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STUDIES ON URANIUM
MINERALS: RUTHERFORDINE,
DIDERICHITE AND CLARKEITE

By Clifford Frondel and Robert Meyrowitz

Trace Elements Investigations Report 474

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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Dr. Phillip L. Merritt, Assistant Director
Division of Raw Materials
U. S. Atomic Energy Commission
16th and Constitution Avenue, N. W.
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Phil:

Transmitted herewith are three copies of TEI-474, "Studies on uranium minerals: Rutherfordine, diderichite, and clarkeite," by Clifford Frondel and Robert Meyrowitz, October 1954.

We are asking Mr. Hosted to approve our plan to submit this report for publication in American Mineralogist.

Sincerely yours,

Dwight M. Loomis
for W. H. Bradley
Chief Geologist

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STUDIES ON URANIUM MINERALS: RUTHERFORDINE,
DIDERICHITE, AND CLARKEITE*

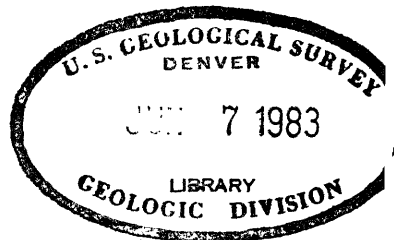
By

Clifford Frondel and Robert Meyrowitz

October 1954

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STUDIES ON URANIUM MINERALS: RUTHERFORDINE,
DIDERICHITE, AND CLARKEITE

By Clifford Frondel and Robert Meyrowitz

ABSTRACT

Rutherfordine, diderichite, and a synthetic uranyl carbonate obtained by heating UO_3 in H_2O under 15,000 psi CO_2 at $300^\circ C$ afforded identical X-ray powder patterns and on analysis each yielded the formula $(UO_2)(CO_3)$. The name rutherfordine has priority. Two new localities are recorded for rutherfordine at Beryl Mountain, New Hampshire, and Newry, Maine, where it occurs as a weathering product of uraninite in pegmatite. Rutherfordine occurs as crusts and aggregates of orthorhombic (?) fibers; biaxial positive, with α 1.720-1.723, β 1.728-1.730, γ 1.755-1.760; Y along the fiber length.

Clarkeite is described from its second known locality, the Ajmer district, Rajputana, India, where it occurs as microcrystalline, chocolate-brown alteration product of uraninite in pegmatite. Analysis yielded the formula $(Na,Ca,Pb,Th,H_2O)_2U_2(O,H_2O)_7$; isostructural with $Na_2U_2O_7$ and CaU_2O_7 . Specific gravity 6.29, mean index of refraction 1.94 - 1.97.

RUTHERFORDINE

Four supposedly distinct uranyl carbonates have been described: rutherfordine, diderichite, sharpite, and studdite. The scant existing data for these minerals, summarized in table 1, make further study desirable. About 20 specimens labeled rutherfordine from the original

Table 1.--Data summarized from the literature on the natural uranyl carbonates.

	Rutherfordine	Diderichite	Sharpite	Studite
Symmetry	Orthorhombic ?	Orthorhombic ?	Orthorhombic ?	Orthorhombic ?
Habit	Aggregates of minute fibers	Fibrous crusts	Fibrous crusts	Fibrous crusts
Composition	$(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3) ?$	Slightly hydrated uranyl carbonate	$(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3) \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O} ?$	Hydrated uranyl carbonate with Pb
Analysis	Cited by Marckwald (1906)	Qualitative tests only	Cited by Melon (1938)	Qualitative tests only
Color	Yellow	Yellow-green	Greenish yellow	Yellow
Specific gravity	4.82 ?	--	3.33	--
Indices of refraction	α 1.72 + 0.01 β -- γ 1.80 + 0.01	1.722 - 1.728 1.728 1.728 - 1.74	1.633, brownish -- 1.72, greenish yellow	1.545 1.555 1.68
Other optic data		Y = e long. Biaxial positive 2V large	Z = e long. Y \perp flattening	Z = e long. Biaxial negative 2V large
Thermal data	CO_2 lost over 300°C		H_2O lost 200-275°C CO_2 and H_2O at 325°C	
Locality	Morogoro, Tanganyika	Katanga, Belgian Congo	Katanga, Belgian Congo	Katanga, Belgian Congo
References	Marckwald (1906) Larsen (1921)	Vaes (1947)	Mélon (1938)	Vaes (1947)

locality at Morogoro, Tanganyika, Africa, were available for study. Most of these specimens were found to consist variously of kasolite, uranophane, and hydrated lead uranyl oxides as alteration zones about cubes of uraninite, and only two contained a uranyl carbonate. The latter mineral was earthy to pulverulent in consistency, with a pale brownish-yellow to straw-yellow color and dull luster. Under the microscope the mineral appeared as minute fibers and lathlike subparallel aggregates; biaxial positive, with α 1.723 (X = nearly colorless), β 1.730 (Y = pale yellow), γ 1.760 (Z = pale greenish yellow); extinction parallel, with Y along the elongation and Z perpendicular to the flattening. The mineral probably is orthorhombic. A new chemical analysis, made on material known to contain a small amount of kasolite, is close to the original analysis of Marckwald (1906). Both analyses, cited in table 2, have been recalculated after deducting the Pb and Ca, as kasolite and uranophane, together with the H₂O-, iron oxide, and residual Si or Ca. The ratios then are close to the formula (UO₂)(CO₃), originally given for this mineral by Marckwald (1906) and later accepted by Mélon (1938) and others.

The X-ray powder spacing data are given in table 3. These data are virtually identical with those given by Miller, Pray, and Munger (1949) for synthetic (UO₂)(CO₃), and are identical with those afforded by a product 1/ obtained by heating precipitated UO₃·nH₂O at 300°C under 15,000 psi CO₂. An analysis of the latter substance, given in table 2, affords the formula (UO₂)(CO₃). This material was found to contain a small amount of U₃O₈ formed by thermal dissociation of the UO₃, accounting

1/ Prepared for us by Miss E. Berman and Dr. G. Kennedy, Harvard University, 1953.

Table 2.--Chemical analyses of uranyl carbonates.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
UO ₃	86.68	86.7	85.9	86.6	87.7	83.8	78.6	85.5
UO ₂								2.6
CaO						1.1	0.2	
PbO						1.0	4.2	
Fe ₂ O ₃						0.8	1.1	
SiO ₂						0.8	1.8	
H ₂ O+		0.2	1.4	n.d.	0.5	0.7	1.9	0.5
H ₂ O-							0.6	0.0
CO ₂	13.32	13.1	12.7	13.6	11.8	12.1	10.5	11.2
Total	100.00	100.0	100.0	100.2	100.0	100.3	98.9	99.8
Specific gravity			5.8	5.43	6.10		5.08	6.10

1. Theoretical weight percentages, (UO₂)(CO₃).
2. Rutherfordine, Morogoro. Original analysis of Marckwald (1906), column 6, recalculated to 100 after deduction of Pb and Ca as kasolite and uranophane together with remaining CaO and FeO.
3. Rutherfordine, Morogoro. New analysis of R. Meyrowitz (column 7), recalculated after deduction of Pb and Ca as kasolite and uranophane together with remaining SiO₂, Fe₂O₃, and H₂O-.
4. Diderichite, Katanga. Analyst: R. Meyrowitz, 1954. Type material of Vaes. Contains a small but undetermined amount of H₂O.
5. Synthetic uranyl carbonate. Recalculated from the analysis of Meyrowitz (column 8) after deduction of UO₂ as U₃O₈.
6. Rutherfordine, Morogoro. Original analysis of Marckwald (1906). Fe reported as FeO.
7. Rutherfordine, Morogoro. Analyst: R. Meyrowitz, 1954. Known to contain some admixed kasolite.
8. Synthetic uranyl carbonate. Analyst: R. Meyrowitz, 1954. Known to contain some admixed U₃O₈.

Table 3.--X-ray diffraction powder spacing data for rutherfordine (CuK α /Ni).

<u>I</u>	<u>d</u> (A)	<u>I</u>	<u>d</u> (A)	<u>I</u>	<u>d</u> (A)	<u>I</u>	<u>d</u> (A)
10	4.60	2	2.41	2	1.874	2	1.435
8	4.29	3	2.32	3	1.734	3	1.388
6	3.90	4	2.15	1	1.658	1	1.373
9	3.21	5	2.05	1	1.603	1	1.346
4	2.64	1	1.95	1	1.588	1	1.318
1	2.51	2	1.914	2	1.510	1	1.275

for the UO₂ reported in the analysis, together with a small amount of an unidentified impurity. The particle size of the material was too small for satisfactory optical study. It may be noted that the analyses of the natural and synthetic substances (table 2) all show a small amount of water retained over 110°C. Although our data for rutherfordine are not based on a type specimen, the close correspondence in physical and chemical properties with the original description leaves little doubt but that they are representative of the mineral. The only discrepancy is with the description of a non-type specimen by Larsen (1921, p. 129), cited in table 1. His value α 1.72 agrees with ours, but his γ 1.80 is much higher and probably was obtained on an admixed uranium oxide.

We have identified rutherfordine on the basis of X-ray patterns and qualitative chemical tests from two additional localities. It occurs abundantly at Beryl Mountain, New Hampshire, as dense to earthy pseudomorphs after uraninite in pegmatite, associated with schoepite, vandendriesscheite, and uranophane. It also occurs as an alteration of

uraninite at Newry, Maine. At both localities the mineral forms earthy, yellow to straw yellow aggregates of extremely small particle size, and appears to be a weathering product. Certain specimens of yellow to orange "gummite" from the Ruggles and Palermo pegmatites, both in New Hampshire, also were found to effervesce slightly in dilute HCl but rutherfordine could not be identified in them with certainty.

DIDERICHITE

An authentic specimen of diderichite from the type locality at Katanga, Belgian Congo, was kindly given to us by Dr. J. F. Vaes, of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, who describes the mineral in 1947. The X-ray powder pattern proved to be identical with that of rutherfordine, and a chemical analysis, cited in table 2, is very close to the formula $(UO_2)(CO_3)$. The mineral occurs as crusts of fibers and laths. These are biaxial positive, with α 1.720 (X = pale yellow), β 1.728 (Y = yellow), γ 1.755 (Z = greenish yellow), with 2V large. Parallel extinction, with Y along the elongation and Z perpendicular to the flattening. These data agree with those of Vaes (1947) and with our data for rutherfordine. We consider that diderichite is identical with rutherfordine. The latter name has priority.

SHARPITE AND STUDDITE

No new data have been obtained for either sharpite or studdite. The type specimens of sharpite were destroyed during the war,^{2/} and other specimens do not appear to be extant. A specimen labeled studdite from

^{2/} Private communication, Professor H. Brasseur, University of Liège, 1954.

the type locality at Katanga was available for study, but despite careful examination no mineral closely answering the description of this species was found on it. The optical properties of both sharpite and studdite, cited in table 1, are distinct from those of rutherfordine and of the other known carbonates of uranium.

CLARKEITE

Clarkeite, hitherto known only from the Spruce Pine district, N. C., has been identified as an alteration product of uraninite in pegmatite in the Ajmer district, Rajputana, India. The specimens, striking in appearance, consist of fractured and in part kaolinized masses of white feldspar containing crystals of uraninite as much as an inch in diameter. The uraninite crystals are zonally altered, and show a small, embayed core of black uraninite, a surrounding zone of deep chocolate-brown clarkeite with a waxy luster, a succeeding zone of bright orange-red microcrystalline fourmarierite, and an outer pale yellowish-green zone composed chiefly of uranophane. In some specimens the residual core of uraninite is lacking and in others the crystals have been completely altered to uranophane.

The clarkeite is dense and microcrystalline. The color in transmitted light is deep brownish yellow, and the mean index of refraction, slightly variable, is between 1.94 and 1.97, specific gravity 6.29. The X-ray powder pattern is virtually identical with that obtained from the analysis sample of the original material from Spruce Pine described by Ross, Henderson and Posnjak (1931). X-ray powder data for the latter mineral and for synthetic clarkeite are given by Gruner (1954).

A chemical analysis of the Rajputana material is cited in table 4. The analysis is very close to the ratio $\text{Na}_2\text{O}\cdot\text{CaO}\cdot\text{PbO}\cdot 8\text{UO}_3\cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$. Gruner (1954), however, has shown that clarkeite is a diuranate isostructural with $\text{Na}_2\text{U}_2\text{O}_7$ and CaU_2O_7 . Water is present in the natural material and in some synthetic preparations but is not essential to the structure. Both the Rajputana and Spruce Pine materials are solid solutions between $\text{Na}_2\text{U}_2\text{O}_7$, CaU_2O_7 , and PbU_2O_7 in which the cation vacancies are occupied by neutral H_2O molecules and in which valence compensation is effected by a concomitant substitution of (OH) or H_2O for O. Our analysis of the Rajputana material conforms to the formula



or to $(\text{Na}_{0.53}\text{Ca}_{0.26}\text{Pb}_{0.25}\text{Th}_{0.06}\text{U}_{0.02}\text{H}_2\text{O}_{0.88})_2\text{U}_2(\text{O}_{6.93}\text{H}_2\text{O}_{0.07})_7$.

The calculated weight percentages for the latter formula are given in table 4. Thermal data presumably would distinguish between the two interpretations based on (OH) or H_2O in substitution for O.

ANALYTICAL METHODS

The methods employed were guided by semiquantitative spectrographic analyses of the samples by C. S. Ansell, U. S. Geological Survey. Quadri-valent uranium was determined by dissolving the mineral in 1:3 H_2SO_4 and titrating with approximately 0.03N potassium permanganate which had been standardized against a known uranium solution. Sexivalent uranium was calculated by difference after total uranium had been determined by reduction in a Jones reductor and titrating with standard potassium permanganate, using the same sample employed for the determination of quadri-valent uranium; lead was removed as the sulfate prior to the reduction

Table 4.--Chemical analysis of clarkeite
from Rajputana.

	1.	2.	3.
Na ₂ O	2.4	2.3	2.3
CaO	2.1	2.1	2.1
PbO	8.0	8.0	7.9
UO ₂	0.8	0.8	0.8
UO ₃	82.0	80.2	79.9
ThO ₂	2.3	2.4	2.4
H ₂ O+	2.4	4.2	4.2
H ₂ O-			1.3
Insol.			0.2
Total	100.00	100.0	101.1
Specific gravity			6.29

1. Theoretical weight percentages for the derived formula $(\text{Na}_{0.53}\text{Ca}_{0.26}\text{Pb}_{0.25}\text{Th}_{0.06}\text{U}_{0.02}\text{H}_2\text{O}_{0.88})_2\text{U}_2(\text{O}_{6.93}\text{H}_2\text{O}_{0.07})_7$
2. Analysis 3 recalculated to 100 after deduction of insoluble and H₂O--.
3. Clarkeite, Rajputana. Analyst: R. Meyrowitz, 1953.

of the dilute solution. The alkaline earths were determined as the sulfates after separation as the sulfates from a 85 percent ethyl alcohol solution. The alkalies were determined as the sulfates; the alkali pyrosulfate formed on ignition was converted to the normal sulfate by heating with successive small samples of ammonium carbonate in a covered dish to constant weight. Lead was separated as the sulfide and determined as the sulfate. The R_2O_3 group was precipitated by CO_2 -free ammonium hydroxide. Qualitative spectrographic analyses were made of the total alkali, total alkaline earth, and total R_2O_3 precipitates. In the carbonate analyses, the CO_2 and H_2O were determined by a modified microcombustion train of the type used for determination of C and H in organic compounds. The samples were decomposed by ignition at $900^\circ C$ in a stream of oxygen. In the clarkeite analyses the H_2O was calculated from the loss on ignition. H_2O - was determined by dehydrating the sample to constant weight at $110^\circ C$. The iron was determined using o-phenanthroline. A standard iron curve was prepared using solutions that contained approximately the same amount of uranium contained in the aliquot of solution used for the determination of iron. The thorium was calculated by difference using the R_2O_3 value. The samples employed in the separate determinations ranged in weight from 20 to 100 mg.

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