

# MUZEUL DE ISTORIE NATURALA "GRIGORE ANTIPA" IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

DUMITRU MURARIU AND AURELIAN POPESCU-GORJ

Muzeul de Istorie Naturala "Grigore Antipa," 1. Chaussee Kisseleff, RO-79744 Bucharest 2, Romania

**ABSTRACT.**— The growth and development of the insect collections of the Natural History Museum of Bucharest, Romania (Muzeul de Istorie Naturala "Grigore Antipa") is summarized, along with historical sketches of major contributors to the collections of the museum.

**KEY WORDS:** collections, entomohistory, museums.



Fig. 1. The building of the Natural History Museum "Grigore Antipa," completed in 1908.

The Natural History Museum "Grigore Antipa" (Muzeul de Istorie Naturala "Grigore Antipa"), Bucharest, Romania, has its origins in the National Museum of Natural History and Antiques, founded 3 November 1834 by Prince Alexandru Ghica, who signed the Royal Deed 143. At that time, the museum contained antiques, collections of paintings and natural curiosities, which were noted as in the "Cabinets of natural curiosities." At the end of the 18th century, the collections were among no more than 12 in the world. The first custodian was the drawing master Carol Wallenstein de Vella. He began exchange relations of zoological

material (for example, with the Imperial Zoological Cabinet, Vienna) and published in 1853 the paper "Elements of Ornithology According to Personal Local Remarks" (in Romanian).

In 1860, the Italian taxidermist Carlo Ferrerati was appointed curator. He enriched the collections of minerals, invertebrates, and lower vertebrates with scientific rarities of great value. During the period 1834-1867 the museum was housed in the building of the "Saint Sava" College, the first Romanian teaching school. After the organization of the University of Bucharest (1864), there arose the problem of moving the collections and appointing a uni-



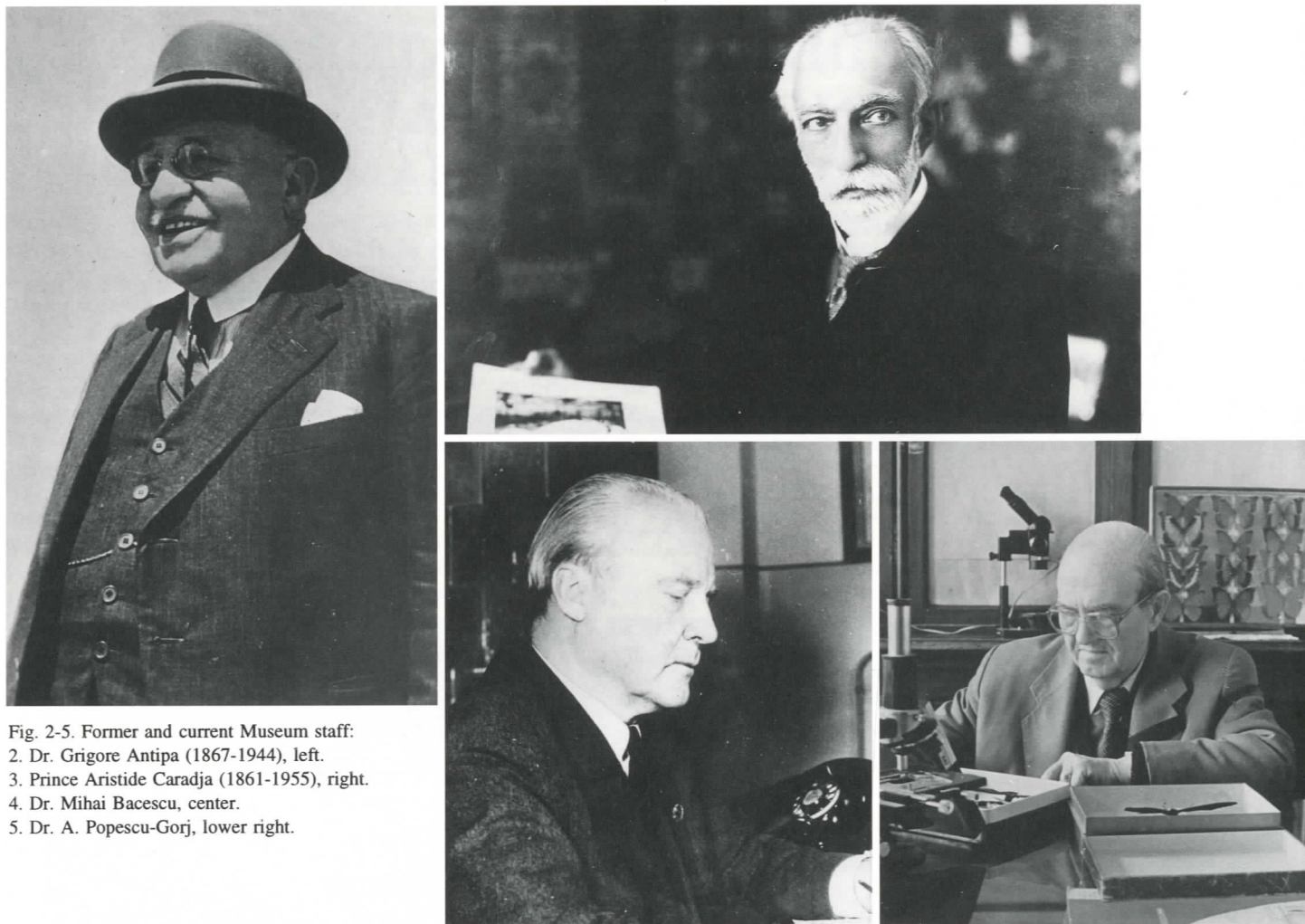


Fig. 2-5. Former and current Museum staff:  
 2. Dr. Grigore Antipa (1867-1944), left.  
 3. Prince Aristide Caradja (1861-1955), right.  
 4. Dr. Mihai Bacescu, center.  
 5. Dr. A. Popescu-Gorj, lower right.

versity professor as director of the museum. Consequently, in 1867, geology professor Gregoriu Stefanescu was entrusted as director over the 4000 zoological and mineral specimens, which he moved to the University building. He discovered and described, among others, the gigantic fossil elephant *Deinotherium gigantissimum*, which was preserved until 1690 in the Meotian sands near Barlad, in the Moldavian province from Romania.

In 1893, Grigore Antipa returned home, after having completed his studies in Jena (Germany) under the guidance of the famous Professor Ernst Haeckel. The newly graduated doctor in zoology became director of the zoological collections, which he moved to a house at Polona Str. 19. Soon, this building became too small for the rich collections gathered by Antipa. Therefore, in 1903 he asked for, and the Council of Ministers approved, the construction of a new "National Museum of Natural History, worthy of the capital of the country." On 24 May 1908 in the presence of King Carol I, the Prime Minister, and many scientists, Grigore Antipa presided over the opening ceremonies. The museum had at that time only 16 halls, but also the first dioramas from all over the world, most well done ecological and biogeographical presentations. Eleven other halls were opened 18 June 1914. On 23 May 1933, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the museum, King Carol II decided to name the Museum "Grigore Antipa," after its organizer.

The earthquake of 10 November 1940, and especially the air raids of 1944, destroyed a great part of the building and of the collections, which were restored in 1944-1948. After the death of Grigore Antipa, on 9 March 1944, and following the great political and social changes thereafter, a succession of seven directors were appointed (Micea Pauca, Constantin Motas, Bernard Schnapp, Alexandru Grossu, Petre Raicu, Mircea Ionescu-Varo and Mihai Bacescu) until 1964. From 1964 to 1988, under the management of the academician Mihai Bacescu, there were many changes in the structure of the research and museological sections and activities.

Today, more than 160 years after organizing the first collections, the Natural History Museum "Grigore Antipa" has a complex patrimony of tens of thousands of exhibits in 42 public halls, and many scientific collections, each with multi-thousands of specimens: 250,000 invertebrates (other than insects); 500,000 insects; 10,000 fishes; 5,000 amphibians and reptiles; 9,000 birds; 7,000 mammals; 8,000 palaeontological specimens; and 5,000 mineralogical specimens.

#### Vertebrate and Non-Insect Invertebrate Collections

When Grigore Antipa assumed his work with the zoological collections, the museum already received the donations of Dr. Hilarie Mitrea. During the 25 years spent by Mitrea in Indonesia (1869-1894) as physician of the Dutch army, he collected crus-





Fig. 6-9. Collections and exhibits sample: 6. The great mammals (fossil and contemporary) hall (Left: *Deinotherium gigantissimum* fossil. Right: the huge skeleton of a *Mastodon americanus*. 7. *Ornithoptera* butterflies from New Guinea (A. Caradja Collection) (upper right). 8. Papilionidae drawer (center right). 9. Morphinae from Brazil (A. Caradja Collection) (lower right).



taceans, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, some of them still being exhibited in the public halls. Furthermore, he donated valuable ethnographical pieces. Other donations include such exceptional collections as of Prof. Steindachner (fishes), Franz Weber (amphibians and reptiles), Prof. Dohrn (Mediterranean fauna), Emil Holub (African birds and mammals), T. G. Müller (Libyan Colenterata), M. Bacescu (Black Sea invertebrates), E. A. Bielz (molluscs), A. Popescu-Gorj (Romanian fishes and Brazilian molluscs), R. Dombrowski (birds), and many others.

In the public halls there are 2,158 specimens of mammals from the world fauna and in the scientific collections 3,300 specimens from the Romanian fauna. The petrographical, mineralogical and palaeontological collections have also valuable contributions (L. Apostol) and donations, such as rocks and minerals from Antarctica (don. G. Neamu), statoliths (G. Voicu), and others.

#### Insects

The richest collections of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum are the entomological ones. Some Coleoptera, Lepidoptera, Hymenoptera and Orthoptera were purchased even by the organizer of the present museum, in 1911, from the firm "Dr. O. Staudinger and Bang-Haas," of Dresden (Germany). Some collections were bought or received as gifts from Deubel, Kenderessy, Fleck and Montandon, totaling nearly 35,000 specimens from 5,400 species and subspecies, proceeding from the Palaearctic region.

The Coleoptera with over 100,000 specimens (7,500 species) were collected in Romania by N. Savulescu, S. Negru, A. Popescu-Gorj, Rodica Serafim, tens of thousands specimens proceeding from the world fauna.

The Heteroptera total 35,000 specimens with 3,500 species, nearly 24,000 being bought from A. L. Montandon.

The Lepidoptera proceed from E. Fleck (15,000 specimens), and in 1934 Franz Salay gave a collection of 8,000 specimens with some rare species from Romania, such as the *Erebia montanus*, which has already vanished from the region. A collection of 21,000 specimens (2,400 species) was made by Prof. Ostrogovitch. Other collections include Lazarescu (6,000 specimens), Ing. Beregszasi (10,800 specimens), Hogas, Macea and Barseti (14,000 specimens from Guinea, Africa), A. Popescu-Gorj (2,500 specimens, representing 250 species of Microlepidoptera and Noctuidae from Brazil), I. Draghia (700 mining insects), V. Albu (3,500 butterflies from North America). But the most valuable collection is that of Aristide Caradja, with more than 110,000 specimens of Microlepidoptera from Europe, Central and Southern China, Rhopalocera and Papilionidae from the Palaearc-



tic, Indo-Malaysian, African, Central and Southern American regions. In this collection alone, there are more than 3,000 type specimens, which were studied also by numerous foreign specialists.

Beginning from 1953, the Museum obtained a collection of Hymenoptera with 8,552 specimens purchased from Dr. Eugen Worell. Later, Victoria Juga-Raica, Xenia Scobiola-Palade and Ioana Matache increased the collection to 27,000 specimens of 3,000 Palaearctic and exotic species.

The Diptera were researched, and the collection set up, by E. Worell, Medea Weinberg, Corneliu Parvu, Aurelia Ursu, Igor Ceianu, V. Bradescu, and Maria Iacob. From the Palaearctic Region there are 21,700 specimens (1,856 species), and 1,700 specimens (615 species) are exotic ones. In the collection of Diptera, 109 type-specimens are gathered.

The collections of Orthoptera (1,400 specimens) and Neuroptera (1,000 specimens) are smaller, containing only Romanian fauna.

### Library

Having a general idea about the collections, we must note that besides the publications of foreign specialists for their investigation, the museum specialists have published their research in the 35 volumes of the annual *Travaux du Museum d'Histoire Naturelle "Grigore Antipa,"* as well as in the review of the Romanian Academy and in the volumes of *Fauna Romine*. During the last years, there was published also a guide to the museum's collections.

The library of the museum was set up when the first custodian Carol Wallenstein de Vella was appointed. But Grigore Antipa assured the systematic evolution of the library. He assembled a real cultural treasure, with publications having a great value by their content, antiquity and rarity. His private library is now segregated as a memorial. After 1944, the museum bought the library of Prince Aristide Caradja. In 1959, the library had a total of 18,188 volumes and became a section of the first library of the Central University. The year 1959 may be considered as the beginning of the organization of the library on a scientific basis, with a specialized librarian, a reading hall, and the sorting of books according to specialities. Every year the library receives on average 300 journal titles from 60 countries. As a result, the library now has a total of about 50,000 volumes. For their use there are the following types of catalogues: books and periodicals, systematic account of the books, the libraries of "Grigore Antipa" and "Aristide Caradja," geographical index of the publications obtained by exchange, lists of the papers appearing in the periodicals.

### Museum Staff

The current staff of the "Grigore Antipa" Museum of Natural History includes 27 specialists, 15 technicians and preparators, 1 librarian, 1 translator-editor, 1 secretary, 1 artist, 1 photographer, 3 taxidermist-restorers, and 1 projectionist. Another 25 includes guards and administration. The specialists are:

Director

Dr. Dumitru Murariu, Mammals  
Acad. Mihai Bacescu, Crustacea (Honorary Director)

Insects and Other Arthropods

Doru Banaduc, Spiders  
Cristina Hoinic, Coleoptera

Ioana Matache, Hymenoptera  
Dr. Cornel Parvu, Diptera  
Dr. Doc. Aurelian Popescu-Gorj, Lepidoptera  
Dorel Rusti, Lepidoptera  
Rodica Serafim, Coleoptera  
Aurora Stanescu, Heteroptera  
Mihai Stanescu, Lepidoptera  
Dr. Medea Weinberg, Diptera

Invertebrates and Aquatic Biology

Gabriela Andrei, Malacology  
Anca Banarescu, Zooplankton  
Dr. Nicolae Galdean, Hydrobiology  
Modest Gutu, Crustacea  
Ileana Negoescu, Crustacea  
Dr. Iorgu Petrescu, Crustacea  
Gabriela Staicu, Hydrobiology

Vertebrates

Mircea Andrei, Herpetology  
Petre Bacalu, Fishes  
Nicolae Parau, Mammals  
Angela Petrescu, Birds  
Nastase Radulet, Mammals  
Mihaela Stanescu, Mammals

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