植物对有机氮源的利用及其在 自然生态系统中的意义

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摘要 近来大量实验研究表明,许多植物能够在不经矿化的情况下直接吸收、利用环境介质中的生物有机氮,尤其氨基酸类。而且,有些植物利用氨基酸的效率可以与矿质氮源 (NH_4^+,NO_3^-) 相当或更高。自然界植物赖以生存的土壤生境中同时存在多种有机氮和矿质氮养分,这是导致植物(至少部分植物)进化产生利用各种不同氮源能力的环境驱动力。土壤中的游离氨基酸尽管含量不高,但其周转快、通量大,理论上可远大于植物的氮需求。尽管植物在与土壤微生物的有机氮源竞争中处于根本性劣势,但土壤中氨基酸的巨大潜在通量和植物相对于微生物的生命周期仍可使植物在长期竞争中获取数量可观的氮。基于植物根对氨基酸的吸收能力、土壤中游离氨基酸库的大小和通量、植物与土壤微生物对氨基酸氮源的竞争以及有关的原位实验结果,近来许多研究者都认为植物有机氮营养在多种生态系统中是重要或潜在重要的。尤其是在一些极地、高山、亚高山、北方针叶林或泰加林生态系统中,由于低温等因素限制有机氮矿化、土壤氨基酸浓度常超过矿质氮(NH_4^+,NO_3^-)浓度,氨基酸可能代表着植物的一个主要氮源。认识到现实生态系统中植物对有机氮源利用的重要性意味着传统的矿质营养观念的更新,这将在很大程度上改变人们对某些重要生态过程的理解,并导致对若干生态学中心问题的再认识。研究以森林生态系统为例,阐述了我国开展该领域研究的科学意义和基本框架。

关键词 :自然生态系统 :土壤 植物 :有机氮源利用

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Organic nitrogen use by plants and its significance in some natural ecosystems

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Abstract: Until recently, a concept concerning nitrogen availability in ecosystems has been absolutely accepted in ecologists, i. e., plants can use only inorganic nitrogen (NH₄⁺, NO₃⁻) which is released in excess of microbial requirements. As a result, the traditional "measure" of soil nitrogen availability to plants is mainly based on the pool size or net flux (net mineralization rate) of inorganic nitrogen. Over the last decade, however, the direct use of organic nitrogen by plants and its potential importance in some ecosystems has been highlighted, and the traditional concept on nitrogen availability has been challenged in ecological studies.

A series of studies have demonstrated that many plant roots not only absorb inorganic nitrogen, but directly absorb bioorganic nitrogen, mainly dissociated amino acids, from the culture medium or bulk soil. Moreover, the efficiencies for some plants to use amino acids are comparable to, or even higher than, that of mineral nitrogen (NH_4^+ , NO_3^-). Organic and

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inorganic nitrogen coexist in primeval habitats (e. g. , natural soils), which might drive the evolution of plants (at least in some plants) to use diverse nitrogen sources. Notwithstanding the concentrations of dissociated amino acids are generally lower in most soils , their concentrations exceed the requirement for plant nitrogen use due to their high turnover rate and large flux in soil. Plant roots commonly compete nitrogen source with soil microorganisms , but they fundamentally in an inferior position. However , the potentially large flux of amino acid nitrogen in soil makes plant to gain larger magnitude nitrogen even if they only explore a small fraction of soil where the bio-organic nitrogen turnover occurred. Based on laboratory experiments of amino acid uptake by plants , amino acid concentrations and fluxes in soil , plant-microbe competition , and isotope ¹⁵N in situ , most researchers recognized that organic nitrogen play important roles in many ecosystems for plants , especially in such ecosystems as arctic tundra , alpine , subalpine forest , and boreal forest , where organic nitrogen mineralization is constrained by low temperature , amino acid concentrations commonly exceed mineral nitrogen (NH₄⁺ , NO₃⁻) , and represent a main nitrogen source for plants. Recognizing the importance of organic nitrogen use by plants in these ecosystems implied that traditional idea of mineral nutrition should be renewed , and this would significantly improve our understanding of many important ecological processes.

In China , there are existing divers ecosystems , such as cold- and mid-temperate forests , subalpine forests , alpine meadow and tundra etc. Soils in these natural ecosystems are typically characterized by low temperature , high organic material , high organic nitrogen , and low mineralization rate , implying the potential supply of soil organic nitrogen is important to ecosystem nitrogen cycling. In this paper , the author discussed the organic nitrogen use by plants and emphasized four questions as following: (1) to reevaluate nitrogen availability in forest ecosystems and integrate assessable criteria; (2) to gain a new understanding of nitrogen cycling in forest ecosystems and to modify its models established during the last two decades; (3) to develop applied techniques for nitrogen nutrition management in forest ecosystem , e. g. , belowground factor regulation which control organic nitrogen supply , ectomycorrhize effectiveness , and species selection in specific nitrogen sources etc; (4) to assess impacts of increased ratio of inorganic/organic nitrogen on forest succession and restoration under the background of widespread disturbances and global change. Finally , the author proposed an integrated conceptual framework to evaluate organic nitrogen availability in soil , species and ecosystem levels.

Key Words: natural ecosystem; soil; plant; organic nitrogen use

关于生态系统氮有效性和植物氮营养的传统认识几乎是完全建立在矿质氮 (NH_4^+ 、 NO_3^-)基础上的。尽管早就发现有的高等植物能够直接吸收利用氨基酸等有机态氮 $^{1-61}$,但 Liebig 的矿质营养理论在长达 150 a 的时间里并未遇到实质性挑战。然而近十几年来 ,越来越多的植物有机氮营养现象被深刻揭示出来 ,许多生态系统中有机氮 (尤其氨基酸类)对植物氮营养的重要性日益受到关注。传统的纯矿质营养观念的改变导致了对许多生态学问题的再认识。为此 ,本文主要引证自然生态系统的实例 ,就近年来国内外有关研究进行简要综述 ,并在此基础上提出我国针对森林生态系统开展该领域研究的科学意义和基本框架 ,以期为国内相关研究提供参考。

1 有机氮源利用——植物氮源利用的多样性

在大多数自然生态系统中,由于不同程度地存在着氮素养分的土壤学缺乏或生物学缺乏,因而氮往往是影响植物净生产力的主要养分 $^{\Gamma_1}$ 。为满足自身的氮营养需求,植物在长期适应过程中产生了各种从环境中获取氮素的机制,以至矿质态氮、有机态氮甚至气态氮在一定情况下都会成为植物可利用的"氮源" (Nitrogen Source) $^{\mathbb{F} \, \mathcal{P}_1}$ 。其中最普遍且最为人们所熟悉的就是植物以主动吸收方式从环境介质 (土壤或溶液)中获取矿质氮源,即 NH_4^+ 、 NO_3^- 。对于某些植物通过共生固氮作用从大气 (N_2)间接获取氮素也早不陌生。然而,很多植物还可以从介质中直接获取有机氮源,对此多数人却了解不足。近十几年来关于植物有机氮营养的若干研究表明,许多植物 (包括有菌根者和一些无菌根者)能够在不经矿化的情况下直接吸收、利用环境介质中的多

种氨基酸、简单蛋白质等小分子和大分子有机氮化合物^[9,10~28]。不同研究者通过根系短期吸收试验、实验室有机氮源纯培养试验、野外植物对同位素标记有机氮源物质 (氨基酸)的吸收及植物组织的¹⁵ N 自然丰度值等不同途径而得出上述结论 ,从多角度揭示出植物在氮源获取方面出乎意料的多样性。

植物的菌根状况对其获取有机氮源有重要影响。研究者较早认识到有机氮是具外生菌根或似欧石南属菌根 (ericoid mycorrhizae)植物的重要氮源 [29-31]。这类菌根植物不仅可吸收氨基酸 ,而且可吸收氨基糖 [52 33]、多肽 [50 31]、蛋白质 [51 34]、核酸 [53] ,甚至几丁质作为其氮源 [52]。其菌根真菌具有分解有机质的酶系统 [53] ,它们通过增加根的吸收面积和有机氮亲和力 [19 35 36] ,使植物能够获得有机氮 ;如果没有菌根共生体 ,这些植物中的许多种类便不能在纯有机氮源中生长 [14 29 30 31 34]。然而 近来不少研究表明 ,一些无菌根植物 (或植物在无菌根条件下)和 VA 菌根植物也能够直接吸收氨基酸等有机氮 ,而且可能是重要氮源 [10-13 ,15 25 26]。特别是无菌根植物对氨基酸类有机氮源的吸收利用 ,已成为颇受关注的热点 [11 ,12 ,15 20]。

在生理机制方面,已经确认植物根对氨基酸的吸收是通过主动的质子同向输送(Proton symport)完成的 $^{[57]}$ 。有人提出在植物根部存在一系列氨基酸载体,其中有些载体表现出很宽的基质专性,这意味着根系具有吸收酸性、中性和基性氨基酸的能力 $^{[58]}$;某些情况下可能还存在不同亲和力的复合载体(multiple transporters) $^{[17,18,39]}$ 。由于有机氮化合物的分子量较大,所以与吸收 NH_4^+ 、 NO_3^- 等矿质氮源相比,植物吸收有机氮源的速率或效率可能会较低。不过,已发现很多植物在实验条件下能够高效吸收氨基酸类有机氮源,有些植物(尤其是高寒地区的植物和湿地植物)甚至还偏爱有机氮源(表 1)。植物获取有机氮源的同时,也获取了有机氮源化合物中的碳和能量,从而大大节省了"碳氮同化成本",因此在氮摄入量相当的情况下,植物的有机氮营养效应会比矿质氮营养效应更大,生长也更好 $^{[1,25,26]}$ 。

需要指出,尽管越来越多的植物有机氮营养现象及其机理被深刻揭示出来,但它有着异乎寻常的多变性^[41]。不同植物之间、不同有机氮源之间、有菌根和无菌根的植株之间,乃至不同的研究方法之间,都可能存在相当大的差异。

2 土壤中的生物有机氮源——自然生境中有机氮源对植物的潜在有效性

自然界植物赖以生存的土壤生境中往往富含多种有机氮养分,这是导致植物 (至少部分植物)进化产生直接利用有机氮能力的环境基础。而能够对植物营养进化产生直接影响或能直接被植物吸收利用的土壤有机氮源物质,无疑主要是土壤有机氮养分中的可溶性部分。

2.1 关于土壤 SON 和土壤 DON

近年来 土壤 SON 和 DON 两个重要概念广泛应用于土壤学、生态学等研究领域。SON 为可溶性有机氮 (Soluble organic N),一般是用盐溶液 (如 $0.5 \text{ mol·L}^{-1}\text{K}_2\text{SO}_4$; $1.0 \text{ mol·L}^{-1}\text{KCl}$ 0.01 mol·L^{-1} CaCl $_2$)或纯水振荡浸提出的土壤有机氮 $^{[41-45]}$,也有用电超滤法 (EUF)提取 SON 的 $^{[46-47]}$;DON 为溶解有机氮 (Dissolved organic N),主要是指原位土壤溶液 (真空杯法或超速离心法提取的土壤孔隙溶液)或土壤自然淋洗液中的有机氮 $^{[45]}$,但有的学者也将 SON 和 DON 统称为 "DON " $^{[23]}$ 。不同的提取方法涉及不同的有机氮形态 测定结果相差悬殊。用盐溶液提取的 SON 量大约是水提取的 SON 或 DON 的几倍至几十倍 ,因此认为盐溶液提取的 SON 绝大部分是与土壤固相结合在一起的 (吸附或凝聚) 称之为 "可代换库" $^{[48-49]}$;而溶解的那一小部分 (即 DON)则相应地称为 "土壤溶液库" $^{[48]}$ 。

土壤中与 SON、DON 相对应的是可溶性无机氮 (SIN)和溶解无机氮 (DIN) 亦即可溶性 $NH_4^+ + NO_3^-$ 和溶解的 $NH_4^+ + NO_3^-$ 。由于 SIN 和 DIN 都是传统意义上的植物有效氮 ,所以常将 SON、DON 分别与 SIN 和 DIN 进行数量比较。在农田土壤中 ,SON 约占可溶性氮总量的 50% 左右 [50-53] ,即 SON 库与 SIN 库大致相当。而在有机质含量相对丰富的自然土壤中 ,SON 和 DON 相对于 SIN 和 DIN 往往占明显优势 [23-42-44-45-49] ,54-57]。在森林生态系统中 ,土壤及凋落物层的 SON/SIN 比值可达到 10 甚至更高 [44-54-56-57] ,土壤溶液中的氮也大部分是有机态的 [42-54-55] ,而且 DON 可能是森林凋落物层淋洗出的主要氮组分 [58]。

尽管 SON、DON 分别代表着土壤可溶性氮库和溶解氮库的主体,但这并不直接表明其构成巨大的潜在氮

源。因为 SON、DON 的优势组分往往是各种结构复杂的腐殖物质 [59 60] ,其次才是一些可供微生物和植物利用的小分子或大分子生物有机氮 ,包括各种氨基酸、氨基糖、酰胺、肽、可溶性蛋白质以及核酸等 [9 23 48 61]。鉴于植物主要吸收小分子的有机氮 ,而 SON 和 DON 中主要的小分子有机氮组分往往是氨基酸类 [48 61] ,所以生态系统中土壤氨基酸氮库对植物的有效性成为研究的核心。

表 1 实验条件下一些高效吸收、利用氨基酸类有机氮源的植物

Table 1 Plant species that was reported to take up/use amino acids efficiently

源群落类型 Native community	植物种 Plant species	对氨基酸氮源的吸收利用 Absorption and use of amino acids	资料来源 Reference
极地苔原 Arctic tundra	Eriophorum vaginatum	偏好有机氮源。在野地生长状态下收集的根系能够快速吸收游离氨基酸 溶液培养中 以氨基酸为氮源比以矿质氮为氮源时积累更多的氮素和生物量 Preferential use of organic nitrogen for growth; Field-collected roots rapidly absorb free amino acids. In solution culture, accumulate more nitrogen and biomass when supplied with amino acids than when grown on inorganic nitrogen	[11]
生草苔原 Tussock tundra; 灌丛生草苔原 Shrub-tussock tundra 干石南灌丛 Dry heath	Carex bigelowi , Eriophorum vaginatum , Ledum palchra ,Salix pulchra , Betula nana	离体根吸收氨基酸的速率与吸收矿质氮的速率相当或更高 Excised roots take up amino acids at comparable or greater rates compared with inorganic nitrogen.	[12]
农田群落 Agricultural	Zea mays	液培植株吸收氨基酸的速率与吸收矿质氮的速率相当或更高 Intact plants in hydroponic solution take up amino acids at comparable or greater rates compared with inorganic nitrogen.	[13]
亚热带石南湿地 Subtropical wet heath	Hakea sp. (proteoid roots)	离体根吸收氨基酸的速率与吸收矿质氮的速率相当或更高 Excised roots take up amino acid at comparable or greater rates compared with inorganic nitrogen	[40]
北方针叶林 Boreal forest	Pinus sylvestris , Picea abies , Vaccinium myrtillus , Deschampsia flexuosa	在自然群落中植物根系吸收 ¹³ C 和 ¹⁵ N 双标记氨基酸的速率与吸收 ¹⁵ N 标记铵的速率相当 Rates of glycine (¹³ C and ¹⁵ N labeled) uptake were similar to those of ¹⁵ N -ammonium.	[20]
高山群落 Alpine; 亚高山森林 Subalpine forest; 矮草草原 Shortgrass steppe; 温带沼泽 Temperate swamp; 热带森林 Dry tropical forest	Kobresia myosuroides , Carex rupestris , C. ebenea , C. canescens , C. rhynchophysa , C. stenophylla , C. fillifolia , Cyperus strigosus , C. halpan	液培植株吸收氨基酸的速率与吸收矿质氮的速率相当或更高 Intact plants in hydroponic solution take up amino acids at comparable or greater rates compared with inorganic nitrogen	[16]
农作物 Agricultural	Oryza sativa Triticum aestivum	无菌培养条件下,氨基酸氮源植株比铵态氮源植株积累更多的氮和生物量 In sterile culture, Plants accumulate more nitrogen and biomass when fed with amino acids than when supplied with ammonium.	[25] [26]

2.2 土壤中的氨基酸

土壤中的氨基酸若能构成重要的植物氮源,其本身至少要满足下列两个条件之一:①在土壤中有可观的数量(浓度或库大小))②即便浓度很低,但有足够大的通量。

为了研究土壤氨基酸氮库的大小 ,多种溶剂被用于从土壤中提取氨基酸 ,包括水、乙醇、乙酸铵、氢氧化钡、稀硫酸以及氯化钾溶液等 ;报道的土壤氨基酸氮浓度范围为 $0.04 \sim 24~\mu g/g^{[62-67]}$ 。 土壤溶液 (孔隙水)中的游离氨基酸总浓度一般在十几至几十 $\mu mol/L^{[15],623,48,62]}$,高者可达 $158~\mu mol/L^{[16]}$ 。 不同方法涉及不同的氨基酸形态 ,在爱尔兰一系列土壤中用 $2~mol\cdot L^{-1}KCl$ 溶液提取的氨基酸量平均是水提取量的 $28~G^{[88]}$,说明土壤氨基酸可能以吸附代换态为主 ,也存在相应的 "可代换库"和"土壤溶液库" [48]。 不过 ,氨基酸在相应的

SON 或 DON 库中往往只占 1% ~ 5% [²³,⁴⁴,⁴⁸,⁵⁷,⁶¹,⁶⁹,⁷⁰] ,罕有达到 20% 的情况 [⁷⁰]。无论是盐或水提取的氨基酸 ,还是土壤溶液中的游离氨基酸 ,它们即可以比相应的矿质氮库低一个数量级 ¹⁰,⁴⁸,⁶⁸] ,也可以与之大体相当或比相应的矿质氮库高几倍甚至高一个数量级 [¹²,¹⁵,¹⁶,²⁰,⁴⁸,⁶²,⁶⁴,⁶⁸,⁷⁰] ,因生态系统和土壤类型而异。这表明 ,就库的大小而言 ,至少在某些生态系统中土壤氨基酸可构成潜在重要的植物有机氮源。

在自然土壤溶液或土壤提取液中发现了多种氨基酸,一般以天冬氨酸、谷氨酸、甘氨酸占优势^[9,15,16,64],有时赖氨酸、精氨酸、丙氨酸、丝氨酸、天冬酰胺、谷氨酰胺、亮氨酸等也有相对较高的浓度^[9,63,64,67,71]。由于容易被微生物或植物吸收,所以土壤游离氨基酸库一般小而易于波动。然而,氨基酸在土壤中的周转却异常迅速,在某些自然土壤中其半衰期仅为 1~28 h^[23,64,70,72-75],一般不足 12 h^[23,70,74],这意味着土壤中有着相当可观的氨基酸通量。由于可溶性有机氮(尤其氨基酸)与矿质氮存在着快速的动态平衡,所以这两个氮库之间总有着密切联系,而且对植物氮营养都可能是至关重要的^[70]。

土壤中的氨基酸可以有多种来源。由于湿交替或冻融交替导致的微生物细胞集中凋亡可以释放出数量可观的氨基酸 $^{[6]}$. 植物根系向根际土壤中分泌氨基酸并可再吸收 $^{[3]}$. 但对植物来说 ,土壤中最大且最稳定的氨基酸来源可能是蛋白质和肽在酶作用下的水解。土壤中易提取的蛋白质浓度一般比氨基酸浓度高一个数量级 $^{[9]}$. 因而完全可以成为氨基酸的稳定来源。在山地生态系统中 ,估计由土壤蛋白质水解产生的氨基酸氮通量为 $42 \sim 109~\mu g/~(g \cdot a)^{[6]}$. 这一数值略高于所估计的该类生态系统总氮矿化速率 $^{[7]}$. 而远高于其净氮矿化速率 $^{[78]}$ 。不同方法和不同培养温度下得出的土壤蛋白酶活性为 $0.1 \sim 4~\mu mol/~(g \cdot h)$ (以氨基酸释放速率表示) $^{[9]}$. 这些研究表明 ,在大多数生态系统中土壤氨基酸氮通量可远大于植物的氮需求。当然 ,这些氨基酸不见得有多少能被植物直接吸收 ,其大部分可能被土壤微生物优先利用 ,或被土壤基质固定。

土壤向植物的氨基酸供应主要取决于土壤蛋白酶活性、氨基酸与土壤固相基质的反应、微生物与植物间的竞争等几大方面。目前,国外在上述几方面都开始了深入探索^[16 ,40 ,74 ,76 ,82 ~88]。

3 土壤微生物和植物根系间的有机氮源竞争——植物直接获取土壤中有机氮源的现实性

尽管在实验条件下许多植物可以吸收氨基酸等有机氮 ,而且土壤中的氨基酸在理论上可满足植物的氮需 求 ,但传统观点对植物利用土壤有机氮源的现实性是否定的。传统观点对生态系统氮有效性的认识有 2 个基本假设 ①在与微生物的氮源 (包无机和有机)竞争中植物处于绝对劣势 ,②只有满足微生物需求后释放出的 "多余矿质氮 "才能供植物吸收利用。而氨基酸等有机氮作为土壤微生物的优良碳源和氮源 ,似乎永远不会 "多余"。因此 ,研究土壤氮对植物的有效性时 ,传统上主要是基于无机氮库的大小 (如常用的 "速效氮 "指标)和净通量 (净矿化速率) ,即便涉及有机氮的有效性 ,也往往侧重于考虑对微生物的有效性和相关的氮矿化作用 ,例如我国常用的 "碱解氮 "指标 ,其基本含义就是 "近期内可矿化的有机氮"。诚然 ,传统观念对土壤有机氮之植物有效性的认识仅限于其矿化难易程度所决定的间接有效性。

土壤微生物具有高亲和力的载体系统、巨大的比表面积、迅速的生长繁殖速率 [89 90] ,这使它们具有强大的吸收动力学优势和微时空优势,因此植物若获取有机氮源必然面对土壤微生物的强有力竞争。近期一些短期试验表明 植物与土壤微生物竞争氨基酸氮源时确实处于明显劣势,一般只能夺取 0.9% ~4% 的外源氨基酸 [76 84 88] ,至多也不过 12% [84]。尽管如此 ,若考虑到土壤中氨基酸的巨大潜在流通量 ,以及植物根系周转慢、寿命长、持氮期长等特点 ,这相对较低水平的竞争力仍可使植物在长期竞争中获取数量可观的氮素 [41 82 84 90]。在这方面 植物-微生物间的有机氮源竞争与无机氮源竞争是极其相似的 [82 90]。况且 ,还有很多机制可以使植物在与土壤微生物的竞争中获取有机氮源:①菌根可以使植物获取有机氮源的能力大大增强 纤细菌丝容易穿入有机物正在分解的微域与其它微生物直接竞争分解产物 [48] ,②土壤具有微域空间异质性 [90-97] ,由于局部微生物活动、植物根衍生物输入、土壤动物的死亡和排泄等原因 ,土壤中根最活跃的微域会有许多养分热点 (hotspots) [90 95 98] ,其中不排除浓度很高的有机氮热点 ,③干湿交替、冻融交替或季节交替会引起土壤微生物 (生物量)的剧烈波动 ,并能向土壤中净释放氨基酸 [76] ,④植物和土壤微生物在利用有机氮源的时间、种类方面存在着一定的生态位分离 [12 40 64 87 88 99] ,如甘氨酸易被植物吸收而不易被微生物利用 [88]。

近期一些研究者将同位素 (¹⁴C、¹³C、¹⁵N)标记氨基酸或复杂有机氮加入到原位土壤中,使土壤微生物和植物都有机会吸收 结果在植物组织中回收到了相当比例的 C、N标记物 [²⁰ 62 76 84 88 100 ~ 106]],这进一步证实了某些植物直接吸收利用土壤有机氮源的现实性——尽管多数情况下尚分不清这是植物根本身还是菌根的作用。

总之 植物在与土壤微生物的竞争中是可以获取有机氮源的 ,土壤有机氮对植物的直接有效性具有现实 意义。

4 有机氮源的营养贡献率—— 植物有机氮源利用在某些自然生态系统中的重要性

目前,直接测定现实生态系统土壤有机氮对植物氮营养的贡献率尚有困难 $^{[8]}$ 。主要通过几条途径进行估测,①数学模型,②同位素 $^{'4}$ C 或 13 C 15 N)双标记有机氮原位实验,③植物的 15 N 自然丰度值(15 N) $^{[27,28]}$ 。根据吸收动力学参数和土壤氨基酸浓度估计,氨基酸对极地苔原植物 $^{'15}$ 尼尔 $^{'15}$ 化据吸收动力学参数和土壤氨基酸浓度估计,氨基酸对极地苔原植物 $^{'15}$ 化基础量量和植物 $^{'15}$ 化二次 $^{'15}$ 化二次

基于植物根对氨基酸的吸收能力、土壤中游离氨基酸库的大小和通量、植物与土壤微生物对氨基酸氮源的竞争以及同位素(4 C、 13 C、 15 N)标记有机氮原位实验,近来许多研究者都认为植物有机氮营养在生态系统中是重要或潜在重要的,所涉生态系统包括极地和高山苔原、亚高山森林、北方针叶林(boreal forest)或泰加林(taiga forest)、亚热带雨林、热带丛林、石南灌丛等多种类型 [9 , 1 , 1 , 2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 3 , 4 ,

北方针叶林或泰加林生态系统,低温、高湿、高有机质和低 pH,使这些寒冷森林土壤的矿质氮以 NH_4^+ 占优势而硝化作用微弱,而且过低的年净氮矿化率曾一度被认为是生态系统氮流通的主要瓶颈 $^{[10]}$ 。近来有关研究表明,泰加林生态系统矿质氮的总输入通量(矿化 + 生物固氮 + 大气输入)尚不足以与植物实际吸收的氮量相持平,缺口达 50% 或更大 $^{[0],111]1}$,其原因可能是森林植物从有机氮源中部分地获取了它们所需要的氮 $^{[20],70,100]}$ 。北方针叶林或泰加林土壤具有很高的总有机氮贮量 $^{[10]}$,土壤可溶性有机氮库比矿质氮库大一个数量级 $^{[70]}$;土壤中有大量的以细根、菌根形式存在的森林生物量 $^{[12]}$,包括欧洲赤松($Pinus\ sylvestris$),挪威云杉($Picea\ abies$),黑云杉($Picea\ mariana$)在内的一些森林植物,不管其菌根状况如何,都能跨越氮矿化过程而直接吸收土壤中的有机氮 $^{[20],70]}$ 。所有这些都提示,在北方针叶林或泰加林生态系统中 植物(树种)的有机氮源利用可能具有特殊重要性。正如有些学者所认为的,有机氮的有效性在很大程度上决定着这些森林植物的氮素营养状况,以及森林群落的结构、功能及演替 $^{[20],62]}$ 。

5 我国开展该领域研究的科学意义——以森林生态系统为例

我国有大范围的寒温带、温带森林生态系统,以及相当可观的高海拔山地森林、草甸、苔原生态系统。在这些自然生态系统中,土壤往往具有典型的低温、高有机质 (OM)、高有机氮 (ON)和低矿化率等特征 [113~115],预示着土壤有机氮源供应和植物有机氮营养的潜在重要性。同时,土壤高有机质 (OM)和高有机氮 (ON)也是其他多数森林生态系统的共有特征。现以森林生态系统为例,分析我国开展该领域研究的科学意义可能在

于下列几大方面:

(1)重新认识森林生态系统中氮的有效性

氮有效性与森林生态系统生产力密切相关 $^{[16^{-118}]}$ 。然而 ,基于传统观念 ,目前我国对森林生态系统氮有效性的评价还仅限于矿质氮指标 ,如矿质氮 (NH_4^+,NO_3^-) 库的大小与动态、净氮矿化速率等。揭示森林植物对土壤有机氮源的利用 ,至少从一个新的侧面重新认识森林生态系统中的氮有效性问题 ,建立相对全面、客观的氦有效性评价指标体系。

全新理解生态系统氮有效性问题的关键可能在于植物-土壤微生物间的氮源竞争。传统上关于生态系统 氮有效性的 2 个基本假设 (见本文第 3 部分)近年来都受到了质的挑战 科学评价不同生态系统中氮的有效 性正成为新的课题 [119]。

(2)森林生态系统氮循环过程的再认识

对氮有效性的传统认识使生态系统 (土壤亚系统)中氮的生物循环被截然分为两大块 ,即微生物分解和植物吸收利用 ,二者通过净矿化过程相联系 ,其中矿化作用曾一度被认为是整个氮循环的驱动和控制环节。受传统框架约束 ,我国以往的森林生态系统氮循环-氮通量研究也主要是建立在矿质氮 (NH_4^+ 、 NO_3^- 、 N_2O 等)基础上的。而近来国外生态学界认识到 :森林植物能够跨越矿化过程直接吸收土壤中的有机氮源 ,从而大大缩短了氮循环路径 [20 62 120] ;而且 ,溶解有机氮 (DON)还可以是森林生态系统氮输出的主要形式 [42 57 69 121 122]。对这些问题的研究将促使人们重新认识森林生态系统的氮循环 (包括生物循环和地球化学循环)过程 ,并在很大程度上修正过去的森林生态系统氮素循环模型。正如 Van Breeman 所说 ,人们需重新审视生态系统的养分循环问题 [23]。

基于植物对有机氮源的利用以及植物-微生物竞争等新观点,Chapin 和 Schimel 相继提出了生态系统 (土壤亚系统)中氮循环的改进模式:其驱动和控制环节不再是由微生物完成的氮矿化作用,而是由胞外酶催化的含氮聚合物 (蛋白质等)的解聚 (depolymerization),这一过程释放氨基酸、氨基糖、核酸等单体物质供微生物和植物利用 植物与微生物对有机氮源和矿质氮源进行有效竞争 [124];而且,若综合考虑解聚作用、植物-微生物竞争和和土壤微域 (microsite)动态等因素,其循环过程或模式还因生态系统氮有效性的具体情况而有所不同 [119]。有鉴于此,可针对不同生态系统的特点,对过去建立的生态系统氮循环模型及参数进行相应调整,以实现对生态系统更有效的管理。

(3)提高森林生态系统氮营养管理水平

充分了解有机氮源对林木氮营养的直接贡献以制定全面、确切的土壤氮有效性指标体系,了解土壤氮循环过程并明确其分室参数及控制途径,无疑构成了提高森林生态系统氮营养管理水平的两个先决条件。此外,进行该领域研究还可提供一些更直接的技术依据。例如,查明土壤有机氮源供应与土壤环境因子、蛋白酶活性及树种组成的关系,就可以通过因子调控手段间接调节土壤有机氮源供应水平,促进林分生产力提高,弄清菌根与有机氮源利用的关系,可以为高有机质"肥沃"土壤条件下(高产人工林)施用菌根菌剂或菌肥提供理论依据,揭示不同树种对有机氮源利用能力的差异,有助于根据"氮形态生态位重叠与分离"情况遴选混交树种组合 [125 ,126]。可以预见,有关研究成果在我国某些森林生态系统(尤其寒温带、温带和高海拔山地森林生态系统)经营实践中有广阔的应用前景。

(4)全球变化、森林演替与退化森林生态系统恢复

长期生长在高有机质 (OM),高有机氮 (ON)和低矿化率土壤上的优势森林树种可能已经进化产生了对有机氮源的适应机制 (包括根系本身的机制和菌根机制)^{20 Al},这使它们能够在可溶性有机氮源丰富的生境中保持优势。全球变化、环境污染和其他人为干扰都将导致土壤氮素养分状况发生改变 ,尤其全球变暖促进氮矿化作用 ,使土壤氮源中的矿质氮/有机氮 (IN/ON)比例增加 ,污染导致的大气氮沉降则通过直接向土壤中加入矿质氮而增加土壤氮源中的 IN/ON 比例 ,这将导致生态系统的植被演变 [127 ,128]。目前 ,我国尚有一些高纬度 (寒温带)和高海拔原始森林生态系统 ,全球变化背景下这些原始森林生态系统的演变及其机制自然成

为人们关心的问题。更重要的是我国温带森林生态系统,土壤氮源的 IN/ON 比例增高很可能意味着这里的一些原优势树种 (如红松 *Pinus koraiensis*)将失去氮源竞争优势,这样一来不仅会导致原始林自然演替,而且会增加将次生林恢复为原始植被类型 (红松针阔混交林)的难度。因此,研究土壤有机氮源及树种的适应性问题,对于深刻认识全球变化和区域工业化对我国温带、寒温带及高海拔森林生态系统的影响,具有重要的理论意义。

总之,深刻认识植物对土壤有机氮源利用的重要性意味着传统的矿质营养观念的更新,这将在很大程度上改变人们对某些重要生态学过程的理解,由此必然导致对若干生态学中心问题的再认识。除上面讨论的几方面外,不同研究者或可在该领域发现更多感兴趣的问题。

6 问题及展望

自 20 世纪 90 年代以来,自然生态系统的有机氮营养及相关的氮循环问题引起了广泛关注,其中不乏发表于《Nature》上的文章 [11 20 86 120 123]。 某些生态系统中植物对有机氮源的利用极其潜在重要性是毋庸置疑的。但作为新兴领域,研究中存在的问题也不容忽视,如土壤氨基酸氮库难以准确测定,机械提取和盐液提取过程中会有细根残片和活微生物中氨基酸的释放干扰;有机氮源纯培养实验放大了氨基酸的相对和绝对供应强度;离体根避免不了根面微生物的矿化作用,而且其 C、N 代谢水平也不同于原位根并影响吸收能力;土壤微域空间异质性和根际氨基酸的流入/流出问题,短期的¹³ C、¹⁵ N 双标记有机氮原位实验中,与菌根菌代谢有关的植物组织¹³ C: ¹⁵ N 问题,以及双标氨基酸的种类选择和一次性浓度问题,现实生态系统中有机氮营养贡献率的测定问题——有机氮构成植物重要氮源的直接判据仍然缺乏 [48]。 长期的 C、N 同位素双标记复杂有机氮原位实验可谓解决问题的较好办法,但仍存在外源有机氮可能在土壤中分布不均,植物对标记 C 的呼吸消耗不易准确估计(尤其考虑菌根代谢时),外源有机氮打破土壤自然平衡,以及有机氮吸收尚难以分清植物根本身还是菌根的作用等困扰。可见,当前该领域面临的最大挑战可能就是方法问题。如果说前 10 a 主要是知识积累,那么,估计今后 10 年将会致力于技术手段的完善和创新。随着新技术带来更多、更具说服力的成果,必将对传统观念更新产生实质性影响。

鉴于植物有机氮营养的复杂性和多变性 (因植物种类和生态系统类型而异) 研究不同生态系统时只可借鉴前人的方法 ,而不能套用其现成的某些结论。为深刻揭示我国森林生态系统中植物有机氮营养的本质特征 ,需选择代表性生态系统类型和优势植物种类 ,采用国内外新技术手段 ,系统性地开展下列研究工作:

- (1)土壤中可溶性有机氮源物质的种类、数量、动态及其相关因素;
- 2)主要有机氮源物质在土壤中的微生物转化、基质吸附、扩散运移等动态生物化学特征;
- (3)实验条件下植物的菌根化和非菌根化根系对介质中有机氮的吸收及有机氮源的营养效应;
- (4) 现实生态系统中植物根系对加入到土壤中的外源性有机氮的吸收和利用,尤其是幼树长期实验。

通过上述研究,以实现从土壤、植物、生态系统3个层面综合评价土壤有机氮对森林植物的有效性,估计有机氮源对森林生态系统中植物氮营养的直接贡献率,并构建相应的应用技术。

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