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My geological life in Greece

My interest in Greece was earlier than the idea to become a geologist: When visiting a traditional German grammar school („humanistic gymnasium“), I had my first contacts with the spirit of classical Greece, and I became enthusiastic for ancient Greek art and philosophy. The first occasion to see the country of my dreams arrived during my graduate studies of geology and palaeontology at the university of Marburg (Germany). In 1956 my professor and PhD supervisor C. W. Kockel, a specialist of Alpine and Balkan geology, undertook a one-month excursion to Greece with his students, which had been organised and actively supported by his friend professor M. Mitzopoulos of the University of Athens. It was really a great impression for me to see the beautiful country and to meet its kind and honest inhabitants with their admirable hospitality, long time before the huge wave of tourism has flooded the country. Working on problems of Alpine geology at that time, I was entrapped by the great sites and problems of Hellenic geology. It was then, that I wished to carry out geological research in Greece myself in the future.

The first occasion arrived, when Professor Kockel sent me to Greece in 1963. My task was to supervise some of his PhD students working on the very complex island of Chios and on the Mesozoic facies and nappe tectonics of the Argolis peninsula. After Kockel's early death (1966) it was my obligation to take over the supervision of these students, now being a lecturer of geology. In these years I started with my studies on Middle Triassic stratigraphy of Argolis based on ammonoids, which I could extend, later on, to the Lower and Middle Triassic sections of Chios, in close cooperation with R. Assereto, M. Gaetani, and A. Nicora (Milano) and V. Tselepidis (Athens). In these early years I could find very helpful connections in the university of Athens with Prof. G. Marinos and two very active members of his staff, the later professors J. K. Melentis and N. K. Symeonidis. At IGSR (now IGME) support was kindly provided by the General Director K. Zachos and Dr. J. Bornovas.

Taking over the chair of geology at the Freie Universität Berlin (1969), I gained better possibilities for geological activities in Greece. In Germany, a big geoscientific research program „Geodynamics of the Mediterranean Region“ was founded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in 1970 with the aim to carry out integrated investigations of geologists, geophysicists, and petrologists in the Alps, the Apennines, the Hellenides and in the Mediterranean Sea, in close cooperation with institutions and colleagues of Austria, Italy, and Greece. I was made one of the coordinators of German activities in Greece. In that function and in later years, I could find friendly contacts to many Greek colleagues, among them I may only mention I. Mariolakos, D. Papanikolaou, and M. Dermitzakis (University of Athens), J. Papastamatiou, D. Theodoropoulos, S.S. Avgoustidis, and N. Fytrolakis (Technical University of Athens), A. Panagos, D. Frydas, and T. Doutsos (University of Patras), and T. Markopoulos (Technical University of Crete, Chania). I gratefully mention, as well, the excellent cooperation with IGME. To that institution I contributed e.g. five sheets of the Geological Map of Greece 1:50 000. My main partners at IGME were G. Katsikatsos, A. Mavridis, and my friends M. and D. Matarangas. During the early

years of my geological activity in Greece I decided to become member of the Geological Society of Greece myself, about 30 years ago.

Here may be the place to mention as well my friendly and fruitful contacts with geoscientists from other European countries working in Greece, mainly with the French working groups of J. Aubouin, J. Brunn, P. Celet, J. Dercourt, and J. Mercier, further-more with the group of J. Meulenkamp from the Netherlands. Naturally I must not forget to thank all my German colleagues for their effective work and the good cooperation with me and within the program. I have to mention gratefully to find several competent colleagues among them, who were ready to write a book on the geology of Greece, which was published in 1986.

Within the mentioned research program (1970-76) and in the following decades, my working group had the chance to deal with several problems of the geology of Greece. An essential subject was the nappe structure of the Pelion peninsula and the Northern Sporades, where I could cooperate closely with my admirable colleague and friend J. Papastamatiou, later on, with D. Matarangas very fruitfully. In Argolis, we continued to study the facies of the Mesozoic and the nappe structure, having mainly in view the tectonic position of ophiolites. We could define the Eohellenic ophiolite obduction, there. Here, it was on a field trip together with D. Roeder (Knoxville, U.S.A.) and I. Mariolakos that I became fully convinced of the concept of plate tectonics. A third field was the external crystalline belt of the Peloponnesus, in contact with IGME and with D. Papanikolaou. There we had a considerable number of Greek PhD and diploma students in our group. My final field of research was on Crete, since the 90th of the past century, with the scope on the Plattenkalk (metamorphism and deformation) and on the nappe structure of Western Crete, here in cooperation with my friend D. Frydas and with H. Keupp (Berlin). I hope to continue a little more on these studies.

Geologists have the preference of fate to feel at home not only in their native countries, but also in other regions of the world, where they have done field work over long times. For me this is true for Austria, Morocco, and the Bolivian Andes, but especially for Greece, where I was allowed to spend altogether several happy and fruitful years in the course of four decades. For that I want to express my deep gratitude and sympathy to all my Greek friends and colleagues for their acceptance and appreciation. Thanks are due as well to the people of all regions of Greece, which I have visited.