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**Preprint statement:** This article is a preprint and has not been peer-reviewed, under consideration and submitted to UCL Open: Environment for open peer review.

**DOI:** 10.14324/111.444/000018.v1

**Preprint first posted online:** 13 August 2019

**Keywords:** Foraminifera, Cenozoic, biostratigraphy, sedimentology, palaeoenvironment, paleogeography, regional tectonics., The Environment, Ecology, Climate

## **Insights on the Cenozoic Geology of North Beirut (Harbour Area): Biostratigraphy; Sedimentology and Structural history**

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### **Abstract**

The biostratigraphy and sedimentology of the outcrops and bedrock exposed in archaeological excavations around the harbour area of Beirut (~5 km<sup>2</sup>) unlock the geological and structural history of that area, which in turn are key to understanding the hydrocarbon and hydrogeological potential of the region. A key location (Site 2) of a studied outcrop section and newly uncovered bedrock is on the northern foothill cliff of East Beirut (Achrafieh). The outcrop section of carbonates is of Eocene beds overlain by conformable Miocene beds. The excavation of the slope bordering the outcrop uncovers a bedrock section of an early Pliocene shoreline of carbonate/siliciclastic sands at its base and a beach-rock structure at top. The age of the shoreline section is dated by an assemblage of planktonic foraminifera including *Sphaeroidinellopsis subdehiscens*, *Sphaeroidinella dehiscens*, and *Orbulina universa*. The Eocene carbonates of Site 2 extend the coverage of the previously reported Eocene outcrops in the harbour area. They form a parasequence of thin bedded chalky white limestones that includes the youngest fossil fish deposits in Lebanon (*Bregmaceros filamentosus*). The deposits are dated as early Priabonian by their association with the planktonic foraminiferal assemblage of *Porticulasphaera tropicalis*, *Globigerinatheka barri*, *Dentoglobigerina venezuelana*, *Globigerina praebulloides*, *Turborotalia centralis* and *Borelis* sp. The Middle Miocene carbonates that conformably overlie the early Priabonian parasequence, include a planktonic foraminiferal assemblage of *Globigerinoides trilobus*, *Orbulina universa* and *Borelis melo*. Elsewhere, in the harbour area, the preserved Eocene limestones are equally directly overlain by conformable Miocene carbonate parasequences of the Langhian - Serravallian age. Younger argillaceous limestone beds of the Mio/Pliocene age occur in the eastern central part of the harbour area and enclose an assemblage of *Truncorotalia crassaformis*, *Globorotalia inflata*, and *Orbulina universa*. The three markers of old and recently raised structural blocks in the harbour area are a Lutetian/Bartonian marine terrace in the south west corner, a lower Pliocene shoreline carbonate section in the north east side and a Holocene raised beach of

marine conglomerates in the north east corner of the area. The locations of these paleo-shorelines, less than 2 kms apart, indicate a progressive platform narrowing of North Beirut since the Paleogene. This study underpins the geological complexity of the region and contributes to understanding the underlying geology which will be needed for future archaeological, hydrocarbon and hydrogeological exploration.

**Keywords:** Foraminifera, Cenozoic, biostratigraphy, sedimentology, palaeoenvironment, paleogeography, regional tectonics.

## INTRODUCTION

Lebanon abuts an active transform plate boundary, and its geology reveals a correspondingly complex tectonic history. The lithology of Lebanon is dominated by carbonate rocks, which often can only be differentiated and dated by detailed micropaleontological investigation. Most recently, there has been increased interest in the geology of on- and off-shore Lebanon, as the hydrogeological, and oil and gas potential of the region is being defined. Furthermore, the 1990s and 2000s saw the revival of archaeological excavations of the major coastal cities of antiquity of Lebanon, namely, Byblos, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre. In Beirut, many reconstruction and infrastructure renewal projects in the harbour and downtown areas were excavated before construction got underway. These works gave a unique opportunity to sample, and study the newly uncovered geological sections of their bedrock and to expand our understanding of the Cenozoic geology of maritime Lebanon (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). At present, the newly described geology of the latest excavated sites of Beirut harbour area ties the occurrence of the Paleogene and Neogene rock formations to the differentially preserved coastal ribbon of Cenozoic outcrops. It also draws the template of the differential gradual rise of Beirut hillsides before and after the earliest uplift of Mount Lebanon in the background of the city.

The initial 1/50 000 geological map of north Beirut (Dubertret, 1945) shows two rock formations on either sides of a major NNE SSW (F1) fault, Cenomanian carbonates to the west of the displacement and outside the area of study and Miocene carbonates to the east of the fault and within the area of study. The current map review based upon the sedimentology and age dating of the excavations' bedrock and the surrounding outcrops draws the Miocene and Eocene carbonate exposures of the area (Ex. Sites 1, 2, and 3 in Fig.1) and locates the previously recorded remnant Maastrichtian carbonate section close to, and east of the F1 fault (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006) suggesting that a more complete Cretaceous section had initially covered West Beirut before its displacement along the fault and ensuing erosion (see Fig.1). Furthermore, it locates the Lutetian/Bartonian marine terrace by the excavations of Site 3 and the Mio/Pliocene argillaceous carbonates by the excavations of Site 6 and the early Pliocene shoreline carbonate section by Site 2 (see location sites in Fig.1). Equally, it locates the reported Eocene bedrock from an excavation to the south of the area of study and the Holocene

marine conglomerates by the north-eastern train station of Beirut harbour area (see Sites 4, 7 in fig.1). In essence, the Miocene, Eocene and Maastrichtian limestone rock formations are the bedrock upon which the harbour area is built. The softer argillaceous limestone of the Mio/Pliocene and fresh water/marine Quaternary siliciclastics in pockets of the hillsides and their surrounds are the easily eroded materials for natural/man made harbours such as the Roman harbour in the north western corner of the area (Marriner et.al, 2014) and the waterway parallel to the eastern hillside of Beirut harbour area, namely “Nahr Beirut”.

## **GEOLOGY**

The shoreline of North Beirut is a discontinuous marine terrace of 5-20m in elevation that borders landward an irregular relief from west to east: a Cenomanian hillside of West Beirut, an Eocene-Mio/Pliocene central low of Beirut harbour area (talweg), and an Eocene-Holocene Achrafieh hillside in East Beirut (see Fig. 1).

The southern outcrops that border the area of study and West Beirut hillside are Quaternary sand dunes and stream gravel deposits. Their occurrence suggests a southern Quaternary shoreline to the Beirut elevated block (see Dubertret, 1951, Sanlaville, 1977).

## **THE EOCENE PLATFORM**

The previous works of BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark (2006), on Beirut had recorded carbonate sections of conformable Eocene and Miocene carbonates gently dipping to the south west (Site 1, Fig. 1). At present, they record conformable Eocene and Miocene carbonates to the south of Site 1 that are dipping to the northeast by about 10 degrees (Site 2, Fig. 1). The Eocene carbonates of Site 1 of medium to thin beds are of the Late Lutetian age (see Table 2 in BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). However, the newly studied Eocene parasequence of Site 2 exposes 70cms of thin bedded carbonates of the Early Priabonian age. The thin carbonate strata include a unique deposit of small < 5cms fossil fish of the Bregmacerotidae family (M. Gayet personal communication, see Figs 2, 3; Plate 4).

## **Biostratigraphy and Sedimentology**

Individual beds of the Eocene carbonate suite are characterised by low angle cross-laminations of bioclastic, siliciclastic, pelletal, lithoclastic packstones and mudstones (see Fig. 2, Samples 6-2 from base to top). The constituents of the grain supported laminations include in a descending order of importance: angular fragments of bioclasts, coral and bryozoan fragments, larger benthic foraminifera, sub-angular to sub-rounded quartz grains >60 microns, sub-rounded Lutetian and uppermost Cretaceous lithoclasts, red algal fragments, echinoderm debris, lamellibranches debris, and planktonic foraminifera. The

constituents of the mud supported laminations include in a descending order of importance: mud sized debris; planktonic foraminifera; rare sub-rounded uppermost Cretaceous lithoclasts. Overall, the environment of deposition of the thin cross-laminated heterogeneous grain supported facies and homogeneous mud supported facies points to shallow water conditions in the backreef-lagoon area close to wave base that is periodically subjected to flooding episodes (see Fig. 3). The high energy fabrics of their thin beds <15 cms suggest a minimal accommodation space rather than slow sedimentation rates. The source of the Cretaceous lithoclasts is likely from nearby exposures and the raised western Beirut block but provenance of the quartz sands remains problematic. The grainstone facies of Layer 5 of the Eocene suite is close to wave base but it includes an exceptional deposit of small fossil fish of the Bregmacerotidae family (Plate 4, figs 1 - 4).

In our definitions of stratigraphic ranges, we primarily use the planktonic foraminiferal zonal scheme of BouDagher-Fadel (2015), which is tied to the time scale of Gradstein et al. (2012) and revised by Cohen et al. (2017).

### **Foraminifera assemblages and fossil fish deposits**

The assemblages include small benthic foraminifera such as *Textularia* spp. (Plate 1, fig. 1), *Bolivina* sp. (Plate 2, fig. 1) and rare benthic foraminifera that consist of long ranging Cenozoic forms, such as, *Elphidium* sp. (Plate 1, fig. 2), *Victoriella* sp. and fragments of *Operculina* sp. (Plate 1, fig. 3). The >10% abundance of planktonic foraminifera from many studied samples assemblages narrows their age of deposition. For example, the presence of *Porticulasphaera tropicalis* Blow and Banner, *Globigerinatheka barri* (Bolli, Loeblich and Tappan) (Plate 2, fig. 2), *Dentoglobigerina venezuelana* (Hedberg), *Globigerina praebulloides* Blow (Plate 2, fig. 3) and *Turborotalia centralis* (Cushman and Bermudez) (Plate 2, fig. 4) nominally indicate Late Bartonian - Early Priabonian (P14-P15, 39.2-35.1Ma) (see BouDagher-Fadel, 2015, 2018a). However, the association of the larger benthic foraminifera *Borelis* sp. (Plate 1, figs 3-4) with the planktonic assemblage narrows the age dating of the Eocene carbonate suite to the Early Priabonian age (see BouDagher-Fadel, 2015, 2018b).

Other than these *in situ* assemblages, reworked and allochthonous assemblages include reworked Paleocene and Early Eocene planktonic forms such as *Acarinina nitida* (Martin), (Plate 2, fig. 5) and *Morozovella* sp., (Plate 2, fig. 6). The allochthonous forms in the Cretaceous lithoclasts contain Late Cretaceous planktonic foraminifera assemblages which include *Globigerinelloides* spp., *Gansserina gansseri* (Bolli) (Plate 3, fig. 1a), *Pseudotextularia elegans* (Rzehak) (Plate 3, fig. 2b), *Hedbergella* spp., *Heterohelix globulosa* (Ehrenberg), *Globotruncana* spp., and the frequently present *Globotruncana aegyptiaca* Nakkady (Plate 3, fig. 3c). These assemblages indicate an age of Late Campanian to Maastrichtian (Campanian 3 – Maastrichtian 3 see BouDagher-Fadel, 2015, 2018b).

The small fish deposits of the high energy bed (layer RML5) belong to the *Bregmacerotidae* family and are represented by the single genus *Bregmaceros*. They are small-sized pelagic 1-2cms cod-like fish (Gadiformes) and their age range is from the Eocene to the Holocene (Přikryl et al., 2016). The species is herein identified as *Bregmaceros filamentosus* (Priem, 1908) and ranges from the Middle Eocene to Early Oligocene (P10a-P21a, see BouDagher-Fadel, 2015). It has been reported from the Mediterranean region and its surrounding areas including Georgia (Middle to Late Eocene) and Iran (Middle Eocene to Early Oligocene) (Afsari et al. 2014, Kotlarczyk et al., 2006; Přikryl et al., 2016).

The bed thicknesses and sedimentology of the Eocene sections of Site 1 and Site 2 indicate a decrease in the accommodation space for their carbonates from north to south and from the late Lutetian to the early Priabonian. However, they are not the only occurrence of the north Beirut Eocene inner platform carbonates. Indeed, the works of 2006 had recorded a marine terrace of Lutetian/Bartonian age in the south west corner of the studied area (Site 3). The site of the terrace is the archaeological excavation adjacent to St-George's Cathedral (Fig. 1). The terrace occurs against the thin hard beds of the basin Maastrichtian carbonates and includes reworked cyclical sorted, coarse cobble to pebble sized Campanian, Maastrichtian and Lutetian lithoclasts bound by Lutetian-Bartonian marine cements suggesting the concurrent presence of a nearby source of uppermost Cretaceous and Lutetian exposures (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). The initial reporting of the dates of these outcrops by Dubertret (Dubertret, 1945-1946) was Eocene and Senonian that has since been refined in BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark (2006).

The 1951 Notice Explicative of Beirut Geological map 1/50 000, by Dubertret, records another location of Eocene carbonates from an excavation due south of the central harbour area (Site 4, Fig. 1). This exposure is described as thin beds of marls and carbonates inclusive of reworked terminal Cretaceous planktonic foraminifera and *in situ* early Eocene foraminifera. Although precise dating of these exposures is not available, it is possible to draw an early Eocene coastal onlap as far south of downtown Beirut.

## **THE MIOCENE PLATFORM**

The Langhian-Serravallian carbonates of the North Beirut inner platform covered more or less the same antecedent Eocene platform area in spite of twenty million years of non-deposition and/or erosion between the two time periods. Their conformable parasequences above the Middle and Upper Eocene carbonates are described from the eastern side of the harbour area. However, their lower Langhian carbonates are recorded in the north of the studied area from Site1 and Site 5 at the base of the Roman harbour, but their upper Langhian carbonates and Langhian-Serravallian carbonates are recorded in the central area of study and southeast of the Beirut harbour in Site 2 (Figs 1, 4; see also BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). The upper Langhian outcrops in the road cuts in the central

harbour area consist of medium to thick carbonate beds and dip, relatively steeply, to the north east. Younger Serravallian carbonates occur in sections close to the eastern hillside of Achrafieh (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). The hillside carbonate sections that had been initially assigned a Helvetian age by Sanlaville (1977), i.e Serravallian in modern usage, suggest latest middle Miocene deposition to the east and south sides of the harbour area. The locations of these Miocene carbonates are summarized in Fig. 4 below.

### **Biostratigraphy and sedimentology**

The Middle Miocene outcrop by the archaeological excavation of Site 2 lies conformably on the youngest Eocene strata of the early Priabonian age. The basal Miocene beds, 50cms thick, are the only described carbonate beds under a suite of strata concealed by habitation (Fig. 5). These beds are characterised by cross laminated structures with laminations of coarse packstones and finer wackestones that include reworked uppermost Cretaceous and Middle Eocene lithoclasts suggesting nearby provenance (Figs 1, 4-5). The packstone and wackestone fabrics enclose, in descending order of importance, lamellibranches bioclasts, coral and bryozoan debris, echinoderm fragments, red algal debris, planktonic and larger benthic foraminifera. The *in situ* foraminiferal assemblage includes *Globigerinoides trilobus* (Reuss), *Orbulina universa* (d'Orbigny) (Plate 2, figs 7- 8) and *Borelis melo* (Fichtel and Moll) which characterise an age range of Middle Langhian to Serravallian (BouDagher-Fadel, 2015, 2018a). *Borelis melo* ranges in the Mediterranean from the Middle to Late Miocene, Langhian-Messinian, N8b-N17 (Jones et. al, 2006), however, the presence of *O. universa* indicates an assemblage not older than N9. This assemblage, therefore, indicates an age ranging from N9 to N17, 15-5.8Ma. The dominance of Miliolidae and Textularidae in the larger benthic foraminifera assemblage indicates a shallow neritic environment of deposition. The heterogeneous fine to >80 microns bioclastic content and allochthonous rare sub-rounded to sub-angular quartz grains and lithoclasts of older sediments suggest sedimentation close to wave base in an inner shelf lagoon.

### **The Late Miocene/Pliocene Platform Remnants**

The preserved platform deposits of the Mio/Pliocene age occur in the east central harbour area in Sites 6 and 8 where recent excavations have uncovered dark grey argillaceous carbonates of inner platform lagoonal sediments (Figs 1, 4). These deposits (Site 6) include reworked Cretaceous planktonic foraminifera, and an *in situ* planktonic foraminifera assemblage not older than Late Miocene, N17, 8.6Ma, but the presence of *Sphaeroidinellopsis subdehiscens* (Blow), *Truncorotalia crassaformis* (Galloway and Wissler), *Globorotalia inflata* (d'Orbigny) and *Orbulina universa* (d'Orbigny) indicate a Late Miocene to Early Pliocene age range (N17 – N19, 8.6 – 3.8Ma, see BouDagher-Fadel,

2015, 2018b), The argillaceous carbonates' occurrences suggest a marine incursion filling the low between the two east and west uplifts of North Beirut (Achrafieh and West Beirut) (see location map Figs 1, 4). To the east of these inner platform sediments, a shoreline carbonate section (Site 2) forms an apron of sediments against the rising northern foothill of Achrafieh. The uncovered bedrock of Site 2 excavation exposes a shoreline sequence of shore to backshore layers at base and a beach-rock sedimentary structure at top (Figs 2, 6).

### **Lower Pliocene Shoreline Carbonate Section**

The pit floor of the excavation consists of coarse siliciclastics and carbonate bioclastic debris overlain by a grain supported limestone layer (30 cms thick) composed of low-angle, cross laminated fabrics of well-rounded sand sized lithoclastic grainstone. The lithoclast grains are bound with meniscus cements that are indicative of meteoric fresh waters, percolating through the vadose zone, in the backshore environment of deposition (see Layer 10 in Figs 6, 7A-B).

The uppermost layer of the bedrock (layer 9) is 1m+ thick. It is characterised by saucer shaped sedimentary structures and low angle cross-stratified bedding interpreted as a lithified beach-rock structure during a sea level rise (Fig. 6). Its heterogeneous fabric is made of coarse cobble to sand sized clasts in a matrix of bioclastic lithoclastic grainstone (see lithoclast 8 in Fig. 6). The binding cement of its bioclastic and lithoclastic components is of micrite and microspar of the mixing marine phreatic and fresh water zone (see Fig. 8 below). Two populations of autochthonous and allochthonous bioclasts include in a descending order of importance: planktonic foraminifera such as *Globigerina* spp. (Plate 3, figs 9 - 10), larger benthic foraminifera, peloids, bioclasts (lamellibranches and bryozoan debris), lithoclasts, algal debris and iron rich reworked lithoclasts. The youngest planktonic foraminifera of the assemblage are *Sphaeroidinella dehiscens* (Parker and Jones) (plate 2, fig. 9), *Sphaeroidinellopsis subdehiscens* (Blow), (Plate 2, Fig. 10), and *Orbulina universa* (d'Orbigny), (Plate 2, Figs 8, 11). The presence of *S. subdehiscens* and *Sa dehiscens* indicate an age of Early Pliocene, N19, 5.3-3.8 Ma. The allochthonous population of bioclasts include Cretaceous (Late Campanian 3b-Maastrichtian, 74.5-66MY), late Eocene (Priabonian) and middle Miocene (Langhian) cobble to pebble sized lithoclasts in the matrix of the beach rock suggesting a nearby source of supply.

The components of the shoreline carbonate section indicate a Lower Pliocene shoreline forming in the earlier wave cut erosional stage during a relative sea level drop or at the onset of the staged uplifts of Achrafieh's hillside followed by a relative sea level rise cementing the contents in a beach-rock structure (Figs 4, 9D).

### **Holocene Shoreline Sediments**

Holocene marine conglomerates and siliciclastics of a raised beach at the site of the Beirut Old Train Station (Site 7, Fig. 1) had been described by Zumoffen (1926) and Sanlaville



(1977) where it occurs approximately 100m downdip of the Early Pliocene shoreline carbonate section of Site 2. The relationship of these two shorelines illustrates the multi-phased uplifts of the Achrafieh hillside (see Fig. 1 and Fig. 9D).

## **STRUCTURE, REGIONAL TECTONICS AND PALEOGEOGRAPHY:**

### **Structural history**

The geology of Beirut harbour area based on recently age dated Paleogene and Neogene carbonates gives a clearer picture of the structural evolution of Beirut. Lithoclasts of latest Cretaceous, middle Eocene and oldest middle Miocene age within these carbonates point to uplift and erosion of beds of this age from nearby areas. Four diagrams of Fig. 9 summarize the structural and geological evolution of the harbour area.

In situ foraminifera assemblages, in the studied parasequences age date the Eocene and Miocene beds. However, the youngest allochthonous lithoclasts in these same beds, provide information on the carbonates present in the area prior to erosion and also serve to date the earliest uplift that would have occurred in the source area.

There has been much debate on the timing of the uplift of Mount Lebanon in relation to the structural deformation along the Dead Sea Fault Zone. For example, Gomez et.al 2007 indicated that Mount Lebanon started rising during the mid-Miocene and continued during the Late Miocene. Previous works by BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark (2006) support this timing when recording Langhian lithoclasts in younger Serravallian and Tortonian-Messinian carbonates of coastal Tyre of south Lebanon and at the Jabal Terbol mid-Langhian-Tortonian section of north maritime Lebanon.

### **Eocene and Miocene movements**

In the case of the Eocene carbonates at Site 3, the inclusion of lithoclasts dated as Campanian, Maastrichtian and Lutetian in the shoreline/ marine terrace sequence confirm that the down thrown side of the NNE SSW (F1) fault would have included latest Cretaceous and middle Eocene beds before their marine erosion during the Lutetian/Bartonian time. The displacement along the F1 fault (Site 3) is inferred to have occurred nearer the end of the middle Eocene (Bartonian) than during the Lutetian as Lutetian beds in the area of study (Site 1) have only *in situ* foraminifera. The areal extent of the Lutetian carbonates are inferred to have covered the F1 fault, before the displacement along its side and the uplift of West Beirut and F1 compartments. In addition, younger (Late Eocene) Priabonian beds at Site 2 lateral to Site 3 include Lutetian and Cretaceous lithoclasts confirming the presence of nearby exposures of Lutetian and terminal Cretaceous beds to Site 2 (see Figs 9B, 9C).

The Langhian and Serravallian (mid Miocene) carbonates of the harbour area, in outcrops and from boreholes, include only *in situ* inner platform microfauna. The exception is at Site 2, by the eastern side of the harbour area, where the conformable Langhian-Serravallian bed includes Lutetian and Cretaceous lithoclasts. The nearby source of that foreign supply to the recipient Langhian – Serravallian sediments is likely from the few preserved Lutetian and Bartonian exposures of the harbour area.

The lower Pliocene shoreline by the uplifted Eocene-Miocene conformable section of Site 2 includes mid Miocene lithoclasts that were sourced either from the rising block of the mid Miocene beds (Achrafieh) and/or from the exposures in the south west of the harbour area. The occurrence of Mio/Pliocene argillaceous carbonates (Site 6, and Site 8) due south of the harbour area infers marine sedimentation filling a platform low between the uplifted reliefs of West Beirut and Achrafieh Eastern hillside (Fig. 9D).

### **North Beirut in the context of maritime Lebanon**

In the Cenozoic, differential structural highs along maritime Lebanon occurred since the Paleocene until the latest Miocene rise of Mount Lebanon (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). The latest rise was concurrent to the platform narrowing and establishment of shorelines close to the present-day coastline. The structural uplift of West Beirut in the late Middle Eocene was initiated while the African and Arabian plate were still united. The uplift of this area was possibly related to local tectonics. However, its reactivation during the mid- Miocene and the early Pliocene time had occurred several millions of years later as the African and Arabian plate had separated into two plates travelling northward and colliding with the Asian plate.

The Dead Sea Transform fault in Lebanon, called the Yammouneh Transform fault separates the two plates. Transpressive and trans-tensional stresses along the fault zone caused the rise of Mount Lebanon on the one hand and the extensional landward basins such as today's Yammouneh inland rhombic basin on the other hand. The structural view describing these occurrences had listed two phases of uplift of Mount Lebanon during the Middle Miocene and the late Miocene, but the BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark (2006) and the present study further calibrates the uplift phases of Mount Lebanon. For example, the dating of individual beds or parasequences of the Middle and Late Miocene have shown a steady supply of older uppermost Cretaceous, Paleocene, Middle Eocene and lower Middle Miocene lithoclasts into recipient Langhian-Serravallian strata and Tortonian strata in north Lebanon (Jabal Terbol); in Langhian-Serravallian strata and lower Pliocene strata in Beirut (Site 2); in lower Langhian strata from sections of coastal Tyre of south Lebanon. These dating markers from the studied coastal outcrops provide the timing of the differential uplifts that had occurred during the earliest Middle Miocene in the south of Lebanon, following in the Middle Miocene in Beirut and Jabal Terbol north of Lebanon; late Miocene in the Jabal Terbol and latest early Pliocene in Beirut (see Fig. 10 below).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Cenozoic geology of maritime Lebanon records Paleocene – Eocene (Priabonian) carbonates on a broad marine platform concurrent with differential relief in south coastal Lebanon (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). In the Beirut harbour area, the earliest coastal onlap of the Middle Eocene would have advanced over a Maastrichtian platform floor and remnants of Ypresian chinks as evidenced by Maastrichtian carbonates at Site 3 and older reworked Ypresian and latest Cretaceous planktonic foraminifera in younger upper Lutetian beds at Sites 1 and 4, (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006; Dubertret, 1945-46, 1951). At Site 2 the younger Priabonian thin beds of the inner platform carbonates occurred in a minimal accommodation space near a shoreline. This occurrence is in contrast to the shelf edge occurrence of their contemporaneous chalk deposits in south coastal Lebanon (BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006). As these two deposits are the only evidence of the late Eocene platform sedimentation along maritime Lebanon, their occurrences in the inner shelf and shelf edge environments follow the paleogeography drawn in 2006 with an interpreted and drawn shoreline around the Beirut harbour area (see Fig. 11).

The earliest Neogene marine incursion of the Beirut harbour area is of early Langhian age. This incursion filled the low on the downthrown side of the Eocene relief of West Beirut.

In the context of maritime Lebanon, the thin to thick bedding (15-60cms) of the mid Miocene in the studied area contrasts with the massive beds (1m-1.5m) of the mid Miocene north of Beirut, in the Nahr el Kalb and Chekka areas, indicating deposition under differentially created accommodation spaces (see Fig. 10). The Beirut sediments were probably deposited on a high whereas north of Beirut the contemporaneous sediments piled massively in a subsiding low space with Mount Lebanon rise (Fig. 10; BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark 2006).

In North Beirut, the two uplift phases of the Neogene are implicitly and/or directly indicated by the studied outcrops: the first occurred before the Langhian/Serravallian when it reactivated the F1 fault in the western side of the harbour area to supply uppermost Cretaceous and Eocene lithoclasts to the conformable Miocene bed of Site 2. The second and younger phase, occurred in the early Pliocene time when the West Beirut block was further uplifted and Achrafieh rise was initiated. The evidence of the later phase of uplift is from the lower Pliocene beach-rock of Site 2 that encloses reworked uppermost Cretaceous lithoclasts, Eocene lithoclasts and mid Miocene (Serravallian) lithoclasts (Fig. 9D).

The biostratigraphy and sedimentology of the studied exposures of the Tertiary carbonates of Beirut harbour area add new information to the geological history and paleogeography of maritime Lebanon as described in BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark (2006).

During the Ypresian, sea level rise reached a maximum with hemipelagic sedimentation over most of maritime Lebanon. Reworked Ypresian benthic and planktonic foraminifera in Lutetian carbonates of Sites 1 and 4 record this occurrence in Beirut harbour area (Fig.

9A). During the Lutetian, the carbonate platform was differentiated into inner-outer depositional zones with carbonate build-ups as recorded south of Beirut and on the eastern and south eastern side of Mount Lebanon. In the case of the Beirut harbour area the Lutetian carbonates are characterised by inner platform deposits (see BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006 describing Lutetian paleogeography pre-Dead Sea Transform left lateral movements and rotation).

The West Beirut high flanked by the marine terrace of Lutetian/Bartonian age at Site 3 sheltered the younger Priabonian inner platform carbonates of Site 2. The relief separated an inner platform environment of the harbour area from an outer platform environment to the west and north of West Beirut high (see Fig. 3). Remarkably, the high energy carbonates of the youngest Eocene inner platform shallow water sediments include whole or broken pelagic fossil fish of the Bregmacerotidae family (see Plate 4). Elsewhere, the youngest Eocene platform limestones left few preserved sections in south maritime Lebanon in addition to the section of Site 2 by the northern foothill of Achrafieh in Beirut (see above and BouDagher-Fadel and Noujaim Clark, 2006).

Twenty million years of non-deposition and/or erosion separate the preserved Eocene carbonates from the conformable overlying mid Miocene carbonates of the harbour area. The younger mid Miocene carbonates of Site 2 infer a reactivation and uplift of F1 fault as they contain eroded Campanian, Maastrichtian and Lutetian lithoclasts. The later phase of the early Pliocene uplift affected the Achrafieh area on the one hand and the reactivation of F1 fault and West Beirut area on the other. A low area between these highs, was filled with inner platform argillaceous carbonates (Fig. 9D).

In the studied area, the youngest allochthonous lithoclasts in recipient sediments have dated the emerged reliefs that are the source of supply. Along maritime Lebanon, the same principle applied to indicate that Mount Lebanon rose differentially through several phases of uplift: at the beginning of the mid Miocene time, during the Late Miocene, and during the early Pliocene time before the final Holocene continental emergence. The underpinning of the geological complexity and structural history of this area is a contribution to understanding the archaeological exploration, hydrocarbon and hydrogeological potential of the region.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors wish to express their gratitude to Dr. Muntaha Saghih Beydoun Head Archaeologist of the excavations of Site 3, Site 2 and Site 8. Her insistence of including a geological study of bedrock and outcrops surrounding the major excavations of Beirut harbour area gave them the opportunity to discover unreported Eocene carbonates, Eocene fish deposits, old and young Cenozoic shorelines by the eastern foothill of Beirut West, and northern foothill of Beirut East. They are deeply thankful for the help and encouragement of Dr. Assaad Seif Head Archaeologist of Site 6 instigating the sampling of the excavated bedrock that led to the newly discovered Mio/Pliocene beds of Beirut harbour area. Finally,

their unreserved thank you go to the editors, David Clark petroleum geologist and Prof. David Price Vice-Provost (Research), UCL. A special thank you to Mr. Khalid Najjarine for his logistical help on Beirut sites.

Fig. 1. Area of study and location sites based on the revised geological map of Dubertret (1945), and the geomorphological map of Sanlaville (1977).

Fig. 2. Field photograph of Site 2; in the upper right hand corner, from right to left: the wall covering the Miocene beds under the habitation of "Achrafieh" northern hillside; sampled layer 1 is the base of the Miocene section; sampled layer 5 of thin bedded Eocene carbonates includes the fish deposits of *Bregmaceros filamentosus*; to the left of the field of view the excavation of a sloped mound uncovering the bedrock of a shoreline carbonate section against the raised cliff side of the Tertiary carbonate section of "Achrafieh".

Fig. 3. Diagram (1) shows an old elevated Lutetian/Bartonian NS composite faulted western block and the Lutetian/Bartonian shoreline by its eastern side. Diagram (2) shows the inner platform shallow water sediments during the early Priabonian time in the backreef waters of the western structural block.

Fig. 4. preserved lithologies of the Eocene and Miocene carbonates of Beirut harbour area; note occurrences of allochthonous lithoclasts from older reliefs. Global Sea Level curve after Snedden and Liu (2004-2008).

Fig. 5. A Miocene brown bed (30cms) of cross-laminated carbonates resting conformably above thinly-cross laminated Priabonian strata of 15-20 cms chalky white carbonates. Base layer 5 in the foreground is the fossil fish layer within the Priabonian parasequence.

Fig. 6. Site 2 excavated bedrock that shows the two stages shore structure. from base: layer 10 of backshore sediments; layer 9 of beach-rock sediments; subangular cobble sized lithoclasts 8 at base of layer 9. The backdrop of field of view is the Paleogene-Neogene outcrop.

Figs.7A & 7B: Photomicrographs of back-shore reworked heterogeneous lithoclasts. The grain contacts are cemented with meniscus cement indicative of precipitation in the fresh water flushed vadose zone.

Fig.8: RML9 (11) of layer 9, photomicrograph of intergranular micrite and microspar cement binding the reworked bioclasts of Eocene into the Serravallian-Early Pliocene deposits. Note, selective pyrite replacement of allochthonous peloids and bioclasts.

Fig. 9. 9A draws the Lutetian coastal onlap as far south of the harbour area by Site 4; 9B marks the West Beirut displacement post Lutetian and marine terrace formation during the Lutetian/Bartonian time and the onset of the Priabonian coastal onlap recorded from Site 2; 9C shows the renewed displacement of F1 fault preceding the middle Miocene coastal onlap and the Miocene/Eocene diachronous unconformity in Sites 1 and 2; 9D draws remnant of a coastal onlap in Site 6, the early Pliocene shoreline section of Site 2, and the latest raised beach marine conglomerates of Site 7 and the topmost "Achrafieh" hillside.

Fig. 10. Summary of the preserved Cenozoic marine sections of the Lebanon coastline during the middle to late Miocene. Note the exceptional Beirut profile where there was a pre-existing relief in the west controlling the platform from the NE and SW.

Fig. 11. Reviewed Priabonian environment of deposition from 2006 in light of present-day description of its environment of deposition in the harbour area.

## Plate 1

Scale bars: Fig. 1 = 0.3mm; Figs 2-5 = 0.5mm

Fig. 1. *Textularia* sp., G1

Fig. 2. *Elphidium* sp., sample G1

Figs 3 - 4. *Borelis* sp., G2

Fig. 5. Fragment of *Operculina* sp., sample G2

## Plate 2

Scale bars: Figs 1-11 = 0.5mm.

Fig. 1. A) *Bolivina* sp., B) *Acarinina* sp., sample G2.

Fig. 2. *Globigerinatheka barri* (Brönnimann), sample G3.

Fig. 3. *Globigerina praebulloides* Blow, sample G3.

Fig. 4. *Turborotalia centralis* (Cushman and Bermudez), sample G5.

Fig. 5. *Acarinina nitida* (Martin), sample RML5.

Fig. 6. *Morozovella* sp., RML5.

Fig. 7. *Globigerinoides trilobus* (Reuss), sample RML1.

Figs 8, 11. *Orbulina universa* (d'Orbigny), 8) RML1; 11) RML9.

Fig. 9. *Sphaeroidinella dehiscens* (Parker and Jones), RML9.

Fig. 10. *Sphaeroidinellopsis subdehiscens* (Blow), RML9.

### Plate 3

Scale bars: Figs 1-3 = 0.5mm.

Figs 1-3. Micritic wackestone of reworked Cretaceous planktonic foraminifera, sample G1:  
1a) *Gansserina gansseri* (Bolli); 2b) *Pseudotextularia elegans* (Rzehak); 3c) *Globotruncana aegyptiaca* Nakkady.

### Plate 4

Scale bars: 5mm.

Thin sections of *Bregmaceros filamentosus* (Priem).

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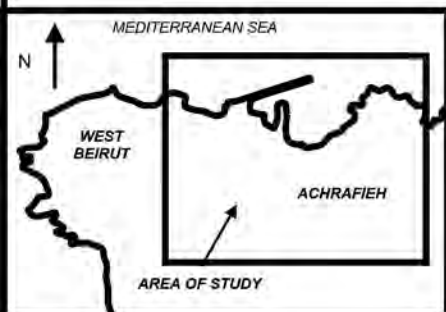
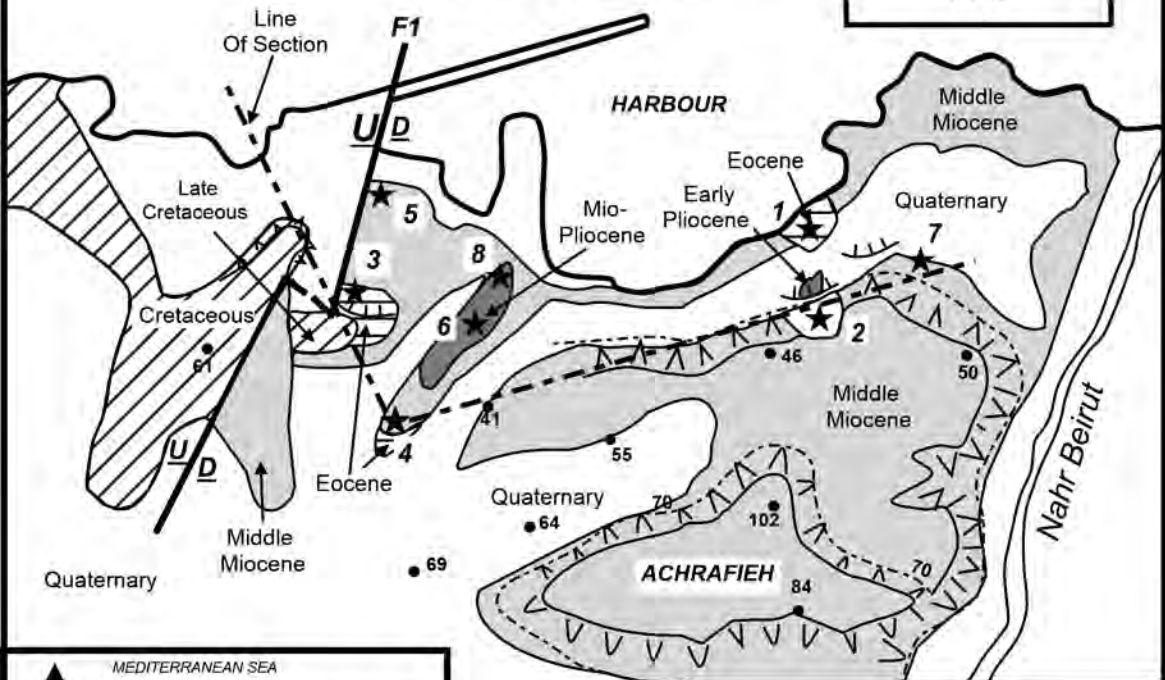
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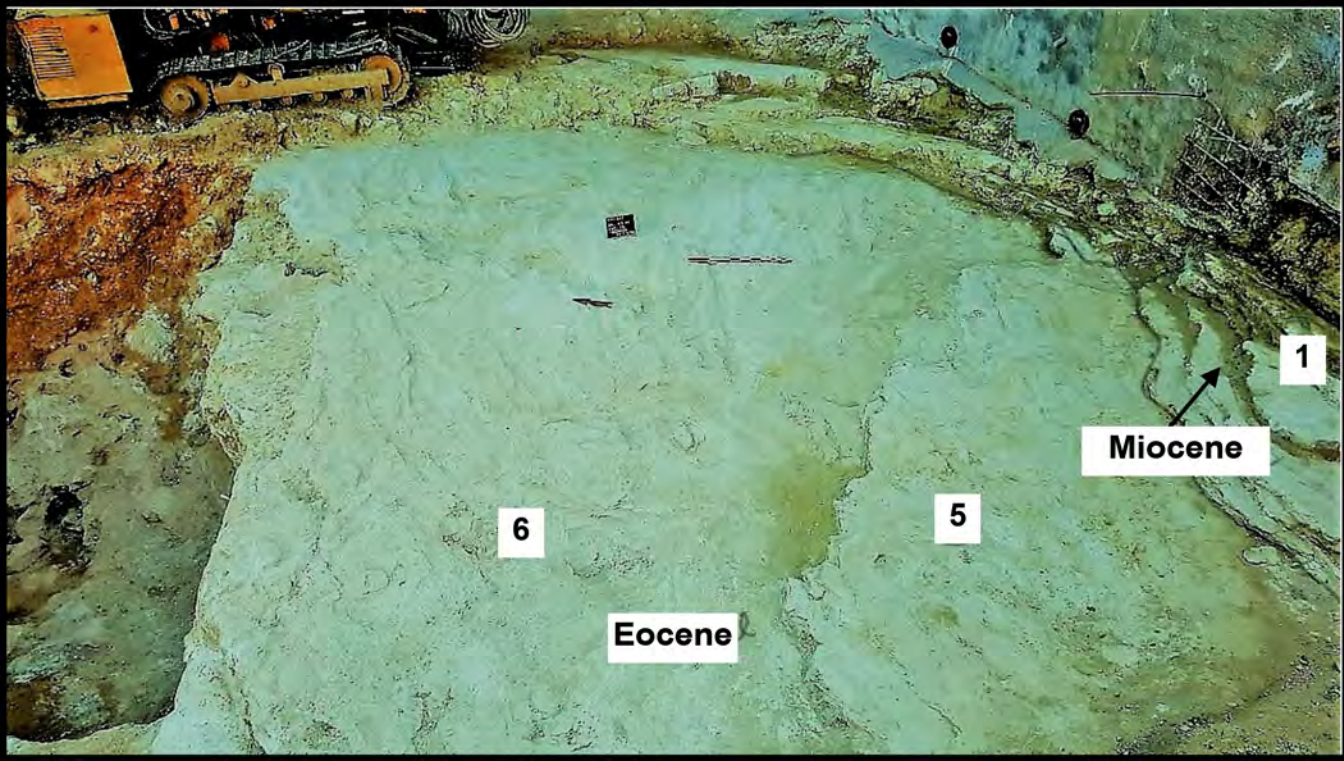
# MEDITERRANEAN SEA

1 Km



## KEY

- ★ 6 Studied Sections
- ~ Paleo-shoreline
- $\frac{U}{D}$  Fault
- V V V Cliffs (after Sanlaville 1977)
- 60 Spot Elevations (meters)



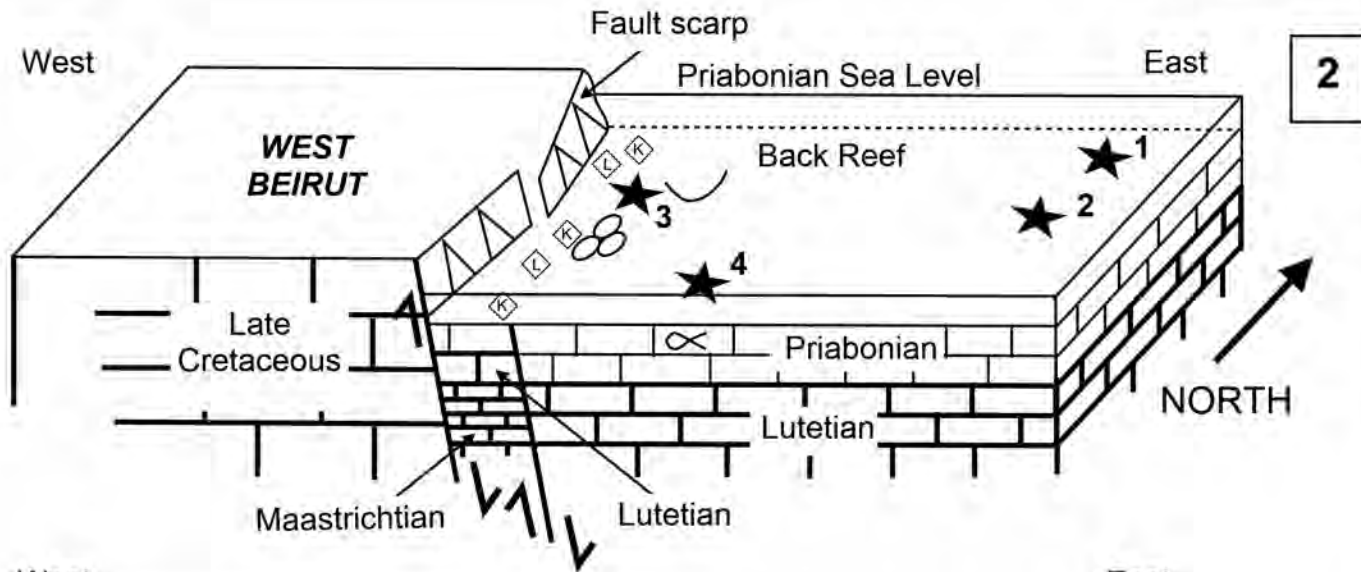
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Miocene

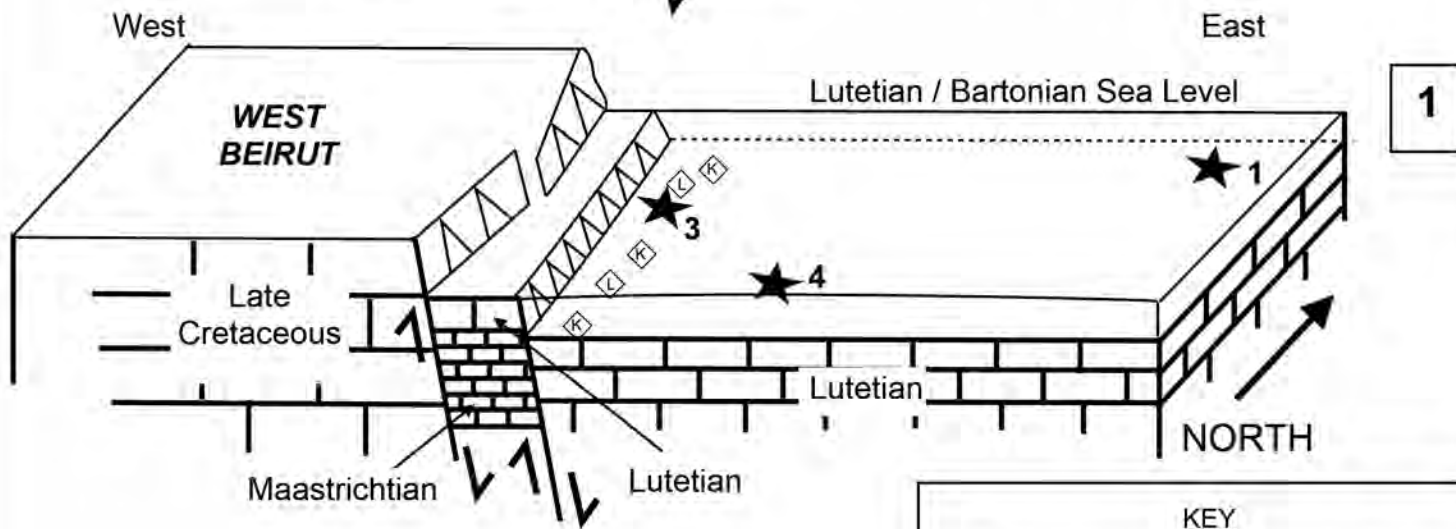
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6

Eocene



2

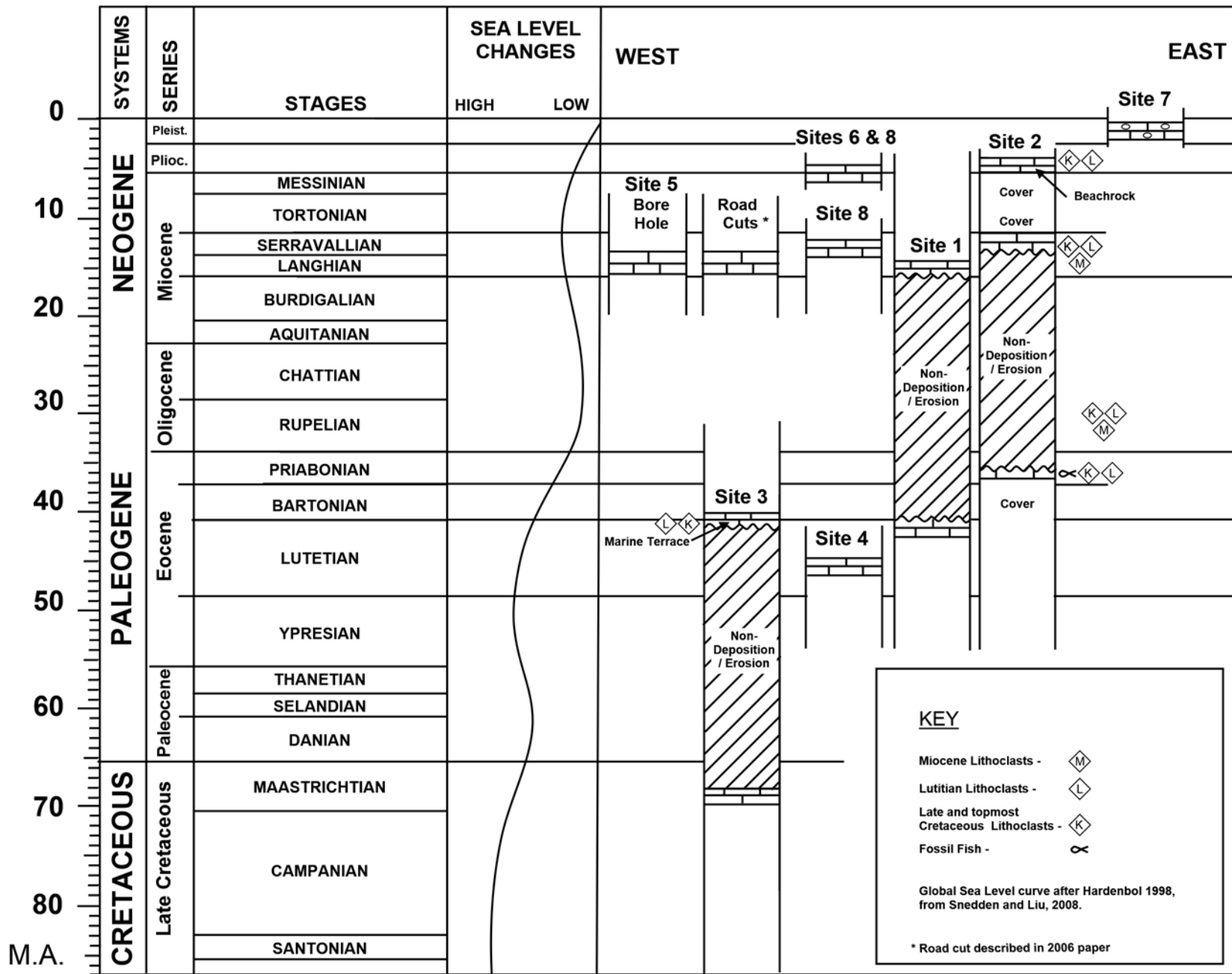


1

Not to scale

KEY

★ 1	Studied outcrops	◊	Lutetian Lithoclasts -
⊗	Foraminifera	◊	Late Cretaceous and Maastrichtian Lithoclasts
∩	Lamellibranch valves	∞	Fossil Fish -





1

INCH 6.37  
CM 16.25

5

6



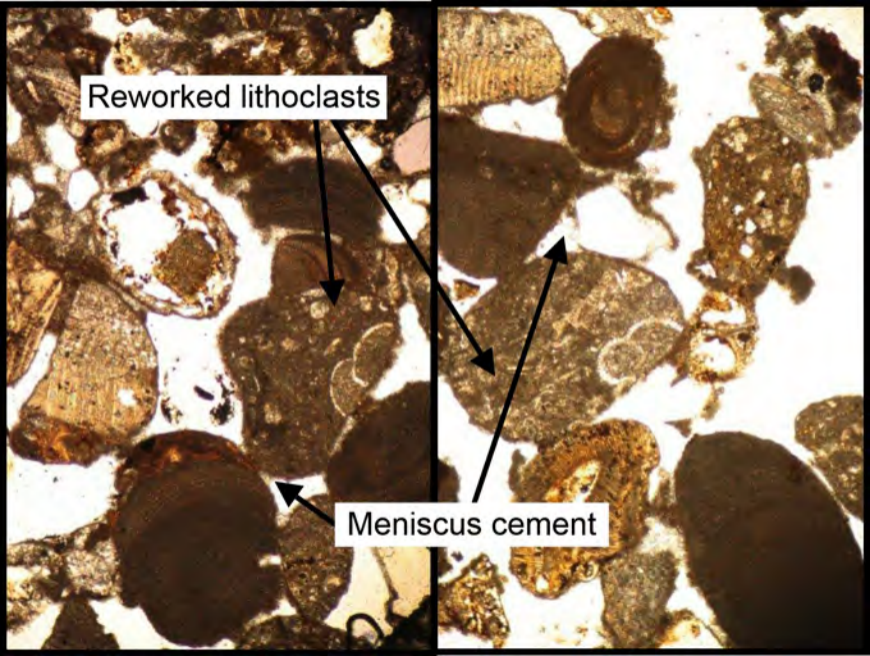
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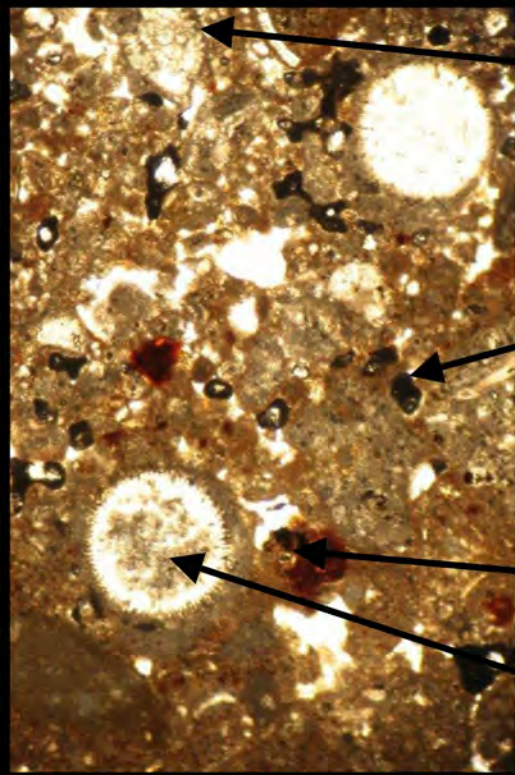
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Reworked lithoclasts

Meniscus cement





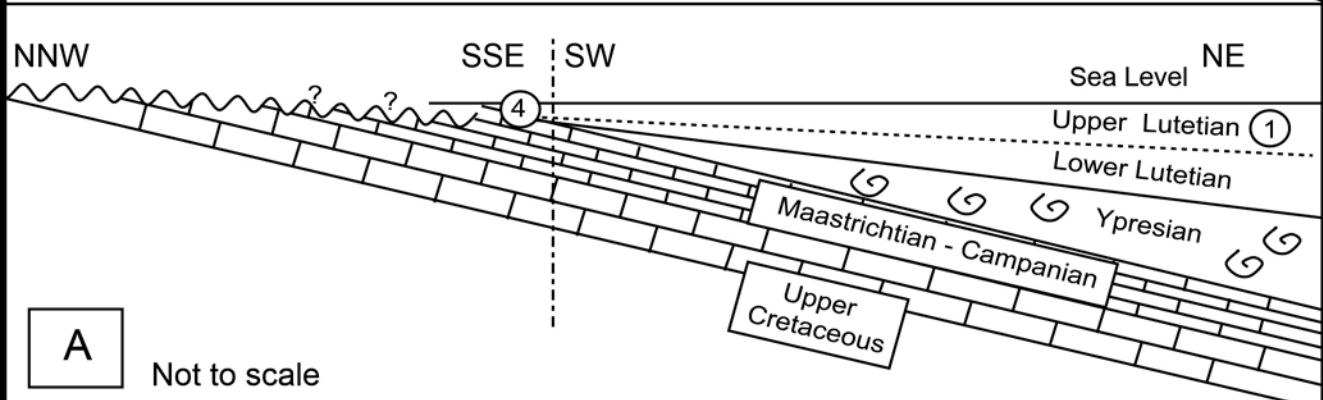
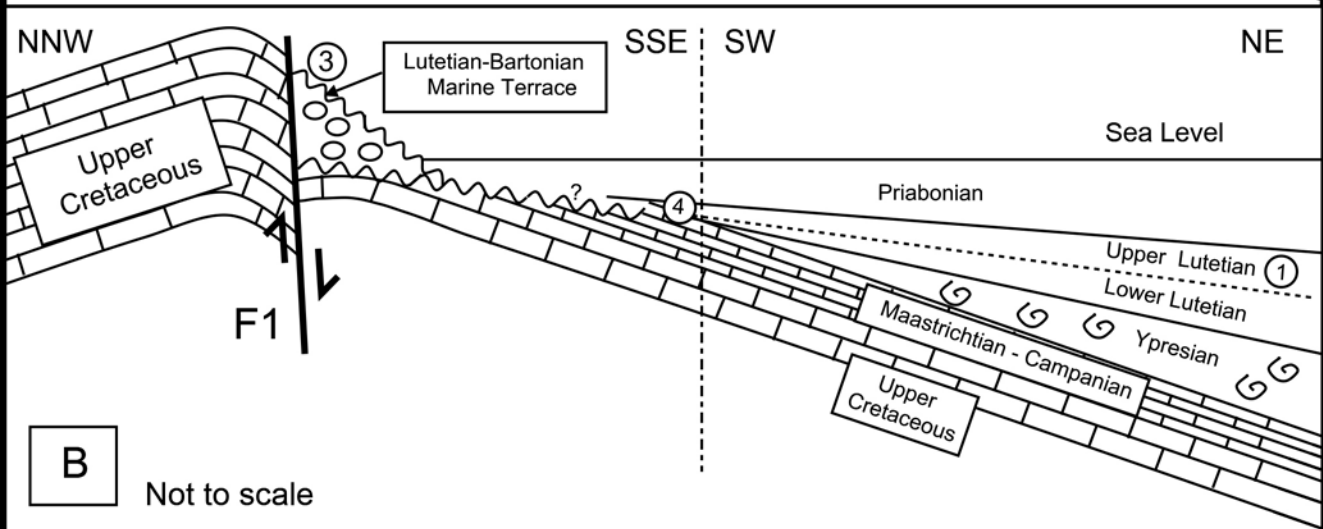
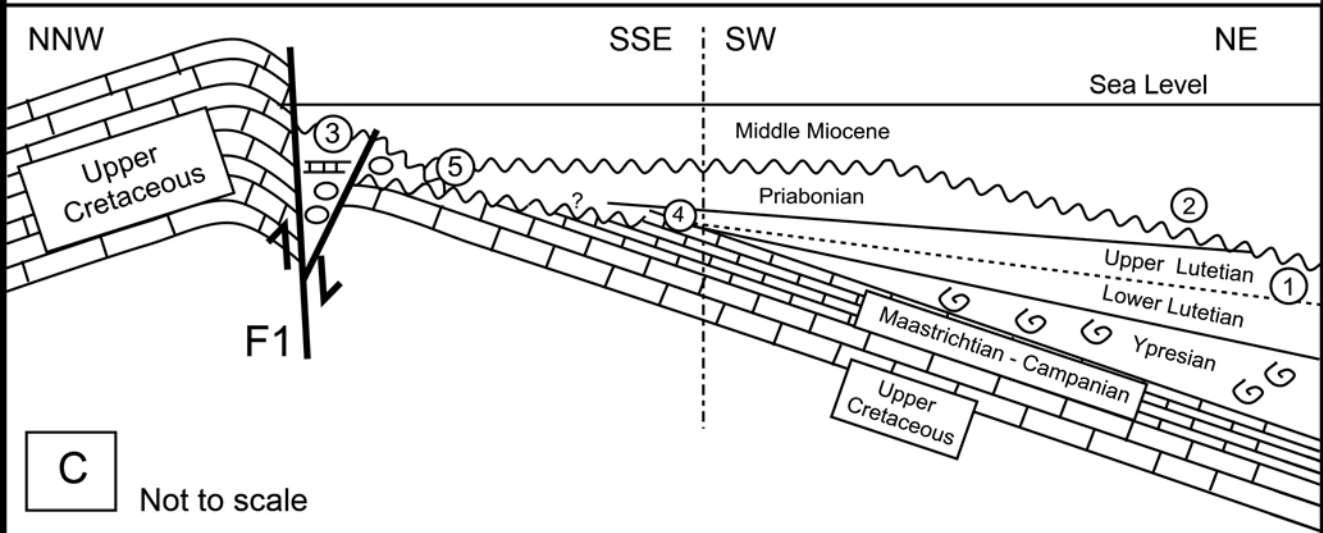
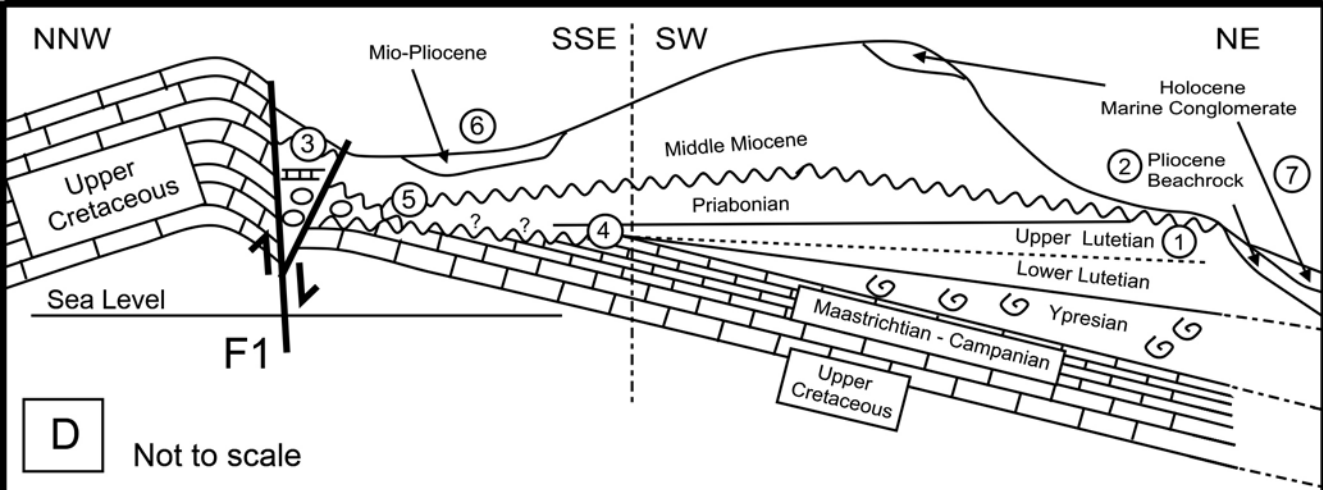


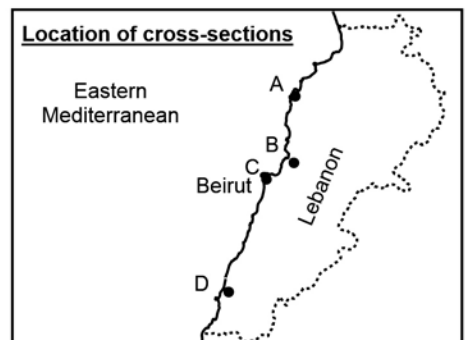
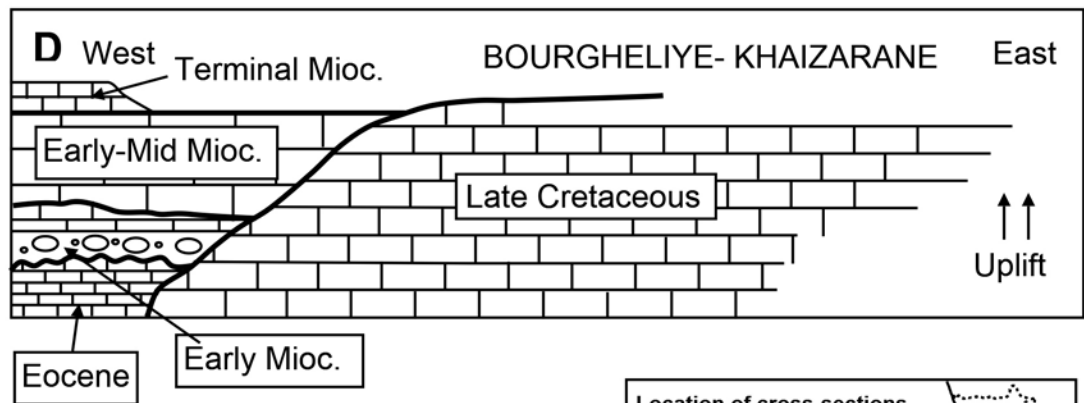
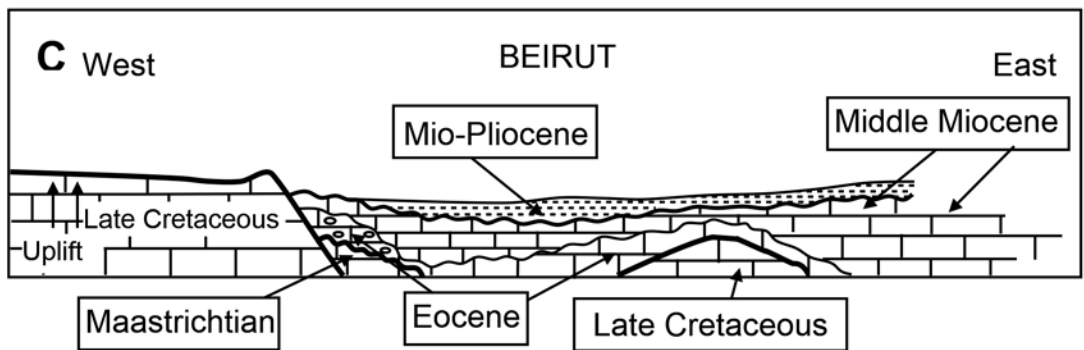
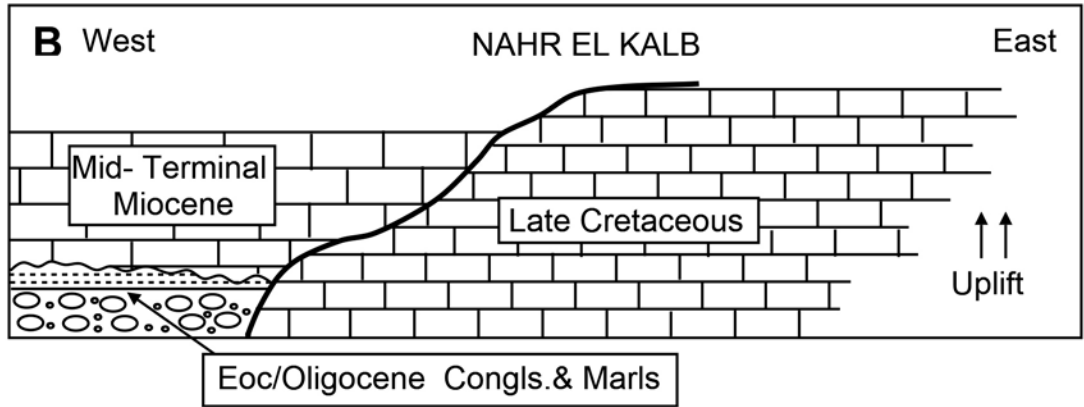
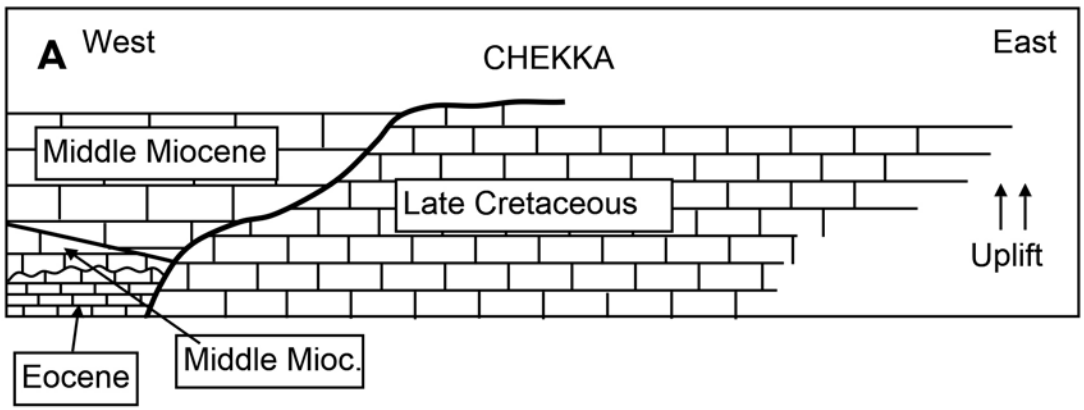
Elphidium sp.

Pyrite replacement of  
peloids and bioclasts

Iron oxide staining

Orbulina universa  
(d'Orbigny)





*EASTERN  
MEDITERRANEAN*

NORTH



INNER  
SHELF

BEIRUT

NON-DEPOSITION  
OR  
DIFFERENTIAL UPLIFT

SIDON

INNER  
SHELF

TYRE

OUTER  
SHELF

0

50 Kms

