

Identification of *Colletotrichum* isolates from *Capsicum chinense* in Amazon

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ABSTRACT. Chili pepper (*Capsicum chinense*) is a great economic important culture on the State of Amazonas, and it represents, approximately, a production of 1.9 thousand tons per year. It is one of the hosts of *Colletotrichum* genus in the North region of Brazil. The aim of the study was to differentiate and to identify isolates of *Colletotrichum* collected from *C. chinense* in Amazon. Molecular characterization, using RFLP-PCR, ERIC-PCR and ISSR, was carried out initially for screening of morphologically similar isolates. Furthermore, phylogenetic analyses were performed using combined regions: Actin (ACT), glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) for the three isolates, INPA 2066, INPA 2286 and INPA 1858, plus superoxide dismutase (SOD2) for INPA 2066. We showed that the molecular markers were able to distinguish the isolates of *Colletotrichum* studied and these results were confirmed with the phylogenetic analyses, three different occurrences of *Colletotrichum* species (*C. siamense*, *C. scovillei* and *C. brevisporum*) causing anthracnose in *C. chinense* in the State of Amazonas. This study

represents the first report of the species *C. siamense* and *C. scovillei* in this host in Brazil.

Key words: *Colletotrichum*; Molecular markers; Chili pepper; Phylogenetic analysis

INTRODUCTION

Colletotrichum (teleomorph *Glomerella*), comprises a big range of cosmopolitan fungi species and are usually described as being the anthracnose disease agent. It is known ~600 species of the genus *Colletotrichum*, which are pathogens of over 3000 species of plants including cereals, legumes, vegetables, perennial crops, and tree fruits (O'Connell et al., 2012). There are some *Colletotrichum* species complexes already described in the literature, such as *C. gloeosporioides*, *C. acutatum*, *C. boninense* and *C. orbiculare* (Weir et al., 2012; Damm et al., 2012a,b, 2013). In Brazil, there are many reports of plant infection caused by *Colletotrichum* species, especially in economically important plants and fruits, such as coffee berries, sugarcane, strawberry, maize, sorghum, banana, avocado and many others. The tropical and subtropical climate favors the spread of *Colletotrichum* species on these plants.

It is notable the great economic interest of chili pepper (*Capsicum chinense* Jacq.) culture in many parts of the world. It happens because of its great potential of growth in almost every country, since it is a tropical regions native, and its use on food, pharmaceutical, cosmetic, and ornamental products (Dias et al., 2013). *C. chinense* is one of the most cultivated vegetables in Brazil, mainly in the North region. The anthracnose is a disease that more affects the culture and five species of *Colletotrichum* were described as the pathogen for this host, *C. capsici* and *C. gloeosporioides* in India, Indonesia, Korea, and Thailand, *C. acutatum* in Australia and Indonesia, *C. coccodes* in Korea and New Zealand (Ratanacherdchai et al., 2010) and *C. brevisporum* in Brazil (Almeida et al., 2017).

The identification of *Colletotrichum* based on morphological characters is problematic due to the few morphological traits that can be used to separate species in this genus (Than et al., 2008). Therefore, it is necessary a precise study and characterization based not only on morphological but also on molecular data utilized for species delimitation and defining of inter- and intraspecific relationships as it has been performed in the past decades. Several molecular techniques have been developed to characterize and to identify different *Colletotrichum* species. Multilocus phylogenetic analysis using partial sequences of gene such as actin (ACT), calmodulin (CAL), chitin synthase (CHS-1), glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH), glutamine synthetase (GS), and manganese superoxide dismutase (SOD2) have been utilized to identify different species of this genus (Weir et al., 2012; Damm et al., 2012a).

Additionally, molecular markers are generally recognized as a reliable method to evaluate genetic diversity and differentiation of *Colletotrichum* spp isolates, such as restriction fragments length polymorphism (RFLP-PCR), inter-simple sequence repeats or microsatellites (ISSR) and enterobacterial repetitive intergenic consensus (ERIC-PCR). In the present paper, the objective was to differentiate and identify isolates of *Colletotrichum* collected from *C. chinense* in Amazon, northern of Brazil, using molecular markers and phylogenetic analysis.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Isolation of *Colletotrichum* from *C. chinense*

Fruits of chili pepper (*C. chinense* Jacq.) with typical anthracnose symptoms were observed in Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil.

The isolation was performed by collecting spores directly from the surface of the lesions in *C. chinense* fruit and then plated on PDA culture medium. A monosporic culture was performed to ensure that this work would be upon a single genetic uniformity.

The isolates of *Colletotrichum* selected and used for screening analysis (Figures 1, 2 and 3) and phylogenetic study are deposited in the culture collection of the Phytopathology Laboratory of National Institute of Amazonian Research - INPA (INPA 2286, INPA 2066 and INPA 1858) (Table 1).

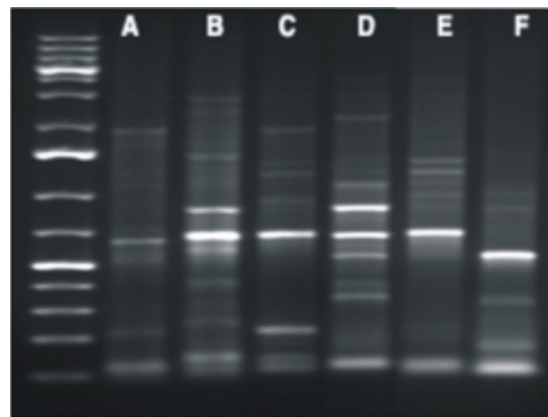


Figure 1. ERIC-PCR of the three isolates from *Capsicum chinense*. **A.** *Colletotrichum fructicola*. **B.** *C. gloeosporioides*. **C.** *C. fragariae*. **D.** Isolate 2286. **E.** Isolate 2066. **F.** Isolate 1858.

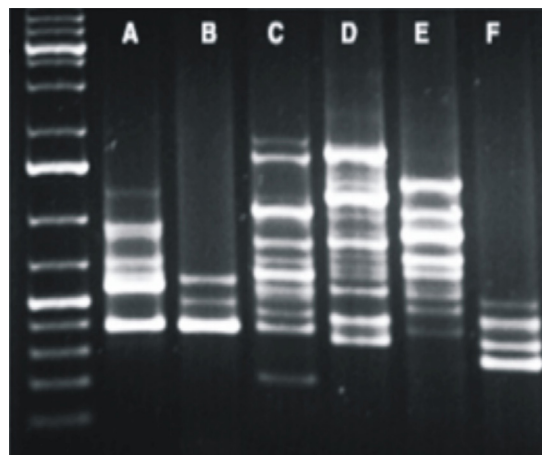


Figure 2. PCR amplification of ISSR of the three isolates from *Capsicum chinense*. **A.** Isolate 1858. **B.** Isolate 2066. **C.** Isolate 2286. **D.** *Colletotrichum fructicola*. **E.** *C. fragariae*. **F.** *C. gloeosporioides*.

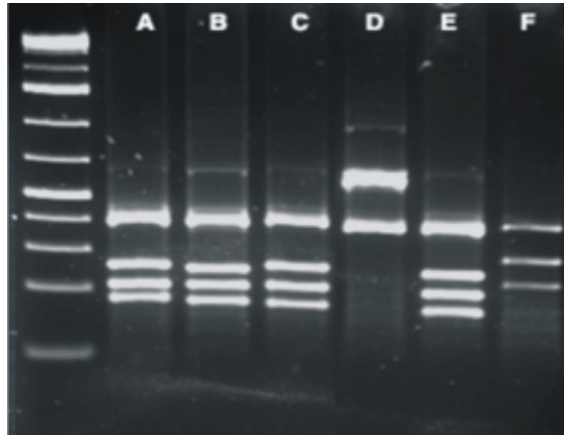


Figure 3. PCR amplification of the 1-kb GS intron based on *Pst*I enzyme digestion (RFLP-PCR), of the three isolates from *Capsicum chinense*. **A.** *Colletotrichum fructicola*. **B.** *C. gloeosporioides*. **C.** *C. fragariae*. **D.** Isolate 2286. **E.** Isolate 1858. **F.** Isolate 2286.

Table 1. List of primers used for molecular screening and phylogenetic analysis.

Region	Primers	Sequences (5'-3')
Enterobacterial Repetitive Intergenic Consensus	ERIC1	ATGTTAAGTCCTGGGGATTAC
Enterobacterial Repetitive Intergenic Consensus	ERIC2	AGTAAGTGACTGGGGTGAGCG
Glutamine synthetase	GSF1	ATGGCCGAGTACATCTGG
Glutamine synthetase	GSR1	AACCGTCGAAGTCCAC
Inter Simple Sequence Repeats	UBC 885	BHBGAGAGAGAGAGAGA
Actin	ACT 512 F	ATGTGCAAGGCCGTTTCGC
Actin	ACT 783 R	TACGAGTCCTTCTGGCCCAT
Superoxide dismutase	SODglo2-F	CAG ATC ATG GAG CTG CAC CA
Superoxide dismutase	SODglo2-R	TAG TAC GCG TGC TCG GAC AT
Glyceraldehyde 3-Phosphate dehydrogenase	GAPDH-F	GCCGTCAACGACCCCTTCATTGA
Glyceraldehyde 3-phosphate dehydrogenase	GAPDH-R	GGGTGGAGTCGTACTIONTGGACATGT

Screening *Colletotrichum* isolates by molecular markers

To confirm if *C. chinense*, in the State of Amazonas, is host of different species of *Colletotrichum*, a initial screening on the obtained isolates was carried out only using different molecular profile isolates for phylogenetic analysis. For this screening, we used ERIC-PCR, ISSR and PCR-RFLP of GS (Glutamine sintase) intron techniques. For comparison, we used isolates of reference of *C. fructicola*, *C. gloeosporioides* and *C. fragariae*.

DNA extraction was carried out at the Molecular Biology Laboratory - Embrapa Western Amazon, according to Doyle and Doyle (1987). The primers used for amplification are listed in Table 2.

To ERIC-PCR marker, ERIC1 and ERIC2 primers were used at a concentration of 0.2 μ M; 1X Buffer [100 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.8; 500 mM KCl, 0.8% (v/v)], 25 mM MgCl₂; 0.5 mM dNTPs; 50 ng DNA; 1 U Taq polymerase (DNA Express®), and reaction was set up to a final volume of 25 μ L. The programming on thermal cycler (Applied Biosystems Veriti™96-Well Thermal Cycler) initiated with 94°C for 1 min followed by 35 cycles of denaturation (94°C for 1 min), annealing (48°C for 1 min) and elongation (65°C for 5 min) and further extension of 65°C for 6 min.

To ISSR marker analysis, the PCR was performed at a 25- μ L final reaction volume, with 0.2 μ M of the UBS primer 885; 1X Buffer [100 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.8; 500 mM KCl, 0.8% (v/v)]; 25 mM MgCl₂; 0.5 mM dNTPs; 50 ng DNA; 1.5 U *Taq* Polymerase (DNA Express®). The pre-cycle was on 94°C for 5 min, followed by 40 cycles of denaturation (94°C for 1 min), annealing (45°C for 1 min) and elongation (72°C for 1 min), followed by a final extension at 72°C for 7 min. Amplification of intron GS, PCR-RFLP was carried out according to Liu et al. (2012). All PCR and PCR-RFLP products ran at a 1.5% w/v agarose gel electrophoresis.

Phylogenetic analysis

Three loci were amplified by PCR and we used for phylogenetic analysis: ACT, GAPDH and SOD2. For these reactions, 1X Buffer [(100 mM Tris-HCl pH 8.8; 500 mM KCl, 0.8% (v/v)], 25 mM MgCl₂; 10 mM dNTPs; 5 μ M for each primer; 50 ng/mL DNA; 5 U *Taq* Polymerase (DNA Express®). The first cycle initiated with 94°C for 4 min, followed by 35 cycles of denaturation (94°C for 30 s), annealing (60°C for 30 s) and elongation (72°C for 1 min), followed by a final extension at 72°C for 7 min. The primer sequences used for each gene are described in the Table 2. PCR products were purified and sequenced by the Applied Biosystems® 3500 Genetic Analyzers. Sequences from forward and reverse primers were aligned to obtain a consensus sequence (Table 1). The fungal DNA sequences were aligned using MEGA 6 (Tamura et al., 2013) with reference sequences of the *Colletotrichum* obtained from GenBank. The Bayesian inference analyses employing a Markov Chain Monte Carlo method were performed with all individual and combined sequences. The MrModeltest 2.3 (Posada and Buckley, 2004) was used to determine the best model of nucleotide evolution (HKY+I to ACT; HKY+G to GAPDH; GTR+I+G to SOD2). The phylogenetic analysis was performed on CIPRES web portal (Miller et al., 2010) using MrBayes version 3.2 (Ronquist et al., 2012). Markov chain Monte Carlo method was run for 10,000,000 generations, sampling every 1000 generations and discarding 2500 samples as burn-in. The resulting trees were rooted using outgroup taxon. Trees were visualized in FigTree 1.4.0 (Rambaut, 2012) and exported to graphic programs. The sequences obtained in this study were deposited in GenBank (Table 2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained reveal that simple molecular settings such as ERIC-PCR, PCR-RFLP and ISSR can be used with efficiency for screening of *Colletotrichum* isolates aiming to identify different species capable of causing anthracnose in the same host. ERIC-PCR and ISSR unique band profiles can be identified (Figures 1 and 2). GS RFLP-PCR also evidenced different profile bands for the isolates (Figure 3).

Phylogenetic results revealed that these different profiles correspond to different species of *Colletotrichum* associated with *C. chinense* (Figures 4, 5 and 6). This information could be confirmed by Bayesian inference methods from multiple gene sequences.

Sequences from fragments of ACT, GAPDH and SOD2 from isolate INPA 2066, ACT and GAPDH from isolates INPA 2286, and INPA 1858 from *C. chinense* were compared with sequences from strains of other *Colletotrichum* species and it showed approximately 99% of similarity with *Colletotrichum siamense*, 99% of similarity with *C. scovillei* Damm, P.F. Cannon & Crous, and 96% of identity with *C. brevisporum* Phoulivong, P. Noireung, L. Cai & K.D. Hyde, respectively.

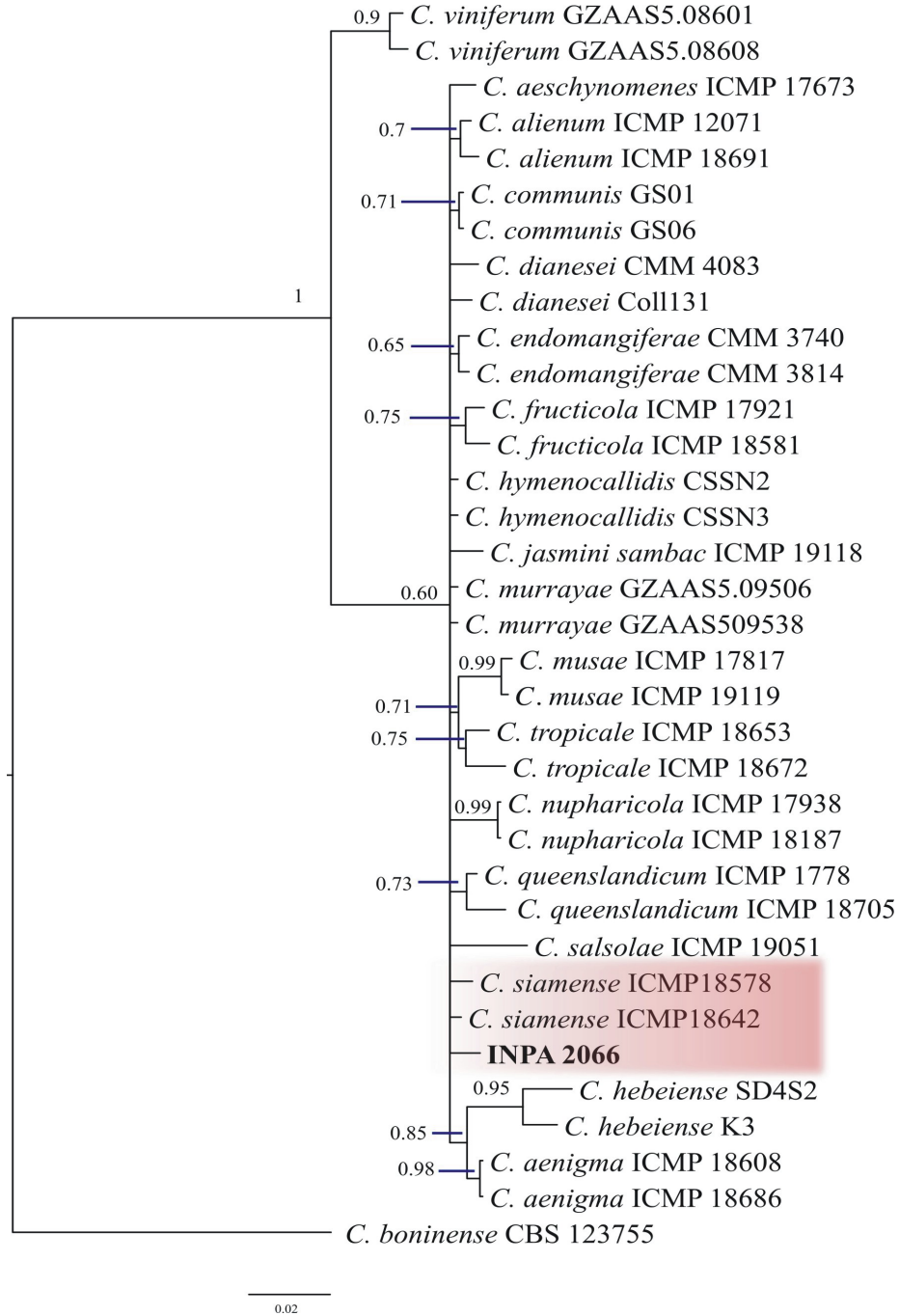


Figure 4. Phylogenetic tree generated by Bayesian inference upon a combined ACT, GAPDH and SOD2 alignment sequences of *Colletotrichum gloeosporioides* species complex and the INPA 2066 isolate highlighted. This tree is rooted with *C. boninense*. Relevant bootstrap values are shown at the nodes.

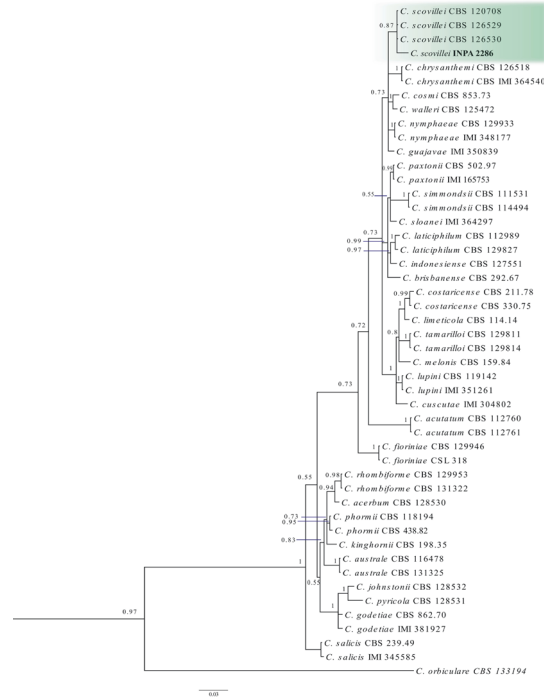


Figure 5. Phylogenetic tree generated by Bayesian inference upon a combined ACT and GAPDH alignment sequences of *Colletotrichum acutatum* species complex among with the INPA 2286 isolate, highlighted. This tree is rooted with *C. orbiculare*. Relevant bootstrap values are shown at the nodes.

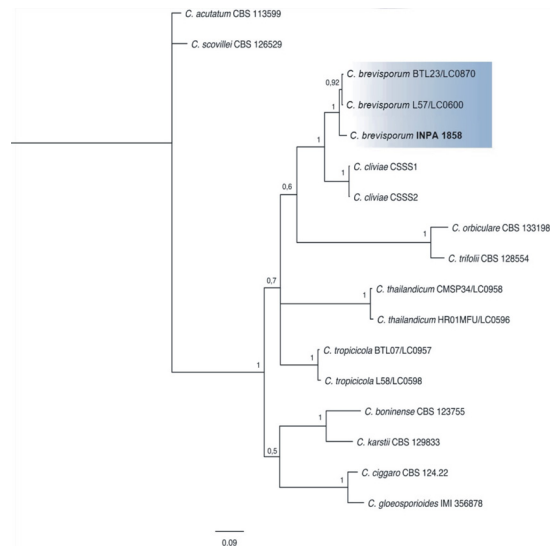


Figure 6. Phylogenetic tree generated by Bayesian inference upon a combined ACT and GAPDH alignment sequences of *Colletotrichum* species including *C. brevisporum* among with the INPA 1858 isolate, highlighted. This tree is rooted with *C. acutatum* and *C. scovillei*. Relevant bootstrap values are shown at the nodes.

The combined dataset generated from Bayesian analysis shows similar topology with individual trees. In the phylogenetic trees based on combined dataset of ACT, GAPDH and SOD2 comprised 873 characters including alignment gaps, which showed that the isolate INPA 2066 is closely related to *C. siamense* H. Prihastuti, L. Cai & K.D. Hyde. This tree was rooted to *C. boninense* (Figure 4). *C. siamense* is biologically and geographically diverse, found in many hosts across several tropical and subtropical regions, including *Capsicum annuum* in Thailand (Weir et al., 2012). Recently, Sharma et al. (2015) using multilocus analysis demonstrated that *C. siamense* are four distinct species forming the *C. siamense* species complex.

The analysis of the combined dataset of ACT and GAPDH showed that the isolate INPA 2286 formed a monophyletic clade supported (Bayesian posterior probability = 0.87) with three strains of *C. scovillei* (Figure 5). And isolate INPA 1858 formed a monophyletic clade with high support (Bayesian posterior probability = 1) with two isolates of *C. brevisporum* (Figure 6). The trees were rooted to *C. orbiculare*, and two species from each complex (*C. acutatum* and *C. scovillei*), respectively (Figures 5 and 6). *Colletotrichum scovillei* belongs to *C. acutatum* species complex and was associated with chilli in Indonesia and Thailand (Than et al. 2008; Weir et al., 2012).

In Brazil, the first report of anthracnose on pepper fruit (*C. annuum* L.) caused by *C. scovillei* was by Caires et al. (2014). *Colletotrichum brevisporum*, which is still not inserted in any *Colletotrichum* species complex has been reported in *Neoregalia* sp and *Pandanus pigmaeus* in Thailand (Noireung et al., 2012). In Brazil, it has been notified the presence of this pathogen in papaya fruit (Vieira et al., 2013), chayote fruits (Bezerra et al., 2016) and chili pepper (Almeida et al., 2017).

In the present study, we showed that the molecular markers were able to distinguish the isolates of *Colletotrichum* studied through the different band profiles and was possible to differentiate isolates of the *C. gloeosporioides* and *C. acutatum* species complex. The phylogenetic analysis results confirmed the occurrence of *C. siamense*, *C. scovillei* and *C. brevisporum* causing anthracnose in *C. chinense* in the State of Amazonas.

This study represents the first report of the species *C. siamense* and *C. scovillei* in this host.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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