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Puyehue-Cordón Caulle: a history of critical magma chambers

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On June 4th 2011 the Puyehue-Cordon Caulle volcanic complex (PCCVC, 40.590° S, 72.117° W) in South Central Chile woke after 51 years of dormancy. The rhyodacitic eruption produced an ash plume that reached altitudes of \sim 13 km causing severe problems for civil aviation in the southern hemisphere. The 2011 eruption is the youngest of six larger explosive Post-glacial eruptions, that are documented in the tephrostratigraphic record (Lara et al. 2006). The 1960 PCCVC eruption, which occurred only 37h after the largest ever instrumentally recorded earthquake (MS=9.5), is probably the most often discussed example of a seismically triggered volcanic eruption (e.g. Walter and Amelung 2007; Lara et al. 2004).

We present estimates for pre-eruptive magma-chamber conditions (P-T-X) derived from several independent methods in order to investigate the criticality of the PCCVC magmatic system. Cpx-liq thermobarometry reveals crystallization pressures from 50 to 250 MPa suggesting a shallow magma chamber at depths of 2-9 km and magma temperatures of 870-890°C. Volatile data and the occurrence of water-dominated magmatic fluid inclusions indicate the exsolution of a chlorine-bearing fluid phase (Salinitymean=3.2 \pm 0.1 eq NaCl) at pressures of \sim 135 MPa.

Fluid inclusions and pre-eruptive H_2O contents of 4-5.5 wt% suggest that relatively shallow reservoirs and pre-eruptive H_2O -saturation appear to be typical features of explosive eruptive events at this volcanic system. The volatile supersaturation indicates that the system was due to erupt prior to eventual seismic activity. We suggest that PCCVC's state of criticality and its situation astride a NW fissure zone associated with the arc-wide Liquiñe Ofqui Fault Zone system – representing efficient pathways for both, the propagation of seismic energy/strain and magmatic ascent - probably controlled eruptive activity by magmatic overpressure that facilitated tectonic triggering by seismic events.

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