18O-depleted sulfate fingerprint of Paleoproterozoic glacial meltwater

B. KILLINGSWORTH1*, P. SANSJOFRE1, P. PHILIPPOT2, C. THOMAZO3, P. CARTIGNY2 AND S.V. LALONDE1

1CNRS-UMR6538 Laboratoire Géosciences Océan, European Institute for Marine Studies, Université de Bretagne Occidentale, 29280 Plouzané, France (*correspondence: bryan.killingsworth@univ-brest.fr)
2Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris, Sorbonne-Paris Cité, Université Paris Diderot, CNRS, 75238 Paris Cedex 05, France
3UMR CNRS/uB6282 Biogéosciences, Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, 6 Bd Gabriel, 21000 Dijon, France

After the Great Oxidation Event (GOE) at ~2.45 Ga, the onset of oxidative weathering, in conjunction with mechanical weathering from globally extensive glaciations [1, 2], should have resulted in the most intense fluxes of sulfate in Earth history up to that point. However, sulfate concentrations and isotope compositions around the GOE are not well constrained [3].

To constrain the GOE sulfate record, we extracted and measured oxygen-18 of trace sedimentary barite (BaSO4) from drill cores of the Turee Creek Group, W. Australia, that record multiple glacial diamictite layers occurring between 2.45 to 2.22 Ga [4]. The barites from Turee Creek cores have δ18O as low as -19.5‰ and average -10.4‰ (n=34), a record of sulfate oxygen-18 depletion that indicates a glacial meltwater source of oxygen. These sulfate δ18O depletions are only comparable to that directly measured from relatively more recent, 635 Myr, snowball Earth glacial sediments [5].

The Turee Creek oxygen-18 depleted sulfate was measured from carbonates that occur 500 m above the Meteorite Bore Member, the nearest glaciogenic horizon. These extremely oxygen-18 depleted sulfates testify to the profound nature of Paleoproterozoic glaciation, and may imply that globally extensive glaciation lasted much longer than indicated by the episodic presence of glacial diamictites alone.