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The Self-Assembly and Structure of Caseins in Solution

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Introduction

Milk proteins have been studied extensively in biochemistry for over 150 years. Milk is itself a complex mixture of water, lactose, fat, minerals and proteins. The protein composition of milk varies greatly from one species to another, concentrations range from 10–200 g l⁻¹ (Jennes, 1970). Bovine milk has generated the most interest, although caprine, equine, ovine, and human milks have also been investigated (Carroll *et al.*, 1985; Sood *et al.*, 1985, 1992; Ono *et al.*, 1989; Sood and Slattery, 1997, 2000; Mora-Gutierrez *et al.*, 1998; Guerardel *et al.*, 1999). Bovine milk on average consists of 3–4% protein (Jennes, 1970; Dickinson and Stainsby, 1982). Historically, milk proteins have been split into two types, depending on their acid solubility:

- i) acid insoluble caseins
- ii) acid soluble whey proteins.

Both the caseins and whey proteins consist of multi-component mixtures.

Caseins are the major protein components of bovine milk and are found in concentrations of approximately (27 ± 2) g l⁻¹ (varies from breed to breed, as well as from cow to cow, depending on production techniques and seasonal changes) and constitute about 78% of total milk protein (*Table 14.1*) (Jennes, 1970). For more information on milk composition and genetic variation, the reader is referred to McMeekin (1970), Jennes (1970, 1982), Swaisgood (1982, 1992), Ng-Kwai-Hang and Grosclaude (1992) and references therein.

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Abbreviations: DP, degree of polymerization; S, Svedberg unit (10⁻¹³sec); SAXS, small angle X-ray scattering; CMP, caseinomacropptide; MHKS, Mark-Houwink-Kuhn-Sakurada coefficients.

Table 14.1. Some properties of the major components of bovine milk (adapted from Jennes, 1970 – with kind permission of Academic Press). Assumes total protein = 36 g l⁻¹ and ~ 78% casein.

Protein	Approximate Concentration, g l ⁻¹	Genetic Variants	Monomer M_w^a , g mol ⁻¹	$s_{20,w}^a$, S
Caseins	28.0			
α_1 -Casein	15.4	A, B, C, D	25 000	1.6
β -Casein	7.0	A ¹ , A ² , A ³ , B, B ₂ , C, D	24 100	1.4
κ -Casein	4.2	A, B	20 000	1.57
γ -Casein	1.4	A, B	30 000	1.55
Whey proteins	8.0			
β -Lactoglobulin	4.8	A, B, C, D	18 300	1.8
α -Lactalbumin	1.1	A, B	14 200	1.75
Bovine serum albumin	0.5		69 000	4.0
Immunoglobulin G	0.9		160 000	7.0

^aValues not necessarily corrected for non-ideality.

Caseins are defined as the group of phosphoproteins from milk which are precipitated at pH 4.6 and 20°C and were first separated in the 1950s (Hipp *et al.*, 1952; Von Hippel and Waugh, 1955; Waugh and Von Hippel, 1956; Long *et al.*, 1958; Hipp *et al.*, 1961). This group of molecules has been found using starch-gel electrophoresis to consist of more than 20 different species (see McKenzie, 1971 and references therein), all of which may be true components of the system (Thompson, 1971). Caseins have a tendency to self-associate or interact with one another in the form of ‘casein micelles’ and ‘casein sub-micelles’, a process considered entropically driven due to hydrophobic interactions (Fang and Dalgleish, 1996; Dickinson and Golding, 1997). The amphoteric nature of the molecules also allows for electrostatic interactions (Euston *et al.*, 1996).

This review will attempt to elucidate the solution properties (in terms of molecular weight, sedimentation coefficient, hydrodynamic radius, intrinsic viscosity, axial ratio and voluminosity/hydration) of the major caseins (α_{s1} -, α_{s2} -, β - and κ -) which underpin the functional properties of milk and technology of milk-based products. It will also consider how the individual properties of these casein types – particularly of the α - and β -caseins – can lead to a more informed picture of casein aggregation products, namely the casein micelle and the casein sub-micelle. As Thompson (1971) once put it: ‘To understand the construction of the total unit, one must first concern oneself with the nature of those components (and the forces which lead to interaction) comprising the total unit’.

The principal casein fractions

The principal casein fractions, namely α_{s1} -, α_{s2} -, β - and κ -casein, constitute approximately 30–40%, 10–15%, 25–40% and 10–15% of bovine casein respectively (Jennes, 1970; Eigel *et al.*, 1984; Grappin and Ribadeau-Dumas, 1992; Rollema, 1992; Srinivasan *et al.*, 1996). The common compositional factor between all these is that they are all conjugated proteins (McKenzie and Murphy, 1970), most with phosphate group(s) esterified to serine residues (Richardson *et al.*, 1992; Swaisgood, 1992).

These phosphate groups play an important role in the structure and stability of the casein micelle. Calcium binding by the individual caseins is proportional to the phosphate content (Swaisgood, 1992).

The conformations of caseins have previously been likened to that of denatured globular proteins due to the unusually high number of proline residues (Farrell Jr., 1973; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a,b), namely 17, 10, 35 and 20 for α_{s1} -, α_{s2} -, β - and κ -casein respectively, which prevent the formation of ordered secondary structures (Guo *et al.*, 1995). However, a recent review into the chemistry of caseins (Swaisgood, 1992), together with the work of Andrews *et al.* (1979) and Kumosinski *et al.* (1991a,b), have suggested a more detailed structure with at least some secondary structure to a level perhaps as high as 70–80% for κ -casein (Swaisgood, 1992). This evidence for secondary and tertiary structure had been obtained from Raman spectroscopy and X-ray diffraction studies of crystalline molecules: however, it must be noted that casein molecules do not form crystals.

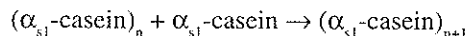
This lack of secondary and tertiary structure has led to various attempts to estimate the structure of caseins in solution, and in this review particular attention will be paid to solution properties of bovine caseins but, where applicable, the properties of other mammalian caseins will also be discussed.

α_{s1} -Casein

This has a monomer molecular weight 23 000 g mol⁻¹, with 199 amino acid residues, 17 of which are proline. The amino acid sequence for α_{s1} -casein, from SWISS-PROT entry P02662 has been found to be:

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RPKHPKIQHG LPQEVLNENL LRFFVAPFPE VFGKEKVNEL SKDIGSESTE
DQAMEDIKQM EAESISSEE IVPNSVEQKH IQKEDVP SER YLGYLEQLLR
LKKYKVPQLE IVPNSAEERL HSMKEGIHAQ QKEPMIGVNQ ELAYFYPELF
RQFYQLDAYP SGAWYYVPLG TQYTDAPSF S DIPNPIGSEN SEKTTMPLW
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It consists of two hydrophobic regions, containing all the proline residues, separated from one another by a polar region, containing seven of the eight phosphate groups. It can be precipitated at very low levels of calcium and undergoes ionic strength dependent self-association; the mechanism is believed to be a step-wise addition (Rollema, 1992), i.e.



The structure of the α_{s1} -casein monomer is presented in *Figure 14.1*. As with other caseins, it undergoes self-association, which for α_{s1} -casein – and also α_{s2} -casein – is in a step-wise manner, i.e. monomers to dimers to trimers, etc. The degree of association depends on the pH and ionic strength of the solution (Swaisgood, 1992) and the association product was estimated at pH 6.7, ionic strength 0.2 M and 35°C to have a molecular weight (molar mass) of 3 400 000 g mol⁻¹ (Thurn *et al.*, 1987b). The hydrodynamic properties are therefore quite different to those of the other caseins. Swaisgood (1992) attempted to estimate the hydration and the asymmetry (axial ratio of the equivalent prolate ellipsoid) from the measured intrinsic viscosity, $[\eta]$, of 10 ml g⁻¹. By assuming a so-called ‘typical’ globular protein hydration value of 0.3–0.5, he

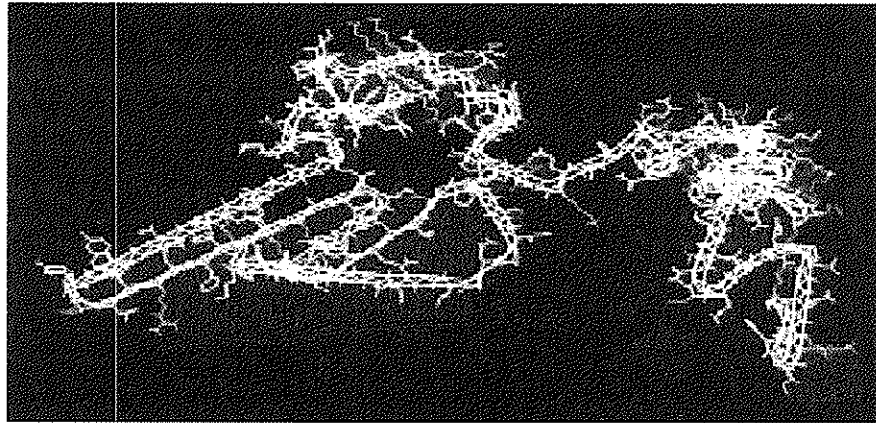


Figure 14.1. Three-dimensional molecular model for an α_{s1} -casein monomer (Kuminoski *et al.*, 1991b). Reproduced with kind permission of the American Dairy Science Association.

calculated an axial ratio, a/b of 7. On the other hand, if he had assumed a spherical monomer ($a/b = 1$), this results in a hydration of approximately 3–3.5. An alternative estimate comes from sedimentation analysis in the analytical ultracentrifuge and measurement of the translational frictional ratio, ff_0 (Tanford, 1961; Harding, 1997, Morris, 2001):

$$\frac{f}{f_0} = \frac{M_w(1 - \bar{v}\rho_{20,w})}{(N_A 6\pi\eta_{20,w}s_{20,w}^0) \left(\frac{4\pi N_A}{3\bar{v}M_w}\right)^{-1/3}} \quad (14.1a)$$

Here M_w is the weight average molecular weight (g mol^{-1}); \bar{v} is the partial specific volume (ml g^{-1}); $\rho_{20,w}$ is the density of water at 20°C ($0.99823 \text{ g ml}^{-1}$); N_A is Avogadro's number ($6.023 \times 10^{23} \text{ mol}^{-1}$); $\eta_{20,w}$ is the viscosity of water at 20°C (0.01002 Poise) and $s_{20,w}^0$ (sec) is the infinite dilution sedimentation coefficient corrected to standard solvent conditions of the density and viscosity of water at 20°C . The measured value for ff_0 of 1.16 from a weight average molecular weight of $23\,000 \text{ g mol}^{-1}$ and a sedimentation coefficient of 2.4 S is consistent with a more globular protein of average hydration – in truth, it seems likely that the 'real' structure may be somewhere in between the viscosity and sedimentation results, and perhaps not so different to that suggested by Kuminoski *et al.* (1991b).

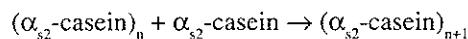
α_{s2} -Casein

This has a monomer molecular weight $25\,000 \text{ g mol}^{-1}$, with 207 amino acid residues including 10 prolines. The amino acid sequence for α_{s2} -casein has been obtained from the SWISS-PROT entry P02663 and is:

KNTMEHVSSS EESIISQETY KQEKMAINP SKENLCSTFC KEVVRNANEE
EYISIGSSSEE SAEVATEEVK ITVDDKHYYQK ALNEINQFYQ KFPQYLQYLY

QGPIVLNPWD QVKRNAVPIT PTLNREQLST SEENSKKTVD MESTEVFTKK
TKLTBEEKNR LNFLKKISQR YQKFALPQYL KTVYQHQBAM KPWIQPKTKV
IPYVRYL

Negatively charged residues are found clustered near the N-terminus and positively charged residues near the C-terminus: this, therefore, is the most hydrophilic of the caseins (Swaisgood, 1992). Unlike α_{s1} -casein and β -casein, it may contain a disulphide bond (α_{s1} -casein and β -casein haven no cysteine residues). It is also very calcium sensitive. It undergoes a similar ionic strength dependent self-association to α_{s1} -casein (Rollema, 1992), although it has been reported to associate to a lesser extent, due to greater electrostatic repulsion and reduced hydrophobicity (Swaisgood, 1992):



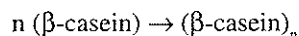
There are limited hydrodynamic data available for the monomer. Its intrinsic viscosity is 11.4 ml g⁻¹ which Swaisgood (1992) has claimed to be consistent with a hydrodynamic radius of 3.6 nm, a hydration of 3.9 and a shape factor (ν) of ~ 9 (Harding *et al.*, 1982), all of which are consistent with his calculations for α_{s1} -casein, although in the absence of any supporting data from measurement of sedimentation coefficients in the analytical ultracentrifuge.

β -Casein

β -Casein is the second most abundant casein, at approximately 25–40% (Jennes, 1970; Eigel *et al.*, 1984; Grappin and Ribadeau-Dumas, 1992; Rollema, 1992; Srinivasan *et al.*, 1996) of the total casein content in bovine milk. It has a monomer molecular weight 24 000 g mol⁻¹, with 209 amino acid residues, including 35 prolines. The amino acid sequence for β -casein has been obtained from the SWISS-PROT entry P02666 and is:

RELEELNVPV EIVESLSSSE ESITRINKKI EKQSEEQQQ TEDELQDKIH
PFAQTQSLVY PFPPIPNSL PQNIPPLTQT PVVPPFLQP EVMGVSKVKE
AMAPKHKEMPFKYVPEPFT ESQSLTLTDV ENLHLPLPLL QSWMHQPHQP
LPPTVMFPPQ SVLSLSQSKV LPVPQKAVPY PQRDMPIQAF LLYQEPVLGP
VRGPFPIIV

It has a highly charged, N-terminal region and a hydrophobic C-terminal region. It is, thus, a very amphiphilic protein, and acts like a detergent molecule: it is no surprise, therefore, that it is widely used as an emulsifier. It is less sensitive to calcium precipitation than the α_s -caseins. Its tendency is to self-associate into a large discrete polymer (Rollema, 1992):



β -Casein self-association is concentration, temperature and ionic strength dependent (Sullivan *et al.*, 1955; Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Payens *et al.*, 1969; Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Arima *et al.*, 1979; Buchheim and Schmitt, 1979; Evans *et al.*, 1979; Morris, 2001). Most studies on such phenomena have been undertaken at lower

temperatures, e.g. 8.5 and 13.5°C (Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963) in order to facilitate the determination of the monomer molecular weight and sedimentation coefficient (24 000 g mol⁻¹ and 1.6 S respectively). Although significant aggregation takes place at 20°C (Hoagland, 1966; Payens *et al.*, 1969; Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Arima *et al.*, 1979; Buchheim and Schmitt, 1979; Evans *et al.*, 1979; Morris, 2001), there is still a large amount of monomer present, especially at low concentration (Sullivan *et al.*, 1955; Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Hoagland, 1966; Thompson, 1971; Arima *et al.*, 1979; Buchheim and Schmitt, 1979; Morris, 2001).

A typical sedimentation velocity experiment shows two distinct peaks (*Figure 14.2*): one for the monomer and the other for a larger polymer (Sullivan *et al.*, 1955; Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Hoagland, 1966; Thompson, 1971; Arima *et al.*, 1979; Morris, 2001), this is consistent with the bimodal distribution found by Buchheim and Schmitt (1979) from electron microscopy. The 'slow' component has been found to have a sedimentation coefficient of 1.6 S, which is typical of a β -casein monomer; the larger species (~ 12.0 S) is a significantly larger polymer. The sedimentation coefficient for the 'fast' moving species has been reported to have a strong concentration dependency (Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Payens *et al.*, 1969; Thompson, 1971) at the concentrations required (~ 2–3 g l⁻¹) for the Schlieren optical system on the ultracentrifuge. The relative amount of the polymer (%) decreases with decreasing concentration (Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Morris, 2001); this is further quantified by a decrease in the weight average sedimentation coefficient (Morris, 2001).

Owing to the problems of temperature-dependent and ionic strength-dependent self-association, the molecular weights and degrees of polymerization calculated for bovine β -casein, not surprisingly, have been found to depend greatly on experimental conditions (Payens *et al.*, 1969; Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Arima *et al.*, 1979; Buchheim and Schmitt, 1979; Takase *et al.*, 1980; Thurn *et al.*, 1987a; Morris, 2001). Such behaviour was reviewed by Rollema (1992): the degree of polymerization (DP) has been shown to vary from about 10 to up to 60, although at room temperature a DP between 40 to 50 has been found to be most prevalent (Swaisgood, 1992).

β -CASEIN MONOMER

Having calculated the molecular weight and sedimentation coefficient, it is, therefore, possible to estimate the translational frictional ratio from *Equation 14.1a* or an equivalent equation from molecular weight and the translational diffusion coefficient (Tanford, 1961):

$$\frac{f}{f_0} = \frac{k_B T}{6\pi\eta_{20,w}} \left(\frac{4\pi N_A}{3\bar{v} M_w} \right)^{1/3} \frac{1}{D_{20,w}^0} \quad (14.1b)$$

where k_B is the Boltzmann constant (1.381 $\times 10^{-16}$ erg K⁻¹ mol⁻¹) and $D_{20,w}^0$ is the infinite dilution diffusion coefficient corrected to standard conditions of 20°C and water (cm² sec⁻¹).

The frictional ratio for the monomer has been calculated to be approximately 1.8 (Sullivan *et al.*, 1955; Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963; Thompson, 1971; Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Sood and Slattery, 1997; Morris, 2001) and corresponds to a hydro-

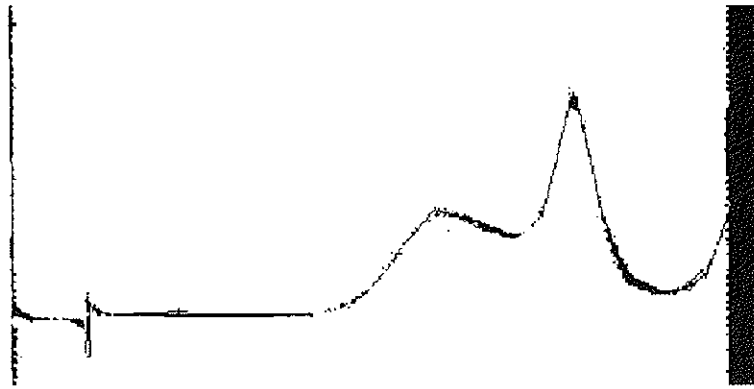


Figure 14.2. Typical sedimenting boundary for β -casein at 8.5°C in barbiturate buffer pH 7.5, $I = 0.2$ M (reprinted from *Biochimica et Biophysica Acta* 71, Payens and Van Markwijk, Some Features of the Association of β -Casein, 517–530, copyright (1963) with kind permission of Elsevier Science).

dynamic radius, r_H of about 3.6 nm (Schmitt and Payens, 1972; Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Swaisgood, 1992). An intrinsic viscosity of 23 ml g⁻¹ (Payens and Van Markwijk, 1963) has been determined. The sedimentation coefficient, diffusion coefficient, frictional ratio, intrinsic viscosity and hydrodynamic radius found in this way are all typical of an extended and/or unusually hydrated molecule (see for example Tanford, 1961; Harding, 1997). Results from small angle X-ray scattering (SAXS) (Andrews *et al.*, 1979) point to a radius of gyration, R_g of 4.6 nm, which is smaller than the value of approximately 5.1 nm calculated from amino acid sequence (Equation 14.2a), sedimentation coefficient (Equation 14.2b) and intrinsic viscosity (Equation 14.2c) for a random coil molecule of 24 100 g mol⁻¹ (209 amino acids), which would indicate at least some ordered secondary structure, the ratio of R_g/r_H would be expected to be 1.5 for random coil (Burchard, 1985).

$$6r_G^2 = (70 \pm 15)n \quad (14.2a)$$

$$s_{20,w}^0 = \frac{M_w(1 - \bar{v}\rho_{20,w})}{4\pi N_A \eta_{20,w} r_G} \quad (14.2b)$$

$$[\eta] = \frac{2.23\pi N_A r_G^3}{M_w} \quad (14.2c)$$

where n is the number of amino acids in the protein molecule. This may be consistent with a Wales–Van Holde ratio, $R = k_s/[\eta]$ (see Wales and Van Holde, 1954; Rowe, 1977) of 1.35 (Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Swaisgood, 1992), which points to an axial ratio, a/b of 2.6 (calculated using the ELLIPS1 program, Harding and Cölfen, 1995); this is somewhat different from the value of 12 suggested by Swaisgood (1992) but on the assumption that β -casein hydration is similar to that of globular proteins, 0.3–0.5. It should be noted that the Wales–Van Holde ratio used to obtain the value of 2.6 is independent of hydration. Knowledge of the Wales–Van Holde ratio can then allow us to estimate the values for the Perrin function, P (see Harding, 1997), the Einstein

viscosity increment, v (see Einstein, 1911 and Harding, 1997) and the hydration, δ from Equations 14.3a, 14.3b and 14.3c.

$$P = \left(\frac{f}{f_0} \right) \left[\frac{\bar{v}}{v_s} \right]^{1/3} \quad (14.3a)$$

$$[\eta] = v v_s \quad (14.3b)$$

$$v_s = \bar{v} + \frac{\delta}{\rho_{20,w}} \quad (14.3c)$$

where v_s is the swollen volume (ml g^{-1}); $[\eta]$ is the intrinsic viscosity (ml g^{-1}). This allows an estimate of hydration of approximately 7 from viscosity ($v = 3.4$) and ~ 3 from sedimentation experiments ($P = 1.1$). Although the values of δ from sedimentation and viscometry are quite different, they do appear to be in line with the previous estimates of 2–8 from viscometry (Swaigood, 1992; Boulet *et al.*, 1998) and from sedimentation (Sood *et al.*, 1992 – human β -casein).

Although hydrodynamic techniques suggest that β -casein monomers are moderately extended and hydrated molecules, when imaged by electron microscopy measurements, the β -casein monomers appear as spheres of approximately 4 nm in radius (Andrews *et al.*, 1979). Swaisgood (1982) attempted to explain this unusual phenomenon by suggesting that the β -casein molecule ‘contains regions of stable structure, although large regions have marginal stability and exhibit a large degree of segmental motion’ and are therefore prone to exhibit random, coil-like behaviour in solution (Swaigood, 1982; Boulet *et al.*, 1998). The fact that electron microscopical images do not correspond to true aqueous solution conditions may be, at least in part, responsible for the difference. This aside, it appears that, in solution, the β -casein monomer is a moderately extended and extremely hydrated molecule.

β -CASEIN POLYMER

Due to the large inconsistencies in molecular weight determinations for the β -casein polymer (300 000–1 400 000 g mol^{-1} at 20–25°C) (Rollema, 1992), it is very difficult to get a definitive answer on conformation – the general consensus appears to be that the β -casein polymer is spherical (Andrews *et al.*, 1979; Buchheim and Schmitt, 1979; Evans *et al.*, 1979; Thurn *et al.*, 1987a; Sood *et al.*, 1992), although Payens and Van Markwijk (1969) and Morris (2001) favour a more extended model.

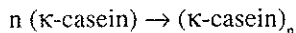
κ -Casein

κ -Casein has a monomer molecular weight 19 000 g mol^{-1} , with 169 amino acid residues, including 20 prolines. The amino acid sequence for κ -casein with the rennet cleavage site in bold (Jollès *et al.*, 1962) has been obtained from the SWISS-PROT entry P02668 and is:

QEQNQEPIR CEKDERFFSD KIAKYIPIQY VLSRYPSYGL NYYQQKPVAL
INNQLFLPYPY YAKPAAVRSP AQILQWQVLSNTVPAKSCQA QPTTMARHPH

PHLSFMAIPP KKNQDKTEIP TINTIASGEP TSTPTTEAVE STVATLEDSP
EVIESPPEIN TVQVTSTAV

It has been found to be very resistant to calcium precipitation and stabilizes other caseins. Rennet cleavage at the **Phe105–Met106** bond has been found to eliminate this stabilizing ability (MacKinlay and Wake, 1965, 1971; MacKinlay *et al.*, 1966; McKenzie, 1971; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Anema, 1997; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Lehner *et al.*, 1999), leaving the hydrophobic portion, para-kappa-casein, and a hydrophilic portion called caseinomacropeptide (CMP). Concentration-dependent aggregation forms discrete polymers.



The proposed structure for a κ -casein is presented in *Figure 14.3*.

κ -Casein is the least abundant of the four major caseins (α_{s1} , α_{s2} , β and κ) and is present at about 10–15% in bovine milk (Jennes, 1970; Eigel *et al.*, 1984; Grappin and Ribadeau-Dumas, 1992; Rollema, 1992; Srinivasan *et al.*, 1996). Although κ -casein (and other caseins) have not been crystallized, molecular models based on amino acid sequence have been proposed (Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a,b) (*Figure 14.3*). Such structures have been described as the ‘horse and rider’, the most recent model providing good correlation with κ -casein functional properties (Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a). The most interesting property is that κ -casein appears calcium insensitive (Waugh and Van Hippel, 1956) and is therefore suspected to play a key role in micellar stabilization (Waugh and Van Hippel, 1956; Sullivan *et al.*, 1959; Swaisgood and Brunner, 1962, 1963; Thompson and Pepper, 1962; Pepper and Thompson, 1963; Zittle and Walter, 1963; MacKinlay and Wake, 1964, 1965; Swaisgood *et al.*, 1964; Rose, 1965; MacKinlay *et al.*, 1966; Payens, 1966; Rose and Colvin, 1966a,b; Thompson *et al.*, 1967; Waugh *et al.*, 1970; Farrell Jr., 1973; Dewan *et al.*, 1974; Carroll and Farrell Jr., 1983; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Anema, 1997; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Groves *et al.*, 1998; Lehner *et al.*, 1999). Evidence that κ -casein is involved in micelle stabilization is due to the fact that it is insensitive to calcium precipitation in the concentrations normally found in milk (Zittle and Walter, 1963). κ -Casein is also the milk component most sensitive to the action of the enzyme chymosin (referred to as rennin in many publications) (MacKinlay and Wake, 1965, 1971; MacKinlay *et al.*, 1966; McKenzie, 1971; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Lehner *et al.*, 1999). Chymosin cleaves the κ -casein molecule at the Phe-Met bond (105–106) and releases the ‘hairy tail’ – casein macropeptide (CMP) – and leaving the insoluble para- κ -casein (Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Lehner *et al.*, 1999). This destroys the micelle stabilizing ability and results in micelle coagulation. Heat-induced coagulation of micelles is due to the interaction of κ -casein with β -lactoglobulin at high temperatures (Zittle *et al.*, 1962). Various authors have also suggested that the degree of phosphorylation, disulphide bonding and glycosylation of κ -casein also play minor roles in micellar stabilization (Thompson and Pepper, 1962; Pepper and Thompson, 1963; Zittle and Walter, 1963; MacKinlay and Wake, 1964, 1965; Hoagland, 1966; Farrell Jr., 1973; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998).

The mechanism of stabilization is still somewhat vague. In the classical model

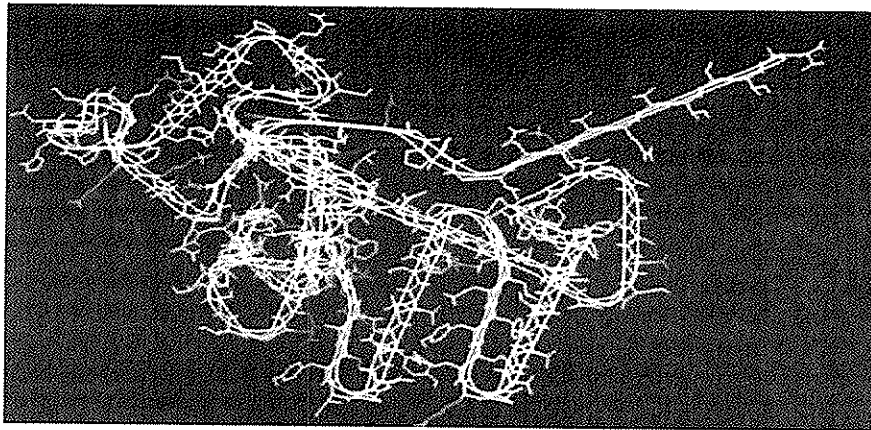


Figure 14.3. Three-dimensional molecular model for a κ -casein monomer (Kuminoski *et al.*, 1991a). Reproduced with kind permission of the American Dairy Science Association.

suggested by Waugh (Waugh *et al.*, 1970; Waugh, 1971), the κ -casein is proposed to concentrate on the outside of the micelle, the core consisting of a hydrophobic α - β complex. Carroll and Farrell Jr. (1983) have subsequently brought this theory into doubt; they suggest instead that there may be two different types of micelles:

- i) κ -casein at the periphery
- ii) κ -casein uniformly distributed throughout micelle.

They further claim that micelles with uniformly distributed κ -casein are smaller than those with κ -casein concentrated on the micellar surface. This may be related to the findings of Sullivan *et al.* (1959), Rose (1965), Rose and Colvin (1966b), McGann and Pyne (1970) and Devold *et al.* (2000), who all claim that increased κ -casein contents decrease micelle size.

κ -Casein is known to self-associate, and this behaviour has been assayed in many solvents, including phosphate (various concentrations/pHs), 5 M guanidine hydrochloride, 7 M urea, acetic acid (33, 66%), NaCl (Swaisgood and Brunner, 1962, 1963; Thompson and Pepper, 1962; Pepper and Thompson, 1963; Zittle and Walter, 1963; MacKinlay and Wake, 1964; Swaisgood *et al.*, 1964; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Morris, 2001). However, most authors have been concerned with calculating the molecular weight of monomeric species. The consensus molecular weight and sedimentation coefficient are 23 000 g mol⁻¹ and 1.4 S respectively: the molecular weight is in agreement with that calculated from the amino acid composition (Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a). Under conditions similar to those of milk (approximately pH 7 and ionic strength 0.1 M), a single sedimentation coefficient of ~ 13.5 S has been measured (Pedersen, 1936; Swaisgood and Brunner, 1962, 1963; Thompson and Pepper, 1962; Pepper and Thompson, 1963; Zittle and Walter, 1963; MacKinlay and Wake, 1964; Swaisgood *et al.*, 1964; Morris, 2001). It should be noted that for the paper by Pedersen (1936), the current naming convention for caseins was not in use and, therefore, the species characterized had not been designated κ -casein as such.

Molecular weight determinations have been somewhat less frequent. Swaisgood *et al.* (1964) suggest a molecular weight of 650 000 g mol⁻¹ for the 13.5 S species; Thurn *et al.* (1987a) calculate a molecular weight of 2 500 000 g mol⁻¹; Farrell Jr. *et al.* (1998) suggest 650 000–1 200 000 g mol⁻¹ at 25°C and 895 000–2 000 000 g mol⁻¹ at 37°C, and Morris (2001) determined a polymer molecular weight of approximately 750 000 g mol⁻¹. In the determinations of Farrell Jr. *et al.* (1998), the differences in calculated molecular weights are dependent on the analysis program used. This does, however, show that the temperature and concentration dependency of aggregation can cause significant problems and inconsistencies in sedimentation equilibrium analyses. It can therefore be inferred that the κ-casein molecular weight is anywhere upward of 600 000 g mol⁻¹, although a value of 600 000–900 000 g mol⁻¹ at 20°C would not be an unreasonable estimate.

Assuming, therefore, a molecular weight of 750 000 g mol⁻¹ and sedimentation coefficient of 13.8 S, it is possible to estimate a translational frictional ratio of 2.1 (Tanford, 1961) (*Equation 14.1a*). One can also estimate the diffusion coefficient (1.7×10^{-7} cm² sec⁻¹) by rearrangement of the *Equation 14.1b*; results would suggest that κ-casein is a moderately extended and/or hydrated molecule. A Wales–Van Holde ratio of 1.6 is consistent with a spherical molecule ($k_s = 15.9$ ml g⁻¹ – Morris, 2001 and $[\eta] = 9.5$ ml g⁻¹ – Swaisgood *et al.*, 1964) and would therefore suggest that the non-unity value of the translational frictional ratio is due to hydration alone.

Casein micelles

A large proportion of casein in milk is in the form of casein micelles, which can be thought of as a complex of calcium caseinate–calcium phosphate (citrate) (Dickinson and Stainsby, 1982). The casein micelle is usually thought of as a hydrated sphere, with the ‘hydration’ – δ (i.e. the amount of solvent associated with the protein either chemically or physically entrained expressed as mass of water per unit mass of protein) estimated on the basis of dynamic light scattering (Dewan *et al.*, 1973) to be (3.7 ± 0.5) and from sedimentation velocity and capillary viscometry (Morris *et al.*, 2000; Morris, 2001) to be (3.4 ± 0.5) . The colloidal calcium phosphate is essential for micellular stability. Removal of Ca²⁺ ions results in a smaller complex – the casein ‘sub-micelle’. κ-Casein is usually found on the exterior of the casein sub-micelle and therefore important to sub-micellular and micellular stability (Waugh and Von Hippel, 1956; Sullivan *et al.*, 1959; Swaisgood and Brunner, 1962, 1963; Thompson and Pepper, 1962; Pepper and Thompson, 1963; Zittle and Walter, 1963; MacKinlay and Wake, 1964, 1965; Swaisgood *et al.*, 1964; Rose, 1965; MacKinlay *et al.*, 1966; Payens, 1966; Rose and Colvin, 1966a,b; Thompson *et al.*, 1967; Waugh *et al.*, 1970; Farrell Jr., 1973; Dewan *et al.*, 1974; Carroll and Farrell Jr., 1983; Kumosinski *et al.*, 1991a; Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998; Groves *et al.*, 1998; Lehner *et al.*, 1999). The κ-casein is thought to coat the hydrophobic core of the sub-micelle (*Figure 14.4*) and is important in casein/polysaccharide interactions due to it having a positively charged region available for electrostatic bonding (Snoeren *et al.*, 1976; DaIgleish and Morris, 1988; Drohan *et al.*, 1997; Augustin *et al.*, 1999; Bourriot *et al.*, 1999, 2000; Langendorff *et al.*, 1999, 2000a,b; see also Rollema, 1992). In recent years, the casein sub-micelle model has been modified and a more open model with a hairy κ-casein outer layer has been suggested (De Kruif and Zhulina, 1996; Holt and Horne, 1996;

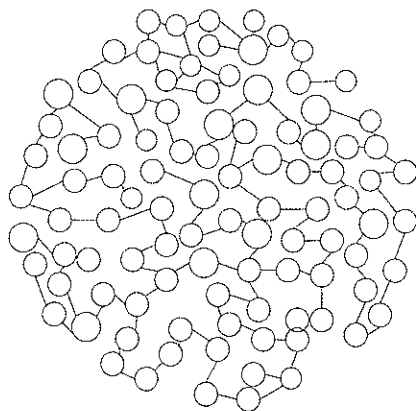


Figure 14.4. Sub-micelle model for the casein micelle (calcium phosphate bridges link individual sub-micelles).

De Kruif, 1999; see also Rollema, 1992). It has recently been reported (Jonkman *et al.*, 1999a,b) that the behaviour and structure of casein micelles does not change significantly upon processing, i.e. ice cream manufacture.

The size distribution of casein micelles is very broad (20–250 nm in diameter) (McKinnon *et al.*, 1999; Morris, 2001), and this is at least partially due to the availability of κ -casein (Sullivan *et al.*, 1955; Rose and Colvin, 1966b; McGann and Pyne, 1970; Dickinson and Stainsby, 1982).

The sedimentation profile of casein micelles (*Figure 14.5*) reveals a broad peak, i.e. large size distribution, and shows a large concentration dependency (Morris *et al.*, 2000; Morris, 2001). The mode average sedimentation coefficient, $s_{r,b}^0 = (845 \pm 2)$ S and $k_s = (16.9 \pm 0.1)$ ml g⁻¹, this is characteristic of a large, extremely hydrated spherical molecule (Morris *et al.*, 2000; Morris, 2001) (see *Table 14.2*). The Wales–Van Holde ratio, $R = k_s/[\eta]$ (see e.g. Creeth and Knight, 1965; Rowe, 1977, 1992; Harding, 1997): this combination of the Gralén parameter, k_s (Gralén, 1944) and the intrinsic viscosity $[\eta]$ can give an approximate concentration independent indication of macromolecular shape, which is independent of an assumed value of the hydration, δ , as we have already noted above.

In the same study, Morris (2001) calculated an intrinsic viscosity of 10.4 ml g⁻¹ and the Wales–Van Holde ratio was therefore calculated to be 1.6. Since the theoretical value for a sphere is 1.6 (see e.g. Creeth and Knight, 1965; Rowe, 1977, 1992; Harding, 1997), it is reasonable to say that casein micelles are ~ spherical. Having confirmed the spherical shape, it is possible to calculate the hydration (*Equations 14.3b* and *14.3c*) using the Einstein viscosity increment, v , where v is 2.5 for a sphere (Einstein, 1911; Harding, 1997). This yields a value of 4.2 ml g⁻¹ for the swollen specific volume; this results in a hydration, δ of (3.4 ± 0.5) grams of solvent/grams of protein, which is in good agreement with the value of (3.7 ± 0.5) (Dewan *et al.*, 1973) from dynamic light scattering.

It is also possible to estimate the molecular weight from the sedimentation coefficient, $s_{20,w}^0$, the Gralén parameter, k_s , and the swollen volume, v_s (Rowe, 1977) (*Equation 14.4*).

$$M_w = N_A \left[\frac{6\pi_{20,w} \eta_{20,w} s_{20,w}^0}{(1 - \bar{v} \rho_{20,w})} \right]^{3/2} \left[\left(\frac{3\bar{v}}{4\pi} \right) \left(\frac{k_s}{2\bar{v}} - \frac{v_s}{\bar{v}} \right) \right]^{1/2} \quad (14.4)$$

From Equation 14.4 a molecular weight, M_w of $2.8 \times 10^8 \text{ g mol}^{-1}$, can be calculated from the sedimentation coefficient of 845 S (Morris *et al.*, 2000; Morris, 2001). The value for the molecular weight calculated from this equation is in good agreement with the value of $2.0 \times 10^8 \text{ g mol}^{-1}$ (Schorsch *et al.*, 1999a,b) measured by turbidity, and would seem consistent with a spherical species of diameter of approximately 150 nm (McKinnon *et al.*, 1999). Further simple mathematical manipulation of the data can yield the corresponding diffusion coefficient, $D_{20,w}^0$ and hydrodynamic radius, r_H , via rearrangements of the Svedberg and Stokes–Einstein (see e.g. Harding, 1999) relationships (Equations 14.5a and 14.5b respectively).

$$\frac{s_{20,w}^0}{D_{20,w}^0} = \frac{M_w (1 - \bar{v} \rho_{20,w})}{RT} \quad (14.5a)$$

$$r_H = \frac{k_B T}{6\pi \eta_{20,w} D_{20,w}^0} \quad (14.5b)$$

The calculated $D_{20,w}^0 = 2.8 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^2 \text{ sec}^{-1}$ and $r_H = 78 \text{ nm}$ are also in good agreement with the previously published values (Lin *et al.*, 1971; Dewan *et al.*, 1974; Schorsch *et al.*, 1999b). Morris (2001) further confirmed this estimation of $D_{20,w}^0$ (and hence molecular weight) by dynamic light scattering. It is also possible to calculate the translational frictional ratio, f/f_0 (Tanford, 1961) from either Equations 14.1a or 14.1b, which is reported to be 1.8.

Morris (2001) continued to presume that casein micelles are spherical (i.e. the MHKS exponent from sedimentation, $b = 0.666$) and formulated the following MHKS relationship – $s_{20,w} = 2.0 \times 10^{-3} M_w^{0.666}$, which is in agreement with the equation calculated by Dewan *et al.* (1974) – $s_{20,w} = 1.8 \times 10^{-3} M_w^{0.665}$.

Although apparently more complex, it seems as if the hydrodynamic properties of the casein micelle may well be better understood than those of the individual components (especially α_{s1} - and α_{s2} -casein).

Discussion

Although widely studied in the last 150 years, there are still many questions to be answered with regard to the solution structure of the caseins. It would seem that, with respect to casein micelles, the structure is quite clear, the properties of the individual caseins are somewhat mysterious; this is especially true for the much under-studied α -caseins. On the other hand, the wealth of data available for β -casein only seems to have confused the issue further. It may be that the instability theory of Swaisgood (1992) may require greater attention. In the case of κ -casein, discrepancies in polymer molecular weight are at least partially due to data analysis (Farrell Jr. *et al.*, 1998).

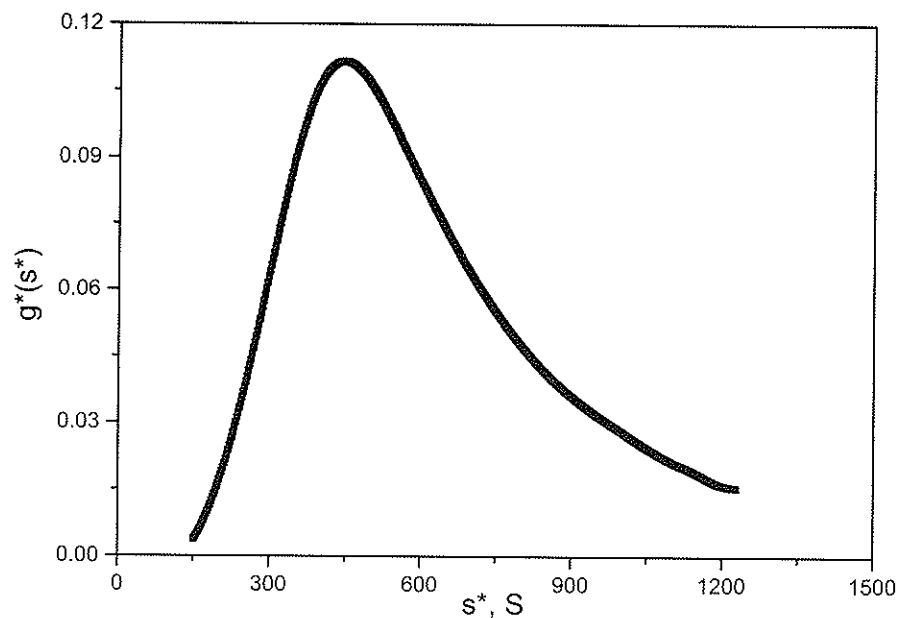


Figure 14.5. $g^*(s^*)$ profile for casein micelles at 0.028 g l^{-1} , i.e. the approximate concentration in bovine milk (adapted from Morris *et al.*, 2000 and Morris, 2001, with kind permission of the American Chemical Society). Where the * is indicative of an *apparent* sedimentation coefficient distribution, i.e. not corrected for diffusion, and an *apparent* sedimentation coefficient, i.e. not corrected for non-ideality and not necessarily to standard solvent conditions (Stafford, 1992a,b; Laue and Stafford, 1999). Conditions: 20°C ; $I \sim 0.1 \text{ M}$; rotor speed 12 600 rpm (Beckman Optima XLI with Rayleigh Interference optics).

Table 14.2. Hydrodynamic parameters for casein micelles (adapted from Morris *et al.*, 2000 – with kind permission of the American Chemical Society).

Parameter	Value
v , ml g^{-1}	0.733
$s_{20,w}^0$, S	845
k , ml g^{-1}	16.9
$D_{20,w}^0$, $\text{cm}^2 \text{sec}^{-1}$	2.8×10^{-8}
$[\eta]$, ml g^{-1}	10.4
$k/[\eta]$	1.6
P	1.0
v	2.5
a/b	1.0
δ	3.4
v_s , ml g^{-1}	4.2
M_w , $\text{g}^{-1} \text{mol}$	2.8×10^8
r_H , nm	78
R/R_0	1.8

v , calculated from average amino acid composition (Perkins, 1986).

It would appear that, contrary to the views of Thompson (1971), it is not always necessary to understand the individual components to understand the whole. This, then, also begs the question: 'Do the structures of the individual caseins alone actually have any bearing on the structure of the casein micelle (or sub-micelle)?' In the context of the current literature, this author would be inclined to answer in the negative.

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