

# 1 **Arrested versus active silica diagenesis reaction boundaries — A review** 2 **of seismic diagnostic criteria**

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## 9 10 **Abstract**

11 This paper evaluates previously proposed diagnostic criteria that can be used to determine  
12 whether or not there is active migration of the opal-A to opal-CT transition zone (TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>). The  
13 criteria are based on the interpretation of 2D and 3D seismic surveys, and are therefore  
14 geometrical. They involve an assessment of the relationship of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> with polygonal fault  
15 systems, differential compaction structures, and tectonic folds. The most robust evidence for  
16 an inactive 'reaction front' between opal-A and opal-CT bearing sediments is the discordance  
17 of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> relative to present-day isotherms. Any of these may be persuasive as diagnostic  
18 criteria for the upward arrest of the diagenetic transformation at a regional scale, but actual  
19 truncation of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> at the modern seabed is definitive for arrested diagenesis. This study  
20 argues that diagenetic assessment based solely on a single criterion independently is not  
21 reliable as an indicator for the current state of a silica transition. As a conclusion, the  
22 analysed seismic/structural criteria should be synthesised to provide a more credible  
23 interpretation for silica diagenesis. The use of modern 2D and 3D seismic data for the  
24 reconstruction of the diagenetic history of opaline silica bearing sediments offers a new  
25 approach to the study of silica diagenesis at a regional scale.

26  
27 **Keywords:** Silica diagenesis; bottom simulating reflector; seismic stratigraphy; differential  
28 compaction folding; polygonal fault systems

## 29 30 **1. Introduction**

31 The transformation of silica from opal-A (biogenic opal) to opal-CT (cristobalite/tridymite) is  
32 the most conspicuous diagenetic event present in modern and ancient deep-sea sediments  
33 where diatomaceous oozes are major constituents of ocean basin floors. This transformation  
34 comprises a complex set of dissolution–reprecipitation reactions (Stein and Kirkpatrick, 1976;

35 Kastner et al., 1977; Leeder, 1982; Williams and Crerar, 1985; Williams et al., 1985; Wrona  
36 et al., 2017a), which lead to marked changes in the host sediment petrophysics, particularly a  
37 porosity drop (Isaacs, 1981; Tada, 1991; Nobes et al., 1992; Chaika and Dvorkin, 1997,  
38 2000; Meadows and Davies, 2007, 2009; Weller and Behl, 2015). These petrophysical  
39 variations are essentially due to extensive dissolution of opal-A and lesser impacts from  
40 precipitation of pore-filling opal-CT (Wrona et al., 2017a; Wrona et al., 2017b; Wrona et al.,  
41 2017c; Varkouhi et al., 2020a; Varkouhi et al., 2020b). A marked reduction in the content of  
42 biosilica frustules following dissolution significantly reduces the sediment stability, which  
43 makes its framework susceptible to abrupt collapse, sharp reduction in intergranular and  
44 intragranular porosities, and an appreciable interstitial-water expulsion (Varkouhi et al.,  
45 2020a; Varkouhi et al., 2020b). A lesser role for subsequent formation of diagenetic opal on  
46 physical-property response than pioneer dissolution of biogenic opal is commonly due to the  
47 restraining influences of authigenic phases other than opal-CT (e.g. authigenic clays) that  
48 precipitate mostly concomitant with silica diagenesis and restrict substantial formation of  
49 opal-CT through affecting the solubility and chemical kinetics of pore-water silica (Emerson  
50 and Hedges, 2008; Loucaides et al., 2010; Varkouhi and Wells, 2020; Varkouhi et al., 2020b;  
51 Varkouhi et al., 2021). The prominent increase in sediment bulk density over a vertical extent  
52 of a few metres results from porosity reduction, and compressional velocity increases owe to  
53 cementation of pore space by opal-CT (Varkouhi et al., 2020a). As a result, acoustic  
54 impedance dramatically increases, allowing these petrophysical changes to be imaged on  
55 seismic profiles as a high-amplitude discrete reflection or composite reflection that is most  
56 easily identified when it exhibits a discordant geometry with the host stratigraphy (Brekke,  
57 2000; Davies and Cartwright 2002; Davies, 2005; Davies et al., 2009; Ireland et al., 2010;  
58 Neagu et al., 2010a; Neagu et al., 2010b).

59

60 This high amplitude reflection is found to crudely mark the position of a transition zone, where  
61 opal-A is gradually lost, and replaced by opal-CT (hereafter  $TZ_{A/CT}$ ). The mapping and  
62 interpretation of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  is important for a general understanding of petroleum systems  
63 (Perrodon et al., 1998; Davies and Cartwright, 2002; Dralus et al., 2015), as a major drilling  
64 hazard (presence of hard sub-seabottom porcellaneous and chert layers containing opal-CT;  
65 Neagu, 2011; Roberts, 2014), and more fundamentally to place the significance of silica  
66 diagenesis in a basin evolutionary context (Davies, 2005; Wrona et al., 2017a).

67

68 Research into biogenic silica diagenesis in deep-water deposits is a broad theme that has  
69 been based on seismic reflection profiling (for a review of the literature, see Cartwright,

70 2007), scientific drillings (see Neagu, 2011 for a literature review), and outcrop examinations  
71 (see Chaika, 1998). The  $TZ_{ACT}$  was first recognised on 2D seismic reflection profiles acquired  
72 during research cruises linked to the earliest drilling campaigns of the Deep Sea Drilling  
73 Project (DSDP) (Hein et al., 1978; Lonsdale, 1990). These early investigations were focused  
74 on Late Cenozoic deep-sea sediments deposited on lower continental slopes of the southern  
75 Bering Sea, where the seismic reflection from the  $TZ_{ACT}$  was parallel to the modern seafloor.  
76 As a result, the diagenetic reflection was commonly described as a bottom simulating  
77 reflector (BSR)—a distinct reflection that roughly parallels the seabed based on seismic  
78 reflection images that exhibit high-amplitude reverse-polarity waveforms (Dillon et al., 1993;  
79 Sheriff and Geldart, 1995; Hillman et al., 2017; Ohde et al., 2018). Silica diagenesis was  
80 further researched over the past three decades, largely catalysed by the drilling campaigns of  
81 Ocean Drilling Program (ODP), which involved both 2D and 3D mapping of the  $TZ_{ACT}$  and its  
82 sediment sampling (after Neagu, 2011; Varkouhi, 2018. Also see Ocean Drilling Program  
83 Publication Services, 2012). The  $TZ_{ACT}$  has been also described from biosiliceous  
84 sedimentary rocks on land. The most extensive and well-researched outcrops being from the  
85 Miocene Monterey Formation in California, where the diagenesis of soft diatomaceous ooze  
86 has resulted in the development of significant hydrocarbon reservoirs in diagenetically formed  
87 tight chert and diatomite (Pisciotta, 1981; Isaacs, 1981, 1982; Keller and Isaacs, 1985; Behl  
88 and Garrison, 1994; Chaika, 1998; Chaika and Williams, 2001).

89

90 One of the most unresolved questions in silica diagenetic research is the recognition and  
91 study of arrested transition zones as opposed to currently active  $TZ_{ACT}$ . Deciphering the  
92 diagenetic state of  $TZ_{ACT}$ , i.e. arrested or active transition zone, is critical for a better  
93 understanding of biogenic silica diagenesis (Neagu et al., 2010b) and for reconstructing the  
94 thermal history of sediments hosting this diagenetic reaction (Pisciotta, 1981; Pisciotta et al.,  
95 1992; Wrona et al. 2017a; Varkouhi, 2018; Varkouhi et al., 2021). By 'arrested' (also referred  
96 to as fossilised by Davies and Cartwright, 2002; Neagu et al., 2010b), this study means the  
97 transition across which transformation from opal-A to opal-CT is presently static; implying that  
98 the regional transition zone is not currently at or near the phase stability boundary between  
99 opal-A and opal-CT. The arrested status of diagenesis is determined from certain specific  
100 stratigraphic and structural relationships between the reaction front and the host sediments  
101 (Davies and Cartwright, 2002). These relationships imply that the silica front is unlikely to be  
102 active in its current sub-seafloor position. Importantly, the lack of equilibrium with the present-  
103 day temperature field in the basin is considered the main clue that accounts for the arrested  
104 state of the  $TZ_{ACT}$  and therefore its discordant attitude relative to the present-day seabed, i.e.

105 a non bottom simulating reflector (non-BSR) (Brekke, 2000; Fig. 1A). The disequilibrium  
106 leading to arrested transitions has been attributed to a marked reduction in the thermal  
107 regime of the host basin in the recent past (Brekke, 2000; Neagu et al., 2010b). Conversely,  
108 silica diagenesis is still ongoing across active transitions. The long established view of an  
109 active  $TZ_{ACT}$ , being geometrically close to seabottom simulating was developed based on the  
110 discordant basin-wide stratigraphic relationships between the  $TZ_{ACT}$  and its host strata (Hein  
111 et al., 1978; Lonsdale, 1990; Fig. 1B).

112

113 In the past four decades, several studies have proposed interpretational criteria which allow a  
114 distinction to be made between arrested and active transition zones on a case by case basis  
115 (Table 1). These criteria are based on seismic structural examination of the  $TZ_{ACT}$  and mostly  
116 support the notion of presently arrested transitions. However, it should be noted that the  
117 seismic reflection that is interpreted as the diagenetic front is not able to reveal the subtle  
118 variations in composition that really define the  $TZ_{ACT}$  (Varkouhi, 2018; Varkouhi et al., 2020b).  
119 Geochemical data, including pore-water saturation state with respect to silica polymorphs can  
120 provide added constraints to the seismic interpretations (Varkouhi et al., 2020b). However,  
121 such supplemental evidence for the dissolution kinetics of amorphous opal and precipitation  
122 of diagenetic silica is at the pore-water sample scale, and cannot be easily translated to  
123 modelling of migration of the opal-A to opal-CT reaction front at a regional scale. The  
124 precision of a seismic stratigraphic approach is further challenged by Meadows and Davies  
125 (2007) who discussed the morphologies of the silica front cross-sectional morphologies in the  
126 Sea of Okhotsk. According to their study, though a discordant feature relative to the modern  
127 seabed, the reaction over the  $TZ_{ACT}$  would not cease completely (the arrested condition), and  
128 they argue instead that there has been a dramatic decrease in the opal-A to opal-CT  
129 transformation rate in the final stage of basin evolution.

130

131 Given the significance of determining the diagenetic state of the  $TZ_{ACT}$ , the principal aim of  
132 this paper is to review the seismic criteria developed by earlier research (compiled in Table 1)  
133 to differentiate arrested versus active silica diagenesis transition zones. The intention here is  
134 not to exhaustively discuss these interpretational criteria, but to critically examine their  
135 reliability and to provide insights, drawn based on the use of these criteria by former works,  
136 into the potential of seismic stratigraphy method for silica diagenetic research.

137

## 138 **2. Diagenetic criteria – Review and assessment**

### 139 **2.1. Geometrical relationship to present-day isotherms**

140 Roaldset and He (1995) were the first who proposed that disequilibrium with present-day  
141 temperature structure supports the view of a presently arrested  $TZ_{A/CT}$  within Neogene  
142 deposits in the Barents Sea. Brekke (2000) and Neagu et al. (2010b) further argued for this  
143 criterion for the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the Atlantic mid-Norwegian margin sediments by linking the cause of  
144 regionally discordant attitude of this transition zone relative to the present-day isotherms,  
145 including those at the seafloor to the arrested diagenesis (Fig. 2). Meadows and Davies  
146 (2007), in contrast, discuss the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  hosted within the Miocene deposits from the Sea of  
147 Okhotsk as an example of a discordant-to-modern seabed feature that is likely to represent  
148 active silica diagenesis, notwithstanding its parallel relationship to the overlying Late Miocene  
149 Unconformity (Fig. 3). They suggest that the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  was ascending through the sediments  
150 parallel to the isotherms at this time (Late Miocene), and that its sluggish behaviour after the  
151 Late Miocene is likely due to erosion of overburden or an increase in sedimentation rates  
152 relative to the rate of silica diagenetic reactions. Although the present stratigraphic  
153 architecture is not able to distinguish between these mutually exclusive possibilities, an  
154 episode of Late Pliocene basin inversion which led to the deformation of pre-existing  
155 structures suggests a more role for the overburden erosion on significant reduction in the rate  
156 of opal-A to opal-CT transformation across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  from the Sea of Okhotsk than the  
157 influence of sediment accumulation (after Tull, 1997).

158

### 159 **2.1.1. Bottom simulating reflectors**

160 Based on seismic, thermodynamic, and petrographic analysis of the BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$   
161 accommodated within the Middle Miocene sediments of the Ocean Drilling Program (ODP)  
162 Sites 794 and 795 in the Sea of Japan, Varkouhi et al. (2020b) compiled a set of  
163 observations that indicate the opal-A to opal-CT transition zones with a BSR geometry  
164 possibly represent an actively migrating diagenetic front:

- 165 - They are found in continuous stratigraphic sections with no major breaks or unconformities  
166 in deposition;
- 167 - The front is clearly identifiable on seismic profiles;
- 168 - Though parallel to the present-day seabed, the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  lies discordant to host sediments  
169 (Hein et al., 1978; Figs. 4 A through C);
- 170 - The front is hosted in silica-rich young sediments (Late Miocene and younger). The age of  
171 depositional horizons hosting the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  was constrained by diatom biostratigraphy  
172 (Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990a, 1990b; Koizumi, 1992);
- 173 - The geothermal gradient of the sediment accommodating the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  is very high (e.g. 132  
174 °C/km for Site 795; Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990b)

175 In contrast, only a few BSR opal-A to opal-CT transitions that are parallel to the present-day  
176 seabed and are in an arrested diagenetic state have been convincingly documented. An  
177 excellent example is located in the western Pacific and was calibrated by ODP Legs 129 and  
178 181 (Figs. 5A, B). The seismic record in the vicinity of Site 800 from Leg 129 displays a  
179 shallow deformed  $TZ_{A/CT}$  reflection at a more or less constant depth of  $\sim 50$  mbsf (equates to  
180 0.06s two-way traveltime) that generally mimics the seabed reflector (Fig. 5A). This  $TZ_{A/CT}$  lies  
181 discordant with the stratified ancient host sediments of Campanian age, but simulating the far  
182 younger (Middle Miocene to Quaternary) overlying pelagic clay beds (containing 20% opal-A  
183 in average; International Ocean Discovery Program, 2014). A large hiatus ranged from the  
184 Late Cretaceous (Early Maastrichtian) to late Early Miocene and regionally recorded over the  
185 central western Pacific has been well documented within and in proximity of this ODP  
186 borehole site (Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990c).

187

188 There are two hypotheses that account for the likely arrest of silica diagenesis across this  
189  $TZ_{A/CT}$ : 1) a sudden change in thermal regime of the host basin, 2) major breaks in sediment  
190 accumulation

191

192 Since silica diagenesis is dominantly temperature controlled (Kastner et al., 1977; Kastner  
193 and Gieskes, 1983; Littke et al., 1991; Kuramoto et al., 1992; Eichhubl and Behl, 1998;  
194 Davies and Cartwright, 2002; Neagu et al., 2010b ), this ancient BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  may represent  
195 the record of a major sudden decrease in the heat flow during the arrest period, likely before  
196 the Middle Miocene, therefore accounting for its disequilibrium with the present-day  
197 geothermal gradient. If this is the case, the thin overburden that has deposited above the  
198  $TZ_{A/CT}$  since the Middle Miocene means that a Late Cretaceous to late Early Miocene  
199 hypothetical palaeo-geothermal gradient at a minimum of  $70$  °C/km, markedly greater than  
200 that of the present-day (the modern geothermal gradient and temperature being  $50$  °C/km  
201 and  $\sim 2.5$  °C, respectively; after Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990c; Fig. 6), would have been  
202 needed to raise the palaeo-temperature of  $TZ_{A/CT}$  above its modern temperature. In addition,  
203 the diagenesis was likely arrested when the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  was migrating up-section through the  
204 biosiliceous overburden under a markedly higher geothermal gradient, given the discordant  
205 geometry of this transition relative to the adjacent stratigraphy. However, there are currently  
206 no constraints of the past temperature relationships to verify this hypothesis.

207

208 The Late Cretaceous to Middle Miocene phase of non-deposition coincident with the surface  
209 of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  can also lend support to the inference that the silica diagenesis across the

210 transition zone drilled by the ODP Leg 129 is an arrested reaction front. An event of rapid  
211 reduction of overburden by deep regional marine erosion over the central western part of the  
212 Pacific Ocean (as documented by Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990c) was followed by the  
213 very low accumulation rate of post-hiatus sediments typical of pelagic deep-sea clays. This  
214 erosional event probably led to a marked decrease in the geothermal gradient such that the  
215 overburden deposited since Middle Miocene time has still not returned the arrested  $TZ_{A/CT}$   
216 level back to the temperature required to rejuvenate its active status. The fact that the  $TZ_{A/CT}$   
217 and its accommodating bedding reflectors are heavily involved in the latest phase of  
218 deformation, including faulting, while the post-hiatus Cenozoic deposits above it have not  
219 been deformed further supports this hypothesis by implying that the ancient formerly deep  
220 transition was deformed before the deposition of after-hiatus strata; thus out of thermal  
221 equilibrium, to such a degree that it cannot be still advancing up the column. In addition,  
222 development of cellular morphologies along middle parts of the transition zone (Fig. 5A) and  
223 that these features die out up-section and do not offset the opal-A-bearing beds indicate that  
224 silica diagenesis has been likely arrested before the Middle Miocene age of the initiation of  
225 post-hiatus deposits. The formation of these cellular structures across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  is attributed  
226 to the pre-arrest upward advance of this boundary due to the release of overpressure (Davies  
227 and Cartwright, 2007; Neagu et al., 2010b).

228

229 While the typical BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  with likely arrested status are commonly observed to be 100–  
230 200 m or less of the present-day seabed, rare cases of deeper transitions (> 400 mbsf) can  
231 also be tracked through the western Pacific deep-sea sediments. The best example of this  
232 type of  $TZ_{A/CT}$  was penetrated during ODP Leg 181, proximal to Site 1124 in North Island,  
233 New Zealand (Fig. 5B). This folded diagenetic horizon cross-cuts the Late Cretaceous host  
234 stratigraphy, but is parallel to the near-seabed younger strata. Over the eastern flank of the  
235 Hikurangi Trough, west of Site 1124, the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  is typically parallel to the basal hemipelagic  
236 biosiliceous layers which have deposited immediately following the erosional event  
237 responsible for an Early Miocene (19–23.8 Ma) unconformity (after Shipboard Scientific  
238 Party, 1999). Although association solely with the regional folding, does not strongly support  
239 arrested diagenesis across the boundary, the initiation of diagenesis since Late Cretaceous  
240 suggests that this deeply buried ancient  $TZ_{A/CT}$  cannot be related to an active diagenetic  
241 reaction in its current sub-seafloor position ~ 470 mbsf (Fig. 5B). It seems that the upward  
242 migration of the boundary was arrested in a folded geometry before the cessation of regional  
243 folding and onset of the Early Miocene erosional events. Analogous structural deformation  
244 pattern of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  and its overlying reflectors, including the current folded seabed suggests

245 that the arrest of diagenesis pre-dated the final phase of folding; otherwise the deformed  
246 geometry of the front would have been comparatively smoothed since the Late Cretaceous  
247 onset of silica diagenesis following upward advance of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  through the overlying opal-A  
248 sediment, and this is obviously not the case for this reaction front.

249

250 — *Argument*

251 Since temperature is a dominant control on silica diagenesis (e.g. Neagu et al., 2010b), the  
252 active up-section migration should simulate the seafloor isotherm and isothermal reflections  
253 within shallow parts of a basin with a simple structure and homogenous sedimentation rates,  
254 i.e. a BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  (Gretener, 1981; criterion 1 in Table 2). However, such a seafloor  
255 mimicking  $TZ_{A/CT}$  geometry is very unlikely to occur in the Atlantic margin, where the thermal  
256 structure of the shallow zones of this basin has been complicated by numerous local  
257 variations in thermal regimes due to highly structured nature of the basin (by following  
258 Neagu, 2011). From this, a strong case can be made that variations in thermal structure of  
259 the basin lead to thermal disequilibrium of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  stratigraphic horizon with normal  
260 isotherms that represent modern geothermal gradients (Fig. 7). The case does not imply that  
261 present local isotherms always mirror the seabed over any structure, but a discordant-to-  
262 modern seabed reaction front is a non-isothermal marker which follows neither the seafloor  
263 nor the present isotherms (criterion 3 in Table 2). Shallow isotherms are however mainly  
264 parallel to the seabed because of the effect of cold sea water, but it depends critically on  
265 basal heat flow and thermal conductivity of the sediments (Rafferty, 2011). The disequilibrium  
266 with present-day temperature structure occurs when the front upward advancement is  
267 arrested possibly owing sudden changes in the basin thermal state (e.g. Brekke, 2000). The  
268 aforementioned case also suggests that the hypothesis of Meadows and Davies (2007)—a  
269 non-BSR reaction front may still represent an active feature, but with a sluggish upward  
270 advancement—is not correct. If correct, the geometry of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  at a regional scale would  
271 have been strongly influenced by stratigraphic array of overburden, and this is clearly not the  
272 case in the Atlantic margin and the Sea of Okhotsk. In addition, if still in thermal equilibrium  
273 with the present isotherms, i.e. an active  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , a reflector topologically mirroring the seabed  
274 isotherm at a regional scale would have been expected (Neagu et al., 2010b). While the  
275 discordant-to-modern seafloor  $TZ_{A/CT}$  represents a partly faulted more or less smooth  
276 boundary over most part of the eastern Russia in the Sea of Okhotsk, the overburden is  
277 heavily involved in collapse features that result from sediment entrain following water flows  
278 and therefore volume loss at the level of remobilized strata (Davies et al., 2008; Fig. 3).  
279 Accordingly, the parallelism the boundary in the Sea of Okhotsk shows with the overlying

280 strata only up to level of the Late Miocene Unconformity suggests that the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  has not  
281 advanced since the Late Miocene. Following this argument, a discordant-to-modern seabed  
282 geometry can highly support the regionally arrested nature of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$  at different settings.

283

284 In comparison, the reliable diagnostic criteria developed by Varkouhi et al. (2020b) in support  
285 of the view of a likely active state for the BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the deep-sea sediments of the Japan  
286 Sea can be applied to analogous basins from other geographical settings. However, given  
287 the association of some BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , e.g. those from the western Pacific margin with  
288 deformational features, additionally the old age of these reaction boundaries (Late  
289 Cretaceous), a BSR attitude relative to the present seafloor is not a definitive proof that silica  
290 diagenesis reaction across the opal-A to opal-CT transition zone is currently active.

291

## 292 **2.2. Truncation to present seafloor**

293 The truncation of a sub-seabottom  $TZ_{A/CT}$  reflector to the present-day seabed represents  
294 regions of eroded overburden and seafloor. The overburden erosion occurs mostly due to  
295 uplift and seawater flow energy, and its intensity in the seaward vergent region is commonly  
296 greater than that of the landward vergent region (McAdoo et al., 2004). Without doubt, when  
297 uplift and/or erosion results in the cropping out of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$  reflector at the present-day seabed,  
298 the only possible interpretation is that the progress of any diagenetic reactions will most likely  
299 be curtailed, and the front arrested. A good example of such a case of an outcropping  
300 diagenetic front is shown in Figure 8 from the Nankai Trough, offshore southwestern Japan.  
301 The exposure of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  at the seafloor at a high angle on the steep ridge slopes suggests  
302 a high degree of erosion, and the cessation of silica diagenesis. The exhaustion of biogenic  
303 opal stock above the transition zone due to overburden removal over the eroded ridges is the  
304 substantial cause for the arrest of the exposed  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the Nankai Trough because this  
305 process precludes silica diagenesis, and thus leads to its arrest. Varkouhi (2018) suggested  
306 that the truncation of the reaction boundary at the seafloor provides clear and independent  
307 indications of the arrest of silica diagenesis at a regional scale. Other deformation styles  
308 associated with this  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , including seaward dipping faults and folds further strengthen the  
309 view of its currently arrested state. The cross-cutting relationship between this faulted/folded  
310  $TZ_{A/CT}$  and its Middle to Late Pliocene host strata suggests that biogenic silica diagenesis  
311 should have commenced and continued to proceed whilst deformation occurred during the  
312 Pliocene. However, the timing of the arrest of diagenesis cannot be determined in this case,  
313 given the removal by uplift and extensive erosion of the biogenic overburden.

314

### 315 **2.3. Regional anticlinal–synclinal morphology**

316 The large inversion-related folds in the Faeroe-Shetland Channel, NE Atlantic margin, exhibit  
317 a clear relationship between the structural relief at the depth of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from this basin and  
318 the nearby stratal surfaces within the accommodating sediments (after Davies and  
319 Cartwright, 2002; Fig. 7C). At a regional scale, the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> is hosted in the Early to Late  
320 Miocene sediments and is itself folded with a wavelength ranging between 5 and 20 km. The  
321 fold axes mapped at the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> coincide with those mapped in the over- and underlying Upper  
322 Oligocene to Late Miocene sediments, which are known to be opaline in their original  
323 depositional facies. The structural relief at the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> is far less pronounced than that of its  
324 folded host strata as expected from a discordant diagenetic reflection. It is, however,  
325 concordant with the Early Pliocene Unconformity that truncates the folded strata (Fig. 7C).  
326 Using these key observations, Davies and Cartwright (2002) concluded that the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from  
327 the Faeroe-Shetland Basin likely advanced upwards during the folding, but was arrested  
328 before the cessation of folding and the last stage of erosion across the Early Pliocene  
329 Unconformity. A similar deformational relationship was observed in the adjacent Atlantic mid-  
330 Norwegian margin by Brekke (2000), who indicated that on the flanks of the large arches and  
331 domes in this area, the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> reflector clearly crosscuts the domal structures, but is also  
332 observed to be itself involved in the latest phase of the arching (Fig. 9). Brekke (2000) argued  
333 that the phase transition was regionally arrested most likely in latest Miocene or Early  
334 Pliocene time. Comparable to the approach of Davies and Cartwright (2002), Neagu et al.  
335 (2010b) used the reconstruction of major fold growth history for silica diagenesis in the mid-  
336 Norwegian margin sediments to argue that the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> with partial development of serrated  
337 patterns (Fig. 10A) advanced syn-folding and hosted within the Neogene deposits was  
338 arrested in situ in a folded geometry since the Late Miocene.

339

#### 340 — *Argument*

341 The interpretation of Davies and Cartwright (2002) on the state of silica diagenesis in the  
342 Faeroe-Shetland basin can be argued as the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> could have continued to migrate upwards  
343 after the last phase of folding, given a significant reserve of biogenic opal above this  
344 boundary for fuelling. If this is the case, the structure of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> would have been then more  
345 highly impacted by overburden architecture than by tectonic folding, and this is clearly not the  
346 geometry that the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> in the Faeroe-Shetland basin currently displays. The parallelism the  
347 folded TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> displays relative to the Early Pliocene Unconformity surface implies that the  
348 reaction front was in thermal equilibrium with this unconformity surface before the arrest of  
349 diagenesis because the unconformity was acting as the palaeo-seabed isotherm at that time.

350 Possibly, following an event of uplift and rapid reduction of overburden by erosion during  
351 Early Pliocene, this palaeo-seabed became an active erosional surface which led to the  
352 cessation of silica diagenesis across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$ . Another piece of evidence for the arrest of  
353 silica diagenesis before the structural deformation was discontinued comes from the  
354 formation of asymmetrical toothy (serrated) features, ranging in height from 20 to 55 m,  
355 across this boundary (Fig. 10B). These sawtooth patterns form where the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  commonly  
356 cross-cuts deformed strata with an inclination similar to the angle of the boundary cross-  
357 cutting them. The serrated morphology is indicative of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  preferential upward  
358 migration through opal-A rich higher stratal levels at a stair-step separation of a few tens of  
359 metres, possibly due to variations in opal-A content of overlying sediment (Meadows and  
360 Davies, 2007). These variations are most likely linked to variations across opal-A sediment  
361 bedding. Therefore, the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  developed the serrated structure by advancing up through  
362 inclined opal-rich layers of the overlying interbedded succession faster than through those  
363 with lower opal-A content.

364

365 Thermodynamically, the regional folded structure of the transition zone from the research  
366 conducted by Davies and Cartwright (2002), Brekke (2000), and Neagu et al. (2010b)  
367 suggests different temperature histories experienced by its different deformed parts. This is  
368 because the reaction boundary underwent deformation (folding) concomitant with its upward  
369 advance, prior to reaching a chemical equilibrium relative to the silica diagenetic process. As  
370 a result, the internal ordering of diagenetic silica lattice is comparatively less at the anticline  
371 crest than at the syncline trough because the depression parts of the folded  $TZ_{A/CT}$  clearly  
372 experience higher temperatures (Mizutani 1977; Neagu et al. 2010b). The maturation lines of  
373 cristobalite therefore do not track the present-day isothermal reflections, an indication for the  
374 cessation of ongoing diagenesis across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  (Varkouhi et al., 2020b).

375

#### 376 **2.4. Differential compaction folding**

377 The upward migration of silica reaction boundary during the transformation of opal-A to opal-  
378 CT can result in the differential compaction and subsidence in the clastic deposits hosting  
379 silica diagenesis (Davies, 2005). The type example of this diagenetically induced folding  
380 mechanism was described from the Faeroe-Shetland Basin on the NE Atlantic margin using  
381 3D seismic data (Davies, 2005). The folding and differential compaction was attributed to  
382 differential advance of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$ . This boundary developed an irregular morphology  
383 comprised of a series of ridge-depression structures across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  (Figs. 7 and 11), with a  
384 pattern of low-relief ridges or monoclines developed as areas of localized elevations spaced

385 ~ 0.5 to ~ 1 km apart and separated by gentle depressions (Davies et al., 1999; Davies,  
386 2005; Davies and Cartwright, 2007). The ridge–depression format has primarily developed  
387 because the host sediment mantles the polygonal fault system and the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> tracks the  
388 faulted deformed stratigraphy (Davies, 2005). The accentuation of front relief through the  
389 ridge lateral/upward growth—this is possibly due to an increased local heating by the flux of  
390 hot fluids from the faults dissecting the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>—leads to the compaction and synchronous  
391 differential subsidence of overburden due to porosity collapse, and thereby the development  
392 of unusual domal folds, ranging in amplitude from ~ 50 m to subtle features of < 10 m, with  
393 troughs mostly aligned with the underlying frontal ridges (Fig. 11). Accordingly, the ridge–  
394 depression structure of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> has developed during onset of diagenesis, before the  
395 overburden subsiding to the depth of this boundary. Hence, the continued development of  
396 these folds implies continued upwards migration of the irregularly advancing reaction front  
397 through the overlying opal-A sediment pile. Neagu et al. (2010b) used this criterion to argue  
398 for cessation of active upward migration of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from the mid-Norwegian margin.

399

#### 400 — *Argument*

401 The structural relief of domal folds systematically decreases upwards, keeping in pace with  
402 decrease in rate of active differential advance of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> (Fig. 11; criterion 5 in Table 2).  
403 From this interpretation, Neagu et al. (2010b) made a case that by the end of differential  
404 compaction folding process, all active up-section migration of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from the mid-  
405 Norwegian margin ceased at a regional scale, i.e. a presently arrested transition. However,  
406 the same morphology could occur if one assumes silica diagenesis commenced since Early  
407 Miocene is probably still ongoing across the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>, albeit for the time being at a rate that is  
408 slow enough (lower than the burial rates of the order of meters per million years; Varkouhi et  
409 al., 2021) to develop the fold relief and width comparable to those progressively formed due  
410 to earlier opal-A to opal-CT transformation. Accordingly, the systematic upward decrease in  
411 the fold relief is consistent with a significant reduction in differential porosity collapse (Fig. 11)  
412 which is essentially impacted by the rate of silica diagenetic reaction (e.g. Mizutani, 1970,  
413 1971, 1977; Varkouhi et al., 2020a; Varkouhi et al., 2020b). As a conclusion, association with  
414 this mode of deformation cannot independently provide strong supporting evidence that the  
415 silica transition zones accommodated within the Neogene deposits of the Faeroe-Shetland  
416 basin and mid-Norwegian margin are currently arrested reaction fronts.

417

## 418 **2.5. Polygonal faults**

419 Polygonal fault systems are widely developed in biosiliceous mudstones that accumulate on

420 many continental margins, abyssal plains, and some foreland basins and are linked to  
421 sediment compaction and fluid expulsion (Cartwright, 1994, 2011; Cartwright and Dewhurst,  
422 1998; Berndt et al., 2003; Stuevold et al., 2003; Gay and Berndt, 2007; He et al., 2010; Ding  
423 et al., 2013). The individual faults making up the polygonal fault system have small throws  
424 (commonly <50 m; Figs. 7A–C), and propagate with a diverse range of strikes such that the  
425 array appears polygonal in planform (Cartwright et al., 2003; Cartwright, 2007). This  
426 polygonality of the array is the defining feature of the system as a whole, and is one of the  
427 main pieces of supportive evidence leading to the conclusion that polygonal faults are not  
428 formed as a result of regional tectonic stresses (Cartwright, 2007). Using data from 3D  
429 mapping of the NE Atlantic margin basins offshore UK and Norway, Cartwright and Dewhurst  
430 (1998) showed that the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  is hosted within polygonally faulted Early to Late Miocene  
431 biosiliceous muds over most of the margin from the Rockall Basin in the southwest to the  
432 Vøring Basin in the northeast. Further research on geometry and characteristics of the  
433 polygonally faulted and deformed  $TZ_{A/CT}$  along the Norwegian margin (Cartwright, 2007;  
434 Neagu, 2010b) revealed that the magnitude of the throw at the level of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  across each  
435 extensional polygonal fault is typically less than the true stratigraphic throw of the host  
436 stratigraphy on the same fault (Figs. 7A, B). This key observation has been attributed to the  
437 arrest of silica diagenesis, possibly since Late Miocene, prior to the last phase of faulting  
438 across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  and its nearby strata (Cartwright, 2007; Neagu et al., 2010a; Neagu et al.,  
439 2010b).

440

#### 441 — *Argument*

442 Having accumulated the minimum local throw values at the level of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the mid-  
443 Norwegian margin, while a substantial proportion of the total fault displacement actively  
444 accumulated on the fault surface above and below the position of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  may reveal the  
445 activity of a post-arrest phase of fault growth (Neagu et al., 2010a). Furthermore, the upper  
446 fault tip displacement distribution argues that the post-arrest youngest active fault phase  
447 results in the shallowest tip propagation and these faults have the largest offsets of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$   
448 (Neagu et al., 2010a). The usually greater throw in the opal-CT interval below the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  and  
449 the effective cessation of displacement in the interval above it seem consistent with the  
450 suggested notion of an arrested upward migration of silica diagenesis within the deep-sea  
451 sediments of NE Atlantic margin. This scenario is however plausible only if the displacement  
452 rate of the fault was equal to or less than the ascent rate of the migrating diagenetic front  
453 prior to the arrest of diagenesis and the last period of faulting (Fig. 12). Contrary to this  
454 scenario, the same relationship (the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  throw across polygonal faults lower than the true

455 stratigraphic offset) could occur during active silica diagenesis if the fault displacement rate  
456 was higher than the rate of TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> migration through the overlying opal-A sediment in the NE  
457 Atlantic margin basins. This interpretation accords with findings of Shin et al. (2008),  
458 Cartwright (2011), Davies and Ireland (2011), and Hooker et al. (2017) concerning syn-  
459 diagenetic origin of polygonal faults. According to these works, particle dissolution during  
460 diagenesis may cause contraction of host stratigraphy, sediment failure, and hence polygonal  
461 faulting. Marked displacement accumulation on the faults above and below the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>,  
462 compared to the displacement minima at the depth of this boundary, can be related to strain  
463 softening of the host strata during ongoing diagenesis, which leads to the later failure along  
464 existing faults (after Wrona et al., 2017b). Due to their massively different material behaviour,  
465 the shear strength of opal-CT cemented mudstones is however higher than that of opal-A  
466 uncemented sediments (Bjorlykke and Hoeg, 1997), therefore the strain softening of  
467 cemented mudstones would need to be experimentally validated. Furthermore, the second  
468 scenario (fault displacement rates higher than the rate of TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> upward advance) is possible  
469 if very low rates of the order of mm per 1000 years for TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> migration are assumed, but  
470 these rates are effectively static relative to the burial and heating rate. Following these  
471 opposite scenarios, the evidence offered based solely on polygonal faults is not strong proof  
472 of the present-day diagenetic state of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>, i.e. whether silica diagenesis across the  
473 opal-A to opal-CT transition zone is an arrested reaction.

474

### 475 **3. Discussion**

476 From the preceding review of criteria for determining the diagenetic state of silica reaction  
477 boundaries, it is evident that relationships between the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> and contemporaneous  
478 deformation, including polygonal faults, differential compaction folds, and tectonic folds can  
479 provide firm indications of the arrest of the upward migration of a silica diagenetic front at a  
480 regional scale (Neagu et al., 2010b; Table 2). Individual examples of each mode of  
481 deformation and their relationship to the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> is not as convincing for assessing the putative  
482 arrest of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> as when disparate lines of evidence point in the same direction. In case of  
483 the mid-Norwegian margin section, for instance, as documented by Neagu et al. (2010b), the  
484 obviously smaller offset of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> at each polygonal fault than the true offset of embedding  
485 strata could comparably occur either concomitant with upward ascent of the boundary or after  
486 the cessation of silica diagenesis, as for the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from the NE Atlantic basin offshore UK  
487 (Davies and Cartwright, 2002). Observation of the systematic attenuation of differential  
488 folding process through the shallower strata overlying the transition zone either proportional  
489 to the sluggish upward advance of the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> or prior to arrest of silica diagenesis suggests

490 that a line of evidence based only on differential compaction folding is not a solid record for  
491 arrest of silica diagenesis across the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in these basins. Regional folding of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$   
492 offers to some extent more reliable arrest proofs of silica diagenesis than the polygonal faults  
493 and differential compaction folds, provided that in both basins the deformed geometry of the  
494  $TZ_{A/CT}$  has been commonly more impacted and complicated by anticlinal–synclinal systems  
495 than overburden architecture.

496

497 Compared to the deformational patterns discussed, discordance relative to present-day  
498 thermal structure and possible exposure at seafloor are more credible diagnostic criteria for  
499 arbitrating the diagenetic state of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$  at a regional scale. The non-parallel geometry of a  
500  $TZ_{A/CT}$  with the seabed and present-day isotherms provides strong record of regional arrest as  
501 documented by Roaldset and He (1995) for the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  from the Barents Sea sediments and  
502 by Brekke (2000) and Neagu et al. (2010b) for the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the mid-Norwegian margin, given  
503 that local heat flow anomalies have caused the thermal structure of these basins to become  
504 intricate, and have thus led to marked deviations of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  from correspondence to  
505 present isotherms. Due to heat flow variations in the host basin, the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  has departed from  
506 equilibrium with temperature field in the basin; thus the non-parallelism of this boundary with  
507 isothermal reflections. The contradictory interpretation for current state of the regionally  
508 discordant-to-seabed  $TZ_{A/CT}$  from the Sea of Okhotsk proposed by Meadows and Davies  
509 (2007) was challenged here, given that the reaction boundary has been more highly  
510 complicated by structural deformations than by the geometry of its overburden. In contrast, a  
511 BSR attitude can equally represent either active or arrested status of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$  as indicated by  
512 Varkouhi et al. (2020) for the likely active characteristic of the transition zone penetrated by  
513 the ODP Wells 794 and 795, but the arrested nature of the BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  drilled by the ODP Site  
514 800. From this, a case can be made that while a non-BSR feature strongly supports arrested  
515 state of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , a BSR geometry is not an independent reliable proof of ongoing silica  
516 diagenesis. Among the seismic/structural criteria so far offered for diagenetic diagnosis of the  
517 state of a  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , its truncation to the seabed as suggested by Varkouhi (2018) is the only  
518 process that independently and with certainty leads to the arrest of diagenesis, provided that  
519 overburden reduction and seafloor exposure of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  cause running out of opal reserve  
520 of the sediment, which results in the cessation of biogenic silica diagenetic reaction. In case  
521 of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  tracked in the deep-sea sediments from offshore southwestern Japan, the  
522 discordant attitude this deformed (faulted/folded) and truncated boundary takes relative to the  
523 seabed and the strata just below it indicates thermal disequilibrium of silica diagenesis  
524 reaction with present temperature–depth relationships, and hence with the present-day

525 isotherms in this region.

526

527 In conclusion, to draw a reliable interpretation for silica diagenesis in depositional settings at  
528 a regional scale using seismic data, the recognition criteria reviewed above should all  
529 together be taken into account in each study case. In case of the Nankai Trough TZ<sub>A/CT</sub>, for  
530 example, even though the exposure at the seabed is a certain indication for the arrest of its  
531 upward advance, association with other modes of deformation, such as faulting and folding  
532 have been utilised to further construe the arrested status of this reaction front. These  
533 interpretational criteria of contribution the seismic/structural approach makes to the  
534 understanding of silica diagenetic process are so far used by a small spectrum of research  
535 over the past decades. This is, to the authors' knowledge, because seismic stratigraphy is yet  
536 in its infancy stage and major advances in this research tool came first in the early 1980s with  
537 the advent of 3D seismic mapping, and that high-resolution surveying this method offers has  
538 only recently stimulated a new approach to the study of silica diagenesis. Because of its  
539 limited vertical resolution, the seismic stratigraphy contains some fallibility, however the  
540 usage of this medium still remains the most reliable method for the study of silica diagenesis  
541 at a basin scale.

542

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552

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910 Table 1. Seismic structural criteria for recognition of arrested and likely active silica fronts.

<b>Criteria – Arrested silica transition zones</b>
- A non bottom simulating reflector <i>(Roaldset and He, 1995; Brekke, 2000; Neagu et al., 2010b)</i>
- Exposure at present-day seafloor <i>(Varkouhi, 2018)</i>
- Taking anticlinal–synclinal geometry at a regional scale <i>(Brekke, 2000; Davies and Cartwright, 2002; Neagu et al., 2010b)</i>
- Deformation as differential compaction folding <i>(Neagu et al., 2010b)</i>
- Deformation by polygonal fault systems <i>(Cartwright, 2007; Neagu et al., 2010a; Neagu et al., 2010b)</i>
<b>Criteria – Likely active silica transition zones</b>
- A bottom simulating reflector <i>(Hein et al., 1978; Lonsdale, 1990; Neagu et al., 2010b; Varkouhi et al., 2020b)</i>

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932 Table 2. A summary of the reviewed criteria for inferring the diagenetic state of  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , stratigraphic and thermal features/parameters  
 933 related to this assessment, qualitative level of reliability for each diagnostic indicator, and the sketches for different types of geometries  
 934 reviewed.

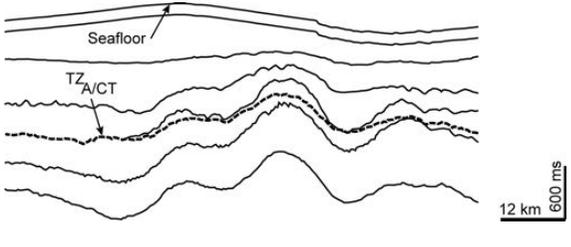
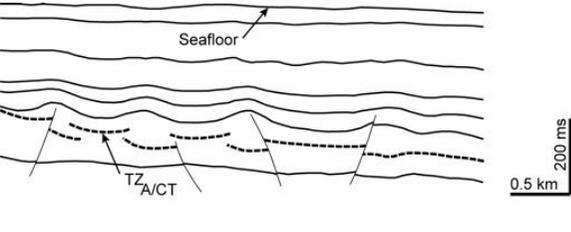
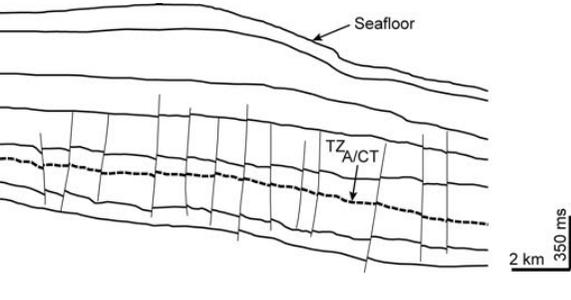
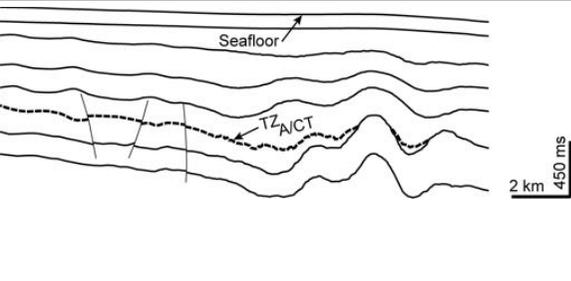
Reviewed identification criterion		Likely diagenetic status	Other determinative stratigraphic/structural and geothermal traits	Level of confidence	Schematic geometry
Number	Description				
1	Bottom simulating reflector	Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age constraints of diagenetic front</li> <li>- Stratigraphic continuity of overlying sediment pile</li> <li>- Biogenic-opal content of overburden</li> <li>- Present-day geothermal gradient of host sediment</li> </ul>	Moderately reliable	
2	Exposure at present seafloor	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discordance relative to near-seabed stratigraphy</li> <li>- Response to tectonic deformation of host strata</li> <li>- Biogenic-silica reserve of overburden</li> </ul>	Definitely reliable	
3	Non bottom simulating reflector	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thermal disequilibrium with modern isotherms</li> <li>- Structure more impacted by deformation than by overburden architecture</li> <li>- Age constraints of diagenetic front</li> </ul>	Highly reliable	

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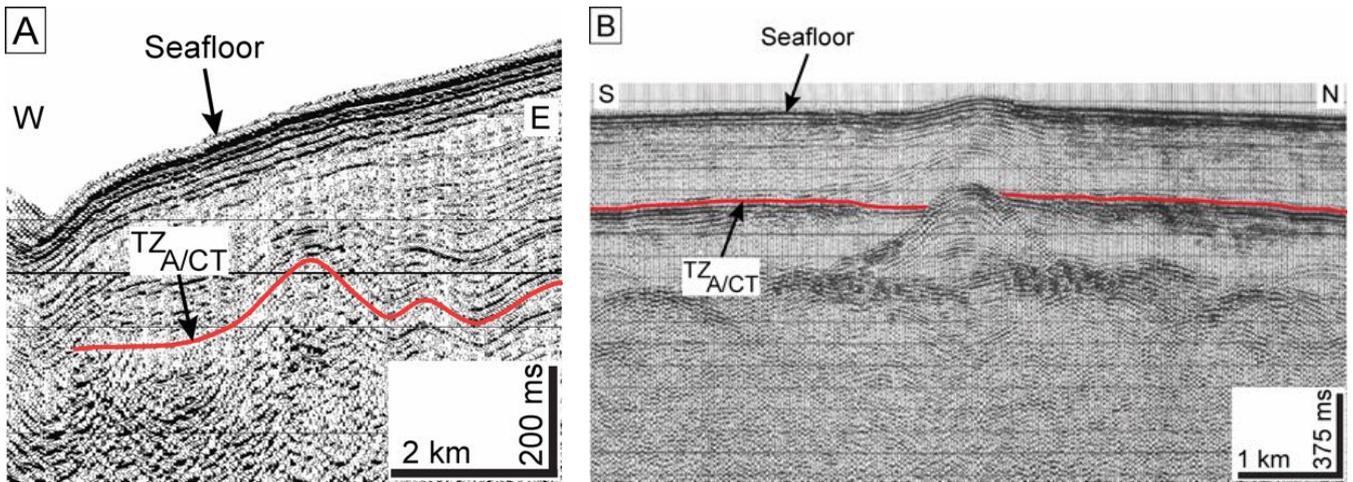
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938 Table 2. Continued.

4	Regional anticlinal–synclinal morphology	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thermal-history contrast among different deformed parts of diagenetic front</li> <li>- Geometric pattern more influenced by structural deformation than by stratigraphic array of overburden</li> </ul>	Moderately reliable	
5	Differential compaction folding	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of cellular morphology</li> <li>- Petrophysical variations of host sediment</li> <li>- Overburden response to differential subsidence</li> </ul>	Slightly reliable	
6	Polygonal faulting	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fault displacement contrast between diagenetic front and host stratigraphy</li> <li>- Non-tectonic compaction of host sediment</li> </ul>	Slightly reliable	
3–6	Association with various deformational styles	Arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disequilibrium with present isotherms</li> <li>- Marked temperature contrast across deformed zones of diagenetic front</li> <li>- Structure more impacted by deformation than by overburden geometry</li> <li>- Response to tectonic and non-tectonic compaction of host sediment and overburden</li> <li>- Petrophysical variability of host sediment</li> <li>- Age constraints of diagenetic front</li> </ul>	Highly reliable	

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942 Figure 1. A regionally folded non-BSR silica diagenesis reaction front (A) versus a BSR  
 943 transition zone (B). The non-BSR  $TZ_{A/CT}$  captured on seismic reflection profile near the  
 944 ODP Site 1022 in the California Margin represents a currently arrested boundary (modified  
 945 from Lyle et al., 1995a, 1995b; Shipboard Scientific Party, 1997). The parallelism the  
 946 undeformed  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , found on seismic section in Japan Basin, displays with the seafloor  
 947 likely indicates an active boundary (modified from Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990b;  
 948 Varkouhi et al., 2020b).

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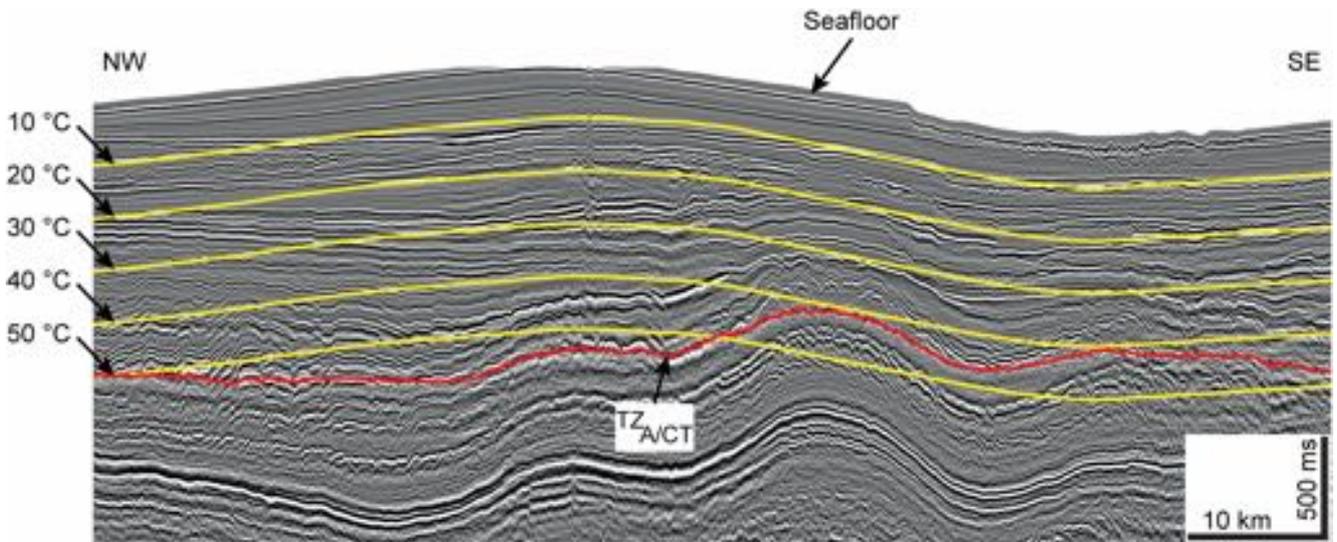
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960 Figure 2: Seismic profile from Møre Basin, Norwegian Sea Continental Margin (modified  
 961 from Neagu et al., 2010b). The regionally folded TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> cross-cuts the present-day  
 962 isotherms (yellow lines). The isothermal curves are drawn based on the data presented in  
 963 Appendix I. For simplification, an average velocity of 2000 m/s was used for the  
 964 conversion of the depth of isotherms (reported in Appendix I) to the two-way travel time on  
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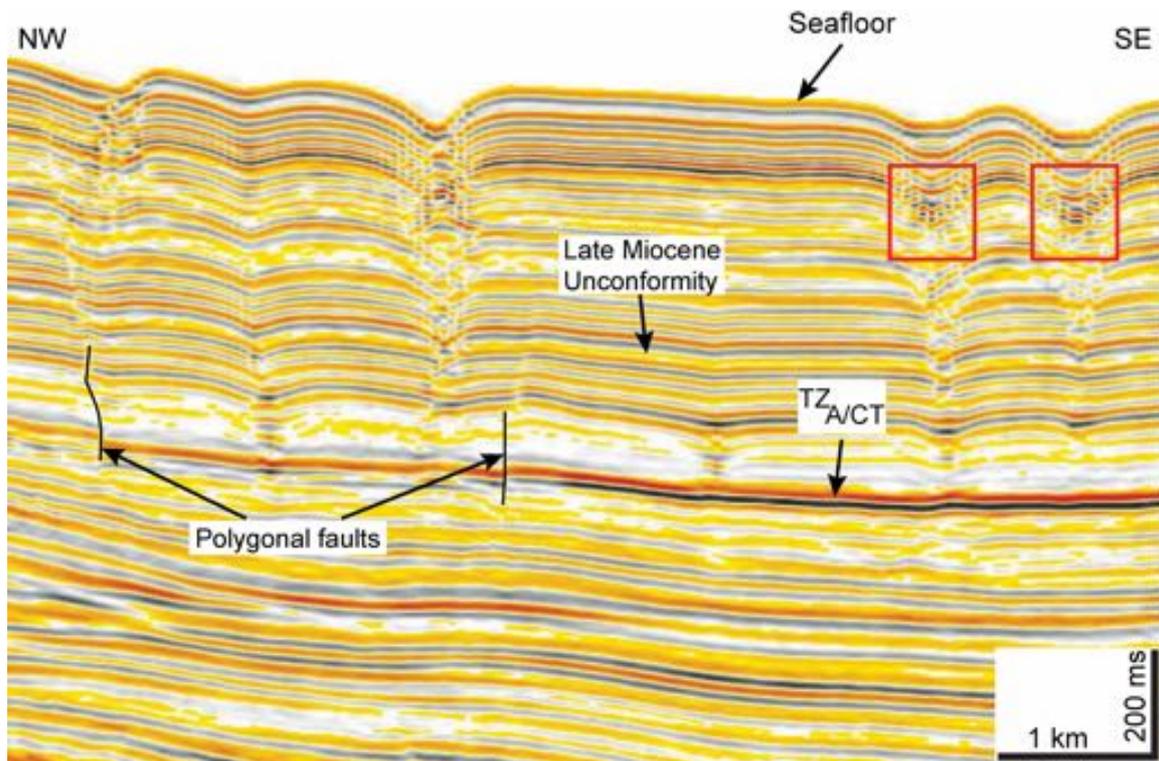
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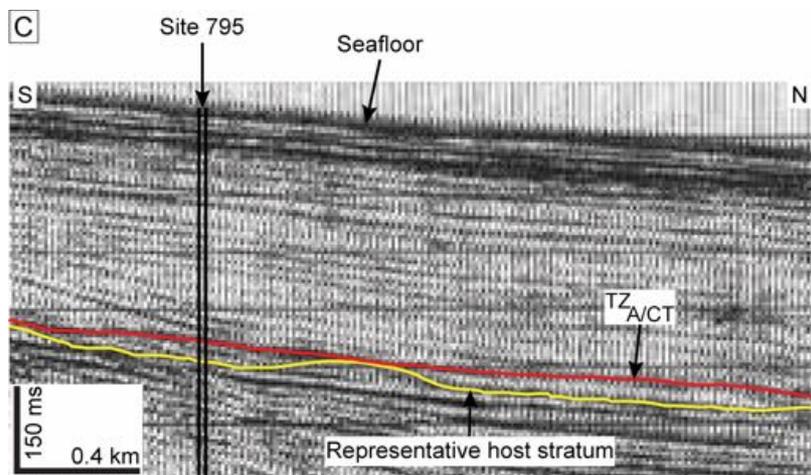
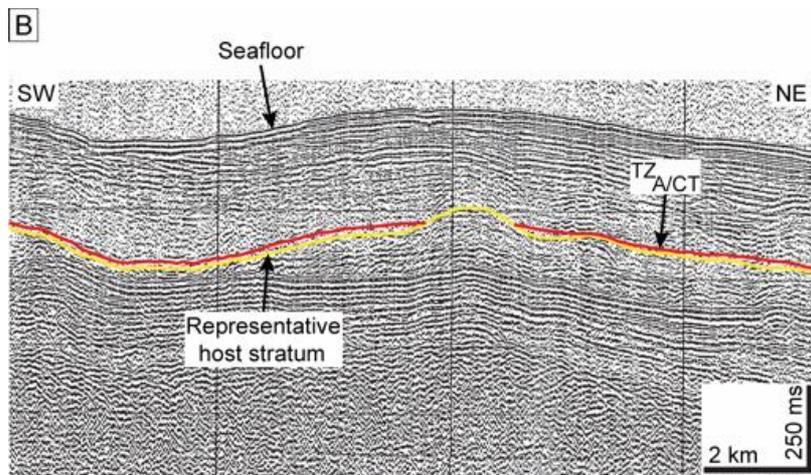
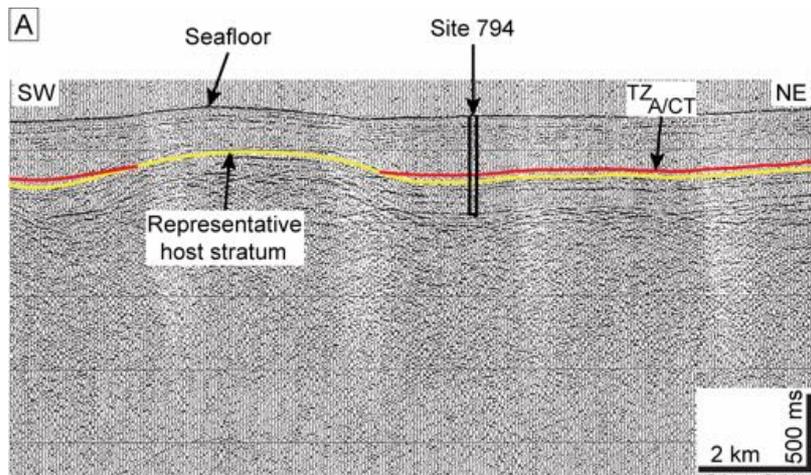
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986 Figure 3: Two-dimensional seismic profile from offshore Sakhalin, Sea of Okhotsk showing  
 987 the partly deformed TZ<sub>ACT</sub> (by polygonal faults) mimicking the Late Miocene Unconformity  
 988 above it (modified from Davies et al., 2008). Refer to Section 2.5 for a review of polygonal  
 989 faults. Note the development of funnel-shaped collapse features (red rectangles) as fluid-  
 990 scape structures above the level of the unconformity.

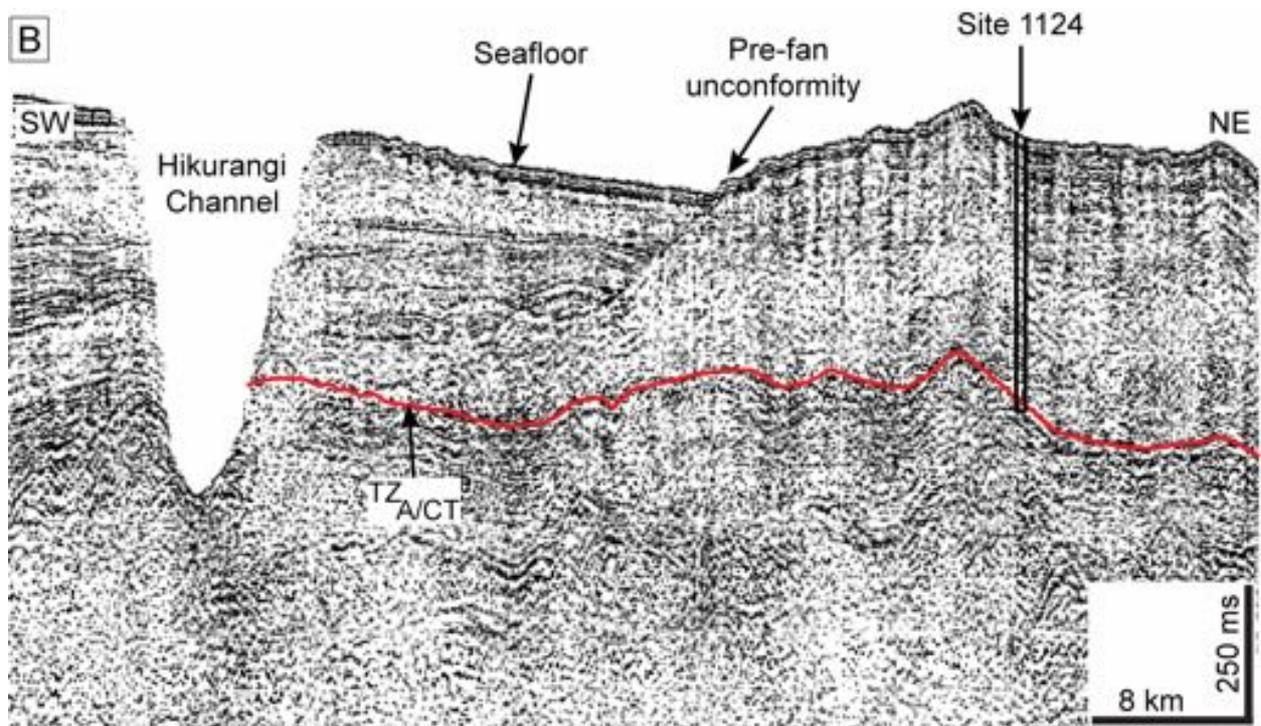
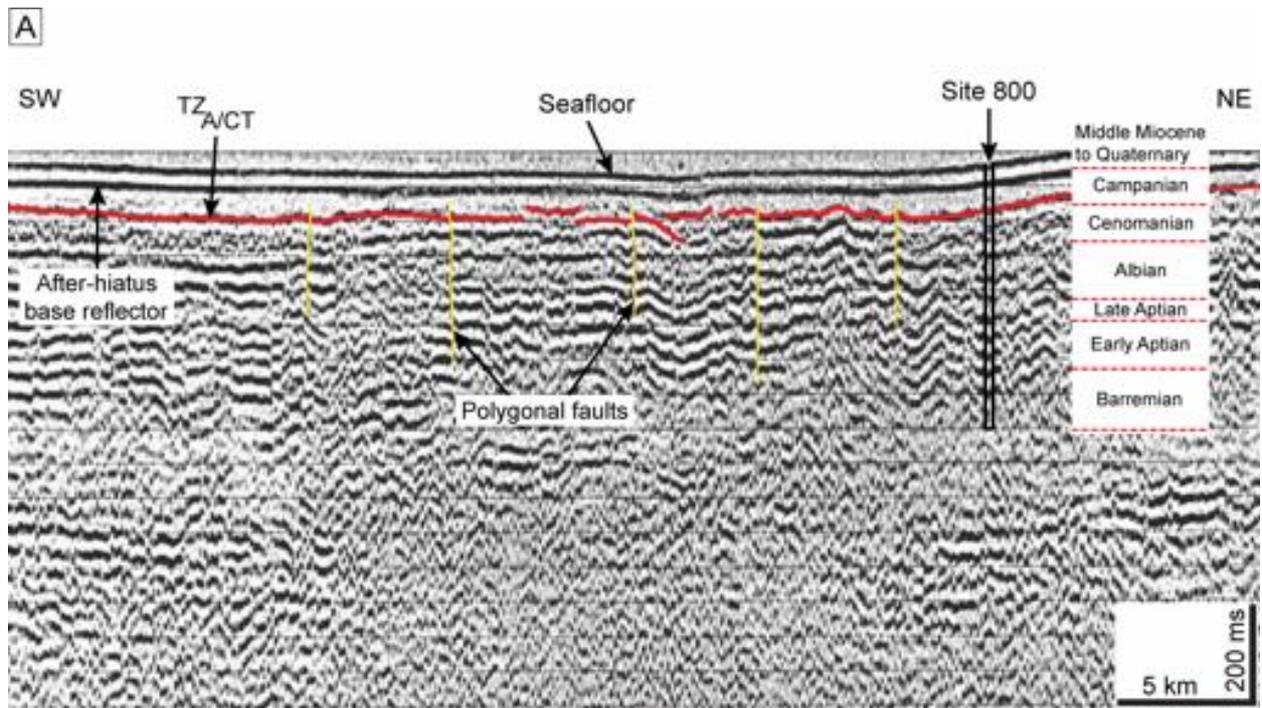
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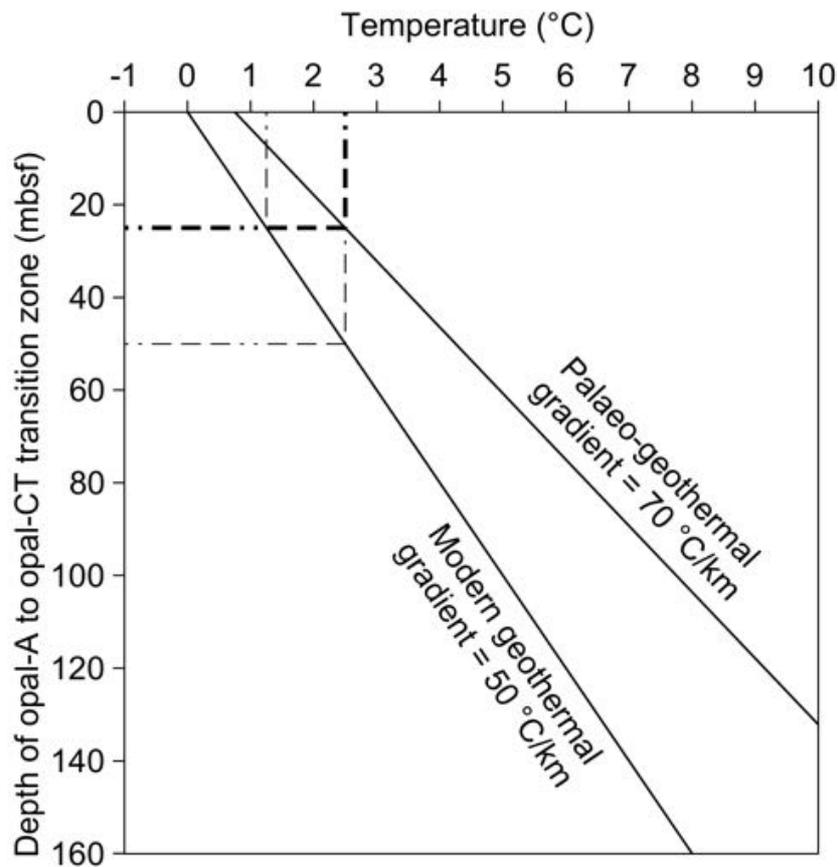
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1012 Figure 4: Likely active opal-A to opal-CT transition zone in the Sea of Japan represented  
 1013 by a seafloor-simulating reflector (modified from International Ocean Discovery Program  
 1014 Site Survey Data Bank, 2019). Note that the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  cuts across the stratal reflectors, but  
 1015 mimicking the present-day seabed. A) A multi-channel seismic profile near Site 794 in the  
 1016 Yamato Basin. B) A seismic line mapped across the central part of the Yamato Basin. C) A  
 1017 single-channel seismic line over Site 795 in the Japan Basin.

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1021 Figure 5: Likely arrested regional BSR opal-A to opal-CT transition zones. A) Cross-  
 1022 sectional seismic profile obtained on approach to ODP Site 800 from the western Pacific  
 1023 (modified from Shipboard Scientific Party, 1990c). The deformed shallow TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> mimics the  
 1024 overlying stratal reflection and the seabed. B) Seismic section hosting ODP Site 1124 in  
 1025 North Island, New Zealand (after Shipboard Scientific Party, 1999). Note that the deformed  
 1026 deep TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> lies parallel to the present-day seafloor.  
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1029 Figure 6: Present-day geothermal gradient and hypothetical palaeo-geothermal gradient at  
 1030 and in the vicinity of ODP Site 800 (drawn based on data from Shipboard Scientific Party,  
 1031 1990c). Presently, the arrested  $TZ_{A/CT}$  penetrated by this borehole lies at ~ 50 mbsf, where  
 1032 the temperature is 2.5 °C. The parallelism the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  shows with the Middle Miocene after-  
 1033 hiatus base reflector suggests this reflector as the palaeo-seabed at that time (following  
 1034 Neagu et al., 2010b; also see Fig. 5A). The overburden above the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  was therefore 20–  
 1035 30 m thick during the Middle Miocene, and the seafloor temperature was 0.75 °C. Given  
 1036 these depth and temperature constraints, a geothermal gradient of 70 °C/km was  
 1037 necessary for ongoing silica diagenesis during the Late Cretaceous to late Early Miocene.

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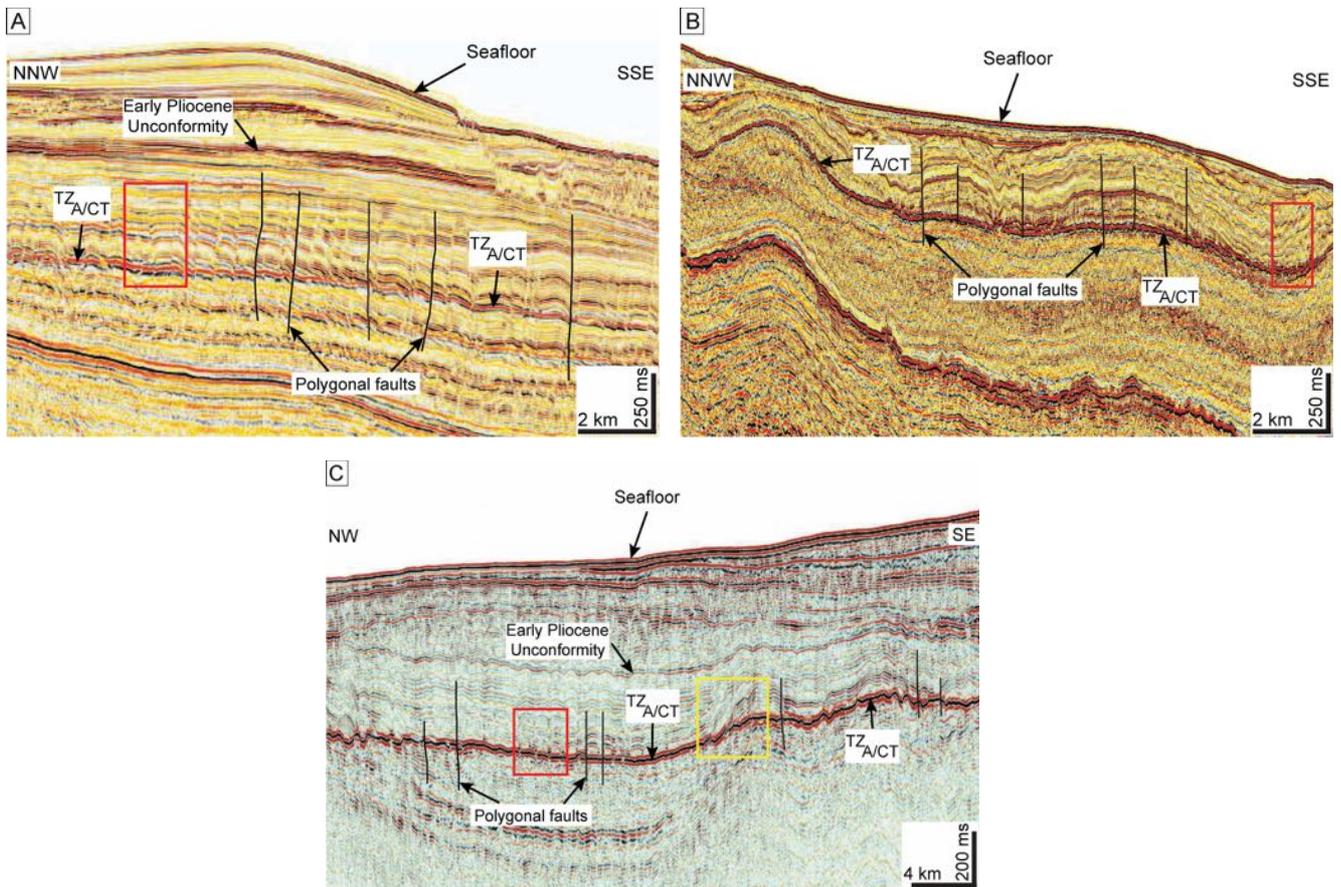
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 1046 Figure 7: Association of silica diagenesis transition zones with various modes of  
 1047 deformation. A) A 3D seismic reflection section displaying the heavily faulted nature of the  
 1048  $TZ_{A/CT}$  from offshore Norway. Also seen is the ridge–depression structures at the  $TZ_{A/CT}$ ,  
 1049 and the development of differential folds in the interval above it (red rectangle) (modified  
 1050 from Cartwright, 2007). B) Another 3D seismic profile from offshore Norway margin  
 1051 showing the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  associated with polygonal faults, ridge–depression morphologies and  
 1052 their overlying folds (red rectangle), and anticlinal–synclinal structures (data courtesy of  
 1053 Statoil A/S). C) 2D seismic section from Faeroe-Shetland basin on the NE Atlantic margin  
 1054 showing the heavily deformed faulted/folded regional  $TZ_{A/CT}$ . The transition is also involved  
 1055 in ridge–depression structures (red rectangle) and serrated features (yellow rectangle)  
 1056 (modified from Davies and Cartwright, 2002).

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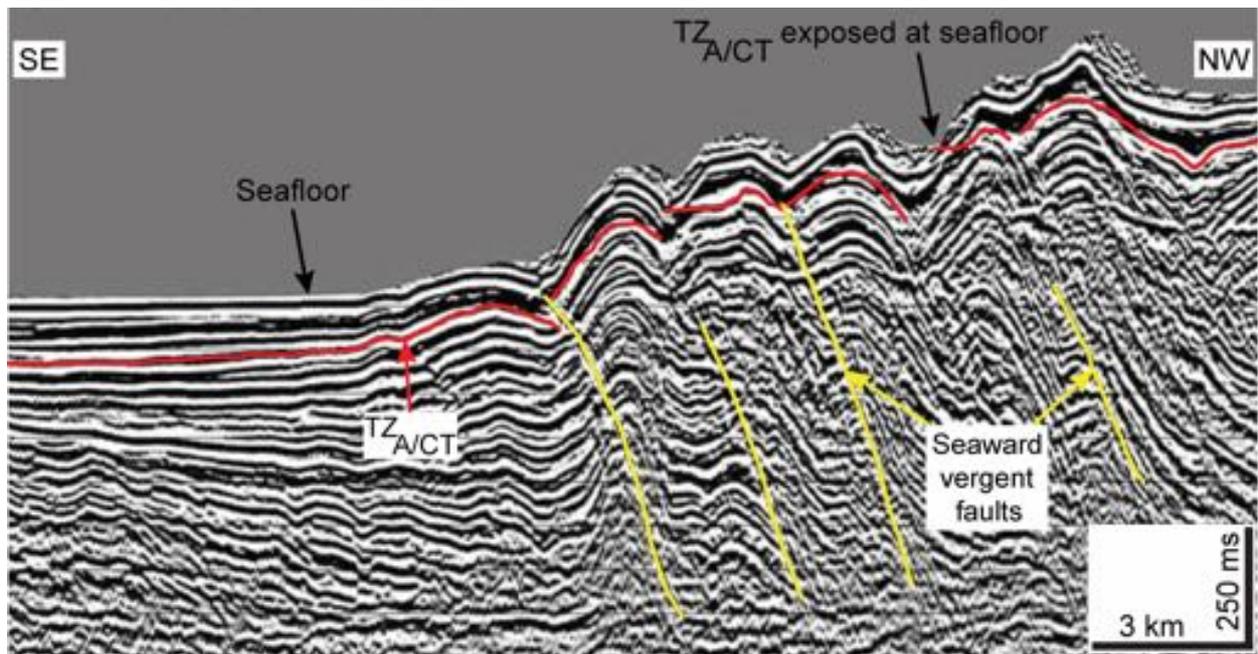
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1067 Figure 8: Seismic cross-sectional image from the Nankai Trough showing the truncation of  
1068  $TZ_{A/CT}$  reflector at the eroded seafloor over the step ridge slope (modified from McAdoo et  
1069 al., 2004). Note the association of this arrested boundary with other modes of deformation,  
1070 such as faults and regional folding.

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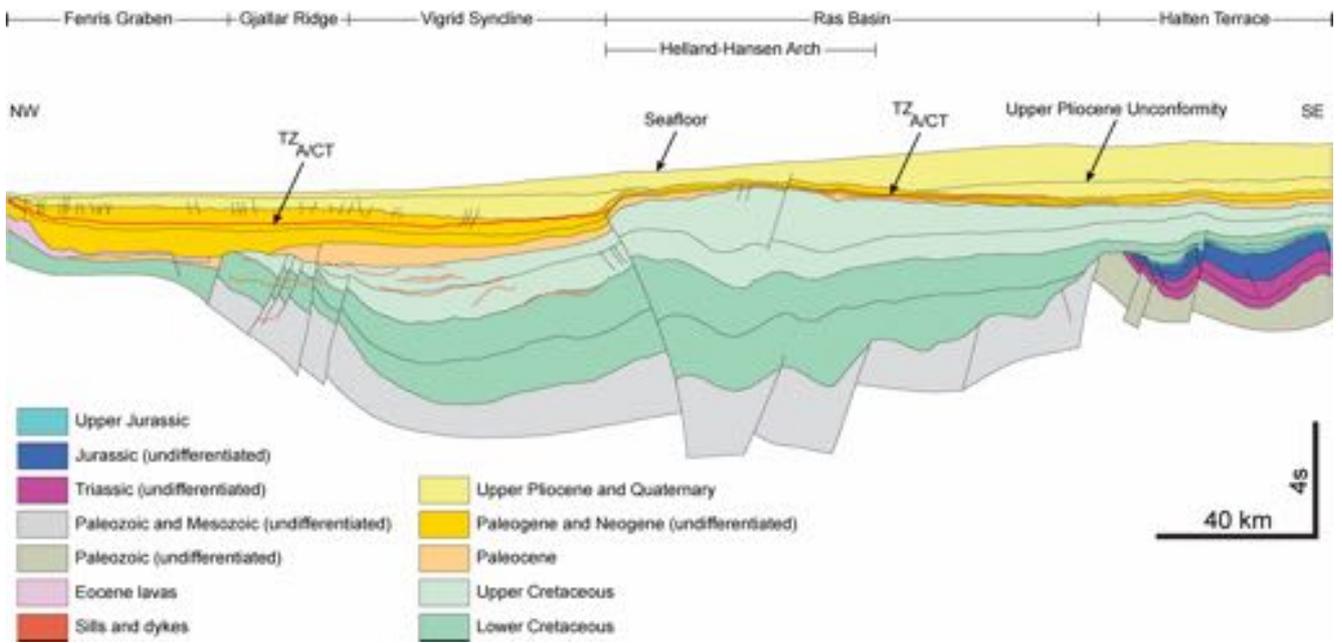
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1097 Figure 9: Geoseismic profile of Vøring Basin in the Norwegian Sea Continental Margin  
 1098 (redrawn and modified from Blystad et al., 1995). Note the non-BSR  $TZ_{ACT}$  (red line) cross-  
 1099 cutting domal nearby strata is itself involved in regional anticlinal—synclinal structures, but  
 1100 roughly mimics the overlying Upper Pliocene Unconformity.

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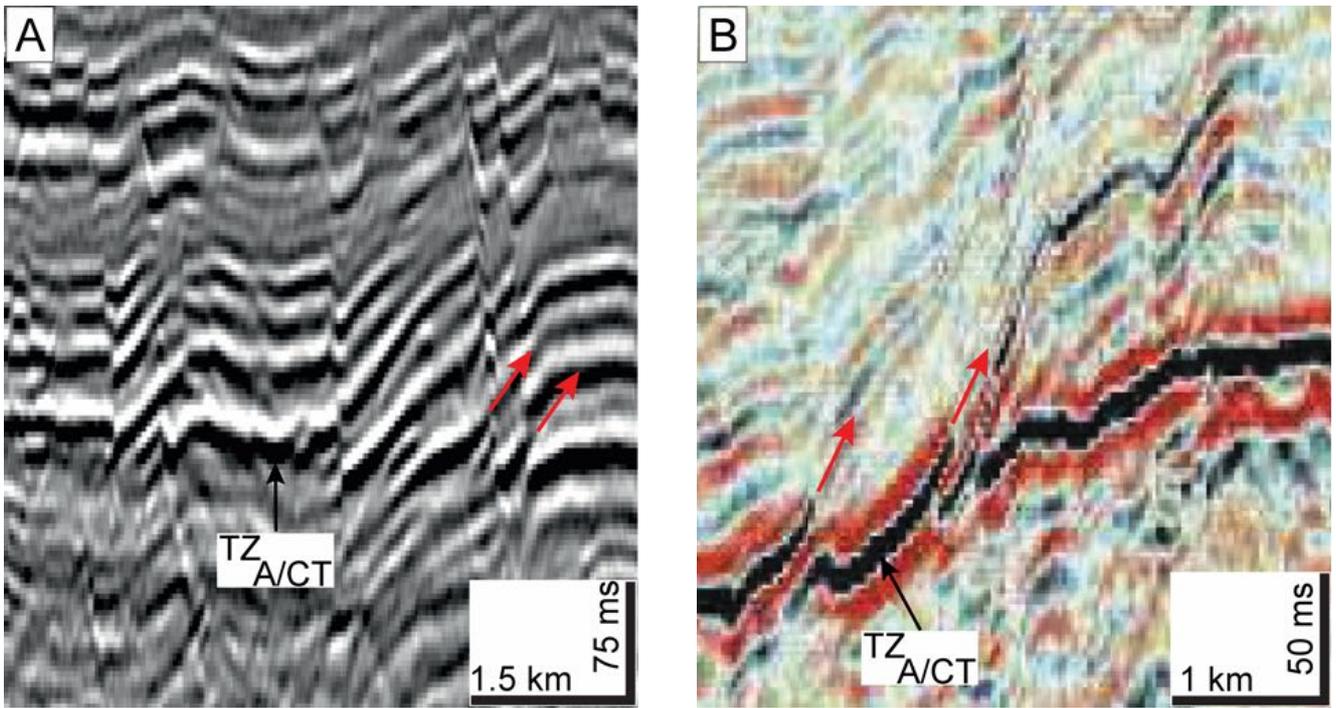
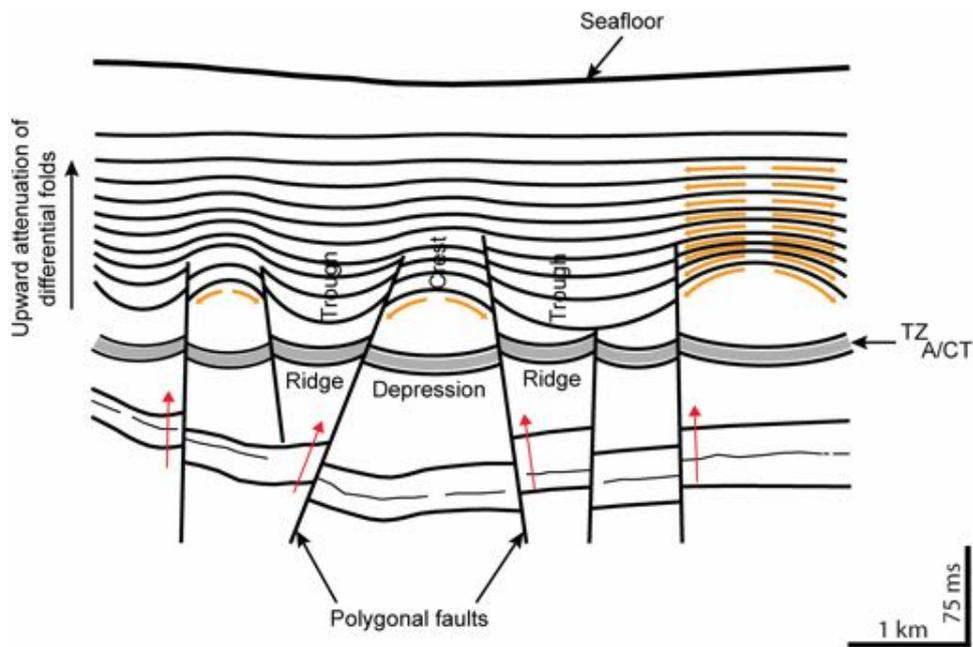
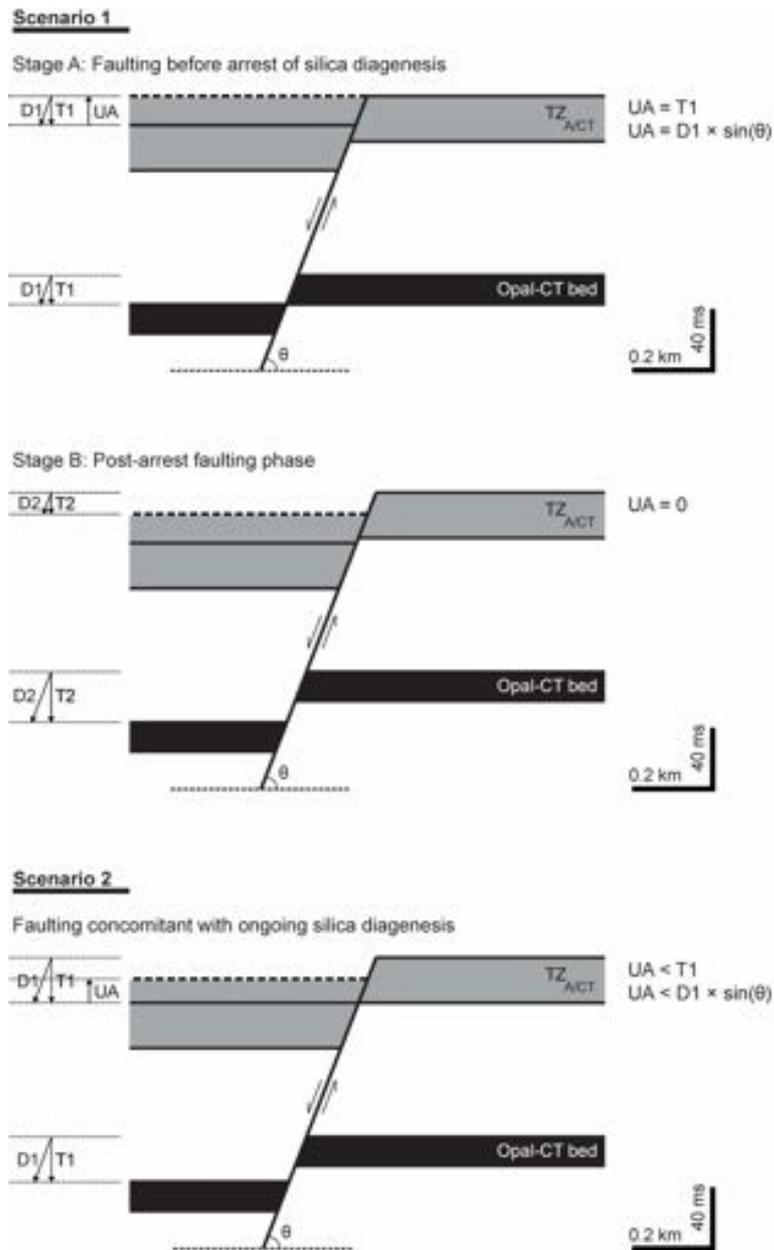


Figure 10: Serrated morphology in opal-A to opal-CT transition zones. A) Serrated pattern in the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from Møre Basin, mid-Norwegian margin. B) Close-up view of serrated feature in the TZ<sub>A/CT</sub> from Faeroe-Shetland basin (yellow rectangle in Fig. 7C).



1169 Figure 11: Sketch showing presumed pattern for the development of differential  
 1170 compaction folds above the  $TZ_{A/CT}$  in the Neogene sediments of NE Atlantic margin.  
 1171 Orange curved arrows mark the direction of overburden porosity collapse. Red arrows  
 1172 along the polygonal faults denote the direction of hot-fluid flux. Note that the fold relief  
 1173 decreases upward in pace with the reduction in differential porosity collapse (orange  
 1174 arrows on the right side of the profile). The diagenetic state of the  $TZ_{A/CT}$ , however, cannot  
 1175 be confidently determined based on this model.

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1182 Figure 12: Presumed schemes of relationships between faulting and diagenetic state of  
 1183 the  $TZ_{ACT}$  in the Miocene deposits of NE Atlantic margin. The abbreviations represent: D1  
 1184 = displacement along the fault during ongoing silica diagenesis, T1 = throw along the fault  
 1185 during ongoing silica diagenesis, UA =  $TZ_{ACT}$  upward advancement, D2 = displacement  
 1186 along the fault after arrest of silica diagenesis since Late Miocene, T2 = throw along the  
 1187 fault after arrest of silica diagenesis, and  $\theta$  = fault dip angle.

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1195 Appendix I: The borehole sites used for drawing the isothermal curves in Figure 2. For  
 1196 every well, the vertical depth, the seafloor temperature, and the geothermal gradient are  
 1197 presented. Also listed is the depth of isotherms computed for five temperature layers, from  
 1198 10 to 50 °C. Refer to Neagu et al. (2010b) for the geographic location of these boreholes.

Borehole site	Minimum distance from start point along NW–SE profile in Fig. 2 (km)	Borehole depth (mbsf)	Seabed temperature (°C)	Geothermal gradient (°C/km)	Isotherm (°C)				
					10	20	30	40	50
					Depth of isotherm (mbsf)				
6505/10-1	10.3	4319	0	35	286	571	857	1143	1429
6403/6-1	20.4	2374	-2.5	45	278	500	722	944	1167
6403/10-1	41.2	1656	-2	46	261	478	696	913	1130
6405/7-1	68.2	3000	-0.7	42	255	493	731	969	1207
6404/11-1	72.8	2130	-1	44	250	477	705	932	1159
6405/10-1	88.3	2231	-0.5	40	263	513	763	1013	1263
ODP 642	149.8	1229	0	40	250	500	750	1000	1250

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