Japan Geoscience Union Meeting 2012

(May 20-25 2012 at Makuhari, Chiba, Japan)

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SMP47-02

Room:301A



Time:May 24 09:15-09:30

Prediction of NMR parameters by first-principles calculation: K-cymrite and polymorphs of $AlPO_4$

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NMR spectroscopy is a powerful technique to study the local structure of solid materials. The interpretation of NMR spectra is greatly facilitated by the development of (1) advanced NMR techniques that provide direct through-bond and through space atomic connectivity information, and (2) first principles calculations of NMR parameters. For the latter, thanks to the development of periodic first-principles methods (Pickard & Mauri, 2001), the calculation of NMR parameters (chemical shift, and quadrupolar coupling constant and electric field gradient (EFG) asymmetry parameter for quadrupolar nuclei, such as 27 Al) from crystal structures has become feasible. In this study, we have applied this technique to calculate the NMR parameters for K-cymrite (KAlSi₃O₈·H₂O) that has a disordered Si/Al distribution and several AlPO₄ polymorphs, and have compared them with the experimental data.

NMR parameters were calculated using GIPAW method (Pickard & Mauri, 2001) implemented in Quantum-ESPRESSO (Giannozzi et al., 2009). For AlPO₄-stishovite solid solution, a supercell of 2x2x2 was used, and 2 Si were replaced with Al and P. For K-cymirte, a supercell of 2x2x1 was used. Four different Al/Si disordered models were built.

For AlPO₄, 5 polymorphs including three recently discoverd high-pressure phases were calculated. Their crystal structures, 27 Al 3Q MAS and 31 P MAS NMR as well as other more advanced two-dimensional (2D) correlation NMR results have already been reported (Kanzaki et al., 2011; Kanzaki & Xue, 2012). The calculated chemical shifts of Al and P sites in these phases are within a few ppm from the observed ones. This further strengthened our previous site assignment of NMR peaks based on 2D correlation NMR experiments. We also calculated the chemical shift for P^{VI} in the SiO₂-AlPO₄ stishovite solid solution. The calculated chemical shift for P^{VI} is about 105 ppm more negative than that of P^{IV} site in cristobalite. A recent experimental NMR study of 1 wt% AlPO₄ dissolved stishovite observed a peak about 130 ppm more negative than that of cristobalite, which was attributed to P^{VI} in stishovite (Stebbins et al., 2009). The general trend is consistent with our calculation, but there is a discrepancy of 25 ppm between the observed and calculated values. More detailed studies are necessary to resolve this discrepancy.

K-cymrite has a double-layered structure with Al/Si distributed in a single T site (Q^4). Our ²⁹Si MAS NMR revealed six peaks, although it has generally been assumed that a maximum of five peaks arising from different Si/Al distributions in the four next nearest T neighbors (nSi, (4-n)Al, with n=0 to 4) should occur for a single Q^4 site (Xue and Kanzaki, 2012). We have shown from direct 2D J-coupling mediated ²⁹Si NMR experiments that the Si(3Si1Al) and Si(2Si2Al) sites are each split into two peaks due to the existence of two populations of T-O-T angles (139° and 180°) (Xue and Kanzaki, 2012). In order to double-check this interpretation, the chemical shifts of Si(4Si), Si(3Si1Al) and Si(2Si2Al) sites were calculated for K-cymrite. The calculated chemical shifts of Si(3Si1Al) and Si(2Si2Al) sites show two distributions for each site separated by about 2 ppm, consistent with our experimental observation. The relative shifts beween Si(4Si), Si(3Si1Al) and Si(2Si2Al) sites are also reproduced.

This study has thus demonstrated that first-principles calculation (GIPAW) of NMR parameters is a reliable mean to assist interpretation of NMR spectra for both ordered and disordered crystal structures.

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Keywords: NMR, first-principles calculation, chemical shift, crystal structure, AlPO₄, K-cymrite