

Revision 1

In situ chemical and isotopic analyses and element mapping of multiple-generation pyrite: evidence of episodic gold mobilization and deposition for the Qiucun epithermal gold deposit in Southeast China

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ABSTRACT

Gold deposits are often the result of complex mineralization and remobilization processes. Interpretation of bulk geochemical and sulfur isotope data of the gold deposits is frequently hampered by complex zoning in pyrite, which calls for *in situ* determination of geochemical and sulfur isotope composition of sulfide minerals. The Qiucun deposit is a good representative of epithermal gold deposit in the Mesozoic Coastal Volcanic Belt of southeastern China. It represents a complex mineralization history, comprising three hydrothermal stages: (I) early stage of

25 pyrite-quartz-chalcedony, (II) main ore stage of quartz-polymetallic sulfide, and (III) post-ore stage
26 of quartz-carbonate. Detailed backscattered electron imaging (BSE), *in situ* trace element and sulfur
27 isotope analyses using laser ablation-inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS)
28 and LA-multicollector (MC)-ICP-MS were applied to reveal the gold mineralization and
29 remobilization history of this deposit. Four texturally distinct generations of pyrite were identified,
30 all of which host invisible gold: Py_{1a} and Py_{1b} in Stage I and Py_{2a} and Py_{2b} in Stage II. A detailed
31 study of the texture, chemistry, and sulfur isotopic composition as well as hydrothermal evolution of
32 auriferous pyrite from the Qiucun deposit revealed the behavior of gold in the course of pyrite
33 evolution. Pyrite of stages I and II contains invisible gold whereas later-stage visible native gold and
34 re-enrichment in invisible is associated with alteration rims around the primary pyrite grains. Py_{1a} is
35 rich in silicate inclusions, enriched in Co and Ni, and depleted in As and Au relative to later pyrite
36 generations. This redistribution is attributed to alteration of biotite in the sub-volcanic host rocks that
37 effectively destabilized gold in the ore fluid during Py_{1a} deposition. Py_{1b} and Py_{2a} show oscillatory
38 zoning with bright bands having elevated As and Au contents. The oscillatory zoning is interpreted to
39 reflect pressure fluctuations and repeated local fluid boiling around the pyrite crystals. These three
40 pyrite generations (Py_{1a}, 1b, 2a) record a narrow range of $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{V-CDT}}$ values between -3.6 ‰ and 4.6 ‰,
41 consistent with a magmatic sulfur source. Gold and some trace elements (As, Ag, Sb, Pb, Tl, and Cu)
42 that were initially incorporated into Py_{2a} became partially exsolved and remobilized during the
43 replacement of porous and invisible gold-rich Py_{2b}. This replacement was likely due to coupled
44 dissolution and re-precipitation reactions triggered by oxidation of the mineralizing fluids. Fluid
45 oxidation is further supported by a general decrease trend of $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{V-CDT}}$ from Py_{2a} (-3.2 to 4.6 ‰) to
46 Py_{2b} (-15.2 to -2.3 ‰). Lastly, previously formed auriferous pyrite underwent post-mineralization
47 fracturing, causing local pulverization of pyrite. Thus newly created porosity facilitated fluid
48 circulation, hydrothermal alteration of the pyrite, and remobilization of invisible gold, which
49 re-precipitated with pyrite in the form of electrum as small inclusions or as larger grains within

50 fractures. Our study emphasizes that pressure-driven hydrothermal processes play a vital role in the
51 initial enrichment and re-concentration of gold and some other trace metals during episodic
52 deposition, replacement, and hydrothermal alteration of gold-bearing pyrite in epithermal gold
53 deposits, ultimately forming visible gold and high-grade ore shoots as exemplified by the Qiucun
54 deposit.

55 **Keywords:** Pyrite formation and replacement; Sulfur isotopes; Gold remobilization; Epithermal gold
56 mineralization

57

58

INTRODUCTION

59 Large gold deposits may form by multiple gold enrichment events, but it is often hard to clarify
60 whether the last of these events represents remobilized gold from pre-existing mineralization or
61 relates to new gold introduction during a distinct epigenetic event ([Large et al. 2009](#); [Haroldson et al.](#)
62 [2018](#)). In many gold deposits, gold shows a bimodal distribution in which refractory gold within
63 pyrite was overprinted by later visible gold as distinct inclusions or filling fractures within the pyrite.
64 The former is either primary in origin or a result of the remobilization of refractory gold. In contrast,
65 the latter is considered to be remobilized invisible gold within fractures of the pyrite (e.g., [Morey et](#)
66 [al. 2008](#); [Cook et al. 2009](#); [Large et al. 2011](#)). This gold remobilization could lead to secondary gold
67 enrichment and help understand the origin of bonanza zones within gold deposits, which
68 considerably enhance bulk gold grade.

69 Pyrite occurs in various crustal environments and is one of the most important host minerals for
70 gold. Gold incorporated in pyrite as solid solution (Au^+) and/or submicron particles (Au^0) is referred
71 to as invisible (refractory) gold ([Gopon et al. 2019](#)). This type of gold, which can reach
72 concentrations from tens of ppb to >1 wt.% ([Deditius et al. 2014](#)), is generally thought to be a
73 primary precipitation feature (e.g., [Reich et al. 2005](#); [Velásquez et al. 2014](#)). However, the
74 physico-chemical controls on this type of gold mineralization are still under debate, with fluid

75 temperature, pH, oxidation state, and sulfur fugacity all playing potentially important roles (Gregory
76 et al. 2019).

77 The texture and chemistry of pyrite have been used extensively in unraveling the genesis and
78 evolution of many ore deposits (Franchini et al. 2015; Sykora et al. 2018). The texture and
79 morphology of pyrite can reflect replacement or dissolution and can also be used to distinguish
80 between supersaturation, near-equilibrium crystallization, or recrystallization. The trace element
81 distribution in pyrite and included nanoparticles may reveal changes in temperature, pH, oxidation
82 state, source and composition of the ore fluid (e.g., Deditius et al. 2011; Velásquez et al. 2014). The
83 sulfur isotope ratios of pyrite can provide useful information on the fluid source and decipher
84 physicochemical conditions during precipitation (Ohmoto 1972). However, interpretation of
85 geochemical and sulfur isotope data is far from straightforward because gold-bearing pyrite usually
86 resulted from multiple stages of overgrowths. Thus, geochemical and sulfur isotope data derived
87 using bulk analysis represent a mixed-signal, from which no definite conclusion can be drawn. *In*
88 *situ* determination of trace element concentration, in combination with sulfur isotope analysis, has
89 been used more and more in the past few years, and the high spatial resolution of these techniques
90 provides a promising tool to reveal the complex overgrowth in single grains and to reveal the
91 detailed episodic gold deposition and remobilization history in gold deposits (Morey et al. 2008;
92 Cook et al. 2009; Velásquez et al. 2014; Gregory et al. 2019).

93 The Mesozoic Coastal Volcanic Belt in southeastern China is one of the most important mineral
94 provinces in China, hosting many epithermal gold deposits, with a total gold reserve of over 480 t,
95 including the world-class Zijinshan gold deposit (323 t Au, average grade: 0.5 g/t, Zhong et al. 2017;
96 White et al. 2019). This contribution reports on the mineralogical distribution of gold in the Qiucun
97 epithermal deposit in the Dehua goldfield of southeastern China (Fig. 1). There, gold occurs as both
98 visible gold and as Au-rich pyritic refractory ore. A fluid inclusion study by Ni et al. (2018)
99 suggested that mineralization took place at 180°–250 °C, and the ore fluid was dilute (<2.6 wt.%

100 NaCl equiv.), near-neutral, CO₂-bearing, and formed during boiling. Liu (2018) proposed that the
101 mineralizing fluid consisted of a mixture of magmatic and meteoric components based on stable
102 isotope data. Despite the many studies on the mine geology, fluid inclusions, and stable isotopes, the
103 mineralogy and mineral paragenesis of this deposit remains poorly understood.

104 Previous studies showed that the auriferous pyrite in the Dehua goldfield is commonly zoned
105 (Zhang et al. 2018) with regard to its chemical and S isotopic composition. Consequently, traditional
106 whole-grain analyses must be considered as “average compositions” of different zones. The situation
107 is even further complicated by minute mineral inclusions in the pyrite. In this study, we used *in-situ*
108 LA-ICP-MS trace element spot and map analyses to investigate the textural and crystallo-chemical
109 relationships between gold and the associated metals in the hosting pyrite. A link between multistage
110 pyrite formation and initial gold deposition is established, and the effect of pyrite deformation on the
111 remobilization of gold in the epithermal environment is described. Lastly, we conducted *in-situ*
112 LA-MC-ICP-MS sulfur isotope analysis of texturally complex pyrite to examine microscopic
113 variations of sulfur isotope compositions in the ore-forming processes. The results are used to track
114 the sulfur source and the changes in physico-chemical conditions during ore formation.

115

116 **GEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

117 **Regional geology**

118 The South China Block (SCB) resulted from the amalgamation of the Cathaysia and Yangtze
119 blocks during Neoproterozoic times (Fig. 1a; Wang and Li 2003). After two intraplate orogenies
120 during the Early Paleozoic and Early Mesozoic (Shu et al. 2015), a western Pacific continental
121 margin formed in the SCB in the Late Mesozoic, marking a change from Tethyan to Pacific
122 tectonism (Zhou et al. 2006). Since the Early Jurassic, the westward subduction of the paleo-Pacific
123 plate beneath the SCB has induced large-scale lithospheric extension and intensive magmatism,

124 which produced the Mesozoic Coastal Volcanic Belt in the southeastern margin of the SCB (Fig. 1b;
125 Zhou et al. 2006).

126 The Dehua goldfield represents a typical example of mineralization within the Coastal Volcanic
127 Belt (Fig. 1b; Ma et al. 2021a). Neoproterozoic metamorphic basement, Paleozoic to Triassic clastic
128 sedimentary rocks, and Jurassic continental clastic and volcanic rocks are the major rock types in the
129 area (Fig. 2a). The Jurassic strata of the Dehua area are subdivided, in ascending order, into the
130 Lishan Formation sandstone, the Changlin Formation sandstone, and the comparatively widespread
131 Nanyuan Formation (Fig. 2a). The latter is composed of Late Jurassic, 169–157 Ma dacitic to
132 rhyolitic tuff, rhyolite, and tuffaceous sandstone (Li et al. 2020). These volcano-sedimentary rocks
133 host the epithermal gold deposits (e.g., Dongyang, Qiucun, Ancun, Lingtouping, and Chunhu) in the
134 region (Fig. 2b).

135 The sedimentary units of the Dehua area were intruded by widespread Silurian and subordinate
136 Triassic and Jurassic to Cretaceous granitic magmas (Fig. 2a), which were generated by partial
137 melting of the Proterozoic basement rocks (Shu et al. 2015). The main geologic structures of the
138 Dehua goldfield include a series of NE-, NW-, and nearly N-S-striking faults (Fig. 2a). The NE- and
139 NW-striking faults of Mesozoic age are two sets of the most important structures, spatially
140 controlling the emplacement of Mesozoic granites and the distribution of gold deposits (Fig. 2a).

141 **Geology of the Qiucun gold deposit**

142 The Qiucun deposit is situated in the northern portion of the Dehua goldfield (Fig. 2a). It is hosted
143 mainly by sub-volcanic rocks of the Nanyuan Formation, subordinately by sandstone of the Changlin
144 Formation (Figs. 2b-c). The exposed intrusive rocks are mainly Silurian quartz diorite, Jurassic
145 rhyolite porphyry and diorite dikes (Figs. 2b-c). The major structures in the Qiucun area are
146 NW-striking normal and NE-striking reverse faults (Fig. 2b). The latter are represented by the
147 so-called F₁, F₂, F₃, F₇, F₁₁, F₁₂, and F₁₃, which are largely filled by in places auriferous quartz veins
148 and diorite dikes, striking 45°-60° and dipping 45°-89° to the southeast (Figs. 2b-c; Fan 2015). The

149 NW-striking normal faults are younger than the mineralization (locally referred to as the F₁₉, F₂₀, F₃₀₁;
150 [Fig. 2b](#)) and located in the northeastern and southeastern parts of the deposit.

151 The Qiucun gold deposit consists of 16 orebodies with a total proven reserve of 10 t Au in 2017
152 ([Huang et al. 2017](#)). The so-called Au₁₁ is the largest gold orebody, extending from 940 to 660 m in
153 elevation, dipping to the northwest at 70°, and varying in thickness from 0.6 to 34 m (average 4.0 m),
154 with a Au grade of 4.9 g/t and a strike length of about 310 m ([Fig. 2c](#)). Gold is present in economic
155 concentrations (3 to 30 g/t), largely confined to quartz veins and silicified hydrothermal breccias and
156 wall rocks. Wall rock alteration is pervasive and is best developed adjacent to the auriferous quartz
157 veins and breccias. The alteration assemblages consist mainly of quartz, sericite, chlorite, illite, and
158 carbonate, with minor disseminations of pyrite. Higher gold concentrations (locally reaching
159 bonanza grades of 300-500 g/t) predominate at depth, in a zone of postulated high fluid flow rate,
160 repeated hydraulic fracturing, and episodic boiling.

161

162 SAMPLING AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

163 Electron microprobe analysis

164 Eleven hand-specimen samples ([Supplementary Appendix Table A1](#)), representative of
165 mineralization stages I and II, were collected from underground at the 712-m, 742-m, and 802-m
166 levels. Polished thin sections containing sufficient amounts of sulfide minerals and their host rocks
167 were characterized by electron microprobe analysis (EMPA). The EMPA was performed using a
168 JEOL JXA-8230 superprobe housed at the Testing Center of the China Metallurgical Geological
169 Bureau, Shandong. Standards and unknowns were analyzed using a 5- μ m beam diameter, an
170 accelerating voltage of 20 kV, and a beam current of 20 nA. Calibration standards used were pyrite
171 for S and Fe, chalcopyrite for Cu, sphalerite for Zn, galena for Pb, and alloy or pure metal for As, Co,
172 Ni, Sb, Ag, and Au. The detection limits for each element were as follows: S (109 ppm), Fe (149
173 ppm), As (234 ppm), Co (80 ppm), Ni (93 ppm), Sb (361 ppm), Pb (438 ppm), Cu (227 ppm), Au

174 (818 ppm), Ag (272 ppm), and Zn (299 ppm). The data were reduced using the ZAF correction
175 method.

176 **In situ trace element analysis of pyrite**

177 Trace element concentrations of pyrite were conducted using LA-ICP-MS housed at the Nanjing
178 FocuMs Technology Co. Ltd., China. The analytical instrumentation employed in this study was a
179 Photon Machines Analyte G2 193-nm ArF excimer laser ablation system attached to an Agilent
180 7700x Quadrupole ICP-MS. The operating conditions and procedures applied to pyrite have been
181 detailed in [Gao et al. \(2015\)](#). Spot analyses were used for individual analyses of various chemical
182 zones as determined by EMPA. Spot ablation was carried out using a spot size of 40 μm at 3.5 J/cm^2
183 and a 6-Hz repetition rate. Each analysis consisted of a 20 s laser-off period to measure background
184 and a 35-s laser-on period for the analysis. USGS polymetallic sulfide pressed pellet MASS-1 and
185 synthetic basaltic glasses GSE-1G were used for calibration ([Wilson et al. 2002](#)). Standard blocks
186 were run after every ten unknown samples. Data reduction was performed offline using
187 ICPDATA CAL software ([Liu et al. 2008](#)), and the Fe content as determined by EMPA was used as
188 reference for the calculation of trace element concentrations.

189 **Element mapping of pyrite**

190 Quantitative element distribution maps of pyrite grains were generated by LA-ICP-MS in the In
191 Situ Mineral Geochemistry Lab at the Hefei University of Technology, China. Maps were acquired
192 using a Photon Machines Analyte HE 193-nm laser ablation microprobe coupled to an Agilent 7900
193 Quadrupole ICP-MS. The maps were collected by rastering the laser over the region of interest with
194 45 s of washout between individual lines. Maps were acquired using a beam diameter of 15 μm with
195 a laser repetition rate of 7 Hz and a scan velocity of 12 $\mu\text{m}/\text{s}$. The raw data were quantified and
196 compiled into maps using the LIMS software package ([Wang et al. 2017](#)), with synthetic NIST SRM
197 610 glass as an external reference material, and Fe as an internal reference, and BHVO-2G glass as
198 monitor for quality control ([Jochum et al. 2005](#); [Gourcerol et al. 2018](#); [Kerr et al. 2018](#); [Hastie et al.](#)

199 2020). Considering the differences in ablation between silicate glasses (NIST 610) and sulfides, it is
200 expected that fractionation limits the accuracy of the quantified data to ~20%
201 (Wohlge-muth-Ueberwasser and Jochum 2015).

202 **In situ sulfur isotope analysis**

203 Polished thin sections analyzed for LA-ICP-MS trace element spot analysis were repolished and
204 used for *in situ* sulfur isotope analysis. *In situ* S isotope analyses of pyrite were performed using a
205 Nu Plasma II MC-ICP-MS together with a Resonetics-S155 193-nm laser ablation system housed at
206 the GPMR, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan. The analytical methods and operating
207 procedures follow the protocols described by Zhu et al. (2016). The diameter of the laser beam was
208 33 μm with a repetition rate of 8 Hz and an energy fluency of 3 J/cm^2 . An in-house pyrite standard
209 named WS-1 ($\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{VCDT}} = 1.1\%$; Zhu et al. 2016) was used to correct the instrumental mass bias. The
210 analytical precision is about 0.1%.

211

212

RESULTS

213 **Mineralization stages and multiple generations of pyrite**

214 Three mineralization stages are recognized based on field and petrographic observations (Figs.
215 3-6). Low-grade Stage I takes the form of fine- to medium-grained gray quartz-chalcedony with
216 minor colloform and vuggy textures (Figs. 3a-c). This stage also includes intergrowth of euhedral or
217 subhedral pyrite. These veins were generally altered and overprinted by later hydrothermal fluids.
218 Stage II is marked by fine-grained white to colourless quartz, and abundant aggregates, massive, or
219 isolated crystals of sulfide minerals (Figs 3d-e). The ore minerals include pyrite, sphalerite,
220 chalcocopyrite, galena, and electrum. Calcite and lesser amounts of quartz characterize the Stage III
221 (Fig. 3f).

222 Pyrite is the predominant sulfide mineral in both Stage I and II veins. Petrographic observations
223 and BSE imaging revealed four generations of pyrite (Fig. 5). The dataset of major element

224 concentrations in pyrite is given in [Supplementary Appendix Table A2](#). Pyrite (Py₁) from Stage I
225 veins consists of two generations: inclusion-rich anhedral cores (Py_{1a}, [Figs. 5a-b](#)), which show
226 neither dissolution textures nor the presence of pores, followed by an inclusion-free outer part of a
227 rhythmic alternation of As-rich (As = 1.0-5.7wt. %) and As-poor zones (As = 0.61-0.91 wt. %) (Py_{1b},
228 [Fig. 5b](#)). Concentrations of As are relatively low (<0.45 wt.%), and all Au contents are below the
229 EMPA detection limit of 975 ppm. Mineral inclusions found in Py_{1a} and rare inclusions in Py_{1b} are
230 mainly quartz, rutile, apatite, sericite, chalcopyrite, and galena.

231 Two distinct generations of pyrite (Py_{2a} and Py_{2b}) are recognized in the Stage II veins. Py_{2a}, with
232 rare or no silicate inclusions, commonly occurs as subhedral to anhedral overgrowth with oscillatory
233 zoning around Py₁ ([Figs. 5d-e](#)). It is coarse- ([Figs. 5d-e](#)) to fine-grained ([Fig. 5f](#)) and its size ranges
234 from 10 μm to 1 mm. The oscillatory zoning is made up of rhythmically alternating thin bright bands
235 in BSE with high As (0.56-4.2 wt. %), and broader, darker bands with low As (bdl-0.40 wt.%) ([Figs.](#)
236 [5d-e](#)). Py_{2b} borders Py_{2a} ([Figs. 5g-i](#)) and is also present in microfractures of Py_{2a} ([Fig. 5g](#)). Py_{2b} is
237 characterized by abundant pores of varying sizes (1-30 μm in diameter), which exhibit no perceptible
238 preferred orientation. Py_{2b} has high concentrations of As (1.3-4.8 wt.%), causing a bright appearance
239 in BSE images. The As-Fe-S ternary diagram ([Fig. 7a](#)) and the As vs. S scatterplot of various pyrite
240 generations ([Fig. 7b](#)) suggests that As is bound to the structure of pyrite in substitution for sulfur as
241 Fe(As_xS_{1-x})₂, corresponding to the arsenian pyrite of the As⁻¹ type ([Simon et al. 1999](#)). This is
242 confirmed by the flat ⁷⁵As spectrum in-depth profiles shown in [Supplementary Appendix Figure A1](#),
243 which supports the notion of As being present as a solid solution.

244 **Trace element distribution in pyrite**

245 A total of 112 LA-ICP-MS spot analyses were performed on various generations of pyrite from
246 Qiucun. Representative time-resolved LA-ICP-MS spectra for each pyrite generation recorded
247 during analyses are shown in [Supplementary Appendix Figure A1](#). Analytical results of different
248 generations of pyrite are provided in [Table 1](#) with median and median absolute deviation values. The

249 full data sets are available in [Supplementary Appendix Table A3](#). The average detection limits
250 obtained in this study are 0.8 ppm Co, 0.6 ppm Ni, 0.4 ppm Cu, 2.2 ppm Zn, 4.2 ppm As, 0.06 ppm
251 Ag, 0.5 ppm Sb, 0.1 ppm Au, 0.05 ppm Bi, and 0.5 ppm Pb.

252 Py_{1a} contains higher Co (median 27 ppm) and Ni (26 ppm) compared to Py_{1b} . Other elevated trace
253 elements in Py_{1a} include Ag (median 12 ppm), Pb (149 ppm), and Cu (4 ppm). Notably, Py_{1a} has low
254 Au (bdl–2.5 ppm, median 0.28 ppm) and highly variable As (5.9–5649 ppm, median 323 ppm)
255 contents. In sharp contrast ([Fig. 10](#)), Py_{1b} has much higher contents of As (median 6828 ppm), but
256 other trace elements are generally very low compared to Py_{1a} (e.g., median 12 ppm Co, 11 ppm Ni,
257 65 ppm Pb). The maximum Au and Ag contents in Py_{1b} are 64 and 683 ppm, respectively.

258 The oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} consists of alternating As-rich and As-poor bands. The As-rich bands
259 contain about an order of magnitude more As (median 5265 ppm) than the As-poor bands (1490 ppm
260 As); similarly, Au (0.60–16 ppm) and Ag (3.1–1621 ppm) are at higher concentrations in these
261 As-rich bands with respect to the As-poor bands (Au = bdl–1.9 ppm, Ag = bdl–216 ppm).
262 Compared to Py_{2a} , Py_{2b} is enriched in Au (median 31 ppm) and As (13084 ppm). Note that the
263 highest Au value (138 ppm) corresponds to the highest As content of 21879 ppm.

264 **Trace element mapping of pyrite**

265 LA-ICP-MS mapping was performed on three representative pyrite grains: (i) a pyrite grain
266 representing Py_{1a} and Py_{1b} from Stage I ([Fig. 10](#)); (ii) a typical oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} grain from
267 Stage II ([Fig. 11](#)); and (iii) a selected area containing Py_{2a} and Py_{2b} from Stage II ([Fig. 12](#)).

268 [Figure 10](#) highlights two generations of a selected Py_1 grain: the porous and inclusion-rich core
269 (Py_{1a}) has elevated Co, Ni, Ag, Pb, and Sb, whereas the overgrowth (Py_{1b}) has relatively high
270 concentrations of Au and As compared to Py_{1a} . This map also confirms a positive correlation
271 between As and Cu in Py_{1b} . The element map of one selected Py_{2a} grain shows that the distributions
272 of Au, As, Ag, Sb, and Tl correlate with the regular and continuous oscillatory zoning pattern
273 displayed by the BSE image ([Fig. 11](#)). Zoning is sharply defined and is clearly visible as alternating

274 broad bands of color. The bright zones are enriched in Au, As, Ag, Sb, and Tl compared to the darker
275 bands, and these elements reach their highest concentrations in a fracture zone of the analyzed Py_{2a}
276 grain, which was corroded by later hydrothermal fluids. Cobalt and Ni display very weak zonation,
277 in which they are higher in the grain cores. [Figure 12](#) indicates two generations of a selected pyrite
278 grain from Stage II: the core (Py_{2a}) with apparent oscillatory zoning, whereas the thin outer rim (Py_{2b})
279 is enriched in Au, As, Ag, Sb, Tl, and Cu.

280 **In situ sulfur isotope data**

281 The *in situ* sulfur isotope compositions for the different pyrite generations are presented in
282 [Supplementary Appendix Table A4](#) and shown in [Figure 13](#). In Stage I, 13 analyses of Py_{1a} grains
283 yielded a relatively restricted $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ range of -2.1 to 2.1 ‰ with a mean value of -0.3 ‰, and 14
284 analyses of Py_{1b} grains gave a similar $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ range of -3.6 to 1.3 ‰ (mean = -0.4 ‰). For Stage II, the
285 $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values of Py_{2a} range from -3.2 to 4.6 ‰ (mean = 0.7 ‰, n = 39), which are significantly higher
286 than those of Py_{2b} with a range between -15.2 and -2.3‰ (mean = -7.3 ‰, n = 18).

287

288 **DISCUSSION**

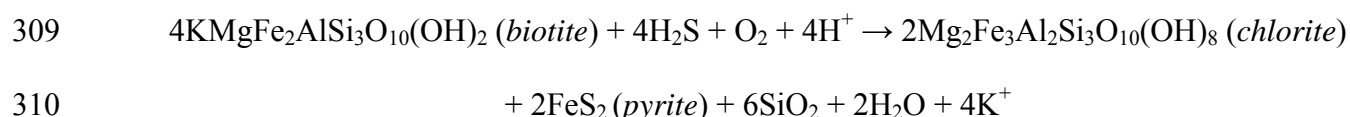
289 **Pyrite formation and primary gold precipitation**

290 **Py_{1a}:** Most Py₁ grains are composite grains with trace element-rich rims (Py_{1b}) and relatively trace
291 element-poor cores (Py_{1a}) as highlighted by trace element images determined by LA-ICP-MS ([Fig.](#)
292 [10](#)). Overall, Py_{1a} grains are enriched in Co and Ni and depleted in As and Au compared to Py_{1b} ([Fig.](#)
293 [8](#)). The solubility of Co and Ni as chloride complexes in hydrothermal fluids is strongly positively
294 correlated to temperature; for example, a decrease in temperature from 300° to 200°C would cause a
295 decrease in Co solubility by over two orders of magnitude ([Migdisov et al. 2011](#)). [Deditius et al.](#)
296 [\(2014\)](#) established an exponential relation of As content in pyrite with temperature as

297

$$C_{\text{As}} = 0.4785 \times e^{-0.0143T}$$

298 where C_{As} is As content in mole percent (mol%) and T is temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$). Based on this equation,
299 calculated concentrations of As increase from ~ 1000 ppm at 400°C to ~ 20000 ppm at 200°C .
300 Therefore, the variations in Co, Ni, and As may suggest that Py_{1a} grains at Qiucun crystallized at
301 higher temperatures than later pyrite generations. In addition, as shown in [Figure 10](#), the region with
302 high Co and Ni concentrations matches with the dark area (i.e., silicate inclusion-rich) on the BSE
303 image; the silicate inclusions may also account for the high Co and Ni contents in Py_{1a} . Biotite
304 phenocrysts in sub-volcanic host rocks at Qiucun were altered to chlorite and minor rutile. Py_{1a}
305 crystallized near or around the altered biotite ([Supplementary Appendix Fig. S2](#)), which contains
306 abundant rutile inclusions, indicating that this alteration preceded of Py_{1a} precipitation. Sulfur was
307 introduced via auriferous fluids, and that the chloritization of biotite provided the iron according to
308 the reaction:



311 Ti dissolved from biotite quickly precipitated as rutile in and around the altered biotite. Other
312 minerals that make up the alteration paragenesis of sub-volcanic rocks also occur as inclusions in
313 Py_{1a} , which also supports the hypothesis that Py_{1a} was formed via fluid-wall rock interaction. The
314 formation of open space during the replacement of biotite by pyrite can be explained by considering
315 the different densities of these minerals (biotite = 3.09 g/cm^3 ; pyrite = 5.01 g/cm^3). Assuming that all
316 Fe in pyrite is derived from biotite, the molar volume of the resulting pyrite will be significantly
317 lower than that of biotite. This process may also explain the presence of abundant silicate inclusions
318 in Py_{1a} .

319 **Gold in Py_{1a} :** Py_{1a} contains minor amounts of invisible gold (~ 2.5 ppm), which precipitated
320 contemporaneously to the very first pyrite generation in the vein stock and wall rock. Sulfur isotope
321 ratios ($\delta^{34}\text{S} = -2.1$ to 2.1 ‰) and the absence of sulfates and hematite suggest that H_2S was the
322 predominant sulfur species in the ore fluid during pyrite formation; therefore, AuHS_2^- is likely to

323 have been the major gold-transporting complex (Ohmoto 1972). As discussed earlier, Py_{1a} formed at
324 the expense of biotite. Thus, the destabilization of gold bisulfide complexes due to loss of H₂S from
325 the ore fluid during sulfidation of the wall rocks was the most likely mechanism for gold deposition
326 (Williams-Jones et al. 2009). The time-invariant trace of the spot analysis and the positive correlation
327 between As and Au indicate that Au and As are most likely contained as solid solution or as
328 nanoparticles in Py_{1a} rather than as inclusions of free gold (Fig. 7a; Reich et al. 2005; Gregory et al.
329 2016).

330 **Py_{1b} and Py_{2a}:** The rims of Py₁ (Py_{1b}) are significantly enriched in As, Au, and Cu compared to
331 their cores (Fig. 10). Py_{1b} has delicate banded textures related to elevated trace element
332 concentrations, and many of the Py_{1b} crystals appear to have overgrown irregular and corroded Py_{1a}
333 grains (Fig. 5b). Some of the Py_{1b} grains are truncated by grain boundaries (Fig. 5b) consistent with
334 the partial dissolution of pyrite (Cook et al. 2009). After Py₁ formation, oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a},
335 accompanied by a few quartz, precipitated during Stage II (Figs. 5c-f). Oscillatory zoning, a common
336 feature in auriferous pyrite, has been documented in many gold deposits (e.g., Peterson and
337 Mavrogenes 2014). Periodic and repetitive changes in pressure (P), temperature (T), and bulk fluid
338 composition have been invoked to explain this zoning (Velásquez et al. 2014). Episodic fluctuations
339 in fluid compositions from multiple hydrothermal events generally lead to several stages of pyrite
340 precipitation with distinct sulfur isotope compositions, irregular boundaries, and corrosion textures
341 between alternating bands (Barker et al. 2009). None of these features has been observed in the Py_{2a},
342 ruling out a multi-stage pyrite crystallization model. Instead, episodic changes of physico-chemical
343 parameters (e.g., P-T-pH) during the boiling of the ore fluids are invoked.

344 Previous studies suggested that zoning in pyrite reflected rapid variations in the As content of ore
345 fluids through time (Deditius et al. 2014; Velásquez et al. 2014). Ballantyne and Moore (1988)
346 proposed that the As concentration of hydrothermal fluids is inversely proportional to the partial
347 pressure of H₂S in geothermal systems and their fossil analogs, the epithermal deposits. The Qiucun

348 hydrothermal system was relatively shallow, and repeated boiling is manifested in hydrothermal
349 breccias and hydraulic fracturing, and in the features of auriferous veins (colloform banded and
350 vuggy quartz veins and bladed calcite crystals) and fluid inclusions (Ni et al. 2018). In such a system,
351 rapid fluctuations in pressure, from hydrostatic to lithostatic, could have been caused by fracturing
352 and resealing of fluid conduits. These variations, and the accompanying boiling, could also
353 contribute to the rapid changes in pH and variations and the activity of sulfur, thus in the solubility of
354 As in the ore fluid (e.g., Kouzmanov and Pokrovski 2012). Moreover, the removal of volatiles (H₂S
355 and CO₂) into vapor tends to increase the pH of the solution, which decreases the solubility of
356 sulfides. Therefore, the cyclicity of pyrite banding reflects repeated and sudden variations in fluid
357 pressure and transient fluid flow regimes.

358 **Gold in Py_{1b} and Py_{2a}:** Rims of Py₁ and the oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} all contain invisible gold, as is
359 the case for Py₁ cores. However, the As-rich bands in Py_{1b} and oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} have about one
360 to two magnitudes more Au than the Py_{1a}, whereas the As-poor bands contain less Au than Py_{1a}. This
361 relationship is also well-revealed by LA-ICP-MS images, an apparent Au enrichment coinciding
362 with As-rich bands in these pyrite generations (Figs. 11-12). There is also a positive correlation
363 between As and Au (Fig. 9a), which is consistent with the preferential precipitation of gold in
364 As-rich layers (e.g., Deditius et al. 2014). It is generally accepted that As-rich sulfides play an
365 important role in scavenging gold (Simon et al. 1999). Fluid boiling at moderate temperatures as
366 documented for Qiucun (<250°C; Ni et al. 2018) is a very efficient way of precipitating most
367 minerals from the liquid phase (Heinrich 2007). Arsenic, Au, Fe, and most other metallic elements
368 exhibit vapor-liquid partitioning coefficients mainly in favor of the liquid phase at temperatures
369 below 300°C (Kouzmanov and Pokrovski 2012), and thus precipitate from the liquid phase if the
370 extent of phase separation is high enough to remove a sufficient part of H₂O into the vapor and thus
371 oversaturate the liquid with arsenian pyrite and native gold.

372 **Secondary gold enrichment**

373 **Formation of gold- and trace element-rich Py_{2b}**

374 Coupled dissolution-precipitation (CDR) reactions have proven significant for the remobilization
375 and upgrading of sulfide-hosted gold ores in various types of gold deposits ([Sung et al. 2009](#); [Hasite
376 et al. 2020](#)). Later hydrothermal fluids dissolve parts of the parent mineral in the CDR processes and
377 precipitate a compositionally different daughter phase at nanometer scale. The resulting product is
378 characterized by high porosity and preserving the external shape and crystallographic orientation of
379 the replaced grain ([Putnis 2009](#)). Textural observations suggest that porous Py_{2b} occurs preferentially
380 along microfractures and grain margins of Py_{2a} ([Figs. 5g-i](#)). The reaction front is sharp and
381 curvilinear ([Fig. 5h](#)), which is strong evidence of CDR reactions ([Putnis 2009](#)). These textures
382 suggest a fluid dissolved earlier Py_{2a}, which was then re-precipitated as Py_{2b}. Preservation of the
383 external morphology of parent Py_{2a} ([Figs. 5g-i](#)) indicates some degree of a spatial and temporal
384 coupling between the dissolution and re-precipitation ([Wu et al. 2019](#)).

385 The *in situ* LA-ICP-MS analyses in the spot- and mapping-modes highlight systematic trace
386 element variations between different pyrite generations in Stage II veins ([Figs. 8-9, 12](#)). During the
387 replacement of Py_{2a} by porous Py_{2b}, elements concentrated in Py_{2b} relative to Py_{2a} (Au, As, Ag, Sb,
388 Pb, Tl, and Cu) might be sourced from infiltrating fluids or from sulfides hosted in sub-micron
389 inclusions (e.g., electrum, galena, chalcopyrite, and arsenopyrite) formed during remobilization from
390 earlier pyrite generations. The peaks of ⁶⁵Cu, ¹²¹Sb, ¹⁹⁷Ag, and ²⁰⁸Pb in LA-ICP-MS laser profiles
391 ([Gregory et al. 2016](#); [Supplementary Appendix Fig. A1F](#)) support the existence of such
392 sub-microscopic sulfide inclusions in Py_{2b}. The presence of Au, Cu, Pb, Ag, and Sb-bearing minerals
393 in later alteration pyrite-arsenopyrite assemblages formed through trace element remobilization and
394 secondary enrichment during CDR reactions has also been documented in many other gold deposits
395 (e.g., [Sung et al. 2009](#); [Hastie et al. 2020](#)).

396 **Visible gold in pyrite ores**

397 Cycles of hydrothermal infiltration during ore deposit formation can alter pre-existing ore minerals
398 and remobilize gold, among other chemical constituents (e.g., [Morey et al. 2008](#); [Cook et al. 2013](#)).
399 For example, visible gold concentrated around the grain boundaries and fractures of pyrite and
400 arsenopyrite is very common in orogenic gold deposits worldwide. It has been interpreted to form via
401 the hydrothermal alteration of pre-existing auriferous sulfides during an increase in temperature and
402 sulfur fugacity during prograde metamorphism ([Morey et al. 2008](#); [Lawley et al. 2017](#)). For example,
403 at Sunrise Dam, Australia, textural evidence exists that is consistent with the replacement of arsenian
404 pyrite, whereby remobilized gold was deposited as native gold inclusions oriented parallel to crystal
405 faces or in fractures, inferring the partial replacement of parent arsenian pyrite via fluid-mediated
406 CDR reactions ([Sung et al. 2009](#)). Furthermore, oscillatory- and sector-zoned pyrite from Jerome and
407 Kenty deposits in Canada records textures, such as porosity development coincident with the
408 presence of native gold and accessory sulfide phases, which are suggestive of CDR reactions that
409 liberated gold and associated elements from earlier auriferous pyrite ([Hastie et al. 2020](#)).

410 At Qiucun, visible electrum grains occur as inclusions within all pyrite generations, as solitary
411 grains or veins in fractures at grain boundaries in pyrite ([Fig. 6](#)). The visible gold-bearing pyrite
412 grains ([Fig. 6](#)) are pervasively fractured, have irregular grain boundaries, and BSE images reveal that
413 these pyrite grains have intra-granular compositional zones that are possibly related to a dynamic
414 alteration history. Parallel to the fractures and boundaries, or intra-grain narrow composite rims
415 within the auriferous pyrite are characterized by a higher than average atomic mass ([Fig. 6](#)). These
416 rims vary in their dimensions but are, in general, up to 300 μm in thickness from grain boundaries
417 and fracture margins. As shown in [Figures 6a-c](#), the rims are porous and define zones in which
418 selective chemical modification of the preexisting pyrite parallel to fracture-grain boundaries has
419 taken place. This grain boundary-fracture association indicates an external (i.e., post-formation)
420 influence. Due to the lack of other mineral phases containing As and S, the infiltration of a later
421 hydrothermal fluid is considered responsible. This fluid would have infiltrated along grain

422 boundaries, possibly promoting fracturing and facilitating the reaction process. The resulting pyrite
423 rims are thus thought to be alteration rims.

424 The precipitation of invisible gold, followed by the later formation of visible gold, is schematically
425 illustrated in [Figure 14](#). Given that primary pyrite grains are characterized by relatively uniform
426 invisible gold within single generations and that alteration rims (which replaced primary growth
427 phases) are depleted in invisible gold, it is suggested that early refractory gold exsolved and was then
428 remobilized locally to form at least part of the later visible gold. The formation of visible gold by
429 hydrothermal alteration of refractory gold-bearing pyrite may provide new insights into the
430 formation of high-grade gold ores in epithermal deposits, although the direct introduction of gold by
431 later auriferous fluids cannot be ruled out. It is suggested here that fluids reacted with fractured
432 auriferous pyrite, causing CDR reactions, during repeated, episodic brittle deformation events.
433 Invisible gold, together with some of the low-melting-point elements (e.g., Cu, Pb, and Sb) were
434 dissolved and re-precipitated as visible gold, galena, and chalcopyrite, within the same pyrite grain
435 as inclusions, as well as in fractures within pyrite ([Fig. 14](#)).

436 **Sulfur isotopic fingerprint of ore-forming processes**

437 Early pyrite generations (Py_{1-2a}) from the auriferous veins at Qiucun yielded a narrow range of
438 $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{py}}$ of -3.6 to 4.6 ‰ with an average of 0.3 ‰, independent of pyrite generation ([Figs. 13a-b](#)). The
439 temperature of the ore fluid at Qiucun is thought to be within the range of 180° to 250°C based on
440 microthermometry of fluid inclusions in the quartz from vein-type ores ([Ni et al. 2018](#)). Assuming a
441 temperature of 250°C, the corresponding range and mean $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{H}_2\text{S}}$ values are -5.1 to 3.1 ‰ and
442 -1.2 ‰, respectively. The $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values reported here are also very close to those in nearby
443 magmatic-hydrothermal deposits (e.g., the Ancun, Xiaban, Dongyang Au deposits), which are
444 generally in the range of -4 to 2 ‰ ([Li et al. 2018a, b](#)). This demonstrates that most of the gold
445 deposits in the Dehua goldfield had a similar magmatic sulfur source. The Co and Ni contents
446 reported here for pyrite from the Qiucun deposit are similar to those in epithermal Au-Ag

447 hydrothermal systems (Fig. 9i). The dominant range of Co/Ni ratios between 0.5 and 10 is consistent
448 with pyrite of a magmatic-hydrothermal origin (Reich et al. 2016).

449 There is a very slight variation of $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values (-1.5 to 1.3‰) in a single oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a}
450 grain (Fig. 5e), illustrating a systematic decoupling from the trace element distribution, which was
451 controlled by pressure fluctuations and repeated localized fluid boiling as discussed earlier. Previous
452 studies have suggested that $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios of sulfide minerals are strongly influenced by oxygen fugacity
453 ($f\text{O}_2$), pH, temperature, and the composition of the parental fluid, but the pressure effect is limited
454 (e.g., Ohmoto 1972; Seal 2006; Li et al. 2018). Therefore, the localized pressure fluctuations and
455 subsequent fluid boiling were not enough to generate sulfur isotope fractionation in oscillatory-zoned
456 pyrite grains. However, the *in situ* $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios for the Py_2 rims (Py_{2b} : -15.2 to -2.3‰) are distinctly
457 lighter than the cores in all the analyzed samples: the average Py_{2b} is 8.0‰ lighter than the Py_{2a} . The
458 negative $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values in Py_{2b} either reflect a sulfur source contribution of negative $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ from the
459 sedimentary host rocks or isotopic fractionation due to change of temperature and oxygen fugacity
460 along with the evolution of the ore fluids. Because no significant amounts of negative $\delta^{34}\text{S}$
461 sedimentary rocks has been found in any lithological unit in the Dehua gold field, we consider
462 changes in the physicochemical conditions (e.g., temperature, pH, and $f\text{O}_2$; Ohmoto 1972; Ma et al.
463 2021b) during pyrite precipitation was a likely explanation for the negative $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values of Py_{2b} .
464 During main-stage pyrite mineralization, a shift from sericite to illite alteration (Ni et al. 2018)
465 reflects cooling of the ore fluid. Pyrite is estimated to be 1.5 ‰ heavier than H_2S in the hydrothermal
466 fluid at 250°C, whereas the pyrite- H_2S fractionation is about 1.9 ‰ at 180°C (Ohmoto and Rye
467 1979). Cooling of the ore fluid by 70°C could cause a ~0.4 ‰ increase in pyrite $\delta^{34}\text{S}$, and therefore,
468 temperature decrease alone cannot explain the observed decrease in $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios in Py_{2b} . The pH of
469 Stage II vein formation had a narrow range of 5.6 to 6.7, based on observation that the mineralization
470 was associated with sericite-illite alteration and the occurrence as a gangue mineral (Ni et al., 2018).
471 Thus, the pH value should not significantly affect the sulfur isotopic composition either.

472 More significant changes in $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios can result from changes in the proportions of oxidized and
473 reduced sulfur species in the ore fluid (e.g., [Ohmoto 1972](#)). Fluid oxidation has been commonly
474 suggested to cause negative $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios in sulfides and rapid gold deposition in hydrothermal ore
475 deposits ([LaFlamme et al. 2018](#)). Fractionation of heavy ^{34}S into the oxidized sulfur species would
476 cause ^{34}S -depleted H_2S in the residual hydrothermal fluid. Consequently, pyrite deposited from the
477 fluid after oxidation would be characterized by much lower $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ratios relative to pyrite precipitated
478 before oxidation ([Ohmoto 1972](#)). At the shallow crustal levels recorded at Qiucun (~ 260 m; [Ni et al.](#)
479 [2018](#)), it is suggested that, during the later mineralization stage, cooler and oxidized meteoric water
480 was increasingly involved in the precipitation of the last generation of pyrite ($\text{Py}_{2\text{b}}$), leading to the
481 further oxidation of the mineralizing fluids and consequently lowering of $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ ([Fig. 13](#)).

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483

IMPLICATIONS

484 In this contribution, two main types of Au mineralization are recognized at Qiucun, with distinct
485 mechanisms: (i) Primary precipitation of invisible gold within unaltered pyrite domains ($\text{Py}_{1\text{a}}$, $\text{Py}_{1\text{b}}$,
486 and $\text{Py}_{2\text{a}}$). We relate the textural and geochemical features of these pyrites to their depositional
487 mechanisms: $\text{Py}_{1\text{a}}$ with low concentrations of As and Au is contemporary with the early
488 hydrothermal alteration of biotite in the host rock and commonly occurs as cores of pyrite. The $\text{Py}_{1\text{b}}$
489 and $\text{Py}_{2\text{a}}$ with characteristics oscillatory zoning of As and Au formed at Stages I-II. This oscillatory
490 zoning is interpreted to have resulted from pressure fluctuation and repeated fluid boiling around the
491 pyrite crystals. Invisible gold is present throughout these pyrite crystals but is more abundant in the
492 As-rich bands; (ii) Secondary enrichment of visible and invisible gold (hosted by $\text{Py}_{2\text{b}}$) associated
493 with later-stage alteration events produced chemically modified alteration rims on the auriferous
494 pyrite. Results of LA-ICP-MS analyses suggest that Au and other trace elements (As, Ag, Sb, Pb, Tl,
495 and Cu) that had been initially incorporated in $\text{Py}_{2\text{a}}$ were partly expelled and remobilized during
496 replacement of porous and trace element (including Au)-rich $\text{Py}_{2\text{b}}$. The very low $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values recorded

497 by Py_{2b} suggest the partial dissolution of Py_{2a} and re-precipitation of Py_{2b} under increasing oxygen
498 fugacity. An additional consequence of the reactivation process is the fracturing of the previously
499 formed auriferous pyrite that continued through later brittle deformation events, which led to more
500 fracturing of pyrite. This newly created porosity of pyrite facilitated further fluid flow along the
501 margins of fractures and grain boundaries within pyrite, including hydrothermal alteration of pyrite
502 and dissolution of invisible gold, which re-precipitated as small inclusions and in fractures as larger
503 veins. This study highlights that the textural, geochemical, and sulfur isotopic compositions of pyrite
504 can provide critical information not only for the physicochemical conditions of the initial gold
505 deposition but also for the secondary invisible and visible gold enrichment processes in Au deposits.

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684 **Figure Captions**

- 685
- 686 **Fig. 1.** (a) Simplified map of the tectonic units of eastern China (Wu et al. 2005); (b) Geologic map
687 of the Coastal Volcanic Belt in southeastern China showing major faults, Late Mesozoic igneous
688 rocks, and epithermal gold deposits (modified from Zhong et al. 2017).
- 689

690 **Fig. 2.** (a) Regional geologic map of the Dehua area showing the distribution of the gold deposits
691 (modified from Jiang 2015); Geologic map (b) and representative cross-section (c) of the Qiucun
692 deposit, showing distribution and morphology of the gold orebodies (after Huang et al. 2017).

693
694 **Fig. 3.** Photographs illustrating textures of gold ores of the Qiucun gold deposit. (a) Quartz veins
695 crosscutting the disseminated pyrite ores. (b) Smoky-gray quartz-chalcedony-pyrite vein of Stage I
696 within the volcanic rocks of the Nanyuan Formation. (c) Stage I veins showing the
697 quartz-chalcedony-pyrite-cemented breccias of wall rocks. (d) Stage III quartz-sulfides veins
698 crosscutting the sandstone of the Changlin Formation. (e) Quartz-sulfides cementing and cutting wall
699 rocks breccias. (f) Stage III quartz-calcite vein with pyrite as anhedral aggregates near the vein
700 margin. **Abbreviations:** Cal-calcite, Py-pyrite, Qz-quartz.

701
702 **Fig. 4.** Paragenetic sequence of Qiucun gold mineralization interpreted from textures and pyrite
703 geochemistry; Line thickness indicates approximate relative mineral abundance. **Abbreviation:**
704 Py-pyrite.

705
706 **Fig. 5.** Backscattered-electron (BSE) images showing textural features and relationships of different
707 generations of pyrite at Qiucun, also shown are the spots of in-situ $\delta^{34}\text{S}_{\text{V-CDT}}$ (‰) isotope
708 composition of pyrite: : (a) Py_{1a} with abundant silicate inclusions; (b) Py_{1b} overgrowths on Py_{1a} ; (c)
709 Early generation of sulfides, including Py_{1a} and Py_{1b} , are overgrown by oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} and
710 the outer rim of As-rich Py_{2b} bands. Note that electrum in fracture of pyrite accompanied by quartz;
711 (d) Porous and inclusion-rich Py_1 is overgrown by oscillatory-zoned Py_{2a} , note that electrum filling
712 the microfracture of the Py_{2a} ; (e) Py_{2a} with characteristic zoning; (f) Cluster of euhedral fine-grained
713 Py_{2a} grains; (g-i) Inclusion-free, zoned Py_{2a} is surrounded by porous and As-rich Py_{2b} . Note that
714 sharp and curvilinear interfaces among them. **Abbreviations:** Elc-electrum, Py-pyrite.

715

716 **Fig. 6.** Collection of backscattered-electron images defining the characteristics of alteration zones
717 within visible gold-bearing pyrite in the Qiucun gold deposit. (a) A pyrite grain from the Stage I vein
718 showing the association later-stage between alteration rims and visible gold. (b) Anhedronal Py_{2a} grains
719 showing advanced stages of post-formation alteration rim around the grain boundary. Visible
720 electrum grains occur as inclusions in alteration rims, in fractures within them, or along grain
721 boundaries. (c) Pyrite from the Stage II veins, showing intergrain rims and the association between
722 alteration rims and visible gold. (d) Electrum filling the fractures of the altered Py_{2a} grains.

723 **Abbreviations:** Elc-electrum, Gn-galena, Py-pyrite, Qz-quartz

724

725 **Fig. 7.** (a) Ternary diagram showing the As-Fe-S composition of pyrite; Only EPMA data were
726 considered. Five different trends show substitution of (i) As for S (As^{-1} pyrite); (ii) As^0
727 nano-inclusions; (iii) As^{2+} for Fe (As^{2+} pyrite); (iv) As^{3+} for Fe (As^{3+} pyrite); and divalent metals
728 (Me^{2+}) substituting isovalently for Fe (after [Deditius et al. 2008, 2014](#)). (b) A plot of As vs. S
729 concentrations for the pyrite, showing a good linear inverse correlation between these elements.

730

731 **Fig. 8.** Trace element distribution diagram showing the variation in the Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, As, Ag, Sb,
732 Au, Pb, and Bi concentrations (in ppm) for all pyrite generations; Concentrations are in logarithmic
733 scale.

734

735 **Fig. 9.** Elemental concentration scatterplots for different generations of pyrite from the Qiucun
736 deposit. (a) Au vs. As: almost all the pyrite generations show a positive relationship with Au-As. All
737 the data spots are below the gold solubility line in pyrite ([Reich et al. 2005](#)); (b) Au vs. Ag; (c) Au vs.
738 Cu; (d) Ag vs. Sb; (e) Ag vs. Cu; (f) Ag vs. Pb; (g) Tl vs. Sb; (h) Cu vs. Pb; (i) Co vs. Ni.

739

740 **Fig. 10.** LA-ICP-MS element maps with logarithmic color scales (in ppm) showing contents and
741 distribution patterns of trace elements of a representative pyrite grain from Stage I. Numbers on BSE
742 image represent wt. % As.

743

744 **Fig. 11.** Elemental maps generated with LA-ICP-MS which show the distributions of selected trace
745 elements in an oscillatory zoned Py_{2a} crystal from the Qiucun deposit.

746

747 **Fig. 12.** Elemental maps generated with LA-ICP-MS which show the distributions of selected trace
748 elements in Py₂ aggregate in Stage II vein from the Qiucun deposit.

749

750 **Fig. 13.** Histograms showing the distribution of $\delta^{34}\text{S}$ values of different generations of pyrite in Stage
751 I (a) and Stage II (b). (c) Log $f\text{O}_2$ -pH diagram showing stability relationships in the Fe-O-S system
752 and alteration assemblages for gold mineralization in the Qiucun deposit at 250°C. The diagrams
753 show the predominance boundaries of aqueous sulfur species (pink dashed), mineral stability in the
754 Fe-O-S system (red solid), alteration equilibria (gray solid), and calcite dissolution (black dashed).
755 The sulfur isotope counters are indicated by blue lines (after [Ohmoto 1972](#); [Zhai et al. 2020](#)).

756

757 **Fig. 14.** A cartoon illustrating a model for pyrite formation and gold re-enrichment at Qiucun. See
758 text for explanations.

759

760

Table Caption

761 **Table 1**

762 Statistic values of LA-ICP-MS analyses of each pyrite generation from the Qiucun gold deposit.

763

764

784 **Table 1**

785 Statistic values of LA-ICP-MS analyses of each pyrite generation from the Qiucun gold deposit.

Pyrite generations	Statistical Parameters	Au	Co	Ni	Cu	Zn	As	Se	Ag	Sb	Te	Hg	Tl	Bi	Pb
Py _{1a} <i>n</i> = 32	Min	bdl	bdl	0.81	bdl	bdl	5.9	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl
	Max	2.5	590	368	1088	527	5649	8.0	197	293	11	0.96	3.2	31	3969
	Med	0.28	27	26	40	1.5	343	2.3	12	7.0	0.4	0.00	0.04	0.29	149
	MAD	0.22	26	24	39	1.4	323	1.2	10	6.4	0.4	0.00	0.04	0.28	148
Py _{1b} <i>n</i> = 25	Min	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	1112	bdl	0.67	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	0.59
	Max	64	212	151	1052	261	32787	9.5	483	7915	5.5	23	620	18	2137
	Med	1.4	12	11	48	1.1	6828	2.4	16	26	0.2	0.07	0.33	0.02	65
	MAD	1.4	11	9.8	42	0.65	5272	1.5	11	24	0.2	0.07	0.32	0.02	57
Py _{2a} <i>n</i> = 36	Min	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	109	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl
	Max	16	73	107	1362	66	17469	12	1621	4771	45	96	504	2.4	4733
	Med	1.7	4.6	18	42	0.92	3123	1.0	25	77	0.3	0.07	0.89	0.03	66
	MAD	1.5	4.6	18	41	0.67	1890	1.0	22	68	0.3	0.07	0.88	0.02	57
Py _{2b} <i>n</i> = 19	Min	1.5	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	5851	bdl	6.8	7.7	bdl	bdl	bdl	bdl	5.2
	Max	138	106	55	579	20	21879	7.1	1626	2176	5.5	3.4	188	0.41	389
	Med	31	3.2	3.4	276	1.3	13084	3.1	40	68	0.2	0.03	0.30	0.01	63
	MAD	29	3.2	3.3	182	1.1	2941	0.71	29	39	0.2	0.03	0.22	0.01	36

786 All data are presented in ppm.

787 Abbreviations: bdl = below detection limit, Min = minimum value, Max = maximum value, Min = minimum value, MAD = median absolute
 788 deviation, *n* = number of analysis.

789

Fig. 1.

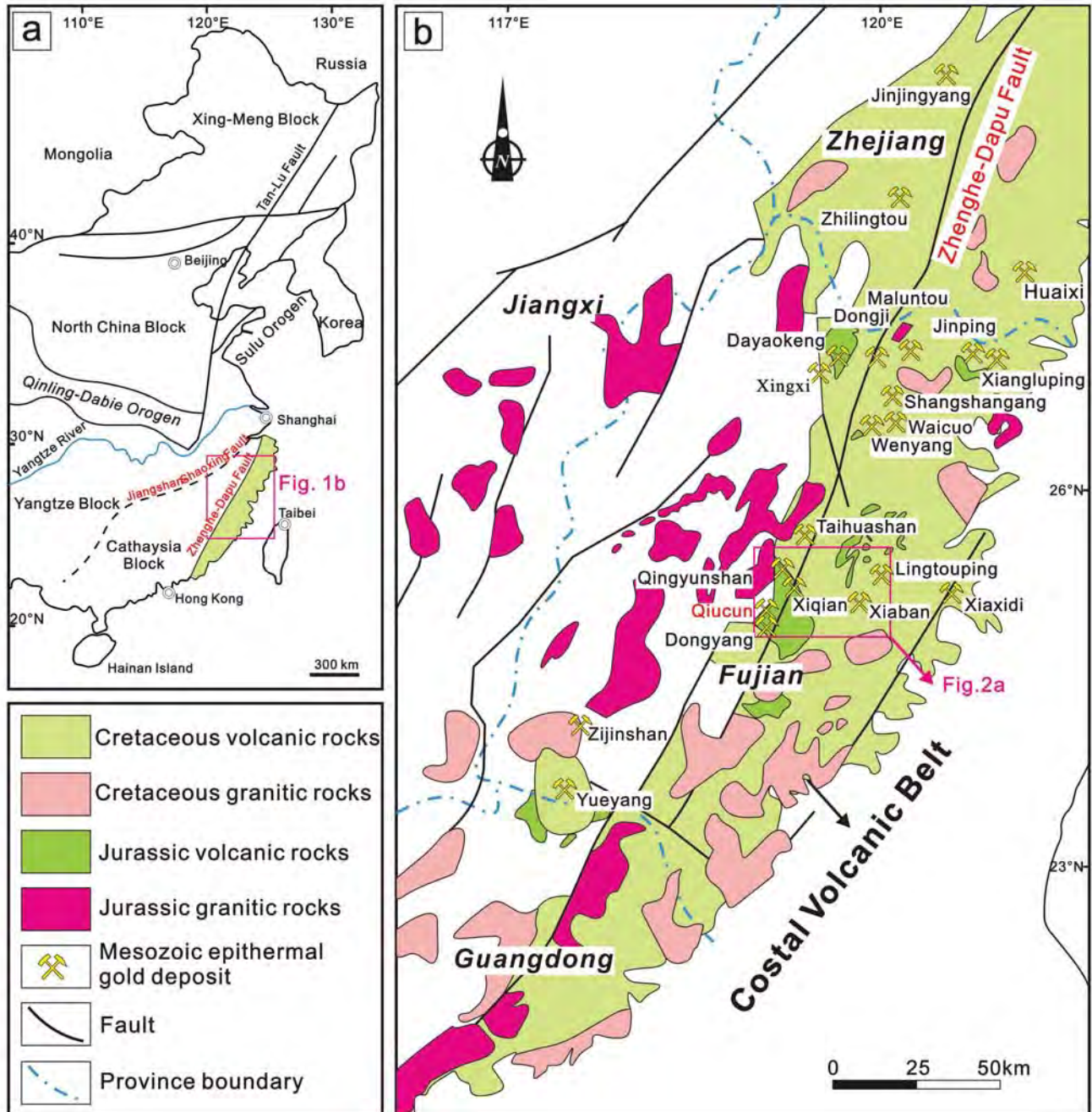


Fig. 2.

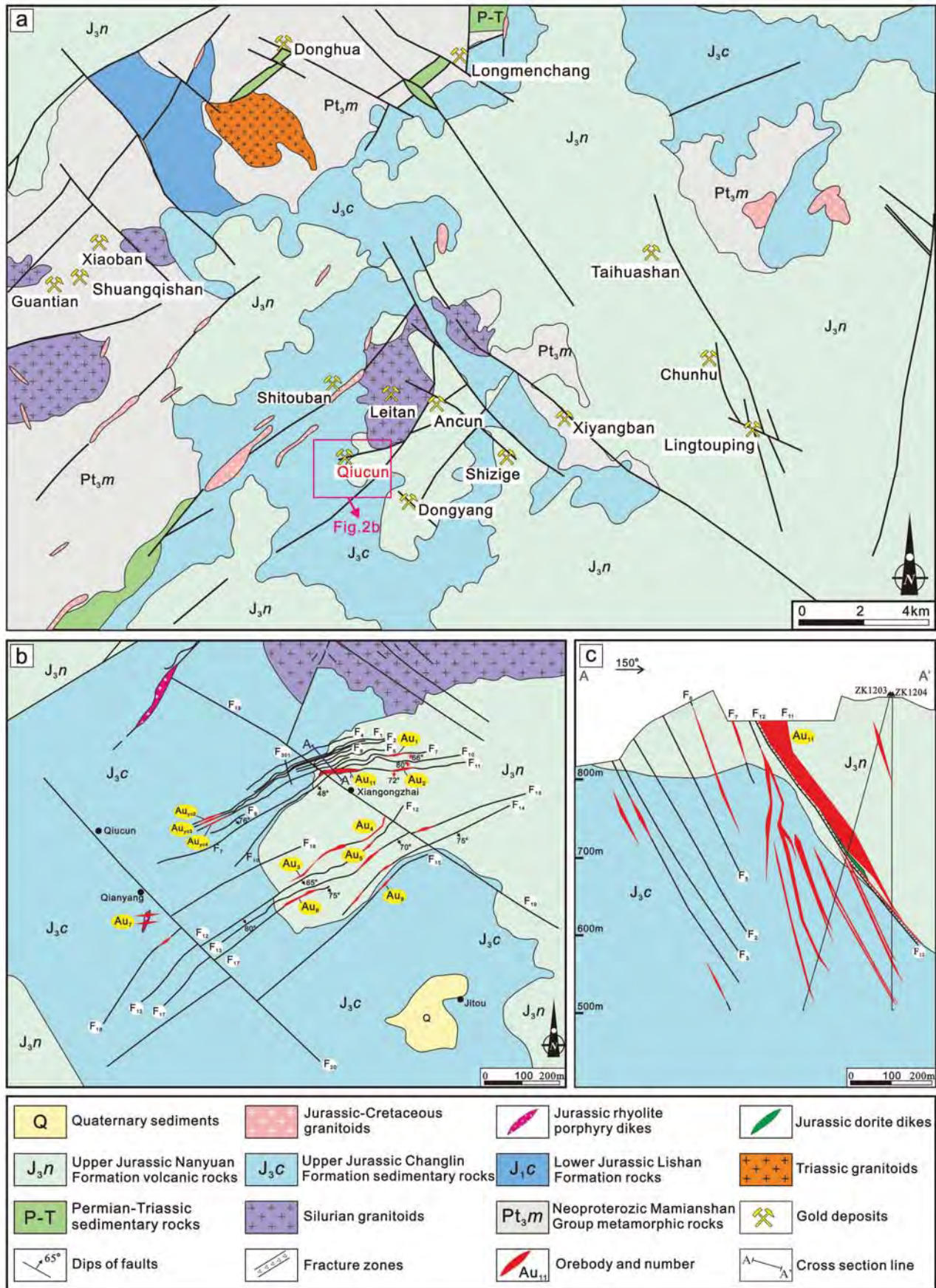


Fig. 3.

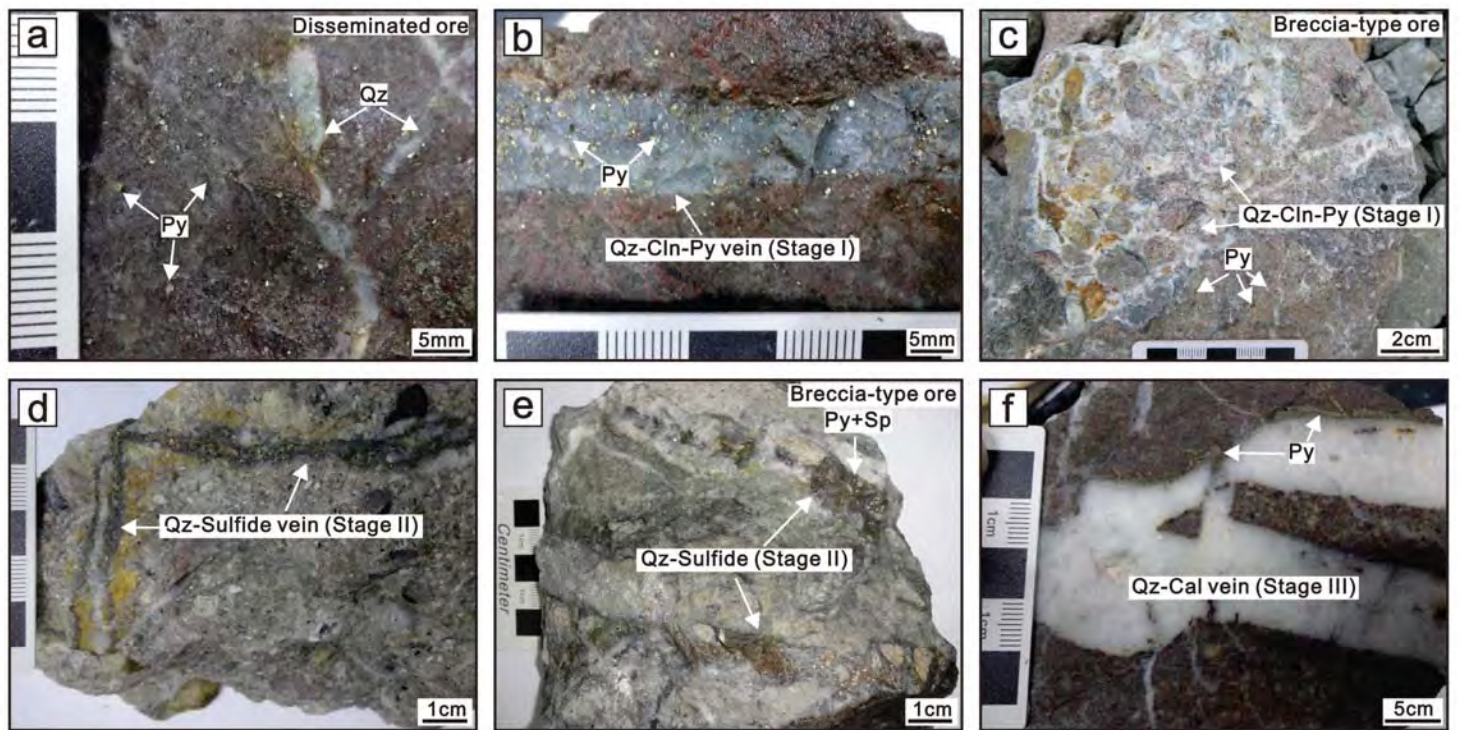


Fig. 4.

	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III
Minerals			
Quartz	██████████	██████████	██████████
Chalcedony	██████████	.....
Sericite	██████████	██████████	
Chlorite	██████████		
Epidote	.....	
Illite		██████████	
Calcite		.....	██████████
Pyrite	Py _{1a} Py _{1b} ██████████	Py _{2a} Py _{2b} ██████████	.....
Electrum	.....	.....
Galena	.....	.....
Chalcopyrite	.....	.....
Sphalerite		.....
Alterations			
Propylitic	██████████		
Phyllic	██████████	██████████	
Silicification	██████████	██████████	
Carbonation			██████████

abundant
 common
 minor

Fig. 5.

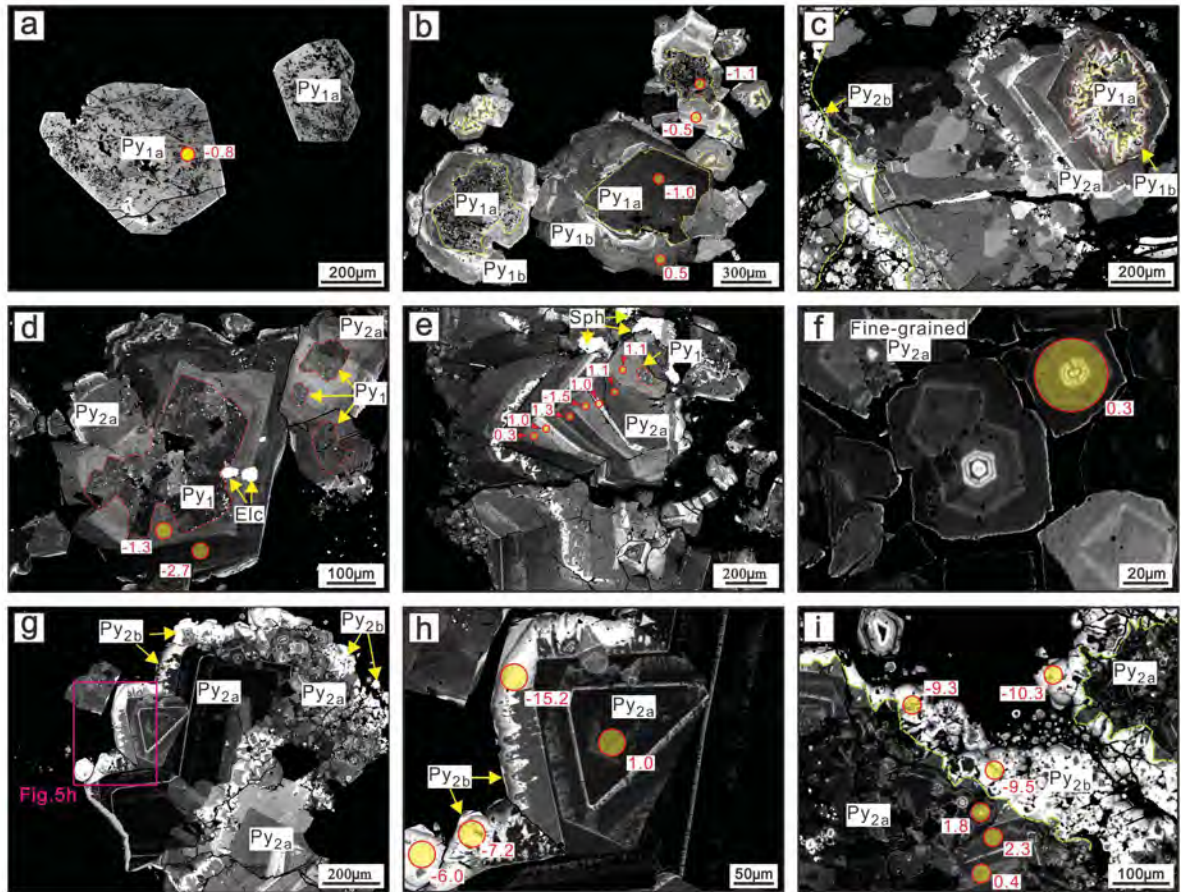


Fig. 6.

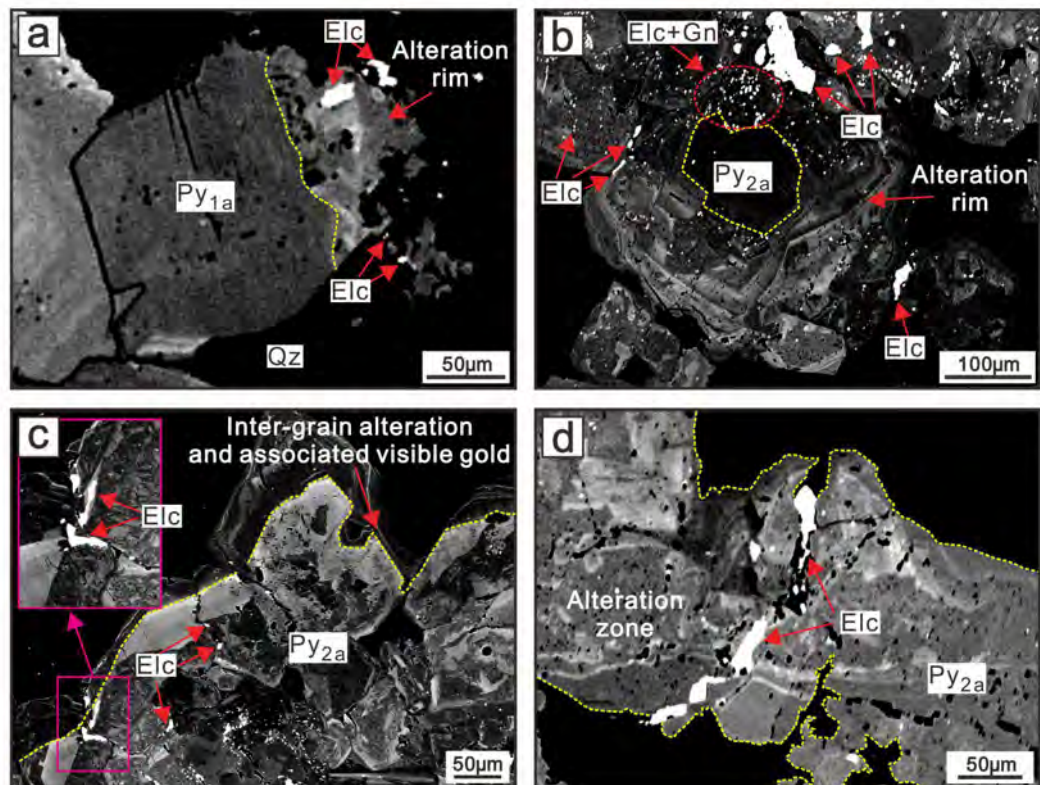


Fig. 7.

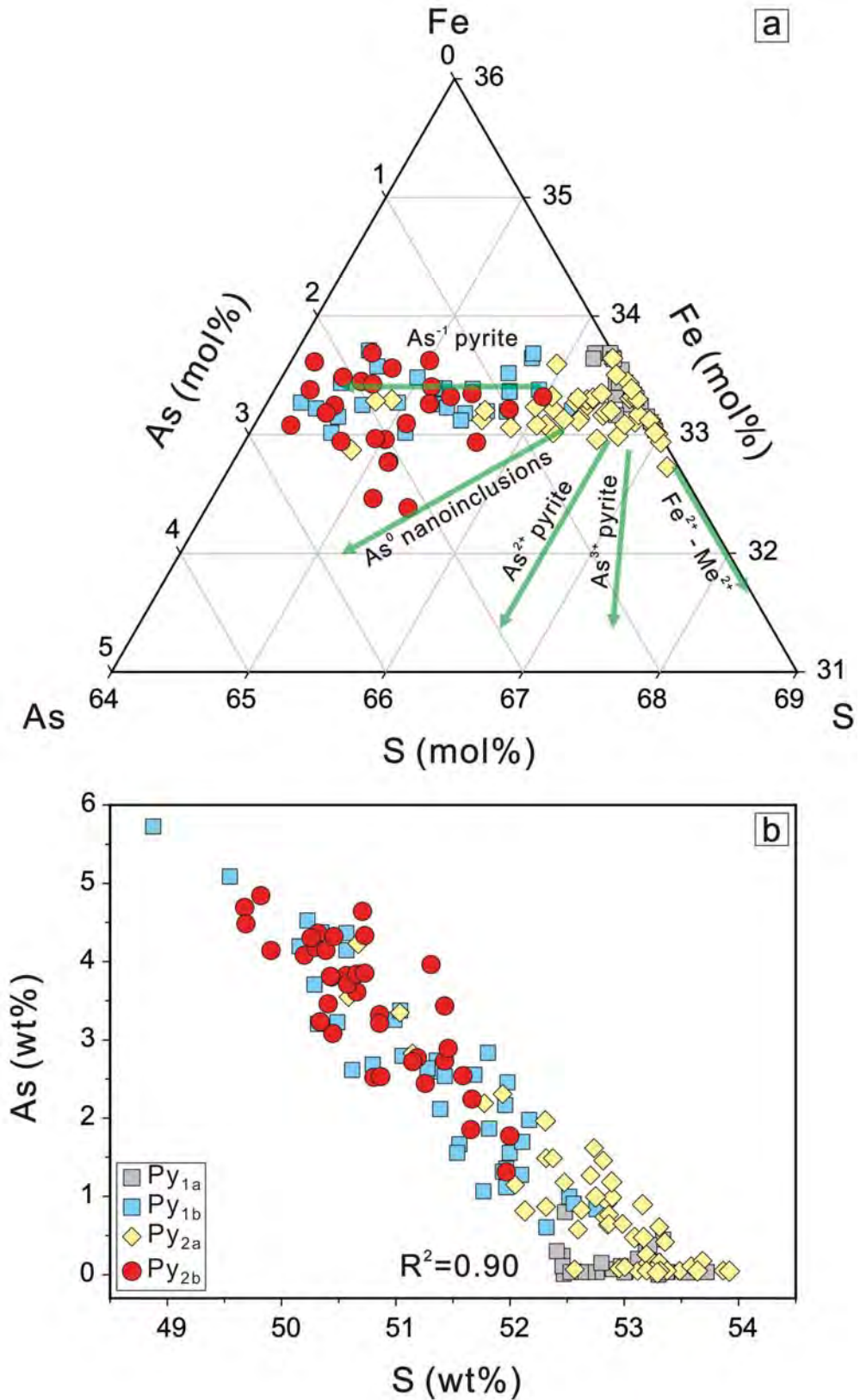


Fig. 8.

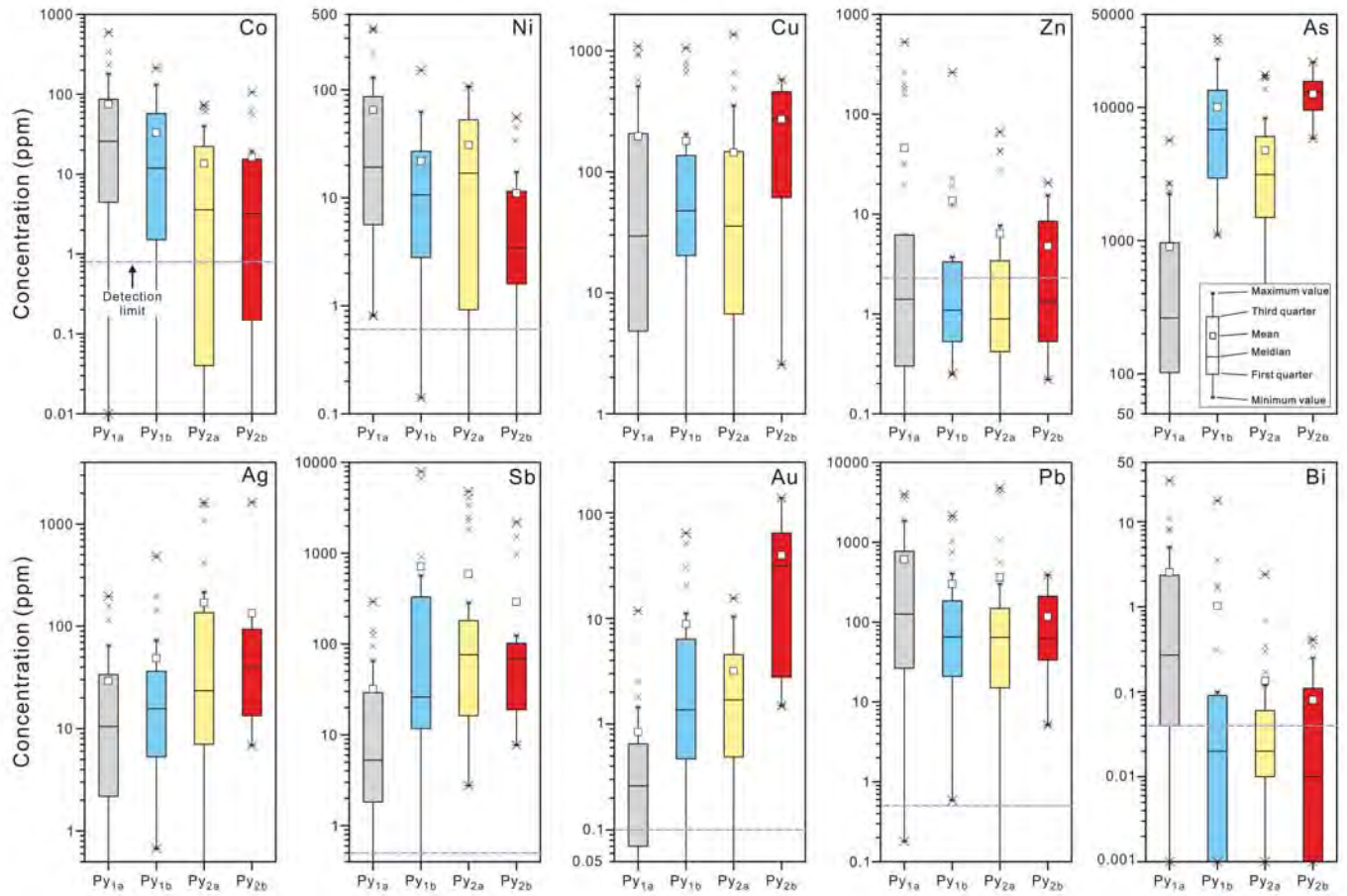


Fig. 9.

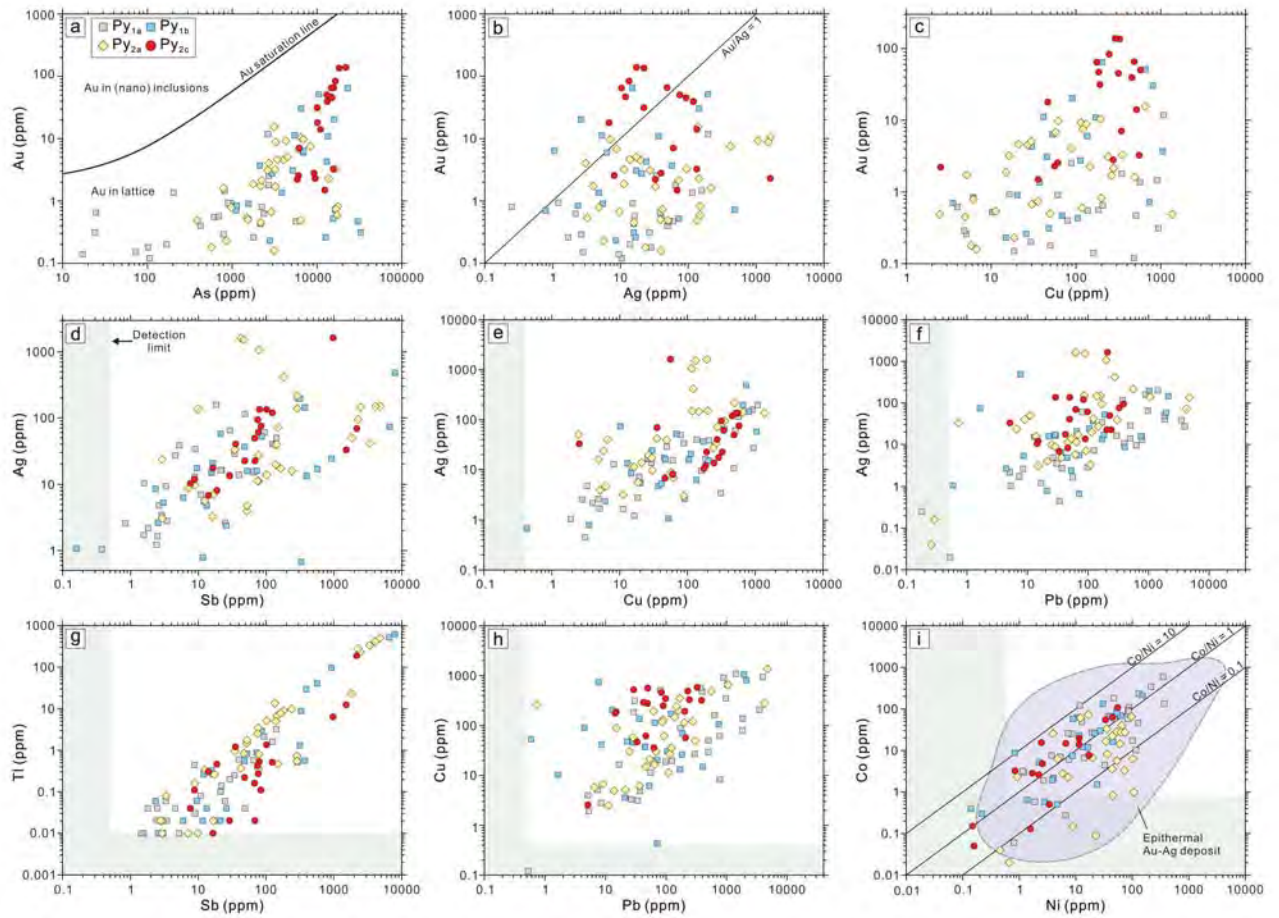


Fig. 10.

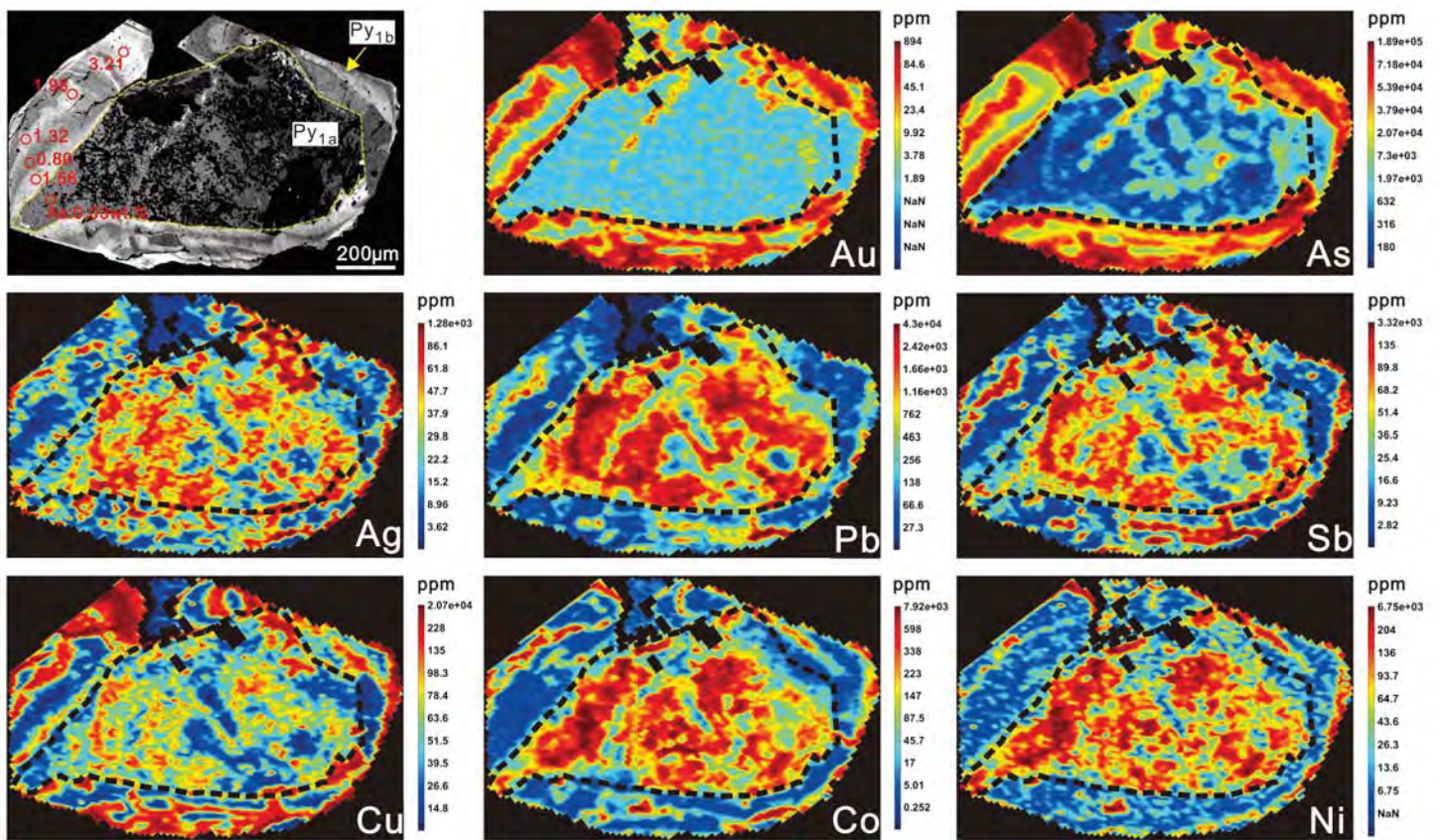


Fig. 11.

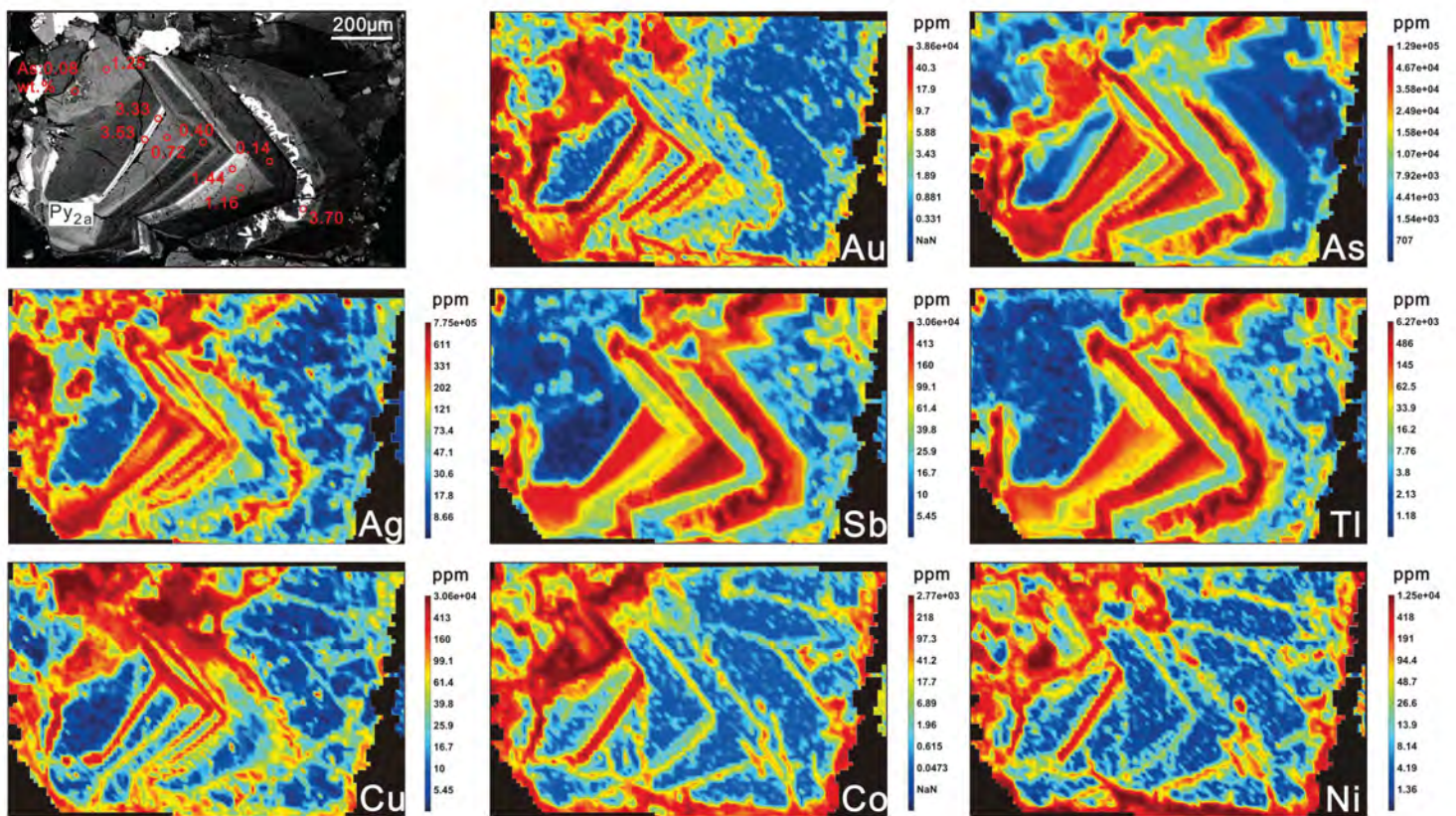


Fig. 12.

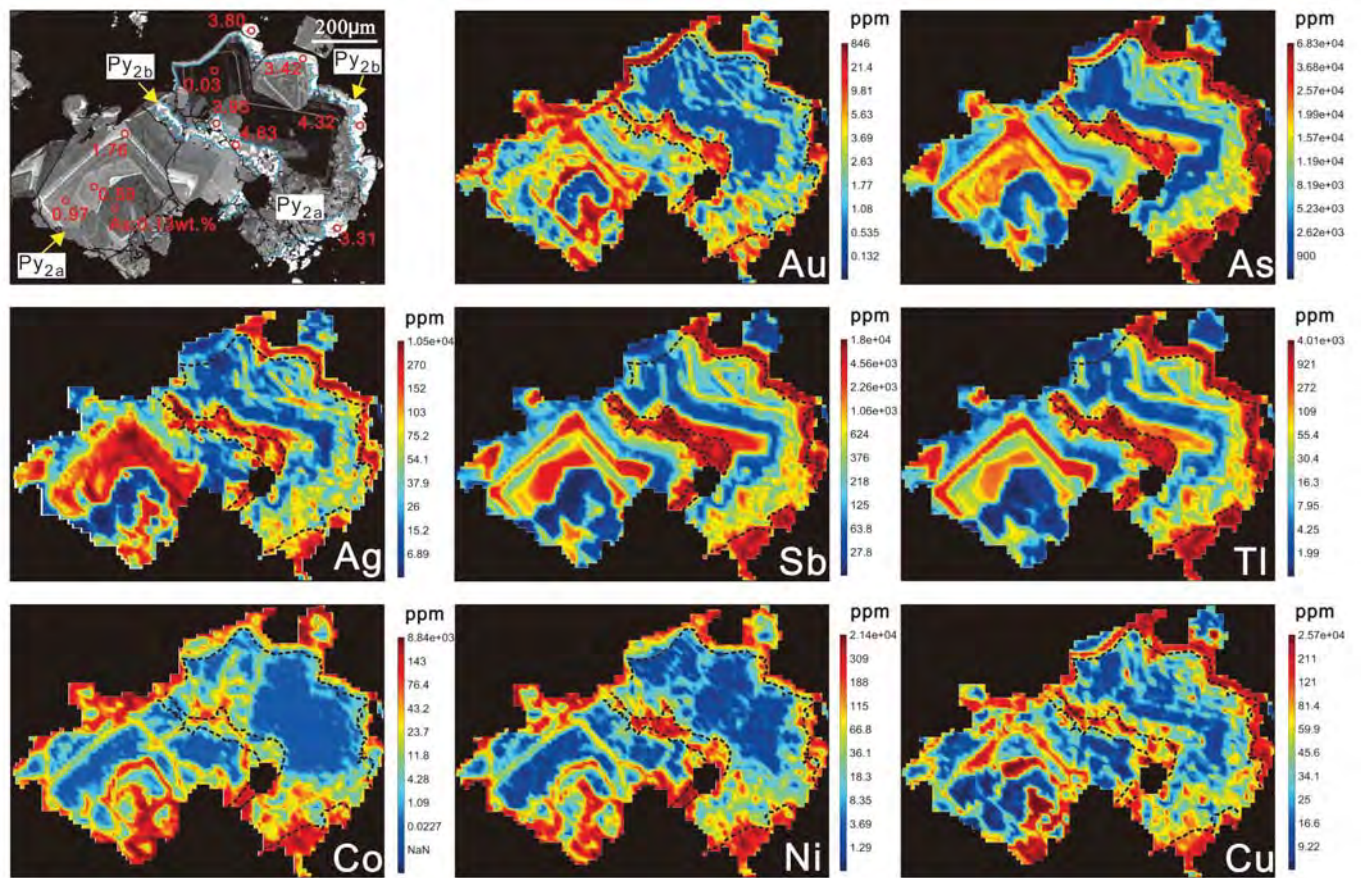


Fig. 13.

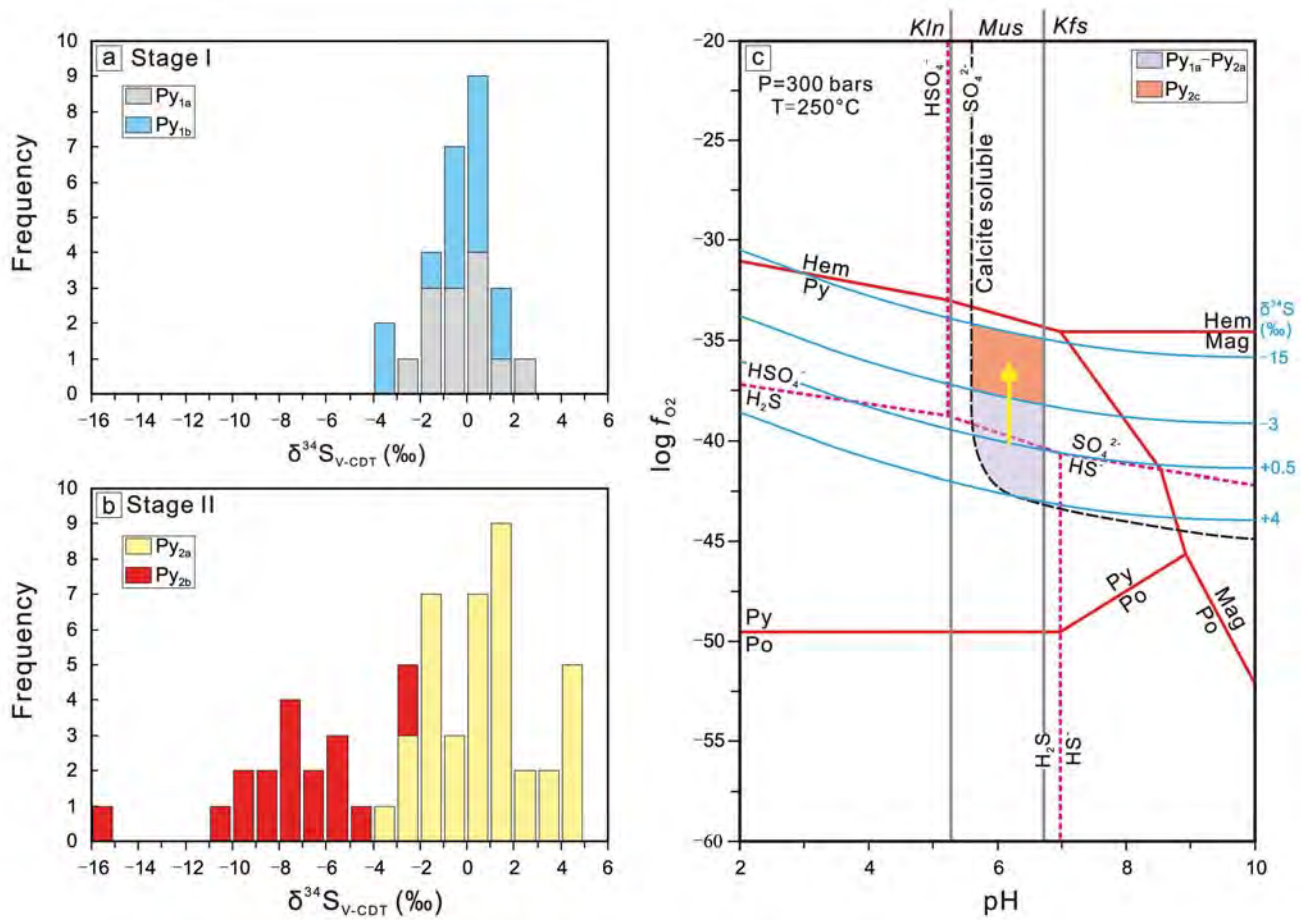


Fig. 14.

