

The Ordovician of Sardinia (Italy): from the "Sardic Phase" to the end-Ordovician glaciation, palaeogeography and geodynamic context

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1 The Ordovician of Sardinia (Italy): from the "Sardic Phase" to the end-Ordovician glaciation,

2 palaeogeography and geodynamic context

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15 Abstract

16 This review shows the most important features of Ordovician succession of the Sardinian basement. 17 We focus on stratigraphy and tectonic structures in the different tectonic units of External and Nappe 18 zones of the Variscan basement. These Ordovician successions are characterized by unconformities 19 related to tectonics events ascribed to the Sardic and Sarrabese phases. The different extent of the 20 unconformity-related gaps in the External (17 Ma) and Nappe (6 Ma) zones, the recent works on 21 trilobite fossil content, and the occurrence of a volcanic arc only in the Sarrabus/Gerrei units highlight 22 significant discrepancies suggesting that these domains did not share the same geodynamic setting 23 and, possibly, paleogeographic position during the Ordovician, implying they drew close and 24 amalgamated only in Variscan times. Whereas for the external and nappe zones the Ordovician 25 features are clear, on the contrary the high-grade metamorphic Inner Zone, where numerous 26 Ordovician ortho- and para-gneiss, needs more detailed studies to define a complete framework of 27 the Ordovician evolution of Sardinia. From the data on the best-preserved succession of the Sardinian 28 tectonic units, arise that at least two distinct terranes were amalgamated only during the Variscan 29 Orogeny, entails alternative correlations for them and a different arrangement in early Paleozoic time.

- 31 *Keywords:* Sardic Phase; Sarrabese Phase; Gondwana; Rheic Ocean; Ordovician magmatic arc;
 32 Qaidam Ocean
- 33

34 1) Introduction

The Ordovician successions of Italy are extensively documented in Sardinia and, to a lesser extent, in the Carnic Alps (Vai 1971; Vai and Spalletta 1980; Schönlaub 2000). In other regions of Italy, portions of Ordovician crust are reported in the northern Apennines (Apuan Alps, Conti *et al.* 1993), and in the southern Apennines (Calabrian-Peloritanian Arc, Cirrincione *et al.* 2015), consisting of rocks of various metamorphic grades made up of sedimentary and volcanic protoliths. Some volcanic products of these metamorphic complexes have provided absolute Ordovician ages (Trombetta *et al.* 2004; Paoli *et al.* 2017).

42 The Ordovician successions of Sardinia are affected by several folding events, the oldest of 43 which are referable to the Early Ordovician Sardic and Sarrabese phases, and the most recent to the 44 Variscan Orogeny. The Variscan Orogeny (Fig. 1) provide the main structure of the Sardinian 45 basement and deformed, with different metamorphic grades, a Cambrian to lower Carboniferous 46 sedimentary and volcanic succession. Three tectono-metamorphic zones (Carmignani et al. 1994) 47 and numerous allochton tectonic units are recognised in Sardinia (Fig. 2). In these different tectonic 48 units, the stratigraphic successions show strong differences between the SW of Sardinia (External 49 Zone) and all the other successions involved in the Variscan structuring of the Sardinian basement 50 (Nappe Zone and Inner Zone). An intra-Ordovician unconformity stands out in the sedimentary 51 succession, which is well preserved in the shallowest tectonic units and less detectable in the high 52 grade tectonic units. This unconformity was first detected in south-western Sardinia and was referred 53 to the tectonic event called the Sardic Phase (Stille 1939). This tectonic event was defined through 54 an angular unconformity (Sardic Unconformity, (Teichmüller 1931) associated with a stratigraphic 55 gap constrained, at the time, between the middle Cambrian and the Upper Ordovician. Subsequently,

56 in south-eastern Sardinia (Nappe Zone), an angular unconformity (Sarrabese Unconformity) was 57 recognised between the Cambrian- Lower Ordovician sedimentary series and a thick Ordovician 58 volcanic and sedimentary complex, and ascribed to the Sarrabese Phase (Calvino 1959; Naud 1981). 59 For many years the meaning of the Sardic and Sarrabese phases (and their unconformities) 60 was the focus of several scientific discussions. As the years went by, many interpretations followed 61 one another as a result of new discoveries, especially concerning the age and stratigraphic features 62 of the successions below and above the unconformities, allowing a more and more accurate age 63 constraint of the deformation phase(s). In recent years the stratigraphy of Ordovician successions in Sardinia has been better defined (Gandin and Pillola 1985; Barca et al. 1987; Laske et al. 1994; 64 65 Pillola et al. 1995, 1998, 2008; Loi et al. 1996; Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007; Ferretti et al. 1998; 66 Leone et al. 1998; Storch and Leone 2003) and the increasing number of isotopic ages (Palmeri et 67 al. 2004; Giacomini et al. 2005, 2006; Dack 2009; Rossi et al. 2009; Oggiano et al. 2010; Pavanetto 68 et al. 2012; Casini et al. 2015) have allowed a more robust interpretation of the widespread 69 stratigraphic gap referred to the Sardic and Sarrabese phases. In addition, the structural style of the 70 deformation, characterized by overturned fold, and the related intra-Ordovician continentalisation, 71 has recently been described in detail (Pasci et al. 2008; Cocco et al. 2018, 2022 submitted; Cocco 72 and Funedda 2019, 2021).

73 Since the 1980s, palaeogeographic reconstructions and some geodynamic models (Oggiano 74 et al. 2010; Gaggero et al. 2012) have assumed that the Variscan basement of Sardinia pertained to 75 a platform connected to a single coherent crustal block since Cambrian times. Thus, the stratigraphic 76 differences between the External and Nappe zones observed in the Ordovician successions were 77 interpreted as due to a coeval evolution in neighbouring areas of a subduction margin, where a back-78 arc basin and a continental volcanic arc developed during the Middle Ordovician in the External and 79 Nappe zones, respectively. The most recent and accurate analyses of stratigraphic and 80 palaeontological data, sediment provenance, chronology of magmatic products and gap ages indicate 81 strong differences between tectonic units in Sardinia, with no comparable geodynamic settings and

82 timescales (Cocco et al. 2018, 2022 submitted). These discrepancies imply that the External and 83 Nappe zones belonged to different and possibly distant palaeogeographical and geodynamical 84 domains. Moreover, these data suggest that the current zonation of the Paleozoic basement of 85 Sardinia is the product of extensive crustal reworking and amalgamation in Variscan times. Therefore, a palaeogeography where Sardinia is considered a single crustal block during the 86 87 Ordovician can be ruled out.



89

90 Fig. 1. Tectonic sketch map of the Southern Variscan Realm at the end of the Paleozoic, modified after Martínez Catalán et al. (2021) 91

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93 2) Variscan tectono-metamorphic framework of Sardinia

94 The complete section of the Variscan chain exposed in Sardinia comprises three tectono-95 metamorphic zones (Carmignani et al. 1994) (Fig. 2a): an External Zone in SW Sardinia, a Nappe 96 Zone in central-eastern Sardinia and, finally, an Inner Zone in the northern sector of the island. 97 During the Variscan collisional phase, a regional (Barrovian) metamorphism developed, increasing from south-west to north-east, from a very low grade in the External Zone, to greenschist facies in 98 99 the Nappe Zone, and to high grade in the Inner Zone.

100 The External Zone is considered to be the parautochthonous above which the external Nappe 101 of the Nappe Zone overthrust and was deformed by at least three Variscan folding events with no or 102 very low-grade metamorphism (T < 250 °C, Casini et al., 2010).

103 The Nappe Zone (greenschist facies, $T < 500 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$) is divided into External and Internal Nappe 104 (Fig. 2b), which are composed of several stacked tectonic units characterised by litho-stratigraphic 105 successions attributable to the same time period, yet showing some lithological differences between 106 them (Fig. 2a and 2b). The overlapping of the External Nappe tectonic units is well exposed in SE 107 Sardinia, where they are involved in a Variscan antiformal structure known as the Flumendosa Antiform (Fig. 2b and 2c) (Conti et al. 1999), whose deep erosion/incision allows the identification, 108 109 from bottom to top, of the Monte Grighini, Riu Gruppa, Gerrei, Meana Sardo and, finally, Sarrabus 110 units (Carmignani et al. 1994; Conti et al. 2001; Funedda et al. 2011, 2015; Meloni et al. 2017). Two 111 main allochthonous tectonic units have been identified in southwestern Sardinia: the Bithia 112 (Pavanetto et al. 2012) and Arburese (biblio) units, which can be correlated with the Gerrei and 113 Sarrabus units, respectively.

114 The tectonic units of the Internal Nappe Zone are stratigraphically less defined, due to the 115 higher metamorphic degree (Casini et al. 2010) and the intensity of deformation (Conti et al. 1998). 116 In central Sardinia (Fig. 2b) they reveal some differences in stratigraphic stacking and are 117 characterised by the lack of Silurian-Devonian limestones (Oggiano and Mameli 2006). Tectonic 118 units have been displaced with a general southward transport direction, which turns westward in the 119 late evolution of the Variscan collision (Conti et al. 2001). Two main Variscan deformation events 120 have been recognised in the External Nappe (Carmignani *et al.* 1994): the first, related to continental 121 collision and shortening, is responsible to the formation of overthrusts marked by well-expressed 122 thick milonitic bands and isoclinal folds with well-developed axial plane foliation. The second event 123 is more likely related to the collapse of the chain in an extensional regime, with consequent total 124 thinning accommodated by ductile shear zones (Casini et al. 2010) combined with asymmetric folds, 125 low- and high-angle normal faults, and crustal-scale strike-slip zones (Conti et al. 1999; Casini and

- 126 Oggiano 2008). Finally, during late Carboniferous-Permian the large-scale emplacement of Variscan
- 127 granitoids occurred, leading to the development of HT-LP metamorphism (Casini *et al.* 2015; Conte
- 128 *et al.* 2017; Secchi *et al.* 2021; Cocco *et al.* 2022).

- Fig. 2. a: Tectono-metamorphic zones, b: tectonic sketch map and c: schematic geological cross-section of the Variscan basement in Sardinia
 (after Cocco *et al.* (2022 submitted), modified after Oggiano *et al.* (2010) and Cocco and Funedda (2019).
- 132
- 133

134 3) Stratigraphy, biostratigraphy, palaeoenvironments and glacio-eustatic variations

The External Zone and Nappe Zone of the Variscan basement only share few common traits in the sedimentary stacking and palaeontological content, and both show widespread evidences of tectonic instability during the Ordovician. The stratigraphic successions (Fig. 3) of the External Zone and the External Nappe have a well-defined stratigraphy based on their rich palaeontological record and sedimentary facies. Due to the general SW-NE increase in metamorphic conditions, only the successions of the Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit (Variscan External Zone) and of the Sarrabus and Gerrei Units (Variscan External Nappe Zone) will be considered (Fig. 3).

144 Fig. 3. Main stratigraphic correlations of sedimentary and magmatic formations characterising the several tectonic zones 145 of the Variscan basement in Sardinia. U-Pb zircons age of magmatic rocks (volcanic in red and plutonic in green) and

bibliographic reference number: 1-(Pavanetto *et al.* 2012); 2-(Oggiano *et al.* 2010); 3-(Dack 2009); 4-(Giacomini *et al.*2006); 5-(Giacomini *et al.* 2005); 6-(Helbing and Tiepolo 2005); 7-(Rossi *et al.* 2009); 8-(Casini *et al.* 2015); 9-(Palmeri *et al.* 2004). After Cocco *et al.* (2022_submitted).

149

150 **3.1**) Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit (External Zone–SW Sardinia)

The Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit consists of two main sedimentary successions (Fig. 3) separated by a regional angular unconformity (Sardic Unconformity; Teichmüller (1931): a succession from the lower Cambrian to the Lower Ordovician (hereafter Pre-Sardic sequence) and a succession from the Upper Ordovician to the lower Carboniferous (hereafter Post-Sardic sequence).

155

156 <u>Pre-Sardic sequence</u>

The Pre-Sardic sequence extends from the lower Cambrian to the Lower Ordovician and is divided into three groups: the Nebida Group (Matoppa and Punta Manna formations), Gonnesa Group (Santa Barbara and San Giovanni formations) and the Iglesias Group (Campo Pisano and Cabitza formations) (Pillola 1990a; Pillola *et al.* 1998) (Fig. 4).

161 The Matoppa Fm. consists mainly of a siliciclastic succession of sandstones and minor siltstones 162 layers, with oscillation and unidirectional current ripples, parallel and cross laminations at low angle 163 (HCS) and, occasionally, ball-and-pillows. Calcimicrobial-archaeocyathan mounds are recurrent in the middle and upper part of this unit. The overlying Punta Manna Fm. is mainly a terrigenous deposit 164 165 with widespread carbonate intercalations of a basal oolitic shoal belt and back shoal deposits, made-166 up of peloidal wackestone, grainstone and ooid-grainstone (spillovers). Backshoal facies also include calcimicrobial-archaeocyathan biostromes, massive limestones, few Protopharetra dominated 167 168 bioherms and stromatolitic beds. The rich associations of Archaeocyatha and trilobites indicates an 169 age assignment to the Cambrian lower Stage 3 to lower Stage 4 for the Nebida Group (Rasetti 1972; 170 Debrenne et al. 1988; Pillola 1990b, 1991).

The Gonnesa Group consists of carbonate deposits. The Santa Barbara Fm. is characterized by alternations of well-stratified stromatolitic dolomites and limestones, which are in turn covered by massive limestone, often dolomitized, of the San Giovanni Fm. The two main Archaeocyatha associations indicates a higher Botomian and a Toyonian age respectively (Debrenne and Gandin 1985), corresponding to the middle portion of the Cambrian Stage 4.

The Iglesias Group begins with an alternation of nodular and massive grey limestones, marls and thin levels of silty argillites of the Campo Pisano Fm. (uppermost Stage 4 to mid-Drumian) which rests in continuity or with local gaps and erosive surfaces over the San Giovanni Fm. (Gandin *et al.* 1987; Pillola 1991; Elicki and Pillola 2004). The succession progressively grades, upwards, to an alternation of variable scale from centimetre to metric of shales, siltstones and sandy levels of the Cabitza Fm. (Drumian to late Tremadoc/?early Floian), deposited in a terrigenous platform environments with facies ranging from the lower offshore to tidal flats (Loi *et al.* 1996).

183 Still in the Cabitza Fm. (Figs 3 and 4) the Cambrian/Ordovician boundary is observed in stratigraphic 184 continuity (Loi et al. 1996). This boundary has been bracketed between the CAB5b fauna (Maladioidella - Onchonotellus) and the CAB6 fauna (Proteuloma geinitzi - Rhabdinopora 185 186 flabelliformis flabelliformis) (Fig. 5), and correlated with the Acerocare Regressive Event (ARE, 187 Erdtmann 1986) according to the relative sea level variation curves (Pillola and Gutierrez-Marco 188 1988; Loi et al. 1996; Pillola et al. 2008; Pillola 2019). The estimated thickness of the Cabitza Fm. 189 is at least 600 m (Cocozza 1979; Cocozza and Gandin 1990). The youngest ages documented in the 190 upper levels of the Cabitza Fm., below the Sardic Unconformity, are the Lower Ordovician 191 (Tremadocian) based on the finding of acritarchs and graptolites (Gandin and Pillola 1985; Barca et 192 al. 1987; Pillola and Gutierrez-Marco 1988) and the latest Tremadocian-?basal Floian beds yielding 193 Araneograptus murravi Biozone (Pillola et al. 2008).

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196 Fig. 4. Main stratigraphic and informal "zones" for the Cambrian Stage 3 to Lower Ordovician strata of the Sulcis-

197 Iglesiente Unit (SW Sardinia).

Fig. 5. Schematic log of the Iglesias Group, together with a detailed sea level curve for Furongian strata in the "Tubi"
 Section. ARE = Acerocare Regressive Event. Modified after Loi *et al.* (1996).

Fig. 6. Schematic lithostratigraphic succession of the Post Sardic-sequences of SW Sardinia. Curve of relative sea-level changes and main fossiliferous occurrence of trilobites (TH) and brachiopods (BH) identified by Leone *et al.* (1998) and Hammann and Leone (1997, 2007). Chronostratigraphic correlation by the time-calibrated eustatic curve established in the Upper Ordovician of the Moroccan Anti Atlas (Loi *et al.* 2010) and the Middle-Upper Ordovician of the Armorican Massif (Dabard *et al.* 2015). After (Cocco *et al.* 2022 submitted).

209

210 <u>Post-Sardic sequence</u>

The Upper Ordovician deposits of the Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit, which lie in angular unconformity above the Cambrian-Lower Ordovician succession (Post-Sardic sequence), begin with a thick aggradational succession of continental facies and subsequently follow retrogradationalprogradational cycles in storm-dominated terrigenous platform facies.

215 The first deposits observed above the Sardic Unconformity (Figs 3 and 6) belong to the Monte 216 Argentu Fm. (Laske et al. 1994), which starts with banks of matrix-rich conglomerates (Punta Sa 217 Broccia Member) and progresses upwards to banks and layers of sandstones and coarse siltstones of 218 the Riu Is Arrus and Medau Murtas Members. The pebbles derive mainly from the erosion of the 219 underlying Cabitza Fm., and in smaller quantities come from the Gonnesa and Nebida Groups. 220 Megabreccias and large olistolites (10-100 metres in size) composed of dolostones and limestones 221 characterise the base of the Monte Argentu Fm., which is interpreted as a deposit settled in an alluvial 222 fan to fan-delta environment (Martini et al. 1991). This very coarse deposit gradually becomes finer 223 towards the top, grading into bioturbated sandstones and siltstones deposited in shallow water marine 224 environments with tidal flat and lagoon facies (Loi 1993; Leone et al. 1998). A single rich but low 225 diversified fossiliferous level is known in the Monte Argentu Fm.: the Tariccoia arrusensis beds 226 (TH0, Riu Is Arrus Mb.) (Hamman et al. 1990; Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007). This endemic 227 taxon does not provide any biostratigraphic indication because it is restricted to the Fluminimaggiore 228 area (Iglesiente). In addition, unassigned plants remains (in TH0) and a few ichnofossils have been reported (Rusophycus carleyi, ?Arthropycus cf. harlani, Skolithos; (Pillola 2020). Hammann and 229 230 Leone (1997, 2007) and Leone et al. (1998) proposed a ?Soudleyan (basal Sandbian) age for the

Tariccoia beds. The thickness of the Monte Argentu Fm. varies between 200 and 600 m (Laske *et al.*1994; Leone *et al.* 1998). Its age is constrained between the Tremadocian-early Floian? of the upper
Cabitza Fm. (Pillola *et al.* 2008) and the Sandbian (Soudleyan-Longvillian) trilobite and brachiopod
fauna (BH1-TH1) of the Monte Orri Fm. (Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007; Leone *et al.* 1998).

235 The Monte Argentu Fm. is conformably capped by a 200-280 m thick succession of the Monte 236 Orri and Portixeddu formations. These latter consist of an alternation of siltstone, argillite and silty 237 sandstone deposited in an upper offshore and, only partially, lower offshore storm-dominated 238 terrigenous platform. Both in the Monte Orri Fm. and, more commonly, in the upper part of the 239 Portixeddu Fm., there are several levels containing phosphatic and silico-aluminous nodules and 240 thick shell-beds (Leone et al. 1991, 1998), which have been interpreted as sedimentary expression of 241 the condensation (very low sedimentation rate) during eustatic rises (Loi and Dabard 1999, 2002; Loi et al. 1999; Botquelen et al. 2002, 2004; Dabard and Loi 2012). The rich fossil record (TH1, 242 243 TH2-3, BH2-4; cfr. Figs 6 and 7) allows to assign these deposits to the Sandbian and Katian (Leone 244 et al. 1991; Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007).

The Domusnovas Fm. (thickness 90 m) begins with quartzarenites and quartz microconglomerates (Maciurru Mb.), with concentrations of heavy minerals (rutile and zircon placers) (Loi 1993; Loi and Dabard 1997; Leone *et al.* 1998), features consistent with a shoreface environment dominated by storm waves.

249 The succession suddenly and conformably evolves into marly limestones, marly shales and 250 limestones of the Punta S'Argiola Mb. This member yields a rich fossil fauna and shows a high degree 251 of sedimentary condensation (Botquelen et al. 2002, 2004, 2006b) documented by a carbonation of 252 the seabed (taphonomic feedback). The late Katian ("Ashgill") age is suggested by the rich and 253 significative content in brachiopods and trilobites (Figs 6 and 7, BH4, BH5, TH3b, TH4) (Hammann 254 and Leone 1997, 2007; Leone et al. 1998). A diversified but poorly preserved conodont fauna has 255 documented the Amorphognathus ordovicicus Zone (Ferretti and Serpagli 1991, 1998). Hamarodus 256 brevirameus, Scabbardella altipes and Amorphognathus (A. ordovicicus and A. duftonus)

257 numerically dominate the fauna, mirroring diversity and abundance of the conodont assemblages 258 reported from the Carnic Alps (Serpagli 1967; Bagnoli et al. 1998; Ferretti and Schönlaub 2001; 259 Ferretti et al., this volume). Investigations of the relative abundance of multielement conodont taxa 260 in representative conodont faunas have the potential to provide useful biogeographical and biofacies 261 information, and the major conodont biofacies in much of the Upper Ordovician had already been 262 introduced by Sweet and Bergström (1984). Conodont data of the last 30 years have reinforced this 263 subdivision, documenting a Mediterranean Province fauna (Sagittodontina robusta-Scabbardella 264 altipes biofacies: Thuringia, France, Spain, Lybia) that apparently occupied high latitude, relatively 265 cold waters near the pole and at lower latitudes the Hamarodus europaeus (now brevirameus)-266 Dapsilodus mutatus-Scabbardella altipes biofacies (Sardinia, Carnic Alps, Baltoscandia) and the 267 Amorphognathus-Plectodina biofacies (middle to upper Katian British faunas from Wales and 268 England) (Ferretti et al. 2014; Bergström and Ferretti 2015).

In addition, the whole Monte Orri, Portixeddu and Domusnovas formations yield a diversified fauna
rich, among other, in echinoderms (Maccagno 1965; Botquelen *et al.* 2006b); bryozoans (Conti 1990
and references therein) and brachiopods (Vinassa De Regny 1927, 1942; Giovannoni and Zanfrà
1978; Havlicek *et al.* 1986; Leone *et al.* 1991; Botquelen *et al.* 2006a).

273 The Upper Ordovician succession ends with the Rio San Marco Fm. (230 m thick; Leone et al. 1991). 274 The base of this formation (Punta Arenas Mb.) is made up of siltstones and shales, interbedded with 275 layers of heterogeneous conglomerates that also host volcanic pebbles and strata of manganese 276 carbonates and oxides. The Punta Arenas Mb. deposits were laid down in restricted marine 277 environments, subsequent to the rapid glacio-eustatic sea level fall of the first Hirnantian glacial 278 pulsation (Ghienne et al. 2000). This member is topped by a condensed level rich in Normalograptus 279 *ojsuensis* (Štorch and Leone 2003), testifying an ensuing rapid sea level rise. This condensed level 280 is overlain by classic upper offshore storm facies showing rhythmic alternations of HCS sandstone 281 layers separated by shales of the basal Cuccuruneddu Mb. After a few metres from the base of 282 Cuccuruneddu Mb, a first glacio-marine layer including ice-rafted debris is observed. Then follow

terrigenous deposits with storm-dominated platform facies, organised by three cycles of sea-level change, from Cuccuruneddu and Serra Corroga members (Fig. 6). The Upper Ordovician succession ends with ice-distal glacio-marine deposits of the Girisi Mb, composed of dark grey finely laminated to massive shales, siltstones and fine to very fine sandstones.

The fauna, present in the Rio San Marco Fm (Figs 6 and 7), allows us to robustly attribute an Hirnantian age to these deposits, included the TH5 fauna at the base of the Girisi Mb. containing *Mucronaspis mucronata mucronata* (Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007; Leone *et al.* 1998; Štorch and Leone 2003).

The Ordovician deposits are followed in conformity by a pelagic succession of the Silurian-Devonian, characterized at the base by black shales with lydites and, in the upper part, by limestones (Gnoli *et al.* 1990; Barca *et al.* 1992; Ferretti and Serpagli 1996; Ferretti *et al.* 1998).

Fig. 7. Schematic lithostratigraphic succession of the Post-Sardic sequences of SW Sardinia. Occurrence of trilobites
(TH) identified by Hammann and Leone (1997, 2007). After Hammann and Leone (2007).

299 **3.2**) Sarrabus and Gerrei Units (External Nappe Zone, Central eastern Sardinia)

300

301 Two unconformities (Fig. 3 and 8) separate three successions with similar lithostratigraphic 302 characteristics in all the tectonic units of the External Nappe. The oldest is an angular unconformity 303 that separates the lower Cambrian-Ordovician sedimentary succession from the Middle-Upper 304 Ordovician volcano-sedimentary succession and is known as the Sarrabese Unconformity (Calvino 305 1959). The second is a nonconformity and represents the surface of marine transgression on effusive 306 magmatic rocks, referred to as the Caradocian transgression by ancient authors. The latter 307 sedimentary succession is continuous from the Upper Ordovician to the lower Carboniferous. 308 The stratigraphic features of the three successions are better preserved and complete in the tectonic 309 units less affected by metamorphism and at the top of the nappe stack (Sarrabus and Gerrei units,

311 Sarrabese sequence, while, the succession above it will be called the Post-Sarrabese sequence.

Figs 2 and 3). The succession below the Sarrabese Unconformity will hereafter be called the Pre-

312

Fig. 8. Hiatus and time surfaces in the External Nappes Zone. U-Pb zircons age of magmatic rocks (volcanic in red and
plutonic in green) and bibliographic reference number: ¹(Pavanetto *et al.* 2012); ²(Oggiano *et al.* 2010); ³(Dack 2009);
⁴(Giacomini *et al.* 2006). After (Cocco *et al.* 2022_submitted).

317

318 <u>Pre-Sarrabese sequence</u>

Below the Sarrabese Unconformity lies a thick siliciclastic succession (Arenarie di San Vito; Calvino 1959) composed of sandstones, siltstones and shales with well-developed sedimentary structures such as parallel and cross laminations, HCS, unidirectional current ripples, flute and load casts. This sedimentary succession consists of an articulated stacking of facies, all deposited in a terrigenous platform in environments that vary between the lower offshore and the tidal flat. Towards the top of the succession, the depositional sequences are expressed with more proximal facies, up to finegrained conglomerates. In the Gerrei Unit, carbonate pelites, limestone layers and
 microconglomerates, with quartz elements, occur in the upper part of the succession.

In the Sarrabus Unit, the Arenarie di San Vito hosts Furongian intermediate to acid volcanic rocks with transitional affinity (Figs 3 and 8), dated 491.4 ± 3.5 Ma (Oggiano *et al.* 2010). The base of the Arenarie di San Vito has never been identified, while its top is always erosive, at least in the External Nappe, where a minimum thickness of 500-600 m can be cartographically measured (Carmignani *et al.* 1982; Oggiano 1994).

332 The age of the Arenarie di San Vito is Miaolingian to (?)Floian based on sparse palynological content 333 (acritarchs) (Barca et al. 1982, 1988; Naud and Pittau Demelia 1987), body and ichnofossils. Trace 334 fossils are quite abundant in the upper part of the succession and are dominated by *Phycodes* 335 circinatum and less Rusophycus sp. Diplichnites sp., Cruziana sp. and very rare Glockerichnus glockeri and Tomaculum sp. (Pillola and Piras 2004). The same levels yielded a well-diversified 336 337 fossiliferous assemblage with graptolites, trilobites, cephalopods, bivalves, gastropods, hyolithids 338 and brachiopods (Gnoli and Pillola 2002; Pillola and Vidal 2022 submitted). Among these taxa, 339 Ampyx priscus, Taihungshania shui landayranensis and didymograptid species are relevant of the 340 Floian age. This attribution is in agreement with the age of the interlayered volcanic rocks.

The stratigraphic evolution of the pre-Sarrabese Unconformity succession in the Nappe Zone testifies the deposition in a passive margin geodynamic condition, as the source areas of the sedimentary flow came from a crystalline craton. The volcanic rocks and the onset of shallowest marine sediments at the top of the Arenarie di San Vito, may be linked to the ongoing tectonic event responsible for the Sarrabese Unconformity (Oggiano *et al.* 2010).

346

347 <u>Post-Sarrabese sequence</u>

348 In all tectonic units of the External Nappe, a thick continental volcanic-sedimentary succession 349 covers the Arenarie di San Vito in angular unconformity. The basis of this sequence consists of 350 conglomerates containing pebbles from the underlying terrigenous succession, intercalated with sandstones and siltstones (Metaconglomerati di Muravera Fm., Carmignani *et al.* 2001). This
continental deposit is discontinuous, and the thickness varies from 0 to 50 m. The overlying volcanic
succession consists of epiclastites and andesitic lavas (Monte Santa Vittoria Fm.; (Carmignani *et al.*2001; Conti *et al.* 2001), in turn covered by rhyolitic to dacitic ignimbrites and lava flows (Porfidi
Grigi Fm. in the Sarrabus Unit, Calvino 1959); Porfiroidi Fm. in the Gerrei Unit, Calvino 1972).

The volcanic products differ in volume and evolutionary tendency within the different tectonic units. The intrusive counterparts of these volcanic successions are the Monte Filau orthogneiss present in the Bithia Unit (Pavanetto *et al.* 2012), and a swarm of sills and necks intruding the Arenarie di San Vito. This volcanic succession is attributed to a calc-alkaline series (Gaggero *et al.* 2012) associated with a subduction system (Carmignani *et al.* 1994; Oggiano *et al.* 2010) and recently reinterpreted as the possible product of an accretionary tectonics (Cocco and Funedda 2019).

362 The age of these volcanic rocks is bracketed at the base by the Floian biota from the San Vito 363 Sandstone Fm. and at the top by Katian BH4 TH3 associations (Punta Serpeddì Fm., Loi et al. 1992); 364 Riu Canoni schists, Naud 1979). A series of U-Pb ages on zircon (Figs 3 and 8, see references) allows 365 us to better identify the timespan of the volcano-sedimentary succession. The upper part is bounded by an age U-Pb of 452 ± 0.32 Ma (Dack 2009) which confirms the biostratigraphic assignment of the 366 367 overlying Serpeddì Fm. and allows to exclude an extended gap between the volcanites and the Katian 368 sedimentary succession. The so far available dating allows to extend the lower volcano-sedimentary 369 limit up to at least 465.4 \pm 1.9 Ma (Oggiano *et al.* 2010), but it could be older depending on further 370 dating.

371

372 *Katian nonconformity sequence*

The unconformable sedimentary succession overlying the volcanics (Fig. 9) comprises an Upper Ordovician-lower Carboniferous continuous sedimentary series. This succession in the External Nappe begins in the middle Katian and the stratigraphic formations recognised in the Sarrabus/Gerrei tectonic units (Fig. 3) are the Serpeddì and Tuviois formations in the Sarrabus Unit (Fig. 9, Barca and Di Gregorio 1979; Loi *et al.* 1992) and the Genna Mesa and Rio Canoni formations in the Gerrei
Unit (Naud 1979; Carmignani *et al.* 2001).

379 In both tectonic units, the stratigraphic organisation of the Upper Ordovician deposits reflects 380 widespread transgression and show variable compositions, depending on the source areas from which 381 the sediments originate as well as stratigraphic and palaeoenvironmental conditions. These deposits 382 are therefore typical of each tectonic unit and consist of lithic sandstones, greywacke, rare arkose 383 and silty mudstones with rare limestones. In the different tectonic units these successions evolve in 384 a similar way, with deposits of lagoon and shoreface environments grading upwards into storm-385 dominated offshore environments. This strongly retrogradational trend is clearly controlled by a 386 third-order eustatic rise (Fig. 9). This strong forcing resulted in deposits characterized by placers; the 387 heavy mineral concentration of which locally exceeds 15% of the total composition. Rutile, pseudo-388 rutile, zircons, monazites and tourmalines are the main mineral phases present in these deposits (Loi 389 et al. 1992; Loi 1993; Pistis et al. 2016). These placer accumulations have been interpreted as 390 sedimentary condensation levels coinciding with the inflection points of the eustatic rise curve of the 391 high-frequency cycles of the third-order retrogradational phase (Pistis et al. 2016). In the upper part 392 of the Katian succession (Tuviois and Rio Canoni formations) a carbonatic, locally silicified horizon 393 is observed.

The fossiliferous content is abundant and well preserved especially in the transgressive stratigraphic successions of the Katian of the Sarrabus/Gerrei tectonic units (Fig. 3). These have provided a rich brachiopod fauna (Giovannoni and Zanfrà 1978; Naud 1979; Loi 1993), trilobites (Hammann and Leone 1997, 2007), cystoids (Helmcke 1972; Helmcke and Koch 1974), bryozoans (Conti 1990) crinoids, conodonts (Helmcke and Koch 1974; Ferretti *et al.* 1998), gastropods and rare orthoconic cephalopods.

The trilobite and brachiopod faunas have been studied by (Leone *et al.* 1991) and Hammann and Leone (1997, 2007), who identified an association of brachiopods and trilobites (TH3 and TH4 for trilobites, BH4 and BH5 for brachiopods) which allows to assign the base of these deposits to the Katian. The underlying volcanics dated 452±0.32 Ma (Dack 2009) ties the first transgressive deposits
to the Middle-Upper Katian. Furthermore, the strongly transgressive trend of the succession allows
us to correlate precisely these deposits with the retrogradation of sequence 3r of the eustatic curve
established in the Upper Ordovician of the Moroccan Anti Atlas (Loi *et al.* 2010).

407 Unfortunately, the strong deformations do not permit a secure evaluation of the facies in the transition 408 from the Ordovician to the Silurian; consequently, the possible occurrence of Upper Ordovician 409 glaciogenic deposits in central and south-eastern Sardinia still remains an open question. In the Gerrei 410 Tectonic unit the Silurian rests on the Katian succession with the classical Thuringian facies triad: 411 "Lower Graptolitic Shales", "Ockerkalk" and "Upper Graptolitic Shales" (Corradini et al. 1998). 412 Local occurrences of Silurian metabasites dated 440±1.7 Ma (Fig. 8) (Oggiano et al. 2010), overlying 413 the Katian sequence, indicates a submarine volcanic activity, represented by spilites and rare pillow 414 structures (e.g., near San Basilio and Brecca); the alkaline to subalkaline basaltic magmas of this 415 volcanic activity have been ascribed to a within plate extensional context (Di Pisa et al. 1992).

417

Fig. 9. Schematic lithostratigraphic succession of the Post-Sarrabese sequences of Sarrabus tectonic unit. Curve of
relative sea-level changes and main fossiliferous occurrence of trilobites (TH) and brachiopods (BH) identified by Leone *et al.* (1998) and Hammann and Leone (1997, 2007). Chronostratigraphic correlation by the time-calibrated eustatic curve

- 421 established in the Upper Ordovician of the Moroccan Anti Atlas (Loi *et al.* 2010) and the Middle Upper Ordovician of
 422 the Armorican Massif (Dabard *et al.* 2015). After (Cocco *et al.* 2022_submitted).
- 423

424 **3.3**) Internal Nappe Zone

425

In the Internal Nappes, neither the Sardic Unconformity nor the volcanic rocks of the Middle Ordovician have ever been detected. Within the low-grade units of north-western Sardinia, calcalkaline meta-rhyolites with a transitional character provided a U-Pb zircon age of 486 ± 1.2 and 479.9 ± 2.1 Ma (Furongian and Tremadocian) (Oggiano *et al.* 2010; Gaggero *et al.* 2012) (Table 2) and can be considered to belong to the same volcanic cycle as that those contained in the Arenarie di San Vito Fm. of the External Nappe (Fig.3).

432 The succession of the Upper Ordovician in the Internal Nappes is poorly defined (Fig. 3). In the 433 Gennargentu Massif (Fig. 2b), the meta-sediments attributed to the Upper Ordovician are mainly 434 quartzites (Dessau et al. 1982) which suggest the erosion of an older and more mature crystalline 435 craton, rather than a volcanic arc. In northwestern Sardinia, a deposit of laminated dark fine 436 metasiltite hosting phosphate layers, oolitic ironstones and possible glacio-marine diamictite, has 437 been reported in the Upper Ordovician (Oggiano and Mameli 2006). Here, the transition to the 438 Silurian black shales is marked by an erosional unconformity evidenced by conglomerates. Based on 439 the observed exposure, the minimum thickness of the typical Silurian euxinic phyllite can be 440 estimated to be about 100 m. In NW Sardinia Internal Nappes, on the other hand, the Devonian 441 platform limestones (commonly cropping out in the External Nappe zone) are absent.

442

443 4) The Sardic and Sarrabese Phases and their unconformities

444

445 Ordovician tectonics in Sardinia is documented by two deformational events including overturned
446 folds (Cocco *et al.* 2018, 2022_submitted; Cocco and Funedda 2019). The deformation event known

447 as the Sardic Phase (Stille 1939) is defined on the basis of the angular unconformity first detected in 448 SW-Sardinia (Fig: 10) (Sardic Unconformity, Teichmüller 1931). The second has been recognised in 449 SE-Sardinia and is called Sarrabese Unconformity (i.e. "Sarrabese Phase": Calvino 1959). The 450 overlapping of Variscan deformation with Ordovician unconformities has led to confusions and 451 simplified interpretations of the timing and meaning of Ordovician unconformities. Recent work in 452 the Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit (SW-Sardinia, the External Zone of the Variscan Chain; Cocco et al. 2018, 453 2022 submitted; Fig.11) highlights that the Sardic Phase occurred between early Floian and early 454 Sandbian, whereas the age of the Sarrabese Phase, recognised in the Sarrabus/Gerrei Units (SE-455 Sardinia, the Nappe Zone of the Variscan Chain), is robustly constrained between the early Floian 456 and the Darriwilian-Dapingian boundary (Fig. 8). Although the ages and style of deformation of the 457 Sardic and Sarrabese phases are potentially similar, there are important stratigraphic, temporal, palaeontological and geodynamic differences that exclude the proximity of these domains in the 458 459 Ordovician age.

460 (Cocco et al. 2022 submitted) also recognise in the Sulcis-Iglesiente unit, after the Sardic Phase, a 461 sedimentary gap with continentalisation that lasted 17 Ma. A continental rift system was then 462 established in the Sandbian, finally evolving into passive continental margin platform deposits. In 463 contrast, after the Sarrabese phase in the Sarrabus/Gerrei units, there is a short-lived stratigraphic gap 464 (about 6 Ma, between the middle Floian and the Dapingian-Darriwilian boundary). This shorter 465 depositional gap ended with accumulation of a thick calc-alkaline volcanic succession in a 466 continental environment. The latter is linked to a subduction system, which lasted for a period of 467 time of about 19 Ma. At the same time, the Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit (SW Sardinia) underwent a process 468 of continental rift and subsequent oceanic opening with the development of a passive continental 469 margin (Post-Sardic succession). Finally, approximately 25 Ma after the Sarrabese Phase, an 470 unconformable transgressive marine deposit overlaps the volcanic arc in the middle Katian 471 (Nonconformity). The distinct temporal extent of the unconformities and the presence of a 472 continental volcanic arc exclusively present in the Sarrabus/Gerrei units (and in the entire Nappe

Zone of the Sardinian basement), allows to propose that these domains did not share the same geodynamic setting, and, consequently, not even the same palaeogeographic position during the Ordovician age, implying that they approached and amalgamated only during the Variscan period (Cocco *et al.* 2018, 2022_submitted). The possible substantial separation is also supported by the comparisons between the Katian trilobites assemblages that, even if influenced by palaeoecological constraints, clearly suggest an earlier "Chinese" affinity in the Sarrabus-Gerrei units (Nappe Zone) (Cocco *et al.* 2022 submitted).

480

- 481
- 482 Fig. 10. Sardic Unconformity along the Masua shoreline (SW Sardinia). The basal heterometric conglomerates of the M. Argentu Fm. (base
- 483 Sandbian) unconformably lie on the Cabitza Fm. (middle Cambrian–lower Floian). After (Cocco *et al.* 2018).

486 Fig. 11. Synoptic figure of the main stratigraphic and magmatic features between the Sulcis-Iglesiente Unit (External
487 Zone) and the Sarrabus/Gerrei Units (External Nappe Zone). Correlation, in linear time scale, of the major unconformities

488 of Ordovician. U-Pb zircons age of magmatic rocks (volcanic in red and plutonic in green) and bibliographic reference

489 number: 1-(Pavanetto et al. 2012); 2-(Oggiano et al. 2010); 3-(Dack 2009); 4-(Giacomini et al. 2006). After (Cocco et

490 *al.* 2022_submitted).

492 **5)** Conclusion

In several reconstructions of pre-Variscan palaeogeography, Sardinia is considered a single block forming part of the Gondwana margin that experienced, since the Cambrian, different geodynamic contexts linked to the evolution of the Rheic Ocean, before being involved in the Variscan orogeny during the Lower Carboniferous.

The most relevant pre-Variscan geodynamic events recorded in Sardinia occurred during the Ordovician, and are testified by a folding event affecting only the lower Cambrian-Ordovician successions. The resulting angular unconformity is sealed by thick continental and shallow-marine deposits in the Sulcis-Iglesiente unit (SW Sardinia) and by volcanic products with calc-alkaline affinity in the Sarrabus/Gerrei units (SE Sardinia).

502 The comparison of the stratigraphy and tectonic structures of the successions below and above the Ordovician unconformities along with better time constraints have allowed to highlight significant 503 504 differences in the Ordovician evolution between the Sulcis-Iglesiente and Sarrabus/Gerrei tectonic 505 units. Noteworthy are the different extension of unconformity-related gaps (17 and 6 Ma in the 506 Sulcis-Iglesiente and Sarrabus/Gerrei units, respectively, (Cocco et al. 2022 submitted), differences 507 in the fossil fauna and the presence of a volcanic arc only in the Nappe Zone units (i.e., 508 Sarrabus/Gerrei units), which suggest that these domains did not share the same palaeogeographic 509 position during the Ordovician, implying that their current juxtaposition is entirely of Variscan 510 origin.

The recognition that the Sardinian block consisting of several distinct terranes before Variscan orogeny implies alternative correlations to those hitherto known and a different reconstruction of their position, also depending on the dynamics related to the diachronous opening of the Rheic Ocean (Burda *et al.* 2021), suggesting an extreme tectonic mobility of the Rheic margin of Gondwana. In particular, the External Zone and the Nappe Zone should be placed in different and distant positions to fit the correct geodynamic context. In this regard, (Cocco and Funedda 2019) propose for the

517	Sarrabus/Gerrei units (and consequently all the Sardinian Variscan Nappe Zone) a position close to
518	the subduction margin of the Qaidam Ocean, in such a way to be consistent with the occurrence of
519	the Ordovician arc volcanic products.
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