

Palynology, a key to climatic and geographic change A tribute to Thomas van der Hammen



Preface

This section of *Geologie en Mijnbouw* is dedicated to professor Thomas van der Hammen on the occasion of his retirement from the chairs of palynology at the Faculty of Biology, University of Amsterdam, and the Faculty of Earth Sciences, Free University Amsterdam, on 30 September 1989.

Educated as a geologist-palaeobotanist at Leiden University, where he studied under the late professor Florschütz, Van der Hammen has become known as one of the leading international scientists in the field of Quaternary palaeoecology and palaeoclimatology.

Van der Hammen began his studies on sediments from the last glacial stage in the Netherlands. After this initial work he spent many years in Colombia, where he became an expert in neotropical palynology. He was among the very first to systematically apply palaeobotany to the study of the tropical Quaternary and Tertiary. He returned to the Netherlands in the 1960's, where he continued research on both Northwest Europe and South America, at first in the Geological Institute at Leiden, and later on at the Amsterdam universities.

Palaeobotany and palaeoecology are branches of science which risk to be marginalized within the framework of traditional disciplinary boundary drawing, notably at times of budgetary reductions. Thomas van der Hammen has succeeded in convincing both earth scientists and biologists of the relevance and fascination of his discipline. At the biology side he has strongly stimulated actuo-ecological research as a basis for sound palaeoecological interpretation. Notably in the long-term research in the Colombian Andes this combined approach has been put into practice with much reward. At the geological side Van der Hammen has successfully stressed the importance of ecology in palaeobotany and the necessity, therefore, of close cooperation with biologists.

What Thomas van der Hammen has achieved for the position of Dutch palaeobotany and palaeoecology is very much the result of the high standard of his personal scientific work, his ability to stimulate young scientists, his enthusiasm and his tenacity in any situation. This 'liber amicorum' is a tribute to an outstanding scientist, who already in 1974 was awarded the Royal Geological and Mining Society of the Netherlands' Van Waterschoot van der Gracht medal for outstanding scientific achievements.

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