Comparative whole-genome analysis reveals artificial selection effects on *Ustilago esculenta* genome

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Edited by Dr. Sachiko Isobe

Received 26 December 2016; Editorial decision 17 June 2017; Accepted 6 July 2017

Abstract

*Ustilago esculenta*, infects *Zizania latifolia*, and induced host stem swollen to be a popular vegetable called *Jiaobai* in China. It is the long-standing artificial selection that maximizes the occurrence of favourable *Jiaobai*, and thus maintaining the plant–fungi interaction and modulating the fungus evolving from plant pathogen to entophyte. In this study, whole genome of *U. esculenta* was sequenced and transcriptomes of the fungi and its host were analysed. The 20.2 Mb *U. esculenta* draft genome of 6,654 predicted genes including mating, primary metabolism, secreted proteins, shared a high similarity to related Smut fungi. But *U. esculenta* prefers RNA silencing not repeat-induced point in defence and has more introns per gene, indicating relatively slow evolution rate. The fungus also lacks some genes in amino acid biosynthesis pathway which were filled by up-regulated host genes and developed distinct amino acid response mechanism to balance the infection–resistance interaction. Besides, *U. esculenta* lost some surface sensors, important virulence factors and host range-related effectors to maintain the economic endophytic life. The elucidation of the *U. esculenta* genomic information as well as expression profiles can not only contribute to more comprehensive insights into the molecular mechanism underlying artificial selection but also into smut fungi–host interactions.

Key words: *Ustilago esculenta*, whole-genome analysis, fungi–host interaction, *Zizania latifolia*

1. Introduction

*Ustilago esculenta* is a basidiomycete fungus, which infects ancient wild rice, *Zizania latifolia*.1 *Zizania latifolia* belongs to the tribe Oryzeae within the Gramineae2 and was one of the six most important cereal crops in ancient China.1 After infection with *U. esculenta* around 2000 yrs ago,4 *Z. latifolia* formed a shuttle-like gall and was
gradually domesticated as an aquatic vegetable called Jiaobai in East and Southeast Asia\(^1\) particularly in China, which has antioxidant properties and may prevent hypertension, cardiovascular disease.\(^6\)

Similar to other crops domestication, Jiaobai plants were artificially selected to increase their suitability to human requirements: taste, yield, storage and cultivation practices. In some unfavourable conditions, like high-dose radiation, water deficiency, unsuitable application of fungicide or unfavourable growing temperature, or if the plants were abandoned, the plants may produce galls being full of dark teliospores (called grey Jiaobai) or escape from fungal infection (called male Jiaobai).\(^7,8\) It was the long-term artificial selection that effectively maximized the occurrence of favourable Jiaobai and enabled \textit{U. esculenta} consecutively to be maintained in host plants. Since \textit{U. esculenta} was the cause of the vegetable, the process of crop domestication actually was the process of artificially selection on interaction complex of fungus and host. A key question, then, is to understand how domestication has shaped \textit{U. esculenta} from the plant pathogen to entophyte and how, in turn, these changes may influence the interaction between the fungus and the host.

It has been shown that host domestication has driven the emergence of the rice blast pathogen \textit{Magnaporthe oryzae}\(^9\) and the wheat pathogen \textit{Zymoseptoria tritici}.\(^10\) In contrast to natural evolution, domestication is due to humans as selective agents; but, just like natural selection, domestication fully depends on genetic variation, mutations, inheritance and demography.\(^11\) The emerging consensus is that domestication causes a distinct imprint on genomes.\(^12\) Integrated and fully analyses of the genome will give insight into the underlying effect of domestication. The comparative genomic study on \textit{Mycosphaerella graminicola} and its wild sister species showed that speciation of \textit{M. graminicola} was associated with adaptation to domesticated wheat and its associated agro-ecosystem.\(^13\) And indeed, comparative genomics has revealed underlying mechanisms of genome evolution, for example, transposon-mediated gene loss driven the rapid evolution of \textit{M. oryzae},\(^14,15\) and gene loss rather than gene gain resulted in the host jump in the smut fungus \textit{Melanopsichium pennisylvanicum}.\(^16\)

Smut fungi are biotrophic pathogens causing characteristic symptoms, the replacement of plant organs by black masses of teliospores, in a number of agriculturally important crop plants, mostly grass family (Grimeinae). These basidiomycete fungi belong to the order Ustilaginales containing over 50 genera. Several different smut diseases in cereal crops are mostly caused not only by species of the 

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Strains and growth conditions

\textit{Ustilago esculenta} strain was isolated from edible \textit{Jiaobai} of Longjiao No 2 in 2011 in Zhejiang province of China. Longjiao No 2 is one of the most widely cultivated \textit{Jiaobai} varieties in east China. The galls were harvested at 160 days after planting. The \textit{U. esculenta} strain was isolated from non-sporulating gall by slice separation method and cultured on potato dextrose agar (PDA) medium. After 6–10 days, the white mycelia that grew out from the tissue were transferred to potato dextrose broth (PDB) medium. The mycelia (M) for further analysis were collected after shaking in PDB medium for 3 days at 28°C. Teliospores were isolated from sporulating gall of grey \textit{Jiaobai} and old gall of edible \textit{Jiaobai} and cultured on PDA medium. After 3–5 days, haploid strains were obtained by single sporidia selection with capillary pipet under microscopy and transferred to PDB medium for additional 3 days shake-culture at 28°C. Enriched sporidia were collected for further analysis. Haploid strains from edible \textit{Jiaobai} called MT strain with deposited number CGMCC Nos. 11841 and 11842 in China Center for Type Culture Collection, haploid strains from grey \textit{Jiaobai} called T strain with deposited number CGMCC Nos. 11843 and 11844.

2.2. Mating assay

Two haploid strains with heterogametic types from \textit{U. esculenta} were streak cultured on YEPS solid medium (1% yeast extract, 2% peptone, 2% sucrose and 1.5% agar) separately, at 28°C. After 3 days, single colonies were picked into YEPS medium for further culture (28°C and 180 r.p.m). The sporidia cells were collected when OD\(_{600}\) reached 1 and re-suspended to OD\(_{600}\) of 1.5. The two cultures were mixed 1:1 Vol/Vol and spotted onto YEPS solid medium.
and cultured at 28°C. Microscopic observation and PCR confirmation of the mating loci were performed 4 days after incubation.

2.3. Effect of amino acids on mating and hyphal growth
Mating assays were carried out and the mixed culture of two mating strains were spotted onto the basic medium (K$_2$HPO$_4$ 1 g/l, MgSO$_4$·7H$_2$O 0.5 g/l, FeSO$_4$·7H$_2$O 0.01 g/l, KCl 0.5 g/l, glucose and agar 15 g/l) supplement with different amino acids (arginine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, proline, tyrosine or valine) as nitrogen source (20 mM) or as trace elements (0.2 mM) when KNO$_3$ as nitrogen source (20 mM/l). With an interval 12 h, mating colonies were mounted for microscopy and after 3 days, hyphal length were measured.

2.4. Effect of arginine on strain T and MT hyphal growth
Two haploid T strains and MT strains with heterogametic types were cultured and mixed as described in ‘Mating assay’ in method. The 3 μl 1:1 Vol/Vol mixed cultures were inoculated on YEPS solid medium and Arg medium (K$_2$HPO$_4$ 1 g/l, MgSO$_4$·7H$_2$O 0.5 g/l, FeSO$_4$·7H$_2$O 0.01 g/l, KCl 0.5 g/l, Sucrose 68 g/l and arginine 13.9 g/l) individually. The cultures were incubated at 28°C. With an interval 12 h, hyphal length was measured. The measurement was repeated for three times.

2.5. DNA, RNA preparation, genome sequencing and assembly
Mycelia (M), sporidia from grey Jiaobai (T) and from edible Jiaobai (MT) were used to isolate DNA and RNA. All the materials were washed with sterile water for three times and centrifuged. After grounding in liquid nitrogen, genomic DNA was extracted using the CTAB method and total RNA was extracted using Trizol (Invitrogen). The isolated RNA was then treated by RNAse-Free DNase and then subsequently treated using Illumina mRNA-Seq Prep Kit (Illumina, San Diego, CA) following the manufacturer’s instruction. Four DNA sequencing libraries with different insert lengths (170 bp, 500 bp, 6 Kb and 10 Kb) and 7.7 Gb raw sequence data (Supplementary Table S1) were generated using Illumina HiSeq2000 platform (BGI, Shenzhen, China).

After removing low quality and adapter sequences, the reads were de novo assembled using the CLC workbench 5.5.1 (CLC bio).
SSPACE BASIC (version 2.0)\textsuperscript{27} was used for scaffold construction and GapFiller (version 1.10)\textsuperscript{28} was applied for gap closure. Genome heterozygosity was first analysed by K-mer analysis and then confirmed by alignment between assembled scaffolds and original reads. Genome Analysis TK (Version 1.6) was used to identify Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms (SNPs).

Genome sequences of \textit{U. maydis} were downloaded from the Broad institute of Harvard and MIT (http://www.broadinstitute.org/annotation/genome/ustilago_maydis/ (6 July 2017, date last accessed)); \textit{Sporisorium reilianum} and \textit{U. borei} genomic sequences were downloaded and retrieved from the Munich information center for protein sequences (ftp://ftpmpis.gsf.de/fungi/Sporisorium_reiliana num/ and ftp://ftpmpis.gsf.de/fungi/MUHDB/).

2.6. Repeat annotation

\textit{A de novo} repeat database of \textit{U. esculenta} was generated using RepeatModeler (Version 1.0.7, http://www.repeatmasker.org/ (6 July 2017, date last accessed)), RepeatMasker (Version 3.2.7, http://www.repeatmasker.org/ (6 July 2017, date last accessed)) was used to identify repeats from our \textit{de novo} database and Repbase database (http://www.girinst.org/ (6 July 2017, date last accessed)). LTR\_FINDER (version 1.0.5)\textsuperscript{29} was applied to identify the long terminal repeat (LTR) elements.

2.7. Gene annotation

We predicted genes as follows: (i) \textit{de novo} prediction. Genes were predicted using Augustus (Version 2.03)\textsuperscript{30} with training gene sets from the \textit{U. maydis} genome. (ii) Homologue-based prediction. We mapped the protein sequences of \textit{U. maydis}, \textit{S. reilianum} and \textit{U. borei} to the \textit{U. esculenta} genome using rBLASTn, with a cut-off E-value of 10$^{-5}$. (iii) RNA-seq based prediction. All contigs from RNA-seq were mapped to the \textit{U. esculenta} genome by TopHat (Version 2.0, http://tophat.cbcb.umd.edu/). (iv) All the gene predictions were combined using GLEAN (version 1.0.1)\textsuperscript{31} to produce consensus gene sets.

Gene functions were assigned according to the best match of the alignments using BLASTp (E-value < 10$^{-5}$)\textsuperscript{32} searching against the nucleotide database of NCBI. The motifs and domains of genes were determined by InterproScan (Version 4.5)\textsuperscript{33} against UniProt/Swiss-Prot protein database. All genes were classified according to Gene Ontology (GO) and KEGG (Release 48.2) pathways. If the best hit of the genes in any of these processes was ‘function unknown’, the second best hit was used to assign the function until there were no more hits that met the alignment criteria, then this gene is determined as functionally unknown. OrthoMCL (version 2.0.9)\textsuperscript{34} was used to group \textit{U. esculenta} genes into orthologue clusters.

Genes were also analysed for carbohydrate-active enzymes (CAZymes, http://www.cazy.org (6 July 2017, date last accessed)) using diCAN.\textsuperscript{35} Genes related to the biosynthesis of secondary metabolites were analysed using the JVI Secondary Metabolite Unique Regions Finder Web server.\textsuperscript{36} SignalP (version 3.0)\textsuperscript{37} was used for the prediction of secreted proteins. The candidates were analysed with ProtComp 6.0 (http://www.softberry.com (6 July 2017, date last accessed)) and TargetP (version 1.1)\textsuperscript{38} were used to predict protein localization.

Information regarding the effects of virulence was retrieved from PHI-base (http://www.phi-base.org/ (6 July 2017, date last accessed)).

The tRNA genes were identified by tRNAScan-SE (version 1.21).\textsuperscript{39} For rRNAs identification, the rRNAs from \textit{U. maydis} were aligned against the \textit{U. esculenta} genome using BLASTn (E-value < 10$^{-5}$) to identify possible rRNAs. Other non-coding RNAs, including miRNA and snRNA, were identified using INFERNAL (version 1.1)\textsuperscript{40} by searching against the Rfam database.\textsuperscript{41}

Genome syntic analysis of smut fungi were performed with MUMmer (version 3.0),\textsuperscript{42} the schematic representation of the genome synteny was generated with CIRCOS (http://mkweb.bcgsc.ca/circos/).

2.8. Transcriptome sequencing and analysis

\textit{Mycelia} (M) and sporidia (MT) of \textit{MT} strain and sporidia (T) of \textit{T} strain were collected for transcriptome sequencing. Three samples of same culture were collected for sequencing company to guarantee the quality of RNA extracting and sequencing. The transcriptomes were sequenced using Illumina HiSeq2000 platform (BGI, Shenzhen, China). The reads from different sequenced samples (M, T and MT) were mapped to the whole-genome assembly using SOAP2.\textsuperscript{43} The expression quantification was calculated based on RPKM measurement.\textsuperscript{44} Only if the gene’s expression profile differs between two samples with a fold change ≥ 2 and a P-value < 0.01 by edgeR,\textsuperscript{45} with estimateDispersion method as “blind”, this gene was considered to be significantly differentially expressed. The transcriptomic data have been deposited at GenBank under accession SRR1611140, SRR5234219 and SRR5234220 for M, T and MT, respectively. To understand the effect of long-term interaction between the host plant and \textit{U. esculenta}, the transcriptomic data of stems from edible \textit{faobai} with \textit{U. esculenta} in the plant and wild \textit{Z. latifolia} (GenBank accession number, PRJNA187578)\textsuperscript{46} were downloaded and used.

2.9. Phylogenetic analysis

The phylogenetic relationships of \textit{U. esculenta}, \textit{U. maydis}, \textit{U. borei}, \textit{S. reilianum} and \textit{Cryptococcos neoformans} were constructed using 45 single copy gene families (Supplementary File S3) by OrthoMCL. The alignments were performed using Clustal omega (version 1.2.0)\textsuperscript{47} with default parameters. One hundred bootstrap replicates were generated for each gene family alignment using the Seqboot package in PHYLIP (version 3.69, http://evolution.genetics.washington.edu/phylip/). For each replicate, a maximum likelihood phylogenetic tree was constructed using Proml package of PHYLIP under Joes–Taylor–Thornton model with testing of a molecular clock. The consensus tree was built based on 4,500 trees from the bootstrap experiments by the Consense package in PHYLIP with an extended majority rule. The percentage of support by the 4,500 individual trees was indicated on each branch of the consensus tree.

3. Results/discussion

3.1. Sequencing of the \textit{U. esculenta} genome

The collected mycelia of \textit{U. esculenta} were sequenced using Illumina HiSeq2000 platform. Four different insert libraries (170-bp-10 kb) were sequenced to generate a total of 4.54 Mb trimmed data with a genome coverage of ×139 (Supplementary Table S1). The reads \textit{de novo} assembled into 1,869 contigs with a total size of 20.2 Mb (Table 1). Since the strain was diploid, we checked the heterozygosity by k-mer (Fig. 2) and SNP analysis (Supplementary File S1). Although some random sequencing errors exist, only one distribution was found by K-mers with volume peak at 85, indicating the high homozygosity of genome. To confirm the result, we aligned the assembled scaffolds with original reads. Totally, 2,118 SNPs including 228 homologous SNPs were found. Such a low SNP frequency and density further validated the genome homozygosity. The N50
lengths of contigs and scaffolds of the assembly were 101.8 and 404.8 kb, respectively. The assembled draft genome size of *U. esculenta* is moderately larger than *U. maydis* and *S. reilianum* but slightly smaller than *U. hordei*. In total, 6,654 candidates gene were identified based on homology to known proteins and the transcriptomic data (detailed annotations see Supplementary File S2), indicating that *U. esculenta* has similar proportion of protein-coding regions as the other three smut fungi. The proportion of genes encoding secreted proteins was around 10% (663 out of 6,654 genes) of the annotated genes. This whole genome shotgun project has been deposited at DDBJ/EMBL/GenBank under the accession JTLW0000000. The version described in this article is version JTLW01000000.

### 3.2. Higher intron number and varied genome defence were found in *U. esculenta*

We performed comparative genomic analysis on the four Ustilaginales, *U. maydis, U. hordei, S. reilianum* and *U. esculenta*. *Ustilago esculenta* shares a high degree of genomic synteny with *U. hordei*, *U. maydis* and *S. reilianum* (Fig. 3). Orthologue comparison of *U. esculenta, U. maydis, U. hordei* and *S. reilianum* identified 3,602 genes clusters that were common to all four species (Fig. 4). *Ustilago esculenta* had the highest orthologue similarity to *U. hordei* (88.6%, 4,166 out of 4,699). It shared 87.2% (4,102 out of 4,699) and 82.1% (3,860 out of 4,699) gene orthologue similarity with *U. maydis* and *S. reilianum*, respectively. The results are consistent with the phylogenetic analysis, which showed that *U. esculenta* is more closely related to *U. hordei* than to *U. maydis* and *S. reilianum* (Fig. 5). Specific *U. esculenta* gene cluster (number: 399) with classifications (number: 103) were enriched in genes associated with secreted proteins (number: 62).

Unconserved regions still existed in the *U. esculenta* genome (white regions in the red Ue genome in Fig. 3). The length of these non-syntenic regions was 3.1 Mb, 15.1% of the whole genome. GC content of these regions was 55.63%, a little higher than that of syntenic regions (51.3%). Totally, 1,589 candidate genes were predicted on these regions (Supplementary File S5), which were spreading in 59 pieces (each piece containing at least 4 genes). Based on the synteny analysis of orthologous genes, 243 genes were found to be orphan genes, and 761 out of 1,346 orthologous genes were annotated as hypothetical protein or uncharacterized protein. No enriched function was found according to GO analysis.

### Table 1. The genome statistics of *U. esculenta* compared with other sequenced smut fungi

| Genome specifics          | *U. esculenta* | *U. hordei* | *U. maydis* | *S. reilianum* |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| Assembly statistics      |                |             |             |               |
| Total contig length (Mb) | 20.2           | 20.7        | 19.7        | 18.2          |
| Total scaffold length (Mb)| 21.4          | 21.2        | 19.8        | 18.4          |
| Average base coverage    | ×10            | ×20         | ×10         | ×20           |
| N50 contig (kb)          | 101.8          | 48.7        | 127.4       | 50.3          |
| N50 scaffold (kb)        | 404.8          | 307.7       | 817.8       | 738.5         |
| Chromosome no.           | 23             | 23          | 23          | 23            |
| GC content (%)           | 51.3           | 52          | 54          | 59.7          |
| Coding                   | 56.7           | 54.3        | 56.3        | 62.6          |
| Non-coding               | 44.2           | 43.4        | 50.5        | 54.3          |
| Gene annotation          |                |             |             |               |
| Percentage coding (%)    | 61             | 57.5        | 61.1        | 65.9          |
| Average gene size (bp)   | 1,964          | 1,708       | 1,836       | 1,858         |
| Average gene density (kb/gene) | 3.2 | 3.0       | 2.9         | 2.8          |
| Protein-coding genes     | 6,635          | 7,113       | 6,786       | 6,648         |
| Of homologous proteins (%)| 6,045 (91)  | 6,325 (89) | 6,214 (92) | 6,394 (96) |
| Exons                    | 12,237         | 10,907      | 9,783       | 9,776         |
| Exons/gene               | 1.84           | 1.53        | 1.44        | 1.47          |
| Average exon size (bp)   | 994            | 1,107       | 1,239       | 1,221         |
| Intron                   | 5,563          | 3,161       | 2,987       | 3,103         |
| Introns/gene             | 0.84           | 0.44        | 0.44        | 0.46          |
| Average intron size (bp) | 185            | 141         | 142         | 144           |
| Average intergenic distance (bp) | 1,052 | 1,186   | 1,127       | 929           |
| tRNA genes               | 152            | 110         | 111         | 96            |
| TEs and repeats (%)      | 7.5            | 2.0         | 8.0         | 0.8           |
These four smut fungi have similar genome sizes, GC content and gene-coding percentages. The most obvious differences between our sequenced genome and the other three Ustilaginales are the number and average length of introns and exons. Ustilago esculenta has \( \sim 2,000 \) more exons and introns individually compared with the other three genomes. This results in higher ratio of exons or introns to genes in U. esculenta. The number of intron-free genes is the lowest and the number of introns per gene (0.84 intron per gene) is the highest in U. esculenta among all four genomes. However in comparison to Aspergillus nidulans (2–3 introns per gene) or C. neoformans (5 introns per gene), U. esculenta has fewer introns. Similar to other Ustilaginales, introns of U. esculenta were primarily distributed at the 5’-end of genes, likely due to the selective pressure during evolution. The number of introns may also be determined by the rates of evolution. Roy and Gilbert suggest that a large number of introns are often found in relatively earlier ancestors based on maximum likelihood reconstructions. Slow-evolving species may retain more introns than the fast-evolving species. This may explain the higher intron numbers in U. esculenta compared with other three Ustilaginales. Farmers keep selecting on the Ustilago–Zizania interaction complex every planting season to retain the vegetables that maintain the desired morphology of the variety. Only a few plants with the potential to produce high quality Jiaobai are kept for propagation. The artificial selection may reduce the selective pressure from nature, and consequently, slow down the evolution rate and result in higher intron numbers in U. esculenta.

Analysis for repeating sequences showed that the repeated sequences did not cluster in a specific region but were randomly distributed across the draft genome of U. esculenta. The coverage of repeats (7%) and transposable elements (TEs) in the assembled contigs are similar to that in U. hordei (7.8%). It is nearly 3 and 10 times higher than in U. maydis and S. reilianum, respectively. Surprisingly, the coverage of unclassified repeats in the U. esculenta assembled scaffolds (2.9%) was 10 times higher than that reported in U. maydis (0.23%). TEs expansion in fungi may increase the size of the genomes but it could also help the species adapt to a new or challenging environment. However, two-thirds of the U. esculenta TEs have no known functions. The U. esculenta TEs showed low similarity with their counterparts found in U. hordei.

Unlike U. hordei, we did not find a repeat-induced point (RIP) mutation mechanism in U. esculenta. The RIP mutation is a fungal-specific genome defence that repetitive elements mutated from CpN to TpN (GpN to ApN). It is nearly 3 and 10 times higher than in U. maydis and S. reilianum, respectively. Surprisingly, the coverage of unclassified repeats in the U. esculenta assembled scaffolds (2.9%) was 10 times higher than that reported in U. hordei (0.23%). TEs expansion in fungi may increase the size of the genomes but it could also help the species adapt to a new or challenging environment. However, two-thirds of the U. esculenta TEs have no known functions. The U. esculenta TEs showed low similarity with their counterparts found in U. hordei.
encoding RNA-directed RNA polymerases (RdRP1, g3276; RdRP2, g1610 and RdRP3, g4076). Chromodomains-coding HP1-like (Chp1, g238) and C5-cysteine methyltransferase (DNAm, g3112) that were detected in U. hordei and S. reilainum were found in U. esculenta as well. Ustilago esculenta showed highly conserved synten with S. reilainum and U. hordei in Dcl1, DNAm and RdRP3. Only U. hordei carried additional genes with functions associated with retrotransposition in the Chp1 (UHOR_15241) and RdRP1 (UHOR_13400, UHOR_08875 and UHOR_13402). The RdRP1 locus of U. esculenta showed a distinct pattern compared with U. hordei and S. reilainum. There was one gene missing (homologue of UHOR_05573) in U. esculenta. It indicates that these four smut fungi have evolved differently regarding genome defence when they were under different selection pressure. The possession of RNAi-related genes and the lack of RIP may suggest that U. esculenta utilizes RNAi for genome defence to control TE proliferating and activity under high selection pressure. Although U. hordei balanced TE activity by combination of RNAi, methylation and RIP mutagenesis, U. maydis may maintain genome stability through highly efficient recombination system for lack of universal mechanisms for TE control and heterochromatin formation. Genome defence mechanism of S. reilainum, an intermediate between U. hordei and U. maydis, remains to be determined although silencing pathway components being represented in its genome.

3.3. DEGs between different strains

To further determine changes of gene expression between different life stages and different strains, digital gene expression profiling of M, T and MT were investigated (Supplementary File S2 and Table S2). Totally, 6,344, 6,307 and 6,335 genes were expressed at M, T and MT, respectively, and 97.7% (6,230 out of 6,394) were constitutively expressed, while only 52 genes were strain-specific and 92 genes were expressed at two strains (Fig. 6). Forty hundred and seventy-seven differentially expressed genes (DEGs) (P-value < 0.01 and fold change of expression > 2.0) between mycelia and sporidia or between sporidia of T strain and MT strain were identified (Supplementary File S2).

GO term enrichment analysis of the 477 DEGs indicated that the DEGs correlated with transport (transmembrane transport and transporter activity), localization, oxidation reduction, oxidoreductase activity, ion binding, cation binding, cofactor binding, co-enzyme binding, membrane and so on were enriched. Interestingly, when compared with sporidial cells, most of DEGs (394 out of 441) were up-regulated in mycelia cells. And similar pattern was observed for sporidia of T strain when compared with that of MT strain (Supplementary Table S3), indicating a more active status of T strain cells.

3.4. Structure and function of mating-type loci

Genes that have a strong effect on speciation are those involved in mating, hyphal fusion or dikaryon formation, and those associated with ecological adaptation. The a mating locus comprises a pheromone-receptor system, which is conserved in the sequenced smuts. Ustilago maydis and S. reilainum have tetrapolar mating systems and their mating loci a and b locate in two different chromosomes. Whereas the mating loci a and b in U. hordei are in the same chromosome (bipolar).

A gene cluster of a3 locus is found on Scaffold 161, containing one mating pheromone gene mfa3.2 (g6433) and one pheromone receptor gene pra3 (g6434). Comparing to other smut fungi, the a locus should have at least two genes, pheromone gene and pheromone receptor gene. So we did the homologous comparison to the sequence from lba gene to rba gene on Scaffold 34, finding the pheromone receptor gene pra2, another mating pheromone gene mfa2.3 and the mitochondrial protein gene rga2 in the a2-locus, which was confirmed by PCR with the primers designed from lba and rba. Same works have been done in the a3-locus. However, the right border gene could not be found and, instead, a long sequence mainly encoding transposase were found at the end of the Scaffold 161. Additional PCR were carried out with the primers designed from lba, rba and the intermediates, and another mating pheromone gene mfa3.1 was found nearby the rba gene. The two a loci of U. esculenta were syntenic to that of S. reilainum, respectively, with conserved gene content, order and position, except for two remarkable characters (Fig. 7).

First, a3 locus was distinctively enlarged in U. esculenta. The a2 locus encompassed 10-kb regions, while a3 locus extended to over 22-kb, with a transposase flanking to panC and a ~14-kb segment inserted between pra3 and mfa3.1 (Fig. 7). A comprehensive search of a3 locus for repetitive elements identified seven LTR (two Gypsy, three Copia and two DIRS) occupied 31.6% of this large region. And 76.9% of LTR located at a 14-kb insertion region. This was similar to MAT-1 of U. hordei, which accumulated repetitive elements (many were LTR) covering more than 50% of this region. TE, having been proved to be implicated in the mating-type rearrangement in basidiomycete and yeast, are associated with steps in the evolution of sexual types. Selection pressure from the co-evolving hosts makes Ustilago and other obligate parasites continue adaptation and favour the presence of higher frequencies of TEs, which may explain the extended segment of mating locus in U. esculenta and U. hordei. Recent research found that Gypsy-like elements were related to ovule development in sexual but not apomictic (asexual) genotypes of plants and transposons drove sex chromosome evolution with the evidences from Drosophila Miranda. Therefore, the high frequency of TEs in mating loci may help U. esculenta to maintain adaptive potential with regulation of the mating-type rearrangement and the sexual reproduction stage but more in-depth analysis is needed.

Second, the gene lga2, which ensuring uniparental mitochondrial DNA inheritance and being major component interfering with pathogenic, is missing from a2 locus and also is not present in the genome. Uniparental inheritance of mitochondria dominates among sexual eukaryotes and is influenced by the mating-type loci in many species, such as slime mold Physarum polycephalum, basidiomycete.
fungus *C. neoformans* and *U. maydis*, green alga *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii*. The lga2 and rga2 genes are specific to the a2 mating-type locus and direct uniparental mtDNA inheritance by mediating elimination of the a1-associated mtDNA in *U. maydis*. Lga2 has a negative role on mitochondrial fusion and may functions on mtDNA elimination, whereas Rga2 can counteract the mtDNA elimination from Lga2-dependent.59 Besides rga2, important genes involved in mitochondria inheritance were found in *U. esculenta*, for example, *dnm1* (g6223, a central component of mitochondrial fission), *fis1* (g2409, involved in mitochondrial fission), *fzo1* (g3102, key component of mitochondrial fusion) and *mrb1* (g5377, mitochondrial p32 family protein). It was implied that *U. esculenta* might mediate its mitochondrial genome integrity and inheritance in a differentiated way compared with wild *U. maydis* strain, but a similar way to lga2 deletion strain, which leads to biparental inheritance. This may be benefit the fungi to maintain its entophytic life during artificial selection, for biparental inheritance, coupled with mitochondrial recombination, has been speculated to be a potentially adaptive strategy under challenging environmental situations.62

In addition to the a locus, Ustilaginales have the b locus encoding two transcription factors that can form an active heterodimer, if they come from compatible mating partners. Scaffold 22 contained a cluster of the b mating-type genes be2 (g2853) and bw2 (g2854), which were significantly up-regulated in sporidia. In *S. reilianum*, bw is separated from the neighbouring gene nat1 by a transposon. Similarly a transposon-related sequence was also found between be and cld1 in *U. esculenta*. As for the a locus, a second copy of the b locus was present in the mycelial culture containing be3 and bw3. The main target of bw/be is the transcription factor rbf1,63 which also has an orthologue in *U. esculenta*. To test if mating and filament induction occurs, we generated haploid sporidial cultures from *U. esculenta* teliospores. Mixing of two sporidial cultures led to induction of filaments showed compatible mating types recognized each other (Supplementary Fig. S1). This indicated that the genetic

Figure 7. Mating-type loci structures of Ustilagoinaceae species. Genes are indicated by arrows. Arrows directions represent the genes orientations. The same colour indicates the same gene family and the detailed gene functions are shown at the right corners of the figures. The figures were drawn based on the real length of gene loci. (A) Indicates the loci a structures from the *lba* gene to the *panC* gene. The broken lines show the actual length is longer than it draws. (B) Indicates the loci b structures which include the two homeodomain proteins be and bw.
program for mating and induction of filaments was maintained in *U. esculenta*.

In our genome assembly, the *a* and *b* mating-type genes were present in different scaffolds (Scaffolds 34 and 22). Without further experiments, it is difficult to conclude if *U. esculenta* has a bipolar or tetrapolar mating system. However, we found the left border gene *lba* existed in *a*2 and *a*3 loci and *cld1* gene in *b*2 locus, indicating the complete border genes existed in *a* and *b* loci in *U. esculenta*, similar to that of *S. reilianum*. Besides, two pheromone genes were detected in both *a*2 and *a*3 locus, indicating additional *a* locus existed to provide pheromone receptor to sense the pheromone (*mfa3.1* and *mfa2.1*). So there should be three *a* loci in *U. esculenta*, although the third one were not found in our genome draft. Base on the mating loci comparison, we assume that the mating system of *U. esculenta* is more similar to *S. reilianum* than *U. boreri*

Recognition of the opposite mating partner leads to activation intracellular signal transduction network of a MAPK module and cAMP signalling pathway. Both have been shown to influence mating and later stages of the pathogenic development. Most genes reported to be involved in meiosis, MAPK and cAMP signalling cascades in pathogenic Ustilaginales were found in the *U. esculenta* genome. We also found orthologues of the transcription factors *prf1* and *clp1*, which are required for cell fusion, filamentous growth and pathogenic development. The genes involved in the signalling network of *U. maydis* (Fig. 8) were also found in *U. esculenta* except *sho1*. All of these genes expressed and up-regulated expression were only detected for in strain M.

Based on the RNA-Seq data, we found that all genes involved in MAPK, cAMP and transcription factors expressed in spridial cells and mycelia but only *kpp6* (*g4166*), *biz1* (*g3925*) significantly up-regulated in mycelia (M). And in spridial cells (both in T and MT) the pheromone-receptor system *mfa2.3* and *pra2* was higher expressed, while it was expressed lower in mycelia (M). Higher expression of the pheromone-receptor system in spridial cells would be consistent with capability of spridial cells to mate resulting in mycelial growth.

### 3.5. Distinct amino acids responding mechanism on balancing interaction between *U. esculenta* and *Z. latifolia*

Nutrition is essential prerequisite for the onset and manifestation of an infection by pathogenic microorganisms, and the plant pathogenic fungi usually delayed to digest host cells to obtain a range of nutrients. Biotic fungi, including *U. maydis*, appear to absorb the nutrients available in the apoplast surrounding living host cells for much of its pathogenic growth phase, which helped to avoid plant defence systems throughout the infection process. It makes the fungi have to maintain sets of genes encoding biosynthetic and degradative enzymes for primary metabolism. To fully understand relationship between *U. esculenta* and its host, we checked the genes involved in central metabolic pathways, such as glycolysis, gluconeogenesis, β-oxidation, glyoxylate cycle, tricarboxylic acid cycle and γ-amino butyric acid (GABA) shunt (Supplementary File S6). Nearly all enzymes can find orthologues in *U. esculenta*; however, *ilvC* (important for all branched amino acids) and certain genes for biosynthesis of tyrosine, phenylalanine, histidine, alanine and serine were missing in *U. esculenta* (Fig. 9). *Ustilago maydis* also lacks a couple of these genes but contains *ilvC*. Since *U. esculenta* was an entophyte, we checked the candidate genes of amino acid biosynthesis and its expression in the host plant, by RNA-seq analysis of stem tissues from edible *Jasobai* and wild *Z. latifolia* (which had no *U. esculenta* inside). Remarkably, all the missing genes of amino acid biosynthesis in *U. esculenta* were found in *Z. latifolia* and most of them showed a higher expression level in edible *Jasobai* (Fig. 9). This kind of cooperation was also found in symbiotic system of aphid host and its symbiont; and in aphid, host gene expression and symbiont capabilities are closely integrated within bacteriocytes, whose function as specialized organs of amino acid production. Here, we deduced that *U. esculenta* is a strict biotrophic fungus, and a partial complementary mechanism had formed after 1000 yrs of symbiosis. However unlike insects and their symbionts, it was the host plant providing the intermediate amino acid production.

The amino acid effect on mating and *in vitro* mycelium growth of *U. esculenta* and *U. maydis* are very attracting. We found when using arginine as main nitrogen source, it inhibited the fusion of yeast
cells (Table 2, Supplementary Fig. S2), which was contrary to the promoting effects on mycelia formation in Ceratocystis ulmi and Candida albicans. The arginine biosynthesis pathway was up-regulated in yeast/mycelia switching, which was the most essential response in the progression of infection. In U. esculenta, the presence of exogenous arginine may exhibit feedback inhibition on arginine biosynthesis. The host plant may conveniently employ this feedback mechanism to modulate U. esculenta infection. It was consistent with the results of High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) detection for amino acids content in stems of grey Jiaobai and edible Jiaobai, that free arginine content is significantly higher in Jiaobai with disease symptom than in the edible Jiaobai (Supplementary Table S4). But more studies need to be done to show how the arginine regulated

Figure 9. Amino acid biosynthesis and metabolism pathway in U. esculenta. Based on the amino acid biosynthesis and metabolism pathway in plants and fungi, the putative amino acid biosynthesis and metabolism pathway map of U. esculenta was drawn. Sets of genes encoding biosynthetic and degradative enzymes, which showed differences in the genome of U. maydis, U. esculenta and Z. latifolia, were marked in blue box. Therein, the red genes ID in the box filled with yellow indicated the genes cannot find in U. esculenta, the red genes ID in the box with white bottom colour showed the genes only can find in Z. latifolia, while the green genes ID indicated the genes cannot find in U. maydis. All the genes marked with * means the up-regulated expression during stem swollen progress based on transcriptome sequencing data basic analysis.

Table 2. Comparision of the mating response to the macro- or micro-amino acids effect in vitro between U. esculenta and U. maydis

| No AA  | micro-AA | macro-AA | micro-AA | macro-AA |
|--------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|        | Hyphae length (mm) | Hyphae length (mm) | Hyphae length (mm) | Hyphae length (mm) |
|        | U. esculenta | U. maydis | U. esculenta | U. maydis |
| Arg    | ++        | 328.77 ± 18.40<sup>g</sup> | ++        | 205.81 ± 56.62<sup>n</sup> |
| Tyr    | ++        | 375.08 ± 41.63<sup>k</sup>   | ++        | 102.19 ± 37.3<sup>1</sup>   |
| His    | ++        | 348.54 ± 35.81<sup>l</sup>   | ++        | 10.86 ± 1.96<sup>5</sup>    |
| Ile    | ++        | 338.62 ± 135.3<sup>l</sup>   | ++        | 133.01 ± 54.49<sup>2</sup>   |
| Leu    | ++        | 196.78 ± 135.4<sup>l</sup>   | ++        | 195.51 ± 22.02<sup>2</sup>   |
| Val    | ++        | 524.01 ± 138.44<sup>l</sup>  | ++        | 163.55 ± 30.96<sup>2</sup>   |
| Met    | ++        | 580.42 ± 36.09<sup>d</sup>   | ++        | 24.38 ± 8.5<sup>l</sup>      |
| Phe    | ++        | 303.42 ± 15.77<sup>d</sup>   | ++        | 42.04 ± 11.6<sup>1</sup>     |
| Pro    | ++        | 443.20 ± 18.5<sup>3</sup>    | ++        | 140.69 ± 39.6<sup>1</sup>    |
| Lys    | ++        | 487.04 ± 35.42<sup>d</sup>   | ++        | 59.13 ± 38.52<sup>1</sup>    |

All the hyphae length data were detected 3 days after mating assays of U. esculenta and U. maydis on basic solid medium with different kind and amount amino acid added. The capital letter as a superscript showed significant differences analysis between edible and grey jiaobai at P < 0.05 level, analysed by one-way ANOVA analysis with Duncan method. All the amino acids (AA) name were abbreviation listed in the table. Also, integrated mating ability analysed of the hyphae length and amount (Supplementary Fig. S3) were estimated. Therein, ‘-’ means no hyphae formation; ‘+’ means less hyphae or short hyphae length; ‘++’ means normal hyphae amount and length and ‘+++’ means large amount hyphae and long hyphae length.
lia formation (Table 2, Supplementary Fig. S2). Besides, histidine, the reactive oxygen species scavenger,\textsuperscript{81} can also promote the yeast cells which were defective in U. esculenta that may adapt to proline, methionine, lysine, phenylalanine and their metabolism, which were closely related to plant disease resistance reaction.\textsuperscript{74-80} In U. maydis, adding each of the four amino acids inhibited the mating progress, which related to fungal pathogenicity, but in U. esculenta, they had conspicuous promotion effect on mycelia formation (Table 2, Supplementary Fig. S2). Besides, histidine, the reactive oxygen species scavenger,\textsuperscript{84} can also promote the yeast cells fusion in U. esculenta.

Overall, we speculated that U. esculenta developed a partial complementary mechanism to gain the host’s nutrition while the hosts also utilize some nutrition metabolism pathways to defence infection. In addition, \textit{in vitro} assays showed that His, Pro, Met, Lys and Phe, which host plant biosynthesized to respond fungus infection, were utilized by \textit{U. esculenta} to promote its mating progress which was important for its successful infection, indicating that \textit{U. esculenta} may change some amino acids response mechanism to regulate the balance of infection–resistance engineering for adapting the entophytic life, during 1000 yrs in \textit{Z. latifolia}.

3.6 Fewer surface sensors and CSEPs benefit economic entophytic life of \textit{U. esculenta}

The basic requirement for pathogens to infect host is to perceive physical and chemical stimuli when contacting with host surface and then induce to penetrate host either by high turgor pressure, like \textit{M. oryzae} and \textit{Colletotrichum spp.},\textsuperscript{82,83} or by secretion of plant cell wall-degrading enzymes (CWDEs), like \textit{U. maydis} and \textit{Cochliobolus carboneum}.\textsuperscript{84,85} During the process, surface sensors, secreted proteins, CAZys and CWDEs are the indispensable factors.

\textit{Sho1} and \textit{Msb2} are conserved upstream proteins of MAP kinase cascade not only in the phytopathogenic fungi \textit{Fusarium oxysporum}, \textit{M. oryzae} and \textit{U. maydis} but also in model fungus \textit{S. cerevisiae}, and human fungal pathogen \textit{C. albicans}, having been approved to recognize the surface signals, direct the central transcriptional network towards penetration.\textsuperscript{74} It is intriguing that there is no \textit{Sho1} orthologue in \textit{U. esculenta}. We further investigated 61 genes (42 of which are secreted proteins) related with \textit{Sho1/Msb2} and also involved in filament and appressoria formation.\textsuperscript{22} Forty-two orthologues were found in \textit{U. esculenta}, and more than 50% of them up-regulated in mycelium when compared with sporidial. Nineteen (17 of which are secreted protein genes) out of 61 genes were not found in \textit{U. esculenta} (Supplementary File S8), including some important virulence factors, for example \textit{pit2} (protease inhibitor in conjunction with Pit1 to maintain biotrophy during plant infection), \textit{am1} (appressoria marker gene), \textit{mig2-5}, \textit{mig2-6}, \textit{dkh6} (a 7TM protein, which might function in plant/pathogen interaction).\textsuperscript{86}

The whole \textit{mig2} gene cluster, a maize-specifically expressed cluster, is missing in \textit{U. esculenta}. The \textit{Ustilago scitaminea}, pathogen of sugar cane, appears to lack the \textit{mig2} cluster too.\textsuperscript{37} And interestingly, some \textit{U. maydis} strains isolated from South America lost the \textit{mig2-4} and were unable to trigger disease symptoms in regional maize variety.\textsuperscript{87} The \textit{mig2} cluster was related with host range,\textsuperscript{88} which may partially explain why \textit{U. esculenta} cannot infect maize and has a narrow host range. Lanver et al.\textsuperscript{22} identified 139 plant surface cue-induced secreted proteins in \textit{U. maydis}. \textit{Ustilago esculenta} shares 112 these genes including 31 CWDEs and majority of \textit{b}-induced genes (Supplementary File S9), loses 27 important secreted protein such as \textit{exg1},\textsuperscript{89} \textit{egl1} (cellulase gene expressed only in the filament),\textsuperscript{90} \textit{hum2} (the former hydrophobin gene in aerial hyphae formation)\textsuperscript{91} and \textit{tin2} (promotes virulence by targeting anthocyanin biosynthesis).\textsuperscript{92}

Fungi produce a variety of CAZys to facilitate infection and/or gain nutrition. A total of 237 genes including auxiliary activities, glycoside hydrolases (GHs), polysaccharide lyases, carbohydrate esterases (CEs) and glycosyl transferases as well as carbohydrate-binding modules were identified in \textit{U. esculenta} (Fig. 10). Those genes belonging to the fungal CAZY families are presumably involved in nutritional uptake and infection mechanisms. The \textit{U. esculenta} genome contains 55 genes (including 9 CEs and 46 GHs) involved in plant cell wall-degradation, which was similar to \textit{U. maydis},\textsuperscript{93} \textit{U. hordei}\textsuperscript{95} and \textit{S. reilianum},\textsuperscript{26} but much fewer than hemibiotrophic and necrotrophic fungi such as \textit{M. oryzae}\textsuperscript{84} and \textit{Botrytis cinerea}.\textsuperscript{95} The compositions of CEs and GHs are similar between the four Ustilagionales species. There is also no significant change in the total number or composition of enzymes coding for the digestion of the three major plant cell wall polysaccharides classes: cellulose, hemicelluloses and pectin (Supplementary File S10).
Effectors, which are typically secreted by the pathogen after contacting with host, have been recognized to govern the interaction between plants and biotrophic pathogens. Totally, 633 proteins were identified as secreted proteins. Of these secreted proteins, 300 were predicted to be candidate secreted effector proteins (CSEPs) since they could not be assigned to enzymatic functions. Compared with *U. maydis* and *U. boreri*, the genome of *U. esculenta* has nearly 20% more predicted secreted proteins and a 10–20% fewer predicted CSEPs (534 secreted proteins and 386 CSEPs for *U. maydis*, 515 secreted proteins and 333 CSEPs for *U. boreri*). Ninety-two (15%) of 633 *U. esculenta* secreted proteins were species specific. Among them, 87 were CSEPs which were 29.6% of total predicted CSEPs. Four hundred and fifteen of 633 (66%) *U. esculenta* secreted proteins are shared among *U. maydis*, *U. boreri* and *S. reilianum* (Supplementary Table S5). Of them, 97 secreted proteins could be matched in pathogen-host interaction database (PHI-database) with an amino acid identity >30%. Of all PHI hits, 55 out of total proteins were characterized as increased or reduced virulence. The remaining hits were either characterized as unaffected virulence or loss of pathogenicity.

There were 57 (11%) secreted proteins assigned to 14 clusters in *U. esculenta*, in comparison to 21, 7 and 22 clusters in *U. maydis*, in *U. boreri* and in *S. reilianum*. Seventy-six percent of Ue genes in clusters had orthologue Um genes, with amino acid identities ranging from 23.3 to 94.2%. Among the 14 clusters identified in this study, seven clusters were previously described Um effector gene clusters (Supplementary File S2), including all clusters whose deletion reduced virulence or non-pathogenic. Fungal secreted proteins are assumed to contribute to tumour formation, and organ-specific effectors in both host and pathogen are required for host tumour formations. In *U. esculenta*, the homologues with um3615 and um3616 secreted proteins were found, which were important genes of cluster 9A for tumour symptoms in adult tissue. When considering the responsible gene cluster 19A for tumour formation in *U. maydis* seedlings, only 4 out of 15 homologues of cluster 19A were present in *U. esculenta*. It may be the reason that *U. esculenta* could not trigger gall formation during seedlings. And more attention should be paid to find stem-specific gene clusters.

Besides, when we compared 92 CSEPs being important for successfully colonization of grass hosts and a core set of 248 CSEPs needed for pathogenicity (PSEPs) which were concluded from genome comparison among smut fungi *M. pennysticticum*, *U. maydis*, *U. boreri* and *S. reilianum*, 55 grass host-related CSEPs and 182 PSEPs can find orthologues in *U. esculenta* (Supplementary Files S11 and S12). But it is remarkable that some important host-related CSEPs, including um03223 (maize-induced gene mig1), um12216 (related to Mig1 proteins) and 9 Ustilago-specific proteins, were not found in *U. esculenta* (Supplementary File S11). Furthermore, nearly 95% of *U. esculenta*-specific secreted proteins were CSEPs, which was one-third of total CSEPs. Missing of host-related CSEPs can further confirmed the narrow host range of *U. esculenta*, and species-specific CSEPs may give more hints in explanation. It has been proposed that effector genes, as speciation genes in fungal plant pathogens, co-evolve with their host targets and reflect the host adaptation.

All in all, although the *U. esculenta* shared core set of secreted proteins with some smut fungi indicating the close relation, the fungus has evolved distinguish characters of fewer surface sensors, high percentage of species-specific CSEPs and fewer CSEPs, lost some important virulence factors and host range-related effectors. All these characters may be the nature need of maintaining lower cost endophytic life and limitation of small genome size, which was the obliged evolution under long time pressure on keeping the mycelia phase and making no need to re-infect the host.

**Acknowledgements**

The authors thank Ying Rong for the preparation of the fungus collection, Cao Qianchao for mating assay, Gui Yijie for analysing assistant with host gene expression, Michael Feldbrugge for providing plasmids. They are grateful to Vera Göhr and Michael Feldbrugge for their critical comments on the article.

**Accession number**

EMBARGO: No

**Supplementary data**

Supplementary data are available at DNARES online.

**Funding**

Our work was supported by funds from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (31470785, 31600634). The funders had no role in study design, data collection and analysis, decision to publish or preparation of the article.

**Conflict of interest**

None declared.

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