AMS OF ^{41}Ca USING THE CaF$_3$ NEGATIVE ION

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High-intensity ion sources are now capable of producing negative molecular ion beams of Ca of $>2\mu$A (Middleton *et al*, 1989). This and the advanced status of ^{41}Ca AMS at several laboratories (Pennsylvania, Argonne National Laboratory, Rochester, Munich, Weizmann Institute) have revived interest in ^{41}Ca ($T_{1/2} = 1.0\times10^5$ yr (Mabuchi *et al*, 1974)) as a possible dating tool (Yamaguchi, 1963; Raisbeck & Yiou, 1979; Kubik *et al*, 1986).

Prerequisites for measuring a radioisotope like ^{41}Ca with AMS are high sensitivity and low background. Using the CaH$_3^-$ molecule from the ion source, the background can be $<1\times10^{-15}$ for ^{41}Ca/Ca (Middleton *et al*, 1989) and the beam currents are high enough (a few μA) (Middleton *et al*, 1989) to measure samples with ratios of ^{41}Ca/Ca between 10^{-14} and 10^{-15}. However, the preparation and storage of high quality CaH$_2$ samples is not an easy task; sample preparation is best done by a specialist located at the AMS facility. We therefore searched for a different Ca compound with high ion source output and low background in the detector, but with a simpler preparation chemistry.

A mass spectrum of a CaF$_2$ sample (Urban, Korschinek & Nolte, 1986) showed a surprising similarity with the mass spectrum of a CaH$_2$ sample (Raisbeck *et al*, 1981). This and the known suppression of potassium from KH$_3^-$ molecules (Raisbeck *et al*, 1981) led us to the investigation of CaF$_3^-$. We used our Scanning Hiconex ion source (General Ionex Corp, Newburyport, Massachusetts) with an irradiated commercial grade CaF$_2$ sample. We mixed CaF$_2$ and Ag in a ratio of 1:4 by weight to insure good heat conductivity for steady beam currents.

The ^{41}K counting rate in the detector from ^{41}CaF$_3^-$ injected into the tandem was lower by at least 10^4 compared to injected ^{41}CaF$^-$, a reduction factor which is similar to the rejection of ^{41}K when using CaH$_2$ samples due to the presence of ^{41}KHD$^-$. Another critical factor in reducing the background generated by ^{41}K counts in the detector is how well we can differentiate between ^{41}Ca and ^{41}K by measuring several energy loss ΔE and energy E values for nuclear charge Z identification. At a terminal voltage of 10 MV creating 74 MeV mass 41 ions we achieved our usual good separation of ca 5×10^5 with our gas detector using 4 ΔE signals and the energy signal.

We have used a NEC high-intensity ion source (SNICS) with CaH$_2$ and CaF$_2$ samples. Typically, 1–2μA of CaH$_3^-$ and 0.7–1μA of CaF$_3^-$ could be produced. With a similar type ion source, Middleton *et al* (1989) could

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produce 5–10μA of CaH$_3^-$, so 2μA of CaF$_3^-$ should be possible with that ion source. Disadvantages of using heavy molecules like CaF$_3^-$ are 1) relatively high terminal voltages (10 MV or more) are needed to have enough ion energy for the Z identification in the final detector, and 2) the Coulomb explosion that the molecules undergo in the terminal stripper reduces the transmission through increased emittance. Our measured transmission (including stripper yield for charge state 7) was only 2% using a foil stripper, but we think this can be improved with a gas stripper and other improvements already made to our tandem.

The chemical preparation of samples whether they are bones, rocks or meteorites is straightforward. Samples are dissolved in appropriate acids and the Ca is precipitated as CaO$_2$O$_4$ which is converted into CaO by heating at high temperatures. CaO is dissolved in diluted HCl and subsequently Ca is precipitated as CaF$_2$ by adding HF. After centrifuging, this precipitate is washed several times with distilled water, and then dried in an oven for several hours. CaF$_2$ is mixed with silver before loading it into a sample holder. This simple procedure will make it possible for an investigator to prepare the samples at his home lab and then send or bring them for the AMS measurements.

Several conclusions can be drawn from this work. KF$_3^-$ shows a very strong suppression relative to the KF$^-$ ion. The beam currents are currently lower than what we can produce from CaH$_2$, but this might not be a restricting factor for some applications with relatively high ^{41}Ca/Ca ratios. Ratios of 10^{-12} instead of 10^{-15} can be expected in meteorites (Paul *et al*, 1985; Kubik *et al*, 1986; Korschinek *et al*, 1987). Here, ^{41}Ca can be used for exposure history studies and, because of its smaller half-life compared to ^{36}Cl (T$_{1/2}$ = 301,000 yr), can help to determine the terrestrial ages of meteorites in the gap between ^{14}C and ^{36}Cl. Other applications for which the use of CaF$_2$ might be advantageous are the use of ^{41}Ca as a neutron monitor in uranium ore deposits or as a biological tracer in humans. In this latter application, we could pre-label bones with an oral dose of ^{41}Ca, then monitor the release of ^{41}Ca for many years without the biological damage that would occur from shorter-lived isotopes such as ^{45,47}Ca. It is clear from the recent results of ^{41}Ca in terrestrial surface samples (Middleton *et al*, 1989) with ratios barely above 10^{-15}, that, for these, it is necessary to use CaH$_2$ because of the higher beam currents available.

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