



Persistent drying in the tropics linked to natural forcing

Amos Winter (1), Davide Zanchettin (2,3), Yochanan Kushnir (4), David Black (5), Sebastian Breitenbach (6), Hai Cheng (7,8), Thomas Miller (1), and Gerald Haug (6)

(1) University of Puerto Rico, Marine Sciences, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico (amoswinter@gmail.com), (2) University of Venice, Dorsoduro 2137, Venice, Italy, (3) Max Planck Institute for Meteorology, Bundesstr. 53, 20157 Hamburg, Germany, (4) Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, Palisades, NY, US, (5) Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, United States, (6) Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, Switzerland, (7) University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, United States, (8) Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China

Climate projections for the future indicate a regional contrast in tropical hydrologic trends between areas that are slated to dry and those that may become wet. While much of the tropical ocean under the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) is projected to see an increase in rainfall, a wide area of Central America and surrounding oceans is expected to experience severe drying. Approximately half the world's population lives in the tropics, and future changes in the hydrological cycle will impact not just freshwater supplies but also energy production in areas dependent upon hydroelectric power. It is vital that we understand tropical forcing mechanisms and the eventual hydrological response in order to better assess projected future regional precipitation trends and variability. Paleoclimate proxies are a valuable source of information for this purpose as they provide long time series that pre-date and complement the present, often short instrumental observations. Here we present paleo-precipitation data from a speleothem located in Mesoamerica that reveal large multi-decadal declines in regional precipitation whose onset coincides with clusters of large volcanic eruptions during the 19th and 20th centuries. This reconstruction provides new independent evidence of robust long-lasting volcanic effects on climate and elucidates key aspects of the causal chain of physical processes determining the tropical climate response to global radiative forcing.