

MARKO LÕOKE

Studies on DNA replication initiation
in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*



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Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Tartu, Estonia

Dissertation is accepted for the commencement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (in Cell Biology) on 07.05.2013 by the Council of the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Tartu

Supervisor: Arnold Kristjuhan, PhD
Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology
University of Tartu
Estonia

Opponent: John F.X. Diffley, PhD
Cancer Research UK
London Research Institute, Clare Hall Laboratories
United Kingdom

Commencement: Room No. 105, 23B Riia St. Tartu, on May 7th, 2013, at 12:00.

Publication of this thesis is granted by the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Tartu and by the Graduate School in Biomedicine and Biotechnology created under the auspices of European Social Fund.



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ISSN 1024–6479
ISBN 978–9949–32–260–2 (print)
ISBN 978–9949–32–261–9 (pdf)

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University of Tartu Press
www.tyk.ee
Order No. 117

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The current thesis is based on the following original publications.

- Ref. I** Lõoke M, Kristjuhan K, Kristjuhan A (2011) Extraction of genomic DNA from yeasts for PCR-based applications. *BioTechniques*, 50(5):325–8.
- Ref. II** Lõoke M, Reimand J, Sedman T, Sedman J, Järvinen L, Väriv S, Peil K, Kristjuhan K, Vilo J, Kristjuhan A (2010) Relicensing of transcriptionally inactivated replication origins in budding yeast. *The Journal of Biological Chemistry*, 285:40004–11.
- Ref. III** Lõoke M, Kristjuhan K, Väriv S, Kristjuhan A (2013) Chromatin-dependent and -independent regulation of DNA replication origin activation in budding yeast. *EMBO reports*, 14(2):191–8.

Author contribution: In all presented articles I participated in experimental design, performed experiments, analyzed data and co-wrote the manuscripts.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA+	ATPases Associated with diverse cellular Activities
Abf1	ARS-Binding Factor 1
ACS	ARS Consensus Sequence
ARS	Autonomously Replicating Sequence
ATP	Adenosine TriPhosphate
Cdc6, 7, 45	Cell Division Cycle (6, 7, 45)
CDK	Cyclin-Dependent Kinase
Cdt1	Chromatin licensing and DNA replication factor 1
Clb2, 5, 6	CycLin B2, 5, 6 (B-type cyclin 2, 5, 6)
CMG	Cdc45/MCM2-7/GINS complex
CUT	Cryptic Unstable Transcript
Ddc2	DNA Damage Checkpoint protein 2
DDK	Dbf4-Dependent Kinase (Cdc7-Dbf4 protein kinase)
Dpb11	DNA polymerase B 11
Fkh1, 2	ForKhead Homolog (1, 2)
Gcn5	General Control Nonderepressible 5
GINS	Complex of Sld5, Psf1, Psf2, and Psf3 (Go - five, Ichi - one, Nii - two, and San - three in Japanese)
HML	Hidden Mat Left
HMR	Hidden Mat Right
Mec1	Mitosis Entry Checkpoint 1
Mcm2-7	MiniChromosome Maintenance 2-7
Mrc1	Mediator of the Replication Checkpoint 1
NFR	Nucleosome Free Region
ORC	Origin Recognition Complex
PCNA	Proliferating Cell Nuclear Antigen
Pfh1	PiF1 Helicase homolog 1
Pre-RC	Pre-Replicative Complex
Psf1, 2, 3	Partner of Sld Five (1, 2, 3)

Rad53	RADiation sensitive 53
RNAPII	RNA Polymerase II
RPA	Replication Protein A
Rpd3	Reduced Potassium Dependency 3
SAGE	Serial Analysis of Gene Expression
Sen1	Splicing ENdonuclease 1
Sin3	Switch INdependent 3
Sir1, 2, 3, 4	Silent Information Regulator (1, 2, 3, 4)
Sld2, 3, 5, 7	Synthetic Lethality with Dpb11 (2, 3, 5, 7)
SWI4	SWItching deficient 4

INTRODUCTION

Duplication of DNA during the S phase is critical for the accurate transmission of genetic material to daughter cells. Successful progression through the S phase requires DNA replication to be properly regulated and monitored to ensure that the entire genome is duplicated exactly once, without errors. In order to achieve this, replication has evolved into a tightly regulated process that includes the coordinated action of numerous factors that function in all phases of the cell cycle. This thesis reviews the current understanding of these processes from the formation of replicative complexes in preparation for DNA synthesis to the series of events that culminate in the S phase with their activation. I will review the constitution of the timely and coordinated replication origin activation program and describe the concept of replication licensing, which protects against genomic instability by limiting initiation events to once per cell cycle. Lastly, I will discuss, how chromatin and chromatin dependent processes, such as DNA replication and transcription, manage to successfully coexist and complete their independent tasks.

In the second part of the thesis, results of my practical work are presented. First, a novel yeast DNA extraction protocol is introduced and its potential uses and advantages are discussed. Additionally, results concerning the dynamics of replication origin licensing under transcriptional conditions are outlined. They demonstrate that DNA replication origins can be licensed multiple times *in vivo*, and this ensures the presence of maximal number of functional replication origins in the S phase. And finally the results about the role of chromatin environment in the regulation of replication origin activation are introduced. These findings indicate that the chromatin context indeed is a major influencing force of the temporal dynamics of replication origin activation, but these effects can be bypassed by specific mechanisms.

1. OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

1.1. Replication initiation

DNA replication is initiated from specific sequences called replication origins. Eukaryotic genomes have many such sites and the synthesis of each chromosome is started from multiple origins. In budding yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) replication origins are short DNA regions of a few hundred base pairs in length, referred to as autonomously replicating sequences (ARS) because of their ability to promote autonomous replication of plasmids (Struhl et al., 1979). Dynamic multi-protein complexes bind onto origins throughout the cell cycle and govern where and when replisomes catalyzing DNA synthesis will assemble. Empirically we can divide this process into several steps. In the first stages, replication origin sites where the multi-protein complexes will form have to be selected. Then in G1 phase of the cell cycle, the inactive replication complexes are assembled onto these sites. Finally these complexes are activated in the S phase. Here, in the literature overview, the key events that take place at origins of DNA replication through the cell cycle are outlined. Additionally, the regulatory mechanisms that control origin activation in time and space and ensure that all genomic regions are replicated exactly once within the same cell cycle are discussed.

1.1.1. Recognition of replication origin sites

The first step in budding yeast DNA replication is the selection of replication origin sites from the 12 million bp genome. All budding yeast replication origins share a highly conserved ARS consensus sequence (ACS) or A domain, which is required for the recruitment of the origin recognition complex (ORC) (Bell and Stillman, 1992; Stinchcomb et al., 1979). The ACS consensus sequence consists of an 11 bp motif (T/A)TTTAT(A/G)TTT(T/A), although a functional ACS may contain one or more mismatches to this sequence. More recently, it has been found that three additional conserved nucleotides on each side of the ACS are important, resulting in a 17 bp extended ACS (Theis and Newlon, 1997; Chang et al., 2011).

While obligatory to origin functioning, the ACS alone is not sufficient for selection of ORC binding sites. The yeast genome contains over 12,000 matches to the ACS motif, yet only 400 are functional, indicating that there are additional requirements (Nieduszynski et al., 2006). The additional sequence other than ACS needed for ORC binding is often referred to as the B1 element. Together, the ACS and B1 serve as a bipartite DNA binding site for ORC (Rao and Stillman, 1995; Rowley et al., 1995).

In addition to ORC binding sequence, every origin contains a set of flanking domains that enables it to serve as a site for DNA replication initiation (Walker et al., 1991; Marahrens and Stillman, 1992). Historically, these elements have been

referred to as B and C domains. Regardless of the name, the exact mechanism of enhancement by the flanking regions varies between replication origins and no clear consensus sequence of these elements can be brought out. Some of these well-characterized elements have been shown to be transcription factor binding sites, while others are regions of DNA unwinding (Bielinsky and Gerbi, 1998; Umek and Kowalski, 1988). The role of transcription factors here is thought to involve the recruitment of chromatin remodelers or modifiers that position nucleosomes or otherwise increase accessibility of origins to transacting factors (Li and Herskowitz, 1993; Flanagan and Peterson, 1999; Venditti et al., 1994). Similarly, it has been found that the favorable chromatin modifications can lead to better origin activation (Knott et al., 2009; Vogelauer et al., 2002).

Therefore, whether a particular sequence matching the ACS behaves as an origin may be determined by several contributing factors. These include, the ease of unwinding of DNA in the vicinity of the ACS, the presence of transcription factor binding sites that may act as nucleosome excluding elements, as well as the surrounding chromatin context that is favorable for the binding of replication factors. While no single one of these contributing properties may be essential for origin activity, together these features may determine whether a particular ACS motif can function as a replication origin.

1.1.2. Assembly of pre-replicative complexes

The first steps towards DNA replication are made long before the start of the S phase. Already in the late mitosis and early G1 phase, relevant protein complexes are formed at the replication origin sites, culminating in the formation of pre-replicative complexes (pre-RCs) (Fig. 1). These events are conserved among eukaryotic organisms, and this process results in the loading of the heterohexameric Mcm2-7 (MiniChromosome Maintenance 2-7) replicative DNA helicase onto origin DNA. Events needed for Mcm2-7 loading are the binding of ORC to origin DNA and the recruitment of cofactors Cdc6 (Cell Division Cycle 6) and Cdt1 (Chromatin licensing and DNA replication factor 1) to the complex. Furthermore, ATP binding and hydrolysis are essential for pre-RC formation as at least ten of the proteins that participate in pre-RC assembly are members of the AAA+ family of ATP binding proteins (Iyer et al., 2004). Analyses of mutations in the conserved ATP binding motifs of ORC, Cdc6, and all six Mcm2-7 subunits demonstrate that each of these elements is essential *in vivo* (Klemm and Bell, 2001; Schwacha and Bell, 2001; Weinreich et al., 1999). Reconstitution of pre-RC assembly from purified yeast proteins has established that ORC, Cdc6 and Cdt1 are necessary and sufficient to load Mcm2-7 onto origin DNA in a reaction requiring ATP hydrolysis (Evrin et al., 2009; Kawasaki et al., 2006; Remus et al., 2009).

Selecting replication origins involves binding of the ORC to the origin DNA. This complex marks all potential origins, providing spatial control of origin posi-

tioning, and is required for the loading of downstream replication factors. ORC consists of six subunits (Orc1–Orc6) and binds DNA only in its ATP-bound state. Specifically, ATP binding (but not hydrolysis) by the Orc1 subunit is required for origin-specific DNA binding (Bell and Stillman, 1992; Klemm et al., 1997). ORC requires five of its largest subunits (Orc1–Orc5) to recognize DNA, four of which (Orc1, 2, 4, and 5) are in close contact with the origin (Lee and Bell, 1997). Although Orc6 is not required for DNA binding, it remains essential for DNA replication and cell viability (Li and Herskowitz, 1993). ORC binding to DNA is required for the recruitment of the Cdc6 ATPase and Cdt1. Moreover, targeting of ORC to specific chromosomal locations can also be accomplished through its interaction with Cdc6, which increases the stability of ORC on chromatin and inhibits ORC binding to nonspecific DNA (Mizushima et al., 2000; Harvey and Newport, 2003).

Both Cdc6 and Cdt1 are necessary for the subsequent association of the Mcm2–7 helicases with origin DNA. In budding yeast, Cdt1 and Mcm2–7 form a stable complex and are recruited to origin DNA as a complex. Interactions between Cdt1 and Orc6 are important for this recruitment step (Chen and Bell, 2011). ATP hydrolysis by Cdc6 stimulates the stable loading of the Mcm2–7 complex onto chromatin, which is accompanied by the dissociation of Cdt1 and Cdc6 (Randell et al., 2006). Additionally, ATP hydrolysis by the ORC complex is necessary for the reiterative loading of Mcm2–7 complexes to origins (Bowers et al., 2004). As mentioned, after helicase loading, Cdc6 and Cdt1 are released from the complex whilst ORC and Mcm2-7 are retained on DNA. *In vitro*, ORC can also be removed with high salt buffer washing, but Mcm2-7 is retained on the DNA, which is a hallmark of pre-RC assembly (Bowers et al., 2004; Donovan et al., 1997).

In vitro reconstitution of pre-RC formation using purified budding yeast proteins and electron microscopy have revealed that Mcm2–7 proteins are loaded as double hexamers at replication origins. The two hexamers are arranged in a head-to-head orientation and are connected via their N-terminal rings. Moreover, the Mcm2–7 double hexamers encircle double stranded DNA and are able to slide along it (Remus et al., 2009; Evrin et al., 2009). The ability of Mcm2-7 to slide along DNA is also interesting because it provides a mechanism for multiple double hexamers to be loaded at a single origin. This could help explain the fact that the number of Mcm2-7 hexamers loaded during G1 phase greatly exceeds the number of replication origins used in the subsequent S phase (Donovan et al., 1997; Lei et al., 1996).

Taken together, current results indicate that Mcm2-7 in the pre-RC exists as a stable head-to-head double hexamer encircling double-stranded DNA. ORC, Cdc6 and Cdt1 are required for Mcm2-7 loading, and the process also requires ATP binding and hydrolysis (Fig. 1).

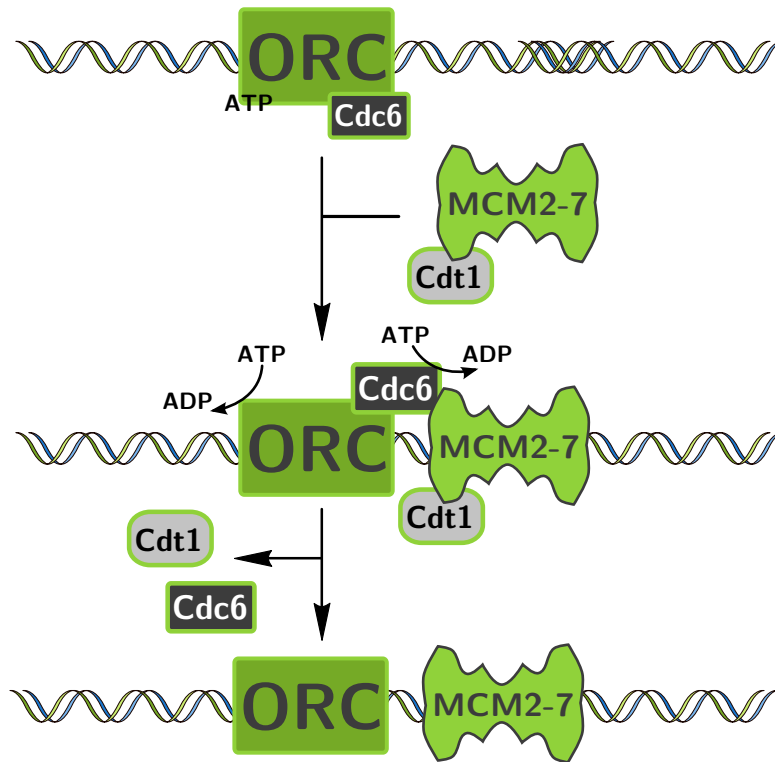


Figure 1. Assembly of pre-replicative complexes. Replication origin sites in budding yeast are marked by stable binding of ORC. Specificity of ORC binding is stabilized by ATP and Cdc6. In G1 phase of the cell cycle, ORC together with Cdc6 and Cdt1 help to load pre-RC complexes. This results in the stable binding of Mcm2-7 double hexamers. In order to achieve this, ORC - Cdc6 subcomplex has to interact with Cdt1 bound Mcm2-7. ATP hydrolysis by ORC and Cdc6 is necessary. The loaded helicase complexes are activated in the S phase where they form the core of the replication initiation process. Cdc6 and Cdt1 are not needed for Mcm2-7 activation.

1.1.3. Activation of the Mcm2-7 helicase complex

Multiple lines of evidence indicate that the Mcm2-7 complex is the engine of the replicative helicase. First, Mcm2-7 travels with replication forks, forming part of the purified replisome complex (Gambus et al., 2006; Aparicio et al., 1997). Second, inactivation of Mcm2-7 subunits during the S phase results in rapid replisome inactivation (Pacek and Walter, 2004; Labib et al., 2000). And third, purified yeast Mcm2-7 complex displays a weak helicase activity under appropriate conditions (Bochman and Schwacha, 2008). However, the key aspect of the Mcm2-7 activation is its association with other proteins that are important for the helicase to function

properly. Current evidence indicates that the active eukaryotic replicative DNA helicase contains at least three components. In addition to hetero-hexameric ATPase Mcm2-7, two cofactors are needed, Cdc45 and the GINS complex (Moyer et al., 2006; Pacek and Walter, 2004; Ilves et al., 2010). The Cdc45, Mcm2-7 and GINS assembly (collectively termed as the CMG complex) is several hundred fold more active as a DNA helicase than the Mcm2-7 alone, providing strong evidence that it is the functional form of eukaryotic DNA replicative helicase (Ilves et al., 2010). The GINS complex (Go, Ichi, Nii, and San; five, one, two, and three in Japanese) itself consists of Sld5, Psf1, Psf2, and Psf3 proteins (Psf - Partner of Sld Five; Sld - Synthetic Lethality with Dpb11), all of which are highly conserved in eukaryotic cells (Takayama et al., 2003). Just like Cdc45 and Mcm2-7, GINS has been shown to be important both for the initial helicase activation and for progression of DNA replication forks (Aparicio et al., 1997; Labib et al., 2000; Kanemaki et al., 2003; Kanemaki and Labib, 2006; Tercero et al., 2000).

The active helicase complexes are assembled only in the S phase, and this process is dependent on the activities of two kinases, CDK (cyclin-dependent kinase) and DDK (Dbf4-dependent kinase) (Zou and Stillman, 2000; Sheu and Stillman, 2006; Masai et al., 2006). Both conserved protein kinases are regulated independently of each other, but by similar mechanisms (Sclafani, 2000; Masai and Arai, 2002). The enzymes are inactive in their monomeric forms and are activated by the binding of unstable activating factors, cyclins for CDK and Dbf4 protein for DDK. Unlike higher eukaryotes, budding yeast has only one cyclin-dependent kinase, Cdk1. At the transition from G1 to the S phase, as CDK and DDK activities increase, numerous factors are recruited to convert the Mcm2-7 double hexamer into an active helicase complex (Fig. 2).

DDK has been shown to act prior to CDK in activating replication origins (Heller et al., 2011). The catalytic subunit of DDK is Cdc7, a serine/threonine kinase activated by the enzyme's regulatory subunit Dbf4. DDK is activated at the onset of the S phase when Dbf4 protein levels are elevated (Ferreira et al., 2000). The primary targets for DDK phosphorylation are the Mcm2-7 components Mcm2, Mcm4, and Mcm6 (Francis et al., 2009). It has been shown that DDK preferentially phosphorylates Mcm2-7 complexes that are stably bound to chromatin (Sheu and Stillman, 2006; Francis et al., 2009; Masai et al., 2006). Moreover, DDK is targeted to replication origins through interactions of Dbf4 with several pre-RC components, including Mcm2, Mcm4, Orc2 and Orc3 (Duncker et al., 2002; Varrin et al., 2005; Sheu and Stillman, 2006). The exact mechanism through which the phosphorylation of Mcm2-7 complex activates the Mcm2-7 helicases remains unknown, but it is likely that this post-translational modification generates a conformational change in Mcm2-7 complex, enabling it to function as a helicase. This model is supported by the finding of a specific mutation in the budding yeast Mcm5 subunit termed *mcm5-bob1*, which can bypass the requirement for Cdc7-

Dbf4 in initiation of DNA replication (Hardy et al., 1997). The *mcm5-bob1* mutant may mimic a conformational change in the Mcm2–7 complex that is normally induced by DDK phosphorylation (Fletcher et al., 2003).

In addition to the DDK induced conformational change in the Mcm2-7 complex, the helicase activation is also dependent on the recruitment of several cofactor proteins. This is directed by CDK dependent phosphorylation events. Unlike DDK, activation and substrate specificity of CDK relies on multiple activation subunits called cyclins. Activation of DNA replication is primarily dependent on the S phase cyclins Clb5 and Clb6 (B-type cyclin 5 and 6). The primary targets of CDK are Sld2 and Sld3 proteins. Sld2 is the preferred substrate for Clb5/Cdk1, but Sld3 is equally well phosphorylated by the mitotic Clb2/Cdk1 pair (Loog and Morgan, 2005). In the absence of Clb5, the short-lived Clb6 is able to substitute for it and activate early replication origins, but the S phase is prolonged due to the failure of late replication origin activation (Jackson et al., 2006; McCune et al., 2008).

Once phosphorylated, the phosphopeptides in Sld2 and Sld3 act as docking sites for Dpb11 (DNA polymerase B 11). Dpb11 is then able to bind to both Sld2 and Sld3 simultaneously and bring the two together. Both Sld2 and Sld3 in turn form complexes with other proteins. Therefore, the Dpb11 dependent scaffolding of Sld2 and Sld3 helps to form a large protein complex (Fig. 2)(Zegerman and Diffley, 2007; Tanaka et al., 2007; Masumoto et al., 2002). The current model suggests that Sld3 interacts with Sld7 and Cdc45. This complex is recruited to origins prior to their activation: in late G1 to early firing origins and during the S phase to late firing origins (Kamimura et al., 2001; Tanaka et al., 2011). Other essential proteins are then recruited to the complex via the Sld3 and Dpb11 interactions. First, the binding of Dpb11 to phosphorylated Sld2 triggers the assembly of a subcomplex composed of Dpb11, Sld2, polymerase ϵ and GINS. Next, when phosphorylated Sld3 associates with Dpb11, all of the components are brought together (Fig. 2) (Muramatsu et al., 2010). Upon initiation of DNA replication, Sld2, Sld3 and Dpb11 do not participate in the replisome and dissociate, whereas Cdc45, GINS and Mcm2–7 assemble into an active helicase complex (Muramatsu et al., 2010). An additional evolutionarily conserved factor, Mcm10, participates in the conversion of the pre-RC to an active replisome. It is required for the recruitment of DNA polymerase α to origins and for activation of the CMG complex (Kanke et al., 2012; Watase et al., 2012; van Deursen et al., 2012; Ricke and Bielinsky, 2004).

Dynamically, the whole process appears to occur very quickly, as Cdc45 has been shown to associate with origins at the time of replication initiation, and its binding to the origins has been utilized as a reliable marker of origin firing (Pryde et al., 2009; Zou and Stillman, 2000; Vogelauer et al., 2002; Aparicio et al., 1999, 2004; L ocke et al., 2010).

In summary, activation of the replicative helicase is initiated by the action of two S phase kinases, DDK and CDK. DDK phosphorylates Mcm2-7 proteins resulting in the conformational change in the hexamer needed for Mcm2-7 activation. Concurrently, CDK dependent phosphorylations of Sld2 and Sld3 allows recruitment of the Dpb11 protein which acts as a scaffold to bring the CMG complex together so that DNA can be unwound.

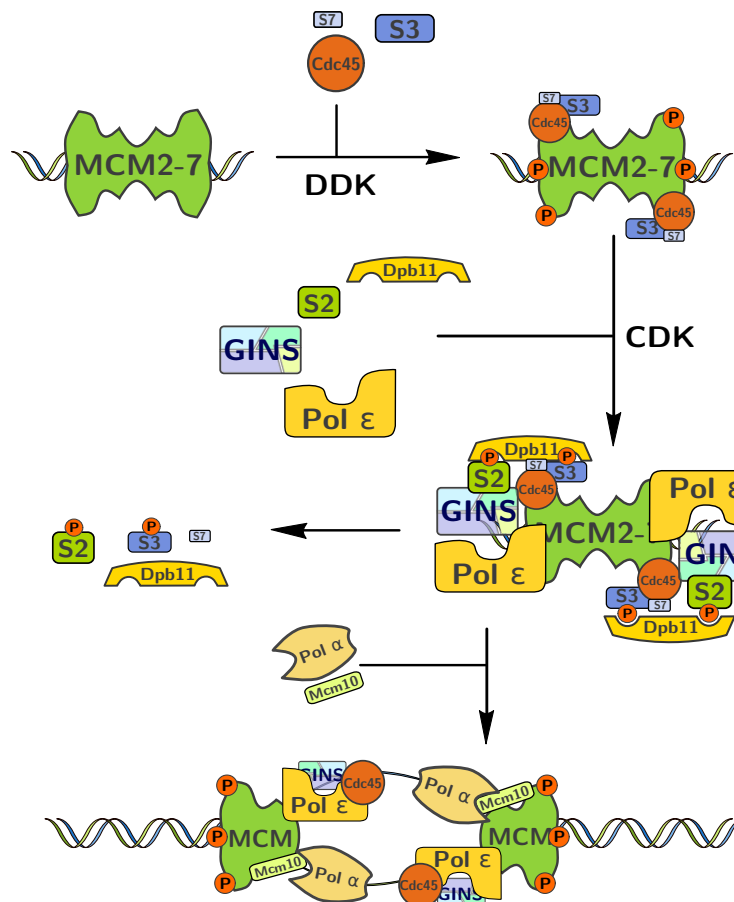


Figure 2. Activation of Mcm2-7 complexes. Abbreviations: S3 - Sld3; S2 - Sld2; S7 - Sld7. Increased activity of CDK and DDK in the S phase triggers the activation of Mcm2-7. First, subunits of Mcm2-7 are phosphorylated by DDK, which induces a conformational change in the complex, enabling the binding of Sld3, Sld7 and Cdc45. CDK dependent phosphorylation of Sld3 and Sld2 creates binding sites for Dpb11 in each protein. Dpb11 binds both of the phosphorylated proteins simultaneously and acts as a scaffold, bringing Sld2 and its binding partners Pol ε and GINS to the complex. Finally, before replication can start, the Mcm10 protein helps to recruit Pol α to the replication complex. Sld2, Sld3, Sld7 and Dpb11 are not needed for the following synthesis of DNA.

1.2. Replication elongation

At the start of replication, the previously formed CMG complex unwinds the DNA duplex and a short region of single-stranded DNA (ssDNA) is exposed. This stretch of DNA is stabilized by the ssDNA binding protein RPA (Replication Protein A), hence RPA associates with origin DNA prior to replication initiation (Tanaka and Nasmyth, 1998; Walter and Newport, 2000). After origin unwinding, Pol α /primase primes DNA synthesis and Pol ϵ starts the elongation of both strands. Afterwards the loading of PCNA (Proliferating Cell Nuclear Antigen) effects a switch from Pol ϵ to Pol δ for continuous elongation of the leading strand (Burgers, 2009).

The leading strand is replicated continuously in 5' to 3' direction, but since DNA polymerases only show unilateral processivity, the lagging strand must also be replicated in the same fashion. This is achieved by producing Okazaki fragments which are about 300 bp in length and where continuous priming and Pol ϵ dependent 5' to 3' elongation takes place. Later the fragments are fused together by DNA ligase (Burgers, 2009). On average, a replication fork replicates ~1-3kb/minute, but fork velocity can vary between different regions of the genome (Conti et al., 2007). Replication forks can pause for some time at certain sites, in particular during replication of long stretches of repeated sequences. This can cause fork collapse and termination of DNA replication at that site (Rothstein et al., 2000). Therefore, an integral part of genome duplication is the surveillance of DNA replication and genome integrity. An evolutionarily conserved signal transduction pathway called intra-S phase checkpoint or DNA damage checkpoint serves as such surveillance mechanism and responds to both DNA damage and replication perturbations.

Activation of this control mechanism starts with generation of long stretches of ssDNA either by the functional uncoupling of replicative helicases and polymerases during fork stalling (Byun et al., 2005; Nedelcheva et al., 2005), processing of DNA double strand breaks (Mimitou and Symington, 2008; Zhu et al., 2008), or by the nucleotide excision repair process (Giannattasio et al., 2004). The generated ssDNA binds RPA and triggers the activation of checkpoint response by Ddc2 (DNA Damage Checkpoint protein 2) dependent recruitment of Mec1 (Mitosis Entry Checkpoint 1) kinase (Rouse and Jackson, 2002; Zou and Elledge, 2003). Mec1 in turn phosphorylates Mrc1 (Mediator of the Replication Checkpoint 1), a mediator that transduces the signal to the effector kinase Rad53 (RADiation sensitive 53), which becomes phosphorylated and activated (Alcasabas et al., 2001). Once activated the S-phase checkpoint response coordinates various aspects of DNA replication, such as firing of new replication origins (Santocanale and Diffley, 1998; Shirahige et al., 1998; Santocanale et al., 1999), stabilization of DNA replication forks (Tercero and Diffley, 2001; Lopes et al., 2001), and resumption of stalled replication forks (Szyjka et al., 2008).

In the event that the stalled replication forks cannot be reactivated, it is important to have additional pre-RCs within the un-replicated region to finish DNA replication. Completion of DNA replication of the whole genome in a timely fashion is thought to be crucial, since some evidence suggests lack of a mechanism controlling the completion of DNA replication at the end of the S phase (Torres-Rosell et al., 2007). This demonstrates that the usage of multiple replication origins in a correct and timely fashion is essential for proper cell cycle progression and genome stability.

1.3. Avoiding re-replication

Eukaryotic cells need to duplicate vast amounts of genetic information quickly and accurately before each cell division. To meet this requirement multiple replication origins have to be used. At the same time it is also important to ensure that DNA replication is not only fast, but accurate, and no segment of the chromosome is duplicated more than once. Indeed, re-initiation from even a single origin within the same cell cycle may cause genomic instability. This is avoided by dividing the process into two non-overlapping phases. In the first phase, during late mitosis and G1, the Mcm2-7 complexes are recruited to DNA in an inactive state. This is also called replication licensing. These DNA bound Mcm2-7 complexes are then essential for initiation and elongation of replication forks during the S phase. As we will see, the spatial and temporal separation of factors needed for loading and activation of the Mcm2-7 is tightly regulated.

The existence of this elegant system was first noticed using cell fusion experiments, where replicated DNA was shown to differ from un-replicated DNA in its replication potential. G1 DNA was able to replicate when G1 cells were fused with those in the S phase, but G2 DNA needed to pass through mitosis beforehand (Rao and Johnson, 1970). Later, this finding was refined to a model according to which replication origins were “licensed” for replication during late mitosis and G1, but the license was removed as the DNA replication was started (Blow and Laskey, 1988). Dividing the process of DNA replication into two non-overlapping phases (one phase permissive for the licensing of DNA replication and the second permissive for the initiation of replication but not for licensing) can explain how cells ensure the precise duplication of chromosomal DNA in a single cell cycle. To date, a large amount of detailed experimental data has been acquired supporting the licensing model and we next will examine the essential features of this elegant system.

To prevent the possibility of replicated origins becoming re-licensed during the S phase, it is important that the ability to license new replication origins is downregulated before entry into the S phase. Therefore, the licensing components ORC, Cdc6 and Cdt1 are only needed for the loading of Mcm2-7 onto DNA in G1, but are not required for the continued association of the Mcm2-7 helicase complex with DNA, and thus their activities are down-regulated at the end of

G1 (Donovan et al., 1997; Hua and Newport, 1998; Maiorano et al., 2000; Rowles et al., 1999). The key component needed to achieve this is again CDK, whose activity directly inhibits the assembly of pre-RCs (Dahmann et al., 1995). One of the major substrates of CDK in budding yeast is Cdc6. CDK can bind to Cdc6 and the phosphorylation of Cdc6 targets it for degradation at the G1 to the S phase transition (Elsasser et al., 1999; Mimura et al., 2004; Drury et al., 2000). Cdc6 levels are also regulated at the transcriptional level to give maximum expression in late mitosis and G1, with its transcription being under the control of the CDK-dependent transcription factor SWI4 (SWItching deficient 4) (McInerney et al., 1997; Zwerschke et al., 1994). In addition to Cdc6, ORC activities are also directly inhibited by CDK. It has been shown that CDK binds ORC via its activating subunit Clb5 and that this helps maintain ORC in an inactive state during S and G2 phases. Eliminating the Clb5–Orc6 interaction has no effect on initiation of replication but instead sensitizes cells to lethal over-replication. (Wuarin et al., 2002; Wilmes et al., 2004). Subsequently, re-replication is further inhibited by CDK dependent phosphorylation of ORC (Nguyen et al., 2001). The two remaining components of pre-RC, Ctd1 and Mcm2-7, are targeted in a different fashion. In budding yeast, CDK promotes nuclear export of both proteins during the S phase, G2 and early mitosis, thus preventing them from gaining access to chromosomal DNA (Nguyen et al., 2000; Labib et al., 1999).

All the mechanisms described above assure that DNA is not replicated more than once per cell cycle. Experiments in budding yeast have shown that in order for significant re-replication to occur, all these different CDK-dependent controls must be inactivated. Partial over-replication is possible when un-phosphorylatable mutants of Orc2 and Orc6 are combined with non-degradable Cdc6. In addition Mcm2-7 and Ctd1 have to be constitutively expressed in the nucleus (Nguyen et al., 2001). The presence of redundant control mechanisms highlights the importance of avoiding over-replication.

1.4. Chromatin environment

In essence, the yeast genome represents a rather compact organization of genes and regulatory sequences. Unlike in many other organisms, very little noncoding DNA is present. From the number of genes and the total size of the yeast genome one arrives at a gene density of about one open reading frame per 2 kb (Goffeau et al., 1996). This leaves only limited space for the intergenic regions that harbor the major regulatory elements involved in chromosome maintenance, transcription and DNA replication. Therefore, in order to develop a more accurate picture, the process of DNA replication must be considered in an *in vivo* environment, where the cell has to deal with many important tasks simultaneously. Additionally, it is also necessary to view the genome as a whole nucleo-protein complex called chromatin, to take into account how the presence of nucleosomes or other DNA

binding proteins affects replication, and also to fit other DNA dependent processes, especially transcription, into the scheme.

1.4.1. Timing and efficiency of replication origins

To date, ~400 loci of budding yeast replication origins have been identified and found to be distributed evenly throughout the genome. However, not all origins are identical (Nieduszynski et al., 2006). The discriminating features between these origins are their initiation time during the S phase and their efficiency of initiation, the latter of which is defined as the frequency at which an origin initiates DNA replication (fires) within a population of cells. In yeast, many origins are efficient, firing in virtually every dividing cell within a population. However, some replication origins are less efficient, initiating in fewer than half the dividing cells within a population. Although the exact mechanisms that determine initiation timing and efficiency remain unclear, chromatin structure clearly plays an important role.

In addition to firing efficiencies, individual replication origins also fire at characteristic and reproducible times during the S phase. For example, the yeast origins *ARS305* and *ARS607* fire shortly after cells have entered the S phase and are considered to be “early” origins, while the yeast origin *ARS1* fires during the first half of the S phase but several minutes after *ARS305* (Raghuraman et al., 2001). On the other hand, some replication origins such as *ARS501* or *ARS609* fire near the end of the S phase and are considered to be “late” origins (Friedman et al., 1996; Ferguson et al., 1991; Friedman et al., 1997). In general, most early origins are positioned near the central portions of yeast chromosomes, while late firing origins are positioned nearer to the telomeres. Therefore, the central portions of chromosomes tend to replicate before the ends (Raghuraman et al., 2001).

There is no consistent relationship between replication origin efficiency and the time at which an origin fires during the S phase: for instance some late firing origins are efficient and others are not (Friedman et al., 1997; Yamashita et al., 1997). Some late origins are inefficient because they are located near an early firing origin. The earlier origin establishes a replication fork that replicates the later origin before it has a chance to fire (Vujcic et al., 1999). As with origin efficiencies, the chromatin context appears to be the major determinant of origin firing times.

1.4.2. Chromatin context

The first evidence of the influence of chromatin context on replication origin activity came from studies showing that some ARS sequences that function properly when inserted into plasmids fail to function as chromosomal origins in their native loci. In particular, it was found that the origins in silenced mating type loci were inhibited by heterochromatin (Vujcic et al., 1999; Dubey et al., 1991). When an otherwise

additionally efficient origin *ARS305* was inserted into the mating type locus, it failed to function (Sharma et al., 2001). Therefore, the inherent capability of some sequences to function as origins can be inhibited by chromatin context.

In budding yeast, heterochromatin is formed in three main regions – telomeres, the ribosomal DNA (*rDNA*) locus and silent mating type loci (*HML* and *HMR*; Hidden Mat Left or Right). To establish silenced chromatin, SIR (Silent Information Regulator) proteins Sir1, Sir4, Sir2 and Sir3 have to be recruited to silencer sequences. This recruitment process is hierarchical where one event (the recruitment of a protein) leads to another. Although the initial assembly varies at different silenced loci, it is interesting to note that the silencing of mating type loci is partially initiated by ORC complex, which binds to silencer sequences and helps to recruit SIR proteins (Zhang et al., 2002). After their initial assembly, SIR proteins spread out from the silencer region through the binding of Sir3 and Sir4 proteins to the tails of histones H3 and H4. Sir3 and Sir4 bind more efficiently to hypoacetylated histone tails, and therefore they need the deacetylase activity of Sir2 for this interaction. The binding of Sir4 and Sir3, in turn helps to recruit additional Sir2 proteins, which facilitate further binding of Sir3 and Sir4 to adjacent nucleosomes, leading to effective silencing of the locus. This spreading of heterochromatin is regulated by chromatin modifications that inhibit SIR binding. This is often achieved by active transcription in boundary areas (Rusché et al., 2002, 2003; Carmen et al., 2002).

In accordance with this model, it has been found that disruptive mutations in Sir3 activate certain replication origins near the ends of chromosomes and cause telomeric DNA to replicate earlier (Stevenson and Gottschling, 1999). On the other hand, relocating a transcriptional silencer and artificially forming heterochromatin in certain parts of the genome can inhibit origin functioning as well (Zappulla et al., 2002). Instead of direct inhibition of replication origins by heterochromatin, it has also been found that an origin's activation time can be altered when it is shuffled between regions with different chromatin states. Taken into account that origins in subtelomeric regions are generally late firing, whereas origins in centromeric regions are early firing (Raghuraman et al., 2001; Pohl et al., 2012), it is possible to render an early origin *ARS1* to fire significantly later when relocated to subtelomeric areas near *ARS501* (Ferguson and Fangman, 1992). Likewise, the late *ARS501* can fire significantly earlier when taken out of subtelomeric DNA and moved to a plasmid (Ferguson et al., 1991). Similar positional effects on replication origin activation are confirmed in one of my publications with a larger variety of origins, as discussed in Chapter 2.3 (Lööke et al., 2013).

In addition to origin relocation experiments, much information on temporal behavior of replication origins has been gathered by studying chromatin modifications. Similar to their regulatory role in transcription, histone modifications regulate the access of replication factors to replication origins and thus help to

determine the time of origin activation. For example, the global increase in histone acetylation has been shown to advance the timing of many replication origins. This can be achieved by inactivating the Sin3–Rpd3 histone deacetylase complex (Sin3 - Switch INdependent 3; Rpd3 - Reduced Potassium Dependency 3), known for its role as a gene-specific transcriptional repressor. Deletion of *RPD3* causes significantly earlier initiation of late-firing origins, along with increased acetylation of histones flanking these origins (Vogelauer et al., 2002; Aparicio et al., 2004; Knott et al., 2009). Consistent with the idea that Rpd3 deacetylates chromatin surrounding a large number of yeast origins, replication of the entire genome is advanced in a strain lacking *RPD3* (Aparicio et al., 2004). On the other hand, inducing histone acetylation improves origin activation. For instance, targeting of Gcn5 (General Control Nonderepressible 5) histone acetylase adjacent to a late-firing origin advances its time of initiation (Goren et al., 2008; Vogelauer et al., 2002). Importantly, mutating the acetylation sites in H3 and H4 severely impairs origin function, indicating that these acetylation events are necessary for efficient origin firing (Unnikrishnan et al., 2010).

Although local chromatin environment is a major influencer of origin timing, recent findings indicate that some origins with Forkhead transcription factor binding sites are activated early in the S phase regardless of their location in the genome (Chapter 2.3.; Lööke et al., 2013). It has been found that Forkhead transcription factor-dependent clustering of these replication origins is required for their early firing, indicating that the spatial distribution of replication origins in the cell nucleus might also influence their activation (Knott et al., 2012). Additional evidence of the importance of spacial organization of chromatin in the nucleus comes from studies of the Ku complex. This versatile complex composed of yKu70 and yKu80 proteins, is important for the repair of double-stranded DNA breaks, and also functions at telomeres. At chromosome ends, the Ku complex is required for correct localization of telomeres to the nuclear periphery, and also contributes to recruitment of telomerase and to transcriptional repression by Sir proteins (Fisher and Zakian, 2005). It has been found that deletion of Ku complex components alters the positioning of telomeric DNA in the yeast nucleus, which in turn affects repression of telomere-proximal genes (Laroche et al., 1998). Importantly, replication origins located close to telomeres or within subtelomeric regions are activated much earlier in mutants lacking Ku function (Cosgrove et al., 2002).

The final aspect influencing replication origin activation is the positioning of nucleosomes. Generally, nucleosomes are depleted from regions of replication origins due to active positioning and maintenance of nucleosome free regions (Field et al., 2008; Eaton et al., 2010). When nucleosomes are positioned incorrectly origin functioning is disrupted. For example, histone deacetylase Sir2 has been shown to inhibit origin activation by inducing unfavorable nucleosome positioning

(Crampton et al., 2008). Several studies have found that active positioning of nucleosomes is important for origin to function properly. For example, *ARS1* activity is disrupted when the functional sequences of the origin are moved into a DNA region masked by a nucleosome (Simpson, 1990). Ordinarily, the nucleosome free region of *ARS1* is maintained by ORC and Abf1 (ARS-Binding Factor 1). Mutations in the Abf1 binding site allow nucleosome invasion into the functional region and reduce origin activity (Venditti et al., 1994). Similarly disruption of ORC-directed nucleosomal positioning interferes with *ARS1* functioning (Lipford and Bell, 2001).

Although not fully understood, chromatin environment remains the major determinant of origin timing and efficiency. It is likely that all the described mechanisms cooperatively regulate the access of replication factors to the origin DNA, since overexpression of limiting replication factors help to overcome chromatin restraints and advance the timing of late origins (Mantiero et al., 2011).

1.4.3. Transcription

A positive correlation between gene expression and timing of replication in both human and fruit flies has been reported, suggesting a connection between these nuclear functions (Woodfine et al., 2005; White et al., 2004; Schübeler et al., 2002). However, this is not found to be true in yeast, where the majority of replication origins are located in intergenic regions that are not directly involved in transcription of protein-coding genes (Wyrick et al., 2001). Nevertheless, the influence of global transcription can not be neglected in budding yeast. Several studies have reported that transcription by RNA polymerase II (RNAPII) inactivates DNA replication origins. The activity of a plasmid borne *ARS1* is inhibited by transcription induced from an adjacent promoter (Tanaka et al., 1994). Likewise, *ARS605*, located within the open reading frame of a meiosis specific gene, is active when transcription is repressed in mitosis, but becomes inactivated upon transcriptional induction of this gene during meiosis (Mori and Shirahige, 2007). My research shows that transcriptional inactivation of these origins arises from RNAPII-dependent transcriptional inhibition of pre-RC formation. All the components of the pre-RC, including ORC and Mcm2-7 complexes dissociate from origin DNA when transcribed (Chapter 2.2.; Lööke et al., 2010).

As mentioned previously, intergenic regions of yeast genome are short. Although the majority of replication origins in budding yeast are located in intergenic loci, several studies show that transcription of non-coding regions is widespread in yeast (David et al., 2006; Neil et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2009; Davis and Ares, 2006). Thus, it is likely that many, if not all, replication origins suffer from some transcriptional stress and can potentially be inactivated by transcription. In order to cope with such conditions, yeast origins can be relicensed multiple times in G1 phase of the cell cycle. It appears that when all requirements are met, formation of pre-RC

complexes is a fairly dynamic process, and an equilibrium between licensing and transcriptional inactivation is formed (Chapter 2.2.; Lööke et al., 2010).

In addition to transcription related perturbation of replication complex formation, conflicts between moving transcription and replication forks have also been described. Both head-to-head and head-to-tail collisions between replication and transcription are possible, although it has been found that head-on collisions inhibit replication fork movement to a greater extent (McGlynn et al., 2012; French, 1992). Replication forks which arrest due to encounters with transcription complexes can give rise to DNA damage response, mutagenesis and chromosomal deletions (Vilette et al., 1996; Srivatsan et al., 2010). To prevent this, certain features of genome organization help to avoid head-on collisions of highly transcribed genes and replication forks. For example replication of the rDNA cluster in budding yeast is regulated in a manner that ensures that replication forks move through the rDNA in the same direction as the transcribing RNA polymerase I (Brewer and Fangman, 1988). Similarly, in higher eukaryotes, transcription of highly expressed genes in close proximity to replication origins is directed away from the origins, minimizing the frequency of head-on collisions (Huvet et al., 2007). While replication origin placement serves as a good method of reducing head-on collisions, it is also clear that not all transcription related stress can be avoided in this way. Recently, two helicases, Sen1 (Splicing ENdonuclease 1) in budding yeast and Pfh1 (PiF1 Helicase homolog 1) in fission yeast, have been found to be necessary for efficient movement of replication forks through transcribed areas. Deletion of either factor results in aberrant DNA structures (Alzu et al., 2012; Sabouri et al., 2012). Therefore, in addition to passive reduction of possible fork collisions, certain factors actively help to reduce harmful effects in situations of concurrent replication and transcription.

In brief, although yeast replication origins are located in genomic regions with low transcriptional activity, usage of the same template molecule may easily lead to conflicts between these two processes. First, the widespread transcription of intergenic regions causes constant disruption and ensuing relicensing of replication origins, at least in budding yeast. Second, collisions between replication and transcription machineries can cause replication fork stalling and consequent genetic instability. The cell prevents this by first minimizing the possible hazardous head-on fork collisions by favorable genomic placement of replication origins with respect to highly transcribed genes. However, when concurrent transcription and replication can not be avoided, specific helicases have been shown to assist replication fork movement through transcribed areas.

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The overall goal of the study was to find out how replication origin functioning is influenced by surrounding chromatin environments. The experimental part consists of three linked studies, each dealing with individual objectives:

- Ref. I** The first objective of the study was to simplify the procedure of introducing and verifying genetic manipulations in yeast. A large fraction of this process consists of extraction of DNA from yeast colonies and validation of the altered traits by PCR. Therefore, the motivation was to create a simple and reliable DNA extraction protocol to simplify the routine work in yeast laboratories.
- Ref. II** The second study presented in the thesis was initially inspired by the discovery of the global bidirectionality of yeast promoters and the resulting possibility that many replication origins might be transcribed. Knowing that transcription disrupts the function of these origins, we sought to find the likely number of transcribed origins and also to dissect the dynamics and fate of transcribed origins.
- Ref. III** The third paper presents results that help to understand how chromatin context determines the activation time of different replication origins. The initial aim was to introduce many different replication origins into similar chromatin environments and to determine the role of surrounding landscape in origin activation. Later, when apparently chromatin-independent origins were identified, the objective was to describe this phenomenon in greater mechanistic detail.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Extraction of yeast genomic DNA (Ref. I)

Presently, the process of DNA replication is best understood in budding yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Therefore, it is an excellent tool to unveil the uncharacterized aspects of this process. In the current study, the focus was set on the relation between chromatin context, chromatin dependent processes and DNA replication initiation. In order to accomplish this goal, significant genetic manipulations had to be performed in yeast strains. Altogether, nearly 100 different yeast strains were created throughout the course of this study. Typically, genetic manipulation of yeast cells involves several rounds of genomic DNA extraction: initially for the gathering of template genetic material, next for the analysis of colonies with desired traits, and finally for the verification of finished strains. PCR is commonly used to gather information at each of the mentioned steps. Therefore, the need for convenient and reliable DNA extraction protocol for PCR based applications was apparent.

2.1.1. Development of the LiOAc-SDS DNA extraction protocol

The main obstacle in efficient isolation of yeast genomic DNA (gDNA) is the very inefficient disruption of the strong cell wall. Conventional methods for gDNA preparation from yeast cells utilize either enzymatic or physical degradation of the cell wall, followed generally by lysis of cells and extraction of gDNA with phenol/chloroform (Ling et al., 1995; Amberg et al., 2005). When analyzing a large number of samples, these methods become time-consuming and/or relatively expensive. At the same time, the resulting amount and purity of DNA greatly exceeds the requirements for simple PCR analysis. Alternatively, for quick genotyping, cells can also be lysed by repeated freeze-thaw cycles in a buffer containing Triton X-100 and SDS, followed by extraction of gDNA with chloroform (Harju et al., 2004). Although this method is considerably faster than conventional gDNA preparation methods, it requires transfer of the sample to a new test tube after chloroform extraction, which slows down the protocol and makes it inconvenient for simultaneous handling of a large number of samples. It has also been reported that usable gDNA can be isolated in a single tube by simple SDS treatment (Akada et al., 2000). However, the yield of gDNA from this protocol is relatively low and the results are poorly reproducible (Ref. I, Fig. 1A). In addition, a large number of cells is required for the protocol, and the buffer for subsequent PCR reactions has to be supplemented with Triton X-100 (Akada et al., 2000).

Principally, the idea was to improve the DNA yield of the SDS treatment by using it in conjunction with a cell wall disruptive agent, and then to remove traces of

SDS before PCR analysis. Initially, lithium acetate (LiOAc) and sodium hydroxide (NaOH) were used to disrupt cell walls. Lithium acetate is commonly used in yeast transformation protocols to weaken cell walls, and sodium hydroxide is used in protein extraction protocols (Thompson et al., 1998; Ito et al., 1983; Kushnirov, 2000). Both chemicals produced adequate results, but the output in PCR signals was diminished when using NaOH, possibly due to unsuitable pH (data not shown). Therefore, LiOAc-SDS lysis was chosen for further calibration and validation.

Following the initial lysis, ethanol was used for precipitation of the DNA, thereby removing the potentially inhibiting chemicals prior to PCR analysis. The protocol subjected to testing, therefore, consisted of following steps:

- Lysis of yeast cells in 100 μ l LiOAc-SDS solution.
- Precipitation of the DNA by addition of 300 μ l of 96-100% ethanol.
- Washing the resulting pellet with 70% ethanol to remove traces of LiOAc and SDS.
- Dissolving the pellet (which includes gDNA) in 100 μ l of water
- Removing the insoluble components by centrifugation
- Using 1 μ l of the extract for PCR

2.1.2. Calibration of the LiOAc-SDS DNA extraction protocol

In order to identify the critical conditions for efficient DNA extraction, a panel of calibration experiments were carried out. In all of these 100 μ l aliquots of mid-log phase liquid culture were collected, DNA was extracted in 100 μ l of lysis solution and analyzed by PCR. The test conditions were varied so that the tested component in each panel would be the limiting factor in the reaction. For example, short incubation time was used for testing of different temperatures; reactions were carried out at room temperature to test a range of SDS concentrations and incubation time; and long incubation time at high temperature was used for determination of optimal LiOAc concentration (Ref. I, Fig. 1C-F). The best results were obtained using 200 mM LiOAc and 1% SDS in the lysis solution, while carrying out the lysis at 70°C for ≥ 5 min. However, based on these experiments, many other suitable conditions can be selected if needed.

Having obtained the optimal conditions, the usability of the protocol was evaluated in its intended purpose - analysis of yeast colonies. A number of colonies were selected for DNA extraction, and two PCR fragments of 489 and 2383 bp in length were amplified. In all cases, robust reproducible output was detected,

confirming the usability of the method, especially when compared to the SDS extraction method described in Akada et al., 2000 (Ref. I, Fig. 1A).

In order to quantify the developed protocol, the yield and purity of the extracted gDNA was determined. For this purpose, gDNA from samples corresponding to 10^7 cells was separated in 0.9% TAE-agarose gel along with serial dilutions of gDNA with known concentrations. Approximately 100 nanograms of gDNA was extracted from 10^7 cells, again representing a considerable improvement compared to Akada et al., 2000. In addition, the experiment verified the presence of large amounts of RNA, which can be removed with RNase treatment, if needed (Ref. I, Fig. 1B).

Another important parameter to consider when choosing a DNA extraction method for PCR is the maximal possible length of amplicons that can be amplified. In order to validate the suitability of the developed protocol in this aspect, PCR reactions were performed with different expected product lengths from 718 bp to 5920 bp. The LiOAc-SDS protocol produced robust results up to 3505 bp, with amplicons of 4449 bp also clearly detectable, although if longer fragments need to be amplified, more delicate DNA extraction methods should be used (Ref. I, Fig. 2A). Taking into account that the average gene density of yeast the genome is about one open reading frame per 2 kb (Goffeau et al., 1996), the achieved length of PCR fragment should be more than adequate in most situations.

Lastly, the potential wide use of the method was confirmed by the successful extraction and amplification of DNA from six different yeast species (*Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Hansenula polymorpha*, *Schizosaccharomyces pombe*, *Candida albicans*, *Pichia pastoris*, and *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*) (Ref. I, Fig. 2B). In addition to simple PCR-based genotyping, we have used LiOAc-SDS extracted and Pfu DNA polymerase amplified *S. cerevisiae* gDNA for BigDye v3.1-based sequencing and obtained DNA sequence readout of the entire 850-bp PCR fragment (data not shown). We have also used LiOAc-SDS extracted gDNA directly in real-time qPCR reactions and for quick genotyping of yeast colonies (data not shown).

In summary, the developed method is a quick and reliable solution for gDNA extraction from yeasts that is suitable for PCR amplification of DNA fragments ≤ 3500 bp. The protocol can be carried out in a single test tube in under 15 minutes, and cells from liquid media and single colonies grown on solid media can be used. The method is suitable for routine genotyping of yeasts either by simple detection of PCR products or for initial amplification of genomic DNA for subsequent sequencing - procedures that are widely used for analysis of scientific, environmental, industrial and clinical samples.

2.2. Relicensing of transcriptionally inactivated origins (Ref. II)

DNA replication origins are licensed in G1 phase of the cell cycle when the Mcm2-7 helicase complexes are loaded onto origins. These pre-replicative complexes remain inactive until replication is initiated in the S phase. In budding yeast, the majority of replication origins are located in intergenic regions that are not directly transcribed (Wyrick et al., 2001). However, it has been found that bidirectional initiation of transcription from many promoters is common, leading to transcription of intergenic regions and production of unstable cryptic transcripts (David et al., 2006; Neil et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2009; Davis and Ares, 2006; Wyers et al., 2005). The widespread transcription of noncoding DNA and the compact nature of the yeast genome raise the possibility that a large fraction of replication origins are transcribed on a regular basis, which can lead to their inactivation before cells enter the S phase.

2.2.1. Transcription of replication origins

To estimate the fraction of replication origins that are regularly transcribed, genome-wide data of yeast transcripts in the loci of replication origins were analyzed. First, the tiling array data of total transcriptome from Neil et al., 2009 were analyzed, and transcription of replication origins was compared to the average level of noncoding DNA transcription genome-wide. This analysis revealed that more than 10% of replication origins were transcribed (Ref. II, Fig. 1A). However, this approach probably underestimated the total number of transcribed replication origins because the widespread transcription of noncoding DNA in yeast cells significantly increases the average level of background signal that was calculated for this analysis. Therefore, the genome-wide locations of CUTs (Cryptic Unstable Transcripts), defined by the SAGE (Serial Analysis of Gene Expression) analysis in Neil et al., 2009 was also analyzed. This analysis showed that at least one-third of the replication origin sequences are transcribed on a regular basis as CUTs (Ref. II, Fig. 1B). However, the replication origin placement in the yeast genome still appears to favor transcriptionally silent regions, as the number of heavily transcribed origins is significantly smaller than the number of those transcribed occasionally (Ref. II, Fig. 1). As mentioned, only 10% of replication origins are transcribed more frequently than the average noncoding DNA (Ref. II, Fig. 1A).

This is in good agreement with previous findings showing that active transcription abolishes replication origin firing both in yeast and in higher eukaryotes (Mori and Shirahige, 2007; Tanaka et al., 1994; Sasaki et al., 2006). However, the fact that many replication origins are situated in transcriptionally active loci suggests that the replication machinery might benefit from transcription-coupled remodeling and modifications of the chromatin that help pre-RC components to access DNA

and facilitate the initiation of replication. The observation that replication timing and transcription are positively correlated in higher eukaryotes surely supports this interpretation (Woodfine et al., 2005; White et al., 2004; Schübeler et al., 2002). However, consequently the question about the fate of transcribed origins is raised. Can sporadic transcription events permanently inactivate replication origins or is there a rescue mechanism?

2.2.2. Dynamics of pre-RC formation

An efficient solution to the transcription-coupled loss of functional origins would be re-establishment of pre-RCs on origins after sporadic transcription events. To investigate this possibility, different ARS elements were inserted into a galactose-inducible *GAL-VPS13* gene, 3 kb downstream from the transcription start site (Ref. II, Fig. 2A). ChIP assays were used to monitor the binding of ORC (Orc2) and Mcm2-7 (Mcm4) to the newly engineered origins and to their corresponding natural loci. When transcription was repressed, both complexes were detected at the *GAL-VPS13*-ARS loci while, in accordance with previous findings, recruitment of ORC and Mcm2-7 was severely reduced in conditions of active transcription (Ref. II, Fig. 2C and 2D). This confirms the disrupting effect of active transcription on replication origin functioning.

To further understand the temporal dynamics of transcription-related disruption of pre-RCs and to investigate the possible re-establishment of pre-RC components, the *GAL-VPS13*-ARS607 locus was first induced with galactose and then repressed with glucose. As expected, both ORC and Mcm2-7 were gradually removed from chromatin as the origin was transcribed. Interestingly, both complexes quickly returned after transcriptional repression and disappearance of RNAPII (Ref. II, Fig. 3). Half of the maximal amounts of Orc2 and Mcm4 were detected within the first 10 minutes after transcriptional repression, indicating that the pre-RCs reformed in the same cell cycle and the passage through the S phase was not necessary.

Naturally, when rescuing pre-RCs from transcriptional stress, it would be important to achieve this before the inhibition of licensing in the S phase. In order to eliminate the possibility of cells entering the S phase and to illustrate the possibility of origin relicensing in G1, cells were next arrested with α -factor and the transcription-coupled dynamics of Mcm2-7 were monitored. In all surveyed origins, Mcm4 was removed from *GAL-VPS13*-ARS loci in response to transcriptional induction. When transcription was subsequently repressed, but cells were arrested in G1, Mcm4 was efficiently reloaded (Ref. II, Fig. 4B). The time needed for complete rescue of transcriptionally inactivated replication origins was between 30 and 60 minutes at the *GAL-VPS13* locus (compare Ref. II, Fig. 3B and 4B). Whether this time is sufficient to rescue origins in their natural loci remains unanswered in the course of this study. However, it is clear that the repeated formation of pre-RCs in G1 is possible.

2.2.3. Activation of relicensed origin

After establishing that transcriptionally disrupted pre-RCs can be reloaded onto origins in G1 without passing through the S phase, the next question was whether the relicensed replication origins are activated in the following S phase. To this end, the transcription at *GAL-VPS13* locus was either constantly repressed, constantly activated, or activated and then repressed to allow origin relicensing before the release of α -factor arrested cells into the S phase. As an origin activation indicator, recruitment of Cdc45 protein to origin DNA was measured through the course of the S phase (Ref. II, Fig. 5A). As expected, both *ARS609* and *GAL-VPS13-ARS609* replication origins were activated in transcriptionally repressed conditions, and the *GAL-VPS13-ARS609* origin failed to activate when transcription was constantly activated. More importantly, the relicensed *ARS609* origin in the *GAL-VPS13* locus was efficiently activated, demonstrating that there is no functional loss in origin function. Furthermore, no change in the timing or efficiency was monitored when the origin was relicensed (Ref. II, Fig. 5A).

To further confirm that Cdc45 recruitment to a relicensed origin reflects its firing, replication structures were visualized at the 60 minute time-point, when Cdc45 associated with origin DNA. A replication bubble was successfully detected at the relicensed *GAL-VPS13-ARS609* locus, indicating origin firing (Ref. II, Fig. 5C). In addition, origin firing was also detected in cells that were grown continuously in transcriptionally repressed conditions, but not in cells where transcription at the *GAL-VPS13-ARS609* locus was active (Ref. II, Fig. 5D and 5E).

Taken together, these results show that transcriptionally disrupted pre-RCs are quickly reloaded onto origins as soon as transcription is shut down, demonstrating a possible rescue mechanism for transcriptionally inactivated replication origins. Importantly, in G1-arrested cells, pre-RCs can reform without transition through the S phase, and following release from G1 block, DNA replication can be initiated from these relicensed origins. Therefore, this mechanism may allow pre-RC assembly in conditions of sporadic transcription, ensuring that a sufficient number of functional replication initiation loci will be available to carry out DNA synthesis.

But what is the sufficient number of origins? Surely, cells can afford to lose some of the licensed origins as there is an excess number of origins in yeast and not all of them fire in a single S phase. Furthermore, even the most efficient origins do not fire in every S phase (Hyrien et al., 2003). Nevertheless, several lines of evidence suggest that replication origins are actively relicensed and that this helps to maintain the integrity of the genome. First, our finding that several efficient and active replication origins, like *ARS214*, *ARS305*, *ARS453*, and *ARS519*, are highly transcribed as CUTs, argues that the relicensing mechanism indeed is constantly used to maintain the potency of these origins (Ref. II, Suppl. Table 1). It has been argued that the surplus of licensed origins helps to safeguard genomic stability in situations where replication is disturbed and licensing is repressed

(Blow and Ge, 2009). Furthermore, considering the importance of accurate genome duplication, redundancy in DNA replication control naturally appears to be an inherent feature of the system. For example, similar redundancy can be found in mechanisms controlling re-initiation events in the S phase. The existence of multiple mechanisms that prevent re-initiation results in an error rate lower than 10^{-7} per origin per cell cycle (Diffley, 2011). Analogously, the high copy number of licensing factors compared to the number of origins may be responsible for generating redundancy in the number of licensed replication origins (Tanaka et al., 2011). This, in turn, can ensure the very low probability of failure of complete genome duplication.

Lastly, in addition to safeguarding the DNA replication process in yeast, relicensing of origins can also explain how replication origins in other eukaryotes can be positioned in transcriptionally active loci and why replication timing and transcription are in positive correlation (Woodfine et al., 2005; White et al., 2004; Schübeler et al., 2002; Hassan et al., 1994). As a good example, it has been found recently that the replication origins in *Trypanosoma brucei* are localized to the boundaries of transcription units (Tiengwe et al., 2012). In these situations, the otherwise harmful effects of accidental transcription can be balanced out by the relicensing system, while the same time replication complex formation benefits from being situated in the areas of open chromatin.

2.3. Chromatin-dependent and -independent regulation of DNA replication origin activation (Ref. III)

One characteristic feature of budding yeast replication origins is their time of activation in the S phase. This temporal behavior is well described, and individual replication origins fire at characteristic and reproducible times during the S phase. As discussed previously, chromatin context and chromosomal positioning of replication origins are the major determinants of replication timing (Chapter 1.4.2.). Nevertheless, it is also possible that replication origin sequences carry intrinsic DNA elements that mediate their time of activation and may help replication origins to overcome certain chromatin directed constraints.

2.3.1. Location-dependent origins

To find out whether epigenetic environment or internal properties of replication origins determine origin activation, different ARS sequences were relocated to a common chromosomal position and their activation time in this new location was determined. We reasoned that, if the timing of origin activation is determined solely by chromatin context, all origins should fire at the same time in their new position, whereas if the timing is derived from their intrinsic DNA sequence elements, the

origins should maintain their own original firing times regardless of their location in genome. The hallmark of origin activation used throughout the study was primarily the binding of Cdc45, although the firing times of all native replication origins we used were also verified by determining the binding of Pol2 (catalytic subunit DNA polymerase ϵ). Our measured activation times of native origins corresponded well with those previously reported (Ref. III, Fig. 1).

In order to dissect the sequence-derived and chromatin-dependent components of origin firing, activation times of these origins were determined when their sequences were copied to a common *VPS13* locus on chromosome XII. The *VPS13* locus itself contains no other DNA replication origins within a 60-kb region and is a genuinely late-replicating part of the chromosome, thus serving as good target locus to study activation of inserted ARS sequences (Knott et al., 2009). After relocation to *VPS13*, origins' firing times were compared to those in their native positions. Upon relocation into the *VPS13* locus, the dynamics of Cdc45 recruitment were changed at four replication origins. In their native locations, the peak of Cdc45 binding was observed at 30 min after G1 release at *ARS605*, at 40 min at *ARS409*, at 50 min at *ARS501* and at 70 min at *ARS609*. However, when inserted into the *VPS13* locus, activation of these origins was changed, suggesting that their firing was determined primarily by the genomic location rather than the intrinsic properties of their sequences. Moreover, as chromatin dependency would suggest, the new activation times of these ARS sequences were synchronized in *VPS13*, indicating that regardless of their original timing, different replication origins can adopt similar firing patterns when inserted into identical chromatin environment (Ref. III, Fig. 2).

These results are in good agreement with what has emerged from previous origin relocation experiments. For example, the timing of *ARS1* can be delayed upon relocation to late replicating chromatin near the end of chromosome V (Ferguson and Fangman, 1992). Similarly, loosening the chromatin derived restraints when relocating *ARS501* from a subtelomeric region to a plasmid advances its timing (Ferguson et al., 1991). The additional layer of information emerging from our study indicates that origins with very different initial activation times can adopt similar chromatin derived activation times. Therefore, it appears that chromatin context is the major determinant of origin firing time, and that changing the chromatin environment can both advance and delay origin firing. This idea is further supported by the finding that late replication origins retain their firing times when moved to a plasmid together with their surrounding sequences, but not when moved alone (Friedman et al., 1996). Additionally, changing the global chromatin state results in similar effects. For example, deletion of *RPD3* causes significantly earlier initiation of late-firing origins. The deletion of *RPD3* deacetylase increases histone acetylation and expands the range of euchromatin. (Vogelauer et al., 2002; Aparicio et al., 2004; Knott et al., 2009).

What is the mechanism that underlies the regulation of origin timing by changing chromatin structure? Such observations can be explained by the now widely accepted stochastic replication model (Bechhoefer and Rhind, 2012). The idea behind the model is that the key components needed for the activation of replication origins are limiting in cells. Therefore, the origins situated in more accessible parts of the genome have an advantage when competing for these activation factors. This rationale also suggests that overexpression of the limiting factors should advance the timing of late replication origins, and this is indeed what has been found (Mantiero et al., 2011; Tanaka et al., 2011). Furthermore, when overexpression of limiting replication factors is combined with the deletion of *RPD3*, an additional set of dormant origins is activated (Mantiero et al., 2011). This indicates that even when initiation factors are present in excess, some parts of chromatin remain inaccessible. This, in turn, means that limiting the number of initiation factors serves as an instrument to mediate origin firing times, and the process is self-regulated by the affinity of replication origins to such factors, which can be regulated epigenetically.

2.3.2. Location-independent origins

In addition to the location dependent origins, whose activation times were synchronized in the *VPS13* locus, another set of replication origins emerged from our study. Contrary to those described above, no shift in Cdc45-binding peak was detected at origins *ARS305*, *ARS607* or *ARS737* when they were inserted into the *VPS13* locus. All these origins were early firing both in their original and in the *VPS13* loci, as the binding of Cdc45 to these origins peaked at 30 min after the release from G1 arrest (Ref. III, Fig. 3). These results demonstrate that some early-firing origins can override the chromatin-derived control and retain their activation pattern in the new environment. However, this is not a common feature of all early replication origins, as *ARS605* shifted from early- to late-firing upon relocation into the *VPS13* locus (Ref. III, Fig. 2C). Therefore, a set of early-firing ARS sequences must possess specific sequence elements that ensure their early firing even when relocated to different sites in the genome.

In order to test whether this location independence is also maintained in other genomic loci, the *ARS607* sequence was inserted into various other chromosomal locations. First, *ARS607* was placed into the *DPB11* locus on chromosome X, which resides in late-replicating chromatin with no other adjacent replication origins (Knott et al., 2009). As expected, Cdc45 was recruited to the locus 30 min after the release from G1 arrest as it was in *VPS13* and in its native locus (Ref. III, Fig. 4J). Next, the *ARS607* sequence was tested in genomic regions that already contain native replication origins. Since neither *VPS13* nor *DPB11* normally contain active replication origins, it was possible that activation of *ARS607* was not properly regulated in these loci because some of the distal regulatory sequences

were missing in these genuinely origin-free regions. To test this possibility, the early origin *ARS728* located near the *CLD1* locus and the late origin *ARS609* near the *HXK1* locus were replaced with *ARS607*. The *CLD1-ARS607* locus was activated early in the S phase which was expected as both *ARS728* and *ARS607* are early-firing origins. More importantly, *ARS607* also activated early in the *HXK1* locus where it replaced the late-firing *ARS609*. While the firing time of the native *ARS609* locus was around 70 min after release from G1 arrest, the recruitment of Cdc45 was shifted 40 min forward in the *HXK1-ARS607* locus and peaked at 30 min after release from G1. Notably, the replaced *ARS609* itself did not harbor any intrinsic information for very late firing, as upon insertion into the *VPS13* locus, its activation shifted earlier and synchronized with the timing of other location-dependent origins in this locus (Ref. III, Fig. 2D). These findings confirm that *ARS607* is activated early in the S phase regardless of its location in the genome, and that it can convert late-replicating regions into early-replicating ones. In our experimental system, this origin fires 30 min after release from the G1 arrest in all tested loci. This demonstrates that early firing of *ARS607* is an intrinsic property of its sequence, enabling early initiation of DNA synthesis regardless of the surrounding genomic structures.

2.3.3. Forkhead binding ensures early activation

To identify the sequence elements required for chromatin independent activation of origins, truncated variants of the *ARS607* sequence were made (Ref. III, Fig. 4A). First, 21 nucleotides were removed in the *ARS607* Δ 1 mutant with no effect on its activation timing. Next, additional 21 nucleotides were removed in *ARS607* Δ 2, which led to delayed activation of this origin in the *VPS13* locus (Ref. III, Fig. 4B and 4C). This deletion successfully separated the sequence needed for basic origin functioning from the sequence needed for its early activation in location-independent manner. The importance of this region becomes clear when it is analyzed in the context of recent findings from Knott et al., 2012. Namely, it was found that deletion of Forkhead transcription factors leads to genome-wide deregulation of the origin firing pattern in budding yeast, resulting in delayed activation of early origins and shifting many late origins to fire earlier. All three origins (*ARS305*, *ARS607* and *ARS737*) we found to be location-independent were delayed in the Fkh1/2 (ForKhead Homolog) double mutant.

ARS607 contains two putative binding sites for Fkh1/2 proteins, one of which is deleted in the *ARS607* Δ 2 mutant, whereas both sites are retained in the *ARS607* Δ 1. To confirm the importance of Forkhead factors for early firing of the three origins, point mutations were introduced into the Fkh1/2 binding sites in *ARS607*, *ARS305* and *ARS737* (Ref. III, Fig. 4A). All of these origins have two Forkhead sites, and when either one of these sites was mutated, early activation of these origins was lost, suggesting that both Forkhead binding sites are necessary to ensure early firing

of these origins (Fig 4D-4H). The double mutant of *ARS305*, where both Forkhead sites were mutated, was also analyzed in Knott et al. 2012, and its activation was impaired. In accordance with this, our results showed that the Forkhead mutants of *ARS607* and *ARS737* also fire significantly later. Furthermore, the conversion of the *HXK1* locus into an early-replicating region is dependent on functional Fkh1/2 sites in *ARS607*, as the point-mutated version of *ARS607* fires late in this locus (Ref. III, Fig. 4J).

Naturally, in order to connect the delayed activation of the mutant origins with Forkhead factors, binding of the Fkh1 protein to replication origins was followed by ChIP assay. Fkh1 was detected at the early-replicating *ARS305*, *ARS737*, *ARS607* and *VPS13-ARS607* loci, but not at the *ARS409*, *ARS501*, *ARS605*, *ARS609* or at the origin-free *VPS13* locus. Importantly, when either one or both Fkh1/2 sites were disrupted in *ARS607*, *ARS305* or *ARS737*, recruitment of Fkh1 to the origins was severely reduced (Ref. III, Fig. 5A). Possibly, the binding of Forkhead proteins to replication origins must exceed a certain threshold level to ensure their early activation, and two Forkhead binding sites establish efficient recruitment of these factors through cooperative binding to the target DNA sequence as shown by *in vitro* assays (Hollenhorst et al., 2001). Altogether, these findings confirm that the sufficient binding of Fkh1 to some origins ensures their ability to activate early irrespective of their genomic location.

As the presence of two Forkhead binding sites was necessary for early firing of location-independent origins, two Forkhead binding sites were also introduced into the *ARS609* sequence in order to render it early. Unfortunately, this did not change the firing pattern of *ARS609* (Ref. III, Fig. S2A, S2B and S2C). However, binding of Fkh1 protein to this altered sequence was not observed either, indicating that the sole the presence of Fkh1/2 recognition sequences within the locus is not sufficient for efficient binding of Forkhead factors (Ref. III, Fig. S2D). It is likely that accessibility of Fkh1/2 sites is hindered by nucleosomes. This possibility is supported by the genome-wide nucleosome localization data indicating that the *ARS609* locus is covered by nucleosomes, whereas *ARS305*, *ARS607* and *ARS737* are located in nucleosome free regions (NFRs) (Jiang and Pugh, 2009). Therefore, at least one of the Fkh1/2 sites inserted into the *ARS609* locus is probably covered by a nucleosome, which may make the site inaccessible to Forkhead factors. Earlier studies have shown that localization of the *ARS1* regulatory sequences within an NFR is crucial for the function of the origin, and that ORC is a key factor for precise nucleosome positioning at the borders of origins (Simpson, 1990; Lipford and Bell, 2001; Eaton et al., 2010). Interestingly, when the *ARS607* sequence was inserted into the *HXK1* or *VPS13* loci, Forkhead binding and early activation was maintained (Ref. III, Fig. 4J). Therefore, it is possible that in addition to Forkhead binding sites, elements necessary for maintaining NFRs are also needed for determining chromatin independency of replication origins.

In order to put the described findings into a broader context, the existence and positioning of Forkhead binding sites were analyzed in the context of temporal activation of replication origins. In particular, the values of replication indexes (Raghuraman et al., 2001; Nieduszynski et al., 2007; Yabuki et al., 2002) of origins containing different numbers of Forkhead binding sites were compared. The mean activation time of replication origins harboring zero or one Fkh1/2 site did not differ from the activation time of all origins, but origins containing two Forkhead sites separated from each other by 60–120 bp were almost exclusively early-firing. This suggests that Forkhead regulation affects a large number of origins and that, not only the presence but also the positioning of the Forkhead sites within an origin is important (Ref. III, Fig. 5B).

Taken together, these results indicate that some immediate-early replication origins contain two Fkh1/2-binding sites, one of which is found in close proximity to the ACS and another is located 60–120 bp away. It is also apparent that efficient binding of the Forkhead factors assures the position independent firing of some replication origins. In line with the previously discussed model of the temporal regulation of origin firing, the binding of Forkhead factors may give replication origins an advantage when competing for the limiting initiation factors. Some proof supporting this idea can be found in the Knott et al., 2012 study. First, it was found that the Forkhead activated origins were enriched in Cdc45 binding in G1 and that this was Fkh1/2 dependent. Additionally, binding of Cdc45 to early origins that were not regulated by Forkhead increased after Fkh1/2 deletion. In other words, when the binding of Cdc45 to Forkhead regulated origins was disrupted, the effective concentration of Cdc45 increased for other origins.

Forkhead induced binding of limiting factors could be facilitated in several ways. First, since Cdc45 recruitment to origins is dependent on DDK (Tanaka et al., 2011), Forkhead factors could directly recruit DDK to replication origins and therefore actively regulate origin firing. However, Forkhead factors are unlikely to achieve this without altering the accessibility of the chromatin environment, since it has been shown that the DDK subunit Dbf4 itself is one of the limiting initiation factors (Tanaka et al., 2011) and that even when it is overexpressed, tightly packed areas of chromatin remain inaccessible to limiting factors (Mantiero et al., 2011). Conversely, our results indicate that even the very late *HXK1* locus can be efficiently converted to early initiation via the insertion of the *ARS607* sequence, and that this is Forkhead dependent (Ref. III, Fig. 4J). Therefore, it is likely that instead of active recruitment of initiation factors, Forkhead binding alters the accessibility of chromatin near replication origins.

Currently, available evidence suggests that Forkhead binding can alter the nuclear positioning of replication origins and facilitate the clustering of early replication origins. First, enrichment of interactions between early replication origins was observed when the arrangement of DNA in nuclear space was analyzed (Duan et al.,

2010). Further analysis of this dataset revealed that the Forkhead activated origins form distinct clusters in the nucleus and that the interaction between two Forkhead activated origins (*ARS305* and *ARS607*) is lost upon *Fkh1/2* deletion (Knott et al., 2012). *Fkh1* dependent association between distant genomic regions has been also described in budding yeast mating type switching (Sun et al., 2002). Therefore, the molecular capacity of *Fkh1* to functionally mediate genomic clustering has been demonstrated several times.

Although direct evidence that the Forkhead dependent clustering facilitates open chromatin and better DNA accessibility at replication origins is currently lacking, such mode of action would fit well with the proposed mechanism of controlling replication timing through origin access by limiting initiation factors.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was launched to find the effects of the chromatin environment on the functioning of replication origins. Problems arising from chromosomal positioning of replication origins and the effects of active transcription on origin regulation were primarily addressed. Methodologically, both approaches were based on genetically relocating a number of replication origins either to transcriptionally active loci or to different chromosomal positions. In order to easily produce and verify the yeast strains used in this study, a novel genomic DNA extraction protocol was developed. The new method is a quick and easy way to reliably extract DNA from yeast cell colonies and liquid culture for a downstream array of PCR based applications. The protocol has been adopted into the everyday work routine of our laboratory, and I hope that others will also benefit from it. Therefore, the first practical outcome of this work has the potential to impact general yeast genetics research.

When dissecting the importance of active transcription on origin activation, many replication origins in the budding yeast genome were found to be transcribed *in vivo*. Previous observations, that this kind of transcriptional disruption in replication origin loci inhibits replication complex formation, were confirmed in this study. At the same time it was found that pre-RC formation at these loci is a fairly dynamic process, and that transcriptionally removed replication complexes can quickly reassemble after transcriptional repression. Moreover, these reassembled, or relicensed origins are capable of Mcm2-7 activation and origin firing in the following S phase. Based on these results, it is likely that in *in vivo* conditions a balance is formed between accidental transcriptional disruption of replication origins and their constant relicensing in G1 phase. This balance may be responsible for assuring an adequate number of functional licensed origins when cells enter the S phase.

Lastly, the importance of the chromosomal environment on origin activation was studied. In agreement with previous findings, it was found that chromatin context is the sole determinant of activation for many origins. The activation time of these origins changes when they are inserted into different chromosomal positions. At the same time, origins containing double binding sites for Forkhead transcription factors are able to override the chromatin determined replication timing, and relatively late-replicating parts of the genome can be converted to early. Additionally, a set of exclusively early firing origins from the budding yeast genome were found to have two Forkhead binding sites with a specific 60 to 120 bp spacing possibly needed for efficient Forkhead binding at these loci. These results indicate that while replication origins are subject to a range different control mechanisms, the existence of chromatin independent replication origins may assure an efficient start of DNA synthesis in various conditions.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

DNA replikatsiooni initsiatsiooni uurimine *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*

Antud uurimustöö raames uuriti, kuidas kromatiini kontekst mõjutab replikatsiooni alguspunktide aktivatsiooni pagaripärmis. Käsitleti replikatsiooni alguspunktide kromosomaalse paiknemise ja transkriptsioonilise inaktivatsiooniga kaasnevaid probleeme. Töö esimeses osas kirjeldati käesoleva hetke arusaami replikatiivsete komplekside moodustumisest ja nende aktivatsioonist rakutsükli S faasis. Samuti iseloomustati mehhanisme, mis tagavad DNA täpse, ühekordse duplitseerumise. Töö praktilise osa paremaks mõistmiseks anti ka ülevaade replikatsiooni alguspunktide ajalisest aktivatsioonist ja juba teadaolevatest faktoritest, mis seda mõjutavad. Viimasena tutvustati kahe fundamentaalse DNA-seoselise protsessi, DNA replikatsiooni ja transkriptsiooni omavahelisi seoseid, keskendudes eelkõige sellele kuidas aktiivne transkriptsioon mõjutab DNA replikatsiooni.

Töö praktiline osa hõlmas endas metodoloogiliselt paljude replikatsiooni alguspunktide geneetilist ümberpaigutamist genoomi erinevatesse kromosomaalsetesse positsioonidesse ning ka transkriptsiooniliselt aktiivsesse lookustesse. Selleks, et lihtsustada nende pärimistüvede tegemist, arendati esmalt uudne genoomse DNA ekstrahheerimise meetod, millega on võimalik kiirelt ja usaldusväärset eraldada DNA-d kasutamaks seda erinevate PCR-il põhinevate rakenduste jaoks.

Uurides transkriptsiooni võimaliku mõju DNA replikatsiooni algatamisele leidsime, et paljud replikatsiooni alguspunktid paiknevad pärmi genoomis positsioonides, mis teeb võimalikuks nende transkriptsioonilise inaktivatsiooni. Samuti selgus, et transkriptsioon takistab funktsionaalsete replikatsiooni komplekside moodustumist. Kuna aga replikatsiooni komplekside moodustumise dünaamika oli oodatust kiirem, on võimalik nende kiire reassembleerumise transkriptsioonilise inaktivatsiooni järel. Lisaks näitasime, et sellised uuesti moodustunud replikatsiooni kompleksid on funktsionaalsed. Antud mehhanism on vajalik tagamaks piisava hulga funktsionaalseid replikatsiooni alguspunkte genoomi efektiivseks paljundamiseks.

Viimasena otsiti antud töös vastust küsimusele, kuidas kromatiini kontekst mõjutab replikatsiooni alguspunktide ajalist aktivatsiooni. Esmalt leidsime, et paljude replikatsiooni alguspunktide aktivatsiooni jaoks on nende kromosomaalne paiknemine peamine ajastust määrav faktor. Samas kirjeldasime ka mehhanismi, millega teatud replikatsiooni alguspunktid väldivad kromatiini kontekstist tulenevaid piiranguid. Sellised replikatsiooni alguspunktid omavad kahte kindla paigutusega Forkhead transkriptsiooni faktori seostumis-kohta. Forkheadi seostumine aga tagab replikatsiooni alguspunkti varajase aktivatsiooni sõltumata tema kromosomaalsest paiknemisest. Selliselt tagatakse efektiivne DNA replikatsiooni algatamine paljudes erinevates tingimustes.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Arnold Kristjuhan for all the hard work and patience put into my education as a researcher. Much assistance has been provided by Kersti Kristjuhan and all the other lab members of our chromatin research group. In addition, I would like to thank all the coauthors of the papers presented in this thesis. Kersti also pointed out that Signe's name should be mentioned in this section. So, thank you Signe! My gratitude also goes to Tiina Tamm and Nikita Avvakumov for critical reading and helpful notes on this thesis.

Last, but definitely not least, I would like to thank my parents Reet and Viktor, whose support has made the now twenty-something year circling in the educational system possible. The time spent without latex gloves has been mighty fun thanks to my friends Kuldar, Ott, Liis, Jaanis, Annely, Paula, Rebane and my girlfriend Kristel.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Marko Lõoke
Date of birth: 17.07.1982
Citizenship: Estonian
Address: Department of Cell Biology
Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, University of
Tartu,
Riia 23, 51010
Telephone: +372 55572686
E-mail: marko.looke@ut.ee

Education:

2007 - ... University of Tartu, doctoral studies in molecular and cell biology
2007 University of Tartu, MSc in molecular and cell biology
2005 University of Tartu, BSc in gene technology
2001 Hugo Treffner Gymnasium

Working experience:

2007 - ... University of Tartu, Specialist

List of publications:

1. Lõoke M, Kristjuhan K, Väriv S, Kristjuhan A (2013) Chromatin-dependent and -independent regulation of DNA replication origin activation in budding yeast. *EMBO reports*, 14(2):191–8.
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ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Marko Lõoke
Sünniaeg: 17.07.1982
Kodakondsus: Estonian
Aadress: Rakubioloogia Õppetool
Molekulaar- ja Rakubioloogia Instituut, Tartu Ülikool,
Riia 23, 51010
Telefon: +372 55572686
E-mail: marko.looke@ut.ee

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2007 Tartu Ülikool, MSc molekulaar- ja rakubioloogias
2005 Tartu Ülikool, BSc molekulaar- ja rakubioloogias
2001 Hugo Treffneri Gümnaasium

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