

OUR PROFESSOR – ON HIS 85th BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

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*“A true professor leaves his mark upon eternity;
He will never know how far his influence may reach.”
Henry Brooks Adams*



We are all busily running in a tumultuous world, oriented towards future, frequently forgetting that – actually – we belong to nature, to which our whole existence is subdued. We only rarely take our time to adequately honour our predecessors, under whose guidance we have become what we are today.

This is such a moment. A moment in which all members of the academic community at the Faculty of Biology of Alma Mater Iassiensis are paying homage to a most dear master of ours, a pathfinder and school founder, THE PROFESSOR of numerous generations of biologists – Constantin TOMA, member of the Romanian Academy, for celebrating the golden age he will soon reach.

A worthy follower of his ancestors, the true pillars of our nation, eager to know and severe with himself, facing the difficulties and burdens of the history, he followed the path of his masters, whose confidence he gained by his acknowledged professional achievements.

Worth mentioning in this respect are his ample contributions to the development of several directions of research in the field of phytobiology, such as: floristics; chorology and phytosociology; dendrology and phenology, along with general blastogeny, the morphology and structure of stipules of leguminous plants; physiology, experimental and radiogenetic anatomy; cytology, embriology and *in vitro* tissue cultures or carpology and biology of sexuality; ecological anatomy, morphology, histology and special anatomy (buds-leaves) or medicinal herbs, trees, ornamental shrubs, halophytes; xylotomy and phytochemistry, all these directions

being considered against the background of a new integralistic concept for vegetal organisms: structure – functions – living environment.

The results thus obtained have been materialized in more than 400 original studies, 21 monographs, treatises and atlases, 10 university courses, among which two treatises and two scientific chapters were published by prestigious national (Publishing House of the Romanian Academy) and international (SPRINGER) Publishing Houses¹. To these, one should add 120 papers devoted to the history of biology (anniversary and commemorative insets), 100 popularization papers, 38 reviews and 15 synthesis lectures, an impressive scientific production, required, consulted and cited by more than 80 specialists of the field all over the world, four of his volumes having been awarded with the “Emanoil Teodorescu” Prize of the Romanian Academy.

An endowed, scrupulous and hardworking investigator, always present in the amphitheatre, in the field and in the laboratory, a skilful organizer of the practical activities of his students, our Professor was the soul of the Laboratory of Vegetal Morphology and Anatomy, which was always open and accessible to all those eager to discover the secrets of plants: students and PhD candidates, researchers, didactic staff of preuniversity structures; in this way, under his guidance, the *Iași School of Plant Morpho-anatomy* was established and extended by the creation of a *Laboratory of Electronic Microscopy*, for the specialists trained – once again at the initiative of its manager – in similar laboratories of Romania and abroad, a school now entitledly recognized at both national and international level. Along the years, 35 young biologists have elaborated their PhD theses under the guidance of Professor Toma, many of them nowadays reputed representatives of the Romanian and European botanical community.

At the same time, Professor Constantin Toma developed an extremely varied and rich managerial activity in the academic community of the faculty, university and also at national level, in various positions, such as: deputy dean, scientific secretary, head of department (three electoral mandates), dean of the Faculty of Biology (two mandates), general chancellor of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, manager of the Botanical Gardens of Iași, manager of the Institute of Biological Researches of Iași, member of the National Council of Academic Evaluation and Accreditation, member in the Commission of Biology of the National Council of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates Validation/Attestation.

¹ MARIUS-NICUȘOR GRIGORE, LĂCRĂMIOARA IVĂNESCU, **CONSTANTIN TOMA**, 2014, *Halophytes: An Integrative Anatomical Study*, Springer International Publishing, 548 pp., ISBN: 978-3-319-05728-6 (print), ISBN: 978-3-319-05729-3 (online) (Emil Racovita Award of the Romanian Academy for the year 2014).

MARIUS-NICUȘOR GRIGORE, **CONSTANTIN TOMA**, 2017, *Anatomical Adaptation of Halophytes. A Review of Classic Literature and Recent Findings*, Springer International Publishing, 338 pp., ISBN: 978-3-319-66479-8 (print), ISBN: 978-3-319-66480-4 (eBook)

As a gifted artisan of writing, our Professor held important positions in the Editorial Boards of reputed scientific publications of the field, of which mention should be made of: director of *COLUMNA*, journal of the Romanian Academy, Editor-in-chief of *Romanian Journal of Plant Biology* (Romanian Academy) and of *Analele Științifice ale Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași –seria Biologie vegetală*, member of the scientific boards of several publications issued in București, Pitești, Arad, Oradea, Bacău, Iași, Craiova, Huși, Vaslui.

The scientific activity and the didactic gift of Professor Constantin Toma, as well as his full involvement in civic actions were rewarded, along the years, as a sign of well-deserved recognition of his professionalism, with invitations of joining 10 Romanian scientific societies and foundations, alongwith high academic positions at both national and international level, such as: corresponding member of the Romanian Academy (1991) and full member since 2010, honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Moldova (2011), and numerous prizes and distinctions: professor emeritus (1982), "Meritul pentru Învățământ în grad de Cavaler" Order (2004), *Emeritus Professor* of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași (2005), The Prize of the Romanian Academy for 4 scientific volumes (1978, 2000, 2002, 2016), the Titles of "Doctor Honoris Causa" of several Romanian universities (University of Bacău – 2005; "Vasile Goldiș" University of Arad – 2008; University of Oradea – 2009; "Apollonia" University of Iași – 2010), and "Honorary Citizen" of his natal village – Gugești (2011) and of the City of Iași (2019).

As a prestigious representative of vegetal biology at both regional and national level, Professor Toma has been invited to numerous specialization and documentation stages at reputed international universities of Louvain, Moscova, Budapest, Kishinew, Paris, Madrid, Lisboa, Geneva, Manchester, Rome, Camerino, Frankfurt, Izmir, Vienna, Sofia, an opportunity for him to introduce his younger colleagues in a fruitful scientific circuit, facilitating their participation to multiple manifestations and meetings organized in almost all countries of Europe.

As an equally gifted speaker, always ready to communicate with a large public, captivating his audience by the subtle arguments of his discourse, Professor Constantin Toma represented and continues to represent, by his professionalism, our faculty at highest levels, as its authorized and unanimously acknowledged leader.

A unique master, by the elegance, precision and distinctness of his verb, emblematic in his conduct and scientific authority, manifested in the amphitheatre, laboratory and in the field, highly esteemed, loved and sometimes feared of, Professor Constantin TOMA came to represent, over time, a genuine model and symbol for all students he trained and formed, year after year, along half of a century, in the amphitheatres of the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, sometimes decisively influencing the professional destiny of many of the disciples who are now working at his side.

A courageous and enthusiastic spirit in decisive moments of the high education community, which he devotedly served for almost half a century, never giving up verticality, always confident in the final triumph of truth, capable of raising after a fall and capable of forgiveness, he consolidated and developed, together with his illustrious colleagues, a unitary, powerful and modern Faculty of Biology, recognized as a reference center of Romanian biology and not only.

Distinguished and sober, extremely discreet, reserved in manifesting his feelings, yet kind and warm with his mates, paying a high esteem to our predecessors, always interested and involved in training and educating the young generations of his students, endowed with unique artistic sensitivity, refined and versed admirer of the beauty of nature and of art, Professor Constantin TOMA, victorious of many challenges he had to face along the years of his life, is now, on his 85 birth anniversary, happily enjoying the admiration and love of all his colleagues, contributors, team members, relatives and friends and their heartily and most sincere wish: “LA MULȚI ANI CU MULTĂ SĂNĂTATE! – MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THE DAY AND GOOD HEALTH!”