A 19-isolate reference-quality global pangenome for the fungal wheat pathogen *Zymoseptoria tritici*

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Abstract

Background: The gene content of a species largely governs its ecological interactions and adaptive potential. A species is therefore defined by both core genes shared between all individuals and accessory genes segregating presence-absence variation. There is growing evidence that eukaryotes, similar to bacteria, show intra-specific variability in gene content. However, it remains largely unknown how functionally relevant such a pangenome structure is for eukaryotes and what mechanisms underlie the emergence of highly polymorphic genome structures.

Results: Here, we establish a reference-quality pangenome of a fungal pathogen of wheat based on 19 complete genomes from isolates sampled across six continents. *Zymoseptoria tritici* causes substantial worldwide losses to wheat production due to rapidly evolved tolerance to fungicides and evasion of host resistance. We performed transcriptome-assisted annotations of each genome to construct a global pangenome. Major chromosomal rearrangements are segregating within the species and underlie extensive gene presence-absence variation. Conserved orthogroups account for only ~60% of the species pangenome. Investigating gene functions, we find that the accessory genome is enriched for pathogenesis-related functions and encodes genes involved in metabolite production, host tissue degradation and manipulation of the immune system. *De novo* transposon annotation of the 19 complete genomes shows that the highly diverse chromosomal structure is tightly associated with transposable elements content. Furthermore, transposable element expansions likely underlie recent genome expansions within the species.

Conclusions: Taken together, our work establishes a highly complex eukaryotic pangenome providing an unprecedented toolbox to study how pangenome structure impacts crop-pathogen interactions.

Background

Microbial species harbor substantial functional diversity at the level of gene presence-absence variation (1). Genes not fixed within a species (*i.e.* accessory genes) can account for a large fraction of the full gene repertoire (*i.e.* the pangenome). In bacteria, the proportion of core genes in the pangenome can range from 5-98% and challenge taxonomic classifications (2,3). The wide spectrum of pangenome sizes across species can be associated with the species distribution and lifestyle (4). Species showing a wide geographical distribution and large population sizes characterized by frequent genetic exchange tend to have expansive, open pangenomes (5). In microbial pathogens, accessory genes play a major role in virulence and environmental adaptation (6–8). The notion of a pangenome led to the discovery that major elements of intra-specific variation are often ignored in studies relying on a single reference genome. Large pangenomes also can challenge association studies aiming to identify the genetic basis of phenotypic traits because mapping is often performed against a single reference genome, making potentially relevant genetic variation inaccessible (9,10). Despite their importance for unravelling the genetic basis of adaptive evolution, only a very limited number of eukaryotic species have well established pangenomes.

Copy number variation including gene deletion generates intraspecific gene content variation in nearly all species (11). This variation can create extreme variance in fitness and promote adaptive evolution (12–15). In plant pathogens, the ability to infect a host often relies on the secretion of effector proteins that interfere with the host cell machinery (16–18). Host plants evolved cognate resistance proteins that are able to recognize effector proteins and trigger immunity (19). Gains and losses of effector genes can therefore have a major impact on the outcome of host-pathogen interactions and challenge food security. Recent studies on fungal pathogens highlighted that genes showing presence-absence variation are enriched for predicted effectors (14,20,21). Effectors and transposable elements (TEs) are often tightly associated with fast-evolving compartments of the genome (22,23), also known as the "two-speed" genome architecture (24). However, how TEs impact

the birth and death of effectors in fast-evolving compartments remains largely unclear (6,25). The

construction of pathogen pangenomes enabled crucial insights into functional diversity and the

evolutionary trajectories of host adaptation. Recent pangenome analyses of four fungal species

including opportunistic pathogens revealed that between ~9-19% of the pangenome is accessory.

Accessory gene localization was preferentially in subtelomeric regions, suggesting both a mechanistic

link to repeat-rich regions and relaxation of selective constraints (26). The wheat pathogen

Zymoseptoria tritici was found to have one of the largest eukaryotic pangenomes with an estimate of

at least 42% of all genes being accessory (27). However, eukaryotic pangenomes remain shallow and

are often based on not fully resolved chromosomal sequences.

Fungal plant pathogens such as *Z. tritici* show extreme cases of genome plasticity. The reference

genome of *Z. tritici* has 21 chromosomes, of which eight are accessory and segregate presence-

absence variation in populations (28). The pathogen rapidly evolved virulence on resistant wheat

cultivars and has overcome all current fungicides (29–31). Host adaptation was driven among other

factors by the rapid deletion of an effector gene and structural rearrangements (32–34). Pathogen

populations are highly diverse with high rates of recombination (35–37). Meiosis can trigger large

chromosomal rearrangements and lead to aneuploid chromosomes in the species (38,39). A

pangenome constructed for five *Z. tritici* isolates revealed that chromosome length variation

segregating within populations was mainly due to the presence-absence variation of large TE clusters

(27,40). Furthermore, accessory genes tended to form clusters dispersed along chromosomes.

Accessory genes also tended to be in closer proximity to TEs than core genes and were therefore more

likely to be affected by epigenetic silencing (27). However, the constructed pangenome was very

likely incomplete given the fact that four of the genomes originated from isolates collected in the

same year from two nearby fields. Furthermore, accessory genes were enriched for pathogenesis-

related functions but the pangenome size did not reach saturation. Given the global impact of the

pathogen and the importance of accessory genes for adaptive evolution, a comprehensive pangenome

capturing worldwide genetic diversity is essential.

In this study, we construct the pangenome of *Z. tritici* by including 19 isolates sampled from six

different continents and covering the global distribution of the pathogen. We test to what extent the

species segregates chromosomal rearrangements and how this impacts gene presence-absence

variation at loci relevant for pathogenicity. We also analyze whether TE content is polymorphic

within the species and may contribute to genome size evolution.

Results

Major chromosomal rearrangements segregating within the species

We constructed a global pangenome of *Z. tritici* based on 19 isolates sampled from six continents and

13 different countries (Figure 1A-B). The isolates included the previously described reference isolate

IPO323 sampled in the Netherlands and four isolates that were isolated from two nearby fields in

Switzerland (27,28,40). The geographic regions of origin of the 19 isolates recapitulate a significant

environmental gradient in mean annual temperature and humidity and span the distribution range of

the species. The sampling period ranges from 1984 (IPO323) to 2010 (CRI10). Fungicide applications

against *Z. tritici* became widespread in the 90s and early 2000s, hence the sampling covers both pre-

and post-fungicide treatment regimes. We sequenced long-read PacBio SMRTbell libraries to a depth

of 40-110X and ~20 kb read coverage in order to generate chromosome-level assemblies. Assembly

sizes ranged from 37.13 Mb (IR01_48b) to 41.76 Mb (Aus01) (Figure 1C).

We recovered all eight known accessory chromosomes of the species but no additional chromosome.

The accessory chromosome 18 is most often missing. Together, the 8 accessory chromosomes display

an average size variation of ~37% across all isolates and a maximum of 60% for chromosome 14

(Figure 2A). For core chromosomes, the average size variation accounts for 16% of chromosome

length going up to 23% for chromosome 7. We identified a major deletion spanning 406 kb and

encompassing 107 genes on the right arm of core chromosome 7 of the Yemeni isolate (YEQ92;

Figure 2B lower panel). The same isolate had chromosome 15 fused to the right arm of chromosome

16. The fusion event is supported by aligned PacBio reads spanning the region between the two

chromosomal segments (Additional file 1: Figure S1). The resulting chromosome is 1.20 Mb long and

49.5 kb shorter than the sum of the homologous chromosomes 15 and 16 of the IPO323 reference

genome. Approximately 90% of the genes on the IPO323 chromosome 15 and 16 belong to accessory

orthogroups, as they lack an ortholog in at least one of the other isolates. We find that the

chromosomal fusion deleted about 150 kb affecting 1 and 12 genes on chromosomes 15 and 16,

respectively (Figure 2B upper panel). We further assessed genome completeness using BUSCO

analyses. All genomes exceed the completeness of the fully finished IPO323 reference genome

(97.9%) with the exception of isolate 3D7 (96.8%; Figure 1C).

Substantial gene content variation across the pangenome

We generated RNAseq data to identify high-confidence gene models in all 14 newly assembled

genomes based on a splice-site informed gene prediction pipeline. The total gene count varied

between 11'657 and 12'787 gene models (Figure 1C). We assigned all genes to orthogroups using

protein homology and constructed a pangenome of all 19 complete genomes. The pangenome consists

of a total of 229'699 genes assigned to 15'474 orthogroups. The number of genes assigned per

orthogroup varies among isolates (Figure 2B). Approximately 99.8% of all orthogroups (15'451) are

single gene orthogroups and ~60% of all orthogroups are shared among all 19 isolates (9'193 core

orthogroups). Around 96% of the core orthogroups (8'829 out of 9'193) have conserved gene copy

numbers among isolates. Furthermore, we find that 30% of all orthogroups are shared between some

but not all genomes (4'690 accessory orthogroups) and 10% of the orthogroups are composed of

genes found in a single genome only (1'592 singletons; Figure 3A-B; Additional file 2: Table S1).

To infect wheat, *Z. tritici* relies on specific gene functions (41,42). Effectors play a major role in

establishing infection and exploiting host resources. Hence, we analysed how gene functions were

structured across the pangenome components. Core orthogroups showing variation in gene-copy

number among isolates include five encoding predicted effectors. Both accessory proteins and overall

effector proteins are less conserved than core proteins at the amino acid level (Additional file 1:

Figure S2). A total of 3.5% (691) of all orthogroups encode at least one predicted effector. Among

orthogroups encoding at least one predicted effector, 31% were conserved among all isolates (219),

63% were accessory (436) and 5% were found in only one isolate (36 singletons). Notably, 99% of

the predicted effector genes are located on core chromosomes. In addition to effectors, enzymes

enabling access to nutrients are important pathogenicity components. We identified a total of 4'742

annotated carbohydrate-degrading enzymes (CAZymes) clustered into 263 orthogroups. Notably,

92% of the orthogroups encoding CAZymes were conserved among all isolates (Figure 3A).

CAZymes grouped into 123 subfamilies. Glycoside hydrolases (GH) are the largest family and

account for 57% of all annotated CAZymes (151 orthogroups for 2'717 genes). Glycosyl transferases

(GT) are the second most abundant family with 1'188 genes and 66 orthogroups (25% of all

CAZymes) (Figure 3C). We also identified 33 orthogroups encoding for auxiliary activities (AA), 9

for carbohydrate esterase activity (CE), 6 for carbohydrate-binding modules (CBM) and 3 for

polysaccharide lyase activity (PL). The PL family includes 29% accessory genes. Across CAZyme

families, 0-10% of the genes are accessory (Figure 3C). We found a singleton GH43 subfamily gene

in the genome of the Australian isolate (Aus01).

The production of secondary metabolites contributes significantly to virulence and competitive

abilities of fungal pathogens. We identified between 29 and 33 secondary metabolite gene clusters per

genome depending on the isolate. A total of 70% of all genes predicted as components of a

biosynthetic gene cluster are conserved between all isolates and 30% are accessory (Figure 3D,

Additional file 1: Figure S3). Of the 147 orthogroups annotated as encoding biosynthetic or

biosynthetic-additional proteins in the pangenome, 87, 92, 111 and 112 have a homolog with >50%

identity in the four closely related sister species *Z. passerinii*, *Z. ardabiliae*, *Z. pseudotritici* and *Z.*

brevis, respectively (Additional file 1: Figure S4). We identified 39 syntenic gene clusters in the

pangenome classified into 12 type 1-polyketide synthase (PKS), 11 non-ribosomal peptide synthetase

(NRPS), four terpene, one type 3-PKS, one siderophore, one indole and eight unclassified clusters.

Sixteen (40%) of the identified syntenic clusters show presence-absence variation. In the CH95

isolate, a gene cluster on chromosome 7 was annotated as unclassified but annotated as a NRPS in 17

other isolates and absent from the IPO323 reference genome. The sole indole and type 1-PKS clusters

located on chromosomes 5 and 10, respectively, were only found in isolate TN09. Two type 1-PKS

and one NRPS cluster were missing in the isolates YEQ95, Aus01 and IPO323, respectively. Among

the 39 identified syntenic gene clusters, 23 included a predicted effector and nine included a gene

annotated as a cell-wall degrading enzyme.

The emergence of fungicide tolerance in *Z. tritici* is a major threat to wheat production. Succinate

dehydrogenase (SDH) inhibitors are commonly used as control agents (31,43). We identified five

SDH orthologs, of which three were conserved among all genomes (SDHB, SDHC and SDHD

subunits). We find two distinct SDHC paralogs SDHC2 and SDHC3 in eleven and two isolates,

respectively. The SDHC3 paralog conferring standing resistance to SDH inhibitors is located adjacent

to a large cluster of TEs, suggesting that chromosomal rearrangements were underlying the paralog

emergence (Figure 3E). Genes encoding major facilitator superfamily (MFS) transporters, which can

confer multidrug resistance in *Z. tritici* (44), grouped into 336 orthogroups for a total of 5'787 genes

(Additional file 2: Table S2). We find that 39 (11%) of these orthogroups are part of a predicted

secondary metabolite gene cluster and one is an annotated CAZyme from the GH78 family. Overall,

the results reveal that gene families essential for pathogenicity and fungicide resistance show

unexpectedly high levels of presence-absence variation in the *Z. tritici* pangenome.

Strong expression variation across major gene functions

Differential gene expression is a major driver of intraspecific phenotypic differences. We performed

mRNA-sequencing of all 19 isolates grown on minimal media. Minimal media induces filamentous

growth of *Z. tritici*, mimicking the morphology and nutrient starvation that occurs early during plant

infection. We investigated isolate-specific gene expression by self-mapping RNAseq reads to each

isolate's genome assembly. Overall, 91.3% of the genes show expression on minimal media and 68%

have expression of more than 10 counts per million (CPM) (Figure 4A). Core genes have higher

expression than accessory genes (Additional file 1: Figure S5). Among the genes showing no

expression on minimal media, 501 are predicted effector genes (8% of predicted effectors), 93 are

predicted CAZymes (2% of CAZymes) and 838 are members of a predicted gene cluster (10% of all

gene cluster genes). CAZymes are overall highly expressed on minimal media (~77% with CPM >10)

when compared to effectors (~45% with CPM >10) and gene cluster genes (~60% with CPM >10)

(Figure 4A). About 53% of core single copy orthogroups with non-zero expression have a coefficient

of variation >50% (Figure 4B). Similarly, ~68% of CAZymes and ~60% of genes that are part of a

secondary metabolite cluster have expression coefficient of variation > 50%. In contrast, about 90%

of orthogroups encoding predicted effectors have a coefficient of variation >50%, together with ~81%

of accessory orthogroups.

To identify broad patterns in the pangenome expression landscape, we performed a clustering analysis

of all core single gene orthogroups. We find that expression clustering does not reflect the

geographical origin or genetic distance with the exception of the four Swiss isolates (1A5, 1E4, 3D1

and 3D7; Additional file 1: Figure S6). We also analysed the impact of copy-number variation on

average expression and find that single-copy orthologs are on average more highly expressed. In

addition, we show that gene expression rapidly decreases if an orthogroup includes 2-8 paralogs

(Figure 4C).

A highly variable transposable element content within the species

TEs are drivers of pathogen evolution by generating adaptive genetic variation. To identify genes with

a potential role in the mobilisation of TEs, we analysed large homology groups. Among the

orthogroups with 10 or more paralogs, ~88% of the genes encode proteins without homology in

databases, ~7% of the genes encode nucleic acid binding functions (GO:0003676), ~2% of the genes

encode a retrotransposon nucleocapsid (GO:0000943) and ~1.5% of the genes encode a DNA

integration domain (GO:0015074). Orthogroups with 10 or more paralogs are all accessory. For

isolates sharing the same large orthogroups, we identified variability in the gene copy number within

those orthogroups. Indeed, the isolates Aus01 and OregS90 have 26 and 16 orthogroups, respectively,

with more than 10 assigned genes. The isolates I93 and Arg00 count between one and six orthogroups

and nine other isolates have no orthogroups larger than ten genes (Figure 4D). Altogether, these

results suggest that large orthogroups (>10 genes) essentially regroup genes that are encoded by TEs.

Our data also indicates regional TE-driven genome expansions given the enlarged genome sizes in

Australian and North American isolates.

To elucidate the role of transposition on generating genomic variation, we screened the 19 genomes

for TE content. For this, we jointly analysed all complete genomes to exhaustively identify repetitive

DNA sequences. We identified a total of 304 high-quality TE family consensus sequences grouped

into 22 TE superfamilies. The GC-content of the consensus sequences is highly variable, ranging from

23-77% (Additional file 1: Figure S7). On average, TE superfamilies have a GC-content lower than

50%, except for unclassified SINE families (RSX; GC% ~50.6). The genomic TE content ranges from

16.48% (IR01_26b) to 23.96% (Aus01) and is positively correlated with genome size (cor = 0.78, $p <$

0.001; Figure 5A). Genome size correlates with genome-wide TE proportions on both core and

accessory chromosomes but is negatively correlated with the proportion of coding sequences

(Additional file 1: Figure S8, S9). The average length of individual TEs ranges from 102 to 51'298 bp

with the Helitron superfamily having the higher average length (Additional file 1: Figure S10-S11).

The largest element is an unclassified LTR (RLX_LARD_Thrym) on chromosome 7, the size of

which ranges from 6'282 bp in CNR93 to 59'390 bp in ISY92. This particular LTR is present at the

locus only in 18 isolates including ISY92, which has a fragmented secondary copy on chromosome 3.

The RLX_LARD_Thrym insertion on chromosome 7 overlaps with the ribosomal DNA locus and

showed far above average mapped PacBio read coverage (~250X).

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The genome-wide content of TEs shows substantial variation among the 19 isolates, however the

relative abundance of different TE superfamilies is relatively conserved with LTR *Gypsy*, unclassified

TIR and LTR *Copia* elements being the most frequent (Figure 5B). Accessory chromosomes contain

consistently higher proportions of TEs compared to core chromosomes (26-41% versus 17-24%;

Figure 5C). Aus01 and OregS90 isolates showed the highest TE content. Interestingly, the Aus01

genome shows LINE *I*, LTR *Gypsy* and LTR *Copia* family-specific expansion compared to other

genomes. In contrast, the genome of OregS90 shows evidence for expansions of Helitron, LTR *Gypsy*

and LTR *Copia* families. On average, 10% of all TEs overlap with genes. Overall, singleton and

accessory genes tend to be closer to TEs and contain more often TE insertions than core genes

(Additional file 1: Figure S12-S13). The isolates Aus01 and OregS90 have 12.8% and 12.4% of all

TEs overlapping with genes, respectively. In addition, Aus01 and OregS90 isolates have 7.4% and

5.4% of all genes that overlap with TEs, respectively (Additional file 1: Figure S14). The composition

of TEs inserted into genes reflects the overall TE composition in the genome, with more abundant

TEs being more often inserted into genes (Additional file 1: Figure S15). TEs can carry their own

regulatory sequences and are often epigenetically silenced by the host. We found that orthogroups

comprising a gene within 100 bp distance of a TE show stronger expression variation (~62% of

orthogroups with a coefficient of variation >50%) compared to other orthogroups (~54% of

orthogroups with a coefficient of variation >50%) (Additional file 1: Figure S16-S17). We also found

that different TE superfamilies have contrasting effects on gene expression, with longer TEs having

more drastic effects (Figure 5D). On average, genes with an inserted TE have lower expression levels

(log10 CPM ~1.7-fold) and a higher coefficient of variation (log10 CPM ~2-fold) compared to genes

without an inserted TE (Additional file 1: Figure S18).

TE transcription correlates with relative frequency across isolates

Class I TEs replicate through an RNA intermediate and class II through a DNA intermediate.

Nevertheless, class II TEs can also transcribe into RNA. To gain insights into the mechanisms of

proliferation, we analysed the relative abundance of TE-derived transcripts across all genomes. The

highly repetitive nature of TEs typically prevents expression quantification at the individual copy

level. Hence, we focused on normalized TE expression across all copies. Overall, more than 70% of

the TE families have non-zero transcription levels. This is consistent with recent findings of pervasive

transcription of TEs in the *Z. tritici* genome under nutrient stress and during infection (68). We find

that the largest TE family, an unclassified LTR identified as RLX_LARD_Thrym, was the most

transcribed with an average $\log_{10}$ CPM ~ 4.2 (Figure 6A). An unclassified DTX-MITE is the second

most transcribed TE with an average $\log_{10}$ CPM ~ 3.6 followed by an unclassified TE

(XXX_*Hermione* with an average $\log_{10}$ CPM ~ 3.4). At the superfamily level, LINEs have the highest

expression overall followed by the aggregation of unclassified TEs (Figure 6B). Retroelements are

more transcribed than DNA transposons (average $\log_{10}$ CPM ~2 and 1.2, respectively).

To understand TE expression dynamics across the pangenome, we investigated associations between

TE transcription, length and relative frequency (Figure 6C). We found TE transcription to be

correlated with TE frequency in the genomes (Spearman's $r = 0.49$, $p < $ 5e-307; Figure 6C) and we

found an even stronger correlation at the TE superfamily level (Spearman's $r = 0.59$, $p < $ 5e-40).

However, TE transcription is not correlated with TE length at the superfamily level (Spearman's r

$=0.06$, $p > $ 2e-1; Figure 6C). Interestingly, the average TE transcription levels are positively

correlated with TE count in the genome (Figure 6D). A notable exception is unclassified SINE

retroelements. The correlation of TE transcription levels and TE frequency in the genome strongly

suggests that transcriptional activity contributed to recent TE expansions in the genome.

Discussion

We established a global pangenome of a major fungal wheat pathogen based on the assembly and

analysis of 19 high-quality genomes. *Z. tritici* segregates major chromosomal rearrangements

affecting both the more conserved core chromosomes as well as the highly polymorphic accessory

chromosomes. The gene content is highly variable among genomes with only 60% of all genes being

conserved in the species. Accessory genes encode functions for a wide variety of interactions with

both biotic and abiotic environments. An exhaustive map of TEs across all genomes pinpoints

transposon-associated genome expansions across geographic regions.

We showed that the *Z. tritici* pangenome is expansive with ~40% accessory orthogroups. Compared

to a previous construction of the *Z. tritici* pangenome based on genomes from a much narrower

geographic breadth (27), we used more relaxed criteria to assign genes into orthogroups. Based on the

tendency to assign more divergent gene variants into the same orthogroup, we recovered a total of 911

orthogroups with at least one paralog compared to only 76 identified previously. The number of

paralogs remains low compared to species with larger genomes that retained more paralogs of gene

duplication events (28). A likely constraint on gene duplication is the genomic defence mechanism

that introduces repeat-induced point (RIP) mutations (45). Although these defences evolved to

suppress transpositional activity of TEs, they can also affect genome evolution by targeting gene

duplicates (45,46). Recent sequencing efforts oriented around important crop species reported

impressively large accessory genome proportions (47–49). However, nearly all eukaryotic

pangenomes are partially based on short-read assemblies that challenge the resolution of segregating

gene variants within a species. With the conservative estimate of ~24% non-reference orthogroups,

the *Z. tritici* accessory genome is the largest reported for a fungal species to date (~40% of the

pangenome). This falls outside the upper range of comparative analyses of human fungal pathogens

and *S. cerevisiae,* where estimates of the accessory genome ranged from 10-20% (26). However,

bacterial accessory genomes can range from 0 to 95% of the total pangenome (3). The effective

population size of a species, its lifestyle, and niche heterogeneity are main factors influencing

bacterial pangenome sizes (4). Similar to bacteria, the effective population size is likely to be the

major factor maintaining a large accessory genome in *Z. tritici*. Previous studies identified *Z. tritici* as

a highly polymorphic species with a rapid decay in linkage disequilibrium, high SNP densities and

high recombination rates (32,35). As a consequence, the pathogen likely retains significant functional

variation within populations as long as the variation is nearly neutral.

Bacterial and fungal genomes show clear functional compartmentalization between core and

accessory genes (4,26). In fungi, core orthogroups are enriched for housekeeping functions in contrast

to an enrichment for antimicrobial resistance and pathogenicity factors among accessory genes (27).

Here we show that genes encoding carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZymes) are highly conserved

within the species. CAZymes are involved in the degradation of the host cell wall and other storage

compounds (50,51). Strong conservation of the content in CAZymes may reflect a fundamental

adaptation to wheat as a host plant. This contrasts with generalist pathogens, which often evolved

larger CAZyme repertoires (52). In contrast to CAZymes, secondary metabolite gene clusters show

substantial presence-absence variation within the species. Fungi produce highly diverse secondary

metabolites that play a role during various life cycle stages, but often have poorly understood

functions (53). Plant pathogens were also shown to depend on secondary metabolite production for

full virulence (54). Hence, variation in secondary metabolite production may underlie variation in

virulence. Species from the genus *Aspergillus* produce a large diversity of secondary metabolites for

which the gene clusters often segregate presence-absence (55,56). The *Z. tritici* pangenome was

constructed from isolates coming from six different continents and a wide array of agricultural

environments. Hence, differences in secondary metabolite production capacity may reflect local

adaptation and trade-offs that balance the cost of metabolite production. Virulence of *Z. tritici* is

thought to be largely governed by gene-for-gene interactions (57). In such interactions effector

proteins either promote disease or are recognized by the host and trigger resistance (19). A gene

encoding a recognized effector should therefore be rapidly eliminated from the species gene pool. *Z.*

tritici populations responded rapidly to selection on effector gene loci by either mutating, deleting or

silencing genes (21,33,34). Our global pangenome analysis significantly expands our understanding

of effector gene diversification. We identified 652 orthogroups encoding predicted effector functions

of which 63% are accessory orthogroups. Accessory effector genes may be involved in arms races

with strong selection driving the gain or loss of individual effector genes in populations. As a contrast,

we identified 45 conserved and highly expressed effectors genes potentially encoding indispensable

pathogenicity functions.

Ultimate mechanisms promoting intra-specific diversity in genome structure may include large

population sizes and niche complexity, however the proximate mechanisms generating such

diversification are poorly understood. TEs can be key drivers generating structural variation (58,59)

and *Z. tritici* readily undergoes TE-mediated chromosomal rearrangements during meiosis (38,39).

Here we show that *Z. tritici* genomes contain 16-24% TEs, with the overall proportion of TEs

accounting for ~70% of the intraspecific genome size variation. Hence, TEs are key drivers of

genome evolution in this species. Among the most drastic chromosomal rearrangements, we detected

a significantly shorter chromosome 7 homolog. The longer homolog was hypothesized to have

originated from a fusion with an accessory chromosome based on evidence from large scale

epigenetic remodelling (60). Our analysis likely identified the ancestral variant prior to the suspected

chromosomal fusion event. Hence, the species retained two major chromosomal variants of a core

chromosome.

TEs are often implicated in gene copy number variation through duplication or pseudogenisation

events suggesting that TEs directly contribute to pangenome diversification. We show that specific

Gypsy and *Helitron* elements were integrated into genes generating highly paralogous orthogroups.

These orthogroups may underlie recent expansions of specific TEs in the genomes of Australian and

Oregon isolates. The *Helitron* element is among the most transcribed TEs in the Oregon isolate,

suggesting a high potential for new transpositions. In contrast, the *Gypsy* element is only weakly

transcribed in the Australian isolate, suggesting that this TE has become deactivated by genomic

defences. In addition to transpositional activity causing loss-of-function mutations in genes, TEs can

also contribute to genome expansions (61). We found a strong correlation of TE content and genome

size across the pangenome suggesting that TEs are the primary drivers of genome expansions.

Because he pathogen was only recently introduced to regions outside of Europe and Asia, genome

size variation among geographic regions may have originated from population bottlenecks such as

founder events. As an example, populations in Australia underwent a significant founder event during

the recent colonization of the continent from Europe (62). Hence, our observation of an expanded

Australian genome may be causally linked to this bottleneck. Genome expansions may also be

triggered by TE mobilisation. Stressors such as host defences during infection cause substantial TE

de-repression across the *Z. tritici* genome (68). Taken together, TE dynamics and large effective

population sizes likely constitute the proximate and ultimate drivers of pangenome size evolution.

Understanding the birth and death cycles of gene functions in such evolving pangenomes will help

address major questions related to crop-pathogen co-evolution.

Methods

High molecular-weight DNA extraction and single molecule real-time (SMRT) sequencing

Origin and year of sampling of all the isolates are described in Supplementary TableS3. High-molecular-weight DNA was extracted from lyophilized spores following a modified version of a cetyltrimethylammonium bromide (CTAB) protocol developed for plant tissue described in (40). Briefly, ~100 mg of lyophilized spores were crushed with a mortar and transferred to a phenol-chloroform-isoamyl alcohol solution. The supernatant was centrifuged and the pellet resuspended twice in fresh phenol-chloroform-isoamyl alcohol. The resulting pellet was then washed three times and resuspended in 100 µl of sterile water. For each isolate, PacBio SMRTbell libraries were prepared using between 15 µg and 30 µg of high molecular-weight DNA. Sequencing was performed on a PacBio Sequel instrument at the Functional Genomics Center, Zürich, Switzerland.

Complete genome assemblies

We largely followed the pipeline described in (64). In summary, raw PacBio sequencing reads were assembled using *Canu* v1.7.1 (65). All assemblies were performed with an estimated genome size of 39.678 Mb (--genomeSize). Two corrected error rates (--correctedErrorRate 0.045 and 0.039) and minimal read length (--minReadLength 500 and 5000) parameters were tested and the most contiguous chromosome-level assemblies were retained for further analysis based on reference alignment. The scaffolding was quality-controlled by inspecting genome-wide dot plots against previously assembled and validated genomes for reference. For each isolate, raw reads were aligned to the newly assembled genome using *pbalign* v0.3.1 from Pacific Biosciences suite (https://github.com/PacificBiosciences/pbalign) to inspect potential mis-assemblies. The assemblies were polished twice using PacBio reads mapped back to the new assembly using the software Arrow v2.2.2 from the Pacific Biosciences suite with default settings (https://github.com/PacificBiosciences/GenomicConsensus) and chromosome-level assemblies were performed using Ragout v2.1.1 and the IPO323 isolate as a reference (66).

RNA extraction, library preparation, sequencing and quantification

For isolates 1A5, 1E4, 3D1 and 3D7, RNA sequencing experiments on minimal media were performed by (67,68). Raw reads were retrieved from the NCBI Short Read Archive accession number SRP077418. Similarly, the 15 additional fungal isolates (Additional file 2: Table S3) were grown in YSB media (10g sucrose + 10g yeast extract per liter) and then 10e5 cells were inoculated on liquid minimal media without a carbon source (69) for 7-10 days prior to extraction to reach identical growth stages as for the previous RNA sequencing experiments. RNA was extracted using a NucleoSpin® RNA Plant kit following the manufacturer's instructions. Library preparation was carried out according to the Illumina TruSeq Stranded mRNA Library Prep protocol with unique indexes for each sample. Single-end 100-bp sequencing was performed on a HiSeq 4000 at the iGE3 platform in Geneva, Switzerland. RNA-seq reads were first filtered using Trimmomatic v0.38 (70) using the following parameters: ILLUMINACLIP:TruSeq3-SE.fa: 2:30:10 LEADING:10 TRAILING:10 SLIDINGWINDOW:5:10 MINLEN: 50, and then aligned to the corresponding genome assembly using STAR v2.6.0a (71) allowing for multiple read mapping (parameters set as --outFilterMultimapNmax 100 --winAnchorMultimapNmax 200 --outFilterMismatchNmax 3). We used HTSeq-count v0.11.2 (72) with -s reverse and –m union parameters to recover counts per feature (joint counting of reads in genes and TEs). We calculated normalized feature counts expressed as counts per million, which accounts for library size, using the EdgeR package v3.24.3 (73). We restricted our analyses to features with a count per million >1.

Gene prediction and genome annotation

We used the gene prediction pipeline BRAKER v2.1 to predict genes in the 14 newly assembled genomes (74–81). BRAKER combines coding sequence and intron hints based on the mapping of conserved protein sequences and introns identified in RNA-seq data, respectively. The above described RNA-seq datasets were joined with predicted protein sequences from the reference isolate IPO323 (28) and used to predict gene features and guide splice site mapping. RNA alignment files were generated with HISAT2 v2.1.0 using the --rna-strandness R option (82). The resulting bam files

were provided to BRAKER (--bam option) together with mapped IPO323 reference proteins (--

prot_seq option) to generate gene predictions for each assembled genome using the --alternatives-

from-evidence=false --prg=gth --etpmode --fungus parameters. Orthologous genes were identified

using protein sequences from all 19 isolates and Orthofinder v2.1.2 with default parameters (83,84).

TE consensus identification, classification and annotation

To obtain consensus sequences for TE families, individual runs of RepeatModeler were performed on

the 19 complete genomes in addition to the genome of *Z. pseudotritici* (85). The classification was

based on the GIRI Repbase using RepeatMasker (86,87). In order to finalize the classification of TE

consensus sequences, we used WICKERsoft (88). The 19 complete genomes were screened for copies

of consensus sequences with blastn filtering for sequence identity of > 80% on >80% of the length of

the sequence (89). Flanks of 300 bp were added and new multiple sequence alignments were

performed using ClustalW (90). Boundaries were visually inspected and trimmed if necessary.

Consensus sequences were classified according to the presence and type of terminal repeats and

homology of encoded proteins using hints from blastx on NCBI. Consensus sequences were renamed

according to a three-letter classification system (91).

A second round of annotation was performed based on predicted protein sequences of TE

superfamilies from other fungal species. Here again, the 19 complete genomes were screened for a

protein sequence of each superfamily using tblastn. Blast hits were filtered for a minimal alignment

size of 80 bp and sequence similarity >35%. Flanks of 3'000 bp or more both up and downstream of

the sequence were then added. Hits were pairwise compared with dotplots using dotter and grouped

into families based on visual inspection (92). Finally, multiple sequence alignments were performed

with ClustalW to construct consensus sequences and the consensus sequences were renamed

according to the three-letter system (91).

A third round of annotation of the 19 complete genomes was done to identify four groups of short

non-autonomous TEs. LTR-Finder was used to screen for LARDs (LArge Retrotransposon Derivates)

and TRIMs (Terminal Repeat retrotransposons In Miniature) with the filters -d 2001 -D 6000 -l 30 -L

5000 and -d 30 -D 2000 -l 30 -L 500 respectively. MITE-Tracker was used to screen for MITEs

(Miniature Inverted-repeat Transposable Elements) and SINE-Finder in Sine-Scan to screen for

SINEs (Short Interspersed Nuclear Elements) (93–98). For each detected LARD, TRIM and SINE,

consensus sequences were created as described above and duplicates excluded. All genome

assemblies were then annotated with the curated consensus sequences using RepeatMasker with a cut-

off value of 250 and ignored simple repeats as well as low complexity regions. Annotated elements

shorter than 100 bp were filtered out, and adjacent identical TEs overlapping by more than 100 bp

were merged. Different TE families overlapping by more than 100 bp were considered as *nested*

insertions and were renamed accordingly. Identical elements separated by less than 200 bp indicative

of putative interrupted elements were grouped into a single element using minimal start and maximal

stop positions. TEs overlapping ≥1 bp with genes were recovered using the *bedtools* v2.27.1 suite and

the *overlap* function (99). Correlations were calculated in RStudio version 1.1.453 using Spearman's

coefficient for pairwise complete observations and statistics were inferred with the *psych* package

using the Holm correction method (100).

Functional annotation of predicted genes

Protein functions were predicted for all gene models using InterProScan v 5.31-70.0 (101) adding -

goterms -iprlookup and -pathway information. Secretion peptides and transmembrane domains (TM)

were identified using SignalP v 4.1 and Phobius (102,103). The secretome was defined as the set of

proteins with a signal peptide but no TM as predicted by either SignalP and Phobius. Putative

effectors were identified among the set of secreted proteins using EffectorP v 2.0 (104).

Carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZymes) were identified using dbCAN2 release 7.0 server (105,106)

with the three tools HMMER, DIAMOND and Hotpep (107–109). Proteins were classified as a

CAZyme if predicted by each of the three tools. We searched for secondary metabolite gene clusters

using the online version 4 of antiSMASH (110). Genes belonging to an identified cluster were

annotated as "biosynthetic", "biosynthetic-additional", "transport", "regulatory" or "other". Gene

clusters mapping at a conserved, orthologous locus shared by two or more isolate were considered as

syntenic.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate: n/a

Consent for publication: n/a

Availability of data and materials: The genome assembly and annotation for new genome assemblies are available at the European Nucleotide Archive (http://www.ebi.ac.uk/ena) under the BioProject PRJEB33986. The RNA-sequencing raw sequencing data was deposited at the NCBI Short Read Archive under the accession number PRJNA559981.

Competing interests: none

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Authors' contributions: TB and DC conceived the study; TB and UO performed analyses; LA and BAM provided datasets and strains; BAM and DC provided funding; TB and DC wrote the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Figure legends

Figure 1: Assembly of 19 complete genomes from a worldwide collection. A. World map indicating the isolate names and country of origin. **B.** Phylogenomic tree based on 50 single-copy orthologs showing reticulation using SplitsTree. **C**. Summary of genome assembly characteristics for all isolates. The bars represent the range of minimum (shortest bar) to maximum values (longest bar) for each reported statistic. Chromosome 14-21 are accessory chromosomes. The presence or absence of accessory chromosomes in each genome is shown by green dots and empty circles for present and missing chromosomes, respectively. The linked dots for isolate YEQ92 indicate the chromosomal fusion event (see also Figure 2).

Figure 2: Large segregating chromosomal rearrangements within the species. A. Chromosome length variation expressed as the percentage of the maximum observed length for each chromosome. **B**. Two large chromosomal rearrangements identified in the isolate YEQ92 isolated from Yemen. The upper part shows the local chromosomal synteny at the fusion locus between accessory chromosomes 15 and 16 identified in YEQ92 compared to the reference genome IPO323. Transposons are shown in red, genes from chromosome 15 in purple, genes from chromosome 16 in green and genes specific to the fusion in grey boxes, respectively. Synteny shared between chromosomes is shown in red for colinear blocks or blue for inversions. The lower part shows the whole chromosome synteny of chromosome 7 contrasting YEQ92 to the reference genome IPO323. YEQ92 misses a subtelomeric region. Transposons are shown in red and genes in grey.

Figure 3: Construction and analysis of the *Zymoseptoria tritici* pangenome. A. Proportions of core orthogroups (present in all isolates), accessory orthogroups (present ≥2 isolates but not all) and singletons (present in one isolate only) across the pangenome (upper-left). The proportions of core, accessory and singleton categories are shown for orthogroups coding for secreted proteins (upper-right), carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZymes; lower-left) and effectors (lower-right). **B**. Gene copy number variation in core orthogroups across the 19 genomes. **C**. Pangenome gene count across six

CAZyme families. Families are divided into glycoside hydrolase (GH), glycosyl transferase (GT),

auxiliary activity (AA), carbohydrate esterase (CE), carbohydrate-binding modules (CBM) and

polysaccharide lyase activity (PL) categories. **D**. Pangenome categories of secondary metabolite gene

clusters. **E.** Synteny plot of succinate dehydrogenase (SDH) paralogs mediating fungicide resistance.

The SDHC3 locus on chromosome 3 is shown for isolates 3D7 and Aus01 both carrying the paralog.

IPO323 and 1A5 lack SDHC3. The position of the SDHC3 paralog is shown using dark arrows.

Genes are colored in grey and transposable elements in red.

Figure 4: Expression polymorphism across the pangenome. A. Proportion of genes showing

expression >10 counts per million (CPM) across genes categories. The frequencies are shown for

orthogroups encoding putative effectors, secondary metabolite cluster genes (gene cluster),

carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZymes), secreted proteins. The frequencies are also shown for

singleton, accessory and core orthogroup categories in the pangenome. **B**. Proportion of orthogroups

for which the expression coefficient of variation is >50% [$cov = sd$ (CPM) / $mean$ (CPM)] among

different gene and pangenome categories as in (A). **C**. Correlation of gene expression and the number

of paralogs detected for the same gene per genome. The grey line shows the logarithmic regression

based on the linear model log_{10} (CPM+1) $\sim$ log_{10} (number of paralogs). **D**. Number of orthogroups

with ≥10 paralogs per genome. Isolates are colored by continent of origin.

Figure 5: Transposable elements (TEs) and genome size variation. A. Contribution of TEs (%) to

total genome size across the 19 isolates. **B**. Relative frequency of the 23 TE superfamilies across all

genomes with 100% referring to the total TE content of the respective genome. **C**. Contribution of TE

superfamilies to core and accessory genome size across the 19 isolates. **D**. Expression of genes

affected by TE insertions (grouped by TE superfamilies; left panel) and the mean TE length in the

genome (grouped by TE superfamilies; right panel).

Figure 6: Transcriptional activity of transposable elements (TEs). A. TE family transcription

levels across all 19 genomes expressed as log_{10} (CPM +1). **B**. Average transcription levels of TE

superfamilies across all genomes expressed as average log_{10} (CPM +1). **C**. Spearman correlation

matrix of four TE metrics including counts, relative frequencies, average length and transcription both

at the level of TE families and superfamilies. **D**. Variation of TE transcription (average log_{10} (CPM

+1)) as a function of TE counts (left panel) or average TE length (right panel). Curves in the left panel

show the logarithmic linear regression given by the linear model log_{10} (CPM+1) ~ log_{10} (TE count).

The highly expressed LARD_Thrym family (RLX) is highlighted using arrows (panels A, B, and D).

Additional Files

Additional File 1: Supplementary_Figures (.docx)

Figure S1: Integrative Genomics Viewer screenshot of PacBio reads aligned back to the YEQ92

genome assembly at the fusion locus between chromosomes 15 and 16.

Figure S2: Percent identity given by the multiple protein sequence alignment for each orthogroup.

Protein sequences were aligned using *mafft* and alignment identity was extracted with the *easel alistat*

tool from Eddy Rivas (https://github.com/EddyRivasLab/easel).

Figure S3: Presence-absence heatmap of the orthogroups assigned to secondary metabolite gene

clusters. Each line stands for an orthogroup. Syntenic gene clusters are numbered from 1 to 39.

Orthogroups including more than one gene per cluster are shown in darker blue (0-3 genes were found

assigned to an orthogroup in this analysis).

Figure S4: Evolutionary origins of the secondary metabolite genes clusters. We performed *blast*

searches using all annotated biosynthetic and biosynthetic-additional proteins as query against four

closely related sister species of *Zymoseptoria tritici*. The heatmap shows the percent identity of the

top hit found in the four sister species for each of the 147 genes encoding biosynthetic functions in

putative gene clusters. The isolates Zpa63, Zp13, Zb87 and Za17 correspond to the species *Z.*

passerinii, *Z. pseudotritici*, *Z. brevis* and *Z. ardabiliae* respectively.

Figure S5: Gene expression across pangenome categories. Gene expression is shown as log10 values

of counts per million reads + 1 because non-expressed genes are also shown.

Figure S6: Single-gene core orthogroups heatmap following hierarchical clustering based on

Euclidian distances. Gene expression is shown as the log10 values of counts per million reads + 1 as

non-expressed genes are also shown.

Figure S7: GC-content across transposable element family consensus sequences.

Figure S8: Transposable element (TE) content correlated with genome length for both core and

accessory chromosomes. The proportion of TEs was calculated as the percentage of chromosome

length in bp.

Figure S9: The proportion of the genome covered by genes correlated with total genome size.

Figure S10: Heatmap of average transposable element size (*log10* of the average length in bp).

Figure S11: Heatmap of average transposable element size summarized by superfamily (*log10* of the

average TE superfamily length in bp).

Figure S12: Distance to closest transposable element across pangenome categories given as $\log_{10}$

values of the distance in base pairs.

Figure S13: Proportion of pangenome categories overlapping with transposable elements (TE). All

features with at least 1 bp overlap with a TE sequence were considered.

Figure S14: Proportion of overlapping genes in blue and transposable elements (TE) in grey. All

features with at least 1 bp overlap with a TE sequence were considered.

Figure S15: Genome-wide transposable element (TE) superfamily frequencies correlated with the

proportion of TEs overlapping genes. Proportions are given for each TE superfamily (color code) and

each of the 19 isolates.

Figure S16: Frequency of orthogroups showing high ($> 50\%$) and low ($< 50\%$) expression coefficient

of variation. Only orthogroups were distinguished whether at least one gene of the orthogroup was

located within 100 bp of a transposable element or not.

Figure S17: Gene expression as a function of its distance to the closest transposable element (TE).

The relationship is shown for each of the TE superfamilies across the 19 isolates. Gene expression is

given by the log10 values of normalized counts per millions reads +1 as genes showing zero

expression are also included.

Figure S18: Gene expression of genes overlapping at least one base pair with a transposable element

("yes") compared to genes not overlapping ("no"). Gene expression is given by *log10* values of

counts per million reads.

1032

1033   **Additional File 2**: Supplementary_Tables (.xlsx)

1034   **Table S1**: List of all identified orthogroups and pangenome categorization.

1035   **Table S2**: List of the genes encoding Major Facilitator Superfamily domains (IPR036259)

1036   **Table S3**: Summary table of the analyzed isolates.

isolate name	origin [country]	genome size (bp)	GC content [%]	TE content [%]	accessory chromosomes	gene count	BUSCO score [%]	accessory genome [%]
1A5	Switzerland	39698711	51.6	18.7	●●●●●●●●	12092	98.3	23.2
1E4	Switzerland	38628401	51.8	17.7	●●●○●●●●	12033	98.1	22.8
3D1	Switzerland	40657500	51.5	19.9	●●●●●●●●	12006	98.5	22.5
3D7	Switzerland	37861420	52.1	18.4	○○●●○●●○	11737	96.8	20.7
Arg00	Argentina	41149037	51.4	20.7	●●●●●●●	12347	98.4	24.8
Aus01	Australia	41760570	51.6	24.0	●●●●○●●●	12787	98.1	27.6
CH95	Chile	39253131	51.7	19.6	○●●●○●●○	12198	98.7	24.2
CNR93	Canada	38169704	52.1	19.2	○○●●○●●○	12193	98.5	24.2
CRI10	Czech Republic	39697126	51.8	19.6	●●●●○●●●	12265	98.1	24.4
I93	USA (Indiana)	39405809	51.5	19.1	●●●○●●●	12263	98.4	24.6
IPO323	Netherlands	39686251	51.7	19.1	●●●●●●●	11839	97.9	22.0
IR01_26b	Iran	38551850	51.5	16.5	●●●●○●○○	11940	98.6	22.6
IR01_48b	Iran	37133562	52.0	18.1	○○●○○●●●	11865	98.5	22.1
ISY92	Israel	39679942	51.1	19.1	●●●●○●●●	12060	98.3	23.4
KE94	Kenya	38152782	51.9	17.3	●●●●○●●○	11959	98.5	22.8
OregS90	USA (Oregon)	39591316	52.1	20.3	○○●●●●●	12483	98.4	26.0
TN09	Tunisia	37907319	51.4	18.8	○●●○○○○●	11657	98.5	20.6
UR95	Ukraine	38369786	51.7	17.7	●○●●○●●	12241	98.5	24.4
YEQ92	Yemen	39871609	51.0	19.8	●●●●●○●●	11734	98.3	21.3

A

B