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SEQUENCE STRATIGRAPHY AND SYSTEMS TRACT ANALYSIS OF THE NEOGENE-QUATERNARY CONTINENTAL MARGIN OFF THE ZAMBEZI DELTA, MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT

During the Neogene and Quaternary, the Zambezi River built a broad delta-platform from 75 to over 100 km into the Indian Ocean. A regional seismic grid shows numerous discontinuities in the delta platform, slope and deeper basinal areas. Based on downward shifts of reflection terminations and onlaps at or below shelf edge, more than 25 sequences have been identified. Within the gross Neogene package, the basal section is characterized by aggradation, followed by rapid and significant (oblique) progradation, which is then followed by numerous aggradational-progradation and progradation packages in the upper, younger sections. From recognition of aggradation-progradation patterns and from well information, it appears that the first, significant and rapid progradation occurred since Mid-Miocene. The earliest of the Neogene sequence appears thicker towards south and thinner towards north, opposite of the younger sequences. The number of sequences, their modes of stacking and thickness distributions reflect relative sea level changes and the points of sediment input as the Zambezi River shifted in position from south to north in time.

The Zambezi passive continental margin, located in the Indian Ocean basin, is a stable platform as opposed to the unstable continental margins off the Mississippi, McKenzie and Niger deltas and is far from the stable margins which were the basis of the Haq, et. al. cycle-chart (1987). Thus the Zambezi continental margin provides an independent test case for verification of eustatic cycles and for the evaluation of allogenic (eustatic) vs autogenic (subsidence and delta switching) effects on depositional systems and systems tracts.