Interactive comment on "**Integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observations in the alpine region of the Heihe River Basin, China**" *by* **Tao Che et al.**

Summary: This communication provides an interesting and highly suitable contribution to Earth System Science Data (ESSD). The paper describes an extensive hydrometeorological dataset collected in the upper reaches of the Heihe River Basin in China since the early 2010s. The paper is generally well-written and figures are very clear and entirely appropriate to illustrate key aspects of the dataset. This report provides guidance that the authors should consider in revising their manuscript.
Response: We thank Anonymous Referee #1 for her/his positive feedback and insightful comments, which provided tremendous help for improving our manuscript. We have carefully addressed all the issues raised by the referee and modified our manuscript accordingly. Detailed responses (marked in blue font) are summarized in the following sections with the original comments (marked in black font). A clean version of the revised manuscript is also attached with changes marked in red font.

General Comments:

1) One requirement for publication in ESSD is the inclusion of clear statements on the limitations of the datasets, which are lacking in the paper. For instance, what are the operating range, accuracy and precision of the instrumentation used? Are there gaps in the datasets and was in-filling performed on these gaps (if any)? Was there any quality control/analysis performed on the data? In any case, information on the limitations of the observational data should be included in a revised paper.

Response: Points well-taken. We agree with the referee that it is important to provide detailed info of the instruments and the datasets (such as quality control and the limitations). In the revised manuscript, we have added the associated descriptions.

a. The operating range, accuracy and precision of the instrumentation used in our observation network have been added in Table 2.

b. In terms of data post-processing and quality control, we also provided more descriptions for each observation variable:

Meteorological data:

We used general post-processing and quality control for the meteorological data, the steps of which were stated in Sec. 3.2 (Page 5, Line 187-189) as:

"Steps of the AMS data processing and quality control were two-fold: (1) All the AWS data were averaged over an interval of 30 min for a total of 48 records per day. The missing data were denoted by -6999; (2) The un-physical data were rejected, and the gaps were denoted by -6999."

Precipitation data were further calibrated and post-processed as stated in Sec. 3.2.4 (Page 6, Line 216-224):

"In particular, only the precipitation gauge (T200B, Geonor, USA) at the Yakou snow superstation was sheltered with DFIRs to collect both solid and liquid precipitation data. Because the uncertainties of the precipitation gauge (T200B) may result from the unstable voltage or unknown abnormity, evaporation of the liquid surface, and offset of the instrument, the postprocessing included three steps: (1) manual calibration by adding a certain amount of water into the gauge, (2) abnormal data rejection using the forward-backward filtering (Gustafsson, 1996), and (3) hourly precipitation calculation (using accumulated data before and after each hour). At the other stations, precipitation gauges (TE525M, Texas Electronics, USA) were neither sheltered by Alter shields nor DFIRs. Therefore, only liquid precipitation data were collected. Precipitation data were provided in raw format without any post-processing, which might be underestimated because of the wind and snowfall."

Specifically, for the EC data, gap-filling was processed with quality control. Detailed descriptions were added in Sec. 3.2.4 (Page 6, Line 225-237) as:

"On the other hand, the instruments of EC were calibrated every six months, and the raw data acquired at 10 Hz were processed using the EdiRe software (University of Edinburgh,

https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/jbm/micromet/EdiRe/), including spike detection and removal, lag correction of H_2O/CO_2 relative to the vertical wind component, sonic virtual temperature correction, coordinate rotation (2-D rotation), corrections for density fluctuation (Webb-Pearman-Leuning correction), and frequency response correction (Liu *et al.*, 2011). EC data were subsequently averaged at an interval of 30 min and divided into three classes according to the quality assessment method of stationarity (Δst) and the integral turbulent characteristics test (ITC), as proposed by Foken and Wichura (1996): class 1 (level 0: Δst<30 and ITC<30), class 2 (level 1: Δst<100 and ITC<100), and class 3 (level 2: Δst>100 and ITC>100), which represent high-, medium-, and low-quality data, respectively. In addition to the above processing steps, half-hourly flux data were screened using a four-step procedure: (1) data from periods of sensor malfunction were rejected; (2) data collected before or after 1 hr of precipitation were rejected; (3) incomplete 30 min data were rejected when the missing data constituted more than 3% of the 30 min raw record; and (4) data were rejected at night when the friction velocity (u^*) was less than 0.1 m/s (Blanken *et al.*, 1998). There were 48 records per day, with gaps denoted by -6999."

Snow data:

Snow depth (Sec. 3.3.1, Page 7, Line 258-261):

"In postprocessing, ambient air temperature measured using WXT520 (Vaisala, USA) was used to calibrate the snow depth data (Ryan *et al*. 2008). Data were cross-compared with the measured SWE (introduced in the next subsection), suspicious values were deleted manually followed by noise filtering and, finally, data were averaged to daily output."

Snow water equivalent (SWE, Sec. 3.3.2, Page 7, Line 272-276):

"Specifically, SWE data from GMON were calibrated by snow depth and density manually-measured using snow ruler and shovel twice a day (in the mornings and afternoons) in the spring of 2014. To avoid random uncertainties during calibration, a 100 m * 100 m grid around the GMON was designed to measure snow depth at an interval of 10 m (100 measuring spots in the grid). Snow density were also manually-measured within the grid at 6

selected locations. The averaged snow depth and density were used to fit the coefficients required by the GMON."

Snow albedo (Sec. 3.3.3, Page 8, Line 285-287):

"It should be noted that the four-component radiation data (provided in raw format) and the albedo data shown in Figure 4d were calculated by the downward and upward shortwave radiation during 10:00-17:30 (local time) in order to filter out values at high solar zenith angles in early mornings and evenings."

Blowing snow (Sec. 3.3.4, Page 8, Line 296-297):

"To filter the wind noise during the observation (especially in summer), it was necessary to manually delete the suspicious data by comparing the results with the SWE and snow depth data. The data would be rejected when (1) snow depth was zero, (2) wind speed was less than 3 m/s, or (3) air temperature was higher than 10°C."

Frozen ground data (Sec. 3.4, Page 8, Line 308):

"The frozen ground data were provided in raw format without any post-processing."

2) As one example of possible data limitations, some of the precipitation gauges were not sheltered by Alter shields or DFIRs. As such, were precipitation data corrected for wind undercatch or provided in raw format without corrections?

Response: Good point. We should have clarified the data/instrument limitations. Other than those explained in the response to the first question, we specifically added statements (limitations/uncertainties of the instrument/datasets, post-processing) for precipitation data in Sec. 3.2.4 (Page 6, Line 216-224) as:

"In particular, only the precipitation gauge (T200B, Geonor, USA) at the Yakou snow superstation was sheltered with DFIRs to collect both solid and liquid precipitation data. Because the uncertainties of the precipitation gauge (T200B) may result from the unstable voltage or unknown abnormity, evaporation of the liquid surface, and offset of the instrument, the postprocessing included three steps: (1) manual calibration by adding a certain amount of water into the gauge, (2) abnormal data rejection using the forward-backward filtering (Gustafsson, 1996), and (3) hourly precipitation calculation

(using accumulated data before and after each hour). At the other stations, precipitation gauges (TE525M, Texas Electronics, USA) were neither sheltered by Alter shields nor DFIRs. Therefore, only liquid precipitation data were collected. Precipitation data were provided in raw format without any post-processing, which might be underestimated because of the wind and snowfall."

3) How unique is this dataset relative to other hydrometeorological networks in operation in the Heihe River Basin? Are these the only hydrometeorological stations in the study area or do they complement an existing array of stations?

Response: In the upper reaches of the Heihe River Basin (HRB), there are other stations established by four research teams as mentioned in the Introduction (Page 3, Line 88-90) and shown in Figure 1. We pointed out that those stations were either located in small-catchments or with specific research area. On the other hand, there also exist other hydrometeorological stations managed by local meteorological agencies for various purposes such as weather forecast, not specifically for scientific research and not related to the current datasets. The automatic meteorological stations (AMSs) introduced in this study were installed/operated within the framework of China's first basin-scale integrated observatory network (Li *et al.*, 2009; Li *et al*., 2013; Li *et al.*, 2017; Liu *et al*., 2018) supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) (stated in Page 2, Line 79-83). In particular, to investigate the alpine hydrology and cryospheric science in the upper reaches of the HRB, the AMSs along with the snow and frozen ground stations were built since 2013 during the Heihe Watershed Allied Telemetry Experimental Research (HiWATER, Li *et al*., 2013). There have been more stations for other research purposes in the middle and lower reaches of the HRB (Liu *et al*., 2018) (stated in Page 3, Line 94-96). In summary, by far, the datasets introduced in the current study fully exhibit the characteristics of the alpine region in the HRB and represent the complete and sophisticated observation efforts invested since the last decade.

4) The journal requires statements on the author contributions and competing interests, as well as a special issue statement, prior to the Acknowledgements. This information should be added in a revised version of the manuscript.

Response: We added "Author contributions", "Competing interests", "Special issue statement" and "Review statement" prior to the Acknowledgement.

Specific and Technical Comments:

1) P. 1, line 29: Change to "cryospheric science".

Response: Corrected.

2) P. 1, line 34: The terminology here should be modified here as "regulated" headwaters suggest a human influence or interference on water resources, which I do not think is the intent of the statement here.

Response: We deleted "that need to be regulated" in the texts.

3) P. 1, line 35: Replace "reformed" by "altered" or "modified".

Response: We replaced "reformed" by "altered".

4) P. 1, line 37: Revise "impact factors" to just "impacts".

Response: Corrected.

5) P. 2, line 46: Delete "the" before "observations".

Response: Deleted.

6) P. 2, line 55: Replace "manipulate" with "control" or "influence".

Response: We replaced "manipulate" with "influence".

7) P. 2, line 76: Should the abbreviation for "Global Terrestrial Observing Network" be "GTON", and not "GTOS"?

Response: We apologized for the typo. It should be "Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS)".

8) P. 2, line 82: Pluralize the following words: "alpine meadows, forests, irrigated crops, riparian ecosystems, and deserts". At the end of this line, do you mean "distributed along an altitudinal gradient"?

Response: We pluralized the words as "alpine meadows, forests, irrigated crops, riparian ecosystems, and deserts" and changed the texts as "distributed along an altitudinal gradient" at the end of this sentence.

9) P. 3, line 86: Replace "great" with "marked".

Response: We replaced "great" with "marked".

10) P. 3, line 87: Revise "the mountainous region" to "mountainous regions".

Response: Corrected.

11) P. 3, line 112: Insert the units for the altitudes.

Response: Corrected.

12) P. 3, line 116: Use a word other than "fascinating".

Response: We used "ideal" instead of "fascinating".

13) P. 3, line 119: Rather than "west wind circulation" do you mean "mid-latitude westerlies"?

Response: We used "mid-latitude westerlies" instead of "west wind circulation".

14) P. 3, line 122: What is meant by "hydrothermal"?

Response: We deleted "under dynamic hydrothermal conditions".

15) P. 3, lines 122-123: Pluralize the words so that it reads "alpine grasslands (dominant), alpine shrubs, alpine meadows, tundra, deserts and forest steppes."

Response: We pluralized the words as "alpine grasslands (dominant), alpine shrubs, alpine meadows, tundra, deserts and forest steppes".

16) P. 3, line 124: Pluralize "grasses and forests".

Response: We pluralized the words as "grasses and forests".

17) p. 4, line 131: Replace "fast" with "rapid".

Response: We replaced "fast" with "rapid".

18) P. 4, line 152: Change to: "at each".

Response: Corrected.

19) P. 4, line153: Change to "AMS installed at".

Response: Corrected.

20) P. 5, line 168: Given the abbreviation "AMSs" has already been defined, use it here only and delete "Automatic Meteorological Stations".

Response: Corrected.

21) P. 5, line 183: Replace "sophisticated" with "detailed".

Response: We replaced "sophisticated" with "detailed".

22) P. 5, lines 195 and 197: Date format may need to change to that used by the journal.

Response: Corrected. All the dates were changed to "DD Month YYYY" format.

23) P. 6, lines 213, 225, 226 and 236: Same comment.

Response: Corrected. All the dates were changed to "DD Month YYYY" format.

24) P. 6, line 234: Should this read "Campbell Scientific"?

Response: Corrected.

25) P. 6, line 242: Delete the attribution of recent changes in snow depth to climate change, this could just be due to interannual variability, changes in snow redistribution by wind, etc.

Response: Agreed. We delete "influenced by local climate".

26) P. 7, lines 247-248 and 267: Date format may need to change.

Response: Corrected. All the dates were changed to "DD Month YYYY" format.

27) P. 7, line 250: Write as "50-100 m2".

Response: Corrected.

28) P. 7, line 262: Pluralize "Qilian Mountains".

Response: Corrected.

29) P. 7, line 263: Change to "redistribution".

Response: Corrected.

30) P. 7, line 269: Change to "which show that the blowing snow fluxes".

Response: Corrected.

31) P. 8, line 283: Do you mean "during spring" or "after spring"?

Response: The "until spring" was changed to "during the melting seasons".

32) P. 8, line 293: Again, do not attribute recent changes necessarily to climate change.

Response: We deleted "due to climate warming".

33) P. 8, line 297: Change to "cryospheric science".

Response: Corrected.

34) P. 8, lines 298-299: Replace "with specific respect to" with "with a focus on".

Response: We replaced "with specific respect" with "with a focus on".

35) P. 8, line 302: What is meant by "alter fundamental processes"?

Response: We changed to "alter hydrologic processes".

36) P. 9, line 320: Change to "CALM".

Response: Corrected.

37) p. 10, line 366: Change to "(PUB) – a review".

Response: Corrected.

38) P. 11, line 406: Change to "Col de Porte, France" and correct the remainder of the title, it appears the units for elevation are missing.

Response: Corrected. It should be "Col de Porte, France, 1325 m altitude".

39) p. 19, Table 1: Insert "(°E)" and "(°N)" for longitude and latitude, respectively. For the observation period, consider adding the starting and ending month as well.

Response: "(°E)" and "(°N)" for longitudes and latitudes were added. Also, the starting and ending months of the observation periods were added.

Interactive comment on "Integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observations in the alpine region of the Heihe River Basin, China" *by* Tao Che et al.

Summary: this manuscript presents a comprehensive dataset of hydrological variables above and below the ground surface at the Heihe River Basin, in China. The breadth of the data collection effort is commendable, and the dataset is potentially very suitable as a contribution to ESSD.
Response: We thank Anonymous Referee #2 for her/his positive feedback and insightful comments, which provided tremendous help for improving our manuscript. We have carefully addressed all the issues raised by the referee and modified our manuscript accordingly. Detailed responses (marked in blue) are summarized in the following sections with the original comments (marked in black). A clean version of the revised manuscript is also attached with changes marked in red.

General Comments:

I agree with referee #1 in that a more thorough data quality assessment should be provided. If space is a concern, maybe an online supplementary material could be provided. Also, in a few instances it is mentioned that manual filtering was carried out before adopting a definitive dataset for a given variable. This is not unexpected, but if no information about which individual data points correspond to filtered values, then it becomes problematic. Perhaps both a "raw" and a "postprocessed" data products should be presented.

Response: We agree with both referees that detailed data quality assessment should have been provided. In the revised manuscript, we added data postprocessing (if there was any) and quality assessment for meteorological data, snow data and frozen ground data separately.

a. The operating range, accuracy and precision of the instrumentation used in our observation network have been added in Table 2.

b. In terms of data post-processing and quality control, we also provided more descriptions for each observation variable:

Meteorological data:

We used general post-processing and quality control for the meteorological data, the steps of which were stated in Sec. 3.2 (Page 5, Line 187-189) as:

"Steps of the AMS data processing and quality control were two-fold: (1) All the AWS data were averaged over an interval of 30 min for a total of 48 records per day. The missing data were denoted by -6999; (2) The un-physical data were rejected, and the gaps were denoted by -6999."

Precipitation data were further calibrated and post-processed as stated in Sec. 3.2.4 (Page 6, Line 216-224):

"In particular, only the precipitation gauge (T200B, Geonor, USA) at the Yakou snow superstation was sheltered with DFIRs to collect both solid and liquid precipitation data. Because the uncertainties of the precipitation gauge (T200B) may result from the unstable voltage or unknown abnormity, evaporation of the liquid surface, and offset of the instrument, the postprocessing included three steps: (1) manual calibration by adding a certain amount of water into the gauge, (2) abnormal data rejection using the forward-backward filtering (Gustafsson, 1996), and (3) hourly precipitation calculation (using accumulated data before and after each hour). At the other stations, precipitation gauges (TE525M, Texas Electronics, USA) were neither sheltered by Alter shields nor DFIRs. Therefore, only liquid precipitation data were collected. Precipitation data were provided in raw format without any post-processing, which might be underestimated because of the wind and snowfall."

Specifically, for the EC data, gap-filling was processed with quality control. Detailed descriptions were added in Sec. 3.2.4 (Page 6, Line 225-237) as:

"On the other hand, the instruments of EC were calibrated every six months, and the raw data acquired at 10 Hz were processed using the EdiRe software (University of Edinburgh,

https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/jbm/micromet/EdiRe/), including spike detection and removal, lag correction of H_2O/CO_2 relative to the vertical wind component, sonic virtual temperature correction, coordinate rotation (2-D rotation), corrections for density fluctuation (Webb-Pearman-Leuning correction), and frequency response correction (Liu *et al*., 2011). EC data were subsequently averaged at an interval of 30 min and divided into three classes according to the quality assessment method of stationarity (Δst) and the integral turbulent characteristics test (ITC), as proposed by Foken and Wichura (1996): class 1 (level 0: Δst<30 and ITC<30), class 2 (level 1: Δst<100 and ITC<100), and class 3 (level 2: Δst>100 and ITC>100), which represent high-, medium-, and low-quality data, respectively. In addition to the above processing steps, half-hourly flux data were screened using a four-step procedure: (1) data from periods of sensor malfunction were rejected; (2) data collected before or after 1 hr of precipitation were rejected; (3) incomplete 30 min data were rejected when the missing data constituted more than 3% of the 30 min raw record; and (4) data were rejected at night when the friction velocity (u^*) was less than 0.1 m/s (Blanken *et al*., 1998). There were 48 records per day, with gaps denoted by -6999."

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"In postprocessing, ambient air temperature measured using WXT520 (Vaisala, USA) was used to calibrate the snow depth data (Ryan *et al*. 2008). Data were cross-compared with the measured SWE (introduced in the next subsection), suspicious values were deleted manually followed by noise filtering and, finally, data were averaged to daily output."

Snow water equivalent (SWE, Sec. 3.3.2, Page 7, Line 272-276):

"Specifically, SWE data from GMON were calibrated by snow depth and density manually-measured using snow ruler and shovel twice a day (in the mornings and afternoons) in the spring of 2014. To avoid random uncertainties during calibration, a 100 m * 100 m grid around the GMON was designed to measure snow depth at an interval of 10 m (100 measuring spots in the grid). Snow density were also manually-measured within the grid at 6

selected locations. The averaged snow depth and density were used to fit the coefficients required by the GMON."

Snow albedo (Sec. 3.3.3, Page 8, Line 285-287):

"It should be noted that the four-component radiation data (provided in raw format) and the albedo data shown in Figure 4d were calculated by the downward and upward shortwave radiation during 10:00-17:30 (local time) in order to filter out values at high solar zenith angles in early mornings and evenings."

Blowing snow (Sec. 3.3.4, Page 8, Line 296-297):

"To filter the wind noise during the observation (especially in summer), it was necessary to manually delete the suspicious data by comparing the results with the SWE and snow depth data. The data would be rejected when (1) snow depth was zero, (2) wind speed was less than 3 m/s, or (3) air temperature was higher than 10°C."

Frozen ground data (Sec. 3.4, Page 8, Line 308):

"The frozen ground data were provided in raw format without any post-processing."

A couple other questions about instruments and data (I focus on snow, as this is my area of expertise): in your figures, only TI rain gages are depicted. I imagine that the Geonor instruments are those located inside the DFIR setups? The TI's are not expected to measure solid precipitation properly, but the Geonors are. However, your data plots show zero or close to zero precip in winter, at the same time when snow depth and water equivalent are positive. Must we conclude that your stations are unable to record solid precipitation?

Response: We thank the referee for pointing this out. Actually, unlike the precipitation gauges that were installed inside the DFIR, the Geonor sensors for SWE measurements were located in an open area outside the DFIR to avoid the influence from the fence. In the revised manuscript, the following statements were added (Sec. 3.2.4, Page 6, Line 216-224) to explain more details of the instrument: "In particular, only the precipitation gauge (T200B, Geonor, USA) at the Yakou snow superstation was sheltered with DFIRs to collect both solid and liquid precipitation data. Because the uncertainties of the precipitation gauge (T200B) may result from the unstable voltage or unknown abnormity,

evaporation of the liquid surface, and offset of the instrument, the postprocessing included three steps: (1) manual calibration by adding a certain amount of water into the gauge, (2) abnormal data rejection using the forward-backward filtering (Gustafsson, 1996), and (3) hourly precipitation calculation (using accumulated data before and after each hour). At the other stations, precipitation gauges (TE525M, Texas Electronics, USA) were neither sheltered by Alter shields nor DFIRs. Therefore, only liquid precipitation data were collected. Precipitation data were provided in raw format without any post-processing, which might be underestimated because of the wind and snowfall."

On the other hand, we agree that Figure 4(a) showed zero or close to zero precipitation in winter, at the same time when snow depth and water equivalent are positive (Figure 4b-c), which might correspond to the unique characteristics of the snowfall in the region: 1) in winter (December, January, and February), the snowfall was quite minimum due to the dry westerlies; 2) the snowfall in autumn could accumulate to formulate the snow cover then last in the winter (generally as patchy and shallow snow covers); 3) the snowfall in spring would lead to the maximum snow depth. As we mentioned in the texts, we could measure solid precipitation at the Yakou station. In summary, small snowfall events ultimately led to shallow snowpack observed in the study site, which explained the positive snow depth and SWE observed in Figure 4(b-c).

Then, you talk about snow data, and state that depth and SWE were obtained from the SR50 and the CS725 sensors, respectively. The SPA did not work, apparently, and you link this malfunction to wind and conclude that for this reason snow density is unavailable. However, you do measure depth and SWE with the other sensors! On any case, as this is a dataset paper, I would not expect it to present estimated or derived information (such as density), but only measured data. Additionally, did you make manual depth and SWE measurements with snow probes, samplers or pits? Do these match what was recorded by the sensors?

Response: We agree with the referee on this point. The SPA did not work, and we did not install sensors to automatically measure snow density or depth. However, SWE data from GMON were calibrated by snow depth and density manually-measured using snow ruler and shovel twice a day (in the mornings and afternoons) in the spring of 2014. To avoid random uncertainties during calibration,

a 100 m * 100 m grid around the GMON was designed to measure snow depth at an interval of 10 m (100 measuring spots in the grid). Snow density were also manually-measured within the grid at 6 selected locations. The averaged snow depth and density were used to fit the coefficients required by the GMON. The statements were added in Sec. 3.3.2 (Page 7, Line 272-276).

We also provided comparisons between auto-measured (using sensors) and manually-measured data as follows (Figure R1), which, however, were not included in the texts since they were not within the scope of the current manuscript. As shown in Figure R1(a), the trends between the auto-measured SWE (by the GMON) and the manually-measured data were good in general although the GMON outputs seemed to be smoother, which may need further investigation and analysis. On the other hand, the manually-measured snow depth followed with those measured by the SR50 even the SR50 underestimated the snow depth (~4 cm). We think the main reason was the heterogeneity of the snow cover due to the micro-topography and the blowing snow.
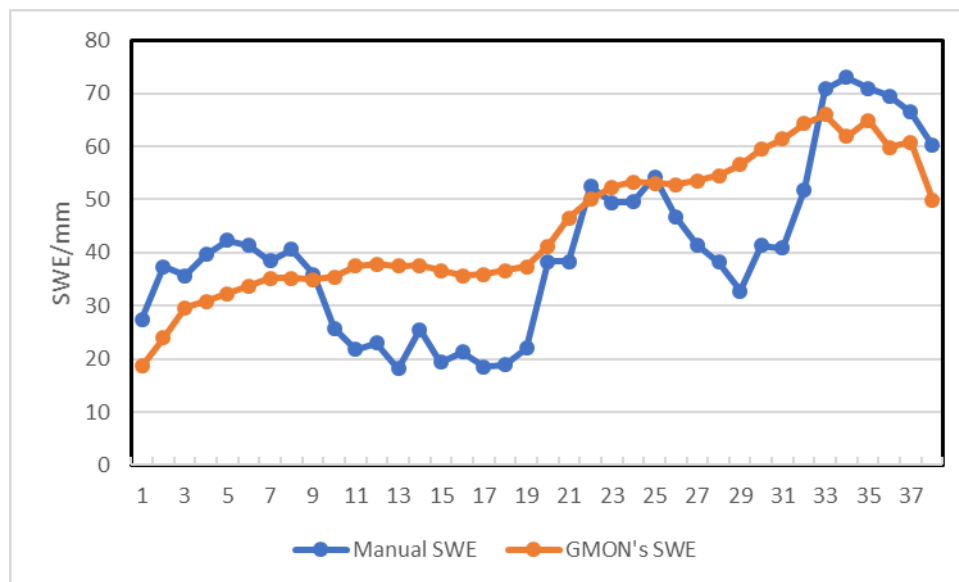
(a) SWE
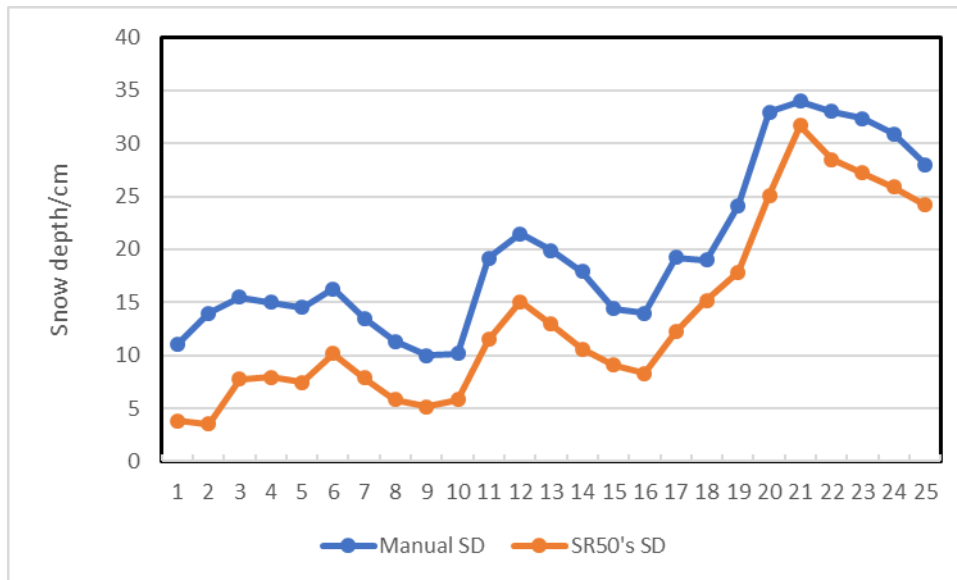
(b) Snow depth

Figure R1. Comparisons between auto-measured (using sensors) and manually-measured data: (a) SWE; (b) Snow depth.

Finally, albedo data looks good, but a bit noisy. Please mention at what solar angle ranges was albedo recorded. Did you filter out values at high angles in the early morning and evening?

Response: Good point! The four-component radiation data (provided in raw format) and the albedo data shown in Figure 4d were calculated by the downward and upward shortwave radiation during 10:00-17:30 (local time) in order to filter out values at high solar zenith angles in early mornings and evenings. The explanations were added in Sec. 3.3.3 (Page 8, Line 285-287).

On the other hand, temporary snow covers (several hours to couple of days) during the summer might be another reason causing the noise on the albedo.

Specific comments:

L55. Replace "manipulate". Maybe "drive" or "modulate" would be better.

Response: We replaced "manipulate" with "influence".

L83: delete "the" before "altitude".

Response: We changed to texts to "distributed along an altitudinal gradient".

L85: delete "the" before "alpine".

Response: Corrected.

Integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observations in the alpine region of the Heihe River Basin, China

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[4] State Key Laboratory of Earth Surface Processes and Resource Ecology, Faculty of Geographical Science, Beijing Normal University, Beijing 100875, China
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Abstract. The alpine region is important in riverine and watershed ecosystems as a contributor of freshwater, providing and stimulating specific habitats for biodiversity. In parallel, recent climate change, human activities and other perturbations may disturb hydrological processes and eco-functions, creating the need for next-generation observational and modeling approaches to advance a predictive understanding of such processes in the alpine region. However, several formidable challenges, including the cold and harsh climate, high altitude and complex topography, inhibit complete and consistent data collection where/when needed, which hinders the development of remote sensing technologies and alpine hydrological models. The current study presents a suite of datasets consisting of long-term hydrometeorological, snow cover and frozen ground data for investigating watershed science and functions from an integrated, distributed and multiscale observation network in the upper reaches of the Heihe River Basin (HRB) in China. Meteorological and hydrological data were monitored from an observation network connecting a group of automatic meteorological stations (AMSs). In addition, to capture snow accumulation and ablation processes, snow cover properties were collected from a snow observation superstation using state-of-the-art techniques and instruments. High-resolution soil physics datasets were also obtained to capture the freeze-thaw processes from a frozen ground observation superstation. The updated datasets were released to scientists with multidisciplinary backgrounds (*i.e.*, cryospheric science, hydrology, and meteorology), and they are expected to serve as a testing platform to provide accurate forcing data and validate and evaluate remote sensing products and hydrological models for a broader community. The datasets are available from the Cold and Arid Regions Science Data Center at Lanzhou https://doi.org/10.3972/hiwater.001.2019.db.

1. Introduction

Water resources in the alpine region are headwaters to sustain downstream ecosystems. However, perturbations induced by nature/climate change and human activities in recent years have significantly altered hydrological processes and eco-functions (Li *et al.*, 2018b). Accurate estimation and prediction of hydrological processes and their key impacts has since become crucial (Pomeroy *et al.*, 2007; Chen *et al.*, 2014; Li *et al.*, 2018c). Process-based alpine hydrological models (*e.g.*, the Geomorphology-Based Eco-Hydrological Model (GBEHM), Yang *et al.*, 2015; the Water and Energy Budget-based Distributed Hydrological Model (WEB-DHM), Wang *et al.*, 2010; the Cold Regions Hydrological Model (CRHM), Pomeroy *et al.*, 2007; the Cryospheric Basin Hydrological Model (CBHM), Chen *et al.*, 2018) are feasible to advance a fundamental understanding of the hydrological cycle and its individual components, *i.e.*, separating the contributions from processes such as snow melting, freeze-thaw, precipitation, evapotranspiration, runoff, and determining their spatiotemporal distributions across scales. Unfortunately, the scarcity of observation data in the alpine region, due to the difficulties of access and technological barriers,

has hindered alpine hydrological modeling and associated research yet motivated the development of next-generation ecosystem observation networks and experiments (Hrachowitz *et al*., 2013). In comparison with observations, using remote sensing data combined with data assimilation could improve the prediction of hydrological processes (Schmugge *et al*., 2002; Clark *et al*., 2007). However, due to the complexities of the earth system, there exist various sources of uncertainties in remote sensing data (especially in the alpine region), which have to be validated and calibrated (Hall *et al*., 2007; Jackson *et al*., 2010; Che *et al.,* 2012; Frei *et al*., 2012; Dai *et al.,* 2017). In summary, to fill the knowledge gap and promote alpine region hydrology research, an integrated, distributed and multiscale observation dataset is essential and expected to provide accurate forcing data for hydrological modeling, validate remote sensing data, allow the evaluation of distributed models and ultimately improve a predictive understanding of alpine hydrological processes and ecosystem functions.

In alpine hydrology, in addition to consistent hydrometeorological data obtained from distributed meteorological stations, snow cover and frozen ground are two important indexes and driving forces that influence hydrological processes (Cline, 1997; Dewalle and Rango, 2008; Walvoord and Kurylyk, 2016). The maximum snow water equivalent (SWE) before ablation determines the storage of snowmelt – a major source of freshwater in the alpine region (Chahine, 1992), while freeze-thaw cycles (FTCs) and soil moisture within the active layer alter water infiltration and, consequently, surface runoff and groundwater (Shanley and Chalmers, 1999; Hardy *et al*., 2001). Several representative snow observation stations were established throughout the world to collect snowpack data during seasonal changes at the catchment/watershed scale (Dewalle and Rango, 2008; Kinar and Pomeroy, 2015) in the USA (the Reynolds Creek experimental watershed, Nayak *et al*., 2010; the Sleepers River Basin, Pellerin *et al*., 2012; the Hubbard Brook Basin, Hardy *et al*., 2001; the Loch Vale, Balk and Elder, 2000; the Green Lakes Valley, Caine, 1995), Canada (the Marmot Creek Research Basin, DeBeer and Pomeroy, 2009), and Europe (the Swiss Alps, Dovas, Beniston *et al*., 2003; the Col de Porte experimental site, Morin *et al*., 2012). To promote alpine hydrology research, the International Network for Alpine Research Catchment Hydrology (INARCH) was launched in 2015 by the Global Energy and Water Exchanges (GEWEX) project of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), involving 18 catchments around the world (Pomeroy *et al*., 2015). The INARCH has since connected individual observatories into an international network and data-share platform to lead frontier research on alpine region hydrometeorology and snow observation. Another community-based observation network, the Circumpolar Active Layer Monitoring (CALM) network, was initiated in the early 1990s to observe the response of the active layer and near-surface permafrost to climate change (Brown *et al*., 2000). The sites of the CALM network are located not only in the Arctic and Antarctic regions but also in several mid-latitude mountainous regions. The observation infrastructure is designed to include standard active layer and near-surface permafrost measurements, with snow cover, soil moisture, and ground subsidence measured simultaneously at selected sites (Brown *et al*., 2000). In addition, the Global Terrestrial Network for Permafrost (GTN-P) is the primary international program targeted at monitoring permafrost parameters. GTN-P was developed in the 1990s by the International Permafrost Association (IPA) under the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) and the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS), with the long-term goal of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the spatial structure, trends and variability of changes in the active layer thickness and permafrost temperature (Streletskiy *et al*., 2017). The CALM and GTN-P have shared stations in their networks and are considered two representative initiatives focusing on frozen ground observation.

The Heihe River Basin (HRB) is the second largest inland river basin in China and is known for its heterogeneous landscapes, diverse ecosystems, unique geographical characteristics and climate change over recent decades. The HRB is mainly composed of glaciers, snow cover, frozen ground, alpine meadows, forests, irrigated crops, riparian ecosystems and deserts (distributed along an altitudinal gradient), which makes it an ideal field site for hydrometeorological research and has motivated and initiated the establishment of China's first basin-scale integrated observatory network (Li *et al*., 2009; Li *et al*., 2013; Li *et al*., 2017; Liu *et al*., 2018). As a major component of the ecohydrological processes in the arid/semi-arid HRB, alpine hydrological processes, especially those related to snow cover and frozen ground in the upper reaches, have marked impacts on runoff in the mountainous regions, which then regulate agricultural development in the middle reaches and the ecosystems of the lower

reaches (Li *et al.*, 2018c). To characterize the dynamic alpine hydrological processes influenced by natural variability and recent human activity, extensive research has been conducted in the upper HRB, including both observation and modeling efforts. Nevertheless, long-term observations in the upper reaches of the HRB were often conducted either in a limited range (*e.g.*, small catchment, Chen *et al.*, 2014) or focused on single elements (*e.g.*, frozen ground, Peng *et al.*, 2016; forest hydrology, He *et al.*, 2012 and Wang *et al.*, 2013). Several distributed hydrological models have been utilized to predict altered hydrologic processes under various climate scenarios (Wang *et al.*, 2010; Zhang *et al.*, 2017; Gao *et al.*, 2018). However, the above modeling efforts suffered from 1) the availability of the forcing data (only two weather stations operated by the Chinese Meteorological Administration functioned in the upper reaches of the HRB) and 2) a lack of high-quality snow and frozen ground data for parameterization. To overcome the above issues, a comprehensive observation network for alpine hydrology was built in the upper reaches of the HRB since 2013 during the Heihe Watershed Allied Telemetry Experimental Research (HiWATER, Li *et al.*, 2013). Composed of seven standard automatic meteorological stations (AMSs), one snow superstation and one frozen ground superstation, the observation network serves as an integrated research platform aiming to provide prominent datasets (*e.g.*, hydrometeorology, snow, and frozen ground) of the hydrometeorological processes in the upper reaches of the HRB, which is expected to support alpine region hydrological model development and simulations along with remote sensing observation. Since 2015, the HRB alpine observation network has joined the INARCH (www.usask.ca/inarch/), which also built a solid foundation for international collaborations.

This paper introduces the infrastructure of the integrated alpine hydrology observation network in the HRB and the complete datasets collected in recent years. The experimental site and design are summarized in Section 2. A brief introduction of the datasets including data availability and access is provided, followed by detailed descriptions of hydrometeorological, snow and frozen ground observations given in Section 3 with subsequent discussions and data analysis. Conclusions with future perspectives are summarized in Section 4.

2. An integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observation network in the upper reaches of the HRB

2.1 Site descriptions

The integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observation network was established in an alpine region in the semi-arid region of northwestern China, with a size of 10,009 km^2 ranging from 1674 m to 5108 m in altitude (37.72°-39.09°N, 98.57°-101.16°E, Figure 1). It is located in the upper reaches of the HRB (143,200 km^2) and the Qilian Mountains (at the intersection of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, QTP, and the Mongolian Plateau, MP). The unique geographical characteristics of the HRB (high altitude, complex terrain, various ecosystems and harsh climate) with the widespread snow cover and frozen ground make it an ideal field site for alpine research yet pose great challenges to observation. Detailed descriptions of the study site are provided as follows.

The study site exhibits complex and dynamic hydrometeorological characteristics. The western region is dominated by the mid-latitude westerlies, while the eastern region is influenced by the southwest- and southeast-Asian monsoons. Due to its regional atmospheric circulation and topography, the annual precipitation in the area decreases from the east to the west, with an average of 510 mm (454.7 mm rainfall and 65.3 mm snow) (Li *et al.*, 2018c). From low to high altitudes, the land surface of the study area is highly heterogeneous, including alpine grasslands (dominant), alpine shrubs, alpine meadows, tundra, deserts and forest steppes. The soil texture is mainly composed of loam, with silt loam near the surface and sandy soil in deeper layers. In the area covered by grasses and forests, the organic content is very high within the top 30 cm of the soil layer, which impacts the energy and water exchange between the land and atmosphere (Chen *et al.*, 2012). The land surface is frozen during the winter across the entire experimental area. The lower limit of the permafrost is between approximately 3700 m and 3800 m, while the rest is seasonally frozen ground. In recent years, with climate warming, permafrost degradation has significantly affected runoff and the carbon cycle (Peng *et al.*, 2016; Gao *et al.*, 2018). Snow cover is widely distributed with unique

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characteristics in the study area. In the high-altitude mountainous regions (elevation > 3800 m), influenced by the local microclimate and low temperature, snowfall could occur in any season. Temporary snow is the major snow cover type in the region at middle and low elevations because strong solar radiation and high air temperature lead to rapid melting and sublimation of the snow. In January and February, snowfall events were rare in historical records due to the relatively low moisture in the atmosphere, while spring and autumn (*i.e.*, March to May, October to November) are considered two main snowfall seasons. Drifting snow is also commonly observed in the region, which may lead to the redistribution of snowpack in high elevation regions (Essery *et al*., 1999; Li *et al*., 2014).

2.2 Observation infrastructure

Considering the characteristics of the study site, an integrated, distributed and multiscale hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observation network has been established with seven AMSs and two superstations (Table 1), with specific scientific focus on the hydrometeorological processes at the basin (the current study site) and sub-basin (the Babao River Basin in Figure 1) scales, as well as two key impact factors in the alpine hydrological process: snow cover and frozen ground. At the basin scale, the observation aims to collect data for investigating the meteorological driving forces and for validation of the alpine hydrological models. At the sub-basin scale, small-scale observations and measurements focus on data such as precipitation, soil temperature and moisture, which are used to develop and improve hydrologic models, as well as to validate remote sensing products at medium to coarse resolutions (Jin *et al*., 2014). At the two superstations for snow cover and frozen ground observations, remote sensing products and land surface model can be further validated using fine-resolution data.

For hydrometeorological observation, topographic characteristics (elevation, terrain and landscape) were fully considered in the location of the stations/sites. In total, seven AMSs, as well as the frozen ground and snow superstations (also incorporating meteorological observations), were established in the study area during the intensive observation period (IOP: 2013-2014) to obtain the spatially distributed meteorological variables. After the IOP, four typical AMSs were selected and retained for continuous observation, which is expected to provide long-term datasets. The observed meteorological variables include wind (speed and direction), air temperature, humidity, infrared temperature, air pressure, four-component radiation, and precipitation. It is noted that all the sensors were installed in the same way at the same height at each station to guarantee consistency. A typical layout of the AMSs installed at the Dashalong station is shown in Figure 2a.

Snow cover is a prominent feature in the study site. Accumulation and depletion processes were measured automatically at the Yakou snow superstation (Figure 2b). The observed components included snow depth, snow water equivalent (SWE, measured by GammaMONitor, GMON), albedo of the snow surface and blowing (drifting) snow flux (measured by FlowCapt). Solid precipitation was recorded based on a weighing bucket precipitation gauge with a double fence intercomparison reference (DFIR) recommended by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). In addition, meteorological variables, soil temperature and moisture were also observed.

Soil temperature and moisture were measured within six layers at each AMS, while evapotranspiration (ET) was observed by eddy covariance (EC) at three AMSs located in permafrost, seasonally frozen ground and a transient zone to observe freeze-thaw (FT) processes. At the sub-basin scale, a wireless sensor network (WSN) with 40 nodes was established to capture seasonal changes in soil temperature and moisture (more details and data can be found in Jin *et al*., 2014). At the A'rou frozen ground superstation (Figure 2c), soil temperature and moisture profiles were intensively measured in eighteen layers to a depth of 3.2 m (in a nested pattern with more layers in the topsoil) to obtain the soil hydrothermal features under freeze-thaw cycles (FTCs). In addition, thermal conductivity and hydraulic conductivity in the topsoil were also measured to observe the dynamic hydrothermal processes within.

Table 2 summarizes all the variables, sensors and measuring locations at the seven AMSs, Yakou snow superstation, and A'rou frozen ground superstation.

3. Data descriptions

3.1 Dataset availability and access

170   All datasets presented in this paper have been released and available for free download from the Cold and Arid Regions Science Data Center at Lanzhou (https://doi.org/10.3972/hiwater.001.2019.db). A specific directory was designated for each observation station with data classified into 3 categories: hydrometeorological data, snow cover data and frozen ground data. Short descriptions were also provided for each dataset. Auxiliary data include site descriptions, *e.g.*, a watershed digital elevation model (DEM), shapefiles of the watershed boundary and the station locations.

175   ### 3.2 Meteorological data

Distributed meteorological data were obtained from seven AMSs, most of which were built on flat ground, with two stations on the north-facing and south-facing slopes. All AMSs recorded precipitation, direction and speed of wind, air temperature and humidity, surface air pressure, upward and downward radiation of both short and long waves (four components) and land surface temperature (LST). All sensors (listed in Table 2 with manufacturers, models, and specifications) were calibrated and
180   intercompared before being mounted. The sampling frequencies, reference heights and directions of these sensors at all stations were identical to keep the consistency of the data. For more detailed observations, wind speed, air temperature and humidity were recorded at 1, 2, 5, 10, 15 and 25 m at the A'rou frozen ground superstation. Three eddy covariance (EC) systems were installed to measure evapotranspiration (ET) at the Yakou snow superstation (built on largely distributed permafrost), the A'rou frozen ground superstation (built on seasonal frozen ground) and the Dashalong station (in the transition zone). In the
185   open area around the A'rou frozen ground superstation, a pair of Large Aperture Scintillometers (LASs) was installed to measure the sensible heat flux of the land surface. Meteorological data were generally logged every 30 min and can be aggregated to hourly, monthly and yearly values per request (Liu *et al.*, 2011). Steps of the AMS data processing and quality control were two-fold: (1) All the AWS data were averaged over an interval of 30 min for a total of 48 records per day. The missing data were denoted by -6999; (2) The un-physical data were rejected, and the gaps were denoted by -6999.

190   #### 3.2.1 Air temperature and humidity

Air temperature and humidity were monitored at a height of 5 m above the ground every 30 min during various periods at all nine stations. At the A'rou frozen ground superstation, air temperature and humidity were observed at heights of 1, 2, 10, 15 and 25 m every 30 mins from 14 October 2012 to 31 December 2017. Consistent trends for both variables were noticed at all heights. However, air humidity showed a decreasing pattern with increasing heights. At locations other than the Yakou snow
195   superstation, surface temperature was observed every 30 min from 24 June 2014 to 4 July 2014 using two sets of equipment for cross-comparison. Almost identical data were obtained between the two sets, although with variations among sites.

3.2.2 Radiation

Radiation data were collected every 30 min during various periods by four-component radiometers installed at all the AMSs (at a height of 6 m at seven standard AMSs and at a height of 1 m at the Yakou snow superstation), which include downward
200   shortwave radiation (DSR, solar radiation), upward shortwave radiation (USR), downward longwave radiation (DLR), upward longwave radiation (ULR), and net radiation (Rn). In general, the DSR, DLR, ULR and Rn data were consistent among sites and throughout the years but varied with seasonal changes. However, the USR data exhibited significant differences among sites, specifically at the A'rou south-facing slope station and the Yakou snow superstation. At the Yakou snow superstation, the USR data were noticeably higher than the other stations due to the high albedo of snow cover. In contrast, minimum USR
205   was found at the south-facing slope possibly due to sufficient sunshine and little snow cover distributed in the area. At the

A'rou frozen ground superstation, to observe vegetation in a typical alpine ecosystem, photosynthetically active radiation (PAR) was also monitored at an interval of 30 min during the observation period.

3.2.3 Wind speed and direction

Wind speed and direction were monitored 10 m above the ground at the interval of 30 mins during various periods. Specifically, at the A'rou frozen ground superstation, wind speed and direction were observed at heights of 1, 2, 5, 15 and 25 m every 30 mins from 14 October 2012 to 31 December 2017. Consistent data for both variables were noticed at all heights with variations among sites.

3.2.4 Precipitation and evapotranspiration (ET)

Among all the long-term monitored meteorological variables, precipitation and ET data at the Yakou, A'rou and Dashalong stations were collected and displayed in Figure 3. Precipitation data were measured by rain gauges, while ET rates were measured using the EC at the Dashalong, Yakou, and A'rou stations (Table 2). In particular, only the precipitation gauge (T200B, Geonor, USA) at the Yakou snow superstation was sheltered with DFIRs to collect both solid and liquid precipitation data. Because the uncertainties of the precipitation gauge (T200B) may result from the unstable voltage or unknown abnormity, evaporation of the liquid surface, and offset of the instrument, the postprocessing included three steps: (1) manual calibration by adding a certain amount of water into the gauge, (2) abnormal data rejection using the forward-backward filtering (Gustafsson, 1996), and (3) hourly precipitation calculation (using accumulated data before and after each hour). At the other stations, precipitation gauges (TE525M, Texas Electronics, USA) were neither sheltered by Alter shields nor DFIRs. Therefore, only liquid precipitation data were collected. Precipitation data were provided in raw format without any post-processing, which might be underestimated because of the wind and snowfall.

On the other hand, the instruments of EC were calibrated every six months, and the raw data acquired at 10 Hz were processed using the EdiRe software (University of Edinburgh, https://www.geos.ed.ac.uk/homes/jbm/micromet/EdiRe/), including spike detection and removal, lag correction of H_2O/CO_2 relative to the vertical wind component, sonic virtual temperature correction, coordinate rotation (2-D rotation), corrections for density fluctuation (Webb-Pearman-Leuning correction), and frequency response correction (Liu *et al*., 2011). EC data were subsequently averaged at an interval of 30 min and divided into three classes according to the quality assessment method of stationarity (Δst) and the integral turbulent characteristics test (ITC), as proposed by Foken and Wichura (1996): class 1 (level 0: Δst<30 and ITC<30), class 2 (level 1: Δst<100 and ITC<100), and class 3 (level 2: Δst>100 and ITC>100), which represent high-, medium-, and low-quality data, respectively. In addition to the above processing steps, half-hourly flux data were screened using a four-step procedure: (1) data from periods of sensor malfunction were rejected; (2) data collected before or after 1 hour of precipitation were rejected; (3) incomplete 30 min data were rejected when the missing data constituted more than 3% of the 30 min raw record; and (4) data were rejected at night when the friction velocity (u*) was less than 0.1 m/s (Blanken *et al*., 1998). There were 48 records per day, with gaps denoted by -6999.

The annual precipitation was approximately 570 mm and 420 mm at the A'rou frozen ground superstation and Dashalong station, respectively, while it reached 600-800 mm at the Yakou snow superstation. It is interesting to observe that unlike the other two stations, at the Yakou snow superstation, a remarkable amount of ET was found not only in summer but also in spring and fall due to excessive ET on the surface of the snow cover. Also shown in Figure 3, similar patterns were clearly observed between precipitation and ET with possible correlations that could be investigated further through hydrological modeling and data analysis.

3.3 Snow data

245 A comprehensive snow dataset from the Yakou snow superstation has been updated since the summer of 2013. The observed snow variables included snow depth, snow water equivalent (SWE) and blowing (drifting) snow. Data obtained from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017 are summarized in Figure 4, with additional plots for precipitation, ET, soil temperature and moisture. Precipitation and ET (Figure 4a) were explained in Sec. 3.2.4, while soil temperature (measured at six depths below the ground) and moisture (measured at three depths below the ground) under freeze-thaw cycles are presented in Figure 4(e-f)

250 as they relate to precipitation and ET. More data with further analysis of frozen ground observations at the study site will be introduced in the next section. Snow density and the liquid water contents of the snowpack were also measured by a Snow Pack Analyzer (SPA, Sommer, Austria). Unfortunately, this did not work well due to the influence of strong wind. Therefore, snow density data, which can be calculated using snow depth and SWE data, are not available at present.

3.3.1 Snow depth

255 Snow depth was measured by SR50A (Campbell Scientific, USA), which determines the distance between the sensor and the target by sending out ultrasonic pulses and listening for the returning echoes reflected from the target. The original snow depth data were available from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017 (with 53 days missing due to power loss or instrument malfunction, marked with -6999 in the dataset) at an interval of 30 min. In postprocessing, ambient air temperature measured using WXT520 (Vaisala, USA) was used to calibrate the snow depth data (Ryan *et al*. 2008). Data were cross-compared with

260 the measured SWE (introduced in the next subsection), suspicious values were deleted manually followed by noise filtering and, finally, data were averaged to daily output. As shown in Figure 4(b), the snow depth has two peaks in autumn and spring, respectively. From 2014 to 2017, the maximum snow depth mostly decreased (31 cm, 16 cm, 15 cm, and 28 cm, respectively), showing an apparent alteration annually. The largest snow depth was found in April, which indicates that in this region, spring snowfall is the dominant and most unique feature in the hydrologic cycle. The measured snow depth data fluctuated in a chaotic

265 pattern due to the strong solar radiation and blowing snow locally, as well as the dry winter, which is typical at the study site.

3.3.2 Snow water equivalent (SWE)

Snow water equivalent (SWE) was measured by GMON (CS725 GammaMONitor, Campbell Scientific, USA) from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017 at a temporal resolution of 6 hr. GMON provides the SWE data by measuring the absorption of natural ground gamma radiation through the snow layer, which depends on the mass of water between the source (the ground)

270 and the radiation detector. The measurement area of the GMON was 50-100 m^2. By tracking the number of hits recorded on a daily basis from potassium (40K) and thallium (208Tl) energy windows located at 1.46 MeV and 2.61 MeV, superior performance was achieved compared with the traditional snow pillow measurement. Specifically, SWE data from GMON were calibrated by snow depth and density manually-measured using snow ruler and shovel twice a day (in the mornings and afternoons) in the spring of 2014. To avoid random uncertainties during calibration, a 100 m * 100 m grid around the GMON

275 was designed to measure snow depth at an interval of 10 m (100 measuring spots in the grid). Snow density were also manually-measured within the grid at 6 selected locations. The averaged snow depth and density were used to fit the coefficients required by the GMON. With the daily collected SWE data (Figure 4c), the on-site snow season was defined from October to May (of the next year) each year at the Yakou snow superstation with a maximum value of approximately 120 mm. The daily snow depth and SWE data in the observation period exhibited similar patterns and are thus closely correlated as seen when comparing

280 Figure 4(b) and 4(c).

3.3.3 Snow albedo

Snow albedo was measured using four-component radiometers described in Sec. 3.2.2 and calculated from the ratio between upward and downward radiations at short waves and long waves. As shown in Figure 4(d), a useful measure of the effective

albedo of the snowpack has been provided, which can be reasonably cross-compared with the snow depth and SWE (Figure 4b-c). It should be noted that the four-component radiation data (provided in raw format) and the albedo data shown in Figure 4d were calculated by the downward and upward shortwave radiation during 10:00-17:30 (local time) in order to filter out values at high solar zenith angles in early mornings and evenings.

3.3.4 Blowing (drifting) snow

Blowing (drifting) snow is commonly observed in the Qilian mountains due to its high altitude and complex terrain. It is important to estimate the occurrence of blowing snow because it may cause redistribution of the snow cover and influence the sublimation of snow (Li *et al*., 2018a). FlowCapt (IAV, Switzerland) was used to measure the number of blowing snow grains at 3 heights (0-1 m, 1-2 m, and 2-3 m) every 10 mins. The FlowCapt sensor is based on vibro-acoustics, which can provide good qualitative and quantitative information about drifted snow intensity and duration of snowdrift periods. The blowing snow data were available from 1 January 2014 to 20 September 2016 without any gaps. To filter the wind noise during the observation (especially in summer), it was necessary to manually delete the suspicious data by comparing the results with the SWE and snow depth data. The data would be rejected when (1) snow depth was zero, (2) wind speed was less than 3 m/s, or (3) air temperature was higher than 10℃. The data collected in 2014 are plotted in Figure 5, which show that the blowing snow fluxes reached a maximum close to the land surface and decreased with height. Two extreme events were found in May and September during that year.

3.4 Frozen ground data

To observe the FTCs of the frozen ground, soil moisture and temperature were measured at all the stations below ground (Table 2). At seven standard AMSs and the Yakou snow superstation, soil temperature was observed at 8 depths (0, 4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, 160 cm), while soil moisture was observed at 7 depths (4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, 160 cm). In addition, intensive measurements of both variables in 18 nested layers within 3.2 m below ground were performed at the A'rou frozen ground superstation (Table 2, Figure 6a) to capture the water and energy exchange within the soil. In addition, soil water potential and soil thermal conductivity were measured in the top 6 layers at an interval of 30 min (Table 2, Figure 6a). The datasets are available from 5 December 2012 to 31 December 2017, with intermittent loss mostly due to power loss and sensor malfunctions at high altitudes. The frozen ground data were provided in raw format without any post-processing. Soil water potential and moisture data are presented in Figure 6(b-c), showing consistent trends in topsoil layers if cross-compared, because the soil water potential represents the capacity for storage of moisture within the soil. Figures 6(b-c) also show that, during the melting season, relatively low soil moisture data were recorded due to the frozen status of the soil, while a sharp increase and fluctuations of the moisture data were noticed until spring in most of the layers. It was also found that soil moisture was quite low without clear seasonal variations in deeper soil layers (>60 cm), which may be because it is difficult for time domain reflectometry (TDR) sensors to work in bedrock. Figure 6(d) plots the soil heat conductivity in selected layers (10, 40 and 80 cm). Soil heat conductivity is difficult to analyze because it is a function of soil density, soil moisture content (ice content in frozen ground) and soil temperature, which cannot be easily calculated using a simple formula. Therefore, site observations can be utilized to evaluate the parameterization of alpine hydrologic models. The soil temperature changes within different layers under the FTCs, including the spatial and temporal variations, are clearly shown in Figure 6(e). Correlated patterns were found between soil moisture and temperature profiles when comparing Figure 6(c) and (e), variations of which become more significant close to the land surface. In addition, at the Yakou snow superstation, the soil at 160 cm below ground was mostly frozen before 2016, with a significant increase to 0°C after 2016, which indicates that the active layer thickness has since increased.

4. Conclusions

In this paper, a suite of alpine hydrology datasets observed from an integrated, distributed and multiscale hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observation network in the upper reaches of the Heihe River Basin (HRB) is presented. With recent observational advances and decades of efforts, the integrated network has served as a testbed for alpine hydrology, cryospheric and meteorological sciences. The associated open-access datasets include high-quality hydrometeorological data with a focus on snow and frozen ground observations at the sub-basin and basin scales, which aims to address a variety of scientific questions including but not limited to: (1) how to provide accurate and effective forcing data for alpine hydrological models, (2) how to integrate observation, simulation and the acquired datasets for informative understanding, and (3) how perturbations (climate change and human activities) alter hydrologic processes. Our continuous efforts based on the current observation network are three-fold: (1) connecting "below-to-above" ground observations (e.g., incorporating other datasets from airborne and geophysical measurements) and looking into a more systematic investigation of the watershed behavior in an unprecedented manner; (2) developing robust data management assimilation tools and, ultimately with the aid of high performance computing, building a data-driven modeling platform to accelerate new discoveries and insights; and (3) performing outreach and offering rich possibilities for community collaboration, both within and across sites.

Author contributions

TC, XL, SL, HL, RJ, MM, and JW designed the observations, TC, HL, ZX, JT, LX, JD and XY cleaned and organized the datasets. ZX, JT, YZ and ZR maintained the observation network. TC, XY and XL drafted the manuscript, and all authors contributed to the paper writing.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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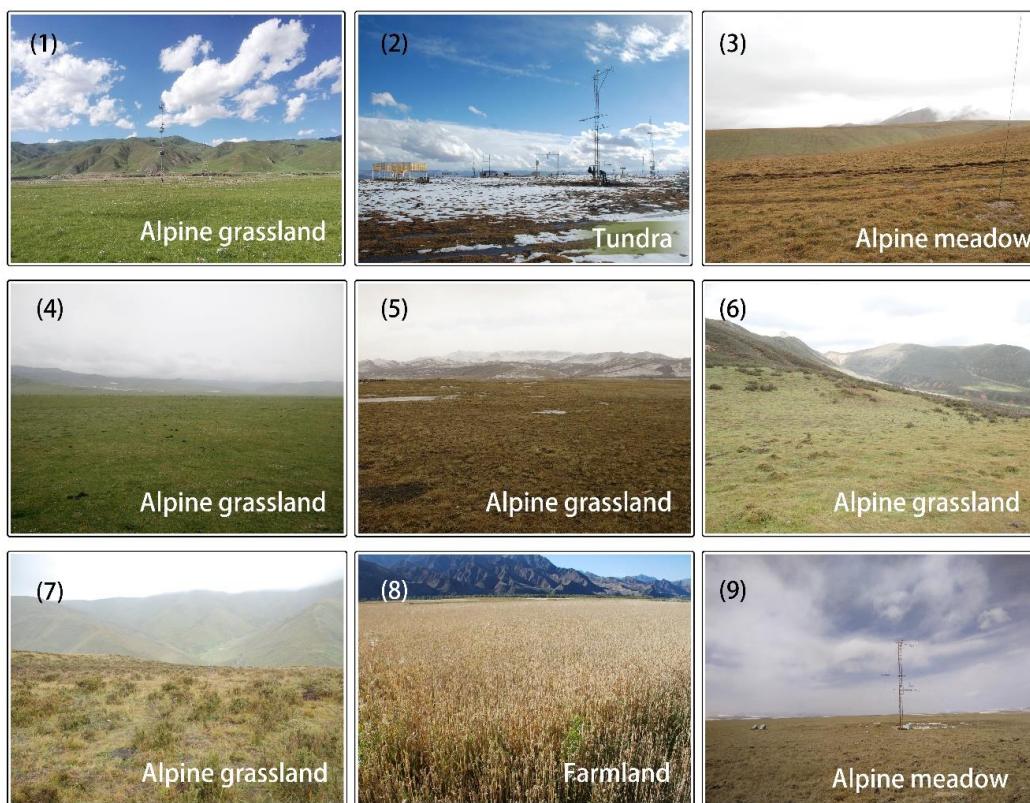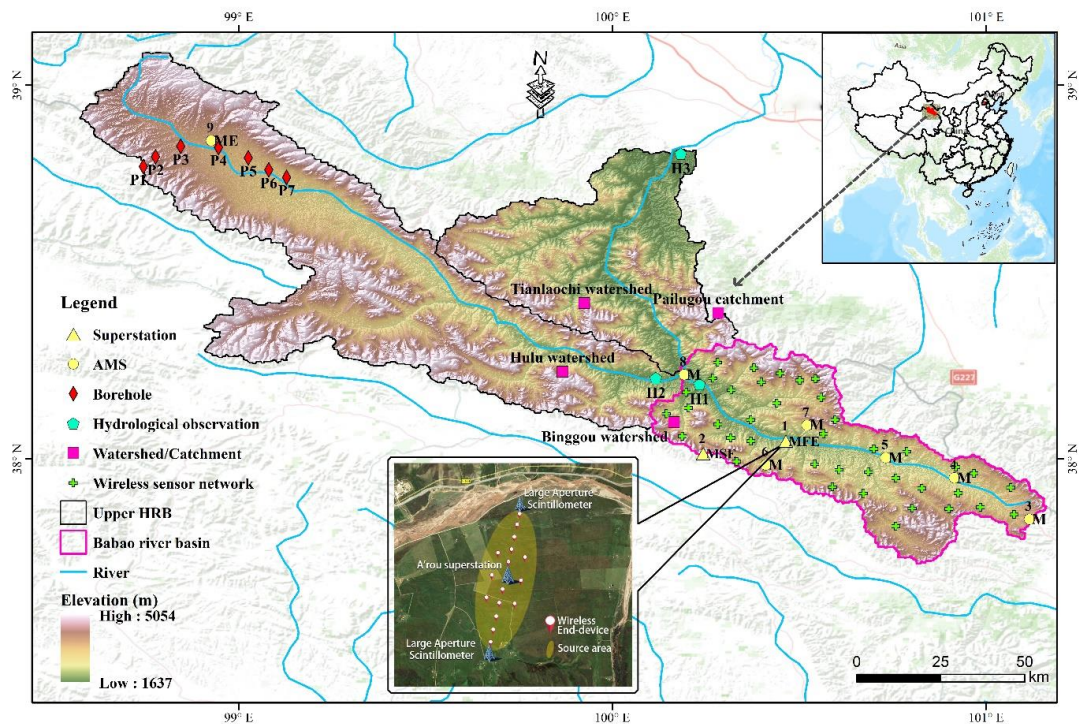
Figure 1: The integrated hydrometeorological – snow – frozen ground observation network located at the study site. The observation network includes seven meteorological stations (M), one frozen ground superstation (F), and one snow superstation (S). The frozen ground and snow superstation observe the meteorological variables, evapotranspiration (E), and water/carbon fluxes, while the Dashalong station (No. 9) observes evapotranspiration by eddy covariance. The other observation watersheds (purple square) in the upper HRB include the Hulu watershed (Chen *et al*., 2014), Pailugou watershed (He *et al*., 2012), Tianlaochi watershed (Peng *et al*., 2014), and Binggou watershed (Li and Wang, 2011). There are nine boreholes in the west for permafrost observation (red diamond, Peng *et al*., 2016). In addition, 40 wireless sensor nodes (end-device, green cross) were designed to observe soil moisture and temperature in a sub-basin and the Babao River Basin (bounded by purple polygons, more details and data can be found in Jin *et al*., 2014). Additionally, there are three hydrological sites in the upper HRB where the runoff was measured (blue circle). In the zoomed-in subfigure at the bottom, a pair of large aperture scintillometers (LASs) are shown on the north-facing and south-facing slopes of the A'rou frozen ground superstation, in the middle of which 16 wireless end-devices (yellow dots) were installed for soil moisture and temperature measurements. To illustrate the ecosystems in the study area, nine typical landscapes are presented as listed in Table 1.

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(a)

(b)

(c)
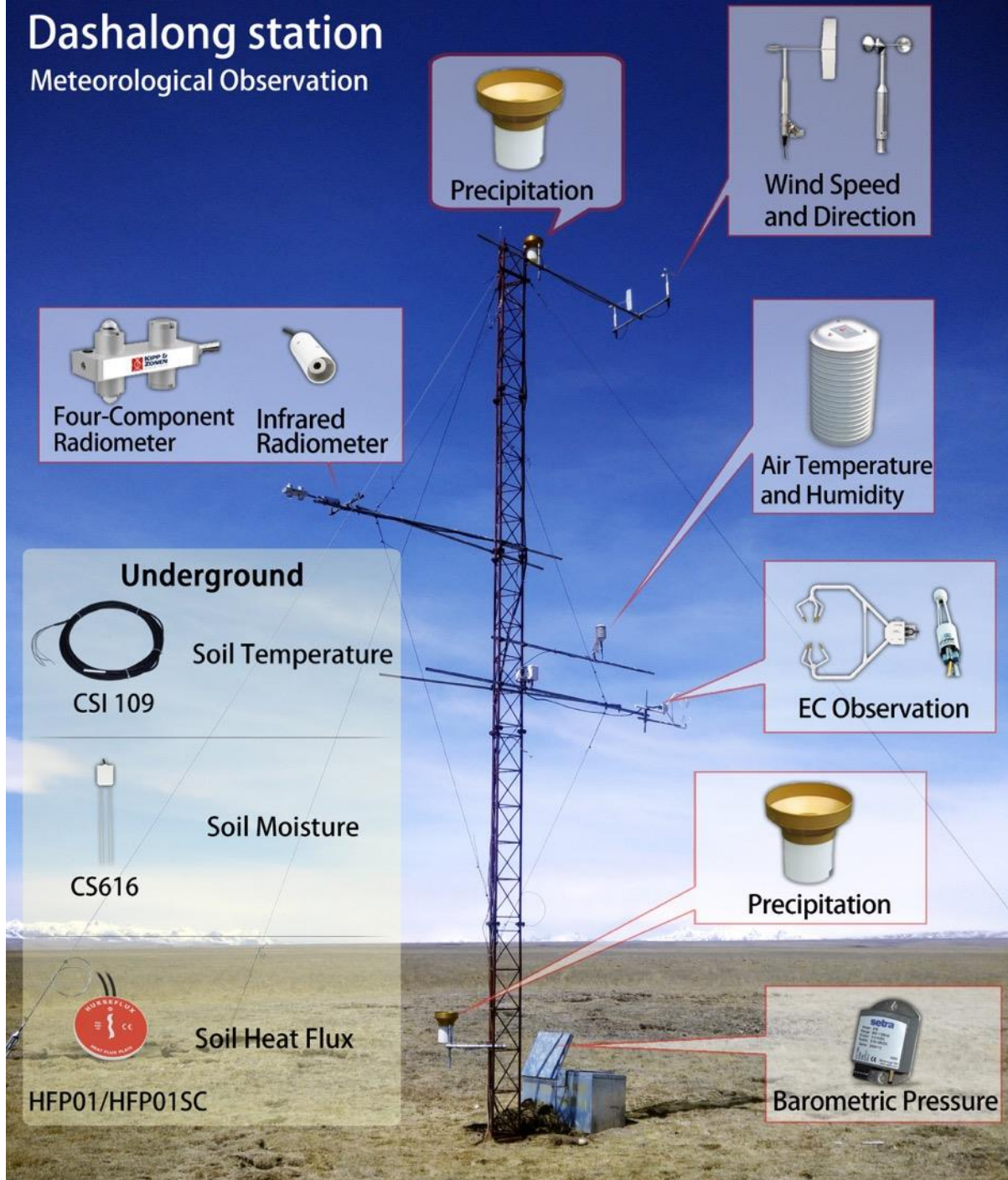
Figure 2: Experimental design: (a) hydrometeorological observation, (b) snow observation, and (c) frozen ground observation.

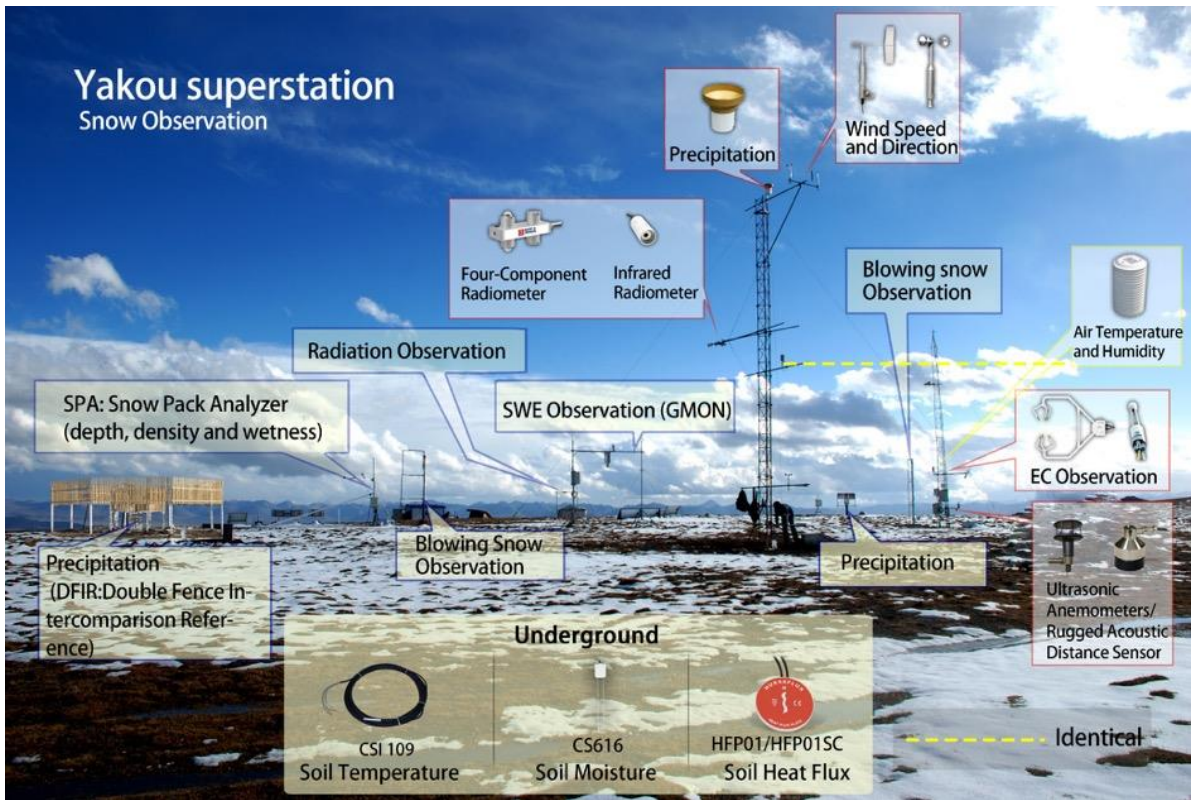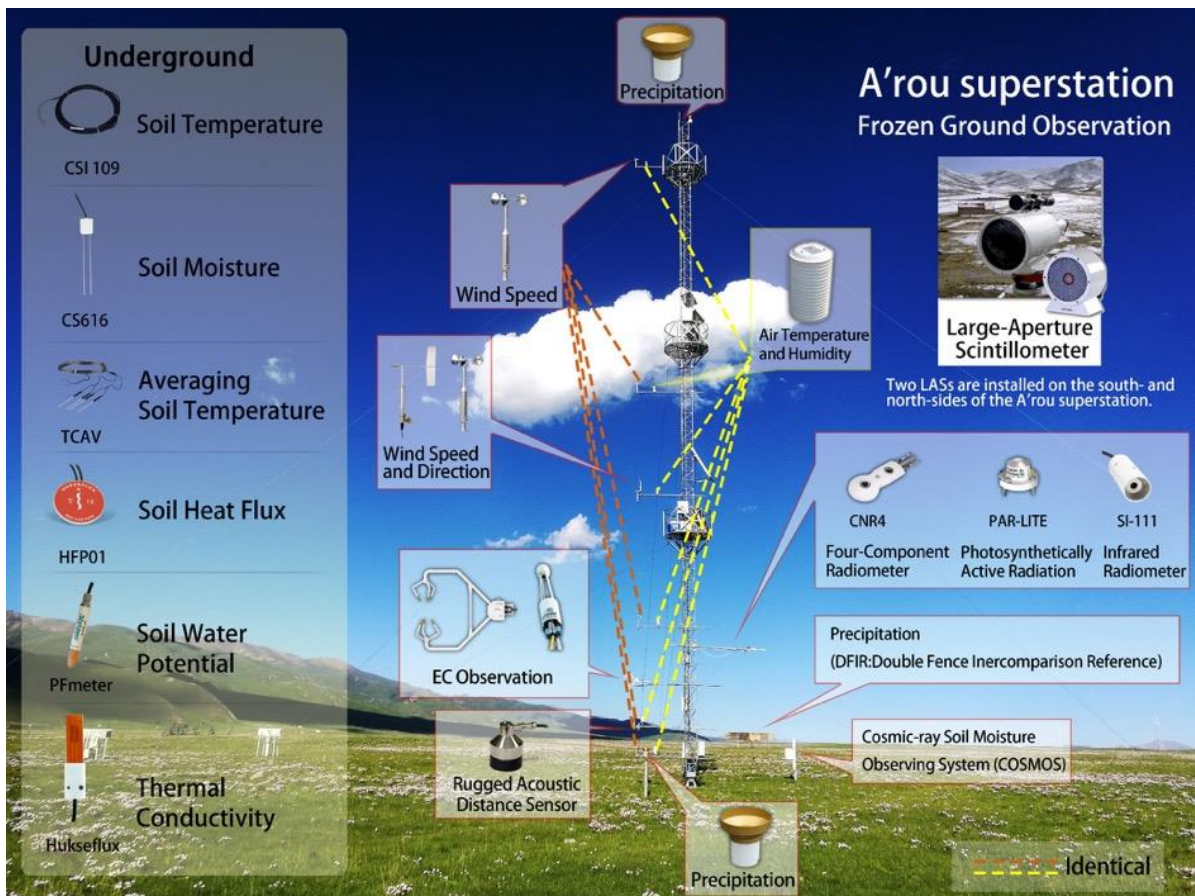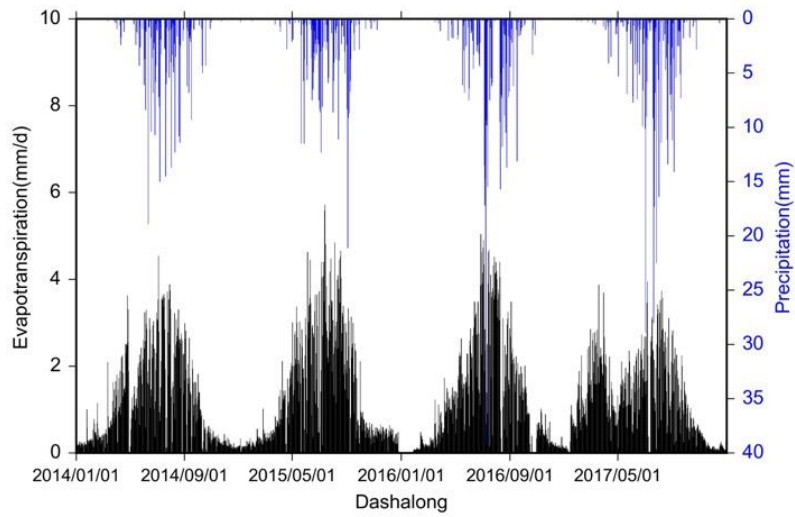520   (a)

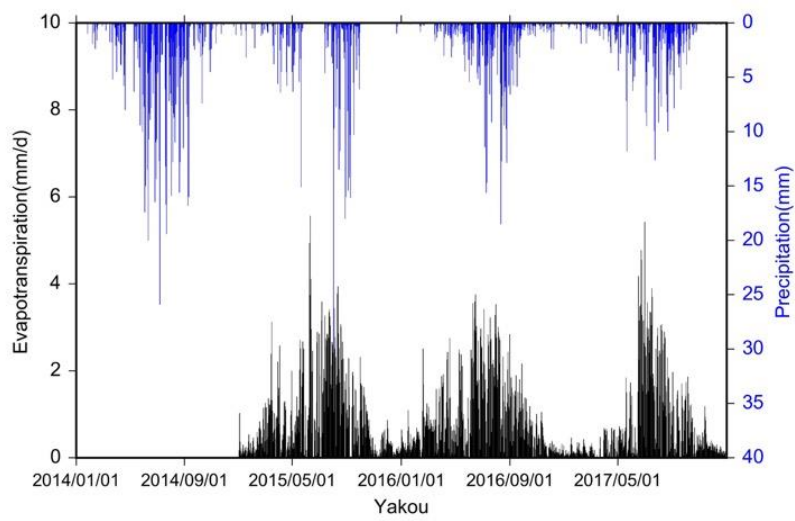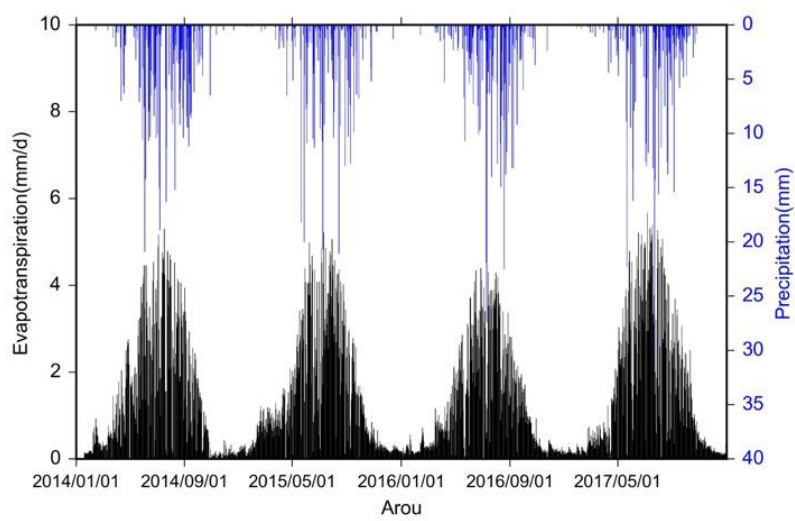   (b)

                                                               (c)

525   **Figure 3: Daily precipitation and ET data at the (a) Dashalong, (b) Yakou, and (c) A'rou stations from 2014 to 2017.**
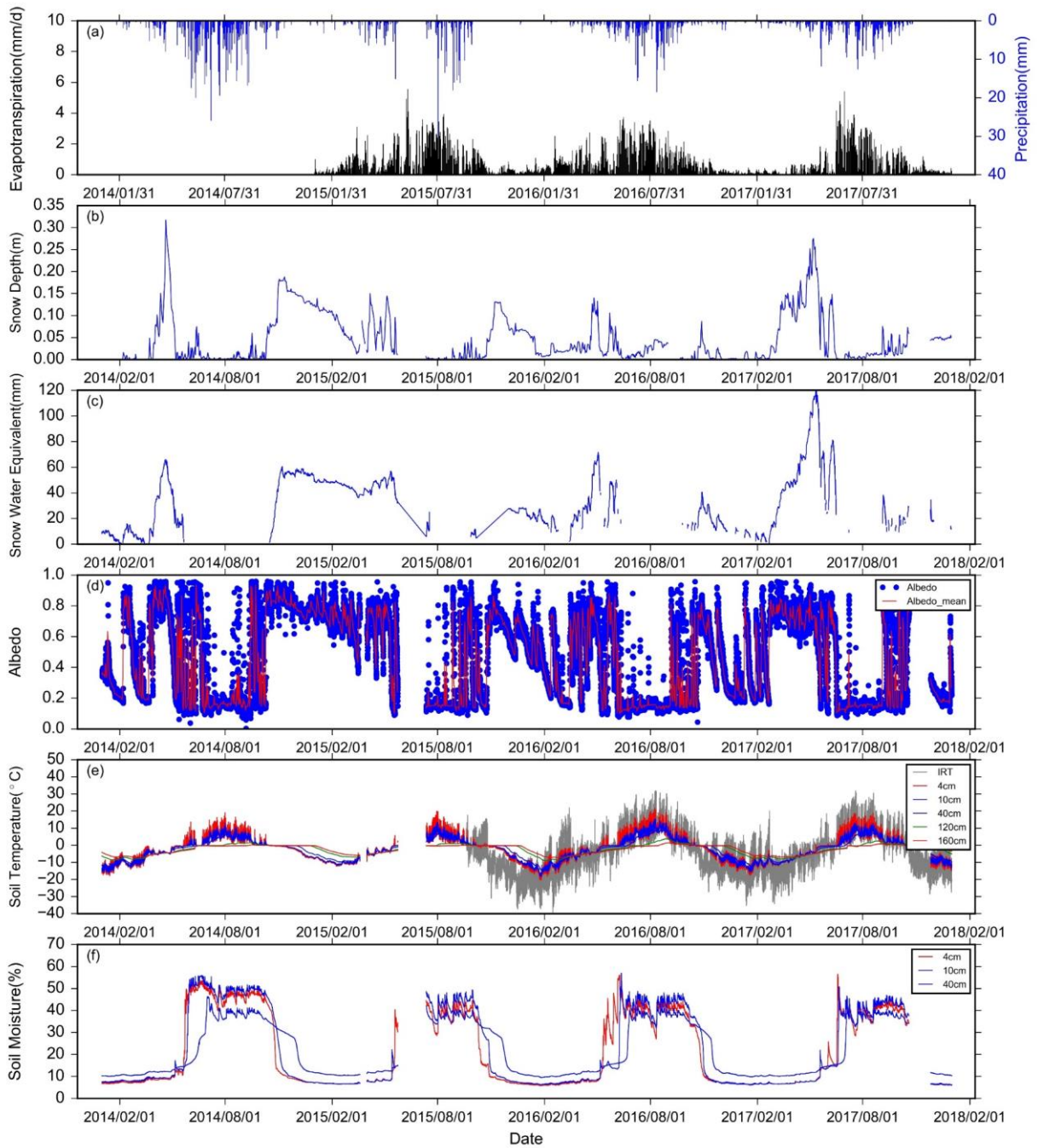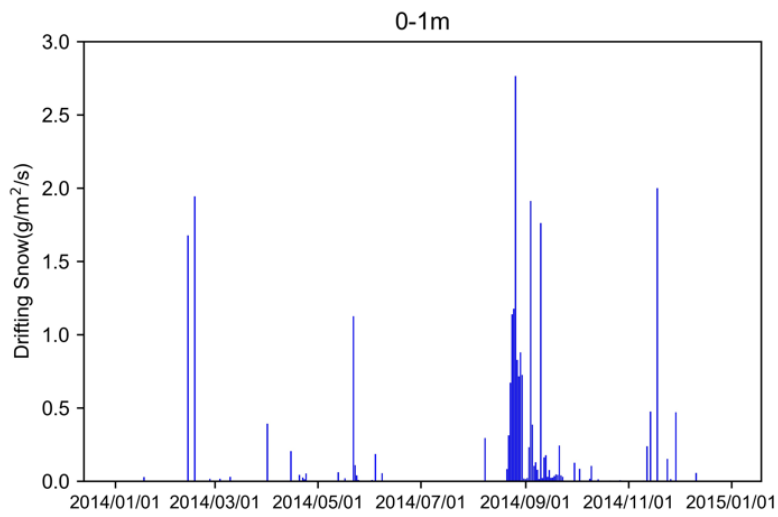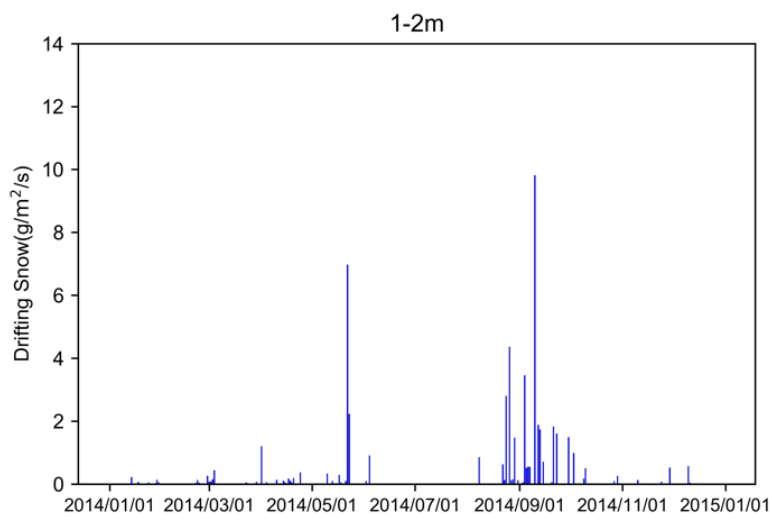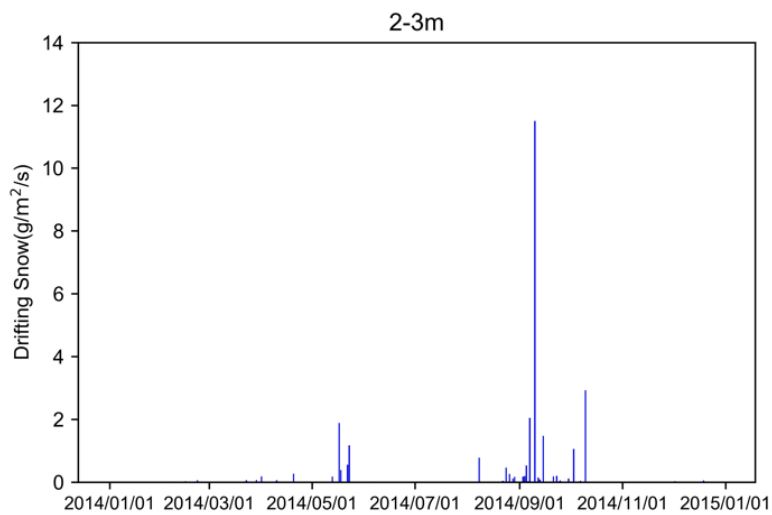
Figure 4: Observations at the Yakou snow superstation from 2014/1/1 to 2017/12/31, including (a) precipitation and ET, (b) snow depth, (c) SWE, (d) albedo, (e) soil temperature, and (f) soil moisture.

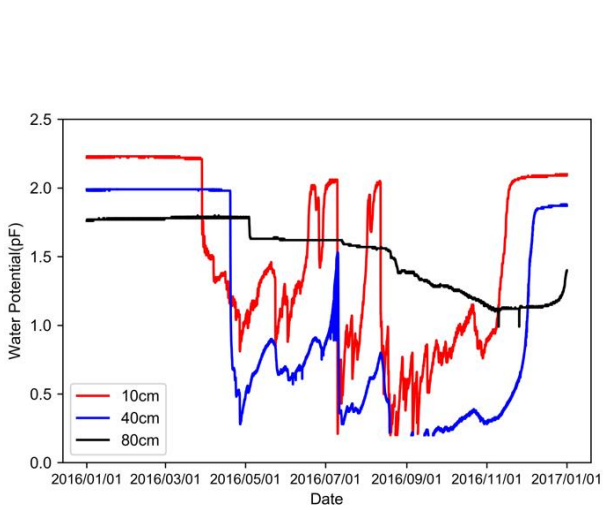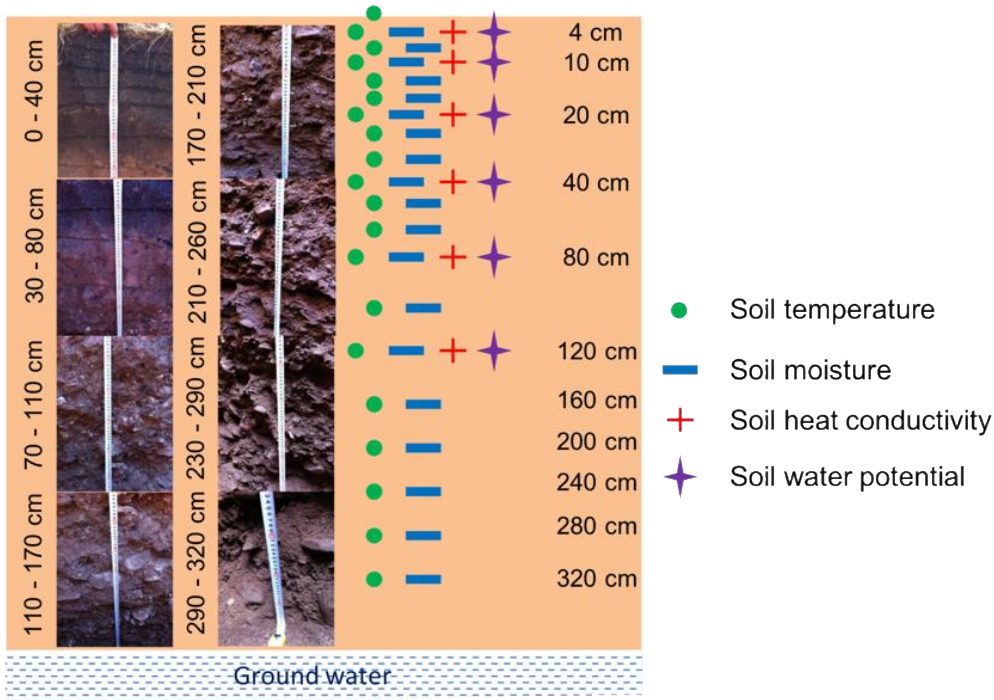530

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(a)

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(b)

(c)

Figure 5: Blowing snow measurement at the Yakou snow superstation from 2014/1/1 to 2014/12/31: (a) at the height of 0-1 m, (b) at the height of 1-2 m, and (c) at the height of 2-3 m.

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(a)

(b)

(c)

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(d)

(e)

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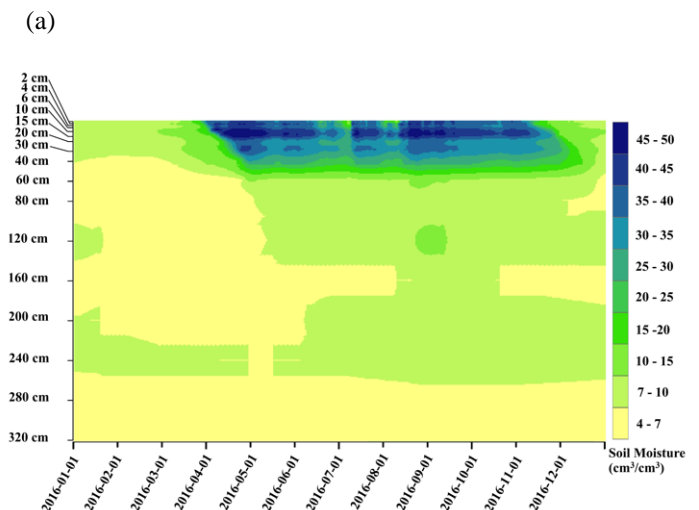
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Figure 6: Frozen ground observation at the A'rou superstation in 2016: (a) soil heterogeneity and layout of the measurements, (b) soil water potential, (c) soil moisture, (d) soil heat conductivity, and (e) soil temperature.

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560   **Table 1: List of seven AMSs and two superstations with detailed information.**
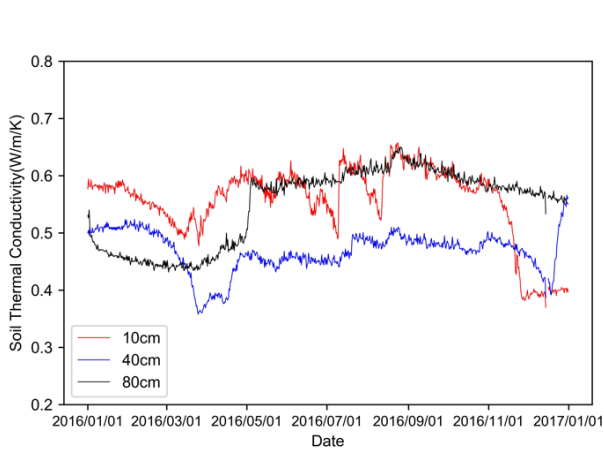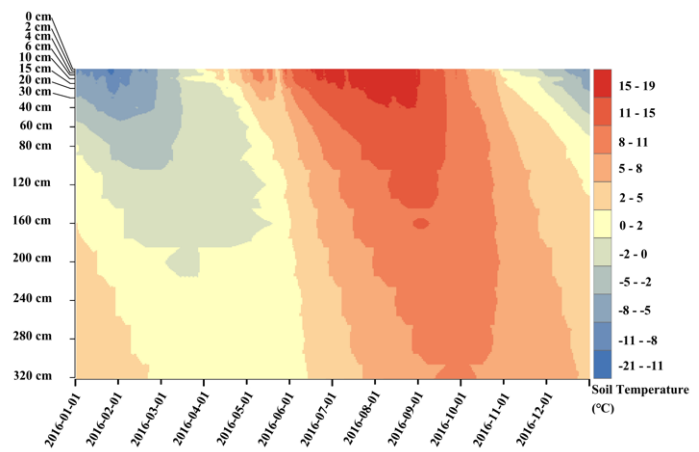
ID	Name	Longitude	Latitude	Elevation (m)	Legend	Land cover	Observation period
1	A'rou frozen ground superstation*+	100.46°E	38.05°N	3033	MFE	Alpine grassland	October 2012 -
2	Yakou snow superstation*	100.24°E	38.01°N	4145	MSE	Tundra	January 2014 -
3	Jingyangling station	101.12°E	37.84°N	3750	M	Alpine meadow	August 2013 -
4	E'bao station	100.92°E	37.95°N	3294	M	Alpine grassland	June 2013 -September 2016
5	Huangcaogou station	100.73°E	38.00°N	3137	M	Alpine grassland	June 2013 – April 2015
6	A'rou north-facing station	100.41°E	37.98°N	3536	M	Alpine grassland	August 2013 -December 2014
7	A'rou south-facing station	100.52°E	38.09°N	3529	M	Alpine grassland	August 2013 -September 2015
8	Huangzangsi station	100.19°E	38.23°N	2612	M	Farmland	June 2013 – April 2015
9	Dashalong station*	98.94°E	38.84°N	3739	ME	Alpine meadow	August 2013 -

Note: * indicates that the flux was observed by eddy covariance (EC). + indicates that the flux was observed by LAS. Legend: M, F, S, and E represent the hydrometeorological, frozen ground, snow cover and evapotranspiration observations.

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Table 2: Measuring variables, sensors and locations.

Variables	Sensors	Range	Accuracy	7 AMSs	Yakou snow superstation	A'rou frozen ground superstation
Air temperature (Ta, °C)	Vaisala: HMP45C, HMP45AC	-40° to +60°C	±0.2°C@20°C	5 m	5m	1, 2, 5, 10, 15, and 25 m
	HMP45D, HMP45AD	-40° to +60°C	±0.2°C@20°C			
Air humidity (RH, %)	Vaisala: HMP45C, HMP45AC	0 to 100%RH	@ 20°C: ±2%RH(0 to 90%); ±3%RH(90% to 100%)	5 m	5m	1, 2, 5, 10, 15, and 25 m
	HMP45D, HMP45AD	0.8 to 100%RH	@ 20°C: ±2%RH(0 to 90%) ±3%RH(90% to 100%)			
Wind speed (WS, m/s)	MetOne: 010C	0 to 60m/s	±0.07 m/s	10 m	10m	1, 2, 5, 10, 15, and 25 m
	034B	0 to 75m/s	±0.12 m/s for WS < 10.1 m/s; ±1.1% of reading for WS > 10.1 m/s			
	RM Young: 03001	0 to 50m/s	±0.5 m/s			
Wind direction (WD, °)	MetOne: 020C	0 to 360°	±3°	10 m	10m	2 m
	034B	0 to 360°	±4°			
	RM Young: 03001	0 to 360°	±5°			
Four-component radiation (DR/UR/DLR_	Kipp&Zone: CNR1	Pyranometer: 0 to 2000 W/m^2 Pyrgeometer:	Uncertainty in daily total: Pyranometer: ±10% Pyrgeometer ±10%	6 m	6m	5 m

Cor/ULR_Cor, W/m²)		-250 to 250 W/m²				
	Kipp&Zone: CNR4	Pyranometer: 0 to 2000 W/m² Pyrgeometer: -250 to 250 W/m²	Uncertainty in daily total: Pyranometer: < 5% Pyrgeometer:< 10%			
Photosynthetically active radiation (PAR, μmol/(s m²))	Kipp&Zone: PQS-1	0 to 10000 μmol/(m² s)	4 to 10μv/μmol/(m² s)			6m
	PAR-LITE	0 to 10000 μmol/(m² s)	4 to 6μv/μmol/(m² s)			
Infrared temperature (IRT, ◦C)	Apogee: SI-111	-40° to 70℃	±0.2℃@ -10℃ to +65℃; ±0.5℃@ -40℃ to +70℃	6 m (2 Repeats)	6 m (2 Repeats)	5m (2 Repeats)
	Avalon: IRTC3	-20° to 60℃	±0.3℃			
Precipitation (Rain, mm)	Texas Electronics: TE525M	0° to +50℃	Up to 10mm/hr: ±1% 10 to 20mm/hr: +0, -3% 20 to 30mm/hr: +0, -5%	10 m	3m (DFIR), 10m	5 m (DFIR)
	Geonor: T200BM3	-40° to 60℃	0.1% FS			
Air pressure (P, hpa)	Setra: CS100	600-1100hPa	±0.5hPa at +20 °C	0.5 m	0.5m	2 m
	Vaisala: PTB110	500-1100hPa	±0.3 hPa at +20 °C			
Eddy covariance (EC)	Campbell Scientific Instrument (CSI), LI-COR: CSAT3 & Li7500A CSAT3 & Li7500	CO2: 0-3000ppm H2O: 0-60ppt	CO2: Within %1 of reading H2O: Within 2% of reading	4.5 m (Dashalong only)	3m	3.5 m

Large Aperture Scintillometer (LAS)	SCINTEC: BLS450; Rainroot: ZZLAS	250m - 6km				9.5 m
Soil heat flux (Gs, W/m^2)	Hukseflux: HFP01SC	±2000W/m^2	±3 of reading	6 cm below ground (3 Repeats)	6 cm below ground (3 Repeats)	6 cm below ground (3 Repeats)
	HFP01	±2000W/m^2	within -15% to +5% in 12hour totals			
	Avalon: HFT3	±100W/m^2	<±5 of reading			
Average soil temperature (TCAV, ℃)	Avalon: TCAV	-55-+85℃	±0.3℃			2 and 4cm
Soil temperature profile (Ts, ℃)	CSI: 109, 109ss	-40° to +70℃	-40℃: ±0.6℃ tolerance 0℃: ±0.38℃ tolerance 25℃: ±0.1℃ tolerance 50℃: ±0.3℃ tolerance 70℃: ±0.4℃ tolerance	0, 4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, and 160 cm below ground	0, 4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, and 160 cm below ground	2, 4 (3 Repeats), 6, 10 (3 Repeats), 15, 20, 30, 40, 60, 80, 120, 160, 200, 240, 280, and 320 cm below ground
	Avalon: AV-10T	-45° to +65℃	<±0.2℃ over 0℃ to 60℃; ±0.4 @ -35℃			
Soil moisture profile (Ms, %)	CSI: CS616	0% to 50% VWC	±2.5% VWC using standard calibration with bulk EC of ≤0.5 dS m-1, bulk density of ≤1.55 g cm-3)	4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, and 160 cm below ground	4, 10, 20, 40, 80, 120, and 160 cm below ground	2, 4 (3 Repeats), 6, 10 (3 Repeats), 15, 20, 30, 40, 60, 80, 120, 160, 200, 240, 280, and 320 cm below ground
	Decagon: ECH2O-5	0% to 100% VWC	±0.03 m^3/m^3 typical in mineral soils that have solution EC <8 dS/m; Medium specific calibration: ±0.02 m^3/m^3 in any porous medium (± 2%)			
Soil water potential (soil_pf, pF)	GeoPrecision: pF-meter	pF: 0-7	± 0.05			4, 10, 20, 40, 80, and 120 cm below ground

Soil thermal conductivity (Soil_TCon, W/(m·K))	Hukseflux: TP01	0.3 to 5 W/(m•K)	± 5%			4, 10, 20, 40, 80, and 120 cm below ground
Snow depth (mm)	CSI: SR50A	0-10m	±1cm		2.5 m	2m
Snow water equivalent (SWE, mm)	CSI: CS725	0-600mm	±15 mm (from 0 to 300 mm) ±15% (from 300 to 600 mm)		2.5m	
Drifting snow (snowdrift, g/m^2/s)	IAV: FlowCapt	0-250 g/m^2/s	1 g/m2/s		0-1m, 1-2m, and 2-3m	

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Note (DFIR): T200BM3 with Double Fence Intercomparison Reference (DFIR). The DFIRs were established in October 2016 at the Yakou snow superstation, and in August 2017 at the A'rou frozen ground superstation, respectively.