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New Constraints on the Age of the Opening of the South Atlantic Basin.

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Abstract

Detailed, high quality, marine total field magnetic data recently acquired over parts of the South Atlantic Ocean off the southwestern margin of South Africa display a pattern of well-defined, NW-SE striking linear magnetic anomalies that can be traced with confidence over distances > 150 km. The magnetic anomalies are interpreted to be M-series seafloor spreading anomalies M9 to M11, which are consistent with the initiation of seafloor spreading at approximately 135 Ma (Late Valanginian/Early Hauterivian). Seafloor spreading models indicate a more rapid (44mm/yr) initial spreading phase between M11 and M4/M5 followed by slower (29 mm/yr) spreading from M4/M5 to M0. This two rate spreading model also matches M-series anomalies previously reported over the conjugate South American margin offshore Argentina where the rates are slightly (<10%) slower. The presence of M11 anomalies over both margins suggests an earlier opening of the southern South Atlantic basin than previously recognized.

Breaks in the continuity of the linear anomaly pattern, observed in map view, are oriented approximately NE-SW and are considered sites of possible fracture zones. One such discontinuity, which we have termed the "Cape Lineament" (CL), marks a significant change in Download English Version:

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