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**封面图说:**红树林粗大的气生根——红树林是热带、亚热带海湾及河口泥滩上特有的常绿灌木或乔木群落。由于海水环境条件特殊,红树林植物具有一系列特殊的生态和生理特征。其中之一就是气根,红树从根部长出许多指状的气生根露出海滩地面,以便在退潮时甚至潮水淹没时用以通气,故称呼吸根。在中国,红树林主要分布在海南、广西、广东和福建省沿海,它一般分布于高潮线与低潮线之间的潮间带,往往潮差越大、红树的呼吸根就长得越高越粗大。

彩图提供:陈建伟教授 北京林业大学 E-mail: cites.chenjw@163.com

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## 厌氧氨氧化菌群体感应系统研究

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**摘要:** 厌氧氨氧化(Anammox)是以铵为电子供体将亚硝酸盐转化为氮气的生物过程。厌氧氨氧化菌(AAOB)生理代谢和细胞结构均十分特殊,且在氮素循环中起着十分重要的作用。厌氧氨氧化已成为环境学、微生物学、海洋学等领域的研究热点。但是,至今人们未能对厌氧氨氧化菌进行纯培养,这严重限制了对厌氧氨氧化菌的深入研究。群体感应是一种普遍存在于微生物细胞之间的通讯机制,它具有根据菌群密度和周围环境变化调节基因表达,以控制细菌群体行为的功能。厌氧氨氧化菌活性的细胞密度效应和生物团聚行为与细菌中普遍存在的群体感应现象相符。探讨了厌氧氨氧化菌群体感应系统存在的可能性、工作机制及其生态学意义,以期为厌氧氨氧化菌的分离培养、团聚体培育等提供理论指导。

**关键词:** 厌氧氨氧化菌; 群体感应; 自诱导物; 工作机制; 竞争

## Quorum sensing in anaerobic ammonium oxidation bacteria

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**Abstract:** Anaerobic ammonium oxidation (Anammox) is a unique anaerobic biological reaction which converts ammonium and nitrite into nitrogen gas and plays an important role in the nitrogen biogeochemical cycle. It is now estimated that Anammox might contribute more than 50% to global present day nitrogen losses from the ocean. Anaerobic ammonium-oxidizing bacteria (AAOB) as the responsible chemolithoautotrophic bacteria are grouped into the phylum Planctomycetes. Now a family of Anammoxaceae including five genera, ten species of AAOB are established. AAOB have some distinct characters in the physiology, metabolism and cell structure. AAOB are chemoautotrophic bacteria which use carbon dioxide or bicarbonate as the main carbon source and ammonium or nitrite as the energy source. AAOB produce hydrazine or hydroxylamine as the very unusual intermediates. AAOB have a particular cell wall structure, cell membrane component and inner cell structure. Currently Anammox are one of hot-spots in the fields of environmental science, microbiology and marine science. So far, however, AAOB have not been isolated and cultivated in pure culture, which has become a great obstacle in the related studies. Besides, applications of Anammox process are also limited without making AAOB's characters clear. Quorum sensing may provide us another perspective to understand AAOB. Quorum-sensing is a common signal sensing mechanism by which bacteria monitor their population density. Quorum sensing system allows bacteria to regulate their gene expression according to the population density and the environmental condition so as to alter their behavior on a population scale. The ability of rapidly altering gene expression and consequently behavior in response to a dynamic environment give bacteria the plasticity to survive in rich, neutral and hostile condition. Bacteria communicate with one another using chemical signal molecules termed autoinducers. In quorum-sensing bacteria, chemical communication involves producing, releasing, detecting, and responding to small hormone-like molecules autoinducers.

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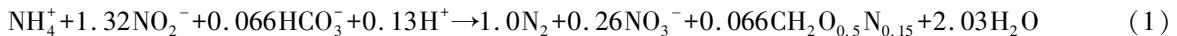
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Bacteria use autoinducers to communicate both within and between species. Both species-specific and specific-nonspecific autoinducers exist. Now there are about four types of autoinducers including acylated homoserine lactone (AHL), oligopeptides, furanosyl borate dister(FBD) and some homologues like epinephrine or norepinephrine in quorum sensing system. Different bacteria have different quorum sensing network architectures. They include parallel quorum-sensing circuits, sequenced quorum-sensing circuits, competitive quorum-sensing circuits, on-off switches quorum-sensing circuits and so on. As to AAOB, they have shown some quorum sensing characteristics. AAOB take on Anammox activity only when the cell concentration is higher than  $10^{10}$ — $10^{11}$  cells/mL. The formation and hydrolysis of extracellular polymeric substances (EPS) have some to do with the population density. Based on the current studies, we firstly analyze the possibility whether AAOB hold a quorum sensing system. Then we discuss the working mechanism of quorum sensing system in AAOB analog to that of *Vibrio fischeri* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* which are two model microorganisms for quorum sensing study. Finally we explain the ecological significance of quorum sensing to AAOB's survival. All the discussions aim to give some enlightenment for learning the specific characters of AAOB which may be helpful for pure culturing and making better use of Anammox process.

**Key Words:** anaerobic ammonium oxidation bacteria; quorum sensing; autoinducer; working mechanism; competition

厌氧氨氧化(anaerobic ammonium oxidation, Anammox)是以铵为电子供体将亚硝酸盐转化为氮气的生物过程(反应式1)<sup>[1]</sup>。厌氧氨氧化菌(anaerobic ammonium-oxidizing bacteria, AAOB)生理代谢奇异<sup>[2]</sup>、细胞结构特殊<sup>[3]</sup>且在氮素循环中起着重要作用<sup>[4-6]</sup>。厌氧氨氧化已成为环境工程、微生物以及海洋领域中的研究热点。



遗憾的是,至今AAOB未能进行纯培养,这严重限制了人们对AAOB的深入研究。在AAOB的研究中发现<sup>[7]</sup>,只有在细胞密度高于 $10^{10}$ — $10^{11}$ 个/mL时,AAOB才能显现出Anammox活性。AAOB的这种细胞密度效应与细菌中普遍存在的群体感应(Quorum sensing, QS)现象相符。群体感应是一种普遍存在于微生物细胞之间的通讯机制,具有根据菌群密度和周围环境变化调节基因表达以控制细菌群体行为的功能<sup>[8-9]</sup>。本文拟对AAOB群体感应系统存在的可能性、可能的工作机制及其生态学意义作一探讨,以期为AAOB分离培养、团聚体培育等提供理论上的指导。

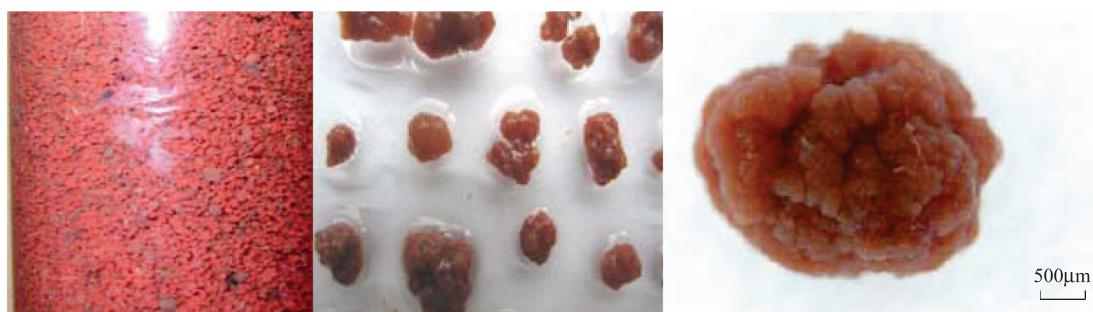
## 1 厌氧氨氧化菌群体感应系统存在的可能性

在菌群生长过程中,细菌不断产生一些称为自诱导物(Autoinducer, AI)的化学信号分子,并分泌到周围环境中;细菌通过感应这些自诱导物浓度,监测周围细菌的数量;当种群密度达到一定阈值时,细菌在群体范围内调控一些相关基因的表达,如抗生素合成<sup>[10]</sup>、生物发光<sup>[11]</sup>、固氮基因表达<sup>[12]</sup>、Ti质粒接合转移<sup>[13]</sup>、毒性基因表达<sup>[14]</sup>、色素合成<sup>[15]</sup>、细菌群游<sup>[16]</sup>和生物膜形成<sup>[17]</sup>等,细菌之间的这种“语言”交流称为群体感应,它在多种细菌的生长过程中扮演着十分重要的角色。

AAOB有两个现象符合群体感应:一是Anammox活性的密度依赖行为<sup>[7]</sup>;二是AAOB的生物团聚行为<sup>[18-19]</sup>。因为AAOB至今未获纯培养物,所以AAOB的群体感应尚无系统研究。但已有少量研究表明<sup>[7, 20]</sup>,AAOB有可能利用群体感应系统调控Anammox活性和团聚行为。主要证据如下:

(1) 存在密度依赖性 研究表明<sup>[9, 11, 21]</sup>,细菌中普遍存在群体感应,且呈现某种密度依赖性,如费氏弧菌(*Vibrio fischeri*)的发光现象;Strous等<sup>[7]</sup>研究表明,AAOB只有在细胞密度高于 $10^{10}$ — $10^{11}$ 个/mL时,才能显现出Anammox活性,推测Anammox活性的密度依赖性很有可能与群体感应系统有关。此外,细菌生物膜的形成是细菌密度依赖性的一种重要形式,也与群体感应有着十分密切的关系<sup>[22]</sup>;AAOB在生长过程中往往以微生物团聚体的形式(如颗粒污泥、生物膜等)存在(图1),且会出现“抱团”与“解散”的现象,推测AAOB的团聚与解散行为也可能与群体感应调控有关。

(2) 具有自诱导物合成潜力 群体感应系统的自诱导物是一些小分子化学物质,它们可以通过扩散作用

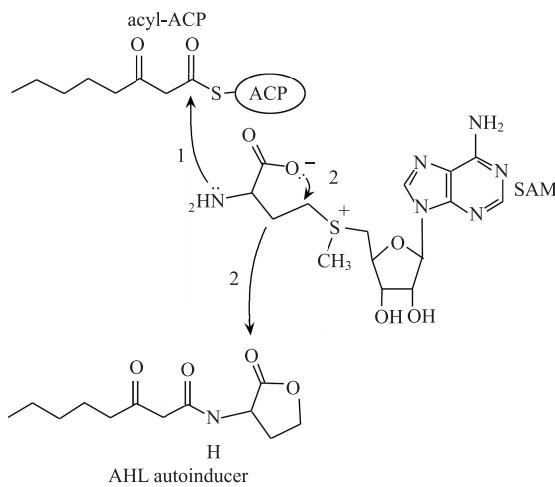
图 1 厌氧氨氧化菌团聚体<sup>[18]</sup>Fig. 1 Anaerobic ammonium oxidation bacteria in form of aggregates<sup>[18]</sup>

或者通过转运蛋白进出细胞膜<sup>[23]</sup>。自诱导物主要分为 4 类:①革兰氏阴性细菌含有的 N-乙酰化高丝氨酸内酯 (N-acyl-homoserine lactones, AHLs) 类化合物,称为 Autoinducer-1 (AI-1), 主要用作种内“语言”<sup>[24]</sup>。②革兰氏阳性细菌含有的寡肽 (serected peptide)<sup>[25]</sup>。③革兰氏阴/阳性细菌含有的呋喃酰硼酸二酯 (furanosyl borate dister, FBD) 类化合物, 称为 Autoinducer-2 (AI-2), 主要用作种间“语言”<sup>[26]</sup>。④其他类肾上腺素和类去甲肾上腺素化合物, 称为 Autoinducer-3 (AI-3)<sup>[27]</sup>。革兰氏阴性菌的群体感应系统一般为 LuxR/I 型群体感应系统<sup>[8-9]</sup>, 其自诱导物为脂肪类衍生物 N-酰化高丝氨酸内酯 (N-acyl-homoserine lactones, AHLs) 类衍生物。AHLs 一般由乙酰化载体蛋白 (acyl-acyl carrier protein, acyl-ACP) 和 S-腺苷甲硫氨酸 (S-adenosylmethionine, SAM) 在 LuxI 型合成酶的作用下生成, 同时产生副产物甲硫腺苷 (Methylthioadenosine, MTA) (图 2)<sup>[28]</sup>。acyl-ACP 和 SAM 是脂肪酸代谢的中间产物, AHLs 合成与脂肪酸代谢密切相关<sup>[29]</sup>。AAOB 是革兰氏阴性菌, Strous 等<sup>[30]</sup>利用宏基因组学技术获取了 *Kuenenia stuttgartiensis* (AAOB 的一种) 的脂肪酸代谢基因组学信息(图 3)。其中, 存在编码 SAM 和 acyl-ACP 的合成酶的相关基因。Rattray 等<sup>[20]</sup>采用比较基因组学技术发现, AAOB 的脂肪酸合成代谢有一部分为脂肪酸合成酶 (FAS) II 型代谢 (简称 FAS II), 其代谢过程中产生 SAM、acyl-ACP 等中间产物; White 等<sup>[23]</sup>也指出, FAS II 型的脂肪酸合成代谢的中间产物常常用于合成硫辛酸和群体感应系统自诱导物; 这从代谢水平进一步证明, AAOB 具有合成自诱导物的潜力。笔者据此推断, AAOB 具有合成 AHLs 的潜力, 可以通过 AAOB 脂肪酸合成代谢的某些支路合成 AHLs, 自诱导物的合成方式可能与已知的革兰氏阴性菌一致。

## 2 厌氧氨氧化菌群体感应系统的工作机制

根据自诱导物的性质以及感应模式, 细菌群体感应系统主要分为以下 3 类<sup>[23]</sup>: (1) 革兰氏阴性菌的 LuxI/LuxR 型信息系统; (2) 革兰氏阳性菌的寡肽和双元介导型信息系统; (3) *Vibrio harveyi* 的 AHL 和双元综合型信息系统。此外, 在 *Myxococcus xanthus* 中还发现了新型的群体感应系统<sup>[31]</sup>。

AAOB 群体感应系统是什么样的? 作者拟以研究较多且同属革兰氏阴性菌费氏弧菌 (*Vibrio fischeri*) 和铜绿假单胞杆菌 (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) 的群体感应系统为依据, 对 AAOB 可能存在的群体感应系统做了推断分析。结合 Anammox 活性的密度依赖性和 AAOB 的生物团聚性, 推断 AAOB 中可能存在两种或两种以上群

图 2 自诱导物酰化高丝氨酸内酯的合成途径<sup>[23]</sup>Fig. 2 The biosynthetic pathway for acylated homoserine lactone (AHL)<sup>[23]</sup>

acyl-ACP: 乙酰化载体蛋白, SAM: S-腺苷甲硫氨酸, AHL autoinducer: 自诱导物腺苷高丝氨酸内酯

体感应系统(分别命名为 Anammox 活性的密度依赖型群体感应系统和 AAOB 的生物团聚型群体感应系统,简称为 AAOBQS1 和 AAOBQS2,假定其自诱导物为 AHLs)。

AAOBQS1 可能类似于费氏弧菌(*Vibrio fischeri*)的群体感应系统,即呈 Lux/LuR 型(图 4)。在 AAOBQS1 中,AmxI 是催化 AHLs 合成的关键酶,AmxR 是检测和感应 AHL 的结合蛋白,*amx* 是编码催化 Anammox 反应的关键酶(可能是联氨水解酶或羟氨氧化酶)的基因,在 AmxI 的催化作用下,细胞产生一定量的 AHLs,并分泌到细胞外。当细胞密度达到  $10^{10}$ — $10^{11}$  个/mL 以上时,AHLs 浓度也达到阈值,AHLs 和 AmxR 形成的活性复合物可以与 *amx* 基因结合,启动下游靶基因的转录,正向调控 Anammox 反应关键酶的合成,最终使得 AAOB 实现厌氧氨氧化功能。

在 AAOB 富集过程中,本课题组发现 AAOB 会逐渐聚集形成颗粒污泥且颗粒污泥不会无限增大;在一定条件下(如低容积负荷)会出现 AAOB 颗粒污泥解聚现象,而恢复正常条件后,AAOB 颗粒污泥又会再次形成。AAOB 颗粒污泥的集散行为类似于铜绿假单胞杆菌的群体感应系统。相比 AAOBQS1,AAOBQS2 可能是一种更为复杂的反馈调节系统,可引起宏观上 AAOB 的集散行为(图 5)。

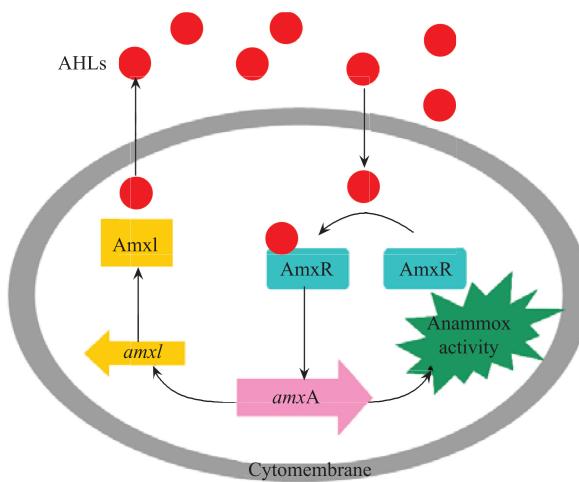


图 4 厌氧氨氧化菌活性的细胞密度依赖型群体感应系统

Fig. 4 Hypothetical quorum sensing system controlling the anammox activity in AAOB

AHLs: 自诱导物,AmxI: 自诱导物合成酶,*amxI*: 自诱导物合成酶基因,AmxR: 自诱导物受体蛋白,*amxA*: 厌氧氨氧化活性控制基因,Anammox activity: 厌氧氨氧化活性,Cytomembrane: 细胞膜

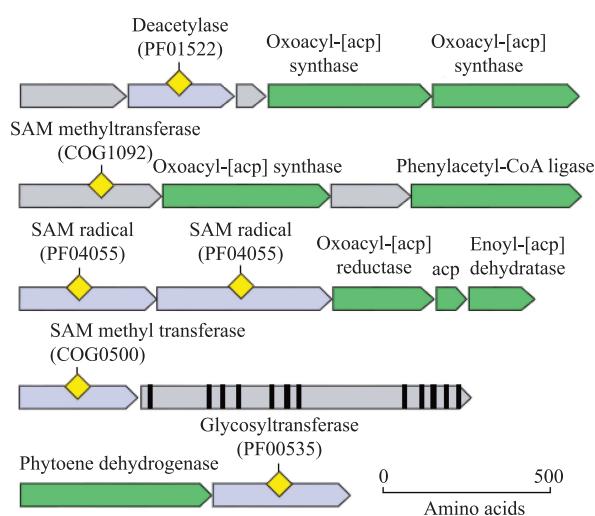


图 3 厌氧氨氧化菌编码脂肪酸合成代谢的 4 个操纵子<sup>[30]</sup>

Fig. 3 Four operons encoding fatty acid biosynthesis in AAOB

Deacetylase: 去乙酰基转移酶(PF01522), Oxoacyl-[ acp ] synthase: 氧化酰基载体蛋白合成酶, SAM methyl transferase(COG1092): S-腺苷甲硫氨酸甲基转移酶(COG1092), Phenylacetyl-CoA ligase: 苯乙酰辅酶 A 连接酶, SAM radical (PF04055): S-腺苷甲硫氨酸残基 (PF04055), Enoyl-[ acp ] dehydratase: 烯基载体蛋白脱水酶, phytoene dehydrogenase: 八氢番茄红素脱氢酶, glycosyltransferase: 糖基转移酶, acp: 载体蛋白, amino acids: 氨基酸

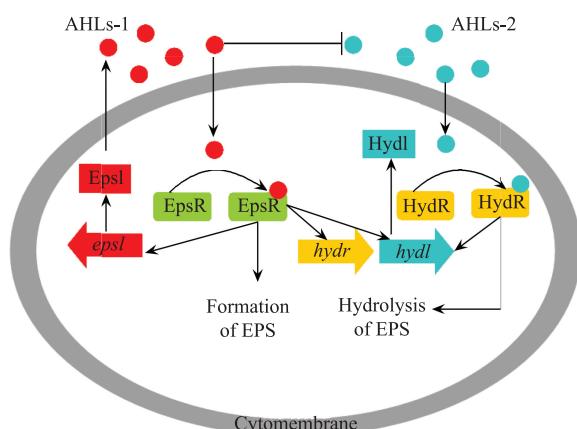


图 5 厌氧氨氧化菌的生物团聚型群体感应系统

Fig. 5 Hypothetical quorum sensing controlling the biofilm's formation in AAOB

AHLs-1: 自诱导物 1,AHLs-2: 自诱导物 2,EpsI: 自诱导物 1 合成酶,HydI: 自诱导物 2 合成酶, EpsR: 自诱导物 1 受体蛋白,HydR: 自诱导物 2 受体蛋白,*epsI*: 自诱导物 1 合成酶基因,*hydr*: 自诱导物 2 合成酶基因,Formation of EPS: 胞外多聚物的合成,Hydrolysis of EPS: 胞外多聚物的水解,Cytomembrane: 细胞膜,箭头线为促进作用,T形线为抑制作用

在AAOBQS2中,EpsI和HydI是催化AHLs-1和AHLs-2合成的关键酶,EpsR和HydR是检测和感应AHLs-1和AHLs-2的结合蛋白,*epsI*、*hydI*和*hydr*分别是编码自诱导物1合成酶、自诱导物2合成酶和自诱导物2载体蛋白的基因。首先,在EpsI的催化作用下,细胞产生一定量的AHLs-1,并分泌到细胞外。当细胞密度达到一定程度时,AHLs-1浓度也达到阈值,AHLs-1和EpsR形成的活性复合物与EPS合成相关的基因结合,启动下游靶基因的转录,正向调控与EPS合成相关基因的表达,产生EPS,进而促进AAOB的团聚与颗粒化。当细胞密度继续上升时,AAOB又可以在HydI作用下产生一定量的AHLs-2,当AHLs-2达到阈值时,AHLs-2和HydR形成的活性复合物可以与EPS水解相关的基因结合,启动下游靶基因的转录,正向调控与EPS水解相关基因的表达,以降解过量的EPS,维持一定的群体形态。AHLs-1与EpsR结合所形成的复合物可以正向调控*hydr*以及*hydI*的表达;AHLs-1也可以和HydR结合,竞争性抑制与EPS水解相关基因的表达,从而避免生物团聚体的过度解聚。

#### 4 厌氧氨氧化菌群感系统存在的生态学意义

生物在自然界长期发育与进化的过程中,出现了以资源和空间关系为主的种内与种间关系。一方面,AAOB群感系统是其细胞进行交流一种方式,它对某些基因的表达具有开关作用;另一方面,AAOB群感系统可使AAOB能够更好地抢占资源与空间,从而在某些环境中处于优势。硝化菌(nitrifying bacteria,NB)、厌氧氨氧化菌(AAOB)、反硝化菌(denitrifying bacteria,DB)有共同的基质,使三者生态位(niche)存在一定重叠;在自然界氨氮等基质含量成为限制性生态因子的状况下,易发生3种功能菌的基质竞争。AAOB通过群感系统来实现聚集,使AAOB在空间和数量上取得优势,最终使AAOB在基质竞争中获胜。研究表明,AAOB普遍存在于陆地与海洋环境中<sup>[4,32-33]</sup>,且在氮素循环中起着十分重要的作用,估计海洋细菌厌氧氨氧化过程的氮气产生量占全球海洋氮气产生量的1/3—1/2左右<sup>[4,32]</sup>。

#### 5 问题与展望

作者结合现有研究提出以下推断:1)AAOB中可能存在群感系统;2)自诱导物可能为N-乙酰化高丝氨酸内酯(N-acyl-homoserine lactones,AHLs)类化合物,由S-腺苷甲硫氨酸和乙酰化载体蛋白合成;3)AAOB群感系统的类型大于或等于2,分别控制Anammox活性表达和集散行为;4)AAOB的群感系统调节细胞内某些基因的表达,可使其更好地适应环境,并在种间竞争中处于优势。

AAOB群感方面的研究尚属起步阶段。拟解决首要问题是给出AAOB具有群感系统的直接证据(如检测自诱导分子)。在确定AAOB群感系统存在的条件下,进一步探明群感机制,探讨群感系统的生态学意义。研究AAOB群感系统具有深远的科学意义和很高的工程价值:一方面有助于提高AAOB可纯培养性;另一方面有助于AAOB污泥颗粒化,提高AAOB污泥的活性和沉降性。

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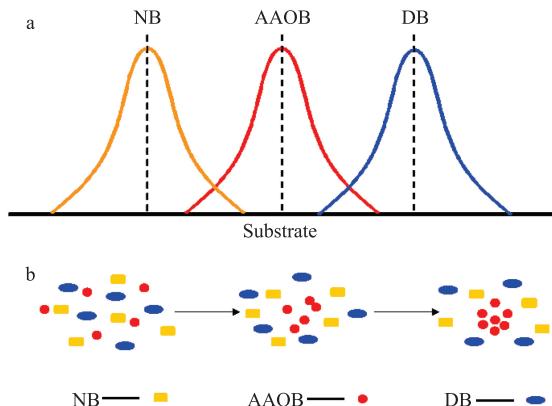


图6 硝化菌(NB)、厌氧氨氧化菌(AAOB)和反硝化菌(DB)的生态位(a)和三者之间的竞争(b)

Fig. 6 The niches and competition between nitrifying bacteria (NB), AAOB and denitrifying bacteria (DB)

NB:硝化菌,AAOB:厌氧氨氧化菌,DB:反硝化菌,Substrate:基质

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