

The Oil and Gas Habitats of the South Atlantic

Geological Society Special Publications

Series Editors

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Cover illustration. GEOSAT satellite free-air gravity image for the southern Atlantic region. Illumination is from the north. Total gravity colour range is -100 to +40 mgals (see gravity legend of Fig. 1, Karner & Driscoll). Gravity contours less than -100 mgals are coloured black whilst contours greater than +40 mgals are white. The free-air gravity anomaly, because it is dominated by near-field density contrasts, is particularly useful for defining the general bathymetry and structure of both thinned continental and oceanic crust. For example, the present-day mid-Atlantic ridge spreading centre, ridge jumps, fracture zone trends, continental margin rift structures and their continuity, the ocean/continent boundary, the 'edge-effect' anomaly that characterizes the shelf break, hot-spot traces, and possible reactivation structures are clearly delineated. Further, the early opening trends of magnetic quiet zone oceanic crust are well-imaged, allowing for improved plate tectonic reconstructions for this early part of the post-rift history to be mapped. Four hotspots have likely influenced significantly oceanic crust chemistry and thickness during the late Cretaceous period. From south to north, these hotspots are Tristan da Cunha, Saint Helena, Ascension, and Fernando de Noronha. Note also that the large river deltas (e.g. Congo, Niger, Ogooué and São Francisco) are all associated with extreme positive gravity anomalies, reflecting the large flexural strength of the underlying lithosphere at the time of loading (see Karner & Driscoll, pages 11–40, for details).

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The Oil and Gas Habitats of the South Atlantic

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Contents

CAMERON, N. R., BATE, R. H., CLURE, V. S. & BENTON, J. Oil and gas habitats of the South Atlantic: Introduction	1
The geological and geophysical framework	
KARNER, G. D. & DRISCOLL, N. W. Tectonic and stratigraphic development of the West African and eastern Brazilian Margins: insights from quantitative basin modelling	11
GALLAGHER, K. & BROWN, R. The Mesozoic denudation history of the Atlantic margins of southern Africa and southeast Brazil and the relationship to offshore sedimentation	41
DARROS DE MATOS, R. M. History of the northeast Brazilian rift system: kinetic implications for the break-up between Brazil and West Africa	55
ROSENDAHL, B. R. & GROSCHEL-BECKER, H. Deep seismic structure of the continental margin in the Gulf of Guinea: a summary report	75
CROSSLEY, R. & CRIPPS, D. Templates from mainland Africa and the Red Sea for interpreting the early evolution of the South Atlantic	85
Oil and gas habitats	
DOLAN, P. Western Africa: an unfinished story of oil and gas exploration	97
COWARD, M. P., PURDY, E. G., RIES, A. C. & SMITH, D. G. The distribution of petroleum reserves in basins of the South Atlantic margins	101
DAVISON, I. Tectonics and hydrocarbon distribution along the Brazilian South Atlantic margin	133
JUNGSLAGER, E. H. A. Petroleum habitats of the Atlantic margin of South Africa	153
Organic geochemistry	
SCHIEFELBEIN, C. F., ZUMBERGE, J. E., CAMERON, N. R. & BROWN, S. W. Petroleum systems in the South Atlantic margins	169
BURWOOD, R. Angola: source rock control for Lower Congo Coastal and Kwanza Basin petroleum systems	181
Applications	
HOLBOURN, A., KUHN, W., EL ALBANI, A., PLETSCH, T., LUDERER, F. & WAGNER, T. Upper Cretaceous palaeoenvironments and benthonic foraminiferal assemblages of potential source rocks from the western African margin, Central Atlantic	195
EL ALBANI, A., KUHN, W., LUDERER, F., HERBIN, J. P. & CARON, M. Palaeoenvironmental evolution of the Late Cretaceous sequence in the Tarfaya Basin (southwest of Morocco)	223
WAGNER, T. & PLETSCH, T. Tectono-sedimentary controls on Cretaceous black shale deposition along the opening of the Equatorial Atlantic Gateway (ODP Leg 159)	241
PREECE, R. C., KAMINSKI, M. A. & DIGNES, T. W. Miocene benthonic foraminiferal morphogroups in an oxygen minimum zone, offshore Cabinda	267
BATE, R. H. Non-marine ostracod assemblages of the Pre-Salt rift basins of West Africa and their role in sequence stratigraphy	283

DINGLE, R. V. Walvis Ridge barrier: its influence on palaeoenvironments and source rock generation deduced from ostracod distributions in the early South Atlantic Ocean	293
Exploration studies and issues	
TURNER, J. P. Detachment faulting and petroleum prospectivity in the Rio Muni Basin, Equatorial Guinea, West Africa	303
BAGGULEY, J. & PROSSER, S. The interpretation of passive margin depositional processes using seismic stratigraphy: examples from offshore Namibia	321
STANISTREET, I. G. & STOLLHOFEN, H. Onshore equivalents of the main Kudu gas reservoir in Namibia	345
JERRAM, D. A., MOUNTNEY, N. & STOLLHOFEN, H. Facies architecture of the Etjo Sandstone Formation and its interaction with the Basal Etendeka Flood Basalts of northwest Namibia: implications for offshore prospectivity	367
CLEMSON, J., CARTWRIGHT, J. & SWART, R. The Namib Rift: a rift system of possible Karoo age, offshore Namibia	381
BARKER, P. F. Falkland Plateau evolution and a mobile southernmost South America	403
LAWRENCE, S. R., JOHNSON, M., TUBB, S. R. & MARSHALLSEA, S. J. Tectono-stratigraphic evolution of the North Falkland region	409
BRANDSEN, P. J. E., BURGESS, P., DURHAM, M. J. & HALL, J. G. Evidence for multi-phase rifting in the North Falklands Basin	425
MEADOWS, N. S. Basin evolution and sedimentary fill in the Palaeozoic sequences of the Falkland Islands	445
Index	465