

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSES OF *ANKISTRODESMUS FALCATUS* AND *CHLORELLA VULGARIS* TO COPPER

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ABSTRACT

The physiological and biochemical responses of two green algae *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* to copper sulphate were investigated. In this experiment both *Ankistrodesmus* and *Chlorella* cultures were treated with copper sulphate concentrations ranging from 0.5 to 250 μM . The influence of copper on growth and metabolism was determined. *Ankistrodesmus* grown at 250 μM copper sulphate, while *Chlorella* grown at 100 μM copper sulphate. Low copper sulphate concentrations (0.5, 5, 10 μM) induced growth, pigments, all metabolites (Total carbohydrates, total proteins, total free amino acids, and phenolic compounds) and nitrate reductase activity in *Ankistrodesmus* cells and then they were decreased with increasing copper sulphate concentrations. In *Chlorella* the above parameters were decreased under all doses of copper used. In *Ankistrodesmus*, soluble carbohydrates, soluble proteins and proline were decreased until 10 μM copper then they increased with increasing copper levels. While in *Chlorella* they increased in all copper concentrations. SDS-PAGE analysis of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* grown in different copper sulphate concentrations caused appearance of new polypeptides and disappearance of others. The treatments of *Ankistrodesmus* with high copper levels (250 μM) caused the synthesis of twenty new polypeptides bands. The numbers of polypeptides bands in *Chlorella* cells were decreased at all copper concentrations when compared with control. There are a differential responses to copper treatments between *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris*. *Chlorella vulgaris* more sensitive to copper toxicity than *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*.

Key Words: Physiological responses, *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*, *Chlorella vulgaris*,

INTRODUCTION

Aquatic contamination is one of main problems derived from toxic effects of heavy metals. Many pollutants can get into aquatic environments after direct or indirect release from agriculture, industries and domestic waste cause pollution of aquatic ecosystem (Fathi *et al.*, 2008; El-Sheekh *et al.*, 2011). Microalgae are widely used in the regulations for metals (Levy *et al.*, 2007). There are many authors studying the toxic effects of heavy metals on different algal species (El-Sheekh *et al.*, 2003; Osman *et al.*, 2004; Akira *et al.*, 2005; Muwafq and Bernd, 2006). Copper, Zinc, Cobalt and Manganese are essential micronutrients required for nutrition and metabolism in plants and algae (Reichman, 2002; Ma *et al.*, 2003; Andrade *et al.*, 2004 and Fathi, 2005). The high concentrations of the previous metals inhibited growth of higher plants and algae (Hall, 2002; Reichman, 2002; Lim *et al.*, 2006 and Afkar *et al.*, 2010). Copper toxicity decreased the activity of photo-system 11 and electron transfer rate of the photosynthetic apparatus in algae (Malick and Mohn, 2003 and Perales-Vela *et al.*, 2007).

Essential and non-essential heavy metals are known to cause inhibition of most growth parameters (An, 2004; Burzynski and Zurek 2007 and Gao *et al.*, 2008) and productivity of plants (Kasim, 2001 and Wu *et al.*, 2004) . Heavy metals stress was known to induce a pronounced alteration in nitrogen metabolism (Paraskevi Malea *et al.*, 2006 and Kholoud 2009). Generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) is the major response of plants to toxic concentrations of heavy metals including Cu (Schützendübel and Polle, 2002 and Maksymiee and Krupa, 2003).

At concentrations above those required for optimal growth, Copper can be toxic for most of algae with the exception of a few algal species that can hyper accumulate metals. This toxicity is dependent on algal species, the concentration of metal supplied (Afkar *et al.*, 2010). In sensitive plant species copper was shown to inhibit growth and to interfere with important cellular processes such as photosynthesis and respiration (Prasad and Strzalka, 1999 and Yruela, 2005).

In this work, the physiological responses to lower and higher copper concentrations in two species of green algae *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* were studied .

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Normal and salt stress algal cultures

The sample was collected from El-Dare wastewater treatment plant at Sohag governorate, Egypt. *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* were isolated from the sample. The two algae were grown in liquid BG-11 medium according to Rippka *et al.*, (1979) under the conditions of fluorescent illumination (2500 Lux) and room temperature ($25\pm 2^{\circ}\text{C}$). Filtered dry air was let to bubble in the culture vessels to provide carbon dioxide and to prevent settling of algal cells.

In this experiment, the *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* were grown under different concentrations of copper sulphate (0.0, 0.5, 5, 10, 50, 100, 150, 200 and 250 μM) Each treatment was made in three replicates. At the end of incubation period, the algal cells were harvested and used for growth and metabolic determinations.

A- Determination of Growth criteria

Cell number: The cell count of control and treated cultures was measured by Hemocytometer 0.1mm deep, having improved Naubauer ruling (A.O. Spencer "Bright fine"). The count was expressed as cells/ml algal suspension.

Dry weight: Dry weight was determined according to Utting (1985) by filtering Culture aliquots (50 ml) through Whatman GF/C filters. The filters were dried and weighed. Data were given as $\mu\text{g/ml}$ algal suspension.

Photosynthetic pigment extraction: Chlorophyll *a*, *b* and Carotenoids were extracted in 100% acetone at 65°C and their contents were determined spectrophotometrically (SPEKOL 11, CARL ZEISS, JENA, GERMANY) according to Metzner *et al.* (1965).

B. Biochemical determinations

Estimation of Carbohydrate contents: Carbohydrate contents was determined in aqueous (soluble carbohydrate) and in HCl solutions (total carbohydrate) with anthrone sulphuric acid reagent according to Fales

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(1951), using glucose as a standard. The blue green color developed was measured at the 620 nm using spectrophotometer.

Estimation of protein contents: Protein content was determined according to Lowry *et al.* (1951). The alga of 10 ml of algal suspension was extracted in distilled-water (soluble protein) and in NaOH (total protein) for 2 h at 90°C. The extract was centrifuged and the supernatants were pooled. The water-soluble protein was estimated by the Folin-phenol reagents and measured spectrophotometrically (SPEKOL 11, CARL ZEISS, JENA, GERMANY.) Bovine serum albumin was used as a standard.

Estimation of total free amino acids: Total free amino acids were determined according to Moore *et al.* (1958). The quantity of total free amino acids was calculated as $\mu\text{gm/mg}$ dry weight.

Estimation of proline: Free proline content of algal suspension was determined according to Bates *et al.* (1973). The absorbance was measured at 520 nm. Proline was used as a standard.

Determination of phenolic compounds: Phenolic compounds content was determined according to Dai *et. al.* (1994). The absorbance was measured at 765 nm. Total phenolic compounds were expressed as a nano equivalents of gallic acid using a calibration curve prepared with 10-50 μM of Gallic acid.

Nitrate reductase assay *in vivo*: For *in vivo* assay of nitrate reductase, the method of Jaworski (1971) was used. Algal cells of 10 ml algal suspension of diuron-treated alga and untreated were precipitated and incubated in anaerobic dark conditions for 1 hr. in 5 ml of 0.1 M K-phosphate (pH=7.5) containing 50 mM KNO_3 and 1% (v/v) n-propanol at 28 °C. The reaction was stopped by boiling in water bath for 5 min and then centrifuged. The supernatant of one ml sample mixed well with two ml 1% w/v sulphonilamide in 1N HCl and two ml 0.1 % w/v N-(1- naphthyl) ethylenediamine dihydrochloride in distilled water. The absorbance was measured by using spectrophotometer (SPEKOL 11, CARL ZEISS, JENA, GERMANY) at 540 nm. Nitrate reductase activity was expressed as $\mu\text{g NO}_2/\text{mL algal suspension h}^{-1}$

Determination of protein electrophoretic pattern: The algal suspension containing 10^9 cells/ml. was centrifuged at 4000 rpm for 5 min. The pellet was used for the extraction of protein by the method cited by Laemmli (1970) using an extraction buffer as recommended by Hawkesford and Belcher (1991). The method of SDS vertical polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS- PAGE) was used as described by Laemmli (1970), for the determination of protein electrophoretic pattern. The gels were subjected to the staining solution for 1-2 h., followed by destaining solution overnight. There-after, the destained gels were photographed while wet.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, we compared growth rate of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* and *Chlorella vulgaris* under low and high copper sulphate concentrations. In low concentrations of copper sulphate (0.5 to 10 μ M) significant increase in cell number and dry weight (157% and 208% respectively) and significant decrease at high concentrations from 50 to 250 μ M were observed in *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*. In *Chlorella vulgaris* the cell numbers and dry weight were decreased under all copper concentrations from 0.5 to 100 μ M. Fig.1. *Ankistrodesmus* cultures showed increase in chlorophyll a, b and carotenoids at low levels and gradual decrease at high levels from 50 to 250 μ M. Fig.2. In, *Chlorella vulgaris* both dry mass and chlorophyll pigments contents decreased in all Copper concentrations. Azeez and Banerjee (1986) also reported decreased chlorophyll contents in two Cyanophytes, *Spirulina platensis* and *Anacystis nidulans* due to Copper toxicity. As the ionic Copper increases, Copper bound to chloroplast membranes and other cell proteins causing inhibition in chlorophyll pigments (Rai et al., 1990 and Rijstenbil et al., 1994). Higher concentrations of Copper, produce irreversible damage to chloroplast lamellae (Overnell, 1975) preventing photosynthesis and eventually causing the death of cell.

In *Ankistrodesmus* cultures exposed to low copper concentrations from 0.5 to 10 μ M the carbohydrates and proteins (total, insoluble) were increased but the soluble ones were decreased when compared with control. In *Chlorella* cultures the same constituents (total and

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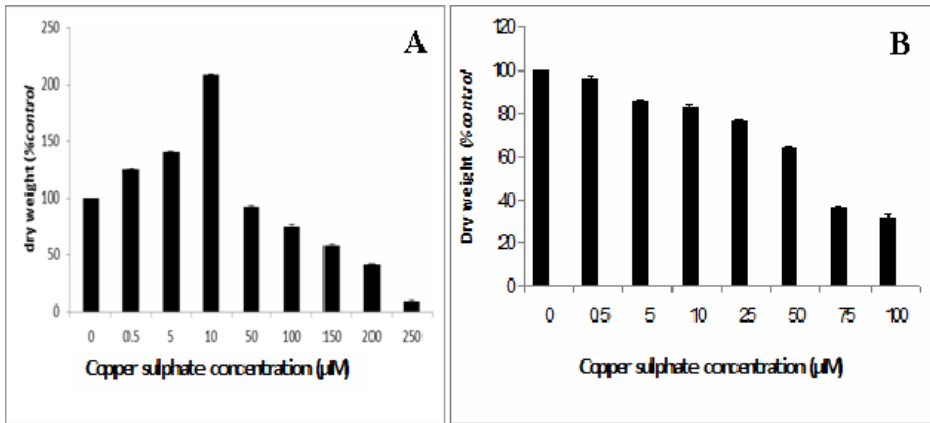


Fig. 1. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on the dry weight (%control) *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) *Chlorella vulgaris* (B) culture.

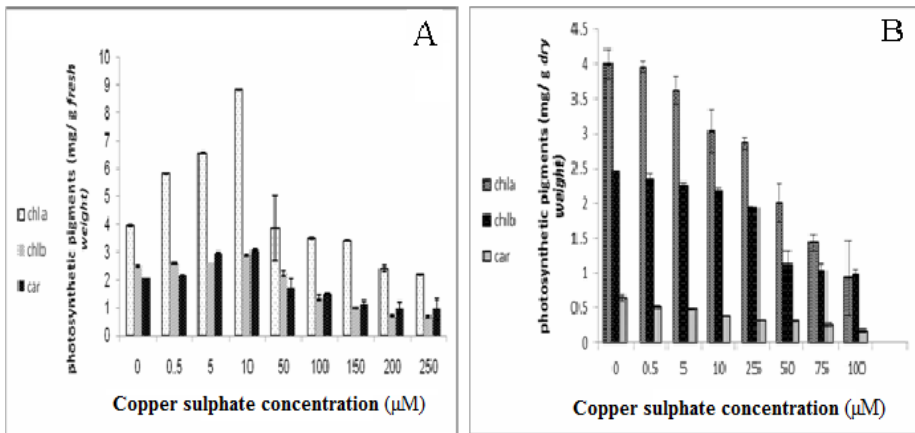


Fig. 2. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on photosynthetic pigments (mg/ g dry weight) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* (B) cultures.

insoluble) were decreased and the soluble ones were increased in all copper levels (Fig.3 and Fig.4) . *Ankistrodesmus* grow in low concentrations of Copper has no toxic effect on growth and the biochemical composition. Copper affects the biochemical such as proteins, lipids and free fatty acids in algae (Lage et al.1994, 1996) . As reported by Lupi et al. (1998), both carbohydrate and protein contents declined in cultures exposed to higher concentrations of Copper. Some authors (Kobbia et al., 1985, Rai et al., 1994, Hart and Scaife, 1997) recorded that protein inhibited by high heavy metal contents and accumulated by low contents of metal. They explained the accumulation of protein at low heavy metal concentrations as one of the ways through which the algae can alleviate their toxic effects, or to increase the utilization of carbohydrate through respiration.

The data in Fig.5 showed that, the total free amino acids were increased in the first algal cells and decreased in the second one at all copper dose. Some amino acids metabolism are stimulated and certain others are inhibited due to pollution effects (Hammouda et al.,1995). Similarly, the biosynthesis of amino acids in cyanobacteria and in eukaryotic phytoplankton cells found in the water polluted with insecticides were enhanced or inhibited (El-Ayouty and Ezzat, 1991; Fathi, 2003) . Oxidative stress directly damages proteins, amino acids, nucleic acids and membrane lipids (Nagalakshmi and Prasad, 1998). As shown in Fig.6, the proline contents in the cells of *Ankistrodesmus* exposed to low copper concentrations were lowered and gradually increased above 10 μM until 250 μM CuSO_4 . Proline contents of *Chlorella* cultures were elevated at all low and high copper levels. Copper stressed *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* used proline as osmo-regulation. This is in agreement with the conclusion of El-Naggar, (1993). Increased accumulation permits osmotic adjustment and provides protection for enzymes, biological membranes and polyribosomes (Sharma et al., 1998, Basak et al., 2001).

In *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* the content of phenolic compounds slightly increased until 10 μM CuSO_4 and then decreased with increasing CuSO_4 dose while in *Chlorella vulgaris*, the content of phenolic compound reduced at all concentrations of CuSO_4 (Fig7). The antioxidant compounds are much agree to those recorded for other macro-algae exposed to various abiotic stresses (Burritt, et al., 2002; Contreras, et al., 2005). ROS levels

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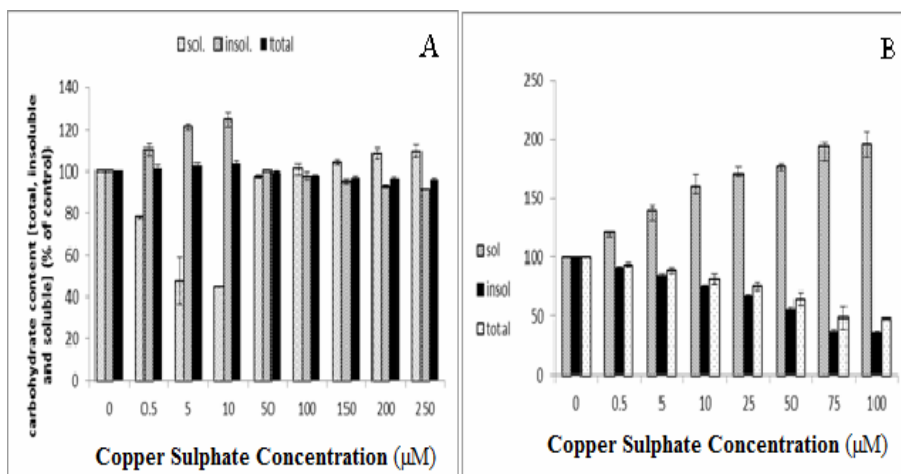


Fig. 3. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on carbohydrate content [total, insoluble and soluble] (% of control) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*(A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

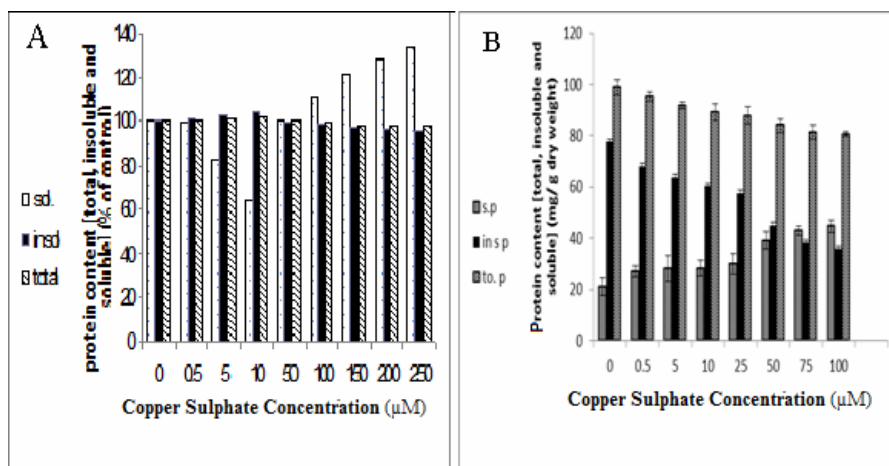


Fig. 4. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on protein contents [total, insoluble and soluble] (% of control) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*(A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

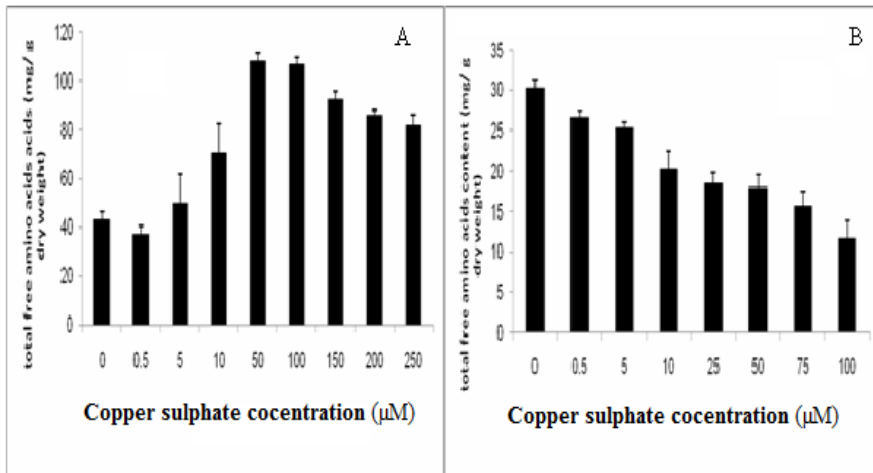


Fig. 5. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on total free amino acids (mg/ g dry weight) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

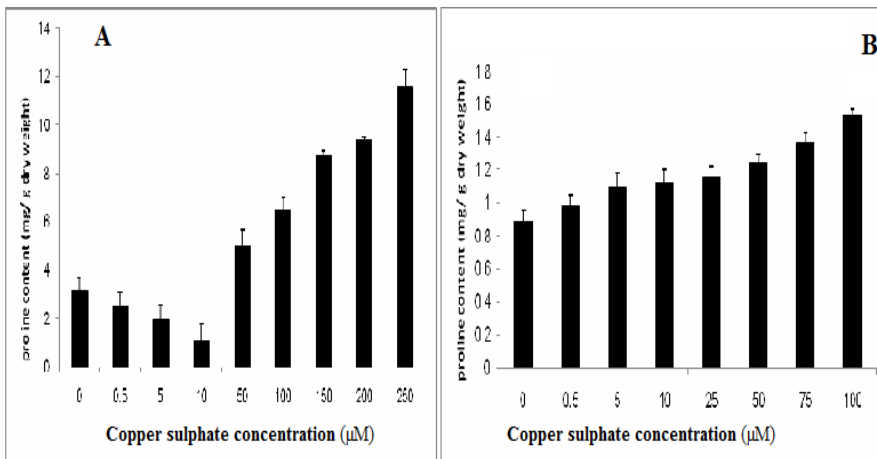


Fig. 6. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on proline content (mg/ g dry weight) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

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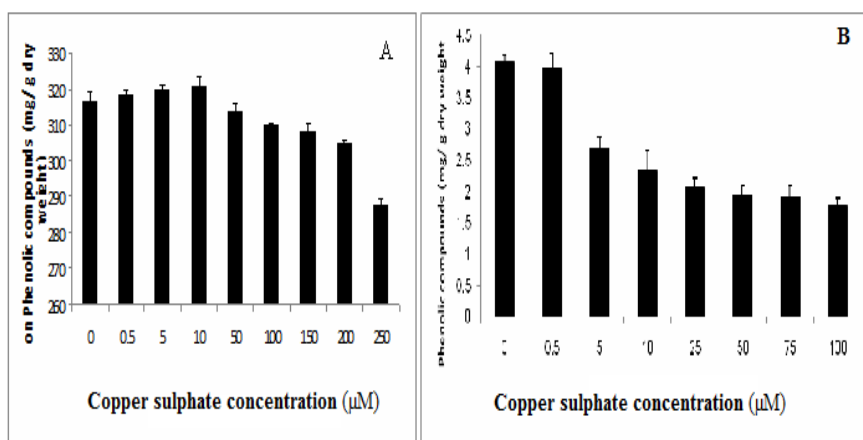


Fig. 7. Effect of copper sulphate (μM) on Phenolic compounds (mg/ g dry weight) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

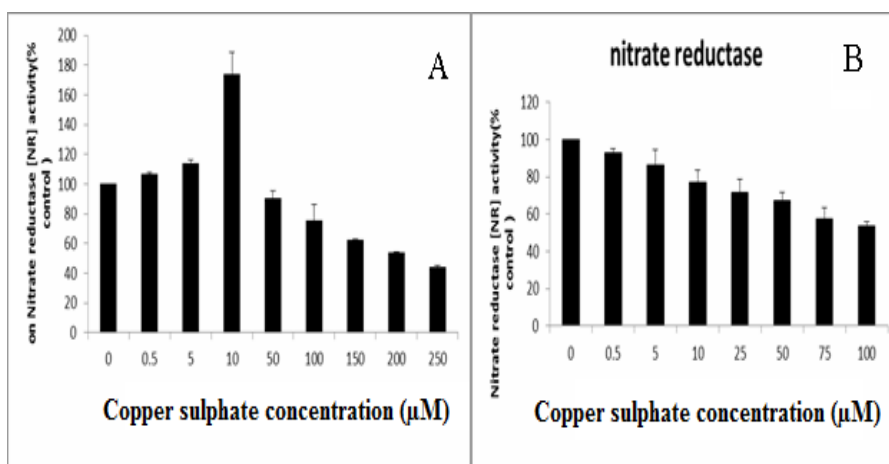


Fig. 8. Effect of Copper sulphate (μM) on Nitrate reductase [NR] activity (% of control) of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (A) and *Chlorella vulgaris* cultures (B).

are controlled by secondary metabolites (Inmaculada, 2005). Fig.8 revealed that, the activity of nitrate- reductase of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* was increased up to 10 μM copper sulphate and then it was reduced with increasing copper dose until 250 μM . Nitrate- reductase activity of stressed *Chlorella* cells was decreased under all concentrations used. The inhibition of N-R activity in the two algae is likely due to impaired NO_3^- uptake in the presence of elevated levels of the test metals. Proteins did not affected with the pronounced drop in the activity of nitrate reductase especially at the higher doses of copper. This might indicated that, the two processes (the activity of Nitrate reductase and the machinery of protein synthesis) did not necessary linked. This agree well with the previous reports (Campbell 1999, Klobus, *et al.* 2002) . The other possibility could be direct inhibition of N-R activity by the test metals (De Filippis and Pallaghy, 1994). Copper stress either stimulated or inhibited the biosynthesis of some polypeptides in the cells of the two investigated chlorophyta. The results in all cultures treated with different copper sulphate concentrations were quite different from that of the untreated control culture.

SDS-PAGE analysis of the total protein in *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* (Fig.9 (A) showed that, Copper stress resulted in the appearance of new polypeptides bands. The numbers of polypeptides in control were 15 polypeptides. They were 35 at 250 μM CuSO_4 . (more than 2 fold) which fluctuated between the low molecular weight polypeptides to high molecular weight polypeptides. For example 37, 34 and 22 kDa polypeptide appeared only under copper stress also the higher molecular weight polypeptides 208 kDa to 71 kDa appeared only in copper treated *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*. In addition the polypeptide bands (45, 42 and 15 kDa) increased in densities. The investigated alga produced low molecular weight protein bands as a possible tolerance mechanism to Copper stress.

SDS-PAGE (Fig. 9 (B) showed that,. The number of polypeptides in *Chlorella vulgaris* was higher in control (22 bands) than in copper treated alga (4, 3, 3) bands at higher doses of metal. This alga was not produce any new polypeptides especially under high copper stress which might be a suitable marker for the great sensitivity of this alga when compared to *Ankistrodesmus falcatus*. The appearance and disappearance of different protein bands due to metal stress were recorded by other authors (Perez-Rama *et al.*, 2001; Osman *et al.*, 2004).

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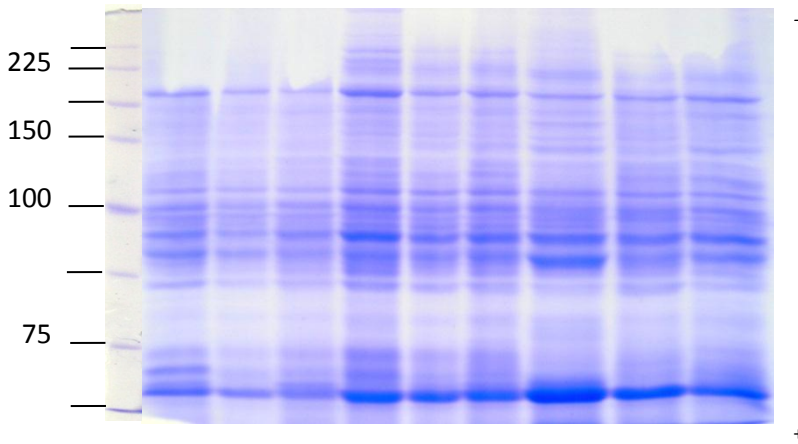


Fig.(9-A). Coomassie blue-stained SDS polyacrylamide gel of polypeptides of *Ankistrodesmus falcatus* cultured under copper sulphate concentrations (0.0, 0.5, 5, 10, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250 μM) . Lane M is protein marker, Lane 1 represents the control.

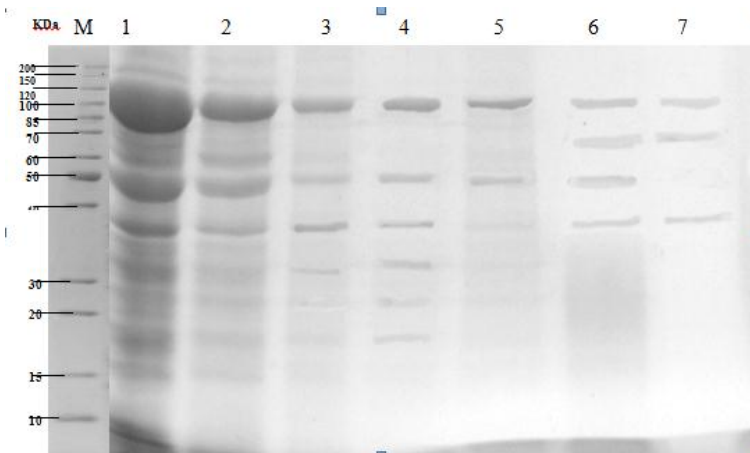


Fig. (9-B). Coomassie blue-stained SDS polyacrylamide gel of polypeptides of *Chlorella vulgaris* cultured under copper sulphate concentrations (0.0, 0.5, 5, 10, 50, 100, 150 μM). Lane M is protein marker, Lane 1 represents the control.

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مقارنه بين الاستجابة الفسيولوجيه لطحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس وطحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس لعنصر النحاس .

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في هذا البحث تمت دراسة تأثير عنصر النحاس على طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس وطحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس من الناحية الفسيولوجية والبيو كيميائية. لقد تمت تنمية مزارع من طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس وطحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس تحت تأثير تركيزات مختلفة (٥. - ١٠ - ٥٠ - ١٠٠ - ١٥٠ - ٢٠٠ - ٢٥٠ ميكرو مول) من كبريتات النحاس. لقد نمت طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس حتى تركيز ٢٥٠ ميكرو مول كبريتات النحاس أما مزارع طحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس نمت حتى تركيز ١٠٠ ميكرو مول كبريتات النحاس . أدت التركيزات المنخفضة (٥. - ١٠ - ٥٠ ميكرو مول كبريتات النحاس) إلى زيادة النمو والإصباغ النباتية وكل نواتج الايض (المواد الكربوهيدراتية الكلية والبروتينات الكلية والأحماض الامينية والمركبات الفينولية) ونشاط إنزيم مختزل النترات في مزارع طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس أما في طحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس انخفض كل ما سبق تحت تأثير جميع التأثيرات من كبريتات النحاس. لقد زاد محتوى الكربوهيدرات الذائبة والبروتينات الذائبة والحمض الاميني برولين في طحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس بزيادة تركيز كبريتات النحاس من ٥٠ ميكرو مول حتى ٢٥٠ ميكرو مول أما في طحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس تزداد كل هذه المركبات عند كل التركيزات من ٥٠. حتى ٢٥٠ ميكرو مول كبريتات النحاس. لقد أدى تنمية طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس عند تركيز ٢٥٠ ميكرو مول من كبريتات النحاس إلى ظهور ٢٠ من الببتيدات الجديدة . أما في طحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس انخفض عدد الببتيدات عند كل التركيزات من كبريتات النحاس. يوجد اختلاف من حيث الاستجابة لتأثير النحاس بين طحلب انكستروديسماس فالكاتس وطحلب كلوريللا فولجارييس .