

Map of study area

Description

Introduction and Rationale for investigation

The study area is situated in the Beishan Orogenic Complex and includes the Ordovician Gubaoquan eclogite. It is primarily composed of Mesozoic to Neoproterozoic igneous and sedimentary rocks, which underwent penetrative deformation and metamorphism to eclogite-facies conditions during the late Ordovician, early Silurian. During the same period, several major granitoid bodies were emplaced into the metamorphic sector. In addition, the area bears evidence for a major convergent event, the structure of the metamorphic tectonics is thoroughly understood, and the relation of the structures to metamorphism and igneous activity is poorly understood. The majority of the tectonic belt now has been mapped, which established nearly all the major tectonic units. In this paper, we describe the tectonic evolution of the Beishan Orogenic Complex, with a focus on the tectonic processes responsible for the uplift and exhumation of the eclogite. The area was mapped at 1:25,000 scale during two field seasons in 2018 and 2019. Previous mapping was conducted at a 1:50,000 scale, by the Gansu Bureau of Geology and Mineral Exploration and Development.

Geological units

The rocks of the Gubaoquan area were divided into numerous lithological units. These can broadly be divided into six different groupings, based on their age: Palaeozoic belt of highly deformed metamorphic rocks, three largely undeformed granitoid, one of Ordovician-Silurian age, one of Devonian age and one presumably of Carboniferous-Permian age, a cover comprised of Permian rhyolites and conglomerates, mafic dykes, presumably of Permian age, the mafic dykes and conglomerate are too small to feature a map. In addition, the area hosts a multitude of smaller Permian-Triassic felsic-mafic intrusions.

Metamorphic tectonics

The metamorphic tectonics consist of intercalated layers and lenses of orthogneiss, mafic schist and metasedimentary rocks. These can be sub-divided into two domain types: one primarily composed of metasedimentary rocks and metabasites, and one with primarily metabasites and orthogneiss. When felsic orthogneiss does occur within the latter, these usually occur in close association with metabasites and trondhjemites and are not megacrystic; if not obscured by younger intrusions, domain boundaries usually constitute shear zones.

The protoliths of the metasedimentary rocks were intruded by mafic dykes (mEfmsh), which together with their host were metamorphosed to garnet amphibolite. Some form coarse, banded-metre-thick packages, while in other intrusions, these can form metre-thick lenses within the metasedimentary rocks. The amphibolites often are associated with significant bodies of metatrolchite and tonalite. These are never megacrystic and usually do not show augen features, in contrast to the felsic augen gneisses found elsewhere. Solner et al. (2018) obtained a lower age cluster of 910.9±3.0 Ma and an upper one at 1378±15 Ma for an amphibolite adjacent to the eclogite. There is a possibility that the metabasites are composed of several suites of protoliths.

The orthogneiss intrudes all of the above units. They primarily have granitic (mEggn) to tonalitic (mEgntn) compositions and often are leucocratic. Some of the orthogneisses are megacrystic, with 515 cm leucocratic augen, whereas in other areas extensive shearing has completely recrystallized these or rocks bearing smaller orthogneiss fragments. An igneous U-Pb zircon age of 420±4 Ma has been interpreted as the protolith's emplacement age (Saitura et al., 2017). This age was obtained from a tonalite gneiss immediately south of the above units. An age of 667.5±1.9 Ma was obtained at another orthogneiss, close to the eclogite (Solner et al., 2019).

The eclogite (Ecl) is hosted within domain 1 and consists of one major and several smaller variably retrogressed, foliation-parallel screens. Towards the west of the major unit, the eclogite grades into smaller bodies. Towards the east, a trail of smaller lenses can be traced up to the southern boundary of the quartz-diorite. The structure of the tectonic belt, Eclogite-facies assemblages are prevalently preserved in the cores of lenses; the edges have usually been retrogressed to amphibolite, with a few smaller lenses having retrogressed completely. Abundant garnet within a green matrix occurs in the thin sections, the latter is the mafic schist. A mafic schist was found to contain cpx-plg symplectites that pseudomorph amphibole. Zircon (U-Pb) from the eclogite yielded 875-860 Ma for the cores, 465-460 Ma for the rims.

Ordovician - Silurian granitoid intrusions

Two major granitoids are part of this stage. The one in the south primarily consists of hornblende-biotite-titanite monzogranite, granodiorite and tonalite (OSltolmg), whilst the one in the north has a leucocratic and is a granodiorite to syenogranite (OSgdmg). OSgdmg intrusions also bear abundant orthogneiss. OSltolmg is a leucocratic quartz-diorite, with microcline (OSgt), leucogranite and trondhjemite (OSht). The south-western intrusion was dated at 442±4 Ma from U-Pb (Mao, 2006), whilst the middle one has ages of 442-43 (Mao, 2006) and 424-43 Ma (Mao et al., 2012).

Silurian - Devonian granitoid intrusions

The north of the mapping area is bound by a major belt that primarily consists of monzogranite with <5 cm alkali feldspar megacrysts (SDmg). Several smaller-grained bodies of leucogranite to leucogranite (SDlmg) and leucogranite to syenogranite (SDlmgtr) occur immediately south of a megacrystic granitic and syenogranite belt that yielded Devonian ages of 404.4±1.8 Ma and 418.5±4.4 Ma, respectively and have been interpreted as arc granitoids (Zhu et al., 2016).

Permian rhyolites and conglomerate

In a very small area, undeformed conglomerates occur. These are intruded by flow-banded rhyolites (Prhy), which also occur in the north-east of the area. The flow bands are internally folded into an irregular geometry, suggesting these are igneous flow features. The conglomerate (too small to feature on map) has clasts of pure quartz, pure leucite, gneiss, dolerite and granite. Unfortunately, the contact appears to have been structurally modified, but most likely these represent basal conglomerates. The conglomerate has not been described before but may be correlative to sedimentary units that non-conformably overlie the greenschist towards the east (Li et al., 2018). The same unit also describes several similar aged (282-242 Ma) rhyolites in the north-east.

Permian granitoid intrusion

This concerns one major intrusion located to the south-east of the Ordovician-Silurian intrusions. The primary unit is P'fkong, a biotite-hornblende tonalite to monzogranite, the unit locally grades into P'fmg, a biotite-hornblende monzogranite to syenogranite. It is bordered to the north by quartz-diorite, with the contact being a fault. The relationship currently is unclear. A leucocratic tonalite dyke (P'fkt) crosscuts P'fkong. This intrusion crosscuts Permian D6 faults and therefore is younger. No radiometric ages have been obtained on this intrusion.

Permian-Triassic mafic dykes

Many gabbroic (P'fkt) and doleritic dykes (too small to feature on map) crosscut the area. These range in size from a few centimetres to several metres. An extraordinary number of dykes is found in the south-west of the study area, where one can find anastomosing systems of one-to-two metre-wide doleritic dykes. Generally, these dykes trend NE-SW. The sharp, straight contacts with the country rock and absence of baked margins are indicative of relatively rapid cooling. The dolerites are subvolcanic, medium-grained and are consistently composed of clinopyroxene, plagioclase and a substantial volume of opaque minerals. The gabbros are similar in composition but coarsely-grained and contain chlorite, indicating low-temperature alteration. These dykes have a maximum age of 262±6 Ma, based on the youngest xenocryst zircon present (Zhang et al., 2015).

Minor Permian-Triassic mafic-intermediate intrusions

This comprises several smaller intrusions. As they occur across a large area, the exact crosscutting relationships between them commonly have not been constrained. P'fkgd is a km-long dyke of granodiorite, quartz-diorite and tonalite. Units P'fmb and P'fintc contain a complicated zone of felsic-mafic intrusions situated just south of the Devonian granitoid. P'fintc consists of rhyolite and tonalite, with minor medium-grained granitoid, leucogranite and syenite. Characteristic are their 11 cm alkali feldspar phenocrysts. The rhyolites are also found to bear chloritized mica and/or plagioclase phenocrysts. P'fmb consists of andesite, dolerite, dolerite, micro-diorite and rhyolites. These variably have plagioclase, quartz, chlorite, hornblende and/or alkali feldspar phenocrysts. Lastly, unit P'fkgd concerns dolerite, diorite and gabbro, which occasionally have undergone greenschist-facies metamorphism. Unit P'fkgd appears to be older than the Permian-Triassic intrusion. All other units crosscut D6 faults and therefore are younger. No radiometric ages have been obtained on any of these intrusions as of yet.

Structural architecture

The area underwent a complicated structural history. In total, six to seven generations were identified, based upon overprinting relationships orientation and/or metamorphic assemblage. D1-D3 have only been observed in the metamorphic tectonic belt, as they provide the emplacement or depositional age of the succeeding units. D1 fabrics have only been observed in the central belt, in both orthogneiss and orthogneiss, whilst D2 has only been preserved in fold hinges. Even though the D3 is commonly occurs in highly strained rocks and most of the area's shear zones were probably active during D3. Due to extensive refolding, S3 strikes and L3 plunges variably. In units mEfmsh, S3 comprises gabbroic and mylonitic textures, in the metasedimentary units comprises a schistosity or mylonitic texture. L3 consists of preferential mineral alignment and mineral / augen stretching lineations. F3 folds S2 and compositional layering and comprises tight to isoclinal, non-cylindrical and asymmetric.

D4 is observed in the metamorphic tectonic belt, whereas the Ordovician-Silurian intrusions frequently bear a foliation that is (sub)vertical to D4. Whilst one shear zone was folded by F4, others may have been active during D4. S4 is a conjugation cleavage to S3, which is regularly observed in F4 hinge areas. In Ordovician-Silurian igneous units, S4 consists of preferential mineral alignment and have steep, north-inclined, E-W striking axial planes and E-W trending hinge lines.

D5 structures primarily occur in the Luyuan ophiolite and within bounding areas of the metamorphic tectonic belt. S5 occurs as shallowly dipping, S-directed axial planes and shallowly plunging, NE-dipped hinge lines.

D6 faults crosscut nearly every unit, except the Permian-Triassic units mentioned in the lithology section. No S6 or L6 has been observed. In unit mEfmsh, F6 comprises box folds with N-S striking, sub-vertical axial planes and moderately N-plunging hinge lines. In other units, F6 consists of open, upright folds or crenulations with comparable axial plane orientations as the box folds, but variably N-S plunging hinge lines. These folds are particularly prominent near the southern boundary of the metamorphic belt and near major brittle faults.

D7, which comprises refolded D6 folds, have only been observed at a few localities in the metamorphic tectonic belt. D7 folds are recurrent, have moderately NW-SE striking axial planes and variably NW-plunging hinge lines. D6 has not been associated with any meso-scale structures.

Metamorphism

Metamorphism is consistently of amphibolite-grade throughout the metamorphic tectonic belt, with eclogite-facies conditions preserved in the small mafic bodies. In the north, metamorphism is restricted to the vicinity of faults and shear zones, where greenschist facies assemblages can be observed. In the metamorphic tectonics, multiple high-grade fabrics are preserved. M1 has only been preserved as folded inclusion trails in garnet and kyanite in meta-pelitic assemblages, which have not been studied yet. This fabric may be broadly similar to the eclogite. M2 has been preserved in fold hinges and is observed both in kyanite and in amphibole. S2 is associated with biotite, muscovite and quartz in unit mEfmsh, whilst kyanite has a sym- to post-kinematic relationship to S2. Overall, D2 is associated with amphibolite-facies conditions. In unit mEfmsh, S3 primarily consists of quartz, biotite and muscovite. Both staurolite and andalusite have in situ syn-tectonic relationships to S3. In unit mEfmsh, S3 predominantly consists of garnet, hornblende, quartz and plagioclase. These assemblages broadly represent garnet amphibolite-facies conditions. Whilst D4 fabrics are widespread, D4 is a D5 metamorphic assemblage has only been sporadically observed in this section. In unit mEfmsh, S4 consists of muscovite and quartz, reflecting greenschist to amphibolite-facies conditions. In unit mEfmsh, S5 is associated with chlorite and occasionally epidote and/or actinolite, representing greenschist-facies conditions.

Geochronology

Early garnet growth, interpreted as having started during prograde metamorphism, is thought to have been dated with garnet-whole rock-diluvionite Lu-Hf isochrones at ~451 Ma (Solner et al., 2020). Sm-Nd isochrones yielded ages of ~443 Ma, which have been interpreted as peak-metamorphism (Solner et al., 2020). D1 fabrics are thought to have formed approximately at this time. No clear age is available for D2, but based on the preceding and succeeding deformation ages, it would have occurred between ~453 and ~440 Ma. U-Pb dating of monzole cores in a metagabbro, thought to have grown approximately at the time of D3 deformation, yielded ~442-443 Ma (Solner et al., 2020). Based on the ~442-424 Ma U-Pb zircon ages of syn-tectonic granitoids and granitoids (Mao et al., 2008; Mao et al., 2012), U-Pb zircon rim ages of ~436 on a retrograde eclogite (this study) and U-Pb monzole ages of ~436-429 from a metagabbro (Solner et al., 2020), D4 deformation is approximately 420 to 442 Ma. As D5 fabrics are found in both the metamorphic tectonic belt and the Permian Luyuan ophiolite, D5 deformation has to be younger than ~288 Ma (Mao et al., 2013). As D6 faults crosscut the Luyuan ophiolite, the same applies to D6 and D7 deformation.

Tectonic setting

The metamorphic tectonic belt represents Mesozoic-Neoproterozoic crust that underwent Ordovician-Silurian continental subduction to various depths and collision-related tectonics, including detachment from the down-going slab and incorporation into an orogenic wedge. Continental subduction possibly continued until the emplacement of the syn-tectonic Ordovician-Silurian arc granitoids, which could be related to slab break-off. The Silurian-Devonian granitoid was emplaced shortly after this, but its tectonic setting is unknown. Most of the area was eventually partially exhumed in the Permian-Carboniferous, marked by the deposition of a basal conglomerate and (sub-)volcanic rhyolites. D5-D7 deformation most likely relates to Carboniferous-Permian convergence and the obduction of the Luyuan ophiolite, driven by subduction in oceanic domains extending to the south at that time (Mao et al., 2012).

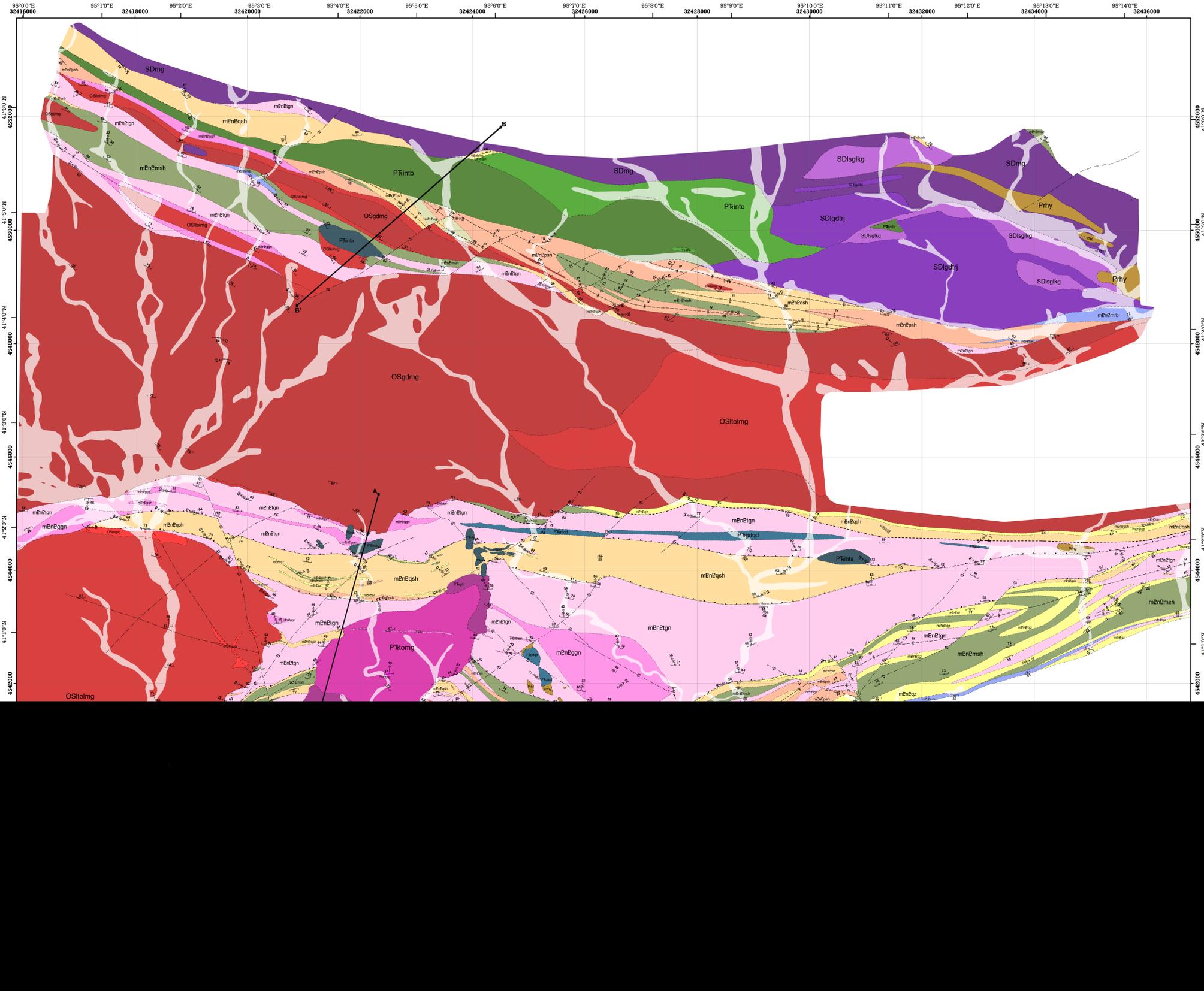
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Lithology

Triassic to Permian

- P'fintc**: Undifferentiated felsic intrusions. Complicated unit that predominantly consists of rhyolite and minor occurrences of monzogranite, micro-quartz monzogranite and syenite. Area also has many occurrences of SDlmgtr but these are undifferentiable at this scale. Characteristic are their 51 cm alkali feldspar phenocrysts, found in all units. The rhyolites are also found to bear chloritized mica and/or plagioclase phenocrysts. The rhyolites intrude into SDlmgtr and P'fmb. Not offset by D6.
- P'fintb**: Undifferentiated mafic-felsic (sub)volcanic intrusions. Includes andesites, dacites, dolerites, micro-diorites and occasionally rhyolites, which are undifferentiable at the scale. Amphibolite to fine-grained, pheroxytic. Variably have plagioclase, quartz, chlorite, hornblende and/or alkali feldspar phenocrysts. Has xenoliths of and intrudes into the SDlmgtr. Not offset by D6.
- P'fintd**: Undifferentiated mafic-intermediate intrusions. Includes several suites, which are not necessarily related. Lithologies include dolerite, gabbro and minor diorite. Usually dark gray to dark blue in colour. Notably, this unit may contain a substantial volume of opaque minerals. Some intrusions contain chlorite, indicating greenschist-facies metamorphism. Generally, the intrusions have a sharp contact with the country rock, no baked or chilled margins. In addition to the intrusions marked on the map, these units occur as one-to-two-metre-wide, NW-SW-trending dykes. These are too small to mark on the map but are most common in the south-west of the study area. Intrudes into SDlmgtr, P'fintmg and crosscuts D6 faults. Too geographically distant from P'fintb and P'fintc to assess their temporal relationship.
- P'fkt**: Leucocratic tonalite. Light grey, 50cm crystals, subhedral and equigranular. Often sericitized and chloritized. Has a slight preferential mineral alignment in places. Intrudes P'fmg.
- P'fmg**: Tonalite to syenogranite. Creamy white to light pink in colour. Generally coarse to medium-grained and subequigranular. Occasionally leucocratic. Variably has plagioclase and/or hornblende as mafic phases, which usually are pheroxytic. Commonly granodioritic in composition, locally grading into tonalite or monzogranite (P'fmgtr). A few distinct areas have syenogranitic to monzogranitic compositions (P'fmgtr), but the contact between P'fmg and P'fmgtr has not been observed in outcrop. Crosscuts D6 faults.
- P'fkd**: Quartz-diorite. Dark grey, with hornblende, plagioclase and occasionally clinopyroxene as mafic phases. Plagioclase grows interstitially. Usually equigranular with 51cm crystals, but occasionally contains 51cm hornblende phenocrysts. Unfolded. Borders P'fmgtr, but contact has not been observed in outcrop - intrusive relationship is currently unclear.
- P'fkgdtr**: Granodiorite to quartz-diorite. Grey-blue, diabasic texture, usually medium-grained. Includes granodiorite, tonalite and quartz-diorite. Sometimes has a weakly developed fracture cleavage. Both offset and crosscut by D6 faults, suggesting they are (sub-)cover. Intrudes into P'fmg, contains mEfmsh and mEfmsh xenoliths.

Permian

- Prhy**: Undifferentiated rhyolite. Includes several suites. Deep pink, light pink and light green in colour. Amphibolite bears minimal mafic minerals. May contain plagioclase, quartz (epidote) and/or plagioclase and/or pyrite phenocrysts. Phenoxytic commonly only 20-30 mm, occasionally 51 cm. Frequently has spherulitic textures (51 cm) and/or flow banding. Crosscuts several units, including SDlmgtr and D6 faults.

Silurian to Devonian

- SDlmg**: Leucogranite to leucogranite-alkali feldspar granite, light to dark pink. Coarse-grained (4-7 mm), variably subequigranular to unequigranular. A sharp contact exists between the two, but these are not differentiable at this scale. The syenogranite includes xenoliths of Kfs-granite. Occasionally contains (chloritized) muscovite or biotite. Intrudes SDmg.
- SDlmgtr**: Leucogranite to trondhjemite, pink-grey in appearance. Medium-grained (5-6mm), subequigranular. Usually a leucogranite, but occasionally grading into trondhjemite. Occasionally contains hornblende and/or plagioclase. The latter, however, has been subjected to chloritization. Feldspars have variably been sericitized as well. Intruded by SDlmgtr, intrudes SDmg.
- SDmg**: Megacrystic granite, unequigranular monzogranite with 55cm alkali feldspar megacrysts. Megacryst concentrations vary, from essentially zero to cumulate textures. Plagioclase and hornblende are the primary mafic phases. The phlogopite occasionally gets chloritized.

Ordovician to Silurian

- OSgb**: Gabbro to diorite, dark blue grey in colour, coarse, diabasic texture. Observed folding as a composite dyke along with OSltmg and has xenoliths of and. Elsewhere, it is found intruding as a composite dyke with OSht, which it also crosscuts. Of some (micro)gabbroic intrusions, it is unclear whether these belong to this unit or P'fintc.
- OSgt**: Trondhjemite to leucogranite, white to light pink. Coarse, occasionally pegmatitic. Dykes of this unit are common throughout the area but are too small to observe at this scale. Larger outcrops are commonly associated with D3-D4 fault/shear zones. May be lightly folded. Crosscuts OSltmg and P'fintc.
- OSmg**: Leucocratic tonalite to syenogranite light pink to white, coarse (5-6 mm) and unequigranular. Hornblende, phlogopite and titanite are the dominant mafic phases. Rarely contains muscovite. Compositionally a monzogranite, granodiorite and occasionally a tonalite (OSltmg). These appear to grade into each other, no megacryst contacts were observed. Furthermore, small areas grade into monzogranite to syenogranite (OSmgtr). Many of these occurrences are associated with D6 faults - potentially, these are the result of alteration, occasionally likely strongly folded. Generally, particularly near the intrusion boundary, intrudes OSgtmg.
- OSgdmg**: Granodiorite to monzogranite, speckled black-white in appearance. Coarse, unequigranular and acidic in nature. Contains 51cm zoned plagioclase phenocrysts. Hornblende, biotite and phlogopite are the dominant mafic phases. Primarily granodioritic in composition, with some tonalitic sections. Many sections are strongly foliated to gneissic.

Mesoproterozoic to Neoproterozoic

- mEcl**: Eclogite and retrogressed equivalents. Occurs as 500m pods, of which the cores frequently eclogite-facies textures. Green and/or relatively fresh areas, dark blue-black in more retrogressed sections. Usually rather coarse (5-6mm). The best retrogressed area predominantly consist of diaspore-white symplectites, garnet and rutile, whereas the most retrogressed areas consist of hornblende, plagioclase, quartz, biotite, and preserved remnants of higher-grade assemblages. Most likely had a basaltic or gabbroic protolith.
- mEfmsh**: Pink gneiss, white to pink. Can have 510 cm K-feldspar augen in the least strained parts, whereas in others these augen are smaller and/or are extensively stretched. Large sinistral quartz-plagioclase porphyroblasts are common, which sometimes bear subhedral hornblende inclusions. The interstitial areas primarily consist of biotite with quartz and plagioclase. Occasionally garnetiferous. Epidotization and chloritization is commonplace towards the south, whereas muscovitization is frequently observed in highly strained areas. Usually bears a gneissic texture, less so in areas with small mafic components. Frequently mylonitic. Most likely had (leucogranitic to granodioritic, occasionally Kfs-granitic) protoliths.
- mEfmsh**: Grey gneiss, white to light grey. May locally be pink, most likely due to potassic alteration. A yellow colour is common in lower lying areas, most likely due to alteration. As with the pink gneisses, these can contain 510 cm plagioclase augen. Interstitial areas primarily consist of quartz, plagioclase, biotite and hornblende. Regularly, these rocks will also contain white mica, primarily in highly strained parts. Occasionally garnetiferous. Commonly, these rocks will bear a well-developed gneissic texture, less so in areas with small mafic components. Frequently mylonitic. Most likely had trondhjemite, tonalite, granodioritic or occasionally quartz-diorite protoliths.

- mEfmsh**: Mafic schist, black, often appears to be a hornblende but generally contains 20% plagioclase. Can be very coarse (51 cm) or fine (2-10 mm), but usually 2-3mm crystal size. Primarily consists of dark brown to blue-green amphibole, sometimes with clinopyroxene or plagioclase inclusions. Frequently gneissiferous. Probably had (meta)gabbroic, (meta)dioritic, basaltic protoliths.
- mEfmsh**: Marble, creamy white, light ochre or grey; pervasively foliated and sometimes intensely sheared, ranges from nearly pure marble to calc-arenite.
- mEfmsh**: Metapelites, dark brown to grey-black; the schistosity is best developed in the most pelitic samples, owing to abundant biotite. Fairly coarse. Usually devoid of any indicator minerals that are visible to the eye but occasionally contains kyanite or garnet.
- mEfmsh**: Quartz schist, light grey to light brown; includes any meta-arenite but tends to be very quartz-rich (50%). Medium fine to coarse. Usually bears a composed pervasive foliation but lacks foliation in more quartzose occurrences. Generally devoid of any indicator minerals that are visible to the eye but contains garnet in some cases.
- mEfmsh**: Quartzite, white to light grey; massive to poorly foliated, nearly 100% quartz with only a small amount of brown or white mica; coarse and usually completely recrystallized, but some inherited grain shapes can be discerned in some cases.
- mEfmsh**: Metaconglomerates, relatively rare in the field and description is based on a small number of outcrops, predominantly in the very north of the mapping area. Light grey to light brown. Composed of variably sized clasts of quartz, quartzite, calcite, quartzite, leucocratic dolerite usually in a strongly foliated to mylonitic micaceous matrix.
- mEfmsh**: Shaded areas with no outcrop, extended areas of outcrop are shown in white.

Symbology

- Lithological contacts (defined or approximate, inferred) - - - - -
- Fault: thrust or reverse (defined or approximate, inferred) - - - - -
- Fold axial trace, approximate (anticline, syncline) - - - - -
- overturned anticline, overturned syncline) - - - - -
- Fold axial plane (F3-F7) - - - - -
- Fold hinge (F3-F7) - - - - -
- Foliation (S2-S4, Sen4) - - - - -
- Lineation (L3, L4, Len4) - - - - -

Bedrock geology
Gubaoquan area
 Gansu, China
 Projection: CGCS2000 3 Degree GK Zone 32
 1:25,000

Figure 27. 1:25,000 map of study area