Ancestral Protein Reconstruction of a membrane trafficking GTPase uncovers unanticipated properties of the ancestral protein and of modern Arf1 GTPases

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Abstract: The emergence of eukaryotes from their prokaryotic ancestors (eukaryogenesis) marked a fundamental shift in cellular organisation, with the appearance of intracellular compartments including the nucleus, the Golgi apparatus and endosomes. These organelles are part of the endomembrane system of eukaryotic cells, which mediates many processes, including secretion of proteins to the exterior of the cell, uptake of material by endocytosis, and compartmentalized degradation of cellular components. The period of eukaryogenesis after the merger of prokaryotic lineages but preceding the last eukaryotic common ancestor, is inferred to have involved a progressive increase in cellular complexity through expansion of organelle-specific protein machineries. However, the steps and stages of organelle emergence during this period are poorly understood as no extant organisms exist from this period, precluding the use of comparative genomics to determine the properties of ancestral proteins present. Membrane trafficking pathways linking organelles are regulated by Arf family GTPases, including Arf1 and Arf6, both present in the last eukaryotic common ancestor. Here we use ancestral sequence reconstruction and molecular cell biological characterization to explore the properties of the ancestor of the Arf1 and Arf6 GTPases. Arf1 has a major function at the Golgi apparatus in regulation of the secretory pathway, whereas Arf6 regulates endocytic pathways at the plasma membrane and endosomes. Our results indicate that the ancestral Arf1/6 protein localizes to both the Golgi and the plasma membrane. We find that localization to the plasma membrane is due to a C-terminal polybasic motif that unexpectedly is also found in a number of modern Arf1 proteins from a wide diversity of eukaryotes. Our data suggest that the ancestral Arf protein acted at both internal compartments and the cell periphery, a feature preserved in a number of modern Arf1 proteins.

Keywords: eukaryogenesis, evolutionary cell biology, endomembrane system, Golgi apparatus, plasma membrane, Arf GTPase, Ancestral Sequence Reconstruction, LECA.

Introduction

The evolution of eukaryotes from their prokaryotic ancestors was an important transition in the history of life, resulting in nearly all complex life forms on earth today. Understanding of this series of events, known as eukaryogenesis, has been the focus of considerable research over many years and has seen significant progress recently, but many questions remain unanswered [1]. Eukaryotes arose from a symbiosis between at least two prokaryotic lineages. These lineages include an alphaproteobacterium that gave rise to the mitochondria, and an archaeal cell, that contributed at least some of the other organellar machinery [1–3]. The resulting endosymbiont then evolved, acquiring hallmark eukaryotic traits and culminating in a population of single-celled eukaryotic organisms, the Last Eukaryotic Common Ancestor (LECA), which gave rise to the extant lineages inhabiting Earth today [1]. The most powerful and frequently used approach to understanding eukaryogenesis through these ancestors is comparative genomics of extant descendant organisms. For eukaryotic origins, the challenging investigation of the contributing prokaryotic lineages and earliest eukaryogenic events has advanced rapidly, with recent studies describing the Asgardarchaeota, from which the eukaryotic host is derived [2], as well as the study of the closest alphaproteobacterial relatives of mitochondria [4]. The LECA marks the end of the eukaryogenic period and is a highly tractable reconstruction point by comparative genomics [5]. From a wide range of analyses, it is inferred to have possessed nearly the complete set of organelles observed in many modern cells. This configuration is underpinned by a large genome complement of molecular machinery, characterized by paralogous expansions of protein families [5]. Though challenges remain, this LECA reconstruction is considered to be robust and comprehensive.

One of the major hallmarks of eukaryotic cells that distinguish them from their prokaryotic ancestors is the endomembrane system[1]. This interconnected system of internal membrane-bound organelles, including the endoplasmic reticulum (ER), the Golgi apparatus, endosomes and lysosomes, allowed compartmentalization of biochemical activities and presumably provided a tremendous evolutionary advantage. The secretory pathway assures the delivery of secreted proteins, such as signalling

82 molecules or proteins for predation and defence to the exterior of the cell, and
83 membrane proteins to intracellular locations. The endocytic pathway assures the uptake
84 of extracellular material including nutrients, as well as internalization of plasma
85 membrane (PM) proteins such as signalling receptors for recycling or transport to the
86 lysosome for degradation. In both the secretory and endocytic pathways,
87 communication between organelles is assured by membrane-bound vesicular carriers[6].
88 Thus, these pathways not only ensured specificity in secretion and internalization but
89 also provided an interconnecting network between many organelles, allowing localized
90 concentration of proteins and lipids for various functions.
91 The archaeal ancestor of eukaryotes provided some of the precursors of the
92 protein machinery for vesicular transport found in extant eukaryotes [7–9]. Between this
93 first eukaryotic ancestor and the LECA, extensive elaboration of the endomembrane
94 system occurred, producing the endomembrane organelles. The LECA is inferred as
95 having possessed a highly sophisticated set of membrane trafficking machinery, much
96 of which is comprised of protein families, where the duplicated family members carry out
97 similar biochemical functions, but at different transport pathways or organelles [5,10]. Thus
98 a full understanding of eukaryogenesis requires explanation of how the endomembrane
99 system evolved.
100 The molecular machinery of membrane traffic in the endomembrane system
101 includes regulators such as the Arf family GTPases, which are universally present in
102 eukaryotes [11,12]. The Arf family includes Arf, Arf-like (Arl) and Sar GTPases, which are
103 involved in different steps of membrane traffic including vesicle budding, vesicle
104 tethering, organelle movement, cytoskeleton-membrane interactions and lipid
105 homeostatsis [13–15]. The Arf family GTPases carry out their functions by cycling between
106 GDP- and GTP-bound forms, where the GTP-bound form is tightly membrane bound
107 and recruits effector proteins to the membrane. Among small GTPases, Arf family
108 proteins are unique in having an N-terminal amphipathic helix, often N-myristoylated,
109 that promotes membrane binding of the active GTP-bound form [16]. Arf1 and Arf6 are
110 hence soluble in their GDP-bound form, and the change in conformation of the N-
111 terminal AH upon GTP binding promotes tight membrane association of the active form.

112 In cells, the level of the soluble pool of an Arf protein depends on its level of activation
113 and also on the presence of membrane-associated receptors for the GDP-bound form
114 [17–24] .

115 The Arf family is ancient, as the eukaryotic proteins all arose from an ancestral
116 group, the ArfR GTPases, which were present in the archaeal ancestor of eukaryotes
117 [8,25]. The LECA is inferred to have already possessed 15 members of the Arf GTPase
118 family [12]. The originally identified Arf1-6 proteins in mammalian cells, and their
119 orthologues throughout eukaryotes, form a single group within the Arf family. LECA is
120 predicted to have had both Arf1 and Arf6 proteins [12]. Arf1 has expanded in many
121 lineages, including in mammals to produce Arf1-5 [16]. Arf1 carries out essential functions
122 in the secretory pathway, including vesicle formation at the Golgi, while Arf6 is involved
123 in endocytosis pathways and actin cytoskeleton regulation at the PM [13,14,26,27]. Arf1 is
124 one of two Arf family proteins found in every eukaryote examined to date, and Arf1
125 proteins are highly conserved at the primary sequence level. For example, human Arf1
126 is 88% identical to the protist *Planomonas micra* Arf1a, and 77% identical to the yeast
127 *Saccaromyces cerevisiae* Arf1. Arf6, on the other hand, has been lost in a number of
128 eukaryotic lineages, including early in the evolution of the Discoba and of the
129 Archaeplastida (land plants and red, green and glaucophytes algal relatives), and Arf6
130 sequences are more divergent at the sequence level [12]. For example, human Arf6 is
131 only 51% and 60% identical to the Arf6 proteins of *Planomonas micra* and
132 *Saccaromyces cerevisiae*, respectively. Because Arf1 and Arf6 are each other's closest
133 relatives within the Arf Family [12], their emergence likely represents a relatively late step
134 in eukaryogenesis, close to the LECA.

135 Comparative genomic analyses based on existing eukaryotic genomes can infer
136 the predicted proteins present in LECA. When Asgard archaeal genomes are also
137 included in comparative genomic analyses, this approach can predict the genes and
138 their protein products that were present in the common ancestor of eukaryotes and the
139 Asgard archaea, which predates LECA and the mitochondrial symbiosis event.
140 However, this approach cannot be used to predict the features of our ancestors
141 between these two points in the evolutionary time line, as no extant organisms

142 originating from this evolutionary period have been identified. Given the complexity and
143 sophistication of the LECA, this period is crucial to our understanding of
144 eukaryogenesis, and hence new approaches are required to provide advances in this
145 area. Because the LECA is inferred to have possessed many paralogues of membrane
146 trafficking machinery [10]*inter alia*, the challenge is to reconstruct the duplication steps giving
147 rise to that complement. Determining the properties of the pre-duplicated ancestral
148 proteins is precisely what is needed to reconstruct the most recent steps to LECA.
149 Ancestral Protein Reconstruction (APR) allows for the prediction of ancestral
150 protein sequences (i.e. Ancestral Sequence Reconstruction, ASR) and then the
151 experimental testing of the biochemical and/or cell biological properties of the predicted
152 proteins[28,29]. This approach has been used successfully for metabolic enzymes,
153 transcription factors and structural proteins and back to deep evolutionary time points,
154 including LECA proteins [28,30,31]. In this study, we have used APR to move beyond the
155 LECA boundary to reconstruct the ancestor of Arf1 and Arf6 GTPases and to explore
156 whether the cell biological properties of the predicted Arf1/6 ancestral sequences
157 resemble either Arf1, Arf6 or a combination of both.
158
159 **Results**
160 ***Ancestral Sequence Reconstruction***
161 In order to perform ASR of the ancestor of Arf1 and Arf6, it was first necessary to
162 construct a broadly sampled and representative dataset. Starting with the dataset from
163 Vargová et al. 2021 [12], we updated the taxon sampling using genomes or
164 transcriptomes of key eukaryotic lineages that had been sequenced in the intervening
165 period and removed organisms redundant to our overall aim of a broad and even
166 sampling of eukaryotes (Supplementary Table 1). Because the aim of the project was
167 reconstruction of nodes in the Arf tree pre-LECA, much more recent, lineage-specific,
168 expansions and highly divergent sequences were identified by preliminary phylogenetic
169 analyses (Supplementary Figure 1A-D), and removed from the dataset. These analyses
170 were carried out for Arf1, Arf6, as well as their closest sister groups Arl1 and Arl5. The
171 latter two subfamilies form a clade that is the closest to the Arf1 - Arf6 clade in the

172 Vargova et al. 2021[12] analysis. As such we include them as outgroups to polarize the
173 analysis under the assumption that the rooting of the entire Arf family does not lie within
174 this set of sequences. The least divergent representatives of each subfamily were
175 aligned and taxon-specific insertions were masked out such that they were not included
176 in the ancestrally reconstructed sequence. This resulted in a final dataset of 363
177 sequences.

178 Under the assumption that the genes in question are vertically inherited [12], a
179 constrained tree was constructed following the species relationships of the taxa
180 sampled [32,33] (Supplementary Figure 2), with an assumed rooting on the mid-point
181 branch between the Arf1+Arf6 and the Arl1+Arl 5 clades (see Methods). The branch
182 lengths in the Arf6 clade are substantially longer than in the Arf1 clade, consistent with
183 past observations of negative selection on Arf1 sequence evolution and divergence in
184 Arf6 (Figure 1, Supplementary Figure 2). ASR was undertaken using this guide tree in
185 both PAML and IQ-TREE (Figure 2A). Initial reconstruction was performed with the
186 optimally chosen model (LG+R8) by the embedded ModelFinder in IQ-TREE. In order to
187 test the effect of a mixture model, we implemented a (LG+C60+R10) model within the
188 IQ-TREE which was determined to be the optimal model and used for final ASR
189 (Supplementary Table 2).

190 Our ancestral reconstructions focused on three nodes of interest, the ancestor of
191 all Arf1s, the ancestor of all Arf6s, and in particular the Arf1/6 ancestor. The ancestral
192 Arf1/6 sequences predicted by PAML (Arf1/6PAML) and IQ-TREE (Arf1/6IQ) were very
193 similar, sharing 92% identity (Figure 2A). For the Arf1/6 ancestral sequences, both
194 programs predicted a large number of residues with high probability. 165/182 positions
195 (90.66%) in the Arf1/6 IQ-TREE ancestor and 167/182 positions (91.76%) in the Arf1/6
196 PAML ancestor reconstructed with greater than 0.8 probability (Supplementary Table 2).
197 Of those positions falling below this cut off, 10/17 in the Arf1/6IQ sequence and 7/15 in
198 the Arf1/6PAML sequence conserved the basic chemical properties of the residue
199 (Figure 2A). Notably, in seven cases, the PAML sequence included, as the residue
200 reconstructed, the residue that was the second most likely from the IQ-TREE
201 reconstruction. Reciprocally, there were four instances where the IQ-TREE sequence

202 included the second most likely PAML residue at the same position. Thus we are
203 confident that both the IQ-TREE and PAML reconstructions are robust and that together
204 they cover the sequence space for possible ancestral reconstruction of the Arf1/6
205 ancestral protein (Figure 2A, Supplementary Table 2).
206 The ancestral Arf1/6 sequences predicted by PAML and IQ-TREE share a high
207 level of identity to existing eukaryotic Arf1 and Arf6 sequences, especially in the
208 nucleotide binding regions (G1 to G5, Figure 2B), which are highly conserved among
209 Arf1 and Arf6 proteins themselves. The ancestral Arf1/6 sequences were more similar
210 to Arf1 than to Arf6 proteins (Figure 2B). For example, Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ were
211 84% and 89% identical to human Arf1, and 73% and 72% identical to human Arf6,
212 respectively. There was less conservation compared to individual eukaryotic Arf1 and
213 Arf6 sequences in the N-terminal amphipathic helical (AH) region, which among
214 eukaryotic sequences is also quite variable. However, the feature of this region that is
215 important for Arf protein function is its amphipathic nature, which mediates tight
216 membrane binding of the active GTP-bound form of the protein[34,35]. The AHs of the
217 Arf1/6 predicted ancestral sequences clearly have this amphipathic property (Figure
218 2C). In addition, both Arf1 and Arf6 are myristoylated on the glycine residue following
219 the initiating methionine, and both predicted ancestral sequences have this feature
220 (Figure 2B, C).
221 The C-terminal regions of Arf1 and Arf6 proteins across eukaryotes are quite
222 variable, both in length and amino acid composition, likely explaining the lower
223 confidence levels of some C-terminal residues in the predicted ancestral sequences in
224 this region (Figure 2B, Supplementary Table 2). Because of the length variation
225 observed at the C-terminus of Arf1 and Arf6 sequences across eukaryotes, the
226 positions corresponding to position 182 in the initial predictions could be included or
227 excluded as a discretionary decision. We chose to test predicted sequences that were
228 181 and 182 amino acids in length, with the latter having an additional lysine residue at
229 the C-terminus.
230
231 ***Localization of Predicted Ancestral Proteins***

232 In order to test the properties of the predicted ancestral proteins in cells, we
233 chose two model eukaryotic systems, mammalian (MDCK; Madin-Darby Canine Kidney
234 epithelial) cells and budding yeast (*Saccharomyces cerevisiae*). Starting with MDCK
235 cells, we expressed Arf1/Arf6 ancestral proteins predicted by both the PAML and IQ-
236 TREE programs, testing two predicted versions by each program, as described in the
237 previous section. All four predicted proteins were fused to GFP at their C-termini,
238 exogenously expressed using transient transfection, and compared to human Arf1 and
239 Arf6 expressed from the same vector. Western blot, using anti-GFP antibodies, and in-
240 gel GFP fluorescence analyses indicated similar levels of expression in mammalian
241 cells (Supplementary Figure 3). The predicted ancestral proteins localized to the Golgi,
242 as did Arf1, colocalizing with the Golgi marker GM130 (Figure 3). In contrast to Arf1,
243 both Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ also localized to the PM, in a manner similar to Arf6,
244 colocalizing with the 8+ PM probe (Figures 4 and 5). The major difference between the
245 predicted ancestors and Arf6 that we observed is that the cytosolic pool of the Arf1/6
246 predicted ancestral proteins was less than that of Arf6, due to the fact that a large
247 fraction of Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ also localized to the Golgi, unlike the case for Arf6.
248 We found that the two versions of each predicted ancestral protein, differing in the
249 number of C-terminal residues, had identical localization properties (Figure 5,
250 Supplementary Figure 4). Thus, the predicted ancestral Arf1/6 proteins were found to
251 specifically localize to the two membranes most commonly associated with Arf1 (Golgi)
252 and Arf6 (PM).
253 We also tested localization of the Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ ancestral proteins in
254 yeast cells. Western blot analysis indicated similar levels of expression of the
255 recombinant, GFP-tagged proteins in yeast (data not shown). The yeast Golgi is not a
256 single, centrosomally localized organelle as in mammalian cells, but is fragmented into
257 individual elements dispersed throughout the cytosol. We used yeast Arf1 fused to
258 mCherry as a Golgi marker, as the majority of Arf1 at steady state is present at the
259 Golgi, colocalizing with the early Golgi marker α-COP (Cop1), part of the COPI coat,
260 and with the late Golgi marker clathrin heavy chain (Chc1) [36]. We found a high level of
261 colocalization of both Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins with yeast Arf1 (Figure 6). In

262 addition, unlike yeast Arf1, both Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ were also found at the PM
263 (Figure 7). As was the case in mammalian cells, we found that the two versions of each
264 predicted ancestral protein, differing in the number of C-terminal residues, had identical
265 localization properties (Supplementary Figure 5). Hence in two different eukaryotic
266 cellular systems, with quite distinct organellar morphologies, the Arf1/6 predicted
267 ancestral proteins have localization properties of both Arf1 and Arf6, localizing to both
268 the Golgi and the PM, suggesting that the common ancestor was able to localize to both
269 of these compartments.
270
271 ***Mechanism of Localization***
272 Previous work has shown that one localization determinant for the Golgi in Arf1 is
273 present in the alpha3 helix and downstream residues (aa 101 to 116 in *Homo sapiens*
274 and *Arabidopsis thaliana* Arf1), and contains the MXXE motif[23,24,37]. This motif is lost in
275 Arf6 proteins. However, when these amino acids are re-introduced into human Arf6,
276 they are sufficient to target Arf6 to the Golgi[23]. We found that the predicted ancestral
277 proteins have the MXXE motif, consistent with their Golgi localization. We also noted
278 that the predicted ancestral proteins have multiple lysines at their C-termini, a known
279 PM localization determinant that binds specifically to anionic lipids enriched in the PM[38–
280 40]. We mutated these lysine residues to glutamines, and expressed the mutants
281 (Arf1/6PAML-3KQ and Arf1/6IQ-4KQ) in mammalian cells. For both Arf1/6PAML and
282 Arf1/6IQ predicted ancestral sequences, the mutant versions failed to localize to the PM
283 (Figures 4 and 5). However, we observed Golgi localization for these C-terminal KQ
284 mutants. Similarly, when the C-terminal KQ mutants of both Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ
285 sequences were expressed in yeast cells, localization to the PM was lost, but
286 localization to the Golgi was unaffected (Figure 7). We conclude that a property of the
287 Arf1/6 predicted ancestral protein is that it had the capacity to localize to both the Golgi
288 and the PM, and that PM localization is mediated by C-terminal basic residues.
289
290 ***Diverse Modern Arf1 Homologues Possess C-terminal Lysines***

291 Because Arf6 localizes and functions at the PM, we expected that the PM
292 localization of the Arf1/6 ancestor has its basis in Arf6 sequences. Indeed, the Arf6
293 predicted ancestral sequences do have multiple C-terminal basic residues
294 (Supplementary Table 2). However, surprisingly, the predicted Arf1 ancestral
295 sequences (using either PAML or IQ-TREE) also have multiple C-terminal positively
296 charged residues (Supplementary Table 2). Examination of the Arf1 sequences used in
297 the ASR indicates that 31 of 120 Arf1 sequences in extant eukaryotes have multiple C-
298 terminal, basic residues. Moreover, the Arl1 (11 of 108) and Arl5 orthologues (25 of 79)
299 also possess the C-terminal basic residue motif. By contrast, only 1 of 55 orthologues of
300 Arf6 included in the ASR dataset possesses this motif. Thus, and somewhat counter-
301 intuitively, the inferred PM-localizing motif in the Arf1/6 reconstructed ancestral proteins
302 does not arise from a highly prevalent motif found in Arf6 orthlogues used in this
303 analysis, Rather it is due to the more frequent presence of the motif in the other three
304 subfamilies in our dataset, and thus calculated to be an ancestral feature of each.
305 To further explore the prevalence of the polybasic C-terminal region in modern
306 Arf1 proteins, we examined the broad diversity of eukaryotic Arf1 sequences in our
307 more extensively sampled dataset, a subset of which was used for the ASR. From a
308 highly conserved W (aa 172 in human Arf1) onwards, we examined sequences to
309 determine the number of basic residues. We found that Arf1 orthologues with positively
310 charged residues in the C-terminus are found all across the eukaryotic tree of life. In
311 humans, the Arf1 orthologue Arf3 has 3 C-terminal lysines, and has been shown to
312 localize to more peripheral structures thant Arf1 and to function in plasma membrane
313 processes[41]. A selection of Arf1 sequences with multiple basic residues, from a range of
314 eukaryotes, and human Arf1 for comparison, is shown in Figure 8, and includes
315 organisms of medical, and ecological impact. Notably, in addition to those Arf1
316 sequences with C-terminal basic residues, there were many cases in which a given
317 taxon possessed multiple Arf1 homologues, and that used for the ASR was not the one
318 with the highest number of C-terminal basic residues. This means that if anything the
319 ASR analysis represents an under-estimate of the basic residue count in the Arf1/6
320 ancestral sequences. It also means that the C-terminal basic tail, and by inference the

321 PM localization of Arf1, is a more prevalent feature of modern eukaryotic Arf1 proteins
322 than currently understood.
323
324 **Discussion**

325 In this work we explored the cell biological properties of the ancestor of Arf1 and Arf6,
326 a protein which predated LECA, by characterizing four predicted ancestral sequences.
327 In the process of addressing this question of ancient evolution, we learned new
328 properties of existing Arf1 and Arf6 proteins in a wide range of eukaryotes. Arf family
329 proteins are key regulators of membrane traffic, and are ancient, having arisen in the
330 archaeal ancestor of eukaryotes [8,25]. These results place the Arf family GTPases at
331 the very beginning of the process of eukaryogenesis. Between the archaeal ancestor
332 and LECA, expansion of the Arf family proteins occurred, leading to the LECA
333 complement of 15 members of this family, including Arf1 and Arf6 [12]. In well-studied
334 eukaryotic systems, the major localization of Arf1 is at the Golgi, where a highly
335 conserved function is in vesicular traffic from the Golgi to either the ER or the
336 endosomal system [27,42,43], whereas Arf6 localizes predominantly to the PM and
337 endosomes, where it regulates the actin cytoskeleton and endocytic pathways [13,14,26].
338 Although having primary functions at different organelles, Arf1 and Arf6 are similar at
339 the sequence level, even sharing many amino acids in the switch regions, which
340 interact with effectors in the GTP-bound state[44–49]. Indeed, localization of mammalian
341 Arf1 and Arf6 to different membrane sites is thought to be a major factor in their
342 distinct functions. For all of these reasons, the Arf1/6 ancestor is a theoretical
343 reconstruction point particularly well suited to the APR approach of addressing pre-
344 LECA evolution.
345 We found that the predicted Arf1/6 ancestors are far more similar to Arf1 than to
346 Arf6 proteins at the primary sequence level, and that these ancestors had the capacity
347 to target the PM using a C-terminal polybasic motif. Unexpectedly, this motif is also
348 found in a number of existing Arf1 proteins (and also in GTPases of the Arl1 and Arl5
349 outgroups), presumably retained from the ancestral form. Many of the Arf1 proteins we
350 identified with C-terminal polybasic motifs are present in organisms for which little or no

351 localization or functional data are available. However, studies have been carried out on
352 the Trypanosoma brucei Arf1 protein TbArf1, which has clearly been shown to be an
353 orthologue of Arf1[12], and which has three C-terminal K residues (Figure 8). TbArf1
354 localizes to the Golgi but also has endocytic functions in Trypanosoma cells that are
355 normally regulated by Arf6 in mammalian and yeast cells. Notably, in addition, TbArf1
356 has a strong PM localization when expressed in mammalian cells[50].
357 It is worth considering the limitations of our work and clarifying the steps that
358 were taken to mitigate these factors. While ASR is of course a theoretical
359 reconstruction, we took several steps to provide the most reasonable reconstruction and
360 avoid biases. We sampled organisms from across the broad diversity of eukaryotes,
361 providing a balanced sampling. We performed upstream analyses to select the least
362 divergent representatives and we used two different ASR methods, each with
363 sophisticated models of sequence evolution. The results of these analyses showed
364 overall conservation with well-characterized Arf proteins (Figure 2). In fact, these were
365 nearly identical in some cases to Arf proteins found in existing organisms (e.g.
366 *Planomonas micra*), which lie near the most recent predicted position of the root of the
367 eukaryotic tree [51]. From an evolutionary perspective, Arf1 and Arf6 are one another's
368 closest relatives in an unrooted tree of Arf family proteins[12], as compared to other
369 possible reconstructions where there are other protein subfamilies intervening. We did
370 assume that the root of the Arf tree does not lie on Arf1, Arf6 or basally to Arf1/6, thus
371 making the Arl1/5 clade an outgroup. Although this is a declared assumption, we
372 believe that it is a strong one. Past attempts to root the Arf family tree with the recently
373 described ArfR archael homologues were unresolved but gave no indication of a root on
374 the Arf1, Arf6, or Arf1/6 groups [8]. Furthermore, a rooting on Arf1, Arf6 or Arf1/6 would
375 then imply that all other Arf family sub-families are derived from Arfs and evolved at a
376 later evolutionary point. This would include the COPII GTPase Sar1. We believe this is
377 unlikely, particularly as other components of the COPII machinery (e.g. Sec23/24)
378 homologues have been identified in Asgardarchaea [7]. Finally, recognizing the
379 theoretical nature of our reconstructions, we have limited our conclusions to broad
380 properties of the sequences, rather than specific amino acids, and corroborated with

381 experimental data or sequences from existing organisms. Even with the steps taken for
382 robustness in our predictions, we chose to test sequences derived from both methods to
383 cover the range of sequences that we had reconstructed and balanced against
384 methodological bias. We also chose to perform our analyses in two model organisms,
385 those that are the best studied and from which a large proportion of the biological
386 knowledge about Arf family proteins have been determined[13,14,27,52,53]. Importantly, we
387 observed experimental consistency in the two cell biological model systems and in the
388 predicted ancestral sequences reconstructed using both methods. With all of these
389 efforts for robustness, we believe that there are important conclusions that can be
390 drawn.

391 Arf1 and Arf6 are localized to membranes through multiple mechanisms,
392 including recruitment of the GDP-bound form through a membrane-bound receptor,
393 interaction with specifically localized Arf guanine nucleotide exchange factors (GEFs)
394 and by activation and interaction with effectors. The complete mechanism of localization
395 for any one of these GTPases has not been fully resolved [27]. Although in vitro, Arf1 and
396 Arf6 are soluble in their GDP-bound forms, in cells the GDP-bound forms of both
397 GTPases have been shown to bind to membranes via protein-protein interactions. Arf6
398 in its GDP-bound form localizes to the PM[18] and interacts specifically with the TBC
399 domain proteins TRE17 and TBC1D24/TBC-K, mediating PM association[17,19]. Arf1 has
400 been shown to bind to at least three Golgi proteins in its GDP-bound form, the Golgi-
401 localized SNARE protein membrin[23,24] and members of the p24 family[20,21] in mammalian
402 cells, and to members of the ArfGAP2/ArfGAP3/Glo3 family of ArfGAPs in plant cells[22].

403 The interaction of Arf1-GDP with membrin is the best studied, and has been
404 shown to mediate specific localization of the Arf1 GTPase to the Golgi[23,24,37]. The region
405 of Arf1-GDP that interacts with membrin, the alpha3 helix and four residues
406 downstream, is sufficient for Golgi localization, and has a markedly different sequence
407 in Arf6[23]. The importance for Golgi localization of the MXXE motif within this region was
408 first demonstrated in mammalian cells[23] and was also shown for a plant Arf1
409 orthologue[24,37]. Indeed, mutagenesis studies showed that mutations in the M110 and
410 E113 residues within the MXXE motif of both *Homo sapiens* and *Arabidopsis thaliana*

411 Arf1 reduce Golgi localization[23,37]. Our results show that this feature is widespread
412 throughout eukaryotic Arf1 orthologues, but is not found in Arf6 sequences. Our studies
413 predict that it was present in the ancestor of Arf1 and Arf6 proteins.
414 Even though Arf6 proteins in many organisms including mammals and yeast do
415 not have a C-terminal polybasic motif, there is one known mechanism of Arf6
416 localization to the PM that does depend on one. This mechanism is via an Arf cascade
417 in metazoan cells, whereby PM-localized Arl4 recruits the Arf6 activator (GEF)
418 cytohesin, which in turn activates and recruits Arf6 [54–56]. There are three Arl4 proteins in
419 mammalian cells (Arl4A, C, D), all of which have nine lysine and/or arginine residues at
420 their C-termini that are required for PM localization through binding to anionic PM lipids
421 such as PI(4,5)P_2 [40,54]. This Arl4-dependent mechanism of Arf6 localization was
422 established late in evolution, as Arl4 proteins arose in early metazoans, likely from
423 Arl19. Arl19 arose in the stem branch of Holozoa, possibly from Arf1 [16], and numerous
424 Arl19 orthologues also have multiple basic residues at their C-termini [12].
425 This work has important implications for understanding both the cell biology of Arf
426 proteins in modern eukaryotes and the process of eukaryogenesis. Our results predict
427 that the eukaryotic ancestor of Arf1 and Arf6 proteins localized to the Golgi and the PM
428 via mechanisms that were maintained in many modern lineages. Arf1 paralogues with a
429 poly-basic C-terminal motif are present in diverse eukaryotes including mammalian cells
430 and important parasites of global health importance (e.g. *Giardia intestinalis*),
431 economically relevant agricultural or veterinary pathogens (e.g. *Tritrichomonas foetus*,
432 *Ustilago maydis*, *Plasmodiophora brassicae*) or protists with key ecological roles (e.g.
433 the diatom *Thallasiosira pseudonana,* the dinoflagellate *Symbiodinium minutum,* or the
434 heterotrophic flagellate *Paradiplonema papillatum*). Hence for a broad range of
435 eukaryotes, we predict that some of their Arf1 proteins will not follow the current
436 paradigm for Arf1 and will localize to the cell periphery, as well as the Golgi. Indeed, in
437 mammalian cells, the idea that Arf1 proteins have broader functions than at the Golgi
438 has been gaining support, where Arf1 has been shown to have functions at the PM, for
439 example in phagocytosis, cell migration, neutrophil chemotaxis, and the CLIC/GEEC
440 endocytic pathway [57–63]. In addition, Arf6 itself can recruit cytohesin which then recruits

441 Arf1 to the PM in another Arf activation cascade [46,47]. This mechanism enables a strong
442 and sustained activation signal at the PM, as Arf1 is more abundant than either Arf6 or
443 Arl4 [47]. Our results support the conclusion that the multifunctionality of Arf1 is an
444 evolutionarily conserved feature.

445 With respect to the events and processes of eukaryogenesis, our results strongly
446 suggest that the Arf1/6 ancestor was a generalist protein acting at multiple cellular
447 membranes in pre-LECA organisms. Based on the observed distribution of subfamily
448 orthologues with the C-terminal basic motif, and the presumed rooting outside the
449 Arf1/6+Arf1/6 clades, the most straightforward evolutionary scenario is that the ancestor
450 of Arf1, Arf6, Arl1 and Arl5 also likely acted at multiple locations. This feature was
451 retained in the ancestor of each subfamily. This mechanism was either retained, lost
452 (and thus subfunctionalized to a specific cellular location) or replaced, as in the Arl19
453 mechanism, in the respective paralogues of the subfamily members in descendant
454 eukaryotic lineages after LECA. Future testing of this scenario will hinge on a resolved
455 rooting for the entire Arf family tree and on experimental characterization of Arf1, Arf6,
456 Arl1 and Arl5 proteins in diverse eukaryotes.

457 While ancient protein resurrection has been used to investigate deep nodes
458 within the eukaryotic tree [31] and even aspects of LECA proteins [30], to our knowledge,
459 this is the first attempt to reconstruct a pre-LECA protein. In this case it appears that a
460 multifunctional protein duplicated, with one paralogue retaining its generalist nature and
461 the other paralogue undergoing divergence and loss in many cases. Loss after
462 duplication is a common result but long-term retention, divergence, and sporadic loss
463 over a 1.5 billion year span suggests complex cell biological involvement. This requires
464 a much deeper understanding of Arf6 function to explain, particularly in non-opisthokont
465 organisms where cell biological information is lacking. Nonetheless, our work does
466 demonstrate that the ASR approach to understanding events in the intervening
467 eukaryogenic period between first eukaryotic common ancestor (FECA) and LECA is
468 tractable and can yield concrete results. We contend that it opens up a highly promising
469 new avenue of investigation for an important and currently intransigent problem in
470 evolutionary biology.

471

472 **Methods**

473 ***Homology Searching***

474 Our sampling was build upon that from Vargová et al. 2021 [12]. Nonetheless, to
475 incorporate sampling from newly sequenced or described taxonomic lineages (e.g.
476 ancyromonads, CRuMs, Telonemia), we searched 24 additional 'omics dataset
477 (Supplementary Table 1). Human Arf1, Arf6, Arl1, and Arl5 were used as the query
478 sequences to search into the dataset for Arf family homologs with the human genome
479 being used as the reference genome.

480 Homology searching for the Arf family paralogs were carried out with Analysis of
481 MOlecular Evolution with BAtch Entry (AMOEBAE) [64]. Forward searches into the
482 assembled database were carried out with BLASTp to identify potential Arf homologs
483 that have sufficient E-value support($E<0.05$). Potential homologues were used as
484 queries to search into the reference genome to check if confirmed Arf family subunits
485 are also detected with proper E value support ($E<0.05$ and must be a factor of 10^2 less
486 than next nonredundant hit). Sequences that were clearly fragmentary were
487 discarded. The remaining data was combined with a selection from Vargová et al.
488 2021 [12].

489

490 ***Phylogenetic Analyses***

491 For computational tractability, the dataset was then subdivided into subdatasets for
492 Arf1, Arf6, Arl1, and Arl5. Alignment was performed with MUSCLE (V5.1) and
493 masked/trimmed manually using Mesquite (V3.70). IQ-TREE (V2.2) was run for 1,000
494 ultrafast bootstraps for each of the Arf subfamilies with default model finding criteria
495 using the embedded Model finder (analysis details in legends of Supplementary
496 Figure 1A-D). The least divergent paralogue (shortest branch length) for each of the
497 Arf families analyzed was collected for further analysis for a total of 120 Arf1, 56 Arf6,
498 108 Arl1, and 79 Arl5 homologues across a total of 120 species and an alignment of

499 182 position.

500 C-terminal basic residue motif assessment was based on a visual inspection of the
501 above alignments. If a sequence possessed three or more basic residues (Arginine,
502 Lysine, Histidine) present after the highly conserved Tryptophan (aa 172 in human
503 Arf1) onwards, it was deemed to be affirmative for the presence of the motif. In some
504 cases sequences were omitted from the total count if it was clear that they had been
505 truncated at the C-terminus prior to W172.

506

507 ***Ancestral Sequence Reconstruction***

508 The datasets were recombined and aligned using MAFFT and manually trimmed to
509 remove unique indels. An unresolved guide tree was imposed, following the most up
510 to date topology of the eukaryotic tree of life [32,33] and respecting the sister clade
511 relationship of Arf1/Arf6 and Arl1/Arl5 [12]. The Arf1 and Arf6 tree was calculated with a
512 rooted constraint of the Arl1/Arf5 clades that are the closest sister clades in an
513 unrooted phylogeny from Vargová et al. 2021[12] as an assumed outgroup.
514
515 Ancestral sequence reconstruction using the constrained guidetree and an alignment of
516 eukaryotic Arfs was performed using an empirical (model=2) non mixture LG model on
517 Phylogenetic Analysis by Maximum Likelihood (PAML V4.8) based on the results of IQ-
518 TREE ModelFinder. Ancestral sequence reconstruction was also performed using a
519 LG+C60+R8 mixture model in IQ-TREE, derived from a ModelFinder search for the
520 most appropriate mixture model. The ASR was also calculated for the Arf1/6 ancestors.
521 Because of the length variation observed at the C-terminus across eukaryotes, the
522 positions corresponding to positions 182-183 could be included or excluded as a
523 discretionary decision. To be conservative, we eliminated the positions, resulting in final
524 sequences of the Arf1 ancestor (181 positions in both IQ-TREE and PAML) ending with
525 a chain of three lysine residues and the Arf1/6 ancestor (181 positions in both IQ-TREE
526 and PAML) with four lysines (Figure 2).

527

528 The N-terminal AHs of the PAML and IQ-TREE predicted ancestral sequences were
529 determined from alignment with human Arf1 and Arf6, whose AH regions have been
530 determined by crystal structure analysis [65,66]. Helical wheel plots were generated by
531 Heliquest [67].

532

533 ***Cell Culture and Plasmids***

534 MDCK cells (ATCC CCL-34) were grown in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium
535 (DMEM) (Gibco #31885023) supplemented with 10% FBS (Gibco #A5256701) and 1%
536 penicillin-streptomycin (Gibco #15140122). For transfections, cells were plated at 50%
537 confluency in 6- or 24-well plates, and containing 1.5 mm coverslips for
538 immunofluorescence microscopy. After 24 hours cells were transfected with 1 µL/cm^2 of
539 Lipofectamine 2000 (Thermofisher #11668027) and a total of 0.5 µg/cm^2 of DNA,
540 including plasmids of interest and carrier DNA where appropriate. After 48 hours, cells
541 were fixed and prepared for immunofluorescence microscopy, or cell lysates were
542 prepared either for western blotting or for in gel fluorescence (IGF) using a ChemiDoc
543 MP imager (Bio-Rad) [68]. As a loading control, total proteins were visualized in
544 commercial pre-cast SDS–PAGE gels (stain-free TGX gels, 4%–20%; Bio-Rad) after
545 photoactivation induced by a 45 second UV treatment using a ChemiDoc MP imager
546 (Bio-Rad).

547

548 Yeast transformations were carried out using the lithium acetate method. Briefly, the
549 BY4742 *MATα his3Δ1 leu2Δ0 lys2Δ0 ura3Δ0* strain[69] was grown in YPD medium at
550 30°C to exponential phase, and approximately 4 OD_{600} equivalents of cells per
551 transformation reaction were harvested, washed and resuspended in 60 µL of
552 transformation solution 1 (10 mM Tris pH7.5, 100 mM LiAc, 1 mM EDTA). 2 µg of
553 plasmid DNA and carrier DNA from salmon testes (Sigma #D9156-1ml, incubated at
554 95°C for 5 min), were added, then 300 µL of 40% PEG in transformation solution 1.
555 Cells were incubated 30 min at 22°C or 30°C, then at 42°C for 15 min. Cells were
556 resuspend in YPD, incubated 1 hour, then plated on selective medium. For live cell

557 imaging, cells were grown in selective liquid medium, to a maximum OD_{600} of 0.3,
558 concentrated, then observed by spinning disk microscopy. For western blotting analysis,
559 cells were grown to a maximum OD_{600} of 0.5, and cell lysates prepared. After transfer of
560 gels, nitrocellulose membranes were incubated with anti-GFP primary antibodies
561 (Roche #11814460001) and anti-mouse IgG-HRP secondary antibodies (GE
562 Healthcare, #NA931V). As a loading control, total proteins were visualized in
563 commercial pre-cast SDS–PAGE stain-free gels after photoactivation induced by a 45
564 second UV treatment using a ChemiDoc MP imager (Bio-Rad).
565
566 Plasmids used in this study are listed in Supplementary Table 3. For mammalian cell
567 exogenous expression, coding regions of Arf1, Arf6 and predicted ancestral proteins
568 were cloned into the pEGFP-N3 vector, with proteins expressed under control of the
569 human cytomegalovirus (CMV) immediate early promoter. The 8+mCherry PM probe
570 was derived from the 8+GFP PM probe described previously [38]. Yeast expression
571 plasmids are centromeric vectors, with proteins under control of the constitutive ADH
572 promoter.
573
574 ***Immunofluorescence***
575 The transfected MDCK cells previously seeded on 1.5 mm coverslips were fixed with
576 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) for 15 min. PFA was inactivated with 50 mM NH_4Cl for 20
577 min. After 2 1× PBS washes, cells were permeabilized for 30 min with 1× PBS, 0.025%
578 saponin (Sigma-Merck #84510), then blocked with 1× PBS, 0.025% saponin, 1% BSA
579 for 30 min. The primary mouse antibody targeting GM130 (BD Biosciences #610822)
580 was hybridized in 1× PBS, 0.025% saponin, 1% BSA at 1:500 overnight at 4°C. After
581 multiple washes, goat anti-mouse IgG Alexa fluor 647 (ThermoFisher #A-21235) was
582 added at 1:500 for 1 hour. After multiple washes, nuclei were stained using
583 Hoechst33342 (ThermoFisher #H3570) in 1× PBS at 1:10,000 for 15 min. Coverslips
584 were washed again, rinced in water, then mounted using Fluoromount (ThermoFisher
585 #00-4958-02). After 24 hours at room temperature, the cells were observed by confocal
586 microscopy.

587

588 ***Microscopy***

589 For MDCK cells, acquisitions were performed either on a Zeiss confocal 980 Airyscan
590 microscope driven by ZEN software (version 3.9.101.03000), using a 63× objective, or
591 on a Leica Spinning Disk CSU-X1 microscope driven by MetaMorph software (version
592 7.10.4.407), using a 100× objective. For the images obtained using the Zeiss confocal
593 980 microscope, 40 z-sections separated by 0.13 µm were acquired for each field of
594 cells using excitation/emission wavelengths 353/465 (Hoechst), 488/509 (GFP), and
595 587/610 (mCherry), and/or 653/668 (Alexa 647). For the Leica Spinning Disk
596 microscope, 20 z-sections separated by 0.2 µm were acquired for each field of cells
597 using excitation wavelengths of 405 (Hoechst), 488 (GFP), 561 (mCherry), 642 (Alexa
598 647), and emission filters 450/60 (Hoechst), 525/50 (GFP), 590/35 (mCherry), 670/40
599 (Alexa 647). Localization of GFP-tagged proteins and compartment markers was
600 analysed in ImageJ2 V2.14.0/1.54f. Median and gaussian blur filters were applied to
601 image stacks, and a projection of four z-sections was used for quantifications. A six-
602 pixel wide line was drawn across a portion of the compartment of interest (PM or Golgi),
603 identified by specific markers (8+mCherry or GM130, respectively). Examples are
604 shown in Figures 3 and 4, yellow lines. Fluorescence intensity in each channel,
605 expressed as a gray value, was obtained for each pixel along the line. Plots of
606 fluorescence intensities across the yellow lines in the upper right panels of each part of
607 Figures 3 and 4 are shown in the bottom right panels. To determine the
608 membrane/cytosol ratio (Figure 5), the value of the peak of fluorescence at the PM was
609 determined, and the average cytoplasolic fluorescence intensity was obtained by
610 selection of a portion of the line passing over cytosol free of organelles, and averaging
611 the fluorescence values obtained. The membrane/cytosol ratio for PM staining was
612 calculated by dividing the membrane fluorescence value by the average cytosolic
613 fluorescence value. For this quantification of PM localization, 20-53 cells from separate
614 fields were analysed (numbers for each condition are given in Supplementary Table 4).
615 The number “n” refers to the number of individual cells quantified for each plasmid
616 transfected, chosen from different microscopy fields and from at least three different

transfection experiments. Mean and standard deviation of the calculated membrane/cytosol ratios were obtained, and statistical analysis (unpaired t test with Welch's correction, two-tailed p value) was performed, using Graphpad Prism software (V10.5.0). **** indicates $p < 0.0001$; **, $p < 0.01$; ns, not significant. The values of p for each pairwise comparison are given in Supplementary Table 5. Numerical values of the raw data obtained, as well as the results of statistical analyses are in Supplementary Table 4.

For yeast cells, acquisitions were performed on a Leica Spinning Disk CSU-X1 microscope, driven by Metamorph software, using a 100× objective. 21 z-sections separated by 0.2 µm were acquired for each field of cells, using excitation wavelengths of 488 (GFP) and 561 (mCherry), and emission filters 525/50 (GFP) and 590/35 (mCherry). Localization of GFP-tagged proteins was analysed using ImageJ2 by selecting an appropriate z-section, choosing cells with well-defined organelle localization, and drawing a line across the cell (examples are shown in Figures 6 and 7, yellow lines). Fluorescence intensity was obtained for each pixel along the line. Plots of pixel intensities across the yellow lines in Figures 6 and 7 are shown in the right panels. At least three independent transformations were performed for each plasmid, including appropriate controls each time.

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Figure Legends

Figure 1: Illustrated constraint tree calculated for Arf1, Arf6, Arl1, and Arl5. This phylogeny shows the more divergent nature of Arf6 sequences as compared with Arf1. Clades are collapsed for clarity (for full tree see Supplementary Figure 2).

Figure 2: Properties of the Arf1/6 ancestral proteins predicted by PAML and IQ-TREE. (A) Alignment of the two predicted ancestral sequences, Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ. Key G-Boxes and and sequence motifs are annotated above. Residue-specific probabilities are colour-coded as inset. (B) Alignment of Arf1/6PAML and Arf1/6IQ predicted ancestral sequences and selected eukaryotic Arf1 and Arf6 proteins. Identical residues in 80% or more (all but 2) of the sequences are indicated by dark purple boxes; in 70% (all but 3) by light purple boxes. Same motifs as in part A are annotated. (C) Helical wheel plots of N-terminal AHs of some of the sequences shown in part B. Helical wheel representations of the N-terminal AHs, generated by Heliquest [67], are shown. Color code for the amino acids is yellow: Val, Leu, Ile, Met, Phe, and Trp; dark purple: Ser and Thr; red: Asp and Glu; pink: Asn and Gln; blue: Lys and Arg; grey: other residues. Arrow represents the helical hydrophobic moment, with length proportional to the calculated value and direction indicating that the helix is amphipathic in the perpendicular direction.

Figure 3: Localization of Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins to the Golgi in MDCK cells. MDCK cells were transfected with GFP (A); Arf1-GFP (B); Arf6-GFP (C); ARF1/6PAML-GFP (D); ARF1/6IQ-GFP (E); ARF1/6PAML-3KQ-GFP (F); or ARF1/6IQ-4KQ-GFP (G), and prepared for immunofluorescence analysis using antibodies against GM130, an early Golgi marker (magenta) and Hoechst dye to visualize nuclei (blue).

676 Representative merged images are shown on the left for each transformant, with GFP-
677 tagged protein (green), Golgi (magenta) and nuclei (blue). Insets (yellow square) are
678 shown on the right, with the GFP and Golgi channels shown separately (left inset
679 panels). The yellow lines shown in the merged inset panels (upper right) are those used
680 to generate plots of pixel intensities for the GFP-tagged proteins (green) and the GM130
681 Golgi marker (magenta) (lower right) of each part (A-G). At least three independent
682 transformations were performed for each mutant plasmid, always including the
683 appropriate control plasmids. Scale bar, 5 μm.
684
685 **Figure 4: Localization of Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins to the PM in MDCK**
686 **cells.** MDCK cells were co-transfected with GFP (A); Arf1-GFP (B); Arf6-GFP (C);
687 ARF1/6PAML-GFP (D); ARF1/6IQ-GFP (E); ARF1/6PAML-3KQ-GFP (F); or ARF1/6IQ-
688 4KQ-GFP (G), and the 8+mCherry PM probe, then prepared for immunofluorescence
689 analysis using Hoechst dye to visualize nuclei (blue). Representative merged images
690 are shown on the left for each transformant, with GFP-tagged protein (green), PM
691 (magenta) and nuclei (blue). Insets (yellow square) are shown on the right, with the
692 GFP and PM channels shown separately (left inset panels). The yellow lines shown in
693 the merged inset panels (upper right) are those used to generate plots of pixel
694 intensities for the GFP-tagged proteins (green) and the PM marker (magenta) (lower
695 right) of each part (A-G). At least three independent transformations were performed for
696 each mutant plasmid, always including the appropriate control plasmids. Scale bar, 5
697 μm.
698
699 **Figure 5: Quantification of PM localization.** Levels of GFP-tagged proteins at the PM
700 in individual cells (n) from the experiments shown in Figure 4 and Supplementary Figure
701 4 were quantified. For GFP, n=30; Arf1-GFP, n=30; Arf6-GFP, n=15; ARF1/6PAML-
702 GFP, n=33; ARF1/6IQ-GFP, n=19; ARF1/6PAML+1-GFP, n=18; ARF1/6IQ+1-GFP,
703 n=22; ARF1/6PAML-3KQ-GFP, n=18; ARF1/6IQ-4KQ-GFP, n=18. The
704 membrane/cytosol ratio was calculated by dividing the membrane fluorescence value by
705 the average cytosolic fluorescence value, as described in Methods. Data are presented

706 as mean values +/- standard deviation, with each individual point shown. Statistical
707 analysis (unpaired t test with Welch's correction, two-tailed p value) was performed. **
708 indicates $p < 0.01$; ****, $p < 0.0001$; ns, not significant. p = for the comparison of GFP
709 alone and Arf1-GFP. Numerical values obtained for all calculated ratios are in
710 Supplementary Table 4, and p values for all pairwise comparisons are in Supplementary
711 Table 5.
712
713 **Figure 6: Localization of Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins in yeast cells.**
714 Plasmids encoding Arf1-GFP (A), Arf1/6PAML-GFP (B) and Arf1/6IQ-GFP (C) were co-
715 transformed into *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells with a plasmid encoding Arf1-
716 mCherry. Representative images for each GFP-tagged protein expressed (left panels),
717 with Arf1-mCherry (middle panels) are shown. The yellow lines are those used to
718 generate plots of pixel intensities (right panels) for the GFP-tagged proteins (green) and
719 Arf1-mCherry (magenta). At least three independent transformations were performed for
720 each mutant plasmid, always including the WT control plasmid. Scale bar, 5 μm.
721
722 **Figure 7: Localization of Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins to the PM in yeast**
723 **cells.** Plasmids encoding GFP (A), Arf1-GFP (B), Arf1/6PAML-GFP (C), Arf1/6IQ-GFP
724 (D), Arf1/6PAML-3KQ-GFP (E), and Arf1/6IQ-4KQ-GFP (F) were transformed into
725 *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells. Localizations of each GFP-tagged protein were
726 quantified as described in Methods. Representative images for each protein expressed
727 in yeast are shown (left panels). The yellow lines are those used to generate plots of
728 pixel intensities (right panels). “0” (left panels) indicates the beginning of the line shown,
729 and corresponds to “0” on the x-axis of the plots (left panels). At least three independent
730 transformations were performed for each mutant plasmid, always including the WT
731 control plasmid. Scale bar, 5 μm.
732
733 **Figure 8: C-terminal region of selected Arf1 homologues from diverse eukaryotes.**
734 This alignment illustrates the presence of multiple positively charged residues in the C-
735 terminus of Arf1 proteins from phylogenetically diverse eukaryotes, including animals,

736 fungi, and organisms with agricultural (*P. brassicae*, *T. foetus*), ecological (*T.*
737 *pseudonana*, *P. papillatum*), and medical (*G. intestinalis*, *C. neoformans*, *T. brucei*)
738 impact. The sequence abbreviation used in Supplementary Table 1 is given before the
739 organism name. Positively charged residues are coloured lime.
740
741 **Supplementary Figure Legends**
742 **Supplementary Figure 1. Phylogenetic analyses of Arf sub-families to identify**
743 **least divergent paralogs.** (A) Arf1. Model=Q.Insect+R8 Matrix=451 taxa, 171
744 positions. (B) Arf6 Model=Q.Insect+I+G4 Matrix=68, 170 positions. (C) Arl1.
745 Model=Q.Yeast.R5 Matrix=126 taxa, 163 positions (D) Arl5. Model=Q.Yeast.R6.
746 Matrix=92 taxa, 161 positions.
747
748 **Supplementary Figure 2. Constrained tree topology for ASR analyses.** This tree
749 was manually constrained based on the topology from Vargová et al. 2021 [12], assuming
750 that Arl1/5 represents an outgroup root. Internal eukaryotic relationships within each
751 clade are based on consensus eukaryotic relationships [12] and with a polytomy at the
752 root, reflecting the knowledge at the time of analysis. Notably, the Carpediemonas 'Arf6'
753 was included in the calculation yielding the sequences tested. However, recalculation
754 without the sequence resulted in only a single AA residue change at a low probability
755 site, and thus did not substantially change the inferred Arf1/6 ancestral sequence
756 (Supplementary Table 2).
757
758 **Supplementary Figure 3. Expression levels of Arf1/6 predicted ancestral proteins**
759 **and controls.** MDCK cells were transfected with the plasmids encoding the indicated
760 proteins fused to GFP (or GFP alone) (A), and samples prepared for GFP in gel
761 fluorescence (see Methods) (A). As a loading control, total proteins were visualized in
762 commercial pre-cast SDS–PAGE stain-free gels. (B). Uncropped version of blot in Part
763 A is shown (C).
764

765 **Supplementary Figure 4. Localization of alternative Arf1/6 predicted ancestral**
766 **proteins to the Golgi and PM in MDCK cells.** MDCK cells were transfected with
767 ARF1/6PAML+1-GFP (A,B) or ARF1/6IQ+1-GFP (C,D) and prepared for
768 immunofluorescence analysis using Hoechst dye to visualize nuclei (blue). Cells were
769 either co-transfected with the 8+mCherry PM probe (magenta) (A,C) or prepared for
770 immunofluorescence analysis using antibodies against GM130, an early Golgi marker
771 (magenta) (B,D). Representative merged images are shown on the left for each
772 transformant, with GFP-tagged protein (green), nuclei (blue), and either PM (A,C) or
773 Golgi (B,D) in magenta. Insets (yellow square) are shown on the right, with each
774 channel shown separately (left inset panels). The yellow lines shown in the merged
775 inset panels (upper right) are those used to generate plots of pixel intensities for the
776 GFP-tagged proteins (green) and the organelle marker (magenta) (lower right) of each
777 part (A-D). At least three independent transformations were performed for each mutant
778 plasmid, always including the appropriate control plasmids. Scale bar, 5 μm.
779
780 **Supplementary Figure 5. Localization of alternative Arf1/6 predicted ancestral**
781 **proteins in yeast cells.** Plasmids encoding Arf1/6PAML+1-GFP (A) and Arf1/6IQ+1-
782 GFP (B) were co-transformed into *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* cells with a plasmid
783 encoding Arf1-mCherry. Representative images for each GFP-tagged protein expressed
784 (left panels), with Arf1-mCherry (middle panels) are shown. The merged images are
785 shown in the right panels. At least three independent transformations were performed
786 for each mutant plasmid, always including the WT control plasmid. Scale bar, 5 μm.
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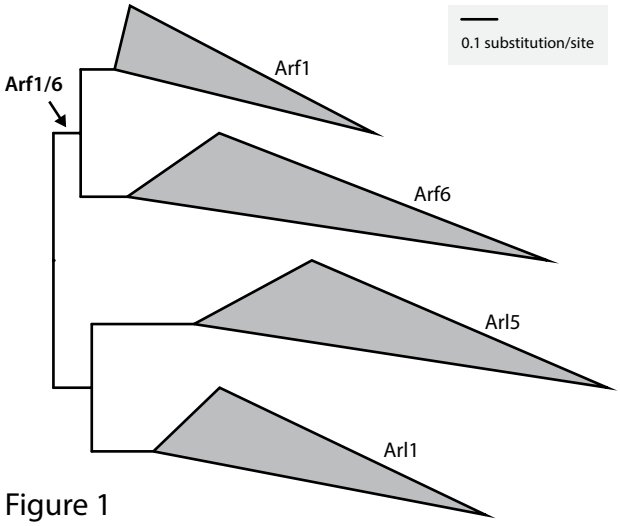
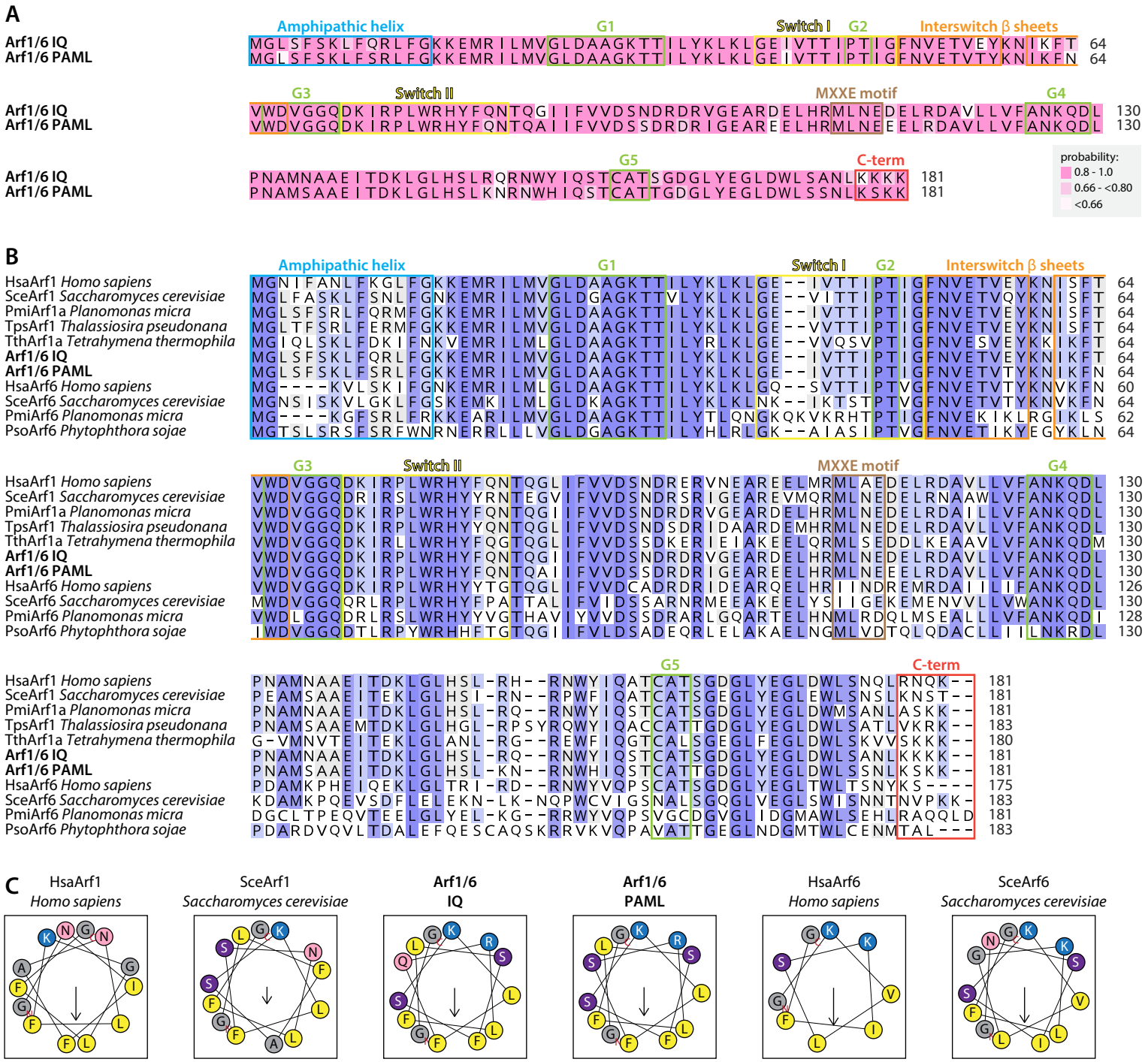


Figure 1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Amphipathic helix
G1
Switch I
G2
Interswitch β sheets
Arf1/6 IQ
Arf1/6 PAML
G3
Switch II
MXXE motif
G4
G5
C-term
probability:
0.8 - 1.0
0.66 - <0.80
<0.66
B
HsaArf1 Homo sapiens
SceArf1 Saccharomyces cerevisiae
PmiArf1a Planomonas micra
TpsArf1 Thalassiosira pseudonana
TthArf1a Tetrahymena thermophila
Arf1/6 IQ
Arf1/6 PAML
HsaArf6 Homo sapiens
SceArf6 Saccharomyces cerevisiae
PmiArf6 Planomonas micra
PsoArf6 Phytophthora sojae
C
HsaArf1
Homo sapiens
SceArf1
Saccharomyces cerevisiae
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PAML
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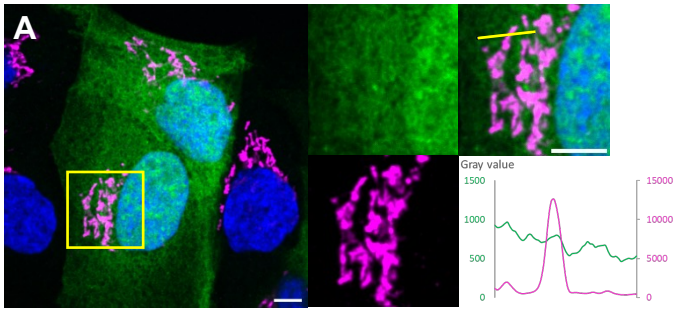
SceArf6
Saccharomyces cerevisiae

Figure 2

Figure 3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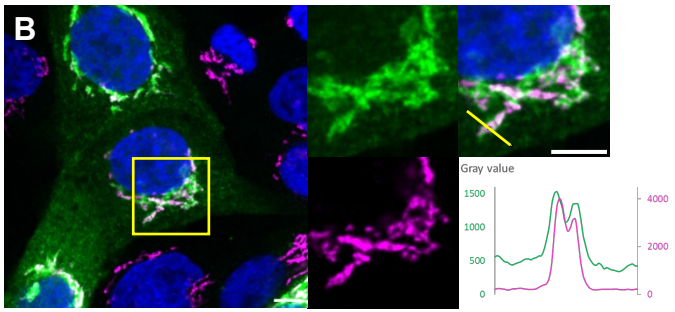
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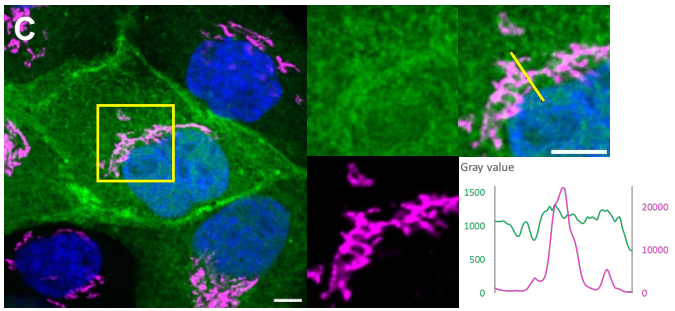
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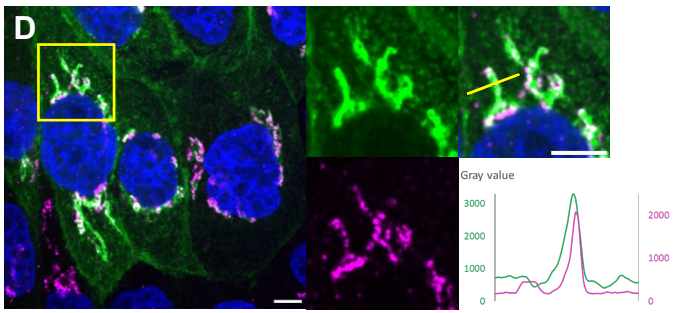
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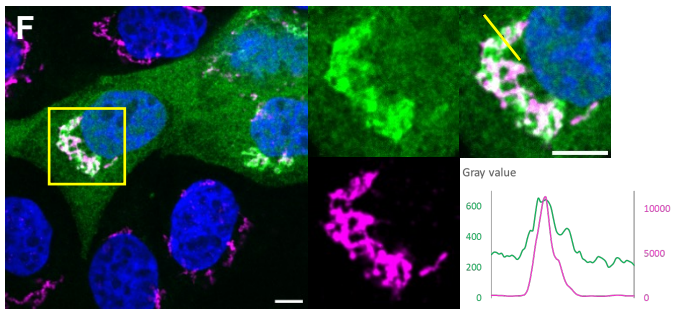
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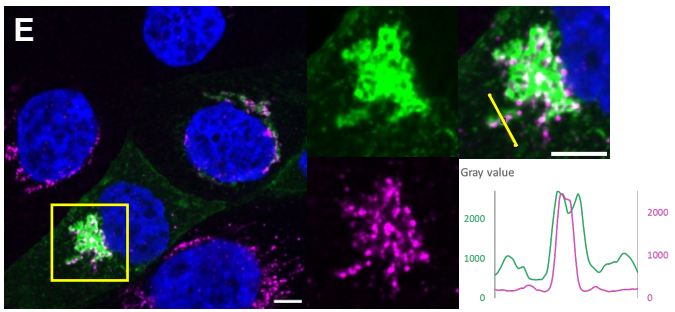
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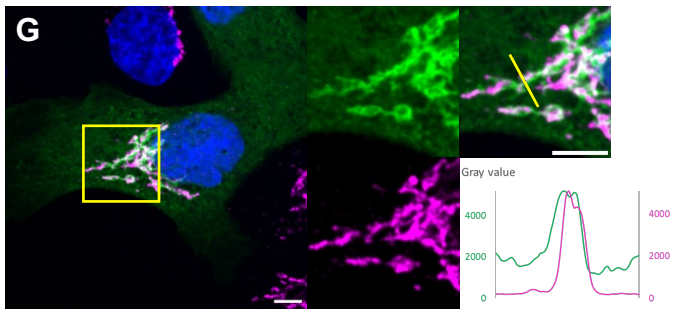
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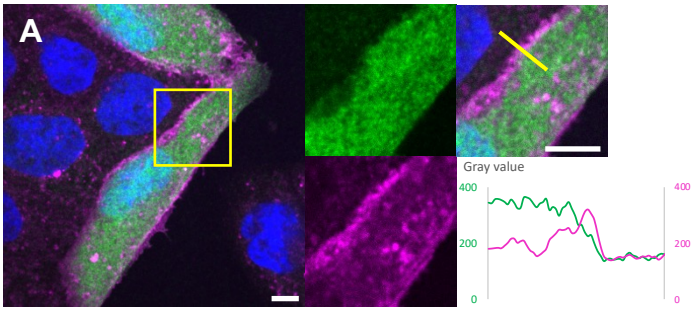
Figure 4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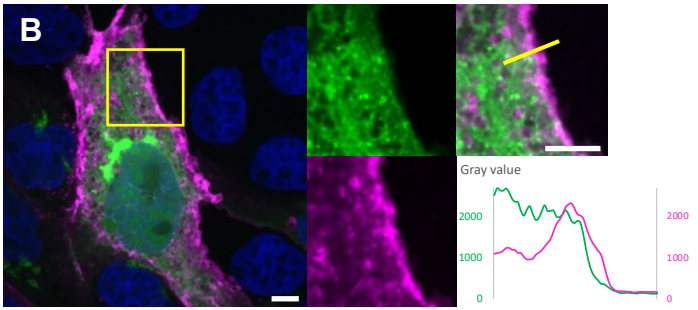
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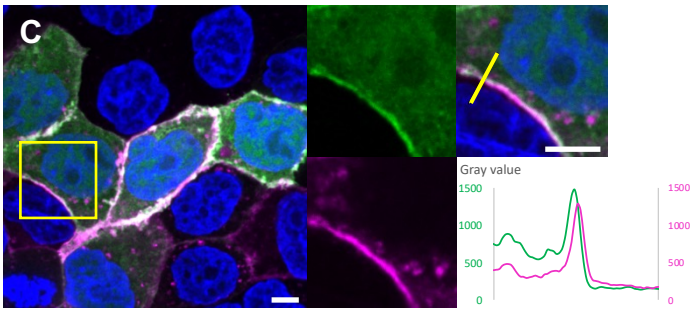
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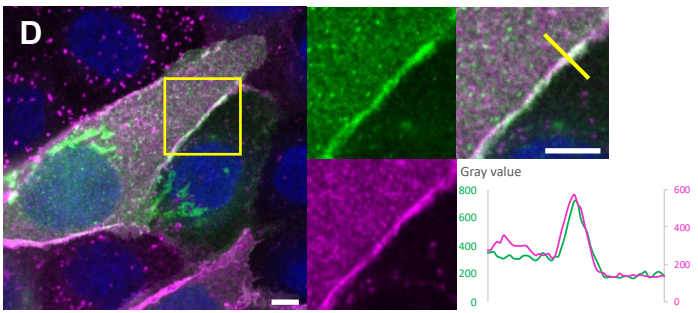
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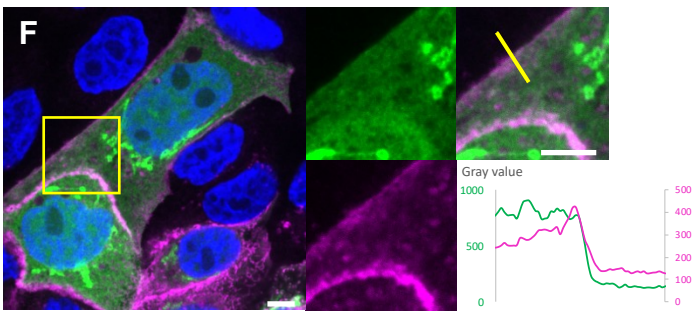
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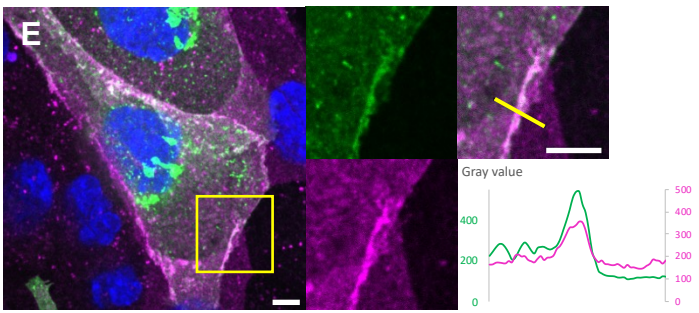
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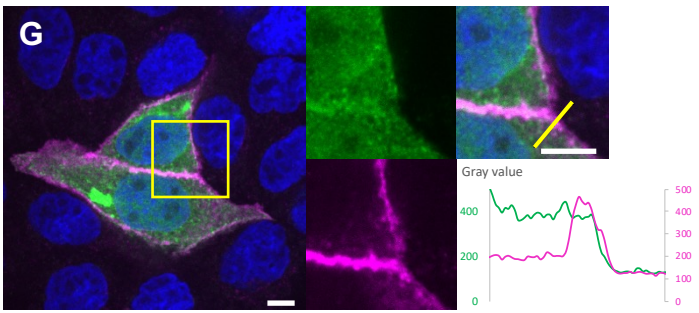
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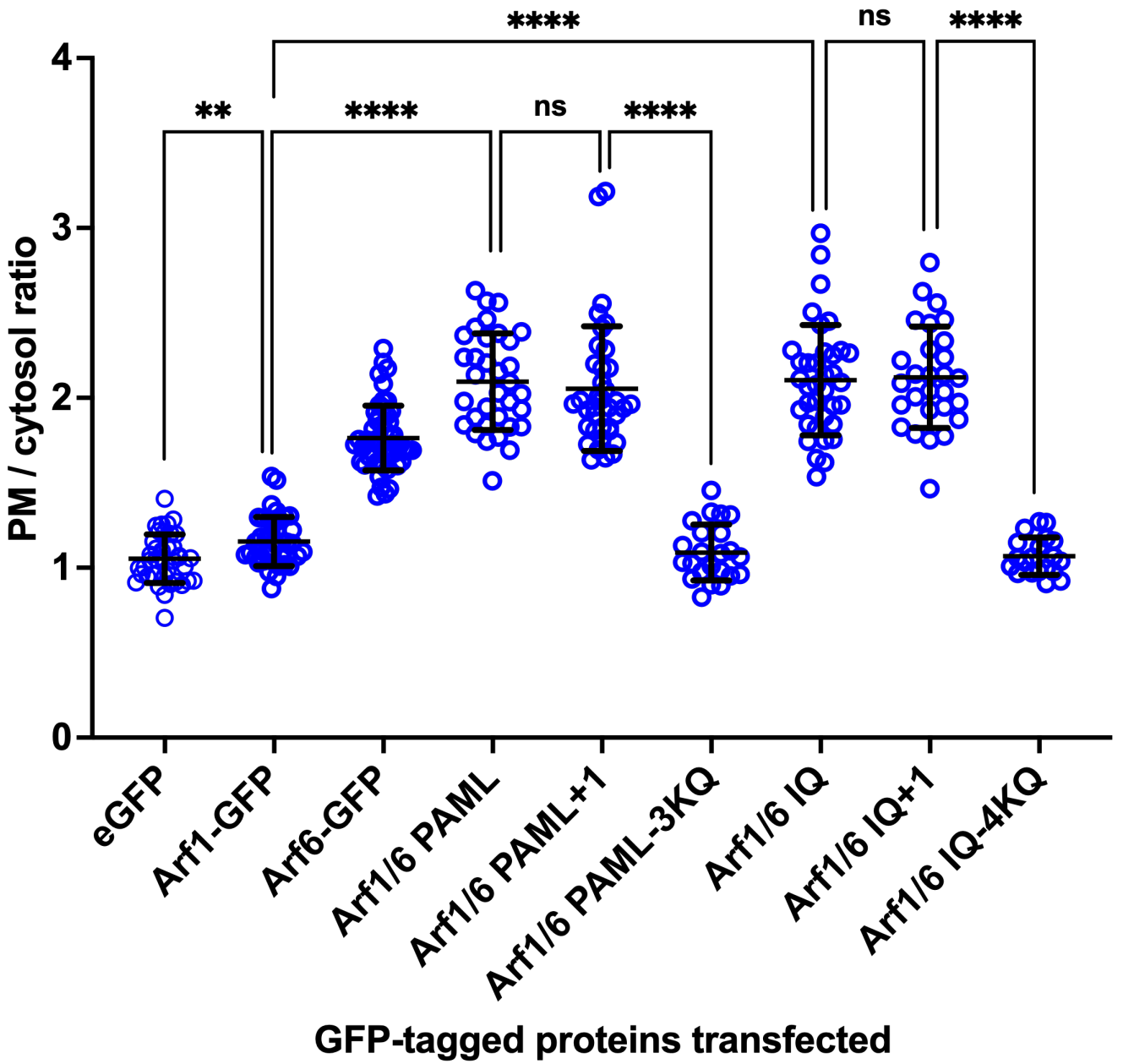
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1
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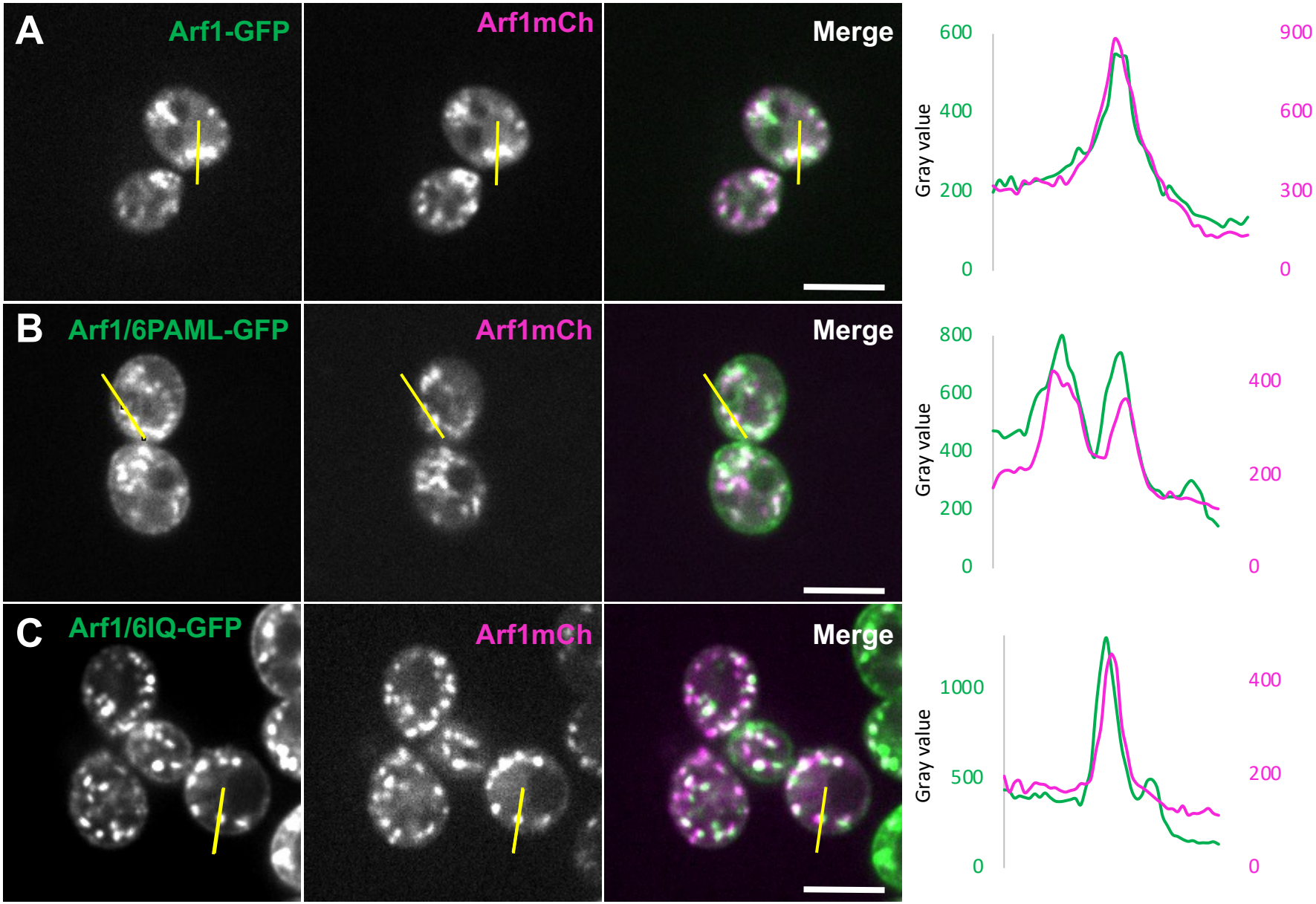
PM / cytosol ratio
eGFP
Arf1-GFP
Arf6-GFP
Arf1/6 PAML
Arf1/6 PAML+1
Arf1/6 PAML-3KQ
Arf1/6 IQ
Arf1/6 IQ+1
Arf1/6 IQ-4KQ
GFP-tagged proteins transfected

Figure 5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Arf1mCh
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Figure 6

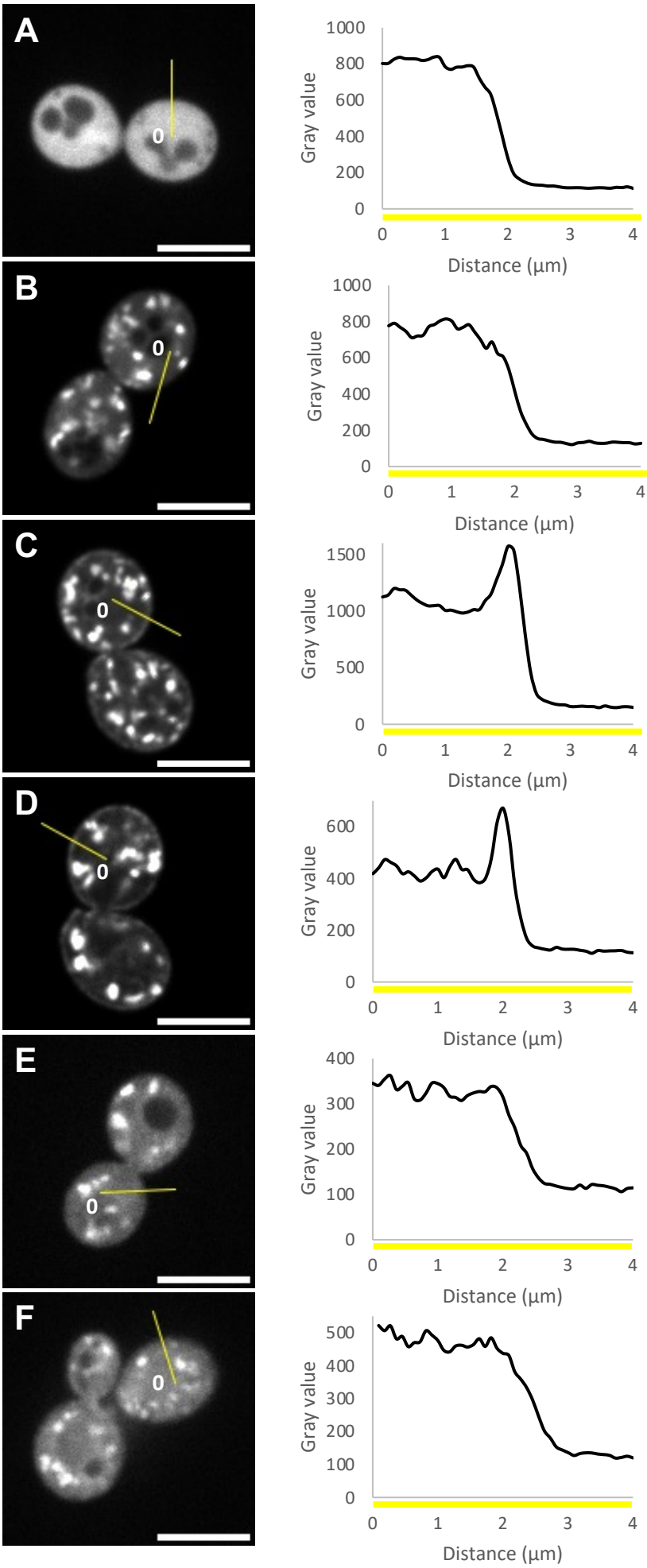
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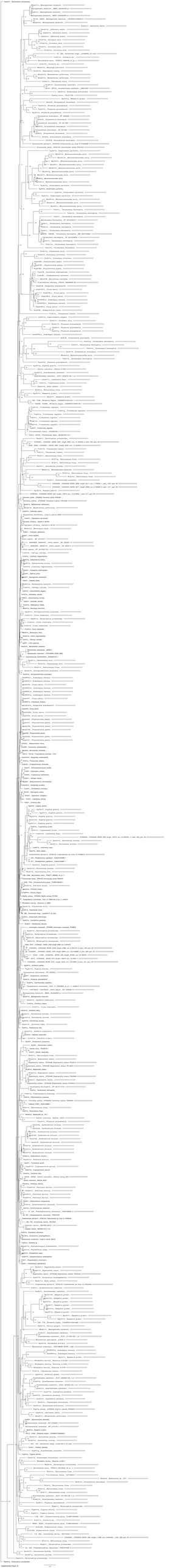
Figure 7

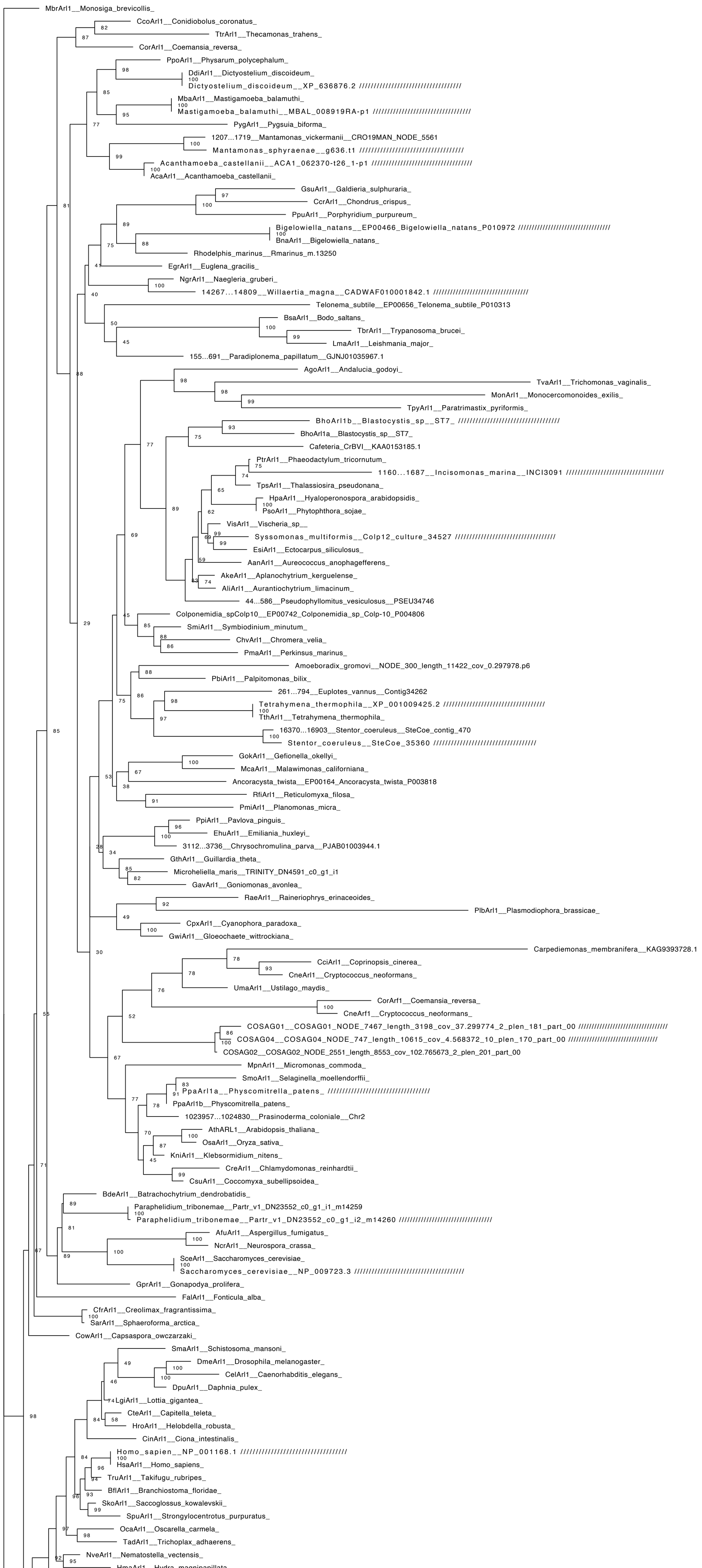
HsaArf1 *Homo sapiens*	Y E G L D W L S N Q L R N Q K - - - - - - - -
CinArf1c *Ciona intestinalis*	Y D G L T W L A T Q F K Q K H G R K H - - - -
SpuArf1a *Strongylocentrotus purpuratus*	Y E G L D W L S N Q L S K K K - - - - - - - -
HmaArf1a *Hydra magnipapillata*	Y E G L D W L S N E L K K K K N - - - - - - -
CneArf1 *Cryptococcus neoformans*	Y E G L E W L S A N L K R K S P - - - - - - -
UmaArf1 *Ustilago maydis*	Y E G L E W L S T N L K R R A - - - - - - - -
GprArf1b *Gonapodya prolifera*	T E G L E W L A A A I K R A R R R - - - - - -
AcaArf1j *Acanthamoeba castellanii*	D E G F D W L A E R I K E K R K - - - - - - -
MbaArf1c *Mastigamoeba balamuthi*	Y E G L D W L A D R L T K S R R R S M - - - -
OHS99736.1 *Tritrichomonas foetus*	Y E G L D W L G E Q I N K K F K - - - - - - -
GinArf1 *Giardia intestinalis*	Y Q G L D W L S D Y I F D K K N K K K G K K R
SvoArf1 *Spironucleus vortens*	F Q G L D W L S K F I T E K K K - - - - - - -
TbrArf1b *Trypanosoma brucei*	Y E G L D W L S V N I K K S M K - - - - - - -
GJNJ01042068.1:1-543 *Paradiplonema papillatum*	Y E G L E W L A G A V K R T K - - - - - - - -
TpsArf1 *Thalassiosira pseudonana*	Y E G L D W L S A T L V K R K - - - - - - - -
VisArf1a *Vischeria* sp.	Y E G L D W L S A A L Q K R K - - - - - - - -
TthArf1a *Tetrahymena thermophila*	F E G L D W L S K V V S K K K - - - - - - - -
PteArf1a *Paramecium tetraurelia*	Y Q G L D W L S K Q F K K R K N - - - - - - -
BnaArf1c *Bigelowiella natans*	V D G M D W L A N T L K K R T K D - - - - - -
PlbArf1b *Plasmodiophora brassicae*	Y E G L D W L S D T L R K R G - - - - - - - -
GwiArf1c *Gloeochaete wittrockiana*	Y E G L D W V A A A L K A R K N - - - - - - -
GavArf1b *Goniomonas avonlea*	Y E G L D W M S G Q M A K K K - - - - - - - -
PbiArf1c *Palpitomonas bilix*	Y E G L D W A S A Q L S R K K K - - - - - - -

Figure 8

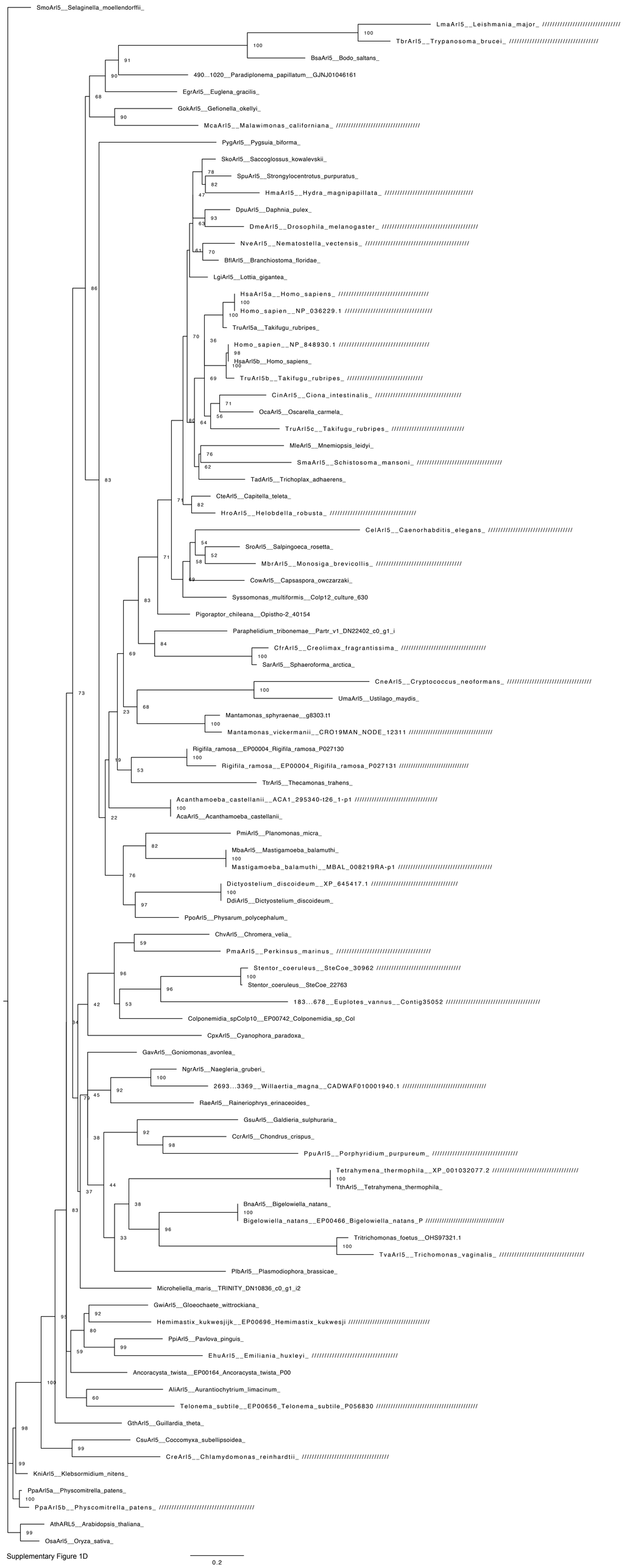
Supplementary Figures



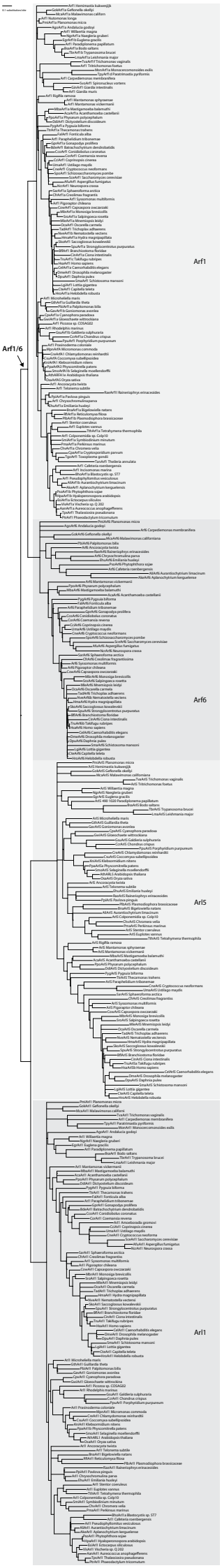
Supplementary Figure 1B



Supplementary Figure 1C

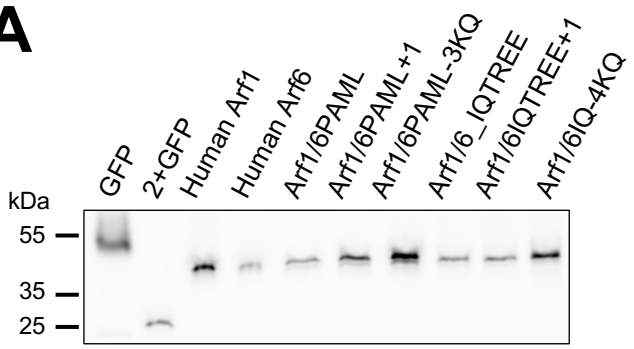


Supplementary Figure 1D



Supplementary Figure 2

A



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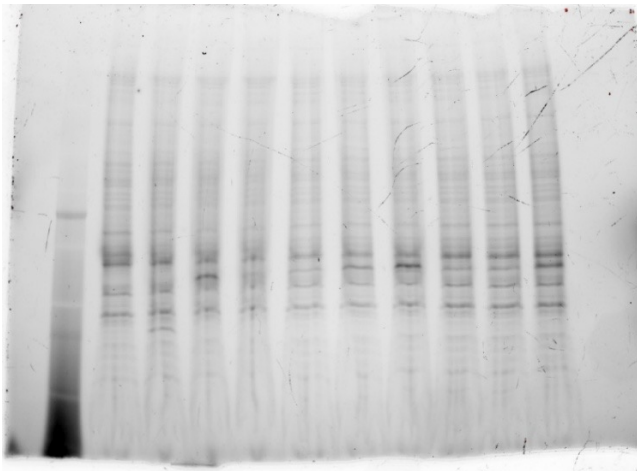
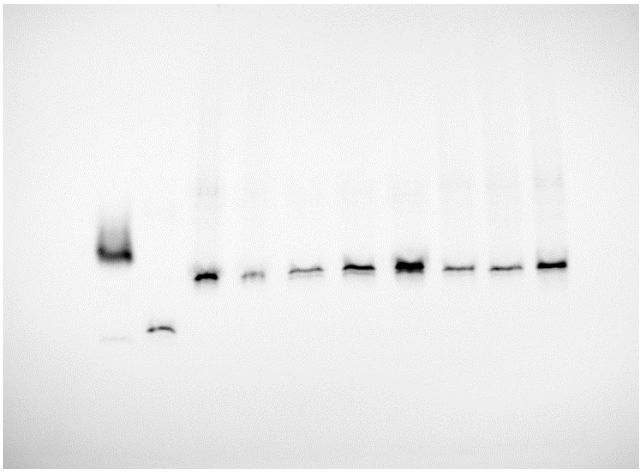
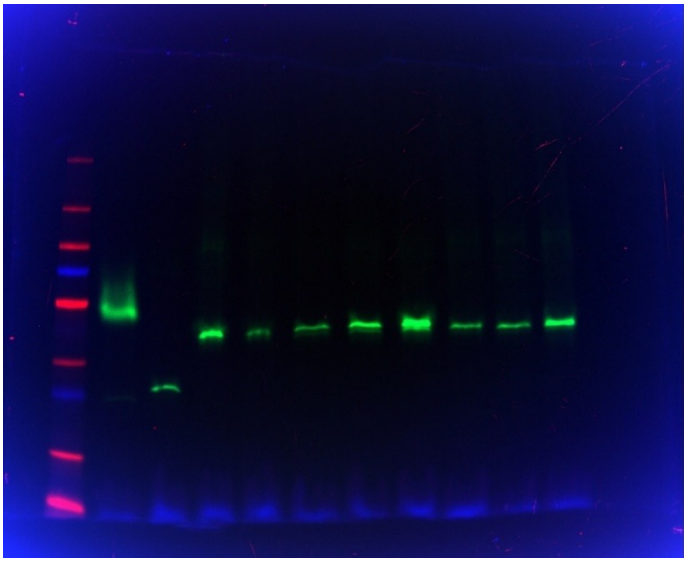
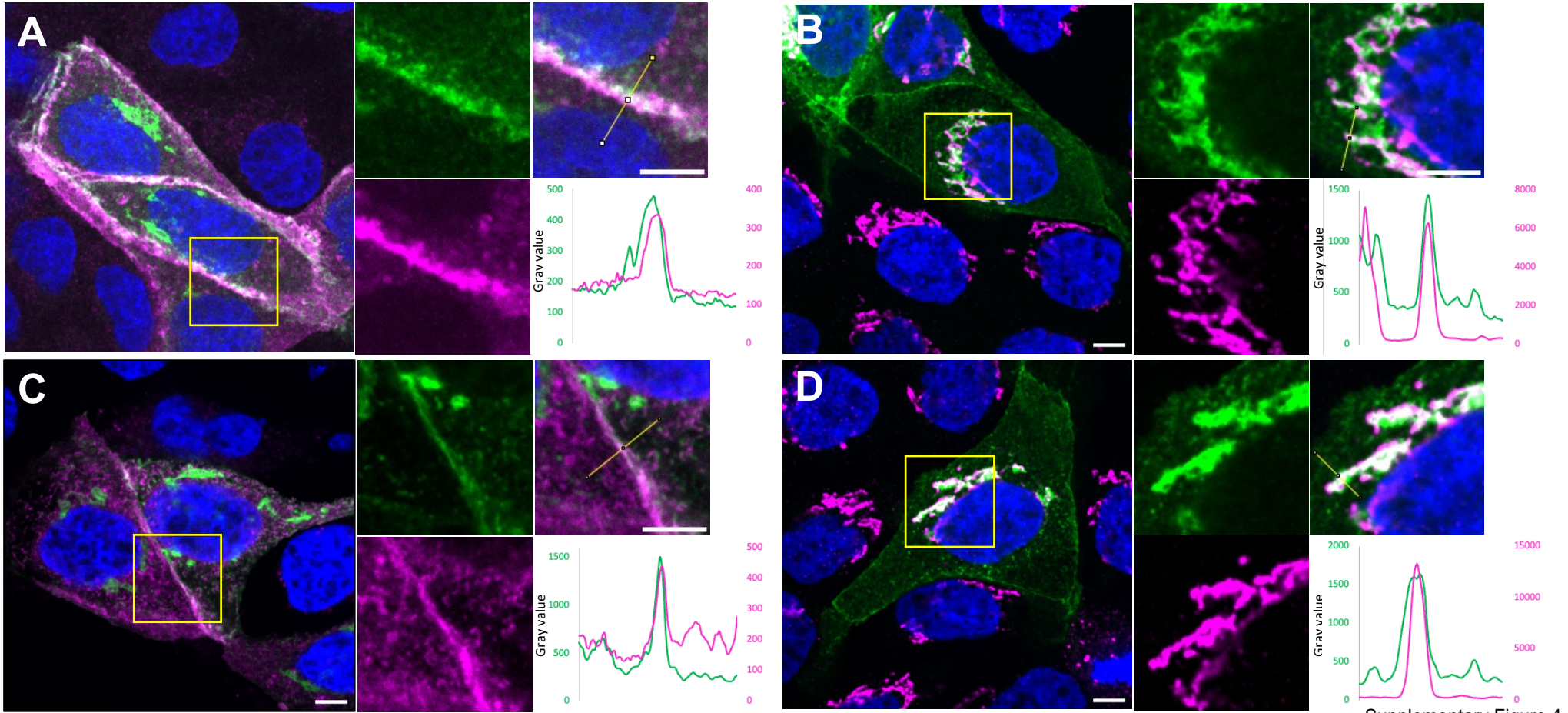


C

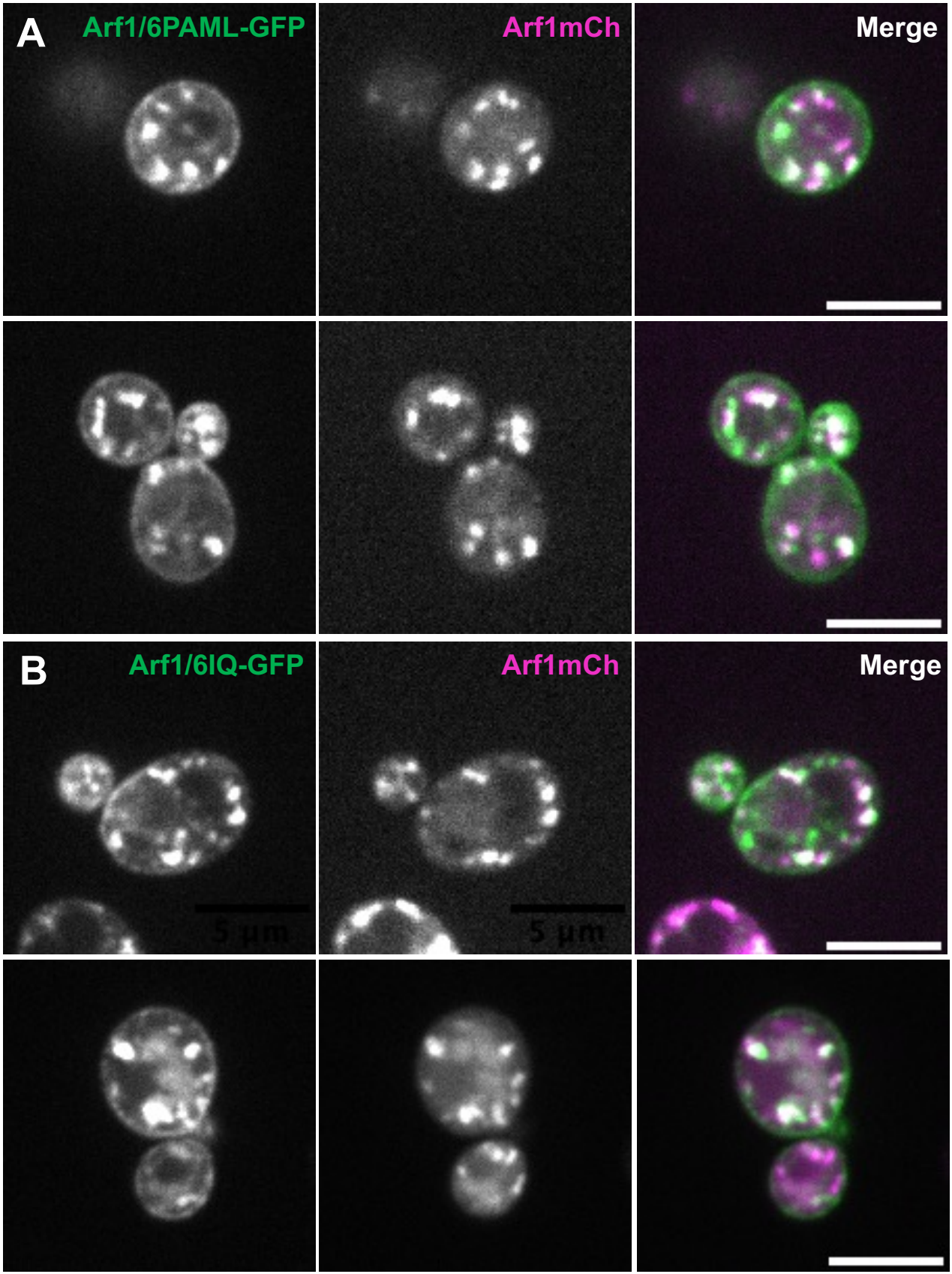




Supplementary Figure 3



Supplementary Figure 4



Supplementary Figure 5