

## **XVI biennial SASQUA meeting, Bloemfontein, South Africa: participation of the African and European databases**

In response to the joint initiative of Professor Louis Scott (Free state University) and Professor Mike Meadows (Cape town University), African (APD) and European (EPD) pollen database delegates agreed to attend the XVI biennial SASQUA meeting in Bloemfontein (30 march to 2 April 2005). SASQUA is the South African association for Quaternary studies affiliated to INQUA which has held its XV international congress in 1999 in Durban.

APD and EPD have evolved separately during the last decades. Thanks to the global pollen database (GPD) initiative and the IGBP PAGES PEP III core project, strong relationships have been developed between them, which lead to a first joint meeting held in 2002 in Casablanca, Morocco. Since this first meeting, an impressive effort has been made in data collection. Thus, the APD manager has identified more than 500 fossil pollen sites in Africa among which 51 are located in the Northern, Mediterranean, area. Taking into account that the Mediterranean flora of North Africa is closely related to the southern European one, these new data are archived within the EPD. The access to these two databases will be hopefully soon facilitated through a web interface developed by MEDIAS France in Toulouse as soon as the taxonomical problems will be sorted out.

So far, the SASQUA meeting was exclusively dedicated to research work carried out in the southern part of Africa. The contribution of several palynologists involved in either APD or EPD was an opportunity to get an overview of palaeoenvironmental and paleoclimatic researches carried out in the whole continent. Among the 50 oral presentations and posters, 26 were given by palynologists from 7 African countries (Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda), three European countries (France, Germany, UK) and two Asian countries (Lebanon and China).

The oral and poster presentations covered a wide range of scientific fields from the late Pliocene (L. Dupont and E. Perez) to the last millennium (A. Ekblom; L. Gillson) including the modelling and calibration aspects as well (C. Hely, S. Brewer, L. Bremond & J. Guiot; J. Watrin, A.-M. Lézine, K. Gajewski & A. Vincens; KI. Duffin). One of the main scientific topics dealt with the last glacial-postglacial transition and the Holocene periods with two main foci: climate reconstruction and vegetation dynamics. Palynologists have shown that the use of different archives (hyrax middens (M. Seliane, ME. Meadows & B. Chase; G. Gil Romera, E. Marais, G. Brook & GS. Carrion; marine sediments (A.-M. Lézine & J.-P. Cazet; L. Dupont, H. Behling, F. Marret & J. Scourse; F. Marret and INTIMATE co-workers; CED. Gray Brewer, ME. Meadows & JA. Lee Thorp; lakes (I. Ssemmanda & A. Vincens; JR. Thackeray and L. Scott; R. Cheddadi, M. Taieb, E. Ortu & B. Damnati; K. Huang & R. Cheddadi; HF. Lamb, CR. Bates, M. Umer, V. Coombes, MH. Marshall, SJ. Davies & E. Dejen; M. Umer, J.-J. Tiercelin, E. Gibert, D. Hureau, A.-M. Lézine, H. Lamb & R. Bonnefille) and swamps (DJ. Nash, ME. Meadows & VL. Culliver; CT. Mumbi, H. Hooghiemstra, R. Marchant & MJ. Wooller; TC. Partridge, L. Scott, E. Norström, B. Theko, JR. Risbek, L. Rossouw & B. Smith; A. Ngomanda, D. Joly & J. Maley; L. Hajar & R. Cheddadi)) is remarkably suitable for accurate and reliable past environmental reconstructions.

The APD and EPD state of the art has been thoroughly presented by their data coordinators (A.-M. Lézine & R. Cheddadi). In addition the APD manager (D. Lewden) presented her up to date list of African pollen sites and related references. Several examples of scientific uses

of both modern and fossil pollen data have been presented. Particularly, the EPD has attained such a spatial resolution that it is now possible to produce maps of tree migrational routes through time, which are crucial for understanding the modern plant diversity. In Africa, a special attention is paid on both taxonomical issues owing to the highly diverse pollen flora and pollen-plant-climate relation for a better reconstruction of the past.

Through this joint meeting, APD and EPD complies with the objectives of the IGBP-PAGES core project PEPIII to make available to the scientific community a powerful tool for a better access to international scientific research dealing with global change and biodiversity, in relation with resource management. In this context, the recent policies of the WDC-A in Boulder, Colorado for palaeodata management have been discussed at the meeting.

The participation of palynologists from outside South Africa has been made possible thanks to funds from the French and the South African national research agencies (CNRS and NRF), the French committee for Geological Sciences (CNFG), the European Union (through a former INCO-DC contract) and PAGES.

MEDIAS France and Professor Louis Scott have kindly accepted to manage with their well known know-how and their friendship, the venue of all the APD and EPD delegates. In addition, thanks to Professors Louis Scott and Mike Meadows and their colleagues, an exceptional post-congress excursion through the Kalahari-Highveld grassland, the succulent Karoo, the Fimbos and the littoral temperate rain forest has been organized, allowing to visit numerous paleo sites (Erfkroon, Colesberg, Blydefontein, Groenvlei, Knysna, Cango Cave...).

We do thank warmly and truly our sponsors and colleagues who have made this meeting and the following excursion successful and fruitful, where brilliant young scientists revealed so much hope for the African research.

A.-M. Lézine  
APD coordinator

