

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Origin and Metal Content of Magmatic Sulfides in Cu-Au Mineralizing Silicic Magmas: Yanacocha, Peru and Yerington, NV

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_

John H. Dilles

Magmatic sulfides from Yerington, Nevada, and Yanacocha, Peru, were analyzed by laser ablation-inductively coupled mass spectrometry (LA-ICPMS) and electron microprobe to determine copper, gold, and silver concentrations and ratios in order to examine the relationship to the metal content of related magmatic-hydrothermal ores. The magmatic sulfides occur in plutonic rocks of the Yerington batholith, which produced porphyry copper-(molybdenum) ore deposits, and in the andesitic and dacitic volcanic rocks at Yanacocha, which produced high sulfidation epithermal gold (copper) ores. The magmatic sulfides, which range from <1 to 20 micrometers in diameter, consist principally of pyrrhotite and chalcopyrite (with minor pyrite and bornite) with a wide range of copper contents (n=34; <3000 ppm to 36 wt% Cu) in the Yanacocha samples. The magmatic sulfides studied from Yerington (n=9) were exclusively chalcopyrite

composition (~35 wt% Cu), but chalcopyrite-bornite mixtures have been previously described (Dilles, 1984).

A methodology for LA-ICPMS analysis and detection of trace amounts of gold, silver, lead, and other metals was developed and tested for sulfides smaller than 30 micrometers diameter, the minimum for laser ablation. Trace metal contents were corrected for silicate backgrounds and standardized against the copper content of the sulfide. Detection limits of average 10-micrometer diameter sulfides are approximately 0.05 ppm for Au and 0.24 ppm for Ag. The Au content in magmatic sulfides ranged from less than detection limit (n=4) to detectable amounts of 5.4 to 131 ppm (n=5) at Yerington, and from less than detection limit (n=17) to detectable amounts of 0.44 to 494 ppm (n=17) at Yanacocha. Silver concentrations for Yerington and Yanacocha ranged from 29 to 2373 ppm (n=7, n= 2 below detection limit) and 0.36 to 6932 ppm (n=20, n=14 below detection limit), respectively. For samples with detectable gold, the Au/Cu (x10, 000) ratio of magmatic sulfides at Yerington and Yanacocha ranged from 0.15 to 3.75 and from 0.02 to 17.04, respectively. For samples with detectable silver, the Ag/Cu (x1000) ranged from 0.09 to 6.78 for Yerington sulfides and from 0.001 to 32.24 for Yanacocha sulfides. The average Au/Cu ratio of magmatic sulfides from both Yerington and Yanacocha are similar to the average ratio of magmatic sulfide reported for andesite and dacite related to the porphyry Cu (Au) ore deposit in the Bajo de la Alumbrera district of NW Argentina (Halter et al., 2002a). The Au/Cu ratio of magmatic sulfide at Alumbrera is similar to the Au/Cu ratio of the ore deposit, but at both Yerington and Yanacocha the Au/Cu ratio of the magmatic

sulfides differs significantly from Au/Cu ratio of the bulk ore. The magmatic sulfides at both Yerington and Yanacocha have Au/Cu ratios of about  $10^{-4}$ , whereas ores from Yerington have a low average Au/Cu  $\sim 2 \times 10^{-7}$  and those from Yanacocha have a relatively high Au/Cu (estimated at  $2 \times 10^{-3}$ ). Au/Cu fractionation is likely to occur both when magmatic sulfides are dissolved into magmatic hydrothermal fluids, and later when these hydrothermal fluids precipitate ore sulfides and gold. Additionally, metals may be contributed to the magmatic hydrothermal fluid from silicate melt as well as sulfide melt. The results of this study suggest that the copper, gold, and silver content and ratios of magmatic sulfides do not directly dictate the metal contents and ratios of related magmatic-hydrothermal ores.

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Origin and Metal Content of Magmatic Sulfides  
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by

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Gregory A. Brennecka, Author

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.....	1
Geologic Setting and Background.....	2
Sulfide stability.....	9
Methods.....	10
Location of sulfide grains.....	10
LA-ICPMS analysis.....	13
Detection Limits.....	18
Determining Concentrations.....	19
Results.....	23
Electron Microprobe analysis.....	23
LA-ICPMS analysis.....	26
Discussion.....	31
Regarding the Method.....	31
Ore Deposit ratios.....	31
Ore Deposit model.....	33
Acknowledgements.....	35
References.....	36
Appendices.....	40

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Location map of the two areas of study.....	3
2. Columnar section of the Yanacocha Volcanic Sequence, from Figure 2.2 Longo (2005).....	6
3. Temperature-oxygen fugacity ( $T$ - $fO_2$ ) diagram modified from Whitney and Stormer (1984) and Dilles (1987) showing the approximate fields that the Yerington and Yanacocha rocks occupy with respect to the Fe-S system....	8
4. Examples of Yanacocha sulfides hosted in plagioclase feldspar (top) and Yerington sulfides hosted in potassium feldspar (bottom).....	12
5. Graph showing the reproducibility of the MASS standard at Oregon State University, indicating the OSU lab is suitable for this type of sulfide study.....	15
6. Graph comparing the agreement of the MASS standard ratios detected at Oregon State University and those published by the USGS.....	15
7. Microscope view of the Halter et al. (2002b) ablation diagram as applied to magmatic sulfides.....	17
8. A three dimensional diagram modified from Halter et al. (2002b) schematically showing the procedure for ablating a sulfide inclusion that is smaller than the laser diameter.....	17
9. Average detection limits ( $3\sigma$ of background cps) for elements of interest from the MASS standard and the unknown sulfides.....	19
10. Diagram showing the “half-cylinder” estimation procedure to determine the concentrations of metals within the sulfide alone and not the surrounding host mineral.....	20



## LIST OF FIGURES (Continued)

11. Ablation profiles of small and large volume sulfides.....	21
12. Diagram depicting the Cu, Fe and S composition (silicate free) in atomic proportions of the magmatic sulfides analyzed (Appendix Table 2).....	25
13. Graph of the average metal ratios found in the two systems of Yerington, Nevada and Yanacocha, Peru.....	29
14. Diagram modified from Hendenquist and Lowenstern (1994) showing the relationship of porphyry systems to that of high sulfidation systems above the source magma body.....	34

## LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Representative Fe-Ti Oxide Compositions for the Yanacocha Volcanics, Peru.....	7
2. Magmatic Sulfides and Their Temperature Limits.....	9
3. Sulfide Mineral Occurrences by Rock Unit.....	11
4. Representative Electron Microprobe Samples.....	24
5. Metal Concentrations of Magmatic Sulfides.....	27
6. Au/Cu Ratio Comparison.....	30
7. Bulk Ore and Sulfide Ratios.....	32

## LIST OF APPENDIX TABLES

<u>Appendix Table</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Sample Locations and Occurrences.....	41
2. Microprobe Data for All Magmatic Sulfides.....	42
3. Microprobe Standards and Intensities Used.....	42
4. Metal Ratios for Magmatic Sulfides from Each Rock Unit.....	43
5. Compositional Data for Iron Titanium Oxides from Yanacocha, Peru.....	43