Depth-discrete eco-genomics of Lake Tanganyika reveals roles of diverse microbes, including candidate phyla, in tropical freshwater nutrient cycling

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Abstract

Lake Tanganyika, the largest tropical freshwater lake and the second largest by volume on Earth is characterized by strong oxygen and redox gradients. In spite of the majority of its water column being anoxic, Tanganyika hosts some of the most diverse and prolific fisheries and ecosystems on Earth. Yet, little is known about microorganisms inhabiting this lake, and their impacts on biogeochemistry and nutrient cycling underlying ecosystem structure and productivity. Here, we apply depth-discrete metagenomics, single-cell genomics, and environmental analyses to reconstruct and characterize 3996 microbial genomes representing 802 non-redundant organisms from 81 bacterial and archaeal phyla, including two novel bacterial candidate phyla, Tanganyikabacteria and Ziwabacteria. We found sharp contrasts in community composition and metabolism between the oxygenated mixed upper layer compared to deep anoxic waters, with core freshwater taxa in the former, and Archaea and uncultured Candidate Phyla in the latter. Microbially-driven nitrogen cycling increased in the anoxic zone, highlighting microbial contribution to the productive surface layers, via production of upwelled nutrients, and greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide. Overall, we provide a window into how oxygen gradients shape microbial community metabolism in widespread anoxic tropical freshwaters, and advocate for the importance of anoxic freshwater habitats in the context of global biogeochemical cycles and nutrient cycling.

Introduction

Located in the East African Rift Valley, Lake Tanganyika (LT) holds 16% of the Earth's freshwater, and is the second largest lake by volume[1]. By its sheer size and magnitude, LT exerts a major influence on biogeochemical cycling on regional and global scales[2,3]. Over the past centuries, LT has been extensively studied as a model system for its rich animal biodiversity[4,5] which have revealed important insights on species radiation and evolution. In contrast, the microbial community of LT that drives the productivity of this ecosystem largely remains a mystery.

LT provides a unique ecosystem to study microbial diversity and function in freshwater lakes, specifically tropical lakes. This ancient lake harbors some of the most spectacular and well-studied adaptive radiations of metazoan species diversity on Earth[5], but these organisms exist in a thin layer of oxygenated surface water. Lake Tanganyika is estimated to be at least 10 million years old and is considered oligotrophic (low nutrient concentrations). Among Lake Tanganyika's defining features is that approximately 80% of the 1890 km^3 of water is anoxic. Being meromictic, its water column is permanently stratified, with a large volume of anoxic and nutrient-rich bottom waters (hypolimnion), separated from the upper ~70m of well-lit, nutrient-depleted water (epilimnion). Despite stratification, periodic pulses of phosphorus, nitrogen and iron from upwelling of deep-waters replenish the epilimnion and sustain its productivity. Lake Tanganyika's influence in biogeochemical cycling regionally and globally is valuable, for instance it stores over 23 TG of methane below the oxycline[3], and stores about 14,000,000Tg of C in its sediments[2].

Only a handful of previous work has been done on the lake's microbial ecology[6,7]. Previous studies have found microbial community composition to be heterogeneous along both vertical and horizontal spans[7]. The differences were primarily related to thermal stratification, which leads to strong gradients in oxygen and nutrient concentrations. However, the contribution of microbes to nutrient cycling in Lake Tanganyika remains to be studied. Here we investigated the microbial community composition, metabolic interactions, and biogeochemical contributions along ecological gradients from high light, oxygenated surface waters to dark, oxygen-free and nutrient-rich bottom waters of Lake Tanganyika. Our comprehensive analyses include genome-resolved metagenomics and single-cell genomics to generate thousands of bacterial and archaeal genomes, metabolic reconstructions at the resolution of individual organisms and the entire lake ecosystem, and measurements of lake biogeochemistry to infer the roles of microorganisms in nutrient cycling across different layers in the water column. Our work offers a window into the understudied microbial diversity of LT and serves as a case study for investigating microbial roles and links to biogeochemistry in globally distributed anoxic freshwater lakes.

Results

We collected 24 samples from the LT water column spanning 0 to 1200m, at two stations (Kigoma: 13 samples, Mahale: 11 samples) in July and October 2015 (Table S1). Detailed environmental profiles from 2010-2013 were used to guide sampling location and depth (Figure

1A). Water column temperatures ranged from 24 to 28°C, and changes in dissolved oxygen (DO)
were greatest at depths ranging from ~50 to 100 m during the time of sampling (Figure 1A,
Figure 1B), dropping to 0% DO around 100m. A consistent chlorophyll-a peak was detected at a
depth of ~120m throughout the years (Figure S1). Nitrate concentrations increased up to ~100
µg/L at a depth of 100m, followed by rapid depletion with the onset of anoxia (Figure 1D).
Secchi depth, a measure of how deep light penetrates through the water column was on average
12.2m in July and 12.0m in October (Figure S2). Despite not having paired environmental data
in 2015, environmental data from 2010 to 2013 was highly consistent and showed minimal
interannual variability, particularly during our sampling period (July and October) (Figure S1,
Figure S2). Additionally, the environmental profiles are similar to those previously collected (see
references [1,8,9]).
Metagenomic sequencing and binning of 24 individual samples resulted in 3948 draft-
quality metagenome-assembled genomes (MAGs) that were dereplicated (using a threshold of
98% average nucleotide identity (ANI)) into a set of 802 non-redundant genomes for
downstream analyses (Table S2, Table S7). We also sequenced 48 single-cell amplified genomes
(SAGs) from a depth of 1200m to complement the MAGs. To assign taxonomic classifications to
the organisms represented by the genomes, we combined two complimentary genome-based
phylogenetic approaches: a manual 16 ribosomal protein concatenated gene phylogeny (16RP)
and GTDB-tk[10], an automated program which uses 120 concatenated protein coding genes.
Overall, we observed congruence between the two approaches (Table S2). Six bacterial genomes
clustered away from known genomes and likely represent two monophyletic lineages at the
phylum-level. On this basis, we propose the candidate phyla (CP) *Candidatus*
Tanganyikabacteria (named after the lake) and *Candidatus Ziwabacteria* (from the Swahili word
for "lake" which is "ziwa"). Overall, our genomes represented 34 Archaea and 769 Bacteria from
81 phyla, including our two proposed phyla (Figure 2, Table S2).
To elucidate the stratification of microbial populations and metabolic processes in the
water column of LT, we identified three zones referred to as "oxic", "sub-oxic", and "anoxic"
which we operationally define based on general oxygen percent saturation (Figure 1C). These
zones coincidently correspond broadly to the epilimnion, metalimnion and hypolimnion
respectively. To relate microbial community composition to relative abundance in our samples,
we mapped metagenomic reads from each depth-discrete metagenome against all 802 MAGs and
computed the average normalized coverage (abundance) (Table S3).
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The microbiome of Lake Tanganyika is shaped by oxygen and redox gradients
Broadly speaking, the tropical microbiome of LT was similar to the epilimnions of
temperate worldwide[11]. Major phylogenetic groups found in high abundance included
Actinobacteria, *Bacteroidetes*, *Betaproteobacteria*, *Cyanobacteria*, *Gammaproteobacteria*,
Planctomycetes and *Verrucomicrobia* (Figure 2), many of which are cosmopolitan and canonical
freshwater lineages. However, LT also hosts organisms less frequently observed elsewhere in
freshwater systems such as *Ignavibacteria* and *Thaumarchaeota*. *Ignavibacteria* were among the

most abundant organisms in 23 out of 24 samples while *Thaumarchaeota* were present at all
depths but peaked in the sub-oxic zone.
Cyanobacteria constituted the most abundant phylum across all our samples (Figure 3,
Table S2). Cyanobacterial MAGs were also abundant in the hypolimnion, including the deepest
samples. While these *Cyanobacteria* encoded both photosystems I and II, we postulate that these
organisms likely conduct dark fermentative metabolism below the photic zone similar to that
observed in *Cyanobacteria* from deep terrestrial ecosystems[12]. Analysis of replication rates[13]
suggests that *Cyanobacteria* are indeed growing, but we cannot quantify absolute rates without
calibration using cultures. Cells were estimated to be replicating more quickly in the photic zone
as compared to the deep hypolimnion (Figure S3).
The dominant community members became more distinct with depth, as oxygen and light
limitations increased (Figure 1, Figure 3, Figure S1, Figure S2). We noticed some differences
between stations, but hesitate to attribute these to local factors without more extensive spatial
sampling. The presence of *Euryarchaeota* in the epilimnion in Mahale might be a result from the
upwelling, though more temporally resolved sampling is required to properly examine this.
Green sulfur bacteria (phylum *Chlorobi*) were the sixteenth most abundant group in samples just
below the sub-oxic zone (Figure S1). *Chlorobi* are observed to be highly abundant in other
freshwater lakes where strong light and sulfide gradients exist, such as the meromictic Lake
Cadagno[14,15]. We hypothesize that the lower abundance of *Chlorobi* observed in LT at and in the
anoxic zone may be attributed to the presence of anoxygenic *Cyanobacteria* and competition
between these groups (Figure S4). Nitrifying *Nitrospira* were present but only below 100m. We
identified a total of ninety-five organisms from CP with Eisenbacteria, Kaiserbacteria and
Rokubacteria comprising the most abundant lineages below 100m. Among CP, only
Tanganyikabacteria, Tectomicrobia and TM6 were present in both the oxic and anoxic zones.
Much remains to be learnt about microbial biodiversity inhabiting lakes' hypolimnions
and deep lakes worldwide. With few microbial ecology studies focused on lake hypolimnions[16–
19], we cannot speculate if microbes in the hypolimnion of Lake Tanganyika are truly endemic.
Nevertheless, we note the contrast between typical freshwater microbes dominating the
epilimnion, and the high prominence of Archaea and CP, including Candidate Phyla Radiation
(CPR) in the anoxic zones.
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Shared microbiome between tropical and temperate freshwater lakes
We examined MAGs from the well-sampled and globally distributed bacterial lineage,
Actinobacteria to ask whether endemic strains were present in Lake Tanganyika. Two specific
lineages (acI, followed by acIV) within the Actinobacteria are typically constrained to freshwater
systems and are cosmopolitan[11]. Previously, acI lineages were found in Lake Tanganyika by 16S
rRNA gene sequencing[7]. In comparison to other available acI from lakes in Japan, Wisconsin
and Switzerland[20,21], Lake Tanganyika MAGs only cover a small fraction of the Actinobacteria
phylogenetic diversity, dominated by freshwater groups acI-B1, acI-C, acIII, acIV, acSTL, acTH
and Iluma-A (Table S2). Overall, *Actinobacteria* lineages show possible niche partitioning with

depth in Lake Tanganyika (Figure S5). All from LT were most abundant in the epilimnion,
except acIII, acIV and two Iluma-A2. Non-canonical freshwater groups were present throughout
the water column. Several cosmopolitan clade members were virtually indistinguishable in the
16RP phylogeny from genomes recovered in US and European lakes (acI lineage), while others
constituted unique groups previously unsampled in other lakes (Figure S5).
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Archaea and candidate phyla are prominent in the anoxic zone of Lake Tanganyika
Little is known about the distribution and ecology of organisms belonging to CP and the
CPR in freshwater lakes. The CPR consists of mostly uncultivated bacteria and are
phylogenetically distinct from major bacterial lineages[13,22]. In a hypersaline soda lake,
uncultured CPR were found to be a major component of the bacterial community. Similarly,
Parcubacteria dominated the anaerobic bacterial community of boreal lakes[23].
Amongst non-CPR candidate phyla, Candidatus Aegiribacteria was first described below the
chemocline of Lake Mahoney (British-Columbia, Canada) in the euxinic hypolimnion, which is
anoxic, saline and sulfur-rich.
Here, we reconstructed 95 CP genomes (40 phyla, including CP Tanganyikabacteria and
CP Ziwabacteria) (Figure 2A) including 22 genomes from CPR organisms. Thirty-seven archaeal
MAGs accounted for 3.4% of microbial abundance (Figure 2A). We reconstructed a full circular
genome of a CP Saccharibacteria. Only *Euryarchaeota* and *Thaumarchaeota* were present
throughout the water column while most of archaea, including members of the DPANN lineages,
resided in the anoxic zone. *Verstrarchaeota*, *Bathyarchaeota*, *Woesearchaeota* and
Micrarchaeota genomes were recovered for the first time from tropical freshwaters, allowing for
future comparative genomics within these groups.
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The novel candidate phyla Tanganyikabacteria and Ziwabacteria
Recently, the discovery of non-photosynthetic relatives of *Cyanobacteria* and their
metabolic diversity[24,25] has changed our understanding of metabolic repertoire of these
organisms. A total of fifteen MAGs (3 dereplicated MAGs) from Tanganyika were distinct from
Cyanobacteria, and closely related to other non-photosynthetic *Cyanobacteria*-like organisms.
We placed these MAGs in the context of published reference genomes[26,27] to ascertain their
phylogeny. All 3 MAGs clustered away from *Cyanobacteria*, CP Melainabacteria, CP
Blackallbacteria, CP Saganbacteria and CP Margulisbacteria (Figure 4A). The 3 MAGs formed a
distinct monophyletic clade closely related to the CP, yet their 16S rRNA sequences shared less
than 80% ANI to them. Therefore, we propose that these MAGs belong to a new candidate
phylum that we designate as CP Tanganyikabacteria.
To assess CP Tanganyikabacteria's global distribution, we searched the 16S rRNA
sequences from the CP Tanganyikabacteria MAGs against publicly available datasets. Sequences
from (>75% 16S rRNA sequence identity phylum cutoff[28]) CP Tanganyikabacteria were widely
distributed across environments, but dominant in freshwater, marine and soil natural systems
(Figure 4B).

Organisms from CP Tanganyikabacteria are facultative denitrifiers with heterotrophic
metabolism supplemented with the ability to oxidize sulfide (Figure 4C). All CP
Tanganyikabacteria in Lake Tanganyika had flagellar machinery and pili, chemotaxis proteins,
and several transporters including iron complex outer membrane receptor and transport proteins,
ferrous iron, sugar and biopolymer transporters. Like other CP Melainabacteria, they generally
do not have a TCA cycle, cytochrome c for the electron transfer chain, nor glycolysis
pathways[25]. However, the one denitrifying CP Tanganyikabacteria had a TCA cycle, and cyt c
cbb3 type and certain genes in the glycolysis pathway were found. None had Ni-Fe
hydrogenases, unlike its CP relatives which have a hydrogen-dependent metabolism[26].
Another group of organisms were distantly related to the Acidobacteria group, CP
Raymondbacteria and Candidate division TG3 (Figure S6). Outside of Lake Tanganyika, one
single genome was identified for this lineage from metagenomes reconstructed from a deep
subsurface aquifer, Crystal Geyser near Green River, Utah[27]. This second CP named
Ziwabacteria contains facultative organisms with heterotrophic metabolism supplemented by
hydrogen metabolism (FeFe hydrogenase, Ni-Fe Hydrogenase Group 1, Group 3c), oxygen
metabolism, and sulfide oxidation (*sqr).*
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Nitrogen cycling
Nitrogen is a major nutrient shaping the ecology of Lake Tanganyika[9]. While 477 T of
N/year flow into LT, dissolved inorganic nitrogen at the surface waters remains low suggesting
rapid nitrogen depletion with important implications for primary productivity that limits yields of
critical fisheries[29]. Operating in both oxic and anoxic conditions present in Lake Tanganyika, the
microbially-driven nitrogen cycle produces biologically-relevant compounds like ammonia,
amino acids, proteins, urea, nitrate, and nitrite. The spatial dynamics of nitrogen forms in Lake
Tanganyika have been studied from biogeochemical data and show that upwelling from the
chemocline (~50-100m) can deliver fixed N to surface[8,29–31]. Such vertical transfers are critical to
supporting productive food webs and the ecosystem[32]. Here, we identify microorganisms that
catalyze these processes while emphasizing specific physiologies that may have implications for
ecosystem-level nitrogen budgets.
We identified microbes involved in ammonia oxidation, nitrite oxidation, complete
ammonia oxidation (comammox), denitrification, urea utilization, anaerobic ammonia oxidation
(anammox), dissimilatory nitrate reduction to ammonia (DNRA), and nitrogen fixation (Figure
S7). In total, nitrogen cycling organisms accounted for 23% of the microbial community
abundance across all the samples. Nitrification (ammonia oxidation to nitrite, nitrite oxidation to
nitrate) is catalyzed by oxygen-dependent enzymes (*amoABC, nxrAB*), and expected to be
prevalent in the surface. Ammonia oxidation was found in bacteria (*Alpha-*, *Gamma-* and
Betaproteobacteria), and also in Thaumarchaeota. The potential for nitrite oxidation was found
in *Acidobacteria*, *Actinobacteria*, *Bacteroidetes*, *Chloroflexi*, *Deltaproteobacteria,*
Fibrobacteres, *Nitrospira*, CP Ziwabacteria*, Planctomycetes,* and *Verrucomicrobia*. Organisms
from many CP were found to be capable of nitrite oxidation including Poribacteria,

Handelsmanbacteria, Eisenbacteria, Rokubacteria, Hydrogenedentes, Tanganyikabacteria and
Ziwabacteria.
We recovered two Nitrospira genomes with *amoABC* and *nxrAB* suggesting comammox
ability for the first time in a freshwater lake water column (to our knowledge), although previous
studies have hinted at their existence[33]. These genomes belong to the previously described
lineage II Clade A, consistent with known *Nitrospira* comammox lineages (Figure 5A).
Additionally, we performed a full genome-wide metabolic comparison with *Nitrospira*
(comammox and not) from other environments (wastewater treatment plants, iron pipes,
biofilm)[34](Figure 5B). When comparing comammox, nitrite oxidizing bacteria (NOB) and
anammox bacteria, which are competing among themselves for either ammonia or nitrite, we
observed that they were present also in the anoxic layer (Figure 5C). Ammonia oxidizers have a
versatile metabolism and can be heterotrophs[35]. In anoxic environment, comammox Nitrospira
can potentially use H_2, which provides an advantage in hypoxic and anoxic habitats[36].
Despite a prominently anoxic water column, our data does not suggest that full
denitrification and DNRA are prevalent genomic features of the microbial community.
Denitrification and DNRA can co-occur under oxygen-limited or anoxic conditions, such as in
the anoxic hypolimnion of lakes. Unlike denitrification which removes reactive nitrogen from
the system by converting fully to N_2 gas, DNRA conserves nitrogen within the system by
reducing nitrate to ammonium. DNRA therefore does not produce N_2 nor N_2O that is released
into the atmosphere. Nitrate reduction to nitrite (*napAB, narGH*) is the first step of denitrification
and DNRA. Six MAGs (*Alphaproteobacteria*, *Betaproteobacteria*, *Gammaproteobacteria*,
Planctomycetes and CP Tanganyikabacteria) had potential for nitrate reduction (Table S4). Only
3 organisms from *Betaproteobacteria* and CP Tanganyikabacteria possessed the capacity for
complete DNRA. Meanwhile, a single organism from *Betaproteobacteria* was capable of
complete denitrification to N_2, while one from CP Tanganyikabacteria could undertake partial
denitrification to nitrous oxide (N_2O). Individual steps in denitrification such as nitrite reduction
to nitric oxide (NO), NO reduction to N_2O, and N_2O reduction to N_2 were inconsistently
distributed in organisms suggesting the presence of widespread metabolic handoffs in the
reductive cycle of nitrogen cycle[37] (Table S4).
Lake water column anammox was first discovered in Lake Tanganyika[38]. Anammox
bypasses the steps of nitrite oxidation and nitrite reduction to directly produce N_2. We identified
one MAG closely related to Candidatus *Brocadiacea* in the phylum *Planctomycetes* that
contained the hydrazine oxidase (*hzoA*) and hydrazine synthase (*hzsA*) genes necessary for
anammox. Like observed previously, anammox organisms peaked in abundance around 100-
150m (Figure 5C)[38]. In LT, nitrite oxidizing bacteria (NOB) and anammox, which both compete
for nitrite, peak in abundance at 100-150m, but NOB are relatively more abundant than
anammox bacteria (Figure 5C). Other important components of the nitrogen cycle in LT include
nitrogen fixation and transformations of organic nitrogen including urea, amino acids, and
proteins (Table S4).
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Sulfur Cycling

The sulfur cycle spans the entire water column of LT and is characterized by intermediates that transcend and connect other biogeochemical cycles (Figure S7). Sulfide oxidation to elemental sulfur was identified by the presence of sulfide quinone oxidoreductases (*sqr*) and was found in 94 MAGs, including Cyanobacteria. We compared the distribution of sulfide oxidizing *Cyanobacteria* with non-Cyanobacteria (Figure S4). We noted that non-Cyanobacterial sulfide oxidizers were more prominent in the dark anoxic zone, whereas anoxygenic photosynthetic *Cyanobacteria* that were able to oxidize sulfide were more abundant at the oxic-photic zone. We propose that competition for sulfide results in higher abundance of anoxygenic photosynthetic cyanobacteria at the surface (where light is present), whereas below the euphotic zone, other sulfide oxidizers such as *Chlorobi*, might have an advantage. The process of anoxygenic photosynthesis coupled with sulfide oxidation has been studied in microbial mats[39], but rarely in pelagic freshwater environment. Interestingly, we did not find any purple sulfur bacteria in Lake Tanganyika. Finally, thiosulfate disproportion (using the sox complex without *soxCD*) and thiosulfate oxidation (using the sox complex) were abundant in LT MAGs representing organisms from *Alphaproteobacteria*, *Betaproteobacteria*, *Gammaproteobacteria*, *Chloroflexi*, *Planctomycetes*, and CP Rokubacteria.

Sulfate reduction was found to be highly prominent in the anoxic water column of LT. In total, we identified 28 MAGs representing organisms from six different phyla, namely *Deltaproteobacteria*, *Acidobacteria*, *Nitrospirae*, *Calditrochaeota*, *Aminicenantes*, *Chloroflexi* that possessed the dissimilatory sulfite reductase complex. No organisms capable of only sulfite reduction or containing the anaerobic sulfite reductase complex were identified. Organisms involved in Sulfur metabolism were the third most diverse after carbon and oxygen metabolism (Figure S8).

Carbon transformations as a direct link to the food chain

Autotrophy involving carbon fixation can take many forms. In photosynthesis, CO_2 is fixed into organic carbon and involves Rubisco enzymes. Rubisco Form I and II are found in algae, plants and bacteria. Form IV are found in both Bacteria and Archaea and perform functions distinct from carbon fixation, such as methionine salvage, sulfur metabolism and D-apiode catabolism. In LT, Form I Rubisco were prevalent in MAGs from *Betaproteobacteria*, *Chloroflexi*, *Alphaproteobacteria*, *Cyanobacteria* while Form II was only found in *Betaproteobacteria* (Figure S9). A well supported clade of Rubisco sequences from LT could not be classified to any known forms. This newly discovered Form IV-like clade was composed of sequences from *Planctomycetes*, *Verrucomicrobia*, *Chloroflexi*, *Poribacteria,* CP Handelsmanbacteria, and CP Hydrogenedentes. In addition to the CBB cycle, the Wood-Ljungdahl pathway was also found to be prevalent in LT. This pathway is dominant in anoxic environments and was found in 48 MAGs, representing organisms from *Actinobacteria, Armatimonadetes, Chloroflexi, Deltaproteobacteria, Euryarchaeota, Firmicutes, Lentisphaerae, Nitrospirae, Planctomycetes,* and *Omnitrophica*. Most organisms with the Wood-Ljungdahl

pathway decreased in abundance with increased depth. While is it counterintuitive that
fermentative organisms are present in the oxic waters of Lake Tanganyika, this could provide an
advantage for them under microoxic or anoxic conditions.
Aerobic and anaerobic methanotrophs consume methane. While previously thought of as
limited to the sediments, it is now known that both aerobic and anaerobic methane oxidation
occur in the water column[40,41]. Methane oxidation is prevalent in the well-oxygenated part of the
water column in many lakes including Lake Kivu, also part of the African Rift Valley lakes[42,43].
Methanogenesis (production of methane) is generally expected to be restricted to the
hypolimnion, but can also be found in the oxygenated water column[44]. Understanding the
potential for microbially-driven methanotrophy and methanogenesis in the water column is
important since it modulates methane fluxes, as they travels from the sediment, through the water
column, to the atmosphere. We identified three MAGs (*Verstraetaerchaeota*, *Euryarchaeaota*)
that possessed the capacity for methanogenesis and were most abundant in the hypolimnion
(Figure S7). The capacity for methane oxidation was identified in organisms from
Betaproteobacteria whose abundance was highest in the oxic-anoxic interface, suggesting an
aerobic methanotrophic lifestyles. Similar to observations in marine systems where capacities for
methane oxidation coexist with sulfur oxidation, we propose that these *Betaproteobacteria*
adapted to thrive in low-oxygen, transient environments characteristic of the sub-oxic zone, with
its ability to utilize many reduced compounds such as sulfide, sulfur, and hydrogen.
To investigate the heterotrophic potential of microbes to breakdown polysaccharides in
Lake Tanganyika, we annotated the carbohydrate-degrading enzymes (CAZYmes) in all MAGs
(Figures S10). Overall, *Planctomycetes* seemed to be a major contributor to carbon degradation
since this group had the largest number of protein families associated with auxiliary activities
(AAs), carbohydrate-binding modules (CBMs), carbohydrates esterases (CEs), glycoside
hydrolases (GHs), and Polysaccharide Lyases (PLs). *Deltaproteobacteria* had the most glycosyl
transferases (GTs). Despite their small genome sizes, CPR especially CP Shapirobacteria have
relatively many CAZYme hits per genome size[45]. We observed the total number of identified
GTs to be more abundant that GHs which begs the question as to why GT are more abundant
than GH in this system, and if the same pattern is found in similar or contrasting environments.
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Metabolic connections across vertical gradients
Overall, we identified and assessed the distribution of organisms involved in nitrogen,
carbon and sulfur cycles through their genomic content. Along a vertical oxygen depth gradient,
we observed a prominence of both phototrophic and heterotrophic metabolism in the photic zone
(Figure 6, Figure S11). At the sub-oxic zone, we noticed the start of the increase in nitrogen-
based metabolism, and complex carbon degradation, and hydrogen metabolism (Figure 6, Figure
S11). Methane metabolism was found throughout the water column but increased below the sub-
oxic zone suggesting the prominent use of non-oxygen electron acceptors for this process. Our
overall findings about microbial metabolisms in LT in relation to light, oxygen and temperature
are reminiscent of classical understanding of partitioning between aerobic and anaerobic

metabolism. Yet, while it is classically understood that certain metabolic processes such as nitrite
oxidation are extremely limited in their distribution (e.g. in *Nitrospirae, Nitrospinae,*
Proteobacteria, Nitrospira), we found that diverse co-occurring groups are actually capable of
performing these transformations. Similarly, identification and characterization of common
freshwater lineages such as *Thaumarchaeota* and *Actinobacteria* below the sub-oxic zone in LT
presents new insights in the ecology of these organisms. These novel findings demonstrate that
genomic-based investigations, when combined with environmental chemistry, add significant
value in comparison to taxonomy-based assumptions of microbial metabolism in the
environment and highlight potential inter-species metabolic dependencies.
Here, we identify connections between organisms in the water column via the
intermediate substrates, or end compounds that they produce. In other words, each cycle can be
seen not in isolation, but in terms of intersections among cycles. This serves as a conceptual map
for studying microbial metabolism in LT and can be used as a framework in other meromictic
lakes with strong oxygen and nutrient gradients. The connections between microbial groups and
metabolisms vary within and across the different lake layers. Finally, we perform a community
wide profiling of microbes with intersecting "metabolic guilds". For example, we found
methanotrophs that can denitrify (*Alphaproteobacteria*), chemolithoautotrophs like anammox
bacteria (*Planctomycetes)* and nitrifiers (*Nitrospira*), and anoxygenic phototrophs
(*Cyanobacteria*) that use hydrogen sulfide which is known to also happen in stable mats
environments[39], but unknown of in meromictic lakes. These findings point to the complexity and
diverse microbial metabolisms in natural ecosystems and for our understanding of pelagic
freshwater microbial paradigms.
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Discussion
Our study of bacterial and archaeal depth-discrete community offers a whole water
column perspective of this incredibly deep, voluminous, and ancient freshwater lake. Our study
encompassed the LT's continuous vertical redox gradient. Microbial communities were
dominated by from core freshwater taxa at the surface to Archaea and uncultured Candidate
Phyla in the latter. We provide genomic evidence for the capabilities of Bacteria and Archaea in
biogeochemical cycling and describe links between spatial distribution of organisms and
biogeochemical processes. These processes are essential in replenishing the water surface in
nutrients, and possibly impact critical food webs that are renowned for their high biodiversity
and that serve as important protein sources for local human populations in four surrounding
African countries[46].
Finally, this study serves as a baseline of microbial community ecology and
biogeochemistry of tropical lakes and highlights the importance of characterizing and linking
microbial processes in deep anoxic waters. Future follow-up studies including genome informed
cultivation efforts, stable isotope probing and biogeochemical modeling, can be employed to
validate our conceptual model of transformations in tropical lake waters, and quantitatively

model the flow of nutrients from microorganisms to the food web, especially the impacts of the
little-studied globally distributed sub-oxic and anoxic freshwaters.
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Methods
Sample collection
Water samples were collected from two stations, Kigoma and Mahale in 2015 (Table 1).
Two casts were employed at each station (Kigoma Deep Cast, Kigoma Surface, Mahale Deep
Cast, Mahale Offshore). Geographic coordinates of the sample sites are listed in Table S1.
Water samples were collected with a vertically oriented Van Dorn bottle in 2015.
Environmental data was collected in 2013, on a previous research cruise, using a YSI 6600 sonde
with optical DO and chl-a sensors. All data including temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO),
conductivity, chlorophyll a) and was collected down to approximately 150m.
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DNA extraction and sequencing
DNA extractions were performed using the MP Biomedicals FastDNA Spin Kit with
minor protocol modifications as described previously[47]. Metagenome sequencing was conducted
at the DOE Joint Genome Institute (JGI). DNA was sequenced on the Illumina HiSeq 2500
platform (Illumina, San Diego, CA, U.S.A.), which produces 2 x 150 base pairs (bp) reads with a
targeted insert size of ~240 bp. Cells collected at 1200m at the Kigoma station were sent to the
DOE JGI for single-cell sequencing.
Single amplified genomes (SAGs) were generated following the Department of Energy
Joint Genome Institute's (JGI) standard protocol[48]. Briefly, individual cells were sorted using an
Influx flow cytometer (BD Biosciences) and treated with Ready-Lyse lysozyme (Epicenter; 5
U µL−1 final concentration) for 15 min at room temperature. Next, cell lysis and whole-genome
amplification were performed with the REPLI-g Single Cell Kit (Qiagen) in 2 µL reactions.
Lysis and stop reagents from the REPLI-g kit received UV treatment to remove potential DNA
contamination[49]. An Illumina shotgun library was constructed from each single cell and
sequenced on the Illumina NextSeq platform (Illumina, San Diego, CA, U.S.A.). Sequencing
reads were filtered using BBTools[50] and assembled into SAGs using SPAdes[51].
425
Metagenome Assembly and binning
Each of the 24 individual samples were assembled de novo to obtain 24 metagenomes
assemblies. Metagenomes were quality filtered, then assembled using MetaSPADEs[52].
Sequencing coverage for each assembled scaffold was performed using Bowtie2[53]. Each 24
metagenomes were binned individually using three binning program: MetaBat1[54], MetaBat2[55]
and MaxBin2[56] test each program's ability to recover bins, and to consolidate bins generated
using different binners using DASTool[57]. DAStool was run with default parameters except for --
score_threshold 0.4. Using this approach, we reconstructed 3948 MAGs, and calculated genomes
statistics using CheckM[58]. We then used dRep[59] to dereplicate these 3948 MAGs to generate a
non-redundant set of genomes for downstream analyses using default parameters. dRep identifies

the highest quality genomes from a set of similar genomes, and reduces overall redundancy for
the downstream analyses. Finally, we used CheckM[58] lineage_wf and ssu_finder functions to
generate basic genome statistics and find 16S rRNA sequences for all 802 dereplicated genomes.
439
Identification of phylogenetic markers
We used a curated set of Hidden Markov Models (HMM) for 16 single-copy ribosomal proteins
(rpL2, rpL3, rpL4, rpL5, rpL6, rpL14, rpL14, rpL15, rpL16, rpL18, rpL22, rpL24, rpS3, rpS3,
rpS8, rpS10, rpS17, rpS19). Initially, the nucleotides of all genomes were translated into amino
acid sequences using Prodigal[60] (V2.6.3). Then the HMM models were searched against the
MAGs and SAGs amino acid sequences using hmmsearch (HMMER 3.1b2)[61] with the setting --
cut_tc and by saving the alignment as a multiple alignment for all hits (-A option). The cut_tc
option was manually determined for each HMM by the threshold resulting in the sharpest decline
in score during the initial run (no --cut_tc option); and are hardcoded in the HMM profiles. The
esl-reformat.sh script available with hmmsearch was used to extract alignment hits.
450
Phylogenetic tree
To create the concatenated gene phylogeny, we used publicly available metagenome-
assembled genomes which represented a wide range of environments including marine, soil,
hydrothermal environments, coastal and estuarine environments. We used 16 genes for the
bacterial tree, and 14 genes for the archaeal tree as described previously[22]. The amino acid
sequences corresponding to each gene were imported to Geneious Prime V.2019.0.04
(https://www.geneious.com) separately for each Bacterial or Archaeal tree. For each gene, we
aligned the sequences using MAFFT (v7.388, with parameters: Automatic algorithm,
BLOSUM62 scoring matrix, 1.53 gap open penalty, 0.123 offset value) [62]. In the case that more
than one copy of the ribosomal protein was found, we performed a sequence alignment of that
gene using MAFFT (same settings) and compared the alignments for those copies. For example,
if they correspond exactly to a split gene, we concatenated them to obtain a full-length gene. If
they were the same section (overlap) of the gene, but one was shorter than the other, the longer
fragment was retained.
We used Geneious Prime (https://www.geneious.com) to apply a 50% gap masking and
concatenated the 16 (or 14) proteins. The concatenated alignment was exported into the fasta
format and used as an input for RAxML-HPC, which was run on the CIPRES server[63] with the
following settings: datatype = protein, maximum-likelihood search = TRUE, no bfgs = FALSE,
print br length = false, protein matrix spec: JTT, runtime=168 hours, use bootstrapping = TRUE.
The resulting Newick format tree was visualized with FigTree
(http://tree.bio.ed.ac.uk/software/figtree/). The Newick format trees for the Archaea and
Bacteria are available as Supplementary Data 1 and Supplementary Data 2. The concatenated
ribosomal protein alignments can be found in Supplementary Data 3 and 4.
The same procedure was followed to create the taxon-specific tree, for example for the
CP Tanganyikabacteria, CP Ziwabacteria, Actinobacteria ac groups, LD12, and Nitrospira, using

phylum-specific references, except with no gap masking since sequences were highly similar and
had few gaps. The *amoA* gene phylogeny was performed using UniProt *amoA* sequences with the
two comammox genomes and with 90% applied masking.
479
Taxonomic assignment and comparison of manual versus automated methods
Taxonomic classification of MAGs and SAGs was manually performed by careful
inspection of the concatenated-RP gene phylogeny, bootstrap values of each group, and closest
named representatives. For comparative purposes, we also assigned taxonomy using GTDB-tk[10],
which uses ANI comparisons to reference genomes and 120 marker genes. While most
taxonomic assignment was consistent between methods, we noted that automatic assignment was
inconsistent for phyla with few representatives in the databases, such Archaea or CP. In total, 12
of the 48 SAGs had enough marker ribosomal sequences to be included in the bacterial tree, and
taxonomic classification was manually assigned, confirming classification by JGI-IMG. In most
cases, we were able to resolve a finer taxonomic identity for the SAGs manually. Additionally,
16S rRNA genes were found in 444 out of 802 MAGs using CheckM[58]. We used the curated
freshwater bacteria database "FreshTrain", implemented in TaxAss[64], to assigned taxonomy to
the 16S rRNA sequences. This freshwater-specific database, albeit focused on epilimnions of
temperate lakes is useful for comparable terminology between the Lake Tanganyika genomes
and the "typical" freshwater bacterial clades, lineages and tribes terminology defined
previously[11]. Taken together, the concatenated gene phylogeny, manual curation, automated
taxonomic classification and 16S rRNA sequences were used to provide support for phylogenetic
classification.
498
Confirmation and support for novel candidate phyla
To ensure that candidate phyla (CP Tanganyikabacteria and CP Ziwabacteria) described
in this study are indeed novel, we combined evidence from genome-wide phylogenetic analysis,
16S rRNA sequences and phylogeny of the MAGs, and average nucleotide identity (ANI) with
closely related genomes in the literature. Taken together, this providence evidence of the
monophyly and deep-branching of these lineages suggesting that they represent novel bacterial
phyla.
To visualize the distribution of CP Tanganyikabacteria globally, we annotated the 16S
rRNA sequence using ssu_finder from CheckM. Then we searched the LT's 16S rRNA sequence
against all the 16S rRNA sequence database from IMG/M[65] (accessed June 2019). We extracted
the latitude and longitude of each hit and used R to visualize the results. The points shown are
results with 81-100% percent ID using BLASTn[66] and have a e-value between 0 and 0.0000653.
511
Relative abundance across water column depths
To obtain a matrix of relative coverage as a proxy for abundance across the samples, we
first mapped each metagenomic paired-read sets to its respective metagenome assemblies using
BBMAP[50], using default settings. BBMap uses pileup.sh, which normalizes the coverage per

scaffold and genome size. We combined the mapping table from the 24 metagenomes, and
summed the total coverage based on the associated MAG ID for each scaffold. To normalize the
coverage by the metagenome size, we obtained the number of raw reads per metagenome. We
also classified the metagenomes by depth as oxic (0-50m, 100% to 80% DO), sub-oxic (50-
100m, 80% to 0% DO) and anoxic (100-1200m, 0% DO). We divided each coverage value by
the sum of reads in that layer. To determine whether a taxonomic group was "abundant" we
applied the criterion that the lineage must be among the 20 most abundant taxa in each of the 24
metagenomes
524
525   *Metabolic potential analysis*
526   Metabolic potential of the Tanganyika MAGs was assessed using 143 custom HMM
profiles[67] , made using *hmm-build* and searched with *hmmsearch* (HMMER 3.1b2)[61]. Threshold
cutoffs were manually created for each 143 HMMs by identifying the score at which the sharpest
drop happened and manually writing the TC value in the HMM database file. Hmmsearch --
use_tc and esl-reformat (part of the "easel" tool suite that comes with hmmsearch) were used to
export the alignments for the HMM hits. We classified the number of genes involved in sulfur
metabolism, hydrogen metabolism, methane, nitrogen, oxygen, C1-metabolism, C monoxide
(CO) metabolism, carbon fixation, organic nitrogen (urea), halogenated compounds, arsenic,
selenium, nitriles, and metals metabolism/utilization. To determine if a MAG could perform a
metabolic function, one copy of each representative gene of the pathway must have been present,
which a value of 1 (presence) was written, as opposed to 0 (absence) (Supplementary Table 3).
For novel candidate phyla, we also used kofamKOALA[68] to further annotate the genomes
(Supplementary Table 5). To investigate heterotrophy, carbohydrates degrading enzymes were
annotated using dbCan2[69] (Supplementary Table 6). The dbCAN-HMMdb-V7 databases was
downloaded (June 2019), and hmmscan and hmmscan-parser.sh were used to run dbCAN2.
541
542   *Annotation and differentiation of amoA and pmoA genes*
543   We annotated *pmoA* using custom HMMs as described above. However, we did not have
a custom HMM for *amoA*. *amoA* and *pmoA* can be difficult to distinguish using gene calling
methods. Therefore, we selected sequences annotated as "*pmoA*" (amoA-like sequences) and
built a single-gene phylogeny using references in Supplementary File 3 from [70]. We first called
the protein coding sequences using Prodigal[60] on the File 1 named
"AamoA.db_an96.aln_tax.annotated.fasta". Then we aligned the sequences using MAFFT[62] in
Geneious Prime, and applied 90% gap masking. We used RAxML[71] to build a comprehensive
tree. Based on the phylogenetic position of the sequences, we delineated *amoA* and *pmoA*
sequences (Figure S12). We noted that the pmoA custom HMM did not pick up any Archaeal
sequences. To identify archaeal ammonia oxidizers in LT, we searched the amoA, amoB and
amoC subunits of *Candidatus Nitrosophaera gargensis* Ga9.2 (Phylum Thaumarchaeota,
Kingdom Crenarchaeota, Class Nitrososphaeria) using BLASTp 2.2.31[66] . We identified 5

Thaumarchaeota MAGs with either subunits, and 2 MAGs (with all 3 subunits). We added the amoA sequences from these *Thaumarchaeota* to the tree in Figure S12.

Annotation and classification of Rubisco sequences

Following the methodology described in reference [72], we further classified the Rubisco enzymes in Lake Tanganyika MAGs. We used manually curated HMMs (described in our Methods) to retrieve Form I, II, II/III, III and IV. We only retained sequences over 200 basepairs. To generate the concatenated tree, we retrieved the unmasked sequences from Jaffe et al., 2019, and used MAFFT to include our sequences from Lake Tanganyika. A 95% sequence alignment masking was described as mentioned in the methods in Jaffe et al., 2019. We used RAxML[71] on the CIPRES server[63] to generate the concatenated tree. Rubisco forms were classified based on their position in the phylogenetic tree.

Data availability

The 802 MAGs can be accessed under the NCBI BioProject ID: PRJNA523022. The 24 metagenomes can be accessed on the Integrated Microbial Genomes & Microbiomes IMG/M portal using the following IMG Genome ID's: 3300020220, 3300020083, 3300020183, 3300020200, 3300021376, 3300021093, 3300021091, 3300020109, 3300020074, 3300021092, 3300021424, 3300020179, 3300020193, 3300020204, 3300020221, 3300020196, 3300020190, 3300020197, 3300020222, 3300020214, 3300020084, 3300020198, 3300020603, 3300020578. An interactive version of the Archaeal and Bacteria trees (Supplementary Data 1 and 2) can be accessed at iTOL at the url: https://itol.embl.de/shared/patriciatran . Code to generate the figures can be accessed at https://github.com/patriciatran/LakeTanganyika/.

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599

600   **Contributions**

601   P.Q.T, K.D.M, and K.A designed the study. P.B.M and B.K. conducted the sampling and
602   provided environmental data. P.Q.T. and K.A. performed genome-resolved metagenomics
603   analyses. P.Q.T. performed phylogenetic, metabolic and community analyses. P.Q.T, K.D.M,
604   and K.A. wrote the manuscript. All authors provided feedback and revised the manuscript.
605

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608

609   **Competing interests**
610   The authors declare no competing financial interests.
611

612   **Supplementary Information**
613   Supplementary Methods, Supplementary Figures 1–12, Supplementary Tables 1-7 and
614   Supplementary Data 1-4

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Figure 1. Sampling site and environmental data
A. Sampling sites in Lake Tanganyika, collected in July and October 2015
B. Weekly temperature profiles from January to July 2013.
C. Weekly dissolved oxygen profiles from January to July 2013.
Contours in *Figure 1A* and *1B* were generated *interp* in the package Akima (Akima and
Gebhardt 2016), and plots were done with the *fields* package (Nychka et al., 2017) in R.
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visualized using FigTree. The scale bar shows branch length corresponding to 0.3 and 0.4
substitutions per site.
A. Colored names are a subset of groups from Lake Tanganyika, with the number dereplicated of
MAGs listed in parenthesis.
B. Colored groups are the most abundant groups in Lake Tanganyika. Additionally, the
Candidate Phyla Radiation (CPR) and candidate phyla (CP) are listed. The two novel phyla from
this study are italicized. In both panels, the color scale of the circles represents the normalized
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640
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666
667 **Figure 6. Overview of vertical biogeochemical cycling**
668 Samples were collected along a vertical profile to capture changes in environmental variables.
669 The lake is separated into three operational zones: oxic, sub-oxic and anoxic. A selected group of
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671 distribution are depicted on the right.
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679 Information for the 802 Metagenome-assembled genomes (MAGs) from Lake Tanganyika,
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682
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Supplementary Table 5. CP Tanganyikabacteria and CP Ziwabacteria KOfam KEGG annotations
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Supplementary Table 6. The 802 genomes were annotated using dbCAN.
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Supplementary Table 7. All >3000 MAGs generated, and dereplication results. Each MAG was assigned to a cluster, then one representative MAG was selected for each cluster.

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Figure S1. Environmental data collected in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 for dissolved oxygen, temperature, chlorophyll a and conductivity. Data in was collected during 6 days in 2010 [Julian days 189 to 230], 8 days in 2011 [Julian day 182 to 237], 26 days in 2012 [Julian day 194 to 362] and 33 days in 2013 [Julian day 3 to 227]. Data in 2013 covers the largest day span annually. Data was plotted with ggplot2 (Wickham 2016) in R, dates were converted using *lubridate* package (Grolemund and Wickham 2011).

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748
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751
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754
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Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Taxonomic Group, ranked by total abundance across all layers

Figure 4

Figure 5

B Nitrogen Cycling

Nitrification and comammox

$$NH_3/NH_4 \xrightarrow{amoABC} NO_2 \xrightarrow{nxrAB} NO_3$$

Figure 6

Figure S2

Figure S3

A Index of replication of Cyanobacteria MAGs in Lake Tanganyika

B Coverage of Cyanobacteria MAGs in Lake Tanganyika

Figure S4

Figure S5

Tree scale: 0.1

Figure S6

Figure S7 A

Figure S7 B

Figure S7 C

Hydrogen

46 taxonomic groups and 220 distinct MAGs

Figure S7 D

Oxygen

49 taxonomic groups and 556 distinct MAGs

Figure S7 E

Carbon

66 taxonomic groups and 618 distinct MAGs

Figure S7 F

Figure S9

Figure S10

Figure S11

Figure S12

Candidatus Nitrospira inopinata LN885086.1_1707
Nitrospira sp. Ga0074138 LNDU01000063.1_90
CZPZ01000032.1_161
Candidatus Nitrospira nitrificans NEWS02000008.1_106
Nitrospira sp. UBA2083 DCZN01000130.1_15
Nitrospira sp. UBA5702 DIHG01000031.1_3
Candidatus Nitrospira nitrosa CZQA01000001.1_65
Candidatus Nitrospira nitrosa CZQA01000011.1_92
Nitrospira sp. UW-LDO-01 NIUT01000005.1_7
Nitrospira sp. SG-bin1 LVWS01000001.1_58
Nitrospira sp. SG-bin2 LVWT01000004.1_39
Nitrospira sp. ST-bin4 MSXM01000087.1_1
Nitrospira sp. UBA2082 DCZO01000016.1_277
M_DeepCast_50m_m2_151
M_DeepCast_65m_mx_150

amoA gene phylogeny

0.3