



**STRUCTURAL ELUCIDATION OF GDSL ESTERASE OF  
*Photobacterium* sp. J15**

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*Photobacterium* sp. J15**

**By**

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
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Master of Science**

**September 2017**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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*Photobacterium* sp. J15**

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**September 2017**

**Chairman : Adam Leow Thean Chor, PhD**  
**Faculty : Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences**

GDSL esterase is a member of Family II of lipolytic enzyme that catalyses the synthesis and hydrolysis of ester. The enzyme was further classified in subgroup SGNH hydrolases due to the presence of highly conserved motif, Ser-Gly-Asn-His in four conserved blocks I, II, III, and V, respectively. The broad substrate specificity and regiospecificity make these enzymes as attractive candidates for various applications. To date, the number of structure of GDSL motif enzymes deposited in the Protein Data Bank (PDB) is less than 50 and none of them came from *Photobacterium*. Besides, the low amino acid sequence identity of only 23% with a passenger domain of autotransporter EstA of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* makes this enzyme to be more interesting to be studied structurally. Hence, in order to solve the structure of GDSL esterase (EstJ15), X-ray crystallography was conducted. The recombinant *E. coli* Rosetta-gami (DE3) pLysS (pET::EstJ15) was overexpressed at 20°C using 0.1 mM IPTG. The crude protein was then undergo two-step chromatography which were affinity chromatography and ion exchange chromatography to produce a highly purified EstJ15 with the tags were cleaved using thrombin. Crystallisation of the purified EstJ15 was carried out via sitting drop vapor diffusion method using 5 mg/ml protein incubated at 15°C. Crystal optimisation of EsJ15 was conducted in order to improve the crystal quality by using different concentrations of salt (ammonium sulphate) and precipitant (PEG 8000). Crystal of EstJ15 was obtained from optimised formulation containing 0.10 M ammonium sulphate, 0.15 M sodium cacodylate trihydrate pH 6.5, and 20% PEG 8000 with crystal dimension of 0.6 mm x 0.2 mm x 0.3 mm. The phase problem was initially solved by using single-wavelength anomalous dispersion (SAD) method using iodide ions as the anomalous scatterer. The crystal was diffracted at 1.78 Å using an in-house X-ray beam and the crystal belongs to primitive

orthorhombic space group  $P2_12_12_1$ , with unit cell parameter of  $a = 49.43$ ,  $b = 66.28$ ,  $c = 105.46$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = \gamma = 90^\circ$ . There is one molecule per asymmetric unit with solvent content of 47.33%. Four iodide ions were located in the structure. The model was then used to solve the native EstJ15 data with higher resolution of 1.38 Å via molecular replacement method. The crystal also belong to primitive orthorhombic space group  $P2_12_12_1$ , with unit cell parameter of  $a = 49.18$ ,  $b = 66.46$ ,  $c = 105.47$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = \gamma = 90^\circ$ . The solvent content is 47.23% with one molecule per asymmetric unit. The crystal structure of Est15 was refined and the final model was evaluated using Ramachandran plot, Verify3D and Errat. The Ramachandran plot evaluation showed that 89.9% of the residues in the crystal structure of EstJ15 are in the most favoured region. Evaluations of the crystal structures by using Errat and Verify3D also showed that the EstJ15 model gave values that were in acceptable range of good structures. The final  $R_{\text{factor}}$  obtained was 0.1580 with  $R_{\text{free}}$  value of 0.1810. The 3D structure of EstJ15 revealed topological organisation of  $\alpha/\beta$ -hydrolase fold of 38.7% helix, 21.3% sheet, 11.0% turn and 29.0% coil. There is one phosphate ion and one chloride ion in the structure. Based on the structural alignment of EstJ15 with other structurally known GDSL motif enzymes, Ser12, Asp302 and His305 were assigned as the catalytic triad with the nucleophile, Ser12 is located near to the N-terminus. Besides, EstJ15 is also grouped under the subgroup of SGNH family with the presence of four conserved blocks I, II, III, and V composed of Ser12, Gly105, Asn161 and His305, respectively. The active site of EstJ15 is located at the centre of the structure, formed a narrow tunnel, channelling to the core. The active site residues including the catalytic triad have low B-factors of less than 10 Å<sup>2</sup> contributed to the high stability of the enzyme that can withstand harsh conditions better. This explain the high salt tolerance of EstJ15 at which the enzyme remained stable and functional in the presence of high salt concentration besides remain stable in various buffers. Besides, the high specificity of EstJ15 toward short chain length substrates (up to C4) was successfully unveiled via protein-ligand docking analysis. The structure elucidation of EstJ15 also provide insights on its catalytic mechanism. In conclusion, the solved structure of EstJ15 revealed exclusive features as compared to other available structure of GDSL motif enzymes. The structure was the first GDSL motif enzyme deposited from *Photobacterium* and highly valuable due to its tolerance to harsh conditions. Besides, the structure may contribute hugely in the field of structural biology where it may serve as a template in solving the phase problem of proteins with decent amino acid sequence identity to it via molecular replacement, where they are remain unsolvable due to low identity to the current available protein structures.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENERANGAN STRUKTUR GDSL ESTERASE DARI *Photobacterium*  
sp. J15**

Oleh

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GDSL esterase adalah ahli Keluarga II enzim lipolitik yang memangkin proses sintesis dan hidrolisis ester. Enzim berkenaan kemudiannya dikategorikan ke dalam subkumpulan SGNH hidrolis dengan adanya motif yang sangat terpelihara, Ser-Gly-Asn-His dalam empat blok I, II, III, dan V. Kekhususan substrat dan kekhususan rantau yang luas membuatkan enzim-enzim ini sesuai dalam pelbagai aplikasi. Sehingga kini, kurang dari 50 struktur enzim motif GDSL telah didepositkan dalam Protein Data Bank (PDB) yang mana tiada satu pun berasal dari *Photobacterium*. Selain itu, identiti rangkaian asid amino yang rendah, 23% dengan domain penumpang pengangkut auto EstA dari *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* menjadikan struktur enzim ini lebih menarik untuk dikaji. Oleh itu, untuk menyelesaikan struktur GDSL esterase (EstJ15), kristalografi sinar-X dijalankan. Penghasilan protein EstJ15 dalam rekombinan *E. coli* Rosetta-gami (DE3) pLysS (pET::*EstJ15*) telah dijalankan pada suhu 20°C menggunakan 0.1 mM IPTG. Dua langkah kromatografi iaitu kromatografi afiniti dan kromatografi pertukaran ion telah dijalankan untuk menghasilkan EstJ15 yang tulen dan tag-tag dibuang menggunakan thrombin. Penghabluran EstJ15 yang sangat tulen telah dijalankan menggunakan kaedah resapan wap titisan menggunakan 5 mg/ml protein dan diinkubasi pada 15°C. Pengoptimuman hablur EstJ15 telah dilakukan dalam usaha untuk meningkatkan kualiti kristal dengan menggunakan kepekatan garam (ammonium sulfat) dan pemendak (PEG 8000) yang berbeza. Kristal EstJ15 berkualiti sinar-X telah diperolehi daripada formulasi yang mengandungi 0,10 M ammonium sulfat, 0.15 M natrium kakodilat trihidrat pH 6,5, dan 20% PEG 8000 dengan dimensi kristal 0.6 mm x 0.2 mm x 0.3 mm. Masalah fasa pada mulanya diselesaikan dengan menggunakan penyebaran ganjil gelombang tunggal (SAD) menggunakan ion iodida sebagai penyebar ganjil. Kristal itu dibelaukan pada

resolusi 1.78 Å menggunakan sumber sinar-X dalam dan kristal tergolong dalam kumpulan primitif otorombik  $P2_12_12_1$ , dengan parameter unit sel  $a = 49.43$ ,  $b = 66.28$ ,  $c = 105.46$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = \gamma = 90^\circ$ . Terdapat satu molekul per unit simetri dengan kandungan pelarut sebanyak 47.33%. Terdapat empat ion iodida di dalam struktur. Model itu kemudian digunakan untuk menyelesaikan data EstJ15 asli dengan resolusi yang lebih tinggi iaitu 1.38 Å melalui kaedah penggantian molekul. Kristal ini juga tergolong dalam kumpulan primitif otorombik  $P2_12_12_1$ , dengan parameter unit sel  $a = 49.18$ ,  $b = 66.46$ ,  $c = 105.47$  Å,  $\alpha = \beta = \gamma = 90^\circ$ . Kandungan pelarut adalah 47.23% dengan satu molekul per unit simetri. Struktur kristal Est15 telah ditapis dan model akhir telah dinilai menggunakan plot Ramachandran, Verify3D dan Errat. Penilaian melalui plot Ramachandran menunjukkan 89.9% daripada residu di dalam struktur kristal EstJ15 terletak di kawasan yang paling disukai. Penilaian struktur kristal dengan menggunakan Errat dan Verify3D juga menunjukkan bahawa model EstJ15 memberikan nilai-nilai yang tergolong dalam lingkungan struktur protein yang boleh diterima. Nilai  $R_{\text{factor}}$  yang diperoleh 0.1580 manakala nilai  $R_{\text{free}}$  yang diperoleh adalah 0.1810. Struktur 3D EstJ15 mendedahkan organisasi topologi lipatan  $\alpha/\beta$ -hidrolis dengan 38.7% helik, 21.3% lembaran, 11.0% pusingan dan 29.0% gegelung. Terdapat satu ion fosfat dan satu ion klorida di dalam struktur. Dari penjajaran struktur dengan lain-lain enzim motif GDSE, Ser12, Asp302 dan His305 telah dikenalpasti sebagai triad katalitik dengan nukleofil Ser12 berada berdekatan dengan terminal-N. EstJ15 juga dikelaskan dibawah subkumpulan keluarga SGNH dengan kehadiran empat blok terpelihara I, II, III dan V yang terdiri daripada Ser12, Gly105, Asn161 dan His305. Rongga aktif EstJ15 terletak di tengah struktur, menghasilkan terowong sempit menyalur ke teras. Residu-residu rongga aktif termasuk triad katalitik mempunyai nilai B-faktor yang rendah daripada 10 Å<sup>2</sup> yang menyumbang kepada tahap stabiliti yang tinggi yang membolehkan enzim ini bertahan dalam keadaan persekitaran yang terlampau. Hal ini menerangkan tahap toleransi EstJ15 terhadap garam yang tinggi yang mana enzim ini tetap stabil dan berfungsi dalam tahap kepekatan garam yang tinggi selain tetap stabil dalam berbagai penampakan. Selain itu, kekhususan substrat yang tinggi terhadap substrat yang pendek berjaya dirungkaikan melalui analisa dok protein-ligan. Penjelasan struktur EstJ15 ini juga dapat memberikan pemahaman tentang mekanisme katalitik enzim ini. Kesimpulannya, penyelesaian struktur EstJ15. Struktur ini adalah yang pertama dideposit dari *Photobacterium* dan sangat bernilai kerana ia mampu bertahan dalam persekitaran yang terlampau. Kesimpulannya, struktur EstJ15 mendedahkan ciri eksklusif berbanding dengan struktur-struktur enzim motif GDSE yang sedia ada. Struktur ini boleh memberi sumbangan besar dalam bidang biologi struktur yang mana ia boleh dijadikan sebagai templat dalam penyelesaian masalah fasa bagi protein-protein yang mempunyai identiti rangkaian asid amino yang sesuai melalui kaedah penggantian molekul, yang mana protein-protein ini masih tidak berjaya diselesaikan berikutan identiti yang rendah berbanding dengan struktur-struktur protein yang sedia ada.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

$\alpha$	Alpha
Å	Angstrom
$\beta$	Beta
°C	Degree Celsius
%	Percentage
$A_{600\text{nm}}$	Absorbance at wavelength 600 nanometer
$\mu\text{L}$	Microliter
$\mu\text{m}$	Micrometer
APS	Ammonium persulfate
bp	Base pair
$\text{CaCl}_2$	Calcium chloride
<i>E. coli</i>	<i>Escherichia coli</i>
EC	Enzyme Commission
g	Gram
h	Hour
IPTG	Isopropyl $\beta$ -D-1-thiogalactopyranoside
kb	Kilobase
kDA	kilodaltons
L	Litre
LB	Luria-Bertani
M	Molar
mA	MilliAmps
mg/ml	Miligram per mililiter
min	Minute
ml	Mililiter
mm	Milimeter
nm	Nanometer
OD	Optical density
SDS	Sodium dedocyl sulphate

SDS-PAGE	Sodium dodecyl sulphate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis
TEMED	N, N, N, N- Tetramethylenediamide
U	Unit
U/ml	Unit per milliliter
U/mg	Unit per milligram
$\mu$ l	Microliter
v/v	Volume per volume
w/v	Weight per volume



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Esterases and lipases are hydrolytic enzymes that catalyse the cleavage and formation of ester bonds. These enzymes can be isolated from various sources including animals, plants and microorganisms. These enzymes are highly attractive in various applications, mainly in food and beverage, fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals due to their broad substrate specificity and regiospecificity (Pandey et al., 1999; Jaeger and Reetz, 1998).

GDSL hydrolases are grouped in Family II of lipolytic family. These enzymes exhibit  $\alpha/\beta$  hydrolase folds and share the same catalytic process via Ser-Asp/Glu-His triad. Unlike other hydrolases, the members of Family II have the nucleophile, Ser located at Gly-Asp-Ser-Leu (GDSL) motif closer to the N-terminus, different from other ordinary esterases and lipases (Akoh *et al.*, 2004).

GDSL motif enzymes can be found in various sources including microbes and plants with well diversified functions due to their broad substrate specificities and diverse catalytic activities. Although these enzymes readily available to be explored, the study on these enzymes is still limited. To date, less than 50 structures of GDSL motif enzymes have been deposited in the Protein Data Bank (PDB). In fact, only four hydrolase structures originated from *Photobacterium* sp. are available at which none is GDSL motif enzyme (Rose *et al.*, 2017).

GDSL esterase J15 (EstJ15) is an enzyme originated from *Photobacterium* sp. J15, a bacterium isolated from seawater of Tanjung Pelepas, Johor, Malaysia. The open reading frame of *EstJ15* gene is 1,044 bp in length which encodes for 347 amino acids. The molecular mass and pI were predicted to be 35.6 kDa and 6.3, respectively. EstJ15 shows high activity towards short carbon chain length substrates with the highest activity on pNP-butyrate (C4) but no activity was observed for substrate longer than C4 (Shakiba *et al.*, 2016).

EstJ15 shares the highest amino acid sequence identity of 23% with the passenger domain of an autotransporter EstA (Chain A) from *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (PDB ID: 3kvn). The full-length of autotransporter EstA comprises of an autotransporter and a passenger domain that was solved at a resolution of 2.5 Å. The autotransporter domain comprises of a relatively narrow, 12-stranded  $\beta$ -barrel that is covalently attached to the passenger

domain via a long, curved helix that occupies the internal space of the  $\beta$ -barrel (van den Berg, 2010).

Due to the low amino acid sequence identity of less than 30%, these two enzymes cannot be grouped into the same family. Hence, the study of the EstJ15 structure is important to know the structural differences of these two GDSL motif enzymes besides to investigate the catalytic mechanism of EstJ15 and more importantly is to understand why it selectively catalyses only short chain length substrates.

X-ray crystallography is one of the means in determining the three dimensional structure of biological macromolecules. In order to understand the fact behind the selectivity of EstJ15 towards short carbon chain length substrates, X-ray crystallography was conducted to study the 3D structure of EstJ15 and enable the establishment of the structure-function relationships and contribute for a better understanding of the kinetic mechanism of the enzymes.

Unlocking the structure of EstJ15 could help in the understanding of the selectivity of EstJ15 on short carbon chain length substrates and postulating its catalytic mechanism. Therefore, this study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- i. To express and purify GDSL esterase enzyme
- ii. To crystallise GDSL esterase enzyme
- iii. To solve the 3-dimensional structure of GDSL esterase via X-ray crystallography
- iv. To analyse the GDSL esterase structure.

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