Black shale formations as geochemical markers of tectonic setting along active plate margins?

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Black shales represent unique sedimentary archives providing important clues into the marine conditions throughout the Earth's history. In the ~635-520 Ma Blovice accretionary complex, Bohemian Massif, black shales [I] form meters to tens of meters thick stratiform bodies within the siliciclastic successions, [II] occur in close proximity to volcanic bodies of arc, OIB-like and MORB-like compositions, or [III] form cm-sized fragments within the graywacke matrix ('block-in-matrix' fabric). Here, we present combined major/trace element and Mo (δ^{98} Mo) isotopic data that show some significant differences among these three different suites of black shales. The Type I black shales undergone common strong silicification resulting in high Sr and Ba, exhibit well-defined negative correlation between SiO₂ and other oxides, contain the lowest amounts of most incompatible trace elements (e.g., REE, Nb, Rb, Th, U) and predominantly yield largely negative $\delta^{98} \text{Mo}$ values (< down to -1.1 ‰) suggesting markedly oxic conditions during their deposition. In contrast, the Type II black shales are characterized by the highest LREE enrichment paralleled by the lowest SiO_2 (< 65 wt. %). Finally, the **Type III** black shales have homogenous SiO₂, but large range of Al₂O₃ and low MgO and P2O5, the highest Ba. The Type II and III shales contain high TOC (up to 7 wt. %) and yield largely positive δ^{98} Mo values (up to +1.0 ‰) suggesting deposition in anoxic-euxinic conditions. In conclusion, we suggest that these three different geochemical compositions are sensitive markers of diverse and temporally changing tectonic settings on an oceanic plate: (1) black shales overlying a volcanic island arc (Type I), (2) black shales deposited on the seafloor in association with MORB (Type II), and (3) black shales associated with terrigenous trench-fill turbidites (Type III).

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[1] Hajná (2019) Gondwana Res, 10.1016/j.gr.2018.10.010,

[2] Ackerman et al. (2019) Gondwana Res, under review.