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Lithologic Character of the Paleozoic Sandstone Succession, Southern Ozark Region, Arkansas, and Missouri

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Running Title: Paleozoic Sandstone Succession in Southern Ozark Region

Abstract

Sandstones comprise nearly half of the Paleozoic (Upper Cambrian-Middle Pennsylvania) lithostratigraphic succession in the southern Ozark region of northern Arkansas and southern Missouri. They record five distinct, but related intervals characterized by 1) Upper Cambrian arkoses resting unconformably on Precambrian granite; 2) Lower Ordovician reworked subarkoses, sublitharenites, and quartzites; 3) Lower Ordovician to Lower Mississippian reworked orthoquartzites; 4) Upper Mississippian first cycle sandstones with few metamorphic rock fragments (mrfs); 5) Lower Pennsylvanian (Morrowan) first cycle sandstones with common mrfs and Middle Pennsylvanian (Atokan) first cycle sandstones with common to abundant mrfs. These sandstones accumulated on a gently sloping cratonic platform reflecting transgressive-regressive, epeiric seas that eroded, transported, reworked and deposited more than 914.4m (3000ft) of terrigenous clastic sediments across what is now the south flank of the Ozark Dome.

Introduction

The Paleozoic record of the southern Ozark region, northern Arkansas, southern Missouri, and northeastern Oklahoma, accumulated on a gently sloping cratonic platform reflecting transgressive-regressive, epeiric seas that eroded, transported and reworked terrigenous clastic sediments (Zachry, 1979). The lithostratigraphic record recognizes at least 33 formations with a potential composite thickness of nearly 2438.4m (8000ft) (Howe and Koenig 1961, McFarland 2004, Fig. 1), although sea-level rise and fall produced regional surfaces of erosion; consequently, the preserved thickness is significantly less. Limestone and shale intervals dominate this composite thickness, but nearly 40% of the record is sandstone (Fig. 1).

Although there have been many excellent studies of the geologic history of the Arkoma Basin, the adjacent shelf, and Ozark Dome have never had a summary of similar comprehension. General papers on the southern Midcontinent, while useful, lack specific information applicable to the details of the geologic history and influence of the Ozark Dome on the region. Accurate analysis of the Arkoma basin fill, particularly the sandstones, has been limited because it is mostly in the subsurface. Perhaps oddly given its location, the Ozark Dome does not appear to have been a significant terrigenous clastic source for the surrounding region before the Mississippian. Its history has been apparently one of periodic uplift, and frequent cover, but there has been no recognition or evaluation of a tectonic signature preserved in the regional unconformities bounding the depositional sequences. The accepted regional geological history of the southern Midcontinent is interpreted as a cratonic platform through the Early Atokan Series with the actual formation of the Arkoma Basin beginning in the Middle Atokan.

Paleozoic Sandstone Succession, Southern Ozark Region

The Paleozoic sandstones represent five distinct, but related, intervals (Fig. 1): 1) the Upper Cambrian Lamotte Formation, an arkose, typically with a basal conglomerate, derived from the Precambrian granite of the Ozark Dome core; 2) sandstones of the Lower Ordovician Gasconade and Roubidoux Formations reflecting reworking of the Lamotte and contemporaneous intervals producing subarkoses, sublitharenites, and finally, quartzarenites; 3) continued reworking that produced well-rounded, well-sorted, orthoquartzites appearing in the Lower Ordovician Cotter Formation and extending to the Bachelor Sandstone, basal member of the St. Joe Formation, Lower Mississippian; 4) appearance of first cycle sandstones with a minimum of metamorphic rock

Paleozoic Sandstone Succession in Southern Ozark Region

Period	Series	Southern Ozarks, Northern Arkansas		1 st Order Cycle	Sandstone Successions	Unit Thickness	
		NW Arkansas	Eastern Arkansas			Feet	Meter
Pennsylvanian	Atoka	Atoka Formation		Absaroka Sequence	First cycle with Abundant MRFS	1500	457.2
		Kessler Limestone				First cycle with Common MRFS	760
	Morrowan	Bloyd Formation			300		91.4
Hale Formation							
Mississippian	Chesterian	Pitkin Limestone		Kaskaskia Sequence	First cycle with few MRFS	140	43
		Upper Fayetteville Shale				300	91.4
	Lower Fayetteville Shale		400			122	
	Hindsville Limestone		200			61	
	Batesville Sandstone						
	Merrimacian	Boone Formation				300	91.4
		Short Creek Oolite				390	119
	Osagean	St. Joe Limestone					
		Pierson Limestone					
	Devonian		Chattanooga Shale			Tippecanoe Sequence	Reworked quartzarenite
Clifty Sandstone			4	1.2			
Penters Chert			90	27.4			
Ordovician	Late	Lafferty Limestone		Sauk Sequence	Reworked Subarkose/Sublitharenite/Quartzarenite	98	30
		St. Clair Limestone				100	31
		Brassfield Limestone				38	12
	Middle	Cason Shale				23	7
		Fernvale Limestone				100	31
		Kimmeswick Limestone				55	17
		Plattin Limestone				250	78.2
		Joachim Dolomite				100	31
		St. Peter Sandstone				175	53.3
		Everton Formation				650	198.1
	Early	Powell Dolomite				215	66
		Cotter Dolomite				500	152.4
		Jefferson City Dolomite				70	21.3
Roubidoux Formation		91	28				
Gasconnade Sandstone		233	71				
Eminence Dolomite		106	32.3				
Cambrian	Late	Potosi Dolomite		24	7.3		
		Derby-Doerun Dolomite		27	8.2		
		Davis Formation		45	14		
Lamotte Sandstone		130	40				
Precambrian Basement Rocks							

Fig. 1. Stratigraphic summary of Paleozoic northern Arkansas. Nomenclature, age assignments and average thickness compiled from and Howe and Koenig (1961), Haley and Frezon (1965), McFarland (2004) with some modification by the author. Total estimated thickness = 2033.3m (6671 ft); red and blue dotted lines represent craton-scale and local unconformities respectively. Yellow boxes denote formations that are entirely or partly sandstones.

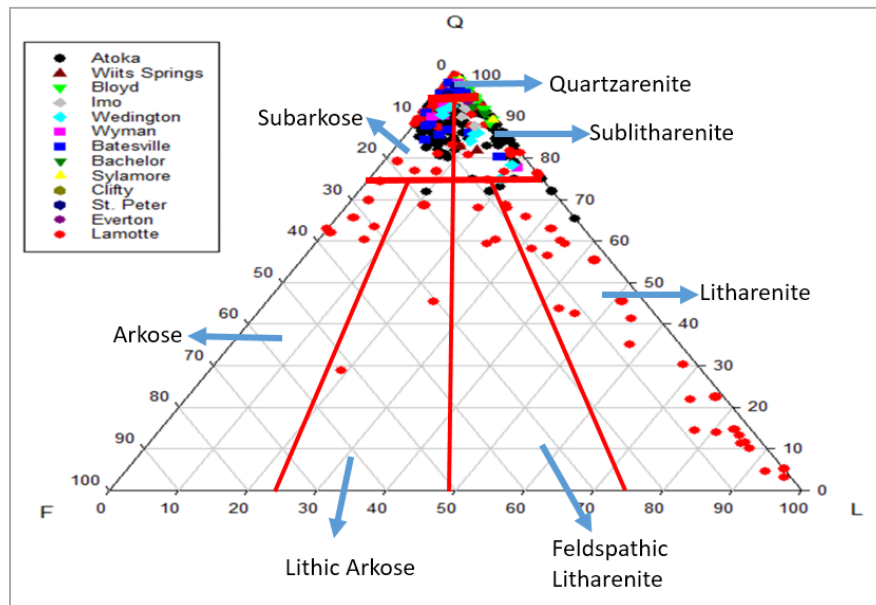


Fig. 2. Composite Plot of the Petrographic Analysis of the Paleozoic Sandstones of the Southern Ozark Region.

fragments (mrf) beginning with the Upper Mississippian Batesville Sandstone Upper Mississippian, and appearing sporadically through the remainder of the Mississippian record to the base of the Pennsylvanian; 5) Pennsylvanian first cycle sandstones characterize the remainder of the record of the southern Ozarks, that can be subdivided into two categories: sandstones with common mrf comprising the Morrowan interval, and sandstones with abundant mrf capping the record as the Atoka Formation, Atokan Series, Middle Pennsylvanian, and the thickest Paleozoic unit in the southern Ozarks.

Petrographic Character of the Southern Ozark Sandstone Successions

Modal analyses plotted as ternary diagrams provide the evidence for the discrimination of the five groups of Paleozoic sandstones comprising the record of the southern Ozark Dome in Arkansas and Missouri (Fig. 2 and 3). As expected, the arkosic-litharenitic Lamotte Sandstone Interval 1 is distributed across the fields ranging from arkose to litharenite. The remainder of the sandstones is clustered in the sublitharenite-subarkose-quartzarenitic fields. All modal data have been separated and replotted on ternary diagrams for each of the sandstone intervals to further discriminate and characterize the five groups of Paleozoic sandstones identified in this study for the southern Ozark Dome in Arkansas and Missouri (Fig. 3).

Summary and Conclusions

Petrographic data for the Paleozoic sandstones of the southern Ozark Dome comprise five related, but distinct intervals: 1) first cycle arkose/litharenite, typically with a basal conglomerate, succeed by subarkose/ sublitharenite and finally to quartzarenite assigned to the Upper Cambrian Lamotte Formation; 2) after an interval of carbonate deposition, sandstones of the Lower Ordovician Gasconade and Roubidoux Formations reflect continued reworking of the Lamotte interval producing subarkoses, sublitharenites, and finally quartzarenites; 3) well rounded, well sorted, quartzarenites and orthoquartzites that reflect reworking of the post-Lamotte quartz sandstones of the southern Ozarks and are represented by all or portions of the Lower Ordovician to Lower Mississippian Cotter-Everton-St.Peter-Clifty-Sylamore-Bachelor intervals. The Bachelor Sandstone, the basal member of the St. Joe Formation, Lower Mississippian, is the last orthoquartzite in the southern Ozark succession; 4) the Lower Mississippian Boone Formation, a chert-bearing limestone, is the thickest and most extensive post- Lower Ordovician and pre- middle Pennsylvanian interval in the southern Ozarks. This limestone interval limited significant reworking, and the Upper Mississippian records first cycle sandstones with few metamorphic rock fragments comprising the Batesville-Wyman-Wedington-Imo Sandstone interval; 5) first cycle sandstones with a major contribution by metamorphic rock fragments comprise

Paleozoic Sandstone Succession in Southern Ozark Region

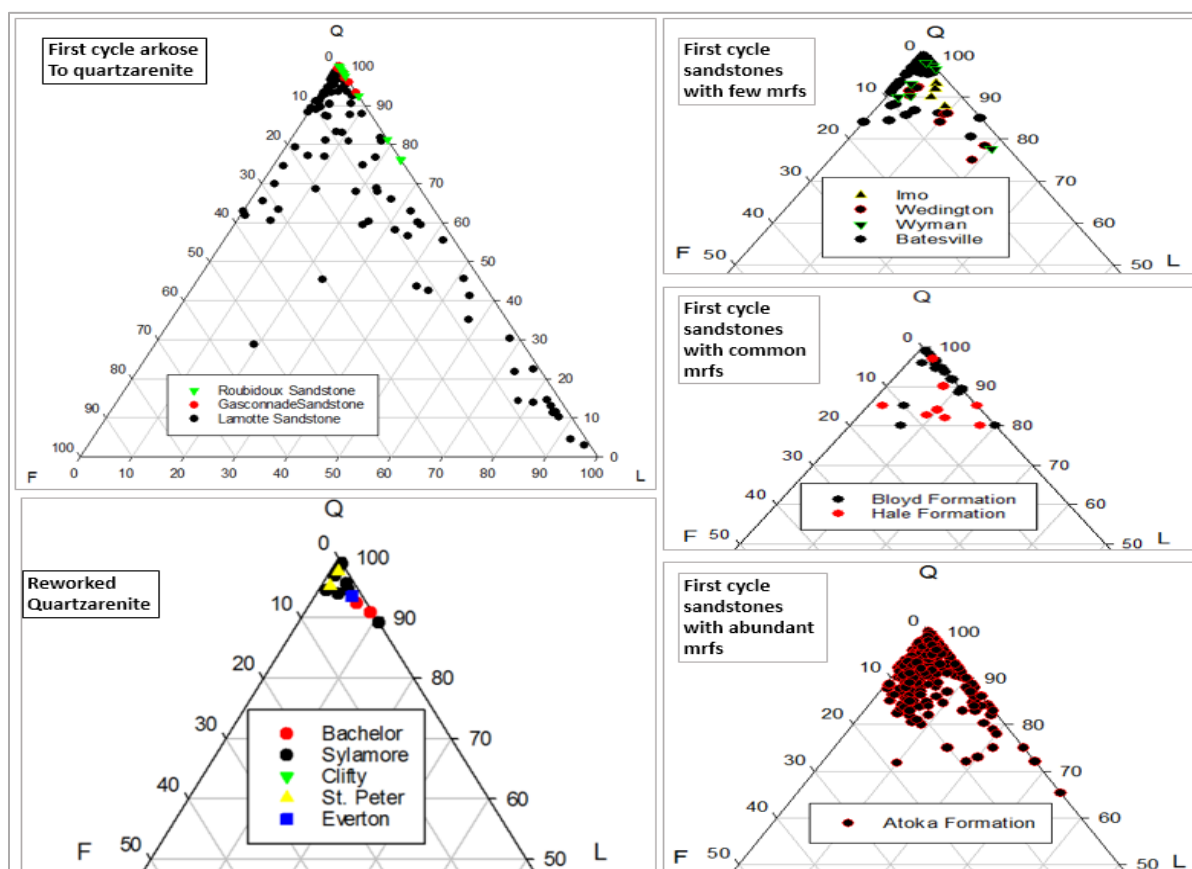


Fig. 3 - Plots of the Petrographic Analysis of the five Paleozoic Sandstone Groups Identified in the Southern Ozark Region. Thin sections provided by Angela Chandler and Richard Hutto, Arkansas Geological Survey; collections in Department of Geosciences, University of Arkansas, and data from Yesberger Jr. (1982) and Houseknecht (1975).

the Pennsylvanian portion of the succession. The Hale and succeeding Bloyd Formations, Morrowan, Lower Pennsylvanian, exhibit scattered to common metamorphic rock fragments, while the Atoka Formation, Middle Pennsylvanian, the thickest Paleozoic terrigenous clastic interval in the southern midcontinent unit and youngest stratigraphic unit in the Paleozoic succession of the southern Midcontinent preserves common to abundant metamorphic rock fragments

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