Infrared microspectroscopic characterization of Ediacaran microfossils from Doushantuo Formation, Weng’an area

Motoko Igisu1*, Tsuyoshi Komiya1, Satoru Nakashima2, Yuichiro Ueno3, Shigenori Maruyama3

1Univ. of Tokyo, 2Osaka Univ., 3Tokyo Tech

Phosphatic embryo-like fossils (500-700 um in diameter) from the Ediacaran Doushantuo Formation in Weng’an area, southern China (about 580 million years ago) were analyzed by micro-Fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy in order to obtain organic signatures for classification of the microfossils. Transmission IR spectra of the microfossils have absorption bands around 2960 cm\(^{-1}\) and 2925 cm\(^{-1}\), together with that around 1600 cm\(^{-1}\), indicating the presence of aliphatic hydrocarbon (aliphatic CH\(_3\) and aliphatic CH\(_2\), respectively) and aromatic moieties (aromatic C=C). In addition, IR microscopic mapping indicates the distribution of aliphatic CH\(_2\) and CH\(_3\) groups inside the microfossils. Two types of phosphatic embryo-like fossils (Megasphaera and Megaclonophycus) have distinctive 2960/2925 cm\(^{-1}\) (CH\(_3\)/CH\(_2\)) peak height ratios (R3/2 values) from ~0.6 to ~0.8, which are higher than R3/2 values of Proterozoic acritarchs and bacterial fossils (Marshall et al., 2005, Precam Res; Igisu et al., 2009, Precam Res). These results are inconsistent with suggestion that they are bacteria and acritarchs. Conversely, this implies that the Doushantuo microfossils analyzed in this study are kinds of animal embryo, while chemical signatures for taxonomy of animals need to be explored.

Keywords: embryo-like microfossil, Doushantuo Formation, FTIR imaging, aliphatic hydrocarbon