**Sequence of the *Uvaria afzelii* (Annonaceae) chloroplast DNA**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction**

The pantropical flowering-plant family Annonaceae has around 2400 species from 109 currently accepted genera [[1](#_ENREF_1)]. It is, therefore, one of the largest families within the order Magnoliales. Plants from this family have very distinct phenotypic characteristics (reviewed in [[1](#_ENREF_1)]), so its delimitations are well defined. Additionally, its centre of diversity is in the neotropical regions, with known geological data, and, except for a few agricultural important crop species, it has been subjected to little human selection. Trees and lianas of the family Annonaceae greatly contribute to the diversity in rain forests [[2-4](#_ENREF_2)] and therefore the evolution of these plants may be informative regarding the development of tropical rain forests in general. All the above mentioned factors make this family a very interesting target for phylogenetic studies aiming at understanding the factors responsible for evolution and speciation in basal Angiosperms.

Phylogenetic studies in this family, as in others, have been conducted using a few chloroplast markers [[1](#_ENREF_1), [5-7](#_ENREF_5)] many others, review? These markers are limited to the previous chloroplast DNA sequence available. Nowadays, it is possible to sequence the entire plastomes of these plants and use this larger amount of data to identify more relevant regions for resolving phylogenies of difficult genera [[8-11](#_ENREF_8)]. In fact, in the genome repository GenBank [[12](#_ENREF_12)] there are almost 650 plant chloroplast genome entries, of which around 500 are from flowering plants [[13](#_ENREF_13)]. Despite the increasing number of chloroplast genomes every year until this study, there is no chloroplast genome available for the Annonaceae family so far. Here, we describe the first plastome of an Annonaceae tree: *Uvaria afzelii*, which belongs to the Uvaria clade, within the long-branch clade [[14](#_ENREF_14)]. *Uvaria afzelii* is a tree or spreading shrub growing up to 5 metres tall, distributed from Guinea to southern Nigeria; the fruit is edible and leaves, bark and roots are used for their medicinal properties [[15](#_ENREF_15)]. Knowing the chloroplast genome of Annonaceae species will allow to reconstruct more easily chloroplast genomes from other Annonaceae plants, or to make baits for targeting enrichment sequencing approaches.

**Materials and Methods**

Sample preparation

Fresh leave material from *Uvaria afzelii* was collected from a green-house grown tree. The chloroplast isolation kit (Sigma, Saint-Louis, USA) was used according to the manufacturer’s instructions. DNA extraction from the chloroplasts was performed with the GenElute plant genomic DNA miniprep kit (Sigma, ). The obtained DNA was sent to Macrogen (Korea) for paired-end library construction and sequencing on a HiSeq 2000 (Illumina) instrument, following the company’s protocol.

Sequencing analysis

Quality control was performed with FastQC and Fastq Screen. Geneious software was used to filter bad quality bases and/or reads and iterative mapping steps. In the first mapping step, reads were mapped to the draft sequence of a chloroplast of *Miliusa cuneata*, an Asian Annonaceae species (kindly provided by Tatiana Arias, manuscript in preparation), to have a draft of the *U. afzelii* plastome. In the following 20 steps, consecutive rounds of mapping to the obtained sequences were performed. Remaining gaps were resolved in two ways: a) *in silico* primer walking using the *de novo* assembler PRICE [[16](#_ENREF_16)] on previously filtered data from the software Trim Galore! (ref, but check exactly which one filter program I used in the end!); b) PCRs after primers flanking the gaps followed by automated Sanger sequencing.

Gene annotation and chloroplast circular map design

Gene annotation was performed in Geneious version 6.06 ([http://www.geneious.com](http://www.geneious.com/), [[17](#_ENREF_17)]) upon alignment of the complete chloroplast sequences of Liriodendron tulipifera (genbank accession number: NC\_008326.1) and Magnolia kwangsiensis (genbank accession number: NC\_015892.1) using the MAFF package, and in DOGMA [[18](#_ENREF_18)]. The exact boundaries between the inverted repeats and the single copies were determined manually. GenomeVx [[19](#_ENREF_19)] was used to draw the circular map of the chloroplast genome.

**Results and discussion**

*Uvaria afzelii* is a tree or spreading shrub growing up to 5 metres tall, distributed from Guinea to southern Nigeria; the fruit is edible and leaves, bark and roots are used for their medicinal properties [[15](#_ENREF_15)] and it belongs to the pantropical Annonaceae family. In this study we report its complete chloroplast genome, which is the first completely annotated Annonaceae plastome. The results of the quality control program Fastq screen show only a small percentage of the whole-reads belong to the chloroplast sequence (figure 1). Less than 0.5% of the total number of reads was aligned to the plastome of *Miliusa cuneata*, which was used as a reference. The majority of the reads do not correspond to human, mouse or insects’ DNA, therefore they might be from nuclear DNA. After assembly of the reads by mapping to the reference chloroplast of *Miliusa cuneata* followed by several iteration mapping steps, the percentage of used reads was of x%. The few gaps (parts with coverage below 2x) were identified and resolved using *in silico* primer walking and PCR followed by automated Sanger sequencing method.

The complete chloroplast genome of *Uvaria afzelii* is around 157530bp and it is shown in figure 2. It is noteworthy that small indels, as well as SNPs, were observed in heteroplasmy, so the actual genome size varies slightly from the given length. The inverted repeats (IRs) have 28002 and 28095 bp and are separated by the small single-copy region (20010bp) and the long single-copy region (91296 bp). We found 139 genes in the chloroplast DNA of *Uvaria afzelii*, 21 of which are completely duplicated and 2 partially duplicated within the IRs. The most noteworthy features of its chloroplast genome is an inversion within the LSC (57722 - 66951 bp) compared to the chloroplasts of *Magnolia kwansiensis*, *Liriodendron tulipifera* and *Miliusa cuneate(check again!)*. Furthermore, it is important to remind that despite the chloroplast representation in figure 2 showing a circular molecule and the fact that Genbank accessions mention that chloroplast genome is circular, the chloroplast DNA mostly has a complex and branched form, and the circular form is only present in small amounts [[20](#_ENREF_20)]. Probably due to this particularity of the plastome molecule, PCRs over the IRb/LSC boundary, where the chloroplast should circularize, were not successful.

Chloroplast DNA is the most gene-rich molecule of the three genomes of a plant cell, with more than 100 genes, spanning over 100-200 kb, that code for the entire machinery necessary for the photosynthesis process. There is a relatively high degree of conservation in size, structure, gene content, and linear order of the chloroplast genes in land plants (ref). In chloroplasts, DNA replication is cell-cycle independent and the number of chloroplast copies present per cell varies. In rapidly dividing leaf tissue there are around hundred copies, but later in leaf development and plant growth, the number of copies decreases to about 20-30 (refs). In addition, each chloroplast may contain up to 300 copies of the genome [[21](#_ENREF_21)]. Despite the abundance of the chloroplast genome, genome skimming (shallow sequencing) experiments show that only a small percentage of the reads actually map to the chloroplast. So, targeting enrichment sequencing is a very promising technique to sequence the plastome from many different species. However, this technique requires some *a priori* knowledge of the genome sequence, such as the genome of closely related species. The sequencing of Annonaceae chloroplasts, such as the one here presented will now allow for the construction of (home-made) chloroplast-target probes for the sequencing of several complete chloroplast genomes and will allow resolving the phylogenies of several Annonaceae genera.

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