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Sulfur Metabolism in Beggiatoa alba

Checked 29/7

The metabolism of sulfide, sulfur, and acetate by *Beggiatoa alba* was investigated under O₂ and anoxic conditions. *B. alba* oxidized acetate to Carbon dioxide with the stoichiometric reduction of oxygen to water. In vivo acetate oxidation was suppressed by sulfide and by several classic respiratory inhibitors, including dibromothymoquinone, an inhibitor specific for ubiquinones. *B. alba* also carried out an oxygen-dependent conversion of sulfide to sulfur, a reaction that was inhibited by several electron transport inhibitors but not by dibromothymoquinone, indicating that the electrons released from sulfide oxidation were shuttled to oxygen without the involvement of ubiquinones. Intracellular sulfur stored by *B. alba* was not oxidized to sulfate or converted to an external soluble form under aerobic conditions. On the other hand, sulfur stored by filaments of *Thiothrix nivea* was oxidized to extracellular soluble oxidation products, including sulfate. Sulfur stored by filaments of *B. alba*, however, was reduced to sulfide under short-term anoxic

Quá trình chuyển hóa lưu huỳnh trong *Beggiatoa alba*

In vivo: quá trình diễn ra trong cơ thể sinh vật sống

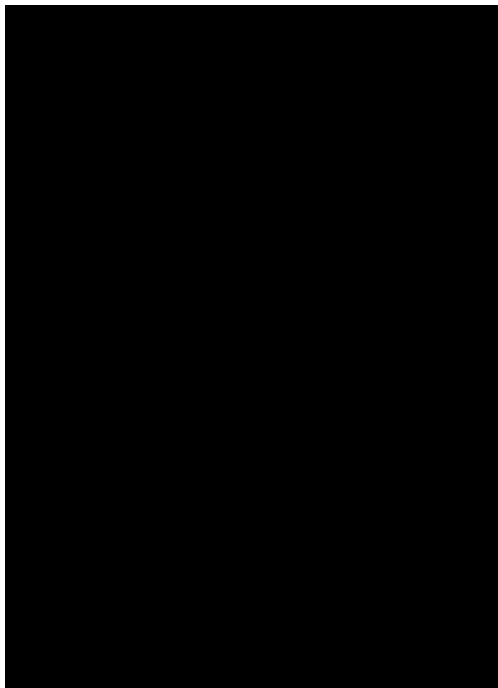
Chúng tôi khảo sát quá trình chuyển hóa sunfua, lưu huỳnh, và acetate của *Beggiatoa alba* trong điều kiện có oxy và thiếu oxy. *B. alba* oxy hóa acetate thành cacbon điôxít cùng với việc khử theo đúng tỷ lệ hợp phần oxy thành nước. Quá trình oxy hóa acetate In vivo bị hạn chế do sunfua và do một số chất ức chế chuỗi truyền điện tử cổ điển, kể cả dibromothymoquinone, một chất ức chế đặc trưng cho các ubiquinone. ...*alba* cũng thực hiện quá trình chuyển đổi sunfua thành lưu huỳnh phụ thuộc oxy, một phản ứng bị ức chế bởi một vài chất ức chế truyền điện tử, ngoại trừ dibromothymoquinone, cho thấy rằng các electron được giải phóng từ quá trình oxy hóa sunfua được chuyển vào oxy mà không có sự tham gia của enzyme ubiquinone. Lưu huỳnh nội bào được dự trữ bởi *B. alba* không bị oxy hóa thành sunfat hoặc chuyển đổi sang một dạng có thể hòa tan bên ngoài trong điều kiện hiếu khí. Mặt khác, lưu huỳnh được dự trữ bởi các sợi *Thiothrix NIVEA* được oxy hóa thành các sản phẩm oxy hóa có thể hòa tan bên ngoài tế bào, kể cả sunfat. Tuy nhiên, lưu huỳnh được dự trữ bởi các sợi *B. alba*

conditions. This anaerobic reduction of sulfur was linked to the endogenous oxidation of stored carbon and to hydrogen oxidation.

All freshwater *Beggiatoa* strains thus far tested have the ability to grow heterotrophically on acetate in the presence of oxygen (14, 25, 26). Members of the genus *Beggiatoa*, however, lack catalase (3, 26), so aerobic growth under highly oxygenated conditions is apparently limited. More-over, lowered oxygen tension and the presence of sulfide have been shown to have beneficial effects on the growth and metabolism of *Beggiatoa* spp. (13, 15, 17, 18, 26).

Oxidation of sulfide may eliminate the need for catalase by detoxifying metabolically formed hydrogen peroxide (3). Alternatively, oxidation of sulfide may simply alleviate the toxic effects of sulfide in the environment. Sulfide oxidation may supplement energy for growth on acetate by freshwater strains of *Beggiatoa* (6, 27) and is the sole energy source for the chemolithoautotrophic growth of at least one marine *Beggiatoa* strain (15, 16). Whatever the effect of sulfide and its oxidation

bị khử thành sunfua trong điều kiện thiếu oxy ngắn hạn. Quá trình khử lưu huỳnh kỵ khí này có liên quan đến quá trình oxy hóa nội sinh của carbon được lưu trữ và quá trình oxy hóa hydro.



might be, marked concentrations of *Beggiatoa* filaments in nature virtually always coincide with the presence of hydrogen sulfide (26).

Recently we showed that *Beggiatoa alba* B18LD and other strains contain multiple electron transport system components (29). In this study, the functioning of the respiratory electron transport chain in the presence and absence of sulfide was investigated with the use of electron transport inhibitors. It was found that under aerobic conditions, sulfide slightly suppressed acetate oxidation and was converted to elemental sulfur, with oxygen serving as an electron acceptor. Under anaerobic conditions, sulfur was reduced either by endogenous substrates or by added hydrogen gas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Strains and growth conditions.

B. alba strains B18LD, B25RD, and B15LD (12), *Beggiatoa* sp. strains 75-2a (13,14) and SM-1 (S. Maier, unpublished), *Vitreoscilla beggiatoides* B23SS (28), *Vitreoscilla filiformis* ATCC 15551 (28), *Thiothrix nivea* JP3 (10), and *Chromatium*

vinos urn (7) were used in this study.

The media were prepared in a basal salts solution (BSS) consisting of 4.7 mM NH₄Cl, 1 mM CaCl₂, 73.5 μM KH₂PO₄, 40 μM MgSO₄ • 7H₂O, and 5 ml of a microelement solution per liter (34). BH (heterotrophic) medium consisted of BSS plus 6.1 mM sodium acetate (pH 7.3). BSO (sulfide oxidation) medium contained BSS, 6.1 mM sodium acetate, and 2 mM neutralized sodium sulfide, with all components added before autoclaving (24).

Cultures of *Beggiatoa* and *Thiothrix* strains were grown at 23°C in 2-liter flasks that contained 1 liter of medium. The flasks were inoculated with approximately 100 ml of a stationary-phase culture and shaken at 100 rpm. The cultures were harvested after 24 h of incubation by centrifugation at 6,000 rpm and washed once in BSS. Concentrated cell suspensions were prepared by suspending the pellet to a density of ca. 0.3 to 0.4 mg of cell protein per ml in the appropriate buffer.

Acetate, sulfide, and thiosulfate oxidation. Acetate-dependent oxygen consumption by *B. alba*

B18LD was measured with the Warburg respirometer as described by Umbreit et al. (32). Two milliliters of a concentrated cell suspension from BH medium were dispensed into Warburg flasks. The center well of the flasks contained pleated filter paper (5 by 25 mm) saturated with 0.2 ml of 20% potassium hydroxide. The side arm of each flask contained 222 μ l of 60 mM sodium acetate in BSS. Inhibitors were incubated with the cell suspension at the concentrations designated in Table 1 for 15 min before the addition of sodium acetate. Manometric readings were taken every 15 min.

The effect of inhibitors on the rate of [2-¹⁴C]acetate oxidation was measured in 25-ml sidearm reaction flasks (no. 882360; Kontes, Vineland, N.J.) by adding 333 μ l of [2-¹⁴C]acetate (1 μ Ci; 0.1 μ Ci/ μ mol) to the concentrated cell suspension as described previously (35). Inhibitors were added to the reaction flasks 15 min before the addition of substrate. ¹⁴C₂ was collected on KOH-saturated filter paper and counted with a Beckman LS-6800 scintillation counter. Data were corrected for quenching by using an internal standard of [methyl-¹⁴C]toluene.

Sulfide-dependent oxygen consumption by *B. aiba* B18LD was measured in the Warburg apparatus by the method described for acetate oxidation, except that the side arm of each flask contained 333 μ l of freshly prepared and neutralized 10 mM sodium sulfide in place of sodium acetate. Duplicate measurements of the chemical oxidation of sulfide were made with respirometer flasks containing 2 ml of BSS without cells. The oxidation of radiolabeled sulfide to labeled "intracellular" sulfur (24, 27, 35) was measured concurrently with identical cell suspensions. Samples (10 μ l) of the concentrated cell suspension were dispensed into 50-ml Erlenmeyer flasks, and the vessels were shaken at 120 strokes per min in a Dubnoff metabolic shaker at 23°C. When anoxic conditions were required, oxygen was removed from the flasks by flushing with nitrogen for 10 min, and then the flasks were carefully capped with a rubber stopper (35). Sodium [³⁵S]sulfide (0.425 μ Ci/ μ mol) was added to each flask to a final concentration of 1 mM. The autooxidation of sulfide and the sorption of sulfide to the cells were measured in control flasks

with autoclaved cells. The effect of respiratory inhibitors or 6 mM acetate on sulfide oxidation by *B. alba* B18LD was measured by adding the affectors to the cell suspension 15 min before the addition of sulfide. Samples (200 μ l) were removed at timed intervals and filtered through Whatman glass fiber filters. The filters with cells containing 35 S inclusions were washed with BSS at pH 3 to remove any externally bound label (24, 27) and then dried at 60°C for 2 h. The dried filters were counted in the scintillation cocktail described previously (25). Quench corrections were made with [14 C]toluene as described previously. To confirm that the cell-bound product of [35 S]sulfide oxidation was 35 S, replicate samples were filtered through Gelman GA-3 glass fiber filters (Gelman Sciences, Inc., Ann Arbor, Mich.) and washed with 2 ml of either BSS (pH 3), ethanol, benzene, acetone, or 5% aqueous trichloroacetic acid.

Oxidation of cellular sulfur. In an attempt to deplete the cellular reserves of sulfur, *B. alba* B18LD and *T. nivea* JP3 were grown to late log phase in BSO medium, harvested, and then suspended in sterile BSS to the same volume and incubated at

23°C on a rotary shaker at 150 rpm. After 12 h, the cells were examined microscopically for the presence of sulfur inclusions and prepared for respirometry as described previously. Cells that were harvested from BSO medium and not starved for sulfur were also prepared for respirometry.

To measure oxidation products obtained from intracellular ³⁵S stores, *B. alba* B18LD and *T. nivea* were grown in BSO medium containing 1 mM [³⁵S]sulfide (0.4 μCi/μmol). Filaments harvested from the radioactive medium were washed twice in BSS and suspended to their original density in one of the following: normal BSS, BSS with chloride salts substituted for all sulfate salts, BSS with chloride salts plus 1 mM freshly prepared and neutralized sodium sulfide, BH medium, or BSO medium (all solutions were adjusted to pH 7.2).

The cultures were incubated aerobically in 500-ml flasks shaken at 200 rpm on a rotary shaker for periods of 12 h to 4 days, depending on the experiment. Typically, four 200-μl samples were taken from each flask at each time point. Two of the samples were filtered

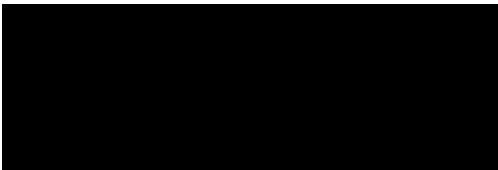
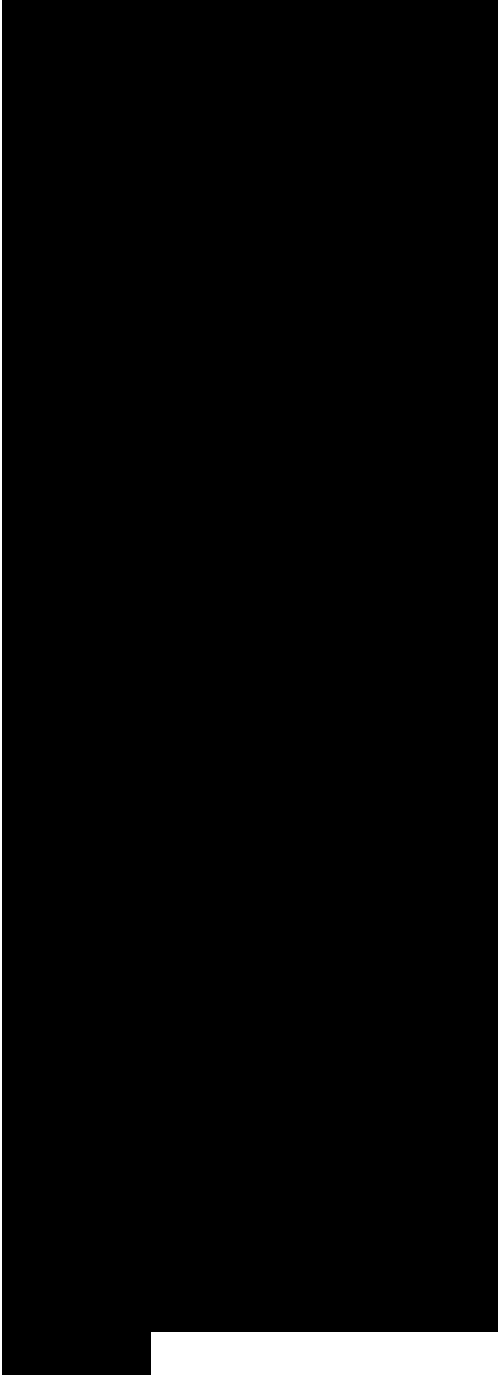
through Gelman glass fiber filters and washed with 2 ml of BSS at pH 3.0. The radioactivity on the filters, measuring the intracellular sulfur, was counted as described previously. To measure the amount of ^{35}S -labeled soluble compounds released from the filaments, the other two samples were centrifuged for 2 min in a microfuge, from which 100- μl samples of the supernatant were added to a toluene-based scintillation cocktail containing 5 g of PPO (2,5-diphenyloxazole) and 50 mg of POPOP [1,4-bis(5-phenyloxazolyl)benzene] per liter in 33% Triton X-100 in toluene (21) and counted as described previously.

An alternative method for obtaining *B. alba* B18LD labeled sulfur inclusions was also used. *B. alba* was grown in 500 ml of BH medium for 16 h, after which 40 μCi of Na^{235}S (1 $\mu\text{Ci}/\text{mmol}$) was added. The filaments were incubated with the labeled sulfide for 6 h, pelleted aseptically by centrifugation, washed twice with BSS, suspended in 50 ml of BH medium, and incubated aerobically on a rotary shaker (250 rpm) for 72 h (25°C). Samples were taken as described above to determine the amount of label remaining in the filaments and the amount

released into the medium.

Microelectrode studies A 5% inoculum of *B. alba* D18LD was introduced into BSO medium, which upon incubation yielded visible tufts of the organism in early exponential growth. Individual tufts were removed from the medium, rinsed gently in BSS, and embedded in a 2% agar cube measuring approximately 3 mm per side. The agar cube containing the tuft of *B. alba* filaments was suspended in the middle of a 500-ml glass bowl filled with BSS by using capillary tubes that were anchored to the bottom of bowl. Air, nitrogen, or hydrogen was bubbled through the BSS solution at ambient temperature (ca. 23°C). Microelectrodes, made according to the methods described by Revsbech et al. (23), were positioned with a micromanipulator to measure sulfide and oxygen gradients around and through the tuft of *B. alba* filaments embedded in agar while the vessel was bubbled with air. The electrodes were then relocated at the surface of the tuft of filaments in the agar cube, and either nitrogen or hydrogen was bubbled through the reaction vessel.

Measurement of sulfide production. Reduction of sulfur to sulfide by mid-exponential-phase cells of *B. alba* B18LD



was measured in flasks which were continuously flushed with high-purity nitrogen. Sulfide was trapped in two serial tubes, each containing 10 ml of 2% zinc acetate solution, which was assayed for sulfide by the method of Kline (9) at intervals. Prior to incubation, cells grown in either BH or BSO medium were washed and suspended in BSS to their original density. This procedure effectively eliminated the accumulation of sulfide in cell suspensions.

Hydrogen evolution and uptake assays. To measure hydrogen evolution in *Beggiatoa* and *Vitreoscilla* spp., concentrated cell suspensions of 0.1 to 0.3 mg of cell protein per ml were prepared in BSS also containing 25 mM HEPES (N-2-hydroxyethylpiperazine-N-2-ethanesulfonic acid) buffer (pH 7.2). Two milliliters of each suspension was dispensed into 9-ml serum bottles (Wheaton Scientific, Millville, N.J.) which were sealed with rubber stoppers and aluminum caps. Forty microliters of 100 mM methyl viologen in 10 mM phosphate buffer (pH 7.2) was added to each flask. The bottles were flushed with nitrogen for 15 min, and the hydrogen evolution assay was initiated by the addition of 0.1 ml of 100 mM

sodium dithionite (in distilled water) to a final concentration of 10 mM. The bottles were shaken at 120 strokes per min at 23°C in a reciprocal metabolic shaker. Headspace gas samples of 100 μ l were withdrawn from the bottles every 30 min and analyzed by injection into a Varian Aerograph 3700 gas chromatograph equipped with a 3-m stainless steel column packed with molecular sieve 5A (30-40 mesh). The following temperatures were used: injector, 100°C; column, 30°C; thermal conductivity detector, 150°C; and filament, 300°C. Nitrogen, at a flow rate of 30 ml/min, served as the carrier gas. The output from the gas chromatograph was recorded on a model 252A strip chart recorder (Linear Instruments Corp., Costa Mesa, Calif.). Peak heights were measured and compared with a standard curve prepared from the heights measured for hydrogen standards in nitrogen.

Hydrogen consumption was measured by dispensing 1.5 ml of concentrated filament suspension into 9-ml serum bottles. After the bottles were flushed with nitrogen for 15 min, 4% of the headspace was replaced with 1 atm (101.29 kPa) of hydrogen. The bottles were incubated as above. The headspace was sampled at 60-

min intervals and analyzed by gas chromatography for remaining hydrogen as described above.

Protein determinations. The concentration of total cell protein was estimated by the method of Lowry et al. (11) after extraction of the sulfur with 95% ethanol for 1 h and digestion of the cells by heating the samples at 90°C in 1 N NaOH for 10 min, followed by reneutralization of the solutions with 1 N HCl. Bovine serum albumin was used as a protein standard.

Chemicals. Radiochemicals were obtained from Amer-sham Corp. (Arlington Heights, Ill.). Sodium [35S]sulfide, prepared similarly to the procedure described by Vargas and Strohl (35), was dissolved in deoxygenated water containing unlabeled sulfide so that the final concentration of sulfide was 20 mM at pH 7.2. Unlabeled crystals of sodium sulfide were washed in distilled water and dried before being weighed. The sulfide solution was stored under a nitrogen atmosphere at 4°C. The nitrogen atmosphere in the labeled sulfide stock solutions was replenished after each use.

RESULTS

Acetate oxidation. Acetate-dependent oxygen consumption by *Beggiatoa alba* B18LD was linear for 90 min at a rate of 3.60

xl of $c > 2$ per min per mg of protein. This consumption was equivalent to a rate of 160 nmol of O_2 per min per mg of protein. The initial rate of $^{14}C O_2$ evolution from [2- ^{14}C]acetate was 65 nmol of $^{14}C O_2$ per min per mg of protein. The acetate oxidation was effectively inhibited by dibromothymoquinone, 8-hydroxyquinoline, 1,10-phenanthroline, 4-Ac-hydroxyquinoline-rt-oxide, KCN, NaN_3 , and 2,4-dinitrophenol as determined by measuring the rates of both acetate-dependent oxygen consumption and the release of $^{14}C O_2$ from [2- ^{14}C]acetate (Table 1). The rate of acetate oxidation, measured isotopically, was decreased ca. 18 to 20% by the presence of 2 mM sulfide.

Sulfide oxidation: The initial rate of [^{35}S]sulfide assimilation by *B. alba* in BSS minus iron salts was 35 to 65 nmol/min per mg of protein in the presence of oxygen; in the absence of oxygen there was no significant measurable sulfide uptake above background (sorption of [^{35}S]sulfide by autoclaved cells; Table 1). Sulfide uptake by *T. nivea* was also oxygen dependent, and the rates were similar to those displayed by *B. alba* (27). Approximately 90% of the labeled internal sulfur

accumulated by *B. alba* B18LD and *T. nivea* in the presence of oxygen was soluble in acetone, benzene, or ethanol (data not shown). Treatment of ³⁵S-containing filaments collected on filters with 5% aqueous ice-cold trichloroacetic acid always resulted in recovery of ca. 10% more counts than measured with filaments washed with BSS (data not shown).

The relative effects of several electron transport inhibitors on oxygen-dependent sulfide assimilation by *B. alba* B18LD are shown in Table 1. The inhibitors

thenoyltrifluoroacetone, 8-hydroxyquinoline, KCN, and NaN₃ suppressed sulfide oxidation to sulfur by more than 60%. Dibromothymo-

TABLE 1. Effect of electron transport inhibitors on acetate and sulfide oxidation in *Beggiatoa alba* B18LDa

Three different methods were used to obtain these data, as detailed in the Materials and Methods section. Control values: acetate-dependent oxygen consumption, 162 nmol/min per mg of protein; [²⁻¹⁴C]acetate oxidation to ¹⁴CO₂, 65 nmol/min per mg of protein; Na²³⁵S oxidation to ³⁵S⁰, 53 nmol/min per mg of protein. All values are averages of at least duplicate experiments and

represent the net values after autoclaved-cell control values were subtracted from the original gross data.

b Abbreviations: TTFA, thenoyltrifluoroacetone (flavoprotein inhibitor); DBMIB, dibromothymoquinone (ubiquinone inhibitor); 8-HQ, 8-hydroxyquinoline (inhibitor of b-type cytochromes); PHEN, o-phenanthroline (inhibitor of b-type cytochromes); HOQNO, 4-jY-hydroxyquinoline-/2-oxide (inhibitor of cytochrome ^cytochrome c couple). c —, Not done.

d The data for inhibition of sulfide oxidation by malate are courtesy of V. A. Vinci.

' The sulfide was neutralized to pH 7.2 just prior to the experiment.

quinone at concentrations five times the amount necessary to inhibit acetate oxidation essentially had no effect on sulfide oxidation (Table 1). Sodium acetate at a final concentration of 6 mM reproducibly inhibited sulfide oxidation by ca. 50%, and 1 to 2 mM malate strongly inhibited sulfide oxidation (Table 1).

To determine the stoichiometry between sulfide oxidation and oxygen reduction, the rates of sulfide-dependent oxygen consumption and [35S]sulfide

oxidation were determined concurrently in duplicate flasks for each measurement. The rate of sulfur accumulation, with cells grown in either BH or BSO medium, averaged 38 nmol/min per mg of protein in this experiment. The concomitant oxygen consumption was 0.96 μ l/min per flask. After accounting for the oxygen consumption due to chemical sulfide oxidation (0.35 μ l/min per flask) and endogenous oxygen consumption (0.30 μ l/min per flask), the rate of sulfide-dependent biological oxygen consumption was 0.31 μ l/min per flask. Each flask contained 0.8 mg of cell protein. The rate of sulfide-dependent oxygen consumption was calculated from these data to be 14 nmol/min per mg of protein.

Sulfur oxidation Microscopic observation of filaments of *B. alba* B18LD and *rē nivea* JP3 grown in BSO medium revealed the presence of numerous refractile sulfur inclusions. After such filaments had been harvested, washed, and incubated in BSS for 12 h, the phase-bright inclusions were depleted from filaments of *T. nivea* but not from filaments of *B. alba* B18LD. Moreover, numerous sulfur inclusions in

TABLE 2. Release of

radiolabeled sulfur from aerobically incubated filaments of *B. alba* B18LD

Time at which the measurements were taken after initiating incubation of filaments containing 35s inclusions in the media described.

b Abbreviations for media: BHA, BH medium (see text) plus 0.05% asparagine; BSS-Ac, BSS plus 0.001% sodium acetate; BSS-Ac-Na₂S, BSS- Ac plus 0.03% neutralized Na₂S; BH-no SO₄²⁻ and BSO-no SO₄²⁻, BH and BSO media with cr salts replacing all sulfate salts.

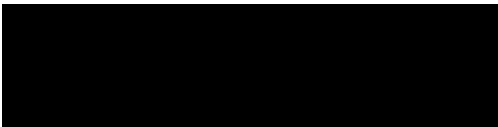
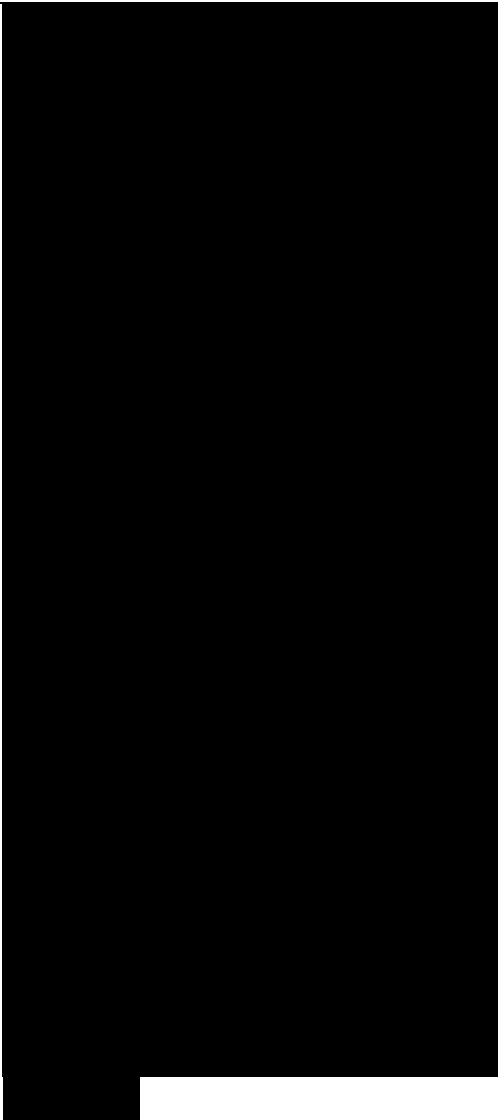
filaments of *B. alba* B18LD were still visible 72 h after the filaments were removed from sulfide.

Endogenous respiration by *B. alba* containing sulfur inclusions (pregrown in BSO) was ca. 0.50 μ l of O₂ per min per mg of cell protein. Endogenous respiration of *B. alba* lacking sulfur inclusions (pregrown in BH medium) was 0.48 μ l of O₂ per min per mg of cell protein. On the other hand, sulfur-containing filaments of *T. nivea* consumed oxygen at rates 20- to 25-fold greater than sulfur-starved filaments of *T. nivea* (data not shown).

The oxidation of intracellular sulfur by *B. alba* and *T. nivea* was also determined by

measuring the extracellular release of ^{35}S -labeled compounds from radiolabeled sulfur inclusions under aerobic conditions. In seven separate experiments conducted with *B. alba* B18LD, never more than 5% of the ^{35}S deposited in the filaments was released into the medium after 22 h (or 11% released after 60 to 72 h) of incubation under aerobic conditions (Table 2). This absence of significant sulfur oxidation was observed regardless of whether sulfate salts, phosphate salts, acetate, or sulfide was present or absent in the medium. Filaments of *T. nivea*, on the other hand, released approximately 40% of their ^{35}S label into the medium within 21 h of incubation (Fig. 1). The presence or absence of 1 mM sulfide or sulfate in the BSS solution had little effect on the solubilization of the label by *T. nivea* filaments (Fig. 1). Chemical measurements indicated that sulfate was a major product of the oxygen-dependent sulfur oxidation in *T. nivea*, although stoichiometric values were not obtained (T. M. Schmidt, Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1985).

Microelectrode studies While air was bubbled around a tuft of *B. alba* B18LD filaments embedded



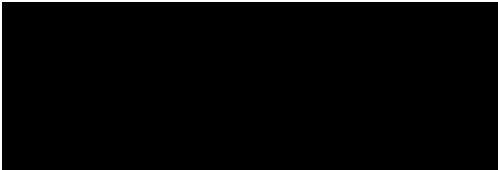
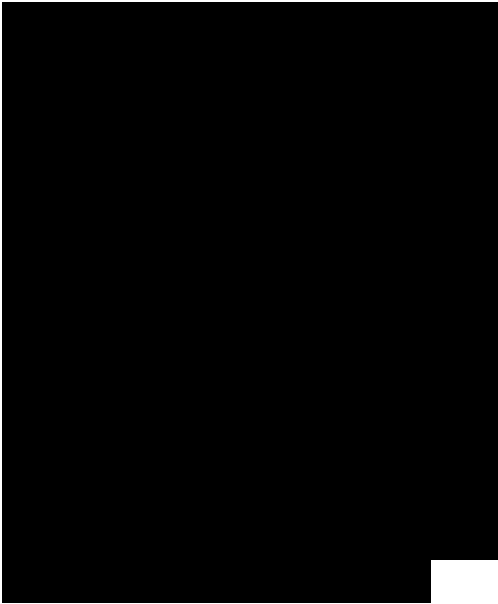
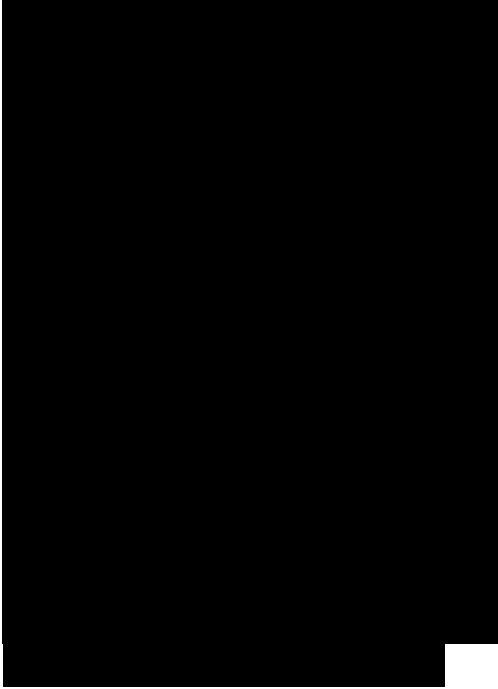
in an agar cube, the endogenous metabolism lowered the concentration of dissolved oxygen to an undetectable level at the surface of the filament pellet (Fig. 2). At the point where the oxygen concentration neared zero, sulfide was detected and reached a concentration of 10 μM at a distance of 50 μm inside the filament pellet. When nitrogen instead of air was bubbled through the microelectrode apparatus, a constant rate of sulfide production was measured at the surface of the cell pellet (Fig. 3). When the nitrogen was replaced with hydrogen, the rate of sulfide production increased (Fig. 3).

Endogenous anaerobic respiration. In a bubbling apparatus designed to provide short-term anoxic conditions with continuous removal of sulfide, sulfide was produced at a rate of 6.7 nmol/min per mg of protein by sulfur-containing filaments of *B. alba* B18LD (Fig. 4). *B. alba* filaments that lacked sulfur inclusions and had been grown in BH medium did not produce any detectable sulfide over a period of 4 h (Fig. 4). As a positive control, sulfide was produced at a rate of 5.0 nmol/min per mg of protein by dark-incubated cells of *C. vinosum* (Fig. 4), a purple phototrophic bacterium known to

reduce sulfur to sulfide (33).

Anaerobic hydrogenase activity. Because hydrogen appeared to stimulate the anaerobic production of sulfide from sulfur-containing filaments of *B. alba* B18LD (Fig. 3), that organism was tested for hydrogenase activity. Sulfur-containing filaments of *B. alba* B18LD, incubated anaerobically, consumed hydrogen at a constant rate of 7.9 nmol/min per mg of protein. There was no detectable hydrogen consumption by *B. alba* filaments that lacked sulfur inclusions or by *B. alba* filaments that were boiled for 2 min (not shown).

Hydrogen production by *B. alba* B18LD was detected only in the presence of both methyl viologen and dithionite. The rate of methyl viologen- and dithionite-dependent *in vivo* hydrogen production by *B. alba* B18LD was 2.25 nmol/min per mg of cell protein and was insensitive to 50 μ M carbonylcyanide-p-trifluoromethoxyphenylhydrazone. Filaments of *B. alba* B18LD exposed to sulfide alone or to sulfide in combination with either methyl viologen or dithionite produced no hydrogen. A survey of several other strains of *Beggiatoa* and *Vitreoscilla* was carried out. The rates of *in vivo* methyl viologen- and



dithionite-dependent hydrogen production found were (in nanomoles per minute per milligram of cell protein): *B. alba* B25RD, 6.1; *B. alba* B15LD, 4.9; *Beggiatoa* sp. clone 75-2a, 6.7; *Beggiatoa* sp.

TIME (HOURS)

FIG. 1. Release under aerobic conditions of ³⁵S-labeled compounds from filaments of *T. nivea* JP3 containing ³⁵S inclusions. Decrease of ³⁵S label in the filaments (sulfur inclusions; solid symbols) and increase in soluble, acid-stable ³⁵S label (open symbols) during incubation in the following media: BSS containing sulfate salts (■, □); BSS with chloride salts replacing sulfate salts (▲, △); or BSS containing sulfate and 1 mM fresh neutralized sodium sulfide (pH 7.5) (•, ○).

DISTANCE (Mm)

FIG. 2. Microelectrode studies of oxygen (A) and sulfide (•) gradients resulting from the endogenous metabolism of a tuft of *B. alba* B18LD filaments. Distances are measured in micrometers from the outer edge of the tuft, which is designated zero on the abscissa. Values to the left of zero indicate a position inside the tuft of filaments, and values to the right represent positions in the agar just outside the tuft of filaments. strain SMI, 2.2; *V. filiformis*

ATCC 15551, 2.3; and *V. beggiatoides* B23SS, 7.2.

DISCUSSION

Acetate oxidation. *B. alba* (25) and other freshwater *Beggiatoa* strains (14, 29) utilize acetate as a sole carbon and energy source in respiratory metabolism. The rate of [2- ^{14}C] acetate oxidation to $^{14}\text{C}\text{O}_2$ (65 nmol/min per mg of protein) found in the present work agrees closely with the v_{max} value of 72 nmol/min per mg of protein determined by Strohl et al. (25). The methyl carbon is oxidized to CO_2 at a lower rate than the carboxyl carbon, accounting for only 34 to 40% of the acetate oxidized by *Beggiatoa*s (25, 29). Because the components of a typical aerobic, heterotrophic bacterial metabolism are present (29), the following stoichiometry for the complete oxidation of acetate is proposed:

(160 nmol/min per mg of protein)

[95 nmol/min per mg of protein]

(65 nmol/min per mg of protein)

where the numbers given in parentheses are values obtained experimentally and the number given in brackets was calculated from the expected stoichiometry.

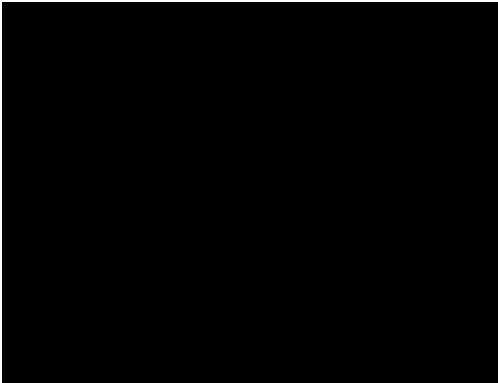
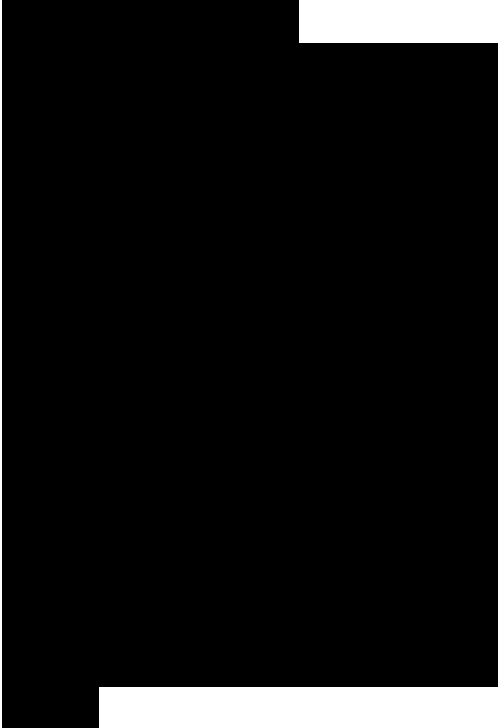
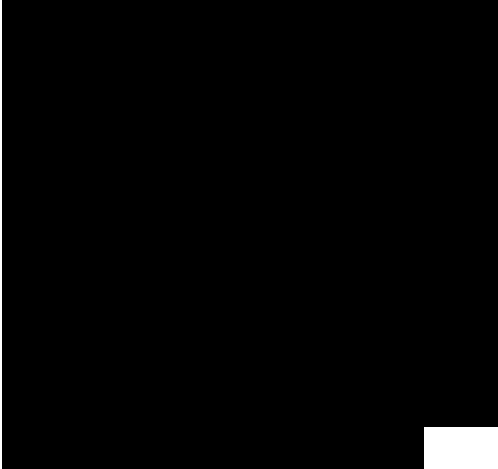
Several known respiratory inhibitors (8) reduced the rate of

acetate oxidation in cells of *B. alba* B18LD, as measured by either the rate of acetate-dependent oxygen consumption or the release of $^{14}\text{C}\text{O}_2$ from [2- ^{14}C]acetate. The suppression of acetate oxidation by sulfide is consistent with the results obtained by Strohl et al. (25) and suggests that perhaps acetate and sulfide metabolism are competing for oxygen.

TIME CMIN)

FIG. 3. Microelectrode experiments showing the effect of gassing tufts of *B. alba* B18LD filaments, embedded in agar, with nitrogen or hydrogen. In one experiment, the filaments were gassed with only nitrogen (•). In the second experiment (A), the filaments were initially gassed with nitrogen, and at the first arrow the nitrogen was replaced with hydrogen gassing. After 5 min of gassing with hydrogen, the filaments were gassed with nitrogen again, and at 10 min (second arrow; ■) they were gassed once again with hydrogen.

Sulfide oxidation. The oxidation of sulfide to sulfur is catalyzed by filaments of *B. alba* incubated in the presence of oxygen. We tested the possible involvement of electron transfer proteins in sulfide oxidation by using electron transport inhibitors that were shown to be effective



inhibitors of acetate oxidation in *B. alba*. Inhibitors of cytochromes or flavoproteins (1) suppressed sulfide oxidation, but the ubiquinone analog dibromothymoquinone (22, 30) was ineffective, suggesting that electrons from sulfide oxidation do not interact at the level of ubiquinone in *B. alba* B18LD.

If electrons enter an electron transport chain, the inhibitor data suggest that both a flavoprotein and cytochromes are involved.

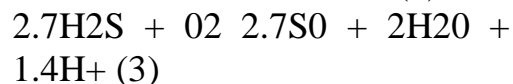
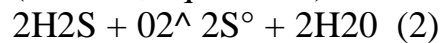
FIG. 4. Production of sulfide by filaments of *B. alba* B18LD containing (●) or lacking (▲) sulfur inclusions incubated under anaerobic conditions. Anaerobic production of sulfide by dark-incubated, sulfur-containing cells of *C. vinosum* (■) was used as a positive control.

A pathway in which electrons from sulfide oxidation enter at cytochrome *c* via a flavocytochrome, as found in *Chromatium* spp. (5, 31), is possible for *B. alba*. This mechanism of sulfide oxidation differs from the proposed pathway for the cyanobacterium *Oscillatoria limnetica*, in which quinones are an essential part of the sulfide-oxidizing system (19).

The stoichiometry for the



chemical oxidation of sulfide to sulfur is 2:1 (H₂S:O₂; equation 2). The rate of [³⁵S]sulfide assimilation to internal 35s° (38 nmol/min per mg of protein) and the rate of sulfide-dependent oxygen consumption (14 nmol/min per mg of protein), determined simultaneously, indicate that the molar stoichiometry for the biological oxygen-dependent sulfide oxidation by *B. alba* was 2.7:1 (H₂S:O₂; equation 3):



Based on growth yields of a marine of *Beggiatoa*, Nelson et al. (16) showed that the stoichiometry of sulfide oxidation to sulfur for energy purposes alone should be 2:1 (H₂S:O₂; equation 2), whereas the stoichiometry of oxygen-dependent sulfide oxidation to sulfur for energetic and reduction purposes would be 2.42:1 (H₂S:O₂). That ratio would fall to approximately 0.5:1 if the sulfide were oxidized completely to sulfate (16). Our data indicate a molar ratio of 2.7:1, which, if compared directly with the autotrophic marine strain of *Beggiatoa* (16), should indicate that *B. alba* obtains both energy and reductive potential from the oxidation of sulfide. It is

unlikely, however, that *B. alba* B18LD requires reduction potential from the oxidation of sulfide, because it contains NAD(P)H dehydrogenase (29) and oxidizes acetate (25,29). These processes should generate all of the reduction potential required by *B. alba*, as differentiated from autotrophs, which do not generate reducing power from organic metabolism. Sulfur oxidation by *Beggiatoa* and *Thiothrix* spp. The initial observations on *Beggiatoa* by Winogradsky included descriptions of the depletion of sulfur inclusions in the filaments, which was attributed to the oxidation of intracellular sulfur to sulfate (36). This hypothesis was recently confirmed for a marine strain of *Beggiatoa* which was capable of autotrophic growth (16). On the other hand, the microscopic, respirometric, and isotopic data presented here indicate that the freshwater strain, *B. alba* B18LD, does not oxidize sulfur to sulfate. Experiments with *B. alba* B15LD have yielded comparable results (W. R. Strohl, unpublished data). It is possible, then, that other freshwater strains of *Beggiatoa* are incapable of sulfur oxidation to sulfate, which would make them metabolically very different from the marine strains.

Our ability to detect sulfur oxidation to sulfate was checked by measuring sulfur oxidation by *T. nivea* JP3. Under the same experimental conditions as used for *B. alba*, we showed that sulfur in *T. nivea* was a transient compound that was converted to a soluble form under aerobic conditions. The resolubilization of sulfur in *T. nivea* was coupled with oxygen reduction (27), and sulfate has been measured as one of the oxidation products. Thus, it appears that the freshwater *Thiothrix* strain may have a sulfur metabolism more similar to that of marine *Beggiatoa* strains than to that of the freshwater strains.

Sulfur reduction. The inability of *B. alba* B18LD to oxidize sulfur leaves a potential source of electrons unused. This stored sulfur, however, might be used as a terminal electron acceptor under anoxic conditions. Sulfur-containing filaments of *B. alba* B18LD reduce sulfur to sulfide, and this reduction is apparently coupled to the oxidation of endogenous carbon reserves, possibly poly-p-hydroxybutyric acid (6, 25).

Desulfuromonas acetoxidans also linked anaerobic sulfur reduction with the oxidation of organic compounds such as ethanol and acetate (2).

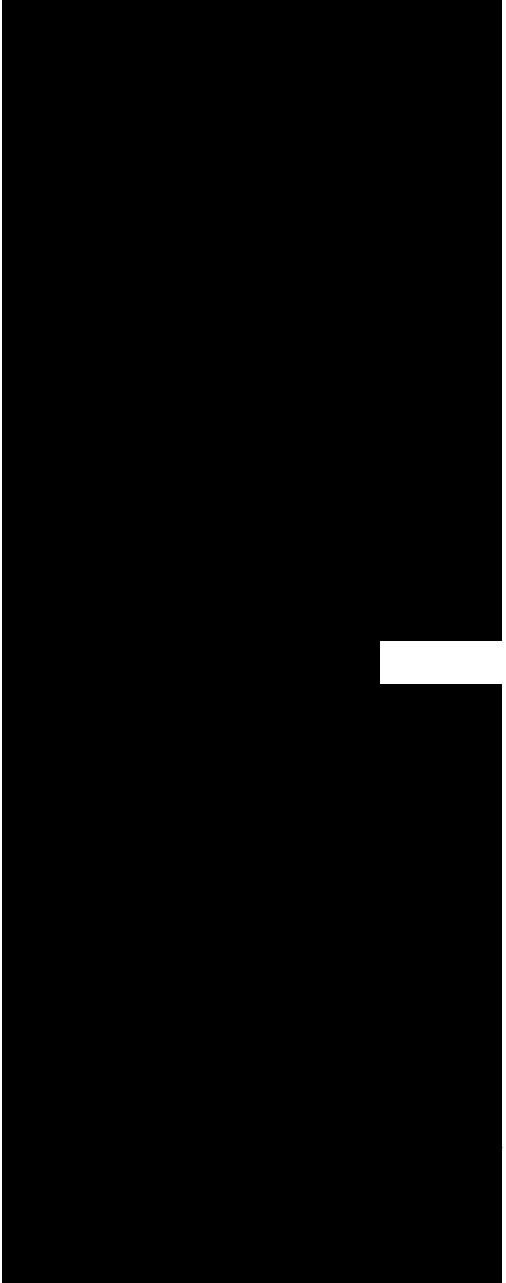
Filaments of *B. alba* B18LD that lack sulfur inclusions do not produce sulfide under anoxic conditions, eliminating the possibility that the sulfide was a product of sulfate reduction or the degradation of sulfur-containing proteins. Anaerobic sulfide production by *Beggiatoa* spp. was first observed in strain 75-2a by Nelson and Castenholz (13) and was thought to be the means by which the cells survived periods without oxygen. It is possible that anaerobic reduction of sulfur may be common to all *Beggiatoa*s and certainly to the freshwater strains that do not oxidize sulfur to sulfate.

When *B. alba* B18LD filaments were placed under short-term anoxic conditions, the presence of hydrogen stimulated sulfide production, suggesting that *B. alba* contained a hydrogenase and that hydrogen oxidation might be coupled with sulfur reduction. Anaerobic hydrogen consumption was detected only when *B. alba* B18LD filaments contained microscopically visible sulfur inclusions. Further experiments showed that the hydrogenase in *B. alba* B18LD was an uptake hydrogenase. The oxidation of hydrogen is coupled to the reduction of periplasmically located sulfur

(27) to sulfide. The coupling of hydrogen oxidation to sulfur reduction has been observed with *Desulfuromonas* spp (4) and is also evident in experiments conducted with *Chlorobium* spp (20). It is not certain that hydrogen is available in the natural habitat of *Beggiatoa* spp., but since several strains of *Beggiatoa* contain nitrogenase (18), the hydrogenase may function in the recycling of hydrogen produced by a side reaction of the nitrogenase.

The metabolic flexibility offered by the coupling of sulfur reduction to anaerobic oxidation of endogenous carbon reserves or hydrogen may be essential to an organism that exists in a changing environment such as that of *Beggiatoa* spp. (13,17). While the organism appears to grow best in the presence of low concentrations of oxygen, it is apparently capable of surviving at least short periods of anoxia (17). In nature this anaerobic respiration of sulfur may be the means by which filaments produce maintenance energy and the energy required to glide to the oxic-anoxic interface.

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Trong tự nhiên, quá trình hô hấp kỵ khí này của lưu huỳnh có thể là một phương tiện để các sợi tạo ra năng lượng duy trì và năng lượng cần thiết để trượt đến các bề mặt phân cách oxy-thiếu oxy.

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