



Minireview

Photophosphorylation and the chemiosmotic perspective

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Abstract

Photophosphorylation was discovered in chloroplasts by D. Arnon and coworkers, and in bacterial ‘chromatophores’ (intercytoplasmic membranes) by A. Frenkel. Initial low rates were amplified by adding electron-carrying compounds such as FMN, later shown to support the ‘pseudocyclic’ electron flow. ATP synthesis, and coupling to electron flow, was detected accompanying linear electron flow from H₂O to either NADP⁺ or ferricyanide. Another pattern of electron flow supporting photophosphorylation was that of a cycle around Photosystem I (PS I). Isolation and analysis of the ATP synthase showed, as with mitochondrial and bacterial analogues, an intrinsic membrane complex (CF₀) and an extrinsic complex (CF₁). CF₁ is a latent ATPase, activated additively by the high-energy state of the thylakoids, and by reduction of a disulfide bond on the gamma subunit. Once reduced, ATP synthesis occurs at lower energy levels. The search for an ‘intermediate’ linking electron flow and ATP synthesis led to the discovery of post-illumination ATP synthesis by thylakoids, where turnover occurs in the dark. Once interpreted by P. Mitchell’s chemiosmotic hypothesis, this led to the discovery of light-driven proton uptake into the thylakoid lumen, with accompanying Cl⁻ intake and Mg²⁺ and K⁺ output. Chemiosmosis was confirmed in several ways, including ATP synthesis in the dark due to an acid-to-base transition of thylakoids, and photophosphorylation accomplished in artificial lipid vesicles containing both the proton-pumping bacterial rhodopsin and a mitochondrial ATPase complex. The now generally accepted chemiosmotic interpretation is able to clarify some other aspects of photosynthesis as well.

Abbreviations: DCCD – dicylohexylcarbodiimide; DNP – dinitrophenol; DTT – dithiothreitol; EDTA – ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid; FMN – flavine mono nucleotide; NADP – nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate; PS I – Photosystem I; SDS – sodium dodecyl sulfate

Discovery

It was suggested early (Ruben 1943; Emerson et al. 1944) that phosphate bond energy could be an intermediate in photosynthesis. Several groups found indications of photophosphorylation in plant cells: either conversion of cell inorganic phosphate to organic forms (Kandler 1950; Simonis and Grube 1952) or uptake of phosphate and conversion to polyphosphate (Gest and Kamen 1948; Wassink 1957), or actual formation of AT³²P in light (Strehler 1953; Schwink 1956). Another useful criterion was the up-

take of glucose and its conversion to starch in light but not in the dark, requiring at least one ATP (Maclachlan and Porter 1959). In these and many other studies, dinitrophenol (DNP), which uncouples respiration, failed to prevent the light-induced reactions.

Deeper insight into the mechanism for ATP synthesis depended on demonstrating the reaction with cell-free organelles (this had been done for oxidative phosphorylation in homogenates in 1937; and with mitochondria identified as such in 1949). This was accomplished with chloroplasts by Arnon et al. (1954), ‘chromatophores’ (intercytoplasmic membranes) from



Figure 1. Mordhay Avron.

Rhodospirillum rubrum by Frenkel (1954), and from the anaerobic bacterium *Chromatium* by Williams (1956). With the 'chromatophores' from both bacteria, it was clear that a cyclic electron flow not involving net oxidation of any substrate supported the ATP synthesis. (A photograph of Daniel Arnon is shown in the article by R. Porra in this issue.)

With isolated chloroplasts (actually, thylakoids) as well, the first discovered ATP synthesis seemed to be supported by a cyclic electron flow pattern. The original rates were at the level of 3 $\mu\text{mol ATP/mg Chl/h}$. However adding FMN or menadione as 'cofactors' permitted rates to be raised to almost 500 $\mu\text{mol/mg Chl/h}$ (Allen et al. 1958) and, as in bacterial extracts, methyl phenazinium sulfate (PMS) brought rates up to 900 (Avron and Jagendorf 1958; see Figure 1 for a photograph of Mordhay Avron).

A little later, it was found that linear (uphill) electron flow from water as donor to added NADP^+ , yielding O_2 as a waste product, supported ATP synthesis (Arnon et al. 1958a). This also occurred using nonphysiological electron acceptors such as potassium ferricyanide, although not with trichlorophenol indophenol (Avron et al. 1958).

A variant of this pattern was found in which the added electron acceptor reduces the O_2 that had been evolved, that is, a net O_2 exchange reaction which can also support ATP synthesis. This is similar to

the Mehler reaction (Mehler 1951; see Heber, this issue, for further information), in which O_2 is reduced to H_2O_2 . By a number of criteria [see Jagendorf (1962) for a full discussion], ATP synthesis by FMN, menadione, and many other 'cofactors' arouses this sort of O_2 exchange pattern. This sequence was renamed 'psuedocyclic photophosphorylation' (Arnon et al. 1961).

Coupling, and uncouplers

It had been known earlier (Lardy and Wellman 1952) that electron flow in mitochondria depends almost entirely on added ADP and P_i , permitting simultaneous ATP synthesis. A similar phenomenon, although not so dramatic, was found for linear electron flow from H_2O to NADP^+ (Arnon et al. 1958b) and to ferricyanide (Avron et al. 1958).

Uncoupling of mitochondrial oxidation by DNP was demonstrated even earlier (Loomis and Lipmann, 1948). For chloroplasts, ammonium chloride was the first uncoupler found (Krogmann et al. 1959). This was followed very soon by the demonstration of uncoupling by a variety of organic amines (Good 1960). Thus, by 1959, the bioenergetics of chloroplasts had achieved the position of mitochondrial research in 1952.

CF_1 and CF_0

Discovery of the enzymatic machinery for ATP synthesis similarly benefited from prior work with mitochondria. Efraim Racker (see N. Nelson in this issue for a photograph of Racker) and others, extracted proteins from mitochondria so that oxidative phosphorylation was eliminated, and added them back to restore some phosphorylation (see Racker 1970). These were called coupling factors, and also had ATPase activity. The first demonstration of an extractable coupling factor for chloroplasts was made by Avron (1963), using thylakoids uncoupled by treatment with ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid, EDTA (Jagendorf and Smith 1962). It was nicknamed CF_1 (for Chloroplast F_1), to distinguish it from the analogous mitochondrial F_1 (for factor 1). Subsequently, Vambutas and Racker (1965) purified a Ca^{2+} -requiring ATPase from chloroplasts, which was latent until activated by trypsin. It could restore photophosphorylation to depleted thylakoids.

It was found that the EDTA treatment releases only a fraction (no more than 70%) of the thylakoid's CF₁. Chaotropes such as silicotungstate (Lien and Racker 1971) or sodium bromide (Kamienietzky and Nelson 1975) are needed to remove all of it. Reconstitution consists of incubating depleted particles and CF₁ together with Mg²⁺ or other cations, to permit their close association (Telfer et al. 1980).

CF₁ was purified and its molecular mass was estimated as 325 000 Da (Farron 1970), but improved techniques later established its Mr value as 400 000 (Moroney et al. 1983). Gel electrophoresis in sodium dodecyl sulfate, SDS (Racker et al. 1972) revealed five kinds of subunits, designated α to ϵ from largest (mass ca. 59 kDa) to smallest (mass ca. 13 000). Later work found a stoichiometry of 3:3:1:1:1. Nucleotide binding sites were found on the α and β subunits. Six nucleotide binding sites have been defined (see Hightower and McCarty 1996). Catalysis occurs on the α subunit, or between the α and β subunits. The single γ subunit must be part of the machinery keeping protons from leaking out of the membrane (Moroney and McCarty 1982; see below), and ϵ is an inhibitor of ATP hydrolysis or synthesis in some of its configurations (Richter et al. 1984). Roles of the subunits are discussed more fully in Futai et al. (1989) and Jagendorf et al. (1991).

The complete apparatus for synthesis of ATP requires the membrane components to which CF₁ attaches. This was designated CF₀ by analogy with the mitochondrial intrinsic membrane protein, which had been called F₀ because it bound added oligomycin. The first approaches led to isolation of an active CF₁CF₀ complex (Carmeli and Racker 1973); later work permitted isolation of CF₀ by itself (see Sebald and Hoppe 1981). Current ideas on the structure of CF₀ give it four kinds of subunits, numbered I through IV. Subunit III, the smallest (about 8 kDa), present as a ring of 6–12 copies, binds the energy transfer inhibitor DCCD (dicyclohexylcarbodiimide) (Nelson et al. 1977) and is the pore through which protons move (see below).

In the early days, thylakoids were declared to have neither ATPase nor a Pi/ATP exchange reaction (Avron and Jagendorf 1959). However, by using high concentrations of sulfhydryl reagents in the presence of light, thylakoids were found to have a strong Mg²⁺-dependent ATPase (Pettrack and Lipmann 1961). Subsequent work by a number of groups showed that the thylakoid ATPase is latent in the dark. Activation occurs in two steps: a rapid initial activation by the high-energy state (causing release of a tightly

bound inhibitory ADP, and loosening of the ϵ subunit), and a slower further activation by reduction of a disulfide bond on the γ subunit (see Bakker-Grunwald, 1977; McCarty 1992). The rate of ATP hydrolysis depends on sufficient high-energy state to be (and remain) active, but excess levels are inhibited by a feed-back mechanism since ATP hydrolysis builds up the energetic state. Low concentrations of an uncoupler will relieve inhibition due to excess high-energy state. Higher concentrations inhibit ATPase by causing the protonmotive force to be so low it can no longer maintain CF₁ in an active state.

These characteristics mean that, in bright sunlight *in vivo*, back pressure from the thylakoids' very high-energy state prevents ATP hydrolysis. But also, in the dark *in vivo*, ATP is not hydrolyzed because the CF₁ is not active. Their stringency prevents futile cycles of ATP synthesis and hydrolysis.

Activation of thylakoid ATPase, including its reduction, has an interesting effect on photophosphorylation in light. It makes the rate of ATP synthesis less dependent on a high protonmotive force (Morita et al. 1983; Mills and Mitchell 1984; Junesch and Gräber 1985). This must mean that some of the light energy going into photophosphorylation is used to maintain the most active catalytic form of CF₁, which must be needed for ATP synthesis as well as hydrolysis.

CF₁, isolated from nonilluminated thylakoids, is not an active ATPase. Its Ca²⁺-dependent ATPase can be activated by heating to 60 °C with ATP and dithiothreitol (DTT) added, as well as by trypsin and other proteases. Other procedures that activate the ATPase of thylakoids as well as the isolated enzyme include treatment with organic solvents (Sakurai et al. 1981; Anthon and Jagendorf 1983); detergents such as octyl glucoside (Pick and Bassilian 1981), light-dependent cleavage of the γ subunit by trypsin (Moroney and McCarty 1982), high levels of the fungal poison tentoxin (Steele et al. 1978), and physical removal of the ϵ subunit (Richter et al. 1984). The inactive state seems to be the one that is highly controlled; disruption of structure leads to exposure of the hydrolytic ability.

During the 1960s, biochemists came to realize that enzymes often went through conformational alterations during catalysis. Inspired by P. Boyer's suggestion of possible 'conformational catalysis' for F₁, Ivan Ryrie looked for exchange of H atoms between medium-exposed groups on the protein and ³H₂O. Up to 500 H atoms on thylakoid-bound CF₁ were found to undergo exchange if the thylakoids went into the

high-energy state, but not in the dark or if uncouplers were present in light (Ryrie and Jagendorf 1971). In another approach, a series of chemical modifying reagents were shown, over several years, to attack CF_1 if thylakoids were in light, but this did not occur in the dark. The first of these was N-ethylmaleimide, attaching to a sulfhydryl group on the γ subunit only in light (McCarty et al. 1972; McCarty and Fagan 1973). Space does not permit a real review of this interesting area, but one outstanding study (Komatsu-Takaki 1989) showed accelerated attack by pyridoxal-5'-phosphate on a lysine of the epsilon subunit in light.

Mechanism of CF_1 action: chemiosmotic concepts take over

From the time of discovery of oxidative phosphorylation, the connection between electron flow and the chemistry of high-energy phosphate bond formation was an intriguing mystery. Essentially all of the speculation about this connection relied on the paradigm of ATP synthesis performed by triose-P dehydrogenase. This was shown to include a low-energy phosphate addition to an SH group on the enzyme, rising to a high-energy level due to oxidation. Therefore, biochemists kept looking for a high-energy intermediate, prior to ATP synthesis, involving one or more of the electron transport enzymes of mitochondria (examples in Chance and Williams 1956).

In the search for a chemical intermediate in photophosphorylation, chloroplasts were illuminated in a pipette (Shen and Shen 1962) or a syringe (Hind and Jagendorf 1963), then injected into buffer containing ^{32}P , Mg^{2+} , and ADP, where some ATP synthesis then occurred. (The two discoveries were quite independent.) There was a problem with the results, however: the amount of ATP made in the dark was up to 50 times more than the concentration of any single electron carrier in the thylakoid membrane. Thus there must have been actual turnover of the enzymatic machinery in the dark. For a more detailed description of this, and other work from this laboratory, see Jagendorf (1998).

Earlier, based on his understanding of the physiology and physical chemistry of ion transport, Peter Mitchell (Figure 2) had proposed a drastically different idea for the mechanism. Realizing that only organelles with membranes accomplished oxidative and photosynthetic phosphorylation, he developed a 'chemiosmotic' concept of the mechanism (Mitchell 1961). In this, the connecting link is the active vec-

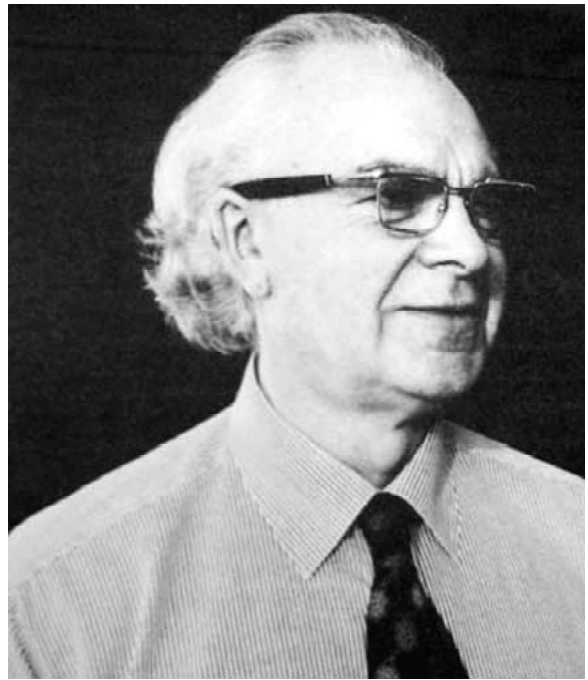


Figure 2. Peter Mitchell.

torial transport of protons across the membrane, as electron flow proceeds alternately from metals (iron or copper) handling only electrons to quinones requiring both an electron and a proton to be reduced. The high-energy intermediate, therefore, would be a difference between the electrochemical activity (both chemical concentration and membrane potential) of protons on the inside, with that on the outside of the membrane. The intermediate would drive a membrane-located, vectorial, reversible, proton-pumping ATPase.

Peter Mitchell's terminology and writing were difficult to understand. I was fortunate in having a brilliant postdoctoral from England, Geoffrey Hind (Figure 3), who could explain the concept to me. In discussing it, it occurred to us that it might be possible to observe the uptake of protons into thylakoids in light and their dissipation in the dark. It was an exciting moment to observe this happening using a simple glass electrode (Jagendorf and Hind 1963). Its relationship to photophosphorylation was further confirmed by finding that uncouplers lead to rapid dissipation of the internal protons (Neumann and Jagendorf 1964; Jagendorf and Neumann 1965).

Others realized that a massive movement of protons had to be accompanied by some sort of counterion flux to keep the membrane potentials in a reasonable range. The first counter-ion flux observed was extrusion of K^+ and Mg^{2+} in light (Dilley and Vernon



Figure 3. Geoffrey Hind.

1965). Somewhat later (Deamer and Packer 1969), the membrane potential was found to be controlled to an even greater extent by the uptake of Cl^- ions with the protons. This seems to occur through a thylakoid chloride channel, discovered by Vambutus et al. (1984). A more complete discussion of ion transport is found in the review by Rottenberg (1985).

The rise in external pH in light implied that the pH of the thylakoid lumen would become more acid. Evidence for this came from the careful measurement of penetrating labeled amines and of cationic dyes in light (see Rottenberg 1985). The estimated internal pH dropped to 4 – 4.5, as the external pH rose to 7.5 – 8. The 3.5 pH unit difference between external and internal spaces was certainly high enough to drive net synthesis of ATP at physiological substrate concentrations.

The first direct indication of a membrane potential was deduced from carotenoid absorption changes (the 'electrochromic' shift at 515 nm), related to the coupling state of chloroplasts (Junge and Witt 1968). A similar change in bacterial 'chromatophores' was shown to serve as an intrinsic voltmeter for the membrane potential (Jackson and Crofts 1971). Other estimates come from the change in distribution of charged anions or cations into the energized organelle (see Rottenberg 1985). A full discussion is found in Junge and Jackson (1982)

Acid to base induced ATP synthesis

In trying to find spectrophotometric evidence for the energetic state, Hind found that pre-illumination of the thylakoids caused an increase in their light-scattering ability (Hind and Jagendorf 1965). This was especially true at lower pH levels, which had provided higher level of postillumination ATP synthesis in light (Hind and Jagendorf 1963). Looking for a correlation between light scattering and the dark ATP synthesis, Hind inserted a control in which thylakoids were never exposed to light, but simply were shifted from pH 4.5 to pH 8. To our surprise, this one protocol provided a very small amount of ATP synthesis (about 10% of that seen when light had been used).

In Hind's experiments, the acid pH had been adjusted using HCl. Worried about possible damage by a strong mineral acid, after Hind left I tried the same experiment using a divalent acid (phthallic) to adjust the acid pH. This increased the amount of ATP made in darkness a great deal; and work with other dicarboxylic organic acids (succinic, maleic, etc.) increased the yield 10-fold, to twice that seen with pre-illumination (Jagendorf and Uribe 1966). This amounted to up to 100 times the level of any electron carrier in the thylakoids. The fact that ATP was being made without any electron flow was further emphasized by the failure of electron transport inhibitors to prevent the acid-base ATP synthesis, and indeed some of them were able to increase the ATP yield (Miles and Jagendorf 1970).

Other work further confirmed the validity of Mitchell's chemiosmotic hypothesis. Mitochondrial particles were shown to make ATP due to an acid/base transition (Thayer and Hinkel 1975). Most spectacular was the demonstration that photophosphorylation could be done by liposomes into which had been inserted both the light-activated, proton-pumping bacteriorhodopsin from *Halobacterium halobium*, and the F_0F_1 complex from mitochondria (Racker and Stoekeniuss 1974). There was no evolutionary precedent for the mating of those two components; so it must have been the protonmotive force generated by illuminated rhodopsin that drove the F_1 to turn over, catalyzing the synthesis of ATP.

The question was raised whether the pH difference or the membrane potential is most responsible for ATP synthesis. The pH jump-driven ATP synthesis had been done with swollen thylakoids, previously washed in 10 mM NaCl. This permitted the entry of very considerable levels of the divalent acid, which correlated well with the extent of ATP synthesis (Uribe

and Jagendorf 1967). In the illuminated steady state, all estimates of internal pH showed a sufficient pH difference to drive ATP synthesis. Also, uncouplers (amines, nigericin, etc.) which collapse only the pH difference stop ATP synthesis.

The membrane potential, on the other hand, is the major force with very small subchloroplast particles. There, valinomycin, collapsing the membrane potential but not a pH gradient, inhibited ATP synthesis (McCarty 1969). Also, in flashing light, where protons move in and insufficient time is given for counter-ion flux to neutralize the electric charge, valinomycin, but not uncouplers such as amines, inhibit ATP formation [see Rumberg (1977) for a discussion].

The most spectacular demonstration of the role of membrane potential seemed to occur in experiments by H.T. Witt and colleagues. In these, an applied voltage in the medium was found to drive ATP synthesis (Witt et al. 1976). However, the interpretation of the results was questioned when it was determined, later, that too much ATP had been formed; perhaps the electric pulse had caused internal accumulation of a small proton pool [see Rottenberg (1985) for a discussion].

In addition to the distinction between proton gradient and membrane potential components, the exclusive function of internal bulk phase protons as the energetic intermediate ('delocalized coupling') has been questioned. Various discrepancies suggested the alternative operation of a close, more direct connection between the proton pumps and the ATPase complex ('localized' coupling). Evidence from R. Dilley's laboratory indicates alternative operation of either of these driving ATP synthesis, depending on the ionic composition of the medium, especially the Ca^{2+} concentration. These ideas are discussed in a review (Dilley 1991). The physiological significance of the two forms is not yet clear.

Much effort has gone into attempts at determining the number of protons pumped per electron moving through the chain, and the number of protons needed to form one ATP. These are both difficult to measure accurately, because of the turnover of internal protons. While most early efforts indicated a proton:ATP ratio of 3, something like a consensus appeared later (Van Walraven et al. 1996) that the number should be 4.

Contribution of the chemiosmotic theory to photosynthesis

The chemiosmotic interpretation helps explain several other photosynthetic details. First of all, the rise in pH of the stroma as protons are moved into the lumen under light, together with the movement of Mg^{2+} into the stroma, provide conditions much more favorable for operation of the CO_2 fixing cycle. Estimates have been made that the stroma pH rises from 7.1 in the dark to 7.8 or 8 in the light (Buchanan 1980).

With protonmotive force as the intermediate between electron flow and ATP synthesis, degrading the proton electrochemical activity gradient will obviously inhibit photophosphorylation. That explains the uncoupling action of detergents (Neumann and Jagendorf 1965), which permit leakage of protons; ionophores like nigericin that exchange H^+ for K^+ ; and of NH_3 and amines, which neutralize the internal acidity.

It also clarifies the nature of the coupling 'sites' in the electron transport chain, as regions where protons are caused to move across the thylakoid membrane. For thylakoids, there are two such natural sites. One is in the oxidation of 2 moles of H_2O in Photosystem II, PS II (Schwarz 1968; Ouitrakul and Izawa 1973; Trebst and Reimer 1973). The enzymes are located on the luminal side of the thylakoid, and, therefore both O_2 , and four H^+ are released into the lumen.

The second is in the transfer from reduced plastoquinone to the cytochrome b_6/f complex, between the two photosystems. Here, the quinone(s) reduced by PS II pass only their electrons to the cytochromes; the H^+ associated is released into the lumen. In addition, a complex pattern can occur in the b_6/f complex, which has different quinone-binding sites on the internal and external faces of the thylakoid. Designated the 'Q cycle' (Mitchell 1975), some of the electrons move on to PS I, but others are recycled back to the quinone pool through the b type cytochromes, resulting in a transfer of an extra proton to the interior of the thylakoid. Critical evidence for its occurrence in chloroplasts has been difficult to obtain, but there were many indirect indications (one example—a high H^+/e^- ratio—Kobayashi et al. 1995). Recent structural analysis of the b_6/f complex supports it as well (Carrell et al. 1997).

The other major pattern for electron flow is the cycle around PS I. In that case, the electron coming from PS I is transmitted, through ferredoxin in the stroma (Tagawa et al. 1963) to the external quinone component of the cytochrome b_6/f complex. This

quinone has to pick up a proton, at the same time, from the stroma. Redox shuffling through the complex must go through a quinone on the lumenal side; and when it is oxidized its proton remains inside. Cyclic electron flow through ferredoxin has the unique characteristic for chloroplasts of being inhibited by antimycin A (Tagawa et al. 1963).

A simpler system is the one using one of the artificial dyes, methyl phenazinium sulfate or its derivative, pyocyanine. These have been shown (Hauska et al. 1974, 1975) to interact with nothing but PS I. They take an electron from PS I on the outside, pick up a proton from the medium, then move into the lumen where they are oxidized by PS I, releasing the proton to the bulk phase.

Further developments

Enormously important findings, and changing concepts, have occurred since the chemiosmotic concept took over. Space permits only very brief mention of some of these.

A revolutionary new idea came from Boyer's finding that synthesis of the high-energy phosphate bond of ATP does not need any energy input, when the substrates are bound on the F_1 or CF_1 . Energy is needed to release ATP from its binding site, and in lesser amount to add ADP and P_i to theirs [see Shavit et al. (1967) for the finding with chloroplasts].

A truly important new concept was the 'binding change' hypothesis, (i.e. site-site cooperativity), developed by Paul Boyer again, from O exchange data [see Shavit et al. (1967)], Stroop and Boyer (1985) for findings with CF_1]. This means that the newly formed ATP is not released until a new ADP binds to an adjacent site. The input of energy then releases ATP from the first site, and tightens the binding of ADP and P_i at the second, so that they, in turn, can catalyze the freely reversible reaction of $ADP + P_i \rightleftharpoons ATP + H_2O$.

While the three β subunits are identical, during catalysis they must have alternative configurations, both because of the alternative nucleotide binding condition, and because there is only one γ subunit. This led to the imaginative concept that during catalysis the γ subunit must touch each one of the β subunits in turn. To do so, it would have to rotate within the center of the complex. This physical rotation of γ has been identified in a remarkable series of papers reviewed most recently by Yoshida et al. (2001).

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