



Characterising the P – T – t histories and
effects of melt loss in high thermal
gradient terranes.

LAURA J. MORRISSEY

Geology and Geophysics
School of Physical Sciences
University of Adelaide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	vii
Declaration	ix
List of publications during the course of this thesis	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction and thesis outline.	1
Introduction to high thermal gradient metamorphism	3
Thermal drivers and geodynamic setting of high thermal gradient metamorphism	5
The role of partial melting during high temperature metamorphism	7
<i>Melt generation and melt extraction</i>	8
<i>Melt and the interpretation of geochronology</i>	9
<i>Melt loss and implications for P–T modelling</i>	9
Recognising polymetamorphism in high thermal gradient terranes	10
Thesis outline	11
References	14
Chapter 2: Linking the Windmill Islands, east Antarctica and the Albany–Fraser Orogen: insights from U–Pb zircon geochronology and Hf isotopes.	23
Introduction	27
Geological setting	29
Sampling and methods	31
<i>U–Pb geochronology</i>	31
<i>Hf isotopes</i>	32
Results	33
<i>U–Pb geochronology of metasedimentary rocks</i>	33
<i>U–Pb geochronology of igneous rocks</i>	38
<i>Hf isotopes of metasedimentary rocks</i>	41
<i>Hf isotopes of igneous rocks</i>	42
Discussion	43
<i>Age and provenance of the metasedimentary rocks of the Windmill Islands</i>	43
<i>Age and isotopic character of the magmatic rocks of the Windmill Islands</i>	46
<i>Tectonic setting of the Wilkes Land–Albany–Fraser system</i>	49
Conclusions	53
Acknowledgements	54
References	54
Supplementary Data	59
<i>U–Pb zircon analyses</i>	59
<i>Zircon spot descriptions for metasedimentary rocks</i>	73
<i>Lu–Hf zircon analyses</i>	80
Chapter 3: Assessing tectonic models for Stage I–Stage II metamorphism in the Antarctica segment of the Musgrave–Albany–Fraser Orogen using P–T constraints.	87
Introduction	91
Geological setting	93
Sample description and petrography	95

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Sampling and methods	99
<i>U–Pb monazite geochronology</i>	99
<i>Mineral equilibria modelling</i>	99
Results	100
<i>U–Pb monazite geochronology</i>	100
<i>Mineral chemistry</i>	102
<i>Pressure–temperature conditions</i>	103
Discussion	116
<i>Monazite growth and the timing of metamorphism</i>	116
<i>Overall P–T–t evolution of the Windmill Islands</i>	117
<i>Tectonic setting of metamorphism in the Wilkes Land–Albany–Fraser system</i>	120
Conclusions	123
Acknowledgments	123
References	123
Supplementary data	129
<i>Whole rock geochemistry</i>	129
<i>LA-ICP-MS monazite U–Pb analyses</i>	130
Chapter 4: Long-lived high-temperature, low-pressure granulite facies metamorphism in the Arunta Region, central Australia.	135
Introduction	139
Geological setting	141
Sample selection and petrography	143
<i>South of Mount Boothby</i>	144
<i>North of Mount Boothby</i>	147
<i>Mount Boothby region pegmatites</i>	148
Methods	148
<i>Monazite geochronology</i>	148
<i>Bulk rock and mineral chemistry</i>	150
<i>Mineral equilibria modelling</i>	150
Results	153
<i>Monazite geochronology</i>	153
<i>Pressure–temperature conditions</i>	155
Discussion	160
<i>Duration of the high-T conditions</i>	160
<i>Thermal character of Early Mesoproterozoic metamorphism in the Aileron Province</i>	162
Conclusions	165
Acknowledgements	165
References	165
Supplementary data	172
<i>LA-ICP-MS monazite U–Pb analyses</i>	172
<i>Whole rock geochemistry</i>	176
Chapter 5: Multi-stage metamorphism in the Rayner–Eastern Ghats Terrane: P–T–t constraints from the northern Prince Charles Mountains, east Antarctica.	179

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	183
Geological setting	184
Sample selection and petrography	188
Methods	192
<i>Monazite U–Pb LA-ICP-MS geochronology</i>	192
<i>Mineral chemistry</i>	193
<i>Phase equilibria modelling</i>	193
Results	195
<i>Monazite U–Pb LA-ICP-MS geochronology</i>	195
<i>Mineral chemistry</i>	199
<i>Calculated P–T pseudosections</i>	201
Discussion	210
<i>Monazite U–Pb geochronology</i>	210
<i>P–T conditions and constraints on P–T path</i>	212
<i>Correlations with Eastern Ghats</i>	214
<i>Mechanisms for the high-T metamorphism in the Rayner–Eastern Ghats context</i>	215
Conclusions	217
Acknowledgements	217
References	217
Supplementary data	226
<i>LA-ICP-MS monazite U–Pb analyses</i>	226
Chapter 6: Upgrading iron-ore deposits by melt loss during granulite facies metamorphism.	233
Introduction	237
Geological setting	240
<i>Gawler Craton</i>	240
<i>Price Metasediments–Warrambo system</i>	241
Sample descriptions	242
<i>Price Metasediments</i>	242
<i>Warrambo gneisses</i>	243
Metamorphic modelling	246
<i>Determining the conditions of metamorphism of the Price Metasediments–Warrambo system</i>	247
<i>Modelling the effects of melt loss</i>	248
Results of Metamorphic Modelling	248
<i>The effect of oxidation state</i>	248
<i>Metamorphic conditions of the Price Metasediments</i>	252
<i>Metamorphic conditions of Warrambo deposit</i>	252
<i>Overall P–T evolution and conditions of the Price Metasediments–Warrambo system</i>	254
<i>Modelling the effects of prograde metamorphism and melt loss using the Price Metasediments</i>	255
Discussion	260
<i>Implications for the generation of magnetite ore during metamorphism</i>	261
<i>Limitations of the modelling</i>	262
<i>Implications for exploration for magnetite-rich iron ore deposits</i>	263
Conclusions	264
Acknowledgements	264

TABLE OF CONTENTS

References	264
Supplementary data	269
<i>Whole rock geochemistry in weight %</i>	269
Chapter 7: Cambrian high temperature reworking of the Rayner–Eastern Ghats terrane: constraints from the Northern Prince Charles Mountains region, East Antarctica.	271
Introduction	275
Geological Framework	276
<i>Cambrian reworking in the Rayner Complex</i>	281
Petrography and sample descriptions	282
<i>Northern Prince Charles Mountains</i>	283
<i>East Amery Ice Shelf</i>	288
Methods	291
<i>Monazite U–Pb LA–ICP–MS geochronology</i>	291
<i>Mineral chemistry</i>	291
<i>Phase equilibria modelling</i>	293
Results	294
<i>Monazite U–Pb geochronology</i>	294
<i>Mineral chemistry</i>	308
<i>T–M and P–T pseudosections</i>	308
Discussion	312
<i>Geochronology</i>	312
<i>Metamorphic conditions</i>	314
<i>Modelled metamorphic conditions</i>	314
<i>Controls on recording of Cambrian metamorphism in nPCM</i>	314
<i>Cambrian P–T paths</i>	315
<i>Preconditioning to reach high temperatures during the Cambrian</i>	316
<i>Links with the Eastern Ghats</i>	318
Conclusions	318
Acknowledgements	319
References	319
Supplementary data	329
<i>LA–ICP–MS monazite U–Pb analyses</i>	329
<i>T–M_{melt} sections</i>	339
Chapter 8: Conclusions and future research directions	341
Appendix 1: Additional publications by the author	351
Early Mesoproterozoic metamorphism in the Barossa Complex, South Australia: links with the eastern margin of Proterozoic Australia.	353
Grenvillian-aged reworking of late Paleoproterozoic crust of the southern North Australian Craton, central Australia: implications for the assembly of Mesoproterozoic Australia.	380

ABSTRACT

Zircon U–Pb and Lu–Hf isotopes, in situ U–Pb monazite geochronology and calculated metamorphic phase diagrams are used to explore the tectonic settings of regional high thermal gradient metamorphism as well as the consequences of melt loss on the bulk composition and reactivity of residual rock packages. Case studies are presented from four high thermal gradient terranes: the Windmill Islands in Wilkes Land, east Antarctica; the central Aileron Province in central Australia, the Rayner Complex in east Antarctica and the southern Gawler Craton in South Australia.

The Windmill Islands region records two stages of high thermal gradient metamorphism between c. 1320–1300 Ma and c. 1240–1170 Ma. The first stage of metamorphism occurred at conditions of 3.5–4 kbar and 700–730 °C and was associated with the formation of a horizontal fabric. The second stage of metamorphism is most strongly recorded in the southern Windmill Islands where it reached conditions of ~4 kbar and 850 °C, coincident with the emplacement of voluminous isotopically juvenile granitic and charnockitic magmas. The metasedimentary rocks of the Windmill Islands contain both arc- and craton-derived detrital zircon grains, suggesting that they formed in a back-arc setting. An extensional setting is consistent with the high thermal gradients and the formation of a regional horizontal fabric during the first stage of metamorphism. The intrusion of juvenile charnockite further suggests that the overall tectonic regime was extensional and that the crust beneath the Windmill Islands contained little evolved material.

The central Aileron Province records long-lived high thermal gradient anatectic conditions between c. 1590 and 1520 Ma. Peak temperatures were in excess of 850 °C with pressures of 6.5–7.5 kbar, corresponding to a thermal gradient of >130–140 °C/kbar. The retrograde evolution involved minor decompression and then slow cooling, culminating with the development of andalusite. The absence of any syn-metamorphic magmatism and the development of contractional structures during metamorphism suggest that long-lived high thermal gradient metamorphism was likely to have been driven to a significant extent by the burial of high heat producing pre-metamorphic granitic rocks that volumetrically dominate the terrane.

The Rayner Complex in east Antarctica was extensively deformed and metamorphosed during the Rayner Orogeny between c. 1020 and 900 Ma. Metamorphism was associated with voluminous granitic and charnockitic magmatism. The earliest phase of metamorphism is recorded in the southern Rayner Complex and involved pressures of >7.5 kbar. Pervasive metamorphism at 950–900 Ma affected the whole Rayner Complex and involved temperatures of 850–880 °C and lower pressures of 6–7 kbar. The Rayner Complex is interpreted to be a back-arc basin that was closed during two-stage collision between the Archean Antarctic cratons to the south and the arc, followed by collision with the Indian Craton.

High thermal gradient metamorphism can occur in both collisional and extensional regimes and in both plate margins and intracontinental settings. The primary thermal driver in the Windmill Islands and the Rayner Complex was likely to have been the thinned lithosphere resulting from back-arc extension, whereas in the central Aileron Province, the primary thermal driver was likely to be anomalously high heat producing crust. However, in all three terranes, the attainment of

ABSTRACT

regional high temperatures was facilitated by the preconditioning (dehydration) of the crust by prior melt loss events and slow erosion rates.

In all four studied terranes, high thermal gradient metamorphism resulted in melt loss that significantly altered the compositions and reactivity of the residual rocks. One implication of melt loss during regional high temperature metamorphism is that it creates a terrane comprising anhydrous, residual rock compositions that are relatively resistant to reworking during subsequent metamorphic events. As demonstration of this, the Rayner Complex records a metamorphic event at c. 540–500 Ma that reached peak conditions of 800–870 °C and 5.5–6.5 kbar. However, high-*T* mineral growth at 540–500 Ma is only recorded in some locations. The spatial distribution of this mineralogical reworking was controlled by localised rock reactivity that may reflect domains that had undergone hydrous retrogression at the end of the Rayner Orogeny, locally enhancing the responsiveness of the rock mass during the Cambrian.

In the southern Gawler Craton, forward modelling of an Fe-rich phyllite sequence shows that melt loss can also have economic implications by increasing the concentration of iron in the residual rock package, leading to enrichment in Fe-oxide minerals (magnetite and hematite). Muscovite-rich rocks with lower iron content are more fertile, produce more melt and therefore show a more significant increase (up to 35%) in the Fe-oxide content in the residual (melt depleted) rock package. Rocks with primary Fe-rich compositions are less fertile, lose less melt and therefore do not experience the same relative increase in the amount of Fe-oxides in the residuum. The economic implications of the modelling are that the more fertile horizons with lower primary iron contents may be significantly upgraded as a result of melt loss, thereby improving the overall grade of the ore system. In the case of southern Gawler Craton, melt loss-driven Fe enrichment has contributed to the formation of one of Australia's largest known magnetite resource systems.

DECLARATION

I, Laura Morrissey, certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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PUBLICATIONS DURING THE COURSE OF THIS THESIS

Peer reviewed journal articles:

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Morrissey, L.J., Hand, M., Lane, K., Kelsey, D.E., Dutch, R.A., 2016. Upgrading iron-rich sequences to economic grade iron-ore deposits by melt loss during granulite-facies metamorphism. *Ore Geology Reviews*, 74, 101–121.

Morrissey, L.J., Hand, M., Kelsey, D.E., Wade, B.P., 2016. Cambrian high-temperature reworking of the Rayner-Eastern Ghats terrane: constraints from the northern Prince Charles Mountains region, east Antarctica. *Journal of Petrology*, 57, 53–92.

Wong, B., **Morrissey, L.J.**, Hand, M., Fields, C., Kelsey, D.E., 2015. Grenvillian-aged reworking of late Paleoproterozoic crust of the southern North Australian Craton, central Australia: implications for the assembly of Mesoproterozoic Australia. *Precambrian Research*, 270, 100–123.

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