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Functional Aspects of Satellite DNA and Heterochromatin

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Publisher Summary

This chapter discusses the functional aspects of satellite DNA and heterochromatin. Despite all attempts to formulate simple rules governing satellite evolution, it is now clear that each case so far analyzed has brought with it its own claims for generalization, none of which have proven sufficiently all-embracing. One initial hypothesis on satellite evolution was that satellites wax and wane with amazing rapidity in evolutionary terms, so that closely related species differ drastically in amount or type of satellite. However, improved methods of DNA sequencing have led to the suggestion that closely related species appear to modulate their satellites from a common library. Because some kinds of heterochromatin are now known to contain satellite DNA and because a large literature exists on the properties of heterochromatin, it is necessary to consider the relationships between heterochromatin and satellite DNA in some detail. The term "heterochromatin" was initially used to define chromosomes or chromosome segments which did not uncoil at mitotic telophase and so maintained a condensed or heteropycnotic state throughout interphase and into the subsequent prophase of the

heteroploidy state throughout interphase and into the subsequent prophase of the next division cycle.



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