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Phenylpropanoid amides of serotonin accumulate in witches' broom diseased bamboo

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Abstract

Aciculosporium take (Ascomycota; Clavicipitaceae), causes the witches' broom disease in bamboo, particularly *Phyllostachys bambusoides*. Since it was observed that endogenous indole-3-acetic acid is reduced in the twigs of the diseased bamboo, the symptoms (bushy appearance) may be induced by reduction in auxin levels. Furthermore, two indolic compounds accumulated in diseased twigs, these being identified as *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* and *N-feruloylserotonin* by LC-MS, ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectroscopic analyses. *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin* possesses antifungal activity against *A. take*.

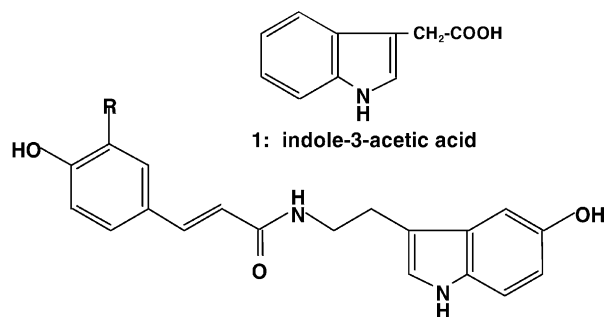
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Keywords: *Phyllostachys bambusoides*; Poaceae; Indole-3-acetic acid; *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin*; *N-Feruloylserotonin*; Antifungal activity; *Aciculosporium take*; Witches' broom of bamboo

1. Introduction

Witches' broom is the disease most destructive to bamboo forests in Japan, China and Taiwan (Tsuda et al., 1997; Zhu and Huang, 1988; Chen, 1970). The symptoms of this disease include a bushy appearance with dwarfed leaves numerous twigs growing successively. The symptoms in *P. bambusoides* Sieb. et Zucc. are especially severe, although the causal agent *Aciculosporium take* Miyake (Ascomycota, Clavicipitaceae; Anamorph: *Albomyces take* Miyake) can infect many other bamboo species (Tsuda et al., 1997). In order to investigate the cause of development of the symptoms, it is necessary to examine the physiological changes in diseased bamboo. Auxin (indole-3-acetic acid, **1**) deficit led to a bushy phenotype in *Arabidopsis* mutants (Lincoln et al., 1990; Bak et al., 2001). Thus, a reduction in auxin **1** may be implicated in the witches' broom appearance of infected bamboo plants.

In this article, we analyzed indolic compounds in diseased and healthy bamboo twigs. The bamboo with witches' broom contained significantly less IAA (indole-3-acetic acid) (**1**) than healthy twigs. Furthermore, we confirmed that diseased twigs accumulated two indolic compounds, *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**3**). We studied the antifungal activity of these two compounds.



2: *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* (R = H)
3: *N-feruloylserotonin* (R = OCH₃)

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2. Results and discussion

2.1. IAA (1) amount related to the symptoms of witches' broom

The amount of free IAA (**1**) in diseased and healthy bamboo twigs were 5.4 ± 1.8 $\mu\text{g/g}$ ($N=5$) and 31.2 ± 21.2 $\mu\text{g/g}$ ($N=4$) dry wt of twigs, respectively (Table 1). Features of witches' broom resemble the phenotype of some bushy mutants of *Arabidopsis*, e.g. a reduced auxin **1** sensing mutant (Lincoln et al., 1990) and a CYP83B1 over-expression mutant, which may consequently reduce free auxin **1** (Bak et al., 2001). The low concentration of free IAA (**1**) in the twigs possibly explains the bushy appearance.

2.2. Diseased bamboo accumulated *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**)

Two indole-related compounds accumulated in diseased bamboo twigs. These compounds were isolated and identified as *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) on the basis of LC-MS, ^1H NMR and ^{13}C NMR spectroscopic analyses. The identity of each amide was established by chemical synthesis from the corresponding hydroxycinnamic acids and serotonin using dicyclohexylcarbodiimide. Next, the amounts of *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) were measured in diseased and healthy bamboo twigs (Table 1). Both compounds (**2** and **3**) accumulated in diseased twigs, compared to healthy twigs. The detection of the compounds (**2** and **3**) in bamboo has not been reported before, although the occurrence of cinnamic acid derivatives in bamboo has been carefully examined (Tachibana et al., 1992). *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) was detected in significant amount in the diseased twigs but only at trace levels in healthy twigs, whereas *N-feruloylserotonin* (**3**) was detected in trace amounts in both diseased and healthy bamboo twigs. These observations imply that *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) are produced by the bamboo plant and not by the pathogenic fungi.

We then searched for *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) in bamboo species other than *Phyllostachys bambusoides*. Both amides were detected

in all bamboo species we studied, including *P. bambusoides* var. *marliacea* Makino, *P. pubescens* Maz.ex Houz.de Le. and *Shibataea kumasaca* (Zoll.) Nakai (Table 2). *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) was detected even in *P. pubescens* and *S. kumasaca*, which showed no symptoms in response to the witches' broom fungus.

Previously, both phenylpropanoid amides of serotonin (**2** and **3**) had been identified from safflower seeds and oil cake (Sakamura et al., 1978; Sakamura et al., 1980; Zhang et al., 1997). *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) was isolated from Japanese barnyard millet grains (Watanabe, 1999) and a powder of konnyaku-imo (*Amorphophallus konjac*) (Niwa et al., 2000). *N-Feruloylserotonin* (**3**) was reported in Sweet Sultan (*Centaurea moschata*) (Sarker et al., 1997) and Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) as moschamine (Sarker et al., 2001). *N-p-Coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) has been reported as having strong antioxidant activity (Zhang et al., 1997; Watanabe et al., 1999) and inhibiting the production of proinflammatory cytokines by human monocytes (Takii et al., 1999; Kawashima et al., 1998). It is, however, not known whether *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) are important for the plant. Some amides of hydroxycinnamic acids possess antifungal activity, e.g. avenanthramides (Miyagawa et al., 1995) and feruloylagmatine (Stoessl and Unwin, 1970). We therefore investigated the antifungal activity of *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**).

2.3. *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) possesses antifungal activity against *Aciculosporium take*

The antifungal activities of *N-p-coumaroyl-* and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**2** and **3**) were tested against three fungi pathogenic to bamboo, *A. take*, *Heteroepichloë bambusae* and *Shiraia bambusicola* (Fig. 1). The concentrations of these amides were set at 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ or less as in most examinations of antifungal activity. *Aciculosporium take* was unable to grow at concentrations higher than 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ of *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) (MIC = 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$), and the EC_{50} value for mycelial grow was 84 $\mu\text{g/ml}$. However, *A. take* grew at 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ of *N-feruloylserotonin* (**3**) (MIC > 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$, EC_{50} > 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$). *Heteroepichloë bambusae* and *Shiraia bambusicola* grew on complete medium amended with

Table 1

The amounts of IAA (indole-3-acetic acid) (**1**), *N-p-coumaroylserotonin* (**2**) and *N-feruloylserotonin* (**3**) in bamboo twigs^a

Sample bamboo twigs	Amount ($\mu\text{g/g}$)		
	IAA (1)	<i>N-p-coumaroylserotonin</i> (2)	<i>N-feruloylserotonin</i> (3)
Healthy bamboo ($N=4$)	31.2 ± 21.2	Trace	2.8 ± 1.0
Witches' broom diseased bamboo ($N=5$)	5.4 ± 1.8	3.4 ± 1.4	9.6 ± 6.4

^a *Phyllostachys bambusoides* was used. Statistically significant differences were confirmed with the Mann–Whitney *U* test.

Table 2

Relative amounts of *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**3**) in selected bamboo species

Bamboo species	Witches' broom symptoms	Amount ($\mu\text{g/g}$)	
		<i>N-p</i> -coumaroylserotonin (2)	<i>N</i> -feruloylserotonin (3)
<i>Phyllostachys bambusoides</i>	Healthy	Trace	2.8 ± 1.0
	Diseased	3.4 ± 1.4	9.6 ± 6.4
<i>P. bambusoides</i> var. <i>marliacea</i>	Healthy	Trace	1.6 ± 1.0
	Diseased	0.8 ± 0.4	4.2 ± 2.4
<i>P. pubescens</i>	Healthy	1.6 ± 0.8	6.0 ± 2.2
<i>Shibataea kumasaca</i>	Healthy	11.0 ± 5.0	12.8 ± 7.4

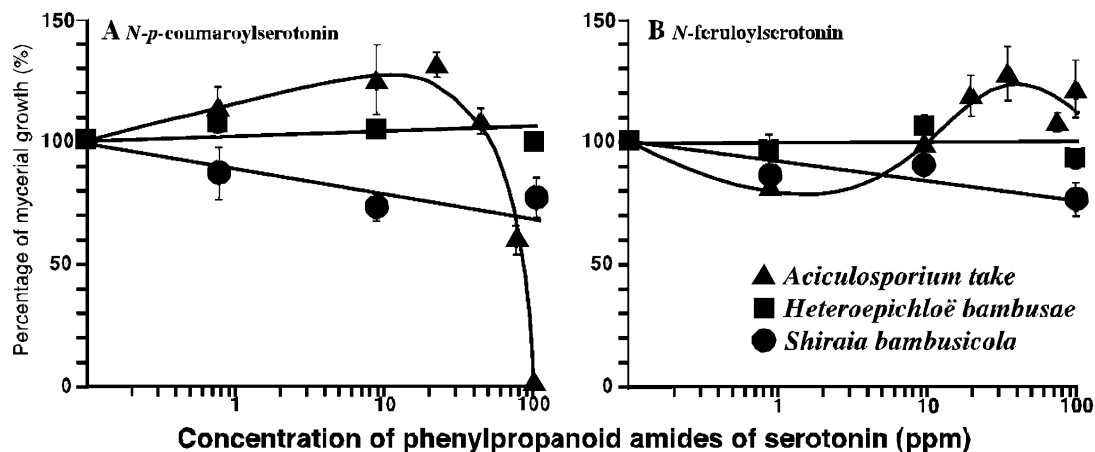


Fig. 1. Inhibition of mycelial growth by *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**3**). The mycelial growth is the diameter of the colony from which the diameter of the inoculum disk (4 mm) was subtracted. The colony diameter 7-days after incubation was measured and its growth compared to that of the corresponding control, *Aciculosporium take* (5.3 mm), *Heteroepichloë bambusae* (20.7 mm) and *Shiraia bambusicola* (12.1 mm). Results are the mean of 3 replicates.

100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ of *N-p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**) ($\text{MIC} > 100 \mu\text{g/ml}$, $\text{EC}_{50} > 100 \mu\text{g/ml}$), respectively.

This is the first report of *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) possessing antifungal activity. This activity is much stronger than the activity of several indole derivatives or serotonin (Yue et al., 2000; Cornelia et al., 2002).

Hydroxycinnamic acid amides have been implicated in the inducible defense of plants. Avenanthramides, *N*-cinnamoylanthramides, were characterized as oat phytoalexins (Mayama et al., 1981; Miyagawa et al., 1995). *N*-Hydroxycinnamoyltyramine in solanaceous plants was produced in response to various environmental stimuli (Clarke, 1982; Negrel and Martin, 1984; Pearce et al., 1988). *N-p*-Coumaroylserotonin (**2**) accumulates in diseased bamboo plants, and possesses antifungal activity. Thus *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) can be considered as a defense compound of bamboo plants.

The witches' broom disease frequently occurs in *P. bambusoides* and related species, and symptoms are especially severe among the host species of *A. take* (Tsuda et al., 1997). In our research, the amount of *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) in diseased *P. bambusoides* was less than the level effective against *A. take*. Thus, *P. bambusoides* produces insufficient amounts of antifungal compounds.

On the other hand, the witches' broom disease rarely occurred in *P. pubescens* and *S. kumasaca*, although these two species were reported as a host of *A. take* (Tsuda et al., 1997). Our studies showed that healthy *P. pubescens* and *S. kumasaca* also produced *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) (Table 2). From this, it is expected that these species have a greater capacity to produce *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) than *P. bambusoides*. When these bamboo species are attacked by *A. take*, they may produce sufficient amounts of *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) to prevent invasion. Thus, the development of witches' broom symptoms may be affected by the accumulation of *N-p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**).

3. Experimental

3.1. Plant materials

Diseased and healthy bamboo twigs were obtained in Kyoto, Japan. One-year-old-twigs were sampled, and the leaves and sheaths were removed. The plant materials were freeze-dried and ground in liquid nitrogen using a mortar and pestle. The powdered material was then

extracted three times with MeOH containing 1% HOAc. All voucher specimens (PRI-Cla-087; PRI-Cla-088) are deposited at the herbarium of the Kyoto University Museum (KYO).

3.2. Quantification of IAA (**1**), *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**) in host plants

The MeOH-extract from bamboo twigs (1 g dry weight) was evaporated in vacuo at 40 °C, and dissolved in distilled water (10 ml). The aqueous phase was extracted with EtOAc (10 ml). The EtOAc layer was concentrated in vacuo and dissolved in distilled water (10 ml). The solution was loaded on a Sep-pak C18 cartridge (Waters) and eluted with MeOH–H₂O. The MeOH–H₂O (6:4) fraction, containing IAA (**1**) and the other indole compounds was analyzed by HPLC (column, Wakosil II 5C18-HG 250×4.6 mm; solvent, MeCN–H₂O (18:88); flow rate, 1.2 ml/min), with monitoring of UV (280 nm) and fluorescence intensity (excitation wavelength of 280 nm and emission wavelength of 355 nm). The calibration curve was linear in the concentration range from 0 to 10 mg/l. The recovery yield of IAA (**1**) and serotonin conjugates (**2** and **3**) was determined by the following recovery experiments. The concentrations of these compounds in the powdered plant materials were determined by the method described above. Then each compound (10 µg) was mixed with the powdered plant materials (1 g), and the concentrations were again determined. The recoveries of the compounds were calculated from differences of the concentrations in the samples with or without additions of exogenous IAA (**1**) and serotonin conjugates (**2** and **3**). The numeric values in Tables 1 and 2 were corrected using recovery yield. Non parametric statistical methods (Mann–Whitney *U* test) were used for analysis. Each study shows a significant difference between diseased and healthy twigs.

3.3. Purification and identification of *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**)

The MeOH-extracts were developed by silica gel TLC (Merck) with CHCl₃–MeOH (1:9). The developed plate was sprayed with Ehrlich's reagent (4-dimethylaminobenzaldehyde 1 g, MeOH 75 ml, 36% HCl 25 ml). From diseased bamboo extracts, two major violet spots appeared at *R*_f 0.3 (A) and *R*_f 0.35 (B). From healthy bamboo extracts, the spot corresponding to compound B was faint. These two compounds were purified by the following procedures, while the fraction that contains the compounds was checked by TLC. The extract corresponding to 250 g dry weight of bamboo twigs was evaporated in vacuo, and the residue was dissolved in distilled water (250 ml) and partitioned with EtOAc (250 ml). The EtOAc extract was applied to a silica gel (10 g) column, and eluted with CHCl₃–MeOH. The

fraction eluted with 10% MeOH was concentrated in vacuo. The solution was loaded on a Sep-pak C18 cartridge (Waters) and eluted with MeOH–H₂O. The MeOH–H₂O (40:60) fraction, containing the compounds of interest, was concentrated in vacuo and subjected to HPLC (column, Wakosil II 5C18-HG 250×4.6 mm; solvent, MeCN–H₂O (23:77); flow rate, 1.2 ml/min; detection, UV 280 nm; 50 °C). Each compound gave a single peak on reversed phase HPLC, at *R*_t 9.8 min (A) and *R*_t 11.5 min (B). The purified compounds were subjected to LC-MS (LCMS-2010A, SHIMADZU) analyses. The following HPLC conditions were used: linear gradient: 30–60% AcCN for 15 min (column, Cadenza CD-C18 75×30 mm Imatakt; flow rate, 0.2 ml/min; detection, UV 280 nm; 50 °C). LC-MS analysis of each compound revealed a molecular ion at *m/z* 323 (A) and *m/z* 353 (B) [*M* + *H*]⁺. ¹H- and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker AC-300 spectrometer in MeOH-*d*₄ solution using TMS as an internal standard. The ¹H NMR spectral data and other results, including the ¹³C NMR spectrum, compound A and compound B were identified as *N*-*p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**3**), respectively. Comparisons were made with synthetic compounds and data from the literature (Zhang et al., 1997).

3.4. Preparation of synthetic *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**)

Synthesis of *N*-*p*-coumaroylserotonin (**2**) was carried out according to the method of caffeoyl DOPA synthesis (Tebayashi et al., 2000) with a slight modification. *p*-Coumaric acid (3.0 mmol), serotonin (1.5 mmol) and dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (3.3 mmol) were dissolved in dry pyridine (10 ml) and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 24 h. After evaporation of pyridine in vacuo, the residue was dissolved in MeOH (20 ml). The solution was cooled in an ice-bath and then 2 M KOH (200 ml) was added. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 h and then neutralized with HOAc. The solvent was extracted with EtOAc (200 ml). The extract was evaporated in vacuo and the residue was dissolved in MeOH (50 ml). Dicyclohexylurea and salts were removed by filtration. After evaporation of solvent, the filtrate was fractionated using a silica-gel column by eluting with EtOAc–hexane (3:1, v/v) to give *N*-*P*-coumaroylserotonin (0.14 mmol). *N*-Feruloylserotonin (**3**) was also synthesized using the same procedure with ferulic acid and serotonin to give *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**) (0.30 mmol).

3.5. Antifungal activities of *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**)

The antifungal activities of *N*-*p*-coumaroyl- and *N*-feruloylserotonin (**2** and **3**) were tested against three bamboo

pathogenic fungi, *A. take*, *Heteroepichloë bambusae* and *Shiraia bambusicola*. Sensitivity to the compounds was evaluated as the minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) and effective concentration to inhibit 50% of mycelial growth (EC₅₀), using the plate dilution method. Each synthetic compound was dissolved in MeOH and incorporated into a series of complete media [0.15% Ca(NO₃)₂·4H₂O, 0.05% KCl, 0.05% MgSO₄·7H₂O, 0.04% KH₂PO₄, 0.003% K₂HPO₄, 0.1% yeast extract, 0.1% tryptone, 1% glucose (w/v)] (Nakada et al., 1994) to yield final concentrations of 1–100 µg/ml. Each medium was poured into petri dishes. Mycelial discs (4 mm in diameter) were cut with a sterilized cork borer from the margin of 1-week-old colonies. The EC₅₀ value was determined 7 days after incubation at 25 °C by plotting the percentage decrease in colony diameter against the log concentration of the chemicals. Each experiment was done in triplicate.

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