Rapid turnover and recurrent structural variation at the 17q21.31 locus in modern and ancient human genomes, and primates

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ABSTRACT

The 17q21.31 locus in humans harbors several complex structural haplotypes including a ~970kb inversion. Different inversion haplotypes have been associated with susceptibility to microdeletions causing Koolen-de Vries syndrome and variation in fecundity and recombination rates. Here, using 210 haplotype-resolved human genome assemblies and pangenome graph-based approaches we characterize 11 distinct structural haplotypes, several of which have not been previously described. Extending our analyses to a set of haplotype-resolved great-ape genomes, we characterize the structure of a recurrent inversion in chimpanzees which extends an additional 750kb and is ~2 million years younger than the human inversion. We further determine that gorillas exhibit an independent duplication of the *KANSL1* gene, disruption of which in humans is the cause of Koolen-de Vries syndrome. Using short read sequencing data we characterize 17q21.31 haplotype diversity worldwide in ~5174 individuals from 107 populations finding increased frequencies of *KANSL1* duplication-containing haplotypes in both European and South Asian populations as well as 8 double recombination events between inverted and non inverted haplotypes ranging in size from 20-180kb. Finally, using 626 ancient Eurasian human genomes we show haplotypes containing *KANSL1* duplications have increased ~6-fold over the past 12 thousand years in Europe. Together, our results highlight the dynamics,

37 complexity, and recurrent, independent evolution of a medically relevant locus across humans
38 and great apes.

INTRODUCTION

Complex structural variants (SVs) play critical roles in human disease[1], diversity[2,3], and
evolution[4,5]. Inversions are a particularly intriguing and understudied class of SV which have
historically been challenging to assay as they are often flanked by large, complex, segmental
duplications[1,6]. Nevertheless, across taxa inversions are powerful drivers of genetic and
phenotypic diversity influencing traits such as behavior[7], fitness[8,9], and morphology[8,10].
Inversions can also act as barriers to gene flow between populations, promoting speciation and
adaptation to different ecological niches and environmental pressures[11–13].
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One remarkable inversion in humans is found at the 17q21.31 locus spanning ~970kb and
disrupting patterns of linkage disequilibrium over more than a megabase[14]. Haplotypes at this
locus group into two major clades: H1 haplotypes which are the most common in humans, and
H2 haplotypes, which are inverted with respect to the H1 haplotype. Since its discovery, this
locus has been associated with signatures of positive selection[14], disease[15], and recurrent
structural rearrangement ("toggling")[16] throughout the great ape lineage, highlighting its complex
evolutionary history.
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The 17q21.31 locus is of particular medical importance harboring several genes associated with
human disease. These include *MAPT,* which encodes the tau protein found in aggregates in
Alzheimer's dementias[17], and *KANSL1,* disruption of which results in Koolen-de Vries Syndrome
(KdVS). KdVS is characterized by developmental delay, intellectual disability, hypotonia,
epilepsy, distinctive facial features, and congenital malformations across multiple organ
systems[18]. While rare truncating mutations of *KANSL1* can cause KdVS[15] it is more commonly
caused by 17q21.31 microdeletions which occur at a frequency of ~1/16,000 individuals. These
microdeletions encompass 5 genes and are mediated by non-allelic homologous recombination
(NAHR) between directly oriented segmental duplications which are present on the H2
(inverted) haplotype, but not the H1 haplotype. H2 carriers are thus at risk for KdVS. However,
H2 haplotypes, which are at particularly high frequency in European populations, are also
associated with increased fecundity in some[14] and thus may be the target of positive selection[18].
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In addition to the non-inverted (H1) and inverted (H2) haplotypes, recent studies have identified
additional structural complexity at the 17q21.31 locus[19,20], including two independent partial
duplications of the *KANSL1* gene on the H1 and H2 haplotypes, as well as copy number
variation of the *NSF* gene. Here, we set out to characterize the recent history and full extent of
structural complexity at the 17q21.31 locus using both humans and non-human primate long
read haplotype-resolved genome assemblies, extensive human population diversity sequencing,
and ancient genomes.

 RESULTS

 Resolving complex genome structures at the 17q21.31 locus with 210 haplotype resolved
 genome assemblies

Recently generated long read genomic resources provide an unprecedented opportunity to
uncover structural diversity at complex loci such as the 17q21.31 locus. We collected 210
diverse haplotypes including the recently assembled T2T human genome to examine the
structural complexity of this region. We first used PGRTK to annotate the repeat architecture of
these genomes (**Fig 1A, B, S1**). PGRTK identifies clusters of paralogous and homologous
sequence within and between genomes enabling us to compare structures among haplotypes.
Previous literature has established that alongside the major inversion haplotypes H1 and H2,
several additional regions of copy number variation exist on different haplotypes. These include
distinct and independent duplications of the *KANSL1* gene on the H2 and H1 haplotypes,
referred to as α and β respectively. Additionally partial duplications of the *NSF* gene, on either
the H1 or H2 haplotype, are referred to as γ duplications.
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Alongside our PGRTK-based classification of structures we used a pangenome based approach
(PGGB) to cluster haplotype architectures (see methods) identifying a total of 24 unique
structures (**Fig S1**). Many of these structures were highly similar differing only subtly in the
composition of the segmentally duplicated *LRRC37A* gene. We thus further clustered structures
based on their pairwise jaccard distance into 11 unique summary structures (**Methods**).
Structural differences between these haplotypes were confirmed by plotting a multiway
structural alignment using SVbyEye (**Fig 1C**). These clusters exhibit finer resolution than
previously developed nomenclature. For example, we identified three structures which can be
classified as H1.β1.γ1, based on their single copies of the *KANSL1* and the *NSF* duplications,
which we designate these with additional numeric suffixes. We further identified two distinct
H1.β1.γ2 haplotypes and three H1.β1.γ3 haplotypes. These distinct structures are mostly
differentiated by copy number variation at the *LRRC37A2* gene, which flanks the inversion.
Overall, the most commonly observed H1 structures were H1.β1.γ1.1 (37% of H1), H1.β1.γ2.2
(30% of H1), H1.β1.γ3.1 (19% of H1) and H1.β2.γ1 (8% of H1) - making up a total proportion of
94% of H1s (88% overall). Most of the variation in structural diversity we observed is located on
H1.β1 haplotypes, which are the highest frequency. Only a single H1.β2 and H2.α2 structure
were observed in our dataset and several previously described haplotypes were not present in
our long read assemblies (H1.β3.γ1, H2.α1.γ2, H2.α2.γ1), however, these are at lower
frequency in the population and were observed in our subsequent analyses of structural
variation using short reads. Together, these data recapitulate previously described structures in
higher detail and demonstrate additional complexity present in humans.

Recurrent but distinct inversions in humans and chimpanzees

The recent completion of several haplotype resolved T2T ape genomes provides the opportunity
to contextualize the evolutionary history of this locus in great apes. To explore the population-
level diversity in these non-human species we sequenced and assembled two gorilla genomes
(four haplotypes) and assessed a set of recently assembled chimpanzee and bonobo genomes
(Rocha et al in prep). Previous work has demonstrated that the H2 orientation is the ancestral

architecture of the locus. However, fluorescent *in-situ* hybridization of a panel of several apes
has suggested that the 17q21.31 inversion is segregating in orangutans, chimpanzees, and
bonobos [16] and has emerged independently in these species (i.e. inversion *toggling*).
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We extracted the orthologous 17q21.31 sequence across five non-human great ape species
and constructed structural alignments using SVbyEye (**Fig. 2A,B**). These alignments
demonstrate the increasing complexity of segmental duplications in African great apes in
comparison to orangutans, as has been previously described [16]. To understand how these
structures relate to the human architecture we complemented these analyses by projecting
human-identified PGRTK sequence blocks onto the primate genomes (**Fig. 2C**). These
projections lose resolution as a function of genetic distance particularly in rapidly evolving
sequence such segmental duplications but still highlight major architectural features like the
inversion and flanking regions.
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Our analyses revealed several striking, lineage specific structural features at this locus. In
gorillas we identified a 500kb duplication overlapping to the *KANSL1* gene. This is an
independent duplication of the gene distinct from that observed in human haplotypes. This
duplication corresponds to an annotated gene sequence in the recent T2T gorilla genome
assembly, though it is unclear if it is a functional duplication. We also identified two inverted
chimpanzee haplotypes. These inversions are in the same orientation as the human H1
haplotype. We refer to this haplotype as the H1p haplotype, and the ancestral primate haplotype
as H2p. The chimpanzee H1p/H2p inversion spans ~1.4Mbp (**Fig 2B**). Alignments between
human and chimpanzee haplotypes revealed that while the human and chimpanzee inversions
exhibit ~750kb of overlapping sequence, the chimpanzee inversion is distinct, containing
approximately 650kb of sequence that is not found in the human inversion (**Fig 2B**). Thus, not
only is the chimpanzee inversion the result of an independent event, but it is a completely
distinct structural variant. This provides further evidence that the H2 orientation is the ancestral
structure as while the H1 and H1p haplotypes differ structurally by hundreds of kb the H2 and
H2p haplotypes exhibit highly similar structures.
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We next sought to compare the timing of the different inversion events by aligning ~400kbp of
unique (non-duplicated) sequence within the shared inversion block across humans and great
apes (**Fig. 2D, methods**). The human H1/H2 inversion exhibits a coalescence time of
approximately to 2.38 million years ago, confirming a relatively deep coalescence of the two
haplotypes [19]. The chimpanzee H1p/H2p inversion however emerged much more recently
~330,000 years ago. These analyses also revealed extensive incomplete lineage sorting across
humans, gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos. 54% of trees exhibited a topology with humans
as an outgroup to the *pan* and gorilla lineages with the canonical topology represented 46% of
the time. Together, these results demonstrate that the 17q21.31 locus is highly dynamic across
great apes with distinct but overlapping structural variants occurring independently in several
taxa over vastly different timescales.

Timing and recurrence of human 17q21.31 structural haplotypes

Long-read haplotype-resolved assemblies phase genome structures with linked SNPs which can be used to trace the evolutionary history of complex genome architectures. Extended suppression of recombination between the H1 and H2 haplotypes enables dating of the coalescent time of the inversion to ~2.38 million years. However, recombination between H1 haplotypes will disrupt patterns of linkage disequilibrium (LD) making it challenging to assess the emergence of specific H1 substructures. We sought to identify high LD blocks adjacent to the distal region of H1 structural variation (containing the *KANSL1* and *NSF* duplications). Such regions can be used to trace the history of these structures. We identified 100kb of sequence adjacent to the structurally variable portion of H1 with a consistent tree topology indicating high LD and reduced recombination (**Fig 3A, B**). Using this sequence we constructed a coalescent tree across 210 human haplotypes and the T2T chimpanzee genome as the outgroup. This tree reveals that H1 *KANSL1* duplications (i.e. H1.β2) largely fall into two clusters, suggesting at least two independent origins of this duplication. In contrast, *NSF* duplications (γ2, γ3) exhibit several independent origins throughout the tree. One particularly large cluster of γ3 duplications was identified, within which all observed γ4 duplications were also found. We also find independent origins of the sub-haplotypes cataloged in **Fig 1A** including multiple origins of the H1.β1.γ1.3 structure. Together, these results highlight that the structure of H1 haplotypes at the 17q21.31 locus is highly mutable and predisposed to recurrent structural variation. This includes large-scale gene duplications such as *KANSL1* and *NSF* as well as smaller SVs including copy number changes of *LRRC37A.*

Population diversity of the 17q21.31 locus worldwide using short read data

Despite their immense power, existing long-read datasets remain limited in sample size and population diversity. Nevertheless, large scale short read sequencing datasets from diverse human populations have recently been generated. To characterize patterns of 17q21.31 variation across the world we analyzed short read sequencing data from 5174 samples encompassing 107 populations representative of human diversity worldwide (see **Methods, Figs S2-5**). Using SNPs tagging the inversion as well as read-depth based copy number quantification we estimated haplotype frequencies assigning individuals to one of four groups: H1.β1, representing H1 haplotypes without *KANSL1* duplications; H1.β2+, representing H1 haplotypes with *KANSL1* duplications; H2.α1 representing H2 haplotypes without *KANSL1* duplications; and H2.α2+ representing H2 haplotypes with *KANSL1* duplications (**Fig 4A-D**).

Worldwide, the most common haplotype is H1.β1,confirming previous work using more limited genome sequencing datasets[19,20]. However, we observe extreme population stratification of complex haplotypes at this locus. European populations exhibit the highest worldwide frequency of H2.α2+ haplotypes (10%-30.58%) and intermediate haplotypes frequencies (10.9%-31.5%) of H1.β2+. In contrast, South Asian populations, which have been historically underrepresented in sequencing datasets, exhibit the highest worldwide frequency of H1.β2+ haplotypes (14.6%-66.8%) and intermediate H1.β1 haplotype frequencies (28.7%-79.2%) with lower levels of H2.α2+ (1.4%-10.9%). East Asian populations are essentially fixed for H1.β1 haplotypes. We also assessed whole genome sequencing data from 368 African genomes from the CAAPA2 consortium demonstrating limited haplotype diversity in Africa, with most populations exhibiting

202   H1.β1. However, we observed H2.α1 haplotypes at low frequency in Khomani San, Nama,
203   Mbuti, Biaka, Bench, and Sheko populations. H2.α2+ haplotypes were also present at some low
204   frequencies in some African populations. These results confirm previous analyses highlighting
205   the presence of rare H2.α1 haplotypes almost exclusively in African populations [19].
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While short read sequencing data do not enable characterization of phased *NSF* duplications
(i.e. γ2+) we calculated *NSF* copy number genotype frequencies worldwide confirming the
highest *NSF* copy numbers in East Asia (**Fig 4E**). We find that the overwhelming majority of
NSF duplications occur on the H1.β1 background. However, we do observe evidence of both
NSF duplications and deletions happening at low frequencies on H2.α2 background (**Fig 4F**).
Together, these results provide the most comprehensive catalog of 17q21.31 diversity in
humans to date and highlight the extreme stratification of haplotypes between continental
populations.

Double recombinants and complex gene conversion events between structural
haplotypes

The suppression of recombination by inversions can disrupt patterns of linkage disequilibrium
(LD) across the genome. To understand how the 17q21.31 inversion has impacted patterns of
recombination we used SNPRelate, a windowed PCA-based analysis, to cluster genotypes
across 3135 individuals (**Fig 5A, B**). Individuals clustered into three groups corresponding to
H1/H1, H1/H2, H2/H2 genotypes with LD extending ~80kb beyond the proximal inversion
breakpoint. Despite the persistence of this long 900kb LD block, we identified three instances of
recombination at the proximal end of the extended LD block (**Fig 5C**) occurring primarily in
African individuals (32/56, 57%). We also noted several individuals exhibiting 20-180 kb
stretches showing switching between genotype groups within the inversion region, indicating
double crossover recombination events, or possibly, long stretches of interlocus gene
conversion (**Fig 5A-C**). Of the 8 identified switch such events, two exceeded 140 kb, occurring
in a single European individual and a single South Asian individual, and likely represent cases
of double crossover recombination. The remaining events range from 20-70 kb and were found
almost exclusively in African populations (51/54, 94%). We also noted that the windowed PCA-
analyses identified more complex clustering patterns at the proximal and distal ends of the
inversion locus (**Fig 5B**). We found that these corresponded strongly with the complex structural
haplotypes which we describe thus demonstrating that complex structural variation can be
detected from short read-based SNP patterns in some cases. Together these results
demonstrate that despite extensive inversion-driven recombination suppression, substantial
exchange has happened between vastly divergent haplotypes.

Ancient genomes track the rise in frequency of *KANSL1* duplications in Europe

To determine how 17q21.31 structural haplotype frequencies have changed in Europeans over
recent history we analyzed 626 ancient genomes spanning ~10 thousand years of human
history[21] (**Fig 6A**). European Hunter Gatherer populations, dating from ~5000-10,000 years
before present (BP) exhibited extremely low haplotype diversity with H1.β1 making up >95% of
haplotypes (**Fig 6B**). Higher frequencies of H2.α2+ haplotypes appear ~7 to ~5 kya BP in Early
and Neolithic Farmers (25%-31%) . Steppe Pastoralists also exhibit H2.α2+ haplotypes (10%)

as well as high frequencies of the H1.β2+ haplotype (30%). To understand the temporal
dynamics of haplotype frequency changes over the last 10 kya we fit a multinomial logistic
regression model to these ancient genomic derived data **(Fig 6C)**. This model demonstrates
that while H1.β1 was the dominant haplotype ~11 thousand years ago with a frequency of
>90%, it has subsequently declined ~1.6-fold. Concomitantly, the H1.β2+ and H2.α2+
haplotypes have increased from ~1% and ~7% to 29% and 21% respectively. Together, these
data demonstrate that 17q21.31 haplotype diversity in Europe today is the result of a massive
shift in frequencies of the *KANSL1* duplication in both H1 and H2 haplotypes over recent history.

DISCUSSION
Here we leverage long-read haplotype-resolved human genomes, newly assembled T2T and
population-scale long-read sequenced great ape genomes, diverse human short-read data, and
ancient DNA to assess the diversity and recent evolution of the 17q21.31 locus. Together, our
results provide the most comprehensive assessment to date of this remarkable region of the
genome providing new insights and clarifying previous works. For instance, while it has been
established that the H2 haplotype is the ancestral orientation of the 17q21.31 locus, the
presence of the inversions in chimpanzees, bonobos, and orangutans has been interpreted as
recurrent "toggling" of the inversion across great apes. Here, by using population-scale
haplotype resolved assemblies from chimpanzees we resolve the structure and sequence of the
chimpanzee 17q21.31 inversion. We find that the chimpanzee inversion is substantially larger
than the human inversion.While it overlaps the human inversion across ~750kb of sequence it
extends an additional ~650kb. Furthermore, we find that this inversion occurred far more
recently than the human inversion, ~330,000 years ago, in contrast to previous estimates[16].
Thus, "highly mutable and recurrent" might be a more apt description of the inversion locus than
"toggling" as independent inversion events with distinct breakpoints have occurred on different
lineages. However, additional population-scale long-read sequencing of primate genomes will
be required to determine the sequence and structures of the bonobo and orangutan inversions
and discern their evolutionary history.
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The H2 haplotype has been associated with increased fecundity in Icelandic[14] and Polish[22]
populations and has thus been suggested to be the target of selection in Europeans. Indeed, H2
haplotype frequencies are highest in European populations. We used ancient genomes to
reconstruct allele frequency trajectories of 17q21.31 haplotypes finding that while H1.β1
haplotypes have declined in frequency markedly over the past 10,000 years, H1.β2+ and
H2.α2+ haplotypes have increased in frequency substantially: ~29-fold for H1.β2+ and 3-fold for
H2.α2+. Thus, the group of haplotypes containing duplications of the *KANSL1* gene has
increased in frequency ~6-fold. Prima facie such an increase in frequency would correspond to
a selection coefficient of approximately 0.015, similar to the average selection coefficients for
regions such as lactase persistence. Critically, however, this estimate is an extremely crude
oversimplification which neglects the small sample sizes in the ancient data and the importance
of modelling the complex demographic history of Europe. Nevertheless, these results provide an
intriguing alternate hypothesis: that duplications of the *KANSL1* gene may be the targets of
selection as opposed to the inversion itself.
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The availability of increasingly diverse population-scale short-read sequencing of humans
enabled us to characterize 17q21.31 haplotype diversity worldwide. Our results confirm previous
work highlighting the prevalence of the H1.β1 haplotype in Africa with the ancestral H2.α1
haplotypes present at low frequencies in some populations such as the Khomani San. However,
our analyses also provide some of the first observations of 17q21.31 diversity in South Asian
populations, which have historically been undersampled. We find surprisingly high frequencies
of the H1.β2+ and H2.α2+ haplotypes across South Asia. These results mirror those of Europe
with the two *KANSL1* duplication-containing haplotypes showing increased frequencies
compared to African and East Asian populations, albeit with differing relative frequencies of the
H1.β2+ and H2.α2+. These results potentially suggest that a recent increase in duplicated
haplotypes may have also occurred in South Asia mirroring the increase in Europe, though
additional analyses are needed to confirm that hypothesis.
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Finally, we discovered several double recombination events inside the 17q21.31 inversion
locus. Intriguingly, these events are overwhelmingly found in African populations, many of which
have very low H2 haplotype frequencies. Therefore, these double recombination events are
likely quite old, having occurred when H2 haplotypes were at higher frequencies in Africa. We
also identified two other much longer double recombination events present in two non-African
individuals. In addition, we identified a region intersecting the *CRHR1* gene where H1 and H2
haplotypes are completely homogenized and individuals cannot be assigned to one haplotype
or the other (**Fig 5A-C**). This finding has previously been reported and explained as the result of
an ancient double recombination event[19]. Crucially, unlike the other double recombinants that
we identified, this event has likely been fixed in H2 haplotype, and the original sequence
associated with the H2 haplotype has been lost in all human populations. Except for these rare
double recombination events, however, we found that recombination is completely suppressed
across the inversion. An additional consequence of segregating inversions is that by
suppressing recombination they can promote the accumulation of deleterious variation[9]. It
remains an unanswered question how the increased frequency of 17q21.31 inversion in specific
human populations may affect mutational load.

The importance of the 17q21.31 locus in human disease, human diversity, and evolution has
been the focus of many studies since its discovery. Nevertheless, long read sequencing, ancient
genomes, and additional human population datasets are continuing to increase our
understanding of this region. Our insights synthesize previous work with these new advances in
genetics and genomics highlighting both new insights and posing new avenues for future
research.

METHODS

Datasets

Short-read sequencing data were compiled from high-coverage resequencing of 5174
individuals from the 1,000 Genomes Project (1KG), the Human Genome Diversity Panel
(HGDP) and the Simons Genome Diversity Panel (SGDP). We also obtained unpublished short-
read sequencing data of 318 individuals from the CAAPA2 Data consortium. In total we were

able to infer the complex genotypes of 4585 individuals with high confidence from these
contemporary samples. Among these 697 are trios from 1KG and the remainder 3888 are
unrelated individual samples compiled from 1KG, HGDP, SGDP, and CAAPA2. The trios are
only used for method validation purposes. Genotypes from 626 historical samples from
between -12kya and 1000 ya were obtained from [23]. Historical samples were assigned to
populations based on their original publications [5,21]. 216 long-read haplotype assemblies were
compiled from the HPRC and HGSVC [3]. In addition we included the GRCh38 genome and
CHM13 reference genomes to our dataset[24]. Haplotype assemblies were only included if they
spanned the 17q21.31 locus. This excluded three assemblie`s HG0015#hap1, HG00320#hap2,`
`and NA21093#hap1` from our dataset, although they were used in characterization of complex
structures in the locus. These three assemblies that were excluded appear to have been
misassembled across the locus as they were either discontiguous, or had a partial *KANSL1*
duplication that could not be cross-validated with short-read sequencing data. We obtained
primate genome assemblies for orangutans, gorillas, bonobos, and chimpanzees from three
sources: GenomeArk (eight haplotypes, two per species), and 57 newly generated and
unpublished gorilla, chimpanzee, and bonobo genomes. For the purposes of this study, we
include the unpublished assemblies for the 17q21.31 region, with full genome releases planned
alongside separate publications currently in preparation.

Characterization of complex structures at the 17q21.31 locus in humans

We extracted the 17q21.31 region including flanking sequences from the GRCh38 reference
genome (chr17: 45275488-46921902). We then used minimap2[25] (-x asm5) to identify the
homologous sequences in all the samples in the HGSVC and HPRC genomes. We performed a
principal bundle decomposition using PanGenomic Research Tool Kit (PGR-TK) for 216 of the
HGSVC and HPRC genome assemblies with the parameters of `-w 80 -r 12 --min-span 32`
`--bundle-length-cutoff 10000 --min-branch-size 16 --min-cov 0`[26]. We examined
the results, and excluded five assemblies that were potentially misassembled. We further
excluded bundles that were unique to just one haplotype, or those whose length were in the
lowest quantile across all the remaining bundles (i.e. < 23kb). We grouped the haplotypes into
representative structures based on the order and orientation of the principal bundles. The
position of genes along haplotypes was determined by mapping coding sequences to
haplotypes using minimap2[25] (`-c -x asm5`). We chose one haplotype within each unique
structure and used PGGB to build a pangenome graph[27]. We then used odgi similarity to
generate a matrix of jaccard distance between each unique haplotype structure and made a
neighbor joining tree to cluster these haplotype structures. We ran minimap2[25] (`-x asm5 -c --`
`eqx -D -P --dual=no`) on pairs of assemblies to create sequence alignments, which were
then inputted to SVByEye[28]for visualization.

Characterization of complex structures at the 17q21.31 locus in primates

We used minimap2[25] (-x asm20) to identify the orthologous sequences in the great ape
assemblies to the human 17q21.31 locus in GRCh38 reference genome (chr17:45275488-
46921902). Because we observed an inversion in chimpanzees that spans a longer region than
the inversion in humans, we then manually extended these sequences by 2Mb on either flank in
both great apes and all human haplotypes, so that these sequences span the entirety of the

chimpanzee inversion. We then reran PGRTK on these extended human sequences with the
same settings and projected the principal bundles to the great ape sequences. Within each
species, we categorized these haplotypes by their inversion, *KANSL1* and *NSF* duplication
status. We then selected the one representative haplotype for each unique structure in each
species for visualization. We ran minimap2[25] and SVByEye[28] on pairs of great ape and human
haplotypes with the same settings except -x asm20 was used as a flag in minimap2[25] instead of
-asm5. To estimate the divergence time of structural haplotypes across great apes, we first
identified the largest region of shared homology within the inverted segment (corresponding to
the blue bundle in Fig. 1A). We performed pairwise alignments using minimap2[25], with the
CHM13 human reference sequence as the query, against 17 primate assemblies: all great ape
haplotypes from GenomeArk (including 4 orangutan, 2 gorilla, 2 bonobo, and 2 chimpanzee
haplotypes), 4 additional gorilla haplotypes, the inverted chimpanzee haplotype, and
representative human haplotypes H1.β1.γ1, H1.β2.γ1, and H2.α2.γ2. Multiple sequence
alignment was performed using kalign[29]. Phylogenetic trees were inferred using IQ-TREE with
the Jukes-Cantor substitution model and 1000 bootstrap replicates Divergence times were
estimated using the orangutan–human/chimpanzee/gorilla split `18.13` mya as a calibration
point[30]. Trees were visualized using the ggtree R package[31].

Evolutionary history of structural variation at the 17q21.31 locus in humans

To date the emergence of different H1 haplotype structures we first needed to find a unique
sequence at the 17q21.31 locus that is physically linked to the *KANSL1* and *NSF* duplications
and not broken down by recombination. The largest region of shared homology within the
inverted segment (corresponding to the blue bundle in Fig. 1A) in CHM13 is also the closest in
proximity to the *KANSL1* duplications. Therefore, we used similarities in phylogenetic tree
topology as a proxy for linkage disequilibrium across this region.This region was divided into
nine non-overlapping 50 kb windows using seqkit (`sliding -s 50000 -W 50000`)[32]. All 210
human haplotypes that were included in previous analyses were included to construct the trees,
as well as 2 GenomeArk chimpanzee haplotypes. For each of the nine windows, sequences
were aligned using kalign[29], and maximum likelihood trees were inferred with IQ-TREE[33] using
the Jukes–Cantor model and 1000 ultrafast bootstrap replicates (`-m JC -bb 1000 -nt AUTO`).
Trees were rooted using the two chimpanzee haplotypes as an outgroup. To quantify
topological similarity between trees, we computed pairwise Robinson–Foulds (RF) distances.
An RF distance matrix was then constructed for all pairwise tree comparisons, and the windows
with the lowest distance to the right-most window (i.e. the window that is closest to the *KANSL1*
duplication) were selected. We then merged the selected windows, and reran IQ-TREE using
the chimpanzee-human split time `7.74` mya as a calibration point for the emergence of
haplotype structures[33].

Using contemporary short read genomes to understand 17q21.31 population diversity in
modern human populations

Tag SNP based inversion genotyping

In order to determine the genotype status of individuals in our dataset, we used a total of 1271
tag SNPs to genotype the 17q21.31 locus based on the method used in[23] For each individual,

we constructed a genotype vector by coding observed genotypes at these SNPs as 0
(homozygous reference), 1 (heterozygous), or 2 (homozygous alternate). Then, Euclidean
distance was calculated between the observed genotype vector and expected genotype vectors
for H1/H1, H1/H2, and H2/H2. Each individual was assigned the inversion genotype with the
minimum Euclidean distance to their observed genotype.

Read-depth based copy number genotyping at NSF and KANSL1

Copy number genotypes for the 1000 Genomes, HGDP, and SGDP, and CAAPA2 individuals
were estimated using read depth as described in [5]. In brief, read depths were quantified from
CRAM (CAAPA2) or BAM (1000G, HGDP, SGDP) files. CRAM files from CAAPA2 were based
on a different version of the GRCh38 reference genome, and to ensure consistency across
datasets, we remapped this data to the same version of the reference genome as the other
three datasets (GRCh38_full_analysis_set_plus_decoy_hla). We generated d4 files from these
BAM files. From the d4 files we calculated the average read depths in 1,000 bp sliding windows
in 100 bp steps across the 17q21.31 locus. These depths were normalized to the average read
depth within a control region chr17:42800000-46000000 within the 17q21.31 locus for each
individual, in which no copy number variation was observed in more than 3,000 individuals (i.e.
individuals from the 1KGP and HGDP samples). To determine the copy number of the α and β
segments of the *KANSL1* duplication, we averaged the copy number of windows that
overlapped with the unique region of each duplication (α: chr17:46143000-46238000 and β:
chr17:46095000-46123000). In the case of *NSF* copy number, since the GRCh38 reference
genome has two copies of *NSF*, we summed the normalized read depth across two target
regions corresponding to the two *NSF* copies (chr17:46,336,376–46,489,410 and
chr17:46,564,311–46,707,123). CAAPA2 samples were excluded from *NSF* analysis because of
difficulties in aligning the sequencing reads to this complex region. Lastly, we removed samples
whose copy number estimates were too large to be realistic (i.e. copy number > 20 for *KANSL1*
and > 50 for *NSF*).

Determining haplotypes from 17q21.31 genotypes

We were able to associate the β and α duplications with the inversion status of their haplotype
background because the β duplication is always associated with the H1 haplotypes and that the
α duplication is always associated with the H2 haplotypes. Therefore, it was possible to
integrate the inversion genotypes (H1/H1, H1/H2, H2/H2) and copy numbers (based on read
depth in sector calls) to assign complex genotypes representing both inversion and *KANSL1*
duplication status as described in[23] **(Fig. S4)**. We then used R to plot the average copy number
across the β and α regions, and assigned genotypes based on their inversion status and copy
number. The samples clustered into duplication genotypes with the exception of a handful of
samples which did not match their inversion calls. In cases where multiple interpretations of
duplication status are possible, the more probable assignment is listed (e.g., H1D/H1D vs.
H1/H1DD we chose the former because H1.B3 is very rare). Since there is more diversity in
NSF copy numbers compared to *KANSL1* especially on the H1.β1 background, we were unable
to phase *NSF* duplications and only provide diploid copy number estimates. Complex genotypes
for the historical short-read genomes were obtained from Irving-Pease[23].

In order to determine recombination or gene conversion events within the inversion locus and
extended LD of 100kb, PC1 values were computed in non-overlapping 10kb windows for all
individuals using SNPRelate[34]. Tag SNP based inversion genotyping revealed three clusters:
H1 homozygous (bottom), H2 homozygous (top), and H1/H2 heterozygous (middle). We
computed the mean, median, and multiple quantile ranges of PC1 for individuals of each
inversion genotype in every window. To identify noisy or ambiguous positions, we evaluated
whether the variance for different genotypes overlapped at each position. Positions with
overlapping variance were flagged and excluded from downstream interpretation. The region of
interest was further refined to non-duplicated regions except for the unique *KANSL1*. To refine
outlier classification, we focused on runs of at least two adjacent outlier windows within the
same sample. For these regions, we reassigned the genotype based on directional deviation of
PC1: H1H2 genotypes with PC1 below the genotype's 5th percentile were reassigned to H1H1,
while those above the 95th percentile were reassigned to H2H2. Homozygous genotypes were
reassigned to H1H2 if their PC1 values deviated substantially in either the positive or negative
direction respectively. Further manual curation allowed us to determine single recombinant
events and double recombinant events (**Table S4**).
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DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

540 The authors declare no competing interests.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

PHS conceived of the study. SS, RNL, SF, JLR, and PHS performed all analyses and wrote the
manuscript. MWM and ANK provided primate cell lines and tissue culture. VB, SGMM, SG, and
BH provided data.

DATA AND CODE AVAILABILITY

All data used in this project are publicly available and described in the 'Datasets' section of the
Methods and at the following github link
https://github.com/sudmantlab/17q21.31_SV_and_evolution which is archived in Zenodo:
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16883463 (Sridharan 2025). Copy numbers, genotypes, and
structural haplotypes can be found in the Supplementary tables. The HPRC data can be
obtained at: https://humanpangenome.org/data/. The HGSVC data can be obtained at:
https://www.hgsvc.org/resources, The 1KG and HGDP data can be obtained at:
https://www.internationalgenome.org/data/. The SGDP data can be obtained at:
https://www.simonsfoundation.org/simons-genome-diversity-project/. The ancient data are
available on the European Nucleotide Archive under the accession codes PRJEB64656 and
PRJEB50857. The unpublished data for bonobos, chimpanzees and gorillas can be obtained at:
https://github.com/sudmantlab/17q21.31_SV_and_evolution. The GenomeArk long read
haplotype resolved assemblies for primates can be obtained at: https://www.genomeark.org/

FIGURE TITLES AND LEGENDS

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Figure 1 – Distinct 17q21.31 structural haplotypes from human long read genome
assemblies: a) Schematic of haplotype structure at the 17q21.31 locus and flanking regions
using PGRTK for the reference CHM13 genome. Large colored arrows represent principal
bundles, which are individual units of repeats. Bundles of the same color represent homologous
sequences. The directionality of the arrow represents the bundle orientation. Unique flanking
regions are indicated in greyscale. Smaller labeled arrows denote genes and gene orientations.
b) Schematic of 11 unique structural haplotypes found within 210 long-read haplotype-resolved
assemblies. Each row represents a unique structural haplotype. Structural haplotypes are
arranged using hierarchical clustering based on jaccard distance, with tip sizes scaled by the
number of assemblies sharing each haplotype. **c)** Structural diversity of 11 unique structural
haplotypes visualized using SVbyEye. Alignments are colored by orientation: grey denotes
alignments between two structural haplotypes in the forward orientation and pink denotes
alignment in the reverse direction. Each row represents a unique haplotype structure arranged
in the same order as in **b**.

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Figure 2 – Characterizing the evolutionary context of the 17q21.31 inversion in the great
ape lineage: a) Visualization of sequence alignments spanning the 17q21.31 locus and flanking
regions in great apes. The sequences are extended from **Fig 1** by 2 Mb on both ends to
characterize the shared homology of flanking regions across all species. Each row represents a
representative haplotype from each of the primates. Alignments are colored by orientation (gray
= forward, pink = reverse). **b)** Alignment visualization comparing representative human
haplotypes H1.β1.γ3 and H2.α2.γ2 and chimpanzee haplotypes H1p and H2p (as seen in **a**),
reordered to highlight the distinct, and longer inversion found in chimpanzees. **c)** Unique
structural haplotypes in great apes with two representative human structural haplotypes shown
as reference. Human haplotypes are plotted along with gene labels and gene orientation.
Sequences are visualized with PGRTK trained on human structures with extended sequence as

seen in **a**. Unique flanking regions are shown in dark grey and lighter grey. Colors are broadly

consistent with **Fig 1b** although the longer genetic interval used here results in slight

differences. **d)** Dating the divergence of primate and human 17q21.31 haplotypes. Trees were

inferred using a large non-duplicated sequence located within the human inversion (i.e. the blue

bundle in **c**, **see methods)**. Several important split times are annotated in the tree. The inset

shows two main topologies that are observed via bootstrapping and their frequencies.

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Figure 3 – Timing and recurrence of human 17q21.31 structural haplotypes: a) Robinson-
Foulds (RF) distance clustering heatmap across phylogenetic trees constructed with non-
overapping 50 kb windows across all human long-read assemblies. Windows are extracted from
a large non-duplicated sequence located within the human inversion (i.e. the blue bundle in **Fig**
1). Darker red indicates greater similarity (lower RF distance) between two trees. Dendogram
summarizes the topological similarity across all windows. Inset histogram displays the
distribution of RF distance values across all comparisons. **b)** Euclidean distance between the
phylogenetic tree constructed at window 9, the closest unique sequence to *KANSL1*, and trees
at all other windows. A loess-smoothed curve is shown in red. **c)** Dated maximum-likelihood tree
constructed using sequences at windows 8 and 9 and rooted with T2T chimpanzee haplotypes
as the outgroup. Human-chimpanzee split-time was used to date the tree. Select internal nodes
are labeled with divergence time. Tip symbols indicate copy-number variation of *KANSL1* (blue
squares) and *NSF* (green triangles).
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Figure 4 – Population diversity of the 17q21.31 locus worldwide using short read data: a)
World map indicating the frequency of direct H1.β1, H1.β2+ and inverted H2.α1 and H2.α2+
17q21.31 haplotypes in 4585 individuals from 193 populations. Insets show the frequency
distribution in South Asia (**b**), Europe (**c**) and Africa (**d**). Pies are scaled by sample size in **b** and
c. Only populations with five or more samples are plotted in **a-c**, whereas **d** shows populations
with as few as a single sample. In **d**, only populations with H1.β1 frequencies less than 1 are
labeled. See **Supplementary Table 2** for exact sample sizes and haplotype frequencies of all
populations. **d)** World map indicating the average diploid *NSF* copy number in 3352 individuals
from 147 populations. Points are scaled based on sample size, with only populations with five or
more samples plotted. See **Supplementary Table 3** for the exact sample sizes and average
diploid copy numbers of all populations. **e)** The distribution of *NSF* copy numbers in individuals
with different inversion and *KANSL1* duplication genotypes.

Figure 5 – Population specific instances of recombination events at the 17q21.31 locus:
The x-axis represents genomic position across a subset of the 17q21.31 locus including the
inversion region and surrounding flanking sequences. A PGRTK-based haplotype structure of
the reference genome (hg38) is shown below the figure. **a)** 10kb sliding window PCA. Each
colored line represents the variation in the position of an individual on the first principal
component axis, and is colored by inversion status. **b)** 10kb sliding window PCA faceted by
inversion status and colored by complex genotype. **c)** All recombination events identified in the
region of interest. Gradient blocks represent single recombination events wherein the right edge
of the block represents the recombination breakpoint. Black boxes represent double
recombination events. Numbers next to each block indicate the number of individuals with that
recombination event, and pie charts indicate the population of these individuals.

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Figure 6 – Ancient genomes track the rise in frequency of *KANSL1* duplication in Europe:
a) Geographic distribution of historical samples across Western Eurasia shown in 2.5 kya time
slices from 10 kya to the present. Samples are split based on their haplotype structure (H1.β1,
H1.β2+, H2.α1, and H2.α2+) and age in each subplot, with dots marking individual sampling
locations. **b)** Temporal distribution of 17q21.31 haplotypes across historical West Eurasian
populations. Stacked bar plots show the number of haplotypes present in each population over
a time bin. Time is shown on the x-axis in years before present (BP). Pie charts on the right
summarize the overall haplotype frequency for each population, with the numbers indicating the
number of individuals in each population. **c)** Modeled temporal trajectories of 17q21.31
haplotype frequencies over the past 10 ky using a multinomial logistic regression model. Each
point represents the observed haplotype frequency in a time bin (all the populations are pooled),
with point size scaled by sample size.
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Supplementary Figure 1 – 24 distinct 17q21.31 structural haplotypes from human long read genome assemblies: Schematic of 24 unique structural haplotypes found within 210 long-read haplotype-resolved assemblies. Each row represents a unique structural haplotype. Structural haplotypes are arranged using hierarchical clustering based on jaccard distance, with tip sizes scaled by the number of assemblies sharing each haplotype. The dashed red line indicates where clades were collapsed into a single representative structure as shown in **Figure 1B**.

Supplementary Figure 2 – Inversion genotype assignments mapped atop copy numbers in the β and α regions: Each point represents an individual with the x-axis denoting the normalized read depth across β and the y-axis denoting the normalized read depth across α. Points are colored according to inversion genotype, assigned using 1271 tag SNPs. Jitter was applied to both the x and y axes to improve visualization of overlapping points.

	H1.β1	H1.β2	H1.β3	H1.β4	H2.α1	H2.α2	H2.α3
H1.β1	2,2						
H1.β2	3,3	4,4					
H1.β3	4,4	5,5	6,6				
H1.β4	5,5	6,6	7,7	8,8			
H2.α1	2,2	3,3	4,4	5,5	2,2		
H2.α2	2,3	3,4	4,5	5,6	2,3	2,4	
H2.α3	2,4	3,5	4,6	5,7	2,4	2,5	2,6

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Supplementary Figure 3 – Table assigning complex genotype status based on α and β regions: Cartesian coordinates (x,y) represent complex genotype assignments with numbers indicating the average copy number as discrete values. The value before the comma corresponds to region β, and the value after the comma corresponds to region α. Red cells denote ambiguous cases which can only be distinguished based on 1271 tag SNPs that are required to differentiate between inversion status. Blue cells represent the most conservative assignment which was used in ambiguous cases within the direct or inverted haplotypes.

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Supplementary Figure 4 – Complex genotype at the *KANSL1* region mapped atop copy
numbers in the β and α regions: Each point represents an individual with the x-axis denoting
the normalized read depth across β and the y-axis denoting the normalized read depth across
α. Points are colored according to complex genotype status, assigned based on the *KANSL1*
region using the criteria described in Supplementary Figures 2 and 3. Jitter was applied to both
the x and y axes to improve visualization of overlapping points.
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Supplementary Figure 5 – Read depth across the 17q21.31 locus split by CNV assigned
by *KANSL1* calls: Each line represents an individual colored and grouped by complex
genotype. The x-axis denotes genome position, and the y-axis shows the average normalized
read depth calculated in sliding windows of 1000 bp. Grouping by complex genotype enables
visual comparison of CNV patterns across complex genotypes. Horizontal grey lines at the
bottom of each plot indicate the positions of the α and β regions, highlighting the differences in
read depth between complex genotypes. This visualization complements the discrete copy
number genotype assignments shown in Supplementary Figures 3 and 4, illustrating the
underlying read depth variation that defines α and β.

TABLES

Supplementary Table 3 - Frequencies of diploid *NSF* copy numbers in 1000 Genomes, HGDP,
SGDP and CAAPA2 samples
Supplementary Table 4 - Recombinant individuals and recombinant breakpoints in 1000
Genomes, HGDP, and SGDP samples
Supplementary Table 5 - Frequencies of H1.β1, H1.β2, H1.β3, H2.α1, and H2.α2 in Ancient
European Genomes
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