



## Remembering Prof. Athanasios (Sakis) Drosopoulos (1944 – 2014) – biosystematist, entomologist, colleague and friend

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On March 30, 2014, Sakis Drosopoulos, our esteemed colleague and dear friend for many years, passed away after a brief illness at age 69. He is survived by his wife Hanneke, his son Spyros, his daughter Loukia, his granddaughter Laura, and his brothers Giorgos and Kostas. Sakis will be fondly remembered by all who knew him, and here we take the opportunity to celebrate his life once again, a life which did not have an easy start.



**Fig. 1:** Sakis in his favourite place, the mountains above Skaloula, central Greece. Photo: M. Gogala, Ljubljana (first published in Gogala, M., 2013. On the trail of Mountain Cicadas. Royal Entomological Society, London).

Sakis was born on September 7, 1944, in Skaloula, Doris (Mt Giona near Lidoriki), as second son of Spyros Drosopoulos, farmer, and Eleni Karabetsou. His elder brother,

Giorgos, was six years older and his little brother Kostas three years younger. Sakis' mother was from Karoutes, a nearby village higher up Mt. Giona. Skaloula, now virtually abandoned, had been a thriving village of some hundred families. When Sakis was born, a month after the battle of Karoutes, the area had been the scene of heavy fighting between the German occupation army and the Greek resistance and the inhabitants had fled their houses and were hiding in the woods. In October 1944, the German army withdrew from Greece but the civil war commenced, bringing again hardship and danger to the country, and into each family. Sakis' family repeatedly had to leave their house in fear of approaching raids and to hide in the mountains for days on end. Skaloula was never restored to its pre-war status because after the civil war a new village, Pentapolis, was founded nearby to replace the villages that had been destroyed and provided a bigger residential center for the inhabitants. Most families from Skaloula went to live there.

Even though Sakis' parents were (what we nowadays like to call “simple”) peasants they emphasized the importance of higher education for their children. Sakis being gifted and keen, left Skaloula at the age of 12 to attend high school in the regional capital Lidoriki, where he shared a rented room with fellow students during weekdays. He called himself lucky that on weekends he could walk home, from Lidoriki to Skaloula (approx. 6 km) for fresh supplies. Fellow students from villages more faraway could go home only for the holidays. From his own reports, he was apparently not a model pupil nor very popular with the teachers, but he enjoyed learning and did quite well. He was not happy with the strict rules the school had bestowed on the students, but came up with creative ideas to work around them: as students were not allowed to go to the cinema, Sakis used to watch the movies from a mulberry tree outside the open air cinema. From these experiences may have come one of his credo in later life: “you always have to have an alternative”.

Sakis graduated from high school in Lidoriki in 1962 but failed the university entry exams because he – in his own words – “had been taught only the first page of the chemistry book”. Whether the teacher was not qualified or whether there was no teacher at all, is not known. To work up his chemistry and refresh the other topics he registered for a preparatory course (1962–1963) in a tuition institute in Athens. He was admitted at “Aristotle” University of Thessaloniki in 1963 where he studied agriculture until 1971.

Sakis always remembered the years as student in Thessaloniki with a big smile on his face. “We were naughty boys” he would say, referring to his best buddies, Aris Kalognomos and Makis Martzopoulos, and the many occasions of wild parties, excursions and other student-pleasures they shared. With both men, he would entertain a life-long friendship, and even family-ties. Apart from Aris and Makis, Sakis had many other friends from his time in Thessaloniki, not only students.

Sakis had a unique talent to make friends easily, an ability that never left him. He was a natural in empathic listening, and people even those who had known him only for a short time, freely confided information on their private lives. He approached all people at an equal level, never felt superior or inferior to anyone, and could easily start a conversation with anyone – be it a famous scientist at a conference, a waitress in a coffee shop, or a small child on a train.



Figs. 2–6: The early years (1944–1971).

**Fig. 2:** Sakis, age 6, with his parents (1950). **Fig. 3:** Sakis (right) with a friend as high-school students in Lidoriki (1960). **Fig. 4:** Sakis (left) leading a traditional Greek folk dance (1964). **Fig. 5:** First date with his later wife, Hanneke van Albada, Lykabetos, Athens (1966). **Fig. 6:** Sakis and Hanneke at their Greek-Orthodox wedding ceremony, Athens (1971).

In the summer of 1966, and again in summer of 1969, Sakis took on an internship at Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Kiphisia, Athens, where he worked on insect pests of Alfalfa, which developed into the theme of his graduation thesis, in 1971.



Figs 7–13: **Becoming a scientist (1963–1977).**

**Fig. 7:** Sakis and his friend Makis during their studies in Thessaloniki (1963). **Fig. 8:** Sakis and fellow students at a laboratory class at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki (ca. 1964/65). **Fig. 9:** At the graduation ceremony from Aristotle University, Thessaloniki (1971). **Fig. 10:** Sakis exploring the Dutch countryside (1972). **Fig. 11:** Sakis introducing Dutch friends to Greek BBQ, Wageningen (1972). **Fig. 12:** Quantitative insect sampling using a DVAC on a Dutch meadow (1972) (first published in Drosopoulos 1977). **Fig. 13:** Sakis receiving his PhD certificate from the hands of his thesis supervisor, René Cobben, Agricultural University Wageningen (1977).

There, in 1966, Sakis first met his later wife, Hanneke van Albada. Hanneke, a student of agriculture from the Landbouwhogeschool Wageningen, the Netherlands, specialising in plant virology, also did practical training in the Entomology dept. of Benaki, as IAESTE exchange student, trying to collect and identify Greek aphids.

Parallel to finishing his studies, Sakis fulfilled the National Service as an officer in the Greek artillery, between October 1969 and November 1971. While in the army, Sakis made several expeditions and exercises in the Rhodopi area near the Bulgarian border. Hence his belief “how stupid are men, raising all these artificial borders to stop human beings from crossing, where all other creatures can move freely”. His free spirit made him outwit the strict rules of the military repeatedly, sometimes resulting in penalties.

1971 was a year of many highlights: on September 25, Sakis and Hanneke were married at St. Gerasimos church Zografu in Athens, and only a few weeks later (on November 13) Sakis graduated as an agriculturist from the Aristotle University Thessaloniki, immediately after having fulfilled his military service.

Sakis had obtained a one year scholarship for postgraduate studies of IAC (International Agricultural Centre) Wageningen, and soon after their wedding and Sakis' graduation, Sakis and Hanneke moved to the Netherlands. At the beginning Sakis studied the Hemiptera fauna at R.I.V.O.N. (National Institute for Biological Field Research in the scope of Nature Conservation) Leersum, where his finding of the abnormal sex ratio in *Muellerianella fairmairei* was followed up by his PhD research.

From January 1972 to June 1977 Sakis worked at the Agricultural University of Wageningen at the Laboratory of Entomology, Taxonomy Section, where he prepared his PhD under the supervision of the late Prof. Dr. R.H. Cobben (1925–1987). On November 9, 1977 he was awarded his PhD on the thesis “Biosystematic Studies on the *Muellerianella* complex (Delphacidae, Homoptera, Auchenorrhyncha)”.

Even early on in his scientific career, it became obvious that Sakis had determination, drive and dedication.

His long-time friend and colleague, Peter de Vrijer, Wageningen, remembers:

*“Sakis’ years in Wageningen, however, were not without obstacles. After the first year, for which he had a scholarship, he expressed the ambition to write his PhD-thesis. He had found an interesting subject in the biosystematics of the planthopper genus Muellerianella. However, it appeared impossible to find additional financial support, and so he was fully dependent on the income of his wife Hanneke, who was teaching at a school for laboratory training. Fortunately, the department of Entomology was very helpful in allowing him to make use of the necessary research facilities. A further obstacle was the fact that his diploma of Thessaloniki University did not allow direct admission to the PhD-programme in Wageningen, and so additional examinations in certain relevant subject areas were required. However, Sakis did not leave any doubt about his determination to achieve his goals. This was also demonstrated by the fact that two of his first papers were published in journals of international reputation. A key finding in his PhD-research, published in Nature, was the discovery that the abnormal sex ratio in populations of M. fairmairei was due to the presence, next to the normal diploid males and females, of a large number of triploid females, which were reproducing by ‘pseudogamy’, i.e. they were parthenogenetic but still required mating with males from the diploid population. A further major result, published in Evolution, was his demonstration that triploid females could be artificially produced by crossing M. fairmairei with its sibling species M. brevipennis and backcrossing the hybrid females with M. fairmairei males. During his time in Wageningen Sakis also*

*made his first steps on the international stage of entomology and participated in the second Auchennorrhyncha Meeting at Silwood Park (UK, 1975) where he made his first contacts with international colleagues, contacts of which several have lasted for the rest of his life.*

*Apart from his scientific activities Sakis was above all a very social person. Given the greek hospitality he was used to, back in Greece he liked to invite students and colleagues to his home for a drink and some 'mezeh'. Perhaps most of all he liked to be joined by friends when celebrating the traditional Greek Easter. One year he invited René and Wies Cobben with several more friends to celebrate Easter in his native village in Greece, a journey of which (at that time) the last part over a mountain track had to be made with his mother's donkey for carrying the luggage. In Skaloula, where there was then not even electricity, they enjoyed festivities with the traditional roasting of a lamb, and the dancing with traditional Greek music played on an old crank gramophone. In his last year in Wageningen Sakis wanted to celebrate Easter in Holland with a group of Dutch friends. For this purpose the traditional Easter lamb of his father was transported from Greece to Wageningen by a cousin, and roasted in the backyard of one of his friends.*

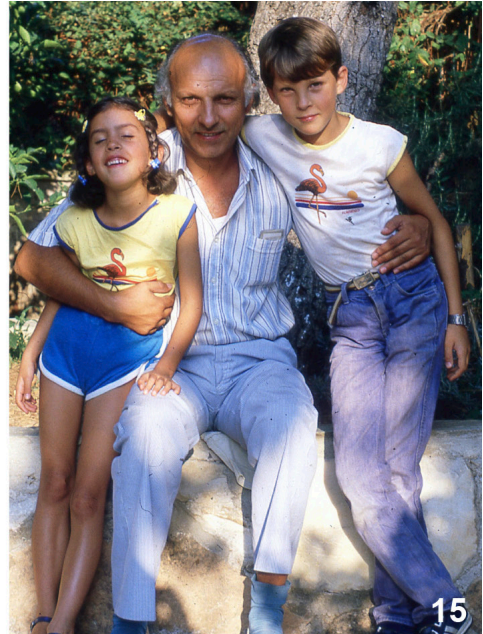
*Of course he also learned to appreciate some of the typical dutch habits, like making use of a bicycle in town, and not to forget certain culinary specialities, of which salted (raw) herring and 'boerenkool' (a mash of kale and potatoes) were his favourites."*

(P.W.F. de Vrijer, personal communication, used with permission).

In the "Dutch" period also fell the birth of Sakis' and Hanneke's children: Spyros (1976) and Loukía Myrtó (1977).

Although Sakis perceived his time in Wageningen as inspiring and certainly as the most influential in his scientific career, and although he had made many friends there, he was not only homesick for his native Greece, but felt he could serve his country better on location than from abroad. He briefly returned to Greece in June 1977 (when his PhD thesis was in press) where he had been offered a position at Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Kiphisia, Athens as curator of the laboratory of Agricultural Entomology. Soon after, in September 1977, he took two months leave from Benaki, on invitation from Wageningen, for the birth of his 2<sup>nd</sup> child and his PhD awarding ceremony. One week after having received his PhD degree, Sakis and his family moved to Greece (November 17, 1977).

Back in Greece and although being employed by a phytopathological institute, Sakis expanded his research focus from applied to fundamental entomology which was not met with unambiguous enthusiasm by his superiors. Sakis, however, was determined to contribute to the knowledge of the insect fauna of Greece, and not restrict his interest to insects of economic importance. An active and scientifically fruitful period commenced. Besides his research on the biology and control of Hemiptera of economic importance, he set out to explore and describe the Greek Hemiptera fauna, including zoogeographical and ecological aspects, and addressed the biosystematics of several complexes of Hemiptera sibling species. Most importantly, he built the first Hemiptera collection – with the help of his assistant Vaso Kapothanassi – in Greece, including more than 30.000 specimens, the majority collected by himself, representing more than 1.800 species. Approximately half of the material is identified. The collection includes several holotypes and numerous paratypes. This collection is now accommodated at the Agricultural University Athens.



Figs 14–16: Sakis and his immediate family.

**Fig. 14:** Sakis with his baby son Spyros (1976). **Fig. 15:** Sakis with his children Loukia and Spyros, Kiphisia, Athens (1984). **Fig. 16:** Sakis and Hanneke in front of Sakis' family home in Skaloula, 2005. Photo: M. Claridge



To accomplish the enormous task of inventorying the Hemiptera fauna of Greece, he initiated cooperations with other hemipterists, especially from the Philipps University, Marburg, Germany (R. Remane, M. Asche, H. Hoch, D. Kammerschen, S. Meyer-Arndt, P. Sittig), and from 1982 a period of intensive field work in Greece begun. During one of the early field trips in Northern Greece the idea of bringing together scientists interested in Hemiptera from all over Europe was born, and in 1983, Sakis organized the “First Mikrolimni Meeting” near Florina, on beautiful Lake Prespa. The meeting was the first of its kind in the Balkan area and was attended by 24 participants from Greece, Slovenia, Italy, Lebanon, England, Germany, Israel and the Netherlands. As it was perceived as very inspiring by all attendants, Sakis organized the “Second Mikrolimni Meeting” just 3 years later, in 1986. This series of conferences has since evolved into what is now the “European Hemiptera Congress”, the first of its kind being organized by Sakis in Amaliapolis in 1998, and is regarded the main forum for research on Hemiptera in Europe.

Figs 17–19: Sakis organizing international conferences.

**Fig. 17:** Sakis, together with Trichoptera specialist Hans Malicky, Lunz, Austria (left), and Hemipterist Jiri Dlabola, Prague (right), on the occasion of the Congress “Zoogeography and Ecology of Greece and Adjacent Regions”, Athens (1981). **Fig. 18:** Hemipterists gather at Sakis’ house in Athens on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> International Auchenorrhyncha Congress, held in Delphi (1993). From left to right – back row: Manfred Asche, S. Dako, Sakis; front row: Hani Abdul-Nour (Lebanon), Heidi Günthart (Switzerland), Hannelore Hoch, Peter de Vrijer (Netherlands), Valentina Kuznetsova (Russia), Loukia Drosopoulou, Athens, Dima Shcherbakov (Russia), Hildegard Strübing (Germany). **Fig. 19:** Another Hemipterists’ gathering at Sakis’ house in Athens, on the occasion of the First European Hemiptera Congress, held in Amaliapolis, Volos, 1998. From left to right: Tatiana Emeljanova (Russia), Pavel Lauterer (Czech Republic), Sakis, Alexander F. Emeljanov (Russia), Reinhard Remane (Germany).



Sakis also organized the “2<sup>nd</sup> Congress on the Zoogeography of Greece and Adjacent Countries” and kept this duty until the 8<sup>th</sup> congress in the series in May 1999.

Sakis was a regular and enthusiastic attendant of all International Auchenorrhyncha Congresses since 1975, and was elected as member of the “International Organizing Committee” in 1990. In 1993, he organized the 8<sup>th</sup> International Auchenorrhyncha Congress in Delphi, which will remain unforgettable for all attendants due to the high scientific quality of contributions, the lovely environment, and the friendly atmosphere.

As Sakis felt he needed to pass on his knowledge on the overall importance of insects and his enthusiasm for the exploration of the biodiversity of his country, his academic career took a new turn: in 1990, he was elected to be Associate Professor of biosystematics of agricultural pests at the Agricultural University Athens and took his oath in 1991, and was promoted to be Full Professor at AUA in 1999. He taught biosystematics on a graduate level and organized yearly excursions to Lake Plastiras, Siatista (Mt Vourinos), Konitsa (Aaos and Voidomati River valleys), Ioannina, and once to Ikaria. On weekends, he would take students to areas close to Athens (Tatoi) on a regular basis.

His knowledge and his eagerness to pass it on as well as his free spirit and his non-conformist attitude made him very popular with the students, but not always paved the way to conflict-free interactions with his colleagues. His trust in what he had believed to be like-minds was disappointed repeatedly, at times causing considerable frustration and sorrow. Luckily, Sakis managed to counterbalance negative emotions in the majority of cases with trips to his birthplace, Skaloula, and its pristine environment. His vision was to keep the area that way and he first presented a proposal for the foundation of a National Park with a focus on ecotourism (rather than mundane tourism) at the first international congress of people from Roumeli. He loved to watch the sky at night, and was fascinated to be able to see the galaxy clearly due to the lack of light pollution in the area.

Although Sakis’ research interests mainly focused on the Hemiptera as model taxa, they were broad in respect to scientific questions. He initiated and/or took an active part in collaborative projects on the national, european and international level.

In 1988–1989 Sakis conducted a biannual joint research program with his colleague M. Loukas, Agricultural University Athens, on the leafhopper *Empoasca*, a pest on grapevine, which was funded by the Ministry of Agriculture. Another research programme, in collaboration with Mike Claridge and Malcolm Gillham, University of Cardiff, Wales, and M. Loukas, Agricultural University Athens, aimed to better understand the biology, ecology and economic importance of the species and host-related populations of *Alebra* (Cicadellidae, Typhlocybinae) was part funded by the British Council from 1988–1992.

While economically important leaf- and planthoppers remained one of his main interests, Sakis was always interested in the diversity, biology and ecology of the Hemiptera in general.

Over the years, Sakis also carried out several environmental studies in Greece, inventorying the fauna and flora of various areas such as Mt Vourinos – Siatista, Aaos river, Mesologghi wetlands, Nisyros Island and Mt Ochi – Evia.



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Figs20–24: Sakis doing what he enjoyed most outside of science.

**Fig. 20:** Making his own wine, 2005. Photo: M. Claridge **Fig. 21:** Preparing fire for a BBQ, 2010. Photo: M. Claridge **Fig. 22:** Giving a talk at the Greek Philatelic Society. **Fig. 23:** Enjoying fresh seafood in the company of friends in picturesque surroundings, 2000. Photo: M. Asche **Fig. 24:** Playing with his cat Bibiko, 2000. Photo: H. Hoch

A long-standing bilateral cooperation with Germany had been initiated in 1980, upon Sakis' initial visit to Marburg in 1980. It was formally established in 1982, entitled "Ecology, Taxonomy, Zoogeography and Economic Importance of Hemiptera in Greece", and funded by a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) scholarship and a grant



Figs 25–27: Sakis and his sources of inspiration.

**Fig. 25:** Fieldwork! **Fig. 26:** Interacting with colleagues – here with a team of scientists in Thailand (1994). **Fig. 27:** Interacting with students – here during an excursion.

from the German Ministry of Research and Education. In 1983 and 1986 Sakis stayed for prolonged periods at Philipps-University Marburg (cooperation with R. Remane, H. Remmert, M. Asche, H. Hoch), and until the end of the decade a period of intensive field work in Greece followed. Collections of leaf- and planthoppers were made in areas which had hardly or never been sampled before (e.g., the mountains of northern and north-eastern Greece: Pindos, Rhodopi, Vourinos; the Dodekanes Islands: Samos, Ikaria, Kos, Rhodos; the Ionian Islands as well as Chios and Lesbos) and as a result, the Hemiptera fauna of Greece is now among the best studied and most species-rich in Europe.



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Figs28–33: Sakis with some of his many colleague-friends.

**Fig. 28:** Rauno Linnavuori, Finland (1991). **Fig. 29:** Mike Claridge, Cardiff, (picture taken in Athens, 2005 (used with permission from CRC-Press, Taylor and Francis). **Fig. 30:** Manfred Asche, Berlin. Photo: H. Hoch **Fig. 31:** Heidi Günthart (Zürich), picture taken in Berlin, 2002. Photo: H. Hoch **Fig. 32:** Pavel Lauterer (Brno), picture taken in Greece, 1995. **Fig. 33:** Matija Gogala and Tomi Trilar (Ljubljana), picture taken in Evia, with Mt. Dirfis in the background, 2007, (published in: GOGALA M. 2013: On the trail of Mountain Cicadas. – Royal Entomological Society, London).

In 1994, Sakis expanded his research activities outside Europe through a collaborative project with Peter Markham, John Innes Research Centre, University of Norwich, on the “Variation in the two viruses of rice tungro complex and in their major leafhopper vector, *Nephotettix virescens*”. The project ran until 1997 and included fieldwork in Thailand, Malaysia and Philippines, and Sakis instructed colleagues from the three countries in cytological and field techniques.

Around the year 2000, Sakis’ interest in the origin of polymorphism and ecology of spittlebugs intensified and in collaboration with the team around A. Maryanska-Nadachovska, Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals, Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland, and V. G. Kuznetsova, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St Petersburg, Russia, a bilateral program on the “Cytogenetic and Molecular studies on European species and their populations of the spittle bug *Philaenus* species complex”, supported by the Polish Academy of Science, brought about interesting results.

Also, at the same time, Sakis became increasingly intrigued by the richness of the cicada fauna of his country, and became involved in various collaborative projects with M.F. Claridge and J. Morgan, University of Cardiff, Wales, the team around J. Quartau, University of Lisbon, Portugal, as well as M. Gogala and T. Trilar, Slovenian Natural History Museum, Ljubljana, Slovenia. The early years of this collaboration for the workers from Wales, Greece and Portugal were generously supported by the British Council. A beautiful summary of some of the work is given in the recent book, “On the trail of Mountain Cicadas”, by Matija Gogala in English (2013, Royal Entomological Society), originally published in Slovenian (2011). In this book there are many excellent pictures of cicadas and of various field sites and major cicada workers, including several of Sakis and his house in Skaloula.

His expertise on herbivorous insects was widely acknowledged through invited lectures, e.g., on the occasion of the celebration of 40 years Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, 1987, at the founding congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology, Basel, 1987 and on the foundation of the Network on Plant-Insect Interactions, Oslo, 1991.

Sakis supervised numerous graduate and several PhD students, already when still employed at Benaki, many of which have become almost members of the Drosopoulos family, and some have obtained important academic positions.

In the scientific community of Greece, Sakis played a significant role. He served on the Board of the Hellenic Zoological Society since 1979, and was President twice. He was an active member of the Greek Entomological Society, the Greek Association of Ecologists, and representative in the EPTA (Club of 7), the coordinative organ of collaboration of seven different Greek Natural-Historical Societies on matters of preservation of nature and environment.

Apart from editing the proceedings of various congresses, Sakis was a member of the editorial board of the “Fauna Graeciae”, edited by the Greek Zoological Society, a member of the editorial board of the “Red Data Book”, edited by the Greek Zoological and Ornithological Societies, and a member of the advisory board of the journal “Deutsche Entomologische Zeitschrift”.

As a milestone contribution to the research field of insect acoustic behaviour, he edited together with Mike Claridge, the multi-authored book: *Insect Sounds and Communication. Physiology, Behaviour, Ecology and Evolution*. which was published in 2006 by CRC-Press, Taylor and Francis Group, Boca Raton, Florida. This publication arose from a symposium organized by Sakis and Mike C in 2002 at the European Congress of Entomology, held at Thessaloniki. At the suggestion of Professor Tom Miller, University of California, Riverside, USA, it was decided to publish the contributions to that symposium and to expand it considerably, resulting in the final 500 page plus book. The book was well received and still provides a valuable reference source for research workers on acoustic behaviour.

In his scientific career Sakis always put concentration on scientific content before influence, power and recognition. His main goal was to contribute to the knowledge of Hemiptera, their behaviour, their distribution, their ecology and their evolution. He was interested in the process of speciation and adaptation, always taking into consideration the whole organism with all its properties. He believed in the concept of biosystematics as an over-all-inclusive branch of science, and he detested reductionist thinking.

In March 2011, Sakis was awarded the first “Insect Drummer Award” of the German Entomological Society, together with Mike Claridge (Cardiff University, Wales, UK) and Hildegard Strübing (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany), in recognition of his outstanding contribution to research on acoustic communication in insects, on the occasion of the society’s biannual meeting held at Humboldt-University in Berlin, Germany.

Apart from being a great communicator of science, Sakis was also a great facilitator. Apart from his many merits in organizing congresses, Sakis – together with his wife Hanneke – offered his generous hospitality to many researchers active in Greece (apart from the authors, these include Pavel Lauterer, Matija Gogala, Tomi and Katharina Trilar, Vladimir Gnezdilov, Rauno Linnavuori, José Quartau, Silke Meyer-Arndt, Doris Kammerschen, Petra Sittig, René Cobben, Peter de Vrijer, Malcolm Gilham, John Morgan, Fer Willemse, Jérôme Sueur, Irina Dworakowska, to name only a few) and helped organize their field work, in many cases accompanying them on excursions for days or even weeks. Sakis was also very good in getting things done, even if those were a bit out of the ordinary. Sakis had the extraordinary gift to make people offer him what he wanted, be it the spontaneous booking of the “king’s cabin” on a overnight ferry to Piraeus in a heavy storm, or a busride out of the regular schedule in order to save his group of colleagues a 10 km walk at the end of an excursion.

Sakis was an enthusiastic collector, even outside the field of entomology. He almost fanatically collected stamps (with focus on Greece, Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany) and was a member of the Hellenic Philatelic Society for many years. In 1995, he was an invited speaker at the yearly celebration of the Greek stamp. He was also a serious collector of Euro coins, and – before mobile phones became available and popular – phone cards.

As much as Sakis was a dedicated scientist, he was a great companion: when being with him, one could be sure to have a good time. He knew countless phantastic restaurants, ouzeria, coffee places. He thoroughly enjoyed high-quality food, preferably fresh seafood, or anything that had been grown in or around Skaloula, and good wine. The best wine, of course, he produced himself, in a ceremony that he held almost sacred for many years. He

loved music, especially traditional Greek music, and was a talented and passionate dancer himself. He was most happy in the company of family and friends, at BBQs (especially the ones at Easter in Athens and Skaloula will be treasured memories by all who had the great privilege to attend) with *arnaki* (lamb) and *kokoretsi* (lamb intestines on a stick) and many other Greek specialties. He and Hanneke always generously shared these pleasures with family, friends and friends of friends, and always kept an open house.

Following the death of his father, at age 90, in December 2001, Sakis renovated the family house in Skaloula and made plans to create his personal laboratory there which he was hoping to use after his retirement from the university. His mother died a few years later in July 2005, at age 89.

Sakis also was a great family man. He and Hanneke were happily married for more than 42 years, and he was immensely proud of his daughter Loukia (who obtained a PhD in Musicology from the University of York in 2009), his son Spyros (who received a PhD in Psychology from the University of Lübeck, Germany, in 2007) and his granddaughter, Laura (born in 1996).

For us, the authors of this text, Sakis was a great and precious friend. You could confide every fact of your life and your most intimate thoughts and emotions to him, and be sure he would not give you away. You could always count on him, and his “trust your philos” was not an empty formula. He had a phantastic sense of humour and we all had many good laughs together. Sakis made sure to always stay in touch with his friends and keep the bond of friendship intact even over long distances. And he was so refreshingly unpretentious.

Sakis took retirement on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The last years of his life were somewhat overshadowed by declining health, and increasing worries about the economic and societal problems of his country, the ever-present global conflicts, ecological catastrophes and ongoing warfare in so many parts of the world. Yet, he kept enjoying the simple things in life, and until the end was convinced that “nothing can happen to us”, a term which was first coined during the early days of field work in Greece after we (M.A., H.H. and Sakis) had stocked up on supplies for camping, but had taken on a much more comprehensive meaning over the years.

Sakis has left a substantial scientific footprint and an even larger gap in the hearts of all who love him. His personality and his friendship will be sorely missed.

The authors wish to thank Hanneke van Albada-Drosopoulou, Athens, for biographical information, and Peter de Vrijer, Wageningen, for sharing personal memories. Photo credits are given in the legends; if not indicated otherwise, photoarchive H. van Albada-Drosopoulou. Roland Mühlethaler, Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, kindly provided the layout of the photo plates.

### List of publications

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