TECHNIQUE FOR COMPARISON OF MICRO-CAI CONCENTRATIONS IN 81P/WILD2 FINE-GRAINED MATERIAL AND PRIMITIVE METEORITE MATRICES

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Introduction: Samples of Jupiter-family comet 81P/Wild 2, returned by the Stardust spacecraft, consist of coarse-grained (>1 m) rocks in association with fine-grained material. This mixture is broadly reminiscent of primitive chondrites, scaled down by two orders of magnitude. The relationship, if any, between the fine-grained material in Wild 2 and the fine-grained matrix in primitive meteorites is an unsolved problem. Here we report the development of a synchrotron- and SEM-based technique that allows for direct comparison of the concentration of micro-CAIs in Wild 2 and meteorite matrices. We also report preliminary results.

Sample preparation and data acquisition:

Cometary fine-grained material. Using the keystoning technique, we extracted Stardust cometary track C2052, 0, 74 from its aerogel tile. We separated the terminal particles — we have reported extensively on one of the terminal particles, Iris, which is a chondrule-like igneous object. We dissected the bulb into two open halves, thus exposing the mixture fine-grained material and melted aerogel in the bulb walls. We mounted one half-bulb between two 50 mm-thick silicon nitride windows. We then carried out microfocused X-ray fluorescence (µXRF) mapping at the Advanced Light Source (ALS) bending-magnet beamline 10.3.2 with the storage ring operating at 500 mA and 1.9 GeV. All data were recorded in fluorescence mode using an XR-100SDD (Amptek) detector. A mini He chamber was used to exclude air in the sample-detector path and between the incident beam ionization chamber and the sample. Maps and µXRF spectra collected on each pixel of the map at 4188 eV (150 eV above the Ca K-edge), with a beam spot size (2.5 μm), and counting times of 100 ms per pixel. We calibrated the Al and Fe measurements using an ALD Al standard and a thin-film Fe micromatter standard.

Primitive meteorite matrix. We used a thin section of a very primitive (petrologic grade ~3.0) CR meteorite, QUE99177. We scanned an area of matrix using a TESCAN Vega SEM with Oxford 80 mm EDX detector. We also mapped orthoclase and Fo87 standards for detector calibration with the identical beam parameters.

Results and discussion: Joswiak et al. recently reported that ~2% of Stardust cometary tracks contain CAI material. This measurement, while very high shock pressures, fine-grained material survived capture in Al foil poorly, but refractory fine-grained material probably has a high survival efficiency in aerogel, even if it is thermally modified. Here we search for microCAIs similar to Inti by searching for Al-rich pixels in synchrotron XRF maps. We chose Al because almost all minerals contain major Al; Ca is a poor choice because it is a ubiquitous contaminant in aerogel. Al-rich CAIs can be subsequently analyzed by long-dwell spot analyses for major and minor elements (Ca, Ti, V, Cr, Fe). In order to compare to meteorites, a normalization is needed. We chose to normalize to Fe, because the silica aerogel capture medium prevents a measurement of cometary Si. The derived quantity is the atomic ratio of Al in CAIs above a certain size to total Fe.

We found no Al-rich pixels in the half bulb of track 74. After accounting for attenuation in the maximum possible melted aerogel in the track bulb, and in the silicon nitride windows, we set an upper limit of Al(CAI=2.6 μm)/Fe < 0.01 (2σ). This upper limit already allows a comparison to meteorites from the published literature: in CV meteorites, which are CAI rich, Al(CAI)/Fe ~0.15; while this ratio in CR meteorites is ~0.01, comparable to our upper limit for Wild 2. However, these ratios include Al in macroscopic CAIs, so a more meaningful comparison is that of micro-CAIs in primitive meteorite matrix and cometary fine-grained material. Using the SEM/EDX scan of QUE99177 matrix, we find Al(CAI=2 μm)/Fe = ~0.001. Further analyses of Wild 2 samples will allow for a direct comparison of CR matrix and Wild 2 fine-grained material.

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