Learning Biostratigraphy in University of Gadjah Mada

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Biostratigraphy is an even-semester elective course (non-mandatory) only offered to sophomores and higher in Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. Many students choose to take this course on their 4th semester since it will ease them to understand other advanced materials on the next semesters such as paleontology and stratigraphy analysis. The course usually starts in the 4nd week of February and held every Thursday for 2x50 minutes.

The course is being carried out by two lecturers. The first is Mr. Akmaluddin, he is an expert in microfossil analysis, especially in foraminifera and calcareous nannofossils. Mr. Sugeng Wijono, the second lecturer, has been in this field for many years and specialized in spore/pollens (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Biostratigraphy Lecturers in Gadjah Mada University, Mr. Akmaluddin (left) and Mr. Sugeng Wijono (right).*

Students are really enthusiastic to learn this subject. The class required minimum of 10 students to establish the class but there are around 50 to 60 students per class enrolled in this course. One of the reasons why this course has been really popular is because the lecturers handle the course directly; no assistants needed. There are no laboratory sessions. That's why every presentation session is conducted interactively so the students' participation is highly encouraged. Other than tasks and homework, the lecturers provide opportunity for discussion within or after the class. Students are also encouraged to review published scientific papers related to biostratigraphy.

In the beginning of the course, students are introduced to the theories related to biostratigraphy. Then, in the first seven weeks they are given basic materials such as; biostratigraphy and its application, fossils and how they are formed, preparing samples (mainly planktons and benthonic fossils) for observation, fossil analysis to know its living environment and age, and defining biozonations.

The final goal of the course, after this seven weeks program, is to literally make the biozonation itself from field report data (Figure 2). Then, the result is compared and analyzed by published biozonation papers e.g. from Postuma or Bolli and Sanders to strengthen its objectiveness.

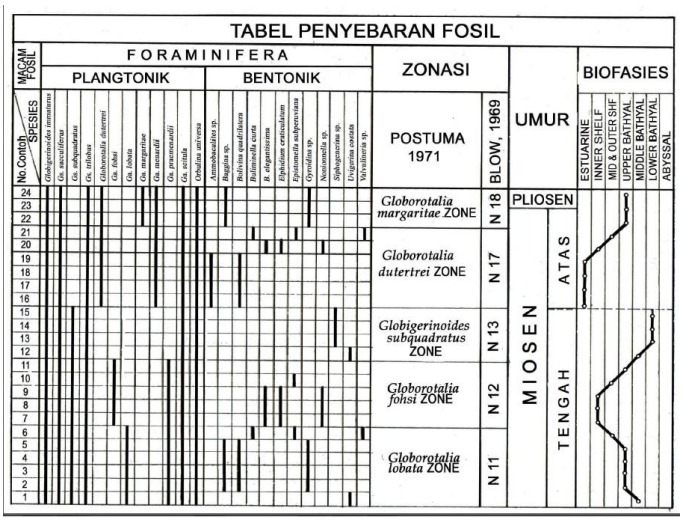


Figure 2. *An example of biozonation table.*

In my perspective, I'm amazed on how the age and paleoenvironment can be determined by learning this course. It would be very helpful to understand the process during the geological mapping.