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INDEX

Sr. No	Title	Author	Subject	Page. No.
1.	Statistical Optimization Of Ferulic Acid Esterase Production In Aspergillus Niger Isolate Using Response Surface Methodology	Balljinder Kaur , Neena Garg	Biotechnology	1-6
2.	Development Of Forest Area In Tropics: The Urgency Of People's Participation In The Indian Context	Dr. M. P. Naik	Commerce	7-8
3.	Opportunity For International Corporations At Bop Segments Of Emerging Markets (Focus : India)	Bhudhar Ranjan Chatterjee , Sukanya Chatterjee.	Commerce	9-11
4.	Retail Trade	Viram. J. Vala , Dr. (Prof.) Vijay Kumar Soni	Commerce	12-15
5.	Determinants Of Market Value Added Some Empirical Evidence From Indian Automobile Industry	Dr. A. Vijayakumar	Commerce	16-20
6.	The Welfare Facilities Available To The Workers In Paper Mills In Madurai	Dr. M. Sumathy , A. Vijayalekshmi	Commerce	21-24
7.	Green Marketing - New Hopes And Challenges	Dr. Prashant M. Joshi	Commerce	25-27
8.	A Study On Employee Welfare Measures In Maharashtra State Transport Corporation With Special Reference To Kolhapur District.	Dr. H. M. Thakar , Prof. Urmila Kisan Dubal	Commerce	28-30
9.	Business Environment In South Korea An International Perspective	Dr. M. Kamalun Nabi , Dr. M. Saeed	Commerce	31-35
10.	Market Timing - Implications Of Market Valuation On Share Issues By Indian Companies	L. Ganesamoorthy , Dr. H. Shankar	Commerce	36-38
11.	The Conceptual Framework Of Corporate Social Accounting	Rechanna , Dr. B. Mahadevappa	Commerce	39-50
12.	Labour Welfare Measures And The Extent Of Satisfaction Of Tirupur Garment Employees	Mr. S. Hariharan , Mr. N. Selvakumar, Dr .H. Balakrishnan	Commerce	51-53
13.	Mahila Savstha Aur Jacha-Bacha Ko Bachane Ko Chunoti	Dr. Anup Chaturvedi	Community Science	54-55
14.	Mapping Of Existing Waste Dumping Sites And Newly Proposed Waste Dumping Sites In And Around Chitradurga Taluk, Karnataka State, Using Remote Sensing And GIS Techniques.	Sunil Kumar R. K Chinnaiiah , Suresh Kumar B.V	Earth Science	56-58
15.	A Role Of Municipal Council And Corporation Of Financial Problems In Nanded District (Maharashtra)	Dr. A. S. Pawar	Economics	59
16.	Impact Of Institutional Credit On Weaker Section In Akola District	Dr. Devyanee K Nemade, Dr. Vanita K Khobarkar	Economics	60-62
17.	Right To Education In India	Dr. Pawar A. S.	Economics	63-65
18.	Gramin Ayam Adivasi Mahilo Ke Arthik Shakti : Sukhma Virti (Adipur Jila Ke Gramin Ayam Adivasi Mahilao Ka Ek Ayaktik Adhiyan Shobha Gupta	Shobha Gupta	Economics	66-67

19.	Knowledge On Food Security Education Among Higher Secondary Students	Dr. P. Paul Devanesan , Dr. A. Selvan	Education	68-69
20.	Family Environment As A Determinant of Academic Anxiety And Academic Achievement	Dr. RajKumari Kalra , Ms. Preeti Manani	Education	70-71
21.	Awareness On Man-Made Disaster In Environmental Education Among High School Students	Dr. A. Selvan , Dr. P. Paul Devanesan	Education	72-73
22.	Teaching Strategies For Simplifying Fractions In Mathematics	M. Kavitha , Dr. A R. Saravanakumar	Education	74-76
23.	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA): A Boon to Tribal Women	Dr. Sherly Thomas	Education	77-78
24.	Sports as a Tool for Interest Oriented Learning	E. Baby Sumanna	Education	79-80
25.	Balanced Scorecard for Higher Education	Jyoti D Joshi	Education	81-83
26.	A Study Of The Interactive Influence Of CAI Package On Academic Achievement	Kunal D. Jadhav	Education	84-85
27.	Reduction Of Fault Current Using SFCL At The Suitable Location In The Smartgrid	Pudi Sekhar , K .Venkateswara Rao , M. Ebraheem , P. Nageswara Rao	Electronics	86-88
28.	HRD Climate in Private Manufacturing Sector: An Appraisal	Dr. Sukhwinder Singh Jolly	Engineering	89-90
29.	Wireless Speed Measurement And Control Of Universal Motor	G. Prasad , G. Ramya Swathi, Dr. P. V. N. Prasad , A. Muneiah	Engineering	91-94
30.	Design Of Decentralized Load-Frequency Controller For Deregulated Hydro-Thermal Power Systems With Non-Linearities	M. Vinothkumar , Dr. C. Kumar , Dr. S. Velusami	Engineering	95-99
31.	Optimization Of Process Parameters For Gas Tungsten Arc Welding Aluminum Alloy A6061 By Taguchi Method	P. Hema , K. Allama Prabhu , Prof. K. Ravindranath	Engineering	100-103
32.	Numerical Approach To Predict The Thermal Performance Of Parallel And Counter Flow Packed Bed Solar Air Heaters	Satyender Singha , Prashant Dhiman , Ritika Kondal	Engineering	104-108
33.	Institute For Entrepreneurship Development Amongst Farmers- Especially Small And Marginal Land Holders.	Sweta Sanjog Metha	Entrepreneurship Development	109-111
34.	Phytoplankton Diversity From Godavari River Water (Maharashtra)	Satish.S.Patil , Ishwar.B.Ghorade	Environmental Science	11-114
35.	Nutrient Adequacy Among Selected Tribal Adolescent Girls Of Kattunayakan Tribes In Tamil Nadu	Somishon Keishing , Saranya .R	Home Science	115-116
36.	Vaigyanic Sacharata Aur Arthik- Samajik Vikas	Dr. Sudobh Kumar	Humanities	117-118
37.	E-Pharmacy In India For Reducing Inter-State Accessibility Dispersion	Satinder Bhatia	Information Technology	119-121
38.	Impact Of Intermediaries' Service Delivery In Insurance Sector	Dr. P. Anbuoli , R. Meikanda Ganesh Kumar	Insurance Sector	122-124

39.	Fate And Human Endeavour In The Mahabharata	Dr Maneeta Kahlon	Literature	125-127
40.	Facets of Hunger in Bhabani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers and Kamala Markandaya's Nectar in a Sieve	Dr. Paramleen Kaur Syali , Ruchee Aggarwal	Literature	128-129
41.	Business Financial Strategy In Small And Medium Scale Brick Industries In Kolar District, Karnataka State.	Muninarayanappa , Dr. S. Muralidhar	Management	130-132
42.	A Study On Brand Equity Analysis Foreign Global Brands Vs Domestic Popular Brands Of Adult Consumer's Perspective In Coimbatore City	A.Pughazhendi , S. Susendiran , R. Thirunavukkarasu	Management	133-135
43.	Comparative Analysis of Cellular Phone Usage Outline of Undergraduate Students.	Atul Patel	Management	136-138
44.	A Study On Management Practices Of Entrepreneurs In Informal Sector	Dr. P. Vikkraman , Mr. S. Baskaran	Management	139-142
45.	E-commerce: Emerging Channel for Marketing in India	Dr Mahalaxmi Krishnan	Management	143-144
46.	The Role Of Educational Institutions In Imparting Entrepreneurship Qualities Among Student Community	Dr. N. Ramanjaneyalu	Management	145-147
47.	Impulsive buying and In-store shopping environment	Dr. Surekha Rana , Jyoti Tirthani	Management	148-149
48.	A Study On Management Practices Of Entrepreneurs In Informal Sector	Dr. P. Vikkraman , S. Baskaran	Management	150-153
49.	Risk Management Processes And Techniques For Resolving Customer - Supplier Relationship Issues	Pramod Kumar , Prof (Dr.) S.L.Gupta	Management	154-160
50.	Risk Management Processes & Techniques For The Successful Delivery Of Web Based Software Projects	Pramod Kumar , Prof (Dr.) S. L. Gupta	Management	161-166
51.	Effect Of Brand Equity On Consumer Purchasing Behaviour On Car: Evidence From Car Owners In Madurai District	R. Suganya	Management	167-169
52.	Relationship Management Model For Global It Industry.	Rishi Mohan Bhatnagar , Prof (Dr.) S. L. Gupta	Management	170-173
53.	It's A Myth That Kirana Stores Will Be Wiped Out If FDI Is Allowed In Multi Brand Retail Sector In India	Shweta Patel , M R Brahmachari	Management	174-176
54.	Learning Organization	Sitheswaran K , Dr. K. Balanaga Gurunathan	Management	177-178
55.	Behavior Management: A Ready-made Soup For Indian Managers	Winnie Jasraj Joshi	Management	179-180
56.	Customer Relationship Management In Public Sector Banks	Dr. P. Anbuoli , T. R. Thiruvén Kat Raj	Marketing	181-182
57.	Nifedipine Compared With Isoxuprine In Treatment Of Preterm Labor	Dr. Santosh Khajotia	Medical Science	183-184

58.	Single Intraoperative Dose of Tranexamic Acid In Orthopedic Surgery (A Study of Bipolar Modular Prosthesis and Dynamic Hip Screw fixation)	Dr. B. L. Khajotia , Dr. S. K. Agarwal, Dr. Prasant Gadwal	Medical Science	185-187
59.	MVA - A Simple & Safe Surgical Procedure For First Trimester Abortion / Medical Termination Of Pregnancy (MTP)	Dr. Priyamvada Shah , Dr. Sameer Darawade	Medical Science	188-190
60.	Pneumococcal Septic Arthritis in an Infant A Case Report	Dr. Vrishali A Muley , Dr. Dnyaneshwari P Ghadage, . Dr. Arvind V Bhore	Medical Science	191-192
61.	A Clear CSF may not be a Normal CSF A Case Report	Dr. Dnyaneshwari P Ghadage , Dr. Vrishali A. Muley , Dr. Arvind V. Bhore	Medical Science	193-194
62.	Neurectomy For Tic How Much Reliable?	Dr. Monali H. Ghodke , Dr. Seemit V. Shah , Dr. Smita A. Kamtane	Medical Science	195-198
63.	To Assess Acceptability Of Female Condom As A Method Of Temporary Contraception Among Indian Women	Dr Priyanka Shekhawat , Dr. Col (Retd) Gulab Singh, Dr Vidula Kulkarni Joshi	Medical Science	199-200
64.	A Study To Evaluate The Efficacy Of Teaching Intervention On Reduction Of Pediatric Immunization Pain Among Nursing Students	Dr. Ramachandra , Dr. S. Valliammal, Mr. Raja Sudhakar	Nursing	201-202
65.	Screening Of Antenatal Patients For Thalassemia	Dr Mukta Rayate , Dr Durga Karne , Dr Shilpa Bhat, Dr Hemant Damle , Dr Sameer Darawade, Varsha Gogavale	Obstetrics & Gynaecology	203-204
66.	Reservoir Rock Quality of the Lakadong Member in the Eastern Part of Upper Assam Basin, India	Dr. Pradip Borgohain	Petroleum Geology	205-207
67.	Study Of Refractive Index And Excess Parameters For Different Liquid Mixtures At Different Temperatures	Sheeraz Akbar , Mahendra Kumar	Physics	208-210
68.	Refractometric And Excess Parameter Study For Liquid Mixtures Containing High Order Alkanes (C17) And 1-alkanols At Different Temperatures	Sheeraz Akbar , Mahendra Kumar	Physics	211-213
69.	Assessment Of Knowledge About Health Services Available At Subcentre Level Among Village Inhabitants	Balpreet Singh , Jayanti Dutta	Public Health	214-215
70.	Effect Of Yogic, Aerobic And Laughter Exercises On Body Composition (An experimental study)	Dr. Manjappa. P. , Dr. Shivarama Reddy. M	Sports	216-220
71.	Age At Menarche In Physically Active And Non Active Urban Girls Of Patiala District	Jyoti Sharma , Dr. Ajita	Sports Science	221-222
72.	Use Of Ranks For Analysis Of Groups Of Experiments	Dr. Vanita K Khobarkar , Dr. S. W. Jahagirdar, Dr. N. A. Chaube	Statistics	223-225



Reservoir Rock Quality of the Lakadong Member in the Eastern Part of Upper Assam Basin, India

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ABSTRACT

The Lakadong Member (Upper Palaeocene - Lower Eocene) of the Sylhet Formation in Upper Assam is of interest because it contains sandstone reservoirs which are prolific producers of oil and gas. These reservoir sandstone of Lakadong Member is significantly different from the Tipam (Eocene) and Barail (Oligocene) Sandstones and are heterogeneous in character. The thickness of the Lakadong Member in the study area varies from 60 to 150 metres. The individual sandstone beds range in thickness from less than a metre to about 13metres. In spite of having lower thickness the productivity from these clastic reservoirs are very high. Diagenesis has played a major role in controlling reservoir quality of these reservoir sandstones. Especially the development of intergranular and intragranular porosity enhances the permeability within these sandstones. On the other hand, permeability is lost in certain horizons due to development of secondary minerals as well as presence of clay minerals.

Keywords : Reservoir rock, Lakadong Member, Diagenesis, Porosity, Upper Assam

Introduction

The Upper Assam basin is the earliest explored petroliferous basin of India. It represents the northeastern extremity of the Indian subcontinent encompassing an area of about 57000 sq. km. and forms the northeastern part of Assam-Arakan geological province. Tectonically, the Upper Assam Basin represents a structurally wrapped foreland basin between two convergent plate margins and came into existence during Early Cretaceous time. It lies at the junction of Himalayan arc to the north and Burmese arc to the east. The generalized stratigraphy of the Upper Assam Shelf in the study area is given in Table-1. The first oilfield in India, the Digboi Oilfield was discovered in this basin in 1889. Since then extensive exploration activities have been carried out by various companies especially two national companies, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGCL) and Oil India Limited (OIL) within the Upper Assam basin and has resulted in discovery of a large number of new structures with potential hydrocarbon reserves. A major breakthrough came in 1990, when for the first time commercial oil was discovered in the early Eocene rocks (Lakadong Member) in Upper Assam basin. This Lakadong Member in Upper Assam is of interest because it contains sandstone reservoirs which are prolific producers of oil and gas. The thickness of this member in the area varies from 60 to 150metres. The sandstone beds range in thickness from less than a metre to about 13metres. In spite of having lower thickness the productivity from these classic reservoirs are very high. Diagenesis has played a major role in controlling reservoir quality of these sandstones.

Materials and Methods

Samples of conventional and sidewall cores along with drill-cuttings of Lakadong Sandstones recovered from wells located in different parts of the area have been studied under Olympus Polarizing Microscope Model CX31P with Motic Image Analyser and JOEL JSM-35 CF Scanning Electron Microscope with EDX facility in Research & Development Centre in Oil India Limited, Duliajan. The study of reservoir

rocks includes general mineralogy, various types of primary and secondary porosities and the important diagenetic features that control the reservoir quality.

Results & Discussion :

The sandstones of present study are basically quartz arenites to sublitharenite and less commonly of lithic wacke type (Figure 2). The general mineralogy of the sandstones includes mainly subrounded to subangular quartz particles (although angular and rounded particle are present), along with feldspar, glauconite, calcite, clay minerals such as kaolinite, chlorite, illite and minor smectite, and heavy minerals. The role of diagenesis as a porosity modifier is overwhelmingly accepted and its control over the reservoir quality has been evaluated in the present study. The important diagenetic changes observed under thin section study are sandstone compaction, precipitation of different types of cement, dissolution and replacement of frame work grains and nature of development of grain contacts. Compaction of the sediments started with burial and progressively increased load with depth. Under more usual conditions, the point or tangential contacts of sandstones suggest early burial stage of diagenesis that on increased overburden load under deep burial stage come into closer contacts along long and concavo-convex grain boundaries and finally forms sutured contacts. The mechanical compaction of sediments is witnessed by bending of detrital mica flakes and fracturing of quartz grains. The long and concavo-convex contacts together with the precipitation of secondary chert (figure 3c) represent the intermediate stage of diagenesis. The cementation is brought by chemical precipitation of pore solutions. Precipitation of glauconite between the framework grains (figure 4d), the silica cement in the form of quartz overgrowth (figure 4e), the infiltration of ferruginous cements throughout the sandstones, and the post depositional accumulation of the patches of argillaceous materials within the framework grains have a significant influence on the reservoir quality of the sandstone. The metamorphic rock fragments are dominating over the igneous and sedimentary variety (figures 3d & 3e) and very few cases these are squeezed to generate dispersed pseudo matrix.

Authigenic development of mica at the expense of argillaceous cement may reduce porosity as well as permeability in the sandstones indicating the phylomorphic or late stage of diagenesis. On the contrary, the corrosion, partial dissolution and replacement of quartz, feldspar and mica grains (figures 3a, 3b & 3f) grains by the cementing material enhance the porosity and permeability in the sandstones. Quartz replacement proceeds along the boundary of the grains. As a result, the replaced parts of the grains are occupied by the replacing fronts. Such replacement processes enhance the reservoir quality. In the present study the commonly recorded clay minerals are kaolinite and illite. Kaolinite is widely distributed in the sandstones and is recorded as stacking of books pattern (figure 4 a). The kaolinite "books" can disaggregate into individual platelets or entire books can migrate into pore spaces thereby causing reduction in porosity and permeability. The irregular surfaces observed in the feldspar grains may be interpreted as to represent stages of growth of authigenic kaolinite. In most cases the chemical element needed for kaolinite formation, namely silicon and aluminum are thought to derive from the leaching of some pre-existing minerals in the sandstones. K-feldspar and mica constitute the more probable Si and Al sources. Kaolinisation that develops at the expense of extremely deformed and crushed feldspars clearly signifies the post date compaction and belongs to the late diagenetic history. Authigenic growth of kaolinites reduces the permeability/porosity ratio. Moreover, the relative abundance of kaolinite indicates the dominance of fluvial influence in the depositional system. Flaky and fibrous illites found to grow in pore spaces often bridge the pores and offers a high resistance to fluid flow through the sandstone and thereby reduces permeability. The fibrous illite acts as a fishnet in sandstone pores and creates permeability blocks, which significantly modifies the reservoir

property. Presence of framboidal pyrite, gypsum (figure 4b) and quartz overgrowth (figure 4e) also reduces the porosity in the sandstones. On the otherhand, partial dissolution of quartz and both K-feldspar and plagioclase feldspar enhances the porosity in the reservoir sandstone. The sandstones are characterized by typical intergranular porosity within the framework grains (figure 4c). In most of the cases the quartz grains show intragranular fracturing (figure 4f) and this post depositional effect obviously enhances the secondary porosity and permeability to make the sandstones to be highly productive.

Conclusion

The Lakadong sandstones (Upper Palaeocene Lower Eocene) of Upper Assam Shelf are basically quartz arenites to sublitharenite and less commonly of lithic wacke type. The sandstones include mainly subrounded to subangular quartz particles (although angular and rounded particle are present), along with feldspar, glauconite, calcite, clay minerals such as kaolinite, chlorite, illite and minor smectite, and heavy minerals. These reservoir sandstones contain generally large secondary pores which are numerous in certain producing horizons. These have developed mainly due to the activity of interstitial solutions. Fracturing and dissolution of quartz, feldspar, rock fragments and the cementing materials are some of the important diagenetic changes that make the reservoir to be highly productive. Moreover, the sorting of the minerals and the presence of micro fractures within the framework grains enhance the porosity and permeability in these sandstones. On the otherhand, development of authigenic minerals as well as the overgrowths and presence of clay minerals in the pore spaces, as revealed from scanning electron microscope studies, affects the reservoir quality.

Figure 1: Location map of the study area

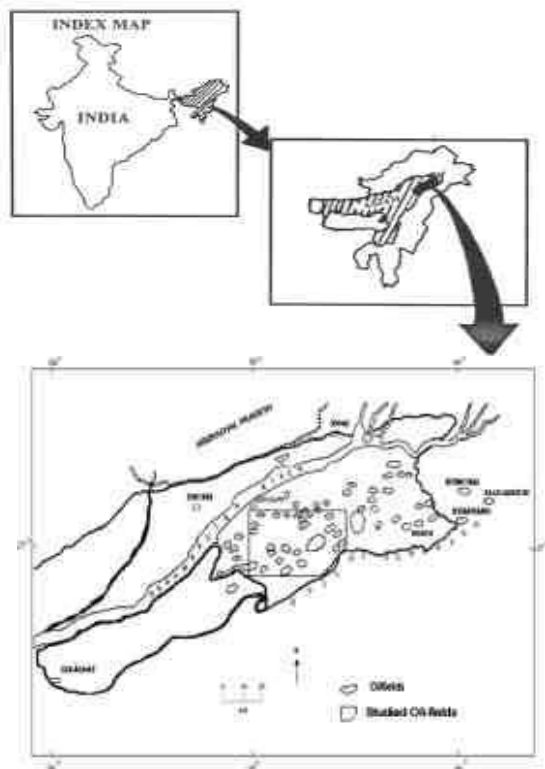


Figure 2 : Classification of the Lakadong Sandstones of the study area (modified after Dott, 1964)

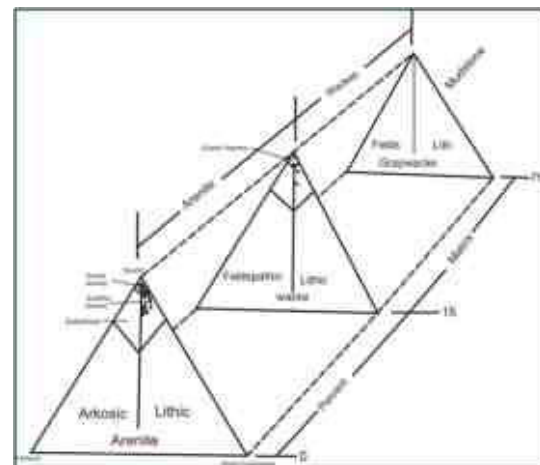


Figure 3. Photomicrographs of Lakadong reservoir sandstones. a, Dissolution of quartz and feldspar grains (100x). b, Dissolution and kink bend of mica flakes (100x). c, Authigenic chert (100x). d, Rock fragment (100x). e, Metamorphic Rock fragment (100x). f, Surface corrosion on microcline grains by cementing material (100x).

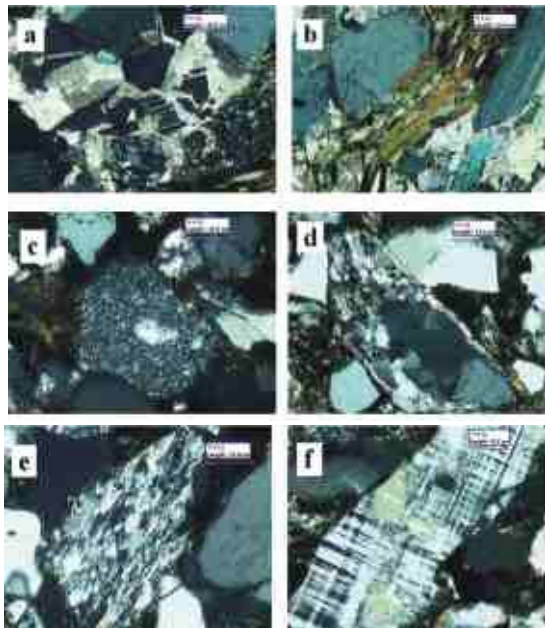


Figure 4. SEM photomicrographs of Lakadong reservoir sandstones. a, Kaolinite books. b, Gypsum crystals. c, Intergranular pore. d, Glauconite developed in pore space. e, Quartz overgrowth. f, Microfracture in framework quartz (Magnification as shown in the SEM photomicrographs)

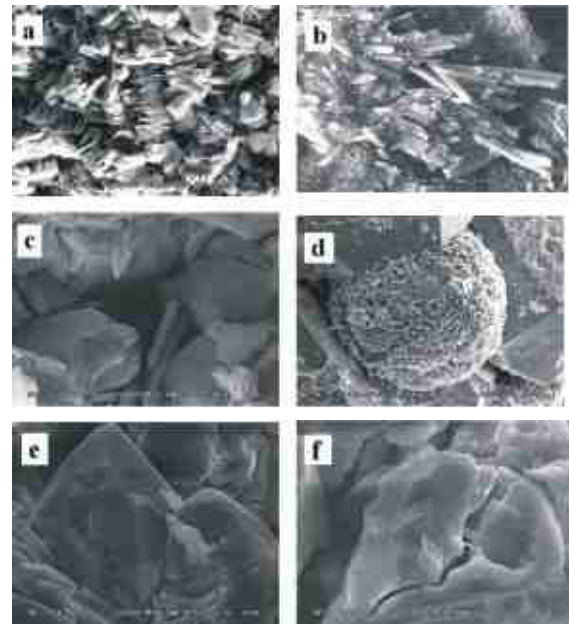


Table 1. Tertiary Succession of Upper Assam Shelf sediments (modified after, Handique *et. al.*,1989)

Epoch	Lithostratigraphic Units Group	Formation	Thickness (m)	Major Lithological Types	
Recent	-	Alluvium			
Pleistocene	Dihing	Dhekiajuli	1300- 2000	Unconsolidated sands with clay and lignitic sands.	
-----Unconformity-----					
Pliocene sands	Dupitila	Namsang Beds	0-1000	Poorly consolidated sandstone with clay and lignitic	
-----Unconformity-----					
Miocene	Tipam	Girujan Clays	100-2300	Mottled clay with sandstone lenses.	
		Tipam Sandstones	{Upper	300-500	Essentially arenaceous sequence
			{Middle	100-200	Sand/shale alteration sequence
			{Lower	100-200	Arenaceous sequence
? Surmas	Not subdivided		Sandstone with shale and grit bands		
-----Unconformity-----					
Oligocene	Barail	Not subdivided	500-1200	{ Upper Part: Mudstone/sale with sandstone beds and coal bands (Argillaceous sequence) { Lower Part: Sandstone with shale bands sequence)	
(Arenaceous Eocene sand-	Jaintia	Kopili alterations	280-500	Splintery shale with sandstone and fine-grained stone with coal bands.	
		Sylhet Limestone			
		{Prang			
		{Nurpuh	350-450	Splintery shale with sandstone and limestone bands	
		{Lakadong			
	Therria		60-170	Sandstone, calcareous sandstone and limestone	
-----Unconformity-----					
Precambrian granitic basement					

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