



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Health Sciences

Department of Medical Biology

Evolutionary genomics of cowpox virus and recombination *in vitro* between a naturally occurring cowpox virus and a vaccinia virus vectored influenza vaccine

Diana Karina Diaz Cánova

A dissertation for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)

April 2023



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*To my grandmother, Josefa N. Mendoza
Zavala vda. de Diaz.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKMV	Ahkmeta virus
AKPV	Alaskapox virus
ATI	A-type inclusion
BPXV	Buffalopox virus
BHK	Baby hamster kidney
BI	Bayesian inference
CAM	Chorioallantoic membrane
CDS	Coding sequence
CEF	Chicken embryo fibroblast
CEV	Cell-associated enveloped virus
CHO	Chinese hamster ovary
ChPV	Chordopoxvirinae
CMLV	Camelpox virus
CNPV	Canarypox virus
CPXV	Cowpox virus
CrmB	Cytokine response modifier B
CrmD	Cytokine response modifier D
CVA	Chorioallantois VACV Ankara
dsDNA	double-stranded DNA
ECTV	Ectromelia virus
EEV	Extracellular enveloped virus
ER	Endoplasmic reticulum
ERA	Environmental risk assessment
EU	European Union
GATU	Genome Annotation Transfer Utility
GMO	Genetically modified organism
HA	Hemagglutinin
HPD	High posterior density interval
HSPV	Horsepox virus
ICTV	International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses
IEV	Intracellular enveloped virus
IMV	Intracellular mature virus
ITR	Inverted terminal repeat
IV	Immature virus
IVN	Immature virus with nucleoid
LSDV	lumpy skin disease virus
MAFFT	Multiple Alignment Fast Fourier Transform
ML	Maximum Likelihood
moi	Multiplicity of infection
MPXV	Monkeypox virus
MVA	Modified Vaccinia virus Ankara
MVA-HANP	MVA vectored influenza vaccine
NGS	Next-generation sequencing
NP	Nucleoprotein
OPXV	Orthopoxvirus
ORF	Open reading frame
ppi	Post primary infection
RCNV	Raccoonpox virus

RDP	Recombination detect program
RSV	Respiratory Syncytial virus
SKPV	Skunkpox virus
TATV	Taterapox virus
TGS	Third generation sequencing
tMRCA	Time to the most recent common ancestor
UK	United Kingdom
VACV	Vaccinia virus
VARV	Variola virus
VOCs	Viral Orthologous Clusters database
VPXV	Volepox virus
WHO	World health organization

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Paper II

Diaz-Cánova, D., Mavian, C., Brinkmann, A., Nitsche, A., Moens, U., and Okeke, M. I. (2022). Genomic Sequencing and Phylogenomics of Cowpox Virus. *Viruses* 2022, Vol. 14, Page 2134 14, 2134. doi:10.3390/V14102134.

Paper III

Diaz-Cánova, D., Brinkmann, A., Nitsche, A., Moens, U., and Okeke, M. I. Whole genome sequencing of recombinant viruses obtained from co-infection and superinfection of Vero cells with Modified Vaccinia virus Ankara vectored influenza vaccine and a naturally occurring *Cowpox virus*. Manuscript

SUMMARY

Modified vaccinia virus Ankara (MVA) is a promising orthopoxvirus (OPXV) vector vaccine candidate due to its host range restriction and good safety profile as a smallpox vaccine. It has been widely tested in clinical trials as a recombinant vector for vaccination against infectious diseases and cancers in humans and animals. Furthermore, it is being used as smallpox and Mpox vaccine. However, the extensive use of MVA and MVA vectored vaccines have the potential for MVA or MVA vectored vaccine to recombine with naturally circulating OPXV. *Cowpox virus* (CPXV) as a close relative of MVA is a potential candidate for recombination. Hence, the genetic diversity and evolution of CPXV was assessed in this work, as well as recombination *in vitro* between a naturally occurring CPXV and MVA vectored vaccine in cells in which MVA multiplies poorly. CPXV is classified as a single species; however, we demonstrated that CPXV might be an assemblage of several species based on its high genetic diversity, lack of monophyly, and close phylogenetic relationship with other OPXV. CPXV strains were separated into five major clusters rather than one monophyletic cluster. Furthermore, we described a new, distinct cluster closely related to *Ectromelia virus* (ECTV) and *Abatino macacapox virus* (Abatino) named “ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV”. Additionally, we showed evidence that a Norwegian CPXV isolate was a natural occurring recombinant CPXV that might have emerged following multiple recombination events between different OPXV species from the Old World and North America. Under *in vitro* conditions, the progeny viruses obtained from co-infection and superinfection of Vero cells with MVA-HANP and CPXV-No-F1 had mosaic genomes and displayed parental and non-parental plaque phenotypes. Furthermore, some progeny viruses contained the transgene from MVA-HANP and regained genes that were deleted or fragmented in MVA-HANP. Overall, these findings will contribute to the environmental risk assessment of MVA and MVA vectored vaccines and to the improvement of the biosafety of MVA vectored vaccines.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Poxvirus

Poxviridae is a family of large double-stranded DNA (dsDNA) viruses ¹. The family is divided into two subfamilies based on its host range: *Chordopoxvirinae* (*ChPV*), viruses that infect vertebrates, and *Entomopoxvirinae*, viruses that infect insects. There are four and eighteen genera within *Entomopoxvirinae* and *Chordopoxvirinae*, respectively (<https://ictv.global/taxonomy>). Among *Chordopoxvirinae*, only species of the genera *Orthopoxvirus*, *Parapoxvirus*, *Molluscipoxvirus*, and *Yatapoxvirus* are known to cause human infections ². The best characterized genus within vertebrate poxviruses is *Orthopoxvirus* (OPXV). Some OPXV including *Variola virus* (VARV), *Vaccinia virus* (VACV)-like, *Cowpox virus* (CPXV), *Monkeypox virus* (MPXV), and *Camelpox virus* (CMLV) can cause human diseases ³. The genus *Orthopoxvirus* includes twelve species. According to their endemism, OPXV are divided into the New World and the Old World OPXV. The Old World or African-Eurasian OPXV group contains: CPXV, VACV, MPXV, VARV, CMLV, *Taterapox virus* (TATV) and *Ectromelia virus* (ECTV). The New world OPXV group comprises three species that are endemic to North America: *Raccoonpox virus* (RCNV), *Volepox virus* (VPXV) and *Skunkpox virus* (SKPV) ⁴. Recently, three novel OPXV species have been discovered in different locations: *Abatino macacapox virus* (Abatino) in Italy, *Ahkmeta virus* (AKMV) in Georgia and *Alaskapox virus* (AKPV) in the United States ⁵⁻⁷, although AKPV is still not formally classified as an OPXV species.

1.2 Orthopoxvirus

1.2.1 *Variola virus*

VARV is the most notorious OPXV, as it is the causative of smallpox. VARV has humans as an exclusive host and no animal reservoirs have been found ⁸. Smallpox is a highly contagious airborne disease with high mortality rates (15-45%) ^{9,10} that caused around 300-500 million deaths world-wide in the 20th century ¹¹. The term “variola” for smallpox was derived from the latin word *various* (meaning spotted) or from *varus* (meaning pimples) ¹², and refers to the pustules that appears on the body and face. Later, the term “small pockes” (pocke means sac) was used to differentiate it from syphilis, “great pockes” ¹³. The first historical record of smallpox was in Egypt from the mummy of Ramses V, who died 1157 BC ¹⁴. From Egypt, the disease started to spread to other parts of the world. One of the first methods to mitigate smallpox was variolation, which consisted in the inoculation of smallpox pus or scabs into the skin (Indian method) or in intranasal insufflation of dried smallpox scabs (Chinese method) to a healthy person ¹⁵. It was an effective method to prevent smallpox, but the mortality rate was approximately 2% ^{9,10}. After 1798, variolation was gradually replaced by a safer procedure called vaccination ¹⁰. Compared to variolation, vaccination gave the same protection, but with less severe symptoms. In 1959, the World Health organization (WHO) launched a Global

Smallpox Eradication Program with the aim to eradicate smallpox ¹⁰. From 1959 to 1977, the WHO organized vaccination campaigns world-wide. The last natural smallpox case was recorded in 1977 ¹⁶, and in 1980 the WHO formally declared the eradication of smallpox, and the routine smallpox vaccination ceased ¹⁷.

Prior to the eradication of smallpox, there were multiple VARV strains that were circulating. However, there were two main variants: *variola major* with a mortality rate of 20-45% (which is the most common cause of death related to smallpox) and *variola minor* or *alastrim*, characterized by a much lower mortality rate (1-2%) ^{9,10}. The latter variant was common in Western Africa and America and appeared in the end of the 19th century ¹⁰. After smallpox eradication, the WHO decided that all VARV stocks should be destroyed or deposited in two international centers in the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology in Russia and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States ¹⁸. Those are the only two WHO-approved centers that can conduct research on VARV. The WHO had planned to destroy all VARV stocks but given the potential for a bioterrorist attack, the destruction has been postponed for a few years until the development of new antiviral agents against smallpox and until the committee decides the best options for global public health ¹⁹.

1.2.2 Cowpox virus

CPXV is a zoonotic OPXV that is the causative agent of the disease cowpox. Historically, cowpox has been associated with the first vaccine used by the English physician Edward Jenner who established a safer method called “vaccination” to protect against smallpox in 1798. He had heard the folk tale that anyone who contracted cowpox could not catch smallpox ²⁰. Based on this belief, in 1796, he inoculated the boy James Phipps with cowpox pustules from the hand of the milkmaid Sara Nelmes. Some weeks after, Jenner infected the boy with smallpox pus and the boy did not develop the disease. After this finding, he repeated the same procedure with other children and concluded that vaccination offers a full protection against smallpox ^{21,22}. Jenner called the pustular material “*variolae vaccinae*” (smallpox of the cow) to make reference to the cow (latin word *vacca*) ^{23,24} and later the “*variolae vaccinae*” was referred to as vaccine ²⁵. However, until now, there is still uncertainty about the nature of the virus that Jenner used as a first vaccine. Probably he might have used VACV or *Horsepox virus* (HSPV) ^{22,26-28}. In 1798, Jenner published his discovery, which was the basis for vaccination and immunology ²². Although vaccination had been first used by Benjamin Jesty 22 years before Jenner ^{29,30}, there is no evidence that Jenner knew about Jesty’s vaccinations ²⁹. Thus, the credits for developing vaccination were given to Jenner ^{29,30}.

CPXV is endemic of Eurasia, mainly in Europe ³¹⁻³⁷. CPXV has the broadest host range among OPXV ^{3,38}, which is thought to be associated with its high number of host range genes ^{39,40}. Its natural reservoir hosts are probably wild rodents such as bank voles (*Myodes glareolus*), common voles (*Microtus arvalis*) and field voles (*Microtus agrestis*) ^{31,41,42}. CPXV infects many non-reservoir species such as felines, monkeys, dogs, alpacas, rats, cats and horses ^{36,42-47}. CPXV even causes spillover infections from infected animals to humans ^{34,48-59}. Most human

CPXV cases were caused by contact with infected cats^{49,59,60}. In humans, the disease is usually self-limiting with pox lesions and mild symptoms, but it can lead to fatal infections, especially in immune-compromised individuals^{61–63}. The first zoonotic case was reported in the Netherlands in 1985, in which a woman was infected with CPXV from a domestic cat⁶⁴. In the last decades, multiple lethal and non-lethal CPXV outbreaks in animals have been reported as well as human cases of CPXV infections^{42,61–63,65–67}. In the Fennoscandian region, CPXV infections in humans and felines have been reported (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-H2, CPXV-Swe-H1, CPXV-Swe-H2, CPXV-No-F1 and CPXV-No-F2)^{45 45,68–72}. Interestingly, one of these Fennoscandian CPXV isolates, CPXV-No-H2, was a peculiar CPXV strain⁷¹. The phylogenetic analysis using the *p4c* gene revealed that CPXV-No-H2 was clustered separate from the other CPXV isolates. This was evidence of the genetic diversity among CPXV isolates. Other studies have also revealed that CPXV is genetically heterogeneous^{70,72–78}.

The traditional nomenclature used in poxvirus taxonomy, that is naming the virus after the host from which it was isolated, brought confusion in the classification of cowpox. For instance, cows are susceptible to both CPXV and VACV. Jenner described cowpox as a disease characterized by pustules on the nipples and utters of cows that were infected from horses²². Later, Downie defined CPXV as strains that were isolated from the spontaneous disease in cattle or from human lesions caused by directly infection from that source. Additionally, he described some biological properties of CPXV such as the presence of A-type inclusion bodies (ATI) and red hemorrhagic pocks on the chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) of chicken eggs after infection⁷⁹. Since then, the classification of CPXV has been based on host specificity and the two main criteria described by Downie. As a consequence, several viruses have been classified as CPXV^{80–83}. The classification of CPXV is still a matter of debate. It has been proposed that CPXV is not one single species and it may contain more than one species^{70,72,73,75,76,84}.

1.2.3 *Vaccinia virus*

VACV has been used as a vaccine against smallpox in the 20th century⁷⁹. Although it is still not clear when VACV started to be used, it is thought that at some point during 19th century cowpox was swapped for VACV¹⁰. However, recent evidence showed that old smallpox vaccines were more similar to HSPV^{22,26–28}, which is more closely related to VACV than to CPXV. Therefore, it has been suspected that Jenner may have used a HSPV-like virus instead of CPXV^{26,85,86}.

The exact origin of VACV is still unknown as well as its natural reservoir, even though VACV is the most studied OPXV. Since VACV strains have been attenuated in the laboratory, it was thought that VACV strains were unable to establish an infection in nature³. However, VACV-like infections have been reported in multiple species (such as cat, cattle, buffaloes and rabbit) and in different places throughout the world^{3,47,87–93}. VACV and VACV-like have a broad host range^{3,94} and are considered endemic in South America and Asia⁹⁴.

There are several variants of VACV-like that have been described such as HSPV, Buffalopox virus (BPXV) and Brazilian VACV-like^{3,47,87}. BPXV outbreaks have occurred in several countries, affecting mainly buffaloes but also humans^{89,95,96}. In South America, multiple outbreaks of VACV-like infections have been recorded, especially in Brazil^{3,97-99}. Brazilian VACV-like strains were mainly isolated from cattle and humans, although they have been detected in other animals^{3,100-102}. It is likely that Brazilian VACV-like derived from a spillback of a vaccine strain to wild hosts rather than being natural VACV populations circulating in an unknown reservoir^{3,85,103}. VACV-like infections in humans were associated with infected animals (zoonotic transmission)^{104,105}. Although human-to-human transmission (interhuman transmission) has also been reported^{106,107}.

Several VACV strains have been used to develop smallpox vaccines. There are four major types of VACV vaccines: first-, second-, third- and fourth-generation vaccines^{108,109}. The first-generation vaccines were live vaccines produced in live animals and were used during the Global Smallpox Eradication campaign^{10,110}. Many VACV strains were used to develop first-generation vaccines, for instance the New York City Board of Health (NYCBH) strain was used in the USA, the Temple of Heaven (Tian Tan) strain was used in China and the Lister strain was used in Africa, Asia, Europe and the USA^{10,109,111}. Nonetheless, these vaccines were not recommended due to safety problems. The second-generation vaccines were produced in tissue culture with good manufacturing practices¹⁰⁹. However, like first generation vaccines, they may still cause severe side effects^{109,112}. The poor safety profile of VACV second-generation vaccines led to the third-generation vaccines. These vaccines are live but attenuated VACV that maintained their immunogenicity and protection against smallpox¹⁰⁸. The attenuation was obtained after multiple passages of the parental virus in cell cultures, which generated random mutations in its genome¹⁰⁹. Several attenuated VACV strains have been developed such as modified Vaccinia virus Ankara (MVA) and Lister-16m8 (LC16m8)^{113,114}. In the fourth-generation vaccines, the attenuation is achieved using genetic engineering. The genomes of the fourth-VACV strains are manipulated by, for example, inserting, deleting or interrupting specific genes¹⁰⁹. An example of these vaccines is NYVACV¹¹⁵. Moreover, subunit-based vaccines are included within the fourth-generation vaccines^{116,117}. Recombinant DNA technology has played an important role in the development of VACV-based vaccines. The ability of incorporate foreign DNA (up to 25kb) into the VACV genome¹¹⁸ opened the opportunity of using VACV as viral vector against other diseases.

Modified Vaccinia virus Ankara

MVA was originally developed in the 1970s as a smallpox vaccine. MVA is an attenuated VACV strain derived from Chorioallantois VACV Ankara (CVA). CVA was passaged more than 500 times in primary chicken embryo fibroblasts (CEF) to be attenuated. After 516 passages, an attenuated virus was obtained and CVA was renamed MVA¹¹⁹. Upon more than 570 passages, the CVA genome had suffered six major deletions as well as minor deletions, insertions and point mutations (Figure 1). As a result, the CVA genome was reduced by around 13%, from 208 kbp (CVA) to 178 kbp (MVA)¹²⁰⁻¹²². The mutations led to the deletion, fragmentation and disruption of multiple genes in MVA responsible for evasion of the host

immune response and regulating the viral host range, such as the *KIL*, *C12L* and *C16L* genes^{122,123}. Although the six major deletions took place in genomic regions of CVA where truncated or fragmented genes pre-existed (e.g. *A39R* and *A55R* gene). The small mutations affected 122 of the 195 genes in MVA¹²². It is presumed that the genetic modifications render MVA incapable to multiply in most mammalian and human cells^{121,124,125}.

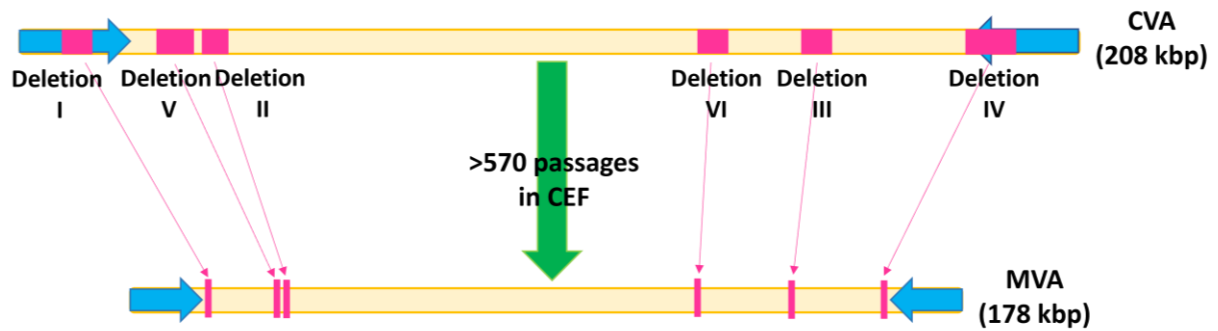


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the CVA and MVA genomes. The pink boxes represent the deleted regions in the CVA genome. The blue arrows represent ITR.

MVA was administered to over 120,000 people in Germany when smallpox was not endemic in the country. Among those vaccinated were children, immunocompromised individuals and elderly people. The vaccines showed mild or moderate adverse effects, such as local reaction (redness) and fever^{114,126–128}. MVA-BN has been authorized for use as a smallpox vaccine in Europe (with the trade name Imvanex), Canada (with the trade name Imvamune) and in USA (with the trade name Jynneos)^{129,130}. Furthermore, it has been approved as a Mpox vaccine¹³¹. MVA-BN is derived from the MVA-584 strain, following six rounds of plaque purification. It has a more restricted host range than other MVA strains¹³². Due to its excellent safety profile, attenuation *in vivo*, immunogenicity *in vivo*, and the ability to incorporate and express foreign DNA with correct post-translational modification, MVA is one of the promising viral vectors for development of recombinant vaccines and gene delivery^{133,134}. MVA has been used to develop recombinant vaccines against numerous diseases, both in humans and animals, and cancers. The development of vaccines using MVA vectors are in different phases of clinical trials, including MVA vaccines against HIV^{135,136}, Ebola^{137–140}, respiratory syncytial virus¹⁴¹, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome¹⁴², cytomegalovirus¹⁴³, influenza^{144,145}, tuberculosis¹⁴⁶ and malaria^{147–149}.

1.2.4 Monkeypox virus

Mpox is a zoonotic disease caused by MPXV. The virus causes mild symptoms but in immunosuppressed patients, individuals with pre-existing medical conditions, elderly people and young children the disease can be more severe with fatal outcomes^{150–153}. Similar to smallpox, Mpox is more often lethal in children than in adults^{151,154,155}. Mpox is endemic in

West and Central Africa ¹⁵⁶. MPXV strains are divided into Clade I (formerly Central African clade) and Clade II (formerly West African clade) ¹⁵⁷. The Clade I has a higher fatality rate (10.6%) than the Clade II (3.6%) ¹⁵⁸. There are two routes of MPXV transmission: (1) from animal to human (zoonotic) and (2) from human to human (interhuman), which includes mother-to-child (vertical transmission) ^{153,155,158}.

MPXV was first identified in captive monkeys in Denmark in 1958 ¹⁵⁹. Natural infections of MPXV have been detected in other mammalian species ¹⁶⁰. Although there is no definitive reservoir of MPXV, it is presumed that African rodents are the reservoir ¹⁶⁰. The first human Mpox case was reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1970 ¹⁶¹. After this, human cases of Mpox have been reported in endemic countries ^{160,162,163}. From 2013 to 2021, sporadic non-endemic cases imported from endemic countries were reported in the USA, Singapore, Israel and the United Kingdom (UK) ¹⁶⁴⁻¹⁶⁸. It is thought that those MPXV outbreaks were spillovers from animals to humans ^{157,169}. In May 2022, the global Mpox outbreak started in the UK ¹⁷⁰, and since then 86,724 cases have been confirmed in 110 countries ¹⁷¹.

1.2.5 *Ectromelia virus*

ECTV is the causative agent of mousepox, a lethal, acute exanthematous disease of laboratory mouse colonies ^{172,173}. The natural reservoir of ECTV is likely wild mice. One ECTV strain was isolated from wild mice in Germany ¹⁷⁴. ECTV has a very narrow host range, its host is the mouse. However, human cases of ECTV infection have been reported in China and one case in fox ¹⁷⁵⁻¹⁷⁷. The first ECTV strain (ECTV-Hampstead) was discovered in a laboratory mouse colony in Hampstead, the UK ¹⁷³. After that, several outbreaks occurred in Europe, Japan, China and the USA ^{174,178,179}. ECTV-Hampstead was the progenitor of the outbreaks in Europe. It is thought that ECTV-Hampstead was also responsible for the outbreaks in Russia, Japan and the USA (from the 1980s) ¹⁷⁴. The ECTV outbreaks in the USA caused high mortality in laboratory mice and losses of millions of dollars ¹⁸⁰. Mousepox was a serious threat to laboratory mice, but it has been eliminated due to increased health surveillance and improvements in animal facilities ¹⁸⁰. However, mousepox is still relevant as it is the best small animal model of smallpox. In addition, it has been used in studies of OPXV infection and pathogenesis ^{172,181,181,182}. Compared to CPXV, ECTV produces white lesions on chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) of chicken eggs and V⁻ ATI phenotype. However, ECTV-Hampstead produced the wild type V⁺ ATI and the atypical V^{+/-} ATI. Furthermore, it contained a complete *p4c* gene. Whereas the other ECTV strains contained a truncated *p4c* gene and produced V⁻ ATI ^{174,183}.

1.2.6 *Alaskapox virus*

AKPV has not been classified as OPXV, but it has been suggested that it represents a novel OPXV. AKPV was isolated from a patient in Alaska, the USA. The distribution of AKPV is unknown as well the infection source of the patient. It has been speculated that either the patient was in contact with fomites brought from abroad or the virus was circulating in small mammals,

like other OPXV, in the areas close to the residence of the patient. The sampling of small mammals and the fomites tested negative for OPXV, although the sampling was limited^{7,184}.

1.3 Virus structure

Poxviruses are ovoid or brick-shaped viruses (220-450 nm x 140-260 nm)¹⁸⁵. The virions are composed of three main substructures: viral core, one or two lateral bodies and the viral membrane(s) (Figure 2)¹⁸⁶⁻¹⁸⁸. The core contains the dsDNA genome, structural proteins and enzymes needed for the transcription of early viral genes¹⁸⁹⁻¹⁹¹. The core is encased by a core wall that has a biconcave shape¹⁸⁶. The core wall is composed of two layers: the inner layer or “smooth layer”, formed by A3; and the outer layer or “palisade layer”, formed by A10 and A4¹⁹². The lateral bodies reside on the concave regions of the core^{187,193}. They are proteinaceous structures that carry host modulatory proteins such as the phosphoprotein F17R, the phosphatase H1 and a glutaredoxin-2 (G4L)¹⁹³. The virus is surrounded by one lipoprotein bilayer membrane and one additional outer membrane (envelope)¹⁹⁴.

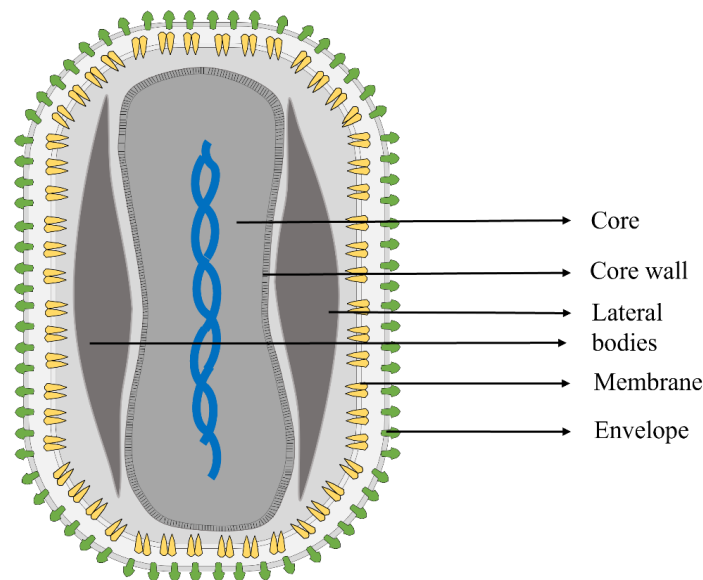


Figure 2. Schematic diagram of *Vaccinia virus* structure.

1.3.1 Genome organization

The genome of poxviruses is a double strand DNA that varies in length from 122 kbp, in *Cetacean poxvirus* of OPXV genus¹⁹⁵, to 360 kbp, in *Canarypox virus* (CNPV) of the *Avipoxvirus* genus¹⁹⁶. Poxvirus genomes contain from approximately 133 genes (in *Yatapoxvirus* and Parapoxvirus) to 328 genes (in CNPV)¹⁹⁶. Their genome consists of the central region and two variable regions at the termini. The end of the variable region contains inverted terminal regions (ITR). ITR are identical sequences in inverse direction at the opposite end with hairpin loops that join the two DNA strands¹. ITR are variable in size between species, and can contain genes that are present in diploid copies in the genome or not contain genes, as in VARV¹⁹⁷⁻¹⁹⁹.

The central region of the genome is highly conserved between the poxviruses, sharing similar gene location (synteny) and genome organization^{84,198}. In this region, there are 49, 90 and 109 genes that are conserved among poxviruses, chordopoxviruses and OPXV, respectively^{198,200–202}. The conserved genes are involved in essential functions such as DNA replication, transcription, and virion assembly^{84,200,202}. In contrast, the variable regions comprise genes that encode proteins involved in the interaction with the host including host range, immunomodulation and pathogenicity. These genes are termed as “non-conserved genes” or “accessory genes”^{8,198,200,201}. Compared to the conserved genes, those genes are more divergent and not highly conserved between poxviruses^{198,202,203}. Furthermore, those genes have more variability in gene length than the genes in the central region¹⁹⁸. Thus, the main differences in the genome of OPXV species are in the terminal variable genomic regions²⁰⁴.

1.4 Viral cycle

The prototype of the OPXV is VACV. Thus, the viral cycle is described with reference to VACV. The complete viral cycle of VACV occurs in the cytoplasm of the host cell¹ (Figure 3).

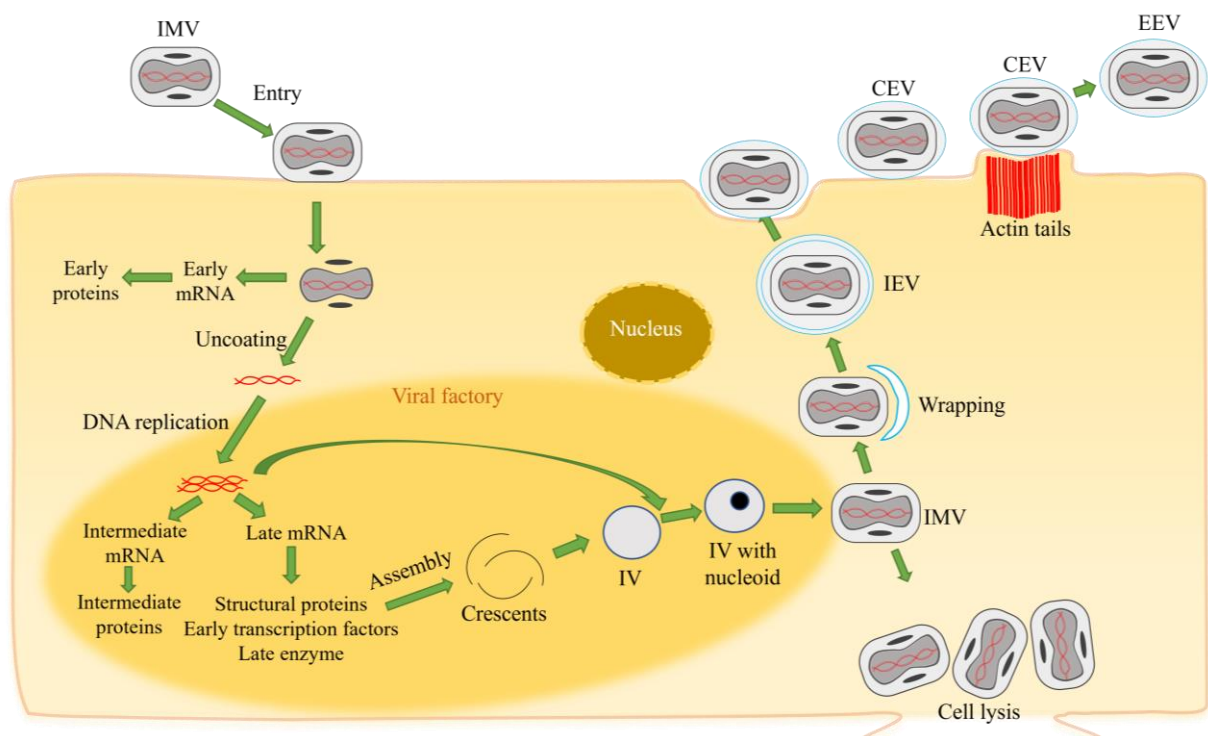


Figure 3. Schematic overview of the *Vaccinia virus* life cycle. IV, immature virion; IVN, immature virion with nucleoid; IMV, intracellular mature virion; IEV, intracellular enveloped virus; CEV, cell-associated enveloped virus; EEV, extracellular enveloped virus.

1.4.1 Virus entry and uncoating

The viral cycle starts with the viral entry (binding and fusion) (Figure 3). VACV attaches to the cell through the interaction of glycosaminoglycans and viral membrane proteins. There are at least 15 proteins involved in the viral entry: four proteins used for binding to the cell (D8, A27 and H3 and A26) and eleven required for viral fusion (A16L, A21L, A28L, F9, G3L, G9R, H2, J5, L1R, L5R and O3L)²⁰⁵. The last ones are called the entry-fusion complex (EFC). The virion entry occurs either through macropinocytosis or direct fusion of the viral membrane with the cell membrane^{1,206}.

Upon entry, the core and the lateral bodies are released in the cytoplasm²⁰⁵. The lateral bodies are dissociated from the core and disassembled²⁰⁷. The core is released in the cytoplasm and transported by microtubules close to the endoplasmic reticulum or perinuclear region of the cytoplasm^{208–210}, followed by the transcription of early viral genes²¹¹. The expression of early genes does not require *de novo* protein synthesis because the viral particles contain their own transcription machinery^{1,212}. More than 100 genes are transcribed inside the viral core²¹³ and the early mRNAs are detected within 20 min post infection^{214,215}. The transcripts are extruded from the core and translated in the cytosol. The core is uncoated and the viral genome is released to the cytoplasm (Figure 3)²¹¹.

When the cell is infected with VACV, superinfection can be prevented by the interaction of A56 and K2 proteins on the membrane of the infected cell with the A16-G9 subcomplex of EFC of subsequent viruses, which blocks the viral entry after membrane fusion^{216,217}. The mechanism by which viruses prevents superinfection with a second virus is called superinfection exclusion. There is another mechanism of superinfection exclusion that does not require the A56 or K2 proteins and prevents the viral fusion of the superinfecting virion and the infected cells, but this mechanism is not completely elucidated, yet²¹⁸.

1.4.2 Viral DNA replication

After the genome has been released, viral DNA replication starts, followed by the expression of intermediate and late genes²¹¹. The viral genome in the cytoplasm is surrounded by membranes derived from the rough endoplasmic reticulum (ER), forming a “virus factory” or “replication factories” in the cytoplasm (Figure 3)^{187,219,220}. It has been proposed that the ER membranes might protect the viral genome from cellular recognition and degradation. Viral DNA replication occurs in the viral factories²¹¹. Each viral factory is derived from one viral particle^{208,221}. Since the cell DNA machinery is located in the nucleus, VACV produces its own viral DNA replication machinery before viral DNA synthesis. The early viral proteins that mediate the viral DNA replication are: B1, I3, H5, G5, A50, E9, A20, D4 and D5^{221–232}.

Transcription and translation of intermediate and late proteins also take places in the viral factories as well as the viral assembly²³³. The activation of intermediate and late genes requires viral DNA replication²³⁴ as the newly replicated DNA serves as a template for the transcription of these genes²³⁵. Most intermediate and late mRNAs are detected at 100 min post infection

^{214,234}. The intermediate viral genes encode DNA binding and packaging proteins, core-associated proteins and late transcription factors ²¹³, whereas the late viral genes encode structural proteins, the viral RNA transcription machinery, early gene transcription factors and proteins involved in morphogenesis and entry ^{236,237}.

1.4.3 Virus assembly and egress

The viral assembly occur in the viral factories (Figure 3) ²³⁸. During the morphogenesis VACV produces four types of virions: intracellular mature virion (IMV), intracellular enveloped virus (IEV), cell-associated enveloped virus (CEV) and extracellular enveloped virus (EEV) ²³⁹. IMV has a single lipid bilayer membrane compared to CEV and EEV that contain one additional membrane (envelope), derived from either endosomes or trans-golgi ^{240,241}. The virion morphogenesis begins with the formation of viral crescents, which are open membranes derived from the ER ²⁴². The crescent grows until it forms a spherical immature virion (IV). Before it closes the viral genome is packaged into IV. These IV are called IV with nucleoid (IVN). Then IVN matures to intracellular mature virion (IMV) (Figure 3) ²⁴³.

IMVs are released from the viral factory. The majority of IMV stay inside the cell until cell lysis. In species such as CPXV, ECTV and AKPV, IMV are occluded within a dense protein matrix in the cytoplasm called ATI bodies ^{79,174,184}. Three phenotypes of ATI exist: IMV are inside the ATI matrix (V⁺), ATI with no IMV inside or on its surface (V⁻) and IMV are only in the periphery of ATI (V^{+/-}) ^{244,245}. The *atip*, *p4c* and *A27L* genes are involved in the production of the wild type V⁺ ATI ²⁴⁶⁻²⁴⁸. The other IMV are transported from the viral factories to the site of wrapping on microtubules. IMV are wrapped by a double membrane derived from either endosomes or trans-golgi ^{240,241}, resulting in intracellular enveloped virus (IEV). The double membrane contains nine proteins (A33, A34, A36, A56, B5, E2, F12, F13 and K2). The deletion of any of these proteins, except for A56 and K2, causes a small plaque phenotype ¹. The deletion or mutation of A56 or K2 causes the formation of syncytia (fusion of infected cells) ^{249 250-253}.

The transportation of the IEV to the cell surface and egression needs three proteins A36, F12 and E2 ^{254,255}. A36 and F12 are only present on the outer membrane of the IEV ²⁵⁶. IEV is moved to the cell surface and its outer membrane fuses with the cell membrane, exposing the virion on the cell membrane ²³⁹. Upon fusion A36 is accumulated in cell membrane ²⁵⁷. The viral particle has one lesser membrane and if it is retained on the surface is called cell-associated enveloped virus (CEV). When CEV is released from the cell, it is known as extracellular enveloped virus (EEV) ²³⁹. CEV is important for cell-to-cell spread ^{239,258}. A33, A34 and B5 proteins are required for efficient cell-to-cell spread ²⁵⁹⁻²⁶¹. These proteins are associated with the formation of comet-shaped plaques ^{259,262,263}. When EEV reaches an infected cell, the infected cell expressing A33 and A36 on the membrane to repel the superinfecting EEV. A33 and A36 induce actin tails to spread EEV to neighboring cells ²⁶⁴. This is another form of superinfection exclusion.

1.5 Viral tropism

The poxvirus tropism can be classified in three levels: cell tropism, tissue tropism and host tropism²⁶⁵. The cell tropism refers to the ability of the virus to infect cell cultures. Based on this ability, cells can be defined as permissive, semi-permissive and non-permissive. The tissue and host tropism are the ability of the virus to infect tissue and host species, respectively²⁶⁵. The initiation of the viral cycle for many viruses begins with the binding to the cell. Thus, it is considered that the viral binding has an important role in cell and tissue tropism²⁶⁵. However, several poxviruses can successfully enter to non-permissive cells^{266–269}, as it has been observed for MVA¹¹⁹. This indicates that cell tropism is affected by other downstream events^{8,270}. The cell tropism depends on the ability of the virus to manipulate the intracellular antiviral pathways that is activated upon viral entry, the ability of the cell to provide complementing host factors needed for the viral multiplication^{8,271,272} as well as the presence/absence of antiviral genes²⁷². In the poxviral genome, within the non-conserved genes, there are genes involved in the modulation of the host antiviral response. These genes are defined as virulence genes^{8,38}. Within the virulence genes, the ones that are required for the successful multiplication of poxviruses in a set of cultured cells are referred to as “host range genes”^{8,38}. The host range genes encode proteins called host range factors that target antiviral and anti-inflammatory host pathways³⁸ and influence the virus tropism⁸. In poxvirus, 38 host range gene homologs have been identified and are classified in 12 gene families^{38,39,271}. The most studied host range genes are *E3L* and *K3L*³⁸.

VACV can productively multiply in most mammalian and avian cells, but not in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells²⁷³. The insertion of the CPXV Chinese hamster ovary host range gene (*CP77*) permitted VACV to multiply in CHO cells²⁷⁴. The first host range genes identified in VACV that are required for multiplication in human cells were *KIL* and *C7L*^{275–277}. It has been shown that the deletion of *KIL* and *C7L* in VACV leads to abortive infection in human cells, pig kidney cells and rabbit kidney RK13 cells^{275–278}. The multiplication deficient in human and pig kidney cells is overcome by the insertion of either *KIL*, *C7L* or *CP77* gene, whereas multiplication in rabbit kidney cells is restored by the insertion of either *KIL* or *CP77* gene, but not the *C7L* gene^{273,277,278}. Other host range genes have been identified in VACV, *E3L* and *C12L* (encoding serine protease inhibitor-1, SPI-1). The *E3L* gene is required to grow VACV in Vero cells and human HeLa cells, but not in rabbit RK-13 cells, hamster BHK cells and CEF cells^{279–281}. *C12L* is needed for VACV multiplication in human A549 cells^{282,283}.

MVA has a restricted host range and is unable to productively infect human and most mammalian cells^{121,124,284}. However, MVA still multiplies in human cells such as osteosarcoma TK–143B cells^{123,124,132,284,285}. Furthermore, it has been observed that MVA strains differ in their ability to multiply in different human cell lines¹³². MVA also multiplies efficiently in some non-human mammalian cell lines such as baby hamster kidney (BHK-21) cells (Table 1)^{121,124,284–288}.

Table 1. Cell lines susceptibility to MVA

Cell lines	Species	Multiplication of MVA strains								
		MVA ^a	MVA-II/85	MVA-VR1508	MVA-BN	MVA-B	MVA-572	MVA-1721	MVA-574	MVA-LZ
MDCK	Canine; kidney	SP							NP	
Ederm	Equine; skin								NP	
RO5R	Fruit bat Egyptian			P						
RO5T	Fruit bat Egyptian			P						
RO6E	Fruit bat Egyptian			P						
CHL	Hamster Chinese; lung	NP								
CHO	Hamster Chinese; ovaries	NP		NP						
BHK-21	Hamster Syrian; kidney	P		P	P	P				P
HEK-293	Human; kidney	NP		NP	NP	NP	NP	P		SP
HeLa	Human; cervix	NP	SP		NP	NP	NP	P	NP	SP
SW839	Human; kidney	NP								
TK-143B	Human; bone	P	SP		NP		NP	P		
MRC-5	Human; lung		NP		NP	NP			NP	
FS-2	Human; skin		NP							
Caco-2	Human; colorectal			NP						
FHs74int	Human; esophagus			NP						
Hutu-80	Human; small intestine			NP						
A549	Human; lung			SP						
HaCaT	Human; skin				NP		SP	P		
HRT18	Human; colon								NP	
Hep-2	Human; larynx								NP	
SK 29 MEL 1	Human; skin									NP
LC5	Human; lung									NP
85 HG 66	Human; brain									NP
U138	Human; brain									NP
C8166	Human; blood (T-cell)									NP
HUT 78	Human; blood (T-cell)									NP
SY9287	Human; blood (B-cell)									NP
MA104	Monkey; kidney								P	
MIB	Monkey; blood (B-cell)									NP
BSC-1	Monkey African Green; kidney	SP								
CV1	Monkey African Green; kidney	SP,P								P
Vero	Monkey African Green; kidney	SP		SP	SP	SP			SP	
FRhK-4	Monkey Rhesus; kidney	NP								
Balb3t3	Mouse; embryonal fibroblast		NP			NP				

NMULI	Mouse; glandular epithelial			SP					
AG101	Mouse; skin				NP		NP	NP	
DBT	Mouse; brain								NP
PK(15)	Pig; kidney	NP		NP					
BEL	Pig; lung								SP
MDBK	Pig; kidney								NP
RK13	Rabbit; kidney	NP		NP					NP
RAB-9	Rabbit; skin	NP							
SIRC	Rabbit; cornea	NP							
IEC-6	Rabbit; small intestine			P		SP			
H4IIE	Rat; liver			NP					

P: permissive, SP: semi-permissive, NP: non-permissive. ^a MVA whose strain, variant or passage number was not stated. Data are summarized from Okeke *et al.* ¹³³.

In non-permissive cells, the viral cycle of MVA follows the same first steps of the VACV life cycle. MVA enters to the cell, expresses the early genes, replicates the viral genome, expresses the intermediate and late genes, but the cycle is blocked in the viral assembly, leading to immature virus particles that stay inside the infected cells ¹¹⁹ or dense particles ^{287,289}. Thus, MVA cannot produce infectious progeny ^{124,284,286,287}. Recombinant MVA vectored influenza vaccine (MVA-HANP) has a similar cell permissiveness compared to MVA, except in A549 and NMULI that are non-permissive to MVA-HANP ²⁸⁷.

1.6 Evolution and phylogeny of orthopoxviruses

The orthopoxviruses, as dsDNA viruses with proofreading DNA polymerases, evolve slowly compared to RNA viruses ²⁹⁰. However, OPXV are not static, they can suffer genomic and phenotypic changes. The evolution of OPXV is driven by several molecular mechanisms such as point mutations, gene duplication, gene loss, homologous and non-homologous recombination and gene gain by horizontal gene transfer ²⁹¹. These mechanisms play an important role in the evolution of OPXV ^{200,291}.

The substitution rate of OPXV have been estimated as $1.7-6.5 \times 10^{-6}$ substitutions per site per year (subs/site/year) ²⁹²⁻²⁹⁵. It is thought that OPXV evolve slowly because of the high fidelity of DNA replication by DNA polymerase ²⁵⁶. However, despite of their low mutation rate, OPXV can evolve rapidly as it has been observed in MPXV ²⁹¹. Since 2018, the MPXV genomes have accumulated 50 single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP). These number of SNP is higher with respect of the estimated substitution rate of OPXV. The rapid evolution of the recent MPXV outbreak may be due to human adaptation ²⁹⁶. In contrast, the VARV genome has been quite stable over the years as it was well adapted to its host (humans) ¹⁹⁹. However, point mutations have also been observed in the OPXV genomes during the course of passaging in the laboratory ²⁹⁷⁻²⁹⁹.

Another mechanism that plays a significant role in OPXV evolution is recombination^{84,200}. Recombination has been observed *in vitro* and *in vivo* between strains of the same species (intraspecies) and between different species (interspecies)^{7,71,72,77,300–304}. Additionally, recombination between OPXV species with non-OPXV has been described³⁰⁵. Among CPXV strains, there is evidence of recombination between different CPXV clusters⁷⁷. Similarly, recombination has been observed between VACV strains^{303,306}. Furthermore, interspecies recombination has been reported between AKPV and ECTV⁷. The study of Gigante *et al.* demonstrated that ECTV may contain AKPV genome sequence⁷. Another study also showed recombination between ECTV and other OPXV (i.e., CPXV)⁷¹. This work demonstrated evidence of recombination in a CPXV strain that contained an ECTV-like *atip* gene⁷¹. Another study described that AKMV may have undergone recombination with CPXV. Some AKMV isolates contained a sequence of 6 kbp similar to CPXV in the left terminal region^{6,302}.

The phylogenetic analyses of OPXV showed that its members were split into two groups: the New World OPXV (RCNV, SKPV and VPXV) and the Old World OPXV (MPXV, CPXV, VACV, TATV, CMLV, VARV, ECTV, Abatino and AKMV)^{7,74,78,307}. AKPV branched separately between the two groups despite its place of isolation (the USA)^{7,74,307}. Based on the AKPV gene content, AKPV was more similar to the Old World OPXV than the New World OPXV. However, AKPV contained seven genes (*AKPV009*, *010*, *024*, *025*, *203*, *204* and *205*) that encoded proteins most similar to proteins of Murmansk and NY_014 poxviruses. The presence of these genes in the AKPV genome might be a result of more than one recombination event with Murmansk. Moreover, two putative recombinant regions between ECTV and AKPV were also found in the AKPV genome⁷.

Within the Old World OPXV, AKMV formed the deepest branch^{6,7,74,184,302,307}. The isolates from the same species formed monophyletic clades, except for CPXV that did not cluster as a monophyletic group^{7,73–75,77,78,307}. CPXV isolates were closely related to the Old World OPXV, except for AKMV^{7,74,78,302}. Despite the similar genomic region (recombinant region) between some AKMV isolates and CPXV, AKMV did not cluster with CPXV in the study of Jeske *et al.* that used the complete genomes⁷⁸.

The phylogenetic studies showed that CPXV isolates were separated into at least five clusters named CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, CPXV-like 3, VACV-like CPXV and VARV-like CPXV^{72–78,308}.^{77,78,308}. The phylogenetic relationship between CPXV-like 1, 2 and 3 and the other OPXV varied in the phylogenetic studies^{74,77,78,307,309}. VACV-like CPXV had a close phylogenetic relationship with VACV. VARV-like CPXV was closely related to VARV, TATV and CMLV^{73,74,77,78,302,307}.

Various phylogenetic studies showed that CPXV was the only polyphyletic member of OPXV and also demonstrated the genetic diversity in CPXV isolates^{70,72–78}. Carrol *et al.* showed the diversity of CPXV isolates using the genetic and patristic distances between CPXV isolates using as threshold values the distances between TATV and VARV. Their study also revealed that CPXV comprised several (up to 5) species⁷⁵. Another study also revealed that CPXV was

genetically heterogeneous and could be divided into six cluster species based on the phylogeny and the genetic and patristic distances (using the distances between TATV and CMLV as a threshold)⁷². Mauldin *et al.* suggested that there are five (up to 14) lineages in CPXV based on monophyly and genetic distance criteria⁷³.

Compared to the other OPXV, CPXV had the largest genome, containing an almost full repertoire of OPXV genes (including OPXV accessory genes) and had the widest host range^{40,84,198,201}. Based on that, it has been proposed that the common ancestor of the Old world OPXV (except for AKMV) is a CPXV-like virus^{40,84,198,201}. The molecular evolution of OPXV is still unclear. A study of the molecular evolution of OPXV revealed that the emergence of OPXV took place about 42,000 years ago³⁰⁷. An earlier study of Babkin *et al.* showed that OPXV emerged 51,000 years ago, although the new OPXV species (i.e. AKMV, AKPV and Abatino) were not part of the dataset²⁹². The New World OPXV first separated from the other OPXV³⁰⁷. Then, AKPV diverged from the Old World OPXV approximately 19,000 years ago. The emergence of the Old World OPXV was about 11,000 years ago. Within the Old World OPXV, the first to diverge was AKMV and its emergence was at around 11,000 years ago. The remaining of the Old World OPXV emerged about 6,000 years ago. Then, ECTV, Abatino and CPXV-GerMKY2010 clade diverged from other OPXV, and their estimated time to the most recent common ancestor (tMRCA) was approximately 5,000 years ago. Later CPXV-like 2 segregated from other OPXV approximately 5,400 years ago. The tMRCA of MPXV, VACV and VACV-like CPXV was estimated as 3,500 years ago. MPXV originated approximately 600 years ago, ~1444 AD³⁰⁷. However, a more recent study suggested that MPXV emerged in 1970 AD³¹⁰, although this estimation is later than the date of the first MPXV isolation¹⁵⁹. CPXV-like1 diverged from VARV, TATV, CMLV and VARV-like CPXV about 3,700 years ago. VARV originated approximately 1,746 years ago³⁰⁷. Although a recent study reported that VARV has emerged 4,000 years ago, which is consistent with the records of smallpox in Egyptian mummies³¹¹.

1.7 Hazard characterization of Modified Vaccinia virus Ankara

Recombinant viral vector vaccines, such as recombinant MVA, are considered as genetically modified organisms (GMO). In the European Union (EU), the marketing authorization of recombinant vaccines are subject to additional requirements compared to non-recombinant vaccines, which are stipulated in Directive 2001/18/EC³¹². The directive seeks to protect human health and the environment when a GMO is placed on the market and released into the environment by requiring an Environmental risk assessment (ERA) for the approval of the recombinant vaccine. The purpose of the ERA is to assess potential risks to human health and the environment that may arise from the use and release of GMOs into environment. The ERA consists of six steps: hazard identification, hazard characterization, evaluation of the likelihood of the hazard, risk characterization, proposal of risk management strategies and determination of overall risk conclusion³¹². Step 2 (hazard characterization) consists of the evaluation of the

potential consequences of each possible adverse effect of a GMO on human health and the environment.

Despite the strong safety profile of MVA, there are still some knowledge gaps regarding MVA and MVA vectored vaccines such as recombination of MVA vectored vaccines with naturally circulating OPXV, nature and distribution of naturally occurring OPXV, the molecular basis of MVA host range restriction as well as the genetic stability of MVA and MVA vectored vaccines¹³³. Hence, addressing these knowledge gaps through carefully planned experiments in cell cultures and animal models is essential for the hazard characterization of MVA and MVA vectored vaccines. Therefore, it would contribute to achieving a more robust ERA and further optimizations of MVA as a safe vaccine vector¹³³.

1.7.1 Host cell restriction of MVA

The host restriction range of MVA is one of the characteristics that make MVA a good candidate for the development of vaccines against infectious diseases. However, the genetic basis for MVA restriction is not completely elucidated. MVA has suffered six major deletions that may cause its restricted host range. However, the introduction of six major MVA deletions into CVA was not enough to recover the complete host range of MVA²⁸⁵. Similarly, the restoration of large deleted regions containing *KIL* and *C12L* did not restore wild type host range³¹³, but improved the ability of MVA to multiply in human cells³¹³. However, the introduction of the *C12L* gene rescued MVA multiplication in only human MRC-15 cells³¹⁴. Additionally, the insertion of *KIL* in MVA did not restore the capacity to productively grow in human cells^{121,313,315}, but restored the multiplication of MVA in rabbit RK13 cells³¹⁵.

Another host range gene that plays a role in multiplication of MVA in human cells is *C16L*. The repair of both the *C16L* and *C12L* genes rescued the ability of MVA to multiply in human cell lines (HeLa, 293T, A549 and MRC-5 cells)³¹⁶. Although the insertion of both genes, unlike the introduction of only *C16*, did not enhance the multiplication of MVA in monkey BS-C-1 cells³¹⁶. Nevertheless, the multiplication competent VACV-WR lacked the *C16L* gene, which suggested that it contained another gene with redundant function^{316,317}. Yet, the role of the major deletions and small mutations in the host range defect of MVA it is still unclear.

A study by Erez *et al.* has shown that spontaneous single mutations altered the host range of MVA. These single mutations in the *D10L* gene arose during passaging of MVA in BS-C-1 cells and increased multiplication of MVA in monkey BS-C-1 cells and slightly in human cells³¹⁸. Even though the *D10L* gene has never been associated with the host range. Another study demonstrated that it is possible to re-adapt MVA to human Caco2-cells by serial passages in Caco2-cells. MVA variants were able to undergo productive infection in human Caco2-cells¹³³. These studies indicate that host defect of MVA could be reversible and the host range restriction of MVA might not be a stable feature³¹⁸. Alternatively, most MVA strains may be polyclonal containing many variants and adaption in human and mammalian cells through serial

passages might have selected a variant with enhanced fitness and multiplication abilities in human cells.

1.7.2 Nature and distribution of naturally circulating orthopoxviruses

For the hazard characterization of the MVA and MVA vectored vaccines, it is necessary to have information about the nature and distribution of naturally occurring OPXV in the area where the recombinant vaccine is to be deployed due to potential recombination of MVA vectored vaccines with a multiplication competent OPXV, which may lead to restoration of MVA to wild type and transfer of the transgene into a competent OPXV ¹³³.

Despite the relevance of OPXV, there is still lack of information regarding the natural reservoir, host range and geographic distribution of some OPXV ^{184,319}. The surveillance efforts and isolation of OPXV both in humans and animals are limited, except for a few countries ¹³³. In addition, many places where OPXV are endemic lack infrastructure and resources. Most information about OPXV has been collected after outbreaks, for instance, the current global Mpox outbreak. Thus, known OPXV are not a representation of what is in nature because most OPXV strains were isolated from humans and from a few places. The lack of information about the nature, distribution and evolution of OPXV hinders the prediction of emergence OPXV ³¹⁹.

Moreover, there is also lack of information about the consequences of the possible adverse effects after releasing the OPXV vectored vaccines. There is no monitoring of the adverse effects associated with the interaction of the recombinant vaccine and naturally occurring OPXV. One example is the recombinant vaccinia-rabies vaccine (Raboral-VRG) used in foxes ³²⁰. It has been monitored for efficacy of vaccination but not for the interaction of the vaccine with the wild OPXV in foxes as well as its possible adverse effects ³²¹. It is important to establish monitoring plans in place prior to releasing the recombinant vaccines as, for example, the spillover from vaccinated animals to the environment could cause changes in the diversity of the wild OPXVs.

It is difficult to make inference about adverse effects due to the interaction of OPXV vectored vaccines and the wild type OPXV when there is few or lack of information about the nature and distribution of naturally occurring OPXV before and after the release of OPXV vectored vaccines. Those are knowledge gaps in the hazard characterization of MVA vectored vaccines ¹³³.

1.7.3 Recombination in co-infection and superinfection

The recombination between MVA vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXV could result in the restoration of MVA to wild type (due to the rescue of deleted and fragmented genes), the transfer of the transgene into a naturally occurring OPXV and the generation of progeny viruses with altered properties (such as virulence and host range) ^{133,322}. The information about the potential for recombination between OPXV vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXV are not mandatory in the ERA ¹³³. Even though the genetic transfer

could be a consequence of recombination and it is stipulated in the Directive 2001/18/EC as an indirect effect.

There is dearth of information about the potential for recombination between the poxvirus vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXV as well as its consequences. The recombination events between MVA vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXV are considered negligible because (1) the co-localization of the viruses in the same cell is unlikely, (2) MVA lost the ability to produce infectious virions in human and most mammalian cells, (3) OPXV are short-lived and (4) superinfection exclusion prevents the second infection of infected cells³²³. However, the likelihood of co-localization increases when there are OPXV circulating in the area of administration of MVA and when the vaccines are administered to domesticated animals and wildlife since animals are the reservoirs and accidental hosts of natural OPXV^{133,322}. Even the ongoing global Mpox outbreak would create scenarios for the interaction of MVA and zoonotic OPXV in humans due to the extensive use of MVA vaccines. Despite the short-lived of OPXV, DNAemia of CPXV can last until four weeks³²⁴, which is a lapse of time for virus-virus interactions¹³³. Even though MVA is unable to complete the viral cycle in non-permissive cells, the infection is blocked on the morphogenesis, thereby the viral DNA replication is unimpaired¹¹⁹. Hence, the recombination could take place in non-permissive cells because only 12 bp of overlapping homologous sequences in DNA sequences are sufficient for recombination³²⁵. In case of superinfections, the mechanisms of superinfection exclusion are not absolute as few viral cores of the superinfecting virions were observed in the cytoplasm of superinfected cells²¹⁸.

A study of *in vitro* co-infection with MVA vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXV showed that the viruses underwent recombination³²⁶. The co-infection was performed in permissive BHK-21 cells. The recombination resulted in hybrid viruses that displayed parental and non-parental characteristics^{326,327}. The genomic characterization of these progeny viruses would give a better understanding of the recombination between these viruses.

Evidence for the natural recombination between a wild strain of capripoxvirus and a live attenuated vaccine in Russia has been reported³²⁸. The recombinant vaccine-like lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV) might be the result of the recombination between field LSDV strain and LSD vaccine. It was isolated after the introduction of the vaccine. The next outbreaks were caused by vaccine-like LSDV strains and not by wild LSDV strains that were observed in the previous years before the vaccination campaigns^{329,330}. Although it has been suggested that the recombinant vaccine-like LSDV strains could be a spillover from vaccinated animals³³¹.

Despite of the relevance of the recombination between OPXV vaccines or OPXV vectored vaccine and naturally circulating OPXV, the studies about this topic are scarce. Therefore, more studies examining recombination should be performed to obtain data about the potential hazard arising from recombination between MVA vectored vaccine and naturally occurring OPXV. Furthermore, the biological and genetic characterization of recombinant progeny viruses should

be performed to understand the recombination process, poxvirus host range, cytopathogenicity and transgene stability and integrity.

1.7.4 Homogeneity and genetic stability of MVA

The homogeneity and the genetic stability of OPXV vectored vaccines are the major concerns during the production of vaccines in large-scale. It is deemed that MVA was homogenous and stable after 570 passages in CEF and plaque purified³³². Comparison of the genome sequence of five MVA strains showed that their genomes (excluding the ITR) were similar³³³. Another study showed that the genomes of three MVA strains were genetically identical, but the strains showed different phenotypic properties and safety profiles. The method employed in that study did not detect the variants in the MVA strains (which were polyclonal mixtures of viruses) because the method only evaluated the majority of viral genome in the sample¹³². In order to identify variants in the MVA strains and confirm the homogeneity, the strains should be subjected to deep sequencing¹³³.

The genetic instability could occur within and outside the transgene. One of the desirable characteristics for a virus to be used as recombinant vector vaccines is to be genetically stable. It has been observed that the MVA genome suffers spontaneous mutations during serial passages^{318,334} and, hence, some variants could be raised during the production of the vaccine or recombinant vaccine stocks. The stability and integrity of the transgene is particular important in the development of recombinant viral vaccines to avoid losing or reducing expression of the transgene. Thus, understanding the viral and host determinants involved in the genetic instability will facilitate the development of MVA vectored vaccines.

Some studies have showed instability of the transgene in recombinant MVA vaccines³³⁵⁻³³⁸. A study by Wyatt *et al.* showed that the transgene expression changed during serial passages due to spontaneous mutations³³⁸. The mutations were found inside and outside the transgene³³⁸. The transgene stability of MVA-HANP has been examined in permissive IEC-6 cells. The expression of the transgene was unstable, after the third passage the expression was undetectable³²⁷. Similarly, it has been observed in the hybrid progeny viruses obtained from co-infection *in vitro* with MVA-HANP and a wild type CPXV. One hybrid virus completely lost the transgene expression after the third or fourth passage. Whereas the stability of transgene of other hybrid progeny viruses varied across different cell lines^{326,327}. From a biosafety point of view the loss of the transgene is relevant because the transgene serves as a tool to monitor the spread of the recombinant vaccine to target and non-target organisms as well as its non-target effects.

In order to confirm the genome stability of recombinant MVA vaccine, it has been recommended to perform the genome sequencing of master seed virus for up to five passages¹³³. In the ERA it is required to assess the adverse effects caused by the genetic stability but it is not mandatory to provide that information as well as whole genome sequences of the stocks to confirm homogeneity¹³³.

2. RATIONALE OF THIS STUDY

OPXV based vaccines, especially MVA, are being used as recombinant vector vaccine against infectious diseases and neoplasm in humans and animals. OPXV vectored vaccines are also being developed against well-known and emerging human diseases caused by viruses such as HIV, influenza virus, Ebola virus, Zika virus, respiratory syncytial virus and SARS-coronavirus-2. Moreover, oncolytic chimeric OPXV are in clinical trials for the treatment of cancer. It is worth considering some biosafety issues that may arise if OPXV vaccines or OPXV vectored vaccines are deployed extensively in the treatment of infectious diseases and cancers. MVA is considered an attractive vector for vaccination due to its host range restriction in human and mammalian cell lines. During the attenuation process MVA lost some virulence genes. However, various mammalian cells, even human cells, are still permissive and semi-permissive to MVA infection.

There are still knowledge gaps with respect to the hazard characterization of MVA. One of the biosafety concerns about the use of MVA vectored vaccine is the potential for recombination between MVA vectored vaccine and a naturally occurring OPXV in cells/hosts in which it multiplies poorly (semi-permissive/non-permissive cells). The recombination with multiplication competent OPXV during co-infection and superinfection may lead the rescue of deleted and/or truncated host range genes in MVA and, therefore, restore the ability to multiply efficiently in human and mammalian cells. The hybrid progenies could display higher virulence and non-parental characteristics, lose the transgene (which hinders the monitoring of OPXV vectored vaccine) and/or transfer the transgene to a multiplication competent OPXV.

In vitro studies on recombination between OPXV vectored vaccine and wild type OPXV are scarce because the risk of recombination has been considered negligible. This argument is based on MVA host restriction and superinfection exclusion. Nevertheless, viral DNA replication still occurs in non-permissive cells which is enough for recombination to take place. Therefore, studies of recombination *in vitro* between MVA vectored vaccine and natural circulating OPXV in semi-permissive cells during co-infection and superinfection should be performed. These studies are relevant to hazard characterization of MVA vectored vaccines.

There are putative scenarios where recombination between OPXV vectored vaccines and other OPXV such as post-exposure therapies of MVA to treat pre-existing OPXV infection in animals or humans can occur. A robust characterization of the potential for recombination between MVA vectored vaccines and naturally occurring OPXVs will require knowledge of the genetic diversity and evolution of naturally circulating OPXVs in regions in which the vaccine will be released since endemic OPXVs will serve as parental strains for recombination. Natural infection with an OPXV (for example MPXV) and vaccination with MVA vaccine (for example JYNEOUS) or prophylactic vaccination with MVA vaccine and natural infection with OPXV are plausible scenarios for co-infection and superinfection which may result in recombination. The surveillance and characterization of OPXV are limited, except for MPXV whose surveillance has increased recently due to the current global outbreak in several non-endemic

countries. OPXV circulated on every continent except Antarctica. For instance, CPXV is endemic to Eurasia. CPXV is a peculiar species among OPXV because it is genetically diverse and polyphyletic. It contains almost the full set of OPXV genes. Moreover, there is evidence of natural recombination in CPXV and between CPXV and other OPXV. The genomic characterization of CPXV isolates would provide insights into OPXV evolution, phylogeny and phylodynamic. Experimental *in vitro* co-infection and superinfection of cell cultures with naturally occurring CPXV and MVA vectored vaccine will serve as a model in which the potential for recombination and genome wide pattern of recombination will be explored. Taken together, the study of the diversity and evolution of OPXV circulating in the location of in which MVA vaccines may be released should be investigated because they are the baseline data to evaluate the potential for recombination and interrogate the genetic heterogeneity of CPXV.

3. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this thesis is to study the evolution and the genetic diversity of CPXV and examine recombination *in vitro* between a naturally occurring CPXV and MVA vectored vaccine in cells that MVA multiplies poorly. Thus, this study is aimed at improving OPXV vectored vaccine biosafety through genomic characterization of wild type CPXV and CPXV/MVA progeny viruses.

PAPER I

Hypothesis: Recombinant CPXV viruses are circulating in nature.

Specific objectives:

- To perform genomic characterization of a novel human CPXV.
- To detect potential recombination events in the genome of novel human CPXV.
- To determine the phylogenetic relationship of a novel human CPXV with other representative CPXV and OPXV strains.

PAPER II

Hypothesis: CPXV isolates have high genetic diversity and CPXV is not a single species.

Specific objectives:

- To determine the phylogenetic relationship of the Fennoscandian CPXV isolates with other representative CPXV and OPXV strains.
- To evaluate the genetic diversity in CPXV isolates
- To study the evolutionary history of CPXV.

PAPER III

Hypothesis: Recombination between MVA-HANP and a naturally occurring CPXV during co-infection and superinfection of cells (in which MVA multiplies poorly) leads the generation of progeny virus with novel genetic and biological characteristics.

Specific objectives:

- To examine the recombination *in vitro* MVA-HANP and naturally occurring Norwegian feline CPXV during co-infection and superinfection of semi-permissive Vero cells.
- To perform genome characterization of parental MVA-HANP and progeny viruses.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Viruses, cells, co-infection and superinfection experiments

In **paper I**, we used the naturally occurring Norwegian human CPXV-No-H2 to examine the possibility of natural recombination in circulating Fennoscandian CPXV and map genome-wide recombination events. Evidence of natural recombination in CPXV-No-H2 based on limited genetic characterization was previously demonstrated ⁷¹. CPXV was propagated in African green monkey kidney Vero cells because these cells are fully permissive to CPXV infection ^{121,124,284–287,327} (**paper I and II**).

In **paper II**, we characterized five naturally circulating CPXV strains (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2) that were isolated in the Fennoscandian region (Norway and Sweden) from human and felines ^{45,68–71}. Genome sequencing of these Fennoscandian CPXV, and phylogenomic analysis with other OPXV strains would contribute to the understanding of the diversity, phylogenetic relationship of CPXV and other OPXV and evolutionary history of CPXV.

In **paper III**, we evaluated the recombination between CPXV-No-F1 and MVA-HANP during *in vitro* co-infection and superinfection of semi-permissive cells to MVA-HANP. Vero cells were selected for these experiments because they are semi-permissive to MVA-HANP infection ²⁸⁷. The feline isolate CPXV-No-F1 was selected instead of the human isolate CPXV-No-H1 because a possible scenario of human CPXV infection is by direct contact with infected domestic pets like cats. In addition, this is also a naturally occurring Fennoscandian CPXV.

MVA-HANP was previously chosen as a OPXV vectored vaccine since (1) MVA is used as smallpox vaccine and viral vector vaccine, (2) MVA is a multiplication incompetent poxvirus vector, and (3) MVA-HANP contains the influenza virus *hemagglutinin* (HA; A/PR/8/34) and *nucleoprotein* (NP) gene inserts, which makes it easier to monitor the transgenes by immunostaining. Overall, this is a safe model to test recombination *in vitro*.

The selection of the progeny viruses was in Vero cells. Unlike CPXV, MVA does not form plaques in Vero cells but expresses HA ³²⁶, which facilitates the identification (and selection) of the plaques from hybrid viruses and differentiate them from parental virus plaques by plaque phenotype and the HA expression. Two criteria used to select the progeny viruses were: plaque phenotype and the expression of the influenza virus HA protein.

The co-infection and superinfection experiments were done at a multiplicity of infection (moi) of 5.0 for each parental virus. Although the high moi of 5 might not be reflect the moi. under natural co-infection/superinfection, it assures the infection of all the cells in the primary infection and, therefore, guarantee the superinfection of Vero cells. Additionally, we performed different superinfection experiments: (1) primary infection with CPXV-No-F1 and superinfection with MVA-HANP after 4 hrs post primary infection (ppi), (2) primary infection with CPXV-No-F1 and superinfection with MVA-HANP after 6 hrs ppi, (3) primary infection

with MVA-HANP and superinfection with CPXV-No-F1 after 4 hrs ppi and (4) primary infection with MVA-HANP and superinfection with CPXV-No-F1 after 6 hrs ppi (Figure 4). These experiments would simulate different possible scenarios such as (1) the person/animal is infected with CPXV and receives the vaccine (MVA) and (2) when the person/animal received the vaccine (MVA) and then is infected with CPXV. The least possible scenario would be the co-infection when the person is infected by both viruses at the same time. But these experiments constitute cell culture-based models to examine recombination of MVA with other OPXV during co-infection of semi-permissive cells as well as evaluate the possibility of superinfection exclusion in preventing recombination.

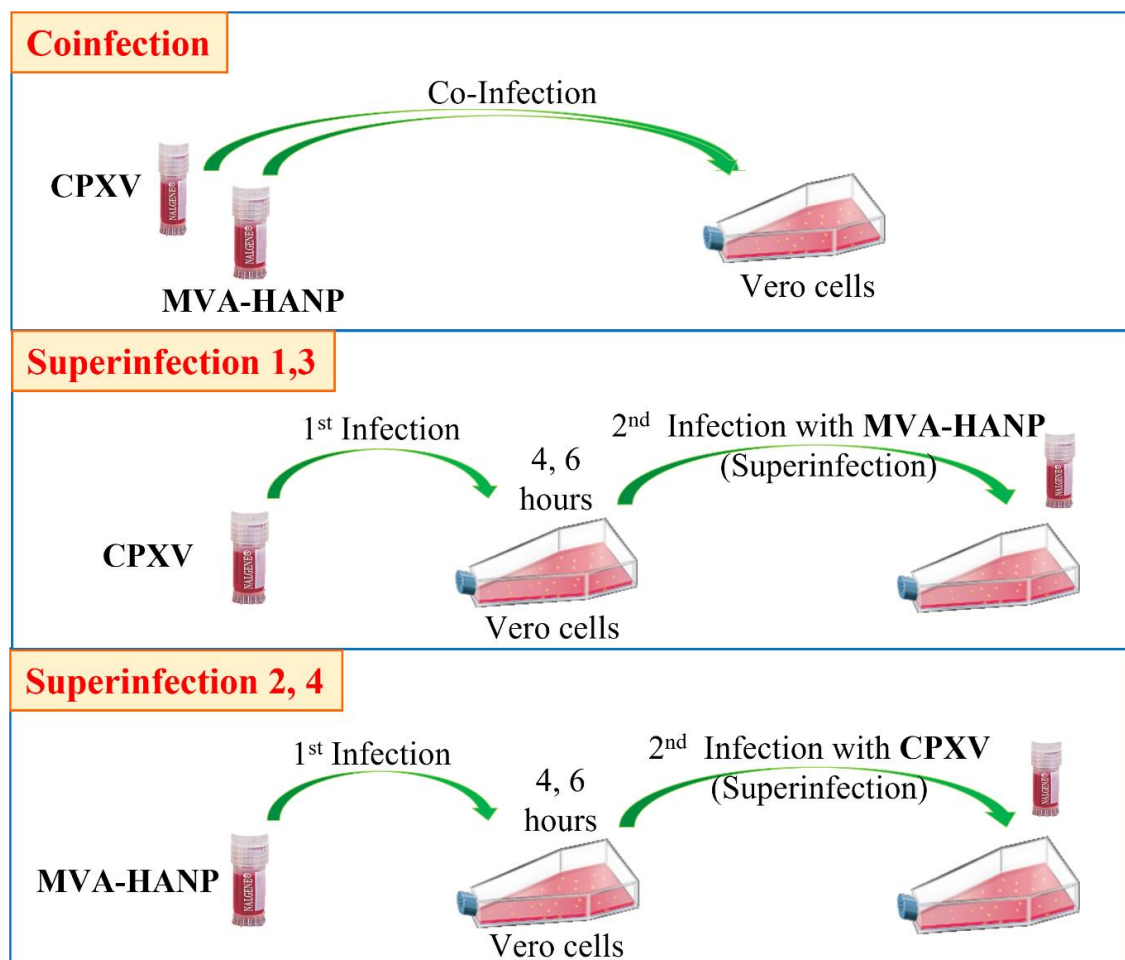


Figure 4. Co-infection and superinfection experiments in Vero cells. Co-infection, Vero cells were co-infected with CPXV-No-F1 and MVA-HANP. Superinfection 1, primary infection with CPXV-No-F1 and secondary infection with MVA-HANP at 4h post primary infection (ppi); Superinfection 2, primary infection with MVA-HANP and secondary infection with CPXV-No-F1 at 4h ppi; Superinfection 3, primary infection with CPXV-No-F1 and secondary infection with MVA-HANP at 6h ppi; Superinfection 4, primary infection with MVA-HANP and secondary infection with CPXV-No-F1 at 6h ppi.

4.2 Viral DNA extraction

The six CPXV isolates were semi-purified by sucrose gradient as previously described²⁰⁹. Viral DNA was extracted from Vero cells infected with the semi-purified virions (**paper I & II**). MVA-HANP was also semi-purified by sucrose gradient, but viral DNA was extracted from infected BKH-21 cells (**paper III**). The progeny viruses from co-infected and superinfected Vero cells were plaque purified and viral DNA was extracted from Vero cells infected with the plaque purified viruses (**paper III**).

The viral DNA extraction was performed following Dabrowski's protocol⁷⁶. In order to release the viral particles, the infected cells were incubated on ice in cold hypertonic buffer (with Triton X-100 and β -mercaptoethanol) to solubilize the plasma membranes. The cell nuclei were removed from cytoplasmic content by centrifugation. Then, the viral particles were isolated from the cytoplasmic content by ultracentrifugation. The viral particles were incubated in cold hypotonic buffer to release viral core. For the following steps, we used a commercial kit for viral DNA extraction (and Qiagen Genomic DNA buffers). These kits have the advantages of extracting high-molecular weight DNA and yielding pure DNA of good quality. Moreover, reproducible DNA yield and quality is achieved.

4.3 Sequencing

Some sequencing technologies can be used for whole genome sequencing. These technologies are second generation sequencing (or next-generation sequencing, NGS) and third generation sequencing (TGS). NGS produces large amounts of short reads (up to a few hundred bp) with low error rate^{339,340}. One disadvantage of NGS is that the short reads are not suitable for assembling genomes with long repeated regions and large structural variants³⁴¹. In contrast to NGS, TGS yields much longer reads (>10 kbp), but with high error rate (~15%)³⁴⁰⁻³⁴². The long reads are useful for *de novo* genome assembly. Both NGS and TGS have advantages and disadvantages; however, one technology overcomes the disadvantages of the other. The hybrid sequencing, that is combination of NGS (short-read sequencing) and TGS (long-read sequencing) platforms, resolves problems such as repetitive regions (e.g. ITR), deletions/insertions and produces genome assemblies with few or no gaps.

Whole genome sequencing of Fennoscandian CPXV isolates (**paper I and II**), MVA-HANP and the progeny viruses from co-infected and superinfected Vero cells (**paper III**) was performed using the hybrid sequencing approach. For this approach, we used Illumina MiSeq platform for short-read sequencing (NGS) and Nanopore platform for long-read sequencing (TGS). Illumina MiSeq is suitable to sequence small genomes (like viral genomes) and generates up to 15 Gb of output and paired-end reads of 300 bp. Nanopore is more cost-effective for generating long reads^{341,342}.

4.4 Genome assembling and annotation

The raw Illumina reads were pre-processed before genome assembling (**paper I, II and III**). The adapters, the low quality reads and short reads were trimmed using Trimmomatic³⁴³. It has been shown that read trimming increases the quality and reliability of downstream analysis and reduces computational requirements and execution time³⁴⁴. After trimming, the reads from contaminants (e.g. Vero cells) were removed using FastQ Screen v0.14.1³⁴⁵ with BWA aligner^{346,347}. The reads were mapped to the possible contaminant genomes (Vero cells) and filtered. FastQ Screen v0.14.1 is a program that maps sequencing reads to one or more reference genomes (e.g. host cell, CPXV and MVA) using an aligner (e.g. BWA) and filters the reads mapping (or not mapping).³⁴⁵ Furthermore, the program allows you to create your own database with the genome of our interest and choose between three aligners. BWA was chosen because it is designed for aligning short and long reads^{346,347}.

The processed reads were used to assemble the viral genomes. The approach used in **paper I, II and III** was hybrid genome assembly (Nanopore and Illumina data) due to the structure of the OPXV genomes. These genomes contain repetitive regions and ITR that hinder the assembly with only Illumina data (short reads). The long reads from Nanopore sequencing overcome this problem. Different assemblers are available for hybrid genome assembly, such as SPAdes³⁴⁸, PBcR³⁴⁹, Unicycler³⁵⁰ and MaSurCa³⁵¹. The viral genomes were assembled using hybridSPAdes. The algorithm first assembles the short reads and then aligns the long reads to generate longer contigs, and generates accurate assemblies³⁴⁸. Unlike PBcR and MaSurCa, it has been designed to assemble small genomes (e.g. bacterial and viral genomes)³⁵².

The assembled genomes were annotated using Genome Annotation Transfer Utility (GATU) (**paper I, II and III**). GATU is a rapid annotation tool with a user-friendly graphical user interface. It transfers annotations from an annotated reference genome to the target genome, which makes the annotation process less time-consuming and less tedious. Additionally, it allows you to review the alignments of putative open reading frames (ORF) with the reference genes³⁵³.

4.5 Gene content comparison

In **paper I**, we compared the gene content of CPXV-No-H2 with other poxvirus genomes. Previously evidence of recombination was detected in CPXV-No-H2⁷¹. First, all predicted CPXV-NoH2 coding sequences (CDS) were translated and compared to the proteins of three OPXV reference genomes (ECTV-Moss, CPXV-BR and VACV-Cop) by BLASTP³⁵⁴. Some regions of the CPXV-No-H2 genome were more similar to either CPXV, ECTV or VACV, but others were less similar to the three OPXV. Hence, in order to detect CPXV-No-H2 genes more similar to other poxvirus genes, all predicted CPXV-NoH2 CDS were translated and compared to poxvirus proteins by BLASTp. The predicted CPXV-No-H2 genes that encode proteins with

the highest amino acid similarity to other OPXV proteins than CPXV proteins were compared to the OPXV genomes by BLASTn.

In **paper II**, we performed the gene content comparison of the five Fennoscandian CPXV with the reference genome CPXV-Br. Similar to procedure of **paper I**, the predicted CDS from five CPXV isolates were extracted, translated into amino acid sequences and compared to the CPXV-Br proteins using BLASTp³⁵⁴.

4.6 Recombination analysis

Since it was suggested that CPXV-No-H2 might originate from a recombination between CPXV-like virus and ECTV-like virus⁷¹, we performed the detection of the possible recombination events in the CPXV-No-H2 genome using RDP4³⁵⁵ and Simplot³⁵⁶ (**paper I**). These programs have been widely used in other studies^{6,71,357,358}. These programs required as input file the alignment of the recombinant sequence with the putative parental sequences. The CPXV-No-H2 genome with other genomes were aligned using Multiple Alignment Fast Fourier Transform (MAFFT). Compared to other aligners, MAFFT is a faster aligner and provides reliable and accurate multiple sequence alignments³⁵⁹.

RDP4 is a recombination detection program that has implemented several methods (RDP³⁶⁰, bootscan³⁶¹, maxchi³⁶², chimaera³⁶³, 3seq³⁶⁴, geneconv³⁶⁵, lard³⁶⁶, and siscan³⁶⁷ to detect potential recombination events in the aligned sequences. It allows to analyse up to 2500 sequences of 10,000 kbp, which makes it suitable for our dataset (genome length < 225 kbp). Furthermore, RDP4 provides the recombination sequences, the sequences that are closely related to the minor and major parental and recombination breakpoints (the beginning and end breakpoints of the potential recombinant sequences)³⁵⁵.

Simplot is another program to detect potential recombination. This software calculates the percent identity (similarity) of the query sequence compared to the other sequences and generates similarity plots (% similarity versus position). The potential recombination breakpoints are easily identified and visualized on the similarity plots.³⁵⁶ Compared to RDP4, Simplot provides fast results, but only allows to analyse up to 10 sequences. Besides the identification of the potential recombinant regions in CPXV-No-H2, we generated phylogenetic trees based on potential CPXV-No-H2 recombinant regions to corroborate the phylogenetic relationship between the putative parental virus (where the recombinant sequence was derived) and CPXV-No-H2. In **paper III**, we conducted recombination analysis of the progeny viruses from co-infected and superinfected Vero cells using the same methodology described above.

4.7 Phylogenetic analysis, patristic and genetic distances

The phylogenetic relationship of Fennoscandian CPXV strains with other CPXV and OPXV was investigated in **paper I and II**. The majority of the OPXV genomes used in this thesis were retrieved from the Viral Orthologous Clusters database (VOCs)³⁶⁸ (**paper I and II**). VOCs is

a repository for large dsDNA viruses, including complete and fully annotated poxvirus genomes ³⁶⁹.

In **paper I and II**, three different alignments were used for the phylogenetic analysis: (1) OPXV core genome (the genomes without ITR), (2) OPXV whole genome (genomic region from the first gene until the last gene), and (3) OPXV orthologous genes. DNA sequences were aligned using MAFFT ³⁷⁰. After aligning, the poorly aligned positions and gaps were removed from the whole and core genome alignments using Gblocks ³⁷¹. It is recommended to remove the problematic alignment regions in long alignments but not in short alignments (as orthologous gene alignment) to generate accurate phylogenetic trees ³⁷¹. The orthologous genes in OPXV genomes were identified using OrthoFinder ³⁷². OrthoFinder is fast, accurate and simple to use. It finds orthogroups, orthologs and gene duplication events and provides comparative genomics statistics ³⁷². The orthologs (present in $\geq 95\%$ of the genomes) were aligned and concatenated.

Two methods of tree reconstruction were used for phylogenetic analysis: maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) method. These methods are more efficient than the neighbour joining method in obtaining accurate tree ^{373,374}. Although they are computationally expensive ³⁷⁵. Before generating the phylogenetic trees, the best-fit models of DNA substitution for the datasets were selected because ML and BI methods use an explicit DNA substitution model. The models were selected by modelTest-NG ³⁷⁶. ML analyses were performed using RAxML ³⁷⁷ and BI analyses were performed using MrBayes v.3.2.7 ³⁷⁸.

Recombination events within datasets may cause inconsistencies in the phylogenetic trees and, therefore, erroneous phylogenetic inferences ^{379,380}. In order to assess if recombination in three datasets affects the phylogenetic inferences between CPXV and OPXV in **paper II**, the three datasets were analyzed for recombination events using RDP4 and one additional dataset of 62 non-recombinant OPXV conserved genes was included. OPXV conserved genes were examined for recombination using RDP4 and only conserved genes that did not show recombination were selected. In addition, in **paper II** the phylogenetic signal of the four dataset was assessed by likelihood mapping analysis using IQ-TREE ³⁸¹. It is important to test the presence of phylogenetic signal because the lack of it can affect the reliability of the results ³⁸².

The diversity of CPXV has been reported and it was proposed that CPXV might be more than one species ^{72,73,75,76,307}. Hence, in **paper II**, we used the genetic and patristic distances between and within CPXV clusters to demonstrate the genetic diversity among CPXV isolates. To separate CPXV isolates into sub-species, the genetic and patristic distances between the closest and distinct OPXV species (TATV and CMLV) were used as threshold values. The patristic and genetic distances were estimated using the program Patristic ³⁸³ and p-distances method, respectively.

4.8 Phylodynamic evolutionary analysis of CPXV

The molecular evolution of CPXV was reconstructed using 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 55 CPXV (**paper II**). Different methods can be used to date the phylogeny: Bayesian³⁸⁴, ML³⁸⁵ or least-squares dating³⁸⁶. We used the Bayesian Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) inference method implemented in *BEAST*³⁸⁷. Before carrying out the phylodynamic evolutionary analysis, we performed some preliminary analyses on the dataset. First, we checked the presence of phylogenetic signal in the dataset by IQtree³⁸¹. Second, the conserved genes were examined for recombination by RPD4³⁵⁵. Only conserved genes that did not show recombination were selected. Third, we assessed the temporal signal in the dataset using TempEst³⁸⁸ because a dataset without temporal signal is not appropriate to calibrate a molecular clock and to infer evolutionary rate and time scale of the virus³⁸². TempEst allows you to detect problematic sequences, for example sequences with assembly errors, annotation errors or incorrect sampling dates³⁸⁸.

5. SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RESULTS

Paper I: “Genomic sequencing and analysis of a novel human *Cowpox virus* with mosaic sequences from North America and Old World orthopoxvirus”

- We presented the whole genome sequence of a human cowpox virus, CPXV-No-H2, from Norway. The length of the CPXV-No-H2 genome was 220,276 bp, containing 217 predicted genes.
- Among 217 predicted genes of CPXV-No-H2, seventeen encoded proteins were most similar to OPXV proteins from the Old World (ECTV and VACV), and North America (AKPV).
- Our analyses revealed that CPXV-No-H2 was a mosaic genome with genes most similar to other OPXV genes.
- The recombination analysis revealed that CPXV-No-H2 may have arisen out of several recombination events between OPXVs.
- One potential recombinant event with parental AKPV contained the *NoH2-210* gene that was most similar to *AKPV-203* and Murmansk gene.
- Within the seven putative recombinant regions in CPXV-No-H2, one was located in the conserved central genomic region.
- The phylogenetic analysis showed that CPXV-No-H2 with two German CPXV isolates (CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY) formed a separate, new CPXV clade, which we named “ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV”.
- CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY shared 96.4% and 96.3% nucleotide identity with CPXV-No-H2, respectively.

Paper II: “Genomic Sequencing and Phylogenomics of *Cowpox Virus*”

- We reported the complete sequence of five Fennoscandian CPXV isolated from cats and humans.
- Their genome size ranged from 220-222 kbp, containing between 215 and 219 predicted CDS.
- The phylogenetic analysis based on the whole genomes, core genomes, orthologous genes and 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 87 OPXV isolates (including the five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates) confirmed the separation of CPXV isolates into at least five distinct major clusters (CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VACV-like CPXV, VARV-like CPXV and ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV).
- CPXV strains were closely related to other the Old World OPXV, except for AKMV.
- Based on phylogenetic analysis and the genetic and patristic distances, CPXV isolates can be further divided into eighteen sub-species.
- We reconstructed the evolutionary history of CPXV using Bayesian time-scaled phylogeny of CPXV based on the concatenated 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 55 CPXV. However, the emergence date of CPXV as well as CPXV clusters could not be accurately estimated.

- The mean evolution rate of CPXV was calculated to be 1.65×10^{-5} subs/site/year, with 95% high posterior density interval (HPD) of $4.36 \times 10^{-7} - 4.32 \times 10^{-5}$ subs/site/year.

Paper III: “Whole genome sequencing of recombinant viruses obtained from co-infection and superinfection of Vero cells with Modified Vaccinia virus Ankara vectored influenza vaccine and naturally occurring *Cowpox virus*”

- Recombination occurred between CPXV and MVA-HANP in co-infected and superinfected Vero cells.
- Some progeny viruses displayed plaque phenotype distinct of that of the parental viruses.
- The distribution of the recombinant events along the progeny virus genomes was random.
- The recombination events were located in both the conserved central region and the variable terminal regions.
- The transgene expression cassette was inserted (recombined) in the same position in the progeny virus genomes.
- The genomes of the recombinant progeny viruses have different lengths.
- Most recombinant progeny virus genomes were a mosaic of the two parental viruses (CPXV-No-F1 and MVA-HANP).
- The percentage of DNA derived from the parental viruses in the recombinant progeny viruses was variable.
- The recombinant viruses, more similar to MVA-HANP (>50%), rescued deleted and/or fragmented genes in MVA and gained new host ranges genes.
- Some recombinant progeny viruses carried the double expression cassette (harboring both influenza virus *HA* and *NP* transgenes) from MVA-HANP.
- The transgene of MVA-HANP was unstable, which led to the partially deletion of the double expression cassette.
- Resulting of the transgene instability of MVA-HANP one non-*HA*-transgene expressing progeny virus contained a fraction of the transgene expression cassette similar to the incomplete MVA-HANP.
- The progeny viruses suffered other genetic changes, such as the large deletion of 16,761 bp in two recombinant progeny viruses.

6. GENERAL DISCUSSION

MVA is a promising vector vaccine candidate. It is in pre-clinical and clinical trial studies for different diseases, including cancer ^{135,140,141,143,389}. However, despite the several studies about MVA and MVA vectored vaccine, there are still knowledge gaps about its potential for recombination with wild type OPXV as well as the distribution, genetic diversity and evolution of naturally circulating OPXV in regions in which MVA or MVA vectored vaccine will be administrated. The occurrence of natural recombination between MVA or MVA vectored vaccine and wild-type OPXV needs favourable scenarios where both viruses are present, that is, in environments where OPXV are circulating and MVA or MVA vectored vaccine is being administrated. Eurasia is a good scenario for recombination of MVA with CPXV since the latter is endemic in this region ³¹⁻³⁷. Several CPXV outbreaks and human CPXV infections have been reported ^{42,45,66,67,69,71,72}. Furthermore, MVA-BN has been approved as a smallpox and Mpox vaccine in Europe. Hence, the genomic characterization of CPXV strains isolated from different geographic locations is important to elucidate the genetic diversity and evolution of CPXV. This information is the baseline for evaluate the potential for recombination of MVA or MVA vectored vaccine with wild type OPXV.

In **paper I & II**, we reported the whole genome sequencing of six Fennoscandian CPXV isolates (CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-H2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2). These isolates were from Norway and Sweden. Among them, there was one atypical CPXV isolate (CPXV-No-H2). It was classified as CPXV based on the presence of ATI, the sequence and phylogenetic analysis of *HA* gene, *cytokine response modifier B (crmB)* gene, and *Chinese hamster ovary host range (CHOhr)* genes ^{70,71}. However, it was an atypical CPXV because of its ATI phenotype (V⁺), presence of the ECTV *atip* gene and atypical CPXV *Hind III* restriction map ^{70,71}.

In **paper I & II**, we studied the phylogenetic relationship of Fennoscandian CPXV with other OPXV. Our phylogenetic analyses revealed that CPXV did not form a monophyletic clade and their isolates were clustered into five major clusters: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VARV-like CPXV, VACV-like CPXV and new CPXV clade. CPXV isolates were closely related to all Old World OPXV species, except for AKMV. These findings are in agreement with other phylogenetic studies ^{74,78,307}. The new CPXV clade was composed of CPXV-No-H2 and two German CPXV isolates, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY. CPXV-No-H2 shared most similarity to CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17. This new CPXV clade was closely related to ECTV and Abatino clade. Thus, we tentatively named this clade as “ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV”. Previously it has been suggested that these two German CPXV isolates formed a new lineage (CPXV-like 3), but their phylogenetic relationship with ECTV and Abatino had a low bootstrap support ⁷⁸. A recently study showed that ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV did not cluster with ECTV and Abatino based on phylogenetic tree of conserved central region (*F11L* - *A23R*) ⁷⁴. In contrast, all our phylogenetic trees showed a closer phylogenetic relationship between ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV and ECTV/Abatino clade, regardless of the dataset used (OPXV whole- and core-genome, OPXV orthologous genes or 62 non-recombinant OPXV

conserved genes) (**paper I and II**). In addition, in our phylogenetic tree construction, we used both ML and BI methods which are more robust and accurate than the NJ method used by Bruneau *et al.* 2023 ⁷⁴.

The Norwegian CPXV isolates grouped in separate CPXV clusters rather than clustering together (**paper I and II**). The Norwegian CPXV-No-H2 belonged to ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV, whereas the other Norwegian CPXV isolates clustered together in CPXV-like 2. Similarly, the Swedish CPXV isolates were grouped together in CPXV-like 2. These Norwegian and Sweden CPXV isolates were closely related to British and Danish isolates, respectively (**paper II**) The phylogenies generated in other studies also showed the close phylogenetic relationship of these Norwegian CPXV isolates with the British CPXV isolates ^{73,75,77}.

Our findings in **paper I and II** revealed the genetic heterogeneity of CPXV isolates. Thus, in **paper II**, we examined the genetic diversity of CPXV using the genetic and patristic distances between and within CPXV clusters as previously reported ^{72,73}. Using the genetic and patristic distances between TATV and CMLV as a threshold value, the five CPXV clusters can be classified as five sub-species and even they can be further divided into 18 sub-species. This is in congruent with our phylogeny (**paper II**). The genetic diversity in CPXV could be attributed to recombination events in CPXV. It has been showed that some CPXV strains were mosaic genomes derived from different CPXV clades ⁷⁷. Even some studies suggested recombination between CPXV and other OPXV ^{6,84,302}. The reported genetic diversity of CPXV in **paper II** could not be a result of recombination events because we used a dataset of 62 non-recombinant OPXV conserved genes and despite the extensive recombination in the other three datasets, the phylogenies and genetic and patristic distances from the datasets with or without evidence of recombination were similar. This was surprisingly because recombination can lead to incongruences in the phylogeny and inaccurate phylogenetic inferences as has been observed in other studies ^{379,380}. Indeed, phylogenetic incongruency was observed when validating the recombinant regions singly in **paper I**. However, it appears that the phylogenetic signals of the recombinant regions were masked by signals from the larger, non-recombinant regions of the genome (**paper II**).

The definition of CPXV has been based on host specificity and two main criteria (ATI bodies and red hemorrhagic pox on the CAM) ⁷⁹, which allowed that several viruses were classified under the CPXV name. ⁸⁰⁻⁸³. Mauldin *et al.* questioned the classification of CPXV as a single species because CPXV did not meet one of ICTV requirement (monophyly) to be classified as a species ⁷³. Our data presented herein substantiated the genetic diversity between and within CPXV clusters (**paper II**), which has also been noted by other researchers. ^{72,73,75-77,390}. Additionally, we demonstrated that CPXV was a polyphyletic assemblage, and it could be split into 18 sub-species (**paper II**). Earlier studies also suggested the division of CPXV ^{72,73,75}. Therefore, the reclassification of CPXV should be considered.

Within the OPXV, CPXV has the largest genome, broadest host range and contains almost the full set of OPXV genes^{40,84,198,201}. These characteristics have led to the suggestion that a CPXV-like virus was the ancestor of all Old World OPXV (except for AKMV)^{40,198,293,307}. However, the evolution of the CPXV as well as OPXV is not clear. In order to understand the evolution of CPXV, in **paper II** we studied the evolutionary history of CPXV based on the concatenated 62 non-recombinant conserved genes. We calculated CPXV substitution rate and the 95% HPD of our estimate overlapped the reported substitution rate of *Chordopoxvirinae* and OPXV^{292–295}. The emergence and divergence dates of CPXV could not be accurately estimated; the 95% HPD intervals of the emergence dates were quite broad. We presumed that it could be because of (1) the high heterogeneity of CPXV isolates and (2) the low genetic information due to restricted number of isolates in term of location, age and host. However, these findings might support the proposed idea that lineages of CPXV are highly divergent and a reclassification of CPXV is warranted.

As mentioned above, CPXV-No-H2 is an atypical CPXV isolate that contains an ECTV *atip* gene^{70,71}. A previous study of our research group suggested that CPXV-No-H2 could have acquired ECTV-*atip* gene by recombination with ECTV or and ECTV-like virus⁷¹. In order to characterize recombination in CPXV-No-H2, in **paper I** we sequenced the whole genome of CPXV-No-H2. Our analysis revealed that CPXV-No-H2 had a mosaic genome, containing genomic sequences more similar to North America OPXV (i.e., AKPV) and the Old World OPXV (i.e. ECTV and VACV). CPXV-No-H2 contained nine recombinant regions that may be a result of different recombination events between the parentals of AKPV and CPXV, ECTV and CPXV, and VACV and CPXV. Although two potential recombinant events with the parental AKPV overlapped with two potential recombination events with the parental ECTV. Curiously, AKPV may undergo recombination with ECTV in the same position of those overlapped recombinant regions and ECTV may contain AKPV-like sequences⁷. In addition, AKPV contained three genes (*AKPV-203*, *AKPV-204* and *AKPV-205*) that were most similar to Murmansk genes and they may be introduced from/to Murmansk by recombination⁷. One of the recombinant regions between AKPV and CPXV-No-H2 comprised a gene that was most similar to *AKPV-203* and Murmansk gene. Moreover, the phylogenetic analyses based on three recombinant regions between AKPV and CPXV suggested that AKPV-like sequences were introduced to CPXV-No-H2 rather than the other way (**paper I**).

Since CPXV-No-H2 produced atypical V^{+/} ATI⁷¹, we analysed the genes involved in the formation of ATI (**paper I**). Two of the three genes (*p4c* and *A27L*) were most similar to CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17 genes and the third gene (*atip*) was in the two overlapping recombinant regions between CPXV and AKPV, and CPXV and ECTV (**paper I**). Compared to CPXV-No-H2, AKMV and CPXV-Ger 2010 produced wild type V⁺ ATI^{7,77,184}. On the other hand, ECTV_Hampstead displayed V⁺ and V^{+/} ATI and other ECTV strains produced V⁻ ATI^{174,183}. ECTV_Hampstead was the progenitor of the European ECTV outbreaks³⁹¹. The ATI phenotype in CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17 was not reported but we presumed that CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17 produces the wild type V⁺ ATI because its *atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L* genes were similar to CPXV_Ger2010_MKY genes (**paper I**).

It is difficult to reconstruct the evolutionary history of CPXV-NoH2 due to the multiple recombination events. The mosaic genome of CPXV-No-H2 could be explained by symplesiomorphy since most recombinant regions were similar to more than one taxon. However, there was one AKPV-like sequence in CPXV-No-H2 that could not be explained by symplesiomorphy because it was only similar to AKPV. A plausible explanation about the origin of the recombinant regions in CPXV-No-H2 is that it was originated from the recombination of CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17-like virus and AKPV-like virus. Probably both viruses could have circulated in populations of rodents in Europe. Even though the isolation of AKPV was Alaska, its ancestor might circulate in Europe because AKPV contained genes similar to those of Russian *Murmansk virus*^{7,305}. The recombinant progeny virus, CPXV-No-H2-like virus, could have suffered genomic changes linked to the adaptation to mice, resulting in ECTV-like virus. CPXV-like virus has been proposed as ancestor of ECTV⁷⁸. Thus, these findings suggested that recombination between OPXV in nature is more common than we thought (**paper I**).

In **paper I and II**, we demonstrated that CPXV-No-H2 was a natural recombinant CPXV (**paper I**) and the extensive recombination in OPXV and CPXV (**paper II**). Recombination is not a foreign evolutionary mechanism in poxviruses. It has been demonstrated in different poxvirus species, both *in vivo*^{6,7,71,77,302,392} and *in vitro*^{326,393–396}. Hazard characterization of MVA vectored vaccines require the evaluation of potential recombination between the vector and naturally circulating OPXV. In our previous study, we performed co-infection and superinfection experiments of semi-permissive Vero cells with MVA-HANP and CPXV-No-F1 and showed that recombination occurred during *in vitro* co-infection and superinfection of Vero cells¹³³. In **paper III**, we performed whole genome sequencing of these progeny viruses obtained from confection and superinfection of Vero cells. Our results confirmed the recombination with MVA-HANP and CPXV-No-F1 in cells where MVA poorly multiplies (Vero cells). It demonstrated that the recombination occurred in semi-permissive Vero cells, despite they did not form mature particles²⁸⁷. This is not surprising because viral DNA replication is unimpaired in non-permissive cells to MVA infection^{119,286}. Therefore, MVA could undergo recombination in semi- and non-permissive cells because poxviral recombination only requires that the linear DNA molecules share 12 bp of homology³²⁵. On the other hand, the superinfection exclusion did not prevent the superinfection of Vero cells in spite of the superinfection time of 6 hours. It has been reported that 6 hours after primary infection with VACV produced 99% exclusion of superinfecting virus³⁹⁷.

In **paper III**, the genomic characterization of progeny viruses derived from co-infected and superinfected Vero cells revealed that their genomes were a mosaic of the MVA-HANP and CPXV-No-F1 genomes, except for the progeny virus R9. The distribution of the recombination events in the progeny virus genomes was aleatory (**paper III**). Recombination events took place both in conserved central regions (*F4L - A24R*) and variable terminal regions (**paper III**). Similar observations were also made in the natural recombinant CPXV-No-H2 (**paper I**). However, it has been reported that the recombination events in OPXV are more common in the terminal genomic region than the central region^{6,7,77,84,199,300}. Interestingly, there was a genomic

region (*CPXV-Br010* to *CPXV-Br043* gene) in the recombinant progeny viruses where recombination events did not occur (**paper III**). Although two recombinant viruses had suffered a large deletion in this region, from *CPXV-Br016* to *CPXV-Br029* gene (**paper III**).

The proportion of the parental genomes in the progeny virus genomes was not uniform. Most recombinant viruses comprised more CDS from CPXV-No-F1 (**paper III**). This could be because Vero cells were permissive to CPXV-No-F1 infection and the selection of progeny viruses based on visible plaques in Vero cells also biased selection in favor of viruses with more CPXV genomes since CPXV forms plaques in Vero while MVA/MVA-HANP does not. To gain a comprehensive understanding of recombination between MVA vector and naturally circulating CPXV, the limitations of culture-based selection can be overcome by metagenomic sequencing of co-infected and superinfected cells.

Various progeny viruses displayed plaque phenotypes distinct to that of parental viruses and some of them expressed the *HA* transgene (**paper III**). Similar findings were observed in the progeny viruses from co-infected BHK-21 cells and superinfected Vero cells (using 2 hours) ^{133,326}. Our progeny viruses produced different plaque phenotypes, such as non-lytic plaques with comet formation (**paper III**). The plaque morphology of the progeny viruses was affected by the presence or absence of genes involved in the syncytium and plaque formation (*F5L*, *F11L*, *F12L*, *F13L*, *A33R*, *A34R*, *A36R*, *A56R*, *B5R* and *K2L* genes) ^{250,252,253,259,262,263,398–401}. Some of these genes were fragmented (e.g. *F5L* and *F11L* gene) or have suffered small internal deletions (e.g. *A36R*) in MVA ¹²⁰. For instance, a recombinant progeny virus contained the *F5L*, *F11L*, *A36R*, *A33R*, *A34R* and *B5R* genes from MVA-HANP and formed small and non-lytic plaques with comet formation (**paper III**).

Within the progeny viruses, there was a non-recombinant that formed plaques with syncytium formation. The genomic analysis revealed that its *K2L* gene had one non-synonymous single-nucleotide mutation (nsSNM) that caused the truncation of the gene (**paper III**). It has been reported that the lack of the *K2L* gene caused the fusion of infected cells ^{251–253}. Besides nsSNMs, other genetic mutations such as deletion were detected in the progeny viruses. A large deletion (~16 kbp) was found in two recombinant viruses from superinfected Vero cells (**paper III**).

A partial deletion of double expression cassette (harbouring both influenza virus *HA* and *NP* transgenes) was detected in the parental MVA-HANP as well as in one recombinant progeny virus (**paper III**). The instability of the *HA* transgene has been also observed in MVA-HANP and in recombinant progeny viruses from co-infected BHK-21 cells ³²⁷. Other studies also showed the transgene instability in recombinant MVA vectors ^{335–338}. In MVA-HANP, the transgene was inserted in the hybrid genes A51/56, where MVA has suffered a deletion (deletion III) (**paper III**). One study compared the stability of the transgene inserted in different regions of the MVA genome (including deletion II, deletion III, the *CP77* gene locus and the *I8R-GIL* intergenic region) after 35 passages and showed that transgene was most stable in the intergenic region compared to the other regions (including deletion III) ⁴⁰².

We observed that the recombinant progeny viruses, with more DNA derived from MVA (>50%), rescued some deleted and/or fragmented genes from CPXV, including host range genes (**paper III**). One of the main concerns about the recombination of MVA vectored vaccine with a multiplication competent OPXV is the rescue of missing or fragmented host range genes in MVA and, hence, restoring the wild-type phenotype^{133,322}. Another concern is the transfer of the transgene from OPXV vectored vaccine into a multiplication competent OPXV^{133,322}. Our data showed that the recombinant viruses with a genome more similar to CPXV-No-F1 contained the transgenic cassette from MVA-HANP (**paper III**).

The recombination of a wild type OPXV and a poxvirus vaccine has been reported³²⁸. A Russian recombinant virus showed evidence of 27 recombinant events. Their possible parentals were a field LSDV strain and an LSD vaccine³²⁸. In following LSDV outbreaks only vaccine-like LSDV strains have been detected instead of the wild type LSDV strains^{329,330}. However, some researchers suggested the recombinant viruses could be a result of spillover from vaccinated animals³³¹.

7. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

We have shown that recombination is a common evolutionary mechanism that occurred between OPXV in nature. CPXV-No-H2 was an example of a natural occurring CPXV that might have undergone several recombination events between different OPXV species isolated from different continents. Furthermore, CPXV, which is the potential candidate for recombination with MVA vectored vaccine, had a high genetic diversity and was an assemblage of several sub-species. Among CPXV strains, three CPXV strains (including CPXV-No-H2) were closely related to ECTV and Abatino and formed a new, distinct CPXV clade named “ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV”. With the current genetic information of CPXV strains the evolutionary history of CPXV could not be elucidated. We demonstrated that progeny viruses obtained from co-infection and superinfection *in vitro* of semi-permissive Vero cells with MVA-HANP and CPXV-No-F1 displayed novel biological and genetic characteristics. Furthermore, the rescue of deleted or fragmented MVA genes in recombinant progeny viruses was possible as well the transfer of the transgene to CPXV. Overall, our findings provide relevant data for the hazard characterization of MVA vectored vaccines and, hence, improving the biosafety of MVA vectored vaccines.

The diversity and evolution of CPXV as well as the recombination between OPXV are still not completely elucidated. The diversity of CPXV has awoken debates about the reclassification of CPXV. However, for the re-classification of CPXV, the biological characterization of the CPXV strains is also required. Together, the genetic and biological characterization would provide a better understanding of diversity of CPXV as well as the evolution of CPXV and OPXV. In order to understand the evolution of CPXV, it is necessary to increase surveillance of OPXV (including CPXV) in different species and regions and acquire ancient CPXV strains. The recombination studies reported in this thesis were under *in vitro* conditions, which could differ from *in vivo* conditions. Thus, future studies should examine recombination *in vivo* particularly in immunocompetent and immunocompromised animal models.

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Paper I



Genomic Sequencing and Analysis of a Novel Human Cowpox Virus With Mosaic Sequences From North America and Old World Orthopoxvirus

Diana Díaz-Cánova¹, Ugo L. Moens^{1*}, Annika Brinkmann², Andreas Nitsche² and Malachy Ifeanyi Okeke^{3*}

¹ Molecular Inflammation Research Group, Department of Medical Biology, UiT - The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway, ² Highly Pathogenic Viruses, Centre for Biological Threats and Special Pathogens, WHO Reference Laboratory for SARS-CoV-2 and WHO Collaborating Centre for Emerging Infections and Biological Threats, Robert Koch Institute, Berlin, Germany, ³ Section of Biomedical Sciences, Department of Natural and Environmental Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, American University of Nigeria, Yola, Nigeria

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and Biotechnology VECTOR (ISTC),
Russia

*Correspondence:

Ugo L. Moens
ugo.moens@uit.no
Malachy Ifeanyi Okeke
malachy.okeke@aun.edu.ng

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Orthopoxviruses (OPXVs) not only infect their natural hosts, but some OPXVs can also cause disease in humans. Previously, we partially characterized an OPXV isolated from an 18-year-old male living in Northern Norway. Restriction enzyme analysis and partial genome sequencing characterized this virus as an atypical cowpox virus (CPXV), which we named CPXV-No-H2. In this study, we determined the complete genome sequence of CPXV-No-H2 using Illumina and Nanopore sequencing. Our results showed that the whole CPXV-No-H2 genome is 220,276 base pairs (bp) in length, with inverted terminal repeat regions of approximately 7 kbp, containing 217 predicted genes. Seventeen predicted CPXV-No-H2 proteins were most similar to OPXV proteins from the Old World, including *Ectromelia virus* (ECTV) and *Vaccinia virus*, and North America, *Alaskapox virus* (AKPV). CPXV-No-H2 has a mosaic genome with genes most similar to other OPXV genes, and seven potential recombination events were identified. The phylogenetic analysis showed that CPXV-No-H2 formed a separate clade with the German CPXV isolates CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY, sharing 96.4 and 96.3% nucleotide identity, respectively, and this clade clustered closely with the ECTV-OPXV Abatino clade. CPXV-No-H2 is a mosaic virus that may have arisen out of several recombination events between OPXVs, and its phylogenetic clustering suggests that ECTV-Abatino-like cowpox viruses form a distinct, new clade of cowpox viruses.

Keywords: poxvirus, phylogenetics, Fennoscandian, Norway, recombination

INTRODUCTION

Poxvirus is a family of double-stranded DNA viruses that can infect a broad range of hosts, including mammals, birds, reptiles, and insects (International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, ICTV¹). Based on the host, *Poxviridae* is divided into two subfamilies: *Chordopoxvirinae* (poxviruses that infect vertebrates) and *Entomopoxvirinae* (poxviruses that infect insects)

¹<https://talk.ictvonline.org/taxonomy/>

(MacLachlan and Dubovi, 2017). Within the subfamily *Chordopoxvirinae*, there is the genus *Orthopoxvirus* (OPXV). They are viruses with large, linear, double-stranded DNA genomes ranging in size from 170 to 250 kbp (Hendrickson et al., 2010).

One of the best-known species among OPXV is *Variola virus* (VARV), the causative agent of smallpox. It was one of the deadliest viruses in human history and was declared to be successfully eradicated in 1980 after a worldwide smallpox vaccination campaign (Strassburg, 1982). Other members of the OPXV genus also cause human diseases, such as *Cowpox virus* (CPXV), *Monkeypox virus* (MPXV), and vaccinia-like virus (Vora et al., 2015; Reynolds et al., 2018; Diaz, 2021; Silva et al., 2021), but those are zoonotic OPXVs. *Variola virus* is the only OPXV that exclusively infected humans in nature. Among the most studied members of OPXVs, *Vaccinia virus* (VACV) is the prototype species. Several VACV strains were used as smallpox vaccines during the world vaccination campaign (Jacobs et al., 2009).

OPXVs can be further divided into New World and Old World OPXVs according to their endemism. The Old World or African-Eurasian OPXV group contains seven species: VARV, VACV, MPXV, CPXV, *Camelpox virus* (CMLV), *Ectromelia virus* (ECTV), and *Taterapox virus* (TATV). The New World OPXV group comprises three species that are endemic to North America: *Raccoonpox virus* (RCNV), *Volepox virus* (VPXV), and *Skunkpox virus* (SKPV) (Smithson et al., 2017b).

In recent times, the increased number of reported OPXV infections as well as the emergence of new OPXVs or re-emergence of existing OPXVs has been reported in several countries across the world (Abrahão et al., 2015; Kalthan et al., 2018). Three novel OPXV species have recently been discovered: *Abatino macacapox virus* (OPXV Abatino) in Italy (Cardeti et al., 2017), *Ahkmata virus* (AKMV) in Georgia (Gao et al., 2018), and *Alaskapox virus* (AKPV) in the United States (Gigante et al., 2019).

The increasing number of OPXV infections in humans could be due to low population immunity against smallpox after the cessation of smallpox vaccination. The vaccinia-like virus infections were reported in different places and host species (Dumbell and Richardson, 1993; Abrahão et al., 2015; Miranda et al., 2017), including humans (Damaso et al., 2007; Megid et al., 2012). In different countries in Africa, human cases of MPXV infections have been reported (Nakoune et al., 2017; Durski et al., 2018; Yinka-Ogunleye et al., 2019; Alakunle et al., 2020); imported MPXV cases were as well reported in Israel, the United Kingdom and Singapore (Vaughan et al., 2018; Erez et al., 2019; Ng et al., 2019). In Europe, cases of cowpox were reported (Tryland et al., 1998; Kalthoff et al., 2014; Ferrier et al., 2021). The distribution of CPXV is in Eurasia (Chantrey et al., 1999; Wolfs et al., 2002; Laakkonen et al., 2006; Vorou et al., 2008; Popova et al., 2017; Diaz, 2021; Ferrier et al., 2021). The natural reservoirs of CPXV are wild rodents (Chantrey et al., 1999; Kinnunen et al., 2011). CPXV has a wide host spectrum, including humans, monkeys, cats, dogs, horses, and farmed llamas (Tryland et al., 1998; Smith et al., 1999; Girling et al., 2011; Prkno et al., 2017; Diaz, 2021). CPXV's broad range is associated with its large genome, which is the largest

genome among OPXVs (Gubser et al., 2004; Carroll et al., 2011). CPXV is polyphyletic (Carroll et al., 2011; Okeke et al., 2014; Franke et al., 2017; Mauldin et al., 2017), and their strains cluster in at least five clades (Mauldin et al., 2017; Jeske et al., 2019). Among them, some clades are more genetically similar to VACV (VACV-like virus) and VARV (VARV-like virus), whereas other CPXV strains appear as single branches and have a mosaic genome that contains genomic parts from different clades (Franke et al., 2017). The genetic heterogeneity inside CPXV could partially be due to recombination processes with other OPXV species or between CPXV clades (Okeke et al., 2012, 2014; Franke et al., 2017).

A poxvirus was isolated from an 18-year-old man living in the county Nordland, Norway (Hansen et al., 2009). Based on the detection of A-type inclusion (ATI) bodies, the sequence and phylogenetic analysis of hemagglutinin (*HA*) gene, cytokine response modifier B (*crmB*) gene, and Chinese hamster ovary host range (*CHOhr*) genes as well as *Hind III* restriction map, this virus was classified as a CPXV and was tentatively named CPXV-No-H2 (Hansen et al., 2009; Okeke et al., 2012). This isolate produces an atypical ATI phenotype, V^{+/-}, in which the virions are encrusted only in the periphery of ATI (Okeke et al., 2012). The sequencing of two of the three genes (*atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L*) involved in the production of ATI with virions embedded into ATI (V⁺) (Patel and Pickup, 1987; McKelvey et al., 2002; Howard et al., 2010) showed that it has intact *atip* and *p4c* genes. Furthermore, interestingly, the *atip* gene of CPXV-No-H2 closely related to that of ECTV with a bootstrap support of 100%, whereas the *p4c* gene was more diverse compared to the orthologs in other OPXVs (Okeke et al., 2012, 2014).

In this study, we report the whole sequence and genomic characterization of a Norwegian human CPXV isolate, CPXV-No-H2. We annotated the open reading frames, performed recombination analysis, and determined phylogenetic relationships with other OPXV genomes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Cell, Virus Culture, and DNA Isolation

The Fennoscandian CPXV No-H2 strain was isolated in 2001 from a human patient from Northern Norway (Hansen et al., 2009; Okeke et al., 2012). CPXV-No-H2 was cultured on a monolayer of Vero cells (ATCC No. CCL-81) in 175-cm² flasks (NUNC Sweden) as previously described (Okeke et al., 2012). Viral DNA was extracted from semi-purified virions using QIAGEN Genomic-tip 100/G and QIAGEN Genomic DNA Buffer Set, following the manufacturer's instructions (Qiagen, Hilden, Germany). DNA concentration was measured using NanoDrop 2000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fischer ScientificTM, Waltham, MA, United States).

Whole-Genome Sequencing

The genome of CPXV-No-H2 was sequenced using Illumina and Oxford Nanopore Technologies (ONT; Oxford, United Kingdom), respectively. The preparation of sequencing libraries and next-generation sequencing with Illumina was

performed at the Norwegian Sequencing Centre, Oslo. ThruPLEX DNA-Seq kit with an input DNA of 50 ng was used for the library preparation. Whole-genome sequencing was performed on an Illumina MiSeq instrument (Illumina Inc., San Diego, CA, United States) using MiSeq Reagent v3 (600 cycles), producing 2×300-bp paired-end reads. For nanopore sequencing, sequencing libraries were prepared using the Ligation Sequencing Kit SQK-LSK109 (ONT, Oxford, United Kingdom) and native barcoding expansion kit EXP-NBD104 and EXP-NBD114 (ONT). Up to 14 samples were multiplexed on R9.4 flow cells (FLO-MIN106). The run was performed on GridION X5 (Oxford, United Kingdom) using MinKNOW v20.10.6. Library preparation and nanopore sequencing were performed at the Genomics Support Centre Tromsø at UiT-The Arctic University of Norway.

Genome Assembly

Raw sequencing data from Illumina MiSeq were evaluated for their quality using FastQC software v0.11.8 (Andrews, 2010). Adapter removal and quality filtering were conducted using Trimmomatic v0.39 (Parameters: ILLUMINACLIP:TruSeq3-PE-2.fa:2:30:10 LEADING:3 TRAILING:3 SLIDINGWINDOW:4:20 MINLEN:36) (Bolger et al., 2014). In order to remove reads corresponding to host cells, filtered reads were mapped against *Chlorocebus sabaeus* (GCF_000409795.2) using FastQ Screen v0.14.1 (Wingett and Andrews, 2018) with BWA v.0.7.17 (Li and Durbin, 2009). The remaining reads were used in the genome assembly. Raw nanopore data (fast5 files) were base called using Guppy 4.2.3 in MinKNOW 20.10.6, with a qscore of 7 as filter, to produce Fastq formatted sequence files. Fastq sequences were demultiplexed using Guppy 4.2.3—likewise with barcode removal. Host sequences were filtered out using FastQ Screen v0.14.1 (Wingett and Andrews, 2018) with BWA v.0.7.17 (Li and Durbin, 2009) as described above. SPAdes v3.15.3 (Bankevich et al., 2012) was used to combine the ONT long reads and the Illumina reads to produce a hybrid assembly (with nanopore option and default parameters). Contigs were screened using BLAST² to remove host contamination. In order to assemble the complete genome, the Illumina reads were mapped to the contigs using Geneious mapper implemented in Geneious Prime 2020.2.4 (Biomatters, Inc., Newark, NJ, United States). Then, the extended contigs were merged into one by Geneious assembler in Geneious Prime 2020.2.4.

Genome Annotation

The assembled genome was annotated using Genome Annotation Transfer Utility (GATU) software from the Viral Bioinformatics Resource Centre (Tcherepanov et al., 2006). ECTV Moscow strain (ECTV_Mos), CPXV Brighton Red strain (CPXV_Br), and VACV Copenhagen strain (VACV_Cop) were used as reference genomes. These reference sequences were retrieved from the Viral Orthologous Clusters (VOCs) database (Ehlers et al., 2002). The GATU parameters included open reading frames (ORFs) longer than 30 amino acids, with a maximum overlap of 25%.

²<https://blast.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Blast.cgi>

Gene annotations from the reference genomes were transferred to the CPXV-No-H2 genome when the level of similarity was ≥80%. The putative coding sequences (CDS) with low similarity to the reference genes were subjected to a BLASTp analysis against the proteins belonging to the *Poxviridae* family from the NCBI database. Putative CDS with high similarity to other poxviruses were annotated. Similarly, the unassigned ORFs were investigated using BLASTp searches to find orthologous genes. In cases where more than one CDS were found in the same genomic region, the CDS with the highest similarity was selected. Geneious Prime 2020.2.4 was used to visualize, edit, and correct the annotations, if needed.

Phylogenetic Analysis

For phylogenetic analysis, 75 OPXV genomes were retrieved from the VOCs database (Ehlers et al., 2002), except for CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, which was retrieved from GenBank. The OPXV genomes used in this study are listed in **Supplementary Table 1**. The alignments of (1) the genomes, excluding the inverted terminal repeats (ITRs; called core genome), (2) the genomic region from the first gene until the last gene (referred to as the whole genome), and (3) the orthologous genes of the 76 OPXVs (including CPXV-No-H2) were performed using MAFFT v1.4.0 (with default parameters; Katoh and Standley, 2013) implemented in Geneious Prime 2020.2.4. The poorly aligned positions were removed from the alignments (1 and 2) with Gblocks 0.91b using default parameters (Talavera and Castresana, 2007). The orthologous genes were identified using OrthoFinder v2.5.2 (Emms and Kelly, 2015). The orthologs (present in ≥95% of the genomes) were aligned as described above and concatenated in Geneious Prime 2020.2.4.

The phylogenetic relationship among these OPXVs was inferred by the maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) methods. ML trees were constructed in RAxML v.8.2.12 (Stamatakis, 2014) using the best-fitting nucleotide substitution model and 1,000 bootstrap replicates. The best-fit nucleotide substitution model for the alignment data was selected using the modelTest-NG v.0.1.6 (Darriba et al., 2020). BI analyses were performed using MrBayes v.3.2.7 (Ronquist et al., 2012) under the best-fitting substitution model with the following parameters: 2 million generations, nchains = 4, samplefreq = 500, and burninfrac = 0.25. The phylogenetic trees were visualized using FigTree v1.4.4 (Rambaut, 2018).

Gene Content Comparison

Predicted CDS from isolate CPXV-No-H2 were extracted, translated into amino acid sequences, and compared to the CPXV_Br, ECTV_Mos, or VACV_Cop proteins using BLASTp (ncbi-blast+ v2.11.0) (Camacho et al., 2009). To find the closest annotated proteins for all predicted CPXV-No-H2 CDS, every translated CPXV-No-H2 CDS was analyzed by BLASTp search against proteins of the *Poxviridae* family. A BLASTn identity analysis was performed on predicted CPXV-No-H2 CDS that encode proteins with a higher identity to other OPXV proteins than CPXV proteins. When the first hit in BLASTp or BLASTn was CPXV-No-H2 protein or genome, the second hit was used.

Investigation of Potential Recombination Events

The genome sequence of CPXV-No-H2 was examined for potential recombination events using recombination detection program 4 (RPD4) (Martin et al., 2015) and SimPlot v3.5.1 (Lole et al., 1999). A putative recombinant event was taken into account if it was identified by RDP4 and/or Simplot analysis and the sequence was most similar to the possible minor parental. The whole genome of CPXV-No-H2 was aligned to other OPXV genomes used as putative parentals (AKPV, CPXV_Gri, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, ECTV_Mos, MPXV_Zaire, and VACV_LC16m8), with MAFFT v1.4.0 (Katoh and Standley, 2013) implemented in Geneious Prime 2020.2.4. Gaps were not removed from the multiple alignments. Similarity plots were performed on the multiple alignments using the SimPlot program (Lole et al., 1999) with default settings. Putative recombination breakpoints were determined by maximization of χ^2 analysis (Lole et al., 1999; Lim et al., 2011). For recombination analysis with RPD4, seven methods [RDP (Martin and Rybicki, 2000), GENECONV (Padidam et al., 1999), Bootscan (Martin et al., 2005), MaxChi (Smith, 1992), Chimaera (Posada and Crandall, 2001), SiScan (Gibbs et al., 2000), and 3Seq (Boni et al., 2007)] were used to detect potential recombination events. RDP4 was used with the default parameters, except for the option “require topological evidence.” The recombination events that were identified by 6 of 7 methods with significant p -values ($p \leq 0.01$) were considered potential recombinant events. The beginning and end of the breakpoints of these events suggested by RPD4 were used to identify the potential recombinant sequence. When the breakpoints were not identified by RDP4, the range of positions of the breakpoints obtained by Simplot analysis was used. Those potential recombinant sequences were utilized to build an ML tree using RAxML v.8.2.12 (Stamatakis, 2014). Phylogenetic tree incongruence was further used to map potential recombination sequences. Furthermore, a BLASTn identity analysis was performed on those potential recombinant sequences.

RESULTS

Genome Assembly and Genome Annotation

Two large contigs (>1000 bp) were obtained with the hybrid assembly and after removing the host contamination. The average coverage of the major and minor contig was 1502X and 735X, respectively. The mean genomic coverage of CPXV-No-H2 was 1370X. The assembled whole-genome length of CPXV-No-H2 was 220,276 bp. The ITR regions were approximately 7 kbp, and the central region was 206,204 bp. The A+T content of the CPXV-No-H2 genome was 66.6%. Genome annotation predicted 217 potential genes in the CPXV-No-H2 genome (Figure 1 and Supplementary Table 2). The overlapping genes were excluded from the annotation process. However, there were 20 predicted overlapping genes (Supplementary Table 3). Some of them were homologs of CPXV_Br genes (CPXV004,

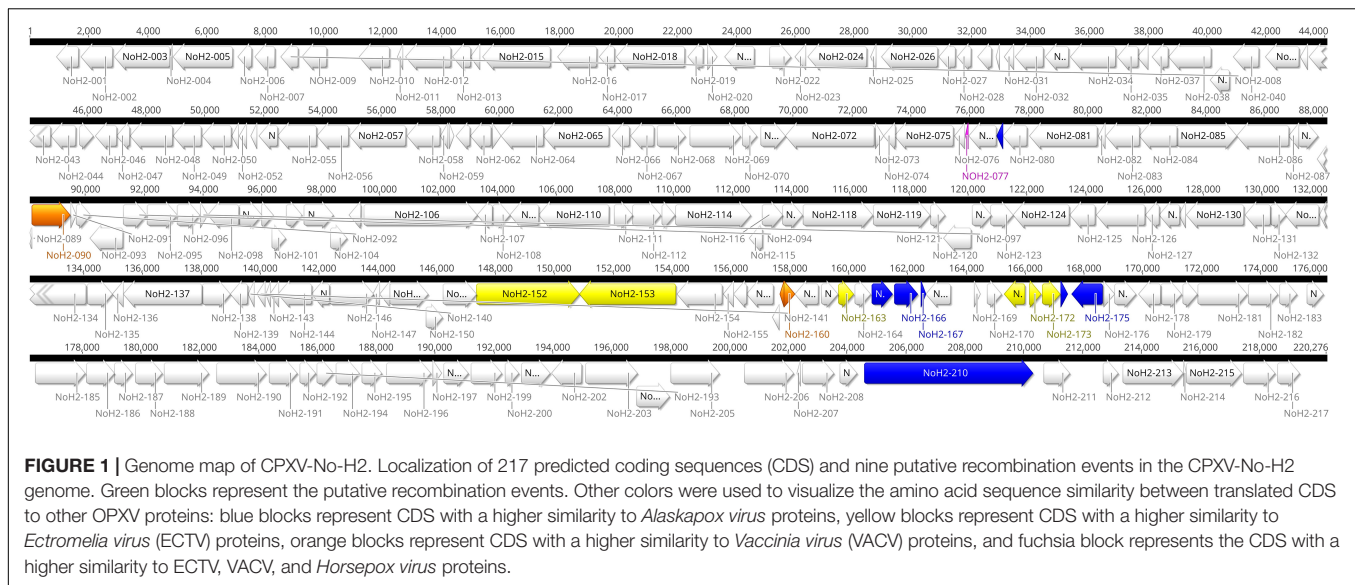
CPXV47, CPXV51A, CPXV058, CPXV078A, CPXV096, CPXV116, CPXV119A, CPXV130, CPXV152A, CPXV160, CPXV170, and CPXV214). The whole genome sequence is deposited in GenBank with accession number OM460002.

Phylogenetic Analysis

The phylogenetic analysis showed that the ML tree topologies were similar to the phylogenetic trees generated by the BI method, regardless of the alignments used. The BI phylogenetic trees had strong posterior probabilities in most nodes (≥ 0.95) (Figures 2–4). Unlike the BI trees, the ML trees had low clade support ($< 70\%$) in some of the nodes (Supplementary Figures 2–4). The BI phylogenetic trees of 76 OPXV whole genomes, 76 OPXV core genomes, and 134 OPXV orthologous genes are shown in Figures 2–4, respectively. The Old World and New World OPXV were separated into two groups in the phylogenetic trees generated from 76 OPXV whole genomes (Figure 2), 76 OPXV core genomes (Figure 3), and 134 OPXV orthologous genes (Figure 4). Within the Old World OPXV, the strains from the same OPXV species were grouped into clusters, except for CPXV strains that formed more than one cluster. CPXV was divided into clusters: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VARV-like, VACV-like, and new clade (Franke et al., 2017). Although the strains of VACV-like did not form a proper cluster, they were closely related VACV (Figures 2–4).

The new clade comprised CPXV-No-H2 and two German CPXV isolates: CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY (posterior probabilities of 1.0 and bootstrap values of 100%) (Figures 2–4 and Supplementary Figures 2–4). The CPXV-No-H2 genome was most similar to the CPXV_GerMygEK_938_17 genome (96.38% identical), and the second most similar virus was CPXV_Ger2010_MKY (96.26% identical), based on the alignment of 76 OPXV whole genomes. The new clade was closely related to the ECTV/Abatino clade. Both clades formed a major clade together (posterior probabilities of 1.0 and bootstrap values $> 89\%$) (Figures 2–4 and Supplementary Figures 2–4). In this study, the new clade (CPXV-No-H2/CPXV_GerMygEK938_17/ CPXV_Ger2010_MKY) was tentatively named “ECTV-Abatino-like.”

In phylogenetic trees derived from the 134 OPXV orthologous genes, the ECTV-Abatino-like/ECTV/OPXV Abatino clade clustered with CPXV_Ger1998/CPXV-like 2 clade with a strong posterior probability (1.0), but with a low bootstrap support value (46%) (Figure 4 and Supplementary Figure 4), whereas the phylogeny of the 76 OPXV whole and core genomes showed that the ECTV-Abatino-like/ECTV/OPXV Abatino clade was separated from the other Old World OPXV, which formed a major polyphyletic clade (posterior probability of 1.0 and bootstrap values $> 81\%$) (Figures 2, 3 and Supplementary Figures 2, 3). This major polyphyletic clade was further resolved in two groups: the CPXV_Ger1998/CPXV-like 2 clade (posterior probability of 1.0 and bootstrap values of 100%) and a larger group containing CPXV-like 1, VARV-like, VARV-TATV-CMLV, CPXV_HumLit08, VACV-like, MPXV, RXPV, and VACV clades (posterior probabilities of 1.0 and bootstrap values of 100%) (Figures 2, 3 and Supplementary Figures 2, 3). The clustering



within this monophyletic group apparently differs between the tree based on 76 OPXV whole genomes and the trees built from 76 OPXV core genomes and 134 OPXV orthologous genes (Figures 2–4 and Supplementary Figures 2–4). In the former, CPXV-like 1 branches separated from other members of the large polyphyletic group (Figure 2 and Supplementary Figure 2). These members formed a cluster and were further split into two clusters: the VARV-like/TATV/CMLV/VARV cluster and the CPXV_HumLit08/VACV-like/MPXV/RPXV/VACV cluster. Both clusters were supported by strong posterior probabilities (1.0) and bootstrap values (100%) (Figure 2 and Supplementary Figure 2), while 76 OPXV core genomes and 134 OPXV orthologous gene phylogenies grouped CPXV-like 1 into the same cluster with VARV-like/TATV/CMLV/VARV, with posterior probabilities of 0.99 and 1.0 and bootstrap values of 51 and 99%, respectively (Figures 3, 4 and Supplementary Figures 3, 4). Additionally, CPXV_HumLit08, VACV-like, MPXV, RPXV, and VACV were grouped into the same cluster, with posterior probabilities of 1.0 and bootstrap values of 100%.

However irrespective of the aforementioned differences between the whole genome tree on one hand and the core genome and the concatenated 134 orthologous genes on the other, the following topologies were consistent in all the trees generated from the three distinct datasets: (i) ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV clustered closely with ECTV-OPXV Abatino clade, (ii) VACV-like CPXV grouped together with VACV, (iii) VARV-like CPXV clustered closely with VARV-TATV-CMLV clade, (iv) CPXV-like 1 clade is sister to VACV-like clade, and (vi) AKPV/AKMV are intermediate between Old World and New World OPXV.

Gene Content Comparison

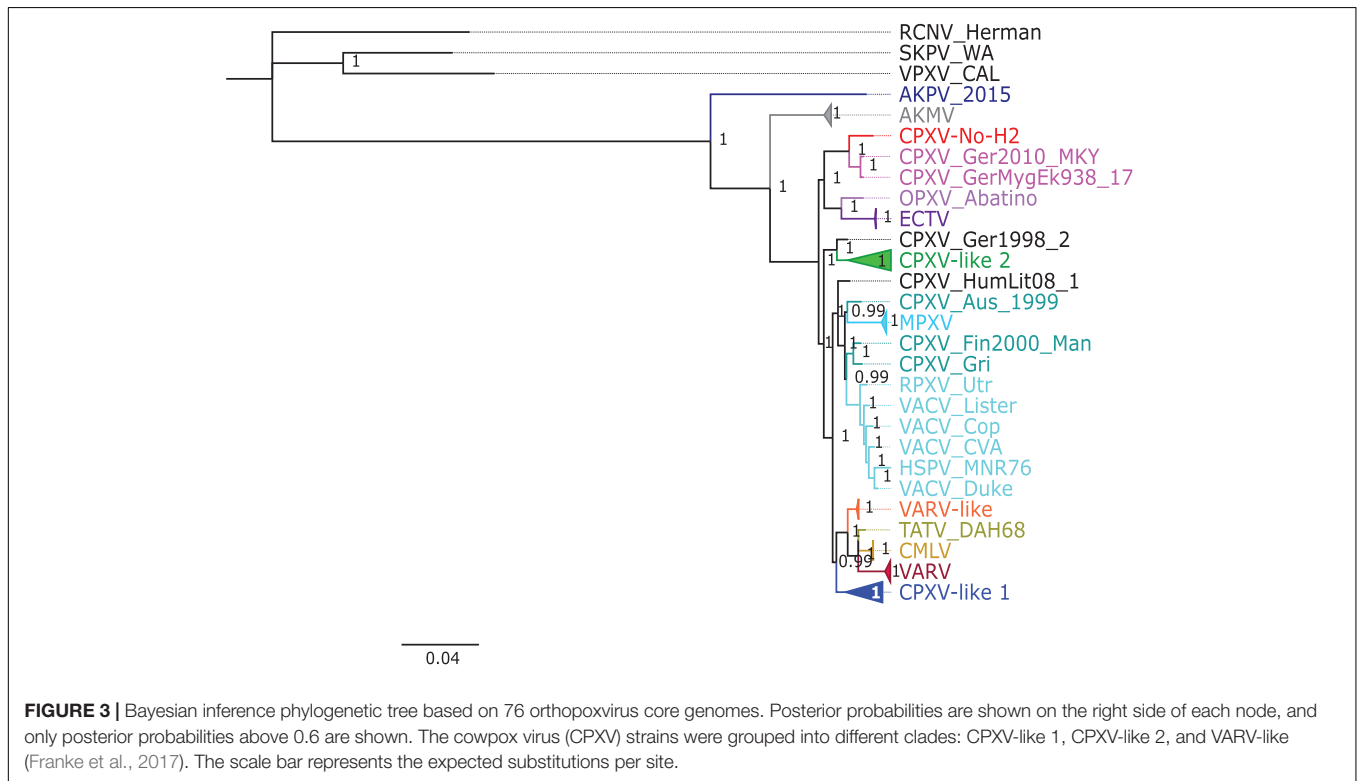
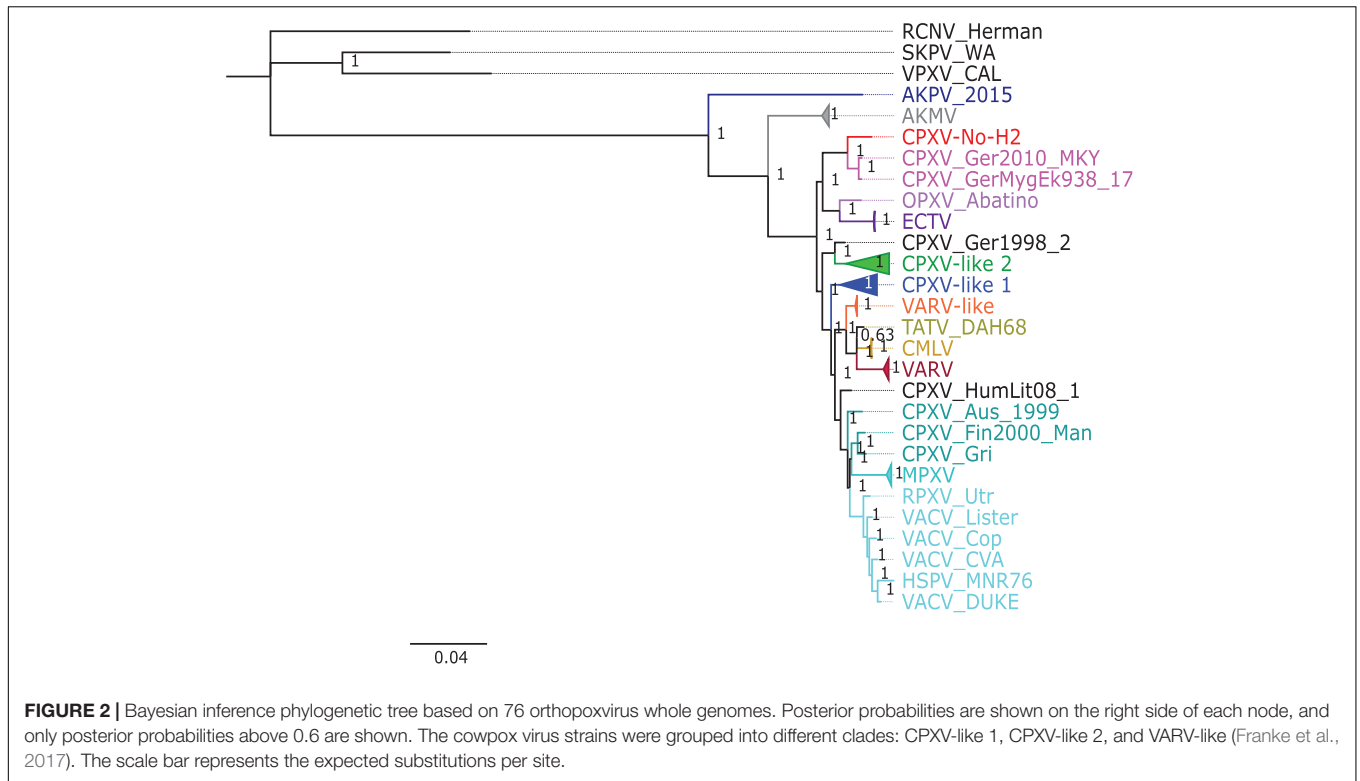
The gene content and organization of the CPXV-No-H2 genome were similar to that of the CPXV_Br and ECTV_Mos genomes. All CPXV_Br genes (excluding ITR genes) were found in the CPXV-No-H2 genome, except for CPXV221 (encodes CrmD protein) and CPXV192 (encodes CPXV192 protein).

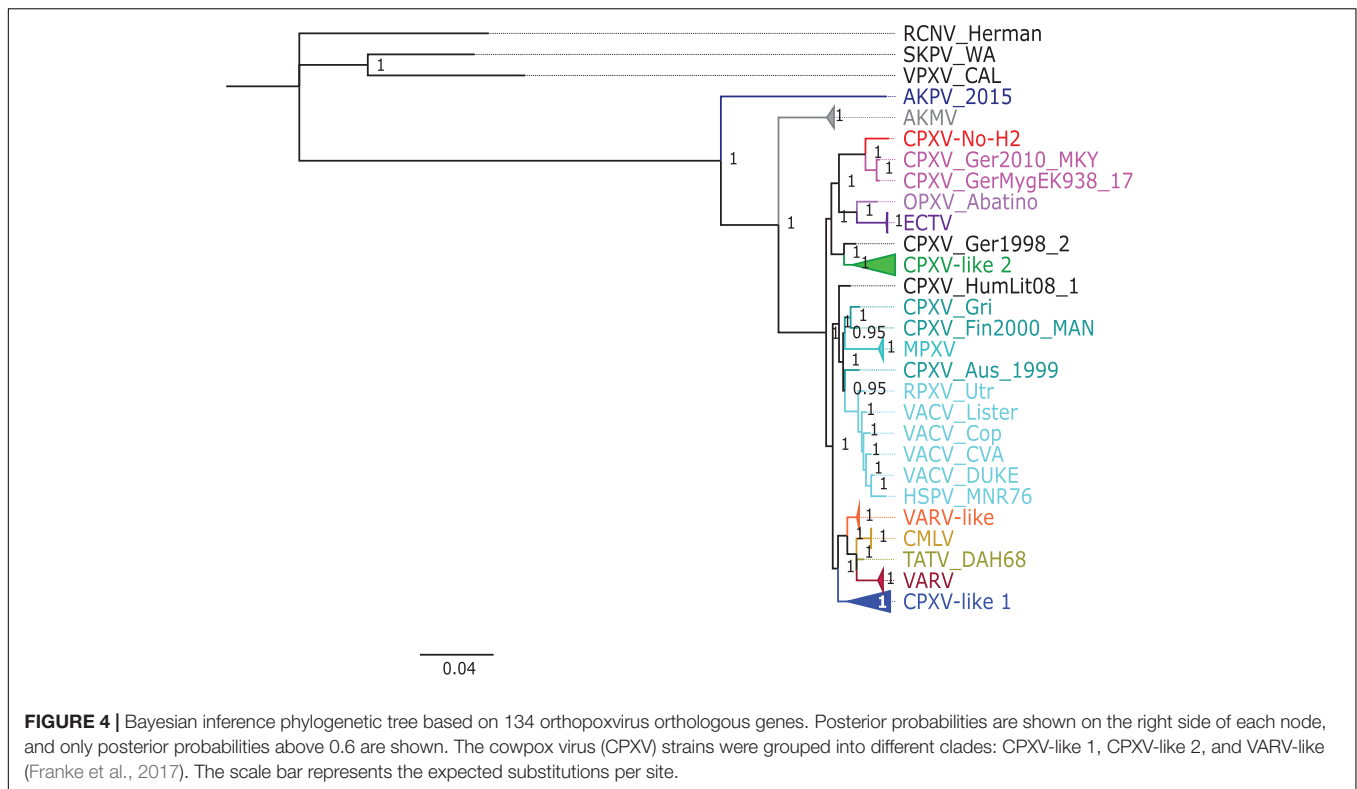
The last gene is truncated in CPXV-No-H2 and overlapped to a major predicted gene. Similarly, comparing CPXV-No-H2 and ECTV_Mos, it was shown that EVM003/170 (homolog to CPXV221) was missing in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. Additionally, the EVM006 gene (encodes C-type lectin) was absent in the CPXV-No-H2 genome.

The predicted gene NoH2-154 encodes an intact p4c protein compared to CPXV_Br, whose p4c gene is disrupted in two fragments (CPXV159 and CPXV161). Similarly, this gene is fragmented in ECTV_Mos (Chen et al., 2003). The BLASTp analysis for NoH2-154 revealed that the best hit was an inclusion protein III from *Buffalopox virus*, with 87.7% identity. This protein (501 aa) was smaller than the p4c protein from CPXV-No-H2 (512 aa). The next best BLASTp hits were longer proteins of 527 aa from CPXV_Ger2010_MKY and 523 aa from CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, which shared 88.6 and 89.12% identity with p4c protein from CPXV-No-H2, respectively. BLASTn showed that the CPXV-No-H2 p4c gene was most similar to the p4c gene from CPXV_GerMygEK938_17.

Within ITRs of CPXV-No-H2, five of eight duplicate CPXV_Br genes were found (CPXV003/227, CPXV005/226, CPXV006/225, CPXV007/224, and CPXV008/223). The terminal CPXV004 gene was also found in both ITRs of CPXV-No-H2 (NoH2-A and NoH2-T) (Supplementary Table 3), but they overlapped two major predicted genes (NoH2-002 and NoH2-216). Interestingly, NoH2-006, the ortholog of CPXV009/222, was found as a single copy downstream of the left ITR of the CPXV-No-H2 genome (Figure 1).

All predicted genes in CPXV-No-H2 were found to have homologs in either CPXV_Br, ECTV_Mos, or VACV_Cop, except for NoH2-008 and NoH2-212. The translated NoH2-008 CDS shared 100% amino acid identity with the hypothetical protein CPXV0285 of CPXV_FM2292 (CRL86746.1) and CPXV_Ger2007_Vole (SBN49117.1). The predicted gene NoH2-212 was a homolog of CPXV-GRI-K3R (encodes CrmE protein). The BLASTp analysis of this translated CDS showed





that it shared the highest amino acid identity (95.2%) with a CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 protein (hypothetical protein pCPXV003 CAB5514210.1). The *NoH2-212* gene was located upstream of the right ITR of CPXV-No-H2 (**Figure 1**).

Of the 217 predicted genes of CPXV-No-H2, 17 coded for proteins that were most similar to other OPXV proteins than CPXV proteins. Seven of them shared high similarity to North American OPXV proteins, AKPV, and 10 genes were most similar to Old World OPXV proteins, including ECTV and VACV (**Supplementary Table 4**). The seven predicted CPXV-No-H2 proteins were most similar (i.e., >92% amino acid identity) to AKPV proteins, including NoH2-079, NoH2-165, NoH2-166, NoH2-167, NoH2-174, NoH2-175, and NoH2-210. The BLASTn analysis of their seven predicted CPXV-No-H2 genes revealed that *NoH2-079*, *NoH2-165*, *NoH2-166*, *NoH2-167*, *NoH2-174*, and *NoH2-210* shared the highest similarity (i.e., > 97% nucleotide identity) with AKPV-076, AKPV-162, AKPV-163, AKPV-164, AKPV-171, and AKPV-203, respectively, whereas *NoH2-175* shared the highest nucleotide similarity with CPXV_GerMygEK938_17/CPXV_Ger2010_MKY. However, the BLASTn analysis of *NoH2-175* with the intergenic region between *NoH2-174* and *NoH2-175* revealed the highest similarity with AKPV (93.98% nucleotide identity).

The six predicted proteins most identical (i.e., > 94% amino acid identity) to ECTV proteins were NoH2-152, NoH2-153, NoH2-163, NoH2-171, NoH2-172, and NoH2-173. At the nucleotide level, *NoH2-152*, *NoH2-153*, *NoH2-171*, *NoH2-172*, and *NoH2-173* had > 95% identity with the

corresponding ECTV *EVM127*, *EVM128*, *EVM140*, *EVM141*, and *EVM142* genes. The *NoH2-163* gene, however, was most similar to CPXV169 from CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY (98.6% identity), whereas the next best BLASTn hit was an ECTV gene with 98.4% identity. The difference between their percent identities was due to one identical nucleotide (**Supplementary Figure 1**).

The three CPXV-No-H2 predicted proteins most similar to VACV proteins included NoH2-090, NoH2-159, and NoH2-160. The BLASTn search of these predicted genes revealed that *NoH2-159* shared 100% nucleotide identity with VACV, BPXV, and CPXV genomes, and *NoH2-160* was 98.4% identical to VACV LC16m8 (*m8197R*) and VACV LC16mO genes (*mO197R*). The predicted protein of the gene *NoH2-077* was 100% identical to ECTV, HSPV, and VACV proteins. However, the BLASTn of this predicted gene showed that it was 100% identical to CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 genome, but this region was not annotated.

Overlapping genes were excluded from the annotation process. There were 20 overlapping predicted genes (**Supplementary Table 3**). Fourteen of them were homologs of CPXV_Br (*CPXV004*, *CXPV47*, *CPXV51A*, *CPXV058*, *CPXV078A*, *CPXV096*, *CPXV116*, *CPXV119A*, *CPXV130*, *CPXV152A*, *CPXV160*, *CPXV170*, and *CPXV214*). Another six overlapping genes did not correspond to any annotated CPXV gene. The BLASTp analysis of the protein encoded by the six overlapping genes revealed that five shared the highest similarity (> 83% amino acid identity) to CMLV_0408151v (*NoH2-B*), OPXV Abatino (*NoH2-H*), VACV_CEvY1

(NoH2-G and NoH2-N), or VACV_Lister (NoH2-R) proteins (**Supplementary Table 3**).

Recombination Analysis

Previous studies by our group had identified a putative crossover event downstream of the *atip* gene (Okeke et al., 2012). Consequently, the complete CPXV-No-H2 genome was examined for recombination because it contained genomic regions with predicted genes similar to AKPV, ECTV, or VACV genomes. Nine putative recombination events were predicted by RDP4 and Simplot analysis for the CPXV-No-H2 genome (**Table 1** and **Figure 1**). Six potential recombination regions were a result of recombination events between the parents of AKPV and CPXV (putative recombination events 1–6), two originated from recombination events between the parental ECTV and CPXV (putative recombination events 7 and 8), and one was a product of a recombination event between the parental VACV and CPXV (putative recombination event 9) (**Table 1**). Within the nine putative recombinant regions in CPXV-No-H2, only one recombinant region (putative recombination event 6) was close to terminal regions, whereas the other eight recombinant regions were located in the central region of the genome.

The first potential recombinant region in the CPXV-No-H2 genome (putative recombination event 1) comprised the *NoH2-079* gene and started from position 76,946 bp in the CPXV-No-H2. The ending breaking could be between positions 77,201 and 77,208 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome based on Simplot analysis. The next potential recombinant region (putative recombination event 2) was almost 500 bp downstream of the first one. It was located between 77,741 and 78,243 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome and contained parts of *NoH2-080* and *NoH2-081*. These two putative recombinant regions shared the highest similarity to the AKPV genome (>98% identical) (**Supplementary Table 5**).

The third potential recombinant region (putative recombination event 3) spanned approximately 4,500 bp, from position 150,156 to 154,530 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. However, it overlapped with the predicted recombinant region between the parental ECTV and CPXV (putative recombination event 7), located between 150,119 and 153,968 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. The latter encompassed only two genes, *NoH2-152* and *No-153*, compared to the former that also contained part of the *NoH2-154* gene. The BLASTn analysis of the third potential recombinant region revealed the highest similarity with the AKPV genome (96.89% identical), whereas the putative recombinant region between the parental ECTV and CPXV was most similar to the ECTV genomes, with 97.93% nucleotide identity (**Supplementary Table 5**).

The fourth potential recombinant region in the CPXV-No-H2 genome (putative recombination event 4) included the genes *NoH2-165*, *NoH2-166*, and *NoH2-167* and part of *NoH2-168*. The Simplot analysis revealed that the beginning and ending breakpoints were located between 160,774 and 160,878 bp and between 162,909 and 162,948 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome, respectively. This genomic region was most similar to the AKPV genome, sharing 97.66% nucleotide identity (**Supplementary Table 5**). The fifth potential recombinant region

(putative recombination event 5) started from 165,874 to 168,063 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. It overlapped with another putative recombinant region between the parental ECTV and CPXV (putative recombination event 8), which was located between 165,847 and 167,892 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. Both regions contained part of *NoH2-171*, *NoH2-172*, *NoH2-173*, and *NoH2-174* and part of *NoH2-175*. The BLASTn analysis of these two putative recombination regions revealed that the first hit was the AKPV genome, with > 97% nucleotide identity (**Supplementary Table 5**).

A sixth potential recombinant event between the parental AKPV and CPXV (putative recombination event 6) was detected only by Simplot analysis. The cross-over points lay between 204,960 and 204,977 bp and between 209,488 and 209,901 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. It contained a major part of the *NoH2-210* gene, which was most similar to AKPV-203 (97.15% identical) and also shared similarity with the Murmansk-007 gene (91.44% identical). Furthermore, this putative recombinant sequence showed its highest identity with the AKPV genome (98.4% identical), followed by the *Murmansk microtus pox virus* genome (91.44% identical).

One putative recombination event between the parental VACV and CPXV (putative recombination event 9) was detected. The breakpoints were undetermined by RDP4, but the Simplot analysis revealed that the putative recombinant sequence started from position 164,400–164,525 bp and ended at position 164,756–164,768 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome. This region contained a small part of *NoH2-169* and a major part of *NoH2-170*. The latter gene shared 94.44% identity with the genes of CPXV and RPXV and the VACV strains, such as Lister, Cantagalo, CVA, and NYCBH.

The phylogenetic analysis of the six putative recombinant regions between the parental AKPV and CPXV showed that CPXV-No-H2 clustered with AKPV with a bootstrap support of > 91%, except for the phylogenetic tree based on the fifth putative recombinant region (165,874–168,063 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome), where CPXV-No-H2 clustered with ECTV with a low bootstrap support (55%), and they were grouped with AKPV (bootstrap value of 100%) (**Supplementary Figures 5–10**). CPXV-No-H2 likewise clustered with ECTV in the phylogenetic tree generated from the potential recombinant region between the parental ECTV and CPXV (165,847–167,892 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome) that overlapped the fifth putative recombinant region (**Supplementary Figure 12**). Unlike the previous phylogenetic tree, the bootstrap support for this clade was higher (93%) though.

Based on the phylogenetic analysis of the putative recombinant sequence between the parental ECTV and CPXV (150,119–153,968 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome), CPXV-No-H2 formed a cluster with ECTV (**Supplementary Figure 11**). This cluster was most closely related to AKPV and formed a major clade, with AKPV and AKMV, separating them from other Old World OPXV. However, the phylogenetic tree of the recombinant region between the parental AKPV and CPXV (150,156–154,530 bp in the CPXV-No-H2 genome), which overlapped that recombinant region, clustered CPXV-No-H2 with AKPV, and both isolates were closely related to ECTV

TABLE 1 | Predicted recombination events in the CPXV-No-H2 genome using recombination detection program 4 (RPD4) and Simplot analysis.

Putative parental strains	Major parental	Minor parental	Recombinant virus	Recombination event	RPD4		Recombination detection programs	Simplot	
					Breakpoint in CPXV-No-H2			Breakpoint interval in CPXV-No-H2	
					Begin (bp)	End (bp)		Begin (bp)	End (bp)
AKPV, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, CPXV_Gri, CPXV-No-H2	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	1	76,946	77,244*	RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, 3Seq	76,679–76,957	77,201–77,208
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	2	77,741	78,243	RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, 3Seq	77,717–77,765	78,237–78,399
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	3	150,156	154,530	GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	150041–150158	154,524–154,570
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	4	160,988*	162,917*	RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	160,774–160,878	162,909–162,948
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	5	165,874	168,063	RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	165,828–165,878	168,042–168,066
ECTV_Mos, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, CPXV_Gri, CPXV-No-H2	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	AKPV	CPXV-No-H2	6	-	-	-	204,960–204,977	209,498–209,901
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	ECTV_Mos	CPXV-No-H2	7	150,119	153,968	GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	149,993–150,158	153,952–154,180
	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	ECTV_Mos	CPXV-No-H2	8	165,847	167,892	RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	165,678–165,855	167,879–167,943
VACV_LC16m8, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, CPXV_Gri, CPXV-No-H2	CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	VACV_LC16m8	CPXV-No-H2	9	164,419*	165,036*	RDP, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, 3Seq	164,399–164,525	164,756–164,768

The breakpoint that was undetermined is marked with an asterisk. AKPV, Alakapox virus; CPXV, Cowpox virus; ECTV, Ectromelia virus; VACV, Vaccinia virus. The breakpoint that was undetermined is marked with an asterisk.

(**Supplementary Figure 7**). The phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant sequence between the parental VACV and CPXV placed CPXV-No-H2 inside the VACV cluster (**Supplementary Figure 13**).

DISCUSSION

CPXV-No-H2 is an isolate from a human in Northern Norway that was classified as an atypical CPXV based on ATI phenotype, sequence of the *atip* and *p4c* genes, and Hind III restriction map (Hansen et al., 2009; Okeke et al., 2012). Our phylogeny analysis indicated that CPXV-No-H2 is most closely related to the German CPXV isolates CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY (**Figures 2–4**). Similarly, phylogenetic analysis based on the *HA* gene also resolved CPXV_Ger2010_MKY and CPXV-No-H2 in the same cluster (Kalthoff et al., 2014). The three CPXV isolates (CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, CPXV_Ger2010_MKY, and CPXV-No-H2) may be part of a novel CPXV lineage separated from the other CPXV strains. It was previously suggested that CPXV_Ger2010_MKY and CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 were part of a new cluster provisionally called CPXV-like 3 (Franke et al., 2017; Jeske et al., 2019). However, this cluster was supported by a low bootstrap value (Jeske et al., 2019). The phylogenetic analysis reported in our study indicated that the new clade (CPXV-No-H2/CPXV_GerMygEK938_17/CPXV_Ger2010_MKY) was more closely related to ECTV and OPXV Abatino than other OPXVs, with strong posterior probabilities and bootstrap values (**Figures 2–4** and **Supplementary Figures 2–4**). Thus, we tentatively named this clade as “ECTV-Abatino-like.”

The ECTV-Abatino-like/ECTV/OPXV Abatino clade was separated from the Old World OPXV in 76 OPXV whole- and core-genome phylogenetic trees, while a phylogenetic tree based on 134 OPXV orthologous genes showed that this clade clustered closely with CPXV_Ger1998/CPXV-like 2 but with poor bootstrap support (46%). We suggest that the separation of ECTV-Abatino-like/ECTV/OPXV Abatino from the other Old World OPXV may be due to the presence of some genes (or genomic regions) located in the core genome, which are not included within the 134 OPXV orthologous genes. A previous study showed that CPXV_GerMygEK938_17/CPXV_Ger2010_MKY/ECTV/OPXV Abatino clustered with CPXV-like 2 but with low bootstrap support (< 70%) (Jeske et al., 2019), although AKPV was not included in their phylogenetic analysis compared to our study that included AKPV and more OPXV strains. When AKPV was excluded from the construction of our phylogenetic trees, the ECTV-Abatino-like/ECTV/OPXV Abatino clade clustered with CPXV_Ger1998/CPXV-like 2 in 75 OPXV whole- and core-genome phylogenetic trees but with low bootstrap support (**Supplementary Figures 14–17**). In contrast, the bootstrap value in the node that clustered these clades increased from 46 to 82% in the phylogenetic tree based on 134 OPXV orthologous genes (**Supplementary Figures 18, 19**). We suspect that the genes or genomic regions that separated those clades have homologs in AKPV—for instance, homologs

of *NoH2-166*, *NoH2-167*, *NoH2-174*, and *NoH2-210* genes, which were most similar to the AKPV genes, were not included in the construction of the phylogenetic tree based on 134 OPXV orthologous genes.

In fact, CPXV-No-H2 has a mosaic genome with genes most similar to the OPXV genes from the Old World, including ECTV and VACV, and the North America, AKPV. Previously, we have shown that the *atip* gene from CPXV-No-H2 displayed the highest similarity to the corresponding ECTV gene, and the insertion of the ECTV *atip* gene may be a result of the recombination between CPXV and ECTV or an ECTV-like virus (Okeke et al., 2012). Our present study suggested similar findings and indicated that CPXV-No-H2 has also undergone recombination events between AKPV and VACV. A recombination between OPXVs has been reported by others (Gubser et al., 2004; Coulson and Upton, 2011; Qin et al., 2011, 2015; Okeke et al., 2012; Smithson et al., 2014, 2017a; Franke et al., 2017; Gao et al., 2018; Gigante et al., 2019).

CPXV-No-H2 displays recombination events with OPXVs that were isolated from different places and species. CPXV-No-H2 is a strain from Northern Norway (Okeke et al., 2012). Its closest relatives CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY were isolated in Germany, but they were isolated from different species: bank vole and cotton-top tamarin, respectively (Kalthoff et al., 2014; Jeske et al., 2019). It was suggested that the infection of cotton-top tamarin was mediated by bank vole infected with CPXV (Jeske et al., 2019; Weber et al., 2020). In contrast, AKPV was isolated from a human patient in North America (Alaska, the United States). The patient’s infection source is unknown, but it is presumable that she was infected by a small mammal (Springer et al., 2017; Gigante et al., 2019). VACV and ECTV have been reported around the world (Dumbell and Richardson, 1993; Miranda et al., 2017; Mavian et al., 2021). ECTV infects laboratory mice worldwide (Trentin and Briody, 1953; Mavian et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021). The first discovered ECTV strain, ECTV_Hampstead, was isolated in the United Kingdom and was the progenitor of the European outbreaks. Only one ECTV strain (ECTV_MouKre) was isolated from a wild mouse in Germany (Mavian et al., 2021). The worldwide presence of ECTV in animals suggests their presence also in Norwegian fauna and hence the possibility to recombine with CPXV.

Among the nine potential recombination events in the CPXV-No-H2 genome, two potential recombination events with the parental AKPV (putative recombination events 3 and 5) overlap with two potential recombination events with the parental ECTV (putative recombination events 6 and 7). Interestingly, in the same position of these recombinant regions, AKPV has undergone a potential recombination with ECTV, and it was suggested that ECTV contains an AKPV-like sequence (Gigante et al., 2019).

These recombinant regions (putative recombination events 5 and 8) contain the *atip* gene, which is one of the three genes (*atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L*) required for the formation of the V⁺ ATI phenotype (Patel and Pickup, 1987; McKelvey et al., 2002; Howard et al., 2010). CPXV-No-H2 contains an intact ECTV-like *atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L* genes. Those latter genes

were most similar to CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 genes. CPXV-No-H2 produces mainly virions encrusted on the surface of ATI ($V^{+/}$) similar to ECTV_Hampstead, which produces both V^+ and $V^{+/}$ ATI phenotype (Ichihashi and Matsumoto, 1966; Okeke et al., 2012; Mavian et al., 2021). ECTV_Hampstead encodes a full-length *p4c* protein compared to other ECTV isolates with V^- ATI phenotype. Besides this, it contains the *atip* and *A27L* genes (Mavian et al., 2021). AKPV and CPXV_Ger2010_MKY also comprise these three genes and produce the V^+ ATI phenotype (Franke et al., 2017; Springer et al., 2017; Gigante et al., 2019). There is no report of the production of ATI bodies in CPXV_GerMygEK938_17; however, its *atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L* genes are most similar to those of CPXV_Ger2010_MKY.

The potential recombination event between the parental AKPV and CPXV (putative recombinant event 6) located close to the terminal region contains part of the *NoH2-210* gene that shared similarity with *AKPV-203* and the Murmansk gene. *AKPV-203* is one of the three AKPV genes that may be introduced from/to Murmansk poxvirus by recombination (Gigante et al., 2019). Murmansk is a non-OPXV that belongs to the genus *Centapoxvirus* that was isolated in Murmansk, Russia (Smithson et al., 2017a). In three of the six recombination events with the parental AKPV (putative recombination events 1, 4, and 6), it seems that CPXV-No-H2 contains AKPV-like sequences rather than AKPV containing CPXV-No-H2-like sequences because the phylogenetic trees showed that CPXV-No-H2 is not part of the ECTV-Abatino-like clade and was placed next to AKPV (**Supplementary Figures 5, 8, 10**). In contrast, the overlapping recombinant regions seem to be CPXV-No-H2-like sequences that were introduced to AKPV based on the phylogenetic tree and the sequence similarity (**Supplementary Figures 7, 9, 11, 12**).

Reconstructing the evolutionary history of CPXV-No-H2 is difficult since it displays several potential recombination events with different OPXVs, especially when it is suspected that recombination events occurred between these OPXVs (such as AKPV and ECTV) (Gigante et al., 2019). Additionally, these OPXVs were isolated from different continents (Springer et al., 2017; Mavian et al., 2021). One plausible hypothesis about the mosaic genome of CPXV-No-H2 is that the CPXV_GerMygEK938_17-like virus was probably circulating in a population of rodents in Europe, and it underwent recombination with the AKPV-like virus. The resultant virus, CPXV-No-H2-like virus, could have suffered genomic changes and adapted to mice, which could be the possible ancestor of ECTV. The origin of ECTV from the CPXV-like ancestor was previously proposed (Jeske et al., 2019) since ECTV has a shorter genome (ranging from 204 to 208 kbp) and reduced number of genes compared to CPXV that has the largest genome among OPXVs, about 220 kbp (Chen et al., 2003; Hendrickson et al., 2010; Carroll et al., 2011; Dabrowski et al., 2013; Mavian et al., 2014, 2021). Our results suggest that CPXV-No-H2 could be derived from a CPXV_GerMygEK938_17-like virus because (1) CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 shares the highest similarity with CPXV-No-H2, (2) it did not show any significant recombination event (Kalthoff et al., 2014; Jeske et al., 2019), (3) none of the

seven recombination regions in CPXV-No-H2 was highly similar to either CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 or CPXV_Ger2010_MKY, (4) there is high similarity between their *p4c* and *A27L* genes, (5) its place of isolation was also in Europe, and (6) we speculated that it has V^+ ATI phenotype similar to CPXV_Ger2010_MKY due to the similarity between their *atip*, *p4c*, and *A27L* genes.

The recombination may have occurred between CPXV_GerMygEK938_17-like virus and AKPV-like virus rather than ECTV-like virus because, aside from two recombination events with the parental AKPV that overlapped a recombination event with the parental ECTV, there are other four recombinant events with the parental AKPV which cannot be viewed as a simple coincidence. In addition, the two suspected recombination regions in the ECTV genome (Gigante et al., 2019) were more similar to CPXV-No-H2 than AKPV (data not shown). Furthermore, hypothetically, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 may produce V^+ ATI similar to AKPV, while CPXV-No-H2 and ECTV_Hampstead produce both V^+ and $V^{+/}$ ATI phenotypes (Ichihashi and Matsumoto, 1966; Okeke et al., 2012; Mavian et al., 2021). It seems that the putative progeny virus, CPXV-No-H2-like virus, may have reduced its ability to embed virions into ATI bodies. This was also observed in the derivatives of ECTV_Hampstead that produces the V^- ATI phenotype (Mavian et al., 2021). We speculated that the recombination between CPXV_GerMygEK938_17-like virus and AKPV-like virus could take place in a rodent in Europe because AKPV contains genes from a Russian poxvirus, Murmansk, which was isolated from a root vole (Smithson et al., 2017a; Gigante et al., 2019), and CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 was isolated from bank vole in Europe (Jeske et al., 2019). Furthermore, CPXV-No-H2 was isolated in Europe, likewise with CPXV_Ger2010_MKY and ECTV_Hampstead (the source of the European outbreaks) (Hansen et al., 2009; Okeke et al., 2012; Kalthoff et al., 2014; Mavian et al., 2021).

However, it is pertinent to note that recombination detection programs predict hypothetical recombination events across genomes, and the outputs are sensitive to input parameter settings, particularly the sliding window size. To increase the likelihood of putative recombination events being real, we recommend the following: (i) use of these programs at default settings, (ii) identification of the exact recombination event by at least two different programs and algorithms, (iii) discountenance of recombination events without very high statistical support, (iv) confirmation of recombination breakpoints by manual inspection of similarity plots, and (v) incongruence of phylogenetic trees.

Another explanation for the presence of the OPXV-like genomic regions in CPXV-No-H2 could be symplesiomorphy because most genomic regions were similar to more than one taxon—for instance, the two CPXV-No-H2 genomic regions that were similar to ECTV and AKPV may be inherited from a common ancestral virus, likewise with the AKPV-like genomic region that contains part of the *NoH2-210* similar to AKPV and Murmansk. However, symplesiomorphy does not explain the presence of the AKPV-like genomic region of 2,150 bp in CPXV-No-H2, which did not share high similarity with

other taxa. The only plausible explanation is that CPXV-No-H2 may have obtained this sequence from an AKPV-like virus by recombination.

Overall, the genetic analysis of the atypical CPXV-No-H2 suggested that it contains sequences similar to other OPXVs, and one of the plausible explanations for their presence was recombination events with other OPXVs. In addition, CPXV-No-H2 is part of a new CPXV clade that was more phylogenetically related to ECTV and OPXV Abatino than other CPXV strains. Our findings provide some insight into the evolutionary history of CPXV and strongly support the genetic heterogeneity of the species CPXV. The discovery of new CPXV isolates and their phylogenetic relationship with OPXVs as well their genomic characterization will contribute to the further elucidation of the complex evolutionary history of CPXV.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are publicly available. This data can be found here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/genbank/OM460002>.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DD-C conducted the experiments, analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. MO and UM conceptualized the study,

supervised the design and execution of the project, and wrote the manuscript. AB and AN contributed to data interpretation and revision of the manuscript for improved intellectual content. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2022.868887/full#supplementary-material>

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Supplementary Material

1 Supplementary Figures

Supplementary Figure S1. Schematic diagram of alignment of CPXV-No-H2, CPXV_GerMygEK938_17, CPXV_Ger2010_MKY and ECTV_Mos showing the *NoH2-163* gene and their homologs, using Geneious software 2021.2.2. Grey regions indicate conserved bases while colors (red, blue, yellow, green) indicate differences (A, C, G, T, respectively) from CPXV-No-H2.

Supplementary Figure S2. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 76 orthopoxvirus whole genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. *Cowpox virus* (CPXV) strains were grouped into different clades: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, and VARV-like (Franke et al., 2017). The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site.

Supplementary Figure S3. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree on 76 orthopoxvirus core genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. *Cowpox virus* (CPXV) strains were grouped into different clades: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, and VARV-like (Franke et al., 2017). The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site.

Supplementary Figure S4. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree of 134 orthopoxvirus orthologous genes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. *Cowpox virus* (CPXV) strains were grouped into different clades: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, and VARV-like (Franke et al., 2017). The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site.

Supplementary Figure S5. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 1 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 1). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S6. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 2 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 2). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S7. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 3 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 3). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S8. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 4 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 4). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S9. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 5 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 5). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S10. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 6 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 6). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S11. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 1 between the parental ECTV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 7). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S12. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 2 between the parental ECTV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 8). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S13. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region between the parental VACV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 9). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S14. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV whole genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

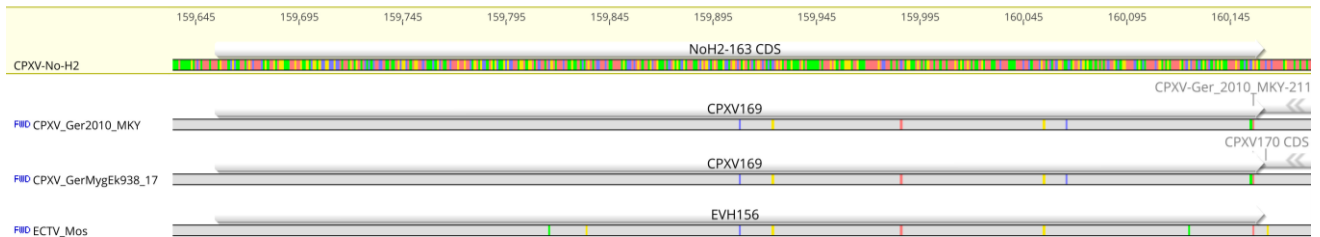
Supplementary Figure S15. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV whole genomes. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S16. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV core genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

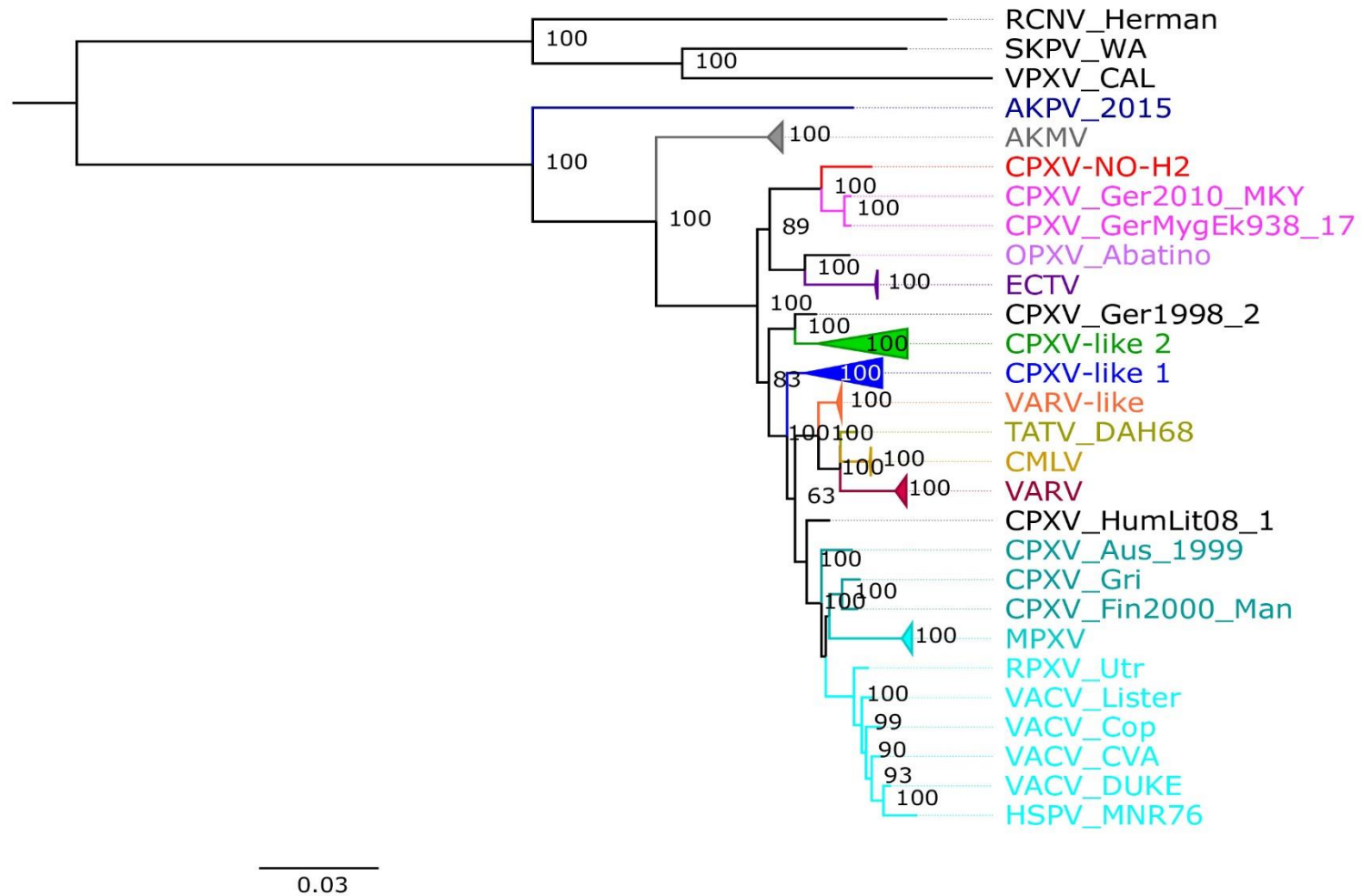
Supplementary Figure S17. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV core genomes. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Figure S18. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 134 orthologous genes from 75 OPXV genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.

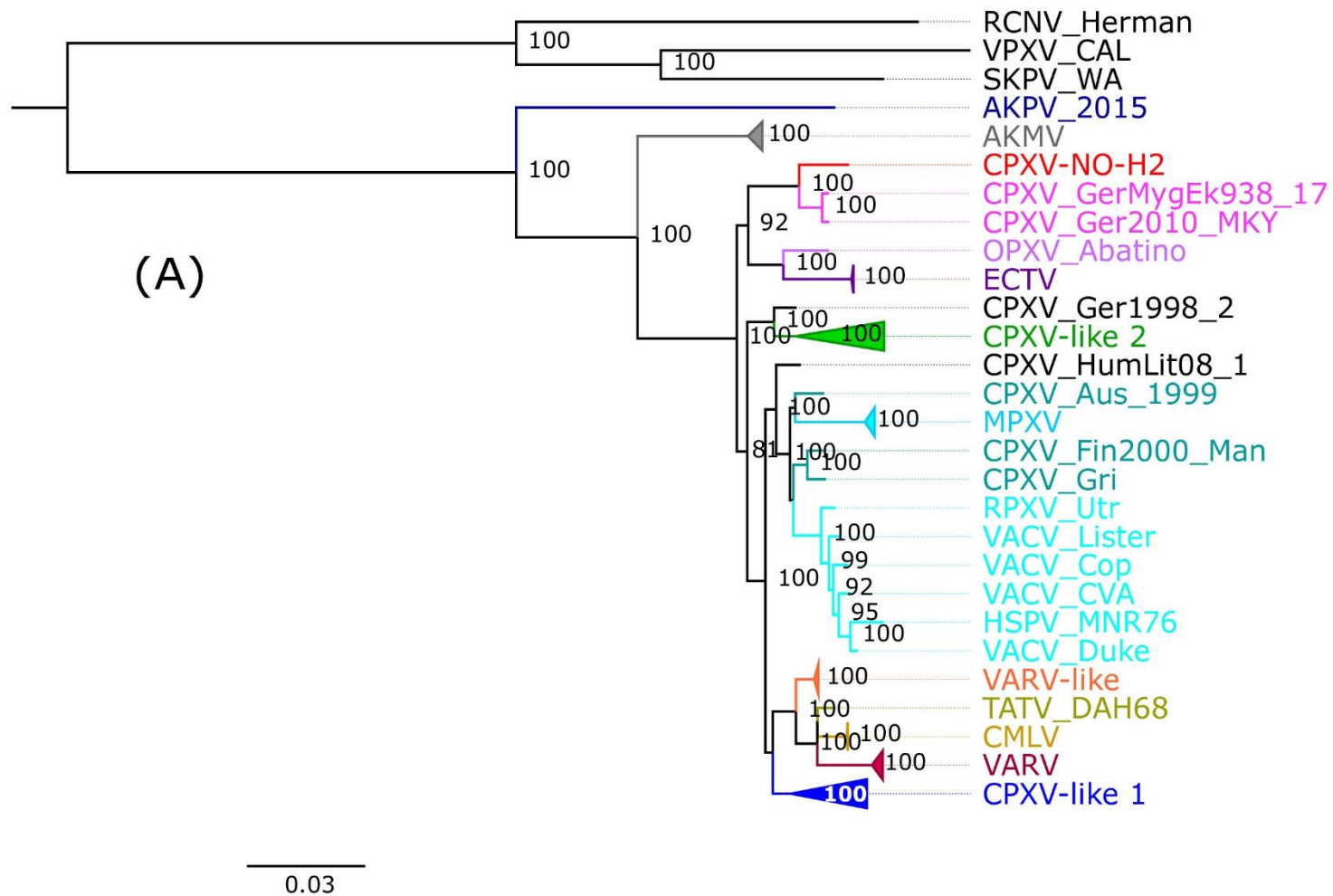
Supplementary Figure S19. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 134 orthologous genes from 75 OPXV genomes. Clades are identified with colors.



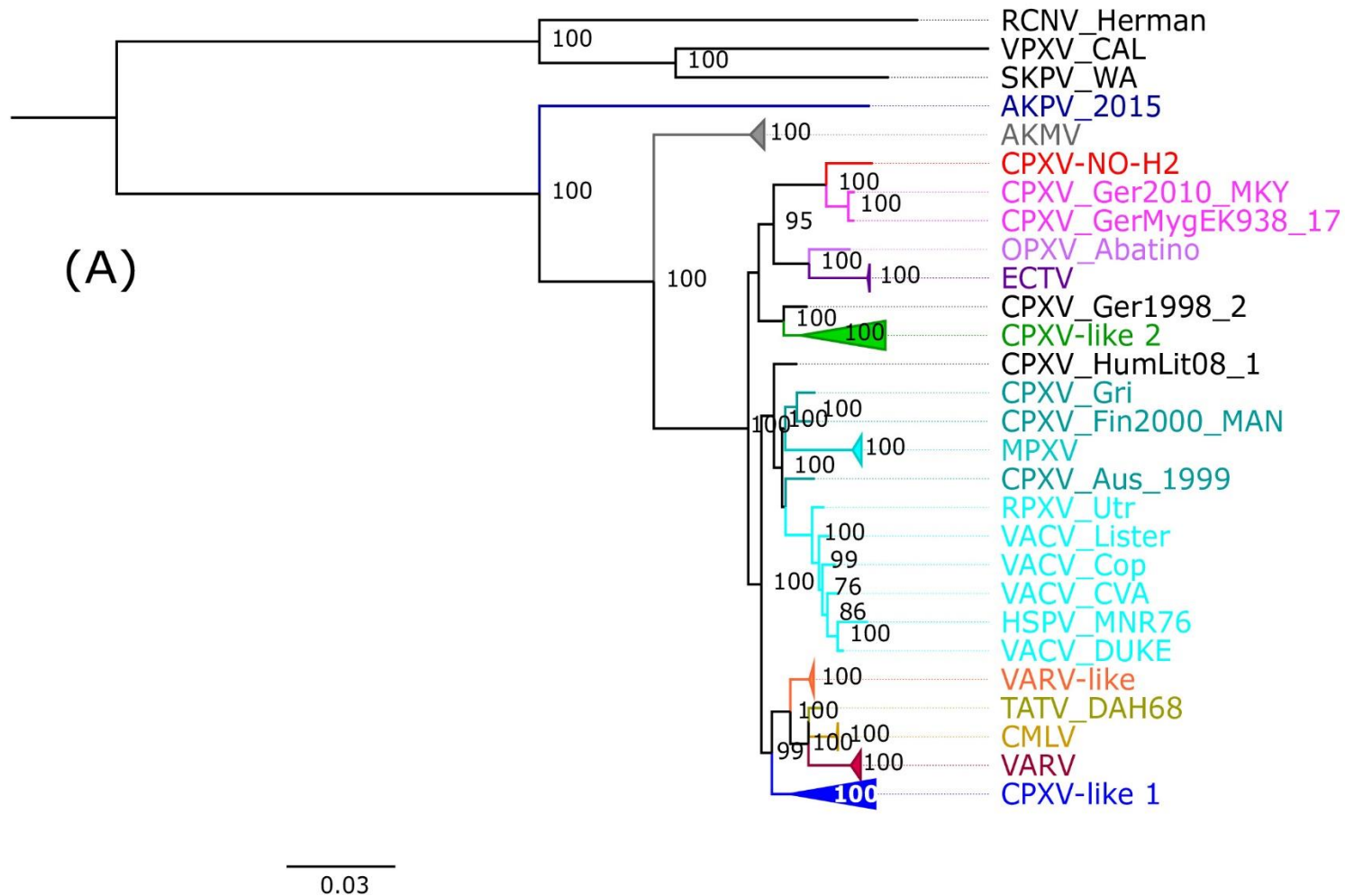
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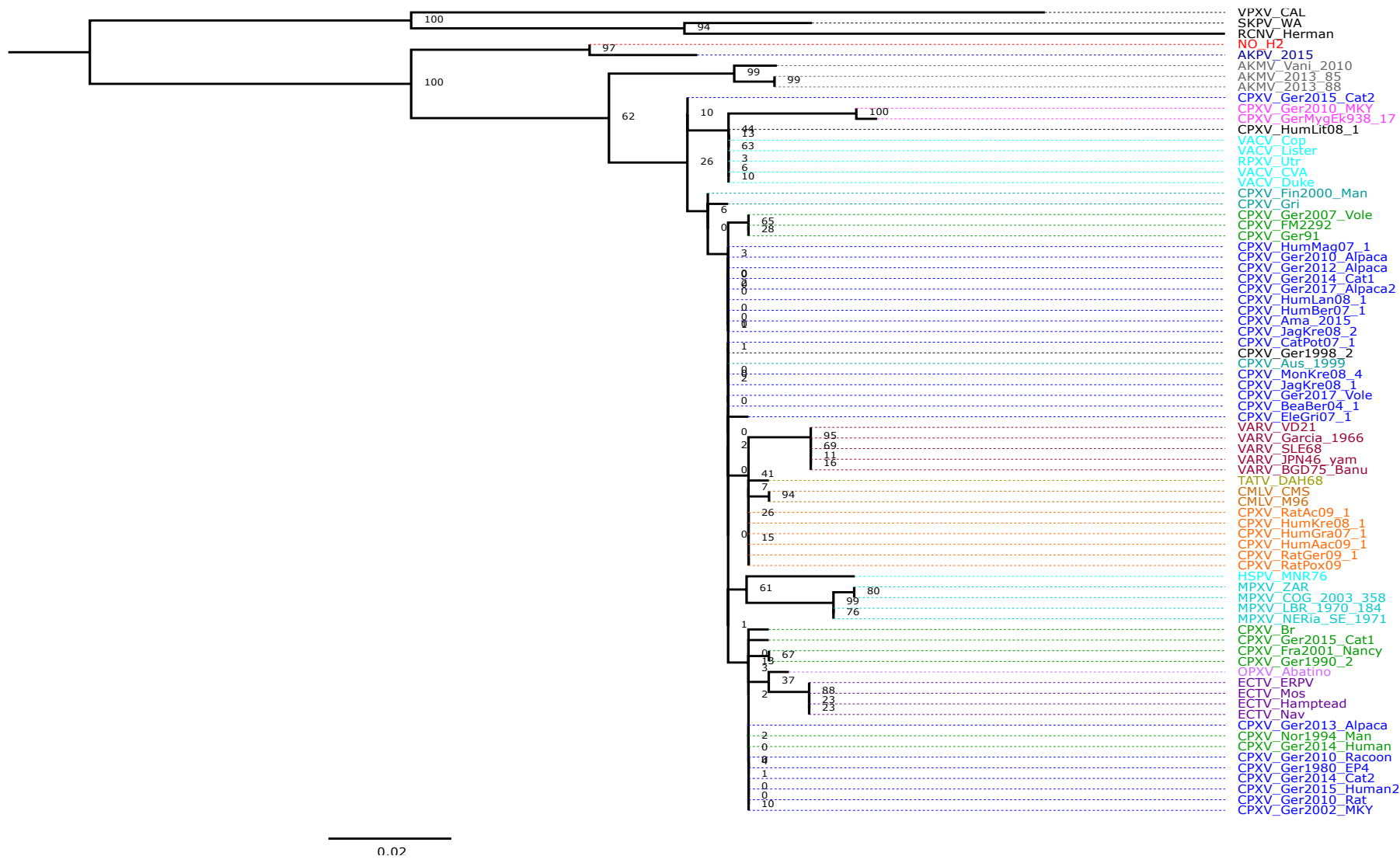
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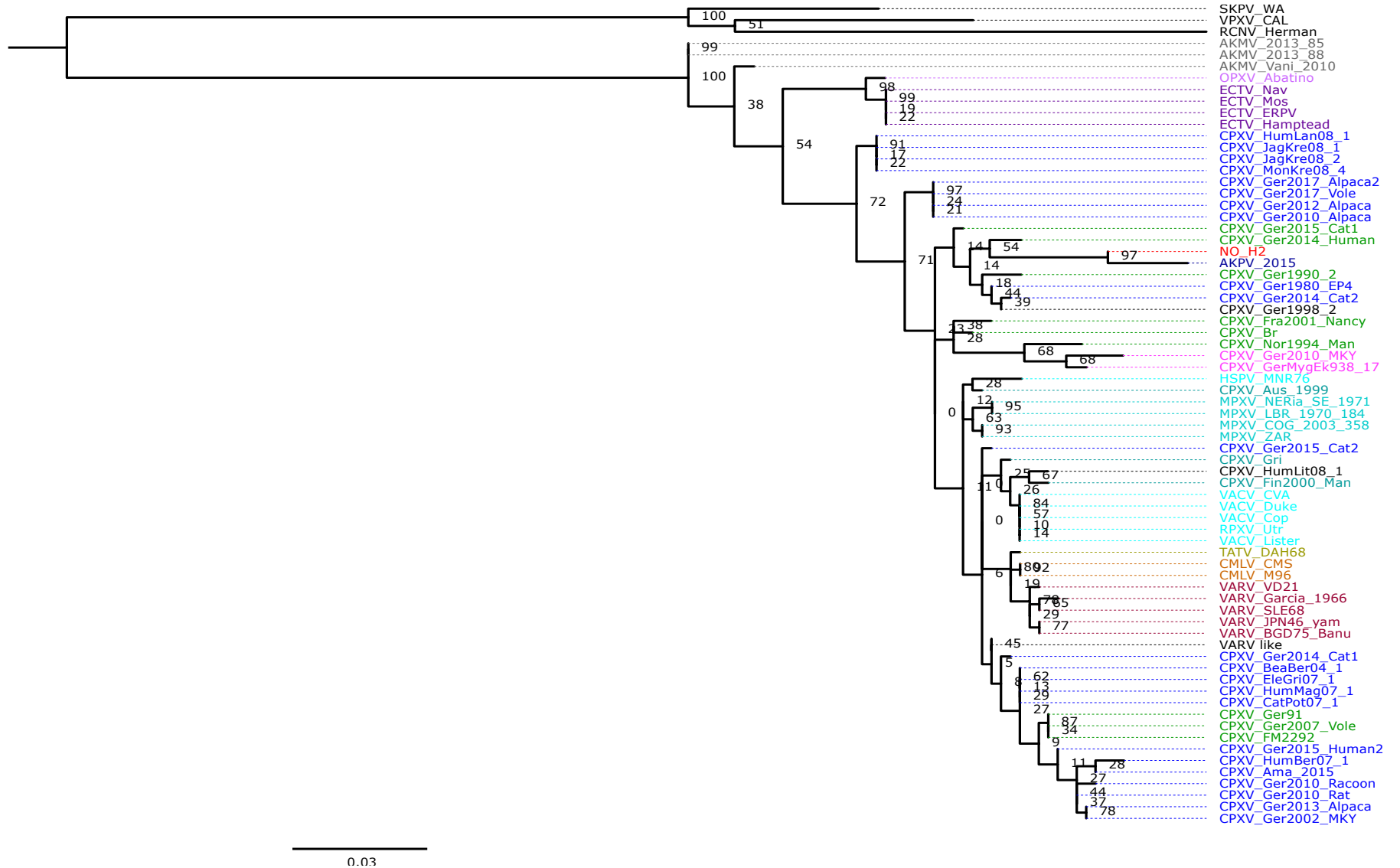
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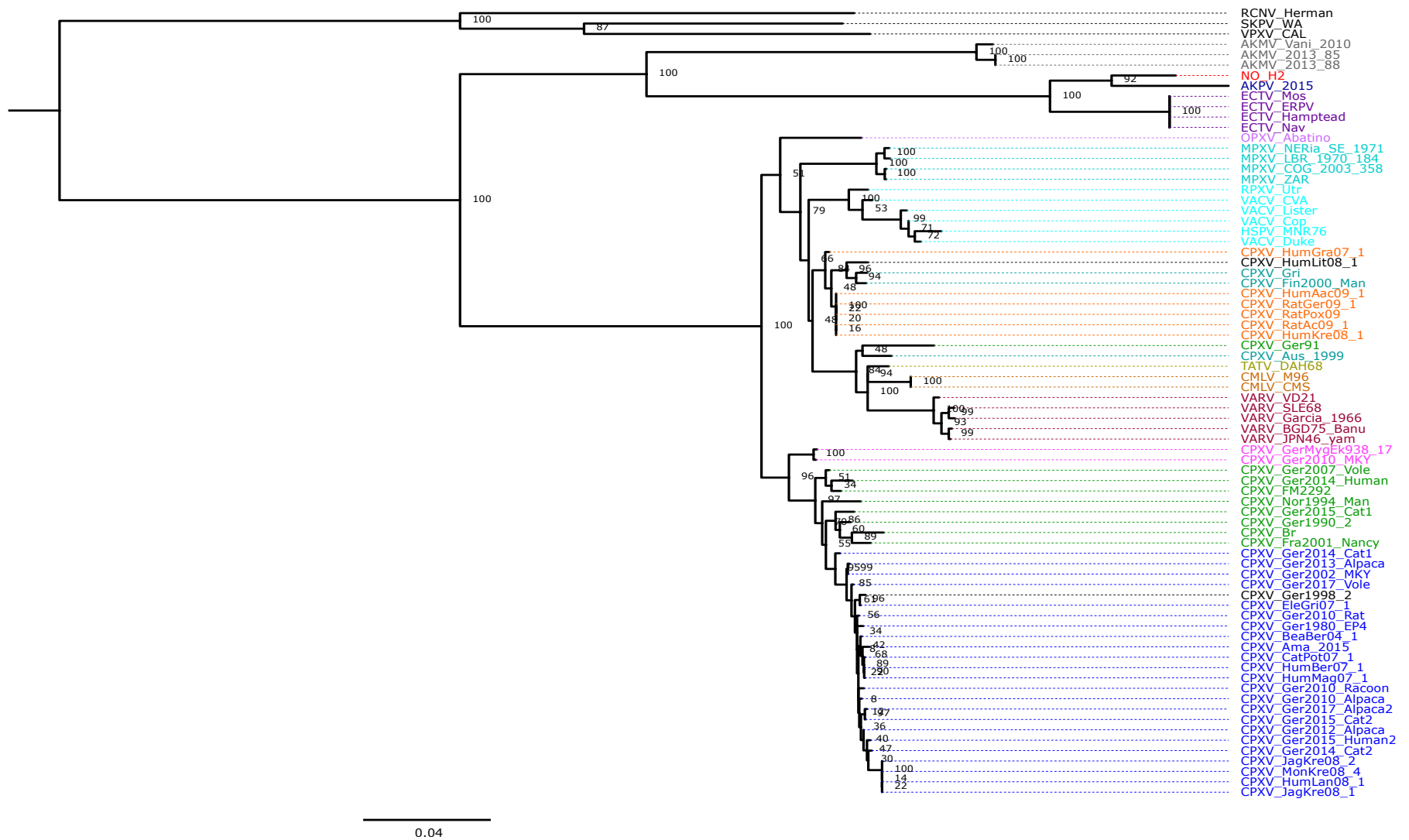
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Supplementary Figure S5. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 1 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 1). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



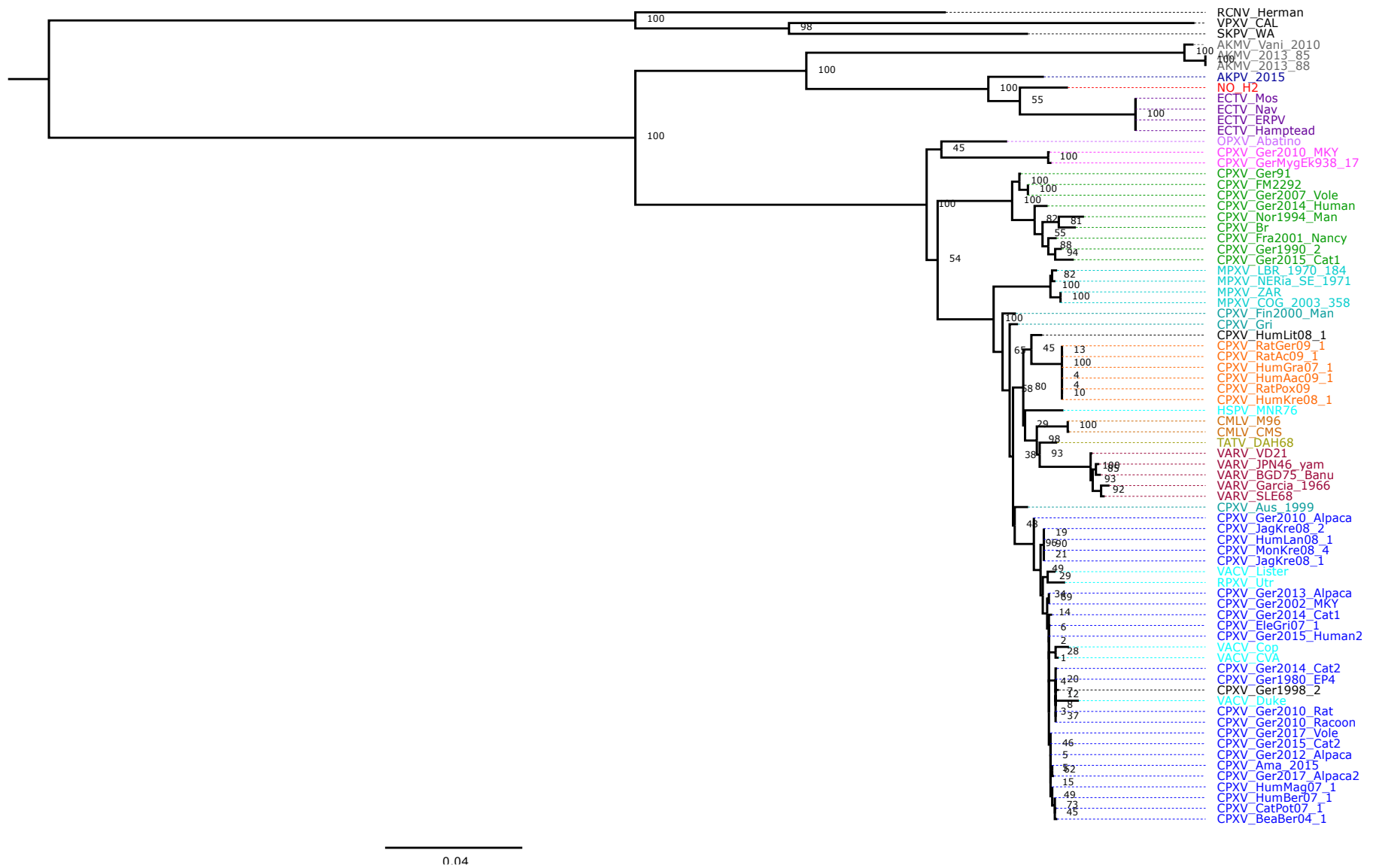
Supplementary Figure S6. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 2 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 2). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



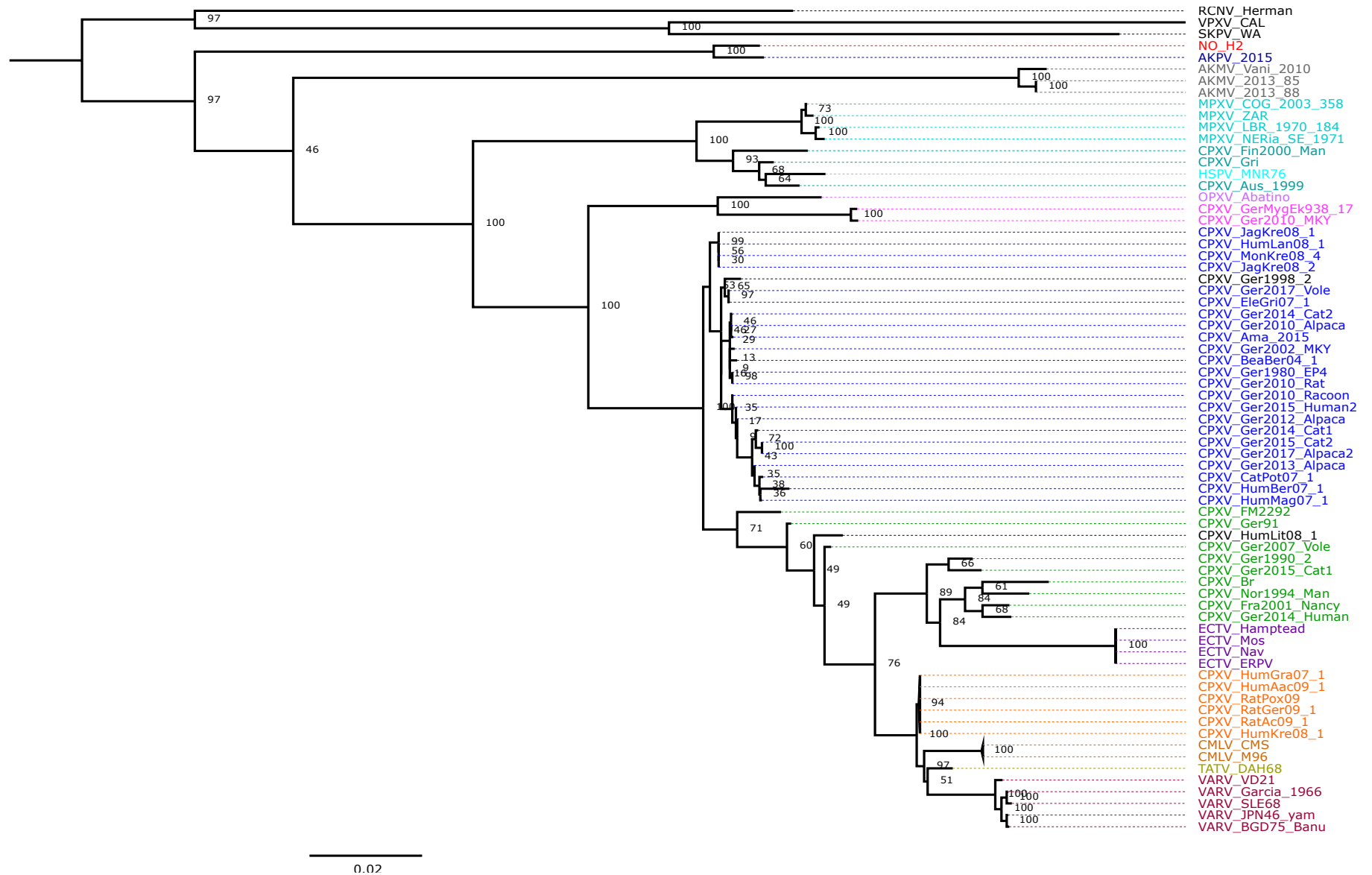
Supplementary Figure S7. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 3 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 3). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



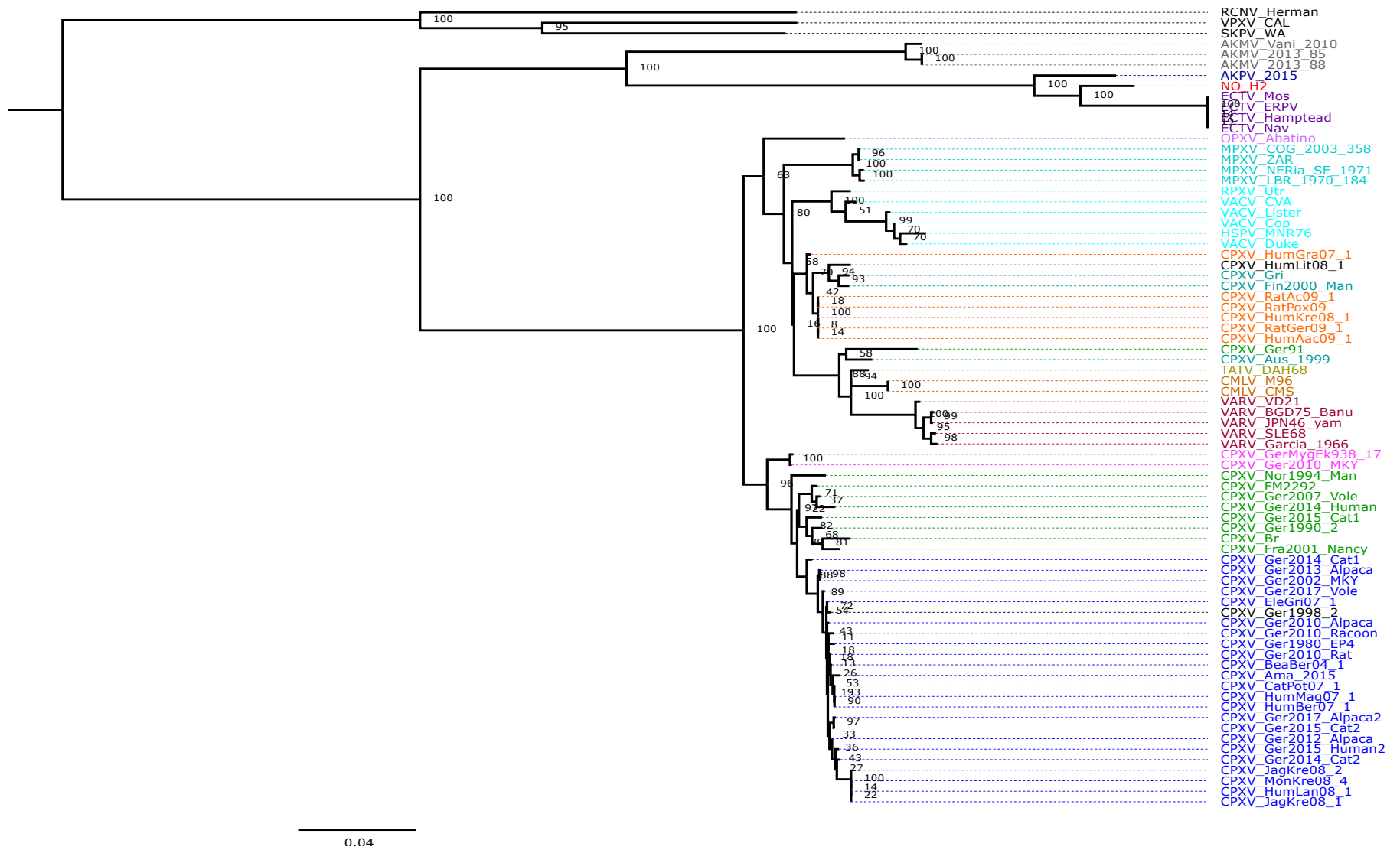
Supplementary Figure S8. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 4 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 4). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



Supplementary Figure S9. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 5 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 5). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



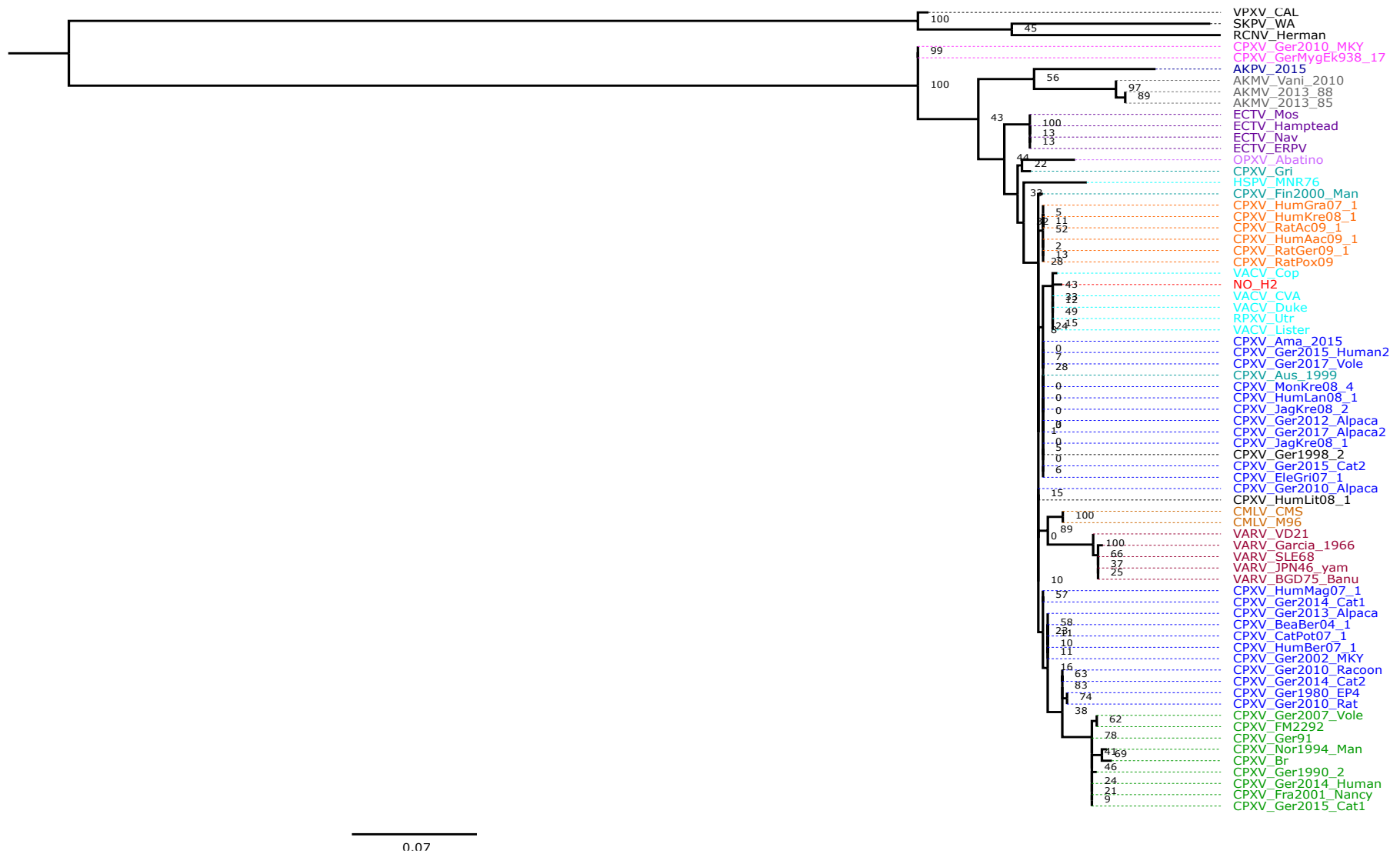
Supplementary Figure S10. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 6 between the parental AKPV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 6). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



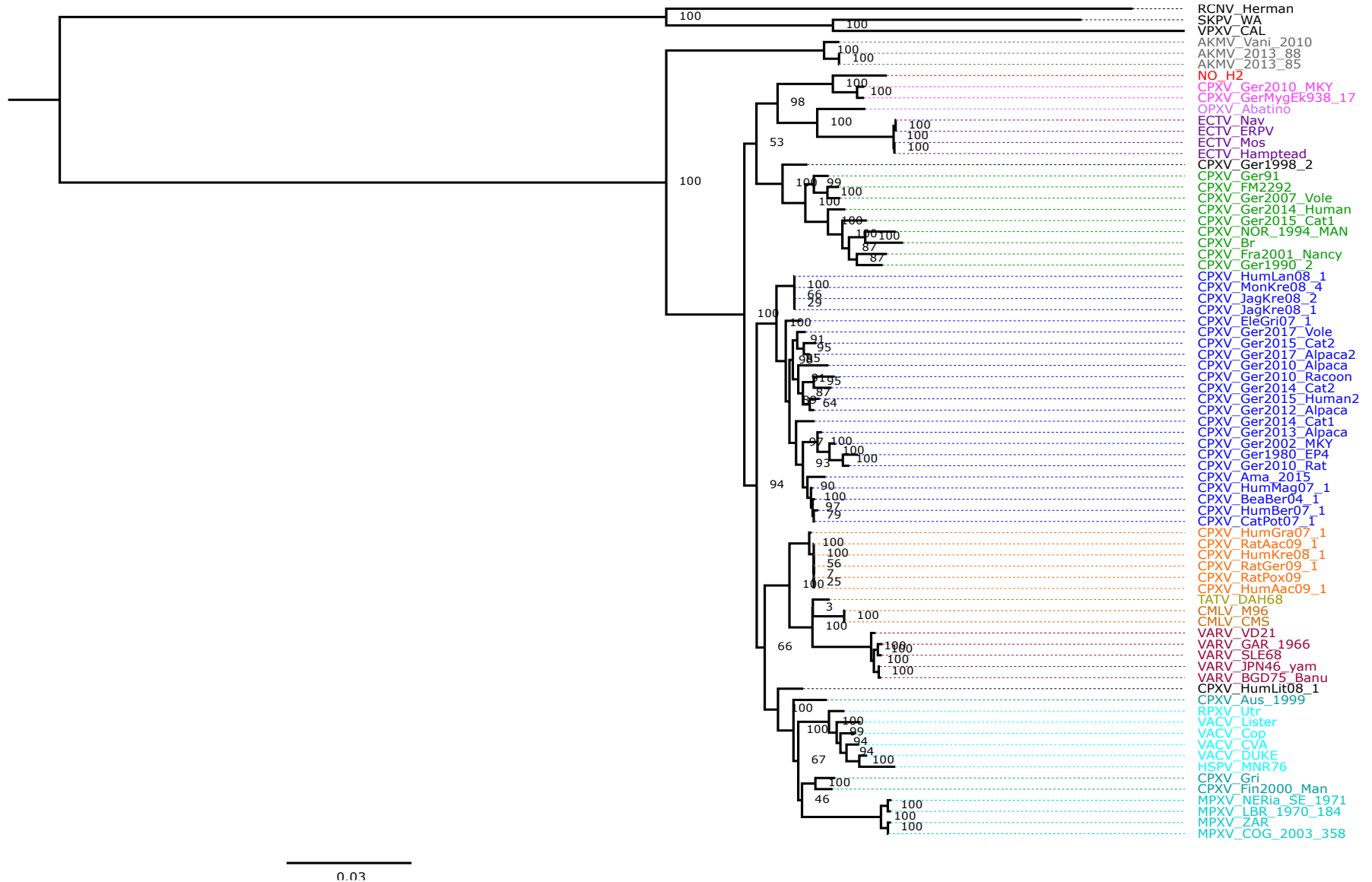
Supplementary Figure S11. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 1 between the parental ECTV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 7). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



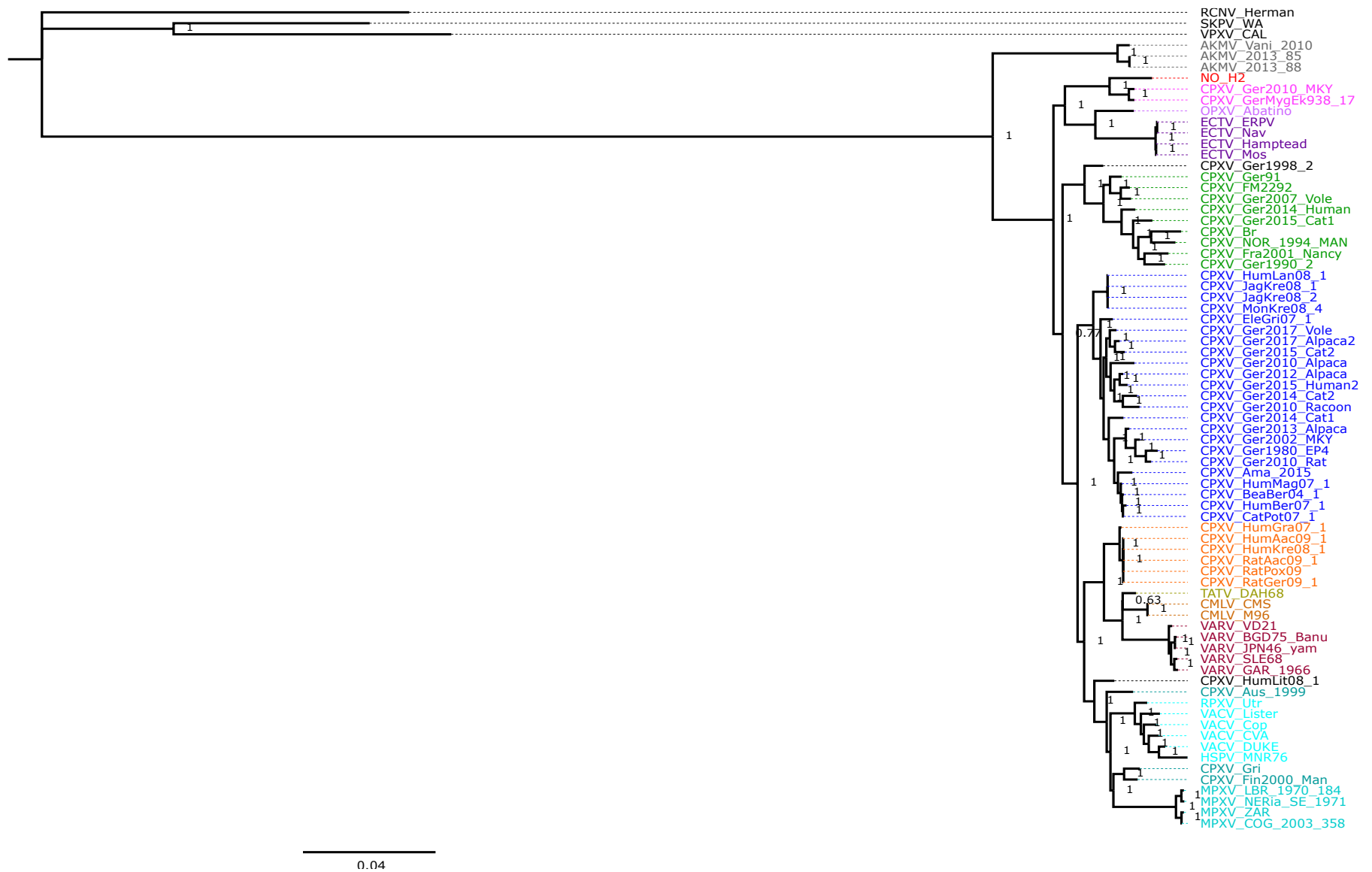
Supplementary Figure S12. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region 2 between the parental ECTV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 8). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



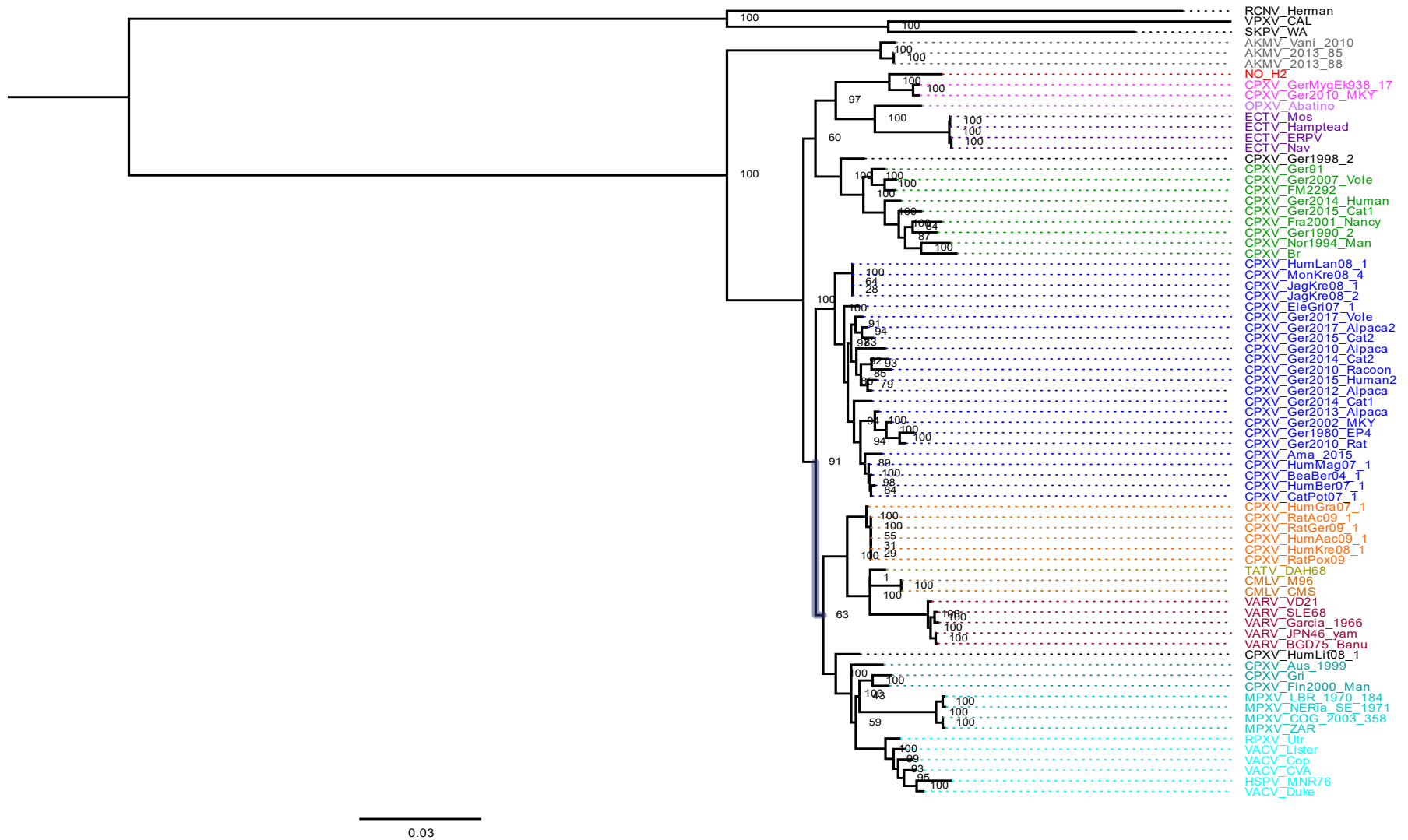
Supplementary Figure S13. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on the putative recombinant region between the parental VACV and CPXV (potential recombinant event 9). Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



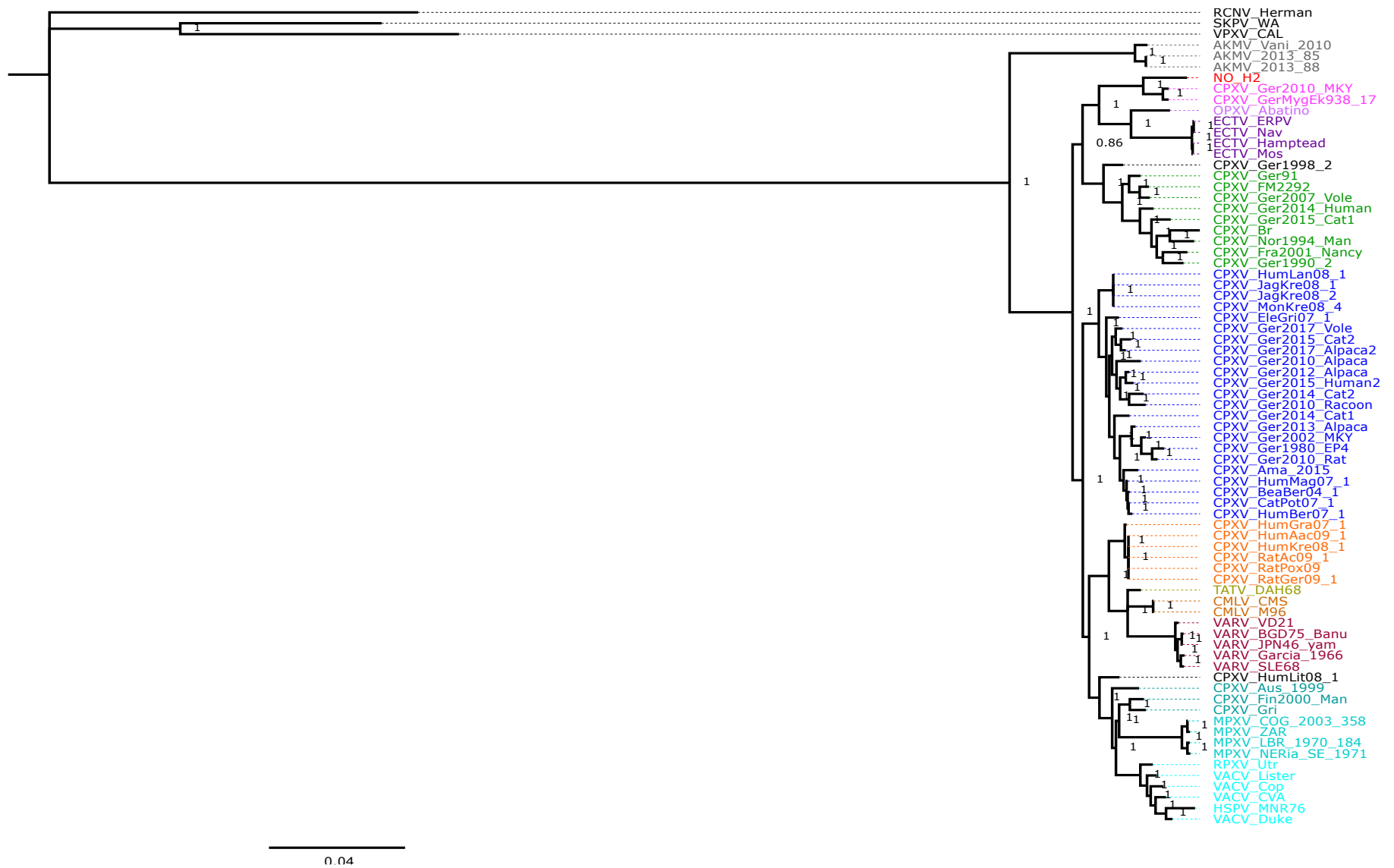
Supplementary Figure S14. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV whole genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



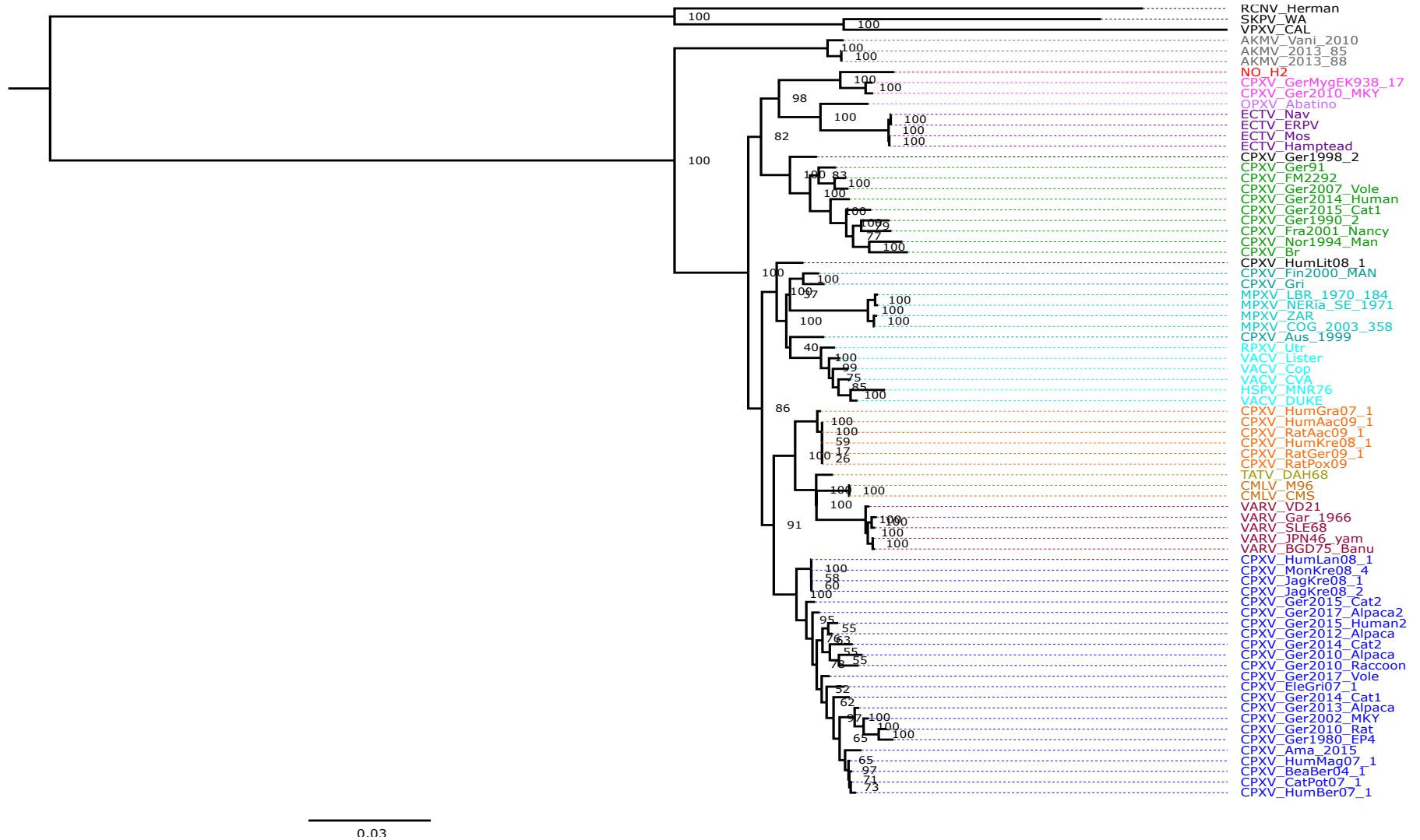
Supplementary Figure S15. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV whole genomes. Clades are identified with colors.



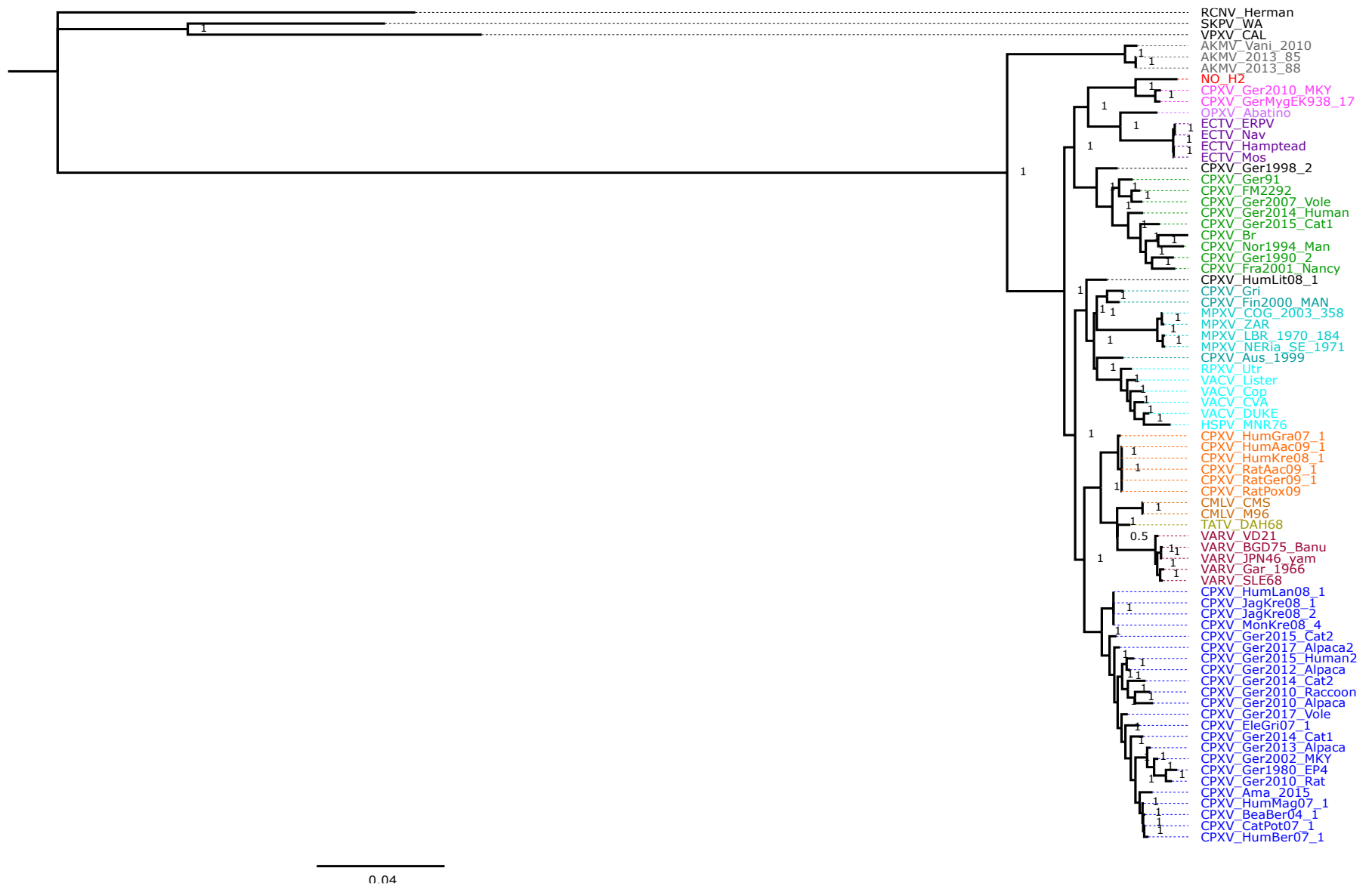
Supplementary Figure S16. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV core genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



Supplementary Figure S17. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 75 OPXV core genomes. Clades are identified with colors.



Supplementary Figure S18. Maximum-Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on 134 orthologous genes from 75 OPXV genomes. Bootstrap values were determined from 1000 replica sampling. Clades are identified with colors.



Supplementary Figure S19. Bayesian Inference phylogenetic tree based on 134 orthologous genes from 75 OPXV genomes. Clades are identified with colors.

Supplementary Table S1. List of strains used in this study.

Virus species	Strain	GenBank number accession	Abbreviation	
<i>Akhmeta virus</i>	2013-85	MH607142	AKMV_2013_85	
	2013-88	MH607141	AKMV_2013_88	
	Vani_2010	MH607143	AKMV_Vani_2010	
<i>Alaskapox virus</i>	2015	MN240300	AKPV_2015	
<i>Camelpox virus</i>	CMS	AY009089	CMLV_CMS	
	M96	NC_003391	CMLV_M96	
<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Amadeus 2015	LN879483	CPXV_AMA_2015	
	Austria 1999	HQ407377	CPXV_AUS_1999	
	BeaBer04/1	KC813491.1	CPXV_BeaBer04_1	
	Brighton Red	NC_003663	CPXV_BR	
	CatPot07/1	KC813506.1	CPXV_CatPot07/1	
	EkGri07/1	KC813507	CPXV_EkGRI07/1	
	Finland 2000 MAN	HQ420893	CPXV_FIN_2000_MAN	
	FM2292	LN864566	CPXV_FM2292	
	France 2001 Nancy	HQ420894	CPXV_FRA_2001_Nancy	
	Germany 91-3	DQ437593	CPXV_Ger91	
	Germany 1980 EP4	HQ420895	CPXV_Ger1980_EP4	
	Germany 1990 2	HQ420896	CPXV_Ger1990_2	
	Germany 1998 2	HQ420897	CPXV_Ger1998_2	
	Germany 2002 MKY	HQ420898	CPXV_Ger2002_MKY	
	Ger/2007/Vole	LT896722	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	
	Ger/2010/Alpaca	LT896718	CPXV_Ger2010_Alpaca	
	Ger/2010/MKY	LT896721	CPXV_Ger2010_MKY	
	Ger/2010/Raccoon	LT896730	CPXV_Ger2010_Raccoon	
	Ger/2010/Rat	LT896728	CPXV_Ger2010_Rat	
	Ger/2012/Alpaca	LT896726	CPXV_Ger2012_Alpaca	
	Ger/2013/Alpaca	LT896719	CPXV_Ger2013_Alpaca	
	Ger/2014/Cat1	LT896723	CPXV_Ger2014_Cat1	
	Ger/2014/Cat2	LT896725	CPXV_Ger2014_Cat2	
	Ger/2014/Human	LT993226	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	
	Ger/2015/Cat1	LT896724	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	
	Ger/2015/Cat2	LT896727	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat2	
	Ger/2015/Human2	LT993232	CPXV_Ger2015_Human2	
	Ger/2017/Alpaca2	LT896732	CPXV_Ger2017_Alpaca2	
	Ger/2017/CommonvoleFMEimka	LT993228	CPXV_Ger2017_Vole	
	GerMygEK938/17	LR812035	CPXV_GerMygEk93_17	
	GRI-90	X94355	CPXV_GRI	
	HumAac09/1	KC813508.1	CPXV_HumAac09_1	
	HumBer07/1	KC813509.1	CPXV_HumBer07_1	
	HumGra07/1	KC813510.1	CPXV_HumGra07_1	
	HumKre08/1	KC813512.1	CPXV_HumKre08_1	
	HumLan08/1	KC813492.1	CPXV_HumLan08_1	
	HumLit08/1	KC813493.1	CPXV_HumLit08_1	
	HumMag07/1	KC813495.1	CPXV_HumMag07_1	
	JagKre08/1	KC813497.1	CPXV_JagKre08_1	
	JagKre08/2	KC813498.1	CPXV_JagKre08_2	
	MonKre08/4	KC813500.1	CPXV_MonKre08_4	
	Norway1994MAN	HQ420899	CPXV_NOR_1994_MAN	
	RatAac09/1	KC813501.1	CPXV_RatAac09_1	
	RatGer09/1	KC813503.1	CPXV_RatGer09_1	
	Ratpox09	LN864565	CPXV_RatPox09	
	<i>Ectromelia virus</i>	ERPV culture-collection ATCC:VR-1431	JQ410350	ECTV_ERPV
		Hampstead	KY554976	ECTV_Hampstead
Moscow		NC_004105	ECTV_Mos	
Naval		KJ563295	ECTV_Nav	
<i>Horsepox virus</i>	MNR-76	DQ792504	HSPV_MNR76	
<i>Monkeypox virus</i>	Congo_2003_358	DQ011154	MPXV_COG_2003_358	
	Liberia_1970_184	DQ011156	MPXV_LBR_1970_184	
	Nigeria-SE-1971	KJ642617	MPXV_NERia_SE_1971	
	Zaire	NC_003310	MPXV_ZAR	
<i>Abatino macacapox virus</i>	-	MH816996	OPXV_Abatino	
<i>Raccoonpox virus</i>	Herman	KP143769	RCNV_Herman	
<i>Rabbüppox virus</i>	Utrecht	AY484669	RPXV_Utr	
<i>Skunkpox virus</i>	WA	NC_031038.1	SKPV_WA	
<i>Taterapox virus</i>	Dahomey 1968	NC_008291	TATV_DAH68	
<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	Copenhagen	M35027	VACV_Cop	
	Chorioallantois Ankara (CVA)	AM501482	VACV_CVA	
	DUKE	DQ439815	VACV_DUKE	
	Lister	AY678276	VACV_Lister	
<i>Variola virus</i>	Bangladesh 1975 v75-550 Banu	DQ437581	VARV_BGD75_Banu	
	Garcia 1966	Y16780	VARV_GARV_1966	
	Japan 1946 (Yamada MS-2(A) Tokyo)	DQ441429	VARV_JPN46_yam	
	Sierra Leone 1969 (V68-258)	DQ441437	VARV_SLE68	
	VD21	KY358055	VARV_VD21	
<i>Volepox virus</i>	CA	NC_031033.1	VPXV_CAL	

Supplementary Table S3. Predicted overlapping genes in CPXV-No-H2 and BLAST analysis.

CDS	Start	Stop	CPXV_Br	Identity (%)	BLASTp		BLASTn	
					OPXV Genome with Highest Identity	Aminoacid identity (%)	OPXV Genome with Highest Identity	Nucleotide identity (%)
NoH2-A	1636	1845	CPXV004	74.65	CPXV	76.1	CPXV GerMygEK938/17	98.1
NoH2-B	38093	38188	-	-	CMLV 0408151v	83.3	CPXV GerMygEK938/17	99.0
NoH2-C	45836	46030	-	-	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	100.0	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	100.0
NoH2-D	46234	46413	CPXV047	83.05	CPXV Ger 2010 MKY	94.9	CPXV Ger 2010 MKY	98.3
NoH2-E	49188	49424	CPXV051A	97.44	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	100.0	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	99.2
NoH2-F	53895	54017	CPXV058	97.5	CPXV, VACV	97.5	ECTV	100.0
NoH2-G	54768	54890	-	-	VACV CEyV1	87.5	CPXV	99.2
NoH2-H	58313	58462	-	-	OPXV Abatino	98.0	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	100.0
NoH2-I	75455	75643	CPXV078A	96.77	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	98.4	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXVGer2010MKY	99.5
NoH2-J	91226	91435	CPXV096	100	AKMV, CMLV, CPXV, VACV	100.0	CPXV, VACV	100.0
NoH2-K	109530	109703	CPXV116	94.12	CPXV, VACV	96.1	CPXV	98.3
NoH2-L	112614	112856	CPXV119A	100	CPXV	100.0	CPXV, OPXVA	99.2
NoH2-M	124280	124498	CPXV130	100	CPXV	100.0	CPXV	99.5
NoH2-N	139869	139985	-	-	VACV CEyV1	94.7	CPXV, VACV	100.0
NoH2-O	144031	144159	CPXV152A	95.24	CPXV	97.6	CPXV, TATV, VARV	100.0
NoH2-P	154705	154911	CPXV160	88.24	CPXV Ger2010MKY	97.1	CPXV Ger2010MKY	98.6
NoH2-Q	160152	160364	CPXV170	94.34	CPXV	100.0	CPXV	99.4
NoH2-R	179029	179130	-	-	VACV Lister	97.0	VACV_VK01	99.0
NoH2-S	200439	200600	CPXV214	84	CPXV Ger2010MKY	94.0	CPXV Ger2010MKY	97.5
NoH2-T	218432	218641	CPXV004	74.65	CPXV	76.1	CPXV GerMygEK938/17	98.1

Supplementary Table S4. BLASTn analysis of predicted genes in CPXV-No-H2 that encode proteins with highest aminoacid similarity to other OPXV proteins than CPXV proteins.

CDS	Start	Stop	Length (bp)	BLASTp		BLASTn	
				OPV Genome with Highest Identity	Aminoacid identity (%)	OPV Genome with Highest Identity	Nucleotide identity (%)
NoH2-077	75843	75950	108	ECTV, HSPV, VACV	100.0	CPXV GerMygEK938/17	100.0
NoH2-079	76910	77128	219	AKPV	98.592	AKPV	98.2
NoH2-090	88183	89487	1305	VACV WAU86/88-1	99.5	CPXV GerMygEK938/17	99.2
NoH2-152	147351	150845	3495	ECTV	99.828	ECTV	98.9
NoH2-153	150838	154107	3270	ECTV*	94.82	ECTV	98.3
NoH2-159	157663	157791	129	VACV	100	BPXV, CPXV , VACV	100
NoH2-160	157790	158170	381	VACV	98.425	VACV LC16m8, VACV LC16mO	98.4
NoH2-163	159655	160161	507	ECTV	97.6	CPXV Ger2010MKY, CPXV GerMygEK938/17	98.6
NoH2-165	160801	161481	681	AKPV	92.92	AKPV	95.2
NoH2-166	161546	162340	795	AKPV	98.485	AKPV	99.1
NoH2-167	162451	162630	180	AKPV	98.305	AKPV	99.4
NoH2-171	165294	165971	678	ECTV	95.556	ECTV_Mill-Hill, ECTV_Hampstead-Egg	95.9
NoH2-172	166133	166537	405	ECTV	100	ECTV	99.8
NoH2-173	166577	167188	612	ECTV	99.507	ECTV	99.7
NoH2-174	167207	167431	225	AKPV	97.297	AKPV	98.7
NoH2-175	167586	168626	1041	AKPV	95.1	CPXV GerMygEK938/17, CPXV Ger2010MKY	94.4
NoH2-210	204592	210315	5724	AKPV	94.905	AKPV	97.2

Supplementary Table S5. Position of the putative recombinant regions in the CPXV-No-H2 genome and BLASTn analysis

Putative recombination event	CPXV-No-H2 genome		BLASTn	
	Start	End	OPXV Genome with Highest Identity	Identity (%)
1	76946	77205	AKPV	98.33
2	77741	78243	AKPV	98.21
3	150156	154530	AKPV	96.89
4	160786	162936	AKPV	97.66
5	165874	168063	AKPV	97.37
6	204966	209636	AKPV	98.42
7	150119	153968	ECTV	97.93
8	165847	167892	AKPV	97.29
9	164405	164766	VACV	99.44

Paper II

Article

Genomic Sequencing and Phylogenomics of Cowpox Virus

Diana Diaz-Cánova ¹, Carla Mavian ², Annika Brinkmann ³, Andreas Nitsche ³, Ugo Moens ^{1,*}
and Malachy Ifeanyi Okeke ^{4,*}

¹ Molecular Inflammation Research Group, Department of Medical Biology, UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, N-9037 Tromsø, Norway

² Emerging Pathogens Institute, Department of Pathology, College of Medicine, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32610, USA

³ Highly Pathogenic Viruses, Centre for Biological Threats and Special Pathogens, WHO Reference Laboratory for SARS-CoV-2 and WHO Collaborating Centre for Emerging Infections and Biological Threats, Robert Koch Institute, 1335 Berlin, Germany

⁴ Section of Biomedical Sciences, Department of Natural and Environmental Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences, American University of Nigeria, Yola PMB 2250, Nigeria

* Correspondence: ugo.moens@uit.no (U.M.); malachy.okeke@aun.edu.ng (M.I.O.)

Abstract: Cowpox virus (CPXV; genus *Orthopoxvirus*; family *Poxviridae*) is the causative agent of cowpox, a self-limiting zoonotic infection. CPXV is endemic in Eurasia, and human CPXV infections are associated with exposure to infected animals. In the Fennoscandian region, five CPXVs isolated from cats and humans were collected and used in this study. We report the complete sequence of their genomes, which ranged in size from 220–222 kbp, containing between 215 and 219 open reading frames. The phylogenetic analysis of 87 orthopoxvirus strains, including the Fennoscandian CPXV isolates, confirmed the division of CPXV strains into at least five distinct major clusters (CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VACV-like, VARV-like and ECTV-Abatino-like) and can be further divided into eighteen sub-species based on the genetic and patristic distances. Bayesian time-scaled evolutionary history of CPXV was reconstructed employing concatenated 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 55 CPXV. The CPXV evolution rate was calculated to be 1.65×10^{-5} substitution/site/year. Our findings confirmed that CPXV is not a single species but a polyphyletic assemblage of several species and thus, a reclassification is warranted.

Keywords: phylogenetic; orthopoxvirus; poxviridae; molecular clock; Fennoscandian; phylodynamics; cowpox virus



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1. Introduction

Cowpox virus (CPXV) is an orthopoxvirus species, belonging to the subfamily *Chordopoxvirinae* of the family *Poxviridae* [1]. Orthopoxvirus (OPXV) comprises several species from the New World and Old World. The most representative species from the New World are raccoonpox virus (RCNV), volepox virus (VPXV) and skunkpox virus (SKPV) [2]. Within Old World OPXV, there are several species: ectromelia virus (ECTV), vaccinia virus (VACV), monkeypox virus (MPXV), variola virus (VARV), taterapox virus (TATV), camelpox virus (CMLV) and CPXV [3–5]. In the last decade, new OPXV species were discovered in the United States (alaskapox virus, AKPV), Italy (abatino macacapox virus, Abatino) and Georgia (akhmeta virus, AKMV) [6–8].

The most notable member of OPXV genus is VARV, the etiologic agent of smallpox. However, after a large, massive vaccination campaign, smallpox was eradicated in 1980 [9]. The last natural cases of smallpox in humans were in Somalia in 1977 [10]. OPXV species, such as CPXV and MPXV, can cause zoonotic diseases [11–14]. MPXV and CPXV are the causative agents of monkeypox and cowpox, respectively, and have a wide host range [13,15]. Recently, a multi-country human monkeypox outbreak in 50 countries has been reported [16]. Compared to MPXV that occurs in Central and Western Africa [17],

CPXV is endemic of Eurasia, mainly present in Europe [12,18–23]. The natural reservoirs of CPXV are wild rodents [18,24]. Nevertheless, CPXV is also able to infect felines, monkeys, dogs, alpacas, rats, horses and humans [12,25–29]. The first zoonotic case was reported in the Netherlands in 1985, where CPXV was transmitted from a domestic cat to a woman [30]. In Fennoscandia, human cases of CPXV infections have been reported (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-H2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2) as well as feline cases (CPXV-No-F1 and CPXV-No-F2) [27,31–35]. CPXV has been classified as a single species; however, it has been proposed that CPXV should be considered as a polyphyletic species [33,35–40]. Based on phylogenetic studies, CPXV was divided into at least five clades: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, ECTV-Abatino-like, VACV-like and VARV-like [38,40–42]. Among OPXV, CPXV has the largest genome [43] and contains the highest number of orthopoxviral genes [42,44]. It was suggested that CPXV-like virus was the ancestor of Old World OPXV, except for AKPV and AKMV [39,44,45]. Until now, the evolutionary history of CPXV is still unclear. Most studies have focused on the molecular evolution of VARV, but few studies were focused on OPXV and, specially, on CPXV [39,45–49].

In this study, we present the whole genome sequence of five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates. We determined the phylogenetic relationship of CPXV, including the Fennoscandian isolates, with other OPXV and studied the evolutionary history of CPXV based on the concatenated 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of several representatives CPXV isolates from the different CPXV clades. Furthermore, we propose a new classification of CPXV.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Cell, Virus Culture and DNA Isolation

Five Fennoscandian isolates were used in this study: CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2. The isolates were cultured on a monolayer of Vero cells (ATCC No. CCL-81), and the viral DNA was extracted from semi-purified virions, as previously described [34,40]. The origin of the five CPXV isolates has been described elsewhere [27,31–34].

2.2. Whole Genome Sequencing, Genome Assembly and Genome Annotation

The genomes of the five Fennoscandian isolates (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2) were sequenced using Oxford Nanopore Technology GridION (ONT; Oxford, UK) and Illumina MiSeq using reagent kit v3 with 2×300 bp paired-end reads, as previously described [40]. Illumina sequencing was performed at the Norwegian Sequencing Centre, Oslo, and Nanopore sequencing was performed at the Genomics Support Centre Tromsø at UiT—The Arctic University of Norway. The genomes were assembled using SPAdes v3.15.3 [50] and annotated with Genome Annotation Transfer Utility (GATU) [51], as previously reported [40].

2.3. Gene Content Comparison

The five Fennoscandian CPXV genomes were compared to CPXV-Br genome. Predicted CDS from five CPXV isolates were extracted, translated into amino acid sequences and compared to the CPXV-Br proteins using BLASTp (ncbi-blast+ v2.11.0) [52].

2.4. Phylogenetic Analysis, Patristic and Genetic Distances

A total of 87 OPXV genomes, including the five Fennoscandian genomes, were used in this study (Table S1). Eighty-two OPXV genomes were retrieved from the Viral Orthologous Clusters (VOCs) database [53], with the exception of CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 (retrieved from GenBank). The genes and genomes were aligned using MAFFT v7.450 (with default parameters) [54], as implemented in Geneious Prime 2022.0.2. Four different alignments were used to build the phylogenetic trees: (1) 87 OPXV whole genome alignment, (2) 87 OPXV core genome alignment, (3) OPXV orthologous gene alignment (Table S2) and (4) 62 conserved genes alignment (Table S3), as previously described [40].

Recombination detection program 4 (RDP4) [55] was used to detect genome-wide recombination in the datasets. Recombination events identified by 5 of 7 methods (RDP [56], GENECONV [57], Bootscan [58], MaxChi [59], Chimaera [60], SiScan [61] and 3Seq [62]) with significant p -values ($p \leq 0.01$) were considered credible evidences of recombination. Whole genome, core genome and orthologous gene alignments were generated without removing the putative recombinant regions.

The conserved gene alignment was generated by examining the 90 Chordopoxvirus (ChPV) conserved genes for recombination using RDP4 [55], as described above. The 62 conserved genes identified as non-recombinant were aligned singly and the 62 single gene alignments were concatenated to generate the conserved gene dataset.

Gblocks 0.91b was used to remove poorly aligned positions from 87 OPXV whole and core genome alignments [63]. The presence of phylogenetic signal of the datasets was assessed by likelihood mapping analysis with the evaluation of 2000 random quartets using IQ-TREE v.2.0.3. [64] (Figure S1). The best-fit nucleotide substitution model for the alignment data was selected using the modelTest-NG v.0.1.6 [65]. Two inference methods, maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI), were conducted with RAxML v8.2.12 [66] using a rapid bootstrap algorithm [67] and MrBayes v3.2.7 [68], respectively, as previously described [40]. The Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) analysis was run until reaching convergence. The phylogenetic trees were visualized applying FigTree v1.4.4 (<http://tree.bio.ed.ac.uk/software/figtree/>, accessed on 19 February 2021). The BI phylogenetic tree based on the OPXV orthologous genes was not built because MCMC analysis did not reach convergence after 50,000,000 generations.

Patristic distances between different groups were calculated from the ML/BI trees of concatenated 62 conserved non-recombinant genes using the program Patristic version 1.0 [69]. The genetic distances between the different groups were estimated by p -distances, as implemented in MEGA version 11 [70]. For patristic and genetic distances, the distances were averaged across taxa to produce a single value. The genetic and patristic distances between TATV and CMLV were used as threshold values since they are closest and distinct OPXV species. These threshold values were used to compare the distance between CPXV clusters and OPXV species and separate them in different sub-species if they were equal or greater than TATV-CMLV threshold values.

2.5. Phylodynamic Evolutionary Analysis of CPXV

A Bayesian MCMC inference method implemented in BEAST 1.10.4 [71] was used to estimate evolutionary rates and the divergence times. Evolutionary analysis was carried out on alignment of concatenated 62 conserved non-recombinant genes of 55 CPXV strains (listed in Table S4). The temporal signal was assessed from the ML tree of 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV by regression of genetic divergence (root-to-tip genetic distance) and the sampling date using TempEst v.1.5.3 [72] (Figure S2). In the analysis, we did not include other OPXV species because the dataset did not contain temporal signal (correlation coefficient = -0.15 , value of $R^2 = 0.02$). The presence of phylogenetic signal of the dataset was evaluated using IQ-TREE v.2.0.3. [64], as described above (Figure S2).

The Bayesian phylodynamic analysis was calibrated using the following parameters: log-normal relaxed clock, coalescent Bayesian skyline population, HKY substitution model and four gamma categories. MCMC chain was run for 1 billion generations. The effective sampling size (ESS) values were checked in Tracer v1.7.2 [73]. Only the Effective Sampling Size (ESS) values > 200 (after burn-in) were accepted. The maximum clade credibility (MCC) tree was generated using TreeAnnotator v1.10.4, visualized using FigTree v1.4.4 and edited graphically using the ggtree package available in R [74].

3. Results

3.1. Genome Assembly, Genome Annotation and Gene Content

The whole genomes of five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2) were assembled, and the coverage of the

assembled genomes varied from 300X to 2400X, as shown in Table 1. The genome size of the Fennoscandian CPXV isolates ranges from 220,808 to 222,178 bp and the length of inverted terminal repeats (ITRs) were approximately 8 kbp (Table 1). The whole genome sequences of these isolates are available in GenBank, with Accession Number: OP125537, OP125538, OP125539, OP125540, OP125541.

Table 1. Genome size, number of predicted coding sequences (CDS) and genome coverage of the Fennoscandian CPXV isolates sequenced in this study.

Name	Genome Size (bp)	CDS	Genome Coverage	
			Illumina	Nanopore
CPXV-No-H1	221,926	215	300X	600X
CPXV-No-F1	221,334	217	820X	1519X
CPXV-No-F2	222,178	217	940X	1480X
CPXV-Swe-H1	220,981	217	700X	2500X
CPXV-Swe-H2	220,808	217	990X	2400X

Gene annotation of the five Fennoscandian CPXV genomes (CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2) revealed 212, 219, 217, 217 and 217 predicted coding sequences (CDS), respectively. A comparison of the predicted CDS of the five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates with the CPXV-Br genome is shown in Table S5. The genome content of the five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates was similar to CPXV-Br genome. The majority of predicted CDS of the five CPXV strains were found to have homologs in CPXV-Br, except for few predicted CDS. *NoF1-009*, *NoF2-009* and *NoH1-008*, present in the Norwegian isolates, were homologs of *EVM004* that encodes a BTB Kelch-domain containing protein. The Swedish isolates contain a CDS (*SweH1-210* and *SweH2-210*) that was homolog of *CPXV-GRI-K3R* (codes for CrmE protein). The five Fennoscandian isolates contain a homolog of *VACV-Cop O3L*, encoding a virus entry/fusion complex component.

The five Fennoscandian CPXV strains lacked homologs of *CPXV001* and *CPXV216*. Furthermore, *CPXV002* and *CPXV191* (*CrmC*) were absent in CPXV-No-H1 and CPXV-No-F1 genomes, respectively.

3.2. Phylogenetic Analysis

The recombination analysis evidenced the extensive recombination in OPXV core genomes (Figure S3) as well as in the datasets of OPXV whole genomes and orthologous genes (data not shown). Recombination regions were not removed from the alignments used to generate the phylogenetic trees for the whole genome, core genome and orthologous genes. To examine if the recombinant regions in the three datasets biased the phylogenetic signal, we generated some fourth data, in which 62 OPXV conserved genes without any evidence of recombination were used in phylogenetic reconstruction, as described in methods. The ML and BI phylogenetic trees built from concatenated 62 conserved genes without recombination is shown in Figure 1 and Figure S4, respectively.

The topology of the phylogenetic trees based on 87 OPXV core genomes (Figure 2 and Figure S5) was identical to that of trees generated from 87 OPXV whole genomes (Figures S6 and S7) and similar to that of the phylogenetic tree built based on OPXV orthologous genes (Figure S8). Whereas the topology of phylogenetic trees based on 62 conserved genes (Figure 1 and Figure S4) slightly differed from that of the phylogenetic trees generated from 87 OPXV core genomes (Figure 2 and Figure S5).

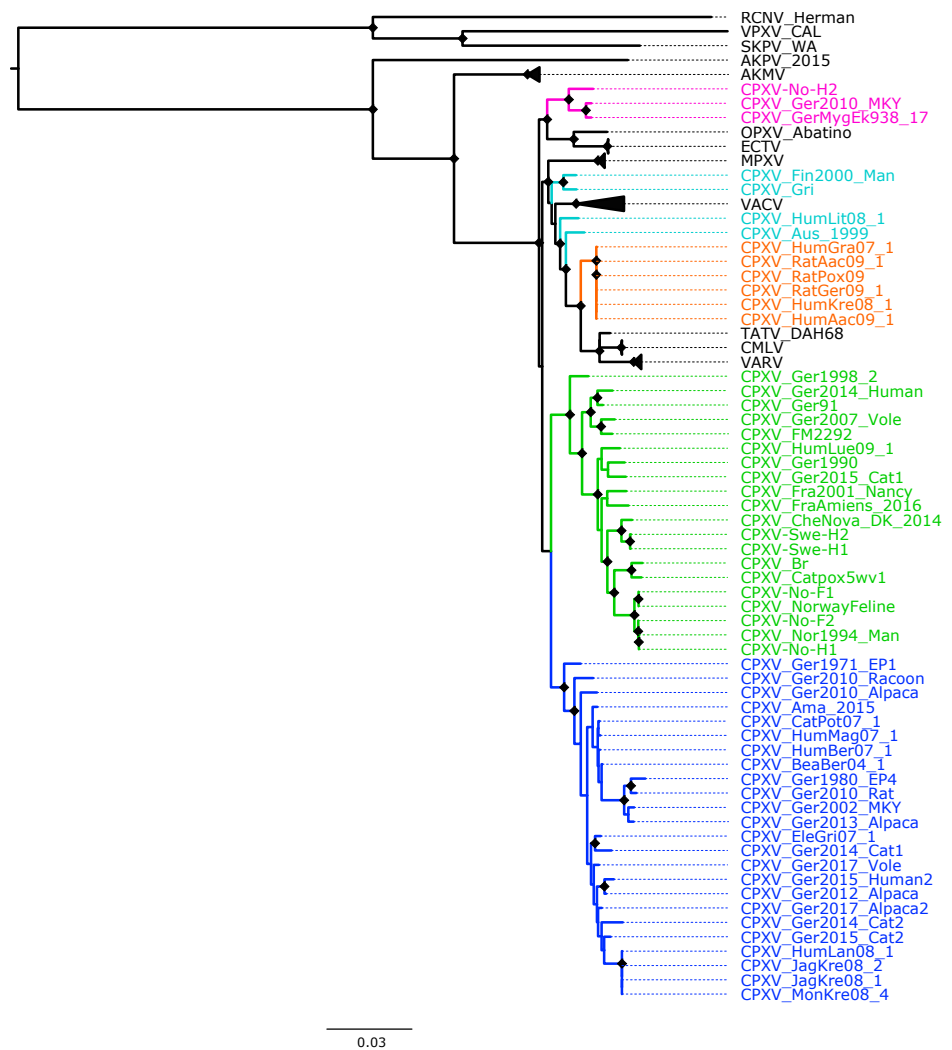


Figure 1. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of 62 conserved genes from 87 orthopoxviruses. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The scale indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

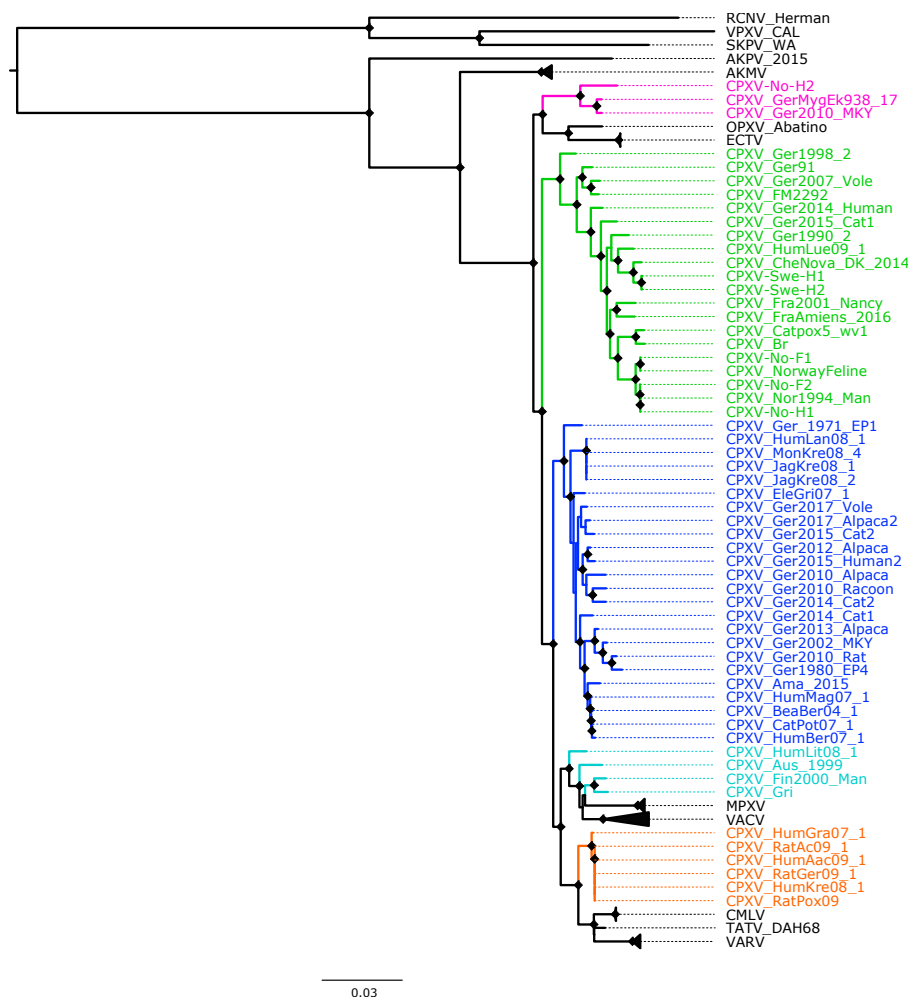


Figure 2. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of 87 orthopoxvirus core genome. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The scale indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

As expected, in all phylogenetic trees, the New World and Old World OPXV were separated and AKPV and AKMV clades were placed between them (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figures S4–S8). Within the Old OPXV, the strains from the same species formed distinct clades, except for CPXV strains. They formed separated clusters with different OPXV species such as VACV, VARV, ECTV and Abatino. CPXV isolates were separated in five clusters: ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV, CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VACV-like CPXV and VARV-like CPXV. Even though CPXV strains from VACV-like did not form a cluster, they were closely related to VACV clade. ECTV/Abatino group was clustered with ECTV-Abatino-like clade, which includes one Fennoscandian isolate (CXPV-No-H2) and two German isolates. ECTV/Abatino/ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV clade clustered with a major clade that contains: CPXV-like 2, CPXV-like 1, VACV-like, VACV, MPXV, VARV-like, VARV, TATV and CMLV clusters (PP = 1.0 and bootstrap values = 100%). In the phylogenetic trees based on 87 OPXV core genomes (Figure 2 and Figure S5), CPXV-like 2 was separated from the other CPXV clusters and OPXV. Furthermore, CPXV-like 1 clade was sister to a major clade that comprised VACV-like, VACV, MPXV, VARV-like, TATV, CMLV and VARV (PP = 1.0 and bootstrap values = 100%). Within this major clade VACV-like/VACV/MPXV cluster was separated from VARV-like, TATV, CMLV and VARV. Whereas the phylogenetic trees generated from 62 conserved genes (Figure 2 and Figure S6) showed that CPXV-like 1 and

CPXV-like 2 were sister clades (PP = 1 and bootstrap values = 70%) and these clustered together with a clade that contains VACV-like, VACV, MPXV, VARV-like, VARV, TATV and CMLV, but with low bootstrap support (48%) and PP of 0.93. In comparison to a phylogenetic tree built from 87 OPXV core genomes, VACV-like/VACV/MPXV did not form separate from VARV-like.

All Fennoscandian CPXV isolates except CPXV-No-H2 were grouped into CPXV-like 2 clade (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figures S4–S8). This clade also contains CPXV strains from Germany, Denmark, Russia, The United Kingdom (UK) and France. Within CPXV-like 2, CPXV-Ger1998_2 formed a deeper single branch and the remaining CPXV isolates were divided in two main sub-clusters. In the phylogenetic trees built from 87 OPXV core genomes (Figure 2 and Figure S5), the sub-cluster one contained three German isolates (CPXV_Ger91, CPXV_Ger2007_Vole and CPXV_FM2292) and sub-cluster two comprised 16 CPXV isolates, including the five Fennoscandian CPXV isolates reported in this study (CPXV_Ger2014_Human, CPXV_Ger2015_cat1, CPXV_Ger1990_2, CPXV_HumLue09_1, CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014, CPXV-Swe-H1, CPXV-Swe-H2, CPXV-Fra2001-Nancy, CPXV-FraAmiens_2016, CPXV-Catpox5-wv1, CPXV-Br, CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-Norwayfeline, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-No-H1 and CPXV-Nor1994_Man). Whereas sub-cluster one of the phylogenetic tree based on 62 conserved genes contained an additional CPXV strain, CPXV_Ger0214_Human (Figure 1 and Figure S4). In all phylogenetic trees, the Norwegian isolates were closely related to the UK isolates (CPXV-Br and CPXV-Catpox5-wv1), while Swedish isolates were closer to the Danish isolate. CPXV-like 1 clade was the largest CPXV clade and comprises only German CPXV isolates as well as VARV-like clade. This clade was sister group of VARV/CMLV/TATV. VACV-like contains CPXV strains from Austria, Russia, Finland and Lithuania. These strains were closely related to VACV and MPXV. Compared to VACV-like, VARV-like and ECTV-Abatino-like, CPXV-like 1 and CPXV-like 2 did not cluster together with other OPXV species (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figures S4–S8). Overall, all phylogenetic trees (based on 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes, orthologous genes and conserved genes) showed the five major CPXV clusters and the clustering of the CPXV-like 2 strains were similar. Thus, although recombination among CPXV is extensive, tree topology from datasets with recombinant regions and datasets without evidence of recombination were very similar.

3.3. Patristic and Genetic Distances

Based on the genetic and patristic distances, CPXV strains can be classified into 18 sub-species (Figure 3). The genetic and patristic distances between CPXV clusters and OPXV species were higher than the TATV-CMLV genetic and patristic distance threshold (Tables S6 and S7). Furthermore, the genetic and patristic distances within some CPXV clusters, such as CPXV-like 2, were higher than the threshold values (Table S8). According to the genetic and patristic distances between CPXV-like 2 strains, CPXV-like 2 was further divided into ten sub-species: group one (CPXV-Ger1998_2), group two (CPXV_Ger2014_Human, CPXV_Ger91, CPXV_Ger2007_Vole and CPXV_FM2292), group three (CPXV_HumLue09_1), group four (CPXV_Ger1990_2), group five (CPXV_Ger2015_cat1), group six (CPXV-Fra2001-Nancy), group seven (CPXV-FraAmiens_2016), group eight (CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2), group nine (CPXV-Catpox5-wv1 and CPXV-Br) and group ten (CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-Norwayfeline, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-No-H1 and CPXV-Nor1994_Man) (Tables S9 and S10). The isolates were grouped together according to their origin, except for the German and French isolates that were separated into five and two distinct sub-species, respectively.



Figure 3. New classification of cowpox virus (CPXV) based on phylogenetic tree inference from 62 conserved genes without evidence of recombination, patristic and genetic distances. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The main five CPXV clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

Similarly, in the ECTV-Abatino-like clade, the genetic and patristic distances between the Norwegian human isolate, CPXV-No-H2, and the German isolates (CPXV_GerMygEk938_17 and CPXV_Ger201_MKY) exceeded the distances between TATV and CMLV (Table S11). Within VACV-like, the distances between the CPXV strains were higher than the threshold values, except for the distances between CXPV-Gri and CPXV-Fin2000-Man (Tables S12 and S13). VACV-like strains were divided into three different sub-species: sub-species one, CPXV_HumLit08_1;

sub-species two, CPXV_Aus_1999; sub-species three, CPXV_Gri and CPXV_Fin2000_Man (Figure 3). In CPXV-like 1, CPXV_Ger_1971_EP1 was classified as one sub-species and the remaining CPXV-like 1 strains as another sub-species, according to the genetic and patristic distances (Table S14). However, the patristic distances between CPXV_Ger2010_Alpa and other CPXV-like 1 strains were higher than the threshold value, but some genetic distances were lower than the threshold values (Tables S15 and S16). VARV-like strains remained together as one sub-species based on the genetic and patristic distances and phylogeny. Curiously, these strains contain a genomic region of approximately 5860 bp that was also identified in some CPXV-like 2 strains (CPXV_Ger91, CPXV_2007_vole, CPXV_FM2291 and CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy), VARV and CMLV.

3.4. Evolutionary Analysis of CPXV

The phylodynamic analysis was performed based on the 62 conserved genes of CPXV genomes. The dataset exhibited a positive correlation between the genetic divergence and the sampling time, which indicates the presence of temporal signal in the sequence dataset (correlation efficient = 0.48; $R^2 = 0.23$). The mean evolution rate of CPXV was estimated to be 1.65×10^{-5} substitutions per site per year (subs/site/year), with 95% high posterior density interval (HPD) of $4.36 \times 10^{-7} - 4.32 \times 10^{-5}$ subs/site/year.

The MCC tree showed that CPXV strains were divided into two main clusters (Figure S9). The minor cluster contained CPXV-like 2 clade (PP = 0.88) and the major cluster comprised ECTV-Abatino-like, VACV-like, VARV-like and CXPV-like 1 clades (PP = 0.89) (Figure S9). However, the emergence date of CPXV as well as major CPXV clusters could not be accurately estimated since the 95% HPD intervals were wide, especially in the deepest nodes. As compared to the 95% HPD intervals tMRCA for recent nodes, tMRCA for deeper internal nodes were quite broad and showed some degree of overlap.

4. Discussion

CPXV strains examined in this study were isolated from different countries in Eurasia, with most of CPXV isolates from Germany. We included five CPXV isolates collected from Fennoscandian as well as our previously published CPXV isolate, CPXV-No-H2 [40]. These five Fennoscandian isolates were previously classified as CPXV based on Hind III restriction map of virus DNA, phylogenetic analysis of multiple conserved genes and the possession of two copies of the intact *cytokine response modifier B (CrmB)* gene [33–35].

CPXV is classified as one species, but this has been debated in many studies due to its genetic heterogeneity and polyphyletic character [33,35–40]. The genetic heterogeneity among CPXV strains could be due to recombination processes [34,35,41] since it is part of the evolution of OPXV [8,34,40,41,43,75–79]. It has been suggested that recombination can affect the accuracy of the phylogenetic inferences [80]. Since the extensive recombination in OPXV genomes has been reported by others [41], we included in our study a dataset of 62 non-recombinant conserved genes to avoid inaccuracy of phylogenetic estimation due the presence of recombination in 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes.

Our phylogenetic analysis using different datasets always showed that CPXV isolates were divided into at least five clusters: CPXV-like 1, CPXV-like 2, VACV-like CPXV, VARV-like CPXV and ECTV-Abatino-like CPXV (Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figures S3–S7). Similar phylogenetic clustering of CPXV has been reported in other studies [40,81]. Three of the five CPXV clusters were closely related to other OPXV species, such as ECTV, Abatino, VARV and VACV. Previous studies have also showed this phylogenetic relationship of CPXV with other OPXV [35,37,38,40,41,43,81].

The German isolates were present in all CPXV clusters, except for VACV-like, while the Fennoscandian CPXV isolates clustered into CPXV-like 2 and grouped into separate clusters according to their country of origin (Norway, Sweden and Denmark), except for CPXV-No-H2. These results are in agreement with the phylogenetic analysis based on single genes (*atip*, *p4c*, *CrmB*, *HA*, complete *CHOhr* or partial *CHOhr*) reported in our previous studies [33,35]. However, not all Fennoscandian isolates were closely related. The

Norwegian isolates were closely related to the UK strains, whereas the Swedish CPXV isolates were closer to the Danish CPXV isolate. The phylogenetic relationship of the Norwegian and UK isolates has been previously reported [38,41]. In our previous studies the relationship of the Fennoscandian isolates with other CPXV isolates varied depending on the single gene used in the phylogenetic analysis [33,35]. However, in the present study, the phylogenetic relationship between the Norwegian and UK isolates as well as the Swedish and Danish isolates were consistent, regardless of the alignment used (87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes, orthologous genes or 62 conserved genes).

Genetic and patristic distances have been previously used to examine the diversity of CPXV [35,36,38]. We used the genetic and patristic distances between TATV and CMLV to classify OPXV into the same or different species because they are the closest and recognized OPXV species. Our examination of the genetic and patristic distances between and within CPXV clusters revealed that the five CPXV clusters can be considered distinct CPXV sub-species and that even the CPXV strains can be separated into 18 sub-species (Figure 3). The heterogeneity of CPXV was not only demonstrated between CPXV clusters, but it was also present within some clusters. Among them, CPXV-like 2 was the most heterogeneous. Their isolates were classified into ten sub-species based on the genetic and patristic distances. This clade comprised isolates of diverse geographic origins (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, UK, Germany and France) and its classification followed their geographical origin. Only German and French isolates were separated into more than one sub-species.

Large genetic variation was also found within VACV-like strains, which were closely related to VACV and MPXV, as previously described [38,40,41]. These strains split into three different sub-species based on the genetic and patristic distances. This division is in agreement with phylogenetic work reported in other previous studies [38,40,41]. Among VACV-like strains, it has been reported that CPXV-HumLit08/1 is a recombinant virus that contains genomic regions related to VACV, VACV-like and VARV-like [41]. However, our findings based on 62 non-recombinant conserved genes evidenced that CPXV-HumLit08/1 can be considered as one sub-species. Similarly, within ECTV-Abatino-like clade, CPXV-No-H2 has undergone recombination with other OPXV [40] and our data supported the separation of CPXV-No-H2 and the other ECTV-Abatino-like strains into different sub-species.

The most genetically homogeneous CPXV cluster was the VARV-like group. The origin of these strains was associated with infected pet rats, probably imported from the Czech Republic [37,82]. Overall, our findings are in concordance with the results of Mauldin et al. [38]. They reported that CPXV-like 1 strains were split into more than one cluster (referred in the study as E1, E2, E3, E4 and E5), VACV-like strains were divided into three groups (referred in the study as A, B and C) and VARV-like strains were clustered into a single group.

Despite the evidence of recombination in the datasets of 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes, their phylogeny, genetic and patristic distances agreed with and are very similar to the phylogeny, patristic and genetic distances reconstructed from the dataset of 62 conserved genes without evidence of recombination. All four datasets suggested that CPXV strains can be divided into at least 18 sub-species (Figure 3, Figure S10 and Tables S6–S16). However, biological characterization of CPXV is required to accurately infer the taxonomic level to which these 18 sub-species of CPXV belong. Furthermore, our phylogenetic analysis evidenced that recombination did not change the phylogenetic relationship between CPXV strains and OPXV despite the extensive recombination between OPXV genomes. Taking into cognizance the extensive recombination present in CPXV genomes, it is rather surprising that recombination appears not to alter the clustering pattern in OPXV phylogeny. Plausible reasons may be that recombination among CPXVs occurred very early in CPXV/OPXV evolution, recombination regions occurred in small batch sizes compared to the whole genomes and the phylogenetic signals from recombinant regions were small and was diluted out by larger phylogenetic signals from other parts of the genome.

We estimated the evolution rate of CPXV based on 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV to be 1.65×10^{-5} substitution/site/year (95% HPD, 4.36×10^{-7} – 4.32×10^{-5} subs/site/year). The 95% HPD of our estimate overlapped the reported substitution rates of *Chordopoxvirinae*, 0.5 – 8.8×10^{-6} substitutions/site/year, and OPXV, 1.7 – 6.5×10^{-6} substitutions/site/year [45–47,49]. The divergence times of CPXV could not be accurately estimated using 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV genomes (Figure S9), even using conserved central region (F4L-A24L) of CPXV genomes (data not shown), since the broad 95% HPD intervals of the divergence time were quite broad. It could be due to the high heterogeneity of CPXV strains and the limited number of samples in terms of location, host and sample age. The majority of CPXV strains were isolated in Germany and from infections in humans. Furthermore, most CPXV strains were isolated in the last decades, there were no ancient CPXV isolates. Therefore, the low genetic information and the high genetic distances between the current CPXV strains increase the uncertainty of the node ages. In our opinion, our result strengthens the proposed idea that lineages of CPXV are highly divergent and a reclassification is needed, rather than showing a lack of a good calibration (tempest indicated presence of temporal signal). It has been proposed that the CPXV-like virus was the ancestor of Old World OPXV, excluding AKPV and AKMV, [39,44,45,83] due to its large genome, broadest host range and the presence of the most orthopoxviral genes [42,43,83,84]. Thus, despite the exclusion of other OPXV in our analysis due to the lack of temporal signal in the dataset, the evolutionary analysis of only CPXV may reflect the genomic history of all OPXV taking into account the high genetic heterogeneity among CPXV, the suggestion that CPXV or cowpox-like virus may be the ancestor to Old World OPXV species and the phylogenetic evidence of CPXV being the only OPXV that clusters with all Old World OPXV. However, the phylodynamic analysis of only CPXV has limitations because of oversampling of CPXV strains from Germany, from human zoonotic events and lack of ancient isolates. To improve the reconstruction of the evolutionary history of CPXV, increased genomic surveillance of CPXV across different regions of Eurasia and in multiple species or by the acquisition of ancient CPXV strains are required. These will result in a more accurate estimation of the time-scale of CPXV evolution.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study demonstrated the high genetic heterogeneity among CPXV isolates and the polyphyletic character of CPXV. Furthermore, our findings confirmed that CPXV was not a single species but a polyphyletic assemblage of several (up to 18) sub-species. Therefore, the current classification of CPXV as one single species should be re-evaluated. We also provided the first reconstruction of the evolutionary history of only CPXV. Overall, this study has shed significant insight on the evolution, phylogeny and classification of CPXV.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/v14102134/s1>, Figure S1. Presence of phylogenetic signal was evaluated by likelihood mapping checking for alternative topologies (tips), unresolved quartets (center) and partly resolved quartets (edges) for 87 OPXV whole genomes (a), core genomes (b), OPXV orthologous genes (c) and 62 conserved genes. Figure S2. Phylogenetic and temporal signal analyses. (a) Presence of phylogenetic signal was evaluated by likelihood mapping checking for alternative topologies (tips), unresolved quartets (center) and partly resolved quartets (edges) for 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV strains. (b) Linear regression of root-to-tip genetic distance in a maximum likelihood phylogeny against sampling time for 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV strains. Figure S3. Recombination analysis of 87 orthopoxvirus (OPXV) core genomes with RPD4. Schematic sequence display depicting color-coded representations of the analyzed sequences and the locations of detected recombination events in the 87 OPXV core genomes. The detected recombination events were detected for at least 5 of 7 methods (RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan and 3Seq) with significant p -values ($p \leq 0.01$). Figure S4. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 62 conserved genes from 87 orthopoxviruses. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probabilities > 0.9 . The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clus-

ters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S5. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 87 OPXV core genomes. Posterior probabilities are shown on the right side of each node and only posterior probabilities above 0.9 are shown. The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S6. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree of 87 orthopoxvirus whole genome. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The scale bar indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S7. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probabilities > 0.9. The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S8. Maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree based on orthopoxvirus orthologous genes. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The scale indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S9. Bayesian maximum clade credibility (MCC) tree of 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 55 CPXV genomes. The MCC tree was generated using BEAST 1, using a log-normal relaxed clock, coalescent Bayesian skyline population, HKY substitution model and four gamma categories. The numbers on the nodes indicate the time of the most recent common ancestor of the clades. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probability values > 0.9. The main five CPXV clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Figure S10. New classification of Cowpox virus (CPXV) based on phylogenetic inference (from 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes), patristic and genetic distances. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values > 80%. The main five CPXV clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV). Table S1: List of strains used in the phylogenetic analysis. Table S2: List of orthologous genes from 87 orthopoxviruses used in this study. Table S3: List of 62 conserved genes from 87 orthopoxviruses used in this study. Table S4: List of strains used in the evolution molecular analysis. Table S5. Predicted genes in CPXV-No-F1, CPXV-No-F2, CPXV-No-H1, CPXV-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2 compared to reference genomes CPXV-Brighton (CPXV_BR). Table S6. Patristic distances between CPXV clusters and OPXV species calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes. Table S7. Genetic distances between CPXV clusters and OPXV species estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D). Table S8. Patristic and genetic distances within CPXV clusters calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV core genomes, whole genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively. Table S9. Patristic distances within CPXV-like 2 calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes. Table S10. Genetic distances within CPXV-like 2 estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D). Table S11. Patristic and genetic distances within ECTV-Abatino-like calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively. Table S12. Patristic distances within VACV-like calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes. Table S13. Genetic distances within VACV-like clade estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D). Table S14. Patristic and genetic distances within CPXV-like 1 calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 87 OPXV whole genomes, core

genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively. Table S15. Patristic distances within CPXV-like 1 calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes. Table S16. Genetic distances within CPXV-like 1 estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D).

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Supplementary information

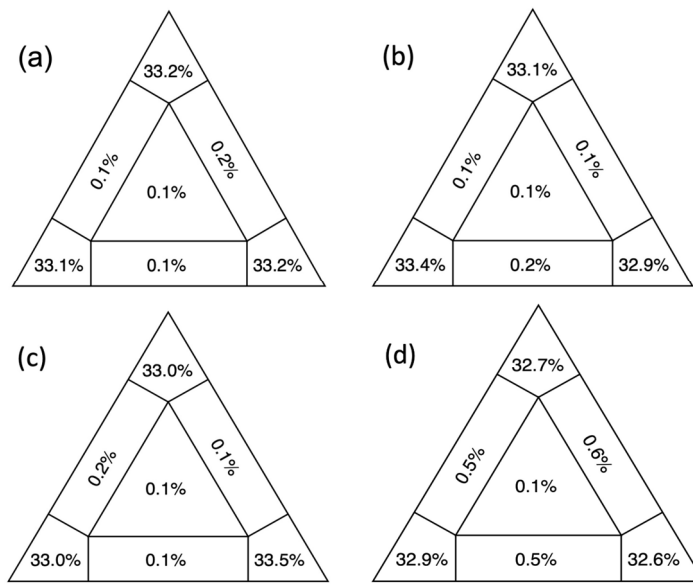


Figure S1. Presence of phylogenetic signal was evaluated by likelihood mapping checking for alternative topologies (tips), unresolved quartets (center) and partly resolved quartets (edges) for 87 OPXV whole genome (a), core genome (b), OPXV orthologous genes (c) and 62 conserved genes.

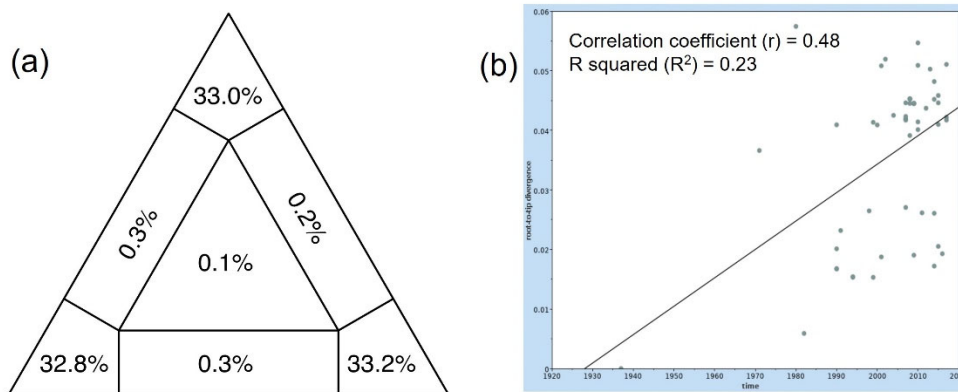
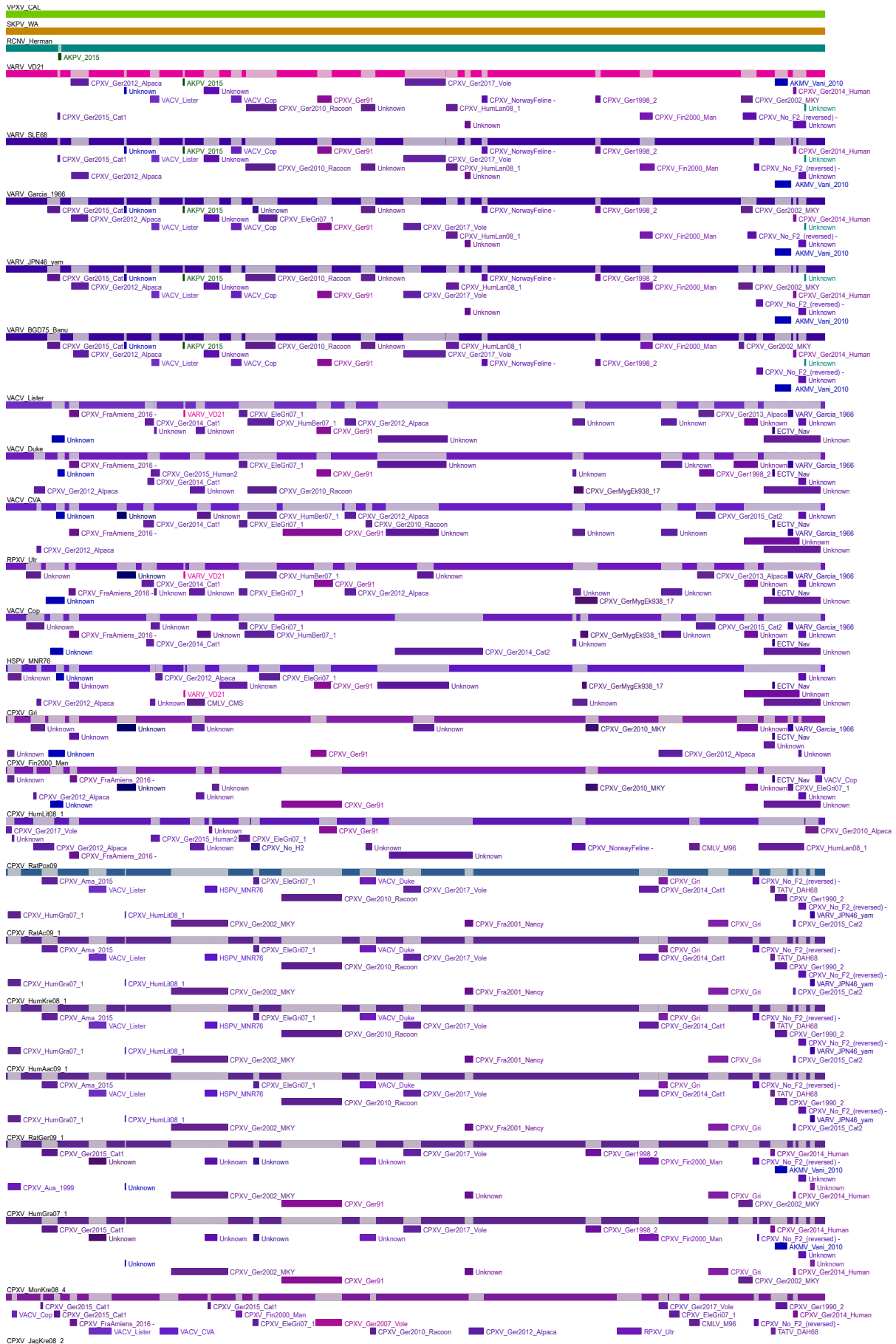
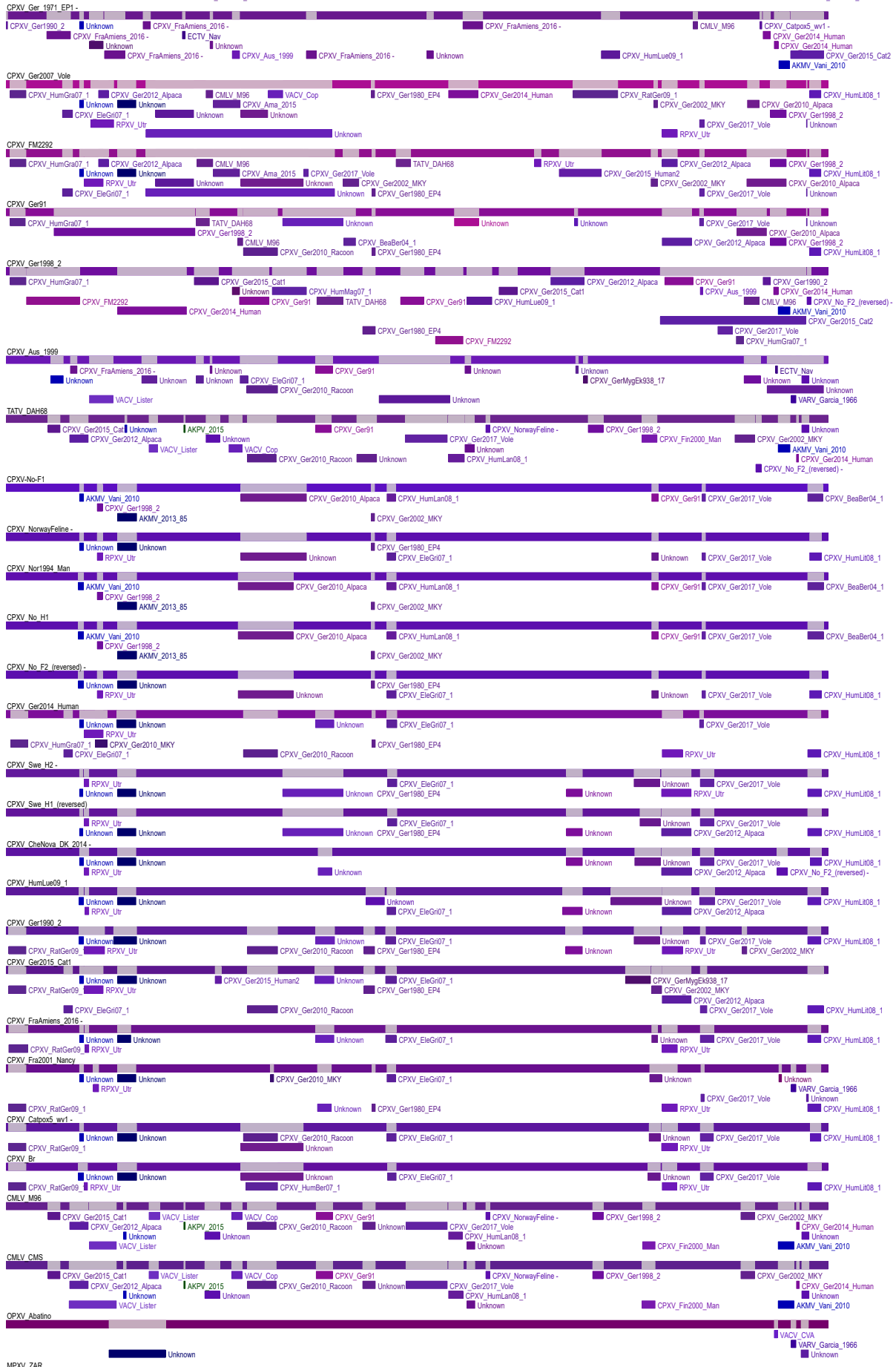


Figure S2. Phylogenetic and temporal signal analyses. (a) Presence of phylogenetic signal was evaluated by likelihood mapping checking for alternative topologies (tips), unresolved quartets (centre) and partly resolved quartets (edges) for 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV strains. (b) Linear regression of root-to-tip genetic distance in a maximum likelihood phylogeny against sampling time for 62 conserved genes of 55 CPXV strains.





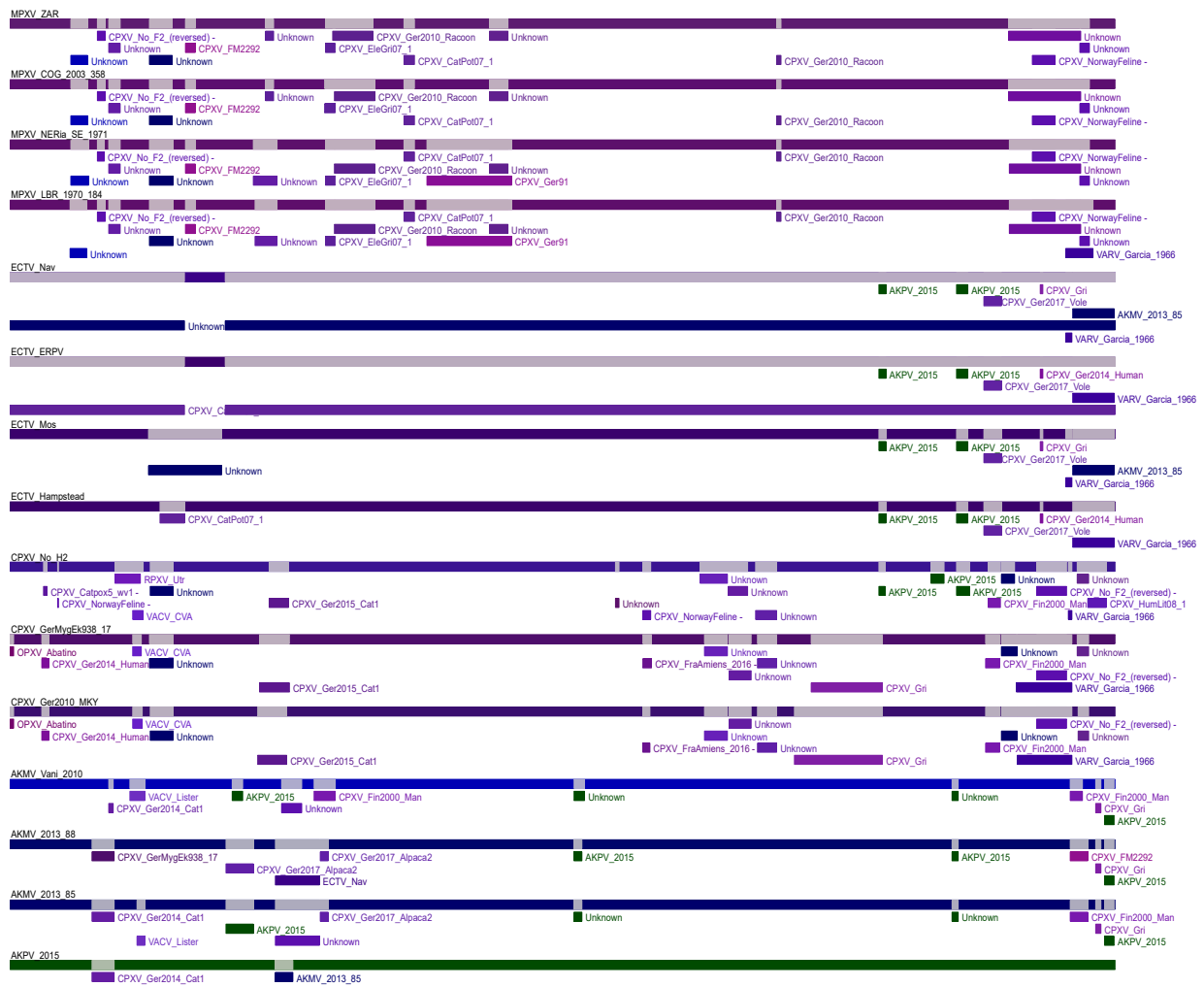
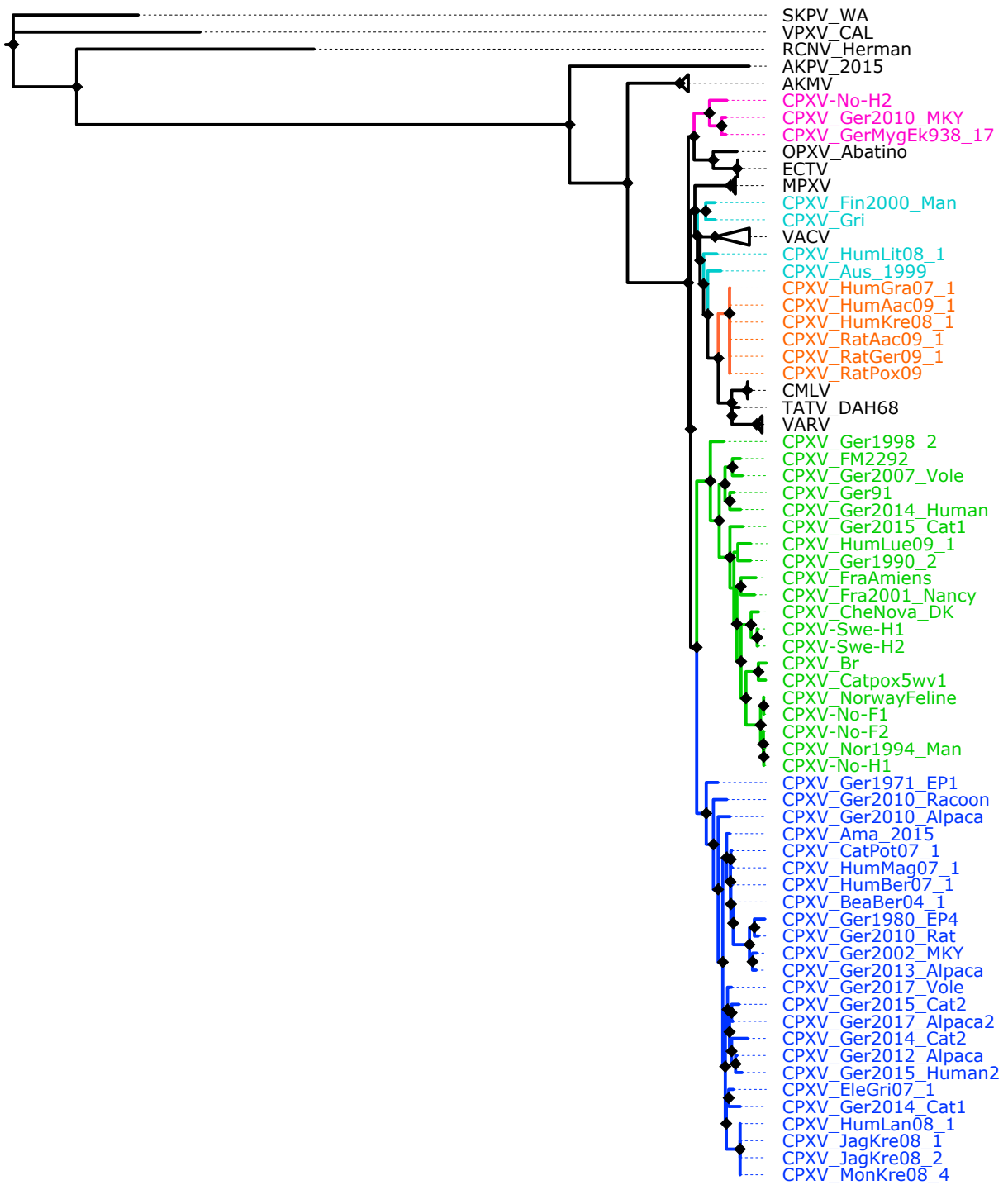


Figure S3. Recombination analysis of 87 orthopoxvirus (OPXV) core genomes with RPD4. Schematic sequence display depicting colour-coded representations of the analyzed sequences and the locations of detected recombination events in the 87 OPXV core genomes. The detected recombination events were detected for at least 5 of 7 methods (RDP, GENECONV, Bootscan, MaxChi, Chimaera, SiScan, and 3Seq) with significant p-values ($p \leq 0.01$).



0.04

Figure S4. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 62 conserved genes from 87 orthopoxviruses. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probabilities >0.9. The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).



Figure S5. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 87 OPXV core genomes. Posterior probabilities are shown on the right side of each node and only posterior probabilities above 0.9. are shown. The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

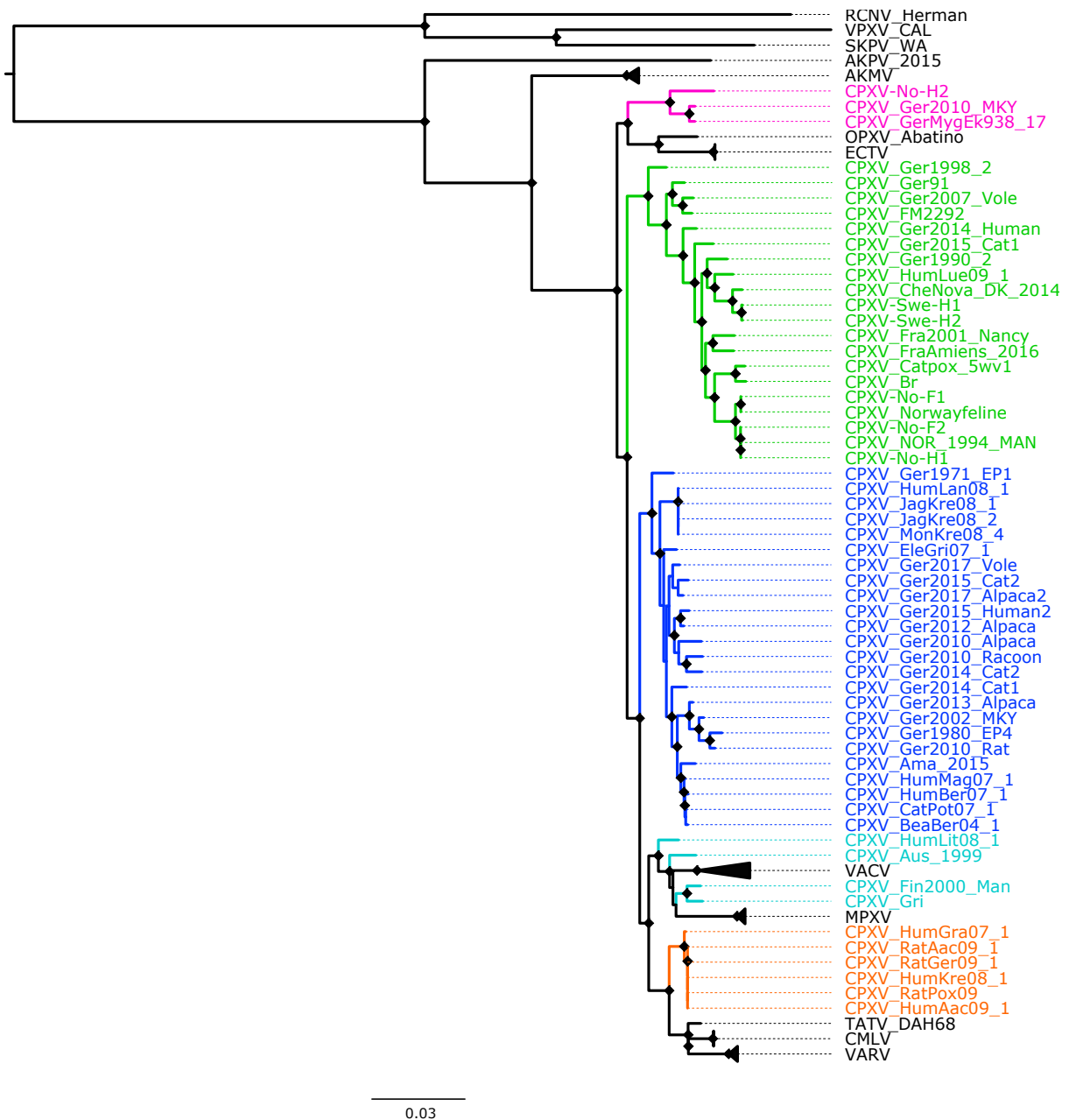


Figure S6. Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree of 87 orthopoxvirus whole genomes. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values >80%. The scale bar indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

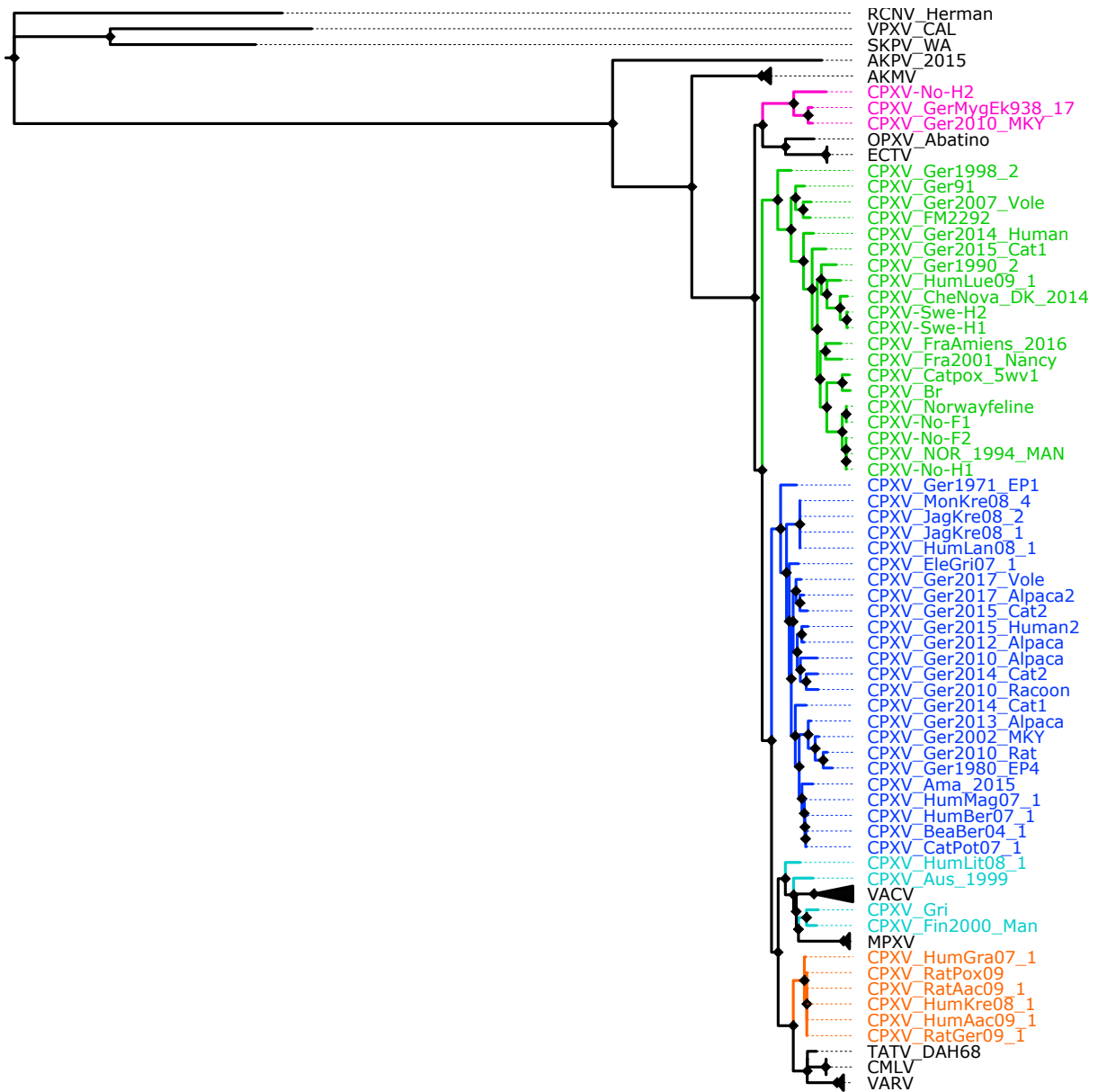


Figure S7. Bayesian inference phylogenetic tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probabilities > 0.9. The scale bar represents expected substitutions per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

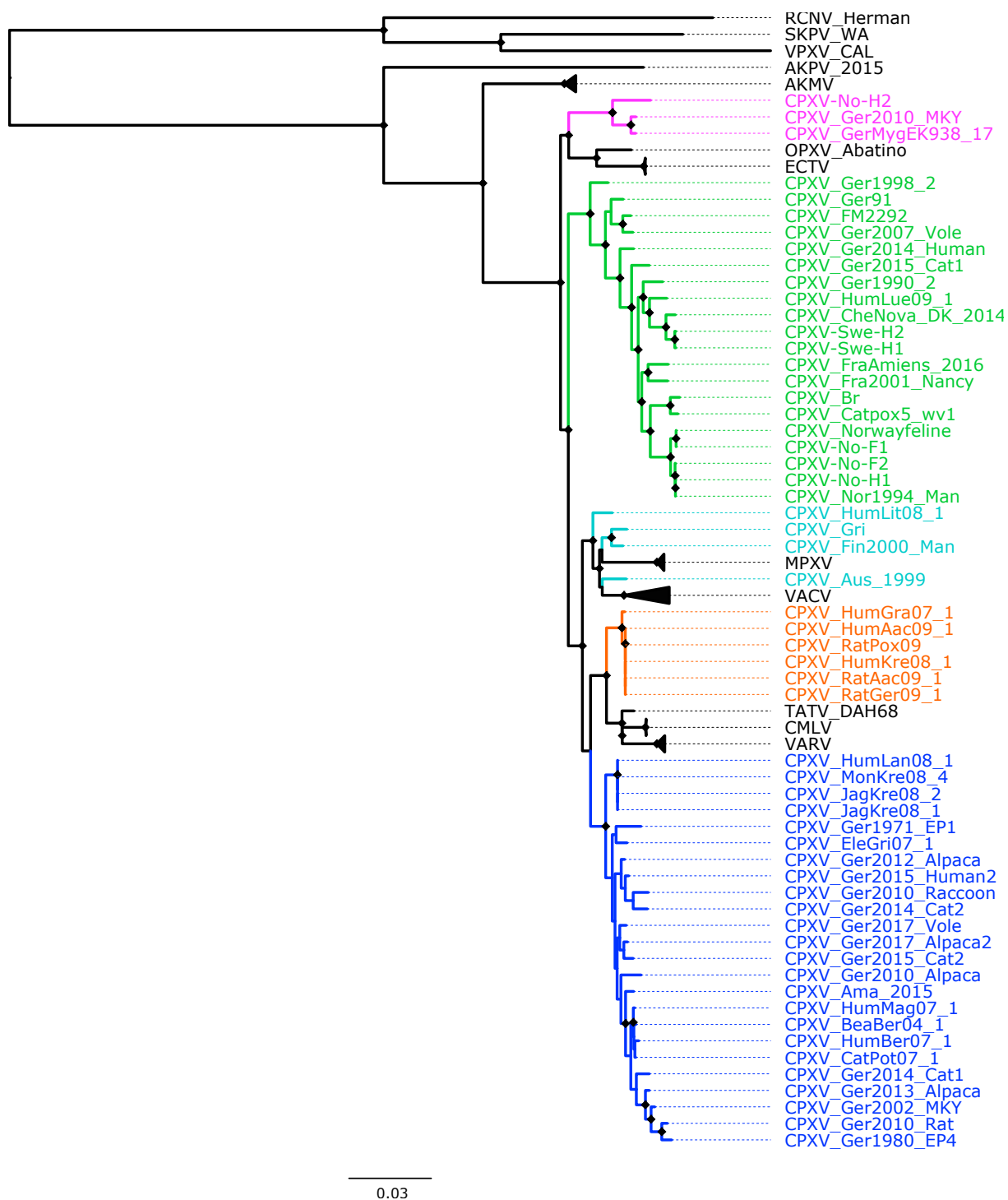


Figure S8. Maximum Likelihood phylogenetic tree based on orthopoxvirus orthologous genes. Bootstrap values were inferred from 1000 rapid bootstrap replicates. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values >80%. The scale indicates substitution per site. The main five cowpox virus (CPXV) clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

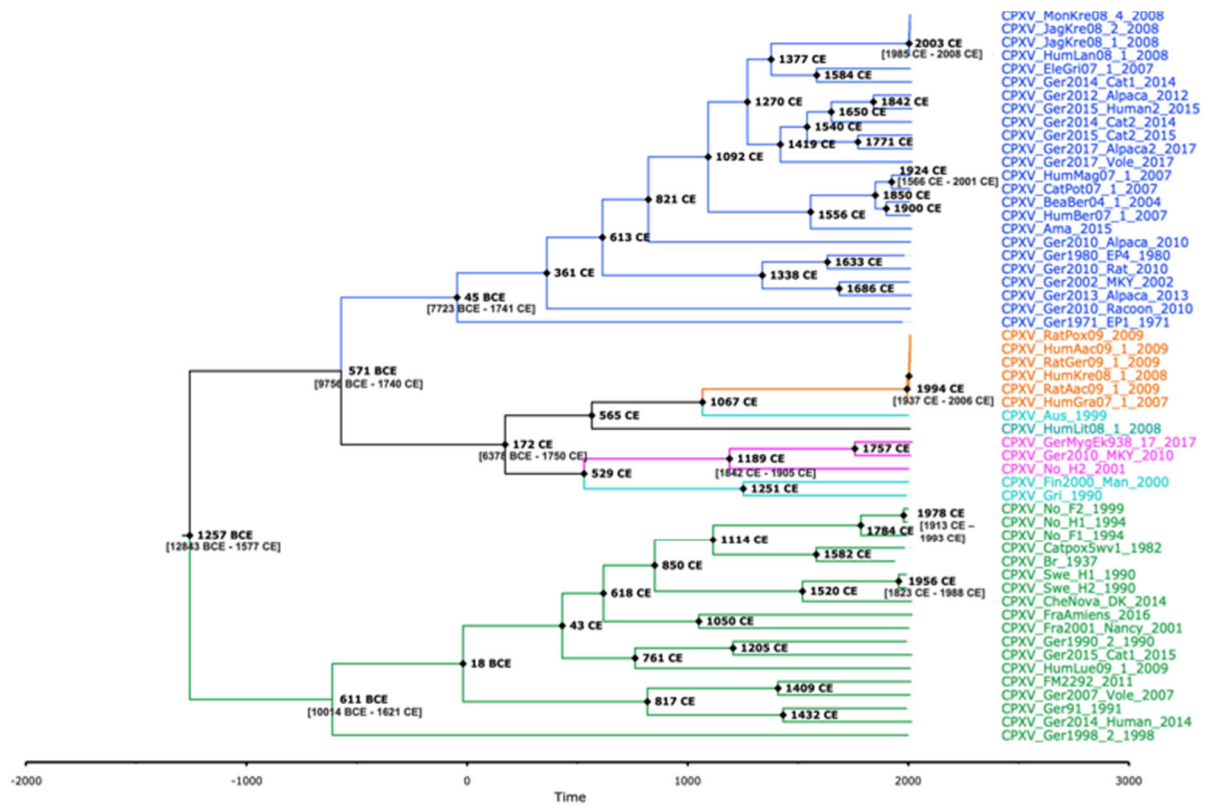


Figure S9. Bayesian maximum clade credibility (MCC) tree of 62 non-recombinant conserved genes of 55 CPXV genomes. The MCC tree was generated using BEAST 1, using a log-normal relaxed clock, coalescent Bayesian skyline population, HKY substitution model and four gamma categories. The numbers on the nodes indicate the time of the most recent common ancestor of the clades. Diamonds at the nodes indicate posterior probability values >0.9. The main five CPXV clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).



Figure S10. New classification of cowpox virus (CPXV) based on phylogenetic inference (from 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes), patristic and genetic distances. Diamonds at the nodes indicate bootstrap values >80%. The main five CPXV clusters were highlighted in different colors: pink (Ectromelia-Abatino-like CPXV), blue (CPXV-like 1), green (CPXV-like 2), turquoise blue (Vaccinia-like CPXV) and orange (Variola-like CPXV).

Table S1. List of strains used in the phylogenetic analysis

GenBank number accession	Virus species	Strain
MH816996	<i>Abatino macacapox virus</i>	-
MH607142	<i>Akhmeta virus</i>	2013-85
MH607141	<i>Akhmeta virus</i>	2013-88
MH607143	<i>Akhmeta virus</i>	Vani_2010
MN240300	<i>Alaskapox virus</i>	2015
AY009089	<i>Camelpox virus</i>	CMS
NC_003391	<i>Camelpox virus</i>	M-96
LN879483	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Amadeus 2015
HQ407377	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Austria 1999
KC813491	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	BeaBer04/1
NC_003663	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Brighton Red
KC813506	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CatPot07/1
KY549144	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CatPox5_wv1
KY569019	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CheNova_DK_2014
KC813507	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	EkGr07/1
HQ420893	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Finland_2000_MAN
LN864566	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	FM2292
HQ420894	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	France_2001_Nancy
LT883663	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	France Amiens 2016
DQ437593	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany 91-3
HQ420895	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1980_EP4
HQ420896	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1990_2
HQ420897	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1998_2
HQ420898	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_2002_MKY
LT896722	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2007/Vole
LT896718	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Alpaca
LT896721	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger 2010 MKY
LT896730	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Raccoon
LT896728	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Rat
LT896726	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2012/Alpaca
LT896719	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2013/Alpaca
LT896723	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Cat1
LT896725	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Cat2
LT993226	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Human
LT896724	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Cat1
LT896727	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Cat2
LT993232	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Human2
LT896732	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2017/Alpaca2
LT993228	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2017/common vole FMEinka
KY463519	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/1971_EP1
LR812035	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	GerMygEK 938/17
X94355	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	GR1-90
KC813508	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumAac09/1
KC813509	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumBer07/1
KC813510	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumGra07/1
KC813512	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumKre08/1
KC813492	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLan08/1
KC813493	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLat08/1
KC813494	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLae09/1
KC813495	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumMag07/1
KC813497	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	JagKre08/1
KC813498	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	JagKre08/2
KC813500	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	MonKre08/4
HQ420899	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Norway_1994_MAN
KY549151	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	NorwayFeline
KC813501	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatAac09/1
KC813503	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatGer09/1
LN864565	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatPox09
OP125541	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-F1
OP125540	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-F2
OP125539	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-H1
OM460002	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-H2
OP125538	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Swe-H1
OP125537	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Swe-H2
KY554976	<i>Ectromelia virus</i>	Hampstead
NC_004105	<i>Ectromelia virus</i>	Moscow
JQ410350	<i>Ectromelia virus</i>	ERPV
KJ563295	<i>Ectromelia virus</i>	Naval
DQ011154	<i>Monkeypox virus</i>	Congo_2003_358
DQ011156	<i>Monkeypox virus</i>	Liberia_1970_184
KJ642617	<i>Monkeypox virus</i>	Nigeria-SE-1971
NC_003310	<i>Monkeypox virus</i>	Zaire-96-1-16
NC_008291	<i>Taterapox virus</i>	Dahomey 1968
AY484669	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	Rabbitpox virus Utrecht
DQ792504	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	MNR-76
M35027	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	Copenhagen
AM501482	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	chorioallantois vaccinia virus Ankara (CVA)
DQ439815	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	Duke
AY678276	<i>Vaccinia virus</i>	Lister
Y16780	<i>Variola virus</i>	Garcia-1966
DQ437581	<i>Variola virus</i>	Bangladesh 1975 v75-550 Banu
DQ441429	<i>Variola virus</i>	Japan 1946 (Yamada MS-2(A) Tokyo)
DQ441437	<i>Variola virus</i>	Sierra Leone 1969 (V68-258)
KY358055	<i>Variola virus</i>	VD21
NC_031033.1	<i>Volepox virus</i>	CA
KP143769	<i>Raccoonpox virus</i>	Herman
NC_031038	<i>Skunkpox virus</i>	WA

Table S3. List of 62 conserved genes from 87 orthopoxviruses used in this study

	VACV_Cop
1	A11R
2	A16L
3	A18R
4	A1L
5	A21L
6	A22R
7	A23R
8	A28L
9	A29L
10	A2L
11	A5R
12	A7L
13	D10R
14	D12L
15	D7R
16	E10R
17	E6R
18	F10L
19	F9L
20	G5R
21	G9R
22	H2R
23	H3L
24	H6R
25	J3R
26	J5L
27	L1R
28	L4R
29	L5R
30	A12L
31	A13L
32	A14L
33	A15L
34	A19L
35	A20E
36	A34R
37	A6L
38	A8R
39	D3R
40	D9R
41	E4L
42	E8R
43	F12L
44	F13L
45	F15L
46	F17R
47	G2R
48	G4L
49	G5.5.R
50	G7L
51	G8R
52	H1L
53	H7R
54	I1L
55	I2L
56	I3L
57	I5L
58	I6L
59	A2.5L
60	G6R
61	H5R
62	J1R

Table S4. List of strains used in the evolution molecular analysis.

GenBank number accession	Virus species	Strain	Country	Year
LN879483	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Amadeus 2015	Germany	2015
HQ407377	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Austria 1999	Austria	1999
KC813491	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	BeaBer04/1	Germany	2004
NC_003663	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Brighton Red	UK	1937
KC813506	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CatPot07/1	Germany	2007
KY549144	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CatPox5_wv1	UK	1982
KY569019	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	CheNova_DK_2014	Denmark	2014
KC813507	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	EleGri07/1	Germany	2007
HQ420893	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Finland_2000_MAN	Finland	2000
LN864566	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	FM2292	Germany	2011
HQ420894	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	France_2001_Nancy	France	2001
LT883663	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	France Amiens 2016	France	2016
DQ437593	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany 91-3	Germany	1991
HQ420895	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1980_EP4	Germany	1980
HQ420896	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1990_2	Germany	1990
HQ420897	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_1998_2	Germany	1998
HQ420898	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Germany_2002_MKY	Germany	2002
LT896722	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2007/Vole	Germany	2007
LT896718	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Alpaca	Germany	2010
LT896721	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger 2010 MKY	Germany	2010
LT896730	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Racoon	Germany	2010
LT896728	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2010/Rat	Germany	2010
LT896726	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2012/Alpaca	Germany	2012
LT896719	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2013/Alpaca	Germany	2013
LT896723	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Cat1	Germany	2014
LT896725	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Cat2	Germany	2014
LT993226	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2014/Human	Germany	2014
LT896724	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Cat1	Germany	2015
LT896727	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Cat2	Germany	2015
LT993232	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2015/Human2	Germany	2015
LT896732	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2017/Alpaca2	Germany	2017
LT993228	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/2017/common vole FMEimka	Germany	2017
KY463519	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Ger/1971_EP1	Germany	1971
LR812035	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	GerMygEK 938/17	Germany	2017
X94355	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	GRI-90	Russia	1990
KC813508	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumAac09/1	Germany	2009
KC813509	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumBer07/1	Germany	2007
KC813510	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumGra07/1	Germany	2007
KC813512	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumKre08/1	Germany	2008
KC813492	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLan08/1	Germany	2008
KC813493	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLit08/1	Lithuania	2008
KC813494	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumLue09/1	Germany	2009
KC813495	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	HumMag07/1	Germany	2007
KC813497	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	JagKre08/1	Germany	2008
KC813498	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	JagKre08/2	Germany	2008
KC813500	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	MonKre08/4	Germany	2008
HQ420899	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Norway_1994_MAN	Norway	1994
KY549151	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	NorwayFeline	Norway	1994
KC813501	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatAac09/1	Germany	2009
KC813503	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatGer09/1	Germany	2009
LN864565	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	RatPox09	Germany	2009
OP125541	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-F1	Norway	1994
OP125540	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-F2	Norway	1999
OP125539	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-H1	Norway	1994
OM460002	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	No-H2	Norway	2001
OP125538	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Swe-H1	Sweden	1990
OP125537	<i>Cowpox virus</i>	Swe-H2	Sweden	1990

Table S5. Predicted genes in CPXV-No-F1, CPXv-No-F2, CPXV-No-H1, CPXv-Swe-H1 and CPXV-Swe-H2 compared to reference genomes CPXV-Brighton (CPXV_BR)

Function	VACV_Cop	CPXV_Br	CPXV-No-F1						CPXv-No-F2						CPXV-No-H1						CPXv-Swe-H1						CPXV-Swe-H2						
			CDS	Start	Stop	Length	Direction	Similarity (%)	CDS	Start	Stop	Length	Direction	Similarity (%)	CDS	Start	Stop	Length	Direction	Similarity (%)	CDS	Start	Stop	Length	Direction	Similarity (%)	CDS	Start	Stop	Length	Direction	Similarity (%)	
CPV-B-002	-	CPXV02	NoF1-001	894	1121	238	(-)	85.135	NoF2-001	1246	1473	228	(-)	85.135	NoH1-001	1235	1972	738	(-)	92.339	SweH1-001	795	1034	240	(-)	83.333	SweH2-001	768	1001	234	(-)	85.526	
Chromatin binding protein (Cop-C2L)	B20R/C2L	vCC1/COP03	NoF1-002	1150	1887	738	(-)	91.129	NoF2-002	1502	2239	738	(-)	91.953	NoH1-001	1235	1972	738	(-)	92.339	SweH1-002	1063	1812	750	(-)	91.968	SweH2-002	1030	1779	750	(-)	93.574	
CPV-B-004	-	CPXV04	overlap																														
TFN receptor (CrmB) (Cop-C2L)	B20R/C2L	crmb/CPXV05	NoF1-003	1961	3034	1074	(-)	91.808	NoF2-003	2313	3386	1074	(-)	92.09	NoH1-002	2046	3119	1074	(-)	92.49	SweH1-003	1912	2967	1056	(-)	92.577	SweH2-003	1879	2924	1056	(-)	92.577	
Ankyrin (Cop-C19L)	B25R/C19L	CPXV06	NoF1-004	3112	4878	1767	(-)	95.748	NoF2-004	3464	5230	1767	(-)	95.748	NoH1-003	3197	4963	1767	(-)	95.748	SweH1-004	3053	4819	1767	(-)	94.888	SweH2-004	3020	4786	1767	(-)	94.888	
Ankyrin-like repeat containing protein	-	CPXV07	NoF1-005	4960	5949	90	(-)	100	NoF2-005	5312	5401	90	(-)	93.1	NoH1-004	5045	5134	90	(-)	100	SweH1-005	4844	4975	132	(-)	83.927	SweH2-005	4841	4942	132	(-)	83.927	
Ankyrin (Cop-C17L)	B23R/C17L	CPXV08	NoF1-006	5089	7095	2007	(-)	96.731	NoF2-006	5441	7447	2007	(-)	97.177	NoH1-005	5174	7180	2007	(-)	97.028	SweH1-006	5015	7026	2022	(-)	96.154	SweH2-006	4982	7003	2022	(-)	96.006	
Hypothetical protein (Cop-C16L)	C16L	CPXV09/CPXV22	NoF1-007	7310	7771	462	(-)	96.732	NoF2-007	7640	8101	462	(-)	96.732	NoH1-006	7390	7811	462	(-)	96.732	SweH1-007	7238	7699	462	(-)	97.386	SweH2-007	7189	7650	462	(-)	97.386	
Alpha amanitin target protein (Cop-N2L)	N2L	CPXV10	NoF1-008	7942	8955	642	(-)	95.992	NoF2-008	8271	8924	654	(-)	95.992	NoH1-007	7881	8634	654	(-)	95.992	SweH1-008	7866	8513	648	(-)	95.814	SweH2-008	7819	8465	648	(-)	95.814	
BTB Kech-domain containing protein: CRL complex (Cop-A55R)	-	-	NoF1-009	8908	9501	594	(-)	-	NoF2-009	9327	9920	594	(-)	-	NoH1-008	8937	9593	657	(-)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ankyrin (Cop-B20R)	B20R	CPXV11	NoF1-010	9828	11843	2016	(-)	95.745	NoF2-010	10247	12268	2022	(-)	96.409	NoH1-009	9920	11935	2016	(-)	95.745	SweH1-009	8962	10926	1965	(-)	95.745	SweH2-009	8913	10877	1965	(-)	95.745	
C-type lectin domain containing protein	-	CPXV12	NoF1-011	12070	12279	210	(-)	97.101	NoF2-011	12495	12704	210	(-)	98.551	NoH1-010	12162	12371	210	(-)	98.551	SweH1-010	10958	11440	483	(-)	95.524	SweH2-010	10909	11391	483	(-)	95.524	
BTB Kech-domain containing protein: CRL complex (Cop-A55R)	A55R	CPXV13	NoF1-012	12707	13318	612	(-)	92.611	NoF2-012	13467	13742	276	(-)	97.619	NoH1-011	13135	13410	276	(-)	97.62	SweH1-011	11505	13082	1578	(-)	96.571	SweH2-011	11456	13039	1584	(-)	96.205	
TFN receptor (CrmB) (Cop-C2L)	C2L	CPXV14	NoF1-013	13393	14001	609	(-)	97.03	NoF2-013	13817	14425	609	(-)	98.02	NoH1-012	13485	14093	609	(-)	98.02	SweH1-012	13156	13758	603	(-)	97.99	SweH2-012	13113	13715	603	(-)	97.99	
TFN-alpha receptor like protein	-	vCD30/CPXV05	NoF1-014	13998	14330	333	(-)	98.182	NoF2-014	14422	14754	333	(-)	98.182	NoH1-013	14090	14422	333	(-)	98.182	SweH1-013	13755	14120	366	(-)	97.273	SweH2-013	13712	14077	366	(-)	96.364	
Ankyrin (Cop-B18R)	B18R	CPXV16	NoF1-015	14405	16708	2304	(-)	97.772	NoF2-015	14828	17131	2304	(-)	98.034	NoH1-014	14496	16799	2304	(-)	98.034	SweH1-014	14181	16475	2295	(-)	98.168	SweH2-014	14138	16432	2295	(-)	98.168	
Ankyrin (CPXV-017)	-	CPXV17	NoF1-016	16904	18291	1308	(-)	96.092	NoF2-016	17606	18913	1308	(-)	96.322	NoH1-015	17210	18517	1308	(-)	96.322	SweH1-015	16874	18181	1308	(-)	95.862	SweH2-015	16718	18045	1308	(-)	95.862	
MPV-ZsR	-	CPXV18	NoF1-017	18390	18995	516	(-)	91.813	NoF2-017	19012	19527	516	(-)	91.813	NoH1-016	18616	19131	516	(-)	91.813	SweH1-016	18280	18804	525	(-)	91.954	SweH2-016	18144	18659	516	(-)	92.982	
Ankyrin (Cop-B18R)	B18R	CPXV19	NoF1-018	18908	21583	2676	(-)	77.855	NoF2-018	19590	22204	2715	(-)	86.916	NoH1-017	19014	21908	2715	(-)	86.916	SweH1-017	18867	21278	2412	(-)	92.04	SweH2-017	18722	21142	2421	(-)	91.574	
Host range protein	-	-	NoF1-019	21633	22149	519	(-)	97.674	NoF2-019	22246	22752	507	(-)	97.647	NoH1-018	21850	22356	507	(-)	97.647	SweH1-018	21374	21892	519	(-)	97.674	SweH2-018	21238	21756	519	(-)	97.674	
Secreted ECR-like protein (Cop-C11R)	C11R	VGF/CPXV021	NoF1-020	23216	23741	526	(-)	94.236	NoF2-020	23917	23939	423	(-)	94.286	NoH1-019	23521	23943	423	(-)	94.286	SweH1-019	23288	23277	420	(-)	95	SweH2-019	23221	23241	420	(-)	95	
IL-1 receptor antagonist (Cop-C10L)	C10L	CPXV22	NoF1-021	23894	23889	996	(-)	96.375	NoF2-021	23401	24496	996	(-)	96.073	NoH1-020	23105	24100	996	(-)	96.073	SweH1-020	22617	23606	990	(-)	93.656	SweH2-020	22481	23470	990	(-)	93.656	
Zinc finger-like protein	-	CPXV23	NoF1-022	24404	25132	729	(-)	99.174	NoF2-022	25033	25761	729	(-)	98.76	NoH1-021	24630	25358	729	(-)	98.76	SweH1-021	24115	24843	729	(-)	95.868	SweH2-021	23979	24707	729	(-)	95.868	
Soluble IL-18 binding protein (Bsb-D7L)	D7L	CPXV24	NoF1-023	25281	25661	381	(-)	96.825	NoF2-023	25910	26260	381	(-)	98.413	NoH1-022	25687	25887	381	(-)	98.413	SweH1-022	24995	25375	381	(-)	98.413	SweH2-022	24859	25239	381	(-)	98.413	
Ankyrin/Host range (Bsb-D8L)	D8L	VHR1/CPXV025	NoF1-024	25720	27735	2016	(-)	95.827	NoF2-024	26350	28359	2016	(-)	95.815	NoH1-023	25947	27956	2016	(-)	95.815	SweH1-023	25434	27449	2016	(-)	95.529	SweH2-023	25298	27313	2016	(-)	95.529	
ANK-containing protein	-	CPXV26	NoF1-025	27849	28040	192	(-)	95	NoF2-025	28473	28664	192	(-)	95	NoH1-024	28070	28261	192	(-)	95	SweH1-024	27564	27761	198	(-)	95	SweH2-024	27428	27625	198	(-)	95.38	
Ankyrin: Type 1 IFN resistance (Cop-C9L)	C9L	CPXV27	NoF1-026	28214	30118	1905	(-)	95.11	NoF2-026	28841	30751	1911	(-)	92.296	NoH1-025	28438	30354	1917	(-)	92.476	SweH1-025	27932	29836	1905	(-)	93.543	SweH2-025	27796	29709	1914	(-)	93.093	
Unknown (Cop-C8L)	C8L	CPXV28	NoF1-027	30160	30717	558	(-)	98.919	NoF2-027	30794	31351	558	(-)	100	NoH1-026	30397	30954	558	(-)	100	SweH1-026	29879	30436	558	(-)	100	SweH2-026	29751	30308	558	(-)	100	
Type 1 IFN inhibitor (Cop-C7L)	C7L	CPXV29	NoF1-028	30789	31241	453	(-)	100	NoF2-028	31420	31872	453	(-)	100	NoH1-027	31023	31475	453	(-)	100	SweH1-027	30505	30957	453	(-)	100	SweH2-027	30377	30829	453	(-)	100	
Rd2-like protein, IFN-beta inhibitor (Cop-C6L)	C6L	CPXV30	NoF1-029	31472	31939	468	(-)	98.71	NoF2-029	32103	32570	468	(-)	98.71	NoH1-028	31763	32173	468	(-)	98.71	SweH1-028	31186	31653	468	(-)	98.71	SweH2-028	31038	31525	468	(-)	98.71	
Kech-like protein (Cop-C5L)	C5L	CPXV31	overlap																														
Kech-like protein (Cop-C5L)	C5L	CPXV32	NoF1-030	32272	32649	378	(-)	98.4	NoF2-030	32903	33280	378	(-)	98.4	NoH1-029	32506	32883	378	(-)	98.4	SweH1-029	31986	32364	363	(-)	93.6	SweH2-029	31888	32220	363	(-)	93.6	
IL-1 receptor antagonist (Cop-C10L)	C10L	CPXV33	NoF1-031	32710	33647	948	(-)	95.886	NoF2-031	33341	34291	951	(-)	96.835	NoH1-030	32944	33894	951	(-)	97.152	SweH1-030	32409	33359	951	(-)	95.886	SweH2-030	32281	33211	951	(-)	95.886	
Complement binding (secreted) (Cop-C3L)	C3L	CPXV34	NoF1-032	33724	34518	795	(-)	96.198	NoF2-032	34358	35152	795	(-)	97.338	NoH1-031	33961	34755	795	(-)	97.338	SweH1-031	33433	34227	795	(-)	95.437	SweH2-031	33305	34099	795	(-)	95.437	
POZ/IBT Kech domain protein (Cop-C2L)	C2L	CPXV35	NoF1-033	34581	36119	1539	(-)	98.828	NoF2-033	35215	36753	1539	(-)	99.219	NoH1-032	34818	36356	1539	(-)	99.219	SweH1-032	34290	35828	1539	(-)	98.242	SweH2-032	34162	35700	1539	(-)	98.242	
Flavivirion Tg signaling inhibitor (Cop-C1L)	C1L	CPXV36	NoF1-034	36108	36826	699	(-)	99.828	NoF2-034	36822	37579	699	(-)	99.567	NoH1-033	36255	37120	696	(-)	99.567	SweH1-033	35899	36594	696	(-)	99.134</							

Table S6. Patristic distances between CPXV clusters and OPXV species calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes.

ML tree of 62 conserved genes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.045	0.037													
CPXV-like2	0.050	0.042	0.048												
VARV-like	0.031	0.021	0.043	0.049											
TATV	0.036	0.026	0.048	0.053	0.016										
CMLV	0.040	0.030	0.052	0.058	0.020	0.011									
ABATINO	0.046	0.038	0.049	0.055	0.044	0.049	0.053								
MPXV	0.034	0.030	0.043	0.048	0.033	0.037	0.041	0.044							
ECTV	0.044	0.038	0.048	0.053	0.043	0.047	0.052	0.028	0.045						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.041	0.033	0.044	0.049	0.039	0.044	0.048	0.037	0.041	0.037					
VARV	0.046	0.037	0.059	0.064	0.026	0.018	0.022	0.059	0.052	0.060	0.054				
AKMV	0.082	0.074	0.085	0.091	0.080	0.085	0.089	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.078	0.095			
AKPV	0.170	0.162	0.174	0.179	0.169	0.173	0.178	0.172	0.171	0.173	0.167	0.184	0.148		
New World	0.693	0.685	0.697	0.702	0.692	0.696	0.700	0.695	0.694	0.696	0.690	0.707	0.671	0.703	
BI tree of 62 conserved genes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.044	0.036													
CPXV-like2	0.051	0.043	0.048												
VARV-like	0.030	0.021	0.042	0.049											
TATV	0.035	0.026	0.047	0.054	0.016										
CMLV	0.039	0.030	0.051	0.058	0.020	0.011									
ABATINO	0.045	0.038	0.048	0.055	0.044	0.048	0.052								
MPXV	0.038	0.030	0.045	0.052	0.036	0.041	0.045	0.046							
ECTV	0.046	0.038	0.048	0.055	0.044	0.049	0.053	0.023	0.047						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.040	0.032	0.043	0.050	0.038	0.043	0.047	0.036	0.041	0.037					
VARV	0.046	0.036	0.057	0.064	0.026	0.018	0.022	0.059	0.051	0.059	0.054				
AKMV	0.080	0.073	0.083	0.090	0.079	0.083	0.087	0.082	0.081	0.083	0.077	0.094			
AKPV	0.166	0.158	0.169	0.176	0.165	0.169	0.173	0.168	0.167	0.168	0.163	0.180	0.220		
New World	0.427	0.419	0.430	0.437	0.426	0.430	0.434	0.429	0.428	0.429	0.424	0.441	0.405	0.435	
ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.043	0.034													
CPXV-like2	0.063	0.053	0.052												
VARV-like	0.037	0.027	0.031	0.051											
TATV	0.041	0.031	0.036	0.055	0.016										
CMLV	0.045	0.036	0.040	0.059	0.020	0.012									
ABATINO	0.060	0.051	0.049	0.061	0.048	0.053	0.057								
MPXV	0.039	0.072	0.050	0.069	0.043	0.048	0.052	0.067							
ECTV	0.066	0.056	0.055	0.066	0.054	0.058	0.062	0.030	0.072						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.062	0.052	0.051	0.062	0.050	0.054	0.058	0.046	0.068	0.052					
VARV	0.052	0.043	0.047	0.066	0.027	0.019	0.023	0.064	0.059	0.070	0.065				
AKMV	0.096	0.087	0.085	0.096	0.084	0.089	0.093	0.088	0.103	0.093	0.089	0.100			
AKPV	0.188	0.179	0.178	0.189	0.177	0.181	0.185	0.180	0.195	0.185	0.181	0.192	0.161		
New World	0.744	0.735	0.733	0.745	0.733	0.737	0.741	0.736	0.751	0.741	0.737	0.748	0.717	0.740	
BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.043	0.033													
CPXV-like2	0.069	0.053	0.058												
VARV-like	0.036	0.027	0.031	0.050											
TATV	0.041	0.031	0.035	0.055	0.016										
CMLV	0.045	0.035	0.040	0.059	0.020	0.012									
ABATINO	0.060	0.050	0.049	0.060	0.048	0.052	0.056								
MPXV	0.039	0.032	0.049	0.069	0.043	0.047	0.051	0.066							
ECTV	0.065	0.056	0.054	0.065	0.053	0.058	0.062	0.030	0.072						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.061	0.052	0.050	0.061	0.049	0.054	0.058	0.046	0.068	0.051					
VARV	0.052	0.042	0.047	0.066	0.027	0.019	0.023	0.063	0.058	0.069	0.065				
AKMV	0.095	0.086	0.084	0.095	0.083	0.088	0.092	0.086	0.102	0.092	0.088	0.099			
AKPV	0.185	0.176	0.175	0.186	0.174	0.178	0.182	0.177	0.192	0.182	0.178	0.189	0.158		
New World	0.469	0.460	0.459	0.470	0.458	0.462	0.466	0.461	0.476	0.466	0.462	0.473	0.442	0.464	

ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.042	0.033													
CPXV-like2	0.040	0.053	0.034												
VARV-like	0.037	0.027	0.031	0.051											
TATV	0.041	0.031	0.035	0.055	0.016										
CMLV	0.045	0.035	0.039	0.059	0.020	0.012									
ABATINO	0.060	0.051	0.049	0.060	0.048	0.052	0.056								
MPXV	0.039	0.032	0.050	0.070	0.044	0.048	0.052	0.067							
ECTV	0.067	0.057	0.055	0.067	0.055	0.059	0.063	0.032	0.074						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.057	0.052	0.045	0.049	0.045	0.049	0.053	0.046	0.063	0.053					
VARV	0.054	0.044	0.048	0.068	0.029	0.021	0.025	0.065	0.060	0.072	0.067				
AKMV	0.096	0.086	0.085	0.096	0.084	0.088	0.092	0.087	0.103	0.094	0.089	0.101			
AKPV	0.187	0.177	0.175	0.187	0.175	0.179	0.183	0.178	0.194	0.184	0.180	0.191	0.159		
New World	0.739	0.729	0.728	0.739	0.727	0.731	0.735	0.730	0.746	0.737	0.732	0.744	0.711	0.734	
BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.026														
CPXV-like1	0.043	0.033													
CPXV-like2	0.062	0.053	0.051												
VARV-like	0.037	0.027	0.031	0.051											
TATV	0.040	0.031	0.035	0.054	0.016										
CMLV	0.044	0.035	0.039	0.058	0.020	0.012									
ABATINO	0.052	0.050	0.040	0.045	0.040	0.044	0.048								
MPXV	0.039	0.031	0.049	0.069	0.043	0.047	0.051	0.066							
ECTV	0.066	0.057	0.055	0.066	0.054	0.058	0.062	0.031	0.073						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.061	0.052	0.050	0.061	0.050	0.053	0.057	0.046	0.068	0.052					
VARV	0.053	0.043	0.047	0.067	0.028	0.020	0.024	0.064	0.059	0.070	0.066				
AKMV	0.095	0.085	0.083	0.095	0.083	0.087	0.091	0.086	0.101	0.092	0.087	0.099			
AKPV	0.183	0.174	0.172	0.183	0.171	0.175	0.179	0.174	0.190	0.181	0.176	0.188	0.155		
New World	0.464	0.454	0.452	0.464	0.452	0.456	0.460	0.455	0.470	0.461	0.456	0.468	0.436	0.458	
ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino-	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.024														
CPXV-like1	0.042	0.034													
CPXV-like2	0.061	0.053	0.058												
VARV-like	0.038	0.030	0.029	0.054											
TATV	0.041	0.033	0.033	0.057	0.017										
CMLV	0.045	0.038	0.037	0.062	0.021	0.013									
ABATINO	0.056	0.048	0.054	0.062	0.049	0.053	0.057								
MPXV	0.039	0.023	0.049	0.068	0.045	0.048	0.052	0.063							
ECTV	0.061	0.053	0.058	0.067	0.054	0.057	0.062	0.030	0.061						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.059	0.052	0.057	0.066	0.053	0.056	0.060	0.049	0.060	0.054					
VARV	0.052	0.044	0.043	0.068	0.027	0.018	0.023	0.063	0.052	0.068	0.066				
AKMV	0.092	0.084	0.089	0.098	0.085	0.088	0.093	0.087	0.092	0.092	0.091	0.099			
AKPV	0.189	0.181	0.187	0.195	0.182	0.186	0.190	0.185	0.190	0.189	0.188	0.196	0.164		
New World	0.762	0.754	0.760	0.768	0.755	0.759	0.763	0.758	0.763	0.762	0.761	0.769	0.737	0.762	

Table S7. Genetic distances between CPXV clusters and OPXV species estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D).

A															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.013														
CPXV-like1	0.016	0.014													
CPXV-like2	0.022	0.019	0.019												
VARV-like	0.015	0.013	0.014	0.021											
TATV	0.018	0.016	0.016	0.023	0.011										
CMLV	0.020	0.018	0.019	0.025	0.014	0.008									
ABATINO	0.025	0.022	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.026	0.028								
MPXV	0.021	0.018	0.021	0.024	0.020	0.023	0.025	0.027							
ECTV	0.024	0.021	0.023	0.025	0.022	0.025	0.028	0.016	0.026						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.020	0.017	0.020	0.021	0.020	0.023	0.025	0.022	0.023	0.023					
VARV	0.024	0.022	0.022	0.029	0.017	0.012	0.015	0.032	0.028	0.031	0.029				
AKMV	0.042	0.040	0.039	0.043	0.039	0.041	0.043	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.044	0.046			
AKPV	0.075	0.073	0.073	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.076	0.075	0.077	0.077	0.074	0.079	0.068		
New World	0.127	0.125	0.126	0.126	0.125	0.126	0.127	0.127	0.128	0.128	0.126	0.128	0.126	0.130	
B															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.015														
CPXV-like1	0.019	0.017													
CPXV-like2	0.026	0.023	0.021												
VARV-like	0.019	0.016	0.015	0.024											
TATV	0.022	0.019	0.018	0.027	0.012										
CMLV	0.025	0.022	0.021	0.030	0.015	0.009									
ABATINO	0.030	0.026	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.031	0.034								
MPXV	0.024	0.021	0.025	0.029	0.025	0.028	0.031	0.032							
ECTV	0.031	0.028	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.034	0.036	0.021	0.034						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.030	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.029	0.032	0.035	0.028	0.033	0.032					
VARV	0.030	0.027	0.025	0.034	0.019	0.014	0.017	0.038	0.035	0.040	0.039				
AKMV	0.049	0.046	0.045	0.050	0.045	0.046	0.049	0.050	0.054	0.050	0.053	0.053			
AKPV	0.088	0.085	0.085	0.086	0.085	0.087	0.089	0.087	0.090	0.087	0.087	0.092	0.081		
New World	0.150	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.149	0.150	0.149	0.151	0.150	0.149	0.152	0.150	0.153	
B															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.015														
CPXV-like1	0.019	0.017													
CPXV-like2	0.026	0.023	0.021												
VARV-like	0.019	0.016	0.015	0.024											
TATV	0.023	0.020	0.018	0.028	0.012										
CMLV	0.026	0.022	0.021	0.030	0.015	0.009									
ABATINO	0.030	0.026	0.027	0.028	0.028	0.031	0.034								
MPXV	0.024	0.021	0.026	0.030	0.026	0.029	0.031	0.032							
ECTV	0.032	0.029	0.030	0.032	0.031	0.034	0.037	0.022	0.035						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.030	0.027	0.028	0.027	0.029	0.033	0.035	0.029	0.033	0.033					
VARV	0.031	0.028	0.026	0.036	0.021	0.015	0.018	0.039	0.036	0.042	0.040				
AKMV	0.049	0.047	0.045	0.050	0.045	0.047	0.049	0.050	0.054	0.049	0.053	0.054			
AKPV	0.088	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.087	0.089	0.087	0.090	0.087	0.087	0.093	0.081		
New World	0.151	0.149	0.149	0.150	0.149	0.151	0.152	0.150	0.152	0.152	0.151	0.154	0.151	0.154	
D															
	VACV	VACV-like	CPXV-like1	CPXV-like2	VARV-like	TATV	CMLV	ABATINO	MPXV	ECTV	IV-Abatino	VARV	AKMV	AKPV	New World
VACV															
VACV-like	0.014														
CPXV-like1	0.019	0.017													
CPXV-like2	0.026	0.024	0.022												
VARV-like	0.019	0.016	0.015	0.025											
TATV	0.022	0.019	0.017	0.028	0.012										
CMLV	0.025	0.022	0.020	0.030	0.015	0.009									
ABATINO	0.030	0.027	0.028	0.028	0.029	0.031	0.033								
MPXV	0.023	0.021	0.025	0.029	0.026	0.028	0.031	0.032							
ECTV	0.031	0.028	0.030	0.031	0.030	0.033	0.035	0.021	0.033						
ECTV-Abatino-like	0.031	0.028	0.029	0.027	0.030	0.033	0.036	0.030	0.033	0.032					
VARV	0.028	0.026	0.024	0.034	0.019	0.014	0.016	0.037	0.034	0.039	0.039				
AKMV	0.049	0.046	0.044	0.050	0.045	0.046	0.048	0.050	0.053	0.049	0.052	0.052			
AKPV	0.088	0.086	0.086	0.087	0.086	0.087	0.090	0.088	0.090	0.086	0.088	0.091	0.081		
New World	0.149	0.149	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.149	0.149	0.150	0.150	0.153	

Table S8. Patristic and genetic distances within CPXV clusters calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV core genomes, whole genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively.

Cluster	Patristic distances						
	ML tree of 62 conserved genes	BI tree of 62 conserved genes	ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes
VACV-like	0.018	0.017	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.017	0.017
CPXV-like1	0.016	0.016	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015
CPXV-like2	0.022	0.022	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.025
VARV-like	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
ECTV-Abatino like	0.012	0.012	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016	0.016
TATV - CMLV	0.011	0.011	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.013
TATV-VARV	0.018	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.021	0.020	0.018

TATV: Taterapox virus, CMLV:Camelpox virus, VARV: Variola virus

Cluster	Genetic distances			
	62 conserved genes	87 OPXV whole genomes	87 OPXV core genomes	OPXV orthologous genes
VACV-like	0.010	0.012	0.012	0.011
CPXV-like1	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008
CPXV-like2	0.012	0.013	0.013	0.014
VARV-like	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001
ECTV-Abatino like	0.008	0.012	0.011	0.011
TATV - CMLV	0.008	0.009	0.009	0.009
TATV-VARV	0.012	0.014	0.015	0.014

TATV: Taterapox virus, CMLV:Camelpox virus, VARV: Variola virus

ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes																					
	1	2			3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10		11						
	CPXV_Ger1 998_2	CPXV_Ger9 1	CPXV_Ger2 007_Vole	CPXV_FM2 292	CPXV_Ger2 014_Human	CPXV_Ger2 015_Cat1	CPXV_Ger1 990_2	CPXV_Hum Lue09_1	CPXV_Che Nova_DK_2 014	CPXV_Swe_ H1	CPXV_Swe_ H2	CPXV_Fra2 001_Nancy	CPXV_FraA miens_2016	CPXV_Catp ox_5sw1	CPXV_Br	CPXV_No_ F2	CPXV_NOR _1994_MAN	CPXV_No_ H1	CPXV_No_ F1	CPXV_Nor wayfeine	
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2																				
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0175																			
2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0203	0.0106																		
	CPXV_FM2292	0.0199	0.0102	0.0064																	
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0214	0.0155	0.0183	0.0179																
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0268	0.0209	0.0237	0.0233	0.0140															
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0313	0.0254	0.0283	0.0278	0.0185	0.0164														
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0332	0.0273	0.0301	0.0297	0.0204	0.0183	0.0149													
	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0361	0.0303	0.0331	0.0327	0.0234	0.0212	0.0178	0.0148												
	CPXV_Swe_H1	0.0361	0.0303	0.0331	0.0327	0.0234	0.0213	0.0178	0.0148	0.0063											
7	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0362	0.0303	0.0331	0.0327	0.0234	0.0213	0.0179	0.0148	0.0063	0.0005										
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0336	0.0278	0.0306	0.0302	0.0209	0.0187	0.0187	0.0206	0.0235	0.0235	0.0236									
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0333	0.0275	0.0303	0.0299	0.0206	0.0185	0.0184	0.0203	0.0232	0.0233	0.0233	0.0136								
	CPXV_Catpox_5sw1	0.0370	0.0311	0.0340	0.0335	0.0242	0.0221	0.0221	0.0239	0.0269	0.0269	0.0269	0.0220	0.0218							
10	CPXV_Br	0.0373	0.0315	0.0343	0.0339	0.0246	0.0224	0.0224	0.0243	0.0272	0.0272	0.0273	0.0224	0.0221	0.0064						
	CPXV_No_F2	0.0356	0.0297	0.0326	0.0321	0.0228	0.0207	0.0207	0.0226	0.0255	0.0255	0.0255	0.0206	0.0204	0.0182	0.0185					
	CPXV_NOR_1994_MAN	0.0356	0.0298	0.0326	0.0322	0.0229	0.0208	0.0207	0.0226	0.0255	0.0255	0.0256	0.0207	0.0204	0.0182	0.0185	0.0001				
	CPXV_No_H1	0.0356	0.0298	0.0326	0.0322	0.0229	0.0208	0.0207	0.0226	0.0255	0.0255	0.0256	0.0207	0.0204	0.0182	0.0185	0.0001	0.0000			
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0357	0.0298	0.0326	0.0322	0.0229	0.0208	0.0207	0.0226	0.0255	0.0256	0.0256	0.0207	0.0204	0.0182	0.0185	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034		
11	CPXV_Norwayfeine	0.0357	0.0298	0.0326	0.0322	0.0229	0.0208	0.0207	0.0226	0.0255	0.0256	0.0256	0.0207	0.0204	0.0182	0.0185	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0000	
BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes																					
	1	2			7		6	5	9	8	11					10		4	3		
	CPXV_Ger1 998_2	CPXV_Ger2 007_Vole	CPXV_FM2 292	CPXV_Ger9 1	CPXV_Swe_ H2	CPXV_Swe_ H1	CPXV_Che Nova_DK_2 014	CPXV_Hum Lue09_1	CPXV_Ger1 990_2	CPXV_FraA miens_2016	CPXV_Fra2 001_Nancy	CPXV_Nor wayfeine	CPXV_No_ F1	CPXV_NOR _1994_MAN	CPXV_No_ H1	CPXV_No_ F2	CPXV_Catp ox_5sw1	CPXV_Br	CPXV_Ger2 015_Cat1	CPXV_Ger2 014_Human	
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2																				
	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0201																			
	CPXV_FM2292	0.0197	0.0063																		
2	CPXV_Ger91	0.0173	0.0105	0.0101																	
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0358	0.0328	0.0324	0.0300																
	CPXV_Swe_H1	0.0358	0.0328	0.0324	0.0300	0.0005															
7	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0358	0.0327	0.0323	0.0300	0.0063	0.0062														
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0329	0.0298	0.0294	0.0271	0.0147	0.0146	0.0146													
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0310	0.0280	0.0276	0.0252	0.0177	0.0177	0.0176	0.0148												
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0330	0.0300	0.0296	0.0272	0.0231	0.0230	0.0230	0.0201	0.0182											
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0333	0.0303	0.0299	0.0275	0.0233	0.0233	0.0204	0.0185	0.0135											
	CPXV_Norwayfeine	0.0353	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0254	0.0253	0.0253	0.0224	0.0205	0.0202	0.0205	0.0000								
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0353	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0254	0.0253	0.0253	0.0224	0.0205	0.0202	0.0205	0.0000								
	CPXV_NOR_1994_MAN	0.0353	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0253	0.0253	0.0253	0.0224	0.0205	0.0202	0.0205	0.0034	0.0034							
	CPXV_No_H1	0.0353	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0253	0.0253	0.0253	0.0224	0.0205	0.0202	0.0205	0.0034	0.0034	0.0000						
11	CPXV_No_F2	0.0352	0.0322	0.0318	0.0294	0.0253	0.0253	0.0252	0.0223	0.0205	0.0202	0.0204	0.0034	0.0034	0.0001	0.0001					
	CPXV_Catpox_5sw1	0.0366	0.0336	0.0332	0.0308	0.0267	0.0266	0.0266	0.0237	0.0218	0.0215	0.0218	0.0180	0.0180	0.0180	0.0180	0.0180				
10	CPXV_Br	0.0369	0.0339	0.0335	0.0311	0.0270	0.0270	0.0269	0.0240	0.0222	0.0219	0.0221	0.0184	0.0184	0.0183	0.0183	0.0183	0.0063			
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0265	0.0235	0.0231	0.0207	0.0211	0.0211	0.0210	0.0181	0.0163	0.0183	0.0186	0.0206	0.0206	0.0206	0.0206	0.0206	0.0205	0.0219	0.0222	
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0211	0.0181	0.0177	0.0153	0.0232	0.0231	0.0231	0.0202	0.0183	0.0204	0.0206	0.0227	0.0227	0.0226	0.0226	0.0226	0.0240	0.0243	0.0139	

ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes																				
	1	2			3	4	5	6	7		8	9	10		11					
	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_HumLue09_1	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_Swe_H1	CPXV_Swe_H2	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Catpox5_wv1	CPXV_Br	CPXV_No_F1	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_No_F2	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	CPXV_No_H1
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2																			
2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0207																		
2	CPXV_FM2292	0.0203	0.0061																	
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0179	0.0102	0.0098																
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0217	0.0181	0.0177	0.0153															
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0271	0.0235	0.0231	0.0207	0.0140														
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0316	0.0279	0.0275	0.0251	0.0184	0.0163													
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0335	0.0299	0.0295	0.0270	0.0203	0.0183	0.0149												
7	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0363	0.0327	0.0323	0.0299	0.0231	0.0211	0.0177	0.0147											
	CPXV_Swe_H1	0.0365	0.0329	0.0325	0.0301	0.0234	0.0213	0.0180	0.0149	0.0062										
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0366	0.0330	0.0326	0.0301	0.0234	0.0214	0.0180	0.0150	0.0063	0.0005									
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0340	0.0304	0.0300	0.0276	0.0209	0.0188	0.0187	0.0207	0.0235	0.0237	0.0238								
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0338	0.0302	0.0298	0.0274	0.0207	0.0186	0.0185	0.0205	0.0233	0.0235	0.0236	0.0137							
10	CPXV_Catpox5_wv1	0.0373	0.0336	0.0332	0.0308	0.0241	0.0220	0.0220	0.0239	0.0267	0.0269	0.0270	0.0221	0.0218						
	CPXV_Br	0.0376	0.0340	0.0336	0.0311	0.0244	0.0223	0.0223	0.0242	0.0270	0.0273	0.0273	0.0224	0.0222	0.0064					
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0359	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0228	0.0207	0.0206	0.0226	0.0254	0.0256	0.0257	0.0207	0.0205	0.0182	0.0185				
	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0359	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0228	0.0207	0.0206	0.0226	0.0254	0.0256	0.0257	0.0207	0.0205	0.0182	0.0185	0.0000			
	CPXV_No_F2	0.0358	0.0322	0.0318	0.0294	0.0227	0.0206	0.0206	0.0225	0.0253	0.0255	0.0256	0.0207	0.0204	0.0181	0.0184	0.0034	0.0034		
	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	0.0359	0.0323	0.0319	0.0294	0.0227	0.0206	0.0206	0.0225	0.0253	0.0256	0.0256	0.0207	0.0205	0.0181	0.0184	0.0034	0.0034	0.0001	
	CPXV_No_H1	0.0359	0.0323	0.0319	0.0294	0.0227	0.0206	0.0206	0.0225	0.0253	0.0256	0.0256	0.0207	0.0205	0.0181	0.0184	0.0034	0.0034	0.0001	0.0000
BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes																				
	2			11					10		9	8	7		6	5	4	3	1	
	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_No_F1	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	CPXV_No_H1	CPXV_No_F2_reversed_	CPXV_Catpox5_wv1	CPXV_Br	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_Swe_H2	CPXV_Swe_H1_reversed_	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_HumLue09_1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_Ger1998_2
2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole																			
	CPXV_FM2292	0.0061																		
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0101	0.0097																	
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0319	0.0315	0.0291																
	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0319	0.0315	0.0291	0.0000															
11	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	0.0319	0.0315	0.0291	0.0034	0.0034														
	CPXV_No_H1	0.0319	0.0315	0.0291	0.0034	0.0034	0.0000													
	CPXV_No_F2_reversed_	0.0318	0.0314	0.0290	0.0034	0.0034	0.0001	0.0001												
10	CPXV_Catpox5_wv1	0.0332	0.0328	0.0304	0.0179	0.0179	0.0179	0.0178												
	CPXV_Br	0.0335	0.0332	0.0308	0.0182	0.0182	0.0182	0.0182	0.0063											
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0298	0.0294	0.0270	0.0202	0.0202	0.0202	0.0202	0.0216	0.0219										
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0300	0.0296	0.0272	0.0205	0.0205	0.0204	0.0204	0.0218	0.0221	0.0135									
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0326	0.0322	0.0298	0.0254	0.0254	0.0253	0.0253	0.0267	0.0270	0.0233	0.0235								
7	CPXV_Swe_H1_reversed_	0.0326	0.0322	0.0298	0.0253	0.0253	0.0253	0.0253	0.0267	0.0270	0.0232	0.0235	0.0005							
	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0323	0.0319	0.0295	0.0251	0.0251	0.0251	0.0250	0.0264	0.0267	0.0230	0.0232	0.0062	0.0062						
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0295	0.0291	0.0267	0.0223	0.0223	0.0223	0.0223	0.0222	0.0236	0.0239	0.0202	0.0204	0.0148	0.0148	0.0145				
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0276	0.0272	0.0248	0.0204	0.0204	0.0203	0.0203	0.0217	0.0220	0.0183	0.0185	0.0178	0.0178	0.0175	0.0147				
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0232	0.0228	0.0204	0.0204	0.0204	0.0204	0.0203	0.0217	0.0221	0.0183	0.0186	0.0211	0.0211	0.0208	0.0180	0.0161			
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0179	0.0175	0.0151	0.0225	0.0225	0.0224	0.0224	0.0238	0.0241	0.0204	0.0206	0.0232	0.0231	0.0229	0.0201	0.0182	0.0138		
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2	0.0205	0.0201	0.0177	0.0355	0.0355	0.0354	0.0354	0.0354	0.0368	0.0371	0.0334	0.0336	0.0362	0.0361	0.0359	0.0331	0.0311	0.0268	0.0214

ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes																				
	1	3	4	6	7	5	9	8	10	11	2									
	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_HumLue09_1	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_SweH2	CPXV_SweH1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_Br	CPXV_Catpox5_wv1	CPXV_Norwayfeline	CPXV_NoF1	CPXV_NoF2	CPXV_NoH1	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_Ger91
1																				
3	0.0223																			
4	0.0280	0.0156																		
6	0.0344	0.0219	0.0193																	
7	0.0374	0.0250	0.0223	0.0156																
	0.0376	0.0252	0.0225	0.0158	0.0069															
	0.0376	0.0251	0.0225	0.0157	0.0069	0.0006														
5	0.0329	0.0204	0.0178	0.0157	0.0188	0.0190	0.0189													
9	0.0349	0.0224	0.0198	0.0213	0.0244	0.0246	0.0245	0.0198												
8	0.0347	0.0222	0.0195	0.0211	0.0242	0.0244	0.0243	0.0196	0.0144											
10	0.0390	0.0266	0.0239	0.0255	0.0286	0.0287	0.0287	0.0240	0.0234	0.0232										
	0.0384	0.0260	0.0233	0.0249	0.0280	0.0281	0.0281	0.0234	0.0228	0.0226	0.0062									
	0.0377	0.0253	0.0226	0.0242	0.0273	0.0274	0.0274	0.0227	0.0221	0.0219	0.0201	0.0195								
11	0.0377	0.0253	0.0226	0.0242	0.0273	0.0274	0.0274	0.0227	0.0221	0.0219	0.0201	0.0195	0.0000							
	0.0375	0.0250	0.0223	0.0239	0.0270	0.0272	0.0271	0.0224	0.0218	0.0216	0.0198	0.0192	0.0037	0.0037						
	0.0375	0.0250	0.0224	0.0239	0.0270	0.0272	0.0271	0.0225	0.0218	0.0216	0.0198	0.0192	0.0037	0.0037	0.0001					
	0.0375	0.0250	0.0224	0.0239	0.0270	0.0272	0.0271	0.0225	0.0218	0.0216	0.0198	0.0192	0.0037	0.0037	0.0001	0.0000				
	0.0213	0.0195	0.0252	0.0316	0.0347	0.0348	0.0348	0.0301	0.0321	0.0319	0.0362	0.0356	0.0349	0.0349	0.0347	0.0347	0.0347			
2	0.0220	0.0202	0.0259	0.0323	0.0353	0.0355	0.0355	0.0308	0.0328	0.0326	0.0369	0.0363	0.0356	0.0356	0.0354	0.0354	0.0354	0.0066		
	0.0185	0.0167	0.0224	0.0288	0.0318	0.0320	0.0320	0.0273	0.0293	0.0291	0.0334	0.0328	0.0321	0.0321	0.0319	0.0319	0.0319	0.0116	0.0123	

Table S10. Genetic distances within CPXV-like 2 estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes (C) and orthologous genes (D).

A																				
	1	2				3	9	4	5	10				8			7	6		
	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_HumLae09_1	CPXV_Br	CPXV_Catpox5swv1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	CPXV_No_F2	CPXV_No_HI	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_No_F1	CPXV_CheNova_DK	CPXV_Swe_HI	CPXV_Swe_H2	CPXV_FraAmiens	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2																			
	CPXV_FM2292	0.0103																		
2	CPXV_Ger91	0.0102	0.0071																	
	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0124	0.0061	0.0080																
	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0124	0.0099	0.0051	0.0101															
3	CPXV_HumLae09_1	0.0130	0.0136	0.0118	0.0133	0.0118														
	CPXV_Br	0.0163	0.0157	0.0143	0.0150	0.0137	0.0126													
	CPXV_Catpox5swv1	0.0165	0.0159	0.0143	0.0154	0.0139	0.0123	0.0053												
4	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0137	0.0148	0.0125	0.0142	0.0119	0.0086	0.0141	0.0140											
	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0133	0.0133	0.0111	0.0127	0.0105	0.0094	0.0129	0.0129	0.0083										
	CPXV_Nor1994_Man	0.0161	0.0152	0.0135	0.0152	0.0132	0.0119	0.0117	0.0117	0.0133	0.0127									
	CPXV_No_F2	0.0160	0.0151	0.0134	0.0151	0.0131	0.0119	0.0116	0.0116	0.0132	0.0126	0.0002								
10	CPXV_No_HI	0.0161	0.0152	0.0135	0.0152	0.0132	0.0119	0.0117	0.0117	0.0133	0.0127	0.0000	0.0002							
	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0158	0.0149	0.0130	0.0149	0.0129	0.0118	0.0116	0.0116	0.0127	0.0124	0.0021	0.0020	0.0021						
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0158	0.0149	0.0130	0.0149	0.0129	0.0118	0.0116	0.0116	0.0127	0.0124	0.0021	0.0020	0.0021	0.0000					
	CPXV_CheNova_DK	0.0148	0.0150	0.0138	0.0150	0.0133	0.0100	0.0119	0.0119	0.0113	0.0116	0.0117	0.0117	0.0117	0.0120	0.0120				
8	CPXV_Swe_HI	0.0145	0.0147	0.0132	0.0142	0.0127	0.0097	0.0117	0.0116	0.0107	0.0112	0.0119	0.0119	0.0119	0.0121	0.0121	0.0049			
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0145	0.0148	0.0132	0.0143	0.0128	0.0098	0.0119	0.0117	0.0108	0.0112	0.0120	0.0120	0.0120	0.0122	0.0122	0.0049	0.0003		
7	CPXV_FraAmiens	0.0151	0.0146	0.0128	0.0147	0.0126	0.0106	0.0121	0.0121	0.0109	0.0115	0.0119	0.0119	0.0119	0.0119	0.0117	0.0115	0.0114		
6	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0134	0.0139	0.0123	0.0136	0.0120	0.0103	0.0132	0.0130	0.0094	0.0105	0.0126	0.0125	0.0126	0.0122	0.0122	0.0112	0.0110	0.0110	0.0098

B																				
	1	2				7		6	4	5	9	8	11				3	10		
	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_Swe_H2	CPXV_Swe_HI	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_HumLae09_1	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_NOR_1994_MAN	CPXV_No_HI	CPXV_No_F2	CPXV_No_F1	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_Catpox_5swv1	CPXV_Br
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2																			
	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0126																		
2	CPXV_FM2292	0.0119	0.0048																	
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0109	0.0077	0.0070																
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0180	0.0170	0.0176	0.0173															
	CPXV_Swe_HI	0.0180	0.0169	0.0175	0.0172	0.0004														
	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0180	0.0173	0.0177	0.0176	0.0047	0.0047													
6	CPXV_HumLae09_1	0.0170	0.0161	0.0164	0.0160	0.0106	0.0105	0.0106												
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0157	0.0138	0.0145	0.0142	0.0126	0.0126	0.0129	0.0108											
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0165	0.0152	0.0154	0.0151	0.0118	0.0117	0.0120	0.0098	0.0094										
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0175	0.0163	0.0164	0.0159	0.0123	0.0123	0.0125	0.0119	0.0118	0.0119									
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0169	0.0148	0.0153	0.0149	0.0130	0.0130	0.0129	0.0119	0.0113	0.0105	0.0101								
	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0182	0.0166	0.0171	0.0168	0.0133	0.0132	0.0130	0.0133	0.0126	0.0131	0.0125	0.0134							
	CPXV_NOR_1994_MAN	0.0184	0.0169	0.0174	0.0171	0.0131	0.0130	0.0127	0.0133	0.0130	0.0133	0.0122	0.0135	0.0026						
	CPXV_No_HI	0.0184	0.0169	0.0174	0.0171	0.0131	0.0130	0.0127	0.0133	0.0130	0.0133	0.0122	0.0135	0.0026	0.0000					
	CPXV_No_F2	0.0183	0.0169	0.0174	0.0171	0.0131	0.0130	0.0127	0.0133	0.0130	0.0133	0.0122	0.0134	0.0026	0.0001	0.0001				
	CPXV_No_F1	0.0182	0.0166	0.0171	0.0168	0.0133	0.0132	0.0130	0.0133	0.0126	0.0131	0.0125	0.0134	0.0000	0.0026	0.0026	0.0026			
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0150	0.0114	0.0116	0.0096	0.0138	0.0137	0.0139	0.0123	0.0097	0.0114	0.0125	0.0121	0.0129	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130	0.0129		
	CPXV_Catpox_5swv1	0.0192	0.0173	0.0179	0.0176	0.0134	0.0132	0.0136	0.0140	0.0137	0.0143	0.0125	0.0140	0.0128	0.0126	0.0126	0.0125	0.0128	0.0143	
10	CPXV_Br	0.0197	0.0175	0.0179	0.0179	0.0138	0.0136	0.0136	0.0144	0.0140	0.0145	0.0125	0.0141	0.0129	0.0126	0.0126	0.0125	0.0129	0.0147	0.0049

C																				
		2		1	11					3	7			6	5	4	9	8	10	
	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_NoF1	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_Nori994_Man	CPXV_No_H1	CPXV_No_F2	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	CPXV_Swe_H2	CPXV_Swe_H1	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_HumLue09_1	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_Catpox5_wvl	CPXV_Br
2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole																			
	CPXV_FM2292	0.0047																		
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0075	0.0068																	
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2	0.0130	0.0123	0.0113																
	CPXV_No-F1	0.0167	0.0171	0.0168	0.0185															
	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0167	0.0171	0.0168	0.0185	0.0000														
11	CPXV_Nori994_Man	0.0170	0.0174	0.0170	0.0186	0.0027	0.0027													
	CPXV_No_H1	0.0170	0.0174	0.0170	0.0186	0.0027	0.0027	0.0000												
	CPXV_No_F2	0.0170	0.0174	0.0170	0.0186	0.0026	0.0026	0.0001	0.0001											
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0113	0.0115	0.0096	0.0153	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130										
	CPXV_Swe_H2	0.0172	0.0177	0.0174	0.0183	0.0135	0.0135	0.0133	0.0133	0.0133	0.0139									
7	CPXV_Swe_H1	0.0171	0.0176	0.0173	0.0183	0.0134	0.0134	0.0132	0.0132	0.0132	0.0139	0.0004								
	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0175	0.0178	0.0177	0.0182	0.0131	0.0131	0.0127	0.0127	0.0127	0.0139	0.0048	0.0048							
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0162	0.0165	0.0160	0.0172	0.0135	0.0135	0.0134	0.0134	0.0134	0.0124	0.0108	0.0107	0.0106						
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0152	0.0154	0.0151	0.0167	0.0132	0.0132	0.0134	0.0134	0.0133	0.0114	0.0120	0.0119	0.0121	0.0099					
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0138	0.0145	0.0141	0.0159	0.0126	0.0126	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130	0.0097	0.0128	0.0127	0.0129	0.0109	0.0094				
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0164	0.0164	0.0160	0.0179	0.0126	0.0126	0.0123	0.0123	0.0123	0.0126	0.0126	0.0126	0.0126	0.0121	0.0120	0.0120			
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0150	0.0154	0.0150	0.0171	0.0135	0.0135	0.0136	0.0136	0.0136	0.0122	0.0132	0.0131	0.0130	0.0120	0.0106	0.0114	0.0102		
10	CPXV_Catpox5_wvl	0.0174	0.0179	0.0176	0.0195	0.0128	0.0128	0.0126	0.0126	0.0126	0.0144	0.0135	0.0134	0.0136	0.0141	0.0143	0.0137	0.0126	0.0142	
	CPXV_Br	0.0176	0.0180	0.0179	0.0200	0.0129	0.0129	0.0126	0.0126	0.0126	0.0148	0.0139	0.0138	0.0136	0.0145	0.0145	0.0141	0.0126	0.0142	0.0049
D																				
		2		1	10	4	11			7			5	6	11		8	9	3	
	CPXV_FM2292	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	CPXV_Ger91	CPXV_Ger1998_2	CPXV_Br	CPXV_Catpox5_wvl	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	CPXV_Nori994_Man	CPXV_NoF2	CPXV_NoH1	CPXV_SweH1	CPXV_SweH2	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	CPXV_Ger1990_2	CPXV_HumLue09_1	CPXV_NoF1	CPXV_NorwayFeline	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	CPXV_Ger2014_Human
	CPXV_FM2292																			
2	CPXV_Ger2007_Vole	0.0049																		
	CPXV_Ger91	0.0079	0.0089																	
1	CPXV_Ger1998_2	0.0124	0.0131	0.0113																
10	CPXV_Br	0.0185	0.0180	0.0186	0.0199															
	CPXV_Catpox5_wvl	0.0185	0.0179	0.0182	0.0195	0.0046														
4	CPXV_Ger2015_Cat1	0.0152	0.0145	0.0149	0.0165	0.0145	0.0139													
	CPXV_Nori994_Man	0.0183	0.0180	0.0181	0.0190	0.0133	0.0130	0.0137												
11	CPXV_NoF2	0.0183	0.0179	0.0181	0.0189	0.0133	0.0129	0.0137	0.0001											
	CPXV_NoH1	0.0183	0.0180	0.0181	0.0190	0.0133	0.0130	0.0137	0.0000	0.0001										
	CPXV_SweH1	0.0181	0.0178	0.0180	0.0187	0.0140	0.0133	0.0133	0.0138	0.0138	0.0138									
7	CPXV_SweH2	0.0182	0.0179	0.0181	0.0187	0.0141	0.0134	0.0133	0.0138	0.0138	0.0138	0.0005								
	CPXV_CheNova_DK_2014	0.0178	0.0177	0.0181	0.0183	0.0138	0.0134	0.0133	0.0128	0.0128	0.0128	0.0051	0.0051							
5	CPXV_Ger1990_2	0.0162	0.0161	0.0159	0.0169	0.0152	0.0147	0.0101	0.0143	0.0143	0.0143	0.0124	0.0124	0.0125						
6	CPXV_HumLue09_1	0.0169	0.0168	0.0164	0.0174	0.0145	0.0140	0.0114	0.0135	0.0136	0.0135	0.0110	0.0112	0.0108	0.0101					
	CPXV_NoF1	0.0181	0.0177	0.0179	0.0189	0.0136	0.0132	0.0135	0.0028	0.0028	0.0028	0.0139	0.0141	0.0133	0.0142	0.0137				
11	CPXV_NorwayFeline	0.0160	0.0160	0.0165	0.0180	0.0123	0.0122	0.0127	0.0028	0.0027	0.0028	0.0132	0.0133	0.0128	0.0134	0.0130	0.0000			
8	CPXV_Fra2001_Nancy	0.0160	0.0156	0.0155	0.0174	0.0145	0.0140	0.0116	0.0139	0.0139	0.0139	0.0134	0.0134	0.0132	0.0110	0.0122	0.0140	0.0131		
9	CPXV_FraAmiens_2016	0.0166	0.0165	0.0161	0.0179	0.0131	0.0129	0.0123	0.0130	0.0130	0.0130	0.0129	0.0129	0.0129	0.0127	0.0125	0.0133	0.0121	0.0105	
3	CPXV_Ger2014_Human	0.0119	0.0118	0.0097	0.0155	0.0156	0.0150	0.0105	0.0140	0.0140	0.0144	0.0145	0.0142	0.0122	0.0127	0.0141	0.0136	0.0129	0.0133	

Table S11. Patristic and genetic distances within ECTV-Abatino-like calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively.

	Patristic distances						
	ML tree of 62 conserved genes	BI tree of 62 conserved genes	ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes
CPXV-No-H2 - CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	0.016	0.016	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.022
CPXV-No-H2 - CPXV_Ger2010_MKY	0.016	0.016	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.021	0.022
CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 - CPXV_Ger2010_MKY	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004
TATV - CMLV	0.011	0.011	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.013
TATV-VARV	0.018	0.018	0.019	0.019	0.021	0.020	0.018

TATV: Taterapox virus, CMLV:Camelpox virus, VARV: Variola virus

	Genetic distances			
	62 conserved genes	87 OPXV whole genomes	87 OPXV core genomes	OPXV orthologous genes
CPXV-No-H2 - CPXV_GerMygEK938_17	0.011	0.016	0.016	0.015
CPXV-No-H2 - CPXV_Ger2010_MKY	0.011	0.016	0.016	0.016
CPXV_GerMygEK938_17 - CPXV_Ger2010_MKY	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
TATV - CMLV	0.008	0.009	0.009	0.009
TATV-VARV	0.012	0.014	0.015	0.014

TATV: Taterapox virus, CMLV:Camelpox virus, VARV: Variola virus

Table S12. Patristic distances within VACV-like calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 62 conserved genes, 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes.

ML tree of 62 conserved genes				
	CPXV_Fin2000_Man_2000	CPXV_Gri_1990	CPXV_HumLit08_1_2008	CPXV_Aus_1999
CPXV_Fin2000_Man_2000				
CPXV_Gri_1990	0.0090			
CPXV_HumLit08_1_2008	0.0181	0.0182		
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0201	0.0203	0.0150	
BI tree of 62 conserved genes				
	CPXV_Fin2000_Man_2000	CPXV_Gri_1990	CPXV_HumLit08_1_2008	CPXV_Aus_1999
CPXV_Fin2000_Man_2000				
CPXV_Gri_1990	0.0089			
CPXV_HumLit08_1_2008	0.0179	0.0180		
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0199	0.0200	0.0148	
ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes				
	CPXV_HumLit08_1	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Gri
CPXV_HumLit08_1				
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0185			
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.0201	0.0185		
CPXV_Gri	0.0207	0.0191	0.0094	
BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_HumLit08_1
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.0092			
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0189	0.0183		
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.0205	0.0199	0.0184	
ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes				
	CPXV_HumLit08_1	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Gri
CPXV_HumLit08_1				
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0186			
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.0201	0.0182		
CPXV_Gri	0.0208	0.0189	0.0094	
BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_HumLit08_1
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.0092			
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0187	0.0180		
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.0205	0.0199	0.0184	
ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes				
	CPXV_HumLit08_1	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Aus_1999
CPXV_HumLit08_1				
CPXV_Gri	0.0194			
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.0179	0.0097		
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.0192	0.0197	0.0182	

Table S13. Genetic distances within VACV-like clade estimated by p-distances from the alignment of 62 conserved genes (A), 87 OPXV whole genomes (B), core genomes(C), orthologous genes (D).

A				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_HumLit08_1
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.006			
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.012	0.012		
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.010	0.010	0.010	
B				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_HumLit08_1	CPXV_Aus_1999
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.007			
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.013	0.012		
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.012	0.012	0.013	
C				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_HumLit08_1	CPXV_Aus_1999
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.007			
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.013	0.012		
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.012	0.012	0.013	
D				
	CPXV_Gri	CPXV_Fin2000_Man	CPXV_Aus_1999	CPXV_HumLit08_1
CPXV_Gri				
CPXV_Fin2000_Man	0.007			
CPXV_Aus_1999	0.012	0.012		
CPXV_HumLit08_1	0.013	0.011	0.013	

Table S14. Patristic and genetic distances within CPXV-like 1 calculated from the Maximum likelihood (ML) and Bayesian inference (BI) trees of 87 OPXV whole genomes, core genomes and orthologous genes and their alignments, respectively.

	Patristic distances						
	ML tree of 62 conserved genes	BI tree of 62 conserved genes	ML tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV whole genomes	ML tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	BI tree of 87 OPXV core genomes	ML tree of OPXV orthologous genes
CPXV_Ger_1971_EPI - CPXV-like 1*	0.0229	0.0219	0.0193	0.0191	0.0187	0.0185	0.0201
TATV - CMLV	0.0114	0.0113	0.0121	0.0120	0.0123	0.0121	0.0130
TATV-VARV	0.0179	0.0175	0.0193	0.0191	0.0207	0.0204	0.0182

* All CPXV-like1 strains without CPXV_Ger_1971_EPI

	Genetic distances			
	OPXV conserved genes	87 OPXV whole genomes	87 OPXV core genomes	OPXV orthologous genes
CPXV_Ger_1971_EPI - CPXV-like 1*	0.0105	0.0102	0.0101	0.0105
TATV - CMLV	0.0080	0.0090	0.0092	0.0094
TATV-VARV	0.0121	0.0141	0.0152	0.0136

* All CPXV-like1 strains without CPXV_Ger_1971_EPI

Paper III

