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The Retezat National Park

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IN MEMORIAM

Alexandru Borza (1887 - 1971)

The great Romanian botanist Alexandru Borza was born on 21 May 1887 in Alba Iulia, Transylvania, where he attended primary and secondary school. He carried out his university studies in Wroclaw, Budapest and Berlin, graduated in theology (1908) and natural sciences (1911), and took his Ph.D. in Natural Sciences (1913).

After completing his university studies he returned in his country. He was appointed professor at the boy's high school Blaj, where he remained until 1919 when he became a founding professor of the "Dacia Superioră" University, Cluj-Napoca. He taught at the University at Cluj until 1947 when he retired. In the period 1935 - 1938 he was Dean of the Faculty of Sciences of Cluj-Napoca, and in 1944 - 1945 Rector of the University. In 1947, in the period of his full creative power, he was removed from the academic community because of his anti-communist political opinions (he was rehabilitated in 1962 when he was granted the title of Scientist Emeritus, and again in 1990 when he became, post-mortem, a member of the Romanian Academy).

He directed (from 1920) for a period of 28 years the Botanical Garden in Cluj-Napoca, the garden that now bears his name. In the period 1921 - 1948 he edited the Bulletin of the Botanical Garden and of the Botanical Museum of the University of Cluj-Napoca.

Founder of the Romanian phytocoenological school (modelled on the Western European school of Zurich-Montpellier), Alexandru Borza published dozens of papers in this field of studies, among which we should mention the phyto-sociological studies of the Retezat Mountains (1934), and the Flora and vegetation of the Sebeş Valley (1959), Introduction to the study of plant cover (1965), this last in collaboration with Nicolae Boşcaiu. He was the initiator of experimental ecology in Romania.

He made a significant contribution to knowledge of corology of cormophytes in Romania editing *Conspectus florae Romaniae regionumque affinium*, I - II (1947, 1949), *Bibliography of Romanian botany* (1921 - 1947) and the collection *Flora Romaniae Exciccata* (beginning in 1920) which formed the basis of the monumental works *Flora of the People's Republic of Romania / Flora of the Socialist Republic of Romania* in 13 volumes, which appeared (1952 - 1976) under the auspices of the Romanian Academy. He described, alone or in collaboration, 85 plant taxa new to science. His extensive herbarium is found in the Natural History Museum in Sibiu.

His research themes in corology and ecology of plants intersected with phytocoenology, phylogeny, popular culture and ethnobotany. This last area had interested him since adolescence (he published his first contribution in 1908). He wrote dozens of works on the subject, the most representative being the *Dictionary of Ethnobotany* published in 1968, which includes nearly 11,000 Romanian plant names.

He reunited the great personalities in the field at the first Congress of Romanian naturalists (1928).

He was a tireless activist in the realm of nature protection. He contributed to the drafting of the first law for the protection of natural monuments in Romania. He initiated the first steps for the protection of natural areas in Romania, fighting for their transfer to state property. He edited the *Bulletin of the Commission for Natural Monuments* (1933 - 1944); and he organized the first national park in Romania, Retezat National Park.

He was member of several academies and societies in the country and abroad (in France, Germany, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Finland).

His research works were published in over 500 scientific publications.

The results of his work place him, without doubt or equivocation, among the most valuable of Romanian naturalists.

The Editors