

# Whole-genome sequence analyses of *Glaesserella parasuis* isolates reveals extensive genomic variation and diverse antibiotic resistance determinants

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**Background:** *Glaesserella parasuis* (*G. parasuis*) is a respiratory pathogen of swine and the etiological agent of Glässer's disease. The structural organization of genetic information, antibiotic resistance genes, potential pathogenicity, and evolutionary relationships among global *G. parasuis* strains remain unclear. The aim of this study was to better understand patterns of genetic variation, antibiotic resistance factors, and virulence mechanisms of this pathogen.

**Methods:** The whole-genome sequence of a ST328 isolate from diseased swine in China was determined using Pacbio RS II and Illumina MiSeq platforms and compared with 54 isolates from China sequenced in this study and 39 strains from China and eight other countries sequenced by previously. Patterns of genetic variation, antibiotic resistance, and virulence mechanisms were investigated in relation to the phylogeny of the isolates. Electrotransformation experiments were performed to confirm the ability of pYL1 - a plasmid observed in ST328 - to confer antibiotic resistance.

**Results:** The ST328 genome contained a novel Tn6678 transposon harbouring a unique resistance determinant. It also contained a small broad-host-range plasmid pYL1 carrying *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* and *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>*; when transferred to *Staphylococcus aureus* RN4220 by electroporation, this plasmid was highly stable under kanamycin selection. Most (85.13–91.74%) of the genetic variation between *G. parasuis* isolates was observed in the accessory genomes. Phylogenetic analysis revealed two major subgroups distinguished by country of origin, serotype, and multilocus sequence type (MLST). Novel virulence factors (*gigP*, *malQ*, and *gmhA*) and drug resistance genes (*norA*, *bacA*, *ksgA*, and *bcr*) in *G. parasuis* were identified. Resistance determinants (*sul2*, *aph(3'')-Ib*, *norA*, *bacA*, *ksgA*, and *bcr*) were widespread across isolates, regardless of serovar, isolation source, or geographical location.

**Conclusions:** Our comparative genomic analysis of worldwide *G. parasuis* isolates provides valuable insight into the emergence and transmission of *G. parasuis* in the swine industry. The result suggests the importance of transposon-related and/or plasmid-related gene variation in the evolution of *G. parasuis*.

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24 **Abstract:**

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34 mechanisms were investigated in relation to the phylogeny of the isolates. Electrotransformation  
35 experiments were performed to confirm the ability of pYL1 - a plasmid observed in ST328 - to  
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37 **Results:** The ST328 genome contained a novel Tn6678 transposon harbouring a unique  
38 resistance determinant. It also contained a small broad-host-range plasmid pYL1 carrying  
39 *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* and *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>*; when transferred to *Staphylococcus aureus* RN4220 by  
40 electroporation, this plasmid was highly stable under kanamycin selection. Most (85.13–91.74%)  
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42 Phylogenetic analysis revealed two major subgroups distinguished by country of origin, serotype,  
43 and multilocus sequence type (MLST). Novel virulence factors (*gigP*, *malQ*, and *gmhA*) and  
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49 result suggests the importance of transposon-related and/or plasmid-related gene variations in the  
50 evolution of *G. parasuis*.

## 51 Introduction

52 *Glaesserella parasuis*, a gram-negative bacterium in the family *Pasteurellaceae*  
53 (*Dickerman et al., 2020*), is a respiratory pathogen that affects swine. It is the etiological agent of  
54 Glässer's disease, which can lead to pneumonia without signs of systemic disease (*Brockmeier,*  
55 *2004*). As China is one of the world's largest pork producers, with more than 463 million pigs  
56 accounting for approximately 50% of global population (*Zhou et al., 2013*), *G. parasuis*  
57 outbreaks in this country could pose a significant threat to pig health and economic loss  
58 worldwide (*Brockmeier et al., 2014*). Disease progression and severity are influenced by  
59 virulence and antibiotic resistance, both of which can result from evolutionary processes  
60 including mutation and horizontal gene transfer (*Deng et al., 2019*). Although antibiotic  
61 resistance may incur fitness costs in terms of virulence, the two phenomena may also act  
62 synergistically (*Geisinger and Isberg, 2017*).

63 Antimicrobial agents are widely used to prevent and control *G. parasuis* infection; however,  
64 overuse of antibiotics for non-therapeutic applications - including promoting growth in healthy  
65 individuals - has resulted in the evolution of antibiotic resistant *G. parasuis* in farming  
66 environments (*Zhao et al., 2018*). Antibiotic resistance in *G. parasuis* is mainly conferred by a  
67 combination of transferable antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) and multiple target gene  
68 mutations. To date, two  $\beta$ -lactam resistance genes (*bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *bla*<sub>TEM</sub>), an aminoglycoside-  
69 resistance gene (*aac (6')-Ib-cr*) and a mutation in the six copies of the 23S rRNA gene,  
70 associated with macrolide resistance, have been reported in *G. parasuis* (*Doi and Arakawa, 2007;*  
71 *San et al., 2007; By Guo et al., 2012*). *G. parasuis* strains often harbour multiple resistance genes  
72 and multi-drug resistance phenotypes, thus deterring clinical treatment.

73 PCR-based studies of *G. parasuis* strains have identified ARGs including *tetB*, *aph(3'')-Ib*,  
74 *aph(6)-Id*, *floR*, *sul1*, and *sul2* (*Wissing et al., 2001; San et al., 2007; Zhao et al., 2018*), and  
75 virulence factors including the haemolysin operon (*hhdBA*), iron acquisition genes (*cirA*, *tbpA/B*  
76 and *fhuA*), the restriction modification system *hsdS*, and genes involved in sialic acid utilization

77 (neuraminidase *nanH* and sialyltransferase genes *neuA*, *siaB* and *lsgB*) (Martinez-Moliner et al.,  
78 2012; Costa-Hurtado and Aragon, 2013). Recently, whole-genome sequencing (WGS) has  
79 emerged as a powerful tool for predicting antibiotic resistance and pathogenic potential in *G.*  
80 *parasuis*. For instance, Li et al. (2013) reported two *G. parasuis* strains with potential resistance  
81 towards the antibiotics ciprofloxacin, trimethoprim, and penicillin, based on the presence of  
82 associated resistance genes; Nicholson et al. (2018) reported genomic differences in the toxin-  
83 antitoxin systems between phenotypically distinct *G. parasuis* strains from Japan and Sweden;  
84 and Bello-Orti et al. (2014) noted the role of mobile genetic elements and strain-specific  
85 accessory genes in fostering high genomic diversity between pathogenic strains of the same  
86 serovar from diseased pigs in Japan, China, and the USA.

87        Though significant effort has been focused on exploring ARGs, virulence factors and other  
88 genetic characteristics of various *G. parasuis* strains, the structural organization of genetic  
89 information, ARGs, potential pathogenicity determinants, and evolutionary relationships among  
90 global *G. parasuis* strains remain unclear. In this study, we sequenced a multidrug-resistant  
91 isolate from diseased swine in Dongguan, China, then compared this genome sequence with  
92 those of 54 isolates from China sequenced by us and 39 strains from China and eight other  
93 countries sequenced by other researchers in order to improve our understanding of genomic  
94 diversity in *G. parasuis* and provide information for gaining better control to treat these  
95 infections.

## 96 **Materials & Methods**

### 97 **Isolates**

98        The multidrug-resistant *G. parasuis* isolate HPS-1 examined in this study belongs to  
99 serotype 4 and was originally isolated from the lungs of a pig suffering from Glässer's disease in  
100 a commercial pig farm in Dongguan city, Guangdong province, China, in 2017. Susceptibility to  
101 19 antimicrobial agents was determined by the disc agar diffusion method and the broth

102 microdilution method (*Pruller et al., 2017*). The isolate was determined to be resistant to  $\beta$ -  
103 lactams, aminoglycosides, macrolides, quinolones, lincomycin, and sulfonamides (Table S1).

104 The other 54 *G. parasuis* isolates were obtained from diseased pigs from more than 20  
105 geographically dispersed farms in China between November 2007 and May 2017 (Table S2).  
106 Bacteria species were identified by biochemical tests and 16S diagnostic PCR (*Oliveira et al.,*  
107 *2001; de la Fuente et al., 2007*). All 55 *G. parasuis* isolates were characterised using serotyping  
108 and MLST as previously described (*Wang et al., 2016; Jia et al., 2017*).

### 109 **Genome sequencing, assembly, and bioinformatics analysis**

110 Isolates were cultured on tryptic soy agar or in tryptic soy broth (Oxoid, Hampshire, UK)  
111 supplemented with 10 mg/mL nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide and 5% bovine serum at 37°C  
112 in 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 24 h. Total genomic DNA was extracted using the DNeasy DNA extraction kit  
113 (Axygen, Union City, CA, USA).

114 Among the 55 isolates, one multidrug-resistant isolate (HPS-1) and one sensitive isolate  
115 (HPS-2) from diseased swine in Guangdong were randomly selected for WGS using the PacBio  
116 RSII (Pacific Biosciences, MenloPark, CA, USA) and Illumina MiSeq (Illumina, San Diego, CA,  
117 USA) platforms as previously described (*Zheng et al., 2017*). The genome assemblies of HPS-1  
118 generated in this study were deposited in GenBank under accession number CP040243. The  
119 plasmid pYL1 and transposon Tn6678 of HPS-1 were submitted to GenBank under accession  
120 number MK182379 and MK994978, respectively. Genomic libraries of the other 53 genomes  
121 were generated and sequenced using the Illumina HiSeq 4000 system (Illumina, San Diego, CA,  
122 USA) as previously described (*Soge et al., 2016*). WGS data were assembled using SOAPdenovo  
123 v1.05 software (assembly statistics available in supplementary materials, Table S3). Gene  
124 prediction was performed using GeneMarkS (*Besemer et al., 2001*), and a whole-genome  
125 BLAST (*Altschul et al., 1990*) searches (E-value  $\leq 1e^{-5}$ , minimal alignment length percentage  $\geq$   
126 80%) against 6 databases: Kyoto Encyclopedia of Genes and Genomes (KEGG), Clusters of  
127 Orthologous Groups (COG), NCBI non-redundant protein database (NR), Swiss-Prot, Gene

128 Ontology (GO), and TrEMBL.

### 129 **Phylogenetic and clustering analyses**

130 Two phylogenetic trees were constructed to assess the relatedness of the 55 *G. parasuis*  
131 strains and 39 previously published genome sequences using single-copy core orthologs and  
132 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) (Table S2). Phylogenetic inference was conducted  
133 using a maximum-likelihood optimality criterion as implemented in PhyML v3.0 (*Guindon et al.*,  
134 2010). The WAG amino acid substitution matrix was used for inference of the single-copy core  
135 ortholog tree, and the HKY85 nucleotide substitution model was used for inference of the SNP  
136 tree. The SNP tree was rooted using *Glaesserella* sp.15-184 as an outgroup. The gene contents of  
137 all 94 isolates were compared using CD-HIT (v 4.6.1) software to generate non-paralogous gene  
138 clusters (identity  $\geq 0.8$ ,  $\geq 80\%$  the length of the longest cluster).

### 139 **Comparison of antimicrobial resistance and virulence genes**

140 A whole-genome BLAST search (E-value  $\leq 1e^{-5}$ , minimal alignment length percentage  $\geq$   
141 80%) was performed against four databases for pathogenicity and drug resistance analysis:  
142 Pathogen Host Interactions (PHI), Virulence Factors of Pathogenic Bacteria (VFDB),  
143 Carbohydrate-Active enZymes Database (CAZy), and Integrated Antibiotic Resistance Genes  
144 Database (IARDB).

### 145 **Features of the novel Tn6678 transposon in HPS-1**

146 Based on the results of the BLASTn search, genomic characteristics were compared among  
147 four isolates that harboured a transposon Tn6678-like structure. BLASTn searches were  
148 performed to identify genes homologous to *bcr*, encoding the multidrug efflux system BCR/CflA,  
149 The homologous sequences were aligned using MUSCLE algorithm in MEGA 7.0.26 (*Kumar*  
150 *et al.*, 2016) and manually adjusted, yielding 92 candidate genes. The default parameter for gap  
151 opening and gap extension were used. The phylogenetic tree was generated using MEGA 7.0.26  
152 software using the neighbour-joining method (*Kumar et al.*, 2016) with the Kimura 2-parameter  
153 substitution model; branch support was assessed using 1000 bootstrap replicates.

## 154 **Electrotransformation and plasmid stability test**

155 Plasmid pYL1 harboring two antimicrobial resistance genes, *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *aac(6')-Ie-*  
156 *aph(2'')-Ia*, which confer to  $\beta$ -lactams and aminoglycosides resistance. To determine the  
157 contributions of pYL1 to penicillin and aminoglycoside antibiotic resistance,  
158 electrotransformation experiments were performed using *Staphylococcus aureus* RN4220 as the  
159 recipient as previously described (Wang *et al.*, 2015). Transformants were selected on brain-  
160 heart infusion (BHI) agar supplemented with kanamycin (25  $\mu$ g/mL) for colony growth at 37°C  
161 for 16 h. Transformation efficiency was calculated based on the ratio of transformants to the total  
162 number of viable cells. The presence of the *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* and *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> genes in  
163 transformants was confirmed by PCR amplification followed by DNA sequence analysis. The  
164 primers for *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> (494 bp) were 5'-CGCTTTGCTTATGCGTCCAC-3' (forward) and 5'-  
165 ACTTTCCACGATGTTGGCGT-3'. The primers for *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* (412 bp) were 5'-  
166 AGAGCCTTGGGAAGATGAAGTT-3' (forward) and 5'-TGCCTTAACATTTGTGGCATT-3'  
167 (reverse). The primers were designed using NCBI Primer-BLAST. The PCR conditions were as  
168 follows: initial denaturation at 95 °C for 5 min, 30 cycles of amplification (30 s at 95 °C, 30 s at  
169 58 °C, and 90 s at 72 °C), followed by extension at 72 °C for 10 min. The PCR products were  
170 purified and sequenced by Majorbio Company (Shanghai, China). The MICs of *S. aureus*  
171 RN4220 and five transformants were determined by Etest (Liofilchems.r.l.) according to the  
172 manufacturer's instructions.

173 The stability of plasmids carrying *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* and *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> was determined by  
174 serial passages for 15 consecutive days at 1:1000 dilutions into fresh BHI, with or without  
175 antibiotic (kanamycin) pressure. Serially diluted cultures were spread on BHI agar plates with or  
176 without kanamycin (8  $\mu$ g/mL), and the resistance retention rate was determined by randomly  
177 picking at least 50 colonies from the BHI plates, spotting them onto new BHI plates with  
178 kanamycin (8  $\mu$ g/mL), and calculating the ratio of resistant to total colonies. Both the resistant  
179 and susceptible colonies from the plates were randomly picked and subjected to PCR for  
180 detection of *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia*.

## 181 **Results**

### 182 ***G. parasuis* core and unique genes**

183       Compilation of the 94 genomes covering all serovars and disease- and non-disease-causing  
184 backgrounds from nine geographic locations (Table S2) demonstrated expansion of the pan-  
185 genome, whereas the number of core genes remained relatively stable with the addition of new  
186 strains (Fig. 1A). This result suggests the presence of an open pan-genome experiencing frequent  
187 evolutionary changes through gene gains and losses or lateral gene transfer. The size of the pan-  
188 genome was 5,243 genes, including ~3.34% core genes shared among the 94 isolates mainly  
189 from China (Fig. 1B). Meanwhile, accessory genomes occupied a large fraction (85.13–91.74%)  
190 of the *G. parasuis* gene content compared with the core genomes and the number of unique  
191 genes ranged from 0 to 103 indicating that 0–4.6% of the genome consists of strain-specific  
192 accessory genes (Table S4).

193       Clusters of Orthologous Groups classification indicated that core genes were significantly  
194 enriched in defense mechanisms and inorganic ion transport and metabolism, whereas unique  
195 genes were significantly enriched in unknown function, nucleotide transport and metabolism,  
196 and carbohydrate transport and metabolism (Fig. 1C).

### 197 **Phylogenetic analysis of *G. parasuis* isolates**

198       A phylogenetic tree based on single-copy core genes of our isolates and reference isolates  
199 resolved two well-supported lineages, lineages I and II, exhibiting association with country,  
200 serotypes, and MLST types (Fig. 2). Lineages I and II comprised eight and two countries,  
201 respectively. Serovars 5, 12, and 14 were identified predominantly in lineage I, while serovars 2  
202 and 10 were mostly found in lineage II. For serovars 3, 8, 9, and 11, the numbers of isolates were  
203 too low to draw conclusions about phylogenetic patterns. The remainder of the serovars were  
204 found in both clades.

205 MLST analysis assigned the 39 isolates in GenBank to 20 different STs, including six new  
206 STs, with 13 isolates not determined. The 55 isolates obtained in our study belonged to 49  
207 different STs, including 39 new STs (Table S2). Most strains of the same STs formed single  
208 clades (Fig. 2). The SNP-based tree with and without an outgroup (Fig. S1 and Fig. S2) was  
209 consistent with the phylogenetic analysis based on single-copy core orthologs. The number of  
210 whole-genome SNP differences among the 94 isolates ranged from 8,603 to 8,730.

### 211 **Biological features of *G. parasuis* isolates**

212 Variation in virulence and stress resistance genes was observed among *G. parasuis* lineages  
213 and subgroups (Fig. 3). All 94 *G. parasuis* isolates harboured more than five types of pathogenic  
214 factors. The virulence factors *gigP*, *malQ*, and *gmhA* were carried by all the tested *G. parasuis*  
215 isolates. Moreover, other virulence factors including the *rfa* cluster, encoding enzymes for  
216 lipopolysaccharide (LPS) core biosynthesis, and *galU* and *galE*, resulting in impaired biofilm  
217 formation, were universally present in the *G. parasuis* isolates.

218 The main ARGs associated with resistance in *G. parasuis*, including the  $\beta$ -lactam-resistant  
219 gene *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub>, tetracycline resistance genes *tetB*, aminoglycoside resistance genes *aph(3'')-Ib* and  
220 *aac(6'')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia*, fluoroquinolone resistance gene *norA*, chloramphenicol resistance genes  
221 *catIII* and *floR*, sulfonamide resistance gene *sul2* were discovered (Fig. 3). Among all of these  
222 genes, the genes *sul2* and *aph(3'')-Ib*, and  $\beta$ -lactam-resistant genes *pbp1a* and *pbp3a* were  
223 universally present in the *G. parasuis* isolates (Fig. 3). Three different serotype isolates (H82,  
224 H92, and H313) obtained from different sites in different years that clustered closely in one  
225 branch all harboured the lincosamide antibiotic resistance factor *lunC* (Fig. 3). Moreover, 91.5%  
226 of the isolates had *bcr*, 90.42% of the isolates had *bacA*, 100% of the isolates had *ksgA*, but five  
227 isolates had *norA*.

### 228 **Genomic features of *G. parasuis* HPS-1**

229 Following sequencing and assembly, a 2,326,414-bp chromosome with an average G+C  
230 content of 40.03%, and a 7,777-bp small plasmid sequence (pYL1) with an average G+C content

231 of 33.32% were identified in strain HPS-1 (Supplementary Fig. S3 and Fig. 4). HPS-1 exhibited  
232 a novel ST (ST328) with undescribed MLST alleles or previously unreported allelic  
233 combinations. This ST328 genome harbored resistance genes against several types of antibiotics,  
234 including sulfonamides (*sul2*), aminoglycosides (*aph(3'')-Ib*, *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia*), and  $\beta$ -  
235 lactam (*bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>*) (Table S1). Further, this genome contained efflux pump-related genes that  
236 confer resistance to sulfonamides (*bcr*) and multidrug resistance (*acrB*).

237 We also identified a novel transposon in the ST328 isolate, designated Tn6678 in the Tn  
238 Number Registry (<https://transposon.lstmed.ac.uk/>). This transposon harbours two 966-bp IS110  
239 family transposases at both ends, two toxin genes *pilT* and *phd*, two genes associated with the  
240 two-component signal transduction system *cpxA* and *cpxR*, one efflux pump-associated gene *bcr*,  
241 and four genes encoding hypothetical proteins with unknown function (Fig. 5). Genome analysis  
242 revealed that Tn6678 was inserted between the molybdopterin molybdotransferase MoeA  
243 encoded by *moeA* and 3-isopropylmalate dehydratase large subunit encoded by *leuC*. A LacI  
244 family transcriptional regulator and a bifunctional tRNA (5-methylaminomethyl-2-  
245 thiouridine)(34)-methyltransferase MnmD/FAD-dependent 5-carboxymethylaminomethyl-2-  
246 thiouridine (34) oxidoreductase MnmC flanked the transposon to the right and left, respectively.

247 Through BLASTN searches, highly conserved homologous sequences to Tn6678 (>97%  
248 nucleotide sequence similarity) were identified in four *G. parasuis* strains [29755 (GenBank  
249 accession number CP021644, USA), SH0165 (CP001321, China), ZJ0906 (CP005384, China),  
250 and str. Nagasaki (NZ\_APBT00000000, Japan)]. The only differences in these five  
251 chromosomes were in the transposases, but transposon Tn6678 had two complete inverted  
252 repeats of IS110 transposases flanked by 32-bp inverted repeats of ISNme5 at both ends (Fig. 5),  
253 suggesting mobility potential. The *bcr*-containing Tn6678 also contained an antibiotic resistance  
254 gene cassette, suggesting its potential to transfer antibiotic resistance genes.

255 BLASTn searches for the *bcr* gene returned a large set of divergently related sequences  
256 using default parameters. These sequences were annotated as bicyclomycin/multidrug efflux  
257 system, Bcr/CflA family drug resistance efflux transporter, Bcr/CflA family multidrug efflux

258 major facilitator superfamily (MFS) transporter or drug resistance transporter, and Bcr/CflA  
259 subfamily. Phylograms revealed that the *bcr* gene in HPS-1 was most closely related to  
260 homologs identified in other members of the Pasteurellaceae, particularly *G. parasuis*,  
261 *Actinobacillus indolicus*, *Bibersteinia trehalosi*, *Actinobacillus* (*A. pleuropneumoniae*, *A. suis*, *A.*  
262 *equuli*, *A. lignieresii*, *A. indolicus*, and *A. porcitosillarum*), and *Mannheimia* (*M. haemolytica*  
263 and *M. varigena*), all of which are known causative agents of upper respiratory tract infections  
264 (Fig. 6).

265 The neighbour-joining phylogenetic tree using 92 *bcr* genes selected from the BLASTn  
266 searches clearly demonstrated two distinctive clades. The first clade contained *bcr* genes of  
267 *Hemophilus influenzae*, which colonizes humans, and other *Haemophilus* species that colonize  
268 non-human animals. Members of the second clade were divided into four apparent subclades,  
269 including *G. parasuis*, *B. trehalosi*, *Actinobacillus* spp., and *Mannheimia* spp. Except for *G.*  
270 *parasuis*, the chromosomally encoded Bcr/CflA from *G. parasuis* HPS-1 most closely clustered  
271 with that found in *A. indolicus*. The phylogenetic tree indicated a divergent evolutionary pattern  
272 between animal-origin *Pasteurellaceae* bacteria. The *bcr* gene tree is consistent with the  
273 organismal phylogeny, suggesting that horizontal gene transfer does not play an important role in  
274 the evolution of *bcr*-mediated resistance.

### 275 **General features and electrotransformation of the plasmid pYL1**

276 The plasmid pYL1 identified in HPS-1 contained seven ORFs with an average length of 912  
277 bp, with one encoded protein of undetermined function (Fig. 4), and two antimicrobial resistance  
278 genes, *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia*. Four ORFs were identified to encode a 3'-truncated  
279 transposase protein ISAp11 (30 amino acids), a Rep-like protein (444 amino acids) involved in  
280 plasmid replication, and two Mob proteins, MobC (144 amino acids) and MobA (541 amino  
281 acids), associated with plasmid mobilization (Fig. 4). Except for resistance genes, pYL1 had the  
282 same backbone and genetic structure and showed 100% nucleotide identity to four previously-  
283 identified plasmids, pFZ51, pFS39, pHN61, and pHB0503 (Table S5) (Kang *et al.*, 2009; Chen

284 *et al.*, 2010; Yang *et al.*, 2013). In contrast, the resistance genes and flanking regions in pYL1  
285 exhibited as little as 58% sequence identity to the other four plasmids (Fig. 7).

286 Transformation of pYL1 into *S. aureus* RN4220 was achieved at a frequency of  $10^{-9}$  cells  
287 per recipient cell by electroporation, confirming that pYL1 is a mobilizable plasmid with active  
288 mobilization genes. The transformants had increased MICs for oxacillin, gentamicin, amikacin,  
289 kanamycin, and streptomycin as compared with those of the parental strain (0.047 to > 256 mg/L,  
290 0.094 to 1.5 mg/L, 0.38 to 16 mg/L, 0.38 to 32 mg/L, and < 0.25 to 32 mg/L, respectively). This  
291 finding indicated that plasmid pYL1 carrying *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia* contributed to  
292 the penicillin resistance and aminoglycoside antibiotic resistance in *S. aureus* RN4220  
293 transformants. Furthermore, the plasmid showed low stability in *S. aureus* without antibiotic  
294 pressure, as only 52.5%, 30.48%, and 2.68% of transformants maintained the kanamycin  
295 resistance after five, six, and seven subcultures, respectively. However, the plasmid can be  
296 conserved in *S. aureus* cultured with kanamycin, as 100% of the colonies remained resistant to  
297 kanamycin after 10 subcultures, as confirmed by PCR mapping.

## 298 Discussion

299 In the current study, we observed an open pan-genome. Similar result that the size of pan-  
300 genome was 7,431 genes including 1,049 core genes has been reported (Howell *et al.*, 2014).  
301 This suggested that the *G. parasuis* pan-genome is vast, and unique genes can be continuously be  
302 identified upon sequencing more *G. parasuis* genomes. However, the isolates in this study with  
303 ~3.34% core genes, primarily isolated from China, displayed further diversity and higher  
304 variability than isolates with only ~14% core genes, primarily obtained from the UK (Howell *et*  
305 *al.*, 2014). Besides, we identified 54 new STs enriching the *G. parasuis* MLST databases and  
306 highlight the wide distribution of *G. parasuis* strains. Although most strains of the same STs  
307 formed single clades, there was no definitive association between ST and serotype (Fig. 2),  
308 consistent with previous studies (Olvera *et al.*, 2006; Wang *et al.*, 2016).

309 The pattern of the phylogenetic tree based on single-copy core genes was different from the  
310 population grouping predicted via MLST, which showed six main subgroups (Wang et al., 2016).  
311 Both phylogenetic lineages contain both Asian and North American isolates, in agreement with  
312 previous phylogenetic analyses (Howell et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Dickerman et al., 2020)  
313 and supporting the hypothesis of frequent migration of isolates between geographic regions.

314 Five types of pathogenic factors *gigP*, *malQ*, *gmhA*, *rfa* and *gal* cluster were universally  
315 carried by *G. parasuis* isolates in this study. The *rfaF* gene has been linked to serum resistance,  
316 adhesion, and invasion (Zhang et al., 2013); *galU* plays a role in autoagglutination and biofilm  
317 formation, and *galE* appears to affect biofilm production indirectly in *G. parasuis* (Zou et al.,  
318 2013). Serum resistance may play a role in the virulence of *G. parasuis* (Cerdeña-Cuellar and  
319 Aragon, 2008). However, *lsgB*, previously associated with *G. parasuis* virulence potential, was  
320 predominant in six isolates (29755 and HPS9 from the USA, Nagasaki from Japan, and KL0318,  
321 SH0104, and SH0165 from China), in line with potentially virulent strains isolated from the  
322 nasal cavities of healthy pigs (Amano et al., 1996; Brockmeier et al., 2013).

323 The *bla<sub>ROB-1</sub>*, *sul2*, *aph(3'')-Ib*, *tetB*, *tetD*, *aac(6')-Ie-aph(2'')-Ia*, *catIII*, and *floR* genes have  
324 previously been identified in *G. parasuis* (Zhao et al., 2018). In the current study, we identified  
325 all of genes mentioned above. This is the first report of genes *tetA*, *tetH* and *tetR* genes in *G.*  
326 *parasuis* isolates and needs further study. Tetracycline resistance genes are often associated with  
327 conjugative and mobile genetic elements enabling horizontal transfer (Lancashire et al., 2005;  
328 Zhao et al., 2018). Moreover, this is the first report describing the presence of the *bcr*, *bacA*,  
329 *ksgA* and *norA* genes in *G. parasuis*, to the best of our knowledge. All of these benefits from the  
330 application of whole genome sequencing method. Three isolates clustered closely in one branch  
331 all harboured *lunC* gene, contained in the ISSag10 sequence of all three isolates. The *lunC* gene  
332 was only identified in plasmid pHN61 of *G. parasuis* (Chen et al., 2010). The results suggested  
333 that the resistance of these three strains to lincomycin may be mediated by the plasmid carrying  
334 *lunC* gene.

335 This is also the first report describing the transposon Tn6678 containing toxin genes *pilT* and  
336 *phd*, drug resistance genes *cpxA* and *cpxR*, and an efflux pump gene *bcr*. Association between  
337 the Cpx system and bacterial antimicrobial resistance has been reported in *Escherichia coli*,  
338 *Salmonella enterica*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *G. parasuis* (Hu et al., 2011; Srinivasan et al.,  
339 2012; Audrain et al., 2013; Kurabayashi et al., 2014; Cao et al., 2018). CpxR plays essential  
340 roles in mediating macrolide (i.e., erythromycin) resistance (Cao et al., 2018). The Bcr/CflA  
341 efflux system was identified as a group of antiporters that confer resistance to chloramphenicol,  
342 florfenicol, and bicyclomycin by actively transporting these compounds out of the cell  
343 (Marklevitz and Harris, 2016). The transposon Tn6678 had two complete inverted repeats of  
344 IS110 transposases flanked by 32-bp inverted repeats of ISNme5 at both ends suggesting  
345 mobility potential and its potential to transfer antibiotic resistance genes. In *G. parasuis*, only the  
346 efflux pump AcrB, belonging to the resistance-nodulation division (RND) family, has been  
347 analysed to date. Efflux pump AcrB may play a role in multidrug resistance, and the *acrAB* gene  
348 cluster could affect the efflux of macrolides in *G. parasuis* (Feng et al., 2014). However, this is  
349 the first description of the efflux pump Bcr/CflA in *G. parasuis*, belonging to the MFS. This  
350 efflux pump, encoded by *bcr*, harbored on a transposon indicated its potential transferability.

351 To date, two  $\beta$ -lactam resistance genes (*bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *bla*<sub>TEM</sub>) have been reported in *G.*  
352 *parasuis* (By Guo et al., 2012). A  $\beta$ -lactam resistance plasmid, pB1000, harbouring *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> was  
353 previously detected in *G. parasuis* clinical strains isolated from Glässer's disease lesions (San et  
354 al., 2007). The plasmid pYL1 harboured two antimicrobial resistance genes, *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> and *aac*(6')-  
355 *Ie-aph*(2'')-Ia. The ROB-1 of plasmid pYL1 had a typical size of 305 bp, in line with  
356 functionally active members of the ROB-1 family from different plasmids in *Pasteurellaceae*  
357 species. AAC(6')-Ie-APH(2'')-Ia, the most important aminoglycoside-resistance enzyme in gram-  
358 positive bacteria conferring resistance to almost all known aminoglycoside antibiotics in clinical  
359 use, also had a typical size of 479 amino acids in this family (Rouch et al., 1987). Although  
360 *aac*(6')-Ib-cr is considered the most prominent aminoglycoside-resistance gene in *G. parasuis*  
361 (Doi and Arakawa, 2007; San et al., 2007), the bifunctional aminoglycoside-resistance enzyme

362 AAC(6')-Ie-APH(2')-Ia in plasmids is also reported in GenBank for *G. parasuis* strains.  
363 Comparing with other four previously-identified plasmids which have similar structure with  
364 pYL1 suggested more rapid evolution among the resistance-associated components of these  
365 small plasmids. The transposase gene of ISAp11 in pYL1 had an internal deletion of 659 bp, but  
366 intact 3' and 5' ends. The truncated ISAp11 linked with *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub> suggested that ISAp11 played a  
367 key role in transposition of *bla*<sub>ROB-1</sub>, facilitating the horizontal transfer of  $\beta$ -lactam and  
368 aminoglycoside resistance among *G. parasuis* isolates. These results are consistent with a  
369 previous study presenting evidence for spread of  $\beta$ -lactam resistance (Yang *et al.*, 2013). A  
370 similar occurrence was also identified in *A. porcitonisillarum* or *G. parasuis* plasmids pFJS5863,  
371 pQY431, and pFS39, suggesting a more widespread role and highlighting that the function of  
372 ISAp11 requires further investigation.

### 373 **Conclusions**

374 In summary, our results shed new light on the importance of genomic variations, especially  
375 transposon-related and/or plasmid-related gene variations, in the evolution of *G. parasuis*. This  
376 comparative analysis identified potentially novel virulence factors (*gigP*, *malQ*, and *gmhA*) and  
377 drug resistance genes (*norA*, *bacA*, *ksgA*, and *bcr*) in *G. parasuis*. Resistance determinants (*sul2*,  
378 *aph(3'')-Ib*, *norA*, *bacA*, *ksgA*, and *bcr*) were widespread across isolates, regardless of serovar,  
379 isolation source, or geographical location. Future research focused on a larger sample of *G.*  
380 *parasuis* isolates worldwide will further increase understanding of the rapid development of  
381 antibiotic resistance associated with mobile genetic elements in this important animal pathogen.

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389

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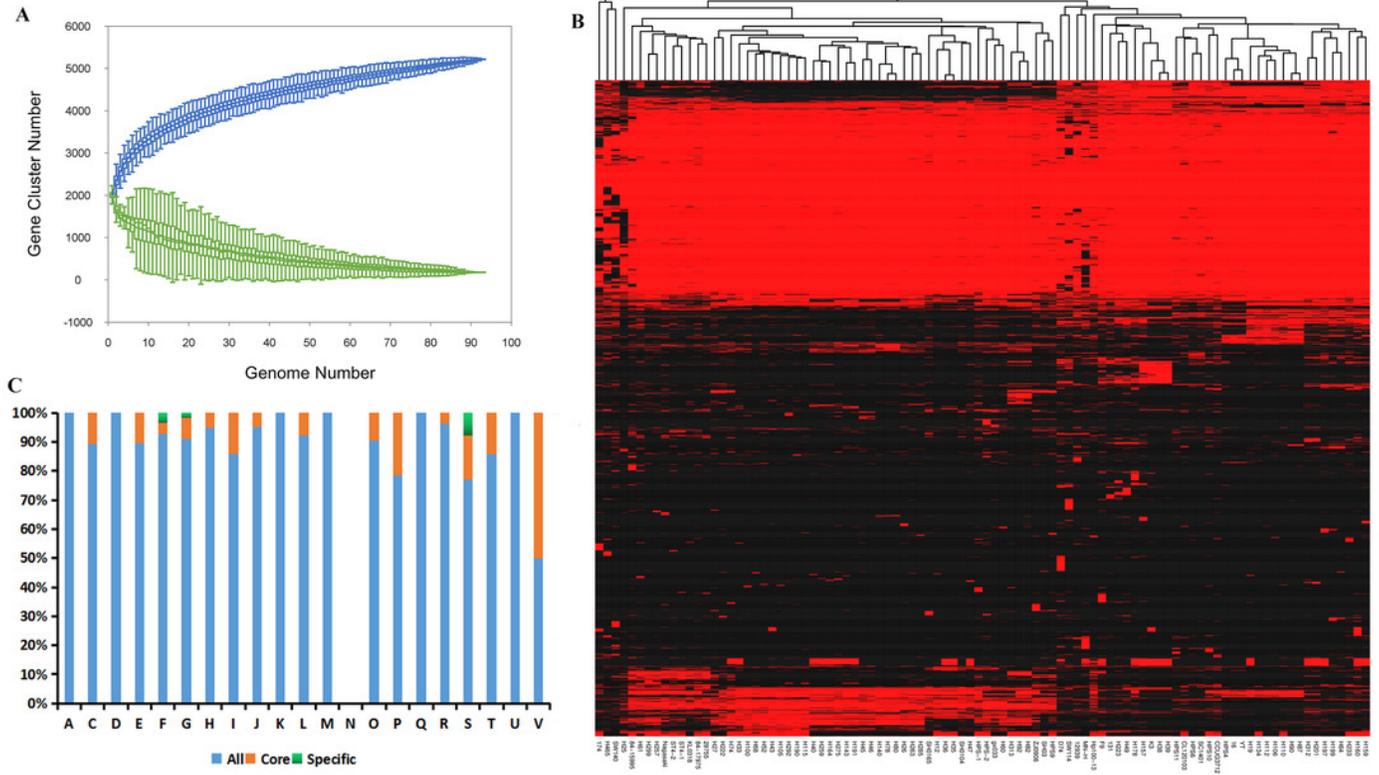
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# Figure 1

Analysis of the core and pan-genome of *G. parasuis* isolates.

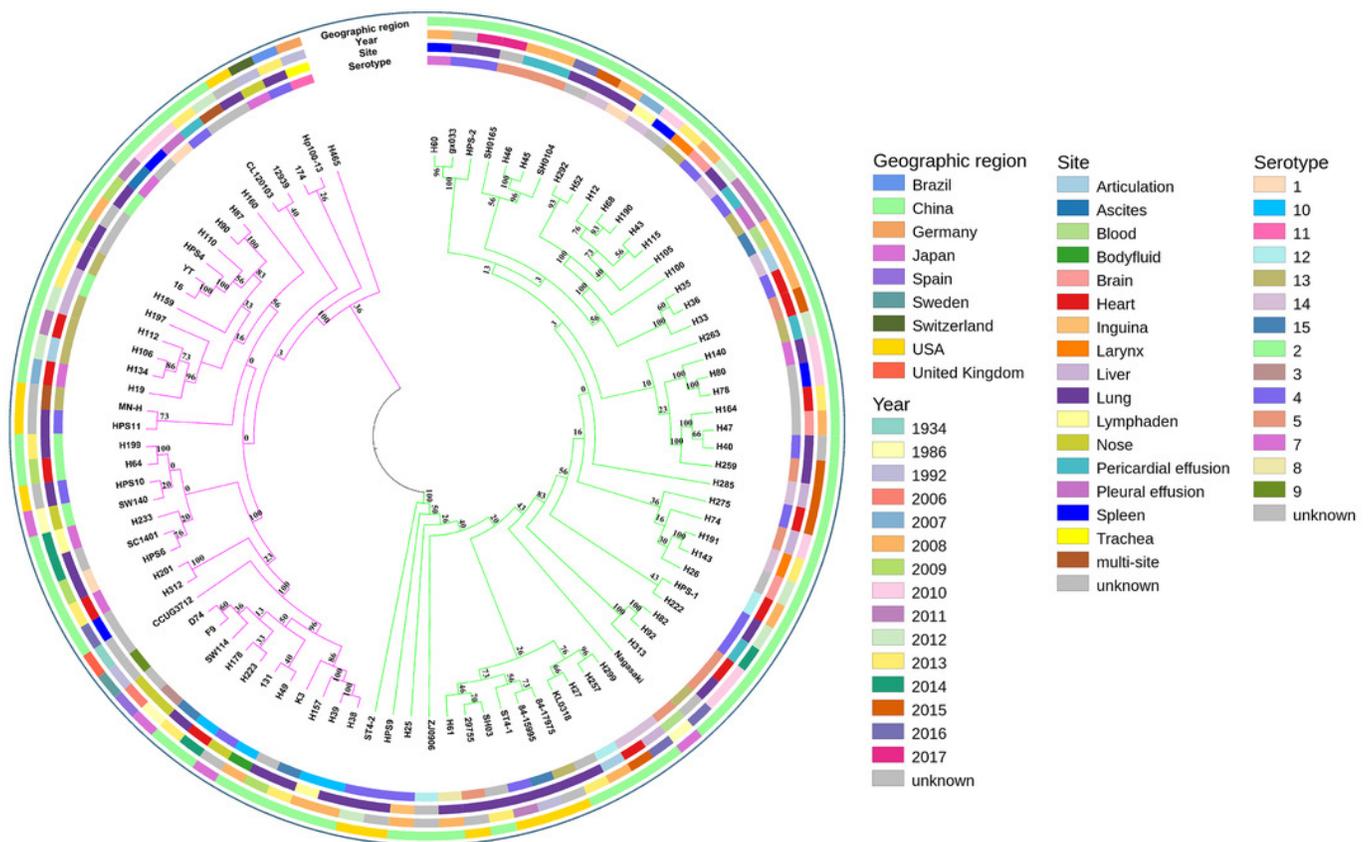
**(A) Core and pan-genomic calculations in *G. parasuis* isolates.** Each green point represents the number of genes conserved between genomes. All of the points are plotted as a function of the strain number( $x$ ). The deduced pan-genome size:  $P(x) = 2483.54x^{0.18} - 461.72$ . The height of the curve continues to increase because the pan-genome of *G. parasuis* is open. **(B) Genes missing or present in *G. parasuis* isolates.** The heat map illustrates the distribution of core and accessory genes across the *G. parasuis* strains. The columns represent *G. parasuis* isolates. The rows represent genes. The red and black regions represent the presence or absence of genes in a particular genome, respectively. The black regions indicate features missing in that strain but present in one or more of the other *G. parasuis* strains. **(C) The distribution of all, core, and specific genes according to the COG classification.** The y-axis indicates the percentage of genes in various COG categories. A: RNA processing and modification. C: Energy production and conversion. D: Cell cycle control, cell division, chromosome partitioning. E: Amino acid transport and metabolism. F: Nucleotide transport and metabolism. G: Carbohydrate transport and metabolism. H: Coenzyme transport and metabolism. I: Lipid transport and metabolism. J: Translation, ribosomal structure and biogenesis. K: Transcription. L: Replication, recombination and repair. M: Cell wall/membrane/envelope biogenesis. N: Cell motility. O: Posttranslational modification, protein turnover, chaperones. P: Inorganic ion transport and metabolism. Q: Secondary metabolites biosynthesis, transport and catabolism. R: General function prediction only. S: Function unknown. T: Signal transduction mechanisms. U: Intracellular trafficking, secretion, and vesicular transport. V: Defense mechanisms.



## Figure 2

Maximum-likelihood phylogeny of 94 *Glaesserella parasuis* isolates based on 93 single-copy core genes.

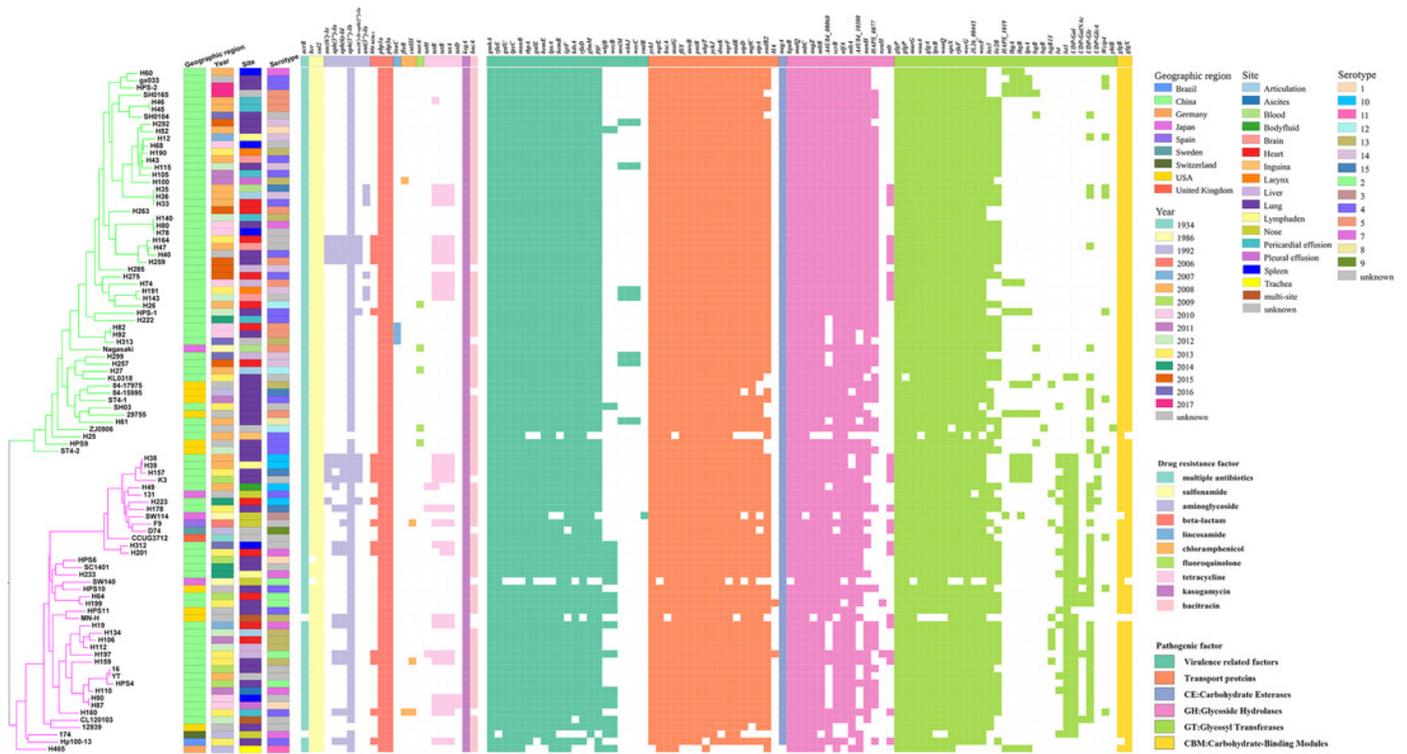
The tree was constructed with MEGA 7 with 1,000 bootstrap replicates. The annotation rings surrounding the tree, from outside to inside, depict (1) geographic region, (2) year of sample collection, (3) site of sample, and (4) serotype. The different colors of the branches represent lineages, lineage I in pink and lineage II in green.



# Figure 3

Virulence and resistance profiles across the phylogeny of the 94 *G. parasuis* isolates.

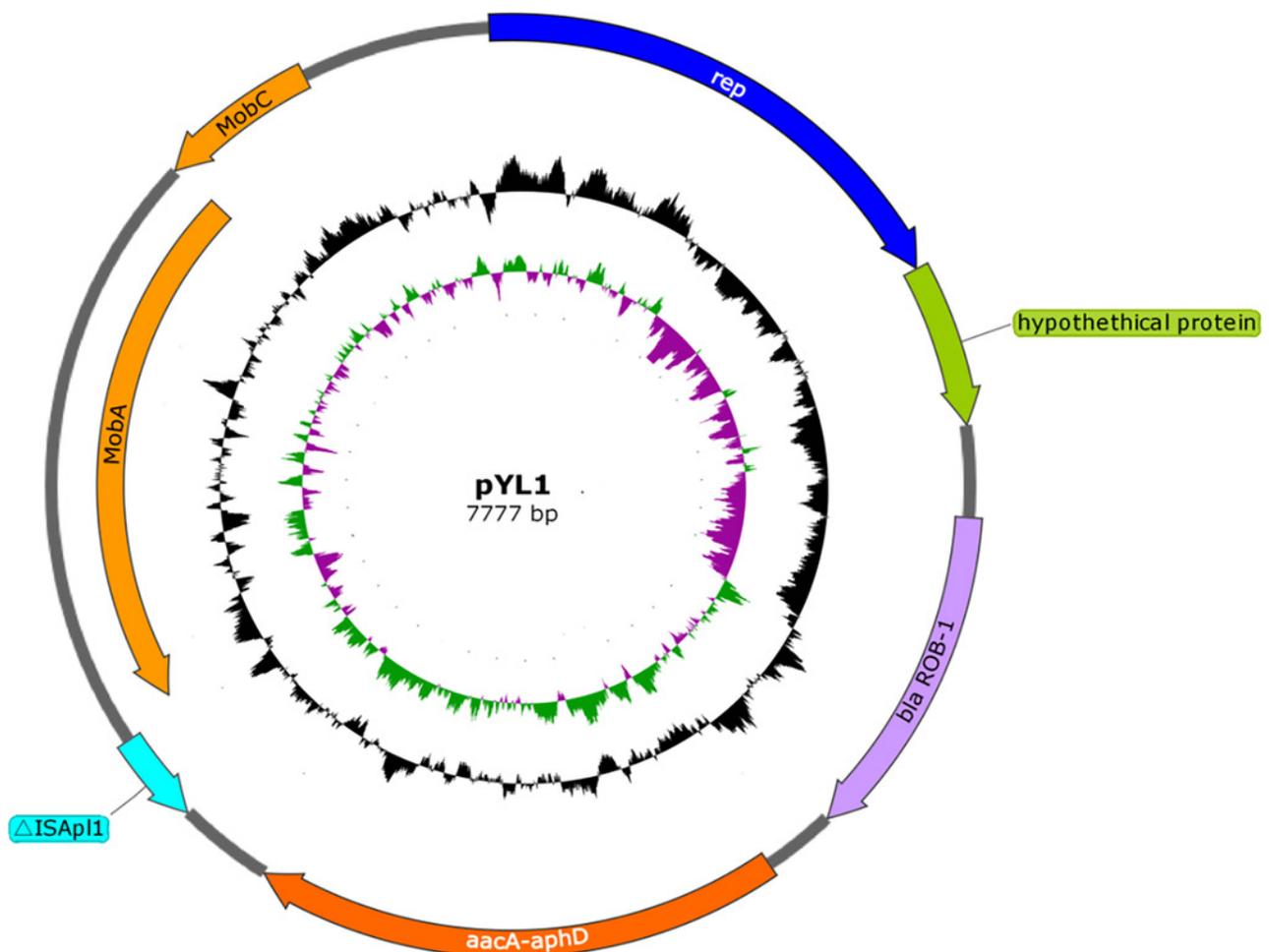
Cluster analysis based on single-copy core orthologs. Pattern of gene presence (colored line) or absence (white).



## Figure 4

Schematic map of plasmid pYL1.

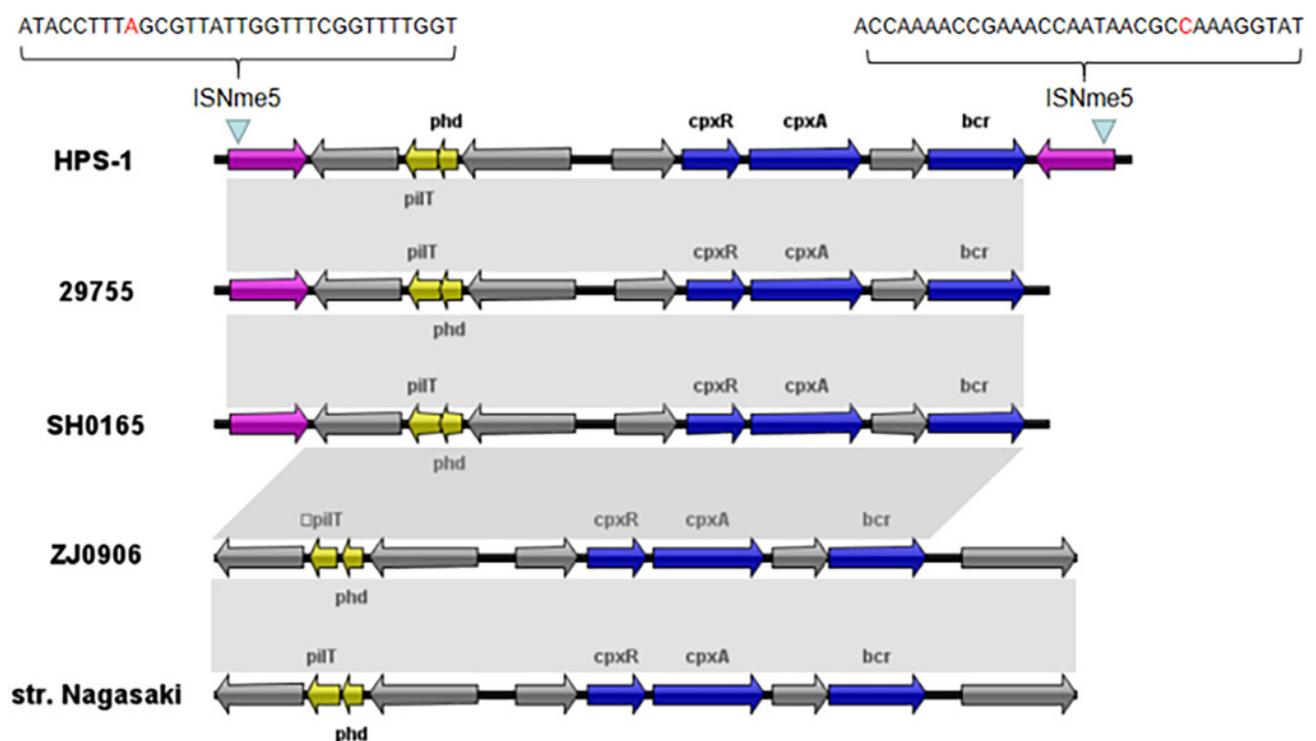
The circles show, from outside to inside: first and second, putative open reading frames, the positions and orientations of the genes; third, G+C content (deviation from the average); and, fourth, G+C skew (green, +; purple, -).



## Figure 5

Organization of the *G. parasuis* HPS-1 Tn6678 transposon and comparison with the similar structure.

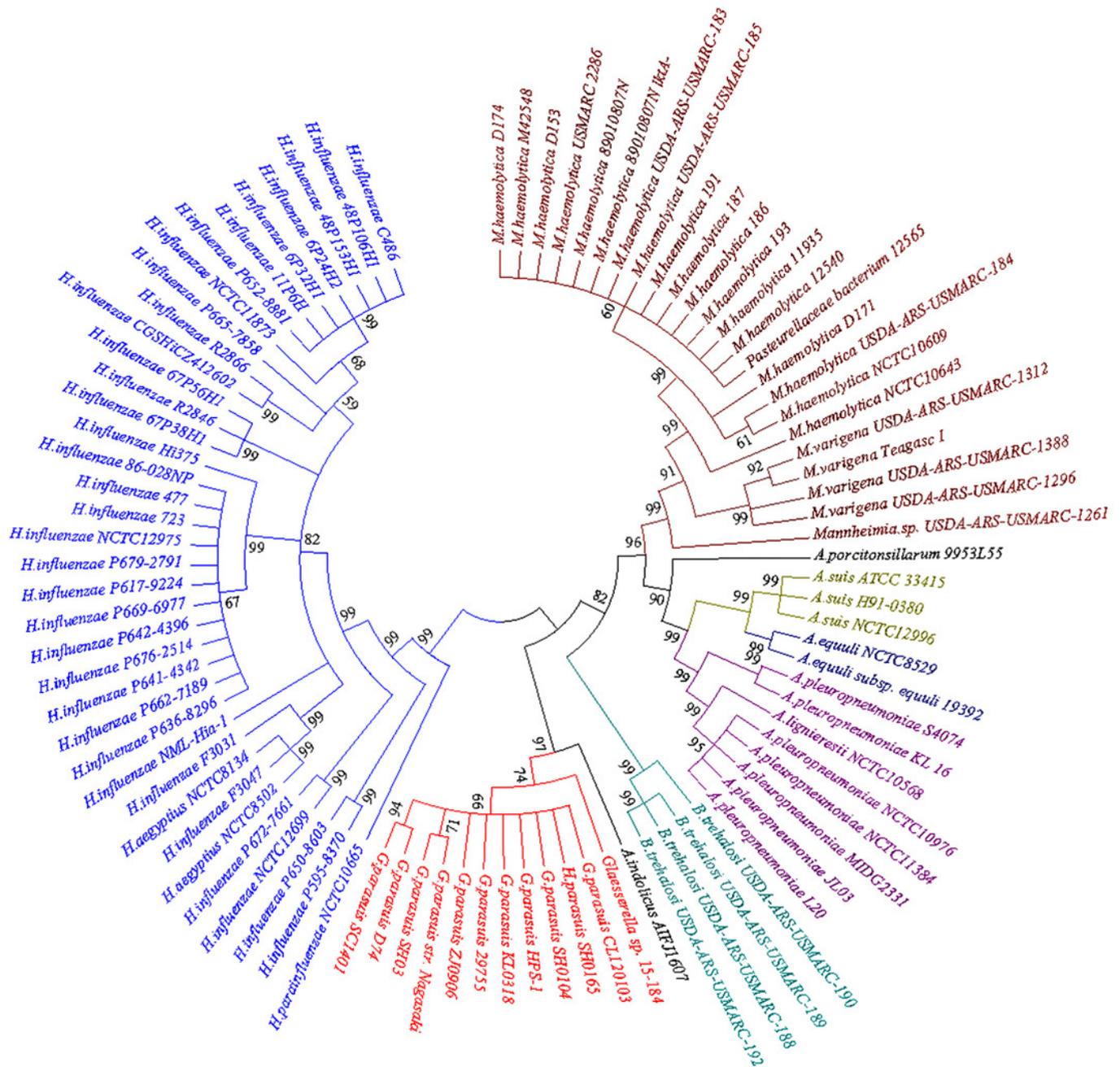
ORFs are shown as arrows, indicating the transcription direction, and the colors of the arrows represent different fragments. Gene color code: transposase, purple; toxin genes (*pilT* and *phd*), yellow; resistance genes (*cpxA*, *cpxR* and *bcr*), blue; proteins with other or unknown functions, gray. Homologous gene clusters in different isolates are shaded in gray (>97%).



## Figure 6

Neighbor-joining phylogenetic tree based on *bcr* gene sequences obtained from the current study and downloaded from NCBI.

The tree was constructed using MEGA 7 with 1,000 bootstrap replicates. The different colors of the branches represent lineages. The *G. parasuis* HPS-1 is indicated by a solid circle.



## Figure 7

Comparison of the genetic structures of pHN61, pFS39, pYL1, pFZ51 and pHB0503.

The accession numbers and origins of these plasmids are displayed on the left side. Arrows represent putative open reading frames, the positions and orientations of the genes. Blue arrows indicate Rep-like protein involved in plasmid replication. Green arrows indicate hypothetical protein. Regions with more than 98% nucleotide sequence identity are shaded yellow.

