

# Crystal structure of the PsbP protein of photosystem II from *Nicotiana tabacum*

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**PsbP is a membrane-extrinsic subunit of the water-oxidizing complex photosystem II (PS II). The evolutionary origin of PsbP has long been a mystery because it specifically exists in higher plants and green algae but not in cyanobacteria. We report here the crystal structure of PsbP from *Nicotiana tabacum* at a resolution of 1.6 Å. Its structure is mainly composed of β-sheet, and is not similar to any structures in cyanobacterial PS II. However, the electrostatic surface potential of PsbP is similar to that of cyanobacterial PsbV (cyt *c*<sub>550</sub>), which has a function similar to PsbP. A structural homology search with the DALI algorithm indicated that the folding of PsbP is very similar to that of Mog1p, a regulatory protein for the nuclear transport of Ran GTPase. The structure of PsbP provides insight into its novel function in GTP-regulated metabolism in PS II.**

Keywords: crystal structure; photosystem II; extrinsic protein; PsbP; molecular evolution

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## INTRODUCTION

Photosystem II (PS II) is a large multisubunit protein–pigment complex that uses light energy to split water into molecular oxygen and reducing equivalents. This water-splitting reaction takes place on the luminal side of PS II and is catalysed by a Mn cluster consisting of four redox-active Mn cations. The Mn cluster is surrounded by at least three extrinsic proteins attached to the luminal surface of PS II. These proteins comprise the oxygen-evolving complex (OEC) and have important roles in stabilizing and optimizing the water-splitting reaction (for a review, see Seidler, 1996).

In all types of oxygenic photosynthetic organisms, the membrane-extrinsic protein PsbO stabilizes the Mn cluster. PsbO is also called OEC33 because of its apparent molecular mass of 33 kDa. Plants and green algae also contain two other OEC proteins: PsbP (OEC23: 23 kDa) and PsbQ (OEC17: 17 kDa). These two proteins cooperate to optimize the levels of Ca<sup>2+</sup> and Cl<sup>−</sup>, which are essential cofactors for the water-splitting reaction (Ghanotakis & Yocum, 1985; Murata & Miyao, 1985; Ifuku & Sato, 2002). Conversely, cyanobacteria have two other OEC proteins, PsbV (15 kDa: cyt *c*<sub>550</sub>) and PsbU (12 kDa), instead of PsbP and PsbQ (Shen *et al*, 1992). The functions of PsbV and PsbU resemble those of PsbP and PsbQ, but they differ from PsbP and PsbQ with regard to both their primary sequences and binding characteristics to the PS II complex (Shen & Inoue, 1993). These observations suggest that the replacement of PsbV and PsbU by PsbP and PsbQ occurred during the evolution of PS II, and a proposal regarding the molecular evolution of PsbQ was recently reported (Ohta *et al*, 2003). However, it is still unclear how and why PsbP evolved in higher plants.

Recently, the structural organization of cyanobacterial extrinsic proteins (PsbO, PsbV and PsbU) was revealed in the crystal structures of PS II from thermophilic cyanobacteria at resolutions of 3.8 Å (Zouni *et al*, 2001) and 3.7 Å (Kamiya & Shen, 2003). The detailed three-dimensional (3D) structure of PsbV was also reported in X-ray crystallographic studies (Frazao *et al*, 2001; Sawaya *et al*, 2001; Kerfeld *et al*, 2003). Conversely, only a relatively low-resolution structure (8 Å) is available for the PS II core from higher plants that do not contain PsbP or PsbQ (Rhee *et al*, 1998; Hankamer *et al*, 2001). The structural organization of the membrane-extrinsic proteins in higher plants has only been determined from single-particle analysis of the spinach PS II–LHCII supercomplex at a resolution of ~17 Å (Nield *et al*, 2000a,b, 2002), whereas the crystal structure of isolated PsbQ has been reported (Calderone *et al*, 2003).

In this study, we focused on PsbP, which represents the PsbP domain protein family in the Pfam database, where many paralogues in *Arabidopsis* and one orthologue in cyanobacteria have been found. However, the structural details and functions of PsbP domain proteins are still completely unknown. To elucidate the 3D structure of PsbP, the crystal structure of

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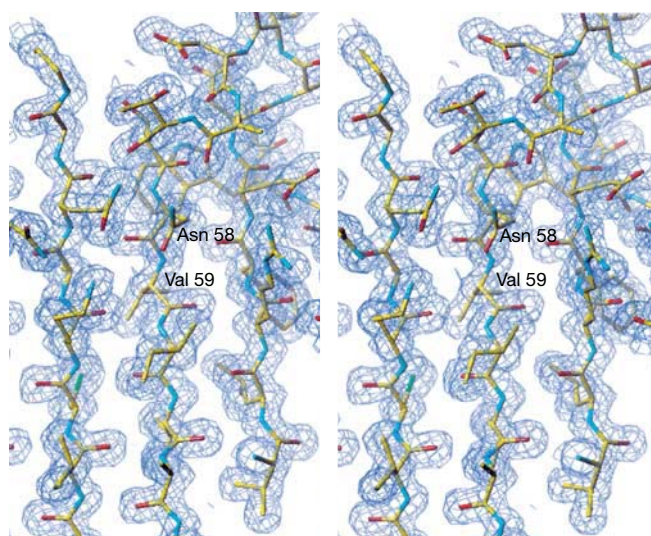
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PsbP from *Nicotiana tabacum* was determined at a resolution of 1.6 Å.

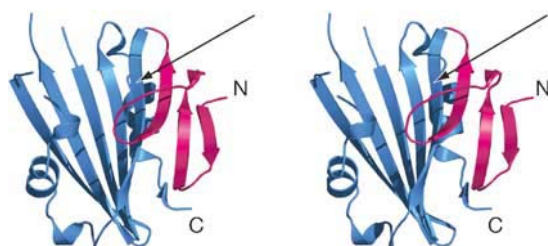
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Structure of PsbP

The structure of PsbP lacking the N-terminal nine amino acids was determined by the multiwavelength anomalous diffraction (MAD) method with a Hg derivative. Fig 1 shows part of the final 1.6-Å-resolution  $2F_o - F_c$  electron-density map. The electron densities of the N-terminal portion (residues 10–15) and two loop regions (residues 91–107 and 138–140) were not seen in the model because of disorder. The structure of PsbP is based on central six-stranded antiparallel  $\beta$ -sheet covered on both sides by  $\alpha$ -helices (Fig 2). The segment Thr 16–Phe 53 forms an antiparallel  $\beta$ -sheet and one  $\beta$ -strand (domain I) that back the central sheet (domain II).



**Fig 1** | Stereo view of a section of the electron-density map. The map was calculated with coefficients  $2F_o - F_c$ , and the refined model was superimposed. The residues of Asn 58 and Val 59 were labelled. Electron density is contoured at  $1.0\sigma$ . The figure was generated with TURBO-FRODO (Roussel & Cambillau, 1996).



**Fig 2** | Stereo view of the structure of PsbP. The schematic representation of the PsbP structural model shows a series of  $\beta$ -strands that are derived from residues 16–53 (domain I: pink) and the central six-stranded antiparallel  $\beta$ -sheet flanked on both sides by helices (domain II: blue). The N (residue 16) and C (residue 186) termini are labelled. The position of the Asn 58–Val 59 bond is indicated by an arrow. The figure was generated with PyMOL (<http://www.pymol.org>).

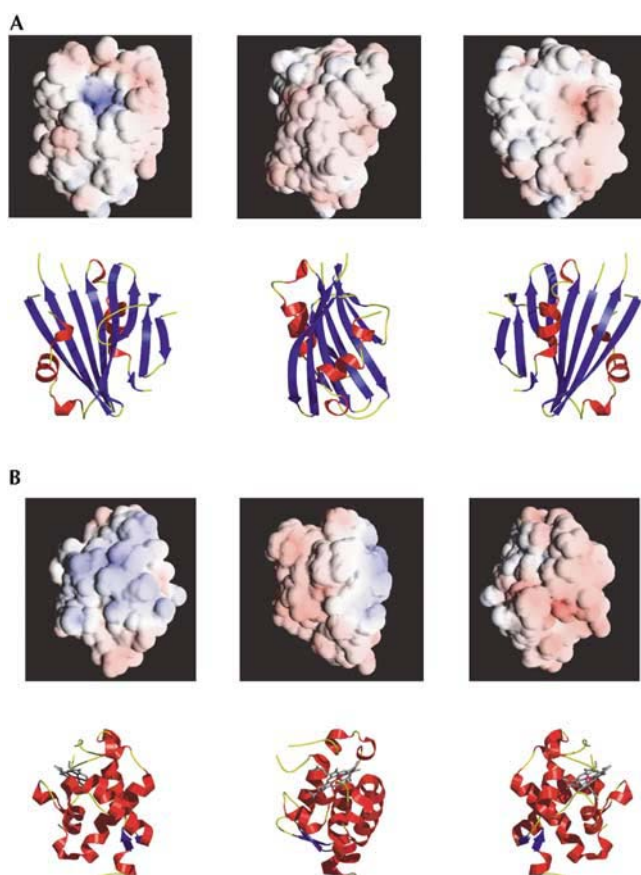
The existence of two distinct domains in PsbP is consistent with a previous report that showed that the Asn 58–Leu 59 bond in spinach PsbP, which corresponds to the Asn 58–Val 59 bond in tobacco PsbP, becomes susceptible to proteolysis under moderately denaturing conditions (Kuwabara & Suzuki, 1995). The exchange of domain I among PsbPs from several plant species has been shown to affect significantly the ion-retention activity of these hybrid proteins, suggesting that domain I has an important role in ion-retention activity in PS II (Ifuku & Sato, 2001). Our structural model of PsbP can hardly explain the molecular mechanism of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Cl}^-$  retention in PS II, as it lacks the N-terminal region of PsbP, which is essential for  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ - and  $\text{Cl}^-$ -retention activity (Ifuku & Sato, 2002). As PsbQ has been shown to compensate functionally for the N-terminal region of PsbP (Ifuku & Sato, 2002), domain I should be located near PsbQ. This N-terminal region of PsbP could adopt a native structure required for  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Cl}^-$  retention only when it is bound to the PS II core.

The C-terminal helix seems to be essential for protein folding as removal of the last ten amino acids causes a severe conformational change: the truncated PsbP is not translocated efficiently to the thylakoid lumen and degrades rapidly (Roffey & Theg, 1996). These C-terminal residues of PsbP should be important for supporting the structure of the central  $\beta$ -sheet in domain II.

### Comparison with cyanobacterial PS II subunits

As shown in Fig 2, the structure of PsbP is mainly composed of  $\beta$ -sheet. Conversely, PsbV and PsbU contain mainly  $\alpha$ -helix, and no structure similar to PsbP was found in cyanobacterial PS II, which was recently reported at a resolution of 3.7 Å (Kamiya & Shen, 2003). Among the cyanobacterial extrinsic proteins, PsbV (cyt  $c_{550}$ ) resembles PsbP in terms of their roles in maintaining  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  and  $\text{Cl}^-$  in PS II, and in their requirement for the binding of a third extrinsic protein: PsbU in cyanobacteria (Shen *et al*, 1998) and PsbQ in higher plants (Miyao & Murata, 1989). Furthermore, both proteins are located near the luminal side of the membrane-intrinsic proteins D1, CP43 and cyt  $b_{559}$  (Nield *et al*, 2000a,b, 2002; Kamiya & Shen, 2003).

We then compared the electrostatic surface potentials of the 3D structures of PsbP and PsbV to discern any similarity between them. PsbV has an asymmetric charge distribution with pronounced positively and negatively charged surfaces (Sawaya *et al*, 2001; Fig 3B). PsbP also has a basic surface with conserved positively charged amino acids (Arg 48, Lys 143 and Lys 160), whereas other surfaces are rather acidic (Fig 3A). In cyanobacterial PS II, PsbV directly associates with the membrane-intrinsic proteins, but does not directly interact with PsbO (Kamiya & Shen, 2003); the positively charged surface interacts with portions of the intrinsic proteins that protrude from the membrane surface, and the negatively charged surface interacts with PsbU. The exact binding site on the PS II core could be different between the two proteins (Enami *et al*, 2000). However, both proteins are known to bind to PS II with electrostatic interaction, and the luminal surface of thylakoid membrane from higher plants has been shown to be acidic (Åkerlund *et al*, 1979). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the basic surface of PsbP would interact with the PS II core in a manner similar to PsbV in cyanobacterial PS II. A direct interaction between PsbP and PS II membrane-intrinsic subunits has been suggested by *in vitro* experiments (Yamamoto, 1988), and PsbP in *Chlamydomonas* can bind to PS II directly, although



**Fig 3** | Comparison of the electrostatic surface potentials of (A) PsbP from *N. tabacum* (this study) and (B) PsbV from *Thermosynechococcus elongatus* (Kerfeld *et al*, 2003). The molecules are rotated anticlockwise by 90° and 180° around a vertical axis (left to right). The figure was produced using GRASP (Nicholls *et al*, 1991).

PsbO is necessary to activate PS II activity (de Vitry *et al*, 1989; Suzuki *et al*, 2003). Recent reports have shown that PS II isolated from transgenic tobacco with low *cyt b<sub>559</sub>* content did not have any bound PsbP, whereas a significant amount of PsbP was present in the thylakoid lumen (Bondarava *et al*, 2003). Other regions of PsbP (particularly, the negatively charged regions) might interact with PsbQ, which has many positively charged residues on its surface (Calderone *et al*, 2003), and with PsbO, which is indispensable for the stable and functional binding of PsbP to isolated PS II *in vitro* (Miyao & Murata, 1989).

### Structural similarity to a Ran-GTPase-binding protein

The absence of a PsbP-like protein in cyanobacterial PS II suggests that the extrinsic proteins of higher plants and green algae began to diverge from those in cyanobacteria primarily during the evolution of PS II. A structural homology search with the DALI algorithm showed that PsbP is folded very similarly to Mog1p (1EQ6; Z score 11.3), which is a regulatory protein for the nuclear transport of Ran GTPase in yeast (Oki & Nishimoto, 1998; Stewart & Baker, 2000) (Fig 4A). PsbP is not likely to be a 'Ran-binding protein', as the amino-acid sequences have low identity and the insertions and deletions in loop regions are different between the

two proteins (Fig 4B). Our biochemical analysis also failed to detect an interaction of PsbP with human Ran GTPase (data not shown). However, the structural similarity provides a framework for investigating the unknown functions of PsbP and other PsbP domain proteins in higher plants and cyanobacteria. Such investigations may also provide insight into the evolutionary origin of PsbP.

### Speculation

The strong structural similarity between PsbP and Mog1p allows us to speculate why higher plants use PsbP instead of PsbV. In higher plants, GTP stimulates degradation of the photodamaged PS II reaction centre D1 protein (Spetea *et al*, 1999), and PsbO has been identified as a GTP-binding protein (Spetea *et al*, 2001). However, D1 degradation has been reported to be dependent on GTP only in higher plants, and the process of D1 degradation has been reported to differ between higher plants and cyanobacteria (Silva *et al*, 2003). Mog1p stimulates nucleotide release from Ran GTPase and modulates its nucleotide state (Baker *et al* 2001). Thus, we can speculate that when higher plants acquired GTP-dependent regulation in D1 metabolism, they may have also acquired PsbP to modulate the nucleotide state of PsbO instead of PsbV, which does not interact with PsbO directly. The precise biological roles of GTP bound to PsbO should be investigated.

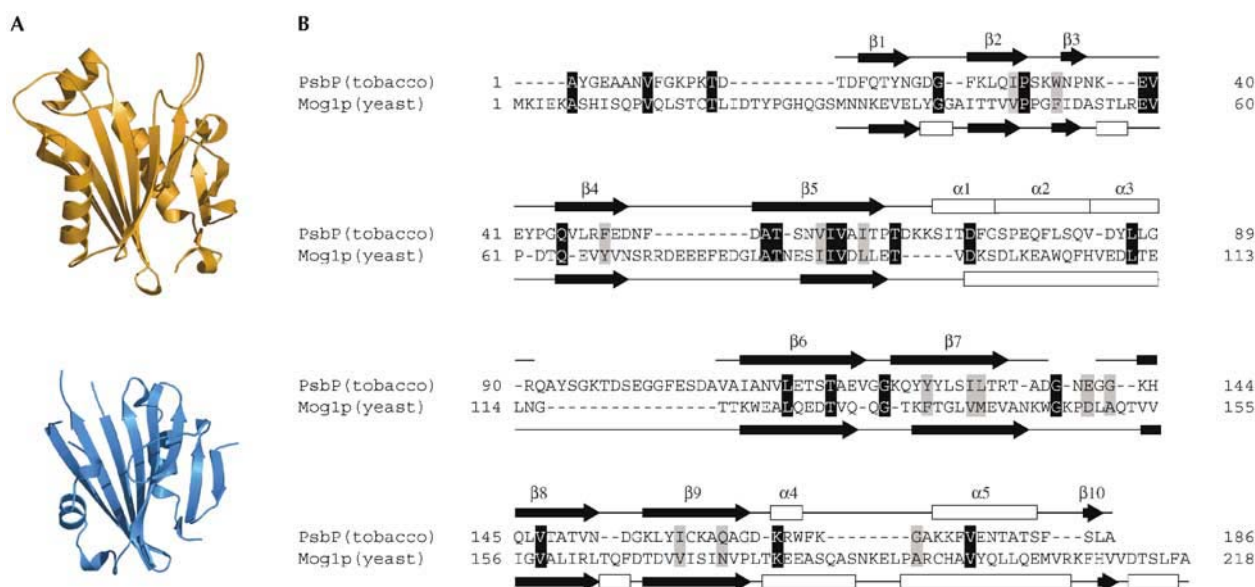
### METHODS

#### Purification, crystallization and preparation of the Hg derivative.

PsbP from *N. tabacum* was expressed in *Escherichia coli*, purified and crystallized as described previously (Ifuku *et al*, 2003). The nine amino-terminal residues of PsbP were genetically removed because these residues have been shown to be easily degraded during crystallization and are functionally dispensable (Miyao *et al*, 1988; Ifuku *et al*, 2003). For phase determination, an ethylmercurithiosalicylate (EMTS) derivative was prepared by soaking the native crystal in mother liquor containing 0.1 mM EMTS, 0.1 M lithium sulphate, 30% (w/v) PEG4000 and 50 mM MES buffer (pH 6.0) for 3 days.

**Data collection.** The native crystal was flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen after being soaked in a cryoprotectant solution containing 35% (w/v) PEG4000, 5% (w/v) sucrose and 5% (w/v) glucose in 50 mM MES buffer (pH 6.0). X-ray data were collected on beamline BL44B2 at SPring-8 using a marCCD165 detector at 90 K. The crystals belong to space group  $P2_12_12$  with  $a=74.5$ ,  $b=90.4$  and  $c=52.6$  Å, and diffract to a resolution of 1.6 Å. In the case of the Hg derivative, the Hg-soaked crystal was back-soaked and flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen using cryoprotectant solution. An X-ray fluorescence spectrum was measured directly from the crystal on the BL45XU beamline at SPring-8 using a Si diode X-ray fluorescence detector. The remote wavelength used was 1.035 Å, and the peak and inflection were 1.00907 and 1.0072 Å, respectively. MAD data sets were collected from 0° to 180° with 1° oscillation on the BL45XU beamline at SPring-8 using a Jupiter210 CCD detector at 90 K. Three data sets were collected in the order peak, edge and remote per ten frames, and the exposure times were 10, 5 and 5 s, respectively. MAD data were collected to a resolution of at least 1.9 Å. The space group of the Hg-derivative crystals changed to space group  $P2_1$ , with  $a=73.9$ ,  $b=90.6$ ,  $c=52.4$  Å and  $\beta=90^\circ$ . The native and derivative data





**Fig 4** | Structural similarity between PsbP and Mog1p. (A) Structures of Mog1p from *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* (top; Stewart & Baker, 2000) and PsbP from *N. tabacum* (bottom; this study). (B) Structure-based sequence alignment of tobacco PsbP and yeast Mog1p. GenBank/EMBL/DDJB database accession numbers are CAA44293 and P47123, respectively.

**Table 1** | Statistics of X-ray data collection

	Native		Hg derivative	
		Remote	Peak	Inflection
Space group	$P2_12_12$	$P2_1$	-	-
Cell dimensions (Å)	74.5, 90.4, 52.6	73.9, 90.6, 52.4	-	-
$\beta$ (deg)	-	90	-	-
Wavelength (Å)	1.0	1.035	1.00907	1.00720
Resolution (Å)	52.6–1.6	50–1.9	50–1.9	50–1.9
Unique reflections <sup>a</sup>	47,044	54,456	54,473	54,456
Redundancy	7.3	3.8	3.8	3.8
Completeness (%)	98.7 (97.3)	99.1 (90.3)	99.2 (92.0)	99.2 (91.8)
$I/\sigma(I)$	7.8 (2.4)	10.6 (4.3)	10.6 (4.2)	10.6 (4.3)
$R_{\text{merge}}$ (%)	7.3 (30.7)	4.2 (12.0)	4.1 (12.6)	4.2 (13.6)

Data for the outer shell are in parentheses.

<sup>a</sup>Increase in the number of reflections in Hg derivative was due to the difference of space groups between native crystal and Hg derivative.

sets were integrated and scaled with Crystal Clear (Rigaku/MS; Pflugrath, 1999). Data collection statistics are given in Tables 1,2. **MAD phasing, automatic model building and refinement.** The Hg sites were determined, refined and used for phase calculation in the program SOLVE (Terwilliger & Berendzen, 1999). Phases were improved with RESOLVE (Terwilliger, 2000), resulting in an overall figure of merit of 0.65. The initial model was constructed automatically by ARP/wARP (Perrakis *et al*, 1999) with Hg-derivative data. Owing to the difference in the space group between native and Hg-derivative crystals, molecular replacement was carried out with AMoRe (Navaza, 1994) using the initial

model obtained by ARP/wARP. The warpNtrace mode of ARP/wARP then automatically built a model that had 149 of 177 amino-acid residues of PsbP in the native electron density at a resolution of 1.6 Å. Water molecules were added with the solvent mode of ARP/wARP. The remaining parts of the structure were built manually using the program TURBO-FRODO (Roussel & Cambillau, 1996), and the resulting model was refined by Refmac (Murshudov *et al*, 1997). Refinement statistics are given in Table 1.

**Protein Data Bank accession numbers.** The atomic coordinates and structure factors of the tobacco PsbP protein have been

**Table 2** | Statistics of X-ray refinement

Resolution range (Å)	20–1.6
$R_{\text{work}}$ (%)	18.6
$R_{\text{free}}$ (%)	20.7
Protein atoms	2,357
Hetero-atoms <sup>a</sup>	34
Solvent atoms	433
Average $B$ -factor (Å <sup>2</sup> )	13.5
$\phi\psi$ most favoured	94.5
$\phi\psi$ additionally allowed	5.5
R.m.s. deviation from ideal values	
Bond length (Å)	0.006
Bond angle (deg)	0.95

$R_{\text{free}}$  is the  $R_{\text{factor}}$  with 5% of the reflections excluded from refinement.  
<sup>a</sup>These atoms are from sulphate ion and glucose that were included in a cryoprotectant solution.

deposited in the Protein Data Bank under accession number 1V2B.

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