

IN HONOUR OF THE 80 YEARS OLD TAMÁS PÓCS

E. FARKAS

*Institute of Ecology and Botany, Centre for Ecological Research
Hungarian Academy of Sciences, H-2163 Vácrátót, Alkotmány u. 2–4, Hungary
E-mail: farkas.edit@okologia.mta.hu*



The year 2013 was dedicated to a special anniversary. Professor Tamás Pócs, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was celebrated both in Hungary and abroad on the occasion of his 80th birthday since he was born on 6 August 1933. He received the Hedwig Medal from the International Association of Bryologists in July 2013. A volume of the Polish Botanical Journal was also dedicated to him and launched during the same event, the IAB Conference in London (Wołowski *et al.* 2013). Several publications have already summarised his activity and were dedicated to him in this volume and 10 years ago, too (Orbán 2003, Orbán and Péntesné Kónya 2013, Péntesné Kónya 2003). The 2nd Conference of Cryptogams was organised in Eger (with the

title “II. Aktuális eredmények a kriptogám növények kutatásában Konferencia”), Hungary on 30 September–1 October 2013. A volume is planned to be published in *Acta Biologica Plantarum Agriensis*, 2013.

Herewith the Committee on Diversity Biology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences wishes to honour its highly respected member and former president on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

The original text of this paper was prepared for a lecture presented in honour of his 70th birthday (in the framework of a session of the Botanical Section of the Hungarian Biological Society, on 8 December 2003). The lecture concentrated on the effect of Tamás Pócs on lichenology – not mentioning in detail other fields treated in other publications mentioned above. After re-reading the text, it was surprising to discover that practically all words are valid even today. Therefore the author decided to publish the original text after minor changes indispensable for the written form, adding only a few updates and literature citations.

Botany became the interest of academician Tamás Pócs already at his teenage years, when he started to collect practically all groups of phanero-gamic and cryptogamic plants. He attended Ödön Szatala’s lichen course and this greatly influenced his special interest in lichens. After graduation, in 1956 he started to work in the Botany Department of the Hungarian Natural History Museum, in his first working place. Then, in 1962 he moved to the Teacher’s College, Eger. He acted as scientific advisor and the head of Botany Department of the Research Institute of Botany, Vác-rátót from 1978, (from 1984 – Institute of Ecology and Botany). In 1983 the title Honorary Professor was donated to him by the Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Between 1985 and 1990 he was teaching at the Sokoine Agricultural University in Morogoro, Tanzania. In 1991 he returned to Eger as the head of the Botany Department and deputy head of the college. He became the member of two academies, in 1992 – member of the Norwegian Academy of Sciences, and in 1995 – member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. His scientific activity turned from Hungarian habitats towards tropical rainforests. Also, additionally to the interest on higher plants, he started to focus on the taxonomy and biogeography of epiphyllous liverworts. Nowadays, he is a keen researcher of the cryptobiotic soil crusts, mainly the cyanobacterial representatives. This led to the study of Martian life conditions concerning such questions like the possibility of simple life-forms on planet Mars.

However, what is the role of Tamás Pócs in lichenology? And what does he mean for me being a lichenologist?

Astonishing to realise that it was only 3 years (1982–1985), when we were working on cryptogamic organisms together in a research group in Vác-rátót. As an assistant researcher I had my first office in the corner of his working

room, where he acted as the head of the Department of Botany and Botanical Garden. On the desk I kept my first “institutional pencil”, the red pencil-sharpener of the shape of a western hat and soon the first reprints, the monograph of *Usnea* by Motyka (1936, 1938) and the foliicolous lichen monograph by Santesson (1952) – all received from my supervisor, Tamás Pócs.

As an addition, I received a question too – if I was interested in joining the work – the foliicolous lichen research, Dr Antonín Vězda was focusing on through decades. In the same time, he was the coauthor of the additional keys to European lichens, the famous “Bestimmungsschlüssel europäischer Flechten” (Poelt and Vězda 1978, 1981). He identified tropical (including also foliicolous) collections of Tamás Pócs (cf. Farkas *et al.* 2010a, b).

In this way I received opportunities and expectations – what else could mean more for a beginner scientist? It was not an essential question that Tamás was not a lichenologist himself. As a supervisor he could help in several other fields, e.g. taxonomy, nomenclature, or how to collect and study literature sources, how to start writing papers in English.

That is all about the personal side of it, however let's see more general matters concerning lichenology in Hungary. What led him to this point, where he is now widely known by lichenologists, not only by bryologists or botanists all over the world?

First of all he started to collect lichens among cryptogamic organisms. His early collections from the Bükk, Mátra, Mecsek, South Zala, Vendvidék are kept in the Hungarian Natural History Museum, these represent 74 specimens. One of the earliest was a specimen of *Chaenotheca hispidula*, collected at Kerkafalva in Órség, on 29 December 1949 at the age of 16.

He soon realised the importance of collecting further specimens in the research of cryptogams. The repeated examination of the existing herbarium specimens by more recent methods may lead to limited results. Often new collections bring such characters not seen in former ones and so represent the missing link in theories of taxonomy or in distribution of species.

Exsiccate collections are especially valuable in this respect. The multiple specimens arriving to several herbaria of the world make comparative studies possible in the same time. Therefore the specimens, Tamás Pócs collected for exsiccates (mostly for *Lichenes Selecti Exsiccati*), are valuable for a larger scientific community.

While he was teaching in Eger, it was also a key interest for him to form a cryptogamic research group. Anna Kiszely-Vámosi studied the lichens of the nearby Bükk and Mátra Mts and also West Hungary. This work resulted in several publications and her doctoral thesis (Kiszely 1978, Kiszelyné Vámosi 1980, 1983, Kiszelyné Vámosi *et al.* 1989). They were in contact with Ferenc Fóris, László Gallé sen., Klára Verseggy, and also Antonín Vězda (Brno).

Tamás Pócs together with Attila Borhidi became my supervisors for candidate degree (Farkas 1990). Later our student, Katalin Molnár was also working in the cryptogamic research group and prepared her PhD thesis partly during the time she spent in Eger (Molnár 2011).

From 1996 he started a wide inventory project mainly on the Hungarian loess wall cryptogams supported by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA). In addition to the extensive bryological collections, lichens (*ca* 500 specimens) were also studied (Lőkös 2003). Both the number of species (from 48 to 65) and localities (from 38 to 85) increased. The most interesting lichenological result is the rediscovery of *Solorinella asteriscus* in 1998 (Pócs 1999). The species earlier was regarded as extinct (Farkas and Lőkös 1994).

Herbaria were always in the first place for him. Tamás Pócs spent a lot of time and energy on developing herbaria. He collected lichens for BP (Budapest), EGR (Eger) or VBI (Vácrátót) in Hungary, just as for DSM (Dar es Salaam) in Tanzania.

His first collections outside Hungary were originated from the Pareng Mts, Transsylvania, 1955–56. At first he found foliicolous lichens in Vietnam, 1963. Starting with 1969 he spent years in Tanzania, where he also collected a large amount of lichens from various substrates. Later on other parts of Africa, and then Australia and the other continents followed.

He built up contacts with several lichen specialists. Antonín Vězda described a large number of new taxa from his collections, most of them from Tanzania. Among other species he described the genus *Pocsia* (today *Phylloblastia*) with type species being *Pocsia marattiae* collected on fern frond of *Marattia fraxinea* in the Usambara Mts in 1970.

The 2,500 lichens of the *Lichenes Selecti Exsiccati* edited by Antonín Vězda contained 80 collected by Tamás Pócs – 3 from Hungary, 65 from Tanzania, 8 from Cuba, 2 from the Canary Islands, 1 from Vietnam and 1 from the Caucasus. Today the preparation of exsiccates is discussed because of conservation matters, however, it must be considered if conserving biodiversity is necessary at least in herbaria or should it be neglected and thus expected that genetical varieties would diminish due to damage of their habitats. Still a small exsiccate has been distributed in honour of Antonín Vězda recently too (Farkas 2010, 2011), its fascicle 3 was dedicated to Tamás Pócs (Farkas 2014).

Via his East African collections Tamás Pócs had several decades long contact with Hildur Krog Norwegian lichenologist. The book “Macrolichens of East Africa” of her and Dougal Swinscow (Swinscow and Krog 1988) was prepared considering also the collections by Tamás Pócs and his wife. Later Tamás was happy to identify his own collections by the help of this identification key.

From the beginning of his tropical activity Tamás Pócs was interested in groups with special ascomata, like those of Graphidaceae or Caliciales.

In 1994 the excellent specialist of the Caliciales, Leif Tibell (Uppsala, Sweden) visited Hungary by a scientific exchange project between academies of Sweden and Hungary. This visit meant an opportunity also for Tamás to have personal contact with Leif. Other lichenologists whom he had contact with are, e.g., Klaus Ammann (Switzerland), Katalin Bartók (Cluj, Romania) or Thorsten Lumbsch (Chicago, USA).

During several expeditions to East Africa and other exotic lands led by Tamás, he always found time to collect lichens, too.

I also participated in such trips in the framework of the Hungarian–Swedish–Tanzanian Usambara Project in Tanzania in 1986 and 1989. In coauthorship with Antonín Vězda we described 11 species of foliicolous lichens new for science. One of them was *Coenogonium pocsii* (described as *Dimerella pocsii* in Vězda and Farkas 1988). As it was presented later (Farkas 1991), the collections in Tanzania largely contributed to the easier identification of *Coenogonium* species even without apothecia, since the thalli produce specific conidia in their pycnidia, which were well represented in our collections.

In 1995 the IAB and IAL Symposium of Follicolous Cryptogams was organised in Eger, Hungary. Tamás Pócs was the president of this international meeting, where the 40 participants represented 17 countries from all over the world. The text of lectures and posters were published in a volume of *Abstracta Botanica*, that we edited together (Farkas and Pócs 1997).

From 1975 onwards 14 taxa (including 1 genus) of lichenised fungi have been dedicated to him.

Arthonia pocsii Lücking and Kalb described from Kenya by German scientists in 2002 (Lücking and Kalb 2002) shows the international reputation of him by lichenologists, since this species was not collected by him. It is mentioned in the publication that beside his bryological and botanical interest, his knowledge on East African mountains and vegetation is outstanding in a worldwide level.

His career is still continuing. He is participating in collecting trips and the unknown, undescribed plants, bryophytes and lichens are present in the nature and consequently present in his collections as well (currently also studied by a lichenological research project of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund, OTKA K 81232).

Similarly to that Antonín Vězda started a new exsiccate (*Lichenes Rariores Exsiccati*) after he closed the *Lichenes Selecti Exsiccati*, when Tamás is returning from a collecting trip, he is already planning the following one.

Therefore I wish further energy and health to the further expeditions and home studies, the long life will be guaranteed anyhow.

Happy 80th birthday, Tamás! Go ahead for the 90th and 100th!

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