproducibly detected in our preparations. The amino acid content of purified \(7cV-P1\) polypeptide is shown in Table I.

Isolation of L-dsRNA — L-dsRNA was isolated for in vitro translation by three different methods. Initially, total cellular nucleic acids obtained from strain NK2 by phenol extraction were hydrolyzed with pancreatic DNase and pancreatic RNase, and the products fractionated on Sepharose 4B columns. The RNA was characterized as dsRNA on the basis of insensitivity to pancreatic RNase in 150 mM NaCl sensitivity to pancreatic RNase in 15 mM NaCl and sensitivity to RNase III in 150 mM NaCl (11, 12). Polyacrylamide gel electrophoretic molecular weight determination and staining with ethidium bromide, which is specific for ds nucleic acid, confirmed the double strandedness of the RNA, as described by Vodkin et al. (13). The yield of dsRNA from strain NK2 by this method was 0.33% of the total nucleic acid fraction. This value agrees well with previous values for this strain.

Alternatively, dsRNA from strains 3/Al and NK2 was separated from the total nucleic acid fraction by Whatman CF11 chromatography (34), as previously described (21). Yields of dsRNA by this procedure were 0.4% of the total nucleic acid for both strains. Finally, L-dsRNA was extracted from purified VLPs by phenol extraction after hydrolysis with proteinase K. The RNA products derived from the VLPs were then fractionated by Whatman CF11 chromatography. The "dsRNA" fractions from CF11 chromatography were determined to be dsRNA on the basis of insensitivity to pancreatic RNase in high salt, sensitivity to pancreatic RNase in low salt, insensitivity to pancreatic DNase. They were character-
ized as L-species by electrophoretic migration behavior and ethidium bromide staining following standard procedures (13, 21).

**In Vitro Translation**—In vitro translation of these dsRNA preparations was carried out using the wheat cell-free translational system. Incorporation of [35S]methionine into products was detected by SDS-polyacrylamide slab gel electrophoresis and autoradiography. Undenatured L-dsRNA does not direct the in vitro synthesis of any [35S]methionine-containing polypeptides detectable by long autoradiographic exposures (Fig. 4). Slight inhibition of translation programmed by endogenous (wheat embryo) mRNAs did occur, as revealed by comparison with the control (no added RNA).

In contrast to the lack of stimulation by dsRNA, prior denaturation of L-dsRNA by a 1- or 2-min incubation at 100° in the presence of EDTA, followed by quick cooling, results in the in vitro synthesis of a single major and three or four minor molecular weight species of [35S]methionine-containing polypeptides which do not co-migrate in SDS-gels with major endogenous polypeptides (Fig. 4). The most prominent minor bands migrate faster, although a small amount of a component migrating more slowly than L-P1 has been observed after more prolonged incubation. The pattern of L-dsRNA specified polypeptides does not change if the dsRNA is exposed to pancreatic RNase in high salt and then deproteinized prior to denaturation and in vitro translation (data not shown).

![Diagram](http://www.jbc.org/)

**Fig. 3.** 7.5% SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis of the major peak of VLPs from the sucrose gradient fractionation shown in Fig. 1. The gel was stained with Coomassie blue. The markers (slot a) are phosphorylase A (92,000), bovine serum albumin (67,000), and carbonic anhydrase (30,000). Times of heating at 100° in SDS sample buffer prior to application to the gel were 0 min (g), 0.5 min (f), 1 min (e), 2 min (b, d), and 5 min (c). All were dialyzed against phosphate/glycerol buffer prior to denaturation. For one sample (b), this was performed in the presence of 1.2 mM phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride.

**Fig. 4.** Radioautograms of 10% SDS-polyacrylamide slab gels demonstrating co-migration and immunological cross-reactivity of ScV-P1 and the major polypeptide (L-P1) synthesized in the wheat germ cell-free system in response to denatured L-dsRNA. The in vitro translation reactions were run under optimum conditions as described in text. The indirect method of immunoprecipitation was carried out as described under "Experimental Procedures." A, (a) endogenous mRNA activity in the wheat embryo system; (b) undenatured L-dsRNA added; (c) denatured L-dsRNA added; (d) e, and f) reaction of preimmune serum γ-globulin with translation reactions programmed with (d) no RNA; (e) undenatured L-dsRNA; and (f) denatured L-dsRNA, respectively; (g, h, and i) reaction of γ-globulin prepared against purified VLPs with translation reactions programmed with (g) no RNA, (h) undenatured L-dsRNA; and (i) denatured L-dsRNA; (j) [35S]methionine-labeled polypeptides from purified VLPs; ScV-P2 and ScV-P3 are not readily visible in this preparation; (k) [35S]methionine-labeled polypeptides synthesized in the wheat embryo system programmed by yeast polysomal RNA. B, competition experiment confirming the specificity of the immunoprecipitation reaction, (l) reaction of anti-VLP γ-globulin with translation products synthesized in response to denatured L-dsRNA (same as i); (m) identical assay as in l except that 1 μg of unlabeled VLPs were added to the translation reaction prior to addition to the anti-VLP γ-globulin.

**TABLE I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amino acid analysis of ScV-P1</th>
<th>Integral residues/75,000 g protein</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aspartic acid</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threonine</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Methionine</td>
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Optimization for Denatured dsRNA-directed Cell-free Polypeptide Synthesis of L-P1—Several parameters of the wheat embryo cell-free system were varied to determine optimum conditions for denatured dsRNA-directed polypeptide synthesis. Optima were assessed not on the basis of total [35S]methionine incorporation into trichloroacetic acid-precipitable material but rather on the basis of incorporation into L-P1, the major in vitro synthesized polypeptide. Optima for Mg²⁺ and for spermidine were found to be 1.6 mM and 0.16 mM, respectively. These are very close to the optima routinely observed for yeast polysomal RNA-directed polypeptide synthesis. The K⁺ optimum was consistently very broad, ranging from 80 to 110 mM, thus somewhat lower than the 120 to 160 mM K⁺ optimum observed for yeast polysomal RNA.

The optimum range of denatured L-dsRNA concentration in the cell-free system was found to be between 0.02 and 0.04 mg/ml (Fig. 5). This optimum is 3- to 4-fold lower than that observed for polysomal RNA directed polypeptide synthesis and possibly reflects the formation of double-stranded RNA in the cell-free reaction mixture. Preliminary experiments conducted to determine the extent of dsRNA formation in the cell-free reaction mixture under conditions of translation do reveal that as much as 30% of the input denatured dsRNA becomes immediately insensitive to pancreatic RNase, and that this insensitive fraction may increase to as much as 65% during the first 25 to 45 min at 22°C (data not shown). These preliminary experiments do not, however, distinguish insensitivity due to dsRNA formation from that due to some other cause. The nature of the pancreatic RNase-insensitive form is under further study.

Denatured L-dsRNA Directs Synthesis of Major VLP Polypeptide—L-P1, labeled in vitro with [35S]methionine, was compared with the major ScV-P1 polypeptide, obtained from purified L-dsRNA containing VLPs labeled in vivo with [35S]methionine. Both polypeptides were purified by gel electrophoresis and hydrolyzed with trypsin under identical conditions. The tryptic peptides, fractionated by paper ionophoresis, gave nearly identical patterns (Fig. 6), although differences in minor slow migrating peptides were seen. Purified y-globulin fractions prepared from sera raised in rabbits against purified L-dsRNA containing VLPs precipitated both ScV-P1 and L-P1 (Fig. 4). The lower molecular weight species produced in vitro were also precipitated. Specificity of the immune precipitation was determined by competition experiments. The addition of unlabelled VLPs, but not the addition of any one of several other purified proteins, competed with the immunoprecipitation of in vitro synthesized, [35S]methionine-labeled L-P1 and minor polypeptides (Fig. 4).

**DISCUSSION**

One of the major in vitro translation products of denatured L-species dsRNA has been shown to correspond to the major L-dsRNA-containing VLP polypeptide, ScV-P1, by three criteria: (a) co-migration during SDS-gel electrophoresis; (b) immunological cross-reactivity; and (c) identical tryptic peptide patterns. dsRNA obtained either from isolated VLPs or by CF11 chromatography of total cellular nucleic acids requires denaturation in order to direct the cell-free synthesis of [35S]methionine polypeptides, indicating that we have translated the sense strand of the VLP genomic L-dsRNA rather than a single stranded RNA molecule either carried within VLPs or co-purifying with VLPs and VLP-derived dsRNA. Translation of ScV-P1 in vitro is not programmed by a single-stranded region (tail) of a transcriptional or replicative intermediate, since we observe no decrease in synthesis of dsRNA-specified polypeptides following exposure of the dsRNA to pancreatic RNase at high ionic strength prior to denaturation and translation.

The translational activity of denatured L-dsRNA in wheat embryo extract was relatively low. This could be due to the presence of dsRNA caused by renaturation, or to the known lack of 5′-terminal caps (m'GpppGp or m'GpppAp) in the L-dsRNA (42), or both. The low RNA concentration optimum and the rapid formation of pancreatic RNase-insensitive structures following denaturation support the notion that at least part of the reason for low activity may be due to renatured dsRNA, or snap-back regions, or both. Messenger RNAs lacking 5′-terminal caps can be capped by methylating enzymes present in wheat embryo extracts, and the addition of S-adenosylmethionine enhances this activity (43, 44). The attainment of high levels of translational activity for at least some eukaryotic mRNAs is dependent on the presence of 5′-terminal caps (45-47). Since it is conceivable that the mRNAs derived in vitro from L-dsRNA are capped, the addition of S-adenosylmethionine to our wheat embryo extracts may enhance polypeptide synthesis directed by genomic L-dsRNA in vitro.

In addition to L-P1, the denatured L-dsRNA directs the synthesis of two other slightly smaller, moderately abundant polypeptides, and sometimes of small amounts of a larger species at approximately 120,000 to 160,000 daltons (not shown). It is unlikely that these four polypeptides represent entirely non-overlapping sequences within the L-dsRNA unless both strands are translated, because the single strand
theoretical maximum coding capacity of the L-species is only approximately 170,000 daltons. One or both of the smaller species may be NH₂-terminal fragments of L-PI produced by premature termination. Premature termination is frequent in the wheat embryo cell-free system. The relationship of these and the larger species to ScV-PI is currently being investigated by tryptic peptide analysis.

Two minor polypeptides having molecular weights of 37,000 and 53,000 have been detected in VLP preparations by others (26). We have not observed any polypeptides derived from our VLP preparations which consistently migrate at these molecular weight positions. Nor have we been able to detect the Mₐ = 37,000 or 53,000 species among the L-dsRNA-directed in vitro translation products, although the pattern of polypeptides in this region could be obscured by the products of wheat embryo endogenous mRNA translation and possibly by products of premature termination on the L-dsRNA ScV-PI cistron. Clearly, a more rigorous analysis of the VLP polypeptide components in VLPs isolated under varying conditions, and a more extensive analysis of translation products derived from L-dsRNA is required before the relationship between L-dsRNA encoded polypeptides and VLP polypeptides is completely defined.

Although our results do not bear directly on the apparent dependency of the M-dsRNA genome on the L-dsRNA genome, they are consistent with the generally held hypothesis that L-dsRNA is a helper genome for maintenance of the M-species. This hypothesis is derived from the general observation that although many yeast strains contain L-dsRNA without M-dsRNA, no strain has yet been reported which contains M-dsRNA without L-dsRNA. If M-dsRNA is indeed obligately encapsulated in VLPs whose proteins are shared with those encapsulating L-dsRNA, then the results presented here suggest a firm basis for M-dsRNA dependency on L-dsRNA: the L-dsRNA species encodes the major capsid polypeptide for the M-dsRNA-containing VLPs. Two types of data obtained by others support this hypothesis. Antibody raised against capsid protein of particles containing L-dsRNA precipitate VLPs containing L- or M-dsRNAs (26) and SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoretic analysis of dissociated VLPs containing L-dsRNA or both M- and L-dsRNA reveals the same size major capsid polypeptide (24). In light of these observations and the fact that the M-dsRNA species (1.1 × 10⁶ daltons by electron microscopic measurements (9)) is not large enough to code for an 88,000 dalton polypeptide, it is highly likely that L-dsRNA, rather than a nuclear gene (e.g. a Mak gene), encodes the capsid polypeptide of M-dsRNA containing VLPs. We intend to isolate VLPs containing exclusively M-dsRNA in order to make a direct comparison of their polypeptide components with those of VLPs containing L-dsRNA.

The replicase and transcriptase activities required for replication and expression of the dsRNA genomes might also be functions encoded exclusively by L-dsRNA, suggesting a further more stringent basis for the dependence of M-dsRNA

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* H. Fried, personal communication.
maintenance on the presence of the L-dsRNA genome. Alternatively these functions could be encoded by nuclear genes, although extensive searches have failed to produce chromosomal mutants leading to loss of both M- and L-dsRNA-containing VLPs. Thus if a putative replicase/transcriptase is encoded by nuclear genes, then these functions are also essential for cell survival.

The in vitro translation of VLP genomic dsRNA which we have applied to the killer system could be a generally useful approach to decoding dsRNA species in several other viral systems. If applicable, it obviates the need to first carry out in vitro transcription for production of translatable mRNAs. We have applied this direct translational approach to VLP-derived dsRNA from Penicillium chrysogenum, and have obtained in vitro translation of the major capsid polypeptide. Preliminary results suggest that this technique also works with reovirus dsRNAs.11

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