



Different traits from the paddy soil and upland soil regulate bacterial community and molecular composition under long-term fertilization regimes

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Paddy soil
Upland soil
Long-term fertilization
Bacterial community composition
Molecular composition

ABSTRACT

Fertilization-induced changes in soil properties from the paddy soil and upland soil may directly regulate bacterial community composition, which usually coincide with shifts in molecular composition of soil organic carbon (SOC) in the upland soil. However, systematical comparisons lack on how regulators vary with cropping systems under the same weather conditions and soil parent materials. Here, we simultaneously investigated the changes of soil physicochemical parameters and shifts in the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition in two adjacent rice and maize fields that have received five fertilization regimes for more than 30 years. The separation of the bacterial community composition among the treatments from the paddy soil was mainly determined by soil nitrate-N, and that from the upland soil was mainly determined by soil available P (AP) and pH. The SOC molecular composition from the paddy soil was separated by the treatments with N application or not, with those treatments with N application being enriched with CCH₃ and aromatic C—C, and those without N application being enriched with aromatic C—H. These changed C functional groups showed close association with amorphous Fe₂O₃. For the upland soil, the SOC molecular composition was separated by the treatments with P application or not, with those treatments with P application being enriched with OCH, and those without P application being enriched with CH/CH₂. These changed C functional groups had close association with AP and total P. Our results indicated inconsistent separation patterns and regulators of the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition among the treatments of the paddy soil and upland soil, and suggested that the relatively dominant role of the fertilization-induced changes in soil properties or other soil microbes that controlled the SOC molecular composition over the bacteria measured in the present study.

1. Introduction

Soil bacteria are critical to soil productivity because of their fundamental roles in mediating nutrient cycling, promoting soil structure formation, and maintaining ecological balance in agroecosystems (Zhou et al., 2015; Eo and Park, 2016). Fertilization was one of the major strategies for maintaining soil productivity, which has been proven to effectively modify bacterial community composition via changing soil physicochemical characteristics (Su et al., 2015; Daquiado et al., 2016; Eo and Park, 2016; Samaddar et al., 2019). Previous studies have shown that dominant soil properties governing the bacterial community composition in the paddy soil differed from that in the upland soil (Wang et al., 2015; Li et al., 2018). The redox potential oscillation induced by

periodic flooding/drainage in the paddy soil and the near-continuous oxidation in the upland soil triggered series distinct chemical, physical, and biological processes in these two soils (Sahrawat, 2015; Meng et al., 2019). For example, nitrogen to phosphorus (N:P) ratio or nitrate-N was regarded as the most influential factors in the paddy soil following long-term fertilization regimes (Wang et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2019). In the upland soils, the bacterial community composition was predominantly determined by soil organic carbon (SOC) (Li et al., 2017a), pH (Chen et al., 2020), or available P (Li et al., 2018). It is noted that different factors regulating the bacterial community composition in the paddy soil or upland soil were mainly obtained from different experimental sites, which may confuse the comparisons of these two soils, probably because of the confounding influences from different weather

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apsoil.2021.103982>

Received 13 June 2020; Received in revised form 2 January 2021; Accepted 28 February 2021

Available online 15 March 2021

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conditions (Chen et al., 2017) or soil parent materials (Sheng et al., 2015). Systematically comparative studies conducted under the same conditions are therefore required.

The fertilization-induced changes in the bacterial community composition were usually accompanied by variations in SOC molecular composition in the upland soil, which is one of the key characteristics regulating the sequestration and stabilization of SOC (Grandy and Neff, 2008; Wang et al., 2017; Li et al., 2018). Ng et al. (2014) found that change of aromatic C—C in two agricultural soils amended with different organic manures showed positive correlation with gram-negative bacteria. Wang et al. (2017) found that shift of alkyl C in an alkaline soil under long-term chemical and organic fertilizations exhibited close correlation with gram-positive bacteria. Li et al. (2018) observed that the higher aromatic C—C content induced by long-term P-deficiency showed close associations with Bacillales species in a Calcaric Fluvisol.

The contribution of abiotic processes to the formation of the SOC molecular composition has also been reported on the upland soil rather than on the paddy soil (Randall et al., 1995; Hall et al., 2020; He et al., 2018). Randall et al. (1995) and Hall et al. (2020) emphasized the potential roles of chemical protection of mineral fractions and metal oxides via selectively preserving specific biomolecules in shifting the SOC molecular composition. He et al. (2018) demonstrated that the amount of C input was the most influential factor controlling the SOC molecular composition. More studies are needed to investigate whether the drivers of the SOC molecular composition in the upland soil differed from that in the paddy soil.

Balanced fertilization with concurrent application of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K) fertilizers is normally recommended as the best fertilization strategy for crop growth in the paddy soil and upland soil (Johnston, 1997), while imbalanced fertilization lacking one of these major nutrients was still widespread over the past decades (Sheldrick et al., 2003; Zhao et al., 2013). In the present study, two adjacent long-term fertilization experiments, with one growing rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) and another maize (*Zea mays* L.), were used, both of which have received five similar balanced and imbalanced fertilization strategies for more than 30 years. We hypothesized that the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition from the paddy soil and upland soil are regulated by distinct soil traits. The objectives of this study were to (1) detail the fertilization-induced variations in the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition, (2) identify the dominant traits regulating the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition, and (3) assess whether the molecular changes coincide with the shifts in the bacterial community composition.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Long-term field experiment and soil sampling

Two adjacent long-term field fertilizer experiments were performed in Jiangxi province, China (28°21'N, 116°10'E), with one having an annual cropping system of early rice-late rice and another of early maize-late maize. The rice and maize experiment was initiated in 1981 and 1986, respectively. Each experiment had a completely randomized design with five fertilizer treatments and three replicates. The treatments were: (1) Control, unfertilized control; (2) NPK, balanced fertilization with N, P, and K fertilizers; (3) NP, imbalanced fertilization with only N and P fertilizers; (4) NK, imbalanced fertilization with only N and K fertilizers; and (5) PK, imbalanced fertilization with only P and K fertilizers, which was used in the paddy soil; or P, fertilization with only P fertilizer, which was used in the upland soil. Soil samples used in the present study were collected after the harvest of later rice and later maize in November 2016. More detailed information was provided in supplement materials.

2.2. Soil properties

Soil pH was determined using a glass electrode (FE20, Mettler Toledo, Germany) with a soil:deionized water ratio of 1:5. SOC and total N (TN) contents were measured by dichromate oxidation and Kjeldahl digestion (Page et al., 1982), respectively. Soil total P (TP) and total K (TK) were estimated by digestion with HF-HClO₄ (Jackson, 1958), and then, their contents were determined by the molybdenum-blue method (Olsen et al., 1954) and flame photometry (FP640, Huayan, China), respectively. Soil available P (AP) and available K (AK) were extracted with sodium bicarbonate and ammonium acetate (Page et al., 1982), respectively, and their contents were determined by the molybdenum-blue method and flame photometry, respectively. Nitrate (NO₃⁻-N) and ammonium (NH₄⁺-N) were extracted by 2 M KCl, and then, their concentrations were measured with a continuous flow analytical system (Skalar Analytic B.V., De Breda, The Netherlands) (Page et al., 1982). Soil dissolved OC (DOC) content was determined using a total organic carbon analyzer (Multi N/C 3100, Analytik, Jena, Germany) after extraction using a soil:deionized water ratio of 1:5. Free iron oxide (Fe₂O₃) and aluminum oxide (Al₂O₃) were extracted by the dithionite-citrate-bicarbonate method, and amorphous Fe₂O₃ and amorphous Al₂O₃ were extracted by the acidic ammonium oxalate method (Pansu and Gautheyrou, 2006). Extracted iron and aluminum were measured by inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry (Optima 8000, PerkinElmer, USA) and inductively coupled plasma mass spectrometry (NexION 300, PerkinElmer, USA), respectively.

2.3. DNA extraction, 16S rRNA gene amplification and sequencing, and bioinformatics analysis

Soil DNA was extracted from 0.5 g of fresh soil using the Fast DNA SPIN Kit for soil (MP Biomedicals, Santa Ana, CA) following the manufacturer's manual, and the DNA concentration was measured using a NanoDrop 2000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher, USA).

The primers 519F (5'-CAGCMGCCGCGGTAAATWC-3') and 907R (5'-CCGTCAATTCMTTTRAGTTT-3') were used to amplify the V4-V5 hyper-variable regions of the bacterial 16S rRNA genes. PCR reactions were performed in a 50 µL reaction mix containing 1.25 µM dNTPs, 2 U of Taq DNA polymerase (TaKaRa, Japan), 2 µL (15 µM) of each forward/reverse primer, and 1 µL (50 ng) of genomic community DNA as the template. The thermal program was as follows: initial denaturation at 94 °C for 5 min, 30 cycles of 94 °C for 60 s, 55 °C for 60 s, and 72 °C for 75 s, followed by a final extension step at 72 °C for 10 min. PCR products were purified using a Cycle Pure Kit (OMEGA), and the amount of DNA in each purified sample was measured using a NanoDrop 2000 spectrophotometer (Thermo Fisher, USA). Equal amounts of PCA products were mixed for each sample and then sequenced on the Illumina MiSeq platform (Illumina, Inc., CA, USA). The 16S rRNA gene sequences were submitted to the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) Sequence Read Archive under the accession number PRJNA591958.

Sequence analysis was performed using the Qualitative Insights into Microbial Ecology (QIIME) pipeline (Caporaso et al., 2010). After trimming the barcodes, primers, low-quality sequences (<Q20), sequences shorter than 200 bp, and singletons, the high-quality sequences obtained were clustered into operational taxonomic units (OTUs) at a threshold of 97% sequence similarity. Taxonomy was assigned using the SILVA 119 database. Nonbacterial sequences (Archaea and chloroplasts) and rare taxa (relative abundance less than 0.001%) were discarded and the remaining sequences of all samples were randomly rarefied to the same sequencing depth (23,466 sequences per sample) for downstream analyses. Principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) based on the weighted UniFrac distance was performed to assess the differences in bacterial community structure among the fertilization treatments in the paddy soil and upland soil.

2.4. Advanced solid-state ^{13}C NMR spectroscopy

All the soil samples were pretreated with 2% (v/v) hydrofluoric acid (HF) before NMR analysis to remove paramagnetic compounds and concentrate organic carbon (Skjemstad et al., 1994). The ^{13}C NMR experiments were carried out on a Bruker Avance 400 (Billerica, USA) spectrometer at a ^{13}C frequency of 100 MHz with 4-mm sample rotors in a double-resonance probe head. The quantitative spectra obtained by ^{13}C multiple cross-polarization magic-angle spinning (multiCP MAS) were recorded at a spinning speed of 14 kHz and a contact time of 1 ms, with a relaxation delay of 0.35 s and 90° ^{13}C pulse-length of 4 μs . All the obtained spectra had good signal-to-noise ratios, with minor (< 3%) spinning sidebands and limited overlap with the center bands. Dipolar dephasing multiCP MAS was also conducted to differentiate signals from non-protonated C and mobile C from the total C signal.

The ^{13}C multiCP MAS spectra were subdivided into eight chemical shift regions and were assigned to the following C functional groups: alkyl C (0–44 ppm), OCH_3/NCH (44–64 ppm), O-alkyl C (64–93 ppm), anomeric C (93–113 ppm), aromatic C (113–142 ppm), aromatic C–O (142–162 ppm), $\text{COO}/\text{N}=\text{C}=\text{C}$ (162–188 ppm), and ketone/aldehyde C (188–220 ppm). The dipolar dephasing multiCP MAS further separate the rotating CCH_3 and long-chained CH/CH_2 from alkyl C, OCH_3 and NCH from OCH_3/NCH , non-protonated O-alkyl C (OCq) and protonated O-alkyl C (OCH) from O-alkyl C, and the non-protonated aromatic C (aromatic C–C) and protonated aromatic C (aromatic C–H) from aromatic C. The relative abundance of each functional group was obtained by integrating and normalizing the spectral area to the total signal intensity (0–220 ppm) for each spectrum.

2.5. Statistical analyses

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by the LSD test was used to identify the statistical differences in soil properties and bacterial taxa among the fertilization treatments. Correlations among the soil properties, molecular compositions, and bacterial taxa were determined by Pearson correlation analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics v19.0 software

(Armonk, NY, USA). Significant differences were defined as $p < 0.05$.

Principal component analyses (PCA) were conducted on the soil properties and C functional groups to visualize the distribution of soil properties and SOC molecular composition among the fertilization treatments in both the paddy soil and upland soil. Per-mutational multivariate analysis of variance (PERMANOVA) was carried out to reveal the significant differences in bacterial communities among treatments using the “adonis2” function in the vegan package, and the differential OTUs among treatments were distinguished by using the edgeR package. Key OTUs contributing to the differences between treatments were identified by similarity percentage (SIMPER) analysis (Clarke, 1993). Redundancy analysis (RDA) and multivariate regression tree (MRT) analyses were performed to discern the relationships between bacterial community composition and soil properties (De’ath, 2006). The significance levels of these relationships were evaluated by Monte Carlo test with 999 permutations. In addition, the overall relationship between soil properties and bacterial community composition was analyzed using the Mantel test (999 permutations) in the vegan package. All of these analyses were performed using R statistical software v3.3.3 (R Core Team, 2012).

3. Results

3.1. Soil properties

Overall, the soil properties from the paddy soil significantly differed from the upland soil, regardless of the fertilization treatments, which was mainly reflected by higher SOC and TN contents, while lower Fe/Al oxide contents in the paddy soil than the upland soil ($p < 0.05$, Table 1; Fig. S1). Principal component analysis (PCA) of the soil properties from the paddy soil revealed a distinct separation of the NP plus PK treatments from the NPK plus NK plus Control treatments (Fig. 1a). As expected, the NP and PK treatments had higher TP and AP while lower NO_3^- -N and DOC contents, as compared with the other treatments ($p < 0.05$, Table 1). Moreover, the highest amorphous Fe_2O_3 content was observed in the PK treatment and Control ($p < 0.05$, Table 1).

Table 1

Effect of fertilizer treatments on soil pH, and contents of nutrients and free/amorphous Fe- or Al-oxides in the paddy soil and upland soil.

	Paddy soil					Upland soil				
	Control	NPK	NP	NK	PK	Control	NPK	NP	NK	P
pH	5.43 ± 0.22 a	5.39 ± 0.08 a	5.27 ± 0.06 a	5.24 ± 0.35 a	5.28 ± 0.00 a	5.10 ± 0.08 b	4.71 ± 0.10 d	4.94 ± 0.11 c	4.52 ± 0.09 e	5.48 ± 0.05 a
SOC (g/kg)	20.00 ± 0.28 ab	20.50 ± 0.52 a	19.76 ± 0.59 ab	19.89 ± 0.50 ab	19.51 ± 0.27 b	7.82 ± 0.63 c	9.43 ± 0.61 a	8.49 ± 0.52 abc	9.09 ± 0.15 ab	8.39 ± 0.55 bc
TN (g/kg)	2.08 ± 0.05 a	2.05 ± 0.14 a	2.11 ± 0.09 a	2.03 ± 0.06 a	2.12 ± 0.04 a	0.90 ± 0.04 b	1.03 ± 0.03 a	0.99 ± 0.03 ab	1.02 ± 0.05 a	0.98 ± 0.08 ab
TP (g/kg)	0.44 ± 0.02 c	0.57 ± 0.04 b	0.57 ± 0.04 b	0.40 ± 0.02 c	0.68 ± 0.01 a	0.54 ± 0.03 b	0.68 ± 0.12 a	0.72 ± 0.07 a	0.66 ± 0.09 ab	0.69 ± 0.05 a
TK (g/kg)	10.87 ± 0.71 a	11.61 ± 0.41 a	11.48 ± 0.46 a	10.88 ± 0.60 a	11.75 ± 0.11 a	14.44 ± 0.14 a	13.84 ± 0.15 b	14.54 ± 0.03 a	14.22 ± 0.28 ab	14.42 ± 0.43 a
AP (mg/kg)	2.78 ± 0.18 d	3.51 ± 0.07 c	15.68 ± 0.53 b	1.82 ± 0.22 e	19.65 ± 0.27 a	1.36 ± 0.24 e	8.89 ± 0.47 c	9.90 ± 0.69 b	3.93 ± 0.14 d	12.74 ± 0.51 a
AK (mg/kg)	46.04 ± 3.25 b	46.66 ± 7.04 b	48.68 ± 5.34 ab	58.36 ± 7.05 a	54.85 ± 0.23 ab	72.47 ± 10.07 cd	202.17 ± 10.86 b	51.70 ± 2.59 d	254.91 ± 21.23 a	87.96 ± 16.93 c
NO_3^- -N (mg/kg)	3.52 ± 0.20 a	3.31 ± 0.23 a	0.44 ± 0.11 b	3.50 ± 0.46 a	0.55 ± 0.11 b	0.63 ± 0.01 d	7.24 ± 0.64 a	1.80 ± 0.76 c	2.93 ± 0.91 b	0.84 ± 0.18 cd
NH_4^+ -N (mg/kg)	13.14 ± 3.12 a	15.42 ± 4.73 a	15.23 ± 5.94 a	17.99 ± 4.91 a	14.19 ± 2.36 a	1.82 ± 0.41 c	2.40 ± 0.07 abc	1.91 ± 0.92 bc	2.86 ± 0.12 a	2.75 ± 0.39 ab
DOC (mg/kg)	64.10 ± 3.88 a	75.40 ± 14.28 a	46.61 ± 1.36 b	60.39 ± 11.70 ab	7.94 ± 0.99 c	4.13 ± 0.91 b	7.66 ± 1.37 a	4.53 ± 1.12 b	4.24 ± 0.08 b	4.34 ± 1.66 b
Free Fe_2O_3 (g/kg)	27.34 ± 2.56 b	34.53 ± 0.63 a	33.13 ± 2.39 a	31.99 ± 0.53 a	32.19 ± 0.62 a	45.39 ± 0.62 b	45.82 ± 0.62 ab	45.93 ± 0.69 ab	46.82 ± 0.50 a	46.45 ± 1.10 ab
Amorphous Fe_2O_3 (g/kg)	0.86 ± 0.06 a	0.61 ± 0.03 b	0.69 ± 0.10 b	0.55 ± 0.15 b	0.92 ± 0.02 a	6.10 ± 0.25 a	7.03 ± 0.37 a	7.01 ± 0.19 a	7.17 ± 1.23 a	6.33 ± 0.08 a
Free Al_2O_3 (g/kg)	5.76 ± 0.87 a	6.45 ± 0.77 a	5.58 ± 0.08 a	5.60 ± 0.50 a	5.97 ± 0.35 a	11.06 ± 1.35 ab	11.97 ± 1.04 a	10.82 ± 1.46 ab	11.06 ± 0.55 ab	9.97 ± 0.23 b
Amorphous Al_2O_3 (g/kg)	1.88 ± 0.17 a	1.35 ± 0.17 b	1.53 ± 0.06 b	1.52 ± 0.04 b	1.40 ± 0.10 b	1.83 ± 0.12 b	1.82 ± 0.11 b	1.94 ± 0.24 b	2.34 ± 0.30 a	1.39 ± 0.07 c

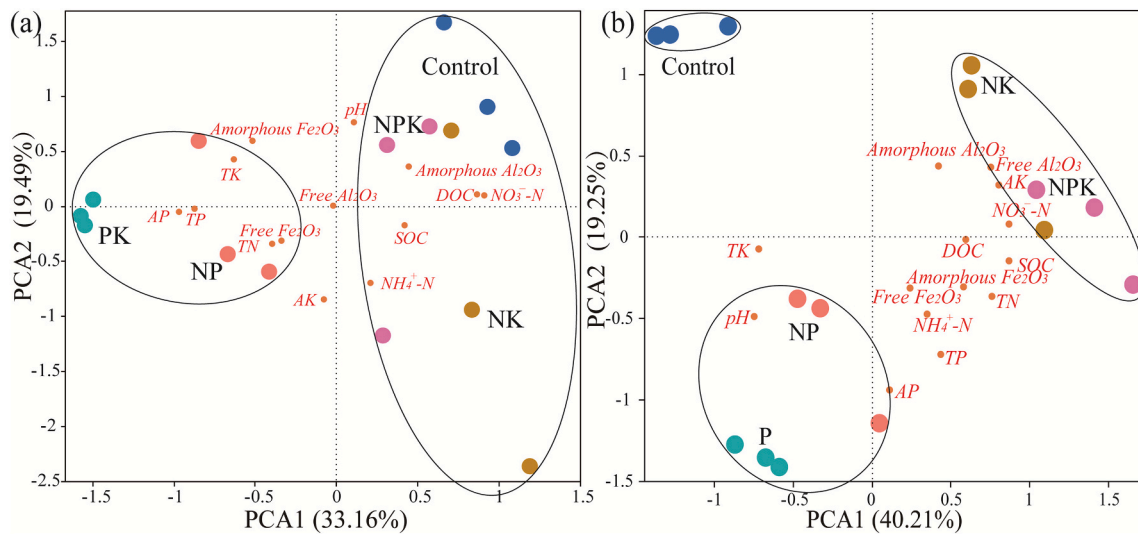


Fig. 1. Principal component analysis (PCA) plots based on soil properties depicting their distributions among the five fertilizer treatments from the paddy soil (a) and upland soil (b).

The soil properties from the upland soil could be divided into three distinct groups, namely, NP plus P, NPK plus NK treatments, and the Control (Fig. 1b). The differences among the three groups were mainly attributed to the higher AP content in the NP and P treatments, the lower pH and higher NO_3^- -N and AK contents in the NPK and NK treatments, and the lower SOC, TP, and AP contents in the Control ($p < 0.05$, Table 1; Fig. 1b).

3.2. Bacterial community composition

Chloroflexi (19.9–34.0%), Proteobacteria (11.9–22.7%), and Acidobacteria (18.1–27.1%) were the dominant phyla across the treatments of the both soils (Tables S1 and S2). As expected, the paddy soil exhibited contrasting bacterial communities from the upland soil (Fig. S2), and they responded differently to fertilization regimes (Fig. 2). The PCoA with weighted distance showed that the bacterial community composition from the paddy soil was clearly separated into two groups, namely, the NP plus PK treatments and the NPK plus NK plus Control treatments (Fig. 2a). However, three distinct groups were found for the upland soil, that is, the NP plus P, NPK plus NK, and Control (Fig. 2b). The PERMANOVA results further confirmed the significant differences between the groups ($p < 0.05$, Table S3).

The SIMPER and edgeR analyses showed that the differences between the two groups of the paddy soil were mostly attributed to the enriched members of Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 in the NP plus PK group, and the higher abundances of Ktedonobacterales members observed in the NPK plus NK plus Control group (Fig. 3a; Table S4). The distinctions among the three groups of the upland soil were largely ascribed to the abundant Gemmatimonadaceae species in the NP plus P group; the enriched Thermogemmatimonadales and Acidobacteria subgroup 2 members in the NPK plus NK group; and the lower abundance of Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 in the Control (Fig. 3b; Table S5).

3.3. The SOC molecular composition

The paddy soil and upland soil had significantly different SOC molecular composition, which was mainly reflected by higher CH/CH_2 content, while lower aromatic C—C and aromatic C—H contents in the paddy soil than the upland soil (Table 2; Fig. S3). The PCA analysis showed that the SOC molecular composition from the paddy soil were clearly separated by the treatments with N application or not, that is, the treatments with N application (i.e., NPK, NP, and NK) had similar molecular composition, which was clearly differed from those without N application (i.e., PK and Control) along axis 1 (Fig. 4a), with the former

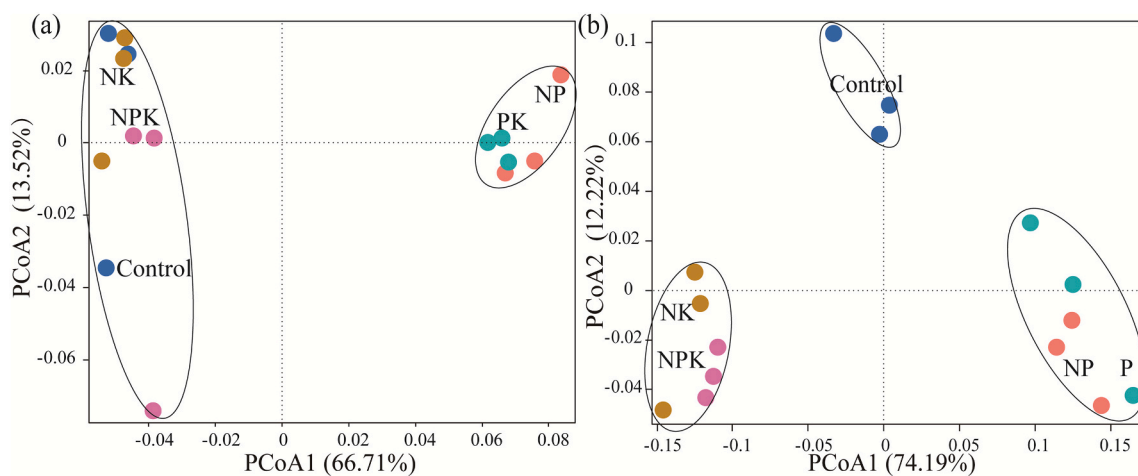


Fig. 2. Principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) plots based on the weighted UniFrac distances showing the variations of bacterial community composition among the five fertilizer treatments from the paddy soil (a) and upland soil (b).

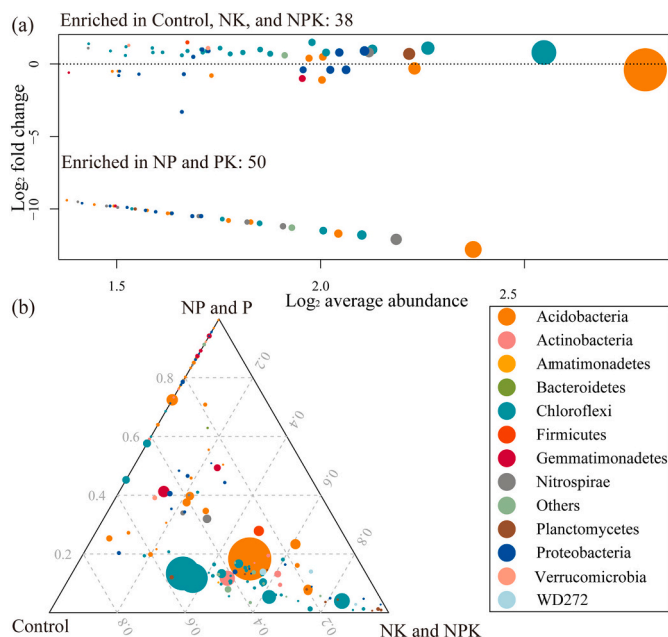


Fig. 3. Bacterial OTUs that show significantly different abundance between the groups in the paddy soil (a) and upland soil (b). Only the OTUs containing more than 0.1% of the total sequence were considered. Circle size represents the average abundance of each OTU. Circle color represents the corresponding OTUs assigned to major phyla. The OTU location in the ternary plot (b) represents their proportional abundances in the three groups.

being characterized by higher CCH₃ and aromatic C—C contents, and the later by higher aromatic C—H content (Table 2; Fig. 4a).

The SOC molecular composition from the upland soil was clearly separated by the treatments with P application or not, that is, the treatments with P application (i.e., NPK, NP, and P) had similar molecular composition, which was clearly distinct from those without P application (i.e., NK and Control) along axis 1 (Fig. 4b), with the former being characterized by higher OCH content, and the later by higher CH/CH₂ content (Table 2; Fig. 4b).

3.4. Correlations between the soil properties and changed molecular compositions, and determinants of the bacterial community composition

Correlation analysis showed that in the paddy soil, the amorphous Fe₂O₃ content had positive correlation with aromatic C—H content which was enriched in the PK plus Control group, while it had negative correlations with CCH₃ and aromatic C—C contents which were enriched in the NPK plus NP plus NK group (Table 3; Fig. 4). In the upland soil, the TP and AP contents showed significant positive associations with OCH content which was enriched in the NPK plus NP plus P group, and they had negative associations with CH/CH₂ content which was enriched in the NK plus Control group (Table 3; Fig. 4).

The bacterial community composition and soil properties shared the same cluster patterns for each soil type (Figs. 1 and 2), and their significant and positive correlations for the paddy soil (Mantel $r = 0.557$, $p = 0.001$) and upland soil (Mantel $r = 0.486$, $p = 0.002$) were confirmed by the Mantel analysis. The RDA and MRT analyses were carried out to further explore the relationships between soil properties and bacterial community composition (Fig. 5). Bacterial communities of the paddy soil were distinctly separated from the upland soil under the dominant influence of SOC content (Fig. S4).

In the paddy soil, the NO₃-N, AP, DOC, TK, and TP significantly correlated with the bacterial community composition ($p < 0.05$, Fig. 5a; Table S6), and these five soil properties accounted for 91.5% of the total variance in the community composition, of which 88.86% was explained

Table 2 Percentages of total spectral area (%) assigned to different functional groups resolved by ¹³C multiCP MAS nuclear magnetic resonance and dipolar dephased multiCP MAS.

Treatment	220–188 ppm		188–162 ppm		162–142 ppm		142–113 ppm		113–93 ppm		93–64 ppm		64–44 ppm		44–0 ppm	
	Ketone/aldehyde C		Aromatic C=O		Aromatic C		Aromatic C		Anomeric C		O-alkyl C		OCH ₃ /NCH		Alkyl C	
					Total	Arom. C-C	Arom. C-H	Total	OC _q	OCH	Total	OCH ₃	NCH	Total	CCH ₃	CH/CH ₂
Paddy soil	Control	1.81	3.04	8.19	3.40	4.79	7.73	28.50	1.50	27.00	13.70	1.04	12.66	27.78	5.23	22.56
	NPK	0.80	2.32	7.42	4.58	2.84	7.94	28.77	2.23	26.54	14.27	1.77	12.49	29.35	7.17	22.17
	NP	1.39	2.30	7.36	4.08	3.29	7.99	28.24	1.94	26.31	14.07	1.89	12.18	29.06	7.12	21.95
	NK	1.62	2.65	7.44	3.98	3.46	7.87	28.77	1.74	27.04	13.73	1.52	12.20	28.42	7.25	21.17
Upland soil	PK	1.53	2.55	7.28	2.86	4.42	7.88	29.35	1.52	27.83	13.88	1.49	12.39	28.38	5.93	22.45
	Control	0.77	4.26	14.96	8.83	6.13	8.13	26.82	2.18	24.64	13.86	2.84	11.02	22.01	6.08	15.93
	NPK	1.71	3.74	16.68	9.49	7.19	8.44	28.36	1.87	26.49	11.88	2.35	9.53	20.27	5.91	14.36
	NP	1.97	4.54	13.42	6.90	6.52	9.34	29.25	2.15	27.10	12.32	1.67	10.66	19.19	5.33	13.86
	NK	2.34	4.05	14.32	8.27	6.05	8.75	27.38	2.28	25.10	12.05	2.08	9.98	21.21	4.96	16.25
	P	2.03	4.72	15.26	8.25	7.01	8.29	27.65	2.12	25.52	12.32	2.22	10.10	20.17	5.86	14.31

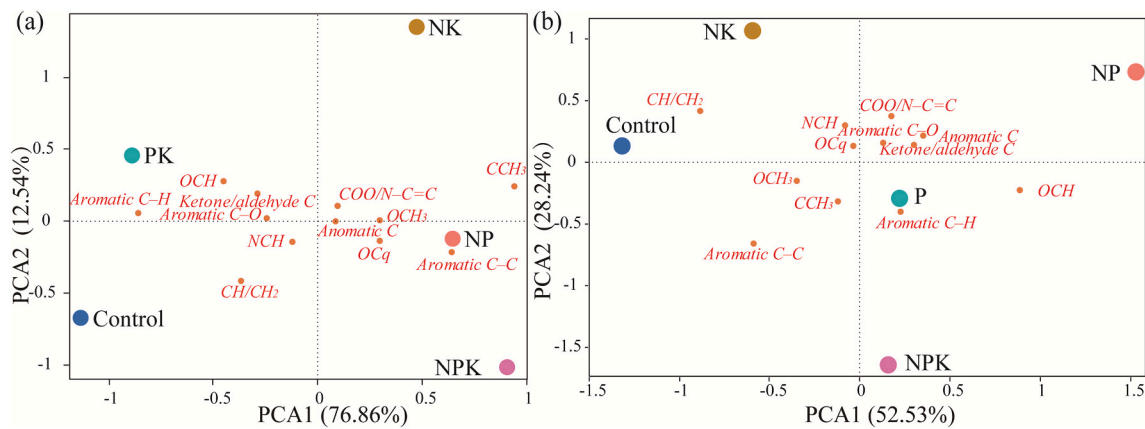


Fig. 4. Principal component analysis (PCA) plots based on the relative contents of C function groups depicting the distributions of molecular composition among the five fertilizer treatments from the paddy soil (a) and upland soil (b).

Table 3

Correlation coefficients between soil properties and SOC molecular compositions in the paddy soil and upland soil.

	Paddy soil			Upland soil	
	Aromatic C-C	Aromatic C-H	CCH ₃	OCH	CH/CH ₂
pH	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
SOC	0.520*	ns	ns	ns	ns
TN	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
TP	ns	ns	ns	0.569*	-0.525*
TK	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
AP	ns	ns	ns	0.652**	-0.877**
AK	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
NO ₃ ⁻ -N	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
NH ₄ ⁺ -N	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
DOC	0.758**	ns	ns	ns	ns
Free Fe ₂ O ₃	ns	-0.747**	0.731**	ns	ns
Amorphous Fe ₂ O ₃	-0.779**	0.761**	-0.787**	ns	ns
Free Al ₂ O ₃	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Amorphous Al ₂ O ₃	ns	0.579*	-0.582*	ns	ns

by RDA 1 and RDA 2 (Fig. 5a). The NP plus PK group was associated with higher AP and TP contents, while NPK plus NK plus Control group was associated with higher NO₃⁻-N and DOC contents. The MRT results showed that separation of the NP plus PK group from NPK plus NK plus Control group mainly relied on NO₃⁻-N content, which explained 85.2% of the total variation (Fig. 5b).

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 species enriched in the NP plus PK group showed negative associations with the NO₃⁻-N and DOC contents and positive associations with the TP and AP contents. Members of the Ktedonobacterales, which were particularly abundant in the NPK plus NK plus Control group, were negatively associated with the TP and AP contents and positively associated with the NO₃⁻-N and DOC contents (Table S7).

In the upland soil, significant correlations between the contents of AP, SOC, AK, NO₃⁻-N, TN, and pH and the bacterial community composition were found ($p < 0.05$, Fig. 5c; Table S6), and these six soil properties explained 83.2% of the total variance in the community composition, of which 75.1% was explained by RDA 1 and RDA 2 (Fig. 5c). The MRT analysis revealed that the community composition was separated into two main groups based on the AP content by the first split, which explained 54.3% of the total variation. Higher AP content was associated with the NP plus P group. Further division of the remaining groups was determined by soil pH, which explained 20.5% of the variation in the community composition. Lower pH was associated with the NPK plus NK group (Fig. 5d).

Pearson correlation analysis revealed that, in the upland soil, the abundant Gemmatimonadaceae species in the NP and P treatments showed positive associations with the AP content and pH. For the species significantly enriched in the NPK and NK treatments, both the Thermogemmatimonadaceae and unclassified Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 2 members were negatively correlated with the soil pH. In addition, the Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1, which was significantly depleted in the Control, showed negative correlations with the SOC and NO₃⁻-N contents (Table S8).

4. Discussion

4.1. Fertilization-induced variation in bacterial community composition show associations with different traits from the paddy soil and upland soil

In the paddy soil, the NO₃⁻-N was considered as the main factor determining the bacterial community composition, which clearly separated the NP plus PK treatments from the NPK plus NK plus Control treatments (Fig. 5a). Fluctuating redox potential evoked by periodic flooding/drainage creates an active environment for denitrification and nitrification (Jin et al., 2020). As a substrate of denitrification, the NO₃⁻-N has been consistently recognized as a determinant factor shaping bacterial composition in paddy soils (Wang et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016; Yi et al., 2019). In the present study, the NP and PK treatments had higher AP and TP contents (Table 1), which may be beneficial for inducing denitrification potential. Wei et al. (2017a) reported that P addition increased gaseous N loss in P-limited paddy soils through stimulating denitrification. In addition, the NP plus PK treatments were enriched with Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 members (Fig. 3a; Table S4), which have been found to be involved in denitrification under oxygen-limited conditions, facilitating the reduction of NO₃⁻-N (Cheng et al., 2017; Rasigraf et al., 2017). This was consistent with the findings that the Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 members negatively correlated with NO₃⁻-N (Table S7), and that the NP plus PK treatments had lower NO₃⁻-N content (Table 1).

In the upland soil, AP and pH were regarded as the main factors determining the bacterial community composition, and they partitioned the community composition into three distinct groups: NP plus P, NPK plus NK, and Control (Fig. 5b). Soil P availability is a major limiting factor determining microbial growth and activity (Zhong and Cai, 2007; He et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2013), and AP content has also been reported as an important property determining bacterial composition (Chu et al., 2007; Li et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2018). Meanwhile, variation of soil pH caused by urea fertilization and its considerable effect on bacterial composition in upland soils have been well documented (Francioli et al., 2016; Ling et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2017). In the present study, the

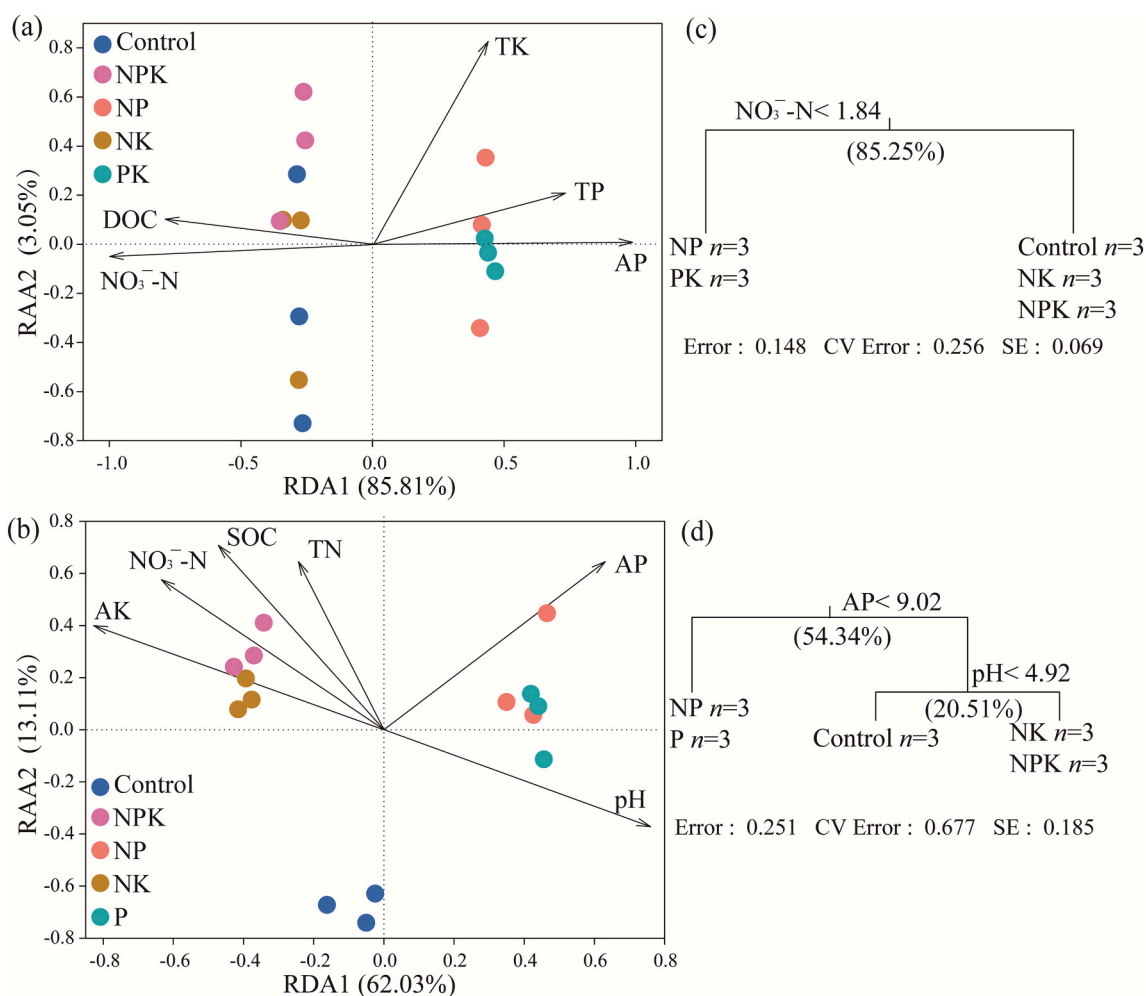


Fig. 5. Redundancy analysis (RDA) (a, b) and Multivariate regression tree (MRT) (c, d) of the bacterial communities and soil properties in the paddy soil (a, c) and upland soil (b, d) under the five fertilizer treatments. (a, b) RDA correlation plots exhibiting variances in bacterial community composition explained by the soil properties. (c, d) Numbers under the crosses of each split indicate percentages of variation explained by the split. CV Error represent cross-validation error, SE represent standard error of the tree. Specific treatment regime and the numbers of samples included in the analysis are shown in each split.

NP plus P treatments had higher AP content, accompanied by higher abundances of Gemmatimonadaceae species (Table 1; Fig. 3). Gemmatimonadaceae species have been reported to be polyphosphate-accumulating microorganisms (Zhang et al., 2003), which are more responsive to higher levels of P availability (Su et al., 2015). This is consistent with the positive relationship between Gemmatimonadaceae and AP content (Table S8). The NPK plus NK treatments had lower pH and AP contents, and their bacterial community composition was characterized by the enrichments of Thermogemmatissporales and Acidobacteria subgroup 2 species. The observed negative relationships between the soil pH and abundances of Thermogemmatissporales and Acidobacteria subgroup 2 (Table S8) are consistent with previous results showing that lower pH favored for the growth of both Thermogemmatissporales and Acidobacteria subgroup 2 (Rousk et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2019). The Control had significantly lower abundance of unclassified Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 members (Fig. 3), which have been described as nitrification-related microorganisms (Cheng et al., 2017), consisting with our observed results that the lower level of Acidobacteriaceae subgroup 1 in the Control treatment was accompanied by the lower level of soil NO_3^- -N (Table 1; Fig. 3).

4.2. Fertilization-induced changes in SOC molecular composition show associations with different traits from the paddy soil and upland soil

In the paddy soil, the molecular composition of SOC was separated by the treatments with N application or not (Fig. 4a). The treatments with N application (NPK plus NP plus NK) were characterized by higher CCH_3 and aromatic C—C contents, and those without N application (PK plus Control) by higher aromatic C—H content (Table 2). In addition, we found that the higher amorphous Fe_2O_3 content in PK plus Control group showed positive association with aromatic C—H content and negative associations with CCH_3 and aromatic C—C contents (Table 3), implying that changes in Fe_2O_3 content in the paddy soil may be one of the potential roles in mediating the variations in molecular composition in this soil. Chemical stabilization of SOC by binding to Fe/Al oxides is a prevailing mechanism controlling SOC sequestration in paddy soil (Zhou et al., 2009; Wei et al., 2017b; Yang et al., 2018). Some studies have shown that amorphous Fe-oxide was the deterministic factor for SOC sequestration and stabilization due to its higher sorption and chelation capacities considering its small particle size, large surface area, and charge characteristics (Cui et al., 2014; Das et al., 2019). Amorphous Fe_2O_3 tended to selectively preserve plant-derived SOC from biological attack (Mikutta et al., 2005; Hall et al., 2018). Wen et al. (2019) and Xue et al. (2020) observed that amorphous Fe_2O_3 would preferentially stabilize aromatic compounds. Aromatic C—H content appeared to be

plant-derived compound (Zhang et al., 2015). We therefore inferred that aromatic C—H enriched in the PK plus Control treatments resulted most likely from the protection of higher amorphous Fe₂O₃ by enhancing surface area and complexation capacity (Berhe et al., 2012). On the contrary, the NPK plus NP plus NK treatments with lower amorphous Fe₂O₃ content may tend to stabilize more C originating from microbial processes. Zhang et al. (2015) reported that the non-protonated aromatic C (aromatic C—C) was possibly a microbially processed product, and the higher rotating CCH₃ group in the treatments with N application may be derived from microbial degradation of long-chain polymethylene structures (Zhang et al., 2015). However, the significant correlations between amorphous Fe₂O₃ and SOC molecular structures were obtained from extreme fertilization treatments, conclusive evidence for their relationships would require further study with gradual fertilization management.

In the upland soil, molecular composition was separated by the treatments with P application or not (Fig. 4b). The treatments with P application (NPK plus NP plus P) were characterized by higher OCH content, and those without P application (NK plus Control) by higher CH/CH₂ content. The specific P-shaped molecular composition of the upland soil was consistent with some previous studies (Xu et al., 2017a; Li et al., 2018; Shen et al., 2018). P-deficiency has been shown to reduce the microbial biomass and enzymatic activity more significantly than N- or K-deficiency in upland soils (Chu et al., 2007; Shen et al., 2018). This discrepancy may result in the relative accumulation of CH/CH₂ groups in the NK plus Control treatments that suffered from long-term P-deficiency, since the long-chain CH/CH₂ in aliphatic structure was suggested as the most biologically recalcitrant fraction of SOC and has been found to be selectively preserved because its intrinsic molecular properties incur greater energy cost for microbial decomposition (Baldock et al., 1992; Zech et al., 1997; Xu et al., 2017b). The negative associations between CH/CH₂ and TP and AP content have also been observed in P-limited soils (Gressel et al., 1996; Mathers and Xu, 2003). On the contrary, the NPK plus NP plus P treatments had higher OCH content (Table 2), which is considered as easily degradable fraction in the O-alkyl C that derived from plant polysaccharides (Kögel-Knabner, 2002; Zhang et al., 2015; Li et al., 2020). We thus inferred that the higher OCH content in the treatments with P application may be attributed to the larger roots and higher amount of exudates from greater maize productivity following P application.

4.3. Fertilization-induced changes in the SOC molecular composition are independent of the bacterial community composition

Inconsistent distributions of the soil bacterial community and SOC molecular composition among the long-term fertilization strategies were observed in both the paddy soil and upland soil (Figs. 2 and 4), which were contrary to some previous studies emphasizing their close relationships (Ng et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017; Li et al., 2018). This inconsistencies suggested that soil bacterial community might not be the dominant driver structuring SOC molecular composition under long-term imbalanced fertilization, even though bacterial species were reported as the predominant microbes responsible for SOC decomposition and mineralization in acidic paddy and upland soils (Murase et al., 2006; Qiu et al., 2018; Zhan et al., 2018). Similarly, in a neutral-acid soil (pH 5.99–7.66), Chen et al. (2020) found that that shifts of SOC molecular composition were not accompanied by changes in bacterial community composition after subjected to long-term fertilization. The molecular composition of SOC could be influenced by various factors other than the bacteria, such as the chemical and physical stabilization processes (Grandy and Neff, 2008; Zhao et al., 2020) and fungal-mediated transformations (Li et al., 2017b; Ng et al., 2014). Our results indicated that the differences in chemical stabilization processes carried out by amorphous Fe₂O₃ may play a more pronounced role in driving structural divergence of SOC after long-term imbalanced fertilization in the paddy soil. Whereas the typical P-shaped SOC molecular composition in the

upland soil might result from the influence of fungal community composition, since fungi play a substantial role in organic matter degradation in upland soils (Zhan et al., 2018). More particularly, Li et al. (2017b) found that the SOC molecular changes of acidic forest soils were tightly related to shifts in soil fungal community composition, and Li et al. (2019) also reported that the SOC molecular composition of an acidic grassland was more tightly linked to fungi than bacteria.

The paddy soil and upland soil exhibited distinct patterns of both bacterial community and SOC molecular composition (Fig. 2; Table 2). This differentiation may be derived from their contrasting redox potential, which could trigger a series of distinct biological and chemical processes (Sahrawat, 2015; Meng et al., 2019). Further studies are needed to confirm. Another point should be mentioned was that our findings were obtained from the long-term imbalanced fertilization experiments with extreme treatments, and additional efforts should be made to gather more comprehensive assessments of the effects of imbalanced fertilization.

5. Conclusion

Using two adjacent long-term field experiments performed on paddy soil and upland soil for more than 30 years in subtropical China, we found that NO₃⁻-N was the most influential factor in regulating the bacterial community composition in the paddy soil, whereas AP and pH became the important factors in the upland soil. It was observed that the SOC molecular composition from the paddy soil was separated by treatments with N application or not, in which treatments with N application were enriched with aromatic C—H and CCH₃ and treatments without N application were enriched with aromatic C—H, and all these changed C functional groups had close associations with soil amorphous Fe₂O₃. However, the SOC molecular composition from the upland soil was separated by treatments with P application or not, in which treatments with and without P application were characterized by enrichment of OCH and CH/CH₂, respectively, and both of them showed close association with soil AP and TP. Our work detailed the profound influence of long-term imbalanced fertilization on the bacterial community and SOC molecular composition in the paddy soil and upland soil. Further studies are required by integrating more real field situations to ensure these results are consistent.

Lowercase letters refer to the comparison within the five treatments of each soil parameter for each soil type at $p < 0.05$.

ns: non-significant at $p = 0.05$; * and ** marks: significant at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$, respectively.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

This work was financially supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (41977102), the Earmarked Fund for China Agriculture Research System (CARS-03), and the Natural Science Foundation of Jiangxi Province (20192BAB203022). We greatly thank the anonymous Reviewers and the Editor for their constructive comments.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apsoil.2021.103982>.

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