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研究課題名（和文）ラテライト形成過程と表層環境の地球史進化：鉄・三種酸素同位体の地球化学からの視点

研究課題名（英文）Iron and Oxygen Isotope Geochemistry of Lateritic Paleoweathering Profile in the Paleoproterozoic

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研究成果の概要（和文）：約22億年前のラテライトの風化断面の鉄と酸素の安定同位体の地球化学より当時の大気中酸素濃度の程度を明らかにしようとする本研究では、鉄同位体比対酸素同位体比の負相関（ラテライト化作用が強い部位ほど ^{54}Fe が溶脱して ^{56}Fe により富み、降水の影響下で形成する2次鉱物は180に枯渇する）を発見した。数値モデル計算より、水／岩石比が10,000-100,000程度であり、現代のラテライトの形成時のものと同程度であること、ラテライト形成場は現代の（亜）熱帯域に相当したこと、さらに約22億年前の海洋の酸素同位体組成が0%であったことを示した。

研究成果の概要（英文）：Based on the iron and oxygen isotope compositions of Paleoproterozoic lateritic weathering profile discovered in Botswana (Yamaguchi et al., 2007; EPSL), a significant negative correlation between iron and oxygen isotope compositions (the more severe/advanced the lateritization was, the more enriched in heavy iron isotope and the more depleted in heavy oxygen isotope the profile has) was discovered for the first time. Then, a numerical calculation suggests that the water-rock ratios for such lateritization would have been around 10,000~100,000 (similar to modern values), lateritization occurred in (sub)tropical environment in the past, and the oxygen isotope composition of seawater 2.2 billion years ago was 0 per mil.

研究分野：アストロバイオロジー

キーワード：ラテライト 鉄 酸素 原生代

1. 研究開始当初の背景

ラテライトの形成には雨季乾季の繰返しや超塩基性原岩等の条件が必要となり、主に熱帯地域に分布する。形成時に高い大気中酸素濃度が必要となるラテライトは、地球史初期には形成しなかった。南部アフリカに産する約 22 億年前の Hekpoort Basalt に発達したものが最古である。ボツワナの陸上掘削によるこの風化断面の発見前は、断面中位の鉄溶脱層より下の部位が、還元的大気下での形成故に表層から鉄が溶脱した古土壤の典型的断面とされてきた。このような層序の誤認によって、当時の大気の酸素濃度が極めて低かったとされた（Holland, 1994）。

最古のラテライトの形成メカニズムを解明する事は、鉱床成因論のみならず大気進化史の制約に関して非常に重要である。しかしながら、先カンブリア時代のラテライトの形成プロセスに関する地球化学的研究は、国内外とも皆無に近い。唯一の例が、研究代表者らが出版した論文（Yamaguchi et al. 2007; EPSL）である。

2. 研究の目的

大気中酸素濃度の急上昇期とされる約 22 億年前に発達した世界最古のラテライト質風化断面を主な研究対象に設定して、鉄酸化物の鉄-酸素の安定同位体地球化学を展開し、ラテライトの鉄-酸素の安定同位体地球化学のレファレンスとなるデータセット構築を行う。形成場における水-岩石の相互作用・古緯度・海水の酸素同位体組成等の推定を行い、ラテライト形成の定量的モデル構築を行うと同時に地球史初期の表層環境進化を探り、地球表層環境の進化に関する重要な知見を得ることが目的である。

3. 研究の方法

約 22 億年前のラテライト質風化断面の試料を用いて、鉄酸化物の鉄-酸素の安定同位体地球化学組成を測定する。マスバランス計算等の手法から、形成場における水-岩石の相互作用・大気中の光化学反応の痕跡・古緯度・海水の酸素同位体組成等の推定を行う。

4. 研究成果

約 22 億年前のラテライトの風化断面において、鉄同位体比対酸素同位体比の負相関を発見した。つまり、水-岩石相互作用、すなわちラテライト化作用が強い部位ほど ^{54}Fe が溶脱して ^{56}Fe により富み、降水の影響下で形成する 2 次鉱物は ^{18}O に枯渇する、ことを示唆する。

数値モデル計算より、ラテライトの形成時の水/岩石比は 10,000~100,000 程度であったことがわかった。この水/岩石比の範囲は、現代のラテライトの形成時のものと

同程度であること、ラテライト形成場は現代の（亜）熱帯域に相当したこと、さらに約 22 億年前の海洋の酸素同位体組成が 0 ‰ であったことも示した。最後に、現世のラテライト形成過程と同様に、鉄の溶脱過程において陸上生命活動を起源とする有機酸が、太古のラテライト形成においても重要であった可能性が示唆できた。本研究成果は、初期地球における微生物生命圏、特に陸上における微生物生命圏の発達に関して重要な示唆を持つ。

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