



The environmental and evolutionary history of Lake Ohrid (FYROM/Albania): Interim results from the SCOPSCO deep drilling project

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11 **Abstract**

12 This study reviews and synthesises existing information generated within the SCOPSCO
13 (“Scientific Collaboration on Past Speciation Conditions in Lake Ohrid”) deep drilling
14 project. The four main aims of the project are to infer (i) the age and origin of Lake Ohrid
15 (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/Republic of Albania), (ii) its regional
16 seismotectonic history, (iii) volcanic activity and climate change in the central northern
17 Mediterranean region, and (iv) the drivers of biodiversity and endemism. The Ohrid basin
18 formed by transtension during the Miocene, opened during the Pliocene and Pleistocene, and
19 the lake established *de novo* in the still relatively narrow valley between 1.9 and 1.3 Myr ago.
20 The lake history is recorded in a 584 m long sediment sequence, which was recovered within
21 the framework of the International Continental Scientific Drilling Program (ICDP) from the
22 central part (DEEP site) of the lake in spring 2013. To date, 50 tephra and crypto-tephra
23 horizons have been found in the upper 460 m of this sequence. Tephrochronology and tuning
24 biogeochemical proxy data to orbital parameters revealed that the upper 247.8 m represent the
25 last 637 kyr. The multi-proxy dataset covering these 637 kyr indicates long-term variability,
26 with a change from cooler and wetter to drier and warmer glacial and interglacial periods
27 around 300 ka. Short-term environmental change caused, for example, by tephra deposition or
28 the climatic impact of millennial-scale Dansgaard-Oeschger and Heinrich events are
29 superimposed on the long-term trends. Evolutionary studies on the extant fauna indicate that
30 Lake Ohrid was not a refugial area for regional freshwater animals. This differs from the



surrounding catchment, where the mountainous setting with relatively high water availability provided a refugial area for temperate and montane trees during the relatively cold and dry glacial periods. Although Lake Ohrid experienced significant environmental change over the last 637 kyr, preliminary molecular data from extant microgastropod species do not indicate significant changes in diversification rate during this period. The reasons for this constant rate remain largely unknown, but a possible lack of environmentally induced extinction events in Lake Ohrid and/or the high resilience of the ecosystems may have played a role.

1 Introduction

Systematic limnological studies started in the early 20th century and were first carried out in Europe, for example, at Lake Geneva (e.g., Forel, 1901), a number of lakes in Germany (e.g., Thienemann, 1918), and at Lake Ohrid on the Balkan Peninsula (reviewed in Stanković, 1960). These initial studies focused on hydrological data, such as temperature, dissolved oxygen and bottom morphology, and on biological data, such as the distribution and ecology of lake biota. Analytical and technological advances in the following decades facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between catchment dynamics, hydrology, and the living world of lakes. This led to the establishment of new institutions, such as the Hydrobiological Institute at Lake Ohrid in 1935 (Stanković, 1960).

Besides analyses in extant lakes, early scientists were also interested in studying past changes in lake systems, and paleolimnology, a sub-discipline of limnology, was established in the 1920s. This field started with the collection of sediment cores from lakes to interpret stratigraphic data on plant and animal fossils as a record of the lake's history (National Research Council, 1996). Particularly with the establishment of radiometric dating methods in the 1950s and 1960s, paleolimnological studies developed into a powerful tool for long- and short-term reconstructions of the climatic and environmental history of lakes and their catchments.

One of the most important developments in paleolimnological work has been the formation of a multi-national continental drilling program – the International Continental Scientific



1 Drilling Program (ICDP). The ‘Potsdam Conference’, conducted in 1993, defined the
2 scientific and management needs for the ICDP and declared Lake Ohrid, Europe’s oldest
3 freshwater lake, as an ICDP target site.

4

5 One of the most outstanding characteristics of Lake Ohrid, besides its presumed old age, is its
6 high degree of endemic biodiversity. With more than 300 described eukaryotic endemic taxa
7 (Föller et al., 2015), Lake Ohrid belongs to the most biodiverse ancient lakes, i.e., lakes that
8 have continuously existed for >100 kyr (Albrecht and Wilke, 2008). If its surface area is taken
9 into account, it may have the highest endemic biodiversity amongst all lakes worldwide.
10 Though Lake Ohrid has long been considered to be of Tertiary age, estimates vary
11 considerably, between ca. 2 and 10 Ma (reviewed in Albrecht and Wilke, 2008). Likewise, its
12 limnological origin remains poorly understood, and hypotheses vary between
13 paleogeographical connection to former marine or brackish water systems, or *de novo*
14 formation from springs and/or rivers (see also Albrecht and Wilke, 2008 for further
15 information and references therein).

16

17 The unique characteristics of Lake Ohrid, together with the lack of knowledge regarding its
18 origin, precise age, and limnological/biological evolution, provided the main motivation to
19 establish an international scientific deep drilling project. Its continuous existence over a long
20 timescale together with an extraordinary degree of endemic biodiversity made Lake Ohrid an
21 ideal ‘natural laboratory’ to study the links between geological and biological evolution and
22 to unravel the driving forces of speciation, leading to the interdisciplinary project ‘Scientific
23 Collaboration on Past Speciation Conditions in Lake Ohrid’ (SCOPSCO). The four major
24 aims of the SCOPSCO project are to (i) obtain more information on the age and origin of
25 Lake Ohrid, (ii) unravel the regional seismotectonic history including effects of major
26 earthquakes and associated mass-wasting events, (iii) obtain a continuous record containing
27 information on Quaternary volcanic activity and climate change in the central northern
28 Mediterranean region, and (iv) evaluate the influence of major geological events on biotic
29 evolution and the generation of the observed extraordinary degree of endemic biodiversity
30 (Wagner et al., 2014). Based on several site surveys and studies conducted between 2004 and
31 2011, an ICDP drilling campaign at Lake Ohrid was carried out in spring 2013 using the
32 ‘Deep Lake Drilling System’ (DLDS) from the ‘Drilling, Observation and Sampling of the



1 Earths Continental Crust' (DOSECC) consortium. In total, more than 2100 m of sediments
2 were recovered from four drill sites, with a maximum penetration of 569 m below lake floor
3 (blf) at the main drill site (DEEP) in the central part of Lake Ohrid (Fig. 1).

4
5 Subsampling and analyses are ongoing, but initial, detailed results of geological and
6 biological investigations of the upper 247.8 m (637 ka) of the DEEP sediment sequence and
7 newer results from biological studies on the extant fauna of Lake Ohrid were recently
8 published in a special issue in the journal 'Biogeosciences' ("Integrated perspectives on
9 biological and geological dynamics in ancient Lake Ohrid", edited by Wagner et al.). The aim
10 of this paper is to review and synthesise the results of the 14 individual papers of this special
11 issue and to complement them with information from former and new studies in order to
12 provide a comprehensive overview on progress towards achieving the four main aims defined
13 for SCOPSCO.

16 2 Site information

17 Lake Ohrid is a transboundary lake shared between the Former Yugoslav Republic of
18 Macedonia (FYROM) and the Republic of Albania (Fig. 1). The lake is located at 693.5 m
19 above sea level (a.s.l.) and has a maximum length of 30.4 km (N-S), a maximum width of
20 14.7 km (W-E), a surface area of 358 km², and a tub-shaped bathymetry with a maximum
21 water depth of 293 m, a mean water depth of ~151 m, and a total volume of 50.7 km³ (Fig. 1;
22 Popovska and Bonacci, 2007; Lindhorst et al., 2012). Water loss occurs by evaporation (13.0
23 m³ s⁻¹) and by the artificially controlled surface outflow in the northern part of the lake, River
24 Crni Drim, which flows into the Adriatic Sea. Outflow rates vary between 22.0 m³ s⁻¹
25 (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007) and 24.9 m³ s⁻¹ (Matzinger et al., 2006 and references therein),
26 depending on seasonal and long-term variations in water level of up to ~1.5 m between 1950
27 and 2000 (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007). The total water loss can be averaged to ~36.5 m³ s⁻¹
28 and is balanced by water input from direct precipitation, rivers, as well as surface and
29 sublacustrine springs. Published data of the annual precipitation in the watershed of Lake
30 Ohrid vary between 698.3 and 1194.0 mm yr⁻¹, with higher precipitation at higher altitudes
31 and an average of 907 mm yr⁻¹ (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007). The average monthly rainfall



1 is highest in winter, with a maximum in November and December, and lowest between June
2 and September. The lake level, however, is highest in June due to snowmelt input and lowest
3 in October and November, before the start of autumn rainfall (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007).
4 The seasonal and long-term variations in water budget allow only an approximation of the
5 water input from the various sources. Direct precipitation and river inflows (45%) as well as
6 surface and sublacustrine karst springs (55%) contribute to the overall water input (Matzinger
7 et al., 2006). The River Sateska, which was previously a direct tributary of the Crni Drim, was
8 artificially diverted into Lake Ohrid in 1962 and is today the largest surface river inflow with
9 a contribution of ~15% of the total inflow of Lake Ohrid (Matzinger et al., 2006; Poposka and
10 Bonnacci, 2007). The karst springs are located primarily along the eastern shoreline of the
11 lake (Fig. 1) and karst waters originate in almost equal proportions from mountain range
12 precipitation and via outflow from Lake Prespa, located ~10 km to the east and ~155 m higher
13 in altitude (Matzinger et al., 2006). Calculating the ratio between the volume of Lake Ohrid
14 (50.7 km^3) and its outflow ($\sim 23.5 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$) results in a theoretical water residence time of ~70
15 years (Matzinger et al., 2006; Popovska and Bonacci, 2007). This theoretical residence time is
16 reduced to ~45 years, when evaporation is taken into account and calculated with the total
17 water output or input ($\sim 36.5 \text{ m}^3 \text{ s}^{-1}$). However, the real water residence time is probably much
18 higher, as sporadic mixing intervals or incomplete mixing, variations in wind stress, or kinetic
19 effects of inflow water entering may affect the lake's hydrology (Ambrosetti et al., 2003). For
20 example, Lago Maggiore in Italy was classified as a holo-oligomictic lake prior to 1970, when
21 the upper 150-200 m of the water column mixed every winter and complete mixing occurred
22 irregularly every few years (Ambrosetti et al., 2003). This is similar to Lake Ohrid today
23 (Matzinger et al., 2006) and the real residence time at Lago Maggiore is higher by a factor of
24 3 to 4 than the theoretical residence time (Ambrosetti et al., 2003).

25

26 Physical and chemical characteristics of Lake Ohrid have been provided in several
27 publications and annual reports (e.g., Watzin et al., 2002; Matzinger et al., 2006; Jordanoski
28 et al., 2004, 2005; Naumoski et al., 2007; Schneider et al., 2014). Average total phosphorous
29 (TP) concentrations of $<10 \text{ mg m}^{-3}$ and Secchi depths ranging between 7 and 16 m
30 characterise the pelagic zone of Lake Ohrid as oligotrophic. These oligotrophic conditions
31 explain why bottom water oxygen concentrations of above 4 mg L^{-1} are recorded even in
32 years without complete overturn (Matzinger et al., 2006). The surface water temperature



1 varies between $\sim 25^{\circ}\text{C}$ in summer and $\sim 7^{\circ}\text{C}$ in winter, while bottom water temperatures are
2 $\sim 6^{\circ}\text{C}$ throughout the year. The boundary between epilimnion and hypolimnion is between 30
3 and 50 m, depending on the season. The pH decreases from 8.6-8.9 in surface waters to 7.9-
4 8.4 in bottom waters. The specific conductivity is around $200\ \mu\text{S cm}^{-1}$ in surface waters,
5 around $150\ \mu\text{S cm}^{-1}$ at 50-200 m water depth and increases again in deeper waters. The
6 concentration of Si is lowest in the trophogenic surface waters, where it is taken up by
7 diatoms, and increases gradually to $<2\ \text{mg L}^{-1}$ in bottom waters (Stanković, 1960). The littoral
8 part of the lake exhibits a slightly higher trophic state (Schneider et al., 2014). These meso- to
9 slightly eutrophic conditions in relatively shallow waters might be due to a direct input of
10 nutrients from the catchment, higher temperatures, and increasing anthropogenic pollution
11 over the last several decades (Kostoski et al., 2010; Schneider et al., 2014). The macrophytic
12 flora in the littoral part of Lake Ohrid can be subdivided into different belts, with *Chara*
13 species in water depths between 3 and 30 m, *Potamogeton* species in shallow waters, and a
14 discontinuous belt of *Phragmites australis* along the shore (Albrecht and Wilke, 2008; Imeri
15 et al., 2010).

16

17 The vegetation in the catchment of Lake Ohrid can be categorized along altitudinal belts (cf.,
18 Filipovski et al., 1996; Matevski et al., 2011). Grasslands and agricultural land are
19 encountered in the littoral zone and the lowlands surrounding the lake, followed by forests
20 dominated by different species of both deciduous and semi-deciduous oaks (*Quercus cerris*,
21 *Q. frainetto*, *Q. petraea*, *Q. pubescens*, and *Q. trojana*) and hornbeams (*Carpinus orientalis*,
22 *Ostrya carpinifolia*) up to 1600 m a.s.l. Mesophilous/montane species such as *Fagus*
23 *sylvatica*, *Carpinus betulus*, *Corylus colurna*, *Acer obtusatum*, and *Abies borisii-regis*
24 dominate at higher altitudes up to 1800 m a.s.l. Due to intense grazing, the timberline is
25 between 1600 and 1900 m a.s.l. Reforestation is now slowly replacing the existing alpine
26 pasture lands and grasslands at and above this altitude (Matevski et al., 2011). Sparse
27 populations of several *Pinus* species, considered to be Tertiary relics, are located in the wider
28 region of Lake Ohrid (Sadori et al., 2016). Em et al. (1985) considered the Ohrid-Prespa
29 region to be a refugial area with remains of vegetation of other species (*Pinus heldreichii*,
30 *Quercus trojana*, *Juniperus excelsa*, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, *Genista radiata*).

31



1 The highest mountains in the Lake Ohrid watershed, which encompasses 1002 km² *sensu*
2 *stricto* and 2393 km² including the Lake Prespa catchment, reach 1532 m a.s.l. in the Mocra
3 Mountains to the west, and 2288 m a.s.l. in the Galičica Mountains to the east of the lake. The
4 average altitude of the Lake Ohrid watershed is 1109 m a.s.l. About 12% of its watershed is
5 located at an altitude above 1500 m a.s.l. (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007). Intensely karstified
6 Triassic limestones and Devonian siliciclastic bedrock dominate in the southeastern, eastern,
7 and northwestern catchment (e.g., Wagner et al., 2009; Lindhorst et al., 2015). Ultramafic
8 metamorphic and magmatic rocks including ophiolites of Jurassic and Cretaceous age crop
9 out in the west. The plains at the northern, northeastern, and southern lake shore are covered
10 by Quaternary sediments.

11

12

13 **3 Material and methods**

14 **3.1 Field work**

15 **3.1.1 Seismic and hydro-acoustic surveys**

16 Seismic and hydro-acoustic surveys were carried out on Lake Ohrid between 2004 and 2009.
17 Parametric sediment echosounder profiles span >900 km in length and were collected at
18 operating frequencies between 6 and 12 kHz (SES-96 light in 2004 and SES 2000 compact in
19 2007 and 2008, Innomar Co.). These frequencies allowed up to 60 m of penetration into the
20 sediments at a vertical resolution of ~20 cm. Over 500 km of profiles were collected by
21 multichannel seismic surveys using a Mini GI Air Gun (0.2 L in 2007 and 0.1 L in 2008) and
22 a 16-channel 100 m long streamer. The Mini GI Air Gun operated at frequencies between 150
23 and 500 Hz and allowed a maximum penetration of several hundred metres at a vertical
24 resolution of ~2 m. A multibeam survey in 2009, using an ELAC Seabeam 1180 sonar
25 system, was used to acquire detailed bathymetric information of the lake floor below ~20 m
26 water depth. More detailed information on the technical specifications of the seismic and
27 hydro-acoustic systems, their settings, the location of the individual profiles, and the
28 operational logistics can be found in Wagner et al. (2014) and Lindhorst et al. (2015).

29



3.1.2 Coring and onsite analyses

Several gravity and piston coring campaigns were carried out from local research vessels or small floating platforms (UWITEC Co.) on Lake Ohrid between 2004 and 2011. Whereas surface sediments collected by gravity corer throughout the basin were used to reconstruct the recent settings and the most recent history of Lake Ohrid (e.g., Matzinger et al., 2007; Wagner et al., 2008a; Vogel et al., 2010c), piston cores with a maximum penetration of ~15 m blf were collected from the lateral parts of the lake, where the water depth did not exceed 150 m (e.g., Wagner et al., 2008b, 2009; Belmecheri et al., 2009; Vogel et al., 2010a, 2010b). These piston cores enabled a reconstruction of the environmental, climatic, and tephrostratigraphic history of the lake back to ~140 ka and provided fossil records of pollen (Wagner et al., 2009), molluscan faunas (Albrecht et al., 2010) and diatom floras (Reed et al., 2010).

12

Based on the site surveys, five primary target sites in Lake Ohrid were proposed for the SCOPSCO ICDP project. One of these sites, Lini (Co1262; Fig. 1), was cored in 2011 using a UWITEC platform and piston corer at 260 m water depth. Although the Co1262 sediment sequence reached only 10.08 m blf, this is the most complete Holocene sequence retrieved to date. Studies on the core material contributed to a better understanding of the tectonic activity (Wagner et al., 2012) and the Late Glacial to Holocene environmental history of the region (Lacey et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016).

20

The remaining four sites were cored in spring 2013 using the DLDS (Wagner et al., 2014; Francke et al., 2016). At the main site, the DEEP site in the central part of the Lake Ohrid basin, six holes (5045-1A to 5045-1F) were drilled with a maximum depth of ~569 m blf (Fig. 1) and an average distance of ~40 m between the individual holes (for details see Francke et al., 2016). In total, ~1500 m of sediment cores were recovered, cut into up to 1 m long segments, and stored in a reefer at 4°C before being shipped to the University of Cologne, Germany, for further processing.

28

Onsite analyses during the 2013 deep drilling campaign included borehole logging, core scanning for magnetic susceptibility, and sedimentological and palaeobiological core catcher analyses. Borehole logging was carried out with various probes at all four drill sites. The



1 logging tools comprised magnetic susceptibility (MS), dipmeter, resistivity, borehole
2 televiewer, spectral gamma ray (SGR), and sonic. While SGR was run through the drill pipe
3 in order to prevent caving of sediments into the drill hole, all other tools were run in 40-50 m
4 long open-hole sections, except for the uppermost 30 m blf, which were kept open with drill
5 pipes to allow re-entry of other probes. Details of the borehole logging tools, logging speed,
6 and vertical resolution are given in Baumgarten et al. (2015). Check shots were recorded for
7 hole 5045-1C, allowing a very good seismic to core correlation for the DEEP-site.

8

9 In order to determine volume-specific MS on the sediment cores and to carry out preliminary
10 core correlation, all cores were scanned onsite at a resolution of 2 cm with a Bartington
11 MS2C loop sensor (10 cm internal diameter) mounted on a multi sensor core logger (MSCL,
12 Geotek, UK). Smear slide analyses of core catcher material (~3 m resolution) from holes
13 5045-1B and 5045-1C were used for onsite diatom analyses (Wagner et al., 2014).

14

15 3.1.3 Biological sampling

16 Biological field sampling within the SCOPSCO project focused on the collection of living
17 invertebrates from the lake and its surroundings in order to conduct phylogenetic and
18 metacommunity analyses. The collection methods for gastropods followed those described in
19 Hauffe et al. (2011) and Schreiber et al. (2012), and included hand collecting, snorkeling,
20 sieving, and dredging from small boats or the research vessel of the Hydrobiological Institute
21 Ohrid. Samples were preserved in 80% ethanol for subsequent analyses.

22

23 In order to improve the interpretation of changes in sedimentary lipid biomarker composition,
24 samples from main modern terrestrial organic matter pools, i.e., soils and leaf litter, as well as
25 macroalgae and macrophytes (*Characeae* spp., *Cladophora* spp., *Potamogeton* spp.,
26 *Phragmites* spp.) were collected from the eastern and southern realm of the Ohrid Basin (for
27 details see Holtvoeth et al., 2016). All samples were oven-dried shortly after collection (70°C,
28 48 hours) and kept frozen prior to biomarker analysis.

29

30



1 **3.2 Laboratory work**

2 The geological work carried out on the gravity and piston cores from the site surveys and on
3 the cores obtained during the ICDP drilling campaign comprises a broad suite of different
4 analytical methods. It includes lithological description after core opening, measurement of the
5 geophysical properties, and granulometric, geochemical, mineralogical, and rock-magnetic
6 analyses. These analyses are carried out on whole core sections, on split core surfaces, and on
7 discrete samples (cf., Wilke et al., 2016) and are described in detail in several individual
8 publications (Matzinger et al., 2007; Wagner et al., 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2012; Belmecheri et
9 al., 2009, 2010; Holtvoeth et al., 2010, 2016; Leng et al., 2010; Lindhorst et al., 2010; Matter
10 et al., 2010; Vogel et al., 2010a, 2010b; Lacey et al., 2015, 2016; Francke et al., 2016; Just et
11 al., 2016; Leicher et al., 2016). Dating of the sediment successions was mainly based on
12 radiocarbon dating and tephrostratigraphic and tephrochronological work. Tuning of sediment
13 proxies to orbital parameters, such as summer insolation and winter season length, or to other
14 records has only been carried out on the sediment sequence from the DEEP site (Baumgarten
15 et al., 2015; Francke et al., 2016; Zanchetta et al., 2016). Optical and geochemical
16 information was used for a correlation of the DEEP core sequences and led to a composite
17 profile of 584 meters composite depth (mcd) (Francke et al., 2016 and unpublished data).
18 Some of the sediment sequences were also studied for their fossil diatom, pollen, ostracod, or
19 mollusc compositions. The sample preparation for the micro- and macrofossil analyses and
20 the determination of the taxa are described in detail in the individual publications (Belmecheri
21 et al., 2009, 2010; Wagner et al., 2009, 2014; Albrecht et al., 2010; Reed et al., 2010;
22 Cvetkoska et al., 2016; Sadori et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2016).

24 Information on interspecific relationships between Ohrid endemics and Balkan species, and
25 on the drivers of speciation processes and community changes was derived from extant taxa
26 by conducting molecular phylogenetic, lineage-through-time plot, and diversification-rate
27 analyses (for details see Föller et al., 2015 and references therein), as well as modeling of
28 community assembly processes (see Hauffe et al., 2016).

29

30



1 **4 Results and discussion**

2 **4.1 Age and origin**

3 **4.1.1 Age**

4 At the start of the SCOPSCO project, the age and origin of Lake Ohrid were poorly
 5 constrained. Previous geological and biological age estimates varied from 2 to 10 Ma
 6 (summarised in Albrecht and Wilke, 2008). Our new results allow for more precise age
 7 estimation. Based on SGR from borehole logging, MS from core logging, and total inorganic
 8 carbon (TIC) analyses on core catcher samples from the DEEP site, and by comparing these
 9 data with global climate records, such as the benthic isotope stack LR04 (Lisiecki and Raymo,
 10 2005), a minimum age of 1.2 Ma has been proposed for the permanent lake phase of Lake
 11 Ohrid (Wagner et al., 2014). This minimum age is supported by the results from more detailed
 12 studies of the uppermost 247.8 mcd of the DEEP site sequence, which cover the last 637 kyr,
 13 according to an age model derived from tephrochronology and tuning of bio-geochemical
 14 proxy data to orbital parameters (Francke et al., 2016). The high-resolution data allow a better
 15 understanding of proxy variation over time and show that high TIC characterises interglacial
 16 periods and very low TIC represents glacial periods, as previously inferred from studies on
 17 core catcher material (Wagner et al., 2014). Indeed, a prominent TIC maximum at ~368 m blf
 18 in the core catcher samples from the DEEP site was presumed to represent the Marine Isotope
 19 Stage (MIS) 31 at 1.081-1.062 Ma (Wagner et al., 2014), which is regarded as one of the
 20 warmest interglacials at the onset of the Mid Pleistocene Transition (MPT; e.g., Melles et al.,
 21 2012). The lithology of the DEEP site sediment sequence indicates that lacustrine, hemi-
 22 pelagic sediments comprise the upper ~430 m blf, whereas littoral and fluvial sediments
 23 dominate below (Wagner et al., 2014). The transition from fluvial or littoral facies to hemi-
 24 pelagic sediments most likely indicates the onset of full lacustrine conditions in Lake Ohrid.
 25 Five TIC maxima below the presumed MIS 31 maximum and above the fluvial or littoral
 26 facies (cf., Wagner et al., 2014) could represent five additional interglacials, which would
 27 place the onset of hemi-pelagic sedimentation within MIS 41 and refines the minimum age of
 28 Lake Ohrid to ca. 1.3 Ma.

29

30 An age estimation for the onset of lacustrine sedimentation in the Lake Ohrid basin has been
 31 derived from comparing seismic and chronological information from core Co1202 recovered



1 in the north-eastern part of the lake (Fig. 1). Tracking seismic reflectors from this coring
2 location (~2 km from the DEEP site) to the central part of the lake allowed for the transfer of
3 chronological information of the core into the basin centre (Lindhorst et al., 2015). In
4 addition, the strength of the reflectors was correlated with chronological information and
5 glacial/interglacial cycles derived from pollen analyses at Lake Ioannina, 200 km to the South
6 of Lake Ohrid. Based on this information, an average sedimentation rate of 0.43 mm yr^{-1} was
7 calculated for the last 450 kyr in the basin centre (Lindhorst et al., 2015). Using this
8 sedimentation rate for the maximum sediment fill of ~800 m blf observed in the basin centre,
9 resulted in an age of 1.9 Ma for the onset of sedimentation (Lindhorst et al., 2015). At the
10 DEEP site a somewhat lower average sedimentation rate of 0.39 mm yr^{-1} can be calculated for
11 the upper 247.8 mcd or for the last 637 kyr (Francke et al., 2016). Sediment compaction with
12 increasing sediment depth (cf. Baumgarten et al., 2015) may have caused further lowering of
13 the calculated sediment accumulation rate downward and also would lead to older ages
14 compared to those based on a constant sedimentation rate of 0.43 mm yr^{-1} . However,
15 lacustrine, hemi-pelagic sediments only form the upper ~430 m blf of sediments at the DEEP
16 site, which represents only half of the maximum sediment fill equivalent to ~800 m blf. As
17 the underlying littoral and fluvial sediments most likely have significantly higher
18 sedimentation rates, the extrapolated age of 1.9 Ma for the onset of hemi-pelagic
19 sedimentation can be regarded as a tentative maximum age, assuming there were no major
20 phases of erosion and/or non-deposition.

21

22 Overall, based on this new geological information, the minimum and maximum age of Lake
23 Ohrid can be restricted to ca. 1.3 and 1.9 Ma, respectively. More precise age estimation will
24 be obtained by ongoing tephrostratigraphic work and paleomagnetic analyses, which may
25 reveal the existence of major reversals in the Earth's magnetic field, such as the Jaramillo
26 (1.075-0.991 Ma), Cobb Mountain (1.1938-1.1858 Ma), or Olduvai (1.968-1.781 Ma)
27 subchrons (Nowaczyk et al., 2013 and references therein).

28

29 These estimates of 1.3-1.9 Ma correspond well to evolutionary data for endemic Lake Ohrid
30 species obtained prior to the drilling campaign. Based on genetic information from extant
31 endemic species and molecular-clock analyses, the onset of intralacustrine speciation in
32 various groups of Lake Ohrid endemics (= "ancient lake species flocks") started between 1.4



1 Ma for the limpet genus *Acroloxus* (Albrecht et al., 2006) and 2.0 Ma for the endemic *Salmo trutta* trout complex (Sušnik et al., 2006) and the *Dina* leech flock (Trajanovski et al., 2010). Assuming that the origin of Lake Ohrid predates the onset of intralacustrine speciation events, the latter authors suggested that the minimum age of Lake Ohrid is approximately 2.0 Ma. However, they were not able to explain why the species flocks investigated differed in their time of origination and why some of the flocks were as young as 1.3 Ma. A potential explanation is now provided by the initial results of the SCOPSCO deep drilling campaign, which indicate that persisting lacustrine conditions with pelagic or hemi-pelagic sedimentation established between 1.9 Ma and 1.3 Ma ago. The period of lake establishment and persisting lacustrine conditions may have comprised up to several hundred thousand years, which in turn might have given rise to most species flocks in Lake Ohrid.

4.1.2 Origin

There is a broad consensus that the 40 km long and N-S-trending Ohrid graben basin developed as part of the Alpine orogeny during a transtensional phase in the Late Miocene, followed by an extensional phase since the Pliocene (e.g., Cvijić 1911; Aliaj et al., 2001; Dumurdzanov et al., 2004; Reicherter et al., 2011; Lindhorst et al., 2015). There is little consensus on the limnological origin of the lake itself, however. Albrecht and Wilke (2008) summarized four related hypotheses. Three of these hypotheses favour an origin as part of a marine ingression or a brackish-water lake system during the Miocene: the Mesohellenic Trough hypothesis, the Tethys hypothesis, and the Lake Pannon hypothesis. A fourth hypothesis favours a *de novo* origin, i.e., that Lake Ohrid formed in a dry polje fed by springs during the Pliocene or Pleistocene. The latter is supported, in part, by the known existence of substantial active karst aquifers (Matzinger et al., 2006) and the seismic data, which indicate that Lake Ohrid formed in a relatively narrow and elongated valley (Lindhorst et al., 2015). Moreover, sediments at the base of the DEEP site sequence are formed by gravel, which is overlain by alternating peat layers, sand horizons, and fine-grained sediments, and contain a relatively shallow, obligate fresh water diatom flora (Wagner et al., 2014). These sediments indicate very dynamic environments, ranging from fluvial to slack water conditions, with varying shallow water conditions, and support, in combination with the presumed Pleistocene age of Lake Ohrid, the *de novo* hypothesis of lake formation.



1

2

3 **4.2 Sediment architecture and basin development**

4 In addition to information on the formation of the Ohrid basin, the hydro-acoustic data sets
5 from Lake Ohrid can also provide knowledge on mass transport deposits (MTDs) and on
6 long-term lake level change.

7

8 The evaluation of the seismic and hydro-acoustic data sets indicated that MTDs are only
9 observed during the last ca. 340 ka in Lake Ohrid (Lindhorst et al., 2016). Older MTDs are
10 not covered by the seismic profiles or may be masked by multiple reflections below 250-300
11 m sediment depth in the central part of the basin. Five major MTDs are detected during MIS
12 9, 7, and 6. Since ca. 80 ka, the number of MTDs increased, however this is accompanied by a
13 trend of decreasing MTD volume. Due to the restricted vertical resolution of the seismic data
14 sets, the age control of the MTDs is relatively imprecise. Nevertheless, it seems that the
15 occurrence of MTDs is not driven by or a response to glacial/interglacial cyclicity, as they
16 occur during glacials, interglacials, and their respective transitions. Although MTDs are
17 detected throughout the entire basin (Lindhorst et al., 2016), they cluster along the major
18 faults in the southeastern and northwestern part of the basin and are probably the result of
19 fault activity and major earthquakes (Lindhorst et al., 2012; Wagner et al., 2012). No
20 indications for these MTDs are found in the drill cores of the DEEP site. Hence, MTDs in the
21 Ohrid basin apparently have a rather limited spatial extent and are not accompanied by basin-
22 wide suspension clouds or turbidites. MTDs with a maximum thickness of <3 cm are
23 observed in the DEEP site record, with clusters in MIS 8, late MIS 6, and MIS 2 (Francke et
24 al., 2016). The thickness of these MTDs is significantly below the vertical resolution of the
25 seismic data.

26

27 The hydro-acoustic data can also provide information about the tectonic history of the basin
28 with respect to lake-level fluctuations. The minimum water depth can be estimated from
29 measuring the depth difference of individual reflectors between their largest depth in the
30 basins and the minimal depth of occurrence at the lake margins. The minimal depth of



1 occurrence for individual reflectors maybe a real reflection termination but in most cases,
2 individual reflectors cannot be traced further up because the shallowest areas of the lake basin
3 are not covered by the seismic and hydro-acoustic survey or reflectors could not be traced to
4 the shallower parts due to faults (Fig. 2). In a second step, linking these reflectors to the
5 chronological information from the DEEP site provides chronological information for the
6 minimum water depth. Tracing a reflector from ~275 m blf at the DEEP site, i.e., a reflector
7 located below the existing age model, supposes a minimum water depth of 300 m (Fig. 2).
8 Reflectors at the MIS 16/15 (~240 m blf) and the MIS13/12 boundaries (~190 m blf) suggest
9 minimum water depths of 300 m as well, thus exceeding the present day water depth of 293 m
10 (Fig. 2). The minimum water depth was reduced to 225 m at the MIS 9/8 boundary (~140 m
11 blf), to 200 m during MIS 8 (~100 m blf), and to 175 m during MIS 5 (47 m blf). In MIS 4
12 (20 m blf), the minimum water depth increased to 250 m, returning to a level similar to that
13 observed in the lower half of the record. Note that this method for estimating water depth
14 contains several sources of uncertainties. The actual water depth during each period may have
15 been much higher, as individual reflectors may continue to shallower water depths or even
16 above the present lake level but cannot be mapped due to missing data coverage in shallow
17 water depth, or reflectors may have been eroded during a following period of a lower lake
18 level. Ongoing subsidence might also have affected the shape of the individual reflectors and
19 potentially increased the maximum depth difference of individual reflectors. Nonetheless, the
20 data suggest a general trend from deeper waters from prior to MIS 16 through to MIS 13/12,
21 followed by decreasing water depths with a minimum in MIS 5 and a subsequent deepening
22 to present day lake level, which is in a broad agreement with humidity trends based on the
23 regional vegetation cover (Sadori et al., 2016). As a result, the deepening of the Lake Ohrid
24 basin was apparently not a continuous and gradational process; we assume that short or mid-
25 term changes reflect changes in water budgets while subsidence is a much slower process.
26 However, already at or shortly after the end of the MPT, the lake showed similar or even
27 higher water depths compared to present lake level. The seismic data do indicate periods of
28 very low lake levels or even a dry lake.

29

30 Mapping of the hydro-acoustic reflectors indicates that the shape of the Ohrid basin slightly
31 altered over time. Based on the isopleths, the deeper part of the basin changed from a more
32 elongated shape to a roundish shape during the last ca. 700 kyr, with a formation of a



1 secondary basin in the northwestern part of the lake after the MIS 13/12 boundary at 478 ka
2 (Fig. 2). This also reflects the extension of the lake basin.

3

4

5 **4.3 Tephrostratigraphic and environmental history**

6 **4.3.1 Tephrostratigraphy**

7 The DEEP site sequence drilled in 2013 provides the most complete tephrostratigraphic
8 record obtained from Lake Ohrid. A total of 39 tephra layers have been identified in the upper
9 247.8 mcd so far (Fig. 3; Leicher et al., 2016 and unpublished data). Major element analyses
10 (SEM-EDS/WDS; see Leicher et al., 2016 for details) on juvenile glass fragments suggest an
11 origin exclusively from Italian volcanic provinces. Of these tephra layers (OH-DP-0027 to
12 OH-DP-2060), 13 could be identified and correlated with known and dated widespread
13 eruptions (Leicher et al., 2016 and references therein). They include the Mercato tephra (OH-
14 DP-0027, 8.43–8.63 cal ka BP) from Somma-Vesuvius, the Y-3 (OH-DP-0115, 26.68–29.42
15 cal ka BP), the Campanian Ignimbrite/Y-5 (OH-DP-0169, 39.6 ± 1.6 ka), and the X-6 (OH-
16 DP-0404, 109 ± 2 ka) from the Campanian volcanoes, the P-11 (OH-DP-0499, 129 ± 6 ka)
17 from Pantelleria, the Vico B (OH-DP-0617, 162 ± 6 ka) from the Vico volcano, the Pozzolane
18 Rosse (OH-DP-1817, 457 ± 2 ka) and the Tufo di Bagni Albule (OH-DP-2060, 527 ± 2 ka)
19 from the Colli Albani volcanic district, and the Fall A (OH-DP-2010, 496 ± 3 ka) from the
20 Sabatini volcanic field. Furthermore, a comparison of the Ohrid record with
21 tephrostratigraphic records of mid-distal Mediterranean archives enabled the identification of
22 less well-known tephra layers, such as the TM24-a/POP2 (OH-DP-0404, 101.8 ka; Regattieri
23 et al., 2015) from Lago Grande di Monticchio and the Sulmona basin, the SC5 (OH-DP-1955,
24 493.1 ± 10.9 ka) from the Mercure basin, and the A11/12 (OH-DP-2017, 511 ± 6 ka) from the
25 Acerno basin, whose specific volcanic sources are still poorly constrained. OH-DP-0624 was
26 tentatively correlated to the CF-V5/PRAD3225 layers from the Campo Felice basin/Adriatic
27 Sea and, thus to the Pitigliano Tuff from the Vulsini volcanic field (ca. 163 ka; Leicher et al.,
28 2016). However, recent tephrochronological results including $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ of a tephra from the
29 Fucino Basin, central Italy, suggest that these tephra correspond to an un-known eruption
30 from the Neapolitan volcanic area at 158.8 ± 3.0 ka (Giaccio et al., 2016). In order to obtain a
31 consistent set of ages all $^{40}\text{Ar}/^{39}\text{Ar}$ were calculated by using the same flux standard (1.194 Ma



1 for ACs, which corresponds to FCs at 28.02 Ma). The chronological information of 11 of the
2 well-identified tephra from Lake Ohrid was used as 1st order tie points for the age-depth
3 model of the composite core, and complemented by tuning of sediment proxies to orbital
4 parameters, such as summer insolation and winter season length (Francke et al., 2016).

5

6 Fifteen additional tephra horizons have been identified within the lower hemi-pelagic section
7 of the DEEP site sequence between 248 and 450 mcd (Fig. 3) and are the subject of on-going
8 work. Although knowledge of tephrostratigraphy for the period >637 ka is restricted, a
9 combination of tephrochronological with paleomagnetic information should provide a robust
10 chronology for this part of the sequence.

11

12 With a total of at least 54 tephra layers intercalated in a continuous sediment succession of >
13 1.3 Ma, the tephrostratigraphic record from Lake Ohrid is a strong candidate to become the
14 template for central Mediterranean tephrostratigraphy, especially for the poorly-known and
15 explored Lower and Middle Pleistocene period. The tephrostratigraphic record may also help
16 to allow re-evaluation and improvement of the chronology of dated and undated tephra layers
17 from other key sites, such as the age of the Fall A tephra (Leicher et al., 2016). Moreover, the
18 tephra constitute valuable, independent tie points that resolve leads and lags between
19 changes in different components of the climate system and allow a synchronisation of the
20 Lake Ohrid record with other regional records (Zanchetta et al., 2016).

21

22 4.3.2 Environmental history

23 The examination of the environmental history of Lake Ohrid over the last 637 kyr focuses
24 both on long-term changes over several glacial/interglacial periods, and short-term changes on
25 the sub-orbital scale.

26

27 Long-term changes

28



1 The study of the long-term environmental history of Lake Ohrid and its surrounding area
2 includes the reconstruction of minimum lake levels based on hydro-acoustic information, by
3 vegetation changes in the catchment, and by internal lake proxies. According to the
4 established age model (Francke et al., 2016), hydro-acoustic (Lindhorst et al., 2015) and
5 borehole logging data (Baumgarten et al., 2015), the sediments deposited at 637 ka are now
6 located ~240 m blf at the DEEP site. If the altitude of the Lake Ohrid outlet or the bedrock
7 gap used by the river Crni Drim would have been the same as it is today (693.5 m a.s.l.), the
8 water depth of Lake Ohrid at 637 ka would have been more than 480 m. There is no evidence
9 in the seismic or sedimentological data for such a great water depth at that time, which
10 implies that subsidence or other tectonic activity affected the sediment succession in the lake
11 basin or the altitude of the outlet. Nevertheless, the hydro-acoustic data suggest a fairly deep
12 lake at the end of the MPT, with a water depth similar or even deeper than today (Figs 2 and
13 4). Shallower minimum water depths are tentatively indicated between MIS 9 and MIS 3,
14 with an absolute minimum during MIS 6 or MIS 5. Tectonic activity and the relative altitude
15 of the outlet are probably the most significant contributors to water depth variations in Lake
16 Ohrid. However, a comparison of the minimum water depth data with pollen data suggests
17 that climate change may also have triggered water-depth fluctuations. Although the Lake
18 Ohrid watershed was a refugial area for both temperate and montane trees during the glacial
19 periods of the last 500 kyr, the earlier glacials MIS 12, MIS 10, and MIS 8 were characterized
20 by grassland (Sadori et al., 2016). Such vegetation would require relatively humid conditions,
21 whereas steppe vegetation with *Artemisia* and pioneer taxa typical of dry conditions
22 dominated during MIS 6, MIS 4, and MIS 2 (Fig. 4; Sadori et al., 2016). Mesophilous
23 communities representing a Mediterranean-type climate are found in MIS 5 and the Holocene.
24 The overall progressive change from cooler and wetter conditions recorded during both
25 interglacial and glacial periods prior to 288 ka to subsequently warmer and drier interglacials
26 and glacials (Sadori et al., 2016) is consistent with the generally shallower minimum water
27 levels reconstructed by tracing hydro-acoustic reflectors throughout the basin. Moreover,
28 driest conditions and a maximum in steppe vegetation between 160-129 ka (Sadori et al.,
29 2016) correspond to a prominent lake-level lowstand and the formation of a subaquatic
30 terrace ~60 m below the present lake level in the northeastern Ohrid basin (Fig. 4; Lindhorst
31 et al., 2010). This lowstand was reconstructed based on hydro-acoustic studies and
32 tephrochronological information from two short sediment cores. Two tephtras deposited on the
33 terrace were previously correlated with MIS 5 tephtras C-20 (ca. 80 ka) and X5 (105 ± 2 ka)



1 (Sulpizio et al., 2010), and it was supposed that the formation of this terrace took place during
2 MIS 6 (Lindhorst et al., 2010). However, new tephrostratigraphic results suggest that the two
3 tephrae instead correspond with Vico B (OH-DP-0617, 162 ± 6 ka) and CF-V5/PRAD3225
4 (OH-DP-0624, ca. 163 ka; Leicher et al., 2016). This constrains the formation of this terrace
5 to the earlier part of MIS 6 and the subsequent lake-level increase to late MIS 6 or early MIS
6 5, with a secondary lowstand around 100 ka (Fig. 4), which approximately follows the overall
7 trend of the minimum lake-level reconstruction.

8

9 Internal lake proxies confirm the long-term trend seen in pollen from generally wetter and
10 cooler interglacial and glacial periods between 637 ka and ca. 300 ka to drier and warmer
11 stages between 300 ka and the Present. The oxygen isotope composition of lake water
12 ($\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$), calculated from $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ of endogenic calcite, shows only moderate variability
13 between interglacial periods with a relatively stable climate from MIS 15 to MIS 13,
14 progressively wetter conditions during MIS 11 and MIS 9, and increasingly evaporated, drier
15 conditions in more recent interglacials (Fig. 4; Lacey et al., 2016). In particular, higher
16 $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ through MIS 5 and the Holocene indicate higher evaporation due to dry and warm
17 conditions prevailing under a Mediterranean-type climate. During glacials calcite is typically
18 absent, however $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ reconstructed from early diagenetic siderite shows a more
19 pronounced long-term shift, with values being consistent with the adjacent interglacials
20 during MIS 14, MIS 12, and MIS 10, a transition to lower values through MIS 8, and very
21 low $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ during MIS 6, MIS 4, and MIS 2 (Fig. 4). The similarity between interglacial
22 and glacial lake water prior to ca. 300 ka suggests that Lake Ohrid may have experienced
23 regular and complete mixing, as calcite and siderite form in different environments; calcite in
24 surface waters during summer months and siderite as a product of early diagenesis in the
25 surface sediments. Lower average $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ before ca. 300 ka indicates moderate summer
26 temperatures (reduced seasonality). It may also suggest higher activity of the karst system due
27 to more precipitation and/or a higher lake level of neighbouring Lake Prespa. Subsequently, a
28 trend to higher $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ during interglacials indicates stronger rates of summer evaporation
29 and drier conditions, and lower $\delta^{18}\text{O}_{\text{lakewater}}$ in glacial periods suggests isotopically fresh
30 conditions most likely due to low evaporation and a higher influence of winter precipitation
31 (increased seasonality), which supports the interpretation of the palynological record.



1 Increasing summer aridity towards present is also backed by the gradual increase of
2 Mediterranean taxa pollen percentages.

3

4 A transition from generally wetter and cooler to drier and warmer conditions is also indicated
5 by a shift from relatively invariant and low TOC prior to ca. 300 ka towards more fluctuating
6 and higher TOC, particularly during the more recent interglacials (Fig. 4; Francke et al.,
7 2016). Wetter and cooler conditions after the MPT drive a high activity of the karst system
8 and intense mixing of the water column, thus promoting decomposition of organic matter.
9 This would, in turn, increase the supply of sulphur to the sediments and allow for the
10 formation of greigite (Fig. 4; Just et al., 2016). A greater activity of the karst system and
11 associated high ion (Ca^{2+} , HCO_3^-) input is further supported by the relatively high TIC during
12 MIS 15, MIS 14, and MIS 13 (Fig. 4; Francke et al., 2016). Pollen data suggest moderate
13 summer temperatures, i.e., conditions that would have favoured mixing and, hence, increased
14 organic matter degradation. Conversely, drier and warmer conditions after ca. 300 ka likely
15 reduced mixing of the water column during the interglacials, which would lead to anoxic
16 bottom waters and a better preservation of organic matter. Such conditions are indicated by
17 the predominant formation of siderite during these more recent glacials, when limited sulphur
18 content of sediments may have prevented the formation of greigite (Fig. 4), with siderite
19 precipitating instead.

20

21 The maximum sedimentation rate during early MIS 6 (Francke et al., 2016) correlates well
22 with the formation of the subaquatic terrace located at 60 m below the present lake level (Fig.
23 4; Lindhorst et al., 2010). The lower lake level led to exposure and erosion of formerly
24 shallow parts of the lake and a lower distance from inlets to the central part of the lake.
25 However, there is no indication, e.g., in isotope or redox sensitive data, for an endorheic lake
26 at that time or any other time during the last 637 kyr. It thus seems that the outlet was always
27 active and climate driven lake-level change may have been compensated at least partly by
28 tectonic activity.

29

30 Sub-orbital changes

31



1 On a sub-orbital scale, prominent environmental changes in the Northern Hemisphere that
2 potentially affected Lake Ohrid include Dansgaard-Oeschger (D/O) and Heinrich events (HE).
3 D/O events are a pervasive feature of the last glacial (e.g., Wolff et al., 2010) and also of
4 older glacial periods (Stein et al., 2009; Naafs et al., 2014). They are likely related to
5 variations in the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) and are recorded as
6 climatic perturbations in many marine and terrestrial records (e.g., Genty et al., 2002; Rohling
7 et al., 2003; Naafs et al., 2014; Seierstad et al., 2014; Stockhecke et al., 2016). In the eastern
8 Mediterranean, D/O events may have influenced regional hydrology and led to large-scale
9 droughts during the past four glacial cycles (Stockhecke et al., 2016). HE are distinctively
10 represented by deposition of ice rafted debris (IRD) in North Atlantic marine cores (e.g.,
11 Hemming et al., 2004), and are also well documented to have had an imprint on marine and
12 terrestrial records for the last glacial and beyond (e.g., Sanchez-Goni et al., 2002; Martrat et
13 al., 2004; Naafs et al., 2013). At the IODP drill site U1308 in the North Atlantic, HE are first
14 indicated during MIS 16 and are represented by ice-rafted debris (IRD) layers that are rich in
15 detrital carbonate and poor in biogenic carbonate (Hodell et al., 2008). It has been speculated
16 that ice volume and the duration of glacial conditions surpassed a critical threshold during
17 MIS 16 and activated the dynamic processes responsible for Laurentide Ice Sheet instability
18 in the region of Hudson Strait, which led to increased iceberg discharge and weakening of
19 thermohaline circulation in the North Atlantic (Hodell et al., 2008).

20

21 MIS 12 is considered to be one of the most severe glacials during the Quaternary, with the
22 lowest summer sea surface temperatures (SST) recorded across multiple records (e.g.,
23 Shackleton 1987; Naafs et al., 2013, 2014; Rohling et al., 2014). Abrupt sea surface warming
24 events of 3-6°C in the mid-latitude North Atlantic during MIS 12 likely reflect the imprint of
25 D/O events and probably had a substantial impact on global climate (Naafs et al., 2014). In
26 contrast to the observations from MIS 16, a temporal lag between the occurrence of IRD and
27 surface water cooling during MIS 12 implies that HE were not the cause for a weakening of
28 the thermohaline circulation in the North Atlantic at this time (Naafs et al., 2014).

29

30 High-resolution records from the Mediterranean region, which can be used to test a larger
31 regional or even global impact of D/O and HE during MIS 16 or MIS 12, are scarce (e.g.,
32 Hughes et al., 2006; Tzedakis et al., 2006; Gironé et al., 2013; Capotondi et al., 2016). A



1 multi-proxy record with lithological, geochemical, and isotope data from the Sulmona basin
2 in central Italy covering MIS 12 shows pronounced hydrological variability at orbital and
3 millennial time scales, which replicates North Atlantic and western Mediterranean SST
4 fluctuations (Fig. 5; Regattieri et al., 2016). Several short-term fluctuations in the MIS 12
5 Sulmona record most likely reflect sub-orbital scale hydrological variations, and are likely
6 related to reduced precipitation sourcing from the North Atlantic due to episodes of iceberg
7 melting, and IRD deposition at the west Iberian margin (Regattieri et al., 2016 and references
8 therein). However, as the timing of these IRD events at the western Iberian margin was used
9 to improve the chronology of the Sulmona record, the correlation of hydrological variations in
10 central Italy and IRD deposition in the North Atlantic is not fully independent.

11

12 At Lake Ohrid and further to the East, the arboreal pollen concentration in the Tenaghi
13 Philippon record from Greece correlates well with the general pattern of the sea surface
14 temperatures in the North Atlantic during MIS 12 (Fig. 5; Tzedakis et al., 2006). The
15 resolution of the existing record is too low yet to allow a clear identification of D/O or HE
16 related climate change. The high-resolution record from Lake Van in eastern Turkey also
17 cannot be used for testing the climatic impact of D/O or HE on the eastern Mediterranean, as
18 the sediments of MIS 12 and the onset of MIS 11 are disturbed and lack independent age
19 control (Stockhecke et al., 2014).

20

21 The new high-resolution record from the DEEP site in Lake Ohrid now offers the possibility
22 to assess the impact of D/O or HE during MIS 12 on a broader regional scale, particularly as
23 it provides two absolute tephra age control points with ages centred at 493.1 ± 10.9 and $457 \pm$
24 2 ka (Fig. 5; Francke et al., 2016; Leicher et al., 2016). During MIS 12, potassium (K) shows
25 a long-term increase, which supports the overall trend towards colder temperatures, such as
26 can be inferred from other marine, terrestrial, or synthetic climate records (Fig. 5). K
27 represents the proportion of clastic, terrigenous matter relative to the content of carbonate
28 (reflected by TIC) and organic matter (reflected by TOC and bSi). TOC was used to infer the
29 severity of glacials at Lake Ohrid (Francke et al., 2016) and shows a remarkable saw tooth
30 pattern during MIS 12, which resembles fluctuations in SST related to D/O variability from
31 the North Atlantic marine record U1313 (Fig. 5; Naafs et al., 2014). Higher TOC is favoured
32 by both increased overall productivity (on land and in the water column) as well as increased



1 organic matter preservation, with the latter resulting from oxygen depletion of the bottom
2 water due to enhanced thermal stratification, decreased mixing, and higher temperatures.
3 These higher temperatures at Lake Ohrid likely correlate with higher SST in the North
4 Atlantic. The TOC record from Lake Ohrid thus would be the first terrestrial record to
5 indicate D/O cycle-related teleconnections between the North Atlantic thermohaline
6 circulation and the climate in the northeastern Mediterranean region during MIS 12.
7 Interestingly, the dominant *Pinus* pollen abundance in the vegetation record indicates a
8 regular ~8 kyr variability during MIS 12 and 10), for which high-resolution analysis is now
9 being performed (Figure 2 in Sadori et al., 2016).

10

11 The environmental impact of HE or other short-term climate events has been studied in detail
12 for the last glacial cycle in records from lakes Ohrid and Prespa. Based on pollen and diatom
13 analyses, HE in the North Atlantic during MIS 4 to MIS 2 led to short spells of very dry and
14 cold conditions superimposed on the glacial conditions (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2014;
15 Cvetkoska et al., 2015). Moreover, there is an increased formation of Fe and Mn concretions
16 in Lake Prespa sediments, most likely driven by a significant shift in the bottom water redox
17 conditions (Wagner et al., 2010). According to diatom studies spanning the last 92 ka, Lake
18 Prespa experienced significant regime shifts that are correlated with lake level fluctuations
19 and changes between (oligo-) meso- and eutrophic conditions (Cvetkoska et al., 2016). Lake
20 Ohrid seems to be less sensitive to short-term climate change due to its higher volume to
21 surface area ratio (e.g., Wagner et al., 2010; Leng et al., 2013). It does not indicate sub-orbital
22 time scale lake-level changes and shifted between ultra oligo- and oligotrophic conditions
23 during the last 92 kyr (Cvetkoska et al., 2016). However, the formation of Fe and Mn
24 concretions and the occurrence of siderite indicate that Lake Ohrid is also sensitive to shifts in
25 the bottom water redox conditions (Lacey et al., 2016). During MIS 12, Fe peaks in XRF data
26 are positively correlated with TIC and indicate the formation of early-diagenetic siderite in
27 response to a shift in bottom water redox conditions towards a more oxic environment (Fig. 5;
28 Francke et al., 2016; Lacey et al., 2016). The Fe peaks during the coldest period of this glacial
29 match particularly well with the number of IRD grains and with maxima in the quartzite- or
30 dolomite-calcite ratio in the U1313 record from the North Atlantic (Fig. 5). The latter are
31 interpreted as millennial ice-rafting driven events (Voelker et al., 2010; Naafs et al., 2011,



2013) and thus demonstrate that North Atlantic HE may have caused changes in internal lake conditions, such as bottom water redox conditions.

One of the HE, the H4 event at 40.4–38.4 ka, is superimposed by another short-term event, the eruption from the Campi Flegrei volcanoes 39.6 ± 1.6 ka. This eruption is one of the most severe volcanic eruptions during the Pleistocene and left a 15 cm thick tephra known as Campanian Ignimbrite or Y-5 marine tephra layer in the records from lakes Ohrid and Prespa (e.g., Wagner et al., 2009; Vogel et al., 2010b; Damaschke et al., 2013). High-resolution studies of diatoms in both lake sediment records indicated little evidence for a response of the diatom community related to the H4 event, but a clear and rapid change following tephra deposition (Jovanovska et al., 2016). This strong change is likely due to fertilisation and the availability of nutrients, particularly silica, such as it was shown in laboratory studies and leaching experiments of tephra with Lake Ohrid water (D’Addabbo et al., 2015). After the initial response, diatom community compositions in lakes Ohrid and Prespa returned to their quasi pre-disturbance state. In Lake Ohrid, the recovery time was ca. 1100 years vs. ca. 4000 years in Lake Prespa (Jovanovska et al., 2016). Although both lakes are resilient to short-term environmental change, it seems that Lake Ohrid is even more resilient than Lake Prespa, likely due to differences in geology, lake age, limnology, and intrinsic parameters of the diatom proxies (Jovanovska et al., 2016).

4.4 Drivers of biodiversity change

One of the major interdisciplinary goals of the SCOPSCO project is to infer the drivers of the extraordinary endemic biodiversity in Lake Ohrid, in general, and to evaluate the influence of major environmental events on evolutionary processes, in particular. Lake Ohrid thus serves as a model system to address questions that have puzzled evolutionary biologists for decades. These questions include the problem whether the high number of endemic species is mainly a result of an accumulation of relic species (‘reservoir function’) and/or of a high rate of intralacustrine speciation (‘cradle function’). Moreover, if intralacustrine speciation plays a significant role, is it primarily driven by geographic or environmental gradients during periods of relatively constant environmental conditions, possibly supported by a high



1 ecosystem resilience of the lake, or does ongoing environmental change lead to an increase
2 (or decrease) in rates of species diversification? Finally, what role do potentially
3 'catastrophic' environmental fluctuations play, such as lake level change or significant
4 changes in the trophic state?

5

6 4.4.1 Reservoir vs. cradle function of Lake Ohrid

7 As discussed in Föller et al. (2015), ancient lakes have often been considered to serve as
8 evolutionary or geographic refugia, either harboring old and distinct lineages or enabling the
9 accumulation of species from extralimital areas during periods of adverse environmental
10 changes, respectively ('reservoir function'). However, previous evolutionary studies in Lake
11 Ohrid on selected animal taxa could not demonstrate the existence of such relict species
12 (sensu Grandcolas et al., 2014), either because ancestral distribution ranges are largely
13 unknown (e.g., Schultheiß et al., 2008) or the native species are not extraordinarily old (e.g.,
14 Albrecht et al., 2008; Hauswald et al., 2008). Instead, intralacustrine speciation after
15 immigration events prevails. Most endemic animal species in Lake Ohrid are considerably
16 younger than the lake itself and form a monophyletic clade (also see Section 4.1.2.). This
17 suggests that the high endemic species richness in Lake Ohrid invertebrates is predominantly
18 a result of intralacustrine diversification ('cradle function', e.g., Albrecht et al., 2006, 2008;
19 Wilke et al., 2007; Schultheiß et al., 2008; Wysocka et al., 2014; Föller et al., 2015).

20

21 Interestingly, the situation is different for plant species inhabiting the surrounding of Lake
22 Ohrid. For example, the existing pollen record from the DEEP site sequence, which covers
23 the last 500 kyr, indicates that the Lake Ohrid catchment has indeed been a refugial area for
24 both temperate and montane trees during glacial periods (Sadori et al., 2016).

25

26 4.4.2 Impact of environmental change on species diversification

27 Ancient lakes are often considered to be comparatively stable systems, potentially resulting in
28 constant diversification rates (i.e., speciation minus extinction rates) over time. Nonetheless,
29 several factors, often related to environmental, geological, or climatic changes, and depending
30 on the genetic features of the species, have been suggested to affect the tempo of



1 diversification in ancient lake species flocks. Accordingly, phases of rapid environmental
2 fluctuations may lead to net evolutionary change. Diversification rates may be higher in the
3 initial phase of lake colonisation and may decline once niche space is increasingly occupied.
4 Alternately, there might be a pronounced lag phase between the colonization of a lake and the
5 onset of subsequent diversification (reviewed in Föller et al., 2015).

6

7 Although high-resolution sediment-core analyses, covering the last 637 kyr, indicate that
8 Lake Ohrid experienced several environmental changes, phylogenetic studies on a
9 microgastropod group using lineage-through-time plots and diversification-rate analyses did
10 not reveal significant changes in this rate over time (Föller et al., 2015). Moreover, diatom
11 community analyses conducted from the DEEP sediment cores could not show extinction
12 events due to major environmental events such as tephra deposition (Jovanovska et al., 2016;
13 for details see section 4.3.2) and climate change over the last 92 kyr (Cvetkoska et al., 2016).
14 However, the potential for a regime shift increases with recent human impact on the diatom
15 flora of both lakes Ohrid (Zhang et al., 2016) and Prespa (Cvetkoska et al., 2015) although,
16 again, Ohrid appears to be more well-buffered from eutrophication than Prespa.

17

18 The reasons for the relatively constant diversification rate over time observed in
19 microgastropods and the lack of diatom extinction events during the Late
20 Pleistocene/Holocene remain largely unknown. However, a lack of environmental induced
21 extinction events in Lake Ohrid and/or a high resilience of its ecosystems may have played a
22 role (Föller et al., 2015; Cvetkoska et al., 2016; Jovanovska et al., 2016). Nonetheless, though
23 environmental changes may have had only a minor direct effect on diversification processes
24 in endemic taxa of Lake Ohrid, these changes potentially altered the abundance and
25 community compositions of diatoms and ostracods (e.g., Belmecheri et al., 2010; Reed et al.,
26 2010; Zhang et al., 2016), thus indirectly affecting speciation processes. In fact, the analysis
27 of the gastropod community in Lake Ohrid implied the presence of both geographical and
28 ecological speciation due to physical barriers and divergence across environmental or life
29 history gradients, respectively (Hauffe et al., 2016).

30



1 Another aspect of environmental change is the impact of anthropogenic activity on species
2 composition, diversity, and diversification. As previously suggested, Lake Ohrid is facing a
3 “creeping biodiversity crisis”, as increasing human impact in and around the lake already
4 jeopardises endemic species (Kostoski et al., 2010). For example, the presence of globally
5 invasive species has been recently demonstrated for Lake Ohrid (Albrecht et al., 2014).
6 Moreover, human-mediated environmental change is also predicted to alter the trophic state
7 of the lake (e.g., Matzinger et al., 2006). Given the small size of both the lake and its
8 catchment, increasing negative effects on the endemic biodiversity of Lake Ohrid and the
9 respective habitats are foreseeable and will likely foster extirpation. Only concerted and
10 international conservation activities might help mitigating the human impact on the sensitive
11 and highly biodiverse ecosystem of Lake Ohrid.

12

13

14 **5 Conclusions and outlook**

15 The SCOPSCO deep drilling project was initiated in 2004 and aimed at inferring (i) the age
16 and origin of Lake Ohrid (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia/Republic of Albania), (ii)
17 its regional seismotectonic history, (iii) volcanic activity and climate change in the central
18 northern Mediterranean region, and (iv) the drivers of biodiversity and endemism. The project
19 included phylogenetic and metacommunity analyses of living invertebrates and sampling
20 from main modern terrestrial organic matter pools from the lake and its surroundings, seismic
21 and hydro-acoustic surveys of the lake internal sediment architecture, and the recovery of
22 surface sediments and sediment cores. Within the framework of the International Continental
23 Scientific Drilling Program (ICDP) a deep drilling in Lake Ohrid took place in spring 2013
24 and provided a 584 m long sediment sequence from the central part (DEEP site) of the lake.
25 Initial results of the study of this sediment sequence in combination with the results of the
26 biological and geophysical as well as former sedimentological studies reveal that the Ohrid
27 basin formed during the Miocene and Pliocene. Lake Ohrid established between 1.9 and 1.3
28 Myr ago and provides a continuous record of distal tephra deposition and climatic and
29 environmental change in the central northern Mediterranean region. With its geographical
30 location, the Lake Ohrid record provides a unique opportunity to align marine records from
31 the North Atlantic with long-term and independently dated terrestrial archives in the Northern
32 and Eastern Mediterranean, such as the records from the Sulmona basin, Tenaghi Philippon,



1 Lake Van, or Dead Sea. This is a major precondition to disentangle longitudinal climate
2 gradients and investigate leads and lags circumventing age model uncertainties.

3

4 More detailed studies exist meanwhile on the upper 247.8 m of the DEEP site sediment
5 sequence and indicate that this part represents the last 637 kyr. Over this period, Lake Ohrid
6 experienced significant environmental change, which is related to orbital-scale climate forcing
7 and regional geological events. These changes apparently did not cause major extinction
8 events in Lake Ohrid, as evident from both the microgastropod phylogeny and the diatom
9 fossil record. The potential high resilience of the ecosystem to past climatic and
10 environmental changes together with relatively low extinction rates may explain the
11 extraordinary degree of endemic biodiversity in the lake. Ongoing biological studies and more
12 detailed analyses of the early stages of Lake Ohrid basin, based on the now accessible
13 sediment records, will help to better understand the drivers of biological diversification and
14 endemism. Lake Ohrid is thus a key site to further resolve the link between biological and
15 geological evolution and should centre our attention on protecting the endemic community
16 from a substantial biodiversity crisis due to the increasing anthropogenic impact.

17

18

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1 **Figure captions**

2

3 Figure 1: **(a)** Location of Lake Ohrid (black rectangle) on the Balkan Peninsula at the border
4 of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and the Republic of Albania.
5 Other records mentioned in the text are indicated by red dots (core U1313 in the North
6 Atlantic, Sulmona basin in Italy, Tenaghi Philippon (TP) in Greece). **(b)** Map of the area of
7 lakes Ohrid and Prespa and bathymetric map of Lake Ohrid (from Lindhorst et al., 2015).
8 Coring locations of piston core Co1202 (red; Vogel et al., 2010) and ICDP sites (white) are
9 shown, with DEEP and Lini sites mentioned in the text. Secondary ICDP sites P (Pestani), G
10 (Gradiste), and C (Cerava) are not mentioned in the text. **(c)** Geological map of the Lake
11 Ohrid catchment (modified from Lindhorst et al., 2015).

12

13 Figure 2: Selected seismic profiles and calculated water depths at different times (see text for
14 details). The arrow of the reflector at 140 m blf (MIS 8/9) indicates the existence of a
15 secondary basin in the northwestern part of the lake. Please note that the lake was probably
16 larger for most periods but individual reflectors cannot be traced to the shallower water depth
17 due to faults. This also explains, why the estimated water depth is not zero at the edges of the
18 shown lake coverage.

19

20 Figure 3: Lithostratigraphy of the upper 247.8 mcd and tephra and crypto-tephra horizons in
21 the DEEP sediment sequence. For nomenclature and details see Leicher et al. (2016). Tephra
22 in bold was used as tie points for the age-depth model for the upper 247.8 mcd spanning the
23 last 637 kyr (Francke et al., 2016; Leicher et al., 2016). Tephrostratigraphic work on tephra
24 from below 247.8 mcd is ongoing.

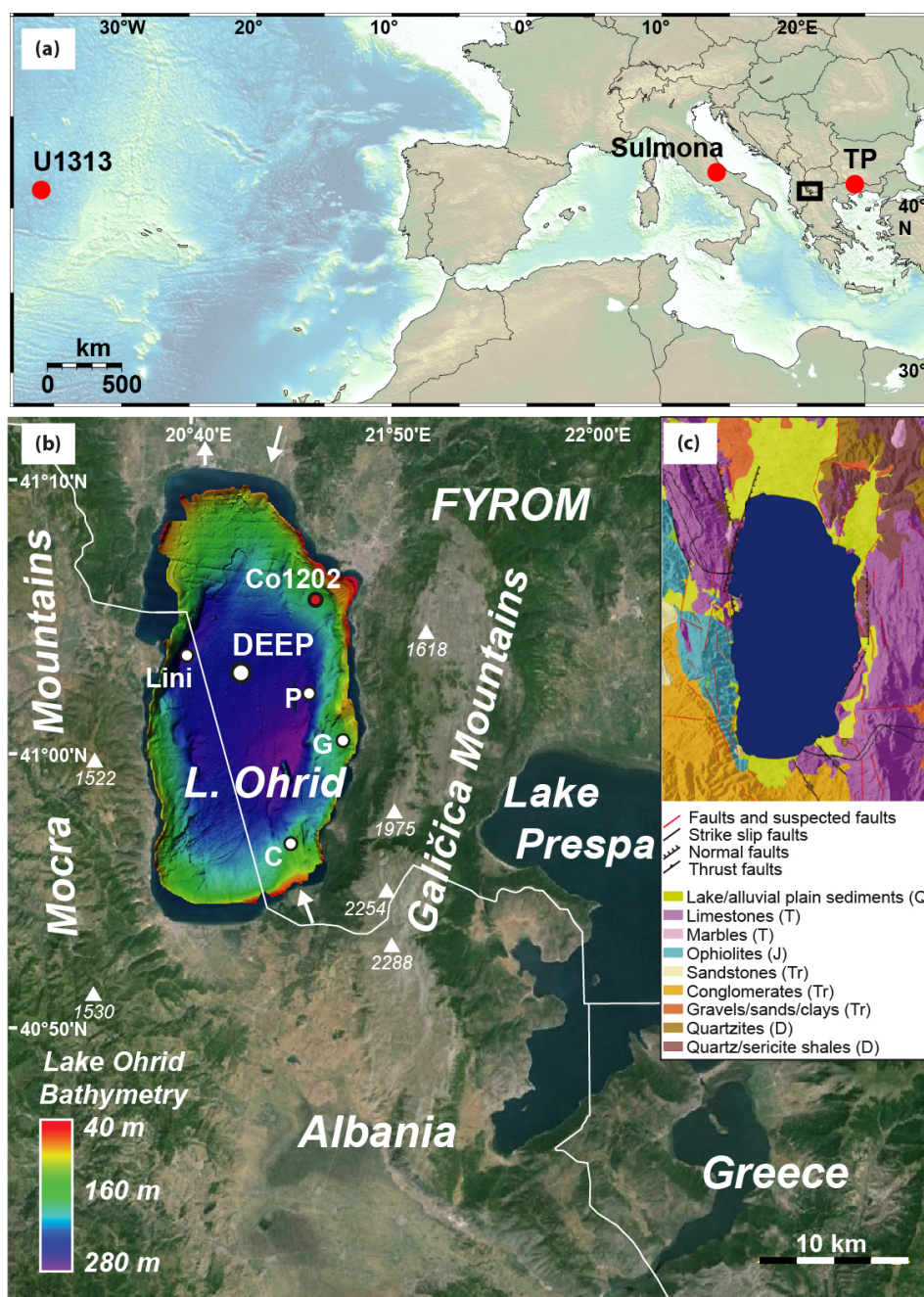
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26 Figure 4: Lake-level reconstructions (modified from Lindhorst et al., 2010, for details see
27 chapter 4.3.2, and this study), pollen (Sadori et al., 2016), sedimentological, and geochemical
28 data over the last 637 kyr (Francke et al., 2016; Just et al., 2016; Lacey et al., 2015) indicate a
29 long-term shift from cooler and wetter to drier and warmer glacial and interglacial periods
30 around 300 ka. Pollen curves have been corrected with respect to those reported in Sadori et
31 al. (2016). MIS boundaries are according to Lisiecki and Raymo (2005).

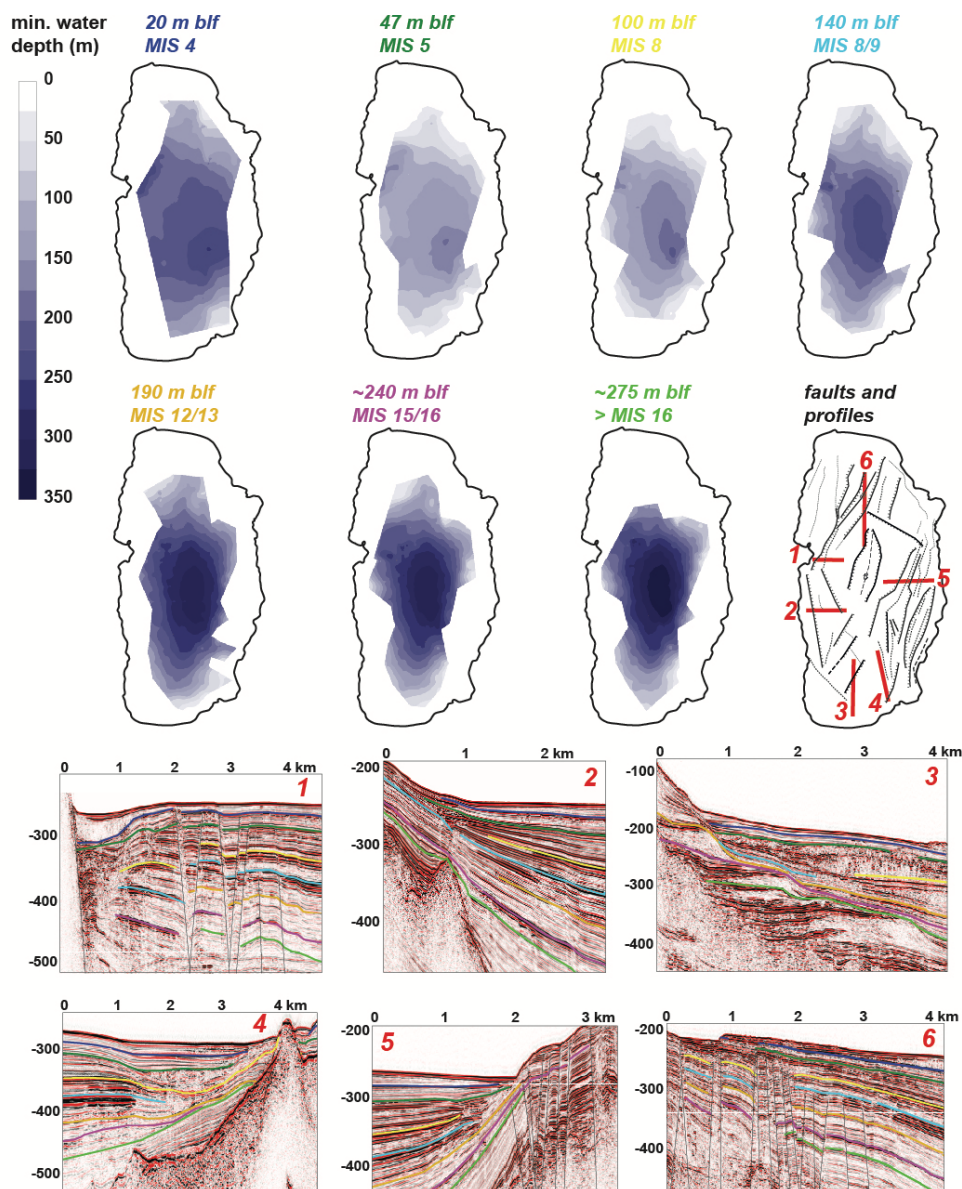


1
2 Figure 5: Geochemical data from the DEEP site sequence with sub-orbital changes during
3 MIS 12 in comparison with other records from a similar latitude (for location of North
4 Atlantic core U1313, the pollen record from Tenaghi Philippon and the isotope record from
5 Sulmona basin see Fig. 1). Arboreal pollen (AP) records are excluded of *Pinus*, *Juniperus*,
6 and *Betula* (Sadori et al., 2016); the record from Tenaghi Philippon is based on pollen data
7 from Wijmstra (1969) and Wijmstra and Smit (1976) and the age model from Tzedakis et al.
8 (2006); see also Sadori et al. (2016). Red bars and black dots at the bottom age axis indicate
9 tephrochronological tie points and tuning points used for the age model of the DEEP site
10 sequence (Francke et al., 2016).

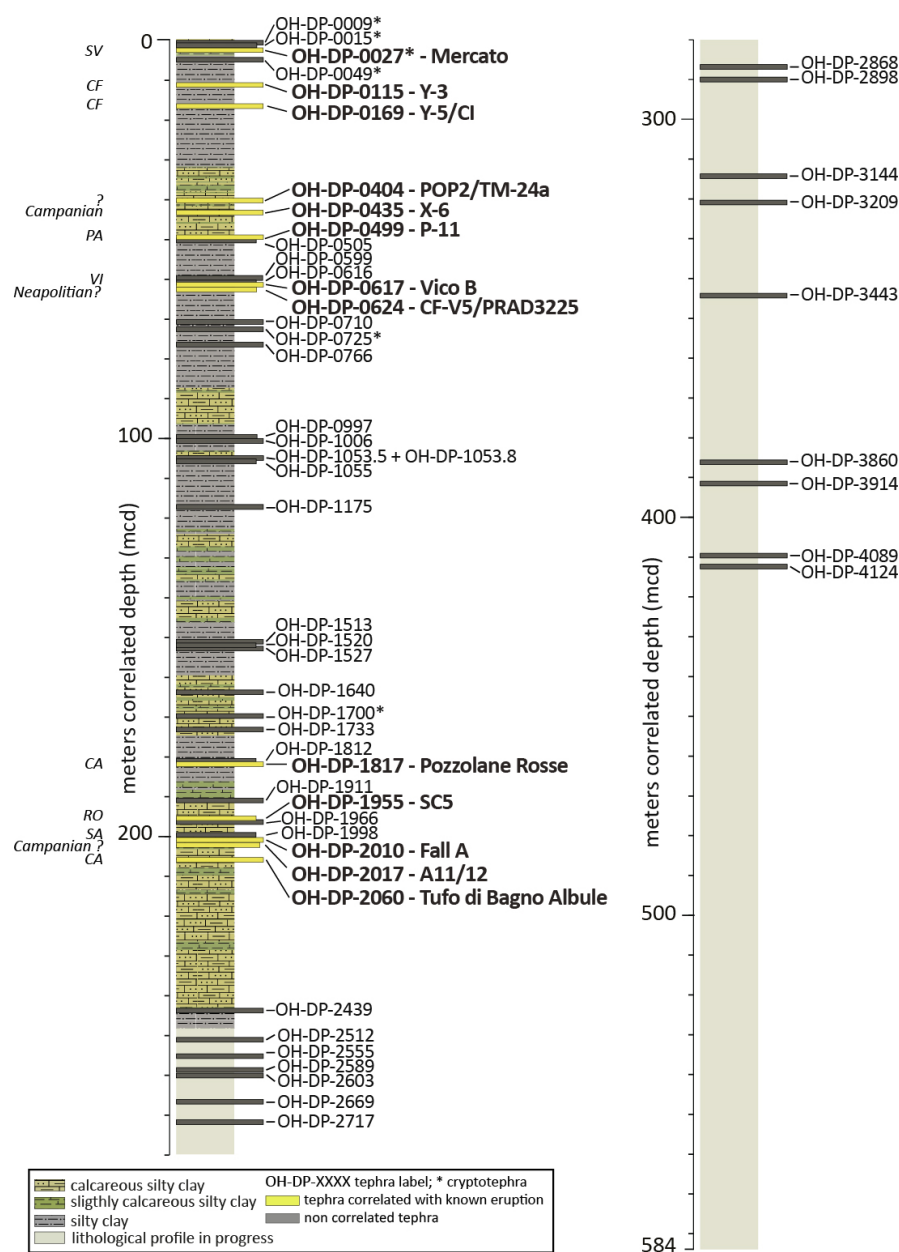
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1 Fig. 1

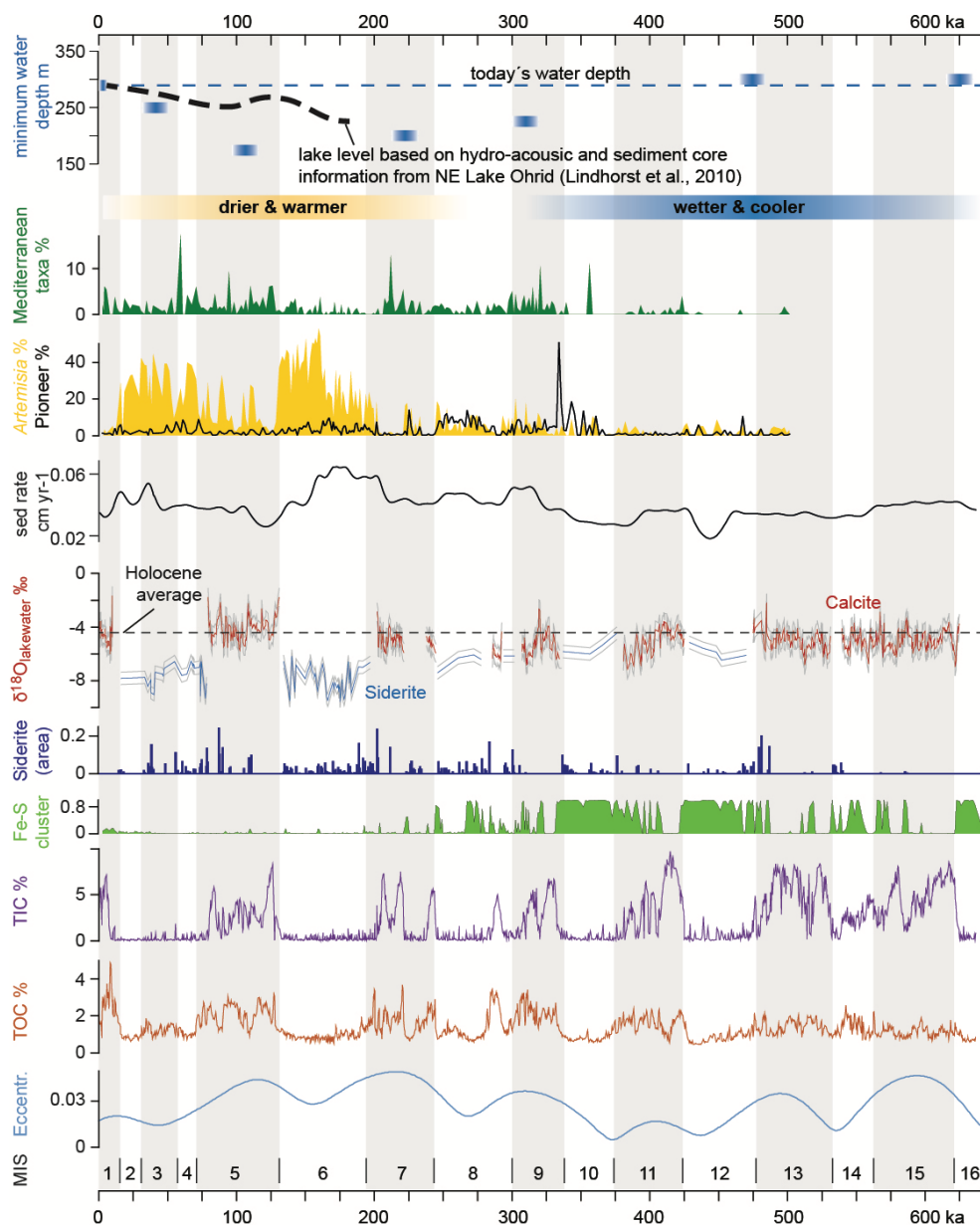


1 Fig. 2

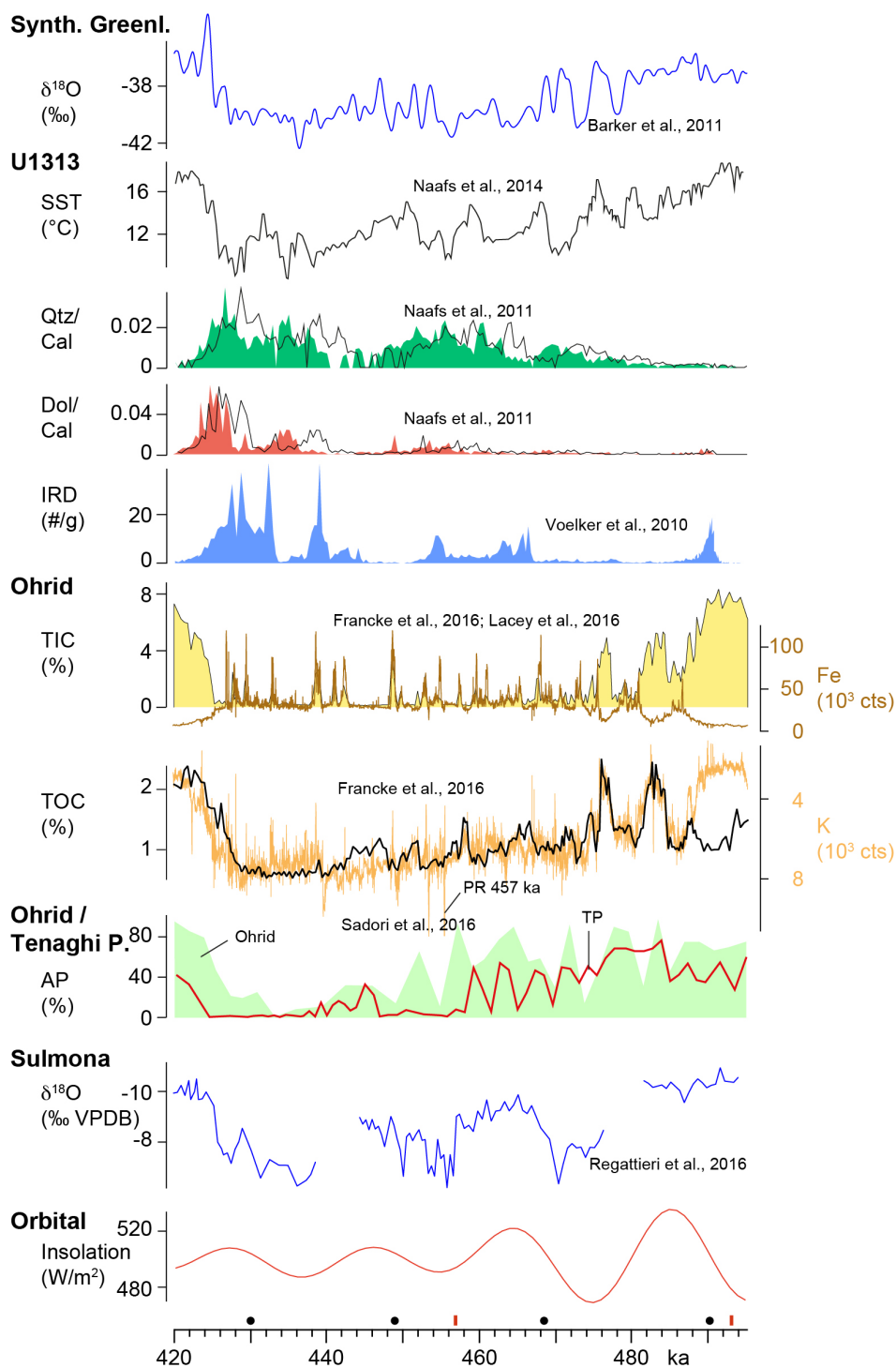


1

Fig. 3



1 Fig. 4



1 Fig. 5