

Foraminifera Group Report

Zeynep Erdem (GEOMAR, Kiel)

Taxonomy Workshop on Recent benthic foraminifera

TMS Taxonomy Workshop on Recent benthic foraminifera was held during TMS Foram-Nanno Fossil 2015 Conference on 17th of June 2015 at Fitzroy Building of Plymouth University in parallel with other two workshops. It was co-organized by Joachim Schönfeld and Malcolm Hart with assistance of Christopher Smart and Deborah Well-Pallmer. We were in total 9 people attending to the workshop and to my surprise I was the only “new in the field”. In the end it was a nice experience to witness such a workshop with “the experts”.

The workshop aimed to exchange ideas regarding to Recent benthic foraminiferal taxonomy from shallow marine environments and related studies where classical taxonomic methods are still necessary. Plymouth University team provided us materials obtained by the Plymouth Marine Laboratory from the Monitoring Stations of the Plymouth area. There were two samples representing two different environments; quartz-rich sand and maerl bed sample. Every one of us was handed out small amount of each sample and was expected to pick and determine the common or interesting species covering the assemblages from both areas. We were picking, sorting and discussing characteristics of different species and at the same time comparing basic knowledge on species from similar environments. Being the only student participant of the workshop, I mostly focussed on picking as many and diverse as possible, while the experts continued on their heat discussions on different species and their distinctive features of the same genus. In particular, Ammonia species became the most popular ones during the workshop since we had seen many nice presentations on ongoing research

during the conference. The discussions on nomenclature and morphotypes continued until we saw SEM images of the very same Ammonia species we picked from these samples.

After we listed the other common species and compared these two different environments, we were done with identification and the discussion went on the current use of taxonomic resources. For me the most important point of this topic was how small amount of recent publications contain figure or plate any more. Joachim Schönfeld presented us a number of 7% of all species recorded in Recent benthic foraminiferal studies were documented as images of plates. Today, with the help of internet search engines and also because of physical and economic difficulties to reach important literature or catalogues, we rely on electronic source more and more. Limited number of digital images is leading us more confusion and therefore, mistake. Especially, how SEM images played role on reaching a consensus during this workshop was a good example of how important good images are in taxonomy studies.

For me as a PhD student working with samples from a totally different environment, it was a great pleasure to witness a “speed-up” identification of foraminifera assemblage from totally different environment. It was a really nice opportunity to discuss the taxonomy studies, including genetic studies, on benthic foraminifera together with scientists from different institutions, having different expertise, research focus and academic career state. I wish to see more organizations as such with more attendance also from students. Finally, I would like to thank again to organizers and Plymouth University team for this nice workshop and conference.



Picking session during the workshop