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Miniature Inverted-repeat Transposable Elements: Their Functional Roles and Genomic Impact in Prokaryotes

Lasse Roberto*

Department of Human Genetics, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 43210, USA

Introduction

Miniature Inverted-Repeat Transposable Elements (MITEs) are short, non-autonomous transposable elements that play significant roles in the evolution and genomic dynamics of prokaryotes. Despite their small size, MITEs exhibit remarkable diversity and have been found in various bacterial and archaeal genomes. This article provides an overview of MITEs, their structural features, mechanisms of transposition, functional roles, and genomic impact in prokaryotes. Transposable Elements (TEs) are DNA sequences capable of moving from one genomic location to another. MITEs represent a class of TEs characterized by their small size (typically less than 800 base pairs), Terminal Inverted Repeats (TIRs), and lack of coding capacity for transposase enzymes. Despite being non-autonomous, MITEs have been identified as important drivers of genome evolution and adaptation in prokaryotes.

Description

MITEs typically range in size from 50 to 800 base pairs, although some exceptions exist. They are flanked by short Terminal Inverted Repeats (TIRs) which are essential for transposition. Unlike autonomous transposable elements, MITEs lack coding sequences for transposases, rendering them dependent on the transposase machinery of other elements for mobilization [1].This non-autonomous nature distinguishes MITEs from other classes of transposable elements. MITEs utilize the transposition machinery of autonomous transposable elements for their mobilization. The transposase enzyme encoded by autonomous elements recognizes the TIRs of MITEs and facilitates their excision and reinsertion into new genomic locations. This mechanism allows MITEs to proliferate and spread throughout the genome [2].

Despite their lack of coding capacity, MITEs have been implicated in various functional roles within prokaryotic genomes. They can act as regulatory elements by influencing gene expression through their insertion into promoter regions or by providing binding sites for regulatory proteins [3]. Additionally, MITEs may contribute to genomic rearrangements, such as deletions, inversions, and duplications, leading to genetic diversity and adaptation. MITEs have a significant impact on the structure and evolution of prokaryotic genomes. Their ability to transpose and insert into new genomic locations can disrupt gene function or regulatory sequences, leading to phenotypic variation. Furthermore, MITEs contribute to genome plasticity by facilitating genomic rearrangements and promoting horizontal gene transfer. The accumulation of MITEs in genomes over time can shape genome architecture and contribute to species diversification [4,5].

Conclusion

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of MITEs in prokaryotic genome evolution. For example, in bacterial pathogens such as Escherichia coli and Salmonella enterica, MITEs have been associated with the acquisition of antibiotic resistance genes through horizontal gene transfer events. In archaea, MITEs have been implicated in the adaptation to extreme environments by influencing gene expression patterns. Miniature Inverted-Repeat Transposable Elements (MITEs) represent a fascinating class of transposable elements that play diverse functional roles in prokaryotic genomes. Despite their small size and lack of coding capacity, MITEs have a significant impact on genome evolution and adaptation through their ability to mobilize and influence gene expression. Further research into the mechanisms and evolutionary dynamics of MITEs will enhance our understanding of genome plasticity and adaptation in prokaryotes.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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***Address for Correspondence:** Lasse Roberto, Department of Human Genetics, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 43210, USA, E-mail: lasseroberto@gmail.com*

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