CHAPTER 7

PETROLOGY AND RESERVOIR QUALITY OF THE GAIKEMA SANDSTONE: INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

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INTRODUCTION

The Division of Geological & Geophysical Surveys (DGGS) and Division of Oil & Gas (DOG) are currently conducting a study of the hydrocarbon potential of Cook Inlet basin (LePain and others, 2011). The Tertiary stratigraphic section of the basin includes coal-bearing units that are prolific gas reservoirs, particularly the Neogene sandstones. The Paleogene sandstones are locally prolific oil reservoirs that are sourced largely from the underlying Middle Jurassic Tuxedni Group.

Several large structures act as hydrocarbon traps and the possibility exists for stratigraphic traps although this potential has not been fully exploited. As part of this study a significant number of Tertiary sandstones from the basin have been already collected and analyzed (Helmold and others, 2013). Recent field programs have shifted attention to the Mesozoic stratigraphic section to ascertain whether it contains potential hydrocarbon reservoirs. During the 2013 Cook Inlet field season, two days were spent on the Iniskin Peninsula examining outcrops of the Middle Jurassic Gaikema Sandstone along the south shore of Chinitna Bay (fig. 7-1). A stratigraphic section approximately 34 m in thickness was measured and a detailed description was initiated (Stanley and others, 2015), but due to deteriorating weather it was not possible to complete the description. During the 2014 field season two additional days were spent completing work on the Gaikema section. Analyses of thin sections from six of the samples collected in 2013 are available for incorporation in this report (table 7-1). Data from samples collected during the 2014 field season will be included in future reports.

Table 7-1. Samples of Gaikema Sandstone collected during the 2013 Cook Inlet field season that are included in this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Number</th>
<th>General Location</th>
<th>Specific Location</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
<th>Unit</th>
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<td>Iniskin Peninsula</td>
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<td>W 153.16617</td>
<td>Gaikema</td>
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</tbody>
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FRAMEWORK MINERALOGY AND PROVENANCE

Petrographic analyses indicate that Gaikema sandstones on the Iniskin Peninsula are largely feldspatholithic with an average modal composition of Qt33F34L33, Qm11F33Lt56, Qm25P73K2, Qp41Lvm52Lsm7 (figs. 7-2 and 7-3) and a plagioclase/feldspar (P/F) ratio of 0.97 (see table 7-2 for explanation of grain parameters). The average grain size is 0.09 mm (upper very-fine) with an average Folk sorting of 0.52 (moderate). The rock framework consists predominantly of plagioclase (range 30–50 percent, average 21 percent) and volcanic rock fragments (VRFs; range 26–43 percent, average 15 percent). Additional components include monocrystalline quartz (average 10 percent), polycrystalline quartz (average 9 percent), chert (average 11 percent), sedimentary rock fragments (SRFs, average 3 percent), and heavy minerals (average 3 percent). Accessory grains include plutonic rock fragments (PRFs), K-feldspar, and micas. One sample (13A13-12.7A) is distinctive in that it consists almost exclusively of euhedral to subhedral plagioclase crystals, with virtually no detrital quartz or other lithic grains. It remains to be determined if this variability in detrital mineralogy is related to differences in depositional environment.

The prevalence of plagioclase and VRFs, along with the dearth of K-feldspar, suggests the sandstones were derived from an undissected volcanic arc terrane. The most likely provenance is volcanic flows, ignimbrites, and tufts that comprise the Lower Jurassic Talkeetna Formation that underlies the Tuxedni Group (Bull, 2014; Bull, 2015). The source terrane was probably a region of uplifted Talkeetna Formation west of the Bruin Bay fault (Detterman and Hartsock, 1966).
Figure 7-1. A. Topographic map showing location of measured section of Gaikema sandstone along the northern shore of Chinitna Bay on the Inskin Peninsula. B. Measured section of Gaikema sandstone consists largely of very-fine- to fine-grained sandstone and siltstone. Distance between flags represents a stratigraphic thickness of 1 m.
The combination of abundant plagioclase and VRFs results in a labile framework mineralogy that is highly susceptible to diagenetic alteration. Authigenic chlorite and/or mixed-layer chlorite/smectite is the dominant cement in the majority of samples. Laumontite is a significant cement in a few samples, where it occurs as a replacement of detrital plagioclase grains and as intergranular cement that occludes primary porosity. Due to the high VRF content, heulandite is anticipated to be a common cement in Gaikema sandstones, although it has not been observed in the few samples analyzed to date. The combination of authigenic clay and zeolite occludes virtually all primary porosity, resulting in overall poor reservoir quality with porosities typically less than 8 percent and permeabilities less than 1 millidarcy (md) (figs. 7-3 and 7-4). The two samples with the lowest permeabilities (<0.1 md) contain significant laumontite cement. Based on this limited dataset, it appears laumontite has a greater impact on permeability than porosity. Because of the extensive cementation, Gaikema sandstones on the Iniskin Peninsula probably have minimal potential as conventional reservoirs. However, due to the extensive authigenic clay cement, the Gaikema in this area could have potential for tight-gas reservoirs. The superposition of tight Gaikema sandstones and potential source rocks of the underlying Red Glacier Formation (LePain and Stanley, 2015)

![Figure 7-2.](image-url)
Figure 7-3. Photomicrographs of Gaikema sandstones from the measured section. A. Very-fine-grained (upper), well-sorted sandstone consisting largely of plagioclase (p) and volcanic rock fragments (vrf). Primary intergranular porosity is almost completely occluded by authigenic clay (arrows). Sample 13A17-6.0A; plane-polarized light. B. Plagioclase (p) and VRFs (vrf) comprise the majority of the rock framework. Intergranular pores are totally occluded by authigenic clay cement (c). Sample 13A17-6.0A; plane-polarized light. C. Fine-grained (lower), moderately-sorted sandstone consisting largely of euhedral to subhedral plagioclase crystals (p) and VRFs (vrf), with virtually no detrital quartz. Primary intergranular porosity is almost completely occluded by authigenic clay (arrows). Sample 13A17-12.7A; plane-polarized light. D. Authigenic chlorite (c) with well-developed medial sutures (arrows) filling large intergranular pore. Sample 13A17-12.7A; plane-polarized light. E. Very-fine-grained (upper), well-sorted sandstone consisting largely of plagioclase (p). Laumontite cement (l) has patchy distribution throughout the rock. Sample 13A17-8.3A; crossed polarizers. F. Laumontite cement (l) replacing detrital plagioclase and filling intergranular pores. Sample 13A17-8.3A; crossed polarizers.
also suggest the alluring possibility of continuous oil accumulations in the Tuxedni Group, perhaps analogous to those in the Late Devonian and Early Mississippian Bakken Formation of North Dakota (Nordeng, 2009). Additional analyses from a larger geographic area are needed before making sweeping conclusions regarding the regional reservoir potential of the Gaikema Sandstone.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Funding for this work was provided by the State of Alaska. Field work during 2013 was partly funded by the National Cooperative Geologic Mapping Program, administered by the U.S. Geological Survey (STATEMAP award G13AC00157). We are grateful to helicopter pilots Roger Hinsdale and Merlin “Spanky” Handley from Pathfinder Aviation for safely transporting us in the field. Generous permits to access Native lands were provided by Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI), and the following village corporations: Chickaloon, Knik, Ninilchik, Salamatof, Seldovia, and Tyonek. We thank Marwan A. Wartes and James G. Clough for helpful reviews of earlier drafts of the manuscript.

**REFERENCES**


