Nucleosynthetic Mo and W isotope anomalies in Murchison leachates

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Nucleosynthetic isotope anomalies at the bulk meteorite scale exist for several elements (e.g., Ti, Mo, Ru) and most likely reflect incomplete mixing of diverse presolar components in the solar nebula [e.g. 1]. These isotope heterogeneities contrast with uniform and terrestrial isotope composition for other elements (e.g., Hf, W, Os [2]). Constraining why planetary-scale nucleo-synthetic isotope anomalies exist for some elements but not for others can provide clues to understanding the early evolution of the solar nebula. To address this important issue we obtained Mo and W isotope data for acid leachates of the Murchison chondrite. About 16 g of Murchison was sequentially digested using acids of increasing strengths. Aliquots of these leachates were previously analysed for Os isotopes [3]. Here, in addition, the acid-resistant residue was completely digested after fusion with a laser.

The Mo and W isotope data, obtained by MC-ICP-MS at ETH Zurich, reveal large anomalies that correlate with each other as expected from nucleosynthetic theory [4] and can be accounted for by variable amounts of s-process Mo and W. A regression of 182 Hf-decay corrected W data in ϵ^{182} W- ϵ^{186} W space yields an initial ε^{182} W consistent with the solar system initial value [5]. The Mo and W anomalies do not correlate with Os isotope anomalies reported for the same samples [3], indicating that Mo and W are hosted in different carriers than Os. This can explain why planetary-scale isotope anomalies exist for Mo but not for Os. Furthermore, the well-correlated Mo and W isotope anomalies in the Murchison leachates combined with the observation that planetary-scale isotope anomalies exist for Mo but not for W suggests that Mo and W are hosted in distinct but chemically similar carriers. The different patterns of planetary-scale nucleo-synthetic anomalies thus seem to reflect the presence of distinct generations of presolar dust that have been homogenized to different degrees.

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Yokoyama et al. (2007) EPSL 259, 567-580 [3] Reisberg et al. (2009) EPSL 277, 334–344. [4] Arlandini et al. (1999) Astrophys. J. 525, 886-900. [5] Burkhardt et al. (2008) Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta 72, 6177-6197.

Oxygen fugacity-dependence of zircon-melt trace element partitioning

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A common feature of terrestrial igneous zircons is a marked excess of Ce over La and Pr, and a deficit of Eu relative to Sm and Gd. This Ce anomaly is attributed to the presence of Ce⁴⁺, and this Eu anomaly attributed to the presence of Eu²⁺; all other REE occur exclusively as M³⁺. Therefore, the magnitude of these anomalies may record the oxygen fugacity (fO_2) at which the magma crystallised. It is often unclear, however, whether the Eu anomaly reflects directly the Eu oxidation state ratio of the melt from which the zircon crystallised, or whether the Eu content of the melt was depleted by fractional crystallisation of plagioclase (or other Eu²⁺-bearing minerals) prior to zircon growth. The present study presents the first systematic data on the dependence of zircon-melt REE partitioning on fO_2 .

Synthetic zircons were grown at 1 atmosphere from a fluxfree melt of 'natural' composition, over a range of 14 log units in fO_2 (IW-4 to QFM+6). The resulting crystals were characterised by cathodoluminescence and analysed by secondary ion mass spectrometry (SIMS) and laser ablation ICP-MS for P, Sc, Ti, Y, REE, Hf, Th and U.

Increasing fO_2 results in the Ce and Eu anomalies becoming more and less pronounced, respectively. There is a narrow fO_2 range over which both anomalies were observed; however the two anomalies do not covary in the same manner as natural samples. Therefore, either partitioning depends strongly on temperature and/or melt composition, or most natural samples suffer removal of Eu from the system before zircon saturation. The Ce and Eu data will be combined with direct determinations by XANES (X-ray absorption near edge structure) spectroscopy of the effects of fO_2 , temperature and melt composition on the redox state ratios of Ce and Eu.

The partitioning of Sc, Y, other REE and Hf is fO_2 independent, as expected. The presence of P in the melt does not affect partitioning. Ti partitioning remains constant, indicating that Ti³⁺ (likely to represent 10-20% of Ti at the most reduced conditions studied) shows similar partitioning behaviour to Ti⁴⁺. The U/Th ratio of zircon varies systematically over more than one order of magnitude with fO_2 .

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