

Dr. IGOR L. SIENKIEWICZ
(1907–2006)



“...în lumea aceasta nu există nimic absolut, cert și sigur. Totul este relativ, aproximativ și comparativ.”

(...nothing is certain in this world. Everything is relative, approximative and comparative)

(Igor Sienkiewicz, April 1984)

On 10th of May, far from his native and youth places, Dr. Igor Sienkiewicz passed away, in Montréal. After a few months he would have been 99 years old.

Even if his eyes couldn't help him lately for studying his entire life favourite, heteropterans, his mind, always active, shined like a precious stone... He passed away like a tree, still standing, after a life full of fulfilments but with many impediments.

During his 98 year of life, the World changed several times, each time influencing also his life ... The destiny often blocked his way, turning him around or pushing him forward despairfully, to unknown lands.

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Beginning with the summer of 1983, for 7-8 years, I was in correspondence with Sienkiewicz, in Canada, which began with discussions on the naturalist A. L. Montandon's life and work, one of his approached subjects. Of course, along the years we had also other themes to discuss.

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In September 1996, Igor Sienkiewicz came back in Romania, after more than 30 years. First of all, he came at „Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History from Bucharest. It was the end of the week and nobody knew him. He left message that he would come back, after visiting his native places. As he told us later, there he hadn't found anybody known, but he heard a lot of sad stories about the past.

Our meeting from the Museum lasted only a few hours and then, we hoped not to be the only one. But Dr. Sienkiewicz knew better than us that the distance between Canada and Romania will be more and more difficultly to cover. He was received warmly, respectfully and with admiration, both by those who had heard his name but also by the others. All cherish his memory. “Parcă răspânda în jurul său lumină” (It seems he spread light around him) was some of our colleagues’ remark.

Obviously affected, he visited Heteropteran Collection, sometime ago studied and enriched by him with hundreds and hundreds of specimens.

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In 2002, when Igor Sienkiewicz was 95 years old, I intended to publish an article dedicated to that anniversary. I came in touch with Dr. Paul Dăncescu, well-known physician and entomologist settled in Canada. Within last years we succeeded in finding some news on Sienkiewicz by his kindness.

On 13th and 14th of April 2002, Dr. Dăncescu phoned him and asked him several questions on his life and activity, suggested by me. For some hours Dr. Dăncescu listened to him and noted Sienkiewicz’s words.

Sad because “astăzi nimeni nu mai vorbește, nimeni nu vrea să mai știe (...) lumea a uitat toată tragedia oamenilor din Basarabia” (nobody talks, nobody does not want to know (...) people have forget the tragedy of the people from Basarabia), he wanted his life, his family’s or other families’ life to be known. Further on I shall present a part of them ...

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Igor Sienkiewicz was born on 15/28th of December 1907, at Tighina, then named (in present Republic of Moldova), a very rich region, with an alluvial soil, favourable to cultures. There, the wine and trees bare a fruit “care nu se întâlnește ca bogăție și frumusețe, nicaieri în lume” (which nowhere occurs).

His family was of Polish origin. In 1831, after the Russians stopped one of the Polish insurrections, his forefather Stanislas Sienkiewicz, was deported in Basarabia, at Tighina, where he married Constanția, also a Polish girl, deported there with her family. Their son was to be the Igor Sienkiewicz’s grandfather. In an alien world, they became orthodox.

Igor’s father was Leonida Sienkiewicz, and his mother, Ludmila Muczinski, from Lithuania.

Igor Sienkiewicz attended the Russian school and high-school at Kishinev. After 1918, there were two private Russian high-schools. One led by Schumacher, a Russian German, and the second one, Jewish, belonging to the “Association of the Commercial Staff”. His graduation diploma given by the Russian high-school in 1928 was not recognized by the Romanian authorities. It was stamped on it “Fără drept de continuarea studiilor”! (no rights for continuing the studies). School-leavers of such high-school were obliged to follow the University studies abroad. Sienkiewicz left for France, at Toulouse, where, in 1931 he got the agricultural expert diploma. He was very fond of entomology and pest control. But because of the economical crisis, the unemployment was very high and because his knowledge in French was not perfectly, he had to work only as agricultural worker.

In 1932, he came back at Tighina. Unfortunately, his expert diploma is not recognized because the high-school he attended was not considered the equivalent of a Romanian high-school. So, he learnt Romanian and gave some exams of equivalence. Also he was in the army. Then he went to the Faculty of Agronomy from Iași, where he was admitted in the fourth study year. In France, the faculty

lasted three years, while in Romania four, after the German example. He passed the exams, and in 1938, when he was 30, he was accepted to practice.

Thus, he had to attend the high-school and the faculty twice!

In 1939 he was admitted in „Camera Agricolă” (Agricultural Chamber), at Kishinev and worked in the village Chițcani, a place with large vine estates and orchards and where his family had in property 21 hectares. Igor Sienkiewicz considered 1939 as the single normal year of his life, of that period.

It followed the Sovietic occupation, begun on 28th of June 1940. Then, his family made a terrible mistake, staying in Tighina further. His father-in-law, physician and mayer of the town, was arrested and convicted. After nine years he died in camp. Deportations were made after mysterious criteria. His family was prepared, having a luggage all the time... But they were missed. When Basarabia was occupied for the second time by Russians, in 1944, they left everything and escape in Romania. First, they stop in Drăgășani, then in Bucharest.

Their escape was a nightmare – overcrowded trains, despaired people! Only by a miracle he succeeded to get in, together with his wife in such a train...

During 1949-1956, he worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, in plant protection field – pest control and phyto-sanitary quarantine.

In 1956, he was employed at “Grigore Antipa” Museum, where he studied heteropterans. Professor Al. V. Grossu, director of the Museum between 1955-57, said that Dr. Sienkiewicz was a very good researcher, one of the valuable scientists of the Museum, beside M. Băcescu, A. Popescu-Gorj, V. Iuga-Raica and other skilled researchers of that time.

Sienkiewicz was in many field trips and collected a very rich entomological material, today preserved in Museum. In his papers, he reported around 40 heteropteran species new for the Romanian fauna. Unfortunately, we can present now only a part of these taxa.

He was very much interested in the great collection “A. L. Montandon”, succeeding in publishing the catalogue of the Palaearctic heteropterans, in 1964.

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Trying to sketch the personality of this savant, especially during the period when he worked at „Grigore Antipa” Museum, I present some of Dr. Medeea Weinberg’s rememberings, well-known dipterologist, researcher in this Museum for several years. During the first years of his career she had the chance of being Igor Sienkiewicz’s laboratory colleague.

«Era un cercetător desăvârșit, un om de teren excelent, un fin observator. Purta o corespondență bogată cu specialiști străini. A adunat de pe teren foarte mult material pe care l-a preparat singur și l-a introdus în colecție. Lucrările sale rămân un document prețios peste timp. Avea o cultură vastă, în toate domeniile. Un om foarte civilizată, cu un simț al umorului și al criticului deosebit, deseori de neînțeles pentru cei cărora se adresa. Uneori remarcile sale critice erau luate greșit drept laude, în sesiunile științifice. Câteodată era excesiv de caustic». (He was a perfect researcher, excellent in field trips, and a keen observer. He had a rich correspondence with the foreign specialists. He collected and prepared a lot of specimens and introduced them himself in collections. His papers are valuable documents. He had a rich culture, in all fields. He was very civilized, with the sense of humour and criticism, seldom misunderstood. Sometimes, his critical remarks were wrongly considered praises, at scientific sessions, but sometimes he was extremely poignant.)

At the Museum, working programme started at 7 sharp; Sienkiewicz came daily at 6:30. If, in the beginning he was silent, as the trust was increasing, he started to discuss more and more interesting things with his colleague, younger with 25 years.. “Cel mai deștept om este acela care învață și de la Sienkiewicz, care e un prost!” (The smartest man is that one who learns also from Sienkiewicz, who is stupid); “Cel mai bogat om este cel care este mulțumit cu ce are” (The richest man is that one who is satisfied with what he has); “Cel mai puternic este cel care reușește să se înfrângă pe sine” (The strongest man is that one who succeed to defeat himself), and so on said Sienkiewicz.

From the moments which impressed her very much, Medeea Weinberg mentions two:

A visit, together with her husband, musician Gerry Podgoreanu (Gerard Weinberg), to Sienkiewicz's home. The piano was already prepared ... After Sienkiewicz and Gerry played Chopin “with four hands”, the musician was asked to play jazz. It was a wonderful unforgettable evening, a spot of light in those difficult years. Also on this occasion, Sienkiewicz presented his heteropteran collection, which he brought from Basarabia.

The second moment was in 1959-60, and it is linked by the “8th of March” ball (The Woman's Day), organized by Prof. Petre Raicu, then director of “Grigore Antipa” Museum, to which the staff of the museum was “obliged” to come with their partners. Sienkiewicz had a smart black suit, with bow tie, and his wife, in a long black velvet dress, with a nice jewel at her neck. They had brought a bottle of liqueur, for the tombola. The Sienkiewicz's appearance, like from another world, generated a sincere admiration as well as envies and malicious comments. “Sienkiewicz era și un dansator minunat” (Sienkiewicz was also a very good dancer) reminded pleasantly Dr. Weinberg. And he also was a very good chess player.

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Igor Sienkiewicz learnt Polish rather late, as he said. He had a rich correspondence with Polish scientists. In 1960, registered for the doctor's degree, at Professor K. Strawiński from the University of din Ljublin (Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej) and requested to leave for Poland for studies. His request was rejected and even in the same year he had to leave the Museum and obliged to go to Poiana-Pitești as agricultural expert. Professor N. Botnariuc succeeded to send him back to “Grigore Antipa” Museum, where he worked till 1964, when he made his passport to leave for Poland.

In 1965 he presented his theses in entomology at the University of Ljublin, becoming Doctor in Sciences.

In June 1965, from Poland he went to France and then in USA, together with his wife. He reached New-York, and after 8 months he left USA, settling in Canada for good, in Montréal. First, he was technician at McDonald College of the McGill University of Montréal, and then, for 11 years, he was teacher of Biology at the French College from St. Jean de Richelieu.

His ten-twelve years of life were more and more difficult. On one hand he was alone, after his loving wife died, and on the other one, he lost his sight gradually and he couldn't work. It was a deep grief which he revealed every time I phoned him. Even if his neighbours respected and appreciated him the loneliness was harder and harder, told us Dr. Paul Dăncescu, who visited him.

He never gave up his passion for heteropterans, publishing many papers along the years. Unfortunately, we can list here only some titles.

During the last year, he wanted to donate his library and entomological collection to “Grigore Antipa” Museum, to whom he was bound till the end. Unfortunately all steps taken by the Romanian State, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the request of “Grigore Antipa” Museum were without success and it is possible that all these values to remain on the territory of the Canadian State for good.

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Obsequies were in Montréal, Friday, 19th of May, at the Orthodox Russian Cathedral St. Pierre et St. Paul, from Champlain Street, and inhumation, at Cimetière Urgel Bourgie.

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In 1984, in *Istoricul cercetărilor* (History of Research) of the volume *Fauna R. S. R. Heteroptera - Pentatomoidea*, Béla Kis wrote referring to Montandon's and Horváth's continuers: «O perioadă de câteva decenii cercetările au fost întrerupte; se publică doar câteva mici liste faunistice (Z. Szilády, 1908; E. O. Marcu, 1932-1933). Între anii 1955 și 1964, I. Sienkiewicz reia studiul heteropterelor, aducând completări valoroase la cunoașterea acestui grup de insecte din România» (For some decades the studies were interrupted; only some small faunistic lists are published (Z. Szilády, 1908; E. O. Marcu, 1932-1933). Between 1955 and 1964, I. Sienkiewicz resumed the heteropteran study, completing the knowledge of this insect group in Romania).

Heteropteran species new to the Romanian fauna,
reported by dr. Igor Sienkiewicz*

Family Miridae: *Allodapus rufescens* (Burm.) – Vatra Dornei (1956); *Brachynotocoris puncticornis* Reut. – Comana (1956); *Phytocoris ustulatus* H. S. – Lotru Mts, near Brezoi (1956); *Alloeotomus germanicus* E. Wagner – Ocna Sibiului, West to the railway station (1957); *Orthotylus fuscescens* Kirschbaum, 1855 – Vatra Dornei (Bucovina) (1960 a); *Pachytomella parallela* (Meyer-Düring, 1843) – Făgăraș Massif, northern slope, valley of Bâlea torrent (Transylvania) (1960 a); *Psallus perrisi* Mulsant et Rey, 1852 – Drăgășani – Vâlcea (Oltenia) (1960 a); *Dionconotus neglectus* (F.) ienisteani f. n. – Bucegi Mts, 2000 m alt. (1960 b); *Orthonotus ponticus* (Horvath, 1888) – Valul lui Traian (1962 a); *Campylomma nicolasi* Puton et Reuter, 1883 - Valul lui Traian (1962 a)

Family Lygaeidae: *Ischnopeza hirticornis* H. S. – Herculane (1956); *Pionosomus opacellus* Horv. – Sf. Gheorghe (the Danube mouth); Letea; Agigea; Gura Humorului (1956); *Arocatus roeseli* (Schill.) – Lotru Valley near Brezoi (1955); *Arocatus melanocephalus* – Baia Mare; Șimlăul Silvaniei (1955)

Family Coreidae: *Nemocoris fallini* F. Sahlb. – Băile 1 Mai (Băile Felix) (1956); *Pitedia juniperina* L. – Lotru Mts, near Brezoi (1956); *Enoplops* (= *Coreus*) *disciger* Kol. – Dobrogea (1955); *Leptoceraea viridis* Iakovlev, 1872 – Between villages Rosetti and Periprava (1960 a)

Family Tingidae: *Tingis (Tropidochila) caucasica* (Iakovlev, 1880) - Valul lui Traian (1962 a)

Family Anthocoridae: *Temnostethus gracilis* Horv., 1907 – Vatra Dornei (Bucovina); Băile Felix, near Oradea (Transylvania) (1965); *Orius laticollis* (Reuter, 1884) – Buftea; Greci Forest (near Bucharest); Comana Forest (1965); *Orius vicinus* (Ribaut, 1923) – on the shore of the salt lake Techirghiol (marine area of Dobrogea) (1965)

*I took these taxa only from Sienkiewicz's papers which I could study.

Some of dr. Igor Sienkiewicz's papers

1. 1954 – Trei specii de Pentatomidae noi pentru R.P.R. Buletinul Științific al Acad. R.P.R., 6 (4): 1225-1231. (in Romanian)
2. 1955 – Trei specii de heteroptere noi pentru R.P.R. Buletinul Științific al Acad. R.P.R., 7 (2): 473-477. (in Romanian)
3. 1956 – Specii de heteroptere noi pentru R.P.R. Nota III, Comunicările Acad. R.P.R., 6 (7): 905-910. (in Romanian)
4. 1957 – Une nouvelle espèce d'hétéroptère pour la faune de la Roumanie. Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 1: 67-72.
5. 1960 a – Hétéroptères nouveaux pour la faune de Roumanie. Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 2: 241-244.
6. 1960 b – Une nouvelle forme de Miridae. Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 2: 407-409.
7. 1960 c – Materialy po faune nastoiaschtschich polujestkokrylych (Hemiptera-Heteroptera) doliny reki Prachova I prilejaschtschich massiwow iujnyh Karpat. In: Flora i fauna Karpat, Sbornik Rabot. Akad. Nauk. SSSR: 179-192. Moskva. (in Russian)
8. 1961 – Contribuții la biologia heteropterelor în condițiile Stațiunii experimentale Valul lui Traian (reg. Dobrogea). Studii și Cercetări de biologie, Seria biologie animală, 13 (3): 345-352. (I. Sienkiewicz, N. Hondru, D. Paraschivescu) (in Romanian)
9. 1962 a – Hétéroptères nouveaux pour la faune de Roumanie. Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 3: 533-535.
10. 1962 b – Heteroptere noi pentru fauna României. Studii și Cercetări de biologie, Seria biologie animală, 14 (1): 79-88. (in Romanian)
11. 1962 c – *Alloeonotus separandus* Horv. 1888 = *A. fulvipes* Scop. 1763. Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie – Skłodowska, Lublin, 17 (15): 463-485.
12. 1963 – Contribution to the study of the Heteroptera from the Dobrogea region. Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 4: 229-237. (I. Sienkiewicz, D. Paraschivescu)
13. 1964 a – Hétéroptères nouveaux pour la Faune de la Roumanie. Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie – Skłodowska, Lublin, 19 (5): 95-100.
14. 1964 b – The Catalogue of the "A. L. Montandon Collection" of Palaearctic Heteroptera preserved in the "Grigore Antipa" Museum of Natural History. Bucharest. 146 pp.
15. 1965 – Three new species of *Anthocoridae* for the Rumanian fauna (10th Note). Travaux du Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa", 5: 491-494.
16. 1986 – Description de *Plagiognathus (Poliopterus) strawinskii* n. sp. (*Heteroptera, Miridae*). Nouv. Revue Ent. (N.S.), 3 (3): 373-378. Paris.
17. 196? – Une femelle macroptère de l'espèce *Diomphalus hispidulus* Fieb. Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie – Skłodowska, Lublin, ?

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