

Paolo Antonio Pirazzoli (1939-2017)

An exceptional career dedicated to coastal geomorphology

In memoriam

Paolo Pirazzoli was born in Venice (Italy) in 1939 but acquired French citizenship in 1978, several years after marrying Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, a well-known historian specialising in Chinese civilization. Paolo Pirazzoli graduated in Civil Engineering from Palermo (Sicily), before becoming an engineer in France, where he was actively involved in the student demonstrations of 1968. In September 1968, he was made redundant by the engineering company he was working for at the time, paving the way - almost by accident - for an exceptional career in geography.

Paolo quickly became interested in sea-level changes after listening to a conference in Paris about the submersion of his home town Venice “full of approximations and errors”. He was rapidly integrated into the coastal research group headed by the geographer Fernand Verger, a very active professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris. In 1976, he obtained his PhD in Geography from Paris University with a thesis entitled “Les variations du niveau marin depuis 2000 ans”.

Paolo Pirazzoli’s main research interests were centred around Quaternary sea-level changes, and the identification and dating of former shorelines (Holocene, Pleistocene) all over the world. Following his retirement, he focused on recent and present-day sea-level changes (tide gauges, satellites, modelling), surges and climate variability, coastal evolution, human impacts, the impacts of a sea-level rise and global change. He was a tireless explorer who travelled the world, from Tierra del Fuego to Iran and from Tahiti to Africa... But islands were his favourite spots, and he had a particular passion for the Greek and Pacific islands. Paolo was one of the rare French geographers of his generation to have had an important international audience. For example, he was leader of the IGCP Project #200 (1983-1987) and advisor for the IGCP projects #274 (1988-1993), #367 (1994-1998) and # 437 (1999-2003).

Paolo Pirazzoli was also a very active scientific editor for different international journals, most notably *Global and Planetary Change* (Elsevier). In 2013, he received an Honorary Fellowship from the International Association of Geomorphology for his services to the discipline.

Paolo was a tireless worker and thinker, and our community greatly appreciated his scientific and interpersonal qualities. He was exceptionally intelligent and independent, and was widely viewed as one of the most prominent coastal geoscientists of his generation. His innovative studies significantly contributed to our understanding of sea-level changes and coastal evolution, authoring hundreds of publications that inspired both his peers and students. He was a strong believer in multidisciplinary research. His international reputation was equalled only by his kindness and his availability for young colleagues and students, who benefitted from his knowledge and vast international network. Sadly, we have lost a great scientist and a warm colleague. Paolo also loved cats, Baroque music, especially Johann-Sebastian Bach’s cantatas, good food and Ouzo! All those privileged to have known him grieve his loss.

Among hundreds of important scientific publications, we can cite the following, particularly pioneering and innovative:

Pirazzoli, P. A. (1976). Sea level variations in the northwest Mediterranean during Roman times. *Science*, 194(4264), 519-521.

Pirazzoli, P. A., Thommeret, J., Thommeret, Y., Laborel, J., & Montaggioni, L. F. (1982). Crustal block movements from Holocene shorelines: Crete and Antikythira (Greece). *Tectonophysics*, 86(1-3), 27-43.

Pirazzoli, P. A., & Montaggioni, L. F. (1986). Late Holocene sea-level changes in the northwest Tuamotu Islands, French Polynesia. *Quaternary Research*, 25(3), 350-368.

Pirazzoli, P. A. (1987). Recent sea-level changes and related engineering problems in the lagoon of Venice (Italy). *Progress in Oceanography*, 18(1-4), 323-346.

Pirazzoli, P. A. (1989). Present and near-future global sea-level changes. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 75(4), 241-258.

Pirazzoli, P. A. (1991). *World Atlas of Holocene Sea-Level Changes*. Elsevier Oceanography Series, Vol. 58, 300 p., Amsterdam.

Pirazzoli, P. A., Laborel, J., & Stiros, S. C. (1996). Earthquake clustering in the Eastern Mediterranean during historical times. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth*, 101(B3), 6083-6097.

Pirazzoli, P. A. (1997). Sea-level changes: the last 20 000 years. *Oceanographic Literature Review*, 8(44), 785.

Pirazzoli, P. A., & Tomasin, A. (2003). Recent near - surface wind changes in the central Mediterranean and Adriatic areas. *International Journal of Climatology*, 23(8), 963-973.

Pirazzoli, P. A. (2005). A review of possible eustatic, isostatic and tectonic contributions in eight late-Holocene relative sea-level histories from the Mediterranean area. *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 24(18), 1989-2001.

Pirazzoli, P. A., & Evelpidou, N. (2013). Tidal notches: a sea-level indicator of uncertain archival trustworthiness. *Palaeogeography, Palaeoclimatology, Palaeoecology*, 369, 377-384.

Evelpidou, N., & Pirazzoli, P. A. (2017). Did the Early Byzantine tectonic paroxysm (EBTP) also affect the Adriatic area?. *Geomorphology*.

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