

Structure and function study of the complex that synthesizes S-adenosylmethionine

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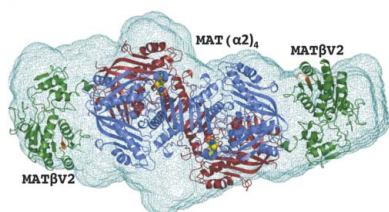
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S-Adenosylmethionine (SAME) is the principal methyl donor of the cell and is synthesized *via* an ATP-driven process by methionine adenosyltransferase (MAT) enzymes. It is tightly linked with cell proliferation in liver and colon cancer. In humans, there are three genes, *mat1A*, *mat2A* and *mat2B*, which encode MAT enzymes. *mat2A* and *mat2B* transcribe MAT α 2 and MAT β enzyme subunits, respectively, with catalytic and regulatory roles. The MAT α 2 β complex is expressed in nearly all tissues and is thought to be essential in providing the necessary SAME flux for methylation of DNA and various proteins including histones. In human hepatocellular carcinoma *mat2A* and *mat2B* genes are upregulated, highlighting the importance of the MAT α 2 β complex in liver disease. The individual subunits have been structurally characterized but the nature of the complex has remained elusive despite its existence having been postulated for more than 20 years and the observation that MAT β is often colocalized with MAT α 2. Though SAME can be produced by MAT(α 2)₄ alone, this paper shows that the V_{\max} of the MAT α 2 β complex is three- to fourfold higher depending on the variants of MAT β that participate in complex formation. Using X-ray crystallography and solution X-ray scattering, the first structures are provided of this 258 kDa functional complex both in crystals and solution with an unexpected stoichiometry of 4 α 2 and 2 β V2 subunits. It is demonstrated that the N-terminal regulates the activity of the complex and it is shown that complex formation takes place surprisingly *via* the C-terminal of MAT β V2 that buries itself in a tunnel created at the interface of the MAT(α 2)₂. The structural data suggest a unique mechanism of regulation and provide a gateway for structure-based drug design in anticancer therapies.

1. Introduction

Transmethylation, the transfer of a methyl group between molecules, plays a central role in fundamental biological processes such as cell growth, gene expression and apoptosis (Lu & Mato, 2012). The S-adenosylmethionine (SAME) molecule (Landgraf & Booker, 2013), which is synthesized by methionine adenosyltransferase (MAT), is the main source of methyl groups in all living organisms. MAT enzymes are conserved from bacteria to mammals, thus highlighting their essential regulatory function in maintaining the appropriate levels of SAME.

Mammals express three MAT genes, *mat1A*, *mat2A* and *mat2B*; the former two encode two homologous MAT catalytic subunits, MAT α 1 and MAT α 2, and the last one encodes the



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regulatory subunit $\text{MAT}\beta$. Association of $\text{MAT}\alpha$ and $\text{MAT}\beta$ subunits results in the formation of the $\text{MAT}\alpha\beta$ complex. Recently, it was shown that there exist two major splicing variants of the *mat2B* gene that encode two proteins $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V1}$ and $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V2}$. Both isoforms interact with $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ (Yang *et al.*, 2008; Xia *et al.*, 2010), revealing the existence of two new complexes: $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta\text{V1}$ and $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta\text{V2}$ (Fig. 1). $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ expression confers a cell growth advantage and is considered increasingly important for differentiation and apoptosis (Lu & Mato, 2012), for instance in human hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) (Yang *et al.*, 2008), colon cancer (Chen *et al.*, 2007) and leukaemic cells (Attia *et al.*, 2008). $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta$ interacts with a large variety of proteins both in the nucleus and cytoplasm of mammalian cells, including HuR (Xia *et al.*, 2010), an mRNA-binding protein known to stabilize the mRNA of cyclins; GIT1 (Peng *et al.*, 2013), a scaffold protein that activates ERK1/2; MafK (Katoh *et al.*, 2011), a Maf family transcription factor; and many others. Global histone methylation decreases upon MAT knockdown in *Caenorhabditis elegans* causing the release of heterochromatin from the nuclear periphery (Towbin *et al.*, 2012). Recently it has been demonstrated that threonine and SAME metabolism are coupled in pluripotent stem cells, resulting in regulation of histone methylation (Shyh-Chang *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, disruption in mice of GNMT, the enzyme that catalyses the methylation of glycine to synthesize sarcosine, and overexpression in ovary cancer cells of NNMT, the enzyme that synthesizes 1-methylnicotinamide by methylation of nicotinamide, cause aberrant DNA,

histone and phospholipid methylation by altering cellular SAME (Martínez-Chantar *et al.*, 2008; Ulanovskaya *et al.*, 2013). GNMT knockdown has been shown to attenuate prostate cancer (Sreekumar *et al.*, 2009). This has led to an emerging paradigm in enzyme regulation, where $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta$ synthesizes SAME locally to support specific methylation reactions (Kaelin & McKnight, 2013; Gibson & Kraus, 2011; Martínez-Una *et al.*, 2013).

The synthesis of SAME has been proposed to follow an $\text{S}_{\text{N}}2$ catalytic mechanism (Markham *et al.*, 1987) that has gained structural support from the crystallographic analyses of MAT catalytic subunits bound to various ligands (Komoto *et al.*, 2004; González *et al.*, 2003; Shafqat *et al.*, 2013). Briefly, the reaction is initiated by the sulfur atom of the methionine which carries a nucleophilic attack against the C5' atom of ATP followed by the hydrolysis of the triphosphosphate (PPPi) (Supplementary Fig. S1A). Despite the central role of $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta$, the nature of the complex has remained elusive and its structural elucidation a challenge. Here we report the crystallographic and solution X-ray scattering structures as well as biophysical analysis of the $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta$ complexes, providing the basis for fresh insight into this widely utilized system in biology.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. $\text{MAT}\beta$ isoforms interact with $\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_2$ through the C-terminal region

Crystallographic structures of the 258 kDa $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta\text{V2}$ complex determined in different forms to a resolution ranging from 2.35 to 3.3 Å reveal that the complex consists of a 185 kDa $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ tetramer which is flanked by two $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V2}$ subunits of 36.5 kDa each (Fig. 2a). The complex has four active sites located at the interface of the $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ dimers. The oligomeric state of our crystallographic structure is different to the suggested tetrameric form $[\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_2(\beta)_2]$ (Kotb & Kredich, 1985) or the recently proposed model in which $\text{MAT}\alpha\beta$ was assumed to be a trimer $[\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_2(\beta)_1]$ (González *et al.*, 2012).

In the first study Kotb and Kredich used analytical ultracentrifugation analysis to estimate the molecular weight of the complex whereas in the second study Gonzales *et al.* used ITC (isothermal titration calorimetry) to investigate its stoichiometry which matches our model in a 2:1 ratio of $\text{MAT}\alpha2$: $\text{MAT}\beta$ subunits. In order to confirm that the crystallographic oligomer is representative of the solution state and is thus physiologically relevant, we performed small-angle X-ray scattering (SAXS) experiments using the HPLC-integrated SAXS set-up at the SOLEIL synchrotron. The scattering curve of the complex in solution obtained by SAXS is in agreement with the theoretical curve calculated from our 2.35 Å crystal structure ($\chi^2 = 3.2$) (Fig. 2b), confirming that the $\text{MAT}\alpha2\beta$ complex in solution does indeed have the same composition and overall conformation as observed in our crystal structures, *i.e.* $\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_4(\beta\text{V2})_2$ (Fig. 2c).

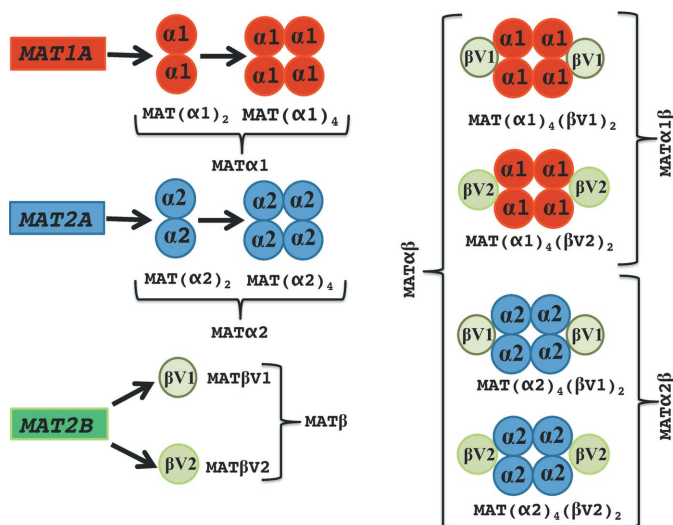


Figure 1
Schematic representation of the oligomeric states of mammalian MAT enzymes. The mammalian genes *mat1A* and *mat2A* produce the catalytic subunits $\text{MAT}\alpha1$ and $\text{MAT}\alpha2$, respectively, sharing 84% sequence homology. The $\text{MAT}\alpha1$ and $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ subunits can be found organized as dimers and tetramers. The $\text{MAT}\alpha1$ dimer and tetramer are known as MATIII and MATI, respectively. On the other hand, *mat2B* encodes the regulatory subunit for which there are two major isoforms, $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V1}$ and $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V2}$. The $\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_4(\beta\text{V2})_2$ complex consists of a $\text{MAT}\alpha2$ tetramer flanked by two $\text{MAT}\beta\text{V2}$ subunits. In this study we were able to assemble *in vitro* three different $\text{MAT}\alpha\beta$ complexes: $\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_4(\beta\text{V2})_2$, $\text{MAT}(\alpha2)_4(\beta\text{V1})_2$ and $\text{MAT}(\alpha1)_4(\beta\text{V1})_2$ (the last two complexes are described for the first time).

The crystallographic structure of the MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ complex reveals that MAT $\beta V2$ interacts with MAT $\alpha 2$ through

the insertion of the C-terminal tail of the β subunit into a cavity created at the interface of the MAT $\alpha 2$ dimer. Specifically, residues K315 to H323 of MAT $\beta V2$ establish extensive hydrophobic and polar interactions with side chains of both MAT $\alpha 2$ monomers (Fig. 3a). In the complex, the usually disordered tail of the MAT $\beta V2$ C-terminal folds into a helical structure (Fig. 3b), and within the MAT($\alpha 2$)₂ binding cavity the interaction generates a dilation of the cleft without any change in the orientation of the side chains consistent with a ‘lock-and-key’ mechanism. In order to establish that the C-terminal tail is indeed the key region of the interaction, we generated a truncated version lacking the last 15 residues at the C-terminus in both variants of MAT β , MAT $\beta V1$ and MAT $\beta V2$. These deletions, though preserving the secondary structure, as confirmed by circular dichroism (CD) spectra (Fig. S1B), precluded the assembly of the complex in solution (gel filtration, Fig. 3c; and ITC, Figs. 3d, 3e and Table 1). Taken together, these data show that MAT $\beta V2$ and MAT $\beta V1$ interact with MAT($\alpha 2$)₂ through the insertion of the C-terminal tail of the β subunit.

Table 1
Thermodynamic parameters of MAT $\alpha\beta$ complex formation.

	MAT $\beta V2$ → MAT $\alpha 2$	MAT $\beta V1$ → MAT $\alpha 2$	MAT $\beta V1$ → MAT $\alpha 1$
[]	36.5 μM → 10 μM	51.2 μM → 10 μM	236.8 μM → 45.1 μM
K_a (M^{-1})	$(1.14 \pm 0.17) \times 10^8$	$(2.90 \pm 0.82) \times 10^7$	$(3.38 \pm 0.24) \times 10^5$
K_d (M)	$(8.77 \pm 1.34) \times 10^{-9}$	$(3.44 \pm 0.98) \times 10^{-8}$	$(2.96 \pm 0.21) \times 10^{-6}$
ΔH	$-2.28 \times 10^4 \pm 188.4$	$-2.37 \times 10^4 \pm 367.6$	-9301 ± 140.9
N	0.44 ± 0.001	0.44 ± 0.004	0.325 ± 0.004

Table 2
Thermodynamic parameters of NADP binding to MAT β isoforms.

	NADP → MAT $\beta V2$	NADP → MAT $\beta V1$	NADP → MAT($\alpha 2$) ₄ ($\beta V2$) ₂
[]	500 μM → 30 μM	500 μM → 29.8 μM	155 μM → 10.22 μM
K_a (M^{-1})	$(1.12 \pm 0.13) \times 10^5$	$(1.17 \pm 0.22) \times 10^5$	
K_d (M)	$(8.93 \pm 1.07) \times 10^{-6}$	$(8.55 \pm 1.6) \times 10^{-6}$	
ΔH	2784 ± 117.4	1866 ± 127.8	
N	0.85 ± 0.026	1.23 ± 0.060	

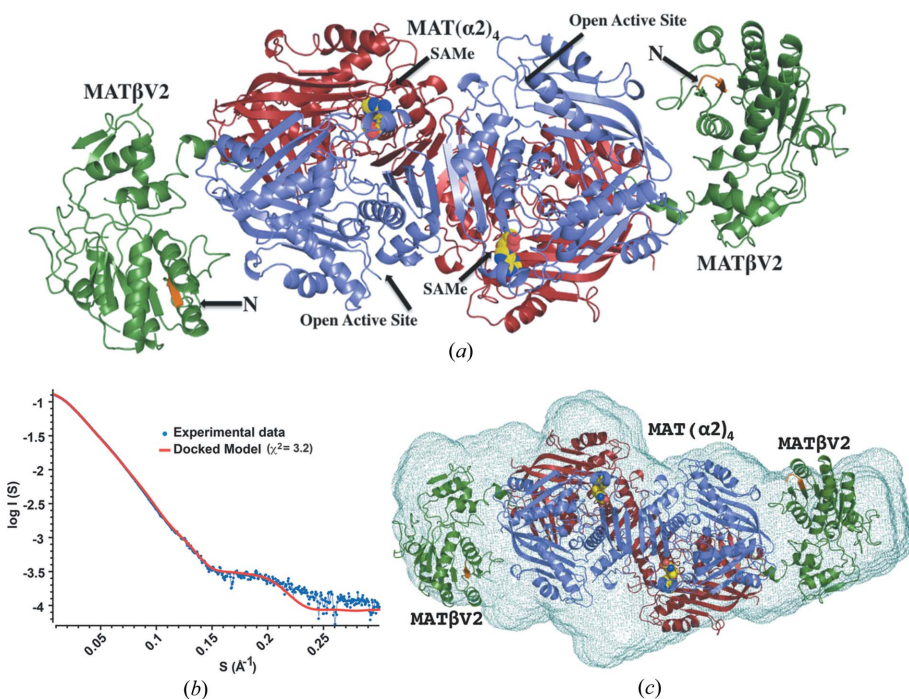


Figure 2
Structure of the MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ complex. (a) Crystallographic structure of the MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ complex. Two MAT $\alpha 2$ monomers with visible gating loops are coloured in slate whereas the other two MAT $\alpha 2$ monomers are coloured in red. MAT $\beta V2$ is coloured in green with the first visible residues at its N-terminal in orange. The reaction product (SAMe) is represented by spheres. (b) SAXS of the MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ complex, the experimental spectrum (blue) is shown with a simulated fit (red) obtained from the crystal structure ($q_{max} = 0.3 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$) ($\chi^2 = 3.2$). The radius of gyration, $R_g = 50.1 \pm 0.05 \text{ \AA}$, was estimated from the low-angle scattering region by a Guinier plot. The distance distribution function, $P(r)$, with maximum linear dimension $D_{max} = 187 \text{ \AA}$. We interpret the higher χ^2 value as arising in part from the flexibility of the interaction and the missing residues at the N-terminus of both MAT β subunits in the crystal structure. This is supported when SAXS data of the MAT $\alpha 2\beta V1\Delta 16$ mutant (slightly better quality data, data not shown) are used with the model from the crystal structure ($\chi^2 = 1.7$). (c) The *ab initio* shape reconstruction of MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ by DAMMIN using P1 symmetry, showing a good agreement between the predicted molecular shape (light green mesh) and the crystal structure ($R_g = 50.7$) (cartoon), after alignment by SUPCOMB (Kozin & Svergun, 2001) (NSD = 0.93).

Interestingly, the tunnel created at the interface of the MAT $\alpha 2$ dimer has a symmetry that allows two possible conformations of the C-terminal MAT $\beta V2$ (Figs. 4a and 4b). The interchangeability of these two orientations could allow certain rotational flexibility of the MAT $\beta V2$ subunit.

2.2. NADP-binding site
Previously, it has been shown that NADP binds to a conserved glycine-rich GXXGXXG motif (G₂₄ATG₂₇LLG₃₀) at the N-terminal domain of MAT β (Shafqat *et al.*, 2013) (Figs. S1C and 5a). The mutants lacking residues involved in NADP binding of the β subunit have been shown to be able to form a complex with MAT $\alpha 2$ supporting the idea that NADP is not needed to form the complex (González *et al.*, 2012). In our case, co-crystallization and soaking experiments with an excess of NADP yielded crystals of the MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V2$)₂ complex without NADP. This observation prompted us to evaluate whether

NADP could interact in solution with the preformed complex. ITC experiments confirmed that, though NADP binds to both MAT β isoforms, no interaction could be observed with the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex (Figs. S2A and S2B; Table 2). The presence of NADP had no effect on MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex formation as observed by gel filtration and native PAGE experiments (Figs. S2C and S2D). The overall structure of MAT β V2 within the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex has no significant structural changes as compared with the NADP-bound MAT β structure (r.m.s.d. = 0.42 Å) (Figs. 5a and 5b). These data taken together suggest that after complex forma-

tion the NADP is displaced from its binding pocket. It is possible that NADP binding to MAT β V2 is relevant for other functions, such as the interaction with HuR, GIT1, MEK, ERK or MafK (Xia *et al.*, 2010; Peng *et al.*, 2013; Katoh *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, the observation that MAT(α 2)₄ does not block the binding pocket (Fig. 5c) suggests that the NADP could bind to the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex in the context of the interaction with other proteins. In fact, there is evidence suggesting that MAT enzymes are involved in the regulation of many pathways, some of which are chromatin based and some may be independent of SAME.

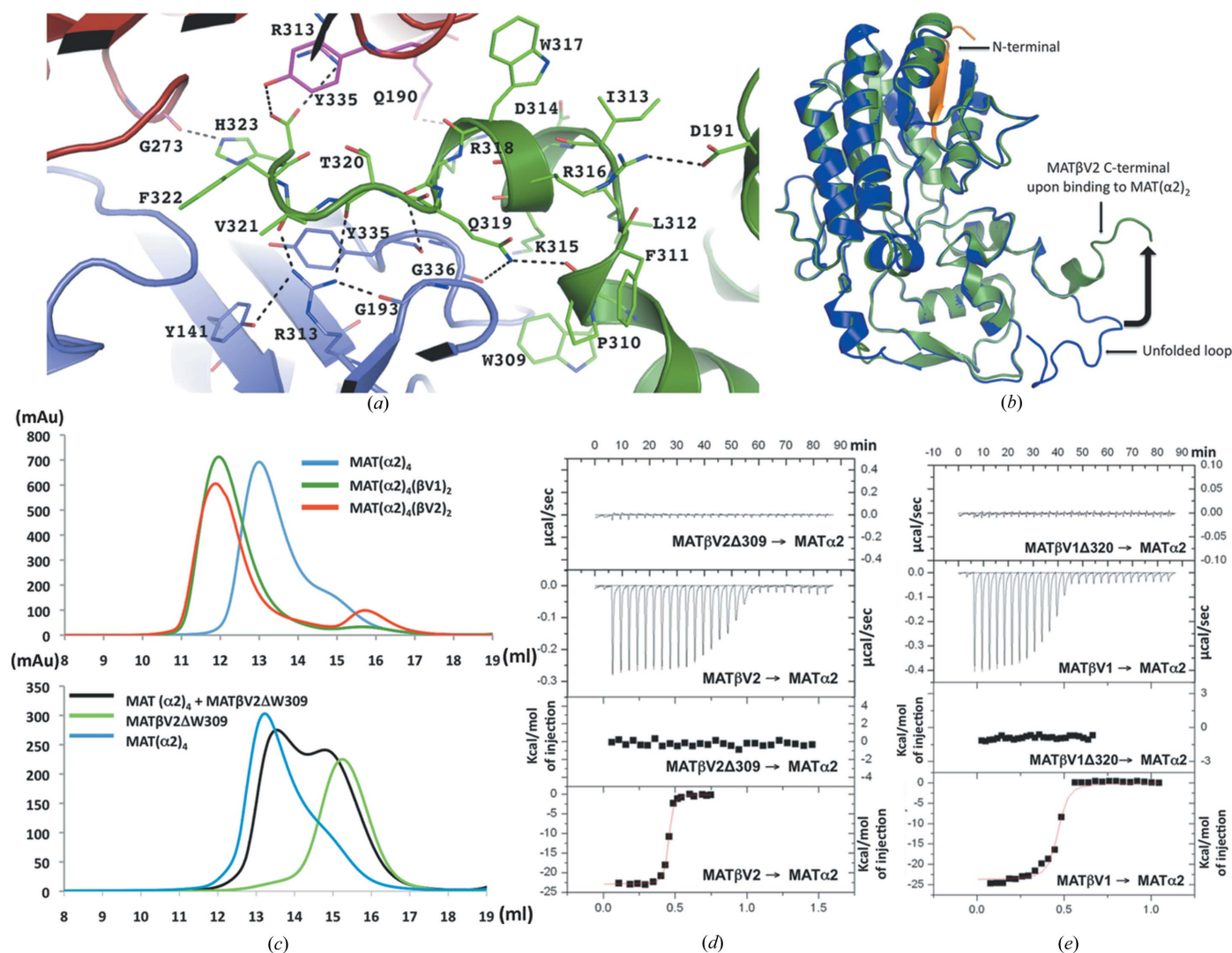


Figure 3
 MAT β V2 C-terminal interactions with MAT α 2. (a) Each MAT β V2 subunit interacts with the core by inserting its C-terminus (green) in a tunnel created at the interface between two MAT α 2 subunits (slate, red). The residues involved in the interaction are in stick representation (hydrogen bonds in black dotted lines). (b) Superposition of MAT β (PDB entry 2ydy) in blue with MAT β V2 from the complex with MAT α 2 (green). The black arrow indicates the conformational change of the unfolded C-terminal loop. (c) Gel-filtration profiles for MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ (red), MAT(α 2)₄(β V1)₂ (dark green) and MAT(α 2)₄ (blue). For complex formation MAT α 2 was incubated with both MAT β variants prior to being loaded onto a Superdex 200 10/300 column. The gel-filtration profiles clearly show the shift of the peak that contains the complex (top) and absence of complex formation when MAT β V2 Δ W309 (black) is used; MAT(α 2)₄ (blue) and MAT β V2 Δ W309 (light green) were loaded as controls (bottom). (d) ITC of MAT α 2 with MAT β V2; the top graphs represent the differential heat released during the titration of MAT β V2 Δ W309 or MAT β V2 with MAT α 2. The bottom graphs represent the fitted binding isotherms. (e) As in (d) ITC of MAT α 2 with MAT β V1 Δ W320 or MAT β V1.

2.3. Interaction of MAT β isoforms with MAT α 1

Looking at the structure of the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex it is difficult to understand why, *in vivo*, MAT β has so far been found to only interact with MAT α 2, even though MAT α 1 and MAT α 2 have a homology of 84% and share the same folding (Fig. S3). A plausible explanation may be that *in vivo* when the expression of *mat1A* is switched on, *mat2A* and *mat2B* expression is switched off. Thus, whereas in adult hepatocytes *mat1A* is highly expressed and the expression of *mat2A* and *mat2B* is low, in HCC where the expression of *mat2A* and *mat2B* is turned on, as well as the expression of other proteins that interact with MAT β such as HuR, GIT1, MEK, ERK or MafK (Xia *et al.*, 2010; Peng *et al.*, 2013; Katoh *et al.*, 2011), *mat1A* expression is low or absent (Lu & Mato, 2012). Accordingly, we observed by gel filtration and ITC the formation of the MAT(α 1)₄(β V1)₂ complex upon incubation of MAT β V1 with MAT α 1 (Figs. S4A and S4B; Table 1). Remarkably, we did not observe a strong interaction by gel filtration between MAT β V2 with MAT α 1 (Fig. S4C), indicating a role of the N-terminus of MAT β in providing the

stability of the MAT α 1 β complex. To confirm this hypothesis, we generated a truncated version of MAT β V1 lacking the first 16 amino acids (MAT β V1 Δ 16). This mutant produces a much smaller amount of complex with MAT α 1, supporting the hypothesis that the MAT β N-terminus is indeed important for the formation of stable MAT α 1 β complexes (Fig. S4D).

2.4. Active site and enzymatic activity

After incubation of the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex with its product SAME, its substrate MET, ATP or AMPPNP (non-hydrolysing ATP analogue), the presence of SAME, adenosine (ADO) or PPNP [$(\beta$ - γ -imido)triphosphate] was clearly observed in different crystals at the active site (Figs. 6a, 6b and 6c) as supported by the corresponding omit maps (Figs. 6d, 6e and 6f). In all of the structures the adenine group makes a π - π stacking interaction with F250 of MAT α 2, supporting the hypothesis that the substrate (ATP) and product (SAME) can occupy the active site in similar orientations. The structures show that two of the four active sites are occupied by SAME or adenosine whereas the other two are empty, thus providing details of structural differences that accompany SAME formation by comparison of empty and occupied sites.

A comparison of the active site in two different states reveals that loops flanking the empty catalytic pockets are disordered (Fig. 2a), in particular the ‘gating loop’ (residues 113–131) that has been proposed to act as a dynamic lid controlling access to the active site (Komoto *et al.*, 2004). The

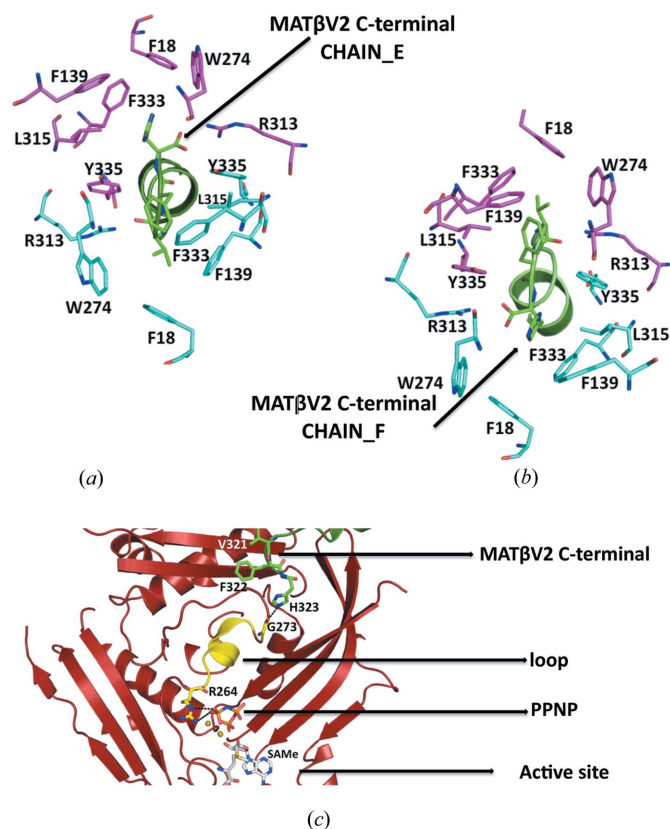


Figure 4
Close view of the tunnel created at the interface of the MAT α 2 dimer. (a) Stick representation of the MAT α 2 residues at the dimer interface, side chains involved in the interaction with MAT β V2 (chain_E in green) are coloured in cyan, the symmetry residues are shown in magenta. (b) Side chains involved in the interaction with MAT β V2 (chain_F in green) are coloured in magenta, the symmetry residues are shown in cyan. Note that between the conformation represented in (a) and (b) there is a twofold symmetry. (c) Cartoon representation of the MAT α 2 monomer; the loop that connects the active site with the buried tail of MAT β V2 is highlighted in yellow.

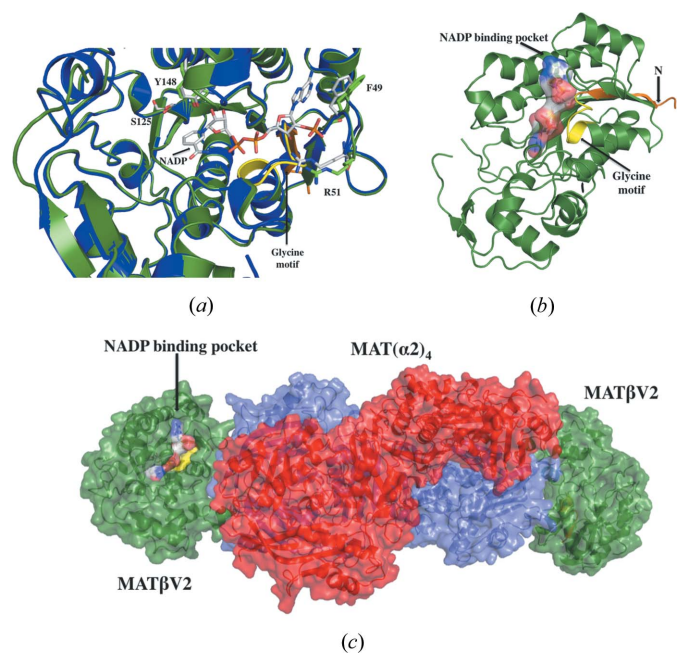


Figure 5
NADP-binding site. (a) Superposition of the NADP-bound MAT β structure (PDB entry 2ydx, Shafqat *et al.*, 2013, in blue) over MAT β V2 as it is in the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex (in green). Residues directly involved in the interaction with NADP are labelled and shown in stick representation. (b) Surface representation of the model of an NADP molecule within the binding pocket of MAT β V2 from the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex. (c) MAT(α 2)₄ (in red and slate) does not block the access of NADP to MAT β V2 (in green).

Table 3
Kinetic properties of MAT α 2 β complexes.

	MAT(α 2) ₄	MAT(α 2) ₄ (β V1 Δ 16) ₂	MAT(α 2) ₄ (β V2) ₂	MAT(α 2) ₄ (β V1) ₂
k_{cat}	295.08 \pm 23.7	688.79 \pm 38.39	859.21 \pm 57.14	1298.16 \pm 47.78
k_{m}	53.84 \pm 10.5	84.79 \pm 9.93	42.45 \pm 7.38	53.48 \pm 4.79

flexibility of this loop induces two different conformations of the catalytic subunit. The loop is disordered in the open conformation causing the entrance to the active site to be opened. The entrance to the active site is blocked in the closed conformation and the gating loop becomes well ordered (Fig. 7a). In the case of the catalytic subunit MAT α 1, S-nitrosylation of residue C121 in the ‘gating loop’ promotes the inactivation of the enzyme (Pérez-Mato *et al.*, 1999). A comparison of the SAME-bound MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex with SAME-bound MAT(α 2)₄ (PDB entry 2p02; Shafqat *et al.*, 2013) shows that in the absence of MAT(β V2)₂ the four active

sites of MAT(α 2)₄ are in a closed conformation. The complex formation with MAT(β V2)₂ causes an asymmetry in MAT(α 2)₄, in which two sites are found in an open state while the other two are in a closed conformation (Fig. 1a). In the absence of SAME, the apo-structures exhibit no density for the gating loop, indicating its flexible nature (Fig. 7b). However in MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ the open active sites show two additional flexible loops, near the inserted MAT β V2 C-terminus (Fig. 7c). In addition, the N-terminal loop (residues 1–13) of both MAT β V2 in the complex, which is orientated to the same side of the open active sites, is disordered. This observation raises the question of whether the N-terminus of MAT β could regulate the gating loop of MAT α 2. If this was the case, the differences between the N-terminus of MAT α 2 β V1 and MAT α 2 β V2 should affect their enzymatic activities. Thus, we compared the activity of the MAT(α 2)₄(β V1)₂, MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ and MAT(α 2)₄(β V1 Δ 16)₂ complexes. Notably, the presence of either MAT β V1 or MAT β V2 increased the V_{max} of MAT(α 2)₄ without altering the K_{m} for

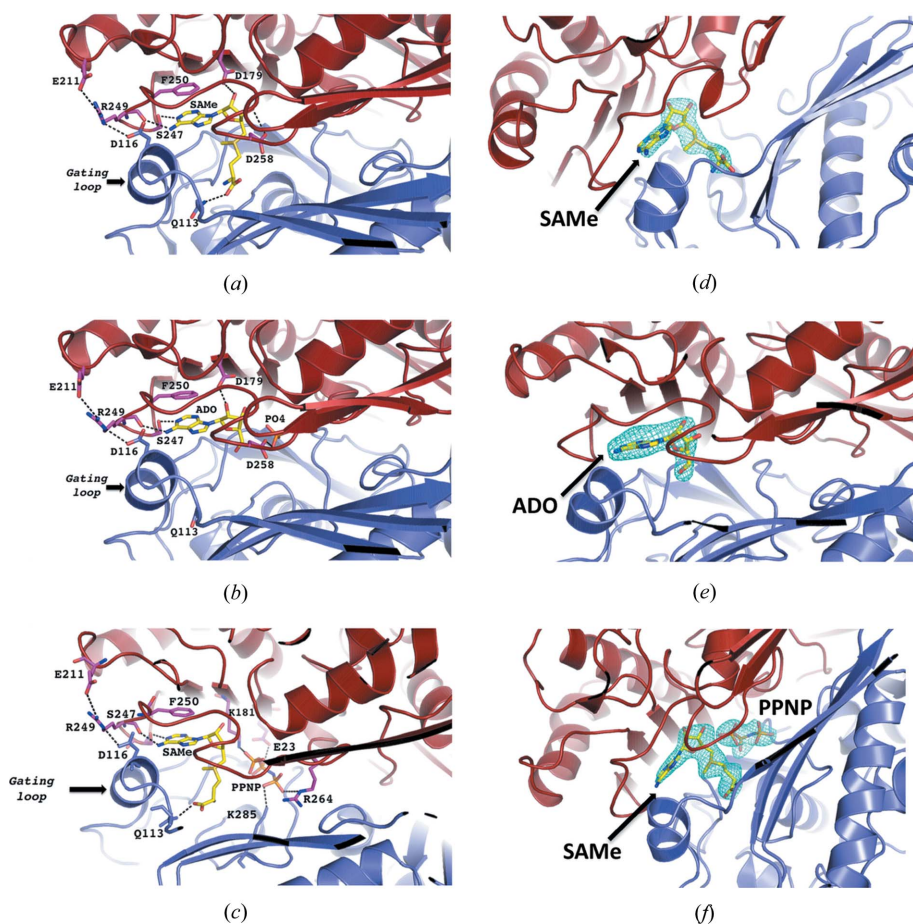


Figure 6
Active site. MAT α 2 monomer with visible gating loop is coloured in slate whereas MAT α 2 monomer with disordered loops is coloured in red. Important hydrogen bonds are shown as dotted lines. (a) Stick representation of the bound product, SAME, at the active site. (b) Crystal co-crystallized and soaked with only ATP shows adenosine molecule (ADO) and PO₄ at the active site, as a result of the ATPases and triphosphatase activity of MAT α 2. (c) Crystal co-crystallized and soaked with AMPPNP and methionine shows SAME and PPNP. (d) Omit ($F_o - F_c$) electron-density map and stick representation of bound molecule, the map is contoured at the 2.5σ level around the SAME molecule, (e) around the adenosine (ADO) molecule and (f) around SAME and PPNP.

methionine. Additionally, the V_{max} of MAT α 2 was 34% higher in the presence of MAT β V1 than with MAT β V2, thus emphasising that differences at the N-terminus affect the activity of MAT(α 2)₄. Furthermore, the MAT(α 2)₄(β V1 Δ 16)₂ complex, in which MAT β has the shortest N-terminus, also has the lowest V_{max} which is still higher than the catalytic subunit alone (Fig. 7d and Table 3). Therefore, the increasing N-terminal length correlates with an increase in V_{max} of the complex activity, confirming the role of the N-terminal in the regulation of the activity.

A more extensive mutational analysis shows by gel filtration that the minimum motif required for the formation of the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex comprises three residues at the end of the C-terminal of MAT β V2 (Val₃₂₁Phe₃₂₂His₃₂₃). This motif interacts with the loop that recognizes the triphosphate of the ATP at the active site, suggesting a possible allosteric mechanism that could be responsible for the observed increase of the V_{max} of MAT(α 2)₄(β V1 Δ 16)₂ in comparison with the catalytic subunit alone (Fig. 4c).

In summary, we propose that the N-terminal loop of MAT β acts in a concerted manner with the C-terminus motif, helping the release of the product by making the active site solvent-accessible for the next substrate to be processed. MAT α 2 β activity and SAME

levels appear to be tightly linked with cell proliferation, *e.g.* upregulation of MAT α 2 and/or MAT β provides a growth advantage in hepatoma and colon cancer cells (Attia *et al.*, 2008; Yang *et al.*, 2008; Lu & Mato, 2012; Xia *et al.*, 2010; Chen *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, T-leukaemic cells exhibit higher MAT α 2 β activity but, remarkably, when MAT α 2 expression is inhibited SAME levels decrease and there is more apoptosis (Attia *et al.*, 2008; Jani *et al.*, 2009). In this regard, regulating SAME production might be an option for potential anticancer therapies. The structure of the MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V2) $_2$ complex presented here has direct implications for a broad range of SAME-based biochemistry (Landgraf & Booker, 2013; Kim *et al.*, 2013). Our results show that the complex MAT(α 1) $_4$ (β V1) $_2$ is stable *in vitro*, raising the possibility that this complex may exist during the transition of the expression between different isoforms. It also provides a gateway for structure-based drug design with the aim of searching lead compounds that regulate the levels of SAME without interfering with the catalytic reaction for its synthesis.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Protein expression and purification

MAT α 1, MAT α 2 constructs were kindly provided by SGC Oxford and MAT β V1, MAT β V2 constructs were from the laboratory of SCL. MAT β V1 and MAT β V1 Δ 16 isoforms were cloned in the HIS-parallel vector *via* *Nco*I and *Xho*I sites, and MAT β V2 was cloned in the pET-28a(+) vector *via* *Nde*I and *Xho*I sites. The expression of MAT β V1 was carried out in *Escherichia coli* BL21(HC41) and the expression of the other three proteins in *E. coli* BL21(DE3) strain. Cells were grown in LB medium at 37°C to an $A_{600} = 0.6$ – 0.8 at which protein expression was induced by the addition of 1 mM isopropyl β -D-1-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG) (GoldBio), at 20°C overnight.

Cell pellets were lysed at 4°C using high-pressure homogenization at 27 Kpsi (1 Kpsi = 69×10^3 MPa) (Constant System Ltd, UK) in lysis buffer (500 mM NaCl, 5% glycerol, 5 mM imidazole, 10 mM BME (β -mercaptoethanol) and the

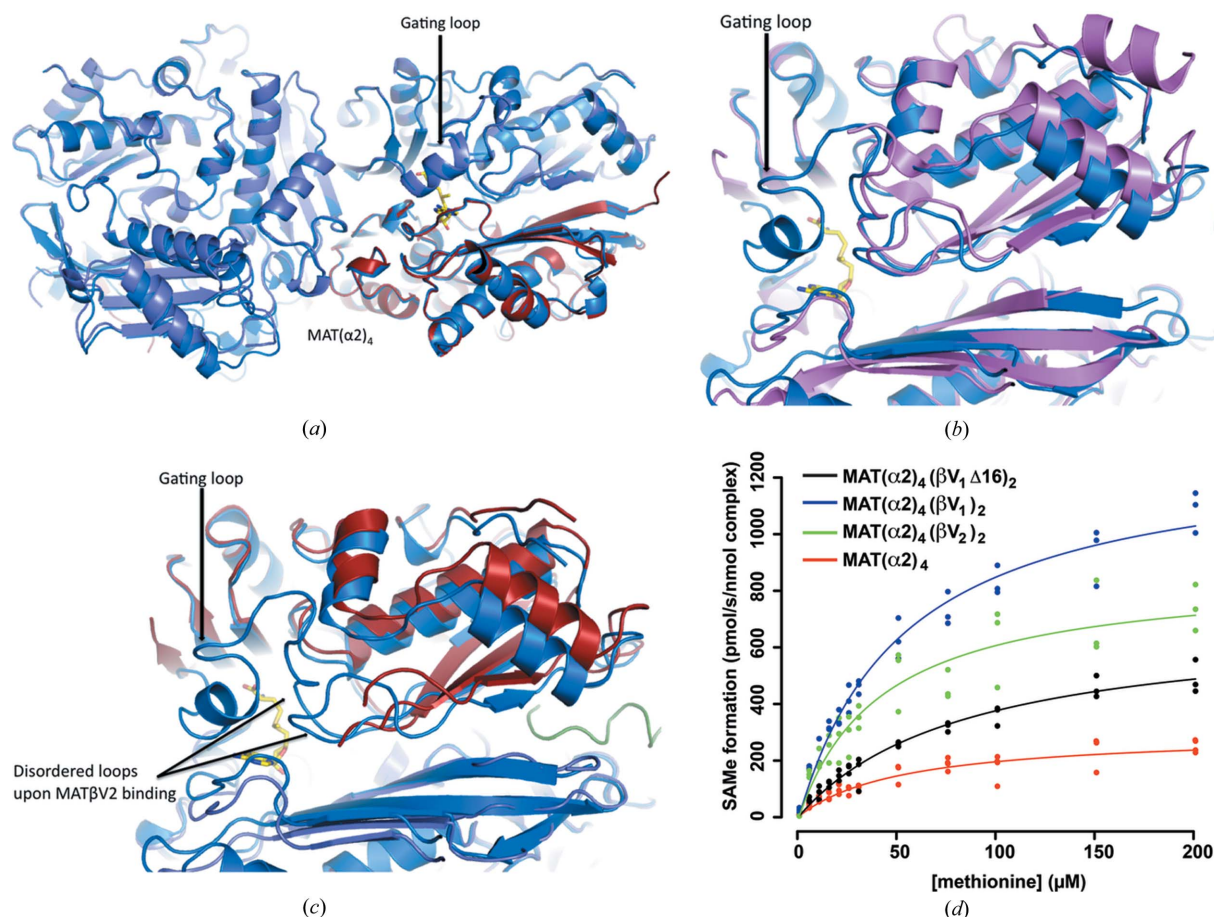


Figure 7

Comparison of MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V2) $_2$ complex with MAT(α 2) $_4$. (a) Superposition of SAME-bound MAT(α 2) $_4$ (PDB entry 2p02 in blue) and SAME-bound MAT(α 2) $_4$ (slate, red) from the complex MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V2) $_2$; in the closed state both structures are similar. (b) Superposition of apo-MAT(α 2) $_2$ from *Burkholderia pseudomallei* (PDB entry 3iml, Baugh *et al.*, 2013, in pink) with the SAME-bound MAT(α 2) $_2$ (PDB entry 2p02 in blue); in the absence of SAME only the gating loop is disordered. (c) Superposition of SAME-bound MAT(α 2) $_2$ (PDB entry 2p02 in blue) with MAT(α 2) $_2$ after MAT β V2 binding; the open state in this case shows two additional flexible loops, near the inserted MAT β V2 C-terminus. (d) ATP was added to MAT(α 2) $_4$, MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V1 Δ 16) $_2$, MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V2) $_2$ and MAT(α 2) $_4$ (β V1) $_2$ pre-incubated with 5–200 μ M of methionine then SAME formation was quantified using UPLC–MS/MS. It shows that the V_{max} of MAT α 2 β complexes are higher depending on the variant of MAT β .

Table 4

Data-collection and refinement statistics.

Values in parentheses are for the highest resolution shell.

	SAMe-bound	ADO-bound	PPNP-bound
Data collection			
Wavelength (Å)	0.98	0.978	0.979
Detector	PILATUS 6M	PILATUS 6M	PILATUS 6M
Space group	$P2_12_12_1$	$P2_12_12_1$	$P2_12_12_1$
Unit-cell dimensions (<i>a</i> , <i>b</i> , <i>c</i>) (Å)	72.44, 115.72, 298.45	72.09, 116.57, 299.48	72.14, 122.18, 298.42
Resolution (Å)	50–2.6 (2.69–2.6)	108.63–3.3 (3.48–3.3)	50–2.35 (2.43–2.35)
R_{merge} (%)	14.4 (59.4)	13.9 (49.4)	10.1 (70.4)
$I/\sigma I$	10.12 (1.75)	6.8 (2.7)	17.3 (1.6)
Completeness (%)	98.7 (90.1)	99.9 (99.9)	98.0 (83.2)
Redundancy	5.6 (4.5)	3.3 (3.5)	7.5 (5.2)
Refinement			
Resolution (Å)	2.6	3.3	2.35
No. of reflections	76590	38907	108283
$R_{\text{work}}/R_{\text{free}}$	21.8/27.9	17.6/26.0	21.1/25.1
No. of atoms			
Protein	15061	16370	16463
Ligand/ion	54/1	38/1	54/4
Water	108	37†	498
<i>B</i> factors (Å ²)			
Protein	76.64	71.19	58.4
Ligand/ions	SAMe/Mg 68.16/60.62	ADO/Mg 97.95/49.14	SAMe/PNPP/Mg 47.73/63.48/39.57
Waters	56.13	30.67†	48.39
Ramachandran statistics			
Residues in preferred regions	1920 (94%)	1863 (90%)	2001 (96%)
Residues in allowed regions	108 (5%)	185 (9%)	76 (4%)
Outliers	10 (0.5%)	20 (1%)	8 (0.38%)
R.m.s. deviations			
Bond lengths (Å)	0.006	0.008	0.005
Bond angles (°)	1.091	1.265	1.026

† The waters in this structure (3.3 Å) were assigned using the high-resolution (2.35 Å) model as reference. Compared to other higher resolution structures very few were assigned (37 compared to 498 in 2.35 Å structure). Many of these waters are located/trapped at the interface of MAT α 2 dimers accounting for the much lower *B* factors.

cell homogenate was clarified by centrifugation at 20 000 rev min⁻¹ for 40 min. The clarified supernatant was loaded onto nickel resin equilibrated with lysis buffer. The column was washed with lysis buffer and then with wash buffer (500 mM NaCl, 5% glycerol, 30 mM imidazole, 10 mM BME). Proteins were eluted with elution buffer (500 mM NaCl, 250 mM imidazole, 10 mM BME) and the His tag was then cleaved from MAT α 2, MAT α 1 and MAT β V1 by incubation overnight with *Tobacco etch virus* (TEV) protease and with thrombin in the case of MAT β V2. MAT α 2, MAT α 1 and MAT β V2 were then loaded onto an ion-exchange chromatography column (HiTrap Q HP column, GE Healthcare), and MAT β V1 on a HiTrap S HP, that were pre-equilibrated with buffer *A* (50 mM NaCl, 5 mM BME); purification was then performed using an isocratic gradient from 0.05 to 1 M NaCl. Selected fractions of MAT α 2 and MAT α 1 were then concentrated and loaded onto a HiLoad 16/60 Superdex 200 gel-filtration column (GE Healthcare) and fractions of MAT β V2 and MAT β V1 onto a HiLoad 16/60 Superdex 75. Finally, fractions containing pure protein were pooled and stored at –80°C. The buffer used in each purification step was 25 mM HEPES pH 7.5.

3.2. Complex formation, crystallization and data collection

In order to assemble the complexes, MAT α and MAT β were incubated together for 1 h at 4°C in 50 mM HEPES buffer pH

7.5 containing 10 mM MgCl₂, 50 mM KCl, 300–500 μ M NADP. The complex was then loaded onto a Superdex 200 10/300 column and eluted with buffer consisting of 200 mM NaCl, 25 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 1 mM MgCl₂, 5 mM KCl, 1 mM TCEP [tris(2-carboxyethyl)phosphine]. Crystals appeared at 25°C within 1–2 d in drops containing 2 μ l MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex at 5.8 mg ml⁻¹ mixed with 1 μ l precipitant solution of 100 mM MES/imidazole buffer pH 6.5, 10% ethylene glycol, 20% PEG 8K. Before crystallization the MAT(α 2)₄(β V2)₂ complex was incubated with its product SAMe (1 mM), its substrate ATP (1 mM) or AMPNP (250 μ M) and MET (1 mM). These compounds were added to the precipitant and cryosolution. Different data sets were collected at the PROXIMA1, XALOC and I04 beamlines at SOLEIL (St Aubin, France), ALBA (Barcelona, Spain) and Diamond (Oxford, England) synchrotron centres, respectively. Data reduction was carried out with the *HKL-2000* (Otwinowski & Minor, 1997) and *XDS* programs (Kabsch, 2010). The phases were calculated with *Phaser* (McCoy *et al.*, 2007) using MAT α 2 (PDB entry 2p02) and MAT β (PDB entry 2ydy, Shafqat *et al.*, 2013) as search models for molecular replacement. Model building and refinement were performed using *Coot* (Emsley & Cowtan, 2004), *PHENIX* (Adams *et al.*, 2010) and *REFMAC* (Murshudov *et al.*, 2011). Data-collection and refinement statistics are summarized in Table 4.

SAXS data were collected on the SWING beamline at the SOLEIL synchrotron, using the HPLC-integrated SAXS set-up with a two-dimensional AVIEX CCD detector over an angular range $q_{\min} = 0.01 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ to $q_{\max} = 0.5 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$. 80 μl MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V 2$)₂ complex at 5 mg ml⁻¹ was loaded onto a pre-equilibrated Shodex KW-402.5-4F 150 kDa SEC (size-exclusion chromatography) column, 250 frames of SAXS data were taken over the course of protein elution. Data averaging and reduction were carried out with the *Foxtrot* suite, developed at SOLEIL for the SWING beamline. Further analyses were performed with the *ATSAS* suite (Petoukhov *et al.*, 2012). In order to generate an *ab initio* model ten runs of *DAMMIN* (Svergun, 1999) were performed, and after averaging and filtering a model with 732 beads was produced.

3.3. Isothermal titration calorimetry (ITC)

In order to address the association constant (K_a) of MAT $\alpha\beta$ complexes, MAT $\alpha 2$, MAT $\alpha 1$, MAT $\beta V 1$, MAT $\beta V 2$ and the mutant variants were buffer-exchanged by gel filtration on a Superdex 200 10/300 GL column equilibrated with 200 mM NaCl, 20 mM HEPES pH 7.5 buffer before ITC analysis. Subsequently, MAT β isoforms and mutants were injected into MAT $\alpha 2$ or MAT $\alpha 1$ solution in aliquots of 10 or 20 μl , respectively (Table 1). To verify the interaction of NADP with different MAT β isoforms, each protein was buffer-exchanged by gel filtration on a Superdex 200 10/300 GL column equilibrated in 5 mM MgCl₂, 5 mM KCl, 20 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 200 mM NaCl buffer before ITC analysis. NADP was also diluted in the same buffer. NADP was injected into MAT $\beta V 2$ in aliquots of 15 μl and into MAT $\beta V 1$ in aliquots of 10 μl (Table 2). All ITC measurements were carried out at 25°C on a VP-ITC Microcalorimeter (MicroCal/GE Healthcare). The ITC data were processed using *Origin* software (OriginLab Corp., USA).

3.4. Activity assays

MAT activity was addressed by measuring production of SAME using a fixed concentration of ATP (1 mM) and different concentrations of methionine (5–200 μM). The concentration of MAT $\alpha 2$ and MAT $\alpha\beta$ complexes was optimized to evaluate the activity at the linear region of the Michaelis curve. The final concentrations of proteins in the reaction were 50, 25 and 12.5 nM for MAT $\alpha 2$, MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V 1$)₂ and MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V 2$)₂, respectively.

The reaction was carried out in a final volume of 200 μl . The mixture contained 40 μl of the enzyme [250 nM for MAT $\alpha 2$, 125 nM for MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V 1$)₂ and 62.5 nM for MAT($\alpha 2$)₄($\beta V 2$)₂], 40 μl of methionine (25–1000 μM) and 40 μl of ATP (5 mM) in 80 μl of reaction buffer (50 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 25 mM MgCl₂, 25 mM KCl). The blank control was prepared in the absence of ATP. All stock solutions for methionine, ATP and each enzyme were prepared in the dilution buffer [10 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 500 mM NaCl, 5% (v/v) glycerol, 0.5 mM TCEP].

For each reaction the protein, methionine and buffer were pre-incubated for 15 min prior to the addition of ATP. The

reaction mixtures were thermostated and agitated (37°C, 1400 rev min⁻¹). After 10 min the reactions were terminated by the addition of 800 μl of 75% acetonitrile and 1.2% formic acid. To ensure the reaction stopped after the addition of acetonitrile/formic acid solution all samples were shaken (4°C, 1400 rev min⁻¹) before centrifugation (14 000 rev min⁻¹) and transferred to 96-well plates for UPLC–MS analysis.

Samples were injected in a randomized order for the detection and quantification of SAME and methionine. Briefly, upon injection, polar metabolites bind to the UPLC column and are then eluted on a polarity gradient. Each fraction was subjected to mass-spectroscopy analysis to determine the production of SAME and the remaining methionine levels. A ten-point calibration curve with exponentially spaced concentrations of methionine was used for quantization of each sample (van Liempd *et al.*, 2013). The rate of SAME formation was calculated (pmol s⁻¹ per nmol of complex or pmol s⁻¹ per nmol of MAT2 α tetramer) for each substrate concentration. *R* (R Core Team, 2013) software was used to fit the enzyme kinetic data with the Michaelis–Menten equation for calculation of V_{\max} and K_m values. Each reaction was performed in triplicate.

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