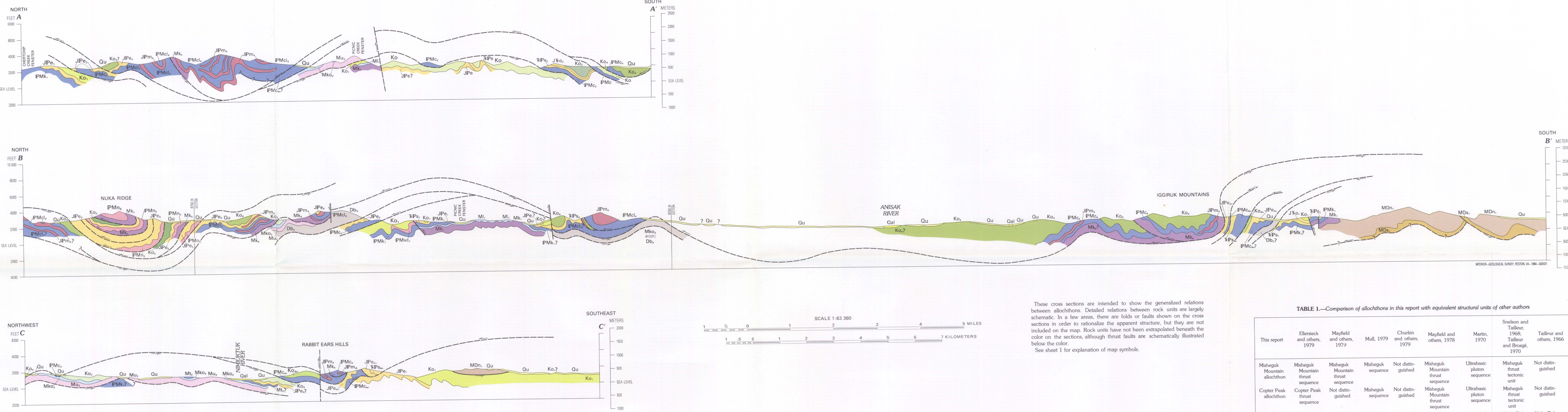


DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CROSS SECTIONS TO ACCOMPANY RECONNAISSANCE GEOLOGIC MAP OF SOUTHEASTERN MISHEGUK MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE, ALASKA

By
C. F. Mayfield, S. M. Curtis, Inyo Ellersieck, and I. L. Tailleux
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INTRODUCTION

This map is one of a series of three reconnaissance geologic maps of the southern Misheguk Mountain quadrangle (fig. 1). Because the geology in all three map areas is similar, a composite map explanation has been designed to facilitate their combined use and provide the reader with a better perspective of the regional geology. There are some rock units and allochthons which do not occur on all three maps. In the explanation, only the allochthons and rock units that appear on the accompanying map are colored.

Devonian to Cretaceous sedimentary rocks make up most of the bedrock in the southern part of the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle. We believe that these rocks were originally laid down as sedimentary deposits on an extensive continental platform located south of the rocks presently exposed in the southern Brooks Range. Marine deposition appears to have been nearly continuous, with only minor interruptions from the Devonian through Middle Jurassic. Upper Devonian rocks comprise two distinct and coeval sedimentary successions. One is mostly composed of shallow-water limestone and dolomite, mapped as the Baird Group, and the other is a near-shore clastic wedge, mapped as the Neotank Sandstone, Kanayuk Conglomerate, and Hunt Fork Shale. Mississippian rocks record a variety of sedimentary facies including shallow-water limestone and clastic rocks, mapped as the Koguk, Uluok, and Nuka Formations, and basinal shale, chert, and micritic limestone, mapped as the Kayak, Shale, Kuna Formation, Tugik Formation, black chert, and black chert and limestone. The rapid facies changes in Upper Mississippian rocks may have been produced by autogenic development across the previously formed Devonian and Early Mississippian continental platforms. We suspect that the middle or early Carboniferous was the time in which the granitic source area for the arkose in the Nuka Formation was rifted away from the south edge of the platform, leaving behind a wide continental shelf on which Pennsylvanian and younger sedimentary rock materials were deposited.

A major change occurred during the Late Mississippian or Pennsylvanian as clastic and shallow-water carbonate sedimentation ceased, and a condensed succession of deep-water sedimentary materials was deposited. From the Pennsylvanian to the Middle Jurassic, sediments were deposited over the older sedimentary rocks of the shelf. During the Late Jurassic and Early Cretaceous another major change in sedimentation occurred as this old continental shelf was broken up and successively superimposed in broad allochthonous sheets during the Brooks Range orogeny. In the early stages of the orogeny two distinct suites of igneous rocks predominantly composed of older pillow basalt, mapped as the Copter Peak igneous sequence, or peridotite and layered gabbro, mapped as the Misheguk igneous sequence, were thrust on top of the sedimentary rocks of the shelf. The new mountain range shed ex-sedimentary materials that were deposited on the north side of the Brooks Range and called the Oplinka Formation. As the area affected by tectonism grew larger, many of the Lower Cretaceous flyschoid deposits, with possible disclastic components of older rocks (Mull and others, 1976; Mull, 1979), also became greatly deformed and displaced by thrust faults.

The Late Jurassic and Early Cretaceous orogen produced numerous thrust faults with up to tens of kilometers displacement. In localized areas where thrust faults are closely spaced, the structure is so complex that the term can be characterized as a "broken formation" (Hsu, 1968). The direction of thrust juxtaposition was such that upper thrust sheets traveled relatively northward over lower sheets. Total displacement on these cross thrust faults was great enough to superimpose coeval rocks of different sedimentary units above and below. This difference is especially evident in Mississippian rocks, which appear to have had more complex facies patterns in their original basins of deposition than the younger rock units. Numerous tight folds, many with southward-dipping axial planes, were also developed in the rocks during the thrusting period. After the time of major thrust displacement (post-late Albian), additional tectonism warped the thrust sheets into broad folds but by some high-angle faults and relatively minor thrust faults.

In order to describe our understanding of the complex stratigraphy and structure in the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle, most rock units on this map are grouped into the named sequences and allochthons shown in figure 2. On this map, the word "sequence" is used as a stratigraphic term, meaning either a distinctive column of sedimentary rocks that were deposited contiguously and undisturbed, or a group of rocks that are of the same age and of wide geographic extent. Thrust sheets that contain the same or similar sequences are herein grouped together into structural units called "allochthons." In contrast, previous reports often use the same terms, such as "tectonic unit," "structural sequence," or "thrust sequence," for both lithostratigraphic and tectonostratigraphic units. This previous terminology can be confusing because there is commonly a lack of distinction between stratigraphic and structural terms. Table 1 compares the named allochthons on this map with analogous terminology used in other reports.

Various parts of the same sequence are commonly superimposed several times in sequence, so that each thrust sheet usually contains only part of a complete sequence. Thrust faults that separate thrust sheets with different sequences are mapped as "intrasquence thrust faults," and those that separate thrust sheets with the same sequence are mapped as "intersequence thrust faults."

Thrust sheets with the same sequence almost always occur in the same structural stacking position relative to thrust sheets with different sequences. This relation has permitted us to construct the generalized model for the stacking positions of the various allochthons and sequences shown in figure 2. This model shows the relative structural position of the allochthons, and a schematic east-west cross section of the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle shows the distribution of stratigraphic and igneous sequences within each allochthon. We believe that the simplest and most reasonable way to reconstruct the original depositional positions of the sequences is to unstack the allochthons in a regular manner such that upper allochthons are successively unstacked south of lower allochthons. When the sedimentary sequences are unstacked in this way, for sequences in the Nuka Ridge allochthon would have been deposited farthest to the south and the sequence in the Brooks Range allochthon farthest to the north. The igneous sequences of the Copter Peak and Misheguk Mountain allochthons were probably formed south of the sequences in the Nuka Ridge allochthon. The approximate relative locations of the sequences prior to thrust dislocation can be viewed on the right side of figure 2 (that right lower sequence is considered to have been located contiguously north of the adjacent sequence(s) above).

Although post-Early Cretaceous erosion removed large parts of the upper allochthons from the area, they were never continuous across the quadrangle, as shown on figure 2. Instead, the allochthons are commonly in the form of large lens-shaped bodies or folded sheets a few hundred meters to tens of kilometers across and a few meters to a kilometer or more in thickness. In most vertical sections some of the allochthons are absent and others are internally repeated by intrasequence thrust faults. Some allochthons thin or pinch out southward. These observed relations may indicate that parts of some sheets were displaced northward by gravity gliding that a complex folding and thrust faulting process operated.

In a few places a structurally lower allochthon, as shown in figure 2, appears to be locally thrust or folded over an allochthon known to be structurally higher in most of the region. For example, at the west end of the Pokovuk Mountains on the southwestern Misheguk Mountain quadrangle map (lat 68°15' N, long 161°20' W), the Ignavik River allochthon is thrust over the Copter Peak allochthon. Along the east side of upper Trail Creek on the south-central Misheguk Mountain quadrangle map (lat 68°30' N, long 160°20' W), the Ignavik River allochthon is thrust over the Ignavik River allochthon. Also, along the middle of the Ignavik River on the southeastern Misheguk Mountain quadrangle map (lat 68°25' N, long 159°29' W), the Kelly River allochthon is locally thrust or folded over the Ignavik River allochthon. See the appropriate geologic map or figure 3 for geographic locations. However, these examples cover only a small area on the map, and they appear to be unusual.

In addition to abrupt facies changes across intersequence thrust faults, there are also more gradual facies changes between some stratigraphic sequences that occur at similar structural levels. These changes are most commonly noticeable in the Upper Mississippian and Lower Pennsylvanian rocks. Where two similar sequences occur at about the same structural level, they were probably deposited contiguously and displaced about the same amount by thrust faults. In such cases, the two similar sequences are grouped into the same allochthon. For example, this kind of gradual facies change occurs in an approximate east-west direction between an eastern facies, the Endicott sequence (Mull, 1979) or footfalls sequence (Tailleur and others, 1966), and a western facies, the Key Creek sequence (this report) which compose the Brooks Range allochthon in the central and western Brooks Range (Mayfield and others, 1978). Within the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle, the Eli sequence and Kelly sequence are grouped into the same allochthon, because they are composed of similar sequences which occur at approximately the same structural level. Where the two sequences are in thrust-fault contact south of Ranak Creek (southeastern Misheguk Mountain quadrangle map), the Eli sequence is structurally higher, a relation which suggests that in this area, the Kelly sequence was deposited north of the Eli sequence. Facies changes not separated by thrust faults of major displacement also probably occur between the Picnic and Wulk sequences and the Ignavik and Nachalk Pass sequences. These are discussed in the next section.

Map symbols for rock units are numbered for easy identification of each allochthon. Each subunit number represents a different allochthon, and each lower case letter, a lithologic unit.

UNCERTAIN RELATIONS BETWEEN ALLOCHTHONS AND SEQUENCES

Where outcrops are poor or where facies changes may have been relatively rapid, continuity between sequences in similar structural positions may be difficult or impossible to establish. For example, the Picnic Creek allochthon has two lithologically similar stratigraphic sequences, called the Wulk and Picnic sequences. In the southern part of the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle, the Wulk sequence is mapped only west of long 161° W. Because the differences in these stratigraphic sequences are probably due to gradational facies changes, rather than separation by major thrust faults, they are mapped as separate sequences within the same allochthon.

Within the Ignavik River allochthon, mafic sills are rare west of the Kuguruk River and common east of the Kuguruk River. Sills are also rare in what appears to be a lower thrust sheet of the Ignavik River allochthon east of the Kuguruk River. The sequence of rocks with few mafic sills is called the Nachalk Pass sequence, and the one with numerous mafic sills is called the Ignavik sequence (fig. 2). These two similar sequences are distinguished within this allochthon, because the presence or absence of mafic sills could have important structural implications in some areas. The Nachalk Pass sequence is distinguished by map symbols that have the letter "n" following the allochthon number. For example, the black chert unit, identified as PM₁C₁ in the Nachalk Pass sequence is stratigraphically equivalent to the black chert rock unit identified as PM₁C₁ in the Ignavik sequence.

The Nachalk Pass sequence is also lithologically similar to the Picnic sequence, so much so that they are difficult to distinguish where the Kelly sequence does not occur between them. For example, in the central part of the Misheguk Mountain quadrangle, there is a possibility that these two sequences may be the same sequence which has been thrust into different structural levels. However, it is more likely that the Picnic and Nachalk Pass sequences were deposited respectively north and south of the Kelly and Eli sequences, with the Picnic sequence deposited near the Wulk sequence and the Nachalk Pass sequence deposited near the Ignavik sequence, as shown in figure 2.

The Bogie and Bastille sequences occur in the same structural level, beneath the Copter Peak allochthon (if it is present), and above the Ignavik River allochthon and other underlying allochthons. For this reason, both sequences are included in the Nuka Ridge allochthon. The two sequences, although similar in many respects, appear to have some stratigraphic differences. The Nuka Formation in the Bogie sequence is underlain by the Kayak Shale, whereas rocks in the Bastille sequence that are possibly coeval to the Nuka Formation are conformably underlain by limestone or silty and sandy limestone. The limestone unit (MD₁) underlying the Etahuk Group in the Bastille sequence has not been precisely dated with fossils and is assigned to age on the basis that it conformably overlies fossiliferous Devonian limestone and regionally correlates with Devonian and Mississippian limestone units in other sequences. Should further investigation locate fossil evidence that the Nuka Formation and the upper part of the limestone unit of the Bastille sequence are coeval, the age disparity would be removed. The two sequences might therefore have been deposited contiguously, with a local embayment of the Kayak Shale in parts of the Bogie sequence. However, should further investigations show that the limestone unit of the Bastille sequence is not younger than Devonian in age, then it is probable that the Nuka Formation and Kayak Shale were deposited above this limestone unit would make the Bogie and Bastille sequences a single sequence. Since rocks of the Bastille sequence and Nuka Formation are not found in contact with each other, their relative positions prior to thrusting are not known, and the trend of this possible facies change is uncertain.

The location of intrusion of the Misheguk igneous sequence ultramafic rocks into the Earth's crust relative to the location of extrusion of the Copter igneous sequence pillow basalts is uncertain. The contact between these sequences is always a thrust fault, with the Misheguk on top. No remnants of the Misheguk-type rocks are found within or at the lower contact of the Copter Peak allochthon. Although both the Copter Peak and Misheguk Mountain allochthons have been included in the dismembered ophiolites of Patton and others (1977), we find no evidence to indicate that these rocks are necessary of the same origin. The basement upon which the Copter Peak basalts were erupted is either a shallow-water basaltic sequence, or it is not preserved. The petrology of the Misheguk Mountain allochthon is typical of the lower parts of many ophiolites (Patton and others, 1977; Roeder and Mull, 1978; Zimmerman and Soule, 1979), indicating that it is probably a remnant of oceanic crust which lay south of the Arctic Alaska continental plate prior to the Brooks Range orogeny. The basalts which were probably erupted atop the Misheguk Mountain plutonic rocks have been eroded away and are no longer preserved in the quadrangle.

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Fossil Table

Table 2 is a list of the fossils which have been identified from the area encompassed by the southeastern Misheguk Mountain quadrangle geologic map. Most fossils were collected in the summer of 1979 during fieldwork for this mapping project. However, they also include previously unpublished fossil collections dating back to the 1960's. A few of the collections were made by geologists from the petroleum industry and collected by U.S. Geological Survey paleontologists.

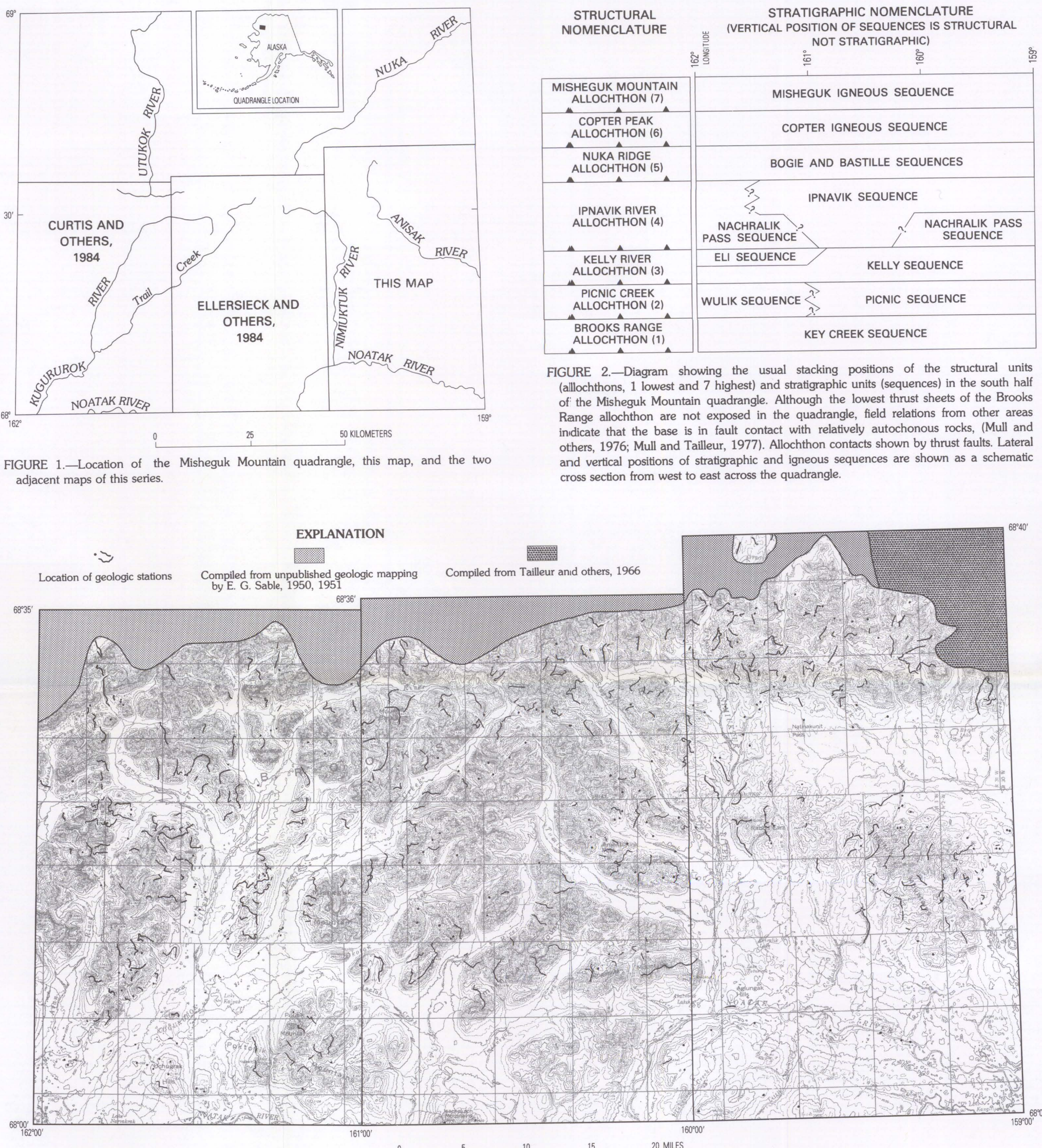


FIGURE 3.—Locations of field traverses used by the geologists who compiled this map and areas of geologic mapping from other studies which are reinterpreted for this report.