Biosignatures recorded in geochemical correlations between organic matter and Fe-bearing minerals in 3.2Ga banded iron formations, Barberton Green stone Belt, South Africa

RYO NAKAJIMA1*, YOKO OHTOMO1, TSUBASA OTAKE1, TAKEKI KAKEGAWA2, TSUTOMU SATO1
1Faculty of engineering, Hokkaido University, Kita 13, Nishi 8, Sapporo, Hokkaido, 060-8628, Japan
(*correspondence: gypsphilaryo@eis.hokudai.ac.jp)
2Department of Earth Science, Tohoku University, Aza-aoba 6-3, Aramaki, Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi, Japan

Iron oxidation process in banded iron formations (BIFs) has been controversial, particulary in those formed before 2.45Ga. Previous studies suggest that microbial activity, either anoxygenic iron-oxidizing bacteria or free oxygen produced by cyanobacteria are the main mechanisms involved. Because of differences in primary productivity, geochemical characteristics of organic matter in relation to the Fe mineralogy may provide an insight to the oxidation mechanism. In this study, we focused on ~3.2Ga BIFs in the Moodies Group, Barberton Green stone Belt, South Africa since the BIFs, which were deposited in a shallow ocean, may contain higher amounts of organic carbon.

Sedimentary rock samples collected in Sheba mine were classified into the magnetite group (magnetite-rich sandstone, 13—50 wt% \(\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3\)) and siderite groups (magnetite-poor silty clastics, 10—30 wt% \(\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3\)), based on the dominant iron mineral. Microscopic features of the clastics in samples from the siderite group show that they were deposited in a relatively shallow environment compared to those of the magnetite group. However, for both groups, negative and positive correlations were observed between iron and \(C_{\text{organic matter}}\) contents, between iron and \(C_{\text{carbonate}}\) contents, respectively. This suggests that primary organic matter may have been consumed by a reaction with iron (hydr)oxides and transformed to siderite, although some samples in the siderite group bear excess carbonates, which was probably affected by later mineralization events. The \(\delta^{13}C\) values of the organic matter in both groups are almost identical (~ -27‰). The correlations and depositional environments, based on the microscopic observations, may imply that two different biological activities, cyanobacteria and iron-oxidizing bacteria were responsible for iron oxidation in the BIFs that were deposited in a shallow ocean.