

# Establishing how Bacterial Cells Position the Division Site

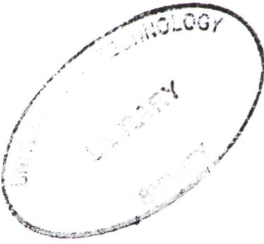
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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2011

The iThree Insitute  
University of Technology, Sydney NSW,  
Australia



## **Certificate of Authorship/Originality**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the written preparation of the thesis, and all experimental work associated with it has been carried out solely by me, unless otherwise indicated.

Finally, I certify that all information sources and literature used are acknowledged in the text.

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Christopher Rodrigues, January 2011

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# Contents

<b>Certificate of Authorship/Originality .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Table of Figures and Tables.....</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Publications.....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>xvi</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.1 <i>Bacillus subtilis</i>: a model organism .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1.1 Sporulation and the spore outgrowth system .....	3
<b>1.2 DNA replication.....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.2.1 Initiation of DNA replication.....	5
1.2.2 DNA chain elongation .....	7
1.2.3 Termination of DNA replication .....	9
<b>1.3 Chromosome segregation .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.4 Cell division .....</b>	<b>13</b>
1.4.1 The FtsZ protein.....	13
1.4.2 FtsZ biochemistry and the Z ring .....	14
1.4.3 Cellular localization of Z ring assembly.....	18
1.4.4 The divisome: FtsZ accessory proteins.....	21
<b>1.5 Regulation of cell division .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.5.1 The Min system.....	23
1.5.1.1 The Min system of <i>E. coli</i> .....	24
1.5.1.2 The Min system of <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	26
1.5.1.3 An emerging view of the <i>B. subtilis</i> Min system .....	27
1.5.2 Nucleoid occlusion .....	29
1.5.2.1 The Transertion hypothesis.....	29

1.5.2.2 Nucleoid occlusion proteins.....	30
1.5.2.3 The role of relief of nucleoid occlusion in midcell Z ring positioning.....	33
<b>1.6 The coordination between DNA replication and cell division.....</b>	<b>35</b>
1.6.1 A link between the early stages of DNA replication and cell division in <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> .....	35
<b>1.7 Regulation of Z ring assembly as a result of DNA-damage related stress: the SOS response .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>1.8 Regulation of cell division in <i>Caulobacter crescentus</i>.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>1.9 Thesis aims .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Material and Methods .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>2.1 Chemicals, reagents and solutions .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>2.2 <i>B. subtilis</i> strains and growth conditions.....</b>	<b>45</b>
2.2.1 Testing the status of the <i>amyE</i> locus of <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	48
2.2.2 Testing for thymine auxotrophy .....	49
2.2.3 Testing for temperature-sensitive DNA replication mutations.....	49
2.2.4 Testing for UV sensitivity and growth of UV-sensitive strains .....	50
2.2.5 Determining cell viability .....	50
2.2.6 Depletion of the P <sub>spac</sub> inducible promoter .....	51
<b>2.3 Preparation of competent <i>B. subtilis</i> cells and transformation... </b>	<b>51</b>
2.3.1 Transformation of competent <i>B. subtilis</i> cells.....	52
2.3.1.1 Transformation of competent <i>B. subtilis</i> cells by congression.....	52
<b>2.4 Preparation, germination and outgrowth of <i>B. subtilis</i> spores ...</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>2.5 General DNA methods .....</b>	<b>53</b>
2.5.1 Purification of chromosomal DNA from <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	53
2.5.2 Agarose gel electrophoresis of DNA .....	54
2.5.3 Determination of DNA concentration .....	54
2.5.4 Polymerase chain reaction (PCR).....	54
2.5.5 DNA sequencing .....	56
<b>2.6 Microscopy methods.....</b>	<b>56</b>

2.6.1 Immunofluorescence microscopy (IFM) .....	56
2.6.2 Ethanol fixation of cells.....	57
2.6.3 Methanol fixation for nucleoid visualisation.....	58
2.6.4 Preparation of cells for live cell fluorescence microscopy .....	58
2.6.5 Phase-contrast and fluorescence microscopy.....	59
2.6.6 Cell scoring and statistics.....	59
<b>2.7 Western blot analysis .....</b>	<b>60</b>
2.7.1 Whole cell protein extraction for Western blotting .....	60
2.7.2 Denaturing SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) of proteins .....	60
2.7.3 Western transfer.....	61
2.7.4 Immunodetection and quantification .....	61
<b>2.8 Suppliers of chemicals, reagents and equipment.....</b>	<b>62</b>

## **Chapter 3 - Investigating the Link between the Early Stages of DNA Replication and Z ring positioning.....64**

<b>3.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.1.1 Early studies examining the link between cell division and DNA replication.....	65
3.1.2 The identification of <i>dnaF133</i> : a DNA replication initiation mutant that allows Z ring assembly at midcell .....	67
3.1.3 Chapter aims.....	68
<b>3.2. Results .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.2.1 Midcell Z rings form preferentially over unreplicated bilobed nucleoids     in the DNA replication initiation mutant <i>dnaF133</i> .....</b>	<b>70</b>
3.2.1.1 Characterization of Z ring positioning in live cells of <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> at the non-permissive temperature.....	70
3.2.1.2 Characterization of unreplicated nucleoid morphologies in live cells of <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> at the non-permissive temperature.....	74
3.2.1.3 Co-visualization of the Z ring and unreplicated nucleoids in live cells of <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> at the non-permissive temperature.....	76



3.2.1.4 Characterization of unreplicated nucleoid morphologies at an earlier time point before the bulk of Z ring formation.....	79
<b>3.2.2 Midcell Z rings also form over bilobed nucleoids when entry into DNA chain elongation is blocked.....</b>	<b>80</b>
3.2.2.1 Characterization of unreplicated nucleoid morphologies in fixed cells when entry into DNA chain elongation is blocked.....	80
3.2.2.2 Co-visualization of the Z ring and unreplicated nucleoids in live cells when entry into DNA chain elongation is blocked.....	82
<b>3.2.3 In the absence of <i>noc</i>, midcell Z ring frequency increases to varying degrees, depending on the type of DNA replication block .....</b>	<b>86</b>
3.2.3.1 Z ring positioning in the absence of <i>noc</i> when DNA replication initiation is blocked .....	86
3.2.3.2 Z ring positioning in the absence of <i>noc</i> when DNA chain elongation is blocked..	88
3.2.3.3 Co-visualization of the Z ring and unreplicated nucleoids in live cells in the absence of <i>noc</i> .....	89
<b>3.3 Discussion .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.3.1 Why do unreplicated nucleoids form bilobed nucleoids?.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>3.3.2 Why do Z rings form preferentially over bilobed nucleoids when <i>noc</i> is present, except in the <i>dna-1</i> mutant?.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>3.3.3 Does chromosome organization affect Z ring positioning when the early stages of DNA replication are blocked? .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.3.4 Why do multiple helical FtsZ patterns form when DNA replication is inhibited at the non-permissive temperature using <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i>? .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>3.3.5 Linking the early stages of DNA replication to midcell Z ring assembly: the “Ready-Set-Go” model.....</b>	<b>99</b>
3.3.5.1 How does “potentiation” occur? .....	102
<b>Chapter 4 - Reinvestigating the Noc/Min system double mutant defect .....</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>107</b>
4.1.1 Chapter aims.....	109
<b>4.2 Results.....</b>	<b>111</b>
4.2.1 Noc and MinCD are not required for midcell Z ring positioning.....	111

4.2.1.1	Characterization of the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant during vegetative growth .....	112
4.2.1.2	Double mutant Z ring positioning in outgrown spores using IFM.....	114
<b>4.2.2</b>	<b>The absence of <i>noc</i> and <i>minCD</i> affects the efficient utilization of division sites.....</b>	<b>117</b>
4.2.2.1	Characterization of the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant when FtsZ is overproduced during vegetative growth .....	118
a)	Native FtsZ overproduction in the double mutant during vegetative growth ...	119
b)	FtsZ-YFP overproduction in the double mutant during vegetative growth.....	121
4.2.2.2	FtsZ overproduction in the double mutant during spore outgrowth partially rescues the efficiency and timing of Z ring assembly at midcell.....	125
4.2.2.3	Double mutant Z ring positioning in live cells overproducing FtsZ-YFP during spore outgrowth .....	127
4.2.2.4	Effects of the temperature and media on the double mutant cell length .....	130
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>134</b>
<b>4.3.1</b>	<b>A role for Noc and the Min system in the cell cycle: coupling efficient midcell Z ring assembly to a round of DNA replication/segregation .....</b>	<b>135</b>
4.3.1.1	Molecular insight into the role of Noc and the Min system in ensuring efficient Z ring assembly at midcell .....	138
4.3.1.2	A new model for the role of Noc and the Min system in the cell cycle .....	140
<b>4.3.2</b>	<b>If the Min system and Noc do not position the Z ring at midcell, what other factors play this role? .....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>- Investigating the role of nucleoid occlusion in midcell Z ring positioning .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>146</b>
5.1.1	The role nucleoid occlusion in midcell Z ring positioning.....	146
5.1.2	Working hypotheses .....	148
5.1.3	Chapter Aims.....	149
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Results .....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>5.2.1</b>	<b>Z ring positioning at midcell is independent of nucleoid occlusion and the Min system .....</b>	<b>151</b>
5.2.1.1	Experimental approach I: addition of HPUra to prevent DNA replication in <i>recA</i> -deleted cells .....	151
a)	Obtaining RecA <sup>-</sup> strains.....	152

b) Optimizing the conditions of the experimental approach and controls .....	154
5.2.1.2 Z ring position relative to nucleoids in fixed cells with two separated nucleoids .	160
5.2.1.3 Z ring precision between two separated nucleoids in fixed cells .....	162
<b>5.2.2 An alternative approach demonstrating Nucleoid occlusion and Min system independent Z ring positioning at midcell.....</b>	<b>165</b>
5.2.2.1 Experimental approach II: using a DNA replication mutant to prevent DNA replication .....	165
a) Obtaining strains for the experimental approach II .....	166
b) Optimizing the conditions of experimental approach II and controls .....	168
5.2.2.2 Z ring localization in live cells with two separated nucleoids.....	172
5.2.2.3 Z ring precision between two separated nucleoids in live cells .....	175
<b>5.3.3 Z ring positioning does not correlate with the amount of relief of nucleoid occlusion at midcell.....</b>	<b>178</b>
5.3.3.1 Correlating Z ring positioning with internucleoid distance in live cells with a single Z ring between two separated nucleoids .....	178
<b>5.3.4 The Min system is required for midcell Z ring assembly when the very early stages of DNA replication are blocked.....</b>	<b>180</b>
5.3.4.1 Live Z ring positioning when the initiation of the first round of replication is blocked.....	180
5.3.4.2 Live Z ring positioning when DNA chain elongation is blocked.....	182
<b>5.4 Discussion .....</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>5.4.1 A signal for midcell Z ring assembly .....</b>	<b>186</b>
<b>5.4.2 A role for Noc and the Min system in promoting efficient midcell Z ring assembly between separated nucleoids.....</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>5.4.3 What prevents midcell Z ring assembly when the very early stages of DNA replication are blocked in the absence of <i>minCD</i>? .....</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>5.4.4 Is chromosome segregation activity required for midcell Z ring assembly in the absence of <i>noc</i> and <i>minCD</i>? .....</b>	<b>193</b>
<b>Chapter 6 - General Discussion.....</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>6.1 Z ring position is linked to replisome assembly at <i>oriC</i>.....</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>6.2 A new role for Noc and the Min system in the cell cycle .....</b>	<b>198</b>



6.3 A mechanism independent of nucleoid occlusion and the Min system defining the location of division sites.....	200
6.4. Insight into other mechanisms preventing Z ring assembly at midcell .....	202
6.5 Concluding remarks and Future work.....	203
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>205</b>
Appendix I .....	206
Appendix II.....	208
Appendix III .....	211
<b>References.....</b>	<b>214</b>

# Table of Figures and Tables

## Figures

<b>Figure 1.1:</b> The cell cycle of <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	4
<b>Figure 1.2:</b> Steps in the DNA replication initiation of <i>B. subtilis</i> at <i>oriC</i> .....	6
<b>Figure 1.3:</b> Simplified model of the <i>B. subtilis</i> replication fork.....	8
<b>Figure 1.4:</b> FtsZ localization in the form of Z rings.....	15
<b>Figure 1.5:</b> FtsZ polymerization and the formation of the Z ring.....	17
<b>Figure 1.6:</b> Visualisation of FtsZ helices using FtsZ-YFP as marker for FtsZ localization in outgrown spores of <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	20
<b>Figure 1.7:</b> Recruitment of divisome components to the septal ring in <i>E. coli</i> and <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	22
<b>Figure 1.8:</b> Comparison between the <i>B. subtilis</i> and <i>E. coli</i> Min system.....	25
<b>Figure 1.9:</b> Prevailing view of division site placement in <i>B. subtilis</i> and <i>E. coli</i> - positioning the Z ring through the combined action of the Min system and nucleoid occlusion.....	33
<b>Figure 1.10:</b> Checkpoint model linking DNA replication to cell division.....	38
<b>Figure 3.1:</b> Z ring positioning in live outgrown spores of <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> at the non-permissive temperature.....	72
<b>Figure 3.2:</b> Nucleoid morphology in live and methanol-fixed DAPI-stained outgrown spores of <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> .....	75
<b>Figure 3.3:</b> Co-visualization of the Z ring and nucleoids in <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> live outgrown spores...	78
<b>Figure 3.4:</b> Nucleoid morphology in <i>dna-1</i> and <i>dnaF133</i> methanol-fixed DAPI-stained outgrown spores.....	80
<b>Figure 3.6:</b> Z ring positioning when entry into DNA chain elongation is blocked during spore outgrowth in the thymineless and +HPUra conditions.....	83
<b>Figure 3.7:</b> Co-visualization of the Z ring and nucleoids in when entry into chain elongation is blocked during spore outgrowth.....	85
<b>Figure 3.8:</b> Z ring positioning in the absence of <i>noc</i> when DNA replication initiation is blocked.....	88
<b>Figure 3.9:</b> Z ring positioning in the absence of <i>noc</i> when entry into DNA chain elongation is blocked during spore outgrowth.....	89
<b>Figure 3.10:</b> Co-visualization of the Z ring and nucleoids in <i>noc</i> -deleted <i>dna-1</i> active or +HPUra treated outgrown spores.....	92
<b>Figure 3.11:</b> Linking DNA replication with Z ring positioning: the ‘Ready-Set-Go’ model.....	101
<b>Figure 4.1:</b> Mean cell length and IFM images of vegetatively-growing wild-type, <i>minCD</i> mutant and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant cells at 30°C.....	112
<b>Figure 4.2:</b> Spore outgrowth of the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant.....	115
<b>Figure 4.3:</b> Z ring positioning at the midcell division site in wild-type and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant outgrown spores.....	117

<b>Figure 4.4:</b> Mean cell length and IFM images of wild-type and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant vegetatively-growing cells when FtsZ is overproduced.....	120
<b>Figure 4.5:</b> Western analysis of FtsZ levels in the wild-type and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant vegetatively-growing cells overproducing FtsZ.....	121
<b>Figure 4.6:</b> Mean cell lengths and representative images of wild-type and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant vegetatively-growing cells when FtsZ-YFP is overproduced.....	123
<b>Figure 4.7:</b> Western analysis of FtsZ-YFP and native FtsZ levels in the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant and the wild-type vegetatively-growing cells. ....	124
<b>Figure 4.8:</b> FtsZ overproduction improves the efficiency and timing of Z ring assembly in the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant during the first cell cycle following spore germination.....	126
<b>Figure 4.9:</b> Live Z ring positioning in the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant and wild-type outgrown spores overproducing FtsZ-YFP.....	129
<b>Figure 4.10:</b> Effect of the growth media and temperature on the cell length distribution of wild-type and <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant.....	132
<b>Figure 4.11:</b> FtsZ localization in the <i>noc minCD</i> double mutant at the 37°C in PAB.....	133
<b>Figure 4.12:</b> A model redefining the roles of Noc and the Min system during the cell cycle. ....	141
<b>Figure 5.1:</b> Depletion of FtsZ results in inhibition of cell division .....	152
<b>Figure 5.2:</b> FtsZ localization in the presence or absence of IPTG during spore outgrowth .....	155
<b>Figure 5.3:</b> Representative images of nucleoid segregation patterns observed in methanol-fixed DAPI-stained nucleoids, after HPUra addition at 150 min of spore outgrowth.....	156
<b>Figure 5.4:</b> Representative images of outgrown spores with two separated nucleoids after the addition of HPUra.....	158
<b>Figure 5.5:</b> Optimized experimental approach I.....	159
<b>Figure 5.6:</b> FtsZ localization in fixed outgrown spores in the absence of IPTG. ....	159
<b>Figure 5.7:</b> Representative images of Z ring localization in cells prepared for IFM with a single Z ring and two separated nucleoids at 210 and 240 min of experimental approach I. ....	160
<b>Figure 5.8:</b> Z ring positioning in outgrown spores with a single Z ring between two separated nucleoids at 210 and 240 min of experimental approach I.....	164
<b>Figure 5.9:</b> <i>B. subtilis</i> strain SU661 contains the <i>dna-1</i> mutation and is temperature-sensitive for DNA replication.....	167
<b>Figure 5.10:</b> Representative images of nucleoid segregation patterns in live DAPI-stained nucleoids 30 min after the temperature shift to the non-permissive temperature. ....	169
<b>Figure 5.11:</b> Representative images of outgrown spores with two separated nucleoids at the 135 min of experimental approach II.....	171
<b>Figure 5.12:</b> Diagram of experimental approach II. ....	171
<b>Figure 5.13:</b> FtsZ localization in the presence or absence of IPTG and xylose during spore outgrowth. ....	172



<b>Figure 5.14:</b> Representative images of Z ring and nucleoids in cells with two nucleoids at the 165 min time point of experimental approach II .....	173
<b>Figure 5.15:</b> Z ring positioning in live outgrown spores with a single Z ring between two separated nucleoids at 165 min of experimental approach II .....	177
<b>Figure 5.16:</b> Relationship between Z ring positioning and internucleoid distance in live outgrown spores with a Z ring between two separated nucleoids at 165 min of experimental approach II.....	179
<b>Figure 5.17:</b> Live Z ring positioning in outgrown spores when initiation of DNA replication is blocked at the level of DnaB.....	181
<b>Figure 5.18:</b> Live Z ring positioning in outgrown spores when the elongation phase of DNA replication is blocked by omitting thymine from the medium (thymineless condition). .....	183

## **Tables**

<b>Table 1.1:</b> Comparison of the <i>B. subtilis</i> and <i>E. coli</i> proteins involved in chromosomal DNA replication. ....	8
<b>Table 2.1:</b> Commonly used aqueous buffers and solutions .....	45
<b>Table 2.2:</b> <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> strains.....	46
<b>Table 2.3:</b> <i>Bacillus subtilis</i> growth media .....	48
<b>Table 2.4:</b> Antibiotics used for selection of <i>B. subtilis</i> .....	48
<b>Table 2.5:</b> Primers used for PCR reactions.....	55
<b>Table 2.6:</b> Antibodies used for primary and secondary detection for both IFM and western blot analysis .....	57
<b>Table 2.7:</b> Suppliers of chemicals, reagents and equipment .....	62
<b>Table 3.1:</b> Frequency of acentral and midcell Z rings in live cells of <i>dna-1</i> (strain SU624) and <i>dnaF133</i> (strain SU625) and the relative position of midcell Z rings to the nucleoid. ....	77
<b>Table 3.2:</b> Frequency of acentral and midcell Z rings and the relative position of midcell Z rings to the nucleoid in thymineless and +HPUra conditions during spore outgrowth. ....	84
<b>Table 3.3:</b> Frequency of acentral and midcell Z rings and the relative position of midcell Z rings to the nucleoid in <i>dna-1</i> mutant at the non-permissive temperature and +HPUra condition.....	92
<b>Table 5.1:</b> Frequency of cells with two separated nucleoids, and internucleoid distances, in SU650 ( <i>P<sub>spac</sub>-ftsZ ΔrecA</i> ) and SU651 ( <i>P<sub>spac</sub>-ftsZ ΔminCD ΔrecA</i> ) after HPUra (100 μM) addition at 150 min of spore outgrowth. ....	157
<b>Table 5.2:</b> Z ring frequencies at the 210 and 240 min of the experimental approach. <sup>a</sup> .....	161
<b>Table 5.3:</b> Genetic transformations to obtain strains required for experimental approach II <sup>a</sup> .....	168
<b>Table 5.4:</b> Frequency of cells with two separated nucleoids and internucleoid distances, at 135 min of spore outgrowth (30 min after the shift to the non-permissive temperature).....	169
<b>Table 5.5:</b> Z ring location in cells with two separated nucleoids and a single Z ring at the 165 min time point of the experimental approach .....	173

# Publications

## Journal article

S. Moriya<sup>^</sup>, R. Rashid<sup>^</sup>, **C.D. Andrade Rodrigues<sup>^</sup>** and E.J. Harry (2010) Influence of the nucleoid and the early stages of DNA replication on positioning the division site in *Bacillus subtilis*. *Molecular Microbiology* 76: 634-47

<sup>^</sup>First author with equal contribution

## Conference proceedings<sup>a</sup>

C.D. Andrade Rodrigues and E. J. Harry - November, 2010 - Bacterial Cell Biology Meeting - Cancun, Mexico - **Oral presentation** - “The Min system and nucleoid occlusion do not identify the division site in *Bacillus subtilis*; they regulate its utilization”

C.D. Andrade Rodrigues and E. J. Harry - July, 2010 - Australian Society for Microbiology Meeting- Sydney, Australia - **Poster Presentation** - “How bacteria identify their middle: challenging a paradigm”

C.D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, R. Rashid, and E. J. Harry - September, 2009 – Gram-Positive Bacteria Meeting - Kobe, Japan - **Invited speaker** - “Evidence of a Noc-independent mechanism linking DNA replication to cell division in *Bacillus subtilis*”

S.Moriya, R. Rashid, C.D. Andrade Rodrigues, E.J. Harry - August, 2009 - EMBO Workshop “Frontiers of Prokaryotic Cell Biology” - Oxford, UK - **Oral presentation** - “A new model for positioning of the cytokinetic Z ring: initiation of replication potentiates the division site.”

C.D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, R. Rashid E. J. Harry - July, 2009 - American society for Microbiology, Prokaryotic Development Conference - Boston, USA - **Poster presentation** - “Evidence of a Noc-independent mechanism linking DNA replication to cell division in *Bacillus subtilis*”

C.D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, R. Rashid, and E. J. Harry - August, 2008 - Molecular Genetics of Bacteria and Phages - Cold Spring Harbour, New York, USA - **Poster Presentation** “ A Link between DNA Replication and Cell division in *Bacillus subtilis*”

C. D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, R. Rashid, and E. J. Harry - July, 2008 -

Australian Society for Microbiology Meeting - Melbourne, Australia - **Oral presentation** - “A Link between DNA Replication and Cell Division in Bacteria”

R. Rashid, C. D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, E. J. Harry - April, 2008 – 162nd Meeting of the Society for General Microbiology - Edinburgh, UK - **Oral presentation** - “Relationship between chromosome structure and Z ring placement”

C. D. Andrade Rodrigues, S. Moriya, R. Rashid, and E. J. Harry – November, 2007 - RNSH/UTS/USyd/Kolling Institute XXIVth Annual Scientific Research Meeting - Sydney, Australia - **Poster Presentation** - “Coordinating DNA replication with Bacterial cell division”

R. Rashid, S. Moriya, C. D. Andrade Rodrigues and E. J. Harry – July, 2007 - Australian Society for Microbiology Meeting - Melbourne, Australia - **Poster presentation** - “Coordination between proper Z ring placement and DNA replication in *B. subtilis*”

<sup>a</sup> The presenting author is underlined.

## Abbreviations

A	adenine
Aa	amino acid
Ab	antibody
AGRF	Australian Research Genome Facility
ATM	atomic force microscopy
<i>B.</i>	<i>Bacillus</i>
β	beta
bp	base pair(s)
BP	band pass
BSA	bovine serum albumin
C	cytosine
<i>cat</i>	chloramphenicol resistance gene
CCD	charged coupled device
DAPI	4'6-diamidino-2-phenylindole
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
dsDNA	double stranded deoxyribonucleic acid
<i>E.</i>	<i>Escherichia</i>
ECT	electron cryotomography
ECL	enhanced chemiluminescence
<i>et al.</i>	and others
<i>ermC</i>	erythromycin resistance gene
FRAP	fluorescence recovery after photobleaching
<i>fts</i>	filamentation temperature-sensitive
G	guanine
<i>g</i>	centrifugal force
g	gram (s)
GFP	green fluorescent protein
GMD	germination medium defined
h	hour(s)
HPUra	6-(-p-hydroxyphenylazo)-uracil



IFM	immunofluorescence microscopy
Ig	Immunoglobulin
IPTG	isopropyl-1-thio- $\beta$ -D-galactopyranoside
kD	kilo Dalton(s)
L	litre(s)
LP	long pass
m	milli ( $10^{-3}$ )
M	moles per litre
min	minute(s)
MQW	Milli-Q purified water
MSA	mineral salts A
MTS	membrane targeting sequence
n	nano ( $10^{-9}$ )
NA	numerical aperture
N/A	not applicable
NBS	Noc-binding sites
<i>neo</i>	neomycin resistance gene
OD <sub>x</sub>	optical density at (x refers to the wavelength in nm)
p	probability
<i>P<sub>spac</sub></i>	IPTG-inducible promoter
<i>P<sub>spachy</sub></i>	IPTG-hyper-inducible promoter
<i>P<sub>xyI</sub></i>	xylose-inducible promoter
PAGE	polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
PBS	phosphate buffered saline
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PDS	potential division sites
pH	power of Hydrogen
<i>phleo</i>	phleomycin resistance gene
RNase	ribonuclease A
ROR	round of replication
ROW	reverse osmosis purified water
rpm	revolutions per minute

RT	room temperature
<i>S.</i>	<i>Streptomyces</i>
sec	second(s)
SDS	sodium dodecyl sulfate
SEM	standard error of the mean
SMC	structural maintenance of chromosome
SMM	spizizen minimal medium
<i>spp.</i>	species
<i>spc</i>	spectinomycin resistance gene
T	thymine
TBAB	tryptose blood agar base
<i>tet</i>	tetracycline resistance gene
<i>thy</i>	thymine auxotroph
Tris	tris(hydroxymethyl)methylamine
Trp	L-Tryptophan
ts	temperature sensitive
U	units (enzyme activity)
UV	ultraviolet
V	volt(s)
v/v	volume per volume
W	watt
w/v	weight per volume
YFP	yellow fluorescent protein
μ	micro- ( $10^{-6}$ )

## Abstract

In virtually all bacteria cell division is essential and tightly regulated both temporally and spatially to ensure that cells divide precisely at the centre between segregated chromosomes. Failure to do so can lead to cell death. The earliest event in bacterial cell division is the polymerization of the highly conserved tubulin-like protein, FtsZ, to form a contractile structure called the Z ring, on the inner side of the cytoplasmic membrane at midcell and between chromosomes. The Z ring subsequently contracts causing the cell envelope to invaginate, generating two newborn cells. Thus the Z ring defines the position of the division site in bacterial cells.

How the Z ring is positioned precisely at midcell is a controversial topic that remains unresolved. Division site positioning has long been believed to occur via the combined action of two factors: the Min system and nucleoid occlusion. Both factors have been proposed to prevent Z ring assembly along the length of the cell, allowing it to assemble only once chromosomes segregate and nucleoid occlusion is relieved specifically at midcell. The research described in this thesis challenges this paradigm, providing compelling evidence that other mechanisms in addition to nucleoid occlusion and the Min system act to position the Z ring at midcell in *B. subtilis*. Moreover, this work also shows that nucleoid occlusion and the Min system do not define the Z ring position at midcell but rather ensure that the midcell division site is utilized efficiently.

A clue to an additional mechanism for positioning the Z ring has emerged from studies investigating the relationship between chromosome replication and Z ring position. The nature of this relationship has remained obscure for years. Part of this thesis involves a closer examination of this relationship. It was found that the ability to position the Z ring at midcell is linked specifically to the progress of the initiation stage of DNA replication, such that the frequency of Z rings at midcell increases as this stage of DNA replication is progressively completed. Moreover, this link was found to be nucleoid occlusion independent.

Spatial and temporal control of Z ring assembly has been widely attributed to the Min system and nucleoid occlusion. While inactivating both systems substantially affects

cell division, it is currently unknown whether their absence affects precise midcell Z ring positioning. This thesis deals with this question, and it was found that the combined effect of MinCD and Noc proteins actually affects the timing and efficiency of Z ring assembly, but not its spatial precision between nucleoids at midcell.

If Noc and MinCD proteins do not position the Z ring at midcell, what other factors may play this role? Two hypotheses were proposed to help explain the precise Z ring positioning observed in absence of *noc* and *minCD*: 1) Noc-independent nucleoid occlusion or 2) factors completely independent of nucleoid occlusion position the Z ring at midcell. Experiments designed to discriminate between these hypotheses showed that they are actually both valid: while the data obtained suggests that factors completely independent of nucleoid occlusion (Noc inclusive) and the Min system position the Z ring at midcell, it also suggested that other Noc-independent nucleoid occlusion factors prevent the Z ring from assembling at midcell over unreplicated DNA.