Genomic analysis of the causative agents of coccidiosis in domestic chickens

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Genomic analysis of the causative agents of coccidiosis in domestic chickens


Global production of chickens has trebled in the past two decades and they are now the most important source of dietary animal protein worldwide. Chickens are subject to many infectious diseases that reduce their performance and productivity. Coccidiosis, caused by apicomplexan protozoa of the genus *Eimeria*, is one of the most important poultry diseases. Understanding the biology of *Eimeria* parasites underpins development of new drugs and vaccines needed to improve global food security. We have produced annotated genome sequences of all seven species of *Eimeria* that infect domestic chickens, which reveals the full extent of previously described repeat-rich and repeat-poor regions and show that these parasites possess the most repeat-rich proteomes ever described. Furthermore, while no other apicomplexan has been found to possess retrotransposons, *Eimeria* is home to a family of chromoviruses. Analysis of *Eimeria* genes involved in basic biology and host-parasite interaction highlights adaptations to a relatively simple developmental life cycle and a complex array of co-expressed surface proteins involved in host cell binding.

Chickens are the world’s most popular food animal, and the development of improved drugs and vaccines to combat poultry diseases are vital for worldwide food security. Protozoan parasites of the genus *Eimeria* cause coccidiosis, a ubiquitous intestinal disease of livestock that has major impacts on animal welfare and agro-economics. It is a particularly acute problem in poultry where infections can cause high mortality and are linked to poor performance and productivity. *Eimeria* belong to the phylum Apicomplexa, which includes thousands of parasitic protozoa such as *Plasmodium* species that cause malaria, and the widely disseminated zoonotic pathogen *Toxoplasma gondii*. *Eimeria* species have a direct oral-fecal life cycle that facilitates their rapid spread through susceptible hosts especially when these are housed at high densities (for review, see Chapman et al. 2013). Unsurprisingly, resistance to anticoccidial drugs can evolve rapidly under these conditions and there is a continuing need to develop novel therapies (Blake et al. 2011).

More than 1200 species of *Eimeria* are described (Chapman et al. 2013) and virtually all of these are restricted to a single host species. Domestic chickens (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) can be infected by seven *Eimeria* species, each of which colonizes a preferred region of the intestine, causing symptoms of differing severity (Table 1; Shirley et al. 2005). Five species induce gross pathological lesions and four of these are the most important in terms of global disease burden and economic impact (*E. acervulina*, *E. maxima*, *E. necatrix*, and *E. tenella*) (Williams 1998).

**Results**

**Genome sequences of the *Eimeria* species that infect domestic chickens**

We generated annotated genome sequences of all seven species of *Eimeria* that infect domestic chickens. For *E. tenella*, a high quality reference genome incorporating annotation-directed manual improvements for targeted regions was produced for the Houghton strain (tier 1) (Supplemental Table S1) as well as Illumina genomic sequencing data for the Wisconsin and Nippon strains. For *E. maxima*, *E. acervulina*, and *E. necatrix*, we produced draft genomes with automated post-assembly improvements (tier 2) (Supplemental Table S1), and for *E. brunetti*, *E. mitis*, and *E. praecox*, we produced...
There is notably less synteny between the genome of 
E. necatrix than those of 
E. tenella and 
E. acervulina, and across the genomes of all 
Eimeria species (Fig. 1A). In support of this phylogeny, 
there is extensive synteny between the genomes of 
E. maxima and 
E. brunetti (Fig. 1A). In support of this phylogeny, 
there is extensive synteny between the genomes of 
E. tenella and 
E. necatrix (i.e., many orthologous genes in the same order across contigs, with only a small number of rearrangements) (Fig. 1B). There is notably less synteny between the genome of 
E. tenella and those of 
E. maxima and 
E. acervulina with much of the chromosome structure rearranged, although presumably retaining the same number of chromosomes. Synteny between the genomes of 
E. tenella and 
Toxoplasma gondii was nonexistent, with no more than three orthologs (ETH_00031645, ETH_00031660, and ETH_ 
00031665) found in the same order.

### Eimeria chromosomes display a banded pattern of repeat-poor and repeat-rich regions

Analysis of 
E. tenella chromosome 1 revealed alternating regions of repeat-poor (P) and repeat-rich (R) sequences (Ling et al. 2007). We now find this feature is conserved in all chromosomes of 
E. tenella and across the genomes of all 
Eimeria species examined (Fig. 1B). The short tandem repeat (STR) content of each genome shows a bimodal distribution with a high frequency peak close to zero and a broad, low frequency peak with a mean ~20%–30% (Supplemental Fig. S1A). This confirms a bipartite structure for the genome. Any region of the genome is either repeat-rich (R; which we define as having a repeat density >5%) or essentially repeat-free (P).

The precise repeat content differs between species, with 
E. tenella having fewer R regions than other species. Of note, 
E. necatrix is more repeat-rich in regions syntenic with 
E. tenella as well as across the genome generally (Supplemental Fig. S1B). Fifty-three point five percent of 
E. tenella genes were found in repeat-rich regions, suggesting that there is no preference for repeats to occur in gene-poor regions.

**Eimeria** protein-coding sequences are extremely rich in homopolymeric amino acid repeats (HAARs)

STRs can result in strings of single amino acids within predicted protein sequences. The extent of homopolymeric amino acid repeats (HAARs) is greater in 
Eimeria than in any other organism sequenced to date (Fig. 2A) and the distribution of homopolymer types is quite different from even closely related organisms such as 
T. gondii and 
P. falciparum. The most common STR in 
Eimeria species is the trinucleotide CAG (Fig. 2B), which occurs preferentially in coding sequences (Fig. 2C). CAG can potentially encode alanine (A), glutamine (Q), serine (S), cysteine (C), and leucine (L), but in 
E. tenella repeats are rarely translated as C or L. They are found preferentially as A or Q (Fig. 2D). HAARs of this type, encoding strings of at least seven amino acids, occur in 57% of 
E. tenella genes, with an average of 4.3 copies per gene. We confirmed that repeats are transcribed and translated in 
E. tenella, with the data predicting similar proportions of each HAAR type to that found in the genome (Fig. 2D).

An analysis of gene ontology terms showed that genes containing HAARs did not cluster in any particular functional class. However, those involved in information processing tasks such as translation, chromatin assembly, gene expression, and DNA metabolism had fewer HAARs than expected by chance (Supplemental Table S4). Indeed genes conserved across the eukaryotes had an overall lower than average repeat content (2.5% vs. 4.68% for all 
E. tenella genes). Proteins that are generally considered to be involved in host-parasite interactions such as 
SAGs, ROP kinases, and MICA had even fewer HAARs on average than those conserved across eukaryotes (0%, 1.88%, and 1.66%, respectively, vs. 2.5%).

We hypothesized that because HAARs are so common in 
Eimeria species, they are unlikely to interfere with protein structure and function. Indeed only 3.2% of 
E. tenella HAARs (687 of 21,191) occur in Pfam domains, which make up 12.4% of 
E. tenella protein sequences. By examining conserved proteins with known 3D structures, we found that serine and glutamine HAARs tend to be insertions in loop or turn regions with medium to high solvent.

### Table 1. 
**Eimeria** species biology and genomic 
sag repertoire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Site of development</th>
<th>Disease type</th>
<th>Pathogenicity</th>
<th>sagA</th>
<th>sagB</th>
<th>sagC</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pseudogene fragments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>E. praecox</em></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. maxima</em></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. acervulina</em></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. brunetti</em></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>+++++</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. mitis</em></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. necatrix</em></td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>+++++</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>E. tenella</em></td>
<td>Caeca</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers of 
sag genes in each 
Eimeria genome, their breakdown into subfamilies, and the numbers of 
sag pseudogenes (other species). (SI) Small intestine; (M) malabsorptive disease; (H) hemorrhagic disease. Levels of pathogenicity are derived from Long et al. (1976).

*Gametogony occurs in the caeca.

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Coccidiosis genomics
accessibility, suggesting they do not affect protein folding (Supplemental Table S5). Alanine HAARs often align to helical regions and may result in very similar local structure (Perutz et al. 2002). Furthermore, homology modeling showed that HAARs tend to be located on the outside of proteins, away from regions involved in domain–domain interactions and active sites (Supplemental Fig. S2).

Comparative genomics of the Coccidia and wider Apicomplexa

Eight thousand, six hundred and three protein-coding genes are predicted in the *E. tenella* assembly, significantly more than the 7286 found in the related coccidian *T. gondii* (Supplemental Table S1), despite *T. gondii* having a nuclear genome that is ~20% (10Mb) larger. By transcriptome sequencing we identified expression of 76% of predicted *E. tenella* genes (6700) across four developmental life stages (unsporulated oocyst, sporulated oocyst, sporozoite, and merozoite). The median sequence identity between *E. tenella* and *T. gondii* orthologous protein sequences was 39.7%, suggesting a large amount of sequence divergence between the two.

We identified several novel *Eimeria*-specific gene families (Supplemental Table S6; Supplemental Data set S1). We found that two of these families (*esf1* and *esf2*) have higher *K*<sub>a</sub>/*K*<sub>s</sub> ratios than other genes (Supplemental Fig. S3; Supplemental Data set S2). This suggests that they may be under diversifying selection and could be important for host–parasite interactions.

The rhoptry organelles of *T. gondii* contain 30–50 kinases and pseudokinases (ROPKs) (Peixoto et al. 2010; Talevich and Kannan 2013), some of which are involved in remodeling the intermediate host cell and protecting the parasite against host defenses (Saeij et al. 2007; Fentress et al. 2010). Recent analysis showed that *E. tenella* has 28 ropk genes, including a subfamily not found in *T. gondii* (Talevich and Kannan 2013). We were able to identify orthologs of all these genes in *E. necatrix*; however, there is divergence in the more distantly related *Eimeria* species (Supplemental Table S7; Supplemental Data set S1). The overall protein kinase (PK) complement of *Eimeria* species (63–84 PK) is smaller than that of *T. gondii* (128 PK) (Peixoto et al. 2010) and *Plasmodium* species (85–99 PK) (Ward et al. 2004; Anamika et al. 2005; Miranda-Saavedra et al. 2012). This is not due solely to fewer ropks and fiks (an apicomplexan family highly expanded in *Plasmodium*) but also a reduction in CMGC kinases (the group which includes cyclin-dependent kinases) (Supplemental Table S7). It is proposed that CMGC kinases have evolved independently within the Apicomplexa to provide specialized functions related to lifecycle transitions (Talevich et al. 2011). Reduction of CMGC kinases in *Eimeria*, which has a simple life cycle and no intermediate host, may be an example of this specialization.
Metabolism is well conserved between *Eimeria* and *Toxoplasma* (Supplemental Fig. S4; Supplemental Data set S3), with the clearest difference being additional enzymes involved in *Eimeria* carbohydrate metabolism. Three of these catalyze reactions in the mannitol cycle, known to be essential for survival of *Eimeria* parasites and not present in other coccidian lineages (Schmatz et al. 1989; Liberator et al. 1998).

The apicoplast is a symbiotic plastid present in most apicomplexans and known to be essential for survival of *T. gondii* (He et al. 2001). Most ancestral plastid genes have moved into the nuclear genome but many of the gene products are post-translationally imported into the apicoplast. The mechanism of import to the apicoplast is poorly understood but two proteins, Tic20 and Tic22, are thought to mediate crossing of the innermost membrane (van Dooren et al. 2008; Lim and McFadden 2010). Genes encoding Tic20 and Tic22 are not found in the *Eimeria* species studied, suggesting either a distinct mechanism for crossing the apicoplast inner membrane or a change in apicoplast function in *Eimeria*.

Apicomplexan genomes have a paucity of common eukaryotic transcription factors (Coulson et al. 2004); instead, the major regulators of stage-specific gene expression are likely to be genes containing DNA-binding domains of the ApiAP2 family (Balaji et al. 2005; Campbell et al. 2010). In *Eimeria* the number of genes containing ApiAP2 domains was found to vary from 44 to 54 (Supplemental Fig. S5; Supplemental Data set S1). We clustered genes containing ApiAP2 DNA-binding domains from apicomplexans and representative outgroups and identified 121 orthologous groups (Supplemental Fig. S6). We found 21 *Eimeria*-specific ApiAP2 groups, 22 further

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**Figure 2.** Characterization of HAARs in *Eimeria* protein sequences. (A) *Eimeria tenella* has a greater number of HAARs than any other genome sequenced and a distinct distribution of HAAR types compared with other repeat-rich genomes, including *Plasmodium falciparum* and the more closely related and not especially repeat-rich *Toxoplasma*. (B) The most common STRs in *Eimeria* genomes are variations on CAG. The second most common are variations on a telomere repeat which we call telomere-like repeats due to their locations throughout the genome. (C) CAG repeats occur in protein-coding regions of the genome more than expected. (D) CAG repeats can encode strings of one of five amino acids. In *Eimeria* they tend to encode alanine and glutamine more often than expected, serine as often as expected, and leucine and cysteine more rarely than expected. A very similar pattern is observed in a limited selection of *E. tenella* peptides derived from proteomics experiments.
groups shared by *Eimeria* and other Coccidia, and five pan-apicomplexan clusters (apiap2_og_336, apiap2_og_90, apiap2_og_1428, apiap2_og_546, apiap2_og_456) (Supplemental Data set S1). This suggests that although *Eimeria* and other species did not robustly support a closer relationship with either plant/algal or predicted reverse transcriptases from chromoviruses (Kordis 2005). Phylogenetic analysis of Table S8). Retrotransposons cannot have been transferred horizontally from the host, because the chicken genome does not contain chromoviruses (Kordis 2005). Phylogenetic analysis of predicted reverse transcriptases from *Eimeria* and other species did not robustly support a closer relationship with either plant/algal or vertebrate/fungal lineages (Supplemental Fig. S7).

**Eimeria-specific surface antigen genes**

All apicomplexan genomes examined to date possess gene families encoding antigenic proteins that are expressed on the surface of invasive stages and thought to be important in interaction with the host immune system (Spence et al. 2013). The principal surface antigen gene family in *E. tenella* is *sag*, which encodes single-domain, membrane-bound proteins tethered by GPI anchors to the surface of invasive sporozoites and merozoites (Tabares et al. 2004). In *E. tenella* the majority of *sag* genes are tandemly arrayed in four clusters, each on a different chromosome (Fig. 3A). There are three subfamilies of *sag* genes: *sagA* is common to all species; *sagB* is restricted to *E. tenella* and *E. necatrix*; and *sagC* is restricted to the other species, being most expanded in *E. brunetti* and *E. mitis* (Table 1). All subfamilies encode signal peptides and addition sites for GPI anchors, but the *sagC* extracellular domain contains only four conserved cysteines whereas *sagA* and *sagB* have six. The *sagB* and *sagC* genes each have five exons, suggesting they may be more closely related to each other than to *sagA* genes, which have four exons. The presence of *sagA* genes in all the *Eimeria* species suggests that these provide a core function, while *sagB* and *sagC* genes may provide functions specific to the different clades.

One core function of SAG proteins may be attachment to host cells prior to parasite invasion. In *T. gondii* the *srs* genes play a role in primary attachment and it is known that *E. tenella* *sagA1* binds mammalian cells (Jahn et al. 2009). We found that multiple SAGA, but not SAGB proteins, were able to bind cultured cells (Fig. 3B), suggesting that attachment is a potential function of the *sagA* family. It is of key importance in designing vaccines to understand the array of antigens presented to the host immune system. Using single-cell RT-PCR we found that multiple members of the *sagA* and *sagB* subfamilies were co-expressed in individual sporozoites and merozoites of *E. tenella* (Fig. 3C). Thus the parasite likely presents a complex set of antigens to the host, much like *T. gondii* SRSs, rather than a single one like *Plasmodium falciparum* PfEMP1. Analysis of stage-specific *sag* expression in populations of clonal *E. tenella* suggests that the expressed repertoire is most complex in second-generation merozoites (Fig. 3D). A small number of *sagA* genes peak in expression at each stage; *sagB* genes all peak in expression in second-generation merozoites, suggesting that they may be particularly important during the later, pathogenic, stages of infection (Fig. 3D).

The total number of *sag* genes varies greatly between species (Table 1). This may simply reflect the overall phylogeny (see Fig. 1A), but it is notable that species that cause the most severe pathologies have higher numbers of *sags*. Thus *E. praecox*, which causes only superficial damage and is widely regarded as the least pathogenic (Allen and Jenkins 2010), has only 19 *sags*, whilst *E. tenella*, *E. necatrix*, and *E. brunetti*, which develop deep in the mucosa causing tissue damage, inflammation, and intestinal hemorrhage (McDonald and Shirley 1987), have 89, 119, and 105 *sags*, respectively. However, *E. mitis*, with the greatest number of *sags* (172), does not fit this pattern; like all species it can impair bird performance and productivity but does not cause gross lesions in the intestine. It is also the case that species which induce potent immunity against reinfection after exposure to small numbers of parasites (*E. maxima*, *E. praecox*, and *E. acervulina*) have the lowest numbers of *sags* whilst those that are least immunogenic (*E. necatrix* and *E. tenella*) have high numbers; however, *E. brunetti* and *E. mitis*, which are of intermediate immunogenicity, do not fit this pattern.

We used remote homology detection to explore the evolutionary origin of the *sag* family. The cysteine-rich secretory protein family (CAP), found in a wide range of eukaryotes (Gibbs et al. 2008), had low but significant sequence similarity to *sags* (Fig. 3E). The most similar CAP-domain containing proteins were those of *T. gondii*, suggesting that *sag* genes are likely derived from CAP-domain containing genes in the common ancestor of *E. tenella* and *T. gondii*, rather than by horizontal transfer from another species such as the host. Recent protein structural evidence shows that the *srs* surface antigen gene family in *T. gondii* is related to a small group of cysteine-rich proteins in *Plasmodium* (Arredondo et al. 2012). These results suggest distinct evolutionary origins for the principle surface antigen gene families of the relatively closely related *T. gondii* and *E. tenella*.

**Discussion**

Control of pathogens such as *Eimeria* species has been essential for development of modern poultry production and is increasingly important for providing global food security. The availability of genomic resources for the seven *Eimeria* species that infect domestic chickens will underpin development and longevity of new anticoccidial drugs and vaccines.

The most striking feature of the *Eimeria* genomes is the disruption of more than half of all protein coding sequences with HAARs. Across every chromosome of each species we found regions where 20%–30% of the sequence comprised simple tandem repeats, interspersed with relatively repeat-free regions. Although a variety of different simple repeats were found outside of coding regions, those within coding regions were almost always based on runs of the trinucleotide CAG. We examined whether these repeats might have a particular function in the proteome but could find no association with known functional groups and showed that the repeats localized to structurally neutral regions within proteins. We hypothesize that poly-CAG is the most benign and easily evolvable coding repeat and that there is sufficient pressure on maintaining repeat banding to allow for frequent deleterious mutations. The repeat regions might function at the DNA level,
perhaps in tertiary structure or gene regulation, and be selected for functional neutrality at the protein level, as we have observed. This hypothesis could be explored by chromatin immunoprecipitation and chromosome conformation capture studies. An alternative hypothesis is that rapid mutation of coding sequences provides evolutionary advantages, which would suggest selection for re-

Figure 3. Analysis of the principle family of surface antigens in *Eimeria* spp. (A) The four loci of tandemly repeated *sag* genes in *E. tenella* are shown with each *sag* gene represented by bars describing the relative expression levels in four stages of the lifecycle. Gene names used previously in the literature are shown where appropriate. Arrows indicate direction of transcription. (B) We found that, of those tested, SAG proteins from subfamily A bound host cells, but those from family B did not. (U) Unwashed; (W) washed; (B) bound. (C) Expression of multiple *sag* genes in individual cells of *E. tenella* was detected using RT-PCR. Ten cells were analyzed for each of eight genes in both sporozoites and second-generation merozoites. (Lanes 1–10) Single-cell multiplex test RT-PCRs. Controls: (lane P1) positive, cDNA library multiplex RT-PCR; (lane N1) negative, no template multiplex RT-PCR; (lane P2) positive, single sporozoite, single target RT-PCR; (lane N2) negative, single sporozoite, single target PCR with no RT. (D) Expression values for all *E. tenella* *sag* genes were clustered and those clusters ordered by mean peak expression, showing that most genes peak in the second-generation merozoite. Where appropriate, genes are annotated with their genomic locus as defined in (A). (E) Patterns of homology for *Eimeria* *sag* and *Toxoplasma srs* genes suggest that while *Toxoplasma* acquired the precursors to its key family of 6-cys surface antigens from a horizontal gene transfer of metazoan ephrin, *Eimeria* has derived them from the cysteine-rich secretory proteins, antigen 5, and pathogenesis-related 1 protein (CAP) family already found in Apicomplexa. Thin, single-headed arrows show phylogenetic paths for CAP- and ephrin-related domains, while bold arrows show the best evidence for the closest relatives of the *sag* and *srs* families. Numbers indicate gene frequencies for each family.
peats at the protein level. Although the HAARs we examined appeared to be neutral in their effects on protein structures (pre-
sumably deleterious changes are lost in the population), occasional
mutations may have been sufficiently beneficial to support the
heavy burden. However, genes known to be involved in host–
parasite interaction were found to be relatively protected from
HAARs, and why repeats should have appeared in a banded pattern
across chromosomes is not clear in this scenario.

We have characterized, for the first time, retrotransposon-like
elements in an apicomplexan. Disruption or replacement of genes
by transposon-mediated transgenesis holds the potential to im-
prove our molecular arsenal for unraveling parasite biology, and
also for developing attenuated vaccines. This approach has been
attempted in *Eimeria* species using piggyBAC transposons; however,
rates of insertion of these elements are low and target particular
sequences (Su et al. 2012). Random, high-frequency insertions of
native transposons would allow high throughput knockout
screens, accelerating our understanding of *Eimeria* biology. The
retrotransposons identified here are at best partially degraded and
it is not clear whether they are actively retrotransposed. However,
its opens the possibility that intact retrotransposons might be
present in more distantly related *Eimeria* species.

To develop cheap, effective new vaccines for coccidiosis, we
must understand how the parasites interact with the host immune
system. Key to this may be the *sag* family of genes encoding surface
antigens, some of which have been shown in vitro to induce pro-
inflammatory cytokine responses (Chow et al. 2011). Whilst some
*sags* are shared across all the *Eimeria* species studied, others are clade-
specific. We found multiple *sags* to be co-expressed on the surface
of infective parasites, suggesting that the avian immune system is
presented with a diverse array of related epitopes, which could poten-
tially aggravate inflammation. Parasites that rely on a healthy
host for vector transmission are thought to use diverse arrays of re-
lated antigens to reduce pathogenicity (Spence et al. 2013) but for
*Eimeria*, which has a simple oral-fecal life cycle, the induction of
inflammation leading to diarrhea could increase parasite transmission.
*Eimeria* *sag* genes have evolved from the CAP-domain superfamily
of cysteine-rich secretory proteins and are unrelated to the major sur-
face antigens of other Apicomplexa. CAP domains are also found on
the surface of parasitic helminths where they are proposed to interact
with host immune systems (Chalmers and Hoffmann 2012).

**Methods**

**Parasite cultivation**

The Houghton (H) strains of *E. acervulina*, *E. brunetti*, *E. mitis*, *E. necatrix*, *E. praecox*, and *E. tenella*, and the Weybridge (W) strain
of *E. maxima*, were used for principle sequencing. The H strains
were isolated at the Houghton Poultry Research Station (UK) and
are the progeny of single oocyst infections. The *E. maxima* W strain
was isolated at the Weybridge Central Veterinary Laboratory from a
single oocyst infection. The *Wisconsin* (Wis) (McDougal and
Jeffers 1976) and *Nippon-2* (Nt2) *E. tenella* lines were used for
comparative analyses. All parasites were propagated in vivo in 3- to
7-wk-old Light Sussex chickens under specific pathogen free (SPF)
conditions at the Institute for Animal Health or Royal Veterinary
College and purified using established methods (Long et al. 1976).

**Summary of genome sequencing and assembly**

Genomic DNA was prepared from purified sporulated oocysts. We
used Sanger capillary sequencing data previously generated for
*E. tenella*, described in Ling et al. (2007) and deposited in the Trace
Archive (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Taxaces; CENTER_PROJECT-
“EMER”). These paired reads had a range of insert sizes to a com-
bined coverage of ~8×. *E. tenella* Illumina GAIIx sequencing li-
brates were prepared with insert sizes of 300 bp and 3 kb and either
54 bp or 76 bp paired-end reads with a combined coverage of
~160×. Capillary reads were assembled using ARACHNE v3.2 using
default parameters (Batzoglou et al. 2002). IMAGE (Tsai et al. 2010)
was used to fill gaps in scaffolds and extend contigs with Illumina reads,
running six iterations (three with k-mer = 31 and three with k-
mer = 27), mapping with BWA (Li and Durbin 2009). The con-
sensus sequence from the ARACHNE-IMAGE assembly was corrected
with Illumina reads using icORN (Otto et al. 2010). All Illumina reads
which did not map to this assembly were assembled using Velvet
(Zerbino and Birney 2008) and these contigs were added to the
final assembly.

For tier 2 (*E. necatrix* H, *E. maxima* W, and *E. acervulina* H) and
tier 3 (*E. mitis* H, *E. praecox* H, and *E. brunetti* H) genomes, 500-bp
Illumina TruSeq libraries were prepared and sequenced as 76-bp
paired-end reads on an Illumina HiSeq 2000 platform to a depth of
199× theoretical genome coverage for *E. acervulina*, 288× for
*E. maxima*, 559× for *E. necatrix*, 143× for *E. brunetti*, 520× for
*E. mitis*, and 102× for *E. praecox* as in Kozarewa et al. (2009). Reads
were assembled using Velvet (Zerbino and Birney 2008), scaffold-
ing was performed with SPSPACE (Boetzer et al. 2011), and gaps
were filled using IMAGE (Tsai et al. 2010).

Full methodological details of genome sequencing, assembly,
and annotation are provided in the Supplemental Material.

**Whole-genome phylogeny**

Each of 814 one-to-one ortholog groups shared across the seven
*Eimeria* species with *Toxoplasma gondii* ME49 was aligned using
MAFFT v7 (Katoh and Standley 2013). Highly variable sites were
trimmed using trimal (Capella-Gutierrez et al. 2009) ("automated1"
option). The alignments were concatenated using FASconCAT
(Kuck and Meusemann 2010) and the resulting alignment used to
construct a maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree using RAXML
with the model PROTGAMMALG4XF (Stamatakis et al. 2005; Le
et al. 2012), bootstrap *n* = 100. Bootstrap percentage support is
shown along the branching nodes. The tree was rooted using
*T. gondii* as the outgroup.

**Transcriptome sequencing and analysis of *Eimeria tenella***

Unsporulated oocysts (two biological replicates), sporulated ooc-
ysts (single replicate), purified sporozoites (single replicate), and
second-generation merozoites (single replicate) of the *E. tenella*
H strain were selected for transcriptome analysis after harvest and
purification as described previously (Novaes et al. 2012). Total RNA
was extracted from oocysts using a Qiagen RNaseasy kit (Qiagen) and
from sporozoites and second-generation merozoites using the
Qiagen RNaseasy Animal Cells purification protocol as described by
the manufacturer. All samples were DNase-treated using the Qiagen
RNase-free DNase kit during RNA purification.

Library preparation, sequencing protocols, and data process-
ing were the same as for Reid et al. (2012). For *sag* gene expression
clustering in Figure 3D, mean RPKM values were taken for
unsporulated oocyst samples and clustering performed using
MBClust3r.seq with 10 clusters (Si et al. 2014). Clusters were or-
dered by the stage of peak expression across each cluster. The
figure was drawn with Circos (Krzywinski et al. 2009).

**Synteny analysis**

MCScanX (Wang et al. 2012) was used to determine regions of
synteny between pairs of species based on the order of pairwise
orthologs identified using OrthoMCL (Li et al. 2003). Default values were used except for the MATCH_SIZE option, which was set to 3 for comparison of E. tenella and T. gondii. For other comparisons it was set to 5.

Classification and analysis of gene families
We used several methods to identify and classify metabolic genes, protein kinases, transcription factors, and Eimeria-specific gene families. Full methodological details are available in the Supplemental Material.

Retrotransposon analysis
Approaches based on domain content and the presence of long terminal repeats were used to identify and classify retrotransposons. Full methodological details are available in the Supplemental Material.

Single-cell expression of sag genes
Single fluorescent E. tenella sporozoites and second-generation merozoites (Clark et al. 2008) were sorted into 96-well plates. RNA was reverse-transcribed for a panel of target transcripts by adding gene-specific reverse primers (Supplemental Table S9). Stage-specific multi-cell-derived cDNA or single-cell cDNA with each single-plex primer pair were included as positive controls P1 and P2. No template multiplex and no reverse transcription reactions were included for each assay as negative controls N1 and N2.

MDBK cell binding by SAGs
Confluent monolayers of MDBK cells were blocked with 1% BSA in PBS for 2 h at 4°C, washed three times in PBS, then incubated with recombinant-expressed ESAG proteins (0.5 mg/mL) for 1 h at 40°C. Monolayers were washed four times with PBS to remove unbound proteins, then cells and bound proteins were solubilized in SDS sample buffer, separated by SDS-PAGE, transferred to nitrocellulose by electroblotting, and probed with rabbit hyperimmune sera raised to recombinant SAG proteins.

Classification of repeat regions
We used Tandem Repeat Finder (Benson 1999) to identify STRs in genomic sequences. It was run with the following parameters: 2, 1000, 1000, 80, 10, 25, 1000, as were used in Ling et al. (2007) and processed using TRAP v1.1 (Sobreira et al. 2006), run with default parameters. We defined a repeat density of ≥0.05 over a window of 1 kb as defining a repeat-rich region based on the distribution of repeat density across E. tenella. Scaffolds shorter than 5 kb were not included in the analysis.

We used SEG (Wootton and Federhen 1996) with parameters 7, 0, 0, –l, to identify HAARs of length ≥7. Repeats of “X,” the symbol used when the amino acid is unknown, and repeats which contained stop codons were removed from the SEG output file. To determine the HAAR content of protein sequences in other organisms, we ran SEG on all complete proteomes from UniProt (~2000 species, ~10-m sequences). We then ranked each species by the median number of repeats per sequence. We took the top 10, excluding viruses, and also T. gondii for comparison.

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Full methodological details of protein structural and proteomic analyses of HAARs are available in the Supplemental Material.

Data access
Sequencing reads and assemblies for each genome have been submitted to the European Nucleotide Archive (ENA; http://www.ebi.ac.uk/ena/); E. tenella Houghton, E. maxima Weybridge, E. acervulina Houghton, E. necatrix Houghton, E. mitis Houghton, E. brunetti Houghton, and E. praecox Houghton (PRJEB4918). Sequencing reads for E. tenella Nippon and E. tenella Wisconsin have been submitted to ENA (PRJEB4009). Transcriptome sequences for E. tenella Houghton have also been submitted to ENA (ERP001847) and ArrayExpress (https://www.ebi.ac.uk/arrayexpress/; E-ERAD-109).

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