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Magnetic polarity stratigraphy of Plio–Pleistocene Pinjor Formation (type locality), Siwalik Group, NW Himalaya, India

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Pinjor (near Chandigarh) is the only type locality in India for the Siwalik Group. We present here, the magnetic polarity stratigraphy of two sections (Ghaggar river and Moginand Nalla) from this area and propose the Ghaggar section for consideration as a standard stratigraphic section for the Pinjor Formation of the Siwalik Group. A total of 83 oriented sites from the 1030 m thick Ghaggar section give an age estimate of -2.7 to -0.5 Ma and 23 sites from 310 m thick Moginand section deduce an age estimate of -2 to -0.86 Ma. The continuously exposed Ghaggar river section has been previously well documented using sedimentology, biostratigraphy and palaeoecology. A fission track age of 2.14 ± 0.5 Ma on the volcanic ash in the Ghaggar river section coincides with the Gauss–Matuyama polarity reversal (2.58 Ma) constraining the lower limit for the Pinjor Formation. Occurrence of the Lower Boulder Conglomerate Formation at -1.79 Ma marks the upper boundary for the Pinjor Formation that coincides with the Plio–Pleistocene boundary. The thermal demagnetization spectra uniquely reveal the predominance of a uni-component system, resulting in a better clustering of the magnetostratigraphic data (normal mean $D = 8.2^\circ$, $I = 27.0^\circ$, $\alpha_{95} = 8.8^\circ$; reverse mean $D = 167.4^\circ$, $I = -25.9^\circ$, $\alpha_{95} = 6.9^\circ$). With the present magnetostratigraphic time constraints, the Ghaggar section forms an ideal location for more interdisciplinary studies along the Plio–Pleistocene boundary in the Himalaya and may be considered as a standard stratotype section for the Pinjor Formation of the Siwalik Group.

STANDARD stratigraphic records of major climatic changes such as Plio–Pleistocene (-1.77 Ma) provide a laboratory for interdisciplinary approaches to understand the natural processes. There is little documentation of such records from the Indian subcontinent. The Pinjor Formation of the Siwalik Group witnessed the Plio–Pleistocene tectonic and climatic changes in the Himalayan Foreland Basin (HFB). The Pinjor area near Chandigarh has been marked as the type locality for the Pinjor Formation of the Siwalik Group way back in 1913 by Pilgrim¹. However, little attention has been paid to highlight any stratotype section for this only type locality of the Siwalik Group available in India.

In this context we attempt magnetic polarity stratigraphy of one of the well exposed sections (the Ghaggar river section) and its extension to Moginand Nalla (about 4 km eastward). A magnetostratigraphic correlation has also been established to previously dated Patiali Rao², Khetpurali³ and Haripur Khol⁴ sections stretching over an area of about 60 km in the Subathu sub-basin of the HFB.

The Siwalik Group

The Siwalik Group comprises more than ~ 6000 m thick freshwater molasse sediments, thus providing an opportunity to study sedimentation, palaeoclimate and tectonic processes^{5–7} in the HFB for the past ~ 18 Ma. The Siwalik Group is divided into the Lower, Middle and Upper Siwalik subgroups based on the faunal assemblages and lithofacies variations^{1,7,8}. The Lower Siwalik Subgroup (-18 to -11 Ma) comprising Kamliyal and Chinji Formations is characterized by first appearance of *Giraffidae* and the depositional environment of high sinuosity meandering streams with broad floodplains⁷. At outcrop level, the Lower Siwaliks comprise highly indurated, fine to medium-grained, grey to greenish-blue and purple sandstones interbedded with reddish-brown to grey and hard concretionary mudstones and palaeosols. These are also characterized by the appearance of staurolite in the heavy mineral assemblage⁹. The type localities for the Lower Siwalik Subgroup are described from the Kamliyal and Chinji villages of Pakistan in the Potwar Plateau. The Middle Siwalik Subgroup (-11 Ma to 5.23 Ma), subdivided into the Nagri and Dhok Pathan Formations records first appearance of the fossil *Hipparion* and appearance of the heavy mineral kyanite⁶. The Nagri Formation (-11 to 8.5 Ma) is characteristic of 'salt and pepper' textured, grey sandstones mainly deposited in braided channels⁷. The Dhok Pathan Formation records the predominance of mudstone and palaeosol facies. The Upper Siwalik Subgroup comprises Tatrot Formation (-5.26 to -2.5 Ma), Pinjor Formation (-2.5 to -1.7 Ma) and Boulder Conglomerate Formation (-1.7 to -0.5 Ma). The Upper Siwaliks are characterized by the appearance of heavy minerals, sillimanite and hornblende⁶. Appearance of the fast-invading or migratory forms of Pinjor fauna (e.g. *Equus*, *Camelus*)¹, is the characteristic faunal change in the Upper Siwalik Subgroup.

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