Cryo-EM structures reveal a conformational change of SOPA1 during mitochondrial inner membrane fusion

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ABSTRACT

Mammalian mitochondrial inner membrane fusion is mediated by OPA1(optic atrophy 1). Under physiological condition, OPA1 undergoes proteolytic processing to form a membrane-anchored long isoform (LOPA1) and a soluble short isoform (SOPA1). A combination of LOPA1 and SOPA1 are required for membrane fusion, however, the relevant mechanism is not well understood. In this study, we investigate the cryo-EM structures of SOPA1 coated liposome tube at nucleotide-free and GTPγS bound states. SOPA1 exhibits a general structure of dynamin family and can assemble onto membrane in a helical array with a building block of dimer and thus induce membrane tubulation. A predicted amphipathic helix is discovered to mediate the tubulation activity of SOPA1. The binding of GTPγS causes a conformational rotation between GTPase domain and stalk region, and then induces a rearrangement of the helical array and an expansion of the tube, which is opposite to the behavior of other dynamin proteins, suggesting a unique role of SOPA1 in the fusion of mitochondrial inner membrane.

KEYWORDS

Cryo-electron microscopy; Conformational change; Mitochondrial fusion; Membrane tubulation; OPA1.

INTRODUCTION

In eukaryotic cells, series of discrete membranous compartments separate different biochemical reactions, and the membrane fission and fusion mechanisms accomplish the communication between and within these compartments (McNew et al., 2013). A family of large GTPases called dynamin plays pivotal roles in the fission and fusion process (Praefcke and McMahon, 2004). Mitochondria, highly dynamic organelles that constitute a remarkably dynamic network are also regulated by large GTPases dependent fission and fusion at outer and inner membranes (Labbe et al., 2014; van der Bliek et al., 2013; Westermann, 2010). The inner membrane GTPase OPA1 (optic atrophy 1), a member of dynamin protein family, is known related to mitochondrial inner membrane fusion and morphology maintaining (Anand et al., 2014; Frezza et al., 2006; MacVicar and Langer, 2016).

OPA1 has eight different spliced variants with a mitochondrial targeting sequence (MTS), and a following transmembrane domain (TM) in its N-terminal. The next portion of the protein includes a coiled coil domain, a highly conserved GTPase domain, a middle domain and a C-terminus GTPase effector domain (GED) (Belenguer and Pellegrini, 2013; Olichon et al., 2007). The last three domains are classical dynamin regions. After imported into mitochondria, the MTS is proteolytically processed to form a membrane anchored long form LOPA1, and the LOPA1 can be further cleaved into a short form SOPA1 through the S1 or S2 site between the TM and coiled coil domain (Naotada Ishihara et al., 2006; Song et al., 2007). Both long and short form of OPA1 participate in mitochondria inner membrane fusion, but it remains open and debated the specific role of SOPA1 alone during the fusion procedure (Anand et al., 2014; Ban et al., 2017; Del Dotto et al., 2017).

Efforts to recapitulate the fusion mechanism in vitro using FRET suggested that LOPA1 alone on either side of membrane can promote fusion with a proper concentration of cardiolipin in opposite membrane (Ban et al., 2017). The SOPA1, on the other hand, bridges the opposite membrane probably via interactions with

both LOPA1 and cardiolipin and assists the LOPA1-dependent fusion with the needs of GTP hydrolysis (Ban et al., 2017). Studies on Mgm1, the yeast homolog of OPA1, have drawn a similar conclusion in which its long form L-Mgm1 acts as a fusion-prone protein with its GTPase activity inhibited and its short form S-Mgm1 drives fusion procedure through GTP hydrolysis (DeVay et al., 2009; Zick et al., 2009). Another study on SOPA1 confirms its tubulation activity with cardiolipin containing liposomes by negative staining electron microscopy (Ban et al., 2010). These studies speculate a GTPase dependent auxiliary function of SOPA1 while membrane fusion, however, there are also other reports supporting the fission favorable function of SOPA1 (Anand et al., 2014).

To further understand the role of SOPA1 in mitochondrial inner membrane remodeling, here we utilized cryo-electron microscopy to solve the structures of SOPA1 coated liposome tubule in a nucleotide-free state and a GTPγS binding state. By comparing these two states, the conformational change of SOPA1 upon GTP binding was deduced and the distinctive role of SOPA1 in mitochondrial inner membrane fusion was proposed.

RESULTS

SOPA1 can induce tubulation of cardiolipin containing liposome

We expressed the short isoform protein of splice form 1 human OPA1 (SOPA1) in bacteria and purified into homogeneity (**Figure 1A**). Gel-filtration experiment indicated a dimerization form of SOPA1 (**Figure 1B**). The GTP hydrolysis activity of SOPA1 is very weak but significantly enhanced with the existence of liposome (**Figure 1C**). The liposome was prepared with a phospholipid composition of 45% DOPC (1,2-dioleoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine), 22% DOPE (1,2-dioleoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphoethanolamine), 8% PI (phosphatidylinositol) and 25% CL (cardiolipin), which approximates the composition of mitochondrial inner membrane (Ban et al., 2010). By examining the mixture of SOPA1 with liposome using both negative electron microscopy (nsEM) and cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM), we found significant tubulation of liposome induced by SOPA1 binding

(**Figures 1D and 1E**). However, we found the tubes are varied with their diameters and diffraction patterns, which indicated SOPA1 proteins coated on the membrane do not form a unique helical lattice.

To optimize the homogeneity of the tubes that is important for the subsequent structural study, we cloned and expressed a truncation form of SOPA1 (SOPA1-Δ196-252, see **Figure 1A**) by deleting its N-terminal residues from 196 to 252 because this region was reported responsible for the dimerization of SOPA1 in solution (Akepati et al., 2008). In comparison with the wild type, the truncation form behaves as a monomer in gel-filtration (**Figure 1B**) and shows even stronger GTP hydrolysis activity with the existence of liposome (**Figure 1C**). In addition, the truncation form can induce homogeneous tubes with similar diameters (**Figures 1D and 1E**), which might be due to its monodisperse behavior in solution. All the subsequent cryo-EM structural studies were performed using this truncation form SOPA1-Δ196-252. Without the explicit explanation, the name SOPA1 in the following context refers to this truncation form.

Helical structure of SOPA1 coated liposomal tube in a nucleotide-free state

To characterize the structure of nucleotide-free SOPA1 coated liposomal tube, we collected cryo-EM datasets of SOPA1 coated tubes and classified the boxed tubes via their diameters and diffraction patterns (**Figures S1A and S1B**). A selected class of tubes were segmented and further reconstructed by the iterative helical real-space reconstruction (IHRSR) algorithm, (Egelman, 2000, 2007) (**Figure S1C**). This approach finally produced a six-start right-handed helical map at a resolution of ~ 14 Å. The map has an inner diameter of 23 nm, an outer diameter of 53 nm, 17.3 units per turn and a pitch of 465.6 Å (**Figures 2A, 2B and Movie S1**).

Similar to the dynamin 1 (Dyn1) coated tube (Chappie et al., 2011; Sundborger et al., 2014), the SOPA1 coated tube can be generally divided into three regions along its radial direction, an inner density fused with the outer leaflet of lipid bilayer, a middle density packing compactly, and an outer globular density (**Figures 2C and 2D**). Thus we name the inner, middle, and outer density as leg, stalk and head

respectively in consistence with the nomenclature in Dyn1 coated tube (Chappie et al., 2011).

To be noted, since we could not determine the handedness of SOPA1 coated tube at the current resolution from helical reconstruction, we further performed cryo-electron tomography (cryo-ET) combined with sub-volume averaging (SVA) to determine the structure of SOPA1 coated tube. The final averaged cryo-ET map shows a consistent architecture with the one from the helical reconstruction **(Figure S2**) and thus validates the handedness of our helical reconstruction (**Figure 2**).

Domain organization of SOPA1 and membrane binding sites

Since dynamin protein family contains a similar domain architecture (**Figure 3A**) and SOPA1 shares the highest degree of sequence conservation (19.8% identical, 35.0% similar) with Dyn1, to decipher the subunit organization of SOPA1 polymer, we separated the crystal structure of the human Dyn1 (PDB ID 3SNH) (Faelber et al., 2011) into three domains, the G/BSE region, the middle/GED stalk, and the PH domain, and then docked these domain structures into the cryo-EM map of SOPA1 coated tube (**Figure 3B**).

The G/BSE region can be well fitted into the head layer and the linker density that connects the head and stalk layers (**Figures 3C, 3E and 3F**). Such good fitness suggests SOPA1 has a similar structural component of G domain (GTPase domain) and BSE three-helix bundle with Dyn1. Since the G domains of dynamin proteins need to dimerize to activate their GTPase activity (Chappie et al., 2010; Raphael Gasper et al., 2009), we also investigated whether the G domains of SOPA1 are dimerized in the present cryo-EM density. However, the attempts to dock the crystal structure of dimerized G domains $GG_{GDP.AlF4}$- (PDB ID 2X2E) (Chappie et al., 2010) failed (**Figure S3A**). And the dimerization interfaces of the proximal G domains in the present packing are separated with about 30 angstrom (**Figure 3D**), suggesting a further conformational change is needed in the subsequent nucleotide binding to enable the activity of GTP hydrolysis.

The middle/GED stalk structure can be well docked into the stick-like density of the middle/stalk layer of the map (**Figures 3C, 3D and 3E**) while the stalk layer of SOPA1 is longer than the middle/GED stalk structure of Dyn1 and its distal tip stretches into the inner layer and directly interacts with the membrane (**Figures 2E, 3F and S3B**). The whole stalk region of the SOPA1 tube shows a compact packing with two interaction interfaces, the bundle-to-bundle interface and the tip-to-tip one (**Figure 3D**). Such compact packing suggests a pivotal role of stalk interactions of SOPA1 in maintaining the structural stability of the protein-lipid complex.

The leg density of the SOPA1 tube is more complicated than the Dyn1 tube (Chappie et al., 2011) because it not only contains a globular density corresponding to the leg of Dyn1 but also contains another density corresponding to the extension of SOPA1 stalk (**Figure 3D and S3B**). Sequence analysis does not suggest a membrane binding domain of SOPA1 explicitly, however, we were surprised to find the Dyn1 PH domain could fit into the globular density very well (**Figures 3D, 3E and 3F**), suggesting SOPA1 would have a PH-like domain to interact with the mitochondrial inner membrane. The corresponding sequence of such PH-like domain would be located between Middle and GED domain (**Figure 3A**).

The current resolution of the map could not determine the linkage between the stalk and the PH-like domain. However, according to the packing of SOPA1 on the tube, there are only two possible conformations, a kinked conformation with the PH-like domain right underneath its own stalk region or an extended conformation with the PH-like domain stretching into the nearby interstice (**Figure 3G**). Comparing with Dyn1, it is more likely for SOPA1 to adopt the extended conformation with its membrane interaction domain alongside the stalk.

As a result, from the present cryo-EM density of SOPA1 coated tube, we observed two membrane binding sites of SOPA1, one is located at its PH-like domain and another at the extension of its stalk domain.

SOPA1 dimer is the building block of its helical array on liposomal tube

The helical reconstruction imaging processing procedure indicated SOPA1 coated tube has a 6-fold symmetry and contains six helical starts. By fitting crystal structures of Dyn1 domains, we found the asymmetric unit of SOPA1 packing array contains two copies of SOPA1 molecules that form a dimer (blue and gray in **Figure S3C**). There are two possible forms of SOPA1 dimer according to the packing array, one is called here the short dimer (pink in **Figure S3C**) and the other defined as the long dimer (green in **Figure S3C**). The short dimer utilizes the tip-to-tip interactions of their stalk domains to form the dimerization interface while the long dimer is more extended and its dimerization interface is mediated by their stalks bundle-to-bundle interactions. Our subsequent structural analyzes by comparing structures of SOPA1 coated tubes in different nucleotide binding states suggest the short dimer is more likely the building block of SOPA1 assembly on liposome (see context below and also **Figure S8A**). Thus, in the following structural analysis and comparison, we will only focus on the short dimer.

We then investigated how the SOPA1 dimers assemble on the liposomal tube. By following the helical symmetry, the SOPA1 short dimers assemble into a single helical turn and then form one start of the packing array (**Figure 3C**). However, for each start, the building blocks are not close enough to form interactions. The packing array needs to be stabilized by the interactions among different starts and we found such interactions are mediated by bundle-to-bundle interfaces of stalks (**Figures 3C and 3D**). These stalk interactions are the main factors to stabilize the SOPA1 helical structure. In addition to the stalk interactions, we noticed the G domains of SOPA1 in adjacent helical starts are facing each other with their dimerization interfaces opposed, which leaves a potential for the subsequent change of SOPA1 array (**Figure 3D**).

SOPA1 membrane tubulation activity is independent with its GTPase activity

Our observation that SOPA1 can induce tubulation of liposome without the addition of nucleotide has suggested the tubulation activity of SOPA1 is independent with its GTP hydrolysis activity. To further validate this assumption, we performed mutagenesis. The high sequence conservation of G domains among

dynamin proteins enabled us to identify the locations (a.a. 297-302 and 319-327) of the key catalytic residues of SOPA1 (**Figure S4A**) at its P loop and switch I (Schmid and Frolov, 2011). All the mutants Q297E, S298A, G300E, T302N and T323A kept their wild-type abilities to bind to liposome but lost their liposome induced GTPase activities (**Figures 4A, 4B and S4B**). However, interestingly, their tubulation activities did not change significantly by examining their liposomal tubes using nsEM (**Figure 4C**). These results confirm SOPA1 can deform membrane without the need of GTP hydrolysis and further suggest the GTP hydrolysis of SOPA1 occurs most likely after the liposomal tubulation.

SOPA1 has a potential amphipathic helix involved in membrane tubulation

Next, we sought to identify the factors to affect SOPA1 membrane tubulation activity. The above structural analysis suggests a PH-like domain exist in SOPA1, which would be presumably responsible for SOPA1 membrane binding and deformation. Sequence analysis suggests such PH-like domain would correspond to the residues from 780 to 830 in SOPA1 (**Figure S5A**). Subsequent secondary structure prediction and helical wheel analysis (Alan Bleasby, pepwheel, http://www.bioinformatics.nl/cgi-bin/emboss/pepwheel) identified a possible amphipathic helix between E794 and K800 (**Figure S5B**). Previous studies have discovered the important role of an amphipathic helix in membrane remodeling (Shen et al., 2012). We thus performed mutagenesis to investigate this susceptible amphipathic helix in SOPA1 PH-like domain for its role in membrane tubulation.

We constructed five mutants of SOPA1 by mutating the region 794-800 to all alanine residues (794-800A), or by point mutations (E794AE795A, K797AK800A, L795EM798EL799E and L795AM798AL799A). Compared to wild type, the mutants 794-800A, L795EM798EL799E and L795AM798AL799A exhibited moderate suppression on membrane binding while the mutants E794AE795A and K797AK800A kept the same membrane binding ability (**Figure 5A**), suggesting this region involves partially in membrane binding via hydrophobic interaction. However, we observed more significant effects of these mutants upon their liposome induced GTPase activity (**Figure 5B**) and membrane tubulation activity

(**Figure 5C**). The mutants 794-800A, L795EM798EL799E and L795AM798AL799A completely lost their activities of GTP hydrolysis and membrane tubulation. While, these activities of mutants E794AE795A and K797AK800A were also greatly reduced. As a result, the predicted amphipathic helix of SOPA1 PH-like domain would be majorly involved in the SOPA1 induced membrane tubulation procedure most likely by insertion of hydrophobic residues and utilizing a previously reported wedge effect (Drin and Antonny, 2010). The reduced or abolished membrane tubulation activities therefore affected the following membrane induced GTP hydrolysis activity.

In addition, the above cryo-EM map based structural analyzes have identified two membrane binding sites of SOPA1 (**Figure 2E**). And the mutagenesis studies here indicated a less important role of the predicted amphipathic helix of the PH-like domain in membrane binding. Therefore, another identified stalk tip region of SOPA1 would play a more important role for SOPA1 bound to membrane.

Nucleotide binding induces a reduced curvature of SOPA1 coated tube

Since the GTPase activity of SOPA1 is indispensable for its fusion in promoting mitochondrial inner membrane fusion (Ban et al., 2010), we sought to study how nucleotide binding could take effect on the SOPA1 coated liposomal tube. Significant conformational changes of dynamin proteins after nucleotide binding have been observed for Dyn1 and Dnm1 (Chappie et al., 2011; Frohlich et al., 2013; Mears et al., 2011).

We incubated excess GTP or its non-hydrolyzed or slowly hydrolyzed analogs (GMPPCP, GMPPNP and GTPγS) with the SOPA1 coated liposomal tubes for 30 mins and examined the tubes by cryo-electron microscopy. We surprisingly found that the diameters of the tubes were all increased from the original ~ 53 nm to 70~80 nm (**Figure S6A**), which is in contrast to the phenomena observed for Dyn1 and Dnm1, where a constricted diameter was observed after nucleotide binding (Chappie et al., 2011; Frohlich et al., 2013; Mears et al., 2011). Besides the expansion of the tube diameter and the reduction of the tube curvature, compared to the nucleotide free state, the binding of nucleotide also decreases the

homogeneity of the SOPA1 coated tubes with a wide range of tube diameters (**Figure S6B**), suggesting an increased variability of SOPA1 in the nucleotide bound state.

We observed the instability of the SOPA1 coated liposomal tubes after incubating with GTP (data not shown), which might be due to the subsequent GTP hydrolysis. Thus, we selected GTPγS bound tubes for the subsequent structural studies because this sample is stable enough and relative homogenous in comparison with other nucleotides. Helical reconstruction technique failed to solve the structure of this tube due to its variable diameters. We therefore utilized cryo-ET and SVA to analyze the assembly of GTPγS bound SOPA1 on the liposomal tube (**Figures S6C, S6D, S6E and S6F**).

A loosened helical lattice of SOPA1 coated tube after nucleotide binding

Compared to the nucleotide free state, the cryo-EM map of SOPA1 coated tube with GTPγS bound also shows four layers of densities, the outer head region, the middle stalk region, the inner leg region, and the innermost membrane region (**Figures 6A and 6B**). However, after GTPγS binding, the interlaced stalks of SOPA1 rotate ~40° counter-clockwise and the distance between neighboring stalk rungs expand ~55 Å leaving significant gaps, which results in a reduced compactness of SOPA1 assemble and a loosened helical lattice (**Figure 6A**).

We then docked the crystal structures of Dyn1 domains into the cryo-EM density (**Figure 6C**). At this time, the nucleotide-free G domain structure was replaced with a GMPPCP binding structure (PDB ID 3ZYC) (Chappie et al., 2011). The structure of G/BSE domain can be well fitted into the head region (green in **Figures 6C and 6D**) and the middle/GED domain well fitted into the middle stalk region (blue in **Figure 6C and 6D**). The potential dimerization interfaces of SOPA1 G domains still exist between neighboring rungs (**Figure 6C**) while the distance between the G domains is still not close enough to form dimer **(Figure S7A)**, indicating further conformation adjustment needed for the subsequent GTP hydrolysis.

For the inner leg region, there are two pieces of densities. One (purple in **Figure 6D**) is underneath the stalk region and would account for the extension of the stalk tip of SOPA1 for membrane interaction. Another globular density (**Figures 6A**) lies underneath the gap between the parallel stalks, which can be well fitted with a dimer of PH domain of Dyn1 (**Figures 6C and 6D**), suggesting a potential dimerization of PH-like domain of SOPA1 after nucleotide binding. The above structural analyzes of SOPA1 in nucleotide-free state suggested two possible conformations of SOPA1, the kinked and the extended ones with two possible locations of its PH-like domain (**Figure 3G**). However, the cryo-EM density here suggests after nucleotide binding the PH-like domain of SOPA1 deflects to the stalk flank and stays away from the stalk. Thus, an extended configuration of SOPA1 monomer is more possible (**Figure 6E**).

By investigating the packing array of SOPA1, we also found that the asymmetric unit of SOPA1 coated tube after GTPγS binding contains two copies of SOPA1 molecules, which can form either a short dimer or a long dimer (**Figure S7B**). In consistency with the above nucleotide-free one, the short dimer with GTPγS bound utilizes the same interaction interfaces (**Figure 7B**). While the long dimer in the GTPγS bound map has a completely different interface with the one in the nucleotide-free state (**Figure S8A**). Thus, by combining two cryo-EM maps of SOPA1 coated tube in both nucleotide-free and bound state, we concluded the short form of SOPA1 dimer is the building block when it binds to membrane and starts to assembly. We further compared this dimer of SOPA1 with other dynamins dimers (Dyn1, MxA and Drp1) that are involved in membrane fission and found their significant differences (**Figure S8B**). The SOPA1 utilizes the stalks tip-to-tip interaction for dimerization while other other dynamins utilize the bundle-to-bundle interaction of stalks for dimerization.

A significant conformational change of SOPA1 after nucleotide binding

Next we further analyzed the conformational changes of SOPA1 upon nucleotide binding by comparing the structural models of SOPA1 coated tubes in nucleotide-free and GTPγS bound states. Superimposing the short dimers of

SOPA1 (extended conformation) in two states reveals a significant rotation of G domain as well as the PH-like domain (**Figure 7A and Movie S2**), yielding an open conformation of SOPA1 after GTPγS binding.

The assembly array of SOPA1 on the tube exhibits even more significant changes after GTPγS binding (**Figures 7B, 7C and Movie S3**). When overlapping the two helical tubes along the vertical direction, a counterclockwise rotation (~20°) of the SOPA1 short dimer was observed and the distance between the short dimers in the same helical rung is increased ~ 6 Å. Such rotation eliminates the stalk bundle-to-bundle interactions among different helical rungs that are important for the stabilization of nucleotide-free protein-membrane complex (**Figure 3D**). However, a new interface between the short dimers in the same helical rung forms after the structural rotation, which is mediated via a new kind of stalk bundle-to-bundle interactions and thus stabilizes the structure of GTPγS bound protein-membrane complex. Besides the structural rotation, the movement of the SOPA1 short dimer was also observed, which yields an increased distance of ~26 Å between dimers in adjacent rungs. Accompanied with the structural rotation and movement, the PH-like domains of SOPA1 tend to dimerize on the membrane (**Figures 6C and 6D**).

Overall, GTPγS binding induces a conformational change of SOPA1 (majorly G domain rotation) without changing the general architecture of the tube building block. And this conformational change causes the rotation of the SOPA1 dimers and enlarges the intervals between neighboring dimers, which eventually results an expansion of the helical tube.

DISCUSSION

Membrane fission and fusion are very important processes in eukaryotic cells for organelle communication, matter exchange and cargo transportation. Owing to the specific double-membrane structure, the fission and fusion of mitochondria are more complicated than plasma membrane and other organelles. With the fruitful structural information of Mfn1/2 and Drp1/Dnm1, the molecular mechanisms of mitochondrial outer membrane fusion and fission have been extensively investigated (Cao et al., 2017; Frohlich et al., 2013; Kalia et al., 2018; Mears et al., 2011; Qi et al., 2016; Yan et al., 2018). However, with the lack of high-resolution structure of OPA1, we only know little about the molecular mechanism of mitochondrial inner membrane fusion. Compared to Mfn1/2, the primary structure of OPA1 is more like Dyn1 that is physiologically involved in membrane fission. How a membrane-fission-like protein could play a role in membrane fusion has been a puzzle in the field for a long time. In addition, unlike other membrane fusion/fission proteins, OPA1 has multiple isoforms and needs to be processed from a long membrane anchored form (LOPA1) to a short soluble form (SOPA1) for an efficient mitochondrial inner membrane fusion, which suggests a strictly regulated dynamics of mitochondrial inner membrane.

In the present study, we investigated the interactions between SOPA1 and liposome that comprises the phospholipid composition of mitochondrial inner membrane, and then we utilized cryo-electron microscopy approach to resolve the structures of SOPA1 coated liposomal tubes in both nucleotide-free and GTPγS bound states. Like other dynamin proteins, SOPA1 can bind to membrane and induce membrane tubulation by forming a helical array on the membrane. We found such tubulation activity is independent with the activity of GTP hydrolysis of SOPA1 while its GTPase activity can be only activated after binding to membrane.

We found SOPA1 has a typical architecture of dynamin family and comprises a global G domain, a long stalk domain and a PH-like domain, resembling the structure of Dyn1. Analyzing cryo-EM densities reveal two membrane binding sites of SOPA1, one is located in its PH-like domain and another belongs to the

extention portion of its stalk region. We further identified an amphipathic helix located in the PH-like domain and found this helix contributes partially to membrane binding but determines the membrane tubulation activity of SOPA1.

We deduced the building block of SOPA1 helical array on the membrane is a dimer, which utilizes the tip-to-tip interaction of stalk regions to form the interface. Such dimer organization is significantly different with other dynamin proteins (Faelber et al., 2011; Ford et al., 2011; Reubold et al., 2015). The bundle-to-bundle interactions among stalk regions play key roles in the stability of SOPA1 coated liposomal tubes. The G domain dimerization interface, which is important for the GTP hydrolysis activity of dynamin proteins, is not formed in the helical array of nucleotide-free SOPA1. This further proves the GTP hydrolysis is a late-stage event after membrane remodeling during SOPA1 dependent membrane fusion.

We observed a significant conformational change of SOPA1 after GTPγS binding, which includes the relative rotation between G domain and stalk, the global rotation of stalk region and the re-arrangment of SOPA1 helical lattice on the membrane. Here we defined the conformation of SOPA1 in its nucleotide-free state as a close conformation and the one with GTPγS bound and G domain rotation as the open conformation. On the contrary to the conventional dynamin proteins that induce a more crowded packing and a constricted tube with a smaller diameter and higher curvature (ready for fission) after nucleotide binding (Chappie et al., 2011; Mears et al., 2011; Sundborger et al., 2014), the conformational change of SOPA1 from close to open after GTPγS binding results an expanded tube with an increased diameter and reduced membrane curvature. This implies a different role of SOPA1 in membrane remodeling in comparison with other dynamin proteins.

Although the resolution by cryo-electron tomography and sub-tomogram averaging is not high, our observation does imply a closer distance of SOPA1 G domains between two neighbor SOPA1 short dimer after GTPγS binding (**Figures 2A and 6A**), however such distance is still not close enough for G domains dimerization. Thus, the structure of GTPγS bound SOPA1 we determined is still

not the state ready for GTP hydrolysis. We speculate it is due to the subtle difference between GTPγS and GTP, which yields a barrier for future structural re-organization of SOPA1 helical array to form dimerization of G domains. Thus, in the physiological procedure, with GTP binding a further rotation of G domain and SOPA1 dimer would occur to enable forming G domain dimerization interface ready for GTP hydrolysis.

In our current study, we observed a close nucleotide-free state of SOPA1 and its open nucleotide bound state. Although the membrane binding and tubulation of SOPA1 do not need the hydrolysis of GTP, the GTPase activity of SOPA1 has been proven vital for OPA1 dependent mitochondrial inner membrane fusion. Thus, a third conformational state of SOPA1 should exist upon GTP hydrolysis. The energy released from GTP hydrolysis would presumably overcome the barrier for the membrane fusion. To be noted that, the literatures have told us SOPA1 alone could not trigger the fusion of mitochondrial inner membrane and SOPA1 needs to work together with LOPA1 (Ban et al., 2017; Del Dotto et al., 2017; Song et al., 2007). Since SOPA1 and LOPA1 share the same domain organization except an N-terminal transmembrane helix, the conformational changes of SOPA1 upon GTP binding and hydrolysis should work for LOPA1. Thus, we speculate it is the conformational change of LOPA1 during GTP hydrolysis to eventually trigger the fusion of mitochondrial inner membrane while this process needs to be enhanced with the cooperation of SOPA1.

Based on our structural analyzes as well as the previous studies of common membrane fusion (Anantharam et al., 2011; Shin et al., 2018; Tobias Brandt et al., 2016) and studies of the functions of LOPA1 and SOPA1, we proposed a model **(Figure S9)** of how OPA1 mediates mitochondrial inner membrane fusion on the basis of fusion pore hypothesis (Tobias Brandt et al., 2016). LOPA1 contains an N-terminal transmembrane helix for membrane anchoring and also two membrane binding sites at the C-terminal region same with SOPA1, which enables LOPA1 to perform membrane tethering without the help of a partner on the opposite membrane. This has been confirmed by the recent *in vitro* FRET study of LOPA1 mediated fusion (Ban et al., 2017). However, after mitochondrial outer membrane

fusion, the approaching space between two inner membranes is not always close enough for LOPA1 tethering, thus decreasing the efficiency of inner membrane fusion. Accumulation of SOPA1 at the cardiolipin rich region would remodel the inner membrane by utilizing the amphipathic helix of its PH-like domain. Then the curved inner membrane becomes closer to the opposite membrane, increasing the possibility for membrane tethering. Then the binding of GTP induces a conformational change of SOPA1 and reduces curvature of inner membrane to yield larger membrane plane for more LOPA1 tethering, which would promote docking of opposite membrane. The participant of LOPA1 into the SOPA1 assembly would be important to activate the GTP hydrolysis of LOPA1 by forming a proper dimerization interface of their G domains. Then the subsequent GTP hydrolysis would induce a further conformational change of LOPA1s to pull the two opposite membrane close enough for spontaneous fusion. In this model, the existence of SOPA1 molecules increases the possibility of membrane tethering and also assists the GTP hydrolysis of LOPA1, therefore resulting a more efficient inner membrane fusion.

Though our current studies shed light on OPA1 induced mitochondrial inner membrane fusion, the precise cooperating mechanism of LOPA1 and SOPA1 remains further elucidated and the high-resolution information of conformational changes of OPA1 during the whole GTP loading and hydrolysis cycle remains further determined. Future structural and biophysical studies are needed to unravel the molecular mechanism of mitochondrial inner membrane fusion.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Protein expression and purification

cDNA corresponding to the short S1 isoform of OPA1 was sub-cloned into the pET32M-3C expression vector (from Wei Feng's Lab, IBP, CAS) with a N-terminal Trx tag and a followed His6 tag. And there is a prescission protease cleavage site exist between His tag and protein sequence. Mutants were constructed in pET32M-3C/OPA1-S1 via PCR. All proteins were expressed in Transetta (DE3) bacteria cells (Transgene) and purified under the following procedure. Cultures were grown at 37 °C until OD 600 nm reaching 0.8 and induced with 0.2 mM IPTG for 18 hr at 16°C. The cells were collected by centrifugation. Bacteria pellets were resuspended in lysis buffer containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl and 1 tablet of protease inhibitors cocktail (Roche) and disrupted with ultra-sonication. Lysates were incubated with Ni-NTA beads (Roche). After washing with the buffer containing 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl, 1mM DTT, and 10 mM imidazole, protein was cleaved by prescission protease at 4°C overnight. After cleavage, protein was eluted with 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl, 1 mM DTT, 20 mM imidazole. The eluted protein fraction was further purified by gel filtration chromatography using a Superdex 200 10/300 GL column (GE Healthcare) in the buffer of 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl, and 1 mM DTT. Purified proteins were frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80 °C.

Preparation of SOPA1 coated tubes

The lipids (Avanti Polar Lipids) were mixed in the following ratio: 45% palmitoyl-2-oleoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (POPC), 22% 1-palmitoyl-2-oleoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphoethanolamine (POPE), 8% L-α-lysophosphatidylinositol (PI), and 25% 1',3'-bis[1,2-dioleoyl-sn-glycero-3-phospho]-sn-glycerol (cardiolipin). The indicated ratios of lipids were mixed in a chloroform solution, evaporated for 4 hr in a vacuum desiccator and rehydrated in the buffer of 20 mM Tris–HCl (pH 8.0), 1 mM EGTA, and 1 mM $MgCl_2$ to a final concentration of 4 mg/ml. The resulting multi-lamellar liposomes were put through five freeze/thaw cycles to make unilamellar liposomes. SOPA1 protein was then

mixed with unilamellar liposomes 1:1 (m:m) at a final concentration of 1mg/ml in the buffer containing 20 mM HEPES (pH 8.0), 1 mM EGTA, and 1 mM $MgCl_2$. The mixture was incubated at 16 °C for 30 min before preparing cryo-EM samples. For tubes incubate with GTP and GTP non-hydrolyzed analogous, 10 mM nucleotide was then added with a final concentration of 1mM, and the mixture was incubated for another 30 min.

For negative staining EM, 5 µl of protein-lipid tubes was applied to glow-discharged continuous carbon films and stained with uranyl acetate (2% w/v) for 1 min. Samples were visualized using a Tecnai Spirit electron microscope (ThermoFisher Scientific) operating at 120 kV and image were recorded with an Eagle camera.

Cryo-EM grids were prepared with Vitrobot Mark IV (ThermoFisher Scientific) under 100% humidity. 3 µl of protein-lipid tubes was applied to glow-discharged Quantifoil R2/1 holy carbon grids, blotted, and plunged into liquid ethane. For grids using for tomography data collection, homemade protein A coated colloidal gold was added as a fiducial marker.

Cryo-electron microscopy

Images for helical reconstruction were recorded on a cryo-electron microscope Titan Krios (ThermoFisher Scientific) operating at 300kV using SerialEM software (Mastronarde, 2005). A Falcon-IIIEC camera (ThermoFisher Scientific) was used at a calibrated pixel size of 1.42Å. A combined total dose of 50 e/Å^2 was applied with each exposure. Images were collected at 2-4 µm underfocus.

Tilt series data were collected on a cryo-electron microscope Titan Krios G2 (ThermoFisher Scientific) using SerialEM software (Mastronarde, 2005), with a K2 direct electron detector (Gatan) operating in counting mode. Tilt series data were typically collected from ±45° with 3° tilt increments at 3-5 µm underfocus. A combined dose of about 90 e/Å^2 was applied over the entire series.

Helical reconstruction

In total, 2112 movie stacks were collected. Motion correction and defocus estimation for all these micrographs were performed using MotionCorr2 (Zheng et al., 2017) and GCTF (Zhang, 2016) respectively. Micrographs with ice contamination, poor Thon rings, too large defocus values (greater than 3 μm) were excluded before filament boxing. Good micrographs were then multiplied by their theoretical contrast transfer function (CTF) for initial correction of CTF. 511 SOPA1 tubes were boxed using e2helixboxer.py in the package of EMAN2 (Tang et al., 2007) with a 480 px box width. An initial segment was stack generated from all these tubes with an overlap of 90% and an initial 3D model was generated by back projection method using these segments and assigning random azimuthal angles to them. The initial 3D model was then interpolated into different ones with various diameters, and diameter classification was performed through supervised 2D classification where models were generated by projecting the 3D models with various diameters. Then the diffraction pattern for each tube was calculated and further classified. A main class of tubes at ~ 53 nm diameter was sorted corresponding to its diameter and diffraction pattern, and contains 6644 segments. The segment stack of the selected class was then regenerated with the box size of 480 px and the box overlap of ~ 94%. Initial helical parameters were calculated by indexing the layer lines in the power spectrum of the boxed tubes. An initial helical rise of 27.0Å and twist of 20.87° were obtained and used for helical reconstruction through a real space helical reconstruction algorithm IHRSR (Egelman, 2000, 2007). The helical parameters finally converged to 25.87 Å for the helical rise, and 20.86° for the helical twist. Then summed CTF^2 was divided for the final CTF correction of the map reconstructed by IHRSR. SPIDER (Shaikh et al., 2008) was used for negative B-factor sharpening. Resolution of the final map was estimated based on the gold standard Fourier shell correlation (FSC)0.143 criterion.

Tomographic reconstruction and sub-volume averaging

Fiducial marker based tilt series alignment and gold erasure were performed using AuTom (Han et al., 2017). And the tomographic reconstructions were performed using IMOD (Kremer et al., 1996) with 2 times binning. No CTF

correction was performed at this step. For tomographic reconstruction, the radial filter options were set at 0.35 cut off and 0.05 fall off. The sub volumes picked in IMOD were extracted by RELION 1.4 (Scheres, 2012) and CTF model of each particles was generated through RELION script that called CTFFIND4 (Rohou and Grigorieff, 2015). Then 3D classification was carried with CTF correction and the particles from selected classes were used for the final refinement. The initial model for 3D classification and refinement is the random averaging of all particles and low-pass filtered to 60 Å. Reported resolutions are based on the gold-standard Fourier shell correlation (FSC) 0.143 criterion.

Sedimentation assay

Proteins was diluted to a concentration of 0.2 mg/ml in 20 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 300 mM NaCl, 1mM $MgCl_2$, 1mM EGTA, 1 mM DTT. Liposomes are the same as the above tubulation assay. The liposomes were directly added to the protein solution at a final concentration of 0.2 mg/ml and incubated at room temperature for 30 min. Samples were centrifuged at 250,000 g in a S140AT rotor (Hitachi) for 20 min at 4°C. The supernatant and pellet were analyzed by SDS–PAGE.

GTPase activity assay

GTPase reactions were performed with 0.1 mg/ml protein and 0.1 mg/ml liposomes in 20 mM HEPES (pH 7.5), 1 mM EGTA, and 1mM $MgCl_2$. GTP hydrolysis was quantified by monitoring the free phosphate concentration using a malachite green assay. Reactions were initiated by the addition of GTP to 100 mM and incubation at 37°C. 20 μl mixtures were quenched with 5 μl of 0.5 M EDTA at regular time points. After the addition of malachite green solution, the free phosphate concentration was monitored by the absorbance at 650 nm in a 96-well plate reader (EnSpire 2300).

DATA AVAILABILITY

Cryo-EM maps and models of SOPA1 coated liposomal tubes have been deposited into Electron Microscopy Data Bank and Protein Data Bank with the accession codes EMD-XXXX/PDB-XXXX for the helical reconstruction of nucleotide-free state, EMD-XXXX for the tomographic reconstruction of nucleotide-free state and EMD-XXXX/PDB-XXXX for the tomographic reconstruction of GTPγS bound state, respectively.

AUTHOR CONTRIBTUIONS

F. S. initiated and supervised the project. D.Z. performed all experiments and collected all data. Y.Z. performed image processing of helical reconstruction. D.Z. and T.N. performed image processing of cryo-electron tomography and sub-tomogram averaging. J.M. cloned the gene and performed initial protein expression. W.C. performed initial cryo-EM work of SOPA1 coated tube. X.P. helped on liposome preparation and co-sedimentation experiments. Y.Z. helped on protein production and purification. D.Z., Y.Z., and F.S. analyzed the data and wrote the manuscript.

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. All institutional and national guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals were followed.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The Authors declare no Competing Financial or Non-Financial Interests.

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FIGURES AND LEGENDS

Figure1. Purification and characterization of SOPA1. (**A**) SDS-PAGE and native PAGE of wild type SOPA1 and its truncation form (Δ196-252). (**B**) Size exclusion chromatography of SOPA1. (**C**) Base and liposome-binding induced GTPase activity of SOPA1. (**D**) Negative stain electron micrographs of SOPA1 coated tubes, scale bar: 200 nm. (**E**) Cryo electron micrographs of SOPA1 coated tubes. Scale bar: 100 nm.

Figure 2. 3D reconstruction of nucleotide-free SOPA1 coated tubes. (**A**) Side view of cryo-EM map of SOPA1 coated tube. Other than membrane, the map is subdivided and colored radially into three layers denoting "leg" (yellow), "stalk" (blue), and "head" (green and cyan). The outer diameter and pitch are labeled. (**B**) Radical cross-section of the tube. The inner diameter is labeled. Dashed black lines denote the planar sections that are rotated by 90° and shown in (D). (**C**) Cross-section of the tube along the solid vertical black line in (B). The leg, stalk, head, and membrane bilayer density are labeled and colored as in (A). (**D**) Corresponding cross sections of the tube along the dashed black lines in (B). The density color scheme is same with (C).

Figure 3. Docking crystallized fragments of dynamin1 into cryo-EM map of nucleotide-free SOPA1 coated tube. (**A**) Domain organization of OPA1. MTS, mitochondrial targeting sequence; TM, transmembrane region; G, G domain; Middle, middle domain; PH-like, PH-like domain; GED, GTPase effector domain. The proteolytic cleavage site S1 in isoform 1 at the 195th amino acid is indicated by black triangle. (**B**) Crystal structure of nucleotide-free human dynamin 1 (Faelber et al., 2011) (PDB ID 3SNH). The structure is separated into G/BSE region, middle/GED stalk region and PH domain, respectively. (**C**) Docking structural fragments of nucleotide-free human dynamin 1 into cryo-EM map (transparent gray) of nucleotide-free SOPA1 coated tube. G/BSE domains are colored green, and middle/GED stalk are colored blue. Building blocks in two different helical starts

are colored orange and pink, respectively. (**D**) Slicing cross sections of the tube showing the fitness between structural model and the map. The positions of cross sections are same with **Figure 2D** and (F). Black circles in panel 1 indicate potential G dimer interface. Solid line circle in panel 2 highlights bundle-to-bundle stalk interface and dashed line circle for the tip-to-tip stalk interface. (**E**) Zoomed–in view of radical cross-section showing the fitness between structural model and the map. The PH domain of human dynamin 1 is fitted into the leg density and the density belonging to the extension of the stalk is shown in a higher threshold and colored in purple. (**F**) Vertical cross section of the map that rotates 90° with respect to (E). Dashed black lines denote the positions of the cross sections in (D). (**G**) Two possible monomer conformations of SOPA1, the extended form and the kinked one.

Figure 4. Tubulation activity of SOPA1 is independent with its GTPase activity. (**A**) Sedimentation of wild type SOPA1 and its G domain mutants with or without cardiolipin containing liposomes. S, supernatant; P, pellet. (**B**) Liposome binding induced GTPase activity of wild-type SOPA1 and its G domain mutants. L, liposome. (**C**) Tubulation activity of wild-type SOPA1 and G domain mutants examined by negative stain electron microscopy. Scale bar: 500 nm.

Figure 5. A predicted amphipathic helix in SOPA1 is indispensable for its tubulation activity. (**A**) Sedimentation of wild type SOPA1 and its mutants with or without cardiolipin containing liposomes. S, supernatant; P, pellet. (**B**) Liposome binding induced GTPase activity of wild-type SOPA1 and its mutants. L, liposome. (**C**) Tubulation activity of wild-type SOPA1 and its mutants examined by negative stain electron microscopy. Scale bar: 500 nm.

Figure 6. Sub-tomogram averaging of SOPA1 coated tube in GTPγS bound state. (**A**) Side view of SOPA1 coated tubes after adding GTPγS. The map is

subdivided into three layers and colored with the same scheme in **Figure 1**. (**B**) Cross section view of the map that is rotated 90° from (A). (**C**) Docking structure fragments of dynamin 1 into the map in (A). Here, the G/BSE region of dynamin 1 is replaced by another structure (PDB ID 3ZYC) with GMPPCP bound. The densities belonging to the extension of the stalk are shown in a higher threshold and colored in purple. (**D**) Cross section views of the map that is rotated 90° from (C). (**E**) Possible monomer conformation of SOPA1 in an extended form.

Figure 7. A possible conformational change of SOPA1 on lipid after GTPγS binding. (**A**) Conformational change of SOPA1 short dimer after GTPγS binding. The left panel shows the short dimer in a view perpendicular to the helical axis and the right panel shows the view along the axis. Dimer in nucleotide-free state is colored in cyan and dimer in GTPγS bound state colored in gray. The G domains are colored in blue. Black arrows indicate the direction of the conformational change. (**B**) Conformational change of SOPA1 helical lattice after GTPγS binding. Four short dimers are number from 1 to 4. The distances between the tips of stalks in a single building block are labeled and indicated by black lines. Interactions between building blocks as labeled in black cycle. (**C**) Cartoon representation of displacements and rotations between building blocks during GTPγS binding. Distances between neighboring dimers are labeled and indicated by black lines. The black arrows indicate the rotation of each SOPA1 short dimer.

Figure 1

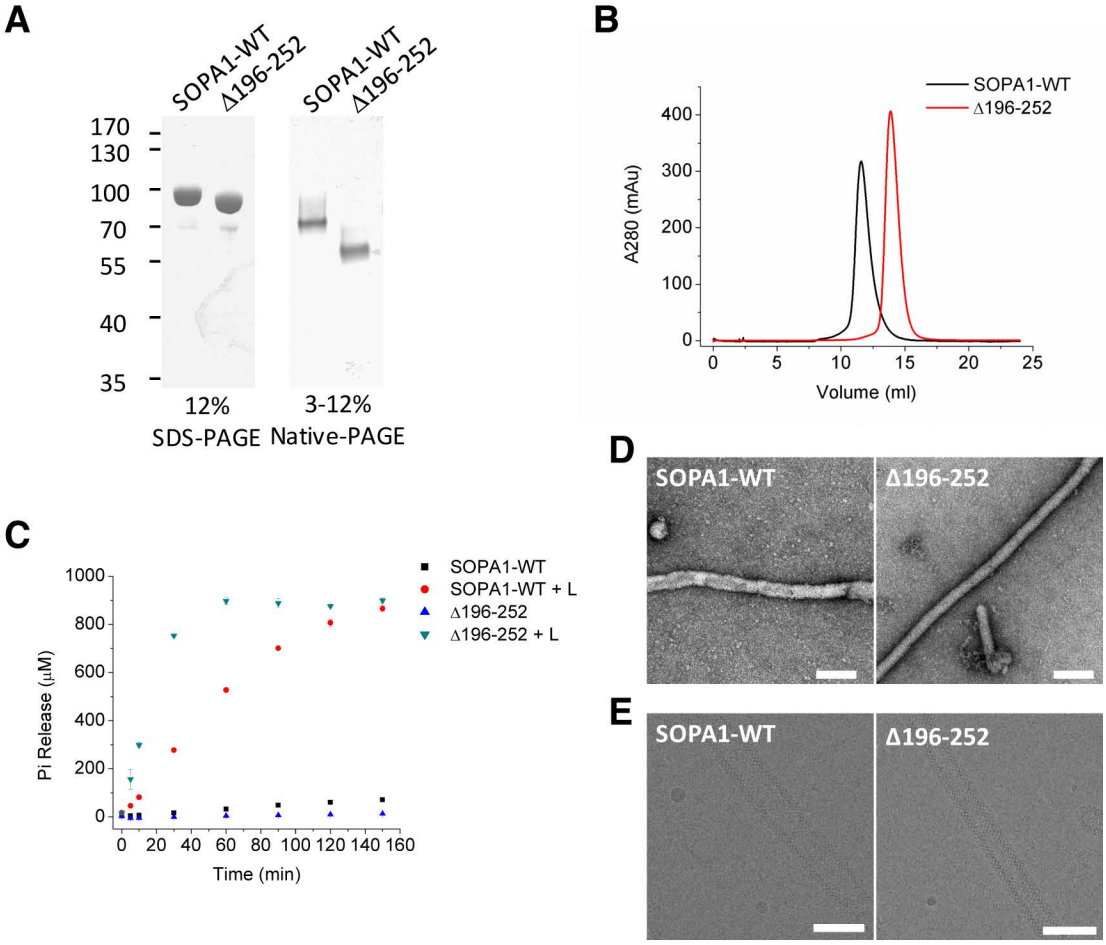

A
SOPA1-WT
Δ196-252
SOPA1-WT
Δ196-252
170
130
100
70
55
40
35
12%
3-12%
SDS-PAGE
Native-PAGE
B
SOPA1-WT
Δ196-252
A280 (mAu)
Volume (ml)
C
SOPA1-WT
SOPA1-WT + L
Δ196-252
Δ196-252 + L
Pi Release (μM)
Time (min)
D
SOPA1-WT
Δ196-252
E
SOPA1-WT
Δ196-252

Figure 2

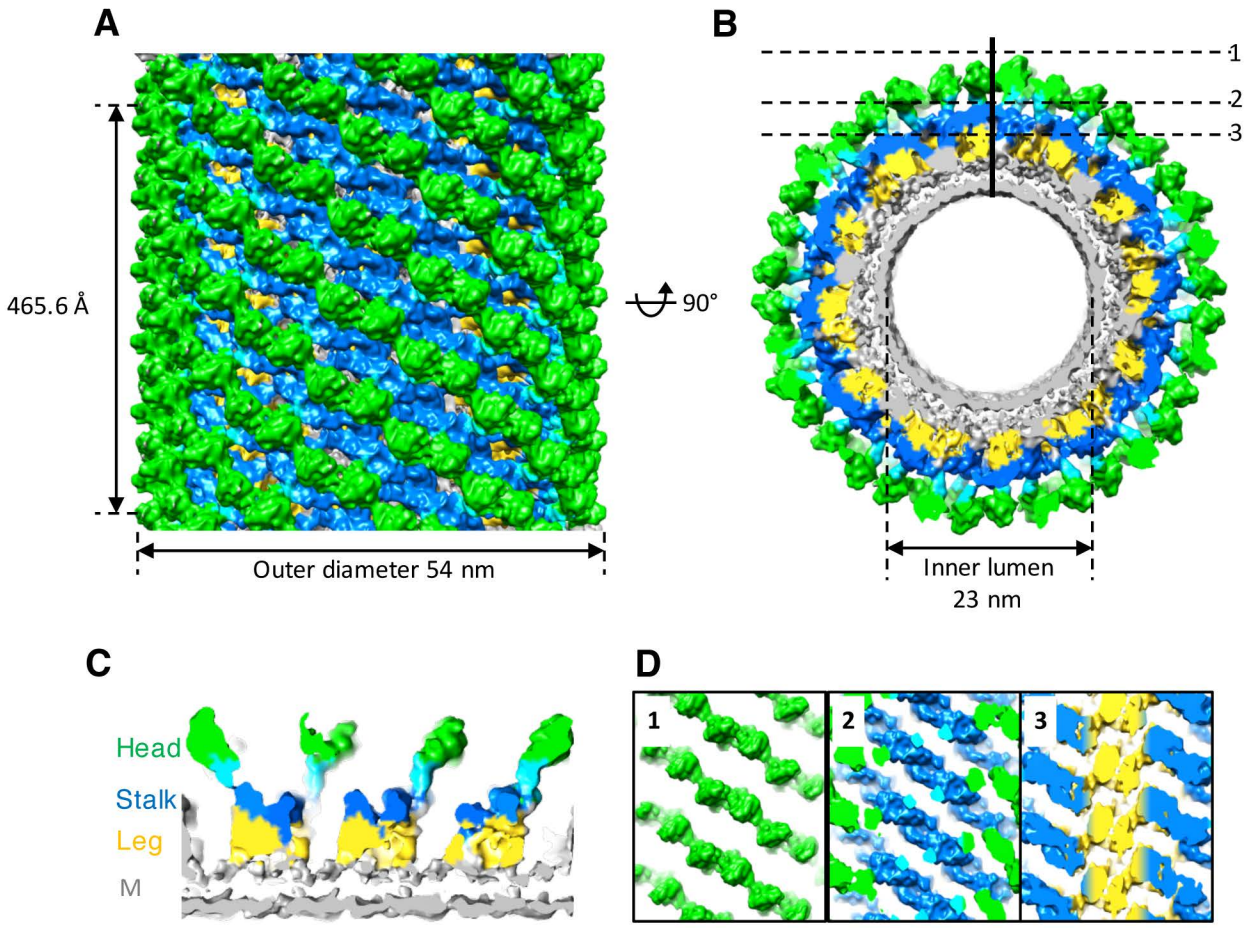
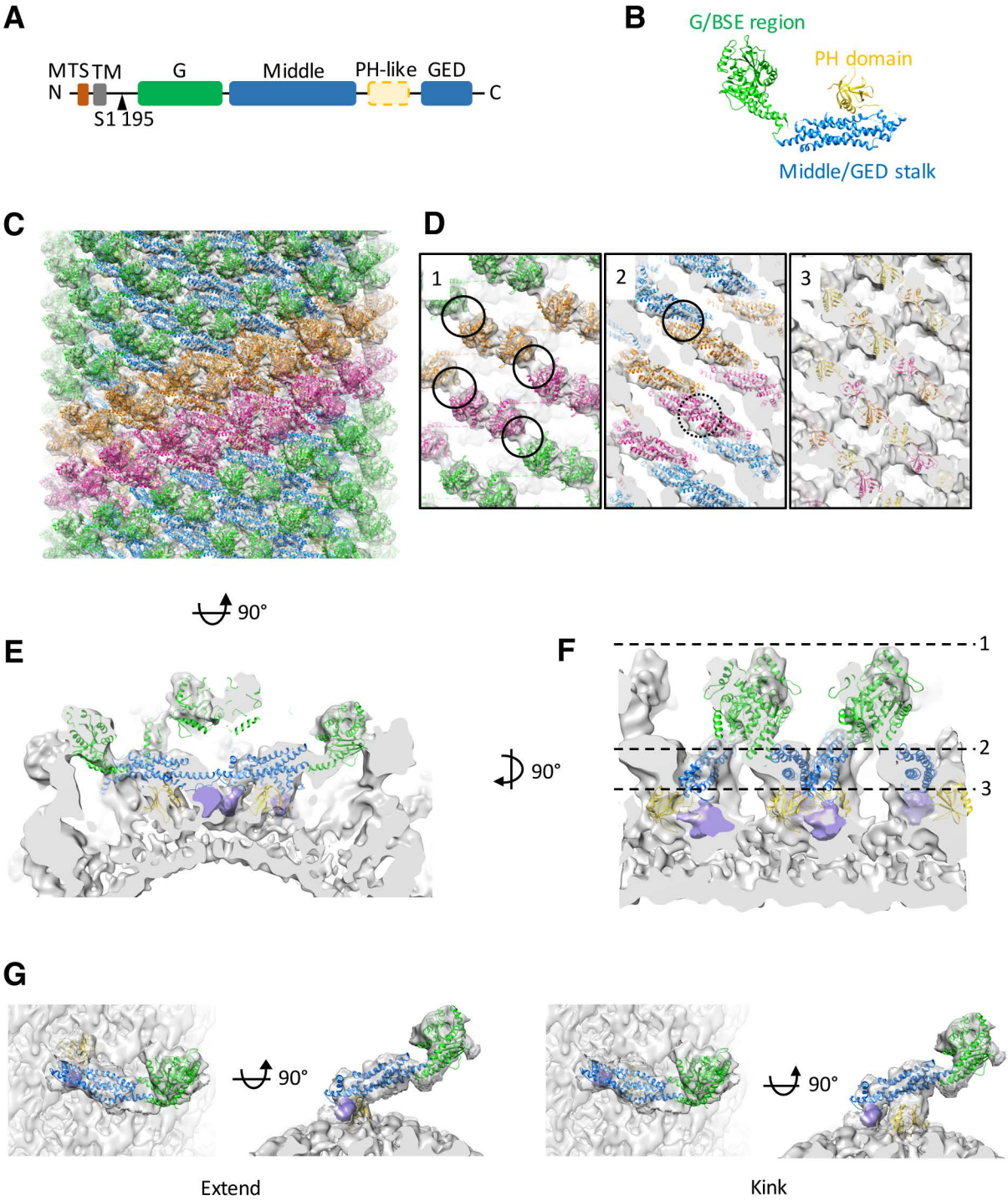

A
465.6 Å
Outer diameter 54 nm
90°
B
1
2
3
Inner lumen
23 nm
C
Head
Stalk
Leg
M
D
1
2
3

Figure 3


A
MTS
TM
G
Middle
PH-like
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N
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S1
195
B
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C
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1
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1
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Extend
Kink

Figure 4

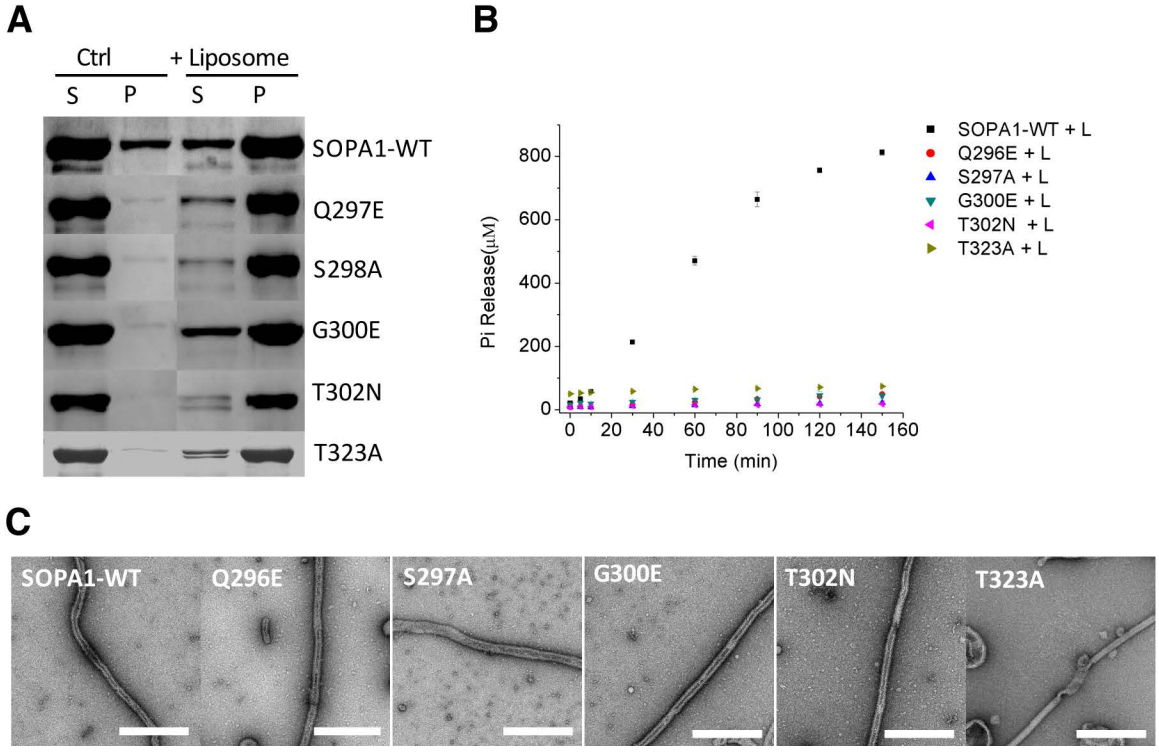

A
Ctrl
+ Liposome
S
P
S
P
SOPA1-WT
Q297E
S298A
G300E
T302N
T323A
B
Pi Release(μM)
800
600
400
200
0
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
Time (min)
SOPA1-WT + L
Q296E + L
S297A + L
G300E + L
T302N + L
T323A + L
C
SOPA1-WT
Q296E
S297A
G300E
T302N
T323A

Figure 5

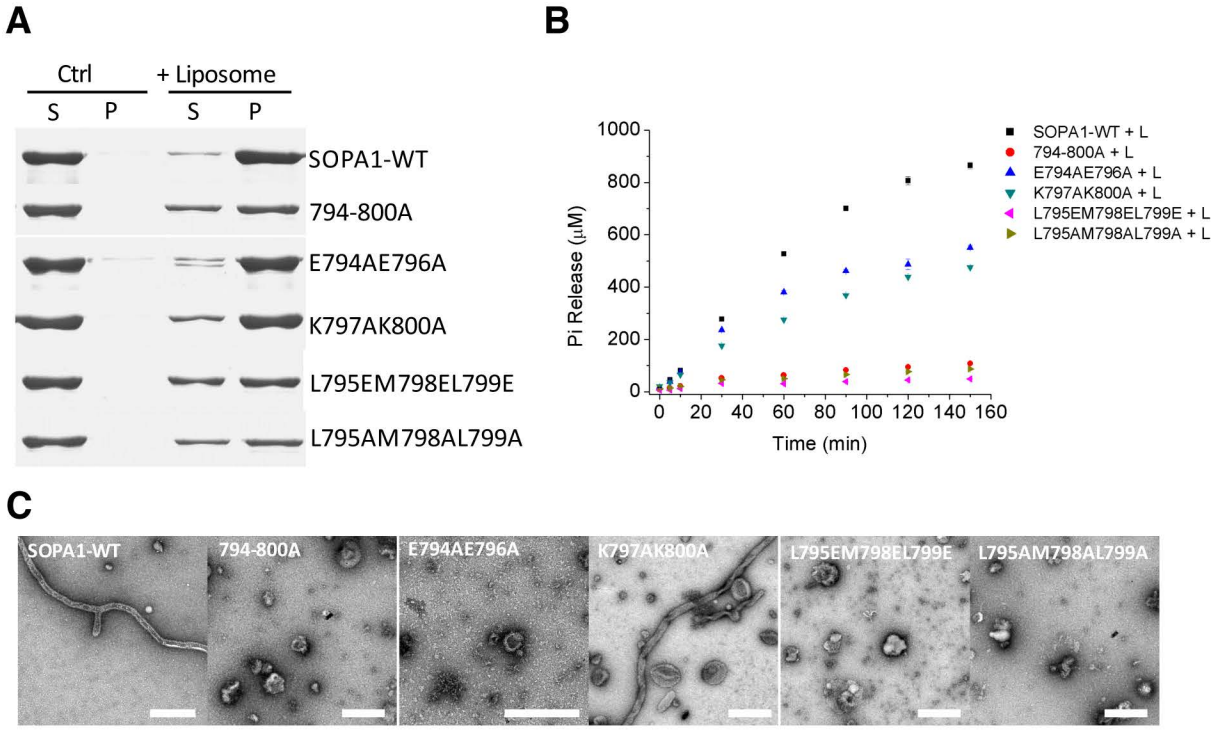

A
Ctrl
+ Liposome
S
P
S
P
SOPA1-WT
794-800A
E794AE796A
K797AK800A
L795EM798EL799E
L795AM798AL799A
B
Pi Release (μM)
Time (min)
SOPA1-WT + L
794-800A + L
E794AE796A + L
K797AK800A + L
L795EM798EL799E + L
L795AM798AL799A + L
C
SOPA1-WT
794-800A
E794AE796A
K797AK800A
L795EM798EL799E
L795AM798AL799A

Figure 6

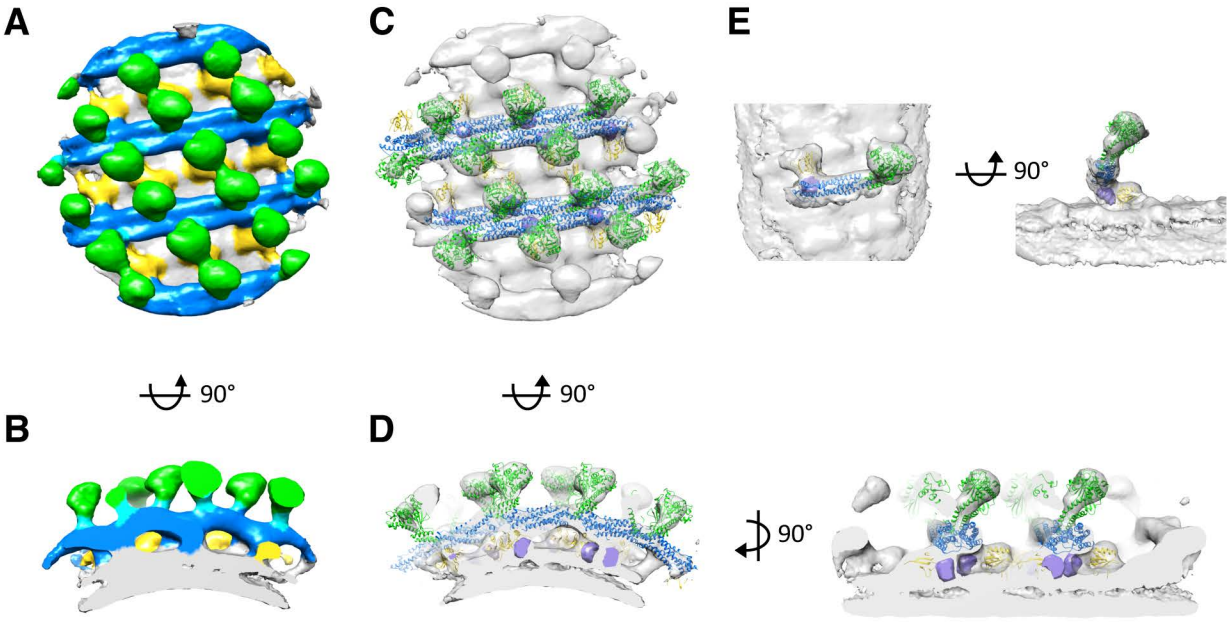
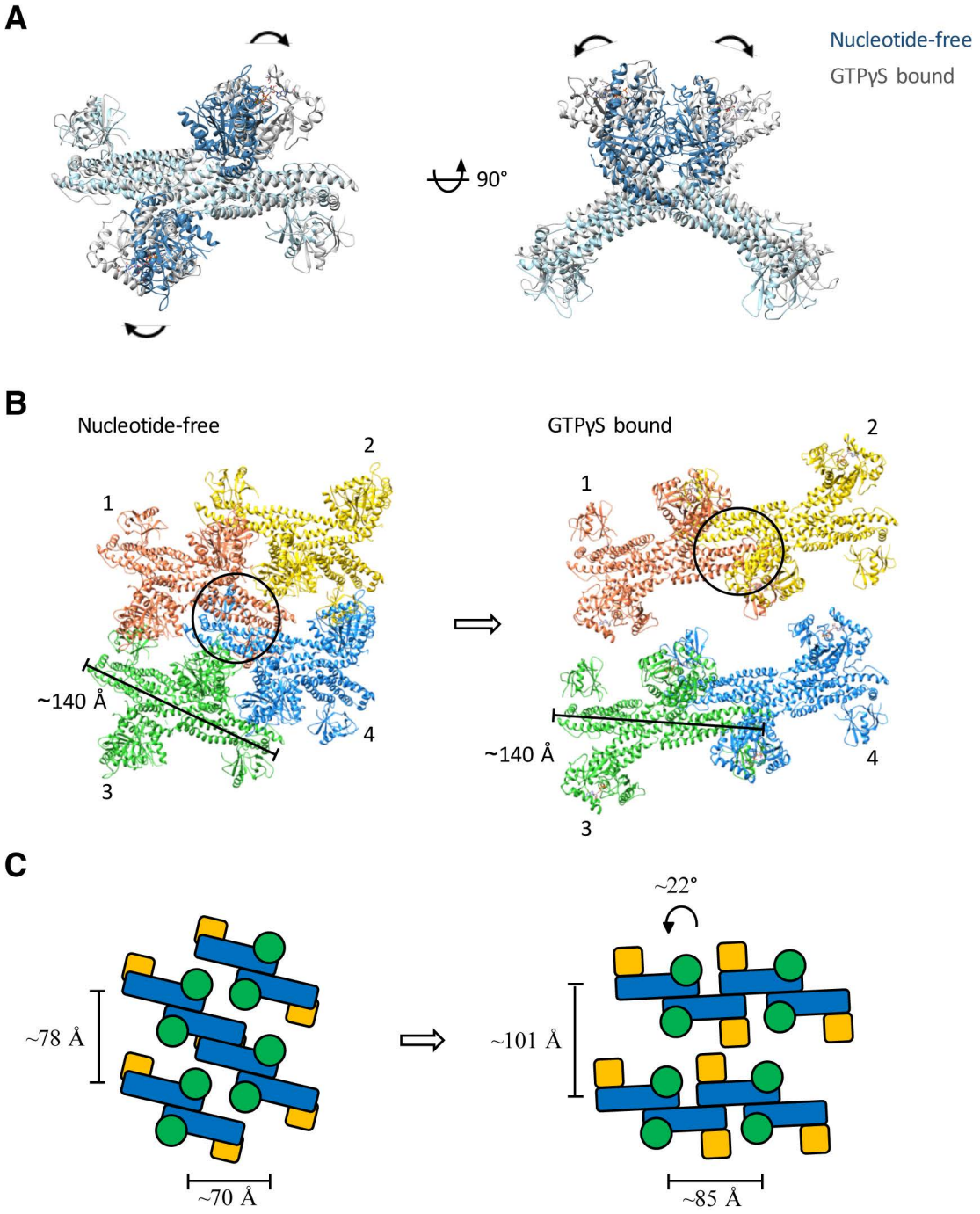


Figure 7


A
Nucleotide-free
GTPγS bound
90°
B
Nucleotide-free
GTPγS bound
1
2
3
4
~140 Å
~140 Å
C
~78 Å
~70 Å
~22°
~101 Å
~85 Å