Mitochondrial Genome Rearrangements in the Scleractinia/ Corallimorpharia Complex: Implications for Coral Phylogeny

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Abstract

Corallimorpharia is a small Order of skeleton-less animals that is closely related to the reef-building corals (Scleractinia) and of fundamental interest in the context of understanding the potential impacts of climate change in the future on coral reefs. The relationship between the nominal Orders Corallimorpharia and Scleractinia is controversial—the former is either the closest outgroup to the Scleractinia or alternatively is derived from corals via skeleton loss. This latter scenario, the "naked coral" hypothesis, is strongly supported by analyses based on mitochondrial (mt) protein sequences, whereas the former is equally strongly supported by analyses of mt nucleotide sequences. The "naked coral" hypothesis seeks to link skeleton loss in the putative ancestor of corallimorpharians with a period of elevated oceanic CO₂ during the Cretaceous, leading to the idea that these skeleton-less animals may be harbingers for the fate of coral reefs under global climate change. In an attempt to better understand their evolutionary relationships, we examined mt genome organization in a representative range (12 species, representing 3 of the 4 extant families) of corallimorpharians and compared these patterns with other Hexacorallia. The most surprising finding was that mt genome organization in *Corallimorphus profundus*, a deep-water species that is the most scleractinian-like of all corallimorpharians. This finding is consistent with the idea that *C. profundus* represents a key position in the coral <-> corallimorpharian transition.

Key words: naked coral hypothesis, gene order, mitochondrial genome, coral evolution.

Introduction

Understanding the evolutionary history of the Scleractinia and relationships between corals and other members of the anthozoan subclass Hexacorallia should enable a better understanding of how it has been influenced by climate in the past and thus enable better predictions of the likely impacts of climate change (Romano and Palumbi 1996). Of the six

Orders of hexacorals, only members of the Scleractinia develop continuous external calcified skeletons (Daly et al. 2003). The Scleractinia suddenly appear in the fossil record in the middle Triassic, about 240 Ma, but the range of morphological variation seen in the Middle Triassic fossils is comparable to that of extant scleractinians (Romano and

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Mitochondrial Genome Rearrangements

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Palumbi 1996). Molecular phylogenies based on both mitochondrial (mt) and nuclear (nucl) genes imply a deeper divergence (~300 Ma—in the Late Carboniferous) of extant scleractinians into two major clades, the "Complexa" and the "Robusta" (Romano and Palumbi 1996; Romano and Cairns 2000; Chen et al. 2002; Le Goff-Vitry et al. 2004; Fukami et al. 2008; Barbeitos et al. 2010; Kitahara, Cairns, and Miller 2010; Kitahara, Cairns, Stolarski, et al. 2010; Kitahara, Cairns, et al. 2012; Kitahara et al. 2012; Kayal et al. 2013). By adding deep-water species to existing molecular data sets and applying an appropriately calibrated molecular clock, Stolarski et al. (2011) demonstrated that two exclusively deep-sea families, the Gardineriidae and Micrabaciidae, form a "basal" clade that diverged at around 425 Ma, prior to the Complexa/Robusta split, pushing the evolutionary origin of scleractinians deep into the Paleozoic. These results support the scenario that scleractinians are the descendants of soft-bodied (corallimorpharian-like) ancestors that survived the mass extinction at the Permian/Triassic boundary and subsequently gained the ability to deposit calcified skeletons (Stolarski et al. 2011).

The "naked coral" hypothesis, first put forward by Stanley and Fautin (2001) to explain the sudden appearance of diverse scleractinian fauna in the middle Triassic, is based on the idea that the skeleton has been an ephemeral trait during coral evolution. Under this hypothesis, the Scleractinia were skeleton-less in the early Triassic, a time when carbonate deposition was suppressed globally (Stanley 2003). Consistent with the idea of skeleton ephemerality, some coral species can undergo reversible skeleton loss under acid conditions (Fine and Tchernov 2007). Strong phylogenetic support for the "naked coral" hypothesis came from analyses based on the alignment of concatenated proteins encoded by 17 complete mt genomes from hexacorallians (Medina et al. 2006); in their analysis, scleractinians were paraphyletic, corallimorpharians being more closely related to the Complexa than are Robusta, the interpretation being that the Corallimorpharia arose by skeleton loss from a scleractinian ancestor at a time (during the mid-Cretaceous) of high oceanic CO2 levels (Medina et al. 2006).

Although the "naked coral" scenario is supported by analyses of protein sequence data, phylogenetics based on mt nucleotide sequences instead strongly support scleractinian monophyly (Stolarski et al. 2011; Kayal et al. 2013; Kitahara et al. 2014). The fundamental disagreement between phylogenies based on nucleotide (fig. 1A) or amino acid (fig. 1B) sequence data for mt proteins stems from the fact that none of the available models for sequence evolution adequately account for the observed data (Kitahara et al. 2014). One possible explanation for this is the occurrence of a "catastrophic" event—a major and unpredictable change, such as sudden impairment of mt DNA repair processes (which are believed to be an ancestral trait within Anthozoa

(Pont-Kingdon et al. 1998; Shearer et al. 2002; Brockman and McFadden 2012).

Given the intractability of coral/corallimorph relationships using conventional molecular phylogenetics, we explored the informativeness of mt genome architecture in this context. mt gene rearrangements occur relatively infrequently and have proven useful in resolving evolutionary relationships, both shallow and deep, across a broad range of organisms (e.g., Gai et al. 2008; Brockman and McFadden 2012; Kilpert et al. 2012). This study is based on the complete mt genomes of a total of 12 corallimorpharians (8 of which are novel), representing 3 of 4 currently described families (Daly et al. 2007; Fautin et al. 2007), and 32 scleractinians, and includes both the early diverging coral Gardineria hawaiiensis (Stolarski et al. 2011), and corallimorpharian, Corallimorphus profundus, which is considered to be the most coral-like of corallimorpharians based on morphological grounds (Moseley 1877; den Hartog 1980; Riemann-Zürneck and Iken 2003). The results indicate that, by contrast with the Scleractinia, extensive rearrangements of the mt genome have occurred within Corallimorpharia. The most surprising finding, however, was that the mt genome of *C. profundus* is scleractinian-like, and is organized very differently to those of all other corallimorpharians for which data are available. Both nucleotide and amino acid sequenced-based phylogenetics unequivocally place C. profundus as an early diverging corallimorpharian, indicating that this organism most closely reflects the coral <-> corallimorpharian transition.

Materials and Methods

DNA Extraction, Polymerase Chain Reaction, Long Polymerase Chain Reaction, Cloning, and Sequencing

Genomic DNA was extracted from corallimorpharian samples that had been preserved in 95% (V/W) ethanol following Chen et al. (2002)—sampling information is summarized in table 1. Long-range polymerase chain reaction (L-PCR; Cheng et al. 1994) was used to amplify large (6-9 kb) and overlapping fragments covering the entire mt genomes of corallimorpharians and corals. For each species, either two- or threespecific primer pairs were designed on the basis of previously available partial sequence data for of rns, rnl, and COI (Folmer et al. 1994; Romano and Palumbi 1997; Chen and Yu 2000; Lin et al. 2011) (supplementary table S1, Supplementary Material online). Reactions were set up in a total volume of $50 \,\mu$ l: $10 \times LA$ PCR buffer, 2.5 mM MgCl₂, 2.5 mM of each dNTP, 2.5 units of TaKaRa La Tag, 0.5 μm of each primer, and approximately 0.5 µg of genomic DNA. The L-PCR conditions were slightly modified from those recommended by the polymerase manufacturer as follows: 94°C for 1 min, then 30 cycles of 10s at 98°C, 45s at 62-63°C, 14.25 min at 68°C, and 10 min at 72°C. PCR products were recovered from the agarose gel using the TOPO XL gel purification

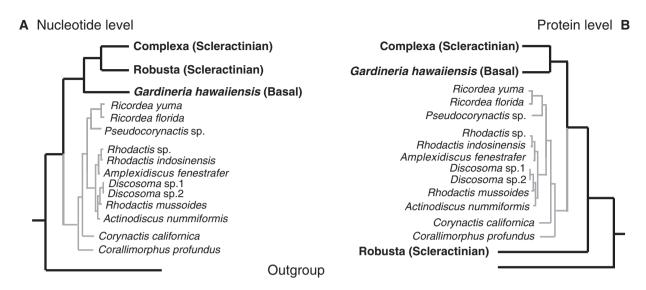


Fig. 1.—Alternative phylogenetic hypotheses for relationships between Scleractinia and Corallimorpharia based on mt genome nucleotide sequences (A) or the amino acid sequences of the proteins that they encode (B). The trees were modified from Kitahara et al. (2014). Note that, for both (A) and (B) scenarios, support for the node separating Corallimorpharia from Scleractinia (the root of the gray part of the tree) was over 97% under both maximum-likelihood analysis and Bayesian inference.

method, cloned into a pCR-XL-PCR vector system using topoisomerase I (Invitrogen), and transformed into *Escherichia coli* (Top10) by electroporation. The nucleotide sequences were determined for complementary strains of two to six clones from each sample using primer walking on the same PCR product by an ABI 377 Genetic Analyzer (Applied Biosystems). The M13 forward and reverse primers were used to obtain the initial sequences from the ends of each insertion. The consensus sequences from three sequenced clones were present for each species.

Genome Annotation and Sequence Analysis

Sequences were verified and assembled using SeqManII (DNAstar v5.0) or Sequencher v4.8 (Gene Codes Corporation) and then analyzed in Vector NTI v9.0 (InforMax). Open-reading frames (ORFs) of length more than 50 (amino acids) were translated using National Center for Biotechnology Information translation table 4 and compared with the databases using BlastX (Gish and States 1993). No novel ORFs were identified on this basis. MEGA v5.0 (Tamura et al. 2011) with a weighted matrix of Clustal W (Thompson et al. 1994) was used to align the identical putative ORFs and rRNA genes with previously published data. The 5'- and 3'ends of the rRNA genes were predicted using the program SINA on the Silva ribosomal RNA database site (www.arb-silva. de/, last accessed February 1, 2014) using the default settings (Pruesse et al. 2012). tRNAs were predicted using tRNAscan-SE search server v1.21 (Lowe and Eddy 1997). rRNA loci were identified on the basis of sequence similarity. Finally, Vector NTI v9.0 was used to generate maps of the mt genomes based on the assembled sequence data.

Gene Order Phylogeny

The double cut and join (DCJ) distance metric (Yancopoulos et al. 2005), implemented in GRAPPA (Moret et al. 2002; Zhang et al. 2009), was used to calculate the pairwise DCJ and breakpoint distances (BPDs) from the gene order data and to generate pairwise distance matrixes. Gene order phylogenies (DCJ and BPD) were estimated with FastME (Desper and Gascuel 2002).

Because gene order is a single character with multiple states (Shi et al. 2010), bootstrapping is not applicable, hence the reliability of each branch was estimated by applying a jackknife resampling technique that in each iteration randomly removed 25% of the initial orthologous gene sets. Note that, because the data set consisted of only 13 protein-coding genes, higher removal rates (e.g., 50%) are unable to resolve the tree branching order. Jackknifing was used to generate 1,000 matrices, which were imported into FastME and used to obtain 1,000 DCJ- and BPD-based trees. Finally, the CONSENSE program in the PHYLIP software package (Felsenstein 1989) was used to calculate majority-rule consensus trees with percent values at each node. Each value represents the percentage of trees supporting a clade defined by a node.

Results

Characteristics of mt Genomes of Corallimorpharians and *Gardineria hawaiiensis*

The molecular characteristics of the mt genomes of a representative range (8) of corallimorpharians and the "basal" scleractinian *G. hawaiiensis* are summarized in table 1, along

Characteristics of the mt Genomes of Corallimorpharians, Scleractinians, and Other Anthozoans

			(ch) (hn)																	Cito one
			Length (bp)																	site and
				A+T	C+ G	atb6 at	atp8 cob	8	O Ion		III nd1	nd2	nd3 nd4	4 nd4l	pu Sbu	Ē	rns tr	trnM trnW	W IGS (length)	GenBank No.
Corallimombaria		Actinodiscus nummiformis	20 02	60 9	39	699	210 1161	1 581	1 209	756 78	789 987	1 098	357 1 476	300	1839 612	2350	1 304	07 17		Wanlitung Taiwan
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		Coraminor prior productus	20,400	00.0	0.00							060'1						- 1		
		Conynactis calitornica	20,632	60.2	39.8							1,098					, 756	. 69		IJ.
		Discosoma sp. 1	20,908	61	38.9			-	1,208			1,098					1,224	70		
		Discosoma sp. 2	20,912	61	38.9	699 2	210 1,161	1,581	1,207	756 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,839 615	2,342	1,068	70 70	4,289	39 NC_008072
		Pseudocorynactis sp.	21,239	6.09	39	699 2	213 1,230		1,178	756 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,839 612	2,537	1,223	70 70	3,177	7 Birch Aquarium at SIO
		Rhodactis indosinesis	20,092	6.09	39.1	699 2	210 1,161	1,581	1,205	756 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,839 612	2,350	1,303	11 71	2,624	4 Wanlitung, Taiwan
		R. mussoides	20,826	19	39		210 1,161		1,207		789 984	1,098	•	76 300	1,839 615		1,304	71 70		
		Rhodactis sp.	20,093	61	33	699 2	210 1,161		1,207	756 78	789 984	1,098	_	300	1,839 612		1,240	70 70		
		Ricordea florida	21,376	62.1	37.9		210 1,140		1,180	756 78	789 987	1,098	-	900 300	1,839 606		1,218	77 70	4,510	
		Ri. vuma	22,015	62.4	37.6	699 2	213 1,140	1,599		756 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	900 300	1,839 606	2,444	1,262	77 70	5,148	Wai
Scleractinia	Basal	Gardineria hawaiiensis	19,429	60.3	39.7	699 2	264 1,197		1,136	738 78	789 981	1,098	357 1,452	300	1,836 615	2,400	1,159	71 70		
	Complex	Acropora tenuis	18,338	62.1	37.9	699 2	219 1,155	1,602		744 78	780 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,836 594	2,261	1,176	71 70	3,615	5 NC_003522
		Agaricia humilis	18,735	59.6	40.4	699	196 1,152	1,581		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,479	9 300	1,836 594	1,577		70 69	4,773	'3 NC_008160
		Alveopora sp.	18,146	62.2	37.8	699 2	237 1,158	3 1,602		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,836 594	2,261	1,125	70 70	3,444	4 KJ634271
		Anacropora matthai	17,888	61.6	38.4	699 2	219 1,158	1,602		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,836 594	2,261	1,174	70 70	3,155	.5 NC_006898
		Astreopora explanata	18,106	62.2	37.8	699 2	219 1,146	1,587		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,836 594	2,243	1,176	71 70	3,416	6 KJ634269
		Astreopora myriophthalma	18,106	62.1	37.8	699 2	219 1,146		, -	744 78	789 984	1,098		900 300	1,836 594	2,244	1,176	70 70		
		Euphyllia ancora	18,875	62.3	37.8		219 1,155		, .	744 78	789 984	1,098		76 300	1,863 594	2,308	1,177	70 70		9 NC_015641
		Fungiacyathus stephanus ^a	19,381	62.2	37.8	699 2	231 1,161		962	744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,839 594	2,366	1,114	71 70		
		Goniopora columna	18,766	62.9	37.1	699 2	216 1,164	1,652	947	744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	76 300	1,836 594	2,227	1,029	02 69	3,214	4 NC_015643
		Isopora palifera	18,725	61.7	38.2	699 2	219 1,158	3 1,602		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	900 300	1,836 594	2,259	1,175	71 70	3,993	3 KJ634270
		kopora togianensis	18,637	61.8	38.2	699 2	219 1,158	3 1,602		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	9 300	1,836 594	2,259	1,177	71 70	3,903	3 KJ634268
		Montipora cactus	17,887	61.6	38.4	699 2	219 1,158	3 1,602		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,836 594	2,266	1,172	71 70	3,151	11 NC_006902
		Pavona clavus	18,315	59.5	40.5	699 2	219 1,152	1,581		744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,836 606	2,299	1,169	69 02	3,566	i6 NC_008165
		Porites okinawanesis	18,647	63.8	36.2	699 2	216 1,161		996	744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,836 594	2,301	1,029	71 70	3,124	4 NC_15644
		Porites porites	18,648	63.7	36.2	699 2	216 1,161	1,578	996	744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	9 300	1,836 594	2,271	1,060	77 70	3,077	7 NC_008166
		Siderastrea radians	19,387	63.1	36.9	699 2.	234 1,155	1,584	686	744 78	789 984	1,098	357 1,476	,6 300	1,836 594	2,242	1,296	77 17	3,568	
	Robust	Astrangia sp.	14,853	68.1	31.9	678 1	198 1,140			685 78	780 948	1,092	342 1,440	300	1,812 561	1,178		72 70	1,474	'4 NC_008161
		Colpophyllia natans	16,906	66.4	33.5	678 1	198 1,140			685 78	780 948	1,104	342 1,440	300	1,815 561	1,885	1,012	72 70	2,310	
		Lophelia pertusaª	16,150	65.1	34.9	699	159 1,161	1,566			780 948	1,092	345 1,446	16 300	1,836 507	1,829	907	77 70	1,816	6 NC_015143
		Madracis mirabilis	16,951	68.4	31.7	678 2	224 1,140				826 082	1,092	345 1,446	900 91	1,815 564	1,937	910	77	2,255	5 NC_011160
		Madrepora oculataª	15,839	9.69	30.3	681 13	1,140	1,560			780 948	1,092	345 1,446	91	1,815 567	1,998	1,163	77 70	873	3 JX_236041
		Montastraea annularis	16,138	66.4	33.5	678 1	1,140	1,578			780 948	1,287	342 1,440	300	1,815 561	1,973	903	73 69	1,345	I5 NC_007224
		Montastraea faveolata	16,138	66.4	33.6	678 1	98 1,140	1,578		708 78	780 948	1,287	342 1,440	008 01	1,815 561	1,973	903	72 69	1,346	I6 NC_007226
		Montastraea franksi	16,137	66.4	33.6	678 1	98 1,140	1,578		708 78	780 948	1,287	342 1,440	10 300	1,815 561	1,973	903	72 69	1,345	IS NC_007225
		Mussa angulosa	17,245	66.3	33.7	678 1	98 1,140	1,575	-	685 78	780 948	1,104	342 1,440	300	1,815 561	220	269	72 70	4,292	12 NC_008163
		Pocillopora eydouxi	17,422	8.69	30.1	678 2	213 1,140	1,550		801 78	780 978	1,308	345 1,491	300	1,839 564	1,917	606	71 70	2,468	8 NC_009798
		Polycyathus chaishanensis	15,357	70.9	29.1	678 1	98 1,140	1,574		708 78	780 948	1,092	342 1,440	300	1,812 561	1,893	905	72 70	844	1 NC_015642
		Seriatopora caliendrum	17,010	2.69	30.3	678 2	37 1,140	1,548		759 78	780 978	1,092	345 1,446	900 91	1,839 564	1,902	916	77 70	2,345	IS NC_010245
		S. hystrix	17,059	6.69	30.2	678 2	237 1,140	1,548			826 082	1,092	345 1,446	900	1,839 564	1,904	916	77 70	2,392	
		Stylophora pistilata	17,177	70.2	29.9	678 2	249 1,140	1,548		837 78	780 978	1,092	345 1,446	91 300	1,839 564	1,936	914	70 70	2,390	0 NC_011162

species Collection GenBank No. DQ_640649 NC_008164 NC_000933 DQ_640646 VC_008827 Site and 2,103 2,591 3,637 3,081 882 brnW 2 2 2 tmM 17 17 1,082 rns 693 581 924 2,588 2,189 2,224 602 Ξ 558 pq 9 999 009 609 558 1,851 1,848 1,816 1,803 1,818 1,818 nd5 nd4 300 300 300 294 294 1,476 1,476 1,476 1,449 1,449 Gene Size (bp) nd4 357 nd3 357 357 354 354 1,110 1,158 1,164 1,146 nd2 984 둳 984 972 972 8 789 786 786 786 0 750 753 744 747 1,239 8 853 1,593 1,593 1,582 1,587 1,597 8 1,179 1,182 1,143 1,14 g atp8 213 219 231 219 218 афе 714 699 690 708 5 + 0 Nucleotide (%) 39.6 48.3 39.1 38.1 37.1 A+T 60.9 61.8 62.9 62.7 ength (bp) 17,443 16,389 Pseudopterogorgia bipinnata Chrysopathes formosa Briareum asbestinum Nematostella sp.ª Metridium senile^a Savalia savaglia Species Scleractinian Clades Other Anthozoa Order

for the octocoral mtMuts gene are Data f mt genomes. the φ in each of IGSs (dq) total length isted. IGS here refers to the are also Non:—Sources of publically available data and collection sites in the case new included. NC_008158 rns gene is 1,239 bp based on the analyses in this study not

with the publically available data for hexacorallians (42 species). All the corallimorpharian and scleractinian mt genomes, both those determined in this study and previous work, encode 13 protein-coding genes, 2 tRNA genes (trnM and trnW; but note that Seriatopora spp. have a duplicated trnW), the small (rns) and large (rnl) subunit ribosomal DNA genes, and a COI group I intron. Corallimorpharian mt genomes range in size from 20,093 bp in Rhodactis sp. to 22,015 bp in *Ricordea yuma* and are significantly larger than those of both Complexa and Robusta corals due not only to the presence of COI group I intron (table 1) but also to differences in size of the intergenic spacers (IGSs) between the three lineages (supplementary fig. S1, Supplementary Material online). In fact, the mt genome architectures of the Corallimorpharia are less dense than those of Scleractinia; mt genome size correlates with the total size of the IGS $(r^2 = 0.5371, P < 0.001;$ supplementary fig. S2, Supplementary Material online). Corallimorpharian mt genomes are characterized by the genes being discrete (i.e., nonoverlapping), whereas this is guite rare in the Scleractinia, where this in shown by only 2 (the complex corals, Siderastrea sp. and Fungiacyathus stephanus) of the 29 species for which data are available.

The mt genomes of scleractinians are smaller than those of corallimorpharians, but the size (19,429 bp) reported here for that of *G. hawaiiensis* is the largest known for a scleractinian. Two cases of gene overlap were observed in the *G. hawaiiensis* mt genome; *ND4* and *ms* loci overlap by 1 bp, and *ATP8* and *COI* overlap by 18 bp.

Gene Order and Rearrangements

The organization of the mt genomes of hexacorallian anthozoans is summarized as linear maps in figure 2 and potential rearrangement mechanisms discussed below. As in the Scleractinia, there is a canonical corallimorpharian gene arrangement (CII), but these two patterns are clearly distinct. Ten of 12 corallimorpharian mt genomes exhibited an identical gene arrangement (referred to as Type CII in fig. 3), the exceptions being those of Corynactis californica (Type CI) and C. profundus (Type CIII). In the Scleractinia, 27 of the 29 complete mt genomes have identical gene order, but again two cases of rearrangement are known (fig. 2). However, although noncanonical gene arrangements have been observed in both Corallimorpharia and Scleractinia, those in the latter involve relatively small changes (i.e., can be explained by single rearrangement events), the rearrangements within Corallimorpharia are much more extensive (fig. 2). At least four rearrangement events are required for the transition between Type CII and Type CI, up to six rearrangement events were identified between Type CII and Type CIII. In the case of scleractinians, far fewer rearrangement events can explain the two deviations from the canonical pattern (Type SII), which G. hawaiiensis shares with most of the

able 1 Continued

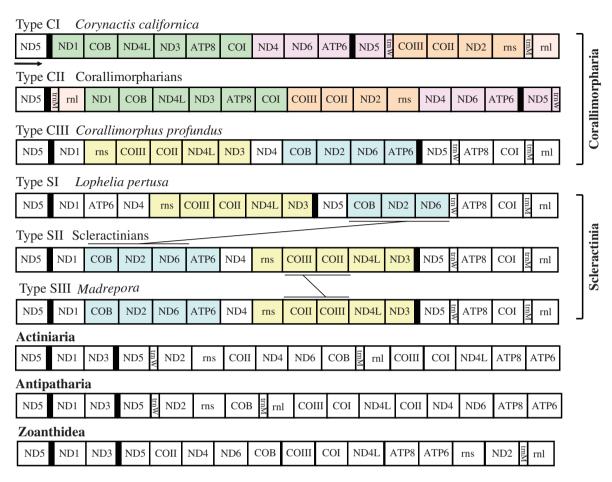


Fig. 2.—Linear maps showing mt genome architecture in Corallimorpharia, Scleractinia, and other members of the anthozoan subclass Hexacorallia. Names of each Order are indicated in bold. The arrow indicates the direction of transcription. The positions of the 5′- and 3′-ends of the ND5 intron are indicated by black squares. Corresponding blocks of genes are marked with color; for clarity, lines showing how genes or gene blocks differ in organization between the mt genomes are shown for only the Scleractinia. Note the relatively small number of rearrangements required to account for genome organization between the scleractinians and Corallimorphus compared with the large number of rearrangements that appear to have occurred in the corallimorpharians.

Scleractinia. *Madrepora oculata* (Type SIII) differs from the SII pattern only in having the order of the *COII–COIII* genes changed, whereas in *Lophelia pertusa* (Type SI), a block of genes (*COB-ND2-ND6*) has been rearranged (Type SI). The most surprising finding was that, in terms of gene organization, the mt genome of the deep sea corallimorph *C. profundus* (Type CIII) was more similar to the canonical scleractinian organization (Type SII) than it was to other corallimorpharians. Only two rearrangements of blocks of genes are required to explain the SII–CIII transition (fig. 2). Thus, although *Corallimorphus* is unquestionably a corallimorpharian in terms of the sequences of mt genes, the organization of those genes is scleractinian-like, implying that it might represent a key transitional state.

Among metazoans, one unique characteristic of the mt genomes of hexacorallians is the presence of a self-splicing intron within the *ND5* gene that contains a number of complete genes. In the case of the Zoanthidea, Antipatharia, and Actiniaria for which data are available, only two genes, *ND1*

and *ND3*, are contained in the *ND5* intron, whereas in the Type CII, all of the genes (including *trnM*, but excluding *trnW*) are contained in the *ND5* intron. In the Type CI pattern, nine protein-encoding genes are located in the *ND5* intron, whereas in Types CIII, SII, and SIII, the same ten protein-coding genes and rns are contained in the *ND5* intron. In Type SI, the number of genes within the *ND5* intron is reduced to 8 due to a rearrangement event between Type SI and these two types of mt genomes in the scleractinians (fig. 2).

Discussion

The most surprising finding of this study was that the mt genome of the deep-sea corallimorpharian, *C. profundus*, more closely resembles scleractinians in gene organization than it does other corallimorpharians (fig. 3*A* and *B*). Although molecular phylogenetic analyses based on nucleotide or amino acid sequence data for mt proteins yield

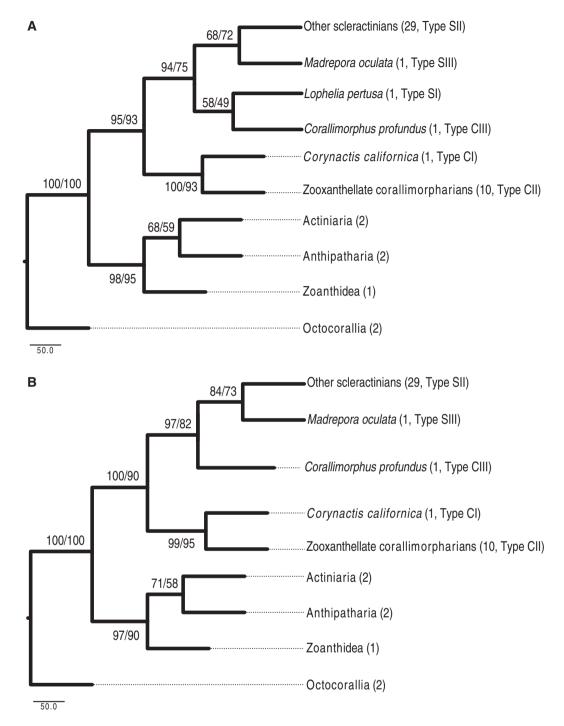


Fig. 3.—mt gene order phylogeny of anthozoans. The trees shown are majority-rule cladograms generated using the CONSENSE program in PHYLIP (Felsenstein 1989). The numbers shown at the nodes indicate the percentages of 1,000 jackknife analyses supporting the topology shown in breakpoint and DCJ analyses, respectively. Numbers of species exhibiting the gene arrangement shown are indicated in parentheses. (A) Gene order phylogeny with Lophelia included. (B) Gene order phylogeny with Lophelia excluded. Note the weak support for the Lophelia/Corallimorphus clade in (A).

fundamentally different results with respect to the relationship between the "complex" and "robust" scleractinian clades, there is no disagreement concerning the monophyly of the Corallimorpharia nor about the early divergence of Corallimorphus within that clade (fig. 1; Kitahara et al. 2014). On morphological grounds, Corallimorphus is also considered the most coral like of corallimorpharians (Moseley 1877; den Hartog 1980; Riemann-Zürneck and Iken 2003).

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Several authors (den Hartog 1980; Owens 1984; Cairns 1989, 1990; Fautin and Lowenstein 1992) have pointed out the level of similarity between Corallimorphus and members of the scleractinian family Micrabaciidae, which are characterized by a reduced skeleton, the fleshy polyp totally investing the rudimentary corallum. Molecular clock estimates imply that the micrabaciids and gardineriids diverged from the scleractinian lineage in the mid-Paleozoic, well prior to the Robusta/ Complexa split (Stolarski et al. 2011). The similarity between the earliest diverging members of both the Scleractinia and Corallimorpharia in terms of both morphology and mt genome architecture (fig. 2) implies that Corallimorphus occupies a key position in the corallimorpharian <-> scleractinian transition. Corallimorphus therefore diverged either close to the point of the scleractinian/corallimorpharian divergence (under scleractinian monophyly) or at the point of skeleton loss (under the "naked coral" scenario).

If we accept that the organization of the mt genome in *Corallimorphus* most closely reflects the ancestral pattern (figs. 1 and 4), then extensive reorganizations are required to generate the consensus corallimorpharian architecture (CII in fig. 2) and that seen in *Corynactis*; in contrast, the rearrangements documented to date within Scleractinia require far fewer steps. In the case of *Lophelia*, the presence of a 67 bp direct repeat comprising the 3'-end of the *ND1* and 5'-end of *COB* genes (Emblem et al. 2011) implies that the likely mechanism of reorganization was tandem duplication and random loss (Moritz et al. 1987; Zhang 2003), which may also account for the *COII–COIII* inversion seen in *Madrepora* (Lin et al. 2012). We were unable to identify signatures of duplication-mediated rearrangement in corallimorpharians; however, neither are there obvious examples of inversion of segments of the mt

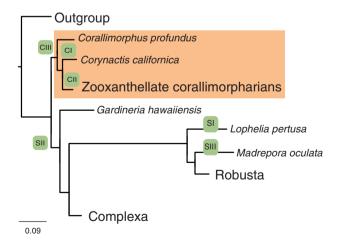


Fig. 4.—Hypothetical scheme for the evolution of mt genome architecture in the Scleractinia and Corallimorpharia. The scheme is based on the phylogenetic tree shown as figure 5 in Kitahara et al. (2014), with patterns of gene organization (numbered as in fig. 2) indicated in green houses.

genome in this Order. Rather, extensive segmental reorganization without inversion has occurred within Corallimorpharia, possibly facilitated by the less compact nature of the mt genomes (reviewed in Boore and Brown 1998). This contrasts markedly with the situation in octocorals, where many successive inversion events explain the observed diversity of mt gene organization (Brockman and McFadden 2012).

Can comparisons of mt genome organization resolve the question of coral monophyly? Although the data presented here are consistent with monophyly of the Scleractinia, they do not exclude the possibility of an origin for corallimorpharians within the coral clade. Phylogenetic analyses based on gene order (fig. 3A and B) were ambiguous. Although both AA- and nt-based molecular phylogenetic analyses unambiguously support monophyly of the Corallimorpharia, the gene order analysis (fig. 3A and B) did not. We interpret the grouping of Lophelia and Corallimorphus in this analysis as an artifact resulting from superficial similarities in gene organization in these two organisms; although gene order is similar, the sequences of those genes are highly divergent. The idea that the grouping of *L. pertusa* with *C. profundus* is artifactual is supported by the relatively low DCJ and BPD confidence values (58/49) associated with this node (i.e., well below the 85% confidence interval recommended by Shi et al. 2010). When L. pertusa was removed from the analysis, the overall DCJ and BPD statistic performances at the nodes of Corallimorpharia and Scleractinia increased, particularly for the node of C. profundus and Scleractinia/M. oculata, where support increased from 94/75 to 97/82 (fig. 3).

The mt genomes of the Robusta differ from both corallimorpharians and all other corals in several characteristics. First, within the larger Scleractinia/Corallimorpharia clade, the Robusta have the most compact mt genomes (size range 14,853–17,422 bp) as a consequence of having in general shorter intergenic regions and the largest number of overlapping gene pairs (three to six cases of overlaps). In contrast, corallimorpharians have the largest mt genomes (size range 20,092–22,015 bp), longer intergenic regions, and no cases of overlapping genes, with complex corals intermediate in these characteristics (genome sizes 17,887–19,387 bp; 0–2 overlapping gene pairs—most frequently a single case of overlapping genes). Second, the Robusta differ in structural comparisons of the ND5 group I intron (Emblem et al. 2011) as well as in molecular phylogenetics based on this feature. A group I intron interrupts the ND5 gene of all hexacorallians examined to date; these introns typically come and go during evolution but that in hexacorallians contains a variable number of genes and has become an essential feature. The hexacorallian ND5 intron has been "captured" in the sense that it is now dependent on host-derived factors for splicing, as indicated by the substitution of the ωG (the last nucleotide of the intron) by ωA (reviewed in Nielsen and Johansen 2009; Emblem et al. 2011). Although these characteristics are common across the

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coral-corallimorpharian clade, the *ND5* introns of robust corals have a more compact core and overlapping intron and *ND5*-coding sequences (Emblem et al. 2011). In some robust corals, ωA is replaced by ωC , indicating a higher level of dependency on host factors for processing and thus greater integration of intron and host. These qualitative factors, as well as molecular phylogenetics of the *ND5* intron sequences, are most parsimoniously accommodated by scleractinian monophyly (Emblem et al. 2011). Third, of the three lineages, the mt genomes of Robusta have the highest (A+T) content and most constrained codon usage, one obvious consequence of which is that phenylalanine is overrepresented in the proteins that they encode, suggesting that mt DNA repair may be reduced in the Robusta (Kitahara et al. 2014).

The features outlined above, in which the Robusta differ from complex corals and corallimorphs, are derived characteristics—they serve to resolve the robust corals but do not unambiguously identify the sister group. Scleractinian monophyly explains all of the data most parsimoniously, but the alternative cannot yet be ruled out. The mt genome has been exhaustively mined for answers, but these must likely wait for the availability of appropriate nuclear markers.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary table S1 and figures S1 and S2 are available at *Genome Biology and Evolution* online (http://www.gbe.oxfordjournals.org/).

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