Epigenetic landscape of the H3K27me3 mark in macrophages transformed by *Theileria annulata*

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Significance statement

Tropical theileriosis is a major constraint to livestock production worldwide. Infection with *Theileria annulata*

induces the transformation of bovine leukocytes that subsequently exhibit similarities to human leukemia.

Long-term *in vitro* culture of transformed leukocytes attenuates their tumorigenic properties. The molecular

changes underlying this process are currently unclear. We focused on H3K27me3, a key histone tail post-

translational modification that regulates chromatin structure and gene expression, and compared its genomic

landscapes in virulent, highly disseminating macrophages *versus* attenuated macrophages with reduced

dissemination potential that are used as a live vaccine against tropical theileriosis. Western blot and ChIP-seq

revealed higher global levels of H3K27me3 and a striking broadening of its genomic distribution in attenuated

macrophages. To our surprise, this reconfiguration is not associated with major changes in gene expression

and attenuated cells appear to be less responsive to PRC2 inhibition, suggesting that large-scale broadening of

H3K27me3 does not systematically translate into increased PRC2-mediated silencing activity. Despite these

changes, H3K27me3 maintains the silencing of key tumor suppressor genes in both virulent and attenuated

macrophages. These findings shed light on the interplay between infection, the evolution of oncogenic

potential and reconfiguration of the chromatin landscape following attenuation of virulence.

Abstract

Theileria annulata and *T. parva* are obligate intracellular parasites that induce bovine leukocyte

transformation, leading to uncontrolled proliferation and heightened dissemination of infected leukocytes, thus

amplifying the parasite and enhancing its transmission. Early passage *T. annulata*-transformed macrophages

are virulent, but virulence decreases with long-term passage and infected macrophages become attenuated for

dissemination. Loss of dissemination is restored when TGF-β2-mediated signaling is re-established in

attenuated macrophages, suggesting that genetic and/or epigenetic changes occurring within macrophages

contribute to the attenuated phenotype. To elucidate the relationship between attenuation of dissemination and

epigenetic dysregulation of *T. annulata*-transformed macrophages, we focused on one of the important

repressive histone marks, tri-methylated lysine 27 of histone H3 (H3K27me3) catalysed by the Polycomb

Repressive Complex 2 (PRC2). We found that the global level of H3K27me3 of *T. annulata*-infected

macrophages is increased in attenuated macrophages compared to virulent macrophages. Chromatin

immunoprecipitation sequencing (ChIP-seq) revealed that the genomic distribution of H3K27me3 is heavily

remodeled from virulent to attenuated macrophages. In attenuated macrophages, many genes transition from a

focal peak of H3K27me3 around the transcription start site to larger chromatin domains. But this transition is

not paralleled by large-scale transcriptional downregulation. In addition, RNAseq analysis following PRC2

inhibitor treatment reveals that fewer genes are derepressed in attenuated macrophages than in virulent

macrophages, suggesting that broader H3K27me3 profiles do not systematically translate into increased gene

silencing activity. Our findings shed light on the mechanisms underlying the dysregulation of epigenetic

modifications in *Theileria*-induced leukocyte transformation and contribute to a better understanding of the

attenuation of tumor dissemination.

Introduction

Apicomplexan parasites *Theileria annulata* and *T. parva* are transmitted by ticks and infect bovine leukocytes,

causing tropical theileriosis primarily in Asian countries and East Coast Fever (ECF) in Africa[1,2].

Macroschizonts differentiated from tick-injected sporozoites induce tumorigenesis of infected leukocytes, and

dissemination of transformed leukocytes is mainly responsible for the pathology of these livestock diseases.

Despite the huge economic impact of this disease in the veterinary field, available vaccines suffer from several

drawbacks such as the requirement for quality control, cold chain[3,4]. In addition, parasites resistant to the

theileriacidal drug buparvaquone are emerging in endemic areas[5,6]. New vaccines and drugs are therefore

needed to control these widespread livestock diseases and to reduce their economic burden in endemic areas.

A specific feature of *T. annulata* and *T. parva* infections is the transformation of their host leukocytes that

allows the parasite population to grow due to uncontrolled host cell proliferation[7,8]. The mechanisms

underpinning *Theileria annulata*-mediated transformation – i.e., how parasites modulate host gene expression

and hijack their proliferation – rely on host-parasite interactions. For instance, the IκB kinase (IKK) complex

is recruited to the surface of the parasite resulting in nuclear factor kappa B (NF-κB) being constitutively

activated to induce expression of anti-apoptotic genes[9]. In addition, *Theileria* infection inhibits nuclear

translocation of p53, a well-known tumor suppressor, and blocks p53-driven expression of pro-apoptotic

genes[10,11]. Meanwhile, c-Jun N-terminal Kinase (JNK2) interacts with a GPI-anchored macroschizont surface

protein (p104), while JNK1 translocates to the nucleus to activate c-Jun to drive transcription of the matrix

metalloproteinase 9 (*mmp*9) gene and enhance tumor dissemination[12–14]. Parasite secreted peptidyl-prolyl

isomerase PIN1 also contributes to c-Jun stabilization that maintains the proliferative phenotype of *Theileria*-

infected leukocytes[15]. Subversion of host cell signal transduction pathways augments *c-myc*-driven

transcription of anti-apoptotic genes[16–18]. *Theileria* transformation therefore shares several similarities with

human carcinogenesis, where epigenetic (i.e., not involving changes of the DNA sequence) alterations

contribute to cancer development. For example, *Theileria*-induced tumor dissemination is regulated by

changes in TGF-β2 levels and dissemination of attenuated macrophages is restored by addition of exogenous

TGF-β2 consistent with a role for epigenetic regulation of cancer-related genes[19–21].

Many types of post-translational modifications on histone tails have been shown to regulate chromatin

dynamics and transcription[22]. Changes of the chromatin state have been reported in *Theileria*-infected

leukocytes. Tri-methylated lysine 4 of histone H3 (H3K4me3) is a mark correlating with active transcription

enriched upstream of the *mmp-9* gene in the *Theileria*-infected B-cell lymphosarcoma cell line (TBL3), and

transcriptional activation of *mmp-9* is associated with heightened tumor dissemination[23,24]. Tri-methylated

lysine 27 of histone H3 Histone H3 at lysine 27 (H3K27me3) is a key chromatin modification catalyzed by

the Polycomb Repressive Complex 2 (PRC2)[25]. H3K27me3 is associated with transcriptional silencing, acting

in part as a docking site for CBX containing PRC1 complexes. During embryonic development, H3K27me3

plays key a role in maintaining transcriptional silencing of developmental regulators[26]. Furthermore, the PRC2

complex is altered in several types of tumors, acting either as a tumor suppressor or an oncogene[27].

Theileria annulata-infected macrophages are fully transformed and as such can be maintained in culture

indefinitely. Early passage *T. annulata*-transformed macrophages are virulent (disseminating), but virulence

decreases with long-term (>300) passage and immortalized macrophages become attenuated for

dissemination[28,29]. In the present study, using the Polycomb-specific H3K27me3 histone mark as a paradigm,

we investigate the evolution of the epigenetic landscape between virulent and attenuated *T. annulata*-infected

macrophages. We show that the distribution of H3K27me3 in attenuated macrophages is profoundly altered

and attenuated cells become less responsive to PRC2 inhibition compared to virulent macrophages. However,

some tumor suppressor genes still respond to PRC2 inhibitor treatment. Our study therefore reveals profound

changes in the chromatin landscape that accompany the transition from virulent to attenuated states.

Results

***Theileria annulata* parasites within transformed host leukocytes are not stained by a H3K27me3-**

specific antibody.

When comparing the amino acid sequence of the tail of histone H3 between various parasite species, we found

that the amino acid sequence surrounding Lys27 is highly conserved between mammals and *Plasmodium*

falciparum and *Toxoplasma gondii* (Fig. 1a). Accordingly, H3K27me3 is present in *T. gondii* tachyzoites and

has been detected in sexual stage II gametocytes in *P. falciparum*[30–33]. We noticed that there's an S>T change

at position 28 of *Theileria* parasite histone H3, raising the question whether H3K27 is tri-methylated in

Theileria species. As expected, immunofluorescence analysis using an antibody specific for H3K27me3

stained bovine host nuclei, whereas *Theileria* nuclei were not stained (Fig. 1b). Whether this is due to absence

of the mark and/or a failure of the antibody to recognize it (due to the H3S28>T change) is unclear. By

contrast, specific antibodies to H3K4me3 decorated both parasite and host cell nuclei. Since H3K27me3 is not

detected in the parasite by the antibody we used, the following analyses of H3K27me3 reflect only the bovine

histone mark.

Global levels and distribution of H3K27me3 are altered in attenuated macrophages.

The fact that attenuated macrophages have a low dissemination potential led us to hypothesize that oncogenes

activated as a consequence of *Theileria* infection might be transcriptionally downregulated through

mechanisms promoting a repressed chromatin state. To this end, we quantified H3K27me3 abundance in the

nuclear fraction of both virulent and attenuated macrophages (Fig. 2a). The amount of H3K27me3 was higher

in attenuated macrophages than in virulent macrophages, whereas H3K4me3 was lower in attenuated

macrophages. Interestingly, the expression of EZH2, the main PRC2 catalytic subunit, appeared unchanged

between virulent and attenuated macrophages.

We next investigated the genome-wide distribution of these marks in *Theileria*-infected macrophages by

chromatin immunoprecipitation sequencing (ChIP-seq). *Drosophila melanogaster* chromatin was used as a

spike-in control in order to normalize the abundance of the histone marks[34]. Consistent with the increase in the

amount of H3K27me3 observed by immunoblotting, the density of the mark around transcriptional start sites

(TSS) was globally higher in attenuated than virulent macrophages (Supplementary Fig. S1). H3K27me3 was

also poorly correlated between virulent and attenuated macrophages at the genome-wide level (r=0.593 and

0.603 for replicates 1 and 2, respectively), contrasting with the high degree of H3K4me3 correlation (r=0.976

and 0.973 for replicate 1 and 2 respectively) (Fig. 2b). A large number of H3K27me3-positive genes were

specific to either virulent or attenuated macrophages, while very few differences were observed for

H3K4me3-positive genes (Fig. 2c). Strikingly, plotting the average H3K27me3 signal revealed that while the

mark was increased overall over the gene bodies of attenuated cells, its relative distribution around the TSS

was strikingly different between virulent and attenuated cells (Fig. 2d). In virulent macrophages, H3K27me3

showed a typical enrichment around the TSS. However, in attenuated macrophages, H3K27me3 enrichment

was no longer maximal at the TSS. Instead, the mark accumulated most prominently in intergenic regions

(upstream of TSS and downstream of transcription termination sites). This contrasts with H3K4me3 that

accumulated sharply around the TSS and showed a similar distribution pattern between virulent and

attenuated macrophages.

We further defined 3 clusters of genes according to H3K27me3 enrichment (Fig. 3a): virulent-positive (cluster

1), attenuated-positive (cluster 2), both positive (cluster 3). While virulent-specific H3K27me3 signal showed

a sharp enrichment around the TSS, attenuated-specific H3K27me3 signal showed a wide distribution around

the TSS of attenuated macrophages, with a maximal enrichment upstream of the TSS. This difference was

also obvious for genes showing H3K27me3 enrichment in both conditions (Fig. 3a). Average transcript levels

in virulent and attenuated macrophages for each H3K27me3 cluster showed no statistically significant

difference as a group, while differential gene expression analysis identified a subset of cluster 2 genes that

were downregulated in attenuated *versus* virulent macrophages (Fig. 3b)[35]. One of the genes highly enriched

for H3K27me3 in cluster 2 in attenuated macrophages is the Src Kinase Associated phosphoprotein 2

(SKAP2) that's associated with cell adhesion of macrophages[36]. It is covered by a large domain of H3K27me3

extending over 500 kb, in contrast to a low level concentrated at the TSS found in virulent macrophages (Fig.

3c), corresponding to the downregulation of SKAP2 in attenuated macrophages[35]. Peaks pattern of

H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 on the representative genes in other clusters, TBX5 (Cluster 1) and WNT3 (Cluster

3) were also visualized (Fig. 3c). Altogether, these data show that the attenuated phenotype is characterized

by a dramatic reconfiguration of H3K27me3 distribution.

Limited effect of PRC2 inhibition on tumor-related phenotypes

In light of the widespread re-distribution of H3K27me3 in attenuated cells, we next investigated the

requirement for the mark in the transformed and attenuated phenotypes. We treated both virulent and

attenuated macrophages with a specific PRC2 inhibitor (UNC1999) and its inactive analog (UNC2400)[37,38].

Ten days treatment with UNC1999 lead to an acute loss of H3K27me3 in both cell lines (Fig. 4a). We then

performed fibronectin-binding assays using the PRC2 inhibitor treated macrophages (Ref). Though attenuated

macrophages displayed lower binding activity compared with virulent macrophages, PRC2 inhibition did not

affect binding activity (Fig. 4b). We injected the PRC2 inhibitor treated macrophages into immune-

compromised Rag2/γC mice and then orally administrated PRC2 inhibitor for 3-weeks to evaluate if loss of

H3K27me3 impacts on formation of tumors *in vivo*. The parasite burden of each organ was quantified by the

amount of DNA corresponding to the *T. annulata ama-1* gene (TA02980). Similar to the fibronectin-binding

assay, there was no significant change resulting from PRC2 inhibition (Fig. 4c).

H3K27me3-mediated gene repression is dampened in attenuated macrophages

We next assessed gene expression changes following PRC2 inhibition in virulent and attenuated cells. For this

purpose, we performed RNA-seq on *Theileria*-infected macrophages treated with UNC1999 or UNC2400 for

10 days to identify the genes whose transcription is reactivated following loss of PRC2 activity. Due to the

repressive function of H3K27me3, PRC2 inhibition resulted in a majority of differentially expressed genes

(DEGs) being upregulated in both virulent and attenuated macrophages (Fig. 5a). Interestingly, the number of

upregulated genes in virulent macrophages was more than 2-fold higher than in attenuated macrophages,

suggesting that gene silencing is less dependent on PRC2 in attenuated macrophages. Twenty-one genes were

commonly upregulated in virulent and attenuated macrophages suggestive of a core function for H3K27me3-

mediated repression in *Theileria*-infected macrophages (Fig. 5b, Supplementary Fig. S2, S3, and

Supplementary Table S2). Gene ontology analysis also demonstrated that PRC2 retains its canonical function

of regulating genes related to embryonic development in virulent macrophages. However, enrichment for this

class of genes is no longer statistically significant in attenuated macrophages (Fig. 5c). This functional

difference in PRC2 inhibitor responsiveness between virulent and attenuated macrophages could be caused by

the difference of genome-wide distribution of H3K27me3 (Fig. 2b). Remarkably, some of the common PRC2-

repressed genes (Fig. 5d) include Granzyme A (GZMA) identified as a novel dissemination suppressor of

Theileria-transformed macrophages[35] and Follistatin (FST) known to reduce tumor invasiveness and

metastasis in breast cancer[39,40].

Overall, our analyses of the epigenetic landscape of *Theileria*-infected macrophages have uncovered a

dramatic reconfiguration of the H3K27me3 genomic pattern during the transition from the virulent to the

attenuated state. The histone mark adopts a broad pattern of genomic distribution reminiscent of the transition

from sharp to broad domains observed during development in the transition from the pluripotent to the

differentiated state[41]. This is paralleled by a reduced transcriptional response following PRC2 inhibition,

suggesting that this broad pattern may be less conducive to gene silencing and/or more resilient to PRC2

inhibition. Interestingly, silencing of some key tumor suppressor genes is preserved in attenuated

macrophages, highlighting the requirement for a minimally functional PRC2 complex.

Discussion

Theileria parasites modulate host leukocyte gene expression to induce uncontrolled leukocyte proliferation,

thereby favoring their own reproduction, as parasites are distributed to both daughter leukocytes following cell

division[42]. The unrestrained leukocyte proliferation and illicit dissemination within *Theileria*-infected animals

have several similarities with human carcinogenesis, and for this reason we focused on key post-translational

modifications of histone tails with established links to oncogenic phenotypes. We chose to map H3K4me3 and

H3K27me3 histone marks in virulent disseminating *T. annulata*-transformed versus attenuated macrophages

with dampened dissemination. As H3K27me3 is a key repressive mark we hypothesized that changes in its

genomic distribution could underlie some of the changes occurring during the attenuation processes. Indeed,

we observed that the distribution of H3K27me3 is dramatically reconfigured during attenuation. In virulent

macrophages, H3K27me3 preferentially accumulates around the TSS of developmental regulators (Fig. 5c),

while H3K27me3 in attenuated macrophages adopts a broader profile over large regions sometimes

encompassing multiple genes. Furthermore, H3K27me3 peaks on the DEGs between virulent and attenuated

macrophages also exhibited a similar distribution (Supplementary Fig. S4)[35].

Repressive histone marks are tightly related to heterochromatin structure, but just how methyltransferases

recognize specific sites in whole chromosomes is still not fully understood. Recently, it has been revealed that

phase separation of H3K9me2/3 and Heterochromatin Protein 1 (HP-1) drives heterochromatin formation and

fusion[43]. Moreover, the disordered region of CBX2, a subunit of the PRC1 complex can form condensates and

is important to maintain a transcriptionally repressed state[44,45]. Long-term oxidative stress also increases

H3K27me3 levels and attenuated macrophages exhibit elevated H_2O_2 production[46,47]. This suggests a potential

link between heightened oxidative stress and the widespread distribution of H3K27me3 in attenuated

macrophages. Given that follicular lymphoma harboring EZH2 mutations displays irregular H3K27me3

methylation, we looked at SNPs in the *ezh2* genes of virulent and attenuated macrophages. However, we could

find no evidence of any amino acid changes whether conferring a gain-of-function change or otherwise. Thus,

we checked our RNAseq data for *ezh2*-associated genes and only *phf19* displayed reduced expression in

attenuated macrophages, a reduction confirmed by qRT-PCR (Supplementary Fig. S5). Given the reduction in

phf19 mRNA levels in attenuated macrophages is significant ($p = 0.0052$) one possibility is that reduced

levels of PHF19 might destabilize the PPRC2 to an extent that although EZH2 can still methylate K27, to a

large extent the complex doesn't repress all marked genes. Many *Toxoplasma* effector molecules localized in

the host nucleus have disordered regions that could contribute to the formation of phase-separated

compartments in the chromatin of host cells[48,49]. We did not elucidate whether and how *Theileria annulata*

infection alters the host cell epigenetic landscape and it is possible that the parasite secretes effector molecules

that might translocate to the host nucleus and reorganize bovine chromatin structure[50–52].

Interestingly, we found that this reconfiguration of H3K27me3 distribution is not associated to widespread

gene silencing and that fewer genes become de-repressed following PRC2 inhibition in attenuated cells than in

virulent macrophages. These observations suggest that this reconfiguration of H3K27me3 does not lead to a

globally increased PRC2 silencing activity. Why spreading of H3K27me3 does not lead to a more extensive

repression of transcription in attenuated macrophages is unclear, but we note that genes that gain H3K27me3

in attenuated macrophages are on average already lowly expressed in virulent cells (Fig. 3b). Previous studies

have shown that global increases in H3K27me3 can lead to complex effects on transcription that do not

necessarily result in a stronger repression of Polycomb target gene[53,54]. Interestingly however, PRC2 inhibitor

treatment led to the de-repression of three tumor suppressor genes *GZMA, PRF1* and *FST* in both virulent and

attenuated macrophages, indicating that H3K27me3 is required in maintaining their repressed state, thus

potentially contributing to the cancer-like phenotype of *Theileria*-induced transformation. This is consistent

with our observation that *GZMA* plays a role in tumor dissemination of *Theileria*-infected leukocytes and

human B-cell lymphomas[35]. The observation that genes silenced by PRC2 comprise both tumor suppressors

and oncogenes may explain the lack of an obvious effect of inhibiting PRC2 on the transformed phenotype.

Alterations of the chromatin state following host-parasite infection have also been reported in other contexts.

In particular, intracellular pathogens are capable of epigenetically modifying gene expression of infected host

cells by injecting effector molecules. *Legionella pneumophila* secretes the methyltransferase RomA into the

host cell to modify H3K14 acetylation and promote intracellular bacterial replication[56]. Amastigotes of

Leishmania, an obligate intracellular parasite, can induce epigenetic alterations of host macrophages, such as

DNA and histone modifications to promote pathogen survival and replication[57]. For instance, modulation of

host H3 acetylation and methylation by *Leishmania* amastigotes prevents NF-κB and NLRP3 inflammasome

activation, resulting in suppression of host immune responses[58,59]. The Apicomplexa parasite, *Toxoplasma*

gondii hijacks host cell signaling pathways and modifies the epigenetic state to prevent host cell apoptosis.

Recently, it was shown that *Toxoplasma* E2F4-associated EZH2 inducing Gene Regulator (TEEGR) activates

EZH2 and antagonizes NF-κB signaling by epigenetic repression in host cells[60]. However, the level of host

EZH2 protein did not change between virulent and attenuated macrophages (Fig. 2a) suggesting that other

mechanisms alter H3K27me3 distribution in *Theileria*-infected macrophages. Above we postulated that

reduced PHF19 expression might be one mechanism that could be directly tested by knocking down PHF19

levels in virulent macrophages to see if this induces abnormal spreading of H3K27me3 marks. Whether

Theileria plays an active role in modulating the H3K27me3 landscape of its host cell, or whether the changes

we observed are caused by changes in the chromatin regulatory properties of the host cell during the

attenuation process are important questions that will need to be addressed in future studies.

Materials and Methods

Cell culture

Theileria annulata-infected macrophages are the Ode virulent and attenuated lines corresponding to passage

53 and 309 [29,61]. These cells were maintained with RPMI medium supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum

(FBS), 2 mM L-Glutamine, 100 U penicillin, 0.1 mg/ml streptomycin, and 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-

piperazineethanesulfonic acid (HEPES) at 37°C with 5% CO_2.

Immunofluorescence microscopy

1×10^5 cells were centrifuged on glass slide with the Cellspin I (Tharmac) at 1,500 rpm for 3 min and fixed by

4% paraformaldehyde for 10–15 min at room temperature. Fixed cells were permeabilized with 0.2% Triton

X-100 for 10 min and blocked with 1% BSA for 30 min. These cells were incubated with primary antibodies

against H3K27me3 (1/1000, Cell Signaling) or H3K4me3 (1/1000, Cell Signaling) with parasite surface

protein p104 (1/1000, 1C12)[62] for 1 h at room temperature, sequentially stained with secondary antibodies

conjugated with Alexa 488 and Alexa 594 (1/1000, Molecular Probes) for 45 min at room temperature.

Stained cells were mounted in ProLong Diamond Antifade Mountant with DAPI (Thermo Fisher Scientific).

Stained cells were imaged by wide field Leica DMI6000 and these images were deconvoluted.

Preparation of nuclear extracts

We washed $0.5–2 \times 10^7$ *T. annulata*-infected macrophages and *D. melanogaster* S2 cells with phosphate-

buffered saline (PBS) once and subsequently suspended with Buffer A (10 mM pH7.9 HEPES, 5 mM $MgCl_2$,

250 mM sucrose, 0.1% NP40) supplemented with protease inhibitors and 1 mM DTT. After keeping on ice for

10 min, cell suspensions were centrifuged 8,000 rpm for 10 min at 4°C to collect cytosolic fraction. Pellets

were subsequently suspended with Buffer B (25 mM pH7.9 HEPES, 1.5 mM $MgCl_2$, 0.1 mM EDTA, 20%

Glycerol, 700 mM NaCl) supplemented with protease inhibitors and 1 mM DTT followed by sonication for 10

min on ice. Nuclear fractions were collected from supernatant of the centrifuged solutions (14,000 rpm for 15

min at 4 °C). Collected nuclear extracts were quantified by the Bradford protein assay.

Immunoblotting

Nuclear extracts were run by SDS-PAGE and transferred to nitrocellulose membrane (GE healthcare), subsequently membranes were blocked with 5% (w/v) skimmed milk powder in PBS containing 0.1% Tween 20 (PBS-T) for 1 h at room temperature. Immune reactions were carried out using 1/2000 diluted monoclonal rabbit anti-H3K27me3 or H3K4me3 antibodies (Cell signaling) or 1/50000 diluted monoclonal rabbit anti-H3 antibodies (Active motif) overnight at 4 °C as primary antibody. 1/5000 diluted HRP-labeled anti-rabbit secondary antibodies (Santa Cruz) for 1 h at room temperature. Proteins were visualized with X-ray film or ECL (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and imaged fusion FX (Vilber Lourmat). The H3 levels were used as a loading control.

Preparation of chromatin

We cross-linked 1.5×10^7 cells by pre-warmed DMEM supplemented with 1% Formaldehyde, 15 mM NaCl, 150 μM EDTA, 75 μM EGTA, and 15 mM pH 8.0 Hepes for 10 min at room temperature with slow agitation and then quenched formaldehyde with 125 mM Glycine for 5 min at room temperature. Following centrifugation at 1000 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C, cells were with cold PBS once. Washed cells were suspended with 1 ml Buffer 1 (50 mM pH7.5 Hepes-KOH, 140 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 10% glycerol, 0.5% NP40, 0.25% Triton X-100) supplemented with protease inhibitors (PMSF, aprotinin, leupeptin, pepstatin) and rocked at 4 °C for 10 min. Following centrifugation at 1500 rpm for 5 min at 4 °C, cells were resuspended with 1 ml Buffer 2 (10 mM pH8 Tris, 200 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 0.5 mM EGTA) supplemented with protease inhibitors (PMSF, aprotinin, leupeptin, pepstatin) and rocked at room temperature for 10 min. Cells

were centrifuged at 1500 rpm for 5 min at 4 °C and resuspended 1.3 ml Buffer 3 (10 mM pH8 Tris, 1 mM

EDTA, 0.5 mM EGTA, 0.5% N-lauroyl-sarcosine) supplemented with protease inhibitors (PMSF, aprotinin,

leupeptin, pepstatin). Suspended cells were sonicated using the Bioruptor (Diagenode) with the setting (high,

30-sec intervals for 30 min) and chromatin were collected after centrifuge at 14,000 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C.

The size of reverse cross-linked DNA was 300–500 bp determined by DNA electrophoresis. Each chromatin

sample was quick-frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80 °C.

Chromatin-DNA quantitation.

We mixed 20 μl of chromatin with 180 μl of $T_{50}E_{10}S_1$ (50 mM Tris pH 8.0, 10 mM EDTA, 1% SDS) at 65°C

for overnight for reverse-crosslinking. We added RNase A to chromatin samples and then incubated them for

1 h at 37°C to eliminate RNA from samples. Samples were incubated with Protease K for 1 h at 55°C. Extract

samples were mixed with phenol:chloroform:isoamyl-alcohol and sequentially added 20 μg glycogen. Purified

chromatin-DNA were collected by Ethanol/NaCl precipitation and their concentration were determined with a

Qubit Fluorometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific).

Chromatin-immunoprecipitation (ChIP)

Dynal magnetic beads (Thermo Dynabeads Protein A: 10001D) were incubated with 20 μl of H3K4me3 or

H3K27me3 antibodies for 8 hours at 4 °C. We prepared chromatin solution mixed with 20 or 10 μg chromatin

for H3K4me3 or H3K27me3 antibodies with 5% S2 chromatin in incubation buffer (3% Triton X-100, 0.3%

sodium deoxycholate, 15 mM EDTA) supplemented with protease inhibitors (PMSF, aprotinin, leupeptin,

pepstatin). These chromatin solutions were mixed with antibodies coupling beads and incubated on rotator for

overnight at 4°C. Each bead was washed 6 times by ice-cold RIPA (50 mM Hepes-KOH pH7.5, 10 mM

EDTA, 0.7 % sodium deoxycholate, 1 % NP-40, 0.5 M LiCl) supplemented with protease inhibitors (PMSF,

aprotinin, leupeptin, pepstatin) and additionally washed Tris-buffer (10 mM Tris pH8.0, 1 mM EDTA, 50 mM

NaCl). We eluted chromatin by 200 μl of $T_{50}E_{10}S_1$ (50 mM Tris pH 8.0, 10 mM EDTA, 1% SDS) at 65°C for

30 min by shaking at maximum speed. Beads were centrifuge at 14,000 rpm for 1 min and placed on the

magnetic stand. After revers-crosslinking described above, purified chromatin-DNA concentration was

determined with a Qubit Fluorometer (Thermo Fisher Scientific).

ChIP-Seq analysis

We mapped all precipitated read to *Bos taurus* (bosTau8) and *D. melanogaster* (dmel5.41) genome by

bowtie2-2.1.0 and processed generated files by Samtools[63,64]. Read normalization factors were calculated from

the number of mapped reads to the *D. melanogaster* genome according to the spiking methods

(Supplementary Table 1)[34]. As we expected, around 90% reads precipitated by H3K27me3 antibody were

mapped to *B. taurus* genome, while H3K4me3 were mapped relatively low percentage (32.18–63.12%). This

is because H3K4me3 antibodies successfully precipitated marks of both *T. annulata* and *B. taurus* histone 3

tails and the unmapped reads to either *B. taurus* or *D. melanogaster* genomes were mapped to the *T. annulata*

genome (data not shown). Peak calling were performed using Adaptive Local Threshold (ALT) equipped in

Easeq (windowsize:3000bp for H3K27me3, 1500bp for H3K4me3, p-value:1E-5, false discovery rate

(FDR):1E-5, Log2fold diff :2, merge within:100bp) or MACS2 algorithm and subsequently annotated to *B.*

taurus transcripts (UMD3.1.1, n=44681)[65,66]. For clustering of each Chip-seq, we performed MACS2 peak

call and clustering of all data by Bioconducter DiffBind package[67]. DiffBind clustering of peaks and high

Pearson's correlations coefficient (r >0.95) between 2 biological replicates of each macrophage and antibody

indicated that the ChIP-seq had worked correctly (Supplementary Fig. S1 b and c). We calculated H3K27me3

and H3K4me3 ratio of quantified value of each gene around +/- 2 kb from TSS between virulent and

attenuated cell. Venn diagrams of the histone mark positive transcripts between virulent and attenuated

macrophages were generated by R. All raw data of ChIP-seq and RNAseq have been uploaded to European

Nucleotide Archive (www.ebi.ac.uk/ena/) under the Study accession number PRJEB52136.

Fibronectin binding assay

Virulent and attenuated macrophage were treated with DMSO, 1µM UNC1999 or 1µM UNC2400 (inactive

analog) for 10 days[37,38]. Treated macrophages were load fibronectin coated plate and incubated for 1 h at 37

°C. Bound cells after PBS wash were stained by Violet blue and lysed by lysis buffer containing Triton X-

100. Number of the cells were quantified by absorbance of 595 nm.

Dissemination of *T. annulata*-transformed macrophages in immune-deficient mice

T. annulata-transformed virulent and attenuated macrophage lines were treated *in vitro* for ten days with

DMSO or 1µM UNC1999, as described above. The macrophages (10^6 in 200 µl PBS) were then injected

subcutaneously into right flank region of 'alymphoid' Rag2/γC double-deficient (T-, B-, NK-) mice and

surveyed for 3 weeks[35]. Four groups each containing five age and sex matched mice were defined: two

treatment groups including virulent/attenuated Ode treated with EZH2 inhibitor and two control groups

including virulent/attenuated Ode treated only with drug vehicle (solvent). During the three-week study

period, mice in the treatment groups were orally administered with UNC1999 (100 mg/kg/day) dissolved in

solution of Tween® 80 (Sigma-Aldrich, Germany) and carboxymethyl cellulose sodium salt (Sigma life

science, USA) to facilitate oral gavage. The control mice received 100 µl of solvent per day. At the end of

study, mice were humanely sacrificed and organs were dissected and kept in PBS at -20°C.

Absolute quantification of *T. annulata*-infected cells in mice tissues

A single copy *T. annulata* gene (apical merozoite antigen 1, TA02980) was cloned into pJET 1.2/blunt

cloning vector using CloneJET PCR Cloning Kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific). To measure the load of *T.*

annulata-infected macrophages in each tissue, quantitative PCR technology were applied to genomic DNA

extracted from mouse tissue (QIAmp DNA mini kit). Quantification were done based on the methodology

described elsewhere[68]. Briefly, a standard curve was generated from crossing points (Cp) measured from serial

dilutions of pJET-ama plasmid construct with known plasmid copy numbers using qPCR assay. The Cps from

1 ng DNA of each tissue sample were used to estimate parasite gene copy numbers based on the equation

derived from plotted data of the standard curve graph.

Library preparation and sequencing

We maintained virulent and attenuated macrophages with 1 µM PRC2 inhibitor for 10 days and collected 2.5

$\times 10^6$ cells of which total RNA were extracted by mirVana miRNA isolation Kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific,

catalogue number AM1560) according to the manufacturer protocol. Strand-specific RNA-sequencing

(ssRNA-seq) libraries were prepared using the Illumina Truseq Stranded mRNA Sample Preparation Kit

(Illumina, catalogue number RS-122-2101) following the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, 1ug of total

RNA was used to purify mRNA using poly-T oligo-attached magnetic beads. mRNA was then fragmented

and cDNA was synthesized using SuperScript III reverse transcriptase (Thermo Fisher Scientific, catalogue

number 18080044), followed by adenylation on the 3' end, barcoding and adapter ligation. The adapter ligated

cDNA fragments were then enriched and cleaned with Agencourt Ampure XP beads (Agencourt, catalogue

number A63880). Libraries validation was conducted using the 1000 DNA kit on 2100 Bioanalyzer (Agilent

Technologies, catalogue number 5067-1504) and quantified using Qubit (Thermo Fisher Scientific, catalogue

number Q32850). ssRNA libraries were sequenced on Illumina Hiseq4000.

RNA seq analysis

All reads are paired by timmmomatic and mapped to *Bos taurus* UMD.3.1 genome by HISAT2[69]. BAM files

converted by Samtools, as described above and were processed by HTSeq-count tools[70] to quantify mapped

reads on each gene. We obtained a DEGs lists among each group with logFC > ±1 and padj < 0.05 using

separately EdgeR and Limma of NetworkAnalyst or TCC-GUI[71,72] and made intersections of these two lists to

identify more stringent DEGs. Treemap of Gene ontology analysis were visualized by Revigo[73].

Gene expression measurements by qRT-PCR

Total RNA was extracted from cells using RNAeasy® plus mini kit (QIAGEN). Complementary DNA

(cDNA) synthesis was done by using 1 μg RNA as template and the GoScript™ reverse transcriptase kit

(Promega, Cat. No. A5001, USA), in 20 μl reaction volume according to the instructions manual. To perform

qRT-PCR target sequences were amplified in a SYBR green PCR master mix (ThermoFisher Scientific, Cat.

No. 4309155) mixed with diluted cDNA (1:20), double distilled water and primers. The PCR was run in

LightCycler® 480 instrument (Roche) and results analysed in Microsoft Excel. Finally, the $2^{-\Delta\Delta CT}$

methodology was employed to estimate relative gene expression levels[74]. The expression of Bovine GAPDH

was used as the internal control for normalization. Graphs were prepared in GraphPad Prism V 8.4.0.

Ethics Statement

A detailed protocol (number 12-26) describing the above mice experiments was first submitted to and approved

(number CEEA34.GL.03312) by the ethics committee for animal experimentation at the University of Paris-

Descartes. The university ethics committee is registered with the French National Ethics Committee for Animal

Experimentation that itself is registered with the European Ethics Committee for Animal Experimentation. The

right to perform the mice experiments was obtained from the French National Service for the Protection of

Animal Health and satisfied the animal welfare conditions defined by laws (R214-87 to R214-122 and R215-

10) and GL was responsible for all experiment as he holds the French National Animal Experimentation permit

with the authorization number (B-75-1249).

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Author Contributions

TS performed all wet-bench experiments, ChIPseq bioinformatic analyses and wrote the manuscript with

editorial inputs from **AP**, **MW** and **GL**. **ST** performed all mouse experiments including estimation of tumor

dissemination and qRT-PCR analysis. **ZR** made the RNAseq libraries that were bioinformatically analyzed

by **TS**, **HRA**, **AK** and **TM**. The study was conceived by **MW** and **GL** and supported by a joint grant awarded

to **AP** and **GL**.

Acknowledgements

TS and **ST** acknowledge a LabEx ParaFrap postdoctoral fellowship and **GL** acknowledges ANR-11-LABX-

0024 support and core funding from INSERM and the CNRS. **GL** and **AP** acknowledge financial support

received from KAUST in form of a joint (OCRF-20146CRG4) grant and **AP** a BAS/1/1020-01-01 grant. We

thank Raphael Margueron at the Curie Institute for help performing ChIPseq experiments; the Next

Generation Sequencing Platform at the Curie Institute for ChIP sequencing, and members of the KAUST

Bioscience Core Laboratory (BCL) for generating the raw RNAseq datasets. We also thank Axel Martinelli at

Hokkaido University for instruction on RNAseq analysis and Mads Lerdrup at the University of Copenhagen

for guidance on ChIPseq analysis by EaSeq.

 Figure legends

Fig. 1. Localization of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 marks in *Theileria*-infected virulent and attenuated

macrophages

(a) Amino acid sequence alignment of Histone H3 tail among Apicomplexan parasites and *Homo sapiens*.

TA07840 sequence is used for *Theileria annulata.* (b) Immunofluorescence staining with H3K27me3 and

H3K4me3 (green). The monoclonal p104 antibody labels a parasite surface protein p104 (red) and DAPI

stained nuclei (blue). Lysin 27 is not tri-methylated in histone tails of *T. annulata* and H3K27me3 antibodies

stained only host nuclei. Tri-methylation on lysin 4 is conserved between *T. annulata* and bovine host nuclei.

Scale bar: 10 μm

Fig. 2. Genome-wide H3K27me3 distribution dramatically changes in attenuated macrophages

(a) Protein amounts of histone marks in both types of macrophage. Each band was normalized to H3 used as a

loading control. Relative intensity was described below each band. (b) 2D histogram visualized comparisons

of the two biological replicates of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 ChIP-seq between virulent and attenuated

macrophages. Read counts found in the each gene of the virulent (on X-axis) and attenuated (on Y-axis)

macrophages are plotted. r value is the Pearson's correlations coefficient calculated. (c) Venn diagrams

showing common genes detected H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 peaks around TSS between virulent and

attenuated macrophages. Peaks of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 were annotated to the *B. taurus* transcripts

(UMD3.1.1) and subsequently quantified around TSS +/- 2 kb by Easeq (52). (d) Tracks of H3K27me3 and

H3K4me3 superimposed signal (intensity on Y-axis) at all regions from the gene set of *Bos taurus* genome

(bosTau8). The X-axis represents within a 200% window centered on each gene with TSS and TTS.

Yellow/orange lines represent signals of virulent macrophages, whereas purple/black lines represent

attenuated macrophages.

Fig. 3. H3K27me3 spreads non-specifically in attenuated macrophages

(a) H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 heat maps around TSS +/- 10 kb of H3K27me3-positive genes either in virulent

or attenuated macrophages. Genes were sorted by the ratio of H3K27me3 signal log2 (Att/Vir). Cluster 1:

positive in virulent macrophages, Cluster 2: positive in attenuated macrophages, Cluster 3: positive in both

macrophages. Rep2 heat map is displayed. Tracks of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 superimposed signal

(intensity on Y-axis) at the gene set of 3 cluster in virulent or attenuated macrophages. The X-axis represents

within a 200% window centered on each gene with TSS and TTS. Black lines represent signals of virulent

macrophages, whereas red lines represent attenuated macrophages. (b) Gene expression profile and DEGs of

each cluster. Average TPM values of each cluster were compared between virulent and attenuated

macrophages and p-values were calculated using Mann-Whitney U test. Within each cluster, the number of

down or up DEGs in attenuated *versus* virulent macrophages was determined using DESeq2 (FDR < 0.1, p-

value < 0.05, logFC > 1, logFC < −1). (c) Peaks of each mark on the representative genes in each cluster.

Fig. 4. Spread H3K27me3 in attenuated macrophages lose its repressive function

(a) PRC2 inhibitor UNC1999 specifically removed H3K27me3 marks, whereas the inactive analog UNC2400

didn't affect H3K27me3 marks. Both macrophages were treated with DMSO or PRC2 inhibitors for 10 days

and nuclear extract were prepared. (b) Fibronectin binding assay. PRC2 inhibitor treated cells were incubated

in a fibronectin coated well plate for 1 hour at 37 °C. Error bars show ± SD from 3 biological replicates. (c)

Dissemination of *T. annulate*-infected macrophages in immune-compromised Rag2/γC mice. Gene copy

number of parasites in each organ were obtained by absolute quantification correspond to *T. 36nnulate* ama-1

gene.

Fig. 5. H3K27me3-mediated gene repression is dampened in attenuated macrophages

(a) Number of DEGs (logFC > 1, logFC < -1, padj < 0.05) between virulent and attenuated macrophages

following PRC2 inhibitor treatment. (b) Venn diagram of common and uniquely upregulated genes in both

virulent (134 genes) and attenuated (50 genes) macrophages with the heatmaps of upregulated DEGs. (c)

Gene ontology analysis. Treemap were visualized by Revigo[73]. These pathways were specifically upregulated

upon PRC2 inhibitor treatment in each macrophage. (d) Heat map of the 21 common upregulated genes in

both macrophages upon UNC1999 treatment versus inactive analog UNC2400.

Supplementary Fig. S1. Clustering of each ChIP-seq reads and scatter plot

(a) Box plots represent the read counts on TSS around +/- 2kb of each gene obtained from H3K27me3 and

H3K4me3 ChIP-seq. ***, Wilcoxon rank-sum test p-value < 2.2e-16. (b) Clustering of each ChIP-seq

samples visualized by Bioconducter DiffBind package. (c) 2D Histogram of the virulent (on X-axis) and

attenuated (on Y-axis) macrophages parameters found in the gene set showing comparison of biological

replicates. r value is the Pearson's correlations coefficient calculated from input parameters.

Supplementary Fig. S2. Peaks of H3K4me3 and H3K27me3 on representative 4 genes of the 21 common

upregulated genes relative to Figure 5

Supplementary Fig. S3. H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 profiles of upregulated genes upon PRC2 inhibitor

related treatment to Fig. 5b

(a) H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 heat maps around TSS +/- 10 kb of 3 group of genes related to Fig.5b in

virulent or attenuated macrophages. Genes were sorted by the ratio of H3K27me3 signal log2 (Att/Vir). (b)

Tracks of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 superimposed signal (intensity on Y-axis) at the gene set of 3 group of

genes related to Fig.5b in virulent or attenuated macrophages. The X-axis represents within a 200% window

centered on each gene with TSS and TTS. Black lines represent signals of virulent macrophages, whereas red

lines represent attenuated macrophages.

Supplementary Fig. S4. H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 profiles of Down and Up DEGs in attenuated

macrophages.

(a) H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 heat maps around TSS +/- 10 kb of Down and Up DEGs in attenuated

macrophages. (b) Tracks of H3K27me3 and H3K4me3 superimposed signal (intensity on Y-axis) at the gene

set of Down and Up DEGs in attenuated macrophages. The X-axis represents within a 200% window centered

on each gene with TSS and TTS. Black lines represent signals of attenuated macrophages, whereas red lines

represent virulent macrophages.

Supplementary Fig. S5. *phf*19 **expression in** *Theileria***-infected virulent and attenuated macrophages**

qRT-PCR confirming significant downregulation of bovine PHF19 in attenuated Ode macrophages compared

to their virulent counterparts. qRT-PCR data were normalized to bovine GAPDH. Two-tailed student's t-test

was used to estimate significance. Mean fold-change in mRNA expression level ± standard errors shown.

qRT-PCR results are representative of three independent experiments.

485 **Supplementary Table 1. Summary of ChIP-seq**

486 **Supplementary Table 2. List of differentially expressed genes corresponding to Fig 5b**

487 **Supplementary Table 3. List of primers for qRT-PCR**

Fig. 1

a

Histone H3 tail

	1 4	27 34
T. annulata	ART**K**QTARKSTGGKAPRKQLASKAAR**K**TAPVTGG	
T. parva	ART**K**QTARKSTGGKAPRKQLASKAAR**K**TAPVTGG	
T. orientalis	ART**K**QTARKSTGGKAPRKQLASKAAR**K**TAPVTGG	
P. falciparum	ART**K**QTARKSTAGKAPRKQLASKAAR**K**SAPISAG	
T. gondii	ART**K**QTARKSTGGKAPRKQLASKAAR**K**SAPMSGG	
H. sapiens	ART**K**QTARKSTGGKAPRKQLATKAAR**K**SAPATGG	

b

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5