

The Darius Programme: Investigation of Foldbelts and Related Sedimentary Basins from the Black Sea and Anatolia to Central Asia

Randell Stephenson

University of Aberdeen, School of Geosciences, Geology and Petroleum Geology, Aberdeen, UK

The DARIUS Programme is a consortium-type programme funded by major oil companies, participating universities and the French research funding agency CNRS. It aims at investigating the 6000 km-long continuous deformed belt from Crimea-Anatolia in the west to the Tien-Shan in the east, through the Caucasus, northern Iran and Zagros. Its major objective is to acquire newly documented observations on the tectonic and stratigraphic evolution of the constituent orogenic domains and associated basins of this belt. The former resulted from the collision of Gondwanan blocks with southern Eurasia from the Mesozoic (Cimmerian blocks) until the Cenozoic (India, then Arabia). Accordingly, the DARIUS Programme funds scientific projects on the basis of proposals submitted by invited geoscientists. For 2010-2011, 38 projects were selected covering most of the DARIUS's area of interest. These scientific projects involve some 40 research institutions and universities from about 15 countries, and scientists from about 150 organisations in Europe, the Middle East and western Central Asian countries. The expertise of the participants of DARIUS includes structural geology and tectonics, stratigraphy and sedimentology, mechanical and thermal modelling, kinematics and geophysics. A number of thematic working groups, tasked with integrating the results of individual projects within regions or disciplines of the DARIUS Programme, have been established to start working in 2011. Two of these – “Tectonic Evolution of Anatolia” and “Evolution of Caucasus: from Basins to Orogenic Belt” – are of direct relevance to Turkey. The thematic working groups will make an essential contribution to the final objectives of DARIUS, which include, most importantly, a new regional geological synthesis of the Middle East-Central Asia study area, realised mainly through a set of palinspastic maps depicting the tectonic evolution since the Late Palaeozoic. It's hoped that these will form a major contribution to new interpretations and new debates regarding the geological and tectonic evolution of the northern Middle East-Central Asia region. This presentation is made on behalf of the Board of the DARIUS Programme: Eric Barrier (leader), Marie-Françoise Brunet and Bruno Vrielynck (ISTEP, Université Pierre et Marie Curie-CNRS, Paris, France); Andrea Zanchi (Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca, Milano, Italy); Franz Fürsich (GeoZentrum Nordbayern der Universität Erlangen, Germany); Marc Sosson (GeoAzur-CNRS, Valbonne, France); Jaume Vergés (Institute of Earth Sciences Jaume Almera, CSIC, Barcelona, Spain) and the presenter.

Keywords : *Regional Synthesis, Tectonic Reconstruction, Palinspastic Maps*