



Si transfers during Archean weathering processes traced by silicon isotopes and Ge/Si ratios

Camille Delvigne (1,2), Sophie Opfergelt (3), Axel Hofmann (4), Damien Cardinal (1,5), and Luc André (1)

(1) Department of Geology and Mineralogy, Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

(camille.delvigne@africamuseum.be), (2) Department of Earth Sciences and Environment, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium (cdelvigne@ulb.ac.be), (3) Earth and Life Institute, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (sophie.opfergelt@uclouvain.be), (4) Department of Geology, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa (ahofmann@uj.ac.za), (5) LOCEAN Laboratory, Sorbonne Universités (UPMC, Univ Paris 06)-CNRS-IRD-MNHN, Paris, France (damien.cardinal@locan-ipsl.upmc.fr)

Weathering conditions in the Mesoarchean are poorly constrained. Recent advances in analytical capabilities have added Si isotopes and Ge/Si ratios to the repertoire of tracers used in the study of soil formation processes: neoformation of secondary clay minerals is associated with large Si isotope and Ge/Si fractionation in response to desilication processes and the weathering degree [1, 2, 3, 4]. Here we combine Si isotopes and Ge/Si ratios of a Mesoarchean paleosol (~2.95 Ga) and of nearly coeval but younger shales as proxies of weathering processes and Si mass transfer at the early Earth's surface. The paleosol is developed on andesite and shows a well defined mineralogical and chemical differentiation. In a first step, similar to modern soils, neoformation of secondary clay minerals in the paleosol was associated with fractionation of Si isotopes and Ge/Si ratios in response to chemical weathering degree and soil desilication. In a second step, the loss of Fe(II)-rich minerals, likely Fe-rich smectites, due to low pO₂ conditions produced additional control on Si and Ge mobilities. Opposite fractionation behaviors are observed: products of desilication acted as ²⁸Si and Ge sink while the leaching of Fe(II)-rich minerals released ²⁸Si and Ge to soil solutions. Furthermore, the shales deposited immediately after the paleosol display $\delta^{28}\text{Si}$ and Ge/Si compositions which may be explained as mixtures of the recognized Archean paleosols components. Their recording within the sedimentary pile suggests that the observed weathering-induced desilication might have been widely effective during the Mesoarchean as well as Fe(II)-rich minerals leaching in a lesser extent and pointing out these processes as determinant in the Si transfers from continents to hydrosphere.

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- [2] Ziegler et al., (2005) *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* **69**, 4597-4610.
- [3] Opfergelt et al., (2010) *Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta* **74**, 225-240.
- [4] Steinhoefel et al., (2011) *Chem. Geol.* **286**, 280-289.