

**THE BIOGRAPHY AND PALEOBOTANICAL ACTIVITY OF
PROF. GÁBOR ANDREÁNSZKY
(COMMEMORATION OF THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH)**

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Gábor ANDREÁNSZKY baron was born in Alsópetény on 1st August 1895. During his childhood he studied in his family. Later his parents sent him to the nearby Piarist Grammar School in Vác where he finished his studies with excellent results in 1913. Then he attended the Pázmány Péter University and read Biology and Chemistry. During the Great War he fought on both the Italian and the Russian fronts so he could graduate only after this break of five years. He worked under Prof. János TUZSON's guidance in the Botanical Department of the University as an unpaid assistant. In 1922 he was awarded a doctorate degree in Botanical Taxonomy and also passed exams in Geology and Chemistry. He was appointed as a first assistant in 1923 and as a candidate in 1929 in the same institution. In 1938 he was an elected member of the Szent István Academy and on 30th May 1945 a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA). From 1947 to 1949 he was the secretary of the IVth Department of the MTA. The National Postgraduate Degree Granting Guard (TMB) qualified him candidate degree in 1952.

In 1941 he married Ilona BOÉR. In the same year he was appointed the first curator of the Botanical Department of the Hungarian National Museum and in 1943 he was promoted to be the director of the same department, and he held this position till 1st November 1945. The Pázmány Péter University awarded him the title of Exceptional Professor in 1943. As the World War II ended, he was saving and reorganizing the valuable collection of the museum's Botanical Department. On 1st November 1945 he was appointed professor of the University's Plant Morphological and Botanical Taxonomy Institute where he was the head of the department until July 1953. Then he had to leave the university because of his social background (barony), thus he was employed as a researcher of the museum where not much later he was given retirement. But this could not divert him from continuing his researches now already in the field of Paleobotany.

Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY's scientific interest directed him towards Botany from his youth. Besides his phytogeographical study trips in Hungary, he took part in important trips along the European and African coasts of the Mediterranean sea: in Sicily, in Corsica, in the French and the Italian rivieras, in Algeria, in Tunis and in Morocco. His trips to the Alps, into Transylvania and Poland were very important at that time. Mainly as a result of his North African study trips, he was convinced that the flora was constantly changing according to the effect of the climate and its certain factors.



In his work on vegetation history he assigned a great importance to climate as a factor strongly affecting the migration of plants.

In 1949 he gave lectures on Paleontology to students of Geology, and from that time investigation of the Tertiary flora was the centre of his scientific interest. His scholar and self-forgetful personality attracted followers around him, so very soon a Paleobotanical School was formed, with nearly twenty students. In 1954 he published a handbook titled "Paleobotany", in which he gave a review of plants of the geohistorical past on the basis of their taxonomical order, and in the second part he characterized the floras and vegetation of geohistorical periods.

He paid special attention to the acquaintance of native paleoflora – hardly discovered at that time – by issuing his first examination results, thoughts and observations. It follows from this that his book is not only a handbook but also a work including new knowledge and even more fruitful new ideas, which show the vocation of a researcher actively dealing with the subject. This work can be recommended for a useful reading to date with its readable style and inspiring questions.

Thereupon his many papers on Paleobotany appeared one after the another, in which he revealed undiscovered sites of the native Tertiary flora. In spite of spending already his retired years, he produced the main work of his life at that time, which made him an acknowledged man all over the world. He carried out his assembling work under bad circumstances such as travelling by train, going on foot with a rucksack on his back escorted by one of his colleagues, friends or disciples. His best helper in uncovering and gathering the native Tertiary flora was Ferenc LEGÁNYI who collected the sites mainly near Eger with a possessed spirit.

In the beginning and later on, during his paleobotanical activity Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY was working with Tertiary and essentially Sarmatian floras. His greatest work originated from this subject and bears the title "Die Flora der Sarmatischen Stufe in Ungarn" of which several publications appeared later. In this monography Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY elaborates all the known Hungarian sites which were considered as Sarmatian. This work has a great importance because this area was almost unknown before (except for Erdőbénye and Tállya).

Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY made a good use of his phytogeographical and ecological knowledge in the reconstruction of the Sarmatian flora and vegetation as well as the climate. It was an entirely new method at that time that he spent a lot of time on ecological and climatological conclusions besides descriptive botany. On this occasion he was dealing with drought-resistance and the presence of xerophilous species in young Tertiary floras. His researches of Neogene are inspired for discussions with his opinions about these problems even today.

He got into touch with native Paleogene while dealing with the collection (collected by Ferenc LEGÁNYI) of the Dobó István Museum in Eger. He examined two very rich findspots of well preserved leaf-remnants: the older Oligocene from Eger-Kiseged and the younger one from Wind Brickyard (Eger). Meanwhile he obtained a little quantity of matter from Oligocene sites of Budapest, so he could compare the floras of two regions with each other. Although geologists had very different opinions about the age of the problematical formations, Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY dated them to the same age on the basis of their vegetation. His statement was verified later by strati-

graphical and paleobotanical investigations. It is an incontestable fact even today that both floras fossilized in the Tard Clay Formation. Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY could not complete his Oligocene researches as much as the Sarmatian ones, however, he published several papers and a small monography on the flora of the Wind Brickyard (Eger). As a matter of fact, these could be regarded as the first scientific elaborations of native Oligocene vegetations. His conclusions proved to be correct about the endemic species and isolated vegetations of native Tertiary Paleoflora despite many debates and disprovals.

We could not neglect his collection-establishing efforts besides his scientific and educational activities. The doubling of the paleobotanical collection of the Hungarian Natural History Museum is connected with ANDREÁNSZKY's name. Native Paleoflora is represented and documented most completely there. At the same time we are obliged to him for country collections because he elaborated them and determined mostly and marked out standard species and published them in many cases.

He formed comprehensive connections with several European paleobotanists by means of his competent knowledge of languages and admissions.

Up to the present day Prof. ANDREÁNSZKY was the most prominent character of Hungarian Paleobotany. The irradiation of his self-forgetful, kind and clear personality has influenced many of his former disciples and his spiritual followers through his works and his friend's recordings. He wrote his own name into the book of immortals by his scientific work throughout his life.