

ABOX-SC法を用いた炭化物の¹⁴C年代測定 Radiocarbon dating of charcoal by the ABOX-SC method

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Charcoal is one of the most important samples for radiocarbon dating. It is necessary to remove contaminants from charcoal sample to obtain the reliable date. ABA (acid-base-acid) method is usually used for chemical pretreatment of charcoal: First, a sample is treated with HCl to remove carbonate contaminant. Next, the sample is treated with NaOH to remove organic contaminants derived from soil during burial. After then, the sample is treated with HCl again to remove absorbed atmospheric carbon dioxide during NaOH treatment. The residue is combusted with CuO at 850°C and graphitized to be ¹⁴C-dated.

However, the ABA treatment often cannot completely remove contaminants from poorly-preserved and/or old charcoals (>about 30 ka). Bird et al. (1999) showed that the ABOX-SC (acid-base-oxidation stepped combustion) method removes organic contaminants more efficiently than the ABA treatment. The age of the charcoal sample treated with the ABOX-SC was reported to be older than that of the charcoal sample treated with the ABA (Brock et al., 2010).

The ABOX-SC method consists of 3 step chemical pretreatments: HCl and NaOH treatments followed by K₂Cr₂O₇-H₂SO₄ treatment in a sealed tube at 60°C for 20 hr (Brock et al., 2010). The mixed solution of K₂Cr₂O₇ and H₂SO₄ removes organic contaminants effectively from charcoal samples, and can extract carbon fraction of oxidation resistant elemental carbon, OREC, which is resistant to oxidation and is less affected by contamination during burial (Bird et al., 1999). After the ABOX chemical treatment, the OREC is heated at 630°C with CuO for 2 hr to remove atmospheric CO₂ contaminants adsorbed during sample treatment and contaminants remained after the ABOX treatment. Finally, the residue of OREC is oxidized completely into CO₂ at 850°C for 1 hr, and the CO₂ is graphitized to be ¹⁴C-dated.

In this study, we apply the ABOX-SC method to some charcoal samples of known age to measure ¹⁴C ages. The charcoal samples, which were excavated from Tang-e Sikan cave in Arsanjan city, Iran, have been dated at about 40 ka and 26 ka by the ABA method, and are considered to be attributed to Upper Paleolithic period. In this study, we confirm the age difference of Paleolithic charcoal samples by the two pretreatment methods of ABA and ABOX-SC.

Keywords: Radiocarbon, Charcoal, ABOX-SC method