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AMS radiocarbon investigation of the African baobab: Searching for the oldest tree

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Abstract

The Glencoe baobab, a very large specimen from South Africa, split twice in 2009. Several wood samples were collected from the eastern cavity, from the outer part of the main section and also from the largest broken segment which was connected to this section. These wood samples were processed and investigated by AMS radiocarbon dating. The radiocarbon date of the oldest sample was found to be 1838 ± 21 BP, which corresponds to a calibrated age of 1835 ± 40 years. Thus, the Glencoe baobab becomes the oldest dated baobab and also the oldest angiosperm tree with accurate dating results. The distribution of dating results revealed that the Glencoe baobab is a multi-generation tree, with several standing or collapsed and partially fused stems, showing different ages.

Keywords

AMS radiocarbon dating; *Adansonia digitata*; Dendrochronology; Age determination; Growth rate

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