

BIOCHEMICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE MOLECULAR MECHANISM OF ATP SYNTHESIS

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Biochemical Investigation of the Molecular Mechanism of ATP Synthesis**” being submitted by **Ritu Mehta** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of degree of Doctor of Philosophy, has been prepared under my supervision and guidance in conformity with the rules and regulations of Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The research report and results presented in this thesis have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



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ABSTRACT

Adenosine triphosphate, the universal currency of the cell is synthesized by the enzyme F_1F_0 ATP synthase present in the coupling membranes of mitochondria, chloroplasts and bacteria. According to the chemiosmotic theory, the transmembrane protonmotive force generated only by protons imparts the energy for the phosphorylation of ADP. The requirement of anions in the process of ATP synthesis was noticed by scientists, but no biological role has been attributed to their presence and requirement. The present study explored the functional significance of anions in driving phosphorylation. The phosphorylation was performed in freshly isolated thylakoids from spinach by the technique of 'acid-base' transition. The rate of phosphorylation and the amount of ATP produced were found to be a strong function of the concentration of succinic and hydrochloric acids. For both these anions, the rates and yields increased with decrease in the concentration of the anions. A number of mono, di and tricarboxylic acid and other anions were tested. Chloride was suggested to be the physiological anion involved in photophosphorylation based on these studies. The increase in the time of exposure of thylakoids with acid stage time was found to cause tremendous increase in the rates and yields because the established concentration gradients of anions and protons were of high magnitude. High magnitude concentration gradients led to greater number of translocations of anions and protons across the membrane in the vicinity of F_0 and hence stimulated the rates and yields, as these translocations imparted energy to F_1 for ATP synthesis. As the phosphorylation time (base stage time) was increased, the substrates and the concentration gradients of anions and protons depleted with successive increments

leading to the observed reduction in the rates. The yields till each interval increased with increment in the phosphorylation time. These results have been shown to be consistent with Nath's torsional mechanism of energy transduction and ATP synthesis. The increase in number of ATP synthase complexes led to the increase in the available channels for the passage of both the ions, hence causing significant stimulation in the rates and amount of ATP produced. The blockage of chloride channel with DIDS led to considerable reduction in the rate and yield obtained while performing the phosphorylation with hydrochloric acid. The addition of DIDS to the BS solution also reduced the rate of phosphorylation and the amount of ATP produced to a significant extent. This further strengthened the correlation between anion transport and the process of phosphorylation. DIDS-treated thylakoid membranes displayed reduced extent of proton uptake as compared to untreated membranes. The results obtained have been shown to be readily explained by the torsional mechanism. In fact, the unifying framework of the torsional mechanism can be fruitfully used as a guide for further experimentation and research in bioenergetics.

CONTENTS

Title	Page No.
CERTIFICATE	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii-iii
ABSTRACT	iv-v
CONTENTS	vi-xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xii-xvii
LIST OF TABLES	xviii
ABBREVIATIONS	xix
CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION	1-14
1.1 ATP synthase	1
1.1.1 Structure of F ₁	3
1.1.2 Structure of F ₀	3
1.2 Function of the enzyme	4
1.3 Phosphorylation by acid –base transition	6
1.3.1 Phosphorylation in chloroplasts	6
1.3.2 Problems in the ‘acid –base’ phosphorylation by chloroplasts	6
1.4 Phosphorylation in submitochondrial particles	7
1.5 Evidence from the inhibition studies	8
1.6 Explanation for the role of anions according to the torsional mechanism	9

1.7	Objectives	10
1.7.1	Summary of the experiments conducted	13
CHAPTER 2 : REVIEW OF LITERATURE		15-52
2.1	Chemiosmotic theory	16
2.2	Working cycle	16
2.3	Energy changes and forces involved during phosphorylation	18
2.4	Features of the chemiosmotic theory	19
2.4.1	Delocalized coupling	19
2.4.2	ΔpH and $\Delta\psi$ as equivalent components of $\Delta\mu_{\text{H}}$	19
2.4.3	Phosphorylation driven alone by ΔpH	20
2.4.4	Phosphorylation driven alone by $\Delta\psi$	21
2.5	Validity/Invalidity of chemiosmosis in biological systems	22
2.5.1	Localized/Delocalized mechanism of coupling	22
2.5.2	Inequivalence/ Equivalence of ΔpH and $\Delta\psi$ in driving phosphorylation	26
2.5.3	'Acid-bath' phosphorylation in chloroplasts	27
2.5.4	Contribution of succinate to $\Delta\psi$	28
2.5.5	Anions actually cross the membrane and create $\Delta\psi$	29
2.5.6	Experiments conducted on the reconstituted ATP synthases from chloroplasts, <i>E. coli</i> and <i>P. modestum</i>	30
2.5.7	Problems not clearly solved by Kaim and Dimroth	32
2.5.8	ΔpH and $\Delta\psi$ driven ATP synthesis - Studies by Graber	33

2.6	Explanation of coupling by the torsional mechanism of energy transduction and ATP synthesis	39
2.6.1	Working model: Generation of torque and transmission of energy	40
2.6.2	$\Delta\psi$ is localized	44
2.6.3	ΔpH and $\Delta\psi$ are kinetically inequivalent in driving ATP synthesis	47
2.6.4	ΔpH and $\Delta\psi$ are the true overall driving forces for ATP synthesis	47
2.6.5	Dynamically electrogenic but overall electroneutral ion transport	48
2.6.6	Kinetic model to explain the pH dependence of the rate of phosphorylation	50
 CHAPTER 3 : MATERIALS AND METHODS		53-62
3.1	Materials	53
3.2	Methods	55
3.2.1	Preparation of whole chloroplast	55
3.2.2	Preparation of thylakoid membranes	55
3.2.3	Estimation of chlorophyll	56
3.2.4	Microscopic examination of thylakoid membrane suspension	56
3.2.5	Thylakoid assay	57
3.2.6	Phosphorylation	57

3.2.7	Analysis for ATP	58
3.2.8	Variation in the time of exposure of membranes with acid stage mixture	59
3.2.9	Variation in the time of exposure of acidified membranes with base stage mixture	59
3.2.10	Effect of different anions on the rate of phosphorylation	60
3.2.11	Effect of different enzyme (ATP synthase) concentrations on the rate of phosphorylation	60
3.2.12	Effect of anion channel blocker 4,4'-diisothiocyanostilbene-2, 2'-disulfonate(DIDS) on the rate of phosphorylation	61
	3.2.12.1 Effect of DIDS in AS	61
	3.2.12.2 Effect of DIDS in BS	61
3.2.13	Measurement of movement of protons across the thylakoid membranes	62

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION **63-124**

4.1	Preliminary studies	63
4.2	Thylakoids as the model system	66
4.3	Rate as a function of the concentration of anion	68
4.3.1	Experiments with different concentrations of succinic acid	70
4.3.2	Rate as a function of concentration of chloride	75

4.3.3	Effect of different concentrations of butyric acid on the rate and yield of ATP produced	78
4.3.4	Rate and yield as a function of concentration of dianions- oxalate and phthalate	80
4.3.4.1	Effect of oxalic acid on the rate and yield	80
4.3.4.2	Effect of phthalic acid on the rate and yield	82
4.3.5	The effect of tri-carboxylate on the rate and yield of ATP produced	83
4.4	Comparison of rates of phosphorylation obtained with different anions in AS	85
4.5	Effect of increased time of exposure of the thylakoids with AS	87
4.6	Effect of increased phosphorylation times on the rate and yield of ATP	91
4.6.1	Effect of increased time of phosphorylation on the rate and yield obtained with 30 mM succinic acid	92
4.6.2	Effect of increased BS on rates and yields obtained with 25 mM and 20 mM succinic acid	96
4.6.3	Effect of increased BS times on the rate and the yield obtained with 1 mM succinic acid	99
4.6.4	Effect of increased BS time on the rate and yield of ATP produced with the anion chloride	102
4.6.5	Effect of increased AS and increased BS on the rate and yield of ATP obtained with 1 mM succinic acid	105

4.6.6	Effect of increased AS and increased BS on the rate and yield of ATP produced with 0.5 mM succinic acid	108
4.7	Effect of different number of synthase molecules on the rate and yield of ATP	110
4.8	Effect of chloride channel blocker on the rate and yield of ATP	113
4.8.1	Effect of DIDS in AS	113
4.8.2	Effect of DIDS in BS	116
4.9	Proton uptake by thylakoids	120
4.10	Summary of results obtained	123
CHAPTER 5 : SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS		125-134
REFERENCES		135-143
BIO-DATA		