

Crystal structure of the cell cycle-regulatory protein *suc1* reveals a β -hinge conformational switch

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ABSTRACT The *Schizosaccharomyces pombe* cell cycle-regulatory protein *suc1*, named as the suppressor of *cdc2* temperature-sensitive mutations, is essential for cell cycle progression. To understand *suc1* structure–function relationships and to help resolve conflicting interpretations of *suc1* function based on genetic studies of *suc1* and its functional homologs in both lower and higher eukaryotes, we have determined the crystal structure of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer. Each domain consists of three α -helices and a four-stranded β -sheet, completed by the interchange of terminal β -strands between the two subunits. This β -interchanged *suc1* dimer, when compared with the β -hairpin single-domain folds of *suc1*, reveals a β -hinge motif formed by the conserved amino acid sequence HVPEPH. This β -hinge mediates the subunit conformation and assembly of *suc1*: closing produces the intrasubunit β -hairpin and single-domain fold, whereas opening leads to the intersubunit β -strand interchange and interlocked dimer assembly reported here. This conformational switch markedly changes the surface accessibility of sequence-conserved residues available for recognition of cyclin-dependent kinase, suggesting a structural mechanism for β -hinge-mediated regulation of *suc1* biological function. Thus, *suc1* belongs to the family of domain-swapping proteins, consisting of intertwined and dimeric protein structures in which the dual assembly modes regulate their function.

Cell cycle regulation requires highly regulated cooperative transitions to be provided by the interactions of several proteins with the catalytically active cyclin-dependent kinase (Cdk) (for recent reviews, see refs. 1–3), including *suc1* (4–8). Yet, significant questions exist regarding both *suc1* structure and biological function. Whereas conserved sequence regions have been identified among *suc1* proteins from yeast to man (9–11) (Fig. 1A), no functionally important structural motif for Cdk binding has been elucidated. Although *suc1* is essential for cell cycle progression *in vivo* and clearly interacts genetically and physically with Cdks (4, 12–14), its precise biological function has remained elusive. Conflicting results on *suc1* activity have been obtained from biochemical studies and genetic experiments involving gene disruption (12–15), overexpression (16, 17), and temperature-sensitive mutants of a *suc1* homolog (4, 11), as well as suppression of temperature-sensitive *cdc2* mutants (4, 12, 13, 15). Both positive (12–15) and negative (17) effects on cell cycle progression have been attributed to *suc1*, and some of these apparent conflicts might be reconciled if the same *suc1* protein adopts more than one functionally distinct form.

Here we establish the existence of two distinct thermodynamically stable forms of *suc1*. Further, we present the atomic structure of the β -interchanged dimeric *suc1*[§] and use comparative analysis with the recently determined crystal struc-

tures of the β -hairpin single domain monomeric *suc1* (18) and its human homolog CksHs2 (19) to identify a β -hinge motif defined by residues His⁸⁸–His⁹³. The conformation of the β -hinge motif controls *suc1* fold, assembly, and conserved molecular surface accessible for *cdc2* kinase recognition. Our two *suc1* structures reveal that opening the β -hinge motif causes β -strand domain swapping to occur in this essential cell cycle protein. So far this dual mode of quaternary structure has been observed in only a few oligomeric proteins, such as the seminal RNase (20) and diphtheria toxin (21).

METHODS

Escherichia coli BL-21 cells containing *suc1* expression plasmid pRK171 were grown at 37°C in LB medium with ampicillin (100 μ g/ml) until an OD₆₀₀ of 0.5–0.6 was reached. The bacteria were then induced with 0.4 mM isopropyl β -D-thiogalactopyranoside and grown for an additional 2–3 hr. Cells were then harvested by centrifugation at 6000 \times g for 15 min. The supernatant was discarded and cell pellets were frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at –70°C. Cell pellets were lysed in 20 mM Hepes, pH 7.0/2 mM EDTA/1 mM 2-mercaptoethanol/1 mM phenylmethanesulfonyl fluoride (DEAE buffer) with sonication. Cell debris and DNA were removed by centrifugation. The supernatant was directly applied to a Pharmacia DEAE-Sepharose Fast Flow column equilibrated with DEAE buffer and was eluted with a 0–0.5 M NaCl gradient. *suc1*-containing fractions were dialyzed against 25 mM imidazole-HCl (pH 7.0) and applied to a Pharmacia PBE 94 chromatofocusing column. Fractions were eluted with Polybuffer 74, 1:8 dilution at pH 4.0. *suc1*-containing fractions were eluted around pH 5.4. These fractions were pooled, concentrated, and then applied to a Pharmacia Sepharose 200 column equilibrated in 50 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.0/150 mM NaCl/1 mM EDTA/1 mM 2-mercaptoethanol. Two peaks were eluted from this column, apparently corresponding to a *suc1* monomer and dimer, respectively. For crystallization experiments, the dimer peak fractions were pooled, dialyzed into 5 mM imidazole/malate (pH 7.4), and concentrated to 10 mg/ml over a membrane with a molecular weight cutoff of 3000.

Crystals of *suc1* dimer were obtained by vapor diffusion techniques at 20°C with 20% PEG-4000, 5% (from a saturated solution) LiCl, and 100 mM imidazole/malate (pH 6.6). The crystals belong to the space group $P2_12_12_1$ with cell dimensions: $a = 55.7$ Å, $b = 85.6$ Å, $c = 97.7$ Å, giving the V_m value (22) of 2.2 Å³/Da (50% solvent) for four *suc1* molecules in the

Abbreviations: rmsd, root-mean-square deviation; Cdk, cyclin-dependent kinase.

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[§]The atomic coordinates have been deposited in the Protein Data Bank, Chemistry Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, NY 11973 (reference 1SCE).

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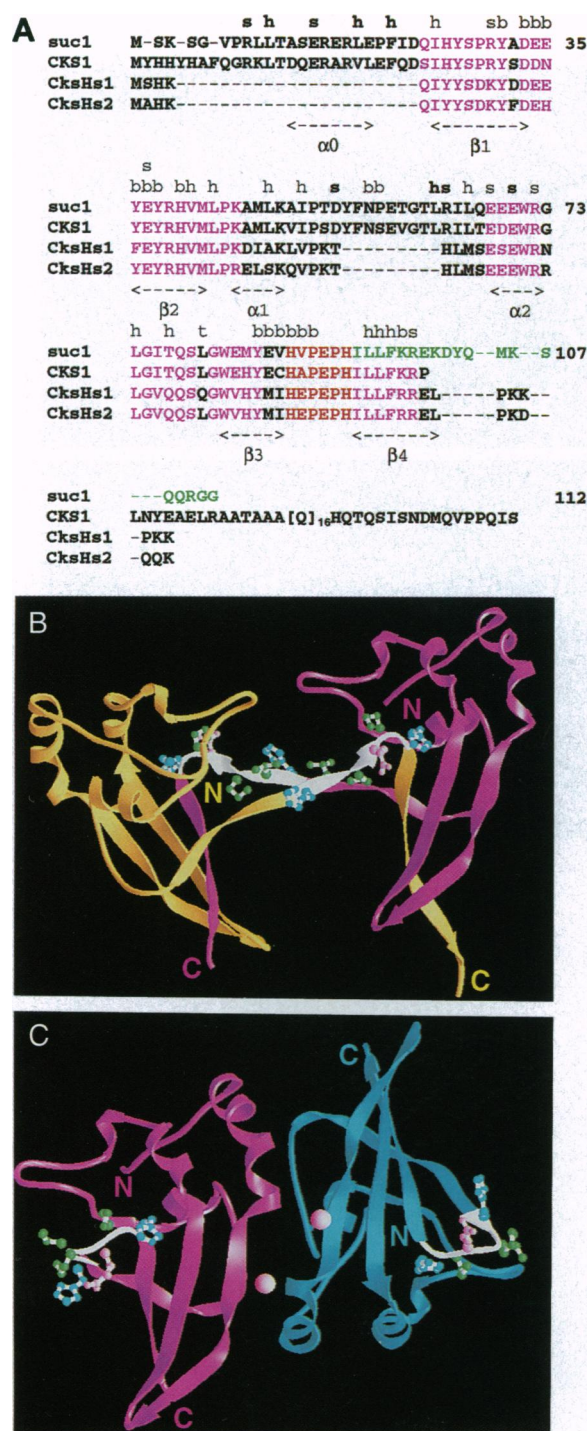


FIG. 1. suc1 fold, secondary structure, sequence conservation, and conformational switch. (A) The sequences of the two yeast homologs (suc1 and CKS1) are aligned with those of the two human proteins (CksHs1 and CksHs2). The β -hinge region His⁸⁸–His⁹³ (red), which forms a β -bend between $\beta 3$ and $\beta 4$ in the β -hairpin single-domain fold (18), is sequence-conserved but is conformationally different in the β -interchanged suc1 dimer reported here. Residues conserved in suc1 proteins are highlighted (magenta). The β -strand involved in domain swapping for the β -interchanged suc1 dimer structure presented here is also represented (green). The zinc ion is bound to residues Asp²³, His²⁶, and His⁴⁰ in the crystal structure of the suc1 β -hairpin single-domain fold (18). Residue functions implied by the new β -interchanged dimer structure are identified by symbols: b, buried residue in the β -interchanged suc1 dimer; h, hydrophobic cluster conserved among suc1 homologs; h, additional suc1 hydrophobic cluster; s, salt bridge conserved among suc1 homologs; s, additional suc1 salt bridge; d, buried hydrophobic residue in the β -interchanged suc1 dimer; t,

asymmetric unit. A 2.2-Å-resolution data set that consisted of 49,409 observations for 19,489 unique reflections (83% complete, $R_{\text{sym}} = 6\%$) was collected from one crystal by use of the University of California, San Diego, mark II multiwire area detector (23). Initial phases were obtained by molecular replacement using a truncated suc1 molecule (18) as a search model (residues 6–11 and 88–93 removed) with the AMORE program package (24) (version R3.T2.F2.O5). Only one monomer from the zinc-promoted crystallographic suc1 dimer gave the correct orientation. The highest peak in the translation function of one truncated suc1 molecule was automatically used to position the other three molecules with the phased translation function by screening all other rotation peaks. After the fitting procedure on the four molecules, the correlation and the R factor were 50% and 43%, respectively, in the 15-Å to 3.5-Å resolution range, with the second solution at 38% and 48%, respectively. Refinement of 6-Å to 2.8-Å data with X-PLOR (25) gave an R factor of 35%. The β -hinge region (residues His⁸⁸–His⁹³) was then built between two symmetry-related suc1 molecules into both $2F_o - F_c$ and $F_o - F_c$ maps with the graphics program TURBO-FRODO (26). Addition of the N and C termini, chloride ions, and water molecules with subsequent refinements without noncrystallographic symmetry restraints gave a final R factor of 19.3% for 18,451 reflections (all data) between 6-Å and 2.2-Å resolution, and a free R factor of 28.4% (10% of the reflections). The final model comprises residues Val⁶–Ala¹⁰², Val⁶–Ala¹⁰², Ser²–Gly¹¹², and Ala³–Met¹⁰⁵ for each monomer, respectively. The overall deviations from ideal geometry are 0.008 Å for bond distances and 1.5° for bond angles. For the four suc1 molecules (3655 protein atoms), the root-mean-square deviation (rmsd) is 0.9 Å and 0.7 Å for all atoms including side chains and all C α atoms, respectively, and only 0.65 Å and 0.55 Å for residues Val⁶–His⁸⁸. The polypeptide backbone dihedral angles all lie in allowed regions of the Ramachandran diagram. Temperature factors average 26 Å² for main chains, 28 Å² for side chains, 18 Å² for 3 chloride ions, and 35 Å² for 238 solvent molecules.

RESULTS

In sequence order, the suc1 secondary structure consists of an α -helix, a pair of β -strands, a pair of α -helices, and a pair of C-terminal β -strands. The amino acid sequence and its secondary structure are highly conserved among the suc1 family of proteins, resulting in 53% identity between yeast and human Cks proteins (Fig. 1A). Each suc1 domain is folded into a four-stranded antiparallel β -sheet, abutted at the top by three α -helices to form the hydrophobic core. Compared with the human homologs CksHs1 and CksHs2, suc1 additionally contains an N-terminal helix, a small loop in the region joining the two helices, and a C-terminal extension (Fig. 1A).

The β -interchanged suc1 dimer domain fold presented here is formed by two interlocked subunits such that the C-terminal β -strand, $\beta 4$, extends and exchanges with the identical strand from the other subunit in the dimer (Fig. 1B). In contrast, the recently determined β -hairpin single-domain suc1 structure crystallized with zinc ions revealed two independently folded monomeric domains joined by a weak zinc-mediated contact (18) (Fig. 1C). No clear physiological function has been determined for the zinc, and the zinc ion ligands are not

buried hydrophobic residue at the tetramer interface. (B) β -Interchanged suc1 dimer fold (yellow and magenta subunits) reported here. The side chains forming the β -hinge region (His⁸⁸ to His⁹³; white backbone) are displayed as balls and sticks (white bonds): His⁸⁸ and His⁹³ (blue spheres); Val⁸⁹, Pro⁹⁰, and Pro⁹² (green spheres); Glu⁹¹ (pink spheres). (C) suc1 β -hairpin single domain fold (18) (magenta and blue subunits) with zinc-promoted (pink spheres) weak dimer. The β -hinge region is displayed as in B. Figs. 1B, 1C, and 2A were generated using RIBBONS (27).

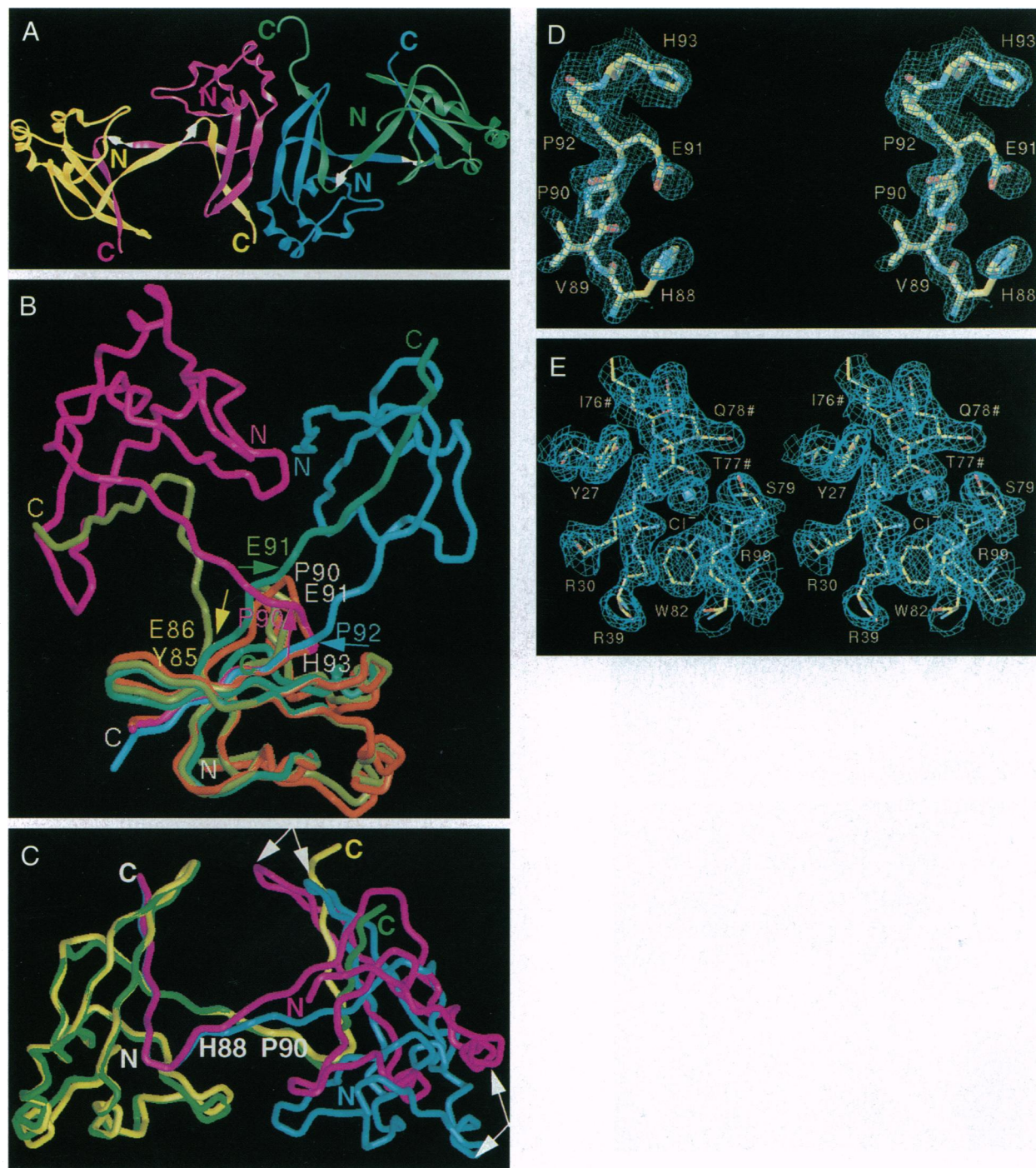


FIG. 2. suc1 fold and assembly. (A) Ribbon model of the two β -interchanged suc1 dimers present in the asymmetric unit (yellow and magenta and blue and green subunits). The hinge points are located within residues Pro⁹⁰-Glu⁹¹, which join $\beta 3$ and $\beta 4$, are highlighted (white). The N and C termini are labeled. For comparison, the magenta subunit has the same orientation as in Fig. 1 B and C. The blue subunit is oriented similarly to the zinc-promoted suc1 dimer (18) (Fig. 1C) but is translated down by 15 Å in the tetramer interface reported here. (B) Superposition of a β -interchanged suc1 dimer (yellow and magenta subunits) with a CksHs2 dimer (19) (blue and green subunits) and the β -hairpin single-domain suc1 (18) (red subunit). Magenta and yellow arrows represent the main hinge points for the β -interchanged suc1 relative to the suc1 β -hairpin single-domain fold (18), as do blue and green arrows for the CksHs2 dimer hinge points. Molecules are superimposed according to the C α atoms of residues Val⁶-His⁸⁸ and Gln⁵-His⁶⁰ for yeast and human Cks proteins, respectively. (C) Superposition of the two β -interchanged suc1 dimers from the crystallographic asymmetric unit. The locus of the β -hinge region is labeled. The magenta and yellow dimer has the smallest hinge-bending angle. Dimer molecules are superimposed according to the C α atoms of residues Val⁶-His⁸⁸. (D) Electron density map and model for the well-ordered β -hinge region. Shown is a stereo pair of the 2.2-Å-resolution omit $F_o - F_c$ electron density map contoured at 2.0σ (blue) of the HVPEPH region, where the coordinates of this region were omitted and the protein coordinates were refined by simulated annealing before the phase calculation for the map. (E) Electron density map and model for the chloride ion and threonine residue bound to the anion binding site. Shown is a stereo pair of the final $2F_o - F_c$ electron density map contoured at 1.0σ , with colored atoms around the anion binding site. The five invariant residues forming the anion binding site (Arg³⁰, Arg³⁹, Arg⁹⁹, Ser⁷⁹, and Trp⁸²) are labeled, together with the chloride ion (light blue sphere). The symbol (#) denotes the residues in the adjacent subunit.

conserved within *suc1* proteins (Fig. 1A), so this apparently represents a crystal contact interaction between *suc1* monomers. The differences in fold and assembly between the β -interchanged dimer (Fig. 1B) and the *suc1* single-domain monomeric fold (Fig. 1C) are primarily in the sequence-conserved β -hinge region His⁸⁸–His⁹³. Thus, the conserved sequence motif HVPEPH (residues 88–93) forms a β -hinge allowing switching between the *suc1* monomer β -hairpin and the β -strand domain swapping seen in the *suc1* dimer structure. These two forms are thermodynamically stable at physiological pH and ionic strength and could be purified separately from *E. coli*-expressed protein (see *Methods*). As the variation is localized to the β -hinge, the *suc1* core structure and hydrophobic packing are highly conserved between the β -hairpin single-domain monomer (18) and the β -interchanged dimer. The average rmsd is 0.64 Å between the main-chain atoms Val⁶–His⁸⁸ and His⁹³–Arg⁹⁹, where His⁹³–Arg⁹⁹ belongs either to the same monomer or to the adjacent subunit for the closed and opened β -hinge conformation, respectively.

In the crystal structure, pairs of β -interchanged *suc1* dimers pack to form a flat elongated tetramer (Fig. 2A), consistent with tetrameric associations observed by gel filtration chromatography (data not shown). At the *suc1* tetramer interface, two β -strands associate to form a wide antiparallel β -sheet of eight β -strands. Due to the presence of the nonconserved Pro²⁹ that bends the first β -strand, the two adjacent β -strands are hydrogen-bonded only via water molecules. The molecular surface area of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer inaccessible to a water-sized, 1.4-Å-radius probe sphere in this tetramer conformation is 650 Å², a value slightly lower than that promoted by zinc (862 Å²; ref. 18), suggesting that this is a weak interaction. The tetramerization interface between the two β -interchanged *suc1* dimers resembles the zinc-promoted interface observed between monomers in the β -hairpin single-domain *suc1* structure (18) except that there is a translation of 15 Å along the N-terminal β -strand direction (Figs. 1C and 2A).

The existence of two crystallographically independent β -interchanged dimers within the asymmetric unit allows comparison both to other *suc1*-homolog structures and between the two independent β -interchanged *suc1* dimers (Fig. 2A). When the two distinct *suc1* folds are compared, the hinge points are localized within the residue triad Val⁸⁹–Pro⁹⁰–Glu⁹¹ by rotational movements in (ϕ, ψ) dihedral angles (Fig. 2B). In contrast, superposition of one *suc1* monomer with the equivalent in the CksHs2 dimer structure reveals a different locus of the β -hinge region, located in the residue pairs Pro⁶²–Glu⁶³ and Pro⁶⁴–His⁶⁵ in CksHs2 (Pro⁹⁰–Glu⁹¹ and Pro⁹²–His⁹³ in *suc1*) (Fig. 2B). Therefore, the adjacent subunit in CksHs2 is located in approximately the same orientation, but in opposite directions as compared with the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer. Superposition of the two β -interchanged *suc1* dimers within the crystallographic asymmetric unit gives the striking result that each HVPEPH region has a somewhat different conformation (Fig. 2C). Considered alone, the structures of the core are virtually superimposable, with a rmsd of 0.55 Å for main-chain atoms, but the hinge bending angle between the cores differs by 25° in a direction roughly perpendicular to the C α –C α vector of the residue pair Val⁸⁹–Pro⁹⁰, verifying that this is, in fact, a flexible hinge.

The *suc1* β -hinge region is well ordered and reveals low temperature factors in the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer crystal structure, indicating that these *suc1* residues are not especially mobile or disordered (Fig. 2D). In contrast, high temperature factors (>40 Å² compared with an average of 28 Å²) indicate high flexibility for CksHs2 in the region Glu⁶¹–His⁶⁵ (Val⁸⁹–His⁹³ in *suc1*). Pairs of conserved Glu⁶³ (Glu⁹¹ in *suc1*) side chains adjacent in the middle of the interchanged β -strands (19) destabilize the CksHs2 dimer and hexamer at neutral and higher pH. In the β -strand-swapped *suc1* dimer, a hydrophobic cluster resulting from the close packing of Val⁸⁷ and Val⁸⁹ from

each subunit forms a stable interface. Thus, the association of the CksHs2 dimer into a hexamer may be needed to compensate for its electrostatically destabilized β -hinge conformation. However, the β -interchanged *suc1* can be purified as a dimer, and no molecular assemblies larger than dimer or weak tetramer were observed by gel filtration experiments for *suc1* from fission yeast. These results suggest that a β -interchanged *suc1* dimer represents a stable conformation, that trimerization into the hexamer observed in CksHs2 (19) is not necessary

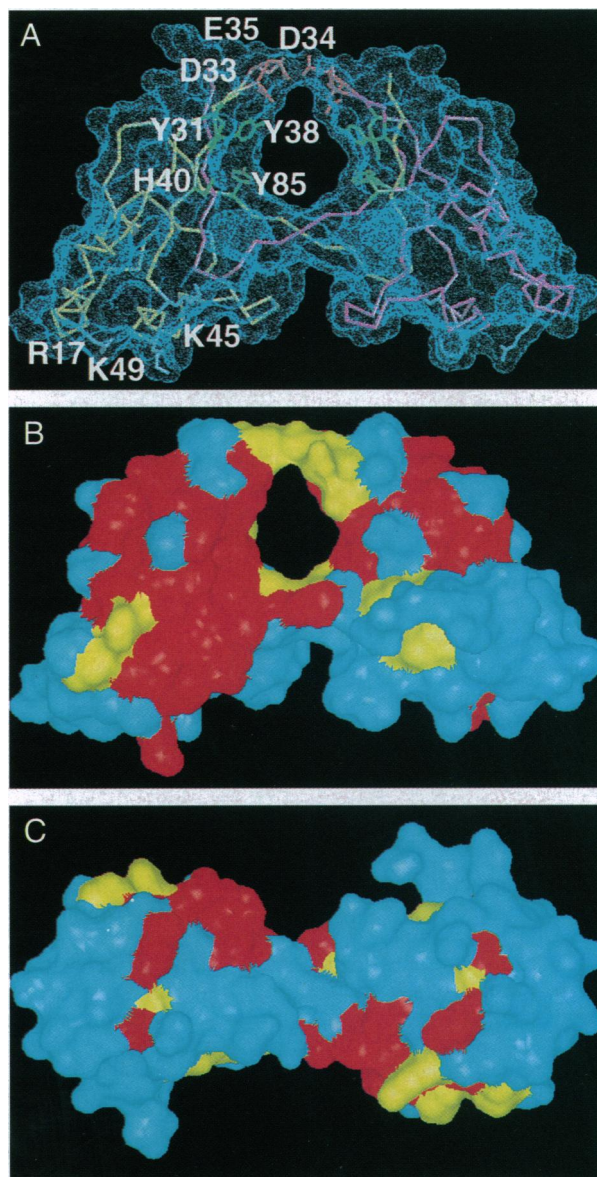


FIG. 3. Molecular surface of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer showing the conserved aromatic and acidic residues within the dimer channel. (A) Molecular surface for the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer (blue points) with the C α trace (yellow and magenta) and the conserved clusters of green (Tyr³¹, Tyr³⁸, His⁴⁰, and Tyr⁸⁵) aromatic side chains and of pink (Asp³³, Asp³⁴, and Glu³⁵) negatively charged side chains. Two clusters of positively charged residues (blue Arg¹⁷, Lys⁴⁵, and Lys⁴⁹ side chains) are positioned along one face of the dimer. The tyrosine cluster and the negatively charged and positively charged residues are labeled for one subunit (left). (B) Sequence conservation and variation at the molecular surface (red, invariant; yellow, highly conserved; and blue, nonconserved residues) is viewed looking down into the central solvent-filled channel. The sequence-invariant residues defined in A within and around this channel lie on each face of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer. (C) The view rotated 90° from that in B, showing that there are no other large conserved patches of residues at the molecular surface of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer.

for β -interchanged dimer formation, and that *suc1* conformational change involves a true molecular hinge and not a completely flexible loop.

Besides the β -hinge-controlled conformational change, the *suc1* dimer structure reveals an anion binding site with implications for molecular recognition. In each subunit of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer, a conserved patch of positively charged residues (Arg³⁰, Arg³⁹, and Arg⁹⁹) along with Trp⁸² and Ser⁷⁹ form an anion binding site, which is inaccessible to solvent because of the adjacent subunit packing in the tetramer. As a result, a chloride ion is sequestered into the anion binding site and is tightly bound to the side chains of Trp⁸² and Arg⁹⁹ and to the Ser⁷⁹ N atom from one subunit, as well as to the Thr⁷⁷ side chain from an adjacent subunit in the crystal (Fig. 2E).

The significance of the β -hinge-mediated dimer for Cdk binding is apparent from alteration of the conserved accessible surface (Fig. 3). A patch of sequence-conserved tyrosine residues (Tyr³¹, Tyr³⁸, and Tyr⁸⁵) is sequestered in the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer at the periphery of a small solvent-filled channel (Fig. 3). The close proximity of six negatively charged residues (Asp³³, Asp³⁴, and Glu³⁵ from each subunit) closes this ring structure (Fig. 3A). In both *suc1* and CksHs2, the narrow channel diameter (10–12 Å) limits binding of proteins such as Cdk. In contrast, these same residues are fully accessible to Cdk or other proteins in the closed β -hairpin conformation of the *suc1* β -hinge. For molecular interactions, the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer conformation also positions two sets of three positively charged residues (Arg¹⁷, Lys⁴⁵, and Lys⁴⁹), which are located in protruding α -helices of each subunit, on the same side of the β -interchanged *suc1* dimer (Fig. 3A) for possible protein recognition.

DISCUSSION

The existence of two distinct conformation and assembly states for the same *suc1* protein sequence is relevant to studies of both protein folding and *suc1* biological activity. The β -interchanged *suc1* dimer and the trimer of CksHs2 each create a solvent-filled channel surrounded by the homologous patch of residues (Tyr³¹, Tyr³⁸, Tyr⁸⁵, and His⁴⁰) which, together with the conserved Asp³³ (Asp¹⁴ in CksHs2), may contribute to a binding site for a calcium ion or other metal ion (19). The cluster of conserved positively charged residues on *suc1* (Arg³⁰, Arg³⁹, and Arg⁹⁹) that bind chloride ion may represent an anion recognition site.

The *suc1* β -interchanged dimer and β -hairpin single-domain folds of *suc1* provide significant differences in conserved accessible molecular surface and, thus, a structural basis for altering *suc1* functional interactions. Such large conformational changes in proteins are known to occur in response to the binding of ligands (see, for example, refs. 28–30) and the cleavage of serpins (31) and in proteins such as immunoglobulins (32). Identical hexapeptide sequences have also been observed in different conformations in proteins (33). However, to our knowledge, a flexible hinge that can open into an extended form and close into a β -bend, allowing interconversions of domain conformation and dimer assembly of a same protein, is a novel motif and structural mechanism. Yet the molecular mechanism of *suc1* conversion between β -strand closing and opening conformations does resemble the mechanism of domain swapping noted in a few oligomeric enzymes (ref. 21 and references therein). Thus, the β -strand domain swapping observed here is analogous to the interchange of the N-terminal segment observed in the dimeric bovine seminal RNase (20).

The structural differences defined here between the β -hairpin single-domain and β -interchanged dimer structures indicate that these *suc1* regulatory proteins could adapt their conformation and assembly in response to environmental changes occurring at precise times during the cell cycle. These

results thus suggest a structural mechanism for regulation of Cdk kinase function based upon cooperative changes in *suc1* conformation and assembly. Biochemical, genetic, and structural characterizations of *suc1*-Cdk assembly states will be needed to establish the basis for regulation of Cdk function by *suc1* and to reconcile the various genetically inferred roles for *suc1* proteins in cell cycle progression. The structural results presented here provide the basis for site-directed mutagenesis aimed at probing the role of the β -hinge motif, the aromatic cluster, the anion binding site, and β -strand domain swapping in *suc1* biological function.

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