RESEARCH/INVESTIGACIÓN

HISTOPATHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ROOTS OF *VITIS VINIFERA* CULTIVAR CABERNET SAUVIGNON INFECTED WITH *MELOIDOGYNE ETHIOPICA*

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**ABSTRACT**


Root tissues of grapevine cv. Cabernet Sauvignon from the locality of El Huique (VI Región, Chile), parasitized by *M. ethiopica*, were analyzed to evaluate the host-parasite association. Root segments with and without galls were fixed and processed following conventional techniques for optical microscopy. Galls in central and lateral positions relative to the root axis were observed. Central galls showed increase in the diameter of the central cylinder due to the presence of hyperplastic tissue. In addition, in this zone the nematode induced the formation of giant cells that were observed at different development stages: initial, differentiated and non-functional. Giant cells were embedded in the widest rays of secondary xylem, disrupting and reducing this tissue as well as the vascular cambium. In lateral galls, the central cylinder of the roots had hyperplastic tissue containing cavities communicated with the root periphery. The histopathological reaction observed in roots showed the susceptibility of the grape cv. Cabernet Sauvignon to the local *M. ethiopica* population.

*Key words:* Chile, giant cell, grapevine, histopathology, *Meloidogyne ethiopica*.

**RESUMEN**


Con el objeto de evaluar la asociación hospedador-parásito se analizaron tejidos radicales de vid cv. Cabernet Sauvignon, provenientes de la localidad El Huique (VI Región, Chile), parasitados por *M. ethiopica*. Trozos de raíces con y sin agallas fueron fijados y procesados siguiendo técnicas convencionales para microscopía óptica. Se observaron agallas centrales y laterales en relación al eje de la raíz. En las centrales, se detectó aumento del cilindro central debido a la presencia de tejido hiperplásico. Además, en esta zona, el nematodo indujo la formación de células gigantes que se observaron en diferentes etapas de desarrollo: inicial, diferenciada y no funcional. Las células gigantes estaban inmersas en los radios más anchos del xilema secundario provocando interrupción y reducción de ese tejido como así también del cambium vascular. En las agallas laterales, en el cilindro central, se observó tejido hiperplásico en cuyo interior se encontraron cavidades que se comunicaban con la periferia de la raíz. Las alteraciones observadas mostraron la susceptibilidad del cultivar evaluado frente a la población local de *M. ethiopica*.

*Palabras clave:* célula gigante, Chile, histopatología, *Meloidogyne ethiopica*, vid.

**INTRODUCTION**

Grape (*Vitis vinifera*) is an economically important crop in Chile. Vineyards currently cover an area of about 190,000 ha, which is expected to expand over 20% within the next 10 years. Approximately 65% of the area is devoted to the cultivation of wine grape varieties, whereas the remaining area is cultivated with table grapes and cultivars for liquor production (SAG, 2005).

Chile has ideal conditions for grape cultivation due to optimal environmental factors and minor concerns with common pests; however, problems with plant-parasitic nematodes are increasing (Aballay et al., 2009). The main nematodes found in grapevines in Chile are *Xiphinema index* (Magunacelaya et al., 2004), *Pratylenchus vulnus*, *Tylenchulus semipenetrans* (Di Vito et al., 2009), *Mesocriconema xenoplax*, and...
several species of *Meloidogyne* (Magunacelaya and Dagnino, 1999; Carneiro et al., 2007). *Meloidogyne* spp. are found associated with root systems of grape plants, being especially harmful to wine grape cultivars, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot and Shiraz (Aballay et al., 2009). The most important species of root-knot nematodes affecting grapevine in Chile is *M. ethiopica* (Carneiro et al., 2007). In recent years, the nematode has been detected in the main grapevine producing areas of the country. It is widely distributed over a ca 1000 km area, from Copiapó valley north of Santiago (ca 800 km) to Talca (ca 250 km) south of Santiago (Carneiro et al., 2007). Chile is the only country in the world where *M. ethiopica* has been detected causing severe yield losses of grapes; it appears to be rather common especially in sandy soils Magunacelaya, 2005; Magunacelaya, 2010). The implementation of a plant certification program appears necessary to avoid spread of the nematode across the country.

The histopathological analyses conducted on grapevines parasitized by *Meloidogyne* spp. were focused on *M. javanica* (Doucet et al., 1984; Vovlas et al., 1978) and *M. incognita* (Hafez and Sundararaj, 2000; Khan et al., 2009); some differences related primarily to damage in the root tissues were observed in the investigations.

The cultivar Cabernet Sauvignon is widely grown in Chile and has shown some tolerance to *M. ethiopica* (Magunacelaya, 2010). To date, this host-parasite association has not been evaluated for histopathological characteristics. Therefore, the aim of the present work was to evaluate the histological alterations induced by a population of *M. ethiopica* in the grape cultivar Cabernet Sauvignon.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Root samples of grape cv. Cabernet Sauvignon were taken from a field naturally infested with *M. ethiopica* at El Huique, municipality of Santa Cruz (VI Región, Chile). Samples were gently washed with water to remove adhering soil particles; roots undergoing secondary growth (with and without galls) were cut (segments about 5 mm long) under a stereoscopic microscope and fixed in FAA (ethanol: glacial acetic acid: formaldehyde: water; 50:5:10:35 v/v). The roots were then dehydrated in a graded series of ethyl alcohol and xylene baths and embedded in histowax. Serial transverse and longitudinal sections 8-10 μm thick were obtained using a rotary microtome. Sections were stained with triple staining (hematoxylin-safranin-fast green) and mounted in Depex (Johansen, 1940; O’ Brien and Mc Cully, 1981). Previously dewaxed sections were subjected to PAS (Periodic Acid-Schiff’s Reaction) test and analyzed under bright field microscopy (Harris and Oparka, 1994). Photographs were taken with a Carl Zeiss Stemi SV6 stereoscopic microscope equipped with a Canon digital camera and a Carl Zeiss Axiophot optical microscope; images were captured with an AxioCam HRC camera and processed with AxioVision 4 software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Histological sections of healthy control roots exhibited the two typical zones, cortex and central cylinder, the latter showing development of secondary vascular tissues (Fig. 1A), with wide rays of xylem and phloem parenchyma (Fig. 1B). They had periderm as protective tissue and in some samples, the epidermis was partially detached (Fig. 1A).

Macroscopic examination of infected roots showed two types of galls: a) round galls (approximately 5 mm diameter), which developed centrally with respect to the axis of the root body in different sectors along the parasitized roots (Fig. 1C) or at the tips of the roots (Fig. 1D); and b) laterally oriented and elongated (approximately 3-5 mm long) or round (3 mm diameter) galls, consisting in lateral protuberances eccentric with respect to the root axis (Fig. 1E, F).

**Round central galls.** The cortical zone had a few cell layers and the central cylinder diameter was significantly increased due to the presence of hyperplastic parenchymatous tissue located in the periphery of vascular tissues (Fig. 2A). Nematode feeding site establishment induced the formation of giant cells in tissues of this region (Fig. 2B). Three to 7 cells per feeding site (Fig. 2C) were embedded in the secondary xylem, especially in the widest parenchymatic rays. During their formation, feeding sites incorporated cells of xylem tissue, disrupting and reducing that tissue and vascular cambium (Fig. 2C, D). Giant cells represented initial, differentiated and non-functional stages of development. At the initial stage, cells were slightly hypertrophic (about 50 μm along the long axis), whereas cells surrounding vascular tissues did not exceed 20 μm in length, with an increase in the cytoplasmic density and secondary vacuolization and containing several nuclei (Fig. 2D). The differentiated giant cells reached about 150 μm in transverse section along the long axis. They had dense, vacuolated cytoplasm, with fewer starch grains (Fig. 3A) compared with control roots (Fig. 1B). Each cell had several nuclei (with 5 to 12 nuclei observed per plane of section); the nuclei were scattered or clustered together (Fig. 2E, F). In some sectors, cell walls were thick and of irregular internal contour due to the presence of localized, digitiform wall ingrowths of several sizes. Cell walls maintained their cellulosic characteristic (PAS +), being evident in areas adjacent to xylem vessel elements (Fig. 2F) and on walls between giant cells (Fig. 3A). Non-functional cells showed progressive loss of the cytoplasm and nuclei, keeping the characteristics and chemical composition of their walls. Anterior region of females appeared completely surrounded by giant cells in some sectors (Fig. 3B). Increased volume of female body produced damage to adjacent tissues and the root...


Fig. 4. *Meloidogyne ethiopica - Vitis vinifera* association. Transverse sections of lateral galls. A and B: view of the lateral gall with hyperplastic tissue. C: detail of alterations produced on the cortical layers (arrows). D: internal cavity in the gall. E: cavities communicated with the surface of the gall. F: detail of a sector of the cavity with fungal hyphae. Abbreviations. c: cortex; ca: cavity; hc: hyperplastic cells; hy: hyphae; lg: lateral gall.
in general (Fig. 3C); crushed and broken cells were observed, some of them with strengthening of cell walls (Fig. 3D). Females with egg masses were detected (Fig. 3E). Juveniles and septate fungal hyphae were observed on cortical layers of lateral roots located near the galls (Fig. 3F).

**Lateral elongated or round galls.** These galls showed hyperplastic parenchymatous tissue that developed in the central cylinder of the roots (Fig. 4A, B) and then moved to the periphery, to cortical layers whose cells might be crushed and broken (Fig. 4C). Cavities surrounded by cells with thick, crushed or broken walls (Fig. 4D) and communicated with the root periphery were observed in this parenchyma (Fig. 4E). No nematodes were detected in these galls. Inside the cavities analyzed, amorphous, unidentified material and branched, septate fungal hyphae were observed (Fig. 4F) and these non-functional galls may have favored the entry of other pathogens, such as the fungi detected.

Histopathological analysis of central galls showed that changes induced by the nematode in the cortex and central cylinder of parasitized roots led to the development of giant cells, reduction of vascular tissues and increase in diameter of the central cylinder due to the presence of hyperplastic parenchymatous tissue. Increased body size of females also caused crushed and broken cells in the cortex and central zone of galls. The latter characteristic agrees with findings of Hafez and Sundararaj (2000) in *V. vinifera* cv. Thompson parasitized by *M. incognita* in that anomalies in root tissues consisted mostly in the presence of hyperplastic and hypertrophied cells located in the stelar region. By contrast, in *V. vinifera* cv. Muscatel, galls produced by *M. javanica* resulted from an increase in cortical parenchyma (Doucet et al., 1984).

In the present study, reduction of vascular tissues also involved the vascular cambium, affecting the formation of secondary vascular tissue. In the analysis of the hybrid VRe2 (*V. vinifera* x *V. rotundifolia*), parasitized by *M. javanica*, Vovlas et al. (1978) indicated that very marked alterations of the central cylinder, especially the presence of feeding sites, disrupted the root vascular tissue.

The characteristics of the differentiated giant cells: dense, vacuolated cytoplasm, with several single or clustered nuclei, is consistent with giant cells type A described in *V. vinifera* cv. Muscatel parasitized by *M. javanica* (Doucet et al., 1984). Also in *V. vinifera* cv. Thompson parasitized by *M. incognita* (Hafez and Sundararaj, 2000), each cell had several nuclei located in the center or near the periphery. In *V. vinifera* cv. Muscatel parasitized by *M. javanica* (Doucet et al., 1984), walls with more or less irregular thickenings were observed in the giant cells, which is in agreement with the present findings. Regarding the internal ingrowths in the giant cell walls, it should be noted that they were PAS positive, confirming the presence of total polysaccharides (Harris and Oparka, 1994). This characteristic suggests the specialization of these cells as transfer cells in sectors adjacent to the xylem vessels (Doucet et al., 2003) and between giant cells.

The wide distribution of *M. ethiopica* in Chile is probably the result of infested grapevine seedlings; nurseries are severely infected by the nematode and commercialization is allowed (Carneiro et al., 2007). Therefore, examination of seedlings and soil are necessary prior to crop planting. Also, a comparison of the different cultivars and rootstocks of grapes used in Chile to evaluate their response to this nematode should be undertaken, especially of those genotypes that have shown tolerance or resistance to other *Meloidogyne* spp.

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