Global distribution and evolution of *Mycobacterium bovis* lineages

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Abstract

Mycobacterium bovis is the main causative agent of zoonotic tuberculosis in humans and frequently devastates livestock and wildlife worldwide. Previous studies suggested the existence of genetic groups of *M. bovis* strains based on limited DNA markers (a.k.a. clonal complexes), and the evolution and ecology of this pathogen has been marginally explored at the global level. We have screened over 2,600 publicly available *M. bovis* genomes and newly sequenced two wildlife *M. bovis* strains, gathering 823 genomes from 21 countries and 21 host-species, including humans, to complete a phylogenomic analyses. We propose the existence of three distinct global lineages of *M. bovis* (Lb1, Lb2 and Lb3) underlying the current disease distribution. These lineages are not fully represented by clonal complexes and are dispersed based on geographic location rather than host species. Our data divergence analysis agreed with previous studies reporting independent archeological data of ancient *M. bovis* [(South Siberian infected skeletons at ~2,000 BP (before present)] and indicates that extant *M. bovis* originated during the Roman Empire period, subsequently dispersing across the world with the discovery and settlement of the New World and Oceania, directly influenced by trades among countries.

Keywords: *Mycobacterium bovis,* animal tuberculosis, phylogenetics, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* Complex, evolution.

Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) is the leading infectious killer in the world and approximately 10 million new cases are reported annually. In 2017, 1.6 million people died of TB and over 95% of these deaths occurred in low and middle-income countries (World Health Organization 2018). The disease is strongly linked to poverty, with its prevalence following a socioeconomic gradient within and among countries. In addition, there is a significant, and often neglected, contributor to the global disease burden, which is the zoonotic transmission of bovine TB to humans. The WHO (World Health Organization) estimated that 142,000 new cases and 12,500 deaths occurred due to zoonotic TB in 2017 (World Health Organization 2018), numbers that are likely underestimated due to lack of routine surveillance data from most countries (Olea-Popelka et al. 2017). People with zoonotic TB face arduous challenges; the etiologic agent is intrinsically resistant to pyrazinamide, one of the first-line drugs used in TB treatment, and a possible association with extra-pulmonary disease often delays diagnostics and treatment initiation. In addition, bovine TB results in severe economic losses for livestock producers worldwide, respecting no borders and repeatedly affecting animal conservation efforts due to the establishment of wildlife reservoirs or spillover events from cattle to associated animal populations. In order to eradicate TB by 2,030 as part of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, it is imperative that future prevention and control strategies focus on all forms of TB in humans, including its interface with animals.

Human and animal TB are caused by members of the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* Complex (MTC). The MTC is a clonal bacterial group composed of 12 species or ecotypes with variable virulence and host tropism (Galagan 2014). *Mycobacterium tuberculosis stricto sensu* is the main responsible for the TB numbers and is highly adapted to human hosts. On the other hand, *Mycobacterium bovis*, the causative agent of bovine TB, has a broader host range and is able to infect and cause disease in multiple host species, including humans, with variable populational persistence (Malone and Gordon 2017). MTC

members have clonally evolved from a common ancestor with the tuberculous bacteria *Mycobacterium canetii*, and alignable regions of MTC genomes are over 99.95% identical, with horizontal gene transfer and large recombination events considered absent. These pathogens have solely evolved through single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) and small deletions of up to 12.7Kb, which translated into a phenotypic array of host tropism and virulence variations (Galagan 2014; Brites et al. 2018).

Using whole-genome, SNP-based phylogenetic analyses, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* strains have been classified into 5 lineages: L1 through L4, and L7. *Mycobacterium africanum*, which is another bacterial species of MTC, accounts for lineages 5 and 6 of the human-adapted MTC strains and is responsible for about 1/3 of TB cases in West Africa (de Jong et al. 2010). Each *M. tuberculosis* lineage is associated with specific global geographical locations and lineage-associated variations in virulence, transmission capacity and in the propensity to acquire drug resistance have been reported (Coscolla and Gagneux 2014). Thus, regional prevalence of specific lineages or sub-lineages have consequences for the epidemiology of TB worldwide. A similar attempt to classify *M. bovis* into different genetic groups was made prior to the large-scale availability of whole-genome sequences and started with the identification of Clonal Complexes (CC). Accordingly, four *M. bovis* CCs have been described (African 1 and 2, European 1 and 2), and these are determined based on specific deletions ranging from 806 to 14,094 bp (base pairs), SNPs and spoligotypes. As with *M. tuberculosis* lineages, *M. bovis* CCs appear to have distinct geographical distributions, with African 1 and 2 restricted to Africa, CC European 2 commonly found in the Iberian Peninsula, and CC European 1 distributed globally (Müller et al. 2009; Berg et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Rodriguez-Campos et al. 2012; Smith 2012). Although there are no studies specifically aimed at identifying differences in virulence patterns among *M. bovis* of different CCs, numerous articles report virulence variations among strains of *M. bovis* (Wedlock et al. 1999; Waters et al. 2006; Meikle et al. 2011; Wright et al. 2013; Waters et al. 2014; de la Fuente et al. 2015; Vargas-Romero et al. 2016)*,* suggesting a possible link between bacterial genetic polymorphisms and disease development, as observed in *M. tuberculosis*.

Since the whole-genome sequence of the first *M. bovis* strain became available in 2003 (Garnier et al. 2003), increasing efforts have been made to sequence additional strains and use whole-genome information to tackle bovine and/or wildlife TB transmission within specific outbreaks or countries (Bruning-Fann et al. 2017; Sandoval-Azuara et al. 2017; Ghebremariam et al. 2018; Kohl et al. 2018; Lasserre et al. 2018; Orloski et al. 2018; Price-Carter et al. 2018; Razo et al. 2018). However, no studies to date have comprehensively analyzed *M. bovis* genomes at a global scale. Few studies that have compared transboundary *M. bovis* strains analyzed bacterial isolates obtained from a reduced number of countries (n<9) and included small sample sizes (Dippenaar et al. 2017; Patané et al. 2017; Zimpel et al. 2017a; Ghebremariam et al. 2018; Lasserre et al. 2018). Nevertheless, attained results suggest that *M. bovis* strains are likely to cluster based on geographical location (Dippenaar et al. 2017; Zimpel et al. 2017a; Lasserre et al. 2018). In our previous study, we have also shown that few *M. bovis* genomes do

not carry any CC genetic marker (Zimpel et al. 2017a), a phenomenon that was recently observed in *M. bovis* isolates from one cattle herd in the USA and from slaughterhouse cattle in Eritrea (Ghebremariam et al. 2018; Orloski et al. 2018). These findings suggest that Clonal Complexes are unlikely to represent the whole diversity of *M. bovis* strains, warranting further evaluation of *M. bovis* molecular lineages (Zimpel et al. 2017a; Lasserre et al. 2018).

In this study, we propose and discuss the existence of at least three distinct lineages of *M. bovis* in the world. We have screened over 2,600 publicly available *M. bovis* genomes and newly sequenced two wildlife *M. bovis* strains, gathering 823 *M. bovis* genomes from 21 countries and 21 different host-species, including humans, to complete a phylogenomic analyses. We also used a previously described approach (Bos et al. 2014) to evaluate the evolutionary origin of *M. bovis* strains and lineages and correlated bacterial population dynamics with historical events to gain new insights into the widespread nature of bovine TB worldwide.

Results and Discussion

Mycobacterium bovis genomes and host adaptation

After screening ~2,600 publicly available *M. bovis* genomes using pre-determined inclusion criteria (see methods), a total of 823 virulent *M. bovis* genomes from 21 countries and 21 different host species were selected for this study (table 1). This sample constitutes the most comprehensive global *M. bovis* dataset ever analyzed, and includes 724 genomes published previously, and two newly sequenced genomes from this study (supplementary table S1). We used 17,302 nucleotide polymorphic positions detected in these genomes to construct phylogenetic trees inferred with maximum likelihood (ML) and maximum parsimony (MP) methodologies (fig. 1; supplementary files S1 and S2). Both phylogenetic methods employed (MP and ML) generated highly similar trees (supplementary figs. S1 and S2). This observation is supported by the Robinson-Foulds distance between both trees (= 678) compared to all other comparisons among 1,000 random trees with the same number of taxa (for a total of 499,500 distances obtained), for which the minimum was 1,632, and the maximum was 1,642 (supplementary fig. S3). Therefore, results are shown for ML only (figs. 1, 2, and 3).

Table 1. *Mycobacterium bovis* genomes selected for analysis.

Country	Number of genomes	Host species (# of selected read sets)
Brazil	3	Cattle (1), Bison (1), Llama (1)
Canada	6	Cattle (5), Elk (1)
China	2	Chimpanzee (2)
Eritreia	12	Cattle (12)
Ethiopia	2	Cattle (2)
France	2	Cattle (1), Wild boar (1)
Germany	6	Human (6)

Ghana	3	Human (3)
Great Britain	12	Human (11), Cattle (1)
Italy	2	Human (2)
Mexico	192	Cattle (175), Human (17)
New Zealand	232	Cattle (129), Ferret (38), Pig (7), Cervid (4), Stout (1), Possum (53)
Northern Ireland	88	Cattle (84), Badger (4)
Panama	2	Cattle (2)
Russia	1	Human (1)
South Africa	11	Cattle (1), Lion (2), Kudu (1), Buffalo (7)
Spain	7	Cattle (7)
Switzerland	2	Unknown host*
Tunisia	1	Human (1)
United States	233	Cattle (124), Coyote (1), Human (2), Cervid (64), Cat (7), Raccoon (12), Wild boar (6), Opossum (9), Jaguar (1), Bobcat (1), Bison (1), Elk (5)
Uruguay	4	Cattle (4)
Total	823	

Mycobacterium bovis genomes sequenced by Brites et al. (Brites et al. 2018).

In the generated phylogenetic tree, host species are found dispersed among different clades, while most *M. bovis* genomes cluster according to specific geographic locations (fig. 1). This finding suggests that geographic proximity between hosts and their contact rates has played a more important role in determining host range of *M. bovis* than phylogenetic distance among hosts. When considering the over-represented countries USA and New Zealand, the most basal *M. bovis* strains are of bovine origin, suggesting that the introduction of bovine TB in these countries occurred through cattle, spilling over to wildlife in subsequent years. The lack of host clustering supports the hypothesis of *M. bovis* being a generalist member of MTC, able to infect different host species irrespective of the bacterial genetic makeup. Interestingly, all *M. bovis* genomes originating from the African Continent, except for South Africa, appeared as emerging from relatively older nodes of the phylogenetic tree, suggesting the continent is a possible center of dispersion.

157
158 **Fig. 1. Host species and geographical distribution of *Mycobacterium bovis* isolates**. Maximum
159 likelihood phylogenetic tree based on single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) of 823 *Mycobacterium*
160 *bovis* genomes, using *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* H37Rv as outgroup. The host species are marked
161 in black tips for bovine, red tips for wild animals, green tips for humans, and in blue tips are two

genomes with unknown host identification. Geographical locations of the isolates are colored in the donut chart (which do not represent ancestral area reconstruction at nodes): blue - North America, black - South and Central America, purple - Oceania, pink - Europe, green - Eastern and Southern Africa, orange - Western and Northern Africa, light blue - Asia. Phylogenetic tree was generated using IQ-Tree with 1,000 bootstrap values and annotated using FigTree v1.4.3 and Mind the Graph. Bootstrap values can be visualized in supplementary fig. S1.

Clonal Complexes do not represent the whole diversity of *M. bovis* genomes

Thirty-eight out of the 823 (4.6%) analyzed *M. bovis* genomes do not have genetic markers of any of the four CCs (Eur1 - European 1, Eur2 - European 2, Afr1 - African 1, Afr2 - African 2). The remaining *M. bovis* isolates were found to cluster according to their CC classification. The vast majority (29/38, 76.32%) *of M. bovis* genomes not classified within CCs appeared dispersed, emerging from relatively ancestral nodes (fig. 2). This finding suggests that isolates clustering in ancient nodes were probably not included in prior studies evaluating CCs, and have thus been poorly studied until now.

Clades A and B

The clade A (fig. 2a, clade A - green box) is composed of 32 *M. bovis* isolates. These are from Africa [Eritrea (*n*=12), Ethiopia (*n*=2), Tunisia (*n*=1)], Europe [Italy (*n*=2), France (*n*=1), Spain (*n*=7), Germany (*n*=1)], Asia [(Russia (*n*=1), China (*n*=2), and the USA (*n*=3). Among these *M. bovis* isolates, only three were characterized with the deletion marker of the CC African 2 (one isolated from wild boar in France, and two from chimpanzees in China; green tips in fig. 2a). The remaining strains (*n*=29) did not show any of the CC specific markers. Clade B (fig. 2a, clade B - orange box) is composed of 6 *M. bovis* isolates, including genomes from Africa [Ghana (*n*=3)] and Europe [Germany (*n*=1), Switzerland (*n*=2)] carrying the deletion marker of the CC African 1 (orange tips in fig. 2a). To date, *M. bovis* strains of the CCs Af1 and Af2 have only been described in Africa (Berg et al. 2011; Firdessa et al. 2013). The finding of *M. bovis* strains of CC Af2 infecting chimpanzees in China may be explained by pathogen importation from the African continent into that country or, less likely, spill-over from infected livestock to captive animals. A thorough characterization of *M. bovis* strains from China in the future could elucidate which CC is more frequent in that country. On the other hand, the presence of both African CCs in countries of Europe, infecting a wild boar (France), humans (Germany) and unknown hosts (Switzerland), is interesting and warrants further investigation into the actual origin of these isolates. Ten out of 43 (23.26%) *M. bovis* isolates from humans are found in clades A and B, four from Africa (Ghana=3; Tunisia=1), four from Europe (Germany=2; Italy=2), one from Russia, and one from the USA. Unfortunately, demographic characteristics of these patients are not described in the related literature (Casali et al. 2014; Walker et al. 2015; Brites et al. 2018; Kandler et al. 2018). With current bovine TB control, the zoonotic transmission of *M. bovis* in Europe and the USA is considered rare. Thus, we speculate that European and North American cases in humans may have arisen from zoonotic transmission acquired in the past that appears

199 in elderly people (Majoor et al. 2011; Davidson et al. 2017) and/or imported human cases of zoonotic TB

200 from countries where bovine TB is highly endemic.

Clade C and the CC Eur2 marker

The clade C (fig. 2a, clade C - pink box) is composed of 73 *M. bovis* isolates, including three genomes

from Germany without CC markers and 70 genomes from the Americas [Brazil (*n*=3), Canada (*n*=2),

Mexico (*n*=17), USA (*n*=40)], Africa [South Africa (*n*=7)], and Europe [Germany (*n*=1)] with the SNP

marker of the CC European 2. The CC European 2 has been described as dominant in the Iberian

Peninsula and also detected in other countries of Europe and in Brazil (Berg et al. 2011; Zimpel et al.

2017a). Its actual worldwide occurrence, however, is unknown.

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Fig. 2. Clonal Complexes and DAPC characterization. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic trees
based on single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) of 823 *Mycobacterium bovis* genomes, using
Mycobacterium tuberculosis H37Rv as outgroup. **(a)** Phylogenetic tree colored based on clades and
clonal complexes. Green box: clade A; orange box: clade B; pink box: clade C; blue box: clade D.
Clonal Complexes (tips): Eur1 in blue, Eur2 in pink, Af1 in orange, and Af2 in green. Genomes without

identification of the Clonal Complexes markers are shown in black. **(b)** Phylogenetic tree colored
based on Discriminant Analysis of Principal Components (DAPC), revealing the clustering among
Mycobacterium bovis genomes regarding the first two principal components. Phylogenetic tree was
generated using IQ-Tree with 1,000 bootstrap values and annotated using FigTree v1.4.3 and Mind the
Graph. Bootstrap of discussed nodes are all ≥ 95% and can be visualized in supplementary fig. S1 and
supplementary file S1. Bar shows substitutions per nucleotide.
222

Clade D and the CC Eur1 marker

The clade D (fig. 2a, clade D - blue box) is composed of 712 *M. bovis* isolates, comprising a small

group of genomes without CC markers containing isolates from France (*n*=1), Great Britain (*n*=1), and the

USA (*n*=4), and a paraphyletic cluster composed of 706 *M. bovis* isolates originating from the Americas

[USA (*n*=186), Mexico (*n*=175), Uruguay (*n*=4), Canada (*n*=4), Panama (*n*=2)], New Zealand (*n*=88),

Great Britain (*n*=11), South Africa (*n*=4), and Northern Ireland (*n*=232). All these 706 members have the

deletion RDEu1, being classified as CC European 1. Thus, the most widespread CC of *M. bovis* (Smith et

al. 2011) forms the most recent evolutionary clade among *M. bovis* strains.

A Proposal for Global Lineages of *M. bovis*

In order to evaluate the genetic relationship among *M. bovis* strains, we used the DAPC (Discriminant

Analysis of Principal Components) population genetic algorithm to detect genome clustering. It revealed

the existence of nine clusters among *M. bovis* genomes, arranged into four groups (fig. 2b). Interestingly,

genomes with more ancestral branching at different clades (C, D, and subclusters of D) share genomic

similarities with genomes emerging from the basal node of the phylogenetic tree (clade A and B) (fig. 2b

in purple and supplementary fig. S4). This finding indicates the occurrence of successive dispersals

followed by clonal expansion in certain geographic locations of the globe throughout the history of *M.*

bovis. In other words, specific bacterial clones of the relatively ancestral lineages gave origin to these

clades, which then clonally expanded in geographic isolation. This finding agrees with cattle trade and

export patterns from Europe and Africa into the New World, Oceania, and Northern Ireland, which

eventually led to the introduction of bovine TB in these regions.

Based on the observed tree topology, CC distribution, geography, and DAPC analysis, we propose the

existence of at least three major global lineages of *M. bovis*, which we define as Lb1, Lb2 and Lb3 (fig. 3;

table 2). Lineage Lb1, emerging from the relatively most basal node, is composed of 38 *M. bovis* isolates,

encompassing Clades A and B (fig. 3 - green and orange boxes). The observed geographical origin of

extant Lb1 isolates points towards North and East Africa and Europe, although it can also be detected, at

a lower frequency, in the United States (3 Lb1 isolates out of 233 *M. bovis* isolates from the USA). Lb2

lineage (fig. 3 - in pink) is composed of the 70 *M. bovis* isolates from Clade C that carry the Eur2 genetic

marker. With present data it is not possible to determine whether the remaining genomes of clade C

isolated from humans in Germany are also part of Lb2. On the other hand, lineage Lb3 (fig. 3 - in blue) is

composed of 706 genomes of Clade D carrying the Eur1 genetic marker. It is not possible to determine

whether the remaining six genomes without a CC marker (from France, Great Britain, and the USA) are

part of Lb3 either. We believe Eur2 and Eur1 are stable markers for Lb2 and Lb3, respectively.

Table 2. Distribution of *Mycobacterium bovis* lineages in the studied countries.

Country	Lb1	Lb2	Lb3.1	Lb3.2
Eritreia	12	-	-	-
Ethiopia	2	-	-	-
Ghana	3	-	-	-
Tunisia	1	-	-	-
France	1	-	-	-
Germany	2	1	-	-
Spain	7	-	-	-
Switzerland	2	-	-	-
Italy	2	-	-	-
China	2	-	-	-
Russia	1	-	-	-
United States	3	40	46	140
Mexico	-	17	67	108
Canada	-	2	3	1
Brazil	-	3	-	-
South Africa	-	7	1	3
Northern Ireland	-	-	88	-
Great Britain	-	-	10	1
New Zealand	-	-	97	135
Panama	-	-	-	2
Uruguay	-	-	1	3
Total *	38	70	313	393

258 Lb - Lineage of *Mycobacterium bovis*. *From 823 studied genomes, 9 were not included in the referred
259 lineages.
260

The Lb3 isolates are arranged in two major groups, suggesting the possibility of two sublineages,

Lb3.1 and Lb3.2 (table 2). Sublineage Lb3.1 is composed by one cluster with genetic resemblance

(based on DAPC) to the ancestral Lb1 containing genomes of New Zealand (*n*=11), Great Britain (*n*=4),

Canada (*n*=1), followed by another cluster composed of isolates from Northern Ireland (*n*=88), New

Zealand (*n*=86), Mexico (*n*=67), USA (*n*=46), Great Britain (*n*=6), Canada (*n*=2), Uruguay (*n*=1), and

South Africa (*n*=1). Sublineage Lb3.2 (table 2) also contains genomes related to ancestral Lb1 (based on

DAPC), represented by New Zealand (*n*=135), Mexico (*n*=13), USA (*n*=4), Uruguay (*n*=2), South Africa

(*n*=3), Great Britain (*n*=1), Canada (*n*=1), and Panama (*n*=1), and a more derived population,

characterized by genomes from the USA (*n*=136), Mexico (*n*=95), Panama (*n*=1), and Uruguay (*n*=1) (fig.

3).

5.0E-4

Spoligotyping patterns are correlated with *M. bovis* lineages

To further support our findings related to the global *M. bovis* lineages, we also evaluated the

spoligotype of all isolates. There was an association between spoligotype and the *M. bovis* lineages

(table 3). Most of the patterns were specific to the predicted lineages, demonstrating that spoligotyping

can be an additional tool to infer these groups.

Table 3. Spoligotype patterns of *Mycobacterium bovis* strains separated by lineages.

Spoligotype pattern	Lb1	Lb2	Lb3.1	Lb3.2
Unknown	2	-	4	7
SB2467	2	-	-	-
SB0134	3	-	-	-
SB0120	17	-	-	1
SB0948	1	-	-	-
SB1517	2	-	-	-
SB0828	5	-	-	-
SB0288	1	-	-	-
SB0944	4	-	-	-
SB1025	1	-	-	-
SB0121	-	30	-	-
SB0295	-	1	-	-
SB0265	-	28	-	1
SB0339	-	1	-	-
SB1345	-	9	28	-
SB2469	-	1	-	-
SB1031	-	-	11	-
SB0267	-	-	4	-
SB1071	-	-	1	-
SB0140	-	-	186	-
SB0263	-	-	4	-
SB1072	-	-	1	-
SB0673	-	-	60	-
SB0307	-	-	1	-
SB1750	-	-	1	-
SB1751	-	-	1	-
SB1502	-	-	1	-
SB1499	-	-	1	-
SB0986	-	-	2	-
SB1348	-	-	1	-
SB0971	-	-	2	-
SB0272	-	-	1	-
SB0980	-	-	2	-
SB0145	-	-	1	201
SB1054	-	-	-	1
SB0130	-	-	-	79
SB0327	-	-	-	11
SB1216	-	-	-	1
SB1758	-	-	-	1
SB1504	-	-	-	56
SB1446	-	-	-	1
SB2011	-	-	-	3
SB1040	-	-	-	27
SB0162	-	-	-	3
Total	38	70	313	393

287 Lb - lineages. Clade C contains 3 genomes (from Germany) not classified as Lb2: two have unknown
288 spoligotype pattern, and one was classified as SB0871. Clade D contains six genomes that were not
289 grouped into Lb3 (without Eur1 marker): four have spoligotype pattern SB1069, one SB0821, and one
290 SB0134.
291

Evolutionary scenario for the origin of *M. bovis*

Recent analyses point towards the evolutionary rate defined by Bos et al. (Bos et al. 2014) as being the most plausible to explain the trajectory of MTC (O'Neill et al. 2017; Menardo et al. 2019). Our posterior Bayesian estimates indicates that the time of the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) for extant *M. bovis* lineages is 430 - 2,394 years BP (Before Present) (fig. 3). This maximum time obtained (2,394 years BP) (fig. 3) agrees with the archeological finding of *M. bovis* (defined by the loss of RD4) causing infection in four human skeletons from the Iron Age in South Siberia, with carbon-dating placing them within the 1,761 - 2,199 years BP range (Taylor et al. 2007). Interestingly, these ancient *M. bovis* strains do not have the deletion marker of CC Eur1 (i.e. RD17), serving as supportive evidence that Lb3 is indeed a recently-evolved lineage of *M. bovis*. The oldest description of tubercle ('phymata') lesions in cattle (and also in sheep and pigs) was done by the Greek physician Hippocrates [460-370 BCE (before common era)] (Herzog, Basel 2003), also overlapping our maximum estimate for the MRCA.

Considering the upper-end time of 2,394 years BP, the predicted origin of the extant *M. bovis* lineages overlaps with the Ancient Roman period [625-510 BCE to 476 CE (common era)]. Moreover, as most extant Lb1 strains are from Europe and Africa, we speculate that *M. bovis* origin may have had an important contribution from the Roman Empire, possibly due to the Empire's influence on animal husbandry practices in the Mediterranean. The world saw a demographical explosion and a deep connection between different cultures and communities during the Roman Empire (Jongman 2012; Hanson et al. 2017). The economical flourishing was followed by a steep rise in agriculture and livestock capacity to feed the Empire's army and ordinary citizens (Jongman 2012). Archeological evidence show that the domestication of cattle in neolithic times initiated a process of animal body size decrease (Meadow 1988, 1989; Meadow and Zeder 2004). Surprisingly, this trend was reversed during the end of the Iron Age and later intensified during the Roman period, as described by an incremental change in body size of cattle (Trentacoste et al. 2018). These findings imply changes in cattle herding management, including improved feeding practices, probably aimed at increasing production capacity for draft, meat and/or milk (Kron 2002). Reasons for breeding cattle varied considerably throughout the Roman territory and beyond due to culture traditions, diet preferences and climate conditions (Valenzuela-Lamas and Albarella 2017). For instance, it is believed that Romans preferred goat and sheep milk for cheese production, and cattle as a draft animal. Communities from Central and Northern Europe, in contrast, used cattle for dairying, and drank fresh milk in significant amounts (Itan et al. 2009). Nevertheless, by intensifying production systems and animal trade, which was most likely not centered solely in Roman territory, bovine TB may have dispersed significantly.

It has been suggested that the demographic explosion and economic rise of the Roman Empire greatly contributed to the spread of human TB worldwide, with naïve human populations from rural areas being exposed to the disease when moving to larger cities (Herzog, Basel 2003; O'Neill et al. 2017). Archeological findings of human skeletons with lesions compatible with TB also suggest a possible shift in

bone disease presentation during the Roman Empire (Holloway et al. 2011). In the Mediterranean area, before 600-800 BCE, over 90% of the skeleton lesions were spinal (a.k.a. Pott's Disease) (Holloway et al. 2011). From 600 BCE to 1600 CE, the number of lesions localized in other skeletal locations started to increase, reaching over 60% of the lesions, mostly combined with spinal lesions as well (Holloway et al. 2011). Diagnosis of TB cases in palaeopathological remains is difficult given the lack of specificity in bone lesions. Nevertheless, this finding suggests an important change in TB presentation that may have been influenced by an increased disease burden as well as by changes in etiological agents and form of transmission with the appearance of *M. bovis* during the Roman Empire. It is thus possible that the zoonotic transmission of TB from cattle to humans through ingestion of contaminated dairy products, meat and close contact may have contributed to the spread of TB in humans during this period.

We cannot assume for certain that bovine TB exclusively originated during the Roman Empire. The disease may have been present in cattle before this period, although caused by a different ancestor of the extant *M. bovis* lineages. It is still unclear if the ancestor of MTC was a specific human pathogen or a generalist microorganism able to infect multiple host species (Brites et al. 2018). In the latter case, the intensification of the livestock system and increase in animal and human population density may have selected for pathogens either more adapted to animals (*M. bovis*) or more adapted to human beings (*M. tuberculosis*) over evolutionary time. It should be noted that genomes from representative *M. bovis* isolates from Eastern and Western Asia have yet to be sequenced and analyzed. The lack of information from that continent makes it impossible to rule out an Asian origin for *M. bovis* lineages, especially considering the finding of an ancient human infection near present Mongolian border in Russia (Taylor et al. 2007). Alternatively, the well-known commercial trade between the Roman Empire and Asia may also account for this dispersal.

Bovine TB after the 16th century

Our dating estimates and evolutionary predictions reveal a complex relationship between spatial dispersal and expansion of *M. bovis*. Bovine TB worldwide distribution is certainly influenced by import and export of cattle breeds over time. Non-European countries imported specialized breed cattle from single sources and then exported to other countries, while others imported animals from multiple locations.

Estimates show that the MRCAs of extant *M. bovis* isolates occurring in Northern Ireland date between 54 to 325 ya (supplementary file S3). Archeological data from cattle specimens found in the UK (United Kingdom) indicates that these animals had a shared ancestry with wild British aurochs, being unrelated to the modern European taurine (Orlando 2015). Accordingly, in Northern Ireland, cattle have been the mainstay of farming since the neolithic period (about 6,000 ya). Therefore, despite the ancient presence of cattle in these regions, the introduction of the extant *M. bovis* lineage Lb3 seems to be a more recent event, possibly due to the importation of taurine cattle from other areas of Europe.

Most of the USA isolates clustered in Lb3 (186/233), a few in Lb2 (40/233) and only three in Lb1 (3/233). A similar trend is observed in Mexico, with the majority of the isolates clustered into Lb3 (175/192) and fewer representatives in Lb2 (17/192). Our dating estimates are consistent with bovine TB introduction into these countries during the New World colonization period (supplementary file S3), with Lb2 dating from 137 to 906 ya (USA) and from 41 to 241 ya (Mexico), and Lb3 dating from 71 to 411 ya (USA) and 216 to 1151 ya (Mexico). The first cattle to be introduced into the USA came from the Iberian Peninsula in the 16th century. This introduction was followed by cattle importation from Mexico (which also received animals from the Iberian Peninsula) and from England (Martínez et al. 2012). This is consistent with the introduction of Lb2 (CC Eur 2) and Lb3 (CC Eur 1), common lineages in the Iberian Peninsula and the UK, respectively. Isolates from USA and Mexico frequently clustered together, consistent with the close cattle trade relationship between these two countries throughout modern history. Despite the success of the eradication program of bovine TB in the USA, outbreaks in wild animals are frequently reported, such as in white-tailed deer, considered a maintenance host, increasing the risk of disease spread to other animals and humans (Cross et al. 2018). Notwithstanding, prevalence of zoonotic TB in the USA is considered low, ranging from 1.4% to 6% of human TB cases, and having some correlation with Hispanic immigrants due the consumption of contaminated dairy products in their endemic countries (Rodwell et al. 2008; Müller et al. 2013). In Mexico, rates of zoonotic TB are estimated to be around 7%, but in some regions can reach nearly 30% of human TB cases (Müller et al. 2013), suggesting the need for better bovine TB control.

At least two main introductions of Lb3 may have happened in New Zealand. The first is estimated to have occurred between 92 and 488 ya (in Lb3.1), while the second from 60 to 333 ya (in Lb3.2) (supplementary file S3). Breeds of cattle were introduced into New Zealand in the 19th century (Livingstone et al. 2015), which is within our time period range and suggests consequent spreading to wildlife. In contrast, *M. bovis* genomes from South Africa appeared clustered into Lb2 and Lb3 (Smith et al. 2011). Despite the small sample size, they are not present in the most ancient lineage, Lb1. In fact, previous genotyping studies have shown that the most common *M. bovis* CC in South Africa is Eur1, i.e. Lb3. Thus, in agreement with previous hypotheses (Michel et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2011), it is likely that bovine TB was introduced into South Africa following European colonization, and subsequently spilled over to naïve wildlife, with destructive consequences (Michel et al. 2006), as exemplified by *M. bovis* genomes from kudus, lions and buffalos analyzed herein.

Concluding remarks

We propose the existence of at least three global lineages of *M. bovis*, named Lb1, occurring mostly in Africa and Europe, Lb2 (with CC Eur2 marker), present mainly in the Americas and South Africa, and Lb3 (with CC Eur1 marker), dispersed worldwide. Because these lineages tend to cluster based on geographical location rather than host species, it reinforces the idea that bovine TB eradication will only

be attained once the disease is controlled in wildlife and vice-versa. The observed lack of host specificity supports the hypothesis of *M. bovis* being a generalist member of MTC. Nonetheless, *M. bovis* ability to be transmitted among cattle is the main reason why this pathogen has spread geographically over evolutionary time, because of animal trade. The lack of stable CC markers in the most ancient lineage, Lb1, indicates that these pathogens have been the least studied, and that there is an urgent need for additional evaluations of *M. bovis* isolates from Asia and Africa.

Our results delineate independent evolutionary trajectories of bacterial subpopulations (i.e. lineages) of *M. bovis* underlying the current disease distribution. Whether or not these events are associated with further specialization of *M. bovis* to the bovine species and breeds or increased/decreased virulence of this pathogen in domesticated and/or wildlife have yet to be determined. Lineages of *M. tuberculosis* are known for their virulence variations, warranting further similar studies regarding *M. bovis* lineages.

Finally, our dating estimates for the MCRA of extant *M. bovis* lineages agreed with previous studies based on independent archeological data (South Siberian skeletons at ~2,000 BP). The results suggest that dispersion and expansion of the species may have increased during the Ancient Roman period, stimulated by the demographic expansion and rising need for cattle breeding. This may have contributed to an increased number of TB cases in humans, albeit of zoonotic origin. Subsequently, the history of economic trade, especially involving animals, may explain the continuous spread of bovine TB worldwide. By understanding the evolutionary origin and genomic diversification of *M. bovis*, we expect that the results presented herein will help pave the way to avoid future outbreaks of the disease in cattle, wildlife and humans.

Materials and Methods

Genome sequencing of Brazilian *M. bovis* genomes

Two Brazilian *M. bovis* isolates obtained from an European bison (*Bison bonasus*) (Zimpel et al. 2017b), and a llama (*Llama glama*) (provided by the Laboratory of Bacterial Zoonosis of the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of São Paulo, Brazil) were reactivated in Stonebrink medium and a single colony was sub-cultured for DNA extraction using a previously described protocol (Zimpel et al. 2017a). DNA quality was evaluated using Nanodrop 2000c (Thermo Scientific, MA, USA) and Agilent 2100 High Sensitivity Chip DNA Bioanalyzer (Agilent Technologies, CA, USA). All procedures involving live tuberculous mycobacteria were performed in a Biosafety Level 3+ Laboratory (BSL-3+ Prof. Dr. Klaus Eberhard Stewien) located at the Department of Microbiology, Institute of Biomedical Sciences, University of São Paulo, Brazil.

Paired-end genomic libraries were constructed using TruSeq DNA PCR-free sample preparation kit (Illumina, CA, USA), and Illumina HiSeq2500 (Illumina v3 chemistry) was used to sequence the genomic library (100 bp). These procedures were performed at the Central Laboratory of High Performance Technologies in Life Sciences (LaCTAD), State University of Campinas (UNICAMP),

São Paulo, Brazil. Illumina sequencing reads were deposited in the Sequence Read Archive (SRA) from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) (accession numbers: SRR7693912 and SRR7693877).

Selection of *M. bovis* genomes

As of September 2018, there were approximately 2,600 sequence read sets of *M. bovis* genomes deposited in SRA, NCBI. Genomes from *M. bovis* were initially selected if they: (i) were sequenced using Illumina technology [i.e., genomes sequenced using MinION (Oxford Nanopore Technologies, Oxford, United Kingdom) and PacBio (Pacific Biosciences, California, USA) were excluded]; (ii) had a sequencing coverage greater than 30X; (iii) presented known sample location; (iv) were virulent *M. bovis* strains, i.e. not named as *M. bovis* BCG, *M. bovis* AN5, *M. bovis* Ravenel.

From all initially selected genomes, four countries were over-represented (n>100) in the dataset (supplementary table S2) and were subsequently subsampled. Briefly, as to obtain host-species representation, first, all *M. bovis* genomes obtained from these countries that were isolated from non-bovine hosts were selected (except for cervids from the USA). From the remaining read sets from cattle and USA cervids, *M. bovis* genomes were randomly subsampled (supplementary table S2) using the online sample size calculator (http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html), choosing an error of 5%, confidence level of 95%, and response distribution of 50% (as to maximize the sample size). A random number generator (https://www.randomizer.org) was used to randomly select genomes from these read sets.

We also selected 28 additional *M. bovis* genomes that were sequenced or identified after September 2018 (Brites et al. 2018). These isolates were from Germany (*n*=7), Ghana (*n*=5), Malawi (*n*=1), Republic of Congo (*n*=3), Russia (*n*=2), Switzerland (*n*=2), and United Kingdom (*n*=6). The same inclusion criteria described above was followed in the selection of these genomes. In the end, a total of 949 virulent *M. bovis* genomes were initially selected using the above described methods and criteria (supplementary table S3).

Sequencing quality criteria

FASTQ files of all 949 initially selected *M. bovis* genomes were downloaded from SRA, NCBI and trimmed using Trimmomatic (Sliding window: 5:20) (Bolger et al. 2014). To guarantee the selection of genomes with good sequence quality, the following quality criteria were considered after trimming: (i) coverage ≥15x, (ii) median read length of 70 bp, (ii) absence of low quality sequences and anomalous GC content as determined using FastQC, (iv) mapping coverage against reference genome *M. bovis* AF2122/97 (NC_002945.4) greater than 95% as indicated by using Burrows-Wheeler Aligner (Li and Durbin 2010).

Mapping and variant calling of reads

From the quality-approved *M. bovis* read sets, duplicated reads were removed using Picard v 2.18.23 (https://github.com/broadinstitute/picard). Reads were mapped against the reference genome *M. bovis* AF2122/97 (NC_002945.4) using Burrows-Wheeler Aligner (Li and Durbin 2010). SNPs were called using Samtools v 1.9 mpileup (Li 2011), and VarScan v2.4.3 mpileup2cns (Koboldt et al. 2012), using parameters of read depth of 7, minimum map quality and minimum base quality of 20. Generated vcf files were annotated using snpEff (Cingolani et al. 2012) based on the same reference genome, and manipulated using awk programming language to remove INDELs (insertion and deletions) and SNPs located in PE/PPE, transposases, integrases, maturase, phage and repetitive family 13E12 genes. Mixed-strain infection was defined when 15% of total SNPs was composed by heterogeneous SNPs. Read sets originating from mixed-strain cultures were excluded from downstream analyses.

Phylogenetic Reconstruction

A customized script in Python language was used to build a matrix of the polymorphic positions identified in all *M. bovis* genomes. IQ-Tree (Nguyen et al. 2015) was used to perform a maximum likelihood (ML) phylogenetic reconstruction, using 1,000 bootstrap inferences. Additionally, a phylogenetic tree was constructed based on maximum parsimony (MP) with standard bootstrap (1,000 replicates) using MPBoot (Hoang et al. 2018). Both phylogenies were rooted using *M. tuberculosis* H37Rv and topology was annotated using FigTree v1.4.3 (http://tree.bio.ed.ac.uk/software/figtree/) and Mind the Graph (https://mindthegraph.com). In order to compare if the ML and MP trees were significantly similar, the Robinson-Foulds distance (Robinson and Foulds 1981) between them was obtained, then tested for significance of this estimated distance by generating 1,000 random trees in IQTree with the same number of taxa used in the analysis. Finally, the original distance to the distribution of distances among all random trees (for a total of 499,500 comparisons) was compared, and results were plotted in a histogram done in R software.

Spoligotyping and Clonal Complexes

Spoligotypes of all selected genomes were investigated using SpoTyping (Xia et al. 2016). Identified genetic spacers were processed in the *Mycobacterium bovis* Spoligotype Database (www.mbovis.org) to retrieve spoligotype pattern and SB number. Intact regions of RdEu1 (European 1 - Eur1, RD17, 1,207 bp), SNP in the *guaA* gene (European 2 - Eur2), RDAf1 (African 1 - Afr1, 350 bp) and RDAf2 (African 2 - Afr2, 451 bp) (Müller et al. 2009; Berg et al. 2011; Smith et al. 2011; Rodriguez-Campos et al. 2012) were searched against all genomes using the BLASTn tool available in SRA, NCBI. Genomes with "no significant similarity found" as result in BLASTn when using intact regions of CC markers were mapped against the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* H37Rv (NC_000962.3), using CLC Genomics Workbench 11 (QIAGEN, Venlo, Netherlands), to confirm the presence of RDs/SNPs.

Population Structure

To investigate the molecular clustering pattern of *M. bovis* genomes, the R package ADEGENET 2.1.1 (Jombart et al. 2010) was used to perform a Discriminant Analysis of Principal Components (DAPC), resulting in the identification of clusters, using the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) for assessing the best supported model, and therefore the number and nature of clusters. The software ggtree (Yu et al. 2017) was then used to generate an illustrated phylogenetic tree according to DAPC results.

Dating divergences

Molecular dating of divergences was performed using BEAST v2.5.2 (Bouckaert et al. 2014) with a coalescent approach (extended bayesian skyline plot). The age of the root was set using the Bos et al. (Bos et al. 2014) calibration, which is based on ancient human skeletons infected with *M. pinnipedii.* The minimum age was set to 800 BP, after reasonable carbon-dating skeleton data, and the soft upper maximum set as ~7,000 BP (a conservative upper bound based on Bos et al. (Bos et al. 2014) posterior estimates; this soft bound allows older dates in our analyses, if these are likely to occur in the posterior distribution of dates). Tip-dating was implemented with collection dates from known sampling times, plus a conservative Uniform [0, 100] BP for the unknown dates.

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Author contributions

CKZ performed and/or participated in all experiments, analyzed and interpreted the data, and wrote the manuscript; JSLP performed dating divergence experiments, analyzed and interpreted the resulting data; ACPG, TTPS and NCSC aided in bioinformatics analyses; CYI and AFSF contributed with biological data; JSFN, JCS, MBH helped design and analyze the data; AMSG designed and coordinated

544 the study, and wrote the manuscript. All co-authors contributed to data discussion and structuring of the
545 manuscript.
546
547 **Competing interests**
548 The authors declare no competing financial interests.
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