Geophysical Research Abstracts, Vol. 9, 01808, 2007
SRef-ID: 1607-7962/gra/EGU2007-A-01808

Very low term (250 Myr) quanification of the eustasy during Mesozoic - Cenozoic time based on coastal onlap measurement at the tethys and world-scale

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The fathoming of the eustasy is still debated. Two different approaches have been carried out. They are both based on the coastal onlap migration through time. The first one is based on the identification of the common signal of the coastal onlap migration measured on different basins (mainly passive margins). The second one is based on a continent to world-scale measurement of the coastal onlap migration. Relative sea-level variations (continent-scale) or absolute sea-level variations (world-scale) are defined by the intersection of the coastal onlap at the studied period on the present-day hypsometry (altitude distribution of one or all continents).

This second method has been applied to a new paleogeographical dataset for the Meso-Cenozoic: one at the Tethys-scale (project PeriTethys, [1]), a second at a global-scale (IUGS/GMW project “Changing Earth Face”, [2]). Eustatic variations through time can be subdivided into three components: a short-term signal (1-15 Ma), a long-term signal (10-40 Ma), and a very long-term signal (250-350 Ma). This study is focused on the very long-term variations during the Meso-Cenozoic with two main questions: at what time is the highest sea level and what is its amplitude? At Tethys-scale (relative sea-level change), the highest sea level occurs during Cenomanian time. The amplitude would be +650 m above present-day sea level. At world-scale (absolute sea-level), the highest sea level occurs during Upper Cretaceous time (Cenomanian - Maastrichtian). The amplitude would be +250 m above present-day sea level.

These results are based on the present-day continental hypsometry. The main question

is: did the present-day altitude distribution represent the past? Present-day continents are mainly submitted to erosion, few subsiding domains (i.e. depositional system) occur. The present-day continental topography is different from past one, mainly Upper Jurassic - Lower Cretaceous time, where large intracontinental basins (intracratonic basins, large passive margins, riftsĚ) with low relief, occurred. The present-day altitude distribution, which could be the best analogue of the Upper Jurassic-Lower Cretaceous time, is the Amazon watershed. New measurements of the relative and absolute sea level have been carried out using the Amazon present-day hypsometry: At Tethys-scale (relative sea-level change), the amplitude of the highest sea level (Cenomanian) would be +250 m above present-day sea level. At world-scale (absolute sea-level), the amplitude of the highest sea level (Cenomanian - Maastrichtian) would be +100 m above present-day sea level.

In conclusion, the most realistic value for the highest sea level (Upper Cretaceous) should be more around 100 m than 250 m as suggested by numerous studies (e.g. [3]).

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