A new occurrence of the genus *Tonkinella* in northern Spain and the Middle Cambrian intercontinental correlation

**ABSTRACT**

The genus *Tonkinella* is a typical polimeroid trilobite in lower Middle Cambrian rocks from Vietnam, Canada, U.S.A., India, Korea, Siberia, China and Argentina. It has recently been found in the Mediterranean region (Iberian Chain, northeastern Spain). In this paper we refer the finding of *Tonkinella* aff. *breviceps* in the Leonian (lower Middle Cambrian) of the Cantabrian Mountains (northern Spain), analysing its stratigraphical position, fossil assemblages, biochronology and utility for intercontinental correlation. The presence of this taxon allows us to make a more accurate correlation between the Middle Cambrian biochronological scales of Laurentia, the Mediterranean area and China.


**INTRODUCTION**

One of the most significant problems in Cambrian correlation is the strong provinciality of the polimeroid trilobites, which are the main faunas used in Cambrian biochronology (Shergold, 1997). This is why studies of the presence of common trilobite species in different biogeographical realms are one of the lines of research encouraged by the International Subcommission on Cambrian Stratigraphy (I.S.C.S.).

The genus *Tonkinella* is one of the most widespread polimeroid trilobite taxa in lower Middle Cambrian rocks. It was defined in Vietnam by Mansuy (1916) and afterwards was found in India, North America, Korea, Siberia, China and Argentina (see Bordonaro and Baldis, 1987; Sundberg, 1994; Bordonaro and Banchig, 1995; Jell and Hughes, 1997). Recently Liñán and Gozalo (1999) defined *Tonkinella sequei* from the uppermost Lower Cambrian of the Iberian Chain (northeastern Spain), representing the first time *Tonkinella* was found in the Early Cambrian. Moreover, this was the first record of the genus in the Acadobaltic Province.

In this paper *Tonkinella* aff. *breviceps* Kobayashi, 1934 is cited from the Upper Leonian (lower Middle Cambrian; Liñán et al., 1993) of the Cantabrian Mountains at the lower Presa del Porma section, “Pu” (“u” stands for the German untere, lower) in northern Spain (see Sdzuy, 1995; Gámez Vintaned et al., 2000). The meaning and value of this species as a tool for intercontinental correlation is evaluated. *Tonkinella breviceps* has a wide geographical distribution. It has previously been cited in Kashmir (India: Kobayashi, 1934; Reed, 1934; Jell and Hughes, 1997), Korea (Kobayashi, 1935; Chough et al., 2000),
GEOLOGICAL AND STRATIGRAPHIC SETTING OF THE LOWER PRESA DEL PORMA SECTION

The fossil described here was found at the lower Presa del Porma section ("Pu") in León province (northern Spain), whose UTM coordinates are 30T UN 121548. The section is located in the topographic map sheet at scale 1:50.000 named Boñar (number 104 of the cartography of Servicio Geográfico del Ejército Español). From a geological point of view the studied area is located in the Somiedo-Correcilla Domain, within the Cantabrian Zone. The Middle Cambrian Lán cara and Oville Formations which crops out in the area of Presa del Porma were characterised by Sdzuy and Liñán (1993) as representative of the so-called Los Barrios facies (Fig. 1).

The lower Presa del Porma section has been previously studied by Sdzuy (1969, 1995) and Zamarreño (1972). The first author listed the trilobite faunas and showed a biostratigraphic sketch for the upper Lán cara Formation and lower Oville Formation, while the second analysed the stratigraphy and sedimentology of the Lán cara Formation. The fossils studied in this paper come from the lowermost visible strata of the Oville Formation (Fig. 2). At this locality, a thickness of 10 m at the boundary between the underlying Lán cara Formation and the Oville Formation is covered by soil. The covered interval possibly includes the lowest part of the Oville Formation. The rocks containing Tonkinella consist of green shales bearing carbonate nodules and a few levels of very fine green sandstones.

Tonkinella aff. breviceps has been found at the lower Presa del Porma section in beds containing the following trilobites species: Eccaparadoxides astrianus (SDZUY, 1968), Paradoxides? enormis SDZUY, 1968, Acadolens decorus SDZUY, 1968 and Conocoryphe (Parabailiella) matutina SDZUY, 1968. The age of this assemblage is Eccaparadoxides astrianus Zone, which characterises the late Leonian in the Mediterranean biochronology (Gozalo and Liñán, 1995; Sdzuy et al., 1999). A late Leonian age for the specimen of Tonkinella aff. breviceps cited here is also supported by the first record of Badulesia tenera (HARTT in Dawson, 1865), which is found some 4 m above in the same succession. The FAD of this species marks the beginning of the Caesaraugustan Stage (sensu Sdzuy et al., 1996). The Leonian/Caesaraugustan boundary has been correlated with the base of the Triplagnostus gibbus or Psychagnostus gibbus Zone by Sdzuy et al. (1999); see also Gozalo et al. (in this issue).
ORDER: Corynexochida KOBAYASHI, 1935

FAMILY: Oryctocephalidae BEECHER, 1897

SUBFAMILY: Oryctocephalinae BEECHER, 1897

GENUS Tonkinella MANSUY, 1916

Type species: Tonkinella flabelliformis MANSUY, 1916

Tonkinella aff. breviceps KOBAYASHI, 1934

Figure 3

Material: A pygidium preserved as inner and outer moulds in green shales from the Oville Formation at the lower Presa del Porma section (“Pu”) in León province (northern Spain). Specimen deposited at the Museo Paleontológico de la Universidad de Zaragoza (Zaragoza, Spain) under reference MPZ 2000/3.

Dimensions: Pygidial length is 4.4 mm, axis length 3.1 mm, pygidial width 6.7 mm, axis width 1.55 mm. Posterior pleural segment width is 0.75 mm. Pygidial length is 65% of pygidial width. Posterior pleural segment width is 11% of pygidial width.

Figure 4

Distribution of Tonkinella species based on the number of axial rings and relative width of the posterior pleural segment (modified from Sundberg, 1994).
Remarks: *Tonkinella breviceps* has recently been comprehensively described from undistorted limestone specimens by Sundberg (1994). Also, the type material has been reviewed by Jell and Hughes (1997), who chose the lectotype and refigured the type. Sundberg (1994: p. 35, fig. 23) used the relative width of the posterior pleural segment and the number of axial rings to recognize four groups of pygidia within the genus *Tonkinella*. *T. aff. breviceps* is placed within the *T. breviceps* group (Fig. 4). The pygidium described here shows the same features as the material described and/or figured by Sundberg (1994) and Jell and Hughes (1997), and its size is included within the specific variability.

Although the Spanish pygidium shows the main characteristics of *T. breviceps* pygidia, we prefer to keep our specimen in open nomenclature because we have not yet found any cranidium.

**DISCUSSION: AGE, CORRELATION AND BIOGEOGRAPHY**

According to Whittington (1995), the youngest known oryctocephalid trilobite appears to be a species of *Tonkinella*. The same author interpreted *Tonkinella* species from North America, Vietnam, and Siberia as occurring at a similar level. Chang (1988: p. 69) placed the Vietnamese specimens in the Hsuchuangian Stage. Jell and Hughes (1997: text-fig. 4) and Hughes and Jell (1999: fig. 2) placed the Himalayan *Tonkinella* in the same Stage. *Tonkinella* was found at the highest part of the Amgan Stage in...
Siberia (Astashkin et al., 1991: p. 68). Nevertheless, the most continuous record of *Tonkinella* has been found in the Great Basin of North America by Sundberg (1994).

*T. breviceps* appears in the *Altiocculus* Subzone (uppermost *Ehmianniella* Zone) defined by Sundberg (op. cit.), who wrote (p. 11): “As defined here, the *Altiocculus* Subzone also incorporates the upper part of the *Pyhagnostostus praeccurrens* agnostoid Zone and the majority of the *P. gibbus* agnostoid biozone.” The occurrences of this species from other countries are of a similar age (Sundberg, 1994; Jell and Hughes, 1997; Fig. 5).

The level containing *Tonkinella aff. breviceps* in Spain can be correlated with the level just below the FAD of *Triplagnostus gibbus* (see above). In consequence, we tentatively correlate the level with *Tonkinella aff. breviceps* with the lower part of the *Altiocculus* Subzone, particularly with the levels preceding to the *Triplagnostus gibbus* FAD.

Biogeographically, *Tonkinella* species are widely distributed in lower latitudes at the early Middle Cambrian (Fig. 6), in accordance with the palaeogeographical reconstruction proposed by McKerrow et al. (1992). They appear within the tropical carbonate development zone suggested by Courjault-Radé et al. (1992) for the continental margins of Gondwana. This interpretation is in accordance with Shergold’s (1969) idea of considering the orectocephalid as a tropical fauna. The intercontinental distribution of *Tonkinella in Laurentia*, Siberia and Gondwana may be interpreted as a result of its pelagic habit, at least during a larval phase.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, the presence of *Tonkinella aff. breviceps* allows us to make a more accurate correlation between the Middle Cambrian biochronological scales of Laurentia, the Mediterranean area and China (Fig. 5). Accordingly, the *Eccaparadoxides asturianus* Zone is an equivalent of the upper part of the *Triplagnostus praeccurrens* Zone or lower part of the *Altiococcus* Subzone in the Great Basin (U.S.A.). This new datum is in agreement with the general correlation suggested by Sdzuy et al. (1999) for the Upper Leonian, and represents the first correlation point between the Spanish and Kashmirian Cambrian.

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