Genome Sequence of "Candidatus Walczuchella monophlebidarum" the Flavobacterial Endosymbiont of *Llaveia axin axin* (Hemiptera: Coccoidea: Monophlebidae)

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Accepted: February 26, 2014

Data deposition: This project has been deposited at GenBank/DDJB/EMBL under the accession CP006873.

Abstract

Scale insects (Hemiptera: Coccoidea) constitute a very diverse group of sap-feeding insects with a large diversity of symbiotic associations with bacteria. Here, we present the complete genome sequence, metabolic reconstruction, and comparative genomics of the flavobacterial endosymbiont of the giant scale insect *Llaveia axin axin*. The gene repertoire of its 309,299 bp genome was similar to that of other flavobacterial insect endosymbionts though not syntenic. According to its genetic content, essential amino acid biosynthesis is likely to be the flavobacterial endosymbiont’s principal contribution to the symbiotic association with its insect host. We also report the presence of a γ-proteobacterial symbiont that may be involved in waste nitrogen recycling and also has amino acid biosynthetic capabilities that may provide metabolic precursors to the flavobacterial endosymbiont. We propose “*Candidatus Walczuchella monophlebidarum*” as the name of the flavobacterial endosymbiont of insects from the Monophlebidae family.

Key words: scale insect, γ-Proteobacteria, symbiosis, comparative genomics.

Introduction

Insects have specialized symbioses with certain bacteria that provide diverse advantages to hosts. Generally, endosymbionts reside inside insect cells, sometimes in unique abdominal structures called bacteriomes (Wernegreen and Wheeler 2009). Endosymbionts have reduced genomes and maintain functions that allow their hosts to live on nutrient-deficient diets such as plant sap or blood (Moya et al. 2008). Endosymbionts from different bacterial phyla have been studied from various sap-sucking insects, mainly aphids and insects in the suborder Auchenorrhyncha (Moran 2007).

Flavobacteria have been found as endosymbionts of several scale insects (Hemiptera: Coccoidea). Until now they have been reported within the families Diaspididae, Lecanidiidae, Coccidae, Eriococcidae, Pseudococcidae, Ortheziidae, Coelostomiidae, and Monophlebidae (Zchori-Fein et al. 2005; Gruwell et al. 2007; Matsuura et al. 2009; Gruwell et al. 2010; Dhami et al. 2012; Rosenblueth et al. 2012). Flavobacteria have been considered to be the primary endosymbionts of scale insects (Gruwell et al. 2007; Rosenblueth et al. 2012). The genome of *Uzinura diaspidicola* (endosymbiont of Diaspididae) was recently sequenced (Sabree et al. 2012). Flavobacteria from scale insects seem to have a single origin, except for *Brownia rhizoecola* (from Pseudococcidae: Phenacoccinae) tribe Rhizococii (Rosenblueth et al. 2012). Some endosymbiotic Flavobacteria form a clade on the basis of 16S rRNA sequences and have been proposed to cospeciate with their Monophlebidae hosts (Rosenblueth et al. 2012). Besides scale insects, two other Flavobacteria have been reported as insect endosymbionts, *Sulcia muelleri* from Auchenorrhyncha and *Blattabacterium* spp. from basal termites and cockroaches, and their genomes have been fully sequenced (Wu et al. 2006; McCutcheon and Moran 2007; López-Sánchez et al. 2009; McCutcheon et al. 2009; McCutcheon and Moran 2010; Woyke et al. 2010; Neef et al. 2011; Huang et al. 2012; Sabree et al. 2012; Patiño-Navarrete et al. 2013; Tokuda et al. 2013). In scale insects,
Enterobacteriaeae endosymbionts have been frequently found to coexist with Flavobacteria, including insects from Diaspididae (Rosenblueth et al. 2012); although the genome of *U. diapicola* has been sequenced from an insect that only has a single endosymbiont species (Sabree et al. 2012). *Llaveia axin axin* (Monophlebidae) harbors both endosymbionts previously found in scale insects: a flavobacterium and an enterobacterium (Rosenblueth et al. 2012).

*Llaveia axin axin* (Llave) (called “niij” by native people) is a giant scale mainly restricted to tropical lowland regions of the states of Michoacán, Guerrero, and Chiapas in Mexico, and in Guatemala, although there are reports previous to 1995 of its presence in the Mexican states of Guanajuato, Veracruz, and Yucatán (Ben-Dov 2005). It is characterized by its use in the manufacture of native traditional crafts that provide an economic benefit to the local people. A yellow fat that is obtained from the female insect is used to prepare a lacquer to coat traditional art crafts making them resistant to heat, water, and decay. The lacquer can be mixed with other natural products to obtain different colors. It has been used on eating utensils without toxic effects and also as a medicine unguent for external wounds or pain (Williams and MacVean 1995; Martínez 2006).

During its early stages of development, the niij establishes on the young leaves and stems of its host plants, specially *Acacia cochlicantha*, *A. angustissima* (reclassified as *Acaciella angustissima*), *Spondias* sp., and *Jatropha curcas* (Rincón-Rosas and Gutiérrez-Miceli 2008; Suazo-Ortunoe ta l. 2013) where it sucks the plant sap. As the insect grows, it keeps moving on the plant until it becomes an adult and reaches the principal trunk. Three-year-old plants can have around 300–400 insects but only during a short time in the year (from July to October). Locals collect the females at the end of the rainy season, rendering most of them to obtain eggs (around 500 eggs per female). Locals place these eggs at the crown of the plants when the rainy season begins and the eggs hatch a few hours later (MacVean 1999). The populations of *L. axin axin* have declined due to its overexploitation, as well as overgrazing, forest fires, and deforestation of the host plants. As they have in common the name for symbiotic bacteria, and we italicized the genus and species (e.g., *S. muelleri* instead of *Candidatus Sulcia muelleri*). DNA Extraction, PCR, and Cloning

Seven *L. axin axin* female adults were collected from each of the following host plants: *Acaciella angustissima* (Ejido Flores Magón, Mpo. Venustiano Carranza), *Jatropha curcas*, and *Spondias purpurea* (Chiapa de Corzo City) from the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Total DNA from the freshly collected insects was extracted as reported earlier (Rosenblueth et al. 2012). PCR was performed with bacterial universal 16S RNA primers F1D1 (5′-AGAGTTTGTACTCAG-3′) and rD1 (5′-AAGGA GTGTACGAGCC-3′), which amplify products of about 1,500 bases (Weisburg et al. 1991). The PCR products were cloned and 60 individual plasmid clones were sequenced by Macrogen Inc. (Korea). Sequences were compared with the nt database of NCBI using the BlastN algorithm.

**Materials and Methods**

**Nomenclature**

In this article we did not use the word “*Candidatus*” as part of the name for symbiotic bacteria, and we italicized the genus and species (e.g., *S. muelleri* instead of *Candidatus Sulcia muelleri*).

**DNA Extraction, PCR, and Cloning**

Seven *L. axin axin* female adults were collected from each of the following host plants: *Acaciella angustissima* (Ejido Flores Magón, Mpo. Venustiano Carranza), *Jatropha curcas*, and *Spondias purpurea* (Chiapa de Corzo City) from the state of Chiapas, Mexico. Total DNA from the freshly collected insects was extracted as reported earlier (Rosenblueth et al. 2012). PCR was performed with bacterial universal 16S RNA primers F1D1 (5′-AGAGTTTGTACTCAG-3′) and rD1 (5′-AAGGA GTGTACGAGCC-3′), which amplify products of about 1,500 bases (Weisburg et al. 1991). The PCR products were cloned and 60 individual plasmid clones were sequenced by Macrogen Inc. (Korea). Sequences were compared with the nt database of NCBI using the BlastN algorithm.

**Fluorescent In Situ Hybridization of the Bacteriome**

Fluorescent in situ hybridization (FISH) was performed as described by Koga et al. (2009) with some modifications. Twenty-day-old freshly collected *L. axin axin* first instar nymphs (fig. 1a) were dehydrated with a 30–100% ethanol series, fixed overnight in Carnoy’s solution, washed with ethanol, and treated for a few days in 6% hydrogen peroxide in 80% ethanol. The samples were washed several times with absolute ethanol, then with xylene, and embedded in paraffin. They were cut into 10-μm sections with a rotary microtome and mounted on silane-coated glass slides. Sections were dewaxed through several washes with xylene and ethanol. Hybridization buffer with 100 nM of the probe was added to the samples and was incubated at 28 °C overnight in a humidified chamber. The oligonucleotide probe used was Cy5_Dcfvl1450 (5′-Cy5-ATACCTCGACTCGAGA-3′), which targets 16S of Flavobacteria of *Drosiha* sp. (Matsuura et al. 2009) and *L. axin axin*. After washing with PBS, the samples were stained with 2 μg/ml of DAPI and they were mounted with citifluor antifade solution. In order to confirm the specificity of the probe, control experiments were performed with no probe, RNAse digestion, and competitive suppression with excess unlabelled probes. The slides were observed under a Zeiss LSM510 META confocal microscope.

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**Genome Sequence of “Candidatus Walczuchella monophlebidarum”**

Enterobacteriaeae endosymbionts have been frequently found to coexist with Flavobacteria, including insects from Diaspididae (Rosenblueth et al. 2012); although the genome of *U. diapicola* has been sequenced from an insect that only has a single endosymbiont species (Sabree et al. 2012). *Llaveia axin axin* (Monophlebidae) harbors both endosymbionts previously found in scale insects: a flavobacterium and an enterobacterium (Rosenblueth et al. 2012).

**Genome Biol. Evol. 6(3):714–726. doi:10.1093/gbe/evu049 Advance Access publication March 7, 2014**

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DNA Preparation and Sequencing

Bacteriomes were dissected in PBS from two frozen (−80 °C) adult females collected in the summer of 2010 in Ejido Flores Magon, Mpo. Venustiano Carranza, Chiapas, Mexico (fig. 1b and c). DNA from the bacteriomes was purified using the Qiagen Dneasy Blood and Tissue Kit. Six micrograms of the purified DNA was used for Illumina HiSeq 2000 sequencing by the Next Generation Sequencing Division, Macrogen Inc.

For 454 sequencing, 5 μg of DNA were prepared from homogenized and filtered (20 and 11 μm pore size filters) abdomens of ten fresh adult females collected from the same site, using the Qiagen Dneasy Blood and Tissue Kit. Pyrosequencing was carried out in a Roche GS-FLX machine at the Virginia Bioinformatics Institute at Virginia Tech, USA.

Genome Assembly and Annotation

The Illumina Genome Analyzer System generated 61,593,058 paired-end reads of 100 nt with an insert size of 455 nt. The 454 run generated 78,087 single-end reads with an average length of 190 nt.

Velvet (Zerbino and Birney 2008) was used to make a hybrid assembly with the Illumina and 454 reads generating 118 contigs with an N50 of 231,364. All contigs were compared with the nt database of NCBI using the BlastN algorithm and only two contigs had high-scoring alignments with sequences from Flavobacteria.

A second assembly was run using Phrap (Gordon et al. 1998) taking the velvet contigs as input, generating a single circular contig of 309,299 bp which corresponded to the chromosome sequence of the flavobacterial endosymbiont.

Average coverage per nucleotide was 1571.4x. Protein-coding genes were predicted using Glimmer3, GeneMark.hmm, and Blast; tRNAs and a tmRNA were identified with tRNAscan-SE; and rRNAs were identified using the web version of WU-BLAST against the Rfam 11.0 sequence library.

Gene function annotation of the predicted protein-coding genes was based on results of BlastP searches against the RefSeq database and of hidden Markov model searches of the Pfam and TIGRFAM databases. The GenePRIMP pipeline (Pati et al. 2010) was used to search for gene call anomalies and the resulting report was used to perform manual curation of the genome.

Metabolic Reconstruction

The flavobacterial endosymbiont metabolic pathways were constructed by hand using the Ecocyc and Metacyc databases and the KEGG Automatic Annotation Server assignments as guides.

Comparative Genomics

Average nucleotide identity between the genomes of S. muelleri CARI (from Clastoptera arizonana), Uzinura diaspidicola ASNER (from Aspidiotus nerii), Blattabacterium sp. BPLAN (from Periplaneta americana), and the flavobacterial endosymbiont of L. axin axin was calculated with custom Perl scripts using Mummer alignments output.

Orthologous genes and the core genome of flavobacterial endosymbionts were determined based on BlastP matches between all genes of the four genomes with a high score.
served in 20

analysis were conducted in MEGA5 (Tamura et al. 2011).

The best model search and phylogenetic

tary table S1, Supplementary Material online.

Goldman

Maximum Likelihood method based on the Whelan and

The evolutionary history was inferred by using the

used to construct the phylogenies are shown insupplemen-

(Kurtz et al. 2004) and plotted in figure 5.

Flavobacterium psychrophilum

as well as the two large lobed bacteriomes where they are

iome. It has also been located in ovary and eggs by PCR.

that the enterobacterial symbiont is also present in the bacter-

Illumina sequences obtained from bacteriome DNA confirmed

also belongs to Monophlebidae family (Matsuura et al. 2009).

shows that Flavobacteria are localized in the bacteriomes and

iomes) located in the abdominal area of the insect. Figure 2

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Phylogenetic Analysis

Flavobacteria 16S rRNA sequences from endosymbionts

were aligned with ClustalW (Thompson et al. 1994) and

manually edited. TIM2+G model was chosen by

(www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/findmodel/findmodel.html; last accessed March 17, 2014. Posada and Crandall 2001) using Akaike Information Criterion (Akaike 1974). Gaps were not considered and 443 positions were analyzed. Maximum likelihood analysis was performed using PhyML 3.0 (Guindon et al. 2010) with 1,000 bootstrap replicates.

Enterobacteria phylogeny was built by aligning the amino

acid sequences of housekeeping genes (rpoA, rpoB, rpoD,
rpoH, nusA, nusB, gyrA, pykA, dnaE, and DNA primase) con-

served in 20 γ-proteobacteria species including the enterobac-
terial endosymbiont of L. axin axin and other insect

endosymbionts with reduced genomes. The alignments

were concatenated and all positions containing gaps and miss-
ing data were eliminated, leaving a total of 5,565 positions in

the final data set. The best model search and phylogenetic

analysis were conducted in MEGA5 (Tamura et al. 2011). The evolutionary history was inferred by using the Maximum Likelihood method based on the Whelan and Goldman + Freq. model with 1,000 bootstrap replicates.

GenBank accession numbers from reported sequences

used to construct the phylogenies are shown in supplemented table S1, Supplementary Material online.

Results

L. axin axin Has Two Bacterial Endosymbionts in
Bacteriomes

Only two phylotypes were detected in all the insect female

adults sampled, Enterobacteriaceae and Flavobacteria. Figure 1c shows one of the two symbiotic organs (bacteriomes) located in the abdominal area of the insect. Figure 2 shows that Flavobacteria are localized in the bacteriomes and that each bacteriome consists of around six lobes. The same type of bacteriome has been found in Drosicha spp., which also belongs to Monophlebidae family (Matsuura et al. 2009). Illumina sequences obtained from bacteriome DNA confirmed that the enterobacterial symbiont is also present in the bacteriome. It has also been located in ovary and eggs by PCR.

The maternally inherited endosymbionts of Monophlebidae as well as the two large lobed bacteriomes where they are located had been described earlier by Walczuch (1932) and Tremblay (1989). Monophlebidae has been considered a family of the superfamily Coccoidea in several recent studies (Hodgson and Foldi 2006; Gullan and Cook 2007). Tremblay’s (1989) study of the endosymbionts also led him to treat Monophlebidae as a distinct family.

Proposed Name for Monophlebidae Scale Insects
Flavobacterial Endosymbionts

We propose the name “Candidatus Walczuchella monophlebidarum” for the flavobacterial endosymbiont living inside bacteriocytes of insects from the family Monophlebidae. The name Walczuchella has been chosen to honor Walczuch (1932) who described the morphology of the bacteriomes in Monophlebidae. Walczuchella: Wal.czuch’el.la. N.L. fem. dim. n. Walczuchella, named after Walczuch. Previous phylogenetic studies have shown that all the Flavobacteria from Monophlebidae belong to the same clade and suggest that they have cospeciated with their insect hosts in this family (Rosenblueth et al. 2012). That is why we propose the species name to be monophlebidarum: mo.no. phle.bi.da’rhum N.L. fem. pl. n. Monophlebidae, a zoological family name; N.L. gen. pl. n. monophlebidarum, of Monophlebidae. Further analyses should be done to determine whether other Flavobacteria that have been previously obtained from insects of the family Coccidae and Lecanodiaspididae whose 16S rRNA sequences are phylogenetically related to Walczuchella monophlebidarum (Rosenblueth et al. 2012) could belong to the same species (fig. 3a).

General Genomic Features

The genome of W. monophlebidarum of L. axin axin consists of a circular chromosome of 309,299 bp with an average G + C content of 32.6% and a coding density of 86.2%. It encodes 33 tRNAs corresponding to 20 amino acids, a single rRNA operon and one tmRNA. There were identified 271 protein-coding sequences (CDSs), 8 of which were classified as hypothetical proteins and the rest had assigned putative biological functions. Twenty-seven CDSs were classified as pseudogenes because of the presence of frameshifts, early stop codons, or because the encoded protein had less than 50% of the length of its closest ortholog in the databases. It is important to note that some of the pseudogenes with frameshifts in homopolymeric tracts may still conserve functionality (Tamas et al. 2008; Wernegreen et al. 2010).

Metabolic Reconstruction of the Flavobacterial Endosymbiont Genome

In figure 4, a reconstruction of W. monophlebidarum metabolism is shown. Most genes are involved in protein and amino acids synthesis and RNA processing. W. monophlebidarum has a minimal set of genes for genome replication,
transcription, and translation. The replication related genes code for DNA polymerase III subunits (α/ε, β, γ, δ, and δ′) and DNA gyrase. For transcription, the RNA polymerase core subunits (α, β, and β′) are present along with their associated σ70 and σS4 factors. For translation, the complete set of ribosomal proteins is retained along with the three ribosomal RNAs and translation initiation factors (I, II, and III), elongation factors (G, P, Tu, and Ts), and peptide chain release factors (1 and 2).

Almost all of the genes necessary to synthesize the ten essential amino acids are present; however, some of them are annotated as pseudogenes and seven are absent. Biosynthetic pathways for methionine, threonine, tryptophan, and arginine are complete; however, some genes encoding intermediate enzymes in the pathways are annotated as pseudogenes and might not be functional. Pathways for biosynthesis of phenylalanine, histidine, lysine, and branch-chained amino acids are incomplete.

The tRNA synthetases for methionine, asparagine, alanine, and aspartate are missing.

A complete gene set encoding the twin-arginine translocation system (tatABC) is present. Genes for an additional protein translocation system were also found. These correspond to the Sec system, which is formed by the secYEG operon that encodes a protein conducting channel embedded in the membrane and secA that encodes an ATPase that drives translocation. All genes are present except secG and spread over the genome not in operons. The gene encoding the auxiliary protein YidC for the biogenesis of both translocation systems is present.

Four subunits of the FOF1 ATP synthase are encoded in the genome. Nonetheless atpABG are annotated as pseudogenes and only atpF seems to be conserved. However, the flavobacterial genome encodes electron transport proteins: a NADH dehydrogenase, a cbb3-type cytochrome c oxidase complex, and two cytochrome c family proteins, which the flavobacterium can use to produce ATP.

The only genes related to vitamin and cofactor biosynthesis in the genome are ispB, menA, and menB from the menaquinone biosynthetic pathway.

Most of the glycolytic pathway and the TCA cycle are lost except for the pathway converting 2-oxoglutarate to succinate.

As in other insect endosymbionts with reduced genomes, W. monophlebidarum lacks genes related to cell envelope biogenesis (fatty acids, phospholipids, and peptidoglycan), DNA recombination, cell motility, defense response, and transporters (McCutcheon and Moran 2012).

The reduced genetic repertoire of the W. monophlebidarum genome suggests that it depends on its host or on the secondary symbiont to complement its metabolic and cellular processes.

Comparative Genomics between Flavobacterial Endosymbionts

Walczuchella monophlebidarum from L. axin axin shares 85.6% average genomic nucleotide identity with U. diaspidicola, 86.8% with Blattabacterium sp. BPLAN, and 87.9% with S. muelleri CARI, which are the closest bacterial relatives with a sequenced genome. Some characteristics of other highly reduced genomes from different insect endosymbionts are shown in table 1.

At the genetic level W. monophlebidarum shares 209 homologous genes with U. diaspidicola, 215 genes with S. muelleri and 250 with Blattabacterium sp. There is functional conservation between these flavobacterial symbionts but no
FIG. 3.—Evolutionary relationships of the flavobacterial and enterobacterial symbionts of *Llavea axin axin*. (a) Phylogeny from flavobacterial endosymbionts inferred from sequences of the 16S rRNA gene. F indicates the flavobacterial endosymbiont of the respective insect. Sequences from free-living bacteria were used as outgroups. Bootstrap values for 1,000 replicates are shown adjacent to each node, (b) phylogeny from endosymbiotic and free-living enterobacteria inferred from the concatenated amino acid alignment of ten genes using the Maximum Likelihood method based on the Whelan And Goldman + Freq. model. Bootstrap values for 1,000 replicates are shown adjacent to each node. Asterisk indicates the location of the *Llavea axin axin* enterobacterial symbiont in the tree.
**Fig. 4.** Left: A metabolic reconstruction of *Walczuchella monophlebidarum* of *Llaveia axin axin* based on its genetic content. Right: A representation of the enterobacterial symbiont capabilities for amino acid biosynthesis. Absent genes are shown in red. Pseudogenes are shown in light gray. Green boxes represent essential amino acids. White boxes represent nonessential amino acids.
significant genomic synteny. Nevertheless, it can be observed that there is more synteny disruption between S. muelleri or Blattabacterium sp. and W. monophlebidarum than between U. diaspidicola and W. monophlebidarum (fig. 5). The closer evolutionary relationship between these last two bacteria can be appreciated in the 16S rRNA gene phylogeny of different endosymbiotic Flavobacteria (fig. 3a) and has been observed in previously reported phylogenies (Gruwell et al. 2007; Gruwell et al. 2010; Rosenblueth et al. 2012). The core genome of the four endosymbionts corresponds to 157 genes. There are seven genes present in genome of the four endosymbionts which corresponds to 157 U. diaspidicola glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GapA) required to analyze the decarboxylation of malate to form pyruvate, and pathway AroE and AspC, malic enzymes MaeA/B, which catalyze the TCA cycle are essentially absent in W. monophlebidarum sp. and W. monophlebidarum sp. have this gene. Similarly, S. muelleri and Blattabacterium sp. have dapF, a gene from the lysine biosynthetic pathway that is absent in W. monophlebidarum and U. diaspidicola.

Table 1
Characteristics of Highly Reduced Genomes from Different Insect Endosymbionts

| Endosymbiont                  | Class               | Host        | Host Diet        | Genomic Size (bp) | G + C % | CDSs | rRNAs | tRNAs | Pseudo-genes | Coding % |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|------|-------|-------|--------------|----------|
| Flavobacterium psychrophilum  | Flavobacteria       | Free Living | —                | 2,861,988         | 33      | 18   | 49    | 20    | 85.6         |
| Walczuchella monophlebidarum  | Flavobacteria       | Scale insects | Phloem sap     | 309,299           | 32.6    | 271  | 3     | 33    | 27           |
| Uzinura diaspidicola          | Flavobacteria       | Scale insects | Parenchyma     | 263,431           | 30.2    | 227  | 3     | 30    | 89.3         |
| Blattabacterium sp. MADAR     | Flavobacteria       | Termites    | Wood            | 590,336           | 28      | 550  | 3     | 34    | 94.9         |
| Blattabacterium sp. BPLAN     | Flavobacteria       | Cockroaches | Omnivorous      | 640,442           | 28      | 580  | 3     | 33    | 94.6         |
| Sulcia muelleri CARI          | Flavobacteria       | Spittlebugs | Sap             | 276,511           | 21      | 246  | 3     | 29    | 93.2         |
| Buchnera aphidicola APS       | Gammaproteobacteria | Aphids     | Sap             | 655,725           | 26      | 575  | 3     | 32    | 87.5         |
| Buchnera aphidicola Cc        | Gammaproteobacteria | Aphids     | Sap             | 422,434           | 20.2    | 362  | 3     | 31    | 86.9         |
| Carsonella ruddii PV          | Gammaproteobacteria | Psyllids  | Phloem sap      | 159,662           | 17      | 182  | 3     | 28    | 97.3         |
| Moranella endobia             | Gammaproteobacteria | Mealybugs | Sap             | 538,294           | 43.5    | 406  | 5     | 41    | 79           |
| Tremblaya princeps PCIT       | Betaproteobacteria | Mealybugs | Sap             | 138,927           | 59      | 121  | 6     | 12    | 72.5         |
| Zinderia insecticola CARI     | Betaproteobacteria | Spittlebugs | Sap           | 208,564           | 14      | 202  | 3     | 25    | 92.4         |
| Hodgkinia cicadica Dsem       | Alphaproteobacteria | Cicadas  | Sap             | 143,795           | 58      | 169  | 3     | 15    | 94           |

*Genome size includes chromosome and plasmids if present.

Amino Acid Biosynthesis Related Genes in the Enterobacterial Endosymbiont

From the 454 and Illumina sequences, a draft assembly of the enterobacterial endosymbiont genome was obtained consisting of 679 scaffolds with an N50 of 7,713 and an average G + C content of 55.6%. Lengths of scaffolds sum 3.4 Mb of sequence, and taking that as the genome size, we calculate a genome coverage of 34 x. We searched for all the essential amino acid biosynthesis genes in the enterobacterial endosymbiont sequences and made a reconstruction of its amino acid biosynthetic pathways. The enterobacterial symbiont has the potential to synthesize the 10 essential amino acids. Only the argC and argF genes were not found in the enterobacterial scaffolds. Different from W. monophlebidarum, it retains the cobalamin-dependent methionine synthase to synthesize methionine from homocysteine and vitamin B2. The enterobacterial symbiont also has the capacity to synthesize...
nonessential amino acids. It can produce tyrosine from chorismate and homocysteine from homoserine.

It is also capable of degrading allantoin to urea and then hydrolizing it into CO$_2$ and ammonia, which can then be used for glutamine and glutamate production.

It is important to point out that most of the amino acid biosynthesis genes that were absent or pseudogenized in *W. monophlebidarum* genome were present in the enterobacterial symbiont genome.

The size of the enterobacterial symbiont genome is similar to free-living bacteria suggesting a recent change to a symbiotic lifestyle, as in its close relative *Sodalis glossinidius* (Toh et al. 2006).

**Discussion**

The genetic content of *W. monophlebidarum* genome suggests a role in synthesizing essential amino acids for the host. According to its metabolic reconstruction, the flavobacterium needs to be provided with some precursors for the amino acid biosynthesis like PEP for phenylalanine and tryptophan production, ribulose-5P for histidine synthesis, pyruvate for
branched-chain amino acid production, and some non-essential amino acids for arginine, methionine, lysine, and threonine synthesis (fig. 4).

The enterobacterial symbiont could be supplying most of these precursors as it has the potential to make ribulose-5P from ribose-1P and also PEP and pyruvate from glycolysis. It is also capable of producing homocysteine from homoserine for methionine biosynthesis.

Interestingly, the enterobacterial symbiont could recycle the waste nitrogen from the insect in the form of allantoin to provide precursors for amino acid biosynthesis. Nitrogen recycling potential has also been reported in Blattabacterium sp. but through a different pathway. It is possible that W. monophlebidarum could assimilate distinct nitrogen products as it retains RpoN, a nitrogen-related gene regulator.

The metabolic precursor production by the enterobacterial symbiont suggests metabolic complementarities between the two endosymbionts. However, their genetic content for essential amino acid biosynthesis overlaps. This might mean that 1) both endosymbionts supply the insect host with essential amino acids or that 2) because of the loss and degradation of many essential genes for viability and amino acid biosynthesis in W. monophlebidarum, it has become incapable of fulfilling its role in the symbiotic relationship with the insect, and the enterobacterial symbiont now fulfills the flavobacterium’s former functions.

As with Sodalis glossinidius and Wigglesworthia glossinidia (Snyder et al. 2010), the primary endosymbiont may have the capacity to produce a nutrient that the secondary symbiont needs and is not capable of producing, in this case thiamine. This could lead to the stable coexistence of both endosymbionts.

Walczuchella monophlebidarum and U. diaspiscola have essentially the same genetic potential for amino acid biosynthesis, the main difference being the presence of frameshifts in some genes of these pathways of W. monophlebidarum. Sulcia muelleri differs from them because it has a secondary symbiont capable of synthesizing methionine and histidine, capabilities that have been lost in S. muelleri.

Perhaps the more degraded state of metabolic pathways of W. monophlebidarum in comparison with those of U. diaspiscola, which has a similar host and environment, can be explained by the presence of the enterobacterial symbiont in L. axin axin, as this reduces the selection forces on the flavobacterium genes. On the other hand, it is interesting how S. muelleri, with a similar life style in an insect host with a similar diet and also accompanied by a secondary endosymbiont as in the case of the L. axin axin flavobacterium, has maintained amino acid biosynthetic pathway’s integrity.

The high number of pseudogenes in the W. monophlebidarum genome compared with other reduced genomes suggests that it is still under a genomic reduction process. Despite

| Table 2 | Genes Retained in the Sulcia muelleri and Uzinura diaspiscola Genomes That Are Absent in the Genome of Walczuchella monophlebidarum of Llaveia axin axin |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| **S. muelleri** Genes | **Related Function** | **U. diaspiscola** Genes | **Related Function** |
| aroE | Chorismate biosynthesis | aroE | Chorismate biosynthesis |
| aspC | Phenylalanine biosynthesis | aspC | Phenylalanine biosynthesis |
| aspS | Aspartyl-tRNA biosynthesis | dnaB | Replication |
| atpCDEH | ATP synthase subunits | eno | Glycolysis |
| dapF | Lysine biosynthesis pathway | folC | Folic acid metabolism |
| dnaB | Replication | gapA | Glycolysis |
| fabF | Fatty acids biosynthesis | gldG | Glycogen biosynthesis |
| fbaA | Glycolysis | maeB | Malate metabolism |
| gapA | Glycolysis | metG | Methionyl-tRNA biosynthesis |
| ilvE | Val, leu, ile biosynthesis | mutL | DNA mismatch repair |
| maeA | Malate metabolism | pgk | Glycolysis |
| marC | Integral membrane protein | queA | RNA modification |
| mutL | DNA mismatch repair | rpe | Pentose degradation |
| putA | Transcription regulator | sodA | Oxidative stress response |
| ubiE | Menaquinone biosynthesis | thiL | Thiamine biosynthesis |
| yaeT | Outer membrane assembly | tktC | Pentose catabolism |
| primase | Replication | tktN | Pentose catabolism |
| M42 family metaloprotease | Metaloprotease | trxA | Electron transfer |
| tal | Transaldolase | Ribokinase | Ribose catabolism |
| Mrp/Nbp35 ATP-binding protein | ATP-binding | CMP_dCMP deaminase | Deaminase |
| Signal peptidase | Signal peptidase | | |
| Methyltransferase | Methyltransferase | | |
the lack of genomic synteny observed in the flavobacteria of sap-feeding insects, they have a similar genome size and a significant functional convergence.

**Supplementary Material**

Supplementary table S1 is available at Genome Biology and Evolution online (http://www.gbe.oxfordjournals.org/).

**Acknowledgments**

The authors thank Yu Matsuura and Shamayim T. Ramírez-Puebla for technical assistance in FISH, Rafael Díaz for technical assistance in PFGE, and Michael Dunn for reading the manuscript. T.P.-P. was supported during the PhD Program (Programa de Doctorado en Ciencias Biomédicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) by a scholarship from Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (Mexico). Financial support was from CONACyT (154453).

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Associate editor: John McCutcheon