The effect of polymorphism and magnesium substitution on oxygen isotope fractionation between calcium carbonate and water

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Abstract—Calcite, aragonite and magnesian calcite were slowly precipitated from aqueous bicarbonate solutions, and oxygen isotope fractionation factors between the precipitate and water were measured. For calcite—water at 25°C and 0°C, 1000 ln $\alpha=28\cdot1$ and 33·7, respectively, both values in excellent agreement with the Urey–Epstein paleotemperature scale. Aragonite—water at 25°C gave 28·7, implying a small but significant fractionation between aragonite and calcite. O¹⁸ also concentrates in magnesian calcite, relative to pure calcite precipitated under the same conditions, by 0.06% for each mole-percent MgCO₃ in calcite.

Introduction

FROM theoretical calculations, UREY (1947) predicted that the temperature coefficient of the equilibrium constant for oxygen isotope exchange between calcium carbonate and water would be large enough to permit establishment of a geological thermometer based on that exchange reaction. The first experimental measurements of this temperature coefficient (McCrea, 1950) were based on inorganic precipitation of aragonite or an aragonite-calcite mixture from sea water over the temperature range 0-80°C.

The currently accepted calibration of the calcium carbonate—water paleothermometer was provided by Epstein et al. (1953) on the basis of calcium carbonate (calcite and aragonite) deposited by marine invertebrates, in some cases grown in thermostatted tanks, in other cases taken from natural environments of known temperatures. The remarkable accuracy, sensitivity and usefulness of the carbonate—water paleotemperature scale have been demonstrated by a large number of significant papers published over the last fifteen years.

The purpose of the present study is to investigate some of the possible secondorder effects which may influence the oxygen isotope distribution in calcium carbonate-water systems in nature. An attempt is made to answer several

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questions:

- (1) What is the effect of calcite-aragonite polymorphism?
- (2) What is the effect of magnesium solid solution in calcite?
- (3) What is the effect of salinity of the aqueous phase?
- (4) Are there significant isotopic differences between biologically and inorganically precipitated carbonates?
- (5) What can be said with regard to the attainment of isotopic equilibrium in the precipitation of calcium carbonate from aqueous solutions?

There is no a priori reason why calcite and aragonite should behave identically in isotope exchange reactions. In a calculation of isotopic partition function ratios, following the theoretical treatments of UREY (1947), BIGELEISEN and MAYER (1947), and McCrea (1950), one would use, in part, the internal vibration frequencies of the carbonate ions, which are significantly different for the two polymorphs (Huang and Kerr, 1960; Adler and Kerr, 1963; Schroeder et al., 1962). A calculation based on the observed vibrational frequencies predicts an enrichment of both O¹⁸ and C¹³ in aragonite relative to calcite by a few tenths permil (O'Neile et al., 1969). Separate analyses of the pearly layer (aragonite) and the prismatic layer (calcite) from the shell of an abalone, Haliotis Rufescens, grown at constant temperature suggest that the aragonite-calcite fractionations are not this large (Epstein et al., 1953; Epstein, 1959).

McCrea's (1950) statement that no relationship was observed between isotopic composition and crystal structure must be evaluated in light of the range of as much as one permit which he observed for carbonates precipitated at the same temperature.

Magnesium in metastable solid solution in calcite is common in marine organisms. Typical high-magnesian calcite may contain ~15 mole per cent MgCO₃. Oxygen isotope fractionations among alkaline earth carbonates precipitated at 25°C have been measured, and are found to be on the order of a few permil: CaCO₃(calcite-SrCO₃ 1·2%₀, CaCO₃-BaCO₃ 3·6%₀ (O'Neil et al., 1969). Dolomite-calcite fractionations of 4-7%₀ at 25°C have been estimated by extrapolation of high-temperature experiments (Northrop and Clayton, 1966; O'Neil and Epstein, 1966a). From these results it is expected that magnesian calcites should show a larger isotope fractionation relative to water than pure calcite.

The paleothermometer calibrations of EPSTEIN et al. (1953) were carried out in sea water. It has generally been assumed that the same fractionations would be observed in fresh or hypersaline waters. Because of the possibility of significant alteration of the structure of water by complex formation (TAUBE, 1954), it is desirable to test this assumption.

It was noted by Epstein et al. (1953) that the temperature coefficient of the calcium carbonate—water isotopic thermometer determined from biologically precipitated carbonate was "essentially in agreement" with the temperature coefficient measured by McCrea (1950) for inorganically precipitated calcium carbonate. We have attempted to verify this observation, and to detect any small differences which might exist, either in the temperature coefficient, or in the absolute magnitude of the fractionation factor.

UREY et al. (1951) discussed the possibility that organisms might deposit

calcium carbonate out of isotopic equilibrium with sea-water. It is now known that some organisms do indeed exert a "vital effect" (Lowenstam and Epstein, 1954; Weber and Raup, 1966). The close correspondence between fractionations observed for a number of different invertebrates and for inorganically precipitated carbonate (EPSTEIN et al., 1953) argues for a close approach to equilibrium between the carbonate and water in these instances. A stronger case is provided by the fact that a simple two-parameter equation was an excellent fit to the high-temperature exchange equilibrium data of CLAYTON (1961) as well as to the low-temperature data of Epstein et al. (1953).

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURES

Materials

Calcium bicarbonate solutions were prepared by passing carbon dioxide at one atmosphere pressure through a suspension of reagent grade calcium carbonate in distilled water. After standing at room temperature for one hour or longer, the solution was filtered to remove excess calcium carbonate. Magnesium bicarbonate solutions were prepared by the same procedure, using reagent grade basic magnesium carbonate. Concentrations of the calcium and magnesium bicarbonate solutions were determined by EDTA titration.

Solutions of malate and pyruvate were prepared by addition of sodium hydroxide to solutions of malic acid and pyruvic acid to bring the pH to 7, following the procedure of KITANO and Ноор (1965).

Slow precipitation of carbonates

Five hundred milliliters of calcium bicarbonate solution (with or without added magnesium salts or organic acid solutions) was placed in a gas washing bottle with a fritted disc, and was maintained at 25°C in a constant temperature water bath or at 0°C in an ice-water bath. Carbon dioxide was slowly removed from the solution by a finely dispersed stream of nitrogen which had been passed through water of the same isotopic composition as the solution so as to avoid changing the isotopic composition of the solution by evaporation. After a period of several hours or days the precipitated carbonate was removed from the vessel, washed with water and acetone and dried for one hour at 100°C.

The polymorphic form of the precipitated calcium carbonate is sensitive to conditions of precipitation, such as rate and temperature (WRAY and DANIELS, 1957) and presence of other substances in solution (KITANO and HOOD, 1965). Under the conditions employed here, pure calcium bicarbonate solutions gave calcite, or calcite-vaterite mixtures. It is not clear what determines their proportions. In one precipitation where both were formed, successive sampling at various times showed that both phases continued to form throughout the experiment.

Solutions of calcium bicarbonate containing magnesium ion (added as magnesium chloride solution) gave aragonite (occasionally containing a minor amount of calcite), as was shown by KITANO and HOOD (1965).

Products were identified by microscopic examination, and by X-ray diffraction. Magnesium content of magnesian calcites was determined from the d-spacing of the 112 diffraction line. using a Norelco diffractometer with silicon as an internal standard.

Isotopic analysis of carbonates was done by the phosphoric acid procedure of McCrea (1950). Water samples were analyzed by equilibration of the final solution with carbon dioxide (COHN and UREY, 1938). Mass spectrometer results were corrected for value mixing, background, and mass-44 tail, and corrections for C18 variations were made according to the formulas of CRAIG (1957). Analyses of carbon dioxide from carbonates were corrected by a factor of 1.01025 (modified after Sharma and Clayton, 1965) to take account of the isotopic fractionation in the phosphoric acid reaction. This factor is not significantly different for calcite and aragonite. as was verified in the present work by analysis of a sample before and after conversion from aragonite to calcite by heating in vacuum for one hour at 410°C. The same value was used for magnesian calcites. Analyses of water were calculated using the factor 1.04073 for equilibrium between carbon dioxide gas and liquid water at 25°C (O'Neil and Epstein, 1966b).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Calcite, 25°C

Results of isotopic analyses of precipitates from pure calcium bicarbonate solutions are given in Table 1. The range of observed values of the calcium carbonate-water fractionation at 25° C is from 27.90 to 28.75 (expressed as 1000 (O¹⁸/O¹⁶) calcium carbonate)

 $\ln \alpha$, where $\alpha = \frac{({\rm O^{18}/O^{16})~calcium~carbonate}}{({\rm O^{18}/O^{16})~water}}$). It was observed from microscopic and X-ray examination that several of the samples contained vaterite as well as

E x pt. No.	Init. Ca ²⁺ conc. (mg/l)	N ₂ flow rate (ml/min)	Time (hr)	CaCO ₃ wt. (mg)	1000 in α	Vaterite*	Remarks
Cl	220	10	18	45	28.33	2	
C2	250	10	18	115	28.59	2	
C3	280	10	18	120	28.50	2	
C4	300	10	22	115	28.22	I	
C5	315	10	24	152	$28 \cdot 37$	1	NaCl 36 g/
C6	390	10	18	295	27.97	1	0,
C7	290	1	42	70	28.56	2	
C8	310	1	43	78	28.43	I	
C9	182	1	68	142	28.40	ı	
C10	320	1	65	130	28.29	1	
Cll	220	1	90	60	28.10	0	
C12	241	1	90	142	27.90	0	
C13	262	1	90	126	28.16	0	
C14	290	1	90	205	28.47	2	
C15	310	1	90	135	28.38	0	
C16	320	1	92	115	28.75	0	NaCl 36 g/
C17	340	1	90	125	28.74	0	G/
C18	390	1	90	357	28.73	0	
C19	218	10†	137	22.5	28.49	1	
C20	310	10†	138	155	28.43	1	
C21	420	10†	137	292	28.75	0	
C22	218	10†	232	22.5	28.17	0	
C23	310	10†	208	80	28.46	0	
C24	420	10†	209	345	28-65	0	

Table 1. Calcite precipitation at 25°C

calcite, as indicated in column 7 of Table 1. In two cases, samples C2 and C7, the two polymorphs were separated by heavy liquids and analyzed. In each case the vaterite phase was found to be enriched in O¹⁸ by 0.5%, and in C¹³ by 0.6%, relative to the associated calcite. Since it was not practicable to carry out this separation on all vaterite-containing samples, results from such samples were not further considered.

The variation in observed fractionation factor, considerably outside experimental error, was uncorrelated with nitrogen flow rate, and thus was not considered to be related to rate of precipitation. There was, however a correlation with initial calcium concentration, with higher concentrations giving rise to larger fractionations. Attempts were made to determine whether the fractionation remained

^{*} Visual estimate of vaterite fraction: 0 < 5%; 15-30%; 230-50%.

[†] N₂ flow at this rate 10 min per day, then shut off.

constant throughout a precipitation experiment by interrupting the experiment several times to remove the precipitate for analysis. Unfortunately, these happened to be cases in which large amounts of vaterite and some aragonite were formed so that the results did not provide the required test. In two experiments, numbers C18 and C24, the total calcite product was reacted with phosphoric acid in the usual procedure for extraction of carbon dioxide for isotopic analysis, except that successively evolved fractions of carbon dioxide were removed at intervals of 15 or 30 min. The results are presented in Table 2. It can be seen from the large

Table 2. Sequential isotopic analysis of precipitated carbonates

Expt. No.	H ₃ PO ₄ react. time	CO_2 yield (μ mole)	$\delta^{\mathrm{C}^{18}}$ rel. PDB*	$\delta m O^{18}$ rel. SMOW	$1000 \ln \alpha$ $C_{8}CO_{3}-H_{2}O$
C18	5 min	26	-26.37	22-17	28-45
	15 min	80	-26.69	22.26	28.54
	30 min	120	$-27 \cdot 18$	22.45	28.72
	60 min	180	-27.69	22.56	28.83
	24 hr	136	 28·37	22-49	28.76
C24	15 min	60	26 ·87	22.00	28-28
	30 min	70	$-27 \cdot 20$	22.25	28-53
	45 min	67	-27.52	22.34	28.62
	60 min	60	 27·68	22-44	28.71
	75 min	52	-27.86	22.46	28.73
	105 min	79	-27.95	22.65	28-92
	24 hr	72	28-25	22-65	28.92
A5	5 min	249	 26·80	22.91	28.72
	10 min	128	$-27 \cdot 26$	23.01	28.82
	60 min	59	-27.46	22.94	28.75

^{*} Isotopic compositions given in δ -terminology, as deviations of isotopic ratio from standards in parts per thousand (permil, %). Carbon standard is the Chicago carbonate PDB; oxygen standard is Standard Mean Ocean Water (SMOW).

systematic trend in δC^{13} values that the acid reaction proceeds in large part by stripping of grains from the outside in. The variation in C13 content reflects the increase of δC13 in the bicarbonate solution as isotopically lighter carbon dioxide is swept from it during precipitation. Hence the smaller trend visible in the O¹⁸ data also reflects a lower δO^{18} in the outer parts of the crystals than in the interiors. Since the oxygen reservoir in the solution is large, this effect can only be attributed to a small change in fractionation factor.

It is not clear whether the observed differences in fractionation factor represent departures from equilibrium or variations in the equilibrium constant in response to small changes in ionic concentration or pH. (Note that the pH of a saturated solution increases as the calcium concentration decreases.) If departures from equilibrium are significant, then they might be expected to be greatest at the beginning of precipitation when supersaturation and crystal imperfection might be important. The possibility of an effect of ionic concentration was investigated by means of a precipitation from a solution containing 36 g/l of sodium chloride (experiments C5 and C15). The resulting fractionations were not significantly different from results from other experiments of comparable calcium concentration.

It is clearly improper simply to average the data when apparently real systematic trends exist. For the reasons given above, we tentatively conclude that the smaller fractionations, obtained in more dilute solutions and under more favorable

Expt. No.	Init. Ca ²⁺ conc. Time (mg/l) (hr)		CaCO ₃ wt. (mg)	1000 in α	Remarks	
C25	360	96	95	33.66	NaCl 23.5 g/l; Na ₂ SO ₄ 3.92 g/l	
C26	340	96	95	33.75		

Table 3. Calcite precipitation at 0°C

crystal growth conditions, more closely approach the equilibrium value. A value of $1000 \ln \alpha = 28.1$ has been selected as the mean of the lowest four experimental values (C11, C12, C13, C22).

Calcite, 0°C

Results of three precipitations of calcite from calcium bicarbonate solutions carried out in an ice bath at 0°C are given in Table 3. The solution in experiment No. C25 also contained 23·5 g/l NaCl and 3·92 g/l Na₂SO₄. With these limited data no significant differences were observed, so the mean value of 1000 $\ln \alpha = 33.7$ was taken.

Aragonite, 25°C

The isotopic fractionations measured between aragonite and water are given in Table 4. They are identical, within experimental error, for all values of the calcium, magnesium and sodium concentrations studied and for a range of a factor of ten in precipitation rate. The stripping experiment for run A5 in Table 2 shows no change of O^{18} content as the crystals grew. The mean value of $1000 \ln \alpha$ is 28.71, implying a fractionation between aragonite and calcite of 0.6 at 25° C.

Magnesian calcite, 25°C

Table 5 shows results of magnesian calcite precipitations.

Calcite precipitated in the presence of malate and pyruvate salts, gave a mean fractionation value of 27.8, i.e. 0.3 lower than the value from pure calcium bicarbonate experiments. The origin of this effect is unknown, and we have assumed it to be constant for all precipitations from malate or pyruvate solutions. The trend of isotopic fractionation with increasing magnesium in solid solution in calcite is shown in Fig. 1. The effect amounts to an increase of 1000 $\ln \alpha$ by 0.06 for each mole per cent MgCO₃ in calcite.

Expt. No.	Init. Ca ²⁺ conc. (mg/l)	Mg ²⁺ cone. (mg/l)	N ₂ flow rate (ml/min)	Time (hr)	CaCO ₃ wt. (mg)	1000 ln a	Remarks
Al	270	480		91	110	28-68	
A2	270	364		90	150	28.68	
A.3	330	1535		72	120	28.71	NaCl 23-5 g/l; Na ₂ SO ₄ 3-92 g/l
A4	300	480	10	19	124	28.78	
A5	310	480	10	19	145	28.68	
A6	260	480	1	89	82	28.59	
A7	310	480	1	118	175	28.85	
A8	260	960	10	164	90	28.70	N, flow 1 hr/day

Table 4. Aragonite precipitation at 25°C

Expt. No.	Init. Ca ²⁺ conc. (mg/l)	Mg ²⁺ conc. (mg/l)*	Organic acid (g/l)†	Time (hr)	Mole % Mg in calcite	1000 ln α	Remarks
MC-1	310	0	М 5	65		27.85	
MC-2	320	0	M 5	258		27.66	
MC-3	350	0	M 5	63		27.91	
MC-4	270	0	P 5	70		27.79	
MC-5	200	Cl 195	M 5	144	5.7	27.97	
MC-6	240	H 290	M 5	66	9.0	28.38	
MC-7	270	H 500	М 5	72	12.8	28.80	NaCl 36 g/
MC-8	260	H 420	M 10	96	11.8	28.39	
MC-9	280	H 365	M 10	71	10.7	28.41	
MC-10	290	H 290	M 10	72	5-7	27.81	
MC-11	320	H 182	P 5	19	3.7	28.16	
MC-12	270	H 132	P 8	45	5.3	27.91	
MC-13	300	H 138	P 8	138	4.7	28.08	

Table 5. Magnesian calcite precipitation at 25°C

[†] M = malic acid; P = pyruvic acid.

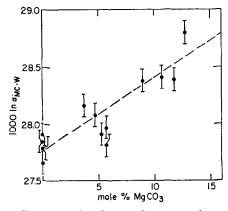


Fig. 1. Fractionation factors for magnesian calcite-water.

Comparison with biogenic carbonates

The calibration of the paleotemperature scale of Epstein et al. (1953) was given in terms of ô-values of CO2 from carbonates and of CO2 equilibrated with water. Now that the fractionation factors associated with the two analytical procedures are known, their experimental values can be recalculated to give carbonate-water fractionation factors. In the work of EPSTEIN et al., the δ -values of both CO₂ liberated from carbonates by H₃PO₄ and water-CO₂ were very near that of the mass spectrometer working standard, so corrections proportional to & were insignificant. However, in the calculation of fractionation factors, corrections must be made for dilution of water oxygen by CO₂ oxygen, and for the &C¹⁸ difference between the equilibration CO₂ and the mass spectrometer standard (Craig, 1957). Taking $\delta \bar{C}^{13} = -29\cdot2\%$ and $\delta O^{18} = -14\cdot9\%$, both relative to PDB (Craig, 1957) the correction to the water analysis is -0.18%. A sample

^{*} Cl = magnesium chloride; H = magnesium bicarbonate.

recalculation of the data of Epstein et al. is as follows:

For sample 18(a), Table 7, page 1324, raw δ (carbonate)-raw

 $\delta(\text{water}) = 1.46\%$

Correcting for water analysis as above, $\delta_{\rm c} - \delta_{\rm w} = 1.64$.

Then

$$\alpha = \frac{(1.00164)(1.04070)}{1.01025} = 1.03183$$

where 1.04070 is the $CO_{2(g)}$ -- $H_2O_{(l)}$ equilibrium fractionation factor (O'Neil and Epstein, 1966b), and 1.01025 is the CO_2 -CaCO₃ kinetic fractionation factor (modified from Sharma and Clayton, 1965).

The biogenic carbonate data are compared with the inorganic precipitation data in Fig. 2. The agreement with the calcite line is remarkably close. However, the

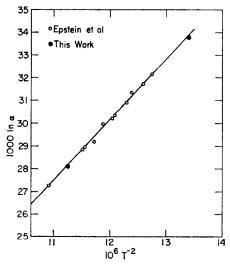


Fig. 2. Comparison of precipitation results with paleotemperature calibration of EPSTEIN et al. (1953).

data of EPSTEIN et al. were derived from analysis of both calcite and aragonite, taken in some cases from different parts of the same shell. Inspection of the analytical results in Table 7 of their paper leads to the conclusion that if any systematic difference exists between coexisting calcite and aragonite, it is small and in the opposite direction to that reported in the present study. If our conclusions about the magnitude and direction of the equilibrium calcite—aragonite fractionation are correct, then the implication is either that there is a vital effect on the isotopic fractionation in the biological precipitation of aragonite, or that there is a difference in behavior of calcite and aragonite in the analytical treatments, possibly in the helium roasting step.

In any case the differences in isotopic fractionation between inorganic and biogenic carbonates are very small, lending strong support to the interpretation that both sets of data represent a close approach to isotopic equilibrium between carbonate and water.

Comparison with theory

Calculations of oxygen isotope equilibrium fractionations among various divalent metal carbonates have been presented by O'Neil et al. (1969). The results of such calculations depend rather strongly on which of the several published sets of vibrational frequencies are chosen. It was found by Bottinga (1968) and O'Neil et al. (1969) that the frequencies given by Schroeder et al. (1962) give reasonable agreement with experiment for the calcite—water system. The same was found to be the case for carbon isotope fractionation (Rubinson and Clayton, 1969). The calculated aragonite—calcite fractionation at 25°C is: $1000 \ln \alpha_{A-C} = 0.79$, in good agreement with the experimental value of 0.6. All of the difference between the two polymorphs arises from differences in the internal vibration frequencies of the carbonate ion, the lattice contributions to the heat capacity being the same for both forms within experimental error.

Conclusions

Inorganic precipitation of calcite from water at 0° and 25° C gives excellent agreement in fractionation factor and in its temperature coefficient with the results of biogenic carbonate precipitation which determine the oxygen isotope paleotemperature scale of Epstein *et al.* (1953). A significant aragonite-calcite fractionation was found in the laboratory experiments, but has not been observed in organically precipitated carbonates. The reason for this discrepancy is not known. The magnitude of the difference, 0.6%, corresponds to an apparent temperature difference of 2.6° if the standard paleotemperature calibration is used.

Magnesian calcites are found to have significantly larger calcite—water fractionations than pure calcites. The effect on paleotemperatures is an error of 0.26° per mole-per cent MgCO₃, and so might give rise to errors of 3 or 4° in high-magnesian calcites.

The results presented here do not satisfy any rigorous conditions for proof of equilibrium. Our conclusion that isotopic equilibrium has been closely approached is based on several lines of evidence: insensitivity of the measured values to large changes in precipitation rate, insensitivity to changes in ionic strength, close coincidence between results from biogenic and inorganically precipitated carbonates, good fit with high-temperature data, and good agreement between experiment and theory. None of these alone is very convincing, but their total impact makes an equilibrium interpretation reasonable.

There may be some question as to the propriety of discussing isotopic equilibrium involving phases which are metastable, as in the case of aragonite at 25°C, and one atmosphere pressure. Nothing in the experimental results suggests that metastability with respect to phase transititions has any influence on the isotope exchange equilibrium. Neither of the metastable phases, aragonite or vaterite, underwent a solid-state transition to calcite under the conditions of the experiment, nor was there any evidence of dissolution of these phases to precipitate the stable calcite.

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