Structures and comparison of endogenous 2-oxoglutarate and pyruvate dehydrogenase complexes from bovine kidney

Shiheng Liu[1,2,#], Xian Xia[1,2,#], James Zhen[1,2,3,#], Zihang Li[1,2], Z. Hong Zhou[1,2,3,*]

1 Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

2 California NanoSystems Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

3 Molecular Biology Institute, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095, USA

# Contributed equally

* Corresponding Author

Email: hong.zhou@ucla.edu; Phone: 310-694-7527

Abstract

The α-keto acid dehydrogenase complex family catalyzes the essential oxidative

decarboxylation of α-keto acids to yield acyl-CoA and NADH. Despite performing the same

overarching reaction, members of the family have different component structures and structural

organization between each other and across phylogenetic species. While native structures of α-

keto acid dehydrogenase complexes from bacteria and fungi became available recently, the

atomic structure and organization of their mammalian counterparts in their native states remain

unknown. Here, we report the cryo electron microscopy (cryoEM) structures of the endogenous

cubic 2-oxoglutarate dehydrogenase complex (OGDC) and icosahedral pyruvate

dehydrogenase complex (PDC) cores from bovine kidney determined at 3.5 Å and 3.8 Å

resolution, respectively. The structures of multiple protein were reconstructed from a single

lysate sample, allowing direct structural comparison without the concerns of differences arising

from sample preparation and structure determination. Although native and recombinant E2 core

scaffold structures are similar, native structures are decorated with their peripheral E1 and E3

subunits. Asymmetric sub-particle reconstructions support heterogeneity in the arrangements of

these peripheral subunits. Additionally, despite sharing a similar monomeric fold, OGDC and

PDC E2 cores have distinct interdomain and intertrimer interactions, which suggests a means of

modulating self-assembly to mitigate heterologous binding between mismatched E2 species.

The lipoyl moiety lies near a mobile gatekeeper within the interdomain active site of OGDC E2

and PDC E2. Analysis of the two-fold related intertrimer interface identified secondary structural

differences and chemical interactions between icosahedral and cubic geometries of the core.

Taken together, our study provides direct structural comparison of OGDC and PDC from the

same source and offers new insights into determinants of interdomain interactions and of

architecture diversity among α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes.

Introduction

Introduction

The pyruvate dehydrogenase complex (PDC; components suffixed by 'p') is an essential

element of life that catalyzes the oxidative decarboxylation of pyruvate to acetyl-coenzyme A

(acetyl-CoA). This key metabolic reaction links glycolysis to oxidative phosphorylation and the

Krebs cycle. PDC is a member of the α-keto acid dehydrogenase complex family, alongside 2-

oxoglutarate dehydrogenase complex (OGDC; 'o') and branched-chain α-keto acid

dehydrogenase complex (BCKDC; 'b'), which all perform analogous reactions in central

metabolism[1,2]. Genomic studies have identified mutations in components of these multienzyme

complexes linked to severe clinical consequences, including metabolic acidosis and

neurodegeneration[3–7]. PDC also attracts interest in cancer biology for its role in modulating the

Warburg effect to promote tumor anabolism[4,8–10].

PDC, OGDC, and BCKDC are each comprised of multiple copies of a substrate specific

dihydrolipoamide acetyltransferase (E2p), dihydrolipoamide succinyltransferase (E2o), or

dihydrolipoamide acyltransferase (E2b) inner catalytic (IC) core surrounded by multiple copies

of the respective α-keto acid dehydrogenase (E1p, E1o, or E1b) and universal dihydrolipoamide

dehydrogenase (E3) components[1,2]. Bovine E2 is comprised of one or two lipoyl domains (LDs)

followed by a peripheral subunit-binding domain (PSBD) and an IC domain that are connected

by flexible linkers (Fig. 1a). Each α-keto acid dehydrogenase complex proceeds through a

three-step mechanism, starting with the decarboxylation of the α-keto acid substrate by E1 and

transfer of an acetyl, acyl, or succinyl functional group to lipoate in the LD of E2. Then, the

functionalized LD localizes to the IC core, where the functional group is transferred from the

lipoyl moiety to CoA. Lastly, E3 reoxidizes the lipoyl moiety, which enables the process to

repeat with the production of NADH. The LD translocates between these active sites through a

flexible swinging arm mechanism[11].

Although each E1, E2, and E3 subunit in an α-keto acid dehydrogenase is highly similar

both in sequence and overall structure to its counterpart in the other classes of the family[12,13],

there are notable differences in the architecture of how these components assemble. E1p is a

heterotrimer composed two alpha and two beta subunits, whereas E1o is a homodimer where

the alpha and beta subunits are a singular polypeptide[14]. In bacteria, PDC, OGDC, and BCKDC

cores all have a 24-mer cubic architecture. As an exception, actinobacteria distinctly lack

assembled cores of E2p and possess a unique OdhA protein that fuses the E2o catalytic

domain to E1o[15]. However, in eukaryotes, PDC cores adopt a different 60-mer icosahedral

architecture despite OGDC and BCKDC cores retaining a cubic geometry[13,16–20]. Additionally,

eukaryotic PDC have an additional noncatalytic E3-binding protein (E3BP) that specifically binds

E3 to the core and is structurally similar to E2[13,16,21–27]. In mammals, E3BP substitutes for E2p in

the core scaffold at possible stoichiometric ratios of 48:12 or 40:20 E2p:E3BP in an unknown

arrangement[23,26]. Nonetheless, the subunits of each α-keto acid dehydrogenase complex self-

assemble into their respective complexes[28].

Much of our current structural understanding of α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes is

derived from crystal structures of recombinantly expressed proteins. However, the flexible

assembly of intact α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes is unamenable to crystallography,

and components were often crystallized individually. Structures from these individual proteins

are unable to fully capture how multiple components come together and function as a complex.

Additionally, crystallization may impose artificial order on protein side chains[29]. In the absence

of the structure of native complexes, we have an insufficient understanding of how these

subunits are organized into functional units. Recently, structures of native PDC from fungus and

bacteria became available from cryo electron microscopy (cryoEM)[13,20,27,30,31]. In the intact

fungus PDC structures, E3BP was observed as an additional component appended to the

interior of the core instead of substituting for an E2p subunit of the core like in mammals and

contains a conserved fold found in other E2 proteins[13,27,30]. From bacteria cultured in minimal

media to minimize the activity of PDC, cryoEM density of the lipoyl domains interacting with the

PDC IC domains could be observed. Despite these exciting progresses, no such endogenous,

intact α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes have been determined for mammals.

In this study, we report the cryoEM structures of endogenous OGDC and PDC E2 IC

domain cores extracted from bovine kidney tissue at 3.5 Å and 3.8 Å resolution, respectively.

We observe peripheral subunits around the core and the lipoyl moiety substrate within the E2

active site for both complexes. By comparing structures of PDC and OGDC from the same

source, we identify distinct interactions in the IC domain trimer and in the two-fold related

intertrimer interface, which may direct self-assembly within a milieu of similar components.

Results

Extraction, cryoEM, and identification of native, intact OGDC and PDC

To generate samples of intact α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes, we extracted

mitochondrial lysates from bovine (*Bos taurus*) kidney tissue. We then used sucrose gradient

fractionation to separate and enrich the protein species present in the mitochondrial lysates

(Fig. 1b). Fractions were evaluated by SDS-PAGE, western blot, and mass spectrometry to

confirm the presence of PDC and OGDC (Fig. 1b, Supplementary Fig. 1a). The mass

spectrometry data indicated BCKDC to be present only as a minor species compared to PDC

and OGDC. Fractions containing PDC and OGDC were pooled together into a single lysate

sample for EM studies. Negative stain 2D class average evaluation of the sample on a single

grid showed both icosahedral classes and cubic classes (Supplementary Fig. S2). Negative

stain classes also show peripheral densities around the cores, suggesting that E1 or E3 are

present and that intact α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes were recovered. Higher-order

assemblies are visible in cryoEM micrographs (Supplementary Fig. S3a), and smeared

densities are present at the periphery of well-resolved cores in the cryoEM 2D classes

(Supplementary Fig. S3b). Notably, additional classes belonging to other unknown protein

species were obtained (Supplementary Fig. S2, S3b), thus highlighting the capability of cryoEM

for the study of molecular sociology. CryoEM 3D reconstruction yielded cubic and icosahedral

cores surrounded by peripheral densities (Fig. 1b, 2a, 3a).

To structurally characterize the putative OGDC and PDC in these two samples, we

obtained 3D reconstructions of the cubic and icosahedral cores of the complexes by single-

particle cryoEM at 3.5 Å and 3.8 Å resolution, respectively (Fig. 2b, 3b; Supplementary Fig. S3;

Supplementary Table S1). We initially identified PDC based on its distinct icosahedral

architecture. This is confirmed by atomic model building of the bovine E2p sequence into the

icosahedral cryoEM density map, which showed good agreement between the sequence and

the respective side chain densities. FindMySequence results also support the identity

assignment of PDC[32] (E-value 4.80e-74, 3.30e-19, and 2.40e-15 for E2p, E2o, and E2b

sequences, respectively).

Although PDC is distinct for its icosahedral architecture, both OGDC and BCKDC share

cubic architecture, which introduces ambiguity to the identification of cubic α-keto acid

dehydrogenase complexes. To confirm whether our cubic complex was OGDC, BCKDC, or a

hybrid of both, we created a homology model by mutating a pre-existing human E2o model to

the bovine E2o sequence[19]. After fitting and real-space refinement of the model into our cubic

cryoEM density map, the side chains for the E2o model fit the density well (Fig. 2e). Sequence

alignment of bovine E2o and E2b reveals primary structure features in E2b that cannot

correspond to side chain densities in our map. Fitting of a pre-existing E2b model into our map

also showed discrepancies between the modeled side chains and the density[17].

FindMySequence and checkMySequence results also support the identity assignment of

OGDC[32,33] (E-value 5.30e-89 and 6.30e-11 for E2o and E2b sequences, respectively). The

unambiguous identification of the cubic complex as OGDC is also reflected in the low presence

of BCKDC components in the mass spectrometry data.

Heterogeneous arrangement of peripheral subunits around the native E2 cores

Unmasked 3D reconstructions have external densities suggestive of E1 or E3 around the core

(Fig. 2a, 3a). Both OGDC and PDC have a large density over each core face. In PDC, thin

densities from the trimer vertices extend toward the density above the pentameric face. OGDC

has additional smaller densities along each cubic edge with thin densities of putative linker

regions connecting to the E2o trimer vertices. Previous models based on hydrogen/deuterium

exchange and cross-linking mass spectrometry studies propose that E1o binds at the edges

and E3 binds at the faces[19,34]. The opposite orientation of the small connecting densities

between OGDC and PDC suggests different predominant states of activity and a large range of

motion for the flexible linker regions. However, enforced symmetry during reconstruction

restricts the interpretability of these external densities for the structures and locations of E1 and

E3.

Peripheral subunit densities were further evaluated by symmetry expanded C_1 sub-

particle reconstructions (Supplementary Fig. S4a, b). A 20 Å low pass filter and color zone of 8

Å around the E2 core model were applied to the sub-particles for greater interpretability of low-

resolution features (Supplementary Fig. S4c, d). Although the resolution is too low for

unambiguous positioning of pre-existing E1 or E3 models within the external densities, we

utilized the asymmetric sub-particle reconstructions to narrow down their potential localization.

Thin densities corresponding to N-terminal linkers originate from both the two-fold related

intertrimer interface and a previously proposed LD binding site in E2o and only the LD binding

site in E2p/E3BP[31]. In both PDC and OGDC, extra densities are located near the LD binding

sites not adjacent to the face of interest, and fitting of *E. coli* E2p with bound LDs into the E2o

sub-particle supports binding of the LD to these sites[31]. In PDC, the extra density at the LD

binding site protrudes outward and some have thin extensions (Supplementary Fig. S4d, e).

These densities have varying prominence and are notably absent at some IC domains

(Supplementary Fig. S4e), suggesting a heterogeneous binding of LDs.

The facial density of OGDC localizes around a single trimer vertex and is connected to

the E2o IC domains by the linker originating from the LD binding sites (Supplementary Fig.

S4c). Additional smaller densities protrude from the linkers originating from the two-fold related

interface. In PDC, only a large facial density is observed (Supplementary Fig. S4d). Similar to

that of OGDC, the facial density is localized near a trimer vertex and is connected to the IC

domain at the LD binding site. Linkers from the two-fold related interface of E2p/E3BP like those

in E2o were not observed. Trajectories of the linker between the IC domain and PSBD from the

two-fold related interface and along the three-fold axis have been previously observed but only

mutually exclusively[13,15,15,17–20,25,28,31,35]. In particular, the N-terminal linker of native *E. coli* E2p in

the resting state folds back towards the three-fold axis of the trimer after reaching the two-fold

related interface[31]. Our asymmetric sub-particle reconstructions suggests that the fold of the E2

N-terminal linker is associated with the activity or reaction step of the complex, and both

conformations of the PSBD possibly coexist based on the binding of E1 or E3 (Supplementary

Fig. S4c). It remains unknown whether the linker folds back to position the PSBD and LD(s)

against its own IC domain or continues past the three-fold axis to a neighboring IC domain.

E2o and E2p utilize distinct interactions to ensure correct self-assembly into E2 trimers

and prevent incorrect heterologous binding of different E2 subunits

For E2o, the backbone of residues 220-455 are fully traceable. For E2p, the backbone of

residues 420-647 are fully traceable, except for residues 519 and 520, which lack densities.

Both E2o and E2p share conserved secondary structure features: six α-helices (H1-6), a short

C-terminal 3_{10}-helix (H7), and ten β-strands (βA-J) (Fig. 2c, 3c). The secondary structure

elements described here are labeled consistently with *E. coli* E2o, bovine E2b, and human

E2p[17,25,36].

The E2 IC domains of OGDC and PDC are arranged as trimers (Fig. 2d, 3d) with 51

interdomain hydrogen bonds and an average buried surface area of 4957 $Å^2$ (standard deviation

(SD) = 3.47) buried surface in E2o and an average of 42.75 (SD = 2.36) interdomain hydrogen

bonds and an average buried surface area of 4397 $Å^2$ (SD = 22) in E2p. Although E2o and E2p

share secondary structure features and overall fold, they have notable differences in certain

regions and in the interactions that stabilize their respective trimers (Fig. 4). The N-terminus

extends at a more elevated angle towards the neighboring IC domain at the clockwise position

in E2o than in E2p (Fig. 4a). The N-terminus wraps around a turn between βC′ and βD′ (prime

symbol is used to denote the neighboring IC domain at the clockwise position from the exterior

view), which is longer in E2o than in E2p. The longer βC-βD turn in E2o enables an electrostatic

interaction between the negatively charged surface of the turn and the positively charged

surfaces of the N-terminus that is not present in E2p (Fig. 4c). This positions βA in a β-sheet

with βD′ and βC′, and the increased stability allowed for modeling of additional N-terminal

residues in E2o. The extended βC-βD turn is also present in human E2o and not E2p, but it is

lacking in bacteria (Fig. 4b). Additionally, E2p possesses a longer interior hairpin (Fig. 4a),

possibly for engaging in interactions in the larger volume of the icosahedral interior of PDC

compared to the cubic interior of OGDC[37].

Within the IC domain trimer, an E2 subunit binds to its clockwise adjacent neighbor

through a short β-β motif between βH and βB′. In E2p, this binding is described by three main

chain-to-main chain hydrogen bonds (Supplementary Fig. S5). In E2o, this binding is described

by two main chain-to-main chain hydrogen bonds, a main chain-to-side chain hydrogen bond,

and a slipped-parallel π-stacking interaction[38] (Phe383-Phe253′). The slipped-parallel π-

stacking interaction of E2o occurs near the three-fold axis of the trimer and may form a

delocalized π-electron network as previously suggested in *C. thermophilum* E2p between

Arg384[30]. By sequence and structure alignment, Phe383 in bovine E2o is the equivalent residue

of Arg384 in *C. thermophilum* E2p. Notably, in bovine E2o, the delocalized π-electron network is

extended within the three-fold axis and encompasses Phe253, Phe383, and Tyr419 (Fig. 4d).

This delocalized π-electron network is also present in human E2o but not in bovine E2p at this

structurally analogous position because the equivalent residues Asn575 are too distant from

each other[19] (Fig. 4d). Like mismatched puzzle pieces, the different interfaces of E2o and E2p

may prevent incorrect assembly due to co-existence of their components within the cell.

The lipoyl moiety is positioned near a flexible gatekeeper in the catalytic site

In the cryoEM density maps of E2p, a region of flexibility has been identified: a β-turn

connecting βE and βF near the interdomain active site (Fig. 5a). Due to missing density at the

βE-βF β-turn, two residues (Ala519 and Gly520) are unmodelled in our E2p model (Fig. 5b).

Although the corresponding density is not missing in E2o, it is still weaker relative to that of the

adjacent residues. This missing or weak density has also been observed in previous cryoEM

density maps[13,15,19,20,31]. The density of the adjacent residue (Leu521 in E2p and Leu329 in E2o)

is well-defined. This leucine is a conserved gatekeeper residue for the binding of the lipoyl

moiety[17,25]. This gatekeeper residue is proximal to the interdomain active site, near the catalytic

residues Ser566 and His620′ in E2p, and positions the dihydrolipoamide (DHLA) into the

catalytic site upon binding of CoA, as suggested previously[17].

In the E2p cryoEM density map, a putative density for the lipoyl moiety was identified

near the catalytic residues Ser566 and His620′ and the gatekeeper residue Leu521 (Fig. 5b).

When the contour level is decreased, the density forms a thin extension through the active site

channel and accommodates a model of DHLA[35] (adopted from PDB ID: 1EAE) (Fig. 5c). The

E2o cryoEM density map also contains a putative lipoyl moiety density (Supplementary Fig.

S6a). Following the trajectory of these densities, the dihydrolipoyllysine enters the active site

from the exterior of the E2 core at an entrance at the end of a cleft between H1 and a turn

connecting βH and βI1, as previously depicted in *E. Coli* E2p in the resting state[31]. Densities of

the lipoyl moiety are not present in cryoEM density maps of native *C. thermophilum* E2p and

E2o and *N. crassa* E2p[13,20,30]. In the E2o density map at low contour level, weak cylindrical

densities reminiscent of β-strands from the LD or helices from the PSBD are observed to the left

and to the right of the entrance of the cleft. The left densities are located similarly to that of the

LD in native *E. coli* E2p in the resting state[31]. (Supplementary Fig. S6b). These additional

densities extend along the cleft towards the active site entrance. We attempted to fit an LD

model and PBSD models from NMR (PDB ID: 1LAC; 1W4H) and Alphafold prediction[39–42] (AF-

P11179-F1; AF-P11181-F1), but there are mismatches between the cylindrical densities and the

LD models when the dihydrolipoyllysine-containing loop is positioned adjacent to the active site

channel. These observations combined with structural variation between LD domain models

suggest that the β-sheets of the LD may be conformationally variable and undergo

conformational and positional changes during catalysis.

To search for E3BP, we expanded the symmetry of the trimer vertex and pentameric

face sub-particles and reconstructed them asymmetrically (C_1) (Supplementary Fig. S7a). Due

to low resolution of the C_1 reconstructions, we are unable to utilize side chain densities to

distinguish sequence identity. Sequence alignment between E2p and E3BP and fitting of

predicted E3BP structures (PDB ID: 6H60; AF-P22439-F1) show two notable regions of

difference in E3BP within the IC domain[26,40,41]: a three-residue shorter linker between H2 and

H3 and a three-residue longer interior hairpin between βI2 and βJ (Supplementary Fig. S7b).

We searched the classes of the trimer vertex and pentameric C_1 sub-particles but were unable

to identify any differences corresponding to the presence of E3BP (Supplementary Fig. S7c).

E3BP is not evenly distributed in the trimers[26], and current 3D classification methods may place

too much weight on the larger features in the conserved fold of E2p and E3BP, which may

reduce the quality of asymmetric reconstructions of the interior hairpin. Heterogeneity of E3BP

distribution precludes identification and experimental structural determination of E3BP from

native mammalian PDC.

Different knob-and-socket intertrimer interactions prevent heterologous self-assembly of

E2 trimers

E2o and E2p have near-identical structures, yet they assemble into core scaffolds with different

geometry. The cubic and icosahedral geometries are related by principles of quasi-equivalence

and Euclidean geometry[28]. Each IC domain trimer vertex of the core is bound to its neighboring

trimers through a palindromic two-fold related intertrimer interface[19,25] (Fig. 6a; Supplementary

Fig. S8a). The hydrophobic C-terminal 3_{10}-helix (H7) of each IC domain binds to a hydrophobic

pocket formed by residues of H2*, H7*, and the N-terminal end of H4* (asterisk is used to

denote the partner IC domain across the two-fold related interface) on the opposite IC domain in

a knob-and-socket interaction (Supplementary Fig. S8b). This binding is further stabilized by

electrostatic interactions from oppositely charged surfaces lining the exteriors of H7 and the

hydrophobic pocket (Supplementary Fig. S8c). In actinobacteria E2p, where H7 folds back

against rather than away from the IC domain, the knob-and-socket interaction cannot occur, so

the trimers are unable assemble into a core[15].

The symmetries for bovine E2o and E2p are obtained from a different combination of

interactions (Supplementary Table S2). The intertrimer interface has an average of 18.7 (SD =

0.49) hydrogen bonds and an average buried surface area of 1102 Å^2 (SD = 0.46) in E2o and

an average of 5.6 (SD = 0.63) hydrogen bonds and an average buried surface area of 825 Å^2

(SD = 14.18) in E2p. The exterior of the E2o socket is more charged than that of E2p

(Supplementary Fig. S8c), which leads to the greater number of hydrogen bonds at the E2o

intertrimer interface. Additionally, the exterior surface of the socket in E2o and E2p are

oppositely charged from one another. Although the residues comprising the hydrophobic

sockets between the two species are similar, the shapes of the sockets are different to

accommodate likewise different knobs. The E2p knob has one hydrophobic surface that binds a

single hydrophobic pocket in the socket. However, the E2o knob has an additional hydrophobic

surface on the opposite side of the knob, and the E2o socket contains two pockets to

accommodate this difference (Supplementary Fig. S8b). Similar to the purpose of the

interdomain interface differences to prevent heterologous assembly of E2 subunits, the

oppositely charged exterior surfaces and differently shaped knob-and-socket of the intertrimer

interface between E2o and E2p suggest a means of preventing heterologous assembly of E2

trimers during core formation.

To compare the relative positions of trimers at the intertrimer interface between E2o and

E2p, the IC domains of the two-fold related interface were aligned by superimposition at one

trimer vertex (Fig. 6b). The fold of H2 and the position of H7 differ between E2o and E2p. H7 of

E2o (Pro448-Leu453) has a length of six residues and has two additional residues (Asp454 and

Leu455) appended at the C-terminus. H7 of E2p (Pro642-Leu646) has a length of five residues

and one additional residue (Leu647) at the C-terminus. H7 is positioned more closely to H4* in

E2p than in E2o, which is enabled in E2p by an additional hydrogen bond between H7 and H4*

and fewer hydrogen bonds between H7 and H2*. (Supplementary Table S2). In E2o, H2 has a

length of 18 residues (Ser259-His276) and is comprised of a helix-kink-helix with the kink

starting at residue 268. In E2p, H2 has a length of 14 residues (Gly455-Leu468) and is a single,

uninterrupted helix (Fig. 6c). The H2 kink in E2o positions the C-terminal end of the helix more

closely against H7* for hydrogen bonds between Lys275 and His276 with Asp454* and

Asp454*, respectively. The different interactions at the knob-and-socket stabilize E2 IC trimers

at angles that enable the Euclidean geometry relationship between a cube and icosahedron.

Discussion

Advances in cryoEM and its integration with mass spectrometry analysis have enabled the

structural characterization of intact, native complexes[32,43,44]. Endogenous methods have recently

been applied to determine structures of PDC in fungi and bacteria[13,20,27,30,31]. Here, we extended

these methods to the study of mammalian tissues and determined structures of native bovine

OGDC and PDC at sufficient resolutions for model building of their E2 IC domains. Analysis of

OGDC and PDC from the same source enables direct comparison between the two protein

species. Although E2 IC domains share a nearly identical fold to conduct analogous reactions,

nuanced differences in their structures highlight the divergent evolution of α-keto acid

dehydrogenase complexes to meet the requirements of different organisms with varied cellular

contents and metabolic environments.

Besides the structures reported here, native structures of α-keto acid dehydrogenase

complexes from the same endogenous source only became available early this year for the

fungus *C. thermophilum*, where both PDC and OGDC were structurally characterized[20]. In

contrast to our bovine E2o and E2p structures, the back-folded N-terminal region comprised of

βA and H1 is absent in *C. thermophilum* E2p. Interestingly, H1 is still present in *C. thermophilum*

E2o from the same size-exclusion chromatography fraction[20], and is also present in native *N.*

crassa and *E. coli* E2p[13,31]. Given that the structured conformation of the N-terminal region is

stabilized by electrostatic interactions between βA and H1 with the βC-βD turn (Fig. 4c), the

back-folded conformation may exist transiently depending on the activity state of the complex.

The unfolded state has been suggested to be necessary for unhindered insertion of the

lipoyl moiety[30]. For *E. coli* E2p in the absence of pyruvate, H1 is folded and binding of the N-

terminus extends towards the three-fold axis, which was suggested to position and stabilize the

E2-LD complex in a resting state[31]. Our sub-particle reconstructions show the N-terminal region

extending outwards from both the two-fold related interface and about the three-fold axis

simultaneously (Supplementary Fig. S4c), which indicates that multiple conformations of the

PSBD linker are present. The conformation of the linker may correspond to the transient binding

of E1 and E3. There could be a potential mixture of activity or assembly states in different lysate

fractions when complexes are sorted by size, and our single-particle cryoEM analysis of the

entire core might have only reconstructed the most stable or populous conformation or a

potential hybrid of the active and resting states.

The interdomain interactions between an E2 IC domain and its neighbor are not

conserved between E2p and E2o. Bovine and human E2o contain an extensive delocalized π-

electron network at the three-fold axis (Fig. 4d) that is absent in their E2p counterparts[19,25]. The

differences in interdomain interfaces between E2p and E2o within an organism may enable

correct self-assembly within a milieu of components in the mitochondrial matrix. *C.*

thermophilum E2o may also have a similar delocalized π-electron network, but instead with

Met350 at the analogous position of Phe383 in E2o[20]. Met-aromatic motifs can provide

additional stabilization compared to purely hydrophobic interactions[45]. Rather than a delocalized

π-electron network of aromatic residues, *C. thermophilum* E2p instead possesses a potential

stabilizing arginine cluster that is absent in both its E2o counterpart, mammalian E2p, and

mesophilic fungus *N. crassa* E2p[13,20,30]. The greater interdomain interactions could contribute

towards increased thermal stability needed for thermophiles compared to mesophiles as a result

of divergent evolution.

While there are pre-existing structures of α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes, the

diversity of interactions within these complexes between different organisms occludes direct

comparison for determinants of assembly. Although *E.coli* E2p and bovine E2b are both cubic

like bovine E2o, their interdomain interface interactions differ greatly. The knob of *E. coli* E2p

has a semicylindrical hydrophobic surface that complements a narrow, elongated hydrophobic

socket[31]. Bovine E2b has a double-sided knob like bovine E2o[17], but the hydrophobic surfaces

are rotated about and have different sizes. Although α-keto acid dehydrogenase complexes can

share the same geometry, the interdomain interactions that hold the complex cores together

differ between both family members and model organisms. Thus, structural characterization of

samples from the same organism are needed to describe distinct interactions.

In mammals, E3BP substitutes for a corresponding E2 in the core scaffold as

determined by biochemical analysis instead of being an additional subunit as it is in

fungus[13,23,26,27], and no internal density was observed for our native bovine PDC structure.

Because of the heterogeneous arrangement of E3BP and peripheral E1 and E3 subunits, PDC

and other α-keto acid dehydrogenase complex may need to be studied at the individual level.

Tomography could identify peripheral subunits and avoid issues of classification for E3BP if

sufficient resolution could be reached in the future.

Advancements in cryoEM have enabled atomic modeling of native α-keto acid

dehydrogenase complexes and other endogenous complexes. Looking forward, faster direct

electron detectors and improved cryoEM grid preparation methods will improve acquisition of

particles for low population species for unambiguous identification and atomic modeling.

Heterogeneous reconstruction could enable visualization of distinct protein conformations[46,47].

Machine-learning based methods in particle picking[48], structure prediction[40], and identification

can resolve unknown identities in a society of proteins[32]. Structural determination of native

geometrically variable complexes from similar folds, exemplified by the cubic and icosahedral

complexes presented here, should not only provide new biological insight but also inform protein

engineering applications by providing an opportunity for comparison within the same

environment to identify the determinants of protein architecture.

Materials and methods

Preparation of bovine mitochondria

Bovine mitochondria were prepared from *Bos taurus* kidneys as described with modifications[49]. 6 kg of bovine kidneys were collected and chilled on ice immediately after slaughter. Cortical tissues were cut into small slices (0.5-1 cm) and soaked in 4 L water for 1 h and then washed with 2 L kidney buffer (20 mM potassium phosphate pH 7.6, 250 mM sucrose, 1 mM EDTA). The slices were passed through an electric meat grinder, and the ground meat was suspended in kidney buffer with 10 mM 2-mercaptoethanol and diluted to a final volume of 12 L. The suspension was homogenized using an Ultra-Turrax (IKA) homogenizer (40 s), filtered through 8 layers of cheesecloth accompanied with sieve, and diluted to a total volume of 18 L using kidney buffer. The resulting supernatant was centrifuged at 2,000-3,000 × g for 10 min. The supernatant was decanted and further centrifuged at 5,600 × g for 25 min. The lysosome-enriched fluffy layer was carefully removed from the mitochondrial pellet. The pellets were resuspended in a total of 8 L kidney buffer and filtered again through 8 layers of cheesecloth. The suspension was homogenized using an Ultra-Turrax homogenizer (30 s), diluted to 12 L with kidney buffer, and centrifuged at 5,600 × g for 25 min. The pellets were resuspended with kidney buffer with 0.2 mM PMSF, 0.25 µg/ml aprotinin, 0.14 µg/ml pepstatin, and 1 µg/ml leupeptin in a total volume of 4 L. The suspension was treated with 0.01% digitonin for 15 min to remove outer mitochondrial membranes and diluted to 12 L using kidney buffer. The resulting mitoplasts were concentrated by centrifugation at ~25,600 × g for 20 min followed by removal of excess kidney buffer. The pellet of the final step was flash frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at −80 °C.

Isolation of bovine PDC and OGDC complexes

100 g of frozen mitoplasts were thawed in 150 mL lysis buffer [20 mM potassium phosphate pH 7.6, 50 mM NaCl, 0.02 mM thiamin pyrophosphate, 20 mM $MgCl_2$, 2 mM EGTA, protease inhibitors (2 mM PMSF, 2.5 µg/mL aprotinin, 1.4 µg/mL pepstatin, and 10 µg/mL leupeptin)]. The sample was diluted to 337.5 mL with lysis buffer. 37.5 mL Triton X-100 buffer [lysis buffer

components in addition with 16% (v/v) Triton X-100] was then added, and the sample was

stirred for 15 min at 4 °C. The suspension was centrifuged (SLA-3000, 13,000 rpm, 20 min,

4 °C), and the supernatant was PEG precipitated in 5% (w/v) PEG 10,000 for 15 min. The

precipitate was collected by centrifugation (2,500 × g, 7 min, 4 °C) and re-suspended in 35 mL

lysis buffer. The suspension was homogenized using a Dounce homogenizer and centrifuged

(SW28 Ti rotor, 28,000 rpm, 17 min, 4 °C). The resulting supernatant was loaded onto 50% (w/v)

sucrose cushions (15 ml) and centrifuged (SW41 rotor, 40,000 rpm, 24 h, 4 °C). Pellets were

each dissolved in 0.5 mL <u>sample buffer</u> (50 mM MOPS-KOH buffer pH 7.0, 0.02 mM thiamin

pyrophosphate, 10 mM $MgCl_2$, 0.1 mM EGTA, protease inhibitors, 1mM DTT) by shaking at

230 rpm for 1 h and clarified by centrifugation (SLA-3000, 16,000 rpm, 20 min, 4 °C). The

sample was loaded onto 10–40% (w/v) sucrose gradients (1 mL per gradient) and centrifuged

(SW41 Ti, 26,000 rpm, 12 h, 4 °C). The gradients were fractionated and assessed by SDS-

PAGE and western blot using a PDC complex antibody cocktail (Abcam) that contains four

different mAbs reacting specifically with E1α, E1β, and E2/E3BP. The fractions containing PDC

and OGDC complexes were pooled, dialyzed to <u>final buffer</u> (50 mM MOPS-KOH buffer pH 7.0,

0.02 mM thiamin pyrophosphate, 1 mM $MgCl_2$, 1 mM NAD+, 0.1 mM EGTA, protease inhibitors,

1 mM DTT), and concentrated for cryoEM analysis. Liquid chromatography-tandem mass

spectrometry was performed on the sucrose gradient fractions. Gradient fractions corresponding

to OGDC were subjected to gel filtration on a Superose 6 column (GE Healthcare) to remove

ferritin.

CryoEM sample preparation and image acquisition

CryoEM grids were prepared by using an FEI Mark IV Vitrobot (Thermo Fisher Scientific). 3 μL

of sample was applied onto a glow-discharged lacey carbon copper grid with a thin, continuous

carbon film (Ted Pella). After waiting for 30 s, the grid was blotted (8°C, 100% humidity, 10 s

blotting time, 1 blotting force) and plunge-frozen in liquid ethane. Grids were loaded into a Titan

Krios (Thermo Fisher Scientific) equipped with a Gatan Imaging Filter (GIF) Quantum LS and a

Gatan K2 Summit direct electron detector. Movies were recorded with SerialEM at super-

resolution mode[50]. The nominal magnification was 105,000 ×, corresponding to a calibrated

pixel size of 0.68 Å at the specimen level. The total exposure time for each movie was set to 8 s

and fractionated equally into 40 frames, leading to a total dosage of ~45 electrons/$Å^2$. Defocus

was set to -1.8 to -2.6 μm.

Image processing

The movies were motion corrected with MotionCor2 (Zheng, 2017). 6,959 good images were

selected from a total of 9,029 by manual screening. After defocus determination by

CTFFIND4[51], particles were automatically picked using Gautomatch (https://www2.mrc-

lmb.cam.ac.uk/research/locally-developed-software/zhang-software/). 33,138 particles for PDC

complex and 41,165 particles for OGDC complex were obtained by 2D and 3D classification in

RELION-3[52]. FSC calculations were performed in RELION-3.

For PDC complex, all particles from the previous step were recentered and extracted

with a box size of 576 pixels. These particles were refined with icosahedral symmetry, resulting

in a map with a resolution of 3.8 Å. To get better density for the peripheral E1 and E3 subunits,

a structure-guided sub-particle strategy was used. First, the STAR file from refinement was

expanded with icosahedral symmetry, leading to a total of 1,988,280 particles. Second, the

center of the expanded particles was shifted to one trimer or pentameric face. Finally, 3D

classification and refinement focused on the putative E1 and E3 region was performed.

For OGDC complex, all particles from the previous step were recentered and extracted

with a box size of 384 pixels. These particles were refined with octahedral symmetry and a

mask around the E2 core, resulting in a map with a resolution of 3.5 Å. To get better density for

the peripheral E1 and E3 subunits, a structure-guided sub-particle strategy was used. First, the

STAR file from refinement was expanded with octahedral symmetry, leading to a total of

987,960 particles. Second, the center of the expanded particles was shifted to one face of the

cubic core, and particles were extracted in RELION with a box size of 208. Finally, 3D

classification and refinement of the external area was performed.

Atomic modeling

For model building, human E2o (PDB ID: 6H05) and human E2p (PDB ID: 6CT0) were used as

templates for bovine E2o and E2p IC domains, respectively[19,25]. Each monomeric subunit model

was fitted into the respective cryoEM density map of the core scaffold using ChimeraX[53],

mutated and manually refined in Coot[54], and real-space refined in Phenix[55]. The monomer

model was then duplicated to the appropriate stoichiometry and fit into the respective map and

refined iteratively using ISOLDE and Phenix[56]. FindMySequence and checkMySequence were

later used to confirm the identity of OGDC[32,33]. Electrostatic potential maps were calculated in

ChimeraX. Sequence alignments were performed [Sequence alignments performed with Clustal

Omega and EMBOSS Needle on the EMBL-EBI server[57–59]. Structure predictions were obtained

from Alphafold using Colabfold or the EBI database[40,41,60].

Data availability Mass spectrometry data and source gel/blot images are provided with this

paper. CryoEM density maps of the icosahedral bovine PDC core and cubic bovine OGDC core

have been deposited in the Electron Microscopy Data Bank under accession numbers EMD-

XXXX and EMD-XXXX, respectively. The coordinates of the bovine E2p IC domain and E2o IC

domain have been deposited in the Protein Data Bank under accession numbers XXXX and

XXXX, respectively.

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Contributions Z.H.Z. conceived the project and supervised the research. S.L designed the

experimental protocols. S.L. and X.X. prepared samples, collected cryoEM images, and

determined the 3D structures. Z.L. and J.Z. built atomic models and made figures. J.Z.

interpreted the results and wrote the manuscript; all authors reviewed and approved the paper.

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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Figure 1. Preparation of bovine OGDC and PDC from native tissue lysate. (a)
Organization of E2 and E3BP domains. **(b)** Workflow for extraction of PDC and OGDC from
bovine tissue lysate. Bovine kidney was homogenized to isolate mitochondria. Mitochondrial
lysates were then fractionated by sucrose gradient. Samples were evaluated for α-keto acid
dehydrogenase complex by SDS-PAGE, negative stain, and mass spectrometry. CryoEM
reconstruction of these samples yielded icosahedral and cubic cores surrounded by
peripheral densities.

Figure 2. CryoEM reconstruction and identification of bovine OGDC core. (a) 3D
reconstruction of the full OGDC with octahedral symmetry showing external densities (orange)
around the core density (grey). Linkers extend from each E2o subunit towards a density along
the edges of the core. Additional large densities are present atop the faces of the core. **(b)** Two
views of the cryoEM density map of E2o core colored by radius, with half of our E2o atomic
model assembly in the right. **(c)** Rainbow-colored ribbon of E2o IC domain atomic model with
secondary structures labeled. Resolvable N-terminal residues (blue) and C-terminus (red) are
indicated. **(d)** Structure of the E2o IC domain trimer, colored by subunits. **(e)** Sequence
alignment of E2o and E2b with sidechain fit of corresponding E2o sequence into cryoEM density
map. Green letters indicate conserved residues between E2o and E2b that establish landmark
features in cryoEM density. Red letters and arrows indicate mismatch of residue identity in E2b
with corresponding cryoEM density, thus establishing the map to be that of E2o.

Figure 3. CryoEM reconstructions of bovine PDC and atomic structure of native E2p IC domain. (a) 3D reconstruction of the full PDC with icosahedral symmetry shows external densities (orange) around the core density (grey). **(b)** Two views of the cryoEM density map of E2p core colored by radius, with our E2p atomic model assembly of a hemisphere shown in the left panel. **(c)** Rainbow-colored ribbon of E2p IC domain atomic model with secondary structures labeled. Resolvable N-terminal residues (blue) and C-terminus (red) are indicated. **(d)** Two views of the atomic model of the E2p IC domain trimer, colored by subunits.

Figure 4. Structure comparison between PDC and OGDC E2 IC domains. (a)
Superimposition of E2p and E2o IC domains with the N-terminal linker, βC-βD turn, and interior
βI2-βJ hairpin indicated by an oval, box, and circle, respectively. E2p has a longer interior
hairpin than that of E2o (circle). N-terminal tail diverges at different angles between endogenous
recombinant E2o (oval). E2o has a more extended βC-βD turn than that of E2p. (box). **(b)**
Comparison of βC-βD turn from E2o and E2p of various organisms (left). **(c)** Location of N-
terminal linker and βC-βD turn contact in the E2o trimer. Lower inset shows residue interactions
between R226 and K228 of N-terminal linker from the yellow subunit with E310′ of βC-βD turn
from the cyan subunit. Right inset: electrostatic surface potential of the same area as that in the
lower inset. The positively charged N-terminal linker (primarily blue) associates with the
negatively charged βC-βD turn (primarily red). **(d)** π-stacking interactions present at the three-
fold axis of E2o trimer but absent in E2p trimer. Expanded views along the three-fold axis of E2o
shows an extended π-electron network formed by F253, F383, and Y419.

Figure 5. Flexible elements within the bovine PDC E2 IC domain trimers. (a) Ribbon-model of E2p trimer (colored by subunits) with boxes highlighting the relative locations of the flexible βE-βF turn (black box). **(b)** Enlarged views of the βE-βF turn near interdomain active site relative to conserved catalytic residues (teal), Ser566 from the red subunit and His620 from the green subunit. Two residues (Ala519 and Gly520) are unmodeled in the turn due to absence of continuous cryoEM density (semi-transparent gray; for clarity, only those for βE-turn-βF are shown), suggesting flexibility of the residues in the turn. The conserved leucine gatekeeper (orange) is next to these unmodeled residues. A weak density (pink) bordered by catalytic and gatekeeper residues within active site is visible. **(c)** CryoEM density of the same region of (B) shown at a decreased threshold as semi-transparent pink for the lipoyl moiety or gray for the surrounding region. Atomic models for the lipoyl moiety (from PDB ID: 1EAE) and the surrounding area are shown as sticks and ribbon, respectively.

Figure 6. Differences in the E2 inter-trimer interactions between PDC and OGDC. (a) Two orthogonal views (perpendicular and parallel to the 2-fold axis) of interacting E2 trimers from the cryoEM density maps of PDC (green) and OGDC (blue). **(b)** Comparison of the intertrimer interface in PDC (green) and OGDC (blue). Interactions involve only two subunits, one from each trimer, as apparent from the left panel where the atomic model (ribbons) of the interacting subunits are superposed in their respective densities. The two interacting subunits shown in (A) are aligned through their left subunit (monomer 1) and shown together to identify differences at the interacting interfaces with boxed regions shown as insets to highlight differences of their corresponding H2 helix. The inset in red box shows the knob-and-socket interaction of H2 and H7 (colored; rest of ribbon transparent for clarity) at two-fold interface in E2p and E2o. **(c)** Superimposition and sequence alignment of H2 in E2p and E2o. The helix-kink-helix (kink highlighted in blue) is present in E2o but absent in E2p. Inset in the orange box: Enlarged orthogonal view of the diverging H2 trajectories.

Supplementary Fig. 1. Raw images of gels and blots. (a) SDS-PAGE. **(b)** Immunoblot.
Numbers below lanes indicate sucrose gradient fraction.

780 Å

699 **Supplementary Fig. 2. Negative stain 2D class averages.** Negative stain 2D class averages
700 show cubic and icosahedral cores with peripheral density. Additional classes of unknown protein
701 species were also observed.

Supplementary Fig. 3. CryoEM data processing workflow. (a) Representative cryoEM micrograph of lysate containing PDC and OGDC. **(b)** CryoEM 2D class averages depicting icosahedral and cubic cores with smeared peripheral density. Classes of additional unidentified protein were also obtained. **(c)** FSC of E2p and E2o core. **(d)** Data processing workflow for reconstruction of E2o and E2p cores and sub-particles.

Supplementary Fig. 4. Symmetry expansion and sub-particle reconstruction of the PDC
and OGDC cores. (a) Top (left) and side (right) views of sub-particle reconstruction with C_1
symmetry of cubic face of OGDC. **(b)** Top (left) and side (right) views of sub-particle
reconstruction with C_1 symmetry of pentameric face of PDC. **(c)** Low-pass filtered (20 Å) OGDC
sub-particle map with density external to fitted E2o model in orange. **(d)** Low-pass filtered (20 Å)
PDC sub-particle map with density external to fitted E2p model in orange. **(e)** Sliced view of
PDC sub-particle at LD binding site. Additional densities at LD binding site are circled.

Supplementary Fig. 5. βH-βB′ interdomain interactions. View of the βH-βB′ interface within
the interdomain trimer for E2p (left) and E2o (right). βH (orange; cyan) forms three hydrogen
bonds with βB′ (green; magenta) in both E2p and E2o. The E2o interface has an additional
slipped-parallel π-stacking interaction between Phe383 and Phe253′.

Supplementary Fig. 6. Lipoyl moiety and tentative lipoyl domain density in native E2o. (a)
Weak, thin density within active site channel of E2o corresponding to putative lipoyl moiety
(magenta). Catalytic residues (teal) indicated for reference. **(b)** Extra, cylindrical density
(orange) located near previously proposed LD binding site.

Supplementary Fig. 7. Search for E3BP in asymmetric sub-particle reconstructions. (a)
Representative pentameric face (left) and trimer (right) sub-particle reconstructions with C_1
symmetry. **(b)** Sequence alignment between bovine E2p and E3BP. Three-residue differences
are indicated in red. **(c)** Atomic model of E2p IC domain fit into trimer sub-particle reconstruction
with C_1 symmetry. The interior loop in E3BP is extended compared to that of E2p and is a key
feature for distinguishing the two components. All cryoEM densities of interior loops from each
trimer class appear identical and fit E2p closely. Enlarged view of the boxed area depicts atomic
models fit into cryoEM density of interior loop. The extended loop of predicted human E3BP
models (PDB ID: 6H60; AF-P22439-F1) are not accommodated by the cryoEM density.

Supplementary Fig. 8. Electrostatic surface potential and hydrophobicity of E2o two-fold related intertrimer interface. (a) Two E2o (left) and E2p (right) IC domains at two-fold related intertrimer interface superposed in their respective density (transparent grey) and colored by chain. **(b**) Open-book view of hydrophobicity at intertrimer interface. A hydrophobic knob on each subunit binds to a complementary hydrophobic pocket on the partner subunit across the interface. Dotted lines indicate contacting surfaces. **(c)** Open-book view of electrostatic surface potential at intertrimer interface. Oppositely charged surfaces on the exterior mediate electrostatic interactions between the two subunits at the intertrimer interface.

740 **Supplementary Table 1. CryoEM data collection, refinement, and validation statistics**

	#1 OGDC (EMDB-xxxx) (PDB xxxx)	#2 PDC (EMDB-xxxx) (PDB xxxx)
Data collection and processing		
Magnification	105,000 ×	105,000 ×
Voltage (kV)	300	300
Electron exposure (e$^-$/Å^2)	45	45
Defocus range (μm)	-1.8 to -2.6	-1.8 to -2.6
Pixel size (Å)	1.36	1.36
Symmetry imposed	O	I1
Initial particle images (no.)	989,189	989,189
Final particle images (no.)	41,165	33,138
Map resolution (Å)	3.5	3.8
FSC threshold	0.143	0.143
Map sharpening B factor (Å^2)	-152	-150
Refinement		
Model-to-map fit, mask CC	0.88	0.87
Model composition		
Non-hydrogen atoms	44496	104640
Protein residues	5664	13560
Ligands	0	0
Mean Isotropic B factors (Å^2)		
Protein	46.08	78.36
Ligand	N/A	N/A
R.m.s. deviations		
Bond lengths (Å)	0.004	0.004
Bond angles (°)	0.944	0.940
Validation		
MolProbity score	1.13	1.39
Clashscore	3.05	7.12
Rotamer outliers (%)	0.5	0.09
Ramachandran plot		
Favored (%)	97.86	98.54
Allowed (%)	2.14	1.46
Outliers (%)	0.00	0.00

742 **Supplementary Table 2. Interactions at the intertrimer interface**

Interactions	Cubic E2o core	Icosahedral E2p core
Hydrogen bonds (donor-acceptor)		
H2 and H7 interaction		
	Arg267-Asp447	(Lys641-Glu463)
	His268-Asp447	
	Lys275-Asp454	
	(Lys275-Asp455)	
	His276-Asp454	
	Arg449-Asn260	
	Arg449-Glu263 [×3]	
H4 and H7 interaction		
	Tyr342-Leu452	Leu534-Leu646
		Glu535-Leu647
Hydrophobic residues composing knob		
	Leu452	Ile643
	Leu453	Leu646
	Leu455	
Hydrophobic residues lining socket		
	Met264	Val460
	Phe272	Leu464
	Leu280	Phe479
	Tyr342	Leu534
	Pro448	Pro642
	Leu451	Met645

Duplicate two-fold interactions not listed. Parentheses indicate interface-variable interaction. Equivalent interactions indicated by matching colors. Arg449-Glu263 share three hydrogen bonds.