

Enhancing Laser Ablation ICP-MS using Sector Field Technology

Key Words

- Finnigan™
ELEMENT 2
- Geochronology
- Isotope Ratios
- Laser Ablation
- Multi-Element
Analysis

Introduction

Laser ablation inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) has developed over recent years to become a sophisticated tool for the multi-elemental and isotope ratio analysis of solid samples. Besides a true multi-elemental capability, independent of matrix, the major requirements for most geological laser applications in ICP-MS are the highest sensitivity and scan speed. Such demanding analytical pre-requisites often require the most sophisticated instrumentation, such as Thermo Electron's Finnigan ELEMENT 2.

This Application Report describes a variety of LA-ICP-MS applications from different scientists to provide a brief summary of the technique in their particular fields of interest. The contributions included are:

- Pb geochronology in zircons (M. Tiepolo et al.)
- Re and Os concentration measurements in molybdenite (I. Rodushkin et al.)
- High mass resolution for non-matrix dependent laser ablation analysis, the isotopic analysis of Pleistocene human remains and the multi-element analysis of fluid inclusions by LA-ICP-MS, (Ch. Latkoczy et al.)

In situ Pb geochronology of zircons

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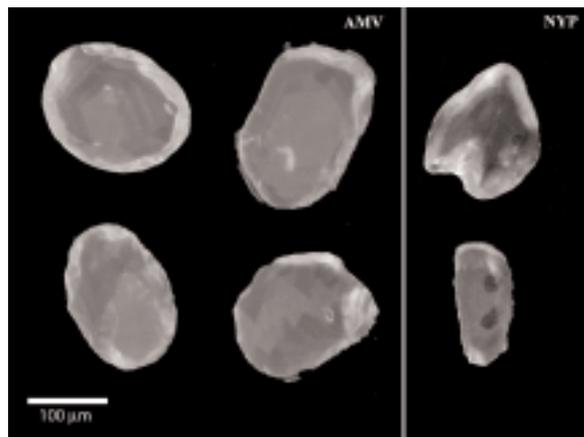


Figure 1: Typical zircons analyzed in this study

The Pb geochronological capabilities of sector field LA-ICP-MS, based on the coupling of the Finnigan ELEMENT and a 213 nm UV laser, have been tested on a series of zircons (Figure 1) ranging in age between 150 and 577 Ma (Figure 2):

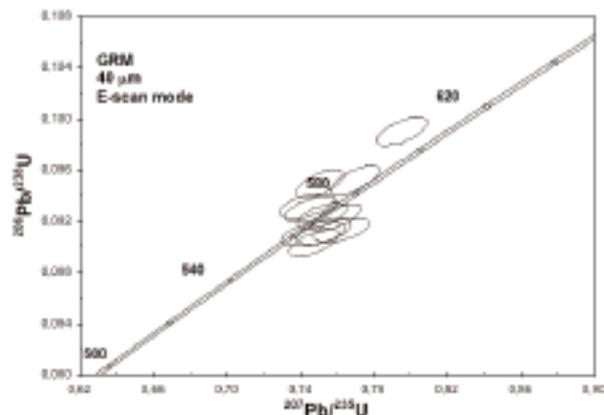


Figure 2: Geochronological determination of zircons

- Geologically meaningful ages calculated from the ratios $^{206}\text{Pb}/^{238}\text{U}$, $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{235}\text{U}$ and $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{232}\text{Th}$ can be achieved down to 1 ppm of total Pb in zircon. Reliable $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{206}\text{Pb}$ ages can be only achieved in zircons with $> \sim 40$ ppm of total Pb.
- At a spatial resolution of 40 μm , the electrostatic scan mode (EScan) is more suitable and gives internal precision values on $^{206}\text{Pb}/^{238}\text{U}$, $^{207}\text{Pb}/^{235}\text{U}$ and $^{208}\text{Pb}/^{232}\text{Th}$ ages to better than 1.1 % (for zircons with ~ 40 ppm of total Pb).
- A spatial resolution of 20 μm can be used on relatively Pb-rich zircons even if the internal precision is about 1.5 times lower than with a spot size of 40 μm .
- Accuracy is not particularly sensitive to scan mode and is more influenced by the total Pb content of zircon, with values ranging between 1 and 5 %.

Reference

Tiepolo M., In situ Pb geochronology of zircon with laser ablation-inductively coupled plasma-sector field mass spectrometry. *Chemical Geology*, 2003, 199, 159-177.

Determination of Re and Os concentrations in molybdenite

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Figure 3: Finnigan ELEMENT 2 with New Wave UP213 laser system.

The ^{187}Re – ^{187}Os geochronometer applied to molybdenite has been demonstrated to be remarkably robust, surviving intense rock deformation and high-grade thermal metamorphism. In molybdenite virtually all Os is produced by the radioactive decay of ^{187}Re to ^{187}Os . Successful dating by isotope dilution techniques is dependent on careful preparation of the mineral separate and on the appropriate choice of spikes. Both the Re and Os contents of molybdenites are highly variable, requiring pre-information for the preparation of the correct spike amounts. LA-ICP-MS (Figure 3) is therefore used as a rapid tool for Re and Os determination in molybdenite, since sample preparation for LA-ICP-MS consists of only the separation of the molybdenite, followed by grinding and pressing to form pellets.

External calibration with internal standardization using a matrix-matched standard has been found to be the best quantification approach for Re, providing results that are indistinguishable from data obtained by solution based ID-ICP-MS (within the limits of measurement precision). The accuracy of ^{187}Os quantification by LA-ICP-MS is poorer than compared to Re, as its determination requires the correction of a severe isobaric interference from ^{187}Re . Consequently, the determination only gives results that are more accurate for the older and higher in Os molybdenite samples.

References

- Malinovsky D., Rodushkin I., Axelsson M.D., and D.C. Baxter, Determination of rhenium and osmium concentrations in molybdenite using laser ablation double focusing sector field ICP-MS. *Journal of Geochemical Exploration*, 2004, **81**, 71-79.
- Malinovsky D., Rodushkin I., Baxter D. and B. Öhlander, Simplified method for the Re-Os dating of molybdenite using acid digestion and isotope dilution ICP-MS. *Analytica Chimica Acta*, 2002, **463**, 111-124.

Multi-element trace analysis of synthetic mineral materials

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The quantification of trace elements in synthetically prepared mineral standards used for microanalysis (rutile TiO_2 , apatite $\text{Ca}_3(\text{PO}_4)_2$ and fluorite CaF_2) by LA-ICP-MS coupled to a 193 nm ArF-Excimer laser system was investigated. A commercially available standard silicate reference material (NIST SRM 612) was used as a one point calibration standard. Using such a non-matrix matched calibration procedure, a highly linear correlation between the measured and nominal concentrations for elements doped to the material was established (Figure 4).

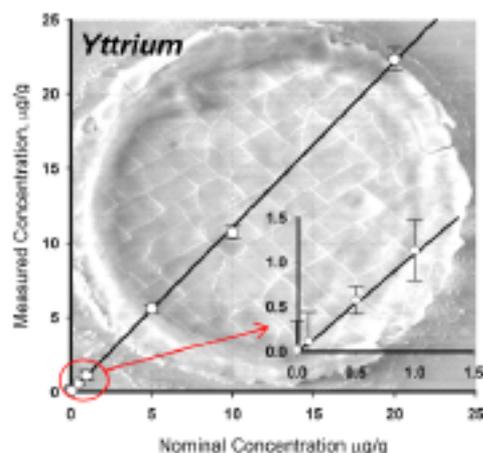


Figure 4: Typical 193 nm ArF-Excimer laser crater in CaF_2 . Calibration curve using NIST SRM 612 as external standard.

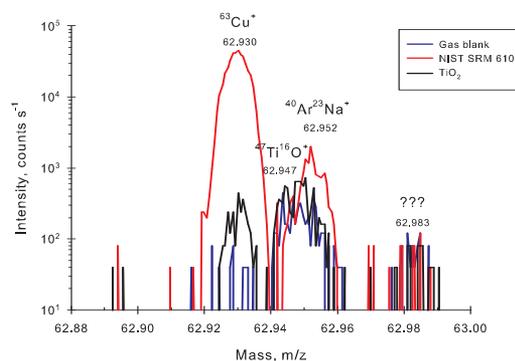


Figure 5a: Medium resolution ($R = 4000$) spectrum at m/z 63 separating ^{63}Cu from the main interferences

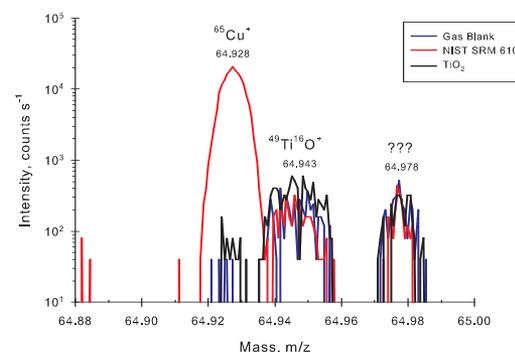


Figure 5b: Medium resolution ($R = 4000$) spectrum at m/z 65 separating ^{65}Cu from the main interferences

Furthermore, the enhanced mass resolution capabilities of the instrument was used to identify possible interferences resulting from major sample elements (Figure 5a and 5b).

The materials were analyzed using different laser spot sizes, ranging from 10 - 120 μm in order to study the elemental distribution of the elements in the mineral standards. At a spot size of 60 μm , relative standard deviations (RSDs) for 10 consecutive measurements were below 5 % for the apatite, below 11 % for the fluorite, and below 18 % for the rutile (Figure 6). The accuracy for each element in the three synthetic mineral standards was within 15 % for most elements in the apatite and fluorite materials, and up to 23 % in the rutile. Such LA-ICP-MS studies proved to be very useful in order to characterize the homogeneity of synthetically prepared materials in the micrometer-scale.

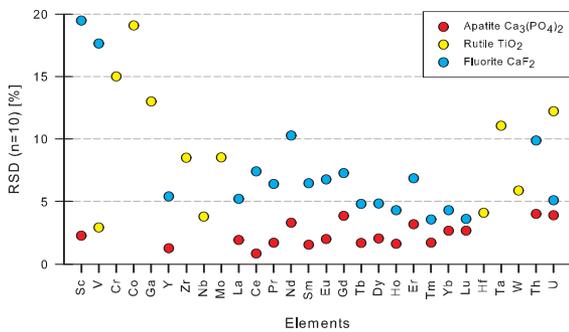


Figure 6: Heterogeneity (expressed as % RSD for ten consecutive measurements) of various elements in the three sample materials

References

Ødegard, M.; Skar, O.; Schiellerup, H.; Pearson, N. J., Preparation of a synthetic titanite glass calibration material for in situ microanalysis by direct fusion in graphite electrodes: A preliminary characterisation by EPMA and LA-ICP-MS, *Geostandards and Geoanalytical Research*, 2005, 29(2), 197-209.

Trace element and Sr isotopic ratio analysis of Pleistocene human teeth from the Altai massif, Russia

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Figure 7a: Second lower right milk molar from Okladnikov cave. Left side: vestibular norm, right side: vertical norm.

In the 1980s, human remains (seven teeth and postcranial fragments) were discovered in two caves in north-western Altai, Siberia. Morphologically and metrically, the Denisova and Okladnikov cave teeth have been compared to both Neanderthals and modern humans (Figures 7a and 7b).



Figure 7b: First lower left premolar from Okladnikov cave. Left side: distal norm. Right side: vertical norm

In this study, we applied LA-ICP-MS to perform a multielement analysis to assess the probability of individual association for these human remains (Figure 8).

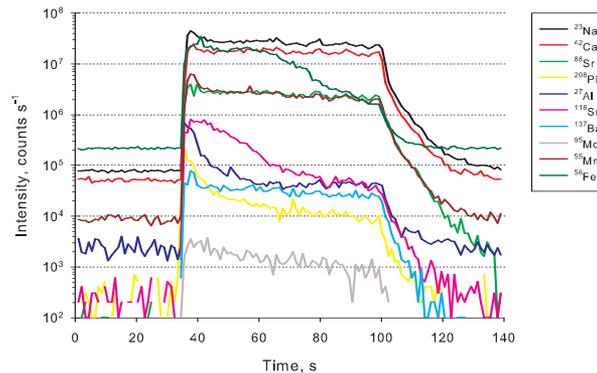


Figure 8: Multielemental laser analysis trace

Furthermore, we used an optimized fast-scan method to measure the isotope ratio of $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ in dentine and enamel to study possible migration patterns (Figure 9 and Table 1).

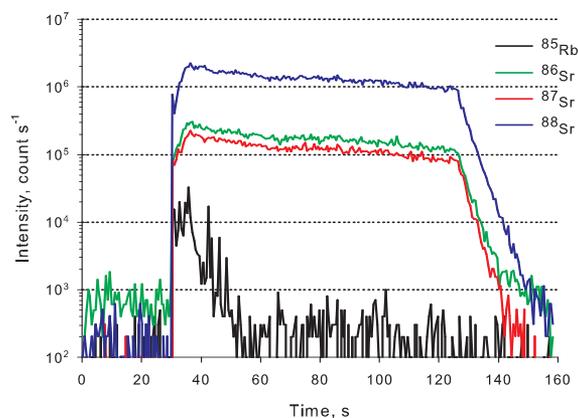


Figure 9: Strontium isotopic laser analysis trace

	⁸⁷ Sr / ⁸⁶ Sr		
Enamel	0.711	0.711	avg
	0.710	0.001	std
	0.710	0.15 %	rsd
	0.712		
	0.712		
Dentine	0.710	0.711	avg
	0.711	0.001	std
	0.712	0.09 %	rsd
	0.711		
	0.710		

Table 1: Results from the Sr isotopic analysis

Our preliminary results showed that further work is necessary to assess the amount and pattern of intra-individual variations in multi-element and isotopic composition, as well any possible effect from the post-depositional environment. We could not reach fully conclusive results on individual associations, but our results do not support previous claims that the Okladnikov cave teeth originate from only two individuals. Strontium isotope ratios in the Okladnikov sample indicate within the measurement uncertainty that the individual did not migrate, at least not to regions with strongly different geological substrate. Further information on regional geology and isotopic composition will help to clarify this question.

References

Shpakova, E.G., Derevianko, A.P., The interpretation of odontological features of Pleistocene Human Remains from the Altai, Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology of Eurasia, 2000, 1, 125-138.

Analysis of fluid inclusions using sector field LA-ICP-MS

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Microscopic fluid inclusions in minerals are the main source of information about the chemical composition of fluids associated with large-scale material transport in the Earth's interior. Hydrothermal transport processes are responsible for the natural enrichment of metal resources in many ore deposits. For the multi-element analysis of the microscopic fluid inclusions (typically 5 - 50 µm in diameter), LA-ICP-MS has become one of the most promising techniques owing to the recent progress in laser optics design and the development of high-sensitivity, fast-scanning ICP mass spectrometers. The latest improvement in the Finnigan ELEMENT 2's scan speed allows magnetic jumps from the lowest mass analyzed, ⁷Li, to the highest mass, ²³⁸U, in only 90 ms. The jump back to the lowest mass is performed in < 50 ms.

The method developed for the analyses of 28 major, minor and trace elements, covering a concentration range of five orders of magnitude, results in a scan duration of 0.88 s and a duty cycle of 63 % (Figure 9).

Figure 9: ELEMENT Method file used for the analysis of fluid inclusions.

These analyses were carried out on single natural fluid inclusions (Figure 10) together with a number of experiments to optimize a controlled ablation technique and to test a calibration procedure.

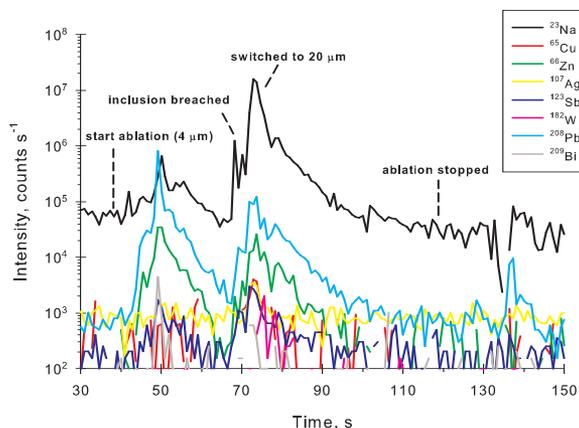


Figure 10: Time resolved laser ablation analysis of a natural fluid inclusion.

The optimized setup for sector field LA-ICP-MS was used together with a laser ablation system based on a 193 nm ArF-Excimer laser. In a procedure to stepwise open complex multiphase inclusions, a small hole (4 µm diameter) was first drilled for the partial release of liquid and vapor, followed by complete drilling out, using a laser spot size covering the entire inclusion.

References

Latkoczy, Ch., and Günther, D., Enhanced sensitivity in inductively coupled plasma sector field mass spectrometry for direct solid analysis using laser ablation (LA-ICP-SF-MS), Journal of Analytical Atomic Spectrometry, 2002, 17, 1264-1270.

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