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PHOTOSYNTHETIC CARBON METABOLISM
IN
PRIMARY AND SECONDARY LEAVES OF *Zea mays* L.

by

GAIL MAN-WAH LAW

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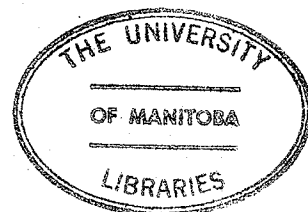
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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*This thesis is affectionately dedicated to
Harold and Helena, my brother and sister-in-law,
whose unfailing love, wise counsel, moral and
prayer support have enabled me to find myself,
and to experience the joy, peace and the
liberating power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

"In the day of my trouble I will call upon Thee:

For Thou wilt answer me.

Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord;

Neither are there any works like unto Thy works.

All nations whom Thou has made shall come

and worship before Thee, O Lord;

And shall glorify Thy Name.

For THOU ART GREAT, and DOEST WONDROUS THINGS:

THOU ART GOD ALONE."

Psalm 86: 7 - 10

ABSTRACT

Kinetic experiments of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ incorporation into leaf discs of Zea mays. L. var. Earliking and identification of the metabolic products have shown that the photosynthetic carbon pathway of primary leaves from 6 - 8 day old seedlings differs from that of secondary leaves from 16 - 18 day old seedlings. The kinetic pattern of photosynthetic intermediates in primary leaves indicated that the Calvin cycle was predominant, whereas in secondary leaves the major route of carbon flow was via the C_4 -dicarboxylic acid cycle as shown by the early production of malate which decreased with time.

These results were in spite of the fact that phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase (EC 4.1.1.31), the key enzyme of the C_4 cycle was just as active in the chloroplast and cytoplasmic fractions of both primary and secondary leaves. However, it was observed that the phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase of primary leaves had a higher apparent K_m for its substrate, phosphoenolpyruvate, in comparison to that of the secondary leaves, which may be partly responsible for the differences.

Chloroplasts isolated from both primary and secondary leaves by the 'laceration technique' of Mache and Waygood (FEBS Letters 3: 89 - 92, 1969) were incapable of fixing CO_2 without the addition of a CO_2 acceptor, although some very young, undifferentiated chloroplasts from primary leaves possessed a small but significant capacity for endogenous CO_2 fixation.

Chloroplasts isolated from either primary or secondary leaves

were capable of fixing CO_2 into photosynthetic intermediates in the presence of 3.2 mM of phosphoenolpyruvate (its approximate K_{app}). This capacity was shared by the corresponding cytoplasmic (supernatant) fractions which showed greater activity, but gave a somewhat different pattern of photosynthetic intermediates.

For CO_2 fixation, the apparent K_m values for phosphoenolpyruvate, HCO_3^- and Mg^{+2} were respectively: 4.00, 0.56 and 2.00 mM for primary leaf chloroplasts; 7.40, 0.89 and 0.30 mM for primary leaf supernatant; 2.04, 0.67 and 2.22 mM for secondary leaf chloroplasts and 2.44, 0.40 and 0.35 mM for secondary leaf supernatant.

These values corresponded reasonably well with the kinetic parameters in the enzymatic assay of phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase of the corresponding fractions being respectively: 10.00, 0.43 and 4.00 mM for the enzyme from chloroplasts of primary leaves; 10.00, 0.44 and 1.14 mM for the primary leaf supernatant enzyme; 1.40, 0.27 and 5.71 mM for the enzyme from chloroplasts of secondary leaves and 3.85, 1.33 and 0.21 mM for the secondary leaf supernatant enzyme.

The response to temperature of the CO_2 fixation capacity and the phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase activity of the chloroplast and supernatant fraction of primary leaves was not severely affected by subnormal temperature conditions (10 - 15°C) during growth, but these activities were almost completely arrested in secondary leaf chloroplasts and extracts under the same conditions.

From these results it is apparent that phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase participates in the regulation of CO_2 fixation capacity

of secondary leaf chloroplasts, and their capacity for CO₂ fixation is not merely due to contamination by the phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase of its corresponding supernatant (cytoplasmic) enzyme.

The distribution of ¹⁴C in the products of CO₂ fixation in the presence of 3.2 mM phosphoenolpyruvate in the chloroplast fractions of both leaf types was also different from that obtained in the supernatant fractions of the corresponding leaf types. The former were more heavily labelled in the amino acid and sugar fractions as compared to the latter which favoured incorporation of ¹⁴C into the organic acid fraction. More specifically, in the chloroplast fraction of both leaf types the major portion of the radioactivity was recovered in glycerate, dihydroxyacetone and glyceraldehyde. The supernatant fraction showed significant label in glycerate only. Malate was not found as a product of CO₂ fixation in any of the fractions at this concentration (3.2 mM) of phosphoenolpyruvate. The absence of malate and the formation of the three 3-C compounds in chloroplast fractions was taken to be evidence in support of a transcarboxylation reaction resulting from the product of β-carboxylation as first envisaged by Hatch and Slack (Biochem. J. 101: 103-111, 1966) and corroborated biochemically by Pan (Ph. D. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1974).

Investigations have shown that the 'laceration technique' is superior to the more commonly employed methods of 'grinding' and 'blending' for the isolation of chloroplasts. Although the chloroplast

'pellet' obtained is predominantly mesophyll in origin, the chloroplasts retain more of their in vivo physical and biochemical integrity.

Bundle sheath chloroplasts generally account for 10% of the total and they can be separated by differential centrifugation. The method is recommended for the isolation of mesophyll chloroplasts from monocotyledonous plants for studies on CO₂ fixation and enzyme activities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF PLATES	xvii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	5
CARBON DIOXIDE ASSIMILATION - THE C ₄ HYPOTHESES	5
A. Radiotracer Studies with Leaf Tissues	6
B. Radiotracer and Enzyme Studies with Isolated Chloroplasts and Differentially Enriched Plant Extracts	10
C. Radiotracer and Enzyme Studies with Isolated Cell Types	14
D. Radiotracer Studies with Tissue Culture	17
MATERIALS AND METHODS	18
RESULTS	
I. PHOTOSYNTHETIC NaH ¹⁴ CO ₃ INCORPORATION INTO PRIMARY LEAF TISSUE OF MAIZE	32
A. Kinetic Experiments	32
1. Rate of Incorporation	32
2. Distribution of ¹⁴ C in the Methanol-water Soluble Fraction	32
3. Distribution of ¹⁴ C in the Various Products of the Organic Acid, Amino Acid and Sugar Fractions	33

RESULTS (continued)	<u>Page</u>
B. Pulse-Chase Experiments	34
1. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Methanol-water Soluble Fraction	35
2. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Various Products of the Organic Acid, Amino Acid and Sugar Fractions	35
II. PHOTOSYNTHETIC $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ INCORPORATION INTO SECONDARY LEAF TISSUE OF MAIZE	38
A. Kinetic Experiments	38
1. Rate of Incorporation	38
2. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Methanol-water Soluble Fraction	38
3. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Various Products of the Organic Acid, Amino Acid and Sugar Fractions	39
B. Pulse-Chase Experiments	
1. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Methanol-water Soluble Fraction	41
2. Distribution of ^{14}C in the Various Products of the Organic Acid, Amino Acid and Sugar Fractions	41
III. PHOTOSYNTHETIC $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ INCORPORATION INTO ISOLATED CHLOROPLASTS FROM MAIZE LEAVES IN THE ABSENCE OF PHOSPHOENOL-PYRUVATE	43
A. Isolated Chloroplasts from Primary Leaves	43
B. Isolated Chloroplasts from Secondary Leaves	43
IV. PHOTOSYNTHETIC $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ INCORPORATION INTO ISOLATED CHLOROPLASTS AND SUPERNATANT OF MAIZE LEAVES IN THE PRESENCE OF PHOSPHOENOLPYRUVATE	45
A. Rate of Incorporation	46
1. Isolated Chloroplasts from Primary Leaves	46
2. Supernatant from Primary Leaves	46
3. Isolated Chloroplasts from Secondary Leaves	47
4. Supernatant from Secondary Leaves	47

RESULTS (continued)	<u>Page</u>
B. Determination of Apparent Km Values for PEP, HCO_3^- and Mg^{+2} for CO_2 Fixation	48
1. Isolated Chloroplasts from Primary Leaves	48
2. Supernatant from Primary Leaves	49
3. Isolated Chloroplasts from Secondary Leaves	49
4. Supernatant from Secondary Leaves	49
C. Products of $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ Fixation	50
D. Effect of Temperature	53
1. Isolated Chloroplasts from Primary Leaves	54
a) Normal temperature treatment	54
b) Cold treatment	54
2. Supernatant from Primary Leaves	54
a) Normal temperature treatment	54
b) Cold treatment	55
3. Isolated Chloroplasts from Secondary Leaves	55
a) Normal temperature treatment	55
b) Cold treatment	55
4. Supernatant from Secondary Leaves	56
a) Normal temperature treatment	56
b) Cold treatment	56
V. STUDIES OF PHOSPHOENOLPYRUVATE AND RIBULOSE DIPHOSPHATE CARBOXYLASES IN THE CHLOROPLAST AND SUPERNATANT OF MAIZE LEAVES	57
A. Determination of Apparent Km Values for PEP, HCO_3^- and Mg^{+2} of Phosphoenolpyruvate Carboxylase	57
1. Chloroplastic PEP Carboxylase from Primary Leaves	57
2. Supernatant PEP Carboxylase from Primary Leaves	58

RESULTS (continued)	<u>Page</u>
3. Chloroplastic PEP Carboxylase from Secondary Leaves	59
4. Supernatant PEP Carboxylase from Secondary Leaves	59
B. Effect of Temperature on the Activities of Phosphoenolpyruvate and Ribulose Diphosphate Carboxylases in Maize Leaves	60
1. Chloroplastic PEP and RuDP Carboxylases from Primary Leaves	60
a) Normal temperature treatment	60
b) Cold treatment	61
2. Supernatant PEP and RuDP Carboxylases from Primary Leaves	61
a) Normal temperature treatment	61
b) Cold treatment	62
3. Chloroplastic PEP and RuDP Carboxylases from Secondary Leaves	62
a) Normal temperature treatment	62
b) Cold treatment	63
4. Supernatant PEP and RuDP Carboxylases from Secondary Leaves	63
a) Normal temperature treatment	63
b) Cold treatment	63
VI. EVALUATION OF THE 'LACERATION TECHNIQUE'	65
A. Physical Integrity of Isolated Chloroplasts as Observed with Light Microscope	65
B. Recovery of Phosphoenolpyruvate and Ribulose Diphosphate Carboxylases by Different Techniques	67
C. Comparison of CO ₂ Fixation Capacity of Secondary Leaf Chloroplasts Isolated by Different Techniques	68
D. Separation of Bundle Sheath and Mesophyll Chloroplasts by Differential Centrifugation	70

	<u>Page</u>
DISCUSSION	71
SUMMARY	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY	95
APPENDIX	107
Tables	108
Figures	127
Plates	217

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table No.</u>		<u>Page</u>
I.	Distribution of radioactivity in extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	108
II.	Distribution of radioactivity in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	109
III.	Distribution of radioactivity in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	110
IV.	Distribution of radioactivity in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	111
V.	Distribution of radioactivity in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	112
VI.	Distribution of radioactivity in extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	113
VII.	Distribution of radioactivity in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	
VIII.	Distribution of radioactivity in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	115
IX.	Distribution of radioactivity in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	116
X.	Distribution of radioactivity in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	117

<u>Table No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
XI. Distribution of radioactivity in various fractions of maize leaf chloroplast and supernatant extracts after 2 minutes of $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ fixation in the presence of 3.2 mM PEP.	118
XII. Distribution of radioactivity in organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of maize leaf chloroplast and supernatant extracts after 2 minutes of $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ fixation in the presence of 3.2 mM PEP.	119
XIII. Distribution of radioactivity in products of maize leaf chloroplast and supernatant extracts after 2 minutes of $\text{NaH}^{14}\text{CO}_3$ fixation in the presence of 3.2 mM PEP.	120
XIV. Comparison of methods of isolation for chloroplasts from maize primary and secondary leaves.	121
XV. Distribution of intact chloroplasts between mesophyll and bundle sheath chloroplasts by the 'laceration technique'.	122
XVI. Levels of phosphoenolpyruvate and ribulose diphosphate carboxylases by different extraction methods from maize primary and secondary leaves.	123
XVII. Comparison of CO_2 fixation capacity of chloroplasts isolated by different techniques from maize secondary leaves.	124
XVIII. Separation of bundle sheath and mesophyll chloroplasts by differential centrifugation.	125
XIX. Summary of apparent K_m values for PEP, HCO_3^- and Mg^{+2} for the CO_2 fixation capacity and PEP carboxylase activity of maize leaf cellular fractions.	126

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Incorporation of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ into the various fractions of plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	128
2. Distribution of ^{14}C in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	130
3. Distribution of ^{14}C in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	132
4. Distribution of ^{14}C in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	134
5. Distribution of ^{14}C in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize primary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	136
6. Incorporation of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ into the various fractions of plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	138
7. Distribution of ^{14}C in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	140
8. Distribution of ^{14}C in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Kinetic experiments.	142
9. Distribution of ^{14}C in various fractions of the methanol-water soluble fraction of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	143
10. Distribution of ^{14}C in various products of the organic acid, amino acid and sugar fractions of the plant extracts from maize secondary leaf discs. Pulse-chase experiments.	144

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
11. Incorporation of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ into isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves in the absence of PEP.	148
12. Incorporation of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ into cellular fractions of maize primary leaves as a function of time.	150
13. Incorporation of $^{14}\text{CO}_2$ into cellular fractions of maize secondary leaves as a function of time.	152
14. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	154
15. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	156
16. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	158
17. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	160
18. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	162
19. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	164
20. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	166
21. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	168
22. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	170
23. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of CO_2 fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	172

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
24. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of CO ₂ fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	174
25. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of CO ₂ fixation by the supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	176
26. Effect of temperature on CO ₂ fixation capacity of primary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 25°C day and 20°C night temperatures.	178
27. Effect of temperature on CO ₂ fixation capacity of primary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 15°C day and 10°C night temperatures.	180
28. Effect of temperature on CO ₂ fixation capacity of secondary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 25°C day and 20°C night temperatures.	182
29. Effect of temperature on CO ₂ fixation capacity of secondary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 15°C day and 10°C night temperatures.	184
30. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	186
31. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	188
32. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize primary leaves.	190
33. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	192
34. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	194
35. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize primary leaves.	196

<u>Figure No.</u>	<u>Page</u>
36. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	198
37. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	200
38. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in isolated chloroplasts of maize secondary leaves.	202
39. Effect of PEP concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	204
40. Effect of sodium bicarbonate concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	206
41. Effect of magnesium chloride concentration on the initial velocity of PEP carboxylase in supernatant fraction of maize secondary leaves.	208
42. Effect of temperature on PEP and RuDP carboxylase activities in primary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 25°C day and 20°C night temperatures.	210
43. Effect of temperature on PEP and RuDP carboxylase activities in primary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 15°C day and 10°C night temperatures.	212
44. Effect of temperature on PEP and RuDP carboxylase activities in secondary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 25°C day and 20°C night temperatures.	214
45. Effect of temperature on PEP and RuDP carboxylase activities in secondary leaf cellular fractions of maize grown under 15°C day and 10°C night temperatures.	216

LIST OF PLATES

<u>Plate No.</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the organic acid fraction of leaf disc extracts.	218
2.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the amino acid fraction of leaf disc extracts.	220
3.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the sugar fraction of leaf disc extracts.	222
4.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the organic acid fraction of chloroplast extracts.	224
5.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the amino acid fraction of chloroplast extracts.	226
6.	Sample radioautogram of the products in the sugar fraction of chloroplast extracts.	228

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSA	Bovine serum albumin
DTT	Dithioerythritol
EDTA	Ethylene diamine tetra-acetic acid
HEPES	N-2-Hydroxyethylpiperazine-N'-2-Ethanesulfonic acid
MES	2-(N-morpholino) ethanesulfonic acid
NAD	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
NADP	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
NADPH	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (reduced)
PEP	Phosphoenolpyruvate
PGA	Phosphoglyceric acid
POPOP	1,4-Bis (2-5) phenyloxazolylbenzene
PPO	2,5-Diphenyloxazole
PVP	Polyvinyl pyrrolidone
RuDP	Ribulose diphosphate
TES	N-tris (Hydroxymethyl) Methyl-2-aminoethanesulfonic acid
Tris	Tris (hydroxymethyl) aminomethane

INTRODUCTION

The view has long been held that higher plants assimilate CO_2 through the Calvin cycle via RuDP carboxylase (Benson and Calvin, 1947) in which the initial product is 3-PGA. However, it was shown in the 1960's that in some plants the initial product of CO_2 assimilation was a four-carbon organic acid. For this reason, the former group of plants are referred to as C_3 plants and the latter C_4 plants (Downton and Tregunna, 1968). After the proposal of the new pathway of CO_2 assimilation for C_4 plants by Hatch and Slack (1966), considerable work has been done on many C_4 species (Slack et al., 1969; Bucke and Long, 1971; Latzko et al., 1971) with various newly developed techniques in an attempt to elucidate the details of the pathway. As some areas have been clarified, more problems have arisen and many questions remain unanswered.

Maize is one of the C_4 plants initially studied. While the majority of workers agree that maize is a C_4 plant (Slack et al., 1969; Berry et al., 1970; Samejima and Miyachi, 1971), it has also been demonstrated that RuDP serves as primary CO_2 acceptor in maize leaves (Latzko et al., 1971) which is a characteristic feature of C_3 plants; and the products of CO_2 fixation in vitro by isolated maize chloroplasts are those of the C_3 rather than the C_4 -pathway (Gibbs et al., 1970; O'Neal et al., 1971, 1972). The latter group of workers used either primary leaves or whole seedlings of 2 to 4 day old maize plants. But the majority of the other investigators used more mature

plants over two weeks old. It is doubtful that results obtained from very young developing leaf tissue could be representative for mature, fully developed tissue as assumed by some of these authors.

The C_4 -pathway as proposed by Hatch and Slack (1966) involves the concerted effort of both mesophyll and bundle sheath chloroplasts. It is believed that the initial site of CO_2 fixation is in the mesophyll chloroplasts resulting in the formation of a C_4 -dicarboxylic acid. This initial product has to be either decarboxylated or transcarboxylated before the carbon can be further metabolized by the bundle sheath chloroplasts. If the former takes place, the decarboxylated CO_2 is believed to be refixed by the bundle sheath chloroplasts. If the latter takes place, the carboxyl group is supposed to be 'transferred' onto a carboxyl acceptor with the subsequent formation of regular C_3 photosynthetic intermediates. The enzyme believed to be involved with decarboxylation reaction, NADP-malic enzyme, has been found to be located in the bundle sheath cells (Slack et al., 1969; Hatch and Kagawa, 1973). Bundle sheath cells of maize have also been shown to decarboxylate malate in vitro (Huber et al., 1973). On the other hand, evidence for a transcarboxylation reaction has also been obtained with maize extracts (Pan, 1974). However, decarboxylation and/or transcarboxylation reactions with subsequent formation of regular C_3 photosynthetic intermediates have yet to be demonstrated.

Although isolated chloroplasts from some C_3 plants have been shown to possess the ability of fixing CO_2 without the addition of

substrate (or CO_2 acceptor) (Kalberer et al., 1967), very little work of this nature had been reported on C_4 plants. The only successful reports were all investigations on very young maize seedlings of 2 to 4 day old (Gibbs et al., 1970; Poincelot, 1972). Two reports on CO_2 fixation by chloroplasts isolated from mature C_4 plants were both on studies of chloroplast systems fortified with PEP (Baldry et al., 1969; Waygood et al., 1971). Interestingly enough, this capacity of CO_2 fixation by isolated mesophyll protoplasts of mature maize leaves was also dependent on the addition of PEP (Kanai and Edwards, 1973a). Phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase is very active in C_4 plants and has been found by most workers to be located in the cytoplasm of the mesophyll cells (Andrews et al., 1971; Lyttleton, 1971). In the light of the activity and location of this enzyme, two questions one would naturally ask are (a) whether the capacity for CO_2 fixation by isolated chloroplasts in the presence of PEP is an artifact due to unavoidable contamination of the inactive chloroplast by the cytoplasm during isolation and (b) if this is the case, what further role the mesophyll chloroplasts are assuming if they are not involved with the β -carboxylation of PEP.

Most work on isolation of C_4 chloroplasts has been criticized on the basis of technical difficulties in eliminating contamination by cytoplasmic enzymes and separation of the two types of chloroplasts (Black, 1973; Laetsch, 1974). Accordingly, whenever a new method is developed the research worker has to be familiar with both the advantages and limitations of the technique and interpret the results