

1 Evidence for carbon cycling in a large freshwater lake in the Balkans
2 over the last 0.5 million years using the isotopic composition of bulk
3 organic matter

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23
24 Abstract

25 In the DEEP core from the Lake Ohrid ICDP drilling project, the carbon isotope composition
26 of bulk organic matter ($\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$) over the last 516 ka shows a negative correlation with total

1 organic carbon (TOC) and total inorganic carbon (TIC). This relationship is marked by
2 periods of lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values corresponding to higher TIC and TOC. Along with TOC/TN,
3 the correlation between $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ suggests that most of the organic matter in the
4 core is from aquatic primary production within the lake. The combination of TOC, TIC, and
5 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ is able to disentangle long-term glacial/interglacial cycles and, to a lesser extent,
6 millennial scale climate variability. Over the longer term, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ shows modest variability,
7 indicating that the $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of the dissolved inorganic carbon (DIC) pool is stabilised by the
8 supply of karst spring water characterised by $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ influenced by the bedrock $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ value,
9 and the long residence time of the lake water and well mixed upper water column promoting
10 equilibration with atmospheric CO_2 . However, comparison between arboreal pollen (AP%),
11 TIC and TOC data indicates that the $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ signal is modulated by the leaching of soil CO_2
12 through runoff and spring discharge, changes in primary productivity, and recycling of
13 organic matter within the lake, all affecting $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$. Exceptionally low $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ during some
14 interglacial periods (e.g. MIS7 and MIS9) possibly indicate rapid intensification of organic
15 matter recycling and/or increasing stratification and enhanced methanogenesis, even if the
16 latter process is not supported by the sedimentological data.

17 Keywords: Pleistocene, Paleolimnology, Europe, stable isotopes, organic matter, Lake Ohrid.

18

19 1. Introduction

20 A defining feature of the Quaternary Period is the quasi-periodic expansion (glacial) and
21 contraction (interglacial) of Northern Hemisphere ice sheets (Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005).
22 According to the astronomical theory of ice ages proposed by Milankovitch (1941), these
23 glacial-interglacial cycles are driven by variations in the Earth's axial inclination and orbit
24 around the sun that affect the seasonal and latitudinal distribution of incoming solar radiation.
25 Although the general characteristics of climate during glacial and interglacial phases are
26 global in extent, detailed regional investigations show that they have different expressions in
27 different archives, as a result of the complexity of the climate system and its regional
28 components. Glacial to interglacial climatic changes produce different effects on individual
29 components of the continental environment (e.g. soil, vegetation, hydrology, and fauna),
30 which can be disentangled using multi-proxy comparisons between regional archives. Most of
31 the information on long-term (multiple glacial cycles) climatic variability comes from marine
32 records (e.g. Lisiecki and Raymo, 2005; Hodell et al., 2013), and ice cores (e.g. EPICA-

1 community-members, 2004; North Greenland Ice Core Project Members, 2004). However,
2 one of the limitations when understanding the complexity of the climate system and its impact
3 on the terrestrial environment is the paucity of long and continuous archives on land (Past
4 Interglacials Working Group of PAGES, 2016).

5 In recent years, very long and important lacustrine records have been obtained as part of the
6 International Continental scientific Drilling Program (ICDP; e.g. Litt et al., 2014; Johnson et
7 al., 2016; Wagner et al., 2017). Proxies from lake records, for example pollen and stable
8 isotopes, can potentially provide regional paleoenvironmental and paleoclimatic information
9 (e.g. Tzedakis et al., 1997; Sadori et al., 2008), and can be used to correlate change across
10 regions (e.g. Milner et al., 2013; Zanchetta et al., 2016). Other proxies (e.g. organic matter,
11 biogenic silica, chemical composition) provide more local information e.g. primary
12 productivity or lake stratification (Hodell and Schelske, 1998; O’Beirne et al., 2017), and/or
13 information on erosion of the catchment including input of nutrients and soil development
14 (Mourier et al., 2010; Arnaud et al., 2016). Overall, different proxies recovered and measured
15 in lake archives can provide crucial information on the different responses of the terrestrial
16 environment to climate forcing over glacial-interglacial timescales (e.g. Wilson et al., 2015).
17 Here we focus on the carbon isotope composition of bulk organic matter ($\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$), which can
18 help in understanding past lake evolution in relation to catchment vegetation and soil
19 development, together with productivity and recycling processes, complementing inferences
20 obtained from other proxies such as pollen and other biological indicators (e.g. Meyer, 1994;
21 Meyers and Lallier-Vergès, 1999; Leng et al., 2010, 2013; Whittington et al., 2015).

22 We measured $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ in the “DEEP” core retrieved from Lake Ohrid under the umbrella of
23 the ICDP project: Scientific Collaboration on Past Speciation Conditions in Lake Ohrid
24 (SCOPSCO) (Wagner et al., 2014ab, 2017). Here, we compare our $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data with other
25 proxy data obtained from the same sediment core over the last 516 ka (Wagner et al., 2017).
26 Previous studies on Lake Ohrid have shown that the sediments contain components (e.g.
27 biogenic silica, organic matter and carbonate content) that are highly sensitive to
28 environmental changes (e.g. Wagner et al., 2008, 2009, 2010; Vogel et al., 2010; Leng et al.,
29 2013; Lacey et al., 2014, 2016; Francke et al., 2016; Sadori et al., 2016), and these have
30 revealed how the lake has evolved through more than half a million years of climate change
31 (Wagner et al., 2017).

32

1 2. General setting

2 Lake Ohrid is located on the southern Balkan Peninsula between Albania and Macedonia at
3 an altitude of 693 m a.s.l. (Fig. 1). The lake developed in a tectonic depression (graben)
4 formed during the latter phases of the Alpine Orogeny in the Pliocene (Aliaj et al., 2001;
5 Lindhorst et al., 2015). The lake is ca. 30 km long and 15 km wide, with a maximum water
6 depth of 293 m and a total volume of 50.7 km³ (Lindhorst et al., 2015). The hydrological
7 catchment of Lake Ohrid comprises an area of 2393 km² incorporating Lake Prespa (848 m
8 a.s.l.) and its catchment (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007) as the two lakes are connected via a
9 karst aquifer passing through the Galicica and Suva Gora mountain ranges. Karst springs
10 depleted in nutrients and minerogenic material represent about 55% of hydrologic input to
11 Ohrid (this may have been higher in the past, see Lacey and Jones, this volume). Up to 50%
12 of the karst waters are estimated to have originated from Lake Prespa (Anovski et al., 1992;
13 Matzinger et al., 2007). Direct precipitation on the lake, together with river and surface runoff
14 account for the remaining 45% of the hydrologic input. The surface outflow through the river
15 Crn Drim (60%) and evaporation (40%) represent the main hydrologic outputs (Matzinger et
16 al., 2006a). According to Matzinger et al. (2006a) the estimated theoretical hydraulic water
17 residence time is ca. 70 years (Matzinger et al., 2006a), which should be reduced to 45 years
18 if evaporation is considered (Wagner et al., 2017). However, Wagner et al. (2017) suggested
19 that the real residence time could be much longer (up to 3 to 4 times).

20 Presently, Lake Ohrid is oligotrophic and oligomictic, although the littoral zones of the lake
21 exhibit a slightly higher trophic state (Wagner et al., 2017). Whilst the upper c. 150 m of the
22 lake water mix every year, the lake is stratified by salinity below 150 m, where mixing occurs
23 on a sub-decadal cycle (Matzinger et al. 2006b). However, the oligotrophic conditions allow
24 bottom-water oxygen concentrations of above 4 mg L⁻¹ even during years without complete
25 overturn (Matzinger et al., 2006b).

26 Due to the sheltered position of the lake in a relatively deep basin surrounded by high
27 mountain ranges and due to the proximity of the Adriatic Sea, the climate of the Lake Ohrid
28 watershed shows both Mediterranean and continental characteristics (Watzin et al., 2002;
29 Panagiotopoulos et al., 2013). The average annual air temperature for the period between
30 1961 and 1990 was +11.1°C, with a maximum temperature of +31.5°C and a minimum
31 temperature of -5.7°C. The average annual precipitation for the Ohrid catchment amounts to
32 approximately 900 mm (Popovska and Bonacci, 2007), and the prevailing wind directions
33 follow the N-S axis of the Ohrid valley.

1 The lake is considered to be the oldest in continuous existence in Europe. Preliminary
2 analyses from DEEP core sediments indicate that the age of Lake Ohrid is between 1.3 and
3 1.9 Ma (Baumgarten et al., 2015; Lindhorst et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2014ab, 2017). The
4 extended limnological history, hydrological conditions, and the presence of >300 endemic
5 species make Lake Ohrid a hotspot of biodiversity and a site of global significance (Albrecht
6 and Wilke, 2008; Föllner et al., 2016).

7

8 3. Material and methods

9 A total of 1526 m of sediment cores were recovered from six parallel core holes at Lake
10 Ohrid's DEEP site (5045-1) in 2013 using the Deep Lake Drilling System (DLDS) of
11 DOSECC (Wagner et al., 2014ab; 2017). The main coring site for the drilling project was
12 chosen after systematic hydroacoustic surveys, which were carried out between 2004 and
13 2009. The DEEP site (N 41°02'57'', E 020°42'54"; Fig. 1) is located in the central basin of
14 Lake Ohrid in a basement depression with an estimated maximum sediment fill of 680 m and
15 243 m water depth (Fig. 1; Lindhorst et al., 2015; Wagner et al., 2017).

16 Here, we use the samples from the DEEP site composite profile, which cover the last 516 kyr
17 (based on the age model proposed by Francke et al., 2016). This age model is based on 11
18 tephra layers (Leicher et al., 2016) and was refined by tuning the bio-geochemical proxy
19 response to local summer insolation. For the interval corresponding to Marine Isotope Stage
20 (MIS) 5, additional tuning points were obtained by comparison with regionally well-dated
21 continental archives (Zanchetta et al., 2016).

22 Detailed core descriptions and methodologies for the chronology, geochemical measurements
23 and pollen analyses can be found in Francke et al. (2016), Lacey et al. (2016), Leicher et al.
24 (2016), and Sadori et al. (2016), and are not therefore discussed here. Pollen data have been
25 updated by new counts (Sadori et al., 2018) for some intervals. $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data from the DEEP
26 sediments is presented here for the first time. 315 samples were analysed at 64 cm intervals,
27 corresponding to an average temporal resolution of ca. 1600 years. $\Delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data are
28 compared to total organic carbon (TOC), total inorganic carbon (TIC), TOC/total nitrogen
29 (TOC/TN, given as the atomic ratio), TOC/total sulphur (TOC/TS), and biogenic silica (BSi)
30 published in Francke et al. (2016), $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of TIC ($\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$) published in Lacey et al. (2016), and
31 arboreal pollen percentage (AP%) published in Sadori et al. (2016). In the DEEP core,
32 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ from the Late Glacial-Holocene was not considered in detail because of the nearby

1 high-resolution study from the LINI site (Fig. 1; Lacey et al., 2015). Data from the LINI site
2 are included here to complete the DEEP core $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ record for this interval.

3 Surface soil samples from 14 different locations around Lake Ohrid (Fig. 1), were collected to
4 cover a range in altitudes and vegetation types (Table 1). The soil samples were dried at 40°C,
5 after which root and plant remains were discarded by hand-picking and sieving to <2 mm.
6 Samples were then ground by hand before being immersed in 10% HCl to remove TIC, rinsed
7 several times with deionized water to near-neutral pH, and oven dried at 40°C for 24 h. The
8 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data were obtained at the IGG-CNR of Pisa by producing CO_2 via combustion using
9 a Carlo Erba 1108 elemental analyser, interfaced to a Finnigan DeltaPlusXL via the Finnigan
10 MAT Conflo II interface. Results were calibrated against the Vienna Pee Dee Belemnite
11 (VPDB) scale using international standards (ANU-sucrose and polyethylene foil from NIST)
12 and a within-run standard (graphite) in order to correct for drift. Average analytical
13 reproducibility for these samples was $\pm 0.10\%$.

14 Total Carbon (TC) and TN contents of soils were measured using a Carlo Erba 1108
15 elemental analyser. TOC was quantified from the difference between TC and TIC, which was
16 measured with a De Astis calcimeter (reproducibility obtained on pure grade calcite and
17 samples was $< \pm 5\%$). These measurements were also used to calculate the TOC/TN ratio.

18 We correlate our data to the Marine Isotope Stages (MISs) but acknowledge there are
19 different responses within marine and continental proxies (e.g. Sánchez-Goñi et al., 1999;
20 Shackleton et al., 2003). We use the correlation proposed by Francke et al. (2016) between
21 the DEEP record and MISs defined on the stacked benthic isotope curve of Lisiecki and
22 Raymo (2005). When we use “warmer periods” or “warm stages” we refer to the entire
23 duration of periods typically associated with odd-numbered MISs, conversely “cold periods”
24 is used for glacial periods usually correlated with even-numbered MISs. The definition of
25 “interglacial” is complex (e.g. Past Interglacials Working Group of PAGES, 2016 and
26 references therein) and it is important to note that the term “warm stage” (e.g. MIS 5, 7) is not
27 synonymous with the term “interglacial”, which usually corresponds to a much shorter
28 interval of time (e.g. Railsback et al., 2015; Past Interglacials Working Group of PAGES,
29 2016).

30 We use the term “transition” instead of “termination” for the passage between glacial and
31 interglacial periods, as suggested by Kukla et al. (2002), as the definition of “termination” is
32 defined by the benthic marine isotope records (e.g. Broecker and van Donk, 1970). Govin et

1 al. (2015) suggested to use the term “Penultimate deglaciation” to refer to the climatic
2 transition occurring between full MIS 6 glacial and MIS 5e interglacial conditions, where the
3 terms “transition” and “deglaciation” could be used interchangeably and also for older
4 “transitions” before MIS 6.

5 4. Results

6 The TOC content of the soil samples ranges from 1.4 to 12.3 % (mean 5.5 %) and N contents
7 from 0.1 to 1.2 % (mean 0.4 %). The TOC/TN ratio of the topsoil samples has an average of
8 16.8 ± 4.7 , ranging from 11.7 to 27.2 (Table 1, Fig. 2). $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values range from -22.8 ‰ to
9 -25.5 ‰ . These values are similar to topsoils dominated by C3 vegetation in the
10 Mediterranean region (e.g., Hartman and Danin, 2010; Prendergast et al., 2017).

11 Figure 3 shows $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data from the core alongside TOC, TIC, TOC/TS, BSi and TOC/TN.
12 Through the core $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ range from -26 ‰ to -34 ‰ . In general, sediments from colder
13 stages (MIS 12, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2) are characterized by higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values, ranging from -25.7
14 to -29.4 ‰ , with an average of $-27.1 \pm 1.0 \text{ ‰}$. These intervals contain lower TIC, TOC and
15 BSi, and show very low TOC/TN (<6) and TOC/TS (<20) (Francke et al., 2016). They also
16 correspond to silty clayey, massive and mottled hemipelagic sediment (lithotype 3 of Francke
17 et al. (2016)). The $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ average value calculated for the warmer stages ($-28.7 \pm 1.4 \text{ ‰}$) is
18 slightly lower than the average value for the glacial periods ($-27.1 \pm 1.0 \text{ ‰}$) and warmer
19 stages generally show more millennial-scale variability compared to glacial phases. In
20 particular, MIS 9 and 7 have more variable $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ from -31.9 to -27.0 ‰ and from -32.6 to
21 -26.5 ‰ , respectively. In contrast, MIS 13, MIS 5 and the Holocene have higher mean
22 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ in comparison with the others warmer periods (-28.1 ± 1.0 , -28.1 ± 0.9 , and -27.2 ± 0.9
23 ‰ , respectively). Warmer stages also have higher TIC, TOC, and BSi contents, and higher
24 TOC/TN and TOC/TS (Francke et al., 2016). These sediments correspond to hemipelagic
25 massive or mottled calcareous-silty-clay or slightly calcareous-silty-clay (lithotype 1 and 2 of
26 Francke et al., 2016).

27 The $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ data is negatively correlated with TOC, TOC/TN, and TIC (Table 2, Fig. 2).
28 When considering the intervals characterised by high TIC contents, which correspond mostly
29 to warmer stages, and where calcite is thought to be the main mineral almost exclusively of
30 endogenic origin (Francke et al., 2016; Lacey et al., 2014, 2016), $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ show a
31 positive correlation (Fig. 4). Colder periods are often marked by very low or no TIC (Francke

1 et al., 2016), and sometimes the occurrence of small amounts of diagenetic siderite (Lacey et
2 al., 2016).

3

4 5. Discussion

5 *5.1 Origin of organic matter in the lake*

6 Organic matter within lake sediments can have different origins in response to changes in
7 aquatic primary production, input from catchment vegetation, and the amount of particulate
8 and dissolved material transferred to the lake. In addition, organic matter can also be subject
9 to differential degradation and dilution effects resulting from different abundances of
10 inorganic compounds (Meyers and Terranes, 2001). Hence, the $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ of the organic matter
11 in lake sediment may reflect a variety of environmental factors (e.g. Meyer and Ishiwatari,
12 1994).

13 Biomarkers in the more littoral cores from Lake Ohrid (Holtvoeth et al., 2016, 2017), show
14 the presence of organic matter that originated from the terrestrial environment (specifically,
15 pollen, litter and soils). However, most of the DEEP record shows TOC/TN ratios <10 ,
16 suggesting that the majority of organic matter is most likely aquatic in origin (e.g. Meyer and
17 Ishiwatari, 1994). Only intervals within some of the warm stages show values >10 (in
18 particular the interglacials MIS 5e and MIS11c, Fig. 3). TOC/TN > 10 could suggest an
19 increased contribution of terrestrial organic matter. An increase in terrestrial organic matter
20 input during the warmer phases could be the result of increased runoff and vegetation cover,
21 as indicated by the pollen record (Sadori et al., 2016, Fig. 3). However, Francke et al. (2016)
22 consider a high contribution of allochthonous organic matter to the DEEP site to be unlikely
23 and suggested that higher TOC/TN could be the result of early diagenetic selective loss of N
24 (Cohen, 2003). This concurs with the results of Rock-Eval pyrolysis analyses from the nearby
25 LINI site Holocene record, which is thought to contain very low amounts of terrestrial
26 material (Lacey et al., 2015). Proxies for clastic input (e.g. the amount of K, Fig. 3)
27 substantially decrease during warmer phases (Francke et al., 2016), which might imply
28 overall less allogeneic supply to the central part of the lake including eroded terrestrial
29 organic matter. This is also in agreement with modern top soil organic matter, which has both
30 higher TOC/TN and higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values than the DEEP core sediments (Fig. 2). However,
31 it should also be considered that the modern $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values of terrestrial organic matter are not
32 necessarily representative of past conditions. The $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of terrestrial organic matter changes

1 with variations in atmospheric CO₂ concentration and climatic conditions (O'Leary, 1981;
2 Ehleringer et al., 1997; Kohn, 2010; Diefendorf et al., 2010) as well as due to the recent
3 decrease in the $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of atmospheric CO₂ caused by anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions
4 (e.g. Keeling, 1979). Cold periods generally have lower atmospheric CO₂ concentrations
5 (Jouzel et al., 2007), where colder and drier conditions lead to higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of terrestrial plants
6 (Kohn, 2010; Diefendorf et al., 2010).

7 If most of the organic matter from the DEEP core sediment is from aquatic primary
8 producers, changes in $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ should largely depend on changes in the $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of the lacustrine
9 dissolved inorganic carbon pool ($\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$) (e.g. Whittington et al., 1996; Zanchetta et al.,
10 2007a). As shown in Figure 4, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ of the DEEP core sediment show a strong
11 positive correlation ($r = 0.60$) during warmer intervals that contain primarily endogenic
12 calcite, further evidence for the prevalent autochthonous nature of the organic matter.

13 *5.2 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ changes at the glacial-interglacial scale*

14 It is interesting to note that the average value of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ are $+0.42 \pm 0.62$ ‰ and –
15 27.96 ± 1.45 ‰, respectively. In particular, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ indicates that the $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ has been
16 continuously high and reasonably stable over the past 516 ka. This can be related to the
17 significant and relatively constant contribution of waters from karst springs sourced from
18 marine carbonate bedrock which have an average $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ of $+1.1$ ‰ (Leng et al., 2010). It will
19 also be supported by the long residence time of the lake water and a well-mixed upper water
20 column which promote equilibration with atmospheric CO₂ (Leng and Marshall, 2004).
21 However, fluctuations beyond this “baseline” over glacial to interglacial cycles need to be
22 evaluated.

23 As discussed above in Section 5.1, if most of the organic matter originated within the lake, the
24 differences in $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ between colder and warmer periods is mostly dependent on $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$.
25 During glacial periods, restricted formation and/or poor preservation of endogenic calcite in
26 the DEEP core prevents the measurement of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$, but in this absence, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ should be a
27 good first-order proxy for long-term changes in lake $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$. $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ is negatively correlated
28 with TIC and TOC (Table 2), which are good indicators of primary productivity in the lake
29 (Francke et al., 2016), and negatively correlated with Arboreal Pollen percentage (AP%, Fig.
30 5), which is a good indicator of wet/dry and cold/warm conditions (Sadori et al., 2016). This
31 suggests that $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ (and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$) is dependent on glacial to interglacial conditions, forced
32 fundamentally by climatic factors. Decreasing $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ values are often derived from CO₂

1 sourced from the oxidation of organic matter, where two main processes can control $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$.
2 One is the external input of oxidized organic matter from either increasing the rate of
3 productivity and/or quantity of CO_2 leaching from catchment soils (Diefendorf et al., 2008;
4 Lézine et al., 2010; Lacey et al., 2015). The amount of soil CO_2 derived by root and microbial
5 respirations is largely influenced by local vegetation typology and climate, with higher CO_2
6 production is related to wetter and warmer conditions (e.g. Raich and Schlesinger, 1992).
7 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ in rivers and springs is also mediated by the weathering of different lithologies,
8 biological activity, and mineral precipitation (e.g. Yang et al., 1996; Karim and Veizer, 2000;
9 Kanduč et al., 2007), which can change over seasonal to longer- (i.e. glacial to interglacial)
10 time scales. Despite these complications, it is reasonable to expect that the amount of soil-
11 derived CO_2 will increase during periods of wetter and warmer climatic conditions. Higher
12 temperatures and precipitation during these intervals would have supported the expansion of
13 forests in the catchment leading to greater soil productivity and CO_2 formation in soils, as
14 well as increasing the subsequent leaching of this CO_2 by rivers, groundwaters and springs to
15 the lacustrine system. Conversely, soil-derived CO_2 will decrease during periods of colder and
16 drier conditions where vegetation is less developed, soil biological activity is reduced and
17 drier conditions would have reduced CO_2 leaching (e.g. Zanchetta et al., 2007a; Lézine et al.,
18 2010; Regattieri et al., 2015). A significant correlation between AP% and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ suggests
19 that soil CO_2 delivered to the lacustrine system is an important mechanism to drive $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$,
20 considering the significant contribution of karst springs to the lake's water budget.

21 A second source of ^{13}C -depleted DIC is the internal recycling of organic matter in the water-
22 column and bottom sediments. Oxidation of organic matter produces CO_2 with $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values
23 close to those of the original organic matter, which is ^{12}C -enriched during photosynthesis
24 (Deines, 1980). Therefore, well-ventilated lakes may recycle organic matter rapidly and
25 efficiently, producing lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ and subsequently lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$, owing to successive
26 steps of oxidation and photosynthesis. Although partial stratification of the water column
27 takes place (by temperature above 150 m depth and by salinity below 150 m) due to
28 holomictic conditions, bottom waters are never depleted in oxygen due to the lake being
29 oligotrophic. Therefore, organic matter recycling is probably efficient in the upper part of the
30 water column in both glacials and interglacials. Moreover, enhanced primary productivity
31 during warmer periods, as indicated by higher TIC and TOC, would have increased the
32 amount of ^{12}C -enriched CO_2 from the oxidation of organic matter available to be recycled by
33 photosynthetic organisms, thereby driving lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$. In addition, very low $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ of

1 less than -32‰ occur at ca. 220 ka (MIS7c), 243 ka (MIS7e), 288 ka (MIS9a) and 313 ka
2 (MIS9c), which may suggest periods of enhanced organic matter recycling and/or methane
3 oxidation. Methane oxidation produces strongly ^{13}C -depleted CO_2 (e.g. Whiticar et al., 1986),
4 and methanogenesis could have been important during periods of higher TOC accumulation
5 promoting anoxic conditions and stratification. However, sedimentological observations
6 suggest complete anoxia at the bottom of the lake has not taken place (in agreement with
7 present day oxygen concentration; Matzinger 2006a), possibly suggesting that this mechanism
8 is a less likely the driver of very low $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$.

9 Overall, lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values during warmer periods at DEEP site could be related to the
10 release of a higher amount of soil CO_2 , associated with an increase in soil respiration and/or to
11 an increased flux of dissolved soil CO_2 to the lake (both related to warmer and wetter
12 conditions). This would be consistently accompanied by higher primary productivity in the
13 lake (as suggested by higher TIC, TOC and BSi, Francke et al. (2016), Fig. 3) and increased
14 organic matter recycling, which in turn drives lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$, and provides a mechanism to
15 explain the lowest $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values. The increased storage of ^{13}C -depleted organic matter in the
16 lake sediment (i.e. higher TOC) during warmer periods does not affect the total isotope
17 budget of the DIC and drive higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$, suggesting that the DIC pool is fully replenished
18 by external soil-derived CO_2 , recycled, and atmospheric CO_2 .

19 On the contrary, higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values during glacial periods may be related to reduced soil
20 CO_2 production in forest soils. Colder conditions promote the development of ecosystems
21 characterised by more open and grass vegetation (Sadori et al., 2016), which have soils
22 characterised by lower CO_2 soil respiration rates (Brook et al., 1983; Raich and Schlesinger,
23 1992). Furthermore, drier conditions typically associated with glacial phases can also reduce
24 soil CO_2 production (Harper et al., 2005). Within these drier conditions, there would also be a
25 change between C3 and C4 vegetation (Boretto et al., 2017) with the latter having
26 significantly higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}$ values (Deines, 1980). For instance, this could be due to the increase
27 of grass and sedge, which include species that utilise the C4 photosynthetic pathway (in
28 particular *Amaranthaceae*; e.g. Ehleringer et al., 1997). This is also supported by a strong
29 decrease in AP% and increases in herbs (non arboreal pollen, NAP) during glacial times, as
30 evident in the pollen record of the DEEP core (Fig. 3, Sadori et al., 2016). A reduction in
31 external soil CO_2 -production and ^{12}C DIC-replenishment then increases the importance of
32 equilibration with the atmospheric CO_2 in producing higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ values (Leng and

1 Marshall, 2004). All these processes can account for higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ during glacials. In
2 addition, there is an internal mechanism for increasing $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ related to enhanced aquatic
3 primary productivity, which leads to a ^{13}C -enrichment in the DIC due to preferential uptake of
4 ^{12}C by phytoplankton during photosynthesis (Hollander and McKenzie, 1991; Meyers, 1994;
5 Bade et al., 2004). If photosynthetic activity is associated with a higher rate of organic matter
6 burial and a reduced rate of soil CO_2 replenishment to the lake, strong ^{13}C -enrichment of
7 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ may also occur (Zanchetta et al., 2007a). Although higher $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ could be related to
8 enhanced aquatic primary productivity (e.g. Hollander and McKenzie, 1991; Meyers, 1994;
9 Bade et al., 2004) glacial intervals have low TOC, TIC and BSi accumulation (Francke et al.,
10 2016; Figure 3), suggesting overall low productivity.

11 Overall, periods of particularly low $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ can be related to the “right” combination of
12 temperature, and the amount and seasonal distribution of precipitation allowing greater soil
13 CO_2 production along with environmental conditions that promote CO_2 leaching and delivery
14 to the lake at times of increased aquatic primary production. This combination does not
15 necessarily correspond uniquely to interglacials characterised by higher temperature. For
16 instance, periods of drought during the main algal bloom, which usually occurs between late
17 spring to early autumn (Lacey et al., 2016), may reduce the soil CO_2 flux into the lake
18 alongside additional increased evaporation favouring CO_2 -outgassing and fractionation
19 (Talbot, 1990) and progressive ^{13}C -enrichment due to within-lake photosynthesis. This may
20 be the case during MIS 5e, which does not have a particularly prominent minima in the
21 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ record (Fig. 3, 6) and for which regional data suggest a climate regime characterised
22 by high seasonality with an extended period of summer drought (Milner et al., 2012; Sinopoli
23 et al., 2018). Conversely, for MIS 9a, which has a prominent $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ minima, regional high-
24 resolution (Fig. 3, 6) pollen data suggest wetter and cooler conditions throughout the year
25 (Fletcher et al., 2013), whereas MIS 9e, again with a prominent minima in $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ (Fig. 3, 6),
26 also appears to be marked by very wet conditions from speleothem data from the Ohrid
27 catchment (Regattieri et al., 2018).

28 *5.3 Glacial to interglacial transitions*

29 Looking in detail at the correlation between $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and the other lake proxies, some
30 differences emerge during glacial-interglacial transitions (Fig. 6). Although part of these
31 differences may be amplified by the variable resolution of the proxies, and by the fact that
32 TIC and TOC are probably affected by dissolution/degradation during glacial periods, the

1 overall differences appear consistent. When changes in $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ are in phase with other proxy
2 records this may suggest a complacent behaviour of the different parts of the system
3 previously described. In case of glacial/interglacial transitions where $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ lags AP % by
4 several thousand years, it may indicate a late response of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ to the warming and wetting
5 of the climate. For instance, an abrupt lowering of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ occurs at ca. 430 ka, during the
6 MIS 12-MIS 11 transition. This is in phase with increased AP %, however TIC and TOC start
7 to increase ca. 2000-5000 years later. The transition between MIS 10 and MIS 9 appears less
8 sharp than MIS 12-MIS 11, and the precise timing of the transition is hard to define, even if
9 the highest rate of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ lowering seems to lag AP % by ca. 2000 years (taking into account
10 record resolution). The transition between MIS 8 and MIS 7e shows a rapid decrease of
11 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ values at ca. 245 ka, lagging behind the increase of AP % by ca. 1500 years (at the
12 limit of our records resolution), with TIC and TOC in phase with the change observed in
13 $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$. The transition between MIS 7d and MIS 7c is complex, but the decrease in $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$
14 and the increase in AP %, TIC and TOC appear closely in phase. During the MIS 6-MIS 5e
15 transition, AP % shows a sharp increase at ca. 130 ka, while $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ starts to decrease around
16 3000 years later, but both reach “interglacial” values at ca. 127 ka.

17 As discussed previously, pollen analyses on the sediments of the DEEP site sequence revealed
18 that high tree pollen percentages are broadly associated with warmer and wetter climate
19 conditions on the Balkan Peninsula (Sadori et al., 2016). Changes in AP% is explained mainly
20 by altitudinal upward migrations of the tree line in response to climate warming and increased
21 rainfall. This implies that forests can expand rapidly at lower altitudes (also in terms of forest
22 density) but they can take additional time to expand to higher altitudes in areas that
23 experienced strong soil erosion linked to glacial conditions. Indeed, although still poorly
24 studied, the Ohrid catchment appears to have been partially covered by glaciers in the past
25 (Ribolini et al., 2011, 2018; Gromig et al., 2018), and the severity and extent of these
26 glaciations probably had an effect on soil and vegetation recovery in the mountainous areas
27 surrounding the lake, which have an important role in karst recharge. This may indicate that,
28 at the catchment scale, soil development and CO_2 delivery to the lacustrine system is
29 somewhat delayed compared to the regional climatic shift toward warmer/wetter conditions
30 during glacial-interglacial transitions, as indicated by pollen (Holtvoeth et al., 2017), due to
31 the slower soil recovery at higher altitude. Based on differences in the timing of response of
32 oxygen and carbon isotopes, it has already been suggested that in some mountain areas of the
33 Mediterranean soil development and soil- CO_2 delivery to karst aquifers is delayed compared

1 to climate amelioration at glacial-interglacial transitions (Zanchetta et al., 2007b; Regattieri et
2 al., 2014; Bajo et al., 2017). More specifically, the progressive development of soils after the
3 sudden increase in precipitation has also been inferred from a speleothem record from the
4 Ohrid catchment following the glacial maximum of MIS 8 (Regattieri et al., 2018). Thus, a
5 delayed recovery of soil, meaning a delayed supply of soil CO₂ to aquifers, appears likely for
6 some glacial/interglacial transitions at Ohrid, especially considering that the lake is largely
7 fed by karst springs with an important recharge component sourced from high altitude. The
8 degree of delay probably depends on a variety of factors, for example the intensity of the
9 previous glacial period (e.g. presence of glaciers), which may affect the rock substratum and
10 its alteration, influencing soil and vegetation development during the subsequent interglacial
11 or warm period. Some of these aspects could be clarified through higher resolution records of
12 single glacial to interglacial transitions and using soil biomarkers, as recently reported for a
13 littoral core of lake Ohrid, which has showed complex patterns of soil and vegetation
14 development and erosion during the last transition and the MIS5 (Holtvoeth et al., 2017).

15 6. Conclusions

16 Sediments stored in Lake Ohrid provide a continuous archive of long-term climate change
17 and catchment landscape evolution. The comparison of $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ with other proxies (TIC,
18 TOC, TOC/TN, TOC/TS, K, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ and AP %) indicates that most of the organic matter in
19 the sediments originates from aquatic primary production. On longer time scales, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$
20 shows relatively modest variability indicating that the $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$ signal is probably stabilised by
21 the long residence time of the lake and well mixed upper water column, promoting
22 equilibration with atmospheric CO₂, and karst recharge from spring waters with a high
23 component of dissolved carbonate bedrock. At the orbital scale, $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ variability is related
24 to changes in the quantity and supply of soil CO₂, as well as the amount of primary
25 productivity and recycling of organic matter, providing a complex interplay between
26 catchment-scale terrestrial and lacustrine evolution. Although warmer periods are generally
27 characterised by a change to lower $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$, there is not a clear correlation between $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$
28 values and periods traditionally associated with peak interglacial conditions (e.g. MIS 5e,
29 MIS 11). This may depend on several factors, for example the amount and seasonal
30 distribution of precipitation, which may regulate the seasonal amount of soil CO₂ produced
31 and the rate of CO₂ leaching toward the lake, and/or different rates of mixing of the upper
32 water column, which influence organic matter recycling efficiency.

1 Based on the different phase relationships between $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and AP% for some glacial to
2 interglacial transitions, a time lag may be present for soil recovery following stronger glacial
3 periods compared to regional climate trends toward wetter and warmer conditions. This delay
4 is probably related to the slow process of soil formation on bedrock (Holtvoeth et al., 2017)
5 after local glaciation in the mountains surrounding Lake Ohrid, as shown for other
6 mountainous areas in the Mediterranean and specifically supported by speleothem data for the
7 end of the MIS 8 glacial maximum in the Ohrid catchment (Regattieri et al., 2018).

8

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1 Figure Captions

2

3 Figure 1. - a) Location Map of Lake Ohrid and soil sample positions; b) Detail of the Ohrid
4 catchment.

5

6 Figure 2 - A) TOC/TN vs TOC % for the organic matter in the soil samples and lacustrine
7 organic matter; B) TOC/TN vs $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ for the organic matter in the soil samples and
8 lacustrine organic matter; C) TOC vs $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ for the organic matter in the soil samples and
9 lacustrine organic matter; D) $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ vs TIC for the organic matter in the soil samples and
10 lacustrine organic matter. TOC/TN and TOC for lacustrine sediments from Francke et al.,
11 2016.

12

13 Figure 3 - Proxy records discussed in the text. From the bottom to the top: A) $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ of
14 lacustrine sediments (this works), blue color data from the LINI core (Lacey et al., 2015); B)
15 Total Organic Carbon % (TOC); C) Total Inorganic Carbon % (TIC); D) TOC/TN; E)
16 Potassium (K) XRF core scanner data; F) Biogenic Silica (BSi %); G) Arboreal Pollen record
17 (AP%) and Non Arboreal Pollen (NAP%); H) LR4 $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ stack (Lisiecki, L. E., Raymo, M. E.,
18 2005). B, C, D, E and F from Francke et al., 2016, and G from Sadori et al. (2016).

19

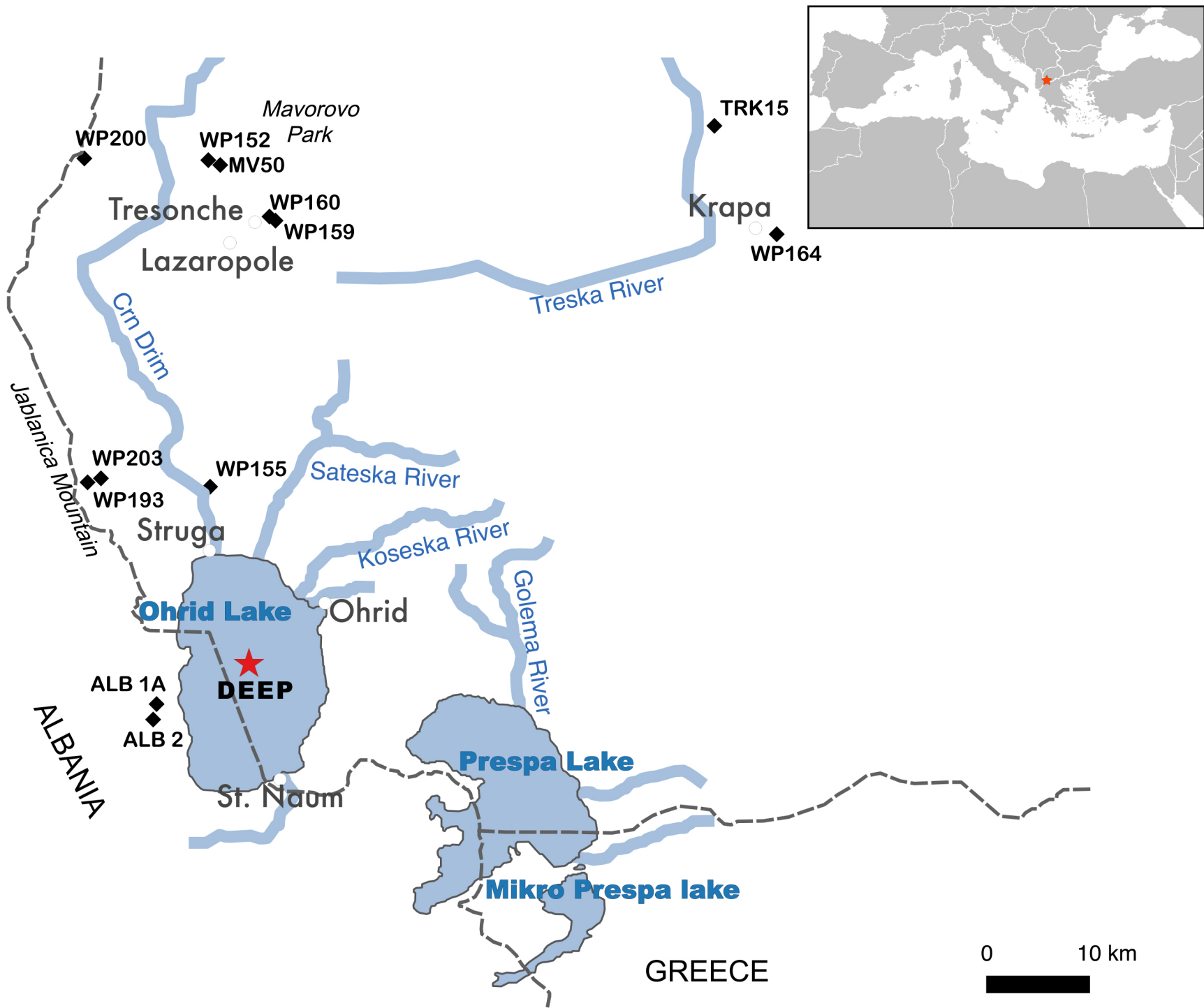
20 Figure 4 - $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ vs $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$. $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ and $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ show high correlation suggesting they are
21 mostly controlled by $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{DIC}}$. $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TIC}}$ data after Lacey et al. (2016).

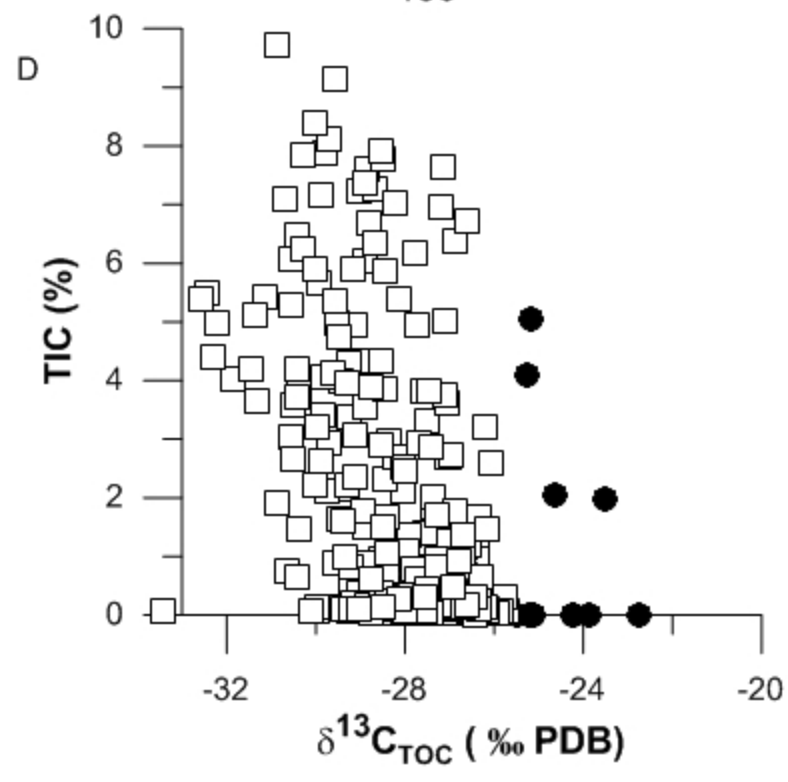
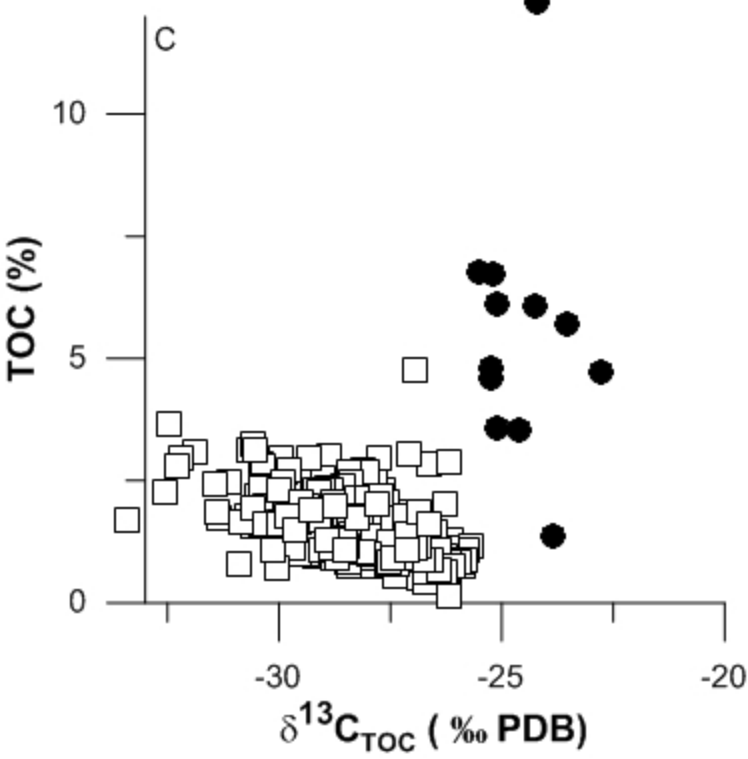
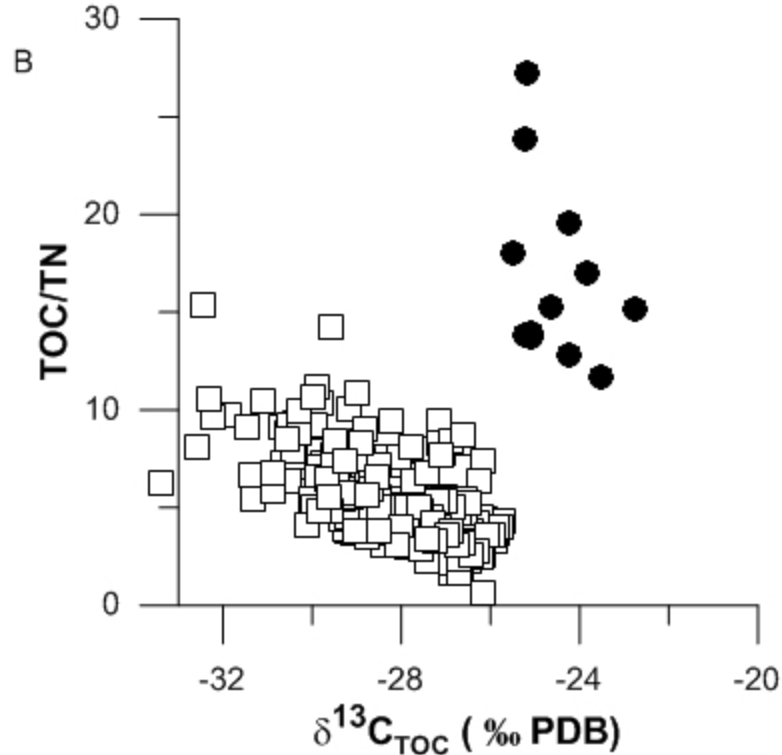
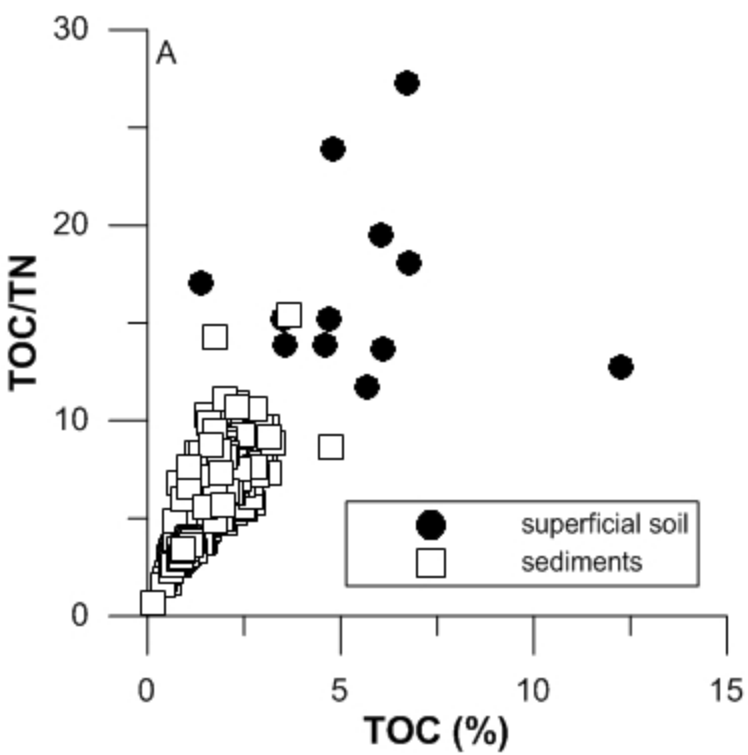
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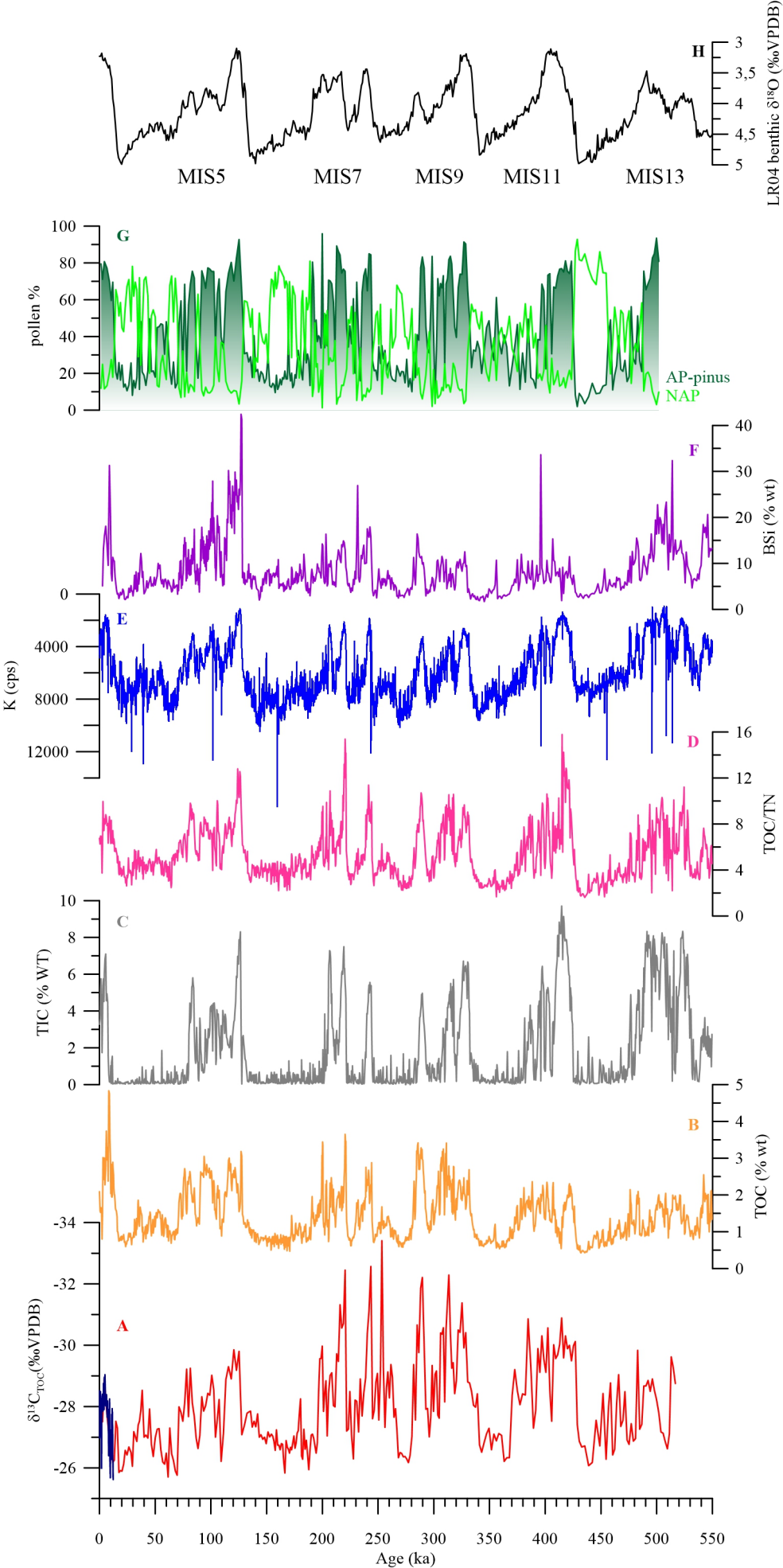
23 Figure 5 - $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ vs AP% (AP% minus Pinus spp. after Sadori et al., 2016).

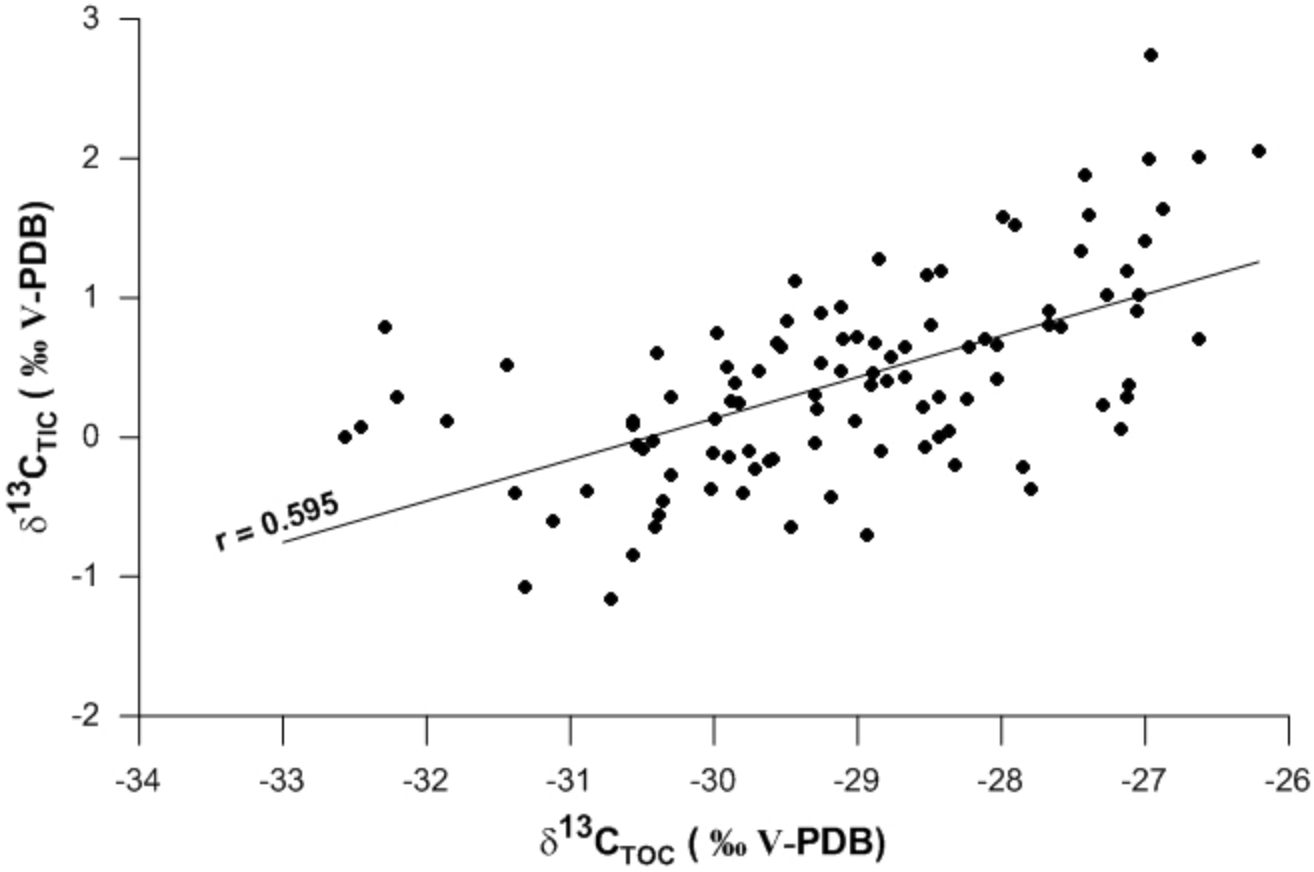
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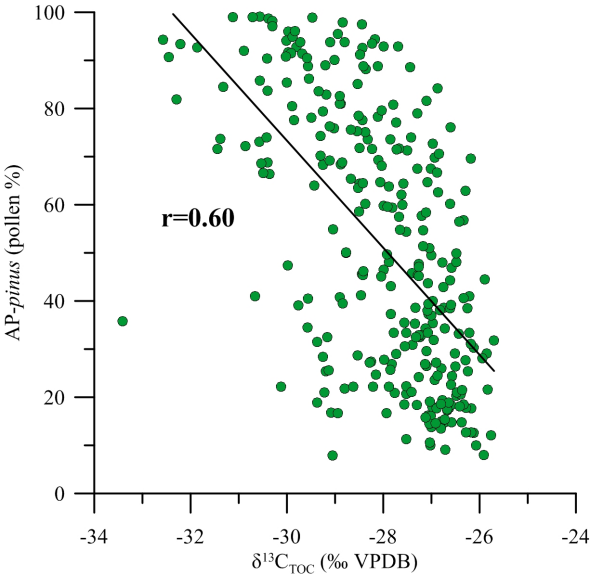
25 Figure 6 - Details of Ohrid proxies for several interglacial periods (from left bottom panel
26 MIS5-MIS9-MIS11-MIS7); a) $\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ (red, this study); b) TOC (yellow) and c) TIC, (grey)
27 (Francke et al., 2016) ; d) Potassium (K) record (Francke et al., 2016; e) Arboreal pollen-pinus
28 (from Sadori et al., 2016) (letters on MIS5 panel apply also for other interglacial).











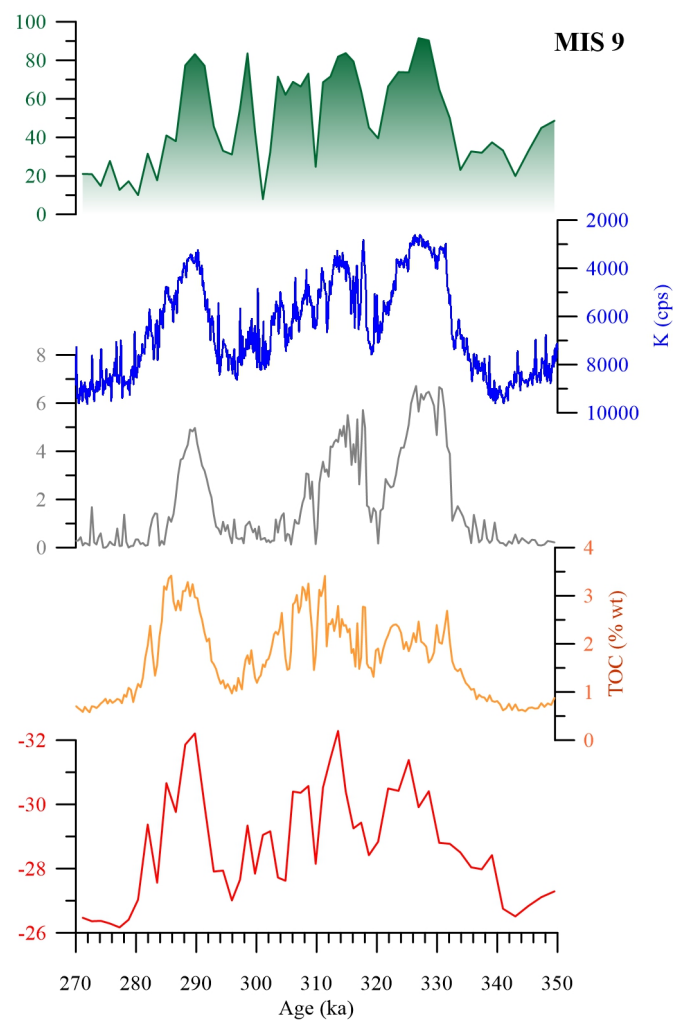
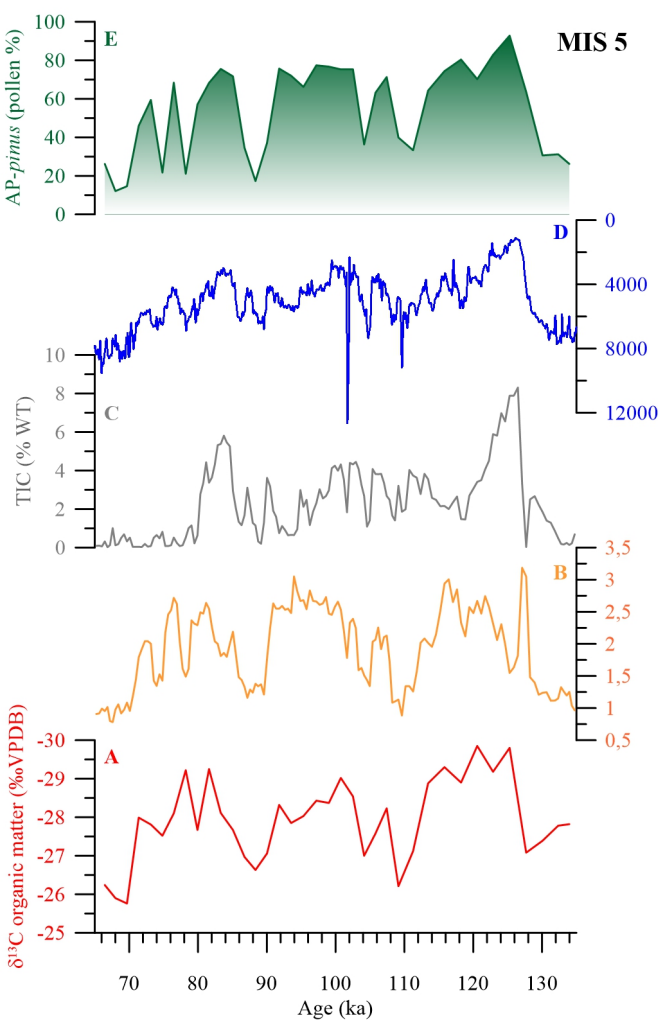
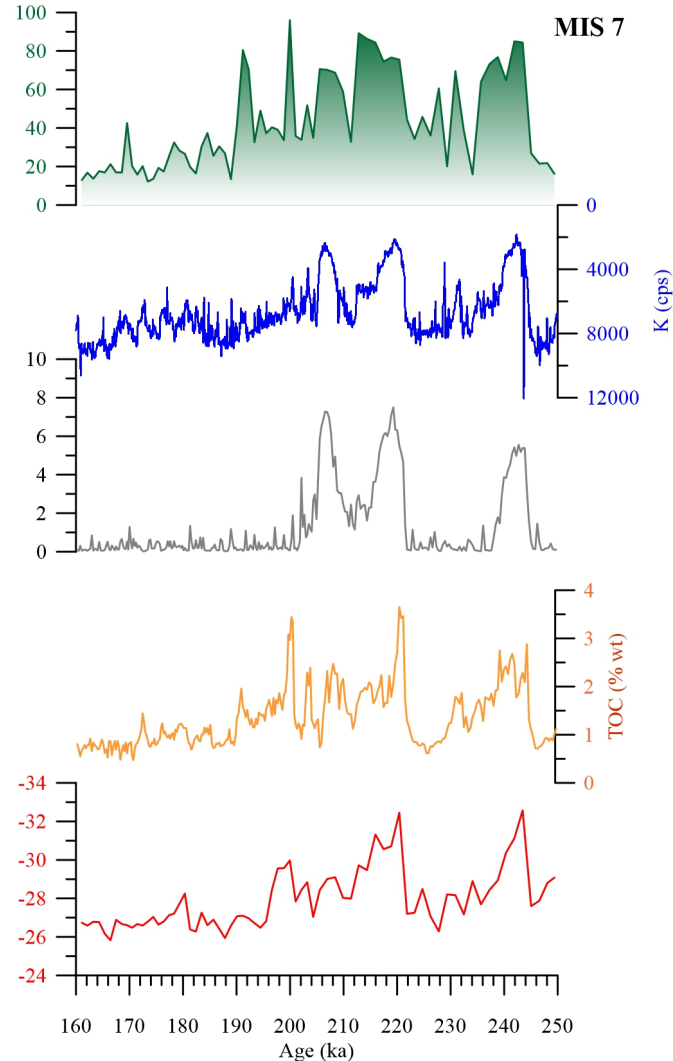
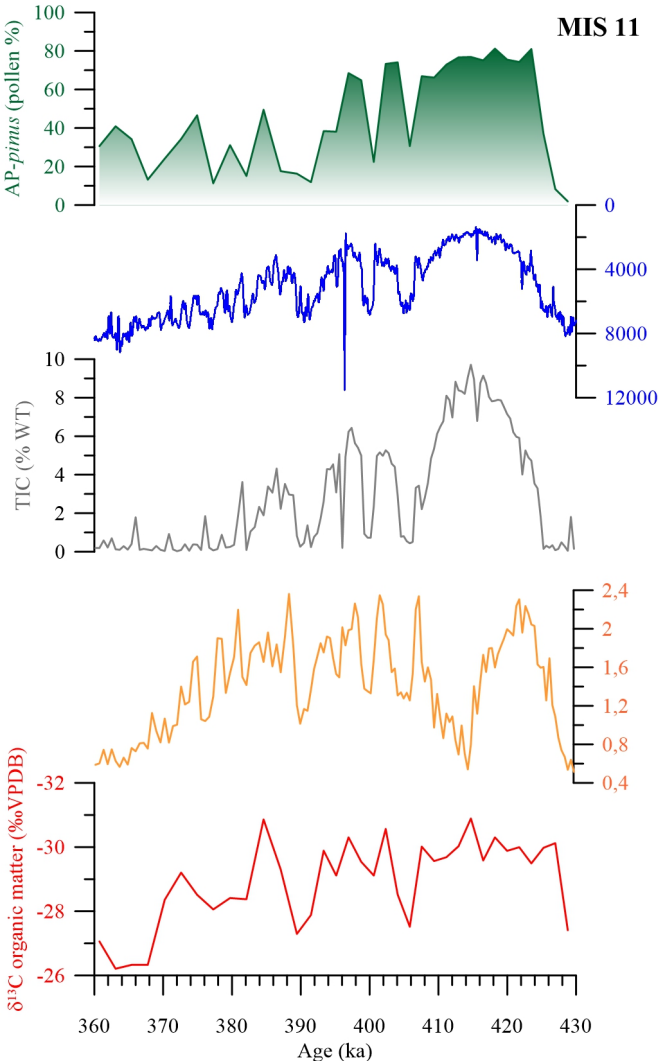


Table 2. Soil samples location, ecosystem type and results of C-isotope composition, TIC, TOC, TN and TOC/TN molar ratio.

Sample	Coordinates	Location	Ecosystem type	$\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$ (‰ PDB)	TN %	TIC %	TOC %	TOC/TN
WP152	41°37'56.16" N 20°40'5.40" E	soil on Mavrovo Mountain	grassland	-24.2	1.2	< 0.5	12.3	12.8
WP155	41°15'15.84" N 20°40'12.96" E	soil under unconsolidated glacial debris on Mavorovo Mountain	grassland	-23.5	0.6	2.0	5.7	11.7
MV50	41°37'35.9" N 20°40'55.1" E	soil on Mavrovo Mountain	grassland	-25.1	0.6	< 0.5	6.1	13.7
WP200	41°38'3.33" N 20°31'29.10" E	soil on Jablanica Mountain	grassland	-25.5	0.5	< 0.5	6.7	18.0
WP193	41°15'34.03" N 20°31'42.54" E	soil on Jablanica Mountain	grassland	-25.2	0.3	< 0.5	4.8	23.9
WP203	41°15'50.58" N 20°32'38.34" E	soil on Jablanica Mountain	forest	-24.3	0.4	< 0.5	6.1	19.5
TRK15	41°40'19.1" N 21°15'13.1" E	detritic soil on Treska river valley	trees and shrubs	-25.2	0.3	5.0	6.7	27.2
WP159	41°33'44.1" N 20°44'45.36" E	soil on Mountain near Tresonche(N-E Lazaropole)	forest	-25.3	0.4	4.1	4.6	13.9
WP160	41°34'1.02" N 20°44'20.10" E	soil on Mountain near Tresonche(N-E Lazaropole)	forest	-24.6	0.3	2.0	3.5	15.2
WP164	41°32'47.64" N 21°19'32.52" E	soil near Krapa	grassland	-22.8	0.4	< 0.5	4.7	15.2
ALB 1A	41°00'10.2" N 20°36'30.0" E	soil on Albanian Mountain ultramafic rocks (W-Ohrid)	grassland	-23.9	0.1	< 0.5	1.4	17.0
ALB 2	40°59'05.9" N 20°36'15.7" E	soil on Albanian Mountain ultramafic rocks (W-Ohrid)	grassland	-25.1	0.3	< 0.5	3.6	13.9

Table 1. Correlation coefficients (r; Pearson linear correlation coefficient) between variables measured on Lake Ohrid sediments (n=315). All the correlations are significant at the 0.05 level.

	$\delta^{13}\text{C}_{\text{TOC}}$	TIC	TOC	TOC/N
TOC/TS	- 0.51	0.40	0.82	0.72
TOC/N	- 0.65	0.73	0.79	
TOC	- 0.59	0.36		
TIC	-0.53			

