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2 Determining erosion rates in Allchar (Macedonia)
3 to revive the lorandite neutrino experiment

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Abstract

²⁰⁵Tl in the lorandite (TiAsS₂) mine of Allchar (Majdan, FYR Macedonia) is transformed to ²⁰⁵Pb by cosmic ray reactions with muons and neutrinos. At depths of >300m, muogenic production would be sufficiently low for the 4.3 Ma old lorandite deposit to be used as a natural neutrino detector. Unfortunately, the Allchar deposit currently sits at a depth of only 120m below the surface, apparently making the lorandite experiment technically infeasible. We here present 25 erosion rates estimates for the Allchar area using in-situ produced cosmogenic ³⁶Cl in carbonates and ¹⁰Be in alluvial quartz. The new measurements suggest long term erosion rates of 100-120 m/Ma in the silicate lithologies that are found at the higher elevations of the Majdanska River valley, and 200-280 m/Ma in the underlying marbles and dolomites. These values indicate that the lorandite deposit has spent most of its existence at depths of >400m, sufficient for the neutrinogenic ²⁰⁵Pb component to dominate the muon contribution. Our results suggest that this unique particle physics experiment is theoretically feasible and merits further development.

1 Introduction

When four hydrogen nuclei (protons) fuse to form one helium nucleus in the solar core, two of them convert to neutrons, releasing two neutrinos in the process. One of the definitive tests of this so-called Standard Solar Model is to measure the flux of those neutrinos. In order to detect these elusive particles, physicists have devised a number of experiments that broadly fall into two categories.

One group of experiments (Sudbury Neutrino Experiment, Super-Kamiokande, IceCube, Borexino) measures the light that is emitted when neutrinos scatter off electrons in water or a scintillation fluid. A second group (Homestake, Gallex, Sage) measures the radiation produced by neutrino reaction products such as Ar, Ge, and B (Bahcall et al., 1996). Because neutrino interactions are so rare, most of these experiments are massive in size and cost, with only one notable exception.

In 1976, Melvin Freedman proposed that the reaction $^{205}\text{Tl}(\nu, e^-)^{205}\text{Pb}$ could form the basis of a natural neutrino detector with the following advantages over alternative experimental designs (Freedman et al., 1976):

1. Thanks to the relatively large nuclear cross section of the reaction and the 16 Myr half life of ^{205}Pb , sufficient amounts of the reaction product can accumulate over geologic time to be measured by (Shottky) mass spectrometry on a sample of just a few kilograms of thallium-bearing minerals such as lorandite (TlAsS_2).
2. The resulting neutrino flux is a long term average over geologic time that may be more informative than the snapshot view of solar activity provided by artificial detectors.
3. Tl is sensitive to a wider range of neutrino energies than any other detector.

The world's largest accumulation of Tl-bearing minerals, and the only one suitable as a neutrino detector, is found in the Allchar mine in the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia. This deposit contains an estimated 500 tonnes of thallium, mostly in the form of lorandite with a geologic age of 4.3 Ma (Neubauer et al., 2009). In 1983, the international LOREX (LORandite EXperiment) collaboration was set up with the aim to investigate the feasibility of Freedman's idea (Pavićević, 1988). It was quickly realised that the Achilles heel of the proposal was the relatively shallow depth (120m) of the Allchar mine (Neumaier et al., 1991).

Besides neutrino reactions, a second production mechanism for ^{205}Pb is by cosmic ray muons. Whereas ^{205}Pb production by neutrinos is effectively independent of depth, the muon flux decreases exponentially with depth. But at 120m, the (fast) muon pathway still produces a significant background signal of ^{205}Pb . This paper shows that the burial depth of the lorandite may have been significantly greater in the past, because 4.3 million years worth of erosion may have removed a significant amount of overburden. The erosion rate, and hence the magnitude of the muogenic ^{205}Pb contribution, may be estimated by analysing other cosmogenic nuclides such as ^{36}Cl and ^{10}Be .

In 1991, the steady-state erosion rate of the Allchar area was estimated by a single ^{36}Cl measurement in limestone (Dockhorn et al., 1991). The ^{36}Cl concentration was found to be high, leading to the conclusion that erosion had been negligible, and that the lorandite had spent most of its 4.3 Ma lifetime at or near a depth of 120m. This conclusion all but terminated the geological neutrino detector and the physics community moved on to other experiments. This paper raises several issues with the Dockhorn et al. (1991) study, suggesting that the lorandite project may have been aborted prematurely (Section 2).

Pavićević et al. (2016) recently conducted a cosmogenic $^{36}\text{Cl} - ^{21}\text{Ne} - ^{26}\text{Al}$ study to re-evaluate the erosion rates in the Allchar area. They estimated erosion rates to fall in the 50-100 m/Ma range, which is much higher than the values obtained by Dockhorn et al. (1991). Unfortunately, the Pavićević et al. (2016) study

73 suffers from two methodological issues. First, it primarily focuses on the two lorandite-bearing mines (Crven
74 Dol and Centralni Deo, Figure 1), which were considered to be the most relevant to the neutrino experiment.
75 These sites also suffer from significant anthropogenic disturbance. This intrinsically leads to over-estimated
76 erosion rates. Second, Pavićević et al. (2016) chose not to report any of their ^{10}Be results because “*the*
77 *nominal erosion rates calculated on the basis of these ^{10}Be AMS measurements were considerably smaller*
78 *than those obtained on the basis of ^{21}Ne , ^{26}Al , and ^{36}Cl concentrations*”. We find this line of reasoning to be
79 questionable, because ^{10}Be is generally considered to be the most reliable and least problematic cosmogenic
80 nuclide.

81
82 To improve on these previous research efforts, we here present the results of a thorough cosmogenic nuclide
83 investigation combining ^{36}Cl and ^{10}Be measurements in carbonates and quartz from bedrock samples and
84 Majdanska River sediments (Sections 3-5). This two-pronged approach allows us to quantify the spatial
85 variability of apparent erosion rates that may have affected previous erosion rate studies (Dockhorn et al.,
86 1991; Pavićević et al., 2016), whilst simultaneously providing us with more robust catchment-wide erosion
87 rate estimates (Section 6).

88 2 Previous erosion rate studies

89 Dockhorn et al. (1991) present the preliminary results of an uncompleted depth profile study. They report
90 the $^{36}\text{Cl}/\text{Cl}$ ratio of a single sample of carbonate collected from 23m depth at an undisclosed location. No
91 further compositional information is provided, although the total chlorine content of the sample is speculated
92 to have been overestimated. At a depth of 23m, the poorly constrained muogenic production of ^{36}Cl far
93 outweighs the much better constrained nucleogenic component. The lack of analytical detail and the subop-
94 timal sampling strategy put into question the value of this erosion rate estimate. Furthermore, cosmogenic
95 nuclide geochronology has greatly matured as a science since 1991.

96
97 A lot more is known now about the complex production systematics of ^{36}Cl in carbonates, including the
98 effect of thermal neutron reactions on ^{35}Cl (Bierman et al., 1995; Stone et al., 1998; Alfimov and Ivy-Ochs,
99 2009; Schimmelpfennig et al., 2009), and the first order effect of sample preparation on the meteoric ^{36}Cl
100 component (Merchel et al., 2008). These factors, if not accounted for, lead to an overestimation of the
101 spallogenic ^{36}Cl content. Thus, the erosion rates of the Allchar area may have been greatly underestimated
102 and ought to be re-evaluated using modern insights and methodologies.

103
104 In a recent study, Pavićević et al. (2016) presented a dataset of ^{26}Al (in quartz; 15 samples), ^{36}Cl (in
105 carbonate; 3 samples), ^3He (in pyroxene; 1 sample), and ^{21}Ne (in quartz, sanidine or pyroxene; 8 samples).
106 These samples were collected in bedrock directly above the two lorandite ore bodies (Crven Dol and Cen-
107 tralni Deo) in order to generate the most relevant erosion rate estimates for the lorandite neutrino project.
108 Double-dating of hydrothermal vein quartz with ^{21}Ne and ^{26}Al yielded discordant erosion rate estimates,
109 with an excess of stable ^{21}Ne relative to radioactive ^{26}Al . This discordance may be attributed to a complex
110 exposure history, or simply to the presence of nucleogenic or magmatic ^{21}Ne in the samples. Unfortunately,
111 no ^{10}Be measurements are reported that could distinguish between these two scenarios.

112
113 Pavićević et al. (2016) propose erosion rates of 50-100 m/Ma for the two lorandite localities, with indi-
114 vidual estimates covering a huge range from 20-370 m/Ma. This range does not allow a clear-cut decision
115 as to whether the long term erosion rate exceeds the 50 m/Ma cutoff required for the geological neutrino
116 detector to be feasible. We address this problem with a different sampling strategy that combines bedrock
117 samples and modern river sediments collected from the entire catchment area.

3 Sampling strategy

A two square kilometre area near the village of Majdan (41.157°N, 21.947°E) was combed out in search of suitable samples for cosmogenic nuclide analysis (Figure 1.a). The sampling strategy included four different kinds of sites:

1. The summits of the highest hills, which are covered by andesitic volcanics, and are expected to yield the lowest erosion rates.
2. Rare bedrock exposures in the canyons of tributaries to the Majdanska River that are carved out in dolomite and marble and are expected to yield the highest erosion rates.
3. Bedrock exposures on the steep slopes in between the above two settings, which consist of andesite, tuffs, marble and every conceivable reaction product of these end members.
4. Modern sand and gravel from the Majdanska River, which contain a wide range of lithologies including many quartz bearing phases (gneiss, granite). These are expected to yield intermediate erosion rates that are representative for the catchment-wide average of the area upstream of Majdan.

Unsurprisingly, we found that the vicinity of the lorandite ore bodies was severely affected by human activity. Thus, although these areas have the highest relevance to the proposed neutrino detector, they are the least well suited for cosmogenic nuclides studies as these require steady-state conditions. In contrast, the area between the Crven Dol and Centralni Deo sites has seen little anthropogenic disruption. We would argue that the apparent erosion rates from this area are more representative of the long term trends in the field area.

At each sampling location, the orientation of the sampled surface and the azimuth and elevation of the horizon were carefully measured, as these are needed to correct the ^{36}Cl and ^{10}Be concentrations for topographic shielding (Table 1). A total of 19 samples were collected, including 10 carbonates, 5 volcanic rocks, and 4 samples of modern river sediment (gravel and sand).

4 Methods

Upon their arrival in the UK, the hand specimens were cut into thick sections and their chemical and mineralogical composition were analysed by QEMSCAN (Quantitative Evaluation of Minerals by SCANNing electron microscopy, Allen et al., 2012) at UCL. This reveals that the interplay between recent volcanic activity and the carbonate basement has produced a wide diversity of lithologies in the field area. The carbonate samples exhibit the full range of compositions from nearly pure dolomite to nearly pure calcite. Meanwhile, the volcanic samples feature sufficiently large and abundant phenocrysts for cosmogenic ^{36}Cl analysis. After completion of the QEMSCAN analyses, all the samples were shipped to CEREGE for cosmogenic nuclide analysis using ^{36}Cl (18 samples) and ^{10}Be (6 samples).

Carbonate and silicate samples were crushed and sieved to 250-500 μm grain size. The magnetic fraction was removed from the silicate samples. Before any chemical treatment, whole rock sample splits were kept aside for analysis of the chemical composition by ICP-OES (major oxides) and ICP-MS (trace elements) at SARM-CRPG (Nancy, France). The samples were washed, and for the carbonates (silicates), 10 wt% (20 wt%) were etched of the grain surfaces by 2M HNO_3 (a mixture of concentrated HF and 2M HNO) and discarded. In case of the silicates, a 1 g split was taken from the resulting material for analysis of the major oxides (to know the concentrations of the target elements for ^{36}Cl production Ca, K, Ti and Fe) at SARM-CRPG. The carbonates and the remaining sample material of the silicates were dissolved after adding a spike enriched in ^{35}Cl .

In case of the carbonates, a split of this solution was taken for analyses of the target elements Ca and K by ICP-OES at CEREGE. AgNO_3 was added to precipitate AgCl , which was extracted and redissolved

163 with NH_3 . $\text{Ba}(\text{NO}_3)_2$ was added to precipitate BaSO_4 , which was filtered out and discarded. The pH was
164 lowered and AgCl precipitated once more, which was extracted and dried for measurement at the ASTER
165 Accelerator Mass Spectrometer (AMS) facility in CEREGE (Arnold et al., 2013).

166
167 Sediment samples were prepared similarly, but had the magnetic fraction removed in a Frantz separator
168 first, before dissolving the carbonate fraction as described above. The undissolved silicate minerals were
169 retained for Be measurement. Samples for ^{10}Be analysis were crushed, sieved and washed. The magnetic
170 fraction was removed by Frantz magnetic separator. Carbonate was removed with HCl . The grains were
171 then leached in a mixture of HCl and H_2SiF_6 . Atmospheric ^{10}Be was removed by etching 3 times ~ 10 wt%
172 off the surface of the remaining quartz grains with HF .

173
174 A ^9Be carrier was added to the residuum which was subsequently dissolved in hydrofluoric acid. HF
175 was evaporated and the sample redissolved in HCl . Raising the pH by addition of NH_3 yielded $\text{Be}(\text{OH})_2$
176 precipitate which was separated, dried, and redissolved with HCl . Fe and Mn were removed by ion exchange
177 columns loaded with DOWEX 1 \times 8 resin. Beryllium was recovered and $\text{Be}(\text{OH})_2$ precipitated with NH_3 ,
178 separated, and dried again. The samples were redissolved in HCl , and loaded onto ion exchange columns
179 of DOWEX 50W \times 8 resin. B was removed, and finally Be recovered, precipitated, centrifuged, redissolved
180 in HNO_3 and finally dried down in porcelain crucibles. The samples were oxidised to BeO in a furnace at
181 700°C , before preparation for AMS analysis at ASTER (Arnold et al., 2010).

182
183 Erosions rates were inferred from the ^{36}Cl and ^{10}Be data using the spreadsheet of Schimmelpfennig
184 et al. (2009) and CosmoCalc version 3.0 (Vermeesch, 2007). Production rates were determined using
185 the scaling model of Stone (2000), assuming Sea Level and High Latitude (SLHL) spallation values of
186 $42.2 \text{ at}^{[36}\text{Cl}]/(\text{g}[\text{Ca}]\cdot\text{yr})$ for Ca (Schimmelpfennig et al., 2011), $148.1 \text{ at}/(\text{g}\cdot\text{yr})$ for K (Schimmelpfennig et al.,
187 2014), $13 \text{ at}/(\text{g}\cdot\text{yr})$ for Ti (Fink et al., 2000), and $1.9 \text{ at}/(\text{g}\cdot\text{yr})$ for Fe (Stone et al., 2005). Catchment-wide
188 erosion rates for samples 11, 15, 17 and 20 were calculated using the average latitude and elevation obtained
189 from a digital elevation model (von Blanckenburg, 2005), using only the area occupied by carbonates and
190 quartz-bearing rocks for ^{36}Cl and ^{10}Be , respectively.

191 5 Results

192 The Allchar deposit is located in the catchment of the Majdanska River, which is underlain by Triassic
193 dolomite, and andesitic lavas and rhyolitic tuffs of Pliocene age (Figure 1.b). The dolomite has undergone
194 various degrees of contact metamorphism and hydrothermal alteration. This is reflected in the chemical
195 and mineralogical composition, as determined by QEMSCAN and ICP-OES/MS (Table 2). Carbonate rocks
196 range from the original dolomite to completely recrystallised marbles made of pure calcite. ^{35}Cl concentra-
197 tions follow a bimodal distribution, with the marbles containing an order of magnitude more Cl than the
198 dolomites (2-9 vs. 39-58 ppm, Table 2). Thermal neutron-producing U and Th is only present in rhyolitic
199 tuff samples 5 and 6.

200
201 All samples yielded measurable amounts of ^{36}Cl (in carbonates and silicates, Table 2) and ^{10}Be (in
202 quartz, Table 3). ^{36}Cl concentrations range from $28\text{-}393 \times 10^3 \text{ at/g}$, except for sample 10, which contains a
203 much higher $25 \times 10^6 \text{ at/g}$ with a 30% analytical uncertainty at 1σ . Because of this high uncertainty and the
204 fact that the ^{36}Cl concentration exceeds the secular equilibrium value, sample 10 is not considered further
205 in this paper.

206
207 Similarly, the relatively high U, Th and Cl content of samples 5 and 6 is incompatible with their low ^{36}Cl
208 concentration. Thermal neutrons produced by U and Th are expected to be absorbed by ^{35}Cl to generate
209 excess ^{36}Cl (Alfimov and Ivy-Ochs, 2009). However, no such excess is observed in samples 5 and 6 and so
210 the only way to obtain a finite erosion rate is to assume a physically implausible zero crystallisation age for
211 this rhyolitic material.

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On a different note, it is useful to point out that samples 5 and 6 were collected at the same location, at depths of 40 and 110 cm below the surface respectively. Thus, these two samples form a depth profile of sorts. As expected, the ^{36}Cl concentration of the shallow sample exceeds that of the deeper sample (50 vs. $28 \times 10^3 \text{at/g}$, Table 2) with the difference agreeing very well with a simple exponential trend. This, again, appears to be incompatible with the thermal neutron production mechanism, which would exhibit a ‘bulge’ at shallow depths (Schimmelpfennig et al., 2009). Apart from samples 5, 6 and 10, all other samples are retained for further interpretation.

The exposure history of the Majdanska River Valley is poorly understood. Although the Balkan peninsula is known to have experienced extensive glaciation during the last Ice Age (Menkovic et al., 2004) and the Majdanska River valley bottom is reportedly covered by ‘Pleistocene glacial deposits’ (Figure 1.b), previous studies have assumed that the ice did not reach the < 1000 m elevations of the Allchar mines (Pavićević et al., 2016). The V-shaped morphology of the Majdanska River valley appears to support the latter scenario (Figure 1.a). Nevertheless, we will quantify the possible effect of glacial erosion by considering two end-member scenarios.

The first scenario assumes that the Allchar area was completely stripped clear by glacial ice, which retreated at 20 ka (= finite exposure scenario). The second scenario assumes an erosion steady-state, in which the field area was never covered by glacial ice. These two scenarios lead to minimum and maximum estimates for the long-term erosion rate, respectively (Table 2 and 3). Three measurements are incompatible with the finite exposure scenario, as they contain too much ^{36}Cl (for sample 7) or ^{10}Be (for samples 11c and 15c). For the remaining samples, the difference in erosion rate between the two scenarios is between 2 and 48%.

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6 Discussion

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With the exception of sample 10, the ^{36}Cl concentrations are invariably lower than in the Dockhorn et al. (1991) sample, and exhibit an order of magnitude in spacial variability, ranging from 28 to $393 \times 10^3 \text{at} [^{36}\text{Cl}]/\text{g}[\text{sample}]$. This variability is not surprising for bedrock samples, as the assumption of steady-state erosion is only approximately valid at best. Cosmogenic nuclides predominantly form in the upper 1-2 m below the surface and erosion is very variable at this scale.

Three samples contain too much ^{36}Cl (sample 7) or ^{10}Be (samples 11 and 15) to be compatible with a finite exposure history. Taken at face value, these concentrations argue against glacial erosion of the Majdanska River Valley during the last Ice Age and support the hypothesis of steady-state erosion. In order to further investigate the dispersion of the bedrock erosion rates, let us now partition the ^{36}Cl estimates into topographic and lithological categories (Figure 2).

As expected from the sampling strategy outlined in Section 4, samples collected from ridges exhibit the lowest erosion rates, with values ranging from 25 to 112 m/Ma and geometric¹ mean values of 54 and 100 m/Ma for the 20 ka exposure and steady-state erosion histories, respectively. In contrast, the bottom of small canyons hosting minor tributaries of the Majdan River exhibit the highest erosion rates (range: 339-915 m/Ma, means: 559-611 m/Ma).

Samples collected from the slopes between the ridges and the canyon bottoms are characterised by intermediate erosion rates (range: 109-456 m/Ma, means: 208-281 m/Ma). Similarly, catchment-wide erosion rates based on ^{36}Cl in the coarse fraction of modern sediment samples 11, 15 and 20, as well as bedrock sample 19 collected at the bottom of the main river channel also yield intermediate erosion rate estimates

¹The geometric mean is used because it is the natural average for strictly positive values and is less sensitive to outliers than the arithmetic mean.

259 (range: 66-648 m/Ma, means: 204-264 m/Ma).

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261 Grouping the bedrock samples according to lithology shows that by far the lowest ^{36}Cl -based erosion rate
262 estimates are observed in the hard andesites of samples 7 and 8 (25-89 m/Ma). At this point it is useful
263 to recall the observation that the calcite marble contains an order of magnitude less natural Cl than the
264 dolomite. This suggests that Cl is lost from dolomite during contact metamorphism. The low ^{35}Cl concen-
265 tration of the calcite reduces the importance of the thermal neutron production pathway of ^{36}Cl . We would
266 therefore expect the dolomite to contain more cosmogenic ^{36}Cl per gramme of Ca (spallation + thermal
267 neutron absorption) than the calcite (spallation only). This is indeed what is observed, with geometric mean
268 erosion rates of 282-358 m/Ma for the marble and 222-303 m/Ma for the dolomite.

269
270 The dispersion of the individual estimate around these mean values (84-864 m/Ma and 109-915 m/Ma,
271 respectively) is admittedly too high to draw any firm conclusions. But what is clear is that the effect of
272 thermal neutrons on the erosion rate estimates is at modest at best, because the difference between the
273 dolomite and the calcite would be much greater if it were not.

274
275 As expected, catchment-wide erosion rates based on ^{10}Be -in-quartz are consistently lower than the ^{36}Cl -
276 based estimates (in either bedrock or sediment). This indicates that silicate lithologies erode more slowly
277 than carbonates, a result that is entirely consistent with the ^{36}Cl concentrations in andesite discussed above.
278 Additionally, it is also useful to contemplate the fact that half life of ^{10}Be is more than four times longer
279 than that of ^{36}Cl . This means that ^{10}Be averages erosion rates over longer time scales than ^{36}Cl .

280
281 The lower ^{10}Be -based erosion rates could also be taken as evidence for an acceleration of the erosion
282 rates in the Majdanska River Valley over the past million years. Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess the
283 likelihood of this interpretation with the current data.

284
285 The ^{36}Cl concentrations in modern river sediments range from 69 to $155 \times 10^3 \text{at/g}$. This dispersion should
286 not surprise us given the small size of the area occupied by carbonate lithologies (13, 11 and 20km^2 for sam-
287 ples 11, 15 and 20, respectively), which may be insufficient to average the upstream heterogeneity in erosion
288 rates. This is made worse by the poor resistance to mechanical abrasion of the carbonate clasts, which
289 biases the detrital carbonate record to nearby sources. Contrastingly, the ^{10}Be concentrations of the fine
290 and the coarse fractions of samples 17 and 20 are remarkably consistent, with four aliquots all containing
291 $67\text{-}68 \times 10^3 \text{at}^{[10}\text{Be}]/\text{g}[\text{SiO}_2]$.

292
293 Samples 11 and 15 contain much more ^{10}Be . There is no satisfactory explanation for these values, although
294 two separate observations cast some doubt on their validity. First, the fact that only one size fraction was
295 analysed for these samples reflects the difficulty in finding sufficient high quality quartz for cosmogenic nuclide
296 analysis in this particular sample. Second, one cannot help but notice that that samples 11 and 15 were
297 collected immediately below the lorandite mining area (Figure 3), which has seen the greatest anthropogenic
298 disturbance. In any case, the striking consistency of the remaining four ^{10}Be erosion rate estimates has led
299 us to accept them as the most representative values for the long-term erosion rate of the Allchar area.

300 7 Conclusions

301 This study has re-evaluated the erosion rate of the Majdanska River Valley in southern Macedonia using
302 cosmogenic ^{36}Cl in carbonates from bedrock and modern river sediment, and ^{10}Be in fluvial quartz. Bedrock
303 samples exhibit the greatest range of erosion rate estimates, from 51 to 915 m/Ma, reflecting the small scale
304 variability of erosion rates in both time and space.

305
306 The order of magnitude range in erosion rates obtained from our study is not surprising. It is a result of
307 our sampling strategy, which specifically targeted the fastest (canyons) and slowest (ridges) landforms. This

308 is a very different situation from the study of Pavićević et al. (2016). Their results exhibit a similar degree
309 of dispersion to ours, but for unclear reasons.

310

311 In the presence of the observed levels of dispersion, it would be unwise to rely on a single sample of
312 bedrock to determine the erosion rate for the entire Allchar area, as was done by Dockhorn et al. (1991).
313 Samples collected on ridges, in canyons, and in the anthropogenically disturbed Crven Dol and Centralni
314 Deo mining areas are unlikely to yield reliable erosion rates. Carbonate samples collected on slopes and in
315 the Majdan River yield mutually consistent steady-state erosion values of 260-280 m/Ma.

316

317 ^{10}Be -derived catchment-wide erosion rate estimates for samples 17 and 20 are similarly consistent but
318 significantly lower at 113-125 m/Ma, again assuming an erosional steady-state. These samples were col-
319 lected upstream and downstream of the lorandite mining area, respectively, and constrain the erosion rate
320 of the quartz-bearing lithologies in the Majdanska River Valley, which occupy roughly twice as much of the
321 draining area as the carbonate lithologies.

322

323 The factor of two difference between the carbonate and silicate erosion rates is entirely consistent with the
324 local geology and geomorphology. Closer inspection of the topographic and geologic maps (Figure 1) reveals
325 that the quartz-bearing lithologies (sandstone, gneiss and rhyolite) occupy the higher elevations, whereas
326 the limestones are found in the valleys.

327

328 The Pliocene volcanics are currently found on either side of the Majdanska River Valley, at altitudes
329 of more than 850m, where they form a hard protective cap on top of the much softer Triassic carbonates.
330 It is likely that these Pliocene deposits once filled the valley itself, until they were removed by fluvial or
331 fluvio-glacial erosion. Once the Majdanska River cut through this hard layer and reached the comparably
332 soft carbonates, erosion would have accelerated to produce the deep valley that is currently observed. Under
333 this scenario, the ^{10}Be -based erosion rates represent the pre-incision values, whereas the ^{36}Cl -based erosion
334 rates represent the current erosion rates of the carbonate areas.

335

336 Conservatively extrapolating the ^{10}Be -derived values of 100-120 m/Ma over the 4.3 Ma lifespan of the
337 lorandite deposit at Allchar would suggest the removal of > 450 m of overburden. Adding this amount of
338 shielding to the present 120 m depth of the lorandite deposit would reduce the effect of the muogenic ^{205}Pb
339 contribution sufficiently to be able to see the neutrino component.

340

341 Importantly, a recent acceleration of the erosion rate as implied by the ^{36}Cl measurements would further
342 improve the prospects for the lorandite neutrino detector. This is because such an acceleration would mean
343 that the lorandite spent most of its existence at greater depths, only to be exhumed to the surface relatively
344 recently.

345

346 Jointly considering the entire body of our twenty-five new erosion rate estimates provides sufficient
347 evidence to discard the single ^{36}Cl measurement of Dockhorn et al. (1991). We would therefore urge the
348 physics community to re-evaluate the feasibility of the lorandite project. Much work remains to be done
349 to make Melvin Freedman's vision a reality (Pavićević et al., 2012). But given the unique advantages of
350 the geological neutrino detector, we would argue that the geological neutrino detector certainly deserves a
351 second chance.

352 **Competing interests**

353 We have no competing interests.

354 **Ethics statement**

355 This work did not involve any living organisms.

356 **Data accessibility**

357 The data are reported in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

358 **Authors' contributions**

359 PV conceived the study, obtained the funding, carried out the field work and wrote the paper, MR carried
360 out the fieldwork and the sample analyses, IS and LB contributed to the sample analyses and the data
361 interpretation, the ASTER team carried out the AMS measurements.

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439 **Figures**

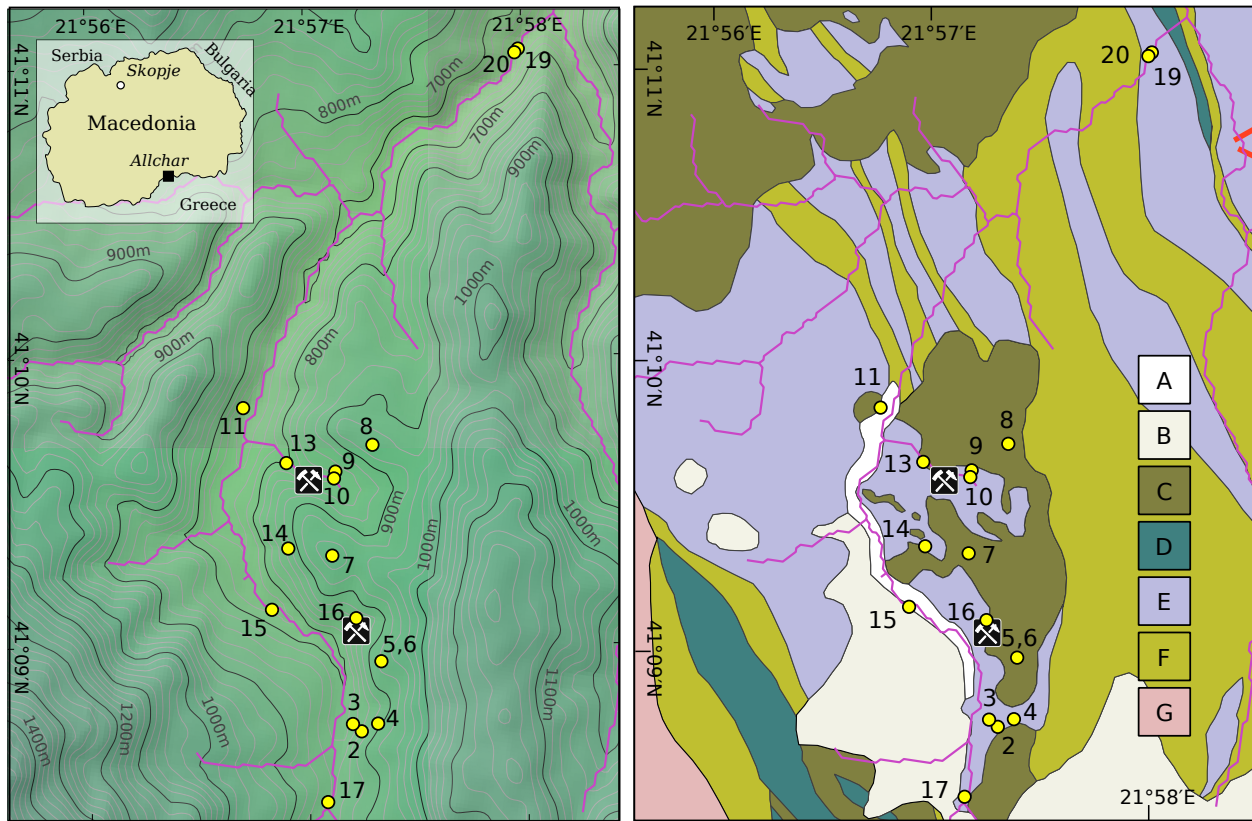


Figure 1: Topographic (left, Jarvis et al., 2008) and geologic map (right) of the Allchar area with indication of the Crven Dol (North) and Centralni Deo (South) mine locations, and the sample locations (yellow circles). A – modern alluvium, B – Quaternary sediments, including (fluvio-)glacial deposits, C – Pliocene andesites, rhyolites and tuffs, D – Jurassic serpentinites, E – Triassic limestones and dolomites, F – Mesozoic sandstones and slates, G – Precambrian gneiss.

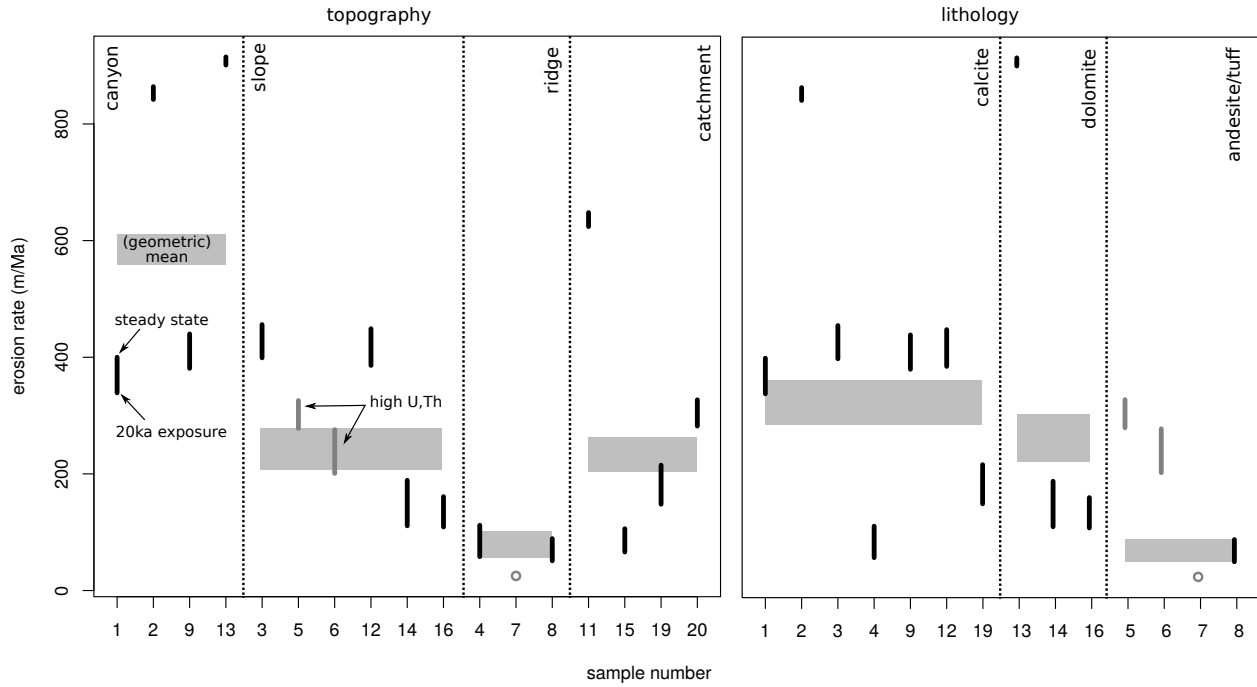


Figure 2: ^{36}Cl -based apparent erosion rates for the Allchar area grouped according to topographic location (left) and lithology (right). Vertical bars connect the erosion rate estimates assuming steady-state (top) and a 20 ka exposure history (bottom), respectively. Similarly, the geometric mean erosion rates are shown as boxes whose top and bottom margins correspond to the steady-state and finite exposure scenarios. Samples 5 and 6 contain high concentrations of thermal neutron-producing U and Th for which an erosion rate can only be calculated under the assumption of an unrealistic zero crystallisation age. Sample 7 contains too much ^{36}Cl to be compatible with the 20 ka exposure scenario.

440 **Tables**

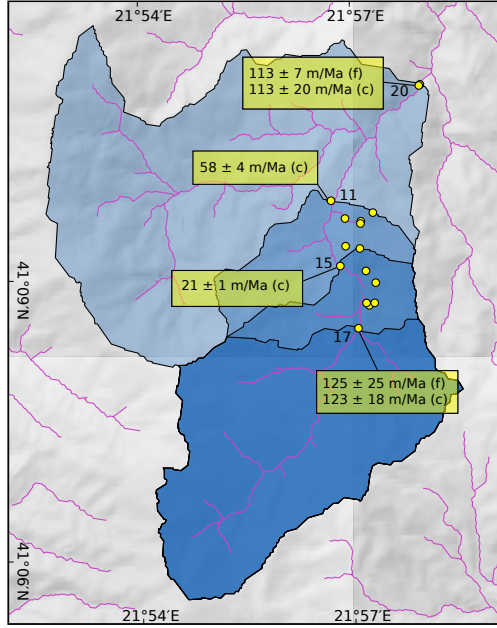


Figure 3: Catchment area of the Majdan River and its tributaries upstream of the four modern sediment samples, with indication of the ^{10}Be -based catchment-wide erosion rate estimates. (c) refers to the coarse and (f) to the fine fraction.

sample	location	lithology	ρ [g/cm ³]	lat	lon	elevation [m]	d [cm]	t [cm]	S_t
1	canyon	marble	1.70	41.1453	21.9565	913	0	4	0.968
2	canyon	marble	2.70	41.1451	21.954	870	0	6	0.952
3	slope	marble	2.70	41.1455	21.9533	844	0	5	0.960
4	ridge	marble	2.68	41.1455	21.9552	908	0	6	0.952
5	slope	tuff	1.86	41.1491	21.9555	940	40	10	0.922
6	slope	tuff	1.87	41.1491	21.9555	940	110	10	0.922
7	ridge	andesite	2.56	41.1552	21.9519	962	0	1	0.992
8	ridge	andesite	2.41	41.1616	21.9550	959	0	1	0.992
9	canyon	marble	2.70	41.1600	21.9522	831	0	5	0.960
10	slope	marble	-	41.1597	21.9521	837	0	7	0.944
11	sediment	sand/gravel	2.80	41.1638	21.9452	721/1151/1323	-	-	-
12	slope	marble	2.59	41.1643	21.9497	817	0	7.5	0.940
13	slope	dolomite	2.80	41.1606	21.9484	787	0	3	0.976
14	slope	dolomite	2.68	41.1556	21.9485	889	10	10	0.922
15	sediment	sand/gravel	-	41.1521	21.9472	779/1205/1347	-	-	-
16	slope	dolomite	2.76	41.1512	21.9532	847	0	10	0.922
17	sediment	sand/gravel	-	41.1410	21.9513	833/1249/1387	-	-	-
19	thalweg	marble	2.69	41.1843	21.9664	620	0	1	0.992
20	sediment	sand/gravel	-	41.1841	21.9662	614/1055/1259	-	-	-

Table 1: Sample locations. ρ is rock density, d sampling depth, t sample thickness, and S_t the topographic shielding factor (Vermeesch, 2007). Three elevations are given for the modern sediment samples, written as $x/y/z$ where x is the elevation of the sample location, y the average elevation of the upstream catchment area that is occupied by carbonates, and z the average elevation of the quartz-bearing parts of the catchment area.

sample #	CaO [wt%]	K ₂ O [wt%]	Fe ₂ O ₃ [wt%]	Cl [ppm]	Th [ppm]	U [ppm]	³⁶ Cl [×1000 at/g]	ε(20 ka) [m/Ma]	ε(∞) [m/Ma]
1	52	0	0	4.9	0	0	94(5)	339(17)	400(20)
2	54	0	0	4.8	0	0	41(3)	842(61)	864(62)
3	54	0	0	2.2	0	0	86(5)	399(28)	456(27)
4	56	0	0	2.0	0	0	361(12)	58(2)	112(4)
5	0.6	6.6	1.5	33	56	12	50(5)	276(35)*	324(41)*
6	0.5	6.4	0.9	16	56	12	28(3)	199(37)*	274(51)*
7	8.8	1.3	0.6	7.9	0	0	393(23)	-	25.0(2)
8	5.6	2.1	0	2.5	0	0	106(7)	51(4)	89(7)
9	56	0	0	2.7	0	0	85(4)	381(19)	440(22)
10	55	0	0	8.3	0	0	25322(7579)	-	-
11c	23	0	0	69	0	0	69(4)	624(39)	648(40)
12	56	0	0	0.7	0	0	84(4)	386(21)	449(25)
13	33	0	0	57	0	0	36(3)	901(87)	915(89)
14	32	0	0	48	0	1	232(11)	111(5)	189(9)
15c	15	0	0	39	0	0	155(7)	66(3)	106(6)
16	31	0	0	39	0	0	185(8)	109(5)	161(7)
19	56	0	0	8.9	0	0	169(6)	148(6)	215(8)
20c	21	0	0	69	0	0	109(5)	282(13)	327(15)

Table 2: Cosmogenic ³⁶Cl results. ε(20 ka) and ε(∞) represent the erosion rate estimates assuming a 20 ka exposure history and erosional steady-state, respectively. 11c, 15c and 20c refer to the coarse fraction of samples 11, 15 and 20. Erosion rates for samples 5 and 6 (marked by *) assume a(n unrealistic) zero crystallisation age and are not considered further. Chemical compositions refer to the solid (silicates) and liquid (carbonates) splits taken after etching. Bulk compositions of the silicate rocks prior to etching are provided in the Online Supplement.

sample #	¹⁰ Be [×1000 at/g]	ε(20 ka) [m/Ma]	ε(∞) [m/Ma]
11c	136(9)	-	58(4)
15c	371(16)	-	21(1)
17f	67(13)	114(22)	125(25)
17c	68(10)	112(16)	123(18)
20f	68(4)	101(6)	113(7)
20c	67(12)	101(18)	113(20)

Table 3: Cosmogenic ¹⁰Be results. 17f and 20f correspond to the fine fractions of samples 17 and 20, respectively. The high ¹⁰Be concentrations of samples 11 and 15 are incompatible with a 20 ka erosion history.