

A BAUXITE GEOLOGICAL MODEL OF TROPICAL OCEANIC ISLAND ARCS

by

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ERRATA

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INVESTIGATIONS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES: METHODS AND APPLICATIONS

Criticism and suggestions made by

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INTRODUCTION

It has become a general practice in the literature devoted to bauxite geology that the occurrences of bauxite are, primarily and almost exclusively, grouped in terms of genetic principles. In spite of the emphasis almost all authors of bauxite geological syntheses laid during the past one decade and a half on the need for classifying them according to structural position (G. I. BUSHINSKIY 1971, 1975, I. VALETON 1972, V. M. MIKHAILOV et al. 1973, GY. BÁRDOSSY 1977, 1982, G. R. KIRPAI 1980, GY. BÁRDOSSY 1981), such an attempt has been made by few as yet. In the wake of A. V. PEYVE (1947), in the Soviet literature, the classification of bauxite deposits based on their belonging to platform and geosynclinal zones has found general acceptance. GY. BÁRDOSSY (1973, 1979, 1981, 1982) was the first to introduce the global tectonic models that had appeared in the late 1960's and that had been used more and more widely ever since, and to apply them to bauxite geology at large. It was himself who, in addition to the continental and orogenic zones, singled out island arc-type bauxite deposits as an independent type. In this paper, paying due attention to GY. BÁRDOSSY's work just referred to, I have made an attempt, taking advantage of the example of the bauxite occurrences in the Caribbean, at developing the bauxite geological model of tropical oceanic island arcs.

METHODOLOGICAL FUNDAMENTALS

In working out the model under consideration, I have relied in the first place on published data, in the second, on the observations and experience in Cuba—one of the examples of the Antilles' island arc. The evaluation has been aimed at singling out stages suitable for bauxitization and bauxite accumulation in the history of birth and evolution of oceanic island arcs and at delineating in this context structural-morphologic units that may be regarded as favourable. Considering the general regularities of bauxitization and bauxite accumulation, my task is thus to specify the evolutionary stages and morphostructural units of platform—quasiplatform behaviour.

To achieve this goal, using a part of the extensive methodological literature available, I have developed a model of the birth and development of tropical oceanic islands arcs (Fig. 1) that makes it possible to assess them bauxite geologically. The works I relied on in the modelling had been authored primarily by W. J. LUDWIG et al. (1966), D. E. KARIG (1970, 1972, 1974), A. H. MITCHELL—H. G. READING (1971), V. R. DICKINSON (1973, 1974, 1976), M. S. MARLOW et al. (1977), R. G. COLEMAN—V. P. IRWIN (1974), W. G. ERNST (1974), K. J. HSÜ (1974), A. E. RINGWOOD (1974), I. R. SEELY et al. (1974), D. E. KARIG—G. F. SHARMAN III (1975), G. F. MOORE—D. E. KARIG (1976), D. R. SEELY (1977, 1979), J. S. WATKINS—C. L. DRAKE (1983). In addition, a number of collections dealing with oceanic basins and continental margins (C. A. BURKE—C. L. DRAKE 1974, R. H. DOTT Jr.—R. H. SHAVER 1974, A. E. M. NAIRN—F. G. STEHLI 1974, 1975, M. TALWANI—W. C. PITMAN 1977, National Academy of Sciences, Washington D. C. 1979, J. S. WATKINS et al. 1979, J. S. WATKINS—C. L. DRAKE 1983) and publications devoted to similar subjects (W. HAMILTON 1977, D. J. HALL et al. 1983, B. BIJOU DUVAL et al. 1983, R. S. LU et al. 1983) have been taken into consideration.

With a view to the quoted works alone, the conclusion may be drawn that the major tectonic position of the island arcs, their kinetics—geodynamics, size dimensions, internal morphostructure and petrogenesis, as epitomized by modern and ancient examples, are by and large clear. In spite of this, the interpretation of a good many of the details of the topics just listed is still controversial. Since these questions, in my opinion, are irrelevant or of little relevance from the viewpoint of bauxite geology, they will not be discussed in more detail.

In connection with the island arc development model adopted (Fig. 1), I should like to make the following remarks:

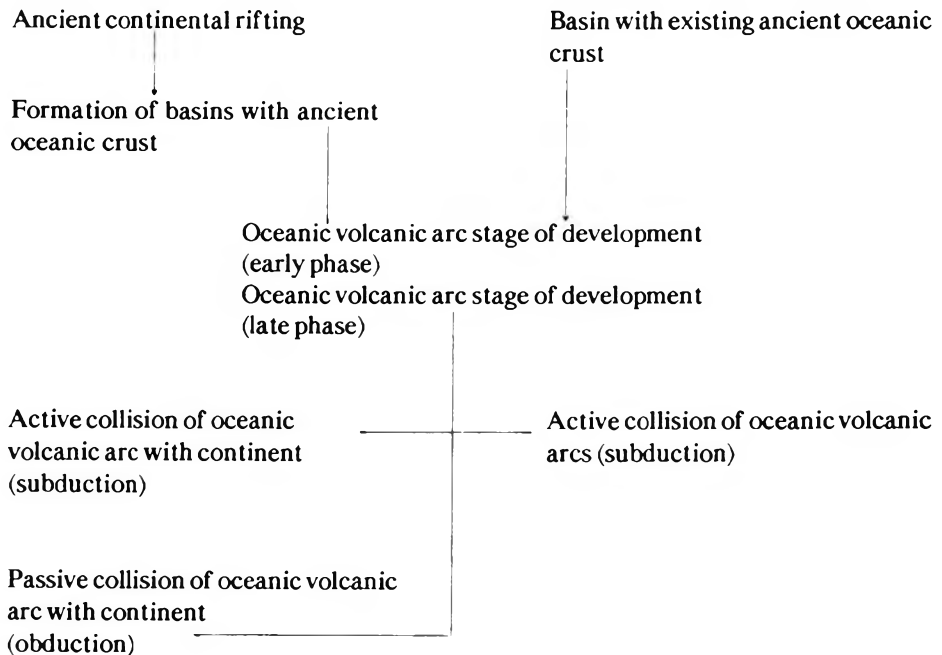
— When the model was being worked out, the assessment of the island arc was not restricted to its confines, but the continental margins were also taken into consideration

— The simplest possible solutions were consciously sought after and the numerous other combinations were left unrepresented. Thus the question of rifting of the oceanic crust, a possibility that may have existed during evolution, has not been dealt with. Changes in the polarity of the subduction of oceanic plates and their consequences have not been examined. The problem of a succession of superimposed island arcs and their possible interaction with active or passive continental margins have not been analyzed

— In my presentation of the evolutionary stages, the nature, type and mechanism of the associated sedimentation and accumulation are not discussed.

— The climatic conditions for bauxitization and bauxite accumulation are regarded, as a working hypothesis, as having been a priori favourable in each evolutionary stage.

Thus the stages in the formation and evolution of island arcs the author has distinguished as typical include:



STAGES OF EVOLUTION AND THEIR BAUXITE GEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As the first landmark in the history leading to the formation of an oceanic island arc, the ancient continental rifting stage (Fig. 1, Profile A₁) is discussed. This process includes the disintegration of the ancient continental platform (craton) with the concomitant progressive attenuation of the normal continental crust. The sedimentary basins of the platform are of continental, transitional or epicontinental facies, while those parts of the platform rising above the base level of erosion are subject to subaerial weathering. In terms of bauxite formation and accumulation, the whole area of the craton may be regarded as favourable. Above cratonic source rocks of proper lithology and morphological setting, in-situ lateritic bauxite may be formed, whereas the edges of the main transitional and epicontinental sedimentary basins of the continental margins may be reckoned with as areas of karstic bauxite formation.

Continental rifting may lead to formation of basins with an ancient oceanic crust (Fig. 1, Profile A₂) with a continental margin consisting of remainders of an earlier platform on either flank and with a zone of continued rifting (this time already belonging to a mid-oceanic ridge) in its central part. Only the continental margins may be regarded as favourable from the viewpoint of bauxite geology, the prerequisites for lateritization and the formation of karstic bauxite here being granted. The oceanic basin and the bauxite prospects of the mid-oceanic ridge in the evolutionary stage under discussion are taken to have been negative.

As the first landmark in the process that led to the formation of the oceanic island arc, an ancient basin with existing oceanic crust is reckoned with from the very outset (Fig. 1, Profile B). The whole area of that basin is taken to have been favourable for the formation and accumulation of bauxite.

The oceanic volcanic arc stage of development (Fig. 1, Profiles C₁, C₂) may be the result of either of the two afore-outlined processes. The morphostructural units of the volcanic arc of the early phase (Profile C₁) are regarded as having been unsuitable for bauxite formation or accumulation both all together and individually, in spite of the fact that the volcanic arc itself in general and the accretion wedge in particular may have got, in form of island or island groups, under subaerial circumstances. All the morphostructural units associated with the late-phase volcanic arc (Profile C₂) are simi-

* In the discussion of the genetic types of bauxites the classification proposed by G. R. KIRPAL' (1980) is adopted

larly rated as having been unfavourable. The bauxite geologically negative rating of the active volcanic arc is explained in the first place by the lack of tectonic stability of the high-perched morphostructural units involved. On the contrary, the continental margins flanking the active volcanic arc on both sides, at a great distance from it, are considered, as already expounded in the foregoing, to have been suitable for bauxitization and bauxite accumulation.

The next discussed landmark in the evolutionary history is the case of active collision of the oceanic volcanic arc with the continent (its subduction) (Fig. 1, Profile D). The old continental platform (craton) and its margin and the so-called "quasiplatform" that evolved within the already passive (extinct) volcanic arc are rated as having been bauxite geologically promising. Both morphostructural units are characterized by a relatively elevated structural position and the relative tectonic stability (quiescence) needed for bauxitization and bauxite accumulation. The craton and its margin have essentially the same bauxite geological characteristics as are typical of Profile A₂. On source rocks corresponding in lithology to the "quasiplatform" area (volcanics and intrusives of the passive arc and ophiolites of the passive accretion wedge), lateritic bauxite may have been formed, whereas on the margin of the transitional-epicontinental sedimentary basin the formation of karstic bauxites may be reckoned with. The remaining morphostructural units of the evolutionary stage under discussion are rated as being bauxite geologically unfavourable.

The passive collision (obduction) of an oceanic volcanic arc with the continent may result in the formation of a young continental platform or, in other words, a composite neoplatform (Fig. 1, Profile F). With a somewhat schematical approach this composite neoplatform may be said to be constituted by the ancient craton on the one hand and by the oceanic crust obducted upon it on the other and, thirdly, by the earlier "quasiplatform" (= passive volcanic arc and passive accretion wedge) that has accretionally coalesced with the former. On account of its favourable topographic setting and proper source rock lithologies (volcanics and intrusives of craton, obducted oceanic crust and passive arc, ophiolites of passive accretion wedge) a considerable part of the young continental platform area is suitable for bauxite formation and accumulation. Karstic bauxites, if any, are expected to occur primarily in the marginal, transitional and epicontinental facies zones of the accretion neoplatform. The oceanic basin in the foreland of the young platform is regarded as being unsuitable for bauxite formation and accumulation.

As the second possible landmark in the history of evolution, the active collision (subduction) of oceanic island arcs is looked at (Fig. 1, Profile E). In this case it is the "quasiplatform" that came into existence within the older, now passive (extinct) volcanic arc that is rated as being bauxite geologically favourable, similar to what has been described in Profile D. In the light of the foregoing, the other morphostructural units are rated as unfavourable from the bauxite geological point of view.

Evaluating summarizingly the geological fundamentals for bauxite resources prediction based on the formation and development of tropical oceanic island arcs, let us conclude

— that of the evolutionary stages that (may have) preceded the birth of a volcanic arc it is the stage of early continental rifting responsible for the formation of the ancient

oceanic basin (Fig. 1, Profiles A₁, A₂) that may be regarded as having been favourable for bauxite formation and accumulation,

— that, in the active volcanic arc development stage, only the continental margins may be taken bauxite geologically into consideration (Fig. 1, Profiles C₁, C₂),

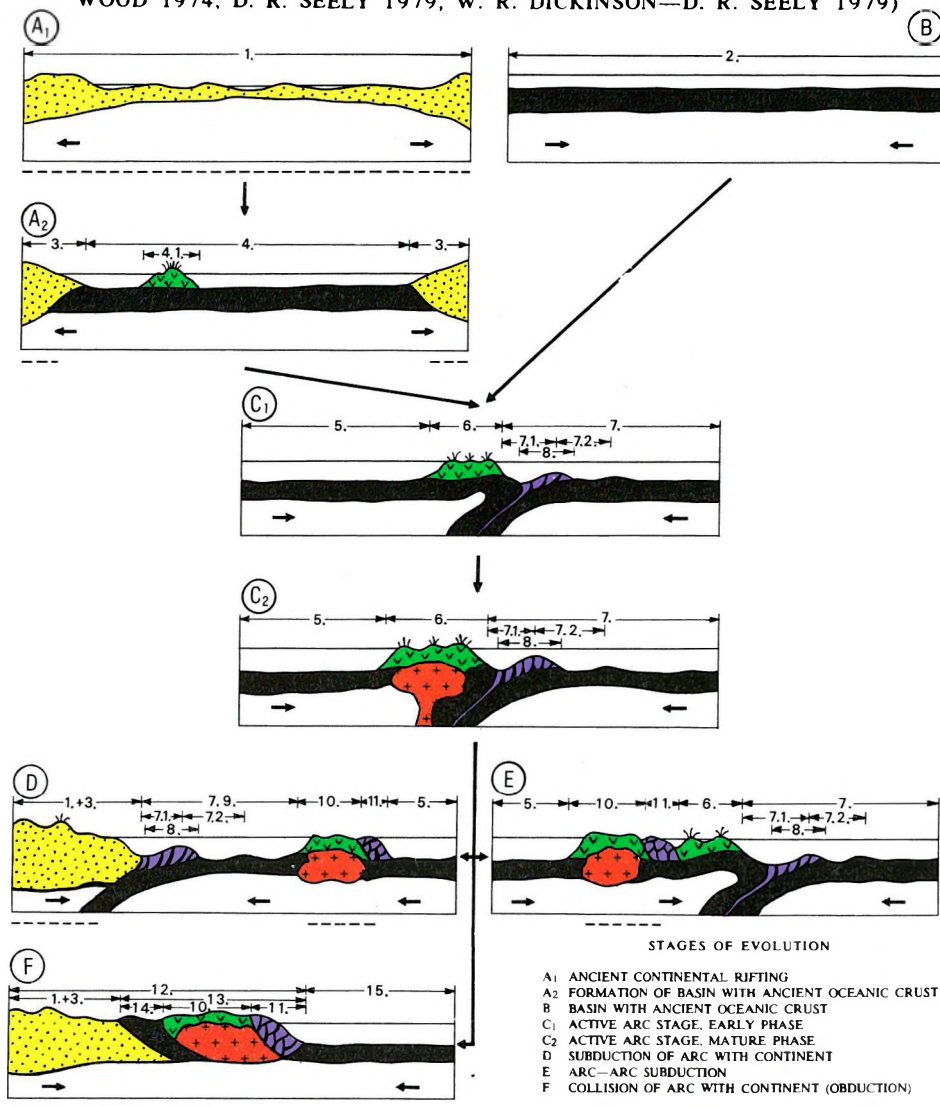
— that of the evolutionary stages that (may have) followed the extinction of a volcanic arc, it is the active (subduction) or passive (obduction) volcanic arc versus continent collision and the active collision of older and younger volcanic arcs (their subduction) that may be rated as having enabled the formation and accumulation of bauxite (Fig. 1, Profiles D, E, F)

— The bauxite geologically advantageous units of the above evolutionary stages include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| — Early continental rifting stage | — ancient continental platform (craton) |
| — Stage of formation of basin with ancient oceanic crust | — ancient continental platform (craton) and margin |
| — Oceanic volcanic arc stage | — continental margin(s) |
| — Active oceanic volcanic arc versus continent collision stage | — ancient continental platform (craton) and margin and "quasiplatform" |
| — Passive oceanic volcanic arc versus continent collision stage | — young continental platform and margin of accretion type |
| — Stage of collision of active volcanic arcs | — "quasiplatform" |

MODEL OF FORMATION AND EVOLUTION OF OCEANIC TROPICAL ISLAND ARCS

(Compiled by L. KÖRPÁS 1985 on the basis of A. H. MITCHELL—H. G. READING 1971, D. E. KARIG 1972, 1974, W. R. DICKINSON 1973, 1974, 1976, A. E. RINGWOOD 1974, D. R. SEELY 1979, W. R. DICKINSON—D. R. SEELY 1979)



EXPLANATIONS MORPHOSTRUCTURAL UNITS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Ancient continental platform (craton) | 7.2. Slope |
| 2. Ancient basin with oceanic crust | 8. Active accretionary prism (subduction complex) |
| 3. Ancient continental platform (craton) and margin | 9. Fore-arc, marginal basins |
| 4. Opened oceanic basin | 10. Passive volcanic arc |
| 4.1. Mid-oceanic ridge | 11. Passive accretionary prism (subduction complex) |
| 5. Back-arc (interarc) basins | 12. Modern continental platform and margin |
| 6. Active volcanic arc | 13. Accretionary neoplatform |
| 7. Fore-arc (interarc) basins | 14. Obducted oceanic crust |
| 7.1. Trench | 15. Modern oceanic basin |

OTHER SYMBOLS

- Continental crust
- Oceanic crust
- Subduction complex
- Volcanites
- Intrusives
- Relative plate motion
- Favourable morphostructural units for bauxite formation
- Sealevel

Fig. 1

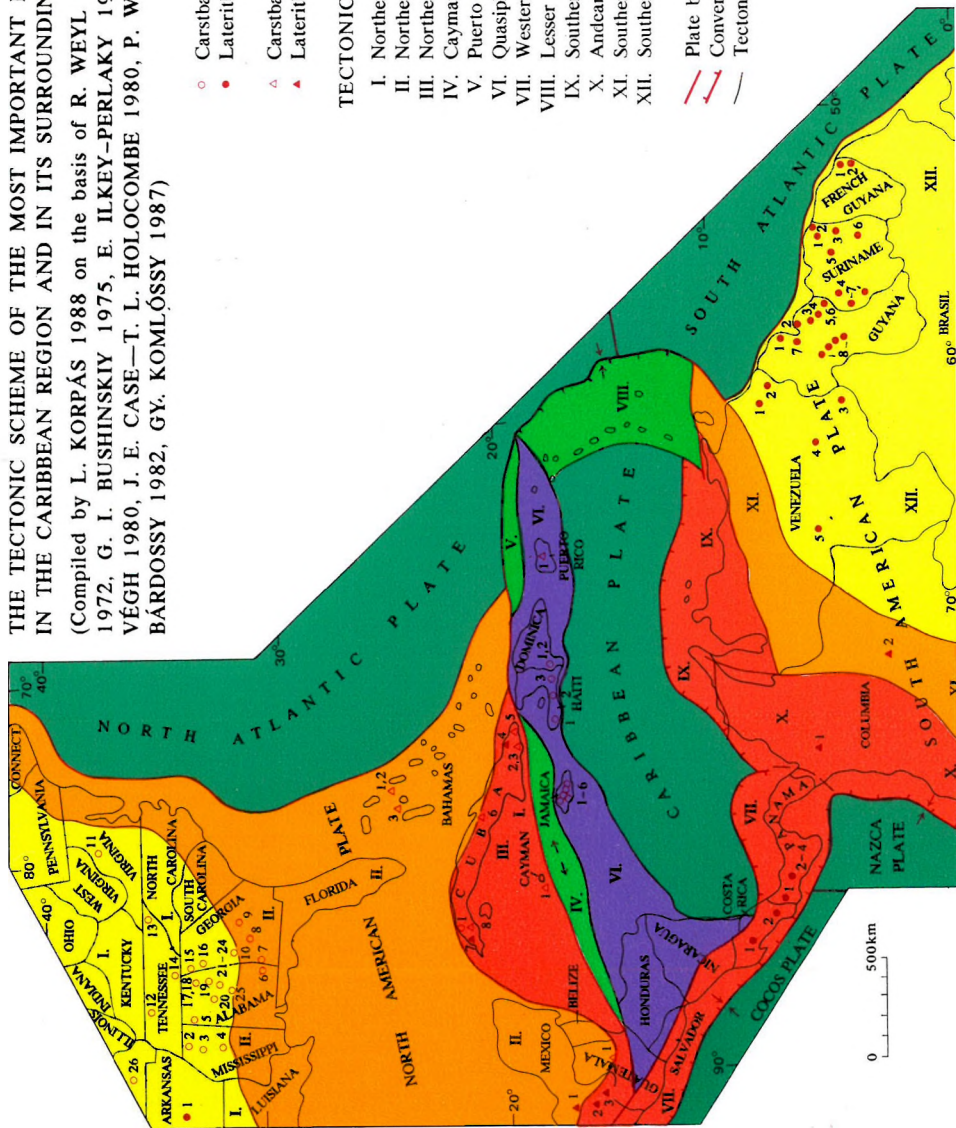
THE CLASSIFICATION OF SOME BAUXITE OCCURRENCES IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION AND IN ITS SURROUNDINGS, ON THE BASIS OF THEIR TECTONIC—MORPHOLOGICAL SETTING AND STAGES OF EVOLUTION

Stages of evolution	C O N T I N E N T A L			S E T T I N G			O C C E A N I C					
	Bauxite deposits and indications			Favourable morphostructural units			Name and geographic position			Bauxite deposits and indications		
	Favourable morphostructural units	Name and geographic position	Genetic type	Age	Favourable morphostructural units	Name and geographic position	Genetic type	Age				
A ₁ —2 Ancient continental rifting	CUBA											
	Southern continental margin	Tranquilidad (8)	carstic, intraformational	Upper Jurassic	—	—	—	—				
B Basin with ancient oceanic crust	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—				
C ₁ —2 Active arc stage (early and mature phases)	CUBA											
	Northern craton and continental margin	Sierra Azul—Pan de Guajalton (1) UNITED STATES Indian Mound (12) Chattanooga (14) Margerum (5) Irwinton (9) Warm Spring (10) Tippah Benton (2) Pontotoc (3) Winston—Nokuse—Kemper (4) Eufala (6) Springsvale (7) Andersonville (8)	carstic, intraformational	Alban—Cenomanian Upper Cretaceous—Paleocene Upper Cretaceous—Lower Eocene Lower Eocene	—	—	—	—				
Southern craton	VENEZUELA											
	Pijigaitos (5)			Upper Cretaceous?								
Southern craton	GUYANA											
	Pouéboon (1) Essequibo (2) Mackenzie (3) Ituri (4) Kwakwani (5) Cajé (6)		lateritic, lateritic—terrigenous	Upper Cretaceous—Paleocene—Eocene								
	SURINAME											
	Suriname River (1)			Paleocene—Lower Eocene								
	FRENCH GUYANA											

D	Subduction of arc with continent	COSTA RICA San Isidro General (1) P A N A M A	lateritic	Upper Miocene— Quaternary	—	—	—	—
E	Arc—arc subduction	—	lateritic	Upper Oligocene— Quaternary	—	—	—	Upper Oligocene— Quaternary
F	Collision of arc with continent (obduction)	B A H A M A S Eleuthera (1, 2) New Providence (3) C U B A	earstic	Pliocene— Quaternary	—	—	—	—
		C U B A	lateritic	Upper Oligocene— Quaternary	—	—	—	Upper Oligocene— Quaternary
		G u a n t a n a m o—N o r t h (2) G u a n t a n a m o—E a s t (3)	earstic, in part intraformational	Upper Oligocene— Miocene— Quaternary	—	—	—	Upper Oligocene— Lower Miocene; Miocene— Quaternary
		J A M A I C A Saint-Ann (1) Cock pit—Country (2) Essex valley (3) Manchester (4) Clarendon (5) Saint Catherine (6)	—	—	—	—	—	Middle— Upper Miocene; Miocene— Quaternary
		H A I T I Massif de la Hotte (1) Miragoone (2) Rodheleis (3)	—	—	—	—	—	Miocene—Pliocene
		D O M I N I C A Sierra de Bahoruco (1) Las Mercedes (2)	—	—	—	—	—	—

THE TECTONIC SCHEME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BAUXITE OCCURRENCES IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION AND IN ITS SURROUNDINGS

(Compiled by L. KOPÁS 1988 on the basis of R. WEYL 1961, 1966, I. VALETON 1972, G. I. BUSHINSKIY 1975, E. ILKEY-PERLAKY 1978, GY. KOMLÓSSY—A. VÉGH 1980, J. E. CASE—T. L. HOLOCOMBE 1980, P. W. GUILD et al. 1981, GY. BÁRDOSSY 1982, GY. KOMLÓSSY 1987)



- Carstbauxite deposits
- Lateritbauxite deposits
- △ Carstbauxite indications
- ▲ Lateritbauxite indications

TECTONIC UNITS

- I. Northern craton
- II. Northern continental margin
- III. Northern accretionary neoplatform
- IV. Cayman trench
- V. Puerto Rico trench
- VI. Quasiplatform
- VII. Western accretionary neoplatform
- VIII. Lesser Antilles island arc
- IX. Southern accretionary neoplatform
- X. Andean deformation belt
- XI. Southern continental margin
- XII. Southern craton

- Plate boundaries
- Convergent plate boundaries
- Tectonic unit's boundaries

NAME AND GEOGRAPHIC POSITION OF THE BAUXITE OCCURRENCES

UNITED STATES	MEXICO	DOMINICA	3.
1. Arkansas	1. Ostvacan (Estacion Juarez)	1. Sierra de Bahoruco	4. Los Guaticos
2. Tappah Benton	2. Tenejapa	2. Las Mercedes	5. Pijiguaos
3. Pontotoc	3. Monte Bello	BAHAMAS	GUYANA
4. Winston—Noxubee—Kemper	CUBA	1-2. Eleuthera	1. Pomeroun
5. Margerum	1. Sierra Azul—Pan de	3. New Providence	2. Essequibo
6. Eufala	Guajaban	CAYMAN ISLANDS	3. Mackenzie
7. Springvale	2. Guantanamo North	1. Grand Cayman	4. Itunji
8. Andersonville	3. Guantanamo East	GUATEMALA	5. Kwakwani
9. Irwinton	4. Moa—Baracoa	1. Alta Verapaz	6. Canje
10. Warm Spring	5. Maisi	COSTA RICA	7. Blue Mountains
11. Spotswood	6. Manga Largo	1. San Isidro General	8. Pakaraima Mountains
12. Indian Mound	7. Mantua	2. ?	SURINAME
13. Elizabethtown	8. Tranquilidaa	PANAMA	1. Suriname River
14. Chattanooga	JAMAICA	1. David	2. Moengo, Rickanau
15. Summerville	1. Saint—Ann	2. Las Lajas	3. Nassau Mountains
16. Hermitage, Cave Springs,	2. Cockpit country	3. Tole	4. Bakhuis
Bobo	3. Essex valley	4. Las Palmas	5. Brown Mountains
17. Fort Payne	4. Manchester	COLUMBIA	6. Lely Mountains
18. Congo	5. Clarendon	1. Antiochia	7. Wana Wiero Hills
19. Rock Run, Goshen V.	6. Saint Catherine	2. Morales—Cajibío	FRENCH GUYANA
20. Ashville	PUERTO RICO	VENEZUELA	1. Roura
21. Jacksonville	1. Florida	1. Massif de la Hotte	2. Kaw Mountains
22. Nances Creek	HAITI	2. Miragoane	
23. Anniston	1. Massif de la Hotte	3. Rochelais	
24. De Armanville	2. Miragoane		
25. Talladega	3. Rochelais		
26. Missouri			

GEOHISTORICAL AND STRUCTURAL INTERPRETATION OF SINGLE BAUXITE DEPOSITS FROM THE CIRCUM-CARIBBEAN REGION

An island arc area of intricate geology and structure, the Caribbean has had a geological and tectogenetic history in which the evolutionary stages discussed can be readily distinguished and reconstructed (Fig. 1, Profiles A—F). The geographic distribution and range of the associated bauxite occurrences and resource indications are illustrated in Fig. 2. The morphostructural positions of the particular typical bauxite deposits within the evolutionary stages, their genetic types and age data are given in Table 1.

Regarding the stage of ancient continental rifting and the formation of an oceanic crusted basin (Late Triassic—Late Jurassic), the only so far known bauxite resource indication from the bauxite geologically favourable morphostructural units is located in the southern continental margin area. This is situated in western Cuba, being of karstic intraformational genetic type and Upper Jurassic (Callovian—Oxfordian) in age.

The bauxite geologically favourable morphostructural units of the oceanic volcanic arcs development stage (Late Jurassic—Late Eocene) include the northern craton and continental margin and the southern craton. Almost all dated bauxite deposits of the northern craton and continental margin are of karstic type. Out of these, the Sierra Azul—Pan de Guajaibon deposit in western Cuba is unique regarding both its age (Albian—Cenomanian) and type (intraformational). The occurrences listed from the territory of the U.S.A. are of Upper Cretaceous—Paleogene, Upper Cretaceous—Lower Eocene and Lower Eocene age. As a contrast, all the "older" Cretaceous—Paleogene deposits known from the southern craton area belong to the lateritic, lateritic-terigenous genetic types. The bauxite deposits of South America assigned to this group are of Upper Cretaceous (?), Paleocene—(Lower) Eocene and Eocene age.

The Central American part of the circum-Pacific subduction zone is interpreted controversially enough, as an example of the active oceanic volcanic arc versus continent collision stage. It is the accretion neoplatform on the western margin of the Caribbean that has been rated as a bauxite geologically favourable morphostructural unit. The bauxite deposits known from there (Costa Rica, Panama) are lateritic bauxites formed on young basalts, varying from Upper Miocene to Quaternary in age.

An active collision (subduction) of oceanic volcanic arcs is considered to have been responsible for the bauxite deposits and resource indications known from the Greater Antilles. Regarding their morphostructural position, they belong, all, to the northern accretion neoplatform and the "quasiplatform" respectively. Genetically, they are for the most part of karstic type with a sporadic representation of the intrafor-

mational type, lateritic resource indications being quite subordinate and limited, as far as our present-day knowledge goes, to Cuba. The time of their formation spans the Upper Oligocene—Quaternary interval. Within this time span, some intraformational resource indications are of Upper Oligocene—Lower Miocene and Middle/Upper Miocene age.

A classic example of the passive collision (obduction) of oceanic volcanic arcs is provided by the collision front of the Cuban Island Arc and the Bahama platform (the Great Bahama Bank). Of the bauxite geologically positive morphostructural units that have evolved here a Lower/Middle Miocene, karstic intraformational bauxite resource indication is found in Central Cuba and Pliocene—Quaternary karstic bauxite resource indications are known from the Bahamas.

CONCLUSION

The bauxite geological model has been developed on the basis of data from the relevant literature. I am aware of the fact that this model is a rather simplified and generalizing one. In spite of this I am convinced that it can be used for a concrete bauxite geological reconstruction of other island arc areas.

The applicability of the model has been illustrated by examples taken from the Caribbean. The conclusions thus derived are as follows:

— The known Caribbean bauxite deposits and resource indications are assignable without any difficulty to the geohistorical stages of the model and to the associated morphostructural units. In the light of the foregoing, I believe, that the bauxite geological potentialities of the Caribbean are—at least from the viewpoint of geological—geohistorical reconstructions—still far from being exhausted. Potential Late Mesozoic (Jurassic—Cretaceous) and Early Paleogene (Paleocene—Eocene) bauxite horizons may be of considerable importance in the Caribbean.

— What is believed to be important to emphasize is that bauxite geological prospects cannot be assessed unless the work to that end is based on a concrete geohistorical reconstruction during which the evolutionary stages favouring bauxitization and bauxite accumulation should be determined and in this context the advantageous morphostructural units should be delineated.

— Examples from the Caribbean alone have enabled me to conclude that the bauxite deposits of island arcs belong mainly to the karstic, subordinately to the lateritic genetic type. This is in harmony primarily with the opinion universally adopted in the Soviet literature and confirmed by GY. BARDOSY (1981, p. 316) that the bauxite occurrences in orogenic (=eugeosynclinal) zones are genetically overwhelmingly of karstic type.

— Let us point out that while interpreting island arc areas bauxite genetically it is not sufficient for one to restrict oneself to reconstruct the island arc in a strict sense, but that one must bear in mind the necessity for taking into consideration the continental margins concomitant of the island arcs and their active and passive collision zones as well.

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