

A Geodynamic Research Team in Aix-en-Provence

Xavier Le Pichon

2002 Balzan Prize for Geology

Balzan GPC Advisers: Eugen Seibold, Enric Banda

Researchers: Louis Andréani, Nicolas Flotté, Youri Hamon, Laurent Husson, Charlotte Le Roy, Jing-Yi Lin, Nicolas Loget

Affiliated Institution: Collège de France

Period: 2002-2008

Xavier Le Pichon is Honorary Professor at the Collège de France. Le Pichon's research team moved to the Université Paul Cézanne, Aix-Marseille III, to establish a new branch of the Collège de France there in 2003, and the second part of the Balzan Prize was used in part to finance new scientific equipment. In addition, it was used to complement post-doctoral salaries and to finance geological field work.

Two projects featured young researchers funded by the Balzan Prize. The first concerned the tectonics of the Western Gulf of Mexico and was the result of cooperation with oil companies over four years. Young researchers Flotté, Husson, Le Roy and Andréani published the results of their research in a special issue of the *Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France*, co-published with the American Association of Petroleum Geology (2008). The main result of the project is to have established that this continental margin, which was thought to be inactive since the Jurassic period, has instead been affected by active tectonics in the last 30 million years.

The second project concerned the geodynamics of the Provence basin, and results were also published as a special issue of the *Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France*. Young researchers Flotté, Husson, Hamon, Lin, Andréani and Loget established that the so-called alpine tectonics is the result of en masse gravity gliding of the thick Triassic salt layer, which occurred when the Alps were uplifted during the Miocene epoch.

Publications

Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France. 181, November 2010. Contributions from Andréani, Flotté, Hamon, Husson, Le Pichon, Lin and Loget.

Bulletin de la Société Géologique de France. 179, 2, 2008. Contributions from Andréani, Flotté, Husson, Le Pichon and Le Roy.