

INTRODUCTION

The map portrays the geology of the southwestern part of the Schefferville (23J) sheet, an area of 6 700 km². A scale of 1:125 000 was chosen to represent both detailed (1:50 000) and regional (1: 250 000) levels of coverage, dictated by geological complexity. Parts of the area were mapped previously at reconnaissance scale by Frarey (1961) and Stevenson (1963); preliminary results of the present project were reported in Percival (1987) and Percival and Girard (1988).

The area is accessible from Schefferville, Quebec by float-equipped aircraft or by boat from Menihik Lake. Exposure is excellent to fair in this hilly terrain straddling the Quebec-Labrador border, defined by the height of land. Field seasons in 1986 and 1987 extended from early June to late August. Bedrock is of Archean age, part of the Ashuanipi complex of the Superior Province, and constitutes basement to the Kanapiaskau Supergroup of the Labrador Trough. Glacial deposits, covering about 15% of the region, are related to several ice flow advances (Klassen and Thompson, 1988).

GENERAL GEOLOGY

The Ashuanipi complex consists dominantly of high-grade gneissic and orthopyroxene-bearing granitoid rocks. An older unit of paragneiss with interlayered metatonalite forms an irregular, 25–75 km-wide, northwest-striking belt that is dismembered by homogeneous plutonic rocks of variable composition. Dips are generally to the northeast, with several prominent oval structural bands in the gneissic belt. Migmatitic rocks and small-scale orthopyroxene indicate uniformly high-grade metamorphic conditions.

A set of prominent, NNW-striking lineaments correspond to faults which offset the Ashuanipi-Kanapiaskau contact, suggesting a Proterozoic age for movement. The age of these with respect to northerly trending diabase dykes could not be established on the basis of field relations.

LITHOLOGY

Discrete lithological units were defined on the basis of composition, mineralogy, texture and structure. Two major groups are recognized on the basis of texture: an early gneissic group, comprising paragneiss and metatonalite; and a later homogeneous plutonic group, which includes both foliated and massive textural types.

Paragneiss generally is migmatitic, with 50–95% foliated schist component and 5–50% coarse-grained leucosome. Assemblages of garnet-orthopyroxene-biotite are ubiquitous, with rare cordierite and sillimanite. The unit is inferred to have sedimentary parentage on the basis of its composition, although protoliths could not be observed at only a few localities. Composition varies locally on the micro-scale, with orthopyroxene. Paragneiss occurs in elongate belts and as inclusions in all other rock types.

Metatonalite occurs both as thin (metres to tens of metres scale) sheets within paragneiss and as discrete, larger (km-scale) bodies. It is characterized by a distinctive spotted texture revealed by light-colored patches of ragged, irregular fusion-ridden orthopyroxene on the mm to cm scale. Similar textures occur in rare, associated two-pyroxene diorites. The patches are most obvious in the larger metatonalite bodies; in smaller bodies they are texturally degraded and replaced by biotite, in association with migmatitic textures. A second generation of orthopyroxene occurs as blocky grains and in leucosome. Garnet occurs locally as spodumene inclusions and as discrete grains in leucosome.

Leucosome, which may have an extensive oval map pattern, with inward dips of foliation in paragneiss and compositional layering (Nagerl, 1987). Strain intensity, judged by the shape of orthopyroxene patches, is low in these bodies relative to the surrounding gneisses. The conical shapes are interpreted as intrusive igneous features, preserved as a result of the dry state of the rock, which led to relatively competent behaviour during regional deformation and metamorphism.

Interlayered paragneiss and metatonalite consists of the above two units, layered on a scale that is too small to be represented at the present map scale.

Pyroxenite occurs as isolated pods on the m to km scale throughout the map area. These coarse-grained, massive rocks contain mainly olivoclastic pyroxene and large hornblende displays phase, often with probably developed during igneous fractionation (Morisset, 1988). The bodies range in thickness from 2–80 m and rarely extend along strike for more than 500 m. Igneous textures are generally preserved in the interiors, whereas the margins are ultramafic schists. Strings of pyroxenite pods in the northeastern part of the area outline the regional structure and probably represent boudinaged veins.

Gabbro represents a minor lithological component that occurs in association with pyroxenite in the northeastern part of the area. A dismembered gabbro sill with minor pyroxenite occurs in the MacPhaden River area, in association with abundant sulphides. Other small bodies comprise medium- to coarse-grained, massive to foliated, homogeneous to migmatitic, two-pyroxene-hornblende-plagioclase rocks.

It is a minor lithological component with several associations. It represents mafic end-members of both the metatonalite and quartz diorite suites which can be distinguished on the basis of textural linkages. Both types consist of orthopyroxene, clinopyroxene, plagioclase and biotite, with minor amounts of quartz and rare hornblende.

Diatexite (Brown, 1986) underlies most of the map area and constitutes the main part of the Ashuanipi complex to the west. In Brown's terminology, diatexites are high-grade anatexitic rocks without continuous migmatitic banding, possibly produced through complete fusion. Diatexites are coarse-grained to porphyritic granodiorites, with garnet or orthopyroxene crystals to 1 cm and feldspar "dents de cheval" to 3 cm. Two types of diatexite are recognized on the basis of mineralogy: garnet-bearing varieties, which also contain biotite, plagioclase, and orthopyroxene, and diatexites with biotite but no garnet. These types are further divided into homogeneous (>25% gneissic enclaves) and inhomogeneous (25–50% enclaves) map units. Diatexite bodies range in size from batholithic to concordant sills less than 1 km in width. They generally have sharp contacts against the enclosing gneisses, suggesting little or no reaction during the in-situ transformation. In general, orthopyroxene diatexites occur as discrete bodies within plutons of garnet-bearing diatexite.

Quartz diorite occurs in several irregular-shaped bodies north of Lac Deslions. These are coarse-grained, homogeneous, massive to foliated rocks consisting of orthopyroxene-biotite-plagioclase-quartz-clinopyroxene assemblages. Patches and discrete bodies of diatexite are common associates.

Tonality is homogeneous, medium- to coarse-grained and massive to foliated, consisting of orthopyroxene, biotite, plagioclase and quartz, with minor clinopyroxene and hornblende. It occurs in oval plutons up to 10 km in length.

Granodiorite occurs in small, widely-spaced plutons. It is generally a homogeneous, medium-grained, massive to weakly foliated rock containing up to 10% biotite and minor orthopyroxene.

Granite is widespread as small, leucocratic porphyritic dykes and irregular lenses on the km scale. In addition, several large plutons of massive granite are present. These contain more mafic constituents, chiefly clinopyroxene and biotite, than the smaller, more leucocratic biotite + garnet + orthopyroxene varieties.

Several small syenite bodies are made up of massive to weakly foliated leucocratic clinopyroxene-biotite rocks. These are minor, regionally simple and silica-saturated with respect to the distinctive nepheline-bearing varieties to the north (Fumerton and Barry, 1984).

A small number of diabase dykes of unknown age trend NW, N and NE. All less than 30 m wide, they are fresh, medium-grained dykes of probable tholeiitic composition, with well-developed chilled margins.

Units of the Kanapiaskau Supergroup overlie the Archean basement unconformably, although the basal contact is rarely exposed. According to Frarey (1961), a basal conglomeratic member of the Wishart Formation immediately overlies the Ashuanipi complex. This is overlain by the Sokoman and Ruth iron formations, including minor slate and chert, and the Menihik Formation consisting mainly of shale, slate and greywacke.

METAMORPHISM

Metamorphic orthopyroxene, diagnostic of regional granulite facies, occurs throughout the region in paragneiss and metatonalite, in association with garnet, biotite and K-feldspar. Similar assemblages characterize diatexite and some granite, and were probably crystallized in the igneous bodies during emplacement near peak metamorphic conditions. Cordierite and sillimanite are rare constituents of paragneiss. Based on the widespread coexistence of orthopyroxene + K-feldspar, quartz, the metamorphic temperature is estimated to have been greater than 750°C by comparison with the experimental results of Bohlen et al. (1983). Pressure estimates, based on microprobe analyses of garnet-orthopyroxene-plagioclase-quartz assemblages and Newton and Perkins' (1982) calibration of the equilibrium, are in the range 5–6.5 kb with no apparent systematic regional variation.

STRUCTURE

The most prominent map-scale structure is a NW-trending semi-coherent belt of paragneiss and metatonalite in the centre of the area, separating regions mainly underlain by diatexite. Within this belt, Fm. Mary (S_1) structures are rarely preserved, one example of sedimentary boudinage being observed. Metatonalite shows primary structures and textures in metatonalite and pyroxenite. The three cone-shaped oval structures in the Lac Bazil-Lac Deslions area are interpreted as inherited primary igneous forms.

At the outcrop scale, the most prominent structural element is an S_1 foliation of gneissosity defined by biotite orientation and migmatitic layering, with a steeply dipping axial foliation symbol. On the regional scale, S_1 strikes NW and dips moderately to steeply. Within the paragneiss-metatonalite belt and to the northeast, dips are generally to the northeast, whereas to the southwest, dips are widely variable.

D_1 structures are generally easterly plunging, mesoscopic to map-scale folds of the S_1 surface, with an axial planar foliation. Most of the folded S_1 axial lineations shown on the map refer to this set of structures. Reversals in plunge direction of D_1 folds may be related to a set of open F_1 folds with no other foliation. D_2 structures are generally to the northeast and on the northwest, dips are generally to the northwest, whereas to the southwest, dips are widely variable.

A set of late fractures and cataclasite zones, present in all rock types, is evident in prominent WNW valleys. Fractures are generally steep, with northwest strike and are locally folded with steeply-plunging axial lineations, indicating a ductile event. Pseudotachylite occurs sporadically in small quantities throughout the region.

GEOCHRONOLOGY

Several units with widespread distribution have been dated with U-Pb techniques, both in the Schefferville area and to the west, in the Lac Clairambault area (Mortensen and Percival, 1987). Detrital zircons from paragneiss have complex U-Pb patterns, revealed by ion probe analyses (J.C. Roddick, pers. comm., 1988), with ages of 3.4 to 2.7 Ga. Zircons in metatonalite are similarly complex, with probable ages of 2.7 to 2.75 Ga and an igneous population on c. 2.60 Ga (J.K. Mortensen and J.C. Roddick, unpublished data). Diatexites also have complex zircon populations that give probable crystallization ages of 2.67–2.68 Ga. Monazite from a late pegmatite gives a probable age of intrusion close to 2.65 Ga. Regionally, monazites have U-Pb ages between 2.68 and 2.63 Ga.

MINERAL POTENTIAL

The Ashuanipi complex hosts several active gold prospects north of the map area (Lapointe, 1986), where gold occurs in association with arsenopyrite in iron formation within paragneiss. Reconnaissance exploration for similar environments was carried out by Thomas and Butler (1987) and followed up by McConnell et al. (1987) and McConnell and Newman (1988). Gold anomalies on sulphide-bearing samples (locations indicated on map) indicate values ranging from near-background levels (2 ppb) to 1875 ppb. All samples come from the paragneiss-metatonalite belt and many are associated with contacts between these two rock types. Gabbro in the McPhaden River area commonly contains sulphide-rich patches, locally containing up to 15% gold. Pyroxenite, as well as Lac Bazil, are also associated with sulphides; they contain levels of platinum-group elements above background (Percival and Girard, 1988).

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INTRODUCTION

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GEOLOGIE GÉNÉRALE

Le complexe d'Ashuanipi comprend des roches gneissiques fortement métamorphisées et des roches granoïtiques à orthopyroxénites. Une unité plus ancienne de paragneiss intercalée souffre des pyroxénites okocristallines dont la taille atteint jusqu'à 2 cm; quelques grandes masses montrent un litage de phase, qui se serait probablement produit pendant le fractionnement igné (Morisset, 1988). L'épaisseur de ces masses varie de 2 à 80 m et elles s'étendent rarement le long de la direction sur plus de 500 m. Les structures ignées sont généralement conservées au sein de ces masses tandis que les marges sont recrystallisées sous forme de schistes ultrafins. Des trainées de masses lenticulaires de pyroxénite dans la partie nord-est de la région suivent la configuration de la structure régionale et représentent vraisemblablement des filons-couche boudinés.

Le gabro est un composant lithologique accessoire qui se présente avec de la pyroxénite dans la partie nord-est de la région. Un filon-couche boudiné de gabro et une petite quantité de pyroxénite, en compagnie de sulfures abondants, se manifestent dans la région de la rivière McPhaden. Quelques autres petites masses sont constituées de gabro massif à folié de texture homogène à migmatique, composé de deux pyroxénites, hornblende et plagioclase dont la taille des grains varie de moyenne à grossière.

L'ORTHOPOXYRÈNE MÉTAMORPHIQUE

L'orthopyroxène métamorphique, caractéristique du faciès régional des granulites, se manifeste partout dans la région dans le paragneiss et la métatonalite, en compagnie de la biotite et du feldspath potassique.

On retrouve de telles associations dans la diatexite et certains granites; elles se sont probablement formées dans ces unités ignées durant leur mise en place au moment où les conditions de métamorphisme étaient presque à leur maximum.

La cordierite et la sillimanite sont des rares composants du paragneiss. À cause de l'existence répandue de l'association orthopyroxène-feldspath potassique et quartz, on estime que la température métamorphique a dû dépasser 750°C suite à une comparaison faite avec les résultats expérimentaux de Bohlen et coll. (1983).

Les estimations de la pression, basées sur les analyses par microsonde des associations de grenat, d'orthopyroxène, de plagioclase et de biotite, avec une petite quantité de quartz et rarement de hornblende.

GÉOLOGIE STRUCTURALE

La pyroxénite se présente sous forme de masses lenticulaires isolées, d'échelle métrique à kilométrique, partout dans la région. Ces roches massives à graine grossière contiennent souvent des pyroxénites okocristallines dont la taille atteint jusqu'à