

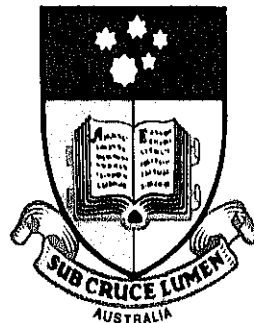
TARGETED TRANSGENESIS AND THE 186 SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMBINATION SYSTEM

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Summary

Efforts are being made to find alternative and more efficient means of generating transgenic livestock, to perform precise genetic modifications in mammals, other than the mouse, such as a gene "knock-out", and to insert a new gene or replace a defective gene, as required for successful gene therapy in humans.

Current methods for producing transgenic farm animals rely on the use of microinjection into fertilised eggs which has several inherent disadvantages as the site of insertion is random, the copy number uncontrollable and gene expression is subject to position effects from the surrounding DNA context. In contrast, homologous recombination to generate transgenic mice has been very successful in contributing to our understanding of basic biological phenomena such as mammalian physiology and development, and for producing animal models of human disease. Currently this technology is dependent on the availability of embryonic stem cells which do not yet exist for any livestock species. Although homologous recombination has been tried in fertilised mouse eggs the success rate is too low for consideration as a routine method. The *Cre/lox* and *FLP/FRT* recombinase systems have been shown to operate in eukaryotic systems via microinjection into fertilised mouse eggs (excision), but the drawback with these systems is their non-directionality, one protein directs both excision and integration.

Nuclear transfer has been used to produce cloned sheep (Dolly), cows and mice from adult cells. Combining the techniques of homologous recombination in a foetal primary cell line, and nuclear transfer, Schnieke's team (1997) successfully produced transgenic sheep. At present the technology is inefficient. Furthermore, successful homologous recombination demands construction of a targeting vector containing vast regions of isogenic homology (species specific), a time consuming and onerous task.

The temperate coliphages like λ , P2 and 186 can enter either a lytic or lysogenic lifecycle upon infection of their *Escherichia coli* host. As different combinations of proteins mediate the excisive and integrative pathways these systems have the directionality lacking in the one protein systems like Cre and FLP. However, none have been shown to function in a eukaryotic environment. The recombinase systems may offer an alternative route to homologous recombination for the initial introduction of the target site, and that is by using closely matching, naturally occurring target sites in combination with an altered integrase, one could bypass the homologous recombination step altogether

The aim of the work described in this thesis was to characterise the 186 integration reaction and, to conduct preliminary investigations into the possible use of such a system for targeted transgenesis in livestock species. In Chapter 2 the *in vitro* requirements for 186 integrative site-specific recombination were investigated. Chapter 3 details characterisation of the 186-*attB* site in which I located its precise position, sites of strand cross-over, order of strand exchange and conducted preliminary mutational analysis to identify bases important for recombination. Chapter 4 describes *in vitro* mouse genomic DNA recombination experiments using naked DNA and chromatin containing *attB* sites. Lastly, *in vivo* investigations were conducted whereby active 186-intasomes were microinjected into fertilised mouse eggs containing genomic copies of 186-*attB*. The resultant progeny were then analysed for 186-mediated integration events.

Contents

Statement	i
Summary	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Contents	v
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Transgenesis	1
1.1.1 Biotechnological applications	1
1.2 Microinjection	3
1.2.1 Mechanism of integration of a transgene by microinjection.....	4
1.2.1.1 Mosaicism	5
1.2.2 Position effects.....	5
1.2.3 Summary	6
1.3 Embryonic Stem Cells and Transgenesis	7
1.3.1 Embryonic stem cells.....	7
1.3.3 Homologous recombination: Gene targeting in ES cells.....	8
1.3.3.1 Antibiotic resistance: A cautionary note.....	9
1.4 Male Stem Cell-Mediated Gene Transfer	9
1.5 Nuclear Transfer and 'Reprogramming'	10
1.5.1 Homologous recombination: Gene targeting in cultured cells.....	12
1.6 Site-Specific Recombination Systems	12
1.6.1 Introduction.....	12
1.6.2 The Cre and FLP site-specific recombination systems.....	13
1.6.2.i The development and utilisation of Cre and FLP.....	14

1.6.2.ii	<i>Excision versus integration</i>	15
1.6.3	The temperate coliphage 'directional' site-specific recombination systems	16
1.6.3.i	<i>Excision versus integration</i>	17
1.7	The λ Site-Specific Recombination System (Integration)	18
1.7.1	The attachment sites <i>attB</i> and <i>attP</i>	18
1.7.2	Int	19
1.7.3	IHF	20
1.7.4	The intasome	21
1.7.5	Intermediates and the order of strand exchange.....	22
1.8	The 186 Site-Specific Recombination System	23
1.9	Targeted Livestock Transgenesis	24
1.9.1	Current technology: Pro's and con's.....	24
1.9.2	Towards targeted transgenesis using directional recombination systems.....	25
1.9.2.i	<i>Current applications for directional recombination systems</i>	25
1.9.2.ii	<i>Development of 'modified' directional recombination systems</i>	26
1.10	Scope Of This Thesis	28
Chapter 2	<i>In vitro</i> studies of the 186 site-specific integration system	30
2.1	Introduction	30
2.2	Results	31
2.2.1	<i>In vitro</i> assays for integrative recombination: Preparation of cell-free extracts and plasmid substrates	31
2.2.1.i	<i>Preparation of cell-free extracts</i>	31
2.2.1.ii	<i>Preparation of pFLIP(X) and pFLIP(I) DNA</i>	32
2.2.2	<i>In vitro</i> assays for integrative recombination.....	32
2.2.3	<i>In vitro</i> kinetics assay.....	33
2.3	Construction of an <i>E. coli</i> IHF Over-Expressing Strain and Purification of IHF	35

2.3.1	Introduction.....	35
2.3.2	Choice of expression system.....	35
2.3.3	Results.....	36
2.3.3.i	<i>Cloning of the himA and himD genes</i>	36
2.3.3.ii	<i>Small-scale expression analysis of pIII'</i>	37
2.3.3.iii	<i>Activity analysis of cell-free extracts of pIII'</i>	38
2.3.3.iv	<i>Purification of III'</i>	39
2.3.3.v	<i>Phastgel and activity analysis of fractions</i>	40
2.3.3.vi	<i>Purity and concentration</i>	40
2.3.3.vii	<i>Activity analysis</i>	41
2.4	Purification of 186 Int From an Overproducing Strain	42
2.4.1	The expression system.....	42
2.4.2	Results.....	42
2.4.2.i	<i>Small-scale expression analysis</i>	42
2.4.2.ii	<i>Activity analysis of cell-free extracts of MRR18</i>	43
2.4.2.iii	<i>Purification of 186 Int</i>	43
2.4.2.iv	<i>Phastgel and activity analysis of fractions</i>	45
2.4.2.v	<i>Purity and concentration</i>	45
2.4.2.vi	<i>Activity analysis</i>	46
2.5	<i>In Vitro</i> 'trans' recombination assays using purified 186 Int and III'	46
2.5.1	Introduction.....	46
2.5.2	The attP and attB substrates.....	47
2.5.3	Results.....	48
2.5.3.i	<i>Units of Int and III' required for trans recombination</i>	48
2.5.3.ii	<i>Kinetics of integrative recombination</i>	48
2.6	Discussion	49
2.7	Conclusions	52
 Chapter 3 Localisation and characterisation of the 186 attB site		53
3.1	Introduction	53

3.2 Results	55
3.2.1 Localisation of BOB' within the common sequence as determined by deletion analysis.....	55
3.2.2 Precise location of the crossover sites using phosphorothioate containing oligonucleotides.	58
3.2.3 BOB and B'OB' can substitute for BOB'.....	59
3.2.4 Mutagenesis of bases in B and B'.....	60
3.2.5 Minimal DNA sequence required to form a bacterial attachment site (BOB')	61
3.2.6 Mutagenesis of bases in 'O'	62
3.2.7 Insertion of an extra helical turn (10 bp) of DNA into the POP' and BOB' overlap sequence.....	62
3.3 Discussion	64
3.3.1 The minimal sequence and location of BOB'-186.....	64
3.3.1.i <i>A consensus sequence for the core-type sites cannot be derived</i>	65
3.3.2 Determination of the order and positions of strand exchange	66
3.3.2.i <i>186 attB lies in a putative novel isoleucine tRNA gene</i>	67
3.3.2.ii <i>Position of attP</i>	68
3.3.3 Analysis of the mutagenesis data	68
3.3.3.i <i>Overlap mutants</i>	68
3.3.3.ii <i>Asymmetric importance of bases in the B and B' dyad</i>	68
3.4 Conclusions	70
Chapter 4 Studies of 186 site-specific integration using transgenic mice containing genomic copies of the 186 attB site	72
4.1 Introduction	72
4.2 Results	75
4.2.1 Creating lines of transgenic mice for the 186 attB site.....	75
4.2.1.i <i>Source of attB DNA</i>	75
4.2.1.ii <i>PCR detection of transgenic mice</i>	75
4.2.1.iii <i>Breeding of transgenic mice</i>	75
4.2.2 Investigating site-specific recombination in genomic DNA <i>in vitro</i>	76

4.2.2.i	<i>Generating a positive control template and a PCR assay for detecting site-specific recombination in genomic DNA</i>	76
4.2.2.ii	<i>Detection of site-specific integration into attB-containing genomic DNA in vitro</i>	78
4.2.3	<i>Investigating site-specific recombination into chromatin in vitro</i>	78
4.2.3.i	<i>Micrococcal nuclease assessment of chromatin quality</i>	78
4.2.3.ii	<i>In vitro 186 site-specific recombination occurs in chromatin</i>	79
4.2.4	<i>Investigating 186 site-specific recombination in transgenic fertilised mouse eggs</i>	80
4.2.4.i	<i>Intasome stability</i>	80
4.2.4.ii	<i>Intasome toxicity test</i>	81
4.2.4.iii	<i>Analysis of pups generated from microinjection of intasomes into transgenic fertilised mouse eggs</i>	82
4.3	Discussion	86
4.4	Conclusions	86
Chapter 5 Final Discussion		88
5.1	Transgenic technology: Where are we today?	88
5.2	Targeted transgenesis and the 186 site-specific recombinase system	89
5.2.1	<i>A 186-mediated "knockout" of the pig $\alpha_{1,3}$-galactosyltransferase gene using closely matching, naturally occurring 186-attB sites</i>	90
5.3	Future work	92
5.4	Concluding Remarks	93
Chapter 6 Materials and Methods		94
6.1	Abbreviations	94

6.2 Bacterial Strains	95
6.3 Plasmids	95
6.4 Reagents	96
6.4.1 Enzymes	96
6.4.2 Radiochemicals	97
6.4.3 Chemicals.....	97
6.4.4 DNA molecular weight markers	99
6.4.5 Protein molecular weight markers	100
6.4.6 Kits.....	100
6.4.7 Oligonucleotides	100
6.4.8 Growth media.....	104
6.4.8.i <i>Liquid media</i>	104
6.4.8.ii <i>Solid media</i>	104
6.4.9 Buffers and solutions	104
6.5 Bacterial Procedures	106
6.5.1 Storage of bacterial stocks	106
6.5.2 Growth of bacterial strains.....	106
6.5.3 Preparation of high efficiency electrocompetent cells.....	106
6.5.4 Bacterial electroporation procedure	106
6.6 DNA Techniques	107
6.6.1 Agarose gel electrophoresis of DNA	107
6.6.2 Restriction endonuclease digestion of DNA.....	107
6.6.3 Isolation of DNA fragments from agarose gels	107
6.6.4 Subcloning of DNA fragments	108
6.6.4.i <i>Dephosphorylation of vector ends</i>	108
6.6.4.ii <i>End-filling of Vectors and Inserts For Blunt End Ligations</i>	108
6.6.5 Ligations.....	108
6.6.6 Purification of ligation reactions.....	109
6.6.7 Small scale isolation of DNA.....	109
6.6.8 Large scale isolation of plasmid DNA.....	110
6.6.9 Sequencing of DNA	110
6.6.9.i <i>Dideoxy sequencing method</i>	110

6.6.9.ii Automated fluorescent sequencing	110
6.6.10 Autoradiography, phosphorimaging and autoradiograph scanning	111
6.6.11 PCR amplifications	111
6.6.12 <i>In vitro</i> recombination assays	112
6.6.12.i <i>cis</i>	112
6.6.12.ii <i>trans</i>	112
6.6.13 Preparation of DNA for microinjection into mouse fertilised eggs	112
6.6.13.i <i>Microinjection of DNA</i>	113
6.6.15 Preparation of genomic DNA from mouse tails	113
6.6.16 Isolation of chromatin from mouse livers	113
6.6.17 Micrococcal nuclease digests	114
6.6.18 Annealing complementary oligonucleotides	114
6.6.19 Kinasing of DNA restriction fragments and oligonucleotides	115
6.6.20 End-labelling and end-filling using the Klenow fragment of DNA polymerase I	115
6.6.21 Transfer to Zeta-probe blotting membrane	116
6.6.22 Southern analysis	116
6.6.22.i <i>Oligo-labelling of DNA</i>	116
6.6.22.ii <i>Hybridisation of DNA immobilised on a membrane</i>	117
6.6.23 Oligonucleotide-directed mutagenesis	117
6.7 Protein techniques	117
6.7.2 Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis	117
6.7.2.i <i>15 % SDS polyacrylamide gels</i>	117
6.7.2.ii <i>Phastsystem gels</i>	118
6.7.2.iii <i>Protein gel scanning and analyses</i>	118
6.7.3 Preparation of cell-free extracts/storage	118
6.7.4 186 Intasome preparation and storage	119
6.8 Containment facilities and animal ethics	119
 Appendix	 120
 Bibliography	 121