

Light-Stimulated Burst of Carbon Dioxide Uptake following Nocturnal Acidification in the Crassulacean Acid Metabolism Plant *Kalanchoë daigremontiana*¹

Received for publication April 1, 1982 and in revised form June 30, 1982

KLAUS WINTER AND JOHN D. TENHUNEN
Lehrstuhl für Botanik II, Universität Würzburg, 8700 Würzburg, West Germany

ABSTRACT

CO₂ exchange characteristics were studied during the light-stimulated burst of CO₂ uptake (MB) immediately following a period of nocturnal CO₂ fixation in the Crassulacean acid metabolism plant *Kalanchoë daigremontiana*. During the early parts of the MB, stimulation of net CO₂ uptake by low ambient O₂ concentration (1.5%) was small, and leaves showed the capacity for net CO₂ uptake at low ambient CO₂ partial pressure (30 microbars) and when the MB was interrupted by darkness. During the later phase of the MB, stimulation of net CO₂ uptake by 1.5% O₂ was increased, and net CO₂ loss was recorded both at 30 microbars CO₂ and during dark interruptions. These results suggest that CO₂ fixation during the MB occurs simultaneously via phosphoenolpyruvate carboxylase (predominant during the early phase of the MB) and via ribulose biphosphate carboxylase (predominant during the later phase of the burst). The magnitude and duration of the MB was increased by a reduction in the length of the dark period and by low (15°C) compared to high (30°C) leaf temperatures.

Plants with CAM exhibit a burst in CO₂ uptake at the onset of illumination following a nocturnal period of CO₂ fixation and malic acid synthesis. This light-stimulated MB² occurs under laboratory conditions when plants are exposed to abrupt transitions from dark to light periods and has also been observed under natural conditions when irradiance gradually increases at dawn (3, 10). The MB links the phase of nocturnal malic acid synthesis and storage with the phase of malic acid mobilization and degradation in the light and, therefore, represents an important period with respect to the regulation of primary carboxylation reactions via PEP carboxylase and RuBP carboxylase. CO₂ fixation during the MB may also contribute substantially to total carbon gain (12). Carbon metabolism during the MB is, however, not well understood (9). In the studies of Osmond and Allaway (7), malate was the main product of ¹⁴CO₂ fixation initially labeled during the MB of *Kalanchoë daigremontiana* leaves, suggesting CO₂ fixation via PEP carboxylase. Subsequent labeling experiments, using *K. daigremontiana* leaf discs, demonstrated CO₂ fixation via RuBP carboxylase as well, particularly during the later parts of the MB (6). In the study presented here, the characteristics of CO₂ ex-

change of attached *K. daigremontiana* leaves were observed in order to obtain information about the carboxylation reactions operating during the MB.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Growth of Plants. *Kalanchoë daigremontiana* was grown in a glasshouse at the Botanical Garden in Würzburg during summer. Mercury vapor lamps provided PAR of at least 0.2 mmol photons m⁻² s⁻¹ for 12 h (07.00–19.00) per day. The PAR increased with illumination from outside and reached approximately 1 mmol photons m⁻² s⁻¹ at noon on bright days. Day and night temperatures were 30 and 20°C, respectively, and RH varied between 55 and 80%. Plants were cultivated in 2-L pots containing soil. They were watered daily and received 200 ml nutrient solution (14) containing 24 mM NO₃⁻ at 3- to 4-d intervals. Experiments were performed with recently expanded leaves (4th or 5th leaf pair from top) of plants about 3 months old.

Gas Exchange Techniques. Measurements of CO₂ exchange were made on whole, attached leaves enclosed in a gas exchange cuvette (Walz Mess- und Regeltechnik, Effeltrich) which was located in a walk-in growth chamber (Weiss Klimatechnik, Giesse). PAR during the 12-h standard light period (07.00–19.00) was 1 mmol photons m⁻² s⁻². Unless stated otherwise, leaf temperature, leaf-air vapor pressure difference, and ambient CO₂ partial pressure entering the leaf cuvette were kept at 20°C, 8–10 mbar and 330 μbar, respectively. Temperature and RH in the growth cabinet were controlled to be approximately the same as those in the leaf cuvette.

Different CO₂ partial pressures and O₂ concentrations in the leaf cuvette were obtained by mixing CO₂ free air and nitrogen containing 1.5% O₂ with pure CO₂ using mass flow meters (Brooks, Veenendaal). Dew points of air entering and leaving the cuvette were measured with dew point mirrors (Walz Mess- und Regeltechnik). Any increase in humidity resulting from transpiration was compensated for by a variable rate of pumping of air through a closed loop bypass with a cold trap. Further details of the measurement procedures and details of calculation of data have been reported previously (4, 11).

Titrateable Acidity. Leaf discs of known area were extracted in 20% (v/v) boiling ethanol for 15 min and the extracts were titrated with 5 mM NaOH to pH 6.5.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Control Experiments. It is known for several CAM species including *K. daigremontiana* that uptake of external CO₂ in the late light period, following deacidification, is predominantly via RuBP carboxylase (9, 12). Therefore, CO₂ fixation is stimulated by low ambient O₂ concentration (1.5%) during this period of time (Fig. 1A). The CO₂ compensation point is around 50 μbar (1) and

¹ Supported by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Wi 641/1-1 and 1-2).

² Abbreviations: MB, morning burst (of light-stimulated CO₂ uptake following nocturnal acidification); PEP, phosphoenolpyruvate; RuBP, ribulose 1,5-biphosphate.

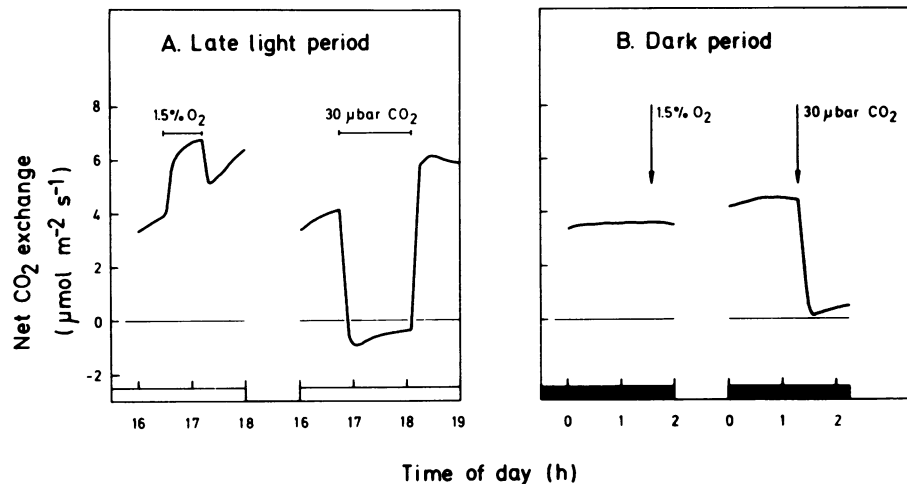


FIG. 1. Net CO₂ exchange in response to decreased ambient O₂ concentration and decreased ambient CO₂ partial pressure during uptake of external CO₂ in the course of the late light period (A) and the middle of the dark period (B). Plants were preadapted to 12-h light (07.00–19.00)/12-h dark cycles. Positive values refer to net CO₂ uptake, negative values to net CO₂ loss. ■, dark; □, light.

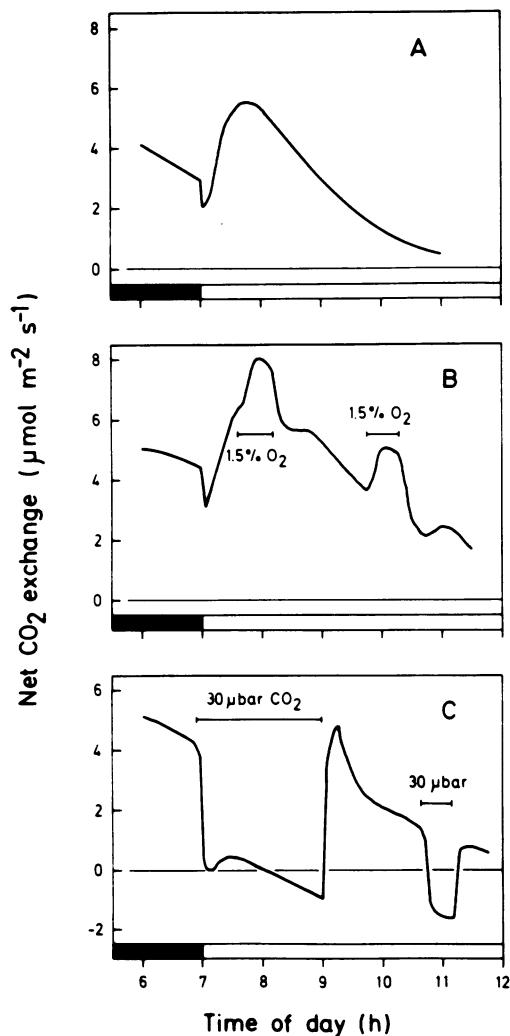


FIG. 2. Net CO₂ exchange during the early 12-h light period following a 12-h dark period (A), and the effects of decreased ambient O₂ concentration (B) and decreased ambient CO₂ partial pressure (C).

hence, at 30 μbar external CO₂, net CO₂ evolution occurs (Fig. 1A). Dark CO₂ fixation is not affected by low external O₂ and at 30 μbar CO₂, net CO₂ uptake occurs (Fig. 1B) because at night the CO₂ compensation point is in the vicinity of 0 μbar due to the operation of PEP carboxylase (12). These results were used to characterize the primary carboxylation reactions occurring during the MB of CO₂ uptake.

Standard 12-Hour Light/12-Hour Dark Cycle. Figure 2A shows the MB obtained following a standard 12-h dark period. A change in the ambient O₂ concentration from 21 to 1.5% stimulates net CO₂ uptake (Fig. 2B). The percentage degree of stimulation increases from 27% at the peak of the MB to 43% at later times of the MB. This result suggests that RuBP carboxylase is functioning. Measurements of transpiration indicated that the stimulation of CO₂ uptake at any point in time was not due to an increase in leaf conductance. At 30 μbar external CO₂, net CO₂ uptake still occurs immediately after onset of illumination (Fig. 2C). Thus, PEP carboxylase is operating as well.

About 1 h after start of the light period and at 30 μbar external CO₂, net CO₂ evolution occurs, which is probably largely due to internal production of CO₂ by decarboxylation of malic acid. Net CO₂ loss under these conditions does not rule out CO₂ fixation via PEP carboxylase. Nevertheless, CO₂ fixation via PEP carboxylase seems to occur primarily during the initial phase of the MB, whereas CO₂ fixation via RuBP carboxylase becomes predominant during the later part of the MB. This conclusion is supported by the data shown in Figure 3 where the MB was interrupted by short periods of darkness. When darkness occurs during the early phases of the MB, leaves still exhibit dark net CO₂ uptake. When darkness occurs after CO₂ fixation during the MB has exceeded its maximum value, substantial loss of CO₂ from the leaf is observed (Fig. 3, C and D).

Shortened and Prolonged Dark Period. The characteristics of the MB are greatly influenced by the length of the previous dark period (see also 5). When the light period commences 2 h before its normal onset, *i.e.* at a point during the dark period when CO₂ dark fixation is still high, the duration of the MB and the maximum CO₂ uptake rate during the MB are increased (Fig. 4A). The initial period of CO₂ uptake at 30 μbar external CO₂, measured after onset of illumination, is prolonged by about 45 min compared to the corresponding period during a standard dark/light transient (Figs. 2C and 4C), *i.e.* CO₂ fixation via PEP carboxylase increasingly contributes to carbon gain during the early phase of the MB. Low O₂ concentration, given during the early part of the MB, causes little (about 15%) stimulation of CO₂ uptake (Fig. 4B). In

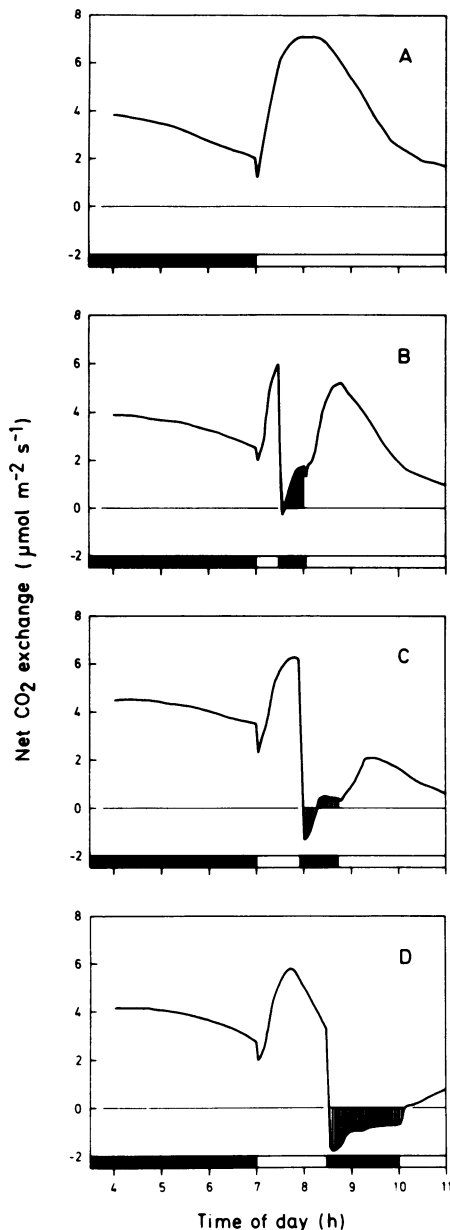


FIG. 3. Effects of dark interruptions (shaded areas) on net CO_2 exchange during the early 12-h light period following a 12-h dark period.

contrast, when the dark period is extended until net CO_2 dark fixation has ceased, only a small MB occurs (Fig. 5A). Reduction in the ambient O_2 concentration to 1.5% during maximum CO_2 uptake of the MB leads to a relatively high (60%) stimulation of CO_2 fixation (Fig. 5B), and with leaves exposed to $30 \mu\text{bar CO}_2$, net CO_2 loss is observed continuously after the beginning of the light period (Fig. 5C). Deacidification starts immediately after onset of illumination (Fig. 6C).

At the end of a shortened dark period, CO_2 fixation via PEP carboxylase appears to continue with high rates into the light period, thereby increasing the magnitude of the MB (Fig. 4A). Under these conditions, substrate (PEP) availability for dark CO_2 fixation may still be high and/or the cytoplasmic malic acid concentration may not yet have reached inhibitory levels at the onset of illumination. Following illumination, there is however only minor net synthesis of malic acid (Fig. 6A), probably due to the simultaneous operation of β -carboxylation and decarboxylation processes (9).

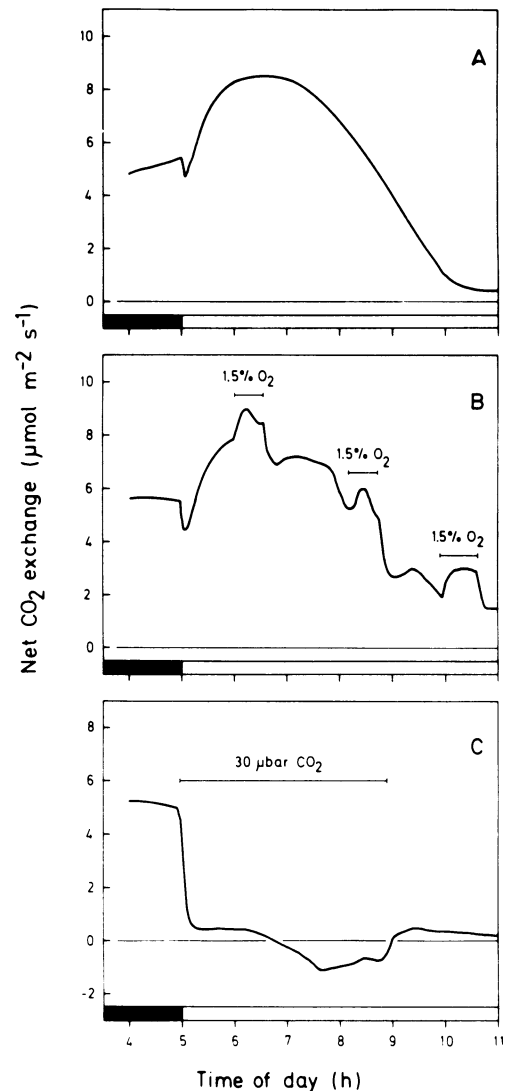


FIG. 4. Net CO_2 exchange during the early light period following a shortened (10-h) dark period (A), and the effects of decreased ambient O_2 -concentration (B) and of decreased ambient CO_2 partial pressure (C). Plants were preadapted to 12-h light (07.00–19.00)/12-h dark cycles.

A time-dependent component is more important in determining the characteristics of the MB than the total amount of carbon fixed in the previous dark period. For example, even though net carbon gain during 12 h darkness was at $30 \mu\text{bar CO}_2$, 20% of that at $330 \mu\text{bar}$ and 15% of that at $1,000 \mu\text{bar CO}_2$, the MB, measured at $330 \mu\text{bar CO}_2$, was not greatly affected (data not shown). Increasing leaf temperatures from 15 to 30°C at night greatly reduced nocturnal net carbon gain (from 100–16%) but also had little effect on the magnitude of the MB which was determined at 20°C (data not shown).

Leaf Temperature. The magnitude and duration of the MB markedly decreases when leaf temperature during the MB is increased from 15 to 30°C (Fig. 7). At 15 and 20°C , maximum rates of CO_2 uptake occur about 1 h after onset of illumination, whereas at 30°C a brief 20-min increase in CO_2 uptake is followed by a sharp decline in net CO_2 uptake, and approximately 1 h after onset of illumination slight net CO_2 loss is observed. When exposed to CO_2 -free air during the period of the MB, leaves kept at 30°C show net CO_2 loss almost instantaneously after the beginning of the light period, while at 15°C about 1 h elapses until net CO_2 loss commences (Fig. 8). High temperatures not only

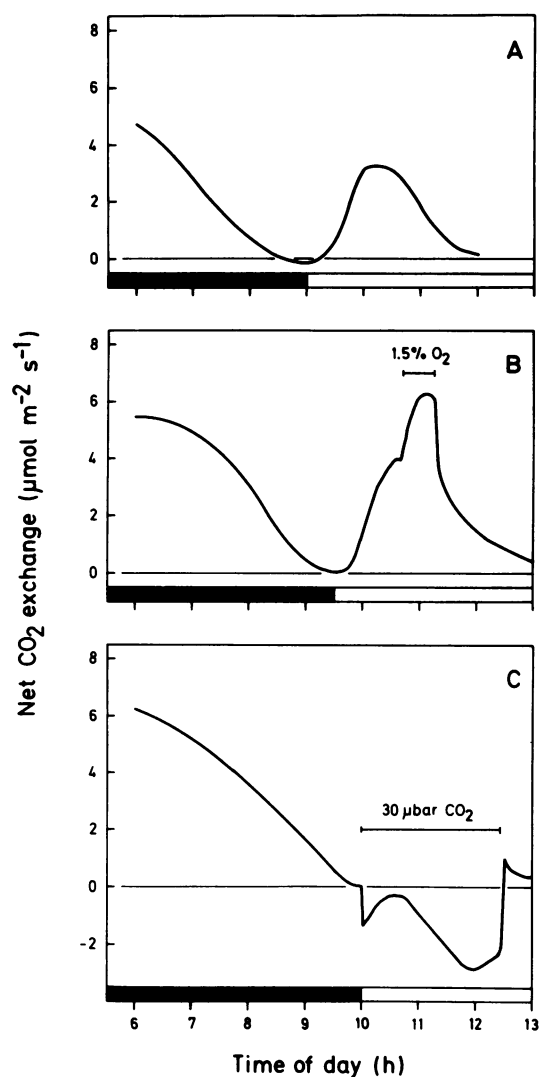


FIG. 5. Net CO₂ exchange during the early light period following a prolonged (14- to 15-h) dark period (A), and the effects of decreased ambient O₂ concentration (B) and of decreased ambient CO₂ partial pressure (C). The standard 12-h dark period was prolonged in each experiment until net CO₂ dark fixation had reached zero. Plants were preadapted to 12-h light (07.00–19.00)/12-h dark cycles.

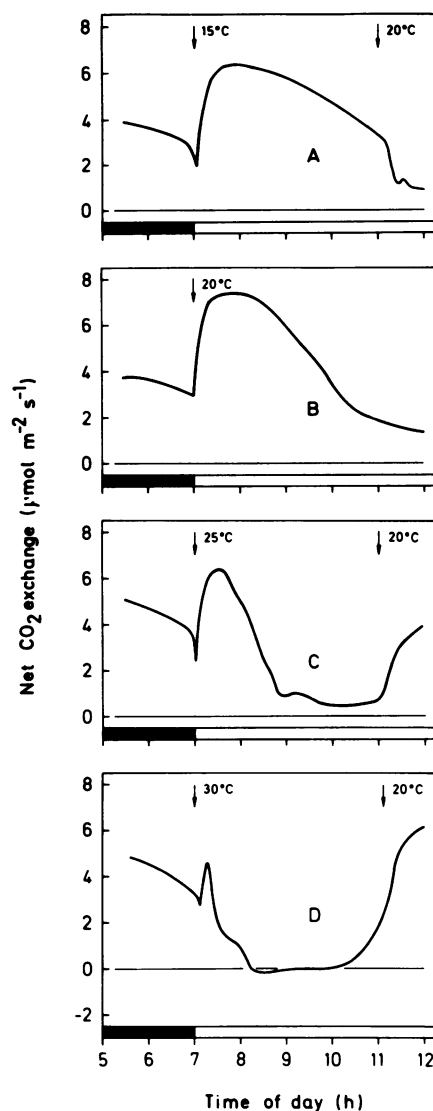


FIG. 7. Effect of leaf temperature on net CO₂ exchange during the first 4 h of the light period following a standard 12-h dark period at 20°C. The leaf-air vapor pressure difference ranged from 10 to 14 mbar at the four temperature regimes.

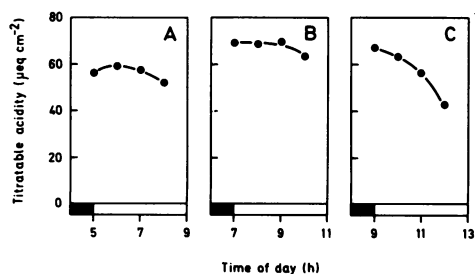


FIG. 6. Titratable acidity during the first 3 h of illumination following a shortened dark period (A), following a standard 12-h dark period (B), and following a prolonged dark period (C). Plants were preadapted to a 12-h light (07.00–19.00)/12-h dark cycle. The experiment was performed in a growth cabinet. PAR = 1 mmol photons m⁻² s⁻¹; leaf temperature = 20–22°C.

seem to increase the rate of malic acid decarboxylation but also effect earlier onset of malic acid decarboxylation.

CONCLUSIONS

Data on CO₂ exchange presented here are consistent with the operation of both PEP carboxylase and RuBP carboxylase during the MB of CO₂ uptake. CO₂ fixation via PEP carboxylase occurs primarily during the initial phase of the MB, whereas C₃ photosynthetic CO₂ fixation via RuBP carboxylase becomes predominant during the later part of the MB. The time point when CO₂ fixation has reached its maximum value in the course of the MB indicates the onset of malic acid decarboxylation which is presumably initiated by release of malic acid from the vacuoles. These processes are favored by high temperatures. The subsequent decline in net uptake of external CO₂ is probably due to increased intercellular CO₂ partial pressure resulting in stomatal closure (2) and due to inhibition of PEP carboxylase by an increased cytoplasmic concentration of malic acid (13).

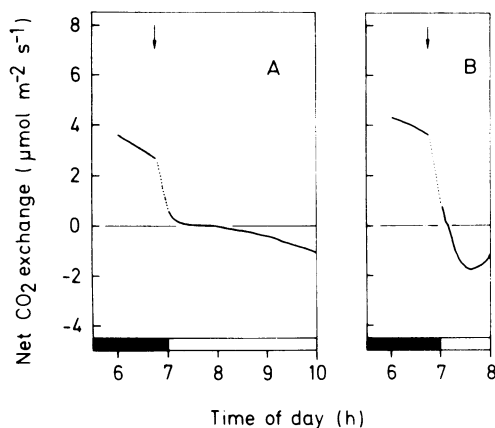


FIG. 8. Effect of CO₂-free air (arrow indicates time point of application) on net CO₂ exchange at 15°C (A) and 30°C (B) during the early light period following a 12-h dark period at 20°C and 330 µbar CO₂. CO₂ exchange during the decrease in CO₂ partial pressure is arbitrarily indicated by a dotted line, because accurate measurement of CO₂ exchange during this period was not possible.

Acknowledgments—We are grateful to Otto Ludwig Lange for supporting these studies, and to Doris Faltenbacher for competent technical assistance. Calculations were made at the Rechenzentrum der Universität Würzburg.

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