

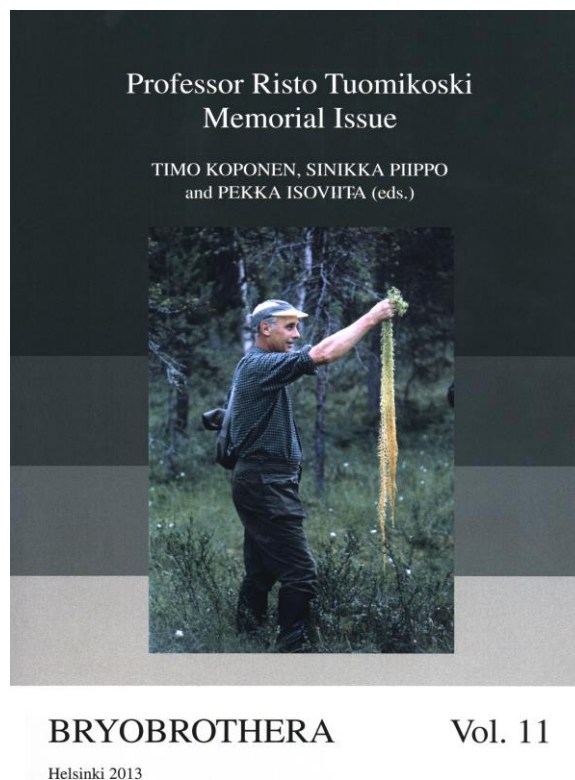
Koponen Timo, Piippo Sinikka & Isoviita Pekka (eds) (2013): *Professor Risto Tuomikoski. Memorial issue.* Bryobrothera Vol. 11. Finnish Bryological Society, Helsinki, Finland, 347 pp., 52 figures, paperback, size 25.1 × 17.6 cm. ISBN 978-952-67345-6-9; ISSN 1235-6181 (Bryobrothera). Price: 45 €. Available from the distributor: Bookstore Tiedekirja, Kirkkokatu 14, FI-00170 Helsinki, Finland, e-mail: tiedekirja@tsv.fi.

Finnish bryology has always belonged to the world powers and the likes of S. O. Lindberg, V. F. Brotherus, H. Lindberg, H. Buch, H. Roivainen and T. Koponen persistently distinguished themselves in the history of bryophyte science. The main fields in which they worked have been taxonomy and phytogeography, and they often carried out their studies in remote, exotic regions of the world, for example in China, Japan, Central Asia, New Guinea and Tierra del Fuego. One of somewhat lesser known Finnish bryologists, keeping in the background of his great predecessors, was Risto Tuomikoski (1911–1989). The figure and activity of this somewhat forgotten but, as it turned out, unusual researcher with an interesting individuality is the subject of the present book. It was published in the 102nd anniversary year of his birth and fourteen years after his death, mainly thanks to the efforts of his disciple Timo Koponen, Emeritus Professor of the University of Helsinki. Having felt a great admiration and respect to his mentor, he completed his detailed biography and invited several Finnish scientists to present the activity of Tuomikoski in other branches of science. Reading of this memorial book discloses a not trite person with an unusual personality, that of a broad-minded researcher with many interests, who was something of a Renaissance man in quite modern times.

Risto Tuomikoski is considered to be one of the most outstanding Finnish biologists of all times. His life and achievements have been dealt with in a number of obituaries and memorial articles, but all have been written in Finnish and so far his biography written in other languages which could be comprehensible for the scientific community-at-large has been lacking. This perceptible gap is filled by the present book which was published by the Finnish Bryological Society of which Tuomikoski was an Honorary member.

The key position in the book is occupied by the biographical sketch of Tuomikoski. As is the case with any work of this sort, completing a genuine and exhaustive biography is an uphill task because it requires a lot of strenuous archival work, interviews with persons who knew the subject, and examination of various documents. Of special importance and assistance in this case proved to be Tuomikoski's inappreciable and heavy correspondence with the eminent Swedish botanist Herman Persson (1893–1978), carried on over two decades from 1938–1958. In the archives of the Natural History Museum in Stockholm are preserved 131 letters which he wrote, in Swedish, to Persson. All the letters have been translated into English as a whole by the editors of the book and published chronologically in the second half of the volume. Many of them are provided with relevant annotations. The translators have undertaken a titanic work making available to botanists this special documentation which is a kind of a diary in which are described stories of Tuomikoski's daily professional and family life, as well as various events and personalities from the Finnish botanical community. This is a unique sociographic document in which, on the background of the vicissitudes and life events of an individual, is outlined the picture and climate of the dramatic years of World War II and the difficult post-war period. Careful readers can find here fascinating descriptions of the genesis of many taxonomic concepts which are usually presented in Floras and ordinary publications in the form of the authorship of a given name or nomenclatural combinations.

At first sight the scientific career of Risto Tuomikoski appears to be that of an ordinary academic, from a student to a professor, but in fact it was for various reasons very exceptional. Since his childhood he had been enchanted by nature, initially being even more interested in entomology and only later he dedicated himself to botany. The future has shown that frequent changes in his branches and interests was a characteristic feature of his scientific activity. Tuomikoski began his scientific career as an ecologist and student of vegetation cover, and



the extensive treatment of spruce mires in eastern Finland, published in 1942, was his dissertation. He had a perfect knowledge of vascular plants and published a lot of miscellaneous contributions on them, exclusively in Finnish and therefore almost unknown outside Finland. As a mycologist we worked on macromycetes and he is considered a pioneer of taxonomic studies on these fungi in Finland. He never forgot about his youthful passion for insects and since the beginning of his scientific career he published entomological papers devoted to various genera and families of Diptera. He intensified his entomological researches in the 1960s, after quitting bryology, and described in total nearly 100 new species and 28 new genera of dipterous insects. Finally, in the late 1960s and throughout the whole decade of the 1970s, Tuomikoski took up linguistics, specialising in Finnish grammar. The results of his linguistic studies have been published in 14 articles and one monograph.

Tuomikoski's time as a student of mosses extended for almost a quarter of a century and was finally finished in 1957–1958. Apart from many floristic papers dealing with the Finnish bryoflora, Tuomikoski completed a number of important taxonomic papers devoted to critical groups in the families Mniaceae and Amblystegiaceae. As a typical field botanist, he paid special attention to the relationships between habitat requirements of mosses and the variability of characters, and the study of mixed stands was his key method in some moss groups such as *Sphagnum* and aquatic mosses of the Amblystegiaceae. He deserves the credit for the observations of some neglected and disregarded characters, such as the branching pattern and topography of rhizoids, which have proved to be valuable diagnostic characters in some families, including the Mniaceae and Amblystegiaceae. Unfortunately, many interesting taxonomic observations which he announced in his letters to Persson have never been substantiated, for example those in the Grimmiaceae, and several valuable manuscripts which remained in the drawer. Only two of these he gave to his pupil Timo Koponen and thanks to his efforts they were published. The first of these dealt with the mosses of Newfoundland where Tuomikoski conducted field studies in 1949, and the second one treated the generic classification of the *Calliergon–Drepanocladus* complex.

The scientific activity of Risto Tuomikoski in various branches of science is accurately described by specialists in this book. It is accompanied by full lists of publications, new taxa, and names dedicated to him in each field. There are different speculations regarding his frequent moving from one research discipline to another. From Tuomikoski's letters to Persson it appears that he was often uncertain of the appropriateness of his concepts and because he was quite sensitive to any criticism from other specialists who perhaps did not accept his conclusions. So, after making a splash in one research field he moved on to another before he could be too heavily criticised. Or, alternatively, he may not have been patient enough to refine his nearly ready manuscripts and to publish them. His own explanation as to why he changed the subject so frequently was that after he had resolved a problem, he lost further interest in the matter, and just could not elaborate to perfection the associated manuscripts. When he was interrogated too much then he made a jest of the problem or imparted unclear and ambiguous answers.

Although Tuomikoski was concerned about the future of cryptogamic botany in Finland, he promoted only two doctoral candidates: Harri Harmaja – a mycologist and Timo Koponen – a world renowned bryologist. In order to resolve his concerns, he often gave lectures and organised short courses devoted to various aspects of cryptogamic botany, through which he hoped to motivate others interested in lower plants.

The book dedicated to Risto Tuomikoski is exciting reading, describing the classical botanical world which is now declining. New times bring completely new challenges, but sadly classical taxonomic and floristic investigations are more and more generally being disregarded and the omnipotent competition for bibliometric factors kills the joy and satisfaction of the descriptions of new species and discoveries of new localities. Within some years, when the generation who have kept in mind these old, good times and who will have departed from this world, only from such books will it be possible to find out in which way and climate were carried out botanical studies in the past.

Reviewer's address: Ryszard Ochyra, Laboratory of Bryology, W. Szafer Institute of Botany, Polish Academy of Sciences, ul. Lubicz 46, 31-512 Kraków, Poland.
E-mail: r.ochyra@botany.pl