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1   # How do deep-water volcanoes grow?

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17

18   ## Abstract

19   Deep-water volcanoes are emplaced in water depths >1.0 km and are widespread along

20   continental margins and in ocean basins. Whilst the external morphology of deep-water volcanoes

21   can be mapped using bathymetric surveys, their internal structure and true volume remain

22   enigmatic. It is thus difficult to determine how deep-water volcanoes grow. We investigate 13

23   Late Miocene-to-Quaternary, deep-water volcanoes that are imaged in 3D by seismic reflection

24   data from the northern South China Sea, which allow us to quantify their external morphology

25   and examine their internal structure. These deep-water volcanoes were emplaced in water

26   depths >1.5 km, are relatively small (<3.0 km diameter, <0.56 km tall, and <0.92 km^3 in volume),

27   and have steep slopes (up to 42°). Most of the volcanoes have erosional, 'crater-like' bases, infilled

28   with sub-horizontal seismic reflections. These crater-like bases are overlain by downward-

29   converging, conical seismic reflections delineating the classical volcano morphology. We suggest

30   the crater-like bases formed by excavation of cold, wet, and poorly consolidated near-seabed

sediment during expulsion of hydrothermal fluid, and not by explosive magmatic eruptions or gravitational subsidence. Erupted igneous material infilled the precursor craters with the observed sub-horizontal layers, likely comprising hyaloclastites. After this initial phase of volcanism, the buildup of volcanic material produced layers that are now represented by the flank-parallel or downward-converging, conical seismic reflections. We suggest high hydrostatic pressures of >15 MPa, which are typical of water depths >1.5 km, inhibited degassing and fragmentation of ascending magma and thus erupted lava. This lack of degassing and fragmentation permitted effusive eruptions during the latter stages of volcanism. Our models for volcano growth in the deep submarine realm demonstrate the power of using 3D seismic data when investigating the internal structure and total volume of deep-water volcanoes.

1. Introduction

Volcanoes occur in a variety of plate boundary and intra-plate settings across Earth's surface. Determining how volcanoes grow is not only critical to predicting and mitigating volcanic hazards, but this understanding can also provide information on the underlying plumbing system structure (e.g., feeder and reservoir locations) and magma dynamics (e.g., composition and supply rate) (e.g., Moore and Clague, 1992; Arnulf et al., 2014; Clague et al., 2018). Volcanoes emplaced on land are typically well-studied and, by comparing their external morphology to similar neighboring edifices, we can infer they are broadly built through fluctuations between so-called summit- and diameter-prone growth (e.g., Moore and Clague, 1992; Rossi, 1996; Grosse et al., 2009; Karlstrom et al., 2018). Yet without direct access to volcano interiors, it is difficult to test growth models predicted from their external morphology alone. Examining ancient, (partially) eroded volcanoes provides some insight into how volcanoes are constructed, but modification of their original shape means we cannot assess relationship between internal structure and external morphology (e.g., Goto and Tomiya, 2019). By using traditional remote-sensing and/or field-based techniques, we can therefore either quantify the external morphology of uneroded

60   volcanoes, but not know their internal structure, or study the interiors of eroded volcanoes where

61   information on their original edifice shape has been lost. Our ability to only constrain either the

62   external morphology *or* internal structure of onshore volcanoes, but not both, limits our

63   understanding of how volcanoes grow.

64   Remote sensing data and lithostratigraphic analysis of well cores allow us to constrain the

65   external geometry and internal structure of the evolution of shallow- and deep-water volcanoes

66   (e.g., Smith, 1988; Magee et al., 2013; Cocchi et al., 2016; Buchs et al. 2018). In particular,

67   seismic reflection imaging of volcanoes provides a unique opportunity to resolve uncertainties

68   regarding volcano growth, given these data can image both the external morphology *and* internal

69   structure of volcanoes (e.g., Gatliff et al., 1984; Calves et al., 2011; Magee et al., 2013; Reynolds

70   et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2019). For example, by using 2D seismic reflection data offshore southern

71   Australia, Magee et al. (2013) showed trends in the external morphology of buried, shallow-water

72   shield volcanoes were consistent with growth via summit eruptions and a proportionate increase

73   in summit height and volcano diameters. Interpretation of reflections within the volcanoes reveal

74   the majority of volcanoes did indeed grow by a proportionate increase in summit height and basal

75   diameter (i.e. the layers were parallel to the volcano flanks) (Magee et al., 2013; see also Reynolds

76   et al., 2018). A similar seismic-based study of shallow-water volcanoes (water depth <200 m),

77   emplaced along the western Indian rifted margin, reveal they preferentially grew via increases in

78   diameter without a commensurate increase in summit height (Calves et al., 2011). Whilst seismic

79   reflection data have been used to unravel the growth of shallow-water volcanoes, few studies

80   have utilized these data to study the internal structure of deep-water (>1 km) volcanoes (e.g.,

81   Gatliff et al., 1984; Sun et al., 2019).

82   Discerning how deep-water volcanoes erupt and grow is critical for: (1) accurate assessment

83   of deep-water volcanic hazards (e.g. submarine landslides and associated tsunami; e.g. Staudigel

84   and Clague, 2010); (2) calculation of accurate eruptive and total volume estimates, which

85   contribute to understanding melting conditions in the underlying crust and/or mantle (e.g. Buchs

86   et al., 2018; Sun et al. 2019); and (3) determining the role of volcanoes in gas venting and

87   hydrothermal circulation (e.g. Planke et al., 2005). Importantly, high hydrostatic pressures in

88   deep-water settings, which can inhibit degassing, ascent rate, and fragmentation of magma, mean

the extrusion dynamics of deep-water volcanoes may fundamentally differ from their onshore and shallow-water counterparts (e.g. Gregg and Fornari, 1998; Cas and Simmons, 2018; Carey et al., 2018; Manga et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2019). These differences in eruption style and underlying controls suggest we may not be able to simply apply our knowledge of volcanism in other, subaerial or shallow water settings, to understand how deep-water volcanoes grow (e.g. Gregg and Fornari, 1998; Manga et al., 2018). It is therefore necessary to image the internal structure of deep-water volcanoes to reveal their growth history.

Here, we use 3D seismic reflection data to investigate 13 deep-water volcanoes located along the continental margin of the northern South China Sea. These Late Miocene-Present volcanoes were emplaced close to the Continent-Ocean Boundary (COB) in water depths >1.5 km. Our 3D seismic reflection data allow us to map the external morphologies and internal structures of these volcanoes in unprecedented detail. From our seismic reflection imaging, we propose the majority of studied deep-water volcanoes grew through an initial phase of crater formation driven by escape of hydrothermal fluids, which became infilled. Volcanic cones developed on top of these infilled craters, or in two cases directly on undisturbed seabed sediment, primarily grew by proportionate increases in summit height and basal diameter, thereby maintaining their slope angle; some volcanoes appear to have grown by preferential addition of material to summit regions. Although similar growth models have been proposed for volcanic cones in subaerial and shallow marine settings, we demonstrate the deep-water volcanoes we study are relatively smaller and have steeper slopes. We attribute the initial phase of crater formation and morphological differences between deep-water volcanoes and those in other settings, to the unique physical conditions under which deep-water volcanoes evolve. Our work shows seismic reflection data is a powerful tool for unravelling volcano growth.

2. Geological setting

The South China Sea is located in a complex tectonic region between the Eurasian, Pacific and India-Australia plates (e.g. Briais et al., 1993; Franke et al., 2014; Li et al., 2014) (Fig. 1a). The South China Sea evolved as a magma-poor rift, culminating in seafloor spreading, the onset of which varied across the region (e.g. Clift et al., 2001; Cullen et al., 2010; Larsen et al., 2018).

Seafloor spreading began in the East Sub-basin in the early Oligocene (~33 Ma; Briais et al., 1993; Li et al., 2014), before the spreading center jumped to the Southwest Sub-basin in the late Oligocene (~25 Ma) (e.g. Franke et al., 2014). Spreading ceased sometime in the middle Miocene (~15.0-15.5 Ma; Briais et al., 1993; Li et al., 2014). Since the late Miocene (~10.5 Ma), tectonic activity in the northeastern part of South China Sea has been mainly driven by its collision with the Philippine Sea Plate (i.e. the Dongsha Event; e.g. Lüdmann and Wong, 1999).

The study area is located to the south of the Dongsha Islands in the northern South China Sea (Fig. 1a). Geological and geophysical studies (e.g. borehole, gravity, magnetic, and 2D and 3D seismic reflection data) indicate widespread Cenozoic volcanism across the northern South China Sea (e.g. Li and Liang, 1994; Yan et al., 2006; Zhao et al., 2016). From the early Paleocene to earliest Oligocene, before the onset of seafloor spreading, intermediate-acidic volcanoes were emplaced in a subaerial setting (Yan et al., 2006). From the Oligocene to middle Miocene, there was a compositional and environmental transition to the emplacement of mafic-to-intermediate volcanoes in shallow-water (<200 m) and subaerial settings (e.g. Yan et al., 2006; Lester et al., 2014) (Fig. 1a). Rapid post-emplacement subsidence led to these volcanoes being deeply buried (up to depths of 1.5 km) beneath the current seafloor (e.g. Zhao et al., 2016). Late Miocene and younger, intra-plate volcanoes (Figs. 1b-c) were emplaced close to the continent-ocean boundary (Clift et al., 2001; Sun et al., 2019). Recent IODP Expeditions 349/367/368 drilled several of these deep-water volcanoes in the South China Sea, revealing they are primarily basaltic (e.g. Li et al., 2014; Larsen et al., 2018), and that some were emplaced during continental breakup and directly covered by deep-water (>1.3 km) nanofossil-bearing clay sediments (Larsen et al., 2018). Many of the deep-water volcanoes, emplaced since the Late Miocene, feed long run-out lava flows that have irregular basal morphologies (Sun et al., 2019) (Figs. 1b-c). The volumes of these long run-out lavas appear equivalent to, or substantially greater than, that of the erupted material contained in the volcanoes themselves (Sun et al., 2019).

3. Datasets and methods

We use a time-migrated 3D seismic reflection dataset covering ~1150 km^2 to study the external morphology and internal structure of deep-water volcanoes in the South China Sea (Fig. 1a). The

147   data were acquired in 2012 using eight tuned air source guns, each with a volume of 8×20 in^3,

148   to produce a total shot volume of 8×160 in^3. Six 3000 m-long, 240-channel streamers with a

149   spacing of 12.5 m were used to tow the hydrophones. The data are zero-phase processed with

150   ordinary processing procedures (e.g. digital filtering, deconvolution, dynamic/static correction,

151   offset stack, etc.), and displayed with Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG) normal polarity.

152   A downward increase in acoustic impedance therefore corresponds to a positive reflection event

153   (red on displayed seismic profiles) and a downward decrease in acoustic impedance corresponds

154   to a negative reflection (black on displayed seismic profiles) (e.g. Brown, 2004).

155   The dominant frequency in the interval of interest (i.e. 0–400 m below the seabed) is ~40 Hz.

156   The estimated limit of separability within the deep-water strata (i.e. nanofossil-bearing clay)

157   encasing the volcanoes is ~14 m, based on a seismic velocity of 2.2 km/s for the sedimentary

158   rocks; this velocity is derived from nearby seismic refraction profiles (Yan et al., 2001; Wei et al.,

159   2011) (Fig. 1a). There are no seismic velocity data available for the studied deep-water volcanoes,

160   but we assume they have an interval velocity of the 4.0±1.0 km/s based on: (i) measured seismic

161   velocities of ~3.0-5.0 km/s for basaltic rocks (lava flows, volcaniclastic breccias and pyroclastics)

162   intersected by nearby boreholes (e.g. BY7-1 and IODP 1431) (Li et al., 2014; Zhao et al., 2016);

163   (ii) velocities of ~3.0-5.5 km/s obtained from seismic refraction profiles that cover other deep-

164   water volcanoes within the basin (Yan et al., 2001; Wei et al., 2011); (iii) typical seismic velocities

165   calculated from boreholes penetrating basaltic submarine volcanoes (~3.3-5.5 km/s) elsewhere

166   (Calvès et al., 2011); and (iv) the size of observed seismic velocity anomaly-induced 'pull-ups'

167   beneath the studied volcanoes (V7, V11, and V13, Fig. S1), caused by acoustic waves travelling

168   faster through hard, crystalline igneous rocks than the surrounding sedimentary strata (Jackson,

169   2012; Magee et al., 2013; Reynolds et al., 2018). With regard to the latter point, we calculate

170   interval velocities of 3.2-4.1 km/s for the three volcanoes (V7, V11, and V13), derived from the

171   magnitude of velocity pull-up artifacts (~82.7 ms - 161.3 ms TWT high) present in underlying

172   seismic reflections (Fig. S1):

173    $\mathrm{Vpi} = \frac{Ts \times Vps}{Ti}$

174   where Vps (Vps = 2.2 km/s) and Vpi are the seismic velocities of encasing rocks/sediments and

175   igneous rocks; Ts and Ti are the seismic wave travel time in the encasing rocks/sediments and

176   igneous rocks, respectively (Fig. 2a).

177   Given a dominant frequency of ~40 Hz and an interval velocity of the 4.0±1.0 km/s, the

178   estimated limits of separability and visibility of layers within the volcanoes is 25±6 m (λ/4) and

179   3.5±0.5 m (λ/30), respectively (Sun et al., 2019). When the volcanic structures are thicker than

180   the estimated limit of separability, their top and base reflections can be distinguished. However,

181   if their thickness lies between the limits of separability and visibility, they will appear as tuned

182   reflection packages; i.e. reflections from their top and base interfere on their return to the surface

183   and cannot be distinguished (e.g. Brown, 2004). Volcanic structures thinner than the limit of

184   visibility will likely not be distinguishable from noise within the seismic data (Eide et al., 2017).

185   The volcanoes we study comprise two distinct components, involving a volcanic edifice and

186   an underlying infilled crater-like base (Fig. 2b). We mapped three key seismic horizons: TV (top

187   of volcano), BV (base of volcano), and the seabed (Figs. 3a-c). From these mapped horizons, we

188   measured key geomorphologic parameters of the volcanoes, including diameter and height/depth

189   of the edifices and crater-like bases (Fig. 2b). We define volcano thickness, which we also use to

190   calculate volume, as the difference in height between TV and BV (Fig. 2b); volume estimates also

191   take into account the irregular morphologies of TV and BV. Because the observed volcano flanks

192   are rugged, we calculated average flank dips as height/(diameter/2) (Fig. 2b). In places, where

193   volcanoes appear to merge, we constrain the plan-view extent of each edifice by distinguishing

194   the location of minimum thickness between them (Fig. 3d). Errors in height, depth, volume, and

195   flank dip measurements largely arise from uncertainties in the seismic velocities (4.0±1.0 km/s)

196   used to undertake the depth conversion rather than measurement errors. The collected edifice and

197   crater dimensions data allow us to better understand how much volcanic material may be

198   underestimated by surficial remote-sensing techniques, and thus unaccounted for when

199   calculating volumes of magma production. We also compare the geomorphologic characteristics

200   of the volcanic edifices to volcanoes emplaced in different environments with varying

201   composition, such as ocean basins (Basalt; Smith, 1988), subaerial volcanic arcs (Basalt - andesite;

202   Grosse et al., 2009), submarine volcanic arcs (dacite, basalt-andesite; Wright et al., 2006) and

203   shallow water (Basalt; Magee et al., 2013).

204

4. Characteristics of the deep-water volcanoes

4.1. Seismic expression

We mapped the top and bases, and thus constrained the thickness and volume of 13 volcanoes (Figs. 3b-c; Table 1). In our seismic data, several volcanoes appear to have merged to form a single, large edifice defined by multiple distinct summits (i.e. V4-V6 and V11-V12; Figs. 3b-c). All the volcanoes are at least partly buried by a thin layer (<300 m) of Late Miocene- Quaternary strata (Figs. 4-5; Table 1), with the tips of edifices (i.e. V6, V7, V9, V11, V12 and V13) breaching the seabed (Figs. 3a, 4a-b, 4d, 4f). Except for V1, all volcanoes are encircled by moats that are up to 75 m deep, and which, depending on their stratigraphic occurrence, are unfilled (i.e. moats expressed at seabed), partly infilled, or fully filled (i.e. buried moats) (e.g. V6-V9; Figs. 3a, 4a-b, 4d-f, 5). The volcanoes are typically characterized by continuous-to-moderately continuous, high-amplitude top reflections (i.e. TV), and discontinuous, primarily low-amplitude base reflections (i.e. BV) (Figs. 4-5; Fig. S1). Occasionally BV is continuous and high-amplitude (e.g. V6; Fig. 4f). Projected boundaries dividing the crater-like bases and edifices of individual volcanoes occur at different stratigraphic levels (Fig. 4). For example, the edifice-crater boundary for V12 is coincident with the modern seabed, whilst for V9 the edifice-crater boundary is located ~50–100 ms TWT (~40-80 m) beneath the current seafloor (Figs 4a-b).

We identify two types of volcano bases: (i) crater-like bases that truncate underlying seismic reflections (Figs. 4a-d); and (ii) relatively flat bases that are conformable with underlying strata (e.g. V6 and V8; Figs. 4e-f). Based on these differences in basal geometry, we sub-divide the volcanoes into two groups: (i) GP1 (11 volcanoes), which have crater-like bases (Figs. 4a-d); and (ii) GP2 (2 volcanoes), which have strata-concordant bases (Figs. 4e-f). The bases of both groups of volcanoes are located at various stratigraphic horizons, up to ~264 m beneath the seabed. Seismic reflections directly beneath the volcanoes, as well as those below lavas emanating from the volcanic edifices, have very low-amplitude compared to their typical seismic character away from the overlying volcanoes (Fig. 5). These reflections beneath the volcanoes are also typically disturbed and occasionally appear to be deflected upward relative to their regional dip (e.g. those beneath V9 in Fig. 5).

4.2. External volcano morphology and dimensions

4.2.1. Volcano edifices

The volcanic edifices have circular to elliptical basal sections, with diameters of ~0.6–3.0 km (average of ~1.3 km), covering areas of ~0.25-7.15 km^2 (Table 1). Edifice height ranges from ~79±20 to 560±140 m (Figs. 3b, 6a; Table 1). There is a very weak (i.e. R^2 = ~0.21), positive correlation between edifice diameter and height, with an average height:diameter ratio of 0.25 (Fig. 6a). Flanks are linear, convex-upward, or convex-downward, and are moderate-to-steep, with dips of up to 42° (average dip of ~26°) (Figs. 4-5; Figs. S1-S2); most (nine) of the volcanoes have slopes >20° (Table 1). Flank dip is weakly, negatively correlated with edifice diameter (R^2 = ~0.12; Fig. 6b) and weakly, positively correlated with height (R^2 = ~0.39; Fig. 6c). Overall, edifice volumes range from ~0.0160±0.0040 to 0.9213±0.2303 km^3 and show a strong, positive correlation to diameter (R^2 = ~0.94; Fig. 6d), but a weak correlation to height (R^2 = ~0.25; Fig. 6e) and no correlation with flank dip and volume (R^2 = ~0.06) (Fig. 6f).

4.2.2. Crater-like bases

The depth and diameter ranges of the crater-like bases are ~87±22 to 517±129 m and ~0.8 to 4.6 km, respectively, and only weakly, positively correlated (R^2 = ~0.20) (Fig. 7a; Table 1); their volumes range from 0.0082±0.0021 to 0.8144±0.2036 km^3 (Table 1). The dips (5°-32°) of the basal crater flanks are only weakly, negatively correlated to crater diameter (R^2 = ~0.29; Fig. 7b) and very weakly, negatively correlated with depth (R^2 = ~0.17; Fig. 7c). Crater volume is moderately-to-strongly, positively correlated (R^2 = ~0.65) with crater diameter but only weakly correlated to crater depth (R^2 = ~0.22) and very weakly, negatively correlated with crater flank dip (R^2 = ~0.16) (Figs. 7d-f).

4.2.3. Total volcano morphometrics

The heights of volcano edifices and depths of crater-like bases are weakly, positively correlated (R^2 = ~0.36; Fig. 7g), whilst their diameters are moderately-to-strongly, positively correlated (R^2 = ~0.65; Fig. 7h). We note the diameters of the crater-like bases are typically greater than (e.g. V5 and V11) or equal to (e.g. V10 and V13) those of their overlying edifices (Fig. 7h). These

263   differences in diameter mean that the *volumes* of crater-like bases are typically larger than those

264   of the overlying edifices (Fig. 7i), e.g. by more than five times (e.g. V5; Table 1); the volumes of

265   the crater-like bases and edifices are weakly, positively correlated ($R^2 = \sim0.23$; Fig. 7i).

266   The average diameters, combining that of the edifices and crater-like bases, of individual

267   volcanoes show a weak ($R^2 = \sim0.22$), positive correlation to volcano thickness (Fig. 7j). The total

268   volumes of volcanoes range from 0.0277 ± 0.0070 to 1.2669 ± 0.3167 km^3. Volcano thickness is

269   only weakly ($R^2 = \sim0.28$) positively correlated with total volcano volume (Fig. 7k). However,

270   there is a strong ($R^2 = \sim0.88$), positive correlation between total volcano volume and average

271   diameter (Fig. 7j).

272

273   **4.3. Internal architecture and seismic facies**

274   We define two principal intra-volcano seismic facies (Fig. 4). Seismic facies 1 (SF1) is bound

275   at its base by BV and predominantly comprises discontinuous, short, parallel to sub-parallel,

276   moderate- to high-amplitude seismic reflections within the crater-like bases of GP1 (Figs. 4a-d).

277   Reflections within SF1 appear broadly parallel with those of the surrounding sedimentary layers.

278   Some outwardly dipping seismic reflections, which define broadly conical structures, are locally

279   observed within the cores of SF1 (Figs. 4a-d). Overlying SF1, seismic facies 2 (SF2) constitutes

280   the upper parts of all GP1 and GP2 volcanoes, broadly comprising stacked, continuous-to-

281   moderately continuous, moderate-amplitude reflections that downlap onto SF1 or BV (Fig. 4). In

282   most instances the internal SF2 reflections, where clearly observed, broadly parallel the outer

283   margins of the volcanic edifices (e.g. Figs 4a, e-f); in some edifices the SF2 reflections converge

284   down-dip (e.g. Fig. 4b).

285

286   **5. Discussion**

287

288   **5.1 Age and environment of volcanism**

289   Biostratigraphic data from nearby boreholes constrain the age of the nanofossil-bearing

290   sedimentary sequences encasing the 13 mapped volcanoes, which have edifice bases that mark

291   the syn-eruptive seabed located at different stratigraphic levels (Figs. 4-5), and indicate volcanism

292   occurred periodically between the Late Miocene (e.g. ~6.3 Ma of V1; Sun et al., 2019) and

293   Quaternary. Analysis of ODP (Site 1146) and IODP (Site U1501) data reveal that, at least since

294   the Early Miocene (~23 Ma) and throughout this prolonged period of intermittent volcanism, the

295   study area was a deep-water (>1.0 km) environment (e.g. Clift et al., 2001; Li et al., 2014; Larsen

296   et al., 2018). Because the mapped volcanoes are within an area characterized by a present water

297   depth of >1.3 km, and the subsidence-corrected, syn-emplacement Miocene-Quaternary sea level

298   was ~200 m higher than it is today (Xu et al., 1995), we consider it likely that eruptions occurred

299   in water depths >1.5 km; these water depths correspond to overlying hydrostatic pressures of >15

300   MPa.

301

302   **5.2. Volcano formation and growth**

303   Most of the thirteen mapped volcanoes (11 of 13) can be sub-divided into an edifice and a

304   crater-like base (Figs. 4a-d, 5). These crater-like bases truncate the underlying stratigraphic

305   reflections and are infilled by sub-horizontal reflections, onto which a conical edifice is developed

306   (Figs. 4a-d, 5). Here we discuss how each of these features relates to the initiation and growth of

307   these deep-water volcanoes.

308

309   5.2.1. Formation of crater-like bases

310   Crater-like bases have been observed beneath volcanoes and hydrothermal vents in subaerial

311   and shallow-water settings, and their formation has primarily been attributed to disaggregation

312   and material removal during explosive eruptions (e.g. Planke et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2006;

313   Geyer and Martí, 2008). Alternatively, crater-like bases could form by the collapse of subsurface

314   conduits following magma extraction and subsidence of overlying material (e.g. Walker, 1993;

315   Geyer and Martí, 2008) and/or post-emplacement gravitational subsidence in response to volcano

316   loading (e.g. Moore and Clague, 1992; de Silva and Lindsay, 2015); depressions generated by

317   these subsidence processes are expected to host inward-dipping layers (e.g. de Silva and Lindsay,

318   2015). We consider it unlikely that the crater-like bases documented here (e.g., Figs 4a-d) formed

319   by subsidence because: (i) gravitational subsidence driven by volcano loading could not produce

320   craters volumetrically larger than, and which occasionally extend beyond the footprint of, the

321   overlying edifices (Moore and Clague, 1992; de Silva and Lindsay, 2015) (Fig. 7i; Table 1); (ii)

322   volcano loading will cause underlying reflections to sag and will *not* produce craters that truncate

323   and erode underlying strata (Figs. 4a-d); and (iii) the sub-horizontal reflections observed within

324   the crater-like bases are inconsistent with collapse of pre-existing strata into evacuated magma

325   conduits or deformation imposed by the volcano load (Figs. 4a-d).

326   By ruling out subsidence as a mechanism for driving crater formation, our observed truncation

327   and erosion of underlying strata by the craters may suggest they formed via an initial phase of

328   explosive activity (e.g. Planke et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2006; Geyer and Martí, 2008). However,

329   whilst evidence for explosive volcanism (e.g. pyroclast occurrence) has been documented in

330   silicic, volatile-rich deep-water settings, high hydrostatic pressures caused by large water

331   columns (e.g. >1.0 km) are expected to prevent substantial exsolution of volatiles from magma

332   and thereby inhibit explosive eruptions (e.g. Walker, 1993; de Silva and Lindsay, 2015; Carey et

333   al., 2018; Cas and Simmons, 2018). Although we lack the well data required to test whether the

334   crater-infilling-material was generated by explosive volcanic activity, we consider it plausible

335   that the deep-water emplacement (>1.5 km) and the basaltic, inferred volatile-poor nature of

336   magma extruded from these volcanoes may have restricted a namely "explosive" eruption style.

337   In particular, the interplay of the deep-water setting and magma composition may have led to

338   primarily effusive eruptions or rapid magma extrusion into the water column in a "non-explosive"

339   manner, e.g. such as suggested for high mass eruption rates by Manga et al. (2018). If explosive

340   activity was inhibited, a different mechanism for producing the observed erosive craters is

341   required.

342   Given the sub-horizontal seismic reflections (i.e. SF1) infilling the craters and truncation of

343   underlying strata by the basal surface, we suggest the crater-like bases could have formed in

344   response to the escape of magma-related hydrothermal fluids (e.g. fluids from magma and/or

345   heated pore fluids from the surrounding sediments). We propose that fluid escape disaggregated

346   and excavated the weak, near-seabed sediments via a similar process to that inferred for ancient,

347   seismically-imaged hydrothermal vents (e.g. Planke et al., 2005; Buarque et al., 2016).

348   Considering expelled, fine-grained sediments are likely to be removed by bottom currents (e.g.

349 Judd and Hovland, 2007), we suggest the crater may have been infilled by sub-horizontal

350 packages composed of either: (i) erupted dense material that settles out of the water column (i.e.

351 it is not affected by bottom currents), perhaps forming layers of hyaloclastites; and/or (ii) material

352 eroded from the depression flanks and deposited within the crater. The process we infer for the

353 formation of the crater-like bases is similar to the generation of deep-water pockmarks, which are

354 usually of kilometer-scale and infilled by sub-horizontal sedimentary strata (e.g. Judd and

355 Hovland, 2007). Further exploration of the material filling these basin-like structures by drilling

356 and coring would help clarify the style and nature of the eruptive activity and crater formation.

357 Regardless of the process(es) driving crater formation, the absence of crater-like bases beneath

358 GP2 edifices indicates volcanism did not always involve near-seabed excavation and was site

359 specific (Figs. 4e-f). It is difficult to determine exactly what factors (e.g. seabed cohesivity and

360 porosity, water depth, mass eruption rate, magma composition and volatile content) controlled

361 the initial emplacement styles of the GP1 and GP2 volcanoes solely from the geophysical data

362 we use here.

363

364 5.2.2. Model of volcano growth

365 Volcano geometry is influenced by the interplay of constructive (e.g. dyke intrusion and

366 stacking of lava flows) and destructive processes (e.g. flank collapse and erosion) (e.g. Annen et

367 al., 2001; Kervyn et al., 2009; Magee et al., 2013). To evaluate edifice growth, field- and remote

368 sensing-based studies broadly rely on the assumption that, in any given volcanic field or setting,

369 small volcanoes develop into large volcanoes (e.g. Walker, 1993; de Silva and Lindsay, 2015).

370 Patterns in volcano morphometry have therefore been used to infer growth models (e.g. Rossi,

371 1996; Calvès et al., 2011; Magee et al., 2013; Karlstrom et al., 2018). From these morphometric

372 data, the following growth models for various volcanoes from subaerial and shallow marine

373 settings have been proposed (Fig. 8): (i) proportional increase in summit height and basal diameter,

374 maintaining flank dip (Magee et al., 2013; Figs 8b, f); (ii) preferential addition of material to the

375 summit area and upper volcano flanks, whilst the diameter remains consistent and flank dip

376 increases with time (Magee et al., 2013; Figs 8c, f); (iii) lateral progradation of the edifice flanks

377 while summit height is fixed, such that flank dip decreases with time (Calvès et al., 2011; Figs

8d, f); and (iv) maintenance of a proportional increase in summit height and basal diameter with time, interrupted by a short-stage of lateral progradation of the edifice flanks (Rossi, 1996; Figs 8e, f). However, these growth models derived from volcano morphometry data are difficult to test because we cannot easily access and evaluate the internal 3D structure of volcanoes. Seismic reflection data uniquely allows us to image volcano interiors in 3D, meaning we can interrogate how edifices build up through time by mapping internal layers (Magee et al. 2013; Sun et al., 2019). Here, we compare the internal architecture of our deep-water volcanoes to growth models from those emplaced in subaerial and shallow marine conditions (Fig. 8), and discuss potential environmental controls on the differences we recognize in their geometry and evolution.

The internal seismic facies variations we recognize within our GP1 volcanoes differ from the seismic facies observed within monogenetic volcanoes that are mainly characterized by homogeneous seismic reflections (e.g. Reynolds et al., 2018). These facies differences suggest the GP1 volcanoes were instead formed through multiple eruptive events (i.e. they are polygenetic) and we propose they likely developed in three stages (Fig. 9): (Stage 1) during the first stage, crater-like bases formed through the explosive expulsion of hydrothermal fluids (see Section 5.2.1); (Stage 2) crater infilling through eruption of material and/or mass wasting of crater flanks, forming the aggradational SF1 facies; (Stage 3) construction of a broadly conical edifice on a relatively flat surface, following crater infilling, through summit eruptions that promoted vertical and lateral growth as evidenced by the positive correlation between volcano height and basal diameter, and the parallelism between their external morphology and internal SF2 reflections (cf. Figs. 4, 6a, 8a-b, f). Down-dip convergence of internal SF2 reflections in some volcanoes (e.g. V12; Fig. 4b) suggests that, for some edifices, vertical aggradation through accumulation of erupted material at the summit may have outpaced lateral expansion of the basal diameter (e.g. Figs. 8a, c, f) (Vail et al. 1977; Magee et al. 2013); i.e. in this scenario, little erupted material reached the base flanks of the volcano, perhaps because eruption rate was low and episodic. The growth of some volcanoes by vertical aggradation may explain why flank dips of the GP1 population correlate moderately positively with volcano height, but not basal diameter (Figs. 6b-c). During Stage 2 or Stage 3, after full or partial infilling of the crater-like base, intrusions feeding summit eruptions may have modified the core of SF1 to form the conical structures that are locally

407   observed (Figs. 4a-d, 9).

408   GP2 volcanoes lack crater-like bases but otherwise appear similar to GP1 (Figs 4 and 6); i.e.

409   the volcanic materials contained in the GP2 volcanoes were expelled directly onto the paleo-

410   seabed, feeding a volcano that grew both vertically and laterally (Stage 3; Fig. 9). The narrow,

411   low-amplitude zone directly beneath the volcanoes and associated deformations (e.g. deflected-

412   upward seismic reflections) suggest that dykes or faults may have served as magma ascent

413   pathways (MP) (Fig. 5). However, these upward-deflected seismic reflections may also be

414   possibly interpreted as seismic artefacts (i.e. velocity pull-ups) that are caused by the overlying

415   thick, high-density volcanic rocks.

416

5.2.3 Controls on edifice morphology

418   Compared to subaerial and shallow-water basaltic volcanoes, as well as moderate- to deep-

419   water (0.9-3 km) andesitic-basaltic volcanoes, the deep-water basaltic volcanoes we study: (i) are

420   ~41–427 times (in volumes) smaller than basaltic and basaltic-andesitic volcanoes from

421   elsewhere (Fig. 6a, d-e; Table S1); (ii) display similar positive correlations between height,

422   diameter, and volume, implying volcano growth broadly involved a proportionate increase in

423   summit height and basal diameter (Fig. 8-9) (e.g., Magee et al., 2013); but (iii) have steeper flanks

424   (most of them >20°), with some volcanoes evidently growing via preferential vertical aggradation

425   (Fig. 6b-c). We tentatively suggest that the small size and steeper flanks we observe likely reflect

426   differences in the environment of emplacement (e.g., water depth) and seabed lithology. Below

427   we consider how mass eruption rate and magma volatile content may control the

428   geomorphological characteristics of volcanoes in this study.

429   The magnitude, duration, and steadiness of eruption rate influence the distribution of extruded

430   material (e.g. de Silva and Lindsay, 2015; White et al., 2015). For example, low eruption rates

431   drive lava to move slowly over short distances (e.g. Rossi, 1996) and, thus, erupted materials are

432   more likely to accumulate around the vents/upper flanks and form high-angle slopes; i.e. growth

433   is via preferential vertical aggradation. Low eruption rates could explain the steep slopes of the

434   volcanoes we study, and may relate to the limited magma supply during post-rift volcanism (e.g.

435   Yan et al., 2006; Li et al., 2014) and/or volatile undersaturation in the basaltic parental magma.

436   Episodic, shorter-duration emplacement of lava (as opposed to a single event) would also build

437   notably steeper flanked volcanoes, as demonstrated in experiments by Fink et al. (1993). However,

438   we note that the presence of long run-out lava flows flanking the volcano edifices (>9.0 km long)

439   likely indicates eruption rates varied significantly through time, with intermittent periods of short-

440   lived, high eruption rates of, possibly, volatile-enriched magma feeding the longest run-out flows

441   (Sun et al., 2019) (Fig. 5). In addition to the low mass eruption rates, volatile-undersaturated lavas

442   (as primarily inferred here) have higher cooling rates,higher glass transition temperatures and

443   higher viscosities, and thus, lava may quench and build-up more proximal to the eruptive source

444   (Del Gaudio et al., 2007).

445   Because of high hydrostatic pressure, wet, cold, and unconsolidated sediments, and the overall

446   magma-deficient (low eruption rate and magma supply), post-rift setting during the Late Miocene,

447   the deep-water volcanoes documented here geomorphologically and genetically differ to their

448   subaerial and shallow-water counterparts in other tectonic environments (Fig. 6). In future,

449   physical and geochemical studies of eruptive products, particularly within GP1 volcanoes, may

450   help resolve the unusual morphologies and eruptive mechanisms within this tectonic setting.

451

6. Conclusion

453   We use 3D seismic reflection data to investigate the three-dimensional structure of thirteen

454   Late Miocene-to-Quaternary deep-water volcanoes. Two groups of volcanoes, one with (GP1)

455   and one without (GP2) crater-like bases, are identified. Internally, these volcanoes comprise two

456   dominant seismic facies types that document volcano growth processes. We are able to investigate

457   the relationship between the external morphology and internal structure of deep-water volcanoes,

458   and thereby build growth models for these hitherto poorly understood volcanic structures. The

459   growth of most of the volcanoes is defined by two main stages: crater formation and infilling,

460   likely initiated by the escape of hydrothermal fluids, and subsequent construction of an overlying

461   conical edifice. Importantly, recognition of crater-like bases beneath the volcanoes implies the

462   volume of modern deep-water volcanoes, which are typically quantified by bathymetric surveys,

463   may be grossly underestimated as the volcanoes may not have a flat, seabed-parallel base. In this

464   study, most of the deep-water volcanoes have edifice volumes less than the underlying craters.

465   Our growth models suggest the morphology of the studied deep-water volcanoes were primarily

466   controlled by the high hydrostatic pressure occurring in the deep-water setting, the volatile-poor

467   nature of the parent magma, and variable magma supply due to the post-rift tectonic setting. In

468   particular, these factors led to erupted material primarily accumulating near the summit and on

469   the upper flanks of the volcanoes, meaning they have relatively smaller sizes (basal diameters,

470   heights and volumes) and are characterized by slopes steeper than that typically seen in their

471   subaerial, shallow-water, and deep-water arc-related counterparts. This study adds a unique

472   dataset to the global database of submarine volcano morphologies. Moreover, this study also

473   highlights that 3D seismic surveys could help revise previous estimates of submarine volcano or

474   seamount volumes and morphologies, and further our understanding of submarine volcanoes that

475   are already relatively-well studied.

476

485

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621

622

623   **Figure Captions**

624

625   Figure 1: (a) Geological setting of the study area. Red polygonal line located to the south of

626   Dongsha Islands is the 3D seismic survey. Top left: regional setting of the South China Sea. It is

627   bounded by the Red River Strike-slip faults (RRFs) to the west and by the subduction trench

628   (Manila Trench) to the east. Northern South China Sea is marked with black square. Igneous rocks

629   with ages from exploration wells and seamount dredges are marked with blue circles/rings (Jin,

630   1989; Li and Liang, 1994; Zou et al., 1995). Crustal structure profiles (OBS1993 (Yan et al., 2001)

631   and OBS2006-3 (Wei et al., 2011)) are marked with pink solid lines. ODP sites 1145 and1146,

632   IODP site U1501 and location of Figure 3 are also labeled. The base map is modified from Yang

633   et al. (2015) and Sun et al. (2019); (b) and (c) Regional seismic strata of the study area. Volcanic

634   materials are mainly located in the shallow level (0-300 m) of post-rifting strata. See location in

635   (a).

636

637   Figure 2: (a) Schematic diagram of the calculation method for igneous velocity within the volcano

638   and surrounding sediments; (b) Schematic diagram of geomorphic parameters measured in this

639   study, using an example volcano with an identified crater-like base and overlying edifice. Note

640   that the travel-time distances between the volcano summit and its base (Ts), or the top of the

641   velocity pull-up (Ti), were measured *within* the volcano edifices.

642

643   Figure 3: (a) Present seabed morphologies of the study area, interpreted from the 3D seismic data.

644   The landmark areal projections of buried or partly buried volcanoes are marked; (b) Thickness

645   (and thus, height) of volcano edifices in the study area; (c) Thickness (and thus, depth) of volcano

646   craters in the study area; (d) Total thickness of the volcanoes, calculated from the vertical addition

647   of (b) and (c). The boundaries of merged volcanoes are marked. 100 ms (twt) = ~200 m.

648

649   Figure 4: (a) - (d): Seismic characteristics of volcanoes (GP1). (a) Volcano 9 (V9) and its line

650   drawing; (b) Volcano 12 (V12) and its line drawing; (c) Volcano 1 (V1) and its line drawing; (d)

651   Volcano 7 (V7) and its line drawing. (e) - (f): Seismic characteristics of volcanoes (GP2). (e)

652   Volcano 8 (V8) and its line drawing; (f) Volcano 6 (V6) and its line drawing. 150 ms (twt) for

653   volcano is equal to ~300 m. TV = top of volcano; PS = present seabed (solid pink line); PLS =

654   paleo-seabed (solid green line); IS = inferred present seabed (dashed pink line); SF1 = seismic

655   facies 1; SF2 = seismic facies 2; VE. = vertical exaggeration. See locations in Fig. 3a.

656

657   Figure 5: 3D seismic profile crosses through V8, V9 and V10. The igneous pathways underneath

658   the volcanoes are narrow, vertical structures (dashed arrows) and the surrounding strata are

659   slightly pushed upward, suggesting them probably as dykes. VE. = vertical exaggeration. See

660   location in Fig. 3a.

661

662   Figure 6: Geomorphologic parameters of deep-water volcanoes (gray solid circles; this study),

663   shallow-water volcanoes (pink squares; Magee et al., 2013), subaerial arc volcanoes (green

664   triangles; Grosse et al., 2009), submarine arc volcanoes (grey cross; Wright et al., 2006) and ocean

665   volcanoes (blue rhombus; Smith, 1988). (a) Height vs diameter; (b) Dip vs diameter; (c) Dip vs

666   height; (d) Diameter vs volume; (e) Height vs volume; (f) Dip vs volume; The deep-water

667   volcanoes in this study have different trends (slopes) to other types. The errors of geomorphologic

668   parameters of volcanoes in the study area are from the ranges of volcano velocities.

669

670   Figure 7: (a)-(f): Geomorphologic characteristics of the craters of deep-water volcanoes in this

671   study. (a) Depth vs diameter (crater); (b) Dip vs diameter (crater); (c) Dip (crater) vs depth; (d)

672   Depth vs volume (crater); (e) Diameter (crater) vs volume (crater); (f) Dip (crater) vs volume

673   (crater). (g)-(i): Geomorphologic characteristics between the volcano edifices and craters of deep-

674   water volcanoes. (g) Height vs depth; (h) Diameter (crater) vs diameter (edifice); (i) Volume

675   (crater) vs volume (edifice); (j)-(l): Geomorphologic characteristics of the total volcanoes. (j)

676   (Height + depth) vs average diameter; (k) (Height + depth) vs total volume; (l) Average diameter

677   vs total volume.

678

679   Figure 8: Volcano growth models. (a) Model of deep-water volcano growth (GP1; purple dashed

680   lines) with preferentially vertical aggradation of the edifice flanks; (b) Model of shallow-water

681   volcano growth (red dashed lines) through a proportional increase in summit height and basal

682   diameter (offshore southern Australia; Magee et al., 2013); (c) Model of shallow-water volcano

683   growth (green dashed lines) where summit height increases, whilst basal diameter remains

684   consistent (offshore southern Australia; Magee et al., 2013); (d) Model of shallow-water and

685   subaerial pioneer cones of hyaloclastite mounds (dark blue dashed lines) where the basal diameter

686   increases, whilst the summit height remains consistent (western Indian rifted margin; Calvès et

al., 2011); (e) Model of subaerial shield volcano growth (orange dashed lines) involving a proportional increase in summit height and basal diameter, which is disrupted by a short stage of preferentially lateral progradation of the edifice flanks (Iceland, Rossi, 1996). (f) The expected trends in summit or basal diameter plotted against volcano volume and average flank dip for all models (a-d).

Figure 9: Cartoon showing proposed three-stage evolution of GP1 volcanoes (see text for details). GP2 volcano growth may be akin to Stage 3. SF1 = Seismic facies 1; SF2 = Seismic facies 2; MP = Possible magmatic intrusions.

698　　**Table Caption**

699

700　　Table 1: Geometrical parameters of the edifices and craters of volcanoes. (1) = water depth of the

701　　seabed where the volcanoes emplace or emplace underneath it (W.D.); (2) = sediment thickness

702　　overlying the buried volcanoes (Th.).

703

704   Figure 1

Figure 1

707   Figure 2


Figure 2. (a) and (b)

710 Figure 3

711

712 Figure 4

713
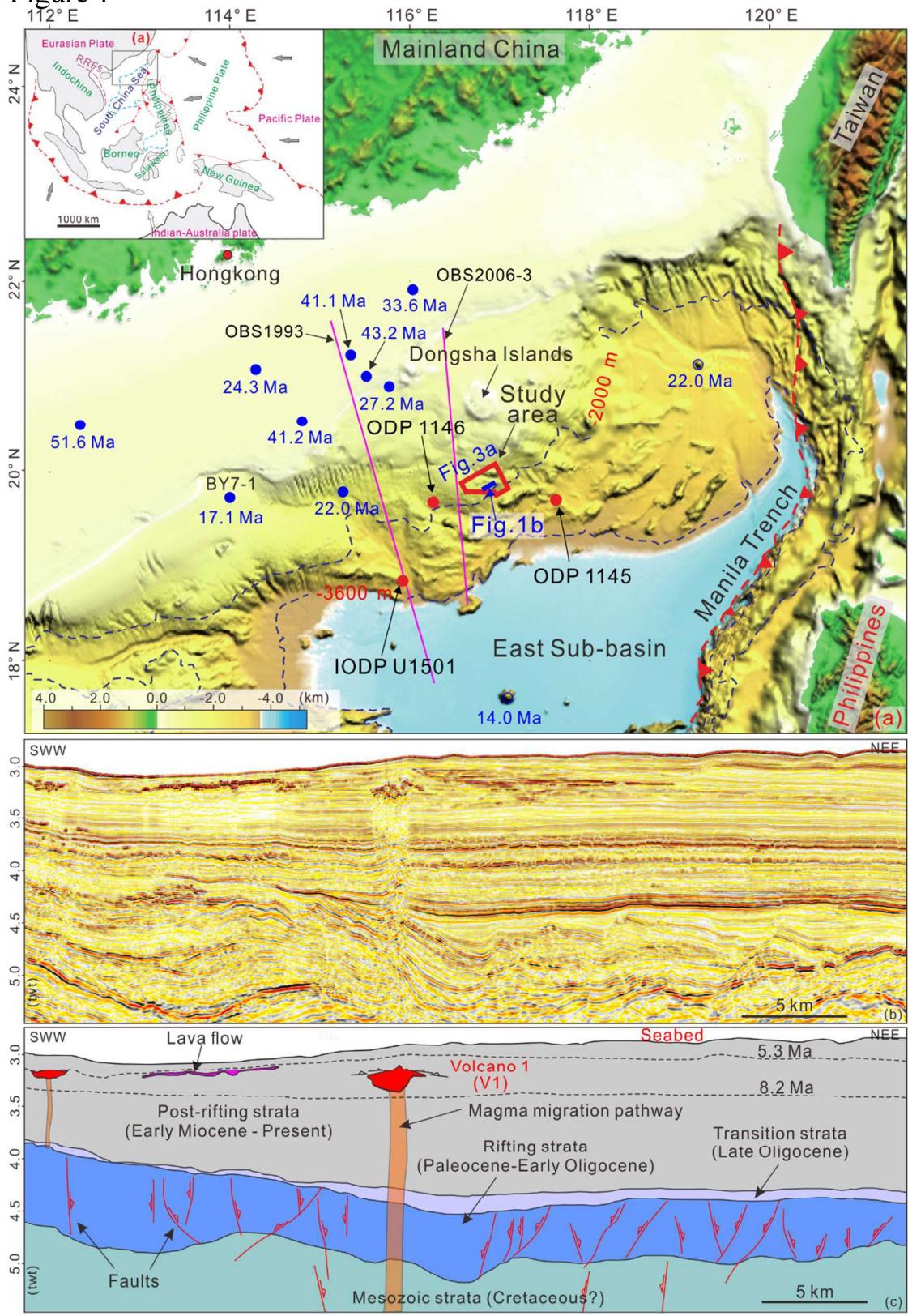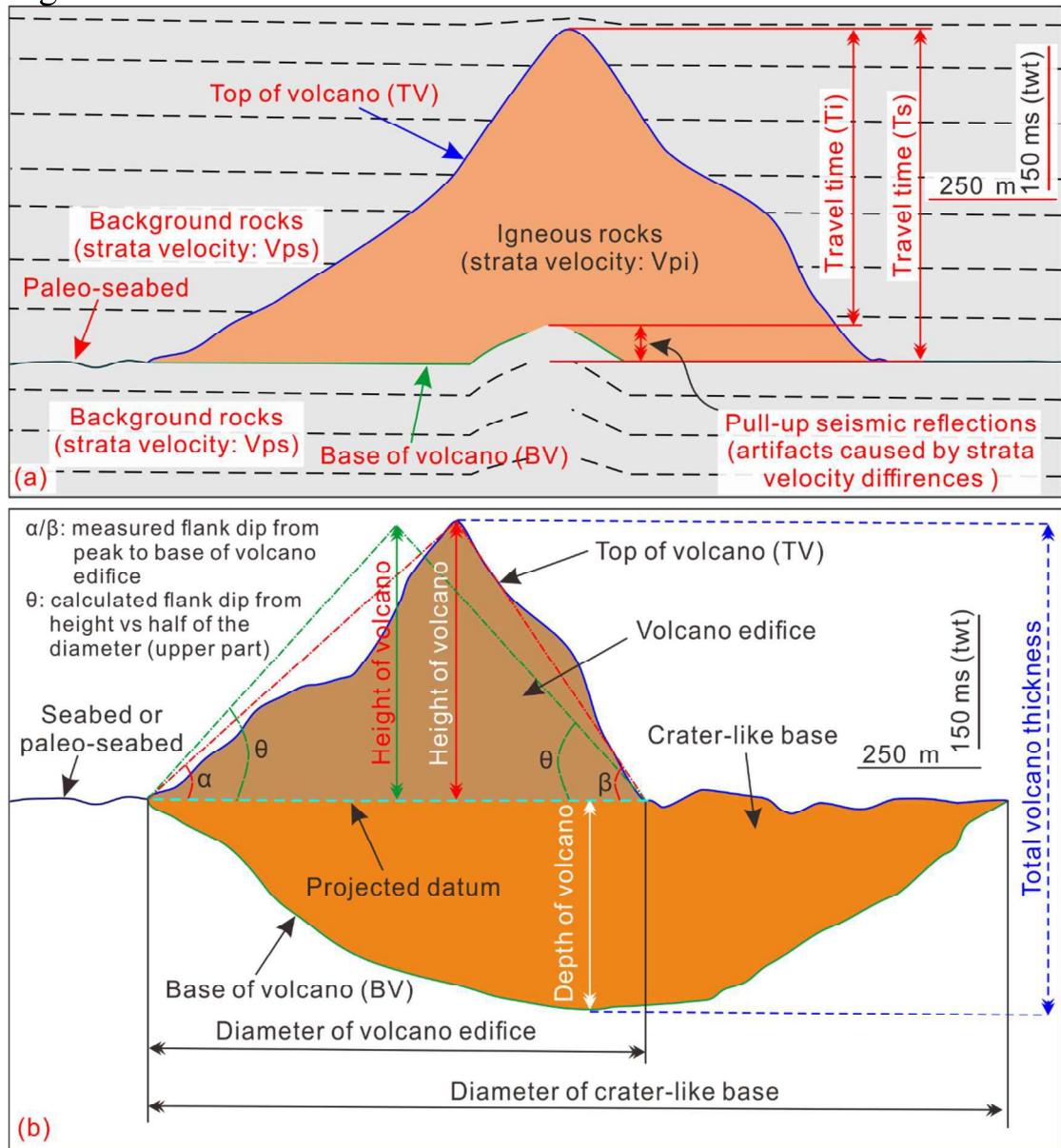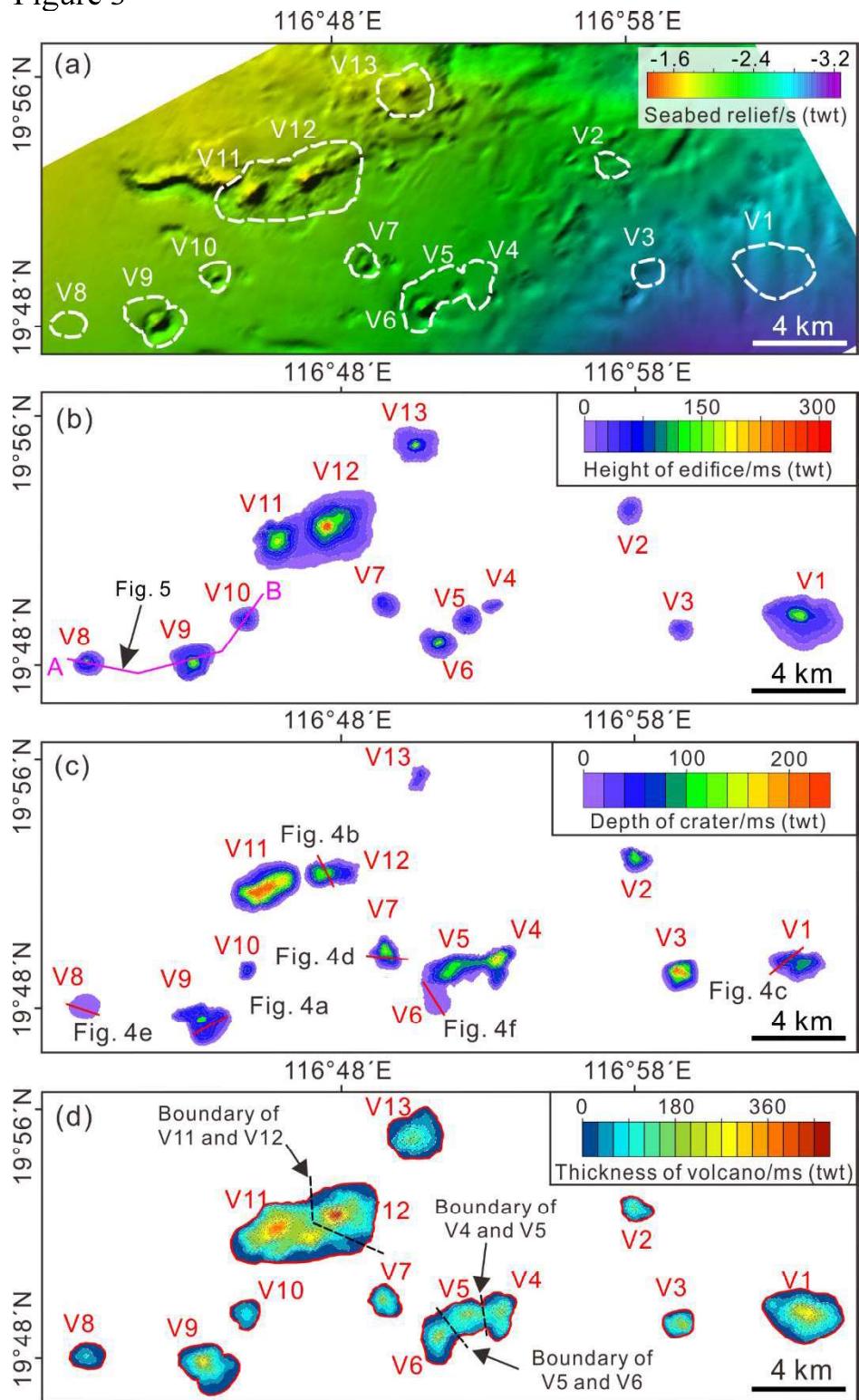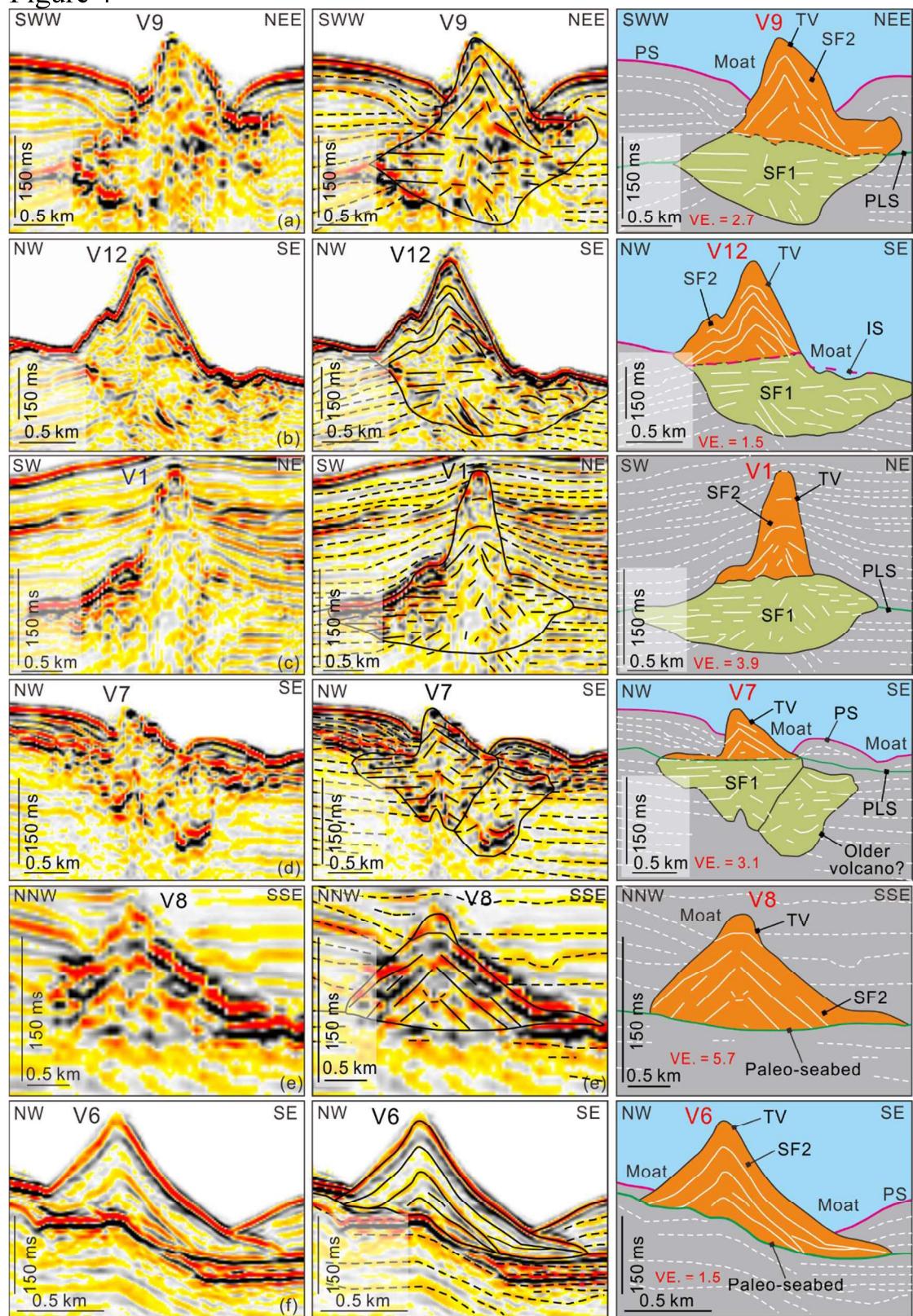
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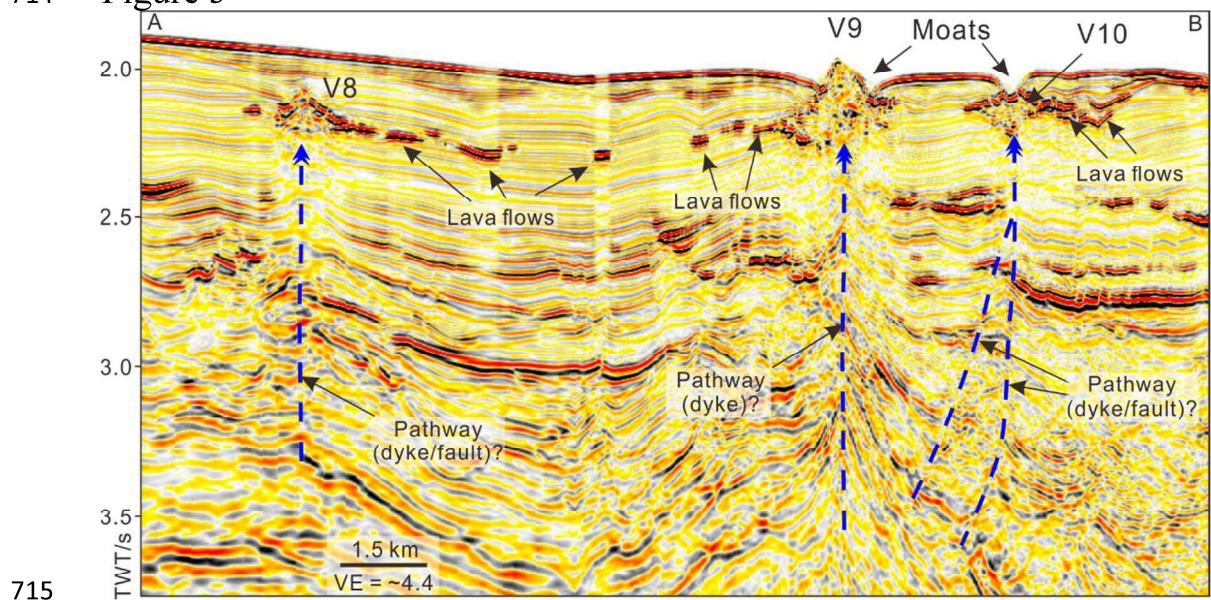
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716   Figure 6

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719   Figure 7

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722 Figure 8

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725 Figure 9

Volcanoes	General parameters		Geometrical parameters of edifices						Geometrical parameters of craters		
No.	W. D./km(1)	Th./m(2)	Diameter/km	Area/km²	Height/m	Min. dip/°	Max. dip/°	Volume/km³	Diameter/km	Depth/m	Volume/km³
V1	2.25	264.0	3.0	7.15	404±101	11	19	0.92±0.23	3.0	129±32	0.26±0.06
V2	2.14	110.0	0.8	0.44	134±34	15	24	0.04±0.01	0.8	142±35	0.01
V3	2.21	88.0	0.8	0.44	140±35	16	25	0.02	0.8	235±59	0.01
V4	1.83	82.5	0.6	0.25	207±52	29	43	0.02	1.3	208±52	0.06±0.01
V5	1.80	165	1.1	0.92	262±66	20	31	0.08±0.02	2.3	313±78	0.44±0.11
V6	1.65	55.0	1.2	1.21	560±140	34	48	0.22±0.05	--	--	--
V7	1.58	104.5	0.8	0.50	235±59	24	36	0.04±0.01	1.1	217±54	0.13±0.03
V8	1.37	121.0	0.9	0.70	235±59	20	32	0.05±0.01	--	--	--
V9	1.49	247.5	1.6	2.08	467±117	23	36	0.31±0.08	1.6	218±55	0.65±0.16
V10	1.46	115.5	1.0	0.82	79±20	7	11	0.02	1.0	87±22	0.03±0.01
V11	1.37	33.0	2.4	4.37	323±81	12	19	0.45±0.11	4.6	410±103	0.81±0.20
V12	1.35	33.0	1.2	1.12	544±136	34	49	0.19±0.05	1.7	517±129	0.21±0.05
V13	1.36	22.0	1.1	0.89	274±69	21	33	0.07±0.02	1.1	177±44	0.07±0.02

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