

EVENTS PRECEDING THE OPENING OF THE MESOZOIC TETHYS IN THE EAST MEDITERRANEAN REGION

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The western end of the Early Mesozoic Tethys had two branches that underwent very different evolution. The prehistory of the northwestern, Dinaric-Alpine branch was determined by the final phase of Variscan tectogenesis in the Middle Carboniferous and the Middle Triassic opening of the Vardar oceanic branch; between the two events, there were no major changes in the plate tectonic organisation of the surrounding region. Starting with the Devonian situation (which basically determined Variscan tectogenesis), the six most important events of paleogeographic evolution are discussed in some detail.

The western, Aegean-Sicilian branch was a subduction zone with olistostromatic sedimentation, probably combined with strike-slip movements, from the Middle-Late Carboniferous until the Middle Triassic (partly even until the Carnian). By means of this subduction directed towards the North or Northeast, the island-arc type Middle Triassic magmatism of the Southern Alps and the Outer Dinarides can be well explained. Behind this arc, the Vardar oceanic branch opened by means of a back-arc basin mechanism. An "Adriatic Promontory" did not exist during the Late Paleozoic and Triassic; the connection of the pelagic Triassic units in Southern Italy (Lagonegro, Imerese, Sicani) was not from the North but from the South of the Apulian microplate.

THE PELAGIC PERMIAN AND TRIASSIC DEEP-WATER SEQUENCE OF WESTERN SICILY AND ITS CONTINUATION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AREA

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The Permian deep-water sequence of western Sicily (fig. 1) is characterized by Circumpacific conodont and radiolarian faunas. Similar pelagic sequences and faunas are known from Oman (above oceanic crust), NE Iraq and from the Phyllite Group of Crete. They belong to the Permian Tethys at the northern margin of Gondwana. The pelagic sedimentation continued during the Triassic with a short shallowing, but continuous sedimentation near the P/T boundary.