

ANTHROPOGENIC AND GEOGENIC CONTAMINATION DUE TO HEAVY METALS IN THE VAST AREA OF VARI, ATTICA

Serelis K.G.¹, Kafkala I.G.¹, Parpodis K.¹ and Lazaris S.²

¹ *Laboratory of Mineralogy-Geology, Agricultural University of Athens, 75, Iera Odos, 118 55 Athens, serelis@aua.gr, kafkala@aua.gr, kparpodis@yahoo.gr*

² *Agroland S. A. spyrosfaz@yahoo.com*

Abstract

The purpose of this work was to investigate the soil heavy metal contamination of the area between Koropi and Vari, in Attica, Greece and to determine their anthropogenic or/and geogenic-lithogenic origin. Soil samples were taken from two different depths of 23 uncultivated sampling sites. Determined heavy-metal concentrations ranged widely; mean values in several sites were elevated and much higher than the soil grand mean worldwide. The higher Co and Ni contamination was found in the lower soil depth (10-25cm), while for Cd, Zn, and Pb in the upper depth (0-10cm). These results, in connection with the performed Hierarchical Cluster Analysis and Principal Component Analysis, indicate that there are two contamination sources. The first, concerning Co-Ni, is a geogenic-lithogenic source and the second, concerning Zn-Cd and Pb, is considered as an anthropogenic source. Since in the study area there is no evidence of an existing anthropogenic source (e.g. an industry) and the parent material does not confirm and give reason for the elevated Zn, Cd and Pb contents, it could be concluded that this contamination was due to ancient metallurgical activities in the area.

Key words: *soil contamination, heavy metals, anthropogenic factors, geogenic- lithogenic factors, HCA, PCA, Vari, Attica.*

1. Introduction

Heavy metal soil contamination is a serious environmental problem, mainly due to its impact on human health (Fytianos et al., 2001, Imperato et al., 2003; Selinus et al., 2005; Girard et al., 2005; Shakeri et al., 2009; Zhuang et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2010). Heavy metals are found in the crust in less than 0.01% (Kabata-Pendias and Pendias, 2001). The existence of heavy metals in soils is attributed to both anthropogenic and geogenic (particularly lithogenic) factors. The main human activities resulted in environmental contamination are: mining and smelting, industrial activities, agricultural practices, fossil fuel combustion, waste disposal, transportation etc. and they have been discussed in numerous reports and publications (e.g. Alloway, 1995; Dudka and Adriano, 1997; Kabata-Pendias and Pendias, 2001; Wong et al., 2002; Girard et al., 2005; Selinus et al., 2005; Kribek et al., 2010).

The presence and distribution of heavy metals in soils is influenced mainly by the parent material, the chemical and physical soil properties, the metal speciation, and the climatic conditions. The mineral content of the parent material is one of the most important factors for the amount of trace elements in soils, irrespective of classification or the amount of weathering (Burt et al., 2003).

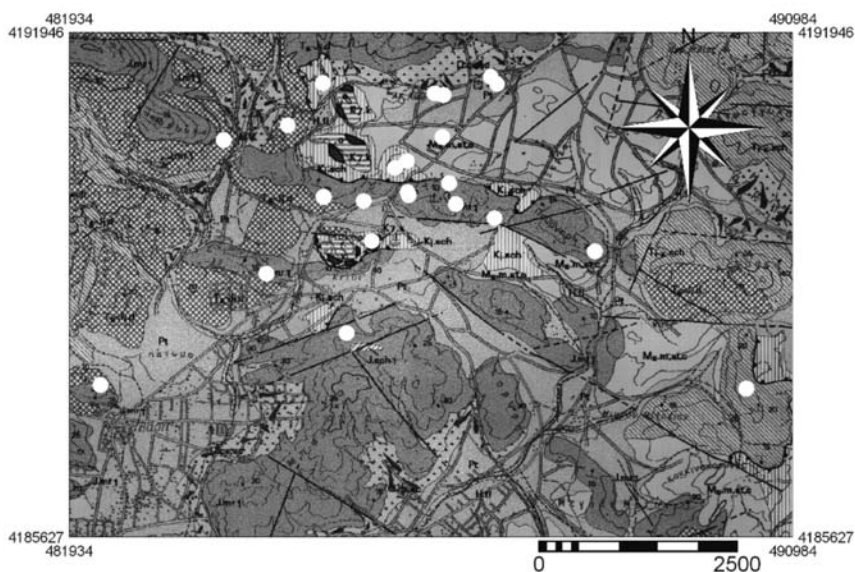


Fig. 1: Map showing the locations of the soil sampling sites. a) Ts-J1d, Pirnari dolomites, b) J.mr1, J.sch1: Lower marble, schists intercalations respectively, c) K1.sch, K1.K: schists, recrystallized limestones respectively, d) K7.k: limestones, e) O: ofiolites, f) Ms.m, st, c: marls, loams, sandstones, conglomerates, g) Pt: Pleistocene deposits, h) Q.cs, sc: Quaternary undivided old and new talus cones and scree (I.G.M.E. KOROPI-VARI sheet 2004 Geological map, 1:50.000).

Soil contamination can be distinguished according to the intensity, the number, and the distance of pollution sources. **“Diffuse” contamination** is the contamination due to 1) a numerous sources, which are poorly identified, 2) sources that are in long distances (dozens of kilometres and sometimes hundreds), 3) mobile sources (vehicles, airplanes etc.). Contamination of this kind is usually moderate. **“Punctual” contamination** is due to an identified source, often close to the contaminated soil. This kind of contamination could be due to industrial activities or a heavy vehicle circulation in highways. Referring to a small region, the displacement of a punctual contamination to a diffusive one is given by the following example: the atmospheric emissions by a Pb smelter are a punctual contamination for surrounding soils but they contribute to a diffusive contamination as they move away. In this case, we have a pollution zone “diffuse of proximity” around the source and in many kilometres (Robert, 1996 in Girard et al. 2005).

Our previous studies (Lazaris, 2008) showed that in the forest (uncultivated) area of Vari, Attica (Fig. 1) multiple contaminants co-exist; namely Pb, Cd, Ni, Co, and Zn were determined in the soil horizons. The purpose of this work is to determine the concentrations of the heavy metals Cd, Zn, Pb, Co, and Ni in the soil of the study area and to investigate whether the possible elevated concentrations found are due to anthropogenic or geogenic sources.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study area and Sampling

The study area belongs to the Attic-Cycladic geotectonic zone of Greece. It is localized by a rectangular with X,Y coordinates of upper left corner [481934, 4191946] and lower right corner [490984, 4185627]. The lithologic formations of the study area are dolomites, marble, schists, lime-

stones, ofiolites (mafic rocks), marls, loams, sandstones, and quaternary deposits (Fig. 1). For centuries, the non-forest area was used for agricultural purposes, which through the years has been transformed to a light industrial one. The last few years though, there is an important urbanisation, legal and illegal. Soil sampling was conducted during October 2008. Twenty three sample sites were chosen (Fig.1) in uncultivated areas and soil was collected from two different depths in each sample site: i) 0-10cm (A depth) and ii) 10-25cm (B depth), making the number of samples forty six. The samples have been transported to the laboratory the same day and have been air-dried at room temperature for several days and passed through a 2mm stainless-steel sieve. Sub-samples were taken for further analysis.

2.2 Analytical Methods

Soil characteristics were determined following standard procedures. Measurement of soil pH in 1:1 (w/v) soil to deionised water agitated for 1 hour. Organic matter concentration was determined by the Wakley-Black method which is based on $K_2Cr_2O_7-H_2SO_4$ oxidation (Nelson and Sommers, 1982). The determination of total carbonate was performed as equivalent $CaCO_3$ percentage using a Bernard calcimeter (Allison and Moodie, 1965). Particle size distribution was determined by Hydrometer method (Bouyoukos, 1951). Heavy-metal concentrations were determined by extraction with Na_2EDTA (ethylenediamine tetraacetic acid) which extracts the exchangeable, carbonate-bound, Fe and Mn oxide-bounds, and a significant quantity of organic-bounds (Clayton and Tiller, 1979). The method involves shaking 10g of soil with $80cm^3$ of 0.005M EDTA (pH=6.0) in polypropylene tubes for 15 hours at $20^\circ C$. EDTA extraction procedure was chosen because it is widely accepted as a successful extractant and it is traditionally proposed for calcareous soils (Quevauviller et al. 1996; Quevauviller et al. 1998). The samples for the extraction procedure (Na_2EDTA) were centrifuged for 20min at 3000rpm ($\approx 1500g$) to compact most of the soil at the bottom of the tubes. The supernatant was filtered through a Whatman No 42 filter paper. The filtrates were analyzed for heavy metals using flame atomic absorption spectrometry (FAAS).

2.3 Statistical Processing

Descriptive statistics and multivariate statistical processing were performed. The data were classified into two groups according to their sample soil depth. Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA) and Factor Analysis (FA) and namely the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) were applied with the use of SPSS 11.0.0 in order to obtain a visual interpretation of data and to detect similarities or differences among them. HCA is used to identify relatively homogeneous groups. The dendrograms were extracted using the Ward method and squared Euclidean distance and there has been a z standardization of the data. PCA analysis, a central tool in chemometrics, was performed using varimax rotation in order to make interpretable components. The component number was selected by using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalue higher than 1).

3. Results- Discussion

Most soils of the study area are Alfisols and in particular suborder Xeralfs. Their mean organic matter content is 0.05 (A depth) and 0.04 (B depth), while mean pH value in both depths is 8.0. The soils are characterised as silty loamy, with clay mean values of 0.13 (A depth) and 0.18 (B depth) and corresponding silt values of 0.41 and 0.55 respectively (Table 1).

Heavy metal -EDTA extracted- concentrations ranged widely among sample sites (data not shown);

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of soil properties and heavy-metal concentrations (mg kg⁻¹) for A, B depths.

A	OM _A	pH _A	CaCO _{3A}	CLAY _A	SILT _A	Pb _A	Cd _A	Co _A	Ni _A	Zn _A
Min.	0.01	7.70	0.10	0.04	0.24	9.65	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.29
Max.	0.08	8.30	0.50	0.23	0.68	1779.12	1.78	15.98	18.58	23.22
Mean	0.05	8.01	0.11	0.13	0.41	169.35	0.60	7.19	6.98	6.21
Std. Dev.	0.02	0.13	0.12	0.06	0.13	381.37	0.47	4.54	4.57	4.88
B	OM _B	pH _B	CaCO _{3B}	CLAY _B	SILT _B	Pb _B	Cd _B	Co _B	Ni _B	Zn _B
Min.	0.01	7.7	0.01	0.08	0.34	10.66	0.00	0.14	0.00	0.40
Max.	0.07	8.4	0.38	0.32	0.70	1649.88	1.45	18.44	25.77	13.65
Mean	0.04	8.00	0.09	0.18	0.55	161.36	0.53	8.30	9.43	3.52
Std. Dev.	0.01	0.15	0.93	0.08	0.08	349.31	0.39	5.66	6.36	3.12
Grand mean*						25*	0.175**	7.90*	22*	64*
Geometric mean**										
OM=Organic Matter										

determined mean values of the measured heavy metals in several sites were elevated and much higher than the soil grand mean worldwide (Table 1), as they were reported by Kabada-Pendias and Pendias (2001). Maximum, minimum, and mean values of the examined elements of the entire study area are presented in Table 1. Significant differences and elevated standard deviations were observed.

The higher Co and Ni contamination is found in the lower depth (10-25cm) indicating that they are derived from the parent material, while for Cd, Zn, and Pb in the upper depth (0-10cm) probably due to anthropogenic sources.

It is well known that cobalt and nickel are concentrated in soil horizons rich in organic matter and clays (Van Hullebusch et al., 2006; Lin et al., 2008). They are immobile in alkaline conditions since their oxides, hydroxides, and carbonate forms are very insoluble, while in acid conditions dissolution and leaching are more likely to occur (Alloway, 1995). The study area is not an acidic one and therefore Co and Ni are in a rather immobile form indicating that leaching is difficult to occur. Therefore, it could be suggested that the higher contents in the B depth originate from the parent material; this suggestion is amplified by the presence of relicts of ofiolites, meta-mafic veins, and carbonate rocks (I.G.M.E. Geological map, issue Koropi, 1:50.000) in the area, which inherit the highest amounts of Co and Ni in soils in accordance with Alloway (1995) and Kabata-Pendias and Pendias (2001).

Zn and Cd are very mobile and bioavailable metals, and their higher contents in A depth suggest their anthropogenic origin. Specifically for lead, measured values were extremely high and in some sites were 80 folds higher than the worldwide grand mean, i.e. 1779.12 and 1649.88 mg kg⁻¹ compared to the grand mean of 25 mg kg⁻¹. This result indicates that in the case of lead the source of contamination is a punctual source. Since in these specific sample sites there is no evidence of an existing anthropogenic source (e.g. an industry) and the parent material does not confirm and give reason for

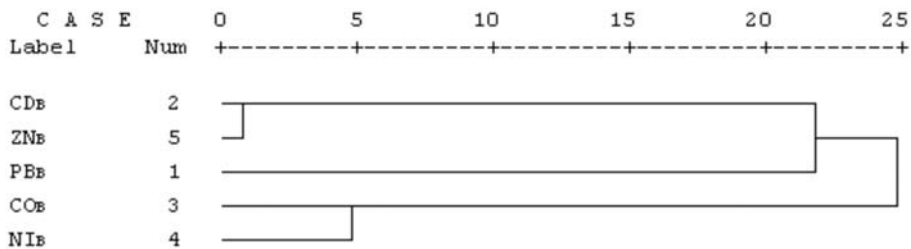


Fig. 3: Dendrogram for the descriptors using Ward Method (B depth).

Table 2. Principal Component Analysis (Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization) for A depth.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
OM _A	0.11	0.10	0.93	-0.07
pH _A	0.10	-0.62	-0.52	-0.47
CLAY _A	0.81	0.39	-0.22	0.11
SILT _A	0.95	0.09	0.06	0.09
Pb _A	0.20	-0.07	-0.03	0.90
Cd _A	0.92	0.14	0.06	0.24
Co _A	0.39	0.60	-0.21	0.47
Ni _A	0.16	0.90	0.15	-0.20
Zn _A	0.80	-0.12	0.48	0.01
% Variance	36.26	19.43	16.43	15.27
Cumulative %	36.26	55.69	72.12	87.39

Table 3. Principal Component Analysis (Varimax Rotation Method with Kaiser Normalization) for B depth.

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
OM _B	0.82	-0.09	0.14	0.04
pH _B	0.30	-0.88	0.07	0.02
CLAY _B	0.39	0.18	0.76	0.31
SILT _B	0.24	0.04	-0.92	-0.01
Pb _B	0.15	0.06	0.10	0.96
Cd _B	0.92	0.26	0.12	0.11
Co _B	0.37	0.79	0.15	0.30
Ni _B	0.30	0.65	0.56	-0.28
Zn _B	0.84	-0.03	-0.20	0.14
% of Variance	30.69	21.40	20.65	13.49
Cumulative %	30.69	52.09	72.74	86.23

clay, silt, Cd, and Zn. The second component, which explains the 19.43% of the total variance, shows high correlation to Ni and a moderate one to Co. The third component with a 16.43% of the total variance has a high factor loading for organic matter. The fourth component, accounting for the 15.27% of the total variance, has a very high factor loading for Pb.

Table 3 represents the four factors that are retained in the analysis and account for the 86.23% of the total variance in B depth. The first component accounts for the 30.69% of the total variance and is composed of very high factor loadings for Cd, Zn, and organic matter. The second component, explaining the 21.40% of the total variance, has a high factor loading for Co and a less high one for Ni. The third component with the 20.65% of the total variance has a high factor loading for clay. The fourth component explaining the 13.49% of the total variance has a very high positive factor loading for Pb.

The results of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis are in accordance with the results of Factor Analysis showing that there are two different contamination sources in the study area: the first source is connected to Cd, Zn, and Pb and is considered as the anthropogenic source, while Co and Ni originate from the second lithogenic source and are more correlated in depth B than in depth A, showing their probable lithogenic origin.

4. Conclusions

Measured EDTA extractable concentrations of Cd, Zn, Pb, Co and Ni ranged widely among sample sites and substantial differences were observed. The results of HCA and FA analysis of soil properties and heavy-metal concentrations satisfactorily describe the presence of the five heavy metals in the soil of the study area. The factors and the clusters excluded are in agreement with each other showing two sources of pollution. Firstly the lithogenic source, which provides the heavy metals Co and Ni, with higher concentrations in B depth (lower depth), and secondly the anthropogenic source, which provides the heavy metals Cd, Zn, and Pb, with higher concentrations in A depth. Determined lead concentrations were extremely high and in connection with its long lasting half-life in soils (740-5900y) this metal can threaten the health of animals and humans upon entering in food chain. Since there are not any minerals containing Pb in the lithologic formations of the area or any industries that would produce such concentrations, it could be concluded that probably in this sites there were ancient metallurgical activities. Indeed, this is in agreement with the findings of archaeological excavations which indicate that in the antiquity the area has been used as a workshop of metallurgy.

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