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Geochemical heterogeneity of Moho transition zone dunites-wehrlites from Wadi Thuqbah, the northern Oman ophiolite

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The thick Moho transition zone (MTZ) exposed along Wadi Thuqba, northern Oman ophiolite, comprises dunites, wehrlites and gabbroic rocks (Negishi et al., 2013 Lithos). As well known, the Oman ophiolite is a slice of a sort of oceanic lithosphere (cf. Nicolas, 1989). Gabbroic rocks occur either as blocks with layered structure enclosed by wehrlites or as sills or dikes cutting wehrlites or dunites. A deformed dunite-troctolite-gabbro complex is exposed near the base of the Thuqbah MTZ. Discordant dunite is observed to cut the basal layered complex, giving rise to wehrlites only close to troctolite-gabbro layers. The discordant dunite apparently grows upward to be a huge dunite-wehrlite body with sparse bands of clinopyroxenites and gabbros. Some of the MTZ dunites and wehrlites contain sulfide (pentlandite-pyrrhotite) (up to 2 volume %). The sulfide-bearing dunite shows high Fo contents (90-92) but low NiO contents (0.1 to 0.4 wt% depending on the amount of sulfide).

Clinopyroxenes in dunites and wehrlites with or without sulfides are characterized by variation in REE contents. They show LREE-depleted chondrite-normalized patterns, and their condrite-normalize (Yb/La) ratio varies from 2 to 15 even in samples from the same outcrop. The steepest slope of REE patterns is similar to that for ultra-depleted MORB melt (e.g., Sobolev and Shimizu, 1993 Nature), and the gentlest one, to that for ordinary MORB (e.g., Johnson et al., 1990 JGR). These features indicate a strong geochemical heterogeneity in melts involved in formation of the Thuqbah dunites and wehrlites. They may give us a clue to our understanding of evolution of ordinary MORB from the ultra-depleted primary MORB melt.

Keywords: clinopyroxene, REE, dunite, wehrlite, Moho transition zone, Oman ophiolite