

Record of relative sea level rise on the Southern Adriatic Shelf

A. ARGNANI, G. BORTOLUZZI, M. GASPERINI, M. LIGI and M. MARANI

Istituto di Geologia Marina, CNR, BOLOGNA (Italy)

A study carried out on 3.5 kHz Subbottom Profiles (SBP) highlights the fine stratigraphic architecture of the Southern Adriatic shelf. The area investigated is the only part of the broad and shallow Adriatic Sea where the shelf is facing a slope that goes to over 1000 m depth.

After a phase of margin outbuilding, marked by prograding slope clinoforms, terminated by exposure and erosion over large part of the shelfal area, the sediments were mainly stored onto the shelf due to the ensuing relative sea level (RSL) rise.

The stratigraphic record of this RSL rise is well documented in the SBP where it appears as a set of thin, roughly tabular, units stacked one on top of the other and progressively stepping landward. Each of these units is about 20 to 40 m thick and is bounded by erosional unconformities. The internal configuration displays oblique and sigmoidal reflections downlapping onto the lower boundary and abruptly truncated by the upper unconformity. Rapid lateral changes in acoustic facies and local erosions on the upper part of the foresets suggests that these units originated during a RSL fall that, however, never reached the shelf edge.

Given the overall retrogradational stacking pattern of the units, these episodes of RSL fall appear to punctuate a general trend of RSL rise. It is noteworthy that sediments deposited mainly, if not only, during these pulses of RSL falls.