

# $V_p$ and $V_p/V_s$ structures in the crust and upper mantle of the Taiwan region, China

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**A tomographic study of the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures in the crust and upper mantle beneath the Taiwan region of China is conducted by simultaneous inversion of P and S arrival times. Compared with the previous tomographic results, the spherical finite difference technique is suitable for the strong heterogeneous velocity structure, and may improve the accuracy in the travel time and three-dimensional ray tracing calculations. The  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures derived from joint inversion and the relocated earthquakes can provide better constraints for analyzing the lateral heterogeneity and deep tectonic characters in the crust and upper mantle. Our tomographic results reveal significant relations between the seismic wavespeed structure and the tectonic characters. In the shallow depth, sedimentary basins and orogen show distinct wavespeed anomalies, with low  $V_p$ , high  $V_p/V_s$  in basins and high  $V_p$ , low  $V_p/V_s$  in orogen. As the suture zone of Eurasian Plate and Philippine Sea Plate, Longitudinal Valley is characterized by a significant high  $V_p/V_s$  anomaly extending to the middle-lower crust and upper mantle, which reflects the impact of rock cracking, partial melting, and the presence of fluids. In the northeast Taiwan, the  $V_p$ ,  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies and relocated earthquakes depict the subducting Philippine Sea Plate under the Eurasian Plate. The high  $V_p$  of oceanic plate and the low  $V_p$ , high  $V_p/V_s$  atop the subducted oceanic plate extend to 80 km depth. Along the east-west profiles, the thickness of crust reaches 60 km at the east of Central Range with eastward dipping trend, which reveals the eastward subduction of the thickened and deformed crust of the Eurasian continental plate.**

Taiwan region, P wave velocity,  $V_p/V_s$  ratio, lithosphere structure, tomography

Taiwan region of China is located in the collision belt between the Eurasian Plate and the Philippine Sea Plate, and becomes a natural laboratory for the study of mountain building, arc-continent collision, and subduction<sup>[1–3]</sup> (Figure 1). The western Coastal Plain, Western Foothills, Central Range, Longitudinal Valley are located across the Taiwan island from the west to the east, and the crust thickness varies greatly, which is about 20–35 km at the western Coastal Plain, and up to 55 km at the Central Range. To the Longitudinal Valley and Coastal Range area, the crust turns to be oceanic type, and the thickness decreases rapidly<sup>[4,5]</sup>. The main tectonic units and seismicity spread in NNE-SSW direction, parallel to the collision frontier of Eurasian Plate and Luzon volcanic

arc. The geological processes in the northeast Taiwan are related to the subducting of the Philippine Sea oceanic plate along the Ryukyu trench.

The previous studies indicated that the Philippine Sea Plate is moving northwestward at a velocity of 7–8 cm/a relative to the Eurasian Plate, which results in the oblique collision between Luzon Arc and Eurasian Plate and the forming of Taiwan orogen<sup>[6–8]</sup>. The main arc-

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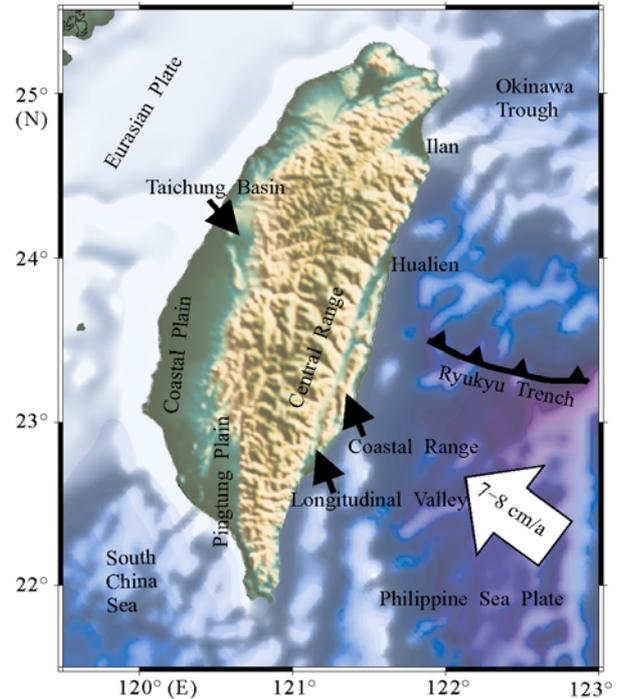
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continent collision process occurred near the Longitudinal Valley spanning 22°–23.5°N, where there is the suture zone of the Eurasian and Philippine Sea Plates<sup>[9,10]</sup>. Except in the Hualien region, the collision and deformation are not very obvious<sup>[11]</sup>. However, as the key place of subduction mechanism transform, Hualien region exhibits the complex tectonics and deep dynamic process involving two different subduction styles: in the northeast of Taiwan area, the Philippine Sea Plate is underthrusting the Eurasian Plate along the Ryukyu trench; while in the southeast, the Eurasian Plate is underthrusting the Philippine Sea Plate<sup>[2,4,5,12–14]</sup>. Collision and subduction are responsible for crust deforming and thickening, mountain building, and active seismicity. Seismological studies suggest that the deformation is not only limited in the middle-upper crust, but also extends to the lower crust and upper mantle<sup>[4,5,9,15,16]</sup>.

The dense network of seismic stations and the large amount of arrival time observations make it possible to study the velocity structures in the crust and upper mantle. Based on the previous tomographic results, Roecker et al.<sup>[17]</sup> showed the evidence of the different underthrusting relations between the Eurasian Plate and the Philippine Sea Plate in the north and south of Taiwan island. Rau et al.<sup>[4]</sup> identified the subducted slab of the Philippine Sea Plate under the Eurasian Plate dipping at an angle of 40° to the depth of 100–130 km in the north of Taiwan, and provided strong evidence for the involvement of crust and upper mantle in the arc-continent collision and mountain building. Kim et al.<sup>[5]</sup> analyzed the relations between earthquake activity and deep tectonics in the crust and upper mantle. Wang et al.<sup>[13]</sup> showed the 65–80 km thick high velocity lithosphere of the Eurasian Plate underthrusting the Philippine Sea Plate down to a depth of 300 km. Wu et al.<sup>[18]</sup> revealed the main tectonic units and deep characters of the arc-continent collision zone.

The  $V_p/V_s$  ratio is an important parameter for analyzing the petrology and rheology of the crust and upper mantle, and could provide more constraints than  $V_p$  or  $V_s$ . In this study, we adopt the spherical finite difference technique to implement the seismic travel time and three-dimensional ray tracing computation, which is suitable for the strongly heterogeneous velocity structure of the crust and upper mantle in Taiwan region<sup>[19,20]</sup>. The  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  ratio structures in the crust and upper mantle are simultaneously determined using the local and regional P and S first arrival times jointly.



**Figure 1** The tectonic framework of the Taiwan region.

## 1 Method and data

### 1.1 Method

As a later-arrival seismic wave, S-wave arrivals are not as clear as the first P-wave arrivals, and the picking uncertainty of S-wave is also much greater than the P wave, therefore the quantity of S-wave data is also less than the P-wave. Because of these reasons, the S-wave velocity structure derived from S-wave arrival times also has greater uncertainty than P-wave structure<sup>[21,22]</sup>, and the  $V_p/V_s$  directly calculated from  $V_p$  and  $V_s$  will have too great uncertainty for tectonic analyses. So, we invert for the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures simultaneously rather than for  $V_p$  and  $V_s$  separately in this study<sup>[23]</sup>.

The P-wave travel time residual  $\delta t_{ij}^p$  can be represented by

$$\delta t_{ij}^p = t_{ij}^{\text{obs}} - t_{ij}^{\text{cal}} = \sum \frac{\partial t}{\partial S_k^p} \Delta S_k^p + \sum_{l=1}^4 \frac{\partial t}{\partial q_l^i} \Delta q_l^i, \quad (1)$$

where  $t_{ij}^{\text{obs}}$  is the observed travel time from the  $i$ th earthquake to the  $j$ th station,  $t_{ij}^{\text{cal}}$  is the synthetic travel time calculated from model,  $S_k^p$  is the P-wave slowness at the  $k$ th grid point in model,  $q_l^i$  ( $l=1, 2, 3, 4$ ) are the source parameters of the  $i$ th earthquake (including

focal depth, latitude, longitude, and origin time). Similarly, the S-wave travel time residual  $\delta t_{ij}^s$  can be represented by

$$\delta t_{ij}^s = t_{ij}^{\text{obs}} - t_{ij}^{\text{cal}} = \sum \frac{\partial t}{\partial S_k^s} \Delta S_k^s + \sum_{l=1}^4 \frac{\partial t}{\partial q_l^i} \Delta q_l^i, \quad (2)$$

where  $S_k^s$  is the S-wave slowness at the  $k$ th grid point in model. From eq. (2), we know there are no obvious relations between  $V_p$  and  $V_s$  except the same source parameters, if we implement the inversion separately for  $V_p$  and  $V_s$ . However, P- and S-wave arrival times will be influenced by some of the same factors, such as mineral composition, temperature, pressure, and pore fluid and so on, and thus the variations of  $V_p$  and  $V_s$  are not totally independent. To build the linear equations for solving  $V_p/V_s$ , with eq. (2), the  $V_p/V_s$  ratio  $r_k = V_p/V_s = S_k^s / S_k^p$  at  $k$ th grid point in model can be represented as<sup>[24]</sup>

$$\sum \frac{\partial t}{\partial S_k^s} \Delta S_k^s = \sum \frac{\partial t}{\partial S_k^s} \Delta(r_k S_k^p) = \sum \frac{\partial t}{\partial S_k^s} (S_k^p \Delta r_k + r_k \Delta S_k^p). \quad (3)$$

Using eqs. (2) and (3), we can obtain the linear equations relating S travel time residual to P wave slowness,  $V_p/V_s$  ratio, and source parameters. The linear equations for solving  $V_p$ ,  $V_p/V_s$  and source parameters simultaneously consist of eqs. (1)–(3).

Three-dimensional ray tracing and travel time calculation are conducted by finite difference technique in spherical rather than Cartesian coordinate system<sup>[19,20]</sup>, thus avoiding the distortion of coordinate system and Earth flattening transform. Compared with the approximate ray tracing technique, the finite difference technique can improve the accuracy in strongly heterogeneous media and reduce the ambiguity in determining global travel time minima<sup>[24]</sup>. Hypocenters are determined via grid search approach, which can always find the true minimum in data variance<sup>[24]</sup>. The system of linear equations for tomographic inversion is solved using the LSQR algorithm<sup>[25]</sup>. In the linear equations, we still keep the equations for source parameters to reduce the bias to the velocity structure.

We take the previous tomographic results as the references to build the starting model<sup>[5,18]</sup>, and adjust it according to the travel time residuals of the current dataset. We choose a fine grid spacing of 2 km for travel time computation and a nominal coarser grid of 10 km laterally and 4–20 km in depth (shown in Table 1) for

wavespeed inversion. To improve the computation accuracy and also make it feasible, we use one-fifth fine grid spacing near the source region (within 100 km from the source)<sup>[19,20]</sup>.

**Table 1** Initial model of  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  ratio used in this study

Depth (km)	$V_p$ (km · s <sup>-1</sup> )	$V_p/V_s$
0	5.10	1.73
4	5.50	1.73
10	6.00	1.73
16	6.20	1.73
22	6.40	1.73
28	6.80	1.73
36	7.60	1.73
46	7.85	1.73
60	7.95	1.73
80	8.00	1.73
100	8.04	1.73
120	8.10	1.73

## 1.2 Data

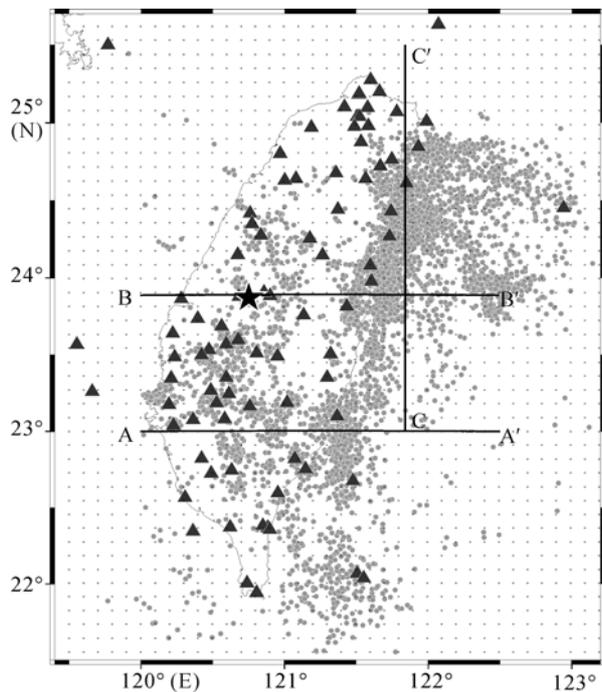
The P and S arrival times are from the seismic station networks in the Taiwan region during 1992–2004, which are located inside the study region of 21.5°–25.8°N and 119.5°–123.5° E. The selection of travel times is based on the following criteria: (1) the focal depth of earthquake is shallower than 100 km; (2) each earthquake is recorded by at least 6 stations with P and S arrival times; (3) travel time residuals must be inside  $\pm 4.0$  s. The entire dataset consists of about 135000 P and 77000 S arrivals from nearly 6000 events recorded at 92 stations, the hypocenters and stations are shown in Figure 2.

## 2 Results and analysis

After three iterations, the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  model can fit the observed arrival times very well; the root-mean-square travel time residual was reduced from 0.99 to 0.60 s.

### 2.1 Resolution test

We constructed the checkerboard velocity model by adding  $\pm 4\%$  of variation to the initial model with horizontal anomaly size about 30 km×30 km at each depth. Figures 3 and 4 show the recovered  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  checkerboard results separately. Since most of the stations are located on land, the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures are recovered better beneath the island to the depth 46 km. Down to the depth of 60–80 km, the recovery shows signs of



**Figure 2** Station and hypocenter distributions. Triangles indicate seismic stations. Open circles show the hypocenters. The nodes of model grid are plotted as small crosses. The pentagram shows the position of  $M_w$  7.6 Chi-Chi earthquake on September 21, 1999.

smearing because of the lack of enough ray path sampling. The recovery of  $V_p$  is also better than that of  $V_p/V_s$ , which is due to more P arrivals than S. In the end, we analyzed the deep structures of Taiwan region based on  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  results down to 80 km.

## 2.2 $V_p$ and $V_p/V_s$ structures

Figures 5 and 6 present the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures at 0–80 km depth from the inversion, with the relocated hypocenters within  $\pm 10$  km of each depth.

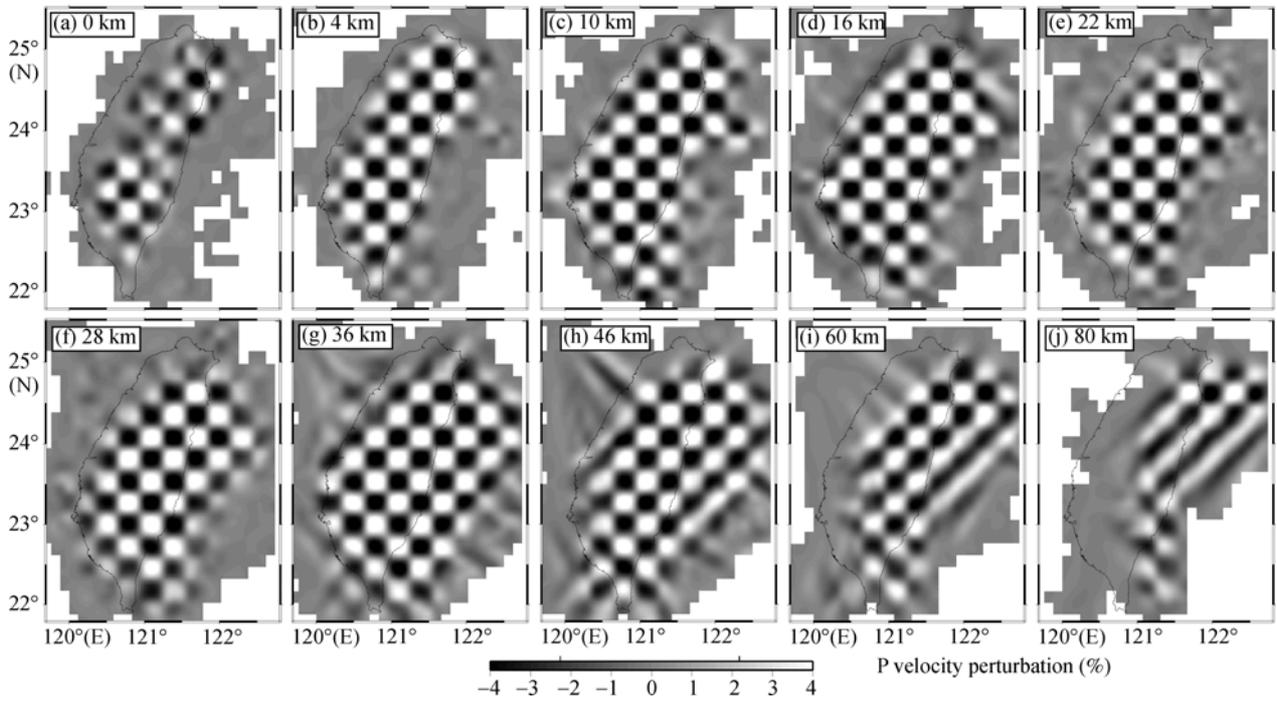
The  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures at 0–10 km depths reveal the tectonic characters of upper crust. The sedimentary basins in the western Coastal Plain show low  $V_p$  and high  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies, which may be related to the thick and water-saturated sediments [19,22]. High  $V_p$  and low  $V_p/V_s$  signals are consistent with the distribution of metamorphic outcrops in Central Range. High  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies at Longitudinal Valley and Coastal Range extend down to the uppermost mantle, where the velocity anomaly and hypocenter distribution depict the collision belt of Eurasian Plate and Luzon Arc. The high  $V_p/V_s$  anomaly in this suture zone may indicate the partial melting and the presence of fluids. The Philippine Sea Plate is characterized by high  $V_p$  and low  $V_p/V_s$ , which reflects the property of oceanic plate.

At 16–46 km depths, the scope of low  $V_p$  anomaly at western Coastal Plain shrinks and turns to be high  $V_p$  with the increasing of depth, the high  $V_p/V_s$  anomaly also becomes weaker. In contrast to the western Coastal Plain, the low  $V_p$  signals at Pingtung Plain in south Taiwan extend to 36 km depth, with significantly high  $V_p/V_s$  anomaly down to 28 km depth. Since the northern boundary of the Pingtung Plain is coincident with the northern edge of the Manila trench, previous studies indicated that the rapid subsidence of this basin is the surface manifestation of the subducting oceanic lithosphere prior to the collision of the fore-arc ridge and the continental margin [18,26], which is also coincident with the low  $V_p$  signals extending to middle-lower crust and upper mantle and the seismicity distributed in north-south direction. With the increasing of depth, the low  $V_p$  anomalies beneath the western Coastal Plain migrate eastward beneath the Central Range and its eastern region, which is still significant at 46 km depth and reflects the variation of crust thickness. While at the depth of 36 km beneath the eastern Coastal Range and to the eastern ocean, there is obvious high  $V_p$  strongly contrasting to the low  $V_p$  beneath the Central Range. The strong variation of  $V_p/V_s$  characters at Hualien and nearby Philippine Sea area indicates the difference between the oceanic and continental crust, which is also related to the active earthquakes.

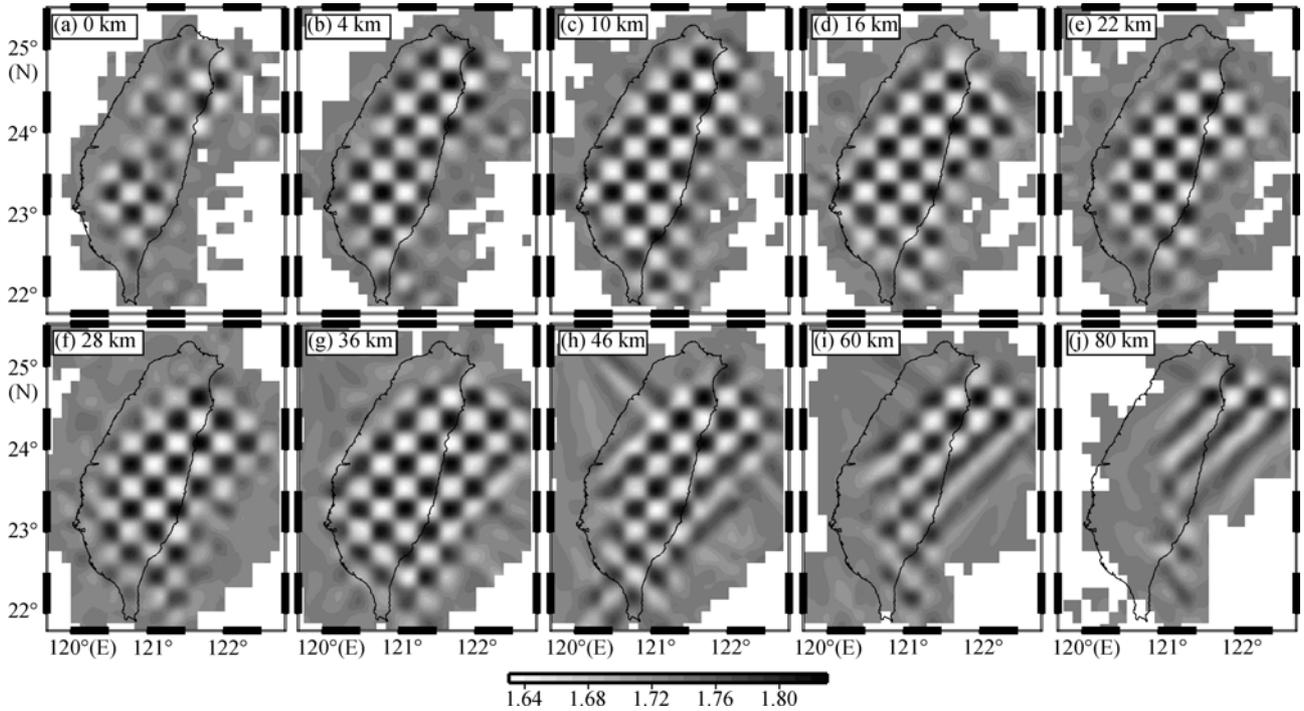
To the depth of 60–80 km, the Central Range and the area to its east are characterized by large scale low  $V_p$  and high  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies. Previous studies indicated that the thickness of crust beneath the Central Range and eastern Taiwan reaches 50–55 km due to the collision of the Eurasian Plate and the Philippine Sea Plate [4,5,9]. The low  $V_p$  character is also related to the collision. On one hand, it indicates the underthrusting Eurasian continental plate beneath the Philippine Sea Plate. On the other hand, it suggests the existence of fluids and partial melting in the crust-mantle boundary and uppermost mantle. It is similar with the low  $V_p$  and moderate high  $V_p/V_s$  signals beneath the volcanic area in north Taiwan observed by Kim et al. [5]. These anomalies could be due to the dehydration caused by the high temperature and pressure or the fluids induced by the subducting Eurasian Plate.

## 2.3 $V_p$ and $V_p/V_s$ profiles

Profiles of  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  with relocated earthquakes are shown in Figures 7(a)–(c), depicting the crustal struc-



**Figure 3** Recovered  $V_p$  models in checkerboard resolution tests at 0–80 km depth.

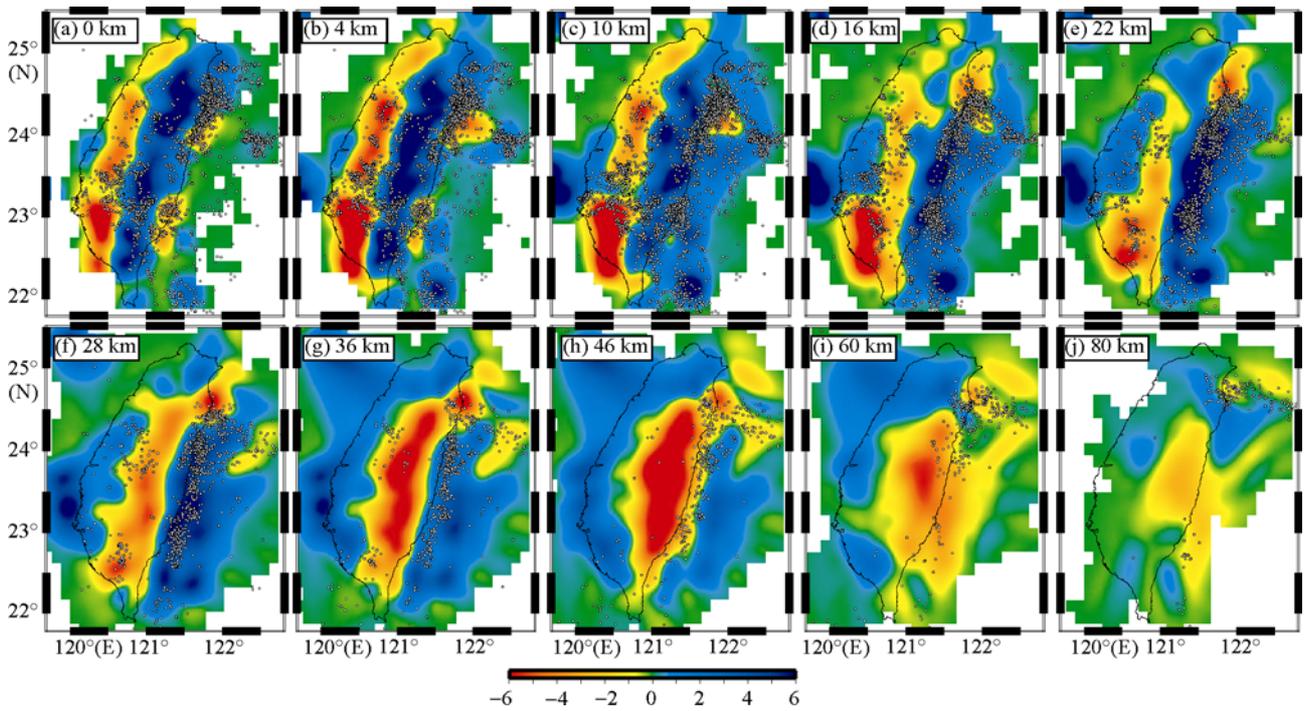


**Figure 4** Recovered  $V_p/V_s$  models in checkerboard resolution tests at 0–80 km depth.

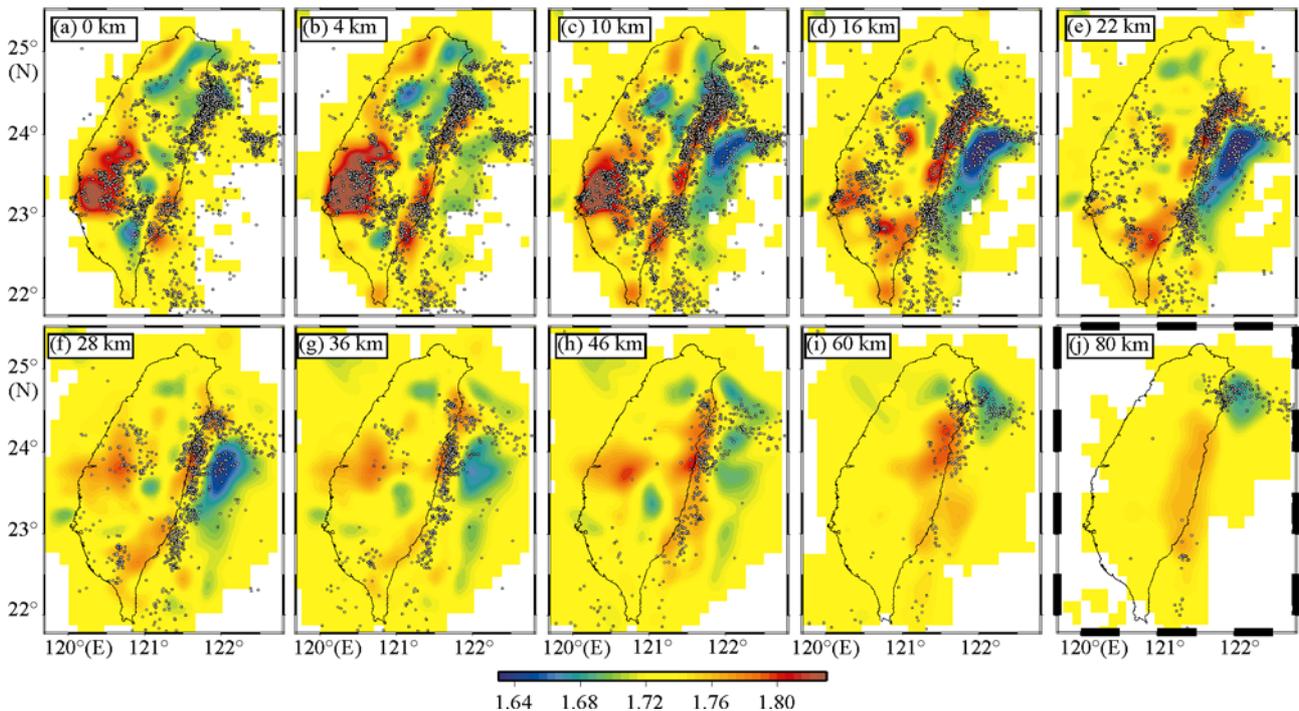
tures across the Taiwan orogen in EW and NS direction.

The low  $V_p$  and high  $V_p/V_s$  characters on profile A-A' (Figure 7(a)) at western Coastal Plain represent the thick sediments, contrasting against the high  $V_p$  and moderate low  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies in the middle-upper crust of the

Central Range and Western Foothills. The earthquakes mainly occur on the east and west sides of the Central Range. Most of focal depths are less than 20 km beneath the western Coastal Plain, but reach 50–60 km beneath the Longitudinal Valley and Luzon Arc. The former ones



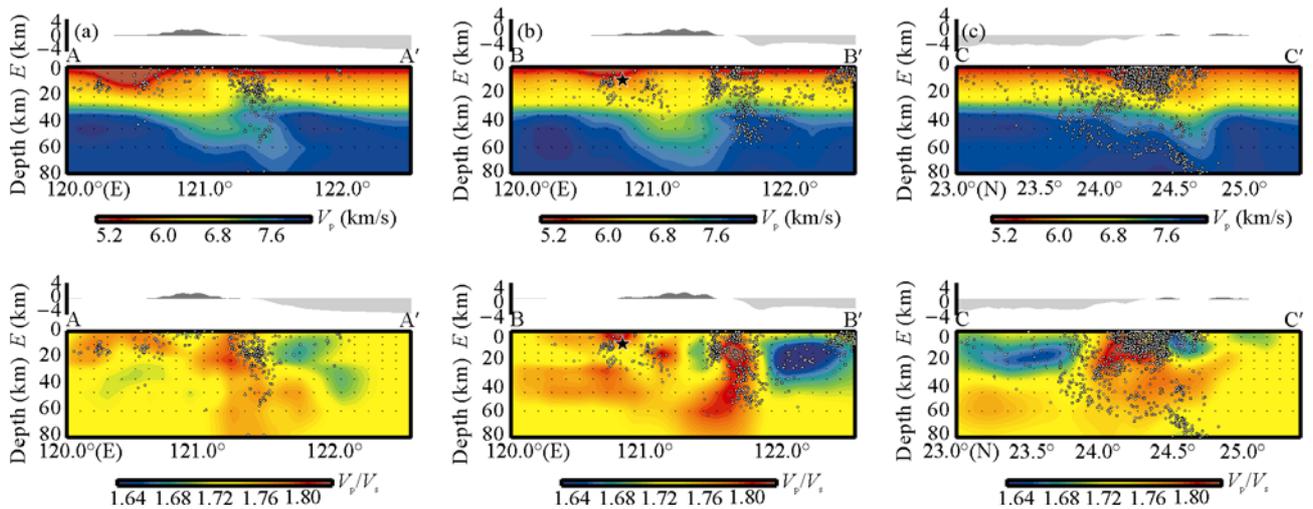
**Figure 5**  $V_p$  perturbation maps (%) at 0–80 km depth. Open circles show the relocated events within  $\pm 10$  km of each layer.



**Figure 6**  $V_p/V_s$  distribution maps at 0–80 km depth. Open circles show the relocated events within  $\pm 10$  km of each layer.

show the brittle rupture in the middle-upper crust, while the latter ones are obviously related to the collision of Eurasian Plate and Philippine Sea Plate. The  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures in these profiles suggest the prominent

variations of the crust across Taiwan, and the crustal thickness reaches its maximum to the east of Central Range, which is coincident with the results from Rau et al. [4] and Kim et al. [5]. The fact that maximum crustal



**Figure 7**  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  ratio profiles. The locations of profiles are shown in Figure 2. Open circles show the relocated events within  $\pm 10$  km of each profile, the black points show the grid node in the model, the pentagram on Figure 7(b) shows the position of  $M_w 7.6$  Chi-Chi earthquake on September 21, 1999.  $E$ , elevation.

thickness is not right beneath the Central Range and the deficiency of correlation between Bouguer gravity and topography suggest that the Taiwan area is not in isostatic equilibrium<sup>[5,27,28]</sup>. The focal mechanisms of moderate earthquakes indicate some amount of westward underthrusting at the Coastal Range, which suggests crustal thickening of the Philippine Sea Plate<sup>[9]</sup>. As the suture zone of the collision between Eurasian Plate and Philippine Sea Plate, the Longitudinal Valley has a large variation of crustal thickness, strong lateral contrast of  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$ , and high seismicity. Most of the earthquakes occurred in the high  $V_p/V_s$  area and its boundary with the low  $V_p/V_s$  area (the high Poisson ratio area and its boundary with the low Poisson ratio area) and showed a trend of eastward dipping.

Profile B-B' (Figure 7(b)) shows the similar  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  characters with profile A-A', and reveals the velocity structures near the location of 1999 Chi-Chi earthquake ( $M_w=7.6$ ). The earthquakes are mainly distributed on the two sides of Central Range; the ones near Taichung Basin show a low-angle eastward dipping trend, whereas the events on the western side of Central Range show a high-angle westward dipping trend. The seismicity is very low in the thickened middle-low crust beneath the Central Range<sup>[5]</sup>. The Chi-Chi earthquake is located in the transition zone between the low  $V_p$ , high  $V_p/V_s$  in the Taichung Basin and the high  $V_p$ , low  $V_p/V_s$  in the Western Foothills<sup>[29]</sup>, which is coincident with the Chelungpu fault where the Western Foothills thrust westward onto the Taichung Basin at a low angle<sup>[30,31]</sup>.

The earthquake activity reveals that the deformation due to the collision of Eurasian Plate and Philippine Sea Plate has already been transmitted to the west of Central Range<sup>[8]</sup>. In the area of Coastal Range and Luzon Arc, the high  $V_p/V_s$  (high Poisson ratio) signals and strong seismicity depict the fault system in the suture zone.

The  $V_p$  structure on profile C-C' (Figure 7(c)) reveals the northward subducting Philippine Sea Plate, which is consistent with the north dipping seismicity down to 80 km depth. The low  $V_p$  and moderate high  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies are also coincident with the characters of other subduction zones<sup>[22]</sup>. As a developing back-arc basin, the Ilan Plain in north Taiwan is under extension in NS direction<sup>[4]</sup>. With the increase of depth, the accretion wedge derived from the crustal materials of subducting slab is characterized by high  $V_p/V_s$  anomaly, due to the presence of fluids from dehydration and increase of pore pressure<sup>[22]</sup>. Near the area of Hualien and Ilan, the large number of earthquakes in the upper to middle-lower crust, the presence of  $M > 6$  normal-faulting earthquakes in the southwestern terminus of the Okinawa Trough off Ilan, the rapid subsidence of Ilan Plain, and the volcanic activities show the prominent tectonic activities of the back-arc basin in the northeast of Taiwan<sup>[4]</sup>.

### 3 Conclusions

Combining P and S arrival time observations, we constructed the tomographic images of the  $V_p$  and  $V_p/V_s$  structures in the crust and upper mantle beneath the

Taiwan area using the spherical finite difference tomographic technique, and relocated the earthquakes with grid search approach. Our image of the crust and upper mantle is consistent with those determined in previous studies. The thickness of crust has large variations from west to the east, and reaches its maximum of 60 km beneath the east of Central Range. The deficiency of correlation between Bouguer gravity and elevation suggests that the Taiwan area is not in isostatic equilibrium and the mountain building is still ongoing. The low  $V_p$  and high  $V_p/V_s$  in the western Coastal Plain is related to the thick sediments and the presence of fluids in the upper crust. The Longitudinal Valley is the suture zone of Eurasian Plate and Philippine Sea Plate, and is also characterized by high  $V_p/V_s$  and strong seismicity, which could be due to the fault system, partial melting, and

fluids incursion by the continent-arc collision. The configuration of the northward subducting Philippine Sea Plate along Ryukyu trench is very clear. The low  $V_p$  and high  $V_p/V_s$  anomalies near the Hualien and Ilan area could be due to the presence of fluids from dehydration of subducted slab and the increase of pore pressure, which is also coincident with the crustal structure with strong seismicity and volcanic activity.

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