IODINE-XENON SYSTEMATICS OF LARGE IGNEOUS INCLUSIONS IN ORDINARY CHONDRITE METEORITES. S. A. Crowther¹, J. D. Gilmour¹ and A. M. Ruzicka², ¹School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, The University of Manchester, UK (sarah.crowther@manchester.ac.uk), ²Portland State University, Department of Geology and Cascadia Meteorite Laboratory, USA.

Introduction: Large igneous inclusions, up to 4 cm across and with low metal and sulphide contents, are found in around 4 % of ordinary chondrite meteorites [1]. The oxygen and major element compositions of most inclusions are broadly similar to ordinary chondrites and chondrules, although not necessarily the same as that of the host meteorite [e.g. 2-4], whereas some have distinctly different compositions [e.g. 5]. Several mechanisms (summarised by [6]) have been proposed for the origins of these inclusions.

A new suite of 42 inclusions, extracted from H, L and LL ordinary chondrites, across a range of petrologic types (3-6), have been identified and characterised using a variety of techniques: their petrology, bulk chemical composition, trace element composition and oxygen isotope compositions have been studied in detail [6]. Hf-W ages have also been determined for a subset of the inclusions [7]. These inclusions formed by different processes at different times, both before and after metamorphism of their host meteorites, but the evidence suggests they did not form as a result of igneous differentiation. The majority of the inclusions fall into four main chemical types [4,6].

In this work we are examining the I-Xe ages and systematics of a subset of this new suite of inclusions. The I-Xe chronometer [8,9] enables us to examine the timing and sequence of events that occurred in the first ~70 millions of years of Solar System history with high resolution, and therefore shed new light on the timing of events in the early Solar System and the histories of these inclusions.

Experimental: I-Xe dating relies on the β decay of ¹²⁹I to ¹²⁹Xe (half-life = 16.1 Ma [10]). The aim is to determine the ¹²⁹I/¹²⁷I ratio at the time of closure to loss of Xe. Samples are artificially neutron irradiated prior to analysis, which converts ¹²⁷I to ¹²⁸Xe. This allows for simultaneous measurement of ¹²⁹Xe produced from ¹²⁹I, and ¹²⁷I as ¹²⁸Xe. The ¹²⁹Xe*/¹²⁸Xe* ratio (where * denotes excess Xe produced either from ¹²⁷I by neutron irradiation or from ¹²⁹I by decay in the early Solar System) is directly proportional to the ¹²⁹I/¹²⁷I ratio at the time of closure to Xe loss. A relative age in relation to other material is determined from this ratio. The absolute age is calculated with reference to Shallowater enstatite, the irradiation standard for I-Xe dating, which has an absolute age of 4562.7 ± 0.3 Ma [11].

Following irradiation, the Xe isotopic composition of the samples is analysed using the RELAX mass

spectrometer [12,13]. Samples are laser step heated in a series of sequentially increasing powers. The gas extracted in each step is analysed to determine the Xe isotope ratios and the absolute amount of Xe released.

Results and Discussion: A subset of 10 inclusions was selected for I-Xe analyses (Table 1), seven of which have been analysed. All samples show excesses of uncorrelated ¹²⁸Xe in low temperature heating steps, which is attributed to terrestrial contamination. Most also show ¹³¹Xe attributed to production via neutron capture on ¹³⁰Ba.

Unfr. This chemical type has bulk chemistry that is essentially unfractionated with respect to bulk ordinary chondrite.

Mid temperature heating steps of 4686-I1 show a roughly constant, elevated ¹²⁹Xe/¹³²Xe ratio (~1.3-1.5 vs 1.04 for Q-Xe [14]), although the excess ¹²⁹Xe does not correlate with ¹²⁸Xe*. This inclusion is best described as an impact melt, which formed after metamorphism of the host meteorite. Its Hf-W age is >50 Ma, much later than the timing of peak metamorphism of the host meteorite [7]. Combining the I-Xe data with this Hf-W age suggests this inclusion formed late, from a source material that had a high I/Xe ratio, such that the ¹²⁹Xe/¹³²Xe ratio evolved to the observed value over several 10s of millions of years prior to the formation/cooling of the inclusion.

4859-I18 was dominated by iodine, with very little trapped Xe. The data suggest an I-Xe age 1.84 ± 0.34 Ma before Shallowater (absolute age 4564.54 ± 0.45 Ma). This inclusion is thought to have formed from a melt of chondritic material, before host metamorphism and probably underwent metamorphism *in situ*. The preservation of an old Hf-W age (~2 Ma after CAIs [7]) implies that it did not equilibrate with the host meteorite and preserved an older age that was set during its formation. The I-Xe age is in good agreement with the Hf-W age and therefore was most likely also set during the formation of the inclusion. The old age implies that the I-Xe system was not reset by type 5 metamorphism in this instance.

Inclusion 7871-I1 was dominated by 127 I (128 Xe) and 130 Ba (131 Xe) in all heating steps, consistent with terrestrial contamination in calcite veins observed to be cutting through the inclusion. In most heating steps the other Xe isotopes were below the detection limit imposed by the dynamic range of the detector and the intensity of the signal from the abundant isotopes, and

unfortunately no I-Xe age can be inferred.

Unfr + K. This chemical type is similar to the Unfr type, except for being highly enriched in potassium.

Similar to 4686-I1, 8231-I1 has an elevated 129 Xe/ 132 Xe ratio, but the excess 129 Xe does not correlate with 128 Xe*. It also has a young Hf-W age, >50 Ma after CAI formation [7], well after peak thermal metamorphism. *Unfr* + *K* inclusions most likely formed by impact melting of chondritic material [6], and it has been suggested that this inclusion may have cooled slowly in a large batch of melt, possibly in a melt pool [7]. As for 4686-I1, it seems likely that this inclusion formed and cooled after the 129 Xe/ 132 Xe ratio of the source material had evolved to the observed value.

Low temperature iodine contamination was not properly separated from high temperature correlated iodine in MET-I2. A lower limit of the age, no more than 0.96 ± 0.25 Ma after Shallowater (absolute age at least 4561.74 ± 0.39 Ma), can be estimated from heating steps with the lowest 128 Xe/ 129 Xe ratios, i.e. those least affected by uncorrelated iodine. This inclusion is in a type 3 host, which shows no evidence of significant metamorphism, therefore this estimate may date the formation of the inclusion.

Vfr. These inclusions are thought to have formed primarily by evaporative melting of free-floating material in a 'nebular' (melt + gaseous) setting [6]. Their lithophile element abundances vary with volatility.

A well-defined I-Xe isochron is observed for MET-I1 (Fig. 1), giving a young age 29.59 ± 0.48 Ma after Shallowater (absolute age 4533.11 ± 0.57 Ma). There is no evidence this inclusion formed by melting of the host meteorite; it likely formed from a distinct body [6]. If this young age dates the formation of the inclusion, it is potentially very significant for both the formation mechanisms of inclusions and the timing of accretion of the chondrite parent bodies. An alternative explanation is that is reflects processing of the regolith of the parent body. Ages determined from other chronometers would assist in interpreting this age.

Similar to 4859-I18, Rfd-I1 is dominated by 128 Xe* and 129 Xe, with only a negligible amount of trapped Xe. The inferred I/Xe ratios correspond to ages ~0.5-2.1 Ma after CAIs. This is consistent with rapid cooling at an early stage, and supports the hypothesis that this inclusion is an unusually large chondrule that formed around the same time as most other chondrules.

Summary: The various chemical types of inclusions (Unfr, Unfr + K, Vfr) show evidence for both early and late formation. Those which formed early perhaps date chondrule formation, whereas those which formed later are suggestive of impact melting and indicate multiple impact events at different times. Some, such as 4686-I1 and 8231-I1, formed several 10s of

Table 1. Summary of inclusions selected for I-Xe analyses. Further information about the individual inclusions is given by [6]. NWA = North West Africa; MET = Meteorite Hills.

Fig. 1. High temperature steps for Vfr inclusion MET-I1.

millions of years after CAI formation, after significant decay of ¹²⁹I. If the late age of MET-I1, an inclusion in a type 3 host meteorite, is interpreted as a formation age it has implications for the timing of accretion of the chondrite parent bodies, although further data are required for this and similar inclusions before drawing any firm conclusions.

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