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# A TRIBUTE TO MARIAN PIOTR KUC (1932–2011)

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On 23 March 2011 Dr. Robert R. Ireland, bryologist working at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, imparted to me a piece of very sad news which he had received from Linda Ley, his former assistant in the National Museums of Canada in Ottawa (National Museum of Natural Sciences, now the Canadian Museum of Nature). He told me that our friend Marian Kuc had passed away suddenly of a heart attack at 5 PM on 19 March 2011 at the age of 78 in the Polish House in Ottawa during a meeting of the Polish diaspora. He lacked literally only one week to complete the full age of 79. It was shocking news to me because only a week earlier I had had a long phone call with Marian in which we discussed details of our upcoming meeting in Kraków during his planned trip to Poland in May 2011. Marian Kuc had been a bryologist, botanist and palaeobotanist for 57 years. Although he spent most of his lifetime in Canada, he started and developed his scientific interests and career in Poland. He published his first paper on botany in 1954 and on bryology in 1955 before most of us now active in the field had even started primary school and could not yet read and write.

Marian Kuc was an extraordinarily vivacious person who was hard to ignore. He was a strong, broad-minded personality but he did not thrust his opinion upon others and usually was eager to be helpful. He was very inventive, resourceful and a formidable adversary in discussions but he was usually prone to take a middle course if strong and convincing arguments were presented. I cannot consider myself to have known him intimately because our only contact for a very long time was merely via correspondence. Since the early 1990s we met each other only sporadically during his rather short visits to the homeland. He was then usually extremely busy, traveling a lot across the country and actively participating in many meetings with people from various circles, this reflecting his broad scientific, social and political interests.

My acquaintance with Marian continued for 32 years, but actually it should be extended for an additional seven years, to 1972, when I encountered his name for the first time. As a student of fifth year biology, I completed my master thesis in the Institute of Botany of the Jagiellonian University, and when looking for a job I came to the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences which shares the same buildings with the former. Professor Adam Jasiewicz, the then director of this institute, stated that I could be employed provided that I could deal with bryophytes because then there was no bryologist either in this institution or in any school of higher learning in Kraków at all. Initially, I was not particularly pleased with the prospect of becoming a bryologist because at that time I was deeply interested in vascular plants, but having no other choices I attended the Laboratory of Bryology and Lichenology headed by Dr. Janusz Nowak, a lichenologist. I received a small financial support for the work of the bryophyte herbarium.

From the very beginning my attention was attracted by numerous collections of mosses made in the 1950s and 1960s by Marian Kuc in Poland

and Spitsbergen. When I started to interest myself in this person, surprisingly I received rather trite answers that he was a scientific worker in the institute but because he had not completed his habilitation he left for Canada. Some older colleagues suggested even that mentioning his name was inadvisable and impolitic. As a young man entering the world of grown-ups, I did not understand properly many things, including the notion of 'Polish hell' and rules which govern scientific communities. It was necessary to have a decade of personal experience to realise that Marian Kuc, with his proud soul, stubborn nature and deep sense of independence, as well as quick scientific development, had a feeble chance for normal activity within the community which did not accept individuals rising from the ranks.

My first contact with bryophytes in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences was short because I decided to continue my postgraduate study at the Jagiellonian University. Nevertheless it became apparent that I was heavily infected with the 'bryophilia' and as a subject of my dissertation I chose the wetland vegetation in the karst sink-holes in the vicinity of Staszów at the Małopolska Upland in central-south Poland in which bryophytes constituted a remarkable component. Additionally, it turned out that for four years I worked in room No. 212 on the second floor in the 'old building' of the Institute, the same one occupied by Marian Kuc during his employment in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

After defending my doctorate in 1976 I returned to the Laboratory of Bryology and Lichenology in the Polish Academy of Sciences and then, as a curator of bryophytes, I started the serious work of the re-arrangement and development of the bryological herbarium. Because the herbarium held numerous unnamed collections of Marian Kuc from some regions in the Polish Carpathians which I intended to study bryologically, for example from the Polica Range, I decided to contact him and to inquire about what to do with these collections. On 8 December 1978 I wrote a letter to Marian in which I introduced myself, described my scientific plans as well as imparted to him some of the facts and impressions which I was able to gather from many sources regarding the 'Kuc affair' in the 1960s.

In mid-January 1979 I received a letter from Marian written on 5 January. After additional explanations in his second letter written in Ottawa on 8 April Marian wrote that 'from your letter I infer that you are a proper person and correctly interpret the matters and events'. In this way we initiated our many years' exchange of letters, ideas and papers. In total, up until 1995, Marian wrote to me over 100 letters and postcards from his numerous trips to South America, and I not much fewer in response. It should be added that these were mostly lengthy letters consisting of several pages densely filled with handwriting or typing. Initially his letters were written from the position of a certain superiority of a-man-of-the-world who knew in person many famous bryologists. However, with time, after my research in the Antarctic and first publications on bryophytes of the icy continent, I was considered by him as an equally experienced partner.

Marian helped me a lot in the completion of a 'polar' literature which was then unavailable in Poland. Some of his photocopies I still use, despite receiving in the interim original copies of them. In the last dozen or so years we exchanged fewer letters as we usually contacted each other by phone. In his objectivity, unselfishness and lack of any jealousy of the scientific achievements of others, Marian differed markedly from many persons in the local scientific community as I have known them. Just the opposite, he felt both glad for and proud of the results of our work which were achieved in extremely difficult conditions, without easy access to rare literature, difficulties in travelling abroad, minute financial support which was generally incomparable with the facilities enjoyed by our colleagues living and working behind the 'iron curtain'. Thanks to Marian I established my first contacts with some western bryologists, for example with Bob Ireland in of the National Museums of Canada in Ottawa, where Marian started his work after leaving Poland in 1966. Actually, in 1981 Bob reviewed a note on *Kindbergia*, my first bryological article published in a foreign journal.

Marian Kuc's biography is very entangled and the main events of his life he presented in his autobiography which, with some abridgements, is published in this Gedenkschrift (Kuc 2012), so it is unnecessary to repeat them. He was born on 26 March 1932 in Chrzanów, a medium-sized town situated about 40 km to the west of Kraków. His childhood and early youthfulness happened in the difficult time of World War II when Poland was under the German occupation for six years. In 1946–1951 he was a pupil of the Stanisław Staszic Secondary School and High School in Chrzanów and developed his interest in natural history under the guidance of Professor Mieczysław Mazaraki (1913–2003) who educated several eminent Polish botanists. Then he decided to dedicate himself to botany and as the main object of his studies he chose bryophytes. When he attended the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in 1951, his interest was exceptionally well specified. He immediately contacted Professor Bronisław Szafran (1897–1968), the eminent Polish bryologist, and under his supervision he developed his bryological interest.

As a university student he was quickly employed as a volunteer in the Laboratory of Bryology of the Institute of Botany of the Jagiellonian University and within two years published no fewer than six botanical papers. As a typical field botanist he carried out studies in various parts of southern Poland and they resulted in the discovery of some interesting species. The most notable achievement from that period was the discovery of *Scorpidium turgescens* (T. Jensen) Loeske in the Silesian Upland at its only locality in the European Lowlands. This arctic species had the status of a glacial relict in this part of Europe. He collected also vascular plants and was the first to discover two synanthropic species of vascular plants in the flora of Poland, namely *Iva xanthifolia* Nutt. and *Veronica filiformis* Sm. In the case of the latter Marian Kuc found the plant but it was identified by Dr. Jan Kornaś. Although they published a joint paper on this plant some discrepancies arose around this discovery which initiated a prolonged conflict between them.

Marian Kuc graduated in 1956 and received the title of Master of Science on the basis of the thesis

**Fig. 1.** Marian Kuc in 1996.

*Mosses of the Silesian Upland* completed under the supervision of his master, Professor B. Szafran. It was a valuable floristic and phytogeographical study which showed that he was a fully fledged bryologist, having perfect knowledge of mosses and being capable to carry out independent scientific research. The area of his first scientific work was then occupied by large wetlands with an exceptionally rich and interesting bryoflora, including many glacial relicts. Marian may be considered as one of the pioneers advocating the protection of bryophytes in Poland and perhaps in the world. In 1958 he provided bryological support for the projected nature reserve 'Góra Kamień' on the Roztocze heights and in 1959 he prepared and published a detailed plan of the establishment several nature reserves to protect rare and by then already endangered species of moss, especially glacial relicts. Unfortunately, his suggestions were totally ignored and did not gain special interest.

**Fig. 2**. Marian Kuc (left) with Professor Władysław Szafer doing field work in the vicinity of Alwernia near Chrzanów in 1954.

In subsequent decades this area has undergone drastic changes because of human activity; most wetlands were drained and the unique ecosystems destroyed. In the mid-1980s, accompanied by my friend Janusz Baryła, I organised a series of excursions to the Silesian Upland which we called 'following Kuc's traces' and we visited most of the sites proposed by Marian as nature reserves. Alas, we found this terrain to be totally devastated and the exceedingly rare glacial relicts of moss extinct, with *Scorpidium turgescens* at the top (Ochyra & Baryła 1988).

After graduation in 1956 Marian was employed in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences as a scientific-technical assistant and from 1 November 1956 he continued his studies as a postgraduate student in this institution. The work in the Silesian Upland prompted him to continue his bryological investigations in the southern uplands of Poland. Then, he outlined a bold project to study the moss flora of this large region which extends across the southern part of the country, from Upper Silesia in the west to the Lublin Upland at the border with the Ukraine in the east. It was almost intact bryologically and most areas represented 'blank spots' on the bryological map of Poland. Marian started a systematic exploration of these areas and soon published a series of floristic accounts on their muscoflora, including the northern part of the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, Sandomierz-Opatów Upland and the districts of Końskie and Staszów. The results were summarised in his doctoral thesis dealing with some selected bryogeographical problems of the southern uplands of Poland which was completed under the supervision of Professor B. Szafran and defended in 1960.

Despite his deep involvement in arctic mosses in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Marian continued his investigations in the southern uplands and in 1962 and 1963 he published, respectively, three valuable accounts on mosses of the Lublin Upland and the Roztocze heights. Thus, during a decade, his research covered a vast area,

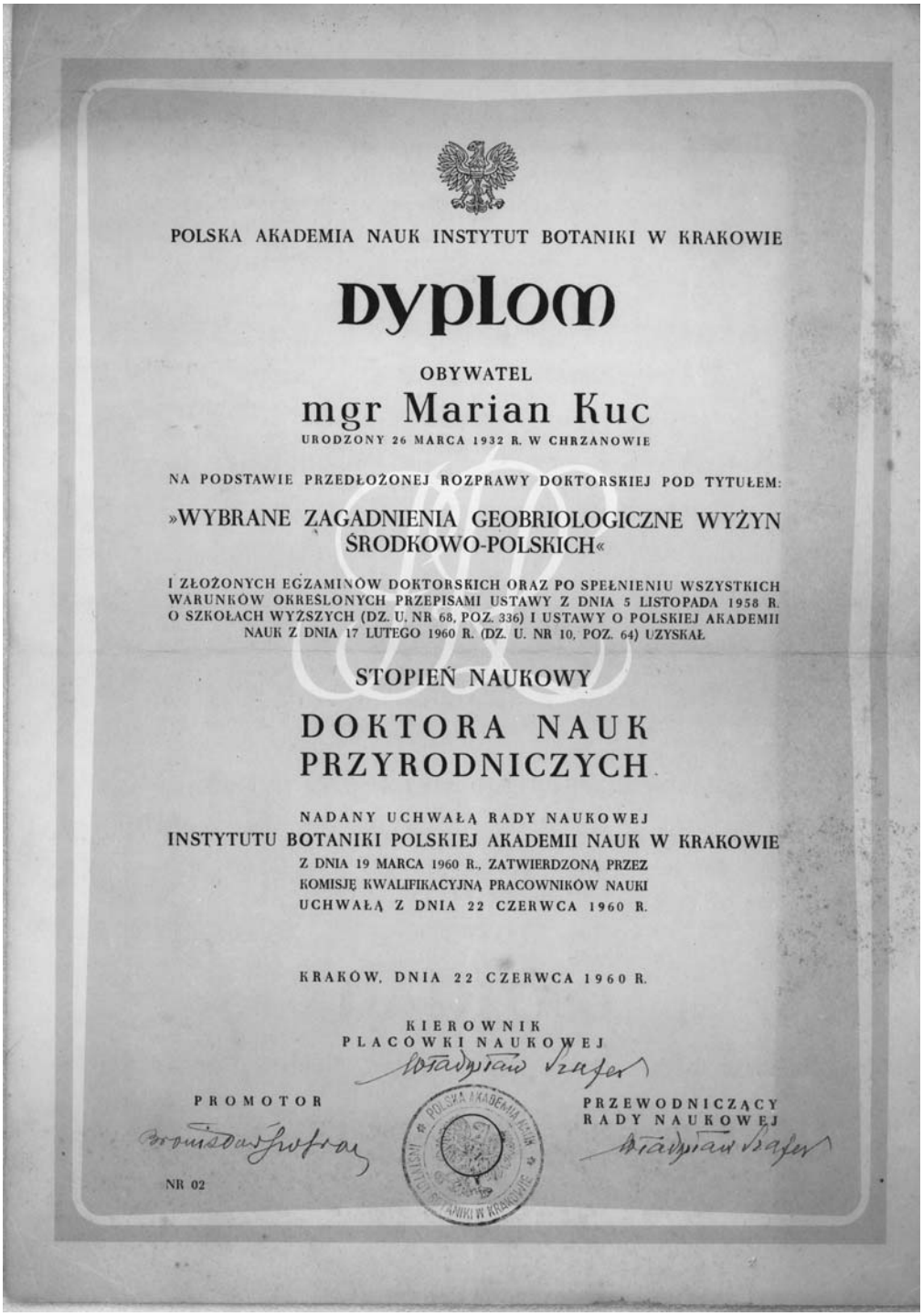
extending a distance of nearly 300 km from the west to the east, and the results were presented in his most important work on Polish mosses, *Bryogeography of the Southern Uplands of Poland*, which was published in 1964. It was a titanic work because in those days there were no good facilities for conducting field work in remote and inaccessible areas of Poland since public transport was imperfect and cars were a great rarity in those days. Therefore, Marian had to tramp large expanses of the terrain on foot. This unique work has no equivalent in Polish plant geography and still may serve as a model of a well founded and carefully outlined project which was based mostly on the original collections made by the author himself. Not until four decades later did Stebel (2006) conduct an analogical project on mosses which covered a similarly vast area of the Beskidy Zachodnie in the Polish Western Carpathians. Until now, no other group of plants and fungi received monographs of this sort in Poland.

Marian also did field work in the Polish Carpathians and was the first to discover the moss *Calliergon richardsonii* (Mitt.) Kindb. in the Tatra Mountains at the only locality in the Carpathians. He studied the moss flora of the Vihorlat range in the Slovak Carpathians and the Tatra Mountains and the results were published in foreign journals of *Biologia* in Bratislava and *Revue Bryologique et Lichénologique* in Paris. This was an unusual event because in those days the vast majority of papers by Polish botanists were published in local Polish journals and publication in foreign journals was considered as a great achievement and honour. In 1959 and 1962 Marian conducted bryological studies in Bulgaria and the results were published in 1965 in the Hungarian journal *Botanikai Közlemények* in collaboration with two eminent Hungarian bryologists, László Vajda and Tamás Pócs. In 1964 Marian collected bryophytes in the Julian Alps in Slovenia (then part of Yugoslavia) and, again, the floristic account of his collections was published in *Revue Bryologique et Lichénologique* in 1967. In the same journal he published in 1959 an account on the geographical distribution of *Tortula velenovskyi* Schiffn., then a great rarity in the European moss flora. In recognition of his great

**Fig. 3**. Marian Kuc on peat bog in the Staszów region on the Małopolska Upland in 1958.

contribution to Polish bryology, a special volume on the Polish Carpathians bryophytes was dedicated to him and it was published very soon after his death (Stebel & Ochyra 2011).

Apart from strictly bryofloristic papers, Marian published a number of phytogeographical papers on distribution of individual moss species in Poland, for example *Seligeria calcarea* (Hedw.) Bruch & Schimp., *Rhynchostegiella tenella* (Dicks.) Limpr., *Desmatodon cernuus* (Huebener) Bruch & Schimp. and *Cirriphyllum germanicum* (Grebe) Loeske & M.Fleisch. [=*C. tenuicaule* (Spruce) Wijk & Margad.], the latter being the first country record. Additionally, the first discovery in Poland of the ephemeral vascular plant *Gypsophila trichotoma* Wender. (= *G. perfoliata* L.) should be credited to him. Moreover, he discovered the rare fungus *Pisolithus tinctorius* (Mich. ex Pers.) Coker & Couch in the neighbourhood of Kraków



POLSKA AKADEMIA NAUK INSTYTUT BOTANIKI W KRAKOWIE

# DYPLOM

OBYWATEL

## mgr Marian Kuc

URODZONY 26 MARCA 1932 R. W CHRZANOWIE

NA PODSTAWIE PRZEDŁOŻONEJ ROZPRAWY DOKTORSKIEJ POD TYTUŁEM:

»WYBRANE ZAGADNIENIA GEOBRIOLOGICZNE WYŻYN ŚRODKOWO-POLSKICH«

I ZŁOŻONYCH EGZAMINÓW DOKTORSKICH ORAZ PO SPEŁNIENIU WSZYSTKICH WARUNKÓW OKREŚLONYCH PRZEPISAMI USTAWY Z DNIA 5 LISTOPADA 1958 R. O SZKOŁACH WYŻSZYCH (DZ. U. NR 68, POZ. 336) I USTAWY O POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK Z DNIA 17 LUTEGO 1960 R. (DZ. U. NR 10, POZ. 64) UZYSKAŁ

STOPIEŃ NAUKOWY

## DOKTORA NAUK PRZYRODNICZYCH

NADANY UCHWAŁĄ RADY NAUKOWEJ
INSTYTUTU BOTANIKI POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK W KRAKOWIE
Z DNIA 19 MARCA 1960 R., ZATWIERDZONĄ PRZEZ
KOMISJĘ KWALIFIKACYJNĄ PRACOWNIKÓW NAUKI
UCHWAŁĄ Z DNIA 22 CZERWCA 1960 R.

KRAKÓW, DNIA 22 CZERWCA 1960 R.

KIEROWNIK
PLACÓWKI NAUKOWEJ

PROMOTOR

PRZEWODNICZĄCY
RADY NAUKOWEJ

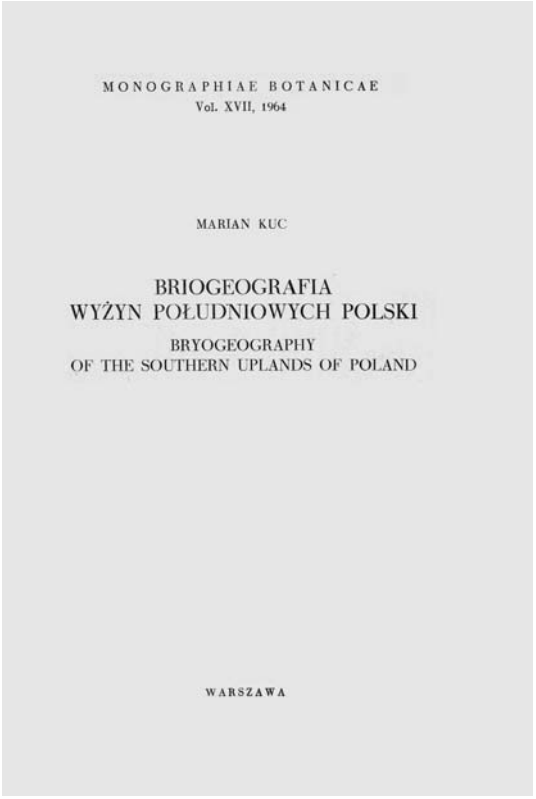
NR 02

**Fig. 4**. Ph.D. certificate of Marian Kuc obtained on 22 June 1960 in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

and several new localities of the rare xerophytic hepatic *Mannia fragrans* (Balbis) Frye & Clark in southern Poland. These discoveries confirm Marian's broad botanical interest, good knowledge of various groups of organisms and accuracy in field studies.

In at least three post-war decades botanical studies in Poland focused primarily on local problems and consequently the results were published mainly in Polish journals. The turning-point in the scientific career of Marian Kuc happened in 1958 when he took part in the Polish Polar Expedition to Spitsbergen organised by the Commission of the Third International Geophysical Year within the Polish Academy of Sciences. This expedition marked the beginning of his great involvement and interest in arctic bryology and botany. Actually, it was the first botanical project in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences realised in such an exotic and botanically fascinating region. Marian made thorough exploratory field studies of the flora and vegetation associations on the north coast of Hornsund in the south-western part of Spitsbergen where the Arctic Scientific Station of the Polish Academy of Sciences was situated at Isbjørnhamna in Hornsund. He primarily gathered a large collection of mosses for his personal studies, but he collected also liverworts and lichens which were examined by Rejment-Grochowska (1967) and Nowak (1965, 1968), respectively. Additionally, he studied some interesting ecological and geological problems, including phenology of the tundra plants, the role of wind in plant dispersal, plants as food for birds, as well as the process of the deglaciation of some areas using an analysis of the vegetation and the land uplift with use of his original 'whale method'.

The work on the mosses collected in Hornsund definitely had priority for Marian and at the same time it was a remarkable challenge to him. Hitherto, Polish botanists did not participate in polar studies and Polish herbaria kept only scarce collections of arctic plants and bryophyte collections were non-existent in practice. From 1955 Marian was in touch with Herman Persson, the renowned student of polar bryophytes at the Museum of Natural History in Stockholm and this institution


MONOGRAPHIAE BOTANICAE
Vol. XVII, 1964

MARIAN KUC

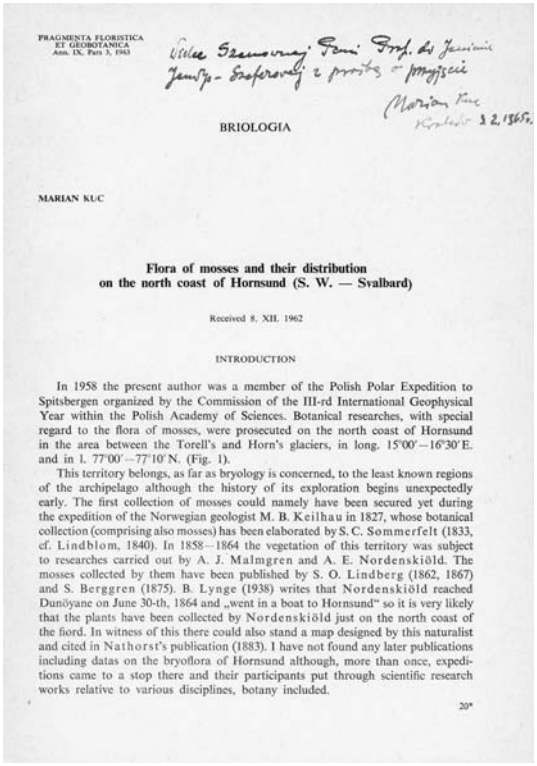
BRIOGEOGRAFIA
WYŻYN POŁUDNIOWYCH POLSKI

BRYOGEOGRAPHY
OF THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS OF POLAND

WARSZAWA

**Fig. 5**. Facsimile of the title page of *Bryogeography of the Southern Uplands of Poland* by Marian Kuc.

certainly offered excellent facilities for examination of his moss collection from Spitsbergen. Unfortunately, the Polish Academy of Sciences could only secure for him a month's time in the famous herbarium in Stockholm because the stay in Sweden was then very expensive. On the other hand, there were regular and cheap exchange programmes between Polish and Soviet Academies of Sciences. Therefore Marian decided to go to the Komarov Botanical Institute in Leningrad (now Sankt Petersburg) where he worked for one year in 1959–1960. The facilities for the study of arctic mosses were also excellent in this institution because the bryological herbarium at LE keeps large collections of arctic mosses from the whole of Eurasia and the botanical library has a great collection of rare botanical books, journals and reprints. Additionally, Marian was lucky to work under the guidance of Dr. Lydia I. Savicz-Lyubitskaya, the



FRAGMENTA FLORISTICA ET GEOBOTANICA Ann. IX, Pars 3, 1963

BRIOLOGIA

MARIAN KUC

**Flora of mosses and their distribution on the north coast of Hornsund (S. W. — Svalbard)**

Received 8. XII. 1962

INTRODUCTION

In 1958 the present author was a member of the Polish Polar Expedition to Spitsbergen organized by the Commission of the III-rd International Geophysical Year within the Polish Academy of Sciences. Botanical researches, with special regard to the flora of mosses, were prosecuted on the north coast of Hornsund in the area between the Torell's and Horn's glaciers, in long. 15°00'—16°30' E. and in l. 77°00'—77°10' N. (Fig. 1).

This territory belongs, as far as bryology is concerned, to the least known regions of the archipelago although the history of its exploration begins unexpectedly early. The first collection of mosses could namely have been secured yet during the expedition of the Norwegian geologist M. B. Keilhau in 1827, whose botanical collection (comprising also mosses) has been elaborated by S. C. Sommerfelt (1833, cf. Lindblom, 1840). In 1858—1864 the vegetation of this territory was subject to researches carried out by A. J. Malmgren and A. E. Nordenskiöld. The mosses collected by them have been published by S. O. Lindberg (1862, 1867) and S. Berggren (1875). B. Lynge (1938) writes that Nordenskiöld reached Dunöyane on June 30-th, 1864 and „went in a boat to Hornsund" so it is very likely that the plants have been collected by Nordenskiöld just on the north coast of the fiord. In witness of this there could also stand a map designed by this naturalist and cited in Nathorst's publication (1883). I have not found any later publications including datas on the bryoflora of Hornsund although, more than once, expeditions came to a stop there and their participants put through scientific research works relative to various disciplines, botany included.

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**Fig. 6**. Title page of the paper of Marian Kuc on the mosses of the Hornsund area in Spitsbergen with dedication to Professor Janina Jentys-Szaferowa.

then leading Russian expert in mosses who at that time worked, together with Z. N. Smirnova and A. L. Abramova, on the famous moss flora of the Arctic U.S.S.R. So, Marian was able to identify all the mosses he had collected in the Hornsund area. He always interacted easily with people and therefore he made many friends in Leningrad. When I stayed several times in the Komarov Botanical Institute in the mid-1980s I very often talked with the mycologist Boris Anatol'evich Tomilin (1928–2008) who considered Marian as his great friend. Boris told me a lot of funny stories about Marian's stay in the Soviet Union and always spoke warmly about him.

The results of Marian's bryological studies on Spitsbergen were presented in his major work *Flora of mosses and their distribution on the north coast of Hornsund* (*S.W.–Svalbard*) which was published in 1963 as a separate issue of Volume 9 of *Fragmenta Flotistica et Geobotanica*. He presented this work as his habilitation thesis for the degree of docent. Unfortunately, it was not accepted by the commission of the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences of the Jagiellonian University to be a relevant treatment for starting the habilitation procedure. This was a shameful and untenable decision, rising certainly from the personal bias of one of the members of the commission with whom Marian was in personal conflict. It seems that this decision was also satisfactory for some scientific workers in the Institute who were jealous of his efficient scientific activity, investigations outside the country and publication of a number articles in foreign journals, a great rarity at that time in Polish botany. Even Marian's habilitation was not completed, he could continue his work in the Institute depending only on the good will of the director. In the Polish Academy of Sciences there admittedly existed the regulation that a scientific worker should complete the habilitation within a strictly appointed time. However, until 2006 it was merely a dead rule and many scientific workers were employed without habilitation until their retirement. Alas, in the case of Marian Kuc this rule was enforced. In 1966 the contract on his employment in the Institute of Botany expired and Professor Bogumił Pawłowski, the then director of this institution and a member of his habilitation commission which rejected his thesis, did not extend it.

Anticipating this decision Marian had earlier applied to get a scholarship from the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) to continue his botanical research in the polar regions and he was successful. Thus, when his employment in the Institute of Botany of the Polish Academy of Sciences finished, he moved to Canada where in 1968 he received the status of a Landed Canadian Immigrant and five years later, in 1973, he became a Canadian citizen.

Initially, Marian worked in the Department of Botany of the National Museum of Natural History (now the Canadian Museum of Nature) in Ottawa. In February 1967 he was invited by Professor Fritz Müller, a lecturer of the McGill University in Montreal, to participate in his 'McGill University

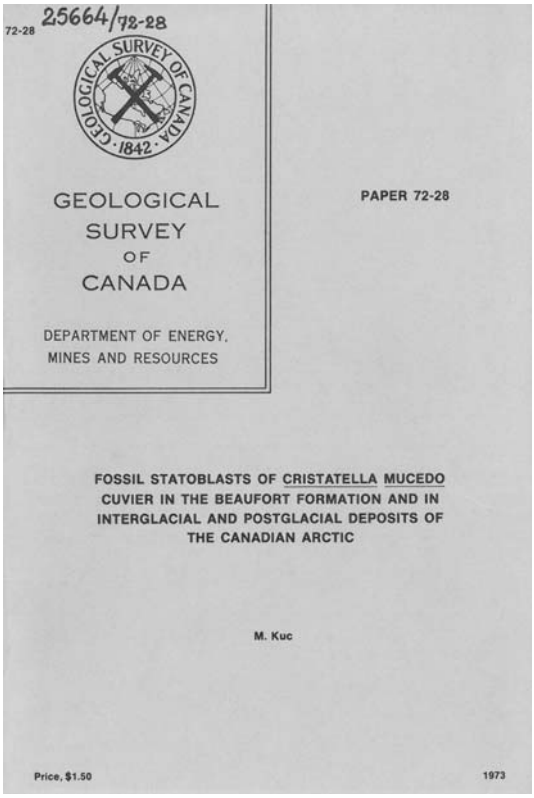


**Fig. 7**. One of the papers completed by Marian Kuc during his work in the Geological Survey of Canada.

Expedition to Axel Heiberg Island', one of the most northerly islands situated at lat. 79°30′N, which is known for its unusual fossil forests dating from the Eocene period. As a result he completed the moss flora of the expedition area of Axel Heiberg Island which was published in 1973 as the second volume within the then newly established, well known series *Bryophytorum Bibliotheca.*

The National Research Council of Canada extended his post-doctoral scholarship to the end of November 1968 and covered the expenses of his research in the Canadian High Arctic Archipelago where he intensively worked on Banks Island, Prince Patrick Island, Fitzwilliam Owen Island, Melville Island and Meighen Island. At the end of 1969 he was employed in the Geological Survey of Canada where he worked until 1977. During this period he spent almost every summer in the Arctic and expanded his investigations on fossil mosses. The results were published mainly in *Reports of Activities* of the *Geological Survey of Canada* and the most notable achievements were the description of *Muscites eocenicus*, a fossil moss from the Middle Eocene of British Columbia, and the fossil flora from the Beaufort Formation in Meighen Island. He also continued his investigations on extant arctic mosses and published the results in a series entitled 'Additions to the Arctic moss flora' which consisted of seven parts. Additionally, he also recorded vascular plants and published two accounts on their distribution in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

Marian was continuously interested in mosses from other parts of the Arctic and in 1967 he published a small paper on cryptogams from Chukotka Peninsula and the Soviet Arctic and in 1973 he compiled the first catalogue of Svalbard mosses based upon the literature data. Earlier, while still in Poland, Marian obtained a small collection of mosses made in 1959 by S. Różycki in the Polish

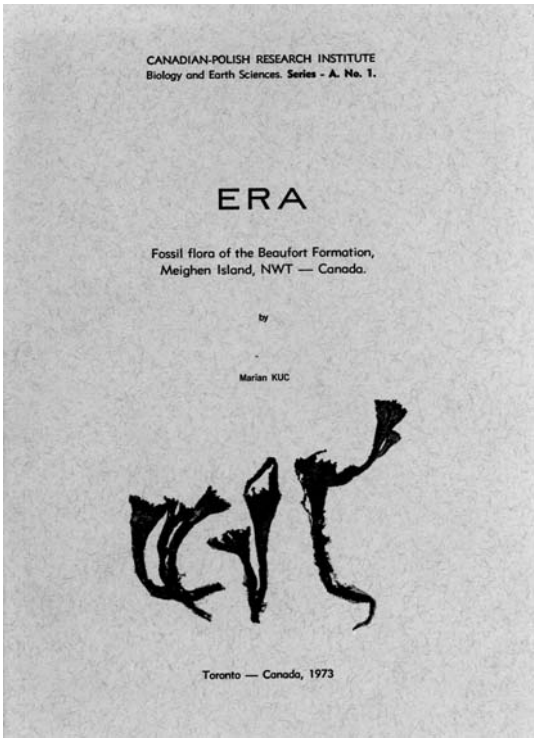


**Fig. 8**. Facsimile of the cover of Marian Kuc's work on fossil mosses from the Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

Dobrowolski Station in the Bunger Oasis in Queen Mary Land in continental Antarctica. He studied this collection and the results were published in 1969. It was one of the first taxonomic treatments devoted exclusively to the Antarctic continental mosses.

In 1977 Marian finished his job in the Geological Survey of Canada and became involved in a private construction business which was necessary to secure his future pension. After six years he returned to scientific research which he carried out in his private 'Overland Research Laboratory Inc.'. At that time he travelled much and visited many countries in Central and South America, Africa, as well as some islands in the Pacific. In 2000 Marian organised his last excursions to Iceland, Greenland and to the West Antarctic. In all these countries he collected bryophytes and the most remarkable discoveries he published in various journals; for example, the first record of *Calliergon giganteum* (Schimp.) Kindb. in southern South America which he found in 1984 in Tierra del Fuego, *Cinclidium stygium* Sw. discovered in Uruguay and *Pleuridium andinum* Herzog in Peru. Moreover, he published some contributions to the moss flora of French Guiana, Ecuador, Paraguay and Suriname in South America, as well as the Tuamoru archipelago in the Pacific.

Marian always stressed the fact that we had never published a joint bryological paper and suggested completing some accounts based upon his exotic collections. About two years ago we agreed to study his African and Chilean collections and he shipped them to me. Progress has been good but, unfortunately, for him these will be only posthumously published accounts. We also talked a lot about his other collections and I convinced him that he should donate them to KRAM because here is deposited the entire collection of mosses collected in Poland and Spitsbergen and it would be wonderful if his bryophyte collection could be preserved in one place. He basically agreed with me but no definite decision was undertaken then. He was such a vivid and healthy man, so it seemed quite impolite to press him to pass the collection to the Institute of Botany. After his death, Linda Ley, his executor, shipped the major part of his herbarium to KRAM and only some Canadian Arctic specimens were deposited in ALTA.

When the political system in Poland changed in 1989, Marian decided to visit his homeland after a long absence. In 1991 he came to Chrzanów, the city of his birth. He invited me and my wife Halina and one sunny autumnal day in September we came to his home where lived his sister Józefa. Although we had never met each other, it felt like a meeting of two good acquaintances. It was a nice, pleasant day and we talked about many issues which we had earlier discussed in our correspondence.

Marian visited Poland every year until 1997 and then, after an eight year break, since 2005. We usually met in Kraków but we also organised some field trips to the Silesian Upland. During his visits to Poland Marian was usually extremely busy. He actively participated in Polish Polar Symposia during which he usually presented lectures which were subsequently published in the proceedings of these symposia. They dealt with results of his earlier studies in Spitsbergen and in the Canadian Arctic, including the publication in 1998 of his geobotanical map of the coastal vegetation of northern Hornsund between Isbjørnhamna and Revdalen, which was prepared forty years earlier during his expedition to this island in 1958. Another valuable account dealt with the flora of the vascular plants of the Hornsund area published in 1995.

However, the closest to his heart was the organisation of 'a geological museum under the open sky' in the local Museum of Natural History in his hometown of Chrzanów. The greatest geological curiosity of this region is the Carbon *Araucaria*-like petrified wood deposited in the sandstone of Kwaczała. He interested many people with this idea and established the Araucarit Society of Chrzanów. For several years he organised expeditions at his own expense to collect araucarits for the Museum. In 2011 the exposition called the Oriental Garden of Geology was named after Marian Kuc. Additionally, the Museum in Chrzanów published a memorial volume dedicated to Marian Kuc (Szuwarzyński 2012).

**Fig. 9**. Marian Kuc (middle) with Jíri Váňa (left) and Ryszard Ochyra (right) in the restaurant in Kraków on 2 October 2007 (photo by Beata Cykowska).

Although Marian visited Kraków many times and we often walked on the street along the Institute of Botany, he never decided to cross the threshold of 'Lubicz 46'. Certainly, this was the effect of his traumatic experience from the 1960s. I tried to convince him many times that he should change his mind because this is a different institution and people who were prejudicial towards him were no longer present. He consistently refused, although he seemed to become more gentle with age. In September 2010 he came unexpectedly to Kraków and brought a parcel with duplicates of his reprints. He had not told me about this visit and I was then away from the Institute. The driver came into the yard and Marian was a only few steps from our Laboratory and herbarium which I had wished to show him so very much.

The next time Marian intended to visit Poland would have been in May 2011. Earlier I talked with some people in the Institute, including the Directors, Professors Konrad Wołowski and Barbara Godzik, and his old friend Professor Leon Stuchlik and convinced them that we should complete a Festschrift on the occasion of the approaching 80$^{th}$ birthday of Marian in 2012. Of course, it was to be a surprise and our intention was to have a symbolic return of Marian to the place in which he started his botanical career. Alas, ruthless fate prepared a different scenario and we were not privileged to meet one another as we did in the past. Nonetheless, the idea of the dedication to him of a collection of botanical papers survived and we are happy to dedicate to Marian the present Gedenkschrift.

Marian! Welcome to the Institute of Botany again!

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