

1 **Genomic Characterization of *Ralstonia solanacearum* Phage ϕ RSB1, a T7-like**
2 **Wide-host-range Phage**

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11 Running title: NOTES

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1 Abstract

2 **ϕ RSB1 is a wide-host-range, T7-like bacteriophage that infects and efficiently lyses the**
3 **phytopathogenic bacterium *Ralstonia solanacearum*. The ϕ RSB1 genome comprises**
4 **43,079-bp dsDNA (61.7% G+C) with 325-bp terminal repeats and contains 47 open**
5 **reading frames. Strong activity of tandem early promoters and wide specificity of phage**
6 **promoters of ϕ RSB1 were demonstrated.**

7

8 Text

9 The phytopathogenic gram-negative bacterium *Ralstonia solanacearum* causes bacterial
10 wilt disease in many important crops (10). Recently, Yamada et al. (9, 12, 21) isolated and
11 characterized various kinds of bacteriophage that specifically infect *R. solanacearum* strains
12 belonging to different races and/or biovars. These phages may be useful as a tool not only for
13 molecular biological studies of *R. solanacearum* pathogenicity but also for diagnosis and
14 biocontrol of bacterial wilt. In this study, we report the genome and characteristic features of a
15 new phage ϕ RSB1. ϕ RSB1 was isolated from a soil sample from a tomato crop field, and was
16 selected for its ability to form large clear plaques on plate cultures of *R. solanacearum* strain
17 M4S (for details of bacterial strains see 21). Plaques formed on assay plates (CPG) were
18 1.0-1.5 cm in diameter. This phage has a wide host range and infected 13 of 15 strains tested,
19 including strains of races 1, 3 and 4 and of biovars 3, 4, and N2. Under laboratory conditions
20 (in standard one-step growth assays) host cells of *R. solanacearum* strains lyses after 2.5-3 h
21 p.i. (with an eclipse period of 1.5-2h), releasing approximately 30-60 pfu new phage particles
22 per cell (burst size) (data not shown). Electron microscopic observation of negatively stained
23 phage particles revealed short-tailed icosahedral structures resembling those of the family
24 *Podoviridae*. The particles consisted of a head approximately 60 nm in diameter and a stubby

1 tail 20 nm in length (data not shown).

2 The ϕ RSB1 genome is linear double-stranded (ds) DNA of approximately 43.0 kbp in size
3 as determined by pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (data not shown). Since no oligomeric forms
4 were formed after heat-treatment, cohesive ends are absent. The sequence of the ϕ RSB1
5 genome was determined using DNA purified from phage particles by shotgun sequencing and
6 primer walking strategy (9). Sequences were assembled into a circular contig of 42,754 bp,
7 suggesting the presence of long terminal repeats. The precise sequence of the repeat was
8 determined by direct sequencing of genomic DNA with outward-directed primers, located
9 outside the possible terminal repeat region. The final sequence of the ϕ RSB1 genome is
10 43,079 bp, and includes direct terminal repeats of 325 bp. The ϕ RSB1 genome size is
11 comparable with that of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* phage ϕ KMV (42,159 bp; accession no.
12 AJ505558) and a little larger than coliphages T7 (39,937 bp; accession no. NC_00164) and T3
13 (38,208 bp; accession no. NC_003298). The size of the ϕ RSB1 terminal repeats is smaller
14 than that of ϕ KMV (414 bp) but larger than that of T7 (160 bp) or T3 (231 bp). The G + C
15 content of the genome is 61.7%. This value is lower than the G + C values of the large and
16 small replicons of the *R. solanacearum* GMI1000 genome (67.04% and 66.86%, respectively)
17 (18). Potential ORFs consisting of more than approximately 50 codons and starting with ATG,
18 GTG, or TTG were identified using the Orfinder and DNASIS programs. The presence of a
19 Shine-Dalgarno ribosome-binding sequence preceding the initiation codon was taken into
20 account for ORF prediction. Possible functions were assigned to ORFs by searching through
21 databases using BLAST, BLASTX, and BLASTP programs (1). Accordingly, a total of 47
22 potential ORFs oriented in the same direction were assigned on the genome (Fig. 1A and
23 Supplementary data). To find homologous sequences, nucleotide sequences from ϕ RSB1
24 DNA were used to searched databases with BLAST and BLASTX programs. Patchy or local

1 homologies were detected in the genomic sequences of various phages including
2 *Xanthomonas oryzae* phages Xop411 (accession no. DQ777876) and Xp10 (AY299121; 22),
3 *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* phages ϕ KMV (accession no. AJ505558; 14) , LKD16 and LKA1
4 (6), *Erwinia amylovora* phage Era103 (accession no. EF160123), and *Burkholderia cepacia*
5 phage BcepF1 (accession no. AY616033). All of these are members of *Podoviridae*. The
6 genome of coliphage T7, the representative of T7-like viruses of the *Podoviridae*, generally
7 consists of three functional gene clusters; one for early functions (class I), one for DNA
8 metabolism (class II), and the other for structural proteins and virion assembly (class III) (8).
9 These gene clusters are essentially conserved in the ϕ RSB1 genome. Figure 1A shows
10 putative ORFs identified on the ϕ RSB1 genome compared with ORFs from other phages;
11 *Xanthomonas* phage Xop411 (giving the highest local similarities), *Pseudomonas* phage
12 ϕ KMV(showing marginal similarity but longest regions of similarity), and coliphage T7. The
13 mosaic genetic relationship of ϕ RSB1 indicates frequent recombinations on the ϕ RSB1
14 ancestral genome during its evolution, in the way suggested for tailed phages and their
15 prophages (2-5, 11).

16 One of the characteristic features found in the ϕ RSB1 gene organization is that the
17 predicted gene for RNA polymerase (RNAP) of ϕ RSB1 (*orf26*) is not located in the early
18 gene region (class I) but at the end of the class II region (Fig. 1A). Another exception is the
19 gene for DNA ligase (DNAL); *orf25* encoding the ϕ RSB1 DNA ligase is in front of the RNAP
20 ORF (*orf26*), whereas the gene encoding T7 DNAL is downstream of the gene for RNAP at
21 the end of the class I cluster (8). In *Pseudomonas* phages ϕ KMV, LKD16, and LKA1, the
22 DNA ligase gene is upstream of the gene for DNAP in the class II gene cluster (Fig. 1A).

23 Similarly to the T7 genome, structural proteins are predicted to be encoded in the class III
24 gene cluster of the ϕ RSB1 genome. Purified ϕ RSB1 particles gave at least 10 protein bands

1 on SDS-PAGE (Fig. 2). Each band was extracted from the gel and was subjected to
2 N-terminal amino acid sequencing (19). The N-terminal sequence of each protein always
3 started from the second amino acid residue of its corresponding ORF, except for ORF35,
4 which included the first methionine (Fig. 2). In addition to known structural proteins, ORF35,
5 ORF36 and ORF46 were identified as structural proteins. In this way, all predicted protein in
6 the class III-structural region were identified, except for the scaffolding protein (ORF31) and
7 a possible tail fiber protein ORF38, which may be lost during purification of the phage
8 particles. In the case of the largest structural protein (170-180 kDa), determination of the
9 N-terminal sequence was unsuccessful using standard methods, possibly because of
10 modification at the N-terminus. However, it most likely corresponds to ORF37, judged from
11 its exceptionally large size (174 kDa); there is no other candidate for this size. ORF37 may
12 encode a tail protein with a transglycosylase domain.

13 T7-like phages are generally known as absolute lytic phages, with a few exceptions, such as
14 integrase-coding phages, e.g. prophage 3 of *Pseudomonas putida* (17), and the cyanophage
15 P-SSP7 (16). Sometimes nucleotide sequences related to T7-like phages are found in
16 conjunction with other temperate phages such as λ -like phages that are integrated in various
17 bacterial genomes (2-5, 11). BLAST and BLASTX database searches using the ϕ RSB1
18 sequence revealed a significantly homologous region (at the nucleotide sequence level) in the
19 genome of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* 1710b (accession no. CP000124). A matrix comparison
20 plot showed that this homology is extended to a 20 kbp region (1710b positions
21 1,740,980-1,761,000) (data not shown). In the 1710b genome, this region is embedded in a
22 large (85 kbp) prophage sequence (1710b positions 1,719,000-1,804,000), which is related to
23 λ -like phages such as *B. pseudomallei* phage ϕ 1026b (7) and *B. thailandensis* phage ϕ E125
24 (20). The homologous region of 1710b-prophage contains 8 ORFs encoding a DNA primase,

1 DNA helicase, DNA ligase, DNA polymerase, exonuclease, and RNA polymerase etc. These
2 correspond to the class II genes of ϕ RSB1 as shown in Fig. 1B. Interestingly, the putative
3 ϕ RSB1 promoters (see below) were also found in this 1710B region (positions
4 1743597-1743650 and 1744983-1745040; Fig. 1B). Both *Ralstonia* and *Burkholderia* belong
5 to *Betaproteobacteria* and may share common bacteriophages (9). Database search also
6 showed that a 10 kbp genomic region of the *R. solanacearum* GMI1000 (positions
7 1,661,000-1,672,000) contains a 1589-aa ORF (RSO5240) showing significant similarity to
8 ϕ RSB1 ORF37, which encodes a putative transglycosylase-tail protein (Supplementary data,
9 E-value e-131). Amino acid sequence similarity extends to the entire region consisting of the
10 N-terminal transglycosylase and C-terminal core or tail domains (1606 aa in ϕ RSB1 ORF37).
11 This GMI1000 ORF is associated with two IS transposase sequences (ISRSO8 transposase A
12 and B; RSO5237 and RSO5236, respectively) on the left side. Immediately to the right of this
13 ORF, there is an ORF (RSO5241) for a putative integrase, which is closely associated with
14 arginine tRNA (AGA), a possible *att* sequence (Fig. 1C). This structure indicates horizontal
15 acquisition of this ϕ RSB1 ORF by host cells, as well as some involvement of the phage
16 integrase/*att* sequence and transposons in such an event. In the context of lysogenic
17 conversion or introduction of a new fitness factor by phage in the pathogenic bacteria, the
18 functions of ϕ RSB1 ORF37 are interesting.

19 As shown in Fig. 3, several putative transcription promoter and terminators were
20 identified in apparently noncoding regions (more than 100 bp long) in the ϕ RSB1 genome. A
21 typical prokaryotic promoter sequence (resembling *E. coli* σ^{70}) was repeated five times
22 (p1-p5) in a left 1,000-bp region without ORFs (Fig. 1A and Fig. 3A). In addition, a few other
23 putative sequences of host σ^{70} promoter (p6-p8) were detected in front of ORFs 1, 17, and 39
24 (Fig. 1A and Fig. 3A). There are possible ρ -independent terminator-like sequences (Fig. 3C).

1 A terminator-like sequence (t2) present after ORF13 is located in the region that separates
2 class I and class II genes (Fig. 1A). Another possible terminator (t3) is located immediately
3 downstream of ORF32, encoding the major capsid protein. t4 is located in front of a putative
4 promoter p8 for ORF40 and ORF41 (similar to the large subunit of a terminase). A final
5 terminator (t5) was defined behind the last ORF47. The terminator positions of t2, t3, and t5
6 are consistent with those reported in *Pseudomonas* phages ϕ KMV (14), LKD16 and LKA1 (6)
7 (Fig. 1A). Searching for core promoter-like sequences conserved in phages T3, T7, or SP6 in
8 the ϕ RSB1 intergenic regions could not find any significant ones. Instead, three sets of
9 common sequence elements were found in front of ORFs 16, 18, and 32 (designated ϕ p1, ϕ p2,
10 and ϕ p3, Fig. 1A). We found a set of sequence elements consisting of a GC-rich stretch, and
11 TTGT, TCTGG, and CGGGCAC motifs preceding an AG-rich Shine-Dalgarno sequence (Fig.
12 3B). Activity of transcriptional promoters of both host- and phage-types thus predicted on the
13 ϕ RSB1 genome was examined using a GFP-expressing single-copy plasmid pRSS12 (13),
14 where the *lac* promoter for *gfp* expression was replaced with a ϕ RSB1 promoter sequence.
15 When we tested bacterial σ^{70} -type promoters p1-p4, p1-p5, and p1-p6, which are located
16 tandemly at the beginning of the class I gene cluster, transformed cells of *R. solanacearum*
17 strains always showed strong GFP fluorescence. Fluorescence was 3-15 times greater than
18 that of pRSS12 with a *lac* promoter. Results with strain MAFF301558 as the host are shown
19 in Table 1. Increased GFP intensity from p1-p4 via p1-p5 to p1-p6 clearly demonstrates actual
20 promoter activities of these ϕ RSB1 early promoters. ϕ p1 is located at the beginning of the
21 class II gene cluster, after the possible terminator t2 and in front of ORF16 encoding possible
22 DNA primase. ϕ p3 is located upstream of ORF32, which encodes the major capsid protein.
23 Both ϕ p1 and ϕ p3 also function as promoters for bacterial RNA polymerase in
24 ϕ RSB1-uninfected *R. solanacearum* cells, but show lower activity compared with p1-p6

1 (Table 1). The promoter activity was also examined in *R. solanacearum* cells after infection
2 with ϕ RSB1. As strain MAFF301558 was found to be a low-efficient host, giving fewer titers
3 of phage progeny, the host was changed to strain M4S. After infection with ϕ RSB1, GFP
4 fluorescence intensity retained at almost the same levels in cells containing the promoters,
5 p1-p5, or p1-p6, whereas cells with ϕ p1 or ϕ p3 showed increased GFP fluorescence after 30
6 min p.i. to 90 min p.i. (Table 1). At 120 min p.i. cell lysis began. These results indicate that
7 ϕ p1 and ϕ p3 are functional in transcription by both bacterial and phage RNAPs. Bacterial
8 σ^{70} -type promoters are not shut down but continue to function after infection.

9 The occurrence of host σ^{70} -type promoter sequences in the late gene clusters, class II and
10 class III, and the low specificity of phage promoters further imply that expression of ϕ RSB1
11 genes is highly dependent on the host RNAP. To determine whether host RNAP is involved in
12 late stages of ϕ RSB1 infection, rifampicin was added to ϕ RSB1-infected cultures at various
13 times post infection and the number of progeny phage was determined. The results are shown
14 in Fig. 4. In samples that were incubated with rifampicin, more than 90% of phage progeny
15 was obtained when the drug was added at 90 min p.i. or later, and no or very few progeny
16 phages were obtained when the drug was added 75 min p.i. or earlier. These results indicate
17 that a switch from host RNAP to ϕ RSB1 RNAP occurs between 75 min p.i. and 90 min p.i.
18 and that late stages of ϕ RSB1 replication are independent of rifampicin. The late genes can be
19 transcribed by rifampicin-resistant ϕ RSB1 RNAP, at least in the presence of rifampicin.

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21 This study was supported by the Industrial Technology Research Grant Program
22 (04A09505) from the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization
23 (NEDO) of Japan. The sequence data for ϕ RSB1 genomic DNA has been deposited in the
24 DDBJ database under accession no. AB451219.

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18

19 Figure legends

20

21 FIG. 1. Genetic organization and comparative analyses of ϕ RSB1 genome. (A) Comparison of
22 the genomes of ϕ RSB1 and T7-like phages. In each alignment, corresponding ORFs
23 (horizontal arrows) are connected by shading. Three functional gene clusters, class I (green),
24 class II (Yellow), and class III (orange) are indicated above the ϕ RSB1 and the T7 maps and

1 corresponding ORFs are colored. Putative bacterial promoters, phage promoters, and
2 terminators of transcription are indicated under the ϕ RSB1 map by p, ϕ p, and t, respectively.
3 Promoters and terminators are also shown in the ϕ KMV and T7 maps. Xop411, *Xanthomonas*
4 *oryzae* phage (44,520 bp, accession no. DQ777876); ϕ KMV, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* phage
5 (42,159 bp, AJ50558); coliphage T7 (39,937 bp, NC_00164). DNAP, DNA polymerase;
6 DNAL, DNA ligase; RNAP, RNA polymerase; MCP, major capsid protein; LYS, lysozyme.
7 (B) Class II region of ϕ RSB1 genome (ORF16-ORF26) often shows high homology with
8 phage or prophage sequences of different phage groups. The ϕ RSB1 region is aligned with the
9 corresponding prophage sequence of *Burkholderia pseudomallei* 1710b (accession no.
10 CP000124). (C) Region on the GMI1000 genome (positions 1,661,000-1,672,000) containing
11 a large ϕ RSB1-ORF37-like ORF (RSO5240), which encodes a putative transglycosylase
12 protein. This GMI1000 region is flanked by two ORFs encoding ISRSO8 transposase A and B
13 on the left side and by integrase (RSO5241) and arginine tRNA (AGA) on the right side.

14

15 FIG. 2. Identification of ϕ RSB1 virion proteins. Proteins from purified ϕ RSB1 particles
16 were separated by SDS-PAGE (10% gel) and stained with Coomassie blue. Molecular size of
17 each marker protein (Amersham full-range MW markers and a LMW gel filtration calibration
18 kit) is indicated on the left. N-terminal amino acid sequence (5 residues) determined for each
19 ϕ RSB1 protein band is shown on the right with its corresponding ORF. Amino acids in
20 parenthesis are obscure residues. Although the N-terminal sequence could not be determined, the
21 largest protein, approximately 175-180 kDa, is predicted to be ORF37, as there is no other
22 candidate for this large size. A few small proteins were lost from the gel during
23 electrophoresis.

24

1 FIG. 3. Predicted regulatory sequences found in the ϕ RSB1 genome. (A) *E. coli* σ^{70} -promoter
2 -like sequences, (B) putative promoter sequences for ϕ RSB1-encoded RNAP, and (C) putative
3 terminators.

4
5 FIG. 4. Late stages of ϕ RSB1 development are resistant to rifampicin. Cells of *R.*
6 *solanacearum* M4S were infected with ϕ RSB1 at moi 5. At the indicated times p.i., aliquots of
7 the infected culture were withdrawn, and incubated with 100 μ g/ml rifampicin for 2.5 h
8 before CHCl_3 -treatment and determination of phage titers (pfu) (open circle). For control,
9 phage titers were also determined at indicated times after CHCl_3 addition without
10 rifampicin-treatment (closed circle). The method is according to Liao et al. (15).

11

TABLE 1. Expression of *gfp* by ϕ RSB1 promoters

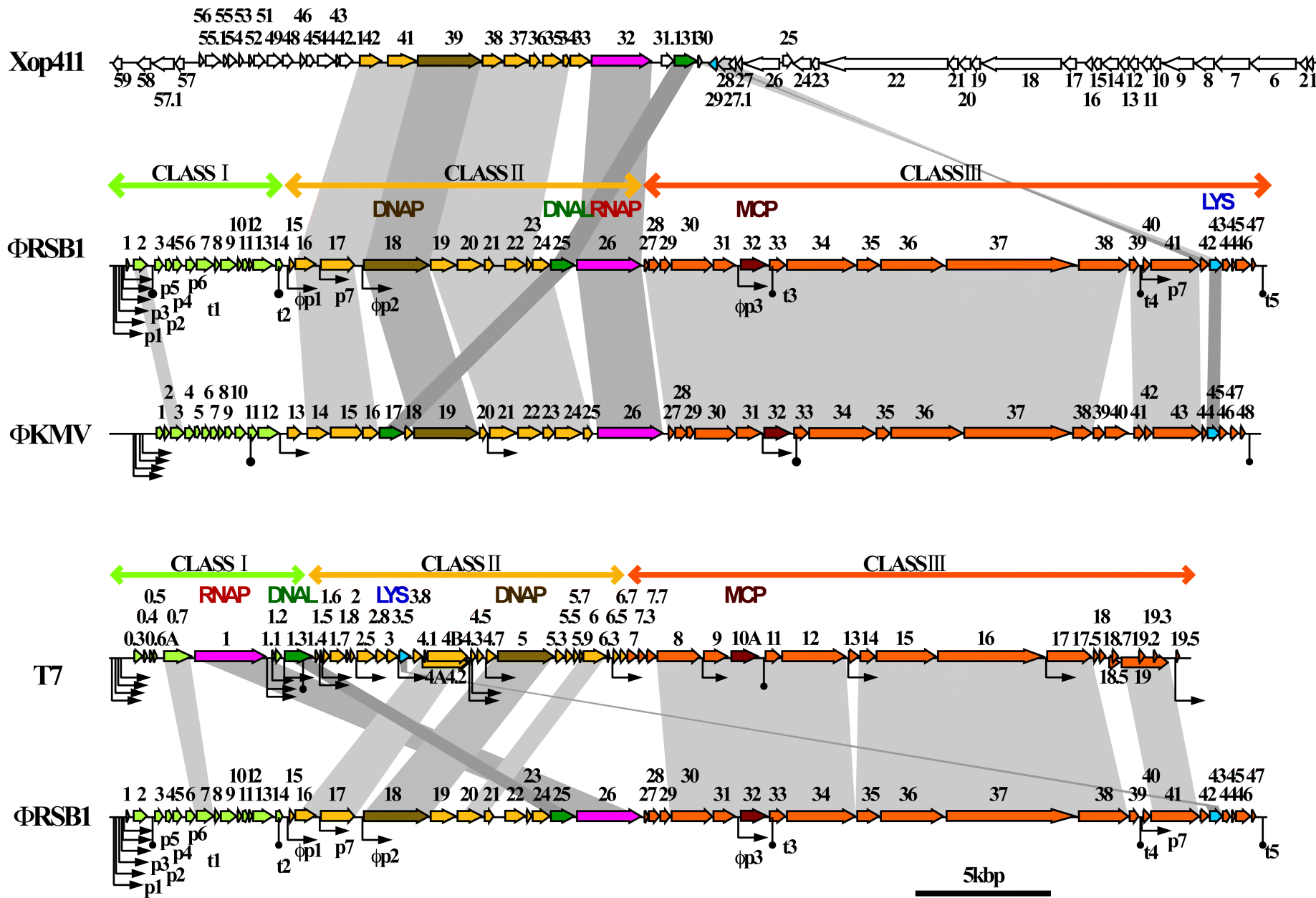
		Relative intensity of GFP fluorescence ^a				
Strain		Strain M4S				
MAFF301558		Time (min) post infection of ϕ RSB1				
Promoter (positions)		0	30	60	90	120
<i>lac</i>	3.5 ± 0.2 (1.0) ^b	1.8 ± 0.1	ND ^c	2.0 ± 0.1	ND	2.0 ± 0.1
p1-p4 (425-845)	10.0 ± 0.3 (3.0) ^b	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND
p1-p5 (425-921)	14.3 ± 0.5 (4.1) ^b	4.2 ± 0.2	4.4 ± 0.2	6.0 ± 0.3	7.2 ± 0.3	9.0 ± 0.4
p1-p6 (425-995)	53.0 ± 0.9 (15.2) ^b	7.3 ± 0.3	8.4 ± 0.3	12.0 ± 0.4	11.7 ± 0.4	13.6 ± 0.5
ϕ p1 (6895-7009)	11.0 ± 0.5 (3.2) ^b	6.7 ± 0.3	16.5 ± 0.5	19.0 ± 0.6	32.8 ± 0.8	15.1 ± 0.5
ϕ p3 (23515-23675)	7.2 ± 0.3 (2.1) ^b	1.4 ± 0.1	4.1 ± 0.2	5.9 ± 0.2	11.4 ± 0.4	7.8 ± 0.3

^aThe values are means ± standard errors for data from three independent experiments.

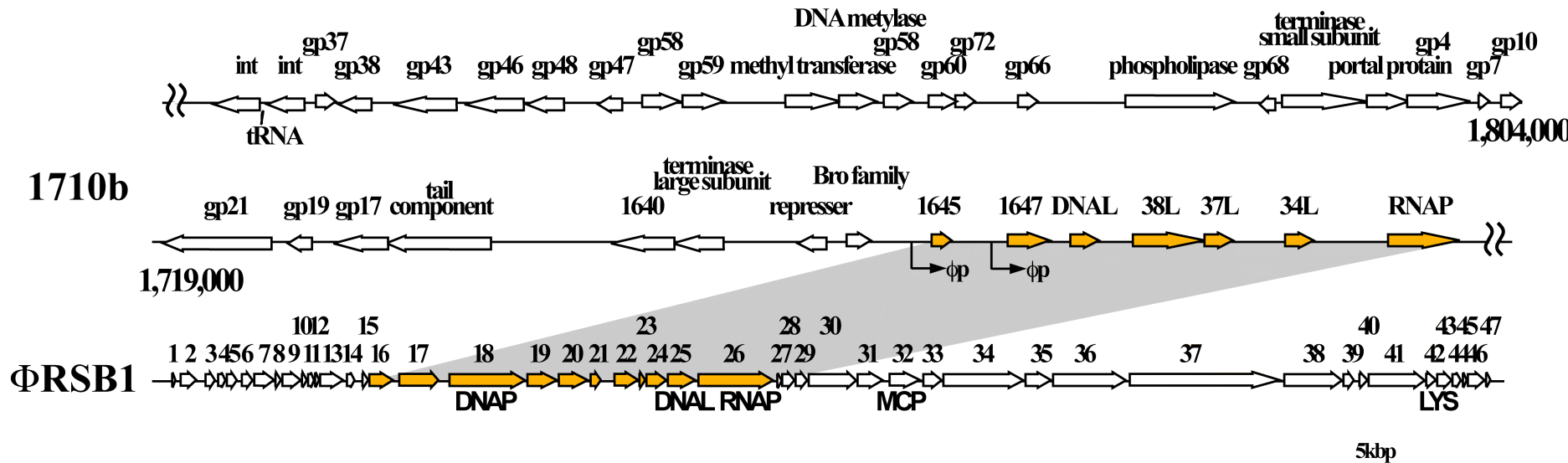
^bThe ratio to *lac*-value (1.0) is in parenthesis.

^cND: Not determined.

A

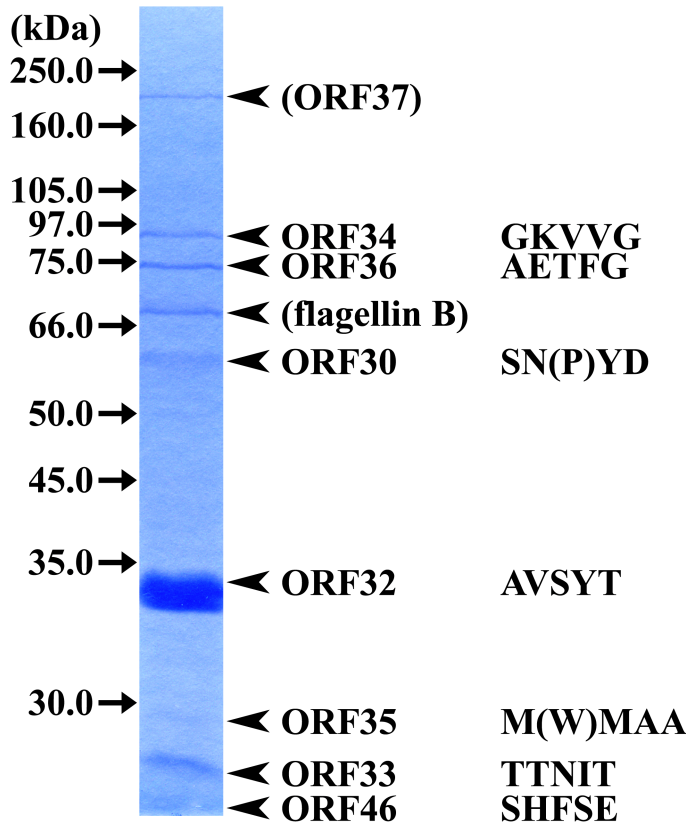


B



C





A

E. coli σ^{70} -like promoters

	Positions	
p1	508-552	CAGAGC TTGACA GACACACACAGCACAGC--- TACAGT GGAGTCACAC
p2	589-633	CAGAGC TTGACA GAGCGAACGGACTAGCA--- TACAGT GGAGTCCAGC
p3	709-753	GCACGC TTGACA GACGGTACGGACTGAGC--- TACAGT GAAGCCTAGC
p4	801-845	GTGCGC TTGACA AGGCGGACGGCAGGTAG--- TACACT GCAGTCCAGT
p5	877-925	GGATGC TTGACA GAGTATCGTCGGGTTGAACG TGAAGC GGCGAACGTGC
p6	934-982	CGCGCT TTGACC TACAGGGTACCACTAGGGAC TGTAGC GAGTGCAGGCA
p7	8113-8156	GACAAC TCGACA ACATGAGCTTCGGCTT--- TGTCAT TCCGATTTTCG
p8	38455-38498	TCCGTC CTGATC GCAGTATACACCGTCG--- TACAAT TTTACTTCCCT
	<i>E. coli</i> σ^{70}	----- TTGACA (-35) ----- TATAAT (-10) -----



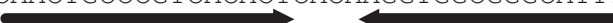
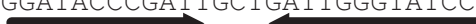
B

Putative phage promoter sequences

	Positions	
ϕ p1	6926-6960	CGA GCCGGGC ATCATCC TTGC CCTGCT TCTGG AGATTCTAGGAG CGGGCAC CCTT---30b---ATG
ϕ p2	9688-9721	AGCT GGGGCGGGGC TAT TTGT GCATA- TCTGG CGG----- CGGGTAT GCT---29b---ATG
ϕ p3	23561-23593	AGGCT CGGGCGGGCC TT TTGT CGTT-- TCTGG CTCCCT----- TGGGACAC AAA--68b---ATG
	Consensus	--- GCstretch --- TTGT ----- TCTGG ----- CGGGCAC -----ATG

C

Putative phage terminators

	Positions	
t1	1808-1853	GACGTACATGCCATTCTGCGGAGTGGGCATGTGCATT 
t2	6465-6501	ACTCGCGGCTCGGATAACGAGCTTCTGAGCCGCGCAC 
t3	24690-24727	CCCAACTGCCCGTCACACTCACAAGGTGGCGGGCATTTTT 
t4	38428-38460	TGGGGATACCCGATTGCTGATTGGGTATCCGTC 
t5	42791-42864	GTGTGCGCGCGTGCATGTGCGCGTACGTGTGTGCGCATGAGCGCGTGCATGTGCGTGCCTGCGCGCGAGTAGCA 