

DIVERSE DEVONIAN PLANT ASSEMBLAGES FROM WESTERN VENEZUELA

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Plant megafossils from 11 stratigraphic horizons spread through approximately 200m of the Lower Member of the Campo Chico Formation, Sierra de Perijá, Western Venezuela, comprise the most diverse Devonian assemblages yet reported from Gondwana and are therefore of great palaeobotanical and biogeographical interest.

Recent trackbuilding in the Caño Colorado area has produced dramatic new exposures allowing revision of local geology and more detailed study of the sedimentology than hitherto possible. A deltaic style of sedimentation is confirmed, with the better preserved plant fossils being found in river channel and overbank deposits. Interbedded marine phases are suggested by scolecodonts and articulated crinoid material. The plants are preserved mainly as coalified compressions, with a few permineralisations at two horizons.

Fossils include lycophytes, zosterophylls, trimerophytes, cladoxylaleans, progymnosperms, "*Taenioocrada*", and a few taxa of as yet uncertain affinity. Herbaceous lycophytes are particularly common, being dominant in some horizons, including a number of species of *Haskinsia* and *Colpodexylon*, ? *Archaeosigillaria* sp., and the first record of *Leclercqia* from the Devonian of South America.

Whilst the stratigraphic distributions of many of the genera so far identified are large, some ranging from Upper Eifelian to Lower Frasnian and greater, a Givetian age is preferred for the assemblages as a whole, as compared with the Frasnian-Famennian age most recently proposed for the Lower Member of the Campo Chico Formation. The assemblages bear closest resemblance in total composition to those of New York State.