

5.4 Symbiosis played a key role in the origin of some eukaryotic organelles.

Endosymbiosis

Symbiosis is a close relationship between organisms of different species that live together. The theory of **endosymbiosis** proposes that some of today's eukaryotic organelles evolved by a symbiosis in which one species of prokaryote was engulfed by and lived inside another species of prokaryote that was a precursor to eukaryotes (figure 5.30). According to the endosymbiont theory, the engulfed prokaryotes provided their hosts with certain advantages associated with their special metabolic abilities. Two key eukaryotic organelles are believed to be the descendants of these endosymbiotic prokaryotes: mitochondria, which are thought to have originated as bacteria capable of carrying out oxidative metabolism; and chloroplasts, which apparently arose from photosynthetic bacteria.

The endosymbiont theory is supported by a wealth of evidence. Both mitochondria and chloroplasts are surrounded by two membranes; the inner membrane probably evolved from the plasma membrane of the engulfed bacterium, while the outer membrane is probably derived from the plasma membrane or endoplasmic reticulum of the host cell. Mitochondria are about the same size as most bacteria, and the cristae formed by their inner membranes resemble the folded membranes in various groups of bacteria. Mitochondrial ribosomes are also similar to bacterial ribosomes in size and structure. Both mitochondria and

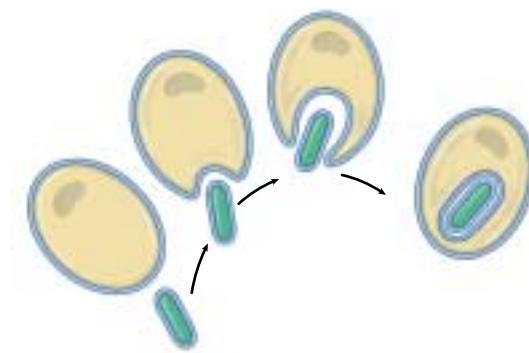


FIGURE 5.30

Endosymbiosis. This figure shows how a double membrane may have been created during the symbiotic origin of mitochondria or chloroplasts.

chloroplasts contain circular molecules of DNA similar to those in bacteria. Finally, mitochondria divide by simple fission, splitting in two just as bacterial cells do, and they apparently replicate and partition their DNA in much the same way as bacteria. Table 5.2 compares and reviews the features of three types of cells.

Some eukaryotic organelles are thought to have arisen by endosymbiosis.

Table 5.2 A Comparison of Bacterial, Animal, and Plant Cells

Bacterium	Animal	Plant
EXTERIOR STRUCTURES		
Cell wall	Present (protein-polysaccharide)	Absent
Cell membrane	Present	Present
Flagella	May be present (single strand)	May be present
INTERIOR STRUCTURES		
ER	Absent	Usually present
Ribosomes	Present	Present
Microtubules	Absent	Present
Centrioles	Absent	Present
Golgi apparatus	Absent	Present
Nucleus	Absent	Present
Mitochondria	Absent	Present
Chloroplasts	Absent	Present
Chromosomes	A single circle of DNA	Multiple; DNA-protein complex
Lysosomes	Absent	Usually present
Vacuoles	Absent	Absent or small
		Usually a large single vacuole