

Iceland and Mid-Ocean Ridges. S. Björnsson (Editor). Vísindafélag Islendinga, Reykjavík, 1967, 209 pp., 65 illus., U.S.\$8.50

Amongst the many symposia on mid-ocean ridges and continental drift, the symposium of which this publication is the result, stands on its own for two reasons. First the subject is one of the very few areas in which a mid-ocean ridge has uncovered itself from its surrounding ocean, and second the symposium is based exclusively on the research by inhabitants of the same area. Earth sciences have been an under-developed subject in Iceland, where for many centuries the main interest has been in the humanities. Even in the 1950's Dr. Sigurdur Thorarinsson, the well known volcanologist, complained that he was known in Iceland itself not because he is an earth scientist, but because he is a poet. Therefore, taking into account that the re-birth of earth sciences in Iceland has occurred at about the same time as the discovery of mid-oceanic ridges, one can but wonder at the quick and healthy growth of both.

The subjects covered are grouped under petrology, geophysics and geology of Iceland. Although this is sometimes not discussed in the papers themselves, almost everybody seems to be a convinced "drifter". One notable exception is, at least in part, Professor Trausti Einarsson in his attack on the newest ideas on sea floor spreading (pp.105-107). He proposes three volcanological models (of which the volcano-tectonic model of number 2 has much appeal to me) through which a similar geographical situation of magnetic anomalies could be realized.

Although the quality of the papers is high and the insights obtained are rewarding and modern, I should have still preferred the inclusion of some more factual data. For instance, in Gudmundur Sigwaldason's paper on the chemistry of basalts, the 43 analyses known are promised, but not produced. In Kristján Seamundsson's paper on southwestern Iceland the map lists a number of central volcanoes, and even from a glance at the topographical map one wonders what exactly is considered to be a central volcano by the author, and what is not. Whereas on his map of Iceland, a belt of Early Quaternary volcanics runs north into the peninsula between Húnafljörður and Skagafjörður, for which no evidence at all is presented.

But, aside from these criticisms, the book gives us a remarkably good insight into the state of the art of earth sciences in Iceland, and promises that many more results will follow in the future.

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