Late Paleozoic Iberian orocline(s) and the missing shortening in the core of Pangea. Paleomagnetism from the Iberian Range.

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Abstract

Supercontinents are usually interpreted to be single and rigid continental plates. How and when Pangea became a rigid supercontinent is disputed, and age estimations vary from ~330 to ~240 Ma. The Gondwana-Laurussia collision formed the Variscan-Alleghanian belt, the most prominent witness of Pangea's amalgamation. In Iberia, this orogen draws an "S" shape featured by the Cantabrian Orocline and the Central Iberian curve. The curvature of Central Iberia is particularly evident in Galicia-Tras Os Montes and in a change of trend that it draws in the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range. Recent research showed that both curvatures are not coeval and that the Central Iberian curve had to form prior to ca. 318 Ma (i.e. not a secondary orocline). We report paleomagnetic and structural results from Paleozoic rocks in the Santa Cruz syncline (Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range) that indicate two main vertical axis rotations events: 1) a Cenozoic (Alpine) clockwise rotation of >20˚ and 2) a Late Carboniferous counterclockwise rotation of ~70˚.

Once the Cenozoic rotation is restored, the change in structural trend that allegedly evidences the outer arc of the Central Iberian curve disappears. Whereas the Cenozoic rotation is incompatible with a Central Iberian curve, the Late Carboniferous rotation is fully compatible with the Cantabrian Orocline, enlarging the area affected by its counterclockwise rotations and the existence of a non-rigid Pangea until, at least, ~295 M.a.

Keywords: Pangea, Iberian Range, Central Iberian curve, Variscan, Paleomagnetism.

1 Introduction

Supercontinents are interpreted to be single continental plates of a size capable of influencing mantle convection patterns and even core-mantle boundary processes (Pastor-Galán et al., 2018a). The amalgamation and break-up of Pangea, the latest supercontinent, are the geologists' template for the supercontinent cycle today. Whereas the configuration of Pangea during its break-up is well constrained due to the preservation of ocean floor from the Jurassic to the present (e.g., Seton et al. 2012), its amalgamation history is less certain and our only evidence is carved in the Paleozoic geological record. Controversy remains about the continental configuration of Pangea during its amalgamation (cf. Pangea A, B, C hypotheses; Domeier et al., 2012; Gallo et al., 2017; Belica et al., 2017), the number of participating continents and their kinematic evolution during the Paleozoic (e.g. Stampfli 2013; Domeier & Torsvik, 2014). Very importantly, there is a large and ongoing debate on when Pangea became a genuine supercontinent with contrasting age estimations ranging between ~330 Ma to ~240 Ma (e.g Veevers 2004; Blakey and Ranney, 2018).

The most important event in Pangea assemblage was the Late Paleozoic collision between Gondwana, Laurussia (Laurentia + Baltica + Avalonian-Megumian terranes) and several microplates (Nance et al., 2010) resulting in the sinuous Variscan–Alleghanian orogen, which swirls several times from Bohemia to Alabama. Two of these orogenic curves are located in the Iberian Peninsula, drawing an “S” shape: 1) the Cantabrian Orocline (e.g. Gutiérrez-Alonso et al., 2012) to the north, and 2) the Central Iberian curve to the south (e.g. Aerden, 2004). In this paper we use the term orocline strictly in its kinematic definition: the curvature of an orocline is a product of vertical axis rotations (Johnston et al., 2013). The Cantabrian Orocline twists the Variscan trend from Brittany across the Bay of Biscay to enter into Central Iberia, and its geometry is especially obvious in its core in NW Iberia (e.g. Weil et al., 2013). The Cantabrian Orocline formed by vertical axis rotations and is kinematically well constrained: it developed from Moscovian to Asselian times (~310–295 Ma.; e.g. Weil et al., 2010; Pastor-Galán et al., 2011). The geometry of the Central Iberian curve is, however, much less constrained due to limited exposures. Some authors claim that the changes in trend observed in the Galicia-Tras Os Montes zone (W Iberia), the eastern most area of the Central Iberian Zone and the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range (Fig. 1) correspond with a syn- or post Variscan orogeny orocline formation (e.g. Shaw et al., 2012; Martínez-Catalán, 2012). From a kinematic point of view, the Central Iberian curve must have formed prior to ca. 318 Ma (Pastor-Galán et al., 2016), at least in West Iberia. It is not known, however, whether its formation involved vertical axis rotations and, if so, to what extent. The kinematics of the Cantabrian Orocline and the potentially expected vertical axis rotations in the Central Iberian curve require significant amounts of shortening and extension yet to be quantified and included in global reconstructions.

In this paper, we use paleomagnetism in the Santa Cruz de Nogueras Syncline (Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range) to study the kinematic history and involvement of the Iberian Range in the Central Iberian curve. Our results confirm the intracontinental deformation Pangea had to undergone to accommodate the Late Carboniferous and Early Permian vertical axis rotations in the Variscan Belt.

2 Tectonic and geological settings

2.1 Tectonic and paleogeographic background

After the Late Silurian–Early Devonian collision between Avalonia (s.l.), Baltica and Laurentia had formed the Appalachian–Caledonide orogeny (e.g. Mac Niocaill, 2000; van Staal et al., 2009; Domeier, 2016), the closure of the Rheic Ocean started (e.g. Nance et al., 2010). Subduction of the

Rheic ocean was followed by the collision between Laurussia and Gondwana and several microplates, which formed the Variscan–Alleghanian–Ouachita belt that seamed Pangea, at the end of the Carboniferous (e.g. Stampfli et al., 2013; Domeier and Torsvik, 2014).

Variscan deformation in Iberia commenced at ca. 400 Ma (e.g. Gómez Barreiro et al., 2006), although the first evidence of continental collision dates from ca. 365–370 Ma (e.g. Dallmeyer et al., 1997; López-Carmona et al., 2014) with the underplating of the Gondwanan margin below Laurussia (e.g. Pérez-Cáceres et al., 2015; Pereira et al., 2017a). Deformation, metamorphism, magmatic episodes and syn-orogenic sedimentation migrated east-northeastward (in present-day coordinates) progressively towards the foreland (e.g. Dallmeyer et al., 1997) where shortening commenced at approximately 325 Ma. (e.g. Pérez-Estaún et al., 1991).

The Iberian Variscides depict a sinuous “S-shaped” geometry of two opposing first order magnitude bends (Fig. 1A) delineated by the well-known Cantabrian Orocline to the north and the Central Iberian curve to the south. Orogenic bends are classified based on the kinematics of their curvature development (e.g. Johnston et al., 2013). Correlations between changes in the structural grain and paleomagnetic directions or rock fabrics are evaluated using an orocline test (e.g. Pastor-Galán et al., 2017 and references therein), which distinguishes two end-members: 1) primary bends, showing a slope (m) = 0 and 2) secondary oroclines, with $m=1$. Intermediate relations ($0<m<1$) are known as progressive oroclines.

The Cantabrian Orocline (a.k.a. Cantabrian Arc and Cantabria-Asturias Arc) formed as a late orogenic feature in a short period of 10 to 15 Myr between ~310 and ~295 Ma (Pastor-Galán et al., 2011; Weil et al., 2013). Its structural trend traces a curvature that runs from Brittany across the Bay of Biscay passing through South England and Ireland into Central Iberia (Fig. 1A; Pastor-Galán et al., 2015a), and its geometry is evident from satellite imagery, especially at its core. Many paleomagnetic and geological studies support the Cantabrian Orocline as secondary feature (e.g. Weil et al., 2013 and references therein). Widespread mantle-derived magmatism occurred coeval with the Cantabrian Orocline formation (between ~312 and ~290 Ma; Gutiérrez-Alonso et al., 2011a, b; Pastor-Galán et al., 2012a; Weil et al., 2013; Pereira et al., 2014, 2015, 2017b).

Described for the first time by Staub (1926), the Central Iberian curve turns the Variscan orogen concave to the west immediately to the south of the Cantabrian Orocline (Fig. 1). In contrast with the Cantabrian Orocline, the geometry and kinematics of the Central Iberian curve are poorly understood and were overlooked for decades due to poor exposure (Martínez Catalán et al. 2015). The observations used in support of the Central Iberian curved geometry are: (i) paleocurrents recorded in Ordovician quartzites (Shaw et al., 2012); (ii) fold trends and inclusions in garnets (Aerden, 2004) and (iii) fold trends and aeromagnetic anomalies (Martínez-Catalán et al., 2012). Based on these arguments, three competing geometries have been proposed (Pastor-Galán et al., 2015b), which share two features in common: (1) the curvature encloses the center-west of Iberia with Galicia-Tras-os-Montes Zone in the core (Aerden, 2004; Pastor-Galán et al., 2018b) and (2) the change in trend in the outer arc is primarily marked by the outcrops in the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range and eastern Central Iberian Zone (Martínez Catalán, 2012).

Paleomagnetic results from the core and southern limb of the Central Iberian curve show an overall rotation that fits with the attitude of the southern limb of the Cantabrian Orocline (Pastor-Galán et al., 2015b; 2016; 2017). However, the timing constraints provided by these results established that no differential rotation occurred younger than ca. 318 Ma, and therefore, if the Central Iberian curve is oroclinal then it must have become secondarily curved prior to ~318 Ma (Pastor-Galán et al., 2017).

2.2 Geological Setting

The Variscan Orogen is classically divided into a number of tectonostratigraphic zones based on fundamental differences in their stratigraphic, structural, magmatic and metamorphic evolution (e.g. Ballevre et al., 2014). The Cantabrian Zone contains an almost complete stratigraphy spanning from Ediacaran to Early Permian and represents the foreland fold-and-thrust belt of the Variscan orogen

(Pérez-Estaún et al., 1990). Structurally it is characterized by tectonic transport towards the core of the orocline, low finite strain values and locally developed cleavage (e.g. Pérez-Estaún et al., 1991; Kollmeier et al., 2000; Pastor-Galán et al., 2009). Illite crystallinity and conodont color alteration indexes are consistent with diagenetic conditions to very low-grade metamorphism (e.g. García-López et al., 2013; Pastor-Galán et al., 2013). The Cantabrian Zone is mostly preserved in NW Iberia in the core of the Cantabrian Orocline (Fig. 1A; Pastor-Galán et al., 2012b) but it also crops out in areas of the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range in E Iberia (Fig. 1B; Carls, 1983; 1988; Calvín-Ballester and Casas, 2014), where we performed our study (Figs. 1B and 2).

The Iberian Range (Fig. 1B) formed in response to the intraplate deformation triggered by the Alpine orogeny in the eastern central part of the Iberian Peninsula during the Cenozoic (e.g. Álvaro et al., 1978; Cortés-Gracia and Casas-Sainz, 1996; Casas-Sainz and Faccena, 2001). It is configured in two main branches trending mainly NW-SE: the Aragonese Branch (northwards) and the Castilian Branch (southwards). Our study focuses on the central part of the Aragonese Branch, where two elongated Paleozoic units, separated by the Cenozoic Calatayud basin, crop out. Paleozoic rocks in the studied area are structured into two tectonostratigraphic units: Badules and Herrera. Whereas the Herrera unit is the continuation of the foreland (Cantabrian Zone), the Badules unit represents more internal zones of the orogen (e.g. Gozalo and Liñán, 1988). The Herrera Unit preserves over 9000 m-thick sedimentary sequence containing a Cambrian-Silurian alternation of sandstones and shales and, over it, an Upper Silurian–Devonian series of shales (Luesma, Nogueras and Mariposas Fms.), sandstones and limestones (Calvín-Ballester and Casas, 2014, Pérez-Pueyo et al., 2018 and references therein) which crop out at the south of the unit (Figs. 1B and 2). The Herrera unit is characterized by an imbricate thrust system with a foreland-dipping geometry in which the deformation and cleavage diminishes eastwards (Calvín et al., 2014). Silurian to Devonian rocks crop out in two overturned synclines with NNW–SSE to NW–SE trend (Fig. 2): Santa Cruz and Loscos synclines. Early Permian mantle-derived magmatism intruded the Herrera unit, and the igneous rocks occur as effusive, subvolcanic dykes and sills and minor plutons (e.g. Calvín et al., 2014 and references therein). A series of 1500 m-thick Mesozoic rocks (Calvín et al., 2014) overlies the Paleozoic units. Both sequences underwent gentle folding during the Alpine compression event with no associated penetrative structures (Cortés-Gracia and Casas-Sainz, 1996).

The present outcrop of Paleozoic basement rocks in the Iberian Range is strongly conditioned by subsequent Late Paleozoic-Mesozoic rifting episodes, the later inversion of those basins during the Alpine deformation in Cenozoic times, and a final extensional event during the Neogene (Salas and Casas, 1993). Two major rifting events took place during Late Permian-Triassic and during Late Jurassic-Early Cretaceous controlled by major Variscan anisotropies, and main depocenters were located NW and SE of the study area. Subsequent Alpine deformation inverted the previous extensional basins and produced a fold-and-thrust-belt displaying interference geometries, strike and reverse-slip movements and complex thin-skinned thick-skinned relationships (Salas et al., 2001; Guimerá et al., 2004; De Vicente et al., 2009; Izquierdo-Llavall et al., 2018). Finally, a Neogene NW-SE extension related to the opening of the Mediterranean western basins led to the final configuration of the system (Simón, 1983; Roca y Guimerà, 1992).

Previous paleomagnetic studies in Permian (subvolcanic) and Mesozoic (limestones) rocks in the region have reported primary Permian and Oxfordian components (Calvin et al., 2014 and Juárez et al., 1994 respectively) as well as Lower Cretaceous remagnetizations (Juárez et al., 1998; Gong et al., 2008). However, reported declinations of all these results should be used with caution since recent data from younger Triassic to Eocene units confirmed the occurrence of clockwise rotations (CW) related to Alpine compression (Mauritsch et al., 2018). Following these authors, the mean Cenozoic paleomagnetic direction in the Central Iberian Range was Dec./Inc. = 025˚/57˚ (k = 35.4) which yields a consistent 21° CW rotation respect to the Cenozoic reference direction for Iberia (Dec./Inc. = 004˚/46˚; k = 110.6). In addition, the paleomagnetic results are supported by shortening differences along-strike found after the restoration of balanced cross sections in the region (Izquierdo-Llavall et al., 2018).

3 Methods and Results

We drilled a total of 300 cores from 28 sites with a petrol engine drill and took over 100 structural orientations (Fig. 2; Table 1; Supplementary File SF1 for exact location) in the Silurian and Devonian sedimentary rocks that crop out to the south of the Herrera unit at the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range, as well as Permian subvolcanic rocks (MD7 and MD21) (Figs. 1 and 2). We performed all analyses at Paleomagnetic Laboratory Fort Hoofddijk, Universiteit Utrecht, The Netherlands.

3.1 Structure and anisotropy of the magnetic susceptibility

The Santa Cruz Syncline is nearly recumbent cylindrical fold with a non-plunging axis (Trend = 199˚, Plunge = 6˚) that swings from NW-SE to N-S trend (Fig. 2A). In the studied area little to no penetrative fabrics developed, and strain patterns based on field constraints are limited to thrusts and folds.

Anisotropy of magnetic susceptibility (AMS) is a very sensitive method that can help describing deformational events even in weakly deformed contexts where tectonic lineation and foliation have not developed (e.g. Mattei et al., 1997; Weil and Yonkee, 2009; Parés, 2015) and it is represented graphically as an ellipsoid whose principal axes are $k_{max} > k_{int} > k_{min}$ (Borradaile, 1988: Parés, 2015 and references therein). The shape of the AMS ellipsoid depends on the crystallographic preferred orientation of the individual components, the rock’s compositional layering, distribution and size of microfractures, and the shape, size and preferred orientation of mineral grains (e.g. Butler, 1992; Tarling and Hrouda, 1993; Tauxe, 2010). In undeformed sedimentary rocks, AMS ellipsoid usually shows an oblate geometry with its foliation plane parallel to bedding and k_{min} perpendicular to it (e.g. Tarling and Hrouda, 1993). In contrast, the AMS ellipsoid in deformed rocks develops a magnetic lineation (k_{max}) typically representing intersection lineations in weakly deformed settings (i.e. parallel to fold axis; e.g. Oliva-Urcia et al., 2009) or maximum extension directions (e.g. Cifelli et al., 2005; García-Lasanta et al., 2015). In strongly deformed areas, the AMS ellipsoid becomes oblate again, this time with k_{min} parallel to the tectonic foliation (e.g. Weil and Yonkee, 2009).

We measured the AMS of 162 samples from our Santa Cruz syncline collection with an AGICO MFK1-FA susceptometer. Samples from sites MD1 to MD7, MD26 and MD27 yielded no interpretable AMS results (Supplementary File SF2). The rest of the samples show triaxial AMS ellipsoids (Fig. 2B and Supplementary File SF2) but close to oblate where the most developed fabrics show k_{min} perpendicular to bedding. Although k_{int} and k_{max} are similar they are distinctly different, magnetic lineation (k_{max}) is roughly oriented to the NNE-SSW with little to no plunge and coinciding with the fold axis trend (Fig. 2A), whereas k_{int} is mostly parallel to the shortening direction (perpendicular to the fold axis). All these results confirm the weak deformation underwent by the studied rocks.

3.2 Paleomagnetism

We used both thermal (TH) and alternating field (AF) demagnetizations to investigate the magnetic remanence of the collected samples. AF demagnetization was carried out using a robotic 2G-SQUID magnetometer available at Utrecht University, through variable field increments (4–10 mT) up to 70–100 mT. In those samples where high-coercivity, low-blocking temperature minerals (e.g. goethite, maghemite) were expected, a pre-heating to 150 °C was coupled to AF demagnetization (van Velzen and Zijderveld, 1995). Stepwise thermal demagnetization was carried in the remaining samples through 20–100 °C increments up to complete demagnetization (Fig. 3; Supplementary File SF3). Principal component analysis (PCA; Kirschvink, 1980) was used to isolate the direction of the characteristic remanent magnetization and results were represented by orthogonal vector end-point demagnetization diagrams (Zijderveld, 1967) using Paleomagnetism.org (Koymans et al., 2016). Representative Zijderveld diagrams are shown in Fig. 3. A minimum of 5 steps was considered to characterize a remanent component. In ~35 samples, two components appear to overlap; for such cases we applied the method of demagnetization great circles (Fig. 3). We used the approach of McFadden and McElhinny (1988) in combining great circles and linear best fits (set points).

Given the structural coherence between the studied sites and the robust paleomagnetic signal of the samples we combined all the results in a single locality. We separated several components to which we applied a fixed 45° cut-off to their VGP distributions (Deenen et al., 2011). Mean directions (Table 1) were evaluated using Fisher statistics (1953) of virtual geomagnetic poles (VGPs) corresponding to the isolated magnetic directions, following Deenen et al. (2011). All statistics were performed with www.paleomagnetism.org (Koymans et al., 2016) and VPD software (Ramón et al., 2017). Most samples show a component which is removed at low temperatures and low coercivities (100–180 °C or 10-12 mT; Fig. 3 and Supplementary material). We consider this component as a viscous remanent magnetization (VRM), because of its similarity to the recent field.

In addition to the VRM, we have identified 3 components showing distinctive components:

Component P: samples from Early Permian dykes and sills (dolerite) show a single polarity component with southwards declination and very shallow inclination (Dec./Inc. = 191.3˚/-8.8˚; k = 35.3, α_{95} = 4.4, K = 55.5, A_{95} = 3.5; Fig. 4; Table 1), which is consistent with that described in similar rocks in the area (Calvín et al., 2014). Component P is predominant in most of the sedimentary (clastic and limestones) Siluro-Devonian rocks studied (104 specimens) with a slightly different average of Dec./Inc. = 183.2˚/4.5˚ (k = 17.6, α_{95} = 3.4˚, K = 35.8, A_{95} = 2.3˚; Table 1; Fig. 4) and a larger dispersion ($K_{sedimentary}$=35.8 vs. $K_{igneous}$=55.5, Table 1). This component clusters better before any tilt correction (Table 1). When occurring together with other components, it is usually removed at 300-350˚ degrees (lower T component) and over 40-50 mT (higher coercivity component). The average direction of all the samples (igneous and sedimentary) combined is Dec./Inc. = 185.1˚/1.4˚ (k = 17.8, α_{95} = 3˚, K = 34.8, A_{95} = 2.1˚; Table 1).

Component #1: In 49 specimens from Siluro-Devonian sedimentary rocks, we identified a single polarity component heading southeast with shallow inclinations and an average direction Dec./Inc. = 150.4˚/8.3˚ (k = 15.5, α_{95} = 5.3˚, K = 29, A95 = 3.8˚; Fig. 5; Table 1). This component does not pass a fold test (Fig. 5B; Tauxe and Watson, 1994).

Component #2: 46 specimens from the Devonian sedimentary samples show a two polarity component that clusters significantly better after structural correction and passes a fold test (Fig. 6; Tauxe and Watson, 1994). Both polarities share a common distribution following the coordinate bootstrap test of Tauxe et al. (2010) (Fig. 6). This component trends ESE-WNW and shows shallow inclinations, slightly higher than in Component #1 (average Dec./Inc. = 107.3˚/12.7˚; k = 8, α_{95} = 7.9, K = 13, A_{95} = 6.1˚) (Table 1).

Demagnetization analyses and thermomagnetic runs (Supplementary Files SF3 and SF4 respectively) indicate that the principal magnetic carrier in dykes and sills is (Ti-poor) magnetite, as evidenced by unblocking temperatures between 480 and 580˚C and alternating magnetic fields peaks of 40-60 mT. Results from limestones and sandstones also point to (Ti-poor) magnetite as the main carrier of the NRM, evidenced by maximum unblocking temperatures of 400–580 °C and alternating magnetic fields of 60–90 mT (Fig. 3). The main magnetic carrier of the red limestones is hematite, demagnetizing over 600 °C and largely resistant to AF demagnetization. Some limestones show a relatively large goethite component that was fully removed at 100˚C.

4 Discussion

Unraveling the kinematics and deformational mechanisms of areas that underwent several tectonic events is a complex task that has to be solved backwards in time, especially when dealing with vertical axis rotations (Pueyo et al., 2016): it is impossible to solve accurately the oldest movements without solving the youngest ones. Several authors described Alpine tectonics involving the basement units in the Iberian Range (e.g. Izquierdo-Llavall et al., 2018). Despite the vertical axis rotations described in the area (e.g. Mauritsch et al., 2018), the Santa Cruz Syncline shows a sub-horizonal axis (Fig. 2A) and the Mesozoic and Cenozoic rocks overlying the Santa Cruz Syncline show sub-horizontal dips and no signs of refolding, thrusting, major tilting nor penetrative internal deformation (Fig. 2D). These data support that the particular area around the Santa Cruz Syncline did not record any significant Alpine tilting.

AMS ellipsoids fit with the macrostructural data (Fig. 2A and B). The k_{min} axes are perpendicular to the bedding plane, caused by compaction after sedimentation. Despite maximum and intermediate magnetic axes distributions show a rather large dispersion, they arrange around an orientation maximum, suggesting a tectonic fabric superimposed on the sedimentary fabric. The magnetic lineation (k_{max} distribution) is parallel to the Santa Cruz syncline's fold axis or, equivalently, perpendicular to the shortening direction. The structural trend (dominant N-S) as well as the overturned feature of the analyzed structures (particularly the Santa Cruz syncline) strongly differs from the expected Alpine grain (NW-SE). The AMS response and its consistency with the general macrostructure support that Alpine deformation was not intense and did not trigger noticeable internal deformation in the studied lithologies. Hence and apart from rigid-body passive movements, post-Permian deformation is negligible. Absence of major internal deformation events simplifies the interpretation of Paleozoic paleomagnetic directions.

4.1 Paleomagnetism

We have identified three different magnetic components. They may occur individually or in couples (Fig. 3), regardless of their lithology or structural position.

Component P

All Lower Permian dykes and sills (MD7 and MD21) and many of the sites sampled in Siluro-Devonian sedimentary rocks, yielded a single-polarity component which clusters better before any correction, with declinations consistently to the south and equatorial paleolatitudes (Fig. 4; Table 1). This indicates that the magnetization must have been acquired when Iberia was situated at equatorial latitudes during a long-lasting reverse chron, since no polarity changes have been found. We know that Iberia crossed the equator from the southern to northern hemisphere during the Early Permian (Osete et al., 1997; Weil et al., 2010) and migrated, together with Pangea, rapidly towards the north (Torsvik et al., 2012). We suggest the Component P to be acquired at Early Permian times during the Permo-Carboniferous Reversed Superchron (PCRS) ranging ~314-265 Ma (Langereis et al., 2010). Therefore, this magnetization is likely primary for the Early Permian mafic dykes and sills that intruded and subsequently overprinted the Devonian sedimentary sequence. There is a small but significant difference in inclination between the remagnetized vector in the sedimentary rocks (4.5 ± 4.7˚) and the potentially primary magnetization found in the dykes/sills (-8.8 ± 6.9˚). This divergence may indicate that rocks were magnetized at slightly different times, with the overprint being an earlier magnetization, perhaps fluid-driven, when Iberia was still in the southern hemisphere. Also, the magnetization in dykes and sills shows a non circular VGP, in contrast to the remagnetized sedimentary rocks. We interpret the elongated shape as a not fully averaged paleosecular variation of the geomagnetic field, likely due to under-sampling those subvolcanic rocks. Calvín et al. (2014) described a very similar component in Early Permian intrusions in an equivalent area of the Iberian Range.

Component P shows inclinations very similar to the Component eP for stable Iberia of Weil et al. (2010), but it is rotated ~22˚ CW with respect to eP. This rotation coincides with the rotation recorded by the Cenozoic and Mesozoic rocks of the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range (21˚ CW following Mauritsch et al., 2018) during the Alpine orogeny. We conclude that the only post-Permian event that the studied Paleozoic rocks recorded is a ~22˚ CW vertical axis rigid-body rotation together with Mesozoic and Cenozoic rocks possibly related to Alpine basement thrusting that underwent differential displacement along-strike during its movement (Izquierdo-Llavall et al., 2018).

Component #1

Component #1 is a single-polarity reverse component that does not pass a fold test (Fig. 5). It represents a shallow component from the southern hemisphere (Dec./Inc. = 150.4˚/8.3˚; Table 1). The magnetization of this component must therefore have been acquired before Iberia crossed the equator in the Early Permian (Weil et al., 2010) but after the onset of the PCRS (~314 Ma), constraining Component #1 to be a Late Carboniferous overprint. If we correct for the ~22˚ CW Cenozoic rotation, this component shows a ~25˚ CCW rotation with respect to the Early Permian pole for stable Iberia (Weil et al., 2010). A CCW rotation during the latest Carboniferous is consistent with the Cantabrian Orocline sense and timing of rotation (e.g. Weil et al., 2013). Considering the strike of the Iberian range, however, the expected magnitude of rotation would be higher. For this reason, we consider Component #1 to be a Late Carboniferous overprint that occurred at the latest stages of Cantabrian Orocline formation.

Component #2

We identified Component #2 in 46 specimens from different sites within the Santa Cruz Syncline (Supplementary File SF3). Component #2 passes the fold test and shows both normal and reverse polarity distributions that pass a reversal test (Fig. 6). The two positive field tests would support a (pseudo)primary magnetization (e.g. Van der Voo, 1990). However, the scarce available paleomagnetic data for Siluro-Devonian times indicate that the northern margin of Gondwana and the derived terranes (e.g. Armorica) were at latitudes of 30-40˚ S (Hasma et al., 2015; Torsvik et al., 2012). More importantly, biostratigraphic and faunal constraints from the Santa Cruz syncline support a medium latitude (~23˚ to ~66˚) formation for the sampled units (Carls, 1988; Villas, 1995). Therefore, the inclinations found (12.7˚ ± 11.7˚) are too shallow when compared to the geological constraints, indicating a magnetization acquired when the rocks were at nearly equatorial paleolatitudes (λ = 6.4˚ S ± ~6˚). Following the global apparent polar wander path (GAPWaP) of Torsvik et al. (2012) calculated for Iberia (given in Koymans et al., 2016) such low paleolatitude (6.4˚ S) would only be expected for Iberia in Middle-Late Carboniferous times, during the waning stages of the Variscan Orogeny. The Variscan Orogeny produced pervasive remagnetizations in Iberia (e.g. Weil et al., 2013; Pastor-Galán et al., 2017. Therefore, we suggest a Late Mississippian-Early Pennsylvanian (Middle Carboniferous) secondary origin for Component #2. The remagnetization likely occurred just before the onset of the long-lasting PCRS (ca. 314 Ma), allowing the occurrence of two polarities.

4.2 On the Central Iberian bend and extent of the Cantabrian Orocline

Our new paleomagnetic results show a vertical axis rotation of ~22˚ CW of the Early Permian Component P (Fig. 7) with respect to stable Iberia at that time (Weil et al., 2010). This 22˚ rotation is identical to the rotation observed in overlying Mesozoic and Early Cenozoic rocks in the area (Mauritsch et al., 2018). Our results also establish a differential pre-Permian CCW rotation recorded by Components #1 (~25˚) and #2 (~80˚) with respect to Component P. Component #1 shows a CCW rotation of less magnitude (~25˚) and, like P, only reverse polarity. We interpret Component #1 as an overprint occurring during the Cantabrian Orocline formation, some time between ~310 Ma and 295 Ma (Pastor-Galán et al., 2015b; 2017). This interpretation explains the similar inclination, declination and single polarity (Fig. 7). The change in structural trend in the Paleozoic rocks of the Iberian Range corresponds roughly to 25˚ (Fig. 7). We have calculated a rotation of 22° around an Euler pole located where the strike of the orogen changes in the Iberian Range (42˚N, 2.4W) and the results coincide with the Iberian APWP for the Late Carboniferous (Pastor-Galán et al. 2016) (Fig. 7). After restoring the 22˚ CW Cenozoic rotation, the structural trend of the Paleozoic outcrops of the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range become near parallel to the orogen strike in the southern limb of the Cantabrian Orocline (Figs. 1 and Fig. 7).When accounting for the 22˚ CW, Component #2 shares a common distribution (following the coordinate bootstrap test of Tauxe et al. 2010) with the Late Mississippian-Early Pennsylvanian pole of Iberia calculated by Pastor-Galán et al. (2016) (Supplementary File SF5).

Once the structure and the paleomagnetic results are restored to a pre-Alpine rotation, the Component #2 can be compared with the orocline test of the Cantabrian Zone. We have plotted Component #2 into the Bootstrapped Orocline Test for the Cantabrian Orocline (Pastor-Galán et al., 2017) obtaining a perfect fit (Fig. 7C). Thus, Component #2 shows the paleolatitude and CCW rotation at ~320 Ma (Figs. 7 and 8) expected at the southern limb of the Cantabrian Orocline. Our data indicate that most of the Iberian Massif rotated ~70˚ CCW with the exception of the very North (at present day coordinates) where the hinge of the Cantabrian Orocline is located, and including the Pyrenees (Fig. 1). Therefore, the extent of the vertical axis rotations associated with the Cantabrian Orocline formation is much larger than originally hypothesized.

Our results show that the change in trend in the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range has a Cenozoic (Alpine) rather than a Paleozoic (Variscan) origin. The new data presented in this paper not only confirms the non-secondary nature of the Central Iberian curve claimed by Pastor-Galán et al. (2015b, 2016 and 2017), but rules out the idea of a single tectonic process responsible for the observed curvature. We claim the geometry of the Central Iberian bend is the results of a combination of processes. The curvature of the inner arc (Galicia- Tras Os Montes; Fig. 1), if rotational, has to be the result of a pre- ~318 Ma process, probably during the early stages of collision and involving no vertical axis rotations (Pastor-Galán et al., 2018). The outer arc curvature, at least in the Iberian range, is the result of much younger Alpine tectonics: these are commonly disregarded in studies of the Variscan Orogen of Iberia.

We have also produced an Iberian plate (everything to the south of the hinge of the Cantabrian Orocline) version of the Global Apparent Polar Wander Path (Torsvik et al., 2012) accounting for the rotation of the Cantabrian Orocline. For this, we used the databases from Dinarès et al., 2005 and Vissers et al., 2016 (Fig. 8; Table 2) and all data from the southern limb of the Cantabrian Orocline (Pastor-Galán et al., 2016; 2017 and this study). Figure 8 and Table 2 show the best fit Euler poles to apply to the Global Apparent Polar Wander Path. To fulfill all these paleomagnetic constraints, a large amount of convergence and/or extension must have been accommodated somewhere in the core of Pangea. These convergence and extension would require the development of large basins and/or at least one subduction zone (either oceanic or intracontinental). Although those features are yet to be described, the Iberian Peninsula was extensively intruded by mantle derived rocks during that particular time interval (e.g. Gutiérrez-Alonso et al., 2011a; Pereira et al., 2014). The mantle character of the intrusions (Perini et al., 2004; Gutiérrez-Alonso et al., 2011b) points towards some sort of lithospheric foundering (e.g. subduction slab break-off, delamination…). In addition, Pereira et al. (2014; 2015) speculated with subduction of the Paleotethys below eastern Iberia as the trigger for Late Carboniferous – Early Permian magmatism.

There is an ongoing debate on how and when Pangea became a rigid supercontinent (e.g. Gallo et al., 2017) with contrasting age estimations ranging between 330 Ma to 240 Ma (e.g Veevers 2002; Blakey and Ranney, 2017). The results showed in this paper, together with those from the Munster basin in Ireland (Pastor-Galán et al., 2015a) show the Cantabrian Orocline as a continental scale feature which affected to all levels of the lithosphere (Weil et al., 2013). We think that the evidences are enough to state that Pangea did not behave as a rigid superplate at least until 295 Ma.

5 Conclusions

Our paleomagnetic and structural results from the Santa Cruz syncline (Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range) show a vertical axis rotation of ~22˚ clockwise (CW) during the Cenozoic and about 70˚ counterclockwise (CCW) during the Late Carboniferous. Once the Cenozoic rotation is accounted for, the structural and paleomagnetic trends of the Aragonese Branch become parallel to those in the southern limb of the Cantabrian Orocline, ruling out a Variscan origin for the outer Central Iberian curve. Thus, the Central Iberian curve is a structure resulted from a combination of processes: 1) an Early Variscan non-rotational process in its core and 2) a Cenozoic CW rotation in its outer arc. In addition, the fit of the Aragonese Branch of the Iberian Range with the Cantabrian Zone indicates that most of the Iberian Massif rotated ~70˚ CCW with the exception of its hinge (located at the NW of the Iberian Peninsula). This means that the extent of the vertical axis rotations associated to the Cantabrian Orocline formation is much larger than previously thought. Using the most recent paleomagnetic constraints and Gplates (Boyden et al., 2011), we have quantified in

1000 km the minimum amount of convergence in the core of Pangea required to accommodate the rotations in Iberia associated with the Cantabrian Orocline.

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Captions

Fig. 1 A) Location of the main Variscan orogeny outcrops in western Europe with Iberia restored to a pre-Albian rotation (Gong et al., 2008). We highlight the Galicia-Tras Os Montes Zone, the Iberian Range and the eastern Central Iberian Zone to remark the areas where the Central Iberian curve is more evident. B) Simplified geological map of the Iberian Range after García-Lasanta et al. (2017), highlighting the Paleozoic outcrops and the studied area.

Fig. 2 Structure and lithology of the Santa Cruz syncline. A) Pi diagram showing all the bedding measurements taken and the fold axis attitude. B) AMS fabrics showing a sedimentary magnetic fabric (k_{min} is perpendicular to bedding) with a slight tectonic fabric (k_{max} is subparallel to the fold axis). C) Geological map of the studied area and location of the samples collected. D) Cross-section through the Santa Cruz syncline.

Fig. 3 Representative Zijderveld diagrams and great circle approach in the studied samples.

Fig. 4 Component P directions and VGPs in geographic coordinates for sedimentary rocks (left) and dykes and sill (right). VGPs are centered on the mean to show the shape of the distribution, ideally rounded. Note that dykes ad sills show a slightly elongated distribution, likely representing a not complete average of the paleosecular variation of the magnetic field.

Fig. 5 A) Component #1 directions and VGPs in geographic coordinates. B) Negative fold test indicating the post-folding origin of the component.

Fig. 6 A) Component #2 directions and VGPs in structurally corrected coordinates. B) Component #2 directions in geographic coordinates (note the high dispersion) and positive fold test, which indicates the pre-folding character of this component. C) Positive reversal test between both normal and reverse directions found in Component #2, suggesting a pre-Kiaman magnetization of the studied rocks.

Fig. 7 Cartoon depicting the different vertical axis rotation events that occurred in the Iberian Range. A) Original quasi-linear Variscan belt. B) The formation of the Cantabrian Orocline at the Carboniferous-Permian limit involved a ~70˚ CCW rotation in the area which fully corresponds with the expected rotation, considering the strike of the Variscan structures in the Iberian Range as shown by the perfect fit of Component #2 in the orocline test for the Cantabrian Zone (below). C) Cenozoic rotation of ~22˚ CW likely produced by differential shortening during the Alpine Orogeny (Izquierdo-Llavall et al., 2018). Note that once this 22˚ CW rotation is corrected, both Components #2, #1 and P fit perfectly with the APWP for the southern limb of the orocline (Pastor-Galán et al., 2016). Below, the Global Magnetic Polarity Time Scale for the Pennsylvanian and Cisselian (following Ogg et al., 2016).

Fig. 8 GAPWaP (Torsvik et al., 2012) adapted to the Euler pole rotations chosen to reconstruct Iberia and a paleomagnetic compilation of Iberian poles from Dinarés et al., 2005, Vissers et al., 2016 and Pastor-Galán et al., 2016, 2017.

Table 1 Paleomagnetic results and statistical information for each component.

Table 2 Euler poles to adapt GAPWaP for Africa (Torsvik et al., 2012) to the Iberian plate as shown in Figure 8.

Supplementary files

SF1 KLM file with the location of each site

SF2 Extra AMS plots

SF3 Raw and interpreted paleomagnetic data. All this data can be opened in Paleomagnetism.org

SF4 Thermomagnetic curves for different specimens. Magnetization in most specimens is carried by (Ti-)magnetite. MD14 shows a clear hematite carrier and some samples present some pyrite.

SF5 Positive reversal test and CMTD test comparing Component #2 with the C component of Pastor-Galán et al., 2016.