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Structural diagenesis of shallow platform carbonates: role of early embrittlement on fracture setting and distribution, case study of Monte Alpi (Southern Apennines, Italy)

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Abstract

Bed-perpendicular, opening-mode diffuse fractures are common features in carbonate rocks because they become brittle during the first stages of diagenesis. Early- fractures could be independent of tectonics and form a background structural network from sub-millimeter to 10's of centimetres scale. This study focuses on the outcrop-to-micro scales structural, stratigraphic, and petrographic characterization of Lower Cretaceous, shallow-water, tight limestones of the Inner Apulian Platform exposed along the axial sector of the southern Apennines fold-and-thrust belt, Italy. This work aims at understanding the formation of early diagenetic fractures during the first stages of sediment lithification, and on their impact on subsequent deformation mechanisms associated to polyphase tectonics. The results of field structural surveys, of petrographic and cathodoluminescence analyses of representative samples unravel the main structural-diagenetic processes in shallow-water carbonates. We document that early brittle fractures were intrinsically related to the host rock pore type and cementation processes, and summarize the overall time-dependant evolution of the structural assemblages in a conceptual model. This model includes all abutting and crosscutting relationships among the various structural elements from field to thin-section observation, and form the now days fracture network.

Keywords: Fractures; Carbonates; Early cementation; Diagenesis; Reservoirs; Southern Apennines;

1. Introduction

Carbonate reservoirs are of a great importance for hydrocarbon exploitation, water resource, and gas sequestration (Barlét-Gouédard et al., 2006; Ford and Williams, 2007; Ahr, 2011). These reservoirs are very often characterized by both primary and secondary heterogeneities (Nelson, 2001; Lucia, 2007), which occur from regional (100's of m to km), to outcrop (cm to 100 m) and micro-scale (mm to cm). In reservoir modelling, heterogeneities with dimensional properties smaller than 10m are included into the matrix properties, leading to quite unrealistic scenarios in the case of fractured carbonates, which have been subjected to complex diagenetic and tectonic histories (Warren and Root, 1963; Barbier et al., 2012; Matonti et al., 2015; Giorgioni et al., 2016; Panza et al., 2016; Giuffrida et al., 2019a). Particularly in tight carbonates, both outcrop-scale and micro-scale fractures may drive a large amount of geofluids (Guerriero et al., 2013; Anders et al., 2014; Panza et al., 2019). Since cement-bearing fractures are widespread in the subsurface, fluid can only flow where fractures are now days barren or partly cemented (Aguilera, 1998; Nelson, 2001; Laubach, 2003; Matonti et al., 2017). Hence, deciphering the interaction between fractures and diagenesis is a key point for a good understanding of the reservoir properties. Accordingly, the assessment of fracture timing and sealing due to cementation is of a prime importance for fractured carbonate reservoir analysis (Laubach et al., 2010; Vitale et al., 2012). In the last decade, the few studies that focused on the relationships between structural and diagenetic processes in carbonates pointed out the possible occurrence of a early embrittlement (Frost and Kerans, 2010; Lavenu et al., 2013, 2014; Lamarche 2015a; Lamarche et al., 2015b; Tavani et al., 2016; Vinci et al., 2017; Lavenu and Lamarche 2018). Along this line, the analysis of outcrop analogues of subsurface fractured carbonates is often employed to lower the uncertainties and bias associated to reservoir characterization and modelling (Lamarche et al., 2012; Rustichelli et al., 2013; Agosta et al., 2015; Lavenu et al., 2015; Corradetti et al., 2018; Guerriero et al., 2015; Panza et al., 2016, 2018, 2019; Massaro et al., 2018; Giuffrida et al., 2019a). In this paper, we investigate the polyphase diagenetic history of fractures crosscutting shallow-water platform carbonates of Monte

Alpi, southern Italy (Sartoni and Crescenti, 1962; Corrado et al. 2002; Shiner et al., 2004; Mazzoli et al., 2006, 2008; La Bruna et al., 2017, 2018). This massif can be considered as a good structural analogue for nearby oil fields of the Basilicata Region, as well as a case study for a multi-scale analysis of carbonate reservoirs involved in a complex tectonic history. In light of their time-dependant tectonic evolution, the goal of the present work is to assess the control exerted by carbonate facies on the structural diagenesis of the Lower Cretaceous limestones.

2. Geological setting

The Apennines are an arc-shaped fold-and-thrust belt (FTB) due to the Oligocene-to-Pleistocene continental collision between Eurasian and African plates (Patacca and Scandone, 2007, and references therein). Contractional deformation was characterized by the eastward propagation of thrust sheets, which involved Meso-Cenozoic sedimentary successions originally pertaining to the Neo-Tethys Ocean due to the rollback of the Adriatic slab (Royden et al., 1987; Patacca et al., 1990; Doglioni, 1991). Along-strike, the Apennines are divided into northern, central, and southern sectors which are bounded by lithospheric discontinuities trending almost orthogonal to the belt axis (Locardi, 1988; Ghisetti and Vezzani, 1997; Vai and Martini, 2001; Cavazza et al., 2004). From west to east, the now days tectono-stratigraphic units comprising the southern Apennines FTB are (Patacca and Scandone, 2007): (i) siltstones and claystones of the Liguride/Sicilide oceanic Basin; ii) carbonates derived from the Apennine Platform; iii) mixed terrigenous-carbonate rocks derived from the Lagonegro Basin, which are commonly divided into Lagonegro I and II tectonic units; and iv) carbonates of the Apulian Platform (Fig. 1). During Late Pliocene-Early Pleistocene time, the western and inner portion of the Apulian Platform (Mostardini and Merlini, 1986; Cello and Mazzoli, 1998) was affected by thick-skinned tectonics (Butler et al., 2004; Shiner et al., 2004). Differently, its outer portion was affected by a significant bulging and development of a Plio-Pleistocene foreland basin system (Pieri et al., 1997; Borgomano, 2000; Spalluto, 2012; Petrullo et al., 2017).

2.1 Monte Alpi Unit

The Monte Alpi Unit is made up of ca. 2000 m-thick, Middle Jurassic to Lower Cretaceous shallow-water carbonates and of 100's of m-thick Messinian carbonate and terrigenous rocks (Fig. 2; De

85 Lorenzo, 1895; Selli, 1957; Sartoni and Crescenti, 1962; Grandjacquet, 1963; Roda, 1965). The
 86 Messinian sedimentary succession is stacked into two intervals (Ortolani and Torre, 1971; Sgroso et
 87 al., 1988; Taddei and Siano, 1992; Van Dijk et al., 2000). The first one consists of Lower Messinian
 88 skeletal carbonates, which stand sub-parallel to the Lower Cretaceous carbonates. The second one is
 89 made of Upper Messinian terrigenous deposits, lying with a sharp angular unconformity on both
 90 Lower Messinian and Lower Cretaceous carbonates. Although debated in the past, the most recent
 91 studies attributed the Mesozoic Monte Alpi carbonates to the Inner Apulian Platform (Sgroso, 1988;
 92 Van Dijk et al., 2000; Alberti et al., 2001; Mazzoli et al., 2006; La Bruna et al., 2017, 2018). The whole
 93 Monte Alpi Unit was interpreted as a push-up structure associated to Quaternary strike-slip tectonics
 94 (Van Dijk et al., 2000), or as a more complex structure due to combined thin- and thick-skinned Plio-
 95 Quaternary compressional tectonics and trans-tensional faulting (Shiner et al., 2004; Mazzoli et al.,
 96 2006, 2014). Recently, La Bruna et al. (2017) showed that the Monte Alpi structure formed during five
 97 deformation stages: 1) foreland bulging and along-foredeep basin stretching, which produced a pre-
 98 compressional, high-angle fault system (pre-Pliocene); 2) emplacement of the allochthon by mean of
 99 low-angle thrust faults inducing small-scale strike-slip faults in the Apulian carbonates (Early
 100 Pliocene); 3) tectonic inversion of the thrust faults in different levels of the allochthon and onset of
 101 low-angle faults (Upper Pliocene); 4) left-lateral, strike-slip motion along NW-SE striking faults and
 102 extensional reactivation of pre-existing E-W faults (Lower Pleistocene) followed by left-lateral strike-
 103 slip motion of N-S striking faults, and coeval formation of NW-SE striking normal faults (Middle
 104 Pleistocene); 5) extension and normal slip on most pre-existing faults which significantly raised and
 105 exhumed the Monte Alpi Unit (Middle Pleistocene-Holocene).

106

107 **3. Methods**

108 **3.1 Field analysis**

109 We study two sub-vertical outcrops exposing the Lower Cretaceous limestones. The Solarino and
 110 Monte Teduro sites are respectively oriented ca. N-S- and NW-SE, and about 2m² in size (Figs. 3a and
 111 4a). At each outcrop, detailed stratigraphic logging and qualitative structural analyses aimed at

deciphering the nature, attitude, geometry, infill, and abutting/crosscutting relationships of individual fractures are carried out.

3.2 Petrographic and mineralogical analyses

The laboratory work includes the petrographic analysis of 60 thin-sections obtained from hand samples collected in the field (29 from the Solarino site, 31 from the Monte Teduro site). The petrographic analysis was carried out using a polarized light Olympus™ microscope BH2, which is equipped with a digital camera Zeiss™ MRc5. Based on their texture the study rocks were sorted according to Dunham (1962) and Embry and Klovan (1971) classifications. For mineralogical and cement analysis the thin-sections were examined with the cathodoluminescence technique (Technosyn Cold Cathode Luminescence Model 8200Mk II). We assessed the relative timing of individual diagenetic elements according to superposition and overlap principles (Meyers, 1974; Goldstein, 1991; Meyers, 1991; Durlet and Loreau, 1996; Boggs, 2009). Furthermore, sawing of samples reveals further structural elements invisible at outcrop. Accordingly, the slivers of rock samples obtained during thin section preparation were re-oriented in order to measure the main attitude of the small structural elements visible under the optical microscope.

4. Results

The Lower Cretaceous carbonates consist of whitish to dark grey limestones arranged in 10's of cm to a few m-thick tabular beds, forming transgressive-regressive depositional sequences dominated by peritidal carbonate facies (Tables 1 and 2) and bounded by bedding-parallel surfaces. The latter appear more prominent than bedding surfaces. Some of them bound a few m-thick bed packages, other bound a few 10's of m-thick beds as documented by Giuffrida et al. (2019b). Accordingly, these surfaces are named Transgressive Surfaces (TSs) and Prominent Transgressive Surfaces (PTSs), (Figs. 3b, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e). TSs bound a few m-thick depositional sequences and are interpreted as 3rd order sequence boundaries (Spalluto, 2012; Rustichelli et al., 2016; Panza et al., 2016; Giuffrida et al., 2019b). PTSs bound 10's of meters thick depositional sequences and are interpreted as 2nd order sequence boundaries (Spalluto, 2012; Giuffrida et al., 2019b) associated to tectonics and/or global sea level changes (Strasser et al., 1999).

4.1 Mesoscale analysis

The two study sites of Solarino and Monte Teduro expose 4 to 60 cm-thick, greyish limestone beds dipping 15° SSE and 30° SE, respectively (Figs. 3c, 3d, 4c, 4d, 4e). The high-resolution mapping shows the following fracture sets:

- bed-perpendicular, strata bound joints and sheared joints striking N-S and E-W, and dipping > 70°E and N, respectively (Figs. 3e, 3f, 3g, 4f, 4g, 4h);
- bed-parallel stylolites (Figs. 3e, 3f, 3g, 4f, 4g, 4h);
- oblique-to-bedding joints and sheared joints ENE-WSW-striking and ~50° SSE-dipping, (Figs. 3e, 3f, 3g, 4f, 4g, 4h). In some cases, these oblique-to-bedding structural elements linked bed-perpendicular joints, forming non-strata bound incipient slip surfaces which offset bed interfaces up to a few centimetres ;
- sub-vertical joints and sheared joints striking NNW-SSE, which either crosscut or abut against the sub-horizontal stylolites (Figs. 3e, 3f, 3g, 4f, 4g, 4h);
- sub-horizontal stylolites, which always abut against the bed-parallel stylolites (Figs. 3e, 3f, 3g, 4f, 4g, 4h).

4.2 Petrographic analysis

Thin-section analysis was key to decipher the carbonate texture originally formed on a flat-topped carbonate platform (Fig. 5, Tables 1 and 2). According to their texture, we document a variety of microfacies from wackestones to floatstones and bindstones (Dunham, 1962). Dominant biota and allochems are benthic foraminifera, bivalve bioclasts, ostracods and oncoids. Dasycladacean green algae, gastropods and peloids are less common. Intraformational, oncoïd-bearing, angular lithoclasts exclusively occur in Bed 0 (Monte Teduro site), which is bounded by a PTS. Sedimentary and biogenic structures include bed-parallel stromatolitic lamination in microbial bindstones, and fenestral features (original fenestrae-type pores now are filled with blocky calcite). Bioturbations such as burrows and borings occur in Monte Teduro site.

Among the diagenetic products, the microsparry-to-sparry calcite cement is ubiquitous in all microfacies. It is characterized by a dominant blocky texture that destroyed the primary host rock porosity. This frequently patchily distributed cement fills fenestral and bioturbation features, as well

as the topmost part of geopetal features. Their basal part is filled by a vadose silt. Isopachous calcite cements around grains also occur. Sparse dolomite crystals and recent vuggy pores are rare.

4.3 Microstructural analysis

Microstructural analysis revealed the following assemblages:

- Calcite micro-veins ~E-W-striking and ~70°N-dipping, often compartmentalized by fenestral features and/or bioturbation-related bores (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 7a and 7b);
- cross-orthogonal, bed-perpendicular calcite veins N-S- and E-W- striking, respectively 70°N- and S- dipping (Figs. 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d and 9a), cutting across bioturbation-related bores, and abutting against bed-parallel stylolites (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d).
- bed-parallel calcite veins that crosscut bed-perpendicular veins (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7a, 7b, 7d, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 9a, 9b and 9d);
- bed-perpendicular stylolites, which show mutual abutting relationships with the bed-parallel veins (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 8a, 8b, 8c and 8d);
- oblique-to-bedding calcite veins striking ENE-WSW, dipping > 60° SSE, abutting against the bed-perpendicular veins and either crosscutting or terminating against the bed-parallel veins (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7c, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 9c and 9d);
- sub-vertical calcite veins striking NNW-SSE, dipping > 80° WSW, crosscutting all aforementioned structures (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7d, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d and 9b), and in some cases abutting against the sub-horizontal stylolites (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d);
- sub-horizontal calcite veins, which either crosscut or abut against all previous structures (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7d, 7e, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 9b, 9c and 9d), and compartmentalized by high angle-to-bedding stylolites (Figs. 6a, 6b, 6c and 6d);
- sub-vertical calcite veins striking NW-SE, dipping > 85° SW, crosscutting all previous structures (Figs. 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d and 9d).

5. Data Interpretation

The diagenetic evolution of the Monte Alpi limestones is assessed on petrographic observations under both planar- and cross-polarized lights, coupled with cathodoluminescence analysis of thin sections. According to the principles of Meyers (1974; 1991) our interpretation is proposed as follows.

5.1 Diagenetic evolution

Seven diagenetic stages are assessed:

- The Early Calcite Cementation event (EC) is marked by isopachous, non-ferroan, euhedral, limpid calcite cement with crystal sizes between 50 and 400 μm . This cement is characterized by poor luminescence, from black to brown dull. It coats the grains and localizes inside bioturbation bores and on top of the geopets (Figs. 10 and 11). This cement is typical of an early diagenetic fabric (Choquette and Pray, 1970). Other evidence for EC occurs in the mud-supported samples where fenestrae and microveins are filled with blocky calcite (Figs. 7a, 7b, 9a and 9b).
- The second stage is marked by the Calcite cement 1 (Cal1). It is a non-ferroan cement made of limpid crystals (Figs. 9a and 9b). Under cathodoluminescence, Cal1 cements have a non-luminescent core of 50-200 μm and a light bright-to-orange, luminescent, fringe 5-to-10 μm in size. Cal1 fills the cross-orthogonal, bed-perpendicular veins (Figs. 9a and 9b).
- The third stage is characterized by a Calcite cement 2 (Cal2) which consists of a drusy-to-mosaic spar that fills bed-parallel veins and some intragranular pores. In planar polarized light, the calcite crystals are subhedral to euhedral, limpid, and 10-to-50 μm in size. In CL, Cal2 comprises two phases Cal2a and Cal2b. Cal2a is non-ferroan, non-luminescent, from black to dull brown calcite (Figs. 7c, 7c1 and 7d). Cal2b is made of dull brown ferroan luminescent crystals, bordered by orange-to-bright yellow luminescent fringes (Figs. 7a, 7b, 7c, 7c1, 7d, 9a, 9b, and 9d).
- The fourth stage is associated to the calcite cement 3 (Cal3), which fills the oblique-to-bedding veins striking ENE-WSW. It is a limpid, subhedral-to-euhedral, 10-to-200 μm in size calcite (Figs. 7c, 9a and 9d). Crystal cores are mostly ferroan and show a bright orange luminescence under CL (Figs. 7c, 9c and 9d);

- Stage five is marked by the calcite cement 4 (Cal4) which fills the oblique-to-bedding veins striking NNW-SSE (Figs. 7d and 9b). Cal4 is limpid, subhedral and euhedral with sizes ranging between 10 and 50 μm . Under CL, Cal4 is bright brown to bright luminescent (Figs. 7d and 9b).
- The sixth stage is associated to the calcite cement 5 (Cal5) which occurs in sub-horizontal veins (Figs. 7d, 9c and 9d). Cal5 is subhedral and euhedral, limpid, ranging from 10 to 50 μm in size. In CL, it is orange-to-yellow bright (Figs 7d, 7e, 9b, 9c and 9d).
- The seventh stage is marked by the calcite cement 6 (Cal6) which occurs in sub-vertical veins striking NW-SE. The ferroan calcite is made of 10-to-100 μm in size, turbid brown and limpid crystals (Figs. 9d). These crystals are dark red-to-orange luminescent under CL, (Figs. 9c and 9d).

5.2 Structural evolution

In this section, on the basis of the aforementioned diagenetic history, we assessed the time-dependant structural evolution of the study studied limestones by considering both field and laboratory data (Fig. 12):

- The oldest structures are the very tiny E-W veins filled with EC blocky calcite which also filled intragranular pores (J0, Figs. 12a and 12b). Some samples bear micro-veins that abut against early fenestral features which were also cemented by EC (Figs. 7a and 7b).
- The bed-perpendicular, cross-orthogonal joints and veins (J1) and the bed-parallel stylolites (S1) show mutual abutting relationships (Figs. 12a and 12c) are interpreted as coeval (Bai et al., 2002.). Bed-perpendicular veins crosscut early diagenetic features such as bioturbation and J0 microveins filled with EC blocky calcite. Hence, they J1 postdate J0. J1 veins are filled with Cal1 characterized by non-luminescent cores, and by bright orange luminescent fringes (Figs. 9a and 9b). This evidence denotes a progressive chemical change compared to earliest stage.
- The bed-parallel veins (J2) and bed-perpendicular stylolites (S2) exhibit mutual abutting relationships (Figs. 12a and 12d), crosscut both J0 and J1 and are filled with Cal2 cements (Figs. 6b, 6c, 7a, 7b, 7c, 8b, 8c, 9a and 9b). Since Cal2 displays an alternation of dull brown

non-luminescent cores (Cal2a, Figs. 7c, 7c1 and 7d) and bright luminescent fringes (Cal2b, Figs. 7a, 7b, 7c, 7c1, 7d, 9a, 9b and 9d), the formation of J2 and S2 is ascribed to telogenesis. There, oxidizing and reducing conditions likely alternated (Richter et al., 2003; Boggs and Krinsley, 2006; Hiatt and Pufahl, 2014).

- The oblique-to-bedding veins (J3) abut against J1 (Figs. 3f, 4g, 12a and 12e) and J2 (Figs. 6b, 6c, 7c, 8b, 8c, 9c and 9d) at both meso- and micro-scales. J3 are filled with Cal3 cements which display orange, bright luminescence consistent with reducing conditions (Richter et al., 2003). Accordingly, J3 likely formed during gently increased burial depth with respect to the previous stage.
- Both NNW-SSE-striking oblique-to-bedding joints/veins (J4) and sub-horizontal stylolites (S4) show mutual abutting relationship at the outcrop scale (Figs. 3e, 3f, 4f, 4g, 12a and 12f) and crosscut all aforementioned structures at microscale (Figs. 6b, 6c, 7d, 8b, 8c and 9c). Since they are filled with Cal5 cements, which are characterized by yellow bright luminescence (Fig. 12), we interpret that J4 formed under reducing conditions (Boggs and Krinsley, 2006) in deep burial diagenetic environments (Hiatt and Pufahl, 2014).
- At microscale, sub-horizontal veins (J5) and high-angle to bedding stylolites (S5) show mutual abutting relationships and crosscut all aforementioned structures (Figs. 6b, 6c, 7d, 8b, 8c, 9c, 9d, 12a and 12g). J5 is filled with Cal5 cements displaying bright orange/yellow luminescence. Therefore, it likely formed under reducing conditions (Boggs and Krinsley, 2006) in burial diagenetic environments (Hiatt and Pufahl, 2014).
- The most recent structures are sub-vertical joints and veins (J6). At micro-scale they crosscut all previous structures (Figs. 8b, 8c, 9d, 12a and 12h). They are cemented by Cal6 having bright orange luminescence and, hence, formed under reducing conditions (Boggs and Krinsley, 2006).

6. Discussion

6.1 Micro-to-meso scale structural assemblages

Both field and laboratory data obtained for the limestones cropping out at the Solarino and Monte Teduro sites are hereafter considered in light of the existing bibliography in order to discuss the deformation mechanisms, geometry and fracture network according to the polyphase tectonic evolution of the Monte Alpi Unit, with a special focus on the modalities of carbonates early embrittlement.

The main structural assemblages deciphered for the study are the following:

(0) *Early embrittlement assemblage*. The first assemblage is made up by the J0 structural elements, which were strictly related to the EC processes that caused the blocky calcite precipitation in the most fine-grained portions of the sedimentary pile (Fig. 12b). EC occurred during Lower Cretaceous times, when the carbonate sediments experienced shallow marine to meteoric diagenesis (Figs. 13b and 13c).

(1) *First burial assemblage*. It includes both J1 and S1 which formed during Cretaceous times when the burial progressively increased (Corrado et al., 2002). Both sets of cross-orthogonal bed-perpendicular joint and veins (J1a and J1b) strike E-W and N-S (Figs. 4, 6, 8 and 13c). They show mutual abutting relationships with respect to the bed-parallel stylolites (La Bruna et al. 2017-2018; Giuffrida et al., 2019a). By considering that, J1 sets are filled with Cal1 cements, their sealing occurred under phreatic conditions, when cements contained higher divalent Mn, and low Fe concentrations (Boggs and Krinsley, 2006). Therefore, we ascribe a burial-related origin for the Cal1 cement (Bathurst, 1975; Tucker et al., 1990; Lavenue and Lamarche 2018) occurred during mesogenesis (Figs. 12a and 13b) in the sense of Choquette and Pray (1970). The coeval formation of cross-orthogonal bed-perpendicular joints induces an asset up under vertical σ_1 and horizontal $\sigma_2 \approx \sigma_3$ principal stress axes (Bai and Pollard, 2000; Bai et al., 2002) during mesogenesis (Figs. 12a, 13b and 13c). This brittle mechanism was already documented by Agosta and Aydin (2006), Agosta et al., (2010, 2012), Rustichelli et al., (2013, 2016), Lavenue et al., (2014, 2015), and Korneva et al. (2014) and Panza et al. (2015, 2016) for tight carbonates cropping out in central and southern Italy, and in south-eastern Spain.

(2) *Layer Parallel Shortening Assemblage*. This assemblage includes bed-parallel veins (J2) and bed-perpendicular stylolites (S2), which formed during Miocene times (Figs. 13b and 13c) in

sub-horizontal limestone beds. Bed-parallel joints were filled with non-ferroan and non-luminescent calcite whose precipitation could be ascribed to the pre-Messinian times during the first telogenesis culmination (Cal2a; figs. 7c, 7c1 and 7d). This structural assemblage was likely associated to the far field propagation of horizontal compressive stresses related to the migrating Southern Apennines FTB thrust front (sensu Geiser and Engelder, 1983). Differently, bed-parallel joints filled with Cal2b calcite, which displays a bright luminescence in CL (Figs. 7a, 7b, 7c, 7c1, 7d, 9a, 9b and 9d), likely formed during Early Messinian in the back-bulge marine deposition zone of the foreland basin system (La Bruna et al., 2018). Quite similar structural assemblage was documented in the Outer Apulian Platform of Italy, both in carbonates platform (Graham et al., 2003; Aydin et al., 2010; Rustichelli et al., 2016), and ramp (Antonellini et al., 2008; Agosta et al., 2009, 2010; Rustichelli et al., 2012). However, the present study document for the first time the occurrence of bed-parallel veins in the Apulian carbonates. These structures were described in Jurassic tight limestones of the Lazio-Abruzzi Platform of central Italy by Agosta and Aydin (2006) and Agosta et al. (2008), who interpreted them as part of the thrust-assemblage due to transients of high fluid pressure conditions that exceeded the vertical loading (sensu Hubbert and Rubey, 1959).

(3) Foredeep Basin System Assemblage. This assemblage includes J3 structural elements (Fig. 13c) related to the Late Messinian tectonic evolution of the Monte Alpi foredeep basin, which took place during Late Messinian times synchronous with the deposition of an up to 300 m-thick sedimentary succession (Patacca et al., 1992; La Bruna et al., 2018; Figs. 13a and 13b). We attribute the J3 formation to localized stress fields due to the shearing of pre-existing structural heterogeneities. Indeed, J3 are envisioned as fault-related structural elements, which cluster at the mode II termination of sheared fracture tip zones, forming splay joints/veins, or at their mode III terminations, forming en-echelon arrays (Figs. 4f and 4g). At a larger scale, this structural configuration was documented by Giuffrida et al. (2019b) in nearby outcrops of the Monte Alpi, and by many other authors in the Outer Apulian Platform carbonates of central and southern Italy (ie., Korneva et al., 2015; Panza et al., 2018, and references therein).

(4) *Tectonic burial assemblage*. During Early Pliocene, the tectonic load related to the juxtaposition of the Southern Apennines FTB onto the Apulian carbonates (Cello and Mazzoli 1998; Patacca and Scandone 2007; Tavani et al., 2015) led to the formation of J4 and S4 structures. Hence, they are interpreted as due to a second burial event of the Monte Alpi carbonates (Figs. 13a to 13c). Since coeval Cal4 cements display bright brown to bright yellow luminescent colours (Figs. 7d and 9b), we assess that the precipitation took place under reducing conditions at depths of 5-6 km (Corrado et al., 2002; Mazzoli et al., 2006).

(5) *Deep-seated thrusting assemblage*. During Late Pliocene times, S5 and J5 structures formed when deep-seated reverse faulting affected the Monte Alpi Unit (Shiner et al., 2004; Mazzoli et al., 2006; Mazzoli et al., 2008) (Figs. 13a to 13c). Deep burial conditions are inferred and supported by the bright orange luminescence of J5 micro-veins (Figs. 7e, 9b, 9c and 9d). We therefore document the aforementioned structural elements in the Apulian carbonates, whereas their occurrence was previously assessed by Agosta and Aydin (2006) for the Jurassic limestones of Lazio-Abruzzi carbonate Platform exposed in central Italy.

(6) *Polyphase transpressional/extensional exhumation assemblage*. The last assemblage includes J6 that formed during the latest tectonic stages (Mazzoli et al., 2014; La Bruna et al., 2017, 2018;) which crosscut all previous assemblages (Figs. 9c and 9d) and were dilated during exhumation from depth (Figs. 13a to 13c). Similar structures were documented throughout the whole Outer Apulian Platform exposed in central and southern Italy (Korneva et al., 2014; Panza et al., 2016).

6.2 Early structural diagenesis

We know that platform carbonates are commonly affected by early diagenetic modifications (Anselmetti and Eberli, 1993) which may increase their stiffness in case of Early Cementation, EC (Eberli et al., 2003). In the Monte Alpi Unit, we documented that in carbonate mudstones early cements filled pores associated to either bioturbation or to fenestral porosity (Figs. 10 and 11). The carbonate mud intervals were originally deposited in a back-reef inner platform/platform margin setting (cf. Figs. 9a and 9b), and were affected by a EC processes that took place at the water-sediment interface or at very shallow depth enhanced by micro-organisms on living organisms and calcite grains

(Bathurst 1975). These micro-organisms perforated the calcitic envelope of the original grains, and triggered micritization at the onset of eogenesis (Tucker et al., 1990).

In the mud-supported lithified sediments, early embrittlement took place prior to bioturbation (boring) of hard substrates (cf. thin sections T0Bb, T6a, T7b, and T8d, Table 2, and Fig. 5d). Accordingly, we envision that both dissolution cavities (vuggy porosity *sensu* Choquette and Pray, 1970) and blocky cements formed during transients of platform emersions. They were therefore, subjected to meteoric diagenesis, then partially obliterated by the bores during the subsequent marine transgressions. Hence, EC processes led to rapid lithification and embrittlement of selective portions of the carbonate pile, which was affected by localized brittle failure and pressure solution (Nelson, 1981, 2001; Wennberg et al., 2006; Rustichelli et al., 2012, 2013, 2015; Lavenu et al., 2015, 2018). These results show that the subsequent mechanical behaviour of the studied limestones is also related to their very early diagenetic evolution, which controlled the initial lithification of the carbonate muds.

7. Conclusions

The present study combined field and laboratory analyses to reconstruct the nature and timing of fracture networks in Lower Cretaceous limestones exposed at the Monte Alpi, southern Italy. We first deciphered both diagenetic and structural evolution of the limestones, and then proposed a conceptual model related to the time-dependant evolution of the structural assemblages in light of the complex tectonic history of the southern Apennines. We focussed on the early cementation processes responsible for the onset of joints and veins at very shallow burial conditions. These processes played a fundamental role on subsequent development of the present-day mechanical and fracture stratigraphy. Specifically, we assessed the following assemblages:

- (0) early embrittlement assemblage (Lower Cretaceous) ascribed to a first stage of eogenesis characterized by early calcite cementation processes and fracture development in the mud-rich portions of the carbonate pile;
- (1) first burial assemblage (Cretaceous) related to the growth of the Inner Apulian Platform and the progressive burial which caused the formation of bed-parallel stylolites and two sets of cross-orthogonal bed-perpendicular joints and veins;

(2) layer parallel shortening assemblage (pre-Messinian) due to the FTB far field stress propagation within the Inner Apulian Platform, and characterised by one set of bed-perpendicular stylolites and bed-parallel veins;

(3) foredeep basin system assemblage (Late Messinian) related to fault activity during the structural evolution of the Monte Alpi foreland basin system, and composed of NW-SE striking joints and veins;

(4) tectonic burial assemblage (Early Pliocene) due to the tectonic loading of the southern Apennines allochthon and made up of oblique-to-bedding joint, veins and stylolites.

(5) deep-seated thrusting assemblage (Late Pliocene) due to steep reverse faults, and made up of sub-vertical stylolites and low-angle joints and veins;

(6) polyphase transpressional/extensional exhumation assemblage (Early Pleistocene to Holocene) related to strike-slip faulting and the latest rock exhumation. It comprises sub-vertical joints and veins that crosscut all previous structural assemblages.

We assessed that early calcite (EC) precipitation mainly occurred within mud-rich carbonate sediments. Both pore dimensions and texture variations were factors driving EC processes in carbonates. We concluded that localized early embrittlement of carbonates determined the subsequent early fractures nucleation in mudstones beds and provided new insights into the mechanical control and nucleation of diffuse fractures. Therefore, these diffuse fractures providing the background permeability in naturally fractured carbonate reservoirs are due to early burial diagenesis that cause the stiffening of the finer grained portions of the carbonate pile.

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Figure captions


Fig.1. (a) Simplified geological map of Southern Apennines, Italy (from Bonardi et al., 1988; Cosentino et al., 2003; Patacca and Scandone 2007; Vitale and Ciarcia, 2013,) and NE-SW geological cross-section modified after Mazzoli et al., 2008. (b) Sketch map of part of the southern Apennines showing the study area. 

Fig.2. Geological map of Monte Alpi, (Basilicata, Italy; modified after La Bruna et al., 2017) with location of the studied sites.

Fig.3. (a) Panoramic overview of the western edge of Monte Alpi; (b) focus on the southern portion of the western cliff; (c) stratigraphic log; (d) outcrop view of the studied Solarino site; (e) close up view of the studied outcrop; (f) line drawing of the studied outcrop; (g) lower hemisphere equal area projection of the structures presented in e.

Fig.4. (a) Close up view of the southern portion of the western cliff; (b) panoramic overview of the Monte Teduro cliff; (c) close up of a portion of the studied Monte Teduro cliff; (d) stratigraphic log; (e) view of the studied outcrop; (f) close up of the outcrop; (g) line drawing map of the studied outcrop; (h) lower hemisphere equal area projection of the structures presented in g.

Fig.5. (a to d) Photomicrographs (cross-polarized light) of representative microfacies of the Lower Cretaceous platform carbonates.

Fig.6. Solarino site, (a) Scanned thin-section; (b) line drawing of the scanned thin-section; (c) cartoon of the structural assemblage presented in b; (d) lower hemisphere equal area projection as poles of the structures that are presented in b and c.

Fig.7. Thin-section zooms a to e: planar-polarized light and cathodoluminescence microphotographs showing the main characteristics and chronologies of fractures and cements. See text for explanation.

Fig.8. Teduro site, (a) Scanned thin section; (b) line drawing of the scanned thin section; (c) cartoon of the structural assemblage documented in b; (d) lower hemisphere equal area projection as poles of the structures presented in b and c.

Fig.9. Thin section focus a to d natural light and cathodoluminescence microphotographs of the showing the main characteristics and chronologies of fractures and cements. See text for explanation.

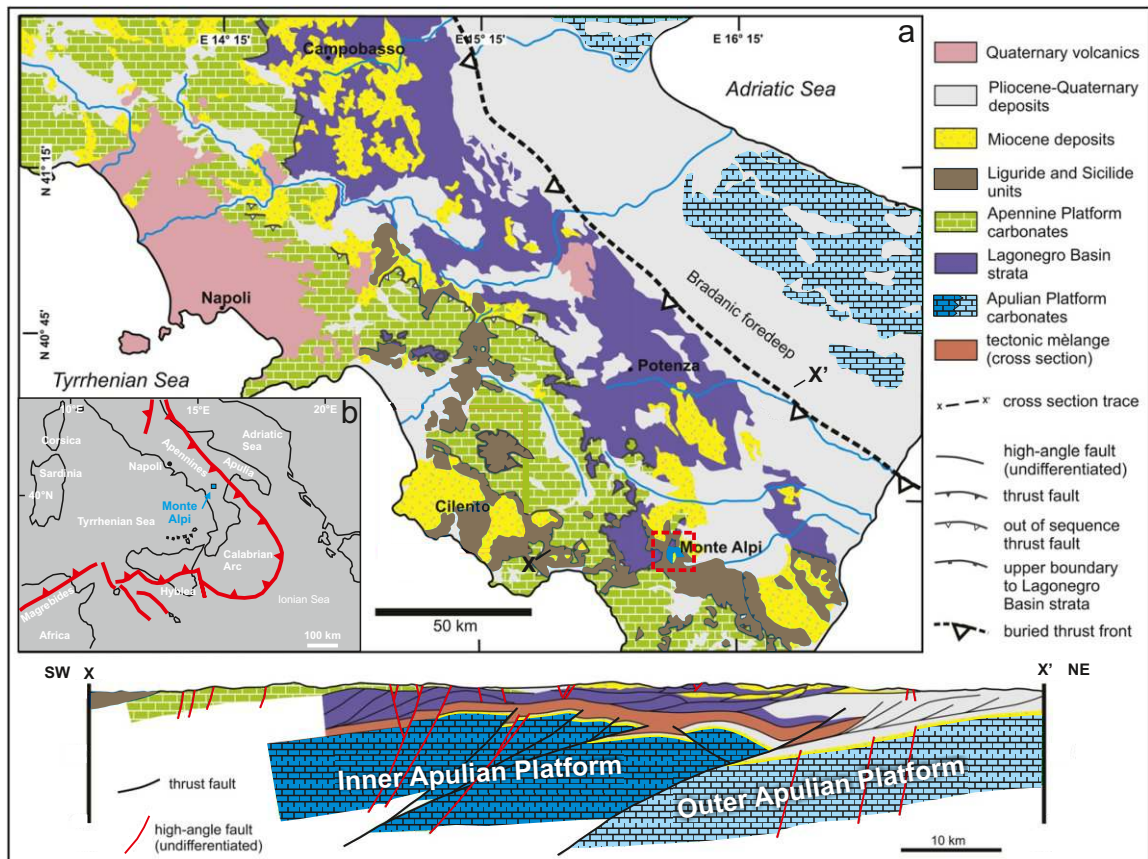
Fig.10. Scanned image of a *Lithoclastic-oncolitic floatstone*. Plane-polarized light and cathodoluminescence photomicrographs (zoom 1) display early calcite cement localized within bores. Bores formed after blocky cement which filled previous cavities. Cavities are related to a platform emersion phase, differently bores formed during subsequent marine transgression and were filled with early calcite cement (ec).

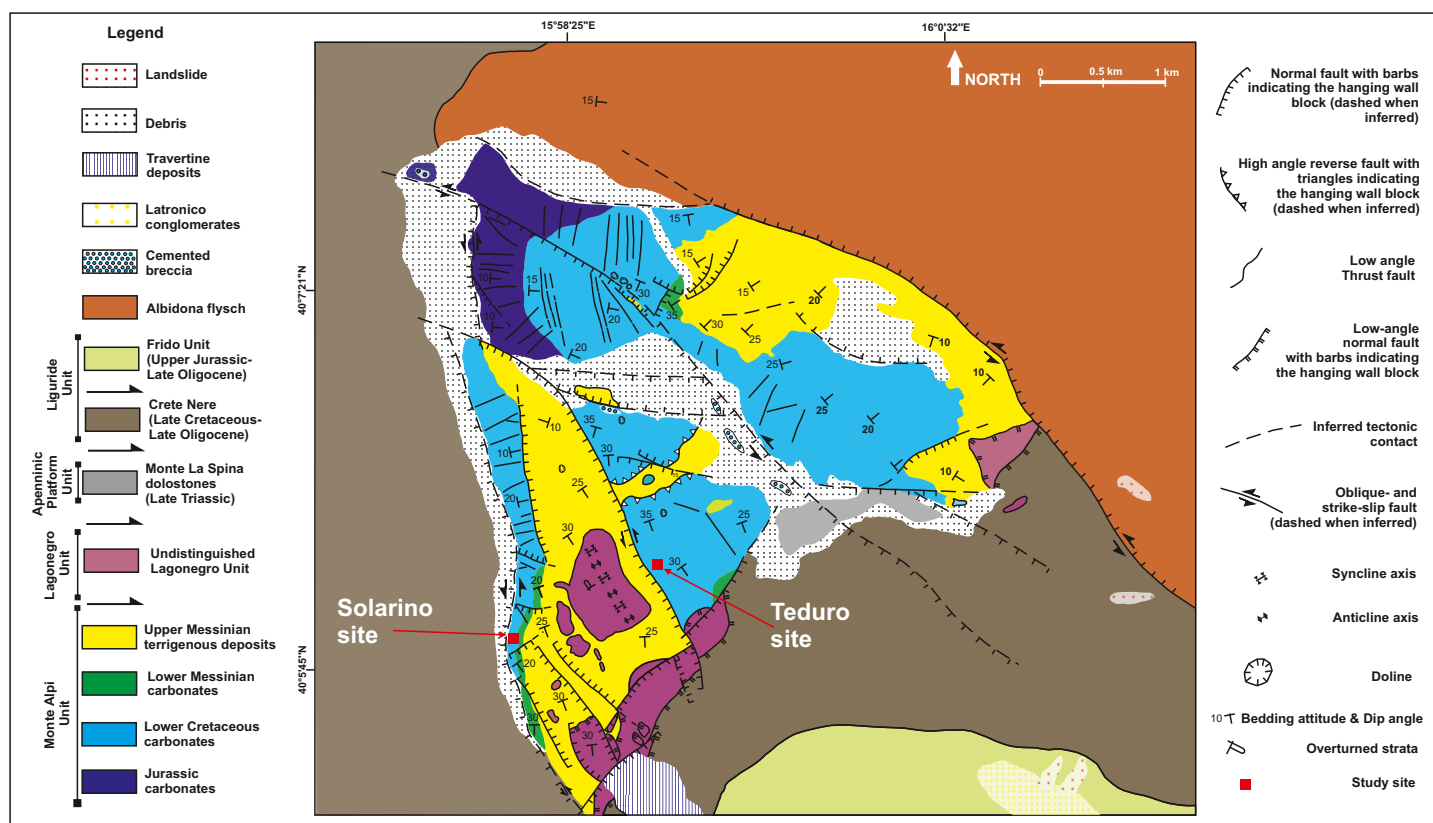
Fig.11. Scanned image of *Fenestral microbial bindstone*. Early calcite cement filled geopetal structures. Plane-polarized and cathodoluminescence photomicrographs (zoom 1 and 2) display large patches of blocky calcite cement and geopetal early features which represent a typical early diagenetic fabric.

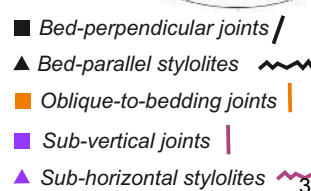
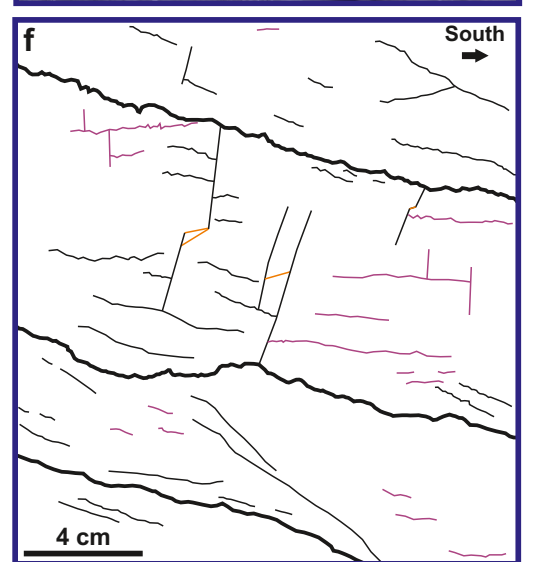
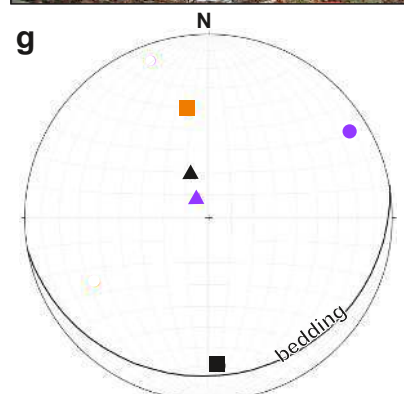
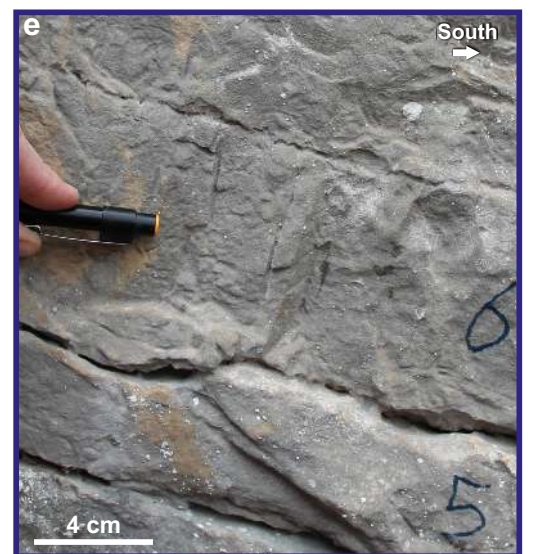
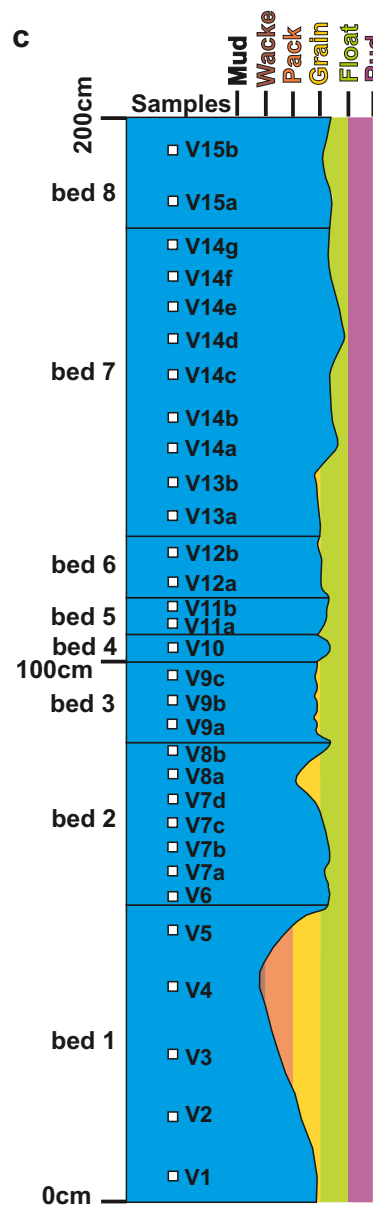
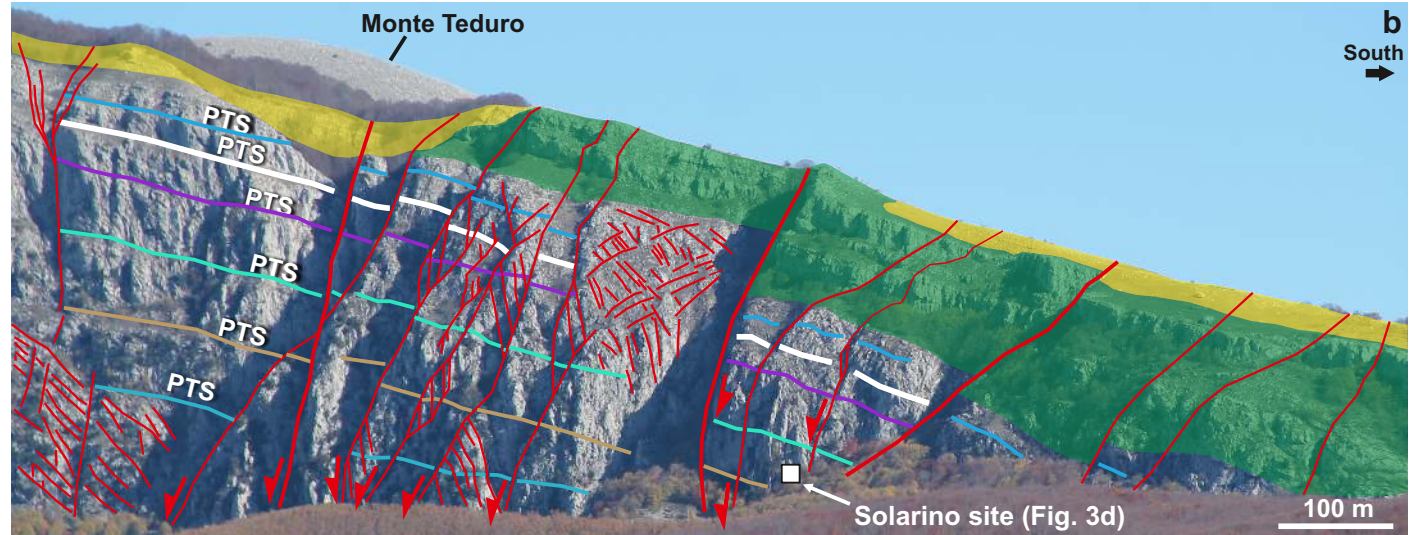
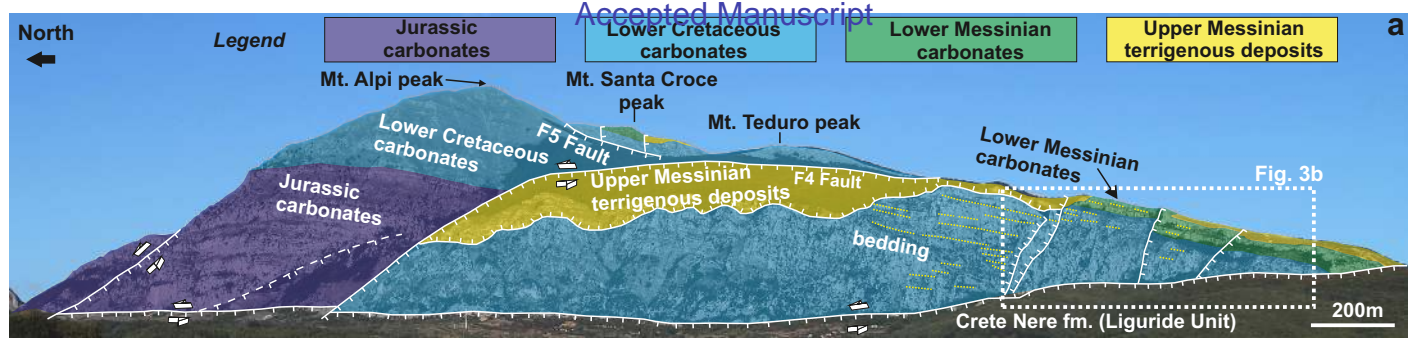
Fig.12. Diagenetic/structural processes and sequence for the Lower Cretaceous limestone rocks. Bottom: conceptual evolution model of the structural elements crosscutting the Lower Cretaceous carbonates.

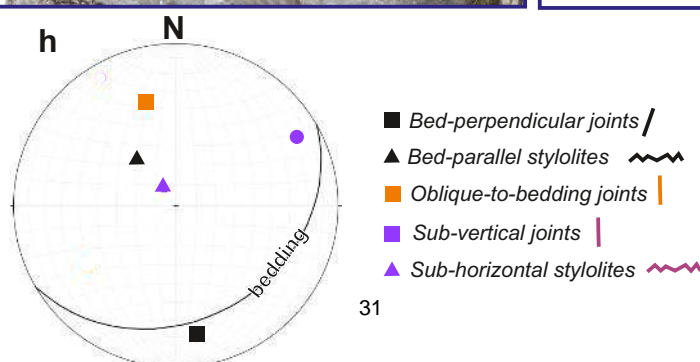
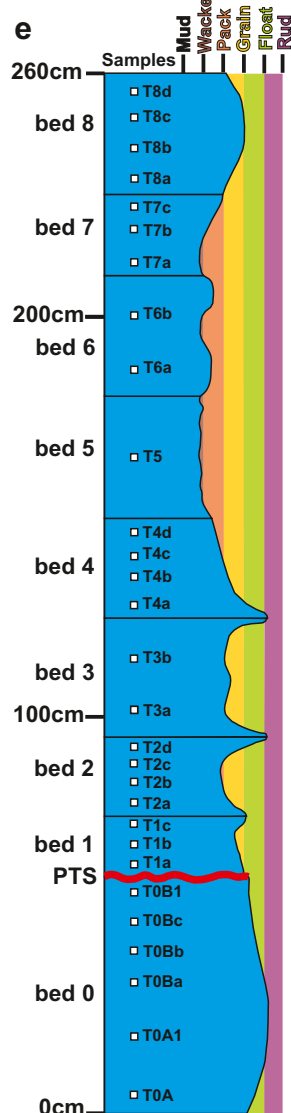
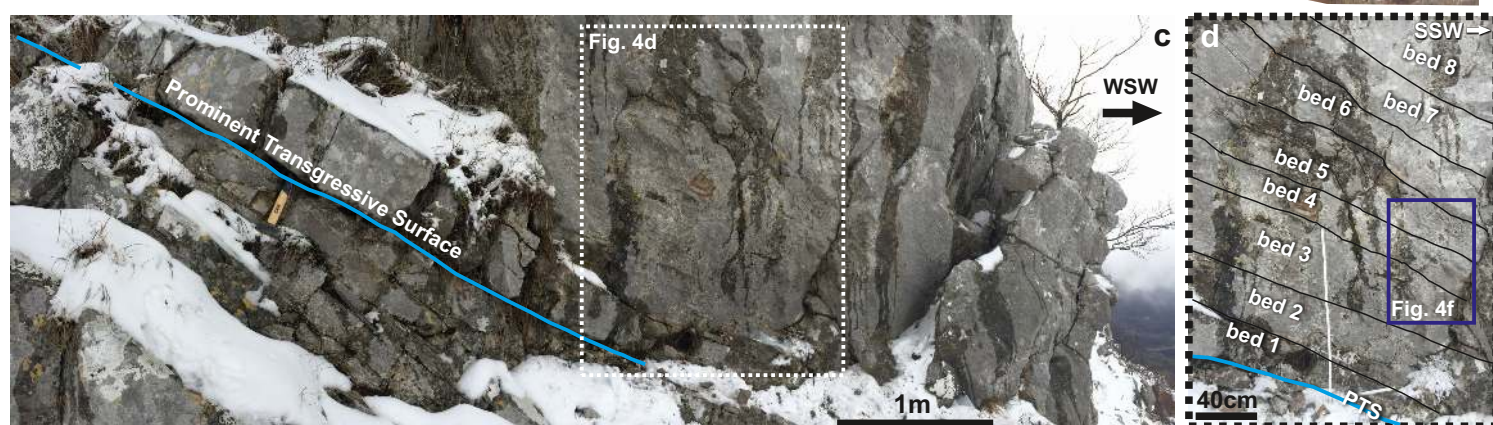
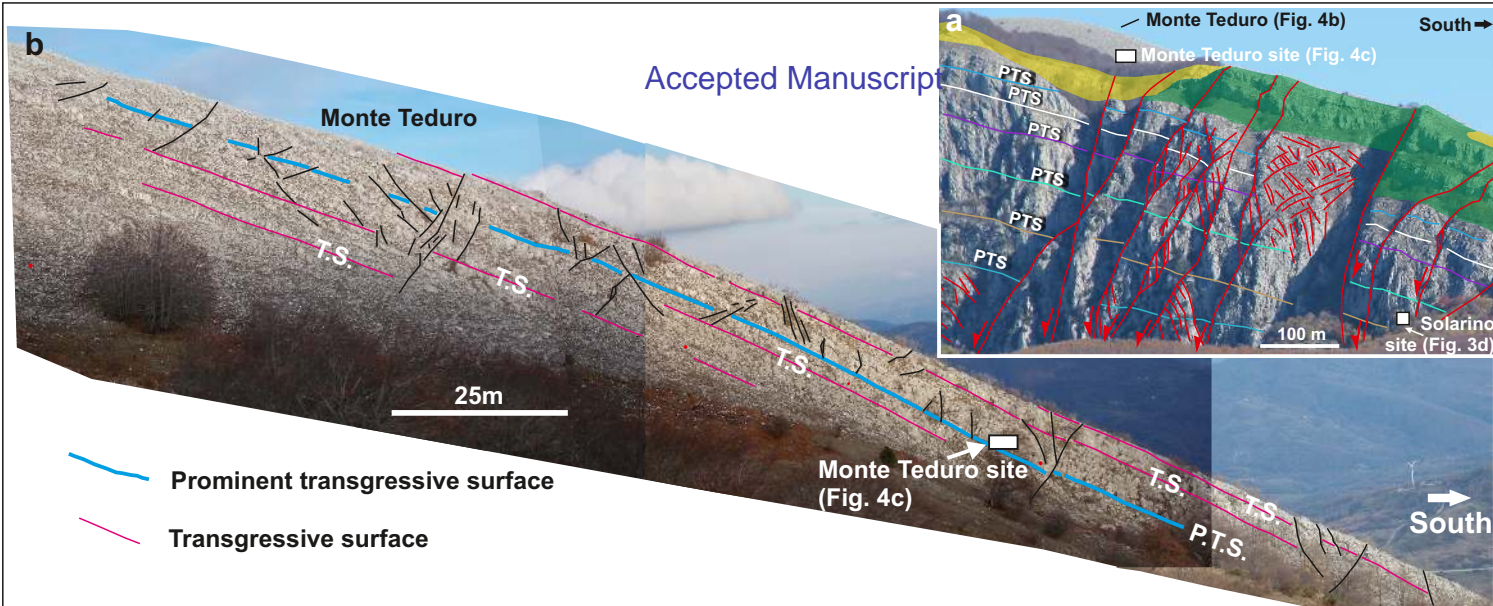
Fig.13. Time/space evolution model proposed for Monte Alpi. **(a)** main tectonic steps from the pre-Messinian to the Holocene time (after La Bruna et al, 2017-2018); **(b)** burial history of the Monte Alpi Apulian carbonates associated to the main tectonic events presented in **a** (modified after Mazzoli et al., 2006); **(c)** idealized block diagrams showing the overall structural assemblages observed at meso and microscale.

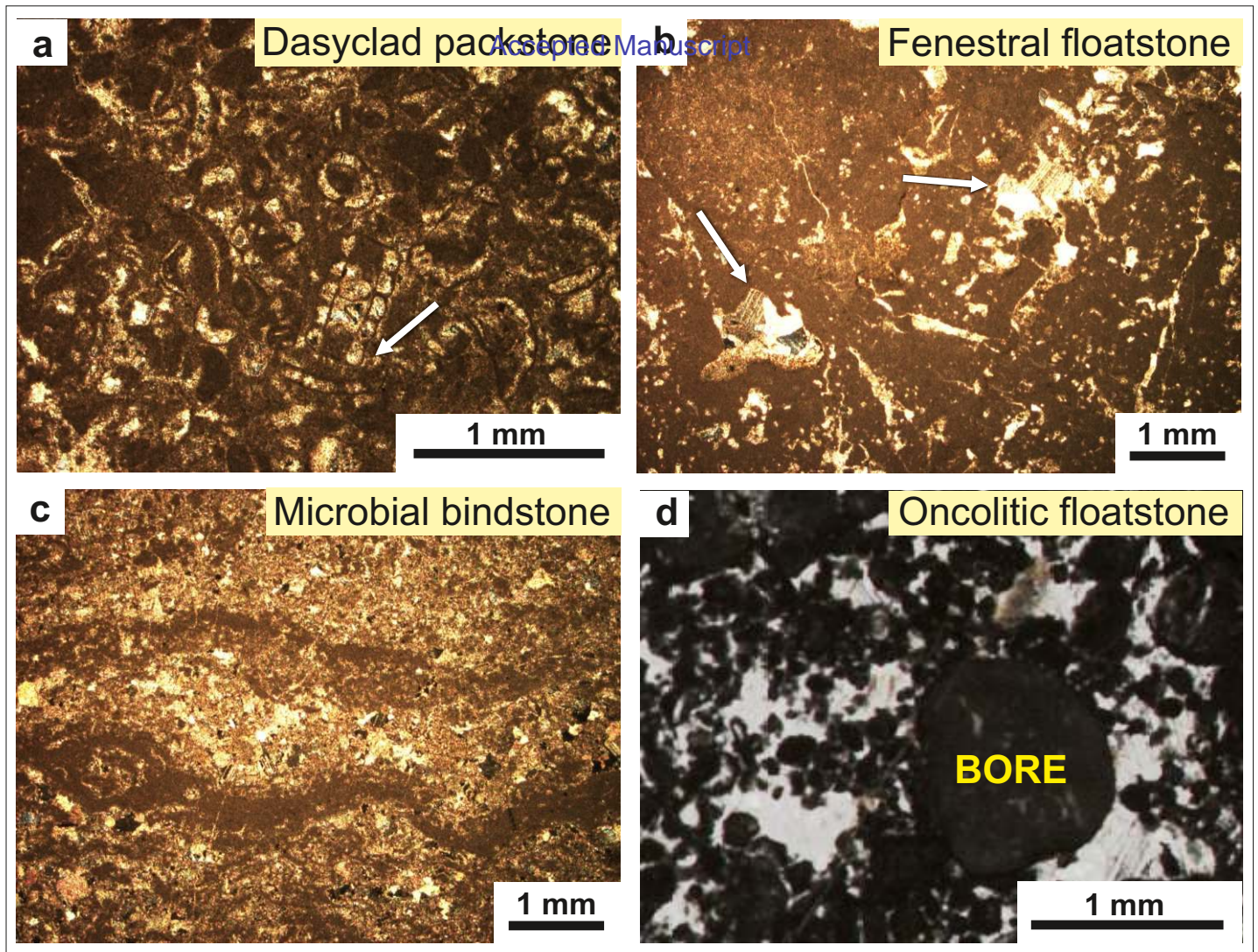
Table1 and **2** display the sedimentological and diagenetic characteristics of the studied rock samples.

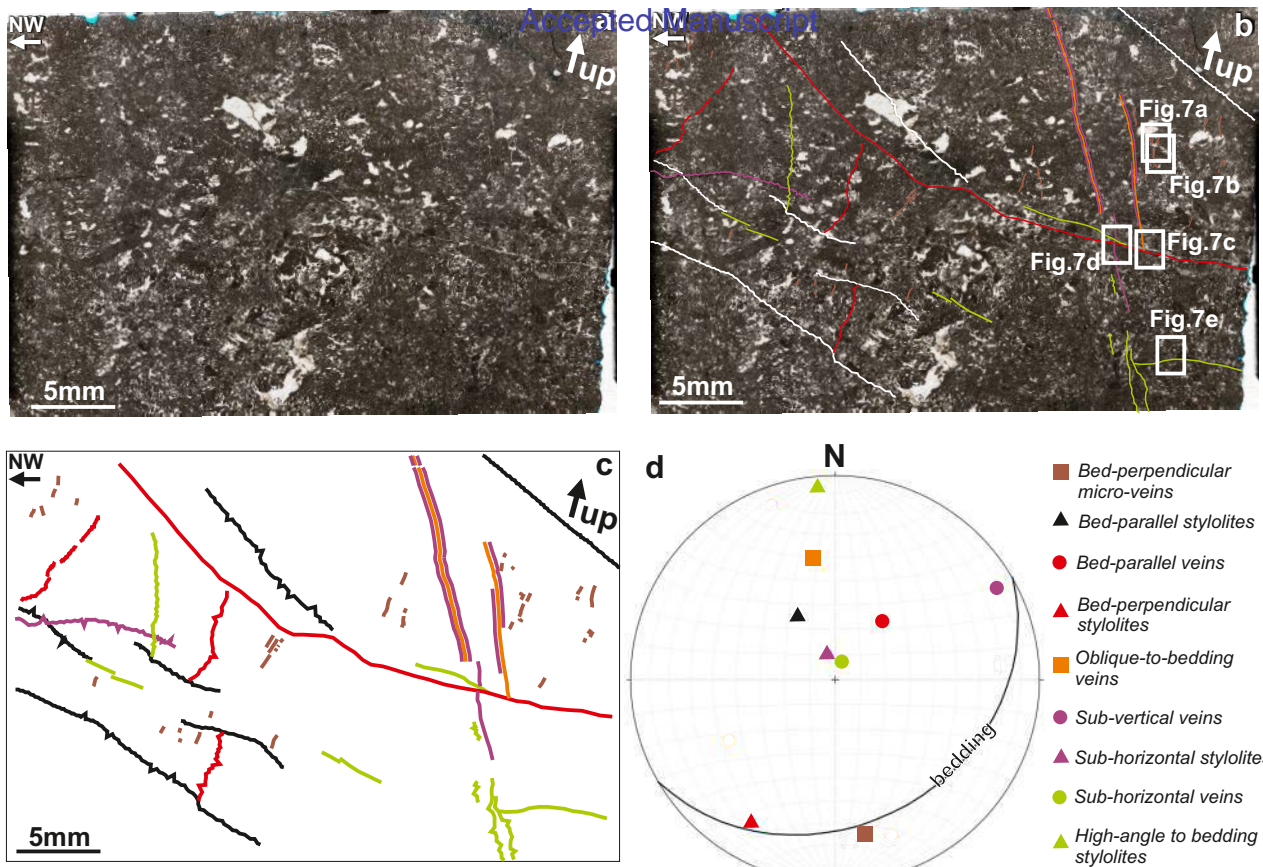


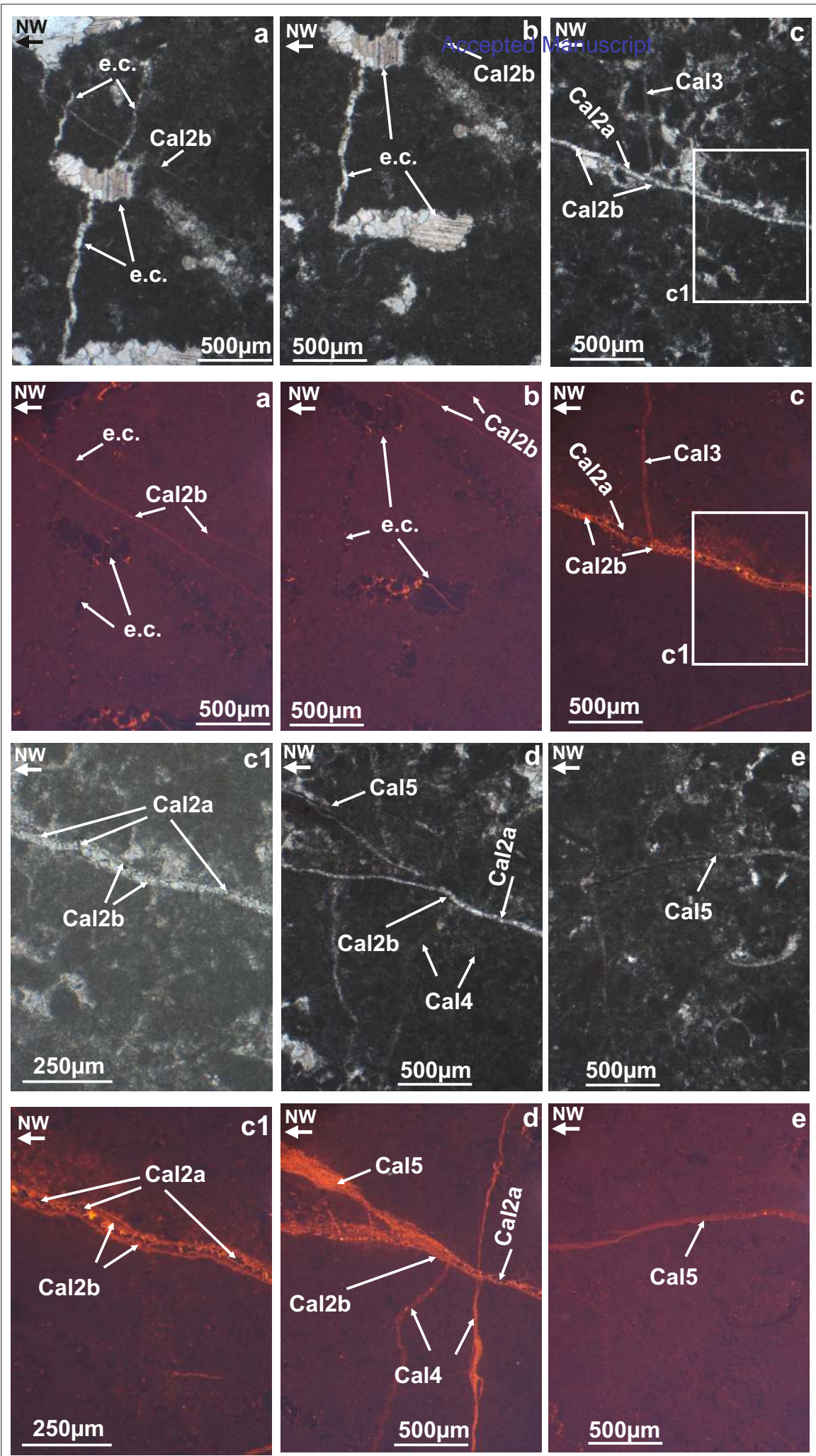


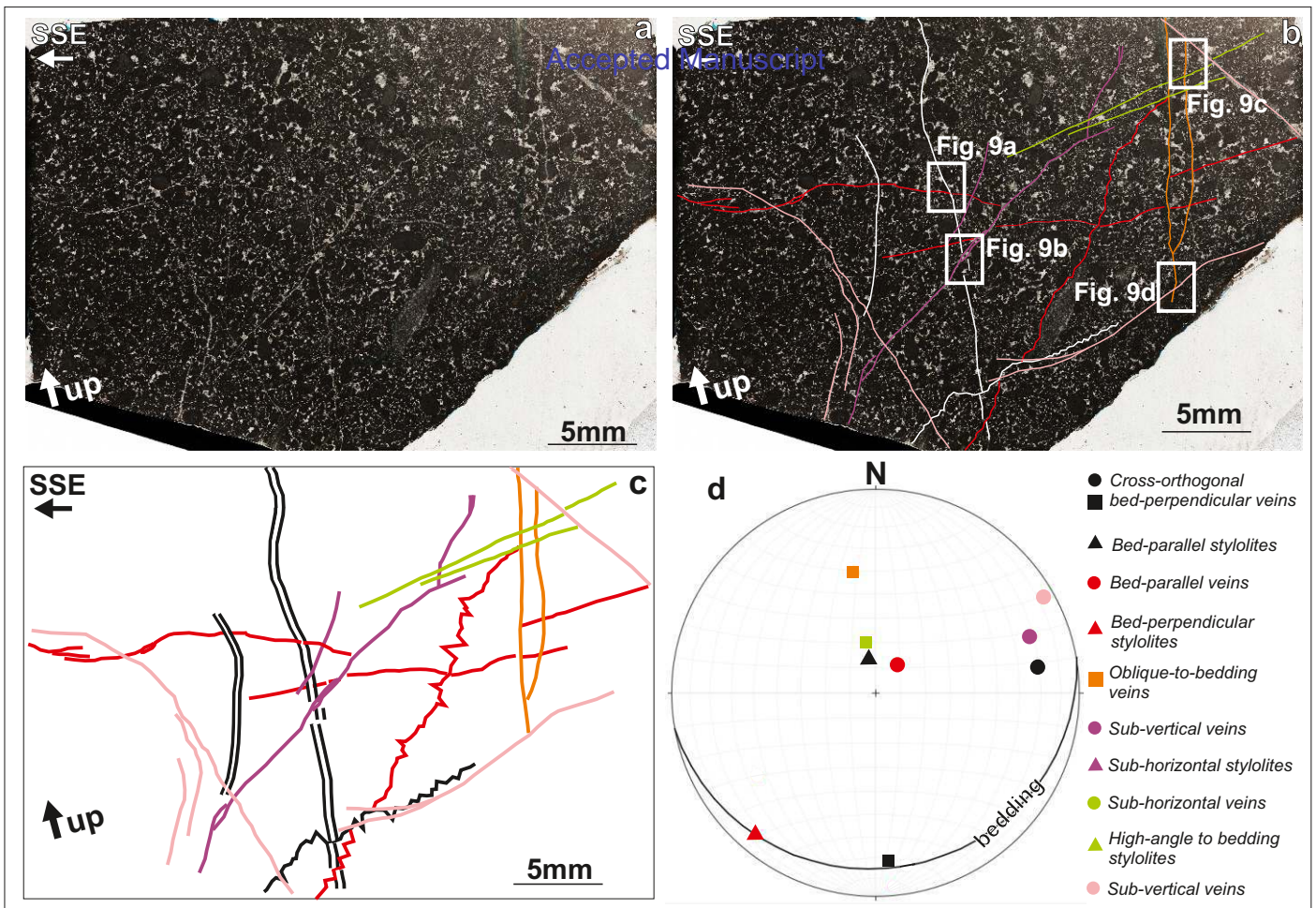


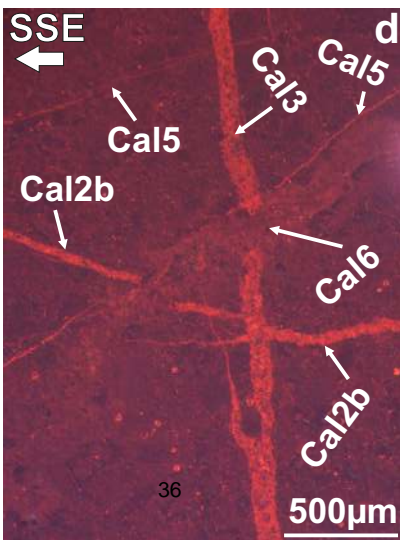
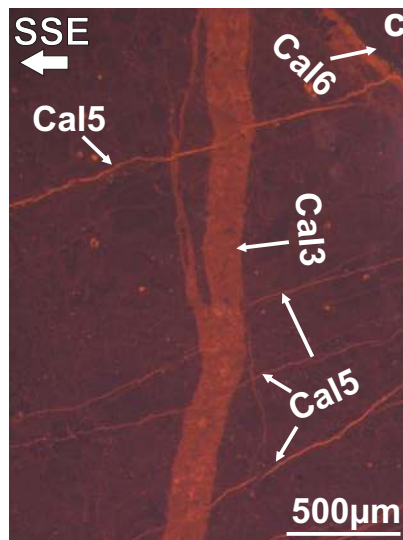
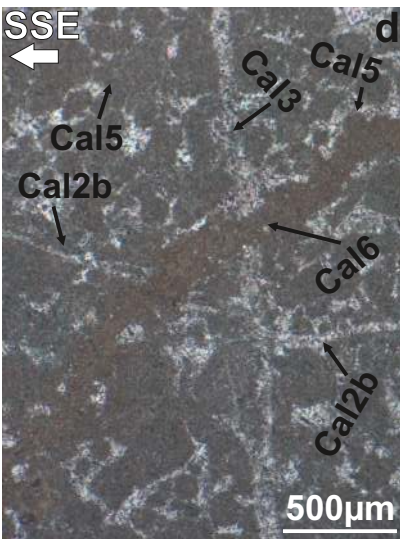
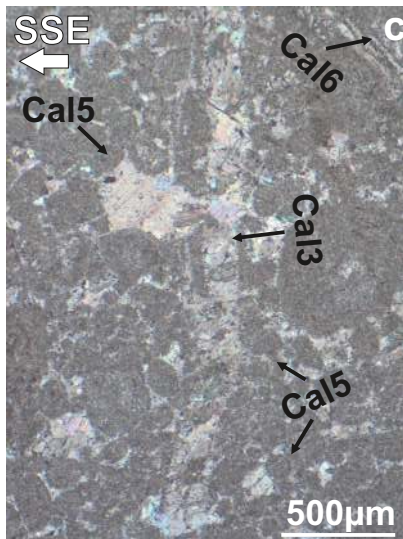
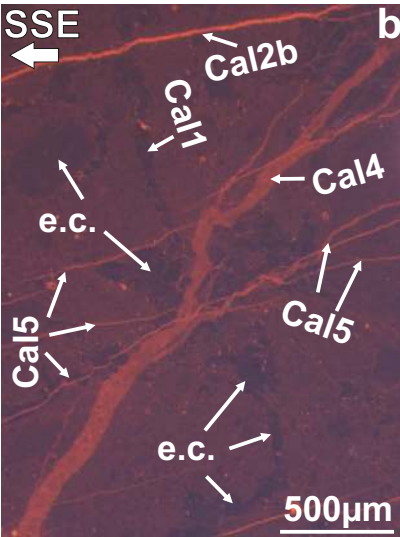
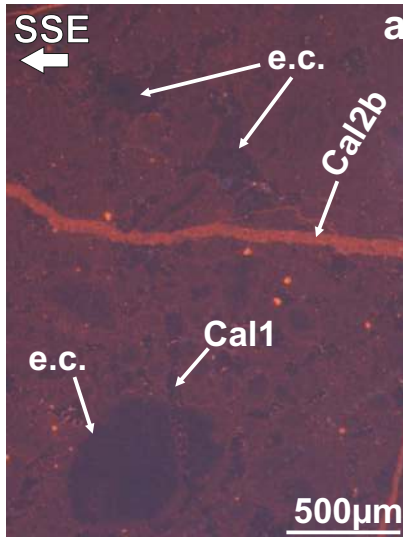
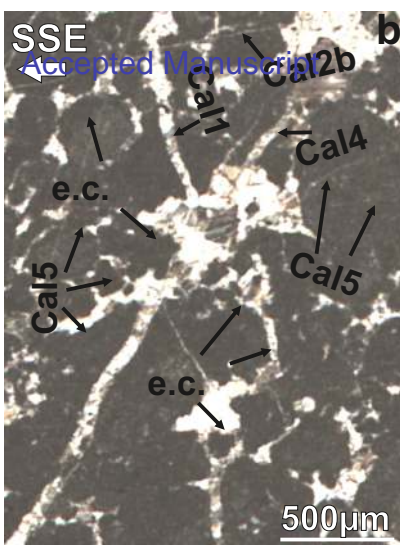
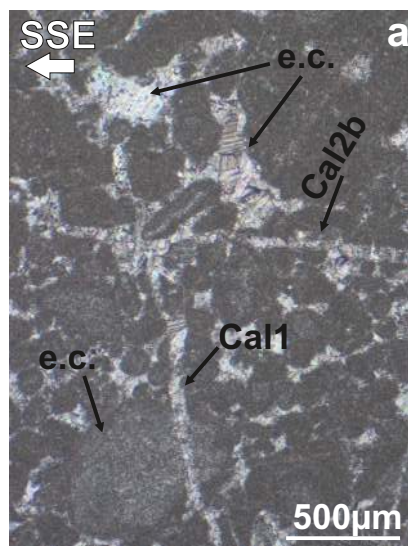


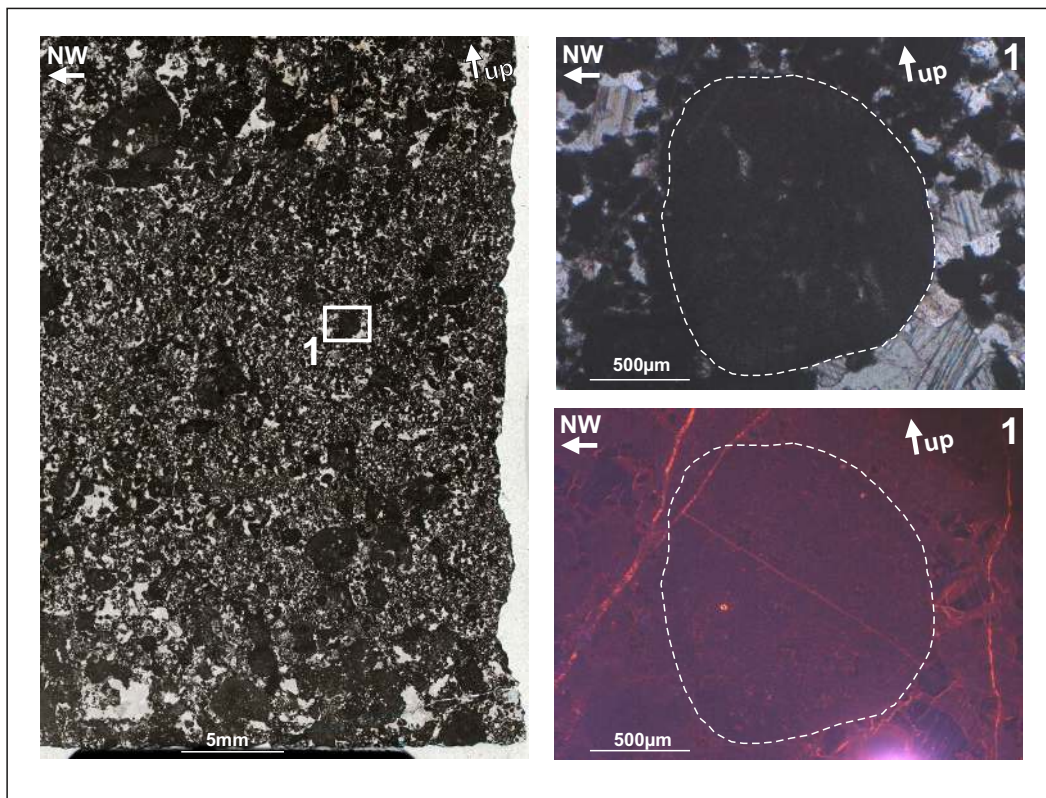


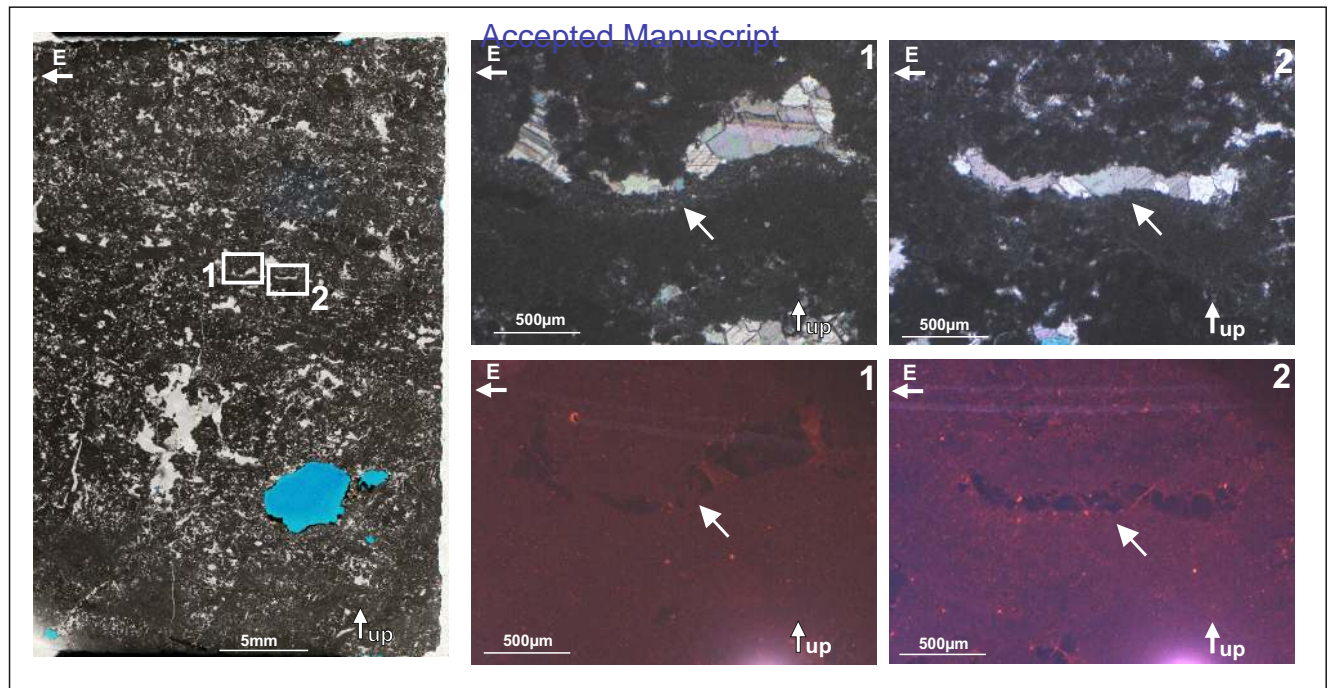


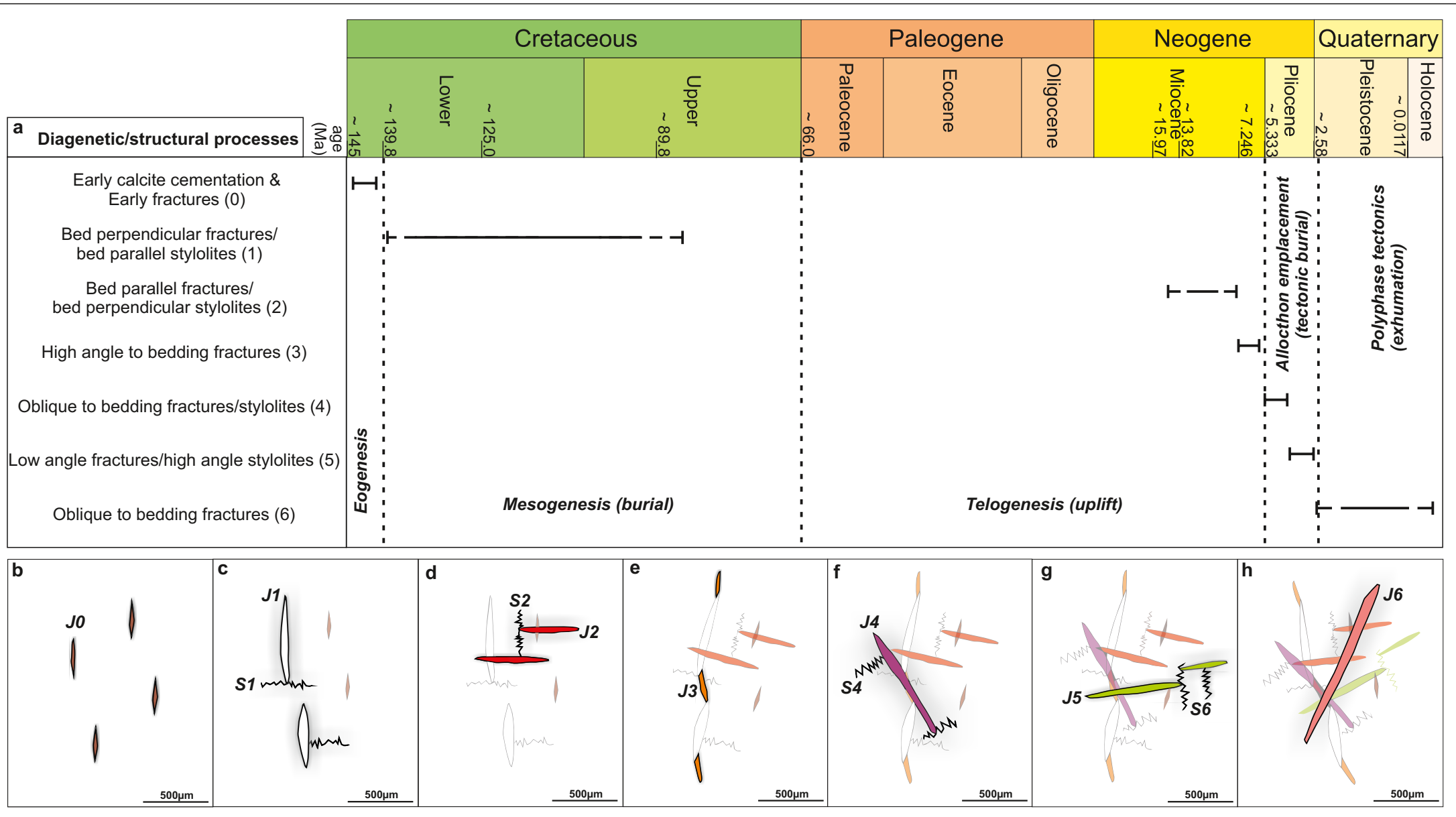


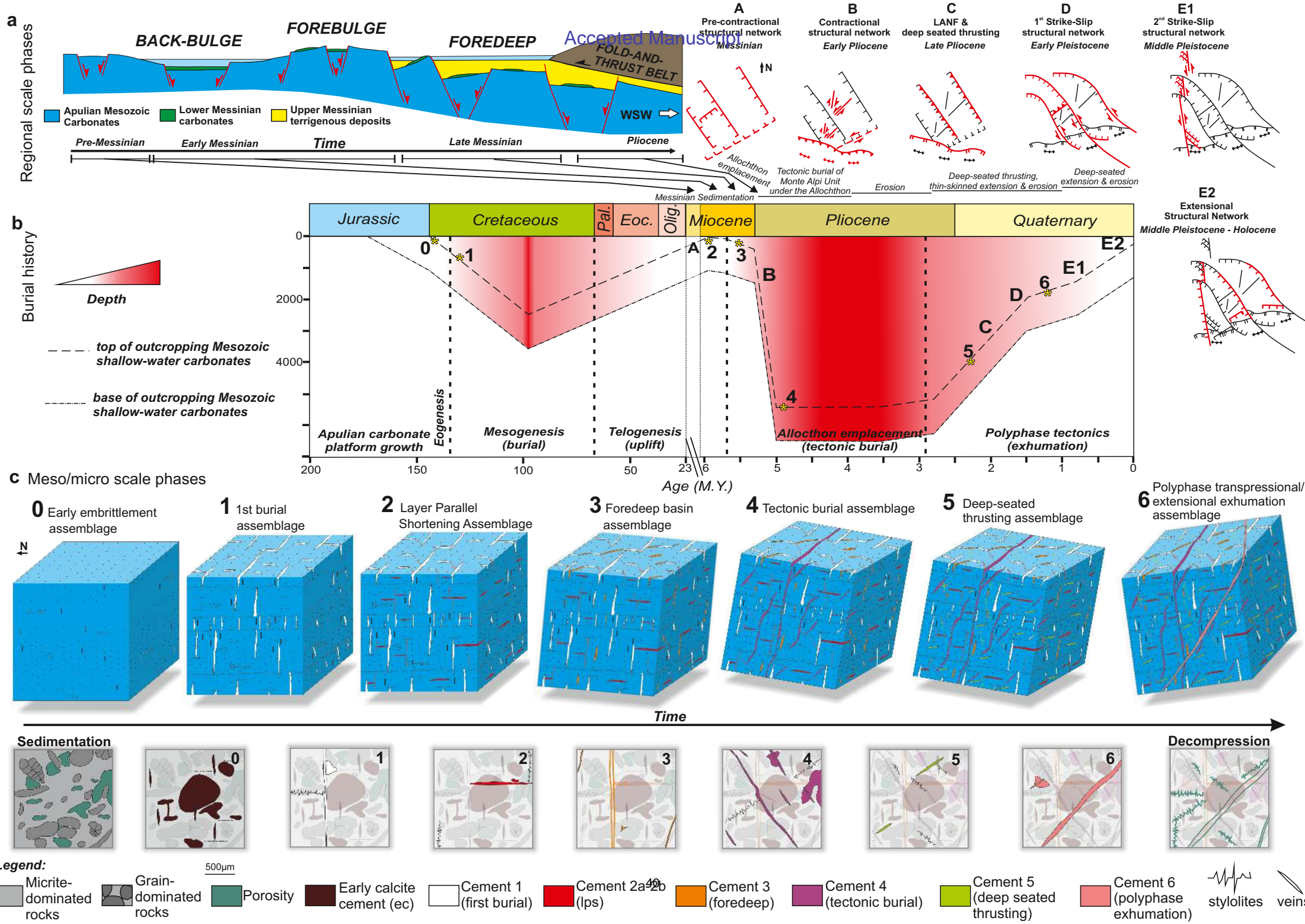












Bed	Sample code	Thin section code	Microfacies name	Biota and allochems	Sedimentary and biogenic structures	Diagenetic products
1	V1	V1	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O BF Bb		D
1	V2	V2	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O BF Bb		D
1	V3	V3	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone	O BF Bb		D
1	V4	V4	Green-algal wackestone-packstone	GA Os BF		BC
1	V5	V5	Fenestral microbial bindstone	O Bb GA Os	SL FF	
2	V6	V6	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb Os BF		
2	V7A	V7a	Fenestral microbial bindstone	Os O Bb GA	SL FF	
2	V7A	V7b	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Os		
2	V7B	V7c	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Os G		
2	V7B	V7d	Oncoidal-skeletal grainstone	O Bb Os		BC
2	V8strike	V8a	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Os BF		BC
2	V8strike	V8b	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-wackestone	O Os Bb		BC
2	V8dip	V8c	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb Os		BC
3	V9	V9a	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb Os		BC
3	V9	V9b	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb Os		
3	V9	V9c	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb GA Os BF		BC
4	V10	V10	Oncolitic grainstone-floatstone	O		
5	V11A	V11a	Fenestral microbial bindstone	O Os G	FF SL	
5	V11B	V11b	Fenestral oncolitic grainstone-floatstone	O Os	FF	
6	V12	V12a	Microbial bindstone	O Os	SL FF	
6	V12	V12b	Fenestral microbial bindstone	O Os Bb GA	SL FF	
7	V13A	V13a	Oncolitic grainstone- packstone	O G GA		BC GS
7	V13B	V13b	Oncolitic grainstone- packstone	O G GA		BC GS
7	V14	V14a	Oncolitic grainstone- packstone	O G GA Os		BC GS
7	V14	V14b	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone-floatstone	O Bb G GA		BC GS
7	V14	V14c	Oncolitic grainstone-floatstone	O BF Os		BC GS
7	V14	V14d	Oncolitic grainstone-floatstone	O G GA Os		BC GS
7	V14	V14e	Oncolitic-skeletal floatstone	O G GA Os		BC GS
7	V14	V14f	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-floatstone	O G GA Os		BC GS
7	V14	V14g	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-floatstone	O G GA Os		BC GS
7	V15	V15a	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-floatstone-packstone	O BF GA Os		BC
7	V15	V15b	Oncolitic-skeletal grainstone-floatstone-packstone	O BF G GA Os		BC GS

Biota and allochems (dominant - minor components)

O = oncoids
 BF = benthic foraminifera
 Bb = bivalve bioclasts
 GA = dasycladacean green algae fragments
 Os = ostracods (disarticulated valves)

Sedimentary - biogenic structures (dominant - minor components)

SL = bed-parallel stromatolitic laminae
 FF = cement-filled fenestral features

Diagenetic products (dominant - minor components)

D = sparse crystals of euhedral dolomite
 BC = large patches of blocky calcite cement

Bed	Sample code	Thin section code	Microfacies name	Biota and allochems	Sedimentary and biogenic structures	Diagenetic products
0 PTS	T0A	T0A	Oncolitic grainstone-packstone	O GA Os		BC
0 PTS	T0A1	T0A1	Oncolitic grainstone-floatstone	O GA Os G	Bu Bo	
0 PTS	T0B	T0Ba	Lithoclastic-oncolitic floatstone	O L BF Bb Os G	Bo	BC
0 PTS	T0B	T0Bb	Lithoclastic-oncolitic floatstone	O L BF OS G	Bo	BC
0 PTS	T0B	T0Bc	Lithoclastic-oncolitic floatstone	O L Os G		BC
0 PTS	T0B1	T0B1	Fenestral oncolitic floatstone	O G	FF	
1	T1dip	T1a	Bioturbated grainstone-floatstone	Os G	Bu Bo	
1	T1dip	T1b	Burrowed, fenestral grainstone-packstone	O BF	FF Bu	BC GS
1	T1dip	T1c	Burrowed, fenestral grainstone-packstone	O BF Os	FF Bu	BC GS
1	T1strike	T1d	Fenestral microbial bindstone	O Os P	Bu Bo FF SL	BC V GS
1	T1strike	T1e	Fenestral microbial bindstone	Os P O	SL FF	
1	T1strike	T1f	Fenestral microbial bindstone	Os P O	SL FF	
2	T2A	T2a	Bioturbated bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Os G	Bu Bo	
2	T2B	T2b	Burrowed bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Bb Os G	Bu	
2	T2B	T2c	Gastropod floatstone (with wackestone matrix)	BF Bb Os G	Bu	
2	T2B	T2d	Burrowed bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Bb Os G	Bu	
3	T3	T3a	Burrowed packstone	BF Bb Os P	Bu	
3	T3	T3b	Bioclastic packstone	BF Bb Os P G		
4	T4A	T4a	Bioclastic floatstone (with packstone matrix)	BF Bb Os O P	Bu Bo	
4	T4B	T4b	Bioclastic packstone	BF Bb Os G P	Bu Bo	
4	T4C	T4c	Bioturbated bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Bb Os G	Bu Bo	BC
4	T4C	T4d	Bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Bb Os G P	Bu Bo	
5	T5	T5	Burrowed bioclastic packstone-wackestone	BF Bb Os G P	Bu	
6	T6	T6a	Bioturbated bioclastic wackestone-packstone	BF Os O P	Bu Bo	BC
6	T6	T6b	Burrowed bioclastic wackestone-packstone	BF Bb GA Os G	Bu	BC V
7	T7A	T7a	Bioturbated bioclastic wackestone-packstone	Os P	Bu Bo	BC
7	T7B	T7b	Bioturbated bioclastic wackestone-packstone	BF Os	Bu Bo	BC
7	T7B	T7c	Bioturbated bioclastic packstone	Bb GA	Bu Bo	
8	T8	T8a	Bioturbated bioclastic packstone	Bb Os	Bu Bo	BC
8	T8	T8b	Bioturbated bioclastic-oncolitic grainstone-packstone	BF Os O	Bu Bo FF	BC
8	T8	T8c	Grainstone-packstone	Os O	Bu Bo	BC
8	T8	T8d	Bioturbated packstone	Os P O Bb	Bu Bo	BC

Biota and allochems (dominant - minor components)

O = oncoids
 BF = benthic foraminifera
 Bb = bivalve bioclasts
 GA = dasycladacean green algae fragments
 Os = ostracods (disarticulated valves)
 G = gastropods (whole shells or fragments)
 L = lithoclasts

Sedimentary - biogenic structures (dominant - minor components)

SL = bed-parallel stromatolitic laminae
 FF = cement-filled fenestral features
 Bu = burrows
 Bo = borings

Diagenetic products (dominant - minor components)

BC = large patches of blocky calcite cement
 GS = geopetal structures