

STACKING SEISMIC DATA BASED ON PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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Stacking seismic data plays an indispensable role in many steps of the seismic data processing and imaging workflow. Optimal stacking of seismic data can help mitigate seismic noise and enhance the principal components to a great extent. Traditional equal-weight seismic stacking method cannot obtain optimal performance when the ambient noise is extremely strong. We propose applying a principal component analysis (PCA) algorithm for stacking seismic data without being sensitive to noise level. We use both synthetic and field data examples to demonstrate the performance of the presented method.

KEY WORDS: seismic imaging, stacking, principal component analysis, low rank approximation.

INTRODUCTION

Stacking is one crucial step in the seismic data processing and imaging workflow (Tian et al., 2014; Lindstrom et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2017; Bai and Wu, 2017; Huang et al., 2017a; Wang et al., 2018). By summing traces corresponding different shot-geophone distances we can output a much enhanced trace for one specific common midpoint. In seismic imaging,

stacking of different single-shot images can help improve subsurface illumination (Liu et al., 2011; Chen et al., 2016b, 2017d). Stacking is inherently an anti-noise method because summation over a number of well aligned traces can boost the effective signals and suppress the Gaussian white random noise. However, when noise becomes extremely strong and number of traces for stacking is small, simple summation cannot perform well in suppressing the random noise. For this reason, a number of stacking methods have been proposed in the literature for more robust performance in the case of low signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) (Schoenberger, 1996; Zhang et al., 2015; Chen, 2016; Chen et al., 2017c; Chen, 2017; Liu et al., 2016c; Chen and Jin, 2015; Zhang et al., 2016b; Siahisar et al., 2017a,b,c; Zu et al., 2016b, 2017b).

Li and Gao (2014) proposed a novel method for stacking seismic data in the time-frequency domain (Lin et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2016a,b, 2017). Deng et al. (2016) took the amplitude-versus-offset (AVO) effect into consideration and proposed a weighted stacking method which can handle the amplitude variation phenomenon of CMP gathers. Liu et al. (2009) proposed a similarity-weighted stacking approach that designs the weights of each trace by calculating the local similarity between each trace and a reference trace, and the method was demonstrated to be superior to the state-of-the-art weighted stacking approaches. Yang et al. (2015) proposed a hybrid stacking strategy considering the coherency along both midpoint and offset directions.

In this paper, we propose using a principal component analysis (PCA) (Farrell and Mersereau, 2005; Du and Fowler, 2007) based stacking method. Considering the complicated situations of field seismic data as mentioned above, we propose to extract the principal components of seismic data to reject the extremely strong noise, non-Gaussian noise, outliers, and to enhance the amplitude of the primary signals. The principal components of the data matrix are extracted via solving an optimization problem with low-rank constraint. A singular value decomposition can be used to solve the optimization problem and then the low-rank approximation of the data matrix, which has a high SNR and is close to the ideal NMO-corrected common midpoint (CMP) gather, can be easily obtained. In this paper, we overcome the low SNR problem for pre-stack seismic data during traditional equal-weight stacking. We leverage the PCA theory to extract the most significant energy (e.g., the reflection energy) hidden in the extremely noisy seismic data. The PCA approximation method can minimize the negative influence of ambient noise, outliers, imperfect NMO operation, etc.

METHOD

Stacking of seismic data

Traditional stacking of seismic data is an arithmetic average of all traces in the input seismic gather. Let $x_i(t)$ denote a seismic trace (or a column) in a data matrix \mathbf{X} , the stacked trace can be expressed as

$$y(t) = \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{x_i(t)}{N} , \quad (1)$$

where t is time. $y(t)$ is the stacked zero-offset trace, and N is the number of traces (or columns in the data matrix).

PCA approximated data matrix

Let us suppose the data matrix \mathbf{X} is composed of signal component \mathbf{S} and unknown components \mathbf{E} ,

$$\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{S} + \mathbf{E} . \quad (2)$$

The unknown components may contain random noise, erratic noise (e.g., large-amplitude spikes) and abnormal components (e.g., misaligned trace). The traditional equal-weight stacking method is essentially a way to boost the energy of useful signals by summation of neighbor traces and at the same time to suppress the random noise. The stacking process is equivalent to applying a mean filter to the whole gather with filter length designed as half number of the total columns.

However, the equal-weight stacking method can obtain optimal performance only if the unknown components are purely Gaussian white noise and the number of columns is large. When the number of columns is large, the arithmetic mean of Gaussian white noise tends to be zero following the statistic rule. When the data matrix is a slim matrix (i.e., the number of rows is much larger than the number of columns), the traditional stacking method cannot obtain optimal performance even if only Gaussian white noise exists. In this case, we need to seek a different way to approximate the useful components in the data matrix.

Principal component analysis (PCA) is an effective way for estimating the principal components in a give matrix. Extracting the principal components in a seismic data matrix using PCA aims at solving the following problem:

$$\min \|\mathbf{E}\|_F^2, \quad s.t. \quad \text{rank}(\mathbf{S}) = k, \quad \mathbf{X} = \mathbf{S} + \mathbf{E}, \quad (3)$$

where $\|\cdot\|_F^2$ denotes the Frobenius norm. k denotes the rank constraint applied to the target signal components.

Singular value decomposition (SVD) can be used to solve the optimization problem. The SVD of the data matrix \mathbf{D} can be expressed as (Wang et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2017b, 2018):

$$\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{\Sigma}\mathbf{V}^T. \quad (4)$$

Here, \mathbf{U} is composed of the eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}^T$. \mathbf{V} is composed of the eigenvectors of $\mathbf{X}^T\mathbf{X}$. $\mathbf{\Sigma}$ is a diagonal matrix composed of the decreasing singular values. Let us denote \mathbf{U} , $\mathbf{\Sigma}$ and \mathbf{V} in the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{U} &= [u_1, u_2, \dots, u_N], \\ \mathbf{\Sigma} &= \text{diag}(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \dots, \sigma_N), \\ \mathbf{V} &= [v_1, v_2, \dots, v_N]. \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

The vectors \mathbf{u}_i and \mathbf{v}_i are also called the propagation vectors and the eigenwavelets, respectively. The singular values σ_i are sorted such that $\sigma_1 > \sigma_2 > \dots > \sigma_N$. They can be obtained by calculating the positive square roots of the eigenvalues of the data covariance matrix $\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}^T$. Eq. (4) can be expressed as:

$$\mathbf{X} = \sum_{i=1}^N \lambda_i \mathbf{u}_i \mathbf{v}_i^T, \quad (6)$$

where $\mathbf{u}_i \mathbf{v}_i^T$ is the rank-one matrix called the i -th eigenimage of \mathbf{X} . Thus, from eq. (5), the seismic data matrix can be decomposed into N eigenimages, the energy of which corresponds to the value of each element in matrix $\mathbf{\Sigma}$. We can approximate the principal components and eliminate the unknown fluctuation in the data matrix by selecting the first k eigenimages (Freire and Ulrych, 1988; Huang et al., 2016, 2017d; Chen et al., 2016c,d; Huang et al., 2017b; Chen et al., 2017e):

$$\hat{\mathbf{S}}_{\text{svd}} = \sum_{i=1}^k \sigma_i \mathbf{u}_i \mathbf{v}_i^T. \quad (7)$$

Stacking based on PCA

After the PCA approximation of the data matrix $\hat{\mathbf{S}}$ is calculated, the better stacked trace is obtained by computing the arithmetic mean of the principal components along the spatial direction:

$$\hat{y}(t) = \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{\hat{s}_i(t)}{N} \quad , \quad (8)$$

where $\hat{y}(t)$ is the stacked trace using the PCA method and $\hat{s}_i(t)$ denotes the i -th column in the PCA approximated data matrix. The detailed algorithm workflow of the PCA based stacking approach can be summarized as:

1. Calculate the SVD of data matrix \mathbf{X} :

$$[\mathbf{U}, \mathbf{\Sigma}, \mathbf{V}] = \text{SVD}(\mathbf{X}) \quad . \quad (9)$$

2. Calculate the low-rank approximated singular value matrix by selecting the k -largest diagonal elements and setting others zero:

$$\hat{\mathbf{\Sigma}} = \text{diag}(\sigma_1, \sigma_2, \dots, \sigma_k, 0, \dots) \quad . \quad (10)$$

3. Calculate the low-rank approximated data matrix

$$\hat{\mathbf{S}} = \mathbf{U}\hat{\mathbf{\Sigma}}\mathbf{V}^T \quad . \quad (11)$$

4. Calculate the arithmetic mean of the PCA approximated data matrix according to eq. (8).

Although there have been a lot of different independent denoising algorithms in the literature that can be used to attenuate some noise energy (Li et al., 2016a; Chen et al., 2016a; Li et al., 2016b; Gan et al., 2016a; Liu et al., 2016e; Huang et al., 2017c,e,f; Chen et al., 2017b,a; Zhou et al., 2017a), the proposed PCA based method can serve as the most straightforward and easy-to-use way to enhance the SNR. Besides, most denoising approaches either damage a lot of useful energy, or fail in attenuating enough amount of noise (Chen and Jin, 2015; Zhang et al., 2016a, 2017). The PCA based stacking method should be applied as a routine step in common seismic data processing workflow because of its superb performance and easy implementation. On the other hand, the PCA based stacking strategy creates a new paradigm for looking at the seismic data in a new perspective. The current PCA based stacking method has a main drawback that the traditional PCA algorithm takes a large computational cost. A faster implementation of the PCA algorithm based on the fact that

the pre-stack seismic data is usually of a special structure (e.g., "slim" matrix) is the current research focus. Future research topics also include substituting the current PCA framework with more sophisticated algorithms to make the obtained components statistically as independent as possible, such as independent component analysis that is proven to be stronger than PCA (Hyvarinen et al., 2001), where higher order statistics rather than second-order moments are used to determine basic vectors. Moreover, applications in other geophysical problems like seismic data interpolation (Gan et al., 2016b; Zhong et al., 2016; Zu et al., 2016a), seismic migration (Ren and Tian, 2016), seismic inversion (Li et al., 2016c; Zu et al., 2017a), multiple attenuation (Shen et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016), are also worth being investigated.

EXAMPLES

In this section, we use two synthetic and one field data examples to demonstrate the performance of the PCA based stacking algorithm. The first synthetic example is shown in Figs. 1-3. The noisy data to be stacked is shown in Fig. 1(a). It is a simple example that contains five flattened seismic traces. The data is so noisy that the useful signals are almost buried in the strong noise. The PCA approximated useful signals (principal components in this problem) are shown in Fig. 1(b), where we can see that a large amount of random noise has been effectively suppressed and the useful reflection signals become much distinct.

The traditional equal-weight stacking algorithm just calculates the spatial average of the noisy data [Fig. 1(a)]. The PCA based stacking algorithm instead stacks the PCA approximated data along the spatial direction. Fig. 2(a) presents the result from equal-weight stacking, which still contains a lot of residual noise. Fig. 2(b) shows the stacked trace using the PCA based method. Since in this synthetic example, we have the ground-truth solution, we can quantitatively compare the stacking performance via the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) measurement. The SNR measurement is designed as follows:

$$\text{SNR} = 10 \log_{10} \frac{\|\mathbf{s}_0\|}{\|\mathbf{s}_0 - \hat{\mathbf{s}}\|} \quad , \quad (12)$$

where \mathbf{s}_0 denotes the ground-truth solution and the $\hat{\mathbf{s}}$ denotes the stacked result. Using this metric, the SNR of the equal-weight stacking method is 1.158 dB while the SNR of the PCA based method is 2.991 dB. To demonstrate the robust performance of the proposed PCA based method, we plot the output SNR diagram varying with increasing noise level in Fig. 3. The noise level is characterized by the noise variance. From Fig. 3 we can observe that the PCA based method is always superior to the traditional

equal-weight method in obtaining much higher output SNR. It is also salient that as the noise level increases more, the superiority of the proposed PCA method becomes more distinct. We conclude from this simple synthetic example that the PCA method obtains a much improved stacking performance.

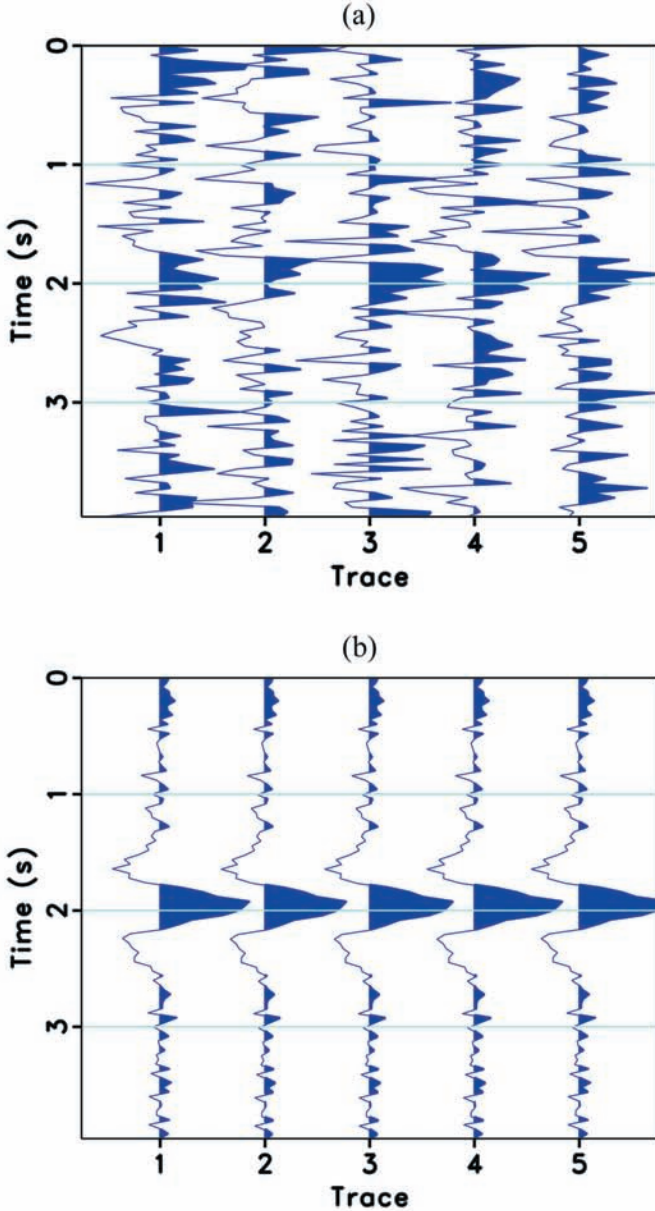
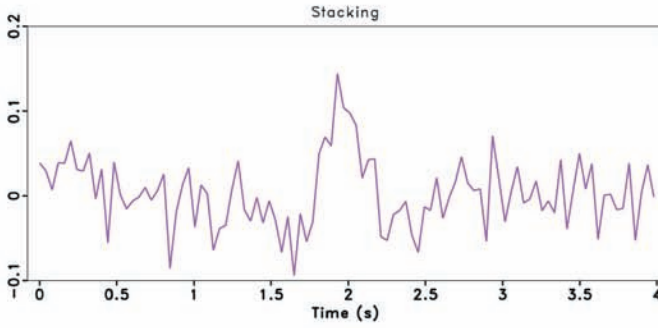


Fig. 1. (a) Flattened synthetic gather. (b) PCA approximated synthetic gather.

(a)



(b)

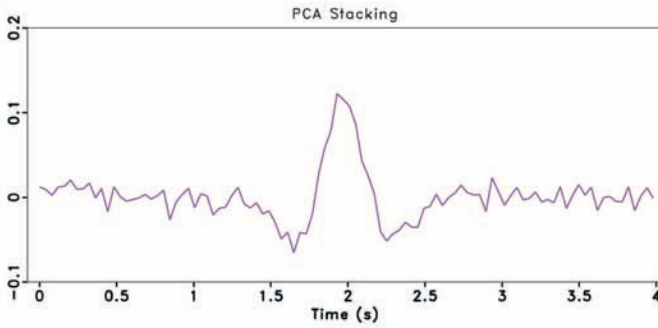


Fig. 2. (a) Stacked trace in the conventional way. (b) Stacked trace using the PCA method.

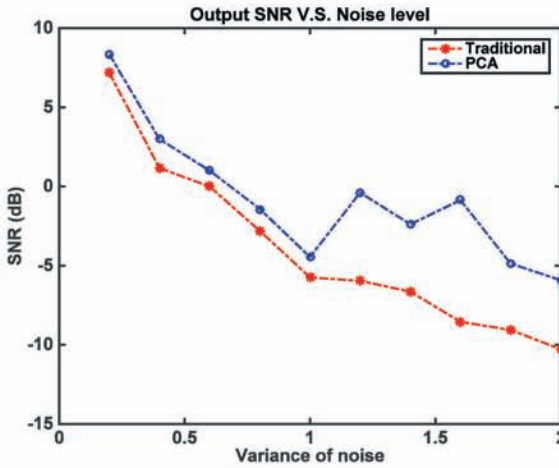


Fig. 3. Output SNRs varying with the input noise levels.

The second example is stacking a prestack 3D seismic data to obtain a stacked image. The prestack seismic data is shown in Fig. 4. The data was also used previously in Gan et al. (2016c). In this example, we add very strong random noise with SNR equal to -3.594 dB. In order to obtain the poststack image, we need first implement normal-moveout (NMO) based velocity analysis on the data and obtain NMO velocity. Then, we use the NMO velocity to atten the gathers, as shown in Fig. 5. We subsequently stack the flattened gathers along the offset direction to output stacked traces for different surface locations. The stacked image roughly depicts the subsurface geological structure. We apply both state-of-the-art equal-weight stacking method and the PCA based method to the flattened gathers and show the stacked images in Figs. 6(a) and 6(b), respectively. From the comparison of stacked images, we can observe that both methods obtain images that show up clear geological structures but the equal-weight method causes strong residual noise while the proposed PCA method obtains an almost noise-free post-stack image. We calculate the SNRs of the two images using the stacked image from clean data as the exact solution. The SNRs of the two methods are 5.171 dB and 11.324 dB, respectively.

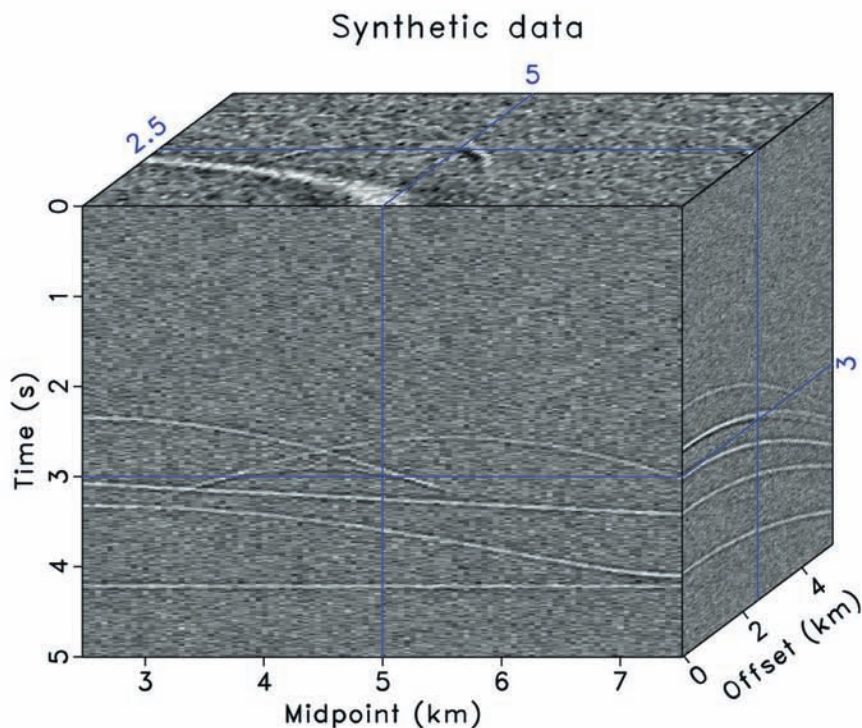


Fig. 4. 3D synthetic seismic data.

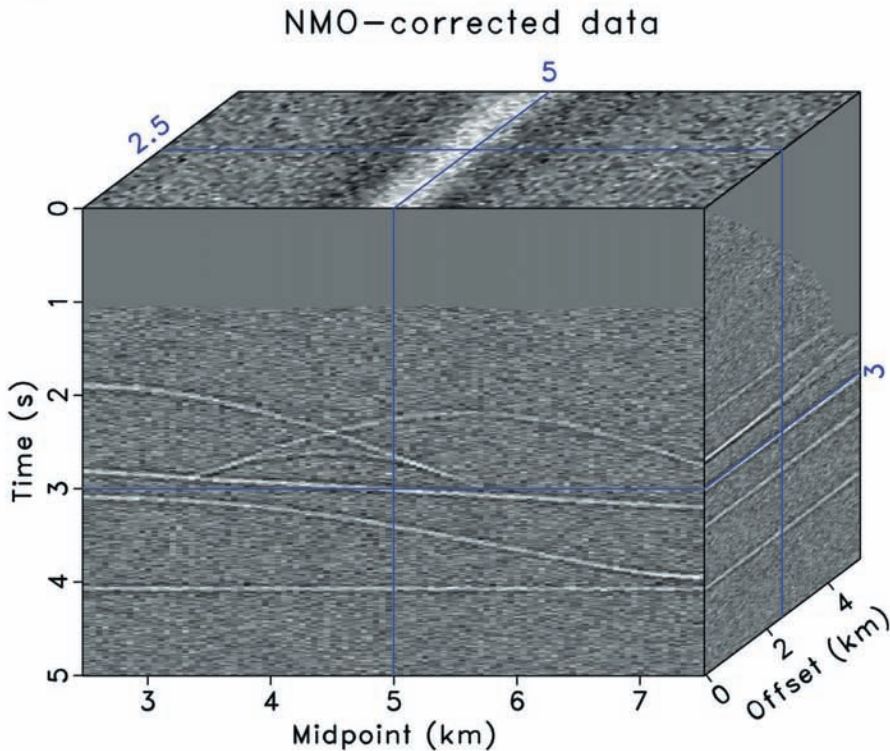
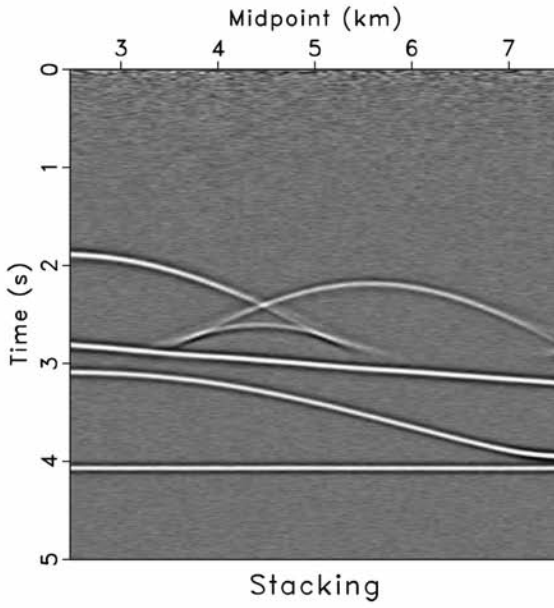


Fig. 5. NMO-corrected seismic data.

We finally demonstrate a field data example. The example is based on a 3D prestack dataset acquired from the Gulf of Mexico (Chen et al., 2015; Chen and Fomel, 2015; Gan et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2016d; Gan et al., 2016d). Fig. 7 shows the raw prestack seismic data. In this data, we have 4000 time samples with 0.001 s sampling rate. There are 250 spatial samples and 24 offset samples. Here we neglect all preprocessing steps and only show the stacked images in Fig. 8 for comparison. For this example, we also show the result from the SNR-based stacking method that was proposed in Neelamani et al. (2006) for more comprehensive comparison. Fig. 8(a) shows the stacked image using the traditional equal-weight method. Fig. 8(b) shows the result from the SNR-based stacking method. Fig. 8(c) shows the result from the PCA method. The result show quite clearly that the PCA based methods obtain images with much better spatial coherency and much clearer seismic reflection events. In order to better view the performance, we zoomed a part from each stacked image and show the zoomed sections in Fig. 9, from which we can see a much clearer comparison. The zooming areas are highlighted by the frame boxes in Fig. 8.

(a)



(b)

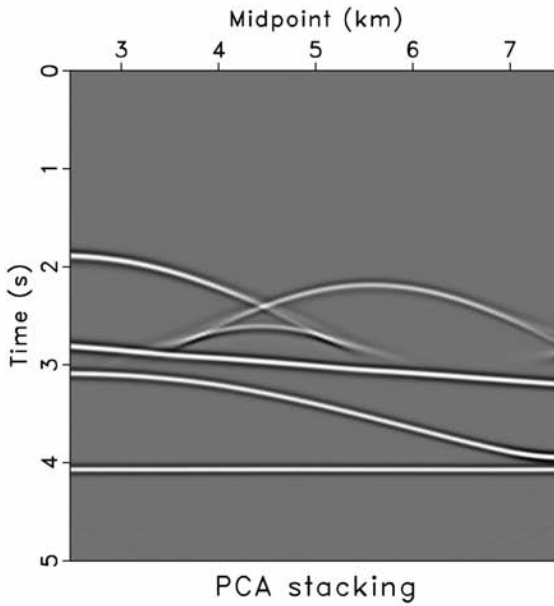


Fig. 6. (a) Stacked result in the conventional way. (b) Stacked result using the PCA method.

Gulf of Mexico Data

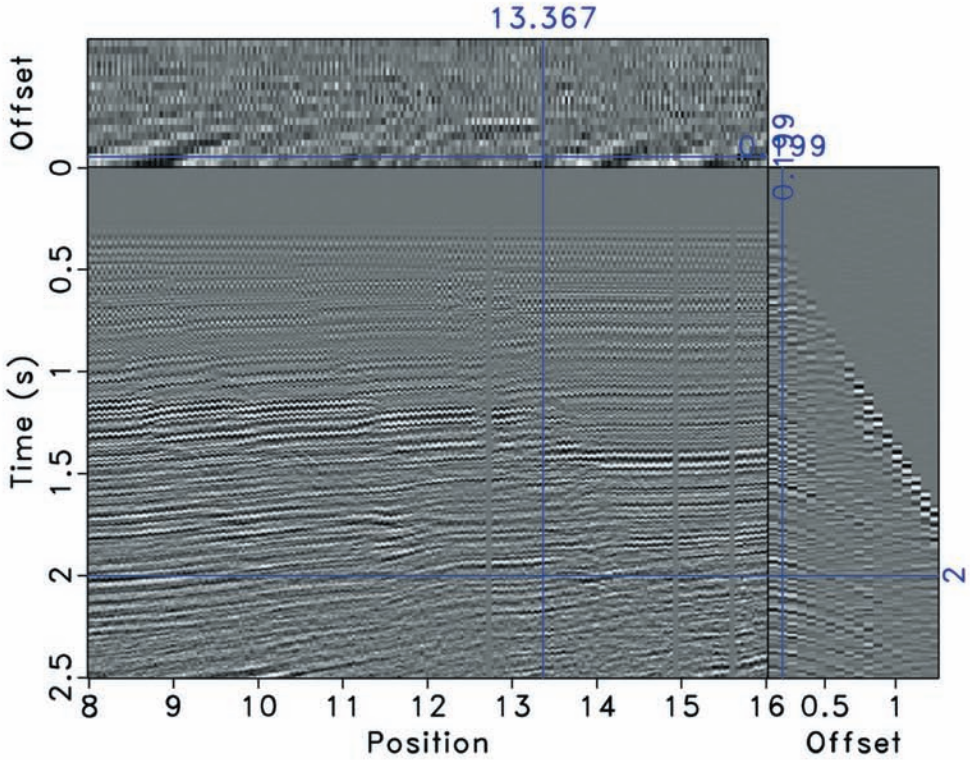


Fig. 7. 3D prestack seismic data.

CONCLUSIONS

Strong random noise will make conventional equal-weight stacking method ineffective in seismic data processing. We have applied an effective principal component analysis (PCA) based method that can be capable of suppressing random noise during the stacking process. The PCA based algorithm tends to extract the principal components, i.e., useful reflection signals, from noisy observations. Numerical results have shown that the PCA based method outperforms the traditional stacking method even more when the noise level becomes extremely high. Both synthetic and field data examples demonstrate the excellent performance of the proposed stacking approach.

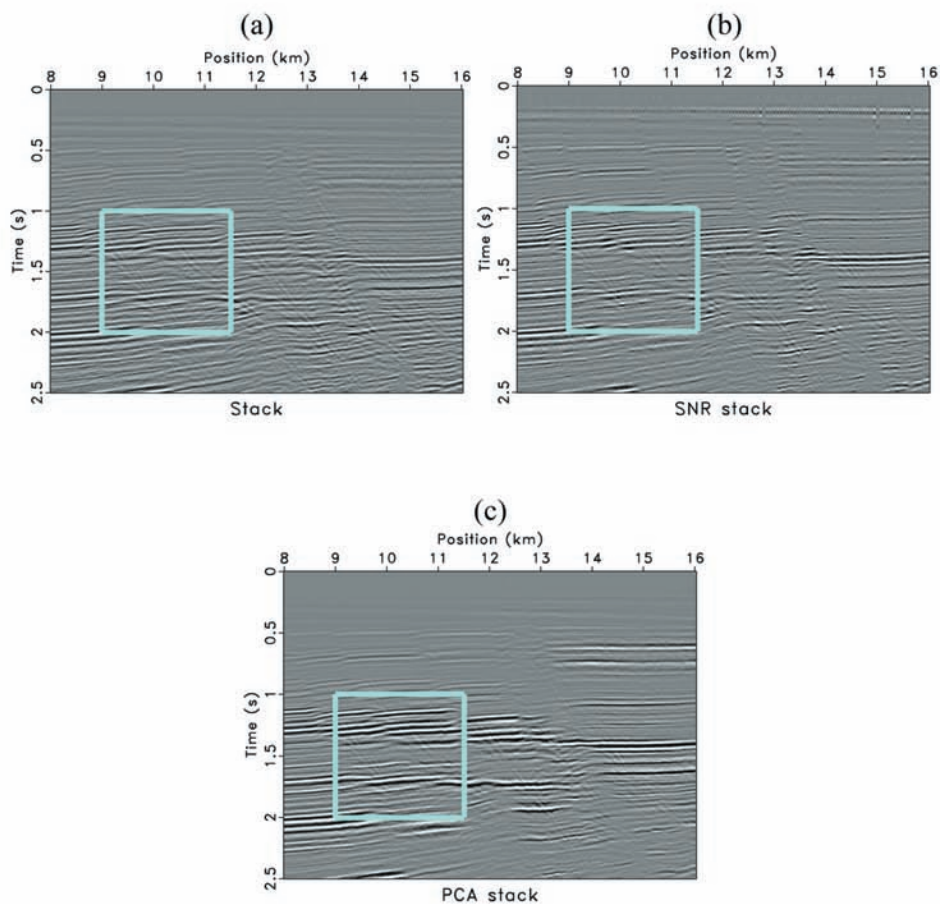


Fig. 8. (a) Traditional stacking. (b) SNR stacking. (c) PCA stacking.

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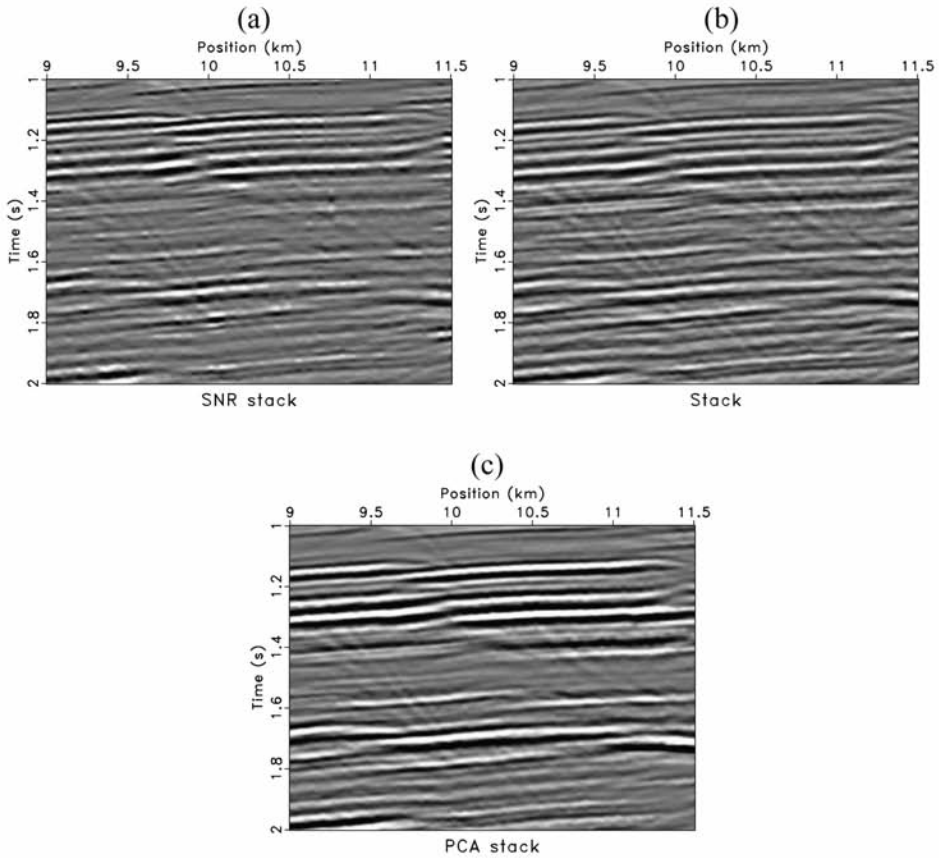


Fig. 9. (a) Traditional stacking. (b) SNR stacking. (c) PCA stacking.

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