

## **Riclef Grolle (1934-2004) – life, work and collections of an outstanding hepaticologist**

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Dr. Dr. h.c. Riclef Grolle, world authority on liverworts and author of numerous lasting contributions in the field of hepaticology, passed away on 12th June 2004. Riclef Grolle was born on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1934 in Oldenburg, Germany, as second child out of seven of the elementary school teacher Dr. Friedrich Grolle and his wife Louise, born Schomerus. Riclef's father fell in 1945 in Austria as a soldier during World War II. One year earlier, his mother together with the seven children had moved to Jena, seeking refuge in the spacious house of her parents. During the hard times at the end of the war, the grandparents offered the mother and children a safe and politically liberal home, where Riclef would stay the rest of his life. It was in Jena that Riclef was formed intellectually. Via the Thuringian Botanical Society, of which he had been a member since 1951, he became into contact with Theodor Herzog, a well-known and internationally respected bryologist and professor of pharmacy, systematic botany and plant geography in Jena. Herzog contributed substantially to Riclef's enthusiasm for nature and directed his interest towards bryology. After his "Abitur" (university entrance qualification) in 1952, Riclef took up the study of biology at the Friedrich Schiller University. However, at the end of the second semester he fell ill from a polyomelitis, which lamed his legs and partially his arms and bounded him to a wheel-chair for the rest of his life. In 1955, after an interruption of two years, Riclef was able to continue his university study thanks to his iron will and the help of his mother, brothers and sisters, as well as numerous fellow students who took many sacrifices to support him. His principal interest was systematic botany, particularly the lower plants, with Otto Schwarz, Theodor Herzog and Bruno Schussnig being his academic teachers. Under the guidance of Herzog, who was already an emeritus professor at the time, Riclef took up hepaticology as his research speciality and completed his study in 1959 with a diploma thesis on the arrangement of rhizoids in the leafy liverworts ("Über die Rhizoidenanordnung bei den beblätterten Lebermoosen"). Subsequently, he became a research assistant at the Institute of Systematic Botany and Herbarium Haussknecht of the University of Jena, a position which he held for more than 35 years, until his retirement in 1996. In this position, Riclef was allowed to work at home, having the rich bryological collections and library of the Herbarium Haussknecht, including those of Herzog and others

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Fig. 1. Riclef Grolle (Jena, 16 Aug. 2004, photo by Rui-Liang Zhu)

at his disposal (see below). In 1962 he received the doctorate degree in natural sciences on a dissertation entitled “Monographie der Lebermoosgattung *Leptoscyphus* Mitt.” (published February 1963).

Despite his physical handicap, Riclef pursued his work on hepatics with great vigour and astonishing productivity. He had a masterly knowledge of the intricate morphology of the plants and was remarkable skilled in microscopic preparation, in spite of his limited physical capabilities. His scientific output numbers over 300 titles, which appeared in a steady flow without any breaks. In his scientific *œuvre* three main areas of research are discerned: taxonomy, nomenclature, and fossils. In taxonomy, hepatics of the Southern Hemisphere and the Tropics had his main interest because of the very incomplete knowledge of these parts of the world. His innumerable taxonomic contributions were essentially based on critical examination of types and on study of large amounts of unidentified material, e.g., from New Guinea (leg. R. M. Schuster, H. Streimann, B. O. van Zanten), Madagascar, the Mascarenes and the Seychelles (leg. M. Onraedt, G. Een), the Himalayas (leg. J. Poelt, D. Long, a.o.), Samoa (leg. W. Schultze-Motel), subantarctic islands (leg. B. O. van Zanten, S. W. Greene et al.), Cuba (leg. J. Bisse, H. Lippold, R. Schubert, A. Bohridi, a.o.), Mongolia (leg. S. Huneck, L. Meinunger et al.), etc. etc. This work resulted in several admirable monographs (e.g., Lepidolaenaceae, *Nowellia*, *Jamesoniella*, *Adelanthus*), revisions, checklists (e.g., New Guinea, East Africa Islands) and numerous taxonomic novelties, including about twenty new genera and many new species. Examples of genera



**Prov. Oriente;** Moa: La Melba, pluviosilva de montaña cerca del aserrio,  
500 m alto

1968/27 de diciembre

leg. J. Bisse y H. Lippold

det.: Grolle 1974

Mp G 316 V 10 20

Fig. 2. Handwriting sample of R. Grolle .

described by Riclef Grolle are *Chonecolea* Grolle (Chonecoleaceae), a peculiar, cephalozielloid monotypic genus from Brazil and Florida with caducous bell-shaped perianths and lateral-intercalary branching, *Cephalojonesia* Grolle, endemic to Africa and the only member of Cephalozieaceae with incubous leaves, *Haesselia* Grolle & Gradst., a robust plagiochiloid member of Cephalozieaceae hitherto known only from one mountain in Guyana, *Gottschelia* Grolle and *Denotarisea* Grolle (Jungermanniaceae), tropical segregates from *Jamesoniella* with dorsally interlocking merophytes, *Herzogobryum* Grolle (Gymnomitriaceae), a small antipodal genus with bistratose leaves, and *Pictolejeunea* Grolle (Lejeuneaceae) characterized by brown or reddish ocelli in all parts of the plants and entally displaced hyaline papilla. Almost all of the new genera are still valid today, a few have been reduced to subgeneric status (e.g. *Krunodiplophyllum* Grolle, *Tetracymbaliella* Grolle).

The second focus of his work was liverwort nomenclature, dedicated to the stabilization of names. To this purpose, Riclef Grolle undertook numerous journeys to the important herbaria in eastern and Western Europe in the search of relevant literature and types. Out of this came a large series of notes on typification and synonymy, the "Miscellanea Hepaticologica," and two great masterpieces, the "Verzeichniss der Lebermoose Europas und benachbarter Gebiete" (1976) and "Nomina generica hepaticarum" (1983). The publications provide correct names and typifications for all the ca 800 generic names of liverworts worldwide and the species described from Europe. They had a major impact on the systematics of the liverworts and led to a level of nomenclatural stability that is

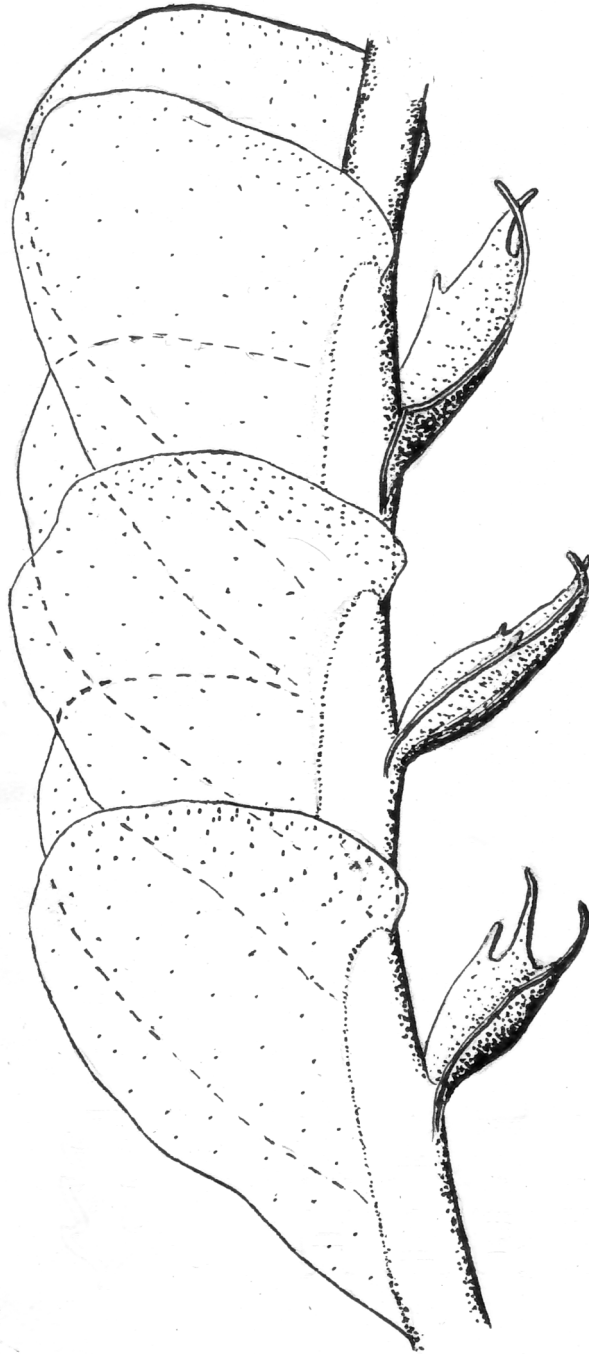


Fig. 3. Drawing by R. Grolle of the type of *Lophocolea randii* S. W. Arnell, *Rand* 3333 (archives JE)

probably unique among plants. Because of his superb knowledge of the rules of botanical nomenclature, Riclef served for many years as chairman of the International Nomenclatural Committee for Bryophytes.

In the last twenty five years of his life, Riclef Grolle dedicated himself to the third main area of work: the investigation of fossilized liverwort remains in amber. Gaining insight in the past had captivated his interest and filled him with enthusiasm. This subject had been neglected for almost a century in spite of the rich collections of fossilized material in amber in the palaeontological musea of Berlin, Halle, Hamburg, München, Stuttgart, Warsaw, and in numerous private collections. His studies showed for the first time that many present-day genera of liverworts already existed by the early Tertiary and that some Asiatic species or genera (*Nipponolejeunea subalpina*, *Spruceanthus*) occurred during the Tertiary in Europe, where they are now extinct. This phenomenon is not uncommon in the higher plants but was unknown in bryophytes. His work on fossils even included the description of oil bodies in a 20 million years old specimen of *Bazzania*, indicating that these organelles are less instable as is usually assumed. Shortly before his death he was able to complete his monograph on “The Liverworts in Baltic and Bitterfeld Amber”, published posthumously together with K. Meister.

Riclef Grolle’s knowledge of the liverworts was unsurpassed, his grasp of the species remarkably for somebody unable to study the species in the field. He was an extremely generous man, always willing to provide help with identification or give advice, and had a fine sense of humour. Many of us have benefited from his vast knowledge and his willingness to share this with others. He was an academic mentor of many hepaticologists of the younger generation, including Jiri Vána, Rob Gradstein, Sinikka Piippo, David Long, Alfons Schäfer-Verwimp, Jochen Heinrichs, Elena Reiner-Drehwald, Mai-Ling So, Rui-Liang Zhu, and others. His scientific work, which earned him an honorary doctorate from the university of Göttingen and the Hedwig medal of the International Association of Bryologists, has provided a solid and lasting basis for modern research on the liverworts.

Riclef Grolle’s liverwort collections, totalling about 40.000 specimens, will be integrated in the Herbarium Haussknecht of the University of Jena (JE). This Herbarium was founded at the end of the 19th century by Carl Haussknecht. Although Haussknecht worked exclusively on phanerogams, he took a broad view and was also interested in building up a good cryptogamic herbarium. He corresponded with numerous contemporary bryologists – J. Milde, J. Juratzka, A. Geheeb and K. Schliephacke among others –, thus receiving proper names for his collections from Europe and Middle East, which included many duplicates. Around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the bryophyte herbarium became considerably enlarged by the accession of the rich bryological collection of K. Schliephacke/Osterfeld. Schliephacke was a student of the muscologist K. Müller of Halle and received many duplicates of species described by Müller. After the destruction of K. Müller’s collections during the burning of the Berlin herbarium in World War II, the Schliephacke herbarium in JE represents one of the best sources of isotypes of species described by K. Müller. In 1961, the bryophyte collections of JE gained major international importance by the accession of the herbarium of Theodor Herzog, containing more than 2000 types.

Through the accession of the liverwort collections of Riclef Grolle, the Haussknecht Herbarium has now taken a prime position among the ten major bryophyte herbaria of the world. Integration of the collections of Riclef Grolle in the general herbarium should be completed by the middle of 2005. It is also planned to digitise the herbarium labels and make these available via the Internet.

Ricief Grolle's collections stand out by the meticulous preparation of the plant material and the detailed labels. In the last two years of his life, Ricief worked hard on translating the herbarium labels (written mostly in German) into English, to ensure that the data were well accessible for verification by future workers. Although not completed, these efforts are undoubtedly of great importance to the international bryological community. Ricief Grolle's research collections – specimens, literature, correspondence, card indexes – together with his scientific publications will remain as a lasting memory of the life and work of one of the greatest hepaticologists of our times.

### SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS OF RICIEF GROLLE

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#### 1959

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### 1962

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### 1963

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