

## Geochemistry, genesis and behavior of the rare elements in Chah-Gheib laterite deposit, Ghader Abad, Fars Province

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### 1-Introduction

Most of the world's terrestrial nickel resources are hosted in nickel laterites. Laterite deposits are the products of intense weathering of ultramafic rocks at the surface of the earth which formed in humid climatic conditions (Elias, 2002). Laterite as an economic resource requires a protolith with primarily enriched Ni. Ultramafic rocks can contain approximately 0.3 percent Ni (Lelong and others, 1976). Three subtypes of Ni-Co laterite deposits according to the dominant Ni-bearing mineralogy, included hydrous magnesium (Mg)-silicate, smectite, and oxide types (Freyssinet et al., 2005). In this research, we investigated geological, mineralogical and geochemical studies of the Chah-Gheib laterite deposit.

### 2-Methodology

Twenty-six samples from different horizons and including the parent rock were collected from the bottom to the top of a well exposed and representative profile at the Chah-Gheib laterite deposit. In order to study mineralogically, 20 samples were taken for thin section and six samples for the polished section which prepared in the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. XRD analyzed sixteen samples and eighth samples analyzed by ICP-MS in the Karaj Mineral Processing Company. EPMA carried out on six thin-polished sections in the Karaj Mineral Processing Company.

### 3-Discussion and conclusions

The Chah-Gheib laterite deposit is located 180 km the northeastern Shiraz and 47 km southeast of the Ghader-Abad. The Chah-Gheib laterite deposit is the result of the weathering of serpentinized peridotite of the radiolarite-ophiolite Neyriz complex that occurs in the lower part of the dolomitic limestone of the Eocene Jahrom Formation of the bottom to top included; serpentinized peridotite, transitional, limonite, hematite, and laterite zones (Fig. 1).

On the based mineralogical investigations coupled with XRD and EPMA results, the main minerals consist of hematite, goethite, quartz montmorillonite, palygorskite, and olivine. On the based EPMA investigations gold is accompanied with silica minerals in the limonite zone. The highest content of nickel content in the lateritic profile is 10870 (ppm), which is related to the laterite zone and the lowest one is 2066 (ppm), related to the transitional zone. There is a positive correlation coefficient between nickel and iron, reflecting the presence of nickel in iron oxides. On the based Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>-Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>-SiO<sub>2</sub> binary diagram, the weathering in the Chah-Gheib laterite deposit ranges from strong to moderate (Fig.2). The Zr-Ga-Cr ternary diagram shows that the Chah-Gheib Laterite is within the range of ultramafic igneous rocks on the plot.

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Figure 1. Lateritic profile of the Chah Gheyb

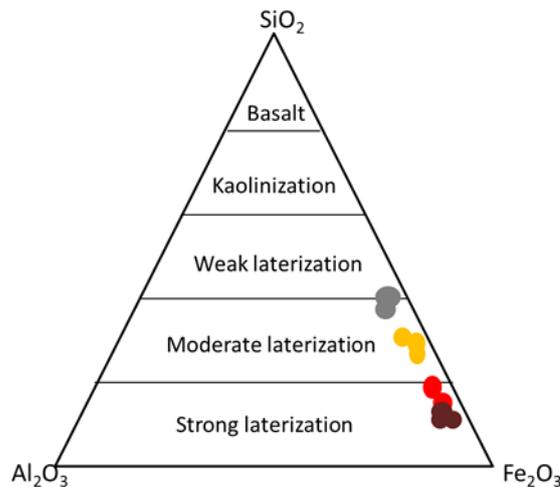


Figure2. SiO<sub>2</sub>, Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> diagram for determining the type of weathering of the laterite (Aleva, 1994).

The rare earth elements show an increasing trend from serpentine (8.97 ppm) to the laterite zones (18.41ppm). The amounts of Ce/Ce\* range from 0.65 to 1.56 in the serpentine and laterite zones, respectively. The Eu/Eu\* ratio increases from serpentines (0.13) to laterite zone (0.98) reflecting a negative anomaly and indicates oxidized acidic conditions for the laterite. Since the ratio of La/Y in the Chah-Gheyb laterite well is below 1, it reflects the acidic condition for the formation of a deposit. (Table1).

Table1. Major, and rare element, Eu Anomaly = [(EuN)/√ SmN×GdN] (Taylor and McLennan, 1985) . CeAnomaly = (2CeN)/(LaN+PrN) (Ma et al., 2007)

| NAME/ZONE | laterite | laterite | hematite | hematite | limonite | limonite | transitional | serpantinit |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| Fe%       | ۳۸,۹۸    | ۳۱,۱۲    | ۲۳,۹۸    | ۲۲,۵۳    | ۱۴,۱۷    | ۱۴,۲۸    | ۸,۶۳         | ۶,۰۱        |
| Mg%       | ۰,۵۷     | ۰,۸۷     | ۱,۹      | ۵,۰۲     | ۴,۳۸     | ۶,۳۲     | ۷,۳۷         | ۲۰,۶۵       |
| Al%       | ۱,۸۳     | ۲,۰۳     | ۱,۵۲     | ۱,۴      | ۱,۵۳     | ۱,۲۸     | ۲,۰۴         | ۰,۲۹        |
| Mn%       | ۰,۱۱     | ۰,۱۰     | ۰,۰۶     | ۰,۱۱     | ۰,۱۵     | ۰,۰۶     | ۰,۰۲         | ۰,۰۶        |
| Ni(ppm)   | ۱۰۸۷۰    | ۹۶۵۸     | ۷۵۹۲     | ۵۶,۹۰    | ۵۰۱۷     | ۳۰۴۳     | ۲۰۶۶         |             |
| Co(ppm)   | ۴۶۳,۱۸   | ۳۵۹      | ۲۳۴,۷    | ۱۹۰,۷    | ۱۹۶,۴    | ۸۴,۴۸    | ۴۴,۷۳        | ۸۵,۰۹       |
| Cr(ppm)   | ۱۲۹۰۰    | ۹۱۷۵     | ۹۶۸۲     | ۷۰۴۹     | ۶۲۸۲     | ۳۷۵۳     | ۲۱۸۷         | ۸۰۴,۲       |
| Ga(ppm)   | ۴,۴۷     | ۲,۹۹     | ۳,۳۹     | ۲,۱۱     | ۱,۷۹     | ۱,۹۸     | ۳,۶۸         | ۱           |

|          |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sc(ppm)  | 37,32 | 36    | 30,93 | 27,53 | 23,76 | 16,36 | 13,31 | 7,66  |
| La(ppm)  | 1     | 1     | 1     | 1,45  | 1     | 2,64  | 1     | 1     |
| Ce(ppm)  | 6,88  | 5,34  | 4,27  | 5,84  | 3,41  | 5,12  | 1     | 1     |
| Pr(ppm)  | 0,84  | 0,69  | 0,57  | 0,94  | 0,48  | 0,72  | 0,6   | 0,06  |
| Nd(ppm)  | 3,11  | 2,58  | 2,23  | 3,51  | 1,73  | 3,08  | 1,8   | 1     |
| Sm(ppm)  | 0,66  | 0,59  | 0,45  | 0,84  | 0,35  | 0,6   | 0,24  | 0,012 |
| Eu(ppm)  | 0,18  | 0,12  | 0,09  | 0,16  | 0,08  | 0,13  | 0,04  | 0,004 |
| Gd(ppm)  | 0,55  | 0,45  | 0,47  | 0,64  | 0,3   | 0,56  | 0,2   | 0,01  |
| Tb(ppm)  | 0,08  | 0,07  | 0,06  | 0,09  | 0,05  | 0,07  | 0,03  | 0,003 |
| Dy(ppm)  | 0,61  | 0,49  | 0,45  | 0,63  | 0,33  | 0,51  | 0,25  | 0,01  |
| Er(ppm)  | 0,25  | 0,21  | 0,22  | 0,25  | 0,15  | 0,21  | 0,1   | 0,005 |
| Tm(ppm)  | 0,05  | 0,04  | 0,04  | 0,05  | 0,04  | 0,05  | 0,03  | 0,002 |
| Yb(ppm)  | 4,12  | 3,08  | 2,37  | 2,52  | 1,66  | 1,6   | 0,22  | 0,008 |
| Lu(ppm)  | 0,07  | 0,05  | 0,05  | 0,07  | 0,03  | 0,05  | 0,09  | 0,005 |
| Eu/Eu*   | 0,98  | 0,76  | 0,64  | 0,71  | 0,81  | 0,73  | 0,6   | 0,13  |
| REE(ppm) | 18,41 | 14,72 | 12,24 | 16,99 | 9,61  | 15,34 | 5,60  | 8,97  |
| Ce/Ce*   | 1,56  | 1,39  | 1,27  | 1,28  | 1,1   | 0,95  | 1,45  | 0,65  |
| La/Y     | 0,29  | 0,29  | 0,44  | 0,35  | 0,32  | 0,67  | 0,50  | 1     |
| pH       | 6,59  | 6,59  | 6,81  | 6,81  | 6,84  | 6,84  | 6,42  | 8     |

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