

Major Progress in China-UK Collaboration on the Causal Relationship between Volcanic Activity and Biological Distinction

Science carried a report recently on the collaborative results between research teams led by Prof. Paul Wignall of Leeds University and Prof. Lai Xulong of China University of Geosciences.

The research for the first time reveals that the 260-million-year-old Emeishan volcanic province of southwest China overlies and is interbedded with Middle Permian carbonates that contain a record of the Guadalupian mass extinction. Sections in the region thus provide an opportunity to monitor directly the relative timing of extinction and volcanism within the same locations. These show that the onset of volcanism was marked by both large phreatomagmatic eruptions and extinctions amongst fusulinacean foraminifers and calcareous algae. The temporal coincidence of these two phenomena supports the idea of a cause-and-effect relationship. The crisis predates the onset of a major negative carbon isotope excursion that points to subsequent severe disturbance of the ocean-atmosphere carbon cycle.

The research started in the year 2005 and has been long supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

• News in Brief •

NSFC Set Up “Research Fund for Young Foreign Scholars”

Recently, forty young foreign scholars from US, Britain, Germany, France and Japan obtained funding from the newly-set-up Research Fund for Young Foreign Scholars. The amount of funding was 7.4 million yuan RMB. These young scholars are from various scientific disciplines such as mathematics and physics, chemistry, life sciences, earth sciences, and engineering and material science. They will conduct research in 27 Chinese universities and 12 institutes of the Chinese academy of Sciences for six to 12 months.

Setting up of this fund is an important symbol of Chinese basic research system going international. Along with economic development, basic research conditions in China are continuously improving, and now capable of hosting foreign scholars doing research in China for long period of time.

Setting up of this fund is also a strategic measure for the future. It aims at attracting outstanding young foreign scholars to do basic research in China, building a bridge and a linkage of academic communications for younger generations in an increasingly opening up environment of basic research. This has great importance in fostering main force of international researchers doing scientific cooperation with China in the future.