Genome structure of *Brachionus asplanchnoidis*, a Eukaryote with intrapopulation variation in genome size

Stelzer, C.P.[1, *], Blommaert J.[1,3], Waldvogel A.M.[4], Pichler M.[1], Hecox-Lea, B.[2] & Mark Welch D.B.[2]

[1] Research Department for Limnology, University of Innsbruck, Mondsee, Austria

[2] Josephine Bay Paul Center for Comparative Molecular Biology and Evolution, Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, MA, USA

[3] Department of Organismal Biology, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

[4] Institute of Zoology, University of Cologne, Zülpicher Str. 47b, 50674 Cologne, Germany

[*] Corresponding author (claus-peter.stelzer@uibk.ac.at)

Abstract

Eukaryotic genomes vary greatly in size due to variation in the proportion of non-coding DNA, a pattern that emerges both in comparisons at a larger taxonomic scale and at the level of individuals within a species. The rotifer *Brachionus asplanchnoidis* represents one of the most extreme cases of intraspecific genome size variation among Eukaryotes, displaying almost 2-fold variation within a geographic population. Here we used a whole-genome sequencing approach to identify the underlying DNA sequence differences by assembling a high-quality reference genome draft for one individual of the population and aligning short-reads of 15 individuals from the same geographic population. We identified large, contiguous copy number variable regions (CNVs), which exhibited significant coverage differences among individuals, and whose coverage overall scaled with genome size. CNVs were mainly composed of tandemly repeated satellite DNA, with only few interspersed genes or other sequences, and were characterized by an elevated GC-content. Judging from their distributions across contigs, some CNVs are fragments of accessory (B-)chromosomes while others resemble large insertions to normal chromosomes. CNV patterns in offspring of two parents with divergent genome size, and CNV patterns in several individuals from an inbred line differing in genome size demonstrated inheritance and accumulation of CNVs across generations. Our study provides unprecedented insights into genome size evolution at microevolutionary time scales and thus paves the way for studying genome size evolution in contemporary populations rather than inferring patterns and processes *a posteriori* from species comparisons.

Introduction

The genomes of Eukaryotic organisms display remarkable diversity in size, overall spanning approximately five orders of magnitude [1]. In addition, genome size may vary substantially among closely related species [2, 3], within a species [e.g., 4, 5, 6], and sometimes even within a population [7]. Most of the variation in genome size stems from differences in the proportion of various kinds of non-coding DNA and/or transposable elements, which can reach excessive levels in species with giant genomes [8, 9]. Studying genome size variation at the DNA-sequence level allows identification of exactly those genomic elements that make up for the genome size difference, and it can suggest the relative strength of mutation, selection, and drift - the underlying evolutionary forces ultimately causing divergence in genome size.

Much of our understanding of eukaryotic genome size variation comes from comparisons between closely related species. Recent studies suggested that proliferation of repetitive elements (RE), in particular transposable elements, play an important role in genome expansion, while their silencing and deletion has been implicated in the streamlining of genomes. In a few studies, it was possible to pinpoint individual REs as the driver of genome expansion [10, 11], whereas in other studies, differently-sized genomes were found to differ in several classes of REs [12, 13]. In the latter case, it is difficult to decide whether multiple RE classes have expanded more or less simultaneously in evolutionary time, or whether the expansions of some REs have occurred *after* an initial genome size divergence driven by a single element. Without accurate dating of the expansions of individual elements, interspecific comparisons suffer from such a 'blind spot' on the early stages of genome divergence. Ultimately, all genome size differences must have gone through a stage of intrapopulation variation followed by fixation, or loss, of these size-variants. Thus, identifying genome size variants within populations and studying them on microevolutionary time scales may allow additional insights on the evolutionary dynamics of early genome divergences.

Intraspecific genome size variation (IGV) has been described in several species of Eukaryotes [some examples are summarized in 7, 14]. IGV may be associated with variation in the number of chromosomes [e.g., B-chromosomes 14], but there are also examples where IGV is not reflected in the karyotype [2, 6]. One of the most recent additions to IGV model organisms was the monogonont rotifer *B. asplanchnoidis*, which displays a nearly 2-fold variation in genome size even among individuals within a geographic population [7]. Monogonont rotifers are short-lived (1-2 weeks), small aquatic metazoans, only a few hundred micrometers in size, common in fresh and brackish water habitats throughout the world. They have a life-cycle involving cyclical parthenogenesis [15] reproducing by ameiotic parthenogenesis for prolonged periods and inducing sexual reproduction occasionally. A 'rotifer clone' consists of the asexual descendants of a single female that has hatched

from a single resting egg, which itself is the product of sexual reproduction. In many Monogonont

species, sex is triggered by crowding due to accumulation of mixis-inducing peptides released by the

animals [16]. In lab cultures, it is possible to suppress sexual reproduction by frequent dilution

intervals or large culture volumes, and to induce mixis in small culture volumes or through the use of

media drawn from dense cultures. Thus, it is possible to either deliberately cross two rotifer clones

sexually, or to keep them clonally for hundreds of generations.

In the present study, we focus on a population of *B. asplanchnoidis* from Obere Halbjochlacke (OHJ),

a shallow alkaline lake in Eastern Austria [7, 17]. Individuals of this population can be crossed with

each other - even if they substantially differ in genome size - and they will produce offspring with

intermediate genome sizes close to the parental mean. Genome size can be artificially selected up or

down with a heritability of 1 by breeding only individuals with large or small genome size. Genome

size variation in this system is mediated by relatively large genomic elements (several megabases in

size), which segregate independently from each other during meiosis. The smallest observed genome

size in *B. asplanchnoidis* was 404Mb (2C, nuclear DNA content). Individuals at or close to this basal

genome size are completely lacking independently segregating elements, while in larger individuals,

genome size scales with the amount of independently segregating elements [7].

Here we used a whole-genome sequencing approach to identify the DNA sequence differences

responsible for intrapopulation genome size variation in this population of *B. asplanchnoidis*. Our

specific goal was to identify and characterize genomic regions that are present in one or multiple

copies in some individuals of the OHJ-population, but are missing in others. To this end, we

assembled a highly contiguous draft genome of a reference clone using long-read (PacBio)

technology and then mapped short-reads of 15 different clones with genome sizes from 404 to 644

Mbp to this assembly. To identify copy number variations (CNVs), we scanned for regions of

increased per-bp read coverage. To independently confirm CNVs, we used PCR to detect

presence/absence of selected CNVs across different clones of the OHJ-population, and droplet digital

PCR to determine the exact copy numbers of one specific locus. Finally, we annotated genes and

repetitive elements in the reference genome, and compared CNV regions to non-variable regions of

the genome.

Results

De novo assembly and annotation of the reference genome

The rotifer clone (OHJ7i3n10) chosen for our reference genome derives from the natural isolate OHJ7 after three rounds of selfing (i.e., fertilizing sexual females by males of the same clone). As measured by flow cytometry [7], OHJ7i3n10 has a 2C-genome size of 568 Mbp, and thus contains approximately 40% excess DNA, compared to the smallest genome size of the OHJ-population (~410 Mbp). The total length of our reference assembly was 230.12 Mb, with 455 contigs and an N50 value of 3.065 Mb (**Fig. 1, Supplementary file 1**). Average GC content was 30.5%. However, the GC distribution was not unimodal, but showed two major peaks at ~25% and ~35% GC, and a minor one at ~50% GC (**Fig. S1**).

Fig. 1 a Photograph of *B. asplanchnoidis* female (with two attached asexual eggs). **b** Circular visualization of the contiguity and completeness of the genome assembly. Full circle represents the full assembly length of 230.1 Mb with the longest contig of 12.2 Mb in red and very few contigs <100 kB. GC-content is varying along the assembly (blue).

Taxonomic partitioning of the polished genome assembly confirmed its purity. Most hits could correctly be assigned to rotifers and remaining hits assigned to mollusks and arthropods can mostly be explained by imbalanced availability of rotifer entries in the *nt* database (**Fig. S2, Supplementary file 1**). We observed that 90.6 % of the metazoan BUSCO gene set collection was complete with low levels of duplicated (2.7 %), fragmented (2.0 %), and missing (7.4 %) genes (**Tab. S2**). A visualization of assembly contiguity and completeness was generated via assembly-stats [18] and is presented in **Fig. 1**. Protein-coding genes make up approx. 26 % of the genome assembly length. In total, we

annotated 16,667 genes with a median gene length of 1999 bp and approx. five exons per gene (**Tab.**

S3).

Comparison of short-reads in 15 OHJ clones

To examine within-population genome size variation, we sequenced 29 short-read libraries from 15

different rotifer clones from the OHJ population (1–4 libraries per clone using different methods,

described below). Nine clones were asexual descendants of individuals collected from the field, four

(including the source of the reference genome) were each asexual descendants of the same three

rounds of selfing of one of these clones, one was an asexual descendant from three rounds of selfing

of a different clone, and one was an asexual descendant of a cross between clones derived from

crossing two different selfed lineages from two natural isolates (Tab. 1, Tab. S4). Raw reads were

passed through multiple preprocessing steps that included quality trimming, removal of PCR

duplicates and mitochondrial DNA, and removal of contaminant DNA. Overall, preprocessing reduced

the total sequence amount from 265.6 to 194.3 Gbp, resulting in per-base sequencing coverage of

9.4 to 79-fold for the different libraries, with the majority of libraries being above 20-fold

(**Supplementary note, Fig. S3, Supplementary file 2**).

Tab. 1 Rotifer clones used in this study

Clone	Genome Size[1] (Mbp)	Origin	No. of libraries
OHJ82	404	natural clone	2
OHJ22	412	natural clone	2
OHJ104	462	natural clone	2
OHJ97	470	natural clone	2
OHJ96	492	natural clone	1
OHJ98	504	natural clone	1
OHJ105	520	natural clone	2
OHJ7	532	natural clone	4
OHJ13	536	natural clone	2
OHJ22i3n14	420	clone derived from selfing[3] OHJ22	1
OHJ7i3n7	536	clone derived from selfing[3] OHJ7	2
OHJ7i3n2	560	clone derived from selfing[3] OHJ7	2
OHJ7i3n10[2]	568	clone derived from selfing[3] OHJ7	2
OHJ7i3n5	644	clone derived from selfing[3] OHJ7	2
IK1	500	clone from cross of OHJ7i3n2 and OHJ22i3n14	2

[1] 2C genome size estimated by flow cytometry (Stelzer et al. 2019)

[2] same clone as reference genome

[3] hatched from an individual resting egg after three generations of selfing

Pooling short reads from all libraries revealed the same three-peak pattern of GC-content apparent

in the reference assembly, with GC maxima at 26%, 36%, and 48% (**Fig. 2a**). Since these three GC

peaks are indicative of three discrete fractions among the genomic reads, we applied a mixture

model to the short-read data, which allowed estimating the relative proportion of each fraction per

library. Overall, there was substantial variation in the relative proportions of the three fractions, both

among rotifer clones and between libraries of the same clone. Interestingly, the 26% GC-fraction was

negatively correlated and the 36% and 48% GC-fractions were positively correlated with genome size

based on flow cytometry (FCM) (**Fig. 2b**).

Fig. 2 Genome size variation is linked to sequences with elevated GC-content. **a** GC-distribution of all short-

read libraries combined (29 libraries of 15 rotifer clones). The red, cyan, and blue lines designate a mixture

model fitted to these data, consisting of three normally distributed subpopulations (26 ±6, 36 ±2.5, and 48 ±3

%GC; means and sds). **b** Panels show the results of the same mixture model applied to each library individually,

thus estimating the proportion of the total reads per library in each GC-fraction. Genome size estimates are

based on flow cytometry and were taken from [7].   Colors in **b** correspond to the six library preps (A-F) listed in

Tab. S4: A=orange, B=gold, C=green, D=turquoise, E=blue, F=pink).

We also used two kmer-based tools, GenomeScope 2.0 [19] and findGSE [20], to obtain reference-

free estimates of genome size for each clone/library. Those estimates were generally lower than

their FCM based counterparts, approximately 0.8-fold in findGSE and 0.6-fold in GenomeScope

(**Supplementary file 3**). GenomeScope appeared to struggle at sequencing coverages below ca. 25-

fold, where it estimated extremely low genome sizes (compared to FCM) and unrealistically high

heterozygosities (6-10%). By contrast, findGSE performed constantly along the gradient of

sequencing coverages. Interestingly, there was a positive correlation between genome size (FCM

estimate) and the ratio of repeats, a fitted parameter of findGSE (**Fig. S4**; Spearman-rank correlation

test, ρ=0.609, *P*=0.0057).

Our assembly-based analyses rely on the alignment of cleaned reads of each of the 29 libraries to the

reference genome. Total alignment rates (TAR) of reads to the reference genome draft were

generally above 94%. TARs were highest in those rotifer clones that are most closely related to the

reference genome (**Fig. S5**). Concordant alignment rates, i.e., properly aligned reads with the correct

insert size, were >90% in all libraries (**Table S5**). However, only about 1/3 of the reads aligned

uniquely to one site in the genome. Only a small proportion of reads, usually well below 5%, showed

discordant alignment, either due to an incorrect insert size, or when only one of the mates aligning to

the reference genome. Discordant alignment rates were generally low (1.3-5.1%) and were not

correlated to genome size.

To identify CNV regions, we calculated the average per-base coverage for 5kbp and 50kbp windows.

To normalize coverage across libraries, we divided the per-base coverage of each window by 1/2 of

the (mean) exon coverage of the respective library. This yields a value of 2 for all diploid regions of

the genome, corresponding to two copies for those genomic regions (provided that our assembly is

unphased in these regions). This analysis of coverage variation revealed that large tracts in the

genome of *B. asplanchnoidis* display consistent patterns of coverage variation, which we quantified

as the standard deviation of coverage across libraries and clones (**Fig. 3**). For example, the first contig

(000F) exhibits large coverage variation with a standard deviation of 1.5-1.7 while the next three

contigs (001F to 003F) have much less coverage variation (< 0.5 s.d.) and a mean coverage value of

close to two. There are several other contigs showing consistently elevated coverage variation, like

004F, 031F, 032F,036F, 042F, and 044F. In addition, some of these variable contigs appear to be

more variable than others (e.g., 031F is more variable than 032F). These overall patterns were very

similar when a lower 5kbp- window resolution was applied (**Fig. S6**)

Fig. 3 Coverage variation along the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome. This graph shows 34 selected contigs spanning

~140 Mbp (i.e., about 60% of the assembly). Each circle represents a 50kbp window of one of the 29

sequencing libraries. Coverage (y-axis) was normalized by dividing the per-base coverage of each window by

1/2 of the (mean) exon coverage of the respective library. Contig borders are indicated by vertical dashed lines,

and contig IDs are listed on the top. Contigs are ordered by size rather than reflecting biological contiguity.

Variation across clones/libraries is indicated by color (based on standard deviations). Standard deviations larger

than 2.5 (about 4% of the data) were capped to a value of 2.5, to allow colored visualization.

Combining the values of coverage variation of all windows (n=4380 for 50kbp, n=45800 for 5kbp)

reveals a multimodal distribution with a prominent peak located at low coverage variations of ~0.15

(lowSD in **Fig. 4a**). This peak corresponds to the genomic sections that are colored in orange/red with

a mean coverage of 2 in **Fig. 3**. Interestingly, at intermediate coverage variations (interSD; 0.7 < s.d. <

2.0) there appear to be at least two peaks, which correspond to the green and blue regions in **Fig. 3**,

respectively. There are also a few windows showing high coverage variation (highSD; s.d. > 2.0),

which form the right tail in **Fig. 4a**.

To test for an effect of these coverage variations on genome size, we calculated the mean coverage

for each clone/library for these three categories of coverage variation (lowSD, interSD, highSD) and

calculated their correlations with genome size. Notably, there were substantial differences in

coverage at the interSD and high SD regions among the different libraries, even in some that had

been prepared from the same rotifer clone (**Fig. 4c**). Thus, in order to control for the effect of library

preparation, were calculated partial correlations between the variables 'mean coverage' and 'genome size' (**Fig. 4c**). Those correlations at 'intermediate' and 'high' variability were highly significant. This result holds even if the libraries with elevated coverage and GC content at interSD and highSD regions (green symbols in Fig. 2b and 4c) are excluded (**Fig. S7**)

Fig. 4 Genomic regions of elevated coverage variability are responsible for genome size variation. The data in this figure is based on normalized coverage (calculated for 50kbp windows) of 29 short-read libraries from 15rotifer clones. **a:** Genomic regions differ in coverage variability (measured as standard deviation of coverage among libraries) as there are regions of low, intermediate, and high variability. **b, c:** Mean coverage in regions of elevated coverage variation (interSD, highSD) correlates positively with genome size (flow cytometry data on genome size was taken from [7]. Dots represent the mean coverage per library. Colors indicate co-prepared libraries (of which some were prepared from the same rotifer clone, but at different dates and with different library preparation methods; see Table S4). Colors in **c** correspond to the six library preps (A-F) listed in Tab. S4: A=orange, B=gold, C=green, D=turquoise, E=blue, F=pink). **d:** This panel shows the same data as in **c**, but rotifer clones are categorized into small genome sizes (<215Mbp, which represent the basal genome size of *B. asplanchnoidis* according to [7] vs. large genome sizes (>215Mbp, which contain additional genomic elements that independently segregate during meiosis, according to [7]).

By merging adjacent 5kbp windows that show increased coverage variation and consistent coverage pattern (significant correlation of coverages), we identified 509 CNV regions in the genome of *B. asplanchnoidis* (**Supplementary file 4**). The total genome space classified hitherto as "copy number variable" was 72.43Mbp (i.e., 31% of the genome assembly). Interestingly, large CNV regions megabases in size made up a large fraction of this total, as can be seen by an "N50" of 0.455 Mbp for the CNV-fraction of the genome. Two of the largest contigs, 000F and 004F, consisted almost entirely of 3-4 large CNV regions, which were separated only by short "breakpoints" of lower coverage variability (**Supplementary file 4**). Our 5kbp window-scanning algorithm also identified CNVs that resided in contigs with otherwise "normal" coverage. In many cases, these CNV regions were near the beginning or end of a contig (e.g., 003F, 006F, 010F). Interestingly, coverage values of clone IK1, a cross between OHJ7i3n2 and OHJ22i3n14, were usually intermediate between those of the two parental clones (Figs. S8, S11, S12). In addition, four clones that were derived by selfing from clone OHJ7 displayed coverages that were largely consistent with their differences in genome size (Fig. S9). For instance, the clone with the largest genome of the selfed line, OHJ7i3n5, had an additional coverage peak at about 2.5 times the base coverage (set by IK1), which indicates that some CNV regions have significantly higher coverage than any other clone of this selfed line.

To additionally classify CNV regions according to their length and contiguity, we considered contigs as "B-contigs" if they contained a large fraction of CNV windows (in analogy to B-chromosomes). Setting this threshold at 90% of contig length, 38 contigs are classified as "B-contigs", comprising 77% of all CNV-windows, i.e., 55.8 Mbp of the assembly (**Fig. S10, S11, Table S6**). Thus, approximately three quarters of the observed CNVs affect more or less an entire contig, while the remaining quarter of CNV regions were found on contigs with otherwise low coverage variability.

To independently confirm CNVs, we chose four genomic loci for PCR-amplification, two in CNV regions and two in non-CNV regions (**Table S7**). All four primer pairs yielded amplicons with the correct size, with no signs of non-specific amplification (**Fig. 5a**). The two primer pairs targeted to non-CNV regions (TA_001F and TA_003F) yielded an amplicon in all rotifer clones. In contrast, the two primer pairs targeted to CNV loci (TA_000F and TA_032F) only amplified in some clones. In particular, clones with the smallest genome sizes (OHJ82, OHJ22 and its descendent OHJ22i3n14) apparently lack both CNV loci, and in others (OHJ 98, 104, 105) the TA_000F-locus was present, but the TA_032F-locus was absent. Overall, these patterns were highly consistent with coverage of the amplified regions in sequencing libraries (**Fig. 5c**). Copy numbers for TA_032, as estimated by ddPCR, ranged from zero to six across the studied rotifer clones, including 3 copies in IK1, a cross between OHJ7i3n2 (six copies) and OHJ22i3n14 (zero copies) (**Fig. 5b, Tab. S8**).

Fig. 5 PCR-based confirmation of CNV-loci. All 15 studied clones from the OHJ-population are displayed in order of ascending genome size (from left to right). **a** PCR-products of primers targeting the four candidate loci (non-CNV loci: TA_001F and TA_003F; CNV-loci: TA_000F and TA_032F). **b** Copy numbers of the TA_032F-locus as estimated by droplet digital PCR. Error bars are 95% confidence intervals. **c** Coverage of the amplified region in sequencing libraries of the same 15 rotifer clones (for comparison). Dots are the average coverages across an entire contig. Colors identify co-prepared sequencing libraries.

After having identified the CNV-regions that contribute to intrapopulation genome size variation in the OHJ-population, we annotated repetitive elements of these regions, and compared them to the rest of the genome. A custom repeat library was created using RepeatModeler2, and the top-contributing TEs were curated. In total, 123 Mbp of the assembly (53.6%) were masked by this library. The highest contributing element (rotiSat2) accounts for just over 50 Mbp of this (**Fig. 6a**). The 36 most abundant repeats represent 67% of masked repeats and 82.6 Mbp of the assembly. Of the 36 highly contributing repeats, 7 were enriched in the interSD region, 12 in the highSD region, 5 in allCNVs, 6 in the B90 region, and 5 in the B95 region (**Supplementary file 6**). Overall, repetitive elements, and especially satDNAs were over-represented in CNV-regions (**Fig. 6c, Supplementary file 7**).

Of the satDNAs we identified in B. *asplanchnoidis*, three (rotiSat2, 8 and 9) are not present in any other sequenced *Brachionus* genome; three others (rotiSat1, 5, 10, 11) are shared with the *Brachionus plicatilis* ss. genome. All but two other repeats in the topRE library were found in at least two other *Brachionus* genomes in varying levels. In addition, we identified a DNA/MITE element and an

uncharacterized element in the *Brachionus plicatilis* ss. genome that are not found in other *Brachionus*

genomes.

CNV-regions differed strongly from non-CNV-regions by having a much lower gene density (**Fig. 6c,**

Supplementary file 7). Phylogenetic orthology inference based on proteomes (OrthoFinder analysis)

of four species in the *B. plicatilis* species complex, with the bdelloid rotifer *Adineta vaga* as an

outgroup, resulted in the assignment of 93063 genes (90.9% of all annotated proteins) to 17965

orthogroups. Fifty percent of genes were in orthogroups with 6 or more genes and were contained in

the largest 5228 orthogroups. There were 3953 orthogroups represented in all species and 299 of

these consisted entirely of single-copy genes. Many duplication events appear to be species-specific,

with an especially high number of genes (5634, or 32 % of all protein coding genes) derived from

gene duplication in *B. asplanchnoidis*. While gene density is significantly reduced within CNV regions

(417 genes located within CNV regions = 2.39 % of all annotated protein-coding genes, p<0.001, **Fig.**

6c), a significant number of these genes derive from gene duplication events (385 genes = 92.33 % of

all genes located within CNVs, *p*<0.001, **Fig. 6c**). The overall pattern of gene distribution thus shows

that CNV regions almost exclusively contain gene copies.

Fig. 6 Genome structure of *B. asplanchnoidis*. a The top-36 repeat elements ranked according to their

contribution to the genome. **b** Differences in repeat element composition between CNV and non CNV regions. **c**

Differences in the distribution of gene content between CNV and non CNV regions (top) and the respective

proportion of genes derived from gene duplication events (bottom). **d** Three representative examples of

contigs: a "B-contig" consisting almost exclusively of CNV regions (000F), a contig containing a large CNV region

at one end (006F), and a non-CNV contig (007F). Top panels display the proportion of each 5kb window

occupied by repeats, intermediate panels display the proportion of each 5kb window occupied by annotated

genes, bottom panels display (exon-)normalized coverages of three rotifer clones (parents: OHJ7i3n2 and

OHJ22i3n14, crossed offspring: IK1). Shaded regions indicate CNVs.

Throughout this study we observed several conspicuous patterns related to GC-content. Regions of

elevated coverage variability (i.e., interSD and highSD regions), CNV regions, and B-contigs were

characterized by an elevated GC-content showing a main peak at ~37% GC and two additional peaks

at around 50% GC (Fig. S13, S14). By contrast, regions of low coverage variability had their main peak

at ~25% GC (Figure S14). Interestingly, these three peaks were also present in the GC-distributions of

unaligned sequencing reads from rotifer clones varying in genome size (Fig. 2b). The 37% GC peak,

which was the most prominent peak in genomic regions of elevated SD, in CNVs, and in B-contigs

(Fig. S14) could be attributed mainly to the satellites rotiSat1 and rotiSat2, while the higher peak at

~55% GC could be attributed to rotiSat5 (Fig. S15-19). Overall, these three satellites are the most

abundant repeat elements in the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome, and their consensus sequences show

the same characteristically elevated GC contents compared to most other repeat elements

(Supplementary File 6). We also observed one minor but distinct peak at ~48% GC in highSD regions,

CNV regions, and B-contigs, which apparently consisted of sequences that were not classified as

repeats by repeatModeler2 (Figures S15-19).

Discussion

In this study, we provide a high-quality reference genome draft of the rotifer *Brachionus asplanchnoidis* to shed light on one of the most extreme examples of intraspecific genome size variation in the animal kingdom [7, 17]. Our genome assembly had a length of 230.1 Mbp. The 2C DNA content of the same rotifer clone is 568 Mbp, according to flow-cytometry based estimates of an earlier study [7]. This earlier study provided evidence that the genome of this particular clone consists of a core haploid genome of 207Mbp and four copies of a segregating 34Mb element. Assuming that our 230.1 Mbp assembly is completely unphased, our reference genome thus amounts to 95% of the flow cytometry-based estimate of the haploid genome (241Mbp).

We aligned short-reads of 15 rotifer clones from the same geographic population, together encompassing a 2C-genome size range of 404–644Mbp, to the reference genome. This analysis uncovered multiple long tracts along the reference genome with increased coverage variation across clones. Additionally, we found that the average coverage at CNV-regions strongly correlates with genome size. CVN-regions also carried a distinct signature in terms of an increased GC-content (36% and 48%, respectively, versus 26% for the rest of the genome), which was both apparent in the short-read data and in the genome assembly. Strikingly, many CNVs had near zero coverage in three of the studied clones (OHJ82, OHJ22, OHJ22i3n14), which was independently confirmed by our PCR-based assays of two selected CNV regions. These results are highly consistent with previous evidence from flow cytometry experiments, showing that these three clones are characterized by a 'basal' genome size (i.e., are close do the smallest observed genome size in this species) and that they entirely lack the independently segregating genomic elements (ISEs) that are present in many other members of the OHJ population. Our results indicate the presence of multiple different ISEs in the OHJ population. For example, both our PCR- and alignment data suggested that the two contigs 000F and 032F belong to two different ISEs, because only the former was detectable in the clones OHJ98, OHJ104, and OHJ105 (**Fig. 5**). This observation is consistent with an earlier study, which suggested such diversity based on the size of ISEs measured by flow-cytometry.

CNV regions account for megabase-long tracts in the genome of *B. asplanchnoidis*. Several contigs displayed highly similar coverage patterns across almost their entire length, if one ignores the few and very short breakpoints. Such contigs might be fragments of even larger elements, perhaps B-chromosomes. Contig 032F might be a good candidate for this, ranging from zero to six copies across the OHJ-population, as indicated by ddPCR. We also detected large CNVs, hundreds of kilobases in length, that were located on contigs with otherwise normal (diploid) coverage and low coverage variation (e.g. contig 006F in **Fig. 6d**). Such a genomic pattern is consistent with a stable diploid chromosome that contains a large homozygous insertion in some clones, hemizygous insertions in

others, and a homozygous deletion in the remaining clones. Additionally, there might be length polymorphisms in such genomic regions, which are dominated by tandemly repeated satellite DNA. In the future, assembling multiple genomes from rotifer clones with different genome size, ideally using long-read technologies in order to approach chromosome-level assemblies [21], might allow a more precise delineation of individual CNVs into these two categories. Overall, our data is consistent with a mixture of B-chromosomes and large insertions into normal chromosomes, and possibly a dynamic exchange between both genomic fractions (since they are made up mostly by the same set of tandemly repeated satellite DNA; see below).

There are a few technical caveats and limitations to be considered in our analysis. First, although we found strong correlations between coverage variation at CNV regions and genome size variation, it was not possible to quantitatively "predict" the genome size of individual clones based on coverage along the reference assembly. Library preparation method seemed to introduce additional variation, specifically at the CNV regions, that prevented us from determining exact copy numbers of these genomic regions. This is a well-known limitation of short-read libraries from genomes that contain large amounts of satellite DNA [22], in particular when combined with heterogeneous GC contents [23]. We could alleviate this limitation and determine exact copy numbers by using digital droplet PCR, finding that the targeted genomic region (contig 032F) is present in zero to six copies across the OHJ-population. This approach is a promising strategy for future studies to accurately assess copy number variation across many loci and in a large number of genomes from the same population. In addition, the differences in copy numbers at CNV regions could be estimated by comparing clones within a set of library preparations. For instance, if coverage at CNV regions is scaled by a reference clone (like clone 'IK1' in Fig. S8 and S9), coverage at CNV regions of focal clones tends to fall into discrete clusters, indicating n-fold differences in coverage relative to the reference. A second limitation is that our reference genome might still not contain all the ISEs that contribute to genome size variation in the natural OHJ population, simply because it represents just a sample from this population. To obtain a more complete picture, more genomes of the OHJ-population would be needed to be sequenced, preferably using long-read sequencing technologies that allow better identification of structural variants [24]. Third, one might argue that our CNV-detection pipeline could miss many of the smaller insertions and deletions, in particular those smaller than 5 kilobases. However, it is quite unlikely that such small-scale structural variation has much influence on genome size variation in *B. asplanchnoidis*, since the percentage of discordantly aligned reads was overall rather low (1.3-5.1%) and it did not scale with genome size. With our reference genome being at the upper end of the genome size distribution of the OHJ-population, we would expect to find a higher percentage of discordant reads in smaller genomes (mainly due to deletions), which was not the case.

CNV regions differed strongly from the remaining genome regarding repeat composition and gene density. Strikingly, most CNV regions were composed of only three satellite repeat elements, some unique to *B. asplanchnoidis* and others shared only with its closest congener, *B. plicatilis*, indicating recent evolutionary origin. The two most prominent satellite repeats, rotiSat1 and rotiSat2, consisted of 154 and 143bp monomers that were tandemly repeated for up to a few megabases. The low sequence diversity of CNV regions nicely explains the characteristic trimodal GC-content signature mentioned earlier, especially since the most abundant satellite elements display the same elevated GC content (**Supplementary file 6**). Non-CNV parts of the genome contained a much higher diversity of other repeat elements, which included DNA transposons, LINEs, LTR elements, and Helitrons. Gene density was significantly lower in CNV regions compared to the rest of the genome, and genic regions in CNVs were typically confined to short stretches scattered across the contig. Interestingly, Orthofinder suggested that genes in CNV regions were three times more likely to derive from a duplication event than genes found in other places of the genome. This indicates that duplications had a role in the origin of these CNV-regions, which incidentally has some resemblance to the proposed early evolution of B-chromosomes [25, 26].

In this study, we have identified, for the first time, genomic elements that can cause substantial within-population genome size variation, ultimately allowing investigation of genome size evolution at microevolutionary time scales. In the OHJ-population of *B. asplanchnoidis*, these genomic elements consist of up to megabases-long arrays of satellite DNA, with only few interspersed genes or other sequences. Though satellite arrays can form essential chromosome structures such as centromeres and telomeres [27], the large intrapopulation variation of these elements in *B. asplanchnoidis*, and their virtual absence in some individuals suggests that, overall, these DNA additions do not provide an immediate fitness benefit to their carriers. Nevertheless, variable amounts of 'bulk DNA' might influence the phenotype through subtler mechanisms independently of the DNA information content, for example through potential causal relationships between genome size and nucleus size, or cell size [28, 29]. Increased levels of structural variation in a genome, as implied by our findings, may also constrain adaptive evolution or genome stability over microevolutionary time scales. In this regard, the genome of *B. asplanchnoidis* should be a valuable addition to existing models of genome evolution, enabling whole-genome analysis combined with experimental evolution approaches [30, 31].

Methods

Origin of rotifer clones and DNA extraction

Resting eggs of rotifers were collected in the field from Obere Halbjochlacke (OHJ), a small alkaline playa lake in Eastern Austria (N 47°47'11", E 16°50'31"). Animals were kept in clonal cultures. A rotifer clone consists of the asexual descendants of an individual female that hatched from a single resting egg. Since resting eggs are produced sexually in monogonont rotifers, each clone has a unique genotype. Our clones from the OHJ-population have been characterized previously with regard of their genome size and other biological traits [7].

Rotifers were cultured in F/2 medium [32] at 16 ppt salinity and with *Tetraselmis suecica* algae as food source (500–1000 cells μl^{-1}). Continuous illumination was provided with daylight LED lamps (SunStrip, Econlux) at 30–40 μmol quanta m^{-2} s^{-1} for rotifers, and 200 μmol quanta m^{-2} s^{-1} for algae. Stock cultures were kept either at 18 °C, re-inoculated once per week by transferring 20 asexual females to 20ml fresh culture medium, or they were kept for long-term storage at 9°C, replacing approximately 80% of the medium with fresh food suspension every 4 weeks.

To produce biomass for DNA extraction, rotifers were cultured at 23°C in aerated borosilicate glass containers of variable size (250mL to 20L). Prior to DNA extraction, rotifers were starved overnight in sterile-filtered F/2 medium, with 2-3 additional washes with sterile medium on the next day. In most preparations we also added the antibiotics Streptomycin (Sigma-Aldrich: S6501) and Ampicillin (Sigma-Aldrich: A9518) to the washing medium, both with an end concentration of 50mg/ml. DNA was extracted using the Qiagen kits Dneasy (for short-read sequencing; from approximately 5000-7000 rotifers) and GenomicTips 100 (for long read Pacbio sequencing; from >20000 rotifers), and RNA was extracted from freshly prepared biomass with Rneasy.

Sequencing of the reference clone

We selected one rotifer clone (called: OHJ7i3n10) as DNA-donor for the reference genome. This clone ultimately derives from an ancestor of the natural OHJ population. However, its immediate ancestors were passed through three generations of selfing (i.e., mating one male and female of the same clone). More details on the genealogy of this lineage and its biological characteristics can be found in [7]. According to this study, OHJ7i3n10 has a 2C-genome size of 568 Mbp, and thus contains approximately 40% excess genomic sequences, compared to the smallest genome size of the OHJ-population (~410 Mbp).

Our *B. asplanchnoidis* reference genome is based on long-read sequencing technology (PacBio

SMRT® on the Sequel-platform). In total, we obtained 16.3 Gbp from two SMRTcells, which confers

to 57-fold coverage assuming a haploid genome size of 284 Mbp. Additionally, we obtained 35.5 Gbp

of Iso-Seq transcriptome data and 12 Gbp of short-read Illumina data of OHJ7i3n10. All sequencing

and library preps related to the reference genome were performed by the Next Generation

Sequencing Facility at Vienna BioCenter Core Facilities (VBCF), member of the Vienna BioCenter

(VBC), Austria.

Sequencing of individuals of the OHJ-population

To characterize genomic variation across the OHJ-population, we generated short-read sequencing

data (Illumina platforms HiSeq and NextSeq) from 15 different rotifer clones, both from the natural

OHJ population and from various clones of a selfed lineage (**Table S4**). Clones were selected such that

they covered the full range of genome size of the OHJ-population. Short-read libraries were

constructed either using the KAPA HyperPrep kit (Roche), or the NGS DNA Library Prep Kit

(Westburg). The KAPA library preparations were done at the Marine Biological Laboratory [for more

details, see12] while the Westburg preparations were done at VBCF. The two methods mainly differ

in the fragmentation method (ultrasonic fragmentation in KAPA *vs*. enzymatic fragmentation in

Westburg). Both methods are claimed to deliver sequence-independent fragmentation and to yield

consistent coverage across a wide range of GC-contents. While the peak fragment size was ~400bp in

both methods, we observed that the libraries constructed with the Westburg kit sometimes had a

pronounced right tail with some fragments up to ~2000bp. We accounted for these larger fragments

by adjusting the relevant parameters during short-read alignment (see below). In many of our clones,

we used both library construction methods, yielding in a total of 29 libraries (**Table S4**).

Reference genome assembly and annotation

Pacbio sequences of the reference genome were assembled using the HGAP4 pipeline [33] at VBCF,

and contamination was initially checked using CLARK [34] against all available bacterial genomes

from NCBI (**Supplementary file 1**). We polished this initial VBCF assembly with short-read Illumina

data of the identical *B. asplanchnoidis* clone using Pilon [35] in three rounds. To investigate the

assembly quality, we backmapped the Illumina data to the genome assembly using bwa mem [36]

and calculated summary statistics using QUAST [37] and Qualimap [38]. To provide an additional

check for contamination, we used Blobtools [39] based on the backmapping alignments and a blastn

search against the nt database (NCBI).To assess the assembly's completeness, we performed a

BUSCO v4.0.6 [40] using the metazoan gene set (n=978) in the *genome* mode applying the *–long*

option.

Genes were structurally annotated on the repeat masked genome assembly using the

MAKER2 annotation pipeline [v2.31.10, 41] using evidence from Pacbio Iso-Seq transcripts of the

same *B. asplanchnoidis* clone; protein homology evidence from the UniProt database (download

January 2020, The UniProt Consortium 2017) in combination with proteoms of different clones and

closely related *Brachionus* species (**Tab. S1**;, and *ab initio* gene predictions from SNAP [42],

GeneMark-ES [v4.48_3.60_lic, 43] and Augustus [v3.3.3, 44]. The SNAP model was initially trained on

the genome assembly with additional support of BUSCO complete hits (see above). GeneMark was

computed in the ES suite on the soft masked genome assembly. The ab initio training of the Augustus

model was computed on the genome assembly supported by the unassembled Iso-Seq transcripts. In

order to compensate for underrepresented rotifer protein representation in the UniProt database,

we combined this dataset with proteomes of another *B. asplanchnoidis* clone and four closely related

Brachionus species (**Tab. S1**). Completeness of these proteomes was checked with BUSCO in the

protein mode and missing orthologs were compared to determine if completeness could be

increased through the combination of proteomes. The combined proteome finally contained 97 % of

the BUSCO genes of the metazoan dataset.

MAKER was run over three rounds. For the first round of MAKER, we only used the Iso-Seq

data as EST evidence and the combined UniProt and proteome sequences as protein homology

evidence applying default parameters and est2genome=1, protein2genome=1 to infer gene

predictions directly from the transcripts and protein sequences. We used the gene prediction of

round 1 to retrain the Augustus and SNAP model, since the GeneMark model was exclusively

computed on the genome assembly and did not require retraining. Maker was run in the second

round using the retrained models and again est2genome=1, protein2genome=1 in order to increase

prediction fidelity. After a second round of retraining the Augustus and SNAP model, MAKER was run

through round 3 with switched off est2genome and protein2genome inference. After structural

annotation via MAKER, we functionally annotated the genes using functional classification of genes

from InterProScan [45] in combination with putative gene names derived from Swissprot [46].

To examine orthologous genes among rotifer species and identify gene duplication events,

we used Orthofinder [47]. This analysis was based on proteome information of the *Brachionus*

plicatilis species complex: *B. rotundiformis*, *B.* sp. 'Tiscar' and *B. plicatilis* [respectively "Italy2",

"TiscarSM28", "Tokyo1" in, 12], and *B. asplanchniodis* (annotation of this study). Proteome

information of *Adineta vaga* [48] was included as outgroup. We extracted the longest transcript

variant per gene to avoid duplicates in the input proteomes and followed the manual instructions of

Orthofinder. To analyze the genomic distribution of genes which were identified to derive from gene

duplication events, we extracted all genes of the *B. asplanchniodis* node (Orthofinder:

SpeciesTree_Gene_Duplications), removed duplicates to create a non-redundant list of genes.

Comparing this list of genes to genes that are located inside or outside of genomic regions with high

levels of CNVs, allowed the estimation of non-random gene distribution patterns via Monte-Carlo

permutation tests (1000 permutations).

Annotation of repetitive elements

The repeat library was produced using RepeatModeler2 [default settings, 49] and the polished

PacBio assembly. This produced 484 consensus sequences, 289 of which are "Unknown". These

consensus sequences were then used to mask the genome assembly using RepeatMasker with

default settings. From this, we identified top contributing repeat elements and used their consensus

sequences were used as blast queries against the genome assembly, and the top hits for each

consensus were used to produce alignments for manual curation [50] and classification [51]. Satellite

monomers were identified using Tandem Repeat Finder [52]. Consensus sequences of the satDNAs

are dimers of these identified monomers.

Contributions per repeat were estimated by summing up the total length covered by each

copy in the RepeatMasker output file. Top contributions were calculated over the whole assembly,

and over regions of the genome with distinct coverage variability (lowSD, interSD, and highSD in Fig.

4). For each region, the top 20 repeats were included, resulting in a total of 38 repeats to curate.

Curation was done by manually inspecting each alignment, identifying the ends of the aligning

regions, and producing a new consensus sequence. Additionally, classification was performed by

searching for TSDs, TIRs, LTRs, satellite structure, and conserved domains. RepBase searches were

rarely constructive since rotifer, and especially monogonont, TEs are not well-represented in any

databases. The final curated library of topREs contains 37 consensus sequences from 36 elements

(one sequence was removed because alignments were to only scattered AT-rich regions, one was an

rRNA gene, and one LTR sequence was split into the LTR and internal portions). Redundant

sequences between the topRE library and the RepeatModeler library were identified using

RepeatMasker. Sequences which were at least 95% identical and covered at least 80% of the

uncurated repeat were removed from the uncurated repeats prior to merging the libraries. Due to

the short length and difficulties in automatically creating consensus sequences for satDNA elements,

all uncurated elements that were identified as similar by RepeatMasker, regardless of similarity or

length of hit, were aligned to the curated consensus sequence and visually inspected for alignment.

Uncurated elements which aligned across most of the curated satDNA consensus sequences were

removed. The combined library (Supplementary file 8) of curated and uncurated elements contained

472 elements (262 unknowns), and was used to mask the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome and to

repeatmask related, high quality *Brachionus* genome assemblies to identify shared elements [53-55].

For each of the top contributing elements and each genomic region, an enrichment index was

calculated as the proportion of each repeat contribution in that region vs the whole genome (i.e.

repeat contribution in region/total contribution of repeat) divided by the proportion of the genome

represented by each region (i.e. region size/ assembly size). If this index was over 1, it meant that the

repeat in question was enriched in the region in question.

Preprocessing of short-read data

Trimming and adaptor removal was done using bbduk (v38.34, https://jgi.doe.gov/data-and-

tools/bbtools/) with the settings: k=23 ktrim=n mink=11 hdist=1 tpe tbo qtrim=rl trimq=20 maq=10

minlen=40. Trimmed reads were initially aligned to the reference genome using bowtie2 [56].

Preliminary tests with various parameter settings (local *vs*. end-to end alignment, different settings

for the sensitivity parameter, map as single reads *vs*. map as paired reads) did not indicate strong

differences. Thus, we used the default values for most parameters, except for fragment size

(parameter: X), which was set to the maximum observed fragment size of each library instead of the

default value of 500 bp (see **Tab. S4**).

We included three steps to remove contaminants, since DNA extracted from the whole

bodies of microscopic organisms might contain DNA from other organisms, such as bacteria. First, we

extracted all unmapped reads from an initial alignment to the reference genome and screened only

those for potential contaminant reads. Thus, we considered the mapped fraction as 'rotifer DNA',

since they mapped to the (contaminant-free) assembly. Second, the unmapped reads of all libraries

were combined and assembled using meta-genomic approaches. For this assembly, we used

metaVelvet [v1.2.02, 57] with a kmer-legth of 101bp, an insert size of 500 (+/- 200 standard

deviation), and a minimum reported contig length of 300bp. The resulting assembly was then

analyzed with metaQuast [58] using the option 'automatic pulling of reference sequences', which

restricts the search to bacteria and archaea. Subsequently, the complete genomes of putative

contaminants were downloaded, and the unmapped reads were mapped against those genomes. In

the third step, the remaining fraction (i.e., reads not mapping to the microbial metagenome) were

subjected to a kmer-based identification using the kraken2 pipeline [59], with the databases bacteria,

archaea, viral, UniVec-Core, and protozoa. We also performed checks on the false-discovery rate of

kraken2, by running the same pipeline on reads that initially did map to the reference genome.

Finally, all unmapped reads that could *not* be taxonomically assigned to contaminants, with either of

the two approaches above, were considered to be of 'rotifer origin' and were merged with the

mapped fraction. Those 'rotifer reads' were then further cleaned by removing mitochondrial DNA,

which was done by mapping them to the published mitochondrial genome of *B. plicatilis* [60], and by

removal of duplicates using FastUniq [61]. These 'final reads' were again mapped to the reference

genome, or they were analyzed using reference-free approaches that do not require alignment.

Analysis of unaligned reads

'Final reads' were subjected to kmer-based analyses using a kmer-size of 21bp with jellyfish [v2.1.4,

62]. Then GenomeScope 2.0 [19] and findGSE [20] were used to obtain kmer-based estimates of

coverage, heterozygosity and genome size. Per-base coverages C were computed from the kmer-

coverages

C_k with the formula:

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$$C = \frac{C_K \cdot R}{(R - K + 1)}$$

where R is the average read size, obtained from dividing the total number of basepairs in each library

by the total number of reads. The coverage estimates from these two programs were contrasted

with the naïve coverage estimate, based on sequencing effort (total number of bp in a library) and 1C

genome size estimated from flow cytometry, assuming a diploid genome.

To analyze GC-distributions among short-read libraries, the GC contents of individual reads

were extracted using the function fx2tab of SeqKit [63]. The resulting csv-files were further analyzed

with the R-package mixtools [64] using the function normalmixEM.

Analysis of copy number variation

Analysis of copy number variation was done separately for all 29 short-read libraries from 15

different clones of the rotifer *B. asplanchnoidis*. Average per-base depth-of-coverage (DOC) values

along 50-kbp and 5kbp windows, respectively, were extracted from the BAM alignment files ('final

reads' to reference genome) using the samtools function 'bedcov' [65]. In total, there are 4835

windows at 50kbp resolution, and 46255 windows at 5kbp resolution in the current genome

assembly. To allow comparisons among clones and libraries, DOC was normalized by dividing the per-

bp coverage of each window by 1/2 of the (mean) exon coverage of the respective library. In

unphased sections of the genome assembly, we expected DOC values of around 2, provided that

both alleles of a (diploid) genome map to the correct location. Coverage variation was quantified as

the standard deviation of DOC per window (50kbp or 5kbp) across all 29 libraries.

To identify individual CNVs and to locate possible breakpoints within contigs, we used a

custom-written R-algorithm involving the following criteria for merging adjacent windows (5kbp)

based on the similarity of coverage patterns. First, the coverage variation (measured as the standard

deviation of per-base normalized coverage across all libraries) had to be above a defined threshold

(i.e., 0.7, which was an *a-posteriori* determined threshold). Second, the read-depths of each library of

both windows had to be significantly correlated with each other at the *P*<0.05 level. This was done by

calculating the partial correlation coefficients. If both conditions applied, those two windows were

considered to belong to the same CNV. The very first and the last window of each contig, which often

showed deviant coverage patterns, were merged with their neighboring window. Third, adjacent

CNVs identified according to the above criteria were merged if they were separated by only one

window (CNV stopping breakpoint) AND if the coverages in the two windows surrounding the

breakpoint are significantly correlated with each other. Finally, we only considered CNVs with lengths

of at least three adjacent windows. Thus, we obtained a table of all CNVs along the genome of *B.*

asplanchnoidis, together with their size, and their location on individual contigs (i.e. in the middle of

the contig, at the edges, or spanning the entire contig). Data analysis related to coverage variation

and CNV detection was done using custom-written algorithms in the R environment [66] with the

base package (v3.6.3) and the add-on packages *stringr* [67] and *reshape2* [68]. For graphical

visualization, we used ggplot2 [69] and the add-on packages cowplot [70] and treemapify [71].

PCR-confirmation of CNV regions

To independently confirm presence or absence of CNV regions in different rotifer clones, and

to estimate the copy numbers of these genomic regions, we used PCR-based methods. To identify

unique PCR-primer binding sites in in regions of high and of low coverage, we used Thermoalign [72]

searches in multiple regions of 5000 bp length, spread across the genome and on different contigs.

The exact search parameters for Thermoalign are given in **Supplementary file 5**. Candidate primers

were tested and optimized using PCR on template DNA from different OHJ clones, including the

reference clone OHJ7i3n10. PCR reactions consisted of 25µl HotStart Taq master mix (Qiagen), 0.1µM

Primer, 3mM $MgCl_2$ and 20 ng template DNA. PCR cycling conditions were: 95°C for 15 min, 30 cycles

of 94°C for 20 sec, 56°C for 20 sec, and 68°C for 10sec; followed by 68°C for 5 min and hold at 4°C.

Agarose gels were used to test for presence/absence of the associated loci across different members

of the OHJ population. In total we screened four loci located on different contigs of the reference

genome assembly. Two of them were located in copy number-invariable, diploid regions of the

genome (according to the coverage estimates from the short-read alignments) and two were located

in CNV-regions (**Table S7**). In addition to the qualitative PCR test, we used droplet-digital PCR (ddPCR)

to estimate the copy number of the CNV loci for each rotifer clone. For each 22µl reaction we used

EvaGreen Supermix (Biorad), 0.15µM Primer, 4 units EcoRI and template DNA equivalent of 1500

genome copies. PCR cycling conditions were: 95°C for 5 min, 40 cycles of 95°C for 30 sec, and 61°C

for 1 min with a ramp rate of 2°C/sec; 4°C for 5 min, followed by 90°C for 5 min and hold at 4°C. For

droplet generation and fluorescence readout, we used a QX200 Droplet Generator and Droplet

Reader (Biorad), respectively. Copy numbers (CN) of CNV loci were estimated for each rotifer clone

using the ratios of amplicon molecule concentrations, which were obtained with the QuantaSoft

Software (Biorad):

$$CN = \frac{T}{(R_1 + R_2)/2} N_R$$

where T is the amplicon concentration of the target locus (the one showing copy number variation

across the OHJ population), R_1 and R_2 are the amplicon concentrations of the two reference loci, and

N_R is the number of copies of the reference loci in the genome (in this case, $N_R = 2$, since the

reference loci were both diploid). The 95% confidence intervals obtained from QuantaSoft were used

as an indication of the measurement error.

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Supplementary Information for:

Genome structure of *Brachionus asplanchnoidis*, a Eukaryote with intrapopulation variation in genome size

Stelzer, C.P., Blommaert J., Waldvogel A.M., Pichler M., Hecox-Lea, B. & Mark Welch D.B.

Correspondence to: claus-peter.stelzer@uibk.ac.at

This file includes:

Supplementary notes on short-read preprocessing

Figures S1 to S19

Tables S1 to S8

References for SI citations

Data to be submitted as electronic supplementary files:

Supplementary file 1 (VBCF report on genome assembly and contaminant filtering; pdf-file)

Supplementary file 2 (Summary of short-read preprocessing and fastqc-reports; xlsx-file)

Supplementary file 3 (Kmer-based analysis of cleaned Illumina reads, xlsx-file)

Supplementary file 4 (Ranges of all CNVs across the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome; csv-file)

Supplementary file 5 (Input parameters of the thermoalign pipeline; txt-file)

Supplementary file 6 (Detailed information on top-36 contributing repeat elements; xlsx-file)

Supplementary file 7 (Repeat profile, Gene density, and CNVs of the 50 largest contigs; html-file)

Supplementary file 8 (Combined library of curated and uncurated repeat elements; fasta-file)

Data to be submitted to public databases:

- Raw reads
- Assembly
- Gene annotation files
- Repeat annotation

Supplementary notes on short-read preprocessing

In total, we obtained 265.6 Gbp of Illumina short-read data from the 15 different *B. asplanchnoidis* clones. After all preprocessing steps had been completed, this amount was reduced to 194.3 Gbp. Total alignment rates to the reference genome improved from 90.9-98.4%, after quality-filtering only, to 94.1-98.4%, after contaminant removal (**Supplementary file 2**) Contamination rates were variable among the different libraries (**Fig. S1**). Contaminant DNA mostly derived from bacteria, of which *Pseudomonas toyotensis* was the only bacterial genome that could be identified with our metagenomic assembly-based approach. Among the libraries 3-30% of the unmapped reads could be assigned to other microbial contaminants. Contamination by the food algae *Tetraselmis* was low to absent depending on library (usually less than 1% of unmapped reads), and protozoan contamination was below the detection threshold in all libraries. After preprocessing, the genome coverages ranged between 9.4-79.0-fold, if the Gbp sequence of each library is expressed as multiples of the 230.1Mb *B. asplanchnoidis* reference genome, with the majority of libraries being above 20-fold (**Supplementary file 2**). Quality control using fastqc [1] indicated substantial improvements in most parameters in the course of the pre-processing pipeline, with the notable exception of GC-content (**Supplementary file 2**)

Fig. S1: GC-distribution in the reference assembly. **a** distribution based on 50kbp-windows, **b** distribution based on 5kbp-windows.

Fig. S2: Blobplot of cleaned OHJ7i3n10 reads against reference genome

Fig. S3: Contamination rates of short-read libraries (before contaminant removal). Horizontal dashes indicate the percentage of reads in the unmapped-reads fraction (i.e., quality-trimmed reads that did *not* align to the reference genome in the first alignment) that could be assigned to four classes of contaminants: *Pseudomonas toyotensis*, (b) other bacteria, archaea, viruses, (c) protozoan contaminants, and (d) *Tetraselmis* (food algae). The blue line indicates the "false-discovery rate", which was obtained by applying the same pipeline to the mapped-reads fraction of each library.

Fig. S4: Genome size (2C, as measured by flow cytometry) versus Ratio of repeats, a fitted parameter of findGSE [2]. The two variables are significantly correlated with each other (Spearman-rank correlation test, ρ=0.609, *P*=0.0057)

Source: Mapping.Rmd

Fig. S5: Total alignment rate *vs*. relatedness of DNA source to the reference genome. Relatedness was assumed to be 1 for all clones within the OHJ7i3-selfed line, 0.5 for the inbred line cross (IK1) and the natural ancestor of the inbred line (OHJ7), and 0 for all other clones which hatched from the natural population.

Fig. S6: Coverage and coverage variation along representative contigs of the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome (5kBp resolution). Each circle represents a 5kBp window of one of the 31 sequencing libraries. Coverage (y-axis) was normalized by dividing the per-bp coverage of each window by 1/2 of the (mean) exon coverage of the respective library. Contig borders are indicated by vertical dashed lines, and contig IDs are listed on the top. All contigs displayed here span ~140 Mbp in total, i.e. about 60% of the assembly. Variation across clones/libraries is indicated by color (based on standard deviations). Standard deviations larger than 2.5 (about 4% of the data) had to be capped to a value 2.5, to allow colored visualization.

a

b

Coverage variability	*t*	*df*	Pearson's *r*	*P*
lowSD	1.75	21	0.36	0.0939
interSD	4.38	21	0.69	0.0003
highSd	2.12	21	0.42	0.0459

Fig. S7: Genomic regions of elevated coverage variability are responsible for genome size variation. This figure shows the same analysis as in Fig. 4 but it excludes the library preps "C" (c.f., Tab. S4), which showed considerably higher coverage and higher GC content in interSD and highSD regions than the other libraries. **a** Mean coverage versus genome size [flow cytometry data on genome size was taken from 3]. Dots represent the mean coverage per library. Colors indicate co-prepared libraries (as in **Tab. S4**): Orange = A, Pink = B, Green = D, Blue= E, Gold = F. **b** partial correlations between the variables 'mean coverage' and 'genome size'.

Fig. S8: Genome-wide coverage patterns of two parental clones and their cross. This figure summarizes per-base coverage estimates of all 5000bp windows along the genome (subdivided in CNV regions and non-CNV regions, respectively). Coverages of the two parental clones (OHJ22i3n14, OHJ7i3n2) are expressed as multiple of the coverage of the crossed offspring clone (IK1). The dashed line at 1 refers to the crossed offspring IK1. The extensions "libC" and "libD" designate co-prepared libraries as in **Tab S4**.

Fig. S9: Genome-wide coverage patterns of multiple clones of a selfed line. This figure summarizes per-base coverage estimates of all 5000bp windows along the genome (subdivided in CNV regions and nonCNV regions, respectively). Coverages of the four clones are expressed as multiple of the coverage of the crossed offspring clone (IK1). The dashed line at 1 refers to the crossed offspring IK1. Clones are ordered in ascending genome size: OHJ7i3n7 (536Mbp), OHJ7i3n2 (560MBp), OHJ7i3n10 (568Mbp), OHJ7i3n5 (644Mbp). Only the library preparations "D" Tab. S4 are displayed here, but library preparations "C" exhibited a very similar pattern (not shown).

Fig. S10: Contig space that is occupied by CNVs. The X-axis displays the proportion of all 5kbp windows in a contig that have been classified as part of a CNV. For this graph, we only used contigs with at least 50 windows in length (i.e., contig length > 250kbp; n=114). The dashed line is our threshold at 0.9 for defining 'B-contigs'.

Fig. S11: Examples of "B-contigs". B-contigs consist almost exclusively of coverage-variable regions, with a consistent coverage pattern. Shaded regions highlight calls of individual CNVs, while open regions are coverage breakpoints, either due to low coverage variation and/or shifts in the coverage patterns among clones. Colored lines represent normalized coverage values of different rotifer clones/libraries (with "2" equaling the coverage at exonic regions). The displayed clones are a "trio" consisting of the parents (OHJ7i3n2, 2C genome size: 560 Mbp; OHJ22i4n14, 420 Mbp) and their sexual offspring (IK1, 500 Mbp).

Fig. S12: Example of small-scale coverage variation. The contigs displayed here contain shorter sections that have been identified as CNVs. Shaded regions highlight calls of individual CNVs, while open regions are coverage breakpoints, either due to low coverage variation and/or shifts in the coverage patterns among clones. Colored lines represent normalized coverage values of different rotifer clones/libraries (with "2" equaling the coverage at exonic regions). The displayed clones are a "trio" consisting of the parents (OHJ7i3n2, 2C genome size: 560 Mbp; OHJ22i4n14, 420 Mbp) and their sexual offspring (IK1, 500 Mbp).

Fig. S13: GC-content vs. coverage variability in different regions of the genome of *B. asplanchnoidis*. Hexbin chart is based on all 5kbp windows of the assembly (bins=250, in ggplot2).

Fig. S14: GC-content of genomic regions for in the *B. asplanchnoidis* genome. a Regions defined by coverage variability, **b** CNV regions (i.e., elevated coverage variability & locally consistent coverage patterns), **c** B-contigs (contigs consisting of >90% CNVs). For **c**, only contigs with at least 50 windows were considered. The distributions shown here are based on GC-contents calculated from 5000-bp windows. To prevent losses in precision, the last window of a contig was excluded (since it was always shorter than 5000 bp).

Fig. S15: Repeat composition of various GC fractions of lowSD regions. 'Unknown' refers to regions that were masked as repeats but could not be ascribed to any of the above categories. 'Not masked' refers to regions that were not identified as repeats by repeatModeler2.

Fig. S16: Repeat composition of various GC fractions of interSD regions.

Fig. S17: Repeat composition of various GC fractions of highSD regions.

Fig. S18: Repeat composition of various GC fractions of CNV regions.

Fig. S19: Repeat composition of various GC fractions of B-contigs.

Tab. S1: Outline of transcriptome and proteome libraries used for gene annotation.

Species | clone	N transcripts (T) | protein seqs (P)	Reference
B. asplanchnoidis | **ohj7i3n10**	T: 21157	
B. asplanchnoidis | **ohj22**	P: 12547	Blommaert et al. 2019
B. plicatilis | **Tokyo1**	P: 12484	Blommaert et al. 2019
B. rotundiformis | **Italy2**	P: 11050	Blommaert et al. 2019
B. spec | TiscarSM28	P: 12085	Blommaert et al. 2019

Table S2: BUSCO completeness statistics of *B. asplanchniodis* genome in comparison to two previously published genomes of related *Brachionus* species.

BUSCO (Metazoa n=978)	*B. asplanchnoidis*	*B. plicatilis*	*B. calyciflorus*
Complete %	90.6	95.0	90.7
Single complete %	87.9	91.7	88.0
Duplicated complete %	2.7	3.3	2.7
Fragmented %	2.0	2.0	2.0
Missing %	7.4	3.0	7.3

Data sources: Published genome of *B. plicatilis* by [4] and of *B. calyciflorus* by [5]

Table S3: Summary statistics of B. *asplanchnoidis* **annotation** in comparison to annotations of previously published genomes from related *Brachionus* species [6]. For reasons of data availability, this comparison does not include more species of the *B. plicatilis* species complex.

	B. asplanchnoidis	*B. asplanchnoidis* ohj22	*B. rotundiformis* Italy2	*B.* spec TiscarSM28	*B. plicatilis* Tokyo1
Number					
Gene	16667	12547	11050	12085	12484
mRNA	17419	12547	11050	12085	12484
Exon	92799	87600	91192	96546	93603
CDS	96847	87188	90882	96132	93249
Mean					
mRNAs/gene	1.05	1	1	1	1
Exons/mRNA	5.33	6.98	8.25	7.99	7.5
CDSs/mRNA	5.56	6.95	8.22	7.95	7.47
Median length					
Gene	1999	1839	1874	1912	1926.5
mRNA	2060	1839	1874	1912	1926.5
Exon	153	62	70	61	60
Intron	59	66	58	63	67
CDS	141	62	70	62	60
Total space					
Gene	59373627	29922141	25565912	29432444	31741372
mRNA	59373549	29922141	25565912	29432444	31741372
Exon	28793789	15401203	16387408	16563187	16266105
CDS	27027022	15373829	16368700	16537800	16239684
Single					
Exon mRNA	2881	514	249	315	444
CDS mRNA	2907	528	257	323	460

Table S4: Information on short-read sequencing libraries

Clone	Origin	GS[1] (Mbp)	Method	Prep.[2]	max. FS[3] (Bp)	avg. FS[3] (Bp)
OHJ82	natural clone	404	westburg	F	2000	503
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ22	natural clone	412	kapa	A	600	450
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ104	natural clone	462	westburg	F	2000	499
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ97	natural clone	470	westburg	F	2000	499
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ96	natural clone	492	kapa	B	600	450
OHJ98	natural clone	504	kapa	B	600	450
OHJ105	natural clone	520	westburg	F	2000	493
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ7	natural clone	532	westburg	E	1000	386
			kapa	A	600	450
			kapa	B[4]	600	450
			kapa	B[4]	600	450
OHJ13	natural clone	536	westburg	F	2000	516
			kapa	B	600	450
OHJ22i3n14	selfed line	420	westburg	C	1000	545
OHJ7i3n7	selfed line	536	westburg	C	1000	495
			westburg	D	3000	1149
OHJ7i3n2	selfed line	560	westburg	C	1000	632
			westburg	D	3000	1228
OHJ7i3n10	selfed line	568	westburg	C	1000	589
			westburg	D	3000	1093
OHJ7i3n5	selfed line	644	westburg	C	1000	496
			westburg	D	3000	1129
IK1	selfed line cross	500	westburg	C	1000	514
			westburg	D	2000	1001

[1] genome size (2C) estimated by flow cytometry in [3]

[2] Indicates co-prepared libraries

[3] Fragment size (FS) of the library

[4] Both derive from the same original preparation, but one was re-sequenced and had an intermediate PCR-step

Table S5: Alignment statistics of short reads to reference genome.

Rotifer clone	Library ID	TAR (%)	CCA (%)	CCA1 (%)	DAS (%)
IK1	vbcf73392	96.5	91.4	30.9	5.1
IK1	vbcf85861	96.1	94.0	36.5	2.1
OHJ104	vbcf102861	94.7	91.9	42.1	2.8
OHJ105	vbcf102863	95.9	93.0	34.6	2.9
OHJ13	vbcf102864	96.1	93.6	34.2	2.5
OHJ22i4n14	vbcf73391	94.9	90.8	36.7	4.1
OHJ7	vbcf100244	94.1	92.8	34.1	1.3
OHJ7i3n10	vbcf73394	98.4	95.8	25.4	2.6
OHJ7i3n10	vbcf85864	97.7	96.3	37.8	1.4
OHJ7i3n2	vbcf73393	98.4	96.4	22.8	2.0
OHJ7i3n2	vbcf85863	95.3	93.5	33.5	1.8
OHJ7i3n5	vbcf73395	97.6	93.1	26.5	4.5
OHJ7i3n5	vbcf85865	96.7	95.1	32.2	1.5
OHJ7i3n7	vbcf73396	97.5	93.6	25.9	3.9
OHJ7i3n7	vbcf85862	98.2	96.9	38.1	1.3
OHJ82	vbcf102860	94.7	91.8	43.0	3.0
OHJ97	vbcf102862	95.8	92.9	38.2	2.9
OHJ104	mbl2016	94.6	92.9	52.0	1.8
OHJ105	mbl2016	95.7	94.0	42.0	1.6
OHJ13	mbl2016	96.6	95.0	45.5	1.7
OHJ22	mbl2015	94.8	91.6	48.4	3.3
OHJ22	mbl2016	95.6	93.3	51.4	2.3
OHJ7	mbl2015	97.2	95.1	49.6	2.1
OHJ7	mbl2016	97.5	96.2	52.9	1.3
OHJ82	mbl2016	95.3	93.5	49.4	1.8
OHJ96	mbl2016	95.9	94.3	47.4	1.6
OHJ97	mbl2016	96.4	94.8	49.6	1.6
OHJ98	mbl2016	96.1	94.3	50.3	1.8
OHJ7	mbl2019	97.4	96.0	42.9	1.4

TAR = Total alignment rate; CCA = Concordantly aligned reads; CCA1 = Concordantly aligned reads (exactly once); DAS = Discordantly aligned reads and singletons

Table S6: Classification of 'B-contigs' in terms of the proportion of 5kbp windows that are CNV

Contig	Total 5kbp windows	CNV-windows	Proportion
000F	2444	2436	0.997
057F	166	165	0.994
058F	163	162	0.994
071F	109	108	0.991
004F	1671	1651	0.988
083F	79	78	0.987
084F	78	77	0.987
086F	72	71	0.986
048F	210	207	0.986
091F	66	65	0.985
099F	59	58	0.983
059F	155	152	0.981
109F	50	49	0.980
061F	146	143	0.979
055F	175	171	0.977
022F	564	550	0.975
031F	409	396	0.968
094F	62	60	0.968
097F	61	59	0.967
095F	60	58	0.967
062F	146	141	0.966
053F	175	169	0.966
047F	232	224	0.966
110F	52	50	0.962
036F	353	337	0.955
044F	262	250	0.954
064F	135	128	0.948
070F	114	108	0.947
068F	108	102	0.944
054F	176	166	0.943
067F	122	115	0.943
106F	52	49	0.942
107F	52	49	0.942
080F	83	78	0.940
088F	69	64	0.928
074F	107	99	0.925
056F	173	160	0.925
045F	252	231	0.917

Table S7: PCR-primers used for verification of selected CNV-loci

Locus	Position in genome			PCR primers		Length (mer)	GC (%)	Tm (°C)	Amplicon (bp)
	Contig	**Start**	**End**	**Orientation**	**Sequence (5'->3')**				
TA_000F	000F	471	681	forward	TCCAAAGGACGTTGATTAACCTG	23	43	58.9	210
				reverse	GGTTGATCAAGCTCCTTAGGAC	22	50	60.3	
TA_003F	003F	3642291	3642472	forward	TTTCGGGTAAGTCGACTTATTCC	23	43	58.9	181
				reverse	ATCCGGCATGTAGTATGAAACTG	23	43	58.9	
TA_001F	001F	841341	841438	forward	GCGGTCCAAATTCCCAAATTC	21	47	57.9	97
				reverse	GCGTCGCAATGTTGGAAAGC	20	55	59.4	
TA_032F	032F	62	163	forward	GCTCATCTCTGATGGTATTTGTCC	24	45	61.0	101
				reverse	CAAGGCAAAGTCATCAGTGAAGTC	24	45	61.0	

Table S8: Data from ddPCR-measurements.

Clone	Primer	Estimated copies/nl			Droplet counts		
		Estimate	ConfMax	ConfMin	Positives	Negatives	Accepted
ik1	TA_001F	40.1	43.6	38.3	497	14340	14837
ik1	TA_003F	44.1	47.8	42.1	523	13708	14231
ik1	TA_032F	63.4	67.9	61	751	13574	14325
ik1	TA_000F	0.58	1.12	0.38	7	14308	14315
neg	TA_001F	0	0.22	0	0	15814	15814
neg	TA_003F	0	0.24	0	0	14881	14881
neg	TA_032F	0.07	0.35	0.02	1	15833	15834
neg	TA_000F	1.2	2	1	16	15155	15171
ohj104	TA_001F	80.1	85	77.7	1072	15206	16278
ohj104	TA_003F	58.2	62.6	56	700	13791	14491
ohj104	TA_032F	0.15	0.48	0.06	2	15859	15861
ohj104	TA_000F	0.53	1.04	0.35	7	15476	15483
ohj105	TA_001F	59.7	64	57.4	715	13746	14461
ohj105	TA_003F	45.5	49.8	43.4	444	11256	11700
ohj105	TA_032F	1.3	2	1	16	14976	14992
ohj105	TA_000F	1.3	2	1	16	14668	14684
ohj13	TA_001F	53.2	57.3	51.1	658	14229	14887
ohj13	TA_003F	48.2	52.1	46.3	602	14382	14984
ohj13	TA_032F	44.9	48.6	43	552	14195	14747
ohj13	TA_000F	0.76	1.34	0.54	10	15477	15487
ohj22	TA_001F	89.6	94.8	87	1160	14650	15810
ohj22	TA_003F	72	76.8	69.6	865	13705	14570
ohj22	TA_032F	0	0.23	0	0	15068	15068
ohj22	TA_000F	0.57	1.11	0.38	7	14428	14435
ohj7	TA_001F	61	65.4	58.7	726	13645	14371
ohj7	TA_003F	50	54	48	608	13992	14600
ohj7	TA_032F	109.9	115.5	107	1463	14942	16405
ohj7	TA_000F	1.27	1.97	0.98	17	15772	15789
ohj7i3n10	TA_001F	68.5	73.2	66.1	815	13589	14404
ohj7i3n10	TA_003F	56.7	61.1	54.4	636	12888	13524
ohj7i3n10	TA_032F	133.4	139.9	130.1	1629	13570	15199
ohj7i3n10	TA_000F	0.59	1.1	0.4	8	15982	15990
ohj7i3n2	TA_001F	41	44.5	39.2	539	15200	15739
ohj7i3n2	TA_003F	38.9	42.4	37.2	502	14917	15419
ohj7i3n2	TA_032F	127.6	133.7	124.5	1680	14664	16344
ohj7i3n2	TA_000F	0.76	1.33	0.54	10	15523	15533
ohj7i3n5	TA_001F	46.2	50.1	44.2	529	13218	13747
ohj7i3n5	TA_003F	40.7	44.5	38.7	430	12222	12652
ohj7i3n5	TA_032F	126.7	133.3	123.4	1429	12565	13994
ohj7i3n5	TA_000F	0.43	0.94	0.26	5	13668	13673
ohj7i3n7	TA_001F	65.1	70.9	62.1	481	8458	8939
ohj7i3n7	TA_003F	46.5	50.3	44.6	600	14874	15474
ohj7i3n7	TA_032F	156	163	152	1919	13578	15497
ohj7i3n7	TA_000F	0.51	0.99	0.34	7	16221	16228
ohj82	TA_001F	74.5	79.2	72.1	949	14519	15468
ohj82	TA_003F	65.1	69.8	62.7	727	12783	13510
ohj82	TA_032F	0.07	0.35	0.02	1	16175	16176
ohj82	TA_000F	1.1	1.79	0.83	14	14950	14964
ohj96	TA_001F	57	61.3	54.8	688	13859	14547
ohj96	TA_003F	45.7	49.4	43.8	590	14901	15491
ohj96	TA_032F	54.2	58.3	52.1	653	13858	14511

ohj96	TA_000F	0.33	0.79	0.19	4	14106	14110
ohj97	TA_001F	62	66.1	59.9	857	15846	16703
ohj97	TA_003F	44.5	48	42.7	620	16079	16699
ohj97	TA_032F	55	58.9	53	749	15652	16401
ohj97	TA_000F	0.3	0.7	0.17	4	15757	15761
ohj98	TA_001F	57.4	61.7	55.2	689	13772	14461
ohj98	TA_003F	51.1	55.2	49.1	604	13594	14198
ohj98	TA_032F	1.16	1.86	0.89	15	15193	15208
ohj98	TA_000F	1.3	2	1	16	15009	15025

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