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Maintenance and dynamic reprogramming of chromatin organization during development

Running head: Chromatin maintenance and reprogramming

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Abstract

Controlled transcription of genes is critical for cell differentiation and development. Gene expression regulation therefore involves a multilayered control from nucleosome composition in histone variants and their post-translational modifications to higher-order folding of chromatin fibers and chromatin interactions in nuclear space. Recent technological advances have allowed gaining insight into these mechanisms, the interplay between local and higher-order chromatin organization and the dynamic changes that occur during stress response and developmental transitions. In this review, we will discuss chromatin organization from the nucleosome to its three-dimensional structure in the nucleus and consider how these different layers of organization are maintained during the cell cycle or rapidly reprogrammed during development.

Significance Statement

Chromatin organization contributes to gene expression control. In this review we examine the interplay between local and higher-order chromatin organization and the dynamic changes that occur during stress response and developmental transitions.

Introduction

In eukaryotes, the genome is organized in the nucleus, the functional control center of the cell. During cellular and organismal life, specific sets of genes need to be transcribed in a particular cell type and others have to be repressed, while transposable elements require continuous control to avoid unscheduled transposition events and deleterious mutations. The organization of the genome into chromatin contributes substantially to this transcriptional control, as access of the transcriptional machinery might be facilitated or prevented by looser or tighter compaction of chromatin. At chromatin's most fundamental level of organization, DNA wraps around an octamer of histone proteins (Luger et al., 1997) forming the nucleosome. Nucleosomes can be bound by linker histones that attach to the nucleosome dyad and linker DNA, thereby forming the chromatosome and locking in the nucleosome at a specific position by restricting linker DNA flexibility (Rudnizky et al., 2021). Chains of nucleosomes arranged as 'pearls on the string' then fold into higher order chromatin fibers that adopt specific structures within the three-dimensional (3D) space of the nucleus. Higherorder folding of chromatin fibers can next help to restrain access for transcription factors and the transcription machinery or favor transcription by allowing enhancer-promoter contacts. Without being exhaustive, we highlight here some recent studies that shed light on local and higher-order chromatin features in the model species Arabidopsis thaliana, illustrating how these are maintained during DNA replication or challenged to achieve transcriptome

1. Establishing chromatin states through histone variants and their modifications

reprogramming during development.

The nucleosome consists of basic histone proteins, an H3-H4 tetramer and two H2A-H2B dimers around which wrap ~146bp of DNA. Histones are evolutionary highly conserved proteins, comprising histone fold domains that assemble to form a histone octamer and mainly non-structured N- and C-terminal tails that protrude from the nucleosome core (Luger *et al.*, 1997). Most eukaryotes express different non-allelic variants of the core histones H3, H2A, H2B and the linker histone H1 (Talbert and Henikoff, 2021). These histone variants can differ in their primary amino-acid sequence only by a few residues or larger domains, can show tissue or cell-cycle specific expression patterns as well as alternative deposition modes (Borg, Jiang, *et al.*, 2021; Probst, 2022). Given the critical role of histones in structuring nuclear DNA and regulating access to specific DNA sequences, their expression, transport and deposition but also their eviction, recycling or degradation are highly controlled through a network of specific sets of histone chaperones (Probst *et al.*, 2020). The direct structural consequences on nucleosome structure conferred by histone variants and their modifications influence chromatin compaction, higher-order chromatin organization and the transcriptional read-out of the genome.

As in other eukaryotes, Arabidopsis histone proteins are abundantly post-translationally modified by methylation, phosphorylation, ubiquitination among others (Leng et al., 2020), both in their histone fold domains and their N- or C-terminal tails. These post-translational modifications (PTMs) can directly modulate histone-histone or histone-DNA interactions as it is exemplified by reduction in the positive charge of histones upon lysine acetylation (Tessarz and Kouzarides, 2014). PTMs can also be subsequently interpreted by reader proteins, thereby contributing to specify transcriptionally permissive or repressive chromatin states (Roudier et al., 2011; Sequeira-Mendes et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2018; Jamge et al., 2022). For example, constitutive heterochromatin, chromosomal regions mainly consisting of repetitive sequences and transposable elements that are constantly transcriptionally repressed, is highly enriched in H3K9me2 and H3K27me1 (Mathieu et al., 2005; Jacob et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2002). Instead, in euchromatin that comprises most of the genes, transcriptional activity correlates with enrichment in H3K4me3, H3K9ac and/or H2Bubiquitination (Leng et al., 2020), while gene repression is achieved by H3K27me3 deposition by the Polycomb Repressive complex 2 (PRC2) (Mozgova and Hennig, 2015) (Figure 1). The importance of these histone modifications, especially the Polycomb mark H3K27me3, for plant development has been revealed by genetic approaches either removing histone modifiers (Goodrich et al., 1997), or more recently expressing histone proteins that cannot be post-translationally modified at specific sites (Fal et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2022; Corcoran et al., 2022). Corcoran et al probed systematically the importance of modifiable histone H4 residues by replacing endogenous H4 genes by transgenes carrying different point mutations, revealing many residues critical for plant survival or development, including correct flowering time (Corcoran et al., 2022). Interfering specifically with modifications set on H3K27 by replacing lysine 27 by alanine in a transgene-encoded H3 resulted in a substantially altered transcriptome when assessed in calli and strong developmental abnormalities partly reminiscent of those found in mutants of histone methyltransferases of the PRC2 complex (Fal et al., 2022). While interpretation of these observations is complicated by the fact that lysine residues can undergo several modifications, these phenotypes confirm the critical role for H3K27me3 in plant development. Deposition of histone modifications or binding of reader proteins could also be influenced by modifications of adjacent residues. For example, expressing H3 proteins, in which the serine at position 28 is replaced by alanine led to reduced S28 phosphorylation (Xu et al., 2022). Subtle changes in H3K27me3 levels were also observed, even though they are likely the indirect consequence of altered expression of CURLY LEAF (CLF) and SWINGER (SWN) coding for histone methyltransferase subunits of the PRC2 complex. Interestingly, whether the K27A mutation was introduced in the H3.1 or the H3.3 variant, affected gene expression and plant development in a different manner (Xu et al., 2022; Fal et al., 2022). In both studies, the

expression of a mutated version of H3.3 caused more severe developmental defects. Potential explanations are the distinct genomic enrichment of the two variants, their expression at different cell cycle stages or in specific cell types. Indeed, even though H3.1 and H3.3 histone variants differ by only four amino-acids, they are differently expressed during the cell cycle and employ distinct deposition pathways: H3.1, expressed in S-phase (Okada et al., 2005; Otero et al., 2016) is deposited by CHROMATIN ASSEMBLY FACTOR 1 (CAF-1) at the replication fork (Jiang and Berger, 2017; Benoit et al., 2019). In contrast, H3.3 deposition requires HISTONE REGULATOR A (HIRA) (Nie et al., 2014; Layat et al., 2021; Duc et al., 2015) and ALPHA THALASSEMIA-MENTAL X-LINKED (ATRX) (Duc et al., 2017). These deposition modes contribute to the preferential enrichment of H3.1 at silent genes and at repetitive elements (Ingouff et al., 2010; Stroud et al., 2012; Wollmann et al., 2012), whereas the H3.3 variant occupies predominantly the 3' end of active genes (Duc et al., 2017; Stroud et al., 2012; Wollmann et al., 2012). While the differences in primary amino acid sequences between the two variants likely do not substantially alter nucleosome structure as shown for the mammalian nucleosome containing either H3.1 or H3.3 (Tachiwana et al., 2011), they are thought to determine deposition, eviction and modifications. Differences in the histone fold are crucial to direct deposition mode of the H3 molecule by the respective chaperones (Shi et al., 2011; Jiang and Berger, 2017) and dissimilarities at position 41 (phenylalanine (F) in H3.1 and tyrosine (Y) in H3.3) impact histone eviction. Indeed, H3.141F contributes to restrict H3.1 to silent genes (Lu et al., 2018) and replacement of Y by F in H3.3 (H3.3Y41F) prevents H3.3 removal from rRNA gene repeats upon inhibition of Polymerase I transcription (Shi et al., 2011), suggesting that H3F41 precludes histone eviction or replacement. While the exact mechanism is unresolved, it may implicate interactions between histone and DNA, as H3F41 is critically situated where the histone tail emerges between the DNA helices. Finally, differences at position 31 between H3.1 and H3.3 are known to direct H3K27 monomethylation by ARABIDOPSIS TRITHORAX-RELATED PROTEIN 5 (ATXR5) and ATXR6 specifically to H3.1 (Jacob et al., 2014). Taken together, small differences in the primary amino acid sequences of H3 and H4 histones may interfere with the setting of post-translational modifications or directly affect octamer assembly or nucleosome structure and stability.

Similar to H3 variants, H2A variants also show differential genomic distribution, with H2A.X present all along the chromosome, while H2A and H2A.Z are depleted from heterochromatin and enriched at chromosome arms (Yelagandula *et al.*, 2014). H2A.Z deposition involves the SWI/SNF chromatin remodeling complex SWR1c that can be recruited to certain genes by the DNA-binding protein SWC4 that recognizes AT-rich DNA elements in their promoters (Gómez-Zambrano *et al.*, 2018). *In vitro*, nucleosomes comprising H2A.Z are more unstable compared to nucleosomes containing other H2A variants (Osakabe *et al.*, 2018). How this

difference in nucleosome stability impacts gene transcription is less clear, as H2A.Z can exert both a repressive effect when incorporated along gene bodies and facilitate transcription by contributing to rapid eviction of the +1 nucleosome in response to heat and other environmental factors (Kumar and Wigge, 2010; Sura *et al.*, 2017). In contrast to H2A and H2A.Z, H2A.W that is specifically deposited at heterochromatic regions by the chromatin remodeling factor DECREASE IN DNA METHYLATION (DDM1) (Osakabe *et al.*, 2021), where it promotes chromatin fiber-fiber interactions and heterochromatin condensation (Yelagandula *et al.*, 2014). The characteristic C-terminal tail of H2A.W can contact linker DNA (Osakabe *et al.*, 2018) and influences chromatin accessibility by modulating the binding of the linker histone H1 at these domains (Bourguet *et al.*, 2021).

Taken together, the genomic distribution of specific variants and their modifications contribute to establish specific chromatin states, to regulate DNA accessibility to the transcriptional machinery and have the potential to affect 3D chromatin organization.

2. 3D organization of the Arabidopsis nucleus

When observing nuclei stained with DNA intercalating agents such as 4',6-diamidino-2phenylindole (DAPI), several strongly stained spots, the chromocenters, are visible (Figure 1, (Fransz et al., 2002; Probst et al., 2003)). Chromocenters consist of the pericentromeric regions from each of the ten chromosomes and localize preferentially at the nuclear periphery (Fang and Spector, 2005; Poulet et al., 2017). Due to the interaction between homologous pericentromeric regions, resulting in the fusion of 2-3 chromocenters per nucleus, on average eight distinct and well-defined chromocenters are detectable in mesophyll cells. Fluorescence in situ hybridization subsequently revealed that each Vshaped chromosome fills a specific chromosome territory (CT) between the nuclear envelope and the nucleolus, around which telomeres are clustered (Schubert et al., 2012; Probst et al., 2003). Most of these chromosome territories are randomly distributed inside the nucleus (Pecinka et al., 2004; Schubert and Shaw, 2011; Di Stefano et al., 2021; Grob et al., 2014; Fransz et al., 2002), except the short arms of chromosomes 2 and 4 bearing the rRNA gene clusters known as the nucleolus-organizing regions (NORs) that tend to associate with their homologous short arms next to the nucleolus (Pontvianne et al., 2016; Pecinka et al., 2004; Di Stefano et al., 2021). Chromatin conformation capture (3C) experiments coupled to sequencing (Hi-C) that inform about interactions between distant chromatin regions later confirmed the existence of CTs, by revealing more frequent interactions between chromatin regions belonging to the same chromosome. Hi-C further showed peculiar interchromosomal interactions between pericentromeric regions in good agreement with the possible fusion between chromocenters observed in cytology (Feng et al., 2014; Grob et al., 2014). Telomeres also engage in frequent inter-chromosomal interactions, while no contacts are observed between pericentromeres and telomeres again supporting the distinct position of chromocenters and telomeres observed in cytology (*Figure 1*). While most information on 3D organization is available from whole leaf tissue therefore averaging organization from different nuclei within this tissue, this organization likely differs from cell type to cell type. For example, in the endosperm (a triploid nutritive tissue surrounding the embryo) CTs were suggested to adopt a non-random arrangement with frequent pairwise associations (Baroux *et al.*, 2017) in agreement with more frequent contacts revealed by Hi-C between chromosome arms compared to leaves (Yadav *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, Hi-C experiments showed fewer contacts between pericentromeric regions in the endosperm, correlated with the presence of endosperm-specific interspersed (ESI) heterochromatin observed by microscopy (Baroux *et al.*, 2007) and consistent with the endosperm's hypomethylated state and global chromatin decondensation (Hsieh *et al.*, 2009; Moreno-Romero *et al.*, 2016; Yadav *et al.*, 2021).

As in animals (Lieberman-Aiden et al., 2009), Hi-C interaction maps revealed further details such as interactions within Arabidopsis chromosomes that can be partitioned in two classes named A and B compartments with a preference for interactions between regions in the same compartment (Grob et al., 2014; Feng et al., 2014). The A compartment is associated with euchromatin and contains mainly chromosome arms while the B compartment is associated with heterochromatin and comprises mainly pericentromeric and centromeric regions (Grob et al., 2014). Many genomes, including those of certain plants, organize in addition into Topologically-Associated Domains (TADs) (Santos et al., 2020; Domb et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2017; Dong et al., 2017). Although TADs are not a dominant feature for the Arabidopsis genome organization, approximately 1,000 TAD-like structures have been identified (Liu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2015). TADs may provide a way to co-regulate genes within a given TAD as illustrated by the recent discovery of large enhancers called superenhancers that coordinate gene expression in a concerted manner to ensure organ development and tissue identity (H., Zhao et al., 2022). Special kinds of TADs are the Lamina associated domains (LADs) also called PLADs in Arabidopsis (Bi et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2019). PLADS have been identified by ChIP against the nucleoskeleton protein CROWDED NUCLEI 1 (CRWN1) (Hu et al., 2019). These PLADs strongly overlap with the chromatin regions identified by a particular restriction enzyme mediated Chromatin Immunoprecipitation (RE-ChIP) directed against the nuclear pore basket protein NUP136 that localizes predominantly at the nuclear periphery (Bi et al., 2017) and correlate with the repressive B-compartment identified by Hi-C (Hu et al., 2019). About 10-20% of the genome, mainly transcriptionally repressed and enriched in the histone modifications H3K9me2 and H3K27me3 has thus been identified to localize at the nuclear periphery (Bi et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2019).

3. Chromatin loops and long-range chromatin contacts in gene expression regulation

In addition to the TAD-like structures, about 20,000 chromatin loops have been described (Liu et al., 2016; Zhao et al., 2021; Crevillén et al., 2013; B., Zhao et al., 2022). Chromatin loops can form between enhancers and promoters and small loops in a range of a few kilobases have been found to form between 5' and 3' regions of genes. The latter are globally positively correlated with gene transcription level, however no obvious correlation with specific histone marks was found for high and moderately expressed genes, while silent or low expressed genes were enriched in the histone variant H3.3 (Liu et al., 2016). A wellknown example for a locus engaged in gene loops is the floral repressor gene FLOWERING LOCUS C (FLC) for which intragenic loop formation correlates with gene expression (Crevillén et al., 2013; Kim and Sung, 2017; Zhao et al., 2021). Several factors have been involved in the formation of a loop connecting the promoter and 3' end of FLC, such as the presence of GH1-HMGA1 proteins, which prevent FLC loop formation and thereby contribute to FLC repression (B., Zhao et al., 2022). In contrast to a general correlation that low expressed genes, engaged in loop formation, show enrichment in the histone variant H3.3 (Liu et al., 2016), H3.3 occupancy or the act of its deposition seem to favor loop formation and expression of the FLC locus (Zhao et al., 2021). FRIGIDA (Choi et al., 2011) plays an active role in H3.3 deposition, as it recruits the H3.3 histone chaperone HIRA to the FLC locus and thereby directly increases H3.3 occupancy (Zhao et al., 2021). During vernalization, cold-induced transcriptional repression of FLC correlates with disruption of the gene loop suggesting that interruption of the loop could be a first step in FLC repression (Crevillén et al., 2013). During vernalization, another intragenic loop comprising the first large intron of the FLC gene is formed and its establishment requires PRC2 and two long noncoding RNAs (Kim and Sung, 2017). During Polycomb mediated silencing the FLC locus also makes long-range contacts, as alleles on homologous chromosomes cluster together (Rosa et al., 2013). On top of FLC in its repressed and K27me3-enriched state, additional contacts between regions highly enriched in H3K27me3 were revealed by Hi-C (Figure 1) (Feng et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2016). Recently, a Hi-ChIP analysis (Hi-C combined with immunoprecipitation) allowed to identify many more regions enriched in H3K27me3 that are engaged in long-range interactions thereby spatially segregating inactive chromatin domains from transcriptionally active genes (Huang et al., 2021). The H3K27me3 marked genes involved in these long-range interactions differ between tissues, reflecting the role of H3K27me3 in silencing of tissue-specific genes. The long-distance contacts identified by Hi-ChIP depend on the presence of the H3K27me3 mark, as ectopic deposition of H3K27me3 in the relative of early flowering (ref6) mutant, lacking one of the H3K27me3 demethylases, induces novel chromatin loops. In contrast, chromatin loops are destabilized in the *clf* mutant, indicating a global reconfiguration of chromatin architecture and a major role for H3K27me3 in structuring repressive regions in euchromatin (Huang *et al.*, 2021).

While we have here focused on the Arabidopsis genome organization, recent studies also allowed insight into the formation of chromatin loops in species with larger and more transposon-rich genomes such as rice, maize and wheat (Y., Sun *et al.*, 2020; Concia *et al.*, 2020; Deng *et al.*, 2022). For example, the formation of loops between genes with similar chromatin marks and expression level is a characteristic feature of the hexaploid wheat genome (Concia *et al.*, 2020) and diurnally expressed genes in rice were found to group together with RNA polymerase II in clusters facilitating coordinated transcription (Deng *et al.*, 2022).

In addition to long-range interactions between repressed genes, contacts between heterochromatic regions characterize higher-order organization in Arabidopsis. The knob region, present on the short arm of chromosome 4 that initially derived from the pericentromere interacts with the pericentromeric region of the same chromosome, forming an euchromatic loop (Fransz *et al.*, 2000; Fransz *et al.*, 2016; Fransz *et al.*, 2002). Other long-range interactions in so called KNOTs have been observed between transposon hotspots from different chromosomes termed KNOT Engaged Elements (KEEs) (*Figure 1*, (Grob *et al.*, 2014)) or interactive heterochromatin islands (IHIs, (Feng *et al.*, 2014)). KNOTs have later been shown to be involved in regulating invasive DNA elements such as transgenes, however so far the mechanisms remain to be resolved as KNOT formation does correlate with neither DNA methylation, sRNA production (Grob and Grossniklaus, 2019; Grob *et al.*, 2014), nor with position at the nuclear periphery (Bi *et al.*, 2017) and KNOTs still exist in the *su(var)3-9 homolog (suvh) 4 suvh5 suvh6* triple mutant with strongly reduced H3K9me2 levels (Feng *et al.*, 2014).

4. Linking local chromatin changes to 3D genome organization

Does interfering with histone variants and their modifications affect higher-order chromatin organization? Plants lacking METHYLTRANSFERASE 1 (MET1) or DDM1, mutants with decreased DNA methylation and H3K9me2 levels (Gendrel *et al.*, 2002; Tariq *et al.*, 2003), show reduced contacts between pericentromeric regions and increased interactions between chromosome arms (Feng *et al.*, 2014), in agreement with changes observed in cytology in these mutants (Mathieu *et al.*, 2007; Probst *et al.*, 2003). Instead, depleting H3K9me2 in the *suvh4 suvh5 suvh6* mutant has more subtle effects on heterochromatin organization (Feng *et al.*, 2014; Stroud *et al.*, 2014). Interestingly, the incorporation of the H2A.W histone variant can lead to chromocenter formation when ectopically expressed (Yelagandula *et al.*, 2014) and is required for chromocenter formation in cotyledons during early seedling development

(Benoit et al., 2019). Surprisingly, however, H2A.W deletion causes only subtle defects in chromocenter organization as detectable by microscopy (Yelagandula et al., 2014; Bourguet et al., 2021). In contrast, depletion of the linker histone H1 reduces nucleosome density at repetitive sequences and disturbs their organization in 3D since chromocenters, except those containing NORs, are nearly completely abolished (Rutowicz et al., 2019). In agreement, Hi-C studies revealed a strong decrease in intra-pericentromeric chromatin interactions in 2h1 mutants lacking the linker histone variants H1.1 and H1.2 (Teano et al., 2022). The role of H1 is, however, not restricted to heterochromatin, as linker histones are also abundant in euchromatin, where H1 loss leads to more relaxed and mobile chromatin (Rutowicz et al., 2019). Interestingly, loss of H1 also affects H3K27me3 homeostasis, causing reduced H3K27me3 at genes and H3K27me3 accumulation at certain hot spots shedding light on the important role of linker histones in controlling recruitment of PRC complexes to specific sequences within the genome (Rutowicz et al., 2019; Teano et al., 2022). Taken together, differences at the nucleosome level in particular incorporation of specific histone variants and their modifications together with linker histones have the potential to influence higher-order organization. This is particularly visible at the level of heterochromatin, where deficient heterochromatin marks affect inter-chromosomal interactions. In euchromatin, recent evidence suggests an important role for the repressive H3K27me3 mark in both short and long-range interactions and in structuring the repressive chromatin domains within nuclear space.

5. Maintenance of chromatin states through DNA replication

During the cell cycle and the life of an organism, chromatin organization is constantly challenged to permit DNA sequence information to be read during transcription, reconstructed during DNA repair or duplicated during DNA replication. All these processes may require changes in post-translational modifications of histones such as phosphorylation of H2A.X to signal DNA damage (Friesner *et al.*, 2005), partial or complete eviction of histones, which carry modifications, and deposition of new histones devoid of these modifications (Stewart-Morgan *et al.*, 2020). During each of these DNA-based cellular activities, there is therefore a tradeoff between the need to reconstitute epigenetic information encoded in the position of nucleosomes, their content in histone variants and their modifications, or to seize the opportunity to modify the chromatin state.

5.1 Maintenance of H3 histone modifications

During transcription, it has been suggested that the RNA polymerase II machinery can read DNA when only an H2A-H2B dimer is removed (Kireeva *et al.*, 2002). Therefore, H3-H4 histone modifications could be maintained during transcription at least at lowly expressed

genes (Kulaeva et al., 2010). In case of histone eviction, histone chaperones such as FACILITATES CHROMATIN TRANSCRIPTION (FACT) and HIRA recycle parental histones (Torné et al., 2020; Jeronimo et al., 2019). The Arabidopsis FACT complex associates with the RNA polymerase II and elongation factors (Antosz et al., 2017) and immuno-precipitates with transcriptionally active chromatin (Duroux et al., 2004). In yeast, the absence of FACT abolishes faithful and local re-deposition of evicted histones at a given gene and instead leads to random incorporation of these histones (Jeronimo et al., 2019). Arabidopsis mutants in CAF-1 (Kaya et al., 2001), HIRA (Ingouff et al., 2010; Duc et al., 2015) and ATRX (Duc et al., 2017) are viable assuming a partial redundant function in histone deposition. Instead, mutants lacking one of the two FACT subunits are lethal (Lolas et al., 2010) suggesting a critical role for this histone chaperone complex that cannot be compensated by the others. During replication, every nucleosome is disrupted and here again it is important to reestablish existing chromatin environments by histone recycling. In yeast and mammals there is little if no splitting of the parental H3-H4 tetramers into dimers (Xu et al., 2010), therefore information carried by a parental H3-H4 tetramer is only found on one of the two daughter strands after replication. While distribution of H3-H4 tetramers is mainly random, a slight bias towards the leading strand in mammals (Petryk et al., 2018) or the lagging strand in yeast (Yu et al., 2018) has been observed. Whether such a bias exists in plants, needs still to be determined. To replenish the nucleosomal histone pool, the CAF-1 complex, highly conserved through evolution, is recruited via PCNA to the replication fork and realizes de novo histone deposition of H3-H4 tetramers (Verreault et al., 1996). In mammals and plants, CAF-1 interacts preferentially with histone H3.1 and deposits this variant in a replication coupled manner (Tagami et al., 2004; Jiang and Berger, 2017). Histone deposition is therefore closely coupled to DNA replication, ensuring immediate reconstitution of chromatin. Very recently, POL2A, the catalytic subunit of Arabidopsis DNA polymerase epsilon (POL ε) required for leading strand elongation, has been shown to bind FASCIATA1 (FAS1), the largest subunit of the CAF-1 complex, and also to exhibit preferential binding to the H3.1 histone variant (Wang et al., 2022). Similar to mammals, where histones can be pre-modified when coupled to CAF-1 before their assembly into chromatin (Loyola et al., 2009), H3.1 can be mono-methylated by ATXR5 and ATXR6 during deposition (Jacob et al., 2014). ATXR proteins only mono-methylate the H3.1 histone variant as the threonine at position 31 in H3.3 causes steric hindrance in the catalytic SET domain preventing mono-methylation of lysine 27 in H3.3 (Jacob et al., 2014). Together with the recruitment of ATXR5 and 6 by PCNA to the replication fork (Jacob et al., 2009), this ensures the exclusive deposition of the repressive mark H3K27me1 on H3.1 by these enzymes coupling assembly of new histones and maintenance of H3K27me1. In a similar manner, maintenance of H3K27me3 can take place concomitantly with DNA replication, as some PRC1 and PRC2 components are directly

recruited to the replication fork via PCNA or through interaction with FAS1 (Jiang and Berger, 2017). This way, newly deposited histones can be modified to maintain H3K27me3 levels. POL2A also interacts genetically and physically with PRC2 components and is required to maintain H3K27me3 at flowering genes (del Olmo *et al.*, 2016). This reinforces the functional link between DNA replication and H3K27me3 maintenance. Therefore, similar to H3K27me1, modification of newly incorporated histones, faithful recycling of parental histones carrying H3K27me3 together with sequence dependent *de novo* targeting of H3K27me3 through recruitment of PRC2 complexes (Zhou *et al.*, 2018) allow maintenance of this silencing mark through the cell cycle. Indeed, the role of cis-regulatory DNA elements such as Polycomb Repressive elements (PREs) in maintenance of H3K27me3 should not be underestimated as, in Drosophila, removal of a PRE leads to rapid loss of H3K27me3 from the locus in cycling cells (Laprell *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, other specific cis-binding factors could help to trap or retain PRC2 complexes as recently reported for the VEL proteins that contribute to *FLC* silencing during vernalization (Fiedler *et al.*, 2022).

5.2 Maintenance of H2A-H2B

The described mechanisms ensure propagation of histone modifications situated on the H3-H4 tetramer. Are there similar mechanisms operating to maintain H2A-H2B variants at the replication fork? H2A-H2B dimers are more rapidly exchanged throughout the cell cycle independently of ongoing DNA replication (Jamai et al., 2007), which led to the conclusion that they are less good candidates to carry heritable epigenetic information. POL2A for example does not seem to play a role in H2A.W maintenance (Bourguet et al., 2020). Nevertheless, parental H2A-H2B dimers can be maintained during DNA replication or transcription through the action of the FACT complex that binds not only H3-H4 but also H2A-H2B dimers (Liu et al., 2020). Whether and how de novo assembly of H2A variants is coordinated with replication in Arabidopsis also remains to be determined. H2A.W deposition at heterochromatin involves the chromatin-remodeling factor DDM1 (Osakabe et al., 2021). DDM1 maintains nucleosome density and remodels chromatin to facilitate access of the methylation machinery to DNA (Zemach et al., 2013) and can directly interact with H2A.W (Osakabe et al., 2021). DDM1 could operate outside S-phase to restore H2A.W occupancy that was diluted during replication, or may function directly at the replication fork like its mammalian homologue Lsh (Han et al., 2020). In contrast, not much is known whether linker histones could be retained during DNA replication or when H1 binding is restored during chromatin maturation following replication. H1 is extremely mobile within chromatin (Rutowicz et al., 2015) suggesting that it can dissociate and re-associate rapidly with newly replicated chromatin. Till now, the lack of efficient synchronization methods for Arabidopsis

cell cultures, has prohibited a detailed analysis of the chromatin maintenance events taking place specifically in plant S-phase cells.

5.3 Maintenance of 3D chromatin organization during replication

Do the need to gain access to DNA during replication and the possible transient dilution of epigenetic information during replication impact higher order chromatin organization? How does the 3D organization of chromatin replicate? In general, no global changes in higherorder organization such as chromocenter structures were observed during S phase (Dvořáčková *et al.*, 2018). 3D organization is therefore globally maintained. Furthermore, as in animals, DNA replication in Arabidopsis is temporally and spatially organized (Dvořáčková *et al.*, 2018; Concia *et al.*, 2018). Detailed analysis of replication timing showed that replication events mainly occur first at distal arms of the chromosomes (early) before proximal arms (mid), while centromeric and pericentromeric regions replicate late during S-phase (Concia *et al.*, 2018). The replication timing broadly correlates with euchromatin (early and mid) and heterochromatin (late), however a certain portion of the genome was replicating through all phases, suggesting heterogeneity between cells (Concia *et al.*, 2018). One appealing hypothesis is that regrouping replication of chromatin domains with similar chromatin states could help to concentrate specific histone modifiers and chaperones at these locations, facilitating accurate replication of chromatin features at these domains.

Taken together, specific mechanisms exist to faithfully restore patterns of certain histone modifications, in particular H3K27me3, rapidly following passage of the replication fork. These mechanisms may have evolved due to the critical role of this histone modification in repressing developmentally regulated genes and therefore ensuring proper development and differentiation (Mozgova and Hennig, 2015). Another reason may be the ancestral role of H3K27me3 in ensuring transposon silencing and therefore genome maintenance (Déléris et al., 2021). Much remains to be understood how other histone modifications are faithfully replicated; in particular those marks or histone variants that only occupy one or few nucleosomes for example H3K4me3 methylation and the H2A.Z histone variant. For these marks, restoration cannot rely on recruitment of histone modifiers by neighboring nucleosomes with similar modifications. Maintenance of epigenetic information could also be reinforced by interaction between the DNA methylation and histone modification maintenance machinery (Probst et al., 2009) such as through the interaction of HISTONE DEACETYLASE 6 (HDA6) that interacts with MET1 to reinforce silencing of transposable elements (Liu et al., 2012). Future experiments will show to what extent the 3D genome structure including long-range interactions of H3K27me3 enriched domains (Huang et al.,

2021) are maintained during replication or how they are restored to maintain organization and functionality of the genome.

6. Epigenome reprogramming during development

While during the mitotic cell cycle genome organization is preserved during interphase, developmental phase transitions evidence remarkable changes in the epigenome and higher-order chromatin organization associated with transcriptome reprogramming. One of the first observations of global alterations in nuclear organization were made during the generation of protoplasts that show a dramatic decrease in both size and number of chromocenters compared to the mesophyll tissue they are derived from (Tessadori, Chupeau, *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, exposure to low light stress causes dispersion of pericentromeric repeats, a phenotype that is reversible upon return to standard light conditions (van Zanten *et al.*, 2010; Tessadori *et al.*, 2009). Instead, decondensation of heterochromatin in differentiated cells is long-lasting after a prolonged heat stress (Pecinka *et al.*, 2010). Genome wide assessment by Hi-C, although using another experimental setup, confirmed that heat stress causes global changes in 3D genome organization as it increases contacts between pericentromeric regions and distal chromosome arms while inter-chromosomal interactions decrease (L., Sun *et al.*, 2020).

Not only stress situations impact 3D genome reorganization, but dynamic change in higherorder organization and the epigenome have also been reported during development. During the floral transition from vegetative to reproductive growth, which is associated with considerable changes in gene expression, leaf nuclei undergo changes in 3D organization with a transient decondensation of pericentromeric and euchromatic regions (Tessadori, Schulkes, *et al.*, 2007). Important changes in higher order chromatin organization also occur during the switch from skoto- to photomorphogenesis when de-etiolated seedlings are exposed to light for the first time (Bourbousse *et al.*, 2015). While some information is available on the role of light signaling components such as DE-ETIOLATED 1 (DET1) (Bourbousse *et al.*, 2015), CRYPTOCHROME 2 and PHYOTOCHROME B in controlling heterochromatin compaction (van Zanten *et al.*, 2010; Snoek *et al.*, 2017), we still know little about the changes at the level of the nucleosome fiber occurring during those higher-order chromatin changes.

Another remarkable developmental transition, seed germination, is likewise associated with important changes in nuclear organization. In the dry seed, the embryo rests in a quiescent state. Embryonic nuclei are small (*Figure 2*) with highly condensed chromatin (van Zanten *et al.*, 2011; van Zanten *et al.*, 2012) that has a peculiar composition, highly enriched in the replacement histone variant H3.3 (Layat *et al.*, 2021; T., Zhao *et al.*, 2022) and a specific H2B variant, H2B.8 (Jiang, Borg, Lorković, *et al.*, 2020; Buttress *et al.*, 2022). H2B.8 is

characterized by a long N-terminal tail that induces formation of phase separated chromatin condensates contributing to chromatin compaction (Buttress et al., 2022). New H3.1 deposition occurs only during imbibition when replication restarts and genes encoding H3.1 are becoming expressed (Masubelele et al., 2005). During seed germination, nuclear size increases, heterochromatin content decreases, and chromocenters disorganize (van Zanten et al., 2011). Here again the cytological chromatin changes correlate with massive alterations in gene expression occurring during seed germination (Narsai et al., 2017; Kawakatsu et al., 2017). Intriguingly, despite the important role of H3K27me3 in cell fate control, gene expression changes precede variations in H3K27me3 methylation (Pan et al., 2022). More details therefore remain to be discovered how gene expression, chromatin structure and higher-order chromatin organization are functionally coupled during this developmental transition. Cytological studies suggested that chromocenter structures are consolidated during seedling establishment and that this process involves local chromatin changes (Mathieu et al., 2003; Benoit et al., 2019). Despite not fully clustered into chromocenters shortly after germination, repetitive sequences are already enriched in the repressive mark H3K9me2 and the linker histone H1. Instead, chromocenter consolidation during the next few days correlates with a progressive increase in H3.1 and H2A.W occupancy (Benoit et al., 2019). Both, rise in H3.1 and H2A.W occupancy and chromocenter formation depend on an operative replication-coupled histone deposition pathway (Benoit et al., 2019) pointing towards a functional link between setting of local chromatin features during replication and heterochromatin organization.

Another striking example of a developmental time frame, during which the epigenome is reprogrammed, is the differentiation of the pollen (PMCs) and spore mother cells (SMCs). PMC and SMC differentiation correlates with a decrease in heterochromatin content and chromocenter number. These changes in higher-order chromatin organization are linked to dynamic alterations in epigenetic marks with an enrichment in H3K4me3, eviction of H2A.Z and the linker histone variants H1.1 and H1.2 as well as the depletion of the repressive mark H3K27me3 (She et al., 2013; She and Baroux, 2015). After meiosis, the SMC will give rise to an ovule that contains an egg and a central cell. The nucleus of the egg cell that after fertilization will give rise to the zygote, contains numerous small H3K9me2 foci rearranged into large chromocenters, but is devoid of H3.1 and the centromeric H3 variant CenH3 (Ingouff et al., 2010; Pillot et al., 2010). Correlating with high levels of LIKE HETEROCHROMATIN PROTEIN1 (LHP1), the H3K27me3 reader (Nakahigashi et al., 2005), no active RNA polymerase II is detected in the egg cell (Pillot et al., 2010). In contrast, the central cell that preserves transcriptional activity, still expresses genes encoding CenH3, H3.1 and the H3.1 deposition machinery, however is strongly depleted in H3K9me2 and lacks chromocenters (Ingouff et al., 2010; Pillot et al., 2010). The PMC, following meiotic

division, will give rise to the mature male gametophyte that contains one vegetative cell and two sperm cells (Figure 2). The vegetative nucleus harbors decondensed chromatin devoid of heterochromatin with low level of DNA methylation, H3K9me2, H3K4me2 and H3K9ac (Schoft et al., 2009; Houben et al., 2011; Slotkin et al., 2009). Loss of H3K9me2 and DNA methylation correlates with increased accessibility of pericentromeric chromatin regions correlating with increased transcription of these regions and production of small interfering RNAs from the vegetative nucleus (Slotkin et al., 2009; Borg, Papareddy, et al., 2021). The two sperm cells on the contrary have highly condensed chromatin, strongly reduced H3K27me3 levels, are completely depleted of the histone variant H3.1, but enriched in H3.10 and H2B.8 variants (Ingouff et al., 2010; Borg et al., 2020; Buttress et al., 2022). H2B.8 via its capacity to form phase separated condensates compacts silent euchromatic regions in sperm cells and contributes to the small size of these nuclei. Loss of H2B.8 does not affect the sperm transcriptome, but reduces transmission of the mutant male gamete, revealing a role for sperm nuclear organization in fertility (Buttress et al., 2022). The other sperm enriched histone variant, H3.10, varies from H3.1 and H3.3 in the primary amino acid sequence around lysine 27 making it a bad substrate for H3K27 methylases. H3.10 incorporation contributes to H3K27me3 reprogramming and in turn to transcription of genes essential for sperm differentiation (Borg et al., 2020). Upon fertilization, the histone variant repertoire is again dynamically changed with the eviction of several histone variants (Ingouff et al., 2010) pointing towards further epigenome reprogramming events during early embryonic development.

Taken together, developmental transitions in plants involve important dynamics at the level of nucleosome composition and 3D genome organization. The changes may concern heterochromatin domains such as in the vegetative nucleus or euchromatic regions through incorporation of specific variants like H3.10 that contribute to reprogramming of the Polycomb mark H3K27me3. Scaling down RNA-seq, ChIP-seq and Hi-C analyses to a few specific cells using key technologies such as INTACT (Deal and Henikoff, 2011), nuclear sorting (Buttress *et al.*, 2022) or single cell approaches (Dorrity *et al.*, 2021) coupled to microscopy analysis (She *et al.*, 2013) will allow dissecting the mechanisms operating during chromatin maintenance or reprogramming.

7. Perspectives

Chromatin organization is essential for gene expression control. Therefore, sophisticated mechanisms ensure maintenance of chromatin states during replication or allow plasticity to remodel chromatin during developmental phase transitions. While we have here concentrated on maintenance and reprogramming of histone variants and modifications and their link with 3D nuclear organization, these dynamics are often associated with both

maintenance of DNA methylation during DNA replication or substantial methylation reprogramming. Furthermore, changes in chromatin marks and higher-order structures can be linked to the expression of non-coding RNAs as shown for the *FLC* locus that expresses several non-coding RNAs (Swiezewski *et al.*, 2009; Kim and Sung, 2017) or *APOLO (AUXIN-REGULATED PROMOTER LOOP)* that regulates auxin-responsive genes (Ariel *et al.*, 2020). Such RNAs can even make the link between DNA methylation and histone modifications through the Polycomb machinery (Fonouni-Farde *et al.*, 2022).

Further investigation will also show whether and how 3D chromosome organization is actively maintained during DNA replication and how it is quickly reformed after mitosis. Finally, more questions remain to be answered such as to what extent chromatin marks determine 3D chromosome organization or how far specific localization of loci for example in PLADs close to the nuclear periphery favors setting of repressive marks. More exciting data will certainly emerge with the development of new and innovative technologies that will allow manipulating the epigenome in a dynamic and cell-specific manner.

Figures and legends:



Figure 1: Schematic representation of chromatin organization in an Arabidopsis nucleus. Left: Heterochromatin in interphase nuclei is highly condensed and organizes into DAPIbright chromocenters, with repressive chromatin marks (H3K9me2 enrichment) and a different nucleosome composition (H2A.W and H3.1) than the surrounding euchromatin that is characterized by a more relaxed chromatin fiber. A representative repressed gene with high H3.1 occupancy and H3K27me3 enrichment and active genes with an H3K4me3 methylation peak at the transcription start site and H3.3 occupancy in the 3' end are shown. Right: 3D chromatin organization within the nuclear space. Arabidopsis chromosomes within their chromosome territory (CT, light blue, (Pecinka *et al.*, 2004)) adopt a rosette-like organization (Fransz *et al.*, 2002), with intrachromosomal interactions taking place between the centromere proximal regions, while centromere distal regions interact preferentially with each other. Telomeres (black dots) and nucleolus organizer regions (NORs, blue) cluster at the nucleolar periphery. Certain chromatin regions termed plant lamina-associated domains (PLADs, orange) situate at the nuclear periphery. Interchromosomal interactions have been observed between H3K27me3 enriched genes (red) and between specific heterochromatic sequences situated on chromosome arms termed KEEs (KNOT Engaged Elements) or interactive heterochromatic islands (IHIs, yellow) (Grob *et al.*, 2014; Feng *et al.*, 2014). Certain genes form gene loops exemplified here for the *FLC* locus that engages either in a loop between the promoter and the 3' end that is associated with transcriptional activity (Crevillén *et al.*, 2013; Zhao *et al.*, 2021) or another loop including the first intron that requires the PRC2 complex and is associated with transcriptional repression (Kim and Sung, 2017). Drawings are superposed on an Arabidopsis nucleus stained with a DNA intercalating-agent (DAPI). Euchromatin appears as light grey, chromocentres as dark grey foci and the nucleolus (NO) as a white region at the center of the nucleus.



Figure 2: Illustration of the chromatin dynamics during certain developmental phase transitions.

The mesophyll leaf nucleus is characterized by light grey euchromatin and black (DAPIbright) chromocenters (CC). In the male gametophyte, sperm nuclei (SN) are small and highly condensed, while the vegetative nucleus (VN) is bigger, lacks H3K9me2 and shows no visible chromocenter structures (Slotkin *et al.*, 2009; Borg, Papareddy, *et al.*, 2021). Sperm chromatin is enriched in a specific H3 (H3.10) and H2B (H2B.8) variant (Borg *et al.*, 2020; Buttress *et al.*, 2022). H2B.8 is also enriched in the small and condensed nuclei in the dry seed embryo (Jiang, Borg, Lorkovi, *et al.*, 2020). During germination, nuclear size increases and heterochromatin becomes more relaxed before being reformed during seedling establishment. During chromocenter formation, repetitive sequences gain H3.1 and H2A.W (Benoit *et al.*, 2019). Euchromatic histone variants and modifications are indicated in grey, those in heterochromatin in black. Maximum intensity projections of paraformaldehyde fixed nuclei isolated from the different developmental stages and stained with DAPI (reverse colored) are shown. The size of the letters represents the relative enrichment in histone variants or modifications.

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