Molecular Insights into Cross-Species Spillover of Coronavirus HKU5 via ACE2 Receptor Recognition

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Abstract

Coronaviruses represent a significant zoonotic threat, with host adaptation serving as a pivotal determinant of cross-species transmission. The bat-derived β-coronavirus HKU5 utilizes its spike (S) protein for receptor recognition and viral entry. Here, we report the cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) structure of the HKU5 S protein in a closed conformation. Two fatty acids are bound to the HKU5 S protein, stabilizing the S protein in the closed conformation. Furthermore, we solve the structure of the HKU5 receptor-binding domain (RBD) in complex with the peptidase domain (PD) of *Pipistrellus abramus* angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2), uncovering a unique binding mode distinct from other coronaviruses that use ACE2 as their receptor. Evolutionary and functional analyses indicate that mutations on RBD can modulate receptor binding, while conservation and structural modeling suggest that HKU5 has the potential to cross species barrier. Notably, we identify ACE2 orthologs in avian species, such as *Pitta sordida*, that support stable HKU5 RBD binding and interaction. These findings provide molecular insights into the host adaptation of HKU5 and underscore the importance of surveillance for this virus and its zoonotic risk.

Introduction

Coronaviruses (CoVs) are zoonotic pathogens with significant potential for cross-species transmission, exemplified by SARS-CoV[1], MERS-CoV[2] and SARS-CoV-2[3,4]. They often originate from animal reservoirs, especially bats, before spilling over to humans[5-7]. The spike (S) protein of coronaviruses mediates receptor recognition and membrane fusion, with the receptor-binding domain (RBD) typically determining host specificity and spillover potential[8,9]. The RBD can adopt "up" or "down" conformation, where only the "up" state engages receptors[10-12]. These conformational shifts are regulated by various factors, including sialic acids and fatty acids[13-17].

Bat coronavirus HKU5 (BatCoV-HKU5) belongs to the β-coronavirus Merbecovirus lineage and is closely related to MERS-CoV[18-20]. Despite being discovered in 2006 and the identification of numerous related sublineages[21], HKU5 remains relatively underexplored compared to pandemic coronaviruses. Recent studies have shown that HKU5 can utilize the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) from *Pipistrellus abramus* for host cell entry[22], which serves as a receptor for multiple human coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV[23], SARS-CoV-2[4,24], and HCoV-NL63[25], and has been implicated in repeated spillover events[26].

In this work, we solved the cryo-electron microscopy (cryo-EM) structure of the HKU5 S protein in a closed conformation, which are bound with two fatty acids that can stabilize the close conformation of the S protein. We also characterize the interaction between HKU5 RBD and bat ACE2, noting differences from MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2. By integrating structural analysis, evolutionary insights, and functional assessment of RBD mutation, we provide a comprehensive perspective on HKU5's host adaptability and spillover risk. These

findings contribute valuable knowledge to coronavirus research and highlight the need for

ongoing surveillance of HKU5 and related viruses.

Results

Structure of HKU5 S protein in closed conformation

We have over-expressed and purified the HKU5 S protein, and then solved its cryo-EM

structure at a resolution of 2.4 Å (Supplementary information, Fig. S1). Unlike the open

conformations observed in the S proteins of SARS-CoV-2[11], MERS-CoV[27] or HKU1-B[28], all

three RBDs of the HKU5 S protein are in the "down" position (Fig. 1a). This closed

conformation hinders interactions with host receptors, potentially delaying host cell entry or

facilitating immune evasion[14,29].

In the cryo-EM map of the HKU5 S protein, two additional non-protein densities were

identified for each protomer. The first one is in a pocket (pocket 1) near the interface between

the RBDs of adjacent protomers. And the second one is in another pocket within the RBD

(pocket 2), near the receptor-binding motif (RBM) (Fig. 1a). Mass spectrometry experiments

suggest the HKU5 S protein contains oleic acid and palmitic acid (Figs. 1b, c and

Supplementary information, Fig. S2), which were fitted to pocket 1 and 2 based on the density

shape, respectively (Fig. 1a). The pocket 1 is formed by hydrophobic residues F393, L419,

L422, L423, F426, V428, F431, P438, L441, L449, V451, V488, A490, F569 and V571 on the

RBD (Fig. 1d). The polar head of oleic acid interacts with residues Y463, S468 and A469 from

an adjacent protomer (Fig. 1d). In cryo-EM map of the HKU5 S protein with S468A&Y463A

double mutant (S_{DM} protein), the density corresponding to oleic acid was absent, indicating the

importance of these polar residues for the interaction with oleic acid (Supplementary

information, Fig. S3, 4). Compared to the wild-type (WT) protein, the S_{DM} protein exhibited a

~5° clockwise rotation of the N-terminal domain (NTD) (Supplementary information, Fig. S4,

b andSupplementary information, Movie 1), resulting in a looser trimeric assembly[30].

Additionally, the SD1 and SD2 domain shifted away from RBD toward NTD, forming new

polar interactions such as a salt bridge between R689 of SD2 and D346 of NTD, and a hydrogen

bond network involving residues [689]RMT[691] of SD2 and [348]GYDD[351] of NTD (Supplementary

information, Fig. S4d and Supplementary information, Movie 2). These changes were

accompanied by structural remodeling, suggesting that oleic acid is beneficial for maintaining

the closed conformation of the S protein. This observation parallels findings in SARS-CoV-2,

where linoleic acid binding stabilizes the closed state of its S protein[17]. The presence of oleic

acid in HKU5 S protein suggests a conserved mechanism to regulate S protein conformational

dynamics, modulating receptor binding and pre-fusion activation to optimize viral entry

efficiency.

The pocket 2, where the palmitic acid binds, is in the interior of RBD (Fig. 1e), which has not

been reported in any other S protein of coronaviruses. Although the pocket 2 is close to the

receptor-binding interface, it does not directly contact it, possibly suggesting a structural or

regulatory role in modulating RBD dynamics rather than directly influencing ACE2 binding.

Interaction of HKU5 RBD with bat ACE2

To elucidate the interaction between the HKU5 S protein and the ACE2 receptor of its natural

host, *Pipistrellus abramus*, we conducted biochemical and structural studies. Gel filtration

chromatography revealed that the S protein in its closed conformation does not co-migrate with the peptidase domain (PD) of the *Pipistrellus abramus* ACE2 (*Pa*PD), indicating that the S protein in closed conformation cannot directly bind to the receptor (Supplementary information, Fig. S5). To understand the molecular mechanism underlying HKU5 S protein receptor recognition, we determined the cryo-EM structure of the HKU5 RBD in complex with *Pa*PD at a resolution of 3.2 Å, allowing accurate modeling and analysis (Fig. 2a and Supplementary information, Fig. S6).

The RBM of the HKU5 RBD adopts a compact super-secondary structure comprising a four-stranded anti-parallel β-sheet (β5~β8, residues N504~P560) and a short helix (α4, residues S457~L464), which are critical for receptor recognition and binding (Figs. 2a, b). The *Pa*PD comprises key structural elements that facilitate its interaction with HKU5 RBD, including the α1 helix (18~54 a. a.), α2 helix (90~101 a. a.), α3 helix (322~330 a. a.), a β-hairpin (346~358 a. a.), and a loop region (L$_A$; 318~330 a. a.) (Figs. 2a, b).

The interface between the RBD and *Pa*PD spans ~1107 Å² area and can be divided into three distinct contact patches, each playing a pivotal role in stabilizing the complex. The patch 1 region involves interactions between RBD residues from β5 and β6 (E510, Y512, A516, Y517, G518, K519, Y521) and *Pa*PD residues in the α1 helix (R26, E37), α2 helix (D90, N96), β-hairpin (N353), and loop region L$_A$ (N386, S388) (Fig. 2c). The interaction is mediated by eight hydrogen bonds and one salt bridge (Fig. 2c), which collectively ensure the stability of this initial contact point. The predominance of polar and charged residues highlights the importance of this region in the high-affinity binding observed in the HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex. The residues of patch 2 from β7 and β8 of the RBD (K543, Y544, S546, Y557) interact with *Pa*PD

residues from the α1 helix (N38), α3 helix (D329), and β-hairpin (D354, K352) (Fig. 2d).

Notably, K543 and Y557 form a salt bridge and a hydrogen bond with D329, respectively,

while Y544 interacts with D354 and K352. N38 and K352 also engage with S546, forming the

primary hydrogen bond network in this patch (Fig. 2d). These interactions ensure the structural

stability of this secondary contact region. Patch 3 incorporated a variety of stabilizing

interactions, such as a cation-π interaction, a salt bridge, and hydrophobic interactions.

Specifically, residue Y559 in RBD β8 forms a cation-π interaction with R328 in the *Pa*PD L$_A$

loop, while residue D459 in RBM and residue R328 in *Pa*PD form a salt bridge. Additionally,

hydrophobic interactions are observed in the region encompassing Y463 of the RBD α4 loop,

Y507 of β1, and P324 of the *Pa*PD α3 helix. These interactions synergistically contributed to

the enhanced stability of the complex (Fig. 2e). Collectively, these three patches establish a

highly specific binding interface between the HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD, which is crucial for host

ACE2 recognition and initiation of viral entry.

In addition to HKU5, numerous other coronaviruses utilize ACE2 for host cell entry, including

the epidemic- or pandemic-causing SARS-CoV[23] and SARS-CoV-2[4,24], as well as human

coronavirus HCoV-NL63[25] and several bat coronaviruses, such as NeoCoV[31], PDF-2180[31],

PRD-0038[32], and MOW15-22[33]. The RBM of SARS-CoV-2 forms an accessible, expansive

surface (residues 438~506) that tightly binds human ACE2 (Fig. 2f). The RBD of HCoV-NL63

features a β-sandwich core structure and comprises three non-contiguous RBMs, with binding

sites concentrated centrally (Fig. 2f). The PDF-2180 RBM adopts a four-stranded anti-parallel

β-sheet, resembling the HKU5 RBM, but latter displays a more compact conformation, with

an extended fourth strand (Fig. 2f).

Structural comparison reveals differences of the HKU5 RBD-ACE2 interface to the other

coronaviruses (Fig. 2g). HKU5 shares partial binding footprints with the known modes of

SARS-CoV-2, HCoV-NL63, and PDF-2180, but lacks conserved residues among these viruses

(Fig. 2g). This indicates that the HKU5 RBD employs a unique interface to interact with ACE2,

likely contributing to the host specificity.

Evolutionary dynamics of HKU5 RBD

To explore the evolutionary dynamics of the HKU5 RBD, we performed a clustering analysis

on the sequences in the NCBI protein database sharing more than 80% identity with the HKU5

S protein (Supplementary information, Fig. S7). The results show that six HKU5 lineages

recorded in the NCBI Taxonomy database are distributed across two clusters (Supplementary

information, Fig. S7). Most of the HKU5 RBD residues are highly conserved across various

lineages, particularly within the core framework of RBD, indicating their critical role in

maintaining structural integrity (Supplementary information, Fig. S7, 8). However, over 30

mutation sites are found in RBM, particularly spanning the segment Q494~G564

(Supplementary information, Fig. S7, 8) that accounts for more than two-thirds of the residue

indels and point mutations.

To evaluate the impact of different HKU5 lineages on ACE2 recognition specificity, we

employed bio-layer interferometry (BLI) to quantify the *Pa*PD binding affinity of various

HKU5 RBD variants (Fig. 3a). The highest affinity is observed for HKU5, with a Kd of 19.94

± 0.23 nM. BtPa-BetaCoV/GD2013 and BatCoV-HKU5-3 display similar binding affinity, at

23.40 ± 0.27 nM and 25.17 ± 0.29 nM, respectively. BatCoV-HKU5-related viruses show a

slightly lower affinity, with a Kd of 35.24 ± 0.37 nM. These HKU5 lineages exhibit *Pa*PD

binding affinity either comparable to or slightly lower than that of the HKU5, suggesting that

the mutations observed in these variants exert a mild effect on receptor binding.

To further investigate the influence of conserved interface residues on the interaction between

HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD, we utilized a tripartite split-fluorescence system[34] in conjunction with

flow cytometry to identify potential key residues within the HKU5 RBD (Figs. 3b-c). These

assays showed high sensitivity for the interaction of the HKU5 RBD with *Pa*PD, with signal

intensity exceeding that of the HKU5 RBD with PD of *Homo sapiens* ACE2 (*Hs*PD), which is

a negative control, by more than tenfold (Fig. 3d). Targeted mutations of interface residues

revealed that, except for Y544, mutations of the other residues, namely Y463, Y507, Y517,

K519, Y521, K543, S546, Y557, and Y559, led to varying degrees of destabilization of the

interaction, as evidenced by decreased fluorescence (Fig. 3d). Notably, the K519A mutation

caused a reduction in fluorescence intensity by more than 50%. It is important to highlight that

residues Y507, K543, Y544, and Y557 are not highly conserved in the HKU5 (Fig. 3d). When

these non-conserved residues were mutated to their corresponding residues in other lineages,

we observed reduction in fluorescence intensity by approximately 50%, as in the cases of

Y507H, K543D, and Y557S (Fig. 3d). These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of

the factors influencing the binding affinity of the HKU5 virus for its receptor.

Cross-species transmission risk analysis of HKU5

To investigate the potential for cross-species transmission of HKU5, we conducted a detailed

structural analysis of the *Pa*PD residues recognized by HKU5. We introduced point mutations

in several polar residues of *Pa*PD that might maintain the interface interaction, including R26A,

E37A, Q96A, N321A, P324A, W327A, R328A, D329A, K352A, N353A, D354A, and S388A

(Fig. 4a). Tripartite split-fluorescence experiments performed on these mutants revealed that,

with the exception of E37 and Q96, most of the mutations resulted in the noticeable reduction

in relative fluorescence intensity, indicating their significant contribution to the virus-receptor

interaction (Fig. 4b). Notably, the R328A mutation in *Pa*PD caused a reduction in relative

fluorescence intensity to below 50%. The R328 in *Pa*PD stabilizes the interface through a salt

bridge with D459 in HKU5 RBD and a cation-π interaction with Y559 in HKU5 RBD, thus

maintaining the interaction between HKU5 and *Pa*PD (Fig. 2e). This result aligns with the

reduced fluorescence intensity observed in the HKU5 RBD Y559A mutant (Figs. 3d, 4b).

There are two consecutive three-residue motifs in *Pa*PD involved in interaction with HKU5

RBD, namely ^{327}WRD^{329} and ^{352}KND^{354}. Point mutation in these two motifs caused marked

reduction in fluorescence intensity (Fig. 4b). We hypothesize that the ^{327}WRD^{329} and ^{352}KND^{354}

motifs of *Pa*PD play a critical role in HKU5 receptor recognition. Sequence alignment of ACE2

from various species indicates that these motifs are conserved across multiple species, such as

an avian *Pitta sordida* (Supplementary information, Fig. S9). The sequence identity of the PD

of *Pitta sordida* ACE2 (*Ps*PD) with *Pa*PD and *Hs*PD is 69% and 76%, respectively (Fig. 4c).

The affinity of *Ps*PD for HKU5 RBD measured by BLI is 122.9 ± 1.3 nM (Fig. 4d).

To analyze the impact of the receptor interface residue changes on HKU5 RBD recognition,

we solved the cryo-EM structure of the HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex. Perhaps due to the

reduced affinity, a large fraction of the *Ps*PD molecules remained unbound in the 2D

classification. However, after collecting sufficient data, we solved the cryo-EM structure of the

HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex at a resolution of 3.2 Å (Fig. 4e and Supplementary information,

Fig. <u>S</u>10). *Ps*PD binds to the HKU5 RBD in a manner similar to *Pa*PD (Supplementary

information, Fig. <u>S</u>11a). The core interaction interface between *Ps*PD and HKU5 RBD is

maintained by the WRD and KND motifs in *Ps*PD, along with other conserved residues (Figs.

4f-i). Some interface residues of *Ps*PD were mutated relative to *Pa*PD, including Q25, D37,

E325, G387, and P389, which correspond to R26, N38, P324, N386, and S388 in *Pa*PD,

respectively (Fig. 4c). The E325 in *Ps*PD (corresponding to P324 in *Pa*PD) disrupts its

hydrophobic interaction with HKU5 RBD Y463 but forms hydrogen bond instead (Fig. 4i and

Supplementary information, Fig. <u>S</u>11b). The E325 in *Ps*PD forms a salt bridge with *Ps*PD R329

(corresponding to R328 in *Pa*PD), which causes a conformational shift of *Ps*PD R329,

disrupting the salt bridge between *Ps*PD R329 and the HKU5 RBD D459 (Fig. 4i and

Supplementary information, Fig. <u>S</u>11b). The R33 in *Ps*PD (corresponding to H34 in *Pa*PD)

forms new polar contacts with T514 and E551 of the HKU5 RBD. Additionally, N322 in *Ps*PD

shows noticeable glycosylation, which was not observed in *Pa*PD, forming new interactions at

the RBD–*Ps*PD interface (Supplementary information, Fig. <u>S</u>11d). However, compared to

*Pa*PD, the overall structure of *Ps*PD is slightly more distanced from the RBD domain

(Supplementary information, Fig. <u>S</u>11), disrupting certain polar interactions, such as between

*Pa*PD E37 and RBD K519 (Supplementary information, Fig. <u>S</u>11e).

To investigate whether different HKU5 subclades affect RBD binding to *Ps*PD, we measured

the Kd values of the RBD of BtPa-BetaCoV/GD2013, HKU5-3, and other HKU5-related

viruses for *Ps*PD, which were 137.8 ± 0.9 nM, 176.2 ± 1.4 nM, and 232.5 ± 2.0 nM,

respectively (Fig. 4d). These differences suggest that mutations in different HKU5 strains may

facilitate adaptation to ACE2 receptors from different species, potentially enabling cross-

species transmission.

We analyzed the conservation of the RBD binding interface on ACE2 between bats and human.

The results revealed substantial differences in the ^{327}WRD^{329} and ^{352}KND^{354} residues between

bat and human ACE2, which may limit the potential for HKU5 to bind to human ACE2 (Fig.

4c). Although the spillover risk of HKU5 to human is currently low, continuous monitoring is

warranted, especially in the context of viral evolution.

In summary, these findings provide a comprehensive perspective on the structural, functional,

and evolutionary characteristics of HKU5, enhancing our understanding of its receptor-binding

specificity and potential for cross-species transmission.

Discussion

This study provides critical insights into the molecular mechanisms underlying HKU5 S

protein interaction with ACE2, shedding light on its structural adaptations, evolutionary

dynamics, and the potential of cross-species transmission.

We identified two fatty acid molecules, oleic acid and palmitic acid, bound to the S protein of

HKU5. These molecules stabilize the closed conformation of the S protein, likely modulating

receptor accessibility. Similar to findings in other β-coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2[17]

and HCoV-OC43[35], fatty acid binding occurs at conserved hydrophobic pockets within the

RBD (Supplementary information, Table 1). Mutational analyses revealed that disruption of

these interactions in HKU5 induces a structural shift toward a more relaxed conformation. This

suggests that fatty acids play a crucial role in maintaining the closed state, potentially limiting

premature receptor binding and aiding immune evasion. Notably, we identified a novel fatty

acid binding pocket proximal to the RBM region in the HKU5 RBD. Cryo-EM map of the

HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex does not contain density in this pocket, indicating that fatty acid

binding may require the trimeric structure of the S protein. The regulatory mechanism aligns

with prior studies proposing that fatty acid presence favors the "down" conformation of RBDs[36].

The widespread presence of fatty acids in coronaviral S proteins highlights their conserved role

in regulating conformational dynamics. Efforts to design small-molecule inhibitors targeting

these binding pockets have shown promise but require further structural optimization to

enhance efficacy[37].

Structural analysis revealed that the HKU5 RBD recognizes ACE2 through a unique

mechanism distinct from other ACE2-binding coronaviruses. Unlike the RBM regions of

SARS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2, which exhibit conserved ACE2-binding motifs[38], HKU5

demonstrates an entirely novel interaction interface. This emphasizes the evolutionary

plasticity of coronaviruses, which can utilize the same receptor through diverse binding modes.

It also highlights the phenomenon of convergent evolution among unrelated viruses like HKU5,

SARS-related viruses, and HCoV-NL63, which all exploit ACE2 as receptor for host cell entry

despite limited sequence homology on RBM region of their RBD.

The broad tissue expression and high conservation of ACE2 across mammalian species provide

a molecular basis for the cross-species transmission of coronaviruses[39,40]. Continuous

adaptation of viral S proteins enables optimization of ACE2 binding, as exemplified by the

progressive evolution of SARS-CoV-2 variants[41,42]. This interplay between receptor

conservation and viral adaptability emphasizes the critical role of ACE2 in shaping coronavirus

host range and transmission potential. For instance, our analysis revealed that certain avian

species, such as *Pitta sordida*, possess ACE2 variants capable of binding the HKU5 RBD,

suggesting potential zoonotic reservoirs beyond mammals. However, the conclusions drawn

from our analysis require further experimental validation. Pseudovirus assays and live virus

experiments could be employed to determine whether these ACE2 variants effectively facilitate

viral entry and replication.

In summary, our findings advance the understanding of how coronaviruses adapt to diverse

hosts via ACE2 utilization, emphasizing the structural and functional diversity of this

interaction. By elucidating the roles of fatty acid-mediated conformational regulation and

ACE2 as a cross-species receptor, this study highlights the importance of monitoring HKU5

and related viruses for their zoonotic potential and public health implications.

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Materials and Methods

Protein preparation

The extracellular domain (ECD) (1~1293 a.a.) of the S protein of BatCoV-HKU5 (uniport ID:

A3EXD0) was cloned into the pCAG vector (Invitrogen) with a C-terminal T4 fibritin

trimerization motif followed by a Flag tag and a 10×His tag. A "GSAS" mutation at residues

742 to 745 was introduced into the S protein to prevent the host cellular protease digestion.

Double mutants of the S protein (S_{DM}) were generated with a standard two-step PCR based

strategy. The RBD domains of the S protein of different HKU5 lineages, including BatCoV-

HKU5 (uniport ID: A3EXD0), BatCoV-HKU5-3 (GenBank: ABN10893.1), BtPa-

BetaCoV/GD2013 (GenBank: AIA62343.1) and BatCoV-HKU5-Realted (GenBank:

QHA24687.1), were also cloned into the pCAG vector (Invitrogen) with an N-terminal signal

peptide for secretion of luciferase and a C-terminal 10×His tag. The PD domains of ACE2 of

different species, including *Pipistrellus abramus* (uniport ID: C7ECT9, *Pa*PD, 18~615 a.a.),

Pitta sordida (uniport ID: A0A851FF99, *Ps*PD, 18~617 a.a.) and *Homo sapiens* (uniport ID:

Q9BYF1, *Hs*PD, 25-622 a.a.), were also cloned into the pCAG vector (Invitrogen) with an N-

terminal signal peptide for secretion of luciferase followed by an N-terminal 2×StrepII tag and

a C-terminal 10×His tag. All the plasmids used to transfect cells were prepared by GoldHi

EndoFree Plasmid Maxi Kit (CWBIO). The purification processes of these proteins were same

as the S protein of HKU1-B that we have been described previously[28]. Briefly, HEK293F

mammalian cells (Invitrogen) were cultured in SMM293-TII medium (Sino Biological) at 37°C

and 5% CO_2 in a Multitron-Pro shaker (Infors, 130 rpm). When the cell density reached $2.0×10^6$

cells/mL, the plasmid was transiently transfected into the cells. To transfect one liter of cell

culture, approximately 1.5 mg of plasmid was premixed with 3 mg of polyethylenimine (PEI)

(Yeasen Biotechnology) in 50 mL of fresh medium for 30 minutes before being added to the

cell culture. After 70 hours of overexpression, cells were removed by centrifugation at 4000×g

for 15 minutes. The secreted proteins were purified by Ni-NTA Agarose (GE Healthcare). After

loading two times, the Ni-NTA Agarose was washed with the wash buffer containing 25 mM

Tris (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl, 50 mM imidazole. The protein was eluted with the elute buffer

containing 25 mM Tris (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl, 500 mM imidazole. The eluent of RBDs or

PDs was concentrated and subject to size-exclusion chromatography (SEC, Superdex 200

Increase 10/300 GL, GE Healthcare) in buffer containing 25 mM Tris (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl.

The eluent of S or S_{DM} protein was subject to SEC (Superose 6 Increase 10/300 GL, GE

Healthcare) in buffer containing 25 mM Tris (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl. The HKU5 RBD was

incubated with *Pa*PD or *Ps*PD at a molar ratio of about 1:5 for one hour. Then the mixtures

were subject to SEC (Superose 6 Increase 10/300 GL, GE Healthcare) in buffer containing 25

mM Tris (pH 8.0), 150 mM NaCl. The peak fractions of SEC were collected and concentrated

for cryo-EM analysis.

Cryo-EM sample preparation and data acquisition

The protein samples were concentrated to ~2.5 mg/mL and applied to the grids. Aliquots (3.5

µL) of the protein were placed on glow-discharged holey carbon grids (Quantifoil Au R1.2/1.3).

The grids were blotted for 3.5 s and flash-frozen in liquid ethane cooled by liquid nitrogen with

Vitrobot (Mark IV, Thermo Scientific). The prepared grids were transferred to a Krios (Thermo

Scientific) operating at 300 kV equipped with a Gatan K3 detector and GIF Quantum energy

filter. Movie stacks were automatically collected using EPU software (Thermo Scientific), with

a slit width of 20 eV on the energy filter and a defocus range from -1.2 µm to -2.2 µm in super-

resolution mode at a nominal magnification of 81,000×. Each stack was exposed for 2.56 s with

an exposure time of 0.08 s per frame, resulting in a total of 32 frames per stack. The total dose

rate was ~50 e⁻/Å² for each stack.

Data processing

The movie stacks were motion corrected with MotionCor2[43] and binned two fold, resulting in

a pixel size of 1.087 Å/pixel. Meanwhile, dose weighting was performed[44]. After patch CTF

estimation, particles were automatically picked according to the templates generated from an

initial 2D classification of manually picked particles by cryoSPARC[45]. After 2D classification,

the particles with clear features were selected and subject to *ab-initio* reconstruction to obtain

the initial models, then multi-hetero refinement without symmetry were performed to selected

good particles using cryoSPARC[45]. The selected particles were subject to non-uniform

refinement, local CTF refinement or global CTF refinement, and local refinement, resulting in

3D reconstruction for the whole structures. The resolution was estimated with the gold-standard

Fourier shell correlation 0.143 criterion[46] with high-resolution noise substitution[47].

Model building and structure refinement

For the model building, the predicted atomic models by Alphafold 3[48] were used as templates,

which were molecular dynamics flexible fitted[49] into the whole cryo-EM maps and manually

adjusted with Coot[50] to obtain the atomic models. Each residue was manually checked with the

chemical properties taken into consideration during model building. Several segments, whose

corresponding densities were invisible, were not modeled. Structural refinement was

performed in Phenix[51] with secondary structure and geometry restraints to prevent overfitting.

Bio-layer interferometry (BLI)

BLI experiments were performed using the Octet system (ForteBio) to characterize the protein

interactions. StrepII-10×His-tagged *Pa*PD and *Ps*PD proteins, along with 10×His-RBD

proteins from four HKU5 strains, were purified separately. At room temperature, *Pa*PD

proteins were immobilized onto equilibrated streptavidin (SA) biosensors. Subsequently, the

biosensors were exposed to solution containing various concentration of RBD proteins (0 nM,

12.5 nM, 25 nM, 50 nM, 100 nM, 200 nM, 400 nM, and 800 nM), with binding kinetics

monitored in real-time. Following the association phase, the biosensors were immersed in a

regeneration buffer to monitor dissociation kinetics in real-time. Sensorgrams were analyzed

using Octet data analysis software to determine the binding affinity constants between the PD

and RBD proteins. This process was repeated to evaluate the binding affinities between the two

PD proteins and the four RBD proteins. For the binding affinity measurements between *Ps*PD

and different RBDs, the RBD concentration gradient was set at 0 μM, 0.04 μM, 0.08 μM, 0.16

μM, 0.32 μM, 0.64 μM, 1.28 μM, and 2.56 μM.

Tripartite split-fluorescence system

497 We designed a tripartite split-fluorescence system containing plasmid A, B, and C. Plasmid A

498 encoded the first nine β-strands (1~196 a.a.) of sfGFP, followed by a stop codon and an internal

499 ribosome entry site 2 (iRES2) sequence to mediate the subsequent translation of iRFP702. For

plasmid B, the tenth β-strand of sfGFP (197~216 a.a.) was inserted at the N-terminus and fused to a receptor-binding domain via a linker (DVGGGGSEGGGSGGPGSGGEGSAGGGSAGGGS). An iRES2 sequence and mCherry sequence were then inserted downstream. For plasmid C, the receptor-binding domain was inserted at the N-terminus and fused to the eleventh β-strand of sfGFP (217~238 a.a.) via a linker (GSGAGGSPGGGSGGSGSSASGGSTSGGGSGGGS), followed by iRES2 and EBFP2 sequences. The designed sequences were synthesized by SynbioB and cloned into the mammalian expression vector PCAG.

Flow cytometry sorting and statistical analysis

HEK293F cells were cultured in SMM293-TII medium (Sino Biological) at 37°C with 5% CO_2 under shaking conditions (120 rpm). Plasmid A, plasmid B expressing WT or mutant RBD, and plasmid C expressing WT or mutant PD were mixed at a 1:1:1 ratio (5 μg each) and transfected into cells (2×10^6 cells per 5 mL flask) using PEI (Lablead) at a 2:1 DNA-to-PEI mass ratio. After 48 hours, cells were harvested by centrifugation at 200 g for 2 minutes and washed twice with 2 mL PBS (Sangon Biotec) at room temperature. The final cell pellet was resuspended in 1ml PBS for flow cytometry. Flow cytometry was performed on a BD FACSymphony[TM] A3. Single-cell populations were gated based on forward scatter area (FSC-A), side scatter area (SSC-A), and forward scatter height (FSC-H) parameters. Cells co-expressing plasmids A, B, and C, identified by simultaneous positivity in the BV421 (405 nm laser, 450/50 nm filter), BV711 (405 nm laser, 710/50 nm filter), and PE-CF594 (561 nm laser, 610/20 nm filter) fluorescence channels, were analyzed for sfGFP fluorescence intensity in the

521   FITC channel (488 nm laser, 530/30 nm filter). The median fluorescence intensity of the gated

522   population was calculated using FlowJo v10. All experiments were performed in triplicate.

Data availability

525   Atomic coordinates and cryo-EM maps (PDB: 9KR8, 9KR9, 9KRA, 9KRB; EMD-62522,

526   EMD-62523, EMD-62524, EMD-62525) have been deposited to the Protein Data Bank

527   (http://www.rcsb.org) and the Electron Microscopy Data Bank

528   (https://www.ebi.ac.uk/pdbe/emdb/), respectively. Correspondence and requests for materials

529   should be addressed to Q.Z. (zhouqiang@westlake.edu.cn)

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534   crystallography facility of Westlake University for technical assistance, advice and support.

Author contributions

536   Q.Z. and L.X. conceived the project. L.X., Y. L., D.L. and Y.Z. did the experiments. L.X. and

537   Y.Z. analyzed the PDB structures and performed the visualization. All authors contributed to

538   the data analysis. Q.Z., L.X. and Y.Z. wrote the manuscript. Q.Z. supervised the project.

Competing interests

540   The authors declare no competing interests.

Figure 1. Cryo-EM structure of the HKU5 S protein.

(a) The cryo-EM map shown in side view (Left) and the atomic model shown in top view

(Middle) of the HKU5 S protein, with protomers displayed in marine blue, purple, and forest

green, respectively. Enlarged views of the boxed regions in the middle panel, showing the

bound fatty acids (Right), with cryo-EM map shown at threshold of 3 σ for palmitic acid and

4 σ for oleic acid, respectively. (b, c) Liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS)

analysis of purified HKU5 S protein. (Top) Chromatograms of C18 and C16 fatty acids.

(Bottom) Corresponding electrospray ionization time-of-flight (ESI-TOF) mass spectra, with

molecular weights of C18H32O2 and C16H34O2 labeled. Intens., i ratio. (d, e) Binding

551   pockets of oleic acid (d) and palmitic acid (e) within the HKU5 S protein, showing key

552   residues involved in polar interactions.

Figure 2. Interactions between HKU5 RBD and bat ACE2.

(a) Cryo-EM map (left) and atomic model shown in cartoon (right) of HKU5 RBD (marine

blue) in complex with *Pa*PD (orange). (b) Enlarged view of the interaction interface, showing

*Pa*PD α1, α2, α3 helices, β-hairpin, and L_A loop interacting with β-strands 5~8 and the α4 of

HKU5 RBD. (c-e) Detailed analysis of the binding interface between HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD,

with polar interactions indicated by dashed black lines. (f) ACE2 binding modes for SARS-

CoV-2, HCoV-NL63, PDF-2180, and HKU5 (upper panel), with RBD topologies shown in

lower panel and the RBM region marked in purple. *Hs*PD, *Pp*PD, and *Pa*PD are the peptidase

domains of *Homo sapiens*, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, and *Pipistrellus abramus*, respectively.

(g) Superimposed ACE2 binding sites of SARS-CoV-2, HCoV-NL63, PDF-2180, and HKU5

on *Pa*PD (upper panel). Binding footprints (lower panel) are shown in green (SARS-CoV-2),

violet (HCoV-NL63), red (PDF-2180) and marine blue (HKU5), respectively, emphasizing

the unique HKU5 binding epitope.

Figure 3. Interaction and functional analysis of HKU5 lineage RBDs with *Pa*PD.

(a) Binding and dissociation kinetics of RBDs of four HKU5 lineages (A3EXD0,

AIA62343.1, ABN10893.1, and QHA24687.1) with *Pa*PD measured by biolayer

interferometry (BLI). R^2 values are 0.9776, 0.9830, 0.9867, and 0.9861, respectively. (b)

Experimental schematic of tripartite split-fluorescence system to evaluate HKU5 RBD-*Pa*PD

interactions. (c) Flow cytometry-based sorting of single-cell populations expressing HKU5

RBD and *Pa*PD. Populations P2 and P4 were isolated based on fluorescence gating. And

sfGFP fluorescence intensity in the P4 population was measured. (d) Relative sfGFP

fluorescence intensity for WT or mutant HKU5 RBDs binding *Pa*PD, normalized to the WT

signal. Each data represents mean ± standard deviation of three separate measurements.

Figure 4. Mutational analysis of ACE2 interface residues and cross-species RBD

interactions. (a) Critical interface residues of *Pa*PD involved in HKU5 RBD binding. (b)

Effects of *Pa*PD residue mutations on HKU5 RBD binding, evaluated by flow cytometry and

tripartite split-fluorescence-based assays. The sfGFP fluorescence intensity was normalized to

WT *Pa*PD. (c) Conservation analysis of *Pa*PD interface residues in humans and red-

whiskered bulbuls, highlighting conserved residues essential for cross-species interactions.

(d) Binding affinities of RBDs of four HKU5 lineages (A3EXD0, AIA62343.1, ABN10893.1,

and QHA24687.1) with bulbul ACE2 PD (*Ps*PD), determined using BLI. R^2 values are

0.9963, 0.9973, 0.9956, and 0.9892, respectively. (e) Cryo-EM map (left panel) and structural

591   model (right panel) of HKU5 RBD (marine blue) in complex with *Ps*PD (purple), showing

592   critical binding interactions. (f-i) Detailed analysis of interface interactions between *Ps*PD

593   and HKU5 RBD, with polar interactions indicated by dashed black lines.

Supplementary information, Figure S1. Cryo-EM data processing pipeline and analysis

for the HKU5 S protein.

(a) Gel filtration elution profile of HKU5 S protein. (b) Flowchart of Cryo-EM data

processing, please see the "Data Processing" section in Methods for details. (c) Gold

standard FSC curve of the HKU5 S protein is estimated by cryoSPARC. (d) Euler angle

distribution of the HKU5 S protein in the final 3D reconstruction in cryoSPARC.

(b)

Compound Name	Formula	Mass	RT	NEG_WT (Area)	SNR
FA 18:0	C18 H36 O2	284.2716	4.37	11196418.18	252.2
FA 16:0	C16 H32 O2	256.2404	3.44	15968231.22	15874.9
FA 18:1	C18 H34 O2	282.2556	3.64	674911.7934	6176.9
FA 20:0	C20 H40 O2	312.3026	5.19	215788.3878	18.3

Supplementary information, Figure S2. Mass spectrometry characterization of the

HKU5 S protein.

(a) The mass spectrometry profile of the HKU5 S protein. The x-axis represents the m/z ratio,

which is the mass-to-charge ratio of the ions. The y-axis represents the ion intensity,

reflecting the abundance of the ions in the sample. Each peak in the mass spectrum

corresponds to a specific ion. (b) The information of the identified compounds. RT: retention

time, NEG_WT: negative ion peak area, SNR: signal-to-noise ratio. The NEG_WT is

624   proportional to the compound concentration. (c) and (d) are the mass spectra of octadecanoic

625   acid (FA 18:0) and eicosanoic acid (FA 20:0), respectively. (e) and (f) display the standard

626   mass spectra of oleic acid and palmitic acid, respectively. These standard spectra serve as

627   references for the qualitative identification of compounds in the sample.

Supplementary information, Figure S3. Cryo-EM data processing pipeline and analysis

for the HKU5 S$_{DM}$ protein.

(a) Flowchart of Cryo-EM data processing, please see the "Data Processing" section in

Methods for details. (b) Gold standard FSC curve of the HKU5 S$_{DM}$ protein is estimated by

cryoSPARC. (c) Euler angle distribution of the HKU5 S$_{DM}$ protein in the final 3D

reconstruction in cryoSPARC.

Supplementary information, Figure <u>S</u>4. Structural comparison of the WT HKU5 S

protein and the S_{DM} protein.

(a) and (b) show the overall structural comparison between the WT HKU5 S protein and the

S_{DM} protein, viewed from two orthogonal orientations. (c) The comparison of the local

structure and the cryo-EM map of the WT HKU5 S protein and the S_{DM} protein at the oleic

acid binding site. The oleic acid molecule is shown in yellow, and the mutated residues are

represented as stick models. The results show that the mutations cause significant changes in

the local structure, eliminating the binding of the oleic acid molecule. (d) and (e) show the

local structural changes in the NTD of the HKU5 S protein upon oleic acid binding. Red

648   arrows indicate the direction of structural movement, and pink regions represent the

649   remodeled secondary structures in the HKU5 S_{DM} protein.

Supplementary information, Figure <u>S</u>5. Gel filtration and SDS-PAGE analysis of the

HKU5 S protein or its RBD incubated with *Pa*PD.

(a) Top: Gel filtration elution profile of HKU5 S protein and *Pa*PD incubated at a molar ratio

of 1:5 for 1 hour. Bottom: SDS-PAGE analysis of fractions collected from the gel filtration.

The results indicate that HKU5 S protein and *Pa*PD do not co-elute, suggesting that they do

not form a stable complex under these conditions. (b) Top: Gel filtration elution profile of

HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD incubated at a molar ratio of 1:5 for 1 hour. Bottom: SDS-PAGE

analysis of fractions collected from the size-exclusion chromatography (SEC). The results

indicate that HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD can be co-eluted, suggesting that they form a stable

complex under these conditions.

Supplementary information, Figure S6. Cryo-EM data processing pipeline and analysis for the HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex.

(a) Flowchart of Cryo-EM data processing, please see the "Data Processing" section in Methods for details. (b) Gold standard FSC curve of the HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex is estimated by cryoSPARC. (c) Euler angle distribution of the HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex in the final 3D reconstruction in cryoSPARC.

a

b

Supplementary information, Figure S7. Phylogenetic analysis and sequence conservation logo of the RBM region of HKU5 lineages

(a) Phylogenetic tree of the S protein sequences in the NCBI protein database with >80% identity to the HKU5 S protein. (b) The sequence conservation logo with conserved interface residues highlighted. The insertion mutations are marked by solid red triangles. The viruse and protein accession numbers are as follows: Pipistrellus bat coronavirus HKU5 (A3EXD0,

AGP04929.1, AGP04937.1, AGP04939.1, AGP04938.1, AGP04942.1, AGP04935.1,

AGP04934.1, AGP04940.1, AGP04932.1, AWH65921.1, AGP04931.1, AGP04933.1,

AGP04936.1, AGP04943.1, AGP04930.1), BtPa_BetaCoV/GD2013 (AIA62343.1), HKU5-2

(ABN10884.1), HKU5-3 (ABN10893.1), HKU5-related (QHA24687.1), HKU5-5

(ABN10902.1), Bat Coronavirus RmGX17 (WCC63547.1), Bat Coronavirus PaHI19

(WCC63538.1), Bat Coronavirus PaGZ19 (WCC63457.1), Bat Coronavirus PaJX20

(WCC63315.1, WCC63520.1, WCC63529.1), Bat Coronavirus PaGD16 (WCC63315.1,

WCC63520.1, WCC63529.1), Bat Coronavirus PaGD17 (WCC63423.1, WCC63378.1,

WCC63369.1, WCC63396.1, WCC63414.1, WCC63432.1, WCC63387.1, WCC63351.1,

WCC63441.1), and Bat Coronavirus PaGD18 (WCC63297.1, WCC63396.1).

Supplementary information, Figure S8. Multiple sequence alignment of RBD from

different HKU5 subtypes.

703   The specific viruses and their corresponding protein accession numbers are detailed in

704   Supplementary information, Fig. S7

Supplementary information, Figure S9. Evolutionary analysis of *Pipistrellus abramus*

ACE2 homologous sequences.

(a) Phylogenetic tree of *Pipistrellus abramus* ACE2 homologous sequences. Avian species are

marked in light blue, and mammalian species are marked in light green. (b) Multiple

sequence alignment of ACE2 homologous sequences from multiple species. The conserved

motifs are indicated by black boxes. The species and protein accession numbers are as

follows: *Pipistrellus abramus* (C7ECT9), *Neovison vison* (A0A8C7BTF2), *Octodon degus*

(A0A6P6ESQ8), *Enhydra lutris kenyoni* (A0A2Y9KLV0), *Mustela putorius furo* (Q2WG88),

Heterocephalus glaber (G5C234), *Chinchilla lanigera* (A0A8C2UPB0), *Peromyscus*

maniculatus bairdii (A0A6I9KY05), *Vombatus ursinus* (A0A4X2M679), *Monodelphis*

domestica (F6WXR7), *Phascolarctos cinereus* (A0A6P5M0G0), *Ursus maritimus*

(A0A8M1G354), *Fukomys damarensis* (A0A091D044), *Mohoua ochrocephala*

(A0A7K7XXX4), *Pitta sordida* (A0A851FF99), *Smithornis capensis* (A0A7K8QUJ4),

Myiagra hebetior (A0A7K9J5U7), *Serilophus lunatus* (A0A7L1DC41), *Rhipidura dahli*

(A0A7K9W0V6), *Sakesphorus luctuosus* (A0A7K8YCL7), *Crypturellus undulatus*

(A0A7K4LNH7), *Chionis minor* (A0A7K7FWK2), *Baryphthengus martii* (A0A7K9DU94),

Alectura lathami (A0A7L0W6I4), *Pluvianellus socialis* (A0A7L3D992), *Bucco*

(A0A7K9IC27), *Eudromia elegans* (A0A7K7VCA6), *Cavia porcellus* (H0VSF6)

Supplementary information, Figure <u>S</u>10. Cryo-EM data processing pipeline and

analysis for the HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex.

(a) Flowchart of Cryo-EM data processing, please see the "Data Processing" section in

Methods for details. (b) Gold standard FSC curve of the HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex is

estimated by cryoSPARC. (c) Euler angle distribution of the HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex in

the final 3D reconstruction in cryoSPARC.

Supplementary information, Figure <u>S</u>11. Comparison of the interfaces between the

HKU5 RBD and *Pa*PD or *Ps*PD.

(a) shows an overall structural comparison in different views, with the black box indicating

the interaction interface. (b-e) show magnified views of the interface details. In the structural

comparison, the RBD and *Ps*PD in the HKU5 RBD–*Ps*PD complex are in purple and marine,

respectively. The HKU5 RBD–*Pa*PD complex is in cyan.

745 **Supplementary information, Table 1 Characterization of fatty acids associated with the**

746 **coronavirus S protein.**

Organism	PDB ID	Ligand ID	Ligand Formula	Ligand MW	Ligand Name	Ref.
SARS-CoV-2	6ZB4	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	[17]
SARS-CoV-2	7E7B	ELA	C18 H34 O2	282.461	9-Octadecenoic acid	[52]
SARS-CoV-2	8H3E	Q83	C15 H18 N2 O5	306.314	7-(6-nitro-2,3-dihydroindol-1-yl)-7-oxidanylidene-heptanoic acid	[37]
SARS-CoV-2	7Z3Z	STE	C18 H36 O2	284.477	Stearic acid	[53]
SARS-CoV-2	7Y42	REA	C20 H28 O2	300.435	Retinoic acid	[54]
SARS-CoV	7ZH1	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	[55]
PCoV_GX	7CN8	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	[56]
HCoV-OC43	7SB5	PLM	C16 H32 O2	256.424	Palmitic acid	[35]
HCoV-OC43	7SBY	8Z9	C16 H30 O2	254.408	Sapienic acid	
Bat Coronavirus WIV1	8TC0	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	
Civet Coronavirus 007	8TC1	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	[36]
Civet Coronavirus SZ3	8TC5	EIC	C18 H32 O2	280.445	Linoleic acid	

 Supplementary information, Table 2 Statistics of cryo-EM data collection, processing,

 and model refinement.

Data collection				
EM equipment	Krios (Thermo Scientific)			
Voltage (kV)	300			
Detector	Gatan K3 Summit			
Energy filter	Gatan GIF Quantum, 20 eV slit			
Pixel size (Å)	1.087			
Electron dose (e-/Å2)	50			
Defocus range (μm)	-1.2 ~ -2.2			
Number of collected micrographs	2,738	3,472	3,103	6,173
Sample	HKU5 S	HKU5 S$_{DM}$	RBD–PaPD	RBD–PsPD
PDB ID	9KR8	9KR9	9KRA	9KRB
EMDB ID	EMD-62522	EMD-62523	EMD-62524	EMD-62525
3D Reconstruction				
Software	cryoSPARC			
Number of used particles	801,468	40,837	437,582	412,452
Resolution (Å)	2.39	2.80	3.17	3.22
Symmetry	C1			
Map sharpening B factor (Å^2)	-91.7	-88.2	-190.3	-187.4
Refinement				
Software	Phenix			
Cell dimensions				
a=b=c (Å)	347.84	347.84	208.704	208.704
α=β=γ (˚)	90			
Model composition				
Protein residues	3,489	3,552	789	796
Sugar	81	87	15	11
Fatty acids	6	3	0	0
R.m.s deviations				
Bonds length (Å)	0.008	0.008	0.006	0.007
Bonds Angle (˚)	1.095	1.012	0.751	0.819
Ramachandran plot statistics (%)				
Preferred	93.49	93.98	93.38	91.79
Allowed	5.96	5.93	6.11	7.95
Outlier	0.55	0.08	0.51	0.25

752 **Supplementary information, Movie 1**

753 Global conformational change from the WT HKU5 S protein to the S_{DM} protein.

754 **Supplementary information, Movie 2**

755 Local conformational change within the S1 subunit of the HKU5 S protein from the WT

756 conformation to the S_{DM} protein conformation.