1 Effect of aging time and Al substitution on the morphology of

### 2 aluminous goethite

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### 9 Abstract:

Goethite and Al-substituted goethite were synthesized from the reaction 10 between ferric nitrate and/ or aluminum nitrate and potassium hydroxide. 11 XRF, XRD, TEM with EDS were used to characterize the chemical 12 composition, phase and lattice parameters, and morphology of the 13 synthesised products. The results show that d(020) decreases from 4.953 14 Å to 4.949 Å and the *b* dimension decreases from 9.951 Å to 9.906 Å 15 when the aging time increases from 6 days to 42 days for 9.09 mol % Al-16 substituted goethite. A sample with 9.09 mol% Al substitution in Al-17 substituted goethite was prepared by a rapid co-precipitation method. In 18 the sample, 13.45 mol%, 12.31mol% and 5.85 mol% Al substitution with 19 a crystal size of 163, 131, and 45 nm are observed as shown in the TEM 20 images and EDS. The crystal size of goethite is positively related to the 21 degree of Al substitution according to the TEM images and EDS results. 22

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- 23 Thus, this methodology proved to be effective to distinguish the
- 24 morphology of goethite and Al substituted goethite.

## 25 Keywords:

26 Goethite, Al substitution, Morphology, Aging time, Unit cell dimension

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#### 29 **1. Introduction**

Goethite ( $\alpha$ -FeOOH) occurs in rocks and throughout the various parts of 30 the global ecosystem and is frequently used as an important raw material 31 to produce magnetic iron oxide and pigments [1-3]. The structure of 32 goethite is similar to that of gibbsite containing essentially layers of 33 oxygen ions in the sequence of hexagonal close-packing with the iron 34 ions in the octahedral interstices [4-7]. Goethite is the best studied 35 example of an isomorphously substituted iron oxide (hydroxide) and of 36 the various possible substitutions in both natural and synthetic goethite 37 samples. The substitution of aluminum for iron in goethite was well 38 demonstrated and has been shown to occur in natural goethites [8-15]. Al 39 substitution amount for Fe differs from different natural goethites ranging 40 from zero to 33 mol% [16-18]. In addition, Al-substituted goethite can 41 also be synthesized easily in the laboratory. Thiel et al. [19] synthesized 42 goethite containing about 33 mol% Al, a level recognized as the probable 43 upper limit of Al tolerated by the goethite structure [20]. However, as 44 much as 47 mol% Al has been reported for Al-substituted goethite 45 synthesized from sulfate solutions [21]. 46

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It is well-known that radius of  $Al^{3+}(0.53\text{\AA})$  is slightly smaller than that of 48  $Fe^{3+}$  (0.65 Å) [22]. Therefore, the substitution of Al for Fe in the structure 49 of goethite will result in the decrease of average size of the unit cell, 50 which is related to the amount of Al substitution and is indicated by shifts 51 of the Al-substituted goethite XRD lines to smaller d spacings. Besides, 52 the effect of Al substitution for Fe on crystallographic structure and 53 physicochemical properties of goethite has been researched extensively. 54 The report of Schulze [4] indicated that the c dimension is a linear 55

function of Al substitution in the range 0-33 mol% Al, but the a 56 dimension is variable over the same composition range. A linear 57 relationship exists between the extent of Al substitution and the a, b and c 58 edge lengths of the unit cell of synthetic goethite obtained from different 59 ways researched by Thiel et al. [19], Jonas and Solymar [23], and Taylor 60 and Schwertmann [24]. The goethite crystals become smaller as Al 61 substitution increases and change from large polydomainic crystals to 62 smaller, monodomainic ones [16]. On the other hand, Al substitution 63 affects the thermal stability of goethite. Ruan et al. [25] reported that Al-64 substituted goethite in thermally more stable than non-substituted goethite 65 based on the results of XRD and DTG and wavenumber of hydroxyl 66 bending and stretching vibrations shifted to higher positions using FTIR 67 technologies. As the increase of Al substitution, the dehydration 68 temperature, the OH stretching wavenumber and the position of both OH 69 bending vibrations increase. Besides, many researches on the effect of Al 70 substitution on unit cell dimension, hydroxyl units, and dehydration 71 temperature of goethite have been reported [17, 26]. 72

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However, no report on the effect of Al substitution on the morphology of 74 goethite using TEM, especially, for one sample prepared in the same way. 75 As is well-known, the morphology of clay minerals plays a crucial role in 76 adsorption of environmental pollutions such as phosphorus, lead, etc. 77 Thus, the objectives of the paper are to make it clear that the effect of 78 aging time on unit cell dimension of Al-substituted goethite and to show 79 the changes of morphology with an increase of Al substitution in one 80 sample prepared under the absolute same conditions. EDS was used to 81 82 measure the Al substitution in the structure of goethite.

#### 84 **2. Experimental**

### 85 2.1 Synthesis of goethite and Al-substituted goethite

## 86 **Preparation of goethite**

87	$100g \text{ of } Fe(NO_3)_3 \cdot 9H_2$	) and 400mL deioni	zed water were placed in a

1000 mL beaker.  $Fe(NO_3)_3 \cdot 9H_2O$  was dissolved by stirring continuously.

89 After dissolution, KOH with a concentration of 5 mol/L and a

90 concentration of 0.1 mol/L were used to regulate the pH at  $13.9\pm0.1$  pH

91 units. After finishing the above, the beaker was sealed with film to

prevent evaporation and placed in a thermotank controlled at 70  $^{\circ}$ C. After

6d, the beaker was taken out to removal of excess KOH by centrifugation

several times until the pH comes to 7 pH units or so. After centrifugation,

 $^{95}$  the deposits were dried at  $105^{\circ}$ C, cooled to room temperature and ground

<sup>96</sup> to obtain powder for further characterization. The sample was labeled as

97 synthetic goethite (SG-6)

#### 98 Preparation of Al-substituted goethite

9.378g of Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O and 90.905g Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O were placed in a 99 1000 mL beaker and then 400 mL deionized water were put into the 100 beaker. The Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O and Fe(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O were dissolved by 101 stirring continuously. After dissolution, KOH with a concentration of 102 5mol/L and a concentration of 0.1mol/L were used to regulate the pH at 103 13.9±0.1 pH units. After adjust of pH, the mixture was divided into five 104 105 beakers. These beakers were sealed with film to prevent evaporating, put into thermotank controlled at 70 °C and kept for 6, 11, 17, 23, 42 days. 106 After the selected aging time, redundant KOH had to be removed by 107 centrifugation for every sample. After centrifugation, the deposits were 108

dried at 105 °C, cooled to room temperature, and ground to obtain powder for further characterization. The samples were labeled as SAG-10-x (x=6, 11, 17, 23, 42), namely, 10 mol% Al substitution for Fe in goethite was aged for x days. In fact, the sample proved an Al substitution of 9.06 mol% (10 mol% Al substitution in theory, Al / (Al+Fe)). The Al substitution amount is calculated by the Chemical composition measured on a Shimadzu XRF-1800 with Rh radiation.

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#### 117 **2.2 XRD**

XRD patterns were recorded using Cu K $\alpha$  radiation ( $\lambda = 1.5406$  Å) on a 118 Philips PANalytical XPert Pro muti purpose diffractometer. The tube 119 voltage is 40kV and the current, 40mA. All XRD diffraction patterns 120 were taken in the range of 10-70° at a scan speed of  $2^{\circ}$  min<sup>-1</sup> with 0.5° 121 divergence slit size. Phase identification was carried out by comparison 122 with those included in the Inorganic Crystal Structure Database (ICSD). 123 The following formula was used to calculate the unit cell dimensions 124 (UCD) because goethite was orthorhombic, 125

126  $d_{hkl} = \frac{abc}{\sqrt{b^2c^2h^2 + a^2c^2k^2 + a^2b^2l^2}}, \text{ where h, k, l represent the crystalline face}$ 

127 parameters and a, b, c represent the unit cell parameters.

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#### 129 **2.3 BET**

130 13-point BET-nitrogen isotherms were used to quantify changes in the
131 specific surface area. All samples were degassed at 110°C for 12h before
132 analysis were conducted. The multi-point BET surface area of each
133 sample was measured at atmospheric pressure using TriStar II 3020

Surface Area and Pore Size Analyzer. The adsorption isotherms achieved a  $p/p_0$  range of 0.009-0.25.

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### 137 **2.4 TEM and EDS**

Transmission electron microscope (TEM) measurements were performed
on JEM-2100 with an energy dispersive X-ray (EDS) facility. The sample
was mixed with alcohol and deposited on a Cu grid. Images of the
microstructure and the relevant selected area electron diffraction patterns
are acquired using an analytical electron microscope.

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#### 144 **3. Results and discussion**

#### 145 **3.1 Effect of aging time on Al-substituted**

146 Fig. 1 reports the XRD patterns of synthetic goethite, synthetic Al-

147 substituted goethite at an elevated aging time, and goethite from the ICSD

148 data base (96-900-2159). These reflections ((020), (110), (120), (130),

149 (111), etc) are observed and identified as goethite compared with the

150 ICSD (96-900-2159) pattern. As shown in Fig. 1, the intensity of

151 reflections increases with increasing aging time, which should be

assigned to the re-crystallization and growth of Al-substituted goethite

153 with aging. High degree of crystallinity gives rise to stronger diffraction

154 intensity for a certain sample. Therefore, the stronger the reflection

155 intensity, the longer the aging time.

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157 In addition, the effect of Al substitution on the d-spacings of goethite

reflection face and the effect of aging time on that of Al-substituted

159 goethite are presented in Fig. 2. The d-spacings were derived from the

XRD patterns using the software of X'Pert HighScore Plus. As is shown 160 in Fig. 2, all d-spacings of goethite reflection face derived from ICSD 161 (96-900-2159) are lower than that of the synthetic goethite in the 162 experiment, which should be ascribed to the different preparation 163 methods. What is more important, all d-spacings decrease after the 164 addition of Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O during the preparation of goethite, which is 165 attributed to the smaller  $Al^{3+}$  ionic radius than that of  $Fe^{3+}$ . This is in good 166 agreement with the report [4]. Schulze [4] has reported that diffraction 167 peaks became broad and shifted to high diffraction angle (namely smaller 168 d spacing) with the increase of Al substitution in the structure of goethite. 169 Especially, d-spacing of (020) reflection decreases gradually from 4.953 170 Å to 4.949 Å with an increase of aging time. The relationship between 171 d(020) and reaction time is basically consistent with the formula: 172  $d(020)=4.95452-2.67E-4 t+3.22E-6 t^2 (R^2=0.997)$ , where t represents 173 aging time in the experiment. It indicates that d(020) of Al-substituted 174 175 goethite has a negative relationship to aging time. However, little fluctuations are observed for other d-spacings as a function of aging time. 176

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The UCD calculated from d-spacings using the formula above as affected 178 179 by aging time and the BET results are shown in Table 1. It is noted that unit cell parameters of Al-substituted goethite decrease from 4.638 to 4.6 180 Å for *a* dimension, from 9.951 to 9.906 Å for *b* dimension, and from 181 3.022 to 3.009 Å for *c* dimension as compared with that of synthetic 182 goethite, which is consistent with the published reports [17, 27, 28]. 183 These researches showed that unit cell parameters of goethite decreased 184 as the Al substitution amount in goethite increased. In addition, b 185 dimension has a little decrease from 9.906 to 9.898 Å as a function of 186 aging time. As presented in Table 1, a increase of BET from 52.931 to 187

 $72.628 \text{m}^2/\text{g}$  is observed when Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O was added in the process of 188 the preparation of goethite. The increase in BET should be considered to 189 be related to the decrease of crystallite size in goethite with the addition 190 of Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O [17]. However, the BET decreases up to  $47.392 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$ 191 dramatically from 72.628  $m^2/g$  and then is maintained stable when the 192 aging time increases from 6 to 42 days. Obviously, the decrease in BET is 193 attributed to the re-crystalline and growth of Al-substituted goethite, 194 which is good agreement with the results of XRD. As well-known, 195 goethite has been proved to be a good absorbent to adsorb many potential 196 contaminants in natural such as arsenic, antimony, copper, zinc, cadmium, 197 lead, and others. [29-33]. Specific surface area plays an important role in 198 the adsorption/desorption process of goethite [34], the larger the specific 199 surface area, the greater the adsorption at a given condition. Therefore, 200 the substitution of Al and high crystallinic degree would decrease the 201 specific surface area and the adsorption amount. It is postulated that the 202 existence of  $Al^{3+}$  will have a competitive adsorption with other cations 203 and result in desorption of cations because Al substitution for Fe in the 204 structure of goethite is much easier than other cations. Maybe, this is the 205 reason why Al-substituted goethite attracted so much attention. 206



Fig. 1. XRD patterns of goethite and Al-substituted goethite at



# 210 Table 1. UCD and BET of goethite and Al-substituted goethite at

211 different aging time.

Complea	d-spacings/Å			Unit cell parameters/Å			$DET/m^2/c$
Samples	020	101	111	а	b	c	DE1/III/g
ICSD	4.957	3.364	2.440	4.580	9.913	3.013	
SG-6	4.976	3.378	2.454	4.638	9.951	3.022	52.9

SAG-10-6	4.953	3.365	2.440	4.600	9.906	3.009	72.6
SAG-10-11	4.952	3.368	2.439	4.594	9.904	3.007	61.9
SAG-10-17	4.951	3.371	2.441	4.611	9.901	3.007	52.5
SAG-10-23	4.950	3.370	2.441	4.607	9.899	3.009	47.4
SAG-10-42	4.949	3.368	2.443	4.597	9.898	3.014	47.2



Fig. 2. d-spacings of goethite and Al-substituted goethite at different
aging time.

## 218 **3.2 Chemical compositions analysis**

219	The chemical composition analysis of SG-6 and SAG-10-6 is presented in
220	Table 2. Based on the percentage of iron and aluminum, the substitution
221	amount of Al for Fe in goethite is calculated as 9.09 mol% compared with
222	the theoretic value of 10 mol% which is calculated before preparation.
223	This indicates just a little $Al^{3+}$ was washed away due to the reaction
224	between Al(OH) <sub>3</sub> and KOH. Meanwhile, some impurities are also
225	detected in the synthetic Al-substituted goethite including Cr, Ca, K, etc,
226	in which K should come from precipitator (KOH). In a word, the
227	synthetic Al-substituted goethite main contains $Fe_2O_3$ 79.25 %, $Al_2O_3$
228	5.05 %. In contrast, almost only $Fe_2O_3$ 84.37 % is detected in SG-6.
229	Combined with the results of XRD, (Fe, Al)OOH is the main chemical
230	composition for SAG-10-6 and FeOOH is the main chemical
231	composition for SG-6 and the purity of the two kinds of goethite is over
232	99 wt%.

233 Table 2. Chemical compositions of goethite and Al-substituted

234 goethite

Samples	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	SiO <sub>2</sub>	CaO	K <sub>2</sub> O	Na <sub>2</sub> O	Cr <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	Loss of ignition
					%			
SG-6	84.37	0.08	0.05	0.01	_	_	0.02	14.4
SAG-10-6	79.25	5.05	0.12	0.01	2.28	0.02	0.03	13.7

# **3.3 Morphology of goethite with different Al substitution level**

238	The TEM images and corresponding EDS of 10 mol% Al substitution
239	amount for Fe in the structure of goethite is presented in Fig. 3. Some
240	rod-like and acicular substance can be observed obviously in Fig. 3(a).
241	These substances are confirmed to be goethite combined with the results
242	of XRD and XRF. In addition, the results of EDS indicate these substance
243	main contain Fe, O, Al, and Cu (deriving from copper grid). Thus, it is
244	concluded that the synthetic products are Al-substituted goethite.
245	However, an apparent difference in morphology can be observed in the
246	TEM images and the materials with different morphology have different
247	Al substitution amount for Fe based on the results of EDS with an area
248	resolution of measurement of 500nm. According to the weight percentage
249	of Fe and Al as determined by EDS, the Al substitution amount is
250	calculated as 13.45 mol% for Fig. 3(c), 12.31 mol% for Fig. 3(e), and
251	5.85 mol% for Fig. 3(g). The corresponding crystal size is 163 nm, 131
252	nm, and 45nm, respectively. That is to say, the width increases with an
253	increase of Al substitution amount. The research [17] showed dehydration
254	temperature increased due to an increasing Al substitution, which was

255	ascribed to the $Al^{3+}$ ion, retains coordinated OH more strongly than $Fe^{3+}$
256	because of the higher ionic potential of $Al^{3+}$ . The high ionic potential
257	would attract more other ions. Therefore, goethite with more Al
258	substitution amount has more broad width in the same aging time.
259	Besides, the length of three selected crystal of Al-substituted goethite is
260	observed from Fig. 3. The aspect ratio between length and width linearly
261	decreases from 9.89 to 2.76 when Al substitution amount has an increase
262	from 5.85 mol% to 13.45 mol%, as shown in Fig. 4. The results are
263	consistent with the formula y=15.403-0.943x with a highly related
264	coefficient ( $R^2$ =0.999), where y denotes the aspect ratio, x represent Al
265	substitution amount. This illustrates that the aspect (L/W) has a negative
266	relationship with the Al substitution amount. Why the same sample has
267	different Al substitution amount? The reason should be ascribed to the
268	rapid titration of KOH into the mixture of Al(OH) <sub>3</sub> ·9H <sub>2</sub> O and
269	$Fe(OH)_3 \cdot 9H_2O$ . Obviously, it is difficult to distribute well for KOH under
270	the condition of rapid titration. Actually, in the experiment, KOH is
271	almost poured into the mixture and then low concentration of KOH is
272	used to regulate the pH. The research [35] reported that the level of Al
273	incorporation into the goethite structure is dependent on the concentration
274	of both KOH and Al <sup>3+</sup> and Al substitution amount increases with a
275	decrease of KOH concentration at a given Al <sup>3+</sup> concentration. Therefore,
276	this rapid co-precipitation made an Al-substituted goethite with $^{14}$

- 277 considerably different Al substitution amount. Fortunately, the method
- 278 provides a better way to investigate the morphology of goethite with
- 279 different Al substitution amount in one sample, which is prepared under
- absolutely same conditions.







Fig. 4. Linear relationship between aspect ratio (L/W) and Al

285 substitution amount.

286

#### 287 **4.** Conclusions

Goethite and Al-substituted goethite were obtained using a rapid 288 precipitation method. The addition of  $Al^{3+}$  decreased the unit cell 289 parameters of goethite. d(020), b dimension, and specific surface area of 290 Al-substituted goethite decreased with an increase of aging time. It was 291 suggested the decrease of BET would make against the application of the 292 goethite in removal of environmental pollutions. The effect of aging time 293 of Al-substituted goethite on adsorption of environmental pollutions such 294 as heavy metal will be investigated in the next work. 295

296

13.45 mol% Al, 12.31 mol% Al and 5.85 mol% Al-substituted goethite
was gotten in one sample whose average Al substitution amount was 9.09
mol%. And the crystal width of goethite increased apparently with
increasing Al substitution amount as shown in TEM and EDS. Therefore,

the rapid co-precipitation method provided a better way to investigate the
difference of crystal morphology of goethite with different Al substitution
amount.

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