

ALEXEY DIAKONOFF, 1907-1989

The editors of the *Tijdschrift voor Entomologie* recently received the sad news that our former editor, Dr A. N. Diakonoff, passed away at the age of 82 on September the 20th, 1989. We share our feelings of sadness with the Dutch Entomological Society, of which he has been an active member for very many years, and with his family, that so much took part in his life as an entomologist.

Alexey Diakonoff was born in Saint Petersburg (now Leningrad) in 1907 and experienced all the miseries of a country going through a revolution. In 1923, by a circuitous way, he was able to join his parents who, according to plan, had reached the Netherlands East Indies. There he finished his elementary education and left for Amsterdam for a university study in biology. As a trained entomologist, his thesis on Indo-Malayan Tortricidae completed, he returned to Java in 1939 to become an entomologist at a research station of the sugar plantations and industries. Just when he had obtained, in 1941, a position of entomologist at the Zoological Museum at Bogor, Java, fate, in the shape of World War II, prisoner of war camps and deportation, prevented him from starting a scientific museum career. In 1945 he returned to The Netherlands for recuperation, most of the time staying at the Leiden Museum and working in the Lepidoptera collection. In 1947 he returned to Bogor, but not for long. The political situation changed very rapidly and the future looked uncertain. In 1951 he returned to The Netherlands to become curator of Lepidoptera at the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden.

Back in The Netherlands he at once became an active member of the Dutch Entomological Society. Already at the summer meeting in June 1953 it was reported that Diakonoff had joined the editorial board of the Society publications. In fact the last issue of 1952 of the "*Tijdschrift*" and the wrapper of the completed volume carried his name. And what is more, the journal changed in several aspects, in external appearance as well as in the internal lay-out. First of all the "*Tijdschrift*" was freed of the reports of the society's meetings and the Annual Report, which from then on would be published in the "*Entomologische Berichten*". The "*Tijdschrift voor Entomologie*" thus became a scientific journal in its purest form. At the same time the lay-out was modified. Distinct page headings with the journal's name on one page and a running title of the article on the opposite page



Dr. Alexey Diakonoff in his working room, 1982.
Photo: E. L. M. van Esch.

were introduced. The size of the pages became larger, a new letter-type (Times Roman) was selected, indeed the whole format of the journal was modernized. If one opens the 1953 volume one recognizes the familiar make-up of recent decades, which indeed stood its ground up till now. Each page is proof of the strong preference Diakonoff had for symmetry in the text. The only change made was the recent shift to a two-column distribution of the text, and that only for economical reasons and not on aesthetic grounds, and after Diakonoff had left the editorial board.

In 1953 there also appears an emblem on the wrapper and title-page: *Lycaena dispar batavus* Oberthür, the Dutch subspecies of the Large Copper, on top of a strongly enlarged egg of the same species, surrounded by the name of the Society. The emblem was modified after the vignette used at the occasion of the 9th International Congress of Entomology at Amsterdam (1951). Al-

though we are not absolutely certain, we have a strong feeling that Diakonoff had a firm hand in all these developments, could convince the board with his aesthetic arguments and obtained a mandate to reshape the "Tijdschrift".

In the early sixties Diakonoff plead for the creation of another series of publications, the "Monografieën van de Nederlandse Entomologische Vereniging". They were intended to serve as a medium for longer articles, which otherwise would surpass the size of a yearly volume of the *Tijdschrift*. In 1964 the first volume was published, while in 1968 a monograph on the Dutch Tortricidae, written by him in cooperation with Count Bentinck, appeared as volume 3 of this series.

Many other papers by his hand appeared in our journal, amidst a total of about 250 scientific papers, in which he – amongst others – described hundreds of species and genera of Microlepidoptera, in particular from the Indonesian archipelago.

In 1970, at the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the society, Diakonoff was granted the honorary membership of the society because of his long and highly appreciated efforts to improve upon the international standing of the society's publications. In 1974 he left editorship after more than twenty years of service, because he wanted to devote all his time to scientific work. His successors on the editorial board call themselves happy to have been trained by him, to have received his lessons in the printing trade, to have benefited from his long experience. Modesty kept him from ever criticizing our work on the later volumes, but we know he followed all developments. He couldn't set aside his interest in "his" *Tijdschrift* after so many years of involvement, or could he?

Only two weeks before his death, Alexey Diakonoff sent us a book review for publication in this journal. Below we publish this review, apparently one of Diakonoff's last manuscripts, as a homage to this great predecessor of us.

P. J. van Helsdingen (former editor)
E. J. van Nieukerken (editor)

BOOK REVIEW

Medvedev, G. S. (ed.), 1987 [1988]. Keys to the Insects of the European part of the U. S. S. R., vol. iv, Lepidoptera, part 1. – Published for the United States Dept. of Agriculture and the National Sciences Foundation, Washington, by Amerind Publ. Co., New Delhi, xxvi + 991 pp, 578 figs. – Translated from Russian by D. R. Sharma. – [Distributed by E. J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, price US \$ 97.50]

This book covers the most archaic groups of Lepidoptera: the suborders Micro- and Macrojugatae and several minor families of the suborder Frenatae, including the economically so important Tortricidae, 17 families in all, the other 16 being: Micropterygidae, Eriocraniidae, Hepialidae, Nepitculidae, Opostegidae, Tischeriidae, Heliozelidae, Incurvariidae, Adelidae, Psychidae, Heterogynidae, Limacodidae, Zygaenidae, Sesiidae, Cossidae and Atychiidae. The species composition of the European part of the USSR is almost completely reviewed (about 1200 species). Identification keys are (mostly) at the species level. Illustrations of the genitalia of both sexes are given for all species, with notes on morphology, biology and distribution of families and genera. Phenology and food plants of most species are discussed. Finally bibliography and indices of insect and hostplant names conclude this book.

This important translation represents a part of the Russian "Opredelitel" (=Keys) series, written by leading specialists of the insect-fauna of the European part of the USSR. The original series is very popular among international Lepidopterists, in spite of the barrier of the language. I even know some colleagues, who taught themselves Russian, in order to be able to read the text. Others acquired the Russian edition, only to study the illustrations of wing neuration and genitalia, and often also of the wing pattern. Now that the language problem is overcome, the translated edition will fill a most important gap in the western bibliography on Lepidoptera.

[A. Diakonoff]



Helsdingen, P. J. van and Nieukerken, Erik J. van. 1989. "Alexey Diakonoff 1907-1989." *Tijdschrift voor entomologie* 132, 161–162.

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