

1 Article

## 2 Complete Genomic Sequence of *Noni mosaic virus* 3 (NoMV), a Novel Potyvirus Associated with a Mosaic 4 Disease in *Morinda citrifolia* L.

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14

15 **Abstract:** An outbreak of a virus-like disease has caused severe damage to noni plants (*Morinda citrifolia* L.)  
16 in Xishuangbanna area of China's southwestern Yunnan province since 2015. The diseased plants displayed  
17 typical mosaic symptom with light and dark green patches on leaves. Flexuous filamentous virus particles of  
18 about 800 nm in length were observed from the leaf saps by transmission electron microscope. Illumina  
19 transcriptomic sequencing further revealed the presence of a potyvirus and its near complete genome was  
20 obtained from *de novo* assembly. The complete genome of 9,659 nts was obtained by Sanger sequencing of  
21 eight amplicons generate by RT-PCR and 5' and 3' RACE. BLASTp analysis of the polyprotein sequence  
22 showed that the virus was most closely related to *Tobacco vein banding mosaic virus* (TVBMV), but these two  
23 viruses only shared 50.7% amino acid sequence similarity. Both phylogenetic analyses of the polyprotein and  
24 CP amino acid sequences indicated that this virus is a member of genus *Potyvirus*. However, the low sequence  
25 homology with all known potyviruses established this virus as a new species in the genus, tentatively named as  
26 *Noni mosaic virus* (NoMV). Our field surveys showed that 100% of the symptomatic samples and 28.57% of  
27 the asymptomatic samples were infected with this novel potyvirus. Aphids collected from diseased leaves  
28 were also detected carrying the virus. In summary, our data indicated that a novel species of potyvirus, NoMV,  
29 is prevalent in Yunnan, China and is associated with an emerging mosaic disease on *M. citrifolia*.

30 **Keywords:** *Noni mosaic virus*; Potyvirus; Complete genome; *Morinda citrifolia* L; Illumina transcriptomic  
31 sequencing  
32

### 33 1. Introduction

34 Plant viruses have seriously threat to crop production and human food safety due to their prevalence and  
35 outbreak. According to incomplete statistics, plant virus infection annually causes about 10% reduction of  
36 global crop production [1]. The development of Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) has provided a powerful  
37 tool for plant pathogens diagnosis, especially for the novel virus identification. Many plant viruses have been  
38 discovered by the NGS method, such as *grapevine Muscat rose virus* (GMRV) [2], *Apple rubbery wood virus*  
39 (ARWV) [3], *Tea plant necrotic ring blotch virus* (TPNRBV) [4] and *Areca palm necrotic ringspot virus*  
40 (APNRV) [5].

41 *Noni* (*Morinda citrifolia* L.) is a fruit-bearing tree with its native range extending across tropical or  
42 sub-tropical regions of Southeast Asia, Australia and the Pacific Islands. Its fruits are traditionally used as a  
43 medicinal herb in many countries [6, 7]. The agricultural planting of noni began as early as 2000 in Hainan and  
44 Yunnan Provinces, China. At present, it has been grown in most provinces in South China. With the increased  
45 areages and continuous cropping, diseases such as blight and fruit rot caused by *Phytophthora botryosa* [8] and  
46 anthracnose caused by *Colletotrichum* spp. [9] have been reported and may become threats to the development  
47 of the noni industry. However, no viral disease of noni has been reported up to now.

48 In 2015, a virus-like disease was found in noni plants in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China. The leaves of  
49 diseased plants had striking mosaic symptoms with light and dark green patches. At present, this virus-like  
50 disease seriously affects the cultivation and production of noni plant in Xishuangbanna. In such cases,  
51 identification of the viral pathogen present in diseased noni plants is significant for scientific and agronomic  
52 interest. In this study, NGS technology and Sanger sequencing were used to demonstrate that the putative  
53 causal agent of this noni disease is a novel potyvirus with distinctive molecular characteristics. This study is the  
54 first report of the novel potyvirus, tentatively named as *Noni mosaic virus* (NoMV) worldwide.

## 55 2. Materials and Methods

### 56 2.1 Plant materials and electron microscopy observation

57 In 2015, thirty-one leaf samples of diseased noni plants (*Morinda citrifolia* L.) showing typical mosaic  
58 symptoms with light and dark green patches (Fig. 1a) were collected from Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China. To  
59 determine if the diseased plants were infected by virus, leaf-saps were prepared for transmission electron  
60 microscope (TEM) examination. Briefly, five fresh leaves of healthy or diseased samples were grounded in  
61 1×PBS at a final concentration of 0.1 g/ml. The grounded samples were centrifuged at 5 000 rpm for 2 minutes  
62 to obtain the supernatants, which were then loaded onto copper grids (200 meshes) individually. The copper  
63 grids were negatively stained by 1% phosphotungstic acid for 2 minutes, dried under tungsten lamp for about 10  
64 min, and then observed under TEM (HT7700, Hitachi). The width and length of viral particles were measured  
65 by using Adobe Photoshop CS3 software.

### 66 2.2 Library preparation for transcriptome sequencing

67 Total RNA was extracted from five diseased noni leaf samples by using a Quick RNA Isolation Kit  
68 (Bioteke, Beijing, China) according to the manufacturer's instructions. RNA quality, including purity,  
69 concentration, and integrity, were confirmed by using Nanodrop, Qubit 2.0, and Agilent 2100 before processing  
70 to cDNA library preparation.

71 The cDNA library was prepared in the following steps. First, mRNA was enriched from total RNA by  
72 Oligo(dT) magnetic beads and then randomly interrupted by adding fragmentation buffer. The fragmented  
73 mRNA was primed by random hexamers and reverse-transcribed into first strand cDNA, which was then treated  
74 with RNase H to remove RNA and used as a template for second strand cDNA (ds cDNA) synthesis using DNA  
75 polymerase I. The ds cDNA was purified by using AMPure XP beads and subjected to end repair and  
76 dA-tailing. Subsequently, the adaptors were added into the ds cDNA and the cDNA library was further  
77 enriched by PCR amplification. Before high-throughput sequencing, the concentration and insert size of the  
78 cDNA library were analyzed by Qubit 2.0 and Agilent 2100, respectively. Finally, the library was sent to  
79 Biomarker Biotechnology Corporation (Beijing, China) for deep sequencing, which was performed on  
80 HiSeq4000 with paired-end read length at 150 bp.

### 81 2.3 Viral genome assembly

82 Raw data was cleaned by filtering low-quality reads and trimming the adaptors. High-quality clean reads  
83 were mapped to viral sequences downloaded from NCBI website (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>) using the  
84 TopHat software [10]. HTSeq v0.5.4p3 was used to count the number of reads mapped to viral sequences [11].  
85 Contigs were assembled *de novo* from the clean reads using Trinity 2.1.1 [12]. These assembled contigs or  
86 unigenes were used to remap the viral reads for the second to obtain more accurate results. The viral contigs  
87 were further assembled into the full length potyvirus-like sequence in CodonCode Aligner 6.0.2 (CodonCode,  
88 Centerville, MA). The resulting full length potyvirus-like sequence was subjected to BLASTx search against  
89 non-redundant protein database (GenBank).

### 90 2.4 Sanger genome sequencing of a novel potyvirus

91 Sanger sequencing was used to confirm the genome sequence of the novel virus, designated as *Noni*  
92 *mosaic virus* (NoMV), arising from deep sequencing and *de novo* assembly. Briefly, seven primer pairs (see  
93 Supplementary Table S1) covering the near complete genome of NoMV were designed based on the assembled  
94 putative genome. Similarly, two nested primer pairs targeting 5' end were also designed. RNA extraction was  
95 conducted as described earlier. Random hexamer and Oligo(dT) were used in reverse transcription. PCR was

96 carried out using Phusion High-Fidelity DNA Polymerase (Thermo Fisher Scientific). The 5' end fragment was  
97 amplified using a 5' Rapid Amplification of cDNA Ends (RACE) kit (Invitrogen) according to the  
98 manufacturer's instructions. Each PCR fragment was cloned into pMD18-T vector (Takara, Beijing, China),  
99 and three independent clones of each fragment were subjected to Sanger bidirectional sequencing (Sangon  
100 Biotech, Wuhan, China). High quality sequencing results were overlapping-assembled using BioEdit (version  
101 7.0.9.0) to obtain the complete genome of NoMV [13].

## 102 2.5 NoMV genome analysis

103 The complete genome of NoMV obtained from previous step was subjected to sequence analyses. First,  
104 putative ORFs of NoMV were identified using ORF finder (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/orffinder/>) and  
105 sequence comparison with closely related viruses. Identified ORFs along with amino acid sequence were then  
106 used in BLAST. Sequences with high similarity to NoMV were downloaded and subjected to alignment and  
107 pairwise comparison using BioEdit (version 7.0.9.0).

## 108 2.6 Phylogenetic analysis

109 To determine the phylogenetic relationship of NoMV with *Potyvirus*, phylogenetic trees were constructed  
110 based on the alignments of polyprotein and coat protein (CP). Twenty potyviruses were chosen for alignment  
111 with NoMV because of their close relationship with NoMV revealed by BLAST search. These potyviruses are  
112 *Narcissus yellow stripe virus* (NYSV, AFJ92907.2), *Narcissus late season yellows virus* (NLSYV,  
113 AFQ95552.1), *Narcissus virus I* (NV-1, BBE01240.1), *Wild onion symptomless virus* (WOSV,  
114 YP\_009259366.1), *Scallion mosaic virus* (ScaMV, NP\_570725.1), *Turnip mosaic virus* (TuMV,  
115 BBA07429.1), *Japanese yam mosaic virus* (JYMV, AJD23399.1), *Asparagus virus I* (AV-1, AIY55493.1),  
116 *Lily mottle virus* (LMoV, ADO34171.1), *Sweet potato latent virus* (SPLV, AJS10748.1), *Jasmine virus T*  
117 (JaVT, APZ75429.1), *Yam mosaic virus* (YaMV, AYD60113.1), *Carrot thin leaf virus* (CTLV, AGH25889.1),  
118 *Panax virus Y* (PnVY, YP\_003725718.1), *Celery mosaic virus* (CeMV, YP\_004376199.1), *Apium virus Y*  
119 (ApVY, QAA06935.1), *Potato virus A* (PoVA, ADA57721.1), *Pokeweed mosaic virus* (PkMV, AFS28881.1),  
120 *Tobacco vein banding mosaic virus* (TVBMV, AEB66864.1), and *Potato virus Y* (PVY, ASI37712.1). All  
121 amino acid sequences were aligned using ClustalX, then passed to MEGA 6.0 for tree building using  
122 Neighbor-Joining method with 1,000 bootstrap replicates [14].

## 123 2.7 Field survey

124 To investigate the prevalence of the viral disease in Xishuangbanna City, Yunnan Province, three field  
125 surveys were conducted from March to May in 2016. Leaf samples of twenty-one asymptomatic and 67  
126 symptomatic noni plants were randomly collected, and 7 asymptomatic and 13 symptomatic samples were  
127 selected for RT-PCR detection using a pair of primers specifically targeting NoMV CP gene (NMV-F and  
128 NMV-R, see in Supplementary Table S1).

129 During field survey, aphids and whiteflies found on the back of noni plant leaves were also collected for  
130 NoMV detection to determine if aphids or whiteflies were carriers of the NoMV. Approximately 50 aphids or  
131 100 whiteflies were pooled to extract total RNA using TRIzol reagent. RT-PCR detection of NoMV was  
132 performed as described above.

## 133 3. Results

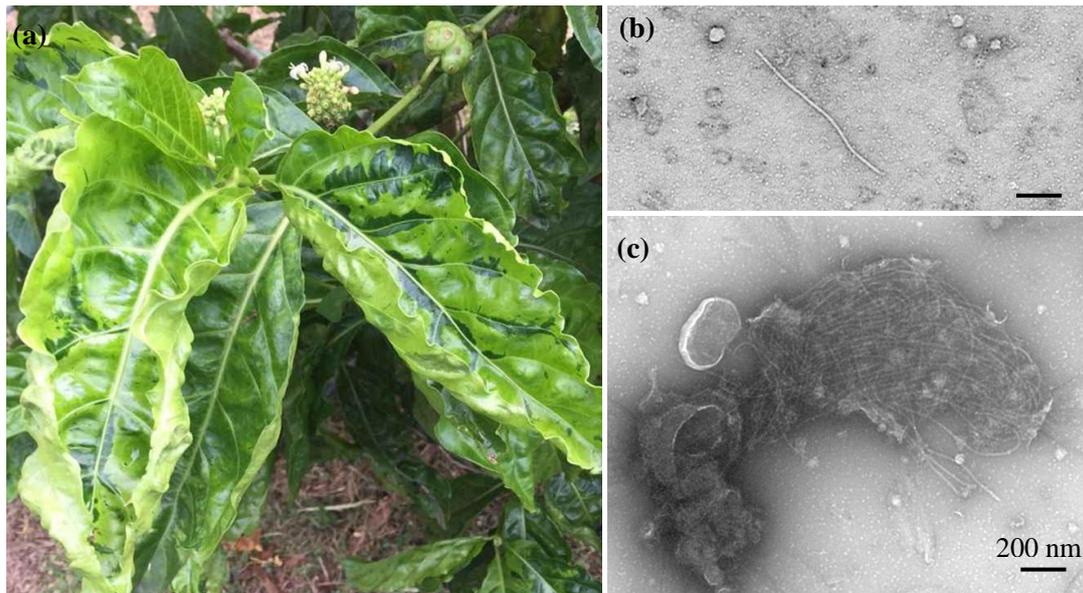
### 134 3.1 Potyvirus-like particles were found in disease noni leaf sap

135 In 2015, leaves of thirty-one noni plants displaying typical mosaic symptoms with light and dark green  
136 patches (Fig. 1a) were collected from Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China. In order to determine if the diseased  
137 plants were infected with a virus, leaf-sap of the diseased and healthy leaves were prepared and observed under  
138 transmission electron microscope (TEM). The results showed that viral particles of typical potyviruses were  
139 observed in the saps of the diseased but not from healthy leaves. These flexuous filamentous particles were at  
140 800±20 nm in length and 20±1 nm in wide (Fig. 1b). Some of the virus particles formed large aggregates (Fig.  
141 1c). No virus particle was found from the healthy samples.

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**Figure 1.** Symptoms and viral particle morphology associated with Noni mosaic disease. (a), Noni plants leaves showing mosaic symptoms; (b) and (c), Transmission electron micrographs of a single virion and aggregated virions from crude extracts of NoMV-infected leaves. Scale bar=200.

### 165 3.2 A nearly full length potyvirus-like sequence was assembled from transcriptome sequencing

166 Raw data were filtered to obtain high-quality clean data, which were then mapped to the virus database in  
167 NCBI GenBank. A total of 644,392 viral reads were identified. The mapped viral reads were assembled into  
168 contigs or unigenes. A total of 40,911 contigs and 318 unigenes were assembled, respectively (Table 1). In  
169 detail, the length range of contigs in 200-300 bp accounted for 99.67%, while the length range of contigs in  
170 300-2000 bp were 0.33%, and only two contig was longer than 2000 bp. Meanwhile, the length ranges for  
171 unigenes in 200-300 bp, 300-500 bp, and 500-1000 bp accounted for 60.69%, 23.90% and 12.26%,  
172 respectively. The length range of unigenes over 1000 bp was 3.15%, while only two unigenes over 2000 bp  
173 were obtained (Table 1). These assembled contigs or unigenes were used to remap the viral reads for the  
174 second round and obtain more accurate results.

175 The assembled viral contigs or unigenes were further extended into the full length potyvirus-like  
176 sequence as long as possible in the CodonCode Aligner 6.0.2 (CodonCode, Centerville, MA), and an 8832 bp  
177 sequence was finally obtained. Blastn search showed this 8832 bp sequence had significant similarity to  
178 potyviruses. Based on the general genome size of potyviruses (~9.7 kb), nearly full length of this potyvirus-like  
179 sequence was obtained, leaving approximately 850 bps of 5' terminal sequence to be further sequenced.

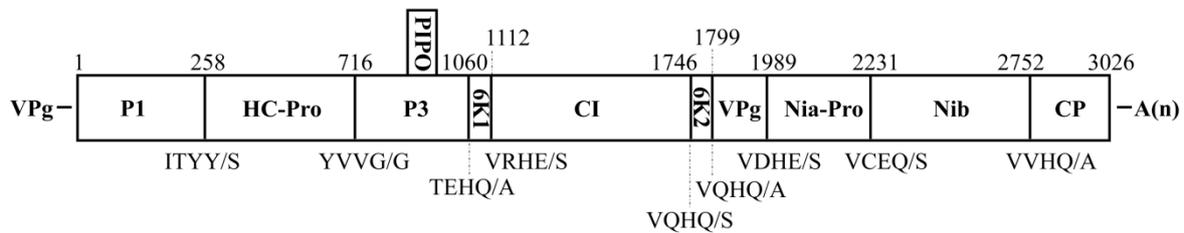
180  
181 **Table 1.** Summary statistical of the assembly results of potyvirus-like reads

Length (bp)	Contig	Transcript	Unigene
200-300	40,778(99.67%)	222(59.04%)	193(60.69%)
300-500	86(0.21%)	94(25%)	76(23.90%)
500-1000	39(0.10%)	50(13.30%)	39(12.26%)
1000-2000	6(0.01%)	8(2.13%)	8(2.52%)
>2000	2(0.00%)	2(0.53%)	2(0.63%)
Total Number	40,911	376	318
Total Length	2,119,848	138,503	117,038
Mean Length	51.82	368.36	368.04

### 182 3.3 Determination of complete genomic sequence of NoMV

183 To further verify the sequence assembled from transcriptomic sequence and to obtain the missing 5' end  
184 sequence, an overlapping amplicon cloning strategy was used with a series of 8 sequential RT-PCR cloning  
185 runs. The two ends of the viral genome were obtained by 5' and 3' RACE. These fragments were Sanger

186 sequenced and assembled. The full length of this potyvirus-like sequence, which was designated as NoMV  
 187 Yunnan isolate (NoMV-YN), comprises of 9,659 nt. This complete genome sequence was deposited in  
 188 GenBank under accession number MN158696. NoMV-YN has typical genomic organization and structural  
 189 characteristic of potyviruses. It has a 291-nt 5' untranslated region (UTR) and a 256-nt 3' UTR. It contains a  
 190 large open reading frame (ORF) encoding a polyprotein of 3,026 amino acids (aa) residues with a calculated  
 191 molecular mass of 343 kDa (Fig. 2).  
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193  
 194 **Figure 2.** Schematic representation of the genomic structure of *Noni mosaic virus* (NoMV) and the predicted  
 195 proteolytic cleavage sites of the NoMV polyprotein. Numbers above each part of the polyprotein indicate the  
 196 total number of amino acids of the mature protein. The cleavage sites are shown below. P1, the first protein;  
 197 HC-Pro, helper component-proteinase; P3, the third protein; 6K1 and 6K2, 6 kDa protein 1 and 2; CI,  
 198 cytoplasmic inclusion protein; VPg, viral genome-linked protein; Nia-Pro, 49 kDa proteinase; Nib, nuclear  
 199 inclusion protein b; CP, coat protein. PIPO (nucleotides 2901 to 3197) derived from RNA polymerase slippage  
 200 on the P3 cistron.

### 201 3.4 NoMV polyprotein analysis

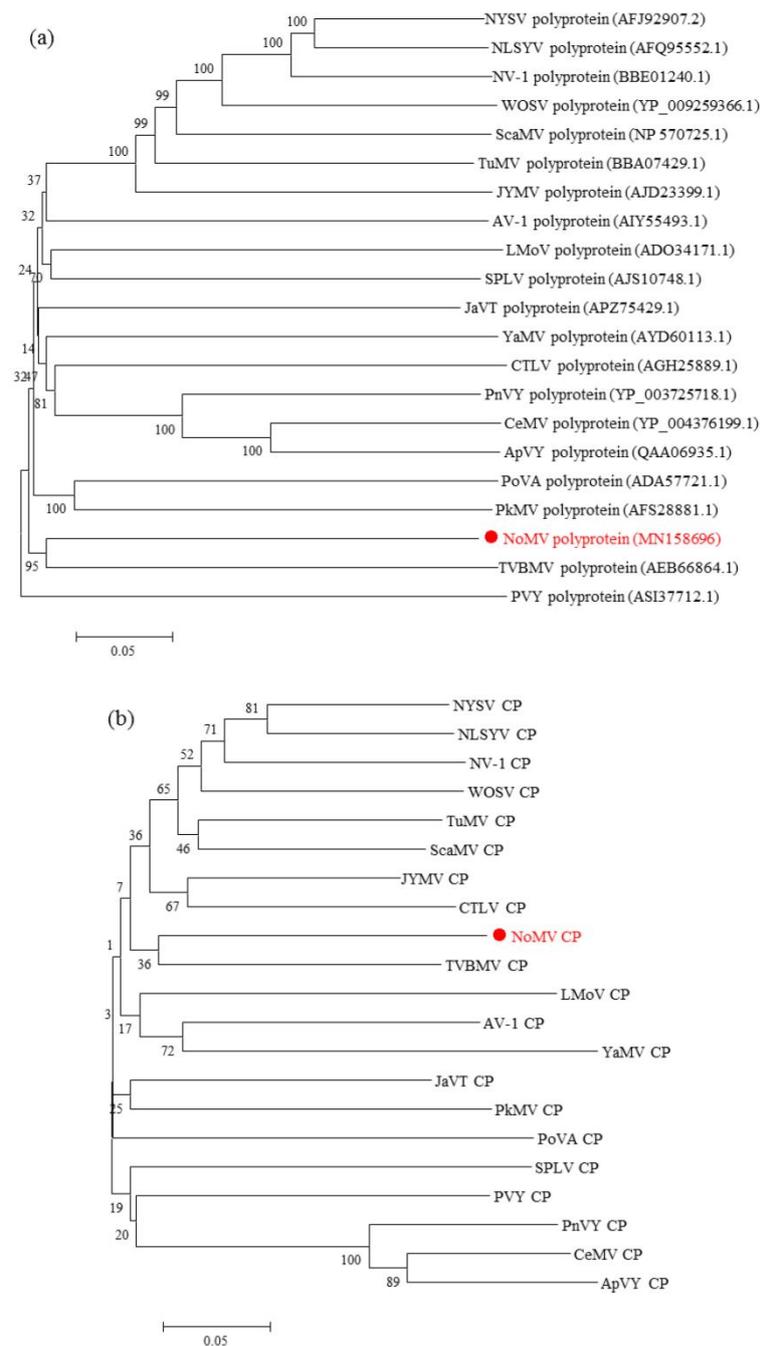
202 Pairwise comparison of NoMV and 20 closely related members in genus *Potyvirus* showed that this virus  
 203 shared only 47-50.7% and 53-67% aa sequence identity with the polyproteins and CPs of other potyviruses,  
 204 respectively (see Table S2). BLASTp analysis of the polyprotein showed that NoMV is most closely related to  
 205 *Tobacco vein banding mosaic virus* (AEB66864.1), and the two viruses have 50.7% amino acid sequence  
 206 similarity on polyprotein. Further analysis showed that NoMV polyprotein has typical structure and domains of  
 207 a characteristic potyvirus. Nine highly conserved potyvirus proteolytic cleavage sites were found in the  
 208 polyprotein based on potyvirus conservative protease cleavage sites. Ten putative mature proteins from  
 209 cleavage are P1 protein (P1, 258 aa), helper-component proteinase (HC-Pro, 458 aa), P3 protein (P3, 344 aa),  
 210 first 6 kDa peptide (6K1, 52 aa), cylindrical inclusion protein (CI, 634 aa), second 6 kDa peptide (6K2, 53 aa),  
 211 viral protein genome-linked (VPg, 190 aa), nuclear inclusion “a” protease (NIA-Pro, 242 aa), nuclear inclusion  
 212 “b” protease (NIB, 521 aa) and 274-aa CP (Fig. 2). The putative PIPO ORF (99 aa) was also identified as the  
 213 conservative motif GAA AAA A which was also found at nt 2896-2902 [15]. In addition, the NoMV CP has  
 214 274 aa residuals with a calculated molecular mass of 30.69 kDa. The <sup>2759</sup>DAG<sup>2762</sup> motif associated with aphid  
 215 transmission was also found at the N terminus of CP (aa 7-9) [16].

216 Moreover, aa sequence comparison of each mature protein between NoMV and other 20 members of  
 217 *Potyvirus* was also performed. The result showed that HC-Pro, CI, VPg, NIA-Pro and NIB proteins of NoMV  
 218 shared relatively high aa sequence identities with those of other 20 members. The similarity ranges from 46%  
 219 to 66%. However, the similarity of P1 and P3 are as low as 9-14% and 23-36%, respectively (Supplementary  
 220 Table S3).

### 221 3.5 Phylogenetic analysis of NoMV with other potyviruses

222 To determine if NoMV is a novel potyvirus and how it relates to other potyviruses, a phylogenetic analysis  
 223 of NoMV and the 20 potyviruses were performed based on the polyprotein amino acid sequences. The results  
 224 indicated that NoMV together with other potyviruses formed a group, representing the *Potyvirus* genus. Further  
 225 analysis indicated that NoMV was most closely related to TVBMV within a subgroup (Fig. 3a). The close  
 226 relatedness between NoMV and TVBMV was confirmed by the phylogenetic analysis based on CP amino acid  
 227 sequences (Fig. 3b). Although NoMV is closely related to the TVBMV, considering the low sequence  
 228 similarities between these two viruses, it is clear that NoMV is a distinct species of *Potyvirus*. These results  
 229 indicated that this virus isolate represents a novel species of potyvirus, tentatively named “*Noni mosaic virus*  
 230 (NoMV)”.

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**Figure 3.** Phylogenetic analysis of deduced amino acid sequences of the polyprotein (a) and coat protein (b) of NoMV and other potyviruses. These sequences were aligned using ClustalX, and phylogenetic trees were constructed with MEGA 6.0 using the Neighbor-Joining method. The bar represents 0.05 substitutions per site. NoMV is highlighted in red.

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### 3.6 NoMV is prevalent in noni fields

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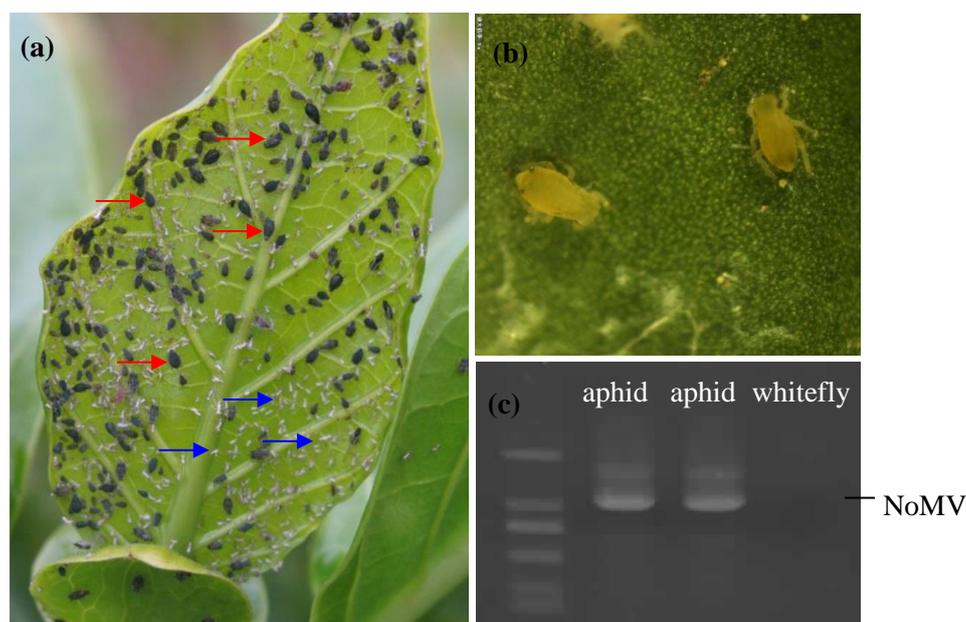
**Table 2.** *Noni mosaic virus* detection on partial noni plants by RT-PCR method

Sample	Collected time	Location	Symptom	RT-PCR
1-H1	2016-3-2	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Negative
1-H2	2016-3-2	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Negative
1-I1	2016-3-2	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
1-I2	2016-3-2	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
1-I3	2016-3-2	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
2-H1	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Positive*
2-H2	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Negative
2-H3	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Negative
2-I1	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
2-I2	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
2-I3	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
2-I4	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
2-I5	2016-5-3	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
3-H1	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Negative
3-H2	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Asymptomatic	Positive*
3-I1	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
3-I2	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
3-I3	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
3-I4	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive
3-I5	2016-5-25	Yunnan, China	Mosaic	Positive

245 “\*” represents NoMV infection of asymptomatic samples.

### 246 3.7 Aphid is a carrier and a potential transmission vector of NoMV

247 Filed surveys also showed that a large number of aphids (*Aphis atrata* Zhang) and whiteflies were observed  
 248 on the underside of symptomatic leaves (Figure 4a and 4b). RT-PCR was performed to determine whether  
 249 aphids or whiteflies could carry the virus and the results showed that a DNA band with expected size was  
 250 amplified from two aphid RNA preparations, but not from the whitefly RNA preparation (Figure 4c). Sanger  
 251 sequencing confirmed the amplified band was of NoMV CP. These results indicated that the aphid is a carrier  
 252 and a potential transmission vector of NoMV.



272 **Figure 4.** RT-PCR of *Noni mosaic virus* coat protein gene using total RNAs from aphids or whiteflies collected  
 273 from diseased noni leaves. (a), A large number of aphids (red arrows) and whiteflies (blue arrows) at the back of  
 274 a leaf; (b), Aphids larvae; (c), RT-PCR detection of NoMV in aphids and whiteflies by NMV-F and NMV-R  
 275 primers. The left lane contains Trans 2000 bp DNA Marker.

#### 276 4. Discussion

277 In this study, we analyzed the transcriptome high-throughput sequencing data of diseased noni plant  
278 leaves, which leads to identification of a novel potyvirus in diseased plant and assembly of the complete  
279 genome of the potyvirus NoMV. However, the *de novo* assembly from the Illumina reads failed to obtain  
280 ~850 bp sequence at the very 5' end of NoMV. This is most likely due to the poor sequence homology at the  
281 5' end of NoMV with any existing viral sequences. Consequently reads containing the 5' end sequences of  
282 NoMV were not mapped to any viral genome and were not used for the *de novo* assembly during the  
283 subsequent analysis. The draft genomic sequence assembled from the NGS data allowed the design of primers  
284 for PCR cloning and 5' and 3' RACE. The complete genome of NoMV was then sequenced by using Sanger  
285 sequencing and assembled. When the complete NoMV genome was used as reference to analyze the  
286 transcriptomic sequencing data again, we found rare viral reads mapped to the 5' end of NoMV genome.  
287 Therefore, the data from the transcriptome high-throughput sequencing would not completely cover this  
288 region. Similar results were observed not only in potyvirus [17], but also in babuvirus [18], enamovirus and  
289 nucleorhabdovirus [19]. These results also indicated the complete genome of NoMV would likely be obtained  
290 by increasing the transcriptomic sequencing data coverage. Considering the cost involved, we chose to fill the  
291 flanking region by 5' RACE.

292 Potyviruses are one of the most important plant-infecting virus groups [20]. At present *Potyvirus*,  
293 consisting of about 170 species, is the largest genus in the family *Potyviridae* according to the International  
294 Committee on Taxonomy of Virus (ICTV) [21, 22]. The species demarcation criteria of potyviruses, as  
295 suggested by ICTV, is based on the complete nucleotide sequence and large ORF amino acid sequence, setting  
296 at <76 % nucleotide sequence identity or <82 % amino acid sequence identity [20, 23]. In this study, sequence  
297 analysis revealed that the polyprotein and CP aa sequence of NoMV shared less than 51% and 67% sequence  
298 identities with those of other potyviruses. These results indicate that NoMV is a novel potyvirus. Although  
299 NoMV was more similar with TVBMV and grouped into sub-clades in polygenetic analysis, it is genetically  
300 distinct from TVBMV and other potyviruses.

301 Among the ten proteins produced by cleavage of the potyviral polypeptide, P1 is the most divergent in  
302 amino acid sequence. Sequence comparison revealed that the amino acid sequence of NoMV P1 shared less  
303 than 14% identities with those of other potyviruses. P1 has been shown to be required for host adaptation in  
304 potyviruses [24, 25]. In addition, sequence comparison also revealed that the amino acid sequence of NoMV P3  
305 shared less than 23% identities with those of other potyviruses. P3 has been shown to play a decisive role in the  
306 intercellular movement of the potyvirus [26]. These findings suggest that the two genetically divergent proteins,  
307 along with other proteins, may allow NoMV to adapt noni plants as a host.

308 Our study also suggests that aphid is a carrier and a potential transmission vector of NoMV. Some  
309 conserved motifs on potyviral proteins have been verified to be responsible for potyvirus aphid transmission  
310 [22]. For example, motifs "KITC" and "PIT" on HC-Pro and a motif "DAG" on CP have been identified to be  
311 key factors in aphid transmission [16, 27-29]. This finding also arouses the concern that without appropriate  
312 management of aphids could accelerate the spread of NoMV. Currently, the disease caused by NoMV has  
313 spread to other growing area in Yunnan Province and even some neighboring area of Thailand. It is likely that  
314 the disease would further spread without proper management and intervention. Further studies are needed in  
315 order to clarify the genetic diversity, biological characterization, and epidemiology of NoMV in different  
316 geographic regions.

317 The data presented in this study provided strong evidence that the novel NoMV is intimately associated with  
318 and is the likely cause for the noni mosaic disease prevalent in Yunan, China. Additional experiments are  
319 required to conclusively demonstrate the etiology of and the role of NoMV in the noni mosaic disease.

320 **Supplementary Materials:** The following are available online, **Table S1:** List of primers used in this study,  
321 **Table S2:** The sequence identity of NoMV and other potyviruses based on polyprotein and CP amino acids,  
322 **Table S3:** The sequence identity of NoMV and other potyviruses based on P1, HC-Pro, P3, 6K1, CI, 6K2, VPg,  
323 Nia-Pro, Nib amino acids.

324 **Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, N.Y. and Z.L.; methodology, N.Y.; investigation, Z.C. and Y.Y.;  
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326 N.Y.

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