



HAL
open science

Proteolytic processing of turnip yellow mosaic virus replication proteins and functional impact on infectivity.

Anna Jakubiec, Gabrièle Drugeon, Laurent Camborde, Isabelle Jupin

► To cite this version:

Anna Jakubiec, Gabrièle Drugeon, Laurent Camborde, Isabelle Jupin. Proteolytic processing of turnip yellow mosaic virus replication proteins and functional impact on infectivity.. *Journal of Virology*, 2007, 81 (20), pp.11402-12. 10.1128/JVI.01428-07 . hal-00180856

HAL Id: hal-00180856

<https://hal.science/hal-00180856>

Submitted on 22 Apr 2008

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**Proteolytic processing of *Turnip yellow mosaic virus* replication proteins
and functional impact on infectivity**

Anna JAKUBIEC¹, Gabrièle DRUGEON, Laurent CAMBORDE and Isabelle JUPIN*

Laboratoire de Virologie Moléculaire, Institut Jacques Monod, UMR 7592 CNRS -
Universités Paris 6 - Paris 7, 2 place Jussieu, 75251 Paris Cedex 05, France

1 : Present address : The Rockefeller University, 1230 York Avenue, New-York, 10021 NY,
USA.

* to whom correspondence should be addressed :

e-mail : jupin@ijm.jussieu.fr

Tel : (33) 1 44 27 40 99

Fax : (33) 1 44 27 57 16

Word count for the abstract : 217

Word count for the text : 6151

Running title : Processing of TYMV replication protein

1 **ABSTRACT**

2 *Turnip yellow mosaic virus* (TYMV), a positive-strand RNA virus belonging to the
3 alphavirus-like supergroup, encodes its non-structural replication proteins as a 206K
4 precursor with domains indicative of methyltransferase (MT), proteinase (PRO),
5 NTPase/helicase (HEL) and polymerase (POL) activities. Subsequent processing of 206K
6 generates a 66K protein encompassing the POL domain and uncharacterized 115K and 85K
7 proteins. Here, we demonstrate that TYMV PRO mediates an additional cleavage between the
8 PRO and HEL domains of the polyprotein generating the 115K protein and a 42K protein
9 encompassing the HEL domain that can be detected in plant cells using a specific antiserum.
10 Deletion and substitution mutagenesis experiments, and sequence comparisons indicate that
11 the scissile bond is located between residues Ser879 and Gln880. The 85K is generated by a
12 host proteinase and is likely to result from unspecific proteolytic degradation occurring during
13 protein sample extraction or analysis. We also report that TYMV PRO has the ability to
14 process substrates *in trans in vivo*. Finally, we examined processing of 206K containing
15 native, mutated or shuffled cleavage sites, and analyzed the effects of cleavage mutations on
16 viral infectivity and RNA synthesis by performing reverse-genetics experiments. We present
17 evidence that PRO/HEL cleavage is critical for productive virus infection and that the
18 impaired infectivity of PRO/HEL cleavage mutants is due mainly to defective synthesis of
19 positive-strand RNA.

INTRODUCTION

1 Many positive-strand RNA viruses produce their replication proteins as polyprotein
2 precursors that are subsequently cleaved to generate functional viral gene products. Such
3 proteolytic processing events allow the expression of multiple intermediate products that may
4 perform various functions in viral replication – possibly distinct from those performed by
5 mature products - thus providing additional ways of regulating the viral multiplication cycle
6 (37, 45). Understanding the proteolytic processing pathway of viral polyprotein precursors
7 can thus help decipher the molecular processes directing the assembly, function and
8 regulation of viral replication machineries.

9 Here we address this question by studying the proteolytic processing of the replication
10 polyprotein of *Turnip yellow mosaic virus* (TYMV), the type member of the genus
11 *Tymovirus*. TYMV is a spherical plant virus that shares replication features with other
12 positive-strand RNA viruses in the alphavirus-like supergroup (14, 21), and has proven useful
13 in the study of fundamental aspects of viral multiplication (10).

14 The two extensively overlapping open reading frames encoded by the 6.3-kb genomic
15 RNA (Figure 1) produce a 69-kDa protein that serves as the viral movement protein and
16 RNAi suppressor, and a 206-kDa (206K) precursor protein that is the only viral protein
17 necessary for replication (10). Viral replication is initiated by the synthesis of a negative-
18 strand RNA complementary to the genomic positive-strand RNA, which in turn serves as a
19 template for the synthesis of new positive-strand genomic RNA and of a subgenomic RNA
20 that allows expression of the 20-kDa viral coat protein (CP). Compared with alphaviruses,
21 little is known about the processing of TYMV 206K protein and the role of such processing,
22 if any, in the regulation of replication.

23 The 206K protein contains sequence domains indicative of methyltransferase (MT),
24 proteinase (PRO), NTPase/helicase (HEL), and RNA-dependent RNA polymerase (POL)
25 activities, as well as a ~ 200 amino acid-long proline-rich region (PRR) that may constitute a

1 hinge between the MT and PRO domains (Figure 1). The PRO domain, which is characterized
2 by a Cys783 – His869 catalytic dyad, belongs to the subgroup of viral papain-like proteases
3 (2, 40, 41). Previous *in vitro* studies have demonstrated its involvement in the cleavage of
4 206K between residues 1259 and 1260, leading to the synthesis of an N-terminal product of
5 140 kDa (140K) containing the MT, PRR, PRO and HEL domains, and a C-terminal 66 kDa
6 (66K) protein encompassing the POL domain (4, 20, 34) (Figure 1).

7 This HEL/POL cleavage has been demonstrated to be functional *in vivo* (39) and
8 appears essential for viral replication (2). However, while 66K is readily detected in infected
9 samples using specific antibodies (39), only trace amounts of 140K are detected in infected
10 cells using an antibody raised against the PRR domain (hereafter anti-PRR) (18) (Figure 1).
11 Instead, two shorter products of 115 and 85 kDa, referred to as 115K and 85K, respectively,
12 are detected in infected cells (18), suggesting that the 140K protein may be further processed
13 *in vivo*. The 115K protein is of particular interest because it has long been known to be a
14 major component of the purified TYMV replicase (6, 36).

15 The goal of the present work was to study the remaining cleavages occurring *in vivo* in
16 the TYMV nonstructural polyprotein using a transient expression system in plant cells and
17 specific antisera, and to determine whether these cleavage events are essential for viral
18 infectivity. Here, we demonstrate that the TYMV proteinase mediates one additional cleavage
19 within the 206K polyprotein, generating 115K and a product encompassing the HEL domain.
20 Using reverse-genetics experiments, we also report that processing at the novel cleavage site
21 is critical for viral infectivity.

22

23 **METHODS**

24 *Plasmid constructions*

25 All DNA manipulations were performed using standard techniques (1, 42). The full-length
26 TYMV cDNA clone E17, which produces infectious transcripts, and its derivative E17-stop Δ ,

1 in which the 206K protein is truncated at aa 1259, have been described previously (11, 38).
2 Plant expression vectors were derived from pΩ-206K, pΩ-140K or pΩ-66K (18, 38).
3 Mutations were introduced by PCR-mediated site-directed mutagenesis or by subcloning of
4 restriction fragments. The overall structures of all plasmids were confirmed by restriction
5 analysis, and the sequences of PCR-generated DNA fragments were confirmed by DNA
6 sequencing. When proteins are truncated, the encoded amino acids are indicated within
7 brackets in the plasmid name. Primer sequences and cloning details will be made available on
8 request.

9 *Preparation and transfection of Arabidopsis protoplasts*

10 Protoplasts of *Arabidopsis thaliana* were prepared as described (18, 19) and transfected
11 with 5 μg expression vector or capped *in vitro* transcripts generated from linearized DNA
12 templates as described (11).

13 *Protein extraction, SDS-PAGE, antibodies and immunodetection analyses*

14 Total protein extraction from protoplasts, SDS-PAGE and immunodetection using anti-
15 66K, anti-CP or anti-140K (hereafter anti-PRR) antibodies were performed as described (18,
16 19, 39).

17 The polyclonal anti-HEL antiserum raised against the TYMV helicase domain was
18 obtained by injecting rabbits with a mixture of two synthetic peptides (aa 1079-1093 and aa
19 1245-1259) conjugated to keyhole limpet hemocyanin. Peptide synthesis, coupling,
20 immunization and affinity-purification of antibodies were performed by Eurogentec
21 (Belgium) according to standard double XP protocols. For detection of the TYMV helicase
22 domain, proteins were separated by 10% SDS-PAGE and subjected to immunodetection with
23 antibodies purified against peptide 1245-1259 (hereafter anti-HEL), used at a 1/200 dilution.

24 *RNA extraction and Northern-blot hybridization*

25 Total RNA extraction from protoplasts, agarose-formaldehyde electrophoresis, blotting,
26 hybridization with TYMV strand-specific riboprobes, and signal quantitation were performed

1 as previously described (5, 19).

2 *Fluorescence microscopy*

3 Fluorescence microscopy of transfected protoplasts and image acquisition were performed
4 as previously described (18, 38).

5 *Sequence analysis*

6 Alignment of primary sequences for replication proteins of Tymoviruses was performed
7 using ClustalW (45) and shaded with Multiple Align Show
8 (http://bioinformatics.org/sms/multi_align.html). The accession numbers of the viral
9 replication proteins of Tymoviruses are as follows : *Turnip yellow mosaic virus* (TYMV)
10 [NP_663297], *Eggplant mosaic virus* (EMV) [NP_040968], *Kennedya yellow mosaic virus*
11 (KYMV) [NP_044328], *Ononis yellow mosaic virus* (OYMV) [NP_041257], *Erysimum latent*
12 *virus* (ELV) [NP_047920], *Physalis mottle virus* (PhyMV) [NP_619756], *Chayote mosaic*
13 *virus* (ChMV) [NP_067737], *Dulcamara mottle virus* (DuMV) [YP_406375], *Plantago*
14 *mottle virus* (PlMoV) [AAW88526], *Scrophularia mottle virus* (SrMV) [AAW88520],
15 *Anagyris vein yellowing virus* (AVYV) [AAW88529].

16

17 **RESULTS**

18 **The viral proteinase generates 115K but not 85K**

19 Immunodetection using anti-PRR antiserum has previously shown that 115K and 85K
20 proteins are readily detected in infected cells (18) (Figure 2, lane 2), and that these products
21 derive exclusively from the 140K protein, as both could be detected upon transfection of
22 Arabidopsis protoplasts with the pΩ-140K vector that expresses the TYMV 140K protein (18)
23 (Figure 2, lane 3). These data suggested the occurrence of at least two additional cleavages
24 within the 140K protein.

25 To determine whether these cleavage events require an active viral proteinase, or
26 whether the responsible proteolytic activity is of cellular origin, the expression vector pΩ-

1 140K-C783S, which encodes a 140K debilitated in its proteolytic activity due to a point
2 mutation in the proteinase active site (41), was transfected into Arabidopsis protoplasts. Upon
3 immunodetection of protein extracts with anti-PRR (Figure 2, lane 4), we observed that such a
4 mutation was detrimental to the accumulation of the 115K protein, with the 140K
5 unprocessed protein instead being detected, while the 85K product was produced in amounts
6 comparable to that expressed by the p Ω -140K expression vector (lane 3). This result indicates
7 that the 115K protein results from the proteolytic activity of the viral proteinase whereas the
8 85K product does not.

9

10 **115K and 85K correspond to N-terminal cleavage products of 140K**

11 To determine whether the 115K and 85K proteins correspond to N- or C-terminal
12 cleavage products of the 140K protein, Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with the
13 expression vectors p Ω -EGFP-140K and p Ω -140K-EGFP, which encode the 140K protein
14 fused at its N- or C-terminus, respectively, to EGFP. Upon immunodetection of protein
15 extracts with anti-PRR, we observed that p Ω -140K-EGFP gave rise to products identical in
16 size to 115K and 85K (Figure 2, lane 6), whereas p Ω -EGFP-140K led to the expression of
17 slower migrating products, whose estimated molecular weight is consistent with that expected
18 for the fusion of EGFP to 85K and 115K proteins (Figure 2, lane 7). This result indicates that
19 both 115K and 85K proteins correspond to N-terminal cleavage products of the 140K protein
20 and that the cleavage sites are located downstream of the proline-rich region.

21

22 **Deletion mapping of the cleavage sites**

23 To locate the cleavage sites leading to the appearance of 115K and 85K products, a
24 series of constructs encoding C-terminally truncated 140K derivatives were transfected into
25 Arabidopsis protoplasts and the corresponding protein extracts were analysed by
26 immunoblotting using anti-PRR (Figure 3A). From the electrophoretic mobilities of the

1 encoded proteins, and comparison with the 115K and 85K products derived from the full
2 length 140K protein (lanes 6 and 13), the cleavage site giving rise to the 115K protein was
3 mapped to between residues 868 and 887, whereas the 85K product – which contains several
4 subspecies of similar mobilities – appears to be generated by cleavage(s) located between
5 residues 686 and 719.

6 These observations indicate that the 85K protein carries the MT and PRR domains,
7 while the 115K protein results from a cleavage between the PRO and HEL domains and
8 encompasses the MT, PRR and PRO domains (Figure 3B).

9

10 **Fine mapping of the 115K cleavage site**

11 As the 115K protein is generated by a cleavage between the PRO and HEL domains
12 (Figure 3) mediated by the viral proteinase (Figure 2), we examined the corresponding region
13 of the 140K protein for the presence of a potential viral papain-like proteinase cleavage site.
14 Based on sequence alignments and similarities with the previously identified HEL/POL
15 cleavage site between amino acids 1259 and 1260 (4, 20), a serine-glutamine dipeptide
16 corresponding to amino acids 879 and 880 of the 206K ORF was identified as a potential
17 PRO/HEL cleavage site (Figure 4A). Processing at this site would result in the production of
18 cleavage products in perfect agreement with those observed (Figure 3).

19 To test the above prediction, mutagenesis of the putative PRO/HEL site was
20 conducted. To this end, alanine or glycine substitutions spanning residues 874 to 886 of the
21 140K protein (positions P6 to P'6 relative to the predicted cleavage site according to the
22 nomenclature of Ref. 43) were introduced into the expression vector p Ω -140K (Figure 4B,
23 left). The corresponding mutant proteins were transiently expressed in Arabidopsis
24 protoplasts and cleavage of the 140K protein was assessed by immunodetection with anti-
25 PRR (Figure 4C, lanes 1-5). As a control, identical substitutions within the previously
26 characterized HEL/POL cleavage site were introduced into the expression vector p Ω -206K

1 (Figure 4B, right) and their effect on the generation of the 66K protein was followed by
2 western blotting experiments using anti-66K (Figure 4C, lanes 6-10).

3 Substitutions of amino acids 874-879 (P6 to P1) strongly inhibited PRO/HEL
4 processing, as the 140K protein was detected in place of the 115K protein (Figure 4C, lanes 2
5 and 3). In contrast, substitutions at positions 880-885 (P'1 to P'6) had less influence on the
6 PRO/HEL cleavage, the 115K protein being the major product detected (Figure 4C, lanes 4
7 and 5). These results are strikingly similar to those observed for the corresponding HEL/POL
8 mutants affecting P6 to P1 and P'1 to P'6 (Figure 4C, lanes 7-10). Taken together, the
9 sequence analyses and experimental data strongly support the identification of Ser-879/Gln-
10 880 as the probable PRO/HEL cleavage site in TYMV 140K.

11

12 ***In vivo* analyses of the cleavages generating 85K and 115K**

13 To determine whether the cleavages giving rise to the 85K and 115K proteins occur *in*
14 *vivo* in intact cells, or whether the appearance of these proteins is the result of unspecific
15 degradation processes during extraction or analysis, we took advantage of the fact that the
16 140K protein is targeted to chloroplasts *in vivo* (38) and that determinants of chloroplast
17 targeting are located within its N-terminal region (18, Jupin, I., unpublished data). We
18 therefore constructed the expression vectors pΩ-140K(1-719)-EGFP and pΩ-140K(1-886)-
19 EGFP, which encode fusion proteins in which the GFP moiety is located downstream of the
20 mapped cleavage sequences (Figure 5A). We reasoned that cleavage at the predicted sites
21 would release the GFP moiety, which would thus become cytoplasmic, whereas in the
22 absence of processing, it would remain fused to the N-terminus of 140K and would retain its
23 chloroplastic distribution.

24 Upon transfection of Arabidopsis protoplasts with the corresponding expression
25 vectors, the green fluorescence of the GFP moiety allows monitoring of its subcellular
26 distribution by fluorescence microscopy in living cells, while the simultaneous observation of

1 chlorophyll red autofluorescence permits detection of the chloroplasts. As shown in Figure 5B
2 (i to iii), protoplasts expressing the 140K(1-719)-EGFP fusion displayed a bright fluorescent
3 staining in the shape of rings around the chloroplasts, indicating that the fusion protein is
4 targeted to the chloroplasts. This result therefore demonstrates that the cleavage between aa
5 686 and 719 does not occur *in vivo*, and that the 85K protein is likely to result from unspecific
6 proteolytic degradation occurring during protein sample extraction or analysis.

7 In contrast, when the EGFP moiety was placed downstream of residue 886 of the
8 140K protein, a diffuse fluorescence characteristic of cytosoluble GFP was observed
9 throughout the cells (Figure 5B, iv to vi), demonstrating that the cleavage event leading to the
10 115K occurred *in vivo*. This processing was inhibited when the 874AAA mutation – shown
11 above to inhibit the PRO/HEL cleavage – was introduced in the pΩ-140K(1-886)-874AAA-
12 EGFP construct, as the corresponding protein then retained its chloroplastic distribution
13 (Figure 5B, vii to ix). These findings therefore demonstrate that the PRO/HEL cleavage that
14 generates the 115K protein indeed takes place *in vivo* at the predicted site.

15

16

17 **Detection of the viral helicase in infected cells.**

18 To detect the C-terminal cleavage product, i.e. the viral polypeptide encompassing the
19 HEL domain, polyclonal antibodies were raised against synthetic peptides derived from the
20 helicase amino acid sequence. The resulting antibodies (anti-HEL) were affinity-purified and
21 then used in immunoblotting experiments. As shown in Figure 6, an immunoreactive protein
22 with an apparent molecular mass of ~42 kDa (42K) was specifically detected in protein
23 extracts of TYMV-infected plant and protoplast samples (lanes 1-6), thus providing the first
24 evidence for the existence of a mature product encompassing the HEL domain in TYMV-
25 infected samples. Its observed molecular weight is consistent with that expected to result from
26 processing at residue 880 (MW 42,145 Da). As expected, this 42K product was detected upon

1 expression of the 206K precursor polyprotein (lane 7) and was found to derive exclusively
2 from the 140K protein, as it was also detected upon transfection of Arabidopsis protoplasts
3 with the pΩ-140K vector (lane 8). Transfection of the expression vectors pΩ-140K-C783S
4 and pΩ-140K-874AAA, in which the PRO/HEL cleavage is abolished either by mutation of
5 the proteinase or by mutation of the cleavage site, respectively, led to immunodetection of the
6 140K protein in place of the 42K protein (lanes 9 and 10), providing further confirmation that
7 PRO/HEL processing takes place *in vivo* at the predicted site.

8

9 **PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sequences can be processed in *trans* in plant cells.**

10 Based on previous *in vitro* co-translational assays, the processing of 206K was
11 suggested to occur only *in cis* (2, 3, 41). To evaluate the ability of the TYMV proteinase
12 produced *in vivo* to function *in trans*, the expression plasmids pΩ-206K-C783S (encoding
13 206K lacking proteinase activity, but retaining the cleavage sites, to serve as a substrate) and
14 pΩ-140K(1-879) (encoding the viral 115K protein to serve as a protease) were transfected
15 into Arabidopsis protoplasts. Processing at the PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sites of the
16 206K substrate was assayed by immunoblotting of the corresponding protein samples using
17 anti-PRR and anti-66K antibodies, respectively (Figure 7). As shown in lanes 3 and 7, the
18 115K protein encoded by pΩ-140K(1-879) was capable of processing *in trans* both the
19 PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sites, as evidenced by the disappearance of the 206K
20 precursor and the immunodetection of the mature products 115K and 66K. As expected,
21 *trans*-cleavage of the substrate was inhibited upon mutation of the catalytic C783 residue of
22 the proteinase encoded by pΩ-140K(1-879)-C783S (lanes 4 and 8). These experiments
23 therefore demonstrate that the TYMV proteinase has the ability to process substrates *in trans*
24 when expressed in plant cells.

25

26 **Effects of cleavage sites mutations on proteolytic processing of 206K**

1 To uncouple the effects of position and amino acid sequence on 206K processing, we
2 tested the ability of the TYMV proteinase to recognize cleavage sites located at different
3 positions within the 206K protein. To this end, expression vectors were constructed in which
4 the PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sites were mutated or substituted for each other. Upon
5 transfection into *Arabidopsis* protoplasts, the effects of the introduced mutations on
6 processing of the 206K protein were assayed by immunoblotting of the corresponding protein
7 extracts using anti-PRR or anti-66K antisera (Figure 8).

8 First, p Ω -206K-(A/S2), a derivative of the p Ω -206K expression vector, was
9 constructed, in which the P6-P'1 residues of the PRO/HEL cleavage site (KRLGGS/Q) were
10 replaced by seven alanine residues (Figure 8A). As expected, this substitution inhibited
11 PRO/HEL processing, as evidenced by immunodetection of the 140K protein instead of the
12 115K protein (Figure 8B, lane 2). Processing at the HEL/POL cleavage site was unaffected -
13 as evidenced by immunodetection of the 66K protein (lane 7) – thus demonstrating that
14 HEL/POL processing can occur independently of cleavage at the upstream site. When the
15 alanine residues at the PRO/HEL junction were replaced by amino acids P6-P'1 of the
16 HEL/POL cleavage site (PKLNGA/T) in the p Ω -206K-(2xS2) expression vector, efficient
17 processing was restored (lane 3), demonstrating that the two cleavage sequences are
18 interchangeable at the PRO/HEL junction.

19 Conversely, p Ω -206K-(S1/A) was constructed, in which the P6-P'1 residues of the
20 HEL/POL cleavage site were replaced by seven alanine residues, which resulted, as expected,
21 in the inhibition of processing at the HEL/POL site (lane 9). Cleavage at the PRO/HEL site
22 was not affected (lane 4), indicating that it can occur independently of processing at the
23 downstream site. Efficient cleavage at the HEL/POL junction was restored when the alanine
24 residues were replaced with the amino acids P6-P'1 of the PRO/HEL site (KRLGGS/Q) in the
25 p Ω -206K-(2xS1) expression vector (lane 10), demonstrating that the two cleavage sequences
26 are also interchangeable at the HEL/POL junction.

1 These results therefore demonstrate that the PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage
2 sequences can be efficiently processed when exchanged within the 206K precursor.

3

4 **Effects of cleavage site mutations on viral infectivity**

5 Viral proteinase catalytic activity has previously been reported to be essential for viral
6 replication (2). Thus, we next wanted to determine whether mutations or substitutions of the
7 cleavage sites affect viral infectivity. For this purpose, the mutations shown in Figure 8 were
8 introduced into plasmid E17 (11), which contains a full-length copy of the TYMV genome,
9 and from which infectious viral transcripts can be obtained. Plasmids E17-(A/S2), E17-
10 (2xS2), E17-(S1/A) and E17-(2xS1) were thus obtained, as well as plasmid E17-C783S,
11 which encodes a disabled proteinase (Figure 9A). Equal amounts of *in vitro* transcripts were
12 transfected into Arabidopsis protoplasts and viral infectivity was assessed by detecting
13 accumulation of CP by western-blotting (Figure 9B).

14 Mutation of the viral proteinase in E17-C783S (lane 2) or impairment of the HEL/POL
15 cleavage in E17-(S1/A) (lane 5) both completely abolished accumulation of CP, therefore
16 confirming that proteinase activity and/or HEL/POL processing are essential for viral
17 infectivity, consistent with previous reports (2). Impairment of the PRO/HEL cleavage in
18 E17-(A/S2) resulted in a partial loss of infectivity, as evidenced by a 5-fold reduction in the
19 accumulation of viral CP (Fig. 9B, lane 3). These defects were partially restored when
20 cleavage sites were reintroduced into the 206K protein as in mutants E17-(2xS1) and E17-
21 (2xS2) (Fig. 9B, lanes 4 and 6). These data therefore indicate that the uncleaved 140K protein
22 may be at least partially functional during viral multiplication but that processing at the
23 PRO/HEL cleavage site plays a critical role in viral infectivity.

24 To confirm this finding, and to ensure that the defect in viral infectivity of the E17-
25 (A/S2) mutant was caused by the lack of 140K processing rather than being due to the amino
26 acid changes at the PRO/HEL junction, a complementary approach, based on the use of

1 proteinase mutants was undertaken. In the E17-C783S construct, the proteinase is debilitated
2 by a point mutation and is therefore unable to process either the PRO/HEL or HEL/POL
3 junctions. As the HEL/POL cleavage event is essential, the putative contribution of the
4 PRO/HEL cleavage to viral infectivity cannot be assessed with this construct. To circumvent
5 this problem, we made use of construct E17-stop Δ (38) (Figure 9A). Transcripts deriving
6 from this construct do not express the 66K protein and cannot replicate, but they can be *trans*-
7 complemented by the 66K protein expressed from the p Ω -66K expression vector (38) (Figure
8 9B, lanes 7 and 8), therefore alleviating the need for the HEL/POL cleavage event. We then
9 constructed the plasmid E17-stop Δ -C783S – with disabled proteinase - and assessed the
10 ability of the corresponding transcripts to be *trans*-complemented by p Ω -66K. We reasoned
11 that a decreased efficiency of complementation would reflect the defect in viral infectivity due
12 to the lack of processing at the PRO/HEL site. Indeed, we observed that complementation of
13 E17-stop Δ -C783S transcripts by p Ω -66K was reduced 5-fold as compared to
14 complementation of E17-stop Δ transcripts (compare lanes 8 and 10), therefore confirming the
15 contribution to viral infectivity of processing at the PRO/HEL site.

16

17 **Effects of cleavage site mutations on RNA synthesis**

18 As the reduction in viral infectivity due to defects in 206K cleavages presumably
19 occurs at the level of viral RNA synthesis, we next used strand-specific Northern-blotting
20 experiments to examine the ability of the cleavage mutant viruses to synthesize plus- and
21 minus-strand RNA species (Figure 10).

22 Consistent with the results obtained above, duplication of the cleavage sites in the
23 E17(2xS1) and E17(2xS2) viral RNA mutants had only a minor impact on the accumulation
24 of plus- and minus-strand RNAs compared to the levels obtained during a wild-type infection
25 (Figure 10, lanes 3 and 5). In contrast, E17-(A/S2) (impaired in the PRO/HEL cleavage) was
26 severely affected, with plus-strand RNAs accumulating ~ 50-fold less than in a wild-type

1 infection. Interestingly, the synthesis of minus-strand RNA was much less affected, with a
2 reduction of only 2.5-fold, indicating that impairment of the PRO/HEL cleavage differentially
3 affects synthesis of plus- and minus-strand RNA species.

4 This observation was confirmed by results obtained upon *trans*-complementation of
5 E17-stop Δ -C783S mutant transcripts with p Ω -66K as compared to *trans*-complementation of
6 E17-stop Δ transcripts (Figure 10, lanes 7 and 9); again a more severe reduction in plus- than
7 in minus-strand RNA synthesis was observed. Taken together, these results show that
8 inhibition of PRO/HEL processing has more impact on the accumulation of plus-strand RNAs
9 than on minus-strand RNAs, and support the hypothesis that the PRO/HEL cleavage plays a
10 critical role in the regulation of synthesis of viral RNA during the infectious cycle.

11

12 **DISCUSSION**

13 *Characterization of the 85K and 115K products*

14 The TYMV 206K replication protein is proteolytically processed *in vitro* and *in vivo*
15 to release the C-terminal 66K protein encompassing the RdRp domain (39). However, its
16 processing pathway remained incompletely understood as only trace amounts of the N-
17 terminal 140K product were detected *in vivo* (18). Instead, two products of 115K and 85K
18 were detected, whose origin was unclear. The goal of the present study was to complete the
19 TYMV 206K cleavage map.

20 Using a viral proteinase mutant, we observed that the occurrence of the 85K protein
21 relied on a host proteinase activity (Figure 2). However, it is likely that this processing event
22 does not occur *in vivo*, as evidenced by the absence of cleavage in intact cells (Figure 5).
23 Given that its C-terminal boundary is located between residues 686 and 719 (Figure 3), i.e.
24 just downstream of the PRR, predicted to be an intrinsically unfolded region (12, 28) and thus
25 known to display extremely high sensitivity to protease digestion *in vitro* (13), we conclude
26 that the 85K protein results from a non-specific degradation process occurring during sample

1 extraction and protein analysis. Consistent with this conclusion was the observation that the
2 amount and electrophoretic profile of the 85K product is highly variable from sample to
3 sample (Figure 4C) (5, 18).

4 On the other hand, the cleavage event generating the 115K product was demonstrated
5 to occur *in vivo* (Figure 5) and to be dependent on TYMV proteinase activity (Figure 2),
6 indicating that the 206K precursor is processed at an additional cleavage site. Based on the
7 electrophoretic mobility of deletion derivatives (Figure 3), sequence comparisons (Figure 4A)
8 and mutagenesis studies (Figure 4BC), the Ser879-Gln880 dipeptide bond was defined as the
9 site most likely cleaved by TYMV PRO to release the N-terminal 115K carrying the MT,
10 PRR and PRO domains and the C-terminal 42-kDa protein encompassing the HEL domain.
11 This hypothesis was further supported by the detection in infected samples of the C-terminal
12 42K cleavage product, production of which was prevented by mutagenesis of the proposed
13 cleavage site (Figure 6). Taken together, our theoretical analysis and experimental data
14 strongly support the identification of Ser879-Gln880 as the probable PRO/HEL cleavage site
15 within the TYMV 206K protein.

16 The expected molecular weights of the proteins released upon cleavage between Ser-
17 879 and Gln-880 can be calculated : whereas the C-terminal helicase protein has a calculated
18 molecular weight of 42,145 Da consistent with that observed experimentally, the N-terminal
19 protein has a calculated molecular weight of 98,404 Da. The reason for the difference
20 between the observed (115-kDa) and the expected (98-kDa) molecular weight is not clear, but
21 may relate to the presence of the intrinsically unfolded PRR region (17). The reason why the
22 115K was detected as a double band is also not presently known.

23 We will henceforth refer to the 206K processing scheme as generating three products :
24 the N-terminal 98K protein containing the MT, PRR and PRO domains, the 42K
25 corresponding to the HEL domain and the 66K encompassing the POL domain (Figure 12).
26 We believe that the cleavage map within the TYMV replication protein is now complete as no

1 additional cleavage products of the EGFP-98K fusion could be detected (Figure 2), and
2 antibodies raised against the MT and the PRO domains also lead to detection of the 98K
3 protein (Jakubiec, A. and Jupin, I., unpublished data).

4

5 *Differences between cell-free versus in vivo systems*

6 Previous experiments using various cell-free translation systems programmed with
7 TYMV RNA demonstrated the occurrence of the HEL/POL cleavage *in vitro* (35, 49).
8 Although a product of 120 kDa has also been detected in some instances (35, 49), it is
9 unlikely to correspond to the 98K protein described herein, as the 140K protein was the only
10 product detected with the anti-PRR antibody upon translation of TYMV RNA in reticulocyte
11 lysate (18), thus indicating that processing at the PRO/HEL site does not occur in this *in vitro*
12 translation assay.

13 Another unexpected finding was the determination of the ability of TYMV proteinase
14 to cleave *in trans* when expressed *in vivo*, as demonstrated in Figure 7, because such *trans*-
15 cleavage was not detected in cell-free assays (2, 3, 41) and proteinase activity was thought to
16 be limited to *cis* processing. Our experiments, however, clearly demonstrate that the TYMV
17 proteinase is able to process substrates *in trans*, as previously reported for other members of
18 the alphavirus-like supergroup with whom TYMV share evolutionary relationships, such as
19 rubella virus (RUB) rubivirus, and Sindbis virus (SIN) or Semliki Forest virus (SFV)
20 alphaviruses (16, 29, 33). Based on its ability to cleave both *in cis* and *in trans* at multiple
21 sites, and its location in the central region of the 206K polyprotein, the TYMV PRO domain
22 can therefore be classified as belonging to the Main, or M-group of viral papain-like cysteine
23 proteases (15).

24 The reasons for the observed differences between cell-free translations versus *in vivo*
25 transient expression assays are unclear, but they may result from differences in active protease
26 concentrations, or from the contribution of cellular cofactors and/or the presence of the

1 whole-cell environment. In this respect, it should be pointed out that TYMV 140K and 98K
2 are membrane-bound proteins that are targeted to the chloroplast envelope in plant cells (18,
3 38) (Figure 5) and it is conceivable that membrane association may influence the folding of
4 the viral proteins, and hence their cleavage properties, thus contributing to the regulation of
5 the 206K processing during viral replication in host cells.

6 7 *Analysis of the cleavage sites*

8 Sequence alignments around the TYMV 206K PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage
9 sites revealed strong similarity between both sites, as residues P7, P4, P2, P2' to P4' were
10 identical and residues P5 and P1 were similar, occupied by basic residues and residues with a
11 short side chain, respectively (Figure 4A). Indeed, analysis of the processing of 206K
12 derivatives demonstrated that the two cleavage sequences can be efficiently processed when
13 substituted for each other within the 206K precursor (Figure 8B). Whether TYMV proteinase
14 displays a cleavage site preference could not be assessed from analysis of the processing of
15 206K derivatives, as cleavage at each site could occur independently of the other (Figure 8B).
16 Further studies are required to establish whether such a preference may exist during viral
17 infection, and if so, what its molecular basis might be.

18 Mutagenesis experiments revealed that the residues most sensitive to substitution are
19 located upstream of the cleavage sites (position P6 to P1) (Figure 4BC), consistent with
20 previous reports regarding cellular and viral papain-like cystein proteases such as cathepsin,
21 foot-and-mouth disease virus or SFV protease (22, 23, 30). The mechanism of cleavage site
22 recognition for TYMV proteinase is unknown, and pursuing the definition of the molecular
23 determinants of its substrate specificity will require further mutagenesis studies.

24 Alignment of the polyproteins encoded by members of the *Tymovirus* genus revealed
25 that the junctions between the homologous PRO, HEL and POL domains are not well
26 conserved. Nevertheless, each tymovirus examined was found to have a potential counterpart

1 for these cleavage sites (Figure 11), suggesting that processing of the polyprotein precursor
2 into three mature products may constitute a conserved feature among tymoviruses. The most
3 uniform feature of these sites is the presence of amino acids with a short side chain (Gly, Ala
4 or Ser) in the P2 and P1 positions, consistent with results obtained for rubivirus and
5 alphavirus cleavage sites (7, 30). Positions P5 and P4 were occupied almost exclusively by
6 basic (Lys, Arg) and hydrophobic (Leu, Ile or Phe) residues, respectively, except in *Erysimum*
7 *latent virus*, which appears particularly divergent among tymoviruses.

8 Strikingly, the residues located downstream of the cleavage site appeared rather
9 conserved at the PRO/HEL junction, but show little conservation at the HEL/POL junction,
10 suggesting that conservation of the helicase N-terminal sequences reflects other functional
11 requirements, rather than proteinase substrate specificity determinants. Like alphavirus
12 proteinases, tymovirus proteinase can apparently accommodate a wide variety of residues in the
13 P1' position, including amino acids with bulky side chains (30, 45).

14 Related papain-like proteinases are also encoded by maculaviruses and marafiviruses –
15 the other genera constituting the family *Tymoviridae*, and by some members of the
16 phylogenetically-related family *Flexiviridae* (31, 32, 39). Although it can be speculated that
17 all these tymo-like PRO domains may share common biochemical and biological features,
18 such comparison awaits for further experimental data.

19

20 *Processing and regulation of viral replication*

21 Processing of nonstructural proteins allows the precursor protein or partially processed
22 intermediates to perform functions that are distinct from those of the mature cleavage
23 products. This provides a means to temporally regulate the course of viral infection by
24 changing the ratio of polyprotein to mature products, and has been reported to be essential for
25 replication of several RNA viruses including rubiviruses and alphaviruses (25-27, 44).

26 To examine the importance of 206K processing in TYMV replication, reverse-genetics

1 experiments were performed. Our results (Figures 9 and 10) confirmed that processing at the
2 HEL/POL junction is absolutely required for TYMV infectivity, the TYMV HEL/POL mutant
3 being unable to accumulate plus- and minus-strand RNAs. This observation suggests that the
4 HEL/POL cleavage is required to activate one of the catalytic activities carried by the 206K
5 protein (i.e. polymerase or helicase), which may not be functional when embedded in the
6 precursor protein. Such a cleavage-dependent activation of the polymerase function has been
7 reported for poliovirus (46), and future crystallographic studies may help to determine
8 whether TYMV RdRp relies on a similar process to adopt an active replication-competent
9 conformation.

10 On the other hand, processing at the PRO/HEL junction was not essential for viral
11 replication, but appeared to contribute to the regulation of viral RNA synthesis, as a TYMV
12 PRO/HEL mutant had more severe defects in plus- rather than minus-strand RNA synthesis
13 (Figures 9 and 10). This suggests that different cleavage events lead to different patterns of
14 RNA synthesis, and emphasizes the importance of an accurate proteolytic processing scheme
15 in virus replication.

16 From previous studies and our current work, we propose that TYMV RNA replication
17 is regulated as follows (Figure 12): after its release in the cytoplasm, the genomic RNA is
18 translated into the 206K protein. Cleavage at the HEL/POL junction is believed to occur
19 rapidly *in cis*, which would lead to the production of a complex consisting of 140K and 66K,
20 capable of minus-strand RNA synthesis (Figure 10). Later in the infection, as the
21 concentration of the 140K increases, and/or due to a conformational change induced by its
22 recruitment to chloroplast envelope membranes, the PRO domain becomes capable of *trans*-
23 cleavage at the PRO/HEL junction, generating the 98K and 42K proteins. The replication
24 complex is then rearranged into a stable form making plus-strand genomic and subgenomic
25 RNAs. Several steps in this process still remain to be demonstrated and further studies
26 addressing these issues are required.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26

Evolutionary relationship with members of the alphavirus-like supergroup of RNA viruses.

The results obtained in this study allow a comparative analysis of the strategies used for nonstructural protein expression and regulation of viral replication among togaviruses (comprising alphaviruses and rubiviruses) and tymoviruses, which are animal- or plant-infecting members of the alphavirus-like supergroup, respectively (Figure 12).

As in tymoviruses, togavirus nonstructural proteins are encoded in the form of a polyprotein containing MT, PRO, HEL and POL functional domains as well as an X-domain of unknown function. Remarkably, the order of these functional domains is similar between tymoviruses and rubiviruses but differs from that of alphaviruses, most likely because of genetic rearrangement (9).

In the case of SIN alphavirus, the P1234 precursor contains three cleavage sites and generates four mature products (nsP1 to nsP4) and a number of intermediates (8). Many studies have demonstrated that the temporal regulation of nonstructural protein processing controls synthesis of the different RNA species. According to current data (25, 44), uncleaved P1234 is not functional and a first cleavage at the 3/4 site is required to generate an early replication complex (P123 and nsP4), synthesizing only minus-strand RNA. Upon further cleavage of P123 at the 1/2 site, an intermediate complex (nsP1, P23, and nsP4) is formed, capable of both minus- and plus-strand genomic RNA synthesis. Upon final cleavage at the 2/3 site, minus-strand synthesis ceases and plus-strand genomic and subgenomic RNAs are generated by a stable complex comprising the four mature products.

In the RUB rubivirus, the situation is much simpler, and only a single cleavage site has been reported (48). The uncleaved P200 precursor is functional and capable of minus-strand synthesis, whereas its cleavage at the PRO/HEL junction plays a critical role in switching the replication complex to synthesis of plus-strand RNA and inhibition of minus-strand synthesis (26, 27).

1 It thus appears that TYMV occupies an intermediate position, both in terms of genome
2 organization and complexity of the regulation process. A common feature between all three
3 genera is the fact that a cleavage event immediately downstream of the PRO domain is
4 required for switching the replication complex from minus- to plus-strand RNA synthesis.
5 Whether, in the case of TYMV, this cleavage also shuts off synthesis of minus-strand RNA,
6 as reported in togaviruses, is presently unknown. TYMV also shares with alphaviruses the
7 fact that the unprocessed precursor is not functional, and that there is an absolute requirement
8 for release of the POL domain to initiate RNA synthesis, in contrast to rubiviruses whose
9 uncleaved precursor is functional in minus-strand RNA synthesis (24, 26, 27). Finally, one
10 regulatory step that appears specific for alphaviruses relates to the differential synthesis of
11 genomic and subgenomic RNAs promoted by cleavage at the 2/3 site. The mechanisms upon
12 which TYMV and RUB rely for this process are still unknown.

13 Remarkably, our findings highlight strong similarities between animal- and plant-
14 infecting members of the alphavirus-like supergroup of positive-strand RNA viruses. They
15 also emphasize the importance of the conformational flexibility of viral proteins in the
16 regulation of viral replication, as a change in template specificity or activation of the
17 polymerase are likely to arise from differences in conformation of the proteins induced by
18 cleavage. Knowledge of the structural characteristics of the various intermediate cleavage
19 products and comparison with that of the final mature products would thus be of great interest
20 given that those processes are shared by all positive-strand RNA viruses.

21

22 **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

23 A.J. was the recipient of a Fellowship from the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de la
24 Recherche et de la Technologie (MENRT). This work was supported in part by grants from
25 MENRT and CNRS (Actions Concertées Incitatives "Programme de Microbiologie
26 Fondamentale" and "Biologie Moléculaire, Cellulaire et Structurale").

1 We are grateful to Drs. L. van Dinten, B. Deiman and C.W.A. Pleij (Leiden University) for
2 the initial suggestion of the PRO/HEL cleavage site, and to Dr. S. Pflieger and Dr. H. Rothnie
3 for comments on the manuscript. Special thanks to C.J. for constant encouragements.
4

5 REFERENCES

- 6 **1. Ausubel, F. M., R. Brent, R. E. Kingston, D. D. Moore, J. G. Seidman, J. A. Smith,**
7 **and K. Struhl.** 1987. Current Protocols in Molecular Biology. Wiley, New York.
- 8 **2. Bransom, K. L., and T. W. Dreher.** 1994. Identification of the essential cysteine and
9 histidine residues of the turnip yellow mosaic virus protease. *Virology* **198**:148-154.
- 10 **3. Bransom, K. L., J. J. Weiland, and T. W. Dreher.** 1991. Proteolytic maturation of the
11 206-kDa nonstructural protein encoded by turnip yellow mosaic virus RNA. *Virology*
12 **184**:351-358.
- 13 **4. Bransom, K. L., S. E. Wallace, and T. W. Dreher.** 1996. Identification of the cleavage
14 site recognized by the turnip yellow mosaic virus protease. *Virology* **217**:404-406.
- 15 **5. Camborde, L., V. Tournier, M. Noizet, and I. Jupin I.** 2007. A Turnip yellow mosaic
16 virus infection system in Arabidopsis suspension cell culture. *FEBS Lett.* **581**:337-341.
- 17 **6. Candresse, T., C. Mouchès, and J. M. Bové.** 1986. Characterization of the virus encoded
18 subunit of turnip yellow mosaic virus replicase. *Virology* **152**:322-330.
- 19 **7. Chen, J.-P., J. H. Strauss, E. G. Strauss, and T. L. K. Frey.** 1996. Characterization of
20 the Rubella Virus Nonstructural Protease Domain and Its Cleavage Site. *J. Virol.*
21 **70**:4707-4713.
- 22 **8. de Groot, R. J., W. R. Hardy, Y. Shirako, and J. H. Strauss.** 1990. Cleavage-site
23 preferences of Sindbis virus polyproteins containing the non-structural proteinase.
24 Evidence for temporal regulation of polyprotein processing in vivo. *EMBO J.* **9**:2631-
25 2638.
- 26 **9. Dominguez, G., C. Y. Wang, and T. K. Frey.** 1990. Sequence of the genome RNA of
27 rubella virus: evidence for genetic rearrangement during togavirus evolution. *Virology*
28 **177**:225-238.
- 29 **10. Dreher, T. W.** 2004. Turnip yellow mosaic virus: transfer RNA mimicry, chloroplasts
30 and a C-rich genome. *Mol Plant Pathol* **5**:367-375.
- 31 **11. Drugeon, G., and I. Jupin.** 2002. Stability in vitro of the 69K movement protein of
32 Turnip yellow mosaic virus is regulated by the ubiquitin-mediated proteasome pathway.
33 *J. Gen. Virol.* **83**:3187-3197.

- 1 **12. Dunker, A. K., C. J. Brown, and Z. Obradovic.** 2002 Identification and functions of
2 usefully disordered proteins. *Adv Protein Chem.* **62**:25-49.
- 3 **13. Fontana, A., P. Polverino de Laureto, V. De Filippis, E. Scaramella, and M.**
4 **Zambonin.** 1997. Probing the partly folded states of proteins by limited proteolysis.
5 *Fold Des.* **2**:R17-26.
- 6 **14. Goldbach, R., and J. Wellink.** 1988. Evolution of plus-strand RNA viruses.
7 *Intervirology* **29**:260-267.
- 8 **15. Gorbalenya, A. E., E. V. Koonin, and M. M. Lai.** 1991. Putative papain-related thiol
9 proteases of positive-strand RNA viruses. Identification of rubi- and aphthovirus
10 proteases and delineation of a novel conserved domain associated with proteases of
11 rubi-, alpha- and coronaviruses. *FEBS Lett.* **288**:201-205.
- 12 **16. Hardy, W. R., and J. H. Strauss.** 1989. Processing the nonstructural polyproteins of
13 sindbis virus: nonstructural proteinase is in the C-terminal half of nsP2 and functions
14 both in cis and in trans. *J. Virol.* **63**:4653-4664.
- 15 **17. Iakoucheva, L. M., A. L. Kimzey, C. D. Masselon, R. D. Smith, A. K. Dunker, and E.**
16 **J. Ackerman.** 2001. Aberrant mobility phenomena of the DNA repair protein XPA.
17 *Protein Sci.* **10**:1353-1362.
- 18 **18. Jakubiec, A., J. Notaise, V. Tournier, F. Héricourt, M. A. Block, G. Drugeon, L. van**
19 **Aelst, and I. Jupin.** 2004. Assembly of turnip yellow mosaic virus replication
20 complexes: interaction between the proteinase and polymerase domains of the
21 replication proteins. *J Virol* **78**:7945-7957.
- 22 **19. Jakubiec, A., V. Tournier, G. Drugeon, S. Pflieger, L. Camborde, J. Vinh, F.**
23 **Héricourt, V. Redeker, and I. Jupin.** 2006. Phosphorylation of viral RNA-dependent
24 RNA polymerase and its role in replication of a plus-strand RNA virus. *J Biol Chem*
25 **281**:21236-21249.
- 26 **20. Kadaré, G., M. Rozanov, and A. L. Haenni.** 1995. Expression of the turnip yellow
27 mosaic virus proteinase in *Escherichia coli* and determination of the cleavage site within
28 the 206 kDa protein. *J. Gen. Virol.* **76**:2853-2857.
- 29 **21. Koonin, E. V., and V. V. Dolja.** 1993. Evolution and taxonomy of positive-strand RNA
30 viruses: implications of comparative analysis of amino acid sequences. *Crit. Rev.*
31 *Biochem. Mol. Biol.* **28**:375-430.
- 32 **22. Kuehnel, E., R. Cencic, N. Foeger, and T. Skern.** 2004. Foot-and-mouth disease virus
33 leader proteinase: specificity at the P2 and P3 positions and comparison with other
34 papain-like enzymes. *Biochemistry* **43**:11482-11490.
- 35 **23. Lecaille, F., Y. Choe, W. Brandt, Z. Li, C. S. Craik, and D. Bromme.** 2002. Selective

- 1 inhibition of the collagenolytic activity of human cathepsin K by altering its S2 subsite
2 specificity. *Biochemistry* **41**:8447-8454.
- 3 **24. Lemm, J. A., and C. M. Rice.** 1993. Roles of nonstructural polyproteins and cleavage
4 products in regulating Sindbis virus RNA replication and transcription. *J. Virol.*
5 **67**:1916-1926.
- 6 **25. Lemm, J. A., T. Rumenapf, E. G. Strauss, J. H. Strauss, and C. M. Rice.** 1994.
7 Polypeptide requirements for assembly of functional Sindbis virus replication
8 complexes: a model for the temporal regulation of minus- and plus-strand RNA
9 synthesis. *EMBO J.* **13**:2925-2934.
- 10 **26. Liang, Y., and S. Gillam.** 2000. Mutational Analysis of the Rubella Virus Nonstructural
11 Polyprotein and Its Cleavage Products in Virus Replication and RNA Synthesis. *J.*
12 *Virol.* **74**:5133–5141.
- 13 **27. Liang, Y., and S. Gillam.** 2001. Rubella Virus RNA Replication Is *cis*-Preferential and
14 Synthesis of Negative- and Positive-Strand RNAs Is Regulated by the Processing of
15 Nonstructural Protein. *Virology* **282**:307-319.
- 16 **28. Liu, J., and B. Rost.** 2003. NORSp: predictions of long regions without regular
17 secondary structure. *Nucleic Acids Res.* **31**:3833–3835.
- 18 **29. Liu, X., S. L. Ropp, R. J. Jackson, and T. L. K. Frey.** 1998. The Rubella Virus
19 Nonstructural Protease Requires Divalent Cations for Activity and Functions in trans. *J.*
20 *Virol.* **72**:4463-4466.
- 21 **30. Lulla, A., V. Lulla, K. Tints, T. Ahola, and A. Merits.** 2006. Molecular determinants of
22 substrate specificity for Semliki Forest virus nonstructural protease. *J. Virol.* **80**:5413-
23 5422.
- 24 **31. Martelli, G. P., S. Sabanadzovic, N. Abou-Ghanem Sabanadzovic, M. C. Edwards,**
25 **and T. Dreher.** 2002. The family *Tymoviridae*. *Arch. Virol.* **147**:1837-1846.
- 26 **32. Martelli, G.P., M. J. Adams, J. F. Kreuze, and V. V. Dolja.** 2007. Family *Flexiviridae* :
27 a case study in virion and genome plasticity. *Annu. Rev. Phytopathol.* **45**: 4.1-4.28.
- 28 **33. Merits, A., L. Vasiljeva, T. Ahola, L. Kaariainen, and P. Auvinen.** 2001. Proteolytic
29 processing of Semliki Forest virus-specific non-structural polyprotein by nsP2 protease.
30 *J. Gen. Virol.* **82**:765–773.
- 31 **34. Morch, M. D., G. Drugeon, P. Szafranski, and A. L. Haenni.** 1989. Proteolytic origin
32 of the 150-kilodalton protein encoded by turnip yellow mosaic virus genomic RNA. *J.*
33 *Virol.* **63**:5153-5158.
- 34 **35. Morch, M. D., W. Zagorski, and A. L. Haenni.** 1982. Proteolytic maturation of the
35 turnip-yellow-mosaic-virus polyprotein coded in vitro occurs by internal catalysis. *Eur.*

- 1 J. Biochem. **127**:259-265.
- 2 **36. Mouchès, C., T. Candresse, and J. M. Bové.** 1984. Turnip yellow mosaic virus RNA-
3 replicase contains host and virus-encoded subunits. *Virology* **134**:78-90.
- 4 **37. Parsley, T. B., C. T. Cornell, and B. L. Semler.** 1999. Modulation of the RNA binding
5 and protein processing activities of poliovirus polypeptide 3CD by the viral RNA
6 polymerase domain. *J. Biol. Chem.* **274**:12867-12876.
- 7 **38. Prod'homme, D., A. Jakubiec, V. Tournier, G. Drugeon, and I. Jupin.** 2003. Targeting
8 of the turnip yellow mosaic virus 66K replication protein to the chloroplast envelope is
9 mediated by the 140K protein. *J. Virol.* **77**:9124-9135.
- 10 **39. Prod'homme, D., S. Le Panse, G. Drugeon, and I. Jupin.** 2001. Detection and
11 subcellular localization of the turnip yellow mosaic virus 66K replication protein in
12 infected cells. *Virology* **281**:88-101.
- 13 **40. Rawlings, N. D., F. R. Morton, and A. J. Barrett.** 2006. MEROPS: the peptidase
14 database. *Nucleic Acids Res.* **34**:D270-272.
- 15 **41. Rozanov, M. N., G. Drugeon, and A. L. Haenni.** 1995. Papain-like proteinase of turnip
16 yellow mosaic virus: a prototype of a new viral proteinase group. *Arch. Virol.* **140**:273-
17 288.
- 18 **42. Sambrook, J., E. F. Fritsch, and T. Maniatis.** 1989. *Molecular cloning: a laboratory*
19 *manual*, 2nd ed. ed. Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.
- 20 **43. Schechter, I., and A. Berger.** 1967 On the size of the active site in proteases. I. Papain.
21 *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.* **27**:157-162.
- 22 **44. Shirako, Y., and J. H. Strauss.** 1994. Regulation of Sindbis virus RNA replication:
23 uncleaved P123 and nsP4 function in minus-strand RNA synthesis, whereas cleaved
24 products from P123 are required for efficient plus-strand RNA synthesis. *J. Virol.*
25 **68**:1874-1885.
- 26 **45. Strauss, J. H., and E. G. Strauss.** 1994. The alphaviruses: gene expression, replication,
27 and evolution. *Microbiol Rev* **58**:491-562.
- 28 **46. Thompson, A. A., and O. B. Peersen.** 2004. Structural basis for proteolysis-dependent
29 activation of the poliovirus RNA-dependent RNA polymerase. *EMBO J.* **23**:3462-3471.
- 30 **47. Thompson, J.D., D.G. Higgins, and T.J. Gibson.** 1994. CLUSTAL W: improving the
31 sensitivity of progressive multiple sequence alignment through sequence weighting,
32 positions-specific gap penalties and weight matrix choice. *Nucleic Acids Res.* **22**:4673-
33 4680.
- 34 **48. Yao, J., D. Yang, P. Chong, D. Hwang, Y. Liang, and S. Gillam.** 1998. Proteolytic
35 processing of rubella virus nonstructural proteins. *Virology* **246**:74-82.

1 **49. Zagorski, W., M. D. Morch, and A. L. Haenni.** 1983. Comparison of three different
2 cell-free systems for turnip yellow mosaic virus RNA translation. *Biochimie* **65**:127-
3 133.

4

5 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

6 ***Figure 1 : Schematic representation of the genomic organization of TYMV RNA.***

7 Open bars denote viral ORFs. The encoded 206K protein is proteolytically processed at a
8 peptide bond (indicated by a filled triangle). Protein domains are indicated (MT,
9 methyltransferase; PRR, proline-rich region; PRO, proteinase; HEL, helicase ; POL,
10 polymerase). The location of epitopes recognized by the anti-PRR and anti-HEL antibodies
11 used in this study is indicated by filled squares.

12

13 ***Figure 2 : Characterization of 115K and 85K proteins.***

14 Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with water (lane 1), TYMV RNA (lane 2), or the
15 expression vectors indicated. The cells were harvested 48 h post-transfection (p.t.) and total
16 proteins were subjected to 8% SDS-PAGE and immunoblot analysis with anti-PRR
17 polyclonal antibodies. The positions of viral proteins and molecular weight markers (MWM)
18 (Biolabs) are indicated (in kDa).

19

20 ***Figure 3 : Deletion mapping of the cleavage sites generating the 115K and 85K proteins.***

21 (A) Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with TYMV RNA (lanes 1 and 8), or the
22 expression vectors indicated. The cells were harvested 48 h p.t. and total proteins were
23 subjected to 6% (top panel) or 8% SDS-PAGE (bottom panel) and immunoblot analysis with
24 anti-PRR polyclonal antibodies. The positions of viral proteins are indicated.

25 (B) Schematic representation of the 115K and 85K proteins. Cleavage sites and protein
26 domains are designated as in Figure 1.

27

1 **Figure 4** : *Mutagenesis of the proposed cleavage site generating the 115K protein.*

2 (A) Amino acid sequence alignment of the PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sites. Identical
3 or similar residues are boxed in black or grey, respectively. The arrow indicates the
4 previously characterized HEL/POL and the proposed PRO/HEL cleavage sites.

5 (B) Amino acid sequence of the PRO/HEL (left) and HEL/POL (right) cleavage sequence
6 mutants. The mutated residues are boxed in grey. P6 to P1 and P'1 to P'6 refer to position of
7 the residues relative to the previously characterized or proposed cleavage sites.

8 (C) Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with the expression vectors indicated. The cells
9 were harvested 48 h p.t. and total protein extracts were subjected to 8% SDS-PAGE and
10 immunoblot analysis with anti-PRR (left panel) or anti-66K (right panel). The position of
11 viral proteins and MWM are indicated.

12

13 **Figure 5** : *In vivo analyses in intact cells of the cleavage site generating the 115K and 85K*
14 *proteins.*

15 (A) Schematic representation of EGFP fusion proteins. Cleavage sites and protein domains
16 are designated as in Figure 1, while the mutated cleavage site is represented by a cross.

17 (B) Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with plasmids pΩ-140K(1-719)-EGFP (i to iii),
18 pΩ-140K(1-886)-EGFP (iv to vi) and pΩ-140K(1-886)-874AAA-EGFP (vii to ix). Single
19 protoplasts were observed by epifluorescence microscopy 25 h p.t. and EGFP localization
20 (green) was observed (i, iv and vii). To visualize the location of chloroplasts, the chlorophyll
21 autofluorescence (red) was acquired (ii, v and viii) and superimposed onto the EGFP
22 fluorescence (iii, vi and ix). Scale bars are 10 μm.

23

24 **Figure 6** : *Detection of the viral helicase in infected cells.*

25 Protein extracts from healthy (H) (lane 1) and TYMV-infected (I) (lane 2) Chinese cabbage
26 leaves, and from healthy (lane 3) or TYMV-infected (lane 4) Arabidopsis leaves were

1 subjected to SDS-10% PAGE and immunoblot analysis with anti-HEL antiserum. Arabidopsis
2 protoplasts were transfected with water (lane 5), TYMV RNA (lane 6), or the expression
3 vectors indicated. The cells were harvested 48 h p.t. and total proteins were subjected to 10%
4 SDS-PAGE and immunoblot analysis with anti-HEL polyclonal antibodies. The positions of
5 viral proteins and MWM are indicated.

6
7 **Figure 7 :** *PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sequences can be processed in trans in plant*
8 *cells.*

9 Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with the expression vectors indicated, either alone or
10 in combination. The cells were harvested 48 h p.t. and total protein extracts were subjected to
11 8% SDS-PAGE and immunoblot analysis with anti-PRR (left panel) or anti-66K (right panel)
12 antisera. The positions of viral proteins and MWM are indicated.

13
14 **Figure 8 :** *Effects of cleavage site mutations on 206K proteolytic processing.*

15 (A) Schematic representation of the 206K protein and mutated derivatives. Residues at the
16 PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sites are indicated.

17 (B) Arabidopsis protoplasts were transfected with the expression vectors indicated. The cells
18 were harvested 48 h p.t. and total protein extracts were subjected to 8% SDS-PAGE and
19 immunoblot analysis with anti-PRR (left panel) or anti-66K (right panel) antisera. The
20 positions of viral proteins and MWM are indicated.

21
22 **Figure 9:** *Effects of cleavage site mutations on viral infectivity.*

23 (A) Schematic representation of the infectious TYMV *in vitro* transcript E17 and its
24 derivatives. Residue Cys783 is indicated by an open circle, or by a filled circle when mutated
25 to Ser. The PRO/HEL and HEL/POL cleavage sequences are represented by filled or open

1 triangles respectively. Deletions are indicated by broken lines and introduced stop codons by
2 asterisks. Crosses denote alanine substitutions resulting in impaired cleavage.

3 (B) *Arabidopsis* protoplasts were transfected with wild-type or mutant *in vitro* transcripts,
4 alone or in combination with expression vectors as indicated. The cells were harvested 48 h
5 p.t. and the ability of the transcripts to replicate was assessed by immunoblot analysis of
6 equivalent amounts of proteins using anti-CP antibodies. The relative accumulation of CP is
7 indicated below each panel.

8

9 **Figure 10: Effects of cleavage site mutations on RNA synthesis.**

10 *Arabidopsis* protoplasts were transfected with wild-type or mutant *in vitro* transcripts, alone
11 or in combination with expression vectors as indicated. The cells were harvested 48 h p.t. and
12 equivalent RNA amounts were analyzed based on rRNA as a loading control. Plus-strand
13 genomic (*g*) and subgenomic (*sg*) TYMV RNAs (top panel) and minus-strand TYMV RNAs
14 (bottom panel) were detected by Northern blot. The relative accumulation of viral RNAs is
15 indicated below each panel.

16

17 **Figure 11: Analysis of Tymoviruses cleavage sites.**

18 Protein sequences at the putative PRO/HEL (upper panel) and HEL/POL (lower panel)
19 cleavage sites of the replication proteins encoded by members of *Tymovirus* genus were
20 aligned using ClustalW. Identical or similar residues are boxed in black or grey respectively.
21 Amino acid numbers are indicated, with respect to the polyprotein.

22

23 **Figure 12 : Comparison of the expression strategies and regulation of replication of different**
24 **members of the alpha-like supergroup of viruses.**

25 Schematic representation of the nonstructural replication proteins of TYMV, SIN and RUB.
26 Protein domains are designated as in Figure 1. Cleavage sites are represented by filled

1 triangles. The numbers below each cleavage site indicate the sequential order of the cleavage
2 in the precursor protein. Cleavages that are required for minus-strand RNA synthesis are filled
3 in black, whereas those required for switching from minus- to plus-strand synthesis are filled
4 in grey.