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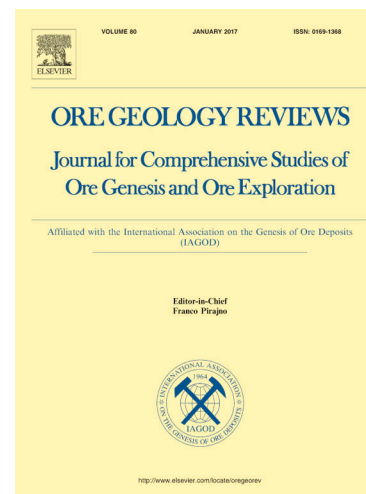
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1           **Co-Ni-arsenide mineralisation in the Bou Azzer district (Anti-Atlas, Morocco): genetic**  
2 **model and tectonic implications**

3  
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16  
17  
18           **Abstract**

19  
20           The two main types of mineralisation in the Co-Ni-As Bou Azzer district, i.e., “contact”  
21 mineralisation” and “cross-cutting” structures have been re-defined based on new field, structural,  
22 textural and mineralogical observations. The main orebodies consists of elongated lenses of massive  
23 Ni-Co-Fe arsenide minerals. These lenses occur in a core of carbonate or siliceous gangue and are  
24 almost exclusively located along the contact between serpentinite and a quartz diorite intrusion. Vein  
25 systems, cross-cutting the different lithologies, are ore-bearing only along segments in contact with  
26 the serpentinite and/or the massive mineralisation. The two orebody types share a rather similar  
27 mineralisation history, starting with a Ni-rich arsenide stage (mainly expressed within the massive  
28 mineralisation), followed by a massive Co-arsenide stage recognised in both mineralisation styles, and  
29 ending with Fe-rich arsenide and base metal sulphide stage.

30           Detailed field observations, microstructural, tectonic, textural and mineralogical analyses led  
31 us to propose a genetic model for the Bou Azzer ore district in which massive mineralisation was  
32 formed by alteration and transformation of previously formed breccia levels composed of serpentinite  
33 (transformed to gangue) and magnetite/spinel (transformed to Co-Ni arsenide minerals) fragments.  
34 Inversely, a tectono-hydrothermal event controlled by a NE oriented transtension generated the vein  
35 system, associated certainly with partial leaching and reconcentration of metals from the massive  
36 mineralisation because veins are principally mineralised when crossing massive orebodies. We  
37 discuss a possible temporal continuum between the two mineralisation styles: massive mineralisation,

38 coeval with serpentinisation (serpentine neof ormation), is related to the transformation of brecciated  
39 lenses and vein mineralisation is formed as an infill of large fractures during transtensive tectonics.  
40 This model has significant tectonic implications, because serpentinite breccia lenses, favourable high-  
41 permeability environment for the massive mineralisation formation, can be compared to ophicalcic  
42 rocks developed in a context of mantle exhumation by detachment. Two types of textures can be  
43 differentiated within the massive mineralisation: i) Brecciated Massive Mineralisation, developed in  
44 the core of ophicalcic levels, and ii) Laminated Massive Mineralisation, supposed to form within  
45 ancient mylonitic serpentinite levels corresponding to intensive deformation zones. Although the  
46 geodynamic significance will not be addressed in this article, we propose and discuss an alternative  
47 model in which the presence of exhumed mantle rocks allows the formation of specific massive  
48 arsenide deposits.

49

50 **Keywords:** Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) Bou Azzer district; Hydrothermalism; Serpentinite; Vein;  
51 Massive arsenide ores; Tectonic implications

52

### 53 1. Introduction

54 Economic concentrations of Co are almost always considered as by- or co-product of mining  
55 where Co is associated with Cu and/or Ni. The only exception is the Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag)  
56 district in Morocco that hosts the only mine in the world where Co is produced as a primary product.  
57 No satisfying genetic model has been proposed so far in the abundant literature regarding the Bou  
58 Azzer district. Five main Co deposit types are presently identified worldwide and associated to  
59 different geological settings: 1) sediment-hosted stratiform Cu-Co deposits such as the Central  
60 African Copper Belt in DRC and Zambia in which Cu and Co are mostly concentrated by diagenetic  
61 processes (Cailteux et al., 2005; Hitzman et al., 2012); 2) magmatic sulphide deposits such as the  
62 giant Noril'sk-Talnakh, Sudbury and Kambalda Ni-Cu (-PGE-Co) deposits in Russia, Canada and  
63 Australia, respectively (Arndt et al., 2005; Naldrett, 2005); 3) secondary concentrations within  
64 lateritic profiles, such as the Koniambo Ni (-Co) deposit, in New Caledonia (Freyssinet et al., 2005;  
65 Butt and Cluzel, 2013); 4) Mn-nodules and Co-rich crusts on the oceanic seafloor (Manheim and  
66 Lane-Bostwick, 1988; Hein and Koschinsky, 2014); and 5) the five-element hydrothermal vein type  
67 (Bi-Co-Ni-Ag-As±U), whose formation is related to the involvement of methane as reducing agent  
68 with the circulation of connate brines, in crustal thinning environments in continental rifting and  
69 crustal thinning environments (Bastin, 1939; Kissin, 1992; Markl et al., 2016; Burisch et al., 2017).  
70 Recent works also tentatively suggest (Dolansky, 2007; Burisch et al., 2017), mainly based on  
71 similarities in the mineral assemblage and fluid signatures that the Bou Azzer district may belong to  
72 the five-element veins deposit type.

73 The Bou Azzer mining district hosts an enigmatic type of Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) mineralisation  
74 located at the vicinity of hydrated ultramafic rock complex (serpentinite) (Leblanc, 1975; Saquaque et

75 al., 1989; Ennaciri, 1995; Hefferan et al., 2000, Kreissl et al., 2018; Ikenne et al., 2020). Although the  
76 paragenesis is rather well-known (Leblanc and Billaud, 1982; Ennaciri, 1995; Ennaciri et al., 1995;  
77 Ahmed et al., 2009; Gervilla et al., 2012), the mode of formation and the structural constraints on the  
78 mineralisation remain unsolved so far. Indeed, although recent models are based on hot brines  
79 circulation within the basement rocks during a major extensional tectonic episode at the end of the  
80 Variscan orogeny (e.g. Essarraj et al., 2005, Oberthür et al., 2009), some other assumptions argue for  
81 a five-element veins deposit type (Burisch et al., 2017), suggest the deposits may have been initiated  
82 at high-temperature (>500°C, Gervilla et al., 2012) or may be also polyphase during the  
83 Neoproterozoic orogeny (Leblanc, 1975; Ennaciri et al., 1997; Tourneur et al., 2019).

84 Most of the authors agree that serpentinite rocks are the source for Co and Ni, leached and  
85 concentrated by hydrothermal fluid circulation, because the main ore bodies are hosted at the vicinity  
86 of a serpentinite complex (e.g. Leblanc, 1975; Ennaciri, 1995). However, the significance of the  
87 geodynamic context in terms of prerequisite for ore formation in this particular environment has never  
88 been addressed so far and structural constraints remain strongly lacking in all studies devoted to the  
89 Bou Azzer district. Recently, serpentinite occurrences worldwide have been described in tectonic  
90 environments where ultramafic mantle rocks are exhumed either in intra-continental extensional  
91 setting (Lagabrielle and Bodinier, 2008), or in hyper-extended rift margins at the ocean–continent  
92 transition (OCT; Boillot et al., 1987; Manatschal, 2004, Manatschal et al., 2006), among others.  
93 Mostly, serpentinitisation occurs because of seawater circulation through the underlying mantle, and  
94 this process shares some common features with the formation of seafloor and sub-seafloor massive  
95 sulphide deposits (Richardson, 1987; Alt, 1995; Alt et al., 1996). In this last example, percolating  
96 seawater interacts with the oceanic crust mainly composed by gabbro and basalt in order to form  
97 massive sulphide mineral accumulations enriched in Cu, Zn, Pb, Au, and Ag. However, it has been  
98 recently demonstrated that, in the setting of mid-ocean ridges, ultramafic rocks may also exhumed  
99 along slow spreading ridges and host black smokers-like hydrothermalism yielding Cu-Fe-Ni-Co-Zn-  
100 rich ore occurrences (Coltat et al., 2019). No example of a similar process involving leaching and  
101 hydrothermal alteration of the mantle has been discussed and proposed so far for the Bou Azzer Co-  
102 Ni-As (-Au-Ag) district.

103 This paper integrates the results of a field study and structural, textural, mineralogical, and  
104 geochemical analyses of the Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) mineralisation at Bou Azzer. A model of formation  
105 is proposed and discussed taking into account the various mineralisation types, their distribution and  
106 specific geometry, as well as their mineralogical characteristics. It is also discussed if both  
107 mineralisation styles (massive lenses and veins) could have formed during continuous mineralisation  
108 events. The continuity is suggested by similar paragenetic sequence beginning with a Co-arsenide  
109 stage in both mineralisation types. However, the structural context of formation differs from  
110 emplacement in permeable and brecciated zones between serpentinite, quartz diorite and Upper  
111 Neoproterozoic volcanic rocks for the massive bodies, and ore formation in large fractures for the vein

112 mineralisation. The role and the significance of several parameters such as pre-existing serpentinite  
113 breccias along extensional fault/detachment, in-situ transformation processes allowing the formation  
114 of Co-Ni minerals at the expense of spinel/magnetite or significance of serpentinite as a major  
115 contributor to the leaching, transport and capture of the metallic phases have been highlighted.  
116 Finally, a tentative of integration of the Bou Azzer district in a new model of formation of “Massive  
117 Arsenides” alternative that involved hydrothermal fluid circulation in an ultramafic rock complex is  
118 proposed and discussed. Such a revisited ore-forming model constitutes a key for future exploration  
119 targeting for Co-Ni deposits essentially due to the new definition of orebody characteristics and  
120 geometry.

121

## 122 **2. Geological setting**

123

### 2.1. The Moroccan Anti-Atlas

124 The Moroccan Anti-Atlas is located in the southern part of Morocco and belongs to the  
125 northern edge of the West African Craton (WAC) and bordered to the north by the South-Atlantic  
126 Fault (Fig. 1). It comprises a succession of inliers that are broadly oriented WSW/ENE and  
127 characterised by Proterozoic cores overlain by Palaeozoic (mostly Cambrian) sedimentary rocks  
128 (Choubert, 1963). The Major Anti-Atlas fault (MAAF) separates two domains: the eastern domain  
129 including the Jbel Saghro, Siroua and Ougnat inliers, whereas the western domain includes nearly 10  
130 inliers. The Bou Azzer-El Graara thus occupies a central position in the Anti-Atlas and is located  
131 exactly along the MAAF (Fig. 1). Field relationships also suggest that the Eastern Anti-Atlas only  
132 exposes Neoproterozoic terranes, while the Western Anti-Atlas exposes a Palaeoproterozoic basement  
133 overlain or intruded by Neoproterozoic sedimentary, volcanoclastic and granitoid rocks (Hollard et  
134 al., 1985). Four orogenic cycles affected the Anti-Atlas area during the Palaeoproterozoic (Eburnean:  
135 Barbey et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 2004; Ennih and Liégeois, 2001), the Neoproterozoic (Panafrican:  
136 Gasquet et al., 2005; Tuduri et al., 2018a), Palaeozoic (Variscan: Burkhard et al., 2006) and the  
137 Cenozoic (Alpine: Missenard et al., 2006). The Proterozoic events, mostly concerned by this study,  
138 are the most significant and according to Choubert (1945) and Choubert and Faure-Muret (1980), they  
139 have been historically divided into three main lithostratigraphic units called Precambrian I (PI),  
140 Precambrian II (PII) and Precambrian III (PIII) then grouped in Supergroups, Groups, Subgroups,  
141 Formations, Members and Suites with local names and geographical justifications (Thomas et al.,  
142 2004), fact that not really simplified the geological understanding in our opinion. Indeed, we have  
143 chosen here to present the lithology with the ancient nomenclature followed by a recent proposition of  
144 simplification by Tuduri et al. (2018a).

145 Although PI terranes were previously attributed to the Palaeoproterozoic, some have been  
146 reinterpreted as Neoproterozoic in age, like PII and PIII. PI is essentially made of Palaeoproterozoic

147 crystalline rocks and is only observed in the Western Anti-Atlas (Ennih and Liegeois, 2001). The PII  
148 units are composed of grauwackes, quartzites and metasediments in which PII-related granitoids  
149 emplaced. The ophiolitic complexes of Bou Azzer and Siroua are also attributed to PII formations  
150 (Leblanc, 1975; Choubert and Faure-Muret, 1980). PIII formations consist of late volcanic units that  
151 overly PI and PII. They are represented by the Ouarzazate supergroup mainly composed of  
152 ignimbrites (Thomas et al., 2004; Blein et al., 2014). A new subdivision into two complexes (lower  
153 and upper) has been recently proposed by Tuduri (2005) and Tuduri et al. (2018a) and appears more  
154 appropriate for linking the sedimentary, volcanic and plutonic rocks to the two tectono-magmatic  
155 events that affected the Anti-Atlas. The term “complex” is herein employed because the two  
156 Neoproterozoic events that affected the Anti-Atlas cannot be described as classical orogenic events  
157 but more likely as an association between volcanism, magmatism and tectonics that strongly  
158 influences the nature of the lithologies. The particularity of these events, with strong influence of  
159 magmatism, low- to medium-grade metamorphism and deformation, justifies the distinction from  
160 classic orogenic phases. Indeed, the main tectono-magmatic events that characterise the  
161 Neoproterozoic deformation are: i) a first magmatic-tectonic event (in the lower complex) mainly  
162 associated with massive high-K calc-alkaline magmatism taking place in the core of weakly deformed  
163 meta-sedimentary complexes controlled by a transpressive tectonics (e.g., Choubert, 1963; Thomas et  
164 al., 2004; Gasquet et al., 2005; Tuduri, 2005; Walsh et al., 2012; Tuduri et al., 2018a,b); ii) a  
165 transtensive deformation (in the upper complex) associated with periods of intense silicic volcanism  
166 (multiple ash-flow caldera-forming eruptions), magmatism and volcano-sedimentary formations  
167 (Gasquet et al., 2005; Walsh et al., 2012; Tuduri et al., 2018a). Such ignimbritic sequences  
168 unconformably overlay the deformed lower complex. Indeed, these complexes are separated by a  
169 major unconformity that is associated with changes in the tectonic setting - between the  
170 compressional character of the lower complex (transpressional tectonics) and the extensional  
171 character of the upper one (transtensional tectonics)(Tuduri et al., 2018a).

172 In both the Siroua and Bou Azzer inliers, an uncertainty remains about the early occurrence of  
173 obduction and oceanic basin closure (suture zone) due to the supposed existence of one or two  
174 subduction zones. Several geodynamic interpretations have been proposed and discussed on this  
175 crucial point of the Neoproterozoic Anti-Atlas evolution (Gasquet et al., 2005; Bousquet et al., 2008;  
176 El Hadi et al., 2010; Walsh et al., 2012; Triantafyllou et al., 2018) but consensus has never been  
177 reached (see below).

178

## 179 **2.2. The Bou Azzer inlier**

180 Located in the central part of the Moroccan Anti-Atlas (Fig. 1), the Bou Azzer-El Graara  
181 inlier represents one the most famous inliers in Morocco, because first description of a Proterozoic



182 oceanic lithosphere was made there (Leblanc, 1975) and also because of its spectacular Co-Ni-As  
183 mineralisation. The Bou Azzer inlier has been defined as an ophiolitic complex supposed to be a  
184 Neoproterozoic suture zone (Leblanc, 1975, 1976, 1981; Bodinier et al., 1984; Gahlan et al., 2006).  
185 The inlier is parallel to the MAAF (Fig. 1b), and some faults with similar orientation were assigned to  
186 this major Anti-Atlas fault. The inlier is characterised by large amounts of serpentinised ultramafic  
187 rocks, originally mantle harzburgites and dunites, associated with gabbro and basaltic pillow lavas  
188 (Leblanc, 1975, 1976, 1981; Bodinier et al., 1984; Gahlan et al., 2006). The ultramafic units are  
189 surrounded by: i) a Cryogenian volcanic arc complex that was emplaced at *ca.* 770-760 Ma, and ii)  
190 Ediacaran volcanic and volcanoclastic rocks including the Ouarzazate supergroup and then  
191 infracambrian sedimentary sequences (Thomas et al., 2004; Walsh et al., 2012 ; Blein et al., 2014).  
192 There, the structural pattern is assumed to follow the closure of an ocean that may have driven to the  
193 obduction of the ophiolitic unit during a period bracketed between 640 and 770 Ma (Clauer, 1976;  
194 Leblanc, 1981; Thomas et al., 2004; Samson et al., 2004; Blein et al., 2014). Following the formation  
195 of the ophiolitic unit, the lower complex sequences consisting of deformed metavolcanic and  
196 metasedimentary rocks, that represent a late orogenic detrital sequence, were emplaced (the Bou  
197 Lbarod and Tiddiline groups). The latter are intruded by high-K calc-alkaline plutons of granodiorite,  
198 quartz diorite and gabbro at *ca.* 650- 630 Ma (Thomas et al., 2004; Inglis et al., 2005; El Hadi et al.,  
199 2010). The upper complex is characterised by numerous volcanic sheets, mostly ignimbritic,  
200 belonging to the Ouarzazate supergroup and deposited during a long-lived extensional-transensional  
201 stage that began around 585-580 Ma and built up until 550-540 Ma (Mifdal and Peucat, 1985;  
202 Thomas et al., 2004; Blein et al., 2014; Tuduri et al., 2018a). Most of these rocks are composed of  
203 dacitic to rhyolitic ignimbrites and andesitic tuffs and overly all the Precambrian units of the Bou  
204 Azzer inlier. Calc-alkaline to high-K plutonic rocks continued to intrude these volcanoclastic units  
205 (Thomas et al., 2004). Both the lower and upper complex units were affected by greenschist facies  
206 metamorphism (Bodinier et al., 1984; Wafik et al., 2001). A sedimentary cover sequence composed of  
207 conglomerates and carbonate rocks overlies all the units and marks the transition to the  
208 Precambrian/Cambrian (Pouit, 1966; Bouchta et al., 1977; Tucker, 1986; Latham and Riding, 1990;  
209 Gasquet et al., 2005). This unit has been locally named the Adoudounian formation or, more recently,  
210 the Taroudant group.

211

### 212 **2.3. The Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag-Cu) district**

213 Three major mining districts can be defined within the Bou Azzer inlier (Fig. 1C). The Bou  
214 Azzer Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) district occurs in the NW and central parts and includes several dispersed  
215 ore deposits all related to serpentinite massifs (e.g. *Taghouni, Bou Azzer East, Aghbar, Tamdrost,*  
216 *Ambed, Ait Ahmane* and the Ag-rich *Tizi* one, Fig. 2). The Bleida Au (-Pt-Pd) district is located in the



217 south-eastern part. The third district is defined by the appearance of several small Cu-rich occurrences  
218 in the infracambrian sedimentary cover (El Ghorfi et al., 2006; Bourque et al., 2014; Maacha et al.,  
219 2015). The entire Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) Bou Azzer district is operated by the Compagnie de Tifnout  
220 Tiranimine (CTT), a subsidiary of Managem, a Moroccan industrial mining group.

221 Three main ore deposit types have been described in the Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) Bou Azzer  
222 district (Leblanc and Lbouabi, 1988; Ennaciri, 1995; Ennaciri et al., 1995b; Maacha et al., 2012): i)  
223 Co-Ni arsenide “contact” mineralisation as massive lenses located at the contact between serpentinite  
224 and quartz diorite and sometimes along the contact with the Upper Neoproterozoic volcanic rocks of  
225 the Ouarzazate supergroup; ii) Co-rich veins “cross-cutting” all lithologies; and iii) Ag-rich  
226 “stockwork” zones emplaced along the contact aureole of the quartz diorite pluton within the  
227 serpentinite. Such a contact aureole is characterised by the following mineral assemblage: prehnite-  
228 calcite-epidote-garnet-clinopyroxene, that represents a Mg-Ca±Mn metasomatic rock associated with  
229 rodingite formation (Leblanc and Lbouabi, 1988; Essarraaj et al., 2005; Borisenko et al., 2014).

230 Five mineralisation stages have been defined at Bou Azzer (Leblanc, 1975; Ennaciri, 1995;  
231 Ennaciri et al., 1996; Ahmed et al., 2009): i) Ni-arsenide stage, mainly consisting of nickeline - NiAs  
232 and rammelsbergite - NiAs<sub>2</sub>; ii) Co-arsenide stage marked by precipitation of safflorite -  
233 (Co,Fe,Ni)As<sub>2</sub>, its monoclinic dimorph (*i.e.*, clinosafflorite) and skutterudite - (Co,Ni)As<sub>3</sub>, sometimes  
234 associated with scarce native gold; iii) Fe-arsenide stage characterised by loellingite - FeAs<sub>2</sub>; iv)  
235 sulpho-arsenide stage, consisting of gersdorffite - NiAsS, cobaltite - CoAsS and arsenopyrite - FeAsS  
236 assemblage, and v) sulphide-sulphosalt stage, with a chalcopyrite - CuFeS<sub>2</sub>, sphalerite - ZnS,  
237 tennantite-tetrahedrite - (Cu,Fe)<sub>12</sub>As<sub>4</sub>S<sub>13</sub> - (Cu,Fe)<sub>12</sub>Sb<sub>4</sub>S<sub>13</sub> and molybdenite - MoS<sub>2</sub> assemblage, with  
238 minor brannerite - (U,Ca,Ce)(Ti,Fe)<sub>2</sub>O<sub>6</sub> (Oberthür et al., 2009). All assemblages are associated with  
239 carbonate and/or siliceous gangue sometimes containing chlorite and talc.

240 The division into early “contact” mineralisation and late “cross-cutting” veins (also called  
241 “croiseurs” in French) serves as a guide for CTT’s geologists and miners for both exploration and  
242 operation activities. However, no satisfying petro-structural genetic model has been proposed for the  
243 formation of the economic mineralisation so far. Hereafter based on textural and mineralogical  
244 arguments and the recognition of massive Co-Ni arsenide bodies in the core of the “contact”  
245 mineralisation, contact mineralisation is called “massive”, whereas “cross-cutting” mineralisation is  
246 defined as veins or vein system. Only these two types are considered in the present study. Historically,  
247 carbonated complex shells, also called “carapace d’Ambed” and siliceous complex shells, called  
248 “Birbirite”, are respectively composed of calcite and quartz, and were used in the district as major  
249 exploration guidelines on surface (Leblanc, 1975; Fanlo et al., 2015; Maacha et al., 2015).

250 The age of the Bou Azzer deposits is still debated. Leblanc (1975) estimated the age of Bou  
251 Azzer mineralisation during the Neoproterozoic, based on general arguments. Concordantly,  
252 Neoproterozoic to Cambrian ages were reported by Ennaciri et al. (1996; 1997) with an U/Pb age  
253 around 590-550 Ma (Ediacaran) on a single brannerite grain posterior to the Ni- and Co-rich stages.

254 Levresse (2001) published an  $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$  age of  $218 \pm 8$  Ma (upper Trias) on adularia from *Filon 7/5*  
255 linked to the silver mineralisation described by Essarraj et al. (2005). Dolansky (2007) has also  
256 provided geochronological data for brannerite from *Filon 7/5* vein system having a range of ages from  
257  $383 \pm 7$  Ma to  $257 \pm 8$  Ma, i.e. Devonian to Permian. Oberthür et al. (2009) reported a large number  
258 of ages ranging from Neoproterozoic to Palaeozoic using three different dating methods: Re-Os on  
259 molybdenite, Sm-Nd on carbonates and U-Pb on brannerite. Only carbonate and brannerite gave  
260 consistent upper Carboniferous ages of  $308 \pm 31$  Ma (Sm-Nd) and  $310 \pm 5$  Ma (U-Pb), respectively.

261

### 262 3. Methods

263 The present study relies on new field and structural data collected during two field campaigns.  
264 Samples for this study were selected throughout the entire Bou Azzer mining from underground  
265 workings in eleven deposits, down to a depth 510 m below surface (*Taghouni, Bou Azzer Centre -*  
266 *Puit 3, Bou Azzer East - Puit 3 and Puit 6, Aghbar, Oumlil, Bouismass, Tamdrost, Ait Ahmane - Filon*  
267 *53 and Zone D*), seven quarries or surface outcrops (*Bou Azzer East, Quarry 52, Filon 55 surface,*  
268 *Filon 2, Filon 7, Filon 5 and Bou Azzer Centre*) and one surface trench (*Bou Azzer East*)(Figs. 1 and  
269 2, Table 1, all the sites are not represented in Figure 2). The names of some of the ore bodies are in  
270 French, to keep the original names of the locations. In total, 72 polished thin sections (30  $\mu\text{m}$ -thick)  
271 were prepared for studying the petro-structural features of the Bou Azzer ore deposits from 14  
272 massive and 48 vein ore bodies. Structural data were collected from 8 massive mineralisation sites  
273 (Appendix 1.1) and 39 veins (Appendix 1.2). Direction, dip angle and dip angle orientation of each  
274 measure are indicated.

275 Petrography and micro-structural study were performed using optical transmitted/reflected  
276 light (TL and RL) and cathodoluminescence (CL) microscopes at the Géosciences Montpellier  
277 laboratory (University of Montpellier, France) and the Department of Earth Sciences (University of  
278 Geneva, Switzerland) to document the relationships between mineral phases and mineralised  
279 structures.

280 Microanalysis was carried out using a FEI Quanta FEG 100 Scanning electron microscope  
281 (SEM) and a Cameca SX100 electron probe microanalyser (EPMA) at the Service inter-regional  
282 Microsonde-Sud of Montpellier (France). Major and minor elements were measured in silicate,  
283 arsenide, sulphide and calcite grains with a beam current of 10nA and accelerating voltage of 20 keV.  
284 Nine major elements were analysed for arsenide and sulphide (standards, spectral lines, and  
285 spectrometers were as follows): Co (Co-metal,  $K\alpha$ , LLIF), Ni (Ni-metal,  $K\alpha$ , LLIF), Fe ( $\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ ,  $K\alpha$ ,  
286 LLIF), Cu (Cu-metal,  $K\alpha$ , LLIF), Zn (ZnS,  $K\alpha$ , LLIF), Pb (PbTe,  $M\alpha$ , LPET), S ( $\text{FeS}_2$ ,  $K\alpha$ , LPET),  
287 Ag (Ag-metal,  $L\alpha$ , LPET), Au (Au-metal,  $M\alpha$ , TAP), As (GaAs,  $K\alpha$ , LLIF). Total counting times  
288 ranged from 60 to 240 sec. The concentrations of major elements are available in Tourneur (2019).  
289 Mineral compositions (in apfu) were calculated considering a total of 3.5 atoms for the stoichiometric  
290 skutterudite and 3 oxygens for calcite.

291 Automated mineral analysis and textural imaging of the studied samples were performed  
292 using an FEI QEMSCAN® Quanta 650F facility at the Department of Earth Sciences, University of  
293 Geneva, Switzerland. The system is equipped with two 30 mm<sup>2</sup> Bruker QUANTAX light-element  
294 energy dispersive X-ray spectrometer (EDS) detectors. Analyses were conducted at high vacuum,  
295 accelerating voltage of 25 kV, and a beam current of 10 nA on carbon-coated polished thin sections.  
296 Field Image operating mode (Pirrie et al., 2004) was used for analyses. In total 221 individual fields  
297 were measured per sample, with 1500  $\mu\text{m}$  per field, and point spacing of 5  $\mu\text{m}$ . The standard 1000  
298 counts per point were acquired, yielding a limit of detection of approximately 2wt% per element for  
299 mineral classifications. Measurements were performed using iMeasure v5.3.2 software and data  
300 processing using iDiscover® v5.3.2 software package. Final results consist of: i) high-quality spatially  
301 resolved and fully quantified mineralogical maps; ii) BSE images with identical resolution as the  
302 mineralogical maps; iii) X-ray element distribution maps.

303 Serpentine minerals were analysed by Raman spectroscopy using a Renishaw Invia  
304 spectrometer equipped with a Peltier-cooled silicon CCD detector using a 532 nm laser excitation  
305 wavelength (laserpower 30 mW, 2400 g/mm grating, spectral resolution  $\sim 1 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) at Charles  
306 Coulomb Laboratory, University of Montpellier, France. The excitation beam is provided by a  
307 Stabilite 2017 Ar<sup>+</sup> laser (Spectra Physics, Newport Corporation) at 514.53 nm and a power of 200  
308 mW (resulting in  $\sim 20$  mW at sample), focused on the sample surface using a x100 objective  
309 (Olympus). Two acquisitions were accumulated to provide a high-definition spectrum. To  
310 characterize the bands in the Raman spectra and identify the phases present, the online database of the  
311 French Society of Mineralogy and Crystallography and the software CrystalSleuth with the RRUFF  
312 Project database (Downs, 2006) were used (Appendix 2). Raw data were processed using LabSpec  
313 software designed for the Jobin-Yvon Horiba LabRAM instruments.

314

## 315 **4. Structural and macroscopic study**

### 316 **4.1. General features**

317 The 3D model in Figure 2 summarizes the distribution of geological units, tectonic contacts  
318 and highlights the relationships, laterally and at depth, between the two major Co-Ni-As ore body  
319 types (massive ore and veins) in the deposits from the Bou Azzer district. Figure 2 was built including  
320 field observations at the main mining sites and quarries studied (Table 1).

321 The ultramafic units of Bou Azzer are composed of an ancient oceanic crust (mafic dykes,  
322 layered gabbro, diabase, basalt and pillow lavas), serpentinised upper mantle and granitoid plutons  
323 (Leblanc, 1975). Serpentinite appears as discontinuous, up 10 km-long, lenses and occur always as  
324 central dome structure with north and south contacts dipping to the north and the south, respectively  
325 (Fig. 2). They are surrounded by the volcanic rocks of the upper complex in the north and by mafic

326 rocks in the south, certainly relicts of an ancient oceanic crust (Beraaouz et al., 2004). Most of the  
327 exploited deposits are also located south of these domes (see above), whatever their typology is  
328 (massive or veins) and along the contact between serpentinite and quartz diorite (Fig. 2). Normal fault  
329 motion was observed between serpentinite and the carbonated complex shell at the *Ambed* site (Fig.  
330 3A). The quartz diorite intrusion crops out always south of the serpentinite (Fig. 2). Its relationship  
331 with serpentinite is not clear because the contact generally appears tectonic. However, an intrusive  
332 character has also been demonstrated, at least within the mafic rocks (Fig. 3B).

333 Two main structural directions exist: the N110°E-120°E general trend of the lithological units  
334 (Appendix 1.1) and the NNE crossing faults (see also Figs. 4B-D; Appendix 1.2). The massive bodies  
335 occur always parallel to the N110°E contact, except at *Bou Azzer East (BAE)*, *Bou Azzer Centre*  
336 (*BAC*), *Bouismass* and *Aghbar* where massive mineralisation can occur along roughly NS trends (Fig.  
337 2; Appendix 1.1). Inversely, all mineralised veins occur along the NNE faults and are high-grade only  
338 along segments in contact with serpentinite. The NNE faults do not cross the entire inlier, with one  
339 exception - the *Igherm* fault which is the longest structure affecting also the infracambrian and  
340 Cambrian units (Figs. 1 and 2). However, this is the unique fault in the area which is not mineralised,  
341 even in its part that cross-cuts the serpentinite. The vein system intersects always the massive  
342 mineralisation (*Bou Azzer Centre*, *Bou Azzer East – Puit 3 and Puit 6*, *Aghbar*, *Bouismass*, *Oumlil*,  
343 *Tamdrost*, *Filon 53 at Aït Ahmane*). One can note that these sites only occur in the western and central  
344 parts of the district, domains where the serpentinitised ultramafic mantle crops out, certainly because  
345 mostly exhumed (Leblanc, 1975; Ennaciri et al., 1997).

346 Near the *Taghouni* and *Bou Azzer Centre* sites, the third type of mineralisation occurs as  
347 disseminated silver and associated stockwork that are developed within the intrusive quartz diorite  
348 (Leblanc and Lbouabi, 1988) (see location in Fig. 2). Sampling is currently impossible in this area  
349 thus explaining why this type of mineralisation has not been considered in the present study.

350

#### 351 **4.2. Surface and underground observations**

352 At surface, *serpentinite* colour is green in zones preserved from the intense carbonation and  
353 talc-alteration (Fig. 3C). Serpentinite is constantly affected by a N120°E trending foliation frequently  
354 underlined by magnetite-rich layers (Fig. 3C), but the foliation age remains unknown. These linear to  
355 dispersed magnetite-rich beds are observed in a few places like *Bou Azzer Centre* and *Bou Azzer East*  
356 - *Puit 3*, for example. The significance of such magnetite-rich structures will be discussed further.  
357 Close to the contact, the serpentinite texture is difficult to recognize but several locations show the  
358 presence of breccia with serpentinite fragments (Fig. 4A).

359 The *quartz diorite* body shows a greyish to greenish colour and feldspar and quartz grains are  
360 recognisable. Albitisation, chloritisation, epidote-rich and titanite/calcite mineral alterations affect this

361 rock. Disseminated ore minerals were observed but not determined at this scale. As already stated,  
362 field relationships between serpentinite and quartz diorite intrusion are not easy to define. However,  
363 several observations suggest that quartz diorite is an intrusive body (Fig. 3B). When not mineralised  
364 and occupied by massive lenses, the contact between serpentinite and quartz diorite can show three  
365 aspects: i) underlined by mafic units or dykes (Fig. 3B); ii) underlined by red levels with prehnite-  
366 calcite-epidote-garnet-clinopyroxene minerals that have been attributed to some rodingite levels  
367 supposed to represent a by-product of the serpentinisation process or maybe the effect of the contact  
368 metamorphism between serpentinite and magmatic rocks (Fig. 3D; Leblanc and Lbouabi, 1988); iii)  
369 linear with a white alteration halo (Fig. 3E). We assume that mafic dykes could be the protolith of the  
370 rodingite levels.

371 All structures belonging to the *vein system* intersect the whole geological units including the  
372 massive ore and may reach several hundred metres in length (Figs. 4B-D). They are filled mainly by  
373 quartz and/or carbonate, like in the *Aghbar* sector where one can observe a several metres-large left-  
374 lateral pull apart only filled by calcite and quartz (Fig. 4B). Quartz and calcite infill is ubiquitous  
375 within all vein systems at surface, either close to or far from the mineralised areas. Veins at surface  
376 comprise economic mineralisation only close to the serpentinite contact. As illustrated at *Bou Azzer*  
377 *Centre*, veins can exhibit two main orientations N60°E (i.e., *Filon 7*) and N10°E (i.e., *Filon 5*) (Fig.  
378 4C). They meet together more to the south following the orientation of *Filon 7* (Fig. 4C). At the  
379 *Quarry 52* (see location on Fig. 2), massive mineralisation classically separates the serpentinite from  
380 the quartz diorite and is expressed by the numerous carbonate and siliceous complex shells  
381 characteristic for the studied area (Fig. 4E). Thus the chronology between the two systems is here  
382 confirmed because massive bodies are systematically cross-cut by veins (Fig. 4E). Numerous pockets  
383 filled by coarse-grained, euhedral calcite, are also systematically observed (Fig. 4A).

384  
385 At depth, most of the massive mineralisation consists of elongated orebodies of Co-Ni-Fe  
386 arsenide, 2 to 20 metres-thick, 15 to 30 metres-long, systematically hosted in a complex  
387 quartz/carbonate gangue and observed mainly along the contact between serpentinite and quartz  
388 diorite (Figs. 5A-B). Because of its stratabound nature, no kinematic information was recorded about  
389 the massive mineralisation. Euhedral nickeline, skutterudite and loellingite can be observed  
390 sometimes in galleries. At this scale, gangue texture is frequently massive and seems euhedral, no  
391 matter of its nature, i.e., carbonate or siliceous (Figs. 5A-B). Massive siliceous gangue is composed of  
392 quartz, chlorite, fragments of spinel and chalcopyrite. The carbonate gangue is the most abundant and  
393 shows three types of textures: i) laminated texture with carbonate/chlorite assemblage, ii) granular  
394 texture with blueish calcite (Fig. 5A) and iii) euhedral texture with white calcite and dolomite. No  
395 chronological relationships between the three textures have been determined. These textures arise  
396 some questions about the nature of the massive mineralisation protolith. Note that serpentinite  
397 fragments were frequently observed in the carbonated gangue.

398 The veins are exploited for Co and represent high-angle structures remarkably exposed  
399 underground. The veins are 2 to 60 cm-thick, and mineralised for about 20 metres, horizontally, only  
400 in the segments hosted within the quartz diorite. The vein system is difficult to follow inside the  
401 serpentinite where the large vein seems replaced by numerous thinner and barren fractures (Fig. 6A).  
402 In contrast with the massive mineralisation, the veins show a large variety of internal textures with  
403 dominant breccia, lamination, massive or comb-type infill (Fig. 5C). Minerals involved are quartz,  
404 Co-Fe minerals and late yellow euhedral calcite or dolomite that frequently surrounds fragments of  
405 quartz diorite and/or fragments of mineralisation (Fig. 5C). The different textures described above are  
406 equally represented in veins and their distribution results from their location: i) breccias are  
407 specifically located in pull-apart structures, ii) laminated textures characterise regular segments with  
408 homogeneous thickness and iii) comb-type infill is encountered in open-space structures. At depth  
409 also, numerous metre-scale pockets with coarse-grained euhedral carbonate infill, similar to the one  
410 observed at surface (Fig. 4A) are also frequently observed (Fig. 5D). They have the same  
411 mineralogical characteristics as the vein systems and are supposed to be formed during the same  
412 event. Kinematic indicators observed in the mineralised faults are summarised in the next section.

413 The different types of structures, i.e. the massive mineralisation, the vein system and  
414 associated pockets, are compared between surface outcrops and underground workings at the scale of  
415 the ore deposit as illustrated in Figure 6, in complement to Figure 2 that only shows their distribution  
416 at surface and at depth. Their main features can be summarised as follows:

- 417 - The orebody geometry is similar at surface and at depth. Both mineralisation styles show  
418 similar size (Fig. 6A) and orientation (Fig. 6B).
- 419 - Although massive mineralisation is clearly recognisable at depth, its characteristics at surface  
420 are questionable. It appears, as represented in Figure 6A, that the carbonated complex shells  
421 (carapace) or siliceous complex shells (birbirite) are the surface equivalent of the massive  
422 mineralisation at depth. However, these bodies are frequently oxidised at surface, having very  
423 dark colours.
- 424 - Mafic dykes are systematically observed at the limit between serpentinite and quartz diorite.  
425 They have the same position and orientation as the massive orebodies, but neither  
426 mineralisation, nor alteration, were observed associated with them.

427

### 428 **4.3. Kinematic constraints**

429 Because of the massive texture of the ore it is rather difficult to conduct kinematic  
430 observations in the lenticular orebodies. These structures strike N120°E, parallel to the Major Anti-  
431 Atlas Fault (MAAF) which cross-cut the Bou Azzer inlier and dip mostly to the NE or SW (Figs. 1, 2,  
432 4, and 6). Inversely, the vein system exhibits abundant criteria of motion that diverge following the



433 vein orientation. Stereonet diagrams of Figure 6B demonstrate that veins mainly trend from N10° to  
434 N70°E with a main dipping to W or NW, respectively and values close to 60-80°.

435 A normal vertical motion is observed resulting in pull-apart structures (Figs. 7A-B and 8).  
436 Horizontally, both dextral and left-lateral motions are observed as indicated in the stereoplots of the  
437 Figure 6B in which dextral planes are in red whereas left-lateral ones are in black. Indeed, the veins  
438 trending close to N-S exhibit dextral sense of motion (Figs. 7C and 8) whereas the ones trending  
439 N70°E are associated with left-lateral motion (Fig. 7D). The fact that numerous textures are equally  
440 represented indicates that the vein structures were also active as fault zones and the distribution of the  
441 different textures depends on their location with respect to the fault zone. This explains why breccias  
442 are specifically located in normal motion pull-apart structures (Fig. 7D) whereas laminated textures  
443 characterise regular segments with homogeneous thickness with comb-type infill (Fig. 7A).

444

## 445 5. Mineralogy and microscopic texture

446 Differently to the five stages of the literature, three main mineralisation stages (colours in Fig.  
447 9) have been distinguished and described below. Textural features and relative major element (Co, Ni,  
448 Fe, As, and S) abundances have been also added.

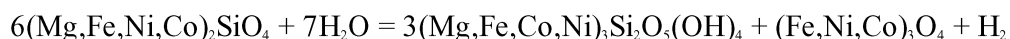
### 449 5.1. Host rocks mineralogy

450 The *quartz diorite* is mostly composed of albite, K-feldspar, pyroxene, apatite, quartz,  
451 oriented chloritised biotite and muscovite, rare epidote and zircon (grey in Fig. 9). Because  
452 plagioclase, pyroxene and biotite exhibit a rather subhedral forms, a hypidiomorphic granular texture  
453 is defined (Fig. 10A). Foliation is marked by white mica and secondary chlorite. Plagioclase, which  
454 has variable size, is albitic in composition ( $Ab\# = 0.92-0.99$ ) and occurs as euhedral to subhedral  
455 grains with typical polysynthetic twins (Tourneur, 2019). Apatite, 10 - 250  $\mu\text{m}$  in size, appears as  
456 euhedral to rounded crystals showing zonation and altered rims in CL images. Near the veins, apatite  
457 is spatially associated with chlorite and loellingite, cut by k-feldspar veinlets (Fig. 10A).

458 The *serpentine* (grey in Fig. 9) composition is intermediate between lizardite and chrysotile,  
459 based on Raman micro-spectroscopy measurements (Appendix 2). However, lizardite is the major  
460 mineral in serpentinite, whereas fibrous chrysotile occurs as an infill in some veins close to the  
461 contact between serpentinite and massive orebodies (Fig. 10B). Serpentinite rocks are characterised  
462 by the occurrence of bastite showing the shape of pyroxene grains resisting to serpentinitisation and  
463 associated pervasive carbonation (Leblanc and Lbouabi, 1988; Ahmed et al., 2005). Rammelsbergite  
464 (Ram) and nickeline (Nk1) disseminations were found within the serpentinite, close to the massive  
465 bodies (Figs. 10B-C). These minerals are the only expression of the mineralisation within the  
466 serpentinite (Fig. 10B). Scarce sulphides and sulfo-arsenides (chalcopyrite, sphalerite, galena,  
467 gersdorffite, bornite, chalcocite, digenite, Tnt-Ttr, arsenopyrite, cobaltite) can also be observed in the



468 serpentinite (Fig. 11A). As reported by Gahlan et al. (2006) and Fanlo et al. (2015), two types of  
 469 spinels/magnetite are commonly observed in the Bou Azzer serpentinite: i) disseminated Cr-rich  
 470 spinels (Fig. 10E) showing margins enriched in magnetite and ii) magnetite beds mostly located far  
 471 from the massive mineralisation (Fig. 3C). Following equation (1), iron can be released from olivine  
 472 during serpentinisation allowing the formation of magnetite along the border of Cr-spinel.



475

## 476 **5.2. Mineralogy and mineral chemistry of the Ni-Co ore**

477 The *massive Ni-Co orebodies* are characterised by two successive mineralisation stages:

- 478 - The early stage of Ni-arsenides (purple in Fig. 9) consists of a first generation of  
 479 nickeline (Nk1, Fig. 10G) with rammelsbergite (Ram) (Figs. 10E-F and 11B-C). Note  
 480 that the monoarsenide (nickeline) crystallised first followed by the diarsenide  
 481 (rammelsbergite; Fig. 10G). When disseminated in serpentine, nickeline shows a  
 482 higher #Co (#Co =  $\text{Co} / (\text{Co} + \text{Ni} + \text{Fe})$ ) of 0.03 than grains from the massive  
 483 mineralisation where #Co is 0.005 (14 analyses; Tourneur, 2019). However,  
 484 rammelsbergite shows similar #Co if the mineral is disseminated in the serpentine or  
 485 occurs in the massive mineralisation (#Co=0.27 and 0.24, respectively; Tourneur,  
 486 2019).
- 487 - The second stage consists of a massive Co mineralisation (green in Fig. 9). Following  
 488 the rammelsbergite deposition, the cobalt arsenide stage is characterised by the  
 489 association of a first generation of cobaltite (Cob1) with small and equidimensional  
 490 skutterudite (Sku1), followed by the first generation of calcite (Cal1) (Figs. 10F-G  
 491 and 11B-C). Then, it is characterised by the formation of a large amount of  
 492 skutterudite (Sku2) and final safflorite (Saf1; Figs. 10F-G-H). Using QEMSCAN  
 493 analysis and X-ray elemental mapping, skutterudite grains show important  
 494 compositional variations between Ni-rich bands and Co-rich bands, becoming  
 495 progressively enriched in Co, as also observed by Gervilla et al. (2012) and Ahmed et  
 496 al. (2009). The core of the grains has a Ni-skutterudite composition ( $\text{Ni}_{0.75}\text{Co}_{0.25}\text{As}_{2.5}$ )  
 497 whereas the rims progressively acquire a more typical skutterudite composition  
 498 ( $\text{Co}_{0.75}\text{Ni}_{0.25}\text{As}_{2.5}$ ; Figs. 11B-C). ( $\text{Fe}^{2+} + \text{Ni}^{2+}$ ) versus  $\text{Co}^{2+}$  and  $\text{As}^+$  versus  $\text{S}^+$  show a  
 499 negative correlation (Figs. 12A-B), as also noted by Dolansky (2007), Ahmed et al.  
 500 (2009), Gervilla et al. (2012) and Maacha et al. (2015). Figure 12 reveals variable  
 501 composition of cobalt and iron-nickel between skutterudite 1 formed in the  
 502 serpentinite and skutterudite 2 of the massive mineralisation. Sku1 has high Co values

503 (15.4-19.5 wt% Co) while Sku2 shows lower Co content (12.1-18.0 wt% Co;  
504 Tourneur, 2019). Sku2 may therefore reflect a progressive evolution of the  
505 mineralising system as continuum process from high Co content to Ni-Fe  
506 compositions (Fig. 12B). Cob2 and Nk2 are considered as alteration minerals on Ram  
507 and Sku2 because occurring as rims around the primary rammelbergite grains and  
508 along fractures (Figs. 9 and 13A).

509

510 Two different gangue associations (siliceous and carbonated) host the massive mineralisation  
511 (black in Fig. 9). Note that relationship between both the siliceous and carbonated gangue was not  
512 observed. The siliceous gangue is composed by a first generation of quartz (Qz1) and chlorite. It hosts  
513 Co-rich arsenides, chalcopyrite and is mostly observed in surface outcrops. The carbonated gangue is  
514 the most abundant and composed of calcite, dolomite, disseminated Cr-rich spinel and laminated  
515 chlorite associated with Co- and Fe-arsenides. The Mg-Fe-Mn diagram of carbonate which is mostly  
516 calcite in composition, integrates analyses from each structure (Fig. 12C). Calcite in the carbonated  
517 gangue shows an average of #Mn = 0.46, with a homogeneous composition with Mg and Fe (see  
518 Tourneur, 2019 for data). Carbonate composition from the surface “carapace” shows trend from Mg-  
519 rich to Mn-rich compositions (Fig. 12C; see location of the main “carapace” in Figs. 1 and 2). In the  
520 paragenetic evolution, the Ni-arsenide stage of the massive mineralisation is followed by the Co-  
521 arsenide one observed in serpentinite and in the gangue. Cal2 shows a close link with Sku2 as  
522 suggested by the crystallisation of Cal2 in the core of the growth bands of Sku2 (Fig. 13C).  
523 Disseminated Cr-rich spinel crystals with alteration halo of magnetite (Fig. 13B), are not only hosted  
524 in the serpentinite, but are also found around rammelsbergite and skutterudite 2 in the carbonated  
525 gangue (Fig. 10E). Then, Lo2 formed at the edge of safflorite (Saf2), representing what we consider  
526 as the Fe stage and also coeval with Cal2 (blue in Fig. 9, Fig. 10H). The base metal assemblage  
527 consists of sphalerite (Sp), chalcopyrite (Ccp1), arsenopyrite (Apy1), galena (Gn) and gersdorffite  
528 (Gd) in the carbonated gangue and represent the sulphide stage formed at the end of the massive  
529 mineralisation paragenesis (Fig. 9).

530

531 *Veins* which are intersecting massive mineralisation and quartz diorite (Fig. 6A) exhibit a  
532 complex infill with several successive stages. Infill is composed, first, of tiny to large euhedral  
533 skutterudite (Sku3) associated with an early dolomite generation (Dol1), two calcite generations (Cal3  
534 and Cal4), comb quartz (Qz2), cobaltite (Cob2) and late calcite (Cal5) (green in Fig. 9, Figs. 11D-E  
535 and 13D). Sku3 has variable composition compared to Sku1 and Sku2 that can be easily discriminated  
536 (Fig. 12B). Figure 11F shows growth banding in skutterudite 3 with Co-, Ni- and Fe-rich zones. It is  
537 noteworthy that skutterudite of the veins contains non-negligible amount of Ni (Fig. 12B).  
538 Disseminated and oriented cobaltite (Cob3) grains with a N160°E trend were seen between comb  
539 quartz (Qz2) (Fig. 13D). Cob3 also formed along the rim of Sku3 and shows high Ni content (around

540 5 wt%; Fig. 11D) even though Ni-rich arsenide has never been reported in the vein system of Bou  
541 Azzer. Star-shaped safflorite (Saf2) followed by elongated crystals or also star-shaped loellingite  
542 (Lo2) are then formed as a replacement of skutterudite (Sku3), also showing variable Co and Fe  
543 content (Fig. 11F). A second generation of veinlets with euhedral adularia (Adu) crystals forms  
544 parallel to the earlier albite/quartz veins (Fig. 13E). Cal5 is enriched in Mg and Mn (Fig. 12C), with  
545 #Mn of ~ 0.66, significantly higher than those of the massive mineralisation.

546

547 The *metric-scale pockets* (Figs. 4A) exhibit open-space fillings consisting, chronologically, of  
548 quartz, carbonate and Co-Fe arsenide (Fig. 5D). They are filled by similar arsenide and sulphide  
549 mineral phases to those observed in the veins: e.g. sub-euhedral Sku3 followed by aggregates of Saf2  
550 and Lo2 in a quartz/chlorite gangue. A comparison between loellingite in the quartz diorite, the  
551 massive mineralisation, the pockets and the veins shows that loellingite from the quartz diorite has the  
552 higher Fe content (average at 26.4 %wt. of Fe) whereas loellingite from the massive mineralisation  
553 and those from veins and pockets show lower values (respectively, average Fe contents of 17.5, 22  
554 and 25 % wt.; see loellingite data available in Tourneur, 2019). Quartz 2 is followed by rhombohedral  
555 Cal4 associated with Cob2 and sulphides (Fig. 13F). Fragments of Lo2 are observed in the gangue of  
556 carbonate (Ca4), frequently in the middle of these structures (Fig. 11F). This calcite (here named  
557 Ca4) has a composition similar to calcite from the veins with typical high Mn content (average #Mn=  
558 0.9; Fig. 12C). Both structures, veins and pockets, contain a late sulphide stage characterised by the  
559 formation of sphalerite, arsenopyrite, chalcopyrite and other accessory minerals (blue in Fig. 9).

560

### 561 **5.3. Texture**

562 Textural characteristics of the massive mineralisation, veins and pockets are indicated in the  
563 lower part of the Figure 9. The main characteristics are the following:

564 - Massive mineralisation exhibits complex internal texture with various aspects of the  
565 Ni-Co arsenides (Ram, Nk1, Sku1, Sku2). Rammelsbergite occurs as isolated grains  
566 in the serpentinite (Figs. 10B and 10D) and in the carbonated/siliceous gangue (Figs.  
567 10F-G). In fact, rammelsbergite occurs as massive, isolated (Figs. 10G and 11B) and  
568 as euhedral feathery, sometimes dendritic and/or brecciated grains (Figs. 10F and  
569 11B). Commonly, isolated rammelsbergite grains are included within massive Co-  
570 arsenide (Sku2; Figs. 10F-G and 11B). High magnification imaging and elemental  
571 mapping illustrates that euhedral feathery or dendritic rammelbergite overgrows  
572 earlier crystals, certainly formed on previous spinel sites (Fig. 14A). In addition,  
573 Sku2, Saf2, Lo1 and Cal2 that crystallised after the first rammelsbergite generation  
574 exhibit typical euhedral shapes certainly due to an open space growth or to

575 replacement as discussed below (Figs. 10E-G and 13C). Optical transmitted light and  
576 cathodoluminescence microscopy revealed that the carbonated gangue hosting the  
577 arsenide shows two alternating textures: i) coarse-grained rhombohedral Cal2 with  
578 clear cleavage and twinning without visible deformation (Figs. 13C and 13G), and ii)  
579 smaller-grained with a jigsaw-like geometry, typical of brecciated domains (Fig.  
580 13G). The occurrence of large brecciated domains of arsenide (Fig. 13G) is confirmed  
581 by the serpentinite fragments (Fig. 4A) and will be discussed below (Brecciated  
582 Massive Mineralisation, BMM).

- 583 - Rarely, massive lenses exhibit a laminated texture with alternating calcite-rich layers  
584 (Cal2) and arsenide-rich ones (Fig. 10C). These textures have been called here  
585 Laminated Massive Mineralisation (LMM) to differentiate them from the BMM (see  
586 above).
- 587 - In the core of the serpentinite, three specific features occur: i) rammelsbergite and  
588 Sku2 are commonly fractured, with a serpentine infill (Figs. 10B-C); ii) inherited  
589 fragments of serpentinite can be observed (Fig. 13H), and iii) ghosts of mesh texture  
590 of calcite are observed in the carbonated gangue (Fig. 14B).
- 591 - Open-space infill textures are characteristic for the veins. Qz3 shows comb texture  
592 formed during the opening of the veins (Figs. 13D-E). Associated to comb-quartz 3,  
593 Cob2 shows a compatible texture with a potential growth toward the vein centre (Fig.  
594 13D). Calcite from the veins occurs also as massive rhombohedral large grains (Cal4)  
595 (Fig. 13F). Inside the veins, skutterudite exhibits fractures filled by carbonates thus  
596 illustrating syntectonic infill (Fig. 11F). Fractured apatite, chlorite and loellingite  
597 have been observed also in the quartz diorite along the vein contacts.
- 598 - Mineralised pockets are observed only inside the massive mineralisation. They show  
599 also open-space filling textures with large centimetre-scale comb-quartz (Qz3),  
600 associated with Co-Fe arsenide formed along the quartz (Fig. 13F). Cal3 of the  
601 pockets shows two types of textures: large rhombohedral texture and smaller  
602 fragmented calcite. Some fragments of Lo2 are also fractured by Cal3 and then,  
603 associated with Qz3 formation.

604

#### 605 **5.4. Alteration**

606 Alteration of the quartz diorite is common and consists in an intense chloritisation, a complete  
607 albitisation of all feldspars, an epidote-rich alteration forming green fractures spatially associated with  
608 the massive mineralised structures and a titanite/calcite (Calc6) alteration. These features are typical  
609 of sodic-calcic alteration (Fig. 9). At the contact between the serpentinite and the quartz diorite where

610 no massive mineralisation is formed, a red and compact rodingite reaction was observed (see above  
611 and Fig. 3D). Serpentinite shows some talc- and carbonate- related alteration. In the massive  
612 mineralisation, Ni and Co-arsenides (Cob<sub>2</sub>, Nk<sub>2</sub> and Gd) have been observed as secondary minerals  
613 around fractured rammelsbergite and Sku<sub>2</sub> (Fig. 13A). Erythrine has been described by Leblanc  
614 (1975) as a supergene alteration of Co arsenide.

615

## 616 **6. Discussion**

### 617 **6.1. Main results**

618 The new contributions of our structural, textural and mineralogical study of the Bou Azzer ore  
619 system are summarized as follows:

- 620 1. The massive bodies, metre-scale in size and trending N120°E, are distributed along the  
621 contact between serpentinite and quartz diorite (Fig. 2). The vein type mineralisation is NS to  
622 N070°E trending and cross-cuts the various lithological contacts in the Bou Azzer area. The  
623 system evolves from Ni-rich-(Co-Fe) in the massive bodies to Co-rich-(Ni-Fe) mineralisation  
624 in the cross-cutting veins. In both systems, the mineralogical succession is the one established  
625 in Figure 9 and can be summarised by three mineralogical stages: i) an arsenide Ni-rich stage  
626 with rammelsbergite/nickeline developed specifically within the massive bodies, ii) an  
627 arsenide Co-rich stage forming late in the massive bodies evolution and at the beginning or as  
628 the main stage of the vein system, and iii) a final stage with Cu-Fe sulphides observed in both  
629 systems.
- 630 2. Massive mineralisation is composed by a carbonated gangue, a siliceous gangue and arsenide-  
631 rich bodies. The ore consists of decimetre-scale elongated bodies parallel to the  
632 lithological/tectonic contact between serpentine and the hanging wall lithology (quartz diorite  
633 or Precambrian volcanic rocks), whereas gangue forms lenses with complex morphology  
634 surrounding the massive bodies. The gangue texture reflects the fact that these lenses are  
635 certainly former breccia bodies with numerous residual fragments of serpentinite that have  
636 been observed at surface, underground and also at microscopic scale. Serpentinite does not  
637 occur only as fragments but also as veins and fractures (Fig. 10B) or fibrous crystals between  
638 fragmented rammelsbergite (Fig. 10C). Such textures testify of serpentinisation synchronous  
639 to the Co-rich mineralisation or corresponding to a late alteration and fracturing of the Co-rich  
640 mineralisation.
- 641 3. Textures of the massive bodies can be separated in two types:
  - 642 a. The most common texture consists of isolated lamellar rammelsbergite grains  
643 encapsulated within the paragenetic succession with, successively, Call, Sku<sub>1</sub>, Cob<sub>1</sub>,  
644 Ccp<sub>1</sub> (Figs. 10F-G, 11B and 14);

- 645           b. Rarely, laminated textures are observed with alternating layers of lamellar nickeline  
646           and automorphic  $\text{Ca}_2$  (Fig. 10D). Ni-rich minerals are overgrown by calcite,  
647           cobaltite and skutterudite prior to the Fe-sulphide stage, when loellingite and  
648           chalcopyrite precipitate. The coexistence of these two textures is further used as a  
649           major criteria for constraining the formation model of the Bou Azzer mineralisation  
650           (see below).
- 651       4. The vein system exhibits internal textures resulting from a tectonically controlled mode of  
652       formation. Veins are associated with sinistral or dextral motions according to their orientation  
653       (Fig. 8) and a normal motion is systematically deduced from vertical planes of observation.
- 654       5. Formation of metre-scale pockets in the core of the massive mineralisation is attributed to the  
655       vein formation stage. These pockets are mainly characterised by large euhedral calcite that  
656       form 90% of the structures but mineralisation (quartz, skutterudite, safflorite, loellingite and  
657       cobaltite) is only found along the contacts or in central position of the pockets (Figs. 4A and  
658       5D).
- 659       6. Within the quartz diorite, dissemination of arsenide minerals, and specifically loellingite,  
660       developed close to the vein type mineralisation. Because these minerals are fractured by K-  
661       feldspar veinlets (Fig. 10A), their formation is supposed to be earlier than the vein formation  
662       event.
- 663       7. Within the serpentinite, close or far from to the massive bodies, Cr-spinel is replaced by or  
664       transformed to magnetite (Figs. 10E and 13B; Ikenne et al., 2005; Gervilla et al., 2012; Fanlo  
665       et al., 2015). It was interpreted that in the massive parts of the orebodies, Cr-spinel is totally  
666       replaced by rammelsbergite or skutterudite.

667

## 668           **6.2. Formation of the Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As ore mineralisation**

669           We propose an integrated genetic model for the Co-Ni-As mineralisation at the Bou Azzer  
670           district explaining the formation of both mineralisation types (Fig. 15).

671           1. The geological and tectonic setting that prevails during mineralisation processes is herein  
672           constructed. We will demonstrate in the following model that this setting plays a significant role for  
673           the mode of formation and for the geometrical/morphological constraints of the various mineralisation  
674           styles in the district. Only the case of massive mineralisation developed at the contact between  
675           serpentinite and quartz diorite is presented here. It has been demonstrated that massive mineralisation  
676           occurs in the core of a gangue in which serpentinite fragments subsist. It is then concluded that a pre-  
677           existing fault zone and its associated breccia (Tourneur et al., 2019) can represent the initial stage as  
678           illustrated in Figures 15A and 15A1. Indeed, we therefore suppose an initial coexistence of laminated  
679           (mylonitic zone of the fault) and brecciated parts of the pre-existing fault. We also suppose that some



680 parts of the brecciated level can contain fragments of the quartz diorite and that spinel and magnetite  
681 are also present. Some domains with open space between fragments are also supposed to exist and  
682 represented in white in Figure 15A.

683 2. The first stage consists of hydrothermal fluid incursion which preferentially percolated  
684 along the lithological/tectonic contacts and within the highly porous brecciated area (Fig. 15B). It is  
685 unknown if the fluid arrived from the upper, lateral or lower part of the system. All possibilities are  
686 presented in Figure 15B (white arrows). During this stage, the two types of massive mineralisation  
687 were formed, i.e., the Laminated Massive Mineralisation (LMM) within mylonitic parts of the  
688 serpentinite and the Brecciated Massive Mineralisation (BMM) within the other parts. Figure 15B1  
689 gives the microscopic details revealing that first rammelsbergite and nickeline form by  
690 replacement/transformation of the spinel fragments and magnetite concentrations. The position of Ni-  
691 minerals within the serpentinite strongly suggests that the Ni-bearing minerals replace some former  
692 Cr-spinel grains or fragments (Figs. 3C and 10E). Serpentinisation was still on-going at least during  
693 the earlier stages of this event as evidenced by the observation of serpentine veinlets and fibres that  
694 cross-cut earlier Ni-minerals such as rammelsbergite (Figs. 10B-C). Chrysotile veins also form all  
695 along the contact between serpentinite and mineralisation although this could be a later event. During  
696 the following stage (Fig. 15B2), massive mineralisation precipitates around the earlier rammelsbergite  
697 and nickeline and forms the massive bodies. Successive crystallisation of calcite, cobaltite and  
698 skutterudite surrounds the rammelsbergite lamellar crystals (Fig. 10F). It ends with the precipitation  
699 of large euhedral calcite that forms the principal carbonate gangue (Fig. 15B2). Final crystallisation of  
700 sulphides and Fe-As-rich minerals is also observed, developed within both the massive bodies and  
701 associated gangue, but also in the quartz diorite (Fig. 15B).

702 3. The late mineralisation stage corresponds to the emplacement of the NS to NE-SW veins  
703 (Fig. 15C). A complex infill is observed and the main mineralisation is represented by skutterudite  
704 fragments (Fig. 15C) and/or small cobaltite crystals formed in the core of vein-related comb quartz  
705 grains (Fig. 13D). Veins are structurally controlled as illustrated by their sigmoidal shape and the  
706 texture of the infill (comb quartz grains, breccia with fragments). As for the massive mineralisation,  
707 this event ended by the crystallisation of sulphides and Fe-As rich minerals both within the veins but  
708 also in the host quartz diorite. In parallel with vein formation, the development of metre-scale pockets  
709 is observed (Fig. 15C1). These pockets formed in the core of the carbonated gangue of the massive  
710 mineralisation (Fig. 5D). The pockets infill is comparable to that of the veins and exhibits, from rim to  
711 core, skutterudite 2, large euhedral quartz and carbonate (that composed 90% of the structure) and  
712 finally, safflorite, loellingite and the late Fe-rich sulphides. In our model, the pockets are developed in  
713 favour of pre-existing zones of void left between fragments of the initial breccia (see Figs. 15A and  
714 A1). The formation of these pockets, coeval to the vein system, is associated to open-space textures  
715 such as euhedral quartz and carbonate crystallisation, consistent with an on-going extensional (or  
716 transtensional) context.



717 Consequences of this integrated model are multiple. Two possibilities exist in order to explain  
718 the similar paragenesis: i) veins formed by remobilisation of the massive mineralisation during a late  
719 event; ii) vein and massive mineralisation are coeval and the difference is explained by a contrasting  
720 mode of formation (replacement/percolation/transformation for massive mineralisation and filling of  
721 fractures for veins). We will see in the next sections that the second hypothesis is here preferred even  
722 if uncertain. Effectively, except the Ni-rich stage that is characteristic of the early massive  
723 mineralisation, the paragenetic evolution of both structures (massive and vein mineralisation) is quite  
724 similar with successive Ni-Co-Fe arsenide, Co-Fe sulfo-arsenide and final Fe-rich sulphide stages  
725 (Fig. 9). The only divergence is textural thus indicating a different tectonic context for their formation  
726 as suggested in Figure 15. Massive orebodies were formed in situ, replacing pre-existing breccia  
727 bodies whereas vein systems result from aperture and formation of traps due to tectonics. Veins,  
728 which are only mineralised in the vicinity of the massive bodies, provide an evidence that their  
729 enrichment can result from the persistence of fluid-rock interaction. This observation demonstrates  
730 that veins can form during or immediately after the massive bodies (see below).

731 The hypothesis that massive mineralisation is developed as a replacement of pre-existing  
732 breccia zones explains the presently observed geometry and distribution of the different massive  
733 orebodies with a lot of small scale discontinuous deposits (Fig. 15). The consequences for exploration  
734 and exploitation strategy of the CTT mining company are significant and the necessity to account for  
735 some discontinuous and dispersed deposits is confirmed.

736

### 737 **6.3. Mineralogical evolution**

738 Because the mineralogical evolution found within both systems is similar except the presence  
739 of Ni-minerals only within the massive orebodies, we propose that, even if massive bodies are formed  
740 first, continuity may exist between the processes responsible for the formation of massive and vein  
741 mineralisation in different tectonic context. The massive mineralisation could be formed by a  
742 replacement of the brecciated contact zones between serpentinite, quartz diorite and Precambrian  
743 volcanic rocks due to hydrothermal fluids circulation. Vein system is coeval and formed by  
744 remobilisation of the massive mineralisation specifically because they are mineralised only at their  
745 contact and certainly because necessary conditions prevailed to allow the precipitation of metal-  
746 bearing fluid. The fact that late large-scale fault (the Igherm Fault, Fig.1C) cross-cutting the entire  
747 Bou Azzer domain is not mineralised confirms the close relationships, at least in time between the two  
748 systems (see above). This may confirm that P-T conditions necessary for fluid-rock interactions were  
749 still preserved during the formation of the vein system, so certainly during or later to the massive ore  
750 formation. Indeed, if later, veins would have cross-cut the Cambrian units.

751 Each structure shows similar features that explain the hydrothermal control of mineralisation  
752 by the circulation of hot brines along lithological contacts (massive bodies) or faults (veins  
753 system)(e.g. Ennaciri et al., 1995; Essarraj et al., 2005; Ahmed et al., 2009; Burisch et al., 2017;  
754 Ikenne et al., 2020; Hajar et al., 2020):

755 i) Ni-Co massive mineralisation is supposed to develop by  
756 replacement/transformation of spinel/magnetite grains of the serpentinite host rock  
757 as illustrated in Figures 10E and 13B and already suggested in the literature  
758 (Gervilla et al., 2012; Fanlo et al., 2015);

759 ii) the carbonated gangue close to the massive mineralisation is interpreted as a  
760 serpentinite breccia transformed by a hydrothermal fluid along the contact between  
761 the quartz diorite, Precambrian volcanic rocks and serpentinite. The occurrence of  
762 preserved serpentinite fragments (Fig. 13G), spinel fragments (Fig. 13B) and  
763 maybe ghost mesh texture entirely overprinted by calcite (Figs. 14B-C) provide the  
764 basis of this interpretation;

765 iii) an extensional context with low-angle detachment can lead to the formation of  
766 open-space between fragments of the brecciated zones. Large scale pockets filled  
767 by euhedral minerals indicate open space crystallisation, consistent with that  
768 expected within a brecciated extensional environment;

769  
770 Hydrothermal leaching of the host rocks seems at the origin of the remobilisation of the  
771 economic elements. This has been texturally demonstrated here but would need a confirmation by  
772 mass balance calculations. However, we can suppose that Ni and Co have their origin mainly from the  
773 ultramafic rocks (Laubier et al., 2014), Fe from the quartz diorite or oxides and base metal elements  
774 from meta-oceanic rocks or serpentinite (Leblanc and Fischer, 1990; Alt and Shanks, 1998). Also, the  
775 source of such a large amount of arsenic necessary to form the Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As mineralisation  
776 remains questionable. Smedley and Kinniburgh (2002) and Burisch et al. (2017) made a compilation  
777 about the source of arsenic in minerals and rocks (Appendix 3). Arsenic can be concentrated within  
778 various types of rocks and minerals such as Fe-oxide, apatite and magnetite but also in ultramafic,  
779 sedimentary or intermediate igneous rocks (diorite, granodiorite). Following the authors, fibrous  
780 magnetite (concentration up to 400 ppm), magnetite disseminated grains or veins (< 20 ppm),  
781 sulphide in serpentinite (50 to 1000 ppm), Neoproterozoic granitoid intrusions (< 10 to ~ 25 ppm),  
782 serpentinite (200 ppm), and volcanic rocks of the Ouarzazate supergroup (100 to 300 ppm) (Leblanc,  
783 1975; Gahlan et al., 2006; Leblanc and Fischer, 1990; Beraaouz et al., 2004; Hattori et al., 2005;  
784 Leblanc and Billaud, 1982, respectively) are good candidates as source rocks. However, principally  
785 because the excess of As is expressed within mineralisation that occurs as a  
786 replacement/transformation of relictic Cr-spinel hosted in serpentinite fragments (this study) and  
787 because it has been also demonstrated that Ni and Co-rich arsenide minerals developed as a

788 replacement of relictic Cr-spinel partially bordered by magnetite (Fig. 13b; Gervilla et al., 2012; Fanlo  
789 et al., 2015), the serpentinite and all accessory minerals inside are the best candidates as source for As  
790 at Bou Azzer, even if the apatite of the quartz diorite cannot be excluded.

791

#### 792 **6.4. Tectonic and geodynamic setting**

793 One of the main results of our study is the establishment of an initial context that can explain  
794 the specificity of the Bou Azzer mineralisation. Because of the preservation of numerous serpentinite  
795 fragments, the initial breccia certainly formed along detachment fault contact between serpentinite  
796 and quartz diorite or Precambrian volcanic rocks (i.e., Fig. 3A). Indeed, we assume that previously to  
797 the mineralisation, brecciated zones with subsequent permeability may form in domains that were  
798 later transformed into massive orebodies and associated gangue mineralisation. Because these  
799 breccias occur as elongated pluri-metric-scale lenses systematically developed at the contact between  
800 the serpentinite and other units (mainly quartz diorite), we suggest they can correspond to some pre-  
801 existing fault-related polymictic sedimentary breccias developed along fault slope as already  
802 suggested in the case of the French Pyrenees (Clerc et al., 2012). Indeed, these breccia outcrops can  
803 be compared to the famous opihcalcite lithologies defined as brecciated and fractured peridotites with  
804 a carbonate matrix (Clerc et al., 2012), as illustrated in Figure 16. We also propose that the siliceous  
805 gangue was formed following similar processes but within parts dominated by quartz diorite  
806 fragments. But this hypothesis has not been followed by thorough analysis. In the case of Bou Azzer,  
807 it is then proposed that the location in which massive mineralisation was developed can be defined as  
808 tectonic contacts. LMM and BMM types of mineralisation are then formed during the same event, but  
809 depending on the position within the fault context and on the initial texture, as illustrated in Figures  
810 15 and 16.

811 The nature of the fault and consequently the type of context remains questionable. It is  
812 noteworthy that opihcalcite has been described mainly within extensional domains and specifically  
813 within area where mantle exhumation took place (Hölker et al., 2003, Lagabrielle and Bodinier, 2008;  
814 Caby, 2014). These rocks are finally intimately associated with the recent concept of a mantle  
815 exhumation within extremely thinned continental margin and/or Oceanic Continent Transition (OCT).  
816 The nature of the tectonic contacts and the geodynamic setting of the Bou Azzer serpentinite  
817 exhumation are not subject of this study and will be re-addressed in a paper in preparation (Chauvet et  
818 al., in prep.). However, it can be suggested, as a preliminary idea, that such hyper extension can be  
819 developed in a back-arc position with respect to the geodynamic model proposed by Triantafyllou et  
820 al. (2018). This model suggested that a north-dipping subduction may form the Tichibanine,  
821 Tazigzaout and Bougmane arcs (see location in Fig. 1c), intensively affected by subsequent  
822 deformation in response to the N-S trending compression. However, the lack of intensive deformation

823 in the Bou Azzer parts where serpentinite crops out may suggest that such areas can be rather affected  
824 by hyper-extension that can explain the mantle exhumation helped by normal faulting with a  
825 deformation extremely located close to the contact (Fig. 16) (Ishii et al., 1992; Jolivet et al., 2018).

826 The quartz-diorite body formation remains a riddle. In this study, we argue for intrusive  
827 relationships (Figs. 3B and 4A). Two alternatives can be advanced. First, the quartz diorite can be the  
828 result of the north-dipping subduction proposed by Triantafyllou et al. (2018). Therefore, its location  
829 in the core of a hyper-extended rift more to the north is justified. Another solution would be that the  
830 quartz diorite resulted from the intrinsic exhumation process as predicted by Manatschal (2004) as a  
831 character of rifted margin in which mantle exhume to the sea floor.

832 Although the formation of massive mineralisation can be considered as the result of  
833 replacement/transformation processes, the vein system appears clearly dependent on the tectonics.  
834 Syn-tectonic infill textures associated with transcurrent/normal faulting (Fig. 7) are the main  
835 arguments. NS dextral and NE sinistral conjugated vein systems are consistent with a N030°E  
836 shortening direction, certainly associated with a vertical component explaining the systematic normal  
837 motion (Fig. 8). Pull-apart structures are the most abundant. These motions are the ones that are  
838 coeval with vein/fault formation because controlling their infill. Transtension is suggested because of  
839 the systematic association between wrench motion and normal ones. Such a NE-SW shortening  
840 direction during transtensive tectonics has been already suggested by Tuduri et al. (2018a), and  
841 particularly as controlling the final mineralisation stage in various deposits of the Jbel Saghro, during  
842 the upper complex formation. Several Au-Ag occurrences of the central Anti-Atlas of Morocco, i.e.,  
843 the *Thaghassa* intrusion-related gold deposit (Tuduri et al., 2018b), the *Qal'at Mgouna*, and *Zone des*  
844 *Dykes* gold indexes and the second stage of the *Imiter* silver mine are the main examples (Tuduri et  
845 al., 2018a).

846 The formation of the geodic textures in metre-scale pockets remains also questionable. The  
847 mineralogical argument suggests that there are coeval with the vein system (this study). They do not  
848 show any argument for structural control but they are clearly post-dating the massive mineralisation  
849 based on cross-cutting relationships. Such an open space environment, as already suggested by  
850 Ennaciri et al. (1997), is consistent with the transtensional character of the second mineralising event  
851 as discussed above. Moreover, it can be suggested that the metre-scale pockets can finally re-use and  
852 benefit from the high porosity and large open space that can exist in the slope-related breccia lenses  
853 that served as a trap for the massive mineralisation. Such open spaces are represented in the schematic  
854 petro-structural evolution of the deposit (Fig. 15).

855 Leblanc (1975) estimated the age of Bou Azzer mineralisation to be Neoproterozoic, based on  
856 general arguments. Palaeozoic age was proposed by Essarraj et al. (2005) explaining that the Bou  
857 Azzer district was formed by basinal brines circulation occurring during the early stage of the Atlantic  
858 rifting. Inversely, Oberthür et al. (2009), that obtained Hercynian ages, proposed a possible reworking  
859 of older minerals. Applying the indirect data obtained in this study and specifically the fact that both

860 types of mineralisation seem to develop in continuity (mineralogical arguments), it is strongly  
861 suggested here that the Bou Azzer mineralisation was formed during the same period of time. The  
862 tectonic context that prevailed during vein formation, defined by conjugate NS dextral and NE left-  
863 lateral normal veins (Fig. 8), seems similar to the second transtension stage that has been defined and  
864 demonstrated recently by Tuduri et al. (2018a) as a major tectonic event that affected the Jbel Saghro,  
865 more to the N-NE (see above). In that case, the formation of earlier massive mineralisation could have  
866 taken place only during the early Neoproterozoic, fact that is consistent with the intervention of  
867 hyper-extension in response to the north-directed subduction suspected southward of the Bou Azzer  
868 district (Triantafyllou et al., 2016).

869 With such a hypothesis, the numerous young ages obtained in this area could be related to  
870 remobilisation processes during the Hercynian orogeny. In fact, the large spectrum of ages between  
871 310 to 70 Ma presents an evidence of improper duress of dating, certainly in favour of unsatisfying  
872 results. Because the Hercynian hypothesis is frequently advanced within the entire Anti-Atlas by a  
873 number of authors (see discussion in Levresse et al., 2017) one can question about the numerous  
874 geochronological data obtained within the entire Anti-Atlas (see also Essarraj et al., 2016) while no  
875 structure can be clearly related to these Hercynian or maybe younger orogenesis. A recent article  
876 underlined fault reactivation during Variscan and Alpine cycles but this appears no sufficient to  
877 explain such an abundance of absolute ages. As the entire Anti-Atlas was buried under a thick marine  
878 sedimentary cover from Middle Cambrian to Lower Devonian (Soulaimani et al., 2014), we question  
879 if such a landfill can be at the origin of age rejuvenation and consequently of the numerous young  
880 ages reported in this area (Caby, personal communication).

881

## 882 **6.5. Deposit classification and consequences for exploration strategy**

883 The Bou Azzer district has been considered recently as a five-element veins type deposit by  
884 Markl et al. (2016) and Burisch et al. (2017). The five-element veins deposits (Bi-Co-Ni-Ag±U) have  
885 open-space infill characterised by two specific mineral associations: Co-Ni sulphides and Co-Ni  
886 arsenides, with or without dendritic to wire-like texture of native elements like silver, arsenic and  
887 bismuth in a carbonate gangue. They are related to hydrothermal processes affecting various  
888 sedimentary, igneous or metamorphic rocks. Indeed, it is clear that deposits of the Bou Azzer district  
889 and particularly the Ag-rich *Tizi* deposit (see location in Fig. 2) can be easily compared to the five-  
890 element veins classification as already suggested. However, a lot of questions subsist. First, although  
891 the late Ag-Hg stage clearly takes place after the Co-As and base metal stages (Leblanc and Lbouabi,  
892 1988; Ennaciri et al., 1997; Essarraj et al., 2005), the age of their formation, the genetic link with the  
893 Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As mineralisation and the mode of formation remain uncertain. Second, the five-  
894 element veins classification does not provide a satisfying model of formation although a few genetic

895 theories have been proposed by Kissin (1992); one of them related to a magmatic-hydrothermal  
896 concept occurring in the continental crust and associated with extensional tectonics. Indeed, this  
897 unsatisfying situation justifies the new and original model of formation discussed above in this work.  
898 Although the model of formation proposed in this study brings significant information regarding the  
899 distribution and the characteristics of the numerous and various Ni-Co-As orebodies of the whole Bou  
900 Azzer district, a large uncertainty subsists about the processes of metal concentration specifically for  
901 the massive orebodies. Our study provides additional evidence that at least the massive part of the  
902 mineralisation was formed by in-situ transformation of existing minerals such as spinel and magnetite.  
903 We do not success in demonstrating if this transformation is dominated by replacement, overgrowth,  
904 remobilisation or dissolution-precipitation process although recent studies favours replacement (e.g.,  
905 Gervilla et al., 2012; Fanlo et al., 2015). The model of formation of the Bou Azzer deposits may  
906 resemble to the replacement processes highlighted in some models of volcanic-hosted massive  
907 sulphide (VHMS) formation (Aerden, 1993; Relvas et al., 2000; Doyle and Allen, 2003), except that  
908 relationship with the main metamorphism event is not demonstrated at Bou Azzer. Gervilla et al.  
909 (2012) mentioned it for the case of the Co-Ni-As Bou Azzer district. In spite of the nature of the Co-  
910 Ni-As mineralisation and the lack of abundant polymetallic sulphides, we can tentatively suggest that  
911 the Bou Azzer district may correspond to a model close to the one of the VHMS but with formation of  
912 arsenides rather than sulphides. The drastic divergence between the two end-members, i.e. sulphide  
913 versus arsenide, can be explained by the implication of the particular association between ultramafic  
914 rocks (serpentinite) and plutonic (quartz diorite) in the second case, i.e., the Bou Azzer case. Indeed,  
915 we propose that the Bou Azzer district is related to Massive Arsenide deposit instead of a Massive  
916 Sulphide one. The term “Volcanic Hosted” can be replaced, in this case, by “Serpentinite Hosted” and  
917 the acronym used could be SHMA, Serpentinite-Hosted Massive Arsenide. In this model, the  
918 distribution of the previous breccia lenses is the most important factor in order to explain the  
919 distribution of massive mineralisation ore bodies. This may explain why the Bou Azzer district is  
920 composed of numerous, isolated, small-size, orebodies rather than a continuous and regular  
921 mineralisation.

922

## 923 **7. Conclusion**

924 Based on new field, structural, textural, petro-structural and mineralogical arguments, we  
925 propose a new genetic model for the famous Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As (-Au-Ag) district that explains the  
926 formation of the two types of mineralisation. Because of the particular significance of the serpentine  
927 and the original arsenide-rich mineralogy, we propose to call this type of deposit SHMA  
928 (Serpentinite-Hosted Massive Arsenides). In this hypothesis, several lines of evidence argue for this  
929 new classification. Because the massive part of the deposit is formed by circulation of hydrothermal  
930 fluids across a serpentinite breccia formed during tectonic exhumation along low-angle extensional  
931 detachment, the model of formation is similar to the one of VHMS except the fact that “basement and



932 source” rocks are serpentinite rather than volcanic or oceanic crust. The significance of replacement  
933 processes is an additional argument for explaining their mode of formation. The presence of intrusive  
934 rocks and exhumed mantle transformed to serpentinite (source for Ni and Co) is essential for the  
935 formation of this deposit type. The nature of the low-angle extensional contact is not, for the moment,  
936 entirely demonstrated. Preliminary observations (Fig. 3A) argue for general extensional setting  
937 (Tourneur et al., 2019).

938

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948

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### 1245 **Figures Captions**

1246

1247 Figure 1: Localisation of the studied area at (A) the West African Craton scale (after Thiéblemont et  
 1248 al., 2016) and (B) at the Moroccan Anti-Atlas scale (after Hollard et al., 1985; Tuduri et al.,  
 1249 2018a). Different inliers are: AM: Agadir-Melloul; BD: Bas Drâa; If: Ifni; Ig: Iguerda; Im:  
 1250 Igherm; K: Kerdous; TA: Tagragra of Akka; TT: Tagragra de Tata; Z: Zenaga. C) Geological  
 1251 map of the Bou Azzer district modified after Leblanc (1975) and Admou et al. (2013).

1252

1253 Figure 2: Simplified block diagram showing the distribution of the main geological units of the Co-  
 1254 Ni-As (-Au-Ag) Bou Azzer district and also the main ore deposits studied in this study. All the  
 1255 underground occurrences here studied were indicated with depth level. See text for explanation.

1256

1257 Figure 3: Photographs of host rocks. A) Faulted contact with normal motion between serpentinite and  
 1258 carbonated complex shell (*Ambed* location, see Fig. 2). B) Intrusive contact of quartz diorite in  
 1259 mafic rocks (*Taghouni* location). C) Massive serpentinite with layers of magnetite, talc- and  
 1260 carbonate-alteration and stereonet diagram of the serpentinite cleavage pole (Schmidt stereonet,  
 1261 lower hemisphere, *Taghouni* location). D) Contact with rodingite between serpentinite and  
 1262 quartz diorite (*Taghouni*, level 80). E) Linear contact between serpentinite and quartz diorite  
 1263 showing the development of alteration halo in both rocks (*BAE P3* location).

1264  
 1265 Figure 4: Photographs of surface structures. A) *Bou Azzer East* field zone showing the contact  
 1266 between serpentinite, siliceous complex shell, mafic rock and quartz diorite. The siliceous  
 1267 gangue is affected by carbonate-rich large-scale pocket (white line) and contains serpentinite  
 1268 fragments (green line). B) Large-scale pull-apart structure composed of a siliceous gangue and  
 1269 exhibiting massive and/or laminated texture (zoom in the red square). C) *Filon 7* aspect at  
 1270 surface after its junction with the *Filon 5*. D) Large view of the *Bou Azzer Centre* mine showing  
 1271 the *Filon 7* extension reaching several hundred metres long. E) *Quarry 52* image representing  
 1272 veins cutting the massive mineralisation and serpentinite.

1273  
 1274 Figure 5: Macroscopic aspect of the massive mineralisation and veins in underground galleries. A)  
 1275 Typical Co-Ni-Fe bearing massive mineralisation separating serpentinite and carbonated  
 1276 gangue (*Aghbar*, level 410). B) Similar massive mineralisation against siliceous gangue (*Bou*  
 1277 *Azzer East P6*, level 510). C) Veins showing brecciated texture (with diorite fragments mainly)  
 1278 and composed of Co-Fe bearing minerals and late euhedral calcite pocket (Cal) (*Bou Azzer East*  
 1279 *P3*, level 80). D) Mineralised pockets composed of quartz/chlorite/skutterudite border, followed  
 1280 by comb-quartz and Co-Fe arsenides. Late rhombohedral calcite with fragments of Co-Fe  
 1281 arsenide is visible in the centre of the pockets (*Filon 53*, level 240).

1282  
 1283 Figure 6: A) 3D sketch of mineralised contact on surface and in gallery for comparison. B) Stereonet  
 1284 poles contour diagram of the massive mineralisation and the veins measured orientation on the  
 1285 field and galleries (Schmidt stereonet, lower hemisphere).

1286  
 1287 Figure 7: Photographs of vein structures in mining galleries. A and B are photographs of the vertical  
 1288 plane. C and D are photographs and corresponding sketch (D) of horizontal plane (view realised  
 1289 towards the top of the mining gallery). A) Normal vein structure illustrated by the offset of the  
 1290 epidote-rich vein (Ep-Vein) (*Filon 53*, level 240). B) Similar motion showing by pull-apart  
 1291 structure (Same area, *Filon 53*, level 240). C) Mineralised vein trending east and showing  
 1292 dextral motion (*Bouismas area*, level 390). D) Mineralised vein trending north-east and  
 1293 showing left-lateral motion with interpretative sketch (*Bou Azzer East, Puit 3*, level 510).

1294

1295 Figure 8: Schematic diagram explaining the conjugate character of the vein system at Bou Azzer.

1296 Conjugate veins in the horizontal planes A systematic normal motions is observed in the  
1297 vertical plane whereas NS and N070°E veins are dextral and sinistral, respectively, allowing to  
1298 define a transtensional tectonic regime with a roughly NNE/SSW shortening direction.

1299

1300 Figure 9: Paragenetic sequence, texture and relative proportions of major elements (metals and

1301 sulphur) in the different structures of the Bou Azzer Co-Ni-As(-Au-Ag) district. Grey colour  
1302 represents minerals of surrounding rocks, purple: Ni-stage, green; Co-stage, black: gangue  
1303 minerals, blue: sulphide stage, orange: sodic-calcic alteration and pink: supergene alteration.  
1304 (Ab: Albite, Adu: Adularia, As: Arsenic, Apy: Arsenopyrite, Bn: Bornite, Cal: Calcite, Cct:  
1305 Chalcocite, Chl: Chlorite, Co: cobalt, Cob: Cobaltite, Ccp: Chalcopyrite, Dg: Digenite, Dol:  
1306 Dolomite, Ep: Epidote, Ert: Erythrine, Fe: iron, Gd: Gersdorffite, Gn: Galena, K: potassium,  
1307 Lo: Loellingite, Ni: nickel, Nk: Nickeline, Qz: Quartz, Ram: Rammelsbergite, S: Sulphide, Saf:  
1308 Safflorite, Sku: Skutterudite, Sp: Sphalerite, Ttn: Titanite, Tlc: Talc, Tnt-Ttr: Tennantite -  
1309 Tetrahedrite)

1310

1311 Figure 10: Mineral assemblages of the Ni-Co arsenide mineralisation at Bou Azzer. A) Quartz diorite

1312 composed of albite (Ab), quartz (Qz) and loellingite (Lo1) cross-cut by potassic feldspar (k-  
1313 Fsp) (optical cathodoluminescence image, CL); B) Aspect of the serpentinite near massive  
1314 mineralisation showing spinel (Spl) grain which is sometimes entirely replaced/transformed by  
1315 rammelsbergite (see rectangle and zoom in Fig. 10C). Within the massive body, skutterudite is  
1316 also fractured and fill by serpentinite (polarised light, PL); C) Isolated nuclei of rammelsbergite  
1317 inside the serpentinite showing fracture filled by neoformed elongated serpentine (RL image).  
1318 D) Laminated Massive Mineralisation (LMM) showing Ni-Co rich arsenide bands (nickeline,  
1319 rammelsbergite, skutterudite, cobaltite) alternating with bands of calcite large crystal (Cal1) and  
1320 sphalerite (RL). E) Disseminated spinel with magnetite-rich margin surrounded by  
1321 rammelsbergite (Ram) and nickeline (Nk1) grains. F) Feathery rammelsbergite fragment (Ram)  
1322 encapsulated inside successive crystallisation of skutterudite (Sku1), calcite (Cal1), infilling  
1323 chalcopyrite (Ccp) and prismatic to cloudy loellingite (Lo1) ending by a massive gangue of  
1324 euhedral banded skutterudite (Sku2) and calcite (Cal2) (RL image). G) RL image illustrating  
1325 the brecciated character of the massive mineralisation (BMM) with rammelsbergite fragments  
1326 surviving in core of a cobaltite (Cob1) - skutterudite (Sku2) - calcite (Cal1) - chalcopyrite (Ccp)  
1327 matrix. Late calcite (Cal2) fills the interstitial open-space. H) Growing of star-shaped safflorite  
1328 (Saf1) on rammelsbergite (not visible on the photography), followed by loellingite (Lo2) and  
1329 large carbonate grain of the carbonated gangue (Cal2) (RL image, polarised).

1330

1331 Figure 11: Automated mineralogy: A) QEMSCAN mineral map of serpentinite in contact with the  
 1332 massive mineralisation at *Aghbar*. A strong talc alteration is observed in the left part of the  
 1333 sample (serpentinite) whereas a calcite impregnation is dominant in its right part (carbonated  
 1334 gangue of the mineralisation). Small (<2000  $\mu\text{m}$ ) spinel grains are preserved in the serpentinite  
 1335 whereas while they are replaced by large bornite grains, associated with skutterudite in the  
 1336 carbonate gangue. Cobaltite is disseminated in both part of the sample. B) QEMSCAN mineral  
 1337 map of the massive mineralisation at *Filon 53* composed mainly of very elongated  
 1338 rammelsbergite noddles surrounded by large skutterudite. Nodde distribution suggests that  
 1339 they were formed by replacement/transformation of initial fragments, possibly spinel grains  
 1340 (see text for explanation). Note that earlier carbonate can develop in contact with  
 1341 rammelsbergite and the final appearance of Cu-rich sulphides (i.e., chalcopyrite). C)  
 1342 QEMSCAN mineral map, Co and Ni element distribution maps for massive mineralisation at  
 1343 *Bouismass*. Skutterudite and rammelsbergite form zoned aggregates with successive Ni-rich  
 1344 and Co-rich growth zones. See text for explanation. Note that rammelsbergite forms isolated  
 1345 nucleus systematically surrounded by cobaltite and skutterudite. D) Transmitted-light image  
 1346 and QEMSCAN mineral map of vein structure at *Aghbar* showing textural relationship between  
 1347 skutterudite, spinel (chromite) and chlorite within a siliceous gangue. The Co map shows that  
 1348 skutterudite has Co-rich border. Note the late dolomite infill (sky blue colour on the  
 1349 QEMSCAN map). E) Transmitted-light image, QEMSCAN mineral map, Co and Ni element  
 1350 distribution maps from *Filon 7/5* vein structure. Small skutterudites (black arrow) are  
 1351 associated with the early dolomite grains and show not detectable Ni content. Inversely,  
 1352 cobaltite related to comb-quartz has significant Ni proportion. F) QEMSCAN mineral map and  
 1353 Co and Fe element distribution maps of a border of a vein structure (*Bouismass*), focused on  
 1354 skutterudite-loellingite relationship. Skutterudite is elongated, fractured and Co/Ni growth  
 1355 bands are less marked than in skutterudite from the massive mineralisation. Loellingite  
 1356 appearance is indicator of a Co/Fe transition.

1357  
 1358 Figure 12: Chemical composition of mineralisation from the serpentinite, the massive mineralisation,  
 1359 the vein system, the pockets and complex shells of the Bou Azzer area. A) As versus S (apfu)  
 1360 within different skutterudites. B) Fe+Ni versus Co (apfu) composition within skutterudite of the  
 1361 different type of deposits. C) Mg-Fe-Mn distribution within calcites (apfu). Data provide from  
 1362 EPMA analysis in Tourneur (2019).

1363  
 1364 Figure 13: Thin section illustrations of the carbonated mineralised gangue of the massive system and  
 1365 vein. A) Cobaltite (Cob2) and nickeline (Nk2) formed along fractures inside rammelsbergite  
 1366 minerals (RL image). Note the occurrence of late calcite (Cal4). B) Optical-CL image of a  
 1367 spinel (Spl) grain partially replaced by the carbonated gangue from the massive mineralisation.

1368 A magnetite-rich margin (Mag) was identified and confirmed by EPMA. C) Laminated  
 1369 nickeline (Nk1) surrounded by skutterudite (Sku2) synchronous with calcite (Cal1) as  
 1370 demonstrated by successive and alternating growth bands (massive mineralisation, RL image).  
 1371 D) Skutterudite associated with dolomite (Dol1) and comb quartz in veins. Cobaltite (Cob2) is  
 1372 supposed to form during a second stage between comb quartz (Qz2) and by replacement of  
 1373 skutterudite (Sku3); E) Adularia (Adu) with a triangular shape forming along vein margin.  
 1374 Minerals inside the vein are quartz (Qz3) and calcite (Cal3) whereas adularia growth on albite  
 1375 mineral of the surrounding rock (Ab) (PL image). F) Rim of a geodic pocket texture exhibiting  
 1376 loellingite (Lo2) and cobaltite (Cob3) (Co-Fe arsenide in the picture) large minerals followed  
 1377 by comb quartz (Qz3) and large calcite (Cal3-4) crystallisation (RL image, polarised). G) Cold-  
 1378 CL image of carbonated gangue showing the brecciated aspect with earlier calcite fragment  
 1379 (Cal2) and the late crystallisation of euhedral large calcite grains (Cal2). H) Serpentinite  
 1380 fragments in the carbonated gangue (Ca2) (PL image).

1381

1382 Figure 14: Additional textural observations. A) High magnification view of the red rectangle area  
 1383 indicated of the Figure 11B. Note that detailed texture of rammelsbergite grains show the  
 1384 existence of two generations: a first mineral formed the elongated grains and some second  
 1385 acicular crystals with higher Co values overgrown on them. This texture indicates rapid  
 1386 crystallisation under oversaturated conditions. B) Cold-CL image of calcite gangue of massive  
 1387 mineralisation showing the occurrence of previous ghost mesh textures now entirely  
 1388 transformed in calcite minerals (see the interpretative sketch). C) BSE image of serpentinite  
 1389 where the texture could be transformed by carbonation in order to form the ghost mesh texture  
 1390 of the Figure 14B.

1391

1392 Figure 15: Interpretative three-stage petro-structural model of the Bou Azzer Co-Ni mineralisation  
 1393 formation. All indications in red within this figure are interpretations whereas the ones in black  
 1394 are observations. A and A1) Pre-mineralisation stage showing the significant role of the  
 1395 existence of elongated lenses of serpentinite breccia at the contact between serpentinite and  
 1396 quartz diorite. Note the presence of spinel minerals, magnetite layers (future Ni-rich minerals)  
 1397 and open space (future mineralised pockets). B) In situ formation of the massive mineralisation  
 1398 by percolation, leaching, replacement, transformation of the brecciated lenses (see text for  
 1399 details). Two stages were identified, a Ni-Co-As one with formation of nickeline and  
 1400 rammelsbergite (B1) and a Co-As-Fe-S stage with crystallisation of skutterudite and cobaltite  
 1401 forming massive bodies and associated to the formation of carbonated and/or siliceous gangue  
 1402 (B2). Fragments of serpentinite were still visible in the gangue. C and C1) Vein formation stage  
 1403 under the control of NNNE-SSW transtensional tectonic event. Co-rich minerals formed  
 1404 followed by the general emplacement of late Fe-S minerals (sulphide stage).

1405

1406 Figure 16: Hypothetic tectonic context favourable for the formation of the mineralisation system of  
1407 the Bou Azzer district (Morocco). Normal fault was supposed to develop zone of tectonic  
1408 breccia and mylonitic deformational zones that will serve as trap for the future massive  
1409 mineralisation. In such a scenario, fault motion is considered as normal (see text for  
1410 explanation) and Brecciated Massive Mineralisation (BMM) were formed in brecciated lenses  
1411 whereas Laminated Massive Mineralisation (LMM) developed in previously-formed mylonitic  
1412 zone. Note the frequent occurrence of mafic rocks at the limit between the serpentinite and the  
1413 intrusive quartz diorite.

1414

1415 Table 1: Information on the different locations analysed in this study: sampling depths, coordinates of  
1416 wells in WGS84, mineralisation type are indicated.

#### 1417 Highlights

- 1418 • Two types of mineralisation characterised the Bou Azzer District
- 1419 • Massive mineralisations are forming by remobilisation processes from relics of spinels
- 1420 • Veins system are linked with a mode of formation associated with tectonics
- 1421 • Continuous evolution from Ni-rich to Co-rich mineralisations in all structures
- 1422 • The mineralised bodies correspond to ancient sedimentary breccia
- 1423 • The mineralised bodies are formed in slope of detachment faults that allow to exhume  
1424 mantle rocks

1425

#### 1426 Declaration of interests

1427

1428  The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal  
1429 relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

1430

1431  The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be  
1432 considered as potential competing interests:

1433

1434

1435



1436

LOCALITY	WELL	DEPTH (m)	LON GITUDE	LAT ITUDE	EINS	M ASS. MIN.
<i>Taghouni</i>	-	-80/-120	30°3 1'35"N	6°5 5'48"W		
<i>Bou Azzer Centre</i>	P 3	-420	30°3 1'13"N	6°5 4'48"W		✓
<i>Bou Azzer East</i>	P 3	-320/-	30°3 0'59"N	6°5 3'44"W		✓
<i>Bou Azzer East</i>	P 6	-510	30°3	6°5		✓

1437

1438

			0'57"N	3'35"W			
<i>Aghbar</i>	P 100	-325/- 365/-405	30°3	6°4	1'35"N	9'06"W	✓
<i>Oumlil</i>	-	-77	30°3	6°4	1'22,55"N	7'6,89"W	
<i>Bouismass</i>	P 2	-390	30°3	6°4	0'55"N	7'18"W	✓
<i>Bouismass</i>	P 1	-80	30°3	6°4	0'59"N	5'15"W	✓
<i>Tamdrost</i>	-	-20	30°3	6°4	1'23.9"N	7'06.8"W	
Aït Ahmane							
<i>Filon 53</i>	-	-115/- 200/-240	30°2	6°3	8'01"N	5'16"W	✓
<i>Zone D</i>	-	-200	30°2	6°3	9'50"N	7'21"W	
<i>Quarries</i>							
<i>Bou Azzer Est</i>	-	surface	30°3	6°5	1'01.8"N	3'41.2"W	
<i>Filon 52</i>	-	surface	30°2	6°3	8'15"N	5'41"W	✓
<i>Filon 55</i>	-	surface	30°3	6°4	1'22"N	7'13"W	✓
<i>Surface</i>							
<i>Filon 2</i>	-	surface	30°3	6°5	1'24.4"N	4'32.5"W	✓
<i>Filon7 and Filon 5</i> ( <i>Bou Azzer Centre</i> )	-	surface	30°3	6°5	1'13"N	4'48"W	
<i>Ambed</i>	-	surface					
<i>Trench</i>							
<i>Bou Azzer Est</i> trench	-	surface	30°3	6°5	1'15.7"N	3'46.8"W	

1439

1440

1441

1442

Appendix

1443

1444

Appendix 1.1: Structural data on the direction to the north, the dip angle and the dip angle orientation of the massive mineralisation

1445

Massive mineralisation	Direction	Dip angle	Dip angle orientation
BAE P6 (-510m)	N60	60	SE
BAE P6 (-510m)	N100	70	SE
Filon 53 (-145m)	N90	60	N
Aghbar (-365m)	N10	60	W

Bouismass (- 390m)	N1 00	30	S
Aghbar (- 325m)	N4 0	60	NW
Filon 53 (- 240m)	N7 0	75	SE
BAE P3 (- 320m)	N1 05	50	SSW

1446

1447 Appendix 1.2: Structural data on the direction to the north, the dip angle and the dip angle

1448 orientation of the veins system

Vein system	Dir ection	Di p angle	Dip angle orientation
BAC P3 (- 420m)	N0 0	40	W
BAC P3 (- 420m)	N1 0	60	W
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 0	70	E
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 0	70	W
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 0	70	W
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 0	85	E
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 0	85	E
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 00	30	S
BAE P6 (- 510m)	N1 05	50	SSW
Taghouni (- 80m)	N1 20	60	NE
Taghouni (- 80m)	N1 20	75	NE
Taghouni (- 80m)	N1 30	70	SW
Taghouni (- 80m)	N1 35	40	SW
Taghouni (- 80m)	N1 60	34	WSW
Aghbar (- 365m)	N1 60	60	W
Bouismass (- 390m)	N1 60	60	WSW
Bouismass (- 390m)	N1 60	80	WSW
Bouismass (- 80m)	N1 70	80	W
Bouismass (- 80m)	N1 70	90	
Bouismass (- 80m)	N1 70	90	W

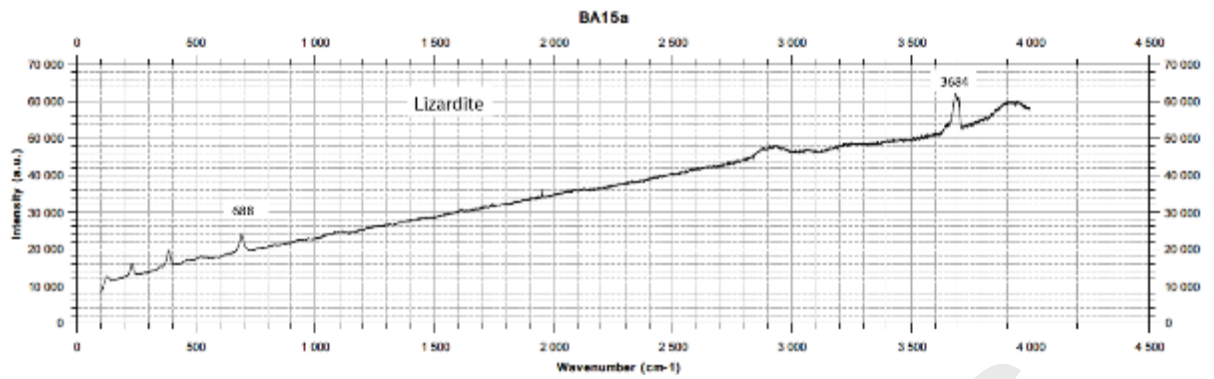
80m)	70			
Bouismass (- 80m)	N1 74	70	ENE	
Bouismass (- 80m)	N1 75	85	E	
Taghouni (- 80m)	N2 0	60	W	
Filon 7 - surface	N2 0	80	W	
BAE P3 (- 302m)	N2 2	88	W	
BAE P3 (- 302m)	N3 0	60	NW	
BAE P3 (- 302m)	N3 0	60	SE	
BAE P3 (- 302m)	N3 5	80	NW	
Oumlil (- 77m)	N4 0	50	NW	
Tamdrost (- 20m)	N4 0	60	NW	
Zone D (- 200m)	N4 0	60	NW	
Zone D (- 200m)	N4 0	60	NW	
BA centre P3	N4 0	60	NW	
BA centre P3	N4 0	65	SE	
Filon 53 (- 200m)	N4 0	70	SE	
Filon 53 (- 115m)	N4 0	80	NW	
Filon 55 - surface	N4 0	80	NW	
Filon 52 - surface	N4 5	85	NW	
BAE P3 (- 302m)	N5 0	80	NW	

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1451 Appendix 2: signal in Raman spectrometry and associated peaks of lizardite/chrysotile

1452 serpentinite



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Appendix 3: As concentration of common rocks and minerals and from Bou Azzer

Rocks and minerals	As concentration (ppm)	Source
<b>Oxide minerals</b>		
Fe oxide (undifferentiated)	up to 2000	Boyle and Jonasson (1973)
Magnetite	2.7 - 41	Baur and Onishi (1969)
fibrous magnetite	400	Leblanc (1975)
magneite veins	20	Gahlan et al. (2006)
<b>Silicate minerals</b>		
Quartz	0.4-1.3	Baur and Onishi (1969)
Feldspar	<0.1-2.1	Baur and Onishi (1969)
Biotite	1.4	Baur and Onishi (1969)
Amphibole	1.1-2.3	Baur and Onishi (1969)
Olivine	0.08-0.17	Baur and Onishi (1969)
Pyroxène	0.05-0.8	Baur and Onishi (1969)
sulphide in serpentinite	50 and 1000	Leblanc & Fischer (1990)
<b>Carbonate minerals</b>		
Calcite	1 to 8	Boyle and Jonasson (1973)
Dolomite	<3	Boyle and Jonasson (1973)
<b>Igneous rocks</b>		
Apatite	<1 - 1000	Baur and Onishi (1969)
ultrabasic (peridotite, dunite, kimberlite, etc...)	0.03-15.8	smedley et al. (2002)
Serpentinized ultramafic rocks	10 - 450	Hattori et al. (2005); Sullivan (2007)
basalt	0.18-113	smedley et al. (2002)
gabbros	0.06-28	Onishi and Sandell (1955)
diorite, granodiorite	0.09-13.4	Boyle and Jonasson (1973)
rhyolite	3.2-5.4	Ure and Berrow (1982)
Neoproterozoic granitoid intrusions	<10 to ~25	Beraaouz et al. (2004)
<b>Sedimentary rocks</b>		
sandstone	0.6-120	Onishi and Sandell (1955)
<b>Volcanic rocks</b>		
ouarzazate group	100 - 300	Leblanc & Billaud (1982)

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