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# Subtropical mangrove and evergreen forest reveal Paleogene terrestrial climate and physiography at the North Pole



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#### ABSTRACT

Sedimentological, micropaleontological and geochemical studies of IODP Leg 302 boreholes, M0004A and M0002A, drilled on the Lomonosov Ridge near the North Pole, are reported to construct chronostratigraphy and helped unravel Paleogene palaeoclimate. These studies concluded to a mean annual temperature of sea surface waters ranging between 21 and 25 °C during the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum and to the occurrence of episodic ice on the Arctic shelf in the earliest Mid-Eocene. Pollen records are characterised by excellent preservation and identification of 112 taxa reveals a subtropical coastal vegetation comprising Taxodium-Glyptostrobus swamps alternating with Avicennia mangrove. The hinterland was occupied by a subtropical evergreen forest including Engelhardia and Distylium, occasionally replaced by Rhodoleia and Castanopsis-Lithocarpus. Climate was reconstructed using the Climatic Amplitude Method, resulting in the following temperature ranges for low elevations: mean annual temperature 18-22 °C, mean temperature of the coldest month 10-14.5 °C, mean temperature of the warmest month 26-27.5 °C, and annual precipitation 1150-1400 mm. Palaeovegetation data allow us to establish climatostratigraphic relationships with the generalized oxygen isotope curve, providing evidence for warm periods (e.g.: Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum, PETM; Early Eocene Climatic Optimum, EECO; Mid Eocene Climatic Optimum, MECO) alternating with cooler periods. We date the latest record of Avicennia mangrove in the Arctic Basin to the MECO. The Azolla phase did not occur after the EECO but at ~50 Ma during a climatically unstable episode during the thermal optimum. Recurrence of rarely produced and weakly transported Avicennia pollen, the exceptional level of preservation of pollen grains, and the high plant diversity indicate that lands of the Lomonosov Ridge were connected to North America in the Ellesmere Island region which, in addition, provided pollen grains of Gymnosperms from high elevations. These physiographic features, suggesting the inflow of altitudinal cold waters into the sea, may solve the apparent contradiction between possible sea-ice and our reconstructed air temperatures during the Middle Eocene.

#### 1. Introduction

Boreholes M0004A (87°51.996'N, 136°10.644'E) and M0002A (87°55.272'N, 139°21.9'E) of the IODP Leg 302 (Arctic Coring EXpedition: ACEX), located on the Lomonosov Ridge (Jokat, 2005), represent an exceptional sedimentary archive for the reconstruction of Paleocene and Eocene environments and climate at the North Pole (Fig. 1). Many sedimentological, micropalaeontological and geochemical studies of the two boreholes (Backman et al., 2006; Brinkhuis et al., 2006; Sluijs et al., 2006, 2009) set out to identify the chronology and marine environments, despite the fact that the sediments lack calcareous and siliceous microfossils making it impossible to reconstruct the

oxygen isotope trend ( $\delta^{18}$ O) at this location (Sluijs et al., 2006). However, several studies using organic biomarkers provided climatic information on the Paleocene and Eocene from borehole M0004A (Sluijs et al., 2006, 2008; Weijers et al., 2007) and from other sites in the Norwegian–Greenland Sea (Schouten et al., 2008). The presence of pollen grains in these sediments revealed by some authors was looked as promising for the interpretation of terrestrial palaeoenvironments (vegetation, climate) but no detailed analysis followed (Sluijs et al., 2006, 2009). A pollen study of a small interval in the lower part of the series (367.50–390.71 mcd bsf, composite depth below sea floor) only identified 37 taxa referenced to botanical taxonomy in 76 samples (Willard et al., 2019). These disappointing results were probably due to

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Fig. 1. Location of the studied boreholes of Leg 302 (ACEX) and comparative pollen localities of Caribou Hills and Faddeevsky Island. The map is elaborated using GeoMapApp (Ryan et al., 2009).

short use of pollen morphology, which identified only very common taxa in the flora and, as a consequence, the palaeoclimatic values from these data were unreliable. For example, many pollen grains are unidentified in this work and grouped in basic morphological categories such as 'tricolpate', 'tricolporate reticulate', 'monocolpate', 'tetracolpate', and 'tetracolporate' pollen grains (Willard et al., 2019), including probably several other morphological features belonging to different genera. This approach lessens the palaeoecological and palaeoclimatic significance of a pollen flora as do some general ascriptions to pseudo-genera (e.g., 'Tricolpopollenites', 'Triatripollenites', 'Tricolporopollenites'). For the sake of comparison, we identified 107 botanical taxa in only 17 samples in the Faddeevsky pollen flora (Anjou Islands, part of the New Siberian Islands) which covers almost the same time interval (Fig. 1; Suan et al., 2017). The robustness of reconstructed vegetation and climate in the Arctic region during the Paleocene and Eocene requires a maximum level of knowledge of the composition of the flora, which implies a significant investment in the botanical identification of the pollen grains.

#### 2. Material and methods

#### 2.1. Material

Here, our pollen analysis concerns 51 samples: 38 from borehole M0004A and 13 from borehole M0002A, distributed from 401.31 to 270.12 mcd and from 263.81 to 221.02 mcd, respectively. Complete palynological content characterised by an excellent preservation is

provided in Appendix A (Supplementary material). The sediments were deposited in a marine environment as supported by the continuous occurrence of dinoflagellate and acritarch cysts. Based on (1) optimal examination of pollen morphology and (2) comparison with specimens from two modern pollen collections (more information in Appendix C of the Supplementary material) and with photograph databases and specialised papers (both at light microscope and scanning electronic microscope), the flora shows 112 taxa. Eighty-two of the botanical identifications are at the genus level and mostly concern trees, 28 others are at the family level and concern some trees and mainly herbaceous plants. The raw pollen data are shown in a detailed diagram where percentages were calculated with respect to the number of identified pollen grains (comprised between 106 and 231 per sample) (Fig. 2). The complete palynological countings are given in Appendix B (Supplementary material).

#### 2.2. Methods

Each sample was processed using a standard soft method: acid digestion (HCl, HF), concentration using  $ZnCl_2$  (at density 2.0), and sieving through a 10-µm nylon mesh. A 40-µl volume of residue was mounted between the coverslip and microscope slide using glycerol in order to allow rotation of pollen grains for their identification using an AX10 Zeiss light microscope at x250 and x1,000 magnifications, respectively. The rarely used technique of mounting the residue in glycerol allows some mobility of pollen grains so their different sides can be examined, thus facilitating their morphological examination and

![](_page_2_Figure_2.jpeg)

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![](_page_3_Figure_2.jpeg)

Fig. 3. Synthetic pollen diagram of boreholes M0004A and M0002A and proposed climatostratigraphic correlations of the warmest phases with the generalized oxygen isotope curve (Vandenberghe et al., 2012).

Classification of taxa constituting the pollen flora with reference to the thermal grouping of plants suggested by Nix (1982): megatherms, i.e. tropical plants, requiring a mean annual temperature > 24 °C; mega-mesotherms, i.e. subtropical plants, requiring a mean annual temperature comprised between 20 °C and 24 °C; mesotherms, i.e. warm-temperate plants, growing under a mean annual temperature comprised between 14 °C and 20 °C; meso-microtherms, i.e. cool-temperate plants, growing under a mean annual temperature comprised between 12 °C and 14 °C; microtherms, i.e. boreal plants, growing under a mean annual temperature lower than 12 °C. Percentages of groups of plants are calculated with respect to the number of identified pollen grains minus those of *Pinus* and indeterminable Pinaceae. The pollen diagram and palaeoclimatic curves are interrupted for intervals without samples large of about 10 m or more because of unrecovered intervals (see: Backman et al., 2006) or unavailable sediment. Warmer and cooler phases are underlined by light and dark grey bands, respectively. Blue patches show the chief correlations between the pollen record and the oxygen isotope curve, blue dotted lines the subsidiary ones. Climatic values reconstructed from pollen data: mean annual temperature, mean temperature of the coldest month, mean temperature of the warmest month, annual precipitation. The records of *Azolla* isolated microspores and microspore massulae are indicated in green: the youngest record corresponds to the *Azolla* phase (Brinkhuis et al., 2006).

PETM, Paleocene–Eocene Thermal Maximum; ETM, Eocene Thermal Maximum; EECO, Early Eocene Climatic Optimum; MECO, Mid Eocene Climatic Optimum. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

#### their botanical identification.

To forward interpretation of the pollen record, a synthetic diagram was used to group taxa according to the thermal requirements of the genera and families and with respect to their ecological significance (Fig. 3). Percentages of groups of plants are calculated with respect to the number of identified pollen grains minus those of Pinus and indeterminable Pinaceae. Plants were grouped according to their required mean annual temperature (MAT) into megatherms (MAT > 24 °C), mega-mesotherms (20 °C < MAT < 24 °C), mesotherms (14 °C < MAT < 20 °C), meso-microtherms (12 °C < MAT < 14 °C), and microtherms (MAT < 12 °C), as suggested by Nix (1982). Because of the Laurasian trait of the Paleogene flora of the Arctic region (McIntyre, 1991; McIver and Basinger, 1999; Eberle and Greenwood, 2012; Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019), we listed the content in genera and/or families of each thermal group according to the information provided by several syntheses on modern plants from North America, Europe and Asia (e.g.: Thompson et al., 2000; Fang et al., 2011). In addition, the behaviour of many elements of this Laurasian palaeoflora is well-known along the Late Cenozoic in Europe and around the Mediterranean Basin (Suc et al., 2018), which was also used to support their thermal grouping.

The investment in pollen identification and counting meant we were able to use the Climatic Amplitude Method to reconstruct climate conditions during the deposition of the sediments at IODP sites M0004A and M0002A. This method, after comparison with > 6000 present-day

pollen records distributed worldwide, relies on the relationship between the relative abundance of each individual taxon and the climate because the method accounts not only for the presence/absence criterion but also percentages (Fauquette et al., 1998). The estimated mean annual temperatures (MAT), mean temperatures of the coldest (MTC) and warmest (MTW) months and mean annual precipitation (MAP) concern low-elevation vegetation because meso-microthermal and microthermal taxa (Cedrus, Fagus, Tsuga, Abies, Picea, plus Cathaya and Podocarpus which live today at higher elevations in tropical-subtropical regions) were excluded from the process to avoid a cold bias linked to transport from higher elevations. Pinus, which may inhabit different vegetation belts, is also excluded from the calculation. The excluded taxa were defined based on the distribution of vegetation today. Indeed, the types of vegetation described in the Early to Middle Eocene in the Arctic region (Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019) are found in South-eastern China today at around 25°N and 110 to 120°E (Hou, 1983). In this region, the vertical distribution of the vegetation is characterised, from the base to the top of the massifs by evergreen broad-leaved forest, mixed evergreen and deciduous (Betula, Acer) broad-leaved forest, Cathaya/Tsuga forest, Picea/Abies forest and high mountain meadows (Hou, 1983). In the Climatic Amplitude Method, the estimates for each climatic parameter are given as an interval (minimum and maximum values of the parameter) and a most likely value (MLV) corresponding to a weighted mean, a statistical calculation tested on modern pollen data which has provided reliable results and

which is given in the text (Fauquette et al., 1998).

#### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Vegetation and climate

Remarkable components of the coastal vegetation are Avicennia and Casuarina which grew in mangrove areas, as they do in Florida today where they contribute to a mosaic vegetation with the bald cypress (Taxodium distichum) swamps (Tomlinson, 1986; Willard et al., 2001). Herbaceous and aquatic plants signal the existence of marshes, perhaps also inhabited by Cyrillaceae-Clethraceae. Myrica and Nyssa (Figs. 2, 3; Tomlinson, 1986; Willard et al., 2001). The monotypic Avicennia mangrove apparently competed the cypress swamps mainly illustrated by papillate pollen grains of Cupressaceae (i.e., the former 'Taxodiaceae') (Figs. 2, 3) that, on the basis of morphological pollen examination and information from Eocene macrofloras of the Arctic region (see also Appendix C in the Supplementary material), we consider to represent a Taxodium-Glyptostrobus cluster. However, Avicennia mangrove is underrepresented in the pollen data: any increase in Avicennia pollen that offset a decrease in Taxodium-Glyptostrobus was continually minimized by the limited quantity of pollen produced by Avicennia and its low dispersal ability (Somboom, 1990; Phuphumirat et al., 2016). As a consequence, Avicennia mangrove is underrepresented in the pollen data. Behind the coastal vegetation, a rich evergreen forest developed dominated by Juglandaceae (Engelhardia, Platycarya, Rhoiptelea, cf. Alfaroa), Fagaceae (Castanopsis-Lithocarpus), Hamamelidaceae (Distylium Rhodoleia, Matudaea, Embolanthera, Fothergilla, Loropetalum), Celastraceae, Menispermaceae, Sapotaceae, Malvaceae (Craigia, Bombax-type), Leguminosae (Acacia-type), Rubiaceae (Canthium-type, Mussaenda-type, Uncaria-type), Icacinaceae (Mappianthus), Ulmaceae (cf. Phyllostylon), Podocarpaceae (Dacrydium), Vitaceae (Cissus), Euphorbiaceae, Arecaceae, etc. and Sciadopityaceae (Sciadopitys) (Fig. 2). Cooler biotopes were inhabited by deciduous elements (Alnus, Carpinus, Carya, Pterocarya, Liquidambar, Quercus, Ulmus, Zelkova, etc.) and by some gymnosperms such as Cathaya and Podocarpus, probably located at mid-elevation (Fig. 2). The relatively smaller proportions of pollen grains of meso-microtherms (Fagus, Cedrus, Tsuga) and microtherms (Abies, Picea) probably originated from higher elevations (Fig. 2). Although Cupressus-Juniperus-type (Cupressaceae) is a major constituent of the pollen flora (Fig. 2), its status in the vegetation is difficult to qualify because the pollen cannot be identified to the genus level. This taxon, abundant in some warmer phases (Fig. 3), may partially refer to some mega-mesotherms such as Chamaecyparis, Taiwania, Sabina, etc. Pollen grains of pine, which are usually over-represented in marine sediments, are not abundant in the record, thereby excluding an important role for this genus in the vegetation and/or revealing the proximity of the coast.

The occurrence interval of Avicennia (382.44-235.88 mcd; Fig. 2) delimits a warm period characterised by peaks of both megathermal and mega-mesothermal plants. We have identified eight samples or clusters of samples where Avicennia pollen is present in significant percentage (more often from > 1% to > 3%: see Appendix A in the Supplementary material) associated with eight maxima of the reconstructed mean annual temperature (MAT) comprised between 20 °C and 22 °C with overall, relatively reduced confidence intervals. Simultaneously, the reconstructed mean temperatures of the coldest and warmest months (MTC and MTW, respectively) are generally high (14-15 °C and 27-28 °C, respectively; Fig. 3). Light grey bands are drawn to highlight these warm periods (Fig. 3). They coincide with the significant presence of megathermal and mega-mesothermal plants, maxima of MAT and maxima of MTC also characterised by relatively reduced confidence intervals. The estimated mean annual precipitation (MAP) is high, comprised between 1150 and 1400 mm. Such warm and wet climatic conditions exist today in South-eastern China at  $\sim 22$  to 27°N (Hou, 1983) and in Florida up to latitude ~28°N (Climate-Data,

n.d.). In addition to its weighty significance as representative of mangrove vegetation (see above), Avicennia probably influenced upwards the calculated temperatures and contributed to increase amplitude between successive maxima and minima. Identification of megathermal taxa as Avicennia constitutes a striking example of advances expected from pollen floras when they are analysed off the beaten track. Four major cooler episodes were identified based on the absence of megathermal plants, the decreasing abundance of mega-mesotherms and the increase in Cathaya and Podocarpus, indicated by dark grey bands (Fig. 3). The corresponding reconstructed MAT falls to around 20 °C while the mean temperatures of the coldest and warmest months drop to 11-12 °C and ~26 °C, respectively (Fig. 3). MAP does not reveal significant variations, as supported by its narrow confidence intervals: its maxima and minima are often independent of temperature changes (Fig. 3). A relatively unstable episode with significant temperature fluctuations and a slight decrease in precipitation lasts from 302.435 to 295.46 mcd (Fig. 3). This relatively unstable warm episode is sandwiched between two warmer phases, also characterised by the biggest increase in Castanopsis-Lithocarpus pollen, probably expressing the peak development of the Eocene Arctic subtropical evergreen forest.

#### 3.2. Climatostratigraphy

The interval of occurrence of the subtropical dinoflagellate cyst Apectodinium augustum (387-378.5 mcd in borehole M0004A) is generally considered to encompass the Paleocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM), characterised by a  $\delta^{13}$ C negative excursion (Sluijs et al., 2006). In fact, the pollen record and quantified climate show a thermal optimum (MLVs of: MAT = 21.2 °C; MTC = 13.7 °C; MTW = 27.4 °C) within this interval at 382.44 mcd which can be correlated with the brief PETM as illustrated by the generalized oxygen isotope curve (Fig. 3; Vandenberghe et al., 2012). The resulting climatostratigraphy (correlations are indicated by the blue patches for the major warmer phases and dotted lines for the secondary warmer phases) shows which thermal peaks of the oxygen isotope curve and pollen data can be associated within the pre-established chronostratigraphy (Fig. 3). Here, the PETM is marked by the first occurrence of Avicennia, the prevalence of Taxodium-Glyptostrobus, the momentary absence of Cathaya, Podocarpus, meso-microthermal and microthermal trees and a brief peak in Cupressus-Juniperus-type pollen, during an overall drop in precipitation (Fig. 3). Such estimated annual precipitation shows similar ranges to those reported by Eldrett et al. (2014) on the basis of pollen record at lower latitude (Central North Sea). Our calculated temperatures for the PETM from borehole M0004A pollen data are in agreement with the values we obtained for the same period in Arctic Siberia and Canada (Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019) but are significantly higher than those deduced from a preceding pollen record (Willard et al., 2019). In their study, Willard et al. (2019) estimate mean annual temperatures between 16 and 18 °C at the beginning of the PETM. The discrepancy can be easily explained by the abovementioned weakness in pollen identification. On the opposite, our high temperatures are in line with the high MAT (Weijers et al., 2007) and sea surface temperatures (SST) based on the relative distribution of branched glycerol dialkyl glycerol tetraether (GDGT) membrane lipids derived from bacteria thriving in soils recovered from the same Eocene strata in borehole M0004A (Sluijs et al., 2006, 2008). Indeed, for the PETM, Weijers et al. (2007) indicate mean annual temperatures between 21 and 25 °C (only the end of the PETM shows lower MAT between 18 and 21 °C) that correlates well with the estimates of SST of Sluijs et al. (2006) based on TEX<sub>86</sub> (between 21 and 23 °C and around 17/18 °C at the end of the PETM). MAT estimated by Weijers et al. (2007) are thus higher than ours and all the more higher than estimates of Willard et al. (2019).

The section shows two nearby negative excursions of  $\delta^{13}$ C at 368.94–368.79 and ~368.00 mcd, respectively. The lower excursion is considered to correspond to the Eocene Thermal Maximum 2 (ETM2)

(Sluijs et al., 2009). Our pollen record points to warmer conditions in two samples at 368.395 and 367.535 mcd, marked by *Avicennia* pollen, frequent Arecaceae (palms) and abundant Cupressaceae (including *Taxodium-Glyptostrobus* and *Cupressus-Juniperus*-type) pollen grains, resulting in a peak in the temperature curves (MLVs of: MAT = 21.6–22 °C; MTC = 14 °C; MTW = 27.4 °C; Fig. 3).

According to the sedimentation rate estimated for the lower part of borehole M0004A above the PETM (12.7 m/Myr) (Backman et al., 2008), the Eocene Thermal Maximum 3 (ETM3) would be expected to occur at depth 355 mcd, i.e. within the interval 367.40–345.60 mcd not recovered by coring and consequently devoid of samples.

Surprisingly, the Early Eocene Climatic Optimum (EECO), clearly visible in the generalized oxygen isotope curve through two temperature maxima interrupted by an abrupt cooling episode (Vandenberghe et al., 2012), was not previously clearly identified in borehole M0004A. This is all the more surprising as the Azolla phase, assumed to follow the EECO, is located from 304 to 298.9 mcd in the borehole (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). Our pollen record shows two major expansions of the subtropical vegetation at 318.86-313.41 and 292.285-282.055 mcd, mainly represented by Avicennia mangrove (> 2% in the lower interval, > 3% in the upper interval), Taxodium-Glyptostrobus swamps, and a higher incidence of Castanopsis-Lithocarpus in the evergreen forest and the other subtropical Cupressaceae (Fig. 3). The other subtropical Cupressaceae (including Cupressus-Juniperus-type) could also have played an important role in the evergreen forest. The reconstructed temperatures reveal two successive prominent plateaus of about 21.6 and 21.3 °C for MAT, ~14 °C and 14.3-14.4 °C for MTC, 27.4 °C and ~27.3 °C for MTW. These two thermal maxima are separated by a cooler episode (313.41-292.285 mcd) corresponding to a reduction in megatherms and mega-mesotherms combined with a wider representation of meso-microtherms and microtherms plus herbaceous plants. The cooling episode was itself interrupted with brief warmings (Fig. 3). The MAT rose to 18.4 °C, MTC to 10.4 °C and MTW to 26 °C (Fig. 3). The MTW obtained from pollen flora is consistent with the drop in summer SST (from 25 °C to 17 °C) revealed by alkenones between 299.74 and 299.14 mcd (Weller and Stein, 2008), also suggesting marked temperature variability during the unstable episode emphasized by the pollen flora. The bimodal shape of the warmer episode and the secondary temperature elevations in the sandwiched unstable period resemble the oxygen isotope record of the EECO (Vandenberghe et al., 2012). Therefore, we propose to climatostratigraphically correlate the 318.86-282.055 mcd interval of borehole M0004A with the EECO (Fig. 3). This correlation is also supported by the elevated percentages of Avicennia, Castanopsis-Lithocarpus and Taxodium-Glyptostrobus in the uppermost part of borehole M0004A before their abrupt decrease in the last sample (270.12 mcd) (Fig. 3).

The pollen diagram of borehole M0002A reveals the warm episode at the top of the record with the last occurrence of *Avicennia* (< 1%) and *Casuarina* associated with dominant *Taxodium-Glyptostrobus* and reduced *Castanopsis-Lithocarpus* (Figs. 2, 3). Reconstructed temperatures are again high: MAT 20.5–21.3 °C, MTC 13.8–14.5 °C and MTW 26.4–27.3 °C (Fig. 3). By correlating the last warm event with the Mid Eocene Climatic Optimum (MECO) at about 40 Ma, this pollen record may help settle the debate concerning the exact age of the Paleogene beds in borehole M0002A (Backman et al., 2008; Poirier and Hillaire-Marcel, 2011) in favour of a short gap in sedimentation as proposed by Poirier and Hillaire-Marcel (2011) (Fig. 4; Table 1). The preceding fluctuating warm episodes (263.815–250.065 mcd) could thus be correlated with the warmer peaks of oscillations centred on ~42 Ma (Vandenberghe et al., 2012).

Studies of terrigenous sands propose that sea ice initiated in the Arctic Basin at about 46 Ma (St John, 2008; Weller and Stein, 2008), based on the original age model (Backman et al., 2008) (i.e., after 42 Ma according to the revised age model; Poirier and Hillaire-Marcel, 2011). The occurrence of ice-rafted debris and the abundance of seaice-dependent fossil diatoms (*Synedropsis* sp.) lowered the onset of

![](_page_5_Figure_7.jpeg)

**Fig. 4.** Curves of sedimentation rate estimated from our results for the studied parts of boreholes M0004A (in red) and M0002A (in blue) compared to previous calculations in grey (Backman et al., 2006) and black (Poirier and Hillaire-Marcel, 2011) for its deviating course from the previous one. The age of the *Azolla* phase is re-evaluated.

PETM, Paleocene–Eocene Thermal Maximum; ETM, Eocene Thermal Maximum; EECO, Early Eocene Climatic Optimum; MECO, Mid Eocene Climatic Optimum. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

#### Table 1

Depths and ages considered for estimating the sedimentation rate of the studied parts of boreholes M0004A and M0002A.

Hole	Reference dot	Depth (mcd)	Age (Ma)
M0002A	Top of the study	221.025	40
	MECO	232.39	40.3
	Base of the study	263.815	42
M0004A	Top of the study	270.12	48
	Top EECO	282.055	48.8
	Base upper EECO	292.285	49.5
	Top lower EECO	313.41	50
	Base EECO	318.86	51.4
	ETM2	368.24	53.8
	PETM	382.44	55.84
	Base of the study	401.31	57

episodic ice on the Arctic shelf at 47.5 Ma (St John, 2008). The intervals with abundant ice-rafted debris and sea-ice diatoms (249.5-248.5, 243.5-236, and 232-225.5 mcd; Stickley et al., 2009) correspond to cooler periods which, in our reconstruction, are characterised by relatively low mean temperature of the coldest month (~10.4 °C). However, the development of seasonal sea ice during these cooler intervals is not really consistent with surviving Taxodium-Glyptostrobus swamps on the shoreline and with the subtropical evergreen forest (including Castanopsis-Lithocarpus, Engelhardia, Distylium, Rhodoleia, Platycarya, and Nyssa) which continued to prevail (Fig. 2). Nevertheless, two of the nine current Synedropsis species are warm-water species which can be distinguished from the sea-ice Synedropsis based only on two criteria (Stickley et al., 2009), the solitary or colonial life-forms, respectively, and valve dimensions. The authors of the study themselves point out that it would be risky to conclude on the ecological preference of the fossil Synedropsis based on these two criteria as they are not sufficiently robust. In any case, the occurrence of some ice at the North Pole at around 47.5 Ma is also seriously challenged by relatively high SST (15-20 °C) coeval with increased ice-rafting debris and/or abundant sea-ice-dependent diatoms (Weller and Stein, 2008; Stein et al., 2015). The first appearance of ice in the northernmost regions is a highly controversial matter. It is proposed to have occurred between about 38

and 30 Ma by Eldrett et al. (2007) under the form of ephemeral continental ice rather than solely sea ice, an interval deferred to about 33–26 Ma by Tripati and Darby (2018) despite intermittent initiating circum-Arctic ice from 47 to 42 Ma.

#### 3.3. The Azolla event

An Azolla phase in borehole M0004A including four maxima of massulae is described between 304 and 298.90 mcd (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). It is usually correlated with a similar event, although with some differences, composed of three maxima distributed along a 21 m thick layer in borehole 913B (Norvegian-Greenland Sea) (Brinkhuis et al., 2006), which encompasses the C22n/C21r chron boundary (Eldrett et al., 2004; Barke et al., 2012) dated to 48.96 Ma (Vandenberghe et al., 2012). Such Azolla blooms have been recorded in many locations in the Arctic and Nordic seas and are considered coeval despite the lack of independent dating except for boreholes 913B (Eldrett et al., 2004; Barke et al., 2012) and 338 (Eldrett and Harding, 2009). A single event at the scale of the Northern basins has yet been described, and is considered to have lasted about 800,000 years between 49 and 48 Ma, implying significant freshwater inputs from the land into the Arctic Basin, which then spilled over into the adjacent seas, and involved sustained freshening of surface waters (Brinkhuis et al., 2006; Barke et al., 2012). It has been suggested that this Azolla phase depended on the rate of exchange between the Arctic Basin and adjacent seas (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). However, Azolla massulae are recorded in turbidites at Site 338 that led Eldrett and Harding (2009) to consider that sediment mass transport from the shelf may be the cause of their occurrence, perhaps in addition or at the place of surface water current from the Arctic Ocean.

Our study enabled us to check for this event at the same depth (302.435-297.72 mcd; Fig. 3; Table 1) in borehole M0004A, marked by abundant massulae and microspores. In our climatostratigraphic interpretation of the pollen record and quantified climate, the Azolla phase did not occur after the EECO as previously proposed but during the climatically unstable episode within this climatic optimum with slightly lower MAT. This is consistent with the 3 °C rise in the sea surface temperature indicated after the termination of the Azolla phase (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). At Caribou Hills, an exposed section in the Beaufort-Mackenzie Basin (Fig. 1), two maxima of Azolla microspores are recorded just after a warm episode (Salpin et al., 2019) which we correlate with the lower part of the EECO. A fairly detailed pollen record is available, although of poor botanical quality, originating from a borehole in the Beaufort-Mackenzie Basin (Taglu G-33) which displays the Azolla phase (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). In the present borehole, the Azolla phase is sandwiched between two warmer episodes marked by pollen of thermophilous plants (Staplin, 1976). This Azolla phase can thus be ascribed to the unstable episode within the EECO. We believe that a single Azolla pulse, which was too hastily correlated at the scale of the Northern basins, should be seriously called into question.

We observed (1) a minor input of Azolla microspores at 392.91–390.21 mcd a little before the PETM (Fig. 3), and (2) a younger influx of Azolla, marked by sporangia, in the exposed Mid-Eocene Belkovsky section (Anjou Islands, part of the New Siberian Islands) (Suan et al., 2017). Our records complete the occurrence of somewhat younger Azolla blooms in the Denmark region (Collinson et al., 2010). Far from challenging the assumption that synchroneity may characterise some Azolla layers linked with a generalized pulse in the Northern region (Brinkhuis et al., 2006; Moran et al., 2006), the age of the major episode in borehole M0004A should be lowered and its concept reappraised, as suggested at a wider latitudinal scale by Collinson et al. (2010). In borehole M0004A, the Azolla phase is also marked by a significant decline in the frequency of the marine dinoflagellate cysts (Brinkhuis et al., 2006). As the event is linked to a marked drop in temperature that affected the sea (Sluijs et al., 2006) and the land (Fig. 3), a lowering of sea level can be assumed, which

would extend the influence of deltas farther offshore. A lowering of sea level was also considered by Eldrett and Harding, 2009 on the basis of the above mentioned turbidites at Site 338. Indeed, fossil records of *Azolla* (including massulae and microspores) are known from the Roussillon Basin (South of France) (Florschütz and Menéndez Amor, 1960) and belong to the marine-continental transition of an Early Pliocene delta (Clauzon et al., 2015). A Late Holocene example comes from the Nile Delta where *Azolla* remains (megaspores, microspores and massulae) were recorded in marine to continental sediments (Leroy, 1992). The rapid conspicuous unstable episode intercalated in EECO may have caused a large enough drop in sea level in the Arctic Basin to increase progradation of deltas and increased offshore transport of this common free-floating *Azolla* fern. In this way, the invasion of *Azolla* remains in the Arctic Basin could be the earlier localized sign of a forthcoming more generalized invasion at the beginning of Mid-Eocene.

#### 3.4. Palaeogeographic inferences

The remarkable preservation of pollen grains in boreholes M0004A and M0002A and particularly the occurrence of the infrequent and weakly disseminated Avicennia pollen (Somboom, 1990; Phuphumirat et al., 2016) imply that land bordered the coring sites. The low frequency of Pinus also supports this assumption (Fig. 2). Samples originating from the warmer phases contain pollen concentration ranging from 1300 to 2650 pollen grains/g (i.e., 2360 to 4780 pollen grains/ cm<sup>3</sup>) of sediment, consistent with previous estimates of the total content of terrestrial (including spores) palynomorphs (Sluijs et al., 2008; Willard et al., 2019). Such pollen concentrations are observed in modern sediments in various regions located from a few kilometres to 40 km from the shoreline (Heusser, 1988; Beaudouin et al., 2007). These data imply that land existed nearby on the Lomonosov Ridge, confirming prior signs of land in the vicinity (Sluijs et al., 2009; O'Regan et al., 2008), and corresponding to a string of islands and peninsulas joining the Ellesmere to New Siberian islands, as already proposed by Eberle and Greenwood (2012) (Fig. 5). Overall, the three Lower Eocene pollen floras from the Arctic region we studied (Faddeevsky: Suan et al., 2017; Caribou Hills: Salpin et al., 2019; M0004A) are almost the same. However, some minor differences, such as the

![](_page_6_Figure_10.jpeg)

**Fig. 5.** Palaeogeographic sketch slightly modified from a previous map (Eberle and Greenwood, 2012) illustrating the pollen transport to ACEX sedimentary sites from coastal part of lands for thermophilous plants. The blue arrow indicates the fluvial transport for pollen grains of altitudinal trees from the Ellesmere Range. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

significant proportion of Castanopsis-Lithocarpus and Hamamelidaceae (Distylium, Rhodoleia) in the evergreen forest leads us to envisage a closer resemblance between the ACEX and Faddeevsky pollen floras. The ACEX flora also resembles the Ellesmere flora (macroremains and pollen grains: McIntyre, 1991; McIver and Basinger, 1999; Eberle and Greenwood, 2012). Similarly, these floras contain genera (e.g., Cathaya, Tsuga, Abies, Picea) which inhabited elevated belts of the Verkhoyansk Chain on the Asian side (Franke and Hinz, 2009), and of the Eurekan Range on the North American side (Harrison et al., 1999; von Gosen et al., 2019), at the top of which snow and/or ice were probable. Pollen grains of altitudinal trees were certainly transported into the Arctic Basin by rivers and this mode of transport is also likely for the macroremains of elevated trees recorded in sandstones (Eberle and Greenwood, 2012). Considering the location of the ACEX boreholes in the southern part of the Lomonosov Ridge, the Ellesmere Range can probably be regarded as the source of pollen of elevated trees, their transport by river to our study sites was probably facilitated by the presence of a peninsula (Fig. 5).

#### 3.5. Updated ACEX Eocene chronology

Pollen flora and climatostratigraphy led us to re-examine and somewhat modify the age model of boreholes M0004A and M0002A based on recognition of five major warm phases and their correlation with the generalized oxygen isotope curve (Fig. 3; Vandenberghe et al., 2012). The sedimentary record of borehole M0004A should run from ~57 Ma to ~48 Ma and the concerned part of borehole M0002A from ~42 to ~40 Ma (Figs. 3 and 4). Secondary climatostratigraphic correlations with the oxygen isotope curve can be added peak by peak for the warmer ones (Fig. 3). A revised sedimentation rate of the Paleogene sediments from ACEX is proposed (Fig. 4; Table 1). About 6 Myrs are hypothesized to be missing in the sedimentary continuity of these boreholes.

There is no pollen record to provide information on changes in vegetation during the 48–42 Ma time span linked to climate deterioration, i.e. from EECO to MECO. However, the surviving megatherms (including *Avicennia*) in the M0002A pollen flora (Figs. 2, 3) suggest that these taxa persisted as relicts on the shorelines of the Arctic Basin during the period 49–40 Ma. Temperatures reconstructed from pollen data are significantly higher than those obtained from leaf analysis (West et al., 2015). It is not surprising that a highly diverse pollen flora originating from low elevations indicate more elevated temperatures than a macroflora, the disparity being extended by the biases existing between the methods of calculation as illustrated by a comparative appraisal of an Early Pleistocene locality (Girard et al., 2019).

According to the generalized oxygen isotope curve (Vandenberghe et al., 2012), the MECO was a prominent but brief warm fluctuation. A better understanding of the thermal amplitude of the Mid-Eocene climatic fluctuations will probably help solve the apparent contradiction between the ice-rafted debris and sea-ice diatoms (which are perhaps not species linked to sea ice; Stickley et al., 2009) on the one hand and the pollen data on the other hand. As a possible way to resolve this matter the apparent contradiction between the ice-rafted debris and sea-ice diatoms on the one hand and the pollen data on the other hand. As a possible way to resolve this matter the apparent contradiction between the ice-rafted debris and sea-ice diatoms on the one hand and the pollen data on the other hand if the palaeoecological interpretation of the diatom *Synedropsis* is confirmed, the fluvial transport of ice-rafted debris from high relief areas should be considered as well as the inflow of altitudinal cold waters into the sea. These waters could have facilitated the local dissemination of such diatoms which require low temperatures.

#### 4. Conclusion

Pollen record allowed vegetation reconstruction from coastal area to high relief (Figs. 2, 3): competing Avicennia mangrove and Taxodium-Glyptostrobus swamps on the coastline; hinterland inhabited by subtropical evergreen forest (Engelhardia, Distylium, Rhodoleia, CastanopsisLithocarpus, etc.); deciduous warm-temperate forest (Quercus, Carpinus, Carya, Ulmus, Zelkova, etc.); conifer belts (Cathaya, Podocarpus, Tsuga, Abies, Picea).

Maxima in *Avicennia* pollen mark the warmer periods alternating with cooler phases, the climate of which has been quantified for low elevation lands (MAT: 18–22 °C; MTC: 10–14.5 °C; MTW: 26–27.5 °C; MAP: 1150–1400 mm; Fig. 3). On the whole they are consistent with estimated SST.

Curves of ecological groups shown in the synthetic pollen diagram and reconstructed temperatures allow climatostratigraphic correlations with the generalized oxygen isotope curve: PETM, ETM2, the three phases of EECO, and MCO are evidenced as major climatic events (Fig. 3). This climatostratigraphy results in updating the ACEX Eocene chronology (Fig. 4).

In borehole M0004A, the *Azolla* phase occurred during an unstable episode within the EECO (Fig. 3), differentiating this local event from a more regional episode at the Lower–Middle Eocene transition.

Physiography of the region is specified: lands existed near the cored sites along the Lomonosov Ridge with probable connection with the Ellesmere Range (Fig. 5), the elevated relief of which could explain the fluvial transport to the Arctic Basin of altitudinal Gymnosperm pollen and ice-rafted debris. Input of cold waters originating from high relief could have caused the local development of sea-ice diatoms.

Finally, this pollen study helps answer certain questions raised after the first set of studies on the ACEX Eocene succession (Stein et al., 2015), in particular the uncertainties concerning the age model of boreholes M0004A and M0002A illustrated for instance by the poor recognition of the EECO before this work was completed.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

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#### Pollen and spore flora of the M0004A and M0002A boreholes (IODP Leg 302 - ACEX)

Site Taxa Depth (mcd)	Site M0002A ncd) 221.025   225.73   228.915   235.88   239.89   245.33   249.7   250.065   254.615   267.17   257.815   261.506   263.815							270.12 273.875 277.126 276.905 282.055 287.395 292.285 296.46 297.72 299.19 301.53 302.435 313.41 318.86 321.94 323.85 326.39 328.13 33											M0004A / 330.01   339.285   345.35   367.535   368.396   368.98   369.465   370.05   372.388   375.26   376.87   380.38   382.44   383.12   388.1125   388.92   390.21   392.91												2.91   396	8.38 401.31						
MEGATHERMS (MAT>24 °C)* Avicennia (Acanthaceae) Bombax-type (Malvaceae)				1		2		2		2			2	1	4 2	4	1	1	4	2	2	-			1	1						_	2		+=	=		_
Canthium-type (Rubiaceae) Euphorbiaceae Acacia-type (Leguminosae)			1			_									2						1												1			=		_
Mappianthus (Icacinaceae) MEGA-MESOTHERMS (20 "C <mat<24 "c)"<="" td=""><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>_</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>-</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>_</td><td></td><td></td><td>_</td><td></td><td>1</td><td>=</td><td>_</td><td></td><td>_</td></mat<24>																		_				-						1	_			_		1	=	_		_
Cr. Airaroa (Jugrandaceae) Arecaceae Castanopsis-Lithocarpus (Fagaceae)	1	1	2	6	9	6	11 11	2 13 8	7 3	4 33		31	1 1 20 26	37	26 21	1 1 1	28	1 18	1 33	2 13	1 1 9 16 7	16	1 5	8	4	2	1	1		1 3	2	4	1	1 1	1	1		3
Casuarina (Casuarinaceae) Celastraceae Cissus (Vitaceae)			7				3	1 2	3	2		6	4 2	2	6 3	1 1	2	1		1	3		1					12	10	7 11	4	4		1 8	=	31	1 3	3 6
Craigia (Malvaceae) Cyrillaceae-Clethraceae												1				1		1				1									1				=			_
Distylium (Hamamelidaceae) Embolanthera (Hamamelidaceae)	2	3	1			1	1 2	1		1	1		1 1		1 2	1	2	1	3	2	1 1	3	1	1	1 1	2		2		1 1			5	2	$\pm$			
Engelhardia (Juglandaceae) Fothergilla (Hamamelidaceae) Loronetaium (Hamamelidaceae)	10	5	7	6	3	4	3 1	7	7 8	4	3	5	4 1	4	2 8	1 2	5	3 3	10	6	3 5 8	5	1	2	4 4		14	3	6	10 14	5	10	9	2 2	7	7 8	8 9	18
Matudaea (Hamamelidaceae) Menispermaceae																		2			1		1	1	_						_					_		
Nyssa (Comaceae) Nyssa (Comaceae) Nyssa aquatica-type (Comaceae)	4	1	4			2	1	4	2			1	1	2	2 1	1 2	4	3	1		1		3				2		2	12 0	5	3	1	1 3			· · ·	
Nyssa cf. sinensis (Cornaceae) Platycarya (Juglandaceae) Rhodoleia (Hamamelidaceae)	1	6	4		2	2	1 2	2	5	2 1	2	1	2 4	9	4	1 4	2	2 3	13	3	2 9 7	2	3	1	2 2	1		3	3		1	2	_	1 2		1	2	
Rholptelea (Juglandaceae) Ricinus-type (Euphorbiaceae)	1											1	1									1	1							1				1	=			1
Sapotaceae Sciadopitys (Sciadopityaceae)	3	11	4	6		1	1 2	1	6				1 1		1	_		2			1			2	1 1 1 2	2		1	2	3 16	2	23			4	3	2 1	1 1
Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains (former 'Taxodiaceae') cf. Phyllostylon (Ulmaceae) Uncaria-type (Rubiaceae)	61	38	48	60	60	60	92 28	42 51	47 1	0 49	32	33	52 45	29	34 40	28 14	4 53	24 51	32	68	53 62 56	89	72	49 5	4 77	76	60	60	71 :	38 59	88	54	40	43 66	81	28 7	75 5	1 37
Cathaya (Pinaceae)	13	29	7	15	5	6	6	7 14	4	1	3	5	1	1	2 2	6 1	4	4 3	1	1	2 1 1		2	5	3 6	3	7	1	1	5 4	2	7		3	5	4	3	1 3
MESOTHERMS (14 °C <mat<20 °c)*<br="">Acer (Sapindaceae)</mat<20>	1		3	1		1	2	2 3	2									2 1		1	1	<u> </u>	2		1	1				1 2	3	-	1					
Alnus (Betulaceae) Anacardíaceae Betula (Betulaceae)	4	4	4	3	7	2	2 2	3 3	6 6	2	1	2	2 2	1	2 3	3 2	1	6 1 1 1 1	1		1 3	2	3	3	1	1	2		1	2 1	1	1	3	7 1			1	3
Buxus cf. sempervirens Carpinus (Betulaceae)	1	5			2	1	3 2	2		2	2	1	1	-	1 5	1 1	2	1	1			2	2	1	1			1		1		2	2	1 1		1		4
Cerfis (Cannabaceae) Decodon (Lythraceae)	3 1 1	3	2	3	4	3	3 5 1 1	1 2	3 1	1	0	4	4 5	0	6 5	0 4	. 0	9 0	0	3	13 7 9 1 2	1		-	0 2		3	2	4	3 7	2	3	14	21 2	$\pm$	<u> </u>	2	
Ericaceae Eucommia (Eucommiaceae) Fraxinus (Oleaceae)	2	3	2	2	4	1	2 1	1			4		_	3	2	1		1		3	1	-			1	1	1	4	2	6 5	5	7	-	1 3			1 2	2 1
Hedera (Araliaceae) Juglans (Juglandaceae) Linuidember (Hememolideaceae)		1			1	2	1	2 1	1					2	1 1			2	1		1 6	2		1											$\equiv$	$\equiv$		=
Ofea (Oleaceae) Ostrya (Betulaceae)						1		3 1			Ľ			2	3 1	· - ·	2	1		1	1 2					-		-								_		_
Parrotia cf. persica (Hamamelidaceae) Parrotiopsis cf. jacquemontiana (Hamamelidaceae) Populus (Salicaceae)	1	1					+	2	1		3	1	1		1	1	2	1		1	1	1	1		3	-		-		1		1	1	-		_	+	
Pterocarya (Juglandaceae) Quercus (Fagaceae)	2 10	9 21	4	2	3	12	4 <u>28</u>	2 1 13 16	1 1 15 2	3 5 31	1 13	3 27	19 6	3 16	1 1 11 18	4 3 27 16	5 15	2 3	4 13 2	2	2 6 3 9 9 8	4	4 5	3 5	2		1	1 2		1	1	2	2	2			1 2	2 2
Salix (Salicaceae) Samuel (Adoxaceae)		2			1			-			1		1		1	1	1		3		1	1				1		1						2	1		2	_
Ilia (Malvaceae) Ulmus (Ulmaceae) Zelkova (Ulmaceae)		3	1	2	1 3	2	3	1 1	1 3	1 2	1	1	1	4	5 3 1	2 3	2	1 1	2		1 1 1 1 1	1			1			1		2 1 1 1		1	1 2 1	3 1	1	<u> </u>		_
MESO-MICROTHERMS (12 "C <mat<14 "c)*<br="">Cedrus (Pinaceae) Fagus (Fagaceae)</mat<14>	18	5	1	1	2	3	7 2	1	2 4	1	3	3	2		1 1	2 3	2	6	1		1 1	_	2							3				1 1	=	3		1
Tsuga (Pinaceae) MICROTHERMS (MAT<12 °C)*	1	2							1									1					1								-	2			Ŧ	1		
Pices (Pinaceae) TAXA WITHOUT ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE	3	4	3	3		2	1	1 5	5	3		4	2 2	3	5	4 2	3			1	2 4	1	2							1 2		1		4	7	7	2 4	4 9
Pinus diplostellate-type (Pinaceae) Pinus haplostellate-type (Pinaceae) Indeterminable pollen grains of Pinaceae	3 6	22 3 5	12	12	2	8	4 5 1 5	4 6 1 1 3	4	4	3	1	3 2	1	1 2 1 3 2	2 3 1 1 1	3	1 2	1		2 3 3 1	3	2 2 7	1	5 5	2	6 1 1	1	2 3	1 8	3	2	-	11	2	39	3 3	3 6 9 30
Cupressus-Juniperus-type (Cupressaceae) Apocynaceae Aristolochia (Aristolochiaceae)	10	20	3	5	11	7	7 11	7 12	11	6	25	4	12 17	6	6 3	9 2	5	8 10	1	17	11 3 12	7	6	12 1	8 3	12	13	3	3	8 6	8	5	32	12 11	4	6 1	15 1	1 11
Normapolles	1				1		1	1 1								2	:		1				1							2				2		2		_
WATER PLANTS Alisma (Alimastaceae)	1	2					1 1		3 .	. 1	0		1 3	1	1	2 1	1	1 2	0	4		-		2	1					1		-	-	2	$\pm$	=		-
Lythraceae Menyanthaceae Myriophyllum (Haloragaceae)						1								1	1						2											_			=	_		-
Oenotheraceae Potamogeton (Potamogetonaceae)																1							1							1		1			$\equiv$			_
Restionaceae Sparganium (Typhaceae)				-														1				-								1		1		2				_
Typha (Typhaceae) HERBACEOUS PLANTS Amaranthaceae			1	-					-				_			+		_				+								1		-	-	1	+	=	-	_
Artemisia (Compositae) Boraginaceae Cannabaceae		1							1	1			1			2	1				1														Ŧ	=		—
Convolvulus (Convolvulaceae) Crassulaceae				L,	1	1		1		1		1				1 1			1	1	2	-					1							_	=	_		_
Cyperaceae Euphorbia (Euphorbiaceae) Leguminosae Papilionideae		2		1	2		2	6	2	3	1		1 1			2	1	2	1	-	2 1	-			1	1				2				_	$\pm$	=		_
Gentianaceae Geranium (Geraniaceae) Helianthemum (Cistaceae)								1					_						1													_	1		=	_		-
Mercurialis (Euphorbiaceae) cf. Merremia (Convolvulaceae)		1						1	1		1		1		2	1		1										1		1					=			=
Plantago (Plantaginaceae) Poaceae		1				1					1				2	1																						
Polygonum (Polygonaceae) Polygonum aviculare-type (Polygonaceae) Resedaceae	2			1	1	-	_	4	4			3	2 8	1	2	1 7	2	2 1	3		1 1 1	2	1	1	1	3						-	-	1	$\pm$	_	-	
Diodia-type (Rubiaceae) Rumex (Polygonaceae)						1									1	1		1	1			1			_			1								$\equiv$		=
Number of identified pollen grains Unidentified pollen grains	183	231	148	154	142	146 1	166 127	142 140	159 14	1 174	119	143	149 131	137	132 147 1 2	142 15 2	13 166	136 109 1	154	136	129 155 147 1	169	150	111 1	06 126	113	114	116	110 1	37 176	145	155	120	131 141 1 1	148	169 1 12	35 11	16 155
PTERIDOPHYTES Selaginella	2	4	1	4	2	3	2 4	6 5	3 1	2 5	8	6	/ 3	6	6 9	1 18	3	6 3	8	4	4 2 5	8	2	3	• 10	6	4			1 11	3	1	12	15 9	2	$\equiv$	0 8	3 16
Selaginella cf. selaginelloides Osmunda Azolia (microspore massulae)		1		2	1					-							56	62 21	F				1		2		3		3	4 1	2	3		1 2	=	4	3	3
Azola (isolated microspores) Polypodiaceae											E					É				1										6	1		1	2 1	2	24 1	17 1	1 9
Unidentified monolete spores Unidentified trilete spores	3	9 4	5	4	3	2	3 4	2 2	1	1	9	1	3 2		1	1 1	8	3 7 1 3	2	1	3 4 3		2	2 1	0 10	6	14 6	8	3	8 5	11	6	3 4	8 11 3 10	6	28 2	22 2	0 26 15 29
Unidentified spores BRYOPHYTES Unidentified spores	23	23	49	7	15	18	8 86	5 85	3 1	1 21	11	2	4 5	1	2	3 4	7	1 9	3	14	5 6 4	3		6	7 16	6	12	4	8 3	32 18	12	17	8	14 17	5	26 1	18 9	21
OTHER PALYNOMORPHS Fungi	23	1371	59	173	51	34	56 54	66 52	83 5	4 19	5	69	42 710	55	120 33	21 36	3 65	16 9	79	81	79 50 85	90	42	359 1	9 13	4	13	24	17	11 10	3	18	15	4 12	31	13 1	12 7	7 17
REWORKED PALYNOMORPHS Pollen grains	12/	381	28	202	228	2		3	4	~ pa	2	24	1 4	1	2	2 6	. 349	2 1	1	2	5 2	2	2	3 10 1	4 10	3	11	9	33 3	28 9	8	5		.0 05	13	9	8 4	4 13
Fern spores * MAT (mean annual temperature) with respect to the Nix (19	1 982)'s temp	1 erature gra	adient	4	3	3	3		1 ;			3	20 215	11	8 5	1 3	2	18 9	6	8	11 21	27	5	2	8	5	15	13	22	9 4	3	8		5 1	31	5 5	50 7	/ 35

limatic quantification of sediments cored	by the M0004A and M0002A holes (IODP I	Leg 302 - ACEX) according to pollen records
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	Site	•	M0002A																								M00	04A																					
	Depth (mcd)	221.025	225.73 2	28.915 23	35.88 23	39.89 24	5.33 249.7	250.065	5 254.615	257.17	257.815	261.506 2	63.815	270.12 2	73.875	277.125 2	278.905	282.055 2	287.395 2	92.285	295.46	297.72 2	99.19 30	1.53 302.	435 313	.41 318.8	6 321.94	323.55	326.39	328.13	330.01 3	39.285	345.35 36	7.535 36	8.395 36	8.98 369.	465 370	.05 372.	388 375.2	6 376.8	7 380.38	382.44	383.12	388.1125 3	88.92 39	0.21 39	2.91 396	5.38 401	31
Climate parameters																																																-	
	minimum value (°C)	16	16	18	16	16	16 1	8 18	8 16	18	18	16	18	16	18	18	18	18	18	18	16	16	18	16	16	21 2	1 1	8 18	16	16	16	16	16	21	21	16	18	18	18 1	6 1	8 18	16	16	18	16	18	18	18	18
Mean annual temperature (MAT)	most likely value (°C)	18.8	18.8	20.5	21.3	18.4	21.3 18.	4 19.9	9 21.3	19.6	19.5	21.3	19.4	19	19.4	21.3	20	21.3	21.3	21.3	18.4	21.3	19.6	21.3	19.3 2	1.6 21.	6 18.	3 19.6	19.9	18.5	18.8	18.9	18.5	22	21.7	18.8	19.6	19.8	19.6 18	.8 19.	7 19.8	21.3	18.7	20	19.5	19.9	19.8	20.3 *	9.5
maximu	maximum value (°C)	23	22	25	25	22	23 2	2 2.	3 23	22	22	22	22	23	22	23	23	22	23	22	22	22	22	23	25	23 2	3 2	1 22	22	22	23	23	22	25	23	23	22	23	22 2	2 2	3 23	22	22	23	25	23	23	25	22
	minimum value (°C)	10	10	12	13	6,4	13 1	0 10	0 13	10	10	10	10	10	10	13	10	13	13	13	6	13	13	13	10	13 1	3	5 10	13	10	10	10	10	13	13	10	10	10	10 1	0	5 10	13	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
Mean temperature of the coldest month (MTC)	most likely value (°C)	12	10.5	14.6	13.9	10.4	13.9 10.	5 14.	5 13.8	12.5	12.4	11.5	10.4	12.1	14.4	14.6	14.5	14.3	14.5	14.4	10.4	13.7	13.3	13.9	11.8 1	3.9 1	4 10,	4 12.5	13.7	10.5	12	12.1	10.5	14	14.1	11.9	12.5	14.5	12.4 10	.5 14.	4 14.5	13.8	12.1	14.5	12.3	14.5	14.5 1	14.5	4.5
	maximum value (°C)	15.5	15.5	16.5	15.5	15	15.5 15.	5 16	8 15.5	15.5	15.5	15	15.5	15.5	15.5	16	16	15.5	16	15.5	15.5	15	15.5	15.5	15 1	5.5 15.	5 1	5 15.5	15	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	15.5	16	15 15	.5 1	6 15.5	15	15	16	15.5	16	16 1	16.5	16
	minimum value (°C)	25	25	25	25	25	25 2	5 25	5 25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25 2	5 2	5 25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25 2	15 2	5 25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Mean temperature of the warmest month (MTW)	most likely value (°C)	26	26.3	26.4	27.4	26	27.3 26.	1 26.3	3 27.3	26.2	26.1	27.4	26.1	26.3	26.1	27.3	26.2	27.3	27.4	27.4	26	27.3	27.3	27.4	26.1 2	7.4 27.	4 2	8 26.2	27.3	26.1	26.2	26.3	26.3	27.5	27.5	26.3	26.1	26.1	26.3 26	.3 2	6 26	27.5	26.5	26.1	26.3	26.2	26.1	26.3 7	.6.1
ma	maximum value (°C)	27.8	28	28	29	27.8	28 27.	8 28	8 28	28	28	28	27.8	28	28	28	28	28	28	29	28	28	28	28	28	28 2	8 2	8 28	28	27.8	28	28	28	30	30	28	28	28	28 2	8 2	8 28	30	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
Mean annual precipitation (MAP) most likely value (m most likely value (maximum value (n	minimum value (mm)	1200	1100	900	1100	1200 1	1200 120	0 1200	0 1100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1100	1200	1200	1200	1200	1100	1100	1200	1100	1200 1	200 1	100 1:	200 120	0 120	0 1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	1100	1100 1	1100 1	1200 1	200 1	1100 110	120	0 1200	1100	1100	1200	1100	1200	1200 1	/100 1	100
	most likely value (mm)	) 1400	1210	1133	1266	1307 1	1314 131	7 138	9 1269	1311	1310	1301	1310	1354	1310	1314	1401	1307	1258	1216	1311	1266	1305 1	310 1	334 14	401 141	0 130	6 1311	1308	1312	1400	1392	1315	1363	1370 1	349 1	1315 1	411 1	262 127	6 141	0 1409	1154	1356	1425	1387	1409	1379 1	.368 1	:59
	maximum value (mm)	1580	1300	1580	1400	1400 1	1400 140	0 158	0 1400	1400	1400	1400	1400	1580	1400	1400	1580	1400	1400	1300	1400	1400	1400 1	400 1	560 1	580 158	0 140	0 1400	1400	1400	1580	1580	1400	1580	1580 1	580 1	1400 1	580 1	400 140	158	0 1580	1400	1580	1580	1580	1580	1560 1	580 1	-80

### **Appendix C (Supplementary material)**

### Comments on the pollen flora

Below, we provide an accurate description, illustrated by photographs, of some critical pollen grains benefiting from a botanical identification, accompanied with some biogeographic and/or ecological considerations. This approach challenges for elevating pollen floras at the same step of botanical relevance than macrofloras, at least at the genus level (identified for 73% of the taxa recorded in the ACEX pollen flora). In this context, the genus appears to be the most relevant taxonomic entity because (1) most of genera existed from the earliest Paleogene, and (2) its bioclimatic significance is generally well delimited.

Aiming to optimize reliability of pollen analysis, we perform appropriate techniques (see the chapter 'Material and methods' of the main text and we follow an accurate nomenclature in pollen morphology (Punt et al., 2007) for understanding shape, structure, aperture(s) and ornamentation, according to the LO-analysis (Lux = light vs. *Obscuritas* = darkness) technique of observation at the transmitted light microscope (TLM) (Erdtman, 1952). Comparisons with pollen grains of modern species were made at TLM by using two pollen collections:

- the pollen collection from ISEM Montpellier (see 'Pollen collection' showing photographs in the website: data.oreme.org) which includes more than 30,000 species mainly from Africa and Asia;
- the private pollen collection (with corresponding photographs) of the GeoBioStratData company composed by a thousand of species, mostly from tropical and subtropical regions.

Scanning electronic microscope (SEM) has also been used to check some of the pollen characters, particularly those perceptible in surface, such as shape and ornamentation. The suffix '-type' is used to indicate that the concerned pollen morphology exists in several taxa (species or genera). The prefix 'cf.' means that the selected taxon has the nearest morphology with the fossil pollen after comparison with pollen of modern species or genera. The Plant List website informs on the present-day accepted botanical taxa and synonymies.

### Avicennia (Acanthaceae)

Scattering of *Avicennia* is done by propagules transported by tide refluxes and oceanic currents (Rabinowitz, 1978). Eberle and Greenwood (2012) suggest that two corridors connected the Arctic Basin to the Tethys (Turgai Strait) and to the Atlantic Ocean (Norvegian–Greenland Sea gateway). Such a palaeogeographic context probably created a marine water circulation, which contributed to *Avicennia* spreading.

Avicennia shows equiaxal to slightly longiaxal tricolpate or tricolporate pollen grains characterised by long and largely opened colpi (without costae) that makes the polar area (apocolpium) very small and the pollen close to be syncolp(or)ate (Fig. 1, A–B). Tricolporate pollen grains show a slightly elongated endoaperture along the polar axis, which does not pass the edges of colpus at the pollen equator. A homobrochate semitectate reticulum constitutes the exine sculpture with dense muri, larger than luminae, which are characterised by a polygonal and slightly elongated outline. Thickness of muri somewhat increases toward the poles that reduces the size of luminae. Colpi are bordered by a thin margo where reticulum is smaller. The structure of the semi-tectate ectexine shows dense columellae with large head constituting the tectum overlying a thinner endexine. At SEM, general shape and exine sculpture can be observed in finer detail showing, in particular, the smooth surface of the tectum somewhat prominent above the columellae (Fig. 1, D). These characters, whatever the pollen is colpate or colporate, are those of the modern *Avicennia* pollen (also supported by an almost similar size), which unique morphology has been extensively described (Mukherjee and Chanda, 1973) and documented by

many photographs at TLM and SEM (Thanikaimoni, 1987; Mao et al., 2012). Indeed, the Avicennia (colpate or colporate) pollen displays numerous characters that discard any confusion with pollen grain of other genera. Using both TLM and SEM, the fossil pollen grains have been compared with those of five living species of Avicennia (Acanthaceae), selected after meticulous examination of modern pollen photographic atlases. Among them, three species displays pollen morphologies (with a colpate or colporate apertural system) very close to the pollen grains of the Eocene Arctic Avicennia: A. nitida Jacq. and A. tomentosa Jacq., synonyms of A. germinans (L.) L. (Fig. 1, N–O); A. alba Blume synonym of A. marina (Forssl.) Vierh.; A. officinalis L. (Fig. 1, K-M) All the Avicennia species contribute today to the mangrove ecosystem in tropical regions, the limits of which they may exceed thanks to favourable conditions (warm marine currents). We identified and described for the first time the Avicennia pollen in the Arctic Eocene (Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019). It is recorded in many samples from the ACEX holes, sometimes grouped in clusters attesting a very weak transport (Fig. 1, C). However, after checking published photographs, we consider that Avicennia is probably present in other pollen records where it can be detected under an artificial name because of poor or false morphological examination: 'Arecipites microreticulates' from hole M0004A (Sluijs et al., 2009: Fig. S3 median views); 'Tricolpites' from North Alaska (Frederiksen et al., 2002: Plate 3, views 1-2 and 4-5).

![](_page_13_Figure_0.jpeg)

Fig. 1. Photographs at TLM and SEM of some fossil and modern pollen grains of elements of the mangrove and swamp-marshes (shots by J.-P. Suc).

Scale bar for TLM views =  $10 \mu m$ ; if different, scale is indicated for SEM views.

- A, *Avicennia* (Acanthaceae), fossil pollen (245.33 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: A1, reticulate ornamentation; A2, focus at base of columellae, colpi and optical section.
- B, *Avicennia* (Acanthaceae), fossil pollen (297.72 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: B1, reticulate ornamentation; B2, focus at base of columellae, colpi and optical section.
- C, Avicennia (Acanthaceae), cluster of fossil pollen grains (382.44 mcd).
- D, Avicennia (Acanthaceae), fossil pollen (287.395 mcd). Detail of surface ornamentation.
- E, *Nyssa* cf. *sinensis*, fossil pollen (228.915 mcd) in equatorial view (aperture facing). LO-analysis: E1, upper focus on ecto- (colpus) and endo- (porus) apertures and folded endexine; E2, lower focus on ecto- (colpus) and endo- (porus) apertures and folded endexine.
- F-H, *Casuarina* (Casuarinaceae), fossil pollen grains in polar view. F (273.875 mcd) & G (282.055 mcd), optical section and focus on the granular endoaperture; H (375.26 mcd), detail of ornamantation near a pore.

- I, Cyrillaceae-Clethraceae, fossil pollen grain (273.875 mcd) in polar view. 11, microreticulate ornamentation; 12, focus at the base of columellae; 13, optical section and apertural vestibulum.
- J, Myrica (Myricaceae), fossil pollen grain (278.905 mcd) in polar view (optical section).
- K–L, Avicennia officinalis L. (Acanthaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 876 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen 19385 from the Herbarium of the University C. Bernard Lyon, France, collected in the Philippines Islands). K, pollen in equatorial view (aperture facing). LO-analysis: K1, reticulate ornamentation and ectoaperture (colpus); K2, optical section and apertures (colpori) in profile. L, pollen in polar view. LO-analysis: L1, reticulate ornamentation; L2, optical section and small apocolpium. M, detail of the reticulate ornamentation.
- N–O, *Avicennia tomentosa* Jacq. (= *A. germinans* (L.)L.) (Acanthaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 874 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen 5 from the Herbarium of the University C. Bernard Lyon, France, plant specimen collected in India), N, pollen in equatorial view (aperture facing). LO-analysis: N1, reticulate ornamentation and ectoaperture ornamentation and small apocolpium; O2, optical section.
- P, *Casuarina equisetifolia* L. (Casuarinaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 715 of the GeoBioStratData collection, origin of plant specimen unknown) in polar view. LO-analysis: P1, focus at the level of granular endoaperture; P2, optical section.
- Q-R, *Nyssa sinensis* Oliv. (Cornaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 27 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen originating from China). Q, pollen in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: Q1, verrucate ornamentation and aperture in profile; Q2, optical section and aperture in profile. R, polar view. LO-analysis: R1, verrucate ornamentation; R2, apertures with folded endexine and optical section.

### Cupressaceae

For a long time, several palynologists group inaperturate Gymnosperm pollen grains in the 'TCT' (Manum, 1962; Frederiksen et al., 2002) taxonomic unit (i.e., 'Taxodiaceae-Cupressaceae-Taxaceae'). This restricted botanical identification results from a not enough precise examination of exine ornamentation based on LO-analysis, which yet allows the distinction between the 'TCT' components (Reyre, 1968) since the occurrence of a papilla is a crucial distinguishing character (only shown by the former 'Taxodiaceae', i.e. the Cupressaceae with papillate pollen).

### • *Cupressus-Juniperus*-type

Pollen, devoid of papilla, shows a double heteromorphic sculpture made of two ectexine layers: the lower level is composed of small numerous glomeruli, the upper layer is composed of grouped or not larger verrucae (Reyre, 1968; Lin and Hu, 2000). These characters are obvious at TLM as shown by *Juniperus oxycedrus* (Fig. 2, N). Such pollen grains are frequently recorded in ACEX holes (Fig. 2, A–B) and were frequently recorded in Eocene deposits from the Arctic shorelines (Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019). Cupressaceae with the *Cupressus-Juniperus*-type pollen grow in various conditions, from subtropical to boreal environments.

![](_page_15_Figure_0.jpeg)

## **Fig. 2.** Photographs at TLM and SEM of some fossil and modern pollen grains of Cupressaceae (shots by J.-P. Suc except O1 and O2 by Z. Zheng).

Scale bar for TLM views =  $10 \mu m$ ; if different, scale is indicated for SEM views.

- A, Cupressus-Juniperus-type, fossil pollen (221.025 mcd). LO-analysis: A1, ornamentation; A2, optical section.
- B, Cupressus-Juniperus-type, fossil pollen (250.065 mcd). LO-analysis: B1, ornamentation; B2, optical section.
- C, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (225.73 mcd). LO-analysis: C1, papilla; C2, optical section.
- D, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (326.39 mcd). Papilla.
- E, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (221.025 mcd). LO-analysis: E1, ornamentation; E2, papilla and optical section.
- F, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (261.506 mcd). Ornamentation and papilla.
- G, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (257.17 mcd). Papilla.

- H, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (250.065 mcd). Papilla and optical section.
- I, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (282.055 mcd). LO-analysis: 11, ornamentation; 12, papilla; 13, optical section.
- J, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (221.025 mcd). Optical section.
- K, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (292.285 mcd). LO-analysis: K1, ornamentation; K2, papilla.
- L, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (221.025 mcd). LO-analysis: L1, papilla; L2, optical section.
- M, Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains, fossil pollen (235.88 mcd). Ornamentation.
- N, Juniperus oxycedrus L., modern pollen (slide 470 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen collected in Morocco). LO-analysis: N1, ornamentation; N2, optical section.
- O, *Glyptostrobus pensilis* (Staunton ex D.Don) K.Koch, modern pollen (slide 2,018-FJ04 of the Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China), plant specimen collected in the Dongshan Nature Reserve, Fujian Province (China). LO-analysis: O1, ornamentation; O2, papilla.
- P, *Taxodium distichum* (L.) Rich., modern pollen (slide 817 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen collected in the Herbarium of the Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China). LO-analysis: P1, ornamentation; P2, papilla.
- Q, *Taxodium distichum* (L.) Rich., modern pollen sample collected in the Chackbay swamp, South Louisiana, USA). LO-analysis: Q1, ornamentation; Q2, papilla and optical section.
- R, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* Hu & W.C.Cheng, (slide 60,331 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in Asia). LO-analysis: R1, ornamentation; R2, papilla.
- S, *Glyptostrobus pensilis* (Staunton ex D.Don) K.Koch, modern pollen, plant specimen collected at the Herbarium of the Sun-Yat sen University (sample number: 28781), Guangzhou (China). S1, overview; S2, detail of ornamentation.

• Cupressaceae papillate pollen grains (i.e., former 'Taxodiaceae')

Pollen shows a composite heteromorphic sculpture of ectexine, with less abundant large verrucae than the small ones in which they are integrated. This character is observable at TLM and very clear at SEM. Two subgroups of pollen types were commonly distinguished: pollen grains with a large more or less hooked papilla with a relatively thick exine were usually ascribed to the modern pollen of Sequoia, Cryptomeria and Cunninghamia (i.e., the so-called Sequoia-type); those with a small papilla and thin exine were referred to modern *Glyptostrobus* (Fig. 2, O, S), Taxodium (Fig. 2, P-Q) and Metasequoia (Fig. 2, R) i.e., the so-called Taxodium-Glyptostrobus-type). Pollen of Taxodium, Glyptostrobus and Metasequoia were regarded almost the same but with a smaller papilla in *Glyptostrobus* and *Taxodium* (Xi, 1986). Most of the pollen grains recorded in the ACEX holes show a very small papilla but it is difficult to identify each individual, including at SEM. However, a recent paper by Bouchal and Denk (2020) demonstrates the inability to distinguish genera or clusters of genera within the Cupressaceae with papillate pollen, whatever on the basis of morphology at TEM and/or SEM or by using morphometric approaches. As a consequence and according to (1) the palaeoecological context defined by the Avicennia mangrove and (2) information provided by plant macroremains (see below), we have considered that most of these pollen grains should belong to Taxodium or *Glvptostrobus* (Fig. 2, C, E–K), without discarding the probable occurrence of *Metasequoia* (Fig. 2, D, L). Glyptostrobus and Taxodium are swamp trees, Metasequoia is a riparian to floodplain element. Glyptostrobus, Taxodium and/or Metasequoia are commonly indicated in Eocene macrofloras of the Arctic region (Boyd, 1990; Greenwood and Basinger, 11994; Jahren, 2007; Uhl et al., 2007; Harrington et al., 2011; Eberle and Greenwood, 2012). Considering the occurrence of the Avicennia mangrove including Casuarina on the one hand, and of swampmarsh companions (Cyrillaceae-Clethraceae, Myrica, Nyssa, Liquidambar, Salix, Cyperaceae, Osmunda, Azolla) on the other hand (Penfound and Hathaway, 1938), probability is high that Eocene Arctic swamps were dominated by *Taxodium* and/or *Glyptostrobus*.

### **Castaneoideae (Fagaceae)**

### • Castanea-Lithocarpus

As far as we know, there is no evidence of Eocene Castaneoideae in the Arctic macrofloras. Pollen grains of this subfamily are difficult to distinguish, including at SEM (Praglowski, 1984) (Fig. 3, E–F). However, it has been possible to ascribe some pollen grains from Eocene of Greenland to *Castanea* and *Castanopsis* on the basis of slight differences in the shape of rugulae (Grimsson et al., 2015). The Castaneoideae pollen grains are abundant in ACEX holes within the intervals 328.13–273.875 mcd and 263.815–239.89 mcd. Using these ultra-characters compared at SEM for some of our fossil pollen grains (Fig. 3, C–D) and those of the living species *Castanopsis chinensis* (Fig. 3, E) and *Lithocarpus cerifer* (Fig. 3, F) chosen as examples, we assume that Castaneoideae (probably *Castanopsis* and/or *Lithocarpus*) were major components of the evergreen subtropical forest (as today in China: Wang, 1961; Hou, 1983; Fang et al., 2011) signifying its apogee as also supported by a lot of companions among Juglandaceae (*Engelhardia, Platycarya, Rhoiptelea, cf. Alfaroa*), Arecaceae, Hamamelidaceae (*Distylium, Embolanthera, Fothergilla, Matudaea, Rhodoleia*), Rubiaceae (*Canthium*-type, *Mussaenda*-type, *Uncaria*-type) Celastraceae, Vitaceae (*Cissus*), etc.

### Icacinaceae

### • *Mappianthus* (Fig. 3, K–L)

Small triporate pollen grains showing vestibula and thick but interrupted annulus. Ornamentation is made of low spines. This pollen is very similar of that of *Mappianthus* illustrated for comparison by the living species *Mappianthus iodoides* (Fig. 3, M) (Lobreau-Callen, 1972). *Mappianthus* contributes to the tropical and evergreen subtropical vegetation of China (Fang et al., 2011).

### Juglandaceae

### Rhoiptelea

Usually unnoticed (Cravatte and Suc, 1981) but very distinctive thanks to an excellent illustration (Kuprianova, 1965), the pollen of this monospecific genus is triporate with prominent pores equipped with large vestibula (Fig. 3, H–I). As additional distinctive character, the *Rhoiptelea* pollen shows arcus (thickened bands of ectexine connecting the borders of the pores) (Fig. 3, H–I). The pollen grains recorded in the ACEX holes are indistinguishable from those of the only modern species (*Rhoiptelea chiliantha*) of this genus (Fig. 3, J). This species is today a notable element of the subtropical evergreen forest in China (Wang, 1961).

### Hamamelidaceae

Most of genera of this family have a tricolpate pollen, with blunt end of colpi (Erdtman, 1952). Colpi whose the edges are ripped are often entirely or partially covered by a granular membrana. Ornamentation is usually a heterobrochate reticulum with variable size of luminae.

• Distylium

Angulaperturate pollen grains with the above-mentioned characters have been commonly recorded in many samples (Fig. 4, D–F). Their ornamentation is a heterobrochate slight reticulum with equal size of muri and luminae. This pollen corresponds to the description of the *Distylium* pollen (Endress, 1977; Bogle and Philbrick, 1980), as illustrated by the comparison with the living species *D. chinense* (Fig. 4, N–O). *Distylium* lives today in similar conditions than *Engelhardia* and *Rhoiptelea*. The genus was widely distributed in the Arctic Basin during the Eocene (Suan et al., 2017; Salpin et al., 2019). Today, *Distylium* is a genus of the evergreen Chinese subtropical vegetation (Wang, 1961; Fang et al., 2011).

Angulaperturate pollen grains with the Hamamelidaceae general characters and a tiny reticulum as ornamentation have been commonly recorded in many samples (Fig. 4, J–K). Such pollen grains resemble those of Rhodoleia (Bogle and Philbrick, 1980), after comparison with the modern species *R. championii* (Fig. 4, S–T). *Rhodoleia* is a component of the Southeastern Asia subtropical evergreen forests (Fang et al., 2011).

![](_page_18_Figure_2.jpeg)

Fig. 3. Photographs at TLM and SEM of some fossil and modern pollen grains of elements of the evergreen subtropical forest (shots by J.-P. Suc).

Scale bar for TLM views = 10  $\mu$ m; if different, scale is indicated for SEM views.

A, *Castanopsis-Lithocarpus* (Fagaceae), fossil pollen (292.285 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LOanalysis: A1, scabrate ornamentation; A2, colpori in profile view.

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- B, *Castanopsis-Lithocarpus* (Fagaceae), fossil pollen (328.13 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LOanalysis: B1, scabrate ornamentation; B2, colpori in profile view and optical section.
- C, Castanopsis-Lithocarpus (Fagaceae), fossil pollen (313.41 mcd), rugulate ornamentation.
- D, Castanopsis-Lithocarpus (Fagaceae), fossil pollen (263.815 mcd), rugulate ornamentation.
- E, *Castanopsis chinensis* (Spreng.) Hance (Fagaceae), modern pollen (slide 933 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen P06858924 of the Herbarium of the National Museum of Natural History Paris, collected in Kwangsi Province (China), rugulate ornamentation.
- F, *Lithocarpus cerifer* Hickel & A. Camus (Fagaceae), modern pollen (slide 932 of the GeoBioStratData collection, plant specimen P00744236 of the Herbarium of the National Museum of Natural History Paris, collected in Vietnam, rugulate ornamentation.
- G, Acacia-type (Leguminosae), fossil polyad (228.915 mcd).
- H, *Rhoiptelea* (Juglandaceae), fossil pollen (221.025 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: H1, surface arcus, a thickened band of ectexine; H2, structure of aperture (pore with vestibulum).
- I, *Rhoiptelea* (Juglandaceae), fossil pollen (330.01 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: 11, surface arcus, a thickened band of ectexine; 12, structure of aperture (pore with vestibulum).
- J, *Rhoiptelea chiliantha* Diels & Hand.-Mazz. (Juglandaceae), modern pollen in polar view (slide 2,250 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in China). LO-analysis; J1, surface arcus, a thickened band of ectexine; J2, structure of aperture (pore with vestibulum).
- K, *Mappianthus* (Icacinaceae), fossil pollen (369.465 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: K1, ornamentation showing small spines; K2, structure of an aperture (pore with thick but interrupted annulus and vestibulum).
- L, *Mappianthus* (Icacinaceae), fossil pollen (388.11 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: L1, ornamentation showing small spines; L2, structure of apertures (pore with thick but interrupted annulus and vestibulum)) and optical section.
- M, *Mappianthus iodoides* Hand.-Mazz. (Icacinaceae), modern pollen in polar view (slide 20,323 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in Asia). LO-analysis: M1, ornamentation showing small spines; M2, structure of apertures (pore with thick but interrupted annulus and vestibulum) and optical section.
- N, Celastraceae, fossil pollen (250.065 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: N1, reticulate ornamentation; N2, optical section showing the structure of apertures (colpores with folds).
- O, Craigia (Malvaceae), fossil pollen (376.87 mcd) in polar view: optical section.
- P, Arecaceae, fossil pollen (254,7615 mcd) in distal view. LO-analysis: P1, reticulate ornamentation; P2, focus on the aperture (colpus).
- Q, *Cissus* (Vitaceae), fossil pollen (254,7615 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium) showing one of the three apertures (colpores).

### Resedaceae

Small tricolpate and microreticulate pollen grains with a thick endexine showing cracks within the aperture are recorded (Fig. 4, G–I). The apertural structure, particularly the presence of endocracks, and a thick endexine points out the family of Resedaceae as documented by the comparison with the modern species *R. luteola* (Fig. 4, R) (Punt and Marks, 1995; El Naggar, 2002). Pollen grains of this family are rarely revealed (Cravatte and Suc, 1981). Resedaceae are sun-loving grasses or small shrubs inhabiting today dry environments of subtropical regions, able to penetrate into the tropics or the temperate zone, mainly distributed from Mediterranean to Central Asia or in North America (Abdallah, 1967). Resedaceae pollen grains are frequent in samples 323.55, 278.905, 257.815 and 254.615 mcd, contributing to moderate peaks of grasses correlated with less humid phases.

### Rubiaceae

Morphology of pollen is very diverse in Rubiaceae (Erdtman, 1952). However, some pollen-types are specific of the family where they can be observed in several genera.

### • Canthium-type

Only one triporate reticulate pollen grain with a large granular annulus and thick endexine is recorded (Fig. 4, A). It can be compared with the pollen of the modern species *Canthium ciliatum* (Fig. 4, M).

![](_page_20_Figure_0.jpeg)

Fig. 4. Photographs at TLM and SEM of some fossil and modern pollen grains of elements of the evergreen subtropical forest (continued) (shots by J.-P. Suc).

Scale bar for TLM views =  $10 \mu m$ ; if different, scale is indicated for SEM views.

- A, *Canthium*-type (Rubiaceae), fossil pollen (326.39 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: A1, reticulate ornamentation and pores; A2, pores and optical section.
- B, *Embolanthera* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (297.72 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: A1, reticulate ornamentation; A2, colpi and optical section.
- C, *Mussaenda*-type (Rubiaceae), fossil pollen (228.915 mcd) in equatorial view. LO-analysis: C1, reticulate ornamentation and two of the four colpori; C2, two other colpori and optical section.
- D, *Distylium* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (330.01 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: D1, reticulate ornamentation; D2, colpi and optical section.
- E, *Distylium* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (318.86 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: E1, reticulate ornamentation and colpi; E2, colpi and optical section.

- F, *Distylium* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (313.41 mcd) in polar view. F1, overview; F2, detail of reticulate ornamentation.
- G, Resedaceae, fossil pollen (313.41 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: G1, reticulate ornamentation; G2, endocracks and optical section.
- H, Resedaceae, fossil pollen (257.815 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: H1, reticulate ornamentation and endocracks; H2, endocracks and optical section.
- I, Resedaceae, fossil pollen (263.815 mcd) in equatorial view. I1, overview; I2, detail of reticulate ornamentation and endocracks.
- J, *Rhodoleia* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (261.506 mcd) in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: J1, reticulate ornamentation; J2, colpi and optical section.
- K, *Rhodoleia* (Hamamelidaceae), fossil pollen (257.815 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: K1, reticulate ornamentation and clopi with their ripped edges; K2, optical section.
- L, *Uncaria*-type (Rubiaceae), fossil pollen (328.13 mcd) in polar view. LO-analysis: L1, reticulate ornamentation; L2, folded structure of colpori and optical section.
- M, *Canthium ciliatum* (D.Dietr.) Kuntze (Rubiaceae), modern pollen in polar view (slide 22,744 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in South Africa). LO-analysis: M1, reticulate ornamentation; M2, pori.
- N & O, *Distylium chinense* (Franch. ex Hemsl.) Diels (Hamamelidaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 13,996 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in China).
- N, pollen in equatorial view (intercolpium). LO-analysis: N1, reticulate ornamentation; N2, optical section.
- O, pollen in polar view. LO-analysis: O1, reticulate ornamentation and ripped edges of colpi with a blunt end; O2, optical section.
- P, *Embolanthera glabrescens* H.L.Li (Hamamelidaceae), modern pollen in equatorial view (slide 14,245 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in China). LO-analysis: P1, reticulate ornamentation; P2, optical section.
- Q, *Mussaenda laxa* (Hook.f.) Hutch. ex Gamble (Rubiaceae), modern pollen in polar view (slide 9954 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in India). LO-analysis: Q1, reticulate ornamentation; Q2, optical section showing the four colpori.
- R, *Reseda luteola* L. (Resedaceae), modern pollen in equatorial view (intercolpium) (slide 17,840 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in India). LO-analysis: R1, reticulate ornamentation; R2, colpi with endocracks and optical section.
- S & T, *Rhodoleia championii* Hook.f. (Hamamelidaceae), modern pollen grain (slide 12,281 of the ISEM collection, plant specimen collected in Malaysia).
- S, pollen in equatorial view. LO-analysis: S1, microreticulate ornamentation; S2, colpi and optical section.
- T, pollen in polar view. LO-analysis: T1, microreticulate ornamenetation; T2, optical section.
- U, *Uncaria thwaitesii* (= *U. elliptica* R.Br. ex G.Don) (Rubiaceae), modern pollen grain in equatorial view (aperture facing) (slide 23,527 of the ISEM collection, unknown origin of the plant specimen). LO-analysis: U1, reticulate ornamentation and colporus with folds; U2, optical section.

### • Mussaenda-type

Only one tetracolporate reticulate pollen with a folded apertural structure and a small round pore with a thick annulus is recorded (Fig. 4, C). *Mussaenda laxa* shows a good example of this pollen type (Fig. 4, Q).

### • Uncaria-type

Two tricolporate reticulate pollen grains with a folded apertural structure and a small round pore with a thick annulus are recorded (Fig. 4, L). *Uncaria elliptica* shows a good example of this pollen type (Fig. 4, U). Rubiaceae are important components of the present-day Chinese tropical and evergreen subtropical forests (Wang, 1961; Hou, 1983).

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