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**Clay Composition and Particle Size of the  
Canterbury Drifts - Climatic, Oceanic, and  
Tectonic change in the SW Pacific**

Thesis submitted by

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# Statement on the Contribution of Others

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# Abstract

Marine sedimentary records provide valuable information for reconstructing ancient environmental and climatic change, and by doing so, also contribute knowledge critical for better understanding future climate change. Records from mid-latitude locations, such as New Zealand (Southern Hemisphere), are particularly important for paleoenvironmental research because they provide information on potential climatic teleconnections between equatorial and polar regions. In reality, however, paleoclimatic and paleoceanographic research on mid-latitude records has received limited attention, particularly in the Southern Hemisphere.

This thesis focuses on Neogene-Pleistocene drift deposits in the Canterbury Basin, also known as the Canterbury Drifts, SE New Zealand. The Canterbury Drifts are recognised as important paleoclimate and paleoceanographic archives of the SW Pacific because they record intrinsic signals of variability in South Island climatic conditions (glacial erosion), of tectonic uplift of the Southern Alps (western South Island), and of the flow of intermediate depth water masses and associated currents that originate from Antarctica (i.e. Sub-Antarctic Mode Water, Antarctic Intermediate Water, Antarctic Circumpolar Current). Despite previous research on the Canterbury Drifts, crucial aspects of their history remain unknown, including details of sediment source and supply dynamics relative to climatic, oceanographic and/or tectonic processes, and how SW Pacific climatic and oceanographic conditions have responded to Milankovitch cycles and high latitude conditions. The aim of this thesis was to address these issues by using clay mineralogy, clay geochemistry (trace elements and Nd, Sr isotopes), and particle size analysis of Canterbury Drift deposits recovered from Plio-Pleistocene Ocean Drilling Program (ODP) Site 1119 and the Early Miocene Bluecliffs Silt (BCS) Formation.

The principal objectives of this thesis were to identify:

1. Changes in South Island weathering regimes and detrital sediment supply relative to Plio-Pleistocene climatic conditions.
2. Change in onland source for shelf sediments relative to environmental conditions, including distinct tectonic events during Plio-Pleistocene drift sedimentation.
3. Connectivity between the Southern Alps ice cap and Antarctic temperatures prior to MIS 11, and Milankovitch (orbital) cycles in Late Pleistocene drift sediments.

4. Changes in climatic, tectonic, oceanic conditions during the Early Miocene-Pleistocene Canterbury Drift succession, and Milankovitch cycles in Early Miocene drift sediments.

Plio-Pleistocene changes in South Island weathering regimes and detrital sediment supply are identified from the clay mineralogy of Site 1119 sediments. The abrupt replacement of smectite with higher chlorite and illite contents at ~3.5 Ma is coincident with the global Early-Late Pliocene transition and reflects the onset of a glacially modulated physical weathering regime, which accompanied abrupt global cooling at that time. Chlorite and illite remain abundant through the Late Plio-Pleistocene, consistent with persistent glacial erosion and continually cooling climate. A glacial control on physical weathering is also seen at high resolution (~4 ka resolution sampling between ~650-260 ka) as increased chlorite and illite deposition during cold glacial phases. Changes in clay mineralogy of ODP Site 1119 therefore reflect changes in onland weathering regimes associated with global climate events.

The high-resolution record (back to at least MIS 16) also shows close ties between the behaviour of the Southern Alps ice cap and Antarctic atmospheric temperatures. Periods of reduced Antarctic temperature are concurrent with increased glacial erosion on the South Island and increased supply of detrital sediments (chlorite, illite, Th, Rare Earth Elements) directly to Site 1119 during periods of lowered sea level. Cold phases were also a time of reduced Southland Current flow as determined by the fine mean sortable silt and low sand content proxies. Conversely, warm Antarctic temperatures (interglacial and glacial-interglacial transitions) are concurrent with reduced glaciation on the South Island, reduced detrital sediment supply to Site 1119 and faster Southland Current flow. Previous evidence of a connection between SW Pacific climate and Antarctic conditions has been strengthened in this study by using numerous proxies and by providing spectral evidence. Spectral analysis of the clay and particle size data indicates high latitude influence on New Zealand climate and oceanography during the Plio-Pleistocene and highlights complex heat distribution in the Southern Hemisphere.

Rare earth elements (REEs) in Site 1119 sediments identify a dominant Torlesse Terrane provenance during the Plio-Pleistocene. Trace element ratios (Th/Sc, Nd/Sc, Rb/Ba) could not confidently identify sediment source and question the conventional use of immobile elements to fingerprint sediment source. Neodymium and Sr isotope data demonstrate intervals of distinct provenance change, alternating between a central Torlesse Terrane source and more a more volcanoclastic-rich sediment input from terranes further south. Specific shifts in the geochemical record between 2.7-2.3 Ma and 0.7-0.6 Ma coincide with previously recorded Australian-Pacific plate rotation events, and suggest distinct episodes of tectonic control on sediment supply to the Canterbury Basin.

Identification of tectonic control on drift sedimentation highlights the importance of considering tectonic activity when interpreting paleoclimatic signatures in basin environments.

Early Miocene BCS drift sediments are dominated by smectites, indicating a prevailing chemically dominated weathering regime during times of low topographic relief in New Zealand, and warm global climatic conditions. Change from a dominantly chemical weathering regime in the Early Miocene to a dominantly physical regime in the Plio-Pleistocene occurred in parallel with the rapid and continuing uplift of the Southern Alps mountain range since the Late Miocene, and with deteriorating climatic conditions from the Late Plio-Pleistocene. The particle size of BCS samples is coarser than Site 1119 sediments and demonstrates long-term fining through the Canterbury Drift succession. This trend is consistent with the widening of eastern shelf areas, continual uplift of the Southern Alps, formation of a mountain glacial cap that accompanied the global Late Cenozoic cooling, and possibly diminishing current flow through a deepening basin environment. Spectral analysis of BCS samples reveals Milankovitch cycles (eccentricity and obliquity) in Early Miocene drifts, and a high latitude influence on New Zealand climatic and oceanographic conditions since the Early Miocene.

This research demonstrates that paleoenvironmental studies of mid-latitude sedimentary records, such as the Canterbury Drifts, are integral to piecing together changes in global climatic and oceanographic conditions through time. Understanding how the Earth's climate has changed in the past, and what has driven these changes, in-turn provides valuable insight into the prediction of, and potential effects of, future climate change.

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	Introduction	1
<b>Chapter 2</b>	Plio-Pleistocene paleoclimate in the SW Pacific - Clay Mineralogy and Particle Size, ODP Site 1119, SE New Zealand	29
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Trace elements of ODP Site 1119 – Unraveling Environmental Change in the SW Pacific	49
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Pleistocene sediment advection in the New-Zealand sector of the SW Pacific (ODP Site 1119): oceanic and atmospheric connections with Antarctic and global climate	80
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Isotopic Fingerprinting of New Zealand terranes in offshore drift deposits: implications for paleoclimatic implications?	103
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Changes in climate and oceanography through the Canterbury Drift succession (Early Miocene-Pleistocene), SE New Zealand	127
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Conclusions	152
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Clay Mineral (XRD) Semi-Quantification	175
<b>Appendix 2</b>	Particle Size Data	183
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Spectral Analysis Output	197
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Clay Geochemistry data (ICP-MS) High Resolution Samples, ODP Site 1119	211

# List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.1</b>	Ocean and frontal systems presently surrounding New Zealand. Ocean Drilling Program Site 1119 is marked by a red star. Canterbury Basin petroleum wells are marked by grey diamonds and from north to south are; Resolution-1, Clipper-1, Endeavour-1, and Galleoun-1.	3
<b>Figure 1.2</b>	Global temperature ( $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ ‰) curve relative to plate tectonic behaviour (gateways), as well as stratigraphic and climatic events in the New Zealand sector of the SW Pacific.	5
<b>Figure 1.3</b>	Location of the Canterbury Basin (red ellipse) relative to the southern New Zealand plateau.	8
<b>Figure 1.4</b>	Schematic W-E (onland-offshore) profile across the Canterbury Basin showing the transgressive-condensed-regressive phases of the Kaikoura Cycle formed by eastern passive margin evolution.	8
<b>Figure 1.5</b>	Positions of the relative poles of Australian-Pacific plates (black squares). From 17.5 to 5.89 Ma (anomalies 5d-3a) poles of relative plate motion reflect parallel movement along the Alpine Fault. Since 5.89 Ma (anomaly 3a) poles shifted SW and indicate compressional movement across the Alpine Fault plate boundary. ODP Site 1119 (this study) is marked by red star.	11
<b>Figure 1.6</b>	Five stages of Canterbury Drift evolution.	12
<b>Figure 1.7</b>	Cross sectional view of the Canterbury shelf showing major features. A timeline has been included to demonstrate the timing of drift deposition at the Bluecliffs Silt (BCS) Formation outcrop (Otaio River) and ODP Site 1119, compared to the Resolution-1 petroleum well that drilled the entire Otakou regressive sequence.	13
<b>Figure 1.8</b>	Location of ODP Site 1119 relative to the Canterbury Basin shelf edge. The core drilled to a depth of ~500 mcd through clinof orm (A unit), small drifts (B units) and the large Big Grey (BG) unit. The upper clinof orm and small drift units have been deposited at SAMW depths, whilst the BG unit has been deposited at AAIW depths. Sample locations are marked by red triangles. Scale on left side of the diagram is in Two Way Time (TWT).	14
<b>Figure 1.9</b>	The greyish BCS capped by Quaternary terrace gravels at the Otaio River type location.	17
<b>Figure 2.1</b>	A. Ocean and frontal systems surrounding New Zealand. B. Ocean and frontal systems east of the South Island, New Zealand. C. Metamorphic terranes of the South Island, New Zealand.	33
<b>Figure 2.2</b>	Clay mineralogy of lake varve and river overbank deposits from the Torlesse Greywacke and Otago/Haast Schist metamorphic terranes, South Island, New Zealand. Basement geology of the South Island is based on the colour code illustrated in Fig. 2.1.	38
<b>Figure 2.3</b>	Clay mineral assemblages and particle size of ODP Site 1119 plotted with age (Ma) and depth (mcd). Drift units (A1-Big Grey) are plotted to the	40

right of the diagram and are distinguished by grey/white boxes. MSS – mean sortable silt

<b>Figure 2.4</b>	Scatterplots comparing peak area data of the clay mineral assemblages identified in ODP Site 1119 sediments.	41
<b>Figure 2.5</b>	Normal and cumulative grain size distribution curves of ODP Site 1119 samples, grouped according to drift units.	42
<b>Figure 3.1</b>	A. Ocean and frontal systems surrounding New Zealand. B. Ocean and frontal systems east of the South Island, New Zealand. C. Metamorphic terranes of the South Island, New Zealand.	61
<b>Figure 3.2</b>	Location of ODP Site 1119 relative to the Canterbury Basin shelf edge. The core drilled to a depth of ~500 mcd through clinoform (A unit), small drifts (B units) and the large Big Grey (BG) unit. The upper clinoform and small drift units have been deposited at SAMW depths, whilst the BG unit has been deposited at AAIW depths. Sample locations are marked by red triangles. Scale on left side of the diagram is in Two Way Time (TWT).	62
<b>Figure 3.3</b>	Chondrite-normalised Rare Earth Element (REE) patterns of lake varve and fluvial overbank deposits from the Torlesse greywacke and Haast Schist Terranes, South Island, New Zealand.	67
<b>Figure 3.4</b>	REE patterns (clay sized fraction), normalised against Average C1 Chondrites.	68
<b>Figure 3.5</b>	Down-hole trace element data (ppm) from ODP Site 1119 sediments. Major drift units have been boxed in grey and white.	69
<b>Figure 3.6</b>	Down-hole trace element ratios (ppm) of ODP Site 1119 samples. Major drift units are boxed in grey and white. The average values for each ratio are marked by the dashed red line.	71
<b>Figure 3.7</b>	Down-hole trace element data of the clay fraction, compared to bulk particle size and clay mineralogy data. Dashed lines mark intervals of change. Major drift units are boxed in grey and white.	73
<b>Figure 3.8</b>	Down-hole trace element ratios of ODP Site 1119 samples compared to Torlesse Terrane samples. Intervals of change are marked by dashed lines. Major drift units are boxed in grey and white.	77
<b>Figure 4.1</b>	A. Ocean and frontal systems surrounding New Zealand. B. Ocean and frontal systems east of the South Island, New Zealand. C. Metamorphic terranes of the South Island, New Zealand.	93
<b>Figure 4.2</b>	A. Oceanographic setting of the New Zealand sector of the SW Pacific relative to ODP Leg 181 drill sites. B. Bathymetric profile of New Zealand sector of the SW Pacific relative to connected Leg 181 drill sites, bathymetry and water masses.	94
<b>Figure 4.3</b>	Down-hole clay mineralogy, particle size, and selected clay geochemistry of ODP Site 1119, compared to the natural $\gamma$ -ray intensity of ODP Site 1119 and MIS. Interglacial periods are boxed in grey.	98

<b>Figure 4.4</b>	Scatter plots of clay phase peak area data from ODP Site 1119 sediments showing generally poor correlations except for chlorite vs. illite ( $R^2 = 0.9$ ) implying strong relationships between these two clay mineral phases during deposition of the Pleistocene Canterbury Drifts	99
<b>Figure 4.5</b>	Blackman-Tukey spectral plots of clay mineralogy, clay geochemistry, particle size, and $\gamma$ -ray intensity from ODP Site 1119. All data has a 95% confidence level. Natural $\gamma$ -ray data has a bandwidth of $0.0088 \text{ ka}^{-1}$ , whilst all other Site 1119 parameters have a bandwidth of $0.0089 \text{ ka}^{-1}$ . The number of lags is 21.	101
<b>Figure 4.6</b>	Natural $\gamma$ -ray, particle size, clay geochemistry, and clay mineralogy trends from ODP Site 1119 compared to the $\delta D$ of the EDC and global benthic $\delta O^{18}$ .	103
<b>Figure 5.1</b>	<b>A.</b> Ocean and frontal systems surrounding New Zealand. <b>B.</b> Ocean and frontal systems east of the South Island, New Zealand. <b>C.</b> Metamorphic terranes of the South Island, New Zealand and location of ODP Site 1119.	116
<b>Figure 5.2</b>	Location of ODP Site 1119 relative to the Canterbury Basin shelf edge. The core drilled to a depth of $\sim 500$ mcd through clinoforn (A unit), small drifts (B units) and the large Big Grey (BG) unit. The upper clinoforn and small drift units have been deposited at SAMW depths, whilst the BG unit has been deposited at AAIW depths. Sample locations are marked by red triangles. Scale on left side of the diagram is in Two Way Time (TWT).	118
<b>Figure 5.3</b>	Down-hole light Rare Earth Element data of ODP Site 1119. The black stars represent sample intervals selected from clay $^{143}\text{Nd}/^{144}\text{Nd}$ and $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ analysis.	121
<b>Figure 5.4</b>	Down-hole $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ and $\epsilon_{\text{Nd}}$ data of ODP Site 1119 sediments and the Rangitata River overbank sample. Error bars lie within the size of the plotted symbol	123
<b>Figure 5.5</b>	$^{143}\text{Nd}/^{144}\text{Nd}$ and $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ data of ODP Site 1119 and the Rangitata River overbank sample from this study compared, to Eastern Province terrane data.	125
<b>Figure 5.6</b>	$^{143}\text{Nd}/^{144}\text{Nd}$ and $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ data of ODP Site 1119, compared to trace element data, particle size data, natural gamma and sediment accumulation rates.	126
<b>Figure 6.1</b>	Lithostratigraphic (metres) nomenclature of the BCS with overlying Southburn Sand.	143
<b>Figure 6.2</b>	Schematic (W-E) cross section of the Canterbury Basin and the sedimentary stages associated with passive margin evolution.	144
<b>Figure 6.3</b>	Paleogeographic conditions of New Zealand during the Cenozoic.	144
<b>Figure 6.4</b>	Location of the BCS type section (“cliff section”), at Otaio River.	145
<b>Figure 6.5</b>	Stratigraphic profile of the BCS at Otaio River including marked hard bands (lithified sand beds). Hard band (HB) 16A identified in this study is marked in red.	147

<b>Figure 6.6</b>	The greyish BCS capped by Quaternary terrace gravels at the Otaio River type location.	148
<b>Figure 6.7</b>	BCS sample after separation.	151
<b>Figure 6.8</b>	X-ray Diffraction of BCS samples in a MacDiff window, showing low intensity clay peaks. The top plot is of a bulk sample, whilst the lower plot is a close up of a glycolated sample.	152
<b>Figure 6.9</b>	Stratigraphic diagram showing the HBs and particle size, gamma, and clay mineralogy results of BCS samples.	154
<b>Figure 6.10</b>	Particle size, gamma, and clay mineralogy of high-resolution BCS samples.	155
<b>Figure 6.11</b>	Spectral frequencies of natural $\gamma$ -ray, and particle size from BCS samples. All data has a 95% confidence level. Natural $\gamma$ -ray and particle size data have a bandwidth of $0.005 \text{ ka}^{-1}$ .	157

## List of Tables

<b>Table 3.1</b>	Measured and certified trace element values of sediment samples from the Torlesse greywacke and Haast Schist terranes.	66
<b>Table 3.2</b>	Measured and certified trace element values of ODP Site 1119 sediments.	81
<b>Table 4.1</b>	Peak frequencies identified by Blackman-Tukey analysis of clay mineralogy, clay geochemistry, and particle size data from ODP Site 1119 sediments.	100
<b>Table 5.1</b>	Measured and certified $^{143}\text{Nd}/^{144}\text{Nd}$ and $^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr}$ values.	123
<b>Table 6.1</b>	Peak frequencies identified by Blackman-Tukey analysis of natural gamma and particle size data from BCS sediments.	157

# Publications produced during my PhD candidature

## Publications

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**Land, M.,** Wust, R.A., Robert, C., Carter, R.M. (2010) Plio-Pleistocene Climate and Oceanography of the SW Pacific; clay mineralogy and particle size of ODP Site 1119, SE New Zealand. *Marine Geology*, **274**, 165-176 (Chapter 2)

**Land, M.,** Wust, R.A., Kemp, A.I.S., Carter, R.M. *in prep.* Trace elements of ODP Site 1119 – Unravelling Environmental Change in the SW Pacific (Chapter 3)

**Land, M.,** Robert, C., Wust, R.A., Carter, R.M. *in prep.* Pleistocene sediment advection, climate, and oceanography in the New Zealand sector of the SW Pacific: connectivity with global climate and Antarctic conditions. (Chapter 4)

**Land, M.,** Kemp, A.I.S., Wust, R.A., Mass, R. *in prep.* Isotopic Fingerprinting of New Zealand terranes in offshore drift deposits: implications for paleoclimatic implications? (Chapter 5)

**Land, M.,** Wust, R.A.J., Robert, C., Carter, R.M. *in prep.* Changes in climate and oceanography through the Canterbury Drift succession (Early Miocene-Pleistocene), SE New Zealand. (Chapter 6)

## Conference Presentations

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**Land, M.,** Wust, R.A., Robert, C., Kemp, A.I.S., Carter, R.M. (2009) Clay Mineralogy and Clay Geochemistry of ODP Site 1119 – Climatic and Oceanographic history of the SW Pacific since ~3.9 Ma. Australian National Network in Marine Science Inaugural Conference, 1-2 December

**Land M.,** Wust, R.A., Carter, R.M., and Robert, C. (2008) Clay Mineralogy and Clay Geochemistry of ODP Site 1119 – Paleoclimatic and Paleoceanographic History of the SW Pacific for the last 3.9 Ma. *EOS Trans. AGU*, 89 (53) Fall Meet. Suppl. Abstract PP11A-1363

