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2 **Structural conservation of chemotaxis machinery across Archaea and Bacteria**

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19 Running title: Structure of archaeal chemoreceptor arrays

20 **Summary**

21 Chemotaxis allows cells to sense and respond to their environment. In bacteria, stimuli
22 are detected by arrays of chemoreceptors that relay the signal to a two-component
23 regulatory system. These arrays take the form of highly stereotyped super-lattices
24 comprising hexagonally packed trimers-of-receptor-dimers networked by rings of
25 histidine kinase and coupling proteins. This structure is conserved across chemotactic
26 bacteria, and between membrane-bound and cytoplasmic arrays, and gives rise to the
27 highly cooperative, dynamic nature of the signaling system. The chemotaxis system,
28 absent in eukaryotes, is also found in archaea, where its structural details remain
29 uncharacterized. Here we provide evidence that the chemotaxis machinery was not
30 present in the last archaeal common ancestor, but rather was introduced in one of the
31 waves of lateral gene transfer that occurred after the branching of Eukaryota but before
32 the diversification of Euryarchaeota. Unlike in Bacteria, the chemotaxis system then
33 evolved largely vertically in Archaea, with very few subsequent successful lateral gene
34 transfer events. By electron cryotomography (ECT), we find that the structure of both
35 membrane-bound and cytoplasmic chemoreceptor arrays is conserved between Bacteria
36 and Archaea, suggesting the fundamental importance of this signaling architecture across
37 diverse prokaryotic lifestyles.

38

39 **Introduction**

40 Single-celled organisms rely on signal transduction pathways to sense and
41 respond to their environments. In Bacteria, one such pathway, the chemotaxis system,
42 relays information on the chemical environment to the flagellar motor to bias swimming

43 direction. Roughly half of all bacteria are chemotactic (Wuichet and Zhulin, 2010). The
44 chemotaxis system, typified by *Escherichia coli*, consists of chemoreceptors (methyl-
45 accepting chemotaxis proteins, or MCPs) networked into cooperative arrays by coupling
46 protein (CheW) and a two-component signaling kinase (CheA). Adaptation to stimulus is
47 mediated by methylation and de-methylation of the receptors, performed by a
48 methyltransferase (CheR) and methylesterase (CheB). CheB is one of the two response
49 regulators controlled by CheA; the other is CheY, which, when phosphorylated, can bind
50 to the flagellar motor, inducing a shift in its direction of rotation, and therefore the
51 swimming behavior of the cell, inducing a “tumble” rather than a “run” (Hazelbauer et
52 al., 2008).

53 In Bacteria, the structure of the chemosensory array is universal across all species
54 imaged to date (Briegel et al., 2009). It is even conserved between membrane-bound and
55 cytoplasmic arrays (Briegel et al., 2014).

56 Many archaea also contain chemotaxis genes. Decades of work have shown that
57 the halophilic archaeon *Halobacterium salinarum* senses chemical attractants such as
58 oxygen, as well as light, through a chemosensory system that, as in bacteria, translates
59 into a change in direction of flagellar rotation. Interestingly, the archaeal flagellum, or
60 archaellum, is not homologous to that of bacteria (Jarrell and Albers, 2012). Archaeal
61 chemotaxis systems use an additional protein, CheF, to translate signal from CheY to the
62 motor (Schlesner et al., 2009).

63 Evolutionary genomics has revealed that the majority of archaeal chemotaxis
64 genes are found in Euryarchaeota and exhibit high sequence similarity to those found in
65 Firmicutes and Thermotogales, suggesting that the system was acquired via lateral gene

66 transfer (LGT) (Wuichet and Zhulin, 2010). However, recently sequenced genomes
67 (Blainey et al., 2011; Spang et al., 2012) from the deeply branching Thaumarchaeota
68 (Brochier-Armanet et al., 2008) also contain chemotaxis systems, raising the possibility
69 of a chemotactic Last Archaeal Common Ancestor (LACA).

70 Here, we apply evolutionary genomics to distinguish between these hypotheses,
71 and electron cryotomography (ECT) to investigate the structure of archaeal chemotaxis
72 systems.

73

74 **Results and Discussion**

75 To identify chemotactic archaea, we selected 240 genomes spanning all major
76 archaeal branches: Euryarchaeota (178), Crenarchaeota (51), Thaumarchaeota (9),
77 Korarchaeota (1), and Nanoarchaeota (1). Using the MiST2 database (Ulrich and Zhulin,
78 2010), we determined that half of these genomes contained chemotaxis systems, defined
79 as the presence of at least one CheA and one MCP. Chemotactic species all belonged to
80 one of two archaeal phyla – Euryarchaeota (118) or Thaumarchaeota (2).

81 Chemotaxis systems are commonly classified on the basis of their signaling
82 kinase, CheA (Wuichet and Zhulin, 2010). In bacteria, there are more than a dozen such
83 classes: multiple systems that signal to the flagellum (denoted F), another that signals to
84 the Type IV pilus (Tfp), and one involved in alternate cellular functions (ACF). To
85 classify the archaeal chemotaxis systems identified above, we examined the protein
86 sequences of their associated CheA. There are 139 such CheA genes in the pangenome,
87 representing only two classes: F1 (134) and ACF (5), consistent with previous work
88 (Wuichet and Zhulin, 2010). ACF systems are found only in the Methanomicrobiales

89 order of Archaea, and, based on sequence similarity (Supplemental Table 1), likely arose
90 from LGT from Deltaproteobacteria.

91 In contrast to ACF systems, F1 systems are widespread across Euryarchaeota,
92 supporting the idea that this system was present in their common ancestor. F1 systems
93 are also found in Thaumarchaeota, a deeply branched phylum, raising the question of
94 whether the LACA was chemotactic. To investigate this question, we used a
95 concatenated alignment of CheA, CheB, and CheR to construct a phylogenetic tree of F1
96 systems in Bacteria and Archaea. In many genomes, there are multiple copies of these
97 genes, making it difficult to unambiguously assign them to shared classes. Therefore, we
98 chose only species that either contained all three genes in the same cluster or contained
99 only a single copy of each gene of the F1 system. The final dataset contains 203
100 CheA:CheB:CheR concatenated sequences from 193 organisms: Euryarchaeota (82),
101 Thaumarchaeota (2), Firmicutes (93), Thermotogae (3), Synergistetes (3), Cyanobacteria
102 (3), Chloroflexi (1), Planctomycetes (1), Actinobacteria (1), Chlorobi (2) and Nitrospirae
103 (2). The resulting tree is shown in Supplemental Figure 1. We find that the F1
104 chemotaxis system in Archaea is monophyletic. In general, the topology of our F1
105 chemotaxis tree recapitulates that of the organismal tree, with two notable exceptions,
106 highlighted in Figure 1.

107 First, our results suggest that the F1 chemotaxis system was laterally transferred
108 from the Euryarchaeota to the Thaumarchaeota sometime between the branching of the
109 Methanococcales and the Archaeoglobales (Supplemental Figure 2), which rejects the
110 idea of a chemotactic LACA. Rather, our data suggest that the ancestral archaeal
111 chemotaxis system was laterally transferred from an ancestor of Bacteria before the

112 divergence of the earliest branching bacterial lineages of Firmicutes, Thermotogales and
113 Synergistetes

114 Our data also suggest more recent LGT events. We find that the chemotaxis
115 system of Methanosarcinales appears to be misplaced in the CheA:CheB:CheR tree
116 (Supplemental Figure 2). Further inspection shows that most Methanosarcinales have a
117 version of the F1 chemotaxis system more similar to that of Clostridia than to any other
118 archaeal clade, consistent with a relatively recent LGT, as has been suggested
119 (Deppenmeier et al., 2002). Some Methanosarcinales (e.g. *Methanosarcina mazei*,
120 *Methanosarcina acetivorans*) appear to have the vertically inherited system, while others
121 (e.g. *Methanococoides burtonii*) have the laterally transferred system.

122 Given the bacterial source of archaeal chemotaxis systems, we wanted to see
123 whether their structure was conserved. Electron microscopy of Archaea has lagged
124 behind that of Bacteria. Many species require complex media, extremes of temperature,
125 or anaerobic conditions for growth. Halobacteria are relatively easy to culture but require
126 high salt concentrations that interfere with ECT, and cells often lose structural integrity
127 upon removal of salt (Trachtenberg et al., 2000). Additionally, many archaeal cells are
128 too large to allow adequate transmission of electrons. With these constraints in mind, we
129 selected four archaeal species, representing three diverse orders of Euryarchaeota:

130 Thermococcales (*Thermococcus kodakarensis*), Methanomicrobiales (*Methanoregula*
131 *formicica*, *Methanosprillum hungatei*), and Halobacteriales (*Halobacterium salinarum*).

132 By ECT, we observed membrane-bound chemoreceptor arrays in *T. kodakarensis*,
133 *M. hungatei*, and *H. salinarum* (Figure 2). The order and packing of the chemoreceptors
134 was identical to that of bacteria, with 12 nm between the centers of adjacent hexamers of

135 trimers-of-MCP-dimers. Interestingly, chemoreceptor arrays may have been observed
136 previously in EM images of Archaea, but not identified as such. For instance, in *M.*
137 *hungatei*, what are identified as cytoskeletal structures are likely chemoreceptor arrays
138 (Toso et al., 2011). Similarly, work in *M. hungatei* and *H. salinarum* identified a “polar
139 organelle,” which is likely the chemoreceptor array (Cruden et al., 1989; Metlina, 2004).
140 The “polar organelle” was first described in (*Aqua*)*Spirillum serpens* in 1962 (Murray
141 and Birch-Andersen, 1963). That study preceded Julius Adler’s seminal 1966 paper on
142 bacterial chemotaxis, which stimulated much work in the field (Adler, 1966). However,
143 the “polar organelle” is described as a structure distinct from the chemoreceptor array as
144 recently as 2001 (Lybarger and Maddock, 2001). Our results, however, lead us to believe
145 that they are, in fact, the same structure (Supplemental Figure 3).

146 We also observe cytoplasmic chemoreceptor arrays in *M. formicicum* (Figure 3).
147 Again, their structure is strikingly similar to that of bacterial cytoplasmic arrays: two
148 hexagonally-packed lattices of trimers-of-MCP-dimers, presumably interacting at their
149 ligand-binding tips, sandwiched between two CheA/CheW baseplates. As observed in
150 the bacterium *Rhodobacter sphaeroides*, these arrays frequently curve, exhibiting both
151 positive and negative curvature in opposing halves of the array (Briegel et al., 2014). The
152 data from all four species are summarized in Supplemental Table 2.

153 Both cytoplasmic and membrane-bound arrays exhibited more variation in
154 subcellular localization than their bacterial counterparts. Rather than clustering tightly at
155 the cell pole, as in most chemotactic bacteria, archaeal arrays were frequently observed
156 nearer to mid-cell.

157 The F1 chemotaxis system was likely transferred from the last bacterial common
158 ancestor in one of the waves of LGT that gave rise to the diversification of Euryarchaeota
159 more than 3.5 billion years ago (Battistuzzi et al., 2004; Nelson-Sathi et al., 2014). It has
160 been suggested that these influxes of genes allowed metabolic divergence, and it may be
161 that chemotaxis helped these diversifying organisms find and colonize new niches. That
162 the transfer occurred after the branching of Eukaryotes from Archaea may explain why
163 chemotaxis systems are not found in Eukaryota (Koretke et al., 2000). It is currently
164 believed that there has been much less LGT to eukaryotes than between prokaryotes, and
165 most of these events happened relatively recently(Keeling and Palmer, 2008). In fact, of
166 the dozen or so subfamilies of two-component signaling systems, only one is found in
167 Eukaryota(Wolanin et al., 2002). Bacteria evolved several classes of chemotaxis systems
168 that were widely exchanged via LGT. In Archaea, by contrast, evolution was largely
169 vertical, with successful LGT of the F1 chemotaxis system occurring maybe as few as
170 three times. It is striking that this signaling architecture, developed in Bacteria, should
171 remain unchanged over billions of years in Archaea adapting to new lifestyles.

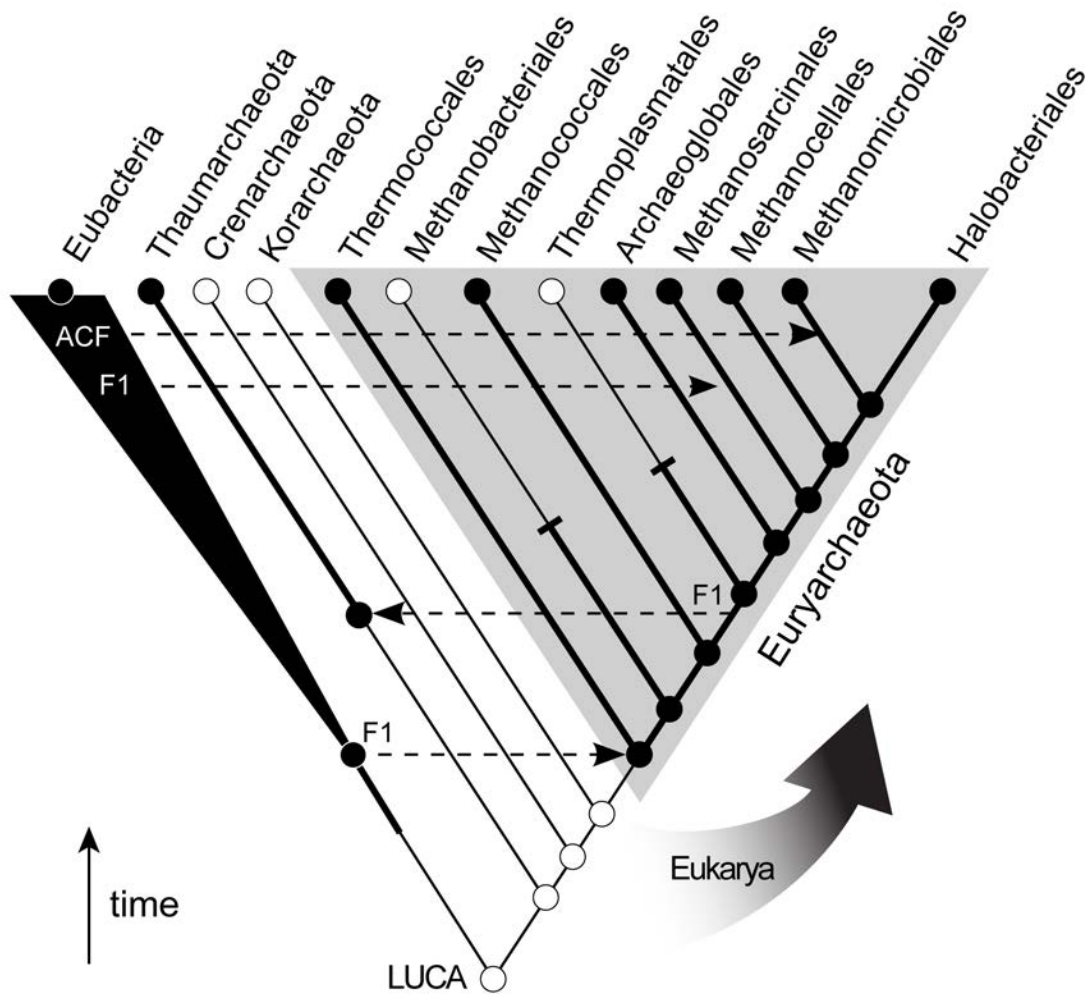
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179 **Figure Legends**

180 **Figure 1. Mapping evolutionary events of the archaeal chemotaxis system onto the**
 181 **tree of life.** Tree of life scheme is as in (Brochier-Armanet et al., 2011). Presence (thick
 182 lines) and absence (thin lines) of the F1 chemotaxis system are marked by black and
 183 white nodes, respectively. Loss events are marked by a bar across the branch. Dashed
 184 arrows denote LGT events of the indicated systems. The Euryarchaeota are shaded in
 185 grey. LUCA: Last Universal Common Ancestor.



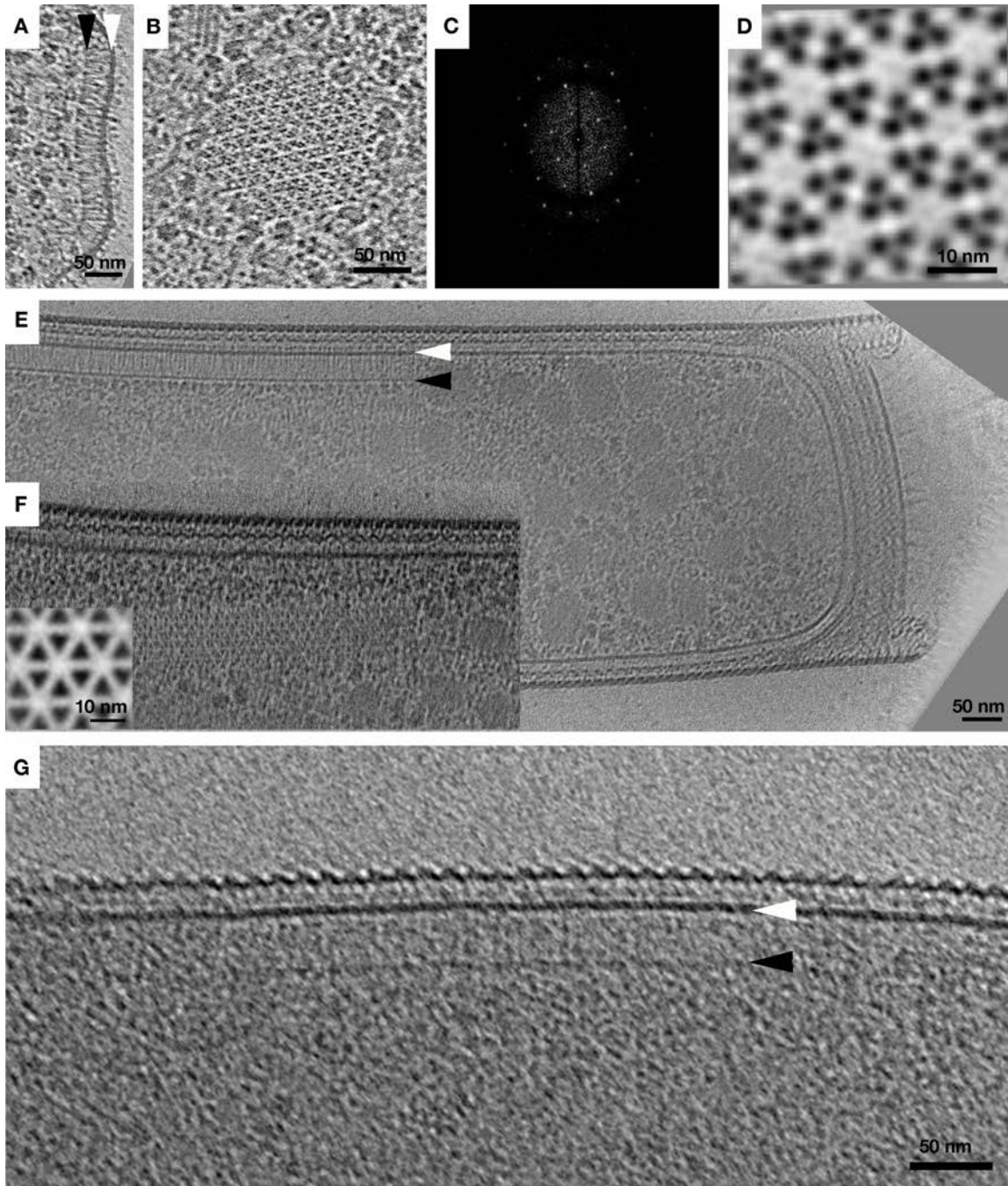
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188 **Figure 2. Membrane-bound chemoreceptor arrays in Archaea.** *T. kodakarensis* (A-

189 **D)** was grown anaerobically on elemental sulfur as previously described (Atomi et al.,

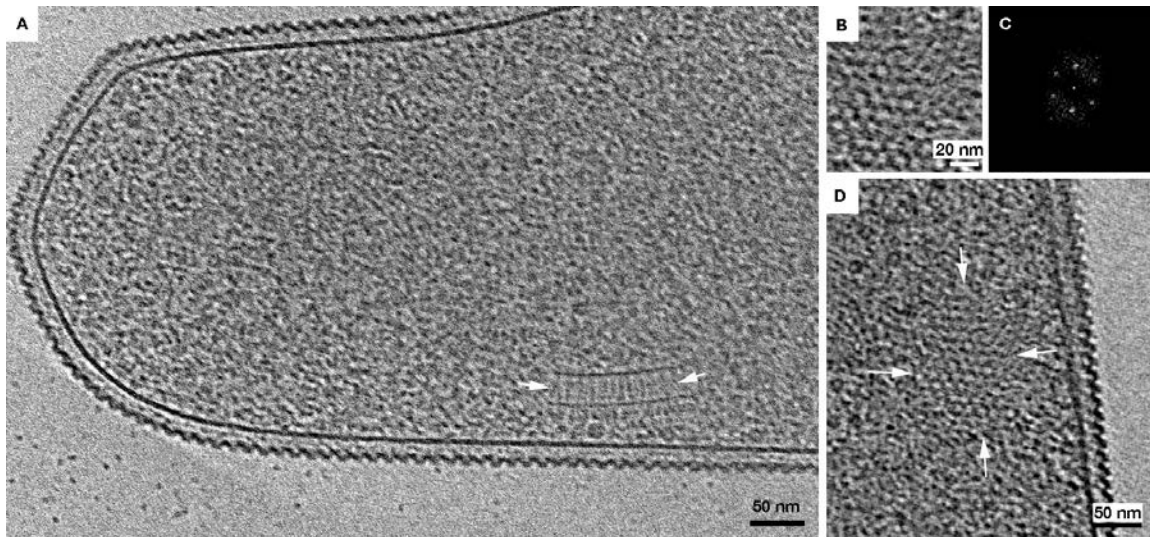
190 2004). *M. hungatei* (**E-F**) was grown on hydrogen and carbon dioxide (Toso et al.,
191 2011). *H. salinarum* (**G**) was grown aerobically in complex medium (Oesterhelt and
192 Krippahl, 1983) at 37°C. *H. salinarum* cells were fixed with 2.5% glutaraldehyde then
193 washed into low-salt buffer with 7% PEG-6000. Cells of all strains were mixed with
194 fiducial markers (Iancu et al., 2007) and plunge-frozen on EM grids (Tivol et al., 2008)
195 and imaged by ECT (Gan and Jensen, 2012). Images were aligned, CTF corrected, and
196 reconstructed with IMOD (Kremer et al., 1996). SIRT reconstructions were calculated
197 using TOMO3D (Agulleiro and Fernandez, 2011), and subvolume averages generated
198 using PEET (Nicastro et al., 2006). (**A**, **E**, and **G**) show representative side views of
199 membrane-bound arrays in *T. kodakarensis*, *M. hungatei*, and *H. salinarum*, respectively.
200 (**B** and **F**) show top views, demonstrating the hexagonal packing of the trimers-of-MCP-
201 dimers (power spectrum shown in **C** and subtomogram averages in **D** and inset). Scale
202 bars 50 nm (**A**, **B**, **E**, **F**, **G**) or 10 nm (**D**, **F** inset); power spectrum (**C**) not to scale.



203

204 **Figure 3. Cytoplasmic chemoreceptor arrays in *M. formicicum*.** Live cultures of *M.*
 205 *formicicum* (DSM 22288) were purchased from the DSMZ and frozen on EM grids upon
 206 arrival. ECT data collection and image processing was performed as described in Figure
 207 2. (A) shows a side view of a cytoplasmic array (white arrows). (B, associated power

208 spectrum in **C**) and **(D)** show cross-sections through a top view of an array revealing
209 hexagonal packing of two layers of trimers-of-MCP-dimers, sandwiched between
210 CheA/CheW baseplates. Scale bars 50 nm (A, D) or 20 nm (B); power spectrum (C) not
211 to scale.



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295 Supplemental Information

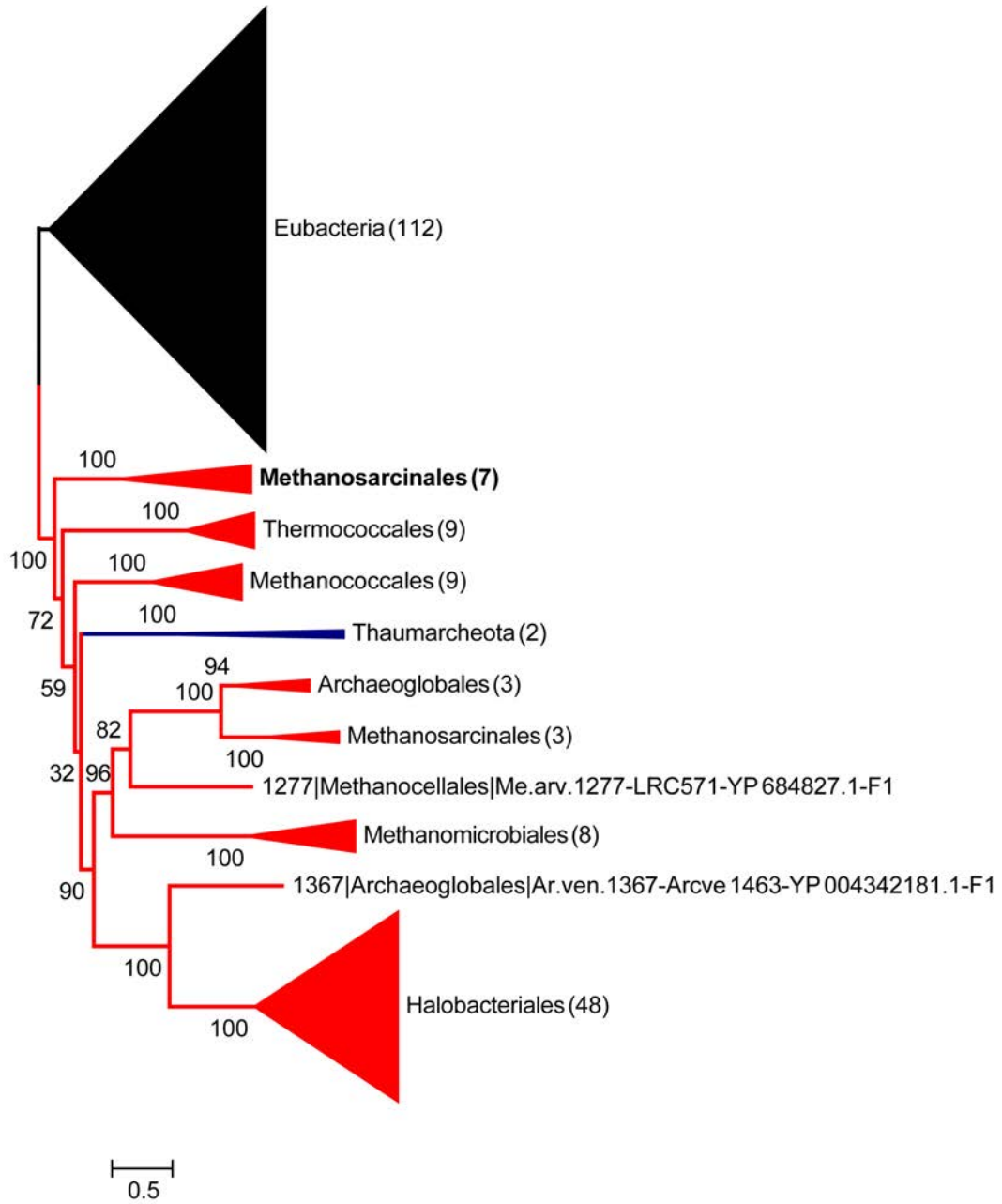
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297 **Structural conservation of chemotaxis machinery across Archaea and Bacteria**
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307 **Supplemental Figure 1.** CheA:CheB:CheR phylogenetic tree of the F1 chemotaxis
308 system in Bacteria (black) and Archaea (color). Thaumarchaeota are in blue and
309 Euryarchaeota are in red. Bold font indicates the F1 system in Methanosarcinales
310 resulting from secondary LGT. All CheA, CheB, and CheR genes from the MiST2
311 database (Ulrich and Zhulin, 2010) were downloaded and classified into chemotaxis
312 classes using HMMER3 (Eddy, 2011) and HMM provided by the authors (Wuichet and
313 Zhulin, 2010). Of those, 193 CheA, CheB, and CheR homologs from genomes
314 containing unambiguously interacting CheA, CheB, and CheR genes from F1 systems
315 were independently aligned using the E-INS-I algorithm from the MAFFT v7.182
316 package (Marucci et al., 2014). The resultant alignments were then concatenated.
317 RAxML (Stamatakis, 2014) was used to produce 1,000 rapid bootstrapped trees using an
318 LG + Γ_4 + I evolutionary model, which were then searched for the best-scoring maximum
319 likelihood trees. Bootstrap values were calculated using the 100 best scoring trees and
320 are shown above nodes (values indicate the number of trees, out of 100, that placed the
321 node as shown). Leaf names represent a description of the system: A | B | C – D – E,
322 where A is the MiST ID of the genome, B is the order, C is the sequence tag (two letter
323 genus and species codes plus MiST ID), D is the locus of the respective CheA, and E is
324 the chemotaxis system (F1). Scale bar indicates average number of substitutions per site.

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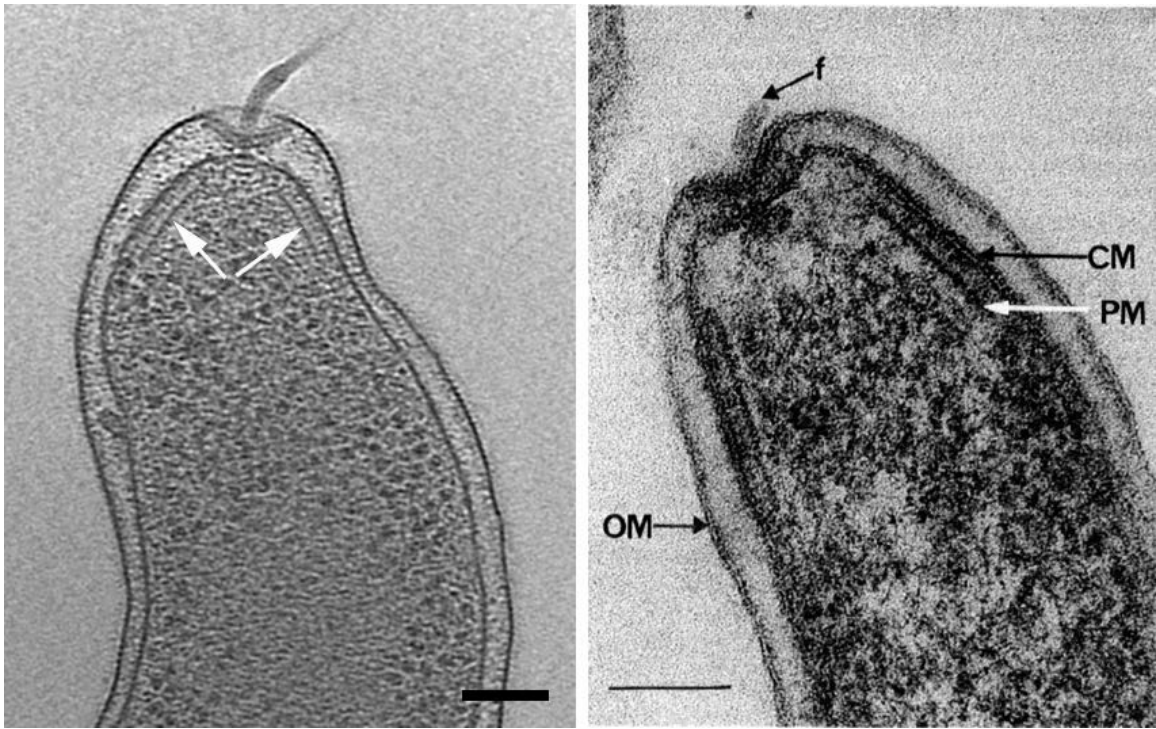
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Supplemental Figure 2. Compressed form of Supplemental Figure 1 emphasizing later LGT events. Color scheme as in Supplemental Figure 1: Bacteria are in black, Thaumarchaeota in blue, and Euryarchaeota in red. F1 systems resulting from secondary LGT in Methanosarcinales are in bold.



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339 **Supplemental Figure 3.** Comparison of the chemoreceptor array (left, white arrows)
340 and polar organelle (right, white arrow, PM denotes Polar Membrane) in *Campylobacter*
341 *jejuni*. Scale bars 100 nm. Right panel from (Brock and Murray, 1988).



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346 **Supplemental Table 1. Sequence similarity of ACF chemotaxis systems in**
 347 **Methanomicrobiales.**

348
 349 Best BLAST hit of the CheA from ACF systems present in Archaea excluding hits to
 350 themselves. The sequences were subject to BLAST (Camacho et al., 2009) similarity
 351 search against two custom databases built from archaeal and bacterial genomes in MiST.
 352
 353

		Best hit in Bacteria		
Organism	Locus	Organism	locus	E-value
<i>Methanospirillum hungatei</i>	Mhun_0494	<i>Desulfomonile tiedjei</i>	Desti_0040	1E-155
<i>Methanoregula formicicum</i>	Metfor_1885	<i>Desulfomonile tiedjei</i>	Desti_0040	3E-172
<i>Methanosphaerula palustris</i>	Mpal_1329	<i>Desulfomonile tiedjei</i>	Desti_0040	0.0
<i>Methanospirillum hungatei</i>	Mhun_0989	<i>Syntrophus aciditrophicus</i>	SYN_00431	4E-167
<i>Methanoculleus marisnigri</i>	Memar_0238	<i>Chthoniobacter flavus</i>	CfE428DRAFT_6501	6E-150

		Best hit in Archaea		
Organism	Locus	Organism	locus	E-value
<i>Methanospirillum hungatei</i>	Mhun_0494	<i>Pyrococcus yayanosii</i>	PYCH_15450	2E-070
<i>Methanoregula formicicum</i>	Metfor_1885	<i>Pyrococcus yayanosii</i>	PYCH_15450	2E-066
<i>Methanosphaerula palustris</i>	Mpal_1329	<i>Methanocaldococcus infernus</i>	Metin_0774	5E-066
<i>Methanospirillum hungatei</i>	Mhun_0989	<i>Archaeoglobus profundus</i>	Arcpr_1374	3E-064
<i>Methanoculleus marisnigri</i>	Memar_0238	<i>Pyrococcus sp.</i>	Py04_0537	3E-071

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359 **Supplemental Table 2. Summary of archaeal species imaged by ECT in the current**
 360 **study.**
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	Location Isolated	Observed Cell Diameter*	MCP Genes	Membrane-Bound Arrays?	Distance from Membrane to Baseplate	Cytoplasmic Arrays?	Distance between Baseplates
<i>Halobacteriales</i>							
<i>Halobacterium salinarum</i>	Salted fish	550-800 nm	18	Yes	35 nm	No	-
<i>Methanomicrobiales</i>							
<i>Methanoregula formicica</i>	Brewery effluent treatment sludge	300-400 nm	6	No	-	Yes	27 nm
<i>Methanospirillum hungatei</i>	Sewage sludge	350-400 nm	27	Yes	32 nm	No	-
<i>Thermococcales</i>							
<i>Thermococcus kodakarensis</i>	Solfatara	1-1.5 μ m	5	Yes	30 nm	No	-

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 363 *Cell diameter measured between inner membranes

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369 **Supplemental References**

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