The temporal evolution of the Cenozoic Southalpine magmatic activity in North-East Italy: evidence from 40Ar/39Ar geochronology

Valentina Brombin (1), Andrea Marzoli (2), Guido Roghi (3), Fred Jourdan (4), Massimo Coltroti (1), Costanza Bonadiman (1), Laura Webb (5), Sara Callegaro (6), Giuliano Bellieni (2), Roberto Sede (2), and Gianpaolo De Vecchi (2)

(1) Dipartimento di Fisica e Scienze della Terra, Università di Ferrara, Italy (brmvnt@unife.it), (2) Padova, Geoscienze, Italy (andrea.marzoli@unipd.it), (3) IGG-CNR, Padova, Italy (guido.roghi@igg.cnr.it), (4) Curtin University, Perth, Australia (f.jourdan@curtin.edu.au), (5) University of Vermont, USA, (6) CEED, Oslo, Norway

tarting in the early Cretaceous, a change in Africa and Europe plate kinematics led to the closure of the Tethys ocean and to the continent-continent collision that triggered the Alpine orogeny. During the late phases of orogenesis (Eocene-Miocene) significant magmatic activity affected the Southalpine domain, particularly the effusive to sub-volcanic igneous activity of the so-called “Veneto Volcanic Province” (or VVP). In the VVP, five main volcanic districts can be defined from north-west to south-east: Val d’Adige, Lessini Mts., Marosticano, Berici Hills, and Euganean Hills, characterized by relatively undifferentiated lava, ranging from melaphanlinites to quartz-normative tholeiites (Beccaluva et al., 2007). Only in the Euganean Hills volcanic and hypabyssal rocks range from subordinate basalts to volumetrically dominant acidic types, mostly quartz-trachytes and rhyolites (Milani et al., 1999). Here we report the first 40Ar/39Ar radioisotopic ages for the VVP aiming at i) reconstructing the temporal evolution of the Cenozoic Southalpine magmatism and ii) shedding light on the Adria/Europe geodynamic relationships.

The first eruptions occurred in the late Paleocene in the western districts where the magmatism was widespread also during the Eocene (Val d’Adige: 41.98 ± 0.20 Ma – 40.73 ± 0.24 Ma; Lessini Mts: 41.21 ± 0.11 Ma – 38.73 ± 0.44 Ma). During the early Oligocene, both basic and acidic eruptions took place in the Euganean Hills in a time-span possibly shorter than 0.2 Ma (32.35 ± 0.09 Ma – 32.09 ± 0.29 Ma). Finally, the youngest volcanic products were erupted in the Marosticano district during the early Miocene (~22 Ma).

This magmatism has been generally related to the break-off of the subducted Tethyan oceanic slab and upwelling of plume-like mantle diapirs through a slab window after the continental collision, in the late Cretaceous. Alternatively, it may be envisaged that the mantle material beneath the subducting slab escaped laterally and upwelled frontally producing a vigorous toroidal/poloidal flow (i.e. horizontal and vertical rotational vortex-like components of mantle motion), which induced melting in the mantle wedge beneath the VVP and triggered the magmatism.

References: