Using titanite petrochronology to monitor CO$_2$-degassing episodes from the Himalayas

giulia rapa (1), chiara groppo (1,2), franco rolfo (1,2), maurizio petrelli (3), and pietro mosca (2)
(1) Department of Earth Sciences, University of Torino, Via Valperga Caluso 35, 10125 Torino, Italy, (2) IGG-CNR, Via Valperga Caluso 35, 10125 Torino, Italy, (3) Department of Physics and Geology, University of Perugia, Piazza Università, 06100 Perugia, Italy

Metamorphic degassing from active collisional orogens supplies a significant fraction of CO$_2$ to the atmosphere, playing a fundamental role in the long-term (> 1 Ma) global carbon cycle (Gaillardet & Galy, 2008). The petro-chronologic study of the CO$_2$-source rocks (e.g. calc-silicate rocks) in collisional settings is therefore fundamental to understand the nature, timing, duration and magnitude of the orogenic carbon cycle. So far, the incomplete knowledge of these systems hindered a reliable quantitative modelling of metamorphic CO$_2$ fluxes. A detailed petrological modelling of a clinopyroxene + scapolite + K-feldspar + plagioclase + biotite + zoisite ± calcite calc-silicate rock from central Nepal Himalaya allowed us to identify and fully characterize - for the first time - different metamorphic reactions that led to the simultaneous growth of titanite and production of CO$_2$. These reactions involve biotite (rather than rutile) as the Ti-bearing reactant counterpart of titanite. The results of petrological modelling combined with Zr-in-Ttn thermometry and U-Pb geochronology suggest that in the studied sample, most titanite grains grew during two nearly continuous episodes of titanite formation: a near-peak event at 730-740°C, 10 kbar, 25.5±1.5 Ma, and a peak event at 740-765°C, 10.5 kbar, 22±3 Ma. Both episodes of titanite growth are correlated to specific CO$_2$-producing reactions, thus allowing to constrain the timing, duration and P-T conditions of the main CO$_2$-producing events, as well as the amounts of CO$_2$ produced. Assuming that fluids released at a depth of ca. 30 km are able to reach the Earth’s surface ~10 Ma after their production, it is therefore possible to speculate on the role exerted by the Himalayan orogenesis on the climate in the past.