Modification of plate-slab coupling in subduction zones: the large-scale (>3000km) Neotethyan example

P. Monié (1), P. Agard (2)
(1) Géosciences Montpellier, UMR 5243, Université Montpellier 2, France (2) Laboratoire de Tectonique, UMR 7072, Université Paris 6, France

We provide evidence for a regional-scale modification of the plate-slab coupling along the Neotethys suture zone from Turkey to the Himalayas, which was responsible for the short-lived exhumation of the rare occurrences of blueschists along this suture during the late Cretaceous. We report new single grain laser probe 40Ar/39Ar ages from the Zagros blueschists that yield two distinct age sets (106-94 Ma and 85-80 Ma respectively) interpreted to reflect the diachronous formation and exhumation of two high-pressure units juxtaposed along serpentinite slices. These cretaceous ages coincide with those provided by other Neotethyan blueschists, despite the long-lasting duration of convergence during the Neotethys closure from the Jurassic to the Tertiary. These ages also encompass the age of intra-oceanic obduction as recorded by the various ophiolitic metamorphic soles present along the suture. These results provide new evidence that blueschist exhumation and obduction are intimately related, large-scale and short-lived processes that testify to a major geodynamic reorganization of the Neotethys during the Late Cretaceous, possibly in response to a drastic change in kinematics and convergence velocities.