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# SHEET INTRUSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE REYKJADALUR VOLCANO, WESTERN ICELAND; STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION

By

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The sheet swarm of the Tertiary Reykjadalur volcano comprises a large number of inclined sheets associated with the central part of the volcanic edifice. These inclined sheets show a large variation in dip and strike. They occur as two lithological groups of aphyric and porphyritic tholeiites. Regional dykes, formed in the now extinct rift zones outside the volcanic edifice, are thicker and dip more steeply than the inclined sheets. Seventy samples of inclined sheets and regional dykes were analyzed for main and trace elements and show that the sheet intrusions are mainly tholeiites but a few ol-tholeiites and icelandites occur. The most evolved inclined sheets are found in the central part of the caldera associated with the volcano, whereas the most primitive sheets are found along the caldera margin. Although inclined sheets and dykes are somewhat different in lithology, it is not possible to chemically distinguish between inclined sheets and regional dykes with standard XRF methods of main and trace elements.

# **CONTENTS**



#### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this report is to present the most important structural and chemical data on the sheet intrusions in the Reykjadalur volcano and surrounding areas, in addition to those reported in Gautneb<sup>1</sup>.

The investigation was made during six weeks field work in the summer of 1988. Around 500 dykes and sheets were studied, 45 thin sections were made and 60 whole rock chemical analyses was performed. The chemical analyses was made in order to obtain data to test whether there was chemical difference between sheet intrusions inside and outside the Reykjadalur volcano.

# GEOLOGICAL SETTING

The Reykjadalur area is situated about 90 km north of Reykjavik in a Tertiary lava pile (Fig. **1) •** Most of the investigated area is easily accessible from the main roads along Nordurdalur<sup>2</sup> and Midhdalir. The area offers good outcrops along numerous river and stream sections. It is, however, difficult to cross most rivers since the currents are strong and the water depth normally exceeds 0.5 m. The valley sides are mostly covered with scree or peat and offer poor exposures.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Gautneb H. 1989 The structure of the Reykjadalur sheet swarm, MS submitted to Tectonophysics.<br><sup>2</sup>The reader is referred to t

The reader is referred to the topographic maps Laxardalur and Nordurdalur 1:100000 (Iceland Geodetic Survey) for location of place names.

The Reykjadalur area was investigated by Johannesson<sup>3</sup> who described the general structure and petrochemistry of alldescribed the general structural and petrochemistry of all extrusive and intrusive rocks, as well as observing faults and geothermal springs. According to Johannesson $3$  the main geological units are the following:

- 1) A 12-13 Ma old basement of flood basalts, tilted and faulted.
- 2) The 7 Ma old Hredavatn sedimentary horizon. This horizon is situated unconformably on the underlying basement.
- <sup>3</sup> ) Hallarmuli central volcano which was active form 6.7-7.0 Ma ago and contains ignimbrites, intermediate rocks and thin tholeiitic lava flows. This is a rather small central volcano which did not develop the structural and chemical features characteristic of larger mature central volcanoes.
- 4) Reykjadalur central volcano, active from about 6.0 to 4.0 Ma. It is situated unconformably on the Hallarmuli volcano. This volcano has the following series of extrusives:
	- a) Thick layered serie consisting of tholeiitic to icelanditic lava flows.

<sup>3</sup>Johannesson H. 1975 Structure and petrochemistry of the Reykjadalur central volcano and surrounding areas, midwest Iceland. Ph.D thesis, University, of Durham 273pp.

- b) The main phase of differentiated extrusives, mainly intermediate to acid lavas.
- c) Thin layered series of mainly tholeiitic composition.
- d) The caldera in-fill.

A collapse caldera, 10 km in diameter and with vertical displacement in excess of 800 m, occupies the central part of the volcano. Before the Reykjadalur volcano became extinct the whole area was covered with a icecap 4.3-4.4 Ma ago and the Holthavorduheidi sedimentary horizon was deposited.

In the volcano the following intrusions occur:

- a) Basaltic to rhyolitic dykes
- b) Basaltic to rhyolitic inclined sheets
- c) Gabbroic to rhyolitic plugs and stocks

Based on the methods of Walker<sup>4</sup> the maximum level of erosion is about 1000 m. The highest mountain peaks are about hundred meters below the initial lava pile.

# Fault activity

The faults are closely associated with the sheet and dyke intrusions. According to Johannesson<sup>5</sup> the faults can be divided

<sup>4</sup>walker G.P.L. 1960. Zeolite zones and dyke distribution in relation of the structure of Eastern Iceland. J. Geol. 68, 518-528.<br><sup>5</sup>Johannesson H. 1975 Structure and petrochemistry of the

Reykjadalur central volcano and surrounding areas, midwest Iceland. Ph.D. thesis Univ. Durham 273pp.

#### into the following groups:

### 1. NE-SW faults

These occur only in the area south of the Reykjadalur volcano. Few faults occur in the southeastern part of the area, but they are abundant in the Grothals area and in the western part of Nordurdalur. The trend changes from NE-SW to ENE-WSW northwards along the Grothals ridge. Most faults dissect the lavas at right angles, indicating that the faulting took place prior to the tilting of the lavas.

# 2. N-S faults

These faults are the only ones found north of the Reykjadalur volcano, but on the southern side of the volcano the faults can be followed as far as to Thverarhlid. These faults cut the Reykjadalur central volcano.

# 3. NW-SE faults

Faults of this trend occur in small number in the southernmost part of the area.

Fig.1

Fig. 1 Simplified map of the investigated area. A to F are localities of regional dykes. 1 to 7 are localities of inclined sheets. Inset: 1 Neovolcanic zone, 2 Plio- Pleistocene rocks, 3 Tertiary rocks.



#### **METHODS**

#### Terminology

Here the term inclined sheet is used for sheets associated with the central volcano. The term regional dyke or dyke is used for sheets occurring outside the central volcano i.e., more than ten kilometres from the caldera margin. The term sheet is used when no distinction is made between inclined sheets and regional dykes.

# Field measurements

The sheet intrusions were studied systematically and the following parameters were recorded for each possible): sheet (where

- 1. Strike and dip
- **2.** Thickness
- 3. Lithology
- 4. Type of host rock
- 5. Vesicles and amygdales in the sheet
- 6. Vesicles and amygdales in the host rock
- 7. Alteration of the sheet and the host rock
- 8. Number and form of columnar rows in the host rock
- 9. Form of sheet (e.g. matching features on the sheet walls)
- 10. Lithology and abundance of xenoliths
- 11. Crosscutting relationships

12. Other features (e.g. flow-lines, chilled margin and other internal sheet structures)

It was not possible to measure all these parameters in each locality, but the first four were always recorded.

# Analytical methods

A representative selection of sheets from different localities and with different lithologies was collected for chemical analysis. The samples were rushed to -150 mesh in a tungsten-carbide ballmill. 9.0 g rock powder was mixed with 9.0 ml moviol glue. This mixture was pressed to tablets with 10 tons pressure in 30 s. Then the tablets were dried at 60<sup>0</sup> C for 2 hours. These tablets weres analysed with the analytical facilities at the department of geology of the University of Bergen, Norway, on an automatic Phillips 1450 XRF with full mass-absorption correction for all elements. Seventen international standards were used for calibration. International standards were also analysed as unknown for instrument stability check. This analytical procedure took much less time than would have been needed for similar work using the present analytical facilities at N.V.I. The chemical analyses are listen in Table 3.

#### DESCRIPTION

#### Field observation

The sheets were studied in the river and stream traverses shown in Fig. 1. A distinction was made between inclined sheets associated with the volcano (station 1 to 7 in Fig. 1), and regional dykes (stations A to F in Fig. 1) far outside the volcano.

#### Lithological variation

Broadly the sheets can be grouped into porphyritic and aphyric basalts. Most sheets are fine grained to very finegrained. The porphyritic sheets contain mainly lath-shaped plagioclase phenocrysts, but in addition phenocrysts of clinopyroxene occur in some sheets. The plagioclase phenocrysts are up to 3 cm long and comprise almost 50% of the volume of the rock. They are mainly confined to the caldera and decrease in abundance with distance from the caldera. The porphyritic sheets comprise slightly above 30% of the total number of sheets but are mainly confined to the caldera.

Within the caldera the sheet swarm contains an enormous number of crosscutting sheets (Fig. 2), but it has not been possible to distinguish between subsets of dominant trends and relative age. The dominating directions are shown in Fig. 1.

The regional dykes, which occur outside the caldera are normally aphyric, relatively thick, steeply dipping, and intrude perpendicular to the dip of the lavas. The regional dykes show well developed columnar rows, often in several sets, developed perpendicular to the dyke walls (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2 Crosscutting inclined sheets at locality 2 in Fig. 1. The sheets occur in complex crosscutting relationships<br>with no age dependent dependent preferred strike.

# **Petrography**

Many thinsections were made for general classification and alteration studies of the sheets. The typical ophitic (dolerite) texture is most common with intergrowths of plagioclase and clinopyroxene, and clinopyroxene as the dominant chadacryst. The plagioclase is usually lath- or needle-shaped and sometimes arranged in glomerophyritic aggregates together with clinopyroxene. The plagioclase commonly shows undulatory zoning. The plagioclase phenocrysts in the porphyritic sheets are commonly poikilitic with inclusions of earlier formed plagioclase, clinopyroxene and opaques. The opaque minerals often occurs in particular zones in the plagioclase oikocrysts.

The degree of alteration is high for many of the sheets, is seen by desintegration of the plagioclase to epidote, calsite and zeolites and the alteration of clinopyroxene to chlorite and opaques. Very high degree of alteration is characterized by complete obliteration of the primary textures and appearance of considerable amount of secondary pyrite.

Most regional dykes are less altered than the inclined sheets at the caldera centre, but many dykes contain small cavities filled with secondary amygdale minerals.



Fig. 3 Typical regional dyke columnar rows<br>to the dyke perpendicular wall.

RESULTS

Structural data

Regional dykes

A total 88 regional dykes were measured. The average dip and thickness for the different stations is as follows (Table 1). The average dip of the regional dykes is 81<sup>0</sup> and the average thickness is 3.2 m. The dip and thickness distributions are shown in Fig 4. The lowest average dip and thickness were observed at station c, which is partly due to occurrence of several inclined sheets at this locality.

Table 1 Statistical results for the regional dykes.



Fig. 4 Thickness and dip distribution of regional dykes.<br>Note that the distributions are very different from those of the inclined sheets (Fig. 5).



Inclined sheets

A total of 368 inclined sheets gave following dip and thickness variations at the seven stations. The average value for all cone sheets is 45<sup>0</sup> for dip and 1.0 m for thickness. Histograms of dip and thickness are shown in Fig. 5

Table 2. Statistical results for the inclined sheets.



Fig. 5 Thickness and dip distribution of inclined sheets. The average dip is about  $45^{\circ}$ .



Dip (degrees)

Discussion of dip, strike and thickness variations

The variation in dip, strike and thickness of the inclined sheets and regional dykes is discussed in detail by Gautneb<sup>1</sup>. For the sake of completeness the most summarized here. important results are

The regional dykes are steeply dipping. The deviation from the vertical can often be attributed to subsequent tilting of the associated lavas. The strike follows the orientation parallel to the extinct volcanic zones. The average thickness of the dykes exceeds that of the inclined sheets by about 2 m.

The inclined sheets show large variation thickness. The dip variation reflects changes in dip and in the stress field during growth of the shallow magma chamber and variation in dimensions of the magma chamber with time (Gautneb  $et al.^2$ ). The average dip decreases with distance from the caldera centre.

# Chemical data

Regional dykes

The regional dykes consists mainly of qz-tholeiites (Fig. 5). One sample classifies as Fe-Ti basalt and two samples as intermediate basaltic-andesites. The regional dykes have a fairly

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Gautneb H. 1989. Structure of the Reykjadalur sheet swarm. MS submitted to Tectonophysics<br><sup>2</sup>Gautneb Het Cudmundsson A Gautneb H., Gudmundsson A., Oskarsson N. 1989. Structure,

petrochemistry and evolution of a sheet swarm in an Icelandic central volcano. Geological Magazine (in press).

uniform composition. Most regional dykes are qz-normative, only two samples contain 2-4% normative olivine, other samples contain 1-9% normative quartz (Table 4).

The trends show a some scatter (Fig. 7) particularly the alkalis (Na<sub>2</sub>O and K<sub>2</sub>O) which show large scatter. There is an increase in CaO, V, Cr, Ni, and Cu with increasing MgO/Fe<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>t and decrease in Na<sub>2</sub>O, K<sub>2</sub>O, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, Sr, Y, Zr, Nb, Ba, Ce, Nd, and La. Other elements show a random distribution. These trends show increase in incompatible and decrease in compatible elements with evolution. Plagioclase and clinopyroxene fractionation seems to be responsible for most of the variation, with some frationation of magnetite and ilmenite in the most highly evolved samples.

The most primitive regional dyke (sample Dll, Table **3)** is 4.90 m thick, stands vertically and consists of little altered aphyric basalt at station A. The most evolved dyke basalt (sample D27a, Table **3)** is a 0.90 m thick and consists of aphyric (station B). There is no indication of any close chemical resemblance between nearby dykes. For instance, dykes D27a and D 27b are separated by not more than five metres of host basalts but have a difference in MgO of **4** wt%, and very distinct differences in all other elements as well. This indicates that these dykes were formed by very different magmas, probably widely separated in time. If these compositional differences of samples D27a and D27b are representative for other regional dykes they would suggest that individual dykes in a cluster were generated under similar stress conditions but by different source magmas.

Fig. 6 MgO/(MgO+FeOt)\*100 versus  $TiO<sub>2</sub>$  for the regional dykes.<br>Most dykes have composition similar to qz-tholeiite.





Fig. 7 Composition of regional dykes. MgO/Fe203t\*100 versus most other elements.



Mg0/Fe203t







### Inclined sheets

The inclined sheets show a greater compositional spread than the regional dykes. The sheets consist mainly of qz-tholeiites, but in Fig. 8 one individual sheet classifies as ol-tholeiite, one as rhyolite and four sheet as Fe-Ti basalts. Of the 45 analysed sheets, 20 are olivine normative, and of these 5 have more than 10% normative olivine. The trends show generally a large scatter, in particular the porphyritic sheets which have a considerably higher $\mathrm{Al}_2\mathrm{O}_3$  content-than-the aphyric-sheets. The large scatter indicates that there was a great variation in the composition of the source magma, which by all probability was followed by a very inhomogeneous alteration. There is an increase in CaO,  $\,$  Ni, and V, with increasing MgO/Fe $_2$ O $_3$ t $\,$  (Fig. 9) and decrease in TiO<sub>2</sub>, Na<sub>2</sub>O, K<sub>2</sub>O, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>, Rb, Y, Zr, Ce, Ba, Nd, and La. Other elements vary randomly. The inclined sheets show the same increase in incompatible elements and decrease in compatible elements, with evolution as the regional dykes. The most primitive inclined sheets (samples 407, 409, 401, sp413, Table 3) occur at stations 2 and 3 in the eastern part of the caldera. Conversely, the most evolved sheets (samples d41, 416, 417, 128) occur in the central part of caldera. Other sheets show no relationship between composition and location. It is not possible to distinguish chemically between other subgroups of sheets.

Fig. 8 MgO/(MgO+FeOt) \* 100 versus  $TiO<sub>2</sub>$  for the inclined sheets.<br>Most sheets are qz-tholeiites, but Fe-Ti basalts and rhyolite are also present.



Ti02



Fig. 9 Composition of the inclined sheets.

Fig. 9 continued











# Chemical comparison of regional dykes and inclined sheets.

Inclined sheets and regional dykes show the same chemical trends. The scatter, however, is considerably larger for the inclined sheets, which may partly be related to greater alteration and a larger variation in the sheet source magma. There is no significant chemical difference between the inclined sheets and the regional dykes.

The regional dykes were probably derived from a deep-seated magma reservoir beneath the volcanic system of which the Reykjadalur central volcano was a part. Intuitively one might expect the regional dykes to be more primitive than the inclined sheets, because the latter were mainly derived from a shallow magma chamber which may be expected to contain more evolved magmas. One would thus also expect a greater variability in the chemistry of the inclined sheets because of replenishment in the shallow magma chamber.

There are several possible explanations for the observed lack of chemical difference between dykes and inclined sheets.

- 1. Some regional dykes may have been laterally injected from the shallow magma chamber.
- 2. The magma in the deep-seated magma reservoir undergoes fractionation and crustal contamination that may be on the same scale as in the shallow magma chamber so that the composition of magmas in the deepseated reservoir was similar to that of magmas in the shallow magma chamber.

3. The composition of the shallow chamber magmas might also be more diverse due to multiple injections of primary magmas, accompanied by fractionation and crustal contamination. Thus the overall chemical composition of inclined sheets may become indistinguishable from that of the regional dykes.

Isotope and REE analysis are probaly necessary to find any distinct difference between source magmas of the regional dykes and inclined sheets.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report describes the structure, lithology and chemistry of sheet intrusions of the Reykjadalur central volcano and surrounding areas. Based on lithology and structural differences, the intrusions are divided into regional dykes and inclined sheets. The main results can be summarised as follows: The regional dykes occur as steeply-dipping, relatively thick (3.5 m average) intrusions. They are on average about 1%c of the total rock. The inclined sheets show larger variation in dip and are, on average, about 1.0 m thick. They occur in two contrasting lithological �ypes, aphyric and porphyritic, respectively. The porphyritic sheets comprise about 30 % of the sheets.

Chemical analyses show that the regional dykes are mainly qz-tholeiities, with some Fe-Ti basalts and basaltic andesites. The compositional variation of the inclined sheets is greater than of the regional dykes. Most are qz-tholeiites but ol-tholeiites and rhyolites are also present.

comparison of inclined sheets and regional dykes shows that there is no statistically significant difference in the chemistry of inclined sheets and regional dykes.

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Table 4 Normative composition of sheets and dykes calculated with fixed Fe203/Fe0 ratio of 0.15