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The Nature of High and Low Affinity Metal Surface Sites on Birnessite Nanosheets

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ABSTRACT

Birnessite nanosheets (δ -MnO₂) are key reactive nanoparticles that regulate metal cycling in terrestrial and marine settings, yet there is no molecular explanation for the sorption selectivity of metals which controls their enrichment. This fundamental question was addressed by optimizing the structure of the Ni, Cu, Zn, and Pb surface complexes on δ -MnO₂ and by calculating the Gibbs free energy change (ΔG) of the sorption reactions with density functional theory. The sorption selectivity follows the order Pb > Cu > Ni > Zn, in good agreement with experimental data. Cu, Ni, and Zn bind preferentially to layer edges at low surface coverage forming double-edge-sharing (DES) complexes, whereas Pb binds extensively with high selectivity over the three transition metals to both layer edges (DES bonding) and to basal planes forming triple-corner-sharing (TCS) complexes. Pb has similar affinity for the DES and TCS sites at pH 5 and a higher affinity for the TCS sites at circumneutral pH. The Pb DES and TCS complexes are both dehydrated at the δ -MnO₂-water interface and feature a trigonal pyramidal geometry with three surface O atoms. The high stability of the two new complexes arises from the hybridization between the Pb 6s/6p and the O 2p states, forming a strongly covalent Pb-O/OH bond at the δ -MnO₂ surface. The quantum chemical results provide mechanistic and energetics insight on metal uptake on δ -MnO₂ that extends what extended X-ray absorption fine structure (EXAFS) spectroscopy alone can provide.

INTRODUCTION

Since its discovery in 1956 at Birness, Scotland,¹ the layered manganese oxide birnessite has been recognized as the most abundant manganese oxide in the Earth surface environment and a key reactive mineral that regulates the geochemical cycling of trace metals.^{2,3} Metal-containing birnessite (MeBi) has been documented in soils, mineral and rock coatings, sediments, and marine ferromanganese crusts and nodules.⁴⁻³¹ Birnessite also features promising electrochemical energy storage performance and catalytic capabilities when fabricated under appropriate conditions,³²⁻³⁶ and its high sorption capacity can be used in waste water treatment.³⁷⁻³⁹ Birnessite is a phyllosulfate, meaning a layered compound composed of edge-sharing Mn(IV)O₆ octahedra, with ideal chemical formula MnO₂. However, birnessite is never stoichiometric. The formula of the 1956's specimen was Na_{0.7}Ca_{0.3}Mn₇O₁₄·2.8H₂O, implying that the MnO₂ layer had a permanent negative charge balanced by interlayer Na(I) and Ca(II) cations. There has been a consensus early on to attribute the net layer charge to Mn(III) for Mn(IV) substitution and/or to vacant octahedral site,^{40,41} but its exact nature had remained enigmatic until the successful electron diffraction analysis by Drits et al.,⁴² and the Mn-EXAFS spectroscopy study and detailed chemical analysis by Silvester et al.⁴³ in 1997.

Two species of birnessite are known, a monoclinic/triclinic one of ideal formula Na_{0.333}⁺(Mn_{0.667}⁴⁺Mn_{0.333}³⁺)O₂,^{42, 44} and an hexagonal one of generic formula H_x⁺Mn_y³⁺Mn_z²⁺(Mn_u⁴⁺Mn_v³⁺□_w)O₂,⁴⁵ in which □ denotes an empty Mn(IV) position. Hexagonal birnessite (HBi) is the ubiquitous form in nature, and the one formed by bacteria and fungi.⁴⁶⁻⁵⁴ Structural data indicate that the main metal sorption site is located on the three doubly-coordinated oxygens (O_{2Mn}) positioned above and below each Mn(IV) vacancy (Figure 1a). At pH 5-7 and in the absence of solute ion, each set of three O_{2Mn} shares two protons (+2 charge). Thus, the six O_{2Mn} on the two layer sides of a vacancy carry altogether a total protonic charge of +4, which balances the -4 charge deficit created by the empty Mn(IV) position.

Using Zn-EXAFS, Silvester et al.⁴³ also found in 1997 that the two protons on one side of a vacancy can be displaced by a Zn(II) ion at pH 4 to form an interlayer triple-corner-sharing (TCS) inner-sphere surface complex on basal planes (Figure 1b). The same year, Manceau et al.⁵⁵ described the incorporation at pH 4 of Co(III) into the octahedral vacancy (incorporated INC complex), consecutively to the oxidation of a Co(II) TCS complex by a layer Mn(III) cation which was reduced to Mn(II)_(aq). These early studies were performed on well-crystallized HBi having micrometer sized basal planes and 0.16 vacancy per Mn atom.⁵⁶ However, natural birnessite is usually nanoparticulate (form denominated δ-MnO₂^{57,58}), and it was recognized in the 2000s that external surfaces, including

external vacancies and layer edges, dominate the total reactive surface area as the density of edge sites increases when the lateral layer dimension decreases. In contrast, the density of vacancies is independent of the layer dimension. On a layer edge, a metal can form a double-corner-sharing (DCS) complex, and a double- (DES) or a single-edge-sharing (SES) complex (Figure 1c-e). A DES complex can evolve into a triple-edge-sharing complex (TES) and incorporated progressively into the MnO₂ layer during the crystal growth. The identification of some of the surface species (INC, TCS, DCS, DES) has led to accelerating research aimed to understand their thermodynamic stability,⁵⁹⁻⁶¹ and how the mineral structure, layer size, and chemical composition control the metal sorption selectivity and capacity per specific surface area.^{24, 37, 62-84}

The most compelling work on the relative affinity of a metal for the vacancy and edge sites has been performed by Takahashi et al.⁸ in 2007 with Pb sorbed at pH 5 using EXAFS. This work was able to discern the Pb DES complex on layer edges and the Pb TCS complex on vacancies at a Pb/Mn at. ratio of 0.002, 0.044, 0.112, and 0.197 on δ -MnO₂ and at a ratio of 0.031 on well-crystallized birnessite. The equilibrium structure of Pb(II) shifted from a dominant DES coordination to a dominant TCS coordination at increasing surface coverage on δ -MnO₂, whereas only the TCS coordination was detected at low coverage on birnessite. This result reflects a higher affinity (i.e., a higher thermodynamic stability) of Pb(II) for the DES sites on layer edges than for the TCS sites, whether they are located on basal planes or near a layer edge (i.e., external vacancies). Similarly, Qin et al.⁸⁵ showed in 2019 that the proportion of edge to corner Sb(V) complexes on δ -MnO₂ increases with a decrease of the Sb/Mn at. ratio from 0.01 to 0.001, and was higher on δ -MnO₂ than on birnessite at Sb/Mn = 0.01. These results corroborate the rationale that lower crystallinity implies a higher density of reactive sites.⁵⁶

In contrast to Pb(II), Ni(II) and Cu(II) are small enough to be incorporated into a vacancy site of a MnO₂ layer like Co(III) (INC complex).^{7, 10, 16, 71, 86, 87} The migration of a Me(II) cation from a TCS site to an INC site is pH-dependent. It is favored at circumneutral pH when the three O_{2Mn} situated on the opposite site of the cavity are deprotonated to suppress the otherwise strong Me(II)-2H⁺ electrostatic repulsion.^{61, 88} The TCS-INC chemical reaction has attracted large scientific attention in the last decade.⁸⁸⁻⁹¹ Ni is totally incorporated into the octahedral sheets of phyllosulfates in ferromanganese precipitates and nodules from soils and marine environments.^{6, 9, 10, 31, 92} The TCS coordination is considered to be the high energy surface site for Ni, and the main mechanism for Ni enrichment up to percent levels by mass in natural layer-type Mn(IV) oxide minerals is thought to follow the TCS-INC pathway. This view conflicts, however, with two observations.

First, the complete incorporation of Ni in an octahedral layer observed naturally has never been reproduced experimentally. The percentages of Ni in INC and TCS coordinations on δ -MnO₂ were 48% and 52% at Ni/Mn = 0.01 pH 6.6,⁹⁰ 45% and 65% at Ni/Mn = 0.002 pH 7,¹⁶ 31% and 69% at Ni/Mn = 0.02 pH 7.7-8.0,⁹¹ 30% and 70% at Ni/Mn = 0.06 pH 8.⁸⁸ There seems to be a limit of 50% to the partitioning of Ni in the INC site when it is incorporated via a TCS complex. Second, a Ni-Mn edge-sharing coordination was observed on δ -MnO₂ at Ni/Mn = 0.002 pH 4.¹⁶ At this pH the three O_{2Mn} of a vacancy are protonated, therefore the TCS-INC pathway is less likely. Formation of a DES complex should be preferred to that of an INC complex, as the former involves the deprotonation of only one O_{2Mn} (Figure 1d). These observations challenge the TCS-INC pathway for the incorporation of Ni in the layer of natural phyllosulfates, and suggest that it is incorporated instead on the edges of the octahedral layers during the crystal growth (DES-INC pathway). That layer edge sites have higher surface reactivity toward Ni is consistent with the faster rates of oxidation of As(III) to As(V),⁵⁶ and of Co(II) to Co(III),^{72, 93} on the layer edge sites of δ -MnO₂ and birnessite relative to vacancy sites.

How can the hypothesis of the sorption of Ni on layer edge sites at low surface coverage be reconciled with spectroscopic results? The Ni-INC, Ni-DES, Ni-TCS, and Ni-DCS complexes are differentiated in EXAFS on the basis of (1) the Ni-Mn interatomic distances, equal to ~ 2.90 Å for an edge linkage (Ni-INC and Ni-DES), and ~ 3.48 Å for a corner linkage (Ni-TCS and Ni-DCS), and (2) the number of octahedral linkages, which is six for the INC and TCS coordinations and two for the DES and DCS coordinations (Figure 1). However, coordination numbers (*CN*s) are poorly constrained in EXAFS because this fit parameter is correlated with the disorder parameter σ (Å), expressed as the mean-square displacement of bond length. The low precision on *CN* values, compounded by the overlap of the Ni-INC and Ni-DES distances (~ 2.90 Å) and the Ni-TCS and Ni-DCS distances (~ 2.48 Å), complicates the analysis of EXAFS spectra and is a source of uncertainty in the characterization and quantification of the surface species.⁹⁰ The INC-DES ambiguity is specific to cations that can substitute for Mn(IV) and Mn(III) in the octahedral layer, which is why Pb(II) is a good chemical probe of the relative affinity of metals for the vacancy and layer edge sites.

Another experimental approach to probing the highest energy surface sites is to measure the EXAFS spectra at low Me/surface area ratio, when the adsorbed cation does not form a mixture of surface species at equilibrium. This has been performed for Pb(II) on δ -MnO₂ (Pb/Mn = 0.002) and Cd(II) on goethite (α -FeOOH) and hydrous ferric oxide (HFO, Cd/Fe = 0.001).^{8, 94} However, measuring Ni at low surface coverage is difficult, because of the high X-ray fluorescence yield of the MnO₂/FeOOH/HFO matrix at the absorption edge energy of first-row transition metals above the Mn

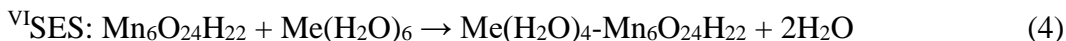
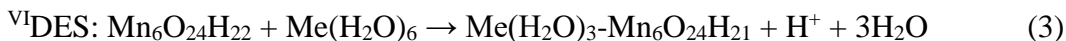
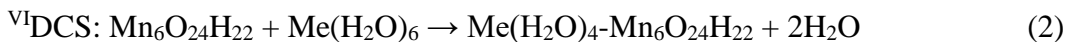
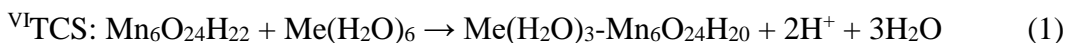
and Fe K-edges (i.e., Co, Ni, Cu and Zn). The background fluorescence signal severely degrades the signal-to-noise ratio of EXAFS data, preventing to obtain reliable structural parameters.

In this study, the reactivity of layer edge sites versus vacancy sites was assessed by calculating the thermodynamic stability of the TCS, DCS, DES, and SES surface complexes for Ni(II), Cu(II), Zn(II), and Pb(II). The metal binding constants to the surface sites (K_{Me}) were obtained from the Gibbs free energy changes (ΔG) for transferring the metal cation from an aqueous solution to the surface site (TCS, DCS, DES, SES complexation). Zn does not invade vacancy sites like Pb(II), but it forms more regular ZnO_6 octahedra than Pb(II) and it has a large size difference (0.74 Å vs 1.19 Å), which may influence the energetics of the bonding at the layer surface.

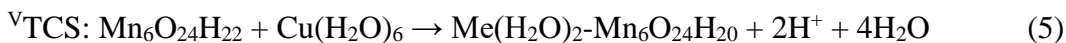
METHODS

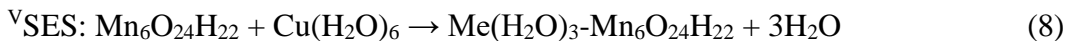
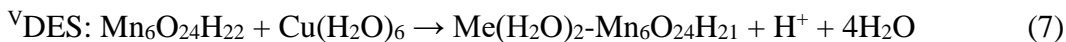
Complexation models. A MnO_2 nanolayer, denoted Mn_6V , was constructed. It has a vacancy site at the center, a composition $Mn_6O_{24}H_{22}$, and a total charge of -2 (Figure 1a). The deficit of +4 charge resulting from the Mn(IV) vacancy was balanced by protonating two of the three O_{2Mn} bordering the vacancy on each side of the MnO_2 layer.^{43, 59} Unsaturated O ions on layer edges were protonated. The magnetic ordering was ferromagnetic among the Mn ions and antiferromagnetic between Ni/Cu and the Mn ions.^{61, 71} Inclusion of magnetism did not decrease ΔG for Cu ($\Delta(\Delta G) < 1$ kcal/mol), and marginally for Ni ($\Delta(\Delta G) < 2$ kcal/mol), thus displacing slightly the equilibrium reactions forward.

Ni^{2+} and Zn^{2+} are octahedrally coordinated in solution and at the MnO_2 surface. Aqua Cu^{2+} fluctuates between tetragonally elongated octahedral (Jahn-Teller distortion, JT), square pyramidal (five-fold), and trigonal bipyramidal (five-fold) coordination, with an average number estimated to 5.7 H_2O molecules.⁹⁵ Cu^{2+} was considered to be only hexahydrated in solution, and six-fold or five-fold coordinated on the Mn_6V nanolayers. The ΔG values of the six-fold surface complexes were calculated for the following surface reactions,^{96, 97} where Me stands for Ni, Cu, and Zn



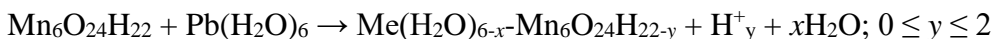
The reactions for the formation of the five-fold Cu complexes are written





Various estimates place the number of Pb^{2+} -bound water molecules between 4 and 7.5, on the basis of mobility measurements in aqueous solution.⁹⁸ The coordination of Pb^{2+} (electronic configuration $[\text{Xe}]6s^24f^{14}5d^{10}6p^2$) is complicated by the presence of a $6s^2$ electron lone pair on the ion. The result is the prevalence of pyramidal over octahedral configurations in crystallographic structures of $\text{Pb}(\text{II})$ with the outer lone pair of electrons at the top of the pyramid.⁹⁹ The hexahydrated Pb^{2+} ion (denoted ${}^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$) adopts a trigonal pyramidal geometry with three O atoms at 2.48-2.51 Å and a planar trigonal geometry with the three other O atoms at 2.61-2.72 Å (Figure 2a). The average DFT distance of ${}^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$ is identical to the EXAFS Pb-O distance measured in water (2.59 Å), suggesting that the ${}^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$ coordination structure prevails.¹⁰⁰ The two most stable four-fold configurations optimized in the gas phase are the seesaw $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2+}$ geometry⁹⁹ and the 3+1 $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})]^{2+}$ geometry.¹⁰¹ In the seesaw geometry (denoted ${}^{\text{IV}}\text{Pb}$), the two short Pb-O distances are ~ 2.40 Å, and the two long Pb-O distances are ~ 2.50 Å (Figure 2b). In the 3+1 configuration, three H_2O molecules form a trigonal coordination at 2.37-2.40 Å from Pb^{2+} (denoted ${}^{\text{III}}\text{Pb}$), and the fourth H_2O molecule is in a secondary solvation shell at ~ 3.96 Å from Pb^{2+} and is hydrogen bonded to two coordinating H_2O molecules (Figure 2c). Previous DFT calculations showed that the trihydrated 3+1 coordination is more stable by 5.1 kcal/mol than the tetrahydrated coordination in the gas phase.¹⁰¹ We obtained a difference of 2.40 kcal/mol in solution using the DFT scheme described below, and no difference (-0.2 kcal/mol) using the CCSD(T)/MP2 molecular orbital theory. Sorption of the $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2+}$ ion gives a ΔG value 10 kcal/mol higher (i.e., less negative) than that of the $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$ ion, because the loss of two Pb-bound water molecules is exergonic. On the basis of EXAFS^{100, 102} and DFT Pb-O distances, we assume that $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$ is more abundant than $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4]^{2+}$ in aqueous solution, although the relative energies suggest otherwise. Given that previous theoretical studies have obtained varying results depending on the level of theory,¹⁰³ only DFT-based molecular dynamics simulations in explicit solvent using the same level of theory could clarify the actual situation, but such an investigation is beyond the scope of the present study.

We found that the lowest energy surface complexes are completely or partially dehydrated at the MnO_2 surface. Therefore, the generic surface reactions for Pb^{2+} can be written:



Thermochemical calculations. Equilibrium geometries and energies were calculated with spin-polarized molecular density functional theory (DFT) using the hybrid generalized-gradient

approximation (GGA) as implemented in the Perdew Burke and Ernzerhof functional PBE0^{104, 105} (also called PBE1PBE) to describe the exchange-correlation functional.¹⁰⁶ This hybrid functional performs extremely well for geometry and energetic properties.¹⁰⁷ The valence electronic configurations of all atoms were treated with the all-electron polarized def2-TZVP basis sets of triple ζ quality.¹⁰⁸ All basis sets were used in combination with the Coulomb fitting auxiliary def2 /J basis sets.¹⁰⁹ The scalar relativity of Pb was accounted for by replacing the 60 innermost electrons with the def2-ECP effective core potential (ECP), as obtained from the Stuttgart pseudopotential library. The atom-pairwise dispersion correction D3BJ¹¹⁰ was applied to all atoms. The solvation model based on density (SMD)¹¹¹ with water as the solvent was applied to all calculations. The default SMD radii for all elements considered here are equivalent to Bondi's values, which are expected to give most reliable results.^{112, 113} The proton solvation energy was taken to be -264.0 kcal/mol.¹¹⁴

Vibrational frequency calculations were performed on all optimized geometries to obtain enthalpies and Gibbs free energies of complexation. The total entropy of the unreacted and reacted birnessite models was obtained by summing the electronic and vibrational entropy, omitting rotational and translational entropies as atoms are held together in a solid.¹¹⁵ The hessian matrix was calculated numerically by finite differences based on the analytical energy gradients as implemented in ORCA under the keyword "NumFreq". All energies are reported at a standard state of 1 mol L^{-1} and 298.15 K. All ab initio computations were carried out using the molecular orbitals calculation software ORCA 4.2.1, and the TightSCF geometry convergence criteria which set the energy change between SCF optimization cycles to 10^{-8} Eh.¹¹⁶ We carefully checked that the minimum of the total energy was a global minimum. The size of the nanosheet is at the limit of what is currently feasible at this level of theory with a reasonable computational effort.

Equilibrium constants were calculated from $\Delta G = -RT \ln K$, and the molar ratios of the complexed ($[\text{Me-MnO}_2]$) to aqueous ($[\text{Me}]_{\text{aq}}$) metals calculated from the law of mass action at pH 5 and 7. The accuracy of the reaction entropies was assessed with respect to the prediction of the first hydrolysis constants of the hexa-solvated Mn^{2+} , Ni^{2+} , and Zn^{2+} ions.¹¹⁷ Calculated pK_a values for the MnOH^+ (10.6), Ni(OH)^+ (9.9), and Zn(OH)^+ (9.0) species differ from experimental values by 0.8(4), which corresponds to a variation of 1-2 kcal/mol on ΔG (Table S1). Thus, absolute ΔG of complexation are calculated reliably within chemical accuracy using the def2-TZVP basis sets for the sorbed metal ions (Me^{2+}). The precision on the variation of the predicted equilibrium constants (i.e., ΔK) is about one power of ten (i.e., $\log K \pm 1$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Structure of the surface complexes. All hydrated surface complexes are stabilized on the Mn_6V nanolayers with H-bonds between water molecules and dangling surface OH groups and $\text{O}_{2\text{Mn}}$ atoms (Figures 1 and S1). The structures of the DCS, DES, and SES complexes are independent of the layer dimension since they are located on lateral sites. The three water molecules of the TCS complex are H-bonded to three external $\text{OH}_{2\text{Mn}}$ atoms in the Mn_6V model. On the basal plane of a MnO_2 layer, the surface oxygens are bonded to three Mn atoms, therefore the H-bonds of the TCS complex would be with three $\text{O}_{3\text{Mn}}$ atoms, not with three $\text{OH}_{2\text{Mn}}$. We verified with a Mn_{18}V cluster that the geometry of the TCS complex remained unchanged when the three $\text{OH}_{2\text{Mn}}$ atoms were replaced with three $\text{O}_{3\text{Mn}}$ atoms (Figure S2). The calculated Me-O and Me-Mn distances are practically identical to previous DFT^{59-61, 71, 88, 90} and EXAFS values^{4-10, 43, 67-71, 86-89, 118-122} (Table S2). The mean (Ni,Zn)-(O,OH,H₂O) distances are: Ni-O = 2.03-2.14 Å ± 0.00-0.03 and Zn-O = 2.05-2.20 Å ± 0.00-0.10 Å. The bond lengths of Ni and Zn with H₂O are longer than with O and OH, except for the DES complexes. The Cu-O distances are characteristic of the JT distortion, regardless of the surface coordination of Cu: $^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}_{\text{eq}} = 1.98\text{-}2.00 \text{ \AA} \pm 0.02\text{-}0.06 \text{ \AA}$; $^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}_{\text{ax}} = 2.33\text{-}2.43 \text{ \AA} \pm 0.00\text{-}0.14 \text{ \AA}$; $^{\text{V}}\text{Cu-O}_{\text{eq}} = 1.97\text{-}1.99 \text{ \AA} \pm 0.01\text{-}0.06 \text{ \AA}$; and $^{\text{V}}\text{Cu-O}_{\text{ax}} = 2.21\text{-}2.32 \text{ \AA}$. The largest difference of 0.14 Å between the two ($^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}$)_{ax} axial ligands occurs for Cu-TCS, where the $^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}$ distances to the surface and water oxygen are $d(^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}_{2\text{Mn}}) = 2.28 \text{ \AA}$ and $d(^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-O}_{2\text{H}}) = 2.56 \text{ \AA}$ (Figure S3a). The $^{\text{VI}}\text{CuO}_6$ polyhedron has a geometry intermediate between a tetragonally elongated octahedron and a square pyramid, in line with previous DFT⁶¹ and EXAFS¹¹⁸ results. The longer bond distance of 2.56 Å is lost in the $^{\text{V}}\text{Cu}$ complex, which has a square pyramid geometry with $d(^{\text{V}}\text{Cu-O}_{2\text{Mn}}) = 2.25 \text{ \AA}$ in excellent agreement with the EXAFS value of 2.23 Å¹¹⁸ (Figure 1f). The tetrahedral coordination hypothesized by Sherman and coworkers¹²³⁻¹²⁶ is an incompatible model: it yields short $d(\text{Cu-Mn})$ of 3.07-3.10 Å not observed by EXAFS,^{118, 123} and the free energy of complexation is as high as 248 kcal/mol (Figure S3b).

Pb adopts a seesaw ($^{\text{IV}}\text{Pb}$) or trigonal ($^{\text{III}}\text{Pb}$) pyramidal geometry at the MnO_2 surface (Figure 3). The octahedral coordination ($^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$) was either unstable, or metastable with a moderately positive ΔG value. The first case is illustrated in Figure 3a with the $^{\text{IV}}\text{Pb}$ -DCS complex $\text{Pb}(2\text{O}_{\text{Mn}}2\text{H}_2\text{O}) \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ -DCS. The complex was initially $^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$ -DCS ($\text{Pb}(2\text{O}_{\text{Mn}}4\text{H}_2\text{O})$ coordination) and it lost two H₂O ligands during optimization taking on the seesaw $\text{Pb}(2\text{O}_{\text{Mn}}2\text{H}_2\text{O})$ coordination. Each departed H₂O ligand is H-bonded to a long Pb-H₂O bond from the seesaw complex and to surface OH groups. The second case is illustrated in Figure 3b,c with the $^{\text{VI}}\text{Pb}$ -TCS complex ($\text{Pb}(3\text{O}_{2\text{Mn}}3\text{H}_2\text{O})$ coordination, Figure 3b). Its geometry was shown previously to be stable,⁶⁰ which our geometry minimization confirmed

(Figure 3b). However, $\Delta G = +1.8$ kcal/mol, indicating that the optimized structure is at best metastable. We found another structure 23.3 kcal/mol more stable ($\Delta G = -17.9$ kcal/mol), in which the surface complex is dehydrated (Pb($3O_{2Mn}$) coordination) and the three departed H_2O are 3.15-4.36 Å away from Pb and are H-bonded to surface O/OH (Figure 3c). The Pb- O_{2Mn} distances are 2.28-2.29 Å, 0.10 Å shorter than the Pb-O distances of the 3+1 aqua species (Figure 2c), and 0.02-0.03 Å shorter than the Pb-O distance of tetragonal PbO (litharge, 2.31 Å). This is accomplished by bringing the Pb atom close to the Mn vacancy, 1.3 Å above the O_{2Mn} plane. Similarly to the ambiguous coordination of Pb^{2+} in solution, explicit solvent molecular dynamics simulations would be necessary to ascertain the hydration state of the PbO_x -TCS complex. However, given the large energy difference (> 20 kcal/mol), we discard the ^{VI}Pb -TCS complex, $Pb(3O_{2Mn}3H_2O)$, for the energetic discussion below.

The weaker stability of the Pb bond to H_2O compared to surface O atoms and OH groups is reflected electronically in a difference of hybridization between the Pb 6s/6p and the O 2p states. Calculation of the partial density of states (PDOS) shows that the Pb 6s states are split into one maximum located at the top and another located at the bottom of the valence band (Figure 4). The high-energy Pb 6s states are fully hybridized with the Pb 6p and O/OH 2p states, forming a strongly covalent Pb-O/OH bond (Figure 4a,b). The low-energy Pb 6s states are little mixed with the O/OH 2p states and unmixed with the Pb 6p states. In contrast to the Pb-O/OH bond, the O_{2H} 2p states from the Pb- H_2O bond are mixed with both the Pb 6s states at low energy and with the Pb 6s6p states at high energy (Figure 4c). However, the Pb and O_{2H} states only partly overlap, which indicates that the bond interactions of Pb are weaker with H_2O molecules than with surface O atoms and OH groups. This explains why the Pb- H_2O bond lengths of the 3+1 aqua species are 0.10 Å longer than those of the ^{III}Pb -TCS complex.

Metal sorption selectivity of surface sites. All ΔG values of complexation are listed in Table S2 and those of the most stable complexes are plotted in Figure 5. ΔG is a predictor of the affinity of metals for a surface site, and the $\Delta(\Delta G)$ differences between metals provide insight into the metal sorption selectivity of this site. It is important to note that ΔG does not directly inform on the equilibrium distribution between the complexed and uncomplexed metal cations (i.e., $[Me-MnO_2]/[Me]_{aq}$), because complexation reactions depend on the activity of protons in solution. Metal sorption can occur (1) without deprotonation of the surface hydroxyl (SES and DCS, reactions (2) and (4)), (2) with loss of one proton (DES, reaction (3)), and (3) with loss of two protons (TCS, reaction (1)). According to the mass-action law ($K \sim ([Me-MnO_2][H^+]^n)/[Me]_{aq}$), the partitioning of Me between the solution and the solid phase is independent of pH in the first case, is proportional to $[H^+]$ in the

second case, and to $[H^+]^2$ in the third case. Equilibrium $[Me-MnO_2]/[Me]_{aq}$ ratios of metals on the different surface sites as a function of pH are discussed in the next section.

ΔG values follow the order $\Delta G(VCu) < \Delta G(VI Cu) < \Delta G(Ni) < \Delta G(Zn)$ regardless of the surface site, indicating that Cu would bind preferentially over Ni and Zn to the MnO_2 surface. This result is consistent with Me^{2+} sorption isotherm data fit with the constant capacity model and the CD-MUSIC/triple-layer model, which show that Cu has a higher affinity than Zn and Ni for the TCS and DCS sites.¹²⁷ The Pb results are more contrasted as ΔG depends (1) on its hydration state in solution, with ΔG being 10 kcal/mol lower for $Pb(H_2O)_6$ than $Pb(H_2O)_4$ sorption, and (2) on the coordination of the surface complex. In comparison, the difference between $Cu(H_2O)_6$ and $Cu(H_2O)_5$ sorption is 2.9 kcal/mol. Regarding the second factor, the trigonal pyramidal geometry (^{III}Pb) is 4-5 kcal/mol more stable than the seesaw geometry (^{IV}Pb , Table S2). Regarding the first factor, aqua $[Pb(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$ outcompetes all Me cations on all surface sites, whereas $[Pb(H_2O)_4]^{2+}$ has similar affinity for the TCS, DCS, and SES sites than $[Cu(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$, and it is outcompeted by aqua $[Cu(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$ and $[Ni(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$, on the DES site (Figure 5). Since $[Pb(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$ is more abundant than $[Pb(H_2O)_4]^{2+}$ in aqueous solution, according to EXAFS,^{100, 102} we conclude that the relative metal sorption affinity for all surface sites decreases in the order $Pb > Cu > Ni > Zn$. Van Genuchten and Peña⁷⁸ interpreted Pb adsorption isotherms at pH 5.5 and differential pair distribution function (d-PDF) analysis to indicate that δ - MnO_2 edges have highest metal selectivity for Pb. Our findings agree with this experimental observation.

Equilibrium distribution of the surface complexes. The predicted equilibrium constants (K) of the surface complexes and the $[Me-MnO_2]/[Me]_{aq}$ ratios at $5 \leq pH \leq 8$ are given in Table S2, and the $[Me-MnO_2]/[Me]_{aq}$ ratios at pH 5 and 8 are shown graphically in Figure 6. The $[Me-MnO_2]/[Me]_{aq}$ ratios decrease in the order $DES > TCS > DCS > SES$ at all pH. Thus, the DES sites are the high-energy sites for the three metals and are occupied first at low surface coverage.

The pK values of the Pb complexes decrease in the order $DCS > DES > TCS$, in agreement with Pb adsorption data modeled with CD-MUSIC.¹²⁸ However, the $pK(DCS) - pK(DES)$ difference is only +0.9, which is within the precision of 1, while the $pK(DES) - pK(TCS) = 5.6$ difference is significant. The sorption selectivity derived from the $[Pb-MnO_2]/[Pb]_{aq}$ ratios after application of the mass-action law follows the order $DES \approx TCS > DCS \approx SES$ at pH 5 and $TCS > DES > DCS \approx SES$ at $pH > 5$ (Figure 6). Since we are interested here in the relative stability of the Pb surface species (i.e., $\Delta(\Delta G)$), the uncertainty regarding the actual solvation state and conformation of the Pb^{2+} aqua ion does not interfere. The similar affinity of Pb for the DES and TCS sites at pH 5 agrees with the

EXAFS results of Takahashi et al.⁸ which show that Pb is bonded approximately evenly on the two sites at a Pb/Mn at. ratio of 0.002.

At pH 8, close to the acidity of marine waters, the highest $[\text{Me-MnO}_2]/[\text{Me}]_{\text{aq}}$ ratio of each metal decreases in the order $^{\text{III}}\text{Pb-TCS} > ^{\text{V}}\text{Cu-DES} > \text{Ni-DES} > \text{Zn-DES}$ (Figure 6b). This order, which corresponds to the affinity sequence of the four metals for MnO_2 , parallels their geochemical partitioning between seawater ($[\text{Me}]_{\text{aq}}$) and marine ferromanganese crusts ($[\text{Me-MnO}_2]$). Pb is enriched $\sim 10^9$ times, Cu $\sim 4 \times 10^6$ times, Ni $\sim 10^6$ times, and Zn $\sim 8 \times 10^5$ times in FeMn crusts relative to seawater,¹²⁹ and the differences of partitioning can be explained in terms of the binding energy of metals to the MnO_2 surface. Pb(II) is even more enriched than redox-sensitive Co(II) ($\sim 8 \times 10^8$), which is sequestered as Co(III). The billion-fold enrichment of Pb can be explained by the structure property-energetics relationship of the dehydrated Pb surface complex at the δ - MnO_2 -water interface. Although Pb is speciated dominantly as $[\text{PbCl}_n]^{2+n}/[\text{PbCO}_3]^0$ in seawater instead of $[\text{Pb}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}$,¹³⁰ this should not change the selectivity sequence because the strong bonding of Pb to the TCS site is driven by the trigonal geometry of the $3\text{O}_{2\text{Mn}}$ site which matches the stereochemistry of Pb.

Recently, Wegorzewski et al.³¹ hypothesized that Ni is incorporated in the layers and Cu is located at the edges of marine phyllosulfates. The uptake modes of Ni and Cu can be rationalized based on their higher affinity for the DES than the TCS sites and their crystal chemical properties. Birnessite crystals grow by lateral extension of the growth layers through the incorporation of MnO_6 octahedra on edge sites. The binding energy of an adatom increases with the number of exposed O ligands, which is two for SES, three for DES, and four for a triple-edge-sharing complex (TES). A TES surface site is unlikely to exist as it is highly reactive and would be rapidly filled by a Mn atom. Thus, crystal growth occurs more likely by adsorption of Mn atoms on DES sites, and it is probably how a Ni-DES complex is incorporated in the MnO_2 layer (DES-INC pathway). This mechanism may explain also how Ni is incorporated in the MnO_2 layer of the MnO_2 - $\text{Al}(\text{OH})_3$ mixed-layer lithiophorite.^{13, 92} In contrast to Ni, steric constraints imposed by the Jahn-Teller distortion of the $^{\text{V}}\text{Cu-DES}$ and $^{\text{VI}}\text{Cu-DES}$ complexes likely hinder its incorporation in the MnO_2 layer.

CONCLUSION

The main results of this study can be summarized as follows: (1) Pb has the highest affinity for MnO_2 out of the four metals studied, followed by Cu, Ni, and Zn; (2) Ni, Cu, and Zn have a higher affinity for the DES layer edge sites than for the TCS layer surface site; and (3) Pb has a higher affinity for the TCS sites at circumneutral pH and a similar affinity for the TCS and DES sites at acidic pH. Pb

uptake on TCS sites may, however, be rapidly limited at increasing surface loading by the density of sites available for sorption. The vacancy sites of δ -MnO₂ and well-crystallized birnessite are usually capped on one side by octahedrally coordinated Mn³⁺ cations, and to a lesser extent by Mn²⁺ cations.^{45, 58} Mn³⁺ cations cannot be replaced with Pb as it is strongly bonded to the surface ($\Delta G = -57.0$ kcal/mol). Mn²⁺ cations can be easily replaced ($\Delta G = -10.8$ kcal/mol), yet there are few of them. Overall, this study on the energetics of metal sorption on phyllosulfate complements the EXAFS-based approach.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI:

Supplementary table and figures (PDF)

Cartesian coordinates of the surface complexes (xlsx)

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Notes

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FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1. **a)** Polyhedral representation of the Mn_6V model with a Mn(IV) vacancy charge-compensated by two protons bound to unsaturated O ions (O_{2Mn}) bordering the vacancy on each side of the layer. **b-e)** Geometry-optimized Ni-TCS, Ni-DCS, Ni-DES, and Ni-SES complexes. **f)** Geometry-optimized Cu-TCS complex with a five-fold coordination.

Figure 2. Geometry-optimized coordinations of Pb(II) to water molecules. **a)** six-fold coordination. **b)** Seesaw geometry.⁹⁹ **c)** 3+1 geometry.¹⁰¹ The Pb-O distances are in angstrom.

Figure 3. Geometry-optimized Pb complexes. **a)** ^{IV}Pb -DCS complex with two solvation water molecules. **b)** ^{VI}Pb -TCS complex. **c)** ^{III}Pb -TCS complex with three solvation water molecules. **d)** ^{III}Pb -TCS complex. **e)** ^{IV}Pb -DCS complex. **f)** ^{III}Pb -DCS complex. **g)** ^{IV}Pb -DES., **h)** ^{III}Pb -DES. **i)** ^{IV}Pb -SES. **j)** ^{III}Pb -SES. ΔG values in kcal/mol are given in parenthesis for the sorption of $[Pb(H_2O)_6]^{2+}$.

Figure 4. Electronic density of states in the valence band region of the Pb-O bond for the ^{III}Pb -TCS complex (**a**), the Pb-O and Pb-OH bonds for the ^{IV}Pb -DES complex (**b**), and the Pb-H₂O bond for the ^{IV}Pb -DES complex (**c**). The HOMO values are the energies of the highest occupied molecular orbitals. The peak arrowed in (**b**) corresponds to the O bonding with H. On top, polyhedral representation of the ^{III}Pb -TCS and ^{IV}Pb -DES complexes.

Figure 5. Gibbs free energy of complexation (ΔG) of the Me^{2+} aqua ions on the Mn_6V nanolayer. For Pb^{2+} , free energies are given for sorption of the six-fold aqua species ($Pb(H_2O)_6$) (**a**), and for the seesaw four-fold species ($Pb(H_2O)_4$) (**b**). $\Delta G(Pb(H_2O)_4) - \Delta G(Pb(H_2O)_6) = 10$ kcal/mol. The Pb coordination of the surface complexes is always three-fold (i.e., ^{III}Pb -TCS, ^{III}Pb -DCS, ^{III}Pb -DES, and ^{III}Pb -SES).

Figure 6. Equilibrium molar ratios of the concentration of complexed Me^{2+} ($[Me-MnO_2]$) to aqueous Me^{2+} ($[Me]_{aq}$) at pH 5 and 8.

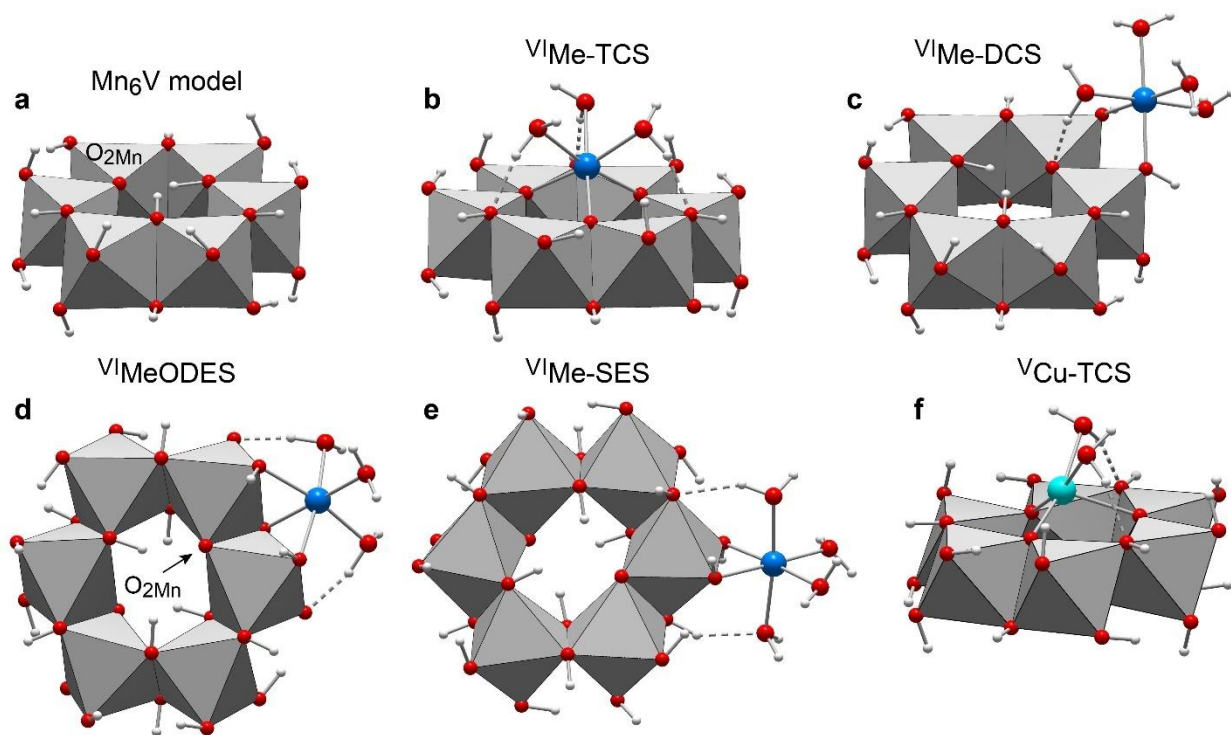


Figure 1

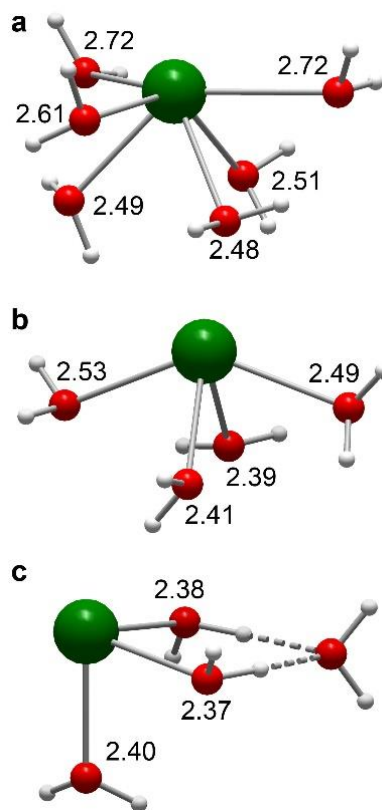


Figure 2

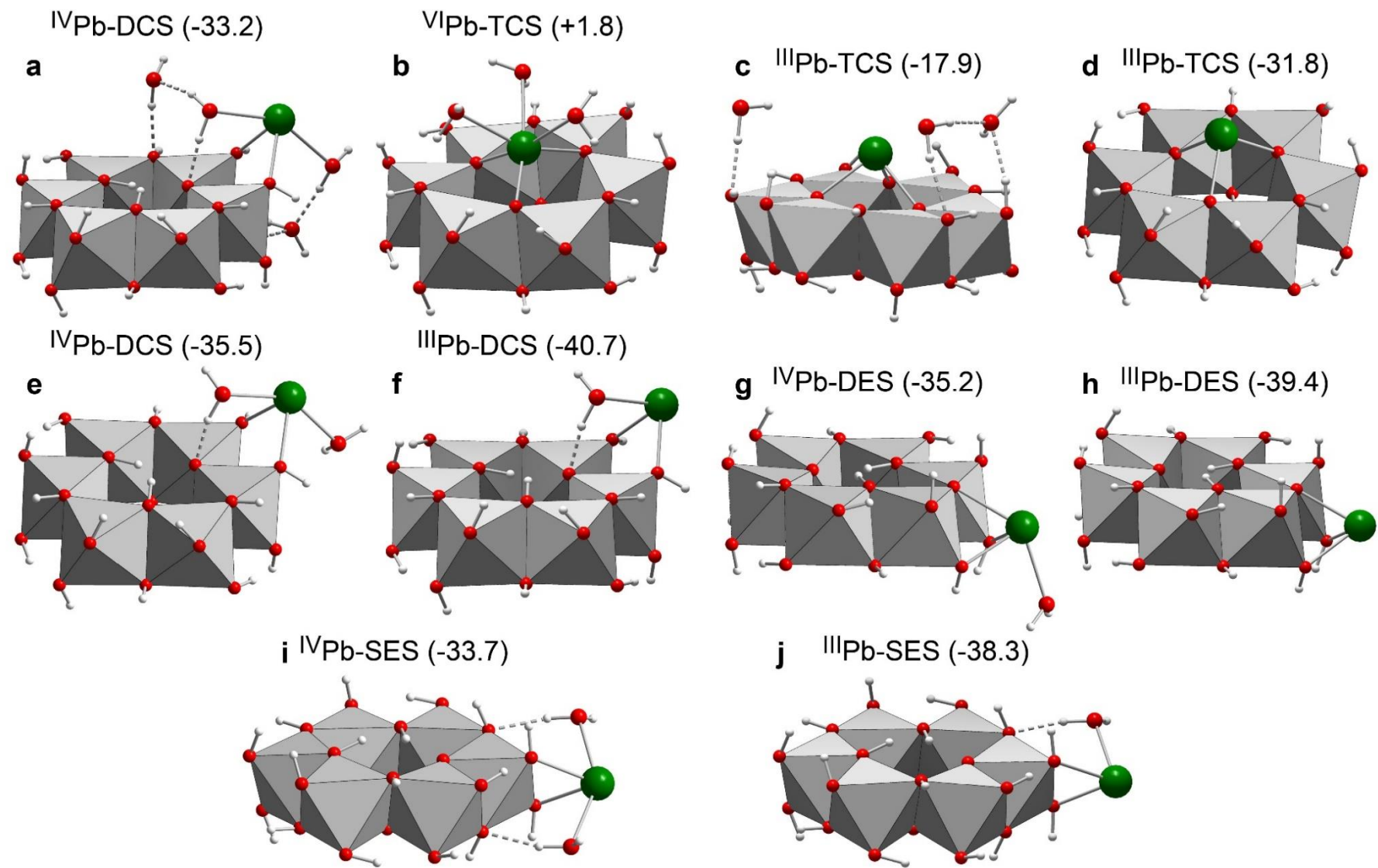


Figure 3

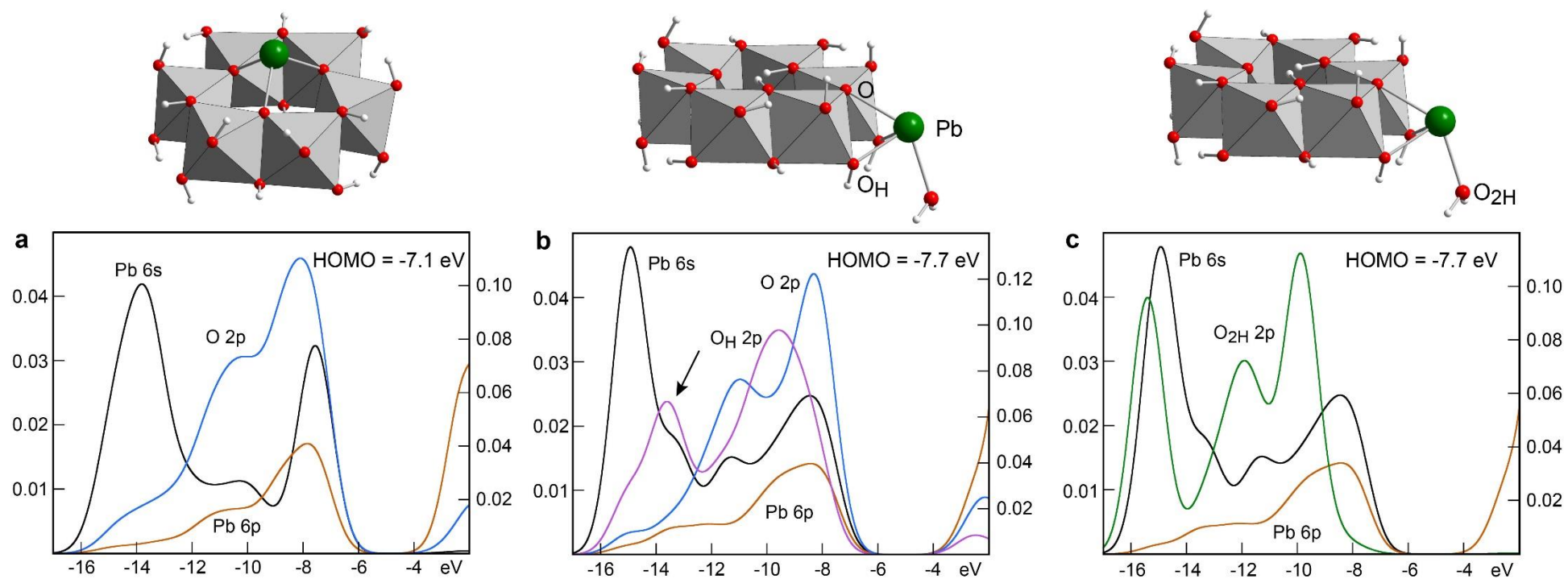


Figure 4

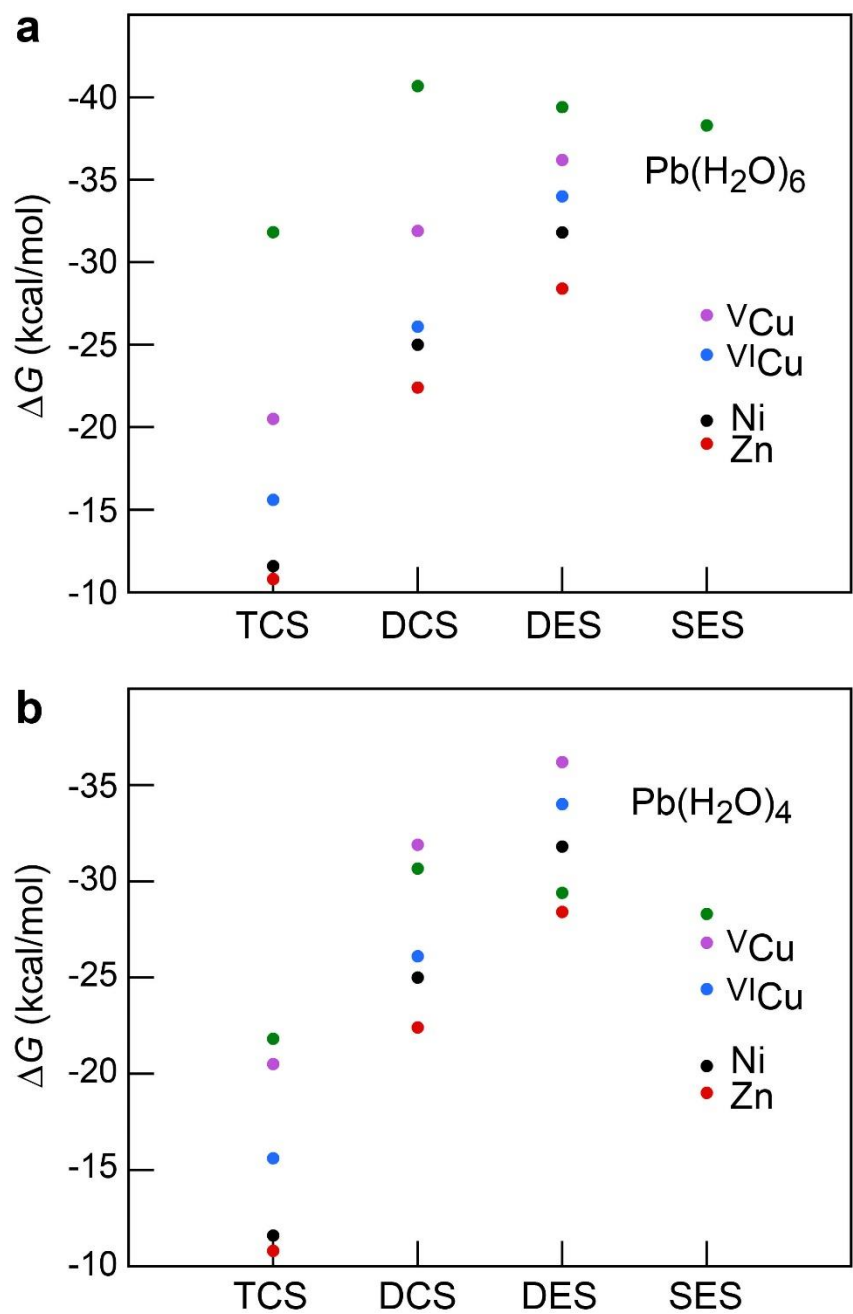


Figure 5

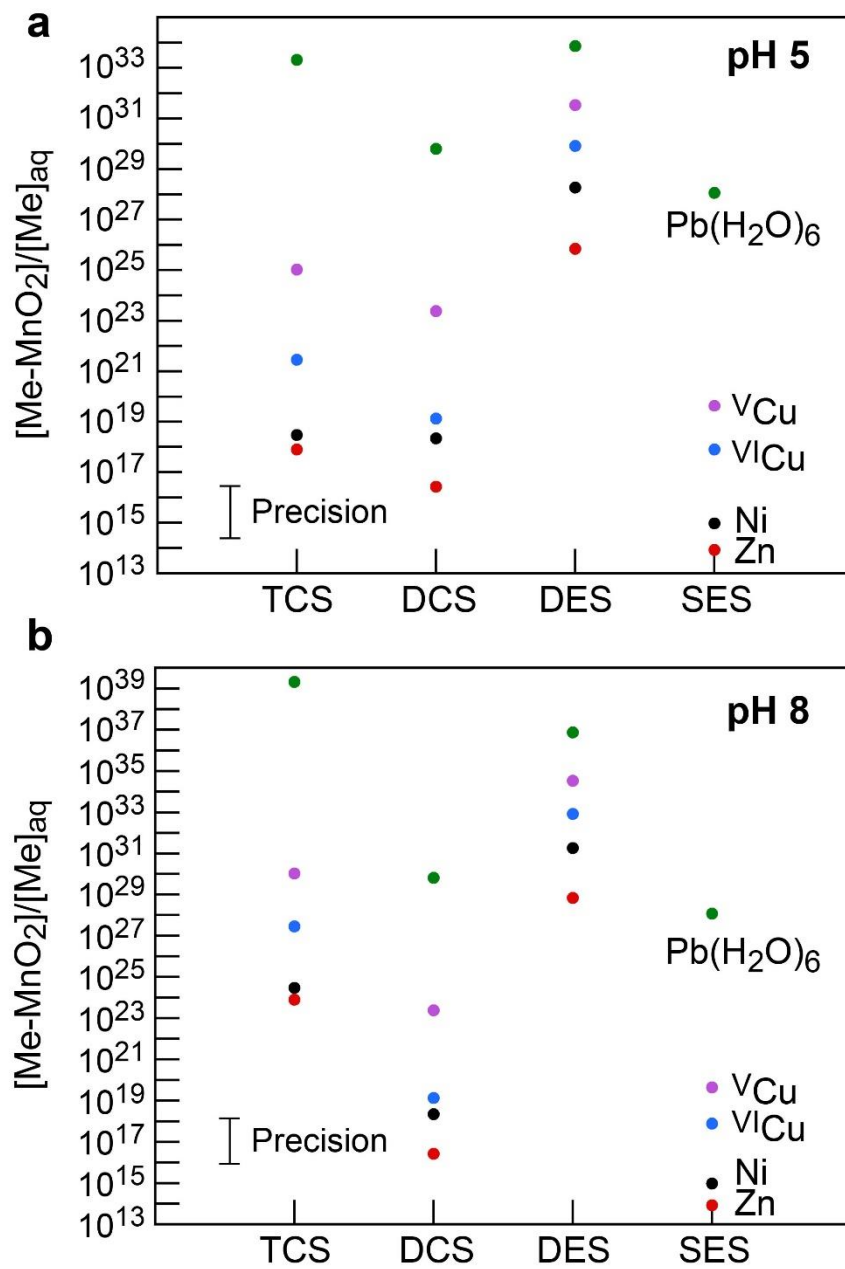


Figure 6

The Nature of High and Low Affinity Metal Surface Sites on Birnessite Nanosheets

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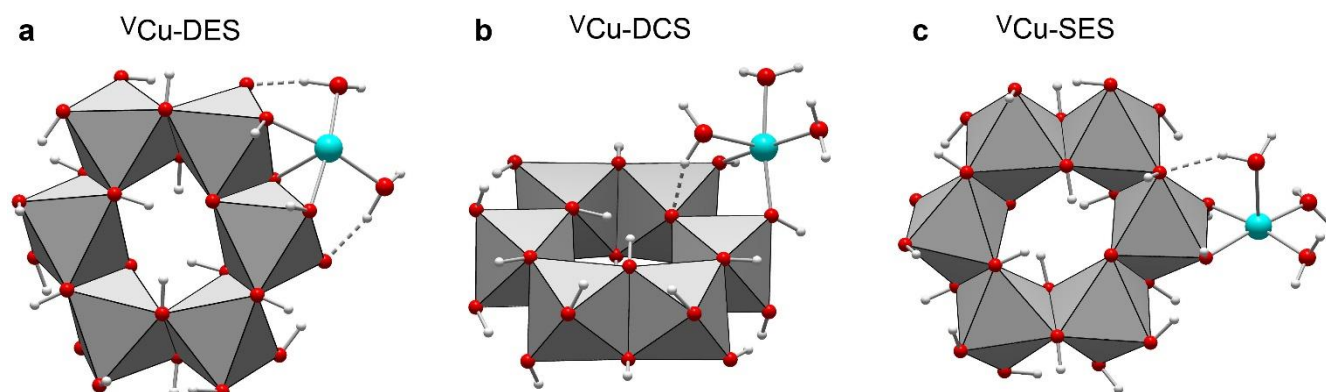


Fig. S1. Geometry-optimized Cu-DES (a), Cu-DCS (b), and Cu-SES (c) complexes with a five-fold coordination.

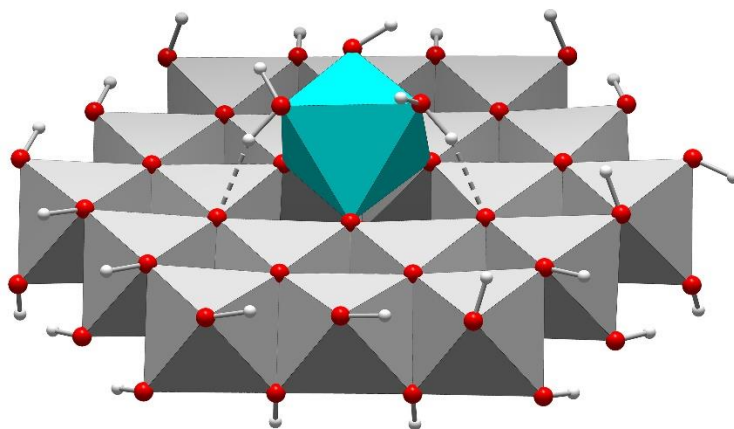


Fig. S2. Geometry-optimized Ni(3O₂Mn₃H₂O)-TCS complex on a Mn₁₈V layer. The three water molecules from the Ni-TCS complex are H-bonded to three O_{3M} surface oxygens.

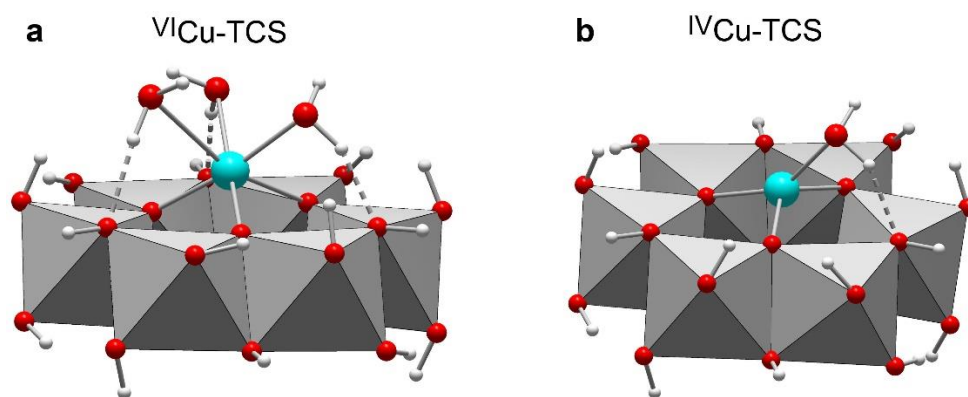


Fig. S3. Geometry-optimized Cu(3O₂Mn₃H₂O)-TCS (**a**) and Cu(3O₂MnH₂O)-TCS (**b**) complexes.

Table S1. Calculated and experimental first hydrolysis constants

Reaction	Calculated ΔG	Calculated pK_a	Experimental pK_a
$Mn(H_2O)_6 \rightarrow [Mn(H_2O)_5OH]^+ + H^+$	15.44 kcal/mol	11.3	10.6
$Ni(H_2O)_6 \rightarrow [Ni(H_2O)_5OH]^+ + H^+$	15.50 kcal/mol	11.4	9.9
$Zn(H_2O)_6 \rightarrow [Zn(H_2O)_5OH]^+ + H^+$	12.47 kcal/mol	9.1	9.0

Table S2. Coordination, interatomic distances (Å), Gibbs free energies of complexation (kcal/mol), equilibrium constants, and [Me-MnO₂]/[Me]_{aq} ratios at pH 5-8 of geometry-optimized surface complexes.

Code name	Coordination	Complex	<Me-O> Cu-O _{eq}	Std	<Me-H2O> Cu-O _{ax}	Std	<Me-Mn>	Std	ΔG	K	pK	pH 5	pH 6	pH 7	pH 8
Ni(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)-TCS	Ni(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)	Ni-TCS	2.05	0.02	2.14	0.01	3.50	0.04	-11.56	2.98E+08	8.5	2.98E+18	2.98E+20	2.98E+22	2.98E+24
Ni(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-DCS	Ni(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	Ni-DCS	2.03	0.00	2.11	0.01	3.49	0.00	-25.03	2.22E+18	18.3	2.22E+18	2.22E+18	2.22E+18	2.22E+18
Ni(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)-DES	Ni(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)	Ni-DES	2.07	0.03	2.06	0.01	2.91	0.01	-31.76	1.91E+23	23.3	1.91E+28	1.91E+29	1.91E+30	1.91E+31
Ni(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-SES	Ni(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	Ni-SES	2.03	0.01	2.08	0.03	2.96	-	-20.44	9.61E+14	15.0	9.61E+14	9.61E+14	9.61E+14	9.61E+14
Cu(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)-TCS	Cu(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)	^{VI} Cu-TCS	2.00	0.06	2.42	0.14	3.47	0.10	-15.64	2.91E+11	11.5	2.91E+21	2.91E+23	2.91E+25	2.91E+27
Cu(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-DCS	Cu(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	^{VI} Cu-DCS	1.99	0.04	2.34	0.00	3.43	0.00	-26.10	1.35E+19	19.1	1.35E+19	1.35E+19	1.35E+19	1.35E+19
Cu(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)-DES	Cu(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)	^{VI} Cu-DES	1.99	0.02	2.33	0.08	3.00	0.01	-34.00	8.36E+24	24.9	8.36E+29	8.36E+30	8.36E+31	8.36E+32
Cu(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-SES	Cu(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	^{VI} Cu-SES	1.98	0.02	2.43	0.10	2.93	-	-24.42	7.94E+17	17.9	7.94E+17	7.94E+17	7.94E+17	7.94E+17
Cu(3O _{2Mn} 2H ₂ O)-TCS	Cu(3O _{2Mn} 2H ₂ O)	^V Cu-TCS	1.99	0.06	2.21	-	3.44	0.06	-20.50	1.06E+15	15.0	1.06E+25	1.06E+27	1.06E+29	1.06E+30
Cu(2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)-DCS	Cu(2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)	^V Cu-DCS	1.97	0.03	2.25	-	3.40	0.00	-31.90	2.41E+23	23.4	2.41E+23	2.41E+23	2.41E+23	2.41E+23
Cu(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)-DES	Cu(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)	^V Cu-DES	1.97	0.01	2.32	-	2.93	0.01	-36.20	3.43E+26	26.5	3.43E+31	3.43E+32	3.43E+33	3.43E+34
Cu(2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)-SES	Cu(2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)	^V Cu-SES	1.97	0.02	2.25	-	2.94	0.00	-26.80	4.41E+19	19.6	4.41E+19	4.41E+19	4.41E+19	4.41E+19
Zn(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)-TCS	Zn(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)	Zn-TCS	2.06	0.01	2.20	0.02	3.48	0.05	-10.78	7.98E+07	7.9	7.98E+17	7.98E+19	7.98E+21	7.98E+23
Zn(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-DCS	Zn(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	Zn-DCS	2.05	0.00	2.13	0.01	3.51	0.00	-22.41	2.67E+16	16.4	2.67E+16	2.67E+16	2.67E+16	2.67E+16
Zn(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)-DES	Zn(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} 3H ₂ O)	Zn-DES	2.16	0.10	2.08	0.01	3.01	0.01	-28.43	6.91E+20	20.8	6.91E+25	6.91E+26	6.91E+27	6.91E+28
Zn(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)-SES	Zn(2O _{Mn} 4H ₂ O)	Zn-SES	2.07	0.02	2.13	0.07	3.01	-	-19.00	8.45E+13	13.9	8.45E+13	8.45E+13	8.45E+13	8.45E+13
Pb(3O _{2Mn})-TCS	Pb(3O _{2Mn})	^{III} Pb-TCS	2.29	0.01	-	-	3.71	0.06	-31.82	2.11E+23	23.3	2.11E+33	2.11E+35	2.11E+37	2.11E+39
Pb(2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)-DCS	Pb(2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)	^{III} Pb-DCS	2.30	0.01	2.36	-	3.84	0.00	-40.67	6.48E+29	29.8	6.48E+29	6.48E+29	6.48E+29	6.48E+29
Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)-DCS	Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)	^{IV} Pb-DCS	2.31	0.00	2.54	0.07	3.88	0.00	-35.46	9.83E+25	26.0	9.83E+25	9.83E+25	9.83E+25	9.83E+25
Pb(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn})-DES	Pb(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn})	^{III} Pb-DES	2.36	0.02	-	-	3.23	0.01	-39.39	7.47E+28	28.9	7.47E+33	7.47E+34	7.47E+35	7.47E+36
Pb(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)-DES	Pb(1O _{2Mn} 2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)	^{IV} Pb-DES	2.40	0.08	2.55	-	3.30	0.01	-35.16	5.92E+25	25.8	5.92E+30	5.92E+31	5.92E+32	5.92E+33
Pb(2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)-SES	Pb(2O _{Mn} H ₂ O)	^{III} Pb-SES	2.33	0.03	2.40	-	3.36	-	-38.30	1.19E+28	28.1	1.19E+28	1.19E+28	1.19E+28	1.19E+28
Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)-SES	Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)	^{IV} Pb-SES	2.35	0.03	2.55	0.01	3.38	-	-33.72	5.21E+24	24.7	5.21E+24	5.21E+24	5.21E+24	5.21E+24
Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)·2H ₂ O-DCS	Pb(2O _{Mn} 2H ₂ O)·2H ₂ O	^{IV} Pb-DCS	2.32	0.01	2.53	0.05	3.88	0.00	-33.20	2.17E+24	24.3	2.17E+24	2.17E+24	2.17E+24	2.17E+24
Pb(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)-TCS	Pb(3O _{2Mn} 3H ₂ O)	^{VI} Pb-TCS	2.23	0.02	2.55	0.03	3.59	0.11	1.84	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pb(3O _{2Mn})-3H ₂ O-TCS	Pb(3O _{2Mn})-3H ₂ O	^{III} Pb-TCS	2.29	0.03	-	-	3.72	0.06	-17.90	1.32E+13	13.1	1.32E+23	1.32E+25	1.32E+27	1.32E+29