Promising Immobilization of Cadmium and Lead inside Ca-rich Glass-ceramics

A. Karnis and L. Gautron

Abstract—Considering toxicity of heavy metals and their accumulation in domestic wastes, immobilization of lead and cadmium is envisaged inside glass-ceramics. We particularly focused this work on calcium-rich phases embedded in a glassy matrix.

Glass-ceramics were synthesized from glasses doped with 12 wt% and 16 wt% of PbO or CdO. They were observed and analyzed by Electron MicroProbe Analysis (EMPA) and Analytical Scanning Electron Microscopy (ASEM). Structural characterization of the samples was performed by powder X-Ray Diffraction.

Diopside crystals of CaMgSi$_2$O$_6$ composition are shown to incorporate significant amounts of cadmium (up to 9 wt% of CdO). Two new crystalline phases are observed with very high Cd or Pb contents: about 40 wt% CdO for the cadmium-rich phase and near 60 wt% PbO for the lead-rich phase. We present complete chemical and structural characterization of these phases. They represent a promising way for the immobilization of toxic elements like Cd or Pb since glass-ceramics are known to propose a “double barrier” protection (metal-rich crystals embedded in a glass matrix) against metal release in the environment.

Keywords—Cadmium, Calcium-rich phases, Diopside, Domestic wastes, Fly ashes, Glass-ceramics, Lead, Municipal Solid Waste Incineration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Heavy Metals like lead or cadmium are widely used in our domestic activities and they are found in significant quantities in domestic wastes. For example, in France in 2004, 795 and 4 milligrams of Pb and Cd respectively were found per kilogram of domestic waste [1].

In occidental countries, incineration is the major treatment of domestic waste [2] (43 wt% of domestic waste in France). This technique offers a great reduction of waste volume and generates thermal or electrical energy. However, Municipal Solid Waste Incineration (MSWI) produces further ultimate gases targeted for their expected capacity to incorporate large cations, especially in the 8-fold coordinated M2 site. Diopside was found to accept uranium in this typical site [10]. We can expect similar behaviour for Cd and Pb since Ca$^{2+}$ is known to display an ionic radius of 1.12 Å when 8-fold coordinated while Cd and Pb display ionic radius of 1.10 Å and 1.29 Å respectively when in the same coordination [11]. In previous studies [12], [13], the immobilization of elements like Cd, Cr or Pb (present in fly ashes), was tested in diopside-based glass-ceramics. But it appears that these studies did not clearly quantify and demonstrate the incorporation of these toxic elements inside diopside crystals.

II. METHOD

Starting glasses were synthesized from oxides mix in the
system SiO$_2$-MgO-CaO-Al$_2$O$_3$. They were doped with relatively large amounts of CdO or PbO, as presented in Table 1. We chose excess of doping elements in order to better constrain the insertion mechanisms of Cd and Pb. Oxides mixes (typically 2 grams in weight) were finely crushed in ethanol so as to get relatively homogeneous starting materials. To minimize the volatilization of lead or cadmium during synthesis of parent glasses, pellets of our samples were prepared. We observed maximum 3-4 wt% difference between Cd or Pb contents before and after glass synthesis at high temperature.

Several samples with different amounts of doping element were synthesized for a systematic analysis (12 and 16 wt% of CdO or PbO). In this paper, we present the results obtained from two glass-ceramics representative of all samples studied in this work. The composition of the corresponding parent glasses is given in Table I.

For synthesis of parent glasses, pellets of oxides mix were placed in a platinum crucible and carried at 300°C during 30 minutes (ethanol volatilization) then brought at 900°C for 60 minutes (decarbonatation) and then brought to 1500°C during 20 minutes, to get homogeneous glasses with limited cadmium and lead loss by volatilization.

Glasses samples were splitted in two parts. One was resin-embedded, polished and carbon-coated for microanalysis. And the other was used as parent glass for glass-ceramics synthesis.

Diopside-based glass-ceramics were synthesized by a two-stage thermal treatment: a nucleation stage at 750°C during 90 minutes and a crystal growth stage at 1000°C during 90 minutes. Temperatures and duration of these stages were chosen in order to maximize number and size of crystallites.

Glass-ceramics were characterized by X-Ray Diffraction (XRD) with a Bruker-AXS D8-Discover diffractometer using CuK$_\alpha$ wavelength ($\lambda = 1.5418$ Å). Glasses and glass-ceramics were studied by Electron MicroProbe Analysis (EMPA, CAMECA SX50) and by using an Analytical Scanning Electron Microscope (ASEM, LEICA S440) equipped with a TRACOR-NORAN Energy Dispersive X-ray (EDX) spectrometer. We observed a very good agreement between analyses obtained from these two latter techniques (with less than 1 wt% difference).

### III. RESULTS

Both glass-ceramics display the same characteristics (Fig. 1) with a glassy matrix in clear grey, diopside crystals in dark grey and in each case a new phase which appears in white (backscattered electron contrast corresponding to dense material). Anorthite crystals (in black) are also present but they are known to be generated by surface corrosion processes.

In all samples, many diopside crystals are present whereas the volume of the glassy matrix appears to be quite small. Unlike previous studies [12], [13], the diopside crystals observed in the present work are slightly bigger (about 5 micrometers compared to 3 micrometers) due to higher temperatures of crystal growth stage.

EDX analysis reveals that diopside does not incorporate lead, probably due to ionic radius differences (as described above). However, the picture is different for cadmium: diopside is shown to accept cadmium up to about 9 wt% CdO (then about 1.5 at% Cd), probably in the Ca sites. After these results, we can propose the chemical formulae for the diopside crystals doped with cadmium as in equation (1) with the hypothesis of cadmium inserted in the calcium site.

### TABLE I

**COMPOSITION OF PARENT GLASS FOR GLASS-CERAMICS DOPED WITH CADMIUM OR LEAD OXIDES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oxide</th>
<th>GD16Cd *</th>
<th>GD12Pb *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SiO$_2$</td>
<td>44.52 wt%</td>
<td>46.64 wt%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MgO</td>
<td>20.16 wt%</td>
<td>21.12 wt%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaO</td>
<td>11.76 wt%</td>
<td>12.32 wt%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Al_2$O$_3$</td>
<td>7.56 wt%</td>
<td>7.92 wt%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doped element</td>
<td>CdO: 16 wt%</td>
<td>PbO: 12 wt%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* G for Glass and D for diopside. 16Cd for glass doped with 16 wt% of CdO. 12Pb for glass doped with 12 wt% of PbO

and lead loss by volatilization.

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(\text{Ca}_{0.59}, \text{Cd}_{0.15}, \text{Al}_{0.26}) \text{Mg}(\text{Si}_{0.87}, \text{Al}_{0.13})_2 \text{O}_6 \quad (1)

Based upon stoichiometric considerations, we see that aluminum can be distributed over both calcium and silicon sites: this can only be achieved with a charge compensation as seen in a previous study [14]. XRD reveals that the cadmium insertion does not induce a significant distortion of the diopside crystal structure, since the Bragg peaks positions are almost exactly those expected from Analytical Standard for Testing Materials files (see XRD pattern in Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 XRD pattern of glass-ceramics GD12Pb. Stars (*) represent Bragg’s peaks of the New Pb-rich phase (NPb), while main peaks for diopside and anorthite are assigned with $hkl$ Miller indices. Note the coarse background at $2\theta$ around 30° which is a signature of the glass-matrix.

In both glass-ceramics samples, new Cd- or Pb-rich phases are observed. They appear with a light contrast (relative to heavy metal insertion, as pictured in Fig. 1). The new Pb-rich phase (named NPb) contains up to 57 wt% of PbO (about 9.8 at% of Pb). The new Cd-rich (named NCd) displays CdO content up to 41 wt% (then nearly 9 at% of Cd). Both phases are observed throughout the whole sample. After EMPA and EDX analysis, we can write a chemical formula as in equation (2) for NPb and equation (3) for NCd if we assume that cadmium is inserted into calcium site.

\[
Pb\text{Al}_{1.02}\text{Si}_{1.45}\text{O}_{4.83} \quad (2)
\]

\[
(Ca_{0.19}, Cd_{0.81})_2 \text{Si}_{1.55}\text{Mg}_{1.47}\text{Al}_{0.22}\text{O}_6 \quad (3)
\]

Bragg peaks of these new phases were identified, but no indexation from related possible crystal structures could be found for both NPb and NCd XRD patterns. XRD details of both phases are listed in Table II.

In both cases, the glassy matrix also contains cadmium or lead. We can assume that these new phases display solubility limits of Cd or Pb, since the Cd or Pb excess is found in the glass matrix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NPb</th>
<th>NCd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2\theta^\circ$</td>
<td>$I/I_0$</td>
<td>$2\theta^\circ$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.75</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>26.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.17</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>36.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.77</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>41.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NPb is a new Pb-rich phase and NCd is a new Cd-rich phase observed in the glass-ceramics studied in this work.

Lead is not incorporated into diopside, probably due to ionic radius differences.

In these glass-ceramics, two new phases are observed and can be envisaged as good candidates for Cd or Pb immobilization. The new Cd-rich phase contains up to 41 wt% of CdO (then 9 at% of Cd) while the new Pb-rich phase contains about 57 wt% of PbO (9.8 at% of Pb).

In order to determine the capacity of these new phases to retain heavy metals, leaching experiments need to be done to determine their long-term behaviour in terms of Cd or Pb release into the environment.

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REFERENCES


IV. CONCLUSION

This study shows that diopside-based glass-ceramics incorporate up to about 9 wt% of CdO (or 1.5 at% of Cd) inside diopside crystals without significant structural change.


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L. Gautron is member of both the American Geophysical Union (AGU), and the Société Française de Minéralogie et Cristallographie (SFMC).