Review for: Controls of aeolian and fluvial sediment influx to the northern Red Sea over the last 220 000 years
Werner Ehrmann1, Paul A. Wilson2, Helge W. Arz3, Gerhard Schmiedl4

The manuscript is original and provides detailed information regarding the siliciclastic sediment compositions in core KL23 from the north part of the Red Sea. The data set provided in this manuscript is valuable and continues this group's work from recent years, where they infer paleoclimate trends from the isotopic values and clay minerals compositions. This contribution is important in providing high-resolution mineralogical and geochemical data and should be published for others to use. The discussion uses the available literature and draws broad spatial teleconnections based on various paleoclimate records and models. They provide a strong case for the ties between low latitude northern Red Sea and high latitudes ice caps glacial-interglacial cycle climate variability over the equatorial insolation driven variability seen southward in Red Sea archives.

The authors argue for a reasonable scenario – where during glacial periods and low global sea levels, the Nile River delta was exposed, and its sediments served as a significant source for terrigenous eolian sediments blown southward to the Red Sea. Their argument relies on increased smectite content and Ti counts during glacial periods, both likely originating from volcanic detritus. Another source of eolian sediments suggested by the authors to be significant in the past is the "Tokar Gap" and two other similar mountain gaps in the eastern borders of the Red Sea fringing mountain belt. These interpretations of the results might prove valid, however, other interpretations may well be inferred from the same results, following the discussion raised here:

Line 155 – contrary to the stated argument the DSAF% maps from (Kunkelova et al., 2024) shows relatively high values for the region between Sallum (Egypt) and Benghazi (Libya). Indeed, this region is the source of reconstructed air parcel routes (Palchan and Torfstein, 2019). On the other hand, lower latitude East Sahara is not a probable source of dust to KL23 due to the local wind patterns and their convergence southward from it (e.g., Menezes et al., 2018).

Line 180 – the treatment of removing marine barite is important but seems not very significant in interpretation of the provided Sr isotopes, as all of the previous terrigenous data from KL23 (Palchan et al., 2013) is higher than the modern seawater composition of 0.709. Hence, as to the authors claim, it should be even more radiogenic than reported. Even so, comparing the Sr values in the current and previous work the difference seems to be negligible.

Line 258 – using the term "substantial" is a bit of a stretch as core KL23 smectite base levels are around 40% of the clay composition, thus, the rise during glacial periods is only additional 10%. This increase is proportional to the content of other clays as the analysis was done only on the <2um fraction. Thus, the rise could reflect decrease in other clays rather than more input from a specific source.

Furthermore, the concentration of the clay fraction in the samples drops significantly from ±12% to ±4% during the respective interval of increased smectite (Fig. 3B & Fig. 6C). However, the use of εNd reflects sources without this issue and its low values "(typically ~ –8 to –6 εNd)" points to that if there is indeed a Deltaic source, it is surely not "substantial" as it resembles more granitoid detritus compared with the Deltaic higher εNd values.

Methods remarks:

Section 2.3 – the leaching method is not specified. This is important and needs clarification and detail. Similarly, there is no detail on the analysis method (i.e., TIMS? Multi-collector?). Even if this is described in a previous paper, it is important to include minimal information regarding the method and analysis (indeed, this is discussed later in section 4.1). For example, what standard was used during the analysis, and what value was assumed for it?

Figure remarks:

Fig. 2a the window lacks a crucial potential source area depicted as increased DSAF% in northern Sahara around 20°N (Kunkelova et al., 2024). This region is a prominent source of air parcel reconstruction (Palchan and Torfstein, 2019).

In summary, this is a fascinating paper with substantial data contribution on the clay mineralogical compositions in the northern Red Sea – a region largely overlooked. The conclusions drawn based on the results are partly debatable; the paleoclimate community will surely benefit from the discussion.

Daniel Palchan

References

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