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Complex I (NADH:quinone oxidoreductase) proteins NuoL, NuoM and NuoN are homologous to one type of Na^+/H^+ antiporters. Thus, these subunits are prime candidates for harbouring important parts of the proton pumping machinery. If they also retain antiporter function and/or the ability to pump sodium has been a matter of debate. The aim of this study was to investigate the sodium binding properties of the NuoL, NuoM and NuoN subunits from *E. coli* complex I and compare them to those of the *bona fide* antiporters MrpA and MrpD from *Bacillus subtilis* using ^{23}Na NMR spectroscopy. This technique has been demonstrated to be particularly suitable to monitor ion binding properties of macromolecules under conditions of very fast chemical exchange [1, 2], as expected from a transporter protein. High amounts of the individual proteins were obtained by expressing them as cytochrome c fusion proteins in *E. coli*. Purification was facilitated by a C-terminal histidine tag fused to the cytochrome c domain. The mobility of Na^+ in the presence of the antiporter proteins was measured at gradually increasing concentrations. Subsequently, the concentration of another, non-interacting cation, NH_4^+, was increased, while sodium was kept constant. Cytochrome c alone was used as negative control protein. From this data, specific binding constants for Na^+ could be estimated for each of the five proteins. The Na^+ interaction was then assessed under different conditions and pH, in the presence of quinone and in the presence of the sodium-hydrogen exchange inhibitor 5-ethylisopropyl amiloride (EIPA). The sodium interaction was compared to the real antiporters MrpA and MrpD.

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1P.19 Infrared spectroscopic analysis on the substrate induced conformational flexibility of the NADH:ubiquinone oxidoreductase

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Protein dynamics play an important role in the catalytic efficiency of enzymes and conformational changes may take place during the substrate binding of the NADH:ubiquinone reductase, the respiratory complex I. A coupled FTIR spectroscopic and perfusion induced approach was applied that provides the possibility recording $^1H/^2H$ exchange kinetics at the level of the amide proton in the mid infrared (170–1500 cm^{-1}). This approach is extremely sensitive to tertiary structure changes [1–3]. In general the exchange rates depend on hydrogen bonding and solvent accessibility. It was suggested that protein structure can be divided in three types of structure characterized by their particular ($^1H/^2H$) exchange dynamics. These three domain types are clearly distinguishable for complex I and the soluble NADH binding fragment and their relative ratios depend on the presence of bound substrate. Furthermore the spectral signature of the overall internal hydrogen bonding was probed in the far infrared (300 to 30 cm^{-1}). The interest of this spectral range is based on the observation that the far-infrared contribution of a wide range of molecules is dominated by vibrations involving a substantial fraction of the atoms forming the molecule and motion associated with intermolecular hydrogen bond vibrations [4,5]. Due to their collective nature, such modes are highly sensitive to the intra- and intermolecular structure and thus provide a unique fingerprint of the conformational state of the molecule and effects of its environment. We use these two infrared spectroscopic approaches to learn about the conformational flexibility of the respiratory NADH:ubiquinone oxidoreductase (complex I) induced by various substrates and present evidence for a different effect of NADH and of NADPH. The role of the quinone for the conformational flexibility is discussed.

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1P.20 Tempering of the cytochrome bc_1 complex of *Rhodobacter capsulatus* by pH

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The cytochrome bc_1 complex is a dimeric membrane ubiquinol: cytochrome *c* oxidoreductase. After an ubiquinol molecule is oxidized in the catalytic center *P* close to the positively charged side of the coupling membrane, the two released electrons going to different acceptors. One is taken by the mobile domain of the [2Fe–2S] iron–sulphur Rieske protein to be passed further to the *c*-type cytochromes. The other electron crosses the membrane, via the low- and high-potential hemes of cytochrome *b*, to reduce a stable semiquinone molecule which is steadily maintained in one of the two centers *N* from the opposite membrane side [1]. The kinetics of flash-induced generation of membrane voltage by the cytochrome bc_1 complex can be traced via spectral shifts of native carotenoid pigments and correlated with the kinetics of electron transfer as measured in the same samples. Earlier we have shown, at neutral pH values, that small amounts of Zn^{2+} ions could make the flash-induced redox-reactions of cytochrome *b* visible, apparently, by retarding the oxidation of heme b_h. Binding of a Zn^{2+} close to the center *P* not only retarded the proton release from this center and the movement of the FeS domain towards cytochrome c_1, but also slowed down the oxidation of heme b_h and the formation of ubiquinol in center *N*. This correlation was attributed to the earlier postulated mechanistic coupling between the two quinone-binding centers [2]. In the case of such coupling, however, one could expect that the retardation of events in center *N* should, reciprocally, affect the events in center *P*. Here we show that the same kinetic behaviour of the cytochrome bc_1 complex could be observed at high pH, when the protonation of ubiquinol in center *N* is retarded. These observations support our suggestion of a cross-