Dear Jerry,

Thanks for your kind words regarding the revised version 2 of our paper. To try to polish it, as you suggested, all three of us have gone carefully through the text once more. The modifications are shown in the following pages (= version with track changes).

English is not the native language of any of us. We suspect therefore that some parts of the text might still be improved, but probably not by us. However, we very much hope that that you will found this re-revised version acceptable.

With best regards,

Victoriano Pujalte, Juan I. Baceta and Birger Schmith

Bilbao (Spain), 23/11/2015

A massive input of coarse-grained siliciclastics in the Pyrenean Basin during the PETM: the missing ingredient of a coeval abrupt change in hydrological regime

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Abstract. The Paleocene–Eocene thermal maximum (PETM) is represented in numerous shallow and deep marine sections of the south-central and western Pyrenees by a 2–4 m thick unit (locally up to 20 m) of clays or marly clays intercalated within a carbonate-dominated succession. This unit records a massive input into the Pyrenean Gulf of fine-grained terrestrial siliciclastics ~~into the Pyrenean Gulf~~, ~~that has been~~ attributed to an abrupt hydrological change during the PETM. However, the nature of such change remains controversial. Here we show that, in addition to fine-grained deposits, large volumes of coarse-grained siliciclastics were brought into the basin and were mostly accumulated in incised valleys and ~~a~~ in a long-lived deep-sea channel. The occurrence of these coarse-grained deposits has~~d~~ been known for some time, but their correlation with the PETM is reported here for the first time. The bulk of the incised

valley ~~PETM~~ deposits in the PETM interval are cross-bedded sands and pebbly sands, almost exclusively made of quartz. The criteria for indicting a relation ~~Proofs of their belonging~~ to the PETM include their stratigraphic position between upper Thanetian and lower Ilerdian marine carbonates, organic carbon isotope data and a high percentage of kaolinite in the sand matrix. The axially-flowing deep-sea channel existed throughout Paleocene times in the Pyrenean Basin, within which coarse-grained calciclastic and siliciclastic turbidites were accumulated. This Paleocene succession is capped by thickly-bedded quartz sandstones and pebbly sandstones, probably deposited by hyperpycnal flows ~~turbidites~~, which are here assigned to the PETM based on their stratigraphic position and organic carbon isotopic data. The large and simultaneous increase in coarse- and fine-grained terrestrial siliciclastics delivered to the Pyrenean Gulf during the PETM is attributed to an increased intra-annual humidity gradient. During the PETM a longer and drier summer season facilitated the erosion of landscapes, whereas a dramatic enhancement of precipitation extremes during the wet season led to intensified flood events, with rivers carrying greater volumes of both bed and suspended loads. This scenario argues against the possibility that PETM kaolinites indicate a coeval warm and humid climate in northern Spain. Instead, the kaolinite reflects the erosion of thick Cretaceous lateritic profiles developed ~~in~~ on the Hercynian basement ~~is proposed as an alternative~~.

1 Introduction

~~The Earth experienced~~ D~~d~~uring the early Paleogene the Earth experienced several intervals of extreme warming, named hyperthermals. The most prominent and extensively studied ~~of them~~ is the Paleocene–Eocene thermal maximum (PETM;

McInerney and Wing, 2011, and references therein). During this event, which started ~56 Ma ago and lasted ~200 ka, global temperatures rose between 5 and 8°C. The PETM was coeval with a large (~3–5‰) negative carbon isotope excursion (CIE) recorded in both marine and continental strata (e.g., Koch et al., 1992; Zachos et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2001; Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003; Mangiocalda et al., 2004). This CIE is thought to record the release of >2000 gigatons of ^{13}C depleted carbon into the ocean-atmosphere system (Dickens et al., 1997; Zachos et al., 2005). The source of the emitted carbon ~~emission~~ is still debated, ~~the~~ ~~with~~ dissociation of oceanic methane hydrates being the leading hypothesis (Dickens et al., 1995, 1997). The CIE associated with the PETM can be discriminated from other early Paleogene hyperthermal CIEs by its stratigraphic position, in the middle part of chron C24R, within planktonic foraminiferal biozone P5, near the boundary of calcareous nannofossil biozones NP9/NP10 (Berggren and Aubry, 1998), and near the boundary of larger foraminifera shallow benthic zones (SBZ) 4 and 5 (e.g., Pujalte et al., 2003a, 2009; Scheibner et al., 2005). A kaolinite spike of controversial origin is also present in many, but not all, PETM sections (e. g., Gibson et. al., 2000; Thiry and Dupuis, 1998, 2000; Quesnel~~l~~ et al., 2011; Dypvik et al., 2011; John et al., 2012).

The PETM is considered a possible ancient analogue of the current warming of the Earth climate, a process expected to alter the global hydrological cycle because a warmer atmosphere can hold more moisture. The possible effects of such change has been reconstructed through modeling (e.g., Murphy et al., 2004; Held and Soden, 2006; Beniston et al., 2007; Allan and Soden, 2008; Berg and Hall, 2015). According to these studies, the character of the expected changes in precipitation will vary from region to region. A proper understanding of the PETM hydrological changes, therefore, requires a globally widespread data base.

Hydrological changes induced by the PETM have been reported in various studies, which suggest drier conditions for some mid-latitude areas (e.g., Wing et al., 2005; Handley et al., 2012) and wetter conditions at high latitudes (e.g., Pagani et al., 2006). In the terrestrial Big Horn basin these changes are recorded by alterations of alluvial architecture (e.g., Foreman et al., 2012, Foreman 2014)~~,~~ and/or in the stacking pattern and type of paleosols (Kraus et al., 2013, 2015). Increased influxes of terrestrial clays into widely separated continental margins during the PETM have also been attributed to a coeval change in hydrology, for instance in the west and east coast of USA (e.g., Gibson et al., 2000; John et al., 2008) and in New Zealand (e.g., Slotnick et al., 2012).

The PETM is recorded in the southern and western Pyrenees (northern Spain) in outcropped sections of a continuous range of facies (Fig. 1), a circumstance that offers the unique opportunity to study the associated hydrological changes on a complete transect of the same basin, from terrestrial to deep marine settings~~, of the same basin~~. In marine sections the PETM is represented by a fine-grained siliciclastic unit (FSU) intercalated within a carbonate-dominated succession. The FSU ~~usually~~ is usually 2–4 m thick, exceptionally up to 20.5 m, and consists predominantly of fine-grained calcareous mudstones. Carbonate content of the FSU in shallow marine sections ranges from 20–45%, the carbonate fraction being largely represented by tests of larger foraminifer~~as~~ (Pujalte et al., 2003a). The FSU carbonate fraction in deep marine sections is ~~even~~ lower (0–10%), being partly represented by an impoverished assemblage of foraminifera and calcareous nannofossils (Schmitz et al., 1997; Orue-Etxebarria et al., 2004; Alegret et al., 2009). These data demonstrate that a massive influx of terrestrial fine-grained siliciclastics was delivered to the Pyrenean Gulf during the PETM, diluting but not entirely suppressing the autochthonous carbonate accumulation. It is generally agreed that this fine-grained siliciclastic influx was due to an abrupt hydrological change in~~on~~ the Pyrenean Gulf region during the PETM. The nature of such change, however, is controversial, some papers arguing in favour of intensified precipitation (e.g., Pujalte et al., 1998a; Adatte et al., 2000), others of increased aridity (e.g., Bolle et al., 1998; Schmitz et al., 2001). Bolle et al. (1998) argued that kaolinite from the Ermua section was brought from lower latitudes by oceanic currents while arid conditions prevailed in the adjacent coastal area. The proposal ~~of~~ by Schmitz et al. (2001) was partly based on a tentative correlation of the FSU with prominent evaporite deposits ~~occurring~~ in the terrestrial Tremp area (Fig. 1). However, subsequent studies by Schmitz and Pujalte (2003, 2007) established a robust correlation of the FSU with units of the Tremp area indicative of an enhanced seasonal humidity-gradient during the PETM (i.e., Claret Conglomerate and the Yellowish Soils). More recently, Clare et al. (2015) suggested that a hot and arid climate during the PETM may have reduced the turbidity current activity immediately before and during the thermal event.

This paper is based on the study of new Paleocene–Eocene (P–E) boundary sections situated in the western Pyrenees (Fig. 1). The main purposes of the paper are to try to locate the PETM in these sections, and to test whether there is additional evidence of changes in the hydrological regime during the event. The most important finding is that, in addition to a massive influx of fine-grained siliciclastics, important volumes of coarse-grained quartz sands and pebbly sands were supplied to the Pyrenean Gulf during the PETM. The coarse-grained siliciclastics were accumulated in two different depositional environments, namely within a broad deep-sea channel and within incised valleys. It will also be shown that kaolinite from the FSU was probably supplied from Cretaceous lateritic profiles developed ~~in~~ on the adjacent Hercynian basement of N Spain, and that turbidite activity increased, rather than decreased, during the PETM.

2 Setting and background information

2.1 Paleogeography

Throughout early Paleogene times the Pyrenean domain was an E-W elongated marine gulf, opening into the Bay of Biscay, situated in the subtropical netevaporation zone (35º latitude North). The gulf had a central deep-water trough (Basque Basin) flanked by a broad shallow marine carbonate platform, in turn surrounded by subaerial alluvial plains (Fig. 1; Plaziat, 1981; Baceta, 1996; Baceta et al., 2011). The alluvial plains in the Tremp area were fed with calciclastic deposits derived from Cretaceous carbonate rocks uplifted in the eastern Pyrenees. In addition, the Massif Central in France and the Ebro Massif in Spain, both mostly made of Paleozoic rocks, supplied siliciclastic sediments (Fig. 1). The carbonate platform is represented by a stack of shallow-marine carbonates up to 300 m thick. It can be broadly subdivided into inner and outer platform domains (Fig. 1) based on fossil content and dolomite/limestone proportions. Significant amounts of sand and sandstone also occur, ~~a fraction of them~~ some of which accumulated within valleys incised in the inner platform domain (Baceta et al., 1994; Pujalte et al., 2014). Basinward from the carbonate platform edge a carbonate base-of-slope apron was developed, which evolved down current to the deep-marine Basque Basin. The deep-sea channel flowed ~~through~~ along the axial part of this basin (Fig. 1).

This paper focuses on the incised fluvial valleys and on the deep-sea channel, discussing the architecture and facies of their deposits across the P–E interval. To place the new data in context, however, prior information about well-studied marine P–E sections of the Pyrenean Gulf is summarized below.

2.2 Main P–E marine reference sections of the Pyrenees

The most representative and well-studied P–E sections of the inner carbonate platform, base-of-slope apron and deep basin settings of the Pyrenees are, respectively, Campo, Ermua and Zumaia (Figs. 1 and 2).

The P–E interval is represented at Campo by deposits of three discontinuity-bounded depositional sequences (DS TH-2, DS Il-1 and DS-Il2; Baceta et al., 2011). These sequences are mostly composed of shallow marine calcarenites and calcareous sandstones rich in larger foraminifera, with planktonic microfossils occurring at some intervals (Fig. 2). The short normal C~~c~~hron C25n was identified near the base of the DS TH-2 (Pujalte et al., 2003b). The DS Il-1 begins with an interval of terrestrial origin that rests on a surface of subaerial exposure developed at the top of DS TH-2. The PETM was pinpointed within that terrestrial interval (Fig. 2; Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003; Baceta et al., 2011).

The Ermua section contains the thickest ~~r~~FSU reported to date in marine successions of the Pyrenees (20.5 m; Pujalte et al., 1994), its attribution to the PETM being based on high-resolution isotopic profiles of bulk rock samples (Bolle et al., 1998; Schmitz et al., 2001) and further constrained with biostratigraphy~~ic zonations~~ (Orue-Etxebarria et al., 1996)

The Zumaia section is the most complete and representative section of the deep-water Basque Basin across the P–E interval (e.g., Baceta et al., 2000). The 4 m thick FSU occurs within an alternation of marls and marly limestones, with intercalated thin-bedded turbidites, rich in benthic and planktonic foraminifera and calcareous nannofossils (e.g., Schmitz et al., 1997; Orue-Etxebarria et al., 2004; Alegret et al., 2009). The Zumaia FSU is ascribed to the PETM based on biostratigraphically constrained isotopic profiles of both bulk-~~-~~rock carbonate samples (Schmitz et al., 1997) and dispersed organic carbon (Storme et al., 2012). The polarity Chron C25n was delineated from 35 m to 25 m below the base of the FSU (Fig. 2; Dinarès-Turell et al., 2002).

3 Data set and methods

This paper is mainly based on the study of three zones of the western Pyrenees, indicated with boxes 1, 2 and 3 in Fig. 1. After a detailed geological mapping of these zones the P–E interval of selected sections was logged and sampled. Thirty-two samples were studied for organic carbon isotopes of~~from~~ dispersed organic matter, and two samples for inorganic carbon isotopes of~~from~~ soil carbonate nodules. Analyses of the organic carbon ($\delta^{13}C_{org}$) were carried out at the Servizos de Apoio á Investigación (SAI) of the University of A Coruña, Spain. Samples were weighed in silver capsules, decarbonated using 25% HCl, and measured by continuous flow isotope ratio mass spectrometry using a MAT253 mass spectrometer (ThermoFinnigan) coupled to an elemental analyser EA1108 (Carlo Erba Instruments) through a Conflo III interface (ThermoFinnigan). Carbon isotope abundance is expressed as $\delta^{13}C_{org}$(‰) relative to VPDB. International reference standards (NBS-22, IAEA-CH-6 and USGS 24) were used for $\delta^{13}C$ calibration. Replicate analyses were carried out on six of the decarbonated samples, which revealed mean standard deviations ≤ 0.1 ‰ (Table 1). Extraction of CO_2 from the two samples of soil carbonate nodules was performed by reaction with orthophosphoric acid (90ºC), and analyzed in an ISOCARB device attached to aVG-Isotech SIRA-IITM mass spectrometer (both VG Isogas Co., Middlewich, United Kingdom) at the Universidad de Salamanca, Spain. The accuracy was monitored by repeated analysis of both internal and international (NBS-19) carbonate standards under identical analytical conditions. Isotope results are given as $\delta^{13}C_{inorg}$(‰) relative to VPDB standard.

Fine-grained samples were analyzed for their clay minerals by X-ray diffraction (XRD) using a PANalytical Xpert PRO diffractometer at SGIker X-ray Facility of the University of the Basque Country, Spain. Samples were mechanically ground and decarbonated using diluted HCl. The resulting suspension was centrifuged until total removal of chlorides. The <2 µm fraction was separated and concentrated by centrifugation. Oriented aggregates of this fraction were analyzed by XRD following three steps: first, air-dried without any additional treatment; second, after ethylene glycol solvation for 48 hours at room temperature, in order to identify smectite; and, third, after dimethyl sulphoxide solvation at 75ºC for 72 hours, in order to identify kaolinite and chlorite. Semiquantitative abundances were assessed using the intensity (area) of the major XRD reflections following the protocol developed by Schultz (1964).

The petrology of 22 sandstone samples was examined in thin sections under a Nikon polarized light microscope. This paper also makes use of stratigraphic and micropaleontological data from previous studies, mainly van Vliet (1982), Pujalte et al. (1994), Baceta (1996), Orue-Etxebarria et al. (1996; 2004) and Baceta et al. (2011).

4 Results

4.1 The P–E interval in the inner carbonate platform

The P–E interval is represented in the inner carbonate platform of the south-western Pyrenees by two different kinds of successions, respectively typified by the Korres and Laminoria sections (Figs. 3 and 4). The Korres section is mostly comprised of shallow marine carbonates and it is illustrative of zones flanking the incised valleys. T~~Instead,~~ ~~t~~he Laminoria section, on the other hand, includes massive volumes of siliciclastic sediments of terrestrial origin that infill elongated, large-scale erosional depressions interpreted as incised valleys, the orientation of which was reconstructed with paleocurrents (Baceta et al. 1994; Fig. 3b).

Two incised valleys have been recognized, respectively situated to the southeast and to the west of the city of Vitoria (Figs. 1, 3A). Their best outcrops occur in the Laminoria and Villalain quarries, after which the valleys have been named. A width of about 6 km is estimated for the Laminoria valley (Fig 3b). Width of the Villalain valley was probably similar, although outcrop constrains preclude its accurate reconstruction. Elsewhere in the southern Pyrenees lower Paleogene inner platform deposits are either eroded or buried under younger deposits~~.~~ (Fig. 1).

4.1.1 Korres section

The Korres section (N42º41´55´´, W2º26´11´´) is situated about 1 km east of the extrapolated eastern margin of the Laminoria incised valley~~s~~ (Fig. 3B). The P–E interval of the section comprised the same discontinuity-bounded depositional sequences as~~than~~ in the Campo section (DS TH-2 and DS IL-1; Baceta et al., 2011). The correlation with Campos is based on the fact that the Korres sequences contain marine microfossils of the Shallow Benthic Zone (SBZ) 4, late Thanetian, and SBZ-5, early Ilerdian (=lowest Ypresian) of Serra-Kiel et al. (1998) (Fig. 4; fossil determination by Serra-Kiel, in Pujalte et al., 1994).

Depositional sequence TH-2 rests abruptly on lower Thanetian recrystallized limestones and dolomitic marls and has two different parts (Fig. 4). The lower part (~10 m) is made up of an alternation of cross-bedded sandy limestones and sandy marls, the upper one (~20 m) of thickly bedded grainstones and sandy grainstones with algal remains and larger foraminifera. As in Campo, the DS TH-2 is capped at Korres by a subaerial exposure surface of uneven morphology, the unevenness caused by a dense array of sub-vertical down-tapering pipes up to 20 cm in diameter and no less than 1 m deep (Fig. 4, 5a,b). The pipe fills have a distinctive rugged appearance in weathered surfaces, caused by numerous hardened coated grains enclosed within a matrix of sandy calcarenites (Fig. 5c,d). Diameters of the coated grains vary between 2 and 35 mm, the smaller ones being spherical, the large ones ovoidal in shape (Fig. 5d). They have large nuclei and thin cortices. The nuclei are formed of quartz grains and lithoclasts set in a micritic matrix, the cortices ~~by~~ of vaguely laminated micrite with irregularly developed circumgranular cracks (Fig. 5e).

Vertical to subvertical pipes with coated grains similar to those of the Korres section were described in recent soils of Tarragona, Spain, by Calvet and Julià (1983, p. 457, their Fig. 1b) and in the British West Indies by Jones (2011, p. 97, his Fig. 2a), who respectively named them pisoids and oncoids. In both cases the pipes with coated grains were developed around roots of trees and bushes penetrating the rocky Miocene substratum. By analogy, it seems logical to conclude that the surface capping the DS TH-2 at Korres was subaerially exposed and colonized by plants.

The DS IL-1 has two parts at Korres, the lower one of terrestrial origin, the upper one of shallow marine character. The lower part (7 m thick, hereafter named unit D; Fig 4) is made up of grey calcareous clays containing scattered small-sized (< 3 mm) carbonate nodules indicative of poorly developed soils. The overlying marine part (> 15 m thick, top not preserved) is mostly composed of sandy calcarenites with abundant shallow marine microfossils, notably flosculinized alveolinids (Fig. 4). These calcarenites pertain to the so-called *Alveolina* limestone, a laterally extensive marine unit of the Pyrenees that records a basin-wide, early Eocene transgression (e.g., Plaziat, 1981; Baceta et al., 2011; Pujalte et al., 2014a).

4.1.2 Laminoria and Villalain sections

Laminoria (N42º46´45´´, W2º28´00´´) and Villalain (N42º54´43´´, W3º35´19´´) are two active quarry sections exposing incised valley successions. Similar deposits are partially outcropped in another two ~~other~~ inactive quarries, ~~(~~Arenaza and Birgara (~~,~~ Fig. 3). In these four quarries the DS TH-2 is truncated by an erosional unconformity, the truncation involving the removal of at least 21 m of the sequence (Figs. 4 and 6A). The unconformity is overlain by the terrestrial part of DS IL-1, in which three successive lithologic~~al~~ units are recognized (units A, B and C in Fig. 4).

Unit A is poorly outcropped in a few scattered outcrops (Fig. 6A). Exploratory shallow boreholes demonstrate that it is up to 7 m thick (J. R. Subijana, pers.comm., March 2015). It is composed of red unfossiliferous clays with subordinate interbedded sand lenses. Neither carbonate nodules nor carbonate-coated rhizocretions have been observed in the clays, only occasional root traces about 1 mm in diameter. The sandstone lenses consist of very fine to fine quartz grains cemented by carbonate. The lenses range in thickness from 0.5 to 4 cm, exhibiting cross-laminations, sharp bases and undulating tops.

Unit B is up to 10.5 m thick and mainly composed of fine to ~~-~~medium grained (0.1–0.7 mm) quartz sands containing up to 20% of clay matrix. Other components are pebbles, ranging 1–10 cm in diameter, ~~that~~ which occur randomly dispersed in the sands (Fig. 6b). Most clasts are subrounded fragments of white or pink vein quartz, but clasts of metamorphic quartzite and of sedimentary quartzarenite also occur. Some of the bigger clasts exhibit distinctive polished flattened facets of ventifacts (Fig. 6c). These ventifacts most likely originated from Permian rocks, where they are comparatively frequent. They are quite commonly found resedimented into younger formations (Segura and Elorza, 2013). The quartz sands exhibit light brownish colours in the active front of the quarries, but have acquired a superficial reddish colour in the inactive Arenaza quarry (Supplementay Fig. 1A; location in Fig. 3). Furthermore, the topmost 10-15 cm of the sands in the Arenaza quarry are intensely impregnated by hematite (Supplementary Figs. 1B, C).

Neither body fossils nor trace fossils have been observed in unit B, although hematite-coated root casts occur at some levels (Fig. 6e). Metre-thick cross-bedded sets bounded by ~~internal~~ erosional surfaces are clearly visible at Laminoria and Villalain (Figs. 6d, f).~~-~~The bounding surfaces have concave-up shapes in the former quarry, which is oriented almost at right angles to the paleocurrents, and near flat in the latter, oriented nearly parallel to the paleocurrents~~The bounding surfaces have concave-up shapes in the former quarry, and are oriented almost at right angles to the paleocurrents, and near flat in the Villalain quarry, oriented approximately parallel to the~~

~~paleocurrents~~. Furthermore, unidirectional cross-stratification of decimeter to meter scale foresets can be clearly perceived at Villalain (Fig. 6f). These geometries are indicative of large-scale unidirectional trough cross-bedding, a type of bedding amply described in fluvial deposits (e.g., Allen, 1983; Bridge, 2003). The absence of marine body fossils or trace fossils, and the occasional occurrence of roots, support the fluvial interpretation.

Unit C is up to 4 m thick and caps the incised valley succession in both the Laminoria and Villalain quarries (Fig. 6d, f). At Laminoria unit C has two parts (Fig. 4 and 6d, e). Part C1 (3 m) consists of silts with intercalated sand beds 5–10 cm thick, with at least two horizons crowded with root casts coated with iron oxides (Figs. 4, 6e). Part C2 (1 m) is solely composed of dark-grey carbonaceous clays. At Villalain only part C2 is represented (Fig. 6f). Unit C is sharply overlain in both quarries by the *Alveolina* limestone unit, with the abrupt lower boundary ~~of which in all probability represents~~ most likely representing a ravinement surface recording the Ilerdian transgression.

4.2. Paleocene deposits in the Basque Basin

The Paleocene Epoch is represented in the Basque Basin by two contrasting and mutually exclusive groups of deposits, autochtonous hemipelagic and allochtonous turbidites and breccias. Hemipelagic deposits are represented by cyclic vertical alternations of marls and limestones, with minor intercalations of thin-bedded turbidites. These deposits have been intensively studied, particularly in the Zumaia section, but also in other sections such as Trabakua pass, Sopelana, Hendaia or Bidart (Fig. 1) (e.g., Dinarès-Turell et al., 2014; Storme et al., 2014; Le Callonnec et al., 2014; Clare et al., 2015; Hilgen et al., 2015, to name but some recent publications). The Zumaia section ~~is~~ also ~~represents~~includes the Global Stratotype Sections and Points for the Selandian and Thanetian stages (Schmitz et al., 2011).

There are two groups of allochtonous deposits. One group corresponds to the calciclastic breccias and thickly-bedded calciturbidites of the base-of-slope carbonate apron (Fig. 1). The Ermua section is representative of this group (Pujalte et al., 1994; Baceta, 1996; Schmitz et al., 2001). The second group includes, in addition to coarse-grained calciclastic deposits ~~carbonate breccias and thickly-bedded calciclastic turbidites~~, important volumes of siliciclastic turbidites (Figs. 7–10).

Allochtonous, or resedimented, deposits of the second group occur in the axial part of the Basque Basin and were, until recently, largely overlooked and misinterpreted. Thus, although their existence near Orio (location in Figs. 1, 7) was reported more than sixty years ago (Gómez de Llarena, 1954), only two papers about them were produced in the following 28 years (Hanisch and Pflug, 1974; van Vliet, 1982). In the first~~ormer~~ paper the resedimented deposits were considered a Cretaceous diapiric mass outflowed from the nearby Zarautz diapir (Fig. 7b). The second~~latter~~ paper provided a correct dating of the succession with calcareous nannoplankton (Figs. 7a, a´) but the only interpretation offered was that “this area [near Orio] remains stratigraphically anomalous until the earliest Eocene, as it also contains a localized very coarse-grained submarine fan body in the basal *Tribrachiatus contortus* zone (NP 10)” (van Vliet, 1982, pp. 32). Later studies by Pujalte et al. (1994) and Baceta (1996) made it evident that the second group of resedimented deposits were accumulated within an axially flowing deep-sea channel (Fig. 1).

4.2.1 The deep-sea channel deposits

Deep-sea channels are erosional submarine features deeply incised into unconsolidated sediment~~s~~ of ocean-margin troughs or abyssal plains (Carter, 1988). The main evidence~~proof~~ that the Paleocene resedimented deposits ~~of the second group~~ were accumulated within a deep-sea channel is that they occur within an elongate erosional depression that extends from near Pau to near Bilbao (Fig. 1; Baceta, 1996; Pujalte et al., 1998b).

Flute casts from thick-bedded turbidites of the deep-sea channel systematically indicate westwards directed paleocurrents. In the case of Orio, paleocurrents demonstrate transport towards the Zarautz diapir, not away from it (Fig. 7b). Furthermore, a high resolution mapping demonstrated that the Zarautz diapir had little influence o~~i~~n the accumulation of the resedimented deposits (Baceta et al., 1991). The trend of the deep-sea channel was inferred from paleocurrents, its cross-section through correlation of well-dated sections using the lower/upper Maastrichtian, the Cretaceous/Paleogene and the NP10/NP11 boundaries as tie-points (Fig. 7, 9). These data demonstrate that the Paleocene deep-sea channel was at least 200 km long, about 5 km wide and up to 350 m deep (i.e., the maximum thickness of the missing section at Orio and Gonzugaraia; Figs. 7, 8).

A chaotic breccia at the base of the resedimented succession near Orio includes contorted blocks of upper Maastrichtian reddish marls and large clasts of hemipelagic limestones of the Paleocene planktonic foraminifera P1a ~~planktonic foraminifera~~ Z~~z~~one of Berggren et al. (1995). The breccia is overlain by thickly-bedded calciturbidites with thin marly interbeds containing well-preserved planktonic foraminifera of the P1c Zone (Fig.7c; Pujalte et al., 1994; Baceta, 1996). Accordingly, ~~it is considered that~~ the excavation of the channel appears to have been ~~was~~ initiated in early Danian times.

The deep-sea channel persisted as a prominent feature of the Basque Basin until the earliest Eocene, when it was buried by the Eocene flysch (Fig. 7, 8). ~~It~~ The channel had a dominantly erosive character, acting essentially as a conduit for high-concentration turbiditic currents, while hemipelagic sedimentation continued on the channel walls and outside the channel. Consequently, three different types of Paleocene sedimentary successions are recognized in the Basque Basin, namely: basin floor, channel-wall and channel-bottom associations (Fig. 7, 8). The first two are largely made up of stacks of hemipelagic limestones and marls. However, while successions of the basin floor (typified by the Zumaia section) are continuous and up to 130 m thick, the thickness of successions of the channel-wall becomes progressively reduced towards the channel axis due to internal hiatuses (e.g., the Balcón de Bizkaia and Trabakua pass west sections, Fig. 8). The channel-bottom association is largely composed of thickly-bedded calciturbidites in its lower part and of thickly-bedded siliciclastic turbidites in its upper part (Fig. 9a, 10a, b). ~~(Fig. 7, 8). Basin floor and channel-wall associations are both largely made up of stacks of hemipelagic limestones and marls. However, while successions of the basin floor association (typified by the Zumaia section) are continuous and up to 130 m thick, the thickness of channel-wall successions becomes progressively reduced towards the channel axis due to internal hiatuses (e.g., the Balcón de Bizkaia and Trabakua pass west sections, Fig. 8). The coarse-grained resedimented deposits made up the channel-bottom association, which is largely composed of thickly-bedded calciturbidites in its lower part and of thickly-bedded siliciclastic turbidites in its upper part (Fig. 9a, 10a, b).~~

4.2.2~~1~~ The P–E interval at the Orio section

Because of the scarce attention hitherto paid to the resedimented deposits of the deep-sea channel, ~~resedimented deposits~~ no previous attempt ~~has~~ had been made to pinpoint the PETM in them. To alleviate this information gap, the Orio section was chosen for several reasons: (i) it is the thickest section of these deposits available in the Basque Basin (Baceta, 1996); (ii) the age of its carbonate-dominated lower part is well constrained with microfossils (Fig. 7a′, c); and (iii) a recent enlargement of the road connecting the N-634 road and the highway has created a clean outcrop of the upper segment of the section~~,~~ (the target of this study), from which fresh samples could be collected (Fig. 10d). Location of the section is shown in Fig. 7b, with the studied segment situated at N43º16′50”/W2º 06′52”.

The target segment is placed well above Thanetian calciturbidites of the NP7/8 zone and below deposits of the Eocene calciclastic-siliciclastic flysch containing *Tibrachiatus contortus* (NP 10, Fig. 7a~~′~~). This nannofossil species (later re-named *Rhomboaster contortus*) slightly post-dates the PETM (Aubry, 1996), its lower occurrence at Zumaia ~~occurring~~ being located 5 m above the top of the PETM (Orue-Etxebarria et al., 2004). The target segment is exclusively made up of siliciclastic deposits, but two different appearing parts are readily identified~~differentiated~~ (parts Y and Z in Figs. 10d, 11). Part Y is composed of plane-parallel sandy turbidites, 0.5–1 m thick, separated by laterally continuous 1–2 cm thick clay interbeds (white arrows in Fig. 10d). The sandstones are medium-grained and loosely cemented, probably due to decalcification. Thin sections reveal that, in addition to quartz, they contain around 5-7% of feldspars, rock fragments and micas, as well as a small proportion of matrix.

Part Z is composed of amalgamated sandstones and pebbly sandstones, the latter with clasts up to 3 cm in diameter (Fig. 10g). They occur in beds ranging 2–4 m in thickness, often separated by concave-up erosional surfaces, the thickest bed occurring at the top of part Z, just below the Eocene flysch (Supplementary Fig. 2a,b). Most beds have a massive appearance, but some are clearly parallel laminated throughout, including the topmost one (Supplementary Fig. 2c). Some of the ~~sandstone~~ bedding surfaces are strewn with coal~~ified~~ remains (Fig. 10e). The sandstones are almost exclusively composed (>95%) of quartz grains, with only~~just~~ traces of micas and rock fragments, and are pervasively cemented by quartz. Part Z is therefore very resistant to erosion, creating a prominent ridge in the landscape (Fig. 10a, b). Clay interbeds are rare, thin and discontinuous. However, clay clasts up to 30 cm in diameter are common in some levels (Fig. 10 d, f). These clasts are considered the eroded remnants of coeval mud deposits, as their original soft nature implies ~~a~~ minimum ~~of~~ transport.

4.3. Stable isotope and clay mineral~~s~~ data from Laminoria and Korres

Samples from units A, B and C were collected at the Laminoria section;~~,~~ samples from unit D, and from pisoids, at the Korres section. The clay mineralogy of units A, B and C was investigated in nine~~9~~ samples, that of unit D in two~~2~~ samples. Organic carbon isotopes ~~were~~ from units B and C were investigated in thirteen~~13~~ clay samples and from two ~~2~~ pisoids~~ samples~~. Inorganic carbon isotopes were analyzed in two~~from 2~~ carbonate nodule samples of unit D. The results are shown in Fig. 11.

The six clay samples from unit A contain illite, smectite and kaolinite, the proportion of the latter ranging between 20% and 32%. Routine analyses of the clay matrix of unit B sands always produce ~~a~~ high kaolinite content (80%–100%; J. R. Subijana, pers. comm., March 2015). Illite, smectite and kaolinite also occur in three~~3~~ samples of unit C, the proportion of kaolinite steadily decreasing upwards, from 27% in sample 7 to just 4% in sample 9. The two samples from unit D exclusively contain illite.

No fresh samples for isotopic analysis could be recovered from unit A. Only one fine-grained sample was collected from unit B, which produced a rather negative isotopic value (-26.7‰ $\delta^{13}C_{org}$). The eleven samples from the overlying unit C reveal a steady vertical trend towards less negative $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ values, from -24.5‰ in sample 3 to –21.2‰ in sample 13 (Fig. 11). The two pisoid samples from Korres ~~gave~~ yielded low $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ values (-28.1‰ and –26.1‰), while the soil nodules from unit D yielded -5.1‰ and -5.8‰ $\delta^{13}C_{inorg}$ values (Fig. 11).

4.4. Stable isotope and clay mineral~~s~~ data from the Orio section

Samples from part Y of the studied segment at Orio were all collected from thin clay interbeds. Most samples from part Z were collected from either clay interbeds or from clay clasts, but one sample of coal~~ified~~ remains was also taken. Fourteen of these samples were analyzed for clay minerals and 23 for organic carbon isotopes. Two marl samples of the Eocene flysch were investigated for organic carbon. The location of the samples and the analytical results are plotted in Fig. 11, the isotopic data being also listed in Table 1.

The clay fraction of samples from part Y is exclusively made up of~~formed by~~ illite. This mineral is also dominant in the 10 samples analyzed from part Z. However, small concentrations of kaolinite (2%–18%) were found in six~~6~~ of these ten~~10~~ samples (Fig. 11).

The $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ composition of the seven~~7~~ samples analyzed from part Y shows a stable vertical trend, with values ~~in the~~ ranging~~e~~ from -24.2‰ to -24.8‰, averaging out at -24.3‰. Values from the 21 samples analyzed from part Z range from -25.5‰ to -28.3‰ and average out at -27.6‰, as most values lie in the lower end~~negative side~~ of the range (Table 1). These data include~~volve~~ a drop of -3.3‰ in carbon ~~isotopic~~ isotope values ~~of -3.3‰~~. The $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ ~~V~~values return to –24.8‰ and~~,~~ –25.4‰ ~~$\delta^{13}C_{org}$~~ in the basal part of the overlying Eocene flysch (Fig.11).

5. Discussion

5.1. Age models

Biostratigraphic data from ~~for~~ sections in the SE Pyrenees, Egypt and Slovenia, demonstrate that the PETM occurred at the base of the SBZ-5 B~~b~~iozone (e.g., Orue-Etxebarria et al., 2001; Pujalte et al., 2003a , 2009; Scheibner et al., 2005; Zamagni, 2012; Drobne, 2014). In the Campo section, in particular, the thermal event is recorded within terrestrial deposits from the lower part of DS Il-1 (Fig. 2; Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003; Baceta et al., 2011). It is also well established that ~~in open marine successions~~ the PETM is located around the NP9/NP10 boundary in open marine successions (e.g., Monechi et al., 2000; Orue-Etxebarria et al., 2004). It is thus reasonable to suppose that the PETM may be ~~registered~~ recorded within some of the terrestrial units A to D of Laminoria and Korres, and within the siliciclastic turbidites of the upper part of the deep-sea channel succession of Orio. ~~None of~~ Neither the terrestrial units ~~A–D~~, nor the siliciclastic turbidites ~~of Orio~~, contain fossils of chronostratigraphic significance. Therefore, carbon isotopes and clay minerals have been used to try to constrain the position of the thermal event.

A pulse of kaolinite accumulation in connection with the PETM has been documented in widely separated sections around or in the Atlantic Ocean, including the Bass River on the USA east coast (Gibson et al., 2000; John et al., 2012), Site 690 in the southern Atlantic (e.g., Shackleton and Hall, 1990), the Paris Basin (e.g., Thiry and Dupuis, 1998, 2000; Quesnel et al., 2011), the Svalbard archipelago (Dypvik et al., 2011) or Zumaia and Ermua i~~o~~n the Basque Basin (Fig. 2; Knox, 1998; Bolle et al., 1998). At Zumaia kaolinite first appears in significant amounts (up to 25% of the clay mineral assemblage) some 10 m below the onset of the PETM, the proportion increasing sharply (up to 75%) at the onset of the thermal event (Knox, 1998). The origin of the pulse is controversial (e.g., John et al., 2012 and below) but, together with carbon isotope data, it is ~~here~~ used here to establish an age model for clastic units A–D of Laminoria and Korres.

The highest content of kaolinite occurs in unit B at Laminoria, which is accordingly tentatively assigned to the core of the PETM. The isotopic value of the ~~one~~ sample from this unit (-26.7‰ $\delta^{13}C_{org}$) is fully compatible with that proposal (Fig. 11). Indeed, analyses of well-constrained P–E terrestrial and marine sections elsewhere in the Pyrenees concur in that the PETM interval is characterized by $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ isotopic values ranging from -26.0‰ to -28.8‰, while pre- and post-PETM background values vary between -22.0~~-~~‰ and -25.0‰ (e.g. Storme et al., 2012; Manners et al., 2013; Pujalte et al., 2014a). The proportion of kaolinite in unit C decreases upward, in parallel with a steady trend towards less negative $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ values (Fig. 11). Both sets of data are strongly indicative that unit C was accumulated, totally or in part, during the recovery phase of the PETM, further reinforcing the ascription of unit B to the PETM. The age of unit A is less well constrained, because no samples suitable for isotopic analyses could be obtained. However, a pre-PETM age is suggested by its comparatively low content of~~in~~ kaolinite and by its stratigraphic position below unit B (Fig. 11).

The pisoids enclosed in the pipes at the top of the DS TH-2 at the Korres section yielded typical PETM $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ isotopic values (-26.1 ‰ and –28.1‰; Fig. 11). Such values imply that the marine deposits of this depositional sequence were subaerially exposed during the thermal event. The absence of kaolinite in unit D, and the $\delta^{13}C_{inorg}$ values of its soil ~~carbonate~~ nodules (-5.1‰ and –5.8‰), indicate a post-PETM age.

The isotope results from the Orio deep-sea channel deposits are even more conclusive. In effect, the -3.3‰ shift in $\delta^{13}C_{org}$ observed from part Y to part Z of the studied segment can only correspond to the PETM, for no other CIE of such magnitude is known to occur in the interval comprised between the calcareous nannofossil zone NP7/8 and the ~~lower~~ lowest occurrence of the species *T. (R.) contortus* ~~calcareous nannofossil species~~ (lower part of NP 10). Consequently, the amalgamated coarse-grained deposits of part Z are confidently assigned to the PETM. The clay mineral results from Orio are somewhat ambiguous, as kaolinite only occurs, and in low proportion, in some of the samples from part Z. It should be noted, however, that the PETM kaolinite influx is very ~~diverse~~variable, and ~~sometimes~~ locally absent, in some basins (e.g., in the Paris Basin; Thiry and Dupuis, 1998; Quesnel et al., 2011).

5.2 Evolution of the incised valleys across the P–E interval

It is widely acknowledged that incised valleys in marine basin margins are usually excavated during relative sea-level falls and filled with sediments during the subsequent sea-level rise (e.g., Boyd et al. 2006; Strong and Paola, 2008). The subaerial exposure of the marine carbonates of the DS TH-2 at Korres and elsewhere in the Pyrenees (e.g, in the Campo section, Fig. 2) is a clear proof of a sea-level fall, which in all probability triggered the incision of the valleys. The oldest unit of the valley-fill succession (unit A of Laminoria) is pre-PETM, which entails that the excavation of valleys was prior to the onset of the PETM. Filling of the valleys during the sea-level rise occurred in three phases, respectively recorded by units A, B and C (Fig. 11, 12). These three units are considered terrestrial in origin, based on the absence of marine fossils and the presence of root marks~~, but~~. However, their contrasting lithologies and sedimentary features are indicative of different depositional conditions.

Unit A was accumulated in a low-~~-~~energy setting, probably a flood plain, as demonstrated by the predominance of clays. The intercalated rippled sandstone lenses probably are ~~corresponding to~~ distal crevasse splay deposits. Flood plains are best developed in meandering river systems, and we speculate that point bar channel sands ~~also~~ do actually exist in unit A ~~C~~. The red color of the clays implies well-drained and oxidized soils. The absence of calcite nodules suggests that either soil moisture was too high or that the accumulation~~s~~ of ~~the~~ clays was too rapid for nodules to form.

The sedimentary features of unit B imply a drastic change in depositional conditions during the PETM. Indeed, the prevalence of sands and pebbly sands required a much greater stream power than in the underlying unit A. Furthermore, the scarcity of fine-grained deposits coupled with the large-scale trough cross-bedding or channeling in the pebbly sands indicate a braided river system stretching across most, if not all, the width of the incised valleys.

The vertical reduction in grain size in unit C likely records the backstepping and ponding of the fluvial system as the sea-level rise continued during the recovery phase of the PETM. Indeed, the widespread hematite-coated root traces in subunit C1 suggest wet soil conditions, and the preservation of abundant coal remains in subunit C2 is indicative of a waterlogged environment. The rise of the sea level eventually caused the marine flooding of the valleys, attested by the deposition of the *Alveolina* limestones above unit C in the Laminoria and Villalain incised valleys (Fig. 6d, f). The post-PETM age assigned to unit D at Korres denotes a small time lag in the re-establishment of fully marine conditions outside the valleys (Fig. 3).

5.3 Changes in the deep-sea channel across the P–E interval

The contrasting sedimentary features of parts Y and Z of the Orio section denote an abrupt change in depositional conditions. The tabular geometry and the massive character of the sandstone beds of part Y, and the fact that many of them are capped by thin but laterally persistent clay deposits, suggest deposition from waning high-density currents (Figs. 10d and 11). Instead, several features of part Z deposits are best explained by deposition from hyperpycnal flows generated by direct river effluents (cf. Plink-Björklund and Steel, 2004). For instance, the 4 m thick topmost bed of part Z is parallel laminated throughout (Supplementary Fig. 2a, c), a strong indication of a sustained upper regime flow. Although internal erosional surfaces preclude~~s~~ establishing the original bed thicknesses in the bulk of part Z, it is ~~clear~~ reasonable to assume that many of the beds~~m~~ most likely had a similar thickness~~magnitude~~ and character as~~than~~ the topmost 4 m thick bed (Supplementary Fig. 2b). The abundant coal~~ified~~ remains of obvious terrestrial derivation (Fig. 10e) is another clear indication of direct river input.

Flood~~s~~ events can produce both hypopycnal and hyperpycnal flows at river mouths (e.g., McLeod et al., 1999). Decoupling of coarse and fine grain populations due to the separation of both flows ~~can occur~~is relatively common (e.g., Plink-Björklund and Steel, 2004). This process may explain the simultaneous deposition ~~during the PETM~~ of sandstone-dominated beds in the bottom of the deep-sea channels~~,~~ and of clays in the ~~deep-sea~~ channel walls during the PETM (Figs. 7–9).

5.4 The PETM kaolinite influx

The origin of the increased kaolinite flux during the PETM is somewhat controversial, some authors arguing in favor of enhanced chemical weathering (e.g., Bolle and Adatte, 2001; Gibson et al., 2000; Dypvik et al., 2011), but others supporting enhanced erosion of former kaolinite-rich soils (e.g., Thiry and Dupuis, 2000; John et al., 2012).

In the study area kaolinite has been found in the three terrestrial units of the Laminoria incised valley, the highest percentage occurring in unit B (Fig. 11). These terrestrial units ~~were~~ probably had their source in~~d from~~ the Hercynian Ebro Massif (Fig. 1), ~~which is~~ now buried under thick Oligocene-Miocene alluvial deposits of the Ebro foreland basin (Lanaja and Navarro, 1987). Similar Hercynian basement rocks are extensively exposed further south, ~~and in numerous sections~~where they commonly appear capped by an up to 50 m thick lateritic profile attributed to prolonged pedogenesis under prevailing humid, tropical conditions during the Cretaceous (Molina Ballesteros, 1991). The lateritic profile is overlain by the “Siderolithic Series”, an extensive lower Paleogene alluvial unit ~~largely resulting from its erosion~~ (Santisteban Navarro et al., 1991; Molina Ballesteros et al., 2007). The main components of the conglomerates, sandstones and overbank fines of the “Siderolithic Series” are quartz and kaolinite derived from the erosion of the Cretaceous lateritic profile. Moreover, the conglomerates and sandstones are cemented by silica and~~, also,~~ contain significant amounts of Fe oxyhydroxides, from which the ~~latter giving the unit its~~ name of the unit was coined. By analogy, the quartz-rich nature and high content of~~in~~ kaolinite and hematite in~~of~~ unit B at Laminoria, strongly suggest that it also resulted from the erosion of a similar lateritic profile developed on the Ebro Massif. Therefore, the kaolinite spike in this unit is best explained by ~~enhanced~~ increased erosion rather than by~~from~~ intensified~~e~~ chemical weathering during the PETM.

Kaolinite occurs at concentrations of 6%–8% throughout most of the Paleocene terrestrial deposits of the Tremp Basin, increasing to up to 15% during the PETM (Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003). However, paleosols across the entire P–E interval indicate a semiarid climate, ~~a~~ further ~~evidence~~ suggesting that their kaolinite content did not result from coeval chemical weathering (Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003). The terrestrial deposits of Tremp were mainly eroded from Cretaceous marine carbonate rocks uplifted during a Santonian–Campanian tectonic phase in the eastern Pyrenees (Fig. 1). No significant alteration profile is known on these uplifted carbonates, a fact that in all probability explains the comparatively low kaolinite content in the resulting alluvium.

The proportion of kaolinite in ~~PETM~~ marine PETM intervals~~sections~~ of the Basque Basin ranges from up to 75% in Zumaia ~~and~~ to 18% or less in Ermua and Orio (Figs. 2 and 11). Such variability is thought to record a mixed contribution from different source areas (Fig. 1).

5.5 The PETM hydrologic change

The PETM coarse-grained siliciclastics of unit B in the incised valleys and of part Z in the deep-sea channel are proof~~s~~ of large increases in, respectively, stream power (which requires greater discharges)~~,~~ and ~~flow~~ strength and capacity of ~~turbidite~~ turbidity currents. PETM coarse-grained sands were also accumulated in fan deltas in the south-central Pyrenees (Fig. 12a, Pujalte et al., 2014b). To evaluate the significance of ~~such increases~~ this influx, however, it must be taken into account that the volume of fine-grained siliciclastics delivered to the Pyrenean Gulf during the PETM far exceeded that of sands and pebbly sands. As a result, a mud blanket 3 m thick on average (after compaction) covered most of the outer platform (Pujalte et al., 2003a), the base-of-slope apron (Schmitz et al., 2001), the basin floor (Schmitz et al., 1997, Baceta, 1996) and, more remarkable, the deep-sea channel walls (Figs. 8b, 9b,c).

The most plausible explanation of ~~simultaneous and~~ the abrupt increase in both coarse and fine-grained clastic input to the Pyrenean Gulf during the PETM is an ~~abrupt~~ enhancement of seasonal precipitation extremes in an overall dry environment. In effect, it is well established that in semi-arid areas ~~interannual~~ variations in precipitation rates are strong and that, during flood events, suspended sediment concentrations in rivers are very high. For example, data compiled from the semi-arid Carapelle watershed in southern Italy ~~by~~ (Bisantino et al., ~~(~~2011, their table 3) show that the concentration of suspended sediments in the Carapelle torrent during intense flood events ~~may be~~ is as high as 43 g/l. Even higher suspension load concentrations (250 g/l) ~~during flood events~~ have been measured in the Wadi Wahrane of Algeria during flood events (Benkhaled and Remini, 2003).

Semi-arid to arid climates prevailed during Paleocene times in the Pyrenean Gulf, as demonstrated by paleosols rich in calcareous nodules and gypsum in the terrestrial Tremp Group of the eastern Pyrenees (Schmitz and Pujalte, 2003). Accordingly, the rise in temperatures during the PETM, c~~w~~ould have prolonged and intensified~~y~~ summer drought but increase the frequency and magnitude of cool-season flood events. This would increase ~~the~~ river channel competence and the volume of suspension loads.

The change in channel pattern recorded in the incised valleys, from meandering during accumulation of unit A to braided during accumulation of unit B (Fig. 12b), is congruent with the proposed hydrological change. The possibility that this change was caused by a tectonic event is ~~considered~~ highly unlikely, since tectonic quiescence prevailed in the Pyrenean domain throughout the latest Maastrichtian–middle Ilerdian interval (e.g., Fernández et al., 2012; Pujalte et al. 2014a). Furthermore, Bridge (2003) maintains that river channel patterns are determined by the type of flows at averaged bankfull discharges ("channel-forming discharges"), a configuration that is only slightly modified at low discharges. Bridge (2003, his Fig. 5.9) also indicates that the width/depth river ratio and degree of braiding ~~of rivers~~ increase as their channel-forming discharges increase. Thus, the observed change from a meandering to a braided pattern can reasonably be attributed to the higher frequency and magnitude of flood events during the PETM.

Changes ~~registered~~ recorded in the deep sea-channel can also be explained in the context of the PETM hydrological change. The deep-sea channel acted mainly as a conduit towards deeper water ~~of~~ for ~~turbidite~~ turbidity currents reaching the axial part of the Basque Basin. During most of Paleocene time these currents mainly carried coarse clastics, either carbonate or silicicilastic~~s~~, while channel-walls were subjected to erosion and the basin floor mainly received hemipelagic sediments (Fig. 12c). During the PETM ~~interval~~ sedimentological evidence suggests that hyperpycnal flows deposited coarse-grained sands and pebbly sands in the deep-sea channel bottom, while a larger fraction of fines carried by hypopycnal plumes were deposited on the channel walls and on the basin floor, greatly diluting the hemipelagic contribution (Fig. 12c). ~~and that hypopycnal plumes carried a larger fraction of fines in suspension that were deposited in on the channel walls an in on the basin floor, greatly diluting the hemipelagic contribution (Fig. 12c).~~

6. Conclusions

The ~~important~~ significant change in sedimentary conditions recorded in the western part of the Pyrenean Gulf across the P–E boundary interval can satisfactorily be explained by a dramatic and abrupt change in hydrology and a pre-PETM sea-level fall. During the PETM dry conditions were intensified or prolonged during the warm season, whereas precipitation events and flash floods became more intense during the cooler season~~drier periods were longer and interval of intense rain more frequent~~. In a dry, vegetation-barren landscape seasonal precipitation extremes effectively eroded the landscape. As a result, during rainy intervals fluvial currents carried coarser bed load~~s~~ and massive suspension load~~s~~. ~~Delivering~~ Delivery of the~~se~~ increased sediment load~~s~~ to the marine basin was facilitated by the low position of the sea level. A fraction of the bed load was accumulated within incised valleys, which had been excavated during the pre-PETM sea-level fall, and on a delta at a valley mouth. The remainder coarse-grained fraction, transported by hyperpycnal flows, reached a deep-sea channel excavated along the axial part of the Basque Basin. ~~Distribution~~ Deposition of the suspension load was much more widespread,~~ its deposits~~ covering much, if not all, of the outer platform, the base-of-slope, the basin floor and even the walls of the deep-sea channel. This implies that the rivers transported and delivered a much larger volume of fine-grained sediments than of coarse-grained sediments, another indication of precipitation extremes. The influx of kaolinite during the PETM, probably due to intensified erosion of Cretaceous lateritic profiles developed on the Hercynian basement, is also attributable to enhanced seasonal precipitation.~~The evidence that the influx of kaolinite coeval with the PETM was due to enhanced erosion of Cretaceous lateritic profiles developed on the Hercynian basement reinforces this conclusion.~~

Based on an entirely different set of data from the Tremp Basin, in the eastern Pyrenees, a similar hydrological change ~~to the one discussed here~~ was proposed by

Schmitz and Pujalte (2007). The data from the western Pyrenees here presented reinforce such a proposal, and indicate that the hydrological change affected the entire Pyrenean domain.

The supplement related to this article is available online at xxxx

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