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1	Hydration of Na-saturated Synthetic Stevensite, a Peculiar Trioctahedral Smectite
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13 Abstract

14 Smectite interlayer water plays a key role on the mobility of elements and molecules, but also 15 in a variety of geological processes. In contrast to saponite and hectorite, whose layer charge originates from isomorphic substitutions, stevensite layer charge originates from the presence 16 17 of octahedral vacancies. Despite its common occurrence in lacustrine environments, hectorite hydration has received little attention, compared to saponite and hectorite. Early reports 18 19 mention a specific hydration behavior, however, with the systematic presence of a low-angle reflection attributed to the regular interstratification of different hydration states. The 20 present study aims at revisiting this specific hydration behavior in more depth. Within this 21 22 scope, the hydration behavior of the above three smectite varieties are compared using 23 synthetic trioctahedral smectites of similar layer charge, and different compositions of their 24 octahedral sheets. The chemical composition of the octahedral sheet does not appear to influence significantly smectite hydration for saponite and hectorite. Compared to its saponite 25 and hectorite equivalents, H_2O content in stevensite is lower by ~2.0 mmol H_2O per g of dry 26 27 clay. Consistent with this lower H₂O content, Zn-stevensite lacks a stable monohydrated state, dehydrated layers prevailing from 60 to 0% RH. The presence of the regular interstratification 28 29 of OW and 1W layers is responsible for the low-angle reflection commonly observed for 30 stevensite under air-dried conditions. Finally, stevensite identification method based on X-ray diffraction of heated and EG-solvated samples is challenged by the strong influence of 31 octahedral sheet chemical composition (Zn or Mg in the present study) on hectorite swelling 32 33 behavior. The origin of this effect remains undetermined and further work is needed to propose a more general identification method. 34

35

36 Keywords: Smectite hydration, stevensite, smectite identification

37 Introduction

Smectites are phyllosilicates whose 2:1 layers consist of two tetrahedral sheets sandwiching 38 an octahedral one. In trioctahedral smectites the three octahedral sites are all occupied by 39 divalent cations, usually Mg²⁺. Isomorphic substitutions occurring either in tetrahedral or in 40 octahedral sheets (Al-for-Si and Li-for-Mg, respectively) or the presence of vacant octahedral 41 42 sites induce a layer charge deficit which is compensated for by the presence of hydrated exchangeable cations within smectite interlayers and at the mineral surface. Based on the 43 44 origin of the layer charge deficit, trioctahedral smectites have received different mineral names: saponite, hectorite, and stevensite for tetrahedral substitutions, octahedral 45 substitutions and octahedral vacancies, respectively (Brindley, 1980). Following the 46 pioneering works of Nagelschmidt (1936) and Bradley et al. (1937), smectite hydration has 47 drawn a lot of attention, owing to the key influence played by smectite interlayer water on 48 the mobility of contaminants and nutrients (Laird et al., 1991), but also in a variety of 49 50 geological settings (See Ferrage et al., 2010, and references therein). The influence of the amount and location of isomorphic substitutions on trioctahedral smectite (saponite and 51 52 hectorite) hydration has been extensively investigated over the last decade or so (Ferrage et al., 2005a, 2010, 2011; Malikova et al., 2005, 2007; Michot et al., 2005, 2007, 2012; Rinnert et 53 al., 2005; Dazas et al., 2015; Vinci et al., 2020). This interest has been sustained by the frequent 54 use of smectite in natural and engineered barriers in (nuclear) waste repositories and by the 55 related requirements for their safety assessment. In both saponite and hectorite, the presence 56 57 of discrete hydration states similar to those reported in the pioneering works on smectite hydration (Bradley et al., 1937; Mooney et al., 1952; Norrish, 1954b) leads to the well-known 58 stepwise expansion of the layer-to-layer distance. With increasing water activity, the 59 occurrence of dehydrated layers (OW, d_{001} = 9.6–10.2 Å) is followed by 1W, 2W, and 3W 60 hydration states (d_{001} = 11.6–12.9 Å, d_{001} = 14.9–15.7 Å, d_{001} = 18–19 Å, respectively), 61 corresponding to the intercalation of 1, 2, and, less frequently, 3 "planes" of interlayer H₂O 62 molecules. 63

54 Stevensite, whose layer charge deficit originates from the presence of octahedral 55 vacancies, is a common smectite in lacustrine environments (Eberl *et al.*, 1982; Khoury *et al.*, 56 1982; Jones, 1986; Thiry *et al.*, 2014; Bentz and Peterson, 2020; De Oliveira Nardi Leite *et al.*, 57 2020) By contrast, hydration of stevensite, whose layer charge deficit originates from the 68 presence of octahedral vacancies. Compared to saponite and hectorite, its hydration has 69 received much less attention although early reports mention a very specific behavior (Brindley, 1955; Faust et al., 1959; Shimoda, 1971). In particular, these studies systematically 70 mention the occurrence of a low-angle reflection tentatively assigned to the regular 71 alternation of OW and 2W layers (Brindley, 1955). The present study thus aims at revisiting 72 this peculiar hydration behavior in more depth. For this purpose, two stevensite samples, with 73 Zn- and Mg-rich octahedral sheets, were hydrothermally synthesized together with their 74 saponite and hectorite chemical equivalents. All synthesized samples have similar layer charge 75 deficits of ~0.8 e⁻ per O₂₀(OH)₄. Hydration of all samples was systematically assessed using 76 volumetric H₂O vapor (de)sorption isotherms and X-ray diffraction under controlled humidity 77 conditions. Quantitative profile fitting of X-ray diffraction data was used both to assess the 78 79 relative proportions of the different hydrates and the evolution of these proportions as a 80 function of H₂O activity, and to unravel the origin of the low-angle reflection, if any.

81

82 Materials and methods

83 Sample preparation

84 Three varieties of Zn-rich trioctahedral smectites and one Mg-stevensite were synthesized hydrothermally from gel precursors having adequate stoichiometry (Hamilton & Henderson, 85 1968). Preparation of a sauconite with ideal structural formula [Na_{0.8}]^{inter}[Zn_{6.0}]^{octa}[Si_{7.2} 86 Al_{0.8}]^{tetra}O₂₀(OH)₄ (hereafter referred to as Zn-sap), a Zn equivalent of hectorite with ideal 87 composition [Na_{0.8}]^{inter}[Zn_{5.2} Li_{0.8}]^{octa}[Si_{8.0}]^{tetra}O₂₀(OH)₄ (hereafter referred to as Zn-hect); a Zn 88 equivalent of stevensite with ideal structural formula [Na_{0.8}]^{inter}[Zn_{5.6},_{0.4}]^{octa}[Si_{8.0}]^{tetra}O₂₀(OH)₄ 89 90 (hereafter referred to as Zn-stev), and stevensite with an ideal structural formula [Na_{0.8}]^{inter}[Mg_{5.6},_{0.4}]^{octa}[Si_{8.0}]^{tetra}O₂₀(OH)₄ (hereafter referred to as Mg-Stev) was sought. All 91 structural formulae are derived from the stoichiometry of gel precursors. Such an ideal 92 sauconite composition leads however to the crystallization of a hemimorphite impurity 93 94 (Zn₄Si₂O₇(OH)₄·H₂O) and a lower Zn content is necessary to obtain pure sauconite (Higashi et al., 2002). The Na:Al:Si:Zn ratio of the initial gel was thus modified to 0.8:0.8:7.2:5.0 leading 95 96 to the structural formula: following approximate [Na_{0.84}]^{inter}[Zn_{5.24}Al_{0.38}D_{0.38}]^{octa}[Si_{7.53}Al_{0.47}]^{tetra}O₂₀(OH)₄. Synthesis of Zn-smectites 97 was

98 performed in Teflon lined Parr reactor (45mL). Initial gels were treated hydrothermally under 99 autogenous pressure for 2 weeks at 170 °C for Zn-stev and Zn-hect, and for 3 days at 220 °C for Zn-sap. Mg-stev synthesis was performed in an externally heated Morey-type pressure 100 101 vessel with an internal silver tubing (Robert et al., 1993; Bergaoui et al., 1995). Synthesis conditions were a temperature of 300 °C, a water pressure of 500 bars, and a duration of 2 102 weeks. After synthesis, all samples were Na-saturated by contact with a 1 mol L⁻¹ aqueous 103 solution of NaCl. To ensure a complete exchange of interlayer cations, samples were shaken 104 105 mechanically in this NaCl solution for 24 h before separation of the solid fraction by centrifugation. Excess NaCl was then removed by washing the solid three times with deionized 106 107 water (Siemens UltraClear, 18.2 M Ω cm⁻¹) and separation of the solid fraction by centrifugation. 108

109 Experimental Sample Characterization

110 Water vapor sorption isotherms were determined volumetrically at 25 °C from sample powder 111 using a Belsorp-max instrument from BEL Japan. Lyophilized aliquots (~100 mg) were initially 112 outgassed at 150 °C for 24 h under a residual pressure of 10^{-5} – 10^{-4} Pa. In addition, N₂ BET 113 surface areas were determined on all Na-saturated samples with the same instrument.

Oriented slides were prepared for all samples by pipetting an aqueous clay slurry on glass 114 slides and drying it at room temperature. The amount of deposited material was weighed. An 115 aluminum slide was used for sauconite preparation to overcome peeling and curling issues. X-116 117 ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were then recorded using a Bruker D8 diffractometer operated 118 at 40 kV and 40 mA and equipped with a MHG Messtechnik humidity controller coupled to an Anton Paar CHC+ chamber. Intensities were measured for 6s per 0.04 °2 θ step over the 119 120 2–50 °2 θ Cu K α angular range with a SolXE Si(Li) solid-state detector (Baltic Scientific 121 Instruments). Divergence slit, the two Soller, antiscatter, and resolution slits were 0.3°, 2.3°, 122 0.3°, and 0.1°, respectively. Samples were maintained at 23 °C in the CHC+ chamber during data collection, whereas the desired relative humidity (RH) value was maintained by using a 123 124 constant flow of mixed dry/saturated air. RH was continuously monitored with a hygrometer (uncertainty of ~2% RH) located close to the sample along the whole isotherm. Samples were 125 126 equilibrated at ~95% RH for 8h (Mg-stev) or 4h (Zn-hect, Zn-sap, and Zn-stev) before starting data collection. Along the desorption isotherm, samples were equilibrated for 2 h at each 127 128 given RH value before XRD data collection, hydration stability being systematically checked by 129 recording again the low-angle reflection after collection of a complete XRD pattern. In addition, all samples were exposed to ethylene glycol (EG) vapor (40 °C) overnight before XRD 130 data collection at 23 °C and room temperature. XRD data was also collected after a similar EG 131 solvation of samples heated to 350 °C for 1 h. Routine data processing, including 132 determination of basal reflection FWHM, was performed using the Eva® program from Bruker. 133 XRD data modeling was performed as described previously (Ferrage et al., 2005a, 2005b, 2010; 134 Dazas et al., 2015; Vinci et al., 2020). Briefly, a main structure, periodic (that is with only one 135 136 layer type) if possible, was used to reproduce as much as possible of the data. Additional 137 contributions to the diffracted intensity were then introduced to account for the misfit. Up to four interstratified structures, each with a different composition (relative proportion of the 138 different layer types), were necessary to reproduce some of the XRD patterns because of the 139 140 observed hydration heterogeneity. Interstratification of the different types of hydrated layers was essentially random in all contributions to the diffracted intensity. Ordered 141 interstratification was used to reproduce low-angle reflections, however. In this case, the 142 Reichweite parameter was set to 1, and maximum possible degree of ordering was 143 144 considered, thus prohibiting the succession of two layers of the minor layer type (Drits & Tchoubar, 1990; Sakharov & Lanson, 2013). 145

146

147 **Results and discussion**

148 Powder X-ray diffraction

149 Hydration modification of Zn-rich stevensite along the desorption isotherm induces a steady decrease of the *d*-spacing corresponding to the first basal reflection from ~15.9 Å to ~10.1 Å 150 at 90% and 10% RH, respectively (Figs. 1A, SI1). Except for the peak at 3.1-3.2 Å, which is 151 152 common to all usual hydration states (0W, 1W, 2W, and 3W), higher-order reflections are 153 weak and do not define a rational series of 00/ reflections (Fig. 1A), indicative of a major 154 hydration heterogeneity. By contrast, a low-angle reflection, that is likely related to the regular alternation of two hydration states, is visible at 21-22 Å for XRD patterns collected 155 156 from 70 to 30% RH (arrows in Fig. 1A). Upon EG solvation, Zn-stev d_{001} increases to ~17.1 Å, as expected for smectite (Fig. 1B), and positions of 002 and 005 reflections are about rational 157 158 with that of the 001, thus indicating little interstratification with non-swelling layers, if any. In 159 addition, the presence of a significant amount of talc-like layers Zn-stev would, after EG 160 solvation, induce a significant broadening of the first basal reflection compared to reflections occurring at higher angle, inconsistent with the data (Fig. SI2). Hydration behavior of Zn-sap 161 and Zn-hect (Figs. SI3, SI4) are consistent with those of their Mg equivalent having similar layer 162 charge (Fig. 1 in Ferrage et al., 2010; Fig. 2 in Dazas et al., 2013) and indicate slightly higher 163 hydration at low RH values. Position of smectite first basal reflection at 20% RH correspond 164 indeed to an apparent layer-to-layer distance of 10.2 Å for Zn-stev compared to 12.4 and 165 166 11.6 Å for Zn-sap and Zn-hect, respectively (Fig. 1B – 12.35 and 12.45 Å for Mg-sap and Mg-167 hect, respectively).

168 XRD patterns of Mg-stev collected along the water vapor desorption isotherm differ significantly from those of its Zn counterpart (Fig. 2A). Specifically, the first basal reflection is 169 systematically located between the positions expected for 1W and 0W smectite, thus 170 171 indicating a consistently low hydration state, possibly as the result of an incomplete 172 rehydration after drying. Rehydration of stevensite (both Zn- and Mg-stev) appears indeed to be slow (up to several days or even weeks) after drying the sample. The position of this first 173 basal reflection steadily shifts towards higher angles with decreasing RH, whereas higher-174 order reflections are systematically visible at 4.7-4.8 Å and 3.15-3.20 Å. In addition, a low-175 angle reflection is visible, its position shifting from ~22.5 to ~17 Å when RH decreases from 95 176 to 45% (arrows in Fig. 2A). Similar to Zn-stev, Mg-stev d_{001} increases to ~17 Å upon EG 177 178 solvation, as expected for smectite (Fig. 2B). Positions of higher-order reflections (at ~9.8, 5.67, and 3.35 Å) indicate however the possible interstratification with non-expandable or 179 collapsed layers. By contrast, XRD patterns of Mg-sap and Mg-hect displays two series of 180 almost rational 00/ reflections after EG solvation, both corresponding to layer-to-layer 181 distances of ~16.9 Å (Fig. 2B). 182

When plotting the full width at half maximum intensity (FWHM) of the first basal reflection as a function of its position (Fig. 3), one may note the significant broadening of Znsmectite basal reflections compared to their Mg equivalents, except for stevensite. This increase in FWHM is most likely related to the lower crystallinity of Zn smectite in relation to their lower synthesis temperature (170-220 °C compared to 300-400 °C for Mg-smectites). In all cases, XRD peak breadth is positively correlated to specific surface area values (Table 1), evidencing the major influence of crystallinity on both values. Compared to Mg-sap and Mg190 hect, crystallinity of Mg-stev is significantly degraded owing to the lower synthesis 191 temperature and duration (400 °C for 1 month for Mg-hect and Mg-sap compared to 300 °C for 2 weeks for Mg-stev). In addition, FWHM is minimal for Mg-sap and Mg-hect for apparent 192 d_{001} values of ~15.5 and ~12.4 Å, that correspond to typical layer-to-layer distances of 2W and 193 194 1W smectites (Bradley et al., 1937; Norrish, 1954a; Ferrage et al., 2010; Dazas et al., 2013). These minimal FWHM values correspond to optimal hydration homogeneity with about 90% 195 196 of the layers or more having the same hydration state (Ferrage et al., 2005b; Aristilde et al., 2013). On this plot, FWHM values determined for Mg-hect are systematically higher than the 197 198 ones determined for Mg-sap and Mg-hect. This is possibly related to the lower temperature used for the synthesis of the former sample (300 °C compared to 400 °C for Mg-sap and Mg-199 hect). One may note however that FWHM values of Mg-stev are decreasing as its apparent 200 201 d_{001} value is decreasing to match the typical layer-to-layer distance of OW Na-saturated smectite (9.6 Å), as a possible indication of decreased hydration heterogeneity. Consistent 202 with Mg-sap and Mg-hect, the three Zn-smectites exhibit minimal values of FWHM for $d_{001} \approx$ 203 204 15.5 Å (Fig. 3 – triangles). A second minimum for $d_{001} \approx 12.4$ Å is observed only for Zn-sap, 205 however, FWHM values steadily decreasing for both Zn-hect and Zn-stev for d₀₀₁ values lower than ~14.5 Å. For Zn-stev, FWHM values actually come to a minimum for $d_{002} \approx 11.0-11.3$ Å 206 207 (dotted-dashed ellipse in Fig. 3), that possibly corresponds to the second-order of the low-208 angle maximum. Similar low FWHM values are observed when Zn-stev is fully dehydrated (d_{001} ≤ 10.0 Å). 209

210 Water vapor desorption isotherms

211 The comparison of H_2O vapor desorption isotherms obtained for stevensite and for their hectorite/saponite counterparts shows that, for a given chemistry (i.e. for Zn- and Mg-212 smectites), H₂O contents are similar for both hectorite and saponite, whereas H₂O content is 213 214 decreased by ~2.0-2.5 mmol g^{-1} in stevensite (Fig. 4). For example, at 30% RH, both Mg- and 215 Zn-stev accommodate ~2.0 mmol H₂O per g of dry clay whereas the saponite and hectorite equivalent host ~5 and ~4 mmol H₂O per g of dry clay (Mg- and Zn-smectites, respectively). 216 217 The different H₂O contents determined for Zn- and Mg-sap/hect essentially result from the difference in molecular weights for the two chemical compositions. 218

In addition, the transition between the two plateaus corresponding to 1W and 2W
 hydration states (4-7 and 10-14 mmol H₂O per g of dry clay, respectively, for Mg-sap/hect –

221 gray areas in Fig. 4) differs significantly from hectorite and saponite on the one hand and stevensite on the other hand. For Mg-smectites, the transition spreads from ~60 to ~40% RH 222 for both saponite and hectorite whereas no transition is visible for stevensite, consistent with 223 the almost constant position of the first basal reflection at ~10.2 Å. For Zn-smectites, the 224 transition appears smoother than for Mg-smectites, possibly as the result of the lower 225 crystallinity and synthesis temperature (Table 1 – Michot et al., 2005). Compared to Mg-226 smectites, this 2W-to-1W transition also appears shifted to lower RH values and spreads from 227 228 ~50% to ~35% RH. In contrast to Mg-smectites, the transition is visible for all three Zn smectite 229 varieties, including Zn-stev, although Zn-stev seems to exhibit no stable 1W hydration state.

230 X-ray diffraction profile modeling

231 XRD profile modeling allows gaining additional insights into the hydration behavior of stevensite relative to other trioctahedral smectite varieties (saponite and hectorite). The 232 233 lower temperatures used to synthesize stevensite, compared to saponite/hectorite, strongly degrade the crystallinity of the synthetic smectite product. As a consequence, the intensity 234 235 and resolution of high-angle reflections are lowered thus hampering the determination of interlayer H₂O structure. The relative proportions of the different smectite hydration states 236 coexisting at a given relative humidity can be deduced however from the modeling of the low-237 angle region (2-30 °2 θ Cu K α). Fits to the data are provided as supplementary information 238 239 (Figs SI1, SI3-SI4) together with the composition of the different contributions to the 240 calculated diffraction patterns (Tables SI1-SI3).

Compared to Mg-sap/hect (Ferrage et al., 2010; Dazas et al., 2015; Vinci et al., 2020), 241 hydration appears much more heterogeneous in Zn-smectites (Fig. 5; Tables SI1-SI3).The 242 proportion of a given hydration state (OW, 1W, 2W, or 3W) never exceeds 75%, except for 243 244 dehydrated layers in Zn-stev for RH conditions below 25% RH (Fig. 5). This increased 245 heterogeneity is possibly linked to an increased chemical heterogeneity in relation to lower synthesis temperature. This effect is likely enhanced by the decrease in crystallinity that 246 smoothens the transition between defined hydration states (Michot et al., 2005). In apparent 247 contradiction with H₂O vapor desorption isotherms, prevalence of 1W layers over 2W layers 248 initiates at higher RH conditions for Zn-smectites (60-50% and 70-60% RH for Zn-sap and Zn-249 250 hect, respectively), compared to their Mg equivalent. Zn-stev dehydration occurs even at 251 higher humidity conditions as the proportions of 2W Zn-stev layers is null at 50% RH and 252 below, whereas Zn-sap and Zn-hect still contain ~35 and 25%, respectively, of 2W layers at 50% RH. Similarly, 0W layers prevail in Zn-stev from 60% RH down to 0% RH, whereas these 253 layers prevail only at 10% RH in Zn-hect (Fig. 5). It is noteworthy that 1W layers never prevail 254 in Zn-stev, whatever the RH conditions, consistent with the absence of a FWHM minimum 255 corresponding to a layer-to-layer distance typical for this hydration state (Fig. 3). Although 1W 256 257 layers prevail in Zn-hect from 65% to 15%RH, the relative proportions of these layers never exceeds ~60%, the high hydration heterogeneity being in this case responsible for the absence 258 259 of a FWHM minimum corresponding to a layer-to-layer distance typical for 1W layers (Fig. 3).

260 Finally, fitting the low-angle maximum of both Zn-stev and Mg-stev required a contribution from a regular 1:1 interstratification of OW and 1W layers (Fig. SI5, Table SI1). 261 This ordered interstratification allowed fitting the low-angle reflection at 20-22 Å, consistent 262 with previous reports and hypotheses (Brindley, 1955; Faust et al., 1959; Shimoda, 1971), 263 264 although interstratification implied 0W and 1W layers rather than 0W and 2W, as previously hypothesized. The presence, and major contribution, of this regular interstratification (mixed-265 layer #4 in Table SI1) also accounts for the minimum FWHM observed in the XRD patterns of 266 Zn-stev in which the position of the first basal reflection is 11.0-11.3 Å (Fig. 3). 267

268 Swelling ability and stevensite identification

269 To differentiate stevensite from other trioctahedral smectites (saponite/hectorite) Christidis 270 and Koustopoulou (2013) proposed to saturate smectites with EG after heating to 500 °C. Upon this dual treatment, saponite and hectorite expand whereas stevensite layers remain 271 272 collapsed. The criterion proposed by these authors appear valid for Mg-hect and Mg-stev, the former re-expanding almost completely to ~17 Å after heating to 350 °C and EG solvation 273 whereas Mg-stev remains essentially collapsed to ~9.6 Å (Fig. 6A). By contrast, both Zn-stev 274 275 and Zn-hect do not re-expand after the same treatment whereas Zn-sap swelling ability is 276 essentially unaffected (Fig. 6B). The origin of the contrasting swelling behavior observed for 277 hectorite depending on its octahedral composition remains unexplained but pleads for additional investigation to assess the validity of identification criterion proposed by Christidis 278 279 and Koustopoulou (2013). In particular, it is necessary to assess the influence i) of crystallinity 280 on smectite hydration behavior, ii) of the octahedral composition on the hectorite ability to 281 re-expand upon heating and EG solvation, and iii) of the possible layer heterogeneity resulting

from the presence of stevensite- and talc-like domains/layers in synthetic smectites (Christidis *et al.*, 2018).

284

285 Conclusion

286 For a given layer charge (~0.8 e^{-} per O₂₀(OH)₄ in the present study) and chemical composition, the H₂O content is lower (by ~2.0 mmol H₂O per g of dry clay) in stevensite compared to its 287 hectorite and saponite equivalents. As a result of this lower H₂O content, the transition from 288 prevailing 2W to prevailing 1W hydration states occurs at slightly higher RH values for Zn-stev 289 compared to Zn-sap and Zn-hect. Hydration behavior of Zn-sap and Zn-hect is similar to that 290 291 of their Mg counterparts. In addition, 1W layers never prevail in Zn-stev, whatever the H₂O activity, the position of its first basal reflection shifting steadily from an apparent d_{001} of 292 15.5 Å, consistent with the prevalence of 2W layers, to ~9.6 Å, consistent with Zn-stev 293 294 complete dehydration. Dehydrated layers prevail in Zn-stev from 60% RH down to 0% RH. 295 Finally, the low-angle reflection commonly observed for stevensite under air-dried conditions is due to the presence of the regular interstratification of OW and 1W layers. 296

With respect to stevensite identification from X-ray diffraction of heated and EGsolvated samples (Christidis & Koutsopoulou, 2013), the chemical composition of the octahedral sheet (Zn or Mg in the present study) appears to strongly modify hectorite swelling behavior, thus challenging the method. Further research is needed to decipher the origin of this effect and to propose a more general identification method.

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Tables

Sample	Specific surface area (m²/g)
Mg-hect	11.1
Mg-sap	50.1
Mg-stev	179.9
Zn-hect	146.9
Zn-sap	96.7
Zn-stev	100.7

Table 1. Specific surface areas determined for Zn- and Mg-smectites with the BET method.

418 Figure captions

- Fig. 1. (A) X-ray diffraction patterns of Zn-stev along the H₂O vapor desorption isotherm. (B)
 X-ray diffraction patterns of Zn-sap, Zn-hect, and Zn-stev collected at 20% RH (black lines),
- 421 70% RH (blue lines), and upon EG solvation (red lines). Dotted lines in (A) indicate the typical
- 422 positions of the first basal reflection for different smectite hydration states, arrows indicating
- 423 the position of low-angle reflection. Hal. Indicates the presence of halite. The vertical gray bar
- 424 indicates a modified scale factor for the high-angle region compared to the 2-15 °2θ range.
- Fig. 2. (A) X-ray diffraction patterns of Mg-stev along the H₂O vapor desorption isotherm. (B)
 X-ray diffraction patterns of Mg-sap, Mg-hect, and Mg-stev collected at 20% RH (black lines),
 70% RH (blue lines), and upon EG solvation (red lines). Dotted lines in (A) indicate the typical
 positions of the first basal reflection for different smectite hydration states, arrows indicating
 the position of low-angle reflection. Hal. Indicates the presence of halite. The vertical gray bar
 indicates a modified scale factor for the high-angle region compared to the 2-15 °20 range s.
- Fig. 3. Evolution of the full-width at half-maximum intensity (FWHM) of the first basal reflection as a function of its position for Zn- and Mg-smectites (triangles and circles, respectively). Data for Mg-smectites from Ferrage *et al.* (2010), Dazas *et al.* (2013), and Vinci *et al.* (2020). The dashed ellipses highlight minimum FWHM values corresponding to essentially homogeneous 1W and 2W hydration states. Position of the first basal reflection essentially decreases with decreasing RH conditions during data collection from an initial "wet" state at 90-95% RH depending on the sample..
- Fig. 4. Water content as a function of relative humidity along the water vapor desorption
 isotherms. Dotted and solid lines represent Mg- and Zn-smectites, respectively. Mg-sap and
 Mg-hect data from (Ferrage *et al.*, 2010) and (Dazas *et al.*, 2013), respectively. Gray areas
 indicate the 1W and 2W plateaus occurring for Mg-sap/hect.
- Fig. 5. Evolution of the relative proportions of the different layer types (summing up all contributions to the diffracted intensity) along H₂O vapor desorption isotherms for Zn-stev,
 Zn-hect, and Zn-sap.
- Fig. 6. Comparison of X-ray diffraction patterns obtained after EG solvation (red) and heating
 to 350 °C followed by EG solvation (black). (A) Mg-smectites: Mg-hect (dashed lines), and Mgstev (dotted-dashed lines). (B) Zn-smectite: Zn-sap (solid lines), Zn-hect (dashed lines), and Znstev (dotted-dashed lines). The vertical gray bar indicates a modified scale factor for the highangle region compared to the 2-12 °2θ range.











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Relative humidity





Hydration of Na-saturated Synthetic Stevensite, a Peculiar Trioctahedral Smectite

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Fig. SI1. Comparison between experimental and calculated XRD patterns along the H_2O vapor desorption isotherm for Zn-stev. Experimental and calculated XRD patterns are shown as solid red and black lines, respectively. Difference plots are shown at the bottom of the figure as gray lines. The vertical gray bar indicates a modified scale factor for the angle region higher to 12° 20 compared to the 3-12°20 angular range. Diffraction lines from halite (NaCl) impurity are indicated as Hal.



Fig. Sl2. Comparison between experimental and calculated XRD patterns for Zn-stev after EG solvation. Experimental data are shown as crosses. Solid red line and blue dashed line correspond to Zn-stev models containing 0 and 25% talc-like layers randomly interstratified with swelling layers. The latter value corresponds to the content of dehydrated (0W) layers in Zn-stev equilibrated at 90% RH (Table SI1). Interlayer model for EG-solvated steventsite layers was not refined from that reported by Moore and Reynolds (1997). The vertical gray bar indicates a modified scale factor for the angle region higher to 15° 2θ compared to the 2-15 °2θ angular range. Diffraction line from halite (NaCl) impurity is indicated as Hal.

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Fig. SI3. Comparison between experimental and calculated XRD patterns along the H_2O vapor desorption isotherm for Zn-hect. Experimental and calculated XRD patterns are shown as solid red and black lines, respectively. Difference plots are shown at the bottom of the figure as gray lines. The vertical gray bar indicates a modified scale factor for the angle region higher to 10° 20 compared to the 3-10 °20 angular range.



Fig. SI4. Comparison between experimental and calculated XRD patterns along the H_2O vapor desorption isotherm for Zn-sap. Experimental and calculated XRD patterns are shown as solid red and black lines, respectively. Difference plots are shown at the bottom of the figure as gray lines. The vertical gray bar indicates a modified scale factor for the angle region higher to 10° 20 compared to the 3-10 °20 angular range.



Fig. SI5. Respective contributions of the various mixed layers to the diffraction profile calculated for Zn-stev at 55% RH. Mixed layers #1, #2, and #4 (Table SI1) are shown as solid orange, blue, and green lines, respectively. Optimum fit and diffraction data are shown as solid red line and black crosses, respectively. The vertical gray bars indicate a modified scale factor for the high-angle regions compared to the 2-24 °20 range.

 Table SI1. Structural parameters used to fit experimental XRD patterns of Zn-stev as a function of relative humidity.

	%RH	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5	2
	2W	15.80	15.77	15.73	15.69	15.66	15.63	15.58	15.55											
Layer-to-layer distance (in Å)	1W	12.80	12.70	12.60	12.58	12.57	12.57	12.53	12.53	12.50	12.50	12.45	12.43	12.40	12.40	12.25	12.20	12.10	11.90	11.80
	0W	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.75	9.70
Number of H ₂ O molecules	2W layers	10.6	10.4	10.0	10.0	9.8	9.6	9.4	9.0	8.8										
[per O ₂₀ (OH) ₄]	1W layers	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.0	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.0	2.8	2.8	2.5	2.3	1.8
σ _z (in Å)		0.22	0.20	0.22	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.22	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.20	0.18	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15
σ* (in °)		4.0	3.8	4.0	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.0	2.0	3.0	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Ab (%)	93	92	79	77	64	48	41	38	3	3	2	2	5	14	20	39	41	53	58
	2W	75	75	75	72	72	65	40	40											
Mixed layer 1	1W									15	10	10	2	2	2	2	2			
	0W	25	25	25	28	28	35	60	60	85	90	90	98	98	98	98	98	100	100	100
	CSD size (in layers)	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	8.0	6.0	6.0	7.0	6.0	9.0	9.0	6.0	5.0	6.0	5.5	5.0	5.5
	Ab (%)	7	8	12	15	27	43	56	42	80	82	80	81	83	81	75	61	59	47	42
	2W	40	30	25	25	25	20	15	5											
Mixed layer 2	1W	50	60	60	60	60	60	65	75	48	48	44	38	34	30	20	20	20	15	15
,	0W	10	10	15	15	15	20	20	20	52	52	56	62	66	70	80	80	80	85	85
	CSD size (in layers)	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.3	6.0	6.0	6.5	6.0	6.0	9.0	7.0	7.0	9.0	8.0	6.0	6.0	7.0	6.0	5.0
	Ab (%)			9	8	9	9	3												
	2W			50	45	40	35	15												
Mixed layer 3	1W			50	55	60	65	35												
	0W							50												
	CSD size (in layers)			4.2	6.0	7.0	7.0	4.0												
Mixed laver 4	Ab (%)								21	16	15	18	17	13	5					
R=1 with	2W																			
maximum possible	1W								50	50	50	50	48	48	40					
degree of ordering									50	50	50	50	52	52	60					
(MPDO)	(in layers)								5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	7.0	9.0	6.0					

Note: Ab.: Relative abundance; CSD: coherent scattering domain; σ_z : fluctuation of the layer-to-layer distance (in Å); σ^* : orientation parameter(in °)

 Table SI2.
 Structural parameters used to fit experimental XRD patterns of Zn-hect as a function of relative humidity.

	%RH	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5
	3W	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0													
Layer-to-layer	2W	15.88	15.80	15.74	15.70	15.67	15.62	15.60	15.56	15.55	15.52	15.50	15.48	15.47	15.46	15.45	15.43	15.42	15.40	15.38
distance (in Å)	1W	13.00	12.98	12.96	12.95	12.95	12.90	12.85	12.75	12.68	12.66	12.65	12.64	12.63	12.61	12.57	12.54	12.49	12.48	12.45
	0W												9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70
Number of H ₂ O molecules	2W layers	11.4	11.2	10.2	9.8	9.6	9.4	9.4	9.2	9.0	8.8	8.0	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.6	7.2	6.6	6.0
[per O ₂₀ (OH) ₄]	1W layers	5.6	5.6	5.5	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.1	5.0	4.6	4.2	3.6	2.8	2.3
σ _z (in Å)		0.22	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.24	0.24
σ* (in °)		7.0	9.0	9.0	8.0	9.0	7.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	8.0	8.0	7.8	7.8	7.5	6.5	7.5	8.0
CSD size (in layers		4.0	4.6	4.8	5.0	5.2	4.5	4.0	4.2	4.5	4.7	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	6.0	9.0	9.0
	Ab (%)	44	57	48	35	30	42	29	27	24	33	41	32	25	20	21	18	23	33	34
	3W	7	6	6	6	6	6													
Mixed layer 1	2W	90	90	90	90	88	80	95	80	75	55	48	48	45	45	42	40	38	30	25
	1W	3	4	4	4	6	14	5	10	5	23	28	28	31	31	31	33	34	35	35
	0W								10	20	22	24	24	24	24	27	27	28	35	40
	Ab (%)	38	24	23	21	20	13	20	36	32	12	3	8	19	20	14	14	15	3	14
	3W	60	60	45	40	37	35													
Mixed layer 2	2W	40	40	55	60	63	65	5	5	5	10									
	1W							65	65	65	70	75	50	53	45	45	45	45	30	20
	0W							30	30	30	20	25	50	47	55	55	55	55	70	80
	Ab (%)	18	16	14	15	21	27	51	37	44	54	56	60	55	60	66	68	62	64	52
	3W																			
Mixed layer 3	2W	40	30	25	20	20	15	30	30	20	10									
	1W	60	70	75	80	80	85	65	65	70	68	80	80	80	75	70	65	60	50	45
	0W							5	5	10	22	20	20	20	25	30	35	40	50	55
	Ab (%)		3	15	28	29	17													
	3Ŵ																			
Mixed layer 4	2W		68	65	65	60	45													
-	1W		32	35	35	40	55													
	0W																			

Note: Ab.: Relative abundance; CSD: coherent scattering domain; σ_2 : fluctuation of the layer-to-layer distance (in Å); σ^* : orientation parameter(in °)

 Table SI3.
 Structural parameters used to fit experimental XRD patterns of Zn-sap as a function of relative humidity.

	%RH	95	90	85	80	75	70	65	60	55	50	45	40	35	30	25	20	15	10	5
	3W	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0												
Layer-to-layer	2W	15.58	15.53	15.52	15.50	15.40	15.38	15.37	15.34	15.32	15.27	15.24	15.23	15.22	15.21	15.16	15.16	15.15	15.15	15.15
distance (in Å)	1W	12.82	12.81	12.80	12.80	12.80	12.80	12.79	12.78	12.74	12.70	12.60	12.55	12.55	12.55	12.50	12.46	12.38	12.29	12.24
	0W												9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70	9.70
Number of H ₂ O molecules	2W layers	11.0	10.4	10.0	9.4	8.8	8.6	8.4	8.2	8.0	8.0	7.8	7.6	7.4	7.0	6.8	6.6	6.0	4.4	4.0
[per O ₂₀ (OH) ₄]	1W layers	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.5	5.3	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.3	5.2	5.0	4.5	4.1	3.5	3.1	2.5
σ _z (in Å)		0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.18	0.18	0.17	0.17	0.19	0.21	0.24	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.20
σ* (in °)		4.0	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.5	4.2	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.6	3.8	3.8
CSD size (in layers		4.5	4.8	5.2	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.0	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.2	4.7	4.7	5.0	5.1	5.0	5.0	5.0
	Ab (%)	48	49	38	39	34	33	28	28	19	21	14	28	21	17	14	10	9	7	5
	3W	3	2	2	2	2	2	2												
Mixed layer 1	2W	97	97	97	96	96	96	96	97	96	88	85	74	74	68	68	65	60	60	58
	1W		1	1	2	2	2	2	3	4	12	15	11	11	15	15	18	20	20	20
	0W												15	15	17	17	17	20	20	22
	Ab (%)	30	32	32	28	29	25	22	19	15	11	9	7	22	32	30	38	38	40	37
	3W	50	45	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	35								
Mixed layer 2	2W	50	55	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	65	10	10	8					
	1W												60	60	62	65	65	60	55	50
	0W												30	30	30	35	35	40	45	50
	Ab (%)	17	13	10	10	12	14	18	17	32	45	46	49	45	48	42	37	42	41	47
	3W	10																		
Mixed layer 3	2W	20	30	25	20	18	18	18	10	3	3	3	3	3	3	1				
,	1W	70	70	75	80	82	82	82	90	97	97	97	97	97	97	98	99	96	94	80
	0W	-	-	-		-	-	_		-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	6	20
	Ab (%)	5	7	20	23	25	28	32	36	35	23	30	16	12	3	15	15	12	12	11
	3W	5																		
Mixed layer 4	2W	70	72	72	70	70	65	65	55	55	45	42	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
	1W	25	28	28	30	30	35	35	45	45	55	58	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
	0W												2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

Note: Ab.: Relative abundance; CSD: coherent scattering domain; σ_z : fluctuation of the layer-to-layer distance (in Å); σ^* : orientation parameter(in °)