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Quentin Pillot, Baptiste Suchéras-Marx, Anta-Clarisse Sarr, Clara T Bolton, Yannick Donnadieu. The Late Miocene Biogenic Bloom: A globally distributed but not an ubiquitous event. 2022. hal-03843365

# HAL Id: hal-03843365 https://hal.science/hal-03843365

Preprint submitted on 8 Nov 2022

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# The Late Miocene Biogenic Bloom : A globally distributed but not an ubiquitous event

Pillot Q.<sup>1</sup>, Suchéras-Marx B.<sup>1</sup>, Sarr A-C.<sup>1</sup>, Bolton C. T.<sup>1</sup>and Donnadieu Y.<sup>1</sup>

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# Key Points:

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6	•	The Late Miocene Biogenic Bloom (LMBB) is expressed in sediment cores in var-
7		ious oceanographic settings.
8	•	Almost $40\%$ of the sites in the compilation show no expression of the LMBB sig-
9		nal.
10	•	The origin of the LMBB could be a generalised increase in upwelling activity.

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#### 11 Abstract

The Late Miocene Biogenic Bloom (LMBB) is a late Miocene to early Pliocene oceano-12 graphic event characterized by high accumulation rates of opal from diatoms and cal-13 cite from calcareous nannofossils and planktic foraminifera. This multi-million year event 14 has been recognized in sediment cores from the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The 15 numerous studies discussing the LMBB lead us to believe that this event is omnipresent 16 in all oceans, although this hypothesis need to be tested. Moreover, the origin of this event 17 is still widely discussed. In this study we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of 18 19 the geographical and temporal aspects of the LMBB by compiling published ocean drilling (DSDP, ODP and IODP) records of sedimentation rates,  $CaCO_3$  and opal and terrige-20 nous accumulation rates that cover the late Miocene and early Pliocene interval. Our 21 data compilation shows that traces of the LMBB are present in many different locations 22 but in a very heterogeneous way, highlighting that the LMBB is not a pervasive event. 23 The compilation in addition shows that the sites where the LMBB is recorded are mainly 24 located in areas with a high productivity regime (i.e. upwelling systems). We suggest 25 that the most likely hypothesis to explain the LMBB is a global increase in upwelling 26 intensity due to an increase in wind strength or an increase in deep water formation, ramp-27 ing up global thermohaline circulation. 28

#### <sup>29</sup> 1 Introduction

The late Miocene is marked by a major event recognized in deep-sea sediments called 30 the Late Miocene Biogenic Bloom (LMBB). This event is characterized by high rates of 31 opal accumulation from diatoms and radiolarians and high rates of calcite accumulation 32 from calcareous nannofossils and planktonic foraminifera (e.g. Farrell et al., 1995; Dick-33 ens & Owen, 1999; Grant & Dickens, 2002; Diester-Haass et al., 2005; Lyle & Baldauf, 34 2015; Drury et al., 2021; Bolton et al., 2022). The LMBB event, first described by Farrell 35 et al. (1995), has been recovered in multiple sites of the world ocean (Figure 1) but its 36 timing is heterogeneous across the sites and its signature in the data record has been iden-37 tified from a variety of different proxies. Farrell et al. (1995) define the LMBB based on 38 an increase in biogenic deposits (CaCO<sub>3</sub>, biogenic silica (opal), and nannofossils) between 39 6.7 and 4.5 million years ago (Ma) in the Eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean, and inter-40 pret this increase to be related to increased biological productivity. The Eastern Equa-41 torial Pacific region was also studied by Lyle and Baldauf (2015) who observed the LMBB 42 between 8 and 4.5 Ma, marked by long periods of high opal and  $CaCO_3$  deposition. Records 43 from the same region, with better resolution and updated age models, were used by Lyle 44 et al. (2019) to estimate the end of the event at about 4.4 Ma, at a time of major de-45 crease in sedimentation rate. Outside of the East Equatorial Pacific, Grant and Dick-46 ens (2002) identified the LMBB event in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, where it takes 47 the form of an increase in  $CaCO_3$  mass accumulation between 9 and 3.8 Ma with a max-48 imum around 5 Ma. L. Zhang et al. (2009) identified the LMBB in records from the South 49 China Sea that exhibit increased mass accumulation of  $CaCO_3$  and opal between 12 and 50 6 Ma. In the Atlantic Ocean, Diester-Haass et al. (2005) identified the LMBB in three 51 different regions. In the North Atlantic, CaCO<sub>3</sub> mass accumulation rate (MAR) and ben-52 thic foraminiferal accumulation rates reached a maximum at 5 Ma. This maximum was 53 observed earlier in records from the tropical ocean (around 6 Ma) and the South Atlantic 54 Ocean (around 8.2 Ma). In the South Atlantic (ODP site 1264), Drury et al. (2021) stud-55 ied the evolution of CaCO<sub>3</sub> MAR at orbital resolution. The onset of the LMBB is de-56 tected at 7.8 Ma and the end at 3.3 Ma with an optimum between 7 and 6.4 Ma. Records 57 from lower productivity regions in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans have also been used 58 to identify the LMBB (Hermoyian & Owen, 2001). By measuring the rate of mass ac-59 cumulation of phosphorus, they found a signature of the LMBB with peak productiv-60 ity around 4-5 Ma. In the Indian Ocean, an increase in productivity between 9 and 3.5 61 Ma was identified by Dickens and Owen (1999) which is reflected in an increase in  $CaCO_3$ 62

mass accumulation as well as the spatial expansion of the Oxygen Minimum Zone. Nevertheless, Lübbers et al. (2019) suggest a much earlier onset of the LMBB in the Indian

- Ocean at 11.2 Ma based on an increase in Log (Ba/Ti) associated with a change in sed-
- <sup>66</sup> iment color from red to green.

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This increase in biogenic sedimentation is coeval with significant changes in the global 67 climate system. Although the land-sea distribution has been quasi-stable since the late 68 Miocene, the configuration of several major seaways evolved during this period: the Cen-69 tral American Seaway underwent final closure (O'Dea et al., 2016), the Bering Seaway 70 71 opened (Gladenkov & Gladenkov, 2004) and the Indonesian Seaway underwent progressive restriction (Kuhnt et al., 2004), all of which likely triggered major changes in oceanic 72 circulation (e.g. Brierley & Fedorov, 2016). Alongside these paleogeographic changes, 73 global cooling occurred at the end of the Miocene, associated with an increase in the merid-74 ional sea surface temperature gradient (Herbert et al., 2016; Martinot et al., 2022). The 75 global decrease in temperature is probably driven by a significant drop in the partial pres-76 sure of  $CO_2$  in the atmosphere (p $CO_2$ ) from about 600 ppm in the middle Miocene to 77 about 400 ppm in the early Pliocene (e.g. Rae et al., 2021). The establishment of a small 78 permanent ice on Greenland is also inferred during the late Miocene (Helland & Holmes, 79 1997; John & Krissek, 2002; Bierman et al., 2016). The expansion of deserts may also 80 be contemporary with this period (Schuster et al., 2006; Z. Zhang et al., 2014), although 81 recent data from the tropical Atlantic margin highlight that the Sahara desert already 82 existed 11 Ma ago (Crocker et al., 2022). Vegetation on land also underwent significant 83 changes with the rise to dominance of plants using  $C_4$  photosynthesis at the detriment 84 of plants using  $C_3$  photosynthesis (Tauxe & Feakins, 2020; Cerling et al., 1997). Some 85 of these changes have been suggested as possible triggering mechanisms for the LMBB. 86

Two hypotheses have been proposed to explain the origin of the LMBB. This event could result from (1) an increase in nutrient supply from the continents to the oceans (e.g. Gupta et al., 2004; Pisias et al., 1995; Hermoyian & Owen, 2001; Filippelli, 1997) or (2) a redistribution of nutrients in the ocean due to a reorganization of oceanic circulation (e.g. Farrell et al., 1995; Dickens & Owen, 1999; Pisias et al., 1995).

An increase in nutrient supply is usually attributed either to enhanced weather-92 ing or to a shift in vegetation cover. A late pulse of uplift in the Tibetan Plateau region 93 during the late Miocene (C. Wang et al., 2014) responsible for intensification of the In-94 dian monsoon could have been responsible for increased continental weathering (Filippelli, 95 1997; Yang et al., 2019; Holbourn et al., 2018; Clift et al., 2020). This hypothesis is sup-96 ported by the global increase in Ca and Si fluxes to the ocean (Pisias et al., 1995). Hermoyian 97 and Owen (2001) also suggest that the uplift of the Andes at 8 Ma caused orographic 98 precipitation and increased sediment flux to the Atlantic Ocean (Curry et al., 1995). An 99 increase in nutrient supply from the continents could also be explained by an intensifi-100 cation of trade winds at the end of the Miocene, linked to the increase in latitudinal tem-101 perature gradient and also to widespread continental aridification (Dobson et al., 2001; 102 Hovan, 1995; Diester-Haass et al., 2006; Herbert et al., 2016). A further hypothesis also 103 suggests that the global spread of  $C_4$  plants in the late Miocene would have resulted in 104 the input of siliceous phytoliths into the ocean reservoir and may have played a role in 105 increasing productivity by reducing silica limitation (Cortese et al., 2004; Pound et al., 106 2012).107

The alternative hypothesis is the redistribution of nutrients caused by changes in 108 oceanic circulation. Based on microfossil and  $\delta^{13}$ C studies, Berger et al. (1993) suggested 109 that an amplification of North Atlantic Deep Water (NADW, Wright and Miller (1996)) 110 111 brought more nutrients into the Pacific Ocean, although Farrell et al. (1995) rather suggest no temporal link between NADW evolution and the LMBB. The restriction of the 112 Central American Seaway may have played a role in the redistribution of nutrients by 113 changing oceanic circulation patterns (Pisias et al., 1995; Farrell et al., 1995). Diester-114 Haass et al. (2002) also suggest that a change in the vertical distribution of nutrients could 115

result from an intensification of the global ocean circulation forced by an intensification
 of trade winds or by an increase in latitudinal temperature gradient (caused by the global
 decrease in pCO<sub>2</sub> and the growth of polar ice sheets).

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While the initiation of the LMBB has been widely discussed in the literature (e.g. 119 Farrell et al., 1995; Diester-Haass et al., 2002, 2006; Dickens & Owen, 1999; Reghellin 120 et al., 2022), the termination of the event has been the subject of only a limited num-121 ber of studies. Farrell et al. (1995) observe a distinct and permanent shift in the loca-122 tion of the maximum opal MAR at 4.4 Ma synchronous with the end of the LMBB. The 123 authors attribute this shift to the final closure of the Central American Seaway that pre-124 vented surface currents from exchanging between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. More 125 recently, Karatsolis et al. (2022) link the end of the LMBB with a decrease in insolation 126 due to a particular orbital configuration. This drop in insolation would have caused a 127 reduction in hydrological cycle intensity and therefore a decrease in continental weath-128 ering and nutrient supply to the ocean. 129

Because most of the published work on the LMBB focuses on specific cores where 130 the event is recorded, we know where the bloom is present but mostly ignore places where 131 the event is potentially not expressed. A global overview of the event is therefore lack-132 ing. The objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive perspective of the tem-133 poral and geographical aspects of the LMBB to help better understand the causes of the 134 event and its impact on the carbon cycle. To do so we systematically compiled all avail-135 able/published paleoceanographic records (from Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP), Oceanic 136 Drilling Program (ODP), Integrated Ocean Drilling Program (IODP) and International 137 ocean Discovery Program (IODP)), that inform on sediment accumulation during the 138 late Miocene to early Pliocene time period. This compilation contains records of sedi-139 mentation rates as well as accumulation rates of CaCO<sub>3</sub>, opal, and terrigenous material 140 and provides an thorough analysis of the spatial and temporal distribution of the LMBB. 141 In contrast to Karatsolis et al. (2022) who choose to focus on high resolution records only, 142 we here choose a less selective approach because even lower resolution datasets or datasets 143 144 that show no signature of the LMBB can help us understand its origin.

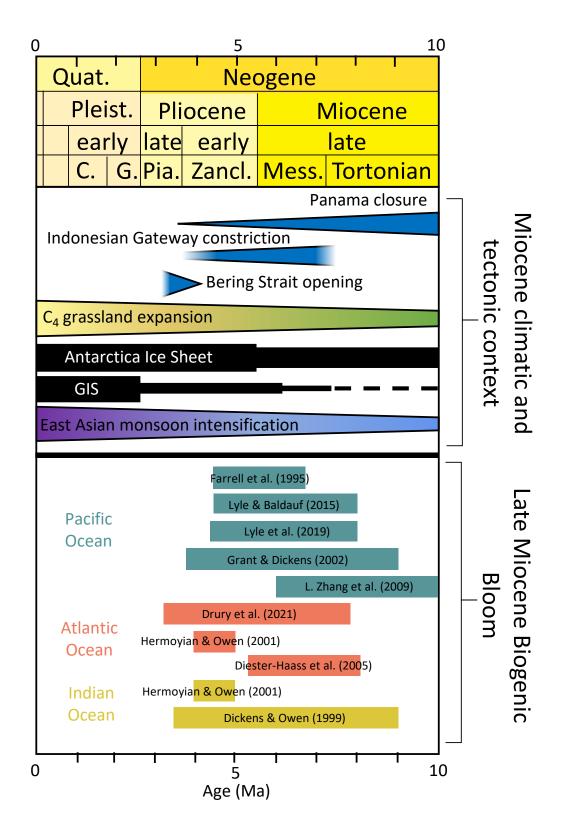


Figure 1. At the top, figure adapted from Steinthorsdottir et al. (2021). Climatic context ( $C_4$  grassland expansion, Antartica and Greenland Ice sheet evolution, East Asian monsoon intensification) and evolution of major seaways configuration during the late Miocene and Pliocene. GIS : Greenland Ice Sheet. Bottom, compilation of some publications related to the LMBB.

# 145 2 Methods

We compiled oceanographic data from DSDP, ODP and IODP expeditions that cover 146 the late Miocene and early Pliocene. Data mining was performed by automatically col-147 lecting the Pangaea datasets that correspond to the selected time interval and that have 148 at least one of the following variables: sedimentation rate, dry bulk density, mass accu-149 mulation rate (MAR), CaCO<sub>3</sub> accumulation rate, bSiO<sub>2</sub> accumulation rate (biogenic SiO<sub>2</sub>) 150 , %CaCO<sub>3</sub>, %bSiO<sub>2</sub>. The compilation was then improved by manually adding datasets 151 absent from Pangaea but relevant to our study. The data compilation contains 155 datasets 152 153 (122 are from Pangaea) from 118 different ocean drilling sites (Table 1). We consider here that within a single publication containing data from multiple sites, data from each site 154 forms an individual dataset. There can therefore be several datasets per publication but 155 also several datasets per site if several publications have studied the site in question. 156

Data processing was then carried out manually to remove datasets that were not 157 relevant to the study, which include datasets that (1) do not provide any data between 158 9 and 3.5 Ma, (2) have a very coarse resolution (less than one data point per million years), 159 or (3) show numerically unrealistic data (e.g. flat time series over a very long time pe-160 riod). The sites were additionally labeled to indicate whether they contained the LMBB 161 signature, which is defined as an increase in carbonate or biogenic opal MAR or sedi-162 mentation rate between 9 and 3.5 Ma (which is the widest definition found in the liter-163 ature, Dickens and Owen (1999)), with clearly identifiable increase and decrease phases. 164 The results are split into four categories as follows : i) 'No', if the dataset shows no LMBB 165 signature; ii) 'Co', if the occurrence of the LMBB is controversial, that is, an increase 166 in biogenic production can be identified but the timing is not consistent with the LMBB 167 definition; iii) 'BB', if the LMBB is clearly identifiable; iv) "In", if there are not enough 168 data before or after the interval of interest to robustly identify an increase ("In" stand-169 ing for "inconclusive"). In the later case, we cannot conclude whether the LMBB is present 170 in the dataset. In cases where there were several datasets for a single site, the label was 171 assigned based on all the datasets considered together; if there was a contradiction be-172 tween datasets, the dataset with the highest temporal resolution was chosen. 173

In order to perform a temporal comparison of the datasets, we also harmonized the geologic timescales used in all of the publications (Berggren et al., 1985, 1995; Gradstein et al., 2004, 2012, 2020; Palike et al., 2006) using the most recent one – Gradstein et al. (2020) – as a standard. This step was performed using the Neptune Sandbox Berlin database (Renaudie et al., 2020).

In addition, a geographical and temporal averaging system was implemented in or-179 der to plot time series. For a given oceanic basin (Pacific, Atlantic and Indian) and a 180 given variable, all values of the corresponding datasets were grouped and segmented into 181 500 kyr bins to obtain a single time series. 500 kyr was chosen because many datasets 182 in particular Lyle (2003) – had a resolution of 500 kyr. Given that the resolution be-183 tween different datasets is very heterogeneous, some datasets would have more weight 184 in this average as they have more values in the bins. To avoid this bias, we therefore first 185 averaged every dataset individually into 500 kyr bins before averaging them globally. 186

We then tried to identify potential oceanographic similarities between sites where 187 the LMBB is present or absent. In order to do so, we computed the paleoproductivity 188 at site locations using information from ocean biogeochemical simulations for the late 189 Miocene (Sarr et al., 2022) that were performed with the IPSL-CM5A2 (Sepulchre et 190 al., 2020) and PISCES-v2 (Aumont et al., 2015) models. To superimpose the position 191 of the sites on the simulation outputs, we calculated the paleocoordinates of the sites for 192 10 Ma using the GPlates software (Qin et al., 2012) and the plate rotation model from 193 Scotese (2016). 194

**Table 1.**Source of the data compilation. Sed rate : Sedimentation rate. Acc rate : Accumulation rate.tion rate.MAR : Mass Accumulation Rate.DBD : Dry Bulk Density.A more detailed table can be found in the supplementary information.

Publication	Number of datasets	variables present in these data sets
Breza (1992)	1	Sed rate
Diester-Haass et al. (2004)	2	Acc rate $CaCO_3$
Diester-Haass et al. $(2005)$	3	Sed rate, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD
Diester-Haass et al. (2006)	4	Sed rate, MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub>
Drury et al. (2021)	1	Sed rate, CaCO <sub>3</sub> , Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , MAR, DBD
Dutkiewicz and Müller (2021)	16	Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD, CaCO <sub>3</sub> , Sed rate
Farrell and Janecek (1991)	1	Sed rate, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD
Farrell et al. (1995)	11	Sed rate, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD
Gardner et al. (1986)	2	Sed rate, MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub>
Grant and Dickens $(2002)$	1	Acc rate $CaCO_3$ , $CaCO_3$
Hayward et al. (2010)	1	Sed rate
Hermoyian and Owen $(2001)$	5	Sed rate, DBD
Janecek (1985)	2	Sed rate, MAR, DBD
Lyle et al. (1995)	11	Sed rate, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub>
Lyle (2003)	57	Sed rate, MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD
Lyle et al. (2019)	7	Sed rate, MAR, $CaCO_3$ , DBD, $bSiO_2$
Müller et al. $(1991)$	1	Sed rate, MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD
Pälike et al. $(2012)$	4	Sed rate, MAR, CaCO <sub>3</sub> , DBD, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub>
Peterson and Backman (1990)	3	MAR, Acc rate $CaCO_3$ , $CaCO_3$
Si and Rosenthal (2019)	14	CaCO <sub>3</sub> , MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , Sed rate
Stax and Stein (1993)	4	MAR
Wagner (2002)	1	Sed rate, MAR
R. Wang et al. (2004)	1	Acc rate opal, $bSiO_2$
Winkler (1999)	1	Sed rate, MAR, Acc rate CaCO <sub>3</sub> , CaCO <sub>3</sub>
L. Zhang et al. (2009)	1	Sed rate, MAR, DBD

### 195 **3 Results**

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# 3.1 Geographical analysis of the compilation

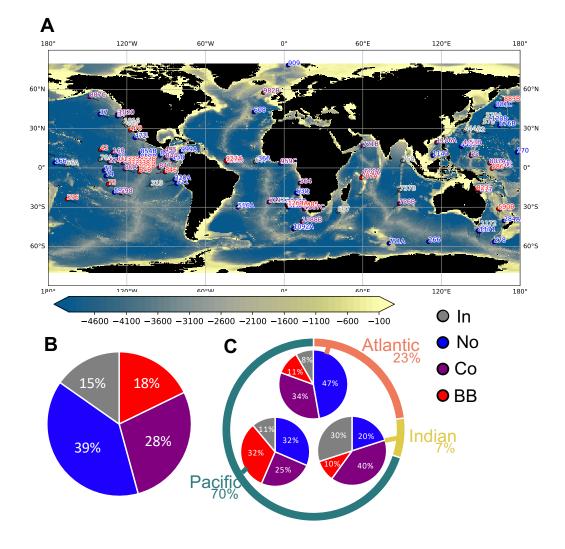
Among the 119 sites, the LMBB is present at 21 sites (Bb) while 33 other datasets 197 remain controversial (Co). The LMBB is not present in 46 of the datasets (No) and its 198 presence is inconclusive for 18 of the datasets (In). The LMBB is identified in both the 199 Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans (sites labeled "BB" and "Co", Figure 2). Most of 200 the sites with a LMBB are localised at mid and low latitudes, suggesting that the LMBB 201 is either absent or has not been recovered in the Southern or in the Arctic Oceans. The 202 LMBB has been identified (certainly or controversially) in all the datasets from the north-203 ern part of the Indian Ocean. The presence of the LMBB in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans 204 is very heterogeneous. In some areas, sites with a LMBB and without a LMBB are very 205 close geographically, such as in the Eastern Equatorial Pacific. The controversial sites 206 have a more homogeneous distribution in terms of latitude. 207

The spatial distribution of sites where the LMBB has been clearly identified follows the same pattern as those where the presence of LMBB is controversial. There are only four sites that show a clear LMBB signature in the Atlantic basin, one in the Indian basin and all the remaining ones are located in the Pacific basin. Most of the LMBB sites are located in the low latitudes (between 30°S and 30°N, Figure 2a, 3a), except for ODP site 145-883 which is located in the northern Pacific.

In the Atlantic Ocean, areas where LMBB is clearly identifiable (off the American coastlines 5°N-40°E and off the African coastlines 30°S-4°W) are also areas where there are sites with no LMBB evidenced. Most of the isolated sites are sites without a LMBB and are located around the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. There is, however, a controversial presence of the LMBB at three isolated and open-ocean sites (ODP site 982B, ODP site 1088B and DSDP site 519).

In the Pacific Ocean, the LMBB signature is present off the coast of Australia, in the northern area of the Tasman Sea and also in the northern part of the Pacific Ocean. The LMBB is also mainly present in the eastern equatorial part although there are also many sites without the LMBB in this area. The Eastern Equatorial Pacific has a high concentration of sites with many of them showing the presence of the LMBB. Sites with a LMBB signature are mainly located between 5°N and 5°S while the sites without a LMBB are a few degrees further north and further south (except for DSDP site 572D).

In the Indian Ocean, the presence of the LMBB is in most cases controversial but one site clearly records it in the western tropical area, near the Seychelles archipelago (ODP site 707A). In the southern Indian Ocean the compilation has only two sites and they do not show any evidence of the LMBB. The remaining sites do not have enough data to conclude. manuscript submitted to Paleoceanography and Paleoclimatology



**Figure 2.** (A) Present-day bathymetry with dots showing the modern positions of the 118 labeled sites. The black line at the end of each point indicates the position of the site 10 million years ago. (B) Distribution of labels over the entire data compilation. (C) Distribution of the compilation for the three oceans.

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# 3.2 Statistical analysis of compilation

The water depth of the sites where the LMBB is absent ranges between 1,000 and 5,000 metres with a large proportion of sites around 3,500 metres (Figure 3b). The depth of the sites where the LMBB is present is mainly between 1,500 and 4,000 metres. The average depth of sites where the LMBB is present (3,236 m) is almost equal to that of sites where the LMBB is absent (3,225 m). This suggests that the geographic distribution of sites where the LMBB is unambiguously identified is not biased by site depth thus by carbonate dissolution.

The simulated paleoproductivity at sites where a LMBB signature is visible is 0.66 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day on average (Figure 3d). Although most of the sites are located in areas of high simulated palaeoproductivity (> 0.7 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day - e.g. East Equatorial Pacific, Southeast Atlantic Ocean), the LMBB is also identified in some oligotrophic areas (< 0.3 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day - e.g. North Pacific, South Pacific Gyre, Figure S2). For sites where the LMBB is absent, the average simulated palaeoproductivity is 0.48 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day. However, two groups can be distinguished, one around 0.25 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day and one around 0.75 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day. A group around 0.75 g/m<sup>2</sup>/day also emerged in controversial sites.

If we consider instead the present-day productivity at sites, which is computed from average chlorophyll mass concentration values in seawater (from remote-sensing data of AquaMODIS satellite NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (2022)), the average value is almost identical for sites with and without the LMBB (around 0.20 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, Figure 3e). There is significant variability for sites where the LMBB is absent or controversial, but for sites where the LMBB is not present, the values are centered around 0.18 mg/m<sup>3</sup>.

To estimate the possible impact of continental nutrient inputs, the distance between each site and the nearest coastline was calculated (Figure 3f). On average the distance is higher for the sites where the LMBB is present (914 km) than for the sites where it is absent (786 km). However, the distribution is much more homogeneous for sites with the LMBB, while three groups of sites can be distinguished for the other labels, one around 500 km, one around 1,300 km and one around 2,000 km.

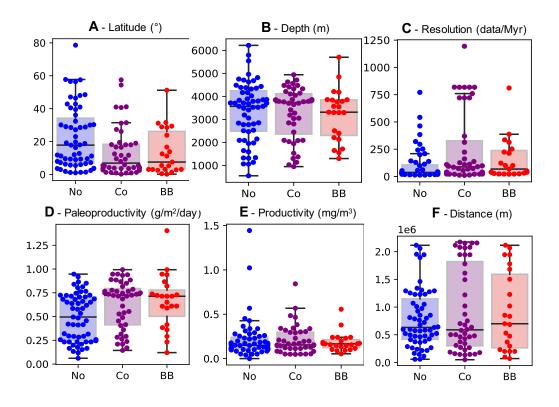


Figure 3. Box plot calculated for each label (each point represents a site). "No" - No LMBB; "Co" - Controversial LMBB; "BB" - LMBB is present. A: Average of absolute modern latitude values in degrees. B: Average depth of sites in metres. C: Average dataset resolution in number of data per million years. The site from Drury et al. (2021) is not shown because it is out of range (24,800 data/Myr). D : Average of the primary paleoproductivity value by phytoplankton from a late-Miocene simulation in  $g/m^2/day$  (from Sarr et al., 2022). E: Average chlorophyll mass concentration value in seawater in  $mg/m^3$  (from remote-sensing data of AquaMODIS satellite NASA Goddard Space Flight Center (2022)). F: Average of the distances between the coordinates of the sites and the nearest coast (m).

## 3.3 Temporal analysis of the compilation

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We also looked at the synchronicity of the event between different oceanic basins 261 using time series that we computed following the procedure described in the Methods 262 section (Figure 4). The values indicated hereafter are those of the unweighted average, 263 meaning that datasets with better resolution have a higher weighting in the average. In 264 the Atlantic Ocean, the signal was constructed from 12 different datasets, with a max-265 imum of 1,639 data and a minimum of 153 in one bin. On this timeserie, CaCO<sub>3</sub> accu-266 mulation rate increases since 15 Ma with a strong increase around 7.5 Ma  $(+15.3 \text{ g/m}^2/\text{y})$ . 267 The maximum is reached around 7 Ma  $(34.1 \text{ g/m}^2/\text{y})$  and then there is a decrease that 268 starts around 6.5 Ma and ends around 2 Ma. In the Indian Ocean, the signal was con-269 structed from 4 different datasets, with a maximum of 51 data and a minimum of 2 in 270 a bin. There is an increase around 7.5 Ma  $(+10~{\rm g/m^2/y})$  with a maximum around 7 Ma 271  $(20.5 \text{ g/m}^2/\text{y})$  then a decrease around 5.5 Ma. In the Pacific Ocean, the signal was con-272 structed from 46 datasets, with a maximum of 620 data and a minimum of 45 in one bin. 273 There is an increase in the rate of  $CaCO_3$  accumulation from 10 Ma with a more abrupt 274 increase around 7.5 Ma (+31.4 g/m<sup>2</sup>/y). The maximum is around 7 Ma (44.5 g/m<sup>2</sup>/y) 275 with a decrease until 2 Ma. The comparison shows that the phase of increasing  $CaCO_3$ 276 accumulation rate around 7.5 Ma is synchronous between the three oceanic basins. The 277 synchronicity of the end of the event is less distinct, with the decrease in biogenic sed-278 iment accumulation being more abrupt in the Pacific Ocean than in the Atlantic and In-279 dian Oceans. 280

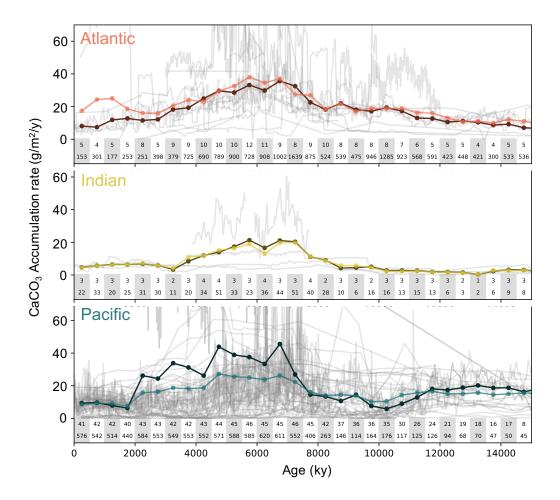


Figure 4. CaCO<sub>3</sub> accumulation rate from "BB" and "Co" labeled datasets for the three oceanic basins. Red, yellow and blue lines represent average weighted values to make each dataset equal (light colour) and unweighted average (dark colour) respectively, for each basin. The light grey lines represent the raw data used to calculate the average. Below each graph, we show the number of datasets used to calculate the average for each 500 kyr time bin (top line), and the number of data averaged (bottom line). The same figure with only the "BB" labeled sites can be found in supplementary Figure S1.

#### 281 4 Discussion

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#### 282

#### 4.1 Compilation biases and limitations

Several biases need to be highlighted to evaluate the limitations of this compila-283 tion before discussing its contribution to the mechanistic understanding of the LMBB. 284 In order to label the datasets, it was necessary to establish criteria that defined the LMBB. 285 These criteria – stated in the methods section – are based on the literature but are not 286 necessarily shared by all authors, which makes it difficult to quantitatively and unequiv-287 ocally identify the LMBB. Early studies defined the event in a specific region depend-288 ing on local parameters and a bias may come from applying this definition globally. In-289 deed, the compilation showed that there was significant heterogeneity between datasets, 290 which makes it difficult to apply a "global" definition. Observational biases are also present 291 because the labeling of datasets relied on manual classification, as an automatic evalu-292

ation was very complicated due to the definition bias exposed previously. The "Co" label was created for this purpose ; in order to classify all datasets that showed potential
traces of LMBB but that could be classified as "BB" or "No" depending on the person
performing the evaluation.

An important bias may come from the sampling of the data compilation. Indeed, 297 a non-negligible proportion of the datasets comes from studies focusing specifically on 298 the LMBB, which therefore published data where the LMBB signature was visible. There 299 is a potential bias of publication of data from this time interval restricted toward those 300 showing a clear LMBB record, thereby artificially increasing the number of sites with 301 a LMBB signature in the compilation. In addition, the spatial distribution of sites in-302 cluded in the compilation is very heterogeneous. The majority of the compilation con-303 stitutes datasets from sites located in the Pacific Ocean (70%), while only 23% of the 304 sites are located in the Atlantic Ocean and 7% in the Indian Ocean (Figure 2c). Very 305 few sites are located at high latitudes (above 50°N and 50°S), or in the gyres of the South 306 and North Pacific and of the North Atlantic oceans. This results in a geographically bi-307 ased view of the LMBB as we lack information on the large-scale extension of the event. 308 There is also temporal heterogeneity, as not all datasets cover exactly the same time in-309 terval, indeed many do not cover the entire LMBB time interval. This heterogeneity may 310 prevent a proper temporal analysis of the compilation. Finally, some datasets come from 311 studies with an orbital resolution and astronomical timescale (Drury et al., 2021) while 312 others have only a few data points for a time window of several millions of years (Lyle, 313 2003). However, this resolution heterogeneity does not seem to impact labeling (Figure 314 3c) : sites with an identified LMBB do not have a better resolution than the sites with-315 out a LMBB. These potential biases must be kept in mind when interpreting the data 316 compilation. 317

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### 4.2 Does the compilation provide support for any of the LMBB hypotheses proposed in the literature ?

Despite the potential biases discussed above, our compilation has a worldwide coverage which opens the discussion on the origin of the LMBB. The compilation shows that the LMBB is a globally distributed but not ubiquitous event. Two hypotheses have been suggested in the literature in order to explain the existence of the event: (1) a global increase in the supply of nutrients to ocean basins through changes in continental weathering (Filippelli, 1997) or (2) a major redistribution of nutrients in the oceans (Farrell et al., 1995).

The spatial heterogeneity of the LMBB in the data compilation could be an ele-327 ment that supports the scenario of a change in nutrient supply from the continents. If 328 this hypothesis is correct, it would seem logical that the LMBB signal would be visible 329 at some sites (close to nutrient input from the continents) and not at others (isolated 330 from these inputs) or at least reducing with the increased distance from the source and 331 without a specific local to regional effect of transfer from oceanic currents or winds. How-332 ever, the compilation of data also showed the global nature of this event and a "local" 333 cause such as the Himalayan uplift cannot produce a rise in productivity on a global scale 334 without redistribution, or if it did, it would have been homogeneous for areas at a great 335 distance from the source (i. e. in the Atlantic Ocean). Furthermore, sites in the data com-336 pilation that are located in the South China Sea (ODP sites 1143 and 1146), thus di-337 rectly affected by the East Asian monsoon system, do not show a clear LMBB signal. 338 Calculations of the distances of the sites from the nearest coastline show that the LMBB 339 is not present in areas particularly close to the coastline compared to areas where the 340 LMBB appears to be absent, which partly contradicts this scenario. Nevertheless, it is 341 important to consider that there can be local changes in the location of inputs that af-342 fect a particular site. For example, proximity of river outlet that changes its flow over 343 time or shifting rainfall patterns. There is also evidence of micronutrient supply by dust 344

fluxes which, due to wind, can be transported a long distance from their source (Hovan, 345 1995; Diester-Haass et al., 2006). This wind-driven dust supply is particularly impor-346 tant as it is related to the cooling and aridification of the late Miocene (Pound et al., 347 2012; Herbert et al., 2016). However, our data compilation cannot highlight an increase 348 in dust flux during this time interval. Moreover, the nutrient input would be then re-349 stricted to areas downwind of the arid and desert regions which is not clearly the case 350 in our records. Karatsolis et al. (2022) suggest an end of the LMBB at 4.6-4.4 Ma re-351 lated to a decrease in insolation which in turn would have caused a reduction in hydro-352 logical cycle intensity and continental weathering. Our compilation shows a significant 353 decline in carbonate-related productivity in the Pacific Ocean at this time, although it 354 does not appear to correspond to the end of the LMBB. Moreover, there is no decline 355 observed at this time in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. Furthermore, the hypothesis 356 of a particular orbital configuration as a trigger for the end of the LMBB is incompat-357 ible with our results because we show a slow and continuous decline of carbonate accu-358 mulation in the terminal part of the LMBB. This slow decrease started as soon as the 359 maximum was reached, around 7-6.5 Ma. Eventually, the increase in nutrient supply hy-360 pothesis seems not corresponding to our geographic and stratigraphic record. 361

Regarding the nutrient redistribution hypothesis, the Eastern Equatorial Pacific 362 is an interesting case study as it has been widely discussed in the LMBB literature (Farrell 363 et al., 1995; Lyle et al., 2019; Reghellin et al., 2022). Our compilation shows that sites 364 with a LMBB signature cluster between 6°N and 5°S and between 90°W and 127°W (Fig-365 ure 5). The LMBB signature is present at eight sites (plus three controversial ones) and 366 is absent at DSDP site 572. A closer look at the data for DSDP site 572 shows that there 367 is a decrease in productivity from 10 Ma and then an increase from 5 Ma to a peak at 368 3.5 Ma. This site has not been labelled "BB" because instead of having an increase in 369 productivity at the end of the Miocene there is a decrease and the peak is reached at the 370 moment when the "LMBB period" is over. The presence of this site without a LMBB 371 might either be due to an error (in the definition of the event or in the interpretation 372 of the signal) or to a particular geographical reason that remains undetermined. With-373 out considering DSDP site 572, we observe that the sites where the LMBB is present were 374 much closer to the Equator 10 Ma ago, which suggests an influence of equatorial upwelling 375 on the increase in productivity (Lyle et al., 2019). Reghellin et al. (2022) suggested that 376 the equatorial upwelling band was less parallel to the equator during the event and had 377 a reduced spatial extent. Moreover, upwelling in this area appears to be strongest be-378 tween 6.5 and 4.5 Ma, based on alkenone analyses from ODP sites 806 and 850 (Y. G. Zhang 379 et al., 2017). These observations, which are in agreement with the compilation, support 380 the scenario of nutrient redistribution as a driver of the LMBB. This redistribution may 381 be a consequence of the closure of the Central American Seaway, which would result in 382 the intensification of upwelling in the Eastern Equatorial Pacific, strongly increasing the surface nutrient concentration and thus primary productivity (Schneider & Schmittner, 384 2006). The Southeast Atlantic Ocean (around 30°S and 10°E) has also been studied in 385 the context of the LMBB (Diester-Haass et al., 2004; Drury et al., 2021). In this area, 386 the link between the LMBB and upwelling is more difficult to discern. Generally, sites 387 where the LMBB is present are areas where simulated paleoproductivity is high (>0.5)388  $g/cm^2/day$ , Figure 5) with the exception of ODP site 1264 (which is nonetheless the site 389 with the highest resolution), which is in an area of low productivity ( $<0.4 \text{ g/cm}^2/\text{day}$ ) 390 closely surrounded by five sites with no LMBB recorded. It is interesting to note that 391 these sites are on the Walvis Ridge and that ODP site 1264 is much shallower than ODP 392 sites 1262, 1265 and 1266 hence sometimes dissolution locally impact the record of the 393 LMBB. Sites without the LMBB are generally in areas of low simulated paleoproduc-394 395 tivity with the exception of ODP site 530 and DSDP site 362 (for these sites, the hypothesis of redistribution remains open to discussion). The calculation of simulated palaeo-396 productivity for each site (Figure 3d) shows that on average, the LMBB signature is mostly 397 recorded at sites located in areas of high productivity (upwelling areas for example). This 398 is consistent with a scenario of intensification of ocean circulation which can change the 399

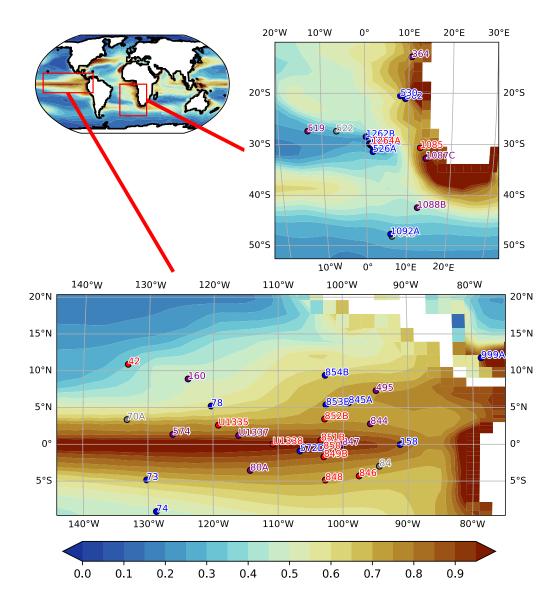


Figure 5. Primary productivity by phytoplankton in  $g/m^2/day$  for the late Miocene (simulation output from Sarr et al. (2022)) with dots showing the paleo-positions (10 Ma) of the labeled sites.

intensity of upwelling and induce a change in the vertical distribution of nutrients (Diester-400 Haass et al., 2002). Nutrient redistribution may also imply a transfer of nutrients from 401 some geographic regions to others (Dickens & Owen, 1996). This would be consistent 402 with the heterogeneous nature of LMBB in the data compilation. But according to this 403 model, some sites should show a reverse signal, i.e. a decline in productivity between 9 404 and 3.5 Ma. Considering low influence of depth and dissolution on carbonate accumu-405 lation rates compiled (Figure 3b), no reverse signals are observed in the data compila-406 tion arguing against the redistribution hypothesis. 407

An alternative scenario would be to consider an increase in nutrients on a global scale without i) a redistribution with an increase of productivity in some regions compensated by a decrease elsewhere and ii) increase in continental inputs. This increase  $1 \mid CC \mid BY$ 

in nutrients could come from the generalized intensification of upwelling systems. This 411 intensification could have two origins, an intensification of the wind regime or an increase 412 in deep water formation at high latitudes. The end of the Miocene is marked by a sig-413 nificant global cooling due to a decrease in the  $CO_2$  level and a strengthening of the tem-414 perature gradient between the equator and the poles (Herbert et al., 2016; Martinot et 415 al., 2022). The strengthening of this gradient leads to more air mass movement in the 416 atmosphere and thus to an intensification of the Walker and Hadley cells (Kamae et al., 417 2011). Trade wind intensification is one consequence of this atmospheric reorganization, 418 evidence of which has been observed in marine sediments (Hovan, 1995). The intensi-419 fication of trade winds causes an increase in upwelling by Ekman pumping, especially 420 in the equatorial Pacific (Bjerknes, 1969; Shankle et al., 2021) and results in increased 421 productivity (Diester-Haass et al., 2006; Y. G. Zhang et al., 2017; Huguet et al., 2022). 422 The late Miocene is also a period when the thermohaline circulation dominated by NADW 423 and Antarctic Bottom Water became perennial (Poore et al., 2006). In general, NADW 424 formation is thought to have intensified from the Miocene to the present day but its evo-425 lution is difficult to quantify (Poore et al., 2006). There are many factors that could have 426 increased NADW production/strength in the late Miocene. For example, the decrease 427 in CO<sub>2</sub> levels (Rae et al., 2021) in the late Miocene may have intensified NADW pro-428 duction (Bradshaw et al., 2015) as well as the transition from a mid-Miocene to present 429 day geography (Herold et al., 2012). NADW may also be enhanced by the closure of the 430 Central America Seaway (Nisancioglu et al., 2003; Schneider & Schmittner, 2006; Sepul-431 chre et al., 2014), thought to have occurred during the Miocene (Montes et al., 2015). 432 Bierman et al. (2016) showed that a small ice sheet might have existed on Greenland over 433 the past 7.5 Ma. An ice sheet on Greenland can lead to an intensification of NADW, through 434 atmospheric forcing (Pillot et al., 2022). Finally, NADW production also varied with the 435 depth of the Greenland Scotland Ridge, which had phases of uplift and subsidence in the 436 late Miocene (Wright & Miller, 1996; Poore et al., 2006; Hossain et al., 2020). Increased 437 deep water formation results in the intensification of overturning cells (such as the AMOC) 438 and therefore intensified upwelling systems. Following the same logic, a decrease in NADW 439 production could have caused the end of the LMBB. The opening of the Bering Seaway 440 in the early Pliocene (Gladenkov & Gladenkov, 2004), which according to modeling could 441 have caused a weakening of the AMOC (Brierley & Fedorov, 2016), could potentially have 442 been linked to the end of the LMBB. 443

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# 4.3 Speculation on the link between the beginning of the LMBB and the Late Miocene Carbon Isotope Shift (LMCIS)

The new data compilation shows that there is a synchronicity between the onset 446 of the LMBB and the LMCIS (Keigwin, 1979; Drury et al., 2017; Westerhold et al., 2020) 447 for the three oceanic basins, a synchronicity that has already been discussed in the lit-448 erature (Diester-Haass et al., 2005; Dickens & Owen, 1999; Grant & Dickens, 2002). This 449 approximately 1\% negative shift in benthic for a miniferal  $\delta^{13}$ C extends from 7.5 to 6.7 450 Ma and corresponds to the last major carbon cycle change in Earth's history (Steinthorsdottir 451 et al., 2021). The period of the  $\delta^{13}$ C shift (7.5 to 6.7 Ma) corresponds to the most im-452 portant phase of increasing productivity in the compilation and the productivity max-453 imum (approx. 500,000 years, Figure 6). However, the isotopic shift lasts just under a 454 million years and  $\delta^{13}$ C never returns to its initial state, whereas the LMBB lasts sev-455 eral million years and biogenic sediment accumulation returns to a pre-event state. The 456 causes of the LMCIS shift are still poorly understood. It may result from a global shift 457 in  $\delta^{13}C_{\text{DIC}}$  (Hodell et al., 2001; Bickert et al., 2004) caused by fractionation of organic 458 matter in surface waters (Bickert et al., 2004) or a change in continental carbon flux (Du 459 et al., 2022). This change may have been caused by the rapid expansion of  $C_4$  plants be-460 tween 8 and 6 Ma (Cerling et al., 1997), although this hypothesis appears to be tempo-461 rally inconsistent (Drury et al., 2017; Tauxe & Feakins, 2020). The LMCIS may also have 462 originated from a global high productivity event in the surface ocean (Grant & Dickens, 463

2002; Diester-Haass et al., 2005). The link between the LMBB and LMCIS supposes that 464 the input of nutrients from the continents would produce a peak in dissolution and there-465 fore a decrease in  $\delta^{13}$ C values of dissolved inorganic carbon (Berger H, 1981; Diester-Haass 466 et al., 2005; Bickert et al., 2004), yet this hypothesis is not consistent with our compi-467 lation, which shows no dissolution event. The LMCIS could also be a consequence of a 468 change in global ocean circulation, in particular the contribution of NADW, which would 469 result in a greater difference in  $\delta^{13}$ C between deep waters from the north and those from 470 the south (Hodell & Venz-Curtis, 2006; Butzin et al., 2011; Thomas & Via, 2007; Poore 471 et al., 2006; Crichton et al., 2021). Considering the timing of the LMCIS (7.5 to 6.7 Ma), 472 this hypothesis would support the NADW intensification scenario for the origin of the 473 LMBB. In this case the LMCIS would not be a consequence of the LMBB but a paral-474 lel consequence of a common cause. 475

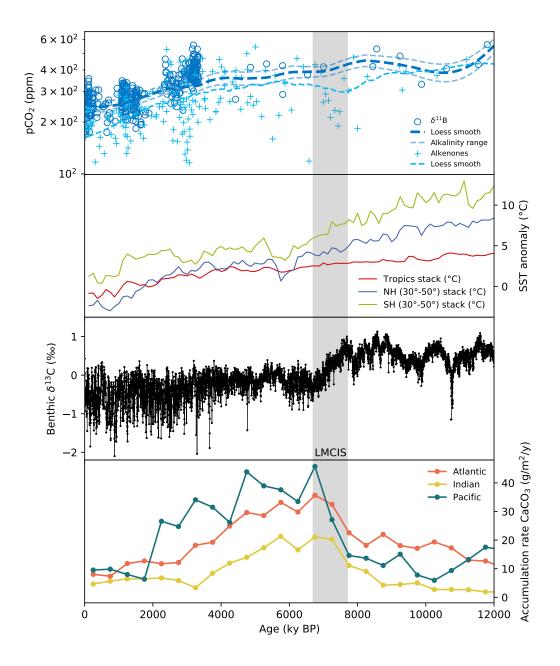


Figure 6. Top to bottom: Atmospheric pCO<sub>2</sub> reconstructions (ppm) from boron isotopes and alkenone  $\delta^{13}$ C compiled in Rae et al. (2021). SST anomaly stacks for different latitudinal bands from Herbert et al. (2016). Megasplice benthic  $\delta^{13}$ C evolution (‰) from Westerhold et al. (2020). CaCO<sub>3</sub> accumulation rate from "BB" and "Co" labeled datasets for the three ocean basins (Figure 4).

# 476 5 Conclusion

Our data compilation shows that traces of the LMBB are present at many differ-477 ent locations but in a very heterogeneous way. We therefore show that the LMBB is not 478 a global event, as it is often considered in the literature to date, because its signature 479 is absent from many sites. The compilation also shows that for the three oceanic basins, 480 productivity shows a strong increase around 7.5 Ma, peaks around 7 Ma and then de-481 creases until it reaches a pre-event state around 3.5 Ma. To explain the origin of the LMBB, 482 the scenarios of increased nutrient input to the oceans and a redistribution of nutrients 483 in the ocean cannot be ignored, although some aspects of our findings do not support these hypotheses. However, the compilation shows that the sites where the LMBB is recorded 485 are mainly located in areas where there is a high productivity regime (i.e. upwelling sys-486 tems). We propose that the most likely hypothesis to explain the LMBB is a global in-487 crease in upwelling intensity due to an increase in wind strength or an increase in deep 488 water formation, ramping up global circulation. These increases may have been the re-489 sult of major tectonic or climatic changes at the end of the Miocene, such as the closure 490 of the Central American Seaway, the general decrease in temperature and  $CO_2$  levels, 491 subsidence of the Greenland-Scotland Ridge or the establishment of the Greenland ice-492 sheet. In future work, the forcing factors at the origin of the LMBB could be identified 493 using a set of simulations from a coupled ocean/atmosphere models with late Miocene 494 paleogeography and integrating a marine biogeochemistry module. 495

#### 496 6 Open Research

All data used in this study have been previously published. The sources are available in Table 1 and in the Supplementary Table.

#### 499 7 Author Contributions

Q. P. performed the data compilation and drafted the manuscript. The sites were labeled by Q. P. and B. S-M. All authors analyzed and discussed the results and contributed to the final version of the manuscript.

#### 503 Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Johan Renaudie for his help in using Neptune Sandbox Berlin. We also thank Weimin Si for access to data and Jean-Baptiste Landant for discussions. We are also grateful to the French ANR project MioCarb (BSM,ANR-20-CE49-0002) for providing funding for this work.

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