

# MAGNETOTELLURIC IMAGING OF CONVENTIONAL AND UNCONVENTIONAL GEOHERMAL RESOURCES

A dissertation presented

by

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# Dedication

To my parents

Lemma Didana and Damench Abebe

without whom none of my success would be possible



# CONTENTS

<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>Statement of Originality</b>	<b>xix</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>xxi</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Aims and Objectives . . . . .	6
1.2 Outline . . . . .	7
<b>2 Magnetotelluric Method</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction . . . . .	10
2.2 MT theory . . . . .	11
2.2.1 EM field equations . . . . .	11
2.2.2 Impedance tensor, Dimensionality, and Tipper . . .	14
2.3 Phase tensor analysis . . . . .	16

2.4	Enhanced crustal conductivity . . . . .	21
<b>3</b>	<b>Magnetotelluric imaging of upper crustal partial melt at Tendaho graben in Afar, Ethiopia</b>	<b>25</b>
	Abstract . . . . .	27
3.1	Introduction . . . . .	28
3.2	Method . . . . .	29
3.3	Results and Discussion . . . . .	32
3.4	Conclusions . . . . .	37
	Acknowledgments . . . . .	38
<b>4</b>	<b>Three dimensional conductivity model of the Tendaho High Enthalpy Geothermal Field, NE Ethiopia</b>	<b>39</b>
	Abstract . . . . .	41
4.1	Introduction . . . . .	42
4.2	Materials and Methods . . . . .	43
	4.2.1 Geologic and tectonic setting . . . . .	43
	4.2.2 Geophysical Setting . . . . .	46
	4.2.3 Method . . . . .	47
4.3	Results and Discussion . . . . .	51
4.4	Conclusions . . . . .	57
	Acknowledgments . . . . .	59
<b>5</b>	<b>Magnetotelluric Monitoring of Permeability Enhancement at an Enhanced Geothermal System Project</b>	<b>61</b>
	Abstract . . . . .	63
5.1	Introduction . . . . .	65

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5.2	Geological and geophysical setting . . . . .	68
5.3	Method . . . . .	72
5.3.1	Dimensionality and strike direction analysis . . . . .	75
5.4	Results . . . . .	76
5.4.1	2D inversion of the baseline regional survey . . . . .	76
5.4.2	Magnetotelluric monitoring of fluid injection . . . . .	78
5.5	Discussion of results . . . . .	93
5.6	Conclusions . . . . .	95
	Acknowledgments . . . . .	97
<b>6</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>99</b>
6.1	MT imaging at Tendaho . . . . .	100
6.2	MT monitoring at Habanero EGS . . . . .	100
6.3	Concluding remarks . . . . .	101
	<b>Appendix A Supporting Information for chapter 3</b>	<b>105</b>
A.1	2D MT data and responses . . . . .	105
	<b>Appendix B Supporting Information for chapter 4</b>	<b>119</b>
B.1	3D responses and magnetics map . . . . .	119
	<b>Appendix C Supporting Information for chapter 5</b>	<b>131</b>
C.1	2D model and MT responses of Habanero . . . . .	131
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>143</b>





## LIST OF TABLES

A.1	Melt fraction dependence on composition, temperature, water content and pressure for Tendaho rock samples. . . .	116
B.1	MT sites locations at Tendaho High Temperature Geothermal Field. . . . .	128
B.2	MT sites locations at Tendaho geothermal field (continued)	129
C.1	MT sites locations for profile LOE of the baseline regional survey at Habanero EGS. . . . .	139
C.2	MT sites locations for profile LON at Habanero EGS . . .	140
C.3	MT sites locations for the time-lapse survey at Habanero EGS. . . . .	141



## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Examples of locations producing geothermal power from convention geothermal system. . . . .	2
1.2	Schematic plot of Cooper Basin EGS project in South Australia. . . . .	3
1.3	Conceptual resistivity model of conventional high temperature geothermal systems. . . . .	4
2.1	Plot of the phase tensor as an ellipse . . . . .	18
2.2	Plot of the phase tensor elements for an MT site from the Habanero EGS. . . . .	19
2.3	Uncertainty plot of phase tensor crosses at selected periods for an MT site from Habanero EGS . . . . .	20
2.4	Map of phase tensor residuals between pre and post stimulation measurements. . . . .	21
3.1	Tectonic setting and magnetotelluric (MT) sites of the survey area . . . . .	29
3.2	Pseudo-section plots of observed and calculated response of apparent resistivity and phase along the profile. . . . .	31
3.3	Preferred 2D resistivity model obtained by joint inversion of TE and TM mode data for the MT profile . . . . .	32

3.4	Calculated electrical resistivity of a partially molten rock as a function of melt fraction. . . . .	36
4.1	Digital Elevation map of Ethiopia and magnetotelluric (MT) sites of the survey area. . . . .	43
4.2	Tectonic and geologic setting of Tendaho geothermal area.	44
4.3	Phase tensor ellipse and real induction arrows at four different periods. . . . .	49
4.4	Phase tensor ellipses for selected periods. . . . .	50
4.5	Vertical resistivity sections through the 3D model which contain the southern profiles. . . . .	52
4.6	Model resistivity maps for layers at different depths. . . . .	53
4.7	Conceptual model of the Dubti geothermal system and 3D perspective view of the final 3D inversion model. . . . .	55
5.1	Location map of MT sites at the Habanero EGS located in South Australia. . . . .	67
5.2	Stratigraphy summary of the Lake Eyre, Eromanga, Cooper, and Warburton Basins in South Australia. . . . .	69
5.3	Hypocenter of the induced seismicity from the 2012 stimulation in the Habanero-4 well. . . . .	71
5.4	Example of resistivity and phase curves from the baseline regional survey. . . . .	74
5.5	Example of a sounding curve from the time-lapse monitoring survey. . . . .	75
5.6	Phase tensor pseudo-section plot of profile LON shown in Figure 5.1 colored by the skew angles. . . . .	76
5.7	Preferred 2D resistivity model obtained by joint inversion of TE and TM modes data for profile LON. . . . .	78
5.8	1D forward modeling and inversion. . . . .	79

5.9	Resistivity model used in 3D forward modeling. . . . .	81
5.10	Residual phase tensor maps at a period of 17s for the isotropic and anisotropic body embedded at 4km. . . . .	82
5.11	Contour map of percent change in apparent resistivity at a period of 100 s. . . . .	83
5.12	Resistivity phase curves pre- and post-injection for site 09. . . . .	85
5.13	Apparent resistivity maps for xy component at selected periods from the time-lapse monitoring survey. . . . .	87
5.14	Maps of phase tensor residuals between pre and post stimulation measurements. . . . .	88
5.15	Phase tensor uncertainty maps at period of 12.8 s pre- and during injection. . . . .	89
5.16	Calculated change in resistivity obtained from time-lapse 2D model of the xy component of resistivity. . . . .	91
5.17	Change in total conductance versus date calculated from xy and yx vertical columns of the 2D time-lapse resistivity models. . . . .	92
A.1	Location map of MT sites used for 2D inversion from the Tendaho geothermal field. . . . .	106
A.2	Rose diagram of geoelectric strike angle determined using azimuth of main axis of phase tensors. . . . .	107
A.3	Fit of data and model response from the joint 2D inversion of TE and TM modes of apparent resistivity and phase. . . . .	108
A.4	Fit of data and model response of TE and TM modes (continued). . . . .	109
A.5	Fit of data and model response of TE and TM modes (continued). . . . .	110
A.6	Preferred 2D resistivity model obtained by inversion of TM mode data for the MT profile . . . . .	111

A.7	Fit of data and model response from the 2D inversion of TM mode of apparent resistivity and phase. . . . .	112
A.8	Fit of data and model response from the 2D inversion of TM mode (Continued). . . . .	113
A.9	Fit of data and model response from the 2D inversion of TM mode (Continued). . . . .	114
A.10	Total magnetic field map of Tendaho geothermal field. . .	115
A.11	The 2D Occam model mesh for the profile. . . . .	117
B.1	Location map of MT sites used for 3D inversion from the Tendaho geothermal field. . . . .	120
B.2	Fits of selected apparent resistivity and phase curves from the 3D inversion. . . . .	121
B.3	Phase tensor ellipses for periods of 0.0031 s, 0.0087 s, 0.0152 s and 0.0303 s. . . . .	122
B.4	Phase tensor ellipses for periods of 0.0532 s, 0.0893 s, 0.1449 s and 0.2439 s. . . . .	123
B.5	Phase tensor ellipses for periods of 0.4274 s, 0.7092 s, 1.1628 s and 2.3256 s. . . . .	124
B.6	Phase tensor ellipses for periods of 3.937 s, 6.8493 s, 22.727 s and 37.175 s. . . . .	125
B.7	Phase tensor ellipses for periods of 62.893 s, 108.7 s, 363.64 s and 877.19 s. . . . .	126
B.8	Total field magnetic map showing inferred faults in the Tendaho geothermal field. . . . .	127
C.1	Location map of MT sites at the Habanero EGS located in South Australia. . . . .	132
C.2	Pseudo-section plots of observed and calculated resistivity and phase for TE and TM modes along profile LON. . . .	133

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C.3	Preferred 2D resistivity model obtained by joint inversion of TE and TM modes data for profile LOE. . . . .	134
C.4	Pseudo-section plots of observed and calculated resistivity and phase for TE and TM modes along profile LOE. . . .	134
C.5	Fits of resistivity and phase data for the time-lapse 2D model. . . . .	135
C.6	Fits of resistivity and phase data for the time-lapse 2D model. . . . .	136
C.7	Fits of resistivity and phase data for the time lapse 2D model. . . . .	137
C.8	Fits of resistivity and phase data for the time-lapse 2D model. . . . .	138





## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents magnetotelluric (MT) imaging of the Tendaho conventional geothermal system in the Afar Depression in north eastern Ethiopia and the Habanero Enhanced Geothermal System (EGS) in the Cooper Basin in South Australia. The aims of this dissertation are twofold. The first was to characterize the resistivity structure of the Tendaho conventional geothermal system. This includes delineating fluid pathways and heat sources and determining the connectivity of geothermal localities in the Tendaho field using 2D and 3D resistivity models. The second aim was to investigate the viability of MT to monitor permeability enhancement in an unconventional EGS reservoir during fluid injection using continuous MT measurement at Habanero EGS in the Cooper Basin, South Australia.

The 2D and 3D resistivity models of the Tendaho high temperature field reveal three main resistivity structures to a depth of 20 km. The surface conductive structure (typically  $\leq 10 \Omega \text{ m}$  and  $> 1 \text{ km}$  thick) is interpreted as sediments, geothermal fluids or hydrothermally altered smectite clay. The underlying high resistivity structure is interpreted as Afar Stratoid Series basalts or chlorite-epidote alteration mineralogy. At a depth greater than 5 km, low resistivity is observed across the whole of the Tendaho geothermal field. This structure is inferred to be the heat source of the geothermal system. Based on geochemical and borehole information and a bulk resistivity from the resistivity model, a melt fraction of about 13% by volume has been estimated for the structure. The most striking feature in the 2D and 3D models is a conductive fracture zone in the basalts, which is likely to increase the permeability and temperature of the deep reservoirs in the basalts and provide an upflow zone. Analysis of 3D resistivity models and the geochemistry of geothermal fluids sug-

gests that the Dubti and Ayrobera geothermal localities at the Tendaho field are not connected. The inferred presence of a conductive fracture zone and shallow magma reservoirs make the Tendaho geothermal field a promising prospect for geothermal power development.

An MT survey was conducted at Habanero EGS during stimulation of the Habanero-4 well, where 36.5 ML of water with a resistivity of  $13\ \Omega\text{ m}$  (at  $25^\circ\text{C}$ ) was injected at a relatively continuous rate of between 27–53 L/s into the EGS reservoirs at a depth of 4077 m. Analysis of pre- and post-injection MT responses showed possible conductive fractures oriented in a N/NNE direction. Apparent resistivity maps also revealed that the injected fluids likely propagated towards N/NNE direction. This result is consistent with the propagation direction of the dominant microseismic events, as well as the orientation of pre-existing N-S striking sub-horizontal fractures susceptible to slip on stimulation. The MT responses close to the injection point show on average a 5% decrease in apparent resistivity for periods  $>10\text{ s}$ . The main reasons for detecting only subtle changes in resistivity at the Habanero EGS is the screening effect of the conductive thick sedimentary cover (about 3.6 km thick) and the presence of pre-existing saline fluids with resistivity of  $0.1\ \Omega\text{ m}$  (equivalent to a salinity of 16.1 g/L at  $240^\circ\text{C}$ ) in the natural fractures in the EGS reservoirs. This is further compounded by the physics of the problem, that is, the small volume of injected fluid compared to the large volume averaging by an MT sounding at the depth of interest. For MT sites close to the EGS well, the analysis of time-lapse inversion models indicated an increase in total cumulative conductance of about 25 S over a depth range of 2–5 km in the N-S direction compared to the E-W direction. This likely indicates anisotropic permeability generated by the hydraulic stimulation. Overall, the MT monitoring at Habanero EGS highlights the need for favorable geological settings and/or controlled source methods and down-hole methods to measure significant changes in resistivity in EGS reservoirs.

## STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

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