

The origin of stylolites in the Ilam Formation (Lorestan Province) SE Iran

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I. Summary

The stylolites of the Ilam Formation in the Lorestan Province have been investigated. The aim of the study is to distinguish diagenetic stylolites from tectonic ones in this formation.

Field observation clearly shows two kinds of stylolite. The interpretation of the constructed diagrams indicated orientationally two groups of stylolite. The first group lies parallel to the strike strike of the bedding plane with different dip directions, which is nearly horizontal is the diagenetic one.

II. General Setting

The Ilam Formation is part of the Upper Cretaceous carbonate sequence deposited on the northern and southern and southern and part of the study area (Zagros Basin) (Fig.1). Basin subsidence and sediment accumulation began during the Lias.

III. Aim of study

Because of abundance of stylolites in the rocks of the study area, this investigation was conducted to distinguish symmetrical relationship between macroscopic dominant structures and the above

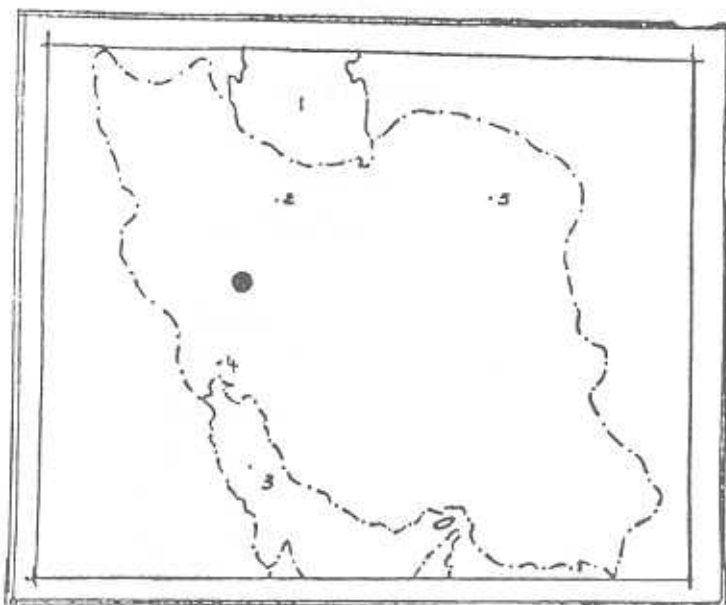


Fig. 1. 1) Caspian Sea, 2) Tehran, 3) Persian Gulf
4) Ahvaz, 5) Mashad, 6) Study area.

mentioned stylolites. In other words, the aim of this study is to differentiate the tectonic stylolites from the diagenetic one.

IV. General Concept

Stylolites are very irregular discontinuities that show alternating peaks and hollows that correspond to each other on the two surfaces (Fig. 1). In cross section their appearance

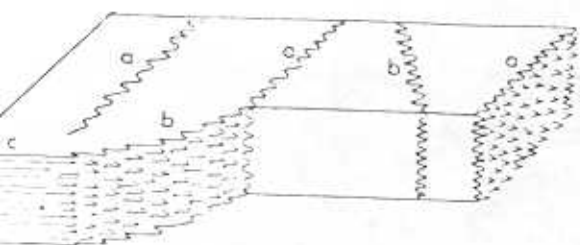


Fig. 2. Examples of stylolites. (a) Symmetrical stylolites. (b) Asymmetrical stylolites, which can lead to a fracture surface with slip striations (c).

Similar to the curves produced by some recording instruments (e.g. seismographs), conical and cylindrical stylolites can be distinguished by their appearance. The lateral extension of conical stylolites range from a few millimeters to few centimeters, while the columns of cylindrical stylolites range from a few millimeters or centimeters up to several centimeters.

Stylolites are therefore, extremely irregular and non-planar. In some places, the irregular joint

surfaces can be coated with a thin film of clay or a light coating of clay residues or insoluble iron oxides. Stylolites are often found in carbonate rocks and occasionally in sandstones.

Stylolites form in rocks, under the influence of compressive stress that force together rocks on either sides of a discontinuity. The two sides interpenetrate as a result of dissolution of the rock matrix near the boundary between them.

Shaub's theories (1939, 1949, 1955), which suggested that stylolites form before rock consolidation, are no longer regarded as valid. Nevertheless, numerous authors (Blake and Roy, 1949; Dunnington, 1945; Park and Schot, 1968 a and b; Rigby, 1953; Stockdale, 1945) considered that stylolites form after lithification but during diagenesis.

More recently, stylolites, whose origin is certainly tectonic, have been described (Arthaud and Mattaure, 1969; Beiersdorf, 1969; Jarozewski, 1969; Wagner 1967). Moreover, Arthaud and Mattaure (1972), studying some stylolites parallel to stratification, showed clearly that they were formed during a stage of tectonic activity.

Sylindrical stylolites could be diagenetic in origin, while tectonic stylolites seem more likely to be conical type (Fig. 3).

In stylolites, the peaks and columns are always parallel to the shortening direction. The joints with symmetrical and asymmetrical stylolites are

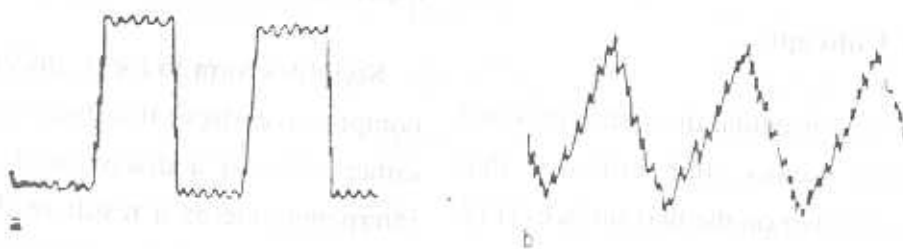


Fig. 3. Cross-section of (a) cylindrical stylolites (b) conical stylolites.

perpendicular and oblique to the shortening (Fig. 5&8).

direction, respectively. For this reason, on a given surface, symmetrical stylolites involve greater dissolution of the rock than asymmetrical stylolites. Depending on spatial arrangement of pre-existing discontinuities or fissures, every kind of stylolites is possible, from symmetrical to asymmetrical.

V. Observations and analysis

As already mentioned, one of the most important rock unit in the study area is the Ilam Formation. Stratigraphically the Ilam Formation lies between Sarvak and Gurpi formations (Upper Cretaceous). Lithologically it consists of well bedded gray argilaceous limestone with a thickness of about 190 m.

Field observations clearly show two kinds of stylolites. Some of them are parallel in orientation to the bedding planes of the Ilam Formation (Fig.4) and the others are oblique

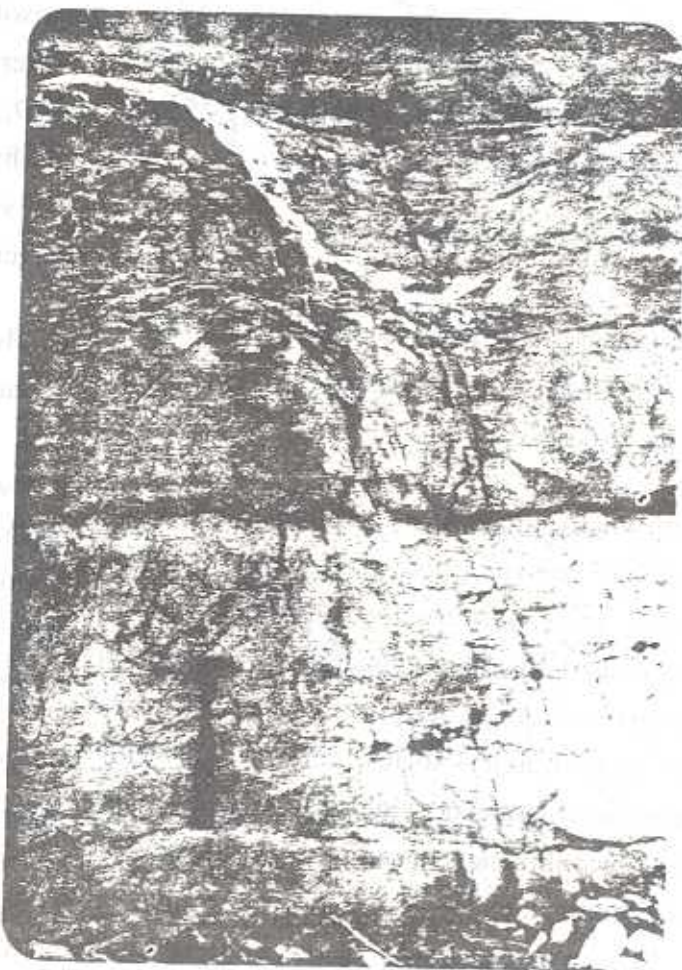


Fig. 4. Stylolites parallel to the bedding planes.

According to a structural and geometrical analysis of the rocks in the study area, numerous stylolite surfaces was observed and measured.

Stereogram of Fig. 7 is a point diagram of all stylolite surfaces in the Ilam Formation and shows two groups of stylolites. The first group shows that their polepoints lie planes in NNE

and meso folds of the Ilam Formation, in the area were constructed and stereograms were drawn (S. Parsi 1989). A correlation between stereogram of Fig. 7 with Fig. 8 shows that the first group of stylolites are parallel to the bedding planes with different dip directions (60° - 80°). These are tectonic stylolites in symmetry, because they are perpendicular to the A-axis, which represents the

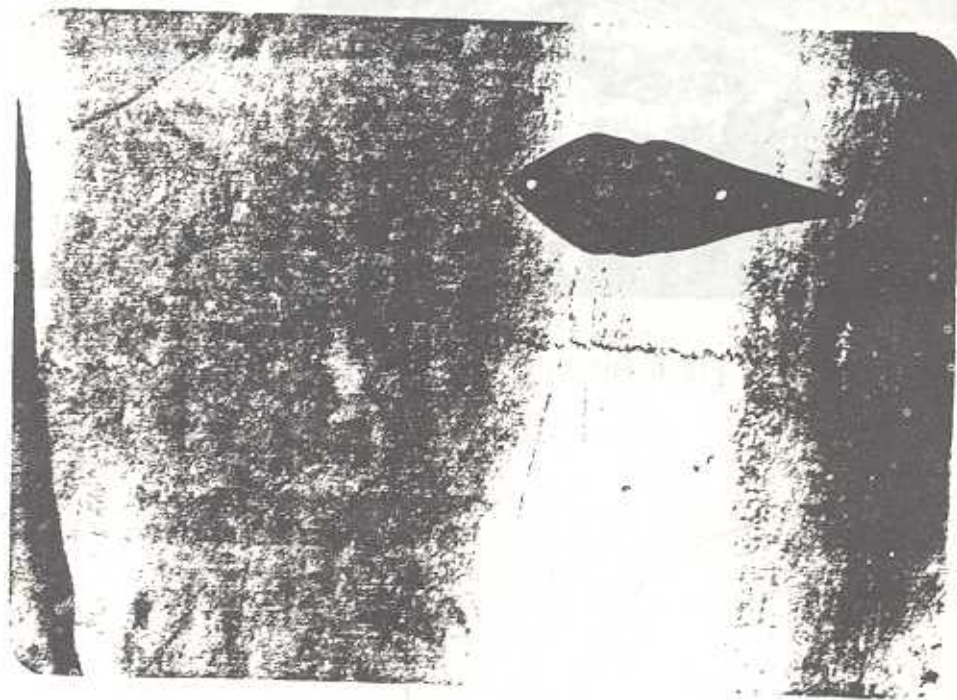


Fig. 5. Stylolites oblique to the bedding

V sectors of the stereogram. This position of the polepoints means that this group of stylolite surfaces are strike-slip like NW-SE, but with different dip directions. The polepoint of the second group lie in the middle part of stereogram which means dip direction of them is around zero.

There is a clear relationship between macroscopic folds and stylolites of the Ilam Formation, the tectonic axes of macro

and greatest principal stress direction. That means that the shortening is occurred in the NE-SW direction.

The existence of extension fractures perpendicular to B-axis of the folds in the area confirmed the tectonic character of the mentioned stylolites.

The polepoint of the second group, which lies in the middle part of the stereogram means that

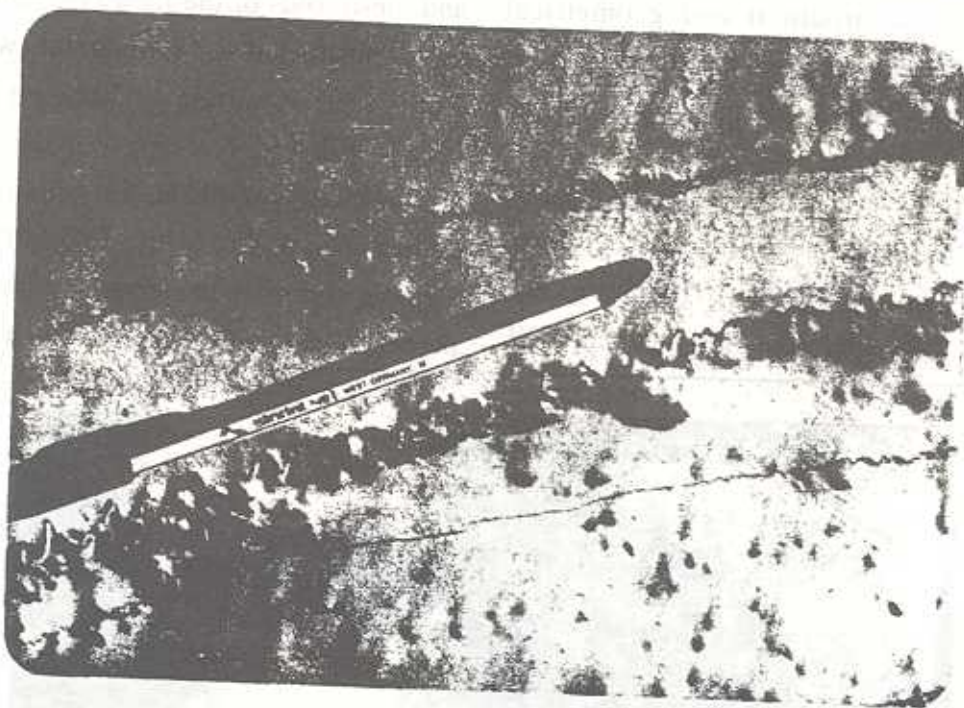


Fig. 6. Stylolite to the bedding planes.

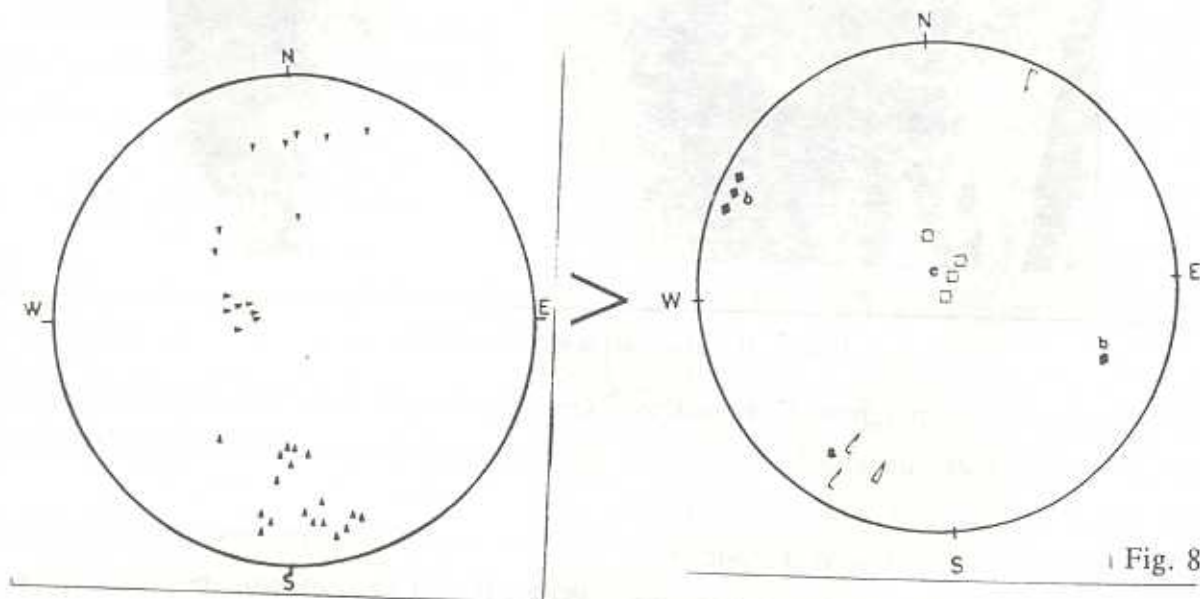


Fig. 7. Point diagram of all stylolite surfaces in the Ilam Formation.

they are nearly horizontal and could be categorized as diagenetic stylolites.

According to the results of the stereogram analysis it appears that both tectonic and diagenetic stylolites are present in the Ilam Formation.

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