

Oxygen Rich Stardust Grains from Novae

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Content

Stardust grains which have condensed from nova ejecta are exceedingly rare in meteorites. Principally through proton captures, novae are efficient producers of the stable isotopes ^{13}C , ^{15}N , and ^{17}O , as well as radioactive isotopes such as ^{22}Na and ^{26}Al [1-3]. To date, primarily carbonaceous phases of stardust grains (e.g., SiC and graphite), with combinations of low $^{12}\text{C}/^{13}\text{C}$ and $^{14}\text{N}/^{15}\text{N}$ ratios, high $^{30}\text{Si}/^{28}\text{Si}$, and high inferred $^{26}\text{Al}/^{27}\text{Al}$ and $^{22}\text{Ne}/^{20}\text{Ne}$ ratios (when measured), have been purported to have formed in novae [4-6]. A few purported nova grains may have actually condensed in supernova ejecta [7]; however, some are undoubtedly nova condensates [8, 9]. Conversely, as material ejected in nova explosions is O-rich, it remains a puzzle why to date mostly carbonaceous nova grain candidates, with only a few possible exceptions [10, 11], have been discovered. O-rich stardust grains with $^{17}\text{O}/^{16}\text{O}$ ratios significantly greater than 0.004, the predicted maximum value that can be reached in low- and intermediate-mass AGB and RGB stars [12], have been proposed to be of nova origin. In most cases, the O isotopic compositions of many of these grains can be fairly well matched by CO nova model predictions. However, for the two grains which have had their Mg-Al compositions determined, the models greatly overproduce the heavy Mg isotopes, missing the grain data by up to several orders of magnitude [11, 13]. Hopefully, new nova models computed with recently updated reaction rates and multi-element isotopic data for two new nova candidate grains can provide further insight into the composition of dust from these sources.

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