Recent hydrological variability of the Moroccan Middle-Atlas Mountains inferred from micro-scale sedimentological and geochemical analyses of lake sediments

Guillaume Jouve (1), Laurence Vidal (1), Rachid Adallal (1,2), Ali Rhoujjati (2), Abdelfattah benkaddour (2), Emmanuel Chapron (3), Kazuyo Tachikawa (1), Edouard Coupr (4), Laurent Dezileau (5), Bertil Hebert (4), William Rapuc (1), Anaëlle Simonneau (6), Corinne Sonzogni (1), and Florence Sylvestre (1)

(1) Aix-Marseille Univ, CNRS, IRD, Coll de France, CEREGE, Aix en Provence, France (gui.jouve@gmail.com), (2) Laboratoire de Géoressources-Unité associée au CNRST (URAC 42), Faculté des Sciences et Techniques, Université Cadi Ayyad, Marrakech, Maroc, (3) Laboratoire de Géographie de l’Environnement (GEODE UMR 5602), Université Jean Jaurès, Toulouse, France, (4) CEFREM UMR5110, Université de Perpignan, Perpignan, France, (5) Géosciences Montpellier, Montpellier, France, (6) Institut des Sciences de la Terre d’Orléans, ISTO, CNRS UMR 7327, Université d’Orléans, Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM), Orléans, France

Study of the hydro-sedimentary dynamics of lakes provides key information on hydrological changes. In this work, we investigate Lake Azigza in the Moroccan Middle Atlas, a region that suffers from a scarcity of observational hydrological data necessary for a coherent management of water resources. Sedimentary deposits of Lake Azigza (32°58’N, 5°26’W, 1,550 m above sea level) were dated and analyzed by combining geochemical and mineralogical measurements coupled with microfacies characterization for the last 134 yr. The detrital component derived from X-ray fluorescence elemental composition and microstructures analysis of the lake sediments provided proxies of runoff activity and lake-level changes, respectively. These proxies were calibrated with regional hydro-climatic and instrumental measurements available over the last 50 yr and used to reconstruct past hydrological changes on inter-annual to decadal time scales between 1879 and 2013. Since 1879, lake level and runoff proxies responded in phase to regional inter-annual precipitation variations. We also show that after the major lake-level drop observed in 2008, the response of the runoff proxy to variable precipitation regime is enhanced. Such an approach emphasizes the potential of these hydro-climate-sensitive sedimentary archives to assess the impact of climate change in the Mediterranean region.