

# Membrane Peroxidation and Methemoglobin Formation Are Both Necessary for Band 3 Clustering: Mechanistic Insights into Human Erythrocyte Senescence

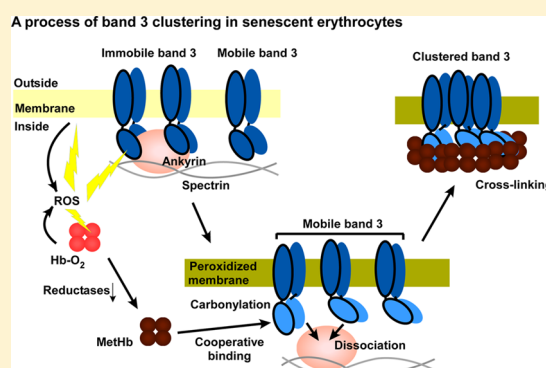
Nobuto Arashiki,<sup>†</sup> Naoki Kimata,<sup>†,‡</sup> Sumie Manno,<sup>†</sup> Narla Mohandas,<sup>§</sup> and Yuichi Takakuwa<sup>\*,†</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Department of Biochemistry and <sup>‡</sup>Kidney Center, School of Medicine, Tokyo Women's Medical University, 8-1 Kawada-Cho, Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 162-8666, Japan

<sup>§</sup>Red Cell Physiology Laboratory, New York Blood Center, New York, New York 10065, United States

## S Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Oxidative damage and clustering of band 3 in the membrane have been implicated in the removal of senescent human erythrocytes from the circulation at the end of their 120 day life span. However, the biochemical and mechanistic events leading to band 3 cluster formation have yet to be fully defined. Here we show that while neither membrane peroxidation nor methemoglobin (MetHb) formation on their own can induce band 3 clustering in the human erythrocytes, they can do so when acting in combination. We further show that binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in peroxidized, but not in untreated, erythrocyte membranes induces cluster formation. Age-fractionated populations of erythrocytes from normal human blood, obtained by a density gradient procedure, have allowed us to examine a subpopulation, highly enriched in senescent cells. We have found that band 3 clustering is a feature of only this small fraction, amounting to ~0.1% of total circulating erythrocytes. These senescent cells are characterized by an increased proportion of MetHb as a result of reduced nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide-dependent reductase activity and accumulated oxidative membrane damage. These findings have allowed us to establish that the combined effects of membrane peroxidation and MetHb formation are necessary for band 3 clustering, and this is a very late event in erythrocyte life. A plausible mechanism for the combined effects of membrane peroxidation and MetHb is proposed, involving high-affinity cooperative binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of oxidized band 3, probably because of its carbonylation, rather than other forms of oxidative damage. This modification leads to dissociation of ankyrin from band 3, allowing the tetrameric MetHb to cross-link the resulting freely diffusible band 3 dimers, with formation of clusters.



During its 120 day circulatory life span, the human erythrocyte is continuously exposed to oxidative stress<sup>1,2</sup> that can result in oxidation of hemoglobin (Hb) to methemoglobin (MetHb)<sup>3</sup> and may also inflict oxidative damage on membrane lipids and proteins.<sup>4–6</sup> Reductases, such as reduced nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NADH)-dependent MetHb reductase, protect Hb against oxidation,<sup>7</sup> whereas oxidative damage to membrane components, as by carbonylation and reaction with malondialdehyde (MDA) and 4-hydroxy-2-nonenal (HNE), is in general irreversible.<sup>4,5,8,9</sup> A number of perturbations of the cell and its membrane changes have been documented during aging, including loss of membrane surface, diminution of cell volume,<sup>10–12</sup> clustering of band 3,<sup>13–15</sup> and surface exposure of phosphatidylserine.<sup>16</sup> These changes may all contribute in varying degrees to the removal of senescent erythrocytes from the circulation at the end of their normal life span.<sup>16–19</sup> However, the relation of oxidative damage to these senescence markers has yet to be fully delineated.

Clustering of band 3, generation of MetHb and its denaturation, leading to Heinz body formation as well as lipid peroxidation (MDA accumulation) in the membrane, has been

documented in a number of erythrocyte disorders, including sickle cell anemia, thalassemias, and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency.<sup>20–25</sup> It has been shown that naturally occurring anti-band 3 antibodies in plasma bind to clustered band 3, resulting in removal of the cells by splenic macrophages.<sup>18,19</sup> Thus, it is very likely that band 3 clustering plays a role in the elimination of senescent normal, as well as various pathological, erythrocytes.

While oxidized Hb has been implicated in band 3 clustering, the mechanism by which such clusters develop in senescent normal erythrocytes is obscure. In this study, we show that both membrane peroxidation and MetHb formation are inseparable from cluster formation, and that the phenomenon is restricted to senescent circulating erythrocytes. We also demonstrate reduced NADH-dependent reductase activity in senescent erythrocytes, and an ensuing increase in the level of MetHb formation. We

**Received:** April 1, 2013

**Revised:** July 25, 2013

**Published:** July 26, 2013



further show that binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in peroxidized, but not in unoxidized, erythrocyte membranes leads to band 3 clustering. These findings establish that the combined effects of membrane peroxidation and MetHb formation are preconditions for band 3 clustering and that this is a terminal event in the erythrocyte life span.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Materials.** Percoll, Q Sepharose Fast Flow, and Sephadex-G25 fine were from GE Healthcare. The polyvinylidene difluoride (PVDF) membrane was from Merck Millipore (Billerica, MA). FITC- and HRP-conjugated anti-rabbit IgGs and HRP-conjugated anti-mouse IgG were from Dako (Glostrup, Denmark). Bis(sulfosuccinimidyl)suberate (BS<sub>3</sub>) was from Pierce (Rockford, IL). The anti-Hb $\beta$  monoclonal antibody was from Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Inc. (Santa Cruz, CA). Cytochrome *b*<sub>5</sub>, 5,5'-dithiobis(2-nitrobenzoic acid) (DTNB), flavin mononucleotide, trichloroacetic acid (TCA), thiobarbituric acid (TBA), 1,1-3,3-tetraethoxypropane, potassium iodide, and Tween 20 were from Wako (Tokyo, Japan). Phenylmethanesulfonyl fluoride and *tert*-butyl hydroperoxide (*t*-BHP) were from Sigma-Aldrich (St. Louis, MO). NADH and NADPH was from Orient Yeast Co., Ltd. (Tokyo, Japan). Potassium ferricyanide was from Kanto Chemical Co., Inc. (Tokyo, Japan). Diamide was from MP Biochemicals (Solon, OH).

**Density Separation of Human Erythrocytes Using Percoll Gradients.** After informed consent had been obtained, venous blood was drawn from healthy human volunteers and used in all the studies outlined. Erythrocytes were collected and washed three times with phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) (137 mM NaCl, 8.1 mM Na<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>, 2.68 mM KCl, and 1.47 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>). A discontinuous gradient of Percoll was made by overlaying 2 mL of 90, 81.8, 80.2, and 75.8% Percoll in 0.25 M sucrose, 120 mM KCl, and 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.4). Two milliliters of washed erythrocytes was layered on top of the Percoll gradient, followed by centrifugation using a swing rotor at 1000g for 30 min at 4 °C. Erythrocytes on top of the 75.8% Percoll layer were removed, and cells between 75.8 and 80.2% and between 80.2 and 81.8% were collected and designated as fractions 1 (F1) and 2 (F2), respectively. For separation of the most dense erythrocytes, 6 mL of washed erythrocytes was overlaid on top of 20 mL of 89% Percoll (density of 1.153 g/mL) in 0.25 M sucrose, 120 mM KCl, and 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.4) and centrifuged using an angle rotor at 33500g for 15 min at 4 °C to generate a continuous density gradient. Erythrocytes in the very bottom dense layer were collected and designated as F3.

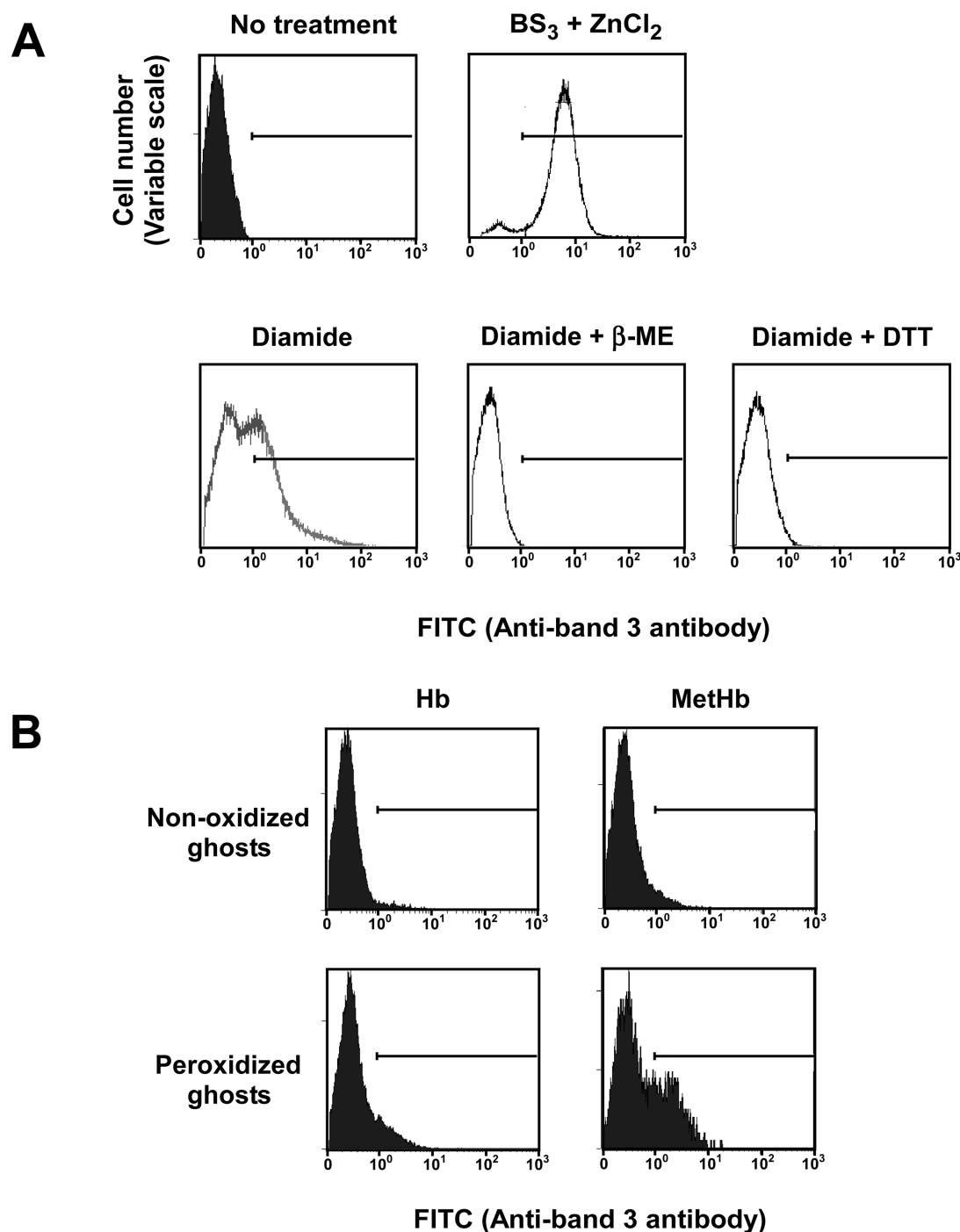
The mean corpuscular volume (MCV) and mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (MCHC) were measured using an automated hematology analyzer. The protein 4.1a:protein 4.1b ratio was calculated by densitometric analysis of immunoblots performed using polyclonal antibodies against protein 4.1a and protein 4.1b prepared in our laboratory. MDA concentrations were measured by the MDA-TBA method. Briefly, membrane ghosts (300  $\mu$ g of protein), obtained from density-separated erythrocytes, were suspended in 500  $\mu$ L of 5 mM sodium phosphate and mixed with 500  $\mu$ L of 10% TCA for 10 min and then centrifuged at 1000g for 10 min; 900  $\mu$ L of 1% TBA was added to 900  $\mu$ L of the supernatants, and the samples were boiled for 10 min followed by measurement of the absorbance at 530 nm. The MDA standard curve was generated as previously described.<sup>26</sup>

**Preparation of Resealed Ghosts and MetHb.** Washed erythrocytes were lysed and washed three times in 5 mM phosphate buffer at 4 °C. In some experiments, the membranes were peroxidized by incubation with 0.6 mM *t*-BHP for 30 min at 37 °C.<sup>27</sup> The membranes were resealed in PBS at 37 °C for 40 min in the presence of either Hb or MetHb. Hb was prepared from the lysate obtained by freezing and thawing of erythrocytes followed by gel filtration through a Sephadex-G25 column in PBS. MetHb was prepared according to the method of Hensley et al. with minor modifications.<sup>28</sup> Briefly, Hb was incubated with 5% potassium ferricyanide in PBS for 30 min at 37 °C to convert Hb to MetHb, followed by rapid removal of potassium ferricyanide by gel filtration through a Sephadex-G25 column. MetHb was used within 1 h of its preparation. A wavelength scan of MetHb incubated additionally for 30 min at 37 °C (same condition that was used for binding assays described below) showed a typical pattern of MetHb and not of hemichrome (data not shown).

**Fluorescence-Activated Cell Sorting (FACS) Analysis of Clustered Band 3.** The rabbit anti-band 3 polyclonal antibody that we generated using the multiple antigenic peptide (MAP) corresponding to amino acid residues 538–554 (asymmetric 4 branches) as an immunogen was used for FACS analysis. Resealed ghosts were incubated with the antibody at a 1:10 dilution in PBS containing 2% BSA. After being washed three times with the same buffer, the resealed cells were incubated with FITC-bound anti-rabbit IgG for 60 min and washed three times with PBS followed by FACS analysis (Beckman Coulter, Inc., Brea, CA). For the assessment of the specificity of this antibody, resealed ghosts prepared from erythrocytes were treated with both 1 mM ZnCl<sub>2</sub> and 1 mM BS<sub>3</sub>, a chemical cross-linker, to induce irreversible band 3 clustering<sup>29</sup> or with 2 mM diamide, an oxidant of SH groups, to induce reversible band 3 clustering<sup>25</sup> and were analyzed by FACS. Furthermore, diamide-treated ghosts treated with reducing agents, 20 mM DTT or 10 mM  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol ( $\beta$ -ME), were also analyzed by FACS.

**Measurement of MetHb and MetHb Reductase Activity.** Density-fractionated erythrocytes were lysed with doubly distilled water and centrifuged at 1000g for 10 min. The MetHb content as the percentage of total cell Hb was determined by dividing the A<sub>630</sub> of the resultant supernatants by the A<sub>630</sub> of 2% potassium ferricyanide-treated supernatants. The activities of NADH- and NADPH-dependent MetHb reductases in fractionated erythrocytes were measured according to methods described by Kuma et al.<sup>30</sup> and Yubisui et al.,<sup>31</sup> respectively. The activities of fractions F2 and F3 were expressed as percentage of the activity of fraction F1.

**MetHb Binding to Peroxidized and Nonoxidized Inside-Out Vesicles (IOVs).** IOVs were prepared from ghosts as described previously.<sup>32</sup> Both ankyrin and protein 4.1 remained associated with the IOVs. In some experiments, IOVs were peroxidized with 0.6 mM *t*-BHP for 30 min at 37 °C. The peroxidized IOVs were treated with 5  $\mu$ g/mL trypsin for 30 min on ice to digest and remove the cytoplasmic domain of band 3.<sup>33</sup> Ten micrograms of IOVs was incubated with MetHb (0–31.3  $\mu$ M) for 30 min at 37 °C, and IOVs with bound MetHb were collected by centrifugation at 100000g for 20 min at 4 °C through an 8% sucrose cushion. Bound MetHb was separated by sodium dodecyl sulfate–polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis (SDS–PAGE), and the extent of binding was determined by densitometric analysis of the MetHb band in immunoblots performed with the anti-Hb $\beta$  monoclonal antibody. The amount of ankyrin associated with IOVs was quantitated by densito-



**Figure 1.** FACS analysis of band 3 clustering in normal ghosts and ghosts treated in various ways. (A) To assess the specificity of the peptide antibody recognizing clustered band 3, ghosts prepared from normal erythrocytes were incubated in the absence (top left) or presence (top right) of 1 mM  $\text{BS}_3$  and  $\text{ZnCl}_2$  to chemically cross-link band 3 or in the presence of 2 mM diamide (bottom left) to reversibly cross-link band 3 by disulfide bonds. Moreover, diamide-treated ghosts reduced by 20 mM DTT (bottom middle) or 10 mM  $\beta$ -ME (bottom right) were also prepared to assess the reversible effect. FACS analysis of the cells was performed following incubation with the rabbit anti-band 3 antibody and the FITC-conjugated anti-rabbit IgG antibody. (B) Ghosts prepared from normal erythrocytes were incubated with (peroxidized ghosts) or without (nonoxidized ghosts) 0.6 mM *t*-BHP, a lipid peroxidation reagent, and then resealed with either Hb or MetHb. These resealed ghosts were subjected to FACS analysis as described above.

metric analysis of the ankyrin band in immunoblots performed using the anti-ankyrin antibody made in our laboratory. The experiments were performed using three different IOV preparations.

**Ankyrin Binding to Peroxidized and Nonoxidized Potassium Iodide-Treated IOVs (KI-IOVs).** Ankyrin was purified according to the method described by Tyler et al.<sup>34</sup> with

minor modifications. KI-IOVs were prepared as described by Bennett et al.,<sup>35</sup> and KI-IOVs were peroxidized with 0.6 mM *t*-BHP. The various concentrations of purified ankyrin (0–2.0  $\mu\text{M}$ ) were added to 10  $\mu\text{g}$  of KI-IOVs or peroxidized KI-IOVs, and the samples were incubated for 30 min at 37 °C and subsequently centrifuged at 100000g for 20 min through an 8% sucrose cushion to separate unbound ankyrin from KI-IOVs. The

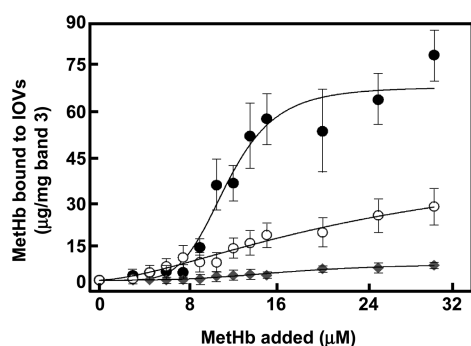
pellets were collected, and bound ankyrin was separated by SDS–PAGE. The amount of ankyrin was measured by densitometric analysis of the Coomassie Brilliant Blue-stained band of ankyrin as described above. These experiments were performed using three to five different membrane preparations.

**Detection of Carbonylated Band 3 on the Peroxidized Membrane.** Ghosts and IOVs were incubated with 0.6 mM *t*-BHP for up to 120 min at 37 °C. IOVs were then treated with 5  $\mu$ g/mL  $\alpha$ -chymotrypsin for 45 min at 0 °C to cleave the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 (43 kDa) from the trans-membrane domain of band 3. Proteins of these ghosts and IOVs were separated by SDS–PAGE (8 and 10% gels, respectively) and transferred to PVDF membranes. Carbonylated proteins were detected by derivatization of carbonyl groups using dinitrophenylhydrazine (DNPH) and the following immunoreaction with the anti-DNP antibody. These experiments were performed using the OxiSelect Protein Carbonyl Immunoblot Kit according to the manual (CELL BIOLABS, Inc., San Diego, CA). The carbonylated signal was detected by exposing PVDF membranes to a film for either 5 or 90 s.

**Statistical Analysis.** All statistical analyses were performed with a Student's *t* test.

## RESULTS

**MetHb Induced Clustering of Band 3.** To validate the specificity of the anti-band 3 antibody, which we generated, we



**Figure 2.** Binding of MetHb to IOVs prepared from nonoxidized and peroxidized normal erythrocyte membranes. Ten micrograms of nonoxidized IOVs (○), IOVs peroxidized by 0.6 mM *t*-BHP (●), and peroxidized IOVs digested by 5  $\mu$ g/mL trypsin (◆) were incubated with MetHb (0–31.3  $\mu$ M), and then IOVs were collected in the pellets by centrifugation through an 8% sucrose cushion followed by SDS–PAGE and immunoblotting with the anti-Hb $\beta$  monoclonal antibody. The amount of MetHb bound to IOVs was calculated by densitometric analysis. The data are means  $\pm$  SD of three individual experiments, and the lines represent the best fit of the data using the Hill equation.

**Table 1. Kinetic Analysis of Binding of MetHb to IOVs Prepared from Washed Erythrocytes**

IOVs	$K_d$ ( $\mu$ M)	maximal binding ( $\mu$ g/mg band 3)	Hill coefficient	$R^2$
nonoxidized	$26.4 \pm 1.5$	$45.3 \pm 19.6$	$1.6 \pm 0.4$	0.97
peroxidized	$11.9 \pm 0.6$	$67.6 \pm 4.5$	$3.2 \pm 1.2$	0.96

measured by FACS its capacity to bind normal erythrocyte membranes and membranes in which band 3 clustering had been induced by treatment with  $BS_3$  and  $ZnCl_2$ . The antibody specifically recognized clustered band 3 in treated cells but not normal band 3 in untreated cells (Figure 1A). The antibody similarly recognized clustered band 3 in cells treated with

**Table 2. Characterization of Fractionated Erythrocytes**

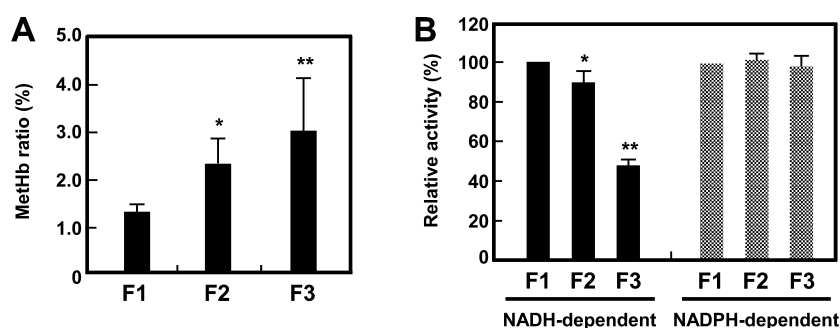
fraction	ratio (% of total cells in each fraction)	MCV (fL)	MCHC (g/dL)	protein 4.1a:protein 4.1b ratio	MDA (nmol/mg of membrane protein)
F1	59.5	97.7	35.8	0.84	1.80
F2	1.0	95.5	37.1	2.07	2.14
F3	0.1	86.1	41.5	2.10	2.96

diamide, which induces clustering via the formation of a disulfide bond between the cytoplasmic domains of band 3 molecules.<sup>25</sup> Binding of the antibody was lost after reduction of the diamide-treated cells with DTT or  $\beta$ -ME (Figure 1A). To confirm that the antibody preferentially recognizes clustered band 3, we performed inhibition analyses using either band 3 peptide 538–554 or band 3 MAP 538–554. The latter efficiently inhibited the binding of the antibody to clustered band 3 induced by  $BS_3$  and  $ZnCl_2$  and by diamide. These results imply that the antibody we used preferentially binds to clustered band 3 but not to native unclustered band 3 (Figure S1 of the Supporting Information).

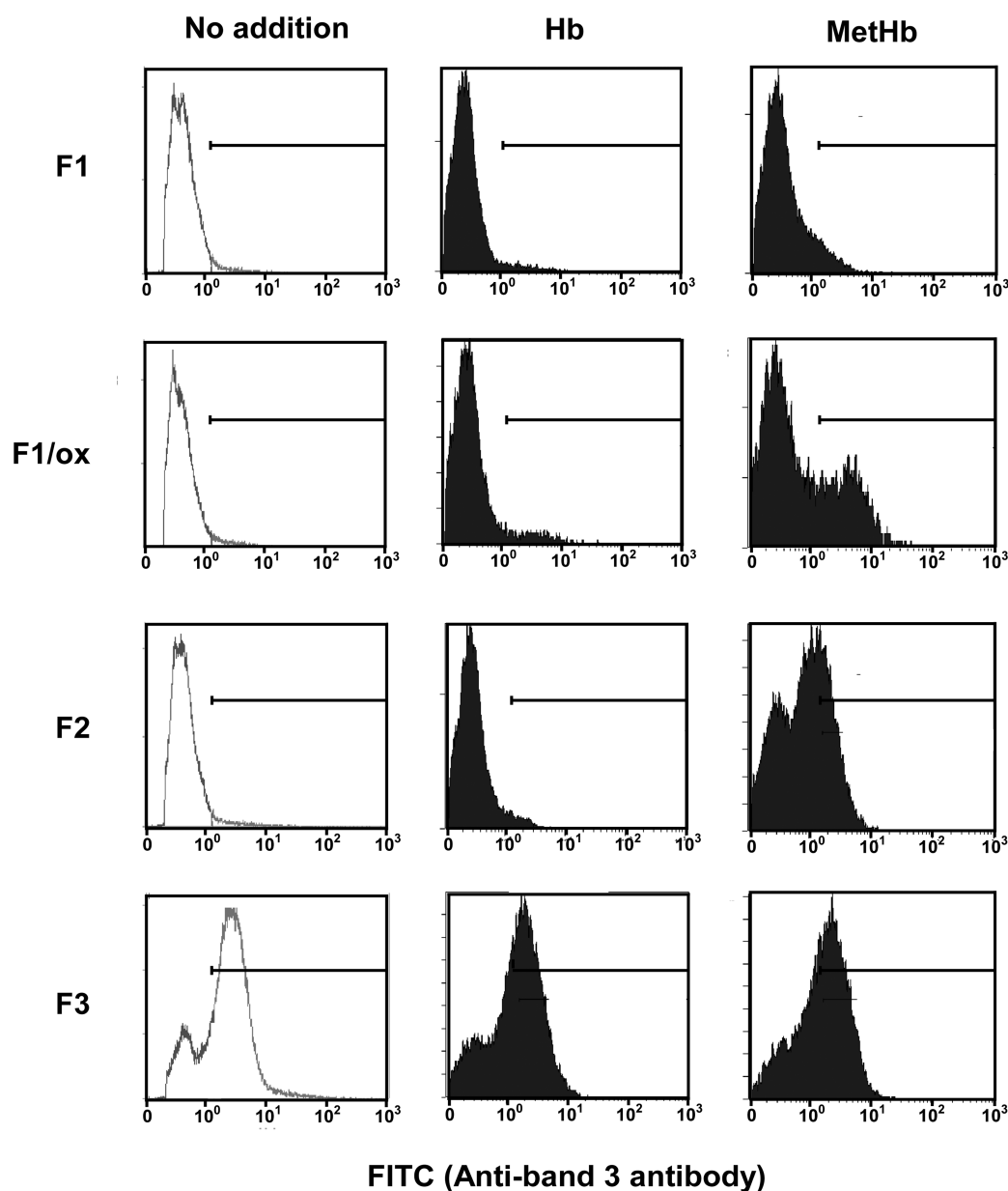
To investigate the ability of MetHb to induce band 3 clustering in erythrocyte membranes, we resealed either MetHb- or Hb-loaded ghosts prepared from normal erythrocytes. We ensured that reductases present in the cytosol had been removed by extensive washing prior to resealing. While resealing with Hb failed to induce antibody binding, incorporation of MetHb resulted in antibody binding to a small fraction (5.9%) of resealed cells (Figure 1B). In marked contrast, following incorporation of MetHb into ghosts prepared from erythrocytes previously treated with *t*-BHP (a lipid-peroxidizing agent), a substantial increase in the proportion of cells displaying band 3 clusters (29.6%) was observed (Figure 1B). Incorporation of Hb into peroxidized membranes resulted in a much smaller increase in antibody-labeled cells (9.0%). Peroxidation after treatment with *t*-BHP was confirmed by the resulting increased membrane-associated MDA (2.20 nmol/mg of membrane protein) relative to that in untreated cells (1.82 nmol/mg membrane protein). We conclude that MetHb can promote band 3 clustering in peroxidized erythrocyte membranes. We note that tyrosine phosphorylation of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 was not observed in these peroxidized membranes (data not shown).

**MetHb Binding to IOVs.** We measured the binding of MetHb and Hb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in IOVs prepared from untreated and peroxidized erythrocyte membranes. Whereas concentration-dependent binding of MetHb to IOVs was observed (Figure 2), Hb showed no perceptible binding. The rate of uptake of MetHb by normal ghosts increased in a concentration-dependent manner, reaching saturation at  $\sim 31.3$   $\mu$ M. Analysis of the binding profile revealed the presence of a single class of sites with a  $K_d$  of 26  $\mu$ M and an estimated maximal binding of 45.3  $\mu$ g/mg of band 3 (Table 1). In marked contrast, the binding of MetHb to IOVs prepared from *t*-BHP-treated membranes displayed a sigmoidal curve typical of positively cooperative binding with a Hill coefficient of 3.2 (Table 1). The  $K_d$  of binding to these IOVs was derived to be 11.9  $\mu$ M with an estimated maximal binding capacity of 67.6  $\mu$ g/mg of band 3. The binding of MetHb was almost entirely eliminated by treatment of the membranes with trypsin. This shows that binding to the lipid bilayer is minimal. The specificity of binding of MetHb to band 3 (not other proteins) was shown by an inhibition assay using the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 that had been purified from peroxidized membranes (Figure S2

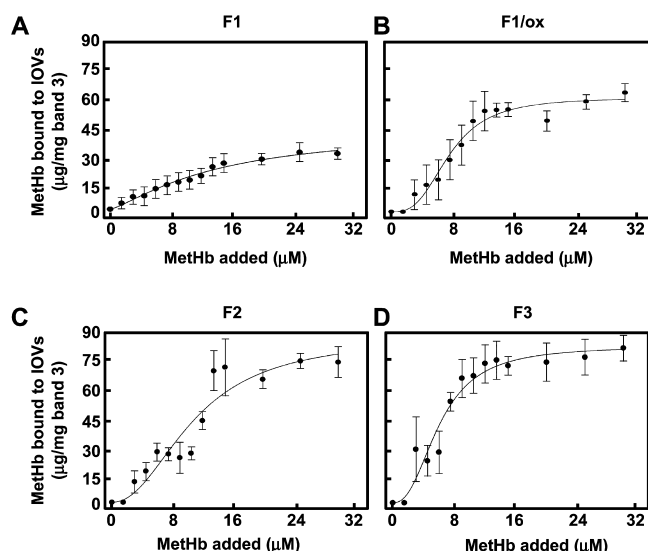




**Figure 3.** MetHb content and MetHb reductase activity of fractionated erythrocytes. (A) MetHb content of erythrocytes in fractions F1–F3 from four individuals measured by the cyan methemoglobin method described in Materials and Methods. Data are means  $\pm$  SD (\* $P$  < 0.05 and \*\* $P$  < 0.01 vs F1). (B) NADH- and NADPH-dependent MetHb reductase activities measured in fraction F1–F3 erythrocytes as described in Materials and Methods. Enzyme activities (%) in fraction F2 and F3 erythrocytes were expressed relative to the values derived for fraction F1 erythrocytes. Data are means  $\pm$  SD ( $n$  = 3) (\* $P$  < 0.05 and \*\* $P$  < 0.01 vs F1).



**Figure 4.** FACS analysis of Hb- or MetHb-incorporated ghosts prepared from density-fractionated erythrocytes. Hb or MetHb was resealed into the ghosts made from erythrocytes isolated in fractions F1–F3 and peroxidized F1 ghosts (F1/ox). Band 3 clustering in these resealed ghosts was analyzed by FACS as described in Materials and Methods.



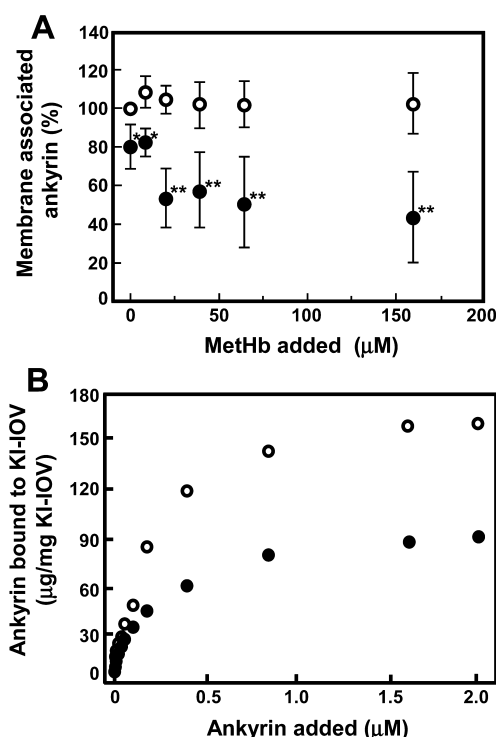
**Figure 5.** Binding of MetHb to IOVs prepared from density-fractionated erythrocytes. The amount of MetHb bound to IOVs prepared from F1 (A), F1/ox (B), F2 (C), and F3 (D) ghosts was measured and showed as described in Materials and Methods and the legend of Figure 2.

**Table 3. Kinetic Analysis of the Binding of MetHb to IOVs Prepared from Fractionated Erythrocytes**

IOV	$K_d$ ( $\mu\text{M}$ )	maximal binding ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{mg}$ band 3)	Hill coefficient	$R^2$
F1	$21.1 \pm 6.3$	$30.4 \pm 4.3$	$1.1 \pm 0.4$	0.93
F1/ox	$7.8 \pm 0.3$	$48.2 \pm 18.0$	$3.0 \pm 0.5$	0.97
F2	$8.5 \pm 1.4$	$75.8 \pm 9.6$	$2.2 \pm 0.6$	0.96
F3	$6.4 \pm 0.6$	$73.5 \pm 5.1$	$2.4 \pm 0.6$	0.94

of the Supporting Information). With increasing concentrations of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3, the amount of MetHb associated with IOV decreased. Thus, while MetHb binds to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in a simple saturable manner in normal membranes, peroxidation of membranes leads to a somewhat higher affinity and cooperativity of binding most likely as a consequence of conformational coupling between the binding sites on the two subunits of the band 3 dimer.

**Characterization of Density-Fractionated Human Erythrocytes.** To determine whether the clustering of band 3 in the cell *in vitro*, engendered by the combined effects of membrane oxidative damage and MetHb binding, is also a feature of erythrocyte aging *in vivo*, we examined cellular and membrane alterations in three distinct populations of human erythrocytes. These were obtained by density gradient fractionation, on the grounds that cell density increases with cell age. In our Percoll density fractionation protocol, 59.5% of all cells could be recovered in the intermediate-density fraction (F1), while only 1.0 and 0.1% were found in higher-density fractions F2 and F3, respectively. Measured values for MCV, MCHC, protein 4.1a:protein 4.1b ratio, and MDA levels for each of the three fractions isolated from whole blood are listed in Table 2. As previously noted, with an increasing cell density (F3 > F2 > F1), MCV decreases and MCHC increases, reflecting erythrocyte aging *in vivo*. It should be noted all the monitored parameters showed little difference between the original whole blood and F1. As protein 4.1b is deamidated to protein 4.1a in a nonenzymatic, irreversible, and time-dependent manner, the 4.1a:4.1b ratio is an excellent indicator of the age of erythrocytes

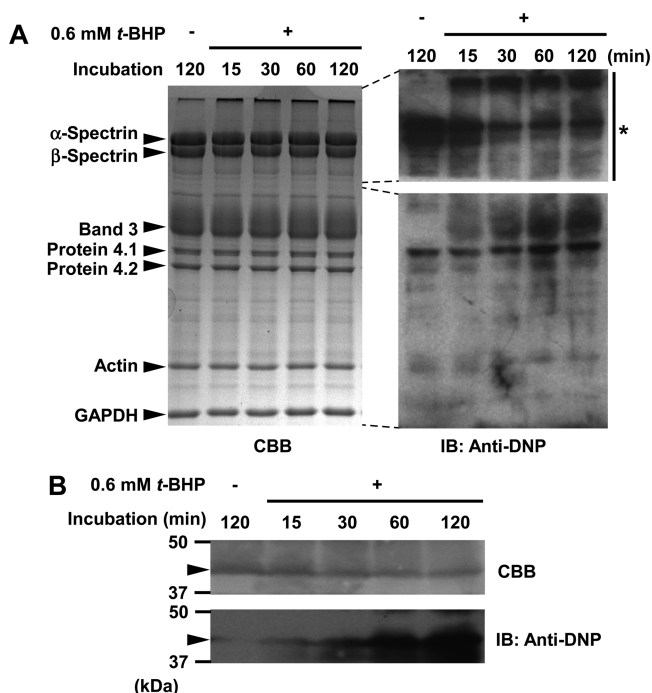


**Figure 6.** Interaction of ankyrin with band 3 in nonoxidized and peroxidized IOVs. (A) Amount of ankyrin associated with nonoxidized (O) or peroxidized (●) IOVs measured in the presence or absence of MetHb by immunoblotting using the anti-ankyrin antibody as described in Materials and Methods. Data represent the mean ratio (%)  $\pm$  SD normalized by the amount of ankyrin bound to nonoxidized IOVs in the absence of MetHb ( $n = 3$ ) (\* $P < 0.05$  and \*\* $P < 0.01$ ). (B) KI-IOVs pretreated with (●) or without (O) *t*-BHP were incubated with increasing concentrations of purified ankyrin. The amount of ankyrin bound to KI-IOVs was measured as described in Materials and Methods and plotted vs the concentration of ankyrin added.

in circulation.<sup>36,37</sup> The 0.1% dehydrated, dense red cells making up F3 had the highest 4.1a:4.1b ratio, confirming that this represents the most senescent erythrocytes still circulating, while the 1% of cells in F2 are less senescent, but still more so than those in bulk fraction F1. It is also interesting to note that the MDA level of F3 was significantly higher than that of F2, but below that of F1 and that of the unfractionated cells. These findings imply that erythrocyte membranes accumulate oxidant damage during cell aging *in vivo*.

The MetHb content of erythrocytes in the most dense cell fraction (F3) was significantly higher (3.0% of total Hb) than that in the least dense F1 fraction (1.3% of total Hb), while erythrocytes in F2 exhibit an intermediate level of MetHb (Figure 3A). Correspondingly, NADH-dependent MetHb reductase activity was lower by some 10 and 50% in fractions F3 and F2, respectively, relative to that in fraction F1. NADH-dependent reductase activity remained essentially unchanged in all fractions (Figure 3B). Because NADH-dependent reductase is the enzyme primarily responsible for MetHb reduction,<sup>7,38</sup> the decrease in its activity during red cell aging is responsible for the accumulation of MetHb in senescent erythrocytes.

**Characterization of Band 3 Clustering in Density-Fractionated Human Erythrocytes.** Using our band 3 antibody that specifically recognizes clustered band 3, we explored the extent of band 3 clustering in native density-fractionated human erythrocytes and in resealed cells, loaded



**Figure 7.** Carbonylation of band 3 induced by membrane peroxidation. Carbonylated proteins of the ghosts that had been treated with or without 0.6 mM *t*-BHP for up to 120 min were analyzed as described in Materials and Methods. (A) The signal intensity of carbonylated proteins corresponding to the position of band 3 in the gel increased in time-dependent manner. The asterisk indicates a part of the gel that was exposed for a very short period (5 s), showing that spectrin was endogenously carbonylated under the experimental conditions used to monitor carbonylation but did not show time-dependent changes. (B) Carbonylation of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 [43 kDa (arrowhead)] in *t*-BHP-treated IOVs. Carbonylation of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 increased with an increasing incubation time.

with either Hb or MetHb (Figure 4). No clustered band 3 could be detected in native erythrocyte membranes prepared from fraction F1 or F2. On the other hand, clustered band 3 could be readily detected in membranes of erythrocytes from fraction F3, indicating that band 3 clustering is a feature of senescent cells. Peroxidization of F1 membranes (F1/ox) to the degree occurring naturally in F2 cells (MDA of 2.23 nmol/mg of membrane protein) did not induce band 3 clustering.

We next examined whether incorporation of either MetHb or Hb can induce band 3 clustering in the different populations of density-fractionated erythrocytes (Figure 4). In no case did incorporation of Hb generate additional band 3 clusters, although clusters did appear in the membranes of a small proportion (~12%) of Hb-loaded peroxidized ghosts prepared from the low-density F1 fraction. MetHb, by contrast, caused varying degrees of cluster formation in all three cell populations. Thus, while MetHb had little effect on native low-density cells, it engendered clusters in 35% of the same cell fraction after peroxidation. In the native intermediate density population of cells (F2), MetHb induced band 3 clusters in ~60% of the cells. MetHb did not further increase the already large fraction of cells in the high-density fraction (F3) containing prominent clusters (Figure 4).

**MetHb Binding to IOVs Prepared from Density-Fractionated Erythrocytes.** The binding of MetHb and Hb to IOVs prepared from membranes of defined subpopulations of density-fractionated red cells (F1, peroxidized F1, F2, and F3)

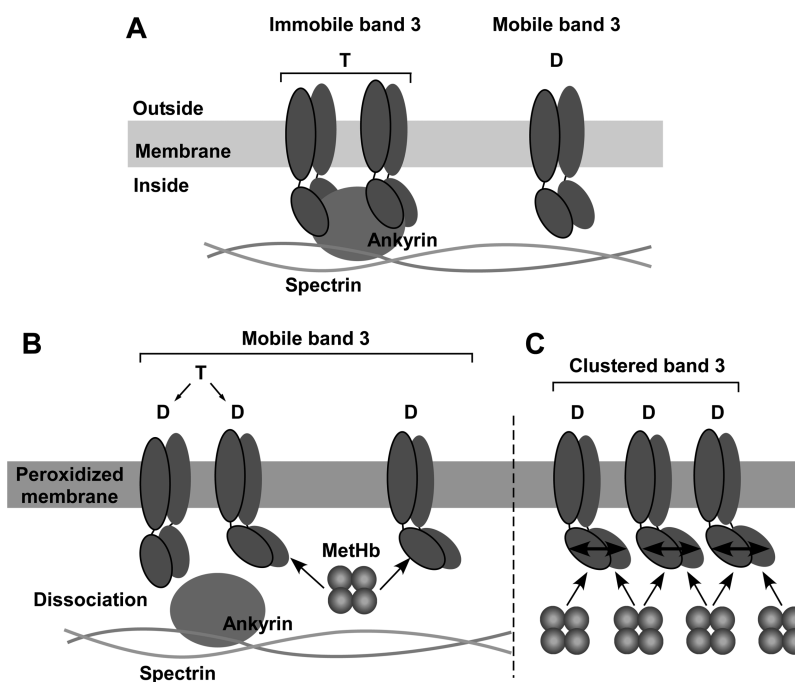
was measured (Figure 5). At Hb concentrations of up to 31  $\mu$ M, no detectable binding to IOVs could be discerned. In marked contrast, MetHb bound to IOV preparations to varying degrees. Detectable binding of MetHb to F1 IOVs was observed at 4  $\mu$ M, the level increasing with an increasing MetHb concentration to a plateau, corresponding to saturation at 30  $\mu$ g/mg of band 3, conforming to a single  $K_d$  of  $10^{-5}$  M (Table 3). MetHb bound to F2 and F3 IOVs with a higher affinity ( $K_d = 10^{-6}$  M) and with approximately twice as many binding sites at saturation than on F1 IOVs (76 and 74  $\mu$ g/mg, respectively, vs 30  $\mu$ g/mg). The binding profiles for F2 and F3 IOVs were sigmoidal, reflecting positive cooperative binding with Hill coefficients of 2.2 and 2.4, respectively (Table 3). Following peroxidation of F1 membranes, both the binding affinity and the maximal binding capacity for MetHb with F1/ox IOVs increased significantly ( $K_d = 10^{-6}$  M and 48  $\mu$ g/mg, respectively). Perplexingly, this binding profile showed positive cooperativity with a Hill coefficient of 3.0. These findings imply that the peroxidation of the membrane induces positive cooperative binding of MetHb to band 3.

#### Effect of Binding of MetHb to Band 3 on Its Function.

We next examined whether binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 affects its interactions with its binding partners, ankyrin and protein 4.1.<sup>39</sup> Following bindings of increasing amounts of MetHb to IOVs prepared from normal membranes, both ankyrin and protein 4.1 remained associated with IOVs (data not shown). By contrast, binding of MetHb to IOVs prepared from *t*-BHP-treated membranes resulted in dose-dependent dissociation of ankyrin from the membranes (Figure 6A), implying a decreased affinity of binding of band 3 to ankyrin following oxidative damage. No concomitant change in the membrane content of protein 4.1 was detected (data not shown). It should be noted that peroxidation by itself appeared to decrease the ankyrin content of IOVs by ~20%. To further support our conclusions, we measured the binding of ankyrin to normal and peroxidized and ankyrin-stripped IOVs (KI-IOVs). While both IOV preparations bound ankyrin in a concentration-dependent manner, maximal binding to *t*-BHP-treated KI-IOVs was only half of that to normal KI-IOVs (Figure 6B). We infer that binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in peroxidized membrane induces a steric or conformational effect that weakens its ability to bind ankyrin.

#### Carbonylation of Band 3 in Peroxidized Membranes.

Carbonylated proteins of the ghosts incubated with or without 0.6 mM *t*-BHP for up to 120 min were analyzed by derivatization of carbonyl groups using DNPH and Western blotting using the anti-DNP antibody. The extent of carbonylation of band 3 increased with an increasing time of incubation with the reagent (Figure 7A). Progressive carbonylation of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 was also observed (Figure 7B). Spectrin and protein 4.1 were both carbonylated in native ghosts, but the extent of carbonylation of both proteins was unchanged by treatment with *t*-BHP (Figure 7A). We suggest that the observed carbonylation of spectrin is a consequence of endogenous modification with 4-hydroxy-2-nonenal (HNE), a carbonylation reaction in a broad sense, because DNPH also reacts with HNE-modified proteins generated by Michael reaction and Schiff base formation.<sup>8,9</sup> We showed previously that only  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -spectrin were endogenously modified with HNE in erythrocyte membrane proteins and HNE-modified spectrin readily formed aggregates.<sup>40</sup> The signals of carbonylated spectrin corresponding to the original position of spectrin were shifted to the upper edge of the gel (high-molecular weight region) by *t*-BHP treatment. Immunoblot analyses to assess HNE- and MDA-dependent



**Figure 8.** Potential mechanism for the combined effect of membrane peroxidation and MetHb in inducing band 3 clustering. (A) The band 3 tetramer formed by two dimers and linked to the skeletal network through interaction with ankyrin is immobile and is thus uniformly distributed in the membrane. The mobile band 3 dimer is not connected to the skeleton, but its area of diffusion is restricted to that within the lattice (fence) of the network. (B) Peroxidation of erythrocyte membranes results in a modest degree of dissociation of ankyrin from the cytoplasmic domain of band 3, and high-affinity cooperative binding of MetHb to the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 accelerates this dissociation process probably because of the carbonylation of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3. Following dissociation from ankyrin, band 3 is released from its constraints for lateral diffusion in the membrane. (C) Binding of MetHb to one subunit of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 induces a conformational change in the cytoplasmic domains of other associated band 3 subunits leading to high-affinity cooperative binding of MetHb. As MetHb is a tetramer, it can form a bridge between a number of diffusing band 3 dimers to induce clustering.

modification of band 3 in *t*-BHP-treated membranes were performed using anti-HNE and -MDA antibodies (Academy Biomedical, Houston, TX), respectively. Neither HNE- nor MDA-induced modification of band 3 could be detected in *t*-BHP-treated ghosts (data not shown). Thiol groups in the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 purified from ghosts that had been treated with *t*-BHP were assayed with Ellman's reagent (DTNB). Oxidation of SH groups in the peroxidized cytoplasmic domain of band 3 was not found to have occurred (data not shown).

## DISCUSSION

The results described above reveal that membrane peroxidation is a prerequisite for MetHb-induced clustering of band 3 in erythrocytes. A possible mechanism for the combined effects of membrane peroxidation and MetHb in inducing band 3 clustering is depicted in Figure 8. Peroxidation of membranes results in a moderate degree of dissociation of ankyrin from its site of attachment on the cytoplasmic domain of band 3, and also a high-affinity cooperative interaction between band 3 and MetHb. Binding of MetHb promoted the loss of ankyrin. It is known<sup>39</sup> that dissociation of ankyrin releases the constraint on band 3 from lateral diffusion in the membrane. Binding of MetHb to one subunit of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 induces a conformational change in the cytoplasmic domains of the other subunits of the band 3 dimer, thereby increasing the affinity of their MetHb binding sites. This would account for the observed cooperativity of binding. As MetHb is a tetramer, it can cross-link the freely diffusing band 3 dimers to induce clustering.

Our findings reveal that band 3 clustering is a feature of a very small fraction (0.1% of the total) of circulating normal

erythrocytes, indicating that band 3 clustering is a very late event in normal erythrocyte aging and is a feature of senescent cells, which are then rapidly removed from the circulation. The finding that this fraction of cells exhibits elevated levels of MDA and an increased level of MetHb binding in association with band 3 clustering supports our hypothesis that both membrane peroxidation and MetHb are necessary for band 3 clustering. This conclusion is further supported by our finding that neither membrane peroxidation nor MetHb alone induces band 3 clustering. The lack of band 3 clusters in the vast majority of circulating erythrocytes is a probable consequence of the two protective mechanisms: normal reductase activity, sufficient to prevent accumulation of MetHb, and effective functioning of scavengers (superoxide dismutase, glutathione, or vitamins C and E) to protect against lipid peroxidation.<sup>1,41</sup> It is interesting that we also found no band 3 clustering in a small subpopulation of cells (F2) with high MDA but little MetHb, but in which clustering could be induced following incorporation of MetHb (Figure 4). Taken together, these findings lend strong support to our thesis that both membrane peroxidation and MetHb are necessary for band 3 clustering in senescent erythrocytes.

Erythrocytes are continuously exposed to oxidative stress from sources such as reactive oxygen species (ROS) from both the internal and external environments.<sup>1,2</sup> Many forms of oxidative modification of proteins can be induced directly by ROS, possibly through modification of amino acid residues such as Pro, Arg, Lys, and Thr, resulting in protein carbonylation.<sup>9,42</sup> We indeed could observe carbonylation of both band 3 and its cytoplasmic domain as a consequence of membrane peroxidation, rather than other oxidative processes, such as oxidation



of thiol groups (Figure 7). The finding that ankyrin dissociates from the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 in peroxidized membranes suggests a possible conformational perturbation at the ankyrin binding site in this domain,<sup>43–45</sup> probably because of carbonylation, either direct or mediated by carbonylation of the transmembrane domain of band 3. Ankyrin dissociation is necessary for band 3 clustering as discussed above (Figure 8). The high-affinity cooperative bindings of MetHb to band 3 in peroxidized membranes could also be the result of a conformational change in an as yet unidentified MetHb binding site in band 3. The crystal structure of the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 indicates a tight symmetric dimer formed by interlocking dimerization arms of the two monomers.<sup>46</sup> We suggest that binding of MetHb to one domain may induce a conformational change in the partner domain. Analysis of the cocrystal structure of a complex of MetHb and the cytoplasmic domain of band 3 obtained from peroxidized membranes should provide insights into an induced conformational change.

We note finally that ROS also cause membrane lipid peroxidation leading to generation of high levels of reactive aldehydes such as MDA and HNE.<sup>8</sup> These products readily bind covalently to proteins with subsequent changes in conformation and function.<sup>8,47,48</sup> In erythrocytes, HNE has been shown to modify spectrin,<sup>40</sup> but our failure to detect modifications of band 3 by either MDA or HNE following peroxidation suggests that such modifications may not play a direct role.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### ■ Supporting Information

Two supporting figures (Figures S1 and S2) that confirm the specific recognition of clustered band 3 by the anti-band 3 antibody and the specific binding between MetHb and band 3 on IOVs. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

## ■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

### Corresponding Author

\*Department of Biochemistry, School of Medicine, Tokyo Women's Medical University, 8-1 Kawada-Cho, Shinjuku-Ku, Tokyo 162-8666, Japan. Phone: 81-3-5269-7415. Fax: 81-3-5269-7415. E-mail: [takakuwa@research.twmu.ac.jp](mailto:takakuwa@research.twmu.ac.jp).

### Funding

This work was supported by Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research 22591112 from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan and National Institutes of Health Grant DK26263.

### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

## ■ ABBREVIATIONS

BS<sub>3</sub>, bis(sulfosuccinimidyl)suberate; IOV, inside-out vesicle;  $K_d$ , dissociation constant; KI-IOV, potassium iodide-treated inside-out vesicle; HNE, 4-hydroxy-2-nonenal; MDA, malondialdehyde; MetHb, methemoglobin; ROS, reactive oxygen species; SDS, sodium dodecyl sulfate; *t*-BHP, *tert*-butyl hydroperoxide; FITC, fluorescein isothiocyanate; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; NADH, reduced nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide; NADPH, reduced nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate; SD, standard deviation.

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