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In Memoriam Sándor Kovács

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On September 23, 2010 Sándor Kovács unexpectedly left us. He was an outstanding personality of Hungarian geology, the initiator of several international co-operations and projects and who maintained close contact with a great number of colleagues all over the world. He was an active member of the Hungarian Geological Society and the leader of the Branch of General Geology for a long time.

He was born in Tamási, a village in the central part of Transdanubia. After elementary school he attended the József Szabó Geological High School in Budapest, where he obtained his first knowledge of earth sciences as well as an impetus for his entire life: the appreciation of rocks and fossils.

In 1970 he continued his studies at the University of Szeged and graduated as a geologist and geographer. There he met Professor Kálmán Balogh, head of the Geological and Paleontological Department and became his favorite student. From then on their careers were joined. In 1975, after obtaining his diploma, he became an assistant at the department under Professor Balogh. In addition to teaching he carried out his thesis work on the fossil-rich Triassic formations of the Aggtelek Hills, defending his dissertation, of an internationally outstanding level, in 1977. In the meantime he became proficient in conodont investigation, and rapidly became an internationally acknowledged expert in this field.



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In 1977 Professor Balogh retired and returned to the Hungarian Geological Institute to assist in the geologic mapping project of Northern Hungary, which was initiated at that time. Sándor Kovács followed him and became a Fellow of the Geological Institute. Between 1978 and 87 he played a crucial role in the study of the Triassic of the Aggtelek and Rudabánya Hills, as well as of the Paleozoic formations of the Uppony and Szendrő Hills. Based on conodont investigation he elaborated a new stratigraphic model for the Paleozoic of Northern Hungary. In addition to this work he wrote a particularly important paper on the problematic issue of Tisia, including its plate tectonic interpretation, and proposed the possibility of long-distance displacement of certain elements of the basement of the Pannonian Basin. He was very active in international scientific communication in this period of his life. He was a long-time collaborator of the Triassic Subcommittee of the International Stratigraphic Commission, worked as secretary of the Triassic Conodont Working Group, and undertook tasks in several projects of the International Correlation Program.

In 1987, by invitation of Professor József Fülöp, he became a member of the staff of the Geological Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at Eötvös Loránd University. At that time work on the compilation of the Paleozoic volumes of Geology of Hungary were already at an advanced stage, and his knowledge and tireless activity were indispensable. Accordingly he concentrated his efforts on Paleozoic conodont stratigraphy. However, at the same time he published highly regarded papers on the indicator role of conodonts in metamorphosed sediments, on the submarine slope sediments in Northern Hungary, as well as on the evaluation of the oceanic remnants in the entire Carpathian-Pannonian region. In the 1990s he became acquainted with the terrane concept and he was one of the first to call attention to the applicability of this concept for the geodynamic interpretation of the heterogeneous basement of the Pannonian Basin. Until the end, proving this thesis remained for him the most important scientific problem. This effort led him to extend his relationships to colleagues working in central and southern Europe, the organization of comparative studies for the Alpine, Carpathian, Dinaridic and Hellenidic regions and to initiate the compilation of the Circum-Pannonian terrane map series.

As far as comparative studies are concerned, the correlation of the Paleozoic of the Szendrő and Uppony Hills of North Hungary with that of the Carnic Alps, Southern Alps and Graz Basin provided essential results, which became fundamental elements of the Paleozoic terrane maps and publications dealing with this topic. Comparison of the Paleozoic to Triassic sequences of the Bükk Mts. of North Hungary with some units in the Dinarides was also of outstanding importance. In the last decade he expended enormous energy into the investigation of the displaced remnants of the Neotethys Ocean occurring in North Hungary, comparing them to the ophiolite mélange zones exposed over large areas in the Dinarides and Hellenides. Results of these studies were incorporated into several papers and in the Mesozoic sheets of the terrane maps.

In addition to research, teaching was also a major aspect of Sándor Kovács's career. He already participated in the education of students at Szeged University. Since 1987 he was continuously involved in the education of future geologists at Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest. With the students he shared his extensive and deep knowledge of the geology of Hungary and of the Alpine, Carpathian and Dinaridic regions. He assisted talented and diligent young people and involved them in the most exciting topics.

Sándor Kovács's life was inseparable from his work. He took all scientific problems and debates very much to heart. His unexpected death ended his career; he was unable to complete many tasks that he still wished to finalize. Nevertheless, what he achieved, what he gave to the scientific community, is truly of outstanding value, and leaves indelible marks on the geology of Hungary and the surrounding regions. We preserve the memory of his likable and friendly personality.

The present volume is dedicated to the memory of Sándor Kovács. It contains his last works as well as papers by some of his colleagues who cooperated with him in the last period of his life.

The list of publications of Sándor Kovács is presented in the periodical of the Hungarian Geological Society, *Földtani Közlöny* 141/2.