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Compositional classification of ''kimberlitic'' and ''non-kimberlitic'' ilmenite

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Abstract

Ilmenite is one of the common kimberlitic indicator minerals recovered during diamond exploration, and its distinction from non-kimberlitic rock types is important. This is particularly true for regions where these minerals are present in relatively low abundance, and they are the dominant kimberlitic indicator mineral recovered. Difficulty in visually differentiating kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenite in exploration concentrates is also an issue, and distinguishing kimberlitic ilmenite from those derive from other similar rocks, such as ultramafic lamprophyres, is practically impossible. Ilmenite is also the indicator mineral whose compositional variety has the most potential to resolve provenance issues related to mineral dispersions with contributions from multiple kimberlite sources.

Various published data sets from selected kimberlitic (including kimberlites, lamproites, and various ultramafic lamprophyres) and non-kimberlitic rock types have been compiled and evaluated in terms of their major element compositions. Compositional fields and bounding reference lines for ilmenites derived from kimberlites (sensu stricto), ultramafic lamprophyres, and other non-kimberlitic rock types have been defined primarily on MgO-TiO₂ graphs as well as MgO-Cr₂O₃ relationships. \odot 2004 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Ilmenite, together with pyrope garnet and chromite, is one of the dominant indicator minerals found in kimberlite. The ilmenite present in kimberlites derives from a number of sources (see, e.g., [Mitchell, 1973,](#page-21-0)

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1977, 1986; Haggerty, 1975, 1976, 1991), but most commonly as discrete ilmenite xenoliths belonging to the megacryst suite of minerals [\(Schulze, 1987;](#page-21-0) Schulze et al., 1995), ilmenites of metasomatic origin [\(Wyatt and Lawless, 1984; Harte, 1987; Haggerty,](#page-21-0) 1989; Dawson et al., 2001; Moore and Lock, 2001), ilmenites intergrown with megacrysts, MARID [\(Daw](#page-20-0)son and Smith, 1977), and Granny Smith silicates [\(Boyd et al., 1984\),](#page-20-0) and groundmass ilmenite and phenocrysts in the host magma [\(Tompkins and Hagg](#page-21-0)erty, 1985; Mitchell, 1986; Moore, 1987). Less com-

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mon sources of ilmenite in kimberlite include primary ilmenites from disaggregated peridotite (both coldcoarse and hot-deformed varieties) and eclogite xenoliths, and rare ilmenites included in diamond [\(Meyer](#page-21-0) and Svisero, 1975; Sobolev and Yefimova, 2000). Ilmenites are also present in a wide variety of nonkimberlitic igneous (gabbros, norites, granites, and anorthosites) and metamorphic (orthogneisses) rocks that may occur in areas hosting kimberlite intrusions. In Southern Africa, ilmenites are present in the volcanic successions of Karoo lavas [\(Bristow, 1980\),](#page-20-0) and in other gabbroic and picritic intrusions such as those found in the Mount Ayliff Intrusion of the Insizwa Complex in Transkei [\(Cawthorn et al., 1988\).](#page-20-0)

The distinction of ilmenites derived from kimberlitic versus non-kimberlitic rocks is important in the context of diamond exploration in regions in which ilmenites are present in relatively low abundance but where they are the dominant kimberlitic indicator mineral recovered. Ilmenite is also the indicator mineral whose compositional variety could be used to greatest effect in provenance studies related to mineral dispersions with contributions from one or more kimberlite sources. This study focuses on a simple and practical scheme for separating kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenite on the basis of major element compositions, but does not address the detailed analysis of crystal –chemical issues and phase relationships that are the subject of comprehensive studies such as [Haggerty \(1976, 1991\), Haggerty and Tomp](#page-20-0)kins (1984), Tompkins and Haggerty (1985), and references referred to therein.

Because ilmenite is a key kimberlitic indicator mineral, its correct identification is critical, yet the visual distinction of kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenite during the extraction of these grains from exploration sample concentrates is imperfect. In addition, ilmenite populations derived from kimberlites or lamprophyres share similar mantle-derived petrogenetic origins but have different significance in the context of diamond exploration. Visually differentiating kimberlite derived ilmenite from grains derived from similar ultramafic rocks, such as ultramafic lamprophyres, is practically impossible, even for highly trained mineral sorters. The latter problem is a direct result of a compositional overlap in the range 4 to 6 wt.% MgO, as well as the visual similarity of ilmenites having 4 to 18 wt.% MgO which represents the compositional range of ilmenite from kimberlites and related rocks. This study highlights the need to determine the compositions and paragenesis of ilmenites extracted from exploration sample concentrates by analytical means, particularly during early phase reconnaissance.

2. Methods and data sources

The compositions of ilmenite derived from potentially diamondiferous sources (kimberlites and lamproites) and other non-kimberlitic sources (e.g., ultramafic lamprophyres, basalt, and gabbro) have been compiled from selected published and internal Mineral Services and De Beers data sets. Compositional fields for ilmenites derived from kimberlites (sensu stricto), and other non-kimberlitic rock types have been defined on selected bivariate graphs and form the basis of a robust and simple classification scheme. Ilmenite $MgO-TiO₂$ diagrams [\(Sobolev,](#page-21-0) 1977) are particularly useful to discriminate kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenite compositions. Equations for kimberlitic and non-kimberlitic reference lines that are given in the text below are for convenience and can be used to filter ilmenite analyses for classification purposes using a simple spreadsheet.

[Sobolev \(1977, Fig. 42\)](#page-21-0) utilised a $MgO-TiO₂$ plot overlayed with $Fe₂O₃$ contours to display various kimberlitic ilmenite populations, which was also used to make some inferences regarding the oxidising environment. In this study, we have inserted reference lines of constant hematite content in scatter plots of $TiO₂$ versus MgO. The Fe₂O₃ contents of the ilmenites were calculated stoichiometrically using [Finger](#page-20-0) (1972), and the isopleths were established empirically using contours of the data on the $TiO₂$ versus MgO plots. These stoichiometric $Fe₂O₃$ reference contours are based on the kimberlite data set discussed below, and are only an indication of the hematite content. They can be used to assess data quality. For example, data points should not plot above the 0% Fe₂O₃ contour (implying negative $Fe₂O₃$ content) and such analyses should be scrutinised for quality. In many cases inconsistencies, especially for non-kimberlitic ilmenite, may be due to the microprobe beam inadvertently impinging on submicroscopic rutile inclusions resulting in abnormally high $TiO₂$ content (and often high totals). In some cases, such analyses may in fact derive from other high- $TiO₂$ minerals such as the pseudobrookite series or Nb –Ta-rich rutiles. While the contours illustrate that the $Fe₂O₃$ content of ilmenites increases with decreasing $TiO₂$, extreme caution should be used in attempting to infer the $fO₂$ environment associated with the ilmenites. The reader is referred to [Haggerty \(1976, 1991\), Haggerty and](#page-20-0)

Table 1

Tompkins (1984), Tompkins and Haggerty (1985) and references therein for a full discussion of ilmenite, $Fe₂O₃$ and $fO₂$ systematics.

Bivariate graphs of MgO versus Cr_2O_3 (after [Hagg](#page-20-0)erty, 1975, 1976, 1991) are also presented for selected data sets. Such graphs, which are commonly used by the diamond exploration fraternity, illustrate certain compositional criteria that also aid in the distinction of kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenites.

^a KRR: Kimberlite-related rock. NK: Non-kimberlitic.

^b Locality or area from which the ilmenites derive. Numbers in () refer to no. of grains. NOTE: Diamond content of primary kimberlites: o—barren; l—at best low (subeconomic); *—near economic or economic. All other rock types are barren.

CUCT-KRG: University of Cape Town—Kimberlite Research Group. UMASS: University of Massachusetts 1987 Ilmenite Database g

to UCT by Steve Haggerty in the late 1980s. DBGSC: De Beers GeoScience Centre. DIAND NWT: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, [North West Territories, Canada—Geology Division, Kimberlite Indicator Mineral Chemistry Database, Slave Province.](#page-21-0) Schulze et al. (1995) data available from web site: [http://www.geology.utoronto.ca/faculty/schulze/ilmenite.html.](http:\\www.geology.utoronto.ca\faculty\schulze\ilmenite.html)

A wide variety of data sets covering Southern Africa, West Africa, North America, Russia, and Australasia were used in this study [\(Table 1\),](#page-2-0) and relevant averages are summarised in Table 2 along with the range in major element compositions of each data set. Only data flagged as off-craton and on-craton

Table 2 Mineral composition statistics for some of the key data sets utilised in this study

Statistic	Off-craton group I kimberlites (RSA and Nambia) $n = 392$					On-craton group I kimberlites (RSA only) $n = 2338$				
	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.
SiO ₂	$0.00\,$	0.01	0.21	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	1.87	0.01	0.06
TiO ₂	41.67	52.42	56.00	51.45	3.04	36.44	52.80	57.92	52.33	3.09
Al_2O_3	0.00	0.21	1.23	0.26	0.21	0.00	0.32	4.70	0.36	0.27
Cr ₂ O ₃	0.00	1.17	6.20	1.25	0.87	0.00	0.82	4.68	0.98	0.55
FeOt	26.93	33.53	49.65	35.24	5.09	19.64	34.11	56.20	34.67	5.40
MnO	0.01	0.28	1.27	0.27	0.10	0.00	0.30	1.94	0.30	0.08
MgO	4.72	11.07	15.55	10.66	2.34	3.37	11.16	19.94	10.84	2.54
CaO	0.00	$0.00\,$	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.63	0.05	0.05
Statistic	North American kimberlites (USA and Canada) $n = 1071$					Siberian kimberlites (De Beers) $n = 2629$				
	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.
SiO ₂	0.00	0.02	1.18	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.00	1.58	0.02	0.06
TiO ₂	31.52	49.88	55.35	48.75	3.81	29.69	47.81	57.08	46.67	4.19
Al_2O_3	0.00	0.24	2.34	0.27	0.22	0.00	0.58	1.30	0.58	0.12
Cr_2O_3	0.08	0.54	5.74	0.85	0.85	0.05	0.42	7.03	0.91	1.07
FeOt	24.07	37.16	57.25	38.12	5.56	28.07	39.98	57.55	41.29	4.64
MnO	0.12	0.30	0.68	0.31	0.07	0.02	0.20	4.67	0.22	0.14
MgO	3.25	9.73	17.13	9.45	2.49	1.12	8.99	14.65	8.69	1.75
CaO	0.00	0.02	1.00	0.04	0.07	0.00	0.02	0.85	0.03	0.04
NiO	0.00	0.06	0.59	0.07	0.04					
Statistic	Australian kimberlites (De Beers) $n = 1913$									
	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.					
SiO ₂	0.00	0.00	0.41	0.00	0.03					
TiO ₂	41.83	50.07	56.89	49.79	2.45					
Al_2O_3	0.00	0.26	1.36	0.34	0.22					
Cr ₂ O ₃	0.00	0.20	6.67	0.30	0.40					
FeOt	28.57	38.12	48.47	38.42	3.78					
MnO	0.00	0.30	0.99	0.31	0.08					
MgO	5.14	10.24	14.50	9.94	1.90					
CaO	0.00	$0.08\,$	0.94	0.08	0.05					
NiO										
Statistic	Malaita alnoite (De Beers) $n = 901$					Australian melnoite (De Beers) $n = 92$				
	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.	Min	Median	Max	Mean	S.D.
SiO ₂	0.00	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.01	0.02
TiO ₂	45.52	50.17	55.25	50.04	1.68	34.05	44.46	52.29	45.03	3.22
Al_2O_3	0.10	0.61	2.27	0.62	0.23	0.00	0.16	0.70	0.18	0.15
Cr_2O_3	0.00	0.05	2.38	0.11	0.26	0.00	0.01	0.07	0.02	0.02
FeOt	28.42	41.09	48.42	41.41	3.17	37.84	48.49	58.59	48.04	4.23
MnO	0.14	0.25	0.66	0.26	0.07	0.00	0.26	0.39	0.27	0.06
MgO	3.12	7.05	13.06	7.00	1.86	1.58	3.25	8.34	3.63	1.62
CaO	0.00	0.06	0.29	0.08	0.05	0.00	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.01
NiO										

was extracted from the University of Cape Town (UCT) Kimberlite Research Group (KRG) database [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0), and only from kimberlite localities allocated to that specific country and marked as Group I kimberlites. Because the KRG database is constantly being updated and the various locality related information upgraded on an ongoing basis, the South Africa and Namibia kimberlite data do not represent the full set of data available for localities in these two countries. Additional regional analyses in the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) ilmenite database from various localities [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) were utilised as an independent data set to test the consistency of the data used to establish ilmenite reference lines, but as they generally embrace the same localities referred to above, they are not included in the data statistics in [Table 2.](#page-3-0) The non-kimberlitic Insizwa and Karoo ilmenite data sets were obtained from tables in published references [\(Cawthorn et al., 1988\),](#page-20-0) and through the extraction of element contents directly from incorporated bivariate plots.

It is assumed for this study that the majority of the compiled compositions represent analyses of the cores of ilmenite grains. However, core versus rim compositions are distinguished by [Schulze et al. \(1995\)](#page-21-0) for several of the North America kimberlite localities. The compositional trends observed in these data and implications for the classification scheme are discussed further in the latter part of this manuscript.

In a sense, we have not taken our own advice, and the mineral composition data utilised in this study have not been screened to exclude poor quality data based on the calculated $Fe₂O₃$ contours. However, this has been done intentionally to highlight the fact that, in reality, such analyses do occur during the routine analysis of exploration samples, and such data should be viewed as suspicious by the recipient.

3. Results

3.1. Kimberlitic ilmenites

Mineral compositions for ilmenites derived from Southern African kimberlite concentrates [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) were separated into on-craton and off-craton localities. [Fig. 1A and B](#page-5-0) are bivariate $MgO-TiO₂$ plots for the off-craton and on-craton Group I kimberlites, respectively. [Fig. 2A and B](#page-6-0) show the same data plotted in $MgO - Cr₂O₃$ space, which was first used by [Haggerty](#page-20-0)

(1975, 1976) to identify a parabolic arc typical of many kimberlitic ilmenite populations (see also [Fig.](#page-20-0) 13 of Haggerty, 1991). The compositional ranges of the on-and off-craton ilmenites are given in [Table 2.](#page-3-0)

An arc encompassing approximately 90% of the data has been estimated on the $MgO-TiO₂$ plots. The area to the MgO – rich side of the arc is defined as the ''Kimberlitic'' ilmenite field. This kimberlitic ilmenite

Fig. 1. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for (A) off-craton group I kimberlites from South Africa and Namibia, and (B) on-craton group I kimberlites from South Africa. The black line represents the bounding reference line of the kimberlitic ilmenite field. Percentage $Fe₂O₃$ was calculated using simple ilmenite stoichiometry [\(Finger, 1972\)](#page-20-0) for individual analyses, and lines of equal Fe₂O₃ were contoured from the data set (dashed lightgrey). These lines are also displayed on subsequent $MgO-TiO₂$ plots for reference (see text).

Fig. 2. Plot of MgO versus Cr₂O₃ for (A) off-craton group I kimberlites from South Africa and Namibia, and (B) on-craton group I kimberlites from South Africa.

reference line is well defined by the ilmenite compositions from both the off-craton and on-craton localities at MgO contents between 4 and 15 wt.% [\(Fig. 1\).](#page-5-0) Below 8 wt.% MgO, the kimberlite compositional arc is defined by the following quadratic equation:

$$
y = -51.9078 + 52.8316x - 11.5519x^{2} + 1.2003x^{3}
$$

$$
- 0.0475x^{4}.
$$

Above 8 wt.% MgO, the arc is defined by the following cubic equation:

 $y = 28.5188 + 4.7521x - 0.287x^2 + 0.0067x^3$.

It is stressed that these equations are a convenient way to define a bounding or limiting reference curve applicable to kimberlites on a world wide basis. This bounding curve can be used as an aid in assessing the kimberlitic characteristics of individual ilmenite grains found in prospecting grains. However, as discussed further below, individual kimberlite localities comprising a population of ilmenites may define different but approximately parallel arcs. Grade categories for the kimberlites are given in [Table 1.](#page-2-0) All the off-craton kimberlites are barren or extremely low grade and most of the on-craton bodies have at least some diamonds, and based on these data, there is no obvious systematic relationship between grade and the $MgO-TiO₂$ relationships.

In order to assess the broader applicability of the kimberlitic ilmenite reference arc defined by Southern African sources, the $MgO-TiO₂$ relationships of ilmenite in mineral concentrates from selected North American, Siberian, Australian, and West Africa kimberlites [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) are shown in Figs. 3–6, respectively. The compositional statistics are given in [Table 2.](#page-3-0)

For the North America data, all but one of the 1071 available analyses fall to the MgO-rich side of the defined arc. The North America kimberlitic ilmenite compositions extend to lower MgO content than those from Southern Africa, and hence aid in defining the kimberlitic ilmenite field boundary at very low MgO contents (Fig. 3).

The Siberian data represented on [Fig. 4](#page-8-0) includes analyses from the Udachnaya and Mir kimberlites, and the vast majority of the data points plot well to the right of the kimberlitic ilmenite reference line. The Siberian data presented here could be used to define its own well-constrained line, but this would not be universally

Fig. 3. Plot of MgO versus TiO2 for ilmenite from North America kimberlites (data of [Schulze et al., 1995\)](#page-21-0). Symbology as for [Fig. 1.](#page-5-0)

Fig. 4. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenite from Siberia kimberlites. Symbology as for [Fig. 1.](#page-5-0)

applicable because much of the Southern African data would fall to the low-Mg side of such a line.

The Australian data includes ilmenite analyses from the Cleve-1 and Skerring kimberlites located in South and North Australia, respectively (Fig. 5). As with the North America localities, over 90% of the data points plot to the MgO-rich side of the kimberlitic ilmenite reference line. These data actually show a very similar compositional trend to the kimberlites from Southern Africa.

Fig. 5. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenite from Australia kimberlites. Symbology as for [Fig. 1.](#page-5-0)

The West African ilmenites (Fig. 6) are divided into various ilmenite types according to the divisions listed in the UMASS ilmenite database. It is evident in Fig. 6 that a significant proportion of the ilmenites fall to the low-Mg side of kimberlitic reference line, and while these mostly relate to groundmass ilmenites, there are a number of discrete ilmenite nodules and bimineralic associations that also fall in this area. Most of the discrete nodules in the nonkimberlitic field are from the Liberian data, while most of the groundmass ilmenites in the non-kimberlitic field are from Sierra Leone. These ilmenites all contain elevated MnO contents, with the proportion of MnO to MgO increasing to lower MgO contents. A high proportion of these have slightly elevated or elevated Cr_2O_3 (more than approximately 0.25 and 0.5 wt.%, respectively) which approach typical kimberlitic values. Elevated MnO in ilmenites from Koidu, Sierra Leone [\(Haggerty and Tomp](#page-20-0)kins, 1984; Tompkins and Haggerty, 1985) and MnO enrichment trends evident in some Monastery ilmenites [\(Haggerty et al., 1979\)](#page-20-0) were attributed to late-stage carbonate and $CO-CO₂$ reactions in the kimberlite. In a practical sense, most groundmass

ilmenites would not report to heavy mineral concentrates in exploration samples, most being less than approximately 0.3 mm in diameter. The relatively few data compiled for the group I kimberlites that fall to the low-MgO side of the kimberlite reference line [\(Fig. 1b\)](#page-5-0) could be similar late-stage ilmenites, or possibly spurious non-kimberlitic ilmenites incorporated into the kimberlite from disaggregated country rock xenoliths.

It is noted that carbonatites can contain high-MnO ilmenites, often also associated with high-MgO contents (see, e.g., [Haggerty, 1976, table Hg-16\(3\) and](#page-20-0) Hg-20(9); Haggerty, 1991). Such ilmenites, however, seldom contain high- Cr_2O_3 contents (rarely more than approximately $0.3 \text{ wt.} %$.

Ilmenites from various Southern African, North American, and Russia localities extracted from the UMASS database [\(Table 1\),](#page-2-0) which were not used in defining the kimberlitic reference line discussed above, are shown in [Fig. 7.](#page-10-0) These data represent an independent confirmation of the applicability of the reference line. While a few of the data clearly fall on the non-kimberlitic side of the reference line, the majority are within the kimberlitic field.

Fig. 6. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenite from West Africa kimberlites. Symbology as for [Fig. 1.](#page-5-0)

Fig. 7. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenite from Southern Africa, North America, and Russia. Symbology as for [Fig. 1.](#page-5-0)

In summary, we have chosen the arc defined by the Southern African sources as the kimberlitic ilmenite reference line as it would correctly classify kimberlitic ilmenites from a variety of kimberlite sources.

For comparative purposes, the ilmenite data from North America, Siberia, and Australia are also shown in MgO-Cr₂O₃ compositional space in Figs. 8-10. These data reinforce the notion that a high proportion of kimberlitic ilmenites have elevated Cr_2O_3 , some of which also display a parabolic $MgO - Cr₂O₃$ relationship [\(Haggerty, 1975, 1976, 1991\).](#page-20-0) However, it is noted that while this 'parabolic' relationship is relatively common, it is by no means universal. Often only the right hand limb is present, and both base and position of the limb vary in $MgO - Cr_2O_3$ space (see, e.g., [Smith, 1977; Eggler et al., 1979; Apter et al.,](#page-21-0) 1984; Schulze, 1984; Moore, 1987; Wyatt et al., 1994; Orr, 1998; Graham et al., 1999).

3.2. Non-kimberlitic ilmenites

A variety of sources were used to define a compositional reference line for non-kimberlitic ilmenites. These included abundant ilmenite compositions from gabbros and picrites that form part of the Mount Ayliff Intrusion (Insizwa Complex), ilmenites from Karoo Basalts in the Bobonong area of Botswana, and groundmass ilmenites in gabbroic phases of the Okenyenya Igneous Complex in Namibia [\(Table 1\).](#page-2-0) The major element MgO versus $TiO₂$ compositions for the Insizwa and Okenyenya non-kimberlitic ilmenites are presented in [Fig. 11,](#page-12-0) and the Bobonong ilmenites is given in [Fig. 12.](#page-13-0) The non-kimberlitic ilmenites [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) have lower MgO contents at equivalent $TiO₂$ values than ilmenites derived from kimberlites [\(Figs. 1, Figs.](#page-5-0) 1, Figs. 3 Figs. 4 Figs. 5). Note that this nonkimberlitic reference line is a measure of the likely maximum MgO limit, at a given $TiO₂$ value, for non-kimberlitic ilmenites, irrespective of the fact that the trend within individual data sets is often subparallel to the $Fe₂O₃$ contours and oblique to the reference line. Thus, most non-kimberlitic ilmenites will plot to the left of the non-kimberlitic arc, and kimberlitic ilmenites to the right of the kimberlitic arc. The area between these arcs, therefore, represents an area of uncertainty that will require additional information, such as Cr_2O_3 and/or MnO

Fig. 8. Plot of MgO versus Cr_2O_3 for ilmenite from North American kimberlites.

Fig. 9. Plot of MgO versus Cr_2O_3 for ilmenite from Siberian kimberlites.

Fig. 10. Plot of MgO versus Cr_2O_3 for ilmenite from Australian kimberlites.

Fig. 11. Plot of MgO versus TiO2 for for non-kimberlitic rocks from Insiwa and Okenyenya (data from [Cawthorn et al., 1988,](#page-20-0) and le Roex, pers. comm.). Percentage Fe₂O₃ contours (from [Fig. 1\)](#page-5-0) are shown as the dashed light-grey lines. The black line at lower MgO represents the chosen bounding reference line of the non-kimberlitic ilmenite field. The black line at higher MgO represents the bounding reference line of kimberlitic ilmenite compositions defined localities in South Africa and Namibia [\(Fig. 1\).](#page-5-0)

Fig. 12. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for non-kimberlitic Karoo volcanics from the Bobonong Area in Botswana. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

contents, before a paragenesis can be attributed. Non-kimberlitic ilmenites also usually have less than 1.0 wt.%. $Cr₂O₃$ and, with few exceptions, have less than $0.5 \text{ w\% Cr}_2\text{O}_3$. This is well illustrated in the major element statistics presented for the Insizwa and Karoo Data in [Table 2.](#page-3-0) Note that several data points, especially those from Insizwa, fall just above the 0 wt.% $Fe₂O₃$ line in the MgO- $TiO₂$ plot, and these data should be viewed as suspicious (perhaps due to rutile or pseudobrookite intergrowths in the ilmenite?). The data set as a whole is nevertheless very useful in defining a nonkimberlitic reference line.

The maximum MgO contents of non-kimberlitic ilmenites were used to estimate a compositional field for these ilmenite varieties. The cubic equation defining the non-kimberlitic bounding reference line is as follows [\(Figs. 11 and 12\):](#page-12-0)

$$
y = 25.4062 + 6.1433x - 0.4187x^2 + 0.0106x^3
$$

3.3. Ilmenites from other kimberlite-related rock types (melnoites)

In the previous sections, we have attempted to establish the compositional fields for kimberlitic and non-kimberlitic ilmenites in terms of $TiO₂$ and MgO. The next step was to evaluate where ilmenites from kimberlite related rock types fall into the classification scheme. These include ultramafic lamprophyres (e.g., alnoites, mellilitites, etc.) and alkali basalts, and are referred to by the term ''melnoite'' for the purpose of this review [\(Table 1\).](#page-2-0) Melnoites are known to host phenocrystic and groundmass ilmenites, as well as megacrystic and xenocrystic ilmenite derived from mafic lower crustal or upper mantle lithologies.

[Fig. 13](#page-14-0) shows the MgO and TiO₂ compositional range of ilmenites present in the Malaita alnoites, as well as ilmenite megacrysts found in the Okenyenya ultramafic lamprophyre (UML) breccia. The ilmenites from Malaita show a trend of slightly decreasing $TiO₂$ contents with decreasing MgO content, and these ilmenite compositions transect the kimberlitic and nonkimberlitic reference lines. The Okenyenya ilmenite megacrysts plot just to the left of the non-kimberlitic reference line at low MgO content. As with the Malaita data, ilmenites from the Entilombo Melnoite, from the Kwazulu Natal province of South Africa, show a linear trend of decreasing $TiO₂$ with decreasing MgO contents [\(Fig. 14\).](#page-14-0) Although the data transect the kimberlitic ilmenite reference line, only 3 of the 1417 analyses plot on the low-MgO side of the non-kimberlitic line.

Malaita Alnoite and Okenyenya UML Megacrysts

Fig. 13. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenites from the Malaita Alnoite and Okenyenya ultramafic lamprophyre. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

[Fig. 15](#page-15-0) is a plot of MgO versus $TiO₂$ for ilmenites from the Selco alkaline intrusions, Canada, which are described in detail by [Janse et al. \(1986\),](#page-20-0) and classified petrogenetically as alnoites. These ilmenite data also transect the kimberlitic and non-kimberlitic boundaries. Ilmenites from the Lake Bullenmerri basanite intrusion, Australia, a 'kimberlite related rock' which also comprises abundant upper mantle garnets, are presented in [Fig. 16.](#page-15-0) The majority of the data fall to the low-Mg side of the non-kimberlitic reference line with only two data points within the kimberlitic ilmenite field.

Fig. 14. Plot of MgO versus TiO2 for ilmenites from the Entilombo Melnoite, Kwazulu Natal province, South Africa. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

Fig. 15. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for the North America, Selco Alnoite. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

The observation that these kimberlite 'related rock' ilmenite compositions straddle the kimberlite reference line is consistent with the fact that is no sharp petrological boundary line between them and genuine kimberlites. While it may be difficult to differentiate single isolated 'related rock' ilmenites found in exploration samples from kimberlitic ilmenites on the basis of $TiO₂ - MgO$ relationships alone, the former are normally low in $Cr₂O₃$ (less than approximately 0.3 wt.% Cr_2O_3 ; see [Table 2\)](#page-3-0). If a population of ilmenites is present, a related rock paragenesis is also suggested if they define a trend at a shallow angle to

Fig. 16. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for the Australia, Lake Bullenmerri Basanite. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

the kimberlite reference line (and in some cases, subparallel to the $Fe₂O₃$ contours).

3.4. Ilmenites from exploration programs

Some exploration data sets are used to illustrate the application of the classification scheme to distinguish kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenites. Fig. 17 shows the MgO versus $TiO₂$ contents for a population of ilmenites visually identified as potentially kimberlitic by the Mineral Sorters at Mineral Services diamond laboratory. The majority of the ilmenites are classified as non-kimberlitic in this plot. Importantly, however, four of the 142 grains are in fact classified as kimberlitic. These samples would therefore warrant additional follow-up because these are highly likely to derive from a kimberlite.

The MgO and $TiO₂$ compositions of the ilmenites in the KIMC exploration database for the Slave craton in Canada [\(Table 1\)](#page-2-0) are shown in [Fig. 18.](#page-17-0) Clearly several of these analyses plot above the 0 wt.% $Fe₂O₃$ reference line and are poor analyses, or perhaps could be other high-TiO₂ bearing minerals that have been incorrectly designated as ilmenites in the database. This plot further highlights the apparent difficulties in visually distinguishing kimberlitic from non-kimberlitic ilmenites. The majority of the ilmenites shown in this plot are

clearly kimberlitic, but the data set also contains a large population of non-kimberlitic grains. Any follow-up work conducted over these recoveries prior to mineral analysis may have resulted in misdirected exploration. For comparative purposes, the KIMC ilmenites are also shown in MgO $-Cr₂O₃$ compositional space in [Fig. 19.](#page-17-0) The majority of these data display a parabolic kimberlite relationship noted by [Haggerty \(1975, 1976, 1991\),](#page-20-0) but the lower-Mg, low-Cr data clearly fall into a separate population.

3.5. Zoning of ilmenite: implications for the classification scheme

[Schulze et al. \(1995\)](#page-21-0) demonstrated for several ilmenite populations from North America kimberlites that core and rim compositions might show significant chemical variation. Indeed it appears as though compositional zoning in ilmenite megacrysts and macrocrysts may be fairly common worldwide. [Schulze et](#page-21-0) al. (1995) and [O'Brien and Tyni \(1999\)](#page-21-0) note that, at most localities where chemical zonation is present, this is represented by increased MgO and/or Cr_2O_3 contents in the outer 100 to 500 μ m of the grain. This compositionally distinct rim is different to the perovskite mantle commonly seen on kimberlitic ilmenites derived directly from kimberlite concentrate or recov-

Fig. 17. Plot of MgO versus $TiO₂$ for an exploration data set. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

Fig. 18. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for ilmenites from the Canadian Slave exploration KIMC database. Symbology as for [Fig. 11.](#page-12-0)

ered close to the kimberlite source rock. [Schulze et al.](#page-21-0) (1995) furthermore concur with the conclusions of previous investigations into ilmenite zoning that the rims of elevated MgO and $Cr₂O₃$ are a result of late stage magmatic overgrowth of new ilmenite on preexisting cores or partial re-equilibration of the ilmenite rims with the host magma. [O'Brien and Tyni](#page-21-0) (1999) suggest that magma mixing may also play an

Fig. 19. Plot of MgO versus Cr₂O₃ for ilmenites from the Canadian Slave exploration KIMC data set.

important role in generating high-MgO ilmenite rims. Certain localities studied by [Schulze et al. \(1995\),](#page-21-0) and work conducted by [O'Brien and Tyni \(1999\),](#page-21-0) however, show examples of ilmenite rims with elevated MgO contents and no corresponding Cr_2O_3 increase. The inferred models for these ilmenites are, either that the magma transporting the grains to surface is a more primitive MgO rich variety that had not yet precipitated significant Cr-rich mineral phases, or that magnesite which would have accompanied the ilmenite macrocrysts to surface would have decomposed in the magma resulting in a sudden increase in MgO content of the magma [\(Schulze et al., 1995\).](#page-21-0)

In addition to the primary chemical zonation seen in kimberlitic ilmenites, alteration of kimberlitic ilmenites in the secondary environment may also be a factor in certain climatic environments. Such secondary alteration is however markedly different from that described above, and is manifested in a distinct increase in MnO and lower MgO contents (e.g., [Wyatt, 1979; Agata, 1998; Jiang et al., 1996\)](#page-21-0). Ilmenites showing these features are present in the Premier kimberlite, and were reported at the Second Cambridge Kimberlite Symposium in 1979 [\(Wyatt, 1979\).](#page-21-0) The data presented in this study, and reproduced in Table 3, have been plotted in $MgO-TiO₂$ space in [Fig. 20.](#page-19-0) Most of the core and intermediate zone analyses fall within the kimberlite field, while the rim analyses fall well within the non-kimberlitic field. [Wyatt \(1979\)](#page-21-0) interprets the MnO enrichment at Premier as either a late-stage nonmagmatic phenomenon postdating kimberlite consolidation, or being due to low-temperature metasomatism of the grains by cir-

Table 3

[Composition of zoned ilmenites from the Premier Mine, South Africa \(from](#page-21-0) Wyatt, 1979)

Several of the Cr-rich kimberlitic ilmenites from the Mwenezi kimberlite in Zimbabwe studied by [Williams and Robey \(1999\)](#page-21-0) showed high MnO contents ranging from 4.5 to 5.4 wt.%, and near zero MgO contents. The authors suggest this may be due to MnO introduction/replacement of MgO in the ilmenites, presumably similar to the Premier case presented above. Indeed, many of these ilmenites have typical kimberlitic high- Cr_2O_3 (more 0.5 wt.%) contents. These Mwenezi ilmenites would plot within the nonkimberlitic field on a bivariate MgO versus $TiO₂$ plot. Our experience has shown that, in certain cases, the MgO content decreases to the extent that visually kimberlitic ilmenites plot to the low-MgO side of kimberlitic compositional field. It is important to recognise such grains in exploration data sets and to classify their paragenesis correctly.

Fig. 20. Plot of MgO versus TiO₂ for zoned ilmenites from the Premier kimberlite. Percentage Fe₂O₃ lines are shown as the dashed light-grey lines. The black lines represent the non-kimberlitic and kimberlitic ilmenite reference lines, respectively.

In contrast to kimberlitic ilmenites, non-kimberlitic ilmenites seldom have zoned rims with increased MgO and/or Cr_2O_3 contents. A selection of the non-kimberlitic ilmenites from the Mineral Services exploration data set were analysed on their rims at distances of 10 and $20 \mu m$ from the grain margin, respectively, and the entire set of ilmenites was also examined using secondary electron backscatter imaging techniques on the in-house Mineral Services Scanning Electron microscope. Both the analytical data and the observations under backscatter confirmed the absence of ilmenite rims of differing composition to their cores.

The analysis of the rims of ilmenites that fall at or close to the compositional boundaries may aid in the interpretation of the paragenesis of these grains. The absence of a compositionally distinct rim does not necessarily mean that the grain is non-kimberlitic, but the presence of a rim with increased MgO or Cr_2O_3 contents may be significant.

4. Conclusions

The results of this study define a simple and practical classification scheme that can be used to compositionally discriminate ilmenites derived from

kimberlitic sources from those occurring in other sources. The key major elements used in this distinction are MgO and $TiO₂$. In addition, the Cr₂O₃ content of the ilmenites also needs to be considered because non-kimberlitic ilmenites typically contain very low to zero Cr_2O_3 contents (seldom above 0.5 wt.%). This is particularly relevant for assessing MnO-enriched ilmenites (more than approximately 1.0 wt.% MnO) that may be zoned or altered ilmenites.

The fact that both non-kimberlitic and kimberlitic ilmenites are recovered in exploration programs in several regions worldwide illustrates the need to be able to discriminate these effectively. The correct identification of the ilmenite source lithology, especially in areas where ilmenite is the key pathfinder mineral, will result in direct cost saving to exploration programs as false anomalies will be easily identified. In addition to this, the ilmenite classification scheme will also aid in finding kimberlitic rocks in areas that contain high background abundances of non-kimberlitic ilmenite.

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