

**OPTIMISATION OF *gus* A GENE TRANSFER  
INTO COCOA (*THEOBROMA CACAO*) VIA  
*AGROBACTERIUM TUMEFACIENS* –  
MEDIATED TRANSFORMATION**



**ANISAH BINTI SAVANTIL**

**UMS**  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA SABAH  
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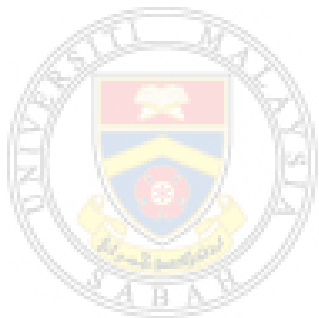
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*AGROBACTERIUM TUMEFACIENS*-MEDIATED  
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**2. CO-SUPERVISOR**

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02 November 2011

## ABSTRACT

### OPTIMISATION OF *gusA* GENE TRANSFER INTO COCOA (*THEOBROMA CACAO*) VIA *AGROBACTERIUM TUMEFACIENS*-MEDIATED TRANSFORMATION

This study describes the optimization of parameters (pH, temperature, periods of co-cultivation and age of explant) for *gusA* gene transfer into two cocoa clones (PBC 123 and BR 25) via *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transformation by using staminode cocoa bud flower collected one day before anthesis as explants. Super avirulent *A. tumefaciens* strain AGL 1 harbouring the binary vector pGPTV-Kan/GUS was used. The binary vector contains a CaMV 35S-driven  $\beta$ -glucuronidase (GUS) gene and a complete neomycin phosphotransferase II (*npII*) gene for conferring plant resistance to the antibiotic paromomycin. Callus induction medium (IM) for clone PBC 123 consisted of Driver and Kuniyuki Walnut (DKW) minerals, glucose, vitamins,  $2 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  2, 4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and  $0.005 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  Thidiazuron (TDZ) pH5.3. Callus IM for clone BR 25 was identical to IM for clone PBC 123 except the TDZ was replaced with  $100 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  2-iP. Callus was allowed to proliferate on semi-solid callus inducing medium for 14 days, 21 days, and 28 days prior co-cultivation with *A. tumefaciens* on semi-solid co-cultivation media for one, two, and three days at various temperatures ( $19^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $21^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $23^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), and pHs (4.8, 5.3, and 5.8). Each set of parameter was design in triplicate plate. Half amount of treated calli in each tested parameter was examined for GUS expression, while another half was selected on selective medium containing  $100 \mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$  paromomycin. GUS expression analyses were done after 18 weeks selection. Based on the GUS expression analyses, up to 86% of calli had at least one blue sector after 18 weeks on selection media containing  $100 \mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$  paromomycin. The best transformation frequency (86.1%) for clone BR 25 was obtained when explant was 21 days old and transformation condition was with pH 5.8,  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and three days co-cultivation period. For clone PBC 123, the best transformation frequency (83.3%) was obtained when explant was 14 days old and transformation condition was with pH 4.8,  $19^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and three days co-cultivation period. A PCR-walking method (Cottage *et al.* 2001) with modification was used to verify the integration of the T-DNA into genome of the putatively transformed cocoa calli. Based on the sequencing results, this method worked with purified plasmid pGPTV-KAN/GUS but the sensitivity too low for putatively transformed cocoa calli.



## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini membincangkan beberapa parameter termasuk suhu, pH, tempoh ko-kultivasi dan umur kalus untuk pemindahan gen *gusA* ke dalam dua klon koko (PBC 123 dan BR 25) melalui kaedah *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* dengan menggunakan staminode bunga koko sebagai eksplant. Strain *A. tumefaciens* yang digunakan adalah dari jenis 'super' avirulen AGL 1 yang membawa vektor binari pGPTV-Kan/GUS. Vektor pGPTV-Kan/GUS ini mengandungi gene  $\beta$ -glucuronidase (GUS) yang dikawal oleh promoter CaMV 35S dan gen lengkap neomycin phosphotransferase II (*nptII*) yang membawa kerintangan tumbuhan terhadap antibiotik paromomycin. Media mengaruh kalus untuk klon PBC 123 terdiri daripada mineral DKW, glukosa, vitamin-vitamin,  $2 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  2,4-D dan  $0.005 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  TDZ, pH 5.3. Media mengaruh kalus untuk klon BR 25 adalah sama dengan media mengaruh kalus klon PBC 123 kecuali kandungan TDZ yang digantikan dengan  $100 \text{ mg l}^{-1}$  2-iP. Kalus dibiarkan membesar di atas media mengaruh separa pejal selama 14 hari, 21 hari dan 28 hari sebelum ko-kultivasi dengan *A. tumefaciens* di atas media ko-kultivasi separa pejal selama satu, dua dan tiga hari pada suhu  $19^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $21^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,  $23^{\circ}\text{C}$  dan  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$  serta pada pH 4.8, 5.3, and 5.8. Setiap set parameter direka dalam tiga replikat piring. Separuh daripada kalus yang telah diko-kultivasi dengan *A. tumefaciens* dari setiap set parameter diambil untuk tujuan ujian penyataan aktiviti GUS. Manakala yang separuh lagi dikultur di atas media pemilihan mengandungi  $100 \mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$  paromomycin. Analisis penyataan GUS dilakukan selepas 18 minggu di atas media pemilihan. Berdasarkan kepada analisis penyataan GUS, sehingga 86% daripada kalus yang diuji mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya satu kawasan bertanda biru selepas 18 minggu di atas media pemilihan. Frekuensi transformasi terbaik (86.1%) untuk klon BR 25 diperolehi daripada kalus yang berumur 21 hari, 3 hari ko-kultivasi pada pH 5.8 dengan suhu  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Bagi klon PBC 123, frekuensi transformasi terbaik (83.3%) diperolehi daripada kalus berumur 14 hari, 3 hari ko-kultivasi pada pH 4.8 dengan suhu  $19^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Kaedah 'PCR-walking' (Cottage et al. 2001) dengan pengubahsuaian digunakan untuk tujuan verifikasi integrasi T-DNA ke dalam genom kalus koko yang secara putatif telah ditransormasi. Berdasarkan kepada keputusan penjujukan, kaedah ini berfungsi bagi plasmid tulin pGPTV-KAN/GUS tetapi kepekaannya adalah terlalu rendah untuk kalus koko yang putatif.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

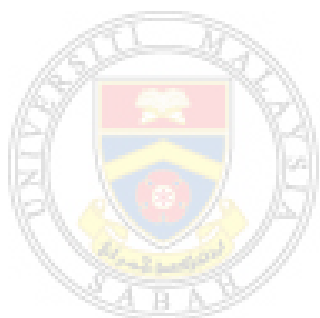
	Page
<b>TITLE</b>	i
<b>DECLARATION</b>	ii
<b>CERTIFICATION</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	iv
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	v
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	vi
<b>TABLE OF CONTENT</b>	vii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	x
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATION</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF APPENDIX</b>	xix
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.1 <i>Theobroma cacao</i> L.	4
2.2. Cocoa Plant Morphology	7
2.2.1 Cocoa branches	7
2.2.2 Cocoa leaves	8
2.2.3 Cocoa flowers	9
2.2.4 Cocoa fruit (pod)	11
2.3 Cocoa Planting Material: Varieties in Malaysia	11
2.4 Malaysian Cocoa Industry: Issues and Challenges	16
2.5 Cocoa Breeding	17
2.6 Genetic Transformation	19
2.6.1 <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i>	19
2.6.2 <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> Strain and Binary Vector Systems	23
2.6.3 <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> -Mediated Transformation of Plant Cells	25
2.6.4 Advantages of <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> -Mediated Transformation	26
2.6.5 Factor That Affect the <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> -Mediated Transformation Efficiency	26
2.6.6 Selection and Identification of T-DNA Integration Into Plant Genome	31

<b>CHAPTER 3: MATERIALS AND METHODS</b>	
3.1 Plant Materials	36
3.2 Initiation of Callus	36
3.2.1 Flower Collection and Sterilization	36
3.2.2 Culture Condition	36
3.3 Paromomycin Sensitivity Test (Kill Curve Test)	37
3.4 Bacterial Strain and Plasmid	38
3.4.1 Culture Conditions and Maintenance of Bacteria	39
3.5 Transformation of Cocoa Callus	40
3.5.1 Initiation of Cocoa Callus	40
3.5.2 Preparation of <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i>	40
3.5.3 Transformation of Cocoa Callus	40
3.5.4 GUS Histochemical Assay	41
3.6 Statistical Analyses	42
3.7 Molecular Analysis	43
3.7.1 Cocoa DNA Extraction	43
3.7.2 Identification of T-DNA/Cocoa DNA Junction Sequence	45
<b>CHAPTER 4: RESULTS</b>	
4.1 Initiation of Callus	55
4.2 Paromomycin Sensitivity Test (Kill Curve Test)	56
4.3 Transformation of Cocoa Callus	63
4.3.1 Effect of parameters on cocoa callus transformation	63
4.3.2 Paromomycin Selection and GUS Expression Analyses	73
4.4 Molecular Analysis	75
4.4.1 Cocoa DNA Extraction	75
4.4.2 Identification of Flanked T-DNA/Cocoa DNA Sequence	76
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION</b>	
5.1 Initiation of Callus	83
5.2 Paromomycin Sensitivity Test (Kill Curve Test)	85
5.3 Transformation of Cocoa Callus	86
5.3.1 Effect of parameters on cocoa callus transformation	86
5.3.2 GUS expression analysis and paromomycin selection analysis	91
5.4 Molecular Analysis	93
5.4.1 Cocoa DNA extraction	93
5.4.2 Identification of Flanked T-DNA/Cocoa DNA Sequence	94
5.5 Improvements / Future Work	95
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION</b>	96
<b>REFERENCES</b>	99
<b>APPENDIX:</b>	
Appendix A: Common Stock Solutions	109
Appendix B: Reagents and Media Recipes	113
Appendix C: Cocoa Clone Information	119
Appendix D: Leaf Disk Transformation of Tobacco Using <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i>	122
Appendix E: List of Publication	126

## LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 2.1	Productivity and beans characteristic of several recommended cocoa hybrid.	14
Table 2.2	Several recommended clone and characteristic.	15
Table 2.3	Suitable clones for various locations in Malaysia.	16
Table 3.1	Details information of the kill curve test	38
Table 3.2	Source of cocoa genomic DNA for experimental DNA, positive control and negative control.	43
Table 3.3	Digestion mixture.	46
Table 3.4	Ligation mixture.	46
Table 3.5	Oligonucleotide sequences for T-DNA primer (Primer 1) and adaptor primer (Primer 2).	48
Table 3.6	Reaction mixture for the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) amplification.	48
Table 3.7	Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) parameters setting.	48
Table 3.8	Ligation reactions.	50
Table 3.9	Solution I. The solution was filter sterilized and stored at 4°C.	52
Table 3.10	Solution II. This solution was freshly prepared on the day of DNA purification	52
Table 3.11	Solution III (Prepared solution was 3 M with respect to potassium and 5 M with respect to acetate	53
Table 3.12	Thermocycler reaction mixtures.	54
Table 3.13	Thermal cycler program set with 25-cycle event.	54
Table 4.1	Qualitative data of paromomycin sensitivity test on cocoa callus of clone PBC123 and BR25.	58

Table 4.2	Percent of calli resistant to paromomycin and stained blue for GUS activity vs. various co-cultivation parameters for PBC 123.	65
Table 4.3	Percent of calli resistant to paromomycin and stained blue for GUS activity vs. various co-cultivation parameters for BR 25.	69
Table 4.4	The best transformation frequencies obtained from cocoa calli 20 weeks after co-cultivation (18 weeks on selection medium).	73
Table 1 (APPX. D)	Summarises of GUS expression and paromomycin analysis observation.	124



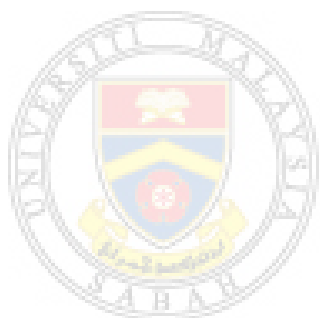
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## LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2.1	Cocoa pods from Criollo type.	5
Figure 2.2	Cocoa pods from Forastero type.	6
Figure 2.3	Cocoa pods from Trinitario type.	7
Figure 2.4	Cocoa trees.	8
Figure 2.5	Cocoa leaves.	9
Figure 2.6	Cocoa flowers cushion with open and unopened buds emerged on the branch of the cocoa tree.	10
Figure 2.7	Floral diagram of <i>Theobroma cacao</i> .	10
Figure 2.8	Cocoa fruit (pod).	11
Figure 2.9	Cocoa pod for cocoa clones PBC 123 and BR 25.	14
Figure 2.10	Induction of <i>virA</i> and <i>virG</i> genes by secretion of acetosyringone from the wounded plant tissues.	21
Figure 2.11	Model for the formation of single-stranded T-DNA in <i>Agrobacterium</i> showing the putative function of VirD1, VirD2, VirD3, VirE2, and the VirB operon.	22
Figure 2.12	The process of <i>Agrobacterium</i> infection and plant cell transformation. The numbers refer to sequential stages.	23
Figure 2.13	Structure of the pGPTV-Kan-GUS T-DNA region.	25
Figure 2.14	Analysis of T-DNA insertion sites in plant cells by PCR-walking. Flow chart of kill curve test.	35
Figure 3.1	Flow chart of kill cure test	38
Figure 3.2	Structure of the pGPTV-Kan-GUS T-DNA region.	49
Figure 3.3	Outline of the cocoa callus transformation.	42
Figure 3.4	Restriction digestions of cocoa genomic DNA and ligation with the annealed adaptors.	47

Figure 3.5	PCR of T-DNA cocoa DNA junction sequence using T-DNA-specific primer and adaptor-specific primer.	49
Figure 4.1	Flower bud explants of cocoa clone PBC 123 and BR 25 at different stages of growth on semi-solid callus-inducing medium.	55
Figure 4.2	Calli of clone PBC 123 one week on induction medium containing various concentrations of paromomycin.	57
Figure 4.3	Calli of clone PBC 123 third week on induction medium containing various concentrations of paromomycin.	58
Figure 4.4	Calli of clone PBC 123 tenth week on induction medium containing various concentrations of paromomycin.	59
Figure 4.5	Calli of clone BR 25 one week on induction medium various concentrations of paromomycin	60
Figure 4.6	Calli of clone BR 25 third week on induction medium containing various concentrations of paromomycin.	61
Figure 4.7	Calli of clone BR 25 tenth week on induction medium containing various concentrations of paromomycin.	62
Figure 4.8	Nodular on dead cocoa callus (PBC 123) after 14 days on selection medium containing 100 $\mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$ paromomycin.	74
Figure 4.9	Transformed cocoa calli on paromomycin selection medium and cocoa callus with blue stain after assayed for GUS expression.	74
Figure 4.10	Gel electrophoresis of extracted genomic DNA.	75
Figure 4.11	Nucleotide sequence of the right T-DNA border of pGPTV-Kan/GUS starting from the 3' end of the GUS gene through the 25 bp right border.	76
Figure 4.12	The annealed adaptors and the site where adaptor-specific primer (primer 2) was designed on the adaptor 2 sequence.	77
Figure 4.13	Diagram of PCR processes for identification of T-DNA/cocoa DNA junction sequence.	78
Figure 4.14	Gel electrophoresis of PCR products.	79
Figure 4.15	<i>E. coli</i> JM109 + pGEM®-T Easy vector colonies grown on LB plates containing 100 $\mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$ ampicillin, 80 $\mu\text{g ml}^{-1}$ , and 0.5 mM IPTG.	80

Figure 4.16	Agarose gel electrophoresis of restriction digestion analysis of miniprep recombinant plasmid DNA.	80
Figure 4.17	PCR products sequence of positive controls (pGPTV-Kan/GUS)	81
Figure 4.18	Blastn search results of the flanking DNA of pGPTV-Kan/GUS positive control.	81
Figure 4.29	PCR products sequence of experimental DNA (NPTII <sup>+</sup> , GUS <sup>+</sup> ).	82
Figure 4.20	PCR product sequence of experimental DNA (NPTII <sup>+</sup> , non-assayed for GUS expression).	82
Figure (APPX.D)	1 Tobacco leaves on selection media.	124
Figure (APPX.D)	2 Transformed tobacco leaves with <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i> AGL1:pGPTV-Kan/GUS.	125



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

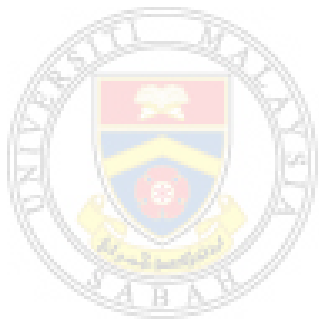
AS	: Acetosyringone
ATP	: Adenosine Triphosphate
<i>A. tumefaciens</i>	: <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i>
BAP	: 6-benzylaminopurine
BLAST	: Basic Local Alignment Search Tool
bp	: base pair
BR25	: Balung River 25
CaCl <sub>2</sub> .2H <sub>2</sub> O	: Calcium chloride
(CaNO <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> .4H <sub>2</sub> O	: Calcium nitrate 4-hydrate
CAT	: Chloramphenicol acetyltransferase
Chi	: Chitinase
cm	: Centimeter
CPB	: Cocoa Pod Borer
DNA	: Deoxyribonucleic
DKW	: Driver and Kuniyuki Walnut (1984)
DMF	: Dimethylformamide
DMSO	: Dimethylsulfoxide
<i>E. coli</i>	: <i>Escherichia coli</i>
EDTA	: Ethylenediaminetetra acetic acid
EtBr	: Ethidium bromide
g	: gram
GFP	: Gene fluorescent protein
GUS	: β-glucuronidase reporter gene

HPT	: Hygromycin phosphotransferase
hpt	: Hygromycin phosphotransferase
IAA	: 3-indoleacetic acid
IBA	: 3-indolebutyric acid
KAC	: Potassium acetate
Kb	: Kilobase
KCl	: Potassium chloride
KH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub>	: Potassium dihydrogen phosphate
K <sub>2</sub> HPO <sub>4</sub>	: Dipotassium phosphate
KNO <sub>3</sub>	: Potassium nitrate
L	: Liter
LB broth	: Luria Bertani broth
LB	: Left border
LUC	: Luciferase gene
MAS	: Molecular marker assisted selection
MARs	: Matrix attachment regions
MCB	: Malaysian Cocoa Board
MES	: Morpholineethanesulfonic acid
mg	: Miligram
Mg	: Magnesium
MgSO <sub>4</sub> .H <sub>2</sub> O	: Magnesium sulfate
mm	: Milimeter
MS	: Murashige and Skoog (1962)
Mw	: Molecular weight
NAA	: 1-naphthylacetic acid

NaCl	: Sodium chloride
NaH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub> .H <sub>2</sub> O	: Sodium phosphate, sodium dihydrogen phosphate
NaOH	: Sodium hydroxide
NPTII	: Neomycin phosphotransferase II
PBC123	: Prang Besar Clone 123
pGPTV-Kan/GUS	: Plasmid glucuronidase plant transformation vector Kan/GUS
PCR	: Polymerase chain reaction
PPT	: Phosphinothricin
PVP	: Polyvinil pyrrolidone
RB	: Right border
SDS	: Sodium dodecyl sulfate
SE	: Somatic embryogenesis
rpm	: Resolution perminute
T-DNA	: Transfer – deoxyribonucleic acid
TDZ	: Thidiazuron
Ti-plasmid	: Tumor-inducing plasmid
UV	: Ultra violet
V	: Volt
Vir	: Virulence
Vol	: Volume
VSD	: Vascular Streak Dieback
X-Gluc	: 5-bromo-4-chlo-3-Indoyl-β-D-glucuronide
2, 4-D	: 2, 4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid
2iP	: N <sup>6</sup> -(2-isopentyl)adenine
%	: Percentage

$^{\circ}\text{C}$  : Degree Celcius

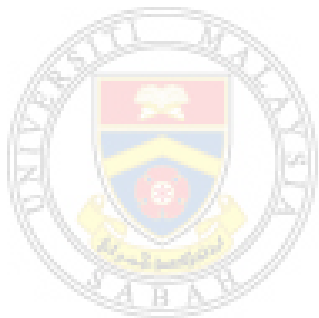
$\mu\text{M}$  : Micro molar



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## LIST OF APPENDIX

	Page
Appendix A Common Stock Solutions	109
Appendix B Reagents and Media Recipes	113
Appendix C Cocoa Clone Information	119
Appendix D Leaf Disk Transformation of Tobacco Using <i>Agrobacterium tumefaciens</i>	122
Appendix E List of Publication	126



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*Theobroma cacao* L. (cocoa tree) is a tropical perennial tree, native to rainforest of the Amazon basin, which has been cultivated since pre-Columbian times (Hurst *et al.*, 2002). Cocoa is one of the important commodity crops cultivated in Malaysia. Currently, cocoa is third important crop in Malaysia after oil palm and rubber (Azhar and Lee, 2004). In terms of cocoa beans grinding, Malaysia is the largest grinder in Asia and emerged as fifth major grinder around the globe (Malaysian Cocoa Monitor, 2010). The processed cocoa beans have been used largely in food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and world chocolate industries. In ecological benefits, cocoa plantation serves as a component of complex agroecosystem that provide both economic and ecological benefits to the farmers and the producing countries (Wood and Lass, 1985).

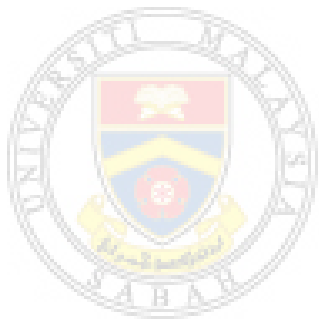
Despite its importance, cocoa production is seriously affected by a number of pests and diseases. The Cocoa Pod Borer (CPB) (*Conopomorpha cramerella* Snellen; Lepidoptera, Gracillariidae) is the most serious insect pest of cocoa whereas the Vascular Streak Dieback (VSD) (*Oncobasidium Theobroma*) and Black Pod are two major elements that affecting the cocoa production in Malaysia (Ahmad Kamil *et al.*, 2005). Annual loss due to CPB in cocoa bean production in Malaysia is estimated not less than 15 percent of potential yields (Malaysian Cocoa Board, personal communication). At the current production of about 30,000 tonnes per year, this translates into a production loss of 5,000 tonnes per year which is an economic loss of RM10,000/tonne from the total annual income RM50,000,000 (Malaysian Cocoa Board, personal communication). If left uncontrolled, damage caused by CPB can result in 100% crop loss. Current control measures for pests and diseases for cocoa depend mostly on insecticides, which are expensive and dangerous (Azhar, 1987). Therefore, new environmentally safe and efficient methods for controlling the pests and diseases are greatly needed.

Planting cocoa trees that resistant to pest and disease is the best way to overcome the problem of yield loss due to pests and diseases. There are commercially cultivated cocoa clones various degrees of resistance to CPB or VSD or black pod has been reported (Ahmad Kamil *et al.*, 2005). However, none has been found to be fully resistant and the resistance levels are very much depending on the cocoa clone. It could be highly resistant, partially resistant or susceptible and it may not possess high yield attributes as well. An alternative method to address this problem is creating cocoa tree that carries all the favoured traits (highly resistant and yet high yield) which can be obtained through genetic transformation and tissue culture. Through genetic transformation for example, a B. t. gene or protease inhibitor gene can be inserted into the cocoa genome to create cocoa tree that resistant to CPB (Sharma *et al.*, 2000). However, successful transformation can only be obtained with an efficient in vitro plant regeneration and transformation protocols.

A reliable protocol for *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*-mediated transformation and generation of transgenic cocoa plants has been established (Maximova *et al.*, 2003, 2006). Despite this achievement, cocoa transformation is still remains inefficient. In Malaysia, the most successful work on cocoa transformation is on cocoa somatic embryos using *Agrobacterium* system which was done by the Malaysian Cocoa Board (MCB) scientists. Partially transformed cocoa somatic embryos were produced, unfortunately these somatic embryos failed to germinate into plantlets.

The previous transformations works have set a platform for optimisation of gene transfer system into cocoa genome via *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. There are many factors affecting transformation efficiency in plant, these include: *Agrobacterium* strain, age of explants, explant type, addition of acetosyringone, co-cultivation period, co-cultivation pH and co-cultivation temperature (Bernal *et al.*, 2009; Razzaq *et al.*, 2011; Suhakat Ali *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, the objective of this study was to optimise transformation parameters for cocoa clone PBC123 and BR25 via *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*. The scope for this study includes; evaluating the effect of explant age (14-days, 21-d, and 28-d), co-cultivation period (1-day, 2-d,

and 3-d), co-cultivation temperature (19°C, 21°C, 23°C, and 25°C), and co-cultivation pH (4.8, 5.3, and 5.8) Staminode-derived calli were transformed using *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* strain AGL1 harbouring the vector pGPTV-Kan/GUS. This work also evaluates the integration of the T-DNA into the cocoa genome, using a modified PCR-walking method (Cottage *et al.*, 2001).



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