

TRAIAN ORGHIDAN (1917–1985) – A DISTINGUISHED ROMANIAN HYDROBIOLOGIST AND BIOSPELEOLOGIST

Traian Orghidan was born on the 27th of February 1917 in the locality of Onești–Plugari, Iași county. He attended the high school in Brașov and Bucharest. After he finished the Science Faculty at the University of Bucharest (1941), he functioned for two years as a geologist at the Columbia–Petrol Society under the direction of Prof. I. Atanasiu. Noted by Professor Constantin Motaș, he worked at the Zoological Station from Cumpătu–Sinaia, first as an assistant (1943–1948), then as a laboratory chief (1948–1950). During these years, he elaborated his doctoral thesis named “Contributions to the knowledge of the Anostracan Phylopoda from the P. R. Romania”. Presenting in 1949 his thesis at the Faculty of Biology in Bucharest, T. Orghidan obtained the qualificative “very good with distinction”.

In 1950, Traian Orghidan was named a lecturer at the Iași University, the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the Chair of Zoology. In 1951, he was transferred to the Faculty of Biology at the University of Bucharest where he took over the course and the laboratory works of Hydrobiology until 1956. During the years 1952–1954, the author of this paper organized the first Hydrobiology Scientific Circle of the Students under the competent guidance of the young lecturer. Starting the hydrobiologic study of the Snagov Lake, our Circle presented some communications on the basis of the material collected from this lake and gained the first place at the Sesion of the Scientific Circles from Bucharest, then at the Circles from the entire country. Also in the period 1951–1956, Traian Orghidan coordinated, with remarkable results, the Speologic Team from Bucharest, founded by him under the care of the Geologic Committee, formed by four researchers. Beside him, the team counted Margareta Dumitrescu, Professor of Vertebrate Zoology and a specialist in bats, Jana Tanasache, assistant of Professor Dumitrescu and specialist in Hydracarina, and Valeriu Pușcariu, ex-assistant of Professor Emil Racoviță from Cluj and then of Professor Radu Codreanu in Bucharest, an old speleologist and strong contender for the protection of nature.

After prolonged interventions at the officials of the time responsible for science and culture, T. Orghidan and Margareta Dumitrescu succeeded to obtain, on 21 June 1956, a Decision of the Minister Council no. 1189 for the founding of an **Institute of Speleology** with its center in Bucharest and a subsidiary in Cluj. As a director was named Professor Constantin Motaș, a zoologist of world repute, just released from the communist prisons on 25 April 1956 after seven years of political detention. As deputy director was named the main initiator, lecturer Traian Orghidan; the **Biospeleology Division** had a chief in the person of Professor Margareta Dumitrescu, Jana Tanasachi

as a principal researcher and two researchers: Ștefan Negrea and Ionel Tabacaru. The **Geology-Palontology Division** had Dr. E. Jekelius as a chief, a researcher, Petre Samson and a preparator, Matei Ghica. A laboratory assistant, Matache Cuza and a secretary, biologist Maria Georgescu, completed the team. The **Cluj Subsidiary** had a chief in the person of Dr. Dan Coman, and Mihai Șerban, Iosif Viehmann and Cornel Pleșa as researchers – the first three being disciples of Emil Racoviță.

In fact, this was not a new institute, as may seem from the official act, but the reorganization of the old Institute of Speleology founded in Cluj, in 1920, by Emil Racoviță – an institute barely functioning in the framework of the University of Cluj under the guidance of Professor Orest Marcu after the death, in 1947, of Emil Racoviță.

From the moment he took over the function of deputy director in 1956 and until his death – at only 68 years in Paris (27 May 1985) – the destiny of T. Orghidan was intertwined with that of the Institute of Speleology “Emil Racoviță” which he led as a director after the retirement of C. Motaș (1963).

Creator of a new school of hydrobiology and, especially, of biospeleology, Traian Orghidan invested all his heart and energy in the reorganization in a modern and dynamic perspective of our Institute. An explorer by excellence, he studied numerous caves, rocks and sediments, rivers and subterranean waters, fossils and vestiges of human culture both in Romania and abroad. He took part in speleological events and even organized expeditions abroad: Bulgaria (1966), ex-Yougoslavia (1967), the Balearic Islands (1970, 1971), Cuba (1970, 1973, 1975) and Venezuela (1975, 1982). As an excellent zoologist and ecologist, his name is tied to the discovery and description of new environments: hyporheic (1955), lithoclastic (1964) and hygropetric (1962). Also, he described numerous taxa: species and genera of Anostraca, Cladocera, Hydracarina, Pseudoscorpionida, etc. Another permanent preoccupation was the biology and repartition of the Romanian Chiroptera, for which he teamed up with Margareta Dumitrescu and Jana Tanasache. Materialized in more than one hundred scientific and vulgarization papers, the results of his researches bear testimony in the specialized libraries. In many of these papers, the author emphasized the importance of protecting the beauty of the caves, of the environment. Among others, his name is tied to the declaration of the Cloșani Cave as a speleological reserve and its partial transformation into a subterranean laboratory for the study of the cavernicol fauna.

Also, Traian Orghidan had a rich activity as a publisher. Thus, as a director of the *Travaux de l'Institut de Spéologie “Émile Racovitza”*, he published a volume each year in collaboration with Ionel Tabacaru, the editorial secretary of this revue. He also published the memorial volumes dedicated to the centenary of the birth of Émile Racovitza (1970) and the semi-centenary of the Institute of Speleology (1973). Between 1973–1983, he published, along with Ștefan Negrea (volumes 1–3) and Vasile Decu (volume 4), the results of the Romanian-Cuban expeditions in Cuba. In 1987, he published together with V. Decu the volume about the expedition in

Venezuela. In 1979, together with Șt. Negrea, he published the volume *Speologia* from the monographic series the *Iron Gates* of the Danube; this volume received the “Emil Racoviță” prize of the Romanian Academy.

Traian Orghidan was the representative of the Romanian Speleology at some International Congresses of Speleology: Vienna (1961), Ljubljana (1965), Stuttgart (1969) and Olomouc (1973). He also participated in the annual meetings of the Director Committee of the Subterranean Laboratory from Moulis (1970–1984), at the Congress of Arachnology from Paris (1968) and other international meetings. He was a correspondent member of the Natural History Museum in Paris, member of the International Union of Speleology, of the Biological Society from Venezuela and other societies as a recognition of his scientific value and as an appreciation of his speleological activity.

I knew our Master – as we all called Traian Orghidan with affection and respect – as a man, teacher and researcher. I also knew very well his four passions: speleology, photography, violin and...tobacco. I still see him studying at the microscope with the pipe or the cigarette in the corner of his mouth (even when he spoke) or playing passionately the violin. I remember my three professors – C. Motaș, T. Orghidan and Margareta Dumitrescu – under whose guidance the researchers of the Institute of Speleology became a fresh research force that made possible the second blooming period of the Romanian biospeleology (after the period of Emile Racovitza) with results of an international standard. I remember his lectures richly illustrated with color slides always made by him, the discussions in the laboratory prolonged until late at night with provocative questions and contradictory answers. Without doubt, the Master was a special man. He was an artist by nature and a non-conformist. From the faculty and until his unexpected death in Paris in full creative power, he had been for us, his pupils, a parent, a brother and a friend at the same time. There was no protocol in his attitude, nothing distant, neither as a professor at the faculty, nor, later, as our director. Whenever we needed an explanation, a scientific or personal suggestion, whatever the place or hour, we rushed into his laboratory and shared with him our problems. This door was always open and he was always available. He never said he was busy or had no time. There are so many memories bonding me with our Master...

Excellent follower of Emil Racovitza and Constantin Motaș's speleological work, Traian Orghidan knew to how to earn a special place both in the heart of his collaborators and of all those who knew him. This distinguished scientist with a vast culture, was endowed with a sensibility for art and music. Often, in relaxed moments, he transported us with his violin in the world of Bach and Enescu...

Traian Orghidan will remain in the history of science as a model of work and devotion for the promotion of the Romanian Biospeleology and Speleology.

Ștefan Negrea