



**1<sup>st</sup> Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family**  
Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, Sep 30 – Oct 4, 2001



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## Alpha-Amylase Family People Have Finally Started Their Own Symposia !

The historically 1<sup>st</sup> **Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family** was held from September 30 to October 4, 2001, at the Congress Centre of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in a charming Smolenice Castle in Slovakia. Its objective was to provide a forum for the presentation and discussion on the research on enzymes belonging to the  $\alpha$ -amylase family. The effort to organise this conference was evoked by the rapidly growing knowledge on this family and its enormous scope.

The Scientific Programme Committee consisting of (in alphabetical order) Richard HASER (France), Štefan JANEČEK (Slovakia), Takashi KURIKI (Japan), E. Ann MACGREGOR (Canada), Kwan-Hwa PARK (Korea), Jack PREISS (MI,

USA), Yuzuru SUZUKI (Japan) and Birte SVENSSON (Denmark) prepared really attractive program divided into 7 sessions entitled: 1. *New primary structures*, 2. *Specificity and evolution*, 3. *Catalytic and binding mechanism*, 4. *New three-dimensional structures*, 5. *Protein engineering*, 6. *Raw starch binding and degrading*, and 7. *Stability and stabilisation*. The symposium was sponsored with three principal sponsors: Novozymes A/S (Denmark), Samyang Genex (Korea) and Tong Yang Confectionery Corp. (Korea). Their financial contribution is gratefully acknowledged. It is also worth mentioning that this special Supplement Issue No. 11 of *Biologia, Bratislava* was possible to prepare and publish due to their financial support.



The members of the Scientific Programme Committee at the Symposium Banquet: Takashi Kuriki (standing on the left) sings a Japanese song and Ann MacGregor, Štefan Janeček, Birte Svensson and Richard Haser (from left to right) enjoying the evening program. Behind Sebastian Violot (on the left) and Gerard Pujadas.

More than 80 scientists taking part in the Symposium came from various countries from all over the world, such as (in alphabetical order) Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Iran, Japan, Korea, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, U.K. and USA. The Symposium was opened by the Keynote Lecture by Birte SVENSSON (Carlsberg Laboratory, Valby, Denmark) who gave an insightful overview on "*Fascinating facets on function and structure of amylolytic enzymes of glycoside hydrolase family 13*". The article based on that talk constitutes the KEYNOTE REVIEW of this Issue. There were presented 9 further Invited Lectures as well as 25 Short Oral Presentations in the individ-

ual sessions. A special Banquet Lecture given by Bernard HENRISSAT (AFMB, CNRS, Marseille, France) was about "*Comparative genomics and the metabolism of starch*". The Poster Session with 31 posters complemented the oral talks. The abstracts of all contributions were published in the Abstract Book which is still available upon request at moderate price (for details, contact [umikbiol@savba.sk](mailto:umikbiol@savba.sk)). Topics presented thus covered the  $\alpha$ -amylase family in its widest sense, i.e. the clan GH-H of glycoside hydrolases with families 13, 70 and 77, the family 57 as a relative belonging also to the  $\alpha$ -amylase family as well as, via the raw starch binding and the starch-binding domains, the families 14 and 15 with  $\beta$ -amylases and glucoamylases, respectively.





"Is everything okay with my presentation?" Johan van Lieshout (in the middle), an  $\alpha$ -galactosidase GH family 57-man, checks his powerpoint slides in the Lecture Hall during the break. On the right Ann MacGregor and Duncan Stanley.



Due to a very pleasant autumn sunny weather it was possible to use the terrace outside the Castle during the coffee breaks for discussions and/or just short relaxing. From left to right: Georges Feller, Viera Horváthová, Ali Akbar Saboury, Arnold Vos, Carsten Andersen, Andrew Shaw, Birte Svensson, Bauke Dijkstra and Johan van Lieshout. In the middle: Wolfgang Liebl with Norbert Sträter and behind them Štefan Janeček and Gerard Pujadas.

Main oral presentations together with selected posters have been collected in this special Supplement No. 11 Issue of the journal *Biologia, Bratislava*, section Cellular and Molecular Biology. The Issue consists of 29 articles – 13 Reviews and 16 Full Papers – so that the reader receives a collection in a single journal issue of recent achievements and views on the  $\alpha$ -amylase family.

The Symposium took place just a very short time after the terrorist attack on USA from September 11, 2001. Three invited speakers (Garabed ANTRANIKIAN, Hamburg, Germany; Jack PREISS, East Lansing, Michigan, USA; and Ryota KUROKI, Yokohama, Japan) cancelled their participation in the conference due to the attack. However, really unusually pleasant and friendly atmosphere during the entire meeting was highly appreciated by all who decided to attend. Good relationships were clearly seen not only in the scientific sessions and discussions but also during the



Gentleman Agreement: Richard Haser after his "Closing words" and Štefan Janeček accepting the mandate from the participants to organise the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family in the Smolenice Castle again in autumn 2004.



During the trip to Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia at the forecourt of the Bratislava Castle. Standing from the left: Anna Medlenová, Andrea Kováčová, Ludmila Pribišová, Brian Tibbot, Tae-Jip Kim, Haruhide Mori, Birte Svensson, Jihye Choi, Hyeyoung Lee, Richard Haser, Bernard Henrissat, Duncan Stanley and Jean-Luc Da Lage.

social program including the Opening Reception, Conference Banquet and the Trip to the capital of Slovakia, Bratislava, attending the Slovak Folk Artistic Ensemble performance with a dinner.

All the participants expressed their support for the Committee to organize the next meet-

ing, **2<sup>nd</sup> Symposium on the Alpha-Amylase Family**, again in the Smolenice Castle, Slovakia, in autumn 2004. Additional information can be found at the regularly updated Symposium website at the URL: <http://imb.savba.sk/~janecek/> following the link "The  $\alpha$ -Amylase Symposia".

Štefan JANEČEK