

## Cloning and Sequencing of IS1086, an *Alcaligenes eutrophus* Insertion Element Related to IS30 and IS4351

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A new insertion sequence (IS), designated IS1086, was isolated from *Alcaligenes eutrophus* CH34 by being trapped in plasmid pJV240, which contains the *Bacillus subtilis* *sacB* and *sacR* genes. The 1,106-bp IS1086 element contains partially matched (22 of 28 bp) terminal-inverted repeats and a long open reading frame. Hybridization data suggest the presence of one copy of IS1086 in the strain CH34 heavy-metal resistance plasmid pMOL28 and at least two copies in its chromosome. Analysis of the IS1086 nucleotide sequence revealed striking homology with two other IS elements, IS30 and IS4351, suggesting that they are three close members in a family of phylogenetically related insertion sequences. One open reading frame of the *Spiroplasma citri* phage SpV1-R8A2 B was also found to be related to this IS family but to a lesser extent. Comparison of the G+C contents of IS30 and IS1086 revealed that they conform to their respective hosts (46 versus 50% for IS30 and *Escherichia coli* and 64.5% for IS1086 and *A. eutrophus*). The pressure on the AT/GC ratio led to a very different codon usage in these two closely related IS elements. Results suggesting that IS1086 transposition might be activated by some forms of stress are discussed.

Insertion sequences (IS) are a class of procaryotic transposable elements (class I) capable of integrating into numerous sites within genomes via a transposition pathway totally independent of homologous recombination. IS are defined genetic entities (usually 0.75 to 1.6 kb). They contain only the genetic determinants for their transposition, which can proceed through either a conservative or a replicative mode or both (for reviews, see references 4, 9, 12, 15, and 17). IS elements are responsible for the occurrence of a number of genetic rearrangements, including insertions and deletions which can result in gene activation or inactivation. We have attempted to identify such IS elements in *Alcaligenes eutrophus* CH34. This strain was isolated near a metallurgical plant from sediments highly contaminated with heavy metals (19). It carries two large plasmids, pMOL28 and pMOL30, which harbor genes encoding multiple resistance to heavy metals. pMOL28 (163 kb) encodes resistance to nickel, cobalt, chrome, mercury, and thallium, while pMOL30 (238 kb) specifies resistance to cadmium, zinc, cobalt, copper, lead, mercury, and thallium (20).

Another remarkable feature of *A. eutrophus* CH34, whose optimal growth temperature is around 30°C, is the high degree of mortality occurring when it is grown at 37°C and the very high proportion of mutants detected among the survivors (21, 28). Cultures grown at 30°C and plated at 37°C give rise to survivors at a frequency of 10<sup>-5</sup> to 10<sup>-4</sup> compared with the viable count at 30°C, and 5 to 80% of these survivors exhibit recognizable mutations such as auxotrophy for lysine (Lys<sup>-</sup>) or threonine (Thr<sup>-</sup>), inability to

grow autotrophically (Aut<sup>-</sup>), inability to use nitrate (Nit<sup>-</sup>), inability to use NH<sub>4</sub><sup>+</sup>, and inability to use tyrosine as a carbon source accompanied by overexcretion of a dark-red pigment (Tyu<sup>-</sup>) (21). This phenomenon was named “thermospontagenesis” (21). Substantial rearrangements in the pMOL28 and pMOL30 plasmids in some of the mutants recovered after thermospontagenesis were also observed. One such rearranged plasmid is pMOL50 (210 kb), a pMOL28 derivative (163 kb) which kept all the metal resistance markers of its parent (21, 28). This appearance of mutations at a high frequency led us to investigate the movement of mobile elements during the exposure at 37°C. The suicide plasmid pJV240 was introduced in *A. eutrophus* AE104, a plasmid-free derivative of strain CH34. pJV240 is an IncQ broad-host-range plasmid bearing the *sacB-sacR* region of the *Bacillus subtilis* chromosome (10, 34). The *sacB* gene encodes levansucrase, which is toxic when synthesized in gram-negative bacteria propagated on media supplemented with sucrose (11). Cultures of AE104(pJV240) grown at 30°C were plated at 30 and 37°C on plates with or without sucrose, in the hope of trapping mobile sequences in the *sacB-sacR* region of the plasmid.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Bacterial strains, plasmids, and media.** Bacterial strains and plasmids are listed in Table 1.

Luria broth (LB) (30) and Luria agar (LA; LB supplemented with 1.5% agar) were used as liquid and solid media to grow *Escherichia coli* and *A. eutrophus* strains. Kanamycin was used at a concentration of 1,000 µg/ml.

Restriction enzymes and T4 ligase were purchased from Bethesda Research Laboratories, Inc., Gaithersburg, Md. Nitrocellulose membranes (GeneScreen; NEN, Boston, Mass.) were used in Southern blotting experiments (29).

**Construction of pJV240.** The pLS306 plasmid contains the

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TABLE 1. Bacterial strains and plasmids used

Strain	Relevant plasmid	Relevant plasmid markers	Reference
<i>A. eutrophus</i>			
CH34	pMOL28 pMOL30	Nic <sup>+</sup> Cob <sup>+</sup> Chr <sup>+</sup> Cad <sup>+</sup> Zin <sup>+</sup> Cob <sup>+</sup>	20
AE104 AE245	pMOL50	Nic <sup>+</sup> Cob <sup>+</sup> Chr <sup>+</sup>	28
<i>E. coli</i>			
DH5 $\alpha$ F'	F'	$\phi$ 80 <i>dlacZ</i> $\Delta$ M15	13
CM656	pJV240	Ap Km Sac <sup>+</sup> IncQ	34
CM404	pRK2013	Km Tra <sup>+</sup>	8
CM444	R388	Su Tp Tra <sup>+</sup> IncW	7
HB101			3

*B. subtilis sacB* and *sacR* genes on a *Bam*HI-*Pst*I fragment (10) which was inserted into the pKT240 broad-host-range plasmid vector (1) to generate pJV240 (34).

**Triparental mating.** Plate matings were carried out by incubating three strains (partners) on an LB plate of rich medium with appropriate controls. One partner contains the plasmid (Tra<sup>-</sup> Mob<sup>+</sup>) to be mobilized in the final recipient (second partner). The third partner contains the mobilizing plasmid.

Two types of triparental matings were used. (i) The mobilizing plasmid pRK2013 is used to mobilize pJV240 in *A. eutrophus*. The counterselection of *E. coli* strains is made through the carbon source (use of azelaic acid, which is a good substrate for *A. eutrophus*). (ii) Plasmid R388 is used to mobilize the Suc<sup>c</sup> derivatives of pJV240 in HB101 (see below). Counterselection occurred by selection at 42°C with appropriate antibiotics.

**Introduction of pJV240 into AE104 and isolation of sucrose-resistant derivatives.** pJV240 was introduced from *E. coli* CM656 into AE104, a plasmid-free derivative of CH34, by a triparental mating. The third partner, *E. coli* CM404, carries pRK2013, which can mobilize pJV240 but cannot be maintained in nonenteric bacteria (8). Transconjugants were selected for their kanamycin-resistant phenotype. Suc<sup>c</sup> mutants were selected by plating cultures grown at 30°C on LA plates supplemented with kanamycin with or without 5% sucrose. The plates were incubated for 3 days at either 30 or 37°C. The plasmids from the Suc<sup>c</sup> mutants found at both temperatures were transferred in *E. coli* HB101 by triparental matings in which mobilization was mediated by the IncW plasmid R388 carried by strain CM444.

Plasmid DNA was extracted by standard procedures (29) for *E. coli* and by the method of Prakash et al. (24) for *A. eutrophus*. Plasmid DNA was analyzed with restriction enzymes according to the supplier's instructions.

**DNA sequencing and sequence analysis.** The *Bam*HI-*Eco*RI fragment from one derivative of pJV240 containing the insertion was subcloned into M13mp18 and M13mp19. Part of the sequence was determined by using the M13 universal primers. Oligonucleotides synthesized by Cyclone DNA synthesizer (New Brunswick Scientific, New Brunswick, N.J.) were used as primers to complete DNA sequencing. The nucleotide sequence of the fragment was determined by the dideoxy-chain termination method (30) with both strands of DNA by using 1 to 2  $\mu$ g of single-stranded DNA as a template, [<sup>35</sup>S]dATP (NEN), and the Sequenase version 2.0 DNA sequencing kit (U.S. Biochemicals, Cleveland, Ohio), as recommended by the manufacturer.

Sequence comparison was carried out by using the FASTA, LFASTA, and TFASTA programs (23). Data bank searches included GenBank, the EMBL nucleotide sequence data base (release 27), and the Swissprot Protein Sequence Database (release 18).

Sequence analysis was performed by using the PC/GENE program package (IntelliGenetics Inc., Mountain View, Calif.).

**Analysis of the genomic distribution of IS1086.** Total DNA was extracted from CH34 and digested with *Bam*HI, *Pst*I, *Xho*I, *Eco*RI, and *Hind*III. Southern blotting was performed after the genomic DNA had been subjected to electrophoresis in a 0.8% agarose gel.

An *Nco*I-*Xma*III IS1086 fragment was labeled with [<sup>32</sup>P]ATP (NEN) and used as a hybridization probe.

**Nucleotide sequence accession number.** The EMBL Data Library submission number for IS1086 is X58441.

## RESULTS

**Isolation of sucrose-resistant insertion mutants.** A culture of strain AE104(pJV240) grown at 30°C was plated on medium with and without sucrose and incubated at 30 or 37°C in order to determine the frequency of sucrose-resistant mutants obtained with or without direct selection on sucrose after incubation at these two temperatures.

When AE104(pJV240) was plated on LB medium without sucrose and incubated at 30°C, no sucrose-resistant mutant could be found among 1,000 colonies that were transferred from the original plates without sucrose onto plates containing 5% sucrose. Plating on medium containing 5% sucrose and incubation at 30°C resulted in a frequency of  $2 \times 10^{-6}$  CFU compared with plating on medium without sucrose ( $10^4$  survivors per ml for  $5 \times 10^9$  cells per ml plated).

When AE104(pJV240) was plated on medium without sucrose and incubated at 37°C, a strong decrease in the number of colonies due to thermospontaneous was observed, resulting in a frequency of survivors of  $5 \times 10^{-5}$ .

Finally, when AE104(pJV240) was grown at 30°C and plated at 37°C on medium with sucrose, the frequency of colonies obtained under these conditions was expected to equal the product of the frequency of survivors at 37°C and the frequency of sucrose-resistant mutants obtained at 30°C and hence to be around  $10^{-10}$ . Surprisingly, the number of survivors found on medium with sucrose after incubation at 37°C was only 3 to 100 times lower than the number of survivors obtained on medium without sucrose at the same temperature (frequency,  $2 \times 10^{-5}$  to  $5 \times 10^{-7}$ ). This result was confirmed by the following observation: among the survivors (frequency of  $5 \times 10^{-5}$ ), on medium without sucrose incubated at 37°C, 14.5% had become sucrose resistant, as determined by testing the colonies on medium with sucrose. This suggests that a very efficient mutation mechanism is active during thermospontaneous.

To examine which types of mutations were responsible for sucrose resistance at 30 and 37°C, plasmids from 30 independent sucrose-resistant mutants obtained at each temperature were transferred to *E. coli* HB101 by triparental matings. The transconjugants recovered were purified and examined for their plasmid content. At 37°C, 12 of 30 mutated pJV240 plasmids had increased in length by approximately 1.1 kb. At 30°C, 12 of 30 mutated pJV240 plasmids also had a similar increase of 1.1 kb. This indicated that an enlargement of pJV240 occurs with equal frequencies at both temperatures. Restriction analysis and hybridization studies showed that although the insertion had occurred at different

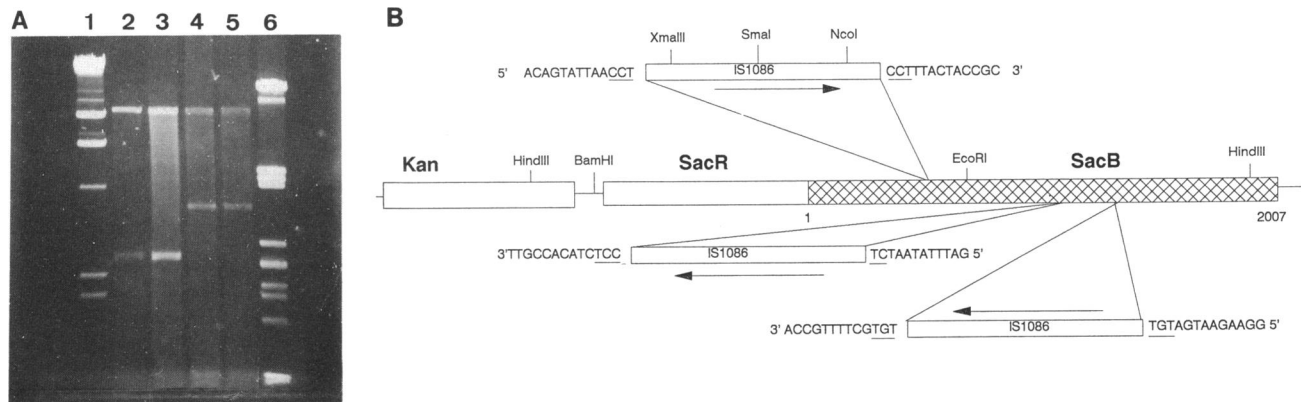


FIG. 1. (A) *Bam*HI-*Pst*I double-digestion restriction patterns for pJV240 (lane 2) and plasmids of three *Suc*<sup>+</sup> mutants (lanes 3 to 5). Two of them (lanes 4 and 5) display a heavier restriction fragment. Lambda phage DNA digested with *Hind*III (lane 1) and with *Pst*I (lane 6) was used as molecular weight markers. (B) Restriction map of the *sacB-sacR* region and *IS1086*, with localization of various *IS1086* insertions and their flanking sequences. Arrows indicate different orientations of insertions on two strands. Target sequences are underlined. Two independently isolated *IS1086* elements were mapped in the same site (at nucleotide 504 in the *sacB* gene).

positions in the *sacRB* operon, it was the same DNA insertion in all cases.

Figure 1A shows the restriction patterns of three mutated (at 37°C) pJV240 plasmids digested by *Bam*HI and *Pst*I. The sizes of the fragments showed that two of these mutated plasmids had acquired an insertion of approximately 1.1 kb.

Digestion with various enzymes of the heavier *Bam*HI-*Pst*I *sacB* fragment and comparison with the corresponding fragment of the parental pJV240 led to the restriction map for the insertion shown in Fig. 1B. The presence of these restriction sites was confirmed for other insertions which are shown in Fig. 1B.

**Complete nucleotide sequence of *IS1086*.** The IS which maps near the junction between *sacB* and *sacR* (Fig. 1B) was entirely sequenced as described in Materials and Methods. The complete insertion is 1,106 bp long. It possesses all the characteristics expected of an IS: 3 bp (CCT) of the target sequence have been duplicated and flank the insert, which is bordered by a 28-bp inverted repeat with 6 bases mismatched (see Fig. 2 and 4). Hereafter we shall refer to it as *IS1086*. The left and right *IS-sacB* junctions were sequenced in three other plasmids.

Among these four independently isolated insertions obtained at 37°C, two mapped at exactly the same target site and generated the same CCT duplication (3 bp). For a third insertion, the target site was different and a TGT triplet of the target had been duplicated. The fourth insertion was flanked by CT on one side and CCT on the other.

The fourth insertion occurred before a CCT, generating an incomplete (from CCT to CT) or an incorrect (from CC to CT) duplication of 2 bp. Thus, *IS1086* may have a preferred target and usually duplicates 3 bp.

**Open reading frames (ORFs) of *IS1086*.** The *IS1086* coding capacity was analyzed by the method of Kolaskar and Reddy (18). The results are shown in Table 2.

On one strand, two distinct ATG codons could be considered as translational start signals corresponding to a 339-amino-acid polypeptide and a 325-amino-acid polypeptide (Fig. 2). Two putative ribosome binding sites are also present just upstream of two ATGs, as indicated in Fig. 2. Further experiments are obviously required to identify the actual initiation codon. It is plausible, however, that a single ORF could span up to 92% of the entire nucleotide sequence

of *IS1086*. Because of the presence of translational consensus signals and a striking homology with two other IS (see below), the putative ORF of *IS1086* is likely to be functional. Three types of promoters have been reported for *A. eutrophus* (16, 31, 33). No corresponding consensus preceding the two potential initiation codons just described could be detected.

On the opposite strand, no transcriptional or translational initiation signal could be found upstream of a potential ORF starting at position 704 and consisting of 109 amino acids (Table 2).

The DNA sequence was also screened for palindromic sequences, and only one was found between nucleotides 131 and 156 (Fig. 2).

**Homology with other IS.** To determine whether the *IS1086* sequence is related to other known DNA sequences, particularly to those of IS elements, data banks were screened. Two sequences displaying significant levels of homology with *IS1086* were found. Both are IS elements: *IS30* isolated from *E. coli* (5, 6) and *IS4351* isolated from *Bacteroides fragilis* (25). Figure 3 shows an alignment of the three sequences. The best alignment is observed in the C-terminal quarter of the three putative ORFs.

A search of the EMBL nucleotide sequence data base (release 27) by using the TFASTA program revealed in addition limited but significant similarity between the putative *IS1086* transposase and one of the proteins potentially encoded by the *Spiroplasma citri* phage SpV1-R8A2 B (ORF3) (26). The phage genome consists of a circular single-stranded DNA of 8,273 bases. ORF3 of the phage also shows homology with *IS30* and *IS4351* putative transposases. Table 3 compares the percent identity and percent similarity between each pair of these four elements.

TABLE 2. Coding capacity of *IS1086*

<i>IS1086</i> strand	Initiation codon position	Termination codon position	No. of amino acids
1	56	1072	339
	98	1072	325
2	704	1030	109



SpV1R8A2L	ATGCATCC	TGTA	A	T	CTGA	A	GT	GCAAC	AAATC
SpV1R8A2R	***A**TA	****	* A	A***	*	**	*****	*****	*****
IS1086L	GGCGGCC	TCAA	A	T	CTGA	A	GT	GCAAC	ACC
IS1086R	*****TT	****	G	* GC**	*	*C	*****	***	
IS4351L	GCTGAAT	TCAA	C	T	TGCA	A	AT	GCAAC	
IS4351R	CT***G*	****	* *	*AT*	*	**	*****		
IS30L	TGTAGAT	TCAA	T	T	GGTC	A	AC	GCAAC	A
IS30R	*****	****	* C	T***	*	*T	*****	*	

FIG. 4. Alignment of inverted repeats of three IS elements and bacteriophage SpV1-R8A2 B. Two well-conserved blocks are boxed. Matched sites between the left and right repeats are indicated (\*).

*EcoRI* fragment which shelters *IS1086* in pMOL28 is not yet known.

DISCUSSION

We have identified a new mobile DNA element in *A. eutrophus* CH34. This element is expected to be an IS, for the following reasons. (i) It was inserted in the *sacB* gene after selection for *Suc<sup>r</sup>* (i.e., *sacB*) mutants. (ii) It displays significant homology with two previously described IS, IS30 from *E. coli* and IS4351 from *B. fragilis*. (iii) Its primary structure is similar to that of an IS (9): it is 1.1 kb long, which is typical of IS; it contains imperfect inverted repeats of 28 bp; and it is flanked in most cases by a direct duplication of 3 bp of the transposition target sequence. This is different from IS30, which generates a 2-bp direct repeat (6). Like IS30 and IS4351, IS1086 contains a unique potential ORF of 339 codons which covers 92% of the total length of the element. The corresponding protein is likely to be the transposase.

IS1086 was found in the mutated pJV240 plasmid of about 50% of the *Suc<sup>r</sup>* mutants, whether they had been obtained at 30°C on plates with sucrose or at 37°C on plates with or without sucrose. The frequency of *Suc<sup>r</sup>* mutants (i.e., the ratio of *Suc<sup>r</sup>* colonies to the viable count) was higher (1,000×) at 37°C than at 30°C, whether they were recovered with or without selection on sucrose. Since we know that the *Suc<sup>r</sup>* mutants do not constitute a fraction of the population which is resistant to exposure to 37°C (data not shown), these results suggest that IS1086 transposition (as well as other mutagenic events) is activated at 37°C. It is also intriguing that the pJV240 *sac* genes which originate from *B. subtilis* have a G+C content different from that of the *A. eutrophus* host, which may be the reason for the high frequency of insertion observed in those genes.

The amino acid sequence of the large IS1086 ORF shows

TABLE 4. G+C contents<sup>a</sup> at silent sites

IS	No. of nucleotides					% G or C
	A	C	G	T	Total	
IS1086						
Total	200	358	300	159	1,017	65
Silent sites	40	183	94	43	360	77
IS30						
Total	374	259	268	251	1,152	46
Silent sites	140	107	75	112	434	42
IS4351						
Total	350	177	250	201	178	43
Silent sites	111	76	71	87	345	43

<sup>a</sup> G+C contents for *A. eutrophus*, *E. coli*, and *B. fragilis* are 69.5, 50, and 43%, respectively.

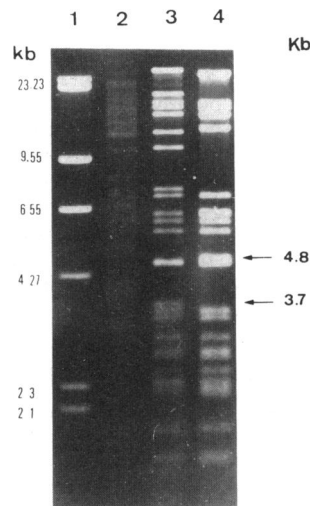


FIG. 5. Results of digestion of pMOL28 and pMOL50 (a derivative of pMOL28 from thermospontaneous) with *EcoRI*. The 4.8-kb fragment (lane 4) which contains IS1086 in pMOL28 is replaced by a 3.7-kb fragment in pMOL50 (lane 3). Lane 2 is a CH34 chromosomal *EcoRI* digestion.

homology with those of *E. coli* IS30 and *B. fragilis* IS4351. A low degree of conservation in the amino acid sequence of the long ORF might indicate an ancient origin for the family constituted by these IS elements, as suggested by Schwartz et al. (32) for elements belonging to the IS2-IS3 family. However, intra- or interspecies gene transfer events among eubacteria as well as selective pressure (e.g., on base composition and codon usage) on these elements when they migrate into a new genus may result in a rapid divergence that could be mistaken for a common ancestry. The mean G+C content of IS30 (46%) is still a little lower than the genomic G+C content of its *E. coli* host (50%), particularly at silent codon positions, suggesting that IS30 might be a recent immigrant in *E. coli*. Also supporting this view is the finding that AUA, AGG, AGA, and CGA codons, which are infrequent in *E. coli* genes, are more frequent in IS30 (35).

Besides the two or three small conserved blocks existing at the beginning and in the middle of the IS30-, IS1086-, and IS4351-encoded proteins, the identity is most striking towards the C-terminal end. In view of the conserved blocks of bases in the inverted repeats of the three elements, this suggests that the well-conserved region carries the end-binding domains of the transposases, which is similar to the organization of transposases in the IS3 family (32) and in IS10 (14).

In spite of their sequence similarity, the G/C bias of these IS elements leads naturally to a different codon usage; for instance, 92% of lysine codons in IS1086 are AAG whereas only 25% are in IS30.

The homology between IS1086 and part of the *S. citri* phage Spv1-R8A2 B genome is interesting. Although the phage genome is a single-stranded circular DNA, it has homology with its host genome, and one of its ORFs (ORF4) displays a low level of homology with *Salmonella* phage P22 integrase. It was therefore suggested that the corresponding protein could catalyze integration of the Spv1-R8A2 B genome into the host chromosome (2, 26). Our results suggest that, alternatively, the protein encoded by ORF3 could act on the adjacent inverted repeat to catalyze inte-

gration of the phage genome, in which case SpV1-R8A2 B could be a new kind of mutator or transposing phage whose genome is packaged as a single strand.

Since *S. citri* is gram positive according to Woese (36), we postulate that the IS1086 family is present in a large range of eubacterial species. Similar findings for other IS elements, for example, IS257, have been reported previously (27). If intra- or interspecies gene transfer is the basis of the relationship between IS30, IS4351, and IS1086, it would be interesting to know which mechanisms (if any) would act to adapt the invading genetic information to the host G+C content and at what pace.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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