

# Interspecies comparisons of Mg/Ca ratios in limpet shells

Niklas Hausmann<sup>a,\*</sup>, Donna Surge<sup>b</sup>, Francisco Zangrando<sup>c</sup>, Angelica Tivoli<sup>c</sup>, Ivan Briz-Godino<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Leibniz Zentrum für Archäologie, Ludwig-Lindenschmit-Forum 1, Mainz, Germany, 55116

<sup>b</sup>University of North Carolina, 104 South Road, 225 Geology Building, Chapel Hill, NC, US, 27599-3315

<sup>c</sup>CONICET (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas), Avenida Maipú 305, Ushuaia, Argentina, V9410BJA

<sup>d</sup>, Spain,

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## Abstract

This study provides a short reassessment of the use of Magnesium to Calcium (Mg/Ca) ratios in Atlantic limpet shells to determine past sea surface temperatures. While *Patella vulgata* along the Spanish shoreline has since then repeatedly produced reliable correlations between sea surface temperature and Mg/Ca ratios, this is not the case for other patelloid species. *Patella vulgata* and *Nacella deaureata* have been studied using Mg/Ca with mixed or contrary results. In this study, we present elemental maps of various such species together with stable oxygen isotope values for some of the specimens. Our dataset also includes specimens that were previously unsuccessful in providing significant correlations between  $^{18}\text{O}$  and Mg/Ca ratios. By reassessing these previous specimens and including a wider range of modern and archaeological samples from three patelloid species (*P. vulgata*, *N. deaureata*, and *N. magellanica*) we further add to the growing set of evidence for the reliable use of Mg/Ca ratios to detect palaeotemperature change and serve as a means to determine ontogenetic age and season of capture as well as to reveal locations of interest within the growth record (i.e. annual temperature minima and maxima) for the targeted analysis using  $^{18}\text{O}$  or clumped oxygen isotope analysis.

**Keywords:** Sclerochronology, Limpets, Elemental Ratio, Mg/Ca

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## 1. Introduction

Limpet shells are commonly found within archaeological sites and and past shorelines due to their robust carbonate structure and the long-term use of limpets as a marine food source. They have successfully been studied in the past in the context of coastal subsistence economies, site occupation on seasonal (SHACKLETON, 1973; Parker et al., 2018; Bosch et al., 2018) or long-term scale (Ortiz et al., 2015), as well as palaeotemperature (Fenger et al., 2007; Surge and Barrett, 2012; Wang et al., 2012; Colanese et al., 2012; Ferguson et al., 2011). Determining past sea surface temperature (SST) change largely relies on the measurement of  $^{18}\text{O}$ -values within the calcitic parts of the shell, but attempts have been made to also use elemental ratios, such as magnesium to calcium (Mg/Ca), to have an alternative measure, that potentially provides a more accurate SST estimate than  $^{18}\text{O}$ -values, which are also affected by changes in salinity. In addition, the data acquisition of elemental ratios — either through laser-ablation-isotope-ratio-mass-spectrometry (LA-ICP-MS) or laser induced breakdown spectroscopy (LIBS), can be much faster and cost-effective, increasing the number of specimens that can be studied overall (Durham et al., 2017; Hausmann et al., 2023).

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\*Corresponding author

Email address: niklas@palaeo.eu (Niklas Hausmann)

Problematically, links between Mg/Ca ratios and SST changes in limpets have also been shown to be unreliable (Graniero et al., 2015) and even where they were successful, anomalous patterns in some specimens had to be filtered out, reducing the overall robustness of the results of those successful studies (Ferguson et al., 2011).

While recent research particularly of *Patella* sp. in the Mediterranean and Southwest Europe have provided promising results (Hausmann et al., 2019; García-Escárcaga et al., 2015, 2018). There remains unclarity for Atlantic limpet species, particularly since it was last shown here, that they are not reliable recorders of palaeotemperature (Graniero et al., 2015).

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Limpet specimens

#### 2.1.1. Modern specimens

The analysed specimens, their origin and studies with background information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Table 1 Overview of the modern and archaeological limpet specimens analysed in this study {#tab:specimens}

Context	Study	Species	Location	Sample ID	Previous analyses
Modern	(Nicastro et al., 2020)	<i>N. deaureata</i>	Bahía Cambaceres Exterior - Tierra del Fuego (AR)	ND-1016-3	Stable oxygen and carbon isotope analysis
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		ND-1016-4 NM-1016-1 NM-1016-3	
	(Graniero et al., 2017)	<i>P. vulgata</i>	Rack Wick Bay - Westray (UK)	ORK-LT5	Stable oxygen and carbon isotope analysis; Mg, Li, Sr, Ca,.
Archaeological	(Surge and Barrett, 2012)	<i>P. vulgata</i>	Rack Wick Bay - Westray (UK)	QG1-7188-1	Stable oxygen and carbon isotope analysis
				QG1-7189-2	
				QG2-1061-1	
				QG2-1064-1	
				QG2-7180-1	
				QG2-7180-2	
	This study	<i>N. magellanica</i>	Heshkaia 35	QG1-7246-1 Heshkaia_35-1	none
		<i>N. deaureata</i>		Heshkaia_35-2	
		<i>N. deaureata</i>		Heshkaia_35-3	
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		Heshkaia_35-4	
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		Heshkaia_35-5	
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		Heshkaia_35-6	

Context	Study	Species	Location	Sample ID	Previous analyses
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		Heshkaia_35-7	
		<i>N. deaureata</i>		Heshkaia_35-8	
		<i>N. magellanica</i>		Heshkaia_35-9	



2.1.2. Archaeological specimens

2.2. Oxygen isotopes

2.3. Mg/Ca ratios

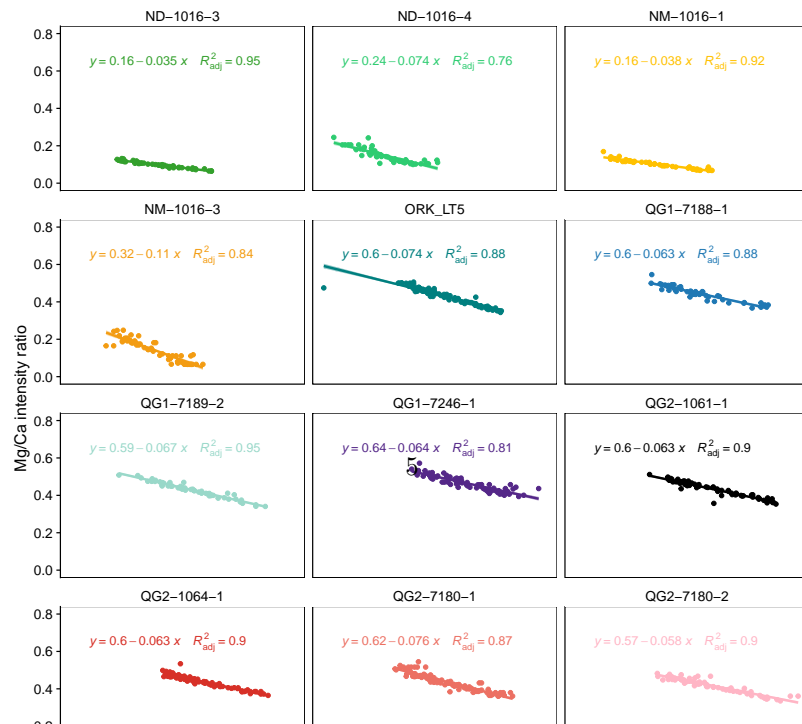
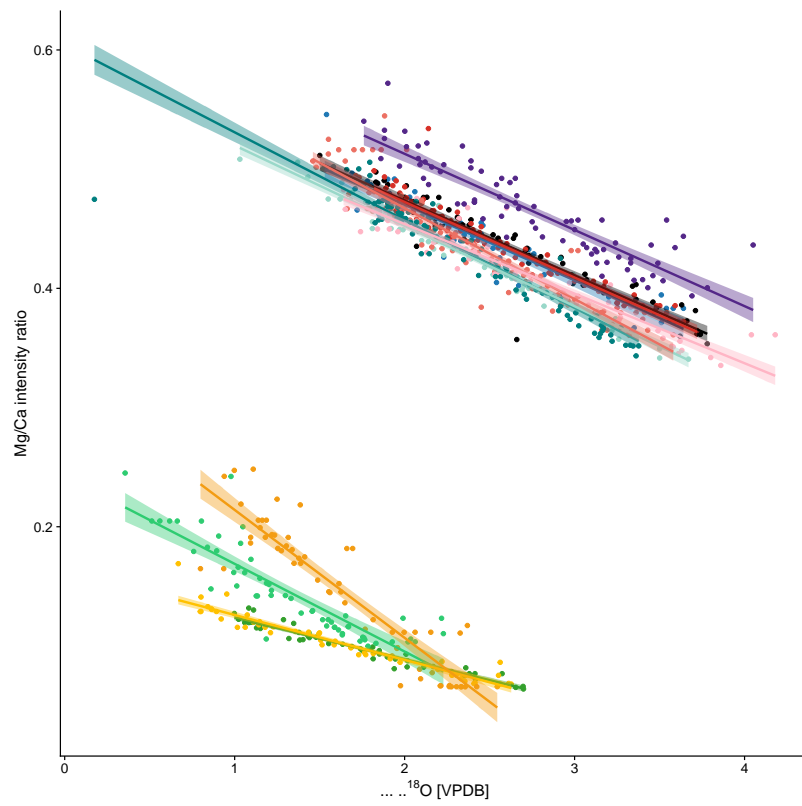
### 3. Results

3.1. *Patella vulgata*

3.2. *Nacella deaureata*

3.3. *Nacella magellanica*

4.





## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Other correlations

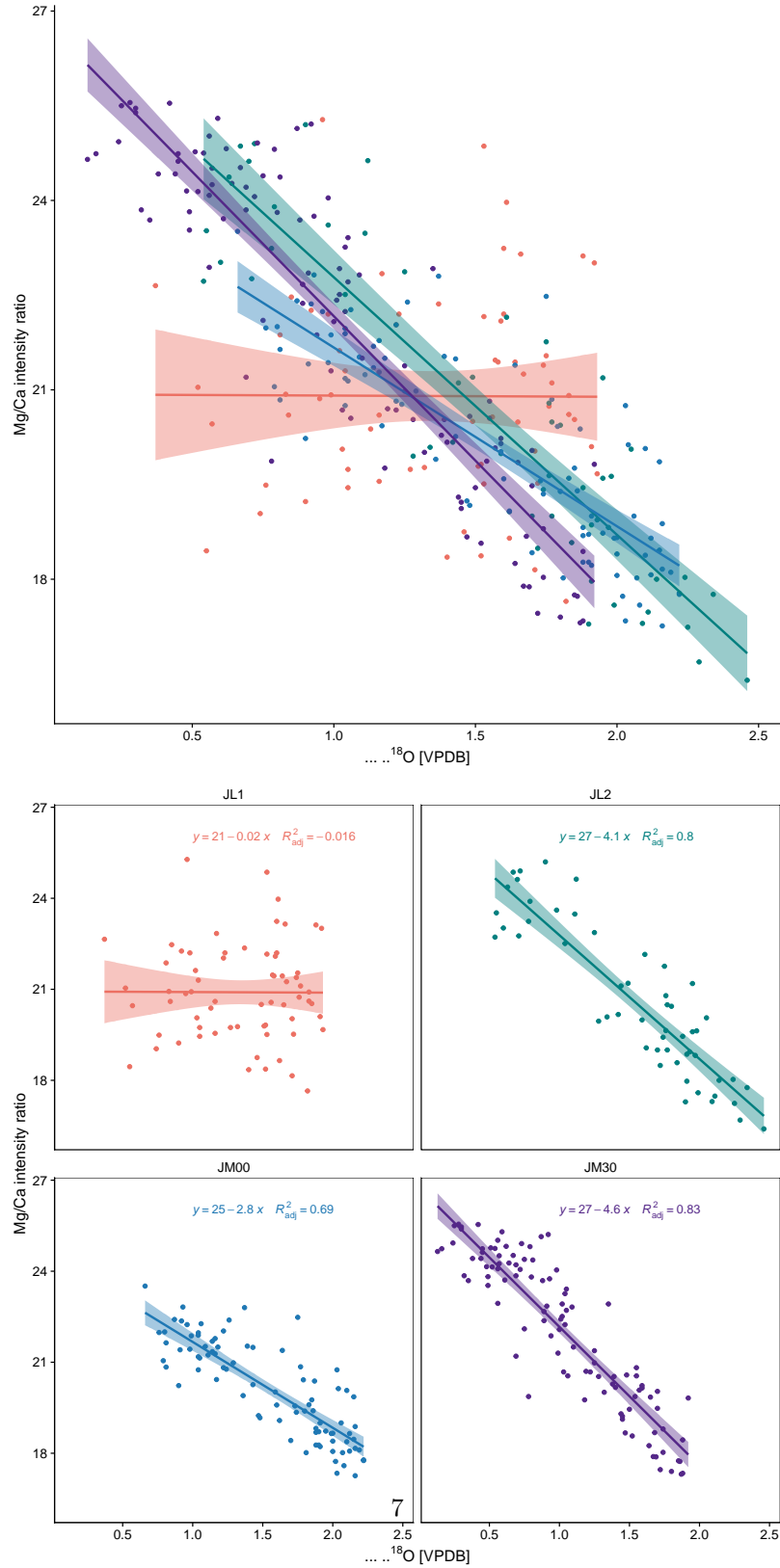


Figure 2: Correlation graphs for Ferguson et al. specimens

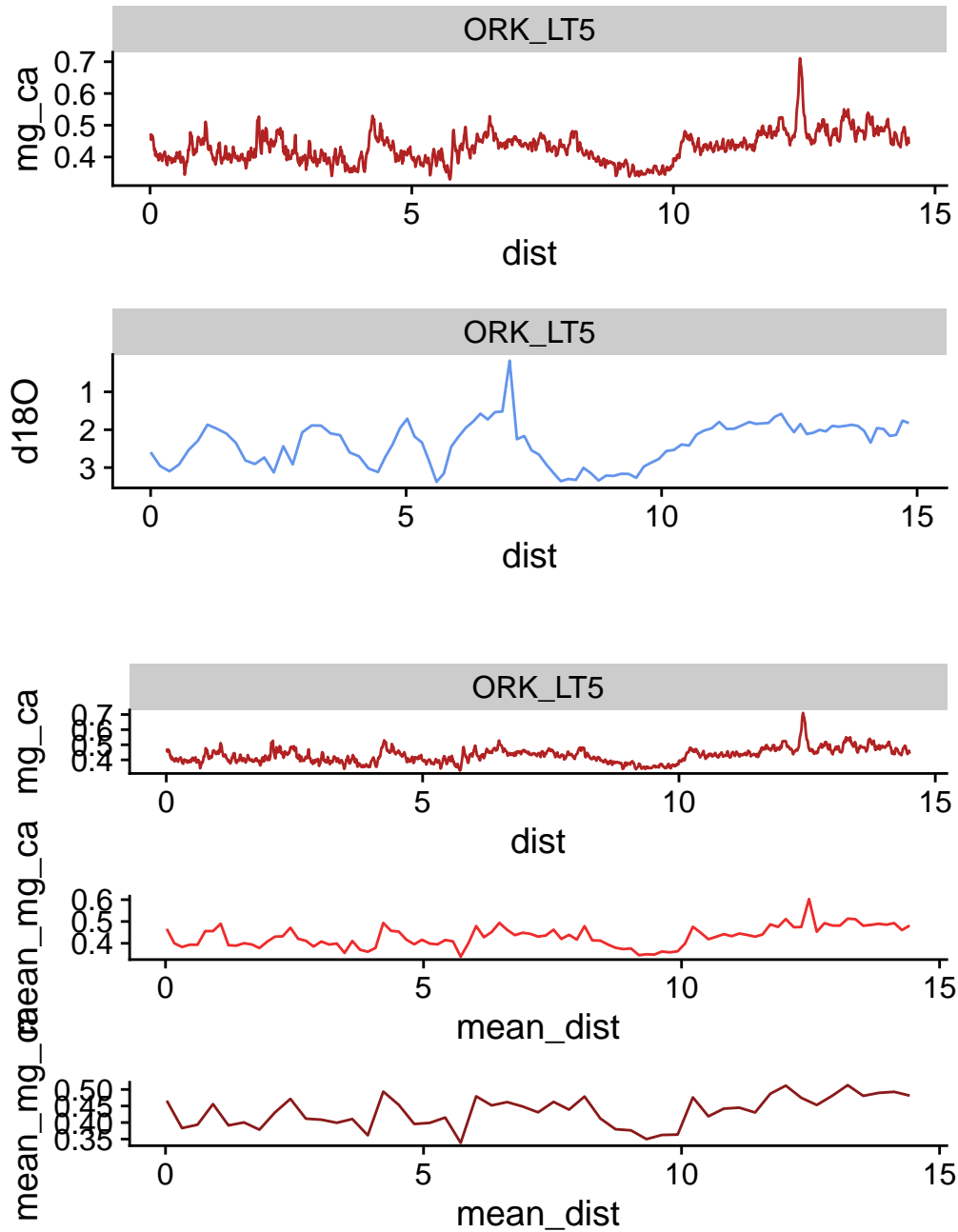
Table 2: Table 2: Overview of comparative correlations {#tab:correlations}

Species	Locality	Specimen	Correlation $R^2$	Study
<i>P. depressa</i>	Northern Spain	LAN541	0.87	(García-Escárzaga et al., 2021)
		LAN545	0.86	
		LAN554	0.78	
<i>P. caerulea</i>	Croatia	LAN559	0.82	(Hausmann et al., 2019)
		ISTPC1	0.9	
		ISTPC2	0.84	
	Crete	AF1911A	0.91 <sup>1</sup>	
		AF3003A	0.92 <sup>2</sup>	
	Israel	AKKPC2	0.96	
		AKKPC3	0.89	
		FRMPC1	0.84	
	Libya	FRMPC2	0.96	
		MO31A	0.83	
		MP64A	0.33	
		MP67A	0.96	
		MP68A	0.81	
	Malta	MA10	0.82	
	Tunisia	TUNPC1	0.81	
		TUNPC2	0.78	
	Turkey	ANTPC1	0.95	
		ANTPC2	0.93	
		KIZPC1	0.94	
		KIZPC2	0.86	
<i>P. rustica</i>	Gibraltar	JL1	0.02	(Ferguson et al., 2011)
<i>P. caerulea</i>	Gibraltar	JL2	0.8 (0.79)	
		JM00	0.69 (0.79)	
		JM30	0.83 (0.79)	
<i>P. vulgata</i>	Orkney	ORK-LT5	not reported, here 0.88	(Graniero et al., 2017) and this study

<sup>1</sup>SST only, no other geochemical data available<sup>2</sup>SST only, no geochemical data available



## 5.2. Comparison of ORK-LT5



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