by Avtandil V. Okrostsvardze and Daniel R. Tormey

Phanerozoic continental crust evolution of the Inner Caucasian Microplate: The Dzirula massif

1 Institute of Earth Sciences at the Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. E-mail:Okrostsvari@gmail.com
2 Cardno ENTRIX, Los-Angeles, USA.

Introduction

The Neoproterozoic marks the onset of modern plate tectonic systems (Stern, 2008), and as such the crust-forming processes preserved from the Pan-African evolution of Gondwana records this critical time period. The early tectonic history is frequently overprinted by younger events, but some of these areas are exposed in basement uplifts within the Alpine orogenic belt. The Dzirula massif in the central part of the Inner Caucasian Microplate in the Republic of Georgia is one of these windows. It exposes pre-Alpine basement, and contains a wide range of granitoids of different pre-Alpine ages. Geochemical and geochronological data provided in this paper helps shed light on crust-forming processes and geodynamics in this critical age range.

Most continental crust was formed from mantle-derived magma before Late Proterozoic, and most intensively in the interval of 3.2-2.5 Ba (Taylor and McLennan, 1985) when the earth’s crust was divided into granulite-basic and granulite-gneissic. Crust formation at the end of Proterozoic and the Phanerozoic occurred as a result of lithospheric thickening, and granite-forming processes were localized at subduction zones. Here the continental crust was formed as a result of lateral and vertical accretion of island arc complexes at active continental margins or by mantle-derived magmatic additions. The application of integrated isotopic studies of Nd, Sr, and Ar isotope systematics in the North American Cordillera (Allegre, Ben Othman, 1980; DePaolo, 1981; DePaolo et al., 1991; Samson and Patchett, 1991) in Lachland orogen in the Eastern Australia (Collins, 1998); in Meguma lithotectonic zone in the NE Canada (Clarke et al., 1992); in central Asia (Jahn et al., 2000); in the Shyok-Darbuk corridor of NE Ladakh, in India (Daga et al., 2010) have largely supported this view of crustal formation.

The Pre-Alpine consolidation Dzirula massif is a good example of Phanerozoic lithospheric thickening and continental crustal formation. It is located in the North side of the Caucasus Orogen and represents a complicated and the widest outcropped part of the Pre-Alpine crystalline basement. As a result of the collision and of generation new magmatic centers Neoproterozoic granite-migmatite complex and ophiolites, Cambrian tonalites, Late Paleozoic microcline granites and Triassic orthoclase gabbros (ricohites) were gathered within the borders of the Dzirula massif. In the pre-Cambrian crystalline schist structure and as well as in composition of Phanerozoic magammites reflects the whole deformation and the new magmatic center generation processes. The significant part of the regional geological events, starting from the Neoproterozoic up to Alpine, it is clear that in the structure and composition of this massif is encoded. It therefore Dzirula massif represents an important object for investigation of Proterozoic to Phanerozoic continental crust evolution. Although well-mapped, there are few isotopic or geological studies of the area (Okrostsvardze and Clarke, 2003, 2004; Zakariadze et al., 1998). We use these geochemical constraints to further constrain the geodynamic and continental crust-forming processes in this area.

Tectonic setting

The Caucasus represents the Northern segment of the Eastern Mediterranean orogen, which is expended over 1200 km between the Black and Caspian Seas, at the NW-SE direction. Currently it is an expression of continental collision between the Arabian and Eurasian lithospheric plates and its location represents the connecting segment between the Alpine and Himalayan mobile belts. Three major unites are distinguished Structurally in the Caucasian Construction: the
Greater and Lesser Caucasian mobile belts and the Inner Caucasian Microplate.

Paleomagnetic and palaeochemical as well as geological data indicate that within the oceanic area of Tethys, which separated Afro-Arabian and Eurasian continental plates, there were relatively small continental or subcontinental plates (terranes) having various geodynamic and geological histories (Gamkrelidze, 1997; Stampfl et al., 2002). During the Late Precambrian, Paleozoic and Early Mesozoic, these terranes underwent horizontal displacement within the oceanic area of Proto-Paleo- and Meso-Tethys, followed by accretion and ultimately merging with the Eurasian continent. The Arabian and Eurasian lithospheric plates are separated by the Greater Caucasian, Black Sea-Central Transcaucasian, Baibut-Sevanian (Lesser Caucasian) and Iran-Afghan terranes (Gamkrelidze, 1997), which in the geological past represented island arcs or microcontinents (Figure 1). The Black Sea-Central Transcaucasian terrane now is situated between the Greater and Lesser Caucasian mobile belts and we consider it as the Inner Caucasian Microplate.

Grenvilian regional metamorphism. The wrinkled restites of these rocks, the size of which ranges between one to tens of meters, are found in the Neoproterozoic quartz-dioritic gneisses. Most are represented by metapelites, which underwent regional metamorphism to biotite-muscovite-gneiss, biotite-sillimanite-orthoclase and low-temperature garnet-cordierite-orthoclase facies (Gamkrelidze, Shengelia, 2005).

In the Cambrian, during Pan-African tectonic-thermal events, several tonalite composition bodies were generated in the gneiss-migmatite complex. Later, in the Upper Paleozoic Variscan tectonic-thermal events, numerous intrusions of microcline granites were emplaced, and most of the gneiss-migmatite complex transformed into granite-gneisses, granite-migmatites and porphyroblastic microcline granites.

The northeastern part of the Dzirula massif contains Neoproterozoic ophiolite fragments, and is known as the Chorchana-Utslevi Ophiolitic Zone (Gamkrelidze et al., 1981). The ophiolites are spatially related to the gneiss-migmatite complex, and are cut by the Upper Paleozoic microcline granites. A detailed study of this unit (Zakariadze et al., 1998) identified ultra-basic harzburgites that represent melting restites of tholeitic basalt; their Nd model age corresponds to 810±100 Ma. Later study indicated that not only the Chorchana-Utslevi ophiolitic zone overthrust, but the whole gneiss-migmatite complex overlies it in the Dzirula massif (Okrostsvaridze, Shengelia, 1996; Shengelia, Okrostsvaridze, 1998).

Field relations and granitoid petrography

The majority of the gneiss-migmatite complex of the Dzirula massif is constructed of quartz-dioritic gneisses (~70%). They are dark gray, medium grained rocks, with occasional plagioclase phenocrysts (4-5 mm). Mineral composition includes plagioclase, biotite, quartz, hornblende; secondary minerals include K-feldspar, muscovite, chlorite and epidote; accessory minerals include apatite, zircon, thorite and ore minerals. Quartz-dioritic gneisses are characterized by numerous oval inclusions of gabbro to diorite composition. Inclusions range between tens of centimeters to one meter and in some cases make 30-35% of the entire exposure. We consider that the xenoliths represent the restites of basic injections, which made ensialic protolith assimilation and hybridism.
Cambrian tonalities largest exposures are in the Macharula and Kvirila river gorges where they are exposed over a distance of 800 m. In both sections several tonalite bodies intruded the gneiss-migmatite complex. The host rock undergoes selective melting and migmatization at the contacts, and biotite gneisses and migmatite inclusions are found in the tonalite intrusive bodies. Late Variscan quartz-muscovite-microcline aplite and pegmatite veins cut each of these features. The mineral assemblage of unchanged tonalites consists of plagioclases (oligoclase) biotite, quartz, and K-feldspar. Accessory minerals include apatite, zircon, thorite and Fe-Ti oxides. As a result of field and petrographic observation we find that tonalities may be the product of anatetic melting of biotite gneisses of the gneiss-migmatite complex.

Upper Paleozoic microcline granites are widely spread in the Dzirula outcrop and represent the product of the Variscan tectonic-thermal events. The gneiss-migmatite complex is saturated with numerous intrusions of these granites. In the northern part of the Dzirula massif, the largest of these granites is exposed; the Rkvia numerous intrusions of these granites. In the thermal events. The gneiss-migmatite complex is saturated with Dzirula outcrop and represent the product of the Variscan tectonic-

petrographic observation we find that tonalities may be the product of unchanged tonalites consists of plagioclases (oligoclase) biotite, quartz, and K-feldspar. Accessory minerals include apatite, zircon, thorite and Fe-Ti oxides. As a result of field and petrographic observation we find that tonalities may be the product of anatetic melting of biotite gneisses of the gneiss-migmatite complex.

In the eastern part of the Dzirula massif, in the Rikoti river gorge, two small intrusives (thickness - 450 m and 250 m) of orthoclase gabbro are presented, which cross cut quartz-dioritic gneisses. Due to their exotic character the investigators called them the rikotites. Their contact zones are intricate because of Alpine tectonic processes, but partial melting products are detected in the approximately 2-meter wide contact zone. Inclusions of 10cm to 50cm diameters ellipsoid leucocratic quartz-orthoclase are characteristic of rikotites, the number of which decreases from the periphery to the centre. The inclusions are gradually displaced by orthoclase gabbros. Following the field work results, we assume that these acid rocks inclusions are xenoliths – the product of selection melting which were abducted by the intrusive on its way of moving. We relate gabbros magma enrichment by orthoclase and quartz to these processes.

### Geochemistry and geochronology

Seveny samples of the Dzirula massif granitoids were collected for complex isotopic research. Major element, trace and rare earth element composition have been analyzed. Based on the petrographic and geochemical work, a subset of twenty four samples were analyzed for Sm-Nd, Rb-Sr and 40Ar-39Ar isotopic systematics. Sm-Nd and Rb-Sr investigations were carried out at the University of California at Berkeley Isotopic Research Centre. 40Ar-39Ar and major, trace and rare earth element composition determination was done at the laboratories of Dalhousie University (Canada).

Neoproterozoic quartz-dioritic gneisses have an average SiO₂ content of 64.08%, with relatively high Al₂O₃ (17.86%) (Table 1). In these rocks Na₂O (4.16%) is higher than K₂O (2.64%) and K₂O/Na₂O=0.64. Quartz-diorite gneisses are metamorphous rocks (Clarke, 1992) and according to A/NCNK parameter (1.07) they are I-type (Chappel, White, 1974) or H-type (Castro et al., 1991) granitoids. The D₁-D₂ discrimination diagram (Figure 3) is consistent, indicating an I-type. REE concentration in quartz-diorite gneisses is relatively low. The trend has weak asymmetry and no expressed Eu negative anomaly (Okrostsvardize, Clarke, 2003), which shows that in quartz-dioritic gneisses magma did not undergo significant fractional crystallization. In quartz-dioritic gneisses Iₚ parameter is quite relatively constant at 0.7044; this low value suggests a mantle source for these rocks (Table 2). In these rocks eNd parameter varies from –1.76803 to –2.19501. This shows that they were formed from the protolith which had comparatively low Sm/Nd parameters relative to chondrite. The Sm-Nd model age did not show reliable results (2376±600 Ma) (Table 3), but these results suggest that the protolith may have been middle Proterozoic formations. More reliable results were reached by Rb-Sr system, which corresponds to 686±74 Ma.

### Table 1. Chemical composition (%) and some petrochemical parameters of the Dzirula massif granitoids and orthoclase gabbros (rikotites)

| Sample | SiO₂   | TiO₂ | Al₂O₃ | Fe₂O₃ | MnO | MgO | CaO | Na₂O | K₂O | P₂O₅ | D₁   | D₂   | R₁   | R₂   |
|--------|--------|------|-------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| Quartz-diorite gneisses |
| Dz 10 | 64.44  | 0.84 | 17.69 | 6.46  | 0.07| 1.53| 4.55| 3.96 | 2.08| 0.28 | 2.3  | -19.4| 2667 | 1028 |
| Dz 12 | 63.92  | 0.71 | 17.47 | 5.18  | 0.06| 1.42| 3.92| 4.17 | 2.72| 0.22 | -1.7 | -18.7| 2517 | 997  |
| Dz 13 | 63.89  | 0.55 | 18.42 | 4.64  | 0.07| 1.47| 3.70| 4.35 | 3.14| 0.16 | -2.7 | -16.4| 2660 | 1153 |
| Tonalites |
| Dz 31 | 66.67  | 0.77 | 15.83 | 5.99  | 0.08| 2.44| 2.57| 2.99 | 2.92| 0.92 | 4.9  | -7.4 | 2517 | 520  |
| Dz 32 | 67.83  | 0.69 | 16.29 | 4.40  | 0.08| 2.00| 2.63| 2.85 | 3.72| 0.31 | 8.1  | -9.3 | 2520 | 490  |
| Dz 33 | 67.09  | 0.69 | 16.18 | 6.87  | 0.08| 2.60| 2.32| 2.86 | 2.71| 0.06 | 7.4  | -6.4 | 2347 | 533  |
| Dz 45 | 67.36  | 0.63 | 16.37 | 5.62  | 0.09| 1.36| 2.04| 2.84 | 3.71| 0.08 | 5.9  | 5.7  | 2410 | 628  |
| Microcline granites |
| Dz 2  | 72.25  | 0.27 | 15.09 | 2.57  | 0.04| 0.59| 1.23| 3.55 | 3.78| 0.15 | 10.4 | -5.3 | 2548 | 450  |
| Dz 4  | 71.01  | 0.56 | 16.35 | 2.15  | 0.07| 1.16| 1.34| 2.16 | 3.69| 0.06 | 8.3  | -2.7 | 2775 | 482  |
| Dz 9  | 74.79  | 0.07 | 14.71 | 1.15  | 0.06| 0.18| 0.61| 3.65 | 4.17| 0.22 | 14.6 | 2.7  | 2663 | 507  |
| Dz 15 | 76.05  | 0.22 | 15.21 | 1.98  | 0.05| 0.51| 1.15| 3.79 | 3.75| 0.17 | 5.2  | 4.7  | 2733 | 466  |
| Dz 16 | 71.88  | 0.017| 15.49 | 1.74  | 0.04| 0.42| 1.15| 3.31 | 5.52| 0.15 | 13.6 | -5.3 | 2365 | 493  |
| Orthoclase gabbros (rikotites) |
| R 20  | 46.6  | 0.964| 9.87  | 11.75 | 0.21| 10.84| 14.95 | 1 | 1.76 | 0.38 | - | - | - |
| R 21  | 51.02 | 0.718| 7.12  | 10.0 | 0.174| 11.99| 15.68 | 1.08 | 1.11 | 0.03 | - | - | - |
| R 23  | 50.25 | 0.7 | 6.40  | 9.26  | 0.195| 11.79| 17.48 | 1.25 | 0.87 | 0.06 | - | - | - |
| R 26  | 51.57 | 0.817| 16.57 | 8.36  | 0.156| 4.63 | 7.99  | 2.16 | 2.02 | 0.43 | - | - | - |
Proceeding from these data and geological evolution of the region, we can assume that quartz-dioritic gneisses was formed in the Neoproterozoic at the Early Pan-African tectonic-thermal events.

In the Cambrian Tonalites SiO₂ (67.26%) is higher than in the Neoproterozoic quartz dioritic gneisses, but Al₂O₃ is lower (16.16%). In these rocks as compared to quartz-dioritic gneisses Na₂O concentration (2.88%) is relatively low but K₂O is quite high (3.26%). Cambrian tonalites are metaluminous rocks and according to A/CNK parameter (1.22) it is S-type granitoids (Okrostsvaridze, Shengelia, 1996). The D₁-D₂ discrimination diagram (Figure 3) is consistent, indicating an S-type. REE concentration is quite high, but with symmetric trends. They are enriched in lanthanides, comparatively poor in heavy REE and weakly expressed Eu minimum, which shows that crystal fractioning was not an important process in the development of these rocks (Okrostsvaridze, Clarke, 2004).

In tonalites Iₛ parameter varies from 0.7081 to 0.7082 which is a consistent with for the upper crust. The εNd parameter ranges from -2.8792 to -6.8906 (Table 2); suggesting a strong influence of upper crustal partial melts.

Rb-Sr isochrones of tonalites showed an age of 538±53 Ma which corresponds to Cambrian age. Biotite samples were also analyzed by ⁴⁰Ar-³⁹Ar method gave an Upper Paleozoic age of 306±2 (Table 3).

Late Paleozoic Microcline granites have an average SiO₂ of 73.00%; Al₂O₃ is the lowest among the Dzirula massif granitoids (15.31%). Alkalinity is increased (Na₂O=3.49; K₂O=4.18) and K₂O/Na₂O parameter is equal to 1.20 which is typical upper crust granitoid data (Table 1).

Table 2. Chemical composition of Rb, Sr, Sm and Nd (ppm) and some isotopic data of the Dzirula Massif granitoids and orthoclase gabbros (rikotites)

| Sample | Rb | Sr | ⁸⁷Rb/⁸⁶Sr | ⁸⁷Sr/⁸⁶Sr | Iₛ | Sm | Nd | ⁴⁰Sm/⁴⁰Sr | ⁴³Nd/⁴⁰Nd | εNd |
|--------|----|----|----------|----------|----|----|----|-----------|-----------|-----|
| Quartz-dioritic gneisses | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dz10   | 89.27 | 387.51 | 0.4576 | 0.70872 | 0.70584 | 3.24 | 22.47 | 0.51236 | 0.11998 | -1.76803 |
| Dz12   | 97.64 | 402.23 | 0.5934 | 0.71023 | 0.70441 | 3.96 | 20.38 | 0.51237 | 0.11780 | -1.96703 |
| Dz13   | 110.22 | 416.89 | 0.7476 | 0.71172 | 0.70442 | 4.17 | 18.87 | 0.51207 | 0.12140 | -2.19501 |
| Tonalites | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dz31   | 116.23 | 213.75 | 1.53879 | 0.72051 | 0.70920 | 6.48 | 38.45 | 0.51206 | 0.10410 | -6.28938 |
| Dz32   | 118.87 | 294.18 | 1.1432 | 0.71757 | 0.70891 | 3.98 | 17.08 | 0.51254 | 0.14394 | -2.87918 |
| Dz44   | 110.20 | 248.86 | 1.2529 | 0.71826 | 0.70877 | 7.10 | 39.63 | 0.51204 | 0.11064 | -6.99145 |
| Dz45   | 89.67 | 290.02 | 1.3833 | 0.71606 | 0.70882 | 9.30 | 48.56 | 0.51207 | 0.11823 | -6.89080 |
| Microcline granites | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dz2    | 114.99 | 249.60 | 0.98124 | 0.71519 | 0.70722 | 5.86 | 33.29 | 0.51216 | 0.10863 | -4.50135 |
| Dz4    | 153.83 | 74.93 | 1.29801 | 0.71512 | 0.71460 | 8.08 | 45.59 | 0.51191 | 0.10947 | -9.36967 |
| Dz9    | 177.68 | 36.08 | 1.82012 | 0.71783 | 0.70668 | 1.20 | 4.17 | 0.51223 | 0.17722 | -6.92835 |
| Dz15   | 130.40 | 203.49 | 1.72948 | 0.71723 | 0.70671 | 5.08 | 23.20 | 0.51214 | 0.13525 | -6.43603 |
| Dz16   | 155.39 | 250.46 | 1.73452 | 0.71581 | 0.70665 | 3.92 | 23.31 | 0.51227 | 0.10387 | -2.19580 |
| Orthoclase gabbros (rikotites) | | | | | | | | | | |
| R20    | 442.21 | 54.82 | 0.35032 | 0.70602 | 0.70497 | 7.06 | 33.62 | 0.51237 | 0.12968 | +0.44803 |
| R21    | 50.59 | 215.24 | 0.66948 | 0.70715 | 0.70514 | 3.60 | 13.88 | 0.51258 | 0.16417 | -0.26030 |
| R23    | 257.81 | 123.59 | 0.29257 | 0.70614 | 0.70526 | 6.19 | 26.67 | 0.51258 | 0.14327 | +0.28341 |
| R26    | 836.14 | 119.42 | 0.40361 | 0.70654 | 0.70533 | 6.88 | 37.17 | 0.51254 | 0.11421 | +0.15332 |

Table 3. Isotopic Ages (Ma) of the Dzirula massif Granitoid and rikotites (orthoclase gabbros)

|岩层名称 | 石英-辉长岩 | 轻质 | 轻质 | 轻质 | 石英-辉长岩 | 轻质 |
|--------|---------|------|------|------|---------|------|
| Sm-Nd量 | 2370±600 | - | - | 278±48 |
| Rb-Sr方法 | 68±74 | 538±53 | 331±21 | 211±11 |
| ²⁶Ar-³⁹Ar方法 | 309±5 (biotite) | 306±2 (biotite) | 303±4 (biotite) | 219±4 (hornblende) | 217±3 (biotite) |

Figure 3. D₁-D₂ Discrimination diagram (Hassan, McAllister, 1992) for the Dzirula massif granitoids. Fields: I – type granites; S – type granites; A – type granites. D₁ = 0.76Al₂O₃ + 2.91MnO-1.93Na₂O+1.95K₂O-18.50P₂O₅; D₂ = 0.37Al₂O₃+7.25TiO₂+54.08MnO+ 42.8Na₂O-0.55K₂O+45.81P₂O₅. Conventional signs: 1 - quartz-dioritic gneisses; 2 - tonalities; 3 - microcline granites.
Upper Paleozoic microcline granites are metaluminous rocks (A/CNK =1.42) and according to it is S-type (Chappel, White, 1974) granitoids. The D1-D2 discrimination diagram is consistent, indicating an S-type (Figure 3).

REE distribution in microcline granites are characterized by sharp asymmetry; they show lanthanides high concentration and heavy REE low concentration. They have sharply expressed Eu minimum, which show that extensive crystal fractionation took place in magmatic system (Okrostsvaridze, Clarke, 2004). The $I_{Sr}$ has a very wide range, from 0.70667 to 0.71460. This range suggests extensive incorporation of upper crustal rocks. $\varepsilon_{Nd}$ parameter ranges from -2.19589 to -9.36967; it shows that they were generated by melting of upper crust rocks.

The Rb-Sr isotopic age of microcline granites corresponds to 351±21 Ma (Tab.3). This is Early Carboniferous, correspondingly, the activity appears to be associated with Variscan tectono-thermal events. In microcline granites (sample Dz2, Dz9, Dz16) muscovite isotopic age was determined using $^{40}$Ar-$^{39}$Ar method which is identical nearly in all samples and on average equals to 303±4 Ma, which, like the Tonalite $^{40}$Ar-$^{39}$Ar data, also corresponds to Late Variscan.

Rikotites (orthoclase gabbros) represent protolith rocks which were low in Al$_2$O$_3$, Fe$_2$O$_3$, K$_2$O and high in CaO and MgO composition. Rb-Sr data of rikotites show 211±11 Ma. Same date of this intrusive was approximately by hornblende $^{40}$Ar-$^{39}$Ar which corresponds to 219±4 Ma and by biotite dating using the same method in this intrusive - 217±3 Ma (Table 3). The Rb-Sr isotopic system in rocks is closed at 600-700°C; $^{40}$Ar-$^{39}$Ar system in hornblendes at 450-500°C; in biotites 300-350°C. From this we can conclude, that the results are in good correlation with each other and indicate rikotite intrusion took place Upper Triassic during the Cimmerian tectonic-thermal events, approximately in the interval of 210-220 Ma.

**Summary of Geochemistry Findings**

The geodynamic regime of formation of the Dzirula massif granitoids can be assessed with the $R_1-R_2$ multipartite diagram (Figure 4), quartz-dioritic gneisses figure points are located within pre-plate Collision granitoids field, while tonalites and microcline granites – within the syn-collision. The petrochemical investigation carried out showed, that the Dzirula massif granitoids are genetically different from each other. Quartz-dioritic gneisses belong to metaluminous I-type granites, which were formed in the volcanic arc geodynamic regime and in which magma crystal fractioning didn’t take place. Tonalites and microcline granites represent petrochemically similar formations and belong to S-type paraluminous granites which were formed at syn-collision stage evolution of the orogen evolution.

On the $\varepsilon_{Nd}$-$I_{Sr}$ isotopic diagram quartz-dioritic gneisses figures points actually do not appear in the field of crust formations and only tonalities and microcline granites figure points follow the upper crust trend (Figure 5). $\varepsilon_{Nd}$ - Intrusive age (Ma) relation diagram shows clearly, that all the granitoid figure points investigated by us are located in the field of Phanerozoic crust (Figure 6), which clearly shows, that the Dzirula massif continental crust is Phanerozoic formation. According to granitoid petrogenetic types, isotopic age and $\varepsilon_{Nd}$ parameters it should be treated as typical Tethyside or collisional orogen (Windley, 1996).

![Figure 4](image-url)  
**Figure 4.** $R_1-R_2$ discrimination diagram (Bachelor, Bowden, 1985) for the Dzirula massif granitoids $R_1 = 4Si-11(Na+K)-2(Fe+Ti)$; $R_2 = 6Ca+2Mg+Al$. Conventional signs are identical to figure 3.

![Figure 5](image-url)  
**Figure 5.** $\varepsilon_{Nd}$-$I_{Sr}$ isotopic diagram (Jahn et al., 2000) for the Dzirula massif granitoids. Conventional signs are identical of figure 3.

![Figure 6](image-url)  
**Figure 6.** $\varepsilon_{Nd}$-$I_{Sr}$ intrusive age (Ma) (Jahn et al., 2000) for the Dzirula massif granitoids. Conventional signs are identical of Figure 3.
Geodynamic Evolution of the Region

The geodynamic evolution of the Caucasian orogen, based on geological, paleofacies, paleobiogeographic and paleomagnetic data, centers on the closing of the Tethys oceanic basin at the end of the Alpine cycle as a result of collision of the Afro-Arabian and Eastern European plates (Gamkrelidze, 1991; 1997; Stampfli, Borel, 2002, Raumer et al., 2003). The Inner Caucasian Microplate, of which the Dzirula massif is a part, in these models is treated as microcontinent, separated from the Arabian plate northern edge during the opening of the Palaeo-Tethys. Its genetic relation with any of the continental plates is not well understood. The new tectonic, petrogeochemical and isotopic data obtained from the Dzirula massif gave us an opportunity to constrain the relationship.

Relying on existing information and the data in this paper suggests that the Dzirula massif represents a vertically accretion structure which is constructed of two large formations: Gondwana-derived gneiss-migmatite complex (upper) and ensialic island arc (lower) (Figure 7).

The interrelation of granitoid genetic types and the geodynamic evolution of the region support this structure. In addition, the gneiss-migmatite complex is similar to the Arabian Plate Northern edge in age, composition and structure (Marzouki, Fyle, 1979; Kroner, Stern, 2008). These authors indicate that the Northern part of Arabian Plate, situated to the south of the Inner Caucasian Microplate, represents a mosaic of microcontinents which were connected by Pan-African tectono-thermal events. Most are characterized by similar composition and tectonic development history to the Dzirula massif gneiss-migmatite complex. The intensive injection of the mantle material, metamorphism, ultrametamorphism and granite-forming processes were of the same character and took place in the intervals of 700-450 Ma. The Pan-African tectonic-thermal events at this time are characterized by a transitional regime, namely, the older inner plate processes are substituted by younger (Phanerozoic) plate edge regimes. Our data indicate that the gneiss-migmatite complex of the Dzirula massif is likely a Gondwana-derived terrane part and separated from the Arabian plate northern edge during the opening of the Palaeo-Tethys.

To make the idea more clear and convincing we will cite a comparison. The Tsakhkuniats massif, which reveals great similarities with Dzirula massif by its tectonic construction, composition and isotopic parameters, is exposed in the South of the Dzirula massif, within the borders of Iran-Afganian terrane of Gondwanan origin. The above mentioned massif, as well as Dzirula, is constructed of the Neoproterozoic gneissic metabasalts-migmatites (Hancavan complex), which is obducted on gneiss-paraschist (Arzacan complex). The Hancavan Complex as well as Dzirula massif gneiss-migmatite complex also contains lenses of opiolitic serpentinites and is crossed by quartz-dioritic gneisses intrusive; its the Rb-Sr isotopic age is 685±77 Ma and the Isr=0.703361 (Agamanian, 2004). The age of the Dzirula massif quartz-dioritic gneisses determined by the same method, corresponds to 686±74Ma and the Isr=0.70489. So, we can detect many similarities between these two massifs and proceeding from the geodynamic evolution analysis of the region, they are most likely to contains same Precambrian platform relics.

Discussion

This work has identified four distinct granitoid types in the Dzirula massif, including their spatial relationships, intrusion history, and ages. These data, combined with an understanding of the regional geodynamics, provides an understanding of granitoid melt generation and the evolution of the continental crust in the Dzirula Massif.

The Neoproterozoic gneiss-migmatite complex is the most widely distributed, and occupy the upper plate of the structure. This unit is composed of quartz-dioritic gneisses of I or H-type granitoids. The average isotopic parameters of these rocks (Isr=0.7044±0.0066: εNd = –1.976692) show that they belong to juvenile crust with a high percent of mantle component. The migmatite complex appears to have formed by partial melting of a subcontinental lithosphere by mantle-derived magmas. The age of quartz-diorite gneiss crystallization is 686±74 Ma (Rb-Sr method), which corresponds to the Early Pan-African tectonic-thermal events.

The tonalites have a crystallization age of 538±33 Ma (Rb-Sr age) which corresponds to Late Pan-African tectonic-thermal events. The tonalites are more evolved than the gneiss, being S type granitoids with higher REE concentrations. The tectonic discrimination diagrams indicate the syn-collisional granite field. The isotopic composition of the tonalites indicates a greater upper crustal character compared to the gneiss-migmatite complex (Isr = 0.7087±0.0011; εNd = –5.762702). The microcline granites have an age of 351±21 Ma (Rb-Sr method), corresponding to the Variscan tectonic-thermal events. The gneiss-migmatite complex is intruded by the microcline granites at this time. These rocks are much more evolved than either the gneiss-migmatite or the tonalites. The microcline granites are biotitic-muscovite paraluminous S type formation and in tectonic discrimination diagrams its plots are in the syn-collision granitic fields. The isotopic composition of the microcline granites also indicates a more developed continental crust. The Isr of these rocks ranges between 0.70667 and 0.71460, and εNd from −2.19589 to −9.96967.

Thus by the late Variscan, the crust of the Dzirula massif has evolved from a primitive composition to one more characteristic of more evolved continental crust. This development occurred during cycles of tectonic-thermal activity that lasted from the upper Proterozoic to the upper Paleozoic. As a result of these cycles, the ensialic protolith S type Upper Paleozoic microcline granites intrude into the mantle-crust hybrid I type Neoproterozoic gneiss-migmatite complex. Based on the geodynamic setting, the gneiss-migmatite

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complex was overthrust onto the protolith of the microcline granite, and part of the ensimatic terrane subducted under this protolith (Figure 7). This collision led to release of water from the subducted terrane led to partial melting of the microcline granite protolith and formation of the granitoid melt which intruded into the overlying gneiss. This explanation is further supported by the presence of ophiolite fragments in the northern part of the Dzirula massif.

The fourth magmatic rock in the Dzirula massif is the rikotites (orthoclase gabbros). The age of the Rikotites by Rb-Sr method, the whole rock - 211±11 Ma; 40Ar-39Ar method hornblende - 219±4 Ma; by 40Ar-39Ar method - biotite is 217±3 Ma. The results indicate that the rikotites intruded into the Dzirula massif during the Upper Triassic, corresponding to the Cimmerian tectonic-thermal events. The rikotites, according to all data, belong to island arc formations that collided with the Dzirula massif area. The rikotites contain orthoclase and are potassium rich. The exotic composition of the rikotites provides further clues about the development of the Dzirula massif. The rikotites appear to have a mantle source, and partial melting and incorporation of the potassium-bearing granites or their protolith appear to have led to the potassium enrichment of the rikotites.

Conclusions

Field, petrochemical, isotopic, and geochronological investigation of the granitoids of the Dzirula massif illustrate continental crust forming processes from Upper Proterozoic to Upper Paleozoic. The formation of the continental crust in this area was episodic, occurring during three phases of tectono-magmatic events.

The data in this study also constrain the geodynamic history of the Inner Caucasian Microplate. These processes occurred in the closing process of Palaeo-Tethys and the opening of Meso-Tethys. Within the Dzirula massif, a Gondwana-derived Proterozoic gneiss-migmatite complex is situated obductively on ensialic island arc. In this Variscan collision-accrretion structure, the crustal thickening and released water caused partial melting of the ensialic island arc, thus generating the microcline granites, which intruded the overlying gneiss-migmatite complex. By the end of this process, the Dzirula massif resembled typical continental crust. Later, in the Upper Triassic, the structure was further intruded by potassium rich gabbros (rikotites). Later, during the Alpine tectonic-thermal processes the Inner Caucasian Microplate merged with the Euro-Asian continental southern active edge.

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Avtandil Okrostvaridze received his degree of the Doctor of Geological Sciences in 1995 at the Geological Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences. His main scientific interests comprises granitoid magmatism, problems of the continental crust evolution and metallogenesis in orogenic systems. At present he works as a professor and head of the Geological department at the Ilia State University (Georgia, Tbilisi) and as scientific supervisor at the Mining Corporation “Golden Fleece”.

Daniel Tormey has Ph.D. in Geology and Geochemistry, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He studies the growth of the continental crust through the geochemistry and volcanology of convergent margin and extensional settings. He conducts volcanic, seismic, and landslide hazard assessment and mitigation planning. He is an expert in water and energy, conducting projects in sediment transport, hydrology, water supply, and water quality, as well as the environmental aspects of energy and energy development.