International degree on

Geosciences and Georesources

Course of
Applied Stratigraphy and Sedimentology

3. Sedimentology

3a. Origin of sediments; **3b.** Clastic and non-clastic sediments; **3c.** Main processes of erosion, transport and sedimentation; **3d.** Main sedimentary processes (tractive, mass, etc ...); **3e.** Facies, facies associations, depositional environments and systems. **3f**. Georisources of sedimentary origin.

1) SELECTIVE PROCESSES (Tractive)

Selective processes generate both a transport (TRACTIONAL TRANSPORT) but also a modelling of the sediment, producing structures (TRACTIONAL STRUCTURES).

(Ex.: marine currents; waves; river floods).

2) MASS PROCESSES

Mass processes produce a ‘mass transport’ of large amount (masses) of sediment, both in subaerial and subaqueous settings.

(Ex.: landslides; mudflows, etc.).

2.1) Gravitative Processes

The gravitative processes represent a type of mass process, which occur mostly under the effect of the gravity force.

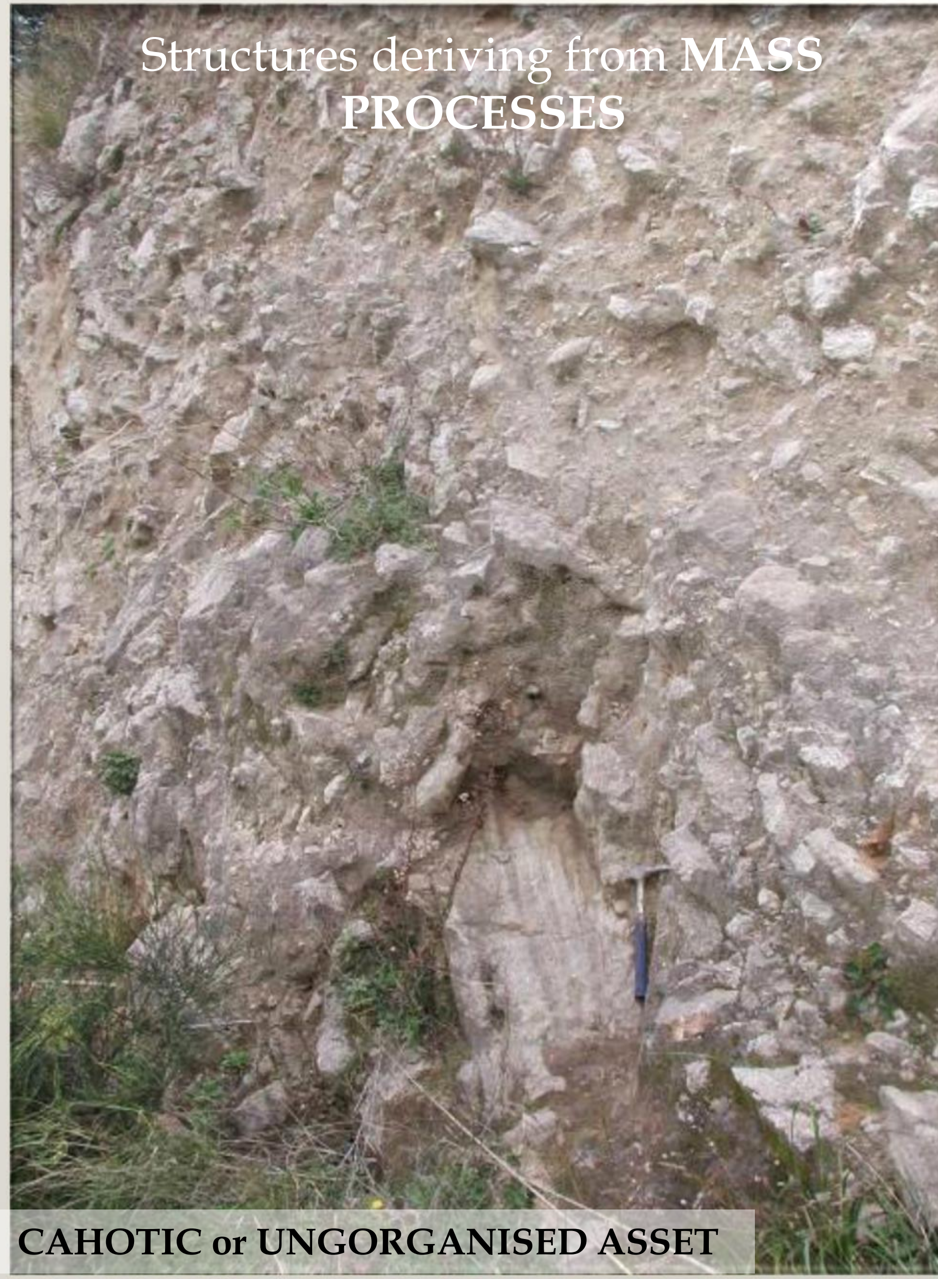
(Ex.: *debris flow*, *grain flow, mud flow; turbidity flow*).

2.2) NON Gravitative Processesi

The gravitative processes represent a type of mass process, whose energy exceeds those of the gravity force, in case of excpetional events.

(Ex.: river catastrophic floods; ciclones, hurricanes, tiphoons; volcanic *surges*).

Course of **Applied Stratigraphy and Sedimentology**



Selective processes shaping a mud/mudrock unit

MUDROCK UNIT

THICKNESS → BOUNDARIES
Sharp or transitional?
What's the unit's shape?

SILT CONTENT
- None →
- Little →
- Much →

FISSILITY

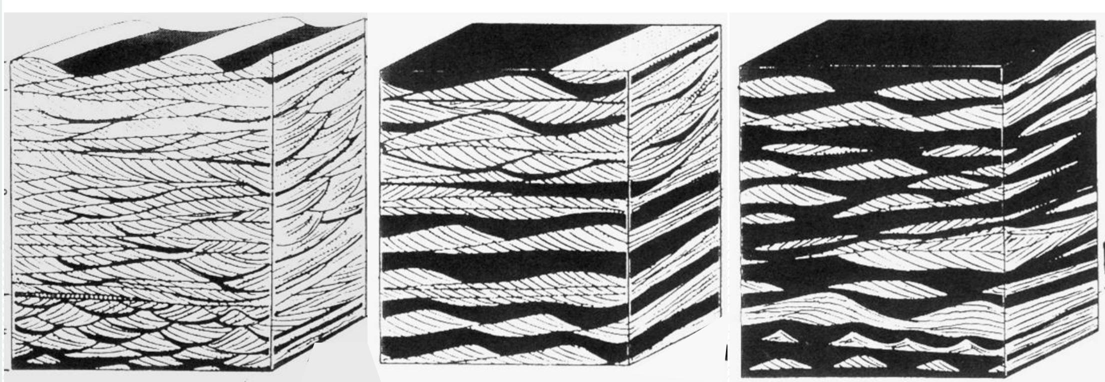
Absent	Present
= claystone	= clayshale
= mudstone	= mudshale
= silty mudstone (or muddy siltstone)	= siltshale

SILT/SAND INTERLAYERS

Absent	Present
uniform mudrock	heterolithic deposit

What kind of interlayers?
- Interlaminae ($\leq$ 2 mm)?
  - Continuous or discontinuous ("streaky")?
  - What's their grain size?
- Interbeds (> 2 mm)?
  - Flat or undulatory? Continuous or not?
  - What's their grain size?
  - What's their internal structure?
  - What's the interbedding type? (flaser? wavy? lenticular?)
- Any soft-sediment deformation?

BIOTURBATION
- Plant root-casts?
  - What length and diameter?
  - Branching or singular?
  - Coaly matter present or not?
- Animal burrows?
  - How strong (dense)?
  - What kind of trace fossils?



Flaser bedding — Wavy bedding — Lenticular bedding

Selective processes shaping a sand/sandstone unit

SANDSTONE UNIT (BED)

THICKNESS → **BOUNDARIES**

Sharp or gradational?
Erosive base? (What's its relief?)
What's the bed's shape (geometry)?

MINERAL COMPOSITION

Siliciclastic or calcareous?
- More exact composition is usually difficult to specify without a thin-section analysis

TEXTURE

Mean grain size
- What's the sand's grain-size category?

v. coarse	1-2 mm
coarse	0.5-1 mm
medium	0.25-0.5 mm
fine	0.125-0.25 mm
v. fine	0.062-0.125 mm
silt	< 0.062 mm

Sorting
- Arenite (< 15 vol.% mud) or wacke?

Any "outsized" particles?
- What's their size & spatial distribution?

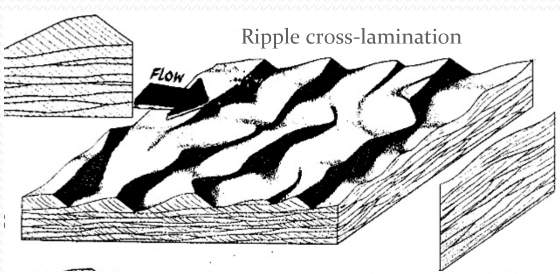
STRUCTURE

Stratified?
- What type(s) of stratification?
- What kind of spatial changes?
- What's the palaeotransport direction?

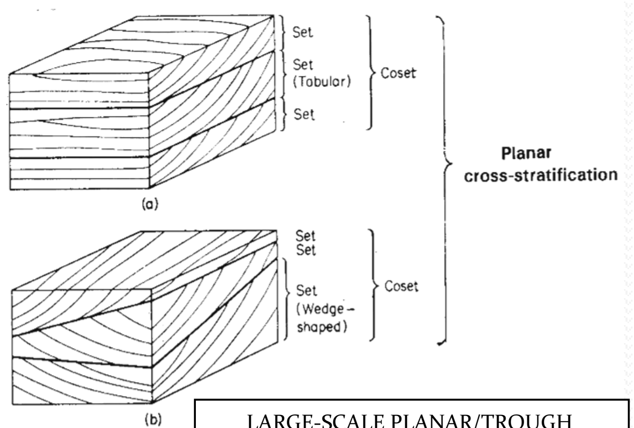
Non-stratified ("massive")?
- Normal? Inverse? Inverse-to-normal?

Any soft-sediment deformation or water-escape structures?

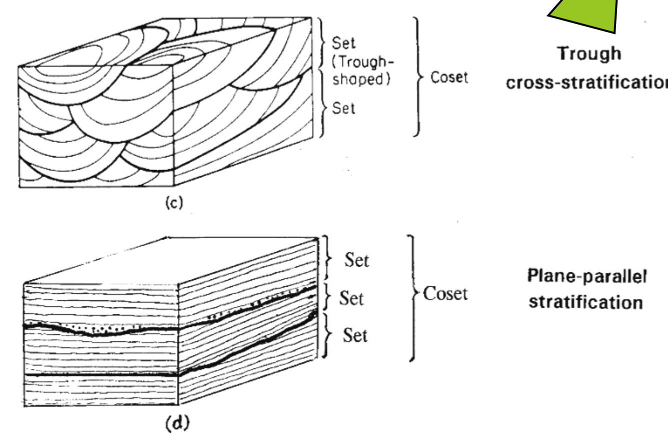
Any biogenic structures?
- Any trace fossils? What kind?
- Any plant-root traces or other pedogenic/paleosol features?
- How dense?



SMALL-SCALE PLANAR/TROUGH CROSS-STRATIFICATION



LARGE-SCALE PLANAR/TROUGH CROSS-STRATIFICATION



Selective processes shaping a gravel/gravelstone unit

CONGLOMERATE UNIT (BED)

THICKNESS → BOUNDARIES

Distinct or indistinct ("amalgamated")?
Even (flat) or uneven?
Sharp base? Loaded?
- Is it erosive?
- What's the scour relief, if any?

MINERAL COMPOSITION

Monomictic?
Oligomictic?
Polymictic?
What components?
Any "intraclasts"? Where?

TEXTURE

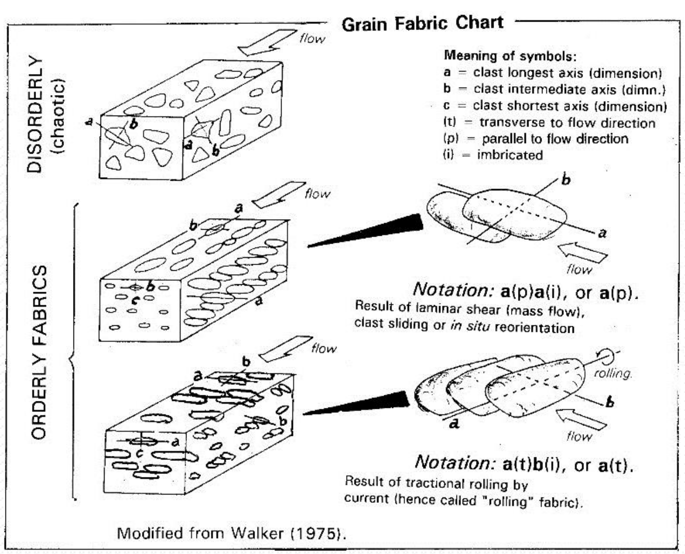
Clast- or matrix-supported?
Mean grain size (D_{mean})
- boulder gravel > 512 mm
- cobble gravel 64-512 mm
- pebble gravel 4-64 mm
- granule gravel 2-4 mm

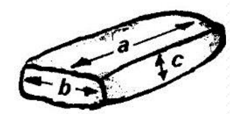
Maximum grain size (D_{max})
Clast sorting
Clast shape
Clast roundness
Clast fabric
- Flow-transverse ***a***(t) ? With imbrication ***a***(t)***b***(i) ?
- Flow-parallel ***a***(p) ? With imbrication ***a***(p)***a***(i) ?
- Disorderly (chaotic) fabric?

STRUCTURE

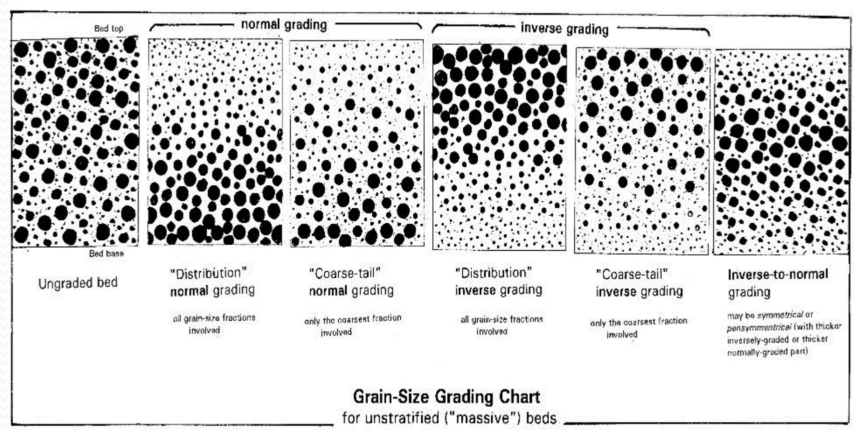
Stratified?
- What type of stratification?

Non-stratified ("massive")?
Any clast-size grading?
- Normal? Inverse?
- Inverse-to-normal? (Symmetric or pensymmetric?)
- Non-graded?





CLAST AXES



Mass Processes

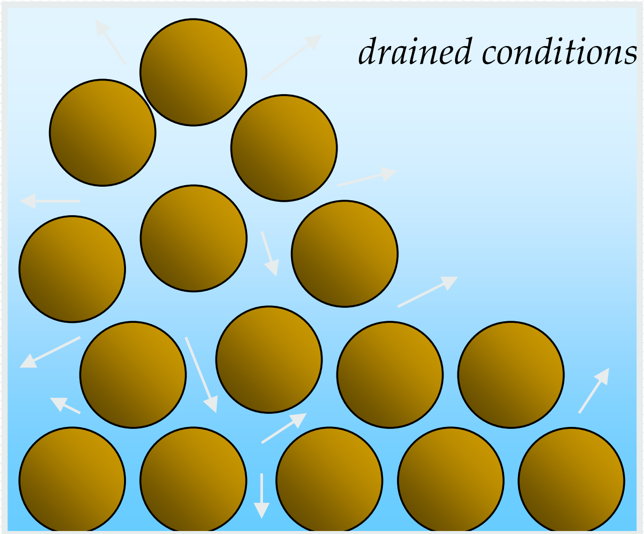
Selective processes generate both a transport (TRACTIONAL TRANSPORT) but also a modelling of the sediment, producing structures (TRACTIONAL STRUCTURES).

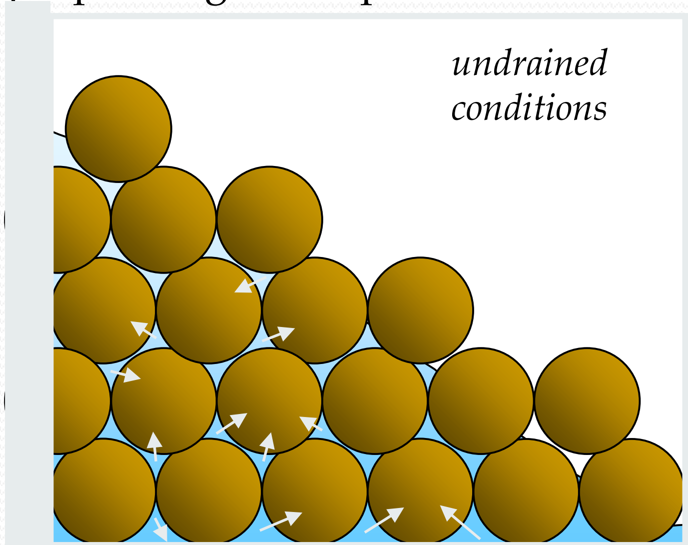
(Ex.: marine currents; waves; river floods).

LANDSLIDE

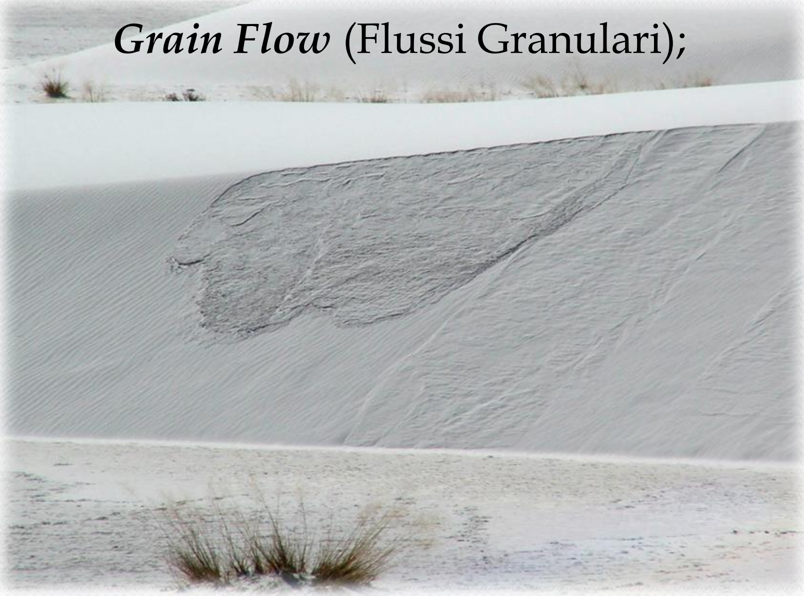
1) **Subaqueous** (more rare; the interstitial pressure does not have any relevant effect, because sediments are in *drained conditions*, with dips even more than 15°-20°;

2) **Subaerial** (more frequent; the interstitial pressure has an important effect onto the sediments because they are in *undrained conditions*; even few degrees of dip can be sufficient to mobilize these masses, but it depend on their proper ‘angle or repose’.





THERE ARE FOUR MAIN TYPES OF MASS (GRAVITATIVE) PROCESSES:



Mud Flow

Mass Gravitative Process :

1) ***Mud Flow***

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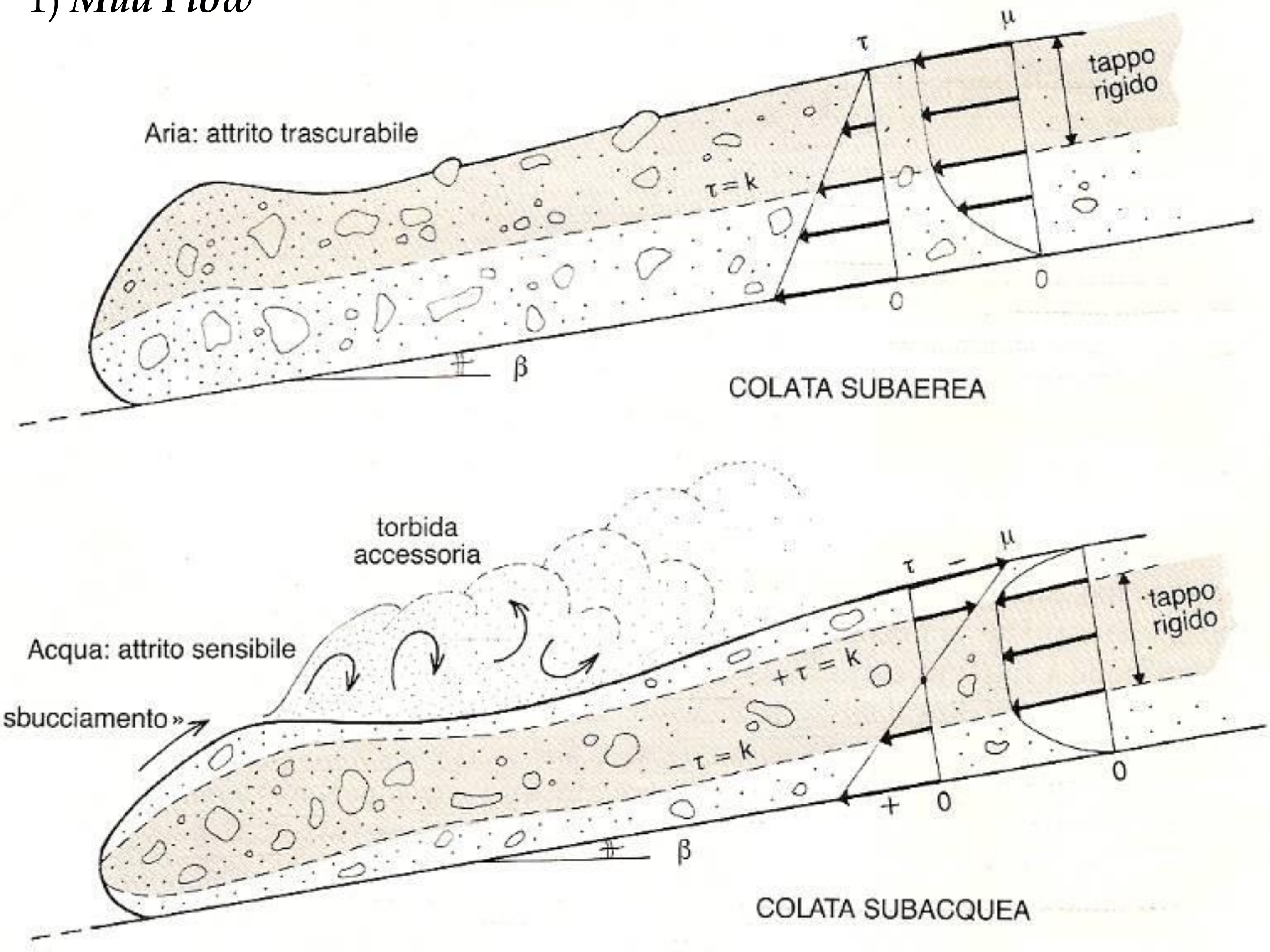
Mass Gravitative Process :

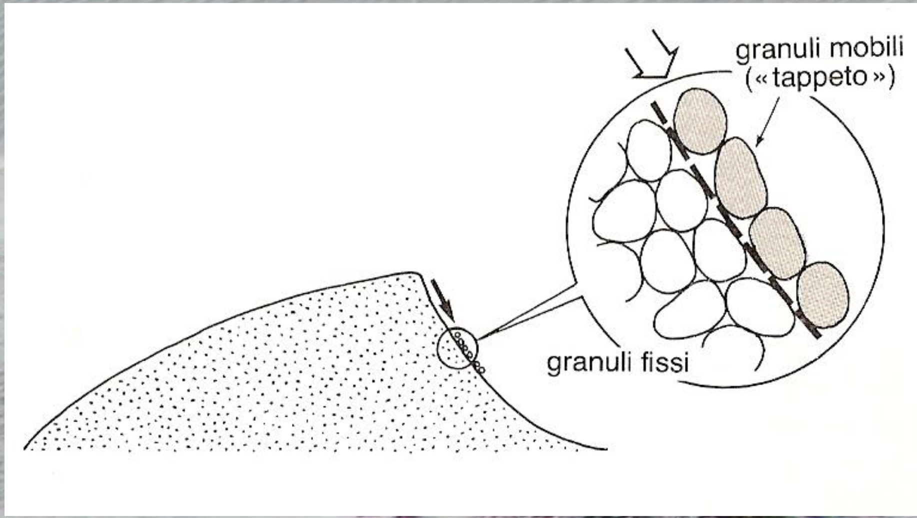
1) ***Mud Flow***

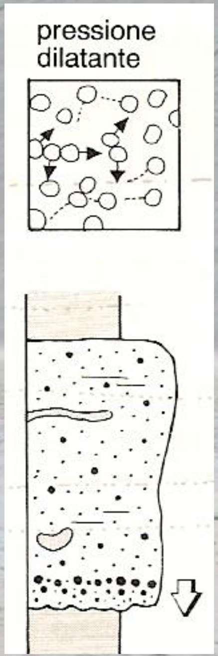


Grain Flow

Mass Gravitative Process :

1) ***Grain Flow***





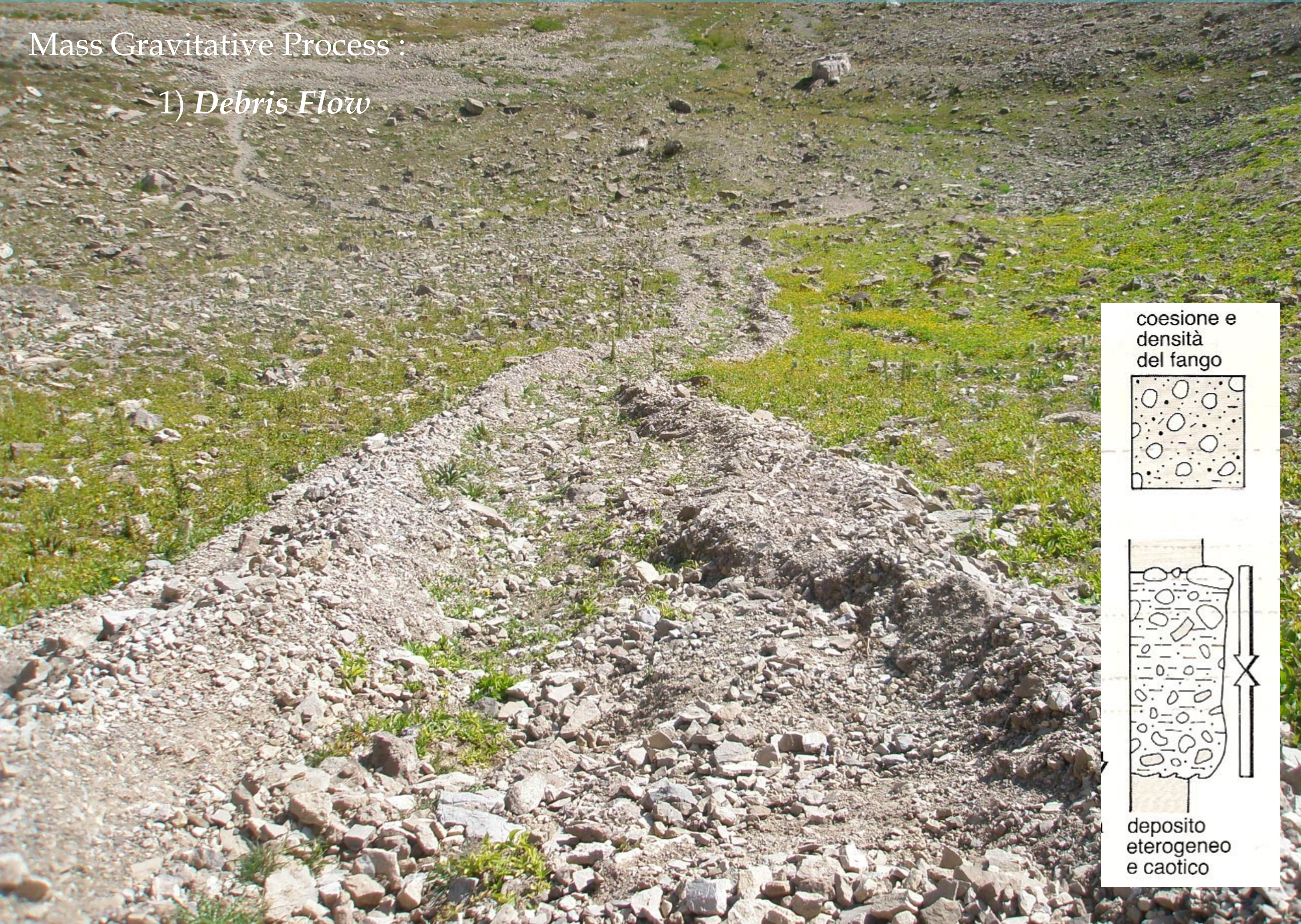
Mass Gravitative Process :

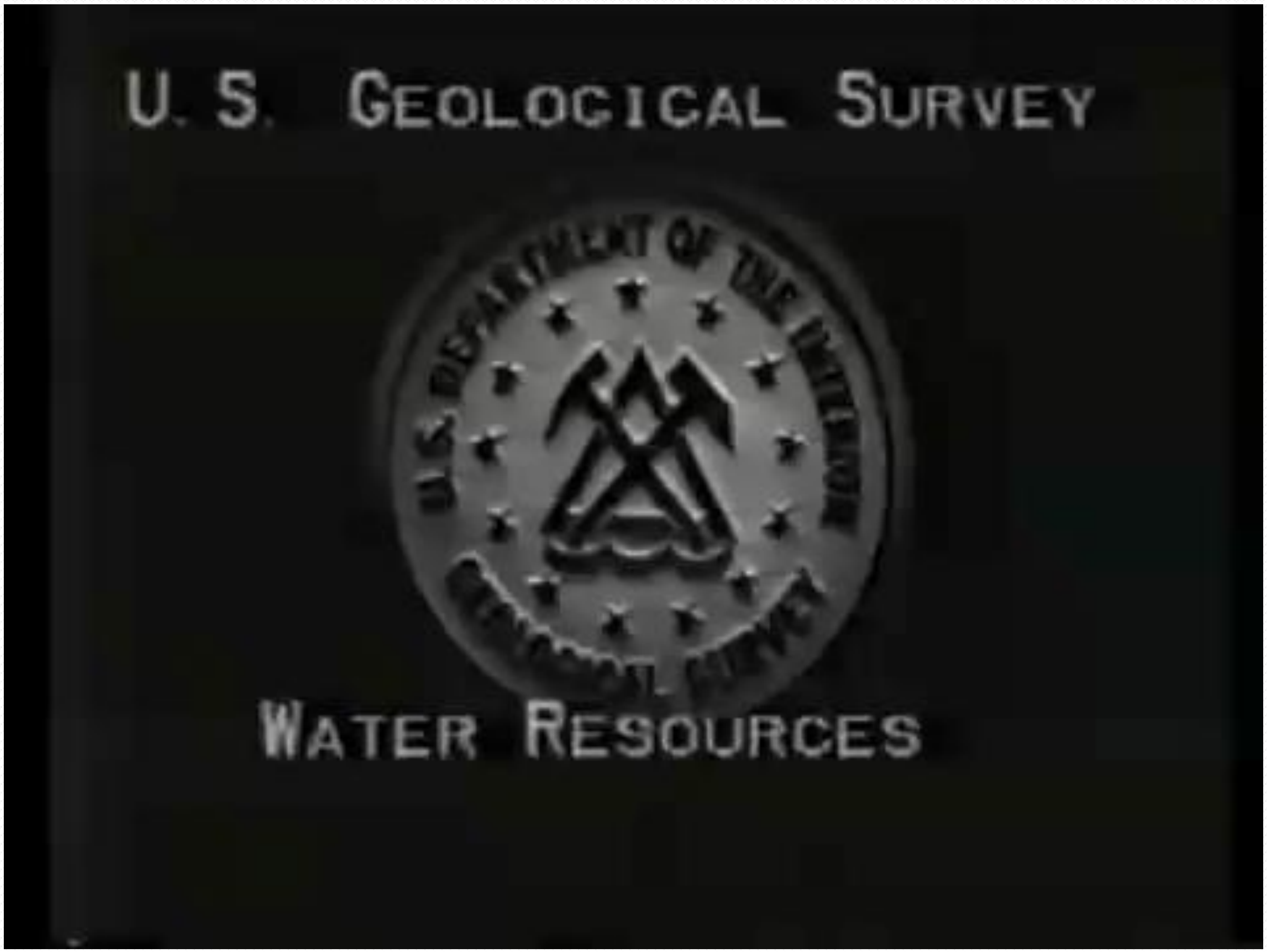
1) ***Mud Flow***

Debris Flow

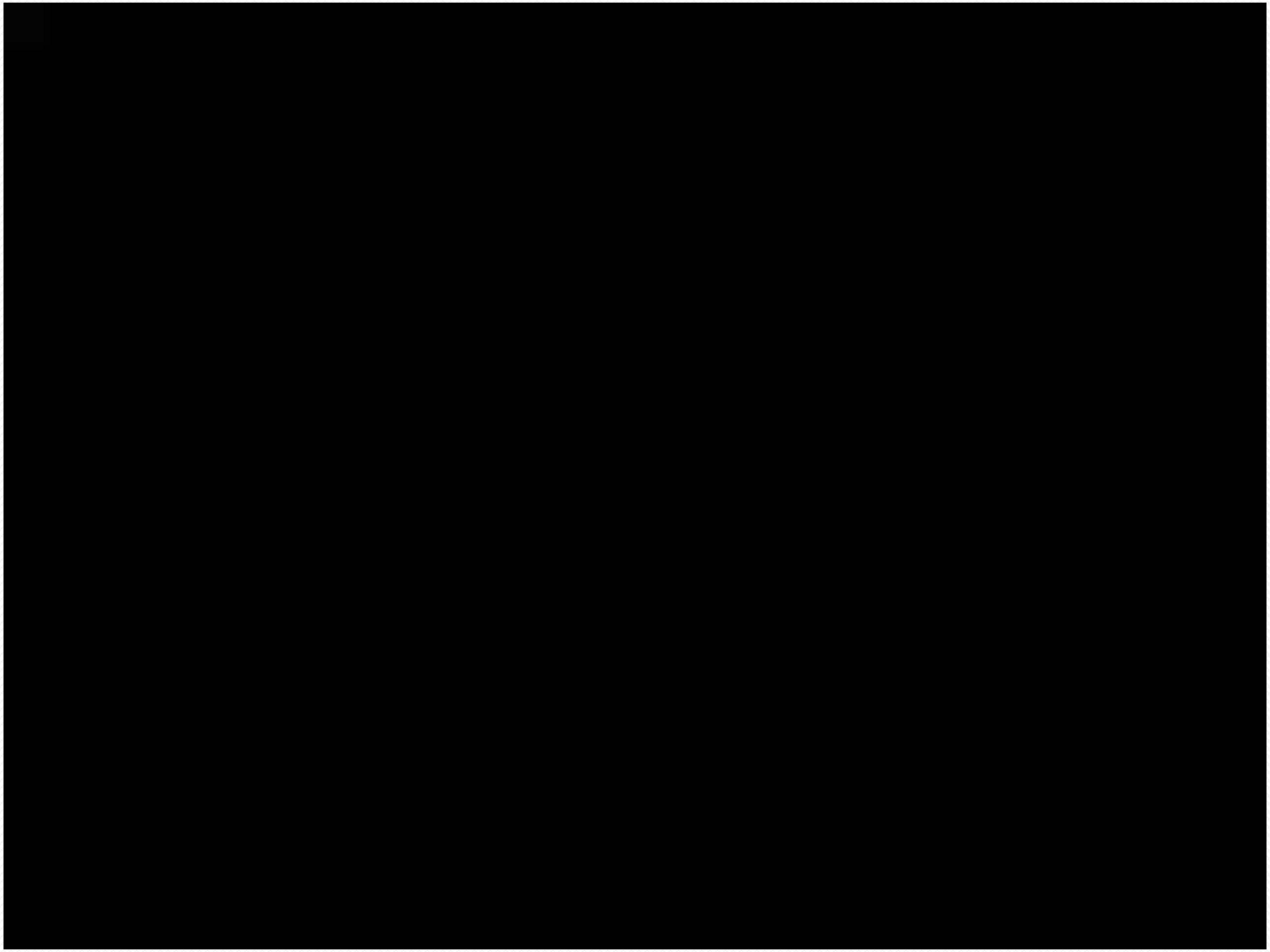
Mass Gravitative Process :

1) ***Debris Flow***



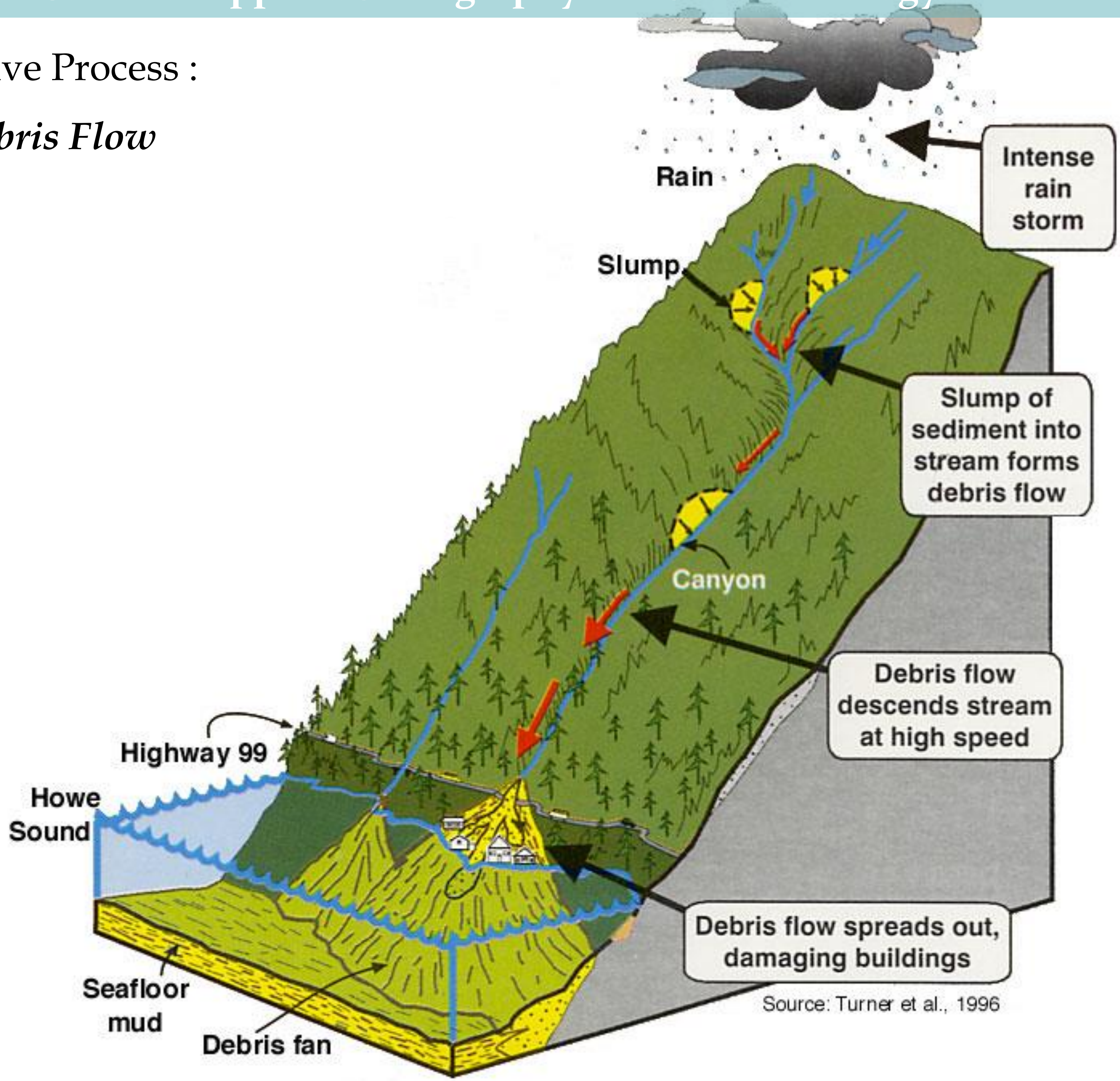

U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
WATER RESOURCES

Mass



Mass Gravitative Process :

1) ***Debris Flow***

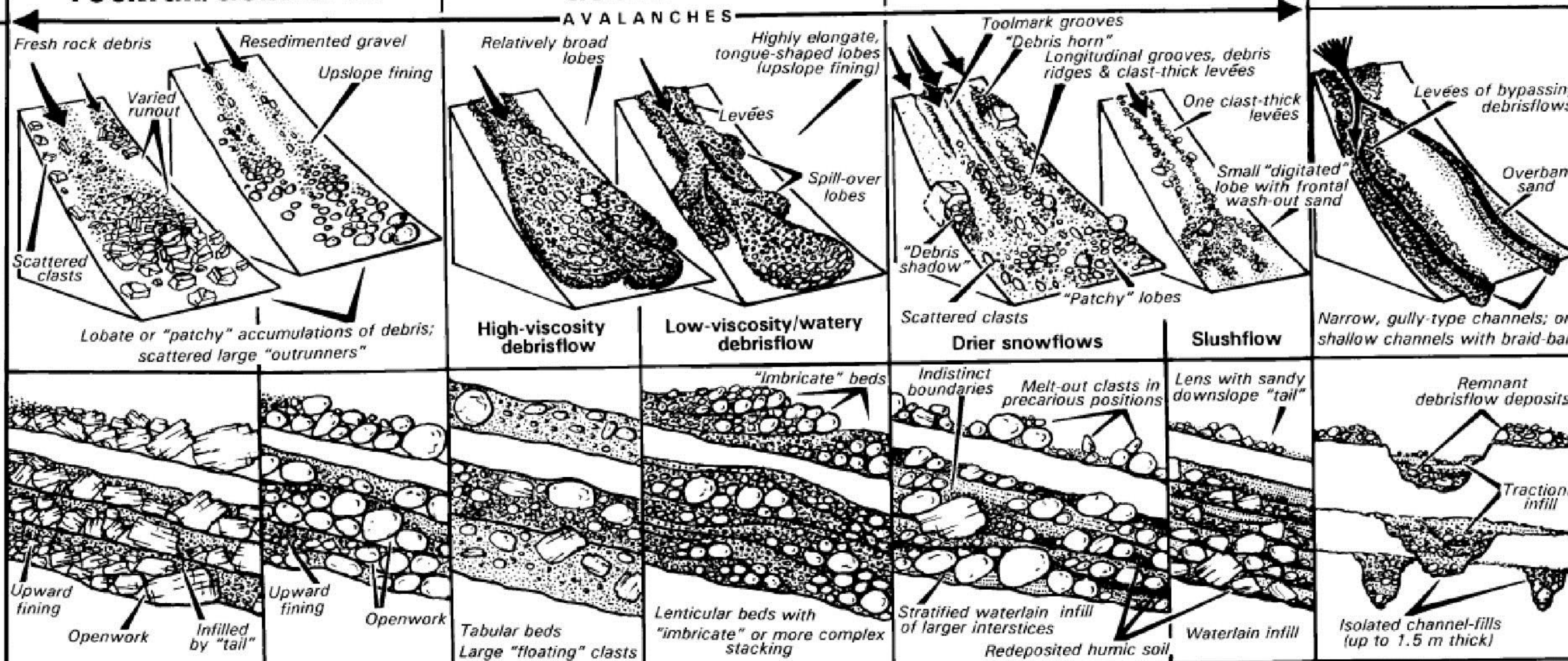


SEDIMENTARY FEATURES — **DEPOSITIONAL PROCESSES**: **rockfall/debrisfall** | **debrisflow** | **snowflow** | **waterflow**

TYPE/GEOMETRY OF DEPOSITS

three-dimensional view

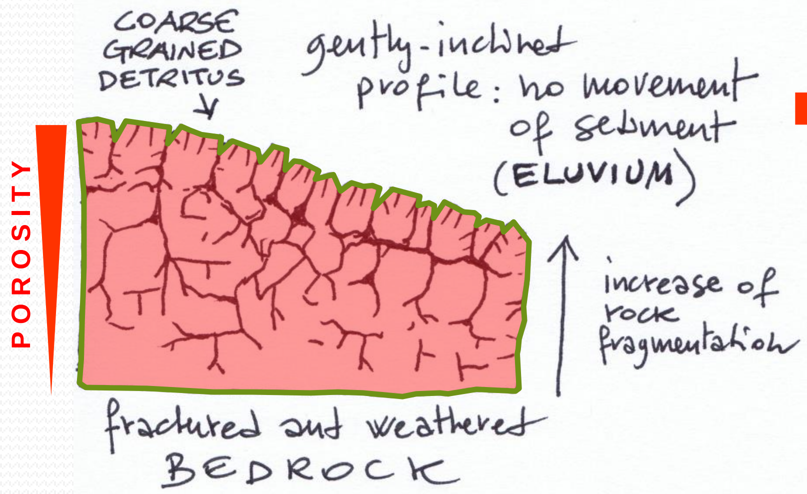
vertical cross-section



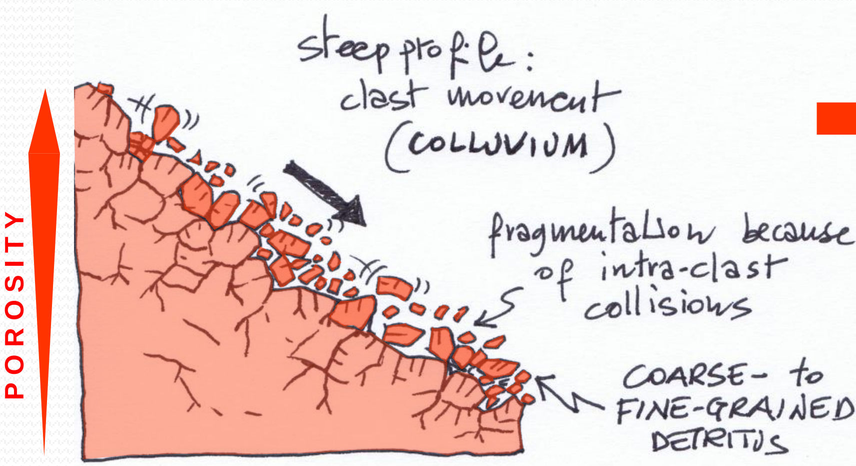
SEDIMENTARY FEATURES	rockfall/debrisfall		debrisflow (high-viscosity)	debrisflow (low-viscosity/watery)	snowflow	waterflow
TEXTURE AND STRUCTURE	Highly immature debris; mainly angular clasts	Mature debris; subrounded to rounded clasts	Matrix-rich to clast-supported. Sandy/muddy matrix. Common "coarse-tail" inverse grading and outsized cobbles or boulders.	Clast-supported, bouldery to cobbly "heads" and clast- to matrix-supported, pebbly upslope "tails". Common normal grading.	Unsorted, scattered clasts and gravel "patches" infilled with waterlain sand or pebbly sand. The sand in large interstices shows stratification, but is massive, very fine/silty and possibly shell-bearing in submarine deposits.	Clast-supported, pebbly to cobbly gravel interlayered with poorly sorted/stratified sand. Matrix-supported gravel occurs as debrisflow remnants.
	Boulder to sand size grade. Clast-supported and commonly openwork, with pebbly to sandy infill at the top. Deposits often infilled with waterlain sand and/or redeposited soil material.					
CLAST FABRIC	Boulders and large cobbles often show "rolling" fabric, $a(t)$ or $a(t)b(i)$, when emplaced frontally in isolation. Many large clasts upslope show "sliding" fabric $a(p)$, but a disorderly "adjustment" fabric predominates; "shear" fabric $a(p)$ often typifies the avalanche's overriding tail, when evolved into a grainflow.		Large clasts mainly aligned downflow, $a(p)$ or $a(p)a(i)$, but showing $a(t)$ orientation along the lobe front.	Common "rolling" fabric $a(t)$ in the frontal and top part of the debrisflow head; common "shear" fabric $a(p)$ or $a(p)a(i)$ in the flow's tail.	Mainly disorderly (chaotic "melt-out" fabric). Boulders and cobbles deposited from turbulent snowflows may have "rolling" fabric $a(t)$, but the scattered debris is vulnerable to rotation by subsequent avalanches. Dense snowflows and slushflows may create "shear" fabric $a(p)$, but this loses order during the melt-out.	Common tractional fabric; poorly developed in gullies due to clast pivoting and adjustment to banks. Many large clasts are rotated *in situ* to $a(p)$ position by less competent waterflow.
DEBRIS SOURCE	Weathered bedrock.	Glacial till and valley-side kame terraces.	Glacial till, kame terraces and upper-slope colluvium.		Glacial till and upper-slope colluvium, including fresh bedrock. Common slope-soil erosion.	Upper-slope colluvium and glacial till.

Eluvial vs. **colluvial** process

ELUVIAL PROCESS and DEPOSIT



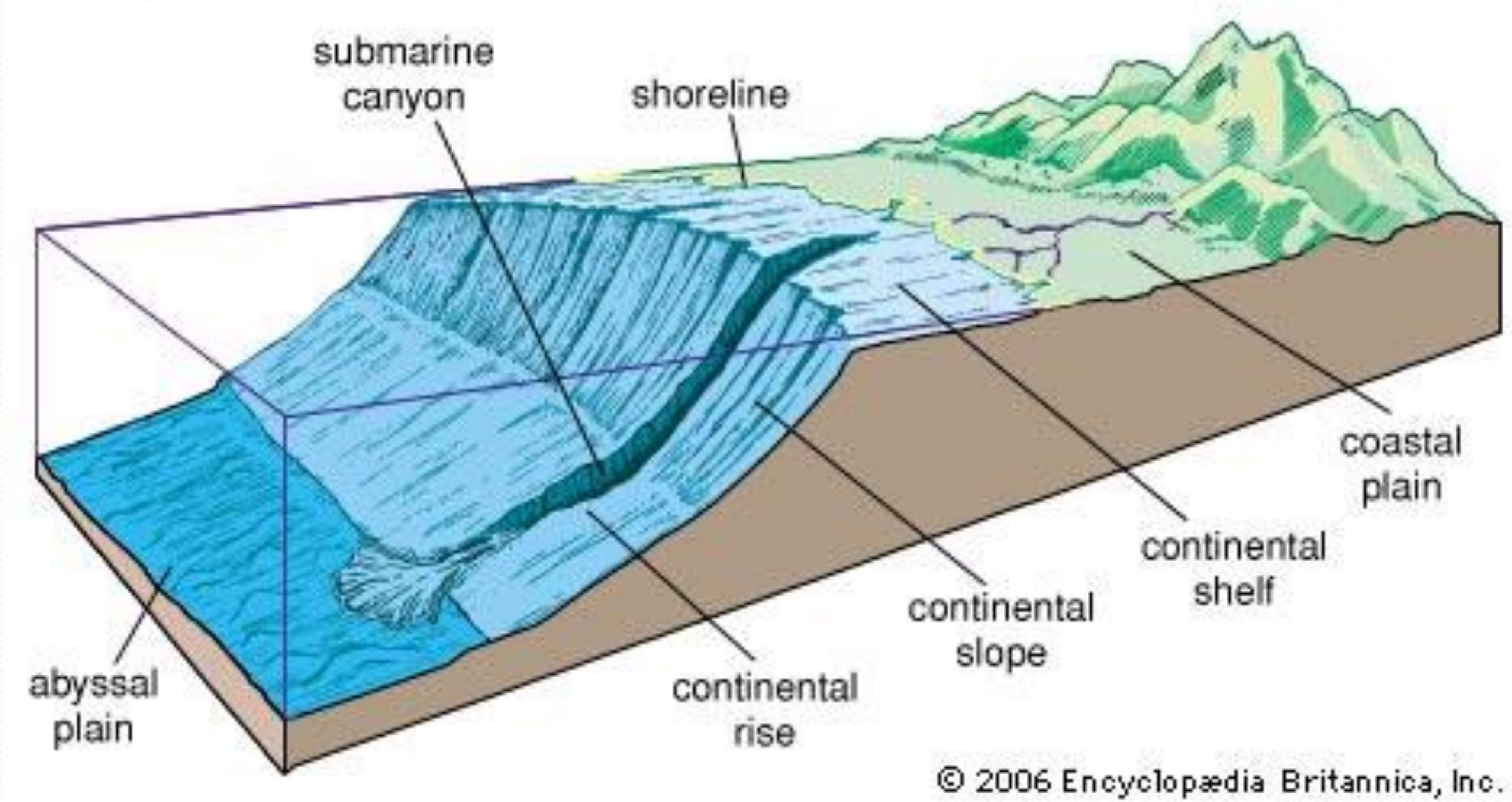
COLLUVIAL PROCESS and DEPOSIT



Turbidity Flow

TURBIDITIC DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEMS represent deep-marine complexes, which can be originated along the continental shelf edge, along the continental slope (through submarine canyons) in the form of rapidly-accelerating water + sediment flows, accumulating submarine fans in the abyssal plain, at the base of the slope.

The onset of turbiditic flows can be generated by earthquakes, tsunami or anomalous waves or, more simply, by sediment overload along the continental shelf edge.

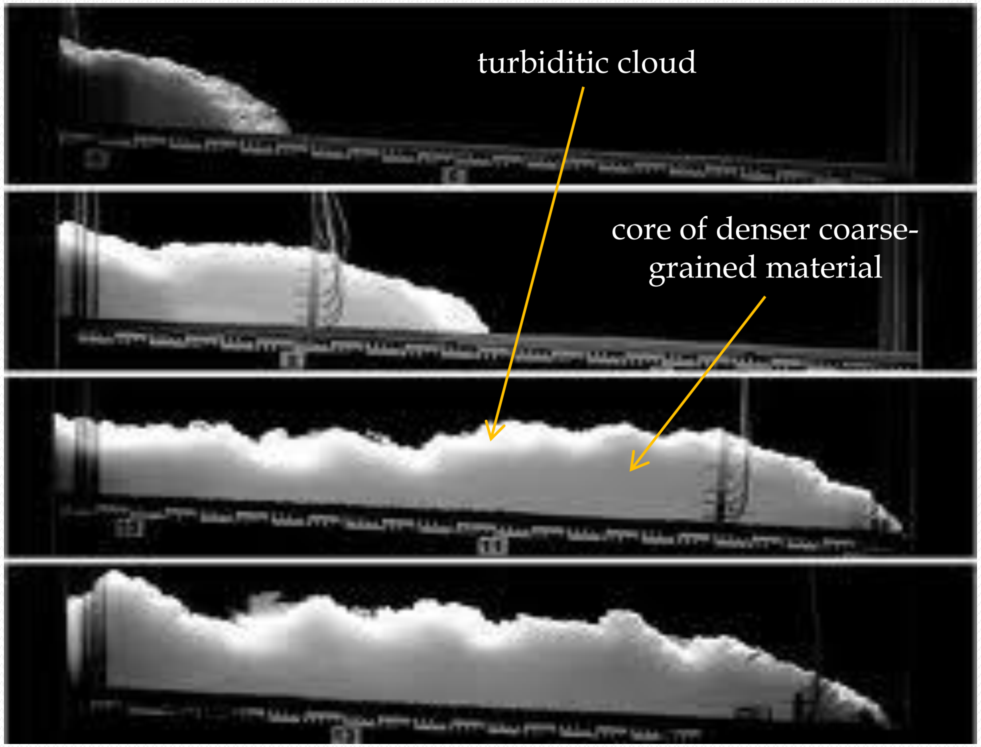


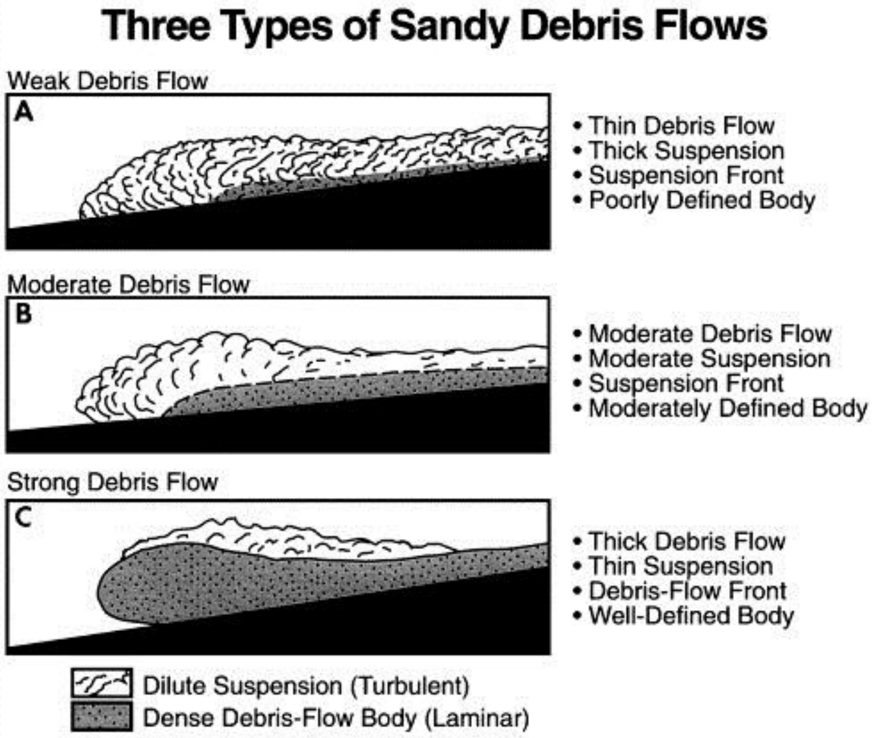
A **TURBIDITY CURRENT** is thus a highly-concentrated flow of high-density of sediment + water which, mrapidly descending the continental slope due to the gravity, it propagates at high velocity (turbitidy currents were measured with a velocity of ca. 300 km/h), concentrated into submarine canyons.

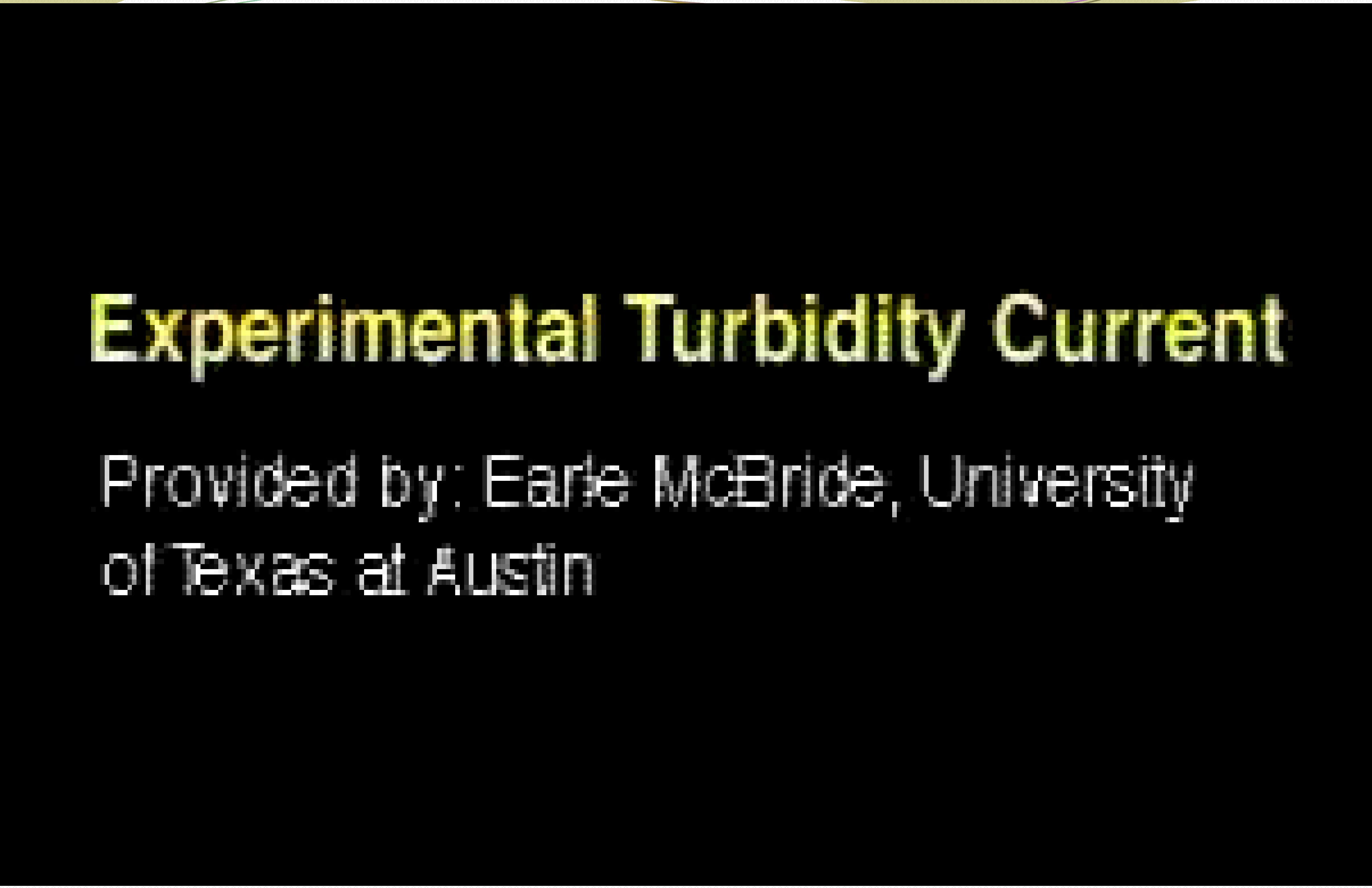
A **TURBIDITY CURRENT**, reconstructed in laboratory, has shown a 'core' of coarse-grained material, which is transported as bedload, and an associated 'turbiditic cloud', which runs at lower velocity, and formed by fine-grained sediment transported in suspension.

A turbiditic current can be characterised by three types of debris flows:

1) Weak debris flow;
2) Moderate debris flow;
3) Strong debris flow.





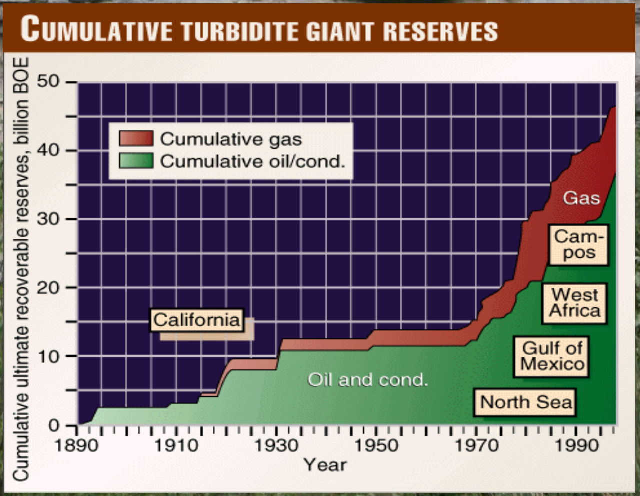

Experimental Turbidity Current
Provided by: Earle McBride, University of Texas at Austin

TURBIDITY CURRENT ACCELERATION

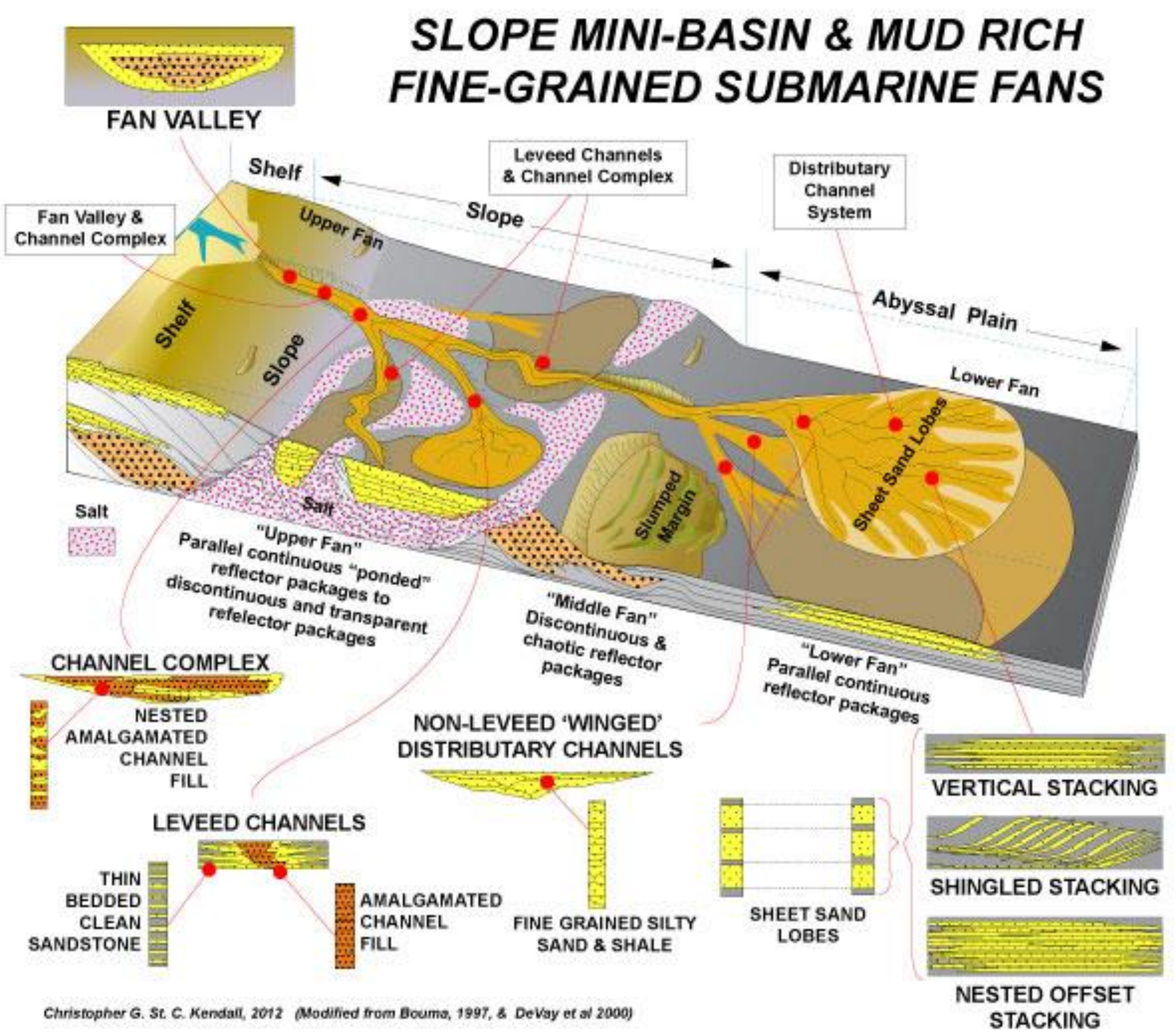
Provided by: Gary Parker, St. Anthony Falls Laboratory, University of Minnesota

Note: As turbidity current spills over break in slope it accelerates. The flow becomes more turbulent and entrains sediment from underlying bed.

TURBIDITES (i.e., the sedimentary product of a turbidite current) FORM EXCEPTIONALLY-GOOD WATER, OIL and GAS RESERVOIRS

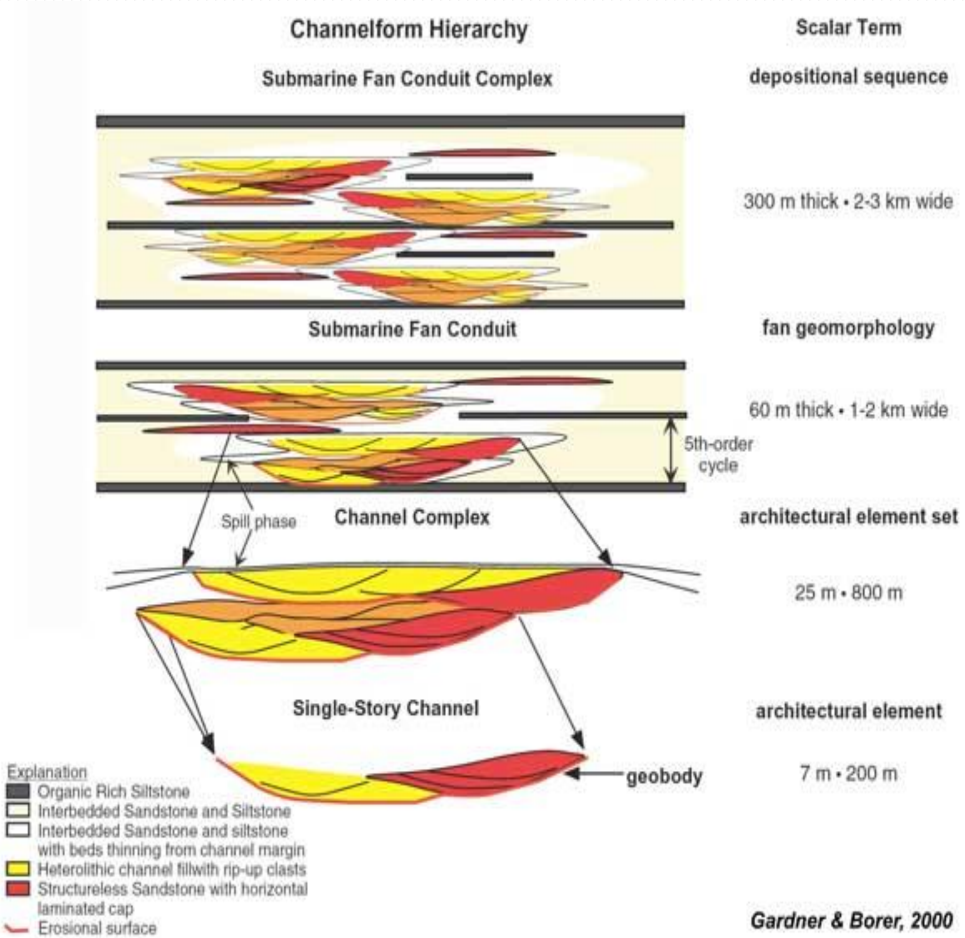


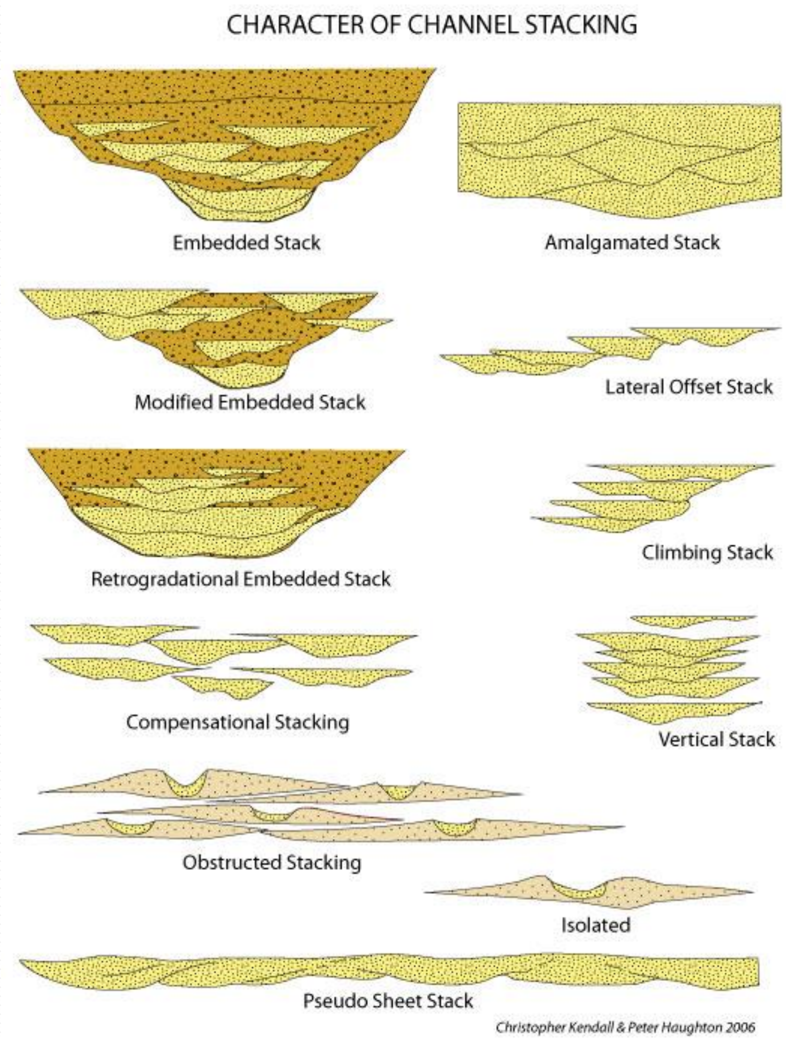
TURBIDITY CURRENTS can be set into motion when mud and sand on the continental shelf are loosened by earthquakes, collapsing slopes, and other geological disturbances. The turbid water then rushes downward like an avalanche, picking up sediment and increasing in speed as it flows.



TURBIDITES contain "architectural elements" which can be recognized at various scales or hierarchies in the sedimentary record. These genetically related stratigraphic building blocks form the sedimentary architecture of the deepwater depositional system.

This hierarchical framework of the units is based solely on the physical stratigraphy of the strata and their thickness is time independent. The elements show a progressive increase in scale from the deposit of a single sediment gravity flow (bed) to the accumulated deposits that comprise entire slope or basin floor successions (complex system set).





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An useful method to analyse sedimentary bodies is the FACIES ANALYSIS.
This approach allow us to describe and interpret sedimentary bodies occurring in outcrop or in the Earth subsurface.

A SEDIMENTARY FACIES is the ensemble of physical features of a sedimentary accumulation, including lithology, grain size, structures, fossil content etc. and that can be used in order to distinguish it from adjacent different deposits.

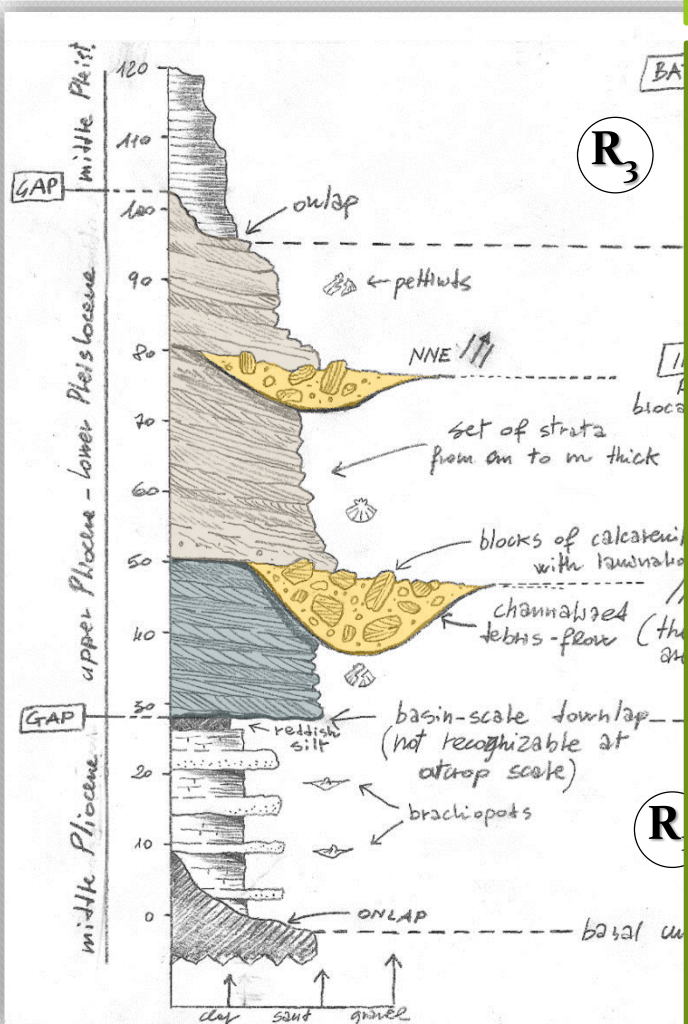
A SEDIMENTARY FACIES can be recognise through three main phases of investigation:

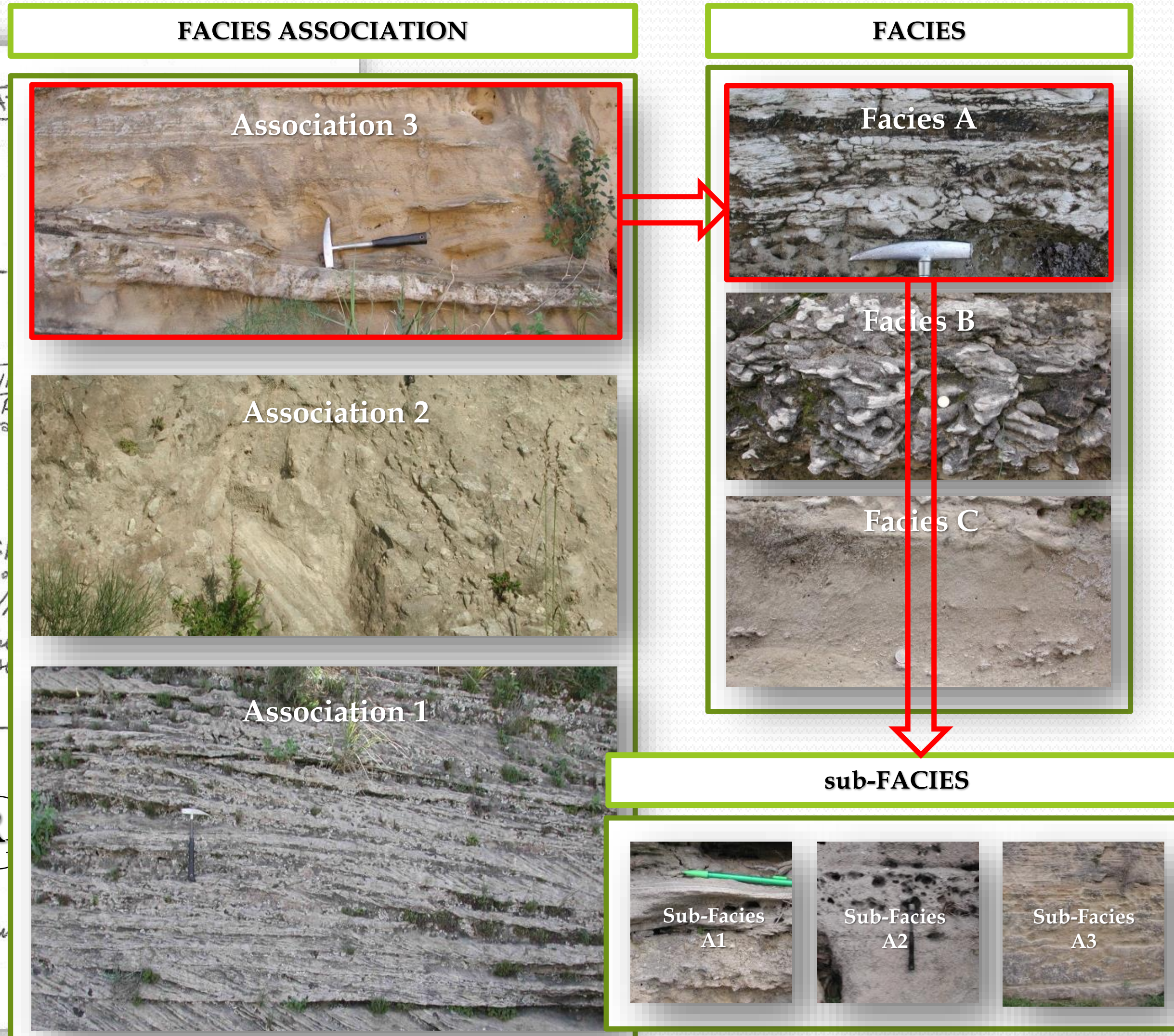
1) Observation of the physical features;
2) Documentation by using standards;
3) Interpretation as processes.

} **FACIES ANALYSIS**

observation **description** **interpretation**

A SEDIMENTARY FACIES is the ensemble of physical features of a sedimentary accumulation, including lithology, grain size, structures, fossil content etc. and that can be used in order to distinguish it from adjacent different deposits. Each SEDIMENTARY FACIES can be subdivided into minor components (sub-facies) or adjacent facies can be grouped into a FACIES ASSOCIATION.





The concept of sedimentary facies

The notion of facies used by researcher depends on the scope of a particular study.

SCOPE OF STUDY	RESOLUTION LEVEL	EXAMPLE DEPOSIT TYPES
Very broad, inter-regional or 'global-scale' palaeogeographic study	VERY LOW (with facies as the record of whole classes of depositional environmets)	• Terrestrial vs. marine facies • Shallow-marine vs. deep-marine facies • Carbonate vs. siliciclastic facies • Evaporitic vs. carbonate facies
Broad, regional-scale palaeogeographic study	LOW (with facies as the record of broadly-defined depositional environments)	• Alluvial, aeolian, shoreline/deltaic, nearshore, offshore facies • Barrier/lagoon and estuarine facies • Patch reef and carbonate platform facies • Submarine fan/apron and abyssal plain facies
Basin-scale palaeogeographic study and sequence stratigraphy	MODERATE (with facies as the record of depositional subenvironments or narrowly-defined specific environments)	• Braided vs. meandering river facies • Channel-fill vs. overbank alluvial facies • Prodelta, delta toe, delta slope, delta front and delta top facies • Foreshore, upper shoreface, lower shoreface, offshore tranistion and offshore facies • Tidal sandflat, mixed flat, mudflat and channel/creek facies • Subtidal, intertidal and supratidal facies • Upper, middle and lower submarine fan facies; or channel-fill vs. overbank turbidites
Sedimentological study of a basin-fill succession or its selected part	HIGH (with facies as the record of depositional processes)	• Nonstratified (massive), planar parallel-stratified, trough cross-stratified, planar cross-stratified and ripple cross-lamin. sandstone facies • Massive, cross-stratified and planar parallel-stratified gravel facies • Turbidite bed classes based on Bouma divisions, such as T*abcde*, T*acde*, T*bcde*, T*bde*, T*cde*, T*de*, etc.

The concept of lithostratigraphic logging
and the interest in vertical facies organization stem
from the Walther Law.

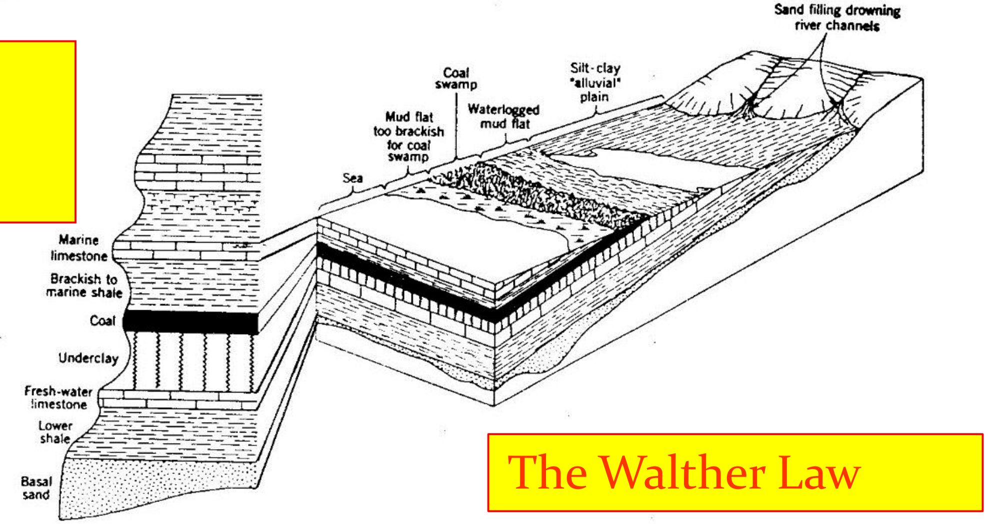
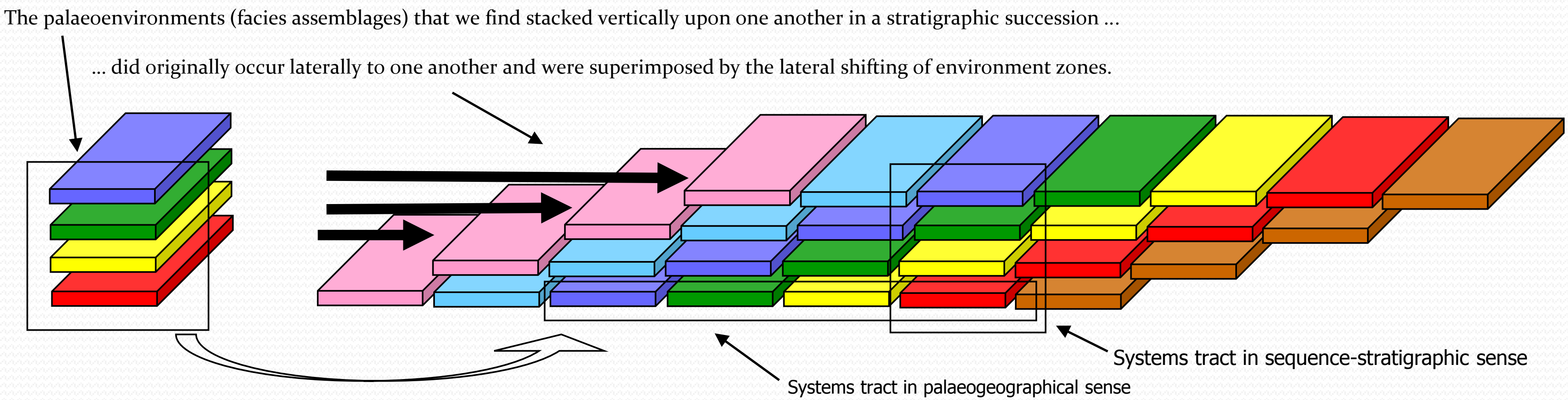
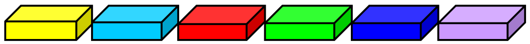
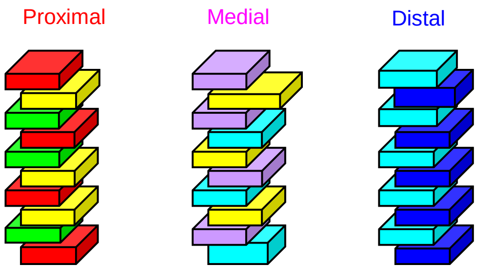
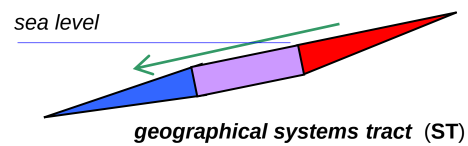
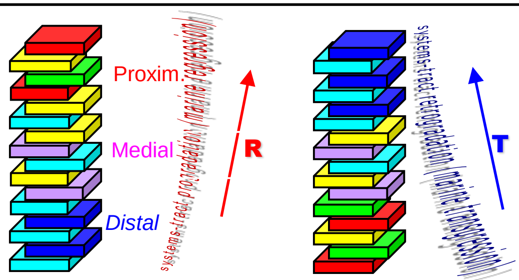
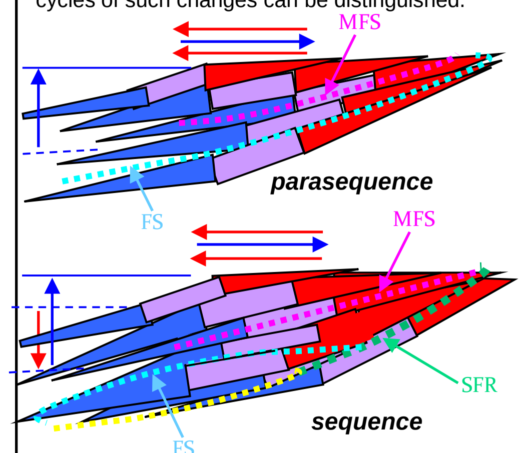


Fig. 1-1. Schematic illustration of the Walther law: a lithostratigraphic profile as the record of the lateral migration and vertical stacking of sedimentary facies belts within a depositional environment (from Shaw, 1964).

Johannes Walther in 1894 formulated the following Rule of Facies Succession: "*The deposits of the same facies area* [environment] *and, similarly, the sum of the deposits of different facies areas* [environments] *were formed beside each other in space, but in a lithostratigraphic profile we see them lying on top of each other.*" This was a basic statement of far-reaching significance: only those facies belts can be vertically superimposed that occur laterally to one another (although not necessarily next to each other, as the lateral shift of a facies belt may be erosive and erase the deposits of the adjacent belt) (see review and discussion by Middleton, 1973).



Facies analysis scheme

STRATIGRAPHIC ELEMENTS	SEDIMENTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	INFORMATION DERIVED
 **SEDIMENTARY FACIES** are the basic ***types*** of sedimentary deposits, distinguished macroscopically on a descriptive basis as the elementary "building blocks" of a sedimentary succession.	The sedimentary succession is logged by being divided into more-or-less uniform "units", or beds, on the basis of: •**sediment texture** (grain characteristics) •**sediment structures** (grain organization characteristics) •**colour** and **biogenic features** (if present) •**geometry** (thickness, lateral extent, shape, boundary types). Units with similar characteristics are classified as one facies. Each facies is separately described and interpreted.	The principal processes of sediment transport and deposition are recognized. Some processes may be directly diagnostic of a particular sedimentary environment and others may not, but as a group – or association – they invariably are (see the next step of analysis).
 **FACIES ASSOCIATIONS** are assemblages of spatially and genetically related facies, distinguished as the basic "building megablocks" of the sedimentary succession.	The succession of facies is reviewed to recognize their natural stratigraphic grouping into genetically coherent assemblages: ***facies associations***. These are interpreted, on the basis of their depositional processes, as the record of particular sedimentary environments. The environments are then arranged into a spectrum from "proximal" to "distal", or from shallower to deeper water. On this basis, a conceptual model of the environments as a "systems tract" is developed. A geographical ***systems tract*** is *a spatial array of coeval sedimentary environments through which the net transfer of sediment occurs from land to the sea*. The term is used also for the sedimentary record of such an array of environments and their behaviour (see below). A systems tract can be "short" or "long", depending on the number and range of systems (environments) involved.	The sedimentary environments, or depositional "systems", are identified and their spatial organization as a geographical "systems tract" is recognized.  This part of facies analysis requires that the researcher has a good "facies atlas" of natural environments in mind and understands well their possible variation and spatial relationships.
 **SYSTEMS TRACT** = a succession of facies associations recording particular types of shoreline behaviour in a geographical systems tract. The basic types are *lowstand* and *highstand normal-regressive* STs and *forced-regressive* and *transgressive* STs. **SEQUENCE** = a succession of systems tracts recording one complete **R**-**T** cycle of relative sea-level change, from one maximum regression phase to the maximum flooding phase and to another maximum regression phase; alternatively, sequences can be distinguished as **T**-**R** cycles, with the maximum flooding phases (surfaces) as boundaries.	Based on the identified spectrum and stratigraphic order of facies associations (palaeoenvironments), the principal types of ***systems tracts*** are recognized within the sedimentary succession. The stratigraphic organization of these tracts is then used to distinguish "sequences", or transgressive-regressive cycles of relative sea-level change (combined with possible changes in sediment supply). The term **parasequence** denotes the record of a relative sea-level rise followed by a "normal" (progradational) regression and another sea-level rise, without an intervening relative fall, in which case a *transgressive systems tract* (**TST**), possibly negligibly thin, culminates in the maximum flooding phase (surface) and is followed by a *regressive systems tract* (**RST**), which in turn is terminated by a new marine transgression. The term **sequence** denotes the record of a cycle of relative sea-level fall and rise, in which case the relative fall ("forced" regression) is represented by an erosional unconformity surface with coeval distal deposits (**FRST**) and a subsequent aggradational/progradationl *lowstand systems tract* (**LST**), jointly a form of **RST**, overlain by a *transgressive systems tract* (**TST**) that culminates in the maximum flooding phase and is followed by a progradational (normal-regressive) *highstand systems tract* (**HST**).	The stratigraphic pattern of relative sea-level changes (combined with changes in sediment supply) is recognized. A hierarchy of *lower-order* (longer-term) and *higher-order* (shorter-term) cycles of such changes can be distinguished. 

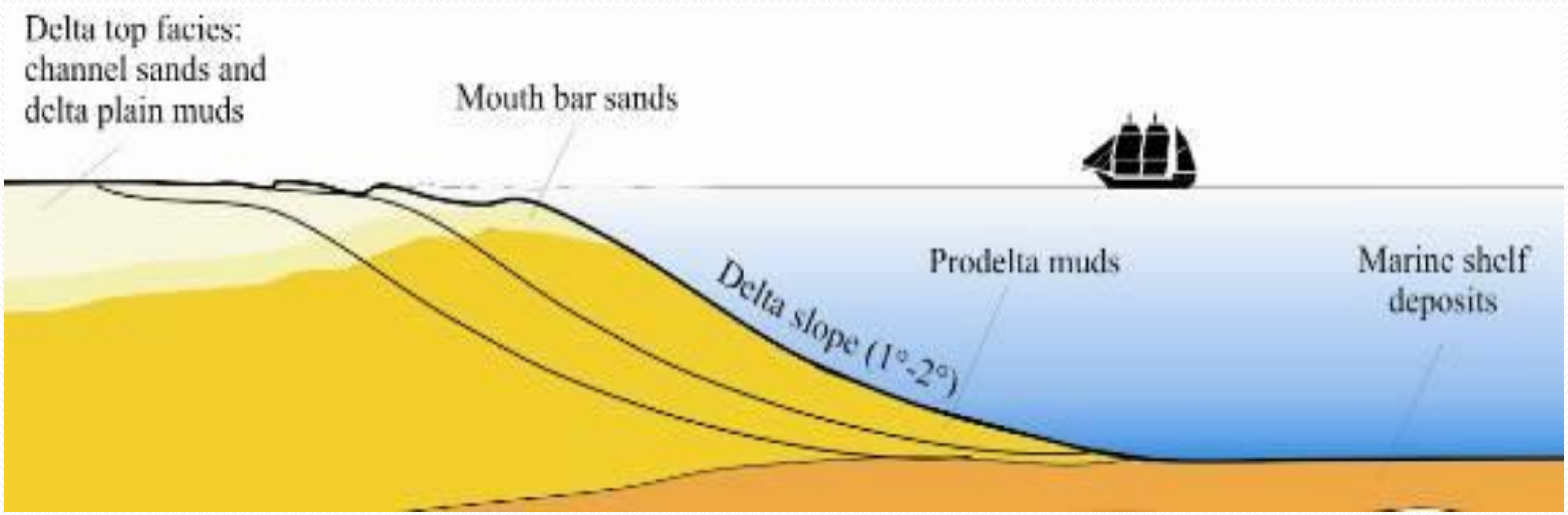
Depositional environments and systems

Hierarchies of environments, examples of continental, transitional, shallow and deep-marine depositional systems

Definition:

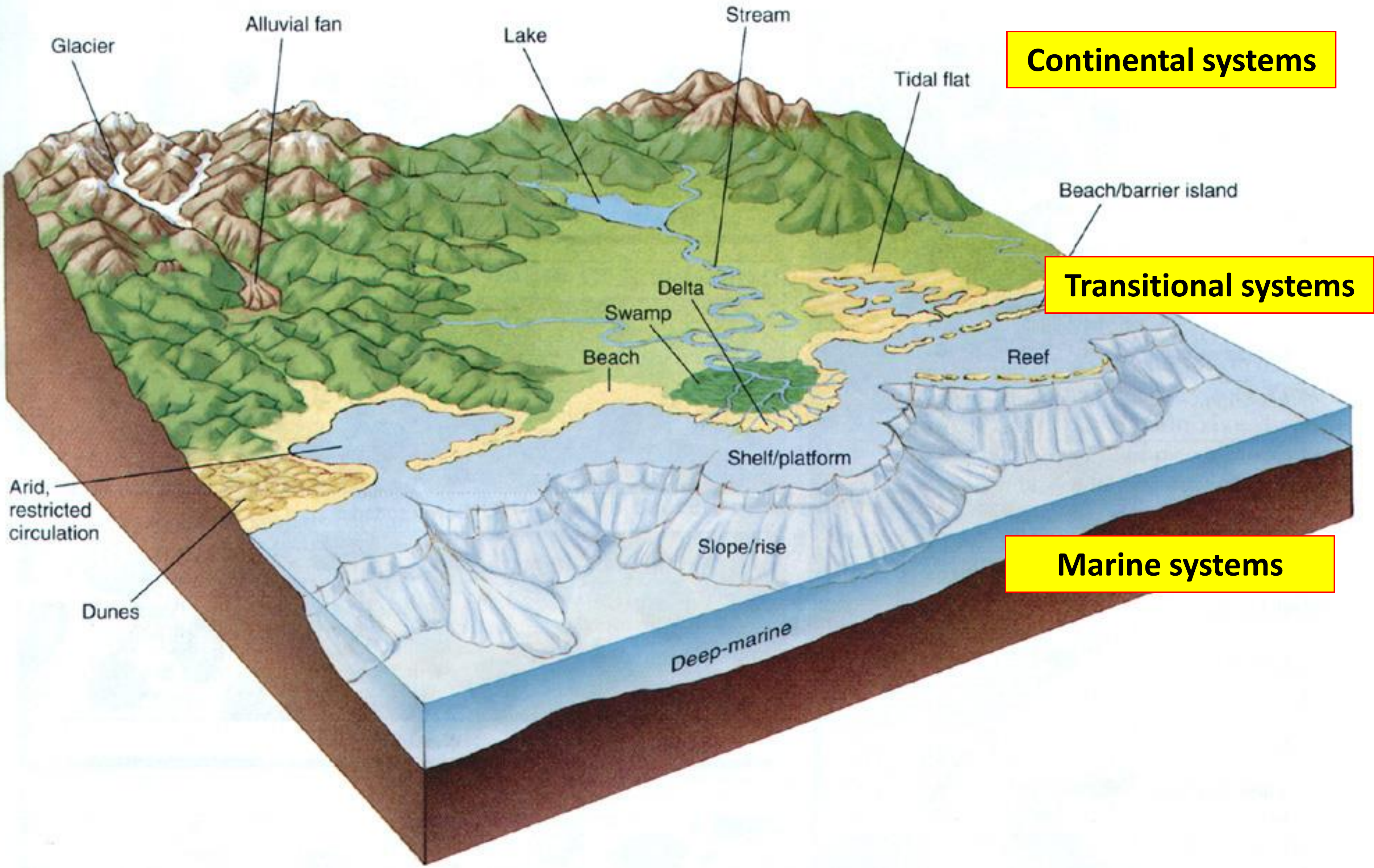
A DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEM is an assemblage of of multiple process-based sedimentary facies which record genetically-related depositional environments

(e.g.: a RIVER DELTA is a depositional system; it can be subdivided into ‘components’ represented by constituent depositional environments, including: the delta plain, the delta front, the delta slope, etc …



There are sveral types of DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEMS in the Earth surface.

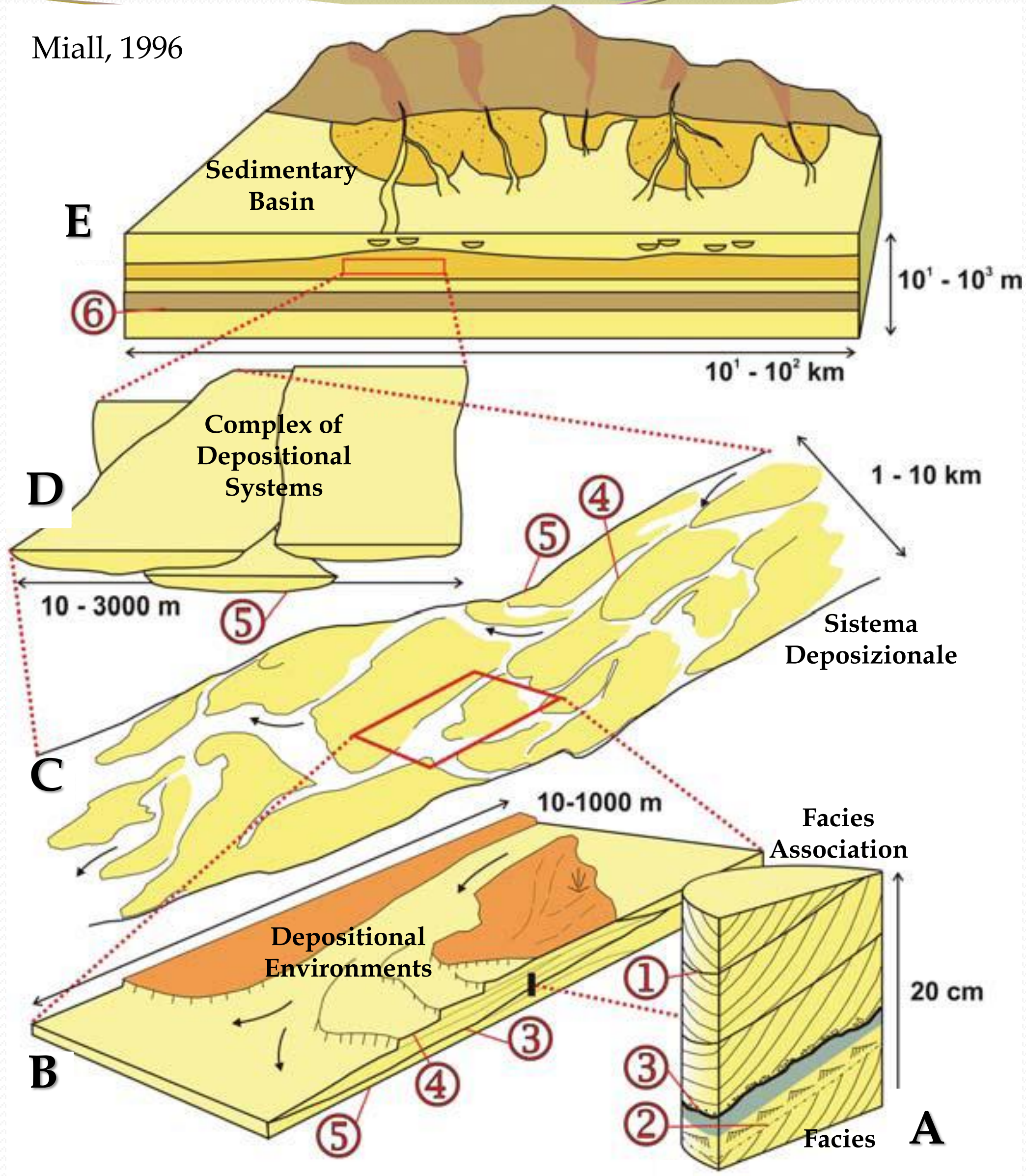
We can distinguish them on the basis of their genesis: continental, transitional or marine.



A HIERARCHICAL RELATIOSHIP LINKS THE VARIOUS PHYSICAL ELEMENTS WHICH DEFINE A SEDIMENTARY FACIES, A DEPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS AND A DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEM

1. A FACIES, together with other genetically-related facies, forms a FACIES ASSOCIATION [for example: cross-laminated sands (**A**)];
2. A FACIES ASSOCIATION represents the sedimentary product of a DEPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENT [for example: fluvial channel filled by gravels and sands (**B**)];
3. An ensemble of depositional environments forms a DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEM (for example: braided fluvial system (**C**)];
4. Two or more depositional systems coexist in a COMPLEX of DEPOSITIONAL SYSTEMS [for example: alluvial fans with fluvial systems (**D**)];
5. Finally, an ensamble of complexes represent a part of a SEDIMENTARY BASIN (**E**).

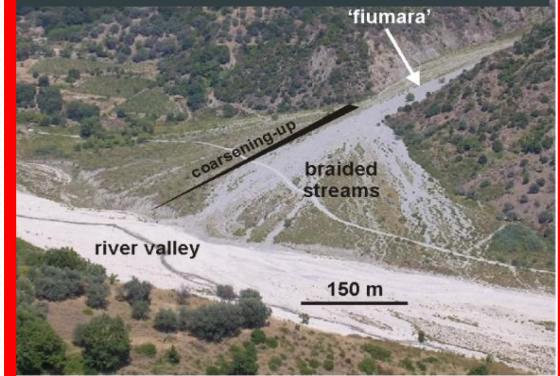
Miall, 1996



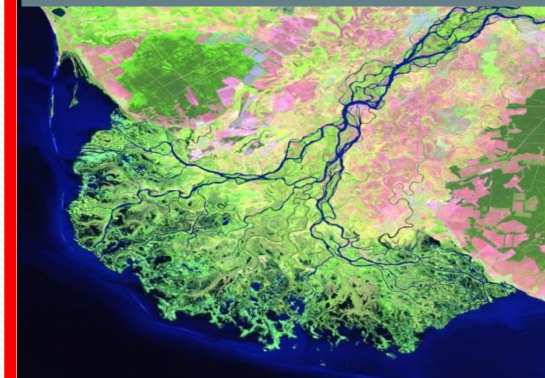
There is a multitude of different types of depositional systems on the Earth's surface

COLLUVIAL FANS

ALLUVIAL FANS



RIVERS & DELTAS

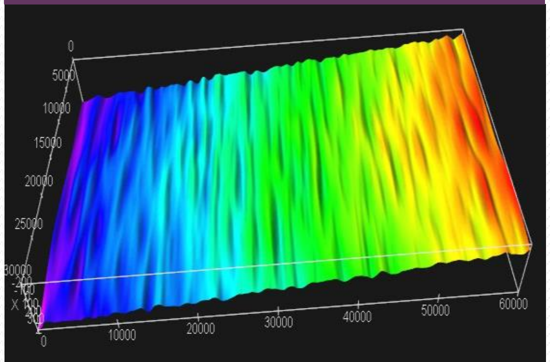


ESTUARIES

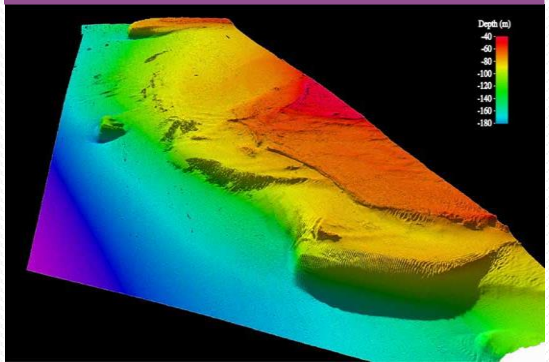
TIDAL FLATS

TIDAL STRAITS

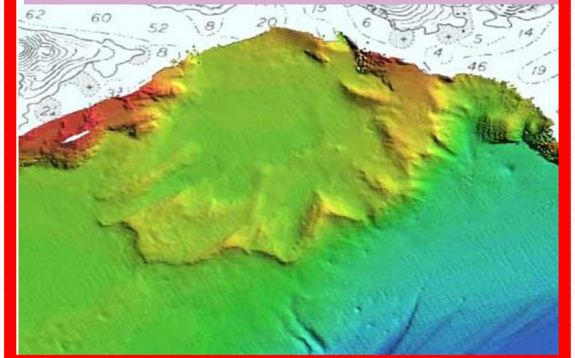
SHOREFACES



SHELVES

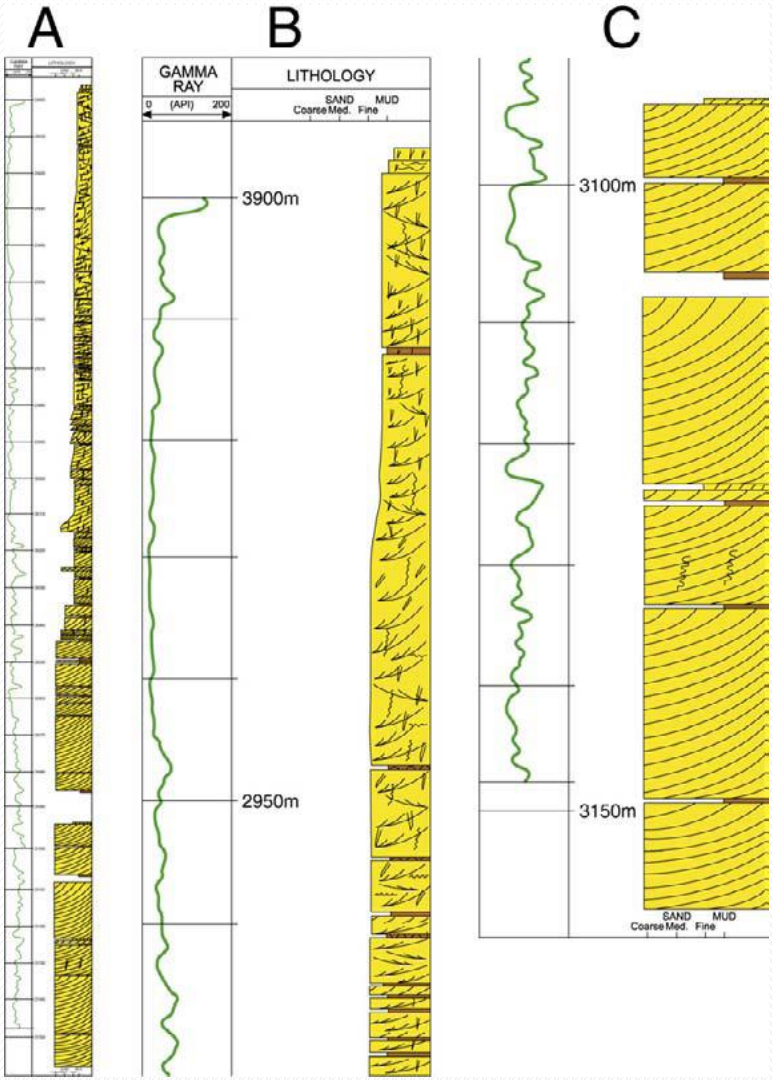


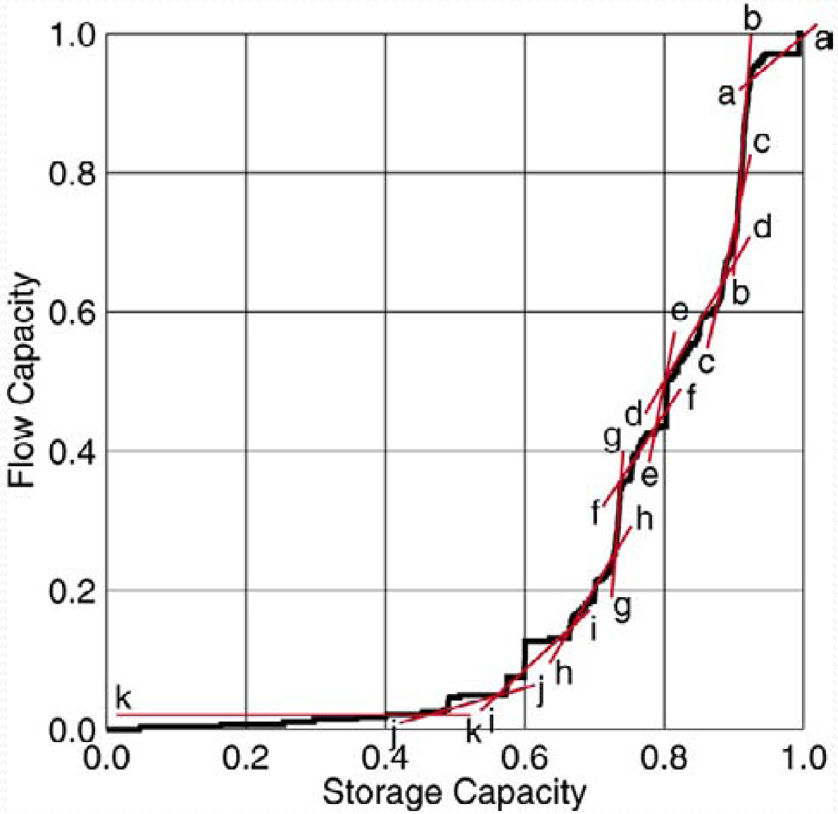
DEEP-SEA FANS



Clastic depositional systems

From a 'reservoir' point of view, clastc depositional systems are storage elements for oil and gas. The possibility to detect and produce hydrocarbon from them depends on the their degree of internal complexity and on their degree of knowledge that we can able to resume from them.



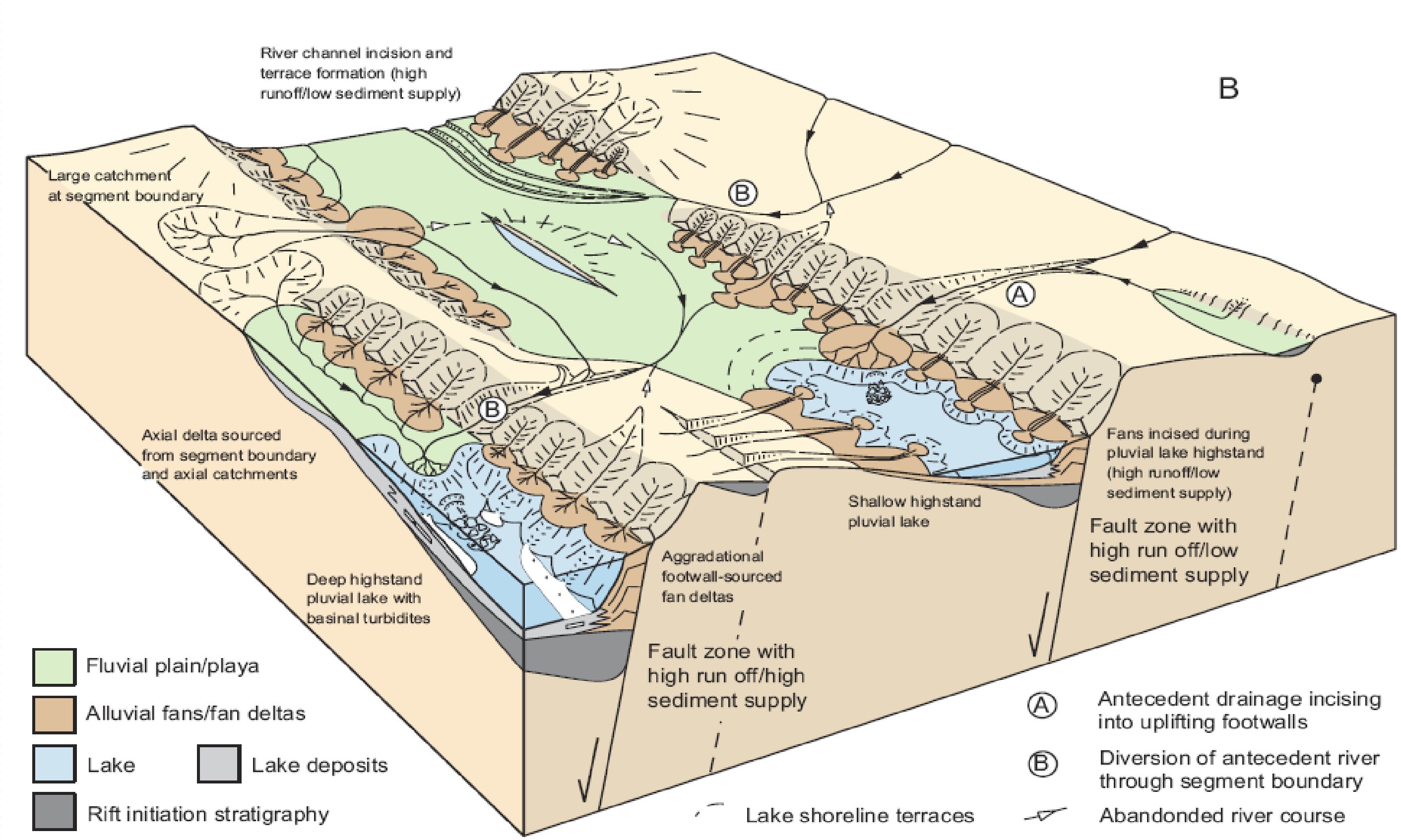


Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems

Continental depositional systems are those where sediment accumulation and distribution occur far from marine environments.

Most of the more ‘HC-bearing’ continental systems are: (1) alluvial systems and (2) fluvial systems.



Gawthorpe & Leeder, 2000

Clastic depositional systems

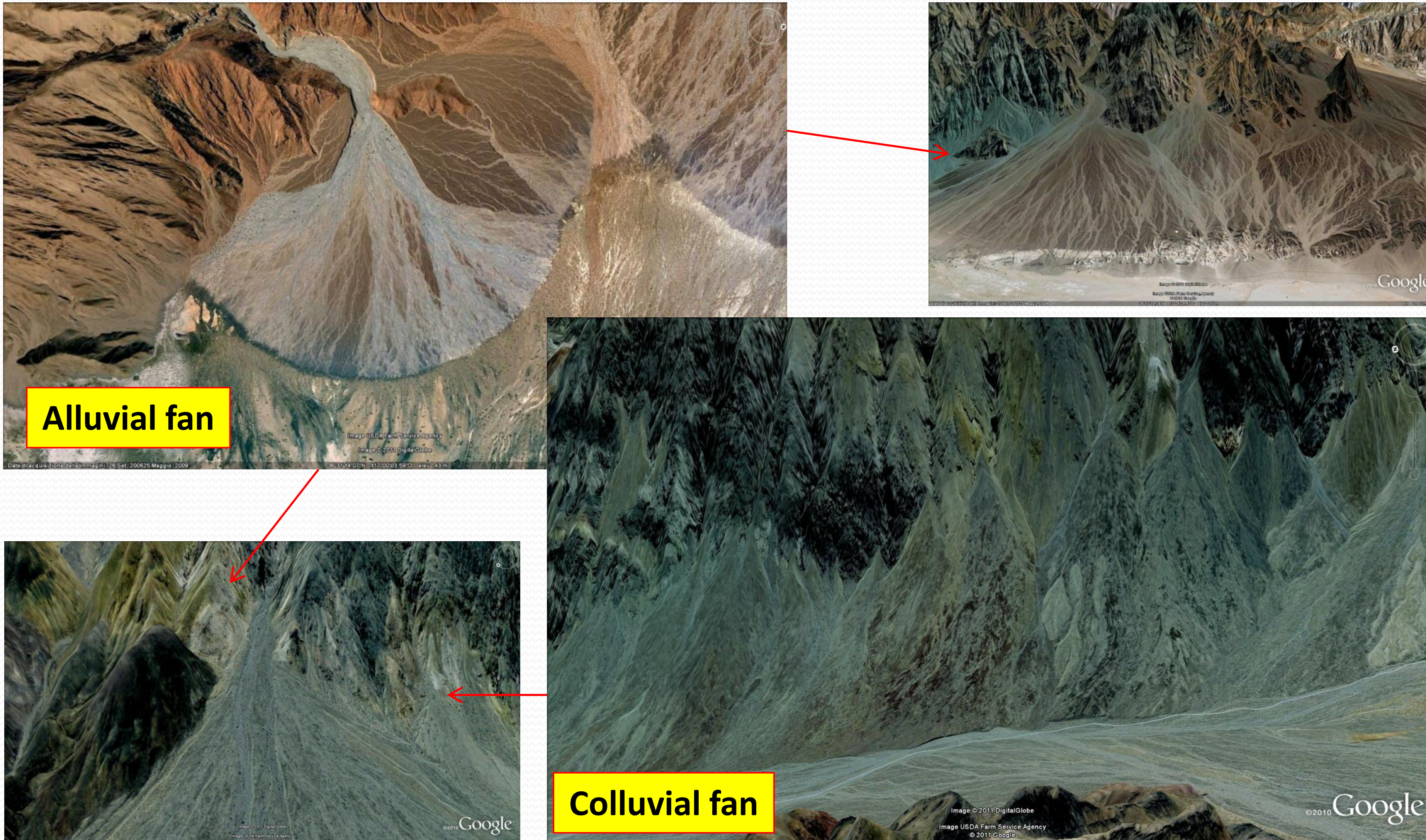
Continental systems: colluvial/alluvial fans

Alluvial fans are fan-shaped sediment bodies that form at the bases of mountain slopes at the mouths of rivers.

TYPICAL CHARACTERISTICS	colluvial fan	alluvial fan
Geomorphic setting:	mountain slope and its base (slope fan)	mountain footplain or broad valley floor (footplain fan)
Catchment:	mountain-slope ravine	intramontane valley or canyon
Apex location:	high on the mountain slope (at the base of ravine)	at the base of mountain slope (valley/canyon mouth)
Depositional slope:	35-45° near the apex, to 15-20° near the toe	seldom more than 10-15° near the apex, often less than 1-5° near the toe
Plan-view radius:	less than 0.5 km, rarely up to 1-1.5 km	commonly up to 10 km, occasionally more than 100 km
Sediment:	mainly gravel, typically very immature	gravel and/or sand, immature to mature
Grain-size trend:	coarsest debris in the lower/toe zone	coarsest debris in the upper/apical zone
Depositional processes:	avalanches, including rockfall, debrisflow and snowflow; minor waterflow, with streamflow chiefly in gullies	debrisflow and/or waterflow (braided streams)
EXAMPLES	 The Brotfonna colluvial fan, Trollvegen near Romsdal, Norway; one of the world's largest colluvial fans, with a height of 830 m and a plan-view radius of 1.5 km.	 The Badwater alluvial fan, eastern side of Death Valley, California; a modest fan, with a radius of *c.* 6 km.

Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems: colluvial/alluvial fans

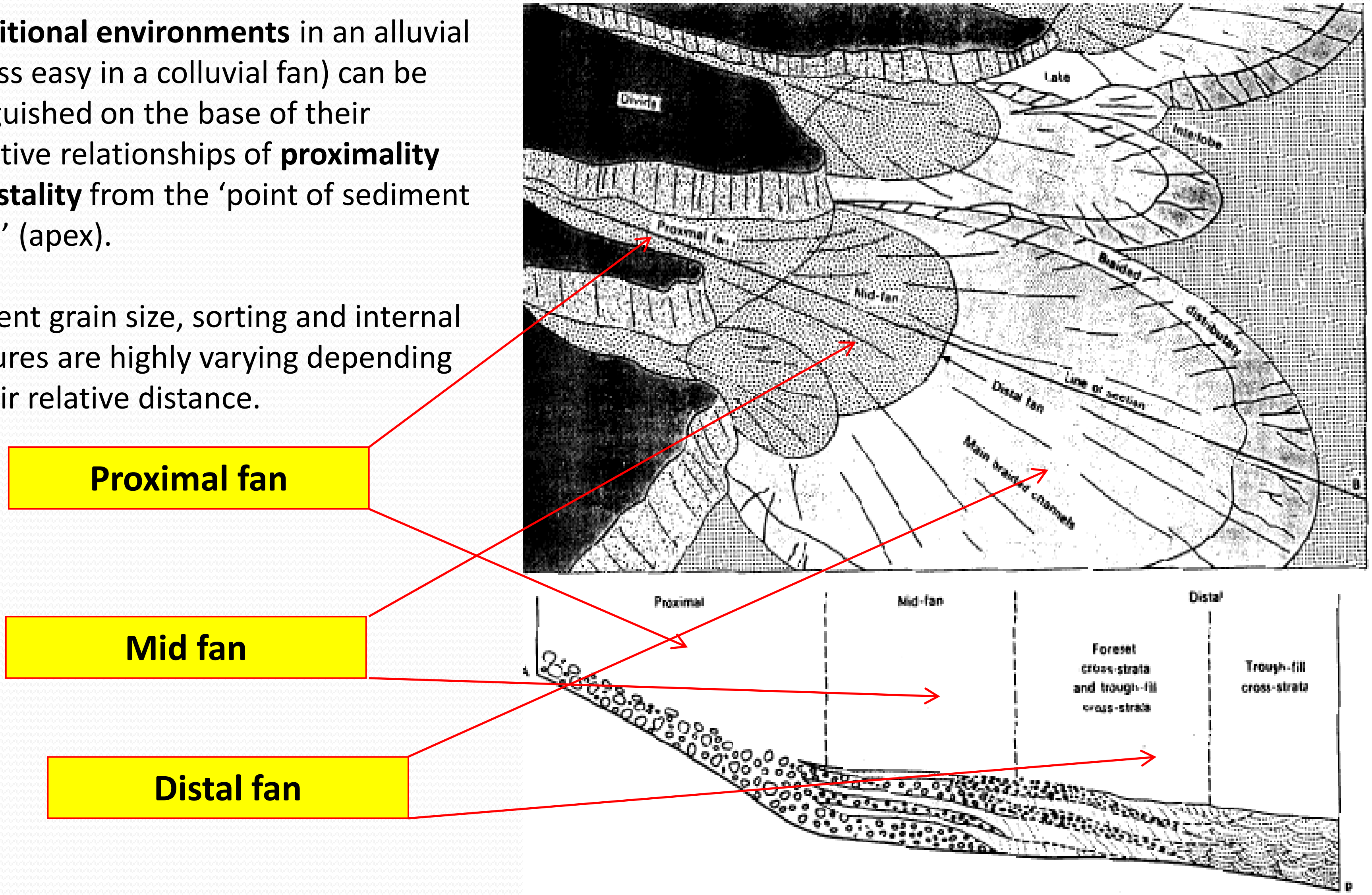


Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems: colluvial/alluvial fans

Depositional environments in an alluvial fan (less easy in a colluvial fan) can be distinguished on the base of their respective relationships of **proximality** and **distality** from the 'point of sediment source' (apex).

Sediment grain size, sorting and internal structures are highly varying depending on their relative distance.

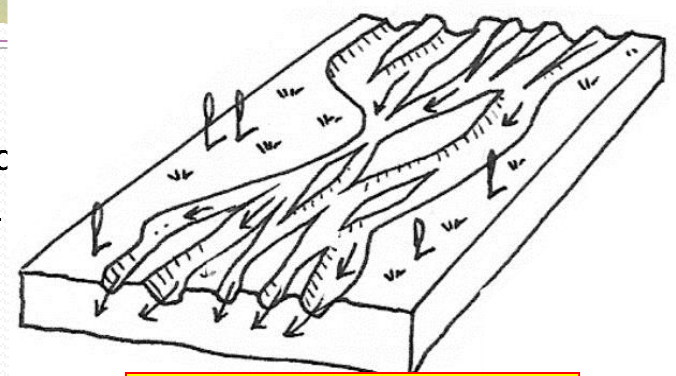


Clastic depositional systems

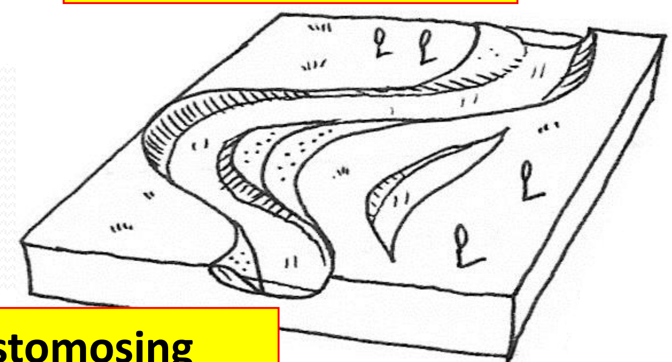
Continental systems: fluvial systems

Fluvial deposits are sediments that are transported and depositec by rivers in a continental environment. There are several types of fluvially derived deposits, including: (1) **braided-river** deposits, which form at and beyond the bases of mountains, where the gradient of the ground surface is relatively steeply inclined, (2) **meandering-river** deposits, which form on more gently inclined floodplains, (3) anastomosing-river deposits, where channels are slightly sinuous but laterally stable, and (4) **straight-channel river** deposits which fill quasi rettilineous valleys.

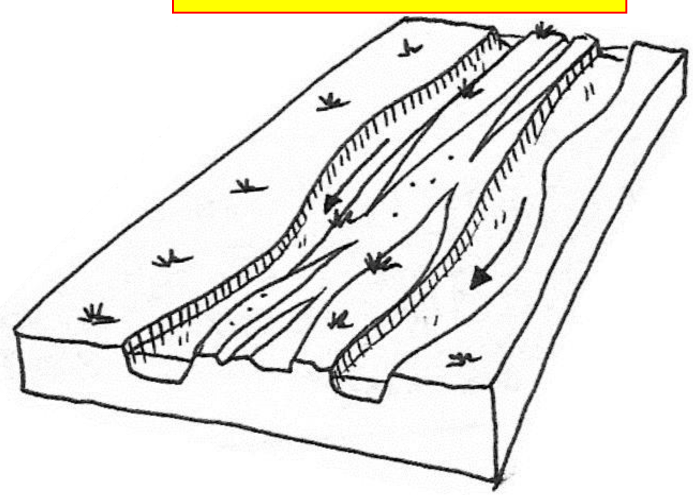
Braided



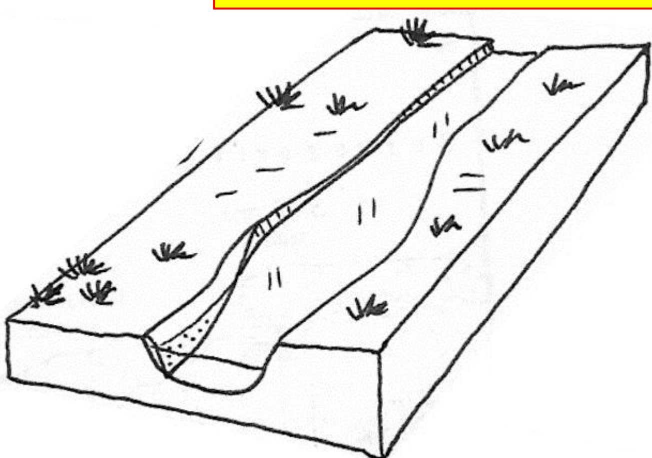
Meandering



Anastomosing



Straight



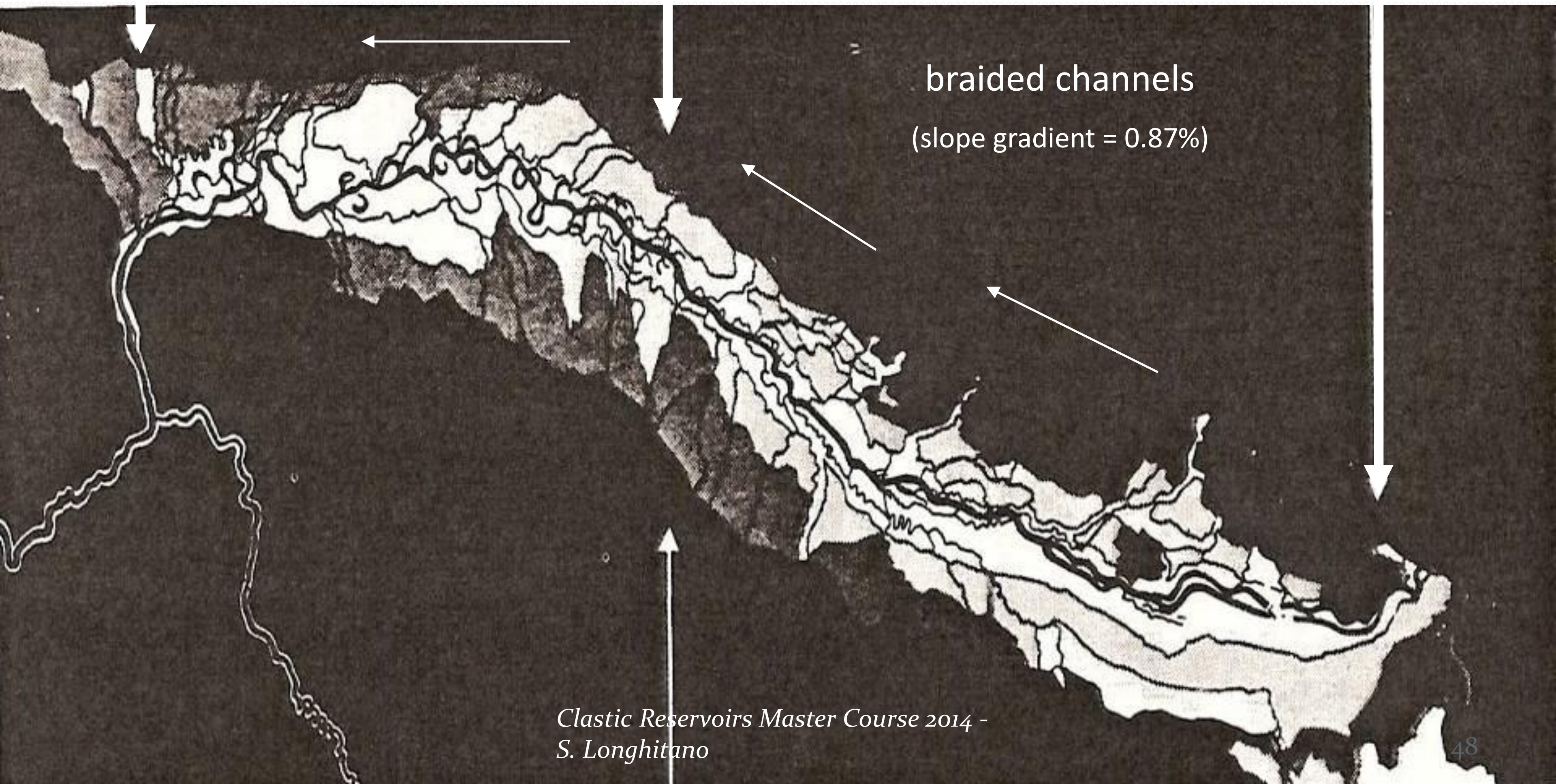
Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems: fluvial systems

The Rhone River

meanders

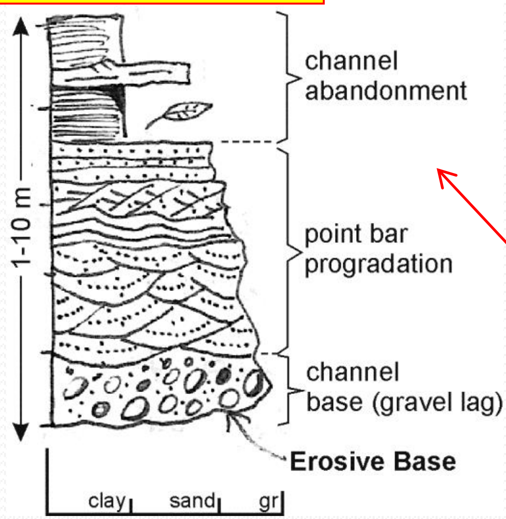
(slope gradient = 0.025%)



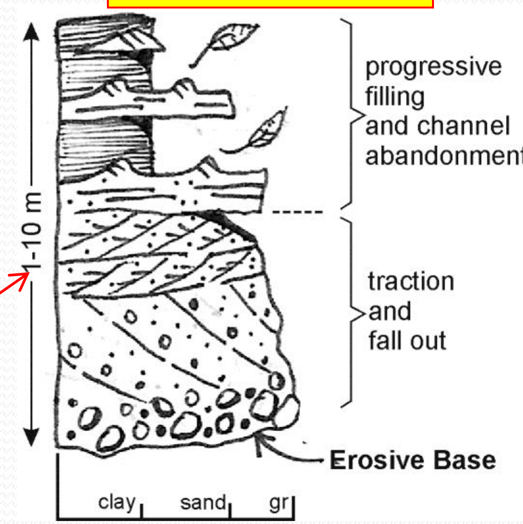
Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems: fluvial systems

Braided

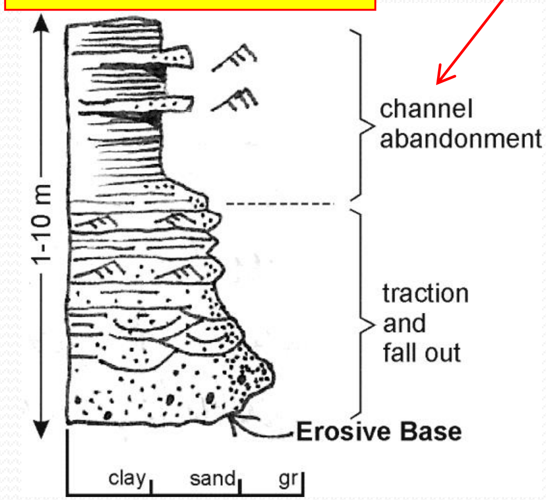


Meandering

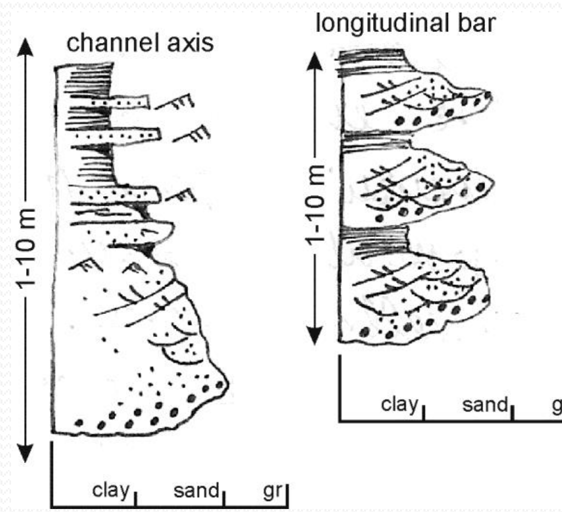


CHANNEL-FILL: FINING-UPWARD SEQUENCE

Straight

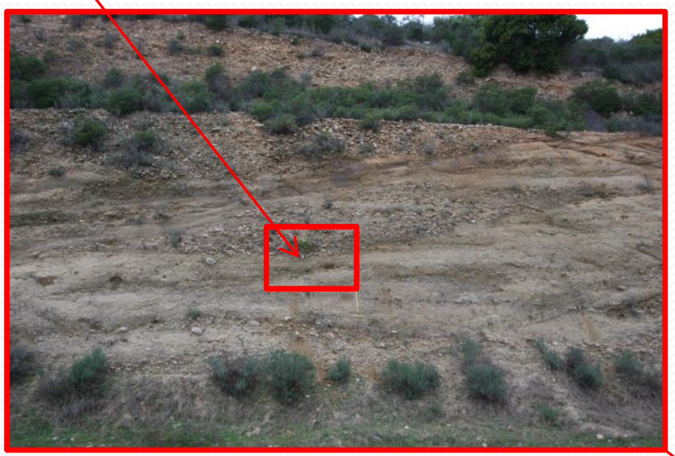


Anastomosing

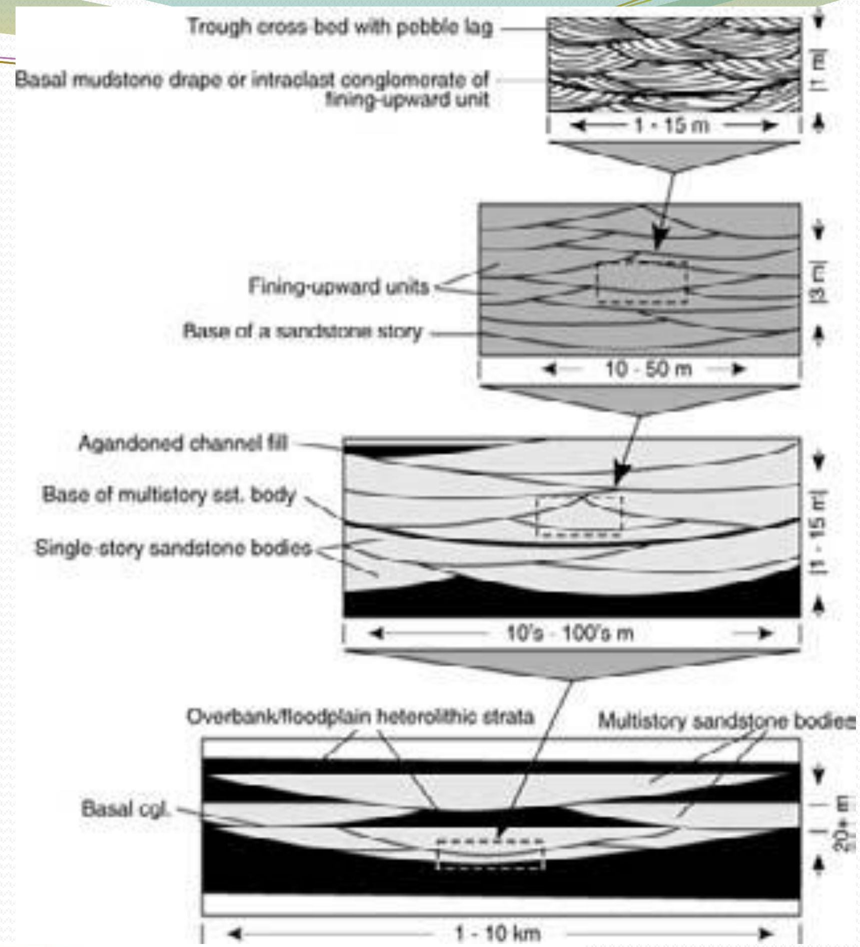


Clastic depositional systems

Continental systems: fluvial systems



Oligocene Ussana Fm., SW Sardinia

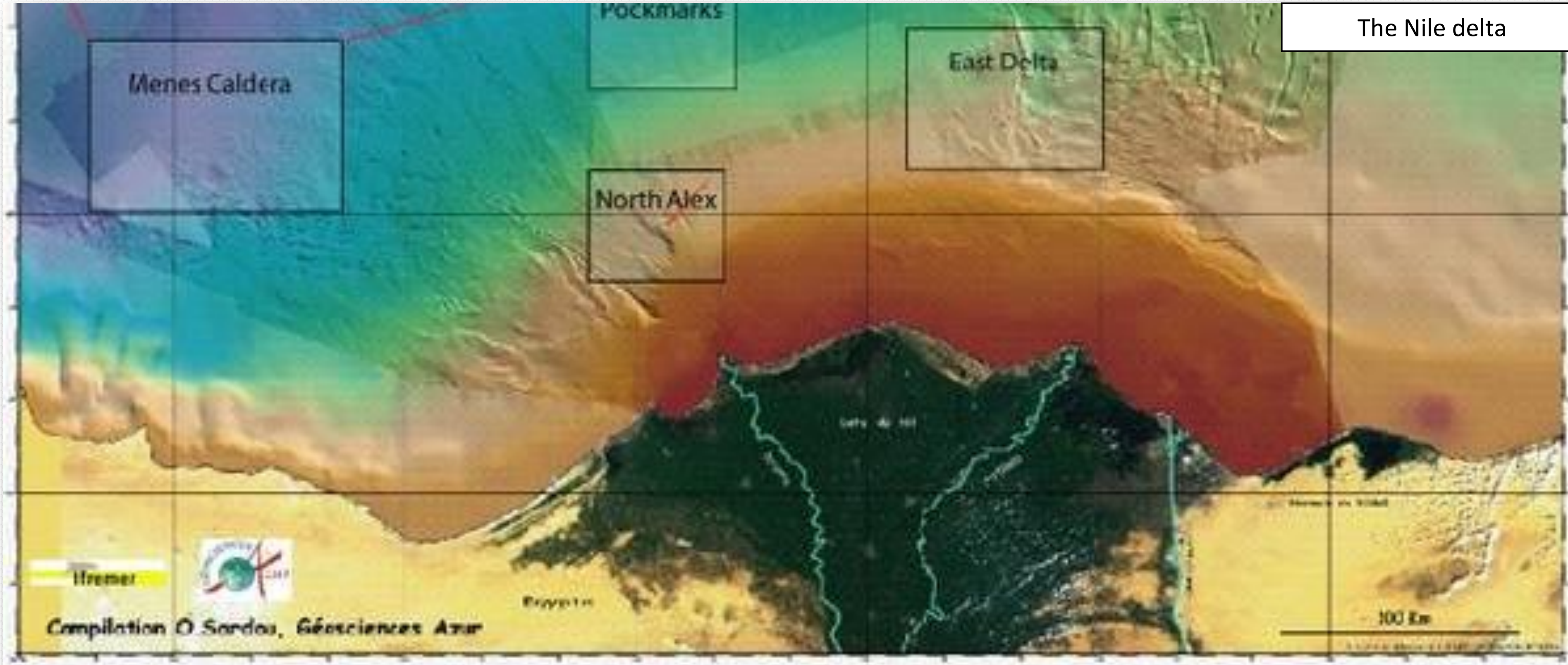


Clastic depositional systems

Transitional systems: deltas

A depositional system that lies both on the continent and above the sea is called **transitional**, because its component environments develop in **subaerial** and **subaqueous** conditions.

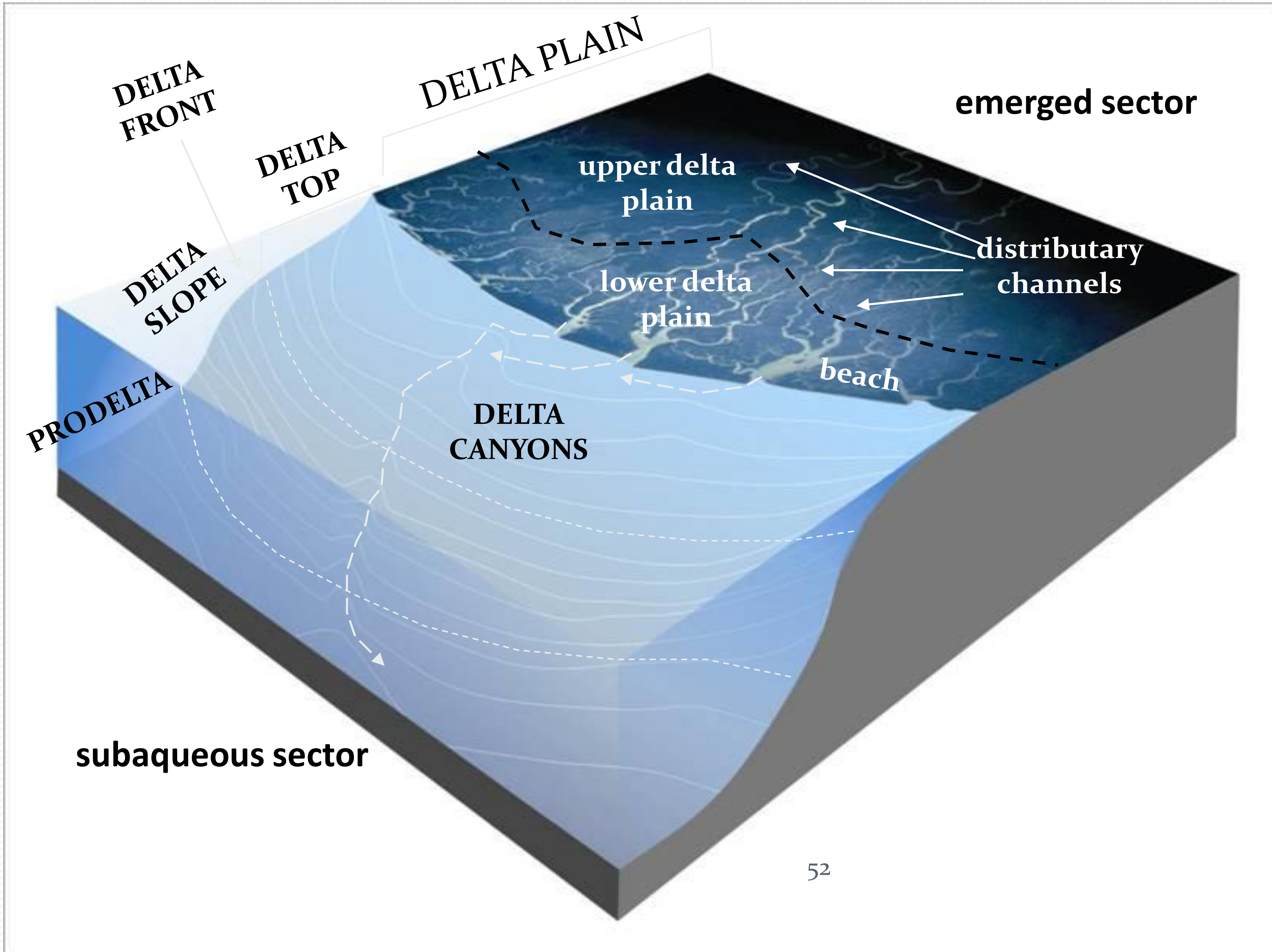
One of the most representative transitional system is a **river delta**.
When a river debouches into a basin, since it loses its transportation capacity, sediments become to be distributed and deposited. Then, a delta develops.



The Nile delta

Clastic depositional systems

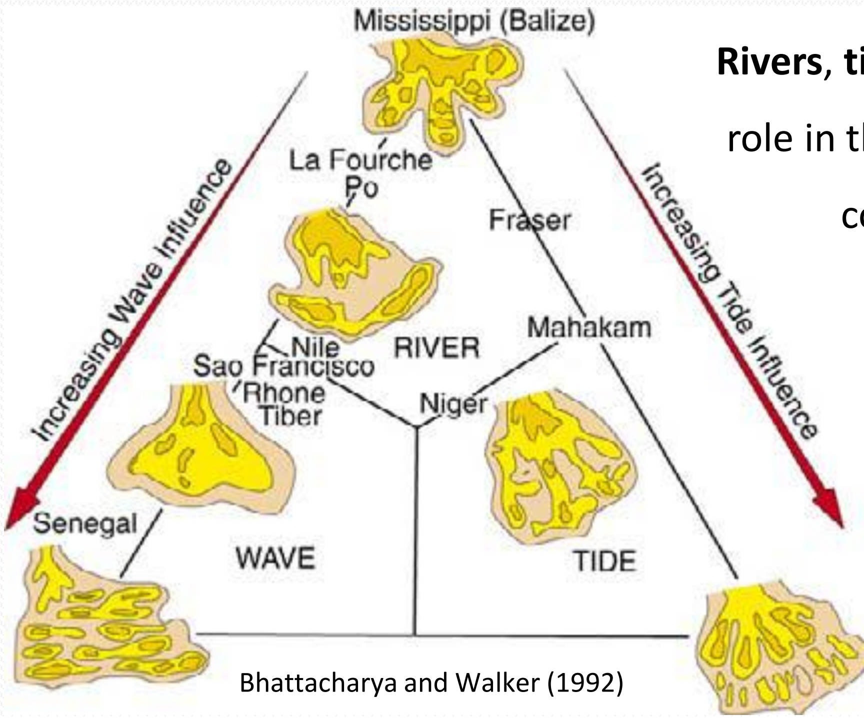
Transitional systems: deltas



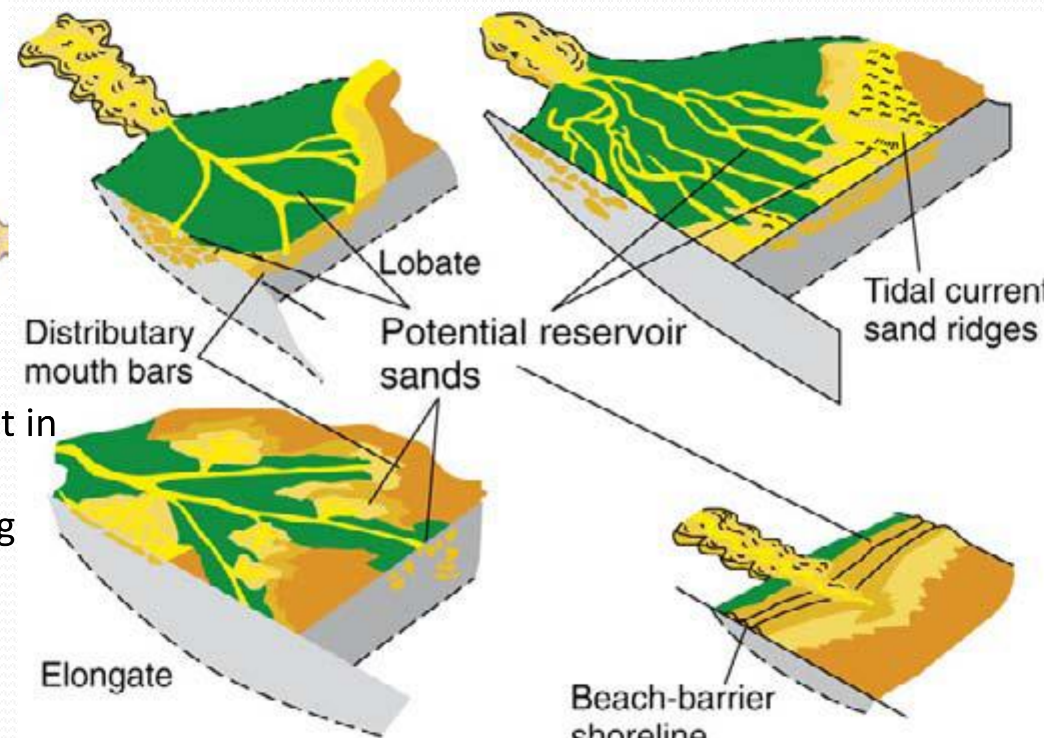
Clastic depositional systems

Transitional systems: deltas

Rivers, **tides**, **waves**, and **currents**, in varying proportions, all play a role in the ultimate distribution of deltaic sediment along different coastlines. A six-fold subdivision of deltas is one of the most common way to classify deltas, on the function of the respective influences of waves, tides, and rivers.



Bhattacharya and Walker (1992)

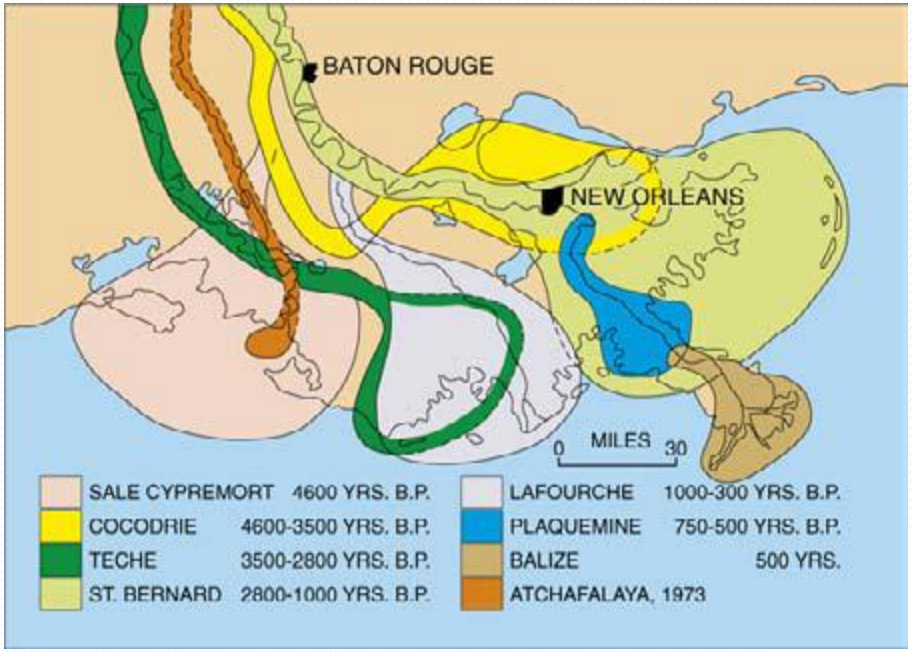


With deltaic reservoirs of hydrocarbons, it is essential to determine the type of deltaic deposit in order to maximize reservoir development and production. Errors are easily made in interpreting types of deltas in the subsurface environment, where we have only scattered wells and limited cores or image logs from which to identify depositional processes and environments.

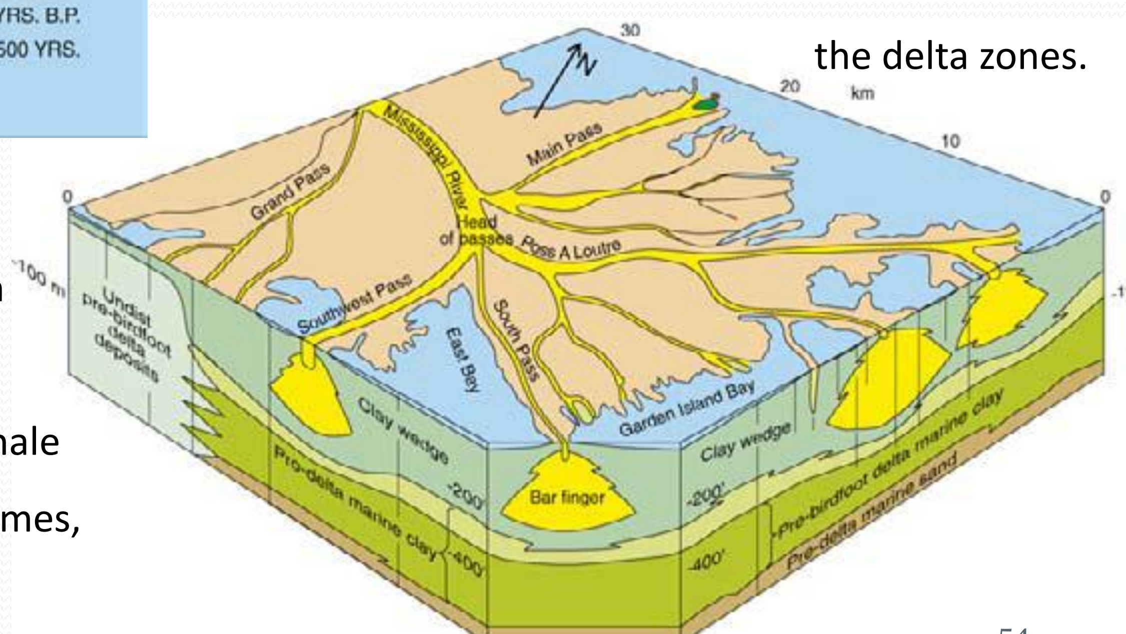
Clastic depositional systems

Transitional systems: river-dominated deltas

The Mississippi River delta has long been considered the “type” **river-dominated** delta. Strong waves and currents do not impinge upon its protected shoreline, so sediment deposited at and near the shore zone is not reworked or dispersed laterally. With time, and sufficient accommodation space between the sea surface and seafloor to accept sediment, such a delta will prograde seaward, as will the delta zones.



Sandy reservoir facies are deposits of distributary channels and distributary mouth bars. Interdistributary bays, marshes, and lagoons separate sandy facies and provide shale barriers in subsurface reservoirs, and sometimes, they provide hydrocarbon source rocks.

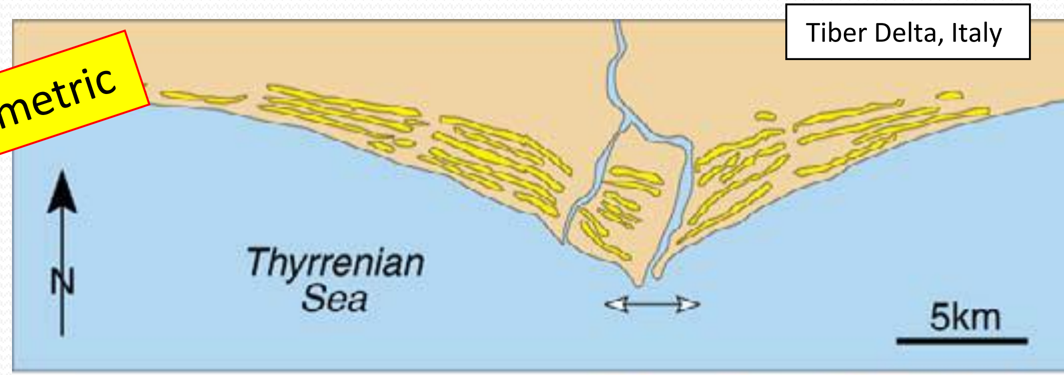


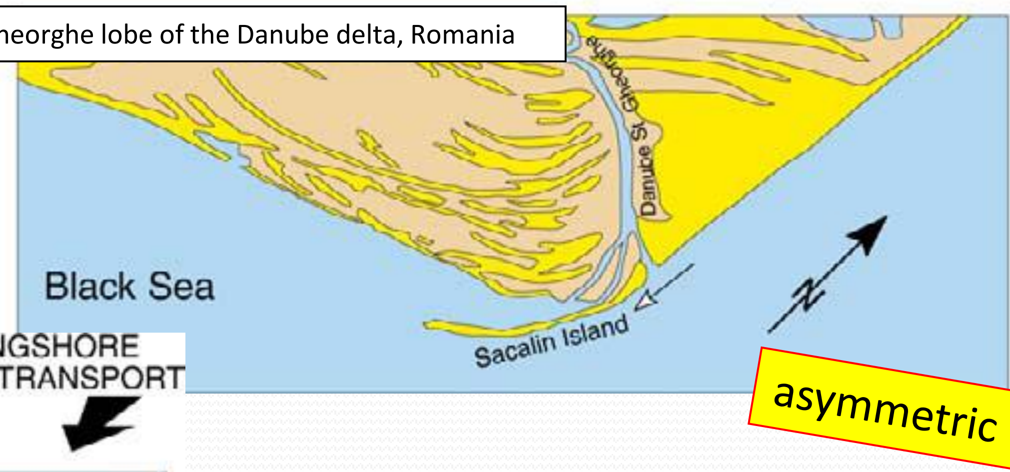
Clastic depositional systems

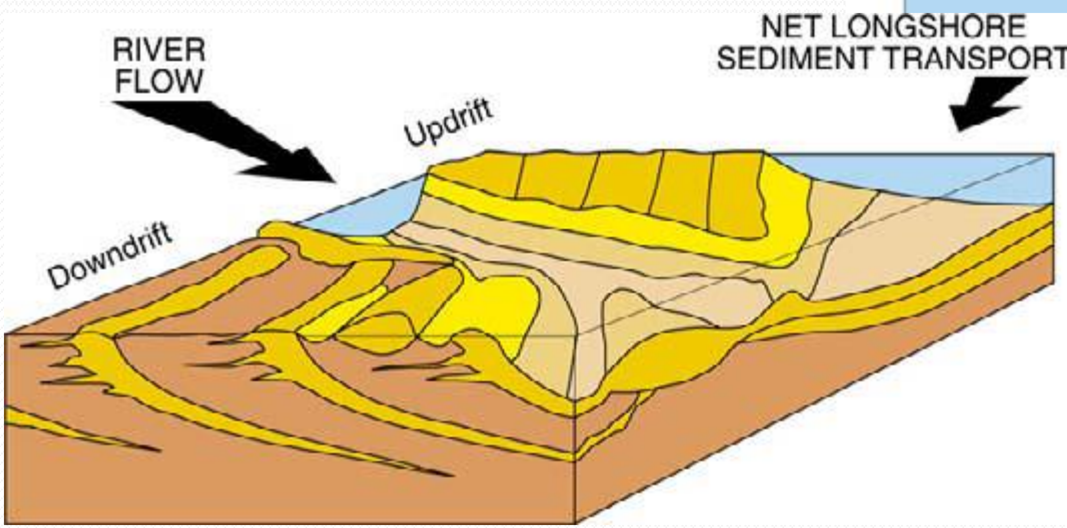
Transitional systems: wave-dominated deltas

Symmetric and/or asymmetric, wave-dominated deltas, result from dominant redistribution of sediments by waves, once the sediments reach the shoreline.

Sandy barrier bar complexes and associated prodelta muds form in the downcurrent portion of the delta and represent very good reservoirs!

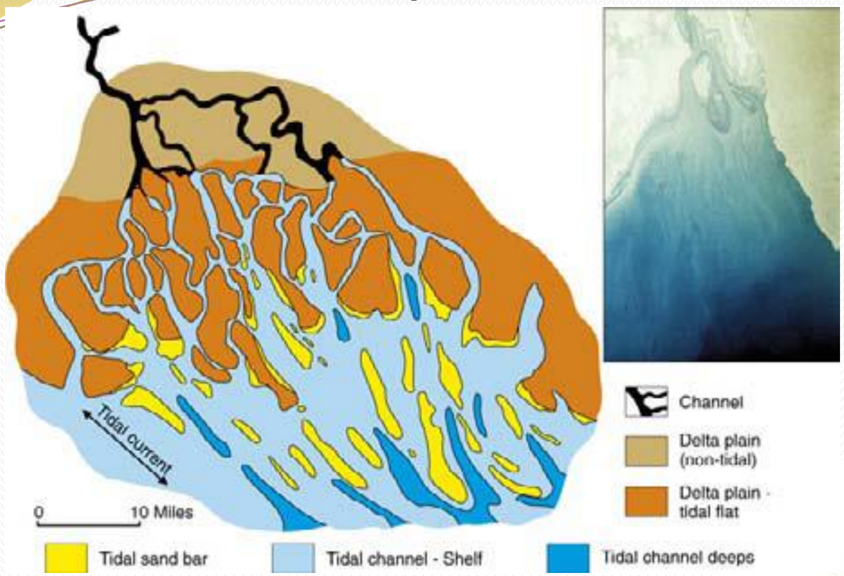




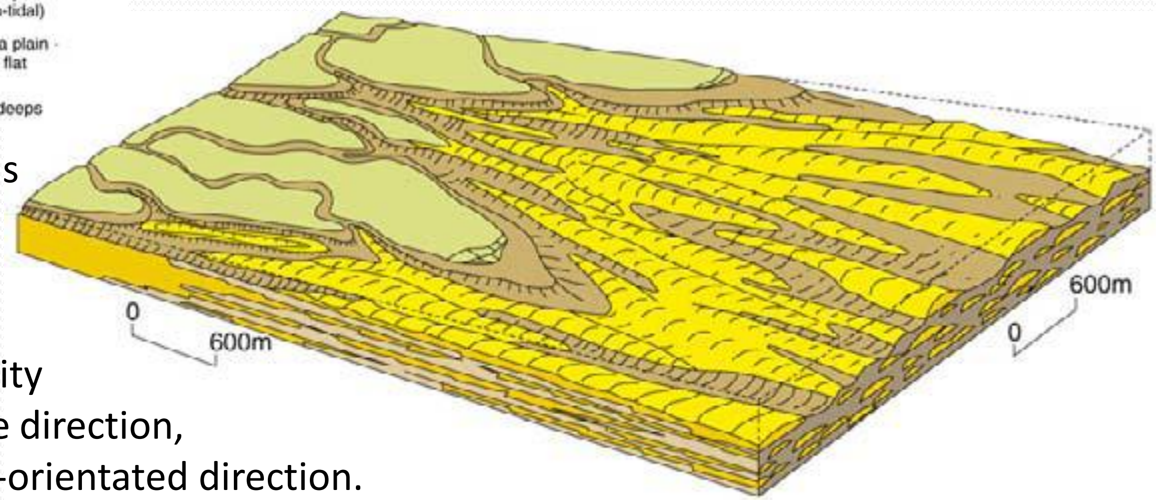


Clastic depositional systems

Transitional systems: tide-dominated deltas



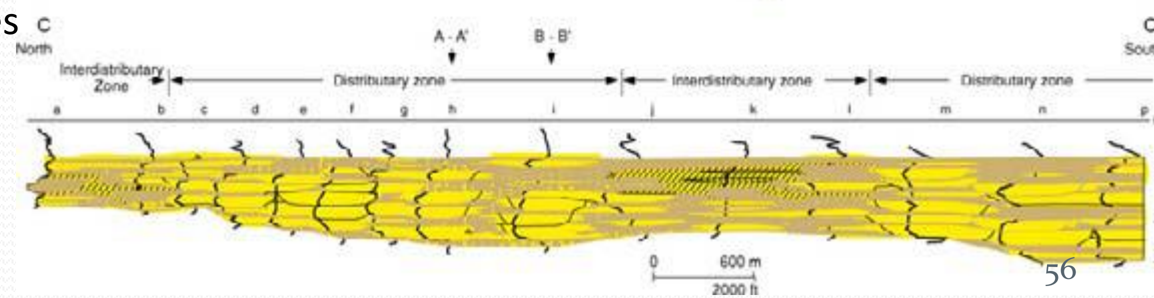
In an embayed coastline, waves and tides can interact closely, depending upon the configuration of the embayment and the orientation of the incoming waves. Particularly in narrow embayments, tidal energy can build progressively landward, giving rise to a very large tidal range. Thus, the tide-dominated delta can be a very high-energy environment, and the sediments will berelatively coarse grained.



Reservoir continuity and fluid-flow patterns are highly dependent upon depositional processes in this tide-dominated delta system.

Reservoir sandstones exhibit good continuity and fluid-flow potential in the dip-elongate direction, but they have poor continuity in the strike-orientated direction.

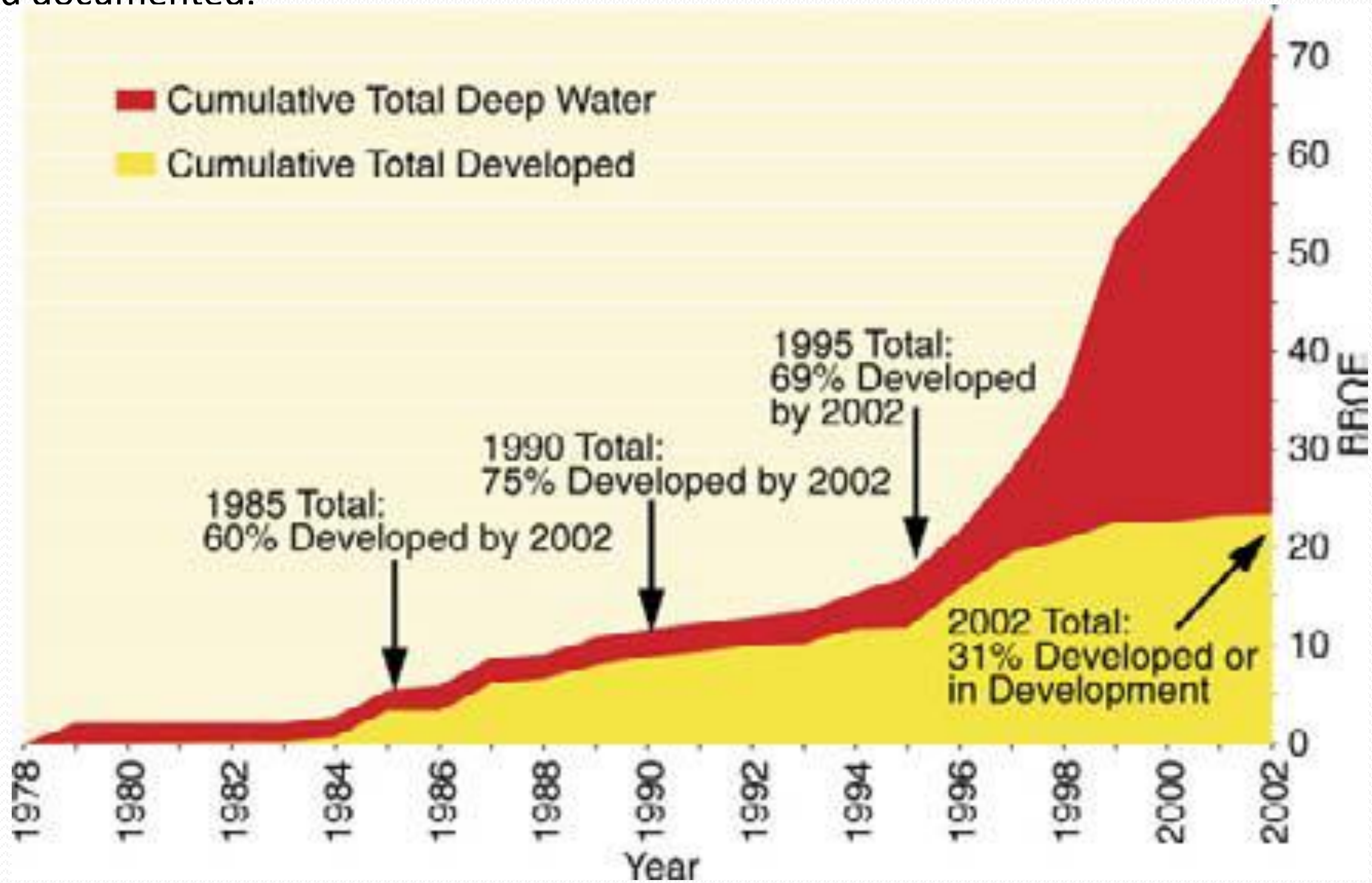
Advanced hydrocarbon-recovery strategies must account for this architectural style if production is to be maximized.



Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems

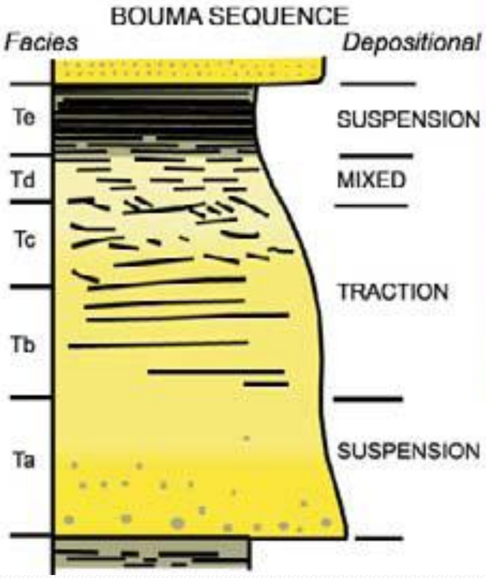
The deepwater depositional system is the one type of reservoir system that cannot be easily reached, observed, and studied in the modern environment. The study of deepwater systems requires many different remote-observation techniques, each of which can provide information on just one part of the entire system. As a consequence, the study and understanding of deepwater depositional systems as reservoirs has lagged behind that of the other reservoir systems, whose modern processes are more easily observed and documented.

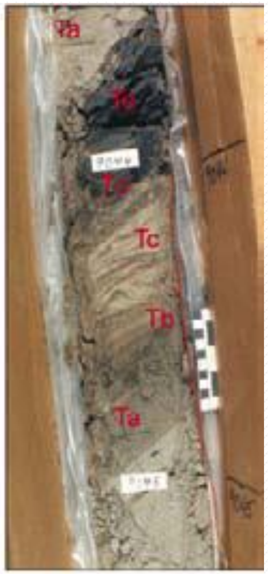


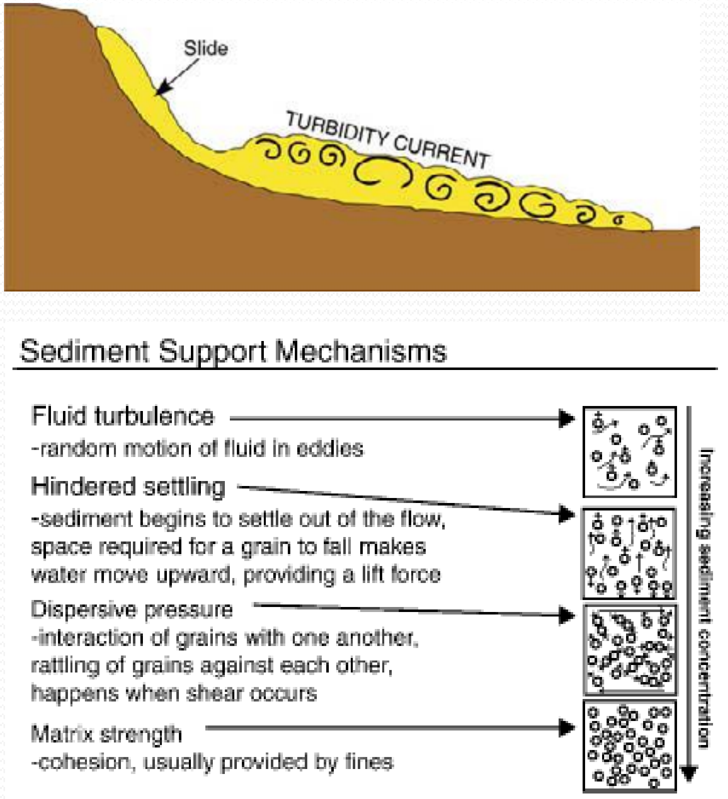
Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems: turbidites

The first real recognition of deepwater (geologic definition) processes and deposits evolved from a classic paper by Kuenen and Migliorini (1950), who described "graded beds" from laboratory flume experiments and outcrop observations. They advanced the concept of turbidity currents as an important process by which sediment is transported from shallow water to deep water.



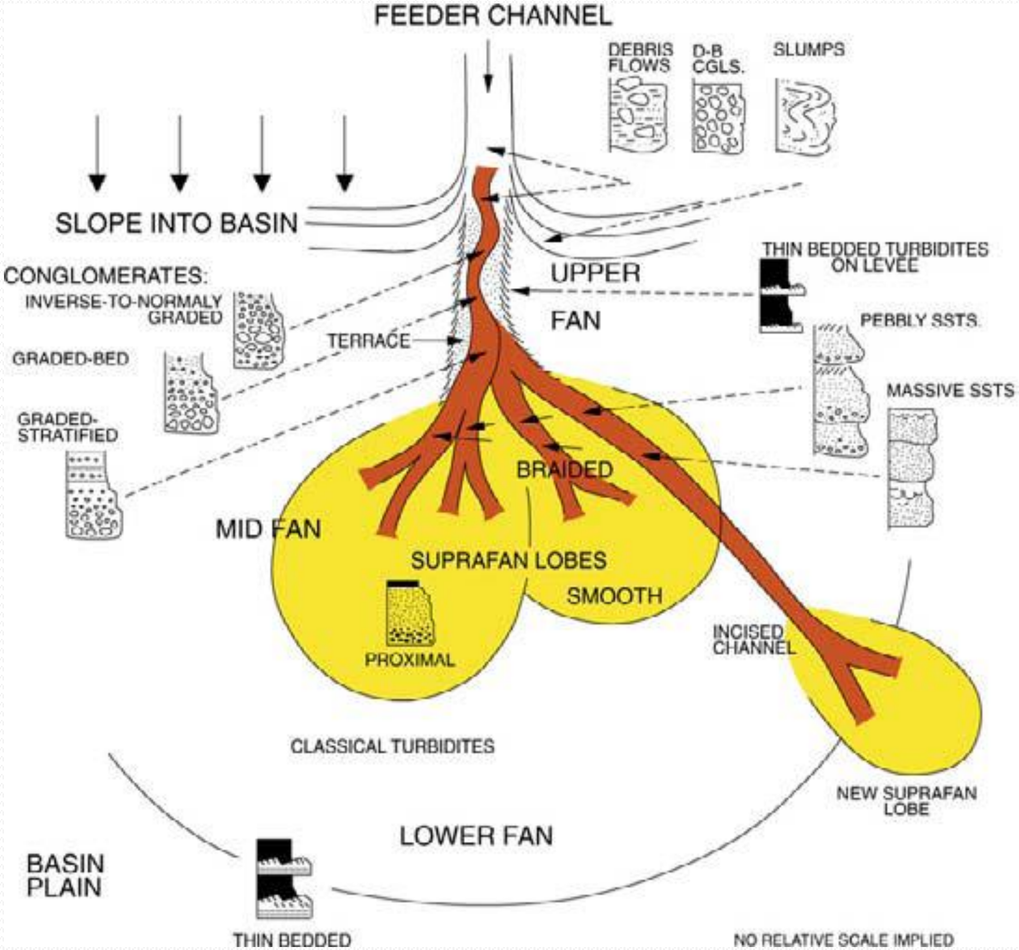




Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems: submarine fans

Pioneering work by Bouma (1962), Mutti and Ricci Lucchi (1972), and Normark (1978) provided early geologic models for submarine fans and their component strata. Walker (1978) attempted to combine models into a comprehensive submarine-fanmodel composed of a feeder canyon, a proximal suprafan lobe, and amore distal lobe fringe, all sitting on a basin-plain deposit



Clastic depositional systems

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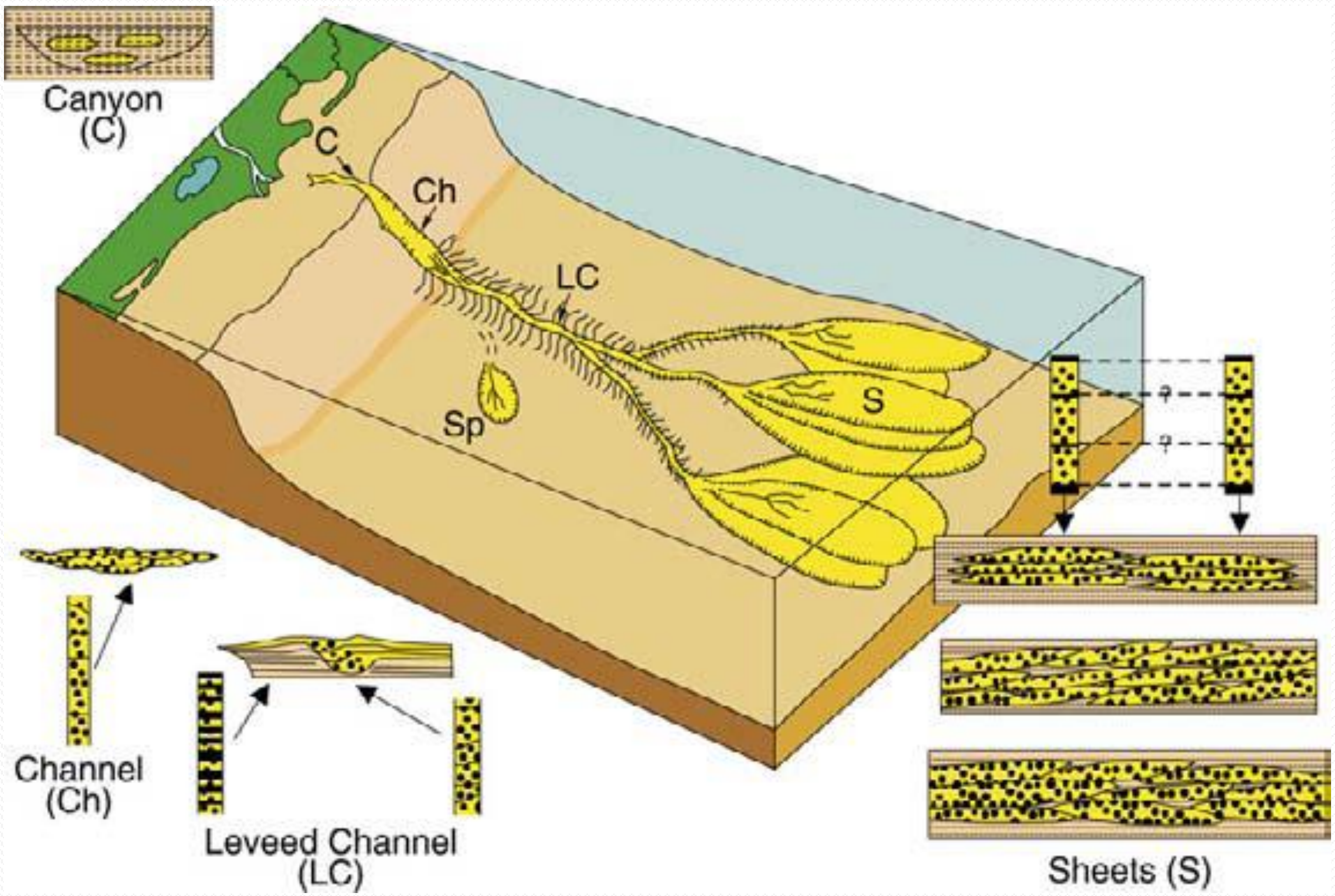

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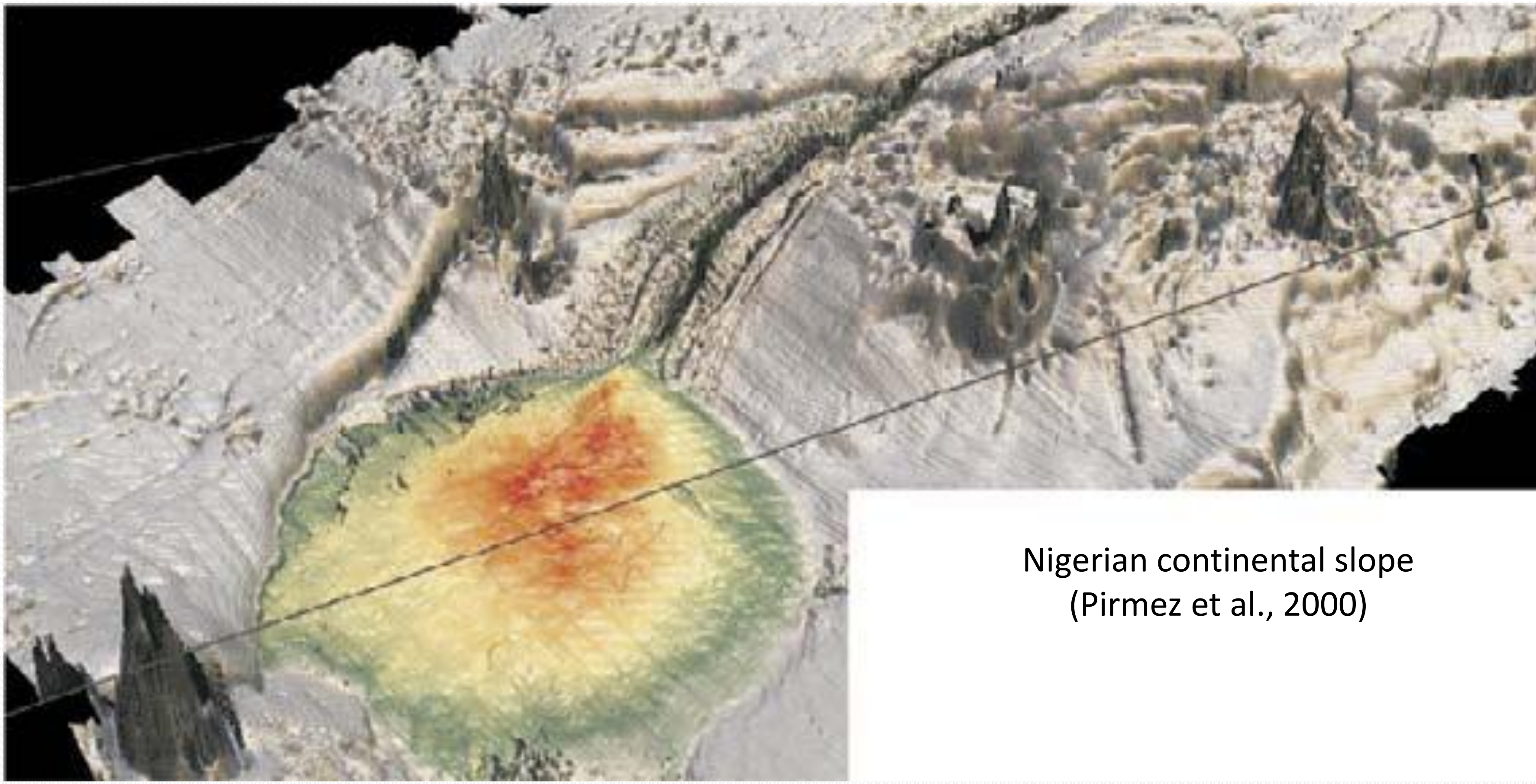
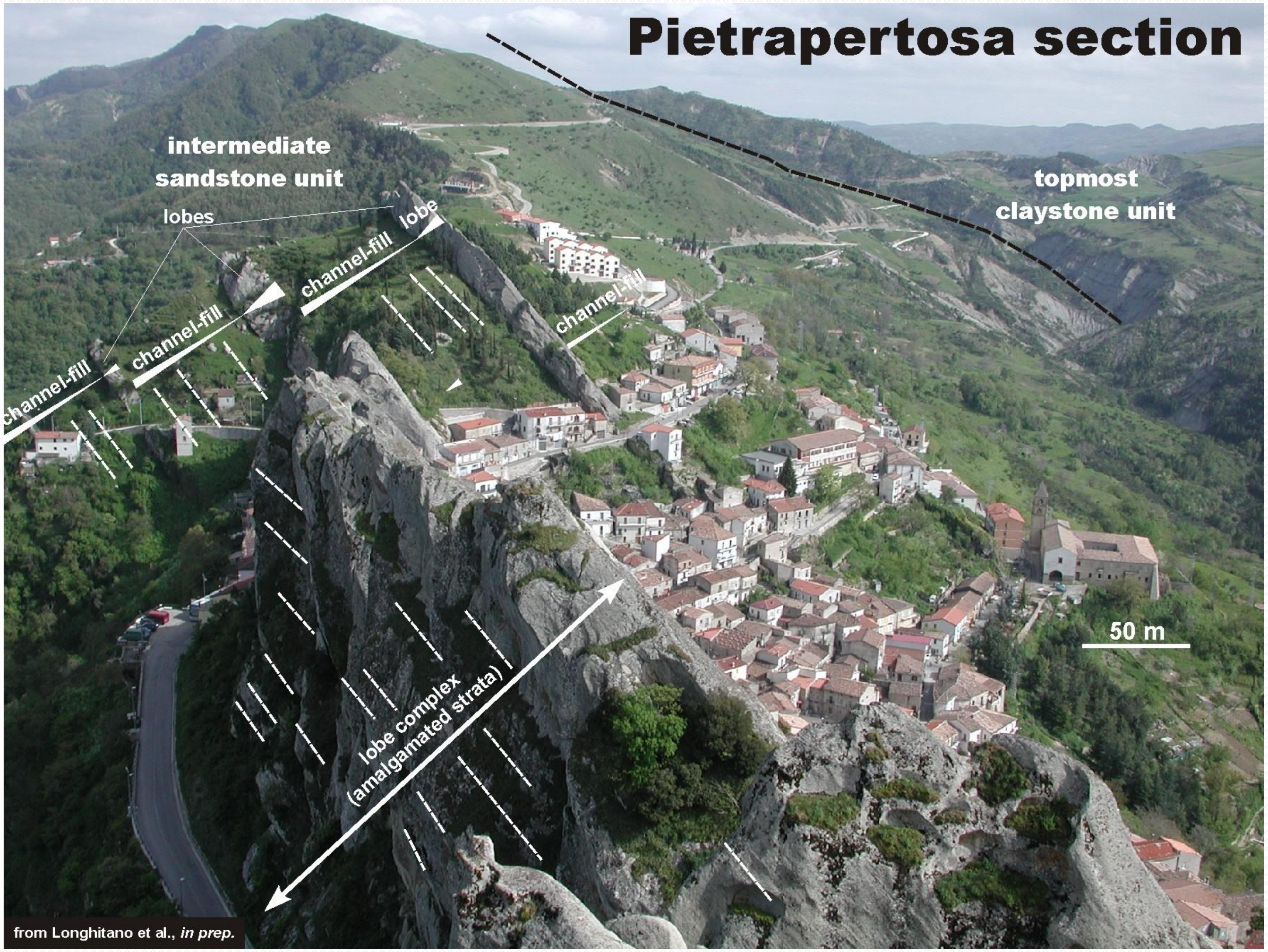


Nigerian continental slope
(Pirmez et al., 2000)

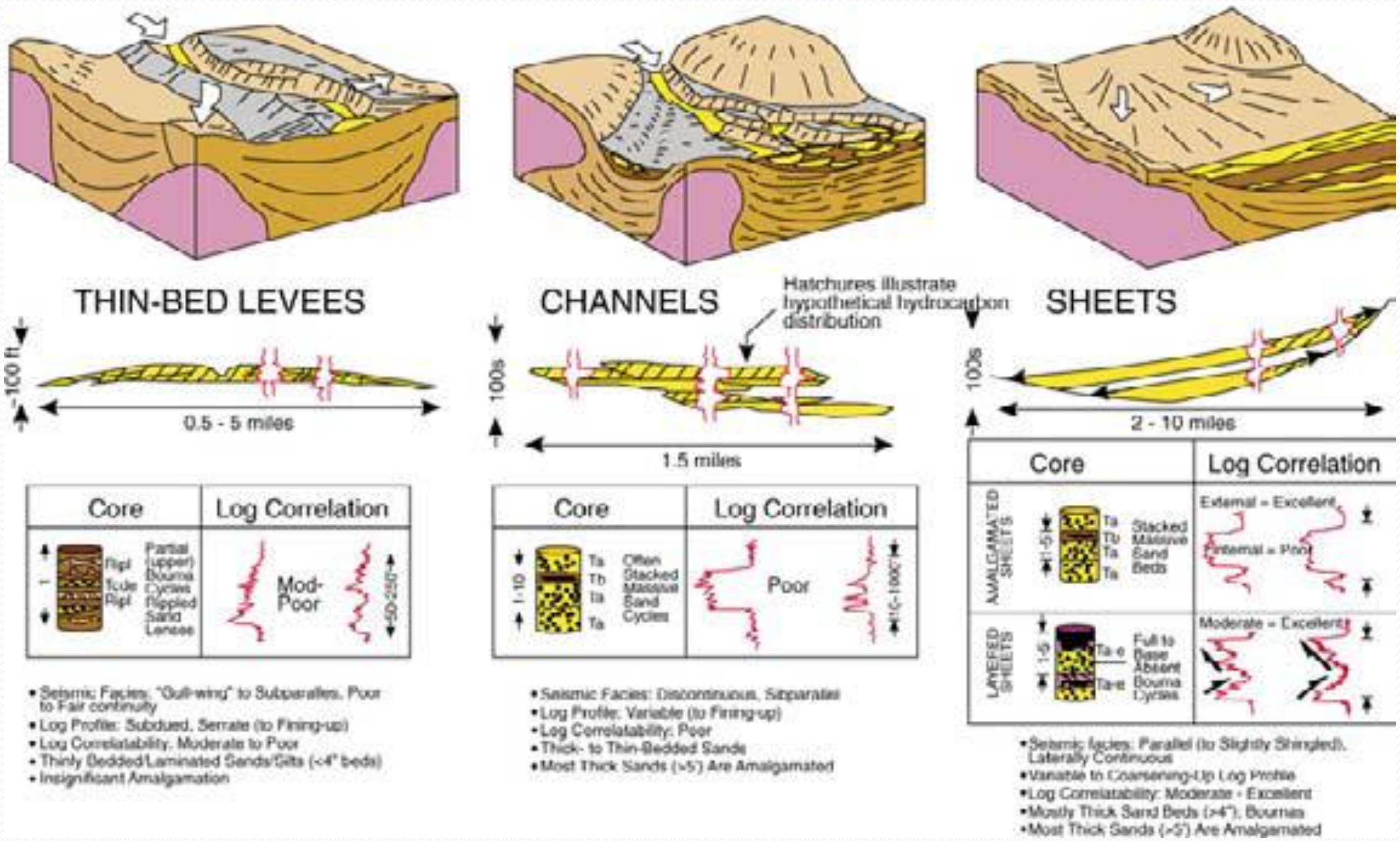
Channel-lobe transition deposits: the example of the Middle Miocene Gorgoglione Flysch Southern Apennine)



Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems: submarine fans

The main architectural elements that comprise deepwater depositional systems are: canyons, (erosional) channels, (aggradational) leveed channels, and sheets or lobes. It is important to note that one should include different types of data in a reservoir characterization, because each type may provide details at a different scale.



Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems: submarine fans and associate channels

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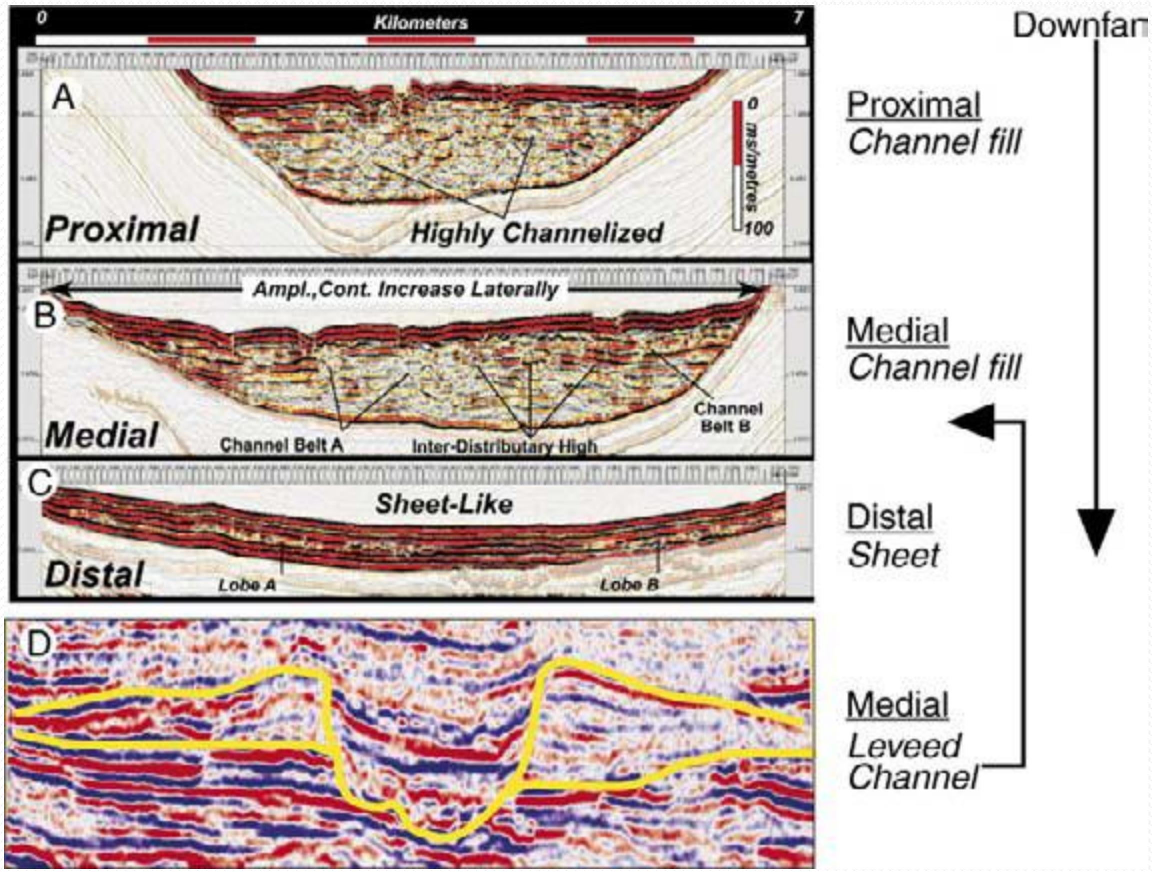
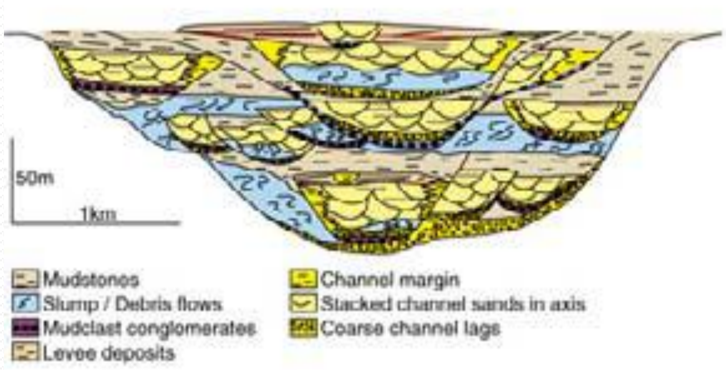


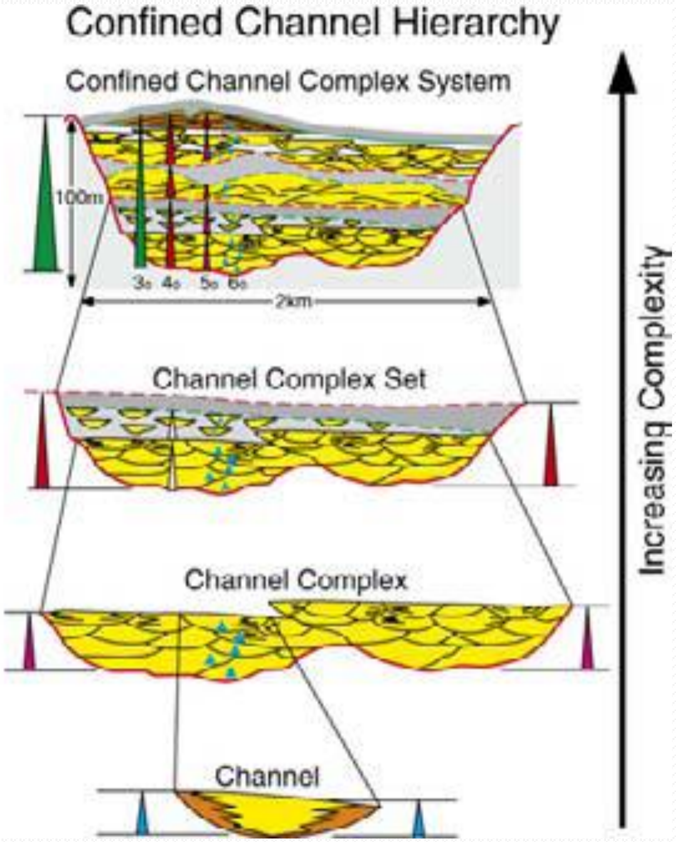
For example, at the reservior scale, seismicreflection patterns for the three elements are distinctly different. A, B, C are three high-resolution seismic profiles from one shallow intra-slope minibasin, northern deep Gulf of Mexico. (A) Proximal and (B) medial profiles cross the up-fan channelized systems. (C) A distal profile crosses the sheet deposits. Note that lobes A and B have a slightly mounded appearance among the laterally continuous, sheetlike reflections. The deposits are as large as 50 ms in two-way traveltime. These have laterally continuous reflections that lapout against the side of basins. (D) Seismic profile of a leveed channel complex from the western Gulf of Mexico (Beaubouef et al., 2003).

Deep-sea marine systems: submarine channels

Although the final internal fill of a channel normally is quite complex, channel fill often can be subdivided into an organized, recognizable pattern or hierarchy of strata.

Confined channel hierarchy from a single channel element, through a complex of elements, through a complex set of elements, and finally to a complex system. Multiple channel fills and intervening shale from levee deposits create significant heterogeneity, with many potential flow barriers and baffles.

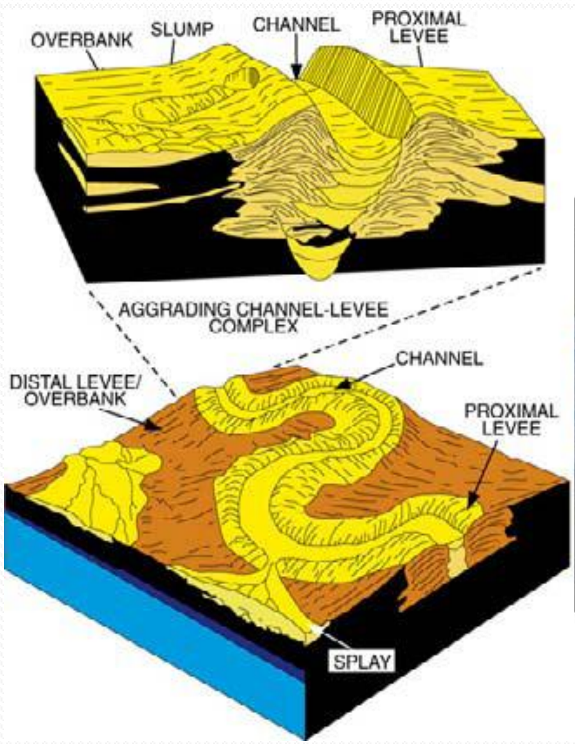


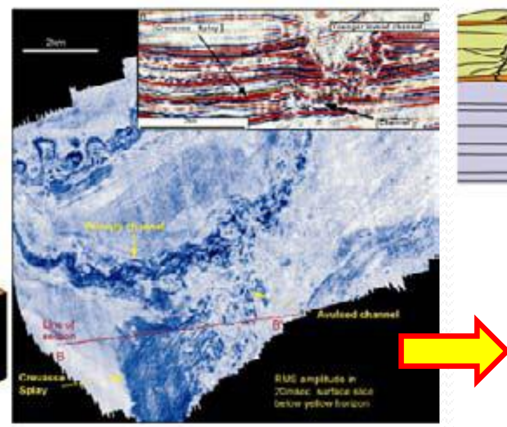


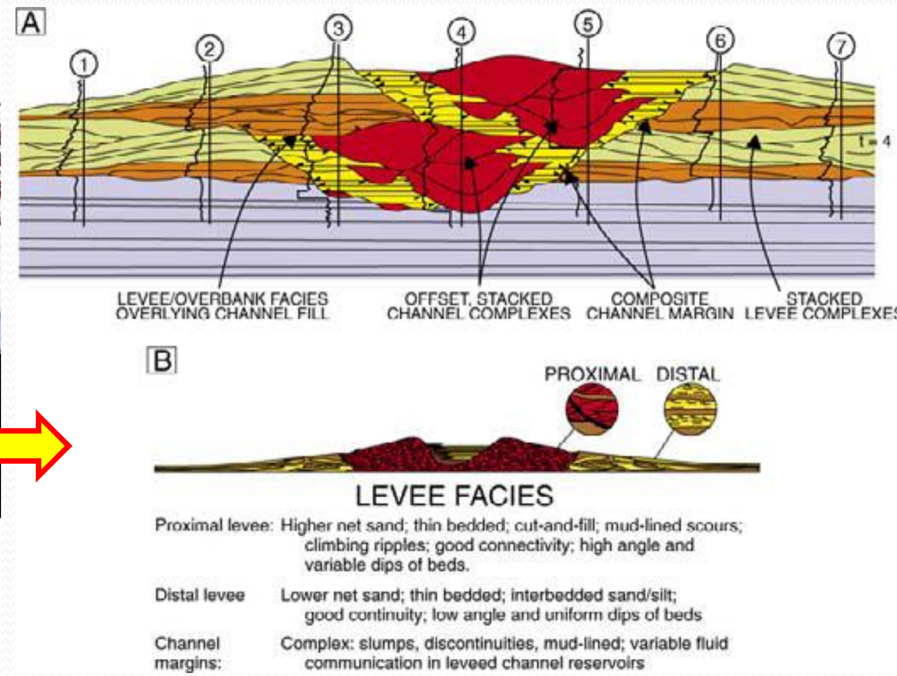
Clastic depositional systems

Deep-sea marine systems: facies models

For the past decade, most major oil and gas companies have focused on developing channel-fill or sheet-sandstone reservoirs. Much less is known about levee-overbank deposits as potential reservoirs. Levee-overbank deposits consist primarily of muds and thinly bedded (millimeters- to centimeters thick), laminated sands and sandstones (hereafter termed “thin beds”) that form adjacent to sinuous channels. They sometimes exhibit excellent porosity and darcy-range permeability.







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