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Thesis submitted for the total fulfilment of the
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**The Setting, Structural Control,
Geochemistry and Mantle Source
of the
Monaro Volcanic Province,
southeastern New South Wales,
Australia.**

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To Baby X: I'll never do another PhD!

Abstract

The Monaro Volcanic Province (MVP) is an Oligocene-Eocene intraplate basaltic lava field situated in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales between the towns of Cooma and Bombala. The lava pile of the MVP consists of basal sub-alkali rocks (olivine tholeiite, transitional basalt) capped by a number of thick ankaramite lavas, above which lie less numerous alkali rocks including alkali olivine basalt, nepheline basanite and olivine nephelinite. Intercalated with the lava flows are massive and matrix-supported alkali and ankaramitic hyaloclastites, alkali pillow basalts, rare tuffs, bauxitic weathering profiles, lacustrine sediments and reworked late Cretaceous to early Tertiary river gravels. The lava pile is intruded through by numerous volcanic plugs and dykes and rare maars. Volcanic centres are principally concentrated in two NW-SE trending zones parallel to major crustal-scale fractures in the Palaeozoic basement. Centres almost always lie over the intersections of two or more conjugate strike-slip or transverse fractures. The stratigraphy, whole-rock geochemistry and Sr and Nd isotopic signatures of rocks from the MVP indicate magma-genesis initially from an asthenospheric source with EM1 characteristics, gradually becoming more lithospheric with DM source characteristics. The long-lived nature of the MVP rules out a mantle plume-type source for magmas. Instead, a diapiric source is envisaged. The MVP mantle xenolith suite appears to have equilibrated at slightly higher temperatures for given pressures than the Newer Volcanics Province suite suggesting the palaeogeotherm for the MVP was slightly hotter than the "South East Australian" geotherm. Large amounts of amphibole (pargasitic hornblende, pargasite, ferroan pargasite and kaersutite) occurring within the more silica-undersaturated rocks of the MVP, and rarely within lherzolitic xenoliths, are interpreted to have formed as selvages on mantle veins in contact with peridotite beneath the MVP. Amphiboles were later sampled by magmas rising through the same conduits and were brought to the surface. MVP ankaramite lavas feature < 2cm clinopyroxene porphyrocrysts, the cores of which are shown to have crystallised at ca. 18 kb pressure or ca. 54 km depth. This defines the base of the local crust within the MVP region. Data from the MVP support a landscape evolution model based on the isostatic rise of the Southern Highlands due to voluminous magmatic underplating since the Cretaceous. Data further support limited denudation since the Early Tertiary based on a pulsatory but high palaeogeotherm.

Table of Contents

Volume I

Chapter 1: Landscapes, volcanic style and geological setting of the Monaro

Volcanic Province	1
1.1: Introduction.....	1
1.2: Location and physical attributes of the MVP	1
1.2.1: Location and areal extent.....	1
1.2.2: The age of the MVP.....	4
1.3: Landscapes, flora and palaeoclimate of the MVP	6
1.3.1: Previous landscape evolution studies	6
1.3.2: This study	12
1.3.3: Vegetation on the lava pile	20
1.3.4: The palaeoclimatic and palaeoecological history of the MVP	24
1.4: The volcanic style and geological settings of eastern Australian intraplate volcanic provinces	26
1.4.1: Lava field volcanism.....	26
1.4.2: Central volcanism	34
1.4.3: The geological setting of eastern Australian Cainozoic intraplate volcanics.....	36
1.4.4: The geological and tectonic setting of the MVP.....	39
1.5: The volcanic style of the MVP	43
1.5.1: Eruption sites.....	43
1.6: Conclusion	55

Chapter 2: A structural analysis of the Monaro Volcanic Province..... 56

2.1: Introduction.....	56
2.2: The structure of the basement to the lava pile	56
2.2.1: What is a lineament?.....	57
2.3: Previous studies	58
2.3.1: General methods and examples	58
2.3.2: The MVP	61
2.4: Landsat MSS study	62
2.4.1: Landsat MSS methods	62
2.4.2: Landsat MSS results	63
2.5: 9-second (250m) DEM of the MVP	65
2.5.1: DEM lineament analysis methods	65
2.5.2: DEM results.....	66
2.6: Discussion – results and regional tectonics	71
2.7: Conclusion	78

Chapter 3: Volcanic stratigraphy, isotopic characteristics and temporal

geochemical evolution of the Monaro Volcanic Province	80
3.1: Introduction.....	80
3.2: Previous studies	81
3.2.1: Volcanic stratigraphy of the MVP.....	81
3.2.2: Volcanic stratigraphy of other regions	84
3.3: Criteria for selecting a stratigraphic profile.....	87
3.4: Site description	88
3.5: Physical features of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section..	91
3.6: Petrology of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section	93

3.7: Previous geochemical studies	94
3.7.1: MVP	94
3.7.2: Eastern Australia and overseas: a review	95
3.8: Rock nomenclature and major element geochemistry	97
3.9: Mineral chemistry of the MVP	103
3.10: Trace element and REE characteristics	107
3.11: Sr and Nd isotopic characteristics.....	112
3.12: Geochemistry of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section ..	115
3.12.1: Rock type nomenclature and vertical distribution	115
3.12.2: Major element distribution	117
3.12.3: Trace elements, REE and Sr and Nd isotopes	119
3.13: Discussion.....	120
3.13.1: Possible correlations with the Bega (BMR) No. 7 DDH.....	120
3.13.2: The geochemical and magmatic evolution of the MVP.	121
3.14: Conclusions	125

Chapter 4: The mineralogy, textural and Pressure-Temperature relationships of xenoliths and megacrysts from the Monaro Volcanic Province..... 126

4.1: Introduction.....	126
4.2: Previous studies	126
4.2.1: MVP.....	126
4.2.2: Eastern Australia.....	128
4.3: Xenolith- and megacryst-bearing rock types of the MVP	132
4.4: Physical and textural characteristics of xenoliths and megacrysts	135
4.4.1: Physical characteristics.....	135
4.4.2: Mantle xenolith and megacryst textures	136
4.4.3: Crustal xenoliths and xenocrysts	142
4.5: Mineral chemistry of mantle and crustal xenoliths and megacrysts.....	145
4.5.1: Olivine	145
4.5.2: Clinopyroxene.....	145
4.5.3: Orthopyroxene	148
4.5.4: Spinel	150
4.5.5: Amphibole	152
4.5.6: Garnet	152
4.5.7: Feldspar.....	153
4.6: P-T estimations for mantle xenoliths from the MVP.....	154
4.6.1: Background.....	154
4.6.2: Experimental errors	157
4.6.3: P-T estimations for the MVP.....	157
4.7: Discussion.....	163
4.7.1: Diamonds are a geo's best friend	169
4.7.2: Apatite Fission Track Analysis and the MVP	171
4.8: Conclusions	174

Chapter 5: The possible role of amphibole fractionation on magma evolution in the Monaro Volcanic Province..... 176

5.1: Introduction.....	176
5.2: The location and petrology of amphibole-bearing rocks in the MVP	176
5.3: Nomenclature of amphiboles from the MVP.....	182
5.4: The mineral chemistry of MVP amphiboles.....	184
5.5: The amphibole contamination problem	186
5.6: The stability of amphibole in the igneous environment	189

5.7: Amphibole fractionation and its effect on whole-rock geochemistry	191
5.8: Determining possible amphibole fractionation trends within the MVP	193
5.9: A comparison of amphiboles from the MVP to those from other regions	198
5.10: Discussion.....	200
5.11: Conclusion	204
Chapter 6: Ankaramite lavas of the Monaro Volcanic Province	206
6.1: Introduction.....	206
6.2: What is an ankaramite?.....	206
6.3: Previous work	207
6.3.1: MVP.....	207
6.3.2: Other areas	209
6.4: Location and physical characteristics of the ankaramites.....	211
6.5: The age of the " <i>Bondo Dolerite Member</i> " and other ankaramites.....	213
6.6: The petrology, mineral and whole-rock geochemistry of MVP ankaramites	217
6.6.1: Petrography and mineral chemistry	217
6.6.2: Whole-rock chemistry	222
6.7: Equilibrium pressure determination of ankaramite clinopyroxenes and its implications.....	225
6.8: Discussion – implications for the nature of the MVP crust.....	227
6.9: Conclusions	230
Chapter 7: Synthesis and conclusions.....	231
7.1: Synthesis of data from the MVP.....	231
7.1.1: Landscape evolution of the MVP and its implications for southeast Australia.....	231
7.1.2: The MVP, magmatism and the evolution of the Eastern Highlands.....	237
7.2: Conclusions	242
References.....	245

Volume II: Appendices

Appendix 1: Volume calculations and vegetation Alliances	1
Appendix 1.1: Calculations for the volume of the lava pile	1
Appendix 1.2: Vegetation Alliances.....	2
Appendix 2: Alternative rock nomenclature and geochemistry.....	4
Appendix 2.1: Normative Anorthite versus Differentiation Index classification.	4
Appendix 2.2: Analytical methods and whole-rock geochemical data	7
Appendix 2.3: Analytical methods and mineral chemistry data.....	60
Appendix 3: Geothermobarometry data	133
Appendix 3.1: Tabulated descriptions of MVP mantle and crustal xenolith thin-sections.....	133
Appendix 3.2: Tabulated MVP and eastern Australian spinel-bearing xenolith geothermobarometry data	136
Appendix 3.3: Tabulated MVP and eastern Australian garnet-bearing xenolith geothermobarometry data	159
Appendix 4: Ankaramite clinopyroxene phenocryst mineral chemistry.....	180
Supporting publications	192

Index of Figures

Figure 1.1: Location of eastern Australian intraplate volcanic provinces	2
Figure 1.2: Major cultural, drainage and topographic features of the MVP	3
Figure 1.3: Probable maximum extent of the MVP lava pile	5
Figure 1.4: Bounds of the Monaro region.....	7
Figure 1.5: Locations of known volcanic plugs.....	14
Figure 1.6: Cartoon of composite terraces of the MVP topography.....	17
Figure 1.7: Major vegetation alliances of the MVP.....	21
Figure 1.8: Eastern Australian intraplate volcanic provinces subdivided into genetic types.....	28
Figure 1.9: Time relationships of eastern Australian intraplate volcanic provinces	36
Figure 1.10: Average age of eastern Australian volcanic provinces versus south latitude	37
Figure 1.11: Main tectonic units of eastern Australia.....	38
Figure 1.12: Simplified map of the basement rocks of the MVP	40
Figure 1.13: Generalised map of the MVP showing volcanic features	44
Figure 1.14: Cross-sectional cartoon depicting the Gourock west quarry.....	48
Figure 1.15: Sketch of the southern side of the Cathcart Road cutting	51
Figure 2.1: Simplified geological map of the MVP and surrounding basement	57
Figure 2.2: G.W. Pratt's proposed fracture patterns in the Palaeozoic basement to the MVP	62
Figure 2.3: Bounds of the Landsat MSS satellite image and DEM of the MVP	63
Figure 2.4: Landsat MSS lineaments of the MVP	64
Figure 2.5: Rose diagram of Landsat MSS lineaments of the MVP.....	65
Figure 2.6: Towns, major drainage and basalt cover compared to the 250m DEM of the MVP.....	67
Figure 2.7: Sun-shaded images of the 250m DEM of the MVP.....	68
Figure 2.8: Colour composite 250m DEM of the MVP	69
Figure 2.9: Lineaments obtained from the 250m DEM of the MVP.....	70
Figure 2.10: Rose diagram of 250m DEM lineaments from the MVP.....	71
Figure 2.11: Interpreted structural features from the 250m DEM of the MVP.....	73
Figure 2.12: Major landscape features and volcanic plug locations of the MVP draped over the coloured 250m DEM of the MVP.....	74
Figure 2.13: Proposed fracture pattern controlling the location of eruption centres in the MVP.....	75
Figure 3.1: Locations of stratigraphic studies of the MVP.....	82
Figure 3.2: Graphic log of the Bega (BMR) No. 7 stratigraphic diamond drill hole	83
Figure 3.3: 3-D view of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section	89
Figure 3.4: MnO-TiO ₂ -P ₂ O ₅ minor element discrimination diagram of MVP rocks	98
Figure 3.5: Total Alkali-Silica (TAS) diagram of MVP rocks	99
Figure 3.6: Normative Ne versus Normative Ab of MVP rocks	99
Figure 3.7: TAS classification with major mineral fractionation trends of MVP rocks.....	100
Figure 3.8: SiO ₂ versus Mg number of MVP rocks.....	101
Figure 3.9: CIPW normative compositions of MVP rocks compared to eastern Australia.....	102
Figure 3.10: Mg number versus total Fe for all MVP olivine analyses.....	103
Figure 3.11: Ternary diagram of all MVP pyroxene phenocryst end-member compositions	104
Figure 3.12: Ternary diagram of all MVP feldspar phenocryst end-member	

compositions	105
Figure 3.13: Ternary diagram of all MVP spinel and ilmenite phenocryst end-member compositions	106
Figure 3.14: MgO versus Ni for all MVP rocks	107
Figure 3.15: Cr versus Ni for all MVP rocks.....	108
Figure 3.16: Zr versus Nb for all MVP rocks	109
Figure 3.17: Y/Nb versus Zr/Nb for all MVP rocks.....	110
Figure 3.18: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of primary rocks of the MVP	111
Figure 3.19: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of evolved rocks of the MVP	111
Figure 3.20: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of REE from evolved rocks of the MVP.....	112
Figure 3.21: $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ versus ϵ_{Nd} correlation diagram for rocks from the MVP and eastern Australia	114
Figure 3.22: La/Nb versus Ba/Nb for rocks from the MVP and eastern Australia.....	115
Figure 3.23: Total Alkali-Silica classification diagram for rocks from the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section.....	116
Figure 3.24: Simple stratigraphic log comparing the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section to the Bega (BMR) No. 7 stratigraphic diamond drill hole.....	117
Figure 3.25a: Major element abundance variation compared to elevation in the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section.....	118
Figure 3.25b: Major element abundance variation compared to elevation in the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section.....	118
Figure 3.26: La/Nb versus Ba/Nb for rocks from the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section	119
Figure 4.1: Classification of plutonic ultramafic rocks	130
Figure 4.2: Location map of xenolith-bearing volcanic plugs in the MVP	133
Figure 4.3: Ternary diagram of end-members for MVP xenolith pyroxenes	146
Figure 4.4: Ca versus Cr for MVP xenolithic clinopyroxenes	147
Figure 4.5: Mg versus Fe for MVP xenolith clinopyroxenes compared to other areas	147
Figure 4.6: Mg versus Fe for MVP xenolith orthopyroxenes compared to other areas	149
Figure 4.7: Mg versus Al for MVP xenolith orthopyroxenes compared to other areas	151
Figure 4.8: Cr-number versus Fe-number for all MVP spinels	151
Figure 4.9: MVP, Bullenmerri-Gnotuk, Delegate and Jugiong garnet classification ternary diagram	153
Figure 4.10: Ternary diagram of MVP xenolithic feldspar end-members	153
Figure 4.11: Histograms of calculated equilibrium Temperatures for MVP xenoliths	159
Figure 4.12: Calculated equilibrium Pressure-Temperature relationships for MVP, Bullenmerri-Gnotuk, Delegate and Jugiong xenoliths	160
Figure 4.13: Calculated equilibrium Pressure-Temperature relationships for eastern Australian garnet-bearing xenolith suites	163
Figure 4.14: Interpreted palaeogeotherms including MVP and eastern Australian garnet-bearing xenolith suites.....	165
Figure 4.15: Lithospheric model for the MVP based on xenolith suite data	168
Figure 4.16: Ternary diagram of MVP garnets compared to Bullenmerri-Gnotuk, Delegate and Jugiong garnets	170
Figure 5.1: Location of amphibole sites within the MVP.....	178
Figure 5.2: Nomenclature of MVP amphiboles.....	183
Figure 5.3: Total Alkali-Silica diagram of rocks from the MVP showing those affected by amphibole contamination.....	189

Figure 5.4: Pressure-Temperature limits of amphibole stability in the igneous environment	190
Figure 5.4: K versus Rb of MVP rocks	193
Figure 5.5: SiO ₂ versus K ₂ O of MVP rocks	194
Figure 5.6: Mineral/melt REE partition coefficients between amphibole, clinopyroxene and a basaltic melt.....	195
Figure 5.7: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of amphibole contaminated rocks.....	196
Figure 5.8: Mg-number versus K ₂ O for amphibole electron microprobe analyses.....	197
Figure 5.9: Mg versus Fe for amphibole electron microprobe analyses.....	198
Figure 5.10: Ca:Mg:Fe+Mn ternary diagram of MVP amphibole analyses compared to other eastern Australian amphiboles.....	199
Figure 5.11: Ca:Mg:Fe+Mn ternary diagram of MVP amphibole analyses compared to data from the rest of the world.....	200
Figure 6.1: Distribution of ankaramite lavas within the MVP	207
Figure 6.2: Ca:Mg:Fe ternary diagrams of ankaramite clinopyroxene porphyrocryst electron microprobe analysis end-members	219
Figure 6.3: An:Ab:Or ternary end-member diagram of plagioclase microlite inclusion electron microprobe analyses from MVP ankaramite clinopyroxene porphyrocrysts	221
Figure 6.4: Typical electron microprobe analysis traverse across an MVP ankaramite clinopyroxene porphyrocryst	222
Figure 6.5: Total Alkali-Silica diagram of MVP rocks depicting ankaramites.....	223
Figure 6.6: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of ankaramites and other fractionated rocks from the MVP	224
Figure 6.7: Primitive mantle normalised (spider) diagram of REE from MVP ankaramites compared to clinopyroxene mineral/melt partition coefficients... ..	224
Figure 6.8: Al ^{iv} versus Al ^{vi} for MVP ankaramite clinopyroxene porphyrocrysts compared to the Barrington Tops volcanic field	225
Figure 6.9: Frequency histogram of MVP ankaramite clinopyroxene porphyrocryst calculated equilibration pressures.....	226
Figure 7.1: Map illustrating the dog-leg in the Great Divide associated with the MVP.....	236
Figure 7.2: Magma-genetic model for the MVP and eastern Australia.....	241

Index of Tables

Table 1.1: Compilation of all available K-Ar dates on the MVP	4
Table 3.1: Comparison of known eastern Australian volcanic stratigraphy.....	85
Table 3.2: Collation of Sr and ND isotopic data from the MVP	113
Table 3.3: Total Alkali-Silica classifications rock types and elevation of rocks in the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section	116
Table 4.1: Xenolith and megacryst-bearing volcanic plugs and dykes of the MVP	134
Table 4.2: Major element atomic maxima and minima for MVP xenolithic clinopyroxenes	148
Table 4.3: Major element atomic maxima and minima for MVP xenolithic orthopyroxenes.....	149
Table 4.4: Major element atomic maxima and minima for MVP xenolithic spinels and ilmenite.....	150
Table 4.5: Pressure-Temperature estimation methods applied to eastern	

Australian mantle xenoliths	155
Table 4.6: A compilation of published eastern Australian mantle xenolith data.....	157
Table 4.7: Calculated equilibrium Pressure-Temperature pairs for MVP xenoliths	158
Table 5.1: Major amphibole-bearing volcanic plugs of the MVP	177
Table 5.2: Electron microprobe analyses of MVP amphiboles	185
Table 5.3: Major element abundances and CIPW norms of amphibole-contaminated rocks	187

Index of Plates

Plate 1.1: Volcanic landforms of the MVP	15
Plate 1.2: Volcanic landforms of the MVP	18
Plate 1.3: Volcanic landforms of the MVP	19
Plate 1.4: Examples of the major vegetation Alliances of the MVP	22
Plate 1.5: Volcanic landforms of the New Volcanics, Nulla and McBride provinces ...	31
Plate 1.6: Primary volcanic features from the MVP	46
Plate 1.7: Features of lava flows of the MVP	52
Plate 1.8: Features of lava flows of the MVP	53
Plate 1.9: Features of lava flows of the MVP	54
Plate 3.1: Aerial view of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section area	90
Plate 3.2: Physical characteristics of the Cooma Creek/Myalla Road stratigraphic section	92
Plate 4.1: Photographs and photomicrographs of xenoliths and xenocrysts of the MVP	137
Plate 4.2: Photomicrographs of xenoliths of the MVP	138
Plate 4.3: Photomicrographs of xenoliths of the MVP	140
Plate 4.4: Photomicrographs of xenoliths of the MVP	143
Plate 4.5: Photomicrographs of xenoliths of the MVP	144
Plate 5.1: Photographs and photomicrographs of amphibole-bearing rocks of the MVP	179
Plate 5.2: Photographs and photomicrographs of amphibole-bearing rocks of the MVP	181
Plate 6.1: Ankaramite flow rocks from the MVP	214
Plate 6.2: Bauxite profile developed on ankaramite lava at The Brothers	215
Plate 6.3: Ankaramitic hyaloclastite outcrop at Wambrook Hill.....	216
Plate 6.4: Photomicrographs of MVP ankaramite	218