Polysaccharides induce deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strains to release

chronic bacteriophages

Chong Wang[1,2,4], Rikuan Zheng[1,2,4], Tianhang Zhang[1,2,3,4], Chaomin Sun[1,2,3,4*]

[1]CAS and Shandong Province Key Laboratory of Experimental Marine Biology & Center of

Deep Sea Research, Institute of Oceanology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Qingdao, China.

[2]Laboratory for Marine Biology and Biotechnology, Qingdao Marine Science and Technology

Center, Qingdao, China.

[3]College of Earth Science, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China.

[4]Center of Ocean Mega-Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Qingdao, China.

[*]Corresponding author

Chaomin Sun

Tel.: +86 532 82898857; fax: +86 532 82898857.

E-mail address: sunchaomin@qdio.ac.cn

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Abstract

Viruses are ubiquitous in nature and play key roles in various ecosystems. Notably, some viruses (e.g. bacteriophage) exhibit alternative life cycles, such as chronic infections without cell lysis. However, the impact of chronic infections and their interactions with the host organisms remains largely unknown. Here, we found for the first time that polysaccharides induced the production of multiple temperate phages infecting two deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strains (WC36 and zth2). Through physiological assays, genomic analysis, and transcriptomics assays, we found these bacteriophages were released via a chronic style without host cell lysis, which might reprogram host polysaccharide metabolism through the potential auxiliary metabolic genes (AMGs). The findings presented here, together with recent discoveries made on the reprogramming of host energy-generating metabolisms by chronic bacteriophages, shed light on the poorly explored marine virus-host interaction and bring us closer to understanding the potential role of chronic viruses in marine ecosystems.

Introduction

Viruses are the most abundant and genetically diverse biological entities on this planet (Suttle, 2007), and potentially play a role in shaping microbial abundances, community structure, and the evolutionary trajectory of core metabolisms (Sullivan et al., 2006; Samson et al., 2013; Zimmerman et al., 2020). The effect of bacteriophages (viruses that infect bacteria) on their specific hosts and within the microbial community is largely determined by their lifestyle. Traditionally, most bacteriophage life cycles are classified as being either lytic or lysogenic (Du Toit, 2017). During the lytic cycle, phages hijack the host's metabolic machinery for replication of their own genome and the production of progeny particles that are released through lysis. By contrast, during lysogeny, phages integrate their genomes into the host chromosome (or exist in the extrachromosomal form) and enter a dormant state, with the potential to re-enter a lytic cycle and release progeny by environmental changes at a later stage. Currently, more and more attention has been paid to chronic life cycles where bacterial growth continues despite phage reproduction (Hoffmann Berling and Maze, 1964), which was different from the lysogenic life cycle that could possibly lyse the host under some specific conditions. During a chronic cycle, progeny phage particles are released from host cells via extrusion or budding without killing the host (Putzrath and Maniloff, 1977; Russel, 1991; Marvin et al., 2014), instead of lysis of the host cell. Chronic infections are common among eukaryotic viruses (Godkin and Smith, 2017), however, to our best knowledge, only few phages have been described for prokaryotes in the pure isolates up to date (Roux et al., 2019; Alarcón-Schumacher et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022). The best-studied examples of chronic infection are those from filamentous ssDNA (single-stranded DNA) phages that to date have primarily been identified in the order *Tubulavirales*, which currently involves three families (*Inoviridae*, *Paulinoviridae* and *Plectroviridae*) (Ackermann, 2007, 2009; Knezevic et al., 2021; Chevallereau et al., 2022). One of the most distinctive features of inoviruses is their ability to establish a chronic infection whereby their genomes may either integrate into the host chromosome or reside within the cell in a non-active form, and

inoviruses particles are continuously released without killing the host. In addition,

tailless phages enclosed in lipid membrane are also released from hosts during chronic

life cycles (Liu et al., 2022). Recent studies indicate that chronic cycles are more

widespread in nature than previously thought (Mäntynen et al., 2021), and the

abundance of inoviruses in ecosystem may have been far underestimated (Roux et al.,

2019). Therefore, a large percentage of phages in nature are proposed to replicate

through chronic life cycles, but whether chronic cycles are associated with specific

environments or ecological conditions remains to be thoroughly explored

(Chevallereau et al., 2022).

Marine ecosystems always influence the operating conditions for life on earth via

microbial interaction networks (Falkowski et al., 1998; Faust and Raes, 2012;

Wigington et al., 2016), which are modulated by viruses through impacting their

lifespan, gene flow and metabolic outputs (Suttle, 2005). A majority of these viruses

are bacteriophages, which exist widely in oceans and affect the life activities of

microbes (Breitbart, 2012; Roux et al., 2016; Gregory et al., 2019; Dominguez-Huerta

et al., 2022). In addition to core viral genes encoding viral structural proteins (Brum et

al., 2016), bacteriophages also encode various auxiliary metabolic genes (AMGs)

(Brum and Sullivan, 2015) that provide supplemental support to key steps of host

metabolism. For instance, AMGs of marine bacteriophages have been predicted to be

involved in photosynthesis (Mann et al., 2003), nitrogen cycling (Ahlgren et al., 2019;

Gazitúa et al., 2021), sulfur cycling (Anantharaman et al., 2014; Roux et al., 2016),

phosphorus cycling (Zeng and Chisholm, 2012), nucleotide metabolism (Sullivan et

al., 2005; Dwivedi et al., 2013; Enav et al., 2014), and almost all central carbon

metabolisms in host cells (Hurwitz et al., 2013). However, AMGs of chronic phages

have not been reported. Thus, it is worth exploring whether chronic phages could

carry AMGs and assist host metabolism during chronic infection.

The deep sea harbors abundant and undiscovered viruses, which potentially

control the metabolism of microbial hosts and influence biogeochemical cycling (Li et

al., 2021). However, due to the vast majority of deep-sea microbes cannot be

cultivated in the laboratory, most bacteriophages could not be isolated. Thus, it is of

great significance to further identify unknown phages in the deep sea and explore
their relationship with microbial hosts and even marine ecosystems. Here, we report
that polysaccharides can induce deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* bacteria (difficult-to-cultivate
microorganisms) to release some chronic bacteriophages. These chronic
bacteriophages might assist host polysaccharides metabolism via corresponding
potential AMGs.

Results and Discussion

Polysaccharides promote the growth of deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36 and stimulate the expression of phage-associated genes

As a primary carbon source, polysaccharides are a ubiquitous energy source for
microorganisms in both terrestrial and marine ecosystems (Zheng et al., 2021a). In
our previous work, we successfully isolated a novel *Bacteroidetes* species through a
polysaccharide degradation-driven strategy from the deep-sea cold seep (Zheng et al.,
2021a). Of note, using the same approach and deep-sea sample replicates, we also
cultured a bacterial strain WC36 that was identified as a member of the phylum
Lentisphaerae by 16S rRNA gene sequence-based phylogenetic analysis (Figure 1A).
As expected, growth assays showed that two kinds of polysaccharides including
laminarin and starch could promote strain WC36 growth (Figure 1B). In particular,
supplementation of 10 g/L laminarin and 10 g/L starch in rich medium resulted in
~7-fold and ~4-fold growth promotion respectively compared to cultivation in rich
medium (Figure 1B).

To explore the reasons behind this significant growth promotion by
polysaccharide supplementation, we performed a transcriptomic analysis of strain
WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented either with or without 10 g/L laminarin
for 5 days and 10 days. In addition to the up-regulation of genes related to glycan
transport and degradation, when 10 g/L laminarin was added in the rich medium, the
most upregulated genes were phage-associated (e. g. phage integrase, phage portal
protein) (Figure 1C and Table 1), which were expressed at the background level in the
rich medium alone. Consistently, RT-qPCR results (Figure 1D) confirmed

upregulation of some genes encoding phage-associated proteins, as shown in Figure

1C. Therefore, we speculate that the metabolism of polysaccharides in strain WC36

might be closely connected with the phage production.

Table 1. Annotations and fold-changes of the transcriptome data of *Lentisphaerae* strain

WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented with or without 10 g/L laminarin. "Rich"

indicates strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium; "Lam" indicates strain WC36 cultivated in rich

medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin.

Gene_id	Lam	Rich	Log$_2$ fold change	*P*-value	Gene annotation
LJT99_00010	34.66133	1.947696	4.047436	0.000885	Phage tail protein
LJT99_00015	59.24968	5.003597	3.5227	4.30E-05	Phage portal protein
LJT99_00030	191.9747	7.854776	4.585701	1.74E-14	Phage tail tape measure protein
LJT99_00055	69.08332	0.3268	7.239027	5.06E-07	Phage virion morphogenesis protein
LJT99_00075	39.57964	5.818312	2.726103	0.003149	Phage major capsid protein
LJT99_00080	64.1666	1.13323	5.654168	7.40E-07	Phage capsid protein
LJT99_02570	14.98313	1.39E-17	8.242446	0.040965	Phage integrase
LJT99_05290	59.24968	0.727225	6.096258	2.40E-06	Phage terminase large subunit
LJT99_05300	39.57964	0.727225	5.511892	0.00012	Phage minor capsid protein
LJT99_05340	49.41521	3.170158	3.896062	2.30E-05	Phage portal protein
LJT99_07085	49.41521	2.558919	4.19071	3.37E-05	Phage portal protein
LJT99_07095	59.24968	1.947696	4.824191	7.40E-07	Phage terminase large subunit
LJT99_07125	59.24968	3.577629	3.991305	3.68E-06	Phage integrase
LJT99_09950	64.1666	5.410965	3.528071	1.70E-05	Phage tail tape measure protein
LJT99_10035	78.91632	9.483688	3.033143	2.89E-05	Phage terminase large subunit
LJT99_14585	69.08332	26.58123	1.366501	0.040756	Phage head-tail adapter protein
LJT99_15275	44.49759	0.727225	5.681619	4.78E-05	Phage integrase
LJT99_15295	88.74881	3.781357	4.498866	9.38E-09	Phage terminase large subunit
LJT99_15305	49.41521	3.577629	3.728509	0.000117	Phage portal protein
LJT99_15310	78.91632	15.18374	2.361653	0.00034	Phage major capsid protein
LJT99_15370	24.82336	4.188794	2.510263	0.030348	Phage major tail tube protein
LJT99_01210	305.0198	11.31601	4.735088	1.56E-17	Type VI secretion system protein VipA
LJT99_01215	737.5197	9.687289	6.230941	1.36E-28	Type VI secretion system protein EvpB
LJT99_01245	39.57964	1.947696	4.239825	4.78E-05	Type VI secretion system baseplate subunit TssK
LJT99_01250	177.2291	6.632948	4.709658	2.15E-14	Type VI secretion system protein IcmF
LJT99_02010	93.66489	28.61632	1.700863	0.00488	Bacterial type II and III secretion system protein
LJT99_02015	64.1666	23.1215	1.459804	0.029185	Type II secretion system (T2SS), protein E
LJT99_02020	103.4968	16.40502	2.643067	2.06E-05	Type II secretion system (T2SS), protein F
LJT99_12295	15122.75	3729.384	2.01964	2.19E-06	Type II secretion system GspH family protein
LJT99_15330	54.33257	1.743985	4.847018	2.40E-06	Type VI secretion system protein

Polysaccharides induce the production of bacteriophages in *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36

To test our hypothesis that polysaccharides might induce strain WC36 to release bacteriophages, we grew strain WC36 in rich medium supplemented with or without laminarin or starch and isolated bacteriophages from the cell suspension supernatant according to established standard protocols (Lin et al., 2012). Based on the growth curve of strain WC36, we found that the growth rate of strictly anaerobic strain WC36 was relatively slow. Therefore, different to the typical sampling time (24 h) for bacteriophage isolation from other bacteria (Jiang and Paul, 1996; Weinbauer et al., 1999), we selected a longer sampling time (10 days) to extract bacteriophages. TEM observation showed that many different shapes of phage-like structures indeed existed in the supernatant of WC36 cells cultured in rich medium supplemented with laminarin (Figure 2A, panels II-IV) or starch (Figure 2A, panels V-VIII). In contrast, we did not observe any phage-like structures in the supernatant of WC36 cells cultured in rich medium (Figure 2A, panel I). We also tested and confirmed that there were not any phage-like structures in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin alone (Figure 2—figure supplement 1A) or in 10 g/L starch alone (Figure 2—figure supplement 1B), ruling out the possibility of phage contamination from the polysaccharides (laminarin/ starch). These results suggest that polysaccharides indeed stimulate the production of various bacteriophages from strain WC36. Correspondingly, in the presence of laminarin, different forms of bacteriophages were observed by TEM, with filamentous ones dominant (Figure 2A). The length of these filamentous phages was about ~0.4 μm to ~8.0 μm (Figure 2A, panel II), and the size of the hexagonal phages was less than 100 nm (Figure 2A, panel IV). In the presence of starch, in addition to filamentous and hexagonal phages (Figure 2A, panels V, VI, and VIII), we also observed a kind of icosahedral *Microviridae*-like phage with a diameter of 25-30 nm (Figure 2A, panel VII).

Given that we found bacteriophages in cultures of strain WC36, we next sought to explore whether bacteriophages adhering to bacterial cells could be observed. To this end, we checked the morphology of strain WC36 in the absence or presence of

polysaccharides. As expected, with TEM we observed many filamentous phage-like structures around strain WC36 cells cultivated in rich medium supplemented with laminarin (Figure 2B, panel II) and starch (Figure 2B, panels III-IV). In contrast, we could not find any phage-like structures around strain WC36 cells cultivated in rich medium (Figure 2B, panel I). Meanwhile, we also checked the polysaccharides (laminarin/ starch) in rich medium directly by TEM and did not find any phage-like structures (Figure 2—figure supplement 2). Moreover, based on TEM observation of ultrathin sections of strain WC36 cultured in medium supplemented with polysaccharide, we even observed filamentous phages that were being released from or entering into host cells via a kind of extrusion or budding structure around bacterial cells (Figure 2C, panels II-IV; (Figure 2—figure supplement 3B, panels II-III), which were typical cellular structures in host cells used for chronic bacteriophage release (Marvin et al., 2014; Krupovic and Consortium, 2018). In contrast, phage-like structures with extrusions or buddings were not found in cells of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium (Figure 2C, panel I; Figure 2—figure supplement 3B, panel I). Hence, these results collectively suggest that filamentous bacteriophages induced from deep-sea strain WC36 replicate in a chronic manner as reported previously (Chevallereau et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022). However, the entry and exit of the hexagonal phages into the WC36 cells were not observed.

To further verify the release style of bacteriophages from strain WC36 in the presence of polysaccharide, we prolonged the incubation time of this strain up to 30 days in medium supplemented with 5 g/L or 10 g/L laminarin. Strain WC36 showed stable growth after it entered the stationary phase (Figure 3A). Regardless of whether the laminarin was present, the bacterial cells kept their cell shape intact, indicating they were still healthy after 30 days (Figure 2—figure supplement 3A, panels I-III). Apparently, the replication and release of bacteriophages in strain WC36 did not kill the host cell, consistent with the key feature of chronic bacteriophages (Howard-Varona et al., 2017). With an increase of culture time (5, 10, or 30 days) and laminarin concentration (5 or 10 g/L), the number of released bacteriophages increased (Figure 2—figure supplement 3A, panels IV-VI; Figure 3—figure

supplement 1, panels IV-IX). Specifically, the average number per microliter of filamentous phages (9.7, 29 or 65.3) extracted from the supernatant of strain WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin for 5, 10 or 30 days was higher than that cultured in rich medium supplemented with 5 g/L laminarin (4.3, 13.7 or 35.3) (Figure 3B). The average number per microliter of hexagonal phages (9, 30, 46.7) extracted from the supernatant of strain WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin for 5, 10 or 30 days was higher than that cultured in rich medium supplemented with 5 g/L laminarin (4, 11.3 or 17.7) (Figure 3C).

Polysaccharides promote the growth of deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strain zth2 and induce bacteriophage production

To explore whether the production of bacteriophages induced by polysaccharide is an individual case, we further checked the effect of polysaccharides on another cultured deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strain zth2. Strain zth2 was isolated by the same polysaccharide degradation-driven strategy as that used for strain WC36 (Zhang et al., 2022). 16S rRNA gene sequence similarity calculation using the NCBI server indicated that the closest relative of strain zth2 was strain WC36 (90.4%), which was lower than the threshold sequence identity (94.5%) for distinct genera (Yarza et al., 2014). Based on a maximum likelihood tree and similarity of 16S rRNA gene sequences, we propose that strain zth2 and WC36 are the type strains of two different novel genera, both belonging to the *Lentisphaeraceae* family, *Lentisphaerales* order, *Lentisphaeria* class. Consistently, laminarin indeed promoted the growth of strain zth2 (Figure 4A). Analysis of the differential transcriptome and RT-qPCR of strain zth2 cultured in either unsupplemented medium or with laminarin showed that many genes encoding critical factors associated with the phage life cycle were up-regulated (ranging from 4 to 200 fold) (Figure 4B, C and Supplementary file 1), suggesting that phages might also be involved in the utilization of laminarin by strain zth2, the same as in strain WC36.

To further confirm the existence of bacteriophages in the supernatant of strain zth2 cell suspension cultured in medium supplemented with polysaccharide, we

performed bacteriophage isolation from the supernatant of strain zth2 cultures
followed by TEM. Indeed, many filamentous-, hexagonal- and icosahedral phages
were clearly observed in the culture of strain zth2 grown in the presence of laminarin
(Figure 4D, panels I-III) and starch (Figure 4D, panels IV-V), but not in rich medium
short of polysaccharide (Figure 4D, panel VI). This suggests that bacteriophages were
induced by supplementation of polysaccharide to strain zth2.

In addition, transcriptome and RT-qPCR results showed that genes encoding
bacterial secretion system-related proteins were up-regulated in strains WC36 (Figure
4—figure supplement 1A, B) and zth2 (Figure 4—figure supplement 1C, D) cultured
in medium supplemented with laminarin. It has been reported that filamentous phages
utilize host cell secretion systems for their own egress from bacterial cells (Davis et
al., 2000; Bille et al., 2005). Therefore, the filamentous phages induced from strains
WC36 and zth2 might also get in and out of host cells using bacterial secretion
systems. Taken together, we conclude that laminarin effectively promotes the growth
of deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strains WC36 and zth2, and induces the production of
bacteriophages. Distinct from previous reports that bacteriophages are induced under
traditional conditions such as low temperature (Wang et al., 2007), mitomycin C
(Mazaheri Nezhad Fard et al., 2010), and ultraviolet irradiation (McKay and Baldwin,
1973), here, we report for the first time that polysaccharides induce the production of
bacteriophages.

Bacteriophages reprogram the polysaccharide metabolism of *Lentisphaerae*
strains WC36 and zth2
In this study, we clearly show that polysaccharide effectively promotes bacterial
growth and simultaneously induces the production of bacteriophages, suggesting a
close relationship between bacteriophages and host polysaccharide metabolism.
Therefore, we sought to ask whether bacteriophages could reprogram polysaccharide
metabolism in deep-sea bacteria. For this purpose, we sequenced the genomes of the
bacteriophages induced by polysaccharides in *Lentisphaerae* strains WC36 and zth2.
Eventually, two incomplete assembled genomes (Phage-WC36-1, 6.3 kb;

Phage-WC36-2, 28.3 kb) were obtained from the bacteriophages of strain WC36 (Figure 5A, B and Supplementary files 2, 3). Meanwhile, two incomplete assembled genomes (Phage-zth2-1, 6.3 kb; Phage-zth2-2, 40.4 kb) were obtained from the phages of strain zth2 (Figure 5A, C and Supplementary files 2, 4). Subsequently, we carefully compared the bacteriophage genomes with those of the corresponding hosts (strains WC36 and zth2) using Galaxy Version 2.6.0 (https://galaxy.pasteur.fr/) (Afgan et al., 2018) with the NCBI BLASTN method and used BWA-mem software for read mapping from host whole genome sequencing (WGS) to these bacteriophages. These analyses both showed that the bacteriophage genomes are completely outside of the host chromosomes. Through comparison of genome sequence (Figure 5—figure supplement 1), IMG database analysis, and phylogenetic analysis (Figure 5—figure supplement 2), we confirmed that Phage-WC36-1 was the same as Phage-zth2-1 (inoviruses, belonging to the family *Inoviridae*, order *Tubulavirales*, class *Faserviricetes*), indicating that inoviruses might be common in the *Lentisphaerae* phylum. Inovirus members were the dominant population in the active group of viruses from deep-sea sediments, and encode some proteins contributing to host phenotypes and ultimately alter the fitness and other behaviors of their hosts (Engelhardt et al., 2015; Mai-Prochnow et al., 2015). A maximum likelihood tree showed that both Phage-WC36-2 and Phage-zth2-2 belonged to the class *Caudoviricetes* (Figure 5—figure supplement 3). In addition to genes encoding phage-associated proteins within the assembled bacteriophage genomes, there are also many genes encoding proteins associated with polysaccharide transport and degradation, which were potential AMGs (Shaffer et al., 2020; Pratama et al., 2021). These polysaccharide metabolizing proteins include TonB-system energizer ExbB (Koebnik, 2005), O-polysaccharide acetyltransferase (Lunin et al., 2020), glucosaminidase, glycoside hydrolase family 127 protein (best BLASTP hit e-value 3e-25), and transglycosylase (Figure 5). GH127 is one of the CAZymes, which are specifically responsible for degrading polysaccharides (Cantarel et al., 2009). Energizer ExbB is an important part of the TonB-system, which is often present in *Bacteroides* and responsible for transport of oligosaccharides from the outer

membrane into the periplasm (Foley et al., 2016). It is absent in the strain WC36 and zth2 genomes, however. In natural ecosystems, viral infections indirectly influence microbial metabolic fluxes, metabolic reprogramming, and energy homeostasis of host cells (Howard-Varona et al., 2020). For example, cyanoviruses possess AMGs encoding core photosynthetic reaction centers (Sullivan et al., 2006) which are highly expressed during infection, thus stimulating photosynthesis and enhancing viral abundance (Lindell et al., 2007). Therefore, these potential AMGs encoding TonB-system energizer ExbB and glycoside hydrolases might reprogram the polysaccharide metabolism of host cells (strains WC36 and zth2) by providing supplemental support to key metabolic processes. The above results provide stronger evidence that the relationship between Phages-WC36 and their host is not a fight to the death between enemies, but in contrast a mutualistic relationship between partners (Shkoporov et al., 2022). Overall, bacteriophages induced by polysaccharides contain potential AMGs associated with polysaccharide degradation, which may play a key role in the degradation and utilization of polysaccharide by host cells.

Moreover, it was recently demonstrated that selfish bacteria, which were common throughout the water column of the ocean, could bind, partially hydrolyze, and transport polysaccharides into the periplasmic space without loss of hydrolysis products (Reintjes et al., 2017; Giljan et al., 2023). Based on our results, we hypothesized that these chronic phages might assist the host to metabolize polysaccharides in this "selfishness" mechanism, thus helping their hosts to grow and proliferate, so they could reap the benefits of simply having more hosts to infect. In addition, we found that nucleic acids could induce a deep-sea wall-less bacterium (*Hujiaoplasma nucleasis* zrk29) to release chronic bacteriophages, which might support strain zrk29 to metabolize nucleic acids without lysing host cells (Zheng et al., 2023). We also found that NO_3^- or NH_4^+ induced a deep-sea *Planctomycetes* bacterium (*Poriferisphaera heterotrophicis* ZRK32) to release a bacteriophage in a chronic manner, without host cell lysis, and this chronic phage might enable strain ZRK32 to metabolize nitrogen through the function of AMGs (Zheng et al., 2024). Therefore, the mutualism between chronic phages and hosts may

327 be widespread in the deep-sea microbes. However, it is difficult to conduct more

328 experiments to prove the mechanistic roles of the AMGs in promoting both host and

329 phage proliferation in these strictly anaerobic deep-sea microbes. In the future, we

330 need to construct genetic operating systems of these strictly anaerobic host strains to

331 reveal the relationship between chronic phage and host.

Materials and methods

Samples, media, and cultivation conditions

Deep-sea samples used for bacteria isolation in this study were collected from a

typical cold seep (E119º17'07.322", N22º06'58.598") at a depth of 1146 m by *RV*

KEXUE in July of 2018. Inorganic medium (including 1.0 g/L NH_4Cl, 1.0 g/L

$NaHCO_3$, 1.0 g/L CH_3COONa, 0.5 g/L KH_2PO_4, 0.2 g/L $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$, 0.7 g/L

cysteine hydrochloride, 500 µl/L 0.1 % (w/v) resazurin, 1 L filtered seawater, pH 7.0)

supplemented with 1.0 g/L of different polysaccharides (laminarin, fucoidan, starch,

and alginate) under a 100% N_2 atmosphere was used to enrich microbes at 28 °C for

one month (Zheng et al., 2021a). The detailed isolation and purification steps were

performed as described previously (Zheng et al., 2021b). After pure cultures of

deep-sea bacteria were obtained, we cultured them in a rich medium (containing 1.0

g/L peptone, 5.0 g/L yeast extract, 1.0 g/L NH_4Cl, 1.0 g/L $NaHCO_3$, 1.0 g/L

CH_3COONa, 0.5 g/L KH_2PO_4, 0.2 g/L $MgSO_4 \cdot 7H_2O$, 0.7 g/L cysteine hydrochloride,

500 µl/L 0.1 % (w/v) resazurin, 1 L filtered seawater, pH 7.0) or rich medium

supplemented with different polysaccharides for the future research.

Genome sequencing, annotation, and analysis of strains WC36 and zth2

For genomic sequencing, strains WC36 and zth2 were grown in the liquid rich

medium supplemented with 5 g/L laminarin and starch and harvested after one week

of incubation at 28 °C. Genomic DNA was isolated by using the PowerSoil DNA

isolation kit (Mo Bio Laboratories Inc., Carlsbad, CA). Thereafter, the genome

sequencing was carried out with both the Illumina NovaSeq PE150 (San Diego, USA)

and Nanopore PromethION platform (Oxford, UK) at the Beijing Novogene

Bioinformatics Technology Co., Ltd. A complete description of the library

construction, sequencing, and assembly was performed as previously described

(Zheng et al., 2021b). We used seven databases to predict gene functions, including

Pfam (Protein Families Database, http://pfam.xfam.org/), GO (Gene Ontology,

http://geneontology.org/) (Ashburner et al., 2000), KEGG (Kyoto Encyclopedia of

Genes and Genomes, http://www.genome.jp/kegg/) (Kanehisa et al., 2004), COG

(Clusters of Orthologous Groups, http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/COG/) (Galperin et al.,

2015), NR (Non-Redundant Protein Database databases), TCDB (Transporter

Classification Database), and Swiss-Prot (http://www.ebi.ac.uk/uniprot/) (Bairoch and

Apweiler, 2000). A whole genome Blast search (E-value less than 1e-5, minimal

alignment length percentage larger than 40%) was performed against above seven

databases.

Phylogenetic analysis

The 16S rRNA gene tree was constructed based on full-length 16S rRNA gene

sequences by the maximum likelihood method. The full-length 16S rRNA gene

sequences of *Lentisphaerae* strains WC36 and zth2 were obtained from their genomes,

and the 16S rRNA gene sequences of other related taxa used for phylogenetic analysis

were obtained from NCBI (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/). All the accession numbers were

listed in the Supplementary file 5. The maximum likelihood phylogenetic trees of

Phage-WC36-1 were constructed based on the zona occludens toxin (Zot) and

single-stranded DNA-binding protein (Zeng et al., 2021; Evseev et al., 2023). The

maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of Phage-WC36-2 and Phage-zth2-2 was

constructed based on the terminase large subunit protein (*terL*). These proteins used to

construct the phylogenetic trees were all obtained from the NCBI databases. All the

sequences were aligned by MAFFT version 7 (Katoh et al., 2019) and manually

corrected. The phylogenetic trees were constructed using the W-IQ-TREE web server

(http://iqtree.cibiv.univie.ac.at) with the "GTR+F+I+G4" model (Trifinopoulos et al.,

2016). Finally, we used the online tool Interactive Tree of Life (iTOL v5) (Letunic and

Bork, 2021) to edit the tree.

 Growth assay and transcriptomic analysis of *Lentisphaerae* strains WC36 and

zth2 cultured in medium supplemented with laminarin

To assess the effect of polysaccharide on the growth of strain WC36, 100 µl of freshly

incubated cells were inoculated in a 15 mL Hungate tube containing 10 mL rich

medium supplemented with or without 5 g/L or 10 g/L laminarin (or starch). To assess

the effect of laminarin on the growth of strain zth2, 100 µL of freshly incubated cells

were inoculated in a 15 mL Hungate tube containing 10 mL rich medium

supplemented with or without 3 g/L laminarin. Each condition was performed in three

replicates. All the Hungate tubes were incubated at 28 °C. The bacterial growth status

was monitored by measuring the OD_{600} value via a microplate reader (Infinite M1000

Pro; Tecan, Mannedorf, Switzerland) every day until cell growth reached the

stationary phase.

For transcriptomic analysis, a cell suspension of strain WC36 was harvested after

culture in 1.5 L rich medium either without supplementation or with 10 g/L laminarin

for 5 days and 10 days. A cell suspension of strain zth2 was harvested after culture in

rich medium either without supplementation or with 3 g/L laminarin for 4 days.

Thereafter, these collected samples were used for transcriptomic analysis by

Novogene (Tianjin, China). The detailed procedures of the transcriptomic assays

including library preparation, clustering, and sequencing, and data analyses are

described in the supplementary information.

Bacteriophages isolation

Phage isolation was as described previously with some modifications (Yamamoto et

al., 1970; Tseng et al., 1990; Kim and Blaschek, 1991). To induce the production of

bacteriophages, strain WC36 was inoculated in rich medium supplemented with or

without 10 g/L laminarin or 10 g/L starch, and strain zth2 was cultured in rich

medium supplemented with or without 3 g/L laminarin or 3 g/L starch. After 10 days

incubation, 60 mL of the different cultures was respectively collected and cells were

removed by centrifugation at 8,000 × *g*, 4 °C for 20 minutes three times. The

supernatant was filtered through a 0.22 µm millipore filter (Pall Supor, New York,

America) and subsequently 1 M NaCl was added to lyse the bacteria and separate

phage particles from these bacterial fragments. Then the supernatant was filtered

through a 0.22 μm millipore filter and collected by centrifugation at 8,000 × g, 4 °C

for 20 minutes, and phage particles were immediately precipitated with 100 g/L

polyethylene glycol (PEG8000) at 4 °C for 6 hours, and collected by centrifugation at

10,000 × g, 4 °C for 20 minutes. The resulting phage particles were suspended in 2

mL SM buffer (0.01% gelatin, 50 mM Tris-HCl, 100 mM NaCl, and 10 mM $MgSO_4$),

then the suspension was extracted three times with an equal volume of chloroform

(Lin et al., 2012) and collected by centrifugation at 4,000 × g, 4 °C for 20 minutes.

Finally, clean phage particles were obtained.

Transmission electron microscopy (TEM)

To observe the morphology of bacteriophages, 10 μL phage virions were allowed to

adsorb onto a copper grid for 20 minutes, and then stained with phosphotungstic acid

for 30 seconds. Next, micrographs were taken with TEM (HT7700, Hitachi, Japan)

with a JEOL JEM 12000 EX (equipped with a field emission gun) at 100 kV.

To observe the morphology of strain WC36, cell suspension in rich medium

supplemented with or without polysaccharide was centrifuged at 5,000 × g for 10

minutes to obtain cell pellets. Subsequently, one part of the cell collection was

adsorbed to the copper grids for 20 minutes, then washed with 10 mM phosphate

buffer solution (PBS, pH 7.4) for 10 minutes and dried at room temperature for TEM

observation. Another part was first preserved in 2.5% glutaraldehyde for 24 hours at

4 °C, and then washed three times with PBS and dehydrated in ethanol solutions of

30%, 50%, 70%, 90%, and 100% for 10 minutes each time. Samples were further

fixed in 1% osmium tetroxide for 2 hours and embedded in plastic resin (Zechmann

and Zellnig, 2009; Fortunato et al., 2016). Thereafter, an ultramicrotome (Leica EM

UC7, Germany) was used to prepare ultrathin sections (50 nm) of cells, and the

obtained sections were stained with uranyl acetate and lead citrate (Graham and

Orenstein, 2007; Panphut et al., 2011). Finally, all samples were observed with the

JEOL JEM-1200 electron microscope as described above. In parallel, the phage'

number in each condition was respectively calculated by ten random TEM images.

Genome sequencing of bacteriophages

To sequence the genomes of bacteriophages, phage genomic DNA was extracted from

different purified phage particles. Briefly, 1 μg/mL DNase I and RNase A were added

to the concentrated phage solution for nucleic acid digestion overnight at 37 °C. The

digestion treatment was inactivated at 80 °C for 15 minutes, followed by extraction

with a Viral DNA Kit (Omega Bio-tek, USA) according to the manufacturer's

instructions. Then, genome sequencing was performed by Biozeron Biological

Technology Co. Ltd (Shanghai, China). The detailed process of library construction,

sequencing, genome assembly and annotation is described in the supplementary

information. In order to detect whether these bacteriophage genomes were located

within or outside of the host chromosomes, we used the new alignment algorithm

BWA-MEM (version 0.7.15) (Li, 2013) with default parameters to perform read

mapping of host WGS to these phages. In addition, we also evaluated the assembly

graph underlying the host consensus assemblies. Clean reads were mapped to the

bacterial complete genome sequences by Bowtie 2 (version 2.5.0) (Langmead and

Salzberg, 2012), BWA (version 0.7.8) (Li and Durbin, 2009), and SAMTOOLS

(version 0.1.18) (Li et al., 2009) with the default parameters.

Data availability

The complete genome sequences of strains WC36 and zth2 presented in this study

have been deposited in the GenBank database with accession numbers CP085689 and

CP071032, respectively. The whole 16S rRNA gene sequences of strains WC36 and

zth2 have been deposited in the GenBank database with accession numbers

OK614042 and MW729759, respectively. The genome sequences of Phage-WC36-1

(Phage-zth2-1), Phage-WC36-2, and Phage-zth2-2 have been deposited in the

GenBank database with accession numbers PP701473, OL791266, and OL791268,

respectively. The raw sequencing reads from the transcriptomics analysis have been

deposited to the NCBI Short Read Archive (accession numbers: PRJNA946146,

PRJNA756144, and PRJNA865570).

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Conflict of interest

482 The authors declare no competing interests.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1. Polysaccharides promote the deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36 growth and stimulate the expression of phage-associated genes. (A) Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of 16S rRNA gene sequences from strain WC36, strain zth2, and some *Planctomycetes-Verrucomicrobia-Chlamydia* (PVC) group bacteria. *Bacillus cereus* ATCC 14579 was used as the outgroup. Bootstrap values (%) > 80 are indicated at the base of each node with the gray dots (expressed as percentages of 1000 replications). The accession number is displayed behind corresponding strain. (B) Growth assays of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium either without supplementation, with 5 g/L or 10 g/L laminarin or with 5 g/L or 10 g/L starch. (C) Transcriptomics-based heat map showing all up-regulated genes encoding phage-associated proteins in strain WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin. "Rich" indicates strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium; "Lam" indicates strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin. (D) RT-qPCR detection of the expression of some genes encoding phage-associated proteins shown in panel C. The heat map was generated by Heml 1.0.3.3. The numbers in panel C represent multiple differences in gene expression (by taking $\log_2$ values).

Figure 2. Polysaccharides induce the production of bacteriophages in *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36. (A) TEM observation of phages extracted from the supernatant of WC36 cells cultured in rich medium supplemented with or without polysaccharide. Panel I shows the absence of phages in the supernatant of WC36 cells cultivated in rich medium. Panels II-IV show the morphology of phages present in the supernatant of WC36 cells cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin. Yellow hollow arrows indicate the typical granular structure of filamentous phages, and green arrows indicate phage-like particles with other shapes. Panels V-VIII show the morphology of phages present in the supernatant of strain WC36 cells cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L starch. Typical filamentous phages are indicated with yellow hollow arrows, and two other kinds of phage-like particles with different shapes are indicated by orange and green arrows, respectively.

(B) TEM observation of strain WC36 cultured in rich medium supplemented with or

without 10 g/L laminarin or 10 g/L starch. Panel I shows representative morphology

of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium. Panel II shows the morphology of strain

WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin. Panels III-IV

show the morphology of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with

10 g/L starch. Red arrows indicate filamentous phages associated with bacterial cells.

(C) TEM of an ultrathin section of strain WC36 cultured in rich medium

supplemented with or without 10 g/L laminarin or 10 g/L starch. Panel I shows an

ultrathin section of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium; Panels II-III show

ultrathin sections of strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L

laminarin; Panel IV shows an observation of the ultrathin section of strain WC36

cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L starch. Red arrows indicate

filamentous phages being released from or entering bacterial cells.

Figure 2—figure supplement 1. TEM observation of potential phage-like

particles extracted from the rich medium supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin

alone (A) or 10 g/L starch alone (B).

Figure 2—figure supplement 2. TEM observation of the rich medium

supplemented with 10 g/L laminarin alone (A) or 10 g/L starch alone (B).

Figure 2—figure supplement 3. The morphology of *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36

and its released filamentous bacteriophages. (A) TEM observation of the

morphology of released filamentous bacteriophages and strain WC36 cultured in rich

medium supplemented without (panels I-III) or with (panels IV-VI) 10 g/L laminarin

for 5, 10, and 30 days, respectively. "Lam" indicate the potential laminarin adhered to

bacterial cells. The filamentous phages released from bacterial cells were pointed

using red arrows. (B) TEM observation of an ultrathin section of strain WC36

cultured in rich medium supplemented without (panel I) or with (panels II-III) 10 g/L

laminarin. White arrows indicate the extrusions or buddings around bacterial cells.

Figure 3. Bacteriophages induced from *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36 by

polysaccharides are released via chronic manners. (A) Growth curve of strain

WC36 cultivated in either rich medium alone or rich medium supplemented with 5

g/L or 10 g/L laminarin for 30 days. The number of filamentous phages (B) and

hexagonal phages (C) extracted from 1 μL of the supernatant of strain WC36 cell

cultured in rich medium supplemented with or without 5 g/L or 10 g/L laminarin (for

5, 10, and 30 days). The average numbers are shown at the top of the bar charts.

Figure 3—figure supplement 1. TEM observation of filamentous phages

extracted from the supernatant of strain WC36 cell suspension cultured in rich

medium supplemented with or without 5 g/L or 10 g/L laminarin (for 5, 10, and

30 days). Panels I-III show the absence of phages in the supernatant of cell strain

WC36 cultivated in rich medium for 5, 10, and 30 days, respectively. Panels IV-VI

show the morphology of filamentous phages present in the supernatant of cell strain

WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 5 g/L laminarin for 5, 10, and 30

days, respectively. Panels VII-IX show the morphology of filamentous phages present

in the supernatant of cell strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with

10 g/L laminarin for 5, 10, and 30 days, respectively. Scale bars, 1 μm.

Figure 4. Polysaccharides promote the growth of deep-sea *Lentisphaerae* strain

zth2 and induce the production of bacteriophages. (A) Growth assays of strain

zth2 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with or without 3 g/L laminarin for four

days. (B) Transcriptomics-based heat map showing all up-regulated genes encoding

phage-associated proteins in strain zth2 cultured in rich medium supplemented with 3

g/L laminarin. (C) RT-qPCR detection of the expressions of some genes encoding

phage-associated proteins shown in panel B. The numbers in panel C represent

multiple differences in gene expression (by taking $\log_2$ values). (D) TEM observation

of phages extracted from the supernatant of a cell suspension of strain zth2 cultured in

the rich medium supplemented with or without polysaccharides. Panels I-III show the

morphology of phages in the cell supernatant of strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium

supplemented with 3 g/L laminarin. Typical filamentous phage is indicated with

yellow hollow arrows, and two other kinds of phage-like particles with different

shapes are indicated by orange and green arrows, respectively. Panels IV-V show the

morphology of phages present in the cell supernatant of strain zth2 cultivated in rich

medium supplemented with 3 g/L starch. Typical filamentous phages are indicated

with red arrows, and other phage-like particles with different shapes are indicated by

green arrows. Panel VI shows that no phages were observed in the cell supernatant of

strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium. "Rich" indicates strain zth2 cultivated in rich

medium; "Lam" indicates strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 3

g/L laminarin.

Figure 4—figure supplement 1. Transcriptome profiles and RT-qPCR analysis of

the genes encoding secretion system related proteins. (A) Transcriptomics-based

heat map showing all up-regulated genes encoding secretion system-associated

proteins in *Lentisphaerae* strain WC36. "Rich" indicates strain WC36 cultivated in

rich medium; "Lam" indicates strain WC36 cultivated in rich medium supplemented

with 10 g/L laminarin. (B) RT-qPCR detection of the expression of genes shown in

panel A. (C) Transcriptomics-based heat map showing all up-regulated genes

encoding secretion system-associated proteins in strain zth2. "Rich" indicates strain

zth2 cultivated in rich medium; "Lam" indicates strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium

supplemented with 3 g/L laminarin. (D) RT-qPCR detection of the expression of

genes shown in panel C. Three replicates were performed for each condition. The

locus tag and its corresponding encoding product were shown with the heat map. The

heat map is generated by Heml 1.0.3.3. The numbers in panels A and C represent

multiple differences in gene expression (by taking $\log_2$ values).

Figure 5. Genomic organization of bacteriophages released from *Lentisphaerae*

strains WC36 and zth2 cultured in rich medium supplemented with

polysaccharide. (A) Schematic of the genomic composition of Phage-WC36-1 and

Phage-zth2-1. (B) A diagram showing the genomic composition of Phage-WC36-2. (C)

The genomic composition of Phage-zth2-2. Arrows represent different ORFs and the

direction of transcription. The main putative gene products of the phages are shown,

and the numbers in brackets indicate the numbers of amino acids within each ORF.

Hypothetical proteins are indicated with gray arrows, structural modules are indicated

by green arrows, the replication module is indicated by blue-grey arrows, the

regulatory module is indicated by golden arrows, the assembly and secretion modules

are indicated by blue arrows and potential AMGs encoding proteins associated with

polysaccharide transport and degradation are indicated by red arrows. The size of the

phage genomes is shown behind each gene cluster.

Figure 5—figure supplement 1. Comparative genome analysis between the Phage-WC36-1 and Phage-zth2-1.

Figure 5—figure supplement 2. Phylogenetic analysis of Phage-WC36-1 and related phages. (A) Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of single-stranded DNA-binding protein sequences from phage-WC36-1 and some related phages. *Chlamydia pneumoniae* J138 was used as the outgroup. (B) Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of Zot protein sequences from phage-WC36-1 and some related *Tubulavirales* phages. *Escherichia coli* was used as the outgroup. Bootstrap values (%) > 50 (A) and >80 (B) are indicated at the base of each node with the gray dots (expressed as percentages of 1000 replications). The accession numbers of phages encoding single-stranded DNA-binding proteins and Zot proteins are given after the phage names.

Figure 5—figure supplement 3. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of terL protein sequences from Phage-WC36-2, Phage-zth2-2, and some related *Caudoviricetes* phages. *Cytomegalovirus* phage AD169 was used as the outgroup. Bootstrap values (%) > 80 are indicated at the base of each node with the gray dots (expressed as percentages of 1000 replications). The accession numbers of phages encoding terL proteins are given after the names of the phages.

Supplementary file 1. Annotations of the transcriptome data of Lentisphaerae strain zth2 cultured in rich medium supplemented with or without 3 g/L laminarin. "Rich" indicates strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium; "Lam" indicates strain zth2 cultivated in rich medium supplemented with 3 g/L laminarin.

Supplementary file 2. Annotations of the Phage-WC36-1 and Phage-zth2-1 genome.

Supplementary file 3. Annotations of the Phage-WC36-2 genome.

Supplementary file 4. Annotations of the Phage-zth2-2 genome.

Supplementary file 5. Accession numbers of strain WC36, strain zth2, some *Planctomycetes-Verrucomicrobia-Chlamydia* (PVC) group bacteria, and *Bacillus cereus* ATCC 14579.

901   **Supplementary file 6. Primers used for RT-qPCR.**

A

Rich
Rich+3 g/L laminarin

B

(Log$_2$ fold change)

| 0.0 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 6.0 | 8.0 | 10.0 |

Locus tag	Product
3.99	JYG24_06675	Phage terminase large subunit
3.35	JYG24_11755	Phage tail protein
4.27	JYG24_11775	Phage major tail tube protein
3.48	JYG24_11780	Phage tail sheath protein
9.30	JYG24_11790	Phage tail protein
7.96	JYG24_11795	Phage tail protein I
3.67	JYG24_11825	Phage baseplate assembly protein V
3.68	JYG24_11845	Phage major capsid protein
5.81	JYG24_11850	Phage portal protein
6.77	JYG24_11930	Phage antirepressor

Lam vs Rich

C

mRNA relative expression (Log$_2$)

JYG24_11790   JYG24_11795   JYG24_11775   JYG24_11850

D

I
200 nm

II
50 nm

III
50 nm

Rich+Lam

IV
500 nm

V
50 nm

VI
200 nm

Rich+Sta   Rich