

Molecular Identification and Characterisation of Extremophilic and Pathogenic Microorganisms from Water Samples Collected in the UK and Saudi Arabia



By

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**Thesis submitted in part fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology
The University of Sheffield, UK
August 2013**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Dedication

To the home of knowledge, culture and civilization

To Al-Hassa

I dedicate this humble work

To the memory of my father Sheikh Hussain

Certainly, you are proud of me, and I do hope that we meet in heaven, with Allah's willing. To my great Mum.

To my beloved wife "Ibtihaj" and my sons Mohammed, Alhassan and the lovely baby Nasser and sweet daughter Fatima

To my brothers and sisters

Acknowledgements

First of all, my thanks to Almighty Allah who blessed me with countless great blessings which enabled me to carry out this work and writing up this thesis.

My sincerest appreciation goes to my major supervisor, Dr. D. J. Gilmour, for his patience, advice, guidance, and attention to detail throughout my research. He, more than any other, has contributed to my educational as well as professional growth. Also my deep thanks to Professor Milton Wainwright, Professor J. Green and Professor A. Goldman for their advice and help.

I am grateful to Professor Mike Williamson for cooperation and assistance in NMR analysis. Thanks extend to Mr. Christopher J. Hill for his help in electron microscope work. My Special thanks to my friends for their contribution and help, Yahia Aldawood, Dr. Naji Alibrahim, Dr. Othman Ba'othman, Dr. Reda Amasha, Krys Bangert and Dr. Sultan Alsharari. Also my thanks to my colleagues in Dr. Gilmour's and Prof Wainwright's laboratories.

My deep thanks to those whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears Dr. Salah Alhajri and Mr. Hussain Bo'esa. Also I would like to thank Eng. Ahmad Almatar, Eng. Abdullah Alshayeb and the couple Dr. Salih Alshuhayeb and Dr. Amir Alalwan and Mr. Alqarni and Mr. Hammad Alkhuwaiter, who stand and help in the process of the UK grant. Thanks extend to Dr. Amin Alhababi for his help in collecting samples.

I can't forget the efforts of my best friend Eng. Thamir Alqarqoosh and my brother Yusif Alshubaith in ease my mission in my homeland while I am in the UK.

My special and deep thanks to my great Mum and grand Mum, Aunties, brothers and sisters for their Dua'a and encouragement. I am also grateful to my lovely wife 'Ibtihaj' and my family who's help, encouraged and patience supported me during the period of my study in the UK.

Thanks extended to my wonderful group in Sheffield, Hassan Allawati, Atif Alaswad, Fathi Albati, Hussain Humaidan, Hassan Ayad, Dr. Feras Almo'arfi, Dr. Naji Alibrahim, Yahia Aldawood and Misha'al Alhajimohammed and their families for their love, help and doa'a.

Deep thanks to my close group, H. Alshawaf, A. Almohammad Saleh, I. Aleliw, J. Alsalam, Dr. Z. Alamer and J. Alkhars. And to my close friends H. Albahrani, M. Bonaqah, M. Alramadan, K. Alameer, A. Alwaiel, T. Bohamad, A. Alamer and M. Almarzooq.

Finally, I would like to thank the former and current Mayors of Al Hassa, Eng. Fahad Aljobair and Eng. Adel Almolhim as well as Vice Mayor Eng. Abdulla Alarfaj and the Head of Envir. Studies Dr. Hassan Alkhars, for their help and support during the study in the UK.

Abstract

Water samples were collected from the rivers Lathkill and Bradford, Derbyshire UK and from the Al-Asfar lake and irrigation channels, Hassa, Saudi Arabia. The Derbyshire samples were incubated in rich growth medium at pH 10 and two alkaliphilic/alkalitolerant strains were isolated. Molecular identification techniques based on 16S rRNA gene sequencing suggested that both strains belonged to the *Exiguobacterium* genus of Gram-positive bacteria. The Hassa samples were incubated in highly saline rich growth media (up to 4 M NaCl) and three halophilic or halotolerant strains were isolated. In this case 16S rRNA gene sequencing identified the strains as *Halomonas venusta*, *Halobacillus blutaparonensis* and *Staphylococcus warneri*.

The *Exiguobacterium* strains were further characterised with respect to antibiotic sensitivity and carbon source utilisation. The compatible solute betaine was detected in *Exiguobacterium* cells grown at pH 10; this is the first report of a compatible solute being found in *Exiguobacterium* cells.

Halobacillus blutaparonensis and *Staphylococcus warneri* were further characterised and *H. blutaparonensis* was shown to accumulate betaine which allows growth at high salinity. However, *H. blutaparonensis* was unable to synthesise the alternative compatible solute ectoine and was therefore incapable of growth at high salinity in minimal medium. *S. warneri* is an important hospital acquired pathogen and it was interesting that it was found in the Hassa water. It also accumulated betaine to allow growth at high salinities.

Two strains (*Exiguobacterium* and *S. warneri*) were chosen for experiments examining the effect of UVC light (254 nm) on cell viability, DNA structure and cell morphology. On solid medium, both strains were susceptible to UVC light with most cells killed after a few minutes exposure. In liquid cultures, *Exiguobacterium* strain was more resistant. Gel electrophoresis studies showed that the DNA was degraded by increasing exposure to UV light, but no clear effects were seen on cell morphology using electron microscopy.

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Abbreviations

bp	Base pair (s)
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
°C	Centigrade
CFE	Cell free extract
Caps	3-(cyclohexylamino)-1-propanesulfonic acid
dH ₂ O	Distilled water
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTPs	Deoxynucleoside triphosphates
EB	Ethidium bromide
FAD	flavin adenine dinucleotide
g	Gram (s)
h	Hour (s)
kb	Kilobase (s)
LB	Luria-Bertani medium
M	Molar
Mes	2-(N-morpholino)ethanesulfonic acid
mg	Milligram (s)
min	Minute (s)
ml	Millilitre (s)
mM	Millimole (s)
Mops	3-(N-morpholino)propanesulfonic acid
MW	Molecular weight
NAD	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (oxidised form)
NADH	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (reduced form)
OAA	Oxaloacetic acid
OD	Optical density
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
rDNA	ribosomal DNA
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
rRNA	Ribosomal Ribonucleic acid
RNase	Ribonuclease

