

PHYSICOCHEMICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACID MINE DRAINAGES (AMD)  
AND AMD-RECEIVING RIVER WATERS IN RANAU, SABAH

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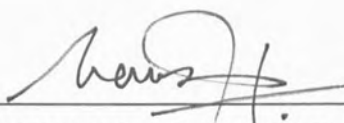
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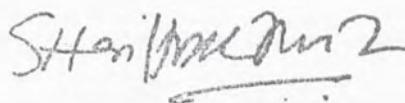
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## ABSTRACT

Selected physicochemical characteristics of AMD and river water samples from Ranau, Sabah were analyzed according to APHA methods. The results showed that the AMDs at the Mamut Copper Mine have low pH (pH 2.77 – 4.26), high total acidity (50.0 – 1557.5  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$   $\text{CaCO}_3$ ), high TDS (0.16 – 2.42  $\text{gL}^{-1}$ ), high  $E_c$  (0.32 – 4.86  $\text{mScm}^{-1}$ ), high concentration of dissolved sulphate (202.94 – 5147.06  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$ ), and elevated concentration of dissolved Cu (0.82 – 27.34  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ), Zn (0.29 -7.59  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ) and Fe (0.03 – 12.51  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ). The total acidity of the AMD samples is strongly correlated with dissolved metals concentration, TDS and  $E_c$ , but there is no apparent relationship with pH. The higher the total acidity, the greater the acid buffering ability of the AMD samples. Except for Mamut-Langanan River, which is highly impacted by AMD from the mine, the water of other main rivers in the area have high pH (pH 7.21 – 7.58), high alkalinity (22.67 – 59.33  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$   $\text{CaCO}_3$ ), low TDS (0.03 – 0.33  $\text{gL}^{-1}$ ), low  $E_c$  (0.07 – 0.66  $\text{mScm}^{-1}$ ), low dissolved sulphate (4.0 – 244  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$ ), and low dissolved Cu (0.001 -0.014  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ), Zn (0.000 – 0.026  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ), and Fe (0.000 – 0.012  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ ). Comparatively, the pH, alkalinity, TDS,  $E_c$ , dissolved sulphate, Cu, Zn, and Fe of Mamut-Langanan River is 4.78, 1.17  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$   $\text{CaCO}_3$ , 0.29 $\text{gL}^{-1}$ , 0.59  $\text{mScm}^{-1}$ , 258  $\text{mgL}^{-1}$ , 0.734  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ , 0.473  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ , and 0.014  $\text{mg mL}^{-1}$ , respectively. The impact of AMD, however, was less apparent downstream of this river.



## **CIRI-CIRI FIZIKOKIMIA SALIRAN ASID LOMBONG (AMD) DAN AIR SUNGAI YANG MENERIMA AMD DI RANAU, SABAH**

### **ABSTRAK**

*Ciri-ciri fizikokimia terpilih bagi sampel-sampel AMD dan air sungai dari Ranau, Sabah telah dianalisis mengikut kaedah APHA. Hasil kajian menunjukkan AMD di Lombong Tembaga Mamut mempunyai nilai pH ( $\text{pH } 2.77 - 4.26$ ) yang rendah, jumlah keasidan ( $50.0 - 1557.5 \text{ mgL}^{-1} \text{ CaCO}_3$ ) yang tinggi, TDS ( $0.16 - 2.42 \text{ gL}^{-1}$ ) yang tinggi,  $E_c$  ( $0.32 - 4.86 \text{ mScm}^{-1}$ ) yang tinggi, kepekatan sulfat terlarut ( $202.94 - 5147.06 \text{ mgL}^{-1}$ ) yang tinggi, dan kepekatan Cu ( $0.82 - 27.34 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ), Zn ( $0.29 - 7.59 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ) dan Fe terlarut ( $0.03 - 12.51 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ) yang tinggi. Jumlah keasidan sampel AMD berkorelasi baik dengan jumlah kepekatan logam terlarut, nilai TDS dan nilai  $E_c$  tetapi tiada hubungan nyata dengan nilai pH. Semakin tinggi jumlah keasidan, semakin tinggi sifat penimbunan asid oleh sampel AMD. Melainkan Sungai Mamut-Langanan, yang nyata dipengaruhi oleh AMD dari kawasan lombong, air sungai lain di lokasi kajian mempunyai nilai pH ( $\text{pH } 7.21 - 7.58$ ) yang tinggi, nilai kealkalian ( $22.67 - 59.33 \text{ mgL}^{-1} \text{ CaCO}_3$ ) yang tinggi, dan nilai TDS ( $0.03 - 0.33 \text{ gL}^{-1}$ ),  $E_c$  ( $0.07 - 0.66 \text{ mScm}^{-1}$ ), kepekatan sulfat ( $4.0 - 244 \text{ mgL}^{-1}$ ), Cu ( $0.001 - 0.014 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ), Zn ( $0.000 - 0.026 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ), dan Fe ( $0.000 - 0.012 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ) yang rendah. Sebaliknya, nilai pH, kealkalian, TDS,  $E_c$ , sulfat terlarut, Cu, Zn, dan Fe bagi Sungai Mamut-Langanan ialah masing-masing 4.78,  $1.17 \text{ mgL}^{-1} \text{ CaCO}_3$ ,  $0.29 \text{ gL}^{-1}$ ,  $0.59 \text{ mScm}^{-1}$ ,  $258 \text{ mgL}^{-1}$ ,  $0.734 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ ,  $0.473 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ , dan  $0.014 \text{ mg mL}^{-1}$ . Kesan input AMD, walau bagaimanapun, menjadi tidak ketara di bahagian hilir sungai ini.*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

%	Percent
°C	Degree Celsius
$\lambda$	Wavelength
$\mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$	Microgram per millilitre
$\mu\text{m}$	Micrometre
$\mu\text{S cm}^{-1}$	Microsiemens per centimetre
AMD	Acid mine drainage
$\text{H}^+$	Hydrogen ions
i.e.	For example; that is (in Latin term)
km	Kilometre
m	Metre
$\text{mg L}^{-1}$	Milligram per litre
mL	Millilitre
mm	Millimetre
NaOH	Sodium Hydroxide
nm	Nanometre
$\text{OH}^{-1}$	Hydroxyl ion
R.	River
Temp.	Temperature

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Mining and Acid Mine Drainage

Mining activity is a major cause of environmental pollution (Down & Stocks, 1977; Salomons, 1995). By general consensus, acid mine drainage (AMD), which is more apparent in abandoned or closed mines, is the most critical environmental problem created by mining. AMD is known to adversely affect both surface and ground waters worldwide (Kalin *et al.*, 2005; Gray, 1998; Banks *et al.*, 1997). The problem of AMD is basically due to its acidic pH (i.e. pH ~ 3.0), high acidity and high concentration of dissolved heavy metals. Inputs of AMD can degrade receiving water quality besides adversely affecting aquatic life (Akcil & Koldas, 2006; Banks *et al.*, 1997).

Various treatment methods are used to remedy or mitigate AMD problem. One of the purposes for the treatment is to reduce or neutralize the acidity of the AMD. The acidity, quantified as total acidity, is contributed by free  $H^+$  in solution (i.e. proton acidity) and dissolved metal ions (i.e. mineral acidity). The neutralization process can be complicated by the mineral acidity. Neutralization of proton acidity leads to increase in



pH. However, as the pH increases, the metals (namely  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Al}^{3+}$ ) can undergo hydrolysis, releasing  $\text{H}^+$  into the solution. This causes pH buffering effect and thereby ineffective neutralization. Consequently, the total acidity value and not the pH value is a better reference during AMD treatment (Jopony *et al.*, 2002; Evangelou, 1995; Singer & Stumm, 1970).

In order to better understand the impact of acid drainage and to provide a basis for assessing a long-term management options and strategic research needs, it is important to determine and characterize the acidity of AMD.

## 1.2 Mamut Copper Mine

Mamut Copper Mine near Ranau in Sabah was the largest mining project in Malaysia and was one of the biggest mining operations in South East Asia. Mamut is situated 60 km due east of Kota Kinabalu, at 1300 m above sea level on the southeastern slope of Mount Kinabalu. The mining lease covers an area of 4800 acres of rugged mountains and steep valley. The annual rainfall is 4000 mm and the climate is sub-tropical (Ramli *et al.*, 1994).

During its operation, the mine produced metal concentrates at the rate of 120 000 tonnes per year, which were sold to smelters overseas for refining. The metal output of the mine was about 30 000 tonnes of copper, 16 tonnes of silver and 2.4 tonnes of gold

per year, which is equivalent to almost 25 % of Malaysia's annual mineral export revenue.

The mine was operated during the period of 1975 - 1999. During that time, some 250 million tones of overburdens were stored in waste rock dumps while over 105 million tones of tailings from the mineral process were deposited at Lohan Tailings Dam. Also, the mining activity left behind a mine pit which is about 1200 m in diameter and a depth of 500 m (Photo 1.1). Currently, there are evidences of AMD pollution at the mine area and the surrounding rivers (Shin, 2000).



**Photo 1.1** Mamut copper mine pit currently filled up with AMD.



### 1.3 Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- (a) to determine and compare the physicochemical characteristics of AMD and AMD-receiving waters.
- (b) to determine and compare the acidity of AMD samples at Mamut Copper Mine.
- (c) to evaluate the relationship between acidity and other characteristics of AMD , including dissolved metals concentration.
- (d) to determine and compare the buffering characteristics of the AMD.

### 1.4 Scope of Study

In this study, AMD samples were collected from the abandoned Mamut Copper Mine in Ranau, Sabah. The samples will be analyzed for selected water quality parameters, including pH, total acidity and total dissolved metals. Each sample will also be titrated potentiometrically with an alkaline solution to evaluate it's buffering characteristic. A similar study will be extended to water samples of AMD-receiving rivers in the area.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction to Mining

Mining is the first operation in the commercial exploitation of a mineral resource. It can be defined as the act of tunnelling and digging out of the ground in order to recover one or more mined material (Dunster, 1996). A typical mining operation is shown in Figure 2.1.

Mining can be broadly categorized into two types, namely surface and underground mining. Surface mining is dominated by open pit (e.g. base and precious metal ore extraction) or open cast (e.g. coal operations). Surface and underground mining usually occur independently of one another, although open pit mining does occasionally occur in areas already partly worked by underground methods. Similarly, underground methods are sometimes used to extract ore from beneath or in the vicinity of pits, where further extension of the pit itself is not economic or technically feasible (Warhurst & Noronha, 1999).

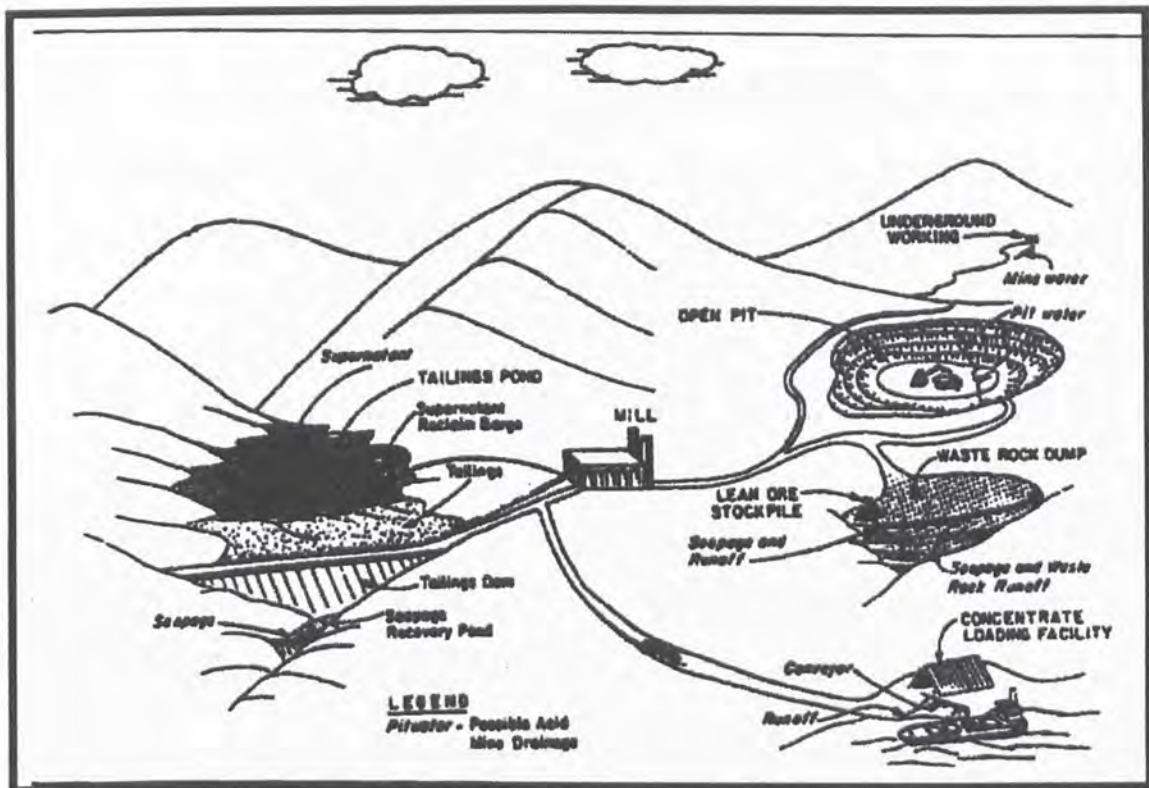


Figure 2.1 A typical mining operation (Source: Ferguson & Erickson, 1988)

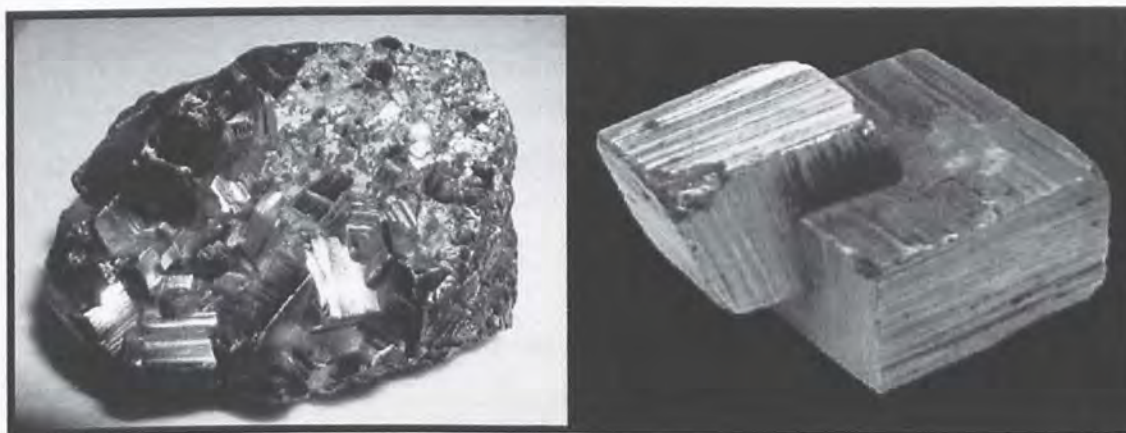
Mining operation at the Mamut Copper Mine was undertaken by the open pit method, utilising drilling and blasting to fragment the overburden and mineral ore followed by loading using loaders then hauling by heavy dump trucks. The overburden was stored in waste rock dumps whilst the ore was hauled to the crushing and milling plants for grinding and processing. After processing, the valuable metallic mineral component was sold as concentrate whilst the tailings were deposited in the Lohan Tailings Dam (Ramli *et al.*, 1994).

Extraction or mining of coal or metal ore deposits produces large volume of solid wastes including overburdens, waste rocks, and tailings which are usually dumped in the



vicinity of the mine. Since sulphide minerals tend to be present as impurities in coal and metal ores, these mine wastes are generally enriched with the sulphides (Skousen, *et al.*, 2000). The dominant sulphide mineral in mine wastes is pyrite,  $\text{FeS}_2$  (Kalin *et al.*, 2005; Kim & Chon, 2001; Hawley, 1977). Other minor sulphide minerals are as listed in Table 2.1.

Pyrite's metallic luster and pale-to-normal brass-yellow colour, as shown in Photo 2.1, have earned it the nickname of "fool's gold" (Morrison, 1992). It is relatively stable in its natural anoxic environment. However, when exposed to water, oxygen, and bacteria, pyrite can readily undergo oxidation to form sulphuric acid, and subsequently leads to the formation of AMD (Akciil & Koldas, 2006; Kalin *et al.*, 2005; Kim & Chon, 2001).



**Photo 2.1** Pyrite mineral  
(Source: Friedman, 2006)



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