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| Title            | The pan-genome of <i>Splendidus</i> clade species in the family Vibrionaceae : Insights into evolution, adaptation, and pathogenicity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Author(s)        | Jiang, Chunqi; Kasai, Hisae; Mino, Sayaka et al.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Citation         | Environmental microbiology, 24(10), 4587-4606<br><a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1462-2920.16209">https://doi.org/10.1111/1462-2920.16209</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Issue Date       | 2022-09                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Doc URL          | <a href="https://hdl.handle.net/2115/90620">https://hdl.handle.net/2115/90620</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| Type             | journal article                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| File Information | L-Revise-EMI-2022-0924_revision_body_13Sep22_wo_tracking.pdf                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



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**The pan-genome of Splendidus clade species in the family *Vibrionaceae*: insights into evolution, adaptation, and pathogenicity**

**Chunqi Jiang<sup>1</sup>, Hisae Kasai<sup>2</sup>, Sayaka Mino<sup>1</sup>, Jesús L. Romalde<sup>3</sup>, Tomoo Sawabe<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Laboratory of Microbiology, Faculty of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, Hakodate, Japan  
<sup>2</sup>Laboratory of Marine Biotechnology and Microbiology, Faculty of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, Hakodate, Japan  
<sup>3</sup>Departamento de Microbiología y Parasitología, CRETUS & CIBUS-Facultad de Biología. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain

**\*Corresponding Author**

Tomoo Sawabe  
Laboratory of Microbiology, Faculty of Fisheries Sciences, Hokkaido University, Hakodate, Japan.  
E-mail: sawabe@fish.hokudai.ac.jp  
Telephone/fax number: +81-138-40-5569

**Running title:**

Pan-genomic Analyses of Splendidus Clade

**Originality-Significance Statement:**

The Splendidus clade is the most diverse clade in the family *Vibrionaceae*. They have become known as pathogens in a wide range of marine vertebrates and invertebrates both in natural or aquaculture settings, but the genome backbones to be pathogens based on complete genome sequences are not yet known even in this era of advances in genomics. We obtained the complete genomes of all type strains in the Splendidus clade for the first time and performed pangenome analyses, which provides new insights into the evolution, environmental adaptation, and pathogenicity of this clade species. Fundamental pathogenicity of the Splendidus clade was revealed by the presence of virulence essential genes, such as *hppD* and an EPS type II secretion system (T2SS), in which T2SS may also

28 be involved in the different ecological niches of this clade. A type III secretion system (T3SS) which  
29 contained the highest number of virulence factors (VFs) was found only in *Vibrio chagasii*.

## 30 **Summary**

31 The Splendidus clade is the largest clade in *Vibrionaceae*, and its members are often related to  
32 mortality of marine animals with huge economic losses. The molecular bases of their pathogenicity  
33 and virulence, however, remain largely unknown. In particular, the complete genome sequences of  
34 the Splendidus clade species are rarely registered, which is one of the obstacles to predict core and/or  
35 unique genes responsible to their adaptation and pathogenicity, and to perform a fine scale meta-  
36 transcriptome during bacterial infection to their hosts. In this study, we obtained the complete  
37 genomes of all type strains in the Splendidus clade and revealed that 1) different genome sizes (4.4-  
38 5.9 Mb) with *V. lentus* the biggest and most of them had several big plasmids, likely because of the  
39 different features on mobilome elements, 2) the Splendidus clade consists of 19 species except *V.*  
40 *cortegadensis*, and 3 sub-clades (SC) were defined with the 15 most closely related members as SC1;  
41 3) different carbohydrate degradation preferences may be the result of environmental adaptation, 4) a  
42 broad prediction of virulence factors (VFs) revealed core and species unique VF genes.

## 43 **Keywords:**

44 *Vibrio*, Splendidus clade, complete genome sequences, evolution, virulence factors, pangenome

## 45 **INTRODUCTION**

46 Vibrios are widespread in aquatic environments such as estuaries, coastal waters, and  
47 sediments, where they are frequently associated with both wild and reared marine organisms,  
48 including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, rotifers, and corals, in commensal or pathogenic relationships  
49 (Thompson *et al.*, 2004; Gomez-Gil *et al.*, 2014; Romalde *et al.*, 2014; Zhang and Li, 2021). As of  
50 Feb 2022, there were 197 validly published species in the family *Vibrionaceae*, including 136 ones in

the genus *Vibrio* described on the List of Prokaryotic names with Standing in Nomenclature (LPSN) (Parte *et al.*, 2020). *Vibrio splendidus* was originally described by Beijerinck in 1900 as a ubiquitous luminous marine bacterium (Baumann *et al.*, 1980; Thompson *et al.*, 2001, 2005; Le Roux *et al.*, 2009; Sawabe *et al.*, 2009). *V. splendidus* is distributed worldwide and is the dominant *Vibrio* species in marine environments, which also shows a remarkable genetic diversity (Thompson, *et al.*, 2003b; Le Roux *et al.*, 2009; Diéguez *et al.*, 2011). The ecologically and genetically diverse populations of *V. splendidus* may serve as useful models to study their environmental adaptations (Hunt *et al.*, 2008; Le Roux *et al.*, 2009). In addition, *V. splendidus* has become known as an opportunistic pathogen associated with various incidents of marine invertebrate mortalities, particularly in the Pacific Oyster *Crassostrea gigas* (Kehlet-Delgado *et al.*, 2020; Oyanedel *et al.*, 2020; Liang *et al.*, 2022).

*V. splendidus* belongs to the Splendidus clade, which is the biggest clade in the family *Vibrionaceae* (Sawabe *et al.*, 2007, 2013; Jiang *et al.*, 2022). The Splendidus clade consists of over 16 described species in the recent study of “Vibrio Clade 3.0” (Jiang *et al.*, 2022): *V. atlanticus* (Diéguez *et al.*, 2011), *V. celticus* (Beaz-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2010), *V. chagasii* (Thompson *et al.*, 2003b), *V. coralliirubri* (Poli *et al.*, 2018), *V. crassostreae* (Faury *et al.*, 2004), *V. cyclitrophicus* (Anonymous, 2001; Hedlund and Staley, 2001), *V. echinoideorum* (Hira *et al.*, 2019), *V. fortis* (Thompson *et al.*, 2003a), *V. gallaecicus* (Beaz-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2009), *V. gigantis* (Roux *et al.*, 2005), *V. kanaloae* (Thompson *et al.*, 2003b), *V. lentus* (Macián *et al.*, 2001), *V. splendidus* (Baumann *et al.*, 1980), *V. tasmaniensis* (Thompson *et al.*, 2003c), *V. toranzoniae* (Lasa *et al.*, 2013), and an as yet unvalidated species “*V. profundus*” (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). Another species, *V. hemicentroti* CECT 8714<sup>T</sup> has been identified as a later heterotypic synonym of *V. splendidus* NCCB 53037<sup>T</sup> based on whole genome sequence indices (Kim *et al.*, 2013; Lucena *et al.*, 2017). However, due to the lack of fine scale complete genome sequences, the robust affiliations of several potential members to the Splendidus

74 clade have not been fixed yet (Jiang *et al.*, 2022), such as *V. artabrorum* (Diéguez *et al.*, 2011), *V.*  
75 *pelagius* (Baumann, 1981) or *V. pomeroyi* (Thompson *et al.*, 2003b). In addition, *V.*  
76 *cortegadensis* (Lasa *et al.*, 2014) was positioned between the Splendidus and Anguillarum clades by  
77 the means of 16S rRNA gene sequence analysis and multilocus sequence analysis, with the closest  
78 neighbours *V. tapetis*, *V. pomeroyi*, and *V. crassostreae*, but the accurate molecular phylogenetic  
79 position remains unknown.

80         Meanwhile, most species in the Splendidus clade had shown an association with pathogenicity  
81 (**Table 1**), particularly marine animals cultured in hatcheries, which has led to huge losses in the  
82 aquaculture industry (Dubert *et al.*, 2017). Recently, genomic sequencing of these pathogens has  
83 provided us with insights into the genetic mechanisms of virulence in some of these systems (Kehlet-  
84 Delgado *et al.*, 2020). For example, according to the comparative genomic analysis of strains of *V.*  
85 *toranzoniae*, differential features of iron acquisition systems and capsule synthesis genes were the  
86 main reason that could explain the differences in the pathogenicity in fish (Lasa *et al.*, 2017). Bruto *et*  
87 *al.* (2018) reported two ancestral traits which are necessary for virulence within the diverse  
88 Splendidus clade, including an exported conserved protein (R5.7) and a  
89 multifunctionalautoprocessing repeats-in-toxin (MARTX) cluster. Species-specific mechanisms of  
90 cytotoxicity in *V. crassostreae* (R5.7) and *V. tasmaniensis* (Type 6 Secretion System effectors) have  
91 also been demonstrated (Rubio *et al.*, 2019). Oyanedel *et al.* (2020) found that a MARTX cluster and  
92 a type-six secretion system (T6SS) were necessary for virulence of *V. splendidus* in oysters. However,  
93 the unexplored diversity and massive exchange of virulence factors within the Splendidus clade have  
94 been indicated by Nasfi *et al.* (2015) using an epidemiological survey. We still could not find any  
95 better conclusion on their genome backbone of the Splendidus clade species to be animal pathogens.  
96 In spite of the abundance, species diversification, and pathogenicity of the Splendidus clade species,  
97 there has been almost no complete genome available for them until now, in particular, no complete

genomes of type strains are available, which limits our understanding of the evolutionary history, ecology, ecogenomics and host-microbe interaction including disease processes of these species. Therefore, the aims of this study were 1) to obtain the complete genome sequences of type strains of Splendidus clade and related species, 2) to define the true membership of the Splendidus clade, 3) to better elucidate the evolutionary history of these species, and 4) to provide insights into hostmicrobial interactions, particularly in pathogenicity.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Complete Genomes and True Members of the Splendidus Clade**

Complete genomes of 18 type strains in the Splendidus clade and one related species were obtained. Genomes of all species consisted of two chromosomes and some of them (11 out of 19) possess one to three plasmids (**Table 2**). The genome sizes of Chromosome 1 (Chr. 1) ranged from 3,104,862 to 3,869,574 bp, and those of Chromosome 2 (Chr. 2) ranged from 1,338,470 to 2,060,851 bp. *V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup> had the biggest genome while *V. artabrorum* CECT 7226<sup>T</sup> had the smallest. The biggest number of plasmids were identified in *V. chagasii* LMG 21353<sup>T</sup> and *V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, and the biggest plasmid (395,604 bp) was identified in *V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>. Range of GC content was 41.4-44.8%. Numbers of CDS, rRNA, and tRNA were 3,850-5,137, 31-46, and 113-139, respectively.

After obtaining complete genomes, the concatenated split network of family *Vibrionaceae* (including 195 species) using 8 housekeeping genes (8-HKGs) was updated: three of the newly included species (*V. artabrorum* CECT 7226<sup>T</sup>, *V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, and *V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>) were clustered with the 16 species of the Splendidus clade proposed in Jiang *et al.* (2022), which now represents the biggest clade (19 species) in the family *Vibrionaceae* (**Figure 1A**). These 19 species cover all species mentioned in recent research (Pérez-Cataluña *et al.*, 2016; Hira *et al.*,

2019; Zhang and Li, 2021) and include the as yet unvalidated, “*V. profundus*” (Zhang *et al.*, 2019). However, “*V. profundus*” was excluded from the subsequent analyses in this study due to the lack of both complete genome and available strains. *V. cortegadensis* CECT 7227<sup>T</sup> was affiliated to the orphan clade, which *Vibrio* genomospecies F6 strain FF-238 belongs. The topology was also confirmed using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) algorithm using the same sequence set used for MLSA (**Figure 1B**). ANI value between *V. cortegadensis* CECT 7227<sup>T</sup> and *Vibrio* genomosp. F6 str. FF-238 (98.1%) exceeded the delineation boundary of species (95-96%), which indicates that they are likely to be the same species (**Figure S1**).

In addition, compared to the genome size and GC content relationships among over 190 *Vibrionaceae* species (**Figure 2A**), the Splendidus clade species showed a rather stable GC content (around 44%, with the exception of *V. gallaecicus*) but a bigger variation in genome sizes (4.4-5.9 Mb). Plasmids harboring strains tend to have bigger chromosomes (**Figure 2B**), but that genome size variation was likely to be caused by sum of gene regions classified as “Mobiolome” (see “Environmental Adaptation” section described below).

### Evolutionary Relationships in the Splendidus Clade

The Splendidus clade has not been considered to be a well-defined group because of phenotypic and genetic diversity (Thompson *et al.*, 2004, 2005). In addition, it has been mentioned that 8-HKGs MLSA is a reliable and effective tool for delineating new species and clades in *Vibrionaceae*, because of the higher gene resolution (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). According to the 8-HKGs MLSA of 195 *Vibrionaceae*, the Splendidus clade showed two main evolutionary directions; *V. fortis* and *V. pelagius* in one direction with “*V. profundus*”, and the major branch including *V. splendidus* in the other (**Figure 3A**). *V. gallaecicus* was deeply branched in the major. Genome sizes of *V.*

## Pan-genomic Analyses of Splendidus Clade

145 *gallaecicus*, *V. fortis* and *V. pelagius*, and the others averaged 5 Mb, but lower and higher GC content  
146 was observed in *V. gallaecicus*, and *V. fortis* and *V. pelagius* (**Figure 2B**). With regards to phylogeny  
147 and genome features, 3 sub-clades (SCs) are proposed in the Splendidus clade; 15 species including  
148 *V. splendidus* (sub-clade 1, SC1), *V. fortis* and *V. pelagius* (SC2), and *V. gallaecicus* (singleton, SC3).  
149 This sub-clade proposal is likely to be supported by the ANI and AAI matrix using complete genomes  
150 (**Figure 3B and 3C**).

151 It is assumed that ancestry of the Splendidus clade had 5 Mb in size and 45% GC content  
152 based on these complete genome comparisons, but during its evolution, GC content of *V. gallaecicus*  
153 (SC3) reduced and genome sizes of SC1 species varied. It has been reported that two genome  
154 sequences of *Prochlorococcus* lacking the DNA repair enzyme 6-0-methylguanineDNA  
155 methyltransferase had very low GC content (Giovannoni *et al.*, 2005), however, this enzyme was  
156 encoded in the all genomes of the Splendidus clade species, which indicates that other factors are the  
157 cause of reduction of GC content in *V. gallaecicus*. Selection has been repeatedly proposed as the  
158 major mechanism to drive toward low genomic GC content in free-living marine bacterioplankton  
159 (Giovannoni *et al.*, 2014; Luo *et al.*, 2015). Luo *et al.* suggested that selection maintains the low GC  
160 content of SAR11 in the marine population. Therefore, the reduction of GC content in *V. gallaecicus*  
161 might also be caused by selection from habitat transition.

162

## 163 Genomic Comparison in the Splendidus Clade

164 In order to understand the evolutionary processes of the Splendidus clade, synteny profiling  
165 was performed compared against *V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>, which had the biggest genome size and  
166 most  
167 CDSs, using BLASTn. Genes on Chromosome 1 (Chr. 1) were more conserved than those on  
168 Chromosome 2 (Chr. 2), while genes on plasmids were very diverse (**Figure 4A**). The same results can

be inferred from the subsequent split pan-genomes of the Splendidus clade. A total of 11 out of 19 species possessed one to several plasmids, of which size ranged 1,858 to 332,195 bp (**Figure 2B and Table 2**). Unfortunately, not only simple gene annotations but also split-pan-genome of those plasmids (see the section Pan-Genome Analysis) did not reveal any conserved features, which means further detail analyses how those plasmids affect genome plasticity and/or pathogenicity of the Splendidus clade species.

It is known that mobile elements can enhance gene insertion and deletion (Vale *et al.*, 2022), synteny profiling for inter and intra sub-clades was also performed to check the sub-clade definition (**Figure 4B**). *V. splendidus* in SC1 showed a rather different genome composition compared to SC2 (*V. fortis* and *V. pelagius*) and SC3 (*V. gallaecicus*), this might explain the greater number of genomic islands (GEIs) that were predicted among the members of SC1 than SC2 and SC3 (**Figure 4C**), which is a significant part of the horizontal gene transfer (HGT) events (Dobrindt *et al.*, 2004). Intra sub-clade profiling in SC1 further revealed the insertion/deletion events among them (**Figure 4B**). ABC transporter complex FhuCDB involved in Fe<sup>3+</sup>-hydroxamate import, responsible for energy coupling to the transport system (Schultz-Hauser *et al.*, 1992), and genes *ddhABCD* for the conversion of glucose-1-phosphate to CDP-4-keto-3,6-dideoxy-D-glucose (Pacinelli *et al.*, 2002), were absent in *V. echinoideorum* compared to *V. lentus*. While, the aerobactin-producing *iucABCD-iutA* operon was inserted in the genome of *V. kanaloae* compared to *V. toranzoniae*, aerobactin is a citrate-hydroxamate siderophore that is important for the virulence of pathogenic enteric bacteria (Li *et al.*, 2021).

### **Pan-Genome Analysis in the Splendidus Clade**

The complete genomes of all Splendidus clade type strains were used for pan-genome analysis using Anvi'o v7. In the Splendidus clade pan-genome (**Figure 5A**), a total of 13,013 gene clusters (GCs) with 83,187 genes were defined, in which 2,391 GCs with 44,619 genes (54%) were recognized in the core-genome (2,198 GCs with 39,564 genes were recognized as the single-copy core-genome),

### Pan-genomic Analyses of Splendidus Clade

and 4,308 GCs with 32,001 genes (38%) were recognized in the accessory-genome. The remaining genes (8%) were recognized as species-unique genes, among which, *V. chagasii* possessed the highest number of unique genes (770), nearly 5 times that of the lowest. In addition, gene cluster analysis showed that the highest number (4865) of GCs were identified in *V. gigantis*, while the lowest (3622) were identified in *V. artabrorum*. A set of geometrically perfect but functionally diverse single-copy core genes (27-BetterSCGs) was selected (Table S1) using a custom setting (--min-geometric-homogeneity-index 1, --max-functional-homogeneity-index 0.9) for phylogenomic tree reconstruction, the result of which also support the proposal of three sub-clades. The ANI boundary for Splendidus clade and sub-clade was found to be around 77.5% and 84.0%, respectively (Figure 5A).

Furthermore, to identify the distributions and locations of these genes, split pan-genomes were also performed using the sequences of Chr. 1, Chr. 2, and plasmids separately (Figure 5B). Most of the genes (67%) in the pan-genome of Chr. 1 while only 29% in Chr. 2 were identified as core genes, and no core genes were found in the pan-genome of plasmids, which may be responsible for the genome diversity among them. Compared to the recent pan-genome analyses of the Halioticoli clade using 10 complete genomes (Jiang *et al.*, 2022), core genes and specific genes on both chromosomes were decreased but accessory genes increased in the Splendidus clade, especially in Chr. 2 (Figure S3). Meanwhile, a majority of the genes in plasmids were identified as species-unique genes, occupying 62% pan-genome.

### Environmental Adaptation of the Splendidus Clade

Along with the pan-genome analysis, both functional classification and metabolism reconstruction were performed for complete genomes and specific genomes of each Splendidus clade species on the basis of the Clusters of Orthologous Genes (COGs) database and KEGG Orthologs (KOs), respectively. In general, COG functional distribution among the Splendidus clade was the same, but with different numbers because of their genome size variation (Figure S4A). However, one

exception was found in the category of “Mobilome: prophages, transposons (X)” marked in purple. The “mobilome” is defined as genes including integrative and conjugative elements (ICEs), plasmids, insertion sequences (IS), transposons, prophages, integrons, and other genomic islands, which play a significant role in HGT (Frost *et al.*, 2005; Huang *et al.*, 2016). The number of this function varies dramatically within the clade, from 15 in *V. gallaecicus* (0%) to 265 in *V. celticus* (5%), being more abundant in the SC1, which may explain more plasmids and HGT events in this sub-clade, eventually leading to their genome diversity of them. In addition, the diversification of mobilome related genes in Splendidus clade also provides possible further evidence in the recently evaluated phage-bacteria interactions in the context of natural diversity (Kauffman *et al.*, 2022), but further analyses are needed.

The functional distributions from specific genomes differed (**Figure S4B**). The highest number of uncharacterized genes was detected in the *V. chagasii* specific genome, while the *V. gallaecicus* specific genome had the most abundant gene sets in the characterized functional estimation. Most of the specific genes were assigned into the upper functional category of “INFORMATION STORAGE AND PROCESSING” including the lower layer function of “Transcription (K)”, and “Replication, recombination and repair (L)”; and the upper functional category of “CELLULAR PROCESSES AND SIGNALING” including the lower layer function of “Defense mechanisms (V)”, “Signal transduction mechanisms (T)”, “Cell wall/membrane/envelope biogenesis (M)”, and “Mobilome: prophages, transposons (X)”. A significant number (113) of “T” was detected in *V. gallaecicus* specific genome, 8 folds the average number in others (14); the second significant number (60) of “X” was detected in *V. chagasii* specific genome, seven-fold the average number in others (9).

According to the KEGG metabolism reconstruction, the whole genomes of the Splendidus clade shared similar numbers and distributions of metabolisms but with several differences (**Figure**

## Pan-genomic Analyses of Splendidus Clade

S5A). First, the numbers of genes encoded for “Other carbohydrate metabolism (A2, abbreviation used in this study)” show a wide range within the clade, from 50 (*V. gallaecicus*, SC1) to 101 (*V. celticus* and *V. artabrorum*), a one-fold difference, which may be the result of adaptations for different living environments. In detail, differences were mainly found in the ability of Dgalacturonate degradation (M00061 and M00631), galactose degradation (M00632), and ascorbate degradation (M00550). Second, a significant abundance of the gene set involved in “Pathogenicity (K1)” with M00542 and M00850 modules was detected in *V. chagasii*, 1.6 to 3.5 times greater than other species. Finally, several genes encoding M00660 module “Plant pathogenicity (K3)” were only identified in *V. chagasii*, indicating its potential pathogenicity towards marine plants. In the results of KEGG metabolism reconstruction for each specific genome (**Figure S5B**), the numbers are few, but distribution was diverse. The specific genome of *V. chagasii* possessed the highest number (40) of reconstructed metabolism but 50% of them were associated with categories “K1” and “K3”, suggesting that this characterization of plant pathogenicity is likely unique among the Splendidus clade species. Based on the KEGG annotation, they were recognized as a type III secretion protein (T3SP) cluster C, F, J, L, Q, R, S, T, U, and V (K03219, K03221-K03230), with an ATP synthase (K03224), as well as a zona occludens toxin (K10954), consistent with the specific T3SS related genes identified in the following virulence factor prediction.

Adaptive radiations have been considered to be important drivers for environmental fitness, and a recent adaptive radiation leading to fine-scale ecophysiological differentiation in the degradation of an algal glycan in marine microbes including some Splendidus clade populations has been described, and differentiated alginate degradation pathways were observed among populations (Hehemann *et al.*, 2016). Four types of polysaccharide lyase (PL) families were detected in most specie of the Splendiudus clade, but still clear rules in those genes distribution were not elucidated yet (**Figure S6**). In fact, there were no significant correlations between PL gene numbers and genome

size, which indicates such portion of alginate metabolism reported previously is unlikely to be the major causes of genome size variation in the SC1. Increased number of complete genomes in the Splendidus clade strains could provide better insights in the ecology and evolution of those recently radiated group in the family *Vibrionaceae* (Sawabe *et al.*, 2007).

## **Fundamentals of Splendidus Clade Pathogenicity**

The pathogenicity of bacteria is regulated by a complicated system composed of a variety of virulence factors, such as adherence, phagocytosis, chemotaxis, iron uptake, toxin, quorum sensing, and secretion system (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Liu *et al.*, 2016). The broad predictions of VFs for the Splendidus clade were obtained (**Table S3**) based on the complete genome sequences, which also revealed the core (**Table 3**) and unique VF genes (**Figure 6**). In general, the highest number (136) of vibrio VFs was predicted on *V. chagasii*, while the number in other members averaged 100 (**Figure S2B**). Meanwhile, several core VFs were found common to the Splendidus clade, such as mannosesensitive hemagglutinin (MSHA type IV pilus) *mshGHIJLMN*, type IV pilus (*pilBCD*), 55 kinds of flagella factors, and an extracellular protein secretion (EPS) type II secretion system (T2SS). The T2SS is likely to be involved in the virulence mechanism and environmental fitness of the Splendidus clade species. On the other hand, genes unique to subclades and species were identified, e.g. absence of *flaC* in SC1, presence of a set of T3SS-related genes exclusively in *V. chagasii*. The details are described as follows.

## **Adherence**

Bacterial adhesion is a crucial step in the early stages of infection (Zhang and Li, 2021). Mannose-sensitive hemagglutinin (MSHA) *msh* and Type IV pilus *pil* genes were widely distributed in the Splendidus clade, while Type IVB pilus *tcp* and accessory colonization factors (ACF) *acf* genes

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were virtually absent (**Figure S7**). Both *msh* and *pil* genes are required for biofilm formation and environmental persistence in *V. cholerae* and *V. parahaemolyticus* (Floyd *et al.*, 2020; Sun *et al.*, 2022). The mannose-sensitive hemagglutinin (MSHA) pilus, plays no role in pathogenicity but does so in biofilm formation, and promotes the interactions between *V. cholerae* El Tor and mussel hemolymph in the hemolymph serum, the efficiency of adherence and association with hemocytes is about twofold more than its mutant without MSHA (Watnick *et al.*, 1999; Zampini *et al.*, 2003). Type IV pilus (T4P), which evokes the immune response of hosts, is ubiquitous on the surfaces of Gram-negative bacteria (Craig *et al.*, 2004), while toxin-coregulated pilus (Type IVB pilus) is used in *V. cholerae* to colonize the human intestine with ACFs, causing cholera, a severe diarrheal disease (Li *et al.*, 2008). The involvements of T4Ps in bacterial colonization in *V. tasmaniensis* LGP32 and *V. crassostreae* J29 have also been reported recently (Rubio *et al.*, 2019).

### Antiphagocytosis

Although vibrio pathogens are commonly regarded as extracellular pathogens, an increasing number of isolates have been found to be capable of invading cells (Zhang and Li, 2021). Capsular polysaccharide (CPS) constitutes the outermost surface of the bacterial cell and is the main virulence factor for antiphagocytosis (Morais *et al.*, 2018). The *cpsABCDEFGHIJ* genes, part of which are common in many vibrio pathogens, such as *V. harveyi* (Bramhachari and Dubey, 2006), *V. alginolyticus* (Muralidharan and Jayachandran, 2003), *V. parahaemolyticus* (Enos-Berlage and McCarter, 2000), and *V. vulnificus* (Lee *et al.*, 2013), are absent in all the type strains of the Splendidus clade species and the well-studied pathogen, *V. atlanticus* LGP32. It is likely that this *cps* family is not involved in the pathogenicity of the Splendidus clade. However, other kinds of CPS were detected in the Splendidus clade, such as *rml*, *wbf*, *wec*, and *wz* related genes, in particular, *wz* related genes (*wza*, *wzb*, and *wzc*) were most abundant, 16 of the 18 members possessed all of them.

## Chemotaxis and Motility

Chemotaxis plays an important role in infection and disease since chemotaxis signaling pathways are widely distributed among pathogenic bacteria, meanwhile, recent research suggests that chemotaxis is crucial in the early stages of infection in different pathogens (Matilla and Krell, 2018). Results showed that kinds of flagella factors were shared among the clade, including 7, 1, 6, 14, 4, 16, 3, and 4 related genes in the *che*, *fil*, *fla*, *flg*, *flh*, *fli*, *flr*, and *mot* clusters, respectively. They are mainly involved in bacterial chemotaxis (Figure S8) and flagellar assembly (Figure S9) (Terashima *et al.*, 2008; Haiko and Westerlund-Wikström, 2013). One exception is flagellin (*flaC*) which was only detected in the members of SC2 and SC3, but absent in those of SC1 (Table S3). The protein of FlaC has not been discussed much in *Vibrio*, but the ability of binding epithelial cells and the influence of cell invasion in *Campylobacter jejuni* TGH9011, a food-born pathogen, has been reported (Song *et al.*, 2004).

## Iron Uptake

Iron uptake systems (IUSs) are an essential part for disease infection, they are primarily regulated by a ferric uptake regulator called Fur in response to iron availability, along with their own specific regulators (Payne *et al.*, 2016; Li and Ma, 2017; Shin, 2021). Significant differences in the iron acquisition systems between genomes of *V. toranzoniae* strain CECT 7225<sup>T</sup> (no virulence) and R17 (virulence to fish) have been reported (Lasa *et al.*, 2017). In this study, numbers of Furs could be identified in the core and accessory genomes of the Splendidus clade with several specific regulators with each located in plasmids, for example, vibriobactin *vibABCE* in *V. echinoideorum*. This *vib* cluster was also present in *V. cholerae* O1 biovar El, *V. vulnificus* CMCP6, and *V. anguillarum* ATCC 68554.

## 339    **Toxins**

340            Bacterial toxins are the major virulence factors that affect the functions of host cells and control  
 341 the vital processes of living organisms so they can facilitate microbial infection, they are one of the  
 342 most important virulence factors that determine whether an infection will succeed or fail (Sarkar *et al.*,  
 343 2021). The hemolysin toxins Vah and MARTX have been characterized as mainly responsible for the  
 344 hemolytic and cytotoxic activity of fish pathogens, which cause erythrocyte lysis in the host cells (Frans  
 345 *et al.*, 2011). Besides, studies have shown that a MARTX toxin cluster (*rtxACHBDE*) was necessary  
 346 for the virulence of *V. splendidus* in oysters (Bruto *et al.*, 2018; Oyanedel *et al.*, 2020). However, a  
 347 *rtxABCD* cluster was only identified in *V. echinoideorum*, and hemolysin/cytolysin *vhA* were absent  
 348 from all type strains of the Splendidus clade.

## 350    **Quorum Sensing**

351            It is well-known that the outcome of the interaction between the host and bacterium is heavily  
 352 influenced by the bacterial population size. This intercellular communication is also known as the  
 353 “Quorum sensing (QS)” system, which is regulated by small diffusible signal molecules called  
 354 autoinducers (de Kievit and Iglewski, 2000; Whitehead *et al.*, 2001; Winzer and Williams, 2001).  
 355 Acyl-homoserine lactones (AHL) are one of the most common autoinducers in Gram-negative  
 356 bacteria, and there are three QS systems generally present in vibrios, for example, VanM/N,  
 357 VanS/PQ, and VanI/R quorum sensing systems in *V. anguillarum* serotype O1 (Milton, 2006);  
 358 LuxM/LuxN, LuxS/LuxPQ, and LuxCqsA/LuxCqsS systems in *V. crassostreae* J2-9 (Lemire *et al.*,  
 359 2015); and LuxM/LuxN, LuxR/LuxI, and LuxS/LuxPQ systems in *V. tasmaniensis* LGP32 (Tait *et al.*,  
 360 2010). A three-channel QS system was also found in *V. harveyi*, a well-recognized and serious  
 361 pathogen in fish and invertebrates (Defoirdt *et al.*, 2008; Yang *et al.*, 2011; Zhang *et al.*, 2020). They  
 362 were mediated by the harveyi autoinducer 1 (HAI-1), autoinducer 2 (AI-2), and cholerae autoinducer

1 (CAI-1), respectively. These autoinducers are detected at the cell surface by the LuxN, LuxQ and CqsS two-component receptor proteins, respectively; and the periplasmic protein (LuxP) is required for the detection of AI-2 by LuxQ (Defoirdt *et al.*, 2008). According to the prediction in VFDB, AI-2 (*luxS*) was widespread in all species of the Splendidus clade while CAI-1 (*cqsA*) was predicted in 15 out of 18 members. Based on the KOfam annotation in the pangenome, the LuxS/LuxPQ-like (AI-2 mediated) system was widespread among the clade, while LuxCqsA/LuxCqsS-like (CAI-1 mediated) system was absent in *V. gallaecicus* and *V. artabrorum* (**Figure 7A**), both of which were considered as environmental non-pathogenic species today (Romalde *et al.*, 2014). Meanwhile, according to the *in vivo* mutant experiments, both AI-2 and CAI-1 were likely necessary for the virulence of *V. harveyi* in brine shrimp (Defoirdt *et al.*, 2005, 2008). It seems to be the same way in virulence of the Splendidus clade pathogens.

### Secretion System

Secretion systems (SSs) in bacterial pathogens are responsible for the secretion of various proteins and toxins which contribute towards promoting bacterial virulence, six different SSs have been identified in Gram-negative bacteria, type I secretion system (T1SS) to Type VI system (T6SS) (Sarkar *et al.*, 2021; Zhang and Li, 2021). Many pathogens use dedicated SSs to secrete proteins involved in virulence from the cytosol of the bacteria into host cells or the host environment, but T3SS and T5SS were found to be less associated with virulence (Green and Mecsas, 2016). Four types of SSs were found present in the Splendidus clade.

An EPS T2SS system, consisting of 12 EPS proteins and one putative secretin GspD was conserved in the core genome of Splendidus clade species (**Figure S10**). The type II secretion pathway is regarded as one of the major virulence mechanisms in bacterial infection, it has been found in numerous bacterial species, including several extracellular pathogens, such as human (*V. cholerae* and

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*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*), fish (*Aeromonas hydrophila*), and plant (*Erwinia carotovora*) pathogens (Sandkvist, 2001). Meanwhile, T2SS is also considered a major survival mechanism for environmental species due to the degradative enzymes secreted (Johnson *et al.*, 2014). This kind of strategy for maintaining fitness in different ecological niches in *V. cholerae* has been discussed previously (Sikora, 2013). Therefore, the conserved T2SS system in the Splendidus clade may be involved in the virulence and different ecological niches of this clade.

A T3SS related region was found exclusively in *V. chagasii* (LOCUS\_5670 to LOCUS\_6080) (**Figure 7B**), it seems related to the plant pathogenicity according to the KEGG annotation. The same genes were also found in the pathogens *V. parahaemolyticus* RIMD 2210633, *V. harveyi* FDAARGOS\_107, and *V. alginolyticus* FDAARGOS\_110. Although T3SS was found to be less associated with virulence (Green and Mecsas, 2016), a recent study reported that T3SS effector proteins, Val1686 and Val1680 from *V. alginolyticus*, were responsible for T3SS-mediated death of fish cells (Zhao *et al.*, 2018). The VirB/D system, a model of T4SS, and five components of T6SS (Hcp, DotU, VasA, VasK, TssA1) were found in the genomes of some of the members, in which Hcp protein was involved in the immune system evasion and biofilm formation in *A. hydrophila* (Rasmussen-Ivey *et al.*, 2016). Rubio *et al.* (2019) showed that T6SS plays a critical role in the success of vibrio infections, and Oyanedel *et al.* (2020) also showed the necessity of T6SS in the virulence of *V. splendidus* towards oysters, but more details of these SSs need to be explored at a future date.

## Other VFs

A hemolysin 4-hydroxyphenylpyruvate dioxygenase (4-hppD), encoded by *hppD* gene, has been demonstrated to be related to virulence of *V. splendidus* in sea cucumbers (Liang *et al.*, 2016) and oysters (Liang *et al.*, 2022). It was found highly conserved in the genomes of the Splendidus clade types. Metalloprotease (Vsm) is another VF in *Vibrio* pathogens, metalloprotease activities

seem to be a common feature of pathogenic bacteria strains associated with mortality episodes of *Crassostrea gigas* reared in France (Saulnier *et al.*, 2010; Zhang and Li, 2021). The known metalloprotease encoding gene *vsm*, a major determinant of toxicity for extracellular products, was reported in *V. splendidus* LGP32, which was re-named to be as *V. atlanticus* LGP32 (Binesse *et al.*, 2008; Zhang *et al.*, 2016), but was not found in the prediction for genomes of type strains of the Splendidus clade. However, an *in silico* homology search showed that they were identified as extracellular zinc metalloprotease (Hap), secreted by *V. cholerae* O1, in the part of genomes.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the complete genomes of Splendidus clade type strains were successfully obtained, with a wide range of genome sizes and more numerous and bigger plasmids than other vibrios. Based on the complete genomes, the most recent taxonomic analysis using MLSA of 8-HKGs with 195 *Vibrionaceae*, resulted in a total of 19 robust members in the Splendidus clade, which confirms it as the largest clade in the family *Vibrionaceae*. Furthermore, the phylogenetic analyses revealed three sub-clades in the Splendidus clade. COG and KEGG annotations were estimated for each genome of the Splendidus clade. Overall, the same function and metabolism structures were shared among members of the clade but with different carbohydrate degradation preferences, and several T3SS related proteins were abundant exclusively on the plasmid of *V. chagasii*. Complete prediction of virulence factors suggested that a T2SS system may be involved in the virulence mechanism and environmental fitness of the Splendidus clade, meanwhile, AI-2 and CAI-1 quorum sensing systems are likely necessary for the virulence of Splendidus clade pathogens. These results are useful in gaining a better knowledge of the evolutionary history, environmental relationships, and pathological processes of the Splendidus clade species, but further experimental evidence is needed.

**EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES****Strains, Culture and Genome Collection**

A total of 19 type strains of *V. splendidus* related species (**Table 2**) were obtained from the CECT (Spanish Collection of Type Cultures), BCCM/LMG Bacteria collection (Belgian Coordinated Collections of Microorganisms) and our laboratory collection. They were cultured on ZoBell 2216E broth overnight at 25°C with shaking for DNA extraction. The genomes of “Vibrio Clade 3.0” (Jiang *et al.*, 2022) were retrieved for the classification of Splendidus clade, older draft genomes of this clade were replaced by the genomes obtained in this study.

**DNA Extraction, Library Preparation and Sequencing**

Bacteria DNA was extracted using the Wizard genomic DNA purification kit (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) following the manufacturer’s instructions. The Nanopore sequencing library was prepared using the Rapid Barcoding Kit (SQK-RBK004) and loaded onto the MinION device under MinKNOW v3.6.0 (Oxford Nanopore Technologies, Oxford, UK) for sequencing. ONT raw reads (fasta5 files) were basecalled by Guppy 3.2.8. The Illumina DNA library was constructed using Nextera XT DNA Library Preparation Kit (Illumina) and sequenced with the Illumina MiSeq platform (300 bp length) following the manufacturer’s instructions. The adaptor sequences were removed using the platanus trim function in Platanus\_B (Kajitani *et al.*, 2020).

**Genome Assembly and Annotation**

*De novo* assemblies were performed on all strains using hybrid assembly. Most of the complete genomes were obtained by Unicycler 0.4.7 or 0.4.8 (Wick *et al.*, 2017) with some exceptions. Draft assembly of *V. chagasii* LMG 21353<sup>T</sup> was created by Flye 2.8.3 (Kolmogorov *et al.*, 2019) with genomeSize=5 m using Nanopore long reads, then sequences were corrected with Racon 1.4.20 (Vaser *et al.*, 2017) and Medaka 1.0.1 (Oxford Nanopore Technologies Ltd.), finally

polished by Pilon 1.24 (Walker *et al.*, 2014) using Illumina short reads. The genome of *V. celticus* CECT 7224<sup>T</sup> was assembled by Canu 1.6 (Koren *et al.*, 2017) and polished by Pilon 1.24, then *dnaA* gene and overlaps were checked and edited using *in silico* MolecularCloning ver. 7 (In Silico Biology, Inc., Yokohama, Japan). The resulting complete genomes were checked with CheckM v1.1.3 (Parks *et al.*, 2015) and annotated with the DDBJ Fast Annotation and Submission Tool (DFAST) v0.2.7 (Tanizawa *et al.*, 2018). All sequences used in this study are publically available under DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank accession number of AP025458-AP025515 (Table 2).

### **Molecular Phylogeny**

The molecular phylogenetic analysis was performed using multilocus sequence analysis (MLSA) according to Sawabe *et al.* (2013). Split decomposition analysis using the concatenated sequence was performed using SplitsTree 4.14.8 with a neighbor net drawing and a Jukes-Cantor correction (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). The sequences were aligned with MUSCLE (Edgar, 2004), and the phylogenetic tree was constructed using MEGA-X v10.1.8 (Kumar *et al.*, 2018) with 1,000 bootstraps using Maximum Likelihood (ML) method and General Time Reversible model (Nei and Kumar, 2000).

### **Genome Taxonomy**

Average Nucleotide Identity (ANI) values were calculated using Orthologous Average Nucleotide Identity Tool version 0.93.1 (Lee *et al.*, 2016) and Genome-based distance matrix calculator (ANI-Matrix), Kostas lab (Rodriguez-R and Konstantinidis, 2016). Average Amino Acid Identity (AAI) values were calculated using Genome-based distance matrix calculator (AAI-Matrix) (Rodriguez-R and Konstantinidis, 2016). *In silico* DNA-DNA hybridization (DDH) values were estimated using a Genome-to-Genome Distance Calculator 2.1 (GGDC) (Meier-Kolthoff *et al.*,

2013). Data was visualized with ComplexHeatmap ver. 2.2.0 (Gu *et al.*, 2016). Genomic comparison was performed with Circular Genome Viewer (CGView) using BLAST (Stothard and Wishart, 2005) and visualized using Proksee (<https://proksee.ca/>).

## **Pan-Genome Analyses**

Pan-genome analysis was performed using the Anvi'o program ver. 7 (Eren *et al.*, 2015). Firstly, each genome sequence file was converted to an anvi'o contigs database (anvi-gen-contigsdatabase) using Prodigal (Hyatt *et al.*, 2010), these contigs databases were decorated with hits from HMM models (anvi-run-hmms). Meanwhile, gene annotation was performed using Clusters of Orthologous Groups 2020 (COG20) (Galperin *et al.*, 2021) for function annotation (anvi-run-nbicogs), and KOfam (a customized HMM database of KEGG Orthologs (KOs)) (Aramaki *et al.*, 2020) for metabolism and pathway annotation (anvi-run-kegg-kofams). Then, an anvi'o genome storage was generated using the prepared contigs databases (anvi-gen-genomes-storage), and next, the pangenome was analyzed using NCBI's blastp for amino acid sequence similarity search and the MCL algorithm (Van Dongen and Abreu-Goodger, 2012) for cluster identification (anvi-pan-genome). In addition, Average Nucleotide Identity (ANI) values were calculated using the PyANI with ANIb method (anvi-compute-genome-similarity) (Pritchard *et al.*, 2016). Finally, it was visualized, decorated, and summarized manually (anvi-display-pan, anvi-summarize). Core genes were filtered and extracted in fasta files for further analysis (anvi-get-sequences-for-gene-clusters).

## **Genomic Islands (GEIs) and Virulence Factors (VFs) Prediction**

Genomic island (GEI), which is a important signof a HGT event (Dobrindt *et al.*, 2004) was predicted by IslandViewer4 (Bertelli *et al.*, 2017) using IslandPick, IslandPath-DIMOB, and SIGIHMM methods, predictions supported by at least one method were used in this study.

Virulence factors (VFs) were predicted using VFanalyzer (Liu *et al.*, 2019), a comparative pathogenomics-based VF analysis pipeline, on the basis of the virulence factor database (VFDB, <http://www.mgc.ac.cn/VFs/>) (Chen *et al.*, 2016). Reference vibrio pathogens in VFDB were used for comparison: *V. cholerae* O1 biovar El Tor str. N16961, *V. cholerae* O395, *V. fischeri* ES114, *V. harveyi* ATCC BAA-1116, *V. parahaemolyticus* RIMD 2210633, *V. vulnificus* CMCP6, and *V. vulnificus* YJ016.

## Acknowledgements

This study was partly supported by MEXT KAKEN 19H03041.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## Data availability

The genomic sequences used in this study are publically available under DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank accession number of AP025458-AP025515.

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- 827

825 **Table 1. List of *Vibrio splendidus* related species.** Bold species were newly confirmed in  
826 Splendidus clade in this study than Jiang *et al.*, 2022. +: contains strains pathogenic for marine  
827 animals, NA: not available.

| Species                     | Clade                  | Pathogenicity | Source                                                                         | Place                                           | 16S rRNA accession | References                                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><i>V. artabrorum</i></b> | Splendidus             | NA            | Cultured clams, <i>Ruditapes philippinarum</i>                                 | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | EF599164           | Diéguez <i>et al.</i> 2011                              |
| <i>V. atlanticus</i>        | Splendidus             | +             | Cultured clams, <i>Ruditapes philippinarum</i>                                 | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | EF599163           | Diéguez <i>et al.</i> 2011                              |
| <i>V. celticus</i>          | Splendidus             | +             | Cultured clams, <i>Ruditapes philippinarum</i>                                 | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | EF599162           | Beaz-Hidalgo <i>et al.</i> 2011                         |
| <i>V. chagasii</i>          | Splendidus             | NA            | Gut of turbot larvae, <i>Scophthalmus maximus</i>                              | Austevoll, Norway                               | MT757983           | Thompson <i>et al.</i> 2003b                            |
| <i>V. coralliirubri</i>     | Splendidus             | NA            | Mucus of red coral, <i>Corallium rubrum</i>                                    | Procida island, Naples, Italy                   | HG942391           | Poli <i>et al.</i> 2018                                 |
| <i>V. crassostreae</i>      | Splendidus             | +             | Haemolymph of diseased oyster, <i>Crassostrea gigas</i>                        | La Tremblade, France                            | EF094887           | Faury <i>et al.</i> 2004                                |
| <i>V. cyclitrophicus</i>    | Splendidus             | NA            | Creosote-contaminated marine sediments                                         | Puget Sound, Washington, USA                    | DQ481610           | Hedlund and Staley 2001                                 |
| <i>V. echinoideorum</i>     | Splendidus             | NA            | Epidermal lesion of green sea urchin, <i>Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis</i> | Northern Norway                                 | MG788349           | Hira <i>et al.</i> 2019                                 |
| <i>V. fortis</i>            | Splendidus             | +             | White shrimp larvae, <i>Litopenaeus vannamei</i>                               | Ecuador                                         | AJ514916           | Thompson <i>et al.</i> 2003a                            |
| <i>V. gallaecicus</i>       | Splendidus             | NA            | Cultured Manila clams, <i>Ruditapes philippinarum</i>                          | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | EU541605           | Beaz-Hidalgo <i>et al.</i> 2009                         |
| <i>V. gigantis</i>          | Splendidus             | +             | Diseased oyster, <i>Crassostrea gigas</i>                                      | La Tremblade, France                            | AJ582810           | Le Roux <i>et al.</i> 2005                              |
| <i>V. kanaloae</i>          | Splendidus             | +             | Diseased oyster larvae, <i>Ostrea edulis</i>                                   | IFREMER, France                                 | AJ316193           | Thompson <i>et al.</i> 2003b                            |
| <i>V. lentus</i>            | Splendidus             | +             | Cultivated oyster                                                              | Vinaroz, Spain                                  | AJ278881           | Macián <i>et al.</i> 2001                               |
| <b><i>V. pelagius</i></b>   | Splendidus             | +             | Seawater enriched with succinate                                               | Hawaii, off coast Oahu, USA                     | AJ293802           | (Baumann <i>et al.</i> 1971) Baumann <i>et al.</i> 1981 |
| <b><i>V. pomeroyi</i></b>   | Splendidus             | +             | Bivalve larvae, <i>Nodipecten nodosus</i>                                      | LCMM Florianópolis, southern Brazil             | AJ491290           | Thompson <i>et al.</i> 2003b                            |
| <i>V. splendidus</i>        | Splendidus             | +             | Marine fish                                                                    | -                                               | AJ515229           | (Beijerinck 1900) Baumann <i>et al.</i> 1981            |
| <i>V. tasmaniensis</i>      | Splendidus             | +             | Atlantic salmon, <i>Salmo salar</i>                                            | Tasmania, Australia                             | AJ316192           | Thompson <i>et al.</i> 2003c                            |
| <i>V. toranzoniae</i>       | Splendidus             | +             | Cultured Manila clams, <i>Venerupis philippinarum</i>                          | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | HE978310           | Lasa <i>et al.</i> 2013                                 |
| " <i>V. profundus</i> "     | Splendidus             | NA            | A deep-sea seamount                                                            | Near Yap Trench in the tropical western Pacific | KT900237           | Zhang <i>et al.</i> 2019                                |
| <i>V. cortegadensis</i>     | <i>V. genomosp.</i> F6 | NA            | Healthy Manila clam, <i>Venerupis philippinarum</i>                            | Galicia, north-western Spain                    | HF955037           | Lasa <i>et al.</i> 2014                                 |

**Table 2. General information of completed genomes for Splendidus clade related species.** Taxa IDs are indicated as: 01-*V. artabrorum* CECT 7226<sup>T</sup>, 02-*V. atlanticus* CECT 7223<sup>T</sup>, 03-*V. celticus* CECT 7224<sup>T</sup>, 04-*V. chagasii* LMG 21353<sup>T</sup>, 05-*V. coralliirubri* DSM 27495<sup>T</sup>, 06-*V. crassostreae* LMG 22240<sup>T</sup>, 07-*V. cyclitrophicus* LMG 21359<sup>T</sup>, 08-*V. echinoideorum* DSM 107264<sup>T</sup>, 09-*V. fortis* LMG 21557<sup>T</sup>, 10-*V. gallaecicus* CECT 7244<sup>T</sup>, 11-*V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, 12-*V. kanaloae* LMG 20539<sup>T</sup>, 13-*V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>, 14-*V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, 15-*V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>, 16-*V. splendidus* LMG 19031<sup>T</sup>, 17-*V. tasmaniensis* LMG 20012<sup>T</sup>, 18-*V. toranzoniae* CECT 7225<sup>T</sup>, 19-*V. cortegadensis* CECT 7227<sup>T</sup>. **IDs** 1-18 are Splendidus clade species. “**Abbr**” indicates the abbreviation names used in this study, “**Chr.**” indicates chromosome.

| ID | Abbr | Sequence  |           | Plasmids                      | Total size (bp) | GC content (%) | CDSs  | Number 16S rRNA | tRNA | Accession number  |
|----|------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------|-----------------|------|-------------------|
|    |      | Chr. 1    | Chr. 2    |                               |                 |                |       |                 |      |                   |
| 01 | Art  | 3,104,862 | 1,338,470 |                               | 4,443,332       | 44.1           | 3,850 | 12              | 127  | AP025458-AP025459 |
| 02 | Atl  | 3,469,123 | 1,605,756 | 32,802                        | 5,107,681       | 44.0           | 4,415 | 15              | 137  | AP025460-AP025462 |
| 03 | Cel  | 3,620,060 | 2,016,907 |                               | 5,636,967       | 44.5           | 4,898 | 14              | 139  | AP025463-AP025464 |
| 04 | Cha  | 3,413,052 | 1,828,839 | 187,827;<br>81,098;<br>58,987 | 5,569,803       | 44.2           | 4,989 | 14              | 137  | AP025465-AP025469 |
| 05 | Cor  | 3,681,934 | 2,060,851 |                               | 5,742,785       | 44.5           | 5,027 | 14              | 135  | AP025470-AP025471 |
| 06 | Cra  | 3,475,743 | 1,947,964 | 237,546;<br>143,128           | 5,804,381       | 44.4           | 5,052 | 13              | 139  | AP025476-AP025479 |
| 07 | Cyc  | 3,415,033 | 1,727,822 | 134,644                       | 5,277,499       | 43.8           | 4,460 | 13              | 137  | AP025480-AP025482 |
| 08 | Ech  | 3,599,125 | 2,020,999 | 72,315;<br>45,679             | 5,738,118       | 43.7           | 4,935 | 15              | 137  | AP025483-AP025486 |
| 09 | For  | 3,262,072 | 1,687,370 | 332,195                       | 5,281,637       | 44.7           | 4,507 | 13              | 134  | AP025487-AP025489 |
| 10 | Gal  | 3,292,782 | 1,833,873 |                               | 5,126,655       | 41.4           | 4,432 | 15              | 130  | AP025490-AP025491 |
| 11 | Gig  | 3,575,998 | 2,018,505 | 225,164;<br>4,542;<br>1,858   | 5,826,067       | 44.2           | 5,063 | 14              | 138  | AP025492-AP025496 |
| 12 | Kan  | 3,174,145 | 1,478,351 |                               | 4,652,496       | 43.9           | 3,989 | 12              | 130  | AP025497-AP025498 |
| 13 | Len  | 3,691,782 | 1,953,633 | 251,461;<br>3,959             | 5,900,835       | 44.0           | 5,137 | 10              | 124  | AP025499-AP025502 |
| 14 | Pel  | 3,187,009 | 1,381,362 | 395,604                       | 4,963,975       | 44.8           | 4,252 | 13              | 135  | AP025503-AP025505 |

|    |     |           |           |                     |           |      |       |    |     |                       |
|----|-----|-----------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|------|-------|----|-----|-----------------------|
| 15 | Pom | 3,635,862 | 2,023,719 |                     | 5,659,581 | 44.6 | 4,820 | 14 | 138 | AP025506-<br>AP025507 |
| 16 | Spl | 3,869,574 | 2,009,543 |                     | 5,879,117 | 44.0 | 5,086 | 14 | 133 | AP025508-<br>AP025509 |
| 17 | Tas | 3,226,267 | 1,501,469 | 149,865;<br>114,713 | 4,992,314 | 44.1 | 4,303 | 15 | 133 | AP025510-<br>AP025513 |
| 18 | Tor | 3,169,590 | 1,436,362 |                     | 4,605,952 | 44.0 | 3,949 | 13 | 131 | AP025514-<br>AP025515 |
| 19 | -   | 3,116,092 | 1,374,279 | 94,062;<br>84,136   | 4,668,569 | 42.5 | 4,069 | 14 | 113 | AP025472-<br>AP025475 |

38 838

839 **Table 3. List of core virulence factor gene sets in the Splendidus clade**

| VF Class                      | Virulence factors<br>(number)                                     | Related genes        | Function                                                   | References                                                                 |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adherence                     | Mannose-sensitive<br>hemagglutinin<br>(MSHA type IV pilus)<br>(8) | <i>mshB</i>          | Biofilm<br>formation                                       | Floyd <i>et al.</i> , 2020;<br>Sun <i>et al.</i> , 2022                    |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshG</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshH</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshI</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshJ</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshL</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshM</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>mshN</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               | Type IV pilus<br>(3)                                              | <i>pilB</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>pilC</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>pilD</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
| Secretion<br>system           | EPS type II<br>secretion system<br>(12)                           | <i>epsC</i>          | Virulence<br>mechanisms<br>and<br>environmental<br>fitness | Sandkvist, 2001;<br>Sikora, 2013;<br>Johnson <i>et al.</i> , 2014          |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsE</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsF</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsG</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsH</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsI</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsJ</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsK</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsL</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>epsM</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
| Chemotaxis<br>and<br>motility | Flagella<br>(55)                                                  | <i>epsN</i>          | Bacterial<br>chemotaxis<br>and flagellar<br>assembly       | Terashima <i>et al.</i> , 2008;<br>Haiko and Westerlund-<br>Wikström, 2013 |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>gspD</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>cheABRVWYZ</i>    |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>filM</i>          |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>flaABDEGL</i>     |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>flgABCDEFGH</i>   |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>IJKLMN</i>        |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>flhABFG</i>       |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>fliADEFGHIJKL</i> |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>NOPQRS</i>        |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>flrABC</i>        |                                                            |                                                                            |
|                               |                                                                   | <i>motABXY</i>       |                                                            |                                                                            |

841 **Figure captions (80 mm, 169 mm or 110 mm)**

842 **Figure 1.** Molecular phylogenetic analyses using network and bifurcating methods based on  
843 concatenated eight housekeeping gene sequences (*ftsZ*, *gapA*, *gyrB*, *mreB*, *pyrH*, *recA*, *rpoA*, and  
844 *topA*). A) The split network of a total of 195 *Vibrionaceae* species with *Escherichia coli* K-12  
845 (ASM584v2) as outgroup. The eight housekeeping gene sequences were concatenated, and the  
846 network was constructed using the SplitsTree4 ver. 4.14.8 with neighbor net drawing method and  
847 Jukes-Cantor correction. B) The Maximum Likelihood (ML) rooted tree for the Splendidus clade,  
848 constructed by MEGA-X v10.1.8 with 1000 bootstraps, *E. coli* K12 MG1655 and *V. cholerae* ATCC  
849 14035<sup>T</sup> as outgroups. Reference sequence data was obtained from Jiang *et al.* (2022).

850 **Figure 2.** Genome size and GC content relationship. A) Position of the 18 Splendidus clade species  
851 in 193 *Vibrionaceae* species (8 genera). Data was obtained from Jiang *et al.* (2022). B) Species  
852 affiliation and sub-clade (SC) of the Splendidus clade. Black borders in B represent the presence of  
853 plasmids.

854 **Figure 3.** Sub-clade delineation in the Splendidus clade. A) Splendidus clade intra split network in  
855 the broad network of 195 *Vibrionaceae* on the basis of eight housekeeping genes (8-HKGs).  
856 Heatmap matrix of values from B) Average Nucleotide Identity (ANI) and C) Average Amino Acid  
857 Identity (AAI) within the Splendidus clade. Values were calculated using genome-based distance  
858 matrix calculator (ANI-Matrix/AAI-Matrix). Taxa abbreviations are indicated as Table 2.  
859 Dendrogram showed the hierarchical clustering. Heatmap was visualized using ComplexHeatmap  
860 ver. 2.2.0.

861 **Figure 4.** Genome synteny profiling of A) the Splendidus clade species against *V. lentus* LMG  
862 21034<sup>T</sup>, B) inter and intra sub-clades in the Splendidus clade with reference genome in bold. The  
863 genomes were compared using CGView using BLASTn. The color indicates the presence of  
864 homologous genes in each genome. C) The numbers of genomic islands (GEIs) predicted in each  
865 Splendidus clade species. Taxa abbreviations are indicated in Table 2.

866 **Figure 5.** The pan-genome analyses using A) complete genome sequences and B) split genome  
867 sequences of the Splendidus clade species. Circle bars represent the occurrence of gene clusters in  
868 each genome. Gene cluster represents a group of homologues identified based on the amino acid  
869 sequence similarity. Heatmap in the upper right corner of A represents ANI similarity between these  
870 genomes, and the above phylogenetic tree was constructed using amino acid sequences of 27 better  
871 single-copy core genes (SCGs) by embedded FastTree tool. Details of statistical information of  
872 layers on the right were shown in Table S2. Taxa abbreviations are indicated as: Art-*V. artabrorum*  
873 CECT 7226<sup>T</sup>, Atl-*V. atlanticus* CECT 7223<sup>T</sup>, Cel-*V. celticus* CECT 7224<sup>T</sup>, Cha-*V. chagasii* LMG  
874 21353<sup>T</sup>,  
875 Cor-*V. coralliirubri* DSM 27495<sup>T</sup>, Cra-*V. crassostreae* LMG 22240<sup>T</sup>, Cys-*V. cyclitrophicus* LMG  
876 21359<sup>T</sup>, Ech-*V. echinoideorum* DSM 107264<sup>T</sup>, For-*V. fortis* LMG 21557<sup>T</sup>, Gal-*V. gallaecicus* CECT  
877 7244<sup>T</sup>, Gig-*V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, Kan-*V. kanaloae* LMG 20539<sup>T</sup>, Len-*V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>,  
878 Pel-*V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, Pom-*V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>, Spl-*V. splendidus* LMG 19031<sup>T</sup>, Tas-  
879 *V. tasmaniensis* LMG 20012<sup>T</sup>, Tor-*V. toranzoniae* CECT 7225<sup>T</sup>.

880 **Figure 6.** Broad prediction of virulence factors (VFs) related genes for the Splendidus clade, the left  
881 text represents VF class, only differences were shown here, detailed predictions and locations are

listed in Table S3. The upper phylogenetic tree was constructed by MEGA-X using nucleic acid sequences of the 27-BetterSCGs, and edited using FigTree v1.4.4. Taxa abbreviations are indicated as: Art-*V. artabrorum* CECT 7226T, Atl-*V. atlanticus* CECT 7223T, Cel-*V. celticus* CECT 7224T, Cha-*V. chagasii* LMG 21353T, Cor-*V. coralliirubri* DSM 27495T, Cra-*V. crassostreae* LMG 22240T, Cys-*V. cyclitrophicus* LMG 21359<sup>T</sup>, Ech-*V. echinoideorum* DSM 107264<sup>T</sup>, For-*V. fortis* LMG 21557<sup>T</sup>, Gal-*V. gallaecicus* CECT 7244<sup>T</sup>, Gig-*V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, Kan-*V. kanaloae* LMG 20539<sup>T</sup>, Len-*V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>, Pel-*V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, Pom-*V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>, Spl-*V. splendidus* LMG 19031<sup>T</sup>, Tas-*V. tasmaniensis* LMG 20012<sup>T</sup>, Tor-*V. toranzoniae* CECT 7225<sup>T</sup>.

**Figure 7.** KEGG pathway reconstruction of A) “Quorum sensing” (vibrio part of map02024) and B) “Bacterial secretion system” (map03070) for Splendidus clade species using KEGG Mapper Reconstruct Tool. A clear illustration of B can be found in the supplemental files. Taxa IDs are indicated as: 01-*V. artabrorum* CECT 7226<sup>T</sup>, 02-*V. atlanticus* CECT 7223<sup>T</sup>, 03-*V. celticus* CECT 7224<sup>T</sup>, 04-*V. chagasii* LMG 21353<sup>T</sup>, 05-*V. coralliirubri* DSM 27495<sup>T</sup>, 06-*V. crassostreae* LMG 22240<sup>T</sup>, 07-*V. cyclitrophicus* LMG 21359<sup>T</sup>, 08-*V. echinoideorum* DSM 107264<sup>T</sup>, 09-*V. fortis* LMG 21557<sup>T</sup>, 10-*V. gallaecicus* CECT 7244<sup>T</sup>, 11-*V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, 12-*V. kanaloae* LMG 20539<sup>T</sup>, 13-*V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>, 14-*V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, 15-*V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>, 16-*V. splendidus* LMG 19031<sup>T</sup>, 17-*V. tasmaniensis* LMG 20012<sup>T</sup>, 18-*V. toranzoniae* CECT 7225<sup>T</sup>.

**Figure S1.** Heatmap generated with OrthoANI values. These values were calculated from the Orthologous Average Nucleotide Identity Tool version 0.93.1 using genomes of related species in Figure 1.

**Figure S2.** The total numbers of virulence factors (VFs) related genes predicted in each Splendidus clade species. Taxa abbreviations are indicated as: Art-*V. artabrorum* CECT 7226<sup>T</sup>, Atl-*V. atlanticus* CECT 7223<sup>T</sup>, Cel-*V. celticus* CECT 7224<sup>T</sup>, Cha-*V. chagasii* LMG 21353<sup>T</sup>, Cor-*V. coralliirubri* DSM 27495<sup>T</sup>, Cra-*V. crassostreae* LMG 22240<sup>T</sup>, Cys-*V. cyclitrophicus* LMG 21359<sup>T</sup>, Ech-*V. echinoideorum* DSM 107264<sup>T</sup>, For-*V. fortis* LMG 21557<sup>T</sup>, Gal-*V. gallaecicus* CECT 7244<sup>T</sup>, Gig-*V. gigantis* LMG 22741<sup>T</sup>, Kan-*V. kanaloae* LMG 20539<sup>T</sup>, Len-*V. lentus* LMG 21034<sup>T</sup>, Pel-*V. pelagius* ATCC 25916<sup>T</sup>, Pom-*V. pomeroyi* LMG 20537<sup>T</sup>, Spl-*V. splendidus* LMG 19031<sup>T</sup>, Tas-*V. tasmaniensis* LMG 20012<sup>T</sup>, Tor-*V. toranzoniae* CECT 7225<sup>T</sup>.

**Figure S3.** Identification of accessory, core and specific genomes in the split pangenomes of Chromosome 1, Chromosome 2, and Plasmids for the Splendidus and Halioticoli clade using Anvi'o7.

**Figure S4.** Numbers (right) and percentages (left) from COG functional classification for each Splendidus clade species in A) complete genomes and B) specific genomes. The abbreviations for the Splendidus clade species are represented in Table 2. Abbreviations for COG categories are indicated as: “Transcription (K)”, “Replication, recombination and repair (L)”, “Cell wall/membrane/envelope biogenesis (M)”, “Signal transduction mechanisms (T)”, “Defense mechanisms (V)”, and “Mobilome: prophages, transposons (X)”, the others are represented in Table S4.

**Figure S5.** Numbers (right) and percentages (left) from KEGG metabolism construction for each

Splendidus clade species in A) complete genomes and B) specific genomes. The abbreviations for the Splendidus clade species are represented in Table 2. Abbreviations for KEGG categories are shown as: “Other carbohydrate metabolism (A2)”, “Pathogenicity (K1)”, and “Plant pathogenicity (K3)”, the others are shown in Table S5.

**Figure S6.** The maximum copy number of alginate lyase families within Splendidus clade. Lyases were predicted using the dbCAN2 meta server (HMMdb v9) with HMMER, DIAMOND, and eCAMI tools , and domains supported by more than two tools were used. The upper phylogenetic tree was constructed by MEGA-X using nucleic acid sequences of the 27-BetterSCGs, and edited using FigTree v1.4.4. Polysaccharide lyase (PL) families are represented by colored rectangles. ND indicates that the lyases were not detected.

**Figure S7.** KEGG pathway reconstruction of “Biofilm formation” (map05111) for Splendidus clade species using KEGG Mapper Reconstruct Tool. Taxa IDs are indicated as Figure 7.

**Figure S8.** KEGG pathway reconstruction of “Bacterial chemotaxis” (map02030) for Splendidus clade species using KEGG Mapper Reconstruct Tool. Taxa IDs are indicated as Figure 7.

**Figure S9.** KEGG pathway reconstruction of “Flagellar assembly” (map02040) for Splendidus clade species using KEGG Mapper Reconstruct Tool. Taxa IDs are indicated as Figure 7.

**Figure S10.** KEGG pathway reconstruction of “Bacterial secretion system” (map03070) for Splendidus clade species using KEGG Mapper Reconstruct Tool. Taxa IDs are indicated as Figure 7.