

# Modeling prograde $\text{TiO}_2$ activity and its significance for Ti-in-quartz thermobarometry of pelitic metamorphic rocks

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**Abstract** Since its calibration, the Ti-in-quartz thermometer has been applied to a wide variety of geologic scenarios. The abundance of quartz in the continental crust and the involvement of silica in metamorphic reactions, deformation, and fluid flux processes make it a particularly powerful tool for constraining the pressure and temperature evolution of rocks, which is essential for developing tectonic models. Being able to quantitatively determine the solubility of Ti in quartz, however, is dependent upon being able to determine the activity of  $\text{TiO}_2$  in the rock during quartz growth or re-equilibration. Here we calculate  $\text{TiO}_2$  chemical potentials of the system relative to that of rutile (as a standard state), projected in  $P$ – $T$  space for an average sub-aluminous pelite composition. Titania activities are calculated from these dependent potentials, with resultant activities used to correct for Ti isopleth projection in the Thomas et al. (2010) solubility equation. The modeling results are in good agreement with previous studies that suggest ilmenite-bearing assemblages buffer high  $\text{TiO}_2$  activities and titanite-bearing assemblages have much lower activities ( $\geq 0.5$ ). At elevated temperatures, however, significant deviation from an assumed average pelite activity of 1.0 occurs, where the projected Ti concentration in quartz is up to 400 % different when assuming a dynamic system activity. This is due, in part, to the sequestering of Ti in biotite during heating and the destabilization of Ti-oxides at higher temperatures. With quartz-producing reactions, deformation-driven solution-transfer processes and

other Si-mobilization events occur during the prograde and retrograde history of metapelites, and assuming  $\text{TiO}_2$  activities associated with the peak metamorphic paragenesis may be misleading and result in significant errors in  $P$ – $T$  calculations.

**Keywords**  $\text{TiO}_2$  activity · Prograde evolution · Isochemical phase stability models · Chemical potential · TitaniQ thermobarometry

## Introduction

The solubility of  $\text{TiO}_2$  in quartz is strongly temperature and (to a lesser extent) pressure dependent, thereby providing a potentially powerful thermometer. This thermometer is increasingly informative due to the ubiquity of quartz in continental crust and the involvement of silica in metamorphic reactions, solution-transfer processes, and Si-charged fluid flux. Quantifying the amount of Ti likely to be incorporated into the quartz lattice is dependent upon several variables, including thermodynamic controls (enthalpy, entropy, and volume), temperature ( $T$ ), pressure ( $P$ ), and the activity of  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ ). Growth experiments at elevated  $P$  and  $T$  constrain the thermodynamics of the exchange of Ti for Si in the tetrahedral site in quartz (Wark and Watson 2006; Thomas et al. 2010; Huang and Audétat 2012). The lesser dependence of pressure on the system allows for adequate temperature estimation even if pressure can only be approximately constrained. Solubility of Ti in quartz is dependent on  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ , which is typically assumed to be fixed when quartz is grown or recrystallized in the presence of Ti-bearing phases. Titania activity may be calculated in systems where  $\text{TiO}_2$  is not an essential stoichiometric component. It is important to accurately constrain

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this activity, because errors in calculated temperatures may arise if deviation from the true activity is large.

Ghent and Stout (1984) defined potential equilibria assemblages where titania activity could be reasonably constrained, with results suggesting activities of  $\sim 1$  and  $\geq 0.8$  for metapelites and amphibolite facies felsic gneisses, respectively. In rutile-absent samples, the Gibbs free energy of the reaction  $2\text{FeTiO}_3 = \text{TiO}_2 + \text{Fe}_2\text{TiO}_4$  has been used to calculate the effective (bulk)  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  (Wark et al. 2007; Ashley et al. 2013), where  $\text{FeTiO}_3$  is ilmenite and  $\text{Fe}_2\text{TiO}_4$  is ulvöspinel ( $\text{TiO}_2$  is dissolved in phases). The Gibbs energy of formation ( $\Delta G_{\text{f,ilm}}^\circ$ ) from the Holland and Powell (1998) database can be used to calculate the Gibbs energy for the above reaction. A Van't Hoff (or Vukancic–Vukovic equation) chemical thermodynamic reaction isotherm can be used in conjunction with the equilibrium constant that relates  $\Delta G_{\text{rxn}}$  to the chemical equilibrium constant ( $K_{\text{eq}}$ ), where  $\Delta G_{\text{rxn}} = -RT \ln(K_{\text{eq}})$ . Incorporating the end-member activities of the products and reactants gives

$$\Delta G_{\text{rxn}} = -RT \ln \left[ \frac{a_{\text{TiO}_2} a_{\text{Fe}_2\text{TiO}_4}}{(a_{\text{FeTiO}_3})^2} \right].$$

Assuming ideality, where component activity is equivalent to the mole fraction of the Ti end-members, the equation can be re-arranged to calculate titania activity:

$$a_{\text{TiO}_2} = \frac{\exp\left(\frac{-\Delta G_{\text{rxn}}}{RT}\right) \cdot Y^2}{X}$$

where  $X$  and  $Y$  are the activities of ulvöspinel and ilmenite, respectively. Despite the utility of implementing these reactions for activity calculation in the absence of rutile, several problems may prevent the successful application of this potential thermometer. For example, ilmenite may form hematite lamellae and re-equilibrate (Harlov 2000; McEnroe et al. 2002). Also, there is very little ulvöspinel component in most metamorphic magnetites, and small analytical errors are likely to extrapolate to large errors in  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ , restricting this application to magmatic rocks (F. Spear, personal communications).

In this paper, we implement pseudosection modeling to calculate system  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  across the modeled  $P$ – $T$  space. This approach bypasses the need for considering various Ti-reactions and allows for the calculation of titania activity in the absence of rutile, ilmenite, and titanite. With the output activity maps, corrected Ti isopleth projections into  $P$ – $T$  space can be computed. The benefit to this approach is that quartz-producing metamorphic reactions can be better interpreted with respect to modeled  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ , giving pressure or temperature estimates with less uncertainty than would be expected if it is assumed that  $\text{TiO}_2$  activity is constant throughout the prograde evolution.

## Modeling approach and considerations

Thermodynamic modeling was conducted for the system  $\text{MnO}$ – $\text{Na}_2\text{O}$ – $\text{CaO}$ – $\text{K}_2\text{O}$ – $\text{FeO}$ – $\text{MgO}$ – $\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$ – $\text{SiO}_2$ – $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ – $\text{TiO}_2$  (MnNCKFMASHT) through gridded minimization calculations using the program *Perple\_X* (Connolly 2009) with the 2004 update of the Holland and Powell (1998) thermochemical database. *Perple\_X* predicts the most stable configuration of phases through a Gibbs free energy minimization approach (Connolly and Kerrick 1987). Results from these calculations should be identical to results acquired in other programs (e.g., THERMOCALC; Powell et al. 1998) as long as the thermodynamic data and solution models are the same. Solution models used are as follows: (1) staurolite, garnet, chlorite, chloritoid, and hydrous cordierite formulation after Holland and Powell (1998), extended for Mn solid solution after Mahar et al. (1997). (2) ideal mixing for ilmenite–geikielite–pyrophanite; ternary feldspar from Fuhrman and Lindsley (1988); white mica (Coggon and Holland 2002; Auzanneau et al. 2010), not allowing for tschermaks or Ti substitutions in the Ca- and Na-subsystems; Ti– $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ -biotite (Tajčmanová et al. 2009), extended to Mn solution after Tinkham et al. (2001). (3) Amphibole model after Dale et al. (2005); (4) compound formation for orthopyroxene after Powell and Holland (1999), with Holland and Powell (2011) modified site populations. (5) Clinopyroxene based on the Holland and Powell (1996) non-ideal quasi-ordered omphacite, modified for non-ideal Ca-tschermaks after Zeh et al. (2005). (6) Silicate melt modeling after White et al. (2001), with the White et al. (2007) modification of the faL (fayalite in melt) and foL (forsterite in melt) olivine melt end-members (an enthalpy adjustment to more closely reflect total Fe + Mg in silicate melt). It is safe to assume that the ilmenite–geikielite–pyrophanite solid solution is an ideal solution for two reasons. First, the majority of metamorphic ilmenites are restricted close to the ideal  $\text{FeTiO}_3$  composition, with very high ( $>0.9$ ) ilmenite activities in sub-aluminous metapelites (e.g., Ashley et al. 2013) and metabasites (e.g., Ghent and Stout 1984). In addition, only small deviations from ideality are detectable in such ilmenite–pyrophanite solution (O'Neill et al. 1989), and the exchange would not alter the stoichiometry with respect to  $\text{TiO}_2$ . Quartz, rutile, and titanite were considered as pure phases. Fluid was considered in excess and treated as pure  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

Mineral abbreviations follow Whitney and Evans (2010) with the exception of “wm” for white mica. Calculations were based on the Mahar et al. (1997) modified average sub-aluminous pelite composition of Shaw (1956), including MnO with a reduced CaO content (Table 1). Additionally, modeling of an average greywacke composition (after Brownlow 1996, and references therein) was conducted to observe the effects of

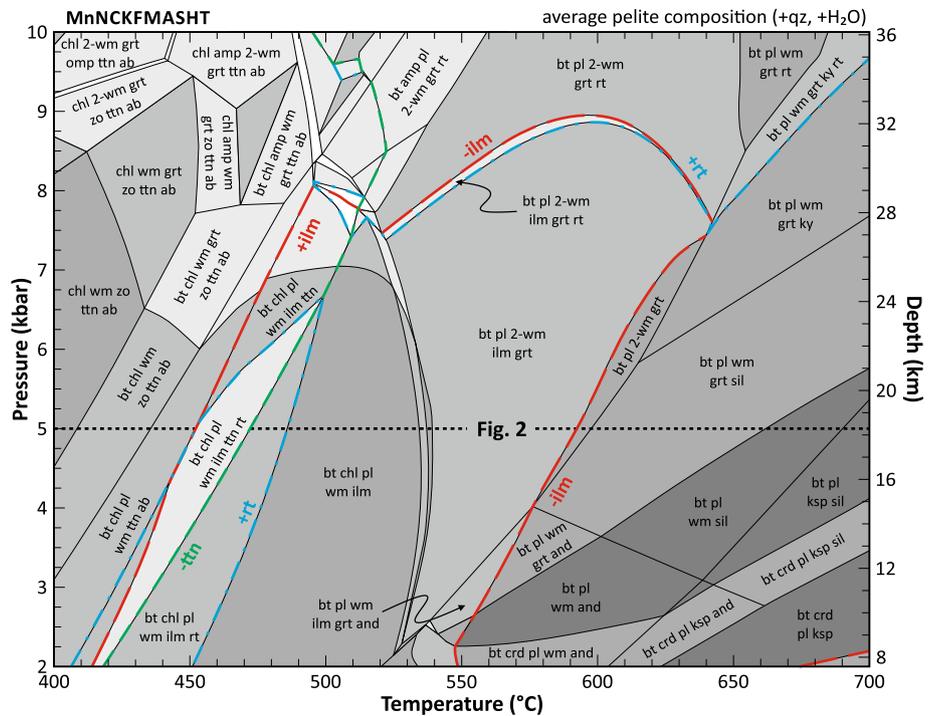
**Table 1** Bulk rock chemical data for average rock-type compositions (in mol%)

Rock-type	SiO <sub>2</sub>	TiO <sub>2</sub>	Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	FeO <sub>tot</sub>	MnO	MgO	CaO	Na <sub>2</sub> O	K <sub>2</sub> O	Ref.
Pelite	71.13	0.67	11.61	5.78	0.10	4.65	1.39	1.99	2.68	1, 2
Greywacke <sup>a</sup>	75.71	0.21	9.42	2.79	0.05	3.18	2.63	4.14	1.88	3

References: 1—Shaw (1956); 2—Mahar et al. (1997); 3—Brownlow (1996, and references therein)

<sup>a</sup> A minor MnO component was added because no data were reported for this component

**Fig. 1** Modeled mineral stability for an average pelitic rock in the system Mn–Na<sub>2</sub>O–CaO–K<sub>2</sub>O–FeO–MgO–Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>–SiO<sub>2</sub>–H<sub>2</sub>O. **Bold lines** denote stability limits of the Ti-oxide phases. The position of the isobaric profile shown in Fig. 2 is indicated by the **dotted line**. Quartz and water is considered in excess. **Darker shaded fields** denote higher variance. Mineral abbreviations from Whitney and Evans (2010)



a lower clay component in the protolith rock (for meta-sammitic and semi-pelitic rocks). The composition used did not include a MnO component; therefore, a minor amount (0.05 mol%) was included to better reflect concentrations observed in nature.

For the modeled *P–T* window, chemical potentials of the TiO<sub>2</sub> component ( $\mu_{\text{TiO}_2}$ ) were calculated with *Perple\_X* (being the result of the computed molar Gibbs free energy). Modeling was performed on the complex (and realistic) MnNCKFMASHT system to take into account the effects of solid solution. Initial calculations were isobaric along a heating profile (Figs. 1, 2). Titania activity may be calculated when evaluating  $\mu_{\text{TiO}_2}$  against an idealized standard state chemical potential ( $\mu_{\text{TiO}_2}^\circ$ ). These standard state values were calculated for the *P–T* conditions of interest by saturating the modeled system in TiO<sub>2</sub> (thus stabilizing rutile in every mineral assemblage stability field), and calculating the dependent potential of rutile at each *P* and *T*. This is completed using the modeled entropy (*S*) and enthalpy (*H*) of rutile to determine the molar Gibbs free energy of pure TiO<sub>2</sub> at the *T* and *P* of interest—which is equal to

the chemical potential of rutile at these conditions (Spear 1993). This is expressed by

$$\mu_{\text{TiO}_2}^\circ = \bar{G}_{\text{TiO}_2}^\circ = U + PV - TS = H - TS \quad (1)$$

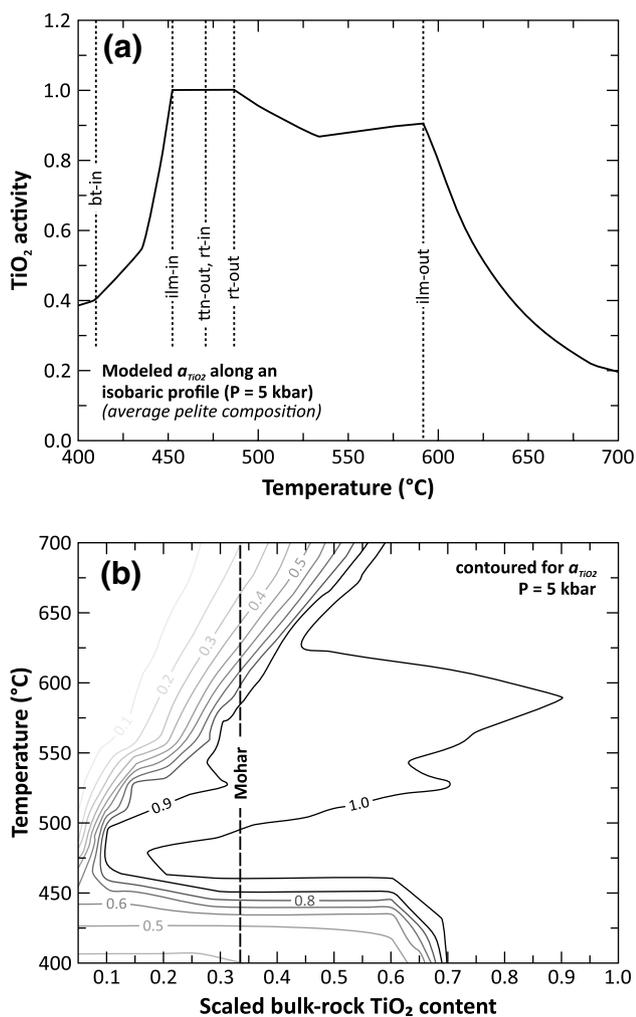
where *U* is the internal energy and *V* is volume. Component activity can then be calculated by the expression

$$a_{\text{TiO}_2} = \exp \left[ \frac{\mu_{\text{TiO}_2} - \mu_{\text{TiO}_2}^\circ}{RT} \right] \quad (2)$$

where *R* is the gas constant (8.31446 J K<sup>-1</sup> mol<sup>-1</sup>) and *T* is temperature (in K). If pure rutile is present as a phase in the bulk rock, then  $\mu_{\text{TiO}_2}^\circ = \mu_{\text{TiO}_2}$  and  $a_{\text{TiO}_2} = 1.0$ .

Corrections to the fixed  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  projection of Ti isopleths (e.g., Fig. 3a; Thomas et al. 2010) can be completed through any of the Ti-in-quartz solubility equations. Here, we use the equation by Thomas et al. (2010) and calculate expected Ti concentrations ([Ti]) in quartz with the expression

$$RT \ln X_{\text{TiO}_2}^{\text{quartz}} = -60952 + 1.520 \cdot T(\text{K}) - 1741 \cdot P(\text{kbar}) + RT \ln a_{\text{TiO}_2} \quad (3)$$



**Fig. 2** **a** Calculated  $\text{TiO}_2$  activity for an isobaric (5 kbar) profile of increasing temperature for an average pelite composition. This modeling suggests that  $\text{TiO}_2$  activity is quite dynamic and rapidly decreases outside the ilmenite stability field. **b** The effects of varying bulk rock  $\text{TiO}_2$  on corresponding component activity. The  $x$ -axis represents  $\text{TiO}_2$  variation (in molecular proportions) between 0.1 (at  $x = 0.05$ ) and 2.0 % (at  $x = 1.0$ ). The **bold line** indicates the average pelite composition shown in (a)

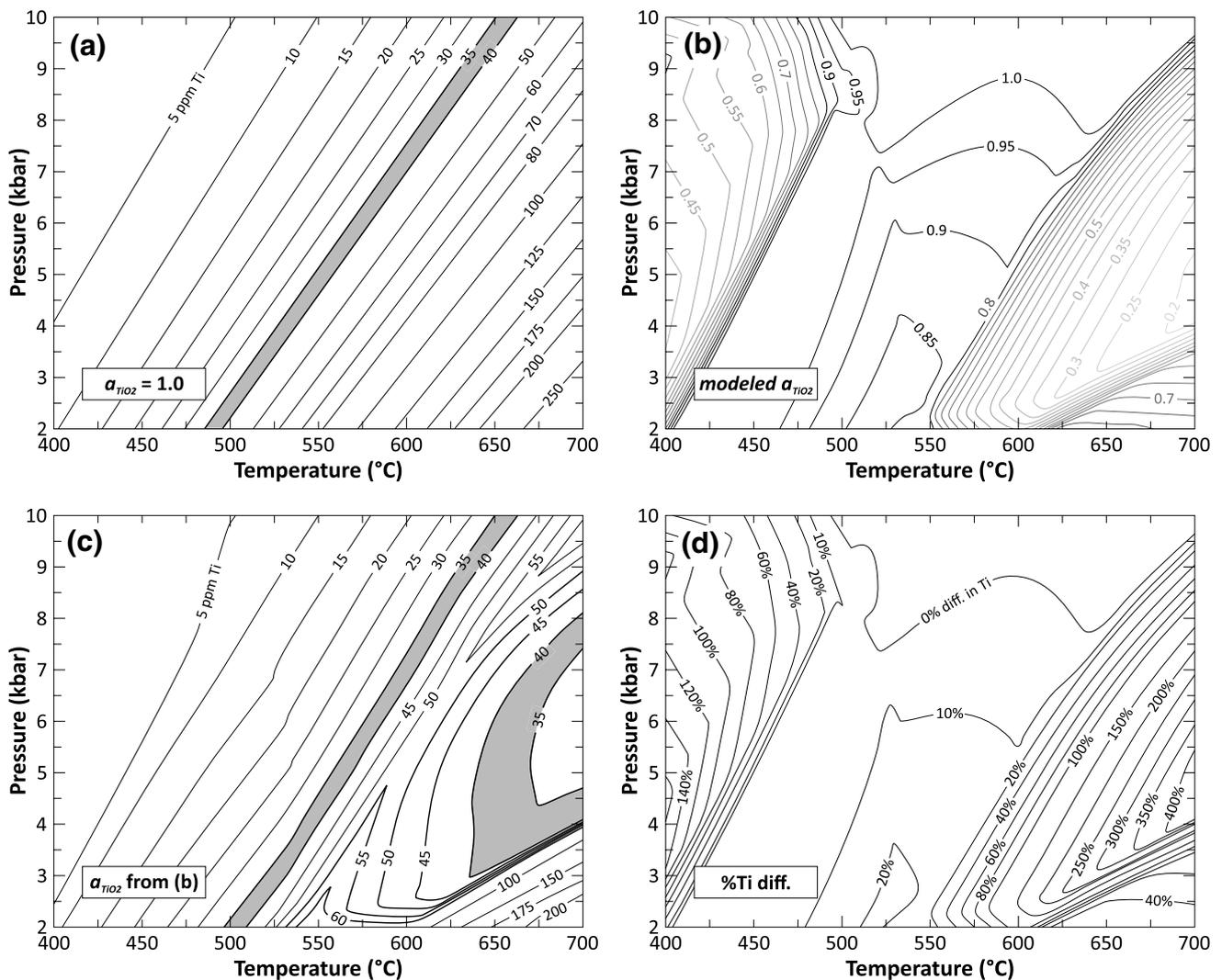
## Results

Pseudosection modeling of the average pelite composition shows the stabilization of ilmenite and rutile at the expense of titanite at  $\sim 450$  °C, with rutile being largely restricted to high- $P$  space ( $>8$  kbar) and ilmenite stable at pressures below this (Fig. 1). Ilmenite breakdown occurs starting at 550 °C, extending to higher temperatures for higher pressures. This is consistent with what is observed in rocks from eastern Vermont (Ashley et al. 2013) and northern Scotland (Thigpen et al. 2013), where garnet porphyroblasts contain an abundance of ilmenite inclusions that the matrix is largely devoid of. With garnet growth initiated at

$<550$  °C in both these studies, heating to peak temperatures would result in ilmenite breakdown and explain the ilmenite distribution observed in these rocks. Outside the ilmenite window, mica (particularly biotite) is the major reservoir for Ti budgeting, with biotite sequestering more Ti at higher temperatures (e.g., Henry et al. 2005; Chambers and Kohn 2012).

Chemical potential of  $\text{TiO}_2$  was modeled at 5 kbar between 400 and 700 °C (Fig. 2a). Calculated  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  across this profile shows that high activities are coincident with the presence of ilmenite ( $>0.85$ ) and rutile (1.0). When buffered by the presence of titanite, the modeled activity is found to be variable, between 0.4 and 1.0 within a 50 °C window. At temperatures above the stability field of ilmenite ( $>480$  °C),  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  rapidly decreases down to 0.2 at 700 °C. In Fig. 2b, the effect of varying bulk rock  $\text{TiO}_2$  in the modeled activity profiles is considered, from 0.1 to 2.0 mol% ( $x$ -axis = 0.05–1.0). Results of this variation modeling suggest rocks that are depleted in  $\text{TiO}_2$  relative to the average pelite considered here (labeled “Mahar” in Fig. 2b) produce a significant reduction in  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  in the modeled  $P$ – $T$  space; minor increases in  $\text{TiO}_2$  saturate the rock with this component and increase the activity across the temperature profile.

Pressure has a significant effect on resultant  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ , due to the stabilization of rutile at higher  $P$  (Fig. 3b), and results in larger temperature windows where titania activity is  $\sim 1.0$ . For example, at 9 kbar titania activities are  $<0.9$  between 490 and 690 °C; at 4 kbar this temperature range is limited to 435–510 °C, with activities down to 0.2 at 700 °C. The implications of this variable activity become evident when Ti isopleths are projected in  $P$ – $T$  space (Fig. 3c) and compared to isopleths calculated assuming a constant activity of 1.0 for pelites (Fig. 3a). At temperatures above 600 °C, Ti concentrations in quartz decrease with increasing temperature, which is counterintuitive to the substitution. When considering [Ti] of 35–40 ppm with a constant  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  of 1.0, the calculated temperature is 575 °C (at 6 kbar). When using the variable activity-corrected isopleths, two solutions are possible for this concentration and pressure: at 580 and 650–675 °C. At lower pressures, this offset would be even greater. The relative discrepancy between assuming a fixed versus variable titania activities can be considered by taking the percent difference between projected isopleth concentration in  $P$ – $T$  space (Fig. 3d). In the titanite stability field, differences up to 100 % are observed. Even greater offsets occur at high temperatures and moderate pressures (up to 400 %). If bulk rock compositions are semi-pelitic or psammitic, Ti solubility in quartz is buffered with very low titania activities (Fig. 4), and only a very small window (425–475 °C, below 3 kbar) results in activities above 0.9.



**Fig. 3** **a**  $P$ – $T$  projected Ti isopleths assuming a fixed titania activity of 1.0 (from Thomas et al. 2010). **b** Modeled  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  for average pelitic bulk composition from Mahar et al. (1997). **c** Corrected Ti isopleth projection, based on the activity map calculated in (b). **d** Percent dif-

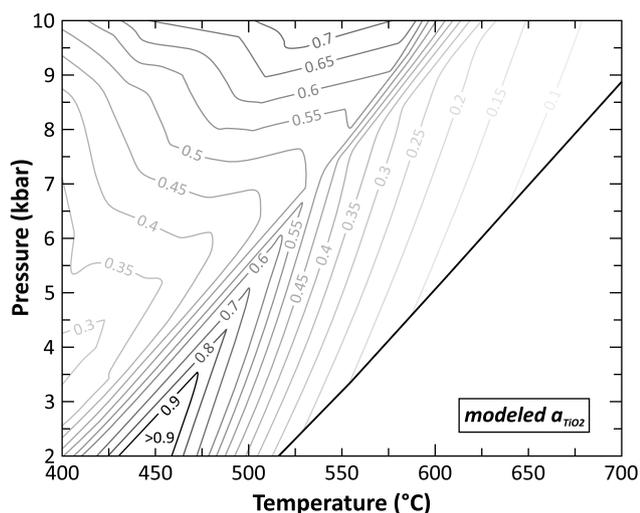
ference between [Ti] in quartz assuming a fixed activity of 1.0 and the modeled  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  shown in (b). Temperature >600 °C and <450 °C have significant variance in [Ti], up to 400 % at 700 °C (4 kbar)

## Discussion

The modeling presented here suggests that  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  has a dynamic variability in  $P$ – $T$  space for average pelite compositions. If quartz is produced within the ilmenite and rutile stability fields, it would equilibrate with high  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$ . If growth occurs in the presence of titanite, the activity is typically 0.5 or above. These results are consistent with previous studies that calculate component activities based on appropriate reactions (Ghent and Stout 1984; Wark et al. 2007; Chambers and Kohn 2012). Chambers and Kohn (2012) calculated titania activities using Ti in biotite, muscovite, and amphibole; however these calculations result in considerable scatter and sometimes produce values above 1.0, which suggests supersaturation and is

thermodynamically impermissible. Their study does recognize that garnet–rutile–ilmenite–plagioclase–quartz equilibrium (GRIPS)-based estimation of  $\text{TiO}_2$  activity in ilmenite-bearing rocks is consistently nearly rutile saturated; results are replicated here. It is important to note that thermodynamic calculations are sensitive to the solution models and thermodynamic datasets chosen and may vary if other models are implemented.

In this study, the Ti-in-quartz solubility equation by Thomas et al. (2010) was preferred for several reasons. First, Ti analyses by Ashley et al. (2013) in eastern Vermont indicate temperatures consistent with temperatures of quartz-producing metamorphic reactions when this calibration is considered. Use of the Huang and Audétat (2012) calibration results in temperatures >100 °C higher than



**Fig. 4** Calculated titania activities in  $P$ - $T$  space for a metamorphosed greywacke. The field to the right of the bold line only has biotite, feldspar, and quartz stable, and no activities could be calculated

expected for these rocks, based on the peak metamorphic paragenesis and exchange thermobarometry results. In addition, the Huang and Audétat (2012) experiments produced quartz with highly variable Ti concentrations. A recent study (Thomas et al. 2015) conducted static recrystallization reversal experiments that confirm the ability of quartz to re-equilibrate at various pressures and temperatures, despite its original starting composition, that is identical to concentrations predicted by the Thomas et al. (2010) solubility equation. A more critical evaluation of the various solubility equations is made by Thomas et al. (2015).

The susceptibility of quartz to participate in metamorphic reactions and the mobility of silica in deformation processes during the prograde evolution of a rock may result in zoned quartz (such as reported by Ashley et al. 2013) that has radically different observed  $a_{\text{TiO}_2}$  during different re-equilibration events. Owing to the slow diffusivity of  $\text{TiO}_2$ , post-growth modifications through volume diffusion due to perturbations in pressure and temperature are minimal unless temperatures are high (e.g.,  $>700$  °C) and/or metamorphic heating occurring over sufficiently long timescales (Spear et al. 2012; Ashley et al. 2013). Therefore this evolutionary record is expected to be preserved, unless re-equilibrated through dynamic recrystallization (see Discussion by Ashley et al. 2014 on the effects of dynamic recrystallization on Ti resetting). The modeled Ti isopleth projections presented here show the effects of such variability on Ti solubility in quartz. Therefore, assuming fixed activities of  $\sim 1.0$  for pelites could result in large temperature errors, unless re-equilibration occurred in the presence of ilmenite or rutile. Rocks metamorphosed via contact metamorphism are expected to be most impacted

by these solubility consequences. The approach we present here provides a simple method for observing the evolution of this component activity and allows for better constraints when interpreting prograde quartz growth.

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