

# Profile of CH<sub>4</sub> IR bands in ice mixtures

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**Abstract.** We studied the infrared spectral characteristics of frozen methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) in several astrophysically relevant ice mixtures, as deposited and after ion irradiation. We examined the profile (shape, width and peak position) of the CH<sub>4</sub> bands as a function of initial mixture, irradiation dose and warming up temperature, and compared our results with previously published laboratory and observational data. Finally, we present a list of spectra that may be used for direct comparison with present and future observations.

**Key words:** molecular data – molecular processes – dust, extinction – ISM: molecules – infrared: ISM: lines and bands – methods: laboratory

## 1. Introduction

The presence of a considerable amount of CH<sub>4</sub> in dense molecular clouds has been predicted by a number of theoretical interstellar medium chemistry models, both of gas phase (e.g. Millar & Nejad, 1985; Herbst & Leung, 1986) and solid phase (e.g. Tielens & Hagen, 1982). Due to its high degree of symmetry, this molecule does not have a permanent dipole moment, and thus has no observable radio spectrum. On the other hand, it has two infrared active vibrational fundamentals (see e. g. Herzberg, 1991), the  $\nu_4$  C-H deformation mode at 1306 cm<sup>-1</sup> (7.66  $\mu$ m) and the  $\nu_3$  C-H stretching mode at 3020 cm<sup>-1</sup> (3.31  $\mu$ m), both measured in the gas phase. Due to the high atmospheric opacity at these wavelengths, only the feature at 7.66  $\mu$ m has been looked for in ground based or air borne observations of bright protostars, and at rather low resolution and signal to noise ratio (Lacy et al., 1991; Boogert et al., 1997). These observations, while showing the presence of the CH<sub>4</sub> feature, did not permit to understand whether it was produced in the gas phase or in solid icy dust grain mantles. Recent ISO observations of the same feature (Boogert et al., 1996) set very low upper limits on the gas phase column density. Moreover, the profile of the absorption features suggests that most CH<sub>4</sub> should be embedded in polar icy grain mantles (H<sub>2</sub>O or CH<sub>3</sub>OH).

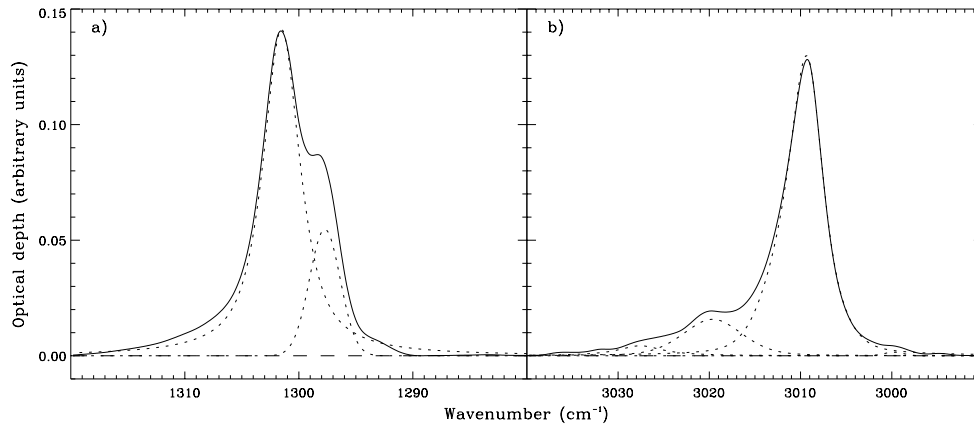
Laboratory experiments have shown that several effects are induced on ice mixtures after ion irradiation. In fact species

are eroded from the target (sputtering, e.g. Johnson, 1990), the structure of the ice is modified (e.g. Baratta et al., 1991; Moore & Hudson, 1992), new molecular species both less volatile and more complex, not present in the initial samples, are formed (e.g. Moore et al., 1983; Strazzulla et al., 1997), along with a complex organic residue which is left over upon warmup (Strazzulla & Baratta, 1992). Here we present laboratory measures on the variation in shape and position of the two CH<sub>4</sub> features both in icy mixtures containing methane, as a function of composition of the ice, temperature and ion irradiation, and as produced after ion irradiation of mixtures containing CH<sub>3</sub>OH. Since the shape and position of the peaks depend only weakly on the grain geometry, for ice mixtures containing less than 30% of CH<sub>4</sub> (see Boogert et al., 1997, for a discussion), many of our spectra can be compared directly to present and future observations, allowing some insight to be gathered on the chemical environment and irradiation history of the grain mantles in which CH<sub>4</sub> is embedded.

## 2. Experimental setup

A detailed description of the experimental apparatus used can be found elsewhere (Spinella et al., 1991). A stainless steel vacuum chamber, in which pressure is kept lower than 10<sup>-7</sup> mbar, is faced through KBr windows to an FTIR spectrometer (4400 to 400 cm<sup>-1</sup> = 2.27 to 25  $\mu$ m). Inside the chamber, a silicon crystal substrate is placed in thermal contact with a cold finger that can be cooled down to 10 K. The gas or gas mixture to be investigated is injected into the chamber through a needle valve and immediately freezes on the substrate. All the spectra in this work have been ratioed to a background spectrum that includes the silicon wafer and were taken at a resolution of 2 cm<sup>-1</sup>, and a sampling of 1 cm<sup>-1</sup>. The samples can be bombarded during or after condensation by ions of energies ranging from 1.5 to 60 keV. Bombarding the samples during condensation makes it possible to prepare rather thick (several  $\mu$ m), uniformly irradiated films, while samples thinner than the penetration depth of the ions can be bombarded after deposition, enabling us to study the effects of irradiation at increasing doses. The ions are obtained from an ion gun (3 kV) or an ion implanter (30 kV). From this latter also doubly ionized Ar beams (60 keV Ar<sup>2+</sup> ions) can be obtained. We used current densities ranging from

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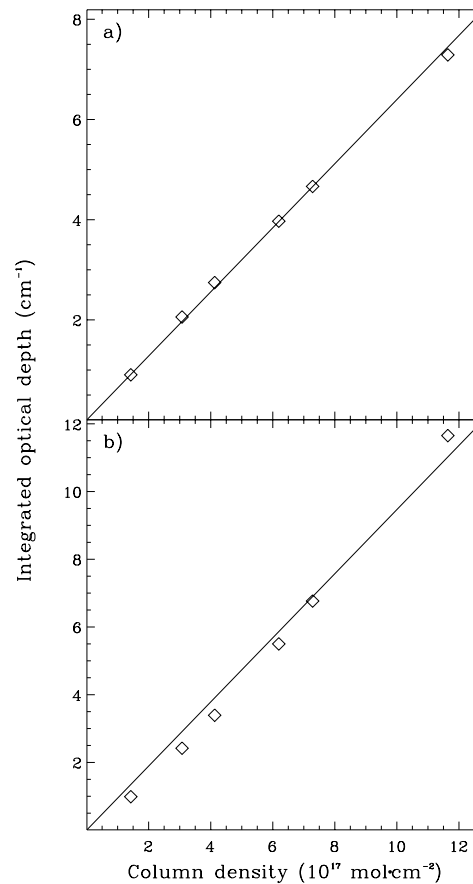
**Fig. 1.** **a** The profile of the band at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in pure CH<sub>4</sub> at  $T = 12.5\text{ K}$  (full line) and its resolution in two components (dotted lines). The band has been normalized to unit integrated area. **b** The profile of the band at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in pure CH<sub>4</sub> at  $T = 12.5\text{ K}$  (full line) and its resolution in components (dotted lines). The main peak is reproduced by the superposition of the second and third functions listed in Table 3. The band has been normalized to unit integrated area.

several  $10^{-1}$  to not more than a few  $\mu\text{A} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$  to avoid macroscopic heating of the target. The substrate plane forms an angle of about  $45^\circ$  with the ion beam and the IR beam. In this way, spectra can be taken at any time, before, during and after irradiation, with no need to tilt the sample. The energy released to the sample by impinging ions (dose) is given in eV per small molecule (16 a. m. u.) because this is a convenient scale to characterize the evolution of the samples upon irradiation and to compare results obtained irradiating different samples.

In some of the experiments, an He-Ne laser beam was used to monitor the thickness of the sample, by watching in real time the interference pattern between the reflections on the interfaces vacuum-sample and sample-substrate. In some experiments, moreover, the spectra were taken in polarized light, allowing us to minimize the effect of the variation of the real part of the refractive index across the band. In particular, the transmittance for light polarized perpendicularly to the plane of incidence depends strongly on the real part of the refractive index. This, for strong absorption can lead to the appearance of spurious features not due to absorption. By choosing a polarization in the plane of incidence, it is possible to eliminate almost completely this effect.

### 3. Results

The mid-infrared spectrum of solid methane shows four active bands, two fundamentals at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $7.68\ \mu\text{m}$ , C-H  $\nu_4$  deformation mode) and  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $3.32\ \mu\text{m}$ , C-H  $\nu_3$  stretching mode), and two combination modes, the  $\nu_1+\nu_4$  at  $4203\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $2.38\ \mu\text{m}$ ) and the  $\nu_3+\nu_4$  at  $4303\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $2.32\ \mu\text{m}$ ). In this section we present a detailed study of the two fundamental modes in pure methane and ice mixtures, as deposited and after ion irradiation. All the spectra were first divided, in intensity scale, by a fitted continuum. Then they were converted to an optical depth scale, and peak positions and FWHM were taken. The intensity between sampled points were interpolated by cubic splines. The  $1\sigma$  error in the peak position and the FWHM are estimated, from the noise level in the continuum, to be typically about  $0.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , anyway always less than the sampling ( $1\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ).

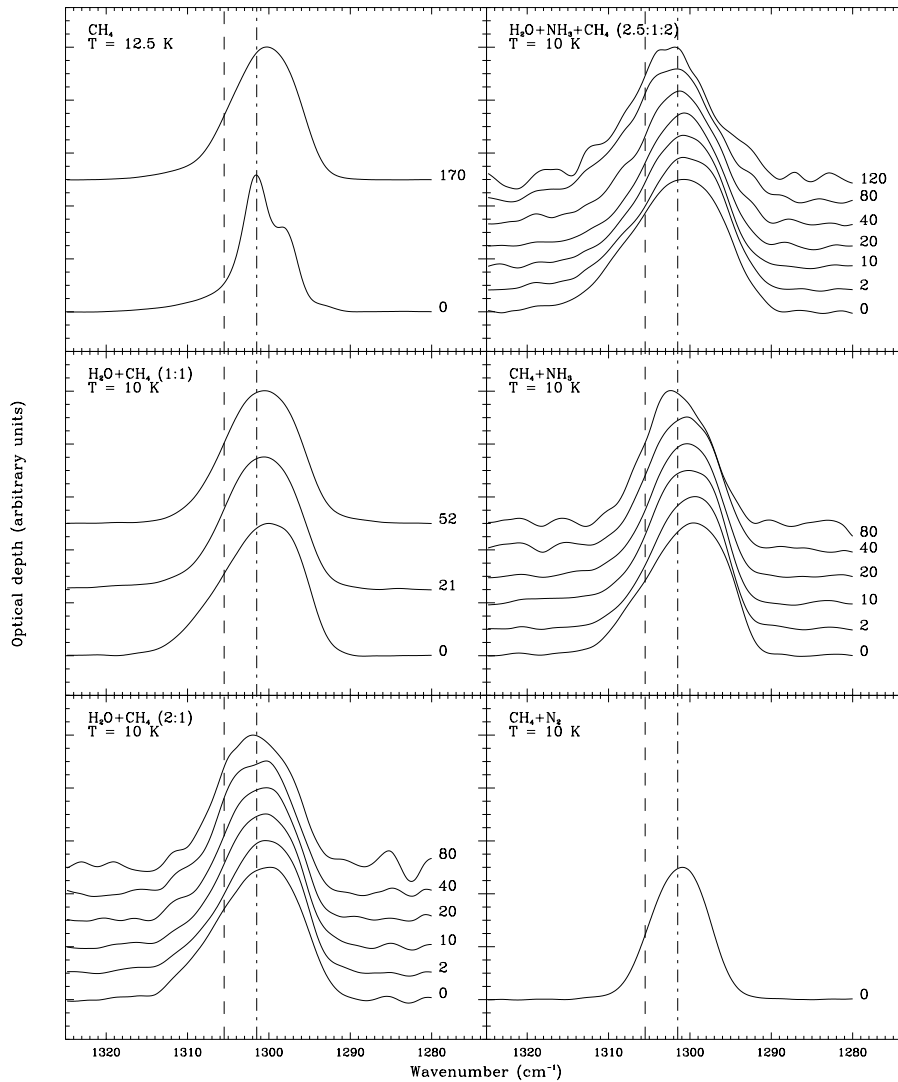


**Fig. 2a and b.** The points represent individual measures of the integrated optical depth of the CH<sub>4</sub> fundamental bands at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (inset **a**) and  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (inset **b**) versus the column density of the sample, as deposited at  $T = 12.5\text{ K}$ . Superimposed is the line through the origin that best fits the points.

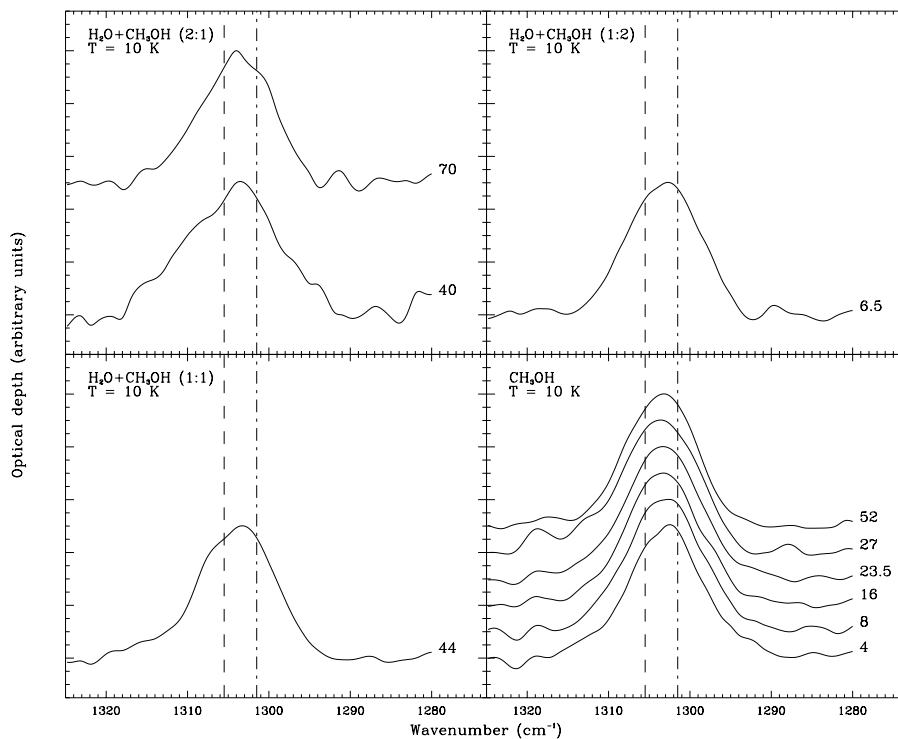
#### 3.1. The $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$ C-H deformation mode

Fig. 1a shows the profile of the  $\nu_4$  mode for pure CH<sub>4</sub> at  $T = 12.5\text{ K}$ , in optical depth scale and normalized to unit integrated area, at the end of the deposition.

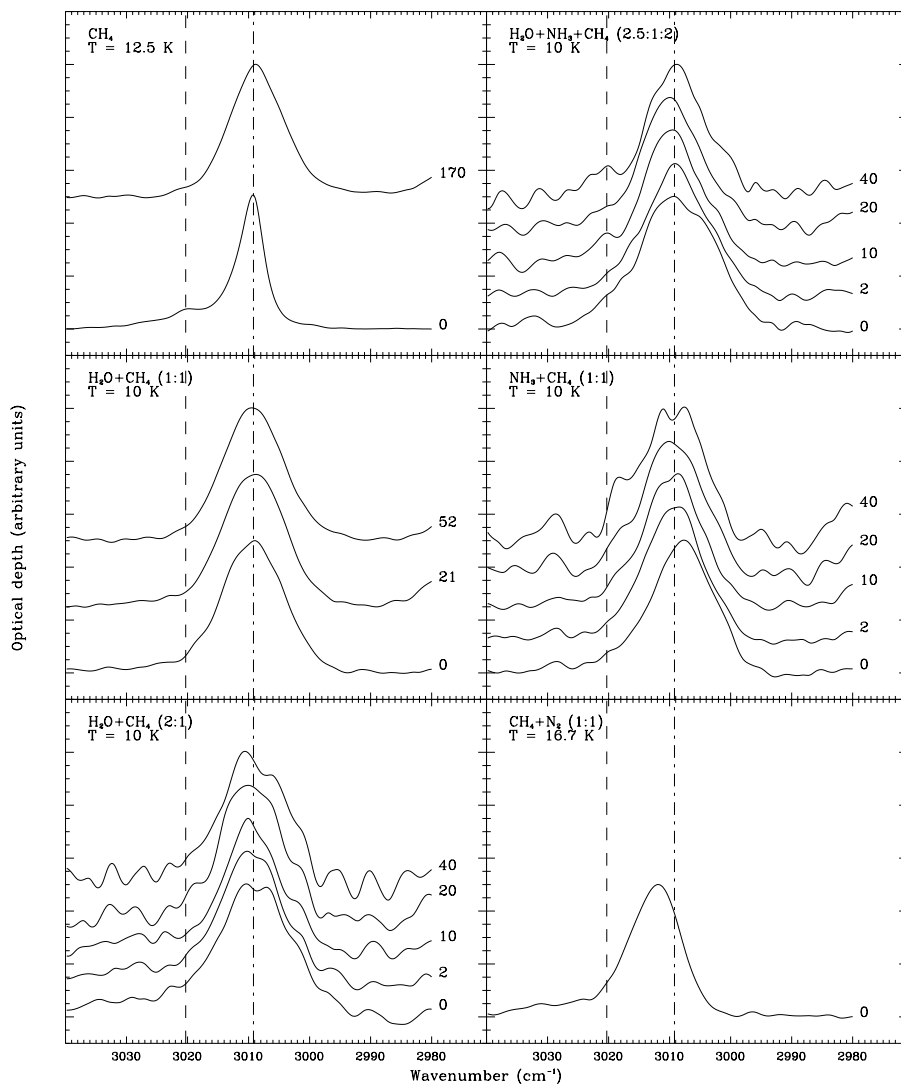
It can be resolved in two components, that have been fitted with pseudo-voigt functions. A pseudo-voigt function is simply



**Fig. 3.** Variations of the shape and position of the band at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  of CH<sub>4</sub> codeposited in various ice mixtures upon increasing ion irradiation doses. The initial ice mixture is indicated in top left corner of each box, along with the temperature of the sample. The dose, in units of eV/16 a. m. u., is indicated beside each plotted band. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> ( $1305.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure solid CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited ( $1301.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.



**Fig. 4.** Variations of the shape and position of the band at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  of CH<sub>4</sub> produced by ion irradiation in various ice mixtures upon increasing doses. The initial ice mixture is indicated in top left corner of each box, along with the temperature of the sample. The dose, in units of eV/16 a. m. u., is indicated beside each plotted band. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> ( $1305.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure solid CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited ( $1301.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.



**Fig. 5.** The profiles of the band at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  of CH<sub>4</sub> codeposited in various irradiated and unirradiated ice mixtures. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> ( $3020.3\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure CH<sub>4</sub> ice as deposited ( $3009.2\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.

**Table 1.** The parameters of the pseudo-voigt functions that best fit the profile of the  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  band in pure CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited at  $T = 12.5\text{ K}$ .

Peak position $\text{cm}^{-1}$	FWHM $\text{cm}^{-1}$	$\eta$	Band area % of total
1297.7	3.2	0.00	18.5
1301.5	3.9	0.87	81.5

the weighted mean of a gaussian and a lorentzian with the same peak position and FWHM. A third parameter,  $\eta$ , gives the weight of the gaussian, and, consequently,  $1 - \eta$  gives the weight of the lorentzian. The parameters were derived from a combined fit of all the spectra taken at various thicknesses of the sample, during its deposition. The parameters of the two fitting functions are shown in Table 1. The choice of the fitting functions has been just one of convenience to better reproduce the profile. The fitted profiles are shown dotted in Fig. 1a. While the fit is rather good, the main component in the experimental spectrum is slightly asymmetric, suggesting that the real profile may be more complex, possibly with more unresolved components.

The thickness of the pure CH<sub>4</sub> sample was measured during deposition from the interference fringes of a He-Ne laser beam reflected by the interfaces film-vacuum and film-substrate. Since the substrate is tilted of  $45^\circ$  with respect to the IR beam, the thickness traversed by the latter is approximately  $\sqrt{2}$  times the measured thickness of the sample. We could therefore calculate the column density of CH<sub>4</sub> molecules in the path of the IR beam, using a density of solid CH<sub>4</sub> of  $0.52\text{ g cm}^{-3}$  (Landolt-Börnstein 1971). Fig. 2a shows the points corresponding to the integrated optical depth of the band at various stages of the deposition, and thus various thicknesses, of the sample, plotted against the column densities of CH<sub>4</sub>. The slope of the straight line through the origin fitted to the data yields a value of  $6.4 \cdot 10^{-18}\text{ cm} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$  for the integrated absorbance. This value is somewhat smaller than that of  $7.3 \cdot 10^{-18}\text{ cm} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$  derived by Boogert et al. (1997) based on data previously published by Hudgins et al. (1993).

The value of the integrated absorbance can not, at present, be measured when CH<sub>4</sub> is codeposited with other species, because we are not able to obtain an accurate estimate of the relative

**Table 2.** Position (cm<sup>-1</sup>) and FWHM (cm<sup>-1</sup>) of the 1302 cm<sup>-1</sup> band of CH<sub>4</sub> in various ice mixtures at different doses of ion irradiation, all at low T (10-16 K). The dose is expressed in eV/16 a.m.u

Initial mixture	Ions used	Dose	Peak (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	FWHM (cm <sup>-1</sup> )
pure CH <sub>4</sub>	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	1301.5	6.7
		170	1300.3	9.7
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	0	1300.6	12.0
		21	1300.8	10.8
		52	1300.5	11.0
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (2:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	1300.0	12.3
		2	1300.3	11.2
		10	1300.5	11.0
		20	1300.5	10.8
		40	1300.5	10.7
		80	1302.0	11.0
H <sub>2</sub> O+NH <sub>3</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (2.5:1:2)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	1300.8	13.8
		2	1300.8	12.4
		10	1300.8	11.6
		20	1300.8	11.0
		40	1301.2	11.2
		80	1301.6	12.5
NH <sub>3</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	1299.4	12.0
		2	1299.3	10.4
		10	1300.0	10.3
		20	1300.3	9.9
		40	1300.4	10.2
		80	1302.1	9.6
N <sub>2</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	-	0	1301.0	8.4
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>3</sub> OH (2:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	40	1303.4	12.8
		70	1304.0	10.4
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>3</sub> OH (1:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	44	1303.3	10.9
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>3</sub> OH (1:2)	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	6.5	1303.6	10.9
CH <sub>3</sub> OH	H <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	4	1302.5	10.3
		8	1302.8	11.1
		16	1303.2	10.7
		23.5	1303.2	10.7
		27	1303.6	11.2
	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	52	1303.2	10.3

amount of each species in the mixture. In fact the assumption that the species deposit in the same ratio as they are prepared in the mixing chamber might in some case be incorrect. Thus in the following we will assume that the integrated absorbance of CH<sub>4</sub> bands does not change in mixtures.

**Table 3.** The parameters of the pseudo-voigt functions that best fit the profile of the 3010 cm<sup>-1</sup> band in pure CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited at T = 12.5 K.

Peak position cm <sup>-1</sup>	FWHM cm <sup>-1</sup>	$\eta$	Band area % of total
2999.8	2.6	0.02	0.4
3009.0	3.3	0.45	27.3
3010.4	6.9	0.29	53.9
3019.6	7.6	0.34	14.4
3027.6	5.9	1.00	4.0

**Table 4.** Position (cm<sup>-1</sup>) and FWHM (cm<sup>-1</sup>) of the 3010 cm<sup>-1</sup> band of CH<sub>4</sub> in various ice mixtures at different doses of ion irradiation, all at low T (10-16 K). The dose is expressed in eV/16 a.m.u

Initial mixture	Ions used	Dose	Peak (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	FWHM (cm <sup>-1</sup> )
pure CH <sub>4</sub>	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	3009.2	5.2
		170	3008.9	10.4
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	0	3010.0	11.9
		21	3008.8	12.3
		52	3009.4	11.8
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (2:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	3008.7	14.6
		2	3009.4	12.0
		10	3010.0	10.1
		20	3009.9	11.5
		40	3010.0	12.8
		80	3010.0	10.0
H <sub>2</sub> O+NH <sub>3</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (2.5:1:2)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	3008.9	14.7
		2	3009.0	12.2
		10	3009.5	11.0
		20	3010.0	11.4
		40	3008.9	10.7
		80	3009.0	13.0
NH <sub>3</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	He <sup>+</sup> 30 keV	0	3007.7	12.0
		2	3008.5	11.4
		10	3009.0	11.2
		20	3010.0	11.6
		40	3010.3	12.6
		80	3008.6	12.8
N <sub>2</sub> +CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1)	-	0	3011.7	10.1
CH <sub>3</sub> OH	He <sup>+</sup> 3 keV	52	3009.5	11.0

Fig. 3 shows the band profile in different ice mixtures containing CH<sub>4</sub> for different irradiation doses. Fig. 4 shows the band profile as produced after ion irradiation of ice mixtures containing CH<sub>3</sub>OH and H<sub>2</sub>O at different ratios. Table 2 lists peak positions and widths of the band in all the samples ex-

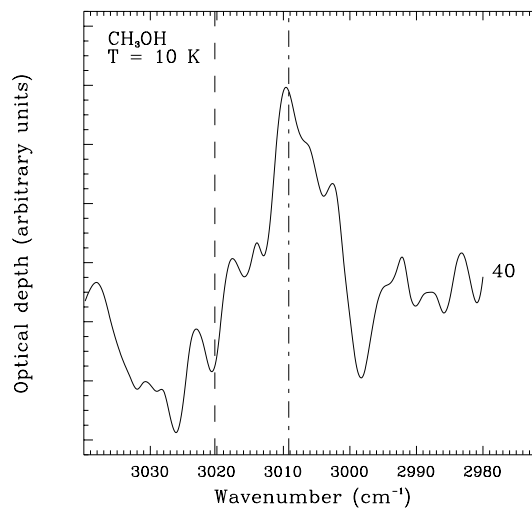
**Table 5.** Position (cm<sup>-1</sup>) and FWHM (cm<sup>-1</sup>) of the 1302 cm<sup>-1</sup> band of CH<sub>4</sub> in various irradiated and unirradiated ice mixtures upon warm-up.

Initial mixture	T (K)	Peak (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	FWHM (cm <sup>-1</sup> )
pure CH <sub>4</sub> as deposited	12.5	1301.5	6.7
	16	1299.8	6.0
	20	1299.7	6.4
	25	1299.6	7.0
	30	1299.4	8.0
	35	1299.4	9.0
pure CH <sub>4</sub> + 170 eV/16 a.m.u.	12.5	1300.3	9.7
	20	1299.8	9.4
	25	1299.7	9.3
	30	1299.6	9.3
	35	1299.4	9.5
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1) as deposited	10	1300.6	12.0
	17	1300.4	11.3
	27	1300.3	10.4
	47	1302.4	10.5
	67	1302.7	10.1
	107	1303.1	10.6
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>3</sub> OH (2:1) + 40 eV/16 a.m.u.	10	1303.4	12.8
	47	1303.8	10.9
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>3</sub> OH (1:1) + 44 eV/16 a.m.u.	10	1303.3	10.9
	151	1303.6	10.0
CH <sub>3</sub> OH + 40 eV/16 a.m.u.	10	1303.2	10.3
	47	1302.9	10.0
	97	1303.0	10.9
	147	1303.1	13.8

aminated, at various irradiation doses, before warming up. The peak position of the C-H deformation mode of CH<sub>4</sub> was found to range between 1299.3 to 1304.0 cm<sup>-1</sup> in the examined ice mixtures. The gas phase position of the origin of the band lies at 1305.5 cm<sup>-1</sup>, so that the band appears always more or less redshifted, indicating an attractive interaction with the solid matrix. The highest redshift was observed for CH<sub>4</sub> codeposited with NH<sub>3</sub>, even higher than that observed for pure CH<sub>4</sub> at low temperatures, while the lowest was observed for CH<sub>4</sub> produced irradiating CH<sub>3</sub>OH or mixtures of CH<sub>3</sub>OH and water with energetic ions. The full width at half maximum, at low temperatures, ranges from 6.7 cm<sup>-1</sup> in pure CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited to 13.8 cm<sup>-1</sup> in H<sub>2</sub>O+NH<sub>3</sub>+CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited. It can be seen that, exception made for pure CH<sub>4</sub>, the general trend is that this band shifts, if any, to slightly higher wavenumbers and gets narrower for higher irradiation doses. It can also be seen that, in all samples examined, if CH<sub>4</sub> is produced by ion irradiation of ice mixtures containing CH<sub>3</sub>OH, the band tends to peak at higher wavenumbers. Where comparable, our results agree closely with those published by Boogert et al. (1997).

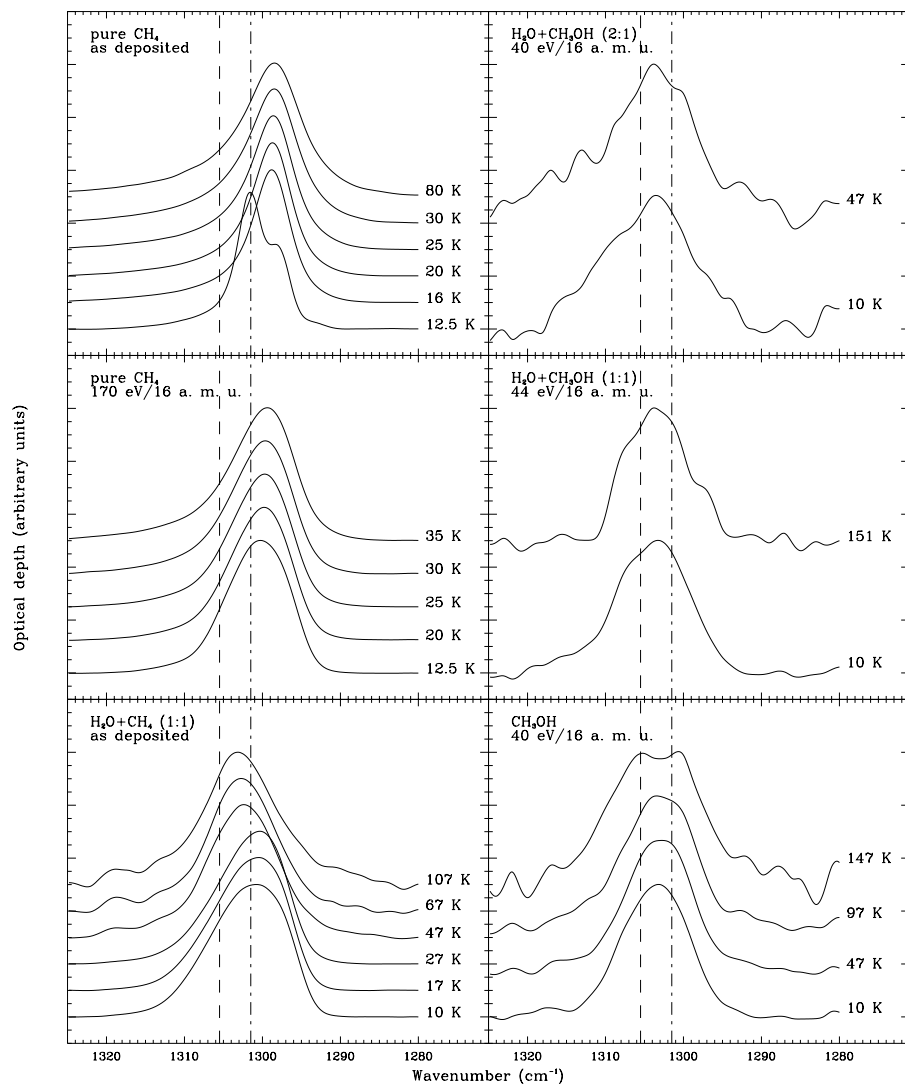
**Table 6.** Position (cm<sup>-1</sup>) and FWHM (cm<sup>-1</sup>) of the 3010 cm<sup>-1</sup> band of CH<sub>4</sub> in various irradiated and unirradiated ice mixtures upon warm-up.

Initial mixture	T (K)	Peak (cm <sup>-1</sup> )	FWHM (cm <sup>-1</sup> )
pure CH <sub>4</sub> as deposited	12.5	3009.2	5.2
	16	3010.9	12.3
	20	3011.0	13.2
	25	3011.0	15.4
	30	3010.9	18.2
	35	3010.9	20.0
pure CH <sub>4</sub> + 170 eV/16 a.m.u.	12.5	3008.9	10.5
	20	3008.8	11.6
	25	3008.4	12.0
	30	3008.5	13.1
	35	3008.0	14.0
H <sub>2</sub> O+CH <sub>4</sub> (1:1) as deposited	10	3010.0	11.9
	17	3010.0	11.8
	27	3010.2	12.3
	47	3008.7	18.2

**Fig. 6.** The spectrum of the band at 3010 cm<sup>-1</sup> of CH<sub>4</sub> produced by ion irradiation of CH<sub>3</sub>OH. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> (3020.3 cm<sup>-1</sup>) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure CH<sub>4</sub> ice as deposited (3009.2 cm<sup>-1</sup>) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.

### 3.2. The 3010 cm<sup>-1</sup> C-H stretching mode

Fig. 1b shows the profile of the  $\nu_3$  mode for pure CH<sub>4</sub> at T = 12.5 K, in optical depth scale and normalized to unit integrated area, at the end of the deposition. It shows a considerable structure, and can be fitted with a superposition of five pseudo-voigt functions with the parameters given in Table 3. As before, the choice of such functions was simply one of convenience. The fitted profiles are shown dotted in Fig. 1b. Clearly, the superposition of the second and third function reproduces the profile of the main peak, while the others seem to represent



**Fig. 7.** Variations of the shape and position of the CH<sub>4</sub> band at 1302 cm<sup>-1</sup> in irradiated and unirradiated ice mixtures upon warm-up. The initial mixture is indicated in top left corner of each box, along with the dose, in units of eV/16 a. m. u.. The temperature is indicated beside each plotted band. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> (1305.5 cm<sup>-1</sup>) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure CH<sub>4</sub> ice as deposited (1301.5 cm<sup>-1</sup>) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.

real fine structure. The first one is very weak and might be simply noise, even though it is consistently present in all spectra taken at different thicknesses of the sample, as the parameters were derived from a *combined* fit of all these spectra. Moreover, such structures are expected to appear in CH<sub>4</sub> due to the breaking of symmetry of the higher vibrational level involved in the transition by the crystal electric field and to the presence of different nonequivalent sites (see, for example, Bohn et al., 1994). Again, to measure the integrated absorbance we used all the spectra taken at different thicknesses of the sample, during deposition. The slope of the straight line through the origin fitted to the data yields a value of  $9.5 \cdot 10^{-18} \text{ cm} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$ . The data and the fitted line are shown in Fig. 2b. Using the data from the paper of Hudgins et al. (1993), assuming for pure CH<sub>4</sub> ice a density of  $0.52 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$  (Landolt-Börnstein 1971), as done by Boogert et al. (1997) for the band at 1302 cm<sup>-1</sup>, one derives a value of  $11.0 \cdot 10^{-18} \text{ cm} \cdot \text{mol}^{-1}$ , which is again somewhat larger than our measurement.

Fig. 5 shows the band profile in different ice mixtures containing CH<sub>4</sub> for different irradiation doses. Fig. 6 shows the

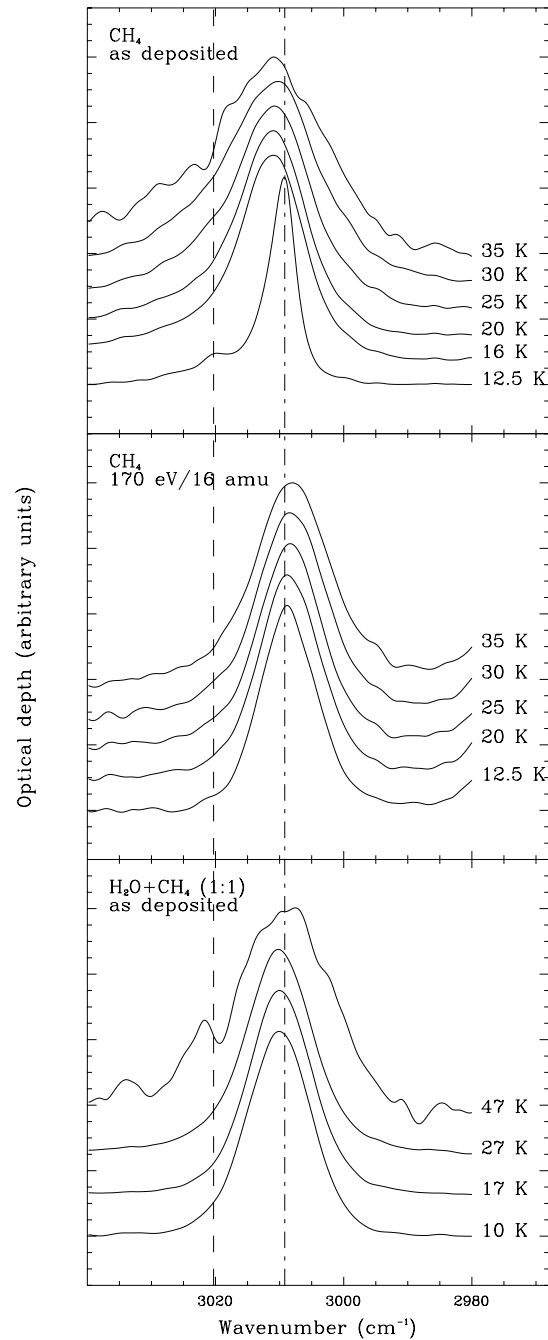
band profile as produced after ion irradiation of CH<sub>3</sub>OH. It is evident that the signal to noise ratio in this band is generally much worse, especially when water is present in the ice mixture, since this band lies on top of a very strong and broad water band that has to be subtracted first. Table 4 lists peak positions and widths of the band in all samples examined, at various irradiation doses, before warming up. The peak position of the C-H stretching mode of CH<sub>4</sub> was found to range between 3007.7 to 3011.7 cm<sup>-1</sup> in the examined ice mixtures. The gas phase position of the origin of the band lies at 3020.3 cm<sup>-1</sup>, so that the band appears again more or less redshifted. The highest redshift was observed for CH<sub>4</sub> codeposited with NH<sub>3</sub>, just as for the C-H deformation band, while the lowest was observed for CH<sub>4</sub> codeposited with N<sub>2</sub>. The full width at half maximum, at low temperatures, ranges from 5.2 cm<sup>-1</sup> in pure CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited to 14.7 cm<sup>-1</sup> in H<sub>2</sub>O+NH<sub>3</sub>+CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited, again just as for the other fundamental band.

### 3.3. Warm-up effects

Figs. 7 and 8 show the evolution of the band profiles of the C-H deformation and the C-H stretching upon warming up the irradiated and unirradiated samples. Tables 5 and 6 list measured peak positions and FWHMs. Generally, the band at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  changes much less than that at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  with temperature. The band at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  always gets slightly narrower at first to get wider again at higher temperatures only in some of the samples. The peak position of this band changes very little, except for pure CH<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O+CH<sub>4</sub> (1:1) as deposited, for which phase changes suggested by abrupt changes in the profile of the bands can be clearly seen respectively between 12.5 and 16 K (see CH<sub>4</sub> in Figs. 7 and 8) and between 27 K and 47 K (see H<sub>2</sub>O+CH<sub>4</sub> (1:1) in Fig. 7). The band at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is, on the other hand, extremely sensitive to the temperature in all the samples in which it was detected. Its width always increases greatly upon warm-up, particularly in pure CH<sub>4</sub>, for which it changes from 5.2 to about  $20\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Again, variations in the peak position are much smaller. The strong variations in width may result from a competition between annealing, that tends to reduce the number of different nonequivalent sites that a CH<sub>4</sub> molecule can occupy, and another mechanism, that might be hindered rotation (Jones et al., 1986; Nelander, 1985), that tends to increase the width of the bands. However, it is clear that the band at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is much more sensitive to temperature changes than that at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Since both bands arise from transitions from the fundamental level to a vibrational level of the same species, if their widths were due to unresolved hindered (almost free) rotational structure, one would expect them to be very similar at all temperatures, and especially to have similar widths in energy scale. Since this is not the case, not even for pure CH<sub>4</sub>, either hindered rotation is not the sole cause of broadening, or the molecule rotation must be rather differently hindered in the two different excited vibrational states. Our measurements of the peak positions of the bands at  $1302\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  of pure CH<sub>4</sub> as deposited at various temperatures, upon comparison with those by Hudgins et al. (1993) at 10, 20 and 30 K, are very close but systematically shifted to slightly lower wavenumbers with respect to them, by about  $0.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .

### 4. Final remarks

The flux of low energy cosmic rays in the interstellar medium is not well known. A proton flux  $J(E = 1\text{ MeV}) \approx 3\text{ cm}^{-2}\text{ s}^{-1}$  has been estimated by Jenniskens et al. (1993). The specific energy loss of 1 MeV protons in a typical grain containing heavy atoms (C, N, O, Si) is  $S \sim 5 \cdot 10^{-15}\text{ eV cm}^2/\text{atom}$ . Greenberg (1982) estimated lifetimes of dense clouds to be of  $3 \cdot 10^7 - 5 \cdot 10^8$  years. Assuming a gas density  $n_0 \sim 10^4\text{ cm}^{-3}$ , it takes  $10^9/n_0 \simeq 10^5$  years for icy mantles to condense on grains (Tielens & Allamandola 1987). These frozen mantles suffer ion irradiation for  $10^5 - 10^8$  years ( $3 \cdot 10^{12} - 3 \cdot 10^{15}$  sec). The former estimate refers to the case of mantles which evaporate immediately after formation while the latter refers to the limiting case of mantles which survive, at least partly, for all the cloud lifetime (Palumbo & Strazzulla



**Fig. 8.** Variations of the shape and position of the CH<sub>4</sub> band at  $3010\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in various ice mixtures upon warm-up. The initial mixture is indicated in top left corner of each box, along with the dose, in units of eV/16 a. m. u.. The temperature, in K, is indicated beside each plotted band. The position of the origin of the band in gaseous CH<sub>4</sub> ( $3020.3\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dashed line, the position of the peak in pure CH<sub>4</sub> ice as deposited ( $3009.2\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) is indicated by the dash-dotted line.

1993). Therefore, after a time  $t$  of  $3 \cdot 10^{12} - 3 \cdot 10^{15}$  sec the energy deposited on an icy grain mantle (dose) is given by  $S \cdot J \cdot t$  and values  $0.05 - 50\text{ eV/atom(C,N,O,Si)}$ .

Laboratory experiments and theoretical models had predicted the presence of CH<sub>4</sub> in icy grain mantles. This had been



confirmed by ground and airplane based observations first (Lacy et al., 1991; Boogert et al., 1997) and ISO observations recently (Boogert et al., 1996). They revealed the C-H deformation band of frozen CH<sub>4</sub> with a peak position of 7.67  $\mu\text{m}$  and a FWHM of 0.062  $\mu\text{m}$ , corresponding respectively to 1303.8 and 10.5  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . This fits nicely with the limits we found in our experiments, and especially with the position and FWHM we found for polar mixtures containing CH<sub>3</sub>OH where CH<sub>4</sub> is produced by ion irradiation. However, as was pointed out by Boogert et al. (1997), there are various ice mixtures containing CH<sub>4</sub> that are compatible with the observed spectra, so that no unique identification is possible at present. A more sensitive test would be to observe the interstellar C-H stretching band of CH<sub>4</sub>, but this has not been achieved thus far. If this is finally done, the direct comparison of the two bands with our (and other) laboratory spectra will give precious information about the environment and irradiation history of the grain mantles containing CH<sub>4</sub>. This will be possible when the data of the ISO observations will be publicly available.

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