



专论与综述

产甲烷古菌铁氢酶研究进展

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摘要: 根据活性中心金属原子的不同, 氢酶主要分为镍铁、铁铁、铁氢酶三大类。铁氢酶是发现较晚、存在物种单一且结构较为特殊的一类氢酶。目前, 铁氢酶仅发现于氢营养型产甲烷古菌中。该酶直接催化氢气异裂, 还原产甲烷代谢途径中一碳载体四氢蝶呤的次甲基转化为亚甲基。与其他两类氢酶相比, 铁氢酶不含传递电子的铁硫簇和双金属活性中心, 在结构组成上有较大的差异。此外, 铁氢酶活性中心的吡啶环被高度取代, 活性中心铁原子直接与酰基碳成键, 这些奇特的活性分子结构预示着氢酶全新的催化机制, 以及古菌细胞在合成特殊结构大分子方面的特殊功能。本文总结了从1990年发现这类新型氢酶以来的相关研究, 分别从氢酶的生理功能、结构特征、催化机制、成熟过程及应用研究等方面阐述铁氢酶的研究进展。

关键词: 氢酶, 产甲烷古菌, 蛋白结构, 催化机制, 生物合成途径

Advances in [Fe]-hydrogenase from methanogens

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Abstract: Hydrogenases are classified into tree types including [NiFe]-, [FeFe]- and [Fe]-hydrogenase depending on the different metals in the active center. [NiFe]- and [FeFe]-hydrogenases were found in various bacteria, while [Fe]-hydrogenase was only found in hydrogenotrophic methanogens. It catalyzes the hetero cleavage of H₂ to reduce the methenyl group of C1 carrier tetrahydrobiopterin into methylene group. Different from other two types of hydrogenases, [Fe]-hydrogenases do not contain electron-transmitting iron-sulfur clusters and bimetallic active centers. Additionally, the highly substituted pyridine ring and the Fe-acyl carbon bond in active center of [Fe]-hydrogenase indicated that there might be a new catalytic mechanism in hydrogenase. It also proposed that methanogens could synthesis this unique structural cofactor in a special way. This review summarizes the research progress of [Fe]-hydrogenase since its discovery in 1990, including physiological function, structural characteristics,

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catalytic mechanism, maturation process, and industrial application in future.

Keywords: hydrogenase, methanogens, protein structure, catalytic mechanism, biosynthetic pathway

氢气作为公认的清洁能源, 具有热值高、无污染等优点^[1]。目前工业制氢气主要包括氯碱工业副产物提纯、天然气/甲醇重整、电解水等, 这类方式能耗过高、环境不友好且成本高昂^[2]。然而生物制氢则以反应条件温和、能耗低、无需稀有金属催化剂等优点成为氢能源的主要方式^[3]。目前, 根据发酵方式的不同, 生物制氢分为光发酵、暗发酵和光-暗耦合产氢^[1,4-5]。光发酵主要是利用微藻、蓝细菌和光合细菌等通过光能产氢, 产氢效率高但速率较低^[6]; 暗发酵产氢则主要是以兼性厌氧和专性厌氧的产氢细菌如肠杆菌属为主, 其产氢速率较高但效率较低^[7]。光-暗耦合发酵有较高的产氢效率, 但过程较为复杂^[5]。无论是哪种产氢方法, 产氢过程主要由微生物细胞内的氢酶作用形成^[8]。氢酶是一类能够催化氢分子可逆生成和裂解的生物催化剂, 目前已知的氢酶根据活性中心金属不同

分为三大类^[9]: [NiFe]-氢酶、[FeFe]-氢酶和[Fe]-氢酶(图 1)。

截至目前, 对这 3 类氢酶的研究集中在基因、生化功能与结构 3 个方面。在基因层面上, 这 3 类氢酶都有对应的结构稳定的操纵子, 包括结构基因、辅因子合成基因簇及蛋白成熟与修饰的基因簇^[11-12]。其中, [NiFe]-氢酶有 2 个结构基因和 1 个附属基因簇, 目前研究较为清楚的是大肠杆菌氢酶的合成体系, 其成熟过程由操纵子 *hypA-F* 编码的蛋白辅助完成^[13-16]; [FeFe]-/[Fe]-氢酶只有 1 个结构基因和 1 个附属基因簇, 然而目前对其活性中心的合成过程尚不明确^[17-19]。

在生化层面, 3 类氢酶的催化特性都与其承担的生理功能相适应^[9,12,20]。[NiFe]-/[FeFe]-氢酶都具有产氢/耗氢的双向生理功能, 其双金属活性中心执行氧化还原反应, 既可以裂解氢分子, 也可以催

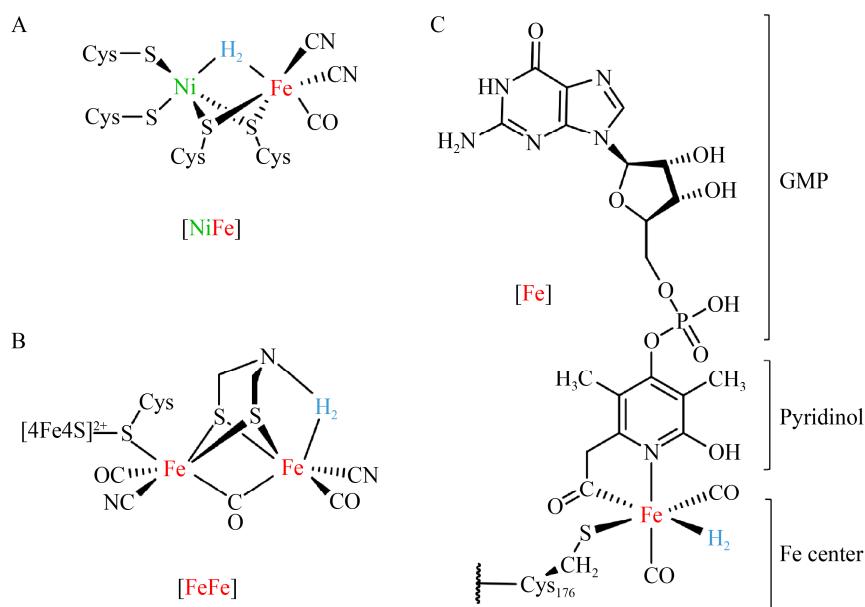


图 1 [NiFe]-、[FeFe]-、[Fe]-氢酶的金属活性中心结构示意图^[9-12]

Figure 1 Chemical structures of active center in [NiFe]-, [FeFe]- and [Fe]-hydrogenase^[9-12]

注: A: [NiFe]-氢酶的[NiFe]中心^[9-10]; B: [FeFe]-氢酶的[FeFe]中心^[11]; C: [Fe]-氢酶的[Fe]中心^[12]

Note: A: [NiFe] center in [NiFe]-hydrogenase^[9-10]; B: [FeFe] center in [FeFe]-hydrogenase^[11]; C: [Fe] center in [Fe]-hydrogenase^[12]

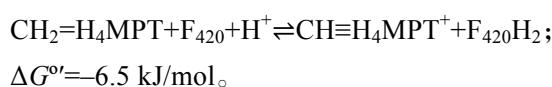
化质子生成氢分子来维持胞内还原力的平衡^[9-12]，而[Fe]-氢酶可以直接催化氢气的异裂生成质子和氢负离子，在生理功能上，其单金属活性中心执行非氧化还原反应，只部分裂解氢气并直接转移氢负离子到电子受体，从而为产甲烷代谢提供还原力^[20-21]。

在结构层面，3类氢酶的差异最为显著。其中[NiFe]-氢酶被最早发现并在1995年由McTavish等^[10]首次解析了脱硫弧菌*Desulfobibrio gigas*的[NiFe]-氢酶结构，这类氢酶由大小3个亚基构成，大亚基含有双金属活性位点，小亚基结合3个传递电子的铁硫簇^[11]。1998年，Peters等^[13]首次解析了*Clostridium pasteurianum*的[FeFe]-氢酶结构。这类氢酶大多数以单亚基的形式存在，包含1个活性中心H-cluster(FeFe双金属与[4Fe4S]构成)和2-4个传递电子的Fe-S簇；[Fe]-氢酶的发现较晚，不同于以上2类氢酶，[Fe]-氢酶金属活性中心只有1个Fe原子，而且不含有传递电子的Fe-S簇^[21]。

[Fe]-氢酶的发现不仅拓宽了我们对氢酶多样性与功能的认识，其较为简单的催化中心也为氢酶在应用与改造方面的研究提供了更有潜力的设计模板与发展方向^[22-24]。

1 [Fe]-氢酶的生物学功能

1991年，Ma等首次报道了在极端嗜热产甲烷菌*Methanopyrus kandleri*中发现的一种氢酶，该酶能催化H₂还原CH≡H₄MPT⁺形成CH₂=H₄MPT可逆反应^[25]，如下所示：



随后该团队在*Methanobacterium thermoautotrophicum*(Marburg)中纯化出该酶，并与已知的2类氢酶进行了比较，证实其为一种新型的不含铁硫簇氢酶^[26]。从产甲烷古菌中原位纯化获得的氢酶以二聚体形式存在，每个单亚基约43 kD，不含有发光基团，该酶复合体不能催化F₄₂₀、NAD等辅酶的还原^[27]，表明此类氢酶裂解

氢气不需要借助还原力。与其他2类氢酶相似的是该酶对氧分子极其敏感，在有氧的条件下很快失去活性^[26-27]。

在早期研究中，由于该酶催化生成CH≡H₄MPT⁺过程中伴随H₂的产生，因此该酶的系统命名为H₂-forming methylenetetrahydropetrin dehydrogenase([Fe]-氢酶/Hmd)^[27]。在对该酶的生化性质鉴定过程中，虽然检测到有少量Fe的存在，然而吸收光谱分析却表明这类氢酶不含有传递电子的铁硫簇，并认为Fe的存在是操作过程中的金属污染，因此，根据这一现象将这类氢酶定义为不含金属的氢酶^[26]。直到2004年，Lyon等研究发现Hmd及其辅因子在UV/Vis照射下会失去活性，红光条件下天然Hmd含有约1 mol的Fe且其与辅因子紧密连接^[28]，从而证实该酶含有金属Fe且其是催化反应过程所必需的重要元素^[28]。之后Hmd摆脱了“不含金属的氢酶”的称号，更名为“不含铁硫簇的氢酶/[Fe]-氢酶”^[29]。

进一步研究发现，并不是所有产甲烷古菌都存在这类氢酶。该酶主要存在于*Methanopyrales*、*Methanobacteriales*和*Methanococcales*这3个目的氢营养型产甲烷古菌中，在*Methanosarcinales*和*Methanomicrobiales*(除了*Methanocorpusculum labreanum*)2个目的产甲烷古菌中并未发现hmd基因的存在，推测其可能与营养代谢类型或生长环境相关^[29-30]。Afting等发现，随着生存环境中Ni元素浓度的改变，Hmd、F₄₂₀-依赖的亚甲基四氢蝶呤脱氢酶(Mtd)和F₄₂₀-依赖的[NiFe]-氢酶(Frh)的表达受到有规则的调控^[29]。Ni浓度较低时，Hmd和Mtd表达上调，而Frh表达下调，因此，在低浓度Ni条件下，Frh催化的反应被Hmd和Mtd这2个酶的联合反应取代，利用H₂作为氢供体产生F₄₂₀H₂(图2)^[29]。当环境中Ni浓度升至5 μmol/L时，Hmd的表达量很明显地大幅度降低^[29]。然而环境中Ni浓度如何调控基因表达尚未明确。细菌中由NikR和RcnR调控胞内镍的浓度来参与[NiFe]-氢酶的

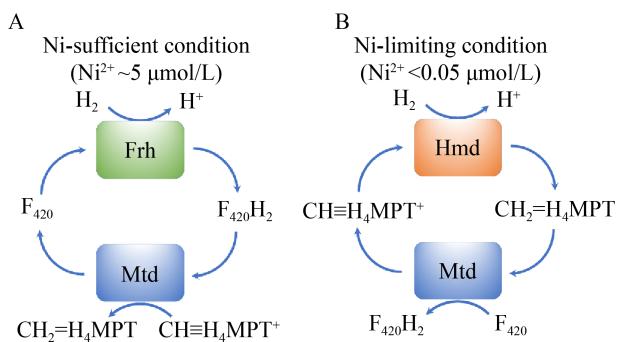


图 2 不同镍浓度条件下 Frh、Mtd 和 Hmd 在产甲烷代谢途径中的相互协作示意图^[29]

Figure 2 Ni-concentration dependent cooperation regulation of Frh, Hmd and Mtd in methanogenesis^[29]

注: A: 在镍充足的条件下, Frh 以 H₂ 为电子供体还原 F₄₂₀ 生成 F₄₂₀H₂^[29]; B: 在镍不足的条件下, 在 Hmd 的协同下, Mtd 以 CH₂-H₄MPT 为电子供体还原 F₄₂₀ 生成 F₄₂₀H₂^[29]。Frh: F₄₂₀-还原型[NiFe]-氢酶; Hmd: [Fe]-氢酶; Mtd: F₄₂₀-依赖型亚甲基-H₄MPT 脱氢酶。F₄₂₀: 辅酶 F₄₂₀; CH≡H₄MPT⁺: 次甲基-H₄MPT⁺; CH₂=H₄MPT: 亚甲基-H₄MPT

Note: A: F₄₂₀H₂ generation with the reduction of F₄₂₀ by Frh under Ni-sufficient condition^[29]; B: F₄₂₀H₂ generation with the reduction of F₄₂₀ by the coupled-reactions of Hmd and Mtd under Ni-limiting condition^[29]. Frh: F₄₂₀-reducing [NiFe]-hydrogenase; Hmd: [Fe]-hydrogenase; Mtd: F₄₂₀-dependent methylene-H₄MPT dehydrogenase. F₄₂₀: Coenzyme F₄₂₀; CH≡H₄MPT⁺: Methenyl-H₄MPT⁺; CH₂=H₄MPT: Methylen-H₄MPT

合成,而在产甲烷古菌只存在 NikR 同源基因,可能通过调控胞内镍的浓度在[Fe]-氢酶与 F₄₂₀-依赖的[NiFe]-氢酶的转录后调控中发挥作用^[29-30]。产甲烷古菌 RcnR 同源蛋白的缺失可能与生存环境或存在其他更为复杂的镍调控体系相关。

2 [Fe]-氢酶的结构

同其他 2 类氢酶相似, Hmd 也是由脱辅酶与辅因子 2 部分构成。Pilak 等通过异源表达获得 *Methanocaldococcus jannaschii* 和 *Mehtnopyrus kandleri* 的 Hmd 脱辅酶氢酶,并解析了 Hmd 的三维结构; Hmd 以同型二聚体形式出现,2 个亚基的 C-末端片段相互缠绕形成二聚体的中心,组成一个交叉的折叠区域;2 个亚基的 N-末端结构域各含一个金属辅因子的结合位点,N 端与 C 端结构域之间形成一个开放式的裂隙(图 3A)^[31]。

为了进一步揭示氢酶与辅因子的结合状态,

Shima 等通过异源表达获得了氢酶的脱辅酶蛋白,同时从 *M. marburgensis* 中纯化获得了氢酶辅因子 Iron-Guanylylpyridinol (FeGP),在厌氧与红光条件下体外组装脱辅酶与辅因子形成有活性的全酶,并对其进行了结构分析^[32]。辅因子 FeGP 嵌在亚基 N 端结构域的 2 个 Rossman 结构域(图 3A)^[31],参与结合辅因子 FeGP 的特殊氨基酸残基(Cys176)如图 3B 所示,鸟苷单磷酸 GMP 与氨基酸残基的结合将 FeGP 辅因子锚定在蛋白内部^[33]。

3 [Fe]-氢酶的特殊辅因子 FeGP

在氢酶的早期研究中,发现通过异源表达纯化的[Fe]-氢酶并无活性,但在加入从产甲烷古菌中提纯并被尿素变性的氢酶超滤液后,异源表达的该酶蛋白活性恢复,证明该酶行使催化功能需要某种辅因子^[34]。Lyon 等发现天然 Hmd 可被 UV/Vis 灭活且这一活性与 Fe 有关,而且 Fe 是辅因子中与酶活性有关的重要金属元素^[28]。通过尿素、胍盐或甲醇在二硫代乙醇解折叠后释放出来的辅因子,经过 UV/Vis 和 ¹H NMR 及 ¹³C NMR 等方法检测,获得了氢酶失活状态下的辅因子结构模型^[35]。

FeGP 辅因子可以在弱碱或弱酸条件下从酶蛋白中可逆地解离出来,但其活性极不稳定,在室温、UV/Vis 照射下,活性中心的金属 Fe 及其配体迅速降解脱除^[36-37]。另外,吡啶醇衍生物多存在于植物、真菌或放线菌的生物碱中,类似该辅因子吡啶环被高度取代的情况较少存在,目前只在产甲烷古菌的氢酶中发现了该类结构的小分子;晶体三维结构分析表明,辅因子的鸟苷酸部分与酶的 N-端单核苷酸结合位点相结合;密度泛函理论(Density Functional Theory, DFT)计算表明,吡啶醇的羟基可能参与催化反应;另外,吡啶醇的酰基配体对氢活化起着关键作用^[36]。

催化中心 Fe 原子是如何与辅因子其他部分相连接的?研究者们通过 IR、Mössbauer、X-Ray 等检测方法,提出一种结合酶的 FeGP 辅因子铁络合物结构模型: Fe 与 1 个 sp² 杂化 N 原子、1 个酰基

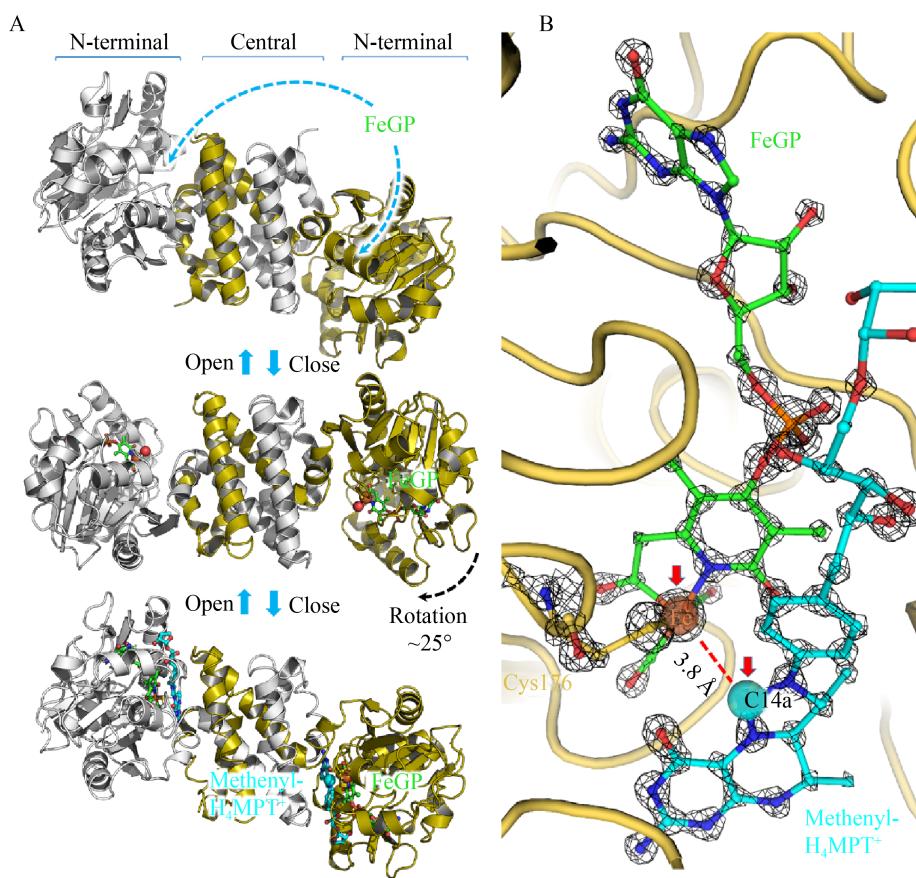


图 3 [Fe]-氢酶的蛋白空间结构与酶-底物复合体活性中心结构示意图^[31-33]

Figure 3 The structures of [Fe]-hydrogenase and its active center in the enzyme-substrate complex^[31-33]

注：A：由上至下依次为[Fe]-氢酶的脱辅酶^[31](闭合构象)、全酶^[32](开放构象)和酶-底物复合体(闭合构象)^[32]空间结构；B：激活状态下的酶-底物复合体活性中心空间结构^[33]。FeGP：[Fe]-hydrogenase 的辅因子(绿色球棍模型，Fe 以棕色球模型表示)；Methenyl-H₄MPT⁺：次甲基-H₄MPT⁺ (绿色球棍模型，Fe 以棕色球模型表示)

Note: A: Structures of [Fe]-hydrogenase apoenzyme^[31] (closed form, top), [Fe]-hydrogenase holoenzyme^[32] (open form, middle) and the enzyme-substrate complex (closed form, bottom)^[32]; B: The activated active center of [Fe]-hydrogenase in the enzyme-substrate complex^[33]. FeGP: Cofactor of [Fe]-hydrogenase (shown as green balls and sticks model, Fe atom was marked as brown spheres); Methenyl-H₄MPT⁺: CH≡H₄MPT⁺ (shown as light blue balls and sticks model)

C 原子、1 个 Cys176-S 原子、2 个 CO 分子和 1 个溶剂分子形成 Fe 中心^[38-41]。这一推测模型在氢酶与辅因子、底物的共结晶蛋白结构中得到证实(图 3B)^[33]。

4 辅因子 FeGP 生物合成途径

FeGP 作为一种特殊的辅因子，其在生物体内的合成过程一直是未解之谜。Schick 等通过同位素标记对 FeGP 辅因子中碳元素的来源进行了初步分析^[42]。研究发现氢酶 Hmd 结构基因的上游伴随出现由数个基因组成的操纵子 *hcgA-G*，推测其可能

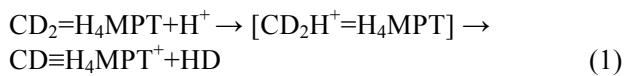
与氢酶辅因子的合成相关^[43-46]。

在操纵子 *hcgA-G* 编码的蛋白中，HcgC 的结构与 SAM-依赖的甲基转移酶相似，体外酶动力学分析与复合晶体结构证实了这一功能^[23,45]；HcgB 的结构与核苷三磷酸酶(NTPase)相似，而核苷三磷酸酶可从核苷三磷酸中裂解焦磷酸，因此推测 HcgB 是一种鸟苷转移酶，能够连接 GMP 和吡啶环从而形成鸟苷吡啶，这一推测通过酶动力学分析以及底物/酶复合体结构分析得到证实^[47]；HcgE 与 E1-like 泛素激活蛋白酶类似，但 HcgE 中的泛素结

合位点并不保守, 因此预测该酶能催化鸟苷吡啶醇羧基的腺苷酸化; HcgF 与烟酰单核苷脱氨酶的结构相似, 但不含有类似酶活性, 却能与鸟苷吡啶环结合使羧基与蛋白残基 Cys 之间形成二硫键, 因此推测 HcgF 能够利用腺苷酸化的鸟苷吡啶醇为底物形成硫脂键^[46]; HcgD 的结构是一个紧密的二聚体形式, 存在 2 个铁原子结合位点, 其中 Fe1 位比 2 位更容易被螯合剂 EDTA 洗脱, HcgD 可能具有转 Fe 金属到 Fe 中心的功能; HcgA 和 HcgG 的功能还有待解析, 推测其功能可能与 Fe 中心 CO 配基的连接相关^[48]。基于 Hcg 各蛋白的功能, 研究者们初步提出了 FeGP 辅因子的生物合成途径, 如图 4 所示^[43-44,49]。

5 [Fe]-氢酶的催化机制

1992 年, Schwörer 等通过同位素标记手段和二维 NMR 图谱发现该酶催化的反应只有底物亚甲基上的一个 H 参与, *pro-R* 位质子与水或溶剂中的质子之间进行了交换^[50]。氢同位素和质谱分析揭示了催化过程中 $\text{CH}_3^+=\text{H}_4\text{MPT}$ 的中间体形式, 并初步解释了氢气生成的过程^[51]。



不同于[FeFe]-/[NiFe]-氢酶在催化 $\text{H}_2/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ 之间质子交换过程对外源电子受体的需要, [Fe]-氢酶不需要外源电子受体的介导, 但[Fe]-氢酶的催化活性必须有底物作为质子受体的参与才能进行^[52]。基于这一发现, 研究者初步推测酶催化质子交换的机制可能是 $\text{CH}\equiv\text{H}_4\text{MPT}^+$ 与酶形成复合体, 并使得咪唑环上的 C14a 有了碳正离子的特性, 从而能够与溶剂中的质子发生立体特异性交换^[53-55]。

为了进一步揭示酶的催化机制, Hiromoto 等通过对酶与底物进行共结晶实验, 解析了 2.15 Å 分辨率下 Hmd 与 $\text{CH}_2=\text{H}_4\text{MPT}$ 的二元复合物结构^[53], 但这一复合物结构中 Hmd 是没有活性的。直到 2019 年才获得了有活性的 Hmd/底物复合物的高分辨率晶体结构(1.06 Å), 通过两者之间的对比发现, 活性 Hmd 和底物共结晶的结构状态与无活性状态存在构象上的变化^[33]。由于 Hmd 在无底物存在时并不表现出氢酶活性, 推测其催化过程是通过底物结合引起的构象变化开启的, 并通过量子力学/分子力学(QM/MM)分析进一步支持了这一假说(图 5)^[32]。

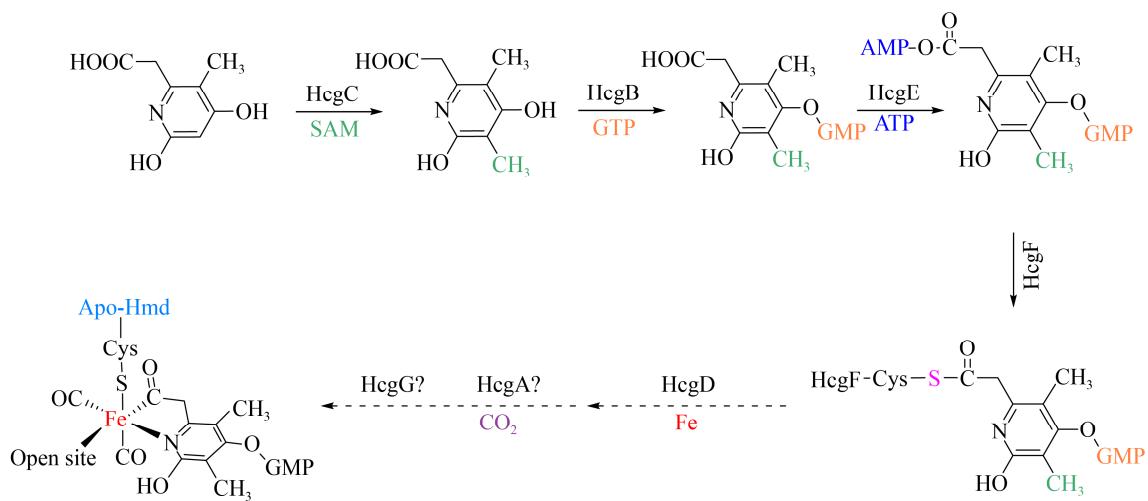


图 4 辅因子 FeGP 的生物合成途径示意图^[23,43-46]

Figure 4 The proposed biosynthetic pathway of FeGP cofactor^[23,43-46]

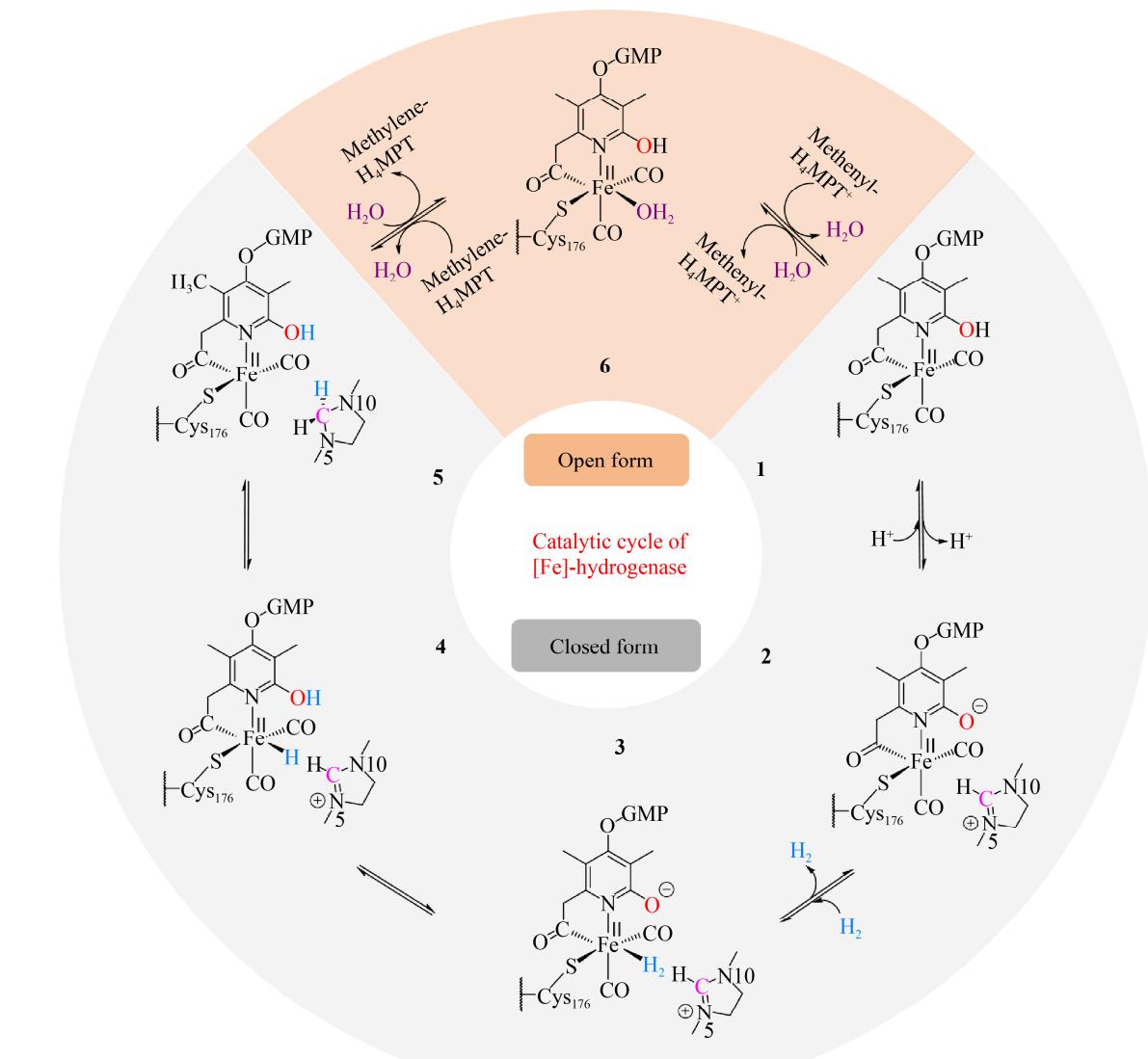


图 5 [Fe]-氢酶的催化机制示意图^[32]

Figure 5 The proposed catalytic mechanism of [Fe]-hydrogenase^[32]

注: [Fe]-氢酶的催化循环包含 2 种酶蛋白构象的变化: 开放构象(以橙色背景表示)和闭合构象(以灰色背景表示)。整个催化循环由底物次甲基-H₄MPT⁺的结合触发, 直接导致催化裂隙的闭合, 进而通过空间位阻效应将占据 Fe 中心第 6 配位的水分子挤出活性中心, 从而形成用于 H₂结合的 Fe 位点空配位(step 1)。随后 FeGP 辅因子吡啶环 2-OH 的去质子化(step 2), H₂ 分子结合于 Fe 位点第 6 配位(step 3)。H₂ 分子在 Fe 位点发生异裂(step 4), 并将产生的氢负离子转移至底物次甲基-H₄MPT⁺咪唑环的 C14a 位点, 完成氢化反应生成亚甲基-H₄MPT (step 5)。在反应产物亚甲基-H₄MPT 释放后, 水分子将重新结合于 Fe 中心第 6 配位(step 6)。同时, 蛋白构象由闭合回复到开放状态。

Note: Open (highlighted by orange background)-closed (highlighted by grey background) conformational changes of [Fe]-hydrogenase are involved in its catalytic cycle. The cycle is triggered by the binding of methenyl-H₄MPT⁺, generating the closure of the active-site cleft and kicking out the water molecule from the Fe site (step 1). With the deprotonation of 2-OH on pyridinol ring of FeGP cofactor (step 2), hydrogen molecule bound on the empty coordination position of Fe site (step 3) and its heterotropic cleavage formed subsequently (step 4). After transfer of hydride to C14a of methenyl-H₄MPT⁺ (step 5), produced methylene-H₄MPT was released and the water molecule re-bound the Fe site (step 6). In addition, the closed form was changed into open form again.

该假说认为, 酶底物共结晶实验表明该酶有2种构象——开放态和闭合态, 而活性的闭合状态是通过底物结合激活的^[32]。在开放状态下, FeGP辅因子的Fe中心与底物的C14a之间的距离为9.3 Å, 由于距离较远理论上不能直接发生反应^[54], 而闭合状态下两者距离为3.8 Å, 可以发生反应^[32]。因此推测酶催化反应的过程可能是: 开放状态下暴露出底物的结合位点, 底物CH₂=H₄MPT结合后促使酶构象转变为闭合状态; 闭合状态的形成使得Fe中心上的水配体被挤出, 从而产生一个空配位; 这一空配位有助于H₂的结合, 同时吡啶环上的2-OH基团去质子化, 激发了底物C14a趋近于碳正离子的状态; 随后, H₂通过闭合构象中狭窄的疏水通道转移至活性位点处, 并结合在Fe中心的空配位上^[55]。低自旋的羟基铁促使H₂极化, 异裂形成Fe-H中间体, 将氢负离子转移给C14a从而形成产物CH₂=H₄MPT, 吡啶环上去质子化的羟基接受H₂异裂后形成的质子, 经质子传递链转移出催化活性中心^[56]。

6 总结与展望

如上所述, 无论是哪一类氢酶, 其显著的特性均是极端氧敏感性, 催化中心的金属原子极容易受到氧分子的攻击而处于失活状态^[1,5]。此外, 氢酶活性中心结构的复杂性与稀有性, 使其无法通过体外合成的途径获取, 致使氢酶在应用研究方面长期处于技术瓶颈阶段^[1,5,57]。

目前对氢酶的研究主要集中在氢酶的生物合成和催化剂结构类似物等方面^[58-65]。Shima等多次尝试利用人工合成的辅因子结构类似物与异源表达的氢酶重组, 然而重组酶的活性较天然酶低得多^[22]。此外, 替换氢酶活性中心金属原子, 如用Mn替换Fe, 从而避免氧分子的干扰, 这一方向也极大地促进了氢酶的应用研究^[24]。相较于其他2类氢酶, [Fe]-氢酶有较高的催化效率、较为简单的辅因子结构和完整的合成途径, 这些优点使得[Fe]-氢酶在未来有更广泛的应用^[20]。然而要实

现该酶的高效应用, 还需通过进一步的理化研究来解决2个问题。(1) 单铁中心的光敏感问题, 因为[Fe]中心在UV/Vis光下非常容易发生CO配体的解离而失活^[28]。研究发现用Mn替代Fe后^[24], 活性中心的光敏感和氧敏感性显著下降, 通过更换性质相似的过渡金属元素有望解决这一问题。(2) 单铁中心的激活问题, [Fe]中心需要蛋白构象由开放到闭合的变化来驱离Fe第6配位的水分子, 从而激活该酶, 而这一过程必须通过与天然底物Methenyl-H₄MPT⁺的结合来驱动^[32]。进一步地理解Methenyl-H₄MPT⁺的特殊生物合成途径及与酶的动态结合过程, 通过定向进化和化学合成类似物等方法用于单铁中心的激活有望解决这一问题^[20,66]。

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