

美国艾奥瓦州文尼希克Lagerstätte及其沉积环境

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摘要: Lagerstätte 是指保存丰富或精美化石、因而具有特殊研究价值的化石层。这类地层所含的化石常具有经矿化的生物软体甚至未变实体, 从而为古生物的分类学、组织学、形态学、解剖学、生态学、埋藏学等研究提供了极其难得的材料。近年来发现于美国艾奥瓦州的文尼希克化石层, 以其特异保存的多门类不常见化石分子为特征, 成为目前仅知的中奥陶世 Lagerstätte。这一生物群的发现不仅填补了化石记录中的一些空白, 也为中奥陶世的生物辐射事件研究领域打开了一个在赤道附近非正常海洋环境中生存的生物群面貌窗口。而且, 其中所含的不同类别矿化生物残留, 在有机物的分解、置换以及生物成岩作用等研究中具有重要意义。初步研究表明, 文尼希克生物群的生活环境与化石保存, 可能与陨石撞击事件有关, 从而为奥陶纪生物辐射事件的起因可能与太空星体爆裂有关的理论研究, 提供了新的验证材料。

关键词: 特异埋藏; 文尼希克生物群; 圣彼得砂岩; 奥陶纪生物辐射; 星体爆裂事件; 陨石坑; 美国艾奥瓦州

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The Winneshiek Lagerstätte, Iowa, USA and Its Depositional Environments

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Abstract: Fossil Lagerstätten are deposits containing abundant and/or exceptionally preserved fossils, often including soft-bodied tissue. Of these, Konservat-Lagerstätten are especially important because they provide not only a much more complete record of the diversity and paleoecology of ancient communities, but also more detailed information on the taxonomy and anatomy of the biota compared to the normal shelly fossil record. However, Konservat-Lagerstätten are rare because they require exceptional physical and chemical depositional conditions. Environmental conditions during the Cambrian may have been more favorable for the preservation of soft-bodied organisms than later in the Paleozoic, and such Lagerstätten provide evidence of biodiversity changes during the Cambrian explosion. Although the Ordovician Radiation or Great Ordovician Biodiversification Event (GOBE) has been well documented, this is based mainly on the shelly fossil record because soft-bodied organisms are poorly represented during the 45 million years of the Ordovician. Only three Lagerstätten, Beecher's Trilobite Bed in upper New York State, the Soom Shale in South Africa, and the recently recognized biota in Manitoba, Canada, approach the extent of soft-tissue preservation in Cambrian deposits. All the three Lagerstätten are of Late Ordovician age.

The Winneshiek fauna was discovered recently near Decorah, northeast Iowa, USA (Fig. 1). It is preserved in a new stratigraphic unit which consists of greenish-brown to dark-gray sandy laminated shale with abundant organic carbon and pyrite (Fig.

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2). The new fauna contains both invertebrate and vertebrate fossils; current recovery includes eurypterids and other chelicerates, phyllocard crustaceans, ostracods, linguloid brachiopods, mollusks, isolated conodont elements and bedding plane assemblages, skeletal elements of jawless fish, various indeterminate fossil forms, and bromalites and other trace fossils (Fig. 3). Most of these fossils are extraordinarily preserved, some with soft tissues or body impressions, establishing the status of this deposit as a Konservat-Lagerstätte, the only significant example of Middle Ordovician (Whiterockian) age.

The importance of studies of the Winneshiek Lagerstätte is manifold. The fauna contains several very rare taxa in the Ordovician fossil record. Phyllocarids, for example, are an important but poorly known group of Paleozoic crustaceans, and the resolution of controversies surrounding their taxonomic position has been frustrated by the rarity of information on their morphology other than the carapace. The new examples preserving trunk and appendages from the Winneshiek Lagerstätte (Plates ①, ②) are valuable for testing hypotheses of phyllocarid relationships and their significance for crustacean evolution. Eurypterids are the most diverse order of chelicerates in the Paleozoic, and the earliest specimens described in the literature are from the Late Ordovician. The Winneshiek eurypterids (Plate ③) are not only the oldest but they occur on Laurentia, which is thought to be where the clade originated. This study will provide important new data to test ideas about eurypterid taxonomy, evolution, and their phylogenetic relationships to Xiphosura and Scorpiones.

Vertebrates from the Winneshiek Lagerstätte include conodonts and jawless fish. Conodonts are abundant and extraordinary in the fauna. Although more material is necessary to confirm that conodont soft tissues are preserved, the occurrence of several types of bedding plane assemblage, including the first known natural apparatus of Coleodontid conodonts (Plate ④), has improved our knowledge of their classification and affinity. Many complete elements, comprising both basal body and crown, will also provide important information on conodont phylogeny and evolution. The evolutionary history and paleoenvironmental context of Ordovician fish remain poorly known. Articulated jawless fish fossils (Plate ⑤) from the Winneshiek fauna certainly will provide significant new information on primitive vertebrates. Some 3-dimensionally preserved vermiform fossils (Plate ⑥) and indeterminate fossils with special structures (Plate ⑦) are also common. Their nature and paleoecologic importance need to be determined.

The Winneshiek fauna preserves a remarkable range of non-biomineralized tissues. These materials provide important information on paleoecology, depositional environments, taphonomy, and diagenesis. Most of the eurypterids from the fauna, for example, are preserved as black or brownish cuticle remnants (Plate ③). Preliminary analysis indicates they contain a fixed-carbon component as high as 81%. Cuticular preservation of arthropods this old is rare. Organic analyses of such cuticular materials will provide further information on organic diagenesis, thermal maturity, affinities and potentially on conditions of deposition. In addition, the conodont elements range in color from amber through pearl to white. Along with the color alteration, conodont elements were mineralogically altered: corresponding dissolution occurs (Plate ⑧), and dense denticle becomes an aggregate of water soluble fibrous material (Plate ⑨). Because elements with different colors occur in the same fauna, they must represent the result of different diagenetic or biologic processes, and the conodont color alteration index (CAI) of thermal maturity is not directly applicable to the Winneshiek Lagerstätte. Bromalitic materials (Plate ⑩) and other trace fossils frequently occur in the Lagerstätte.

The Winneshiek Lagerstätte provides remarkable information on the depositional environment. Fine-scale lamination, in part sandy, in conjunction with the limited geographic extent of the shale, suggests a marginal to nearshore marine setting, possibly with tidal influence. The preservation of abundant organic matter and pyrite indicates low-oxygen conditions with restricted bottom circulation. Many animal groups that typify Ordovician open-marine shelf faunas, such as corals, bryozoans, crinoids, cephalopods, trilobites, and graptolites, were not found in the Winneshiek fauna. The restricted biota suggests deposition in an area that was separated from the open sea, possibly in a nearshore/estuarine environment with slightly brackish-water within Laurentia (Fig. 4).

Preliminary considerations suggest that the Winneshiek fauna may have lived and been preserved within a meteorite impact basin. Firstly, the origin of the Lagerstätte-bearing shale and underlying conglomerate/breccia succession in the study area is equivocal. The conglomerate/breccia unit consists of angular, unsorted, and multi-sourced clasts (Fig. 5), some of which show boudinage-like structures (Fig. 6). The sediments differ significantly from those expected in normal deposits, but are usually found in impact structures. Secondly, results from analysis of water wells indicate that this abnormal succession is limited to a small area (Fig. 7). More than 400 wells have been drilled in the study area, and 182 of them penetrated to a depth below the Lagerstätte-bearing shale. However, the abnormal succession occurs only in 29 wells (red points in Fig. 7), which are distributed in a circular area with a diameter of about 6 km. Field investigations and a review of available well data indicate that the contact of the circular

area with surrounding strata is abrupt. In addition, faulting of early Paleozoic bedrock has been reported in the subsurface of the same area, although its extent and mechanics have remained poorly understood. More importantly, microdeformation features have been recognized in quartz grains from the conglomerate/breccia unit (Fig. 8); such features have been widely considered as unequivocal evidence of impact. Two contemporaneous impact structures in the central United States, the Rock Elm structure in Wisconsin and the Ames structure in Oklahoma, provide comparisons with the Iowa feature: a similar sedimentary succession of, in ascending order, breccia, black shale, and pure sandstone; similar conodont faunas from the shale units; and similar paleolatitude settings in tropical Laurentia during the Middle Ordovician (Fig. 4).

The importance of the investigation of the depositional environment is not limited to explaining the local geological history, but will improve our understanding of the GOBE, which is documented primarily from the study of faunas that inhabited open-marine shallow-shelf environments. By contrast, the Winneshiek fauna lived in a nearshore to estuarine (likely brackish) environment where faunal diversity has not been well documented. The possible impact structure which hosts the Lagerstätte may also provide a test of the hypothesized link between the GOBE and asteroid breakup during the Ordovician.

Key words: Konservat-Lagerstätte; Winneshiek fauna; St. Peter Sandstone; the Great Ordovician Biodiversification Event; asteroid breakup; meteorite impact; Iowa, USA

1 前言

Lagerstätte (复数Lagerstätten)一词源自德国采矿业用语，大意是指具有经济价值的含矿层。现在该词已被古生物学家广为借用，用来专指那些含有丰富生物，尤其是那些含有生物软体组织或矿化生物软体化石，因而具有特殊研究价值的地层，中文称之为特异埋藏化石层或化石库。Lagerstätten之所以被古生物学家重视，是因为它们所含的化石比常规的壳相或其它生物骨骼化石保存了更为详尽的生物外部形态结构和内部解剖构造等细节，是研究地质历史中相关生物的起源、演化、分类等的宝贵资料，它们同时还保存了许多生态学和埋藏学信息，从而为沉积环境和成岩作用等研究提供重要材料。

Seilacher等(1985)根据不同沉积环境的动力因素和保存机制，将Lagerstätten划分为堆积沉积 (concentration deposits) 和保护沉积 (conservation deposits) 二种类型。前者多形成于滨海潮汐带、造礁带、水下裂隙沉积以及洞穴堆积等，这种类型的沉积以壳相灰岩为典型，一般来说，虽然其中所含的化石数量丰富，但由于受搬运作用、生物作用和化学作用等的影响，化石的个体质量通常不高。而在保护沉积环境下形成的Lagerstätten则相反，它们所含的化石数量未必很多，甚至稀少，但由于受外界破坏因素影响较小，化石的个体质量往往属于上乘，乃至一些生

物的软体部分也被矿化或直接保存下来。在保护沉积环境下形成、并完好保存这类化石精品的地层，则被古生物学家称为 Konservat-Lagerstätte，或简称为Lagerstätte。

然而，这类含有生物软体组织或矿化实体的化石层，在地质时期中被保存的机率很低，这是因为它们能否被保存下来，取决于当时沉积环境中物理、化学、生物以及随后的成岩作用等诸多因素 (Seilacher et al, 1985; Briggs, 2003; 鲁安怀, 2007)。从目前的化石记录来看，就早古生代而言，寒武纪时似乎具有更有利保存这类化石的环境条件，除保存澄江动物群的帽天山页岩和布尔吉斯页岩外，奥斯顿类型 (Orsten-type) 的化石，在国内外也多有发现 (如Dong et al, 2004, 2005a,b; Donoghue et al, 2006)。可以认为，这些特殊保存的化石类群被不断发现，不仅更新了人们对古生代早期生物面貌的认识，同时为寒武纪生物大爆发理论的确立，奠定了坚实的化石材料基础。

发现于奥陶纪的Konservat-Lagerstätten，较之寒武纪要稀少得多。除本文将介绍的文尼希克化石层 (Winneshiek Lagerstätte) 外，就目前所知，属这一时期的著名Konservat-Lagerstätten仅有三处，它们是美国纽约上州的Beecher's 三叶虫化石层 (Briggs et al, 1991)，南非的Soom页岩层 (Aldridge et al, 1994)，以及最近发现于加拿大曼尼托巴 (Manitoba) 省的化石层 (Young et

al, 2007), 它们的时代同属晚奥陶世, 而文尼希克化石层则是目前已知的唯一时代属中奥陶世的 Konservat-Lagerstätte (Liu et al, 2006)。

2 文尼希克生物群及其意义

2.1 文尼希克生物群

文尼希克 (Winneshiek) 生物群于2005年被发现于美国艾奥瓦 (Iowa) 州东北部的 Decorah 附近 (图1), 生物群名称取自化石产地所属的文尼希克县名, 它保存于一套在该地区新发现的浅绿至深灰色具薄层状构造的含砂页岩中 (图2), 局部含丰富的有机碳和黄铁矿 (Young et al, 2005)。上覆于这套页岩地层之上的是成熟度很高的纯石英砂岩, 即在研究地区内分布广泛的狭义圣·彼得砂岩 (St. Peter Sandstone; Dapples, 1955), 时代为中奥陶世的白石期 (Whiterockian), 古地理分区属劳伦古陆块 (Laurentia)。

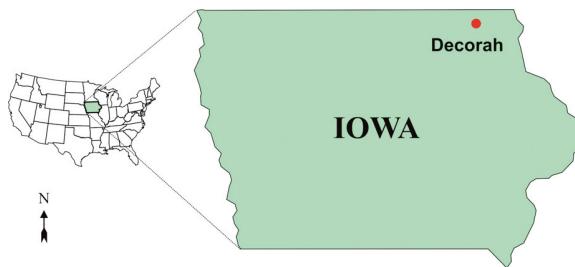


图1 研究地区地理位置图
Fig. 1 Location of the study area

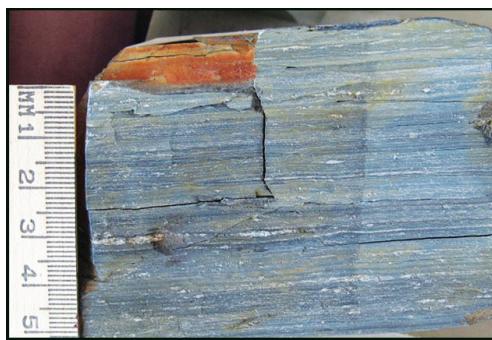


图2 经磨光的含文尼希克生物群页岩
Fig. 2 Polished surface of the shale which hosts the Winneshiek Lagerstätte

钻井资料显示, 这套含文尼希克生物群的页岩, 最大厚度可达38 m, 但据以揭示生物群面貌的化石材料, 主要来自目前仅知的一处厚约3 m的地表露头, 层位属该页岩层的最上部, 而这一地

表露头下部的近2 m地层, 终年隐伏在密西西比河上游一条支流的水面之下。

文尼希克生物群由脊椎和无脊椎动物组成, 目前已发现的化石材料显示, 它所包含的生物类别有牙形刺类、无颌类、有螯肢类、叶虾类、无铰腕足类、介形类、腹足类以及一些分类位置未明化石和生物遗迹化石 (图3; Liu et al, 2005, 2006, 2007a, b)。这些化石大多保存精美, 其中含生物软体组织残留、外部形态结构乃至内部构造细节的化石亦不乏常见, 有些化石甚至呈三维立体保存, 这在化石记录中实属难得。因此, 尽管对文尼希克生物群的研究尚处于开始阶段, 但它在奥陶纪古生物分类学、古生态学、化石埋藏学, 以及奥陶纪生物大辐射理论研究等方面的意义已露端倪, 它的发现也已引起古生物界的广泛重视, 一些古生物学家更将其称为“10余年来奥陶纪古生物学界最重要的发现” (摘自论文评审意见)。

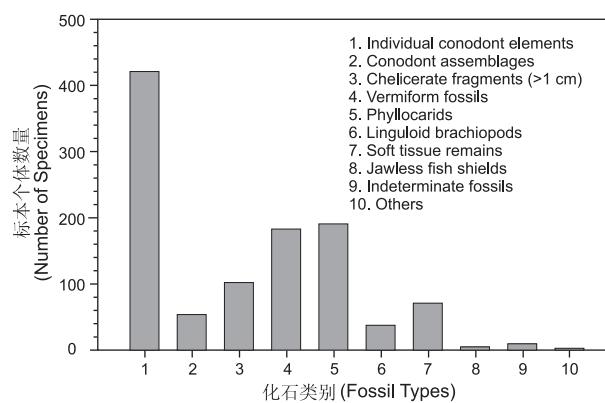


图3 从最初约250 kg页岩样品中发现的化石类别及个体数量直方图
Fig. 3 Histogram of fossils recovered from the first 250 kg of the shale sample

此外, 这个化石群的发现在生物地层学研究方面也具有重要意义, 这是因为在美国中部地区广泛分布、且研究程度很高的圣·彼得砂岩, 以往所产化石极为稀少, 文尼希克生物群的发现, 无疑为相关地层时代的厘订及其沉积环境分析, 提供了直接的化石证据。

2.2 文尼希克生物群的古生物学意义

对文尼希克生物群进行深入研究的意义是多方面的, 限于篇幅, 本文仅择重要者简介之。首先, 该生物群的组成分子中有不少是属于奥陶纪

化石记录中的罕见类别,如早期脊椎动物中的无颌鱼类,无脊椎动物中的有螯肢类、叶虾类等。叶虾类是古生代甲壳动物中的一个重要类别,但是有关这类化石的分类以及与现代海洋中叶虾的亲缘关系等,一直难有定论(Vannier et al, 2003),这是因为除极少数在特殊环境下保存的化石材料外(Bergström et al, 1987; Rode and Lieberman, 2002; Briggs et al, 2004),人们对这类化石的了解,多限于它们的背甲,其余构造则知之甚少。发现于文尼希克生物群中的叶虾类化石,不仅保存了许多完整的硬体,还有不少化石保存了软体印痕和生物组织残留,揭示了这些生物的诸多外部和内部构造细节(图版①,②),对深入了解早期叶虾类的形态特征、解剖构造、演进路线以及与现代叶虾类的亲缘关系等,均有着重要意义。

文尼希克生物群中的有螯肢类以板足鲎类为主(图版③),少数与蒜甲鲎类(aglaspidids)近似的早期剑尾类(xiphosuran)等在这里也有出现。板足鲎是古生代有螯肢类中一个最具生物多样性的目(Tetlie, 2007),其中包括节肢动物中个体最为庞大的种类,是这一时期海洋中的重要捕食者。此前报导的确凿板足鲎化石,最早出现于晚奥陶世,文尼希克生物群中所含的这类化石,不仅极有可能是板足鲎类最早期的原始种类,而且它们出现于被认为是这类生物发源地的劳伦古陆缘海,从而为这类生物的起源、迁移、早期演化和分类研究,以及它们与剑尾类和蝎类(scorpiones)之间关系的研究,提供了极为重要的化石材料(Dunlop and Braddy, 2001)。

从图3中可以看到,文尼希克生物群中牙形刺化石的数量最为丰富,其中尤其值得注意的是一些牙形刺化石集群与生物软体残留共存的标本(Liu et al, 2006, 2007a),但由于它们所显示的解剖构造与此前发现于苏格兰石炭纪具软体组织的牙形刺动物化石(Aldridge et al, 1993)存在不少差异,文尼希克生物群中发现的标本是否代表了这类绝灭动物的早期形态和构造特征,尚有待更完好的标本来证实。然而,数量众多且类型多样的牙形刺自然集群在文尼希克生物群中的出现,无疑为厘清所涉及到的相关牙形刺动物的分类和演化,提供了重要的化石证据(Liu et al, 2007b)。例如,鞘石科

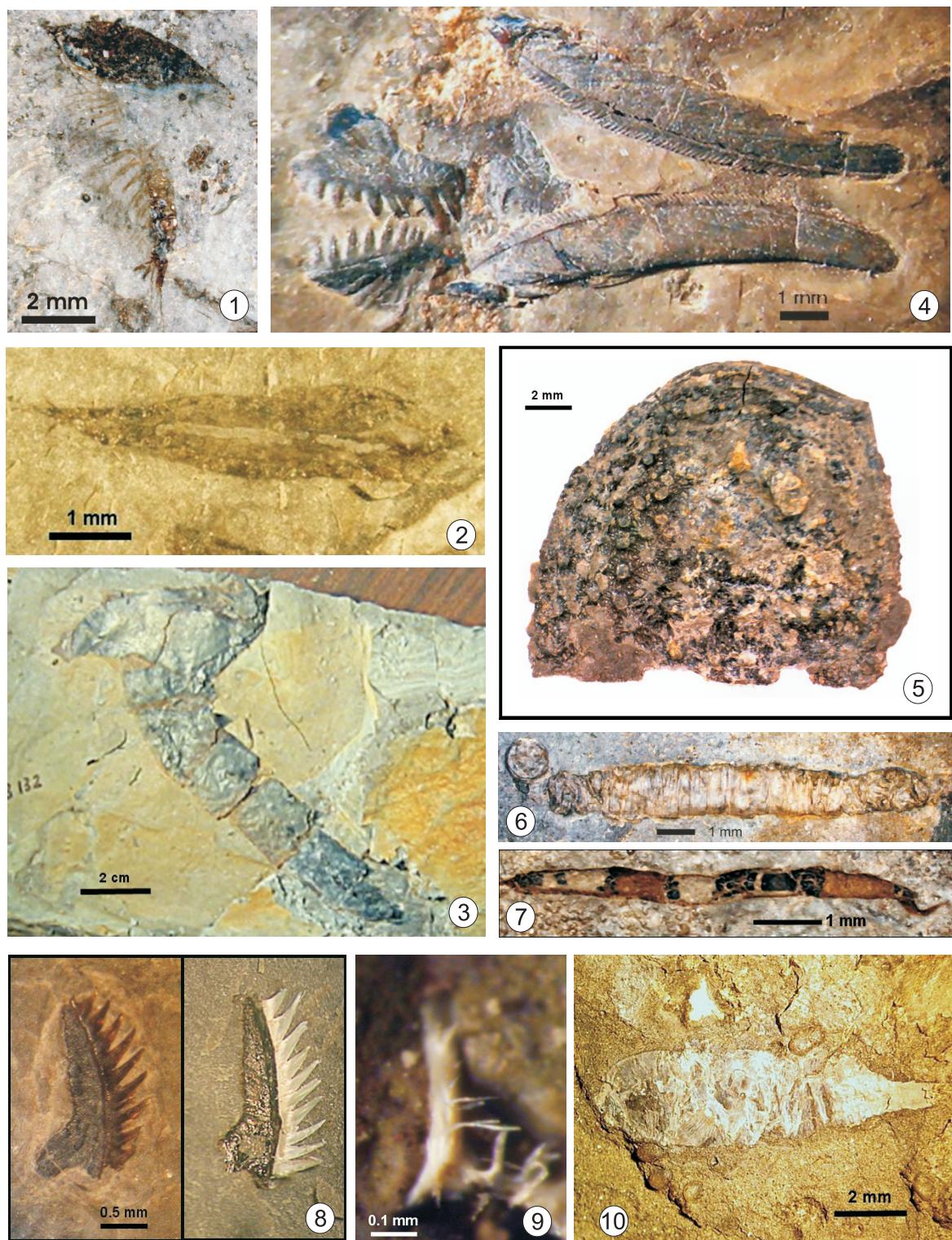
(Coleodentidae) 中的 *Archeognathus* 和 *Coleodus*,一直被认为是两个不同的属,而这次发现于文尼希克生物群中数块具相同组分的自然集群标本,首次证实它们实际上来自同一个生物个体(图版④),从而证明上述二属为同物异名。其实,Coleodentidae 自建立以来,关于这类化石的形态、分类以及它们与其它牙形刺类别的亲缘关系等,就一直存在着许多疑问,它们是否应为牙形刺动物中一个独立的目(Sweet, 1988),甚至脊椎动物中一个新的类别,都有待于对当前自然集群标本进行深入研究的结果。同样,来自这个生物群的其它牙形刺自然集群标本,对于弄清复杂(complex)牙形刺的组成以及牙形刺动物之间的亲缘关系研究,也有着重要价值(Donoghue et al, 2008)。另外,文尼希克生物群中的牙形刺化石,大多保存了完整的基板(basal plate)构造,它们也将为研究早期牙形刺生物的种系发生、自然分类和系统演进提供重要的化石材料(Donoghue et al, 2000; Dong et al, 2005a, b)。

无颌类是发现于文尼希克生物群中的另一类重要早期脊椎动物,这类化石因为其原始而在脊椎动物的起源和演化进程中扮演重要角色,又因为早期无颌类在化石记录中非常罕见而愈显珍贵(Sansom et al, 1997)。由于化石稀少,关于这类生物的生活环境,包括它们是淡水生物还是海洋生物,在研究者中尚存争议(如Graffin, 1992; Alluée and Holland, 2005)。目前发现于文尼希克生物群中的这类化石均为无颌类的骨甲化石(图版⑤),它们与典型的海洋生物牙形刺、叶虾类、腕足类等共生,并保存于含黄铁矿的页岩之中,表明它们当时生活在海洋环境之中。当然,目前发现的标本,也进一步丰富了这类早期原始脊椎动物的地理分布。

文尼希克生物群中还有不少化石呈三维立体保存,其中大多为具有稳定构造特征的蠕虫状化石(图版⑥),有些则具特殊的外部形态构造(图版⑦),这些化石的内部一般多高度碳化,它们是某些未知化石生物还是属于生物粪便之类的遗迹化石,尚有待进一步的研究。

2.3 文尼希克生物群的埋藏学意义

除古生物分类学方面的意义之外,文尼



图版说明 (Explanation of plates) :

①—保存软体形态的叶虾类化石 (A well preserved phyllocard specimen), ②—保存肠状内脏构造的叶虾类化石 (A phyllocard specimen with gut remains), ③—被完整保存的板足鲎类附肢化石 (A complete eurypterid leg fossil), ④—鞘石类牙形刺的自然集群化石 (A coleodontid conodont apparatus), ⑤—部分黄铁矿化的无颌鱼类骨甲化石 (Partially pyritized jawless fish head shield), ⑥—呈立体保存的蠕虫状化石 (A 3-dimensionally preserved vermiform fossil), ⑦—一末端具钩状构造的分类位置未定化石 (An indeterminate fossil with a terminal hook-like structure), ⑧—相同种类牙形刺化石的颜色变化; 右图所示牙形刺标本的基板大部已被溶蚀 (Conodont elements with color alteration and corresponding dissolution; The basal plate of the specimen on the right was mostly dissolved), ⑨—随着颜色变化, 牙形刺的齿冠转变为可溶于水的白色丝状集合体 (Along with the color alteration, conodont denticle becomes aggregate of water soluble fibrous material), ⑩—含有机物残留的生物遗迹化石 (A bromalitic fossil with organic remains in it)。

希克生物群在有机物分解及置换、化石埋藏学(taphonomy)、古生态学等方面的研究,也具重要价值。随着现代科学技术的发展,多学科的综合分析在古生物学和沉积学研究中日显重要,文尼希克生物群研究中许多涉及化石保存和沉积环境方面的课题,也需借助这些研究来解决。就目前所获的材料来看,该化石层中矿化的生物残留有碳化物、磷化物、黄铁矿化物等多种类型,包括了早期的生物体自身矿化作用(authigenic mineralization)和有机体成岩作用(organic diagenesis)不同阶段的产物(Briggs et al, 2000; Briggs, 2003)。例如,该生物群中的板足鲎类化石,大多保存为黑色或棕褐色的薄纸片状(图版③),分析结果表明,其含碳量可高达81%(Liu et al, 2006),且极易用机械方法将其从沉积物表面剥离。这类化石中有些可能是生物生长过程中的蜕或龄虫化石,但在如此古老的地层中,节肢动物的表皮能以这种方式保存下来,在化石记录中是罕见的(Gupta et al, 2007)。对这类化石进行深入研究的结果,将为生物成岩作用、热熟化作用(thermal maturity)、沉积作用以及生物同源性等研究提供重要信息。

文尼希克生物群中牙形刺化石的保存也有不少未解之谜,比如,其保存特点之一是它们的颜色呈多样性,相同种类的牙形刺齿冠,可自琥珀色逐渐变化为白色,而且,颜色的深浅与化石被溶解的程度密切相关(图版⑧),即在一枚牙形刺化石的齿冠逐渐变白的不同阶段,其基板常遭受相应程度的溶蚀。与此同时,齿冠的物质成分和结构也发生相应改变,由琥珀色的致密块状,转变为可溶于水的白色丝绢状集合体(图版⑨),直至齿冠最终也被完全溶解而仅留下化石的印模。标本显示,这个变化过程是渐进和连续的。长期以来,不同颜色的牙形刺化石,被广泛用作恢复保存这类化石的地层在成岩过程中所经历的温度指标,称为牙形刺色变指标(color alternation index)。不同颜色的牙形刺化石在文尼希克化石层中的相同层位出现,说明这种颜色变化除成岩过程中的温度作用以外,还受其他因素影响,包括成岩作用、地下水作用甚至生物作用的影响。在对相关牙形刺化石进行地球化学和矿

物学成分对比研究之后,有望揭开这类化石在文尼希克化石层中的异常变化之谜。

此外,文尼希克生物群中还保存了大量与生物摄食或食物消化活动有关的化石(bromalitic materials; 图版⑩)和其他遗迹化石。Aldridge等(2006)将发现于南非Soom页岩中的类似化石分为五个大类,通过深入研究,它们也将提供相关生物的古生态学、埋藏学、和分类学信息。

3 文尼希克 Lagerstätte 的沉积环境

3.1 沉积环境分析及其意义

牙形刺、腕足类、叶虾类等典型海相生物的出现,说明文尼希克生物群生存于海洋环境。保存这个生物群的地层为薄层状含砂页岩,加之非常有限的地理分布范围,表明其为近岸沉积,并有可能受波浪作用影响。化石的完好保存,则说明这些生物在死亡之后,很少受底栖生物的挠动破坏;沉积物中含有大量的有机物和丰富的黄铁矿,说明它们形成于水体上下对流不畅、底部相对缺氧的还原环境。

值得注意的是,文尼希克生物群的组分非常特殊,许多奥陶纪正常海洋环境中常见的生物类群,包括三叶虫、笔石、珊瑚、头足类、棘皮类、苔藓虫类等,都在文尼希克生物群中缺失,进一步说明这个生物群生存于一个非正常海的环境中。从古地理图中可以看到,本文研究地区在中奥陶世时,位于赤道附近劳伦古陆块的边缘海近岸位置(图4中的2)。区域海盆沉积序列分析也表明,这里和邻近地区在中奥陶世属于海侵过程中被再沉积的古峡谷或古喀斯特地区(Templeton and Willman, 1963; Buschbach, 1964; Dott et al, 1986)。综合以上分析,可以推断文尼希克生物群当时应该生存于一个与外海交流不畅的近岸海湾地带,由于受陆表径流输入的影响,这里水体的含盐度可能比正常海水的盐度低,水中的含氧度和水体垂直分层情况,也应与正常海有别,即文尼希克生物群生存于一个与正常海不同的特殊环境中。

以上沉积环境的分析结果,在中奥陶世生物群的研究中具有特殊意义。研究证明,自中奥陶世早期开始,生物界出现了一个以科、属级别为

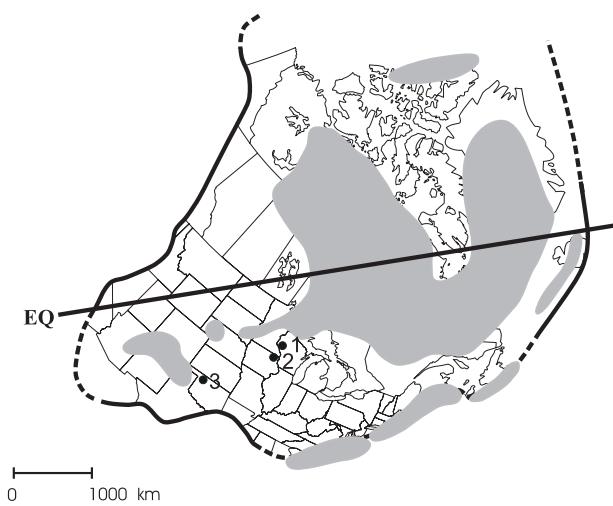


图4 中奥陶世劳伦古陆块古地理图（源自Witzke, 1990）
Fig. 4 The paleogeographic map of the Laurentia during Middle Ordovician (from Witzke, 1990)

主的生物多样性繁荣期 (Sepkoski, 1984; Droser and Finnegan, 2003)，称为奥陶纪生物辐射事件 (The Ordovician Radiation 或The Great Ordovician Biodiversification Event)。虽然生物界的这一重要事件已被众多化石门类的研究结果所证明 (Webby et al, 2004)，但此理论的依据，尚主要基于在正常海洋环境下生活和保存的壳相化石 (Webby, 2004; Harper, 2006)，因此，生存于特殊环境下的文尼希克生物群，不仅在古生物分类学上填补了一些化石记录中的空白，而且为我们深入研究奥陶纪生物辐射事件，打开了一个在中奥陶世赤道附近非正常海洋环境条件下生存的生物群面貌窗口，其研究结果，将拓展我们对生物界这一事件的了解。

3.2 陨石撞击事件及其意义

目前的初步研究还表明，文尼希克生物群的生活环境与化石保存，很可能与当时形成的一个陨石撞击构造有关。虽然此说尚有待进一步研究核实，但这个假设的形成却是以多种地质证据为基础的。

首先，研究地区内的钻井资料表明，在含文尼希克生物群的页岩之下，是一套在研究地区内从未出现过的特殊砂、砾岩层，它与含文尼希克生物群的页岩一起，构成一个局部性非正常沉积

序列，切割入当地正常沉积序列达200 m以上，进入上寒武统。这套特殊砂、砾岩层上部的20余米为角砾岩层，角砾成分为混杂的灰岩、白云岩、砂岩、燧石以及含绿泥石页岩等，包含了研究地区内上寒武统和下奥陶统的所有典型岩性。这些角砾未经任何分选或磨圆 (图5)，有些角砾的外形甚至出现丝丝缕缕的现象 (图6)。因为角砾成分具多源性，这套角砾岩层不应该是原地坍塌堆积，而与其类似的角砾岩却屡见于不同时代形



图5 成分复杂且未经任何分选或磨圆的角砾岩岩芯样
Fig. 5 Very angular and unsorted conglomerate core samples

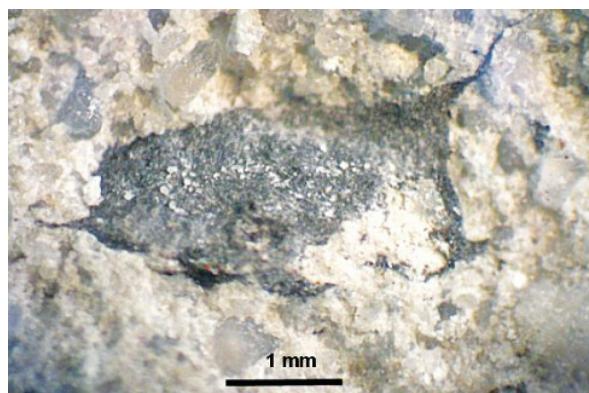


图6 角砾岩中形态奇特的页岩角砾
Fig. 6 A black shale grain with boudinage-like structure found in the conglomerate/breccia unit

成的陨石撞击构造内 (Keoberl and Anderson, 1996; Horton et al, 2005)。

其次，钻井资料分析结果表明，含文尼希克生物群的页岩和其下的砂、砾岩层，亦即非正常沉积序列，在研究地区内的分布范围非常有限。在如图7所示的约380 km²范围内，共有400余口钻井保存有完整岩性记录或岩芯样品资料，经核

查, 其中182口钻井的深度至少达到或低于含文尼希克生物群页岩应在的海拔高度, 它们的地理位置在图7中用黑点和红点标示, 在正常情况下, 这套非正常沉积序列应该在这些钻井中出现。但是, 如图7中的红点所示, 这套非正常沉积序列仅出现于其中的29口钻井中, 而且它们无一例外地全部集中出现在一个直径约6 km的圆形范围内,

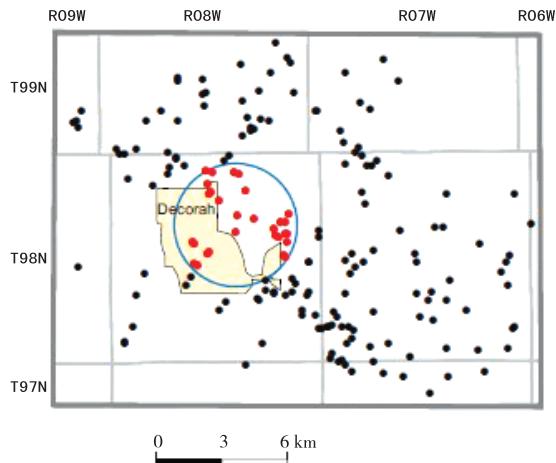


图7 钻井位置图, 示根据深度应该出现含文尼希克生物群页岩的182口钻井(图中所有点)和实际存在该非正常沉积、并集中分布于一个圆形范围内的29口钻井(图中红色点)

Fig. 7 Wells deeper than the Lagerstätte-bearing shale (all points) and wells that actually contain the sequence (red points) within a circular area only

并且与周边的当地正常沉积序列呈突然接触。

此外, 本文研究地区地处加拿大地盾区, 这里的古生代地层产状平缓, 除第四纪冰川切割外, 断层或褶皱等地质构造极不发育。但在Decorah地区, 隐伏地下的基岩断裂构造曾经被报导 (Lorenz et al, 1961), 虽然该构造的性质及成因当时都不清楚。更为重要的是, 一些显微变形 (microdeformation) 特征也已被发现于来自上述砂、砾岩层中石英颗粒的表面 (图8)。这种石英颗粒表面的显微变形解理模式, 过去总是出现于不同时代形成的陨石撞击构造内, 因而被广泛认为是确定陨石撞击事件的最重要依据 (Koeberl et al, 1996a, b; French et al, 2004; Horton and Izett, 2005)。

在美国中部地区, 有两个已被深入研究过的陨石撞击构造, 它们是威斯康辛州 (Wisconsin) 的Rock Elm构造和俄克拉荷马州 (Oklahoma) 的Ames构造, 其地理位置见图4中的1和3。这两个



图8 岩石薄片照片, 示非正常沉积的砂、砾岩层中石英颗粒表面的显微变形

Fig. 8 Thin section showing microdeformations of quartz grain from the conglomerate/breccia unit

撞击构造与本文研究的非正常沉积序列有着诸多相似性: 它们形成的时代都是中奥陶世; 其沉积物序列与含文尼希克生物群的非正常沉积序列相同, 即下部为砂、砾岩层, 上部为含化石的页岩层, 然后被时代和岩性都与圣彼得砂岩相当的正常沉积地层所覆盖; 在这两个陨石撞击构造内的页岩中, 一些与文尼希克生物群中相同或近似的牙形刺化石也曾被发现 (Repetski, 1997; Peters et al, 2002); 而且, 在中奥陶世时, 这两个撞击构造与本文研究地区都位于赤道附近的相近纬度带内 (图4)。诚然, 若就此认为上述三地有着陨石撞击事件发生的同时性, 结论或许有失于草率; 但综合以上所有证据, 从而推断上述三地非正常沉积物之间存在着成因上的相同性, 即文尼希克化石层分布范围所限的圆形区域也为陨石撞击所致, 似不致过于牵强。

如果最终证实文尼希克生物群曾生活并被保存于一个中奥陶世形成的陨石撞击坑内, 这不仅对恢复区域地质发展史, 解释文尼希克生物群特殊的生活环境及埋藏条件有很大意义, 更重要的是, 它将为探讨奥陶纪生物辐射事件起因的有关理论, 提供新的验证材料, 因为有最新研究成果表明, 这一奥陶纪生物界重大事件的发生, 可能与当时太空中的星体大规模爆裂有着重要的联系 (Schmitz et al, 2008)。

4 结论

1) 文尼希克化石层含多门类保存精美的化石, 是当前仅知时代属中奥陶世的Konservat-Lagerstätte。

2) 文尼希克生物群中不少分子为化石记录中的罕见分子, 它们为这一时期的古生物学、古生态学、化石埋藏学、生物成岩作用等的研究, 提供了重要资料。

3) 这个生物群的发现, 打开了一个在中奥陶世时生活于赤道附近非正常海洋环境下生物群面貌的窗口, 填补了一些与奥陶纪生物大辐射事件相关的化石记录空白。

4) 文尼希克生物群的生活与保存环境很可能与陨石撞击事件有关。若经证实, 它将为奥陶纪生物辐射事件的起因可能与当时太空中的星体大规模爆裂有关的理论, 提供新的验证材料。

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