

Grain Size Analysis of Samples from CRP-2/2A, Victoria Land Basin, Antarctica

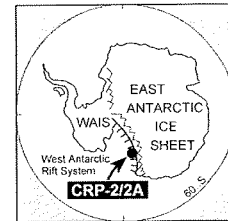
P.J. BARRETT & J. ANDERSON

School of Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington, P O Box 600, Wellington - New Zealand
(peter.barrett@vuw.ac.nz)

Introduction

The purpose of this note is to present results of grain size analyses from 118 samples of the CRP-2/2A core using sieve and Sedigraph techniques. The samples were selected to represent the range of facies encountered, and tend to become more widely spaced with depth. Fifteen

came from the upper 27 m of Quaternary and Pliocene sediments, 62 from the early Miocene-late Oligocene strata (27 to 307 mbsf), and 41 from the early Oligocene strata beneath (307 to 624 mbsf).



The results are intended to provide reference data for lithological descriptions in the core logs (Cape Roberts Science Team, 1999), and to help with facies interpretation. The analytical technique used for determining size frequency of the sand fraction in our samples (sieving) is simple, physical and widely practised for over a century. Thus it provides a useful reference point for analyses produced by other faster and more sophisticated techniques, such as the Malvern laser particle size analysis system (Woolfe et al., this volume), and estimates derived from measurements taken with down-hole logging tools (Bücker, personal communication, 1999).

Method

Between 10 and 25 g of sample was disaggregated by crushing gently between wooden blocks and then stirring in distilled water for 60 minutes in an ultrasonic bath. A microsample was checked for material not fully disaggregated, and if found the treatment was continued until disaggregation was complete. The sample was then wet-sieved into sand and mud fractions, and both fractions dried and weighed. The sand fraction (0.063-2 mm) was then dry-sieved and a 1 g sub-sample of the mud fraction analysed by Sedigraph 5100. Because wet sieving invariably retains some coarse silt, dry sieving was extended to catch 4.5 and 5.0 phi fractions. The weights retained were then merged with the Sedigraph results. The analyses are reported in table 1 for each sample as frequency percent at 0.5 phi intervals for the range -1 to 10 phi (2 to 1/1024 mm) and the percent finer than 10 phi.

Around 1/4 of the samples contain more than 2% gravel though only 8 samples had more than 10%. Because of the small sample size (typically between 10 and 20 g) the proportion of gravel cannot be reliably estimated, but the proportion is nevertheless recorded with the results.

Results

The results are summarised in table 1 (frequency percent) and table 2 (summary statistics). The size frequency distributions fall into 5 main types (Fig. 1, facies after Powell et al. this volume and Fielding et al., this volume); *mudstone* (facies 1) with less than 10% sand, *sandy*

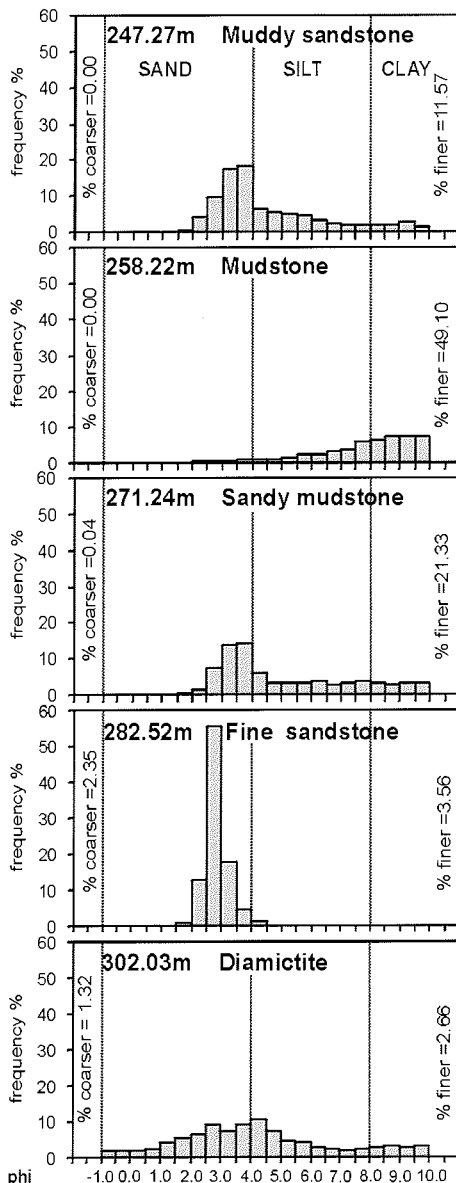


Fig. 1 - Typical histograms for samples from sequence 11 to illustrate the range of textures in CRP-2/2A. They range from diamictite at the base through well sorted fine sandstone (with a coarse tail from ice-rafting) to sandy mudstone and mudstone in the middle part, returning to muddy sandstone toward the top of the cycle.

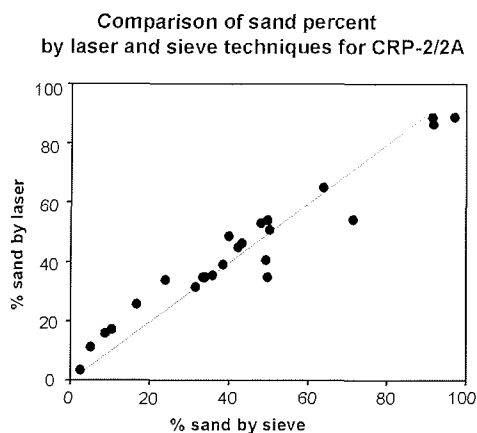


Fig. 2 - Comparison of percent sand measured by sieving (this paper) and by laser particle size analyser (Naish et al., this volume) in samples from the same 2 cm interval of core from CRP-2 and 2A.

volume). The following brief comparison is made between the two methods, with a focus on the sand range because we consider that most useful descriptive and environmental information for nearshore marine sediments is carried in the sand range. The strength of the sieve –Sedigraph method is that it is little affected by artifacts unrelated to size. It might be biased a little by shape, but it does sort grains in the sand range at least by intermediate and short grain axes. The weakness is that it is time-consuming and requires a relatively large sample – 10-20 g. The strength of the laser method is that it is relatively rapid and requires only a small sample - ~1 g. A possible weakness is that there may be artifacts relating to the material being analysed on account of the way sand grains diffract or transmit light.

Both sieve and laser methods depend crucially on sample disaggregation, that is, ensuring that the sample is

treated in such a way as to separate the now lithified collection of the grains into their original separate elements. While we have made every effort to do this for the sieved samples, and believe we have achieved a high degree of disaggregation, it is unrealistic to believe that we have been completely successful. Nevertheless we can show a high degree of correlation with visual observations, at the same time noting exceptions for further consideration. Comparison between a simple measure such as percent sand for the sieve dataset presented here and the laser dataset presented in Woolfe et al. (this volume) resulted in the expected positive correlation but with a very large scatter. While we can acknowledge some scatter resulting from the different ways in which size is measured, the range seemed excessive. The analyses have now been repeated with special attention to disaggregation and with a smaller lens (range 1-600 microns), and yield a much closer relationship (sand % measured by sieve and laser mostly within 5%, Naish et al., in preparation, and Fig. 2). Further work is planned, but we consider the comparisons thus far to be encouraging for the use of the laser size technique for high resolution studies of varying textural patterns in sedimentary strata.

REFERENCES

- Cape Roberts Science Team, 1999. Studies from the Cape Roberts Project, Ross Sea, Antarctica. Initial Report on CRP-2/2A. *Terra Antarctica*, 6 (1/2), Supplement, 228 p.
- Folk R.L. & Ward W.C. 1957. Brazos River bar: a study in the significance of grain size parameters. *Journal of Sedimentary Petrology*, 27, 3-27.