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# Equation of State of Liquid Iron under Extreme Conditions

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## Abstract

The density of liquid iron has been determined up to 116 GPa and 4350 K via static compression experiments following an innovative analysis of diffuse scattering from liquid. The longitudinal sound velocity was also obtained to 45 GPa and 2700 K based on inelastic x-ray scattering measurements. Combining these results with previous shock-wave data, we determine a thermal equation of state for liquid iron. It indicates that the Earth's outer core exhibits 7.5–7.6% density deficit, 3.7–4.4% velocity excess, and an almost identical adiabatic bulk modulus, with respect to liquid iron.

## Main text

32 Iron is the sixth most abundant element in the universe and the main component of dense  
33 metallic cores of planets. This is not only true for the Earth, but also for Mercury and Mars,  
34 which are expected to have partially molten cores [1,2]. Density ( $\rho$ ) and longitudinal sound  
35 velocity ( $V_P$ ) (equivalent to bulk sound velocity,  $V_\Phi$ , in a liquid) are the primary observables  
36 of the Earth's liquid outer core [3]. Therefore, laboratory measurements of these properties  
37 at high pressure are of great importance to understand Earth's and other planets' core  
38 composition and behavior.

39 While determination of density for crystalline materials under high pressure and  
40 temperature ( $P$ - $T$ ) is relatively straightforward by *in situ* x-ray diffraction (XRD), it is still  
41 challenging for disordered materials. Although XRD is potentially applied up to 100 GPa  
42 and high temperature, analytical methods to extract  $\rho$  from a diffuse XRD signal, which is  
43 characteristic of a liquid, are not yet well established; a recent study [4] concluded that a  
44 conventional technique to analyze the diffuse signals gives a liquid density with uncertainty  
45 exceeding more than 10%. Improvement of the diffuse scattering analysis is therefore  
46 necessary. In particular, the density of liquid iron has not been reported at high pressure  
47 based on static experiments.

48  $V_P$  is also a key property to understand liquid behavior as it is related to compressibility,  
49 thermal expansivity, the Grüneisen parameter ( $\gamma$ ), etc. In particular, it is an important quantity  
50 for constructing an equation of state (EoS) of a liquid when combined with density data.  
51 Previously, the  $V_P$  of liquid iron was obtained only to 5.8 GPa by ultrasonic measurements  
52 in a multi-anvil apparatus [5]. This is much lower than the pressure range of the Earth's core.  
53 Moreover, the structure of liquid iron may be different above 6 GPa [6], indicating that  
54 measurements are needed to higher pressures to understand the core.

55 In this study, we measured the density of liquid iron at pressures up to 116 GPa and 4350  
56 K via static compression using a laser-heated diamond-anvil cell (LH-DAC). This is close to  
57 conditions at the top of Earth's core. A new analytical method was applied to derive  $\rho$  from  
58 diffuse x-ray scattering signals, as this is key to precise determination of liquid density under  
59 pressure. We also obtained the  $V_P$  of liquid iron to 45 GPa by inelastic x-ray scattering (IXS)  
60 measurements in the LH-DAC. From our new data combined with previous shock-wave data  
61 [7,8], we obtain the  $P$ - $T$ - $\rho$ - $V_P$ - $\gamma$  relation for the Earth's entire outer core conditions (136–  
62 330 GPa, 4000–5400 K) based on the Mie-Grüneisen EoS. The earlier shock compression

63 experiments measured the  $\rho$ ,  $V_P$ , and  $\gamma$  of liquid iron only between 278 and 397 GPa along  
 64 the Hugoniot path that intersects the melting curve of iron around 270 GPa [7]. The  
 65 temperature in shock experiments is not well determined, being dependent on the model of  
 66 internal energy of liquid iron. We therefore do not employ the temperature data reported in  
 67 the shock experiments.

68 We collected angle-dispersive XRD spectra using a brilliant x-ray beam at BL10XU,  
 69 SPring-8 [9] (see Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 1). Strong diffuse scattering signals from  
 70 molten iron were found in the XRD spectra collected at about 100–400 K above its melting  
 71 point (Fig. S1 in [10]). A background is subtracted (based on the measurement just below  
 72 the melting point), and the result is converted into the structure factor  $S(Q)$ , where  $Q$  is the  
 73 momentum transfer. Transformation of  $S(Q)$  gives the distribution function  $F(r)$  and the  
 74 radial distribution function  $g(r)$  ( $r$ , radial distance) [Fig. 1] (Eqs. S6 and S7 in [10]).

75 The density of the liquid can, in principle, be determined from the slope of  $F(r)$  for  $r$   
 76 smaller than the inter-atomic spacing, where  $F(r) = -4\pi\rho r$  and  $g(r) = 0$ . However, the  
 77 transformation from  $Q$  to  $r$  requires integration over  $Q \rightarrow \text{infinity}$ . Experimental limits on  
 78 the  $Q$  range result in oscillations in  $F(r)$  and  $g(r)$  that lead to large uncertainty in the  
 79 determination of density if not corrected. An iterative analytical procedure originally  
 80 developed in [11] has been applied for liquid density determinations at high pressure [12,13],  
 81 but it often fails [4]. Indeed, it modifies  $S(Q)$  from experimentally observed one, losing  
 82 information from raw data.

83 In this study, we have developed an innovative analytical method in which the observed  
 84  $S(Q)$  is extended beyond  $Q_{\max}$  (the maximum  $Q$  in experimental data) so that the  
 85 corresponding  $g(r)$  is physically reasonable;  $g(r) = 0$  for  $r < r_{\min}$  region ( $r_{\min}$ , the distance  
 86 between the nearest neighboring atoms). We extend  $S(Q)$  by;

$$87 \quad S_{\text{extend}}(Q) = \begin{cases} S(Q) & (Q \leq Q_{\max}) \\ 1 - \frac{1}{Q} \int_0^{r_{\min}} \left\{ 4\pi r \rho + \frac{2}{\pi} \int_0^{Q_{\max}} f(Q) \sin(Qr) dQ \right\} \sin(Qr) dr & (Q > Q_{\max}) \end{cases}, \quad (1)$$

88 where  $f(Q) = Q\{S(Q) - 1\}$  (see Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 2). The transformed  
 89 quantities  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and  $g_{\text{extend}}(r)$  are calculated from the  $S_{\text{extend}}(Q)$ . However, there are several  
 90 unknowns in the procedure, including a scale factor for background,  $s$ , normalization of  $S(Q)$ ,  
 91  $\alpha_N$ , as well as desired  $\rho$  and  $r_{\min}$ . If incorrect values are used for them, the difference between  
 92 calculated  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and expected  $F(r) = -4\pi\rho r$  (or between calculated  $g_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and

93 expected  $g(r) = 0$  at  $r < r_{\min}$  will be larger compared to that calculated for true values. For  
 94 instance, if input  $\rho$  includes error  $\Delta\rho$  as  $\rho_{\text{input}} = \rho_{\text{true}} + \Delta\rho$ ,  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  calculated from  $S_{\text{extend}}(Q)$   
 95 involves an additional term given by;

$$96 \quad \frac{2}{\pi} \int_{Q_{\max}}^{\infty} \left\{ \int_0^{r_{\min}} -4\pi r \Delta\rho \sin(Qr) dr \right\} \sin(Qr) dQ, \quad (2)$$

97 (see Supplemental Material [10]). We sought the best  $S_{\text{extend}}(Q)$ , as well as  $s$ ,  $\alpha_N$ ,  $\rho$ , and  $r_{\min}$ ,  
 98 by minimizing  $\chi^2$  (see [11]) given by;

$$99 \quad \chi^2(s, \alpha_N, \rho, r_{\min}) \equiv \int_0^{r_{\min}} \{g_{\text{extend}}(r)\}^2 dr. \quad (3)$$

100 We searched for the minimum  $\chi^2$  in wide ranges of  $s$ ,  $\alpha_N$ ,  $\rho$ , and  $r_{\min}$ ;  $1 \pm 0.5$  for  $s$  ( $s$  is expected  
 101 to be within  $1 \pm 0.05$ , since the fluctuation in incident x-ray intensity was less than 5%),  $\pm 50\%$   
 102 from the value obtained by the Krogh-Moe and Norman's method [14,15] for  $\alpha_N$ ,  $\pm 50\%$  from  
 103 the density of solid iron at the  $P$ - $T$  condition of an experiment for  $\rho$ , and between 0.15 and  
 104 0.30 nm for  $r_{\min}$  (0.30 nm is larger than the first peak position in  $g(r)$ ). For  $r_{\min} < 0.15$  nm, a  
 105 small sub-peak appeared between  $r = 0.15$  nm and the dominant peak in  $g(r)$ . The existence  
 106 of such sub-peak is unreasonable, because liquid iron is expected to be a simple monoatomic  
 107 liquid.

108 In practice, the shape of artificial oscillations in  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and  $g_{\text{extend}}(r)$  are also affected  
 109 by  $Q_{\max}$  in Eq. 1 [16,17]. Therefore, we calculated  $\chi^2$  with changing  $Q_{\max}$  from the  
 110 experimental limit to  $\sim 30 \text{ nm}^{-1}$  that corresponds to the position at the end of the first dominant  
 111 peak in  $S(Q)$ . The calculation shows that there is a unique  $Q_{\max}$  at  $\sim 70 \text{ nm}^{-1}$  which minimizes  
 112  $\chi^2$  for each experimental data. When  $Q_{\max}$  is smaller than  $65 \text{ nm}^{-1}$ , the calculated  $\chi^2$  is larger  
 113 than the minimum  $\chi^2$  by more than two orders of magnitude. For run #1 (Table I), for example,  
 114 we find a unique set of these parameters that minimizes  $\chi^2$ ;  $s = 1.0052$ ,  $\alpha_N = 4.522$ ,  $r_{\min} =$   
 115  $0.194 \text{ nm}$ , and  $Q_{\max} = 72.0 \text{ nm}^{-1}$ , giving  $\rho = 85.26 \text{ atoms/nm}^3$  ( $7.91 \text{ g/cm}^3$ ) [Fig. S9]. Figure  
 116 2 shows  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and  $g_{\text{extend}}(r)$  calculated from  $S_{\text{extend}}(Q)$  for run #1, indicating that our  
 117 procedure successfully reduced the oscillations in  $F(r)$  and  $g(r)$  at  $r < r_{\min}$  that are mainly  
 118 caused by a lack of data beyond experimental  $Q$  and inaccurate  $s$  and  $\alpha_N$ . The uncertainty in  
 119  $\rho$  estimated from the difference between calculated  $F_{\text{extend}}(r)$  and expected  $F(r) = -4\pi\rho r$  is  
 120 found to be less than  $\sim 1\%$  (Table I). Note that our procedure does not modify  $S(Q)$  at  $Q \leq$   
 121  $Q_{\max}$ , in contrast to previous iterative analytical procedures.

122 The hard sphere model (HSM) [18] has often been applied for the structure of a single-  
123 component liquid. For example, Ikuta *et al.* [4] determined the density of liquid aluminum  
124 up to 6.9 GPa on the basis of fitting the HSM to experimentally obtained structure factor  
125  $S(Q)$ . The HSM, however, does not match the  $S(Q)$  of liquid iron observed in this study at  
126 relatively large  $Q$  [Fig. S2], indicating that the structure of liquid iron at high pressure is  
127 more complex than the HSM. Similar discrepancies between observed  $S(Q)$  for liquid metals  
128 and the HSM have been reported [4,19]. The densities of liquid iron obtained on the basis of  
129 the HSM are smaller than those determined by the present analyses by  $\sim 3$  atoms/nm<sup>3</sup> ( $\sim 3$ –  
130 3.5%) for all of runs #1–11.

131 The sound velocity,  $V_P$ , of liquid iron was determined from IXS spectra collected at  
132 BL43XU, SPring-8 [20,21] (Table I, see Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 3). The molten  
133 state of a sample was confirmed by the absence of XRD peaks from solid iron, before and  
134 after the IXS measurements. The IXS spectra included three peaks in the present scanned  
135 energy range [Fig. 3(a)]; Stokes and anti-Stokes components of the longitudinal acoustic  
136 phonon mode from the sample, and a quasi-elastic contribution near zero energy transfer.  
137 We determined the  $V_P$  of liquid iron between 16 and 45 GPa from dispersion relations [Fig.  
138 3(b)]. Note that the  $V_P$  of liquid iron is not sensitive to temperature [22–24]. While the  
139 structure of liquidus crystal of iron changes from face-centered-cubic (fcc) to hcp at  $\sim 100$   
140 GPa, it does not likely affect the  $P$ – $V_P$  relation for liquid since both are close-packed  
141 structures and such effect is not found in the present  $P$ – $\rho$  data [Fig. 4(a)].

142 Now we have both  $P$ – $T$ – $\rho$  and  $P$ – $T$ – $V_P$  data for liquid iron from the present study, in  
143 addition to the  $P$ – $\rho$ – $V_P$ – $\gamma$  relation from previous shock compression experiments [8]. From  
144 these data, we obtain the  $P$ – $T$ – $\rho$ – $V_P$ – $\gamma$  relation across the Earth’s entire outer core conditions,  
145 based on the Mie-Grüneisen EoS (see Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 4) [Figs. 4(a) and  
146 4(b)]. We do not employ the  $\rho$  at 1 bar [25] nor the  $V_P$  determined below 5.8 GPa [5], but,  
147 even so, our EoS reproduces these data well, suggesting that a possible structural change in  
148 liquid iron below 6 GPa [6] has only a small impact on  $\rho$  and  $V_P$ .

149 In order to compare liquid iron properties with seismological observations [26], we  
150 calculated the isentropic  $T$  profiles using  $\gamma$  determined in this study (see Supplemental  
151 Material [10], Sec. 4), considering three different model temperatures at the liquid/solid core  
152 boundary (inner core boundary, ICB) ( $T_{\text{ICB}} = 5000$  K, 5400 K, and 5800 K) [3] [Fig. 4(c)].

153 Compared to the  $\rho$ ,  $V_P$ , and adiabatic bulk modulus ( $K_S$ ) of liquid iron calculated along the  
154 isentrope with  $T_{\text{ICB}} = 5400$  K, the Earth's liquid outer core exhibits low  $\rho$  by 0.99–0.81 g/cm<sup>3</sup>  
155 (7.5–7.6%) [Fig. 4(d)] and high  $V_P$  by 0.43–0.29 km/s (4.3–3.7%) [Fig. 4(e)]. Such  $\rho$  deficit  
156 is about 1% smaller than the previous estimates of 8.4–8.6% [8] that was based on the EoS  
157 determined by a combination of the shock-wave data [7] including their uncertain  $T$  estimates  
158 and the 1-bar data. In contrast, the observed  $K_S$  of the outer core is almost identical to that of  
159 liquid iron [Fig. 4(f)]. Note that the  $K_S$  of liquid iron is not sensitive to temperature.

160 Seismology gives the density difference between the liquid and solid core at the ICB;  
161  $\Delta\rho_{\text{ICB}} = 0.55\text{--}0.82$  g/cm<sup>3</sup> [26–28]. Our results show that liquid iron is less dense than  
162 hexagonal-close-packed (hcp) iron [29] by  $\Delta\rho_{\text{melting}} = 0.32$  g/cm<sup>3</sup> at 330 GPa and its melting  
163 point of 6230 K [30]. This is larger than the previous estimates of 0.12–0.22 g/cm<sup>3</sup> [31,32]  
164 and approximately half of the observed  $\Delta\rho_{\text{ICB}}$ . Therefore, the remaining 0.23–0.50 g/cm<sup>3</sup>  
165 (corresponding to 1.9–4.1% of the liquid core density at the ICB) should be attributed to a  
166 compositional difference between the outer and inner core ( $\Delta\rho_{\text{comp}}$ ).

167 Since the solubility of oxygen (O) in solid iron is negligible [33,34], oxygen has been  
168 widely considered as a main light element in the Earth's core, in order to account for  $\Delta\rho_{\text{comp}}$   
169 [33]. Our revised density EoS of liquid iron indicates a smaller  $\Delta\rho_{\text{comp}}$  that can be explained  
170 with only 1.6–3.8 wt% O in the outer core and none in the inner core. This gives the upper  
171 bound for oxygen concentration in the liquid core. However, 1.6–3.8 wt% O is not high  
172 enough to explain the  $\rho$  deficit of the outer core with respect to liquid pure iron [35],  
173 suggesting that oxygen is not a predominant light element in the core. While the light  
174 elements in the core have not yet been identified [3], this study revealed that the  $\rho$  deficit is  
175 constant at 7.5–7.6% and the  $V_P$  excess is also almost constant at 4.3–3.7% over the entire  
176 outer core [26], which strongly constrains its possible compositional range.

177 The EoS is a fundamental macroscopic characteristic of a material. Our new analytical  
178 procedure to derive liquid density from diffuse x-ray scattering signals can be applied to any  
179 amorphous materials and may be used to explore the EoSs of other liquids. In addition, this  
180 work demonstrates that a combination of high-pressure density and velocity data enables a  
181 precise determination of the EoS. These data can now be obtained not only for solids but for  
182 liquids via XRD and IXS measurements even at extreme high  $P$ - $T$  conditions by using LH-  
183 DAC techniques. For further understanding the nature of amorphous materials under

184 compression, future technical developments to use higher energy x-rays are necessary to  
185 collect diffuse signals in a wider  $Q$  range.

186

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197

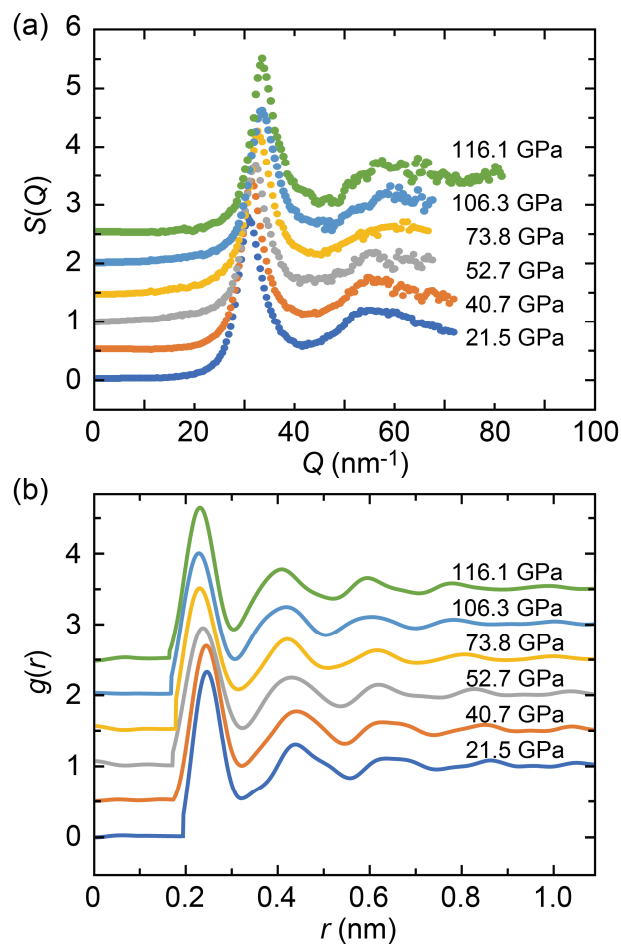
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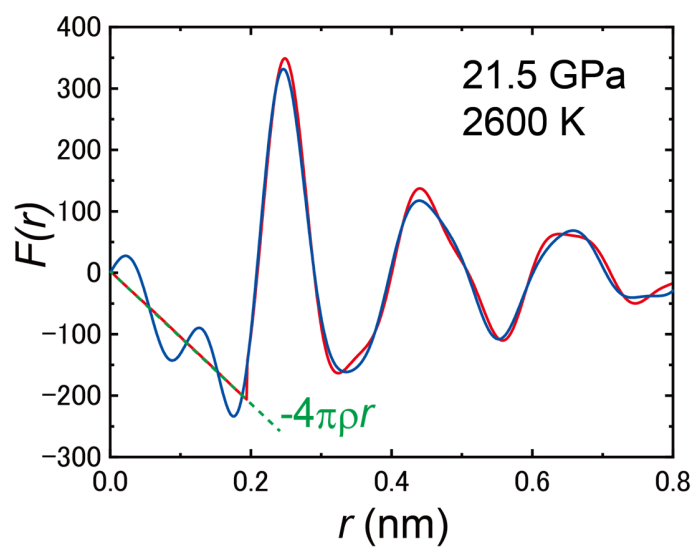
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286 FIG. 1. Structural analyses of liquid iron at high pressures via in-situ XRD measurements.  
 287 (a) Structure factor,  $S(Q)$ , of liquid iron up to 116.1 GPa determined from XRD  
 288 measurements in this study, showing peak shifts to larger  $Q$  values due to the compression  
 289 of liquid iron. (b) Corresponding radial distribution functions,  $g(r)$ , determined in this study.  
 290 Vertical scales are offset for clarity for both  $S(Q)$  and  $g(r)$  plots.

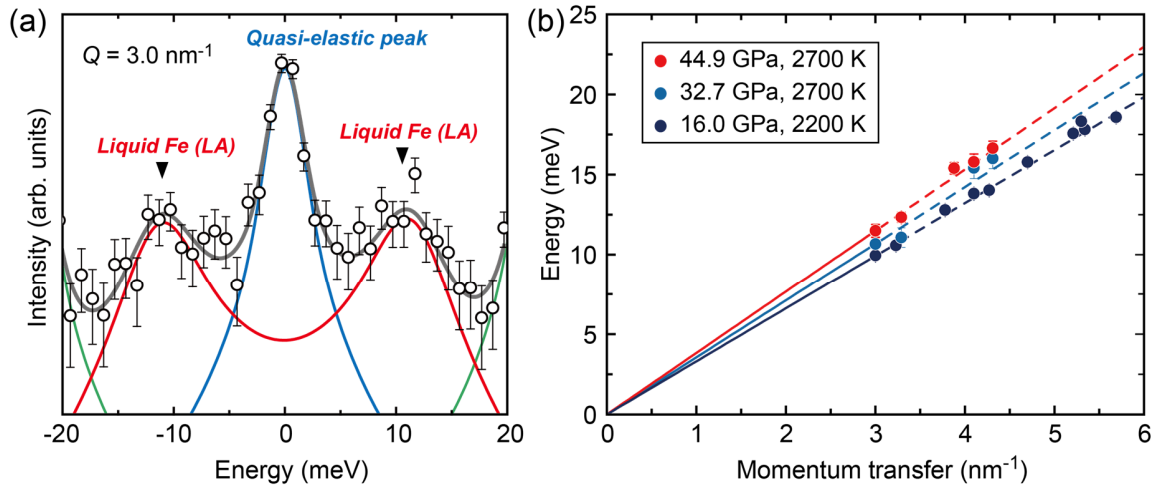
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294 FIG. 2. Distribution function  $F(r)$  from run #1 calculated based on the present analytical  
295 method (red), in which the extension of  $S(Q)$  and parameters of  $s$ ,  $\alpha_N$ , and  $\rho$  are determined  
296 simultaneously, demonstrating that our new method successfully reduces the oscillations at  
297  $r < r_{\min}$  and gives a precise liquid density from the slope.  $F(r)$  calculated without extension  
298 of  $S(Q)$  with assuming  $s = 1$  is shown by the blue line for comparison.  
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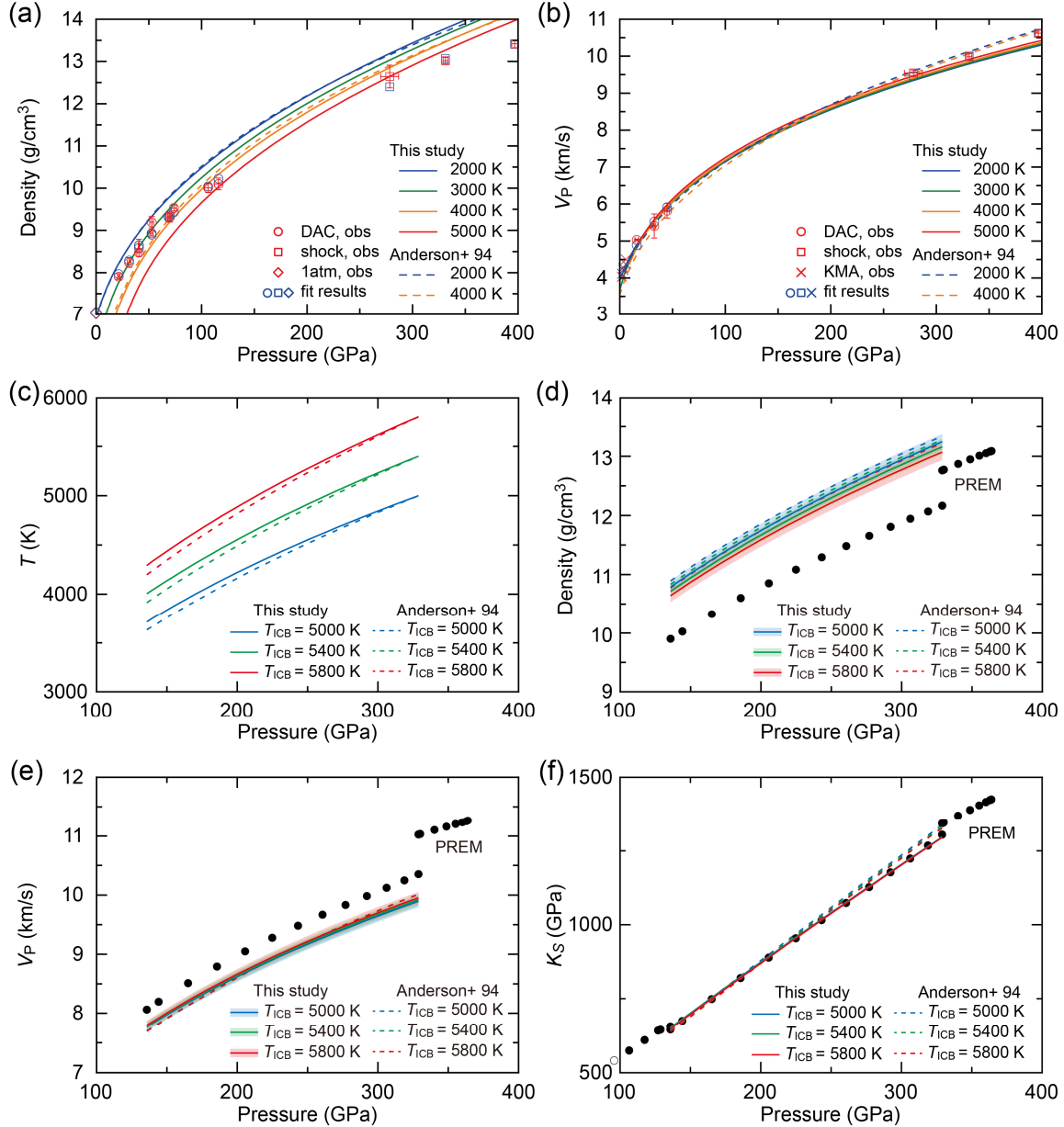


301

302 FIG. 3. High-pressure inelastic x-ray scattering (IXS) measurements of liquid iron. (a)  
303 Typical IXS spectrum of liquid iron collected at 44.9 GPa and 2700 K at momentum transfer  
304  $Q = 3.0 \text{ nm}^{-1}$ . The spectra include three components: a quasi-elastic peak near zero energy  
305 transfer (blue), longitudinal acoustic (LA) phonon mode of liquid Fe (red), and transverse  
306 acoustic (TA) phonon mode of diamond (green). The vertical axis is plotted on a logarithmic  
307 scale. (b) Longitudinal acoustic phonon dispersion of liquid iron at pressures from 16.0 to  
308 44.9 GPa.  
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312

313 FIG. 4. Density ( $\rho$ ), P-wave velocity ( $V_P$ ), and adiabatic bulk modulus ( $K_S$ ) of liquid iron. (a),  
 314 (b) Isothermal  $P$ - $\rho$  and  $P$ - $V_P$  relations calculated from our EoS for 2000 K (blue), 3000 K  
 315 (green), 4000 K (yellow), and 5000 K (red) (Table SII). Dashed lines, 2000 K (red) and 4000  
 316 K (yellow), are from shock-compression study [8]. Red symbols represent experimental data  
 317 (circles, this study; squares, shock experiments [8]; crosses, multi-anvil experiments [5];  
 318 diamonds, 1 bar data at 1811 K [25]). Consistency between the red and blue (fit results)  
 319 symbols indicates that our EoS well reproduces all experimental data points. (c) Calculated  
 320 isentropic temperature profiles with  $T_{ICB} = 5800$  K (red), 5400 K (green), and 5000 K (blue)

321 (Table III) (see Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 4). Dashed lines are those proposed by a  
322 previous study with a different Grüneisen parameter [8]. (d), (e), (f) Comparison of seismic  
323 observations (black circles, PREM [26]) with the  $\rho$ ,  $V_P$ , and  $K_S$  of liquid Fe under core  
324 pressures along the isentropic temperature profiles in (c). Uncertainties in the present  
325 estimates of  $\rho$  and  $V_P$  are  $\sim 1\%$  (see the uncertainty band around each solid curve and  
326 Supplemental Material [10], Sec. 4 for details). Dashed lines represent those proposed on the  
327 basis of earlier shock-wave data [8].  
328

329 Table I. Experimental results on liquid iron.

<i>P-T-ρ</i> relation determined from XRD measurements			
run no.	<i>P</i> (GPa) <sup>†</sup>	<i>T</i> (K)*	<i>ρ</i> (g/cm <sup>3</sup> ) <sup>†</sup>
#1	21.5(12)	2600	7.91(7)
#2	31.3(17)	2870	8.24(11)
#3	40.6(5)	2880	8.64(15)
#4	40.7(21)	3060	8.48(9)
#5	52.7(16)	3250	8.93(7)
#6	52.8(18)	3340	9.19(13)
#7	68.5(22)	3530	9.32(10)
#8	69.8(19)	3540	9.30(11)
#9	73.8(24)	3630	9.53(7)
#10	106.3(35)	4250	10.01(11)
#11	116.1(39)	4350	10.10(14)
<i>P-T-V<sub>P</sub></i> relation determined from IXS measurements			
run no.	<i>P</i> (GPa) <sup>†</sup>	<i>T</i> (K)*	<i>V<sub>P</sub></i> (km/s) <sup>†</sup>
#12	16.0(16)	2200	5.03(12)
#13	32.7(11)	2700	5.40(32)
#14	44.9(20)	2700	5.82(20)

<sup>†</sup>The numbers in parentheses represent one standard deviation in the last digits.

\*±10% uncertainty [10].

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