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4 Pulsed volcanism and rapid oceanic deoxygenation during 5 **Oceanic Anoxic Event 1a**

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17 **ABSTRACT**

18 Widespread oceanic anoxia, biological crises, and volcanic activity are associated with
19 the onset of Early Aptian (ca. 120 Ma) Oceanic Anoxic Event 1a (OAE1a). Reconstructions of
20 oceanic deoxygenation and its links to broadly contemporaneous volcanism, however, remain
21 poorly resolved. Here we use novel geochemical data, including $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ ratios and rare Earth
22 element abundances, to parse the timing and tempo of submarine volcanism and global oceanic

23 deoxygenation across this event. Pacific Ocean sediments deposited in the run up to OAE1a
24 record multiple phases of marine volcanism associated with **the** emplacement of Ontong Java
25 Plateau lavas. Rapid oceanic deoxygenation followed the initial phases of volcanism and a
26 biocalcification crisis. Large swaths of the oceans likely became anoxic from the Tethys to the
27 Pacific Oceans in <30 k.y. Oceanic anoxia persisted for almost a million years after this and was
28 likely sustained through intensified continental and submarine weathering. These results paint a
29 new picture of OAE1a in which volcanism, biological crisis, and oceanic deoxygenation are
30 separated in time and linked through Earth system responses that operate on **timescales of tens of**
31 **thousands of years.**

32 INTRODUCTION

33 Oceanic Anoxic Events (OAEs) occurred intermittently throughout the Phanerozoic Eon
34 and are linked to major climatic anomalies, large igneous province (LIP) volcanism, and
35 biological crises (Erba, 2004; Erba et al., 2010; Jenkyns, 2010). For instance, submarine
36 volcanism and **the** emplacement of the Ontong Java Plateau (OJP) in the Pacific Ocean correlates
37 with Early Aptian OAE1a (Bottini et al., 2012; Bottini et al., 2015; Larson, 1991; Mehay et al.,
38 2009; Mills et al., 2017; Percival et al., 2021), which is globally demarcated by sedimentary C-
39 isotope anomalies that subdivide the event into segments (C2–C7) (Menegatti et al., 1998) (Fig.
40 1). Most radiometric ages for OJP lavas fall between 124 Ma and 120 Ma (Timm et al., 2011),
41 and thus OJP volcanism is often implicated as the driver for biogeochemical upheaval across
42 OAE1a. Os-isotope and Hg-concentration records suggest **that** the onset of volcanism was coeval
43 with the beginning of OAE1a (C3, **ca.** 120.76 Ma) **and that** the main eruptive phase occurred
44 between 120.70 Ma and 119.90 Ma (C3–C6) (Bottini et al., 2012; Percival et al., 2021; Tejada et
45 al., 2009) according to the timescale of Malinverno et al. (2010) (Fig. 1).

46 OJP volcanism likely triggered biotic turnover, climatic perturbations, and widespread
47 oceanic deoxygenation. For example, OJP volcanism injected large masses of CO₂ into the
48 ocean-atmosphere system (Mehay et al., 2009), which contributed to a warm greenhouse climate,
49 accelerated hydrologic cycle, and increased weathering and nutrient delivery to the oceans
50 (Bottini et al., 2015). Nutrient delivery, in turn, can drive eutrophication with increased primary
51 productivity and water-column oxygen demand (Westermann et al., 2013). Indeed, the onset of
52 OAE1a (C3, ca. 120.76 Ma) is delineated by the deposition of organic matter (OM)-rich black
53 shales, which continued across a million year interval (C3–C6, 120.76–119.66 Ma), which
54 implies OM accumulation in oxygen-poor waters (Jenkyns, 2010) (Fig. 1). OAE1a is also
55 associated with global Os- and Sr-isotope excursions that are thought to represent volcanic
56 activity and basalt-seawater interaction with corresponding changes in ¹⁸⁸Os and ⁸⁶Sr delivery to
57 the oceans (Bottini et al., 2012; Mills et al., 2017). However, the response times of the Os- and
58 Sr-isotope perturbations across OAE1a are vastly different, >50 k.y. and >1 m.y., respectively,
59 and this is generally attributed to their differing residence times in the ocean (Os is ~40 k.y., Sr is
60 ~5 m.y.). Similar (~1 m.y.) dynamics in the Li- and Ca-isotope systems—both with >1 m.y.
61 residence times—have been attributed to enhanced continental weathering resulting from
62 volcanic CO₂-induced warming (Blattler et al., 2011; Lechler et al., 2015). These observations
63 imply that volcanism may have triggered OAE1a and associated feedbacks, but current records
64 of both ocean redox state and volcanism generally lack the resolution required to evaluate the
65 timing and tempo of OJP eruptions and their relationship to the hallmark biogeochemical
66 perturbations of OAE1a. This limitation makes the cause-and-effect relationships of LIP
67 eruptions, oceanic deoxygenation, and biotic turnover during OAE1a difficult to establish.

68 To reconstruct **the eruption history of the OJP** and associated oceanic deoxygenation, we
69 established multiple geochemical records (Fe speciation, manganese enrichments (Mn_{EF}), rare
70 Earth element (REE) abundances, and $\delta^{53}Cr$ ratios) in sediments that record OAE1a (Table 1).
71 These proxies have relatively short **residence times in the ocean** (<10 k.y.) and thus respond to
72 environmental changes on similar timescales. The Fe-speciation proxy quantifies sediment ratios
73 of highly reactive Fe (Fe_{HR}) to total Fe (Fe_{Tot}) (Fe_{HR}/Fe_{Tot}), **and** values >0.38 **are** diagnostic of
74 sediment deposition under anoxic conditions (Raiswell et al., 2018). Cerium (Ce/Ce^*) and
75 Europium (Eu/Eu^*) anomalies (i.e., the deviation of Ce and Eu concentrations relative to
76 neighboring REEs) are widely used to trace oceanographic processes (Nozaki, 2001). Ce is redox
77 active and Ce anomalies (Ce/Ce^*) reflect **the** seawater oxygenation state, whereas **the anomalies**
78 **(Eu/Eu^*) of europium, which is also redox active, trace** seawater mixing with hydrothermal
79 fluids (Olivarez and Owen, 1991). Chromium isotopes ($\delta^{53}Cr$) are an additional paleoredox
80 proxy (Frei et al., 2009) **and are useful** in fingerprinting both depositional redox state and
81 hydrothermalism (Bauer et al., 2019; Bauer et al., 2021). Together, these data resolve distinct
82 intervals of volcanism, followed by oceanic deoxygenation, which is, in turn, followed by shifts
83 in oceanic chemistry related to continental and submarine weathering.

84 **METHODS**

85 We analyzed sedimentary rocks deposited on the southeastern margin of the Tethys
86 Ocean (Cismon core) and in the Pacific Ocean (**Deep Sea Drilling Project [DSDP] Site 463**) (see
87 Supplemental Material¹). Lithologically, the sites are dominated by chemical precipitates whose
88 compositions may directly reflect their seawater provenance (carbonates and OM-rich shales;
89 Erba and Larson, 1998). All samples are stratigraphically constrained and can thus be temporally
90 correlated between sites. We conducted total digests and selective leaches to speciate metals

91 buried in detrital (lithogenic) and authigenic materials (non-lithogenic), respectively. Elemental
92 concentrations and Cr isotopic compositions were measured in both digests and leaches (0.5 N
93 HCl) and screened for detrital sediment contribution (Figs. DR2–DR4¹). Detailed methods and
94 tabulated data can be found in Table DR1¹.

95 RESULTS

96 Manganese concentrations in sediments from both sites display strong temporal
97 variability. In the ~100 k.y. before OAE1a (C2), aluminum-normalized Mn (Mn_{EF})
98 concentrations (PAAS normalized, $Mn_{EF} \sim 1.0$ [McLennan, 2001]) at DSDP Site 463 are strongly
99 enriched ($Mn_{EF} = 19$), whereas pre-OAE1a Mn_{EF} values at the Cismon site are typical of deep-
100 sea sediments ($Mn_{EF} = \sim 7$) (Fig. 2). At the onset of OAE1a (C3), a second large Mn enrichment
101 is observed at DSDP Site 463 ($Mn_{EF} = 21$), which is followed by a decrease to $Mn_{EF} < 1$ in less
102 than 30 k.y. (Fig. 2). Mn in Cismon sediments also drops to $Mn_{EF} < 1$ during the first 30 k.y. of
103 C3 (Fig. 2). Mn_{EF} values at both sites remain mostly at < 1.0 for the rest of OAE1a (C3–C6) (Fig.
104 2).

105 The isotopic composition of Cr differs greatly in Tethys Ocean and Pacific Ocean
106 sediments. Pre-OAE1a (C2) $\delta^{53}Cr$ values at both sites fall within the crustal range (igneous
107 silicate Earth (ISE) = -0.121 ± 0.10 ; Schoenberg et al., 2008). However, at the onset of OAE1a
108 (C3), $\delta^{53}Cr$ values diverge at the two sites. At Cismon, $\delta^{53}Cr$ values rise to isotopically heavier
109 values, whereas at DSDP Site 463, $\delta^{53}Cr$ values drop to light values (-0.84%) (Fig. 2). Cismon
110 sediments have $\delta^{53}Cr_{HCl}$ (range = $+0.29\%$ to $+1.34\%$, mean = $+0.86\%$) and $\delta^{53}Cr_{Bulk}$ (range =
111 -0.2% to $+0.34\%$, mean = $+0.13\%$) values that are mostly heavy relative to the ISE for the rest
112 of OAE1a (C3–C6) and return to ISE compositions following the event (C6, Fig. 2). In contrast,
113 sediments deposited at DSDP Site 463 during OAE1a have $\delta^{53}Cr_{HCl}$ (range = -0.23% to

114 +0.11‰, mean = -0.07‰) and $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}_{\text{Bulk}}$ (range = -0.18‰ to +0.47‰, mean = +0.02‰) that
115 mostly fall in the ISE range (Fig. 2).

116 REE concentrations in OAE1a sediments are dynamic and coherent. REE signals in
117 OAE1a sediments are primary and free of appreciable siliciclastic contamination (Figs. DR2–
118 DR4). At both sites, pre-OAE1a (C2) Ce/Ce* values are typical of sediments deposited by
119 oxygenated seawater at ~0.4 (Nozaki, 2001) (Fig. 2). However, during C2, ~100 k.y. before
120 OAE1a, Eu/Eu_{HCl}* values at DSDP Site 463 show a positive spike (+1.37) that is coeval with
121 strong Mn-enrichment (phase I, Fig. 2). Within the first ~30 k.y. of OAE1a (C3), both the
122 Cismon and DSDP sites record a shift in Ce/Ce* to more positive values, which reach >0.80
123 (Fig. 2). At the onset of C3, Eu/Eu_{HCl}* values at DSDP Site 463 display a second large positive
124 excursion (+1.44) that is also mirrored by Mn-enrichment and a large negative $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ excursion
125 (phase II, Fig. 2). During OAE1a (C3–C6), both sites have Ce/Ce* values consistently above 0.4
126 (Cismon_{mean} = 0.63, DSDP Site 463_{mean} = 0.82) and return to pre-excursion values following C6
127 (Fig. 2). During C4, DSDP Site 463 sediments record a third positive Eu/Eu* anomaly in both
128 bulk and 0.5 N HCl extractable pools (phase III, Fig. 2). This excursion is less apparent in the
129 other proxies but evident in Hg-concentrations at DSDP Site 463 (Fig. 1).

130 **DISCUSSION**

131 **Ontong Java Plateau Volcanism**

132 Manganese abundances and Eu/Eu* patterns in Aptian sediments resolve several distinct
133 and previously unrecognized volcanic phases associated with the emplacement of the OJP in the
134 Pacific Ocean (Fig. 2). Elevated Mn_{EF} and Eu/Eu* in sediments deposited at DSDP Site 463
135 occur in three distinct intervals: ~100 k.y. before OAE1a (phase I, C2), at its onset (phase II,
136 C3), and during OAE1a (phase III, C3–C4). These intervals of elevated Mn_{EF} and Eu/Eu* likely

137 reflect sediment deposition from seawater mixed with hydrothermal fluids and signal multiple
138 discrete pulses of volcanism in the Pacific Ocean. These volcanic phases are likely resolved at
139 DSDP Site 463 owing to its proximity to the OJP (Erba et al., 2015), whereas the distal Cismon
140 sediments display little evidence for such volcanism, **which implies** that the Tethys Ocean was
141 mostly isolated from direct hydrothermal influence at this time. This is supported by Hg-
142 concentration trends (Fig. 1), which reveal appreciable Hg-cycle perturbations only in Pacific
143 Ocean sediments proximal to the OJP source (Percival et al., 2021).

144 OJP emplacement gave rise to both short- and long-term changes in seawater chemistry
145 that developed earlier than previously thought and persisted across **hundreds of thousands of**
146 **years**. ~~The short oceanic residence time of Mn and Eu of <1 k.y. led to responses on similar~~
147 ~~timescales and thus resolves marine hydrothermalism in proximal sediments.~~ This phenomenon
148 is observed through abrupt (~10 k.y.) coeval excursions in Mn_{EF} and Eu/Eu_{HCl}^* at DSDP Site
149 463 during volcanic phases I, II, and III. **In** contrast, the much more gradual decline in $^{187/188}Os$
150 over ~75 **k.y.** from **ca. 120.73 Ma** to **ca. 120.65 Ma** (C4) is globally synchronous, **postdates**
151 volcanic phases I and II, and likely results from protracted submarine alteration of large volumes
152 of fresh OJP basalt (Fig. 2). This basaltic material was likely emplaced episodically in the
153 preceding 200 **k.y.** during volcanic phases I and II (Fig. 2). **Non-radiogenic Os-isotope**
154 **compositions are maintained throughout OAE1a at both sites, which implies** a sustained shift in
155 the mass balance of Os fluxes to the oceans and continued basalt alteration as a long-term source
156 of ^{188}Os . Local records in the Pacific Ocean, therefore, reveal a more complex and episodic
157 volcanic history than that resolved by the global Os- and Sr-isotope responses **that are** thought to
158 signal sustained volcanic input to the oceans over >100 **k.y.**

159 **Timing Oceanic Deoxygenation**

160 Volcanic fluids associated with phases I and II were injected into oxygenated seawater in
161 the Pacific Ocean. The most pronounced Mn_{EF} at DSDP site 463 coincides with the largest
162 positive Eu/Eu^* anomalies and a large negative excursion in $\delta^{53}Cr$ to -0.84% (phase II, Fig. 2).
163 In the modern oxygenated oceans, sediments deposited in close proximity to active hydrothermal
164 vents show similarly negative $\delta^{53}Cr$ values (-1.20%) **that are** imparted through both partial
165 reduction of seawater $Cr(VI)$ by hydrothermal $Fe(II)$ and diagenetic $Cr(III)$ oxidation by
166 sedimentary Mn-oxides (Bauer et al., 2019). Collectively, Cr-isotope compositions and Eu/Eu^*
167 anomalies in DSDP Site 463 sediments all signal hydrothermal fluid mixing with oxygenated
168 seawater. Volcanic phases I and II thus occurred when the Pacific Ocean was well oxygenated, at
169 least at the location of DSDP Site 463 sediment deposition.

170 Oceanic anoxia likely expanded to global scales in the aftermath of volcanic phase II,
171 **which occurred** <30 k.y. after the start of the OAE1a at both sites (Fig. 2). Fe speciation at both
172 sites displays a transition to Fe_{HR}/Fe_{Tot} values >0.38 , which occurred **in** <30 k.y. between **ca.**
173 **120.76 Ma** and **120.73 Ma** (Fig. 2) **and reveals** rapid oceanic deoxygenation during C3.
174 Synchronous shifts in Mn_{EF} and Ce/Ce^* in sediments from both sites also imply changes **that are**
175 best explained through rapid basin-scale deoxygenation. For instance, the strongly elevated
176 Ce/Ce^* values at both sites imply large-scale reductive dissolution of sediment Mn minerals
177 (German and Elderfield, 1990; German et al., 1991) and signal likely expansion of oceanic
178 anoxia into the deeper oceans where Mn nodules tend to accumulate. The Fe_{HR}/Fe_{Tot} and Ce/Ce^*
179 values that first record anoxic conditions, moreover, are immediately preceded by declining
180 Mn_{EF} to values **of** <1 at both sites (C3, Fig. 2), **which** likely reflects local Mn loss from
181 sediments due to reductive Mn-oxide dissolution under anoxic conditions. **This process is** often
182 observed in modern anoxic marine sediments (Brumsack, 1989). Similar Ce/Ce^* excursions to

183 values >0.8 in other Tethyan sediments further support widespread anoxia during OAE1a (Bodin
184 et al., 2013).

185 The Cr-isotope compositions at both sites, though different, could reasonably be
186 interpreted as reflecting anoxia in both the Tethys and Pacific Oceans during OAE1a (C3–C6).
187 For example, the heavy $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ excursions ($\delta^{53}\text{Cr}_{\text{Bulk}} +0.34\text{‰}$, $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}_{\text{HCl}} +1.34\text{‰}$) at the Cismon
188 site document partial to near-complete reduction of seawater Cr(VI) under anoxic conditions,
189 which preserves the heavy $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ of seawater Cr(VI) (Reinhard et al., 2014). In contrast, at DSDP
190 Site 463, the $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ values fall mostly within the ISE range during OAE1a and instead reflect
191 sustained hydrothermal input into the Pacific Ocean. Hydrothermal release of mantle Cr ($\delta^{53}\text{Cr} =$
192 ISE) into anoxic waters would not have supported Cr redox reactions or appreciable Cr-isotope
193 fractionation. Notably, $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ records in sediments deposited during OAE2 (ca. 92 Ma) display
194 excursions to isotopically lighter values (Holmden et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016). This signal
195 similarly has been interpreted to reflect an increased flux of hydrothermal Cr large enough to
196 mask an excursion to isotopically heavier values expected under expanded oceanic anoxia.
197 Patterns in $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$ records across different OAEs thus appear to have some common drivers.

198 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

199 Our data resolve the relative timing of volcanism and oceanic deoxygenation during
200 OAE1a and provide new insight into the relationships between these characteristic features of the
201 event. For example, a global decline in calcareous nannoplankton in the fossil record (Erba et al.,
202 2010) occurs at the onset of volcanic phase II and predates oceanic deoxygenation by ~ 100 k.y.
203 (Fig. 2), which makes anoxia an unlikely driver of the nannoconid crisis. Instead, this timing
204 implies that acidification of the ocean (Wang et al., 2020) resulting from the early phases of OJP
205 volcanism may have played a more important role. We also now pinpoint oceanic deoxygenation

206 to a <30 k.y. interval at the onset of C3 well before intensified weathering is reflected in oceanic
207 chemistry some 150–300 k.y. later (Lechler et al., 2015). Oceanic deoxygenation has often been
208 attributed to eutrophication that arises from enhanced weathering-driven nutrient fluxes to the
209 oceans. Our new timing, however, now suggests that initial deoxygenation was an even more
210 immediate response to volcanic phases I and II. Such responses could include changes to oceanic
211 circulation and declining oxygen solubility in seawater as the result of warming of the ocean or
212 eutrophication driven directly by the hydrothermal supply of bio-limiting metals (Bottini et al.,
213 2015). Higher-resolution analyses of the rock record and Earth system modeling could help test
214 these hypotheses over the relevant timescales.

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333 Figure 1. Anatomy of **Oceanic Anoxic Event (OAE) 1a is shown for the (A) Tethys Ocean and**
334 **(B) Pacific Ocean**. C-isotopes, carbonate C (gray lines), organic matter C (black lines), and
335 stratigraphy **are** after Bottini et al. (2012) **and** Menegatti et al. (1998); $\text{Fe}_{\text{HR}}/\text{Fe}_{\text{Tot}}$ (this study);
336 $^{187/188}\text{Os}$ **are after** Bottini et al. (2012) **and** Tejada et al. (2009); nannoconid abundances **are after**
337 Erba (2004); Hg concentrations **are after** Percival et al. (2021).

338 Figure 2. **Oceanic Anoxic Event (OAE) 1a geochemistry is shown**. Chronostratigraphy **is** after
339 Malinverno et al. (2010). $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ age distribution of **Ontong Java Plateau** lavas **is after** Timm
340 et al. (2011). **(A)** C-isotopes **are after** Bottini et al. (2012) **and** Menegatti et al. (1998). **(B)**

341 $^{187/188}\text{Os}$ are after Bottini et al. (2012). (C) Mn_{EF} ; pink shading is the PAAS Mn_{EF} . (D)
 342 $\text{Fe}_{\text{HR}}/\text{Fe}_{\text{Tot}}$; pink shading is <0.38 . (E) $\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$; pink shading indicates ISE range. (F) Ce/Ce^* ; pink
 343 shading shows modern composition of the upper ocean (<0.4). (G) Eu/Eu^* ; pink shading denotes
 344 modern composition of the upper ocean (<1.2). Note x-axis break between panels. DSDP—Deep
 345 Sea Drilling Project. **[[In the figure, Myrs should by m.y. Kyrs should be k.y.]]**

TABLE 1. GEOCHEMICAL PROXY DESCRIPTIONS

Proxy	Utility	Proxy Threshold	Threshold Calibration Reservoir	<Threshold	>Threshold	References
<i>Interpretation</i>						
Manganese enrichment factor (Mn/Al)	paleoredox proxy, hydrothermal proxy	0–1	Modern oxygenated sediments	possibly anoxic sediments	hydrothermal Mn supply	(Böning, 2005; Brumsack, 1989)
Os-isotopes ($^{187/188}\text{Os}$)	weathering proxy	0.6	Modern oxygenated seawater	weathering of mafic lithology (^{188}Os -enriched)	weathering of felsic lithology (^{187}Os -enriched)	(Bottini et al., 2012)
Fe speciation ($\text{Fe}_{\text{HR}}/\text{Fe}_{\text{Tot}}$)	paleoredox proxy	0–0.38	Modern oxygenated sediments	possibly oxic sediments	anoxic sediments	(Raiswell et al., 2018)
Cr-isotopes ($\delta^{53}\text{Cr}$)	paleoredox proxy, hydrothermal proxy	–0.21–0.00 (‰)	Modern oxygenated sediments	possibly hydrothermal activity, possibly oxic sediments, possibly anoxic sediments	anoxic sediments	(Bauer et al., 2019, 2021)
Ce anomalies (Ce/Ce^*)	paleoredox proxy	0–0.4	Modern oxygenated seawater	oxic sediments	anoxic sediments	(Bodin et al., 2013; Nozaki, 2001; Tostevin et al., 2016)
Eu anomalies (Eu/Eu^*)	hydrothermal proxy	1.0–1.2	Modern oxygenated seawater	oxic sediments	hydrothermal Eu supply	(Olivarez and Owen, 1991)

346 **[[Böning, 2005, and Tostevin et al., 2016 are not in the ref list. Please add the citations to**
 347 **the ref list or delete them from the table.]]**