

1 **New evidence concerning the genome designations of the AC(DC)**
2 **tetraploid *Avena* species**

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1 **Abstract**

2 The tetraploid *Avena* species in the section *Pachycarpa* Baum, including *A. insularis*, *A.*
3 *maroccana*, and *A. murphyi*, are thought to be involved in the evolution of hexaploid oats; however, their
4 genome designations are still being debated. Repetitive DNA sequences play an important role in
5 genome structuring and evolution, so understanding the chromosomal organization and distribution of
6 these sequences in *Avena* species could provide valuable information concerning genome evolution in
7 this genus. In this study, the chromosomal organizations and distributions of six repetitive DNA
8 sequences (including three SSR motifs (TTC, AAC, CAG), one 5S rRNA gene fragment, and two oat A
9 and C genome specific repeats) were investigated using non-denaturing fluorescence in situ
10 hybridization (ND-FISH) in the three tetraploid species mentioned above and in two hexaploid oat
11 species. Preferential distribution of the SSRs in centromeric regions was seen in the A and D genomes,
12 whereas few signals were detected in the C genomes. Some intergenomic translocations were observed
13 in the tetraploids; such translocations were also detected between the C and D genomes in the hexaploids.
14 These results provide robust evidence for the presence of the D genome in all three tetraploids, strongly
15 suggesting that the genomic constitution of these species is DC and not AC, as had been thought
16 previously.

17 **Introduction**

18 The cultivated hexaploid oat, *Avena sativa* L. ($2n=6x=42$, genomes AACCCDD), is the sixth most
19 important cereal crop cultivated worldwide [1]. The superior nutraceutical properties of the oat grain
20 have attracted considerable attention from both breeders and consumers [2]. The genus *Avena* L.
21 comprises a number of closely related species with a basic chromosome number of seven, and includes
22 diploids, tetraploids, and hexaploids [3]. *A. sativa* is an allohexaploid species displaying disomic
23 inheritance, and is closely related to the weedy species *A. sterilis* L. [4]. It is believed that *A. sativa* was
24 domesticated from *A. sterilis* somewhere in Northwest Asia [4, 5].

25 The evolutionary history of the hexaploid oat A, C, and D genomes has been under intense
26 scrutiny [6-13]. The identities of its genome donors, however, remain inconclusive. It has been assumed

27 that one of the species in the section *Pachycarpa* Baum, which includes *A. insularis* Ladiz., *A.*
28 *maroccana* Gdgr. (synonym, *A. magna* Murphy et Terr.), and *A. murphyi* Ladiz., has been involved in
29 the formation of the hexaploids [13-15]. Currently, these tetraploid species have all been designated as
30 having AC genomes ($2n=4x=28$, genomes AACC). The most challenging mystery has concerned the
31 origin of the D genome donor, since no natural diploid with a D genome has been identified. Because of
32 the high homology between the A and D genomes in *A. sativa* [9], the D genome in the hexaploid has
33 been considered to be a variant of the A genome, suggesting that it originated from one of the A genome
34 diploids [9, 16]. Furthermore, the AC genome designations of the three tetraploids in the section
35 *Pachycarpa* have been challenged by evidence from both cytogenetic [17] and molecular studies [13,
36 18]. Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) with an A genome-specific probe did not produce
37 hybridization signals in the chromosomes of the AC genome tetraploids, and this absence was also
38 observed in the D and C genome chromosomes of the hexaploids [17]. Another previous study, which
39 used high-density genotyping-by-sequencing (GBS) markers, also showed that the hexaploid D genome,
40 rather than the hexaploid A genome, has stronger matches with the A genome of these tetraploids [13].
41 Thus, more evidence is needed to confirm the genomic composition of these tetraploids.

42 Repetitive DNA elements are major components of plant genomes, including those of the *Avena*
43 species, where more than 70% of the genome is predominated by repetitive DNA sequences [19].
44 Generally, repetitive DNA sequences evolve more rapidly than genic sequences, and play essential roles
45 in genome structuring and evolution [20]. Their organization, distribution, and density can be specific for
46 a species, a genome, or even a chromosome [21]. Therefore, extensive examination of the organization
47 and distribution of repetitive DNA sequences could assist our understanding of the organization and
48 evolution of genomes [22, 23], provide valuable information in taxonomic and phylogenetic studies [24],
49 and help develop diagnostic markers for identifying specific chromosomes and chromosome regions
50 [25-27].

51 Fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) is one of the most routinely-used tools to study the
52 physical organization and distribution of repetitive DNA sequences. Indeed, FISH techniques using
53 repetitive DNA sequences have been shown to be powerful tools in cytogenetic studies of *Avena* species.
54 For instance, FISH using oat A and C genome-specific repetitive DNA sequences as probes clearly

55 differentiated the A, C, and D genomes of hexaploid oat [17]. However, conventional FISH analysis is
56 time-consuming because of the preparation and labeling of probe sequences and the denaturing of probes
57 and chromosomes [27]. In recent years, a new FISH labeling procedure, non-denaturing FISH
58 (ND-FISH), has been developed. ND-FISH uses synthesized oligonucleotide sequences as probes, and
59 performs FISH analysis under non-denaturing conditions, thus substantially simplifying the procedure
60 [28]. It has been widely used for cytogenetic studies in barley [25, 29], wheat [26], and rye [26], but less
61 often for oat [30-33].

62 In this study, we used ND-FISH analysis to analyze the chromosomal organization of three
63 tri-nucleotide SSR motifs (TTC, AAC, and CAG) and three oligonucleotide sequences (oligo-Am1,
64 oligo-As120a, and oligo-Ta794) in *Avena* spp. The latter probes were derived from the oat A and C
65 genome-specific repetitive DNA sequences Am1 and As120a and the wheat 5S rRNA gene. The
66 relationships amongst the genomes from three tetraploid species in the section *Pachycarpa*, as well as
67 two hexaploid oat species, were determined.

68 **Materials and Methods**

69 **Plant materials**

70 Table 1 shows the plant materials used in this study, which comprised two hexaploid species (*A.*
71 *sativa* and *A. sterilis*) and three AC(DC) genome tetraploid species (*A. insularis*, *A. marrocana*, and *A.*
72 *murphyi*). Seeds of these materials were obtained from either the United States Department of
73 Agriculture (USDA), or Plant Gene Resources of Canada (PGRC), with the exception of *A. insularis*, for
74 which the seeds were kindly provided by Dr. Rick Jellen, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, USA.

75 **Table 1 List of materials used in this study, including species name, accession number, haplome**
76 **and origin.**

Species	Accession number	Haplome ^a	Country of origin
<i>A. sativa</i> L.	CN 64226	ACD	Ethiopia
<i>A. sterilis</i> L.	PI 411503	ACD	Turkey

<i>A. insularis</i> Ladiz.	SN	AC(DC)	Italy
<i>A. maroccana</i> Gdgr.	Clav 8331	AC(DC)	Spain
<i>A. murphyi</i> Ladiz.	CN 21989	AC(DC)	Algeria

77 ^a Genomic compositions of *A. insularis*, *A. maroccana*, and *A. murphyi* are based on Yan et al. [13]

78 ND-FISH probes

79 Three SSR motifs ((TTC)₅, (AAC)₅, (CAG)₅), two oligonucleotides derived from oat A and C
80 genome specific repeats, and a wheat 5S rRNA gene fragment were used as ND-FISH probes. TTC,
81 AAC, and CAG are tri-nucleotides that are highly abundant and widely distributed throughout the
82 barley, wheat, and rye genomes [34, 35]. The other three probes are: (1) oligo-As120a, a 71bp fragment
83 specific to the oat A genome that was isolated from *A. strigosa* [17]; (2) oligo-Am1, a 51bp fragment
84 specific to the oat C genome that was isolated from *A. murphyi* [36]; and (3) oligo-Ta794, a 41bp 5S
85 rRNA sequence fragment that was isolated from *T. aestivum* [37]. All of these probes were synthesized
86 by Sangon Biotech Co., Ltd. (Shanghai, China). The synthesized oligonucleotides were 5'-end labeled
87 with either 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA) or 6-carboxyfluorescein (FAM). Further details
88 concerning the probes, including their names, DNA sequences, and fluorochromes, are listed in Table
89 2.

90 **Table 2 Oligonucleotide probes used for fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) analysis**

Probe	Oligonucleotide
oligo-As120a	TAMRA-5'-ACTACAACGGAATGGCTAAATAAACTGCCAACAACACTGTGT GTTTGGTTTATCACTTACGATCTGTACCT-3'
oligo-Am1	FAM-5'-GATCCATGTGTGGTTTGTGGAAAGAACACACATGCAATGACTC TAGTGGTT-3'
oligo-Ta794	FAM-5'-TCAGAACTCCGAAGTTAAGCGTGCTTGGGCGAGAGTAGTAC -3'
oligo-(TTC) ₅	TAMRA-5'-TTCTTCTTCTTCTTC-3'
oligo-(AAC) ₅	TAMRA-5'-AACAACAACAACAAC-3'
oligo-(CAG) ₅	FAM-5'-CAGCAGCAGCAGCAG-3'

91 **Preparation of metaphase spreads**

92 Metaphase chromosome preparation paralleled that of previous experiments with some
93 modifications [33]. In brief, seeds were imbibed in distilled water for 18 h at 25°C in the dark, and then
94 placed in petri dishes lined with a layer of moist filter paper. To synchronize cell division and accumulate
95 metaphase plates, the germinated seeds were transferred to a 4°C growth cabinet for 48 h, then to one at
96 25°C for 24 h. Root tips were harvested from germinated seeds, pre-treated in 1.0 MPa nitrous oxide gas
97 for 3.5 h, then fixed in glacial acetic acid for 5 to 20 min before being fixed in 70% ethanol. Apical
98 meristems were extruded from the fixed root tips and enzymatically digested with 2% cellulose and 1%
99 pectinase. After being squashed in a drop of 60% acetic acid, each suspension was dropped onto a clean
100 glass slide. The slides were air-dried prior to ND-FISH analysis.

101 **ND-FISH analysis**

102 ND-FISH was performed as described by Fu et al. [26]. Briefly, air-dried, pre-treated slides were
103 fixed for 10 min with 4% (w/v) paraformaldehyde, and then immersed in 2×saline sodium citrate (SSC)
104 for 10 min. After dehydration in an ice-cold ethanol series of 75%, 95%, and 100% for 5 min each, they
105 were air-dried. These air-dried slides were then denatured at 80°C for 2 min in deionized formamide (60
106 µL per slide), followed by dehydration in 75%, 95%, and 100% alcohol at -20°C for 5 min each before air
107 drying. A 10 µL aliquot of a hybridization mixture containing 0.5 µL FISH probe, 4.75 µL 2×SSC, and
108 4.75 µL 1×TE was applied to each slide, then the slides were incubated for 2 h at 37°C. The slides were
109 counterstained with DAPI and Vectashield mounting medium (Vector Laboratories, Inc., Burlingame,
110 CA, USA). Sequential FISH analyses were performed as described in Fominaya et al. [33]. Digital
111 images were captured using an Olympus BX-51 epifluorescence microscope equipped with a
112 Photometric SenSys Olympus DP70 CCD camera (Olympus, Tokyo), and processed using Photoshop
113 V7.0 (Adobe Systems Incorporated, San Jose, CA). After capturing each image, the slides were washed
114 as described by Komuro et al. [35].

115 Results

116 The assignments of each chromosome of the tetraploid and hexaploid oat lines were based on the
117 work of Fominaya et al. [33]. The A and C genome-specific probes oligo-Am1 and oligo-As120a, as
118 well as the 5S rRNA probe oligo-pTa794, were used to assist with chromosome identification, enabling
119 the A and C genome chromosomes to be distinguished from the D genome chromosomes.

120 Chromosomal organization of repeats in three tetraploid 121 species

122 As expected, the oligo-Am1 probe produced multiple strong signals all along half of the
123 chromosomes in all three tetraploids (Figs 1b, 1h and 1n). These chromosomes were identified as being
124 the C genome chromosomes, meaning the remaining chromosomes should belong to the A(D) genome.
125 Six C/A(D) translocations were observed in *A. insularis* (Fig 1b and 1s) and *A. maroccana* (Figs 1h and
126 1s), while only four were found in *A. murphyi* (Figs 1n and 1s). The oligo-Ta794 probe produced two
127 pairs of bright signals on chromosome 1 A(D) in *A. insularis* (Figs 1c and 1s) and *A. maroccana* (Figs
128 1i and 1s), and on chromosome 4A(D) in *A. murphyi* (Figs 1o and 1s). In addition, a pair of weak
129 signals was detected on chromosome 2C of *A. insularis* (Figs 1c and 1s). No discernable hybridization
130 signals were detected in any of the three tetraploids using the oligo-As120a probe (Figs 1a, 1g and 1m).

131

132 **Fig 1. Karyotypes of the tetraploid species *A. insularis* (a-f), *A. maroccana* (g-l), and *A. murphyi***
133 **(m-r) after sequential FISH analysis.** The probes included FAM-As120a (green), TAMRA-Am1
134 (red), FAM-Ta794 (green), TAMRA-(TTC)₅ (red), TAMRA-(AAC)₅ (red), and FAM-(CAG)₅ (green).
135 (s) Karyotype of single metaphase chromosomes of these species. The white arrows indicate the
136 intergenomic translocations.

137

138 For the SSR probes, the oligo-(TTC)₅ probe produced strong signals on chromosome 13A(D) in
139 *A. insularis* (Figs 1d and 1s) and *A. maroccana* (Figs 1j and 1s), covering a large region around the
140 centromeres. However, no such signals were detected in *A. murphyi* (Figs 1p and 1s). Many more

141 signals were produced by oligo-(AAC)₅ than by oligo-(TTC)₅. In *A. insularis*, oligo-(AAC)₅ produced
142 strong signals on chromosomes 8C, 6A(D), 10 A(D), 11 A(D), and 13 A(D), with faint signals on 12C
143 and the remaining three A(D) genome chromosome pairs. These signals were found in centromeric
144 regions, intercalary regions, or both (Figs 1e and 1s). In the other two tetraploids, chromosome pairs
145 with (AAC)₅ hybridization signals were reduced to three, all belonging to the A(D) genome, but the
146 signal patterns were highly differentiated both in distribution and intensity. In *A. maroccana*, signals on
147 6A(D) were very strong and covered a large region around the centromere, while signals on 11A(D)
148 and 13A(D) were weak and located in the centromeric and telomeric regions, respectively (Figs 1k and
149 1s). In *A. murphyi*, signals on 12A(D) were positioned in the centromeric region, while signals on
150 14A(D) were located in the centromeric region and on the short arm. Very weak signals on the long
151 arm were observed on 13A(D) (Figs 1q and 1s). The oligo-(CAG)₅ probe produced signals on two (8C
152 and 12C) (Figs 1f and 1s), three (8C, 12C and 6A(D)) (Figs 1l and 1s) and one (9C) chromosome (Figs
153 1r and 1s) in *A. insularis*, *A. maroccana*, and *A. murphyi*, respectively. All of these signals were located
154 in centromeric regions, but differed in intensity.

155 **Chromosomal organization of repeats in two hexaploid** 156 **species**

157 In the two hexaploids, the oligo-Am1 and oligo-As120a probes produced multiple signals that
158 were evenly distributed along 14 chromosomes each, identifying these chromosomes as belonging to
159 the the C and A genomes, while indicating that the remaining 14 chromosomes belong to the D genome
160 (Figs 2a and 2f). Three minor C/D translocations, on chromosomes 10D, 20D, and 21D, were detected
161 in *A. sativa* (Figs 2a and 2j), whereas two minor C/D translocations, on 10D and 21D, were observed in
162 *A. sterilis* (Fig 2f and 2j). Two 5S sites were detected in *A. sativa*, on chromosomes 19A and 20D (Figs
163 2b and 2j).

164

165 **Fig 2. FISH performed on mitotic metaphase plates of hexaploid oats (a) *A. sativa* and (f) *A.***
166 ***sterilis*.** (a) Simultaneous FISH of TAMRA-labeled As120a (red) and FAM-labeled Am1 (green). (b-e)
167 The same cell as in panel 'a' after sequential FISH with FAM-labeled Ta794 (green), TAMRA-labeled

168 (TTC)₅ (red), TAMRA-labeled (AAC)₅, and FAM-labeled (CAG)₅ (green). (f) Simultaneous FISH of
169 TAMRA-labeled As120a (red) and FAM-labeled Am1 (green). (g-i) The same cell as in panel ‘f’ after
170 simultaneous FISH with TAMRA-labeled (TTC)₅ (red), TAMRA-labeled (AAC)₅, and FAM-labeled
171 (CAG)₅ (green). (j) Karyotypes showing a single chromosome of each homologous group chosen from
172 the metaphases in panels ‘a’ and ‘f’. The white arrows indicate the C/D genome translocations.

173

174 All three SSR probes produced detectable signals in the two hexaploid oats. Similar to what
175 was found with the tetraploids, one pair of strong signals produced by the oligo-(TTC)₅ probe was
176 detected in the centromeric region of 9D in both hexaploids (Figs 2c, 2g and 2j). In the hexaploids,
177 oligo-(AAC)₅ once again produced more signals than oligo-(TTC)₅ did. Signals from (TTC)₅ were
178 detected on five (13A, 15A, 16A, 10D, 12D) (Figs 2d and 2j) and six (11A, 15A, 16A, 10D, 12D) (Figs
179 2h and 2j) chromosomes in *A. sativa* and *A. sterilis*, respectively. All of these signals were located in
180 centromeric or pericentromeric regions, but differed in intensity. For (CAG)₅, the signal intensities
181 between *A. sativa* and *A. sterilis* were similar, but differed in number. In *A. sativa*, oligo-(CAG)₅
182 produced signals on five chromosomes, including 15A, 16A, 2C, 6C, and 10D (Figs 2e and 2j). All of
183 these signals were located in centromeric regions. In *A. sterilis*, the number of chromosomes with
184 hybridization signals was eight, including four A genome chromosomes (11A, 13A, 15A, 16A), two C
185 genome chromosomes (2C and 6C), and two D genome chromosomes (10D and 12D) (Figs 2i and 2j).

186 **Discussion**

187 **The chromosomal organization of SSR repeats in oat** 188 **genomes**

189 We have elucidated the chromosomal organization of three SSR motifs, (TTC)₅, (AAC)₅, and
190 (CAG)₅, in five *Avena* polyploids. All three SSR oligonucleotides produced detectable hybridization in
191 mitotic metaphase chromosomes in these species. Most of the signals produced were located at the
192 centromeric or pericentromeric regions (Figs 1 and 2). These results were consistent with previous

193 studies [30-32], and implied that *Avena* genomes contain more repetitive sequences in the centromeric
194 regions of the chromosome than in intercalary parts, as has been found in many other plants [22, 34, 38].
195 Signal numbers produced by these three SSR probes varied, with (AAC)₅ producing the most
196 hybridization signals, followed by (CAG)₅. The (TTC)₅ probe produced few discernable signals (Figs 1
197 and 2). For the tri-nucleotide repeats, A/T-rich repeats (e.g., AAG/CTT, AAC/GTT) have been shown to
198 be predominant in dicot species [39], but that is not the case in the monocot species barley or rice.
199 Previous studies showed that an AAT repeat gave poor hybridization signals in barley [40], and a GCC
200 motif was dominant in the rice genome [41]. In this study, both of the A/T-rich tri-nucleotide motifs,
201 TTC and AAC, gave poor hybridization signals in *Avena* genomes, unlike what was seen in barley and
202 wheat, where these probes hybridized to many sites and usually appeared all along the chromosomes [29,
203 34]. Previous studies also showed that other tri-nucleotide motifs (AAG, TTG, ACT) hybridized poorly
204 in *Avena* species [30-32]. Taken together, these results suggest that the tri-nucleotides, at least the
205 A/T-rich ones, are not the predominant repeat types of SSRs in *Avena* genomes.

206 In *Avena* species, the C genome is highly diverged from both the A and D genomes, and the A
207 and D genomes are of high homology [9, 42]. These differences could be observed by comparing the
208 distribution of the SSR motifs used in this study. For instance, almost all of the signals produced by the
209 (CAA)₅ probe are observed in the A or D genome chromosomes, with the exception of two C genome *A.*
210 *insularis* chromosomes that had detectable (CAA)₅ signals (Figs 1s and 2j). The signal number produced
211 by the three SSR probes also differed between the A and D genomes, with the A genome chromosomes
212 having more signals than the D genome chromosomes (Figs 1s and 2j). The centromere plays an
213 important role during mitosis and meiosis in higher eukaryotic organisms [38]. Centromeric sequences
214 are the most rapidly evolved in the genome, and have been considered to generate the major differences
215 between genomes [20]. In this study, most signals produced by the probes used were located in
216 centromeric regions; hence, the differences in signal patterns among the A, C, and D genomes would
217 reflect the structural differences between these genomes and support the pivotal role of the centromere in
218 genome restructuring.

219 **The genomic compositions of *A. insularis*, *A. maroccana*, and**
220 ***A. murphyi***

221 It is well accepted that the tetraploid species *A. insularis*, *A. maroccana*, and *A. murphyi* have
222 been involved in the formation of hexaploid oats; however, the genomic constitutions of these species
223 remain inconclusive. The AC genome designation was first assigned to *A. maroccana* after As and Cp
224 genomic DNA used as probes for genomic in situ hybridization (GISH) each labeled half of the
225 chromosomes in this species [43]. In addition, C-banding analysis showed high similarity between the
226 chromosomes of *A. insularis*, *A. maroccana*, and *A. murphyi* [44], suggesting that they share the same
227 genomic composition. However, these AC genome designations have been challenged by considerable
228 evidence coming from both cytogenetic and molecular studies (summarized in Table 3). The strongest
229 lines of evidence come from FISH analysis [17] and a GBS study [13]. An A genome-specific
230 repetitive sequence isolated from the As diploid *A. strigosa* failed to hybridize with the genomes of the
231 so-called AC tetraploids or the hexaploid D genome [17]. GBS markers revealed that half of the
232 chromosomes of the tetraploids showed strong matches with the C genome chromosomes of the
233 hexaploids, while the others showed strong matches with the D genome chromosomes [13]. In the
234 current study, the A genome-specific probe oligo-As120a failed to hybridize with the chromosomes of
235 the three tetraploids or the D genome chromosomes of the hexaploids (Figs 1a, 1g and 1m), once again
236 confirming the absence of the A genome in these tetraploids. Furthermore, some C/D genome
237 translocations were observed in *A. sativa* and *A. sterilis* (Figs 2a and 2f), and these were also detected
238 in the three tetraploids (Figs 1b, 1h and 1n). In addition, a pair of strong (TTC)₅ signals was detected
239 on one A(D) chromosome in *A. insularis* and *A. maroccana* (Figs 1d, 1j and 1p). Such signals were
240 also observed on hexaploid chromosome 9D. Together with information from previous studies, the
241 similarities between the hexaploid D genome and the A(D) genome in all three of the tetraploids
242 observed in this study provide robust evidence for the presence of the D genome in these tetraploids,
243 strongly suggesting that the three tetraploid species in the section *Pachycarpa* should be re-designated
244 as having CD genomes, rather than AC genomes.

245 **Table 3 Evidence for the DC genome assignment of the tetraploid species in the section *Pachycarpa***

Species	FISH	Molecular marker	Chromosome pairing behaviour
<i>A. insularis</i>	Linares et al. [17]	Yan et al. [13]	Loskutov [45]
<i>A. maroccana</i>	Fominaya et al. [33]; Linares et al. [17]	Oliver et al. [46, 47]; Chew et al. [16]; Yan et al. [13, 18]	Ladizinsky [48]
<i>A. murphyi</i>	Linares et al. [17]	Peng et al. [49-51]; Yan et al. [13, 18]	

246 **The tetraploid progenitor of hexaploid oats**

247 No conclusive agreement has been reached regarding which tetraploid species may have
248 contributed to the hexaploid oat genome. Examining the existing literature, all of the three tetraploid
249 species in the section *Pachycarpa* have been postulated to be the tetraploid ancestor of the hexaploids
250 at one time or another [10, 13-15, 18]. In the current study, the signal patterns produced by the probes
251 used revealed that the three tetraploids were closely related, but well differentiated from each other. For
252 instance, the number of intergenomic translocations in *A. murphyi* (Fig 1n) differed from that in *A.*
253 *insularis* (Fig 1b) and *A. maroccana* (Fig 1h), while the signal patterns produced by (TCC)₅ allowed
254 for the differentiation of *A. maroccana* (Fig 1j) from the other two tetraploids (Figs 1d and 1p).
255 However, none of these tetraploids showed a FISH karyotype that is better matched to the hexaploids
256 than the others in this study. One possibility is that it wasn't one of the extant tetraploids that
257 participated in the formation of the hexaploid oats, but, rather, a common ancestor that has not been
258 identified or is now extinct. There is considerable evidence that all three tetraploids originated from the
259 same tetraploid ancestor and then diverged from one another after several large chromosomal
260 rearrangements and other changes in their chromosomes decreased their level of homology [44, 52, 53].
261 Another plausible explanation is that the genomes of the hexaploids may have experienced substantial
262 restructuring after polyploidy took place. This hypothesis is supported by previous study, which
263 showed significant genome downsizing after polyploidizations in genus *Avena* [54]. A similar
264 phenomenon has been observed in wheat. Zhang et al. [55] observed distinct differences in multiple
265 phenotypic traits and identified a large number of differentially expressed genes between the natural
266 AB genome tetraploid wheat and a ploidy-reversed (from hexaploid to tetraploid) "extracted tetraploid

267 wheat” which has AB genomes that are virtually identical to the AB sub-genomes of its bread wheat
268 donor. In hexaploid oat, there exists a genetic mechanism that is similar to the *Phl* locus in hexaploid
269 wheat, which ensures exclusive homologous chromosome pairing in meiosis [56]. This attribute of
270 hexaploid oat would make possible the reconstitution of its CD component by a simple backcrossing
271 technique, and, therefore, could provide a unique opportunity to address whether and to what extent
272 the CD component of hexaploid oat has been modified during its evolutionary history at the
273 allohexaploid level, and provide more substantial evidence on the tetraploid ancestor of hexaploids.

274 **Conclusions**

275 FISH techniques with six repetitive DNA sequences showed a distinct hybridization patterns of
276 *Avena* A, C and D genomes, confirming the substantial structural differences among these genomes,
277 particular the large divergence between the C and A/D genomes. Several intergenomic translocations
278 between the D and C genomes in hexaploid oats were detected, and such intergenomic translocations
279 were also observed in all three tetraploids in the section *Pachycarpa*, providing good evidence for the
280 presence of the D genome in these tetraploids, hence supporting a final re-designation of these
281 tetraploids as CD genomes.

282 **Acknowledgments**

283 We gratefully acknowledge the fellows in Triticeae Research Institute who gave us
284 professional and technical assistance during the experiment, and we thank Dr. Eric N. Jellen, Brigham
285 Young University, Provo, Utah, USA, for kindly providing the seeds of *A. insularis*.

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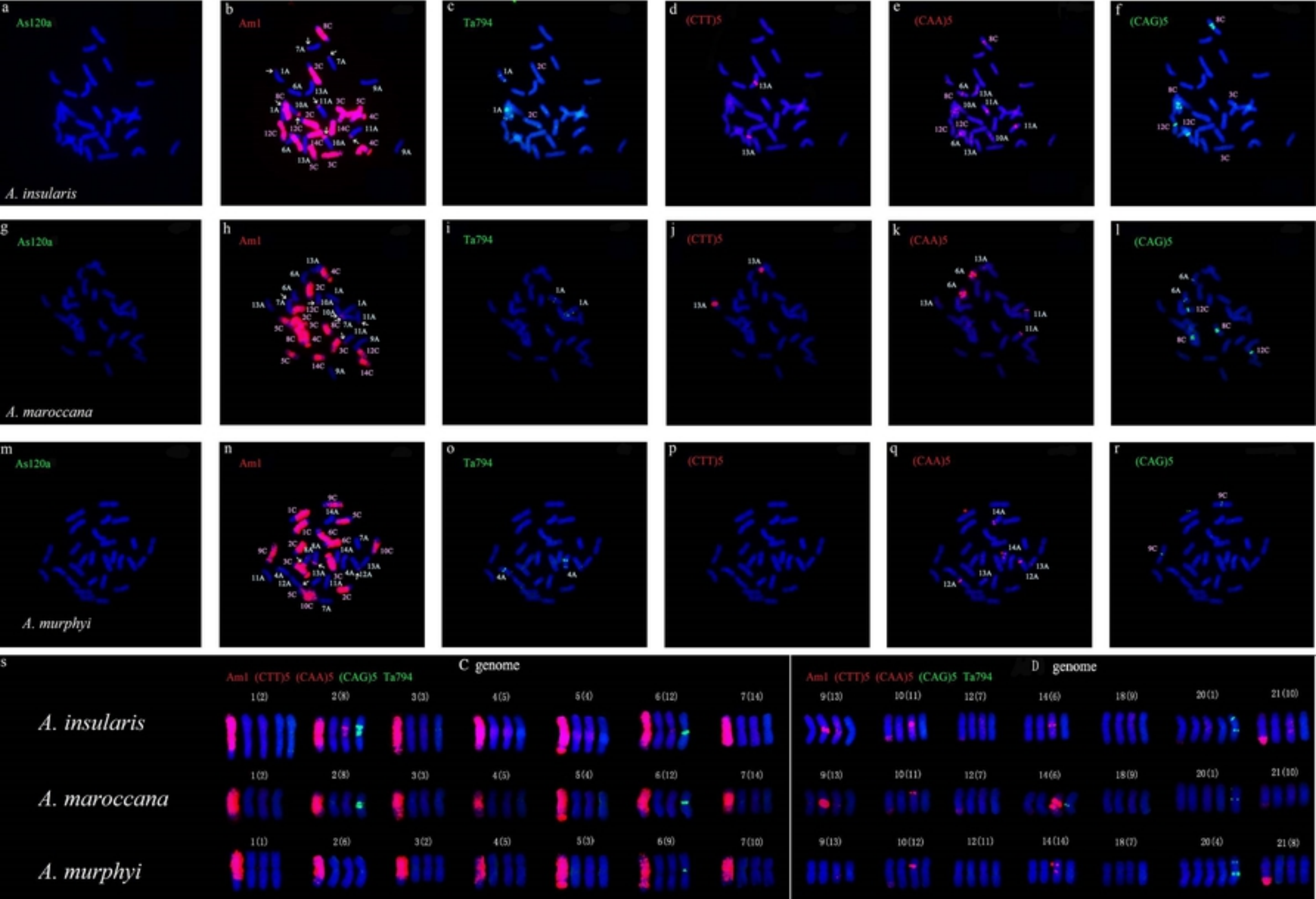


Figure 1

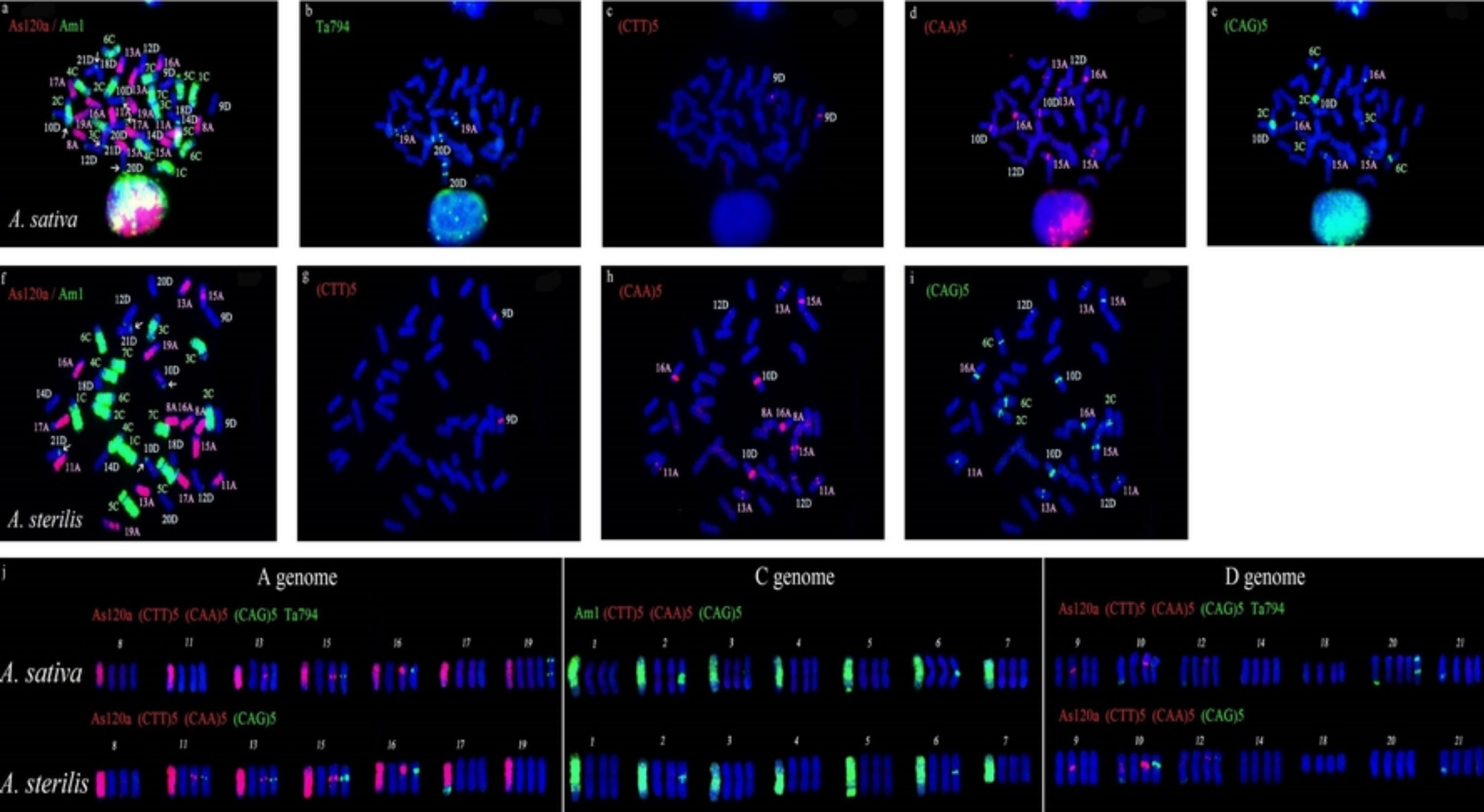


Figure 2