Rotational Dynamics of Actin-Bound Intermediates in the Myosin ATPase Cycle†

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ABSTRACT: We have used saturation-transfer electron paramagnetic resonance (ST-EPR) to detect the microsecond rotational motions of spin-labeled myosin subfragment one (MSL-S1) bound to actin in the presence of the ATP analogues AMPPNP (5'-adenylylimido diphosphate) and ATPγS [adenosine 5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate)], which are believed to trap myosin in strongly and weakly bound intermediate states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle, respectively. Sedimentation binding measurements were used to determine the fraction of myosin heads bound to actin under ST-EPR conditions and the fraction of heads containing bound nucleotide. ST-EPR spectra were then corrected to obtain the spectrum corresponding to the ternary complex (actin-MSL-S1-nucleotide). The ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1-AMPPNP bound to actin is identical to that obtained in the absence of nucleotide (rigor complex), indicating no rotational motion of MSL-S1 relative to actin on the microsecond time scale. However, MSL-S1-ATPγS bound to actin is rotationally mobile, with an effective rotational correlation time (τ) of 17 ± 2 μs. This motion is similar to that observed previously for actin-bound MSL-S1 during the steady-state hydrolysis of ATP [Berger et al. (1989) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 86, 8753–8757]. We conclude that, in solution, the weakly bound actin-attached states of the myosin ATPase cycle undergo microsecond rotational motions, while the strongly bound intermediates do not, and that these motions are likely to be involved in the molecular mechanism of muscle contraction.

The molecular mechanism of muscle contraction is postulated to involve the repeating cyclic interaction of actin and myosin (the two major protein components of muscle), whereby force is generated when the head of the myosin molecule (subfragment one, S1) rotates while bound to actin (Huxley, 1969; Huxley & Simmons, 1971; Huxley, 1974; Huxley & Kress, 1985). This proposed process is tightly coupled to the hydrolysis of ATP (the major source of chemical energy in muscle) by S1, and specific states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle are thought to mediate the interaction between actin and myosin (Lynn & Taylor, 1971; Eisenberg & Hill, 1985). While this model has been supported by structural, mechanical, and biochemical studies over the past 30 years, direct evidence for the rotation of S1 relative to actin during the contractile cycle has remained elusive.

Spectroscopic molecular probes provide a means by which the orientation and rotational motions of specifically labeled muscle proteins can be directly monitored [reviewed by Thomas (1987)]. Previous work using electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) to measure orientation, and saturation-transfer EPR (ST-EPR) to measure microsecond rotational motions, has demonstrated that most of the myosin heads (>80%) in an isometrically contracting muscle fiber are highly disordered (Cooke et al., 1982; Fajer et al., 1990b) and mobile on the microsecond time scale (Barnett & Thomas, 1989). Additionally, time-resolved phosphorescence has shown that isometrically contracting muscle fibers undergo rotational motions that are distinct from those in rigor (no nucleotide) or relaxation (Stein et al., 1990). Stiffness is not necessarily a linear function of actin-attached myosin heads (cross-bridges), and it is difficult to determine unambiguously the fraction of attached cross-bridges in complex contractile systems such as myofibrils and muscle fibers (Pate & Cooke, 1988; Fajer et al., 1988). Thus, even though the stiffness in an isometrically contracting muscle fiber is high (70–80% of the rigor value), the contribution of the attached cross-bridges to the observed spectroscopic signals is unclear.

The ambiguity of cross-bridge attachment can be avoided by using solutions of S1 covalently cross-linked to actin (XLAS1). ST-EPR experiments on spin-labeled XLAS1 have shown that the myosin heads undergo microsecond rotational motions during steady-state ATP hydrolysis (Svensson & Thomas, 1986), but it is not clear that myosin heads covalently cross-linked to actin are a true analogue of physiologically attached cross-bridges. However, the fraction of uncross-linked S1 bound to actin in solution (acto-S1) can be determined directly from sedimentation experiments (Chalovich & Eisenberg, 1982), making it possible to analyze the rotational motion of the actin-attached myosin heads explicitly in the case of acto-S1. We have previously established, using ST-EPR and sedimentation experiments, that spin-labeled S1 (MSL-S1) undergoes microsecond rotational motions while

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† Abbreviations: ADP, adenosine 5'-diphosphate; ATP, adenosine 5'-triphosphate; caged ATP, the P(2)-[(2-nitrophenyl)ethyl ester of ATP; AMPPNP, 5'-adenylylimido diphosphate; ATPγS, adenosine 5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate); S1, myosin subfragment one; HMM, heavy meromyosin; MSL, 4-maleimido-2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-l-piperidinyloxyl; EPR, electron paramagnetic resonance; ST-EPR, saturation-transfer electron paramagnetic resonance; SEM, standard error of the mean; EGTA, ethylene glycol bis(β-aminoethyl ether)-N,N,N',N'-tetraacetic acid; MgCl2, magnesium chloride; KPr, potassium propionate; TEAB, triethylamine bicarbonate.
bound to actin during steady-state ATP hydrolysis (Berger et al., 1989). Conditions of low ionic strength and high actin concentration were used to ensure that a significant fraction of the MSL-S1 was bound to actin. Complementary experiments with the spin label attached to actin instead of S1 indicate that the myosin heads rotate relative to actin under these conditions (Ostap & Thomas, 1991).

In the present study, in order to determine which attached states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle correspond to the mobile actin-attached population of myosin heads observed during the steady-state hydrolysis of ATP, we have used the ATP analogue AMPPNP (5'-adenylylimido diphosphate) and ATPyS [adenosine-5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate)] to trap MSL-S1 in states that are thought to correspond to the two major conformational intermediates of the actomyosin ATPase cycle. These two major conformational states of myosin, which have been identified both through structural (Shiriver & Sykes, 1981, 1982; Barnett & Thomas, 1987) and kinetic (Geeves et al., 1984; Eisenberg & Hill, 1985) means, are often referred to as the weakly bound and strongly bound intermediates of the actomyosin ATPase cycle. In the presence of AMPPNP, a nonhydrolyzable analogue of ATP (Yount et al., 1971a, b), muscle fibers exhibit structural (Barrington-Leigh et al., 1972; Goody et al., 1975; Lynn, 1975; Marston et al., 1976; Padron & Huxley, 1984; Fajer et al., 1988) and mechanical [Marston et al. (1976), reviewed by Kuhn (1981)] properties intermediate between those of rigor and relaxation, and myosin is believed to be trapped in a strongly bound intermediate state of the ATPase cycle (Greene & Eisenberg, 1978). ATPyS, an analogue of ATP that is hydrolyzed 500 times more slowly than ATP (Bagshaw et al., 1972; Barrington-Leigh et al., 1972), is thought to accumulate myosin in a weakly bound prehydrolysis intermediate state of the ATPase cycle (Goody & Hofmann, 1980). We have used ST-EPR to measure the microsecond rotational motions of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of AMPPNP or ATPyS, at low and physiological ionic strengths. The fraction of actin-attached myosin heads in the presence of either AMPPNP or ATPyS has been determined from sedimentation experiments and used to determine directly the ST-EPR spectra of the ternary complexes actin-MSL-S1-nucleotide. Thus we were able to measure the microsecond rotational motions of MSL-S1 bound to actin in possible intermediate states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Preparations and Solutions.** Chymotryptic myosin subfragment one (S1) was prepared as described previously (Eads et al., 1984), except that the chymotryptic digestion time was 10 min. S1 was spin-labeled at SH-1 (Cys-707) with 4-maleimido-2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-1-piperidinoxyl (MSL; Aldrich), to a final specific activity of 0.08 ± 0.02 label bound per head, with a specificity of 1.00 ± 0.04, as previously described (Svensson & Thomas, 1986). The concentrations of S1 and MSL-labeled S1 (MSL-S1) were determined spectrophotometrically at 280 nm, using an extinction coefficient of 0.75 (mg/mL)^{-1} cm^{-1}. The spin concentration was determined by double integration of the digitized low-power conventional EPR spectrum (Squier & Thomas, 1986). F-actin was prepared as described previously (Thomas et al., 1979). The concentration of G-actin was determined spectrophotometrically at 290 nm, using an extinction coefficient of 0.63 (mg/mL)^{-1} cm^{-1}. The tetra-lithium salts of AMPPNP (5'-adenylylimido diphosphate) and ATPyS [adenosine-5'-O-(3-thiotriphosphate)] were purchased from Boeringer-Mannheim. The nucleotides were purified by HPLC on a preparative Bio-Rad MA7Q anion exchange column (2 cm × 10 cm) and eluted with a linear gradient of 0.1-1.0 M triethylamine bicarbonate (TEAB), pH 7.8. The eluted nucleotides were then lyophilized, resuspended in distilled water, lyophilized again, and diluted to a final concentration of 100-150 mM in low ionic strength buffer (10 mM imidazole, 1 mM EGTA, pH 7.0). The purified nucleotide concentration was determined spectrophotometrically at 259 nm, using an extinction coefficient of 15.1 M^{-1} cm^{-1}. The amount of ATPyS hydrolyzed during the ST-EPR and sedimentation binding experiments was determined by measuring the rate of inorganic phosphate production according to the method of Lanzetta et al. (1979). Experimental conditions are defined as 10 mM imidazole, 2 mM EGTA, and 2 mM MgCl2 (pH 7.0), plus the indicated concentration of magnesium nucleotide (AMPPNP or ATPyS). Potassium propionate (KPr) was added to achieve the desired ionic strength.

Our primary goal in these studies was to obtain EPR spectra of the ternary complexes actin-MSL-S1-nucleotide, so conditions were chosen to maximize the binding of actin and nucleotides to S1, and these conditions were used for both EPR and actin-binding measurements. For ATPyS, we chose the same conditions, 5 mM nucleotide, low ionic strength (36 mM), and high actin concentration (200 μM), that had been previously used to study MSL-S1 bound to actin during steady-state ATP hydrolysis (Berger et al., 1989). We used similar conditions in the presence of AMPPNP, except that the weaker nucleotide affinity required a higher (16 mM) AMPPNP concentration, resulting in a higher minimum ionic strength (100 mM). Experiments were also performed at physiological ionic strength (μ = 186 mM).

**Sedimentation Binding Experiments.** The apparent association constant (K_{app}) for MSL-S1 binding to actin was measured by sedimenting a 200-μL sample of actin and/or MSL-S1 in a Beckman TL-100 centrifuge for 10 min at 38600 rpm at 25 °C in order to pellet the actin and actin-bound MSL-S1. The resulting supernatants (sup) were assayed for protein concentration ([protein]) using the enhanced protocol of the BCA protein assay (Pierce), and these values were compared to controls containing no actin in order to determine the fractions of free ([f')] and actin-bound ([f]) MSL-S1:

\[
f' = \frac{[\text{protein}]}{[\text{acto-S1 sup}]} = \frac{[\text{protein}]}{[\text{S1 sup}]} (1)
\]

and

\[
f = 1 - f'
\]

K_{app} was then determined from f'/f, and the initial MSL-S1 ([S1]) and actin ([A]) concentrations:

\[
K_{app} = \frac{f}{f'}\frac{[S1]}{[A] - f[S1]} (2)
\]

Sedimentation binding experiments contained 10 μM MSL-S1 and 40 μM actin in the presence of 0-16 mM AMPPNP, and 100 μM MSL-S1 and 200 μM actin in the presence of 0-5 mM ATPyS. Binding experiments were also performed with 100 μM MSL-S1 and 200 μM of actin in the presence of 16 mM AMPPNP, in order to ensure that the observed binding constant was not altered by the high concentrations of protein required by the spectroscopy experiments. Lower concentrations of MSL-S1 and actin were also used in the Scatchard analysis of acto-S1 binding in the presence of low AMPPNP concentrations (12 μM actin, 3-24 μM MSL-S1 at 0.5 mM AMPPNP; 16 μM actin, 4-32 μM MSL-S1 at 1.0 mM AMPPNP; 20 μM actin, 5-40 μM MSL-S1 at 2.0 mM AMPPNP). K_{app} was determined in the Scatchard analysis experiments from a linear least-squares best fit of the data using

\[
[S1_{\text{bound}}]/(S1_{\text{free}}[\text{A}_{\text{total}}]) = -K_{app}(S1_{\text{bound}}/[A_{\text{total}}]) + K_{app} (4)
\]
**FIGURE 1:** Interaction between MSL-S1 (M), actin (A), and nucleotide (N). A. General binding scheme. B. Simplified binding scheme assuming $K_3$ and $K_4$ are sufficiently strong that MSL-S1 is always bound to actin, nucleotide, or both. C. Simplified binding scheme assuming $K_1$ and $K_3$ are sufficiently strong that MSL-S1 always has nucleotide bound.

Samples containing 200 µM actin in the absence of MSL-S1 were sedimented as a control for unpolymerized actin.

The evaluation of $K_{app}$ depends on the relative interactions between MSL-S1 (M), actin (A), and nucleotide (N), as depicted by the binding scheme in Figure 1A. This binding scheme can be simplified if A and N both bind strongly enough to M, such that all M is bound to A, N, or both. In this case, the binding scheme in Figure 1A simplifies to the one in Figure 1B, and $K_{app}$ can be defined as a function of both the binding constant of A to MN ($K_3$) and the binding constant of N to AM ($K_4$) (Biosca et al., 1986):

$$K_{app} = (K_3/K_4)(1/\langle N \rangle) + K_3$$

Thus by measuring $K_{app}$ over a range of $\langle N \rangle$ and plotting $K_{app}$ vs 1/$\langle N \rangle$, $K_3$ and $K_4$ can be determined from a linear least-squares fit to the data. The fraction of M with bound N If $\langle N \rangle$ is sufficiently strong that MSL-S1 always has nucleotide bound.

$S_{AMN} = (S_{total} - f_{MN}S_{MN} - f_{AM}S_{AM})/f_{AMN}$

(7)

where $S_{total}$ is the spectrum of the ternary complex AMN which was derived from $S_{total}$ (the composite spectrum observed in the presence of A, M, and N), and the ST-EPR spectra of the rigor actin-S1 complex (AM) and the free S1-nucleotide complex (MN), from the following relationship:

$$S_{AM} = (S_{total} - f_{MN}S_{MN} - f_{AM}S_{AM})/f_{AMN}$$

(8)

The mole fractions $f_A$ and $f_N$ are determined from sedimentation data and eq 6; then $f_{AM} = 1 - f_A - f_N$ and $f_{MN} = 1 - f_{AM} - f_{MN}$. If the nucleotide binding to AM is strong enough that $f_{AM} = 0$ (achieved below for ATPyS but not for AMPPNP), eq 8 can be simplified to

$$S_{AMN} = [S_{total} - S_{MN}(f_{MN})]/f_{AMN}$$

(9)

where $S_{MN}$ and $f_{AMN}$ are now equivalent to the fraction of free $f_J$ and bound $f_J$ heads determined directly from the sedimentation experiments (eqs 1 and 2).

**RESULTS**

**Sedimentation Experiments.** Sedimentation binding experiments were performed in order to determine the fraction of MSL-S1 bound to actin and to nucleotide. These results are summarized in Table I. S1 binds to actin very strongly in the absence of nucleotide (rigor), with an association constant greater than 10$^8$ M$^{-1}$ even at high ionic strength (Greene & Eisenberg, 1980a). We verified that essentially all of the MSL-S1 is bound to actin (0.98 ± 0.01) in the absence of nucleotide under our experimental conditions (data not shown). It has been demonstrated previously that AMPPNP (Greene & Eisenberg, 1980a) and ATPyS (Bagshaw et al., 1972) bind very strongly to S1, with association constants of 1.5 × 10$^6$ M$^{-1}$ and at least 10$^7$ M$^{-1}$, respectively. Thus the general binding scheme in Figure 1A can be simplified to the one in Figure 1B, and $K_3$ and $K_4$ can be determined from a plot of $K_{app}$ vs 1/$\langle N \rangle$ (eq 5).

The fraction of MSL-S1 bound to actin was measured over a range of AMPPNP concentrations (0.5–16 mM). $K_4$ was...
Table I: MSL-S1 Binding Parameters Determined from Sedimentation Experiments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nucleotide (mM)</th>
<th>$K_3$ (M$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>$f_B$</th>
<th>$K_4$ (M$^{-1}$)</th>
<th>$f_N$</th>
<th>$f_s$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AMPPPNP$^a$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu = 100$</td>
<td>$(2.23 \pm 0.42) \times 10^4$</td>
<td>0.74 $\pm$ 0.03</td>
<td>$(3.32 \pm 0.16) \times 10^4$</td>
<td>0.84 $\pm$ 0.01</td>
<td>0.76 $\pm$ 0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu = 186$</td>
<td>$(2.51 \pm 0.72) \times 10^4$</td>
<td>0.30 $\pm$ 0.05</td>
<td>$(3.15 \pm 0.18) \times 10^4$</td>
<td>0.83 $\pm$ 0.01</td>
<td>0.42 $\pm$ 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATPyS$^b$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu = 36$</td>
<td>$(2.22 \pm 0.38) \times 10^4$</td>
<td>0.27 $\pm$ 0.04</td>
<td>$&gt;1.0 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>$&gt;0.98$</td>
<td>0.27 $\pm$ 0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\mu = 186$</td>
<td>$&lt;1.0 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>$&lt;0.02$</td>
<td>$&gt;1.0 \times 10^4$</td>
<td>$&gt;0.98$</td>
<td>$&lt;0.00 \pm 0.02$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^aK_3$ is the association constant for the binding of MN (MSL-S1-nucleotide) to A (actin), and $K_4$ is the association constant for the binding of N to AM (see Figure 1). $f_B$ is the fraction of total MN that is bound to A, as determined from $K_3$ and eq 5, and $f_s$ is the fraction of total M with bound N, as determined from $K_4$ and eq 5. $f_N$ is the fraction of total M that is bound to A, measured directly from sedimentation experiments under ST-EPR conditions. All errors are given as SEM, $n = 4-8$. $^b$For AMPPPNP, $K_3$ and $K_4$ were determined using linear regression analysis from plots of $K_{app}$ vs 1/[AMPNNP]. $^c$For ATPyS, $f_B$ and $f_N$ were determined directly from sedimentation experiments in the presence of ATPyS and were used to determine the upper and lower limits for $K_3$ and $K_4$, respectively.

Table II: ST-EPR Spectral Parameters and Effective Rotational Correlation Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>composite spectra</th>
<th>bound S1$^d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C/C</td>
<td>$\tau_r$ (µs)</td>
<td>C/C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSL-S1</td>
<td>$-0.83 \pm 0.10$</td>
<td>0.35 $\pm$ 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actin + MSL-S1</td>
<td>0.76 $\pm$ 0.04</td>
<td>104 $\pm$ 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMPPPNP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actin + MSL-S1 (µ = 100 mM)</td>
<td>0.35 $\pm$ 0.06</td>
<td>24.5 $\pm$ 5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actin + MSL-S1 (µ = 186 mM)</td>
<td>0.03 $\pm$ 0.08</td>
<td>8.0 $\pm$ 2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATPyS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actin + MSL-S1 (µ = 36 mM)</td>
<td>$-0.21 \pm 0.12$</td>
<td>3.7 $\pm$ 1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actin + MSL-S1 (µ = 186 mM)</td>
<td>$-0.78 \pm 0.02$</td>
<td>4.2 $\pm$ 0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^dC/C$ is the standard line-height ratio parameter from the center of the ST-EPR spectrum (Thomas et al., 1976; Squier & Thomas, 1986). $\tau_r$ is the effective rotational correlation time in microseconds calculated from $C/C$. All errors are given as SEM, $n = 5-9$. Bound S1 is the ternary complex (A-MN) bound to both nucleotide and actin. $^d$Results are averaged together for the MSL-S1 spectra, regardless of ionic strength or the nucleotide present, and for the actin + MSL-S1 (rigor) spectra, regardless of ionic strength.

Due to the weak binding of MSL-S1 to actin in the presence of ATPyS, even at low ionic strength (µ = 36 mM), $K_{app}$ was determined at the high protein concentrations used in the ST-EPR experiments (100 µM MSL-S1, 200 µM actin), ensuring that a significant fraction of MSL-S1 was bound to actin under these conditions. The value of $K_{app}$ was independent of [ATPpyS] over the concentration range used (0.5-5.0 mM), indicating that [ATPpyS] was sufficient for saturation. Thus in the presence of ATPyS at low ionic strength, the binding scheme in Figure 1C is valid, and the measured value of $K_{app}$ is equivalent to $K_3$. The fraction of MSL-S1 bound to actin (as the ternary complex AMN) under these conditions was determined to be 0.27 $\pm$ 0.03, corresponding to a value of $(2.22 \pm 0.38) \times 10^4$ M$^{-1}$ for $K_3$. At physiological ionic strength (µ = 186 mM), the binding of MSL-S1 to actin in the presence of ATPyS was too weak to be measured ($K_3 < 1.0 \times 10^4$ M$^{-1}$) even at the high protein concentrations used in the ST-EPR experiments (100 µM MSL-S1, 200 µM actin), and essentially none (0.00 $\pm$ 0.02% of the MSL-S1 was bound to actin. The accumulation of ADP was a limiting factor in the sedimentation binding or ST-EPR experiments, since the rate of ATPyS hydrolysis by acto-MSL-S1 was determined to be quite slow (0.008 $\pm$ 0.006 s$^{-1}$) under the conditions used.

ST-EPR Experiments. Effective rotational correlation times ($\tau_r$) determined from ST-EPR spectra, using the $C/C$ line-height ratio parameter, are summarized in Table II. The $\tau_r$ values determined from the normalized intensity parameter ($J V_r^2/J V_f^2/H$; Squier & Thomas, 1986) were not significantly different (data not shown). The ST-EPR spectrum of the ternary complex (acto-MSL-S1-nucleotide (AMN), was obtained as indicated in eq 8 in the presence of AMPPPNP, or eq 9 in the presence of ATPyS. The ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1 (Figure 2, center column) is independent of the nucleotide present. The effective
rotational correlation time (\(\tau_r = 0.35 \pm 0.12 \mu s\)) is precisely the value expected for global rotational motion of MSL-S1 (Thomas et al., 1975). In the absence of nucleotide the ST-EPR spectrum of actin-MSL-S1 (Figure 2, rigor composite) shows that MSL-S1 is rotating slowly on the microsecond time scale, with a \(\tau_r\) of 104 ± 14 \(\mu s\). The observed submillisecond motions of the rigor complex are due entirely to flexibility within the actin filament, since \(\tau_r\) is the same when the spin-label is attached to Cys-374 of actin rather than MSL-S1 (Thomas et al., 1979; Ostap & Thomas, 1991), and all of the myosin heads are bound to actin under these conditions. These results indicate that in the absence of nucleotide, MSL-S1 is bound rigidly to actin on the microsecond time scale. Upon the addition of 16 mM AMPPNP to actin + MSL-S1, the ST-EPR spectrum (Figure 2, AMPPNP composite) decreases slightly in intensity and changes shape, corresponding to a 4-fold decrease in \(\tau_r\) (24.5 ± 5.5 \(\mu s\)). The effect of 5 mM ATPyS on the actin + MSL-S1 ST-EPR spectrum is much greater (Figure 2, ATPyS composite), resulting in a \(\tau_r\) of 3.7 ± 1.8 \(\mu s\).

The effective rotational correlation time (\(\tau_r\)) of 24.5 \(\mu s\), obtained for actin + MSL-S1 + AMPPNP (Figure 2, AMPPNP composite), is not an accurate characterization of the system, since the spectrum contains contributions from three species: actin-MSL-S1 (rigor), MSL-S1-AMPPNP (free), and actin-MSL-S1-AMPPNP (ternary complex). To obtain the spectrum of the ternary complex, we must subtract the other two spectra, weighted by their respective mole fractions as determined from the sedimentation experiments. Thus, in Figure 2, the ST-EPR spectrum of actin-MSL-S1-AMPPNP (AMPPNP bound) was obtained by subtracting 0.16 of the actin-MSL-S1 spectrum (rigor composite) and 0.22 of the MSL-S1-AMPPNP spectrum (AMPPNP free) from the spectrum of actin + MSL-S1 + AMPPNP (AMPPNP composite) and dividing by 0.62 to normalize the spectral intensity. This residual spectrum, with a \(\tau_r\) of 115 ± 7 \(\mu s\), was not significantly different from the rigor actin-MSL-S1 spectrum (Figure 2, rigor composite). Thus MSL-S1-AMPPNP binds rigidly to actin, with no more microsecond rotational mobility than the rigor complex.

A ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of ATPyS (Figure 2, ATPyS bound) was obtained in a similar manner, by subtracting 0.73 of the free MSL-S1 + ATPyS spectrum (Figure 2, ATPyS free) and dividing by 0.27 to normalize the spectral intensity. It was not necessary to correct for a rigor component, since ATPyS binds strongly enough to acto-S1 to saturate all of the myosin heads. The ST-EPR spectrum of the actin-attached myosin heads in the presence of ATPyS is quite different from the actin-attached myosin heads in rigor or in the presence of AMPPNP, which are not rotationally mobile on the microsecond time scale. On the contrary, actin-bound MSL-S1-ATPyS is quite mobile on the microsecond time scale, with a \(\tau_r\) of 17 ± 2 \(\mu s\).

At physiological ionic strength (\(\mu = 186 \text{ mM}\)), the ST-EPR spectra of acto-MSL-S1 (rigor) and MSL-S1 are identical to that at low ionic strength (data not shown). The ST-EPR spectra of actin + MSL-S1 + 16 mM AMPPNP (Figure 3, AMPPNP composite) indicates more mobility on the microsecond time scale than at \(\mu = 100 \text{ mM}\), with a \(\tau_r\) of 8.0 ± 2.3 \(\mu s\). A ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of AMPPNP at physiological ionic strength (Figure 3, AMPPNP bound) was obtained by subtracting 0.17 of the rigor acto-MSL-S1 spectrum and 0.58 of the MSL-S1 + AMPPNP spectrum from the acto-MSL-S1 + AMPPNP spectrum, and dividing by 0.25 to normalize the spectral intensity. The ST-EPR spectrum of the actin-attached myosin heads in the presence of AMPPNP at physiological ionic strength (Figure 3, AMPPNP bound) was not significantly different than the rigor acto-MSL-S1 spectrum (Figure 2, rigor composite), or the spectrum of the actin-bound MSL-S1 in

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**Figure 2:** ST-EPR spectra of 100 \(\mu M\) MSL-S1 + 200 \(\mu M\) actin (left), 100 \(\mu M\) MSL-S1 (center), and actin-bound MSL-S1 (right) in the absence of nucleotide (first row, \(\mu = 36 \text{ mM}\)), and in the presence of 16 mM AMPPNP (second row, \(\mu = 100 \text{ mM}\)) or 5 mM ATPyS (third row, \(\mu = 36 \text{ mM}\)), at 25 °C. The spectrum of the actin-bound MSL-S1 (right) was obtained by subtracting the appropriate mole fraction of the free MSL-S1 spectrum (center) from the composite spectrum (left). In the presence of AMPPNP, since the MSL-S1 was not completely saturated with AMPPNP, an additional correction was made by subtracting the appropriate mole fraction of the rigor spectrum from the composite spectrum. Thus the spectra of the bound components correspond to the ternary complexes actin-MSL-S1-nucleotide (AMN in Figure 1 and eqs 8 and 9). The numbers below spectra are effective rotational correlation times (\(\tau_r\)), determined from \(C'/C\). Each spectral baseline is 100 G wide.
Rotational Dynamics of Muscle Cross-Bridges

Biochemistry, Vol. 30, No. 46, 1991

11041

K₄ was determined to be approximately $3 \times 10^4 \text{ M}^{-1}$ at both ionic strengths for AMPPNP, in good agreement with previous measurements in solutions of acto-S1 (Biosca et al., 1986), myofibrils (Biosca et al., 1988), and muscle fibers (Pate & Cooke, 1985; Fajer et al., 1988). These values are thermodynamically consistent with the general binding scheme in Figure 1A. $K_2$, the association constant for S1 binding to actin in the absence of nucleotide, can be determined from our values of $K_3$, $K_4$, and $K_1$, the association constant of AMPPNP for S1, by detailed balance (i.e., $K_1K_3 = K_2K_4$ or $K_2 = K_1K_3/K_4$). Using a value of $1.5 \times 10^8 \text{ M}^{-1}$ for $K_4$ (Greene & Eisenberg, 1980a) and our measured values of $K_3$ and $K_4$ we determined $K_2$ to be $1 \times 10^8 \text{ M}^{-1}$ at $\mu = 100 \text{ mM}$ and $1 \times 10^7 \text{ M}^{-1}$ at $\mu = 186 \text{ mM}$, which are in good agreement with previously determined values of $K_2$ for unlabeled S1 under similar conditions (Greene & Eisenberg, 1980a; Biosca et al., 1986).

In the presence of ATPγS at $\mu = 36 \text{ mM}$, $K_3$ was determined to be $2.22 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}$, which is consistent with previously measured values for unlabeled S1 (Goody & Hofmann, 1980; Geeves et al., 1986; Millar & Geeves, 1988). At $\mu = 186 \text{ mM}$, the binding of MSL-S1-ATPγS to actin was too weak to be measured, indicating that $K_3$ is less than $10^2 \text{ M}^{-1}$ under these conditions. It was not necessary to measure $K_4$ for ATPγS, because the binding of ATPγS to acto-MSL-S1 was saturating, as shown by the [ATPγS]-independent value of $K_{pp}$. This is consistent with the ability of 5 mM ATPγS to fully relax muscle fibers at physiological ionic strength, as determined by X-ray diffraction and mechanical measurements (Barrington-Leigh et al., 1972; Goody et al., 1975; Dantzig et al., 1988). The association constants measured in this work were determined directly on MSL-S1, under the conditions and protein concentrations used in the ST-EPR experiments. Since it was possible to determine $K_3$ and $K_4$ reliably under our experimental conditions, the quantitative analysis of the ST-EPR data to obtain the spectra of the ternary complexes (actin-MSL-S1-nucleotide) is valid.

**Interpretation of AMPPNP ST-EPR Spectra.** MSL-S1-AMPPNP bound to actin is rigidly attached, just as in the absence of nucleotide (rigor), with a $\tau_r$ of 114 $\pm$ 5 $\mu$s. Thus MSL-S1-AMPPNP bound to actin is not rotationally mobile relative to actin on the microsecond time scale, and the observed decrease in $\tau_r$ upon increasing the ionic strength to 186 mM is due solely to an increase in the fraction of MSL-S1 detached from actin.

The ST-EPR spectrum of acto-MSL-S1 in the presence of 5 mM ATPγS (Figure 3, ATPγS composite) at physiological ionic strength ($\mu = 186 \text{ mM}$) is identical to that of free MSL-S1, with a $\tau_r$ of 0.42 $\pm$ 0.08 $\mu$s, as seen by the virtually flat residual after subtracting the MSL-S1 + ATPγS spectrum (Figure 3, ATPγS bound). This result is expected since the sedimentation binding experiments showed that none of the MSL-S1 is bound to actin at physiological ionic strength. This result supports the binding data that ATPγS binds strongly to acto-MSL-S1, saturating all of the myosin nucleotide binding sites.

**Discussion.**

**Summary of Results.** We have used saturation-transfer electron paramagnetic resonance (ST-EPR), in conjunction with sedimentation binding experiments, to measure the microsecond rotational motions of actin-attached intermediate states of the myosin ATPase cycle. The ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1-AMPPNP bound to actin at low ionic strength ($\mu = 100 \text{ mM}$) is identical to that obtained in the absence of nucleotide (rigor complex), indicating no rotational motion of MSL-S1 relative to actin on the microsecond time scale. Increasing the ionic strength to physiological levels ($\mu = 186 \text{ mM}$) decreased the fraction of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of AMPPNP but had no effect on the rotational mobility of the actin-attached myosin heads. However, MSL-S1-ATPγS bound to actin at low ionic strength ($\mu = 36 \text{ mM}$) is rotationally mobile, with an effective rotational correlation time ($\tau_r$) of 17 $\pm$ 2 $\mu$s. At physiological ionic strength ($\mu = 36 \text{ mM}$) all of the MSL-S1 was dissociated from actin in the presence of ATPγS.

**Interpretation of Binding Results.** Determination of $K_3$, the association constant for MSL-S1 binding to actin in the presence of nucleotide, and $K_4$, the association constant for nucleotide binding to the acto-MSL-S1 complex, was essential in resolving the ST-EPR spectra of the acto-bound MSL-S1 in the presence of AMPPNP or ATPγS. In the presence of AMPPNP, the measured values of $K_3$ ($2.23 \times 10^4 \text{ M}^{-1}$ at $\mu = 100 \text{ mM}$ and $2.51 \times 10^3 \text{ M}^{-1}$ at $\mu = 186 \text{ mM}$) agreed closely with previous measurements made under similar conditions on unlabeled S1 (Green & Eisenberg, 1980a; Biosca et al., 1986; Duong & Reisler, 1987a).
rigor, or with ADP bound (Manuck et al., 1986; Fajer et al., 1990a), their conformation probably represents a strong binding state late in the actomyosin ATPase cycle. Biochemical evidence supports this conclusion, and mechanical and structural studies indicate that the AMPPNP state is probably intermediate between the ADP and relaxed states. The association constants of AMPPNP binding to myosin and actomyosin are closer to those of ADP than ATP (Greene & Eisenberg, 1978, 1980a), and S1 binds to regulated actin in the absence of Ca2+ with positive cooperativity in the presence of AMPPNP, just as in the presence of ADP, but not ATP (Greene, 1982; Williams & Greene, 1983). Experiments with cross-linked acto-S1 indicate that myosin heads in the presence of AMPPNP are structurally similar to those in the presence of ADP or in rigor (Duong & Reisler, 1989). However, electron microscopy coordinated with X-ray diffraction of insect flight muscle (Reedy et al., 1983, 1987), X-ray diffraction of vertebrate muscle (Lynn, 1975; Padron & Huxley, 1984), and EPR of spin-labeled myosin light chains in vertebrate muscle (Arata, 1990; Hambly et al., 1991) suggest that the distal (far from actin) portion of the myosin head is ordered with the thick filament, rather than the thin filament as in the ADP and rigor states. Cross-bridges in HMM (Greene, 1981; Duong & Reisler, 1987b) and in myofibrils (Chen & Reisler, 1984) are characterized by single-headed binding to actin in the presence of AMPPNP or ADP, in contrast to rigor cross-bridges which are bound to actin by both myosin heads (Eisenberg & Greene, 1980b). These results suggest that the AMPPNP state is structurally different from the ADP or rigor states and may represent an earlier state in the ATPase cycle. Mechanical measurements on muscle fibers in the presence of AMPPNP have also suggested that this state may represent a partial reversal of the power stroke (Marston et al., 1976; Kuhn, 1981), although cross-bridge detachment and reattachment to positions of lower strain cannot be ruled out in these experiments (Schoenberg, 1989). The ambiguity of cross-bridge attachment in the previous structural and mechanical experiments with AMPPNP makes it difficult to discern effects of cross-bridge detachment from changes in the actin-attached cross-bridge. In the present work, we have been able to differentiate the rotational motions of the actin-attached myosin heads from those arising from the dissociation of S1 from actin. Thus, AMPPNP appears to trap myosin in a strong-binding intermediate state of the actomyosin ATPase cycle that is similar, but not identical, to the ADP and rigor states. It is clear, however, that these states late in the actomyosin ATPase cycle are rigidly bound to actin and not rotationally mobile (relative to actin) on the microsecond time scale.

Interpretation of ATPγS ST-EPR Spectra. Myosin heads bound to actin in the presence of ATPγS have considerable microsecond rotational mobility, with an effective correlation time of 17 µs. Our results are consistent with X-ray diffraction of muscle fibers in the presence of ATPγS at low ionic strength, which indicate that the actin-attached cross-bridges are structurally distinct from rigor cross-bridges (Xu & Yu, 1991). In the presence of ATPγS at physiological or low ionic strengths, active muscle fibers develop stiffness without developing tension (Danzig et al., 1988), indicating that the myosin heads are in a weak-binding state early in the ATPase cycle that can bind to actin but can not generate force. These cross-bridges were found to have a range of measurable detachment rates, suggesting that multiple attached states may exist. Transitions between multiple attached states might account for the observed microsecond rotational motions of the ternary actin-MSL1-ATPγS complex, but time-resolved experiments will be necessary to test this hypothesis. Our results clearly demonstrate that in contrast to the later stages of the ATPase cycle, myosin heads in the presence of ATPγS are dynamically attached to actin, and this behavior in solution may be relevant to structural and mechanical properties of the muscle fiber.

We have previously reported that MSL-S1 bound to actin during steady-state hydrolysis of ATP at low ionic strength (µ = 36 mM) is rotationally mobile on the microsecond time scale, with an effective rotational correlation time τ of 1.0 ± 0.3 µs (Berger et al., 1989), which is much less than the value of τ measured in the presence of ATPγS (17 µs) in the present study. However, this apparent difference is due to the different spectral parameters measured. In the presence of ATP, only a few seconds were available for data acquisition, so the spectrum was monitored at a single spectral position (Berger et al., 1989). In the present study with ATPγS, several minutes were available for acquisition, permitting the analysis of the line-height ratio C'/C, which has been shown to be more reliable (Thomas et al., 1976). When the ATPγS spectrum was analyzed by the same procedure used in the ATP study, τ was determined to be 1.2 µs, in excellent agreement with the value obtained with ATP [1.0 µs, Berger et al. (1989)]. The different results obtained from different spectral parameters are probably due to the anisotropic motions SI is likely to undergo, particularly when bound to actin (Squier et al., 1986). Thus ATPγS induces anisotropic rotational motions of actin-bound S1 that are similar to those observed for actin-bound S1 during the steady state of actin-activated ATPase activity. We found that the value of τ obtained from the normalized intensity parameter, which takes into account the entire EPR spectrum (Squier & Thomas, 1986), agrees with the value obtained using C'/C. Thus our best estimate for the effective rotational correlation time of actin-attached MSL-S1 in the presence of ATPγS, or during the steady-state hydrolysis of ATP, is 17 µs.

Since ATPγS is hydrolyzed by myosin approximately 500 times more slowly than is ATP (Bagshaw et al., 1972), it is believed to trap myosin in an early prehydrolysis intermediate of the actomyosin ATPase cycle that is probably similar to the actin-myosin-ATP state (Bagshaw et al., 1972; Barrington-Leigh et al., 1972; Goody et al., 1975). The predominant intermediate of the acto-S1 ATPase cycle during steady-state ATP hydrolysis is believed to be actin-myosin-ADP-Pi (Stein et al., 1985). The microsecond rotational motions of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of ATPγS are similar, with a τ of about 17 µs. Thus, in contrast to strong-binding actin-attached intermediates of the myosin ATPase cycle (induced by AMPPNP, ADP, or rigor), which are immobile on the microsecond time scale and rigidly bound to actin, weakly bound actin-attached intermediates of the myosin ATPase cycle (induced by ATPγS, ATP, or ADP-Pi) have considerable microsecond rotational mobility.

Alternative Explanations. An alternative explanation for the observed microsecond rotational motions of MSL-S1 bound to actin in the presence of ATPγS may be that the spin label becomes mobilized relative to the myosin head. While nucleotide binding to myosin has been known to mobilize certain SH2-bound spin labels (Barnett & Thomas, 1987) and fluorescent probes (Thomas, 1987; Tanner et al., 1992), no difference was observed in the ST-EPR spectra of MSL-S1 in the absence of nucleotide or in the presence of AMPPNP or ATPγS, which all had a τ of 0.35 µs (Figure 2, Table II).
Rotational Dynamics of Muscle Cross-Bridges

MSL-S1 has also been shown to remain rotationally rigid in the microsecond time range in the presence of ATP, as shown by the ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1 fixed on glass beads (Thomas et al., 1980). In order to determine more rigorously whether the whole myosin head is rotating and contributing to these motions, or just the domain around SH1, it will be necessary to perform complementary experiments with the spin label at other sites on S1. We have previously considered the possibility that the S1 remains rigidly attached to actin even in the presence of ATP and that the nucleotide induces rotational motions in actin. Experiments using spin-labeled actin (at Cys-374), rather than S1, indicate that there is no change in the rotational mobility of actin during steady-state ATP hydrolysis (Ostap & Thomas, 1991). Therefore, we conclude that these motions are due to the rotation of S1 relative to actin.

In principle, the ST-EPR spectrum could also be affected by the rapid attachment/detachment equilibrium between S1 and actin, but the rate of detachment is slow enough that S1 spends 1–2 ms in the attached state with actin in the presence of ATP (White & Taylor, 1976) and even longer in the presence of ATPyS (Goody & Hofmann, 1980; Geves et al., 1986) or AMP-PNP (Marston, 1982; Trybus & Taylor, 1982). In order to affect the ST-EPR spectrum, the lifetime of the attached state would have to be comparable to or shorter than the spin–lattice relaxation time \( T_1 \), which is about 10 \( \mu s \) (Thomas et al., 1976). It is also possible that the accumulation of ADP following the hydrolysis of ATP\(_y\)S affected the sedimentation binding and ST-EPR experiments. However, this is unlikely due to the extremely slow rate of hydrolysis of ATP\(_y\)S by MSL-S1 (0.01 \( s^{-1} \)), which, like the MgATPase activity of S1, is slowed by spin labeling. At this rate, less than 10% of the ATP\(_y\)S would be hydrolyzed by the end of the 10-min sedimentation binding experiments, and less than 50% by the end of even the longest ST-EPR experiments (typically lasting 45 min). No change was observed in the ST-EPR spectrum of acto-MSL-S1 in the presence of ATP\(_y\)S from the first (5 min after adding ATP\(_y\)S) to the last (45 min after adding ATP\(_y\)S) scan acquired before digital averaging, indicating that the increasing concentration of ADP did not significantly affect the data.

The high concentrations of actin (200 \( \mu M \)) used in these experiments probably do not stericly restrict the rotation of S1 or artificially trap S1 in the actin filament lattice, since the ST-EPR spectrum of MSL-S1-ATP\(_y\)S at physiological ionic strength is unaffected by 200 \( \mu M \) actin (Figure 3). While it is known that sulphydryl modification at SH1 partially inhibits the acto-S1 ATPase activity (Mulhern & Eisenberg, 1976, 1978; Svensson & Thomas, 1986), we believe the results obtained with spin-labeled myosin and its subfragments are applicable to unlabelled myosin as well. SH1 modification does not affect the binding of S1 to actin significantly (Berger et al., 1989); the MSL-S1 ATPase can still actively cycle and is still activated by actin (Svensson & Thomas, 1986). Furthermore, the mechanical properties of muscle fibers spin-labeled at SH2 are not significantly different from those of unlabelled muscle fibers (Crowder & Cooke, 1984; Barnett & Thomas, 1989; Fajer et al., 1991).

Relationship to EPR of Muscle Fibers. Complementary experiments in solution and in muscle fibers are important in examining the rotational mobility of myosin heads bound to actin during the active actomyosin ATPase cycle. The fraction of myosin heads bound to actin can be determined directly in solutions of S1 and actin and used to analyze the ST-EPR spectra explicitly in terms of the actin-attached component in the presence of different nucleotides. These results can then be used to interpret data obtained with muscle fibers, where it is not possible to determine unambiguously the fraction of actin-attached cross-bridges, and thus deconvolute the spectra in terms of an actin-attached component. Experiments with muscle fibers have established the relevance of the rotationally mobile actin-attached intermediate states of the myosin ATPase cycle in a more physiologically intact system.

Previous EPR studies on isometrically contracting muscle fibers have shown that less than 20% of the myosin heads are oriented as in rigor, while the rest are almost as highly disordered as in relaxation (Cooke et al., 1982; Fajer et al., 1990b). One interpretation of these results is that the disordered myosin heads are detached from actin, but an alternative explanation is that they are bound to actin in a rotationally dynamic state. The latter interpretation seems more likely since the stiffness of an isometrically contracting muscle fiber is 70–80% of the rigor value, indicating that most of the cross-bridges are attached to actin under these conditions (Fajer et al., 1990b). X-ray diffraction measurements on isometrically contracting muscle fibers also suggest that most of the myosin heads are associated with the thin filament (Haselgrove & Huxley, 1973). ST-EPR of isometrically contracting muscle fibers found the cross-bridges to be almost as mobile as in relaxation, with a \( \tau \) of 25 \( \mu s \), despite high stiffness values, indicating that the active cross-bridges are dynamically disordered (Barnett & Thomas, 1989). This value of \( \tau \) is comparable to the \( \tau \) of 17 \( \mu s \) measured in this work for myosin heads bound to actin in the presence of ATP\(_y\)S and previously during the steady-state hydrolysis of ATP. The actual \( \tau \) for the bound cross-bridges in the isometrically contracting muscle fiber is likely to be a bit longer, since some of the cross-bridges are certainly dissociated. This is to be expected, however, since the myosin heads in the muscle fiber will be more restricted by the myofibrillar lattice than S1 in solution. EPR (Fajer et al., 1990b) and time-resolved phosphorescence anisotropy (Stein et al., 1990) experiments indicate that the cross-bridge motions in an active isometric muscle fiber are not a linear combination of relaxed and rigor motions. This interpretation has been confirmed in this work and by Berger et al. (1989), where the myosin heads have been unambiguously shown to be dynamically attached to actin, with a mobility that is intermediate between those of rigor and relaxation.

Relationship to Other Work. We have identified a rotationally mobile state that is attached to actin during the myosin ATPase cycle that is distinct from the predominant states in rigor or relaxation. Evidence from other techniques supports this conclusion. X-ray diffraction on relaxed (Yu & Brenner, 1989) and isometrically contracting (Podolsky et al., 1976; Yu & Brenner, 1987) skeletal muscle fibers, and on bony fish muscle (Harford et al., 1991), have also identified an actin-attached cross-bridge state that is different from the rigor state, on the basis of changes in the radial mass distribution around the thick and thin filaments. Electron microscopy of cross-linked (Craig et al., 1985; Applegate & Flicker, 1987) and non-cross-linked solutions of actin and S1 (Trinick & White, 1991) or HMM (Frado & Craig, 1991), and of muscle fibers (Hirose et al., 1991), have shown that the myosin head is disordered while bound to actin in the presence of ATP. Disorder of the myosin heads while bound to actin, even in the muscle fiber, implies that myosin is quite flexible in its interaction with actin. Our results that S1 is rotationally mobile during attached states of the myosin ATPase cycle [this work and Berger et al. (1989)] are also consistent with results.
obtained using the in vitro motility assay [Kron and Spudich (1986) and reviewed by Huxley (1990)], which has demonstrated that HMM is flexible enough to move actin filaments in opposite directions (Toyoshima et al., 1987) and that S1 alone is sufficient to move actin filaments (Toyoshima et al., 1989) and generate force on the actin filament comparable to that in a muscle fiber (Kishino & Yanagida, 1988). Since the myosin head only spends 1–2 ms at a given attachment site on actin (White & Taylor, 1976), submillisecond motions of S1 are required to move from one site of attachment on actin to another. Mechanical measurements on muscle fibers have shown that there are tension transients that follow a rapid stretch and release of the fiber during steady-state ATP hydrolysis, which probably arise from submillisecond rotations of actin-attached cross-bridges (Huxley & Simmons, 1971). Thus there is considerable structural and mechanical evidence to support the existence of a rotationally mobile actin-attached myosin head in the active cross-bridge cycle.

Previous structural (Barnett & Thomas, 1987; Shriver & Sykes, 1981, 1982) and kinetic [reviewed by Gelles et al. (1984) and Eisenberg and Hill (1985)] studies have suggested that there are two intrinsic conformations of S1, often termed the weakly and strongly bound intermediate states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle. The transition from the weakly to the strongly bound states has been postulated to be responsible for the mechanism of force generation in muscle (Eisenberg & Hill, 1985). In solution, although the weakly bound states are thought to be the predominant intermediates of the actomyosin ATPase cycle, they do not activate the thin filament or generate force (Stein et al., 1979; Brenner et al., 1982; Eisenberg & Hill, 1985). However, the actin-binding proteolytic fragment of caldesmon that specifically inhibits the formation of weakly bound cross-bridges, but not strongly bound ones that can generate force, has been shown to inhibit force production in active muscle fibers at physiological ionic strength, indicating that the weakly bound states are important intermediates in the process of force generation in the muscle fiber (Brenner et al., 1991). Despite high stiffness values, cross-bridges in relaxed muscle fibers at low ionic strength, which are predominantly in the weak binding conformation (Brenner et al., 1982), have been shown to be disordered and mobile on the microsecond time scale (Fajer et al., 1991). Similar results have been obtained in isometrically contracting muscle fibers at physiological ionic strength (Cooke et al., 1982; Barnett & Thomas, 1989; Stein et al., 1990; Fajer et al., 1990b), in which most of the cross-bridges are thought to be in the strong binding conformation (Goldman, 1987). Thus it is quite likely that the rotationally dynamic cross-bridges in an isometric muscle fiber are actively involved with the process of force generation.

**Conclusions.** We have demonstrated that spin-labeled myosin heads attached to actin in a ternary complex with ATP\(_7\)S are rotationally mobile on the microsecond time scale, while those in a ternary complex with AMPPNP are not. The microsecond rotational motions of myosin heads attached to actin in the weakly bound intermediate states of the actomyosin ATPase cycle that occur both in the presence of ATP\(_7\)S and during the steady-state hydrolysis of ATP (Berger et al., 1989) are probably intimately involved in the process of force generation within the muscle fiber as well. Similar cross-bridge motions have been identified in isometrically contracting muscle fibers (Barnett & Thomas, 1989; Fajer et al., 1990b), but it remains to be determined whether the rotationally mobile myosin heads correspond only to the weakly bound states preceding force generation or to the actual force generating states as well. Future experiments using time-resolved spectroscopic techniques, in conjunction with transient biochemical and mechanical perturbations of the contractile cycle, will be required to correlate more precisely the microsecond rotational motions of actin-attached cross-bridges with the underlying mechanism of muscle contraction.

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**Registry No.** ATPase, 9000-83-3; AMPPNP, 25612-73-1; ATP\(_7\)S, 35094-46-3.

**References**


Rotational Dynamics of Muscle Cross-Bridges