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University of Texas Institute for Geophysics Technical Report No. 53

Plate Tectonic Reconstructions of the Larson et al. (1985) Map of the Age of the World Oceans

Paleoceanographic Mapping Project Report #05-0985

by

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Introduction

During the past 20 years, numerous oceanographic surveys have mapped the age of the ocean floor in great detail (NGDC data bank). Recently, two separate studies have compiled these results and have produced maps illustrating the age of the ocean basins on a global scale (Sclater and Parsons, 1981; Larson et al., 1985). This work has been done with the realization that in order to make accurate plate tectonic reconstructions, an accurate map of the age of the ocean floor is required. This report compares these two compilations and presents a new set of Mesozoic and Cenozoic plate reconstructions based on the magnetic isochrons of Larson et al. (1985).

A Comparison of the Sclater and Parsons (1980) and Larson et al. (1985) Isochron Maps.

Figures 1. and 2. are reduced versions of the Sclater and Parson (1980) and Larson et al. (1985) isochron maps. In Figure 3, these two data sets have been directly overlaid. Though the choice of different times for the isochrons used on each map makes direct comparison difficult, a few points can be made.

Similarities:

- 1. The pattern in the North, Central, and South Atlantic Oceans are very similar.
- 2. The treatment of the younger anomalies along the Southwest Indian Ridge is identical because both maps are based on the work of Sclater and Fisher, 1981.
- 3. The pattern in the Central Indian Ocean is similar due to the fact both groups base their interpretations on the work of Sclater and McKenzie (1971).
- 4. The pattern in the Eastern Pacific, as portrayed on both maps is fairly similar.

Differences:

(Overall)

1. The Sclater and Parsons (1980) compilation was finished before two important sources of new information were available: 1. the GEBCO bathymetric maps of the world oceans (published 1983), and 2. the exciting new results from SEASAT (Haxby et al., 1983). Many of the differences between these two maps are due to the fact that the more recent Larson et al. (1985) isochron map has incorporated data from these two sources.

2. The method in which the maps were made has also resulted in important differences. The Larson et al. (1985) isochron map was made by directly mapping the age of the ocean floor from exisiting pattern magnetic anomalies. Where no data were available, the boundaries of the isochrons were estimated. The Sclater and Parsons (1980) map on the other hand is based largely on plate tectonic models for each ocean basin. The isochrons were derived by rotating ridge axes about poles of rotation that "best fit" the observed magnetic lineations.

(Atlantic)

- 1. The Larson et al. (1985) map takes into account the evolution of the Jan Mayen micro-continent.
- 2. The Sciater and Parsons (1980) map does not show the correct position of the Charlie-Gibbs fracture zone.
- 3. The Larson et al. (1985) map correctly takes into account the ridge jump in the Cape Basin (SW Africa); the Sclater and Parson map does not.

(Indian)

- 1. Both maps show very different patterns for the isochrons that represent the early stages of rifting between India and Antarctica. (Both are likely to be incorrect.)
- 2. The Larson et al. (1985) map indicates that sea floor spreading in the Mozambique and Somali Basins ended at anomaly M10 time. More likely, it continued to anomaly M0 time.
- 3. On the Sclater and Parsons (1980) map the Prince Edward Fracture Zone (Southwest Indian Ridge) is shown to be a nearly continuous feature. The Larson et al. (1985) map suggests that the feature is discontinuous and has been interrupted by a phase of oblique spreading.
- 4. The Larson et al. (1985) map includes the work of Cande and Mutter (1982) which suggests Australia and Antarctica parted company in the Late Cretaceous.
- 5. The Sciater and Parsons (1980) map shows a small back arc basin opening between the Campbell plateau and the Macquarie Ridge.
- 6. The magnetic anomalies in the Weddell Sea run N-NW on the Sclater and Parsons map, whereas they run nearly E-W on the Larson et al. (1985) map. It is not clear which of these two interpretations are correct.

(Pacific)

1. Neither compilation uses the more recent work of Klitgord and Mammerickx (1982) and Lonsdale and Klitgord (1981) for the Eastern Pacific.

- 2. The locations of the major fracture zones, as shown on the Sciater and Parson's map, are displaced 1-2 degrees from their actual positions.
- 3. The maps do not agree on the shape of the isochrons on the Nazca plate.
- 4. The shape of the isochrons in the Southwest Pacific at 170 W are very different. On the Sclater and Parsons (1981) map the fracture zones trend more N-S.

Discussion

A comparison of the two maps suggests that though similar, there are important differences. The most significant differences are summarized by the following list of "problem areas".

- 1. The evolution of the Jan Mayen microplate.
- 2*. The Late Jurassic -Early Cretaceous evolution of the Somali and Mozambique basins.
- 3*. The Evolution of the Southwest Indian Ridge in the vicinity of the Prince Edward Fracture Zone.
 - 4*. The early rifting history between India and Antarctica.
 - 5*. The evolution of the Weddell Sea.
 - 6*. The evolution of the SW Pacific.
 - 7. The evolution of the Nazca plate.
- * indicates that special projects are underway to solve the problems in these areas.

Plate Tectonic Reconstructions of the Larson et al. (1985) Isochron Map

The reconstructions illustrated in Figures 4 - 12 attempt to "best fit" the isochrons drawn by Larson et al. (1985). In the first phase of the project, the isochrons were digitized and converted to spherical coordinates. Finite poles of rotation (see Appendix) were then calculated through the use of interactive computer graphics (Evans and Sutherland PS300). Maps were then plotted using the program PALEOMAP.

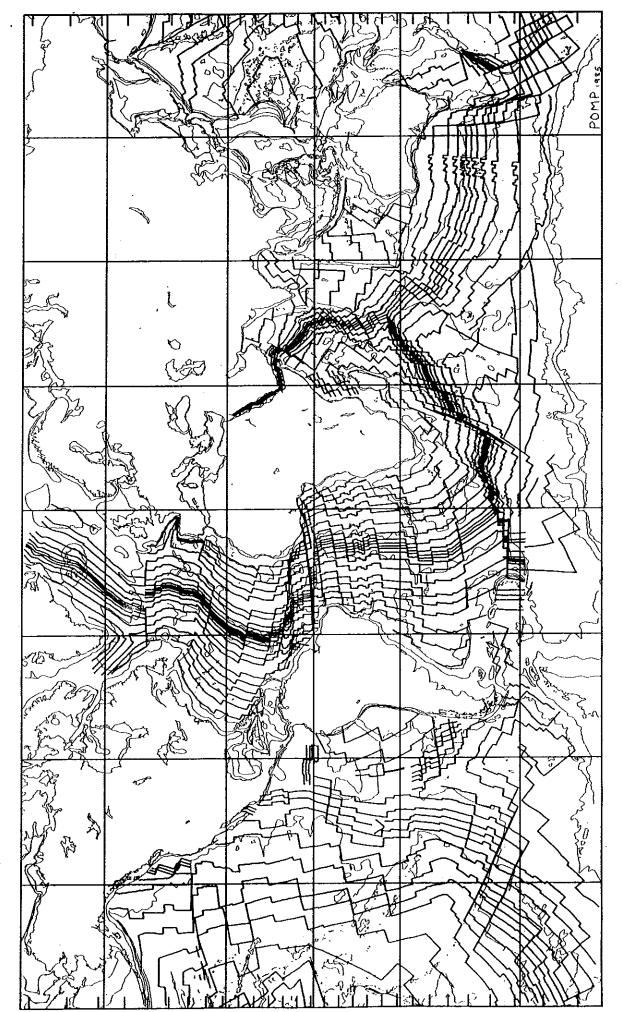


Figure 1. Sclater and Parsons (1980) Isochron Map

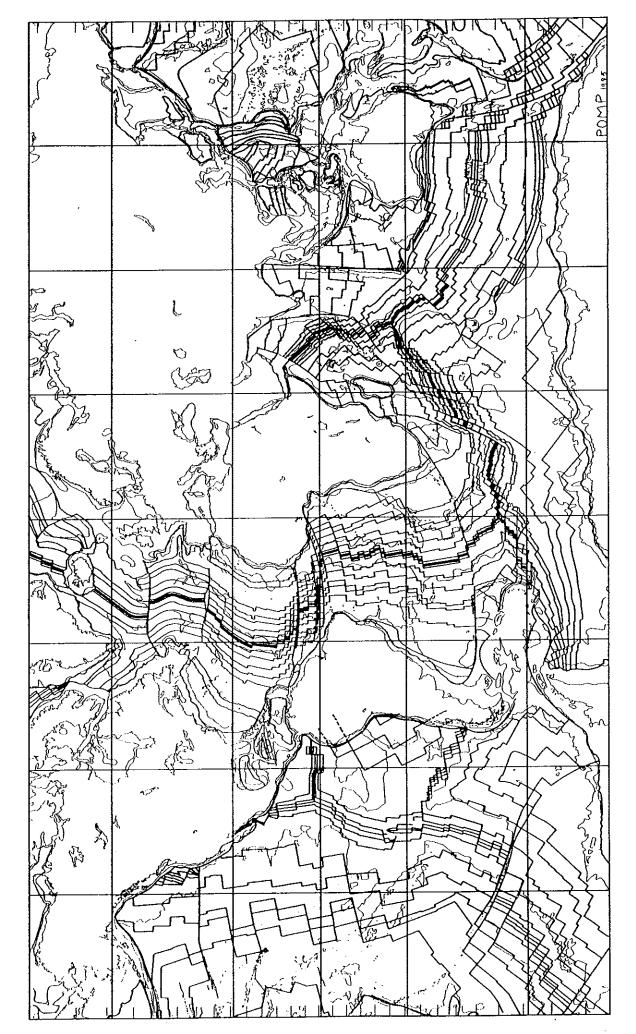
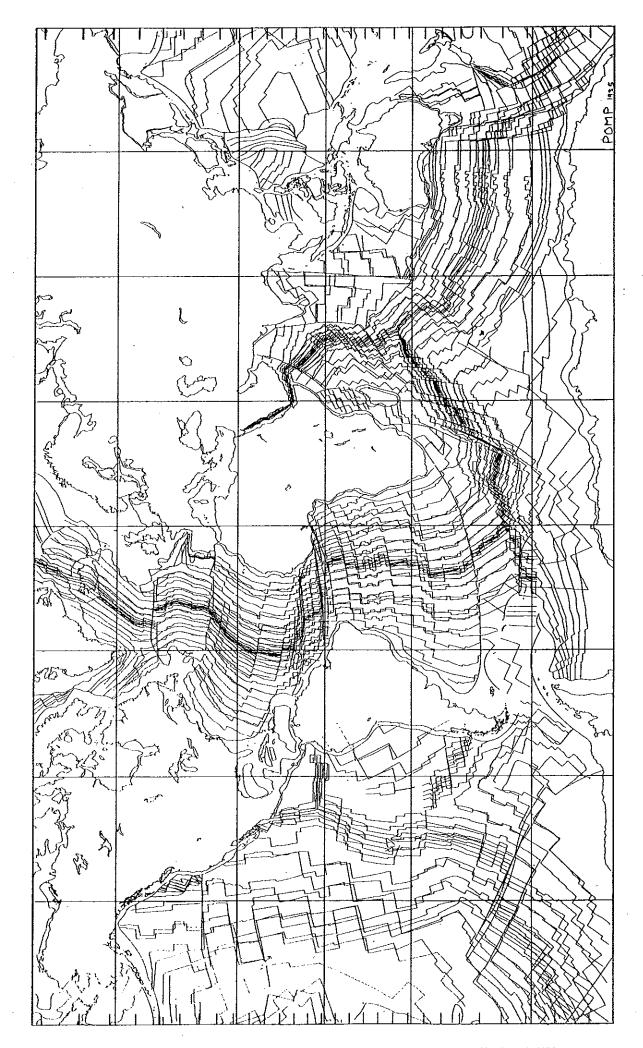


Figure 2. Larson et al. (1985) Isochron Map



Sclater and Parsons (1980) and Larson et al. (1985) Isochrons combined Figure 3.

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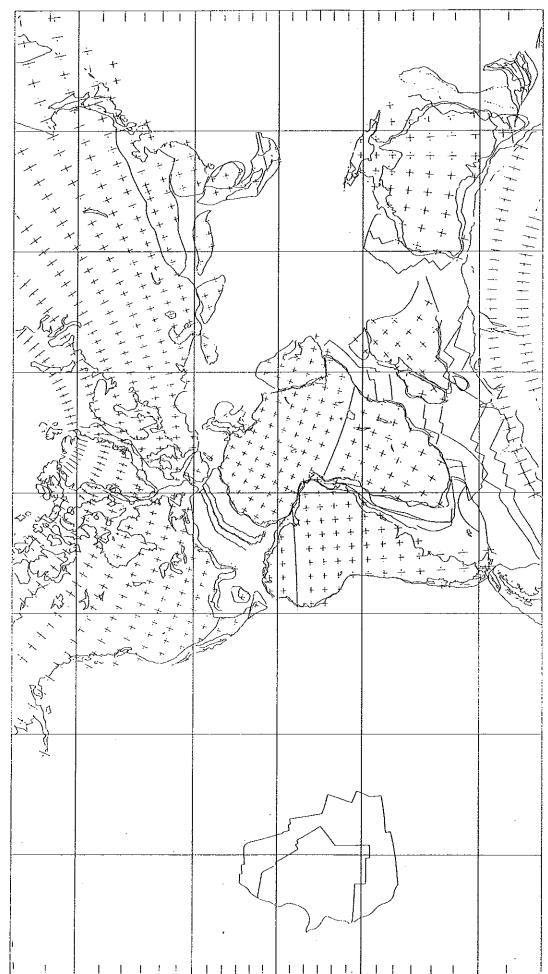
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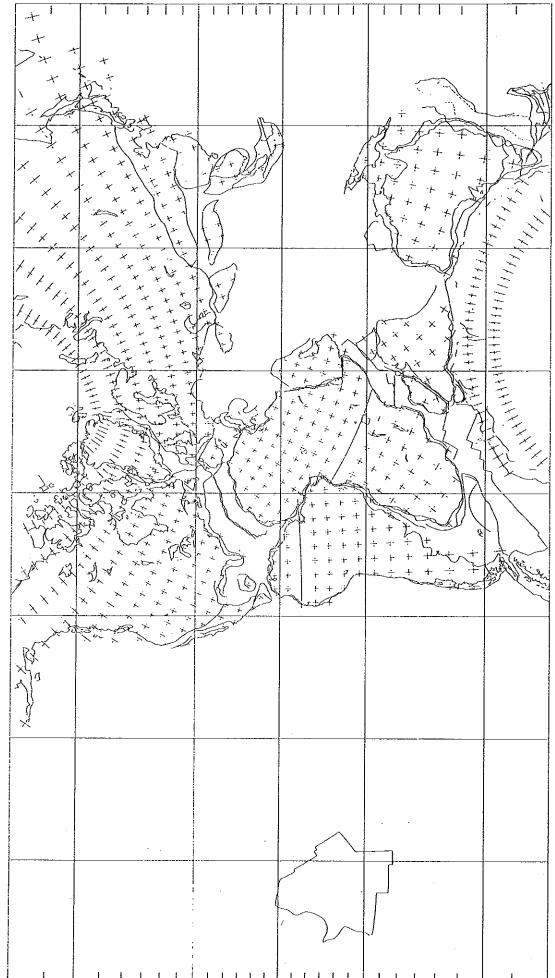
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      059.2
                  0.00
                               0.00
                             21.84
21.84
0.00
                                        13.27 802
13.27 802
0.00 201
      065.0
                 62.27
62.27
804
804
                 0.00
                                                       !ELL-SAM+
                                                                      100 MY FUTURE
      -100
805
                                       0.00 201
0.00 201
10.00 201
13.70 201
39.30 201
15.00 201
                                                       ISAME AS
                                                                    WAF−SAM
805
      000.0
                  0.00
                              0.00
               0.00
-46.70
-81.50
      010.0
                              0.00
805
                           -74.30
      020.0
                                                       IELL-SAM
805
                                                       !ELL-SAM
                          -145.30
-86.90
805
805
      110.0
               -48,80
                          -169.98
-92.80
-79.40
-79.40
                                                       !ELL-SAM
      120.0
               -60.97
805
                                       25.20 201
87.02 201
87.02 201
0.00 101
0.00 101
                                                       !ELL-SAM
!ELL-SAM
               -66.90
805
      140.0
805
      165.0
               -63,81
                                                       ISCOTESE & LAWVER (1986)
      245.0
               -63.81
805
                                                       !NSL-NAM, 100 MY FUTURE
!NSL-NAM
                              0.00
      -100
                  0.00
103
                              0.00
      000.0
                  0.00
103
                                                       !NSL-NAM
!NSL-NAM
!NSL-NAM FIT
!BOUCHER (1978)
!MEX-NAM, 100 MY FUTURE
!MEX-NAM
                                         0.00 101
      131.0
                  0.00
                              0.00
                          -128.16
-128.16
                                      -75.00 101
-75.00 101
                 70.11
103
      165.0
                 70.11
      245.0
103
                                         0.00 101
                              0.00
10\overline{4}
      -100
                  0.00
                              0.00
104
      000.0
                  0.00
                                                       !MEX-NAM
                  0.00
                              0.00
                                         0.00 101
104
      143.0
                                                       MEX-NAM FIT
EZIEGLER, SCOTESE, & BARRETT (1983)
                             94.10
                                        13.00 101
13.00 101
104
      165.0
               -48.60
               -48.60
      245.0
104
                                                       IBAJ-MEX, 100 MY FUTURE
IBAJ-MEX
IBAJ-MEX FIT
                           -95.60
                                      -20.00 104
105
      -100
                 46.60
                                         0.00 104
7.37 104
                  0.00
                              0.00
105
      000.0
                 37.90
37.90
      032.0
                           -91.30
105
                                                       IMODIFIED SCOTESE ET AL (1979)
IKOL-EUR, 100 MY FUTURE
                           -91.30
                                         7.37
                                                104
301
301
      245.0
105
                                         0.00
403
      -100
                  0.00
                             0.00
                                                       !KOL-EUR
403
     000.0
                  0.00
                              0.00
                                         0.00
403 140.0
                                         0.00 301
                                                       !KOL-EUR
                  0.00
                              0.00
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20.00 301 !KOL-EUR
                          100.00
403 165.0
                80.00
                                                     !KOL-EUR
!YUC-NAN , 100 MY FUTURE
403 245.0
205 -100
                          100.00
                                      25.00 301
0.00 101
                                               301
                80.00
                             0.00
                  0.00
205
                                                     YUC-NAM
!YUC-NAM
!YUC-NAM FIT
!ZIEGLER, SCOTESE & BARRETT (1983)
!HON-MEX, 100 MY FUTURE
                                        0.00 101
205
                             0.00
     000.0
                  0.00
                0.00
27.60
27.60
                             0.00
                                        0.00
                                               101
205
      143.0
                          -85.50
-85.50
0.00
                                               101
                                     08+66-
      165.0
205
                                     -66.80 101
0.00 104
                                               10\bar{1}
205
204
      245.0
      -100
                  0.00
                                                     HON-MEX
204
                  0.00
                             0.00
                                        0.00 104
      000.0
                            87.90
87.90
87.90
87.90
              -39.70
-39.70
-39.70
                                      15.10 104
15.10 104
     053.0
127.0
165.0
704
                                                     HON-MEX
HON-MEX FIT
SCOTESE ET AL (1979)
204
                                      31.10 \overline{104}
204
               -39.70
204
      245.0
                                      31.10 104
                                                     IARC-GRN , 100 MY FUTURE
IKEPT FIXED TO GREENLAND
IERK-EUR, 100 MY FUTURE
                 0.00
                                        0.00 102
                             0.00
      -100
106
                                              102
                             0.00
                                        0.00
     245.0
                 0.00
1,06
                                        0.00
      -100
                  0.00
                             0.00
                                               301
                                                     !ERK-EUR
!ERK-EUR
!ERK-EUR
                                               301
301
301
      000.0
                  0.00
                             0.00
                                        0.00
     073.0
095.0
245.0
                           0.00
96.80
96.80
0.00
317
317
                 0.00
                                        0.00
                                       3.70
3.70
0.00
                                                                 FIT
(1976)
                  3.60
                73.60
317
                                               301
                                                     ISCOTESE
                                                     INNZ-AUS,
INNZ-AUS
INNZ-AUS
INNZ-AUS
                                                                  100 MY FUTURE
                                              801
      -100
806
                                       0.00 801
      000.0
                             0.00
806
                 0.00
                          0,00
806
      040.0
                  0.00
                                        0.00 801
                31.20
43.70
                                      -4.00 801
-7.70 801
      065.0
804
                                                     !NNZ-AUS
!NNZ-AUS
                          126.40
-19.91
-19.91
      0.080
806
                                                     INNZ-AUS FIT
ISCOTESE & LAWVER (1986)
                                      44.61 801
                24.19
      090+0
808
                24.19
      245.0
                                      44.61 801
806
                                                    ISNZ-MBL;
ISNZ-MBL
ISNZ-MBL
ISNZ-MBL
ISNZ-MBL
                                                                  100 MY FUTURE
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00 804
807
      -100
        0.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00 804
807
                          -98.50
                                       1.88 804
                                                                  AN2
807
         3.4
                68.71
              73.35
74.97
-72.79
69.48
       24.2
37.7
                          -62.84
-53.67
                                      16.62 804
28.96 804
                                                                   AN6
807
                                                                   AN15
807
                                                    SNZ-MBL
SNZ-MBL
SNZ-MBL
       59.2
66.2
                          127.36
-36.51
-52.00
                                     -40.05 804
807
                                                                   AN25
                                      59.31 804
62.38 804
62.38 804
0.00 601
807
       84.0
                                                                  FIT
807
                                                                 & LAWVER (1986)
                                                     !SCOTESE
807
                          -52.00
     245.0
                65.14
                                                     IJAF-NCH, 100 MY INTO FUTURE
      -100
                 0.00
                             0.00
605
                                                     JAF-NCH
605
605
                                        0.00
                                               601
     000.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                                     IJAF-NCH
                                       0.00 601
     011.0
                 0.00
                             0 + 00
                                                     JAP-NCH FIT
ISCOTESE (1976)
                        -113.40
-113.40
0.00
                                      -7.50
-7.50
605
605
     023.0
              -13.70
-13.70
0.00
                                              601
                                                     ISCOTESE (1976)
INCH-EUR 100 MY FUTURE
                                               601
     245.0
                                       0.00
                                              301
301
601
      -100
                                                     INCH-EUR
601
                                       0.00
     000.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                                     INCH-EUR
     215.0
245.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               301
601
                                                     ITEMPORARILY FIXED TO EUROPE
                                       0.00
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                              301
601
                             0.00
                                       0.00 601
                                                     ISCH-NCH, 100 MY FUTURE
                 0.0 + 0.0
602
     -100
                                                     ISCH-NCH
302
602
      213.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               601
                                                     ITEMPORARILY FIXED TO N CHINA
                 0.00
     245.0
                             0.00
                                       0.00 601
                                                     ISEA-SCH, 100 MY FUTURE
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               602
603
     -100
                                       0.00 602
                                                     ISEA-SCH
     213.0
245.0
                             0.00
603
                 0.00
                                       0.00 602
                                                     ITEMPORARILY FIXED TO S CHINA
IICH-SCH, 100 MY FUTURE
603
                 0.00
                             0.00
                             0.00
604
      -100
                 0.00
                                       0.00 602
                                                     !ICH-SCH
     213.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
604
                                       0.00 602
                                                     !TEMPORARILY FIXED TO S CHINA
604
     245.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                                     ICSD-SPN, 100 MY FUTURE
      -100
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               304
306
                                                     ICSD-SPN
ICSD-SPN FIT
     004.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               304
306
                                      26.17
                                              304
304
                          178.46
              -50.85
306
     012.0
                                                    ISCOTESE ET AL (1979)
LITL-EUR, 100 MY FUTURE
LITL-EUR
     245.0
              -50.85
                          178.46
303
                             0.00
                                       0.00 301
307
     -100
                 0.00
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               301
307
     000.0
307
                             0.00
                                               301
                                                     !ITL-EUR
     021.0
                                       0.00
                                                    ITL-EUR
ITL-AFR
ITL-AFR
                                              \underline{301}
     065.0
                40.00
                                    -13.00
307
                                    5.57 701
-20.00 701
              -45.63
47.12
                          -60,67
307
     065.0
307
     030+0
                           10.85
              47.12
-49.21
                                    -41.40
                           10.85
                                              701
                                                     !ITL-AFR
307
     143.0
                                                    IITL-AFR
IITL-SPN FIT
IZIEGLER, SCOTESE, & BARRETT (1983)
                        -167.00
-173.30
-173.30
                                     38.04
67.12
67.12
                                              701
307
     165.0
                                               304
              -45.67
307
     165.0
              -45.67
                                               304
307
     245.0
                                                     !TRK-EUR, 100 MY FUTURE
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                              301
     -100
                 0.00
504
                                                    !TRK-EUR
!TRK-EUR
!TRK-EUR
                                       0.00
                                              301
301
504
     0.000
                 0.00
                             0.00
                           95.00
95.00
               71.00
                                      11.00
504
     035.0
     190.0
504
                                      11.00
                                               301
                                                                  FIT
                                                                 (1977)
              -42.60
                                                     SCOTESE
     245.0
                        -151.40
                                      30.00
                                               301
504
                             0.00
                                       0.00 504
                                                     !IRN-TRK, 100 MY FUTURE
505
      -100
                 0.00
                                                    IRAN FIXED TO TURKEY
IGRK-ITL, 100 MY FUTURE
IGREECE FIXED TO ITALY
ITIB-NCH, 100 MY FUTURE
505
     245.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00 504
                .0.00
     -100
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                              307
308
                                       0.00 307
     245.0
-100
308
                 0.00
                             0.00
606
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                              601
                                                     ITIB-NCH
606
     000.0
                 0.00
                             0.00
                                       0.00
                                               601
              -48.10
                        --143.60
                                       7.56
                                              601
                                                     ITIB-NCH
     038.0
606
                                      7.56
71.47
              -48.10
                                               601
                                                     TIB-MCH
                        -143.60
606
     215.0
                                                    ISCOTESE
                                                                 (1977)
                        -145.10
                                               601
     245.0
              -59,70
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