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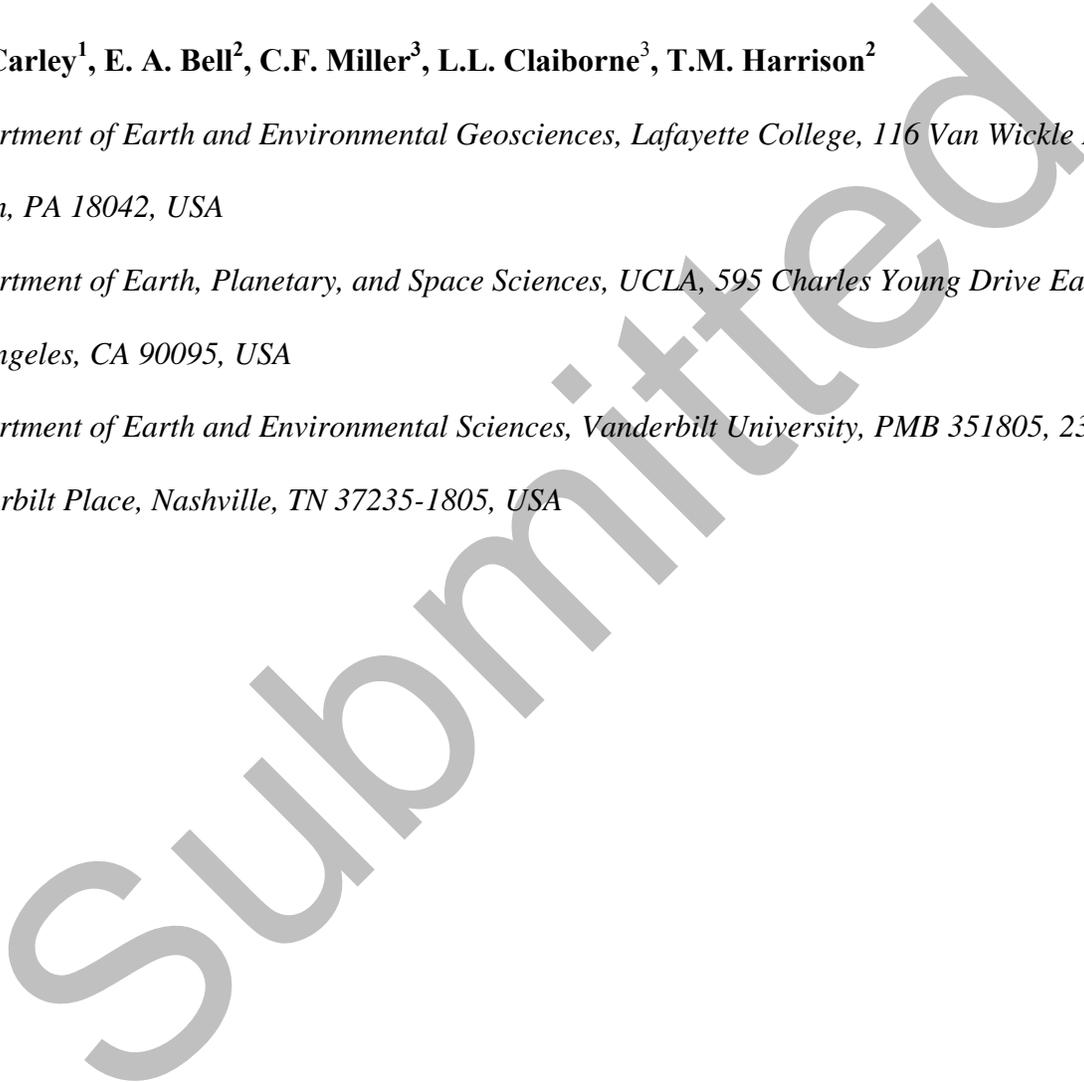
Hadean, Archean, and modern Earth: Zircon-modeled melts
illuminate the formation of Earth’s earliest felsic crust

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12 **ABSTRACT**

13 The magmato-tectonic environment(s) of origin for Earth's earliest crust are enigmatic
14 and fiercely debated. Revealing the composition of the melts from which Hadean (>4.02 Ga)
15 zircons crystallized might clarify conditions of initial crust construction. We calculate model
16 melts using Ti-calibrated zircon/melt partition coefficients ($K_{d_{Zr(Ti)}}$) and published trace element
17 data for Hadean and Archean zircons. The same treatment is applied to zircons from possible
18 analogue environments (MORB, Iceland, arcs, lunar), to constrain potential petrogenetic
19 similarities and distinctions between the early and modern world. Model melts from oceanic
20 environments (MORB, oceanic arc, Iceland) have higher heavy rare earth element (HREE)
21 contents and shallower middle REE (MREE) to HREE/chondrite (ch) slopes than those from
22 continental arcs and tonalite-trondhjemite-granodiorite suites (TTGs). Hadean and Archean
23 model melts are nearly indistinguishable from one another, both resembling TTGs and
24 continental arcs, with pronounced depletion of HREE and slope reversal in heaviest REE. A
25 limited number of samples ≥ 4.25 Ga yield model melts with broadly similar characteristics to
26 those from younger Hadean and Archean zircons, but with relatively elevated REE (~half order
27 of magnitude) and higher LREE and MREE relative to HREE. Rare earth element patterns of
28 early Earth model melts suggest a common petrogenetic history in the Hadean and Archean,
29 involving garnet \pm amphibole in relatively low-temperature, high-pressure, environments.

30 INTRODUCTION

31 Zircon crystals are the only recognized physical record from the Hadean eon (>4.02 Ga;
32 Harrison, 2020; cf. O'Neil et al., 2008). As relics of silicic magmas, they provide evidence of
33 earliest crustal compositions and crust-constructing processes: U-Pb ages and Ti concentrations
34 reveal timing and temperatures of crystallization (Ferry and Watson, 2007); other trace elements
35 hold clues regarding source materials, tectonic settings, and extent of evolution (Claiborne et al.,
36 2006; Grimes et al., 2007); Hf and O isotopes illuminate mantle and crustal source contributions
37 (Kinny and Maas, 2003; Valley, 2003); and mineral inclusions further document crystallization
38 conditions (Bell et al., 2015; Bell et al., 2017).

39 Despite the diverse and ever-increasing varieties of evidence that can be extracted from
40 zircon, the petrogenesis of Hadean magmas remains controversial. Some researchers have
41 inferred crystallization in mafic, oceanic, environments (e.g., Kemp et al., 2010; Gréaux et al.,
42 2018); some argue for involvement of subduction (Hopkins et al., 2008; Turner et al., 2020);
43 while others call upon extraterrestrial impacts (Kenny et al., 2016). The debate continues because
44 Hadean zircon crystals are out of context. The magmas in which they crystallized, and thus
45 critical evidence of their petrogenetic histories, are lost to the geologic record.

46 Knowing the composition of the melts from which Hadean zircons crystallized will
47 permit meaningful comparisons with modern Earth systems, clarifying their magmo-tectonic
48 environment(s) of origin. Partition coefficients (Kds) provide a mechanism for constraining the
49 composition of a melt from which a mineral crystallizes. However, reliable and consistent
50 zircon/melt Kds are elusive. This is because of challenges in determining compositions of zircon
51 and coexisting melts in experimental and natural materials, and because of a wide range of true
52 Kds (Claiborne et al., 2018). Based on measurements of zircon rims and host glasses, Claiborne

53 et al. (2018) demonstrated a strong negative correlation between K_{ds} and zircon saturation
54 temperature for elements including U, Th, and the REE. The Ti concentration in zircon rims is
55 also negatively correlated with K_{ds} , consistent with a temperature dependence of zircon Ti
56 concentration ((Ferry and Watson, 2007). Based on this correlation between temperature and
57 K_{ds} , they calculated equations for Ti-adjusted zircon-melt K_{ds} ($K_{d_{Zrc(Ti)}}$). These $K_{d_{Zrc(Ti)}}$, which
58 account for much of the complexity in zircon/melt partitioning behavior, permit unique insight
59 into magmatic systems of the early Earth.

60

61 **APPROACH**

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63 Model melts are calculated using $K_{d_{Zrc(Ti)}}$ (Claiborne et al., 2018) and published trace
64 element data for Hadean and Archean zircons. The same treatment is applied to zircons from
65 potential analogues (e.g., MORB, Iceland, arcs, hotspots, the Moon). We exclude model values
66 for La, Ce, Pr, and Eu because Claiborne et al. (2018) consider K_{ds} for these elements to be
67 unreliable. Because of their extreme incompatibility, concentrations of LREE (except Ce) are
68 near detection limits and subject to strong influence by inclusions. Oxygen fugacity, a variable
69 not assessed by Claiborne et al. (2018), strongly affects K_{ds} for polyvalent Ce and Eu .

70 Model melt compositions are compared to one another, and to measured tonalite-
71 trondhjemite-granodiorite (TTG) rock compositions (Moyen, 2011), to identify compositional
72 evidence of petrogenetic similarity (or difference) between the early and modern Earth. We also
73 compare model melts across the Hadean-Archean boundary, in an attempt to temporally
74 constrain a petrogenetic transition into the modern (post-Hadean) world.

75

76 **Early Earth Zircon Compositions**

77 Early Earth zircon compositions used in this investigation are from compilations in Bell
78 et al. (2016 and 2017) and Carley et al. (2014). Appendix 1 contains supporting references. The
79 Bell et al. (2016 and 2017) compilation contains paired Ti and trace element (TE) compositions,
80 carefully vetted for signs of post-crystallization alteration, for 75 Hadean (4.0 to 4.245 Ga) and
81 114 Archean (< 4.0 Ga to 3.3 Ga) zircon analyses. These data are primarily from Jack Hills,
82 Australia (177 of 189; Bell et al., 2016); the other 12 are Archean zircons from the Nuvvuagittuq
83 Supracrustal Belt, Quebec, Canada (Bell et al., 2017). To represent the earliest years of Earth's
84 history (≥ 4.25 Ga), the Bell et al. (2016 and 2017) compilation is supplemented by the Carley et
85 al. (2014) compilation ($n = 64$). These ≥ 4.25 Ga zircons ($n = 61$ for U; $n = 12$ for REE) lack
86 paired TE-Ti analyses, so a representative concentration of 5 ppm Ti is used to calculate model
87 melts. This is the median Ti value for both the Carley et al. (2014; $n = 600$) and Bell et al. (2016
88 and 2017; $n = 76$) Hadean compilations. Model melts calculated using this representative
89 concentration are indicated in Appendix 1. Model melt sensitivity to Ti concentration (and thus,
90 the consequences selecting a non-representative Ti value) is depicted in Appendix 2.

91

92 **Compositions of Zircons from Modern Earth and Lunar Settings**

93 Model melts are calculated using published compositions of zircons from an assortment
94 of well-constrained tectono-magmatic environments: the Moon (Crow et al., 2017) as an analog
95 for magma ocean and/or stagnant lid + plume scenarios; MORB (Grimes et al., 2007); Iceland
96 (Carley et al., 2014); ocean arc (Izu-Bonin: Barth et al., 2017); “evolving rifts” with oceanic
97 lithosphere replacing continental lithosphere (Salton Sea, USA: Schmitt and Vazquez, 2006;
98 Schmitt et al., 2013; Alid, Eritrea: Lowenstern et al., 1997; Lowenstern et al., 2006); and

99 continental arcs (Mount St. Helens, USA: Claiborne, 2011) Yanacocha, Peru: Dilles et al., 2015).
100 Early Earth model melt compositions are also compared to a global compilation of Archean
101 TTGs (Moyen, 2011).

102

103 **RESULTS**

104

105 Model melt values are available in Appendix 1, accompanied by original zircon
106 compositions and $Kd_{Zr(Ti)}$.

107 We plot model melt and TTG whole-rock compositions using combinations of trace
108 elements commonly used to discern zircon provenance (e.g., Grimes et al., 2007). Hadean and
109 Archean model melts define the high U/Yb – low Y end of a negatively trending compositional
110 spectrum (Fig. 1a). These early Earth values plot near model melts from continental arcs
111 (Yanacocha, Mount St. Helens) and measured TTGs. Conversely, model melts for the Moon,
112 MORB, oceanic arc, Iceland, and evolving rifts have distinctly lower U/Yb and higher Y. Other
113 trace element discrimination schemes (e.g., Yb vs. Y, Th/Yb vs. U/Yb) reveal consistent
114 groupings (Appendix 2).

115 Chondrite-normalized REE plots (Fig. 2a) display similar compositional distinctions.
116 Again, the early Earth (modeled melts and measured TTG) define one compositional extreme
117 (MREE/ch 7-10, HREE/ch 4-7) and the moon defines the other (all REE/ch > 100). The two
118 continental arc examples are similar to early Earth: Yanacocha is almost identical, while Mount
119 St. Helens has somewhat higher MREE/ch and HREE/ch (20-10). MORB, Iceland, oceanic arc,
120 and evolving rifts have flat to negatively-sloping MREE/ch and HREE/ch (100-20).

121 The early Earth samples (modeled Hadean and Archean, measured TTG) share an abrupt,
122 hook-like inflection, from decreasing MREE to increasing heavy REE (HREE), with a minimum
123 at Er-Tm. Yanacocha is similar, with a minimum at Ho. Mount St. Helens also falls to a
124 minimum at Ho, but from Ho to Lu its pattern is flat at HREE/ch ~ 10 . The early Earth and
125 continental arc patterns are distinct from model melts representing modern oceanic
126 environments. The oceanic arc plots with a shallow concave-up pattern, with an inflection
127 around Dy, straddling REE/ch ~ 30 ; the MORB pattern is flatter with higher REE/ch (~ 70). The
128 lunar model melt displays an irregular, pronounced, concave-up shape with an abrupt change in
129 slope at Gd. The irregularity is perhaps due to extremely elevated Ti (median Ti = 99 ppm; Crow
130 et al., 2017), far above the values used in the Claiborne et al. (2018) calibration, impacting the
131 integrity of the model.

132

133 **DISCUSSION**

134

135 **Hadean vs. Archean Model Melts**

136 Model melt compositions calculated using Hadean (≥ 4.0 Ga) and Archean (< 4.0 Ga)
137 zircon populations are almost identical in trace element discrimination (Fig. 1) and REE patterns
138 (Fig. 2). They closely resemble whole-rock TTG compositions (Moyen, 2011). The similarity
139 between Archean model melts and TTG is expected, as >3 Ga felsic rocks are dominantly TTG
140 (Moyen and Martin, 2012). The compositional coherence between the Hadean and Archean is
141 noteworthy, suggesting a common petrogenetic history.

142

143 **Early Earth Variability through Time**

144 To investigate if model-melts record a transition from the Hadean into an Archean-like
145 world, we compare early Earth model melts divided into 0.25 Ga age bins (4.5-3.0 Ga). The
146 close similarity between Hadean and Archean model melts persists from 4.25 to 3 Ga. Median
147 U/Yb and Y (Fig. 1b), REE/ch (Fig. 2b), MREE/HREE(ch) and Lu/Tm (Fig. 3) are
148 indistinguishable across the Hadean-Archean age boundary. However, the oldest model melts (\geq
149 4.25 Ga, $n = 12$ of 192) are consistently distinct from the rest of the early Earth, with lower
150 median U/Yb (1.4 vs. 3.4 to 5.9) and higher median Y (20 ppm vs. 7 to 11 ppm; Fig. 1b). They
151 also have higher median REE abundance by a factor of ~ 2 to 8 (Fig. 2b). Chondrite-normalized
152 MREE/HREE ratios are elevated for the ≥ 4.25 Ga model melts (e.g. median Sm/Lu ~ 6.8 vs 3.0
153 to 4.2; Fig. 3a). The slope reversal in the REE/ch diagram, expressed by Tm/Lu, is greatest in the
154 oldest Hadean model melts (0.94 vs 0.75 to 0.80; Fig. 3b).

155 While these compositional distinctions are tantalizing, confidence is tempered by the
156 limited number of REE analyses for zircons ≥ 4.25 Ga ($n = 12$). The lack of Ti for these zircons,
157 requiring application of an assumed value (5 ppm), is also concerning. If Ti was as low as 1-2
158 ppm, the melt compositions would be closer to the rest of those modeled for the early Earth.
159 However, we consider 5 ppm to be a conservative estimate (typical of Hadean zircon, well below
160 typical values for modern Earth); higher Ti would lead to a greater compositional difference
161 between these oldest model melts and the rest of the early Earth (Fig. 2, Appendix 2). Despite (or
162 because of) these uncertainties, the apparent variation through the Hadean warrants further study,
163 especially of more zircon ≥ 4.25 Ga.

164

165 **Early Earth Model Melts: Comparison with Melts from Known Settings**

166 Early Earth model melts are consistently distinct from those generated in modern oceanic
167 settings (e.g., MORB, Iceland, ocean arc), evolving rifts, and the Moon. It is therefore unlikely
168 that early Earth zircons crystallized from a magma ocean (cf. the Moon), magmas that formed by
169 shallow melting in environments with elevated geothermal gradients (Iceland, MORB), or more
170 generally from juvenile, mantle-derived, magmas (including ocean arcs).

171 In contrast, early Earth model melts (and TTG) are very similar to model melts from
172 continental arcs (Mount St. Helens and especially Yanacocha). These model melts are “adakite-
173 like” in their steep, negatively-sloping REE patterns, low to very low HREE, and inflections near
174 Er-Tm (Kay, 1978); they especially resemble high-silica adakite (Moyen, 2009). Lower model
175 HREE for early Earth (and Yanacocha) than for Mount St. Helens may reflect somewhat greater
176 depth of melting (cf. Reimink et al., 2020).

177

178 **Genetic Constraints on Early Earth Melts**

179 Early Earth model melts were likely influenced by similar petrogenetic conditions as
180 TTG and adakite-like magmas, based on their distinct similarity in REE patterns. The steep
181 negative slope of REE patterns (Fig. 2) and extreme depletion of HREE (Figs. 2 and 3) imply a
182 crystalline residue with strong affinity for the REE. High bulk Kds for HREE, along with the
183 inflection in the middle-heavy REE portion of the patterns, strongly implicate either garnet,
184 amphibole, or both (e.g., Kay, 1978; Moyen, 2009). The median Hadean and Archean patterns
185 with the inflection at Er-Tm (Fig. 2) imply garnet in the residue, as the maximum in the
186 amphibole Kd pattern is at Gd-Dy (Davidson et al., 2013). Such patterns (REE and Kd) and
187 implied mineral residues (garnet +/- amphibole), together with experimental phase equilibria, are
188 attributed to partial melting of eclogitic or amphibolitic mafic sources at moderately high to very

189 high pressure –commonly suggested to be ≥ 1 GPa (e.g., Beard and Lofgren, 1991; Rapp and
190 Watson, 1995), but possibly as low as 0.7 GPa (Newton, 2018). In modern environments, such
191 conditions and source materials imply melting either in a subducting slab or within mafic lower
192 crust influenced by water (e.g., from amphibole dehydration and/or via slab-derived fluid influx)
193 at temperatures lower than those inferred for typical Hadean-Archean geotherms (Hopkins et al.,
194 2008; Harrison, 2009).

195

196 **IMPLICATIONS**

197 (1) Zircon-saturated melts of Hadean and Archean age were strikingly similar in composition.

198 The oldest Hadean model melts (≥ 4.25 Ga, $n = 12$) exhibit tantalizing compositional
199 differences that warrant future study.

200 (2) Hadean-Archean model melts are distinctly different from “primitive” magmas (those of
201 mantle origin, reflecting a high geotherm: Moon, MORB, Iceland, oceanic arcs). They are
202 distinctly similar to modern, adakite-like, arc magmas. As is expected from their dominance
203 in the Archean, TTGs also closely match Archean zircon-modelled melts.

204 (3) Early Earth model melt REE/ch patterns, with strong HREE depletion and inflections near
205 Er-Tm, suggest generation in the presence of garnet and/or amphibole. This implies
206 petrogenesis in hydrous, high pressure environments that were relatively cool compared to
207 our current understanding of typical Hadean-Archean geotherms.

208 **APPENDIX**

209 1. Zircon data, supporting references, $Kd_{Zr(Ti)}$, and calculated model melt compositions.

210 2. Supplemental figures.

211

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328

329 **FIGURE CAPTIONS:**

330

331 **Figure 1.** U/Yb vs Y in zircon-based model melts. (A) Early Earth (Hadean and Archean) vs.
332 modern settings; global compilation of bulk rock tonalite-trondjemite-granodiorite (TTG)
333 compositions shown for comparison (Moyen, 2011). Symbols represent median model melt
334 compositions; fields show ranges of modeled compositions (extreme outliers excluded). (B)
335 Median Hadean and Archean model melts binned by age. In both A and B, Hadean includes $12 \geq$
336 4.25 Ga model melts calculated using an assumed Ti concentration of 5 ppm (paired Ti-TE were
337 unavailable). See text and Appendix 1 for data sources.

338

339 **Figure 2.** Median REE patterns of zircon-based model melts. (A) Early Earth vs. modern
340 settings, with bulk rock TTG for comparison (Moyen, 2011). (B) Hadean and Archean model
341 melts binned by age. Model melts ≥ 4.25 Ga ($n = 12$) were calculated using an assumed Ti
342 concentration of 5 ppm. Note that REE lighter than Nd are excluded, because zircon Kds are
343 unreliable for these extremely incompatible elements (Claiborne et al., 2018). McDonough and
344 Sun (1995) was used for chondrite normalization. See text and Appendix 1 for data sources.

345

346 **Figure 3.** Chondrite normalized REE ratios of early Earth model melts binned by age. Lower
347 and upper edges of the boxes represent the 25th and 75th percentiles. Boxes are bisected by the
348 median. N-values represent population totals. Model melts in ≥ 4.25 Ga bin were calculated
349 using an assumed Ti concentration of 5 ppm. (A) Sm/Lu (MREE/HREE); high ratios are more
350 “adakite-like.” (B) Lu/Tm; values >1 indicate slope reversal characteristic of “adakites-like”

351 magmas and many TTGs. McDonough and Sun (1995) was used for chondrite normalization.

352 See text and Appendix 1 for data sources.

353

Submitted

Figure 1

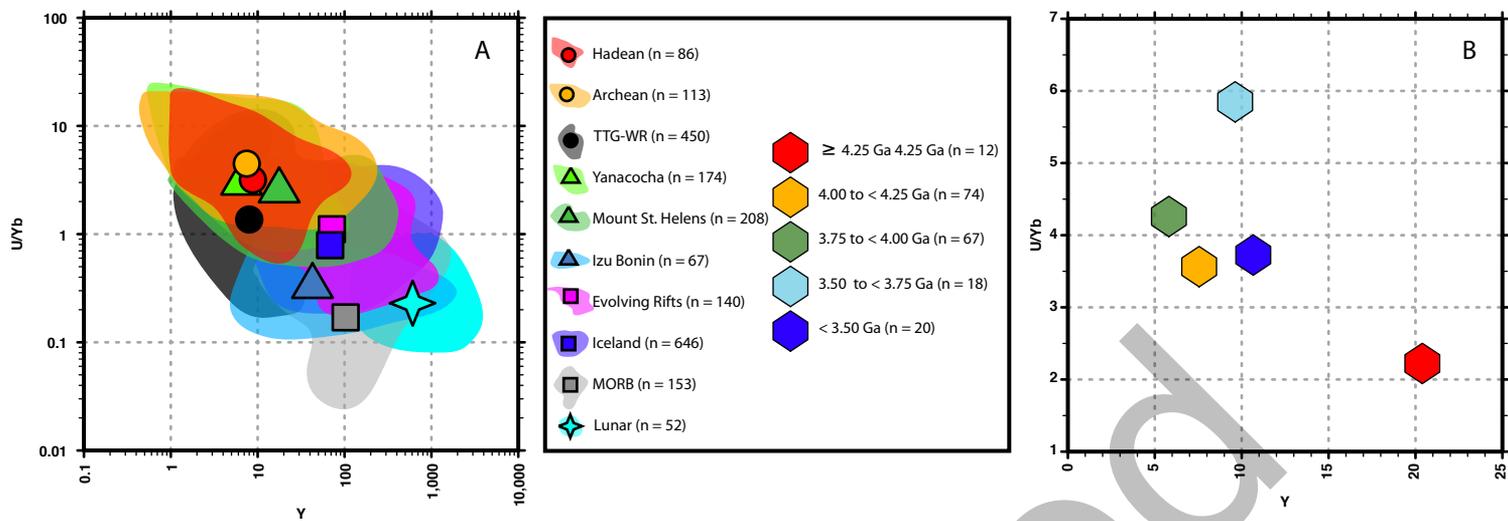


Figure 2

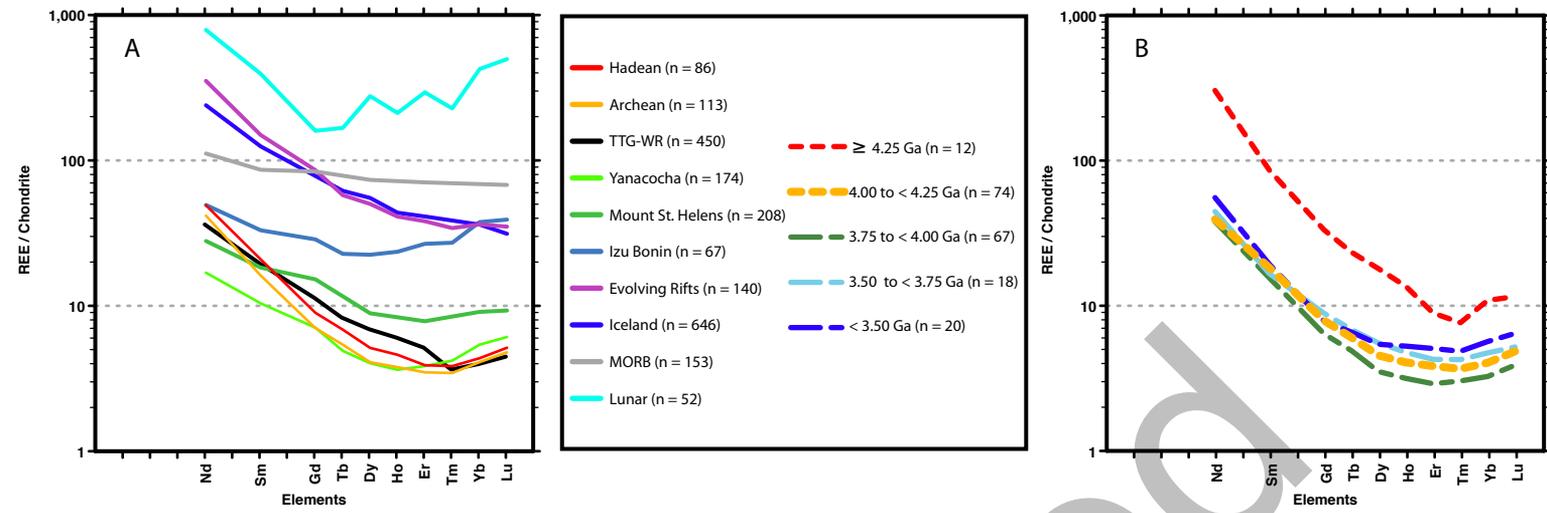


Figure 3

