



Hans Hürlimann

(1921-2014)

Hans Hürlimann, Swiss botanist and leading specialist on the liverwort flora of the South Pacific region, died on 1 October 2014 in Basel at the age of 93. Born in Brugg (Kanton Aargau), Hans went to school in Winterthur and studied biology at the University of Zürich, where he obtained his doctorate in 1950 on a prize-winning study dealing with the life history and ecology of the common reed.

Following his promotion, he left to the South Pacific to join the Second Swiss Botanical Expedition to New Caledonia. During two years, from 1950-1952, he made large collections of bryophytes and flowering plants (the latter together with his field companions Marcel Baumann-Bodenheim from Zürich and André Guillaumin from Paris), mainly on New Caledonia, but also on Tahiti, Fiji and Tonga. The identification of the specimens and publication of the results would occupy him for the rest of his life.

Following his return to Europe, Hans Hürlimann took at first a high school teaching position, but soon after, in 1955, he became attached to the pharmaceutical division of CIBA in Basel, where he worked until his retirement on the pharmaceutically active substances of tropical plants. Study of the Pacific material remained essentially a free-time occupation; only after his retirement he was able to dedicate himself more full-time to the job. His work on the Pacific collections resulted in a large series of publications, at first mainly focusing on flowering plants and mosses, but after 1974 dealing exclusively with liverworts and hornworts. His series “*Hepaticae aus dem Gebiete des südlichen Pazifik*” published in 14 installments (of which 13 written by himself) over a period of almost forty years (1960-1998), is his main contribution to bryology and a milestone in the study of the liverworts and hornworts of the South Pacific region. His collections, which were distributed to many different herbaria worldwide, contained almost three hundred liverwort species from New Caledonia, or almost two third of the total number of species known from the island. Many were first records for New Caledonia and ten liverworts and hornworts were new to science, including the remarkable *Aponardia huerlimannii* (Váňa & Grolle) Váňa, a puzzling plant characterized by densely papillose leaf cells and huge, swollen trigones and the only species known in the genus *Aponardia*. R.M. Schuster, who searched in vain for this species when visiting in New Caledonia, placed it in a separate subgenus *Aponardia* of *Nardia* but J. Váňa recently transferred it to a genus of its own, arguing that the morphological and ecological differences are large enough to separate it from *Nardia* as an independent genus (Váňa *et al.*, 2012). Unfortunately, *Aponardia huerlimannii* is only known from sterile material and has not been included in a molecular study, so its correct taxonomic placement remains uncertain. Another new species of special interest, collected by Hans Hürlimann on Tonga, was *Phaeolejeunea amicorum* (Hürl.) Pócs (= *P. etesseana* subsp. *amicorum* Hürl.), member of a rare Pacific genus with only few species. Hans considered it just a subspecies of *P. etesseana* (Steph.) Mizut. but T. Pócs, who recently discovered it on Fiji, showed that the plant is quite distinct and merits recognition as a separate species (Pócs, 2008).

My first contact with Hans Hürlimann dates back to the early 1970s when I was working on the genera *Acrolejeunea* and *Schiffneriolejeunea* for my dissertation. Very few specimens of these two genera were available from the Pacific islands and the rich collections of holostipous Lejeuneaceae collected there by Hans, which he kindly sent to me for identification, were of great help to solve the taxonomy of these genera in the Pacific region. From then on we have stayed in close contact, my wife and I visited him and his wife in Basel and at their summer house in Lumbrein (which he affectionately called “unser Katzendorf”), and I had a chance to enjoy one of the fieldtrips of the Swiss Bryological and Lichenological Society led by Hans in the Lugnez near his summer house. His Christmas greetings to us were usually written in almost perfect Dutch, a language which he had learned during a brief stay in The Netherlands after the war.

Hans Hürlimann was an active member of the Swiss Bryological and Lichenological Society (SVBL) and the botanical societies of Switzerland and his hometown Basel, and he was a contributor to the Red List and the Mapping Project of the bryophytes of Switzerland. He was awarded honorary membership of the Schweizer Botanische Gesellschaft and the SVBL, and the recent Checklist of the liverworts and hornworts of New Caledonia (Thouvenot *et al.*, 2011) was dedicated to him in recognition of his major contribution to the hepaticology of New Caledonia.

Hans was married to Margrit Högger during 54 years – she died two years before him – and they had two children, one daughter and one son. He had a very modest and amiable personality, and he will be remembered as a dear friend.

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