CHAPTER 1

Rise of the Palaeoecology of Africa series

Louis Scott

Department of Plant Sciences, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

ABSTRACT: The *Palaeoecology of Africa* series was founded by E.M. van Zinderen Bakker, a biologist and palynologist who emigrated from Europe to South Africa. Ever since its origin during the nineteen-sixties, it gave a reflection of the history and development of palaeoscience in connection with the African continent and played a role in promoting international collaboration with multidisciplinary reports, conference proceedings and other papers in this field.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Palaeoecology of Africa (PoA) of which this is the 35th volume, is a series traditionally focusing on multi-disciplinary studies on palaeoenvironments of Africa, especially on more recent parts of geological time like the Neogene and Quaternary. The early PoA volumes reveal the development history of these palaeoscience aspects in Africa. Thanks to the pioneering and visionary efforts of Eduard Meine van Zinderen Bakker and the publisher A. A. Balkema, the early volumes of PoA was a unique academic initiative out of Africa in the nineteen sixties. The series served as a mouth piece for an international group of specialists at a time when the important role palaeoenvironmental changes did not yet receive as much attention as today. Palaeoscience was then, a little-known discipline for the continent except for a rich heritage of Palaeozoic fossils and a few important hominid cranial finds such as at such as Taung, Florisbad and a few other sites (e.g. Dart 1925; Dreyer 1935).

1.2 ORIGIN

PoA had its humble origins in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties when van Zinderen Bakker, a Dutch naturalist who immigrated to South Africa in 1947 (Meadows 2015; Neumann and Scott 2018) started lecturing at the University of the Orange Free State in Bloemfontein (now shortened to University of the Free State). Here, he formed the Palynological Research Unit that was sponsored by the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, and by the 1950's he was already involved in some of the first palynological research projects in Africa, including modern pollen surveys in Southern Africa (Coetzee and van Zinderen Bakker 1952) and analysis of the hominin-bearing spring deposits of Florisbad near Bloemfontein (Dreyer 1935; van Zinderen Bakker 1957).

PoA started as eight soft-cover reports on pollen analysis entitled 'Palynology of Africa' in which van Zinderen Bakker reported on research news and activities in palynology and related aspects of palaeosciences in Africa covering the period of 1950–1963 (referenced in Neumann and Scott 2018). They were later re-published by Balkema, Cape Town in 1966 in book form as Volume 1 of *Palaeoecology of Africa* with the sub-title *and the Surrounding Islands &*

Antarctica (Van Zinderen Bakker 1966). The sub-title reflected van Zinderen Bakker's wide multi-disciplinary interests, which included biological and palynological research at the Marion and Prince Edward Islands, c. 2000 km south east of Cape Town in the Southern Ocean, to which he organized the first biological and geological research expedition in 1965 (van Zinderen Bakker 1976a; Van Zinderen Bakker *et al.* 1971). PoA Volume 1 (Van Zinderen Bakker 1966) included accounts of activities of several well-known international scientist at the time like D.A. Livingstone, L.S.B. Leakey, J.D. Clarke, R.J. Mason, C.K. Brain, W.W. Bishop, A.R.H. Martin, M. van Campo, E.P. Plumstead, H. Rakotoarivelo, H. Straka, O. Hedberg, R.E. Moreau, W.F. Libby, and others.

Volume 2, 4 and 6 followed basically the same format as Volume 1, but contained chapters under specific topics as short reports by various authors (Van Zinderen Bakker 1966, 1967b, 1972). The chapter topics included climatology and palaeoclimatology, geology and palaeontology, archaeology, biogeography, palynology in Africa, Antarctica and the Southern Ocean, isotope dates and morphology of microfossils, periglacial evidence, sea-levels, and oceanography.

The third volume of Palaeoecology of Africa contained the doctoral thesis of Joey Coetzee (Coetzee 1967), which is a landmark publication for Quaternary palynology in Africa (Meadows 2007). The early volumes also included additional lists with researcher's addresses and publications.

Maintaining the wide multi-disciplinary character from an international group of palaeo-scientists, subsequent volumes of PoA began to include separately authored papers, e.g., Volume 7 that included an extended study of 106 pages by A.C. Hamilton on palynology in Uganda (Hamilton 1972).

1.3 EDITORIAL CHANGES

Over the years the series eventually changed editors or were assisted by guest editors especially in the case of conference proceedings. Volume 18 was edited by Joey Coetzee and served as a dedication to the work of van Zinderen Bakker (Table S1).

Klaus Heine of Regensburg took over as editor for Volumes 19-27, of which Volume 27 was co-edited by Jürgen Runge (Frankfurt) who took over the duties for the rest of the volumes. After 1999, CRC Press (Taylor & Francis Group/'A Balkema Book') became the publisher and introduced the new current enlarged layout format and new series sub-title, *Landscape evolution and Palaeoenvironments* since 2007 (Volumes 28-34).

1.4 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

With the appearance of Volume 22 in 1991, the following seven of eleven conference proceedings, were already published in PoA of which four represented meetings of the Southern African Society for Quaternary Research (SASQUA) (see Table S1 for the full list):

- (1) Volume 5, Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) Cambridge in 1968 (Van Zinderen Bakker 1969). This was later followed up by Volume 8 (Van Zinderen Bakker 1973), which did not cover the proceedings of a specific event but expanded the topic and inspired further interest in history of Antarctica.
- (2) Volume 12, Sahara and Surrounding Seas held in Mainz in 1979 under the auspices of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur*, guest edited by M. Sarnthein, E. Siebold and P. Rognon, (Van Zinderen Bakker and Coetzee 1979).
- (3) Volume 15, Southern African Society for Quaternary Research, SASQUA VI (1981) Pretoria, guest edited by J.C. Vogel, E.A. Voigt and T.C. Partridge (Coetzee and van Zinderen Bakker 1982).

- (4) Volume 17, Southern African Society for Quaternary Research, SASQUA VII (1985) Stellenbosch, guest edited by H. Deacon (Van Zinderen Bakker *et al.* 1986).
- (5) Volume 19, Southern African Society for Quaternary Research, SASQUA VIII (1987) Bloemfontein, guest edited by J.A. Coetzee (Heine 1988).
- (6) Volume 21 Southern African Society for Quaternary Research, SASQUA IX (1989) Durban, guest edited by R.R. Maud (Heine 1990).
- (7) Volume 22 (African Palynology) Rabat, guest edited by A. Ballouche and J. Maley (Heine 1991).

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