Atomic resolution structures of the methane-activating enzyme in

anaerobic methanotrophy reveal extensive post-translational modifications

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Abstract

Anaerobic methanotrophic archaea (ANME) are crucial to planetary carbon cycling. They oxidise methane in anoxic niches by transferring electrons directly to nitrate or metal oxides and alternatively to sulfate-reducing bacteria. Due to their physiological complexity, no ANME species have been isolated, hampering the biochemical investigation of the enzymatic processes involved in anaerobic methane oxidation. To study the methane-capturing enzyme of these microorganisms, we circumvented the isolation barrier by exploiting microbial enrichments of freshwater nitrate-reducing ANME-2d grown in bioreactors, and marine ANME-2c in syntrophy with bacterial partners. The crystal structures of their Methyl-Coenzyme M Reductases (MCRs), refined to true atomic resolution, provided the most precise image of the enzyme to date. Despite their physiological differences, these ANMEs have extremely conserved MCR structures, similar to homologs from methanogenic *Methanosarcinales,* rather than the phylogenetically distant MCR of ANME-1 isolated from Black Sea mats. The three studied MCRs are highly modified, with seven post-translational modifications. Among them was a novel 3(S)-methylhistidine on the γ-chain of both ANME-2d MCRs. Labelling with gaseous krypton did not reveal any internal channels that would facilitate alkane diffusion to the active site as observed in the ethane-specialized enzyme. Based on our data, the methanotrophic MCRs should follow the same radical reaction mechanism proposed for the methane-generating homologues. The described pattern of post-translational modifications underscores the importance of native purification as a powerful approach to discovering intrinsic enzymatic features in uncultivated microorganisms existing in nature.

Introduction

In light of climate change, studies about planetary methane fluxes have become increasingly important due to the global impact of the greenhouse gas. In anoxic marine sediments, about 71% of biogenic methane is transformed into the less potent greenhouse gas CO_2 through the process of anaerobic oxidation of methane (AOM)[1]. The same is true in terrestrial and freshwater systems, where AOM may account for up to 50% reduction in methane emissions in freshwater wetlands[2]. The only microorganisms capable of performing AOM without the use of oxygen as a methane-activating agent are anaerobic methanotrophic archaea (ANME)[3, 4]. All ANME groups have been found in marine sediments except ANME-2d[5, 6]. Electrons retrieved during the complete oxidation of methane can be transferred to sulfate-reducing partner bacteria (e.g., *Desulfobacterota*), most likely through direct interspecies electron transfer (DIET) via nanowires[7, 8]. Reports proposed that some ANMEs performed non-syntrophic AOM by coupling methane oxidation to Fe(III), Mn(IV), or humic substances reduction[9-12]. In addition, freshwater ANME-2d can reduce nitrate[13] or colonise electrodes and generate electricity[14].

Despite their common ability to turn methane into CO_2, ANME-1 and ANME-2/ANME-3 are phylogenetically distant. To understand their physiological differences, it is of utter importance to investigate the fundamental molecular mechanism of AOM. Despite extensive efforts, the gathered biochemical information on ANMEs is scarce due to the absence of any axenic cultures. However, some laboratories have succeeded in obtaining enrichments of microbial consortia[15-17], a strenuous process due to the extremely long doubling times of ANME. This achievement can represent a turning point in deciphering how these microbes catabolise methane and might inspire biotechnological applications.

Methane capture, the first reaction in AOM, has been proposed to be carried out by the Methyl-coenzyme M reductase (MCR). Accordingly, the reaction would follow the reverse direction of methanogenesis[18]. In the proposed mechanism, the heterodisulfide, made of Coenzyme M (HS-CoM) and Coenzyme B (CoB-SH), would react with methane to generate methyl-S-CoM and free CoB-SH through a radical mechanism catalysed by the Ni-containing tetrapyrrole cofactor F_{430}[19, 20]. Methane conversion to methyl-S-CoM was previously proved in the methanogenic enzyme from *Methanothermobacter marburgensis*[21] despite its unfavourable thermodynamics (Gibbs free energy change of +30 kJ.mol^{-1} of transformed methane)[4]. To perform this difficult process, ANMEs produce considerable quantities of MCR, which is by far the most abundant cellular enzyme[18, 22, 23]. In addition, a

thermodynamic pull allowing an immediate conversion of methyl-S-CoM should proceed, leading to subsequent transformation to CO_2.

MCR quaternary structure consists of a dimer of heterotrimers $(\alpha\beta\gamma)_2$ harbouring the cofactor F_{430} in each active site[20]. The catalytic chamber and its close surroundings contain many post-translational modifications (PTMs) that vary among different methanogens and are located on the α-subunit. No correlation has been observed so far between the PTMs and phylogeny. While for some PTMs the installation machinery has been resolved, their physiological functions remain elusive[24-27]. The structures of ten methanogenic MCRs have yielded considerable information, highlighting conserved overall features[19, 28]. In contrast, the MCR structure from ANME-1 revealed unique traits, including a modified methylthio-F_{430} cofactor, a cysteine-rich patch, and two different PTMs (*i.e.*, a C7-hydroxy-tryptophan and a methionine sulfoxide)[29], corroborated by biochemical studies[18, 22].

The unique traits hint towards the presence of other unexpected features in ANME MCRs. Acquiring snapshots of the phylogenetically different counterparts in ANME-2 and ANME-3 would stimulate applied research in methane mitigation. Attempts have been made to facilitate structural studies of ANME MCRs, including successful recombinant expression of ANME-1 MCR and the Ethyl-CoM reductase (ECR) specialised to activate ethane from 'Candidatus Ethanoperedens thermophilum'[30]. However, this approach is biased as the machinery for generating and installing native F_{430} variants, species-specific PTMs, and dedicated chaperones required for correct folding are absent in the recombinant host. Moreover, artefactual chimeric assemblies have been observed between the native MCR from the methanogenic host and the recombinant ANME-2 MCR-γ. Similarly, the cultivation-independent approach of computational protein structure modelling exhibits biases as the process is guided by extracted data from known models, but cannot predict the physiological cofactor, PTMs, and other unknown important functional traits such as water networks and gas channels. As an illustration, the native ECR harbours a dimethylated-F_{430} cofactor, a widened active site and unique PTMs (N^2-methylhistidine, a S-methylcysteine at a position different to the methanogenic one, and 3-methylisoleucine) that scaffold a gas channel connecting the active site to the solvent, favouring alkane diffusion[23]. Therefore, to explore the specific features of alkane-capturing enzymes, the investigation of native systems still prevails, which is a challenge in the case of non-isolated microbes such as ANMEs.

In this study, we purified MCRs directly from microbial enrichments dominated by ANME-2
to compare them with methanogenic and methanotrophic (ANME-1) homologues. The native
structures obtained at atomic resolution reveal the detailed architecture of the methane-
capturing enzyme, with the discovery of a novel PTM on the γ-subunit. These findings expand
our knowledge of this crucial carbon-cycling enzyme, highlighting the importance of studying
natural systems.

<u>Results</u>

Isolation of the core catabolic enzyme MCR from freshwater and marine ANME-2

Cultures containing an abundant population of ANME are rare due to the laborious enrichment
procedures and the long doubling time of these organisms. Successive breakthroughs in the
cultivation of ANME-2 species have enabled us to access freshwater and marine
representatives for studying differences between their MCRs through native protein
purification (Figure 1 and Supplementary Fig. S1). In all presented cases, the native protein
isolation was based on MCR tracking by following its intrinsic properties: the absorption
signature from the F_{430} cofactor and the typical pattern on denaturing gels (SDS-PAGE,
Supplementary Fig. S2).

Investigations were started on a relatively simplified system in which ANME-2d grew
independent of sulfate-reducing partners. Biological samples were retrieved from Ooijpolder
(Netherlands)(31, 32) and Vercelli rice fields (Italy)(14, 17) and cultivated in bioreactors for
>5 years, significantly enriching ANME-2d with nitrate as an electron acceptor. Metagenomic
analysis of the Ooijpolder samples directly obtained during sampling time showed a read-based
relative abundance of 28% 'Ca. Methanoperedens sp.' BLZ2 (Supplementary Fig. S1)(33)
(further referred to as ANME-2d[O]). In comparison, metagenomic analysis of the Vercelli rice
field enrichment sample showed a read-based relative abundance of 9% 'Ca.
Methanoperedens' (Supplementary Fig S1), with the main strain 'Ca. Methanoperedens'
Vercelli Strain 1(34) (further referred to as ANME-2d[V]). Both samples were separately
processed for protein purification, starting from 17.5 g and 12.5 g of ANME-2d[O] and ANME-
2d[V] containing biomass and yielding 114 mg and 14 mg of the major MCR, respectively
(Figure 1).

Furthermore, the purification setup was tested on a microbial enrichment from a marine system.

Here, the original sample used to initiate the enrichment was collected from the Amon Mud

Volcano in the Mediterranean Sea at a depth of 1,120 m and a temperature of 14 °C. The

microbial enrichment, grown at 20 °C in batch serum bottles since 2003, mainly gathered

ANME-2c (with a relative abundance of 32 %) along with microbial partners based on 16S

rRNA gene sequencing(7)(Supplementary Fig. S1). The processed biomass of 3.21 g contained

the microbial mixture as well as inorganic particles, and a final quantity of 4.9 mg of MCR

could be extracted.

In all cases, the final purified MCR fractions subjected to UV/Vis spectroscopy presented a

peak at 425 nm due to the F_{430} cofactor in accordance with previous reports for methanogenic

MCRs (Supplementary Fig. S2b-c)(23, 35). While the final SDS-PAGE suggests a high sample

homogeneity in solution, we could not exclude a mixture of MCRs from different subspecies.

Therefore, we used the selective crystallisation process to isolate and identify a single variant

by X-ray crystallography.

151   MCR shows a well-conserved overall architecture

X-ray crystal structures were solved for MCR from ANME-2d[O] and ANME-2d[V] and models

were refined to a final resolution of 0.98 Å (Table 1). Both MCRs crystallised in a monoclinic

space group with similar unit cell dimensions. Despite the differences in the organisms and the

slight deviations in the crystallisation solution (see methods), both MCR models shared the

same crystalline packing (Supplementary Fig. S3). The observation suggests a very close

sequence identity that would maintain the surface contacts to establish the same crystal lattice.

This was confirmed after sequencing the MCR from the initial electron density, matching the

sequences derived from metagenomic data. MCRs from ANME-2d[O] and ANME-2d[V] are

structurally almost identical with a root mean square deviations (rmsd) of 0.09 Å (with an

overall of 2,186 aligned Cα), probably due to their high sequence identity (with an identity of

95.4, 97.2, and 95.6% for α, β, and γ, respectively),

The dataset obtained for the ANME-2c enrichment was also of sufficiently high quality to

unequivocally determine the sequence from the electron density map at a resolution of 1.34 Å.

The derived sequence perfectly matched the one of ANME-2c MCR from the metagenomic

data (Supplementary Fig. S4 and S5). Based on the crystal structure, MCR from ANME-2c

seems to form stable dimers (Supplementary Fig. S3), as pointed out by the PISA server

analyses (the dimer exhibiting a ΔG^{int} of -617.2 kcal.mol^{-1} and a ΔG^{diss} of 26.8 kcal.mol^{-1}.

Analyses performed on the 25th of November 2024). The dimeric interface is exclusively

formed by the interaction of the α-subunits, mainly via the C-terminal extension. The dimeric

state does not disturb the access to the active site. Due to the low quantities of MCR obtained

at the end of the purification and the slow growth of the consortium, we were unable to test

whether this dimeric arrangement reflects a crystallisation artefact or a stable entity in solution.

Further studies will need to be carried out. On the other hand, the predicted trimeric

arrangement of the MCR from ANME-2d[O] observed in blue native PAGE(33) was not detected

in the crystal structure. Nevertheless, we cannot exclude that the purification and crystallisation

process might have disrupted a trimeric organisation occurring *in vivo*.

Despite the different environmental niches, the marine ANME-2c and freshwater ANME-2d

MCRs have high amino acid sequence identities of 63.6, 61.5, and 71.4% for α, β, and γ subunit,

respectively (Supplementary Fig. S5-6). The overall structure of the three ANME-2 MCRs

matches that of the different methanogenic MCRs, of the methanotrophic ANME-1 MCR, and

of the ECR from '*Ca.* E. thermophilum' (Figure 2, Supplementary Fig. S5-6), the closest

homolog being the MCR from *Methermicoccus shengliensis*(35). Besides the overall

similarity, notable structural differences are summarised in Figure 2. The electrostatic profile

of the surface is also similar to previously studied MCRs, with both ANME-2d members

exhibiting more pronounced positive charges at the entrance leading to the active site than a

typical methanogenic MCR (Supplementary Fig. S7).

A sealed, strictly conserved catalytic chamber covered by seven post-translational

modifications

The active site of the three ANME-2 MCRs is highly conserved across all described MCRs

from methanogenic archaea and contains a canonical F_{430} cofactor in accordance with previous

studies(22) (Figure 3, Supplementary Fig. S8). The subatomic resolution of both ANME-2d

structures enables the visualisation of the majority of hydrogen atoms and accurately depicts

the position of each ligand atom. MCRs from ANME-2c and ANME-2d[O] contain reduced

coenzymes trapped in the active site (i.e., CoM-SH and CoB-SH). However, MCR from

ANME-2d[V] exhibits a mixture of ligands. The fit to the electron density was optimal when the

model included CoM-SH, CoB-SH, the heterodisulfide, and methyl-CoM (Supplementary Fig.

S9). The methyl-CoM, modelled for the first time in an experimental structure, fits a position

proposed in a recent molecular dynamics simulation model by Polêto and colleagues with a S-
Ni distance of 3.9Å(36). However, due to its low occupancy and the requirement for
experimental validation to confirm its existence, we omitted the methyl-CoM from the final
deposited model.

The ligand-coordinating residues are almost perfectly conserved (Figure 3a-b, Supplementary
Fig. S10). In both ANME-2d, a canonical glutamine (position α341 in ANME-2c), proposed
to be important to anchor the F_{430}, and juxtaposed to the tyrosine coordinating the CoM thiol
(position α342 in ANME-2c) is substituted by a methionine (positions α343 and α346 in
ANME-2d^O and ANME-2d^V, respectively)(36). The substitution does not impact the F_{430}
position and provokes few steric displacements in the vicinity (Supplementary Fig. S11).

The discovery of a gas channel in the ethane-capturing enzyme prompted us to investigate
whether ANME-2 MCR possesses a similar access system for methane. Analysis of the internal
cavities in all three models, using CAVER software(37) with a probe radius similar to that of
methane, did not reveal tunnels protruding from the active site. In comparison, applying the
same parameters to the ECR model from '*Ca*. E. thermophilum' revealed its hydrophobic
substrate tunnel. Still, we performed krypton labelling on ANME-2c MCR crystals to verify
the existence of an accessory tunnel *via* experimental means. Based on the anomalous signal
of the dataset collected at the krypton K-edge, no signals were observed in the active site or
tracking in a hydrophobic tunnel (Figure 3c, Supplementary Fig. S12). Krypton atoms are
rather positioned on the outer shell of the protein, trapped in hydrophobic pockets, as
previously observed for the methanogenic enzyme from *M. marburgensis*(23, 38). The absence
of a dedicated gas tunnel connecting the active site to the solvent reinforces the proposed
scenario that ethane-specialised homologues evolved this strategy by introducing loop
extensions and dedicated PTMs. Enzymes targeting longer alkanes should also have a
dedicated entry cavity(19).

All three ANME-2 MCRs contained the notably high number of seven PTMs based on the
electron density model (Figure 4, Supplementary Fig. S13 and S14). ANME-2c MCR includes
the conserved N^1-methylhistidine and thioglycine, the common 5(*S*)-methylarginine, 2(*S*)-
methylglutamine, and the rarer S-methylcysteine, didehydroaspartate, and 6-
hydroxytryptophane. The same PTMs are present in both ANME-2d MCRs, except for 2(*S*)-
methylglutamine. Instead, the histidine 159 from the γ chain harbours a methyl group on its β-
carbon in an *S* configuration (i.e., 3(*S*)-methylhistidine). The histidine is canonical and

positioned at a distance of 3.5 Å from the F_{430} cofactor, with the atom ND1 forming a hydrogen

bond to F_{430}. The modified methyl group is distanced at ~5.7 Å and directed away from the

cofactor without disturbing the positioning of surrounding residues (Supplementary Fig. S15).

Besides their clear presence in the electron density map, all PTMs could also be confirmed via

LC-MS analysis (Supplementary Fig. S16-18).

Discussion

Anaerobic methanotrophic archaea have a significant impact on the global carbon cycle due to

their important role as a biological methane filter. The efficiency of their catabolism could be

harnessed in microbial-driven technology, as illustrated by electrode-attached ANME-2d

producing an electrical current from methane oxidation(14) or as a methane sink in

wastewater(39). Therefore, efforts are carried out by the scientific community to decipher their

metabolisms. Here, by directly exploiting microbial consortia, we isolated and structurally

characterised the key catabolic enzymes from ANME representatives, expanding the available

pool of methanotrophic MCR structural models from one to four. Due to their excellent quality,

the MCR crystals from ANME-2d provide subatomic resolution, detailing the active site,

cofactor, and coenzymes to unprecedented levels. Further structural studies using these models

could be conducted to assign protonation states through neutron diffraction or time-resolved

crystallography, facilitated by the rapid micro-crystal formation and the high protein yields.

This offers prospects for studying the mechanism of methane activation.

Compared to active MCR retrieved from hydrogenotrophic methanogens, it is currently not

feasible to obtain reactivated ANME enzymes with an *in vivo* approach. Still, our structural

insights showed that methane-oxidising MCRs do not contain gas tunnels that connect the

solvent with the buried active site, in contrast to the ethane-activating enzyme. Our structural

analysis suggests that methane first enters the catalytic site before the heterodisulfide closes

the catalytic chamber(19). Such a mechanism is likely to be shared among all ANME MCRs.

Structural differences observed between MCRs from ANME-2 and ANME-1 are more likely

rooted in their distinct evolutionary histories than in adaptations to specific ecological niches.

This is supported by our finding that MCRs from both freshwater and marine ANME-2 archaea

are highly conserved despite originating from different environments. According to proposed

evolutionary scenarios, methanotrophy in ANME-1 likely evolved from alkanotrophic

ancestors (most likely Alkanophaga, however, with an MCR that would originate from

Methanofastidiosa), while in ANME-2, it emerged from methanogenic lineages

(*Methanosarcinales*)(40). These differences suggest that the MCR architectures in ANME-1

and ANME-2 arose through convergent evolution, rather than from a shared methanotrophic

ancestor. Beyond differences in cofactors (e.g., methylthio-F_{430} versus classic F_{430}) and

structural particularities (e.g., presence or absence of a cysteine-rich path), the repertoire of

PTMs is largely divergent between clades (Figure 4 and Supplementary Fig. S14). However,

three structural positions appear consistently important for methanotrophy: a conserved N^1-

methylhistidine, a thioglycine, and a 5(*S*)-methylarginine in ANME-2/methanogens

compensated by S-oxymethionine/7-hydroxytryptophan in ANME-1.

With seven PTMs, ANME-2 MCRs gather the largest repertoire of modifications reported

among methane-metabolising archaea. Notably, the structurally closest related MCR from *M.*

shengliensis (also belonging to the same order(41)) harbours the most reduced gallery with

three PTMs(35). A rational explanation for the great number of PTMs in ANME would be the

kinetic limitation of methane activation compared to the methane release reaction. The methane

oxidation in MCR has an appK_m value of ≈10 mM (measured with the MCR isoform I of

Methanothermobacter marburgensis). This strongly limits the catalytic rates of methane

activation by ANME at *in situ* conditions, where methane concentrations are often below 1

mM. Recent studies suggest that PTMs stabilise the active site and ligands(25, 26), so it might

be beneficial for a microbe to invest in equipping its core catabolic machinery to enhance, even

slightly, its kinetic properties (i.e., by further decreasing the appK_m). Further studies of other

ANME MCRs will be necessary to observe a correlation between the increased amounts of

PTMs and methanotrophy. Similarly, future studies could investigate the prevalence of the

3(*S*)-methylhistidine and whether it exists in other *Methanosarcinales*. To our knowledge, this

is the first report of a 3(*S*)-methylhistidine in a natural protein and the first PTM identified on

the γ-chain of any characterised MCR. While the methylation occurs on a residue coordinating

the F_{430} cofactor, it appears to have no immediate effect on the surrounding active site, raising

questions about its role, in line with the so far mostly unresolved functions of the majority of

PTMs observed in MCRs(19, 28). Because all crystallographic structures are mere snapshots

of a single state, we cannot exclude a role during catalysis, enzyme assembly, or F_{430}

reactivation. Located on a loop at the surface of the γ-subunit, the 3(*S*)-methylhistidine could

be installed before the oligomeric assembly by a dedicated methyltransferase. Due to the low

nucleophilicity of the β-carbon, the reaction should occur similarly to the installation of a

methylarginine (installed by the Mmp10 methyltransferase(26)) or methylglutamine(27) rather

than the N^1-methylhistidine, in which an S-adenosylmethionine dependent methyltransferase
would substitute a hydrogen of the imidazole ring nitrogen with a methyl group.

By revealing the unexpected features of methanotrophic MCRs through accurate models, our
work emphasises the need to understand how native systems operate. Highlighting which type
of cofactor should be inserted or which PTMs would be appropriate to install would guide the
design of efficient heterologous methane capture systems for mitigating greenhouse gas
emissions and moving towards a zero-carbon emission society.

Materials and Methods

Biomass acquisition and microbial enrichments.

<u>ANME-2c cultivation:</u> Sediment was sampled using a multicorer at Amon Mud Volcano, Nile
deep-sea fan, Mediterranean Sea at 032° 21.70 N, 031° 23.40 E at a water depth of 1,120 m
and 14 °C during NAUTINIL cruise in 2003 with the research vessel RV L'Atalante. Onboard
samples were transferred into gas-tight bottles. In the home laboratory, sediment slurries were
set up with a synthetic marine sulfate reducer medium at pH 7.4 (Widdel and Bak, 1992(42))
and methane headspace at 20 °C. Incubated slurries showed methane-dependent sulfate
reduction within a few days. To remove sediment debris, cultures were continuously incubated
with methane as the sole electron donor and sulfate as the electron acceptor. The activity-based
doubling time for both cultures, monitored by sulfide measurements, was about four to six
months. Consecutive dilution and further incubation resulted in debris-free cultures of detached
flocks essentially composed of AOM-performing methane-oxidizing archaea and sulfate-
reducing bacteria consortia. For more details on the cultivation methods, see Laso-Pérez *et al.*,
2018(43).

<u>ANME-2d^O bioreactor cultivation of Ooijpolder sample</u>: Granular biomass was obtained from
a highly enriched bioreactor culture(33). The culture was maintained in an anaerobic 15 L
sequencing fed-batch reactor (30 °C, pH 7.3 ± 0.1 controlled with $KHCO_3$, stirred at 200 rpm,
with a working volume between 8 and 11 L). The reactor was continuously sparged with 15
mL.min^{-1} CH_4/CO_2 (95:5) and fed with medium (flow rate 2-2.5 L.day^{-1}), as described in Kurth
et al. 2019(32) with an adaptation of the KH_2PO_4 concentration to 0.05 g L^{-1} and sodium nitrate
(15-25 mM) as electron acceptor. Once a day, the biomass was settled for 5 min, after which
the excess liquid in the reactor was pumped off to a volume of 8 L.

ANME-2d^V bioreactor cultivation of Vercelli rice fields sample: Granular biomass was
obtained from a freshwater bioreactor enrichment culture first described by Vaksmaa *et al.*
2017(17). The culture was maintained in an anaerobic 15 L sequencing-fed batch reactor (room
temperature, pH 7.3 ± 0.1 controlled with KHCO$_3$, stirred at 200 rpm) with a working volume
between 8 and 11 L. The reactor was continuously sparged with 10 mL.min^{-1} CH$_4$/CO$_2$ (95:5)
and fed with medium (flow rate 1.5-2 L.day^{-1}) containing sodium nitrate (5-8 mM). Once a
day, the biomass was settled for 5 min, after which the excess liquid in the reactor was pumped
off to a volume of 8 L.

The medium contained 0.07 g.L^{-1} MgSO$_4$.7H$_2$O, 0.1 g.L^{-1} CaCl$_2$.2H$_2$O, 0.05 g.L^{-1} K$_2$HPO$_4$,
0.5 mL.L^{-1} of trace element solution, 0.3 mL iron solution (54 g.L^{-1} FeCl$_3$.6H$_2$O and 114.6
g.L^{-1} nitrilotriacetic acid), and 0.1 mL.L^{-1} of Wolin's vitamin solution (DSMZ 141). The trace
element solution contained per liter: 0.12 g CeCl$_3$.7H$_2$O, 0.6 g CoCl$_2$.6H$_2$O, 4.0 g CuSO$_4$, 0.07
g H$_3$BO$_3$, 1.0 g MnCl$_2$.4H$_2$O, 0.35 g Na$_3$MoO$_4$.2H$_2$O, 0.1 g Na$_2$WO$_4$.2H$_2$O, 0.95 g NiCl$_2$.6H$_2$O,
0.14 g SeO$_2$, 1.44 g ZnSO$_4$.7H$_2$O.

Metagenome sequencing

ANME-2c: For DNA extraction, 20 ml of the AMW culture was sampled and pelleted by
centrifugation. From the pellet, microbial DNA was extracted using the DNeasy PowerSoil Kit
(Qiagen, Venlo, Netherlands) following the supplied protocol. Library preparation and
Illumina sequencing (2 x 150 bp reads, 150 million raw reads) were performed at LGC
Genomics (Berlin). The metagenomic reads were assembled using SPAdes v. 4.0.0 with default
parameters(44) and automatically binned with the software SemiBin (v. 2.1.0) on the *de novo*
assembly using the *single_easy_bin* pipeline(45). Three bins affiliated with ANME-2 were
obtained according to GTDB (v. 2.1.1) classification(46). Annotation was carried out with
prokka v. 1.14.6(47), followed by extraction of the corresponding MCR proteins.

ANME-2d: Genomes were retrieved from GTDB-Tk v2.4.0 for ANME-2D^O, 'Ca.
Methanoperedens sp.' BLZ2 under accession number GCA_002487355.1 and ANME-2D^V,
'Ca. Methanoperedens' Vercelli Strain 1 under accession number GCA_905339155.1. MCR
sequences from 'Ca. Methanoperedens sp.' BLZ2 correspond to NCBI entries
WP_097300250.1, WP_097300253.1, and WP_097300251.1 for the α, β, and γ subunits,
respectively. MCR sequences from 'Ca. Methanoperedens' Vercelli Strain 1 correspond to
NCBI entries MCX9030096.1, MCX9030093.1, and MCX9030095.1, for the α, β, and γ
subunits, respectively.

DNA extraction and sequencing of ANME-2d^O and ANME-2d^V were performed as described
previously(48). Microbial taxonomic profiles of the different ANME enrichments were
determined using SingleM(49) against the GTDB-Tk database version 2.4.0. Read quality was
assessed using FASTQC v0.11.9. The ANME-2c sample consisted of 83 million reads of 150
bp, which resulted in a 2367× profile coverage, while the ANME-2d^O and ANME-2d^V samples
consisted of 6.6 and 5.5 million reads of 300 bp, respectively, resulting in 572× and 574×
profile coverage.

Sample treatment and lysis

<u>ANME-2c:</u> Two anaerobic 150 mL AOM enrichment cultures were used as starting material.
Particles were settled overnight at RT, followed by the removal of ~130 mL of clear
supernatant. H_2S in the culture headspace was replaced with N_2 gas before transferring the
culture to an anaerobic chamber. Cell lysis and preparation of extracts were performed in a
N_2/CO_2 atmosphere (90:10%) at 31 °C. Both samples were pooled and centrifuged at 8,000 ×
g for 5 min. The supernatant was carefully removed, resulting in a pellet of ~ 3.21 g (wet
weight). The aggregates were resuspended in 30 mL IEC-A buffer (50 mM Tricine/NaOH pH
8 and 2 mM dithiothreitol (DTT)) and lysed via two rounds of sonication interceded with a
French Press treatment at 1,000 PSI (6.895 MPa). The French press cell was flushed with N_2
gas before use to ensure anoxic conditions. Unfortunately, 7.5 mL of the lysed sample was lost
in the airlock due to an accidental break of the serum flask. The leftover total extract was then
diluted to 60 mL with IEC-A, followed by centrifugation at 45,000 × g for 30 min at 18 °C. A
volume of 100 µL was withdrawn at each step for SDS-PAGE analysis (Supplementary Fig.
S2).

<u>ANME-2d^O</u>: Frozen biomass containing '*Ca*. Methanoperedens sp.' BLZ2 (17.5 g of cells) was
transferred to an anaerobic chamber containing an N_2/CO_2 atmosphere (90:10%) and
resuspended in 90 mL buffer IEC-A. Cells were first lysed via two rounds of sonication
(SONOPULSE Brandelin, 75% power, 30 sec, 1st round: 4 cycles, 2nd round: 3 cycles)
interceded with a French Press treatment at 1,000 PSI (6.895 MPa). The French press cell was
previously flushed with N_2 to ensure anoxic conditions. After the second round of sonication,
the sample was centrifuged at 45,000 × g for 30 min at 18 °C. The supernatant was collected
and subjected to ultracentrifugation at 100,000 × g for 1.5 hours at 4 °C (rotor used: 70Ti,
Beckman Coulter). A volume of 100 µL of the total cell extract and soluble fraction was
withdrawn for the Bradford assay and SDS-PAGE.

ANME-2d^V: The frozen biomass (12.47 g) was resuspended in 60 mL buffer IEC-A. Cells were
processed the same way as ANME-2d^O except for the following variation. The supernatant
from ultracentrifugation was sonicated for an additional four cycles, and 40 mL of filtered
supernatant was obtained before injection onto the HiTrap Q HP column.

MCR purification

ANME-2c: Protein purification was performed under anoxic conditions in an anaerobic Coy
tent with an N$_2$/H$_2$ atmosphere (97:3%) at 20 °C under yellow light. Before every injection
onto a chromatography column, the sample was filtered using a 0.2 μm nitrocellulose filter
(Sartorius, Germany). Proteins were tracked via multi-wavelength absorbance monitoring (λ
280, 415, and 550 nm) in combination with SDS-PAGE. The filtered soluble extract (60 mL;
20.7 mg protein) was loaded onto a 1 mL HiTrap Q-Sepharose HP column (Cytiva, Munich,
Germany) equilibrated with IEC-A. The proteins were eluted with a two-step protocol,
reaching 0.5 M and then 1 M at a flow rate of 0.7 mL.min^{-1}. MCR was eluted at 0.5 M NaCl,
and the pool (~13 mL) was diluted ~1:4 (protein sample: buffer) with IEC-A buffer. The
filtered sample was loaded on a 0.982 mL Mono Q 5/50 column (Cytiva, Munich, Germany).
The elution was performed at a gradient of 100 to 700 mM NaCl at 0.5 mL.min^{-1}. The pooled
MCR fractions were diluted ~1:4 (protein sample: buffer) with HIC-B buffer (25 mM
Tricine/NaOH pH 7.6, 2 M (NH$_4$)$_2$SO$_4$, and 2 mM DTT). The pool was filtered and passed on
a 1.622 mL Source15φ column (Cytiva, Munich, Germany). Proteins were eluted by applying
a gradient of 1.5 to 0 M (NH$_4$)$_2$SO$_4$ at 0.6 mL.min^{-1}. The final MCR pool was washed by
dilution (1:1000) with storage buffer (25 mM Tris/HCl pH 7.6, 10% v/v glycerol, and 2 mM
DTT) using a 30 kDa cut-off concentrator to remove salts. Finally, the sample was concentrated
to 200 μL. The protein concentration estimated via the Bradford method was 24.6 mg.mL^{-1}.

ANME-2d^O: Purification was performed under the previously described conditions, and
fractions of interest were followed at λ 280 nm. The soluble extract (90 mL at 7.82 mg.mL^{-1})
could not be filtered due to the large particulate size and was directly injected into the 10 mL
HiTrap Q-Sepharose HP column pre-equilibrated with IEC-A buffer. After washing the
column, the elution was performed with a gradient of 0 to 650 mM NaCl for 10 column volumes
(CV) at a 2 mL.min^{-1} flow rate. The pool of interest was diluted 1:1 with HIC-B buffer, filtered,
and loaded on the 1.622 mL Source 15φ column. A gradient from 80% to 0% (NH$_4$)$_2$SO$_4$ for
10 CV at a 1.5 mL.min^{-1} flow rate was applied. The final MCR fractions were pooled and
concentrated on a Vivaspin centrifugation concentrator with a cut-off of 30 kDa. The buffer

was exchanged by ultrafiltration for the storage buffer (25 mM Tris/HCl pH 8.0, 10% v/v

glycerol, 2 mM DTT, and 100 mM NaCl) containing NaCl to prevent the spontaneous

formation of microcrystals. Around 2 mL of purified MCR was recovered at 57 mg.mL^{-1},

aliquoted into 50 µL, and stored at 4 °C and −80 °C.

<u>ANME-2d^V</u>: Purification was performed under the previously described conditions, and

fractions of interest were followed at λ 280 nm. The filtered soluble extract (40 mL) was

injected into the 10 mL HiTrap Q HP column pre-equilibrated with IEC-A buffer. After

washing the column, the elution was performed with a gradient of 0 to 650 mM NaCl for 16

column volumes (CV) at a 2 mL.min^{-1} flow rate. The pool of interest was diluted 1:2 (protein

sample:buffer) with HIC-B buffer, filtered, and loaded on a 5 ml HP Phenyl Sepharose column.

A gradient from 1.3 M to 0 M of $(NH_4)_2SO_4$ for 12 CV at a 1.0 mL.min^{-1} flow rate was applied.

The final MCR fractions were pooled and concentrated using a Vivaspin centrifugation

concentrator with a 30 kDa cut-off. Ultrafiltration exchanged the buffer for storage buffer.

Around 0.35 mL of purified MCR was recovered at 40 mg.mL^{-1} and stored at 4 °C and −80

°C.

UV-visible spectrophotometry

UV-visible absorption spectra were recorded using a Cary 60 spectrophotometer (Agilent

Technologies, Waldbronn, Germany) on a TrayCell with a 1 mm path length.

Phylogeny analyses

The three MCR subunits from each MAG were concatenated and used to calculate a

phylogenetic tree, including the sequences of the studied MCRs from ANME-2c and ANME-

2d of this manuscript and the sequences of structural homologues. The concatenated MCR

sequences were aligned using MUSCLE v3.8.1551(50). The aligned concatenated sequences

were used to calculate a phylogenetic tree with RAxML v.8.2.12(51) using a partition file to

calculate differential models for each gene and the following parameters '-m

PROTGAMMAAUTO -f a -N autoMRE -k'.

Crystallisation

<u>ANME-2c:</u> The fresh preparation of MCR was immediately crystallised. Crystals were

obtained using the sitting drop method on 96-Well MRC 2-Drop Crystallization Plates in

polystyrene (SWISSCI, Switzerland), containing 90 µL of crystallisation solution in the

reservoir. 0.5 µL protein sample at a concentration of 24.6 mg.mL^{-1} was mixed with 0.5 µL of

crystallisation solution. The crystallisation screening was performed by an OryxNano (Douglas

Instrument, UK) at 18 °C in a tent filled with 100% N_2. Then, plates were transferred to a Coy

tent (N_2/H_2 atmosphere 97:3%) at 20 °C. Crystals were formed over the following days. The

most successful conditions were: (A) 30% v/v 2-Methyl-2,4-pentanediol, 100 mM Tris pH 8.5,

500 mM NaCl and 8% w/v Polyethylene glycol 8,000, and (B) 30% v/v Polyethylene glycol

400, 100 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 200 mM $MgCl_2$.

The conditions were replicated on a Junior Clover plate (Jena Bioscience, Germany) under oxic

conditions with 90 µL of the crystallisation solution in the reservoir. Crystals with yellow

square or rectangular morphology appeared over the next two weeks. The final dataset of

ANME-2c MCR was obtained from crystals formed from 2 µL of protein and 2 µL of condition

A.

ANME-2d^O: Following an initial screening on a 96-well MRC 2-Drop Crystallization Plate

done aerobically at 18 °C, MCR crystals were reproduced using the sitting drop method on a

Junior Clover plate. The best crystals were obtained with a reservoir filled with 100 µL of the

following crystallisation solution: 20% w/v polyethylene glycol 3,350, 50 mM Tris pH 8.0 and

200 mM potassium nitrate and by spotting 5 µL protein at a concentration of 2.19 mg.mL^{-1}

with 2 µL crystallisation solution. Thick yellow brick-shaped crystals appeared within 24-48

hours.

ANME-2d^V: Following an initial screening on a 96-well MRC 2-Drop Crystallization Plate

done aerobically at 18 °C, MCR crystals were reproduced using the sitting drop method on the

Junior Clover plate. Here, the reservoir was filled with 100 µl of 20% w/v Polyethylene glycol

3,350 and 200 mM sodium thiocyanate pH 6.9, and the crystallisation well contained 3 µL

protein at a concentration of 40 mg.mL^{-1} with 2 µL mother liquor.

Krypton labelling

ANME-2c MCR in solution was shipped to the High-Pressure Freezing Laboratory for

Macromolecular Crystallography (HPMX)(52) of the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility

(ESRF, Grenoble, France). Crystallisation was repeated using the crystallisation solution from

condition B (see crystallisation of ANME-2c MCR) at ambient temperature in an aerobic

environment on a Junior Clover plate (Jena Bioscience, Germany). Obtained crystals were used

for the krypton-labelling using the pressurisation method. Here, crystals were pressurised at

214 bars of krypton for 2 min prior to being flash frozen at cryogenic temperature, still under

pressure. X-ray crystallographic data were collected on the beamline ID23-1 (ESRF) at 14.4

keV, above the krypton absorption edge.

X-ray data collection, processing, modelling, and validation.

MCR crystals were soaked in the crystallisation solution supplemented with 20% v/v ethylene

glycol for ANME-2d^O and ANME-2d^V for 5-10 seconds before being transferred to liquid

nitrogen.

X-ray diffraction for ANME-2c crystals was collected at SOLEIL (Source optimisée de lumière

d'énergie intermédiaire du LURE) synchrotron, Saint-Aubin, France, at the beamline

PROXIMA-1. Crystals for both ANME-2d were collected at the European Synchrotron

Radiation Facility (ESRF), Grenoble, France, on the beamline BM07-FIP2. Krypton-derivative

ANME-2c crystals were collected at the ESRF on ID23-1 beamline.

The datasets were processed and scaled with *autoPROC* (Version 1.0.5, Global Phasing

Limited, Cambridge, UK)(53), except for the krypton-derivative sample, which was integrated

with XDS and scaled with *aimless* from the CCP4 package. The structures were solved by

molecular replacement using *PHASER* from the *PHENIX* package (Version 1.19.2-4158)(54).

For molecular replacement, we used an AlphaFold 2(55) model based on the metagenome-

derived amino acid sequence for MCR of ANME-2c. The ANME-2c MCR model was used as

a template to solve krypton-derivative MCR ANME-2c and as-isolated ANME-2d^O MCR

datasets. Finally, the ANME-2d^O MCR model was used as a template to solve ANME-2d^V

MCR.

All models were then refined with *COOT* (Version 0.8.9.2)(56) and *PHENIX* refine. Because

of the high resolution, all atoms were considered anisotropic (except for the krypton-derivative

model), and hydrogens were added in riding mode. ANME-2d^V MCR was refined with a mix

of ligands in the active site, since this resulted in the best fit to the electron density

(Supplementary Fig. S9). All models have been deposited with hydrogen atoms modelled on

the protein (*e.g.*, not on ligands and solvents).

The models were validated by the MolProbity server (http://molprobity.biochem.duke.edu).

Figures of MCR structures were generated with PyMOL (V. 2.2.0, Schrödinger, LLC).

Sequence alignments were generated with MAFFT 7(57) and visualised with ESPript 3.0(58).

Internal tunnels analyses connecting the active site to the surface were performed by CAVER

with default parameters and considering a radius of 0.9(37). With these parameters, no tunnels
could be detected except for the ECR control.

Mass spectrometry analysis

Purified MCRs in solution was used for liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS)
analysis to confirm the presence of the PTMs observed in the electron density.

The purified proteins were digested after carbamidomethylation with trypsin, chymotrypsin, or
elastase at 30 °C in ammonium bicarbonate buffer. In order to obtain many different peptides,
sodium lauryl sulphate, sodium deoxycholate, or guanidine hydrochloride were added in
various digestion approaches. The duration of incubation with protease was varied from 1.5 to
15 hours. In addition, ANME-2c MCR was labeled via vinylpyridine or iodoacetamide. The
peptides were then desalted using C18 SPE and measured using LC-MS carried out on an
Exploris 480 instrument connected to an Ultimate 3000 RSLC nano and a nanospray flex ion
source (all ThermoFisher Scientific, USA). The separating gradient of 60 minutes ran with
solvent A, 0.15% formic acid in water, and solvent B, 0.15% formic acid in acetonitrile. The
data were recorded in DDA mode and analysed using the Byonic or Proteomediscoverer
software and the sequence data files (FASTA).

It should be noted that the hydroxytryptophan could not be found reliably with Byonic and
often included artificial new adduct masses. Additional analysis with Proteomediscoverer
(Sequest) has identified the modified residue reliably in both ANME-2d MCRs.

Data availability

Metagenomic sequences from the Amon Mud Volcano enrichment were deposited under NCBI
BioProject ID PRJNA1248948.

All models and their structure factors were deposited under the following protein data bank
identifiers: 9QR3, MCR ANME-2c; 9QM5, Krypton gassed MCR ANME-2c; 9RQ1, MCR
ANME-2d^O; 9QQT, MCR ANME-2d^V.

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Author contributions

Enrichment of ANME-2c was done by G.W., enrichments of ANME-2d were done by M.W.
and C.U.W. Metagenomic data processing for ANME-2c and ANME-2d was done by R.L.-P.
and M.W., respectively. Purification and crystallisation of ANME-2c MCR were performed by
M.-C.M. and N.V.P. Purification and crystallisation of ANME-2d^O MCR was done by P.M.
and M.W. Purification and crystallisation of ANME-2d^V were done by M.W. and T.W. Data
collection was done by S.E., and T.W. Krypton pressurisation were done by S.E. and P.C. X-
ray data processing, model refinement and analysis were done by M.-C.M. and model
validation by T.W. LC-MS processing and analyses was performed by J.K. The manuscript
was written by M.-C.M. and T.W. Manuscript edition and correction were done by all authors.

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Figure 1. Comparison of the ANME-2 samples investigated in this study and procedure of protein isolation by native purification and crystallisation. Images of the bioreactor and flasks containing the respective freshwater and marine ANME-2 are presented. Close-ups of granular biomass of ANME-2d reducing nitrate and fluorescence *in situ* hybridisation labelled micrographs (7) of the marine methanotrophic consortium (red for the archaeon and green for the sulfate-reducing partner, using specific probes) are shown. Purified MCR fractions are shown on the SDS-PAGE at the bottom of the figure next to the crystals obtained from each sample. For ANME-2c, the sample passed on SDS-PAGE corresponds to dissolved crystals, and a picture of the purification procedure can be examined in Supplementary Fig. S2. L stands for ladder.

Figure 2. Comparison of ANME-2 MCR structures with previously structurally characterised MCRs. Superposition of the α-, β-, and γ-subunits of MCR. The panels on the right are close-ups of structural deviations. In each panel, the corresponding chain is coloured, while the remaining chains are shown (greyed out) for ANME-2d^V. MCR structures are coloured according to the microorganism, with *M. marburgensis* (PDB code: 5A0Y) in light blue, *M. shengliensis* (7NKG) in deep blue, ANME-1 from Black Sea mats (3SQG) in cyan, '*Ca.* E. thermophilum' ECR (7B1S) in marine, ANME-2c in dark green, ANME-2d^O in green and ANME-2d^V in light green. N- and C-termini are shown as spheres and ligands as sticks.

Figure 3. ANME-2 MCR active sites. Stereo-view of the MCR active site in (**a**) ANME-2c and (**b**) ANME-2d[V]. Interacting residues are shown as lines, and non-interacting side/main chains were omitted. Polar contacts are in black dashes. (**c**) Anomalous map highlights Kr (pink surface). Xe (teal spheres) from '*Ca.* E. thermophilum' (extracted from PDB 7B2C) are superposed. Proteins are in cartoons, and ligands in sticks coloured as follows: red, blue, orange and yellow, for O, N, P and S, respectively.

Figure 4. ANME-2 MCR post-translational modifications. PTMs in the active site of (**a**) ANME-2c and (**b**) ANME-2d^V. The main chain is shown as a cartoon, with ligands and PTMs shown as sticks with colours according to atoms (red for O, blue for N, orange for P, yellow for S). Close-ups of PTMs flank the central picture, highlighting electron densities. The $2F_o-F_c$ map (grey mesh) is contoured at 1 σ, and the F_o-F_c map (green mesh) is contoured at 3 σ. The latter highlights the experimental hydrogen positions. The 3(*S*)-methylhistidine is positioned on the γ-chain.

773 Table 1: X-ray analysis statistics for ANME-2 MCR

	ANME-2c from microbial enrichment	ANME-2c (Kr pressurised)	ANME-2d^O from bioreactor	ANME-2d^V from bioreactor
Data collection				
Synchrotron and beamline	SOLEIL, PROXIMA-1	ESRF, ID23-1	ESRF, BM07-FIP2	ESRF, BM07-FIP2
Wavelength (Å)	0.97856	0.86100	0.97980	0.97930
Space group	$P2_1$	$P2_12_12_1$	$P2_1$	$P2_1$
Resolution (Å)	127.16 – 1.35 (1.50 – 1.35)	59.40 – 1.80 (1.83 – 1.80)	76.67 – 0.98 (1.04 − 0.98)	94.91 – 0.98 (1.04 − 0.98)
Cell dimensions				
a, b, c (Å)	156.87, 157.46, 215.42	153.48, 153.67, 212.88	81.58, 189.30, 84.11	81.62, 189.82, 83.93
α, β, γ (°)	90, 90.34, 90	90, 90, 90	90, 114.27, 90	90, 114.36, 90
R_{merge} (%)[a]	16.8 (167.1)	12.7 (162.3)	11.9 (116.8)	7.9 (80.0)
R_{pim} (%)[a]	7.3 (73.7)	5.1 (64.6)	4.5 (46.8)	3.0 (32.0)
$CC_{1/2}$ [a]	0.991 (0.560)	0.999 (0.768)	0.996 (0.667)	0.998 (0.754)
I/σ_I[a]	6.6 (1.6)	14.1 (1.8)	9.4 (1.7)	13.0 (1.9)
Spherical completeness[a]	66.2 (12.2)	100.0 (100.0)	84.4 (24.4)	74.7 (23.5)
Ellipsoidal completeness[a]	96.2 (66.6)	/	96.5 (70.9)	83.9 (62.6)
Redundancy[a]	6.3 (6.0)	13.8 (14.2)	7.8 (7.1)	7.6 (7.0)
Nr. unique reflections[a]	1,527,343 (76,367)	461,593 (22,707)	1,130,261 (56,513)	996,827 (49,841)
Refinement				
Resolution (Å)	98.93 – 1.34	54.30-1.80	41.78 – 0.98	41.72 – 0.98
Number of reflections	1,527,210	461,298	1,130,120	988,481
R_{work}/R_{free}[b] (%)	11.24/14.71	12.93/15.52	10.25/11.76	12.96/14.81
Number of atoms				
Protein	152,558	75,375	39,210	39,298
Ligands/ions	1,328	1,000	406	473
Solvent	9,812	4,293	3,419	3,293
Mean B-value (Å^2)	15.77	29.30	10.72	10.03
Molprobity clash score	0.99	1.50	0.60	0.45
Ramachandran plot				
Favoured regions (%)	97.33	97.11	97.16	97.08
Outlier regions (%)	0.07	0.08	0.08	0.08
rmsd[c] bond lengths (Å)	0.010	0.009	0.010	0.011
rmsd[c] bond angles (°)	1.247	1.170	1.341	1.382
PDB code	9QR3	9QM5	9RQ1	9QQT

774 [a] Values relative to the highest resolution shell are within parentheses. [b] Rfree was calculated
775 as the Rwork for 5% of the reflections that were not included in the refinement. [c] rmsd, root
776 mean square deviation.