

LASER RAMAN SPECTROSCOPIC STUDY OF THE DEHYDRATION AND REHYDRATION PROCESSES OF FERROUS SULFATES.

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Introduction: Hydrated sulfates are one of the two major types of secondary minerals (the other type is phyllosilicates) that have been found on the surface of Mars, in large quantities and with wide spreading. Among them, Ca-, Mg-, Fe-, Al-sulfates have all been identified. A commonly accepted concept is that the Mg, Fe, Ca, Al cations in those sulfates were released from basaltic minerals by chemical weathering. Among the Gibbs Free energy for weathering reactions of major basaltic silicates: those of olivine are the lowest (~ -6.58 to -4.0 Kcal/atom), those for feldspar are the highest ($\Delta G_f^0 \sim -1.32$ to -0.32 Kcal/atom), and those for pyroxene are in the middle (-2.72 to -2.98 Kcal/atom). These values imply that following the increasing degree of chemical weathering, the releasing of Mg and Fe^{2+} from olivine and pyroxene would happen much easier than Al, K, and Na, the release of which happen only from high degree extensive weathering process. Therefore the finding of large quantity and wide spreading of Mg-sulfates, Fe-oxides, ferric sulfates, localized Ca-sulfates, and Mg, Fe-smectite on Mars demonstrates a moderate degree of chemical weathering (except at specific locations) of Mars surface materials.

During the chemical weathering of olivine (or pyroxene) and the follow-up evaporation of generated brines, hydrated Fe^{2+} -sulfates would precipitate together with hydrated Mg-sulfates. The stability and reaction pathways of those sulfates are important to understand the property of Mars surface materials. We have accomplished two sets of laboratory experimental investigations on the stability fields and dehydration/rehydration processes of Mg- and Fe^{3+} -sulfates. This abstract reports a systematic laser Raman spectroscopic study on Temperature-Relative Humidity (T-RH) driven dehydration/rehydration processes of Fe^{2+} -sulfates.

Samples and Experiments: Melanterite $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (Fe7w), rozenite $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (Fe4w), and szomolnokite $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (Fe1w) are three common Fe^{2+} -sulfates found in nature. For each of them, we conducted 30 T-RH driven dehydration/rehydration experiments at three temperature (50, 21, and 5 °C) and 10 relative humidity levels (RH=6-100%). The monitoring of the molecular phase transitions was made by using non-intrusive laser Raman Spectroscopic (LRS) measurements [1], accompanied by gravimetric measurements

to derive the changes in H_2O number per molecule.

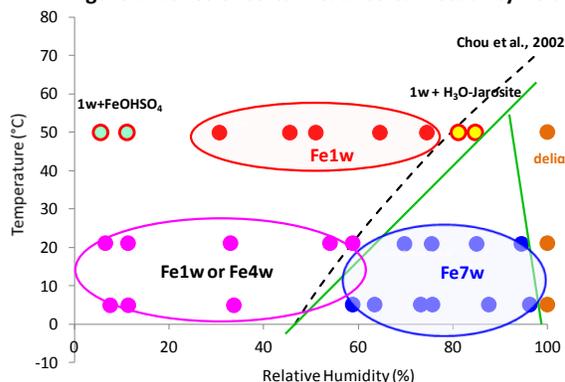
Pure crystalline melanterite $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ was purchased from ACROS (code 201390010, CAS 7782-63-0, lot A0242021), whose identity, status of crystallinity, and hydration degrees were confirmed by XRD. The melanterite grains were hand-grounded and sieved, and fine powder samples of 90 -150 μm grain sizes were used to ensure sufficient surface area for reaction. To generate the starting samples for Fe7w, Fe4w, and Fe1w, three Petri dishes filled with ground $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ powder were placed into three glass jars filled with RH buffer solutions, KCl- H_2O , $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$, and LiCl- H_2O (RH=85%, 33%, and 11% respectively at room T), in which the powder samples were kept for a few days to reach the desired hydration degrees. During the sample preparation, the color of sample powder was carefully monitored, to prevent potential oxidation of Fe^{2+} -sulfate to Fe^{3+} -sulfates. 100 LRS measurements were made on each of the final sample powders. No Raman peaks of ferric-sulfates were observed from them. The homogeneity in hydration degree of each powder sample was confirmed as well.

90 T-RH driven experiments at Earth atmospheric pressure were started in August, 2013. LRS and gravimetric measurements of reaction products were made at pre-determined time intervals (3, 8, 16, 32, 56, 120, 192 ... 4872 hours) until present day.

Zones of stability fields: Based on the LRS phase identifications of the reaction products of 90 experiments, we can approximately define five zones of stability field of this Fe^{2+} - SO_4 - H_2O system (Figure 1, [2]).

Zone of deliquescence -- the boundary between deliq and Fe7w was defined based on the observed deliquescence of 9 experiments (started from Fe7w, Fe4w, and

Figure 1. Zones of certain & uncertain stability fields



Fe1w) at three Ts and 100% RH and the observed remaining powder samples of another 9 experiments at same Ts but 85-96%RH (KNO₃-H₂O buffer).

Zone of melanterite Fe7w stability field – the boundary between Fe7w and other ferrous sulfates were defined by the observed phase transition from Fe4w and Fe1w to Fe7w in 20 experiments at two Ts and 4-6 RH levels.

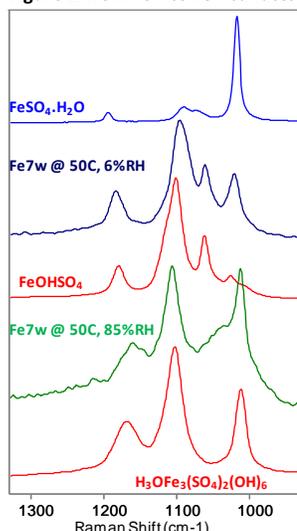
Zone of szomolnokite Fe1w stability field – it was defined by observed phase transition from Fe7w and Fe4w to Fe1w in 10 experiments at 50 °C and five RH levels.

Zone of non-separated stability field for rozenite Fe4w and szomolnokite Fe1w – at 21 °C and 5 °C, RH=6-59%, stable Fe1w and Fe4w were observed in 16 experiments and phase transition from Fe7w to Fe4w happened in 8 experiments. The potential slow kinetics prevented us to separate the stability fields of Fe4w and Fe1w in this T-RH space.

Zones of Fe²⁺ to Fe³⁺ transformation: Among the 90 experiments run under Earth atmospheric pressure for 8 months, oxidation from Fe²⁺-sulfates to Fe³⁺-sulfates were only observed at 50 °C, in 9 experiments at four RH levels (Figure 1, 2). Among them, the phase transition from FeSO₄.H₂O to FeOHSO₄ were observed in 3 experiments at RH=5% and 11%. Phase transition from FeSO₄.H₂O to hydronium jarosite H₃OFe₃(SO₄)₂(OH)₆ was observed in 6 experiments at RH=81% and 85%. Notice that both types of ferrous to ferric oxidation processes happened only from szomolnokite, i.e., the Fe²⁺-sulfate with the lowest hydration degree. In addition, the formation of two ferric sulfates both need extreme RH conditions.

Comparison of Fe²⁺- and Mg-sulfates: We compared the data from these 90 experiments with a similar set of 90 experiments started from MgSO₄.xH₂O (x=1, 4,

Figure 2. from Fe²⁺ to Fe³⁺ sulfates



7). We have found the two groups of sulfates have three types of very different properties.

Difference #1 – FeSO₄.6H₂O was never observed as a stable phase during all dehydration-rehydration experiments.

Oppositely, MgSO₄.6H₂O is a stable phase, and has a well defined stability field in T-RH space.

Difference #2 – the stability of rozenite FeSO₄.4H₂O against dehydration is much lower when compared with starkeyite MgSO₄.4H₂O. It has been demonstrated that at T ≤ 50 °C, the dehydration of epsomite MgSO₄.7H₂O would stop at the stage of MgSO₄.4H₂O. Only by the

help of specific catalysis effect, its dehydration would develop toward forming kieserite MgSO₄.H₂O. However in this set of experiments (T ≤ 50 °C), the dehydration of FeSO₄.7H₂O has passed the stage of FeSO₄.4H₂O and reached FeSO₄.H₂O continuously (Figure 3). The less stable rozenite structure is caused by the larger size of four-member-ring sub-structural units that exist in both rozenite and starkeyite [3, 4].

Difference #3 -- the the stability of szomolnokite FeSO₄.H₂O against rehydration is much higher when compared with kieserite MgSO₄.H₂O. Figure 4 shows at 50 °C and mid-RH, MgSO₄.H₂O started to rehydrate forming MgSO₄.4H₂O or MgSO₄.6H₂O while FeSO₄.H₂O remained unchanged. A similar higher stability against rehydration was also observed for rozenite at mid-T (21 °C) experiments. The reason that caused the high stability of szomolnokite and rozenite against rehydration is under investigation.

Implication to Mars surface/subsurface mineralogy: A comprehensive understanding on the dehydration and oxidation processes is under development.

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References: [1] Chio et al., 2005, Spectrochimica Acta; [2] Chou et al., 2002, Am. Mineral.; [3] Wang et al., 2014, Icarus, accepted; [4] Wang et al., 2014, this volume.

Figure 3. Unstable Fe7w & Fe4w against dehydration

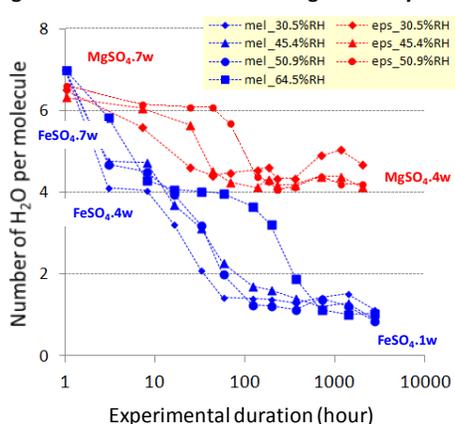


Figure 4. Stable Fe1w against rehydration

