Tie-points for Gondwana reconstructions from a structural interpretation of the Mozambique Basin, East Africa, and the Riiser-Larsen Sea, Antarctica

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ABSTRACT

Movements within early East Gondwana dispersal are poorly constrained and there is uncertainty about the position of the continent-ocean transition and the timing and directions of the rifting and earliest seafloor spreading phases. Here, we present a combined structural interpretation of multichannel reflection seismic profiles from offshore northern Mozambique (East Africa), and the conjugate Riiser Larsen Sea (Antarctica). We find similar structural styles at the margins of both basins. At certain positions at the foot of the continental slope, the basement is intensely deformed and fractured, a structural style very untypical for rifted continental margins. Sediments overlying the deformation zone are deformed and reveal toplap and onlap geometries, implying a post-breakup deformation phase. We propose this unique deformation zone as tie-point for Gondwana reconstructions. Accordingly, we
interpret the western flank of Gunnerus Ridge, Antarctica as a transform margin, similar to
the Davie Ridge offshore Madagascar, implying that they are conjugate features. As the
continental slope deformation is post-rift, we propose a two-phase opening scenario. a first
phase of rifting and early seafloor spreading, likely in NW-SE direction, was subsequently
replaced by a N-S directed transform deformation phase, overprinting the continent-ocean
transition. From previously identified magnetic chrons and the sediment stratigraphy, This
change of the spreading directions from NW-SE to N-S is suggested to have occurred by the
Late Middle Jurassic, around magnetic anomaly M38n.2n (~164 Ma). We suggest that the
second phase of deformation corresponds to the strike-slip movement of Madagascar and
Antarctica and discuss implications for Gondwana breakup.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mozambique Basin off East Africa and the conjugate Riiser-Larsen Sea off Antarctica
(Fig. 1) resulted from the Middle Jurassic separation of East Gondwana (Madagascar,
Antarctica, India and Australia) from West Gondwana (South America and Africa). However,
a consistent reconstruction of prerift configurations relies on the knowledge of the crustal
types and the location and structural style of the continent-ocean boundaries. Therefore, the
early movements within Gondwana are poorly constrained and there is a debate about the
timing and directions of the earliest rifting and spreading phases (e.g. Cox, 1992; Davis et al.,
2016; Eagles and König, 2008; Jokat et al., 2003; Leinweber and Jokat, 2012; Marks and
Tikku, 2001; Martin and Hartnady, 1986; Nguyen et al., 2016; Phethean et al., 2016; Reeves,
2014, Reeves et al., 2016; Roeser et al., 1996; Smith and Hallam, 1970; Torsvik and Cocks,
2013). The Mozambique Basin is of special importance for Gondwana reconstructions, as two
end-members of rifted margins, a volcanic rifted and a transform margin can be studied in
close relationship. In the Mozambique Basin, the transition from the SW-NE trending rifted
margin to the N-S trending transform margin along the Davie Ridge (Fig. 1) remains poorly
studied. Existing studies focus mostly on the sedimentary infill of the Mozambique Basin
(e.g. Castelino et al., 2015; Mahanjane, 2014; Salman and Abdula, 1995), or on the crustal structure in the western and central parts of the Mozambique Basin (e.g. Leinweber et al., 2013; Mahanjane, 2012; Müller and Jokat, 2017; Mueller et al., 2016). While it is generally accepted that the Riiser-Larsen Sea is the conjugate of the Mozambique Basin (e.g. Jokat et al., 2003; Nguyen et al., 2016), it remains much less well studied in spite of an available set of modern geophysical data (e.g. Hinz et al., 2004; Leitchenkov et al., 2008; Roeser et al., 1996).

In this study, we present a combined structural interpretation of new and published multichannel reflection seismic profiles from different datasets. We concentrate on offshore Mozambique (East Africa), in the vicinity of the Davie Ridge, and the conjugate Riiser Larsen Sea (Antarctica) at the transition from the rifted margin to the Gunnerus Ridge (Fig. 1). We compare the structural configuration of the basement and the earliest postrift sediments. The main outcome of this study is a zone of deformed and fractured basement at the foot of the continental slope at both margins. The sediments overlying the deformation zone are deformed, revealing a post-breakup deformation phase. We provide evidence that these unique structures can serve as tie-point for Gondwana reconstructions. This leads to a two-phase opening scenario for the conjugate Mozambique Basin and Riiser Larsen Sea.

2. TECTONIC AND GEOLOGICAL SETTING

2.1 BREAKUP OF EAST AND WEST GONDWANA

Several plate kinematic models describe the breakup of Gondwana along the East African margin (e.g. Cox, 1992; Davis et al., 2016; Gaina et al., 2013, 2015; Eagles and König, 2008; Leinweber and Jokat, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2016; Reeves et al., 2016). It is generally accepted that breakup of Gondwana along the East African margin took place in the Early Jurassic, at about 170-180 Ma (e.g. Gaina et al., 2013, 2015; Leinweber and Jokat, 2012; Leinweber et al., 2013; Nguyen et al., 2016; Reeves et al., 2016). While earlier studies proposed that the Mozambique Basin and West Somali Basin opened in a generally N-S direction, more recent plate tectonic reconstructions argue for an almost simultaneous opening of both basins in
NW-SE direction (e.g. Gaina et al., 2013; Reeves et al., 2016). There is also debate about the
timing and directions of the earliest rifting and spreading phases. The change of the spreading
direction has been suggested to have occurred at ~159 Ma (Leinweber and Jokat, 2012), ~153
Ma (Reeves et al., 2016), or ~150 Ma (Phethean et al., 2016).
Oceanic crust generated by seafloor spreading between Africa and Antarctica has been dated
by the identification of marine magnetic anomalies. A recent study, using new geophysical
data, tentatively identifies M41n (~165 Ma; Leinweber and Jokat, 2012) or M38n.2n (~164
Ma; Müller and Jokat, 2017; magnetic polarity timescale of Ogg, 2012) as the oldest magnetic
anomaly in the Mozambique Basin. This makes the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea
considerably older than proposed in previous studies (M2 to M22, ~148-127 Ma; Simpson et
In the conjugate Riiser-Larsen Sea, Leinweber and Jokat (2012) identify M25n (~154 Ma) as
the oldest magnetic anomaly (Fig. 1), extending the model of Bergh (1977) and confirming
previous interpretations of Roeser et al. (1996) and Leitchenkov et al. (2008), who identified
M0 to M24 (~152-125 Ma). However, well-defined magnetic anomalies older than M25n
were not yet identified (Leinweber and Jokat, 2012; Leitchenkov et al., 2008; Roeser et al.,
1996), although it is implied that spreading started before M25n (Leinweber and Jokat, 2012).
By the Late Jurassic, seafloor spreading was underway in the Mozambique and Riiser Larsen
Sea Basins (e.g. Coffin and Rabinowitz, 1987; Eagles and König, 2008; Rabinowitz et al.,
1983; Segoufin and Patriot, 1980; Simpson et al., 1979).

2.2 ENIGMATIC CRUSTAL BLOCKS IN THE MOZAMBIQUE BASIN AND
RIISER-LARSEN SEA
The Mozambique Basin and the West Somali Basin are separated by a bathymetric elevation
rising 1-2 km above the surrounding seafloor that is referred to as the Davie Ridge (Fig. 1). It
has been widely accepted that the Davie Ridge is located at the trace of a fossil transform fault
that accommodated the motion of Madagascar/Antarctica with respect to Africa. This
The transform was active from the Late Middle Jurassic (~160-165 Ma) to the Early Cretaceous (~125-135 Ma) (e.g. Coffin and Rabinowitz, 1987; Segoufin and Patriat, 1980). Although in the West Somali Basin the presence of the Davie Ridge has been questioned (Klimke and Franke, 2016), the presence offshore west Madagascar is obvious. The Gunnerus Ridge in the Riiser-Larsen Sea may be the prolongation of the shear zone offshore Madagascar that accommodated the southward drift of Madagascar relative to Africa (Nguyen et al., 2016). (Fig. 1). Its western flank has been interpreted as a strike-slip fault delineating a transform margin (e.g. Leitchenkov et al., 2008). The Gunnerus Ridge has been the subject of seismic and potential field studies in the last decades (e.g. Leitchenkov et al., 2008; Roeser et al., 1996; Saki et al., 1987). Based on its top basement seismic velocities of 5.8-6.1 km/s and dredged granitoid and gneissic rock samples, the Gunnerus Ridge has been ascribed a continental origin (Leitchenkov et al., 2008; Saki et al., 1987).

Other prominent crustal features in the Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea are the Beira High and the Astrid Ridge, respectively (Fig. 1). Both structural interpretation (Mahanjane, 2012) and seismic velocities derived from refraction seismic data (Müller et al., 2016) indicate that Beira High is made up of stretched and highly intruded continental crust. The Astrid Ridge in the western Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 1) is separated into a northern and a southern part by the Astrid Fracture Zone (e.g. Bergh, 1987; Leitchenkov et al., 2008). While Bergh (1987) proposed that the Astrid Ridge is an entirely magmatic structure, Roeser et al. (1996) proposed that N-S striking strong magnetic anomalies over the western flank of the southern part of Astrid Ridge originate from seaward-dipping reflectors and that this part is made up of continental crust.

3. METHODS AND DATABASE

In this study, we use several marine reflection seismic datasets acquired by different institutes in the Mozambique Channel and the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 1).
The BGR14 dataset was acquired by the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR) during a cruise of R/V Sonne in 2014. For a detailed description of the acquisition parameters and seismic processing, the reader is referred to Klimke et al. (2016).

In this study, we present a yet unpublished profile striking E-W, crossing the Mozambique Basin into the Morondava Basin offshore Madagascar (Fig. 1). For the seismostratigraphic interpretation of the areas in the Morondava Basin and the Davie Ridge, we use the stratigraphic interpretation established in Franke et al. (2015) and Klimke et al. (2016). For the Mozambique Basin, we use results from previous offshore studies (e.g. Castelino et al., 2015; Franke et al., 2015; Mahanjane, 2014).

We present two out of eight profiles of the Mbwg00 dataset acquired by Western Geophysical in 2000, which run NW-SE and SW-NE in the Mozambique Channel (Fig. 1). This dataset is part of the National Petroleum Institute of Mozambique archive and has recently been presented by Mahanjane (2014). Here, we present one previously published profile (Mahanjane, 2014) with the focus on the continental slope and additionally show one previously unpublished profile of this dataset. For the interpretation of the sedimentary successions, we base on the stratigraphic framework established in Castelino et al. (2015), Franke et al. (2015) and Mahanjane (2014).

The RAE43 reflection seismic dataset in the Riiser Larsen Sea was acquired by Polar Marine Geosurvey Expedition during a survey with the R/V Akademik Alexander Karpinsky in 1998. For a detailed description of the used equipment, the acquisition parameters, and the processing, the reader is referred to Leitchenkov et al. (2008). In this study, we show two reinterpreted profiles of this dataset (Fig. 1) using as a basis the stratigraphic framework of Leitchenkov et al. (2008).

4. RESULTS AND STRUCTURAL INTERPRETATION

The seismic profiles shown in this paper are located in the northeastern part of the Mozambique Basin, off East Africa, and in the eastern part of the Riiser-Larsen Sea, off...
Antarctica (Fig. 1) and thus cover parts of two conjugate margins resulting from the separation of Antarctica from Africa. Two profiles (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3) are oriented in a NW-SE direction, parallel to the spreading direction and run from the continental slope towards the abyssal plain in the Mozambique Basin and Riiser-Larsen Sea. Profile C (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) trends NW-SE and runs from the Mozambique margin towards the Davie Ridge, while Profiles D and E (Figs. 6, 7 and 8) are oriented in E-W direction, crossing the Davie Ridge and Gunnerus Ridge, respectively.

In the following, we present a structural interpretation of the continent-ocean transition at both continental margins (section 4.1) (Figs. 2-8), with a special emphasis on the timing of the deformation observed at the foot of the continental slope (section 4.2). Finally, we discuss implications on opening scenarios for the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea (section 5).

4.1 COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF CONJUGATE MARGIN SECTIONS: THE TIE-POINT

We identify an untypical yet similar structural style of the continent-ocean transition at both, the Mozambique and the Riiser-Larsen Sea continental margins. The continental slopes dip steeply at angles of ~6°-7° at the Mozambique margin (Figs. 2A and 4) and ~5° in the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 2B). The top basement reflection is clearly imaged below the slopes and increases in depth from ~1s TWT to ~7s (TWT) over distances of ~50-70 km. At the foot of the continental slope, at depths of ~7 s TWT, there is a distinct zone of highly deformed basement on both continental margins (Fig. 2A, distance 50-70 km; Fig. 2B, distance 160-190 km). In the deformed zone, the basement is intensely faulted over distances of about 30 km (Fig. 2). On Profile A (Fig. 3A), which is oriented subparallel to the spreading direction, the basement has been folded in an upward direction and internal horizons are heavily deformed and dissected by faults (e.g. Fig. 3A, distance: 50-70 km). The same kind of deformation is identified on the conjugate continental slope in the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Figs. 2B and 3B; distance: 160-190 km). Again, the basement is dissected by faults and has been folded at the
foot of the continental slope. A similar package of post-rift sediments is included in the folds, altogether resembling the observed deformation pattern in the Mozambique Basin (Figs. 2A and 3A). The origin of the basement deformation is interpreted as strike-slip faults that form positive flower structures (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3).

Further northeast in the Mozambique Basin (Fig. 4), the basement deformation is characterized by steeply dipping normal faults (Fig. 4; distance 40-50 km). Faulting increases towards the SE (Fig. 5, distance: 50-60 km) where internal reflections have been heavily deformed and rotated in contrast to the area further west at the continental slope of the Mozambique margin, which is characterized by compressional deformation (Fig. 2), the deformation in the SE (Fig. 5) seems to be dominated by extensional stress, forming negative flower structures. Profile D in the Mozambique Basin (Fig. 6) shows that the basement is transparent in the deformed zone (distance: 25-45 km), possibly due to intense faulting.

Geographically, the deformed basement zone is distinct in the eastern parts of the basins, close to the Davie Ridge and the Gunnerus Ridge (Fig. 9). The zone is clearly depicted on several profiles over distances of 100-200 km in E-W direction along the margins (Fig. 9). Seaward of the deformation zone along both margins, oceanic crust is interpreted that is characterized by high-amplitude, low-frequency, multi-reflector bands in depths of 7-9 s (TWT) (Figs. 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8). Locally, closely spaced diffractions are distinct (Figs. 2, 4, 6 and 8), both features being typical for oceanic crust (Klimke et al., 2016). The interpretation of oceanic crust seaward of the deformation zone is well in line with refraction seismic experiments and gravity modelling by Leinweber et al. (2013), refraction seismic experiments supported by 2D magnetic modelling of Müller and Jokat (2017) and magnetic anomaly identifications by Leinweber and Jokat (2012) and Müller and Jokat (2017) in the Mozambique Basin. Normal faults dissecting the oceanic crust with throws of ~250 ms (TWT) in the Mozambique Basin (Fig. 2A, 4) and up to ~1s (TWT) in the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 2B, 7 and 8) are distinct. The faults are spaced at 5-15 km (Fig. 2A, distance: 90-190
km; Fig. 4, distance: 70-180 km; Fig. 6, distance: 70-100 km) and 10-40 km (Fig. 2B, distance: 30-110 km; Fig. 7, distance: 0-300 km), respectively. The abundance of the faults is increasing significantly in the vicinity of the Davie Ridge (from ~15 km to 5 km) and the Gunnerus Ridge (from ~40 km to ~10 km).

According to Leinweber et al. (2013) and Müller and Jokat (2017), the continent-ocean transition at the Mozambique margin is located very close to the Zambezi coast and is characterized by high-velocity lower crustal bodies and seaward-dipping reflectors, typical for volcanic rifted margins.

This previously identified position of the continent-ocean transition corresponds in our reflection seismic profiles to the area of the deformed basement (Figs. 2, 4, 6).

4.2 TIMING OF THE DEFORMATION

At both conjugate margins, sedimentary successions overlying the basement have been affected by the deformational event (Figs. 2 and 3). According to our seismostratigraphic concept, the top of the deformed sediments (horizon “MJ”) is of Middle Jurassic age. The sedimentary unit underlying horizon MJ is characterized by subparallel reflectors with low amplitudes. The seismic transparency of this unit allows a clear along-margin distinction from younger, reflective deposits (e.g. Fig. 4). At both margins, Horizon MJ is terminating seawards against oceanic crust, which likely formed during the Jurassic Magnetic Quiet Zone (Middle to the Late Jurassic) (Fig. 2A, distance: 150 km; Fig. 2B, distance: 60 km; Fig. 4, distance: 125 km; Fig. 6, distance: 100 km). An extrapolation of identified magnetic anomalies (Figs. 1 and 9; Leinweber and Jokat, 2012; Müller and Jokat, 2017) to the study area in the Mozambique Basin (Fig. 9), indicates that the sedimentary unit below horizon MJ terminates against oceanic crust at the position of magnetic anomaly M38n.2n (~164 Ma).

The extrapolation of the magnetic anomalies was done by noting the distance of magnetic anomaly M38n from the continent-ocean transition in the Mozambique Basin (Fig. 9). This is well in line with our stratigraphic concept and we propose that the deformation is Middle
Jurassic in age. The deformation of the earliest, likely Middle Jurassic sediments observed at both continental margins is characterized by onlap and toplap geometries, where the MJ horizon acts as an unconformity sealing the deformation. In the Mozambique Basin, the top of the Middle Jurassic sediments has been eroded resulting in toplap structures of older sediments against the MJ horizon (Fig. 3A; distance: 60 km). In the Riiser-Larsen Sea, the Middle Jurassic sediments have been folded upward in conjunction with the basement (Fig. 3B; distance: 160-190 km) and subsequent, likely Late Jurassic sediments onlap the MJ horizon (Fig. 3B, distance: 170 km).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 LANDWARD EXTENT OF OCEANIC CRUST

Both, the Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea show a steeply dipping continental slope with angles of 5°-7° with a zone of deformed basement situated at the foot of the continental slope. Seaward of the deformed zone oceanic crust is interpreted, which is highly dissected by normal faults. The abundance of the faults, with throws of up to 1s (TWT), increases towards the Davie Ridge and the Gunnerus Ridge.

At both margins, magnetic anomaly M25n (~154-155 Ma) is located ~250-280 km seaward of the coast (Fig. 1), which implies symmetric spreading. Therefore, oceanic crust older than ~155 Ma (M25n) should be present in the Riiser-Larsen Sea. A comparably wide strip of oceanic crust with ages of ~155-166 Ma fits well between magnetic anomaly M25n and the zone of deformed basement located at the base of the continental slope (section 4.1). This implies a considerably more southern position of the continent-ocean transition than previously anticipated for the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 9). Gravity modelling derived crustal thicknesses of 5-6 km (Leitchenkov et al., 2008). The crustal thickness remains relatively constant west of the Gunnerus Ridge and increases from 5-6 km to 10 km only near the Astrid Ridge (Fig. 16 in Leitchenkov et al., 2008). Based on these observations, we suggest to
relocate the continent-ocean transition in the Riiser-Larsen Sea to the zone of deformed
basement at the continental slope (Fig. 9).

Along the Davie Ridge and the Gunnerus Ridge, the transition from continental to oceanic
crust is abrupt. At the western flank of the Gunnerus Ridge, the continent-ocean transition is
~40-50 km wide and at the Davie Ridge, it does not exceed 10-20 km. This is typical for shear
margin settings, where the transition from continental to oceanic crust typically occurs over
distances of not more than 50-80 km (e.g. Bird, 2001). Gravity modelling of profiles crossing
the Gunnerus Ridge by Leitchenkov et al. (2008) and Roeser et al. (1996) confirm the abrupt
continent-ocean transition. Thus, we propose that the western margin of Gunnerus Ridge is a
transform margin, similar to Davie Ridge. As the abundance of normal faults increases
significantly in the vicinity of the Davie Ridge and Gunnerus Ridge (Fig. 4 and Fig. 7), we
suggest that the oceanic crust has been affected by intense shear motions during spreading.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR GONDWANA BREAKUP

As origin of The distinct basement deformation at the continent-ocean transition in the eastern
parts of both Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea we propose intense shearing. We
are confident that seaward of the deformed basement oceanic crust is found. Thus, there was a
short period of seafloor spreading preceding the wrenching. Shear movements affected a
basement that was formed by rifting, breakup and early opening of the Mozambique Basin
and the Riiser-Larsen Sea. This shearing occurred likely along the Davie Ridge and the
Gunnerus Ridge that in our view represent transform margins on their western flanks in the
Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea (Fig. 9). Based on the reflection seismic data,
the shearing processes affected oceanic crust located as far as 100-200 km away from the
main transform faults (Fig. 9). Klimke et al. (2016) observed similar structures in extended
basement to the east of Davie Ridge in the West Somali Basin (Fig. 9). The observed faults
are steeply dipping wrench faults that were active during the southward movement of
Madagascar along the Davie Ridge. Here, a prominent unconformity of inferred Early Cretaceous age marks the end of wrench faulting (U2) (Klimke et al., 2016).

With this scenario, we confirm plate tectonic reconstructions which propose an early, NW-SE directed phase of rifting and seafloor spreading in the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea (e.g. Eagles and König, 2008; Gaina et al., 2013; Reeves et al., 2016), followed by a change of spreading directions from NW-SE to N-S. According to our seismostratigraphic concept, the change in spreading directions from NW-SE to N-S likely occurred early, at the transition from Middle to Late Jurassic. This age is derived from the seaward termination against oceanic crust at 164 Ma (M38n.2n; Müller and Jokat, 2017) of the unconformity MJ sealing the deformation.

Westward of the study area, the Beira High (Fig. 1) is suggested to have separated from Africa during the initial opening of the Mozambique Basin (e.g. Nguyen et al., 2016). As significant differences in the amount of stretching are observed below the margins of Beira High, some authors propose a rift jump during the early rifting stage from the northwestern to the southeastern boundary of Beira High (e.g. Mahanjane, 2012; Müller et al., 2016). Mahanjane (2012) observes two rift phases in reflection seismic data covering the Beira High and postulates a two break-up stages concept. Our observed two-phase break-up scenario (Fig. 10) concurs well with the proposed rift jump model (e.g. Mahanjane, 2012; Müller et al., 2016). We suggest that the “ridge jump” from the northwestern to the southern boundary of Beira High can be associated with the change in spreading direction from NW-SE to N-S direction, initiating the strike-slip movement of Madagascar and Antarctica (Fig. 10). This concept is in line with the reconstruction model of Leinweber and Jokat (2012) who propose a spreading center between the Beira High and Africa that jumped to the southern margin of Beira High at ~159 Ma.

Our proposed model for the initial opening of the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea implies that the Gunnerus Ridge was located at the southwestern flank of Madagascar in order
to be aligned with the Davie Ridge. This brings the Astrid Ridge, regardless of its crustal
nature and formation age, to the western flank of Beira High (Fig. 10), indicating that they
could be conjugate features (Nguyen et al., 2016).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In reflection seismic profiles we identify a symmetric zone of deformed and faulted basement
at the foot of the continental slope at the margins of the northeastern Mozambique Basin and
the conjugate eastern Riiser-Larsen Sea. The architecture and style of the observed
deformation zone, which is unique at rifted margins, represents a mirror image between both
conjugate margins and is proposed as a tie point for Gondwana reconstructions. We interpret
strike-slip deformation as the origin of the deformed continental slope. Sediments overlying
the basement deformation zone at the foot of the continental slope are deformed with onlap
and toplap geometries, indicating a post-breakup deformation phase. This indicates that a first
phase of rifting and early seafloor spreading has been subsequently replaced by a second,
transform deformation phase, overprinting the continent-ocean transition. The sedimentary
horizon, sealing the deformation, terminates against oceanic crust at around the position of
magnetic anomaly M38n.2n (164 Ma; Middle Jurassic).

From the structural configuration, the Gunnerus Ridge is conjugate to the Davie Ridge,
offshore Mozambique/Madagascar. A major transform fault is interpreted at the western
margin of the Gunnerus Ridge, similar to the Davie Ridge. However, strike-slip deformation
affected not only the rims of Davie and Gunnerus Ridge but also the adjacent oceanic crust.
Faults, dissecting the top oceanic crust reflection are distinct with decreasing amplitude up to
a distance of 100-200 km from the main transform fault.

The location of the continent-ocean transition along the Gunnerus Ridge indicates that the
oceanic crust in the eastern Riiser-Larsen Sea extends further south than previously
anticipated. The continent-ocean transition in Antarctica is likely located closer to the
shoreline than proposed in earlier studies.
In the here proposed breakup scenario, a first, likely NW-SE directed extensional phase resulted in localized seafloor spreading in the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea Basin before 164 Ma. Likely a ridge-jump at the transition from the Middle Jurassic to the Late Jurassic initiated the generally N-S opening of both oceanic basins. The second phase represents the southward displacement of East Gondwana, with strike-slip movement of Madagascar and Antarctica against Africa and the development of transform margins along Gunnerus Ridge and Davie Ridge.

DATA AVAILABILITY
All reflection seismic profiles of the bgr14 dataset can be accessed via Dieter Franke. The reflection seismic dataset (RAE43) located in the Riiser-Larsen Sea has been made available through Antarctic Seismic Data Library System (SDLS) and can be accessed via http://sdls.ogs.trieste.it/. Two profiles of the Mbwg00 dataset located in the Mozambique Channel are commercial seismic lines, original data of which cannot be made available.

COMPETING INTERESTS
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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FIGURE 1: Bathymetric map of the Africa-Antarctic corridor, the Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea (ETOPO1 1 arc-minute global relief model; Amante and Eakins, 2009) A). The yellow flow lines indicate the motion between Africa and Antarctica according to Eagles and König (2008). Red boxes indicate the study area in the Mozambique Basin and the Riiser-Larsen Sea. AR= Astrid Ridge, EB= Enderby Basin, GR= Gunnerus Ridge, MB= Mozambique Basin, RLS= Riiser-Larsen Sea WSB= West Somali Basin. B). Black and orange lines indicate the locations of the reflection seismic profiles of the BGR14 and Mbwg00 datasets. Locations of Profiles A, C and D (Figs. 2A, 4 and 6) are highlighted with red lines. The location of Beira High is from Mahanjane (2012). Magnetic isochrons (yellow lines) and oceanic fracture zones (dashed white lines) compiled from Leinweber and Jokat (2012) and Müller and Jokat (2017). The location of Davie Ridge is marked with solid white.
line. BH = Beira High. C) Thick black lines indicate the location of the reflection seismic profiles of the RAE43 dataset. Position of Profiles B and E (Figs. 2B and 7) are highlighted with red lines. Magnetic isochrons (yellow) and fracture zones (dashed white lines) are compiled from Leinweber and Jokat (2012) and Leitchenkov et al. (2008). Continent-ocean transition as interpreted from Leitchenkov et al. (2008) is indicated with thick orange line.

FIGURE 2: Migrated profile Mbwg00-511 in the Mozambique Basin (A) and stacked profile RAE4303 in the Riiser-Larsen Sea (B) (line locations in inset maps and Fig. 1). In the lower panels, the stratigraphic interpretation according to Castelino et al. (2015), Leitchenkov et al. (2008) and Mahanjane (2014) is presented. At the foot of the continental slope, at the continent-ocean transition, a 20-30 km wide zone of deformed and fractured basement is distinct. Postrift sediments, overlying the deformation zone have been affected by the deformation. This deformation zone is proposed as tie-point for Gondwana reconstructions.
FIGURE 3: Close-up view of the zone of deformed basement in the Mozambique Basin (A) and Riiser-Larsen Sea (B) presented in Fig. 2. The lower panels show the interpreted sections of the profiles. The basement is distinctively deformed and fractured. Overlying postrift sediments are deformed and indicate toplap (A) and onlap (B) geometries. Unconformity MJ seals the deformation.
FIGURE 4: Migrated section of profile Mbwg00-510 (line location in inset map and Fig. 1).

The lower panel shows the section overlain by the stratigraphic interpretation according to Castelino et al. (2015), Franke et al. (2015) and Mahanjane (2014). The profile runs from the continental slope to the Davie Ridge offshore Madagascar. The zone of deformed basement is observed at the foot of the continental slope. The Davie Ridge appears as bathymetric high, rising 1 S (TWT) above the surrounding seafloor. At the foot of the western flank of Davie Ridge, a zone of deeply buried, compressed sediments is observed that might have been thrusted onto the oceanic crust during southward motion of Madagascar.
FIGURE 5: Close-up view of the zone of deformed basement in the Mozambique Basin presented in Fig. 4. The lower panel shows the interpreted section of the profile. The basement is deformed by steeply dipping, fan-like normal faults that at depths may converge into a single, subvertical fault (green, distance: 40-60 km). The deformation is likely dominated by extensional stress.
FIGURE 6: Pre-stack migrated section of profile BGR14-305 (line location in inset map and in Fig. 1). The lower panel shows the interpreted section according to the seismostratigraphic concepts of Castelino et al. (2015), Franke et al. (2015), Klimke et al. (2016) and Mahanjane (2014). The profile runs from the continental slope offshore northern Mozambique across the Davie Ridge into the Morondava Basin offshore Madagascar. The zone of deformed basement is observed at the foot of the continental slope (distance: 30-50 km), where the basement is not imaged, which is probably due to the intense faulting of the basement. The Davie Ridge is observed in the center of the profile as a morphological expression. The shear zone including the Davie Ridge is characterized by three prominent crustal blocks, which extend over distances of ~120 km.
FIGURE 7: Stacked section of profile RAE4307 (line location in inset map and in Fig. 1). The lower panel shows the interpreted section of the profile with the stratigraphy according to Leitchenkov et al. (2008). The profile runs from the Riiser-Larsen Sea across the Gunnerus Ridge into the Enderby Basin. The Gunnerus Ridge rises ~4 s (TWT) above the surrounding seafloor. The transition from continental to oceanic crust along the Gunnerus Ridge is very abrupt (~30-40 km). The oceanic crust of the Riiser-Larsen Sea is dissected by normal faults. The abundance of the faults increases significantly towards the Gunnerus Ridge.
FIGURE 8: Closeup view of the faulted oceanic basement presented in Fig. 7 in the Riiser-Larset, Sea, close to the Gunnerus Ridge. The lower panel shows the interpreted section of the profile.

FIGURE 9: Sketch map illustrating the location of the deformed basement observed at the foot of the continental slope in the Mozambique Basin (A) and the Riiser-Larsen Sea (B). Solid Red lines indicate the location of Profiles A to E (Figs. 2, 4, 6 and 7). Blue and black
lines highlight magnetic anomalies and fracture zones in the Mozambique Basin and Riiser-Larsen Sea according to Leinweber and Jokat (2012), Leitchenkov et al. (2008) and Müller and Jokat (2017). The continent-ocean transition (COT) as proposed in this study is shown in green. The continent-ocean transition according to Leitchenkov et al. (2008) in the Riiser-Larsen Sea is shown in purple. Orange lines indicate wrench faulting in the West Somali Basin (Klimke et al., 2016). Blue dots mark onlap locations of horizon MJ against oceanic basement. Dashed blue line marks the extrapolation of magnetic chron M38n (Müller and Jokat, 2017) to the study area in the Mozambique Basin. The extrapolation was done by noting the distance of magnetic chron M38n from the continent-ocean transition. Yellow and rose hatched areas mark the location of transpressional (yellow) and transtensional (rose) deformation. The location of Davie Ridge is marked with thick dashed red line. The location of SDRs in the Mozambique Basin is compiled from Leinweber et al. (2013) and Müller and Jokat (2017).

FIGURE 10: Schematic sketch of the initial opening of the Mozambique Basin/Riiser-Larsen Sea. A) In the Middle Jurassic, NW-SE directed rifting and seafloor spreading between Africa
and Antarctica initiates with the possible formation of localized spreading centers close to the present-day shoreline. B) By the Late Jurassic, the spreading center has jumped to the south and the NW-SE extensional phase has been replaced by N-S oriented seafloor spreading. At the eastern margin of the evolving Mozambique Basin/Riiser Larsen Sea Basin, a transform deformation phase, overprinting the previous continent-ocean transition, accommodates the extension. The transform fault develops along the conjugate western flanks of the Davie Ridge and the Gunnerus Ridge. The positions of Madagascar, Antarctica and India have been adopted from Nguyen et al. (2016). Locations of SDRs, Lava flows and intrusions in the Mozambique Basin are taken from Mahanjane (2012) and Müller and Jokat (2017). Magnetic chrons taken from Leinweber and Jokat (2012) and Müller and Jokat (2017). Thick green lines mark the basement deformation zone presented in this study. Dashed green line marks the continent-ocean transition (COT) of this study. Dashed purple line is the continent-ocean transition (COT) of Leitchenkov et al. (2008). AR= Astrid Ridge, BH= Beira High, GR= Gunnerus Ridge.