

Plaque in memory of Jean-Marie Géhu in Camerino

On November 6, 2015, a plaque in memory of Jean-Marie Géhu was inaugurated in the library of the ex-Department of Botany and Ecology (Palazzo Castelli) of the University of Camerino. The 51x68 cm white Carrara marble plaque features an effigy of Professor Géhu sculpted by the Italian-Albanian artist Luan Hoxha, and the words *Jean-Marie Géhu (1930-2014), promoter of Phytosociology in Europe and the world*. Jean-Marie Géhu appears with his open and kind smile familiar to all who knew him. Prof. Jesus Izco wrote from Santiago de Compostela, *I am very happy to learn of the initiative to place a plaque in memory of our friend and teacher Jean-Marie Géhu, at the University of Camerino. It is another way to perpetuate his memory and honor his dedication to Phytosociology and affection for many phytosociologists – including myself – who always counted on his personal support and his scientific body of work.*

Why a plaque in memory of Jean-Marie Géhu in Camerino? Because Camerino was the first place he came to in Italy, the place of his first contacts with Italian botanists and the beginning of a long period of scientific and promotional collaboration in Phytosociology. At the inauguration, Prof. Frédéric Bioret explained three reasons for the location of the plaque. *This plaque embodies the symbolic bond between the Amicale Francophone de Phytosociologie and the University of Camerino. Franco Pedrotti went to Bailleul for the first time in 1976, and since 1982 has been the President of the Amicale; the magazine Documents Phytosociologiques was edited and published by the University of Camerino from 1982 to 2009. Camerino's Institute of Botany [which became the Department of Botany and Ecology] was the place of the official transition in 2009 of the magazine from Amicale to Société Française de Phytosociologie. The plaque also symbolizes the forty-year bond of unflinching friendship between Jean-Marie Géhu and Franco Pedrotti. The last reason is that one can consider the Mediterranean to be his adopted homeland: Jean-Marie Géhu loved this region, and had many friends here.*

Prof. Géhu came to Camerino for the first time in 1979, on my invitation to participate in the annual Conference of the Italian Society of Phytosociology and to give the opening talk on *La Phytosociologie d'aujourd'hui. Méthodes et orientations*, subsequently published in the *Notiziario della Società Italiana di Fitosociologia*, today *Società italiana di Scienza della Vegetazione* (1980, 16: 1-16). In this way, Italian phytosociologists had the opportunity to meet Géhu, to initiate scientific collaborations with him, and to develop further contacts. A few years later, I invited Géhu to write a contribution on Synphytosociology, a science that was emerging in those years, published in the *Informatore Botanico Italiano* (1987, 18: 53-83) *Des complexes de groupements végétaux à la phytosociologie paysagère*.

In this atmosphere of collaboration, in 1982 a cultural accord was signed between the then Institute of Botany and the Station Internationale de Phytosociologie of Bailleul, which made it possible to undertake other activities, such as the publication in Camerino of *Documents Phytosociologiques*, which continued until 2007 (secretair Edoardo Biondi). After the death of Josias Braun-Blanquet (Montpellier 1980), in 1984, the publication of *Braun-Blanquetia* began in collaboration between Camerino and Bailleul, which continued until 2012 (secretair Roberto Venanzoni), for a total of 48 volumes.

The unveiling of the plaque was followed by words of greeting from Roberto Canullo (in the name of the University of Camerino), Franco Pedrotti (President of the Association Amicale Francophone de Phytosociologie), Roberto Venanzoni, (President of the Società italiana di scienza della vegetazione) and Frédéric Bioret (President of the Société Française de Phytosociologie). Bioret gave a talk on *Jean-Marie Géhu and the Phytosociology of the XXI century*, and Pedrotti gave a talk on *Jean-Marie Géhu, promoter of Phytosociology in Europe and the world*, thus defined for the following reasons: a) for his scientific activity in both theoretical and applied phytosociological research on the vegetation of France and other European countries, with which he introduced new concepts and methodologies; b) for the foundation in 1969 of the *Association Amicale Francophone de Phytosociologie*, which for many years was the point of encounter for botanists from neo-Latin countries (France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Belgium and Switzerland) but which also welcomed botanists from other European countries such as Poland, Holland, Germany, Hungary, Russia, Czechoslovakia and others; c) for the foundation in 1970 of the *Station Internationale de Phytosociologie di Bailleul*, then *Centre régional de Phytosociologie*, visited for years by researchers and students from throughout Europe and the world; d) for the publication in 1972 of the magazine *Documents Phytosociologiques*, which continues to date; e) for the organization in 1971 in Paris of the first international colloquium on Phytosociology, on *La végétation des dunes maritimes*; in following years the *colloques* took place Lille and then from 1983 onwards in Bailleul, with a few exceptions in Strasbourg, Nancy, Versailles, Orsay and Limoges; five *colloques* were organized in Italy, one in

Cagliari and the last in Rabbi in the Stelvio National Park (2015). A total of 29 *colloques* were organized, and for each of them the acts were published in volumes called *Colloques Phytosociologiques*; f) finally, for having compiled and printed the *Dictionnaire de Soziologie et synécologie végétales* (Berlino-Stoccarda, ed. Cramer, 2006, pp. 899).

I would like to conclude with the words Frédéric Bioret wrote me from Brest, upon returning from Camerino: *we spent three exceptional days in Camerino, and the homage to Jean-Marie Géhu was moving; this marble plaque now has a history and the Institute of Botany of Camerino has become the keeper of the memory of this out of the ordinary humanist scientist.*

The event was organized by the botanists of Camerino under the auspices of the Association Amicale Francophone de Phytosociologie, the Società Italiana Scienza della Vegetazione and the Société Française de Phytosociologie. Messages were received from France (Jeannette Géhu-Franck, Jean-Roger Wattez, Vincent Bouillet, Farid Bensettiti, Aurélie Chalumeau, Pauline Delbosc, Renaud Ward, Marielle Godet), Spain (Alfredo Asensi, Blanca Asensi, Jesus Izco, Daniel Pablo de la Cruz Sanchez Mata), Russia (Tatiana Yurkovskaya), Romania (Dan Gafta, Vasile Cristea), Bulgaria (Veska Roussakova, Svetlana Bancheva), Germany (Martin Dickmann, Erwin Bergmeier, Jürgen Dengler), Hungary (Sandor Bartha), Turkey (Emin Ugurlu), Brazil (Marcello Martinelli) and Italy (Emilia Poli, Consolata Siniscalco, Edoardo Biondi, Camilla Wellstein).

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