

PALYNOLOGY AND SEDIMENTOLOGY OF LAMINITES AND TILLITES FROM THE LATEST FAMENNIAN OF THE PARNAÍBA BASIN, BRAZIL

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(5 figures & 3 plates)

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ABSTRACT. Varvelike rhythmites, usually laminated siltstones and shales with scattered clasts, are known from outcrops and well cores of the upper Cabeças Formation in the Parnaíba (Maranhão) Basin, Brazil, with sediments laid down under glacial and periglacial conditions. Palynological study from different lithologies, indicates a latest Famennian age (LN Zone). Sedimentological approach of one rhythmite indicates that the grain-size contrast clearly separate between silt and sand layers but that all layers, even the dark silty ones, show features characteristic of sediment-gravity flows. Lateral influx was permanent during the deposition of the sediment. Clay analyses reveal the predominance of kaolinite probably originated from Middle Devonian rocks. Latest Famennian miospores and acritarchs are present and confirm the marine character of the depositional environment but a large part (70%) of the palynological material is reworked from Givetian / Frasnian rocks. No reworked miospores from early to late Famennian can be demonstrated. At least two distinct source-areas of the reworked material, Givetian (or older) and Frasnian, can be recognized. Contemporaneous miospores are significantly less present in the tillites and associated shale than in the laminites which suggest that they are produced locally, the glacial tongue, carrying the reworked part of the material, only partially overlapping adjacent environments. The rhythmites are presumed to be true varves, the sandy layers being first settled after the local seasonal melting of the ice cover and the rush of fresh water supply into the sea, the silty layers being deposited when the spring water run-off decreases. The *Vallatisporites* mother-plant, believed to live in a swamp margin environment, might have been the first to produce spores immediately after the melting of the ice cover.

KEYWORDS: Famennian, laminites, Brazil, Parnaíba Basin, Cabeças Formation, miospores, reworked palynomorphs

1. Introduction

A latest Famennian ice age is recorded in large intracratonic basins of northern Brazil. Available evidence includes diamictites with striated, faceted and polished pebbles, rhythmites with dropstones, erratic boulders, and striated pavements. In the Parnaíba (Maranhão) Basin (Fig. 1), sediments laid down under glacial and periglacial conditions make up the upper Cabeças Formation which displays massive polymict diamictites with subrounded to angular, striated and polished outsized clasts immersed in silty and clayey matrix. Varvelike rhythmites, usually laminated

siltstones and shales with scattered clasts, are known from outcrops (Malzahn, 1957) and well cores (Carozzi *et al.*, 1975) and are documented by Caputo (1985, Fig. 13) and Caputo & Crowell (1985, Fig. 11).

Palynological study (Loboziak *et al.*, 1993) of the Cabeças Formation made in boreholes 2-PM-1-MA, 1-PA-1-MA and 1-TM-1-MA (Fig. 1), from different lithologies, indicates a latest Famennian age (Zone LN).

The present paper aims to focus on tillites and associated sediments.

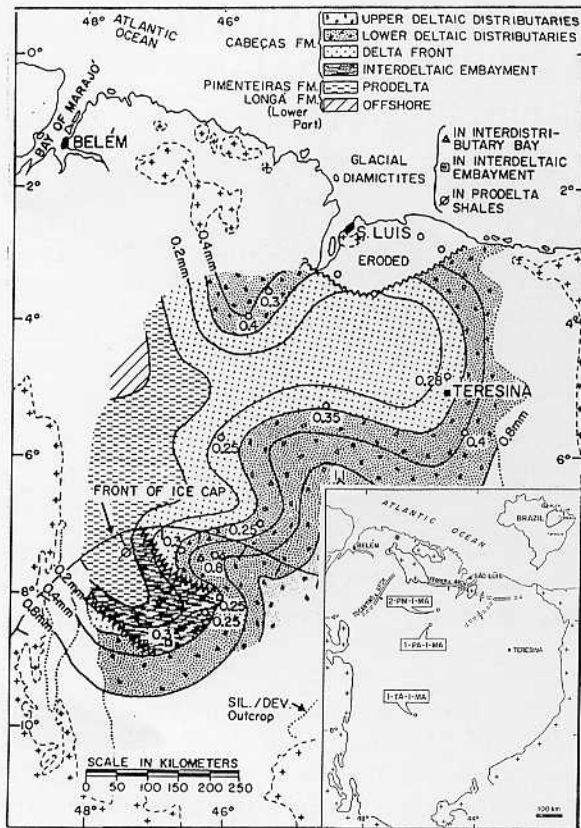


Figure 1. The Parnaíba (Maranhão) Basin with the localisation of boreholes 2-PM-1-MA, 1-PA-1-MA and 1-TM-1-MA and paleoenvironmental map of Famennian time (reproduced from Carozzi 1980, Fig. 15 modified, after Carozzi *et al.* 1975, Fig. 32.) 0.2 to 0.8mm represent the average elasticity.

2. Investigated material

The material comes from well 1-TM-1-MA, core 16 : three samples (N° 1, 3 and 4) are from interval 674,10-678,40 m and one sample (N° 2) from interval 678,40-683,81 m. Sample N° 3 (pl. 1A) is a laminite (varvelike rhythmite) composed of white sandy and dark silty layers, each half a millimeter thick, each layer being in turn very finely laminated. Eight layers (pl. 1A and pl. 2: 1A to 4B) have been macerated separately. Sample N° 1 and N° 4 were in contact with sample N° 3. Sample N° 1 is a shale (pl. 3B), sample N° 4 is a diamictite/tillite with clasts of laminites and dropstones (pl. 3A). Sample N° 2 is a homogeneous tillite (pl. 1B).

3. Depositional conditions

According to Carozzi (1980), well 1-TM-1-MA was cored through the Cabeças Formation characterized by marine interdeltic sediments (Figs. 1 and 2). Deposits accumulated in subaqueous fan turbidites and were generated from the calving of icebergs ; they are represented by fine graywackes and "varvites" with nu-

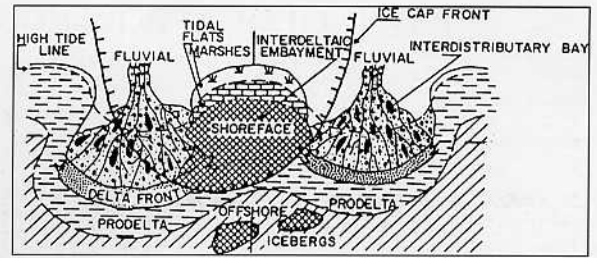


Figure 2. Depositional model of glacial interference with a deltaic system (reproduced from Carozzi 1980, Fig. 4 modified, after Carozzi *et al.* 1975, Fig. 5)

merous rafted pebbles. Fine-grained moderate to well-sorted quartzose to feldspathic arenites with some quartzose subgraywackes correspond to deltaic deposits. Through a northward shift, a glacial tongue developed, crosscutting a major interdeltic embayment and induced the partial overlapping of adjacent deltas. This hypothesis is well supported by the occurrence and distribution of diamictites and lithic graywackes interbedded with silty shales and shales. The latter sediments were genetically connected to interdistributary bays, interdeltic embayments and prodeltas. The paleoenvironmental reconstruction (Fig. 1) points to a major deltaic supply from the south-east. Four samples (1 to 4) were analysed for their sedimentological characters.

A contrasted grain-size and color readily differentiate silty from sandy layers or laminae with both lithologies. The latter are grouped as doublets or varva-like laminae (at least the pairs B, C and D, on plate 2). These doublets show at the base a sharp erosive-like boundary penetrating into the underlying silty clay whereas the shift from coarse to fine-grained sediments in the upper part of the doublets into the silty sediment is either progressive or sharp; the intradoublet boundary between sand and silty lithologies may be represented by a very thin rich organic discontinuity. These grain-size generally exhibits a fining upward trend. The silty to clayey silt laminae are characterized by a dense horizontal stratification with locally some microdropstones. All layers, even the dark silty ones, were accumulated by lateral gravity flows.

4. Clay mineral analysis

Clay mineral analysis by X-ray diffraction was carried out on the less-than-two micron fraction extracted from selected core samples. The analysed material corresponded to light and dark varvae, tillite and shale (Fig. 3). the clay fraction was extracted after mild grinding with a hand mortar, and prepared as oriented aggregates by sedimentation and centrifugation with demineralized water, but without any chemical pretreatment. Beside the air-dried state, the oriented ag-

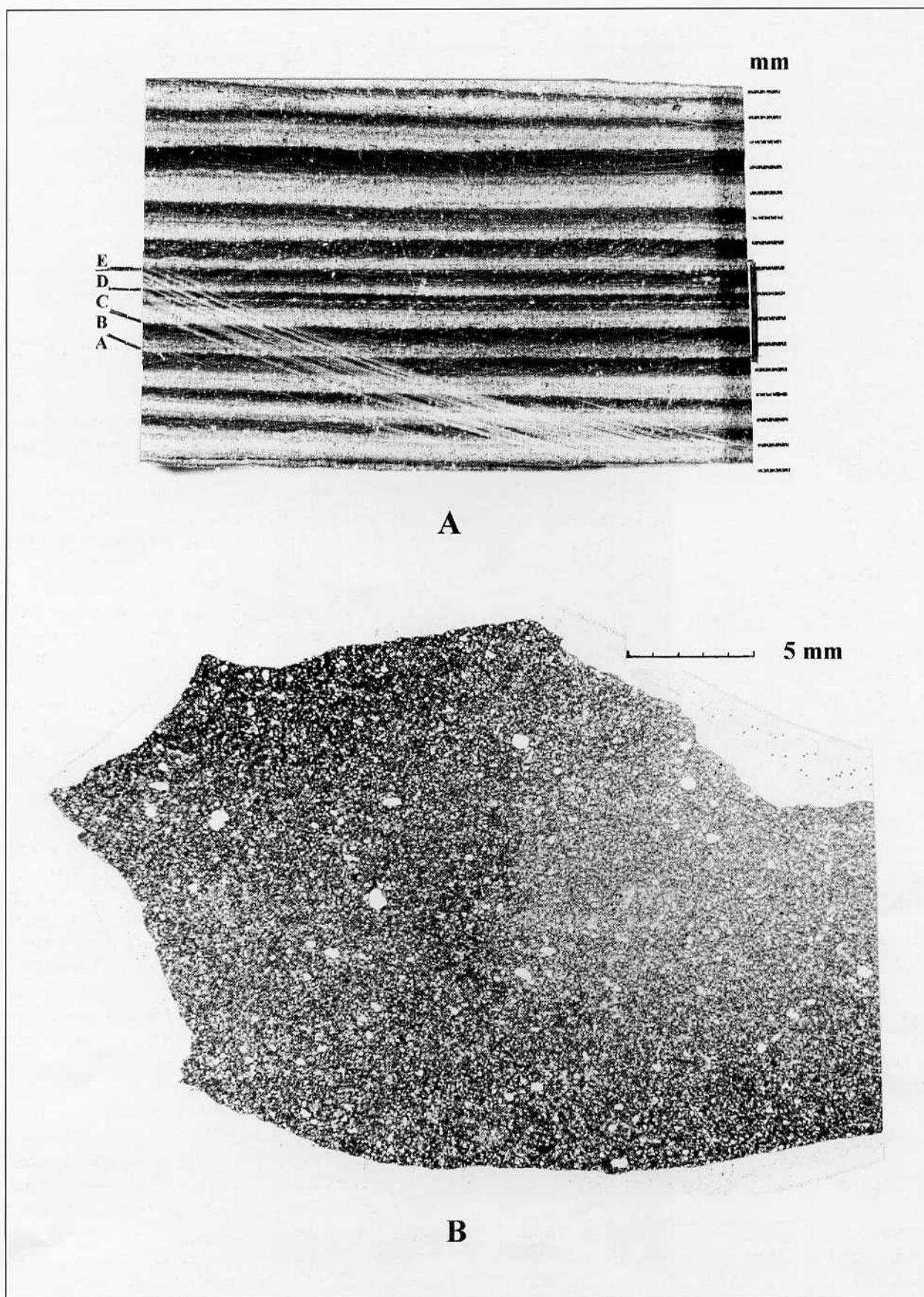


Plate 1. A : sample N° 3: laminites (varvelike rhythmites) (borehole I-TM-1-MA, core 674.10 - 678.40 m) B : sample N° 2: homogeneous tillite : (borehole I-TM-1-MA, core 678.40 - 683.81 m).

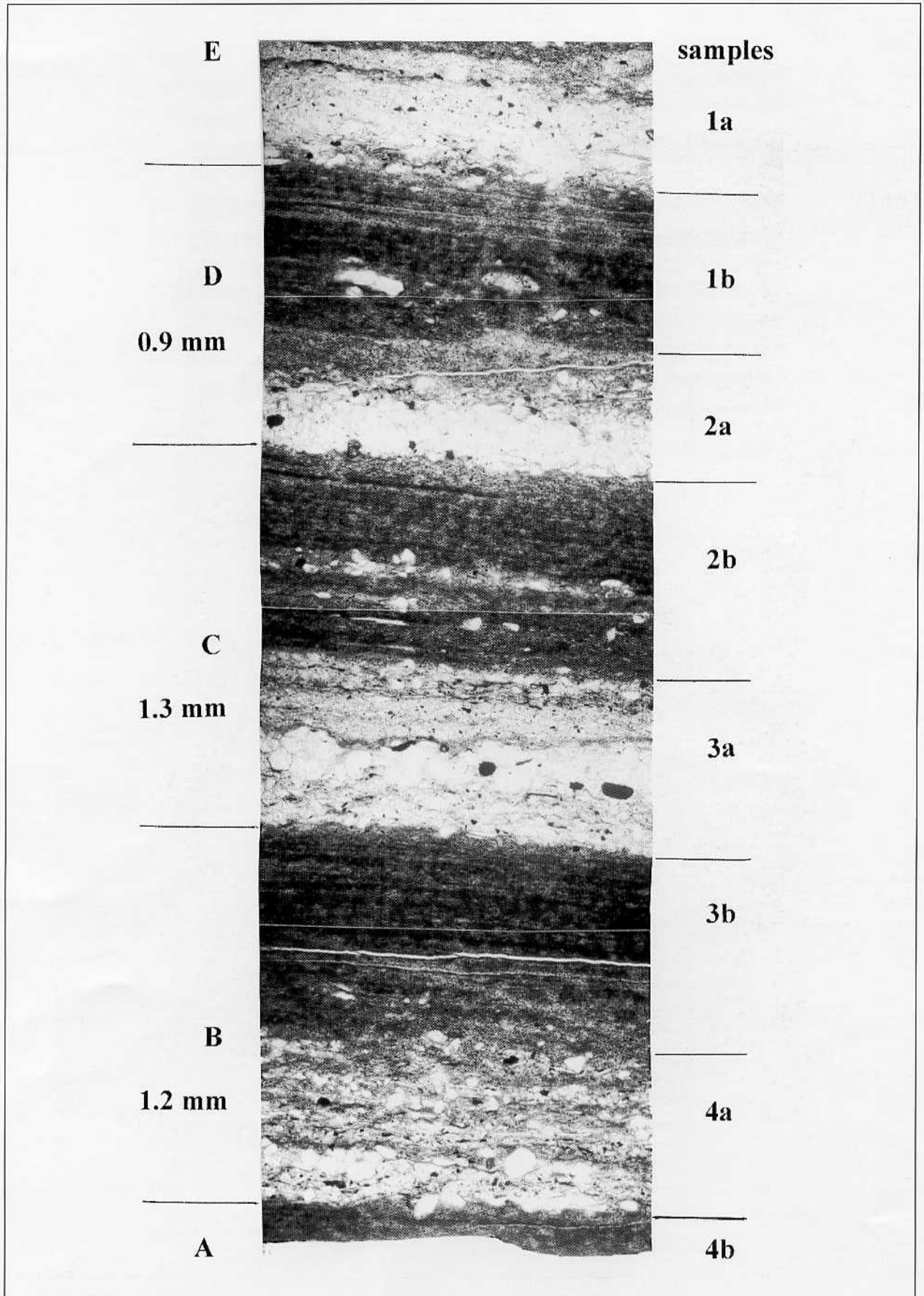


Plate 2. sample N° 3: laminites (1a to 4b) sampled separately for analysis.

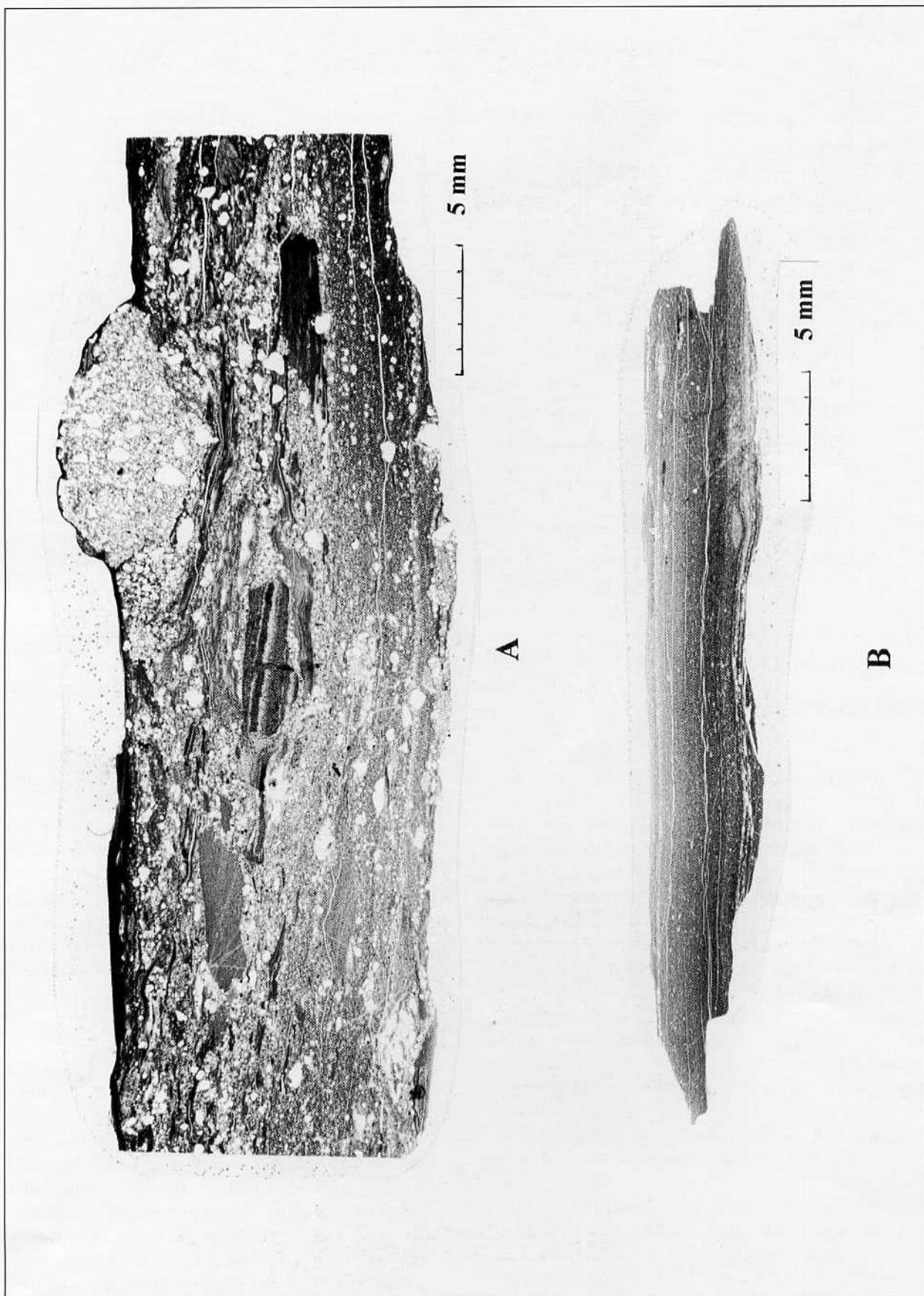


Plate 3. samples in contact with the laminites of sample N° 3. A : sample N° 4: diamictite/tillite with clasts of laminites and dropstones. B : sample N° 1: shale.

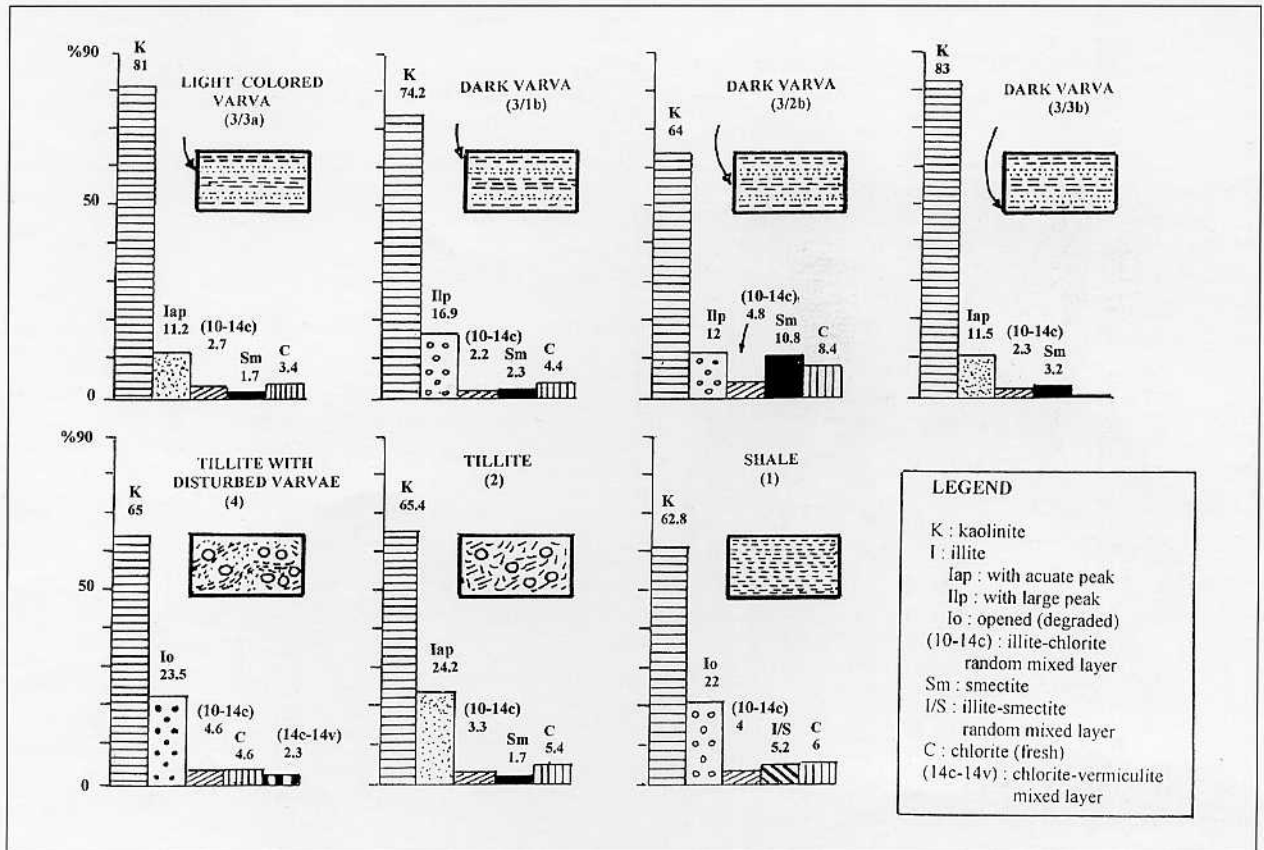


Figure 3. Clay analyses

Large dominance of kaolinite and illite with a ratio $K/K+I$ ranging from 87 % (N° 3/sand layer) to 63 % (Tillite N° 2 and 4). Illite is often degraded. Other clays (Chlorite, Smectite, ...) are poorly represented.

gregates were submitted afterwards to solvation with ethylene glycol vapors (check for swelling clay minerals) and to heating to 500 °C. The quantitative distribution of the clay minerals, directly obtained from the measurement of the intensity of the basal (001) spacings without application of a correction factors unravel the large predominance of kaolinite (62.3 to 93%) in all samples. The remaining clay minerals comprise in decreasing order: illite, a random mixed layer illite-chlorite (10-14c), a random illite-smectite (10-14sm) mixed layer or a badly crystallized smectite, and in practically all investigated samples, some fresh chlorite. Illite could be structurally discriminated as: a fresh mineral (characterized by a narrow and symmetric narrow {001} 10Å, characterizing a well-crystallized mineral), a slightly degraded illite (with an enlarged basal peak), a fully degraded material (or open illite).

The predominance of kaolinite as found in the investigated samples pointed to a middle or late Devonian source from the southern part of the basin through a south-east supply as proposed by Carrozi (1980). The other clay minerals remained genetically anonymous. Chlorite associated with fresh illite (mica) point to an unweathered material whereas the mixed layers illite-

chlorite and illite-smectite could point to a mild physico-chemical weathering having affected prior removal the upper part of the same parent rocks. The co-existence of residual fresh materials with a predominant kaolinite (the latter representing a deep or extended weathering) either points to a mixing of sources or to a substratum which was originally covered by a kaolinic mantle. The latter was recycled by erosion which has also affected the substratum (comprising illite, chlorite, and the mixed layers).

5. Palynological analysis

The quantitative palynological analysis of the subdivided sample 3 (Fig. 4) shows a miospore / miospore + acritarch ratio ranging from 40 % to 70 %. A large part of this material is reworked from Givetian / Frasnian rocks (see below) but latest Famennian miospores and acritarchs are present and also confirm the marine character of the depositional environment. The palynomorph concentrations suggest some rhythmicity of a higher level, miospores progressively decreasing from 4.000/gr (3/3b) to 2500/gr (3/1b) in the silty layers and from 2500/gr (3/3a) to 1000/gr (3/1a) in the sandy layers.









		Percentage (one = or one > means 10%)			Concentration (one = or one > means 500/gr)		
	Cycle Sample	Miosp.	Sp. acrit.	Leiosph.	Miosp.	Sp. acrit.	Leiosph.
	E 1a	>>>>>	>>	>>>	>>	>	>
	D 1b	=====	=====	=	=====	=====	=
	D 2a	>>>>>>>	>>	>	>>>>	>	>
	C 2b	=====	=====	=	=====	=====	=====
	C 3a	>>>>>	>>>	>>	>>>>>	>>>	>>>
	B 3b	=====	=====	=	=====	=====	=====
	B 4a	>>>>	>>>>	>>	>>	>>	>
	A 4b	=====	=====	=	=====	=====	=====

Figure 4: Quantitative analysis of laminites samples

> : sandy, = : silty

Miosp. : Miospores

Sp. acrit. : Spiny acritarchs

Leiosph. : Leiospheres

For cycles and samples, see Plate 1

The qualitative palynological analysis of all samples (Fig. 5) concerns 41 taxa, 70 % of these taxa being reworked from Givetian and Frasnian sediments. Reworked material, which is very well preserved, is recognizable only by its well known stratigraphic range. The most recent reworked miospores belong to the late Frasnian "IV" Zone, an equivalent of the *acanthaceus - deliquescens* Zone known in Eastern Europe to correspond to the Late *rhenana* conodont Zone (Obukhovskaya et al., 2000). No reworked miospores from early to late Famennian can be demonstrated. Latest Famennian miospores are represented by 12 species and are mainly characterized by the occurrence of *Retispora lepidophyta* and of a complex of *Vallatisporites*, with *V. vallatus* indicating a high stratigraphic position within the latest Famennian (late latest Famennian) i.e. the LN (*lepidophytus-nitidus*) Zone.

Most of the reworked taxa of Givetian (or older) age are only present in the tillites and associated shale (N° 1, 2 and 4). Most of the other reworked taxa originate from Frasnian rocks. They are more numerous in the silty layers (20 taxa) than in the sandy layers (13 taxa) of laminites 3. Thus, all reworked material in tillites can be explained by Givetian and Frasnian source while the reworked material in laminites 3 can be explained mainly by Frasnian source

Tillites and associated shale (N° 1, 2 and 4) contain only few of the characteristic taxa of the LN Zone. On the contrary, in sample N° 3, the *Vallatisporites* complex is present both in the silty and sandy layers.

6. Interpretation and conclusion

Reworked palynomorph occurrences throughout the stratigraphic column have been reviewed by Strel & Bless (1980). In late Pleistocene glacial lacustrine deposits, up to 60 % of Mesozoic and Cenozoic miospores and Dinoflagellates are known in sandy facies with clay flakes (Switzerland : Jan du Chêne, 1975). Reworked Mesozoic and Cenozoic palynomorphs are known in many continental late Pleistocene sediments (Great Britain : Birks, 1970, Turner, 1970 ; The Netherlands : Zagwijn & Veenstra, 1966 ; USA : Davies, 1961). Reworking processes are also known in Quaternary marine glacial deposits (USA : Bartlett, 1928 ; Scandinavia : Fries & Ross, 1950 ; Antarctica : Wilson, 1968, Kemp, 1972a and 1972b). Carboniferous glacial marine rhythmites were recently described in western Argentina (Milana & Lopez, 1998) but no attempt of analysing the miospores of the different layers has been made. The reworking occurrence in glacial pre-Quaternary sediments are poorly recorded emphasizing the interest of our new data.

The present data show that at least two distinct source-areas can be recognized, a Givetian one and a Frasnian one. Paleogeography and clay analysis suggest its origin in the southern part of the basin. Smaller amount of reworked taxa in the sandy layers than in the silty layers of the laminites (sample N° 3) could be explained by a distinctly lower concentration of miospores in the sandy than in the silty layers (see Fig. 4). Indeed, silty layers have more chance than sandy layers to reflect the complete reworked assemblage.

	Laminite 3										tillites		
	silty sandy										4	3	2
	4b	3b	2b	1b	4a	3a	2a	1a					
REWORKED MIOPORES													
<i>Emsian to Givetian taxa</i>													
<i>Acinosporites apiculatus</i>													
<i>Grandispora megafornis</i>													
<i>Rhabdosporites minutus</i>													
<i>Samarisporites praetervisus</i>													
<i>Eifelian to Givetian taxon</i>													
<i>Camarozonotriletes? concavus</i>													
<i>Emsian to Frasnian taxa</i>													
<i>Acinosporites lindlarensis</i>													
<i>Samarisporites eximius</i>													
<i>Eifelian to Frasnian taxa</i>													
<i>Archaeozonotriletes variabilis</i>													
<i>Chelinospora timanica</i>													
<i>Grandispora permulta</i>													
<i>Verrucosiporites premmus</i>													
<i>V. scurrus</i>													
<i>Givetian to Frasnian taxa</i>													
<i>Cymbosporites catillus</i>													
<i>C. cyathus</i>													
<i>Chelinospora concinna</i>													
<i>C. ligurata</i>													
<i>Geminospora lemurata</i>													
<i>G. punctata</i>													
<i>Samarisporites triangulatus</i>													
<i>S. sp. E</i>													
<i>Frasnian to earliest Famennian taxa</i>													
<i>Grandispora daemontii</i>													
<i>Geminospora piliformis</i>													
<i>Lophozonotriletes media</i>													
<i>Verrucosiporites bulliferus</i>													
<i>Late Frasnian to earliest Famennian taxa</i>													
<i>Cymbosporites acanthaceus</i>													
<i>Lophozonotriletes bouckaertii</i>													
<i>Rugospora bricei</i>													
<i>Late Frasnian to Tournaisian taxon</i>													
<i>Auroraspora macra</i>													
CONTEMPORANEOUS MIOPORES													
<i>Latest Famennian taxa</i>													
<i>Retispora lepidophyta</i>													
<i>Vallatisporites hystricosus</i> (small spines)													
<i>Latest Famennian to Tournaisian taxa</i>													
<i>Aratrisporites saharensis</i>													
<i>Cordylisporites spathulatus</i>													
<i>Gorgonispora convoluta</i>													
<i>Knoxisporites literatus/hederatus</i>													
<i>Leiozonotriletes insignitus</i>													
<i>Spelaeotriletes</i> sp. cf. <i>S. obtusus</i>													
<i>Vallatisporites vallatus</i>													
<i>V. verrucosus</i>													
<i>Verrucosiporites mesogrammosus</i>													

made by S. Loboziak

• in 1992

◆ in 1992 and repeated in 1997

◇ in 1997

Figure 5: Qualitative analysis of laminite and tillite samples. All reworked material in tillites can be explained by Givetian and Frasnian sources. All reworked material in laminite 3 can be explained mainly by Frasnian source.

This is partly true also for the miospores presumed to be contemporaneous (late latest Famennian) of the laminite deposit (less miospores in the sandy layers than in the silty layers). But it is obvious that these contemporaneous miospores are significantly less present in the tillites and associated shale (Samples N° 1, 2 and 4) than in the laminite (Samples 3), a situation different from that observed in the reworked material. This suggests that the contemporaneous miospores are produced locally, the glacial tongue, carrying the reworked part of the material, only partially overlapping adjacent environments.

If we except sample 3/4a (where several silty thin layers are intercalated in the sandy layer - See plate 2), the rarity of contemporaneous miospore taxa in the sandy layers of laminite N° 3 might be interpreted also as a sort of seasonal effect, with only the *Vallatisporites* complex and *S. sp. cf. S. obtusus* escaping the process. In case of seasonal effect, the rythmites would be true varves, the sandy layers being first settled after the local seasonal melting of the ice cover and the rush of fresh water supply into the sea, the silty layers being deposited when the spring water run-off decreases.

In the late Famennian of eastern North America, *Vallatisporites hystricosus* was demonstrated to occupy a margin of downstream peat swamp (Streel & Scheckler, 1990). Because Streel & Traverse (1978) had come to the conclusion that *V. hystricosus* and *V. vallatus* were part of a same palynodeme, the first species merging progressively into the second-one with time, Streel (1999) has accepted that, in the late latest Famennian of western Europe, they were sharing the same ecological niche.

Was the *Vallatisporites* mother-plant, living in the swamp margin environment, the first to produce spores immediately after the (spring?) melting of the ice cover?

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8. References

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- Samarisporites eximius* (Allen) Loboziak and Streel 1989
- Samarisporites praetervisus* (Naumova) Allen 1965
- Samarisporites triangulatus* Allen 1965
- Samarisporites* sp. E in Streel and Loboziak 1987
- Spelaeotriletes* sp. cf. *S. obtusus* Higgs 1975
- Vallatisporites hystricosus* (Winslow) Byvsheva 1985 (small spines)
- Vallatisporites vallatus* Hacquebard 1957
- Vallatisporites verrucosus* Hacquebard 1957
- Verrucosisporites bulliferus* Richardson and McGregor 1986
- Verrucosisporites mesogrumosus* (Kedo) Byvsheva 1985
- Verrucosisporites premnus* Richardson 1965
- Verrucosisporites scurrus* McGregor and Camfield 1982

Appendix : list of taxa

Acinosporites apiculatus (Streel) Streel 1967
Acinosporites lindlarensis Riegel 1968

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