A late episode of Ferrar magmatism? Geochemistry and preliminary \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}\) results of high Fe (SPCT) tholeiites from Southern Victoria Land, Antarctica

P. Antonini  
A. Marzoli  
G. Demarchi  
P. R. Renne

Dip. Scienze della Terra, Università di Trieste, via Weiss 8, 34127 Trieste, Italy  
Berkeley Geochronology Center, 2455 Ridge Road, Berkeley, 94709 CA, USA

The Middle Jurassic Ferrar Magmatic Province extends along the proto-Pacific margin of Gondwana from Antarctica to Tasmania, Australia and New Zealand. This magmatism is part of the Mesozoic low-Ti Gondwana Province (Cox, 1988), but differs from the other Mesozoic Large Igneous Provinces, related to the break-up of Gondwana, by having high SiO\(_2\) content, LILE/HFSE ratios and Sr isotopic compositions (\(^{87}\text{Sr}/^{86}\text{Sr} > 0.708\)). In Antarctica, the Ferrar magmatism is represented by the mafic layered intrusions of Dufek, the sills and dikes of the Ferrar Dolerite and by the lava flows of the Kirkpatrick Basalt. Geochemical and isotopic studies on the Kirkpatrick basalts from the Mesa Range (Victoria Land) revealed the occurrence of two geochemical types: the Mount Fazio (low-Fe; MFCT) and the overlying Scarab Peak (high-Fe; SPCT; Fleming et al., 1995).

Ferrar sills and lavas from Prince Albert Mountains have been investigated for major and trace elements and Sr-Nd isotopic compositions. The studied rocks mainly belong to the low-Fe tholeiites (MFCT) and consist of tholeiitic-andesitic basalts and andesites, while the high-Fe tholeiites (SPCT) have been found only at Brimstone Peak. High-Fe (SPCT) rocks are represented by evolved (mg# 23–18) andesites characterized by relatively high FeO\(_t\) (>13.0 wt.%) and TiO\(_2\) (>1.8 wt.%) and low SiO\(_2\) (56–59) contents. Relative to the high-Fe (SPCT) rocks, the low-Fe (MFCT) rocks cover a wider range of mg# (54–23) showing lower FeO\(_t\) (<12.0 wt.%) and TiO\(_2\) (<1.4 wt.%) and, for similar mg# values, higher SiO\(_2\) (56–61) contents.

The \(\varepsilon\text{Nd}\) and \(\varepsilon\text{Sr}\) values of the low-Fe (MFCT) tholeiites range from -4.8 to -5.7 and from 85.8 to 112.1, respectively. The \(\varepsilon\text{Sr}\) values are positively correlated with the degree of differentiation, (e.g. increase of SiO\(_2\) content and \(\text{LREE}/\text{HREE}\) ratios), suggesting that crustal contamination may operated during the magmatic differentiation of low-Fe (MFCT) tholeiites. The high-Fe (SPCT) rocks exhibit less enriched Sr-Nd isotopic compositions (\(\varepsilon\text{Nd} = -2.7\) to -3.9; \(\varepsilon\text{Sr} = 73.6\) to 78.9), with respect to the high-Fe (MFCT) indicating that the SPCT rocks can not derive from the MFCT magmas by fractional crystallization. This suggests SPCT and MFCT experienced different evolutionary processes, and may require distinct parental magmas.

Previous \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}\) data suggested that Kirkpatrick basalts and Ferrar dolerites were emplaced in a short time interval, less than 1 Ma (e.g. Heimann et al., 1994; Fleming et al., 1997).

We present new \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}\) data on an high-Fe (SPCT) andesite. The plagioclase separate of this sample yields an \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}\) plateau age of 175.1 ± 1.0 Ma (1σ analytical precision; Fig. 1). This plateau is defined by 21 contiguous steps and by c. 90% of released \(^{39}\text{Ar}\). The isochron age (174.9 ± 2.5 Ma; MSWD = 0.95; intercept \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{36}\text{Ar} = \infty\)) is shown in Fig. 1.

![40Ar/39Ar Step-Heating Spectrum for SPCT sample 2140](image)

**Fig. 1.** \(^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}\) age spectrum of SPCT sample 2140.
Fig. 2. Relative probability plot of $^{40}$Ar/$^{39}$Ar ages of Kirkpatrick basalts and Ferrar dolerites (see text for references). All ages recalculated on the basis of Mmhb-1 = 523.1.

$288.5 \pm 6.2$ is indistinguishable. The ages are calculated based on the age of 28.02 Ma for Fish Canyon sanidine (FCs), equivalent to 523.1 Ma for MMhb-1 standard (Renne et al., 1988). Previous $^{40}$Ar/$^{39}$Ar ages determined for the Kirkpatrick Basalt and the Ferrar Dolerite (Heimann et al., 1994; Fleming et al., 1997) were based on a different age of MMhb-1. Normalizing all to the basis defined by Renne et al. (1998), the Kirkpatrick Basalts (Heinmann et al., 1994) and the Ferrar Dolerites (Fleming et al., 1997) range from 179 to 181 Ma (mean 180.2 ± 0.5 Ma). The high-Fe (SPCT) age (175.1 ± 1.0 Ma) is significantly younger than the mean age of Ferrar magmatism, even at the 2σ confidence level (Fig. 2), thus the SPCT andesites represent a late episode in Ferrar volcanism. Further $^{40}$Ar/$^{39}$Ar analyses of SPCT andesites are in progress.

References