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## **Karl Heinz Rechinger – a life for botany**

### **Introduction**

A life devoted almost exclusively to botany ended on 30 December 1998 – Karl Heinz Rechinger, author of *Flora Aegaea*, founder, editor and for many parts also author of the monumental *Flora Iranica* died in Vienna, aged 92. Like no-one in this century, he has increased our knowledge of the flora and vegetation of the Balkan Peninsula and of South West Asia.

It would be utterly inappropriate, however, to limit this retrospective to his achievements as a plant taxonomist who has left behind an outstanding oeuvre with scores of taxa new to science. He was a devoted civil servant, who was for almost 35 years the director of the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum in Vienna and for eight years Erster Direktor of that institution. In addition, Rechinger was an extremely active plant collector travelling repeatedly some of the remotest corners of the world. He brought home a total of c. 80 000 herbarium specimens, perfectly prepared and labelled, often in several duplicates (Vitek 1999). On the other hand, Rechinger's input in academic teaching was very limited and so were his activities to modernise the Natural History Museum's galleries and to attract more visitors.

During his long and active life Rechinger was able to visit many regions of the world, to meet generations of botanists, and to work repeatedly in a number of major botanical institutions. In old age he became a living encyclopaedia for the flora of the East Mediterranean area and the Near East, for the history of plant taxonomy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and, in a way, also a monument of his own.

Whereas Rechinger's life was most extraordinary in some respects, notably in his repeated expeditions to unconventional areas like N Afghanistan or the border zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, it was most conventional in others. His early career echoes in many respects that of his father; for the first half of his life he lived in his parents' house; he never seriously considered leaving his native Vienna; he found in his first wife Frida (née Moser) and his second wife Wilhelmina (née Goudemans) not only partners but also highly efficient and dedicated collaborators, i. e. secretaries, assistants and drivers. Without their input neither *Flora Aegaea* nor *Flora Iranica* would have been accomplished.

Rechinger lived long enough to harvest what he had sown, to receive many honours

and to be able to publish a few substantial autobiographical papers. However, they deal only with his travels in Greece and South West Asia (Rechinger No. 268, 317, 395), give itineraries, more notable discoveries, correlate them with collection numbers, and present a vivid picture of his oriental wanderings. This is the reason why his travels, with the exceptions of those to other parts of the Balkan Peninsula, are only briefly dealt with in this retrospective. In addition, it should be noted that his travels, although important, were intervals in an essentially sedentary life in Vienna. It has been said that Rechinger felt particularly happy on his expeditions, although they were often strenuous and difficult but full of the romance of travelling in the Levant and Near East. Indeed he was perhaps one of those rare individuals, a perfect mixture of field botanist, herbarium curator and taxonomist.

Special attention is given to Rechinger's formative years: as will be shown, many seeds determining his career and his personality were planted very early by his father. Although Rechinger lived in the twentieth century, he was in many respects a man of the nineteenth century, in a way a member of *Die Welt von gestern*, so vividly described by Vienna-born Stefan Zweig: he never drove a car, he never typed a manuscript, never used a computer - which he regarded as a tool not an icon - and he is not known to have counted a chromosome number or used any experimental technique. He strongly disliked any form of data handling, was cool towards modern approaches in plant taxonomy and had no interest in macrosystematics. His principal focus was Flora writing. Some of his late papers, like that containing the description of the new genus *Scabiosiopsis*, were clearly outdated and based on insufficient material. Only time will show if the very many species described in a few genera like *Cousinia*, will be accepted by later generations.

The author of this paper met Rechinger for the first time in 1970. Subsequently he wrote his thesis under Rechinger's supervision, contributed several accounts to *Flora Iranica*, and was fortunate enough to remain in personal contact with him until his last months. As a native of Vienna he is familiar with many scenes of this story, notably Heldenplatz, which he daily crossed when on his way to lectures in Vienna University.

The following paper is neither a scientific analysis nor a biography in the strict sense. It is not based on archival material, but offers a rather personal view of the life of an extraordinary man. Its principal basis is a series of interviews with Rechinger recorded on tape in 1981, conversations over several years, supplemented by oral information collected from Rechinger's widow in 1999. In addition, two autobiographical papers written for the Austrian Academy of Sciences but unpublished were used for this account as well as the copy of a confidential statement concerning his election to this academy, all made available by Rechinger's widow. Consequently there is no *audiatur et altera pars*.

No attempt is made to deal with the vast number of letters written by Rechinger or received by him during the seven decades of his activity, nor are the circles of his friends, botanical and private, described. Regulations governed by Austrian Law do not permit an analysis of his files as civil servant.

Cross references to Rechinger's publications listed in chronological order as appendix 1 are kept to the minimum. This retrospective contains five more appendices: appendix 2 gives the works edited by Rechinger, appendix 3 contains eulogies, biographical notes and obituaries, appendix 4 the Festschriften and other works dedicated to him, appendix 5 the published photographs of Rechinger, appendix 6 the eponymy.

### The formative years – 1906-1926

Karl Heinz Rechinger was born in Vienna on 16 October 1906. He was the only son of Dr Karl Rechinger (1867-1952), then K. u. K. Assistent at the Department of Botany of the K. K. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum (now Natural History Museum) and thus a member of the imperial household, and of Rosa Elisabeth [Lily] Rechinger, née Favarger (1880-1973). Since father and son were plant taxonomists, with the son exceeding by far the father's scientific output, they are listed in *Authors of Plant Names* as 'Rech.' and 'Rech. f.' respectively.

The family background was of considerable importance for Rechinger's early development. The Rechingers lived in the family's block of flats in Friedrichstraße 6, in the heart of the city, within walking distance from the Natural History Museum, the Musikvereinsgebäude [Hall of the Friends of Music] and the Karlskirche [St Charles Church]. Karl Heinz grew up in the sophisticated and refined world of a well-to-do Viennese family. In a way, there was always music in the air – the famous K. K. Hofoper (now Staatsoper), in 1906 directed by Gustav Mahler, was round the corner, sonatas by Mozart, Beethoven and chamber music were played regularly in the family, at an early date Rechinger started to learn piano, which remained until very late in his life a favourite pastime – I remember him spending many hours of relaxation with Bach's *Wohltemperiertes Klavier* and Brahms's *Balladen* and *Intermezzi* (the latter composer had corresponded with Rechinger's aunt), and late in life he had two grands in his living room like his parents had. As a boy Rechinger learned also to play cello, but never reached an advanced level and gave it up later. Surprisingly by Viennese standards Karl Heinz showed no interest in opera preferring instead chamber and organ music; in old age he recollected the famous organ recitals given by Franz Schütz in 1919 in the Goldener Saal of the Musikvereinsgebäude. The arts played a similar role: the family possessed a fine collection of Biedermeier paintings (a few later on long-term loan to the Österreichische Galerie) and a rich collection of excellent china. In a multilingual metropolis like Vienna special attention was given to the languages: Rechinger would later impress his visitors with his excellent French (taught by a *bonne*), good English and Swedish, not to mention a working knowledge of Dutch and modern Greek acquired years later. Although he neither knew nor spoke a Slavonic language, he was able to distinguish the subtle differences in Slavonic family names and always pronounced them correctly.

The father, a born plant collector, played a most important role in Karl Heinz's early steps towards botany – he encouraged him to collect specimens and introduced him to the careful observation of nature. When gathering cryptogams for the Natural History Museum's *Flora exsiccata Austro-Hungarica* the father invited his son to join in – Rechinger's first collection is said to have been an alga gathered on Obertressen in the Ausseer Land, a fashionable holiday area in Styria, where the Rechingers owned a summer house. Karl Heinz always kept a warm memory of his father and the summer months, often wet, spent together in the Salzkammergut, where so many members of Vienna society passed their leisure time – among them the physicians Sigmund Freud and Theodor Billroth, the painter Gustav Klimt, the composers Johannes Brahms and Gustav Mahler, the writer Arthur Schnitzler to name a few. In this way, collecting became part of Karl



Fig. 1. K. H. Rechinger in Lederhosen, Vienna, 1912, photograph. — Private collection. Vienna.

Heinz's life very early – the alga is reported to have been gathered in 1911, thus at the age of 4 – and remained a dominant theme ever since with the last numbered specimens collected in Switzerland eighty years later. Not surprisingly young Karl Heinz started to collect also mushrooms, in particular edible ones, stamps, railway tickets, etc. and continued as a philatelist until late in life. Hard to believe but true – collecting herbarium specimens had been also his mother's hobby even before her marriage; later she continued to collect plants with her son and as a widow published a *Flora von Bad Aussee* (L. Rechinger 1965). Plant collecting became almost obsessive with Karl Heinz, resulting in a vast number of collections gathered on all five continents (for a conspectus of collection numbers see Vitek 1999). Indeed, Karl Heinz grew up in an atmosphere saturated with botany.

All these early collections were incorporated into Karl Rechinger's private herbarium which he donated in 1913 to the Botanical Museum of Lund University in Sweden, where his friend Prof Dr Svante Murbeck was director. However, soon after this Karl Rechinger started a second private herbarium, and it was essentially this collection which received Karl Heinz's early plant specimens including those from his first travels to Greece. Later this herbarium passed from father to son and was sold many years later to the Conservatoire Botanique in Geneva.

Karl Heinz was born ten months after his parents had returned to Vienna from their honeymoon spent in the South Seas. They brought home a large number of botanical and zoological specimens later to be published as *Botanische und zoologische Ergebnisse einer wissenschaftlichen Forschungsreise nach den Samoainseln*. As a child he listened to his parents' vivid recollections from their circumnavigation and their visits to islands way out in the Pacific, which may have been a factor creating his second obsession – travelling. For the moment, however, his life had two focal points – Vienna and, for his first twenty-five years, Bad Aussee, which led to regular peregrinations of the whole family. In this way, Karl Heinz became a connoisseur of the Salzkammergut and accompanied his mother on many mountain tours; later he was to climb many high peaks in Greece, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At a very early day, probably at the age of 5 or 6, Karl Rechinger showed the Natural History Museum to his son (Fig. 1) – some seventy years later Karl Heinz remembered this first visit, the many stuffed birds and minerals in show cases and the special perfume of animals conserved in spirit still so characteristic of this institution today. The huge build-



ing on the Ringstraße in the heart of the city decorated with imperial splendour and containing one of the richest collection of natural history specimens in the world must have made a lasting impression on his mind. Later this institution became the focal point of his life and the repository of most of his later collections and published works. In a way, centring his botanical interest on the Balkan Peninsula and the Near East was in perfect agreement with the Natural History Museum's tradition – these areas belonged to the traditional spheres of interest of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and were particularly well represented among the collections.

Although the K. K. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum and the K. K. Kunsthistorisches Hofmuseum (now Art History Museum) on the opposite side of the Maria-Theresien-Platz were and are gems on their own, they formed and still form also part of an agglomeration of grandiose imperial buildings – the Hofburg, the residence of Emperor Franz Joseph I, the office of the prime minister for Cisleithania, the office of the minister of foreign affairs for the Empire, the Imperial Library, the House of Parliament for Cisleithania. The centre was and is formed by the famous Heldenplatz, a large square, where several decisive events in the history of Austria took place. In short, this was the political heart of the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire then ranging from Lake Constance in the west to the hills of the Ukraine in the east and from the Sudety mountains in the north to the Boka Kotorska in Montenegro in the south. It is very likely that all this made another lasting impression on Karl Heinz, in particular since his father belonged to court circles, although to the outer fringe only.

Elementary school started for Rechinger with private lessons and an exam at the end of the first year. Only later did he actually attend school in Hegelgasse in the first district of Vienna.

At home Karl Heinz was a witness of the preparation of the *Botanische und zoologische Ergebnisse* for the press. Collaborators from all over Europe, among them Casimir DeCandolle in Geneva, Professor Dr Ludwig Diels in Marburg, Professor Dr Ludwig Radlkofer in München sent their manuscripts, a situation foreshadowing his own work when editing *Flora Iranica* more than half a century later.

During these years Karl Heinz fell seriously ill with an affliction of the lungs, probably tuberculosis. His parents were rich enough to send him for many months to a sanatorium for children in Arosa in Switzerland. In a world described in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* Karl Heinz underwent a drastic, but successful cure, and it was during these months that he started collecting and preparing flowering plants, like soldanellas and primroses, and sent them to his parents for determination. After more than a year he returned to Vienna, where things had changed dramatically – the consequences of the First World War, although not yet lost, were felt in shortage of supplies, in particular food.

Like his father before him young Karl Heinz subsequently attended the prestigious Schottengymnasium in Vienna run by Benedictine monks and frequented by the sons of the upper echelons of society. Starting from September 1918 he crossed every morning the Ringstraße next to the K. K. Hofoper. On his way to Schottengymnasium, where the foundations of his excellent knowledge of classical languages were laid, he followed Augustinerstraße, passed the Imperial Library, Michaelerplatz and the Landhaus, where three decades later the father of the author writing this text had his office. Rechinger's proficiency in botanical Latin, put to use during seven decades, was equalled by few. Later he wrote innumerable plant descriptions in Latin, started his *Flora Aegaea* with a quotation in classical Greek taken from the *Odyssey*, and when he began the *Flora Iranica* project

there was no question but that the results would be published in Latin. Natural History (including botany) and geography were among his favourite subjects, travelogues like Sven Hedin's *Von Pol zu Pol*, a Christmas present from his parents, among his favourite reading. In this way Karl Heinz grew up in a liberal and tolerant atmosphere best characterised by the fact that he was admitted as a protestant of Helvetic creed to an otherwise strictly catholic college.

After the armistice in November 1918 Karl Heinz was able to follow profound changes in Vienna – the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy collapsed, the last emperor went into exile in Switzerland, the Republic of Austria was proclaimed, the double-headed eagles were torn down from the shops which had supplied the imperial court. The K. K. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum became the Naturhistorisches Museum, across the square dominated by an impressive monument of Maria Theresia, the K. K. Kunsthistorisches Hofmuseum became the Kunsthistorisches Museum. On the adjacent Heldenplatz the Imperial Library changed its name into Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, and the Hofburg was no more the residence of the Emperor but of an elected president. All these events had, however, little effect on school life in the Schottengymnasium.

What followed were two intermissions – Karl Heinz was sent in 1919 to maternal relatives in Neuchâtel in Switzerland, where to the considerable surprise of his hosts he collected and preserved flowering plants, algae, insects and even spiders (Favarger 1997); in 1920 Murbeck in Lund offered hospitality for the Kriegskind [child affected by war]. The reason for all this was to provide better nutrition for the weak boy than was available in post-war Vienna. It was in Lund where Rechinger earned his first money – characteristically for mounting herbarium specimens – and where he slept for three months in the museum's library. Back in Vienna he continued at the Schottengymnasium; some of the contacts from this period lasted for a long time – when Erster Direktor of the Natural History Museum his homologue at the Kunsthistorisches Museum was Hofrat Dr Auer from his class.

In the meantime his father Karl had been promoted to Custos-Adjunkt, Custos 2. Klasse and Custos 1. Klasse with the title Regierungsrat added, but at the age of 55 he was sent into early retirement, which effectively meant the end of an unaccomplished career. This happened in 1922 as part of Seipel's Beamtenabbau [reduction of civil servants]. Since Karl Rechinger's relationship with the then director of the Department of Botany had always been uneasy, he continued botany from his home base in Friedrichstraße 6. In the fourth floor of his house a small private botanical institute took shape – with a herbarium, to which father and son as well as friends and correspondents contributed, as well as a library. This is where Karl Heinz learnt how to prepare specimens, handle botanical collections and interpret labels. Later he became an expert in identifying handwritings of botanists and was greatly interested in graphology, the scientific study of handwritings, especially to determine the writer's personality. The father had similar interests: Karl Rechinger had integrated the herbaria of Heinrich Gustav Reichenbach and Eduard Hackel into the imperial collections – anyone who has seen their labels will understand that exceptional expertise had been necessary to decipher and interpret them. Karl Heinz Rechinger's consistently excellent preparation of exsiccatae and his precise field notes always giving accurate geographical and often also ecological data reflect the early training received from his father. In addition, the immense amount of material collected during a very long

and very active life was also identified by him and made quickly and in an exemplary way available to the scientific community.

Karl Rechinger's private botanical institute must have been a very special place – on clear winter days it was possible to see from the window the snow-capped Schneeberg (2075 m), a view long since impossible because of buildings erected. In those years father and son undertook many excursions into the surroundings of Vienna, notably to the Burgenland, then still a rather exotic region, which had become part of Austria only in 1921. Later Rechinger remembered, that a tour with his father to the Parndorfer Platte, a plain east of Vienna where the many Pannonian elements present might give the visitor a feel of countries far to the east, fuelled his lifelong wanderlust, the invincible desire to travel, in particular in easterly directions.

Contacts included botanical evenings in the home of Dr August Edler von Hayek, medical officer and Regierungsrat, in near-by Margaretenstraße, probably in an atmosphere well known to the author of this text – as a student he lived in Margaretenstraße, his father was also Regierungsrat, but the evenings centred on bees rather than plants. After Hayek's death the botanical evenings were continued in Friedrichstraße 6, frequented among others by Dr Heinrich Freiherr von Handel-Mazzetti, the successor of Karl Rechinger and predecessor of Karl Heinz Rechinger in the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum, Dr Karl Ronninger, Dr Friedrich Vierhapper, and briefly Professor Dr Karl Fritsch of Graz University. The botanical circles in Vienna were closely connected: a few years later Karl Heinz Rechinger worked with Vierhapper in the same room at the Institute of Botany of Vienna University (Schönbeck-Temesy 1992). Among Karl Rechinger's friends and exchange partners was also Dr Árpád von Degen, later visited by his son in Budapest.

Still at the Schottengymnasium Rechinger left in 1922 for a botanical excursion to Sibiu in Transsylvania in Romania financed with the stable Swedish Crowns earned for mounting specimens in Lund. It was followed in 1925 by a tour with the *Salix* specialist Rudolf Görz to the Tatra Mountains [Vysoké Tatry] in then Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia. When writing his Matura-Arbeit in 1926 Rechinger chose 'Die Pflanzenwelt der Hohen Tatra' as a topic and based his study on the impressions gathered on this excursion and on Ferdinand Pax's *Grundzüge der Pflanzenverbreitung in den Karpathen*, testifying a precocious interest in alpine floras.

Having passed the final exams at the Schottengymnasium in July 1926 Rechinger left in accordance with Viennese tradition for his Maturareise [a sort of Grand Tour after the finals], and during the next two months he travelled via Italy to France. In the Alpes Maritimes he first encountered the Mediterranean and submediterranean flora, which was to become a leitmotiv for the next decades of his life, climbed the Eastern Pyrenees, visited Brittany, Paris and the Vosges and returned via Stuttgart to Bad Aussee.

### **The meagre years – 1926-1938**

The First World War had annihilated the war loans of the Rechinger family; due to inflation the same happened to their shares and assets, but the landed property continued to add substantially to Karl Rechinger's pension as a civil servant. This was the financial basis for the following period of Rechinger's life, which may well be called the meagre years. Due to the very high rate of unemployment in Austria in those years, prospects for him were

rather dim right from the beginning.

It was almost natural for a young man of his personal and family background to study botany, and geography, to which he added geology, and of course this was done at Vienna University. The central figure in botany was then Professor Dr Richard Wettstein Ritter von Westerheim, a heritable member of the Herrenhaus, now defunct. His elegant lectures in plant taxonomy were held in lecture hall 50, like 42 years later those by Professor Dr Lothar Geitler attended by the author of this text. Wettstein's lectures fascinated Rechinger, while the practical courses held at the Institute of Botany centred on cryptogams and were much less to his liking.

This is how it came that Rechinger decided to write a thesis under the supervision of Wettstein, which effectively meant that the professor was prepared to write a report upon submission. Karl Heinz chose a topic very near to his father's heart – a revision of a section of the genus *Rumex*, in fact a genus on which the latter had published before (Rechinger 1891-2).

While still working on his thesis and in the same way, in which Professor Dr Anton Kerner Ritter von Marilaun, Wettstein's father-in-law, had offered a part-time temporary job to Karl Rechinger, Wettstein now offered a part-time temporary job, then called 'Demonstrator', to Karl Heinz Rechinger. This was the only paid university position he ever held. For good reasons he was chosen as curator for the institute's herbarium and his first job was to integrate a very substantial collection brought home from China by a member of the botanical circles which had met in Margaretenstraße – Handel-Mazzetti, who had formerly been assistant of Wettstein. Having submitted his thesis to the dean of philosophy his revision was reviewed and he was admitted to the oral exams in botany, geology and philosophy. Under stress Rechinger almost lost his nerve, but in the end he managed to pass the two dreaded rigorosa. In accordance with tradition he was promoted Doctor of Philosophy on 15 May 1931 in the large festive Hall of Vienna University then still decorated with Gustav Klimt's famous frescoes which were destroyed during the Second World War: Rechinger placed his fingers on the sceptre of the faculty of philosophy and received his diploma.

Meagre years followed: earlier he had moved from the Institute of Botany of Vienna University to the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum, where he started on 1 November 1929 as an unpaid 'Volontär' and became in 1935 a scarcely paid 'Aspirant', receiving some grants from the Natural History Museum's funds for drawing up inventories – but even this source of revenue repeatedly dried up. Economic recession and shortage of staff led to a decrease of the activities in the Department of Botany, which then comprised a single scientist – Dr Karl von Keissler, the successor of the famous lichenologist Dr Alexander Zahlbruckner. This was the state of affairs when Rechinger started to work; right from the beginning he was charged with a variety of obligations in the herbarium and library.

In winter heating was restricted to the rooms adjacent to the inner courtyard of the Natural History Museum, and work in the herbarium was possible only in thick overcoats. In order to prevent the fingers from becoming stiff, they were placed into warm water at intervals.

Under these more general circumstances Rechinger married in 1933 Dr Frida Moser, aged 29, a botanist like himself, who had previously completed her thesis. They lived together in a flat in Friedrichstraße 6, with her and his parents adding to the small income of Karl Heinz.

For an enthusiastic young man these obstacles counted for little: in 1927, when still a

student (Fig. 2), Karl Heinz, with his inborn optimism, had set out for his first great botanical excursion (for further details Rechinger No. 317: 41-45). The initiative had come from his father: in 1912 he had visited Corfu and had met in early 1927 the zoologist Professor Dr Franz Werner then planning a spring excursion to the Aegean, and Rechinger joined in. Their destination had been a region on the outer edge of Europe, with virtually no infrastructure to depend on. Hard to believe but true, because of lack of connections by steamers, the pair had to use rowing and sailing boats to travel from island to island. A glorious spring greeted Rechinger, aged 20, and Werner on Naxos and on the many other islands which were then still incompletely known from a botanical point of view. When determining his collections back in Vienna, Rechinger was in a particularly favourable situation: he could rely on the extremely rich collections in the Natural History Museum, the Institute of Botany and also had access to



Fig. 2. K. H. Rechinger, Greece, 1927, photograph. — Private collection, Vienna.

the Herbarium Graecum of Jenő von Halácsy, then deposited in the so-called old museum in the botanic garden of Vienna University and the material basis of the latter's *Conspectus Florae Graecae*. A similar concentration of herbarium specimens from Greece existed nowhere else in the world. In addition, the *Prodromus Florae Peninsulae Balcanicae* was very helpful written by the host of the botanical circle meeting in Margartenstraße – Hayek, who had died, while Rechinger toured the Aegean. Halácsy's and Handel-Mazzetti's herbarium labels became the model for Rechinger: for the following six decades he did not change the format and layout of his annotations (P. Hein, pers. comm.): the text is always in Latin, the locality information starts with the name of the country followed by the name of the province and more detailed geographical and ecological data including elevation. In accordance with Austrian practice the day and the year is given in Arabic, the month in Latin numbers.

Rechinger's 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Flora der ägäischen Inseln und Ost-Griechenlands' published in 1929, of course in the *Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums Wien*, was the first paper in a long series of contributions to the knowledge of the Greek flora. It was also during this first excursion that the idea of a *Flora Aegaea* developed – in a sailing boat from Skopelos to the small island of Kíra Panagiá.

In 1928 another excursion in north-easterly direction was on the program – to the Liptauer Alpen [Nízke Tatry] in then Czechoslovakia, now Slovakia, this time accompanied by his friend Dr Jozsef Scheffer from Bratislava, a town Rechinger visited regularly in those days.



The following excursions were again in a southerly direction:

- (1) in April 1930 with Prof Dr Vierhapper, formerly an assistant of Wettstein at the Institute of Botany, to Dalmatia, then Yugoslavia, now Croatia, to visit the peninsula Pelješac and the island of Korčula (Rechinger No. 21);
- (2) in July and August 1930 with a group of the Naturwissenschaftlicher Verein der Universität Wien led by Prof Dr W. Himmelbauer, another of Wettstein's pupils, to Bulgaria (Rechinger No. 14);
- (3) in 1932 a second tour to Greece, in part together with Werner and Dr Emma Brummeister (Rechinger No. 29, 317: 46 – 49), which included a visit to the high mountains on the border between Greece and Yugoslavia, now Makedonija; on this excursion Rechinger is reported to have learnt from Werner how to catch and preserve snakes and lizards with one of his trophies from Amorgos subsequently being described as *Elaphe rechingeri* (Eiselt 1997);
- (4) in 1933 a tour to southern Yugoslavia, where regions on the border to Albania were visited, this time with his wife Frida, Scheffer and, in part, by Ing O Gander (for further details see Rechinger No. 25, 26).

Descending the river Danube from Vienna to Belgrade and ascending it again in 1933 must have been a special experience just like climbing the botanically unexplored mountains surrounding Peć in Kosovo. Because of insufficient security a visit to adjacent Albania was not permitted by the authorities. The specimens gathered on the excursions in Yugoslavia comprised a few novelties, among them *Rumex balcanicus* Rech. f. and *Onobrychis bertisceae* Rech. f., which have stood the test of time.

Plant collecting with Frida continued also in Austria, the Neusiedler See area and the countryside by the river March being the favourite hunting grounds of Karl and Karl Heinz Rechinger, while the Pre-Alps and Alps were the favourite hunting grounds of Lily and Karl Heinz Rechinger, where they walked e. g. from Semmering to Mönichkirchen in a day. During one of these tours the Rechingers discovered *Cynoglossum hungaricum* as new for Austria, then and today a very rare and local plant. Special attention was given to the genus *Salix*, which continued to fascinate Karl Heinz until the end of his life. Later he was to write the account of this genus for the second edition of *Hegi* and for *Flora Europaea*. In 1933 Rechinger, aged 27, won his first prize – the "Lekársko-Prírodovedecký" Spolok in Bratislava awarded him with 1000 Czechoslovak crowns for a paper on the very striking flora of the region surrounding Neusiedler See which belongs in part to Austria and to Hungary.

At the Natural History Museum work on the genus *Rumex* continued, and, in addition, Rechinger determined his collections from the Balkan Peninsula. Most importantly, he had the stamina to publish all his findings in a long series of papers, a tradition he maintained for years. Since the introductions contain brief itineraries, it is often possible to follow his wanderings in detail.

In 1934 a third *Iter graecum* with the highly efficient Frida, for three weeks accompanied by the zoologists Werner and Dr Otto Wettstein Ritter von Westerheim, was undertaken to the Aegean islands and NE Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 50 – 53); this tour was supported partly by the Austrian Academy of Sciences. As before and later Frida took the photographs and subsequently prepared the drawings accompanying the publications. A fourth *Iter graecum* in 1935 with Frida, for six weeks accompanied by Otto Wettstein and R Homberg was restricted to the Dodekánisa, then part of the Kingdom of Italy

(Rechinger No. 317: 53 – 56). By this time, Rechinger, aged 27, had become an expert on the flora of the Balkan peninsula: he had collected plants in all countries of this area with the exception of Albania and Turkey in Europe.

The same year Rechinger attended the VI International Botanical Congress in Amsterdam, where he met three plant taxonomists from Berlin: Professor Dr Ludwig Diels, Dr Friedrich Fedde, who had arrived on his motor-assisted bicycle and earlier had published some of Rechinger's early papers in the *Repertorium*, and Dr Johannes Matfeld, also deeply interested in the flora of the Balkan Peninsula.

These were informal days at the Natural History Museum: when Keissler, due to age, progressively relinquished service activities at the Department of Botany, Rechinger took up his commitments although he still had no permanent job. For the following 35 years he was responsible for one of the finest collections of plant specimens in the world and for an impressive botanical library. This was an extremely long tenure – even Adolf Engler's directorship of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem was shorter. In all these years Rechinger was the personification of the Department of Botany, handling the loans, responding to requests, and running the daily routine.

In 1936 Karl Heinz and Frida Rechinger went on a fifth *Iter graecum* concentrating on the flora of N Greece (for further details see Rechinger No. 41, 48, 317: 56 – 63); this tour included a visit to the island of Samothraki and particularly successful collecting on the high mountains forming the border between Greece and Bulgaria, then almost unknown.

The following year Rechinger, aged 29, finally obtained the post of 'provisorischer wissenschaftlicher Assistent' at the Natural History Museum, where 'provisional' meant that dismissal was possible at any time. He thus entered the civil service, to which he belonged until his retirement in 1971.

Among the many parcels with herbarium specimens then arriving in the Natural History Museum were some sent by Dr Erwin Gauba, then teacher of French in Egypt, but soon to take up a position as professor of botany at the newly founded Agronomic High School in Karaj, 45 km west of Tehran. On a visit to his native Austria, Gauba met Rechinger in the Natural History Museum and invited him to Iran. He was electrified: in accordance with Viennese tradition, details were fixed in a coffee house in Mariahilferstraße.

There was a special challenge: the Natural History Museum possessed extremely rich botanical material from Iran brought together by travellers from the Austro-Hungarian Empire: Dr Theodor Kotschy, Kustos-Adjunct at the Department of Botany of the K. K. Hofnaturalienkabinett, originally kept in the so-called old museum in the Botanic Garden of Vienna University, by Dr J E Polak, physician-in-ordinary to shah Nasr Eddin, and by his later protégés Josef Armin Knapp, Thomas Pichler and Dr Otto Stapf. As a matter of fact shah Nasr Eddin even visited the newly opened K. K. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum on 25 August 1889 (Eiselt 1971). However, apart from Gauba's specimens from NW Iran nothing substantial had been acquired by the Natural History Museum more recently. In addition, Karl Rechinger had already published a few papers, albeit short, on the flora of Iran (e. g. Rechinger, K. 1889, 1894). But most importantly for Rechinger, vast areas of this country were virgin territory – not only from the botanical point, but also regarding topography, geology, mineralogy and zoology.

In this way Karl Heinz and Frida Rechinger, full of enthusiasm but with very little money, started to plan an ambitious expedition to a country more exotic than everything

they had seen so far. They left Vienna on 7 May 1937 travelling by train via Warsaw, Kiev, Rostov and Baku entering Iran by boat in Pahlavi. What followed was a strenuous collecting tour with Gauba full of micro- and macro-disasters: problems with the customs in Pahlavi, waiting endlessly in Tehran for the dshawas, the prerequisite for further permits to undertake tours within Iran, ill-health, broken-down cars, running out of money, Gauba often drunk, bundles of herbarium specimens lost on the way to Tehran to name a few (Rechinger No. 395: 302 – 306, 320). Driving in the mountains with faulty breaks was another experience, in particular since the driver was known to smoke opium. Even so, an impressive number of specimens was collected. It took more than 16 months until the last parcels arrived in the Natural History Museum.

Exhausted the young couple had started their home-bound trip by bus and shared taxi via Baghdad, Damascus to Beirut, then taken a steamer via Haifa, Cyprus and Brindisi to Trieste and finally the train to Zell am See, where Karl and Lily Rechinger had hired a summer house. In early September the two oriental travellers were back in Vienna. Here Karl Heinz asked his father to abstract the information on the flora of Iran scattered in the literature in the form of a card index, later continued and extended by Frida to include Afghanistan and the northern part of Iraq. The hand-written cards with rubber stamps giving the references are well known to collaborators of the *Flora iranica* project which started sixteen years later when Karl Rechinger was long dead.

Although Karl Heinz Rechinger was then deep in the preparation of his *Flora Aegaea* he simply could not resist to travel in November 1937 to Weimar with some of his Iranian trophies to meet Joseph Bornmüller, then regarded as the highest authority on the flora of Iran. Exchanging opinions on the material collected by Carl Haussknecht, Bornmüller and Rechinger was a stimulating experience and led to a life-long mutual respect in botanical matters. In political matters, however, they strongly disagreed with Bornmüller being in conformity with Nazi politics, while Rechinger resented the new line. Otherwise the meeting was a relaxed one, with Rechinger sleeping on Bornmüller's sofa and working in the Herbarium Haussknecht with its fine view on the cemetery where Goethe, Schiller and many others had been buried.

Back in Austria, the shadows on the wall were growing longer and longer. The yelling of demonstrators could be heard in Friedrichstraße 6, with sometimes two manifestations taking place simultaneously. For an intelligent young man it was evident, that political change was imminent.

### **The difficult years – 1938-1945**

After several stormy months the Deutsche Wehrmacht occupied Austria in March 1938, the Deutsche Reich declared the infamous 'Anschluß' and Austria effectively became part of the Deutsche Reich. The buildings on the Heldenplatz were left unaltered, but there was no longer a President, Chancellor or minister of the Republic of Austria. Even the use of the word 'Österreich' was forbidden by the new political authorities, an extremely humiliating experience for a man like Rechinger. Drastic changes took place at all levels of society, and the same holds true for the Natural History Museum. After the occupation many members of staff, both scientific and technical, declared themselves as 'illegale', i. e. clandestine members of the formerly suppressed NSDAP, and proudly wore their party badges,

genuine or fake, hoping for immediate promotion in their rank. In short, in the beginning of the Nazi rule there was more applause in Vienna than tears.

For a person like Rechinger the difficult years started. For the son of a former member of the imperial household with essentially conservative feelings, all that had happened was nothing else than a complete nightmare, and it was quite clear to him that it would sooner or later lead to catastrophe. However, he was a wise man with a feeling for realities. It was clear to him that nothing reasonable could be done against the brutal machinery implemented by the Nazis in Austria and that it would be best to remain silent. However, in contrast to many of his colleagues at the Natural History Museum, he did not join any of the Nazi organisations but showed a marked disinterest in politics. After Hans Kummerlöwe from Dresden, a dashing member of the SA, was installed as director for the science museums in Vienna, including the Natural History Museum, Rechinger was summoned by him and told that there is no place for a person of his 'Gesinnung' [political views]. Surprisingly nothing happened and Karl Heinz continued his duties under the unfriendly eye of his superior.

Soon afterwards he found himself in a bizarre situation: the new authorities substantially increased the staff in the Department of Botany. As Kustos they installed Dr Giorgio Cufodontis, a highly qualified plant taxonomist, bon vivant, member of the NSDAP and ten years senior to Rechinger, and as assistant a pupil of Richard Wettstein, the mycologist Dr Franz Petrak, twenty years senior, but strangely Rechinger remained head. The problem was solved soon: Cufodontis was promoted to director of the gardens of the defunct Republic of Austria in Vienna, while Petrak became Rechinger's deputy.

In early 1939 Rechinger visited Bornmüller a second time in Weimar to continue the determination of his Iranian collections. In old age he regarded his father, Murbeck, Degen and Bornmüller his models as collectors, the energetic Handel-Mazzetti his model as traveller to distant lands. A remarkable botanical meeting took place a few months later in Carinthia: Karl and Lily Rechinger had again rented a summer house, this time on the Wörther See, and their son, Bornmüller, Fedde and Dr Gerhard Kerstan joined them, and made a botanical tour to the mountains near Villach. Eleven years later Karl Heinz Rechinger started to publish the collections Kerstan had gathered in 1935 in Afghanistan.

When Nazi Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, it was obvious to everyone that further steps would follow soon. This was indeed the case.

Ill-health resulted in a belated call-up of Rechinger on 10 June 1941. He had become German citizen via the 'Anschluß' and used the apparent delay in his call-up to finish the manuscript of his bulky *Flora Aegaea*, a work done mainly in Friedrichstraße 6 and finished before mid-1941. In a way, it was a flight into work. Rechinger also continued the determination of the plants brought home from Iran, resulting in his *Ergebnisse einer botanischen Reise nach dem Iran*, of which the first three instalments were published during the Second World War in the *Annalen*. Meanwhile air-raid drill started at the Natural History Museum and members of staff, Rechinger included, got used to sleeping on campbeds in their respective departments.

What followed was an odyssey in various functions and places, but Rechinger, like the principal figure in Jaroslav Hašek's *Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války*, preferred to try to survive instead of becoming a hero but dead. Many years later, he said that he was lucky not to have been forced to use a gun. The secret of his success was a mixture

of careful behaviour, good luck and excellent contacts to the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW), Amt Wissenschaft, i. e. the science office of the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces, in Berlin. In contrast to widespread opinion, conflicting lines of interest existed and persisted in Nazi Germany, one of them being the antagonism between NSDAP and the Armed Forces, and this was used by Rechinger.

However, at first he was submitted to merciless basic military training in Niederdonau, the word Niederösterreich then also being prohibited, followed by several months as clerk in the military service in St. Veit an der Glan in Carinthia. Since there was very little to do during office hours Rechinger found time enough to correct the proofs of his *Flora Aegaea*, which he kept hidden in the drawer of his desk. Later he had to do service at the Sprachmittlersammelstelle in Vienna, a central office for interpreters, which had the positive side effect that he could at least sleep in Friedrichstraße 6 and be near to his plants.

Rather unexpectedly an opportunity to visit Greece again offered itself in spring 1942. This has to be seen in a more general framework: in Nazi Germany plant genetics, in particular the improvement of cultivars, was regarded a matter of strategic importance. The Balkanfeldzug, which resulted in the occupation of the Balkan Peninsula, Turkey-in-Europe excepted, opened up the opportunity to collect material for plant breeding. Thus the OKW, Amt Wissenschaft in Berlin in collaboration with Reichsforschungsrat and the influential Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft set up a group of scientists and ordered them to do this job. The project was given top priority, which meant an expedition with military protection. Otto Wettstein of the Natural History Museum in Vienna, his former travel companion, offered Rechinger the position of a botanist and, after some hesitation, he agreed. As so often, there was a family connection: Otto Wettstein's brother Fritz was director of the Institute for Biology in Berlin, which belonged to the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft.

What followed, has been reported in detail (Rechinger No. 69, 317: 63-68) and does not need to be repeated here. Intended as an excursion to collect living material for plant breeding, it ended as a tour to collect material Rechinger thought interesting, although he actually gathered also some fruits and seeds for further cultivation. Being able to visit Crete, an island he had earlier seen from Karpathos but had never set foot on, was for him probably the most important aspect of this expedition. Rechinger was very well prepared: earlier he had determined the specimens collected on this island by Ignaz Dörfler, formerly a technical assistant at the Department of Botany, he had finished Vierhapper's manuscripts on the plants of Crete, and now had a set of proofs of his *Flora Aegaea* in his luggage. For four months Rechinger toured Crete, where surprisingly he was permitted not to wear his uniform.

Back in Vienna he continued service in the Sprachmittlersammelstelle, but was granted a three months leave to determine his new collections from Crete and write up an account subsequently published as *Neue Beiträge zur Flora von Kreta*.

Soon afterwards Rechinger was engaged in the preparation of a project similar to the excursion to Crete, again initiated by the Amt Wissenschaft: the flora of the Crimea, an area then still occupied by Nazi troops, was to be studied, and plant genetic resources collected in Soviet research centres were to be taken possession of (Flitner 1995). All this came to nothing, since the Soviet armed forces had liberated the Crimea while the expedition was still in its preparatory phase.

Starting from April 1943 Rechinger resumed service for the Sprachmittlersammelstelle, which this time meant censoring letters written in French by prisoners of war and forced



labourers – hard to believe but true, in the cosy atmosphere of a coffee house in Josefstädterstraße.

Every bureaucratic machinery is known for its automatism, and this applied also for Nazi Germany: Rechinger's temporary position at the Natural History Museum was made automatically permanent in 1943, since he then belonged to the Wehrmacht. There was no political check-up, he was still no party member or associate of any Nazi organisation, and the whole action seems to have been made against the intentions of his enemies at the Natural History Museum. The decree making him 'Beamter auf Lebenszeit' [civil servant for life] signed by Hitler caused naturally many questions and problems in the early years of post-war Austria.

The bad news of an allied air raid against Berlin resulting in the almost complete destruction of the Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem, where Karl Rechinger had determined the critical specimens brought back from Samoa and which Karl Heinz had visited several times, came as a shock. It resulted in the evacuation of the vast collections of the Natural History Museum in Vienna. Petrak split the very rich herbarium and had it transferred to several locations in what was then Niederdonau. The library of the Department of Botany was evacuated into a bank near Burgtheater, thus within walking distance from the Natural History Museum.

Although Rechinger was not engaged in the evacuation, he suffered from the consequences: the museum was empty when back from military service. When he wished to continue work on his collections from Iran he had to travel to the evacuation sites, notably Purgstall an der Erlauf, a village in Niederdonau, and sort out material for comparison. In order to keep the precious material free from insects, Rechinger went a few times to Lunz am See, another evacuation site in Niederdonau, and to Purgstall to put insecticide into the boxes.

Rather unexpectedly the obsolete Crimea project led to another one-year-leave from the Wehrmacht, which was mainly spent in Vienna and used for the determination of the collections from Iran. During this intermission Rechinger seems to have been asked to act as editor for a journal, to which he had contributed several times – the *Annalen*. A last opportunity to collect plants offered itself in June 1944, when an excursion was undertaken in occupied France: Rechinger and Dr Hermann Sleumer, then a member of staff of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem, went by train to Narbonne and toured the Pyrenees, accompanied by two aides from Madagascar to carry the boxes and dry the paper. Since allied troops had landed in Normandy and soon afterwards in southern France, the return journey was made under constant threat of being killed, wounded or made prisoner of war. Rechinger witnessed his first air-raid in the railway station of Dijon; progress back to Mulhouse was slow and followed by a trip through bombed-down Germany.

Although the massive volume of *Flora Aegaea* published by the Academy of Sciences in Vienna has 1943 on its title-page, it is very likely that it came out the following year. Bornmüller's copy now kept in the library of the Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem has Rechinger's dedication dated 'Sept. 1944'. Seeing his first magnum opus published must have been a special satisfaction for Rechinger, in particular since part of the print-run had been destroyed when an allied air attack hit the printers next to the Institute of Botany of Vienna University.

Further bomb attacks against Vienna made orderly work more and more impossible. In early November 1944 Karl Heinz was called up to do service, this time in the

'Arbeitsdienst' [labour service] near Oberwart in Burgenland, then Styria – he was one of the many who had to build the famous 'Ostwall', a fortification intended to stop the victorious Soviet Army approaching occupied Austria from the east. As evident from Rechinger's letter sent to Bornmüller, this was a particularly bad time for him, sleeping on wet straw in a hovel and having only turnips for food (Fig. 3). Only the days spent in February 1945 in Berlin were considered by him worse – the city already in ruins or in flames, which reminded Rechinger of the last scene of Richard Wagner's *Die Götterdämmerung*.

Back home in Vienna, Rechinger experienced on 12 March 1945 another heavy air attack on Vienna. He had hidden in the cellar of the Natural History Museum: when leaving after several hours he at first thought snow had fallen – the wind had blown through the broken windows of the Art History Museum and a considerable part of the collection of banknotes had been scattered. A skeleton of the fine cupola of the Art History Museum was left and a considerable portion of the main building was in ruins. More frightening was another observation: the State Opera House and the nearby Heinrichshof were in flames, producing enormous clouds of black smoke. Friedrichstraße 6 was in great danger. Karl Heinz and Frida spent many hours on the roof of their family's block of flats successfully extinguishing burning material which the wind blew from the large fires nearby.

After having been an eyewitness of the arrival of the Deutsche Wehrmacht on the Heldenplatz, watching the scene from the roof of the Natural History Museum and hearing Hitler speaking to the crowds, Rechinger now witnessed the arrival of the Soviet Army – not in Vienna, but in Lunz am See, where Geitler, a former assistant of Wettstein, had also found refuge. The last weeks had been particularly dangerous, since SS patrols shot people dead almost indiscriminately. For Rechinger it was clearly liberation from the hated occupation by Nazi Germany.

### **The *Wiederaufbau* years – 1945-1962**

Translated literally *Wiederaufbau* means reconstruction. Here it stands for the first seventeen post-war years in Austria: they were a time of reconstruction from the damage caused by the war, but also years of general economic upturn and the reconstruction of the defunct Republic of Austria. It was a period of great optimism and of a stable coalition government, which had to start from scratch. After seven terrible years the country enjoyed peace and everyone was happy to have survived the Nazi terror. However, until October 1955 Austria remained occupied by the four Allied Powers; on the day following the departure of the last allied soldier the Republic solemnly declared itself permanently neutral.

In contrast to Berlin with its four sectors, there were five in Vienna – an American, a British, a French, a Soviet sector, and an international sector. Niederösterreich, the province surrounding the capital was under Soviet occupation. Vienna's first district with the Natural History Museum and Friedrichstraße 6, where Rechinger's flat had been devastated during his absence, belonged to the international sector. Here a system of rotation was operating. Every month the military commander of the international sector changed and for ten years Rechinger would have been able to watch from the roof of the Natural History Museum the ceremony taking place on the Heldenplatz. Rechinger observed something similar every month from a window of the Department of Botany: the military cere-

bezgl. der Korrekturen fahnen möglichst  
 aller Ihrer Pausen betreffenden Arbeiten  
 mit freundiger Dankbarkeit an und  
 bitte, die Sendung ergehen zu lassen  
 an das Museum zu richten. Es ist und  
 bleibt eine meiner Lieblinge, denn, später  
 einmal eine Flora von Berlin zu schrei-  
 ben und die Vorarbeiten hierzu wird den  
 Juch die Anerbieten ungemein erleichtert.

Bis zu meiner Abreise am 2. Nov. hat  
 weder unser Museum, noch unsere aus-  
 wärts gelegenen Herbarien und Brüche noch  
 das Bot. Inst. der Univ. Schaden gelitten.  
 Gelitten wurde hingegen das Bauwerk,  
 in dessen Fries unsere Brüche liegen, ohne  
 daß die Bombe durchgeschlagen hätte und  
 ganz ausgebrannt ist die Druckerei Gittel  
 mit samt dem letzten Band unserer Annalen  
 samt Satz und Manuskripten. Dies ist wohl  
 ein Schlag für uns, aber nicht der schlimmste,  
 persönlich bin ich nicht betroffen, da ich  
 von meiner Arbeit (4. Teil der pers. Rubricate)  
 nun im Voraus Bode ahnend Separata machen  
 ließ. - Was die letzten Tage geschadet haben,  
 weiß ich allerdings nicht.

Eutschuldigen Sie das Geschehene, ich setze  
 auf einem Stück haufen bei schlechtem Loslot  
 neben einem rauchenden Ofen und habe vor Angst  
 und ungeschulten Arbeit stehen müssen. Rth. Ledeb. 1944

Fig. 3. Letter by K. H. Rechinger to J. Bornmüller, November 1944, pencil on paper, photocopy. -  
 Archiv, Herbarium Haussknecht, Universität Jena.

mony accompanying the change in the rotating chair of the Allied Komandatura Vienna taking place in front of the Justizpalast. Even today there are reminiscences of this ten-year allied period recognisable in the Natural History Museum – several rooms still have no smoking inscriptions in German, English, French and, most surprisingly for Vienna, in Russian. There was also nothing extraordinary for Rechinger to receive in September 1945 a visit from a Soviet officer in full uniform - the botanist Boris A. Tikhomirov had come to ask for a complete set of botanical publications published in Vienna during the German occupation. This could be organised and later Tikhomirov always remained on friendly terms with Rechinger.

The first priority was bringing back to Vienna the herbarium and the library from the various evacuation sites. This was a Herculean task, and Rechinger was one of the task force. Numerous and seemingly endless meetings with the Soviet authorities were necessary to organise transport facilities and personnel: the specimens evacuated in the stately home of the Kuppelwieser family in Lunz am See had to be brought by lorries to the local station, then transported on the narrow-track railway to Gaming, where normal-track wagons had to be found for transport to Vienna. Finding snow-proof wagons was a major obstacle. In Lunz and Purgstall all this was done by Rechinger and a single assistant in freezing November and December 1945.

In May 1945, definitely after the armistice, a catastrophe had happened in Oberhöflein near Geras, one of the evacuation sites of the Department of Botany: fire had destroyed most of the material stored in a large room of the stately home including Gauba's specimens from Iran, whereas Halácsy's Herbarium Graecum, his Herbarium Europaeum and a few miscellaneous bundles kept in another room survived. This meant, that the herbarium material of several major groups, among them the gymnosperms and palms, had been totally destroyed.

In contrast to the Art History Museum on the other side of the monument for Maria Theresia the Natural History Museum had miraculously remained almost intact, but of course there was no lift, so fascicle after fascicle, tome after tome, had to be carried up the 144 steps to the Department of Botany. Since the windows were mostly broken and cardboard or wooden boards had been inserted instead, the rooms were dark. Very few rooms could be heated in winter, so work was done in the cold and with candlelight only. The Department of Botany then comprised two scientists, Rechinger and Petrak, and three aides. Because of insufficient shelter and isolation, mould was a constant threat, and indeed a small number of specimens was ruined. Living conditions in bomb-shattered Vienna were also difficult: his feet on a hot water bottle, covered with a blanket Rechinger wrote his *Phytogeographia Aegaea* on a sofa in Friedrichstraße 6, heating his room during the grim first post-war winter with the card index drawn up for *Flora Aegaea* now published. It was in these two papers that Rechinger developed his concept of a phytogeographical border line between Europe and Asia, for which recently the name 'Rechinger's line' has been proposed. It is similar to the well-known 'Wallace's line' separating Oriental and Australian zoogeographical regions (Strid 1997); when comparing the faunas of Bali and of Lombok a marked difference exists similar to that between the floras of Ikaria and Naxos.

Fortunately undistributed duplicates of all groups had remained in store rooms of the Natural History Museum. Now it was Rechinger's task to sort them into two parts: one part was used as nucleus to rebuild the collections lost, the second part to restart the exchange of herbarium material with other institutions. Shortly afterwards, the mineralogist Dr

Hermann Michel, again Erster Direktor, commissioned Rechinger to continue editing the *Annalen*, then still under allied censorship, being responsible for the volumes 55 to 59. In addition, he had to restore the interrupted exchange of scientific publications with natural history museums all over the world, a remarkable task for someone who wrote all letters by hand and could not rely on a secretary.

During the first year of post-war Austria travelling was restricted, so Rechinger concentrated on the adventive flora of Vienna, in particular of the local railway stations. Because of the many trains arriving from easterly destinations, the number of introductions from the east had increased dramatically, a feast for a field botanist like Rechinger.

Soon invitations received from friends made stays abroad possible again. The first of these came from Professor Dr Charles Baehni, director of the Conservatoire botanique in Geneva. However, in 1946 the Swiss mission in Vienna was not prepared to accept the quadrilingual identity card with the famous eleven rubber stamps issued by the four Allied Powers for an Austrian citizen. Consequently Rechinger had to take the one and only ruined wagon for civilians, which was added to the Interzonenzug [an allied train connecting the different zones of occupied Austria] from Vienna to Bregenz. There, surprisingly, the Swiss authorities accepted the document and his application for a visa. After having waited for four weeks in Bad Aussee, he was finally permitted to enter Switzerland, a country in peace and prosperity. In St. Margareten, the border station Rechinger passed, he saw something he had not seen for some years – piles of different kinds of chocolate. The stay in Geneva was brief and promising; among the new contacts was Dr Vivi Täckholm from Sweden, then based in Cairo, who repeatedly worked at the Conservatoire Botanique.

In 1947 funds from the British Council made a stay at the British Museum (Natural History), London (now Natural History Museum), and at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew possible, and later that year Rechinger was again in Geneva – Baehni had offered him a temporary position for a year and the Erster Direktor of the Natural History Museum had granted an unpaid leave. Based in the main building of Geneva University, where Boissier's *Flora orientalis* herbarium and the Herbarium Boissier-Barbey were conserved, Rechinger was charged to determine the extensive material collected by M Haradjan in Syria and Cyprus. However, the second stay in Geneva was not a particularly successful one: relations with Baehni turned uneasy, the salary, although nice for Viennese standards, was low for Geneva standards, and living conditions in the tiny, uncomfortable accommodation rented by the Rechingers in rue de Zurich 1 compared very unfavourably with those in their five-room-flat in Friedrichstraße 6 near the Staatsoper, then still in ruins.

In early 1948 Rechinger received in Geneva a visit from Dr Ashgor A Azizi, who had the function of cultural attaché of the young shah Mohammed Reza in Vienna and encouraged Rechinger to visit Iran again. Small world - many years later the author of this text became a good friend of Dr Azizi's son Josef and met several times his father in the family's Biedermeier villa in Hietzing, a residential area near Schönbrunn castle.

After endless troubles, like receiving Austrian passports via the Austrian representative in Bern and visas for Iran, this resulted in Rechinger's second expedition to the Near East in 1948, the last undertaken with Frida. As in 1937 it was highly successful in many respects, in particular in the number of specimens brought back to the Natural History Museum. Advance payment for duplicates not yet collected and support from various sources made this expedition possible. Dr Esfandiar Esfandiari, a former student of Gauba,



doctor of Vienna University, and now director of the Plant Pests and Diseases Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture in Tehran, was to act as host for the Rechingers in Iran - later he permitted Rechinger to select in Tehran duplicates of Gauba's specimens for the Natural History Museum in Vienna to replace those lost in Ober-Höflein. In Iran Esfandiari, Paul Aellen and Mr Marouchehri accompanied the pair from Austria. The expedition started in Geneva and ended in Vienna, making another lasting impression on Karl Heinz's mind (Rechinger No. 395: 306-312).

Slowly the living and working facilities improved in Vienna – in the Natural History Museum the windows were glazed, a lift was built in 1958, followed by central heating in 1960.

Contacts with Prof Dr Eric Hultén resulted in invitations to Sweden – in 1949, in 1950, enabling Rechinger to participate in the VII International Botanical Congress, and again in 1951. Each time Rechinger worked for three months in the pleasant atmosphere of the Natural History Museum in Stockholm determining another collection from the Near East – that brought together by Prof Dr Gunnar Samuelson in Turkey, Cyprus, Syria and the Lebanon. Since the first set of duplicates of Haradjan's and Samuelson's collections was given to the Natural History Museum in Vienna, Rechinger's stay contributed significantly to the herbarium of his home institution. On the other hand, the gap between the Aegean area and the highlands of Iran were bridged in Rechinger's mind and, in a way, nurtured the plan of a *Flora iranica*. The work done in Sweden was awarded with the Linnean Medal in silver, and his excellent contacts with colleagues in Scandinavia resulted years later in Rechinger being elected foreign member of the Kungliga Svenska Vetenskapsakademien in Stockholm and the Danske Videnskabernes Selskab in Copenhagen.

The trip in a sleeper to Sweden in 1949 was important for Rechinger, then aged 42, also in another respect: in the Hamburg railway station he met a young woman – the charming Wilhelmina Goudemans, aged 25, then also en route to Stockholm. She was to become his partner for life which led to separation from Frida. Several years later Wilhelmina became Rechinger's second wife.

In 1949 Rechinger was made kustos 1. klasse, in 1955 director of the Department of Botany and for the ensuing twelve years had to participate in the monthly meetings of the directors with the Erster Direktor as coordinator, not always pleasant ones with all the inevitable manoeuvring and bureaucratic non-sense. The first appointment had a retroactive effect – on paper he had begun his new position on 1 May 1945, thus just a few days before the armistice had been signed by the Allied Powers and Germany in Reims and Berlin, which effectively meant the rebirth of the Republic of Austria. The first crisis followed in 1950, when the communists unsuccessfully attempted a coup d'état – from the window of Friedrichstraße 6 Rechinger watched a barbed wire fence being drawn, but the uprising collapsed quickly.

By 1950 he had become a specialist for the flora of the Near East. After Bornmüller's death large collections were sent to the Natural History Museum for identification, comprising among others those of Lennart Edelberg, Kerstan, Walter Koelz, Mogens Køie, Hans Franz Neubauer and Otto Heinrich Volk and others from Afghanistan, a country he had not yet set foot on. The *Symbolae Afghanicae* published in Copenhagen have to be regarded as a further step in an easterly direction and another precursor of *Flora iranica*.

The Natural History Museum was and is an institution separate from Vienna University,

although a few members of staff had and have the right to teach at the university. In accordance with this tradition, Rechinger applied in 1952 for a *venia legendi* [the authorization to teach at a university] submitting several of his publications, of which *Phytogeographia aegaea* was selected as Habilitationsschrift. This was accepted by the Habilitationskommission, which included Professor Geitler, formerly a refugee in Lunz, now Wettstein's second successor in the chair of botany and director of the Botanic Garden of Vienna University. Rechinger gave a test lecture, and was vested in 1953 with the right to deliver lectures, i. e. he was made Universitätsdozent. Teaching commitments were minimal: but his new position enabled Rechinger to supervise theses. He had, however, only very few students who finished their studies: Dr Alois Patzak, who was forced to give up botany because of ill-health, Dr Gerhard Leute, now Hofrat at the Landesmuseum für Kärnten in Klagenfurt, Dr Gerhard Tuisl, now Hofrat at the Landesmuseum für Niederösterreich in St Pölten, and, finally, the author of this text. Rechinger, however, influenced several others, among them in Vienna Dr Friedrich Ehrendorfer, Dr Harald Riedl, his successor as director of the Department of Botany, Dr Helene Schiman-Czeika, and abroad Dr Gerhard Wagenitz, Dr Werner Greuter and Dr Arne Strid, to name a few.

Otherwise Rechinger held only few lecture series, first in lecture hall 50 of the main university building, later in the Department of Botany at the Natural History Museum. Topics dealt with included plant geography, grasses and composites. Because of the small number of students attending his courses and a certain opposition from university circles Rechinger later gave up lecturing altogether.

In 1960 the Federal President of the Republic of Austria conferred upon Rechinger the title *außerordentlicher Professor* which was purely honorary, and, taking into account the subtleties of university terminology, he was no professor extraordinary. When Professor Dr Felix Widder, formerly Fritsch's assistant and later director of the Botanical Garden of Graz University, retired, he proposed Rechinger *primo loco* as his successor. This came to nothing, among other reasons because the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy for good reason did not appreciate Rechinger's idea to lecture in Graz, but otherwise continue work for *Flora Iranica* at the Natural History Museum in Vienna, where all the relevant collections were kept. Offers to come as a visiting professor to Istanbul and Ankara Universities were rejected since Rechinger quite rightly considered working conditions at the Natural History Museum in Vienna far superior. This is how it came that Rechinger remained on the fringe of university life.

A Fullbright Scholarship had enabled Rechinger in 1953 to visit the United States for three months: he worked mainly in the herbarium of the New York Botanical Garden determining material of the genus *Rumex*. On Sundays Grigorij Ivanovic Širjaev, a refugee from the Ukraine, introduced Rechinger to the knowledge of the giant genus *Astragalus*, particularly polymorphic in the Iran. St. Louis, Oklahoma, El Paso, Los Angeles were stops on a rather wild tour by plane, bus and car to San Francisco from where he returned to New York.

Rechinger was back in Paris to attend the VIII International Botanical Congress in 1954, where he met Boris Konstantinovich Schischkin, long serving editor of *Flora SSSR* and member of the French speaking intelligentsia of old Russia. Why Rechinger never visited St Petersburg with its outstanding botanical collections from Caucasia and Central Asia, including several classical collections from Iran, remains an enigma. Subsequently he went on a botanical tour to Spain and Spanish Morocco with Professor Dr Ledyard Stebbins and

Ehrendorfer, later the successor of Widder on the chair at Graz University and then the successor of Geitler on the chair at Vienna University.

The famous Staatsvertrag signed by France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and Austria on 15 May 1955 in the Upper Belvedere in Vienna finally brought an end to the allied occupation and Austria became a highly respected member of the international community. Its neutral status between the western and eastern block led to a particular high esteem in an area near to Rechinger's heart – the Levant.

Three days after the ceremony in Belvedere castle, Rechinger left by train for Greece, a country he had not seen since 1942. For the first time he was accompanied by Wilhelmina; although no botanist by training, she quickly became Rechinger's assistant, in particular in the field, and later collected occasionally also independently. The island of Evvia was studied in detail, which resulted in *Die Flora der Insel Euboea*. An excursion was made with Dr Konstantinos Goulimis, the return journey via Ohrid, Niš, Zagreb and Ljubljana, then Yugoslavia, now Makedonija, Yugoslavia, Croatia, and Slovenia respectively, in the company of Professor Dr Francis Marion Ownbey.

In spring 1956 Rechinger (Fig. 4) was back in Greece, on part of this tour again accompanied by Goulimis. Later that year he, for the first and only time, accepted an appointment as visiting professor - at Baghdad University, where he laid the foundations of the University Herbarium (BUH; Rechinger No. 268, 395: 312 – 319); in a similar way Rechinger's Iter Iranicum Secundum with Esfandiari and Aellen had laid the foundations of the herbarium at Evin (IRAN). Always enthusiastic about railways, Karl Heinz and Wilhelmina went by train from Vienna via Istanbul, Ankara, Aintab, Mosul to Iraq, which over the ensuing months they travelled extensively. The return journey was done by car via Tabriz, Erzurum, Ankara to Athens, catching the ferry to Venice, and continuing by road to Bad Aussee. The stay in Baghdad gave Rechinger ample opportunity to lecture, collect plants, and travel – with Dr Ali al-Rawi, Evan Guest, and probably for the first and only time in his life, with students. One of the first things he did after his return to the Natural History Museum in Vienna was to write a *Flora of Lowland Iraq*, his only Flora written in English, published when already Erster Direktor.

The Austrian Academy of Sciences elected Rechinger corresponding member at home in 1957. As evident from a report marked confidential found among Rechinger's papers Professor Dr Friedrich Knoll, Wettstein's retired successor on the chair of botany at Vienna University and long-time rector of Vienna University, was the first on the list of proponents. Rechinger's works published earlier by the academy, in particular *Flora Aegaea*, and the Hansgirg Medal awarded to him by the academy in 1950 were among the arguments brought forward in his favour. It should be noted that Rechinger was never elected full member. In accordance with tradition Rechinger was invited only to those meetings which were open to full and corresponding members. In short, membership was entirely honorary – but in accordance with tradition implied the right for working facilities at an Austrian research institute even after retirement.

Editing volume 3 of the second edition of *Illustrierte Flora von Mitteleuropa*, usually called *Hegi* became another never ending story: it started for Rechinger in 1955 with the first fascicle appearing in 1957 and ended in 1979 after the publication of fifteen more parts. Supported by Patzak, Rechinger had written the account of *Rumex* and *Salix*, accounts completely independent from those of the first edition. However, the last four instalments of vol-

ume 3 (3) were edited by Professor Dr Jürgen Damboldt of the Freie Universität Berlin.

Yugoslavia and Greece were again on Rechinger's program in spring and early summer of 1958; accompanied by Wilhelmina this tour included a visit to Dubrovnik, the Boka Kotorska, Pec, Skopje, Ohrid, then Yugoslavia, now Croatia, Yugoslavia and Makedonija respectively, and finally the Peloponnesos, which Rechinger had not seen before; in Evvia Prof Dr Hans Runemark and Dr Sven Snogerup of Lund University accompanied the Rechingers.

Election to another academy of science followed in February 1959: under number 4989 Rechinger's name was added to the members' list of the Kaiserliche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina, which was then based in Halle. Whereas the diploma has this name, the publications of this learned society used 'Deutsche Akademie der Naturwissenschaften Leopoldina'. Obviously the epithet 'kaiserlich' [imperial]

was regarded as not acceptable in the German Democratic Republic, although for the wrong reason – it does not refer to the Kaiser, Wilhelm I or Wilhelm II, but to Emperor Leopold I, who had granted privileges three centuries earlier to the nascent academy, then based in Schweinfurt. Since Rechinger possessed certain monarchist inclinations and since Kotschy had also belonged to this academy, he may have liked the idea of being elected member of the Leopoldina. It is notable that on the same day another man with deep interests in plant life was elected member of this Academy – Professor Dr Melvin Calvin, soon later to be awarded with the Nobel Prize for his outstanding achievements in plant biochemistry.

Although Rechinger disapproved of congresses and meetings, he organised in April 1959 the First *Flora Europaea* Meeting in Vienna. This led to personal contacts with Franz Jonas, mayor of Vienna, and Dr Heinrich Drimmel, minister for education; playing successfully the old game of one political party outdoing the other, this constellation resulted in receptions for the participants of the meeting in a splendour quite untypical for botanical congresses – in the Vienna Rathaus (town hall) and the Palais Starhemberg, the minister's office on Minoritenplatz. Otherwise, Rechinger's role in the *Flora Europaea* organization was that of an advisory editor, regional advisor for Greece, and author for the accounts of *Rumex* and *Salix*, the latter account finished at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, since the material at the Natural History Museum had been destroyed in Oberhöflein in 1945. However, collaboration with the *Flora Europaea* project ended in disagreement, one reason being allegedly the often limited attention given by British botanists to the complexities of Balkan floristics.



Fig. 4. K. H. Rechinger, Vienna, 1956, photograph. — Private collection, Vienna.

In the same year Rechinger collected odd *Salix* species in the Plateau Central in France, in the Pyrenees and the Cordillera Cantabrica in Spain and then crossed the Atlantic by steamer from Amsterdam to Montreal in order to attend the IX International Botanical Congress. Here he met after years the relative from Neuchâtel, with whom he had shared several weeks in 1919 – Claude Favarger, meanwhile professor of botany at the local university. Coincidence or parallel evolution? Very little is known about Rechinger's short collecting tour in the Tyrol in 1960, which was followed in 1961 by a trip with Wilhelmina across Bulgaria, Turkey-in-Europe, and N Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 73-74). It ended in Genoa, where he attended the Second *Flora Europaea* meeting.

Starting from 1960 Rechinger acted at the Natural History Museum also as Baureferent, the coordinator for construction and maintenance work. This resulted in endless meetings with the zoologist Dr Hans Strouhal, a pupil of Werner and then Erster Direktor, the heads of the other departments, members of staff and architects on the permanent problem of many museums - lack of space. It made Rechinger a connoisseur of each and every corner of the grandiose structure with its magnificent marble stairs and cupola, sacrosanct as a historical building. Plans were drawn up, finalised and inserted into the government machinery, but neither Rechinger, nor the Erster Direktor, nor the Minister of Education were able to stage the harmony between the Ministries of Education, Public Works and Finance necessary for any major initiative of this kind. All this was of course a rather frustrating job for Rechinger, who used to quote Franz von Grillparzer, poet and like him a high ranking civil servant in Vienna 'Das ist der Fluch von unsrem edlen Haus, auf halbem Wege und zu halber Tat mit halben Mitteln zauderhaft zu streben' [This is the curse on our noble House, to attempt half action hesitatingly and in half way]. It was only many years later, in fact during the time in office of the zoologist Dr Oliver Paget, the second successor of Rechinger as Erster Direktor, that these plans materialised – in fact in a form totally different from what was originally intended. However, Rechinger's activities as Baureferent were not all in vain: workshops for the museum's galleries including a book-binder and printer, guestrooms and modern toilets were constructed.

### The busy years – 1962 -1971

When Strouhal retired in 1961, Rechinger was by a majority of 17 to 4 votes elected Erster Direktor of the Natural History Museum, a choice subsequently confirmed by the Ministry of Education to take effect from 1 January 1963. This was a memorable vote, since for the first time in the long history of the museum a botanist, a representative of a small department, was chosen for this position. Soon later Dr Adolf Schärf, Federal President of the Republic of Austria, awarded the title Hofrat to Rechinger. Contrary to wide-spread understanding among the uninitiated, title and rank of Hofrat are widespread in the Austrian civil service.

What followed may be called the busy years. However, it should be noted that Rechinger was no Generaldirektor, but simply *primus inter pares* remaining Director of the Department of Botany, with little say in the affairs of the other departments. Essentially he took charge of official duties, presided over routine meetings and ceremonies, successfully maintaining the subtle balance between the individual departments of this large institution. One of the more important duties was to represent the Natural History Museum at the



annual meetings of the directors of the museums of the Republic of Austria at the Ministry of Education. Since the federal museums were primarily ranked according to the number of visitors, since the Natural History Museum attracted only few people and since budgets were basically received according to this parameter, Rechingner took part in a game lost from the beginning and regarded, quite wrongly, the whole affair as a farce. He seems never to have tried to interrupt the cruel self-fulfilling prophecy of this mechanism and battle for funds for public education, which he could have got; instead he battled for funds for science, which he could never get. Rechingner also seems not to have possessed the mixture of hardness, diplomacy and cleverness necessary for such meetings.

After the confirmation of Rechingner's election by the Ministry of Education, he was received in the imperial splendour of the Hofburg by Schärff, his neighbour on the opposite side of Ringstraße, who told him frankly that there was little interest in all 'these dead things', not a particularly stimulating statement for the new Erster Direktor, but not entirely unexpected by a long-serving civil servant.

Due to its central position in the heart of Vienna, representation played a more important role than presumably in any other Natural History Museum in Europe. Rechingner possessed the necessary style and format for these duties and took part in the many receptions given at embassies, ministries etc. One of his more outstanding obligations was to receive cardinal Döpfner, archbishop of Munich, when the exhumed bones of members of the Babenberg family were handed over to the Natural History Museum. In accordance with tradition this was done in the hall below the cupola, thus in a particularly fine setting.

In other respects, these were golden days: the budget came from the ministry, there was neither necessity nor intention to raise external funds or worry about the balance of expenditure and income, the entrance fees were fixed at a symbolic level. Not surprisingly for a man of his background, Rechingner was no reformer and showed limited interest in the Natural History Museum's galleries, a notable exception being the construction and installation of six high security showcases for the most spectacular objects of the museum – among them the bouquet of flowers made of precious stones reported to be a gift by Maria Theresia, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia, to her husband, Emperor Franz I of Lorraine, the so-called Moctezuma-emerald from Columbia and a lapislazuli snuff box formerly owned by Eugen Prince of Savoy. Organising a Landrover for the Natural History Museum was another success: the Hammer Purgstall Gesellschaft, founded by another old boy from Schottengymnasium, the Friends of the Natural History Museum, and the Ministry of Education contributed to the purchase. In 1965 the car was first hired by Rechingner and put to test in Iran.

Otherwise he was opposed to activities for the general public in the Natural History Museum, and was against travelling exhibitions regarded as politically mandatory by the Ministry of Education, which, as a rule, prevailed in these matters. Rechingner battled for the Natural History Museum's role as a scientific research institute against the Ministry which regarded popular education as the Museum's prime task, another hopeless fight. By consequence Rechingner had few friends in the Ministry, which on the other hand was liberal enough to permit him – even in his years as Erster Direktor - to undertake expeditions to the Balkans and the Near East. In short, Rechingner wished not to be disturbed in his work. Whereas this might be regarded as acceptable for a university professor, it was not acceptable, even in the sixties, for the head of a very major museum.

Financial support for Rechinger's expeditions in 1962, 1965, 1967 and 1971 regarded as untimely by the Ministry of Education was poor, but even so he had private money enough to undertake several tours

- (1) in 1962 via Moscow and Tashkent to Afghanistan and West Pakistan (now Pakistan) returning home from Karachi on board the 'Circassia' via Aden, Alexandria, and Genoa (Rechinger No. 395: 319-324; on part of the tour accompanied by Dr Ian Hedge, Dr Knut Lindberg and Professor Dr Per Wendelbo),
- (2) in 1963 to Romania to attend the third *Flora Europaea* Meeting in Bukarest and to South Africa to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden and to South West Africa (now Namibia; on part of the tour accompanied by Dr Bertil Nordenstam),
- (3) in 1964 to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 74-75; accompanied by Wilhelmina, on the tour across the Peloponnesos also by Dr Dimitrios Phitos), and to Edinburgh, one of Rechinger's favourite places, to attend the XI International Botanical Congress,
- (4) in 1965 to Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan (Rechinger No. 395: 325-328; accompanied by Wilhelmina and on most of the tour by Jennifer Lamond, in Pakistan also by Dr Syed Irtifaq Ali and Dr Syed Muhammad Anwar Kazmi),
- (5) in 1966 to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 75-76; accompanied by Wilhelmina), in 1967 again to Iran and Afghanistan (Rechinger No. 395: 328-332; accompanied by Wilhelmina and their children Lilian and Björn; in Afghanistan also by members of the Deutsches Partnerschaftsteam at Kabul University, comprising Dr O Anders, Dr Siegmund - Walter Breckle, Prof Dr Helmut Freitag and Dr Dieter Podlech),
- (7) in 1968 to Spain and Portugal,
- (8) in 1969, 1970, 1971 to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 76-78; accompanied by Wilhelmina, on part of the three tours accompanied by Strid, Niki Goulandris and Elli Stamatiadou),
- (9) in 1971 to Iran (Rechinger No. 395: 332-334; accompanied by Wilhelmina and Lamond, on part of the tour also by Dr Mousa Iranshahr and Dr Fereidoun Terme).

Here, as before, lecture tours and trips to work for *Flora Iranica* in herbaria are not included.

The year 1961 had been important for Karl Heinz and Wilhelmina also in another respect: they moved from their flat in Schwindgasse 7 in Vienna's fourth district to a spacious flat bought from family property in Beckgasse 22 in Hietzing, Vienna's elegant thirteenth district. Situated within walking distance from the garden and park of Schönbrunn Castle it became well known to all collaborators of the *Flora Iranica* project, who were always received in the best spirit of Viennese hospitality. With its fine library, large working desks, good oil-paintings and furniture it echoed Karl Rechinger's private botanical institute in Friedrichstraße 6, supplemented with the memorabilia of a traveller to the Levant and Near East – very nice carpets, good kelims, colourful saddlebags from Afghanistan, and, more personal, the registration number of the Rechingers' first car bought in Beirut. Long dinners including oriental specialities like delicious date pies, stories, impressions, reflections and ideas of a traveller who had seen very much, occasionally chamber music were typical for the cultivated atmosphere of this house.

The concept of a Flora of the Iranian highlands seems to have developed gradually in Rechinger's mind. An early note is found in the letter sent in November 1944 from Oberwart to Bornmüller in Weimar (Fig. 3). This project was to deal with the vascular flora

of a vast and extremely diversified area, i. e. Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan west of the Indus river, the mountainous part of Iraq, the Talish Mountains and the Kopet Dagh, the latter two areas then belonging to the Soviet Union, now Azerbaidjan and Turkmenistan respectively. Rechinger found in 1962 a publisher, the Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt in Graz, specialised in expensive, high quality fascimile editions, courageous enough to embark on such a vast and open-ended enterprise.

Funds to start production were found, both in Austria and abroad, but always remained a problem, and the same applies to grants-in-aid for individual contributors, which mainly came from the Fonds für wissenschaftliche Forschung in Vienna. Rechinger insisted on *Flora Iranica* being tailored as a private undertaking independent from the Natural History Museum. Automatically support from the Ministry of Education had to remain minimal. In order to remain completely independent Rechinger did not raise money in Iran, then a rich country orientated towards the West. When shahbanu Farah Diba received Azizi's Austrian wife Dorothea, several fascicles of *Flora Iranica* were donated to her, but this did not lead to any financial support of the project. Only much later official interest in Iran for Rechinger's work increased.

Right from the beginning the print run was very small, the market limited because of the use of Latin instead of English, and interest restricted to a small number of highly specialised libraries. Due to repeated political turbulences in the Near East sales were always low in this area, which resulted in an exorbitant price for the fascicles. Initially only names, synonyms, keys, lists of specimens studied, and notes were included; at the suggestion of Wendelbo this was later supplemented by descriptions and illustrations, mainly photographs. The publication in fascicles had *Flora of Tropical East Africa* as model. For Rechinger clearly *Flora Iranica* became his favourite child – it dominated his life, led to several further expeditions to the Near East, brought him in contact with many external contributors, and meant for him joy, fulfilment, and a change from the bureaucratic nuisance at the Natural History Museum. In contrast, another wide-ranging plan came to nothing: Rechinger understandably rejected the plan of the Ministry of Education to combine again the Natural History Museum with the museums of ethnology and of folklore. All this resulted in further stormy meetings with Ministerialrat Dr Blaha, but the whole project was not put into effect.

Not unsurprisingly, Rechinger was promoted to wirklicher Hofrat as late as 1969; when the decree signed by Jonas, then President of the Republic, was handed over to him in Palais Starhemberg by Dr Alois Mock, then Minister for Education, he was not alone: his school fellow Auer from Schottengymnasium also received the certificate of appointment.

Having served under four ministers – Drimmel, Dr Theodor Piffel-Pčerevič, Mock and Dr Hertha Firnberg – and met all of them, Rechinger retired by the end of December 1971. Since the Ministry of Education was not satisfied with the way he had run the Natural History Museum, he was neither decorated with an order of the Republic of Austria as his predecessor and successors were, nor was an honorary *biennium* added to his pension, nor did the representative of the Minister of Education take part in the reception given for the outgoing Erster Direktor, essentially mild countermeasures against a man who had only partly done what he was expected to do.

What mattered more to him was the Festschrift published by the Natural History Museum with contributions by many collaborators of the *Flora Iranica* project – among them from the home institution Riedl, and his former collaborators Leute, Petrak, and Dr

Adolf Polatschek. This first Rechinger Festschrift mirrors the far-flung network of the *Flora Iranica* project for which Austria with its politically neutral position between the two blocks was particularly apt. Specialists from the west and east, among the latter Dr Kazimierz Browicz, Dr Anna Chrtková – Žertová and Dr Ivan T Vassilczenko, from the Polish, Czechoslovak and Soviet Academies of Sciences respectively, were good examples.

### The happy years – 1971-1996

On 16 th October 1971 Rechinger had celebrated his 65th birthday, which meant retirement from office, from his position as Erster Director and from that as Director of the Department of Botany. The heavy burden of responsibility was passed on to the younger shoulders of the palaeontologist Dr Friedrich Bachmaier; no more meetings at the Ministry of Education, no more bureaucratic routine. Hard to believe but true, in these happy years the decrease in salary of an Austrian civil servant from active duty to pension was almost negligible.

What followed may be called the happy years, but definitely not retirement: Karl Heinz and Wilhelma continued at their previous pace, working almost daily at their desks in hall 50 of the Natural History Museum. From there Karl Heinz (Fig. 5) could enjoy a panoramic view of Vienna, right in front the Parliament, the Rathaus (Town Hall), and at a distance the Wienerwald; he could listen to classical music, or take a rest in his campbed used in Iran and Afghanistan and then in hall 50, reflecting his travels. But very much work was still ahead – although 89 instalments of *Flora Iranica* had been published before Rechinger's retirement, the treatments of several very major families, like *Compositae*, *Labiatae*, *Scrophulariaceae* and *Umbelliferae*, had not even started.

Even so Rechinger, now always accompanied by Wilhelmina, could not resist travelling. Full of joy and enthusiasm they went

- (1) in 1972 twice to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 78–79, in Chalkidiki accompanied for three days by Greuter, in Macedonia for a few days by Stamatiadou),
- (2) in 1973 again to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 79, on part of the tour accompanied by Nordenstam, later by Goulandrīs and Stamatiadou) returning to Vienna via Ancona, Milan and Geneva,
- (3) in 1974 to Iran (Rechinger No. 395: 334-337), the first time with their own Volvo, on part of the tour accompanied by Dr Reino Alava, Iranshahr and Dr Jany Renz,
- (4) in 1975 again to Iran (Rechinger No. 395: 337-341; on part of the tour accompanied by Iranshahr, Renz and Wendelbo),
- (5) in 1976 to Greece (Rechinger No. 317: 79–80); on part of the tour accompanied by Professor Dr William T Stearn and Stamatiadou),
- (6) in 1977 a last time to Iran (Fig. 6; Rechinger No. 395: 341-346; accompanied on part of the tour by Mostafa Assadi, Iranshahr, Renz and Runemark respectively; an excursion was made with Juliette Contandriopoulos, Favarger and J C Klein) returning to Vienna via Ankara, Bursa, Thessaloniki, Athens, Patras, Ancona and Geneva.

As stressed recently (Vitek 1999), Rechinger thus continued in his old rhythm finding relaxation from dull herbarium work in his travels, and relaxation from his exhausting travels in work done in the herbarium. In a way, all this echoes his earlier annual peregrinations to Bad Aussee.

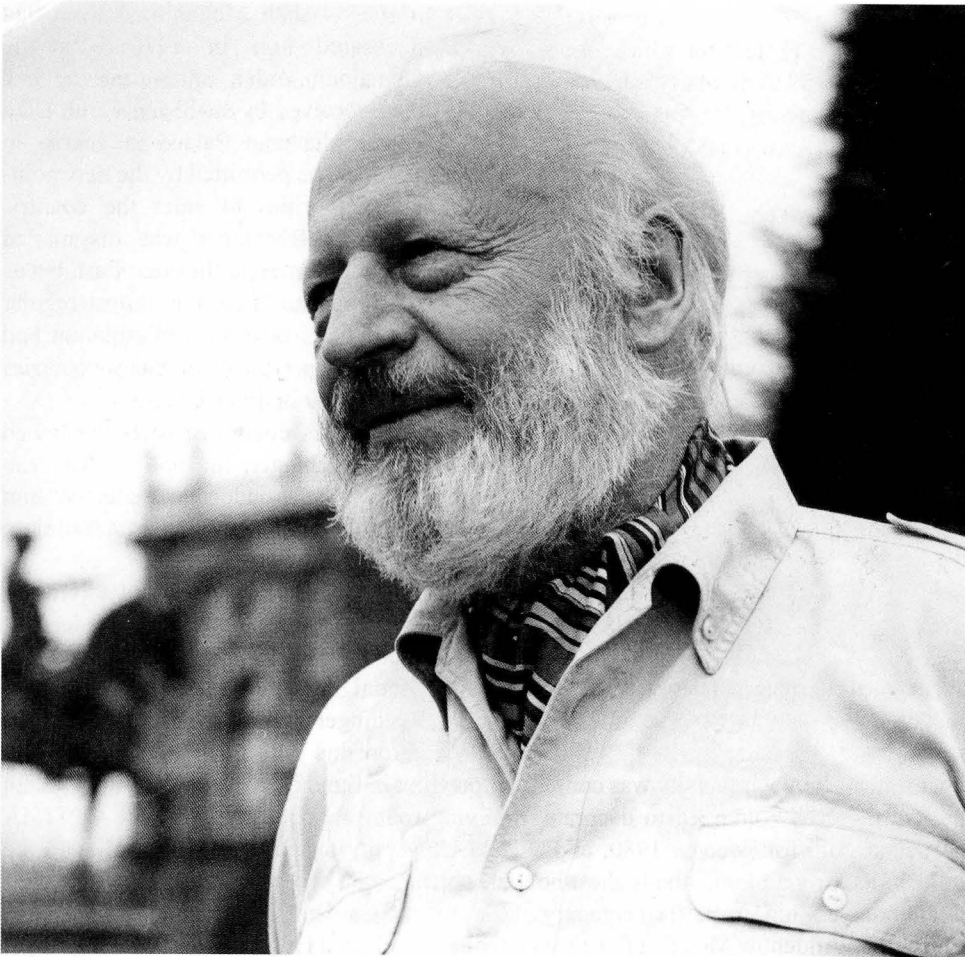


Fig. 5. K. H. Rechinger, in the back the Natural History Museum and a statue of the monument for Maria Theresia. Vienna, c. 1973, photograph. — Private collection, Vienna.

As institutional basis Rechinger continued to use the Natural History Museum, where the collections from the *Flora Iranica* area were kept as a separate collection in hall 50. Several times he visited the Conservatoire Botanique in Geneva, where Boissier's *Flora orientalis* herbarium was consulted more often by Rechinger than by anyone else in these years. These stays were subsidized by the Schweizerische Nationalfonds. In Tehran, the herbarium of the Ariamehr Botanical Garden became Rechinger's second working base, and numerous specimens in this collection were annotated by him during his repeated stays in the capital of the shah's Empire.

The outbreak of the Iranian revolution, the war between Iraq and Iran, the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Army and Rechinger's advanced age did not permit further expeditions to the *Flora Iranica* area; in addition, he was too much a man of the *ancien*





Fig. 6 K. H. Rechinger, Teheran, 1975, photograph.  
— Private collection, Vienna.

*régime* – shah Mohammed Resa had decorated him in 1970 with the Oumajoum order, third class, he had been received by shahbanu Farah Diba in the Niavaran Palace in Tehran in 1975 - to be permitted by the new political authorities to enter the country. Naturally Rechinger was dissatisfied with the turmoil in the Near East, but as wise man he knew the almost regular oscillations between self-isolation and opening up typical for many countries of the Near and Far East.

Honours continued to be bestowed upon Rechinger: in 1966 the Linnean Society of London had elected him member thereby continuing a tradition: Zahlbruckner, director of the Department of Botany prior to Keisler had also been a member of this learned society. In 1968 the Hammer-Purgstall-Medal in gold had been given to Rechinger and in 1976, a few months before his 70th birthday, the honorary

doctorate of Lund University was conferred upon him in Lund cathedral – the laurel wreath he had received continued to decorate his living room until his last day. The OPTIMA Medal in gold followed in 1980, and Vienna University awarded him in 1981 with the golden doctor's diploma, the highest honour which can be conferred to a member of their doctor's collegium. At the Tercentenary of the Botanic Garden Berlin-Dahlem he had been given the Willdenow Medal, a few years later he was elected Honorary fellow of the Royal Society Edinburgh and foreign member of the Slovenska Akademija Znanosti in Umetnosti in Ljubljana.

When relations with his successor as Director of the Department of Botany became less harmonious, the Rechingers preferred to visit the Natural History Museum only at weekends, where they could work in perfect peace and isolation (for a description of this atmosphere see Lack 1997). Informal agreements were made to enable the Rechingers (Fig. 7) to take specimens home to Beckgasse, which was the place where the bulk of the late work for *Flora Iranica* was actually done. The Department of Botany continued, however, to provide the infrastructure of the whole project, like handling the incoming and outgoing loans and paying for the transport as well as having the labels for the 'itineraria iranica' printed. In reciprocity Rechinger donated the first set of all his collections gathered after retirement to the Natural History Museum and sold the rest to other institutions, thereby continuing a tradition started earlier – for good reasons he had felt entitled to do so, since the travel expenses for his journeys had been mostly paid from his own pocket.

Occasionally Rechinger complained about a certain isolation in Vienna – of his four



Fig. 7. K. H. Rechinger wearing the Iranian Homajoum Order at the Schottenball in Vienna, with Wilhelmina on the left, 1981, photograph. — Archives, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem.

pupils only Tuisl lived in Vienna but worked in nature conservation, in which Rechinger was never particularly interested, while the contacts with his successors as Erster Direktor remained formal. Rechinger told the author that he had repeatedly regarded himself as an outsider at the Natural History Museum and isolated, in particular during the years of Michel as Erster Direktor, but also later; the same holds true, maybe even more so, for Vienna University. Maybe it was the kind of isolation described by Grillparzer, Hofrat like Rechinger and one of his favourite poets, when writing his epigram: 'Hier sitzt ich unter Faszikeln dicht, Ihr glaubt – verdrossen und einsam - Und doch vielleicht, das glaubt ihr nicht, Mit den ewigen Göttern gemeinsam' [Here I sit between fascicled tight – You may think me annoyed and lonely – But believe me it's all right: I sit with eternal gods only]. Whereas Grillparzer had referred to the fascicles in the K. K. Hofkammerarchiv, Rechinger referred to the herbarium fascicles at the Natural History Museum, formerly the K. K.

Hofnaturalienkabinett, clearly his second home.

The eightieth birthday was celebrated by another Festschrift and with festivities both at the Institute of Botany of Vienna University and the Natural History Museum, where a special wish of Rechinger was fulfilled – a quartet played the only very infrequently heard string quartet No. 2 by Franz Schmidt in the large cupola hall. There were still new destinations – tours to the Azores in 1978, to Australia in 1982, to Indonesia in 1985, to Cyprus in 1986, to Chile in 1987 (Grau 1997), to Ceylon in 1990 – and old ones like to Scotland and Turkey in 1984, to Kashmir in 1986, to Berlin in 1987 to see the rebuilt Botanical Museum, attend the XIV International Botanical Congress and visit the author of this text, to Spain in 1988, to Pakistan in 1990. Last visits to Edinburgh and Geneva, where he had worked so often in the *boîte*, followed in 1991. Most of these travels yielded additional specimens, which had to be labelled, determined and were added to the herbarium of the Natural History Museum (Vitek 1999). In May 1995 the Rechingers attended their last congress – the symposium ‘Plant Life in Southwest and Central Asia’ in Izmir, where the nestor of botany in the Near East, aged 88, received standing ovations, indeed for everyone present a moving moment. It was on this occasion that Rechinger saw the Mediterranean Sea for the last time.

Tenacity, endurance and patience were characteristic features of Wilhelmina and Karl Heinz. Even late in their life they had a single wish – to finish what they had begun, one of Rechinger’s favourite proverb being from Afghanistan ‘the dogs are barking, but the caravan continues’. In the end, they almost succeeded in completing *Flora Iranica*, clearly a mammoth project. By then Rechinger had become more and more fascinated by Edmond Boissier’s equally monumental *Flora orientalis*: it was the latter’s capacity for synthetic work which fascinated Rechinger, although he also possessed similar power – like Dr Peter Davis, editor of *Flora of Turkey*, simultaneously published with *Flora Iranica*. It was also Boissier’s position as private scholar of independent means with no obligations whatsoever, in particular towards the public, which even earlier had made him a model for Rechinger.

There was still the routine work now so well known to both Rechingers, who lived and worked together like the legendary Philemon and Baucis: exchanging letters with contributors, preparing out-going loans, labelling, annotating and inserting specimens, editing manuscripts, writing up indices, correcting proofs, hosting guests. The author will not forget the summer days spent together in Beckgasse 22 finishing the account of *Dipsacaceae* in 1989: music, nice food and conversation created a highly stimulating atmosphere for work. What in many less ambitious flora projects is managed by a well-staffed secretariat, was done by Wilhelmina, and her name should have been given on all title pages of *Flora Iranica*. Rechinger’s output in his ninth decade remained breathtaking – numerous generic accounts in *Umbelliferae*, in the *Flora Iranica* area a particularly difficult group, *Caryophyllaceae*, *Compositae* and *Ranunculaceae* are from his pen. Very appropriately for a man of his productivity one of Rechinger’s latest papers was a progress report on his second magnum opus presented at the Plant Life in South Asia Symposium at Karachi University in 1990.

But there were also quiet hours for Rechinger: reading in his deckchair (Fig. 8) on the small green strip in front of Beckgasse 22, a street planted with horse chestnuts, a tree brought from Istanbul to Vienna and cultivated there by Carolus Clusius as early as 1576; listening to string quarters by Beethoven or playing polyphonic music on the piano, which in his own words brought him satisfaction and pleasure similar to revising the complex

genus *Cousinia* (Leute 1997); looking at his collection of postage stamps; taking a nap on the sofa in his library; or spending a few sunny autumn days in Kapfenstein, a small village in eastern Styria. There the Rechingers enjoyed the local wine and made short outings in the peaceful, hilly countryside. The wanderer was at home.

The last visits to his beloved museum took place in 1993, more than eighty years after he had first seen Emperor Franz Joseph I's palace of science, appropriately called recently 'Das Haus der Wunder' [the house of wonders]. Then Rechinger's interest in the affairs of the Natural History Museum faded, thanks to him now the best place in the world to study the flora of Iran and Afghanistan, and indispensable for every student of the Greek flora.

#### The late years – 1996-1998

Old age started with Rechinger's ninetieth birthday, celebrated by the scientific community with another voluminous Festschrift. Since he was by now stone deaf, exchanging views with Rechinger was possible only in writing, to which he usually answered shouting in a painfully sharp, loud voice. Otherwise he remained totally clear and was able to write lengthy dedications on the titlepage of the Festschrift in his characteristic handwriting.

Physically, Rechinger now became more and more similar to the aged Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, second director of the Royal Botanic Garden at Kew, a halo of white hair being the most striking sign of old age. Wilhelmina continued to visit the Natural History Museum and maintained contact with the *Flora Iranica* herbarium, which had been incorporated into the main collection starting from about 1993. Repeatedly he had himself driven by Wilhelmina in their Mercedes to some of his favourite spots in the Wienerwald and, very appropriate for a man with so many easterly associations, to the Danube near Hainburg. Rechinger did not complain about the infirmities of old age, except for the fact, that he was no more able to listen to music.

Interest in *Flora Iranica* continued until late. Although Rechinger had lost the ability of synthetic work, like writing keys or long texts, he continued to write and rewrite miscellaneous notes on *Rumex* and on the plant geography of the Iranian highlands intended by him as *Ausleitung* [epilogue, a play of words in German] for *Flora Iranica*, since had not written an *Einleitung* [introduction] to this important Flora. In his mind, Rechinger often seemed to return to the Near East, which he knew so well – he had travel on the back of

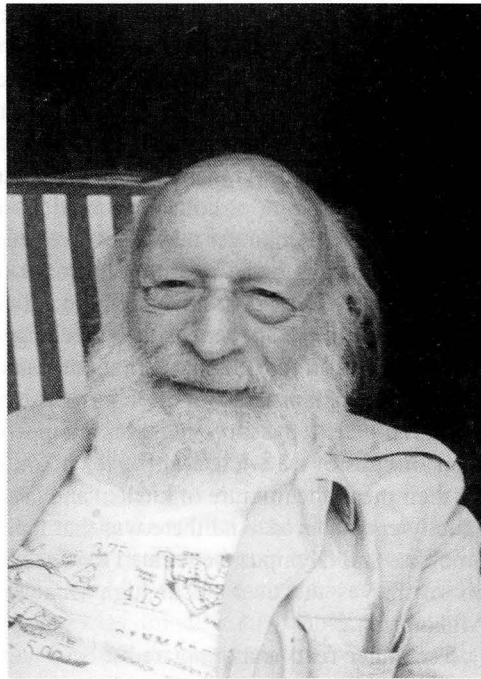


Fig. 8. K. H. Rechinger relaxing in a deckchair, Vienna, 1996, photograph. — Private collection, Vienna.

mules in 1937 and of camels forty years later, used a variety of vehicles, the extremes being the comfortable Landrover of the Friends of the Natural History Museum and Gaubas's ruinous car, which contained a large clattering box containing all the parts fallen off en route. Walking up and down the railway platform accompanied by an armed Soviet guard when in transit to Iran in 1937 was another memorable story, just like the first tour to the wilderness of Afghanistan in 1962, the crystal-clear nights full of stars in the dry deserts of inner Iran, or collecting in tribal territory in Pakistan accompanied by no less than 25 militia. Rechinger may also have reflected the numerous taxa described by him as new to science and the enormous amount of material collected: in fact only very few species of the Greek flora have not been collected by him, in the *Flora Iranica* area no-one has collected more specimens than Rechinger did. In addition, he had been the very first plant collector in the remoter corners of Iran and Afghanistan, e. g. in the province Ghorat in western Afghanistan. But there were also the less romantic memories of Levantine and oriental travels – dysentery, malaria, red tape in Kabul and Tehran with its endless processions of cups of tea while waiting for permits, the armies of bedbugs waiting every night for their meal, the mixture of kitchen and lavatory smell, opium smoke and insecticide frequently encountered. And there was that feeling of triumph having climbed Kajmakčalan, Smolikas and Olympus, penetrated roadless into unknown Kuh-i Hisar or having seen with his own eyes the over 50 m high Buddha statues carved in the rocks in Bamian in Afghanistan.

Rechinger read and annotated a draft version of the author's *Flora Graeca Story* in 1998, aged 91, and amazed Iranshahr, his last visitor from Iran, by correctly naming an odd *Cousinia* only a few months before his death. The publication of the *Flora Iranica* account dealing with the *Cyperaceae* by Professor Dr Ilkka Kukkonen (Fig. 9) was probably one of Rechinger's last joys. It was in English and had been edited by Hedge, his travel companion in Afghanistan 34 years ago. A single family, i. e. *Rubiaceae*, a single sub-family, i. e. *Antirrhineae*, and a single, albeit very large genus, i. e. *Astragalus*, were left unpublished, an extremely remarkable achievement for such a vast area rich in species (Podlech 1997): a territory of just under three million square kilometres and a vascular flora totalling slightly more than 10000 species had been covered, more species than in *Flora of Turkey*, slightly less than in *Flora Europaea*.

After several turbulent weeks of recurrent instability Karl Heinz Rechinger died on 30 December 1998 in a Vienna hospital. In accordance with his intentions he was buried in the family's tomb in Vienna's famous Zentralfriedhof, where he is very near to his father, who had been clearly the main model to follow, and near to Richard Wettstein, his professor at Vienna University.

As a man Rechinger was clearly one of those increasingly rare individuals who have an extremely broad spectrum of interests and knowledge. He was very well read, an excellent and charming host, a man of culture, wisdom, and humour, generous and tactful. Judging from the few acoustic records available, his melodious voice was very similar to that of the aged Emperor Franz Joseph I., who had died in 1916 in Schönbrunn Castle, so near to Beckgasse 22, and whom he had seen on his sixth birthday in 1913 at a parade on the Kolowratring [now Kärtnering] in Vienna. Both used the typical, but now increasingly rare 'Schönbrunner Deutsch' of the upper echelons of Vienna society, intermixed with many somewhat old-fashioned expressions in French.



# Cyperaceae

auctore I. KUKKONEN, Helsinki

Lfg. No. 173/März 1998  
Cont.



## FLORA DES IRANISCHEN HOCHLANDES UND DER UMRAHMENDEN GEBIRGE

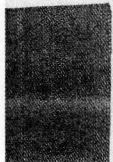
PERSIEN, AFGHANISTAN, TEILE VON WEST-PAKISTAN,  
NORD-IRAQ, AZERBAIDJAN, TURKMENISTAN

von

Univ.-Prof. Dr.

KARL HEINZ RECHINGER

Erster Direktor des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien (emeritus)



AKADEMISCHE DRUCK- u. VERLAGSANSTALT  
GRAZ - AUSTRIA

Fig. 9. Cover of *Flora iranica*, part 173, Graz, 1998, photocopy. — Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Bibliothek.

Rechinger was not a good public speaker, disliked congresses which he called 'foam and bubbles', although he attended many, had no sympathy for botanical politics and nomenclatural sophistry. He was highly critical about speculations in plant systematics, in particular evolutionary lines and strategies, and concentrated instead on species taxonomy. Rechinger's geographic focus was clearly circumscribed resulting in rather limited knowledge of the tropical flora. His world was the written and printed word, the new argument carefully brought forward or the old arguments critically reassessed. Rechinger's knowledge of the flora and vegetation of the Balkan Peninsula and the Near East was surpassed by no-one, and the same holds true for his knowledge of the pertinent literature. He was almost obsessed by plant collecting, in particular in dry climates, but showed no interest in cultivating plants in a garden or gardens in general. Though at first glance modest, Rechinger was fully aware of his own worth and proud of his extraordinary achievements. He did not attempt to hide his superiority, both intellectually and in financial matters; having two busts of himself in his flat he was also not free from vanity. The complex relations with his superiors – notably Michel, Strouhal and, in particular, Blaha of the Ministry of Education – are difficult to interpret without access to his personal files. Nothing is known about his relations with his equals, in the last period of his public life the directors of the federal museums of the Republic of Austria, earlier the directors of the other departments of the Natural History Museum. As Erster Direktor Rechinger was highly respected, more as the patriarch of the institution than as organiser, manager or fund-riser. As supervisor of the author's thesis Rechinger was always prepared to discuss problems, to read and annotate draft versions of manuscripts, to give an opinion on a handwriting or a variation pattern, and the same holds true for the contributors to *Flora Iranica*. Sharing his rich botanical knowledge and long experience in a generous way with the interested and qualified was a characteristic trait of this Grand Old Man. This liberal attitude always helped to push his projects forward. Many more facets of his personality observed from different angles are described in the miscellany of reminiscences published at the beginning of the Festschrift celebrating Rechinger's ninetieth anniversary (in particular Grau 1997, Lamond 1997, Schiman-Czeika 1997, Spitzenberger 1997).

All in all Rechinger had been a lucky man: apart from tuberculosis as a boy, he was never seriously ill; he was born into comfortable circumstances, could always rely on family property, which added substantially to his salary and later his pension as a high ranking civil servant and made his long and expensive expeditions possible; although he had started *Flora Iranica* late, aged 57, he almost saw its completion; he constantly had the full support of his first and later of his second wife and enjoyed a happy marriage with his 'Wilhelminchen'; his two children, Dr. Lilian Rechinger (born in 1952) and Dr. Björn Rechinger (born in 1962), were an enrichment of their parents' life. Karl Heinz Rechinger is survived by his two wives Frida and Wilhelmina and his two children.

## Epilogue

Rechinger's life spans almost the whole twentieth century. He saw the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the rise of the Soviet Union and of Nazi Germany and the fall of both, and when he died his native Austria had entered the European Union. Indeed, it is

difficult to imagine this long sequence of decades: Rechinger had met as a boy the famous lichenologist Zahlbruckner, attended the V International Congress in Amsterdam in 1935, visited Teheran as an idyllic oriental town under Resa Schah just after the town walls had been pulled down, now a metropolis of more than seven million inhabitants, and seen Berlin in flames in 1945. On the Heldenplatz he saw the flags of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, those of the first Republic of Austria, of Nazi Germany, of the Soviet Union, later also of the other three allies, and finally of the Second Republic of Austria.

What was remarkable about him? The continuity in time he represented, in particular in the study of the flora and vegetation of the Levant and the Near East based in Vienna. All this had started with the acquisition by the Imperial Library of the Codex Vindobonensis, an early byzantine herbal, in the late sixteenth century. It was followed by the essential part played by Ferdinand Bauer in John Sibthorp's *Flora Graeca* project (Lack 1998), Kotschy's indefatigable collecting tours in the Ottoman Empire and Persia and Haláschy's synthetic *Conspectus Florae Graecae*. The crown of Vienna's tradition in the botanical exploration of the Levant and the Near East, however, belongs to Rechinger.

His scientific output was vast (see Appendix 1), similar in breadth and quality to a single scientist at the Natural History Museum in Vienna – the ichthyologist Dr Franz Steindachner, Intendant of the K. K. Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum and thus a predecessor of Rechinger. The well-known oil portrait of Steindachner by Josef Engelhart, the grandfather of Azizi's wife, and that of Rechinger now hang in the spacious office of the Erster Direktor. Rechinger's life-long interest in the diversity of plant life is equally remarkable, his love for botany, even in the form of miserable herbarium specimens. For each of them he had the highest respect, knowing so well how much effort had often been necessary to find, dry, transport, label and determine the plant. He always possessed fantasy enough to imagine the living plant, an important qualification for every herbarium taxonomist. In addition, Rechinger combined two completely different qualifications: analytical ones as evident in the detailed descriptions of numerous new taxa, and synthetic ones as evident in his revisions, flora treatments or his *Phytogeographia Aegaea*. Whereas his father had left behind a rather small oeuvre, Karl Heinz did not suffer from horror publicandi – his bibliography (see Appendix 1) is very long and rich comprising a number of very substantial texts. Karl Heinz also possessed the strength to edit several major projects and helped to complete others (see Appendix 2). In short, he was one of the increasingly rare individuals in science, whose fame resulted almost exclusively from his publications – not from funds raised, not from organisations founded or chaired, not from congresses organised, not from publicity gained in the media.

What was most remarkable about Rechinger? A general culture and knowledge equal to very few. His was a very rich and most remarkable life, reaching the utmost end of what nature has according to man. Not only botany and botanists will miss Karl Heinz Rechinger.

## Note

The tapes recording the interviews with Rechinger, some of poor quality, and copies of his unpublished autobiographical notes have been deposited in the archives of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum Berlin-Dahlem.

### Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to W. Rechinger (Vienna) for permitting the reproduction of the photographs, for valuable information and for allowing the use of a very preliminary draft of K. H. Rechinger's bibliography. Dr. D. Azizi (Vienna) kindly commented on her contacts with K. H. and F. Rechinger. The Herbarium Haussknecht, Jena agreed to the reproduction of a letter kept in its archive. R. K. Brummitt (Kew), Prof. Dr. W. Greuter, P. Hein, Dr. N. Kilian, Dr. T. Raus, Dr. R. Vogt (all Berlin) kindly read earlier versions of this text.

### Appendix 1 – Works by K. H. Rechinger

Works by Rechinger are arranged in chronological order by year as indicated on the titlepage; no attempt for further precision in chronology has been made.

Unless otherwise indicated all works listed are kept in the Library of the Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem. With the exception of those marked with an asterisk (\*) they have been examined by the author.

Flora Iranica stands for Rechinger, K. H. (ed.), Flora Iranica, Graz.

1. – (1923) Beitrag zur Pilzflora des südlichen Siebenbürgen. - Z. Pilzkunde 2: 240.
2. – (1929) Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Flora der ägäischen Inseln und Ost-Griechenlands — Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien 43: 269-340.
3. – (1929) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum*. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 26: 177.
4. – (1929) Eine neue hybride *Saxifraga* aus den Westkarpathen. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 26: 233.
5. – (1930) Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Pilz-Flora von Aussee in Steiermark. I. *Basidiomycetes*. — Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien 44: 279-317.
6. – (1930) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum* 2. Eine verkannte und in Vergessenheit geratene asiatische Art: *R. dictyocarpus* Boiss. et Buhse.— Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 27: 385-391.
7. – (1931) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum*. III. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 29: 246-248.
8. – (1932) Vorarbeiten zu einer Monographie der Gattung *Rumex* I. — Beih. Bot. Centralbl. 49, Abt. 2: 1-132.
9. – (1932) Einige neue balkanische Pflanzen. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 31: 158-160.
10. – (1932/33) Einleitung, p.77-78. — In: Servít, M., Bearbeitung der von K. H. Rechinger (fil.) im Jahre 1927 auf den Ägäischen Inseln gesammelten Flechten. — Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien 46: 77-90.
11. – (1933) Vorarbeiten zu einer Monographie der Gattung *Rumex* II.— Die Arten der Subsektion *Patientiae*. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 31: 225-283.
12. – & Scheffer, J. (1933) Zur Kenntnis der Flora und Vegetation der Liptauer Alpen (Zentralkarpathen). — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 31: 284-312, 337-357.
13. – (1933) Die süd- und zentral-amerikanischen Arten der Gattung *Rumex*. Vorarbeiten zu einer Monographie der Gattung *Rumex* III. - Ark. Bot. 26(2): 1-58. — Note: Independent pagination.
14. – (1933) Ergebnisse einer botanischen Reise nach Bulgarien. — Magyar Bot. Lapok 32: 5-58.
15. – (1933) Neue Pflanzen aus dem Alibotusch-Gebirge (Bulg. NO-Mazedonien). — Magyar Bot. Lapok 32: 152-153.
16. – (1933) Vegetationsskizzen aus Bulgarien. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 33: 257-272.
17. – (1933) Floristisches aus der Umgebung des Neusiedler Sees. — Verh. Heil- Naturwiss. Vereins Bratislava 1933: 51-83.
18. – (1934) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum* IV. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. 33: 353-363.
19. – (1934) Ein neuer *Rumex* aus den Nordalbanischen Alpen. — Magyar Bot. Lapok 33: 5-7.
20. – (1934) Dreizehn neue Pflanzenarten aus Griechenland. — Magyar Bot. Lapok 33: 8-22.
21. – (1934) Zur Kenntnis der Flora der Halbinsel Pelješac (Sabbioncello) und einiger Inseln des jugoslawischen Adriagebietes (Dalmatien). — Magyar Bot. Lapok 33: 24-42.

22. – (1935) Die australischen und neuseeländischen Arten der Gattung *Rumex*. Vorarbeiten zu einer Monographie der Gattung *Rumex*, IV. — Österr. Bot. Z. **84**: 31-52.
23. Vierhapper, F. & Rechinger, K. H. 1935. Bearbeitung der von Ignaz Dörfler im Jahre 1904 auf Kreta gesammelten Blüten- und Farnpflanzen. — Österr. Bot. Z. **84**: 123-157, 161-197.
24. Rechinger, K. H. 1935 Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum*. V. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **38**: 49-55.
25. – (1935) Ergebnisse einer botanischen Reise in den Bertiscus (Nordalbanische Alpen). — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **38**: 137-152, 319-389.
- \*26. – (1935) Reiseskizzen aus dem albanisch-montenegrinischen Grenzgebiet. — Mitt. Geogr. Ges. Wien **78**: 147-157. — Copy in Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.
27. – (1936) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum*. VI. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **39**: 169-173.
28. – (1936) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* Sekt. *Lapathum*. VII. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **40**: 294-301.
29. – (1936) Ergebnisse einer botanischen Sommerreise nach dem Ägäischen Archipel und Ostgriechenland. — Beih. Bot. Centralbl. **54 B**: 577-688.
30. – (1936) Neue Pflanzen aus der Aegaeis. - Österr. Bot. Z. **85**: 56-64.
31. – (1936) Einige neue Pflanzen aus der südöstlichen Aegaeis. — Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien **47**: 147-152.
32. – (1936) Sull' indigenato del "*Rumex Patientia*" L. in Italia. — Arch. Bot. (Forli) **12**: 371-372.
33. – (1936) Zur Kenntnis der Flora der Sanntaler Alpen. — Verh. Zool.-Bot. Ges. Wien **85**: 53-59.
34. – (1937) The North American Species of *Rumex*. — Publ. Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Bot. Ser. **17**: 1-151.
35. – (1937) *Rumex* in J. F. Macbride, Flora of Peru, Part 2, No. 2. — Field Mus. Nat. Hist., Bot. Ser. **13** (Publ. 379): 445-449.
36. – (1937) Revision des Formenkreises der *Stachys cretica*. — Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien **48**: 167-178.
37. – (1938) Enumeratio florae Constantinopolitanae. Aufzählung der nach dem Erscheinen von Boissiers Flora orientalis aus der Umgebung von Konstantinopel bekannt gewordenen Farn- und Blütenpflanzen. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. Beih. **98**: 1-73.
38. – (1938) Pflanzenbilder aus den Ostalpen nach Aquarellen von Ferdinand Götting. - Wien; ed. 2, Wien (1947). — Note: First edition not seen, second edition kept in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna.
39. – (1938) Der Formenkreis der *Inula candida* und seine Verbreitung. — Österr. Bot. Z. **87**: 81-100.
40. – (1938) Plantae novae Aegaeae. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **43**: 144-151.
41. Ade, A. & Rechinger, K. H. (1938) Samothrake. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. Beih. **100**: 106-146.
42. Rechinger, K. H. (1938) Vegetationsbilder aus dem Bertiscus (Nordalbanische Alpen) (= Walter, H. (ed.), Vegetationsbilder, 25. Reihe, Heft 4, Tafel 19-24). — Jena.
- \*43 – (1938) Die in Uruguay und angrenzenden Gebieten vorkommenden Arten der Gattung *Rumex*. - Revista Sudamer. Bot. **5**: 153-156. — Copy in Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.
44. – (1938) Salicologische Fragmente 1-4. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **45**: 87-94.
45. – (1938) *Majoranamaracus Zernyi* (*Amaracus libanoticus* (Boiss.) Briq. x *Majorana syriaca* (L.) Kostel. nov. hybr.). — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **45**: 95.
46. – (1939) Plantae novae Aegaeae II. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **47**: 49-51.
47. – (1939) Versuch einer natürlichen Gliederung des Formenkreises von *Rumex bucephalophorus* L. (Vorarbeiten zu einer Monographie der Gattung *Rumex* VI.) - Bot. Not. 1939: 485-504.
48. – (1939) Zur Flora von Ostmazedonien und Westthrazien. - Bot. Jahrb. Syst. **69**: 419-552.
49. – (1939) *Tunica cypria* Rech., nov. spec. — Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **47**: 163-164.
50. – (1939) Zur Flora von Albanien und Mazedonien. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **47**: 165-179.
51. – (1939) Der Formenkreis der *Inula candida* und seine Verbreitung. Nachtrag. - Österr. Bot. Z. **88**: 228-229.
52. – (1939) Zur Flora von Armenien und Kurdistan. - Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien **49**: 262-281.
53. – (1939) Vegetationsbilder aus dem nördlichen Iran (= Walter, H. (ed.), Vegetationsbilder, 25. Reihe, Heft 5, Tafel 25-50). — Jena.
54. – (1940) Vorwort, p. 409-413. — In: Rechinger, K. H., Ergebnisse einer botanischen Reise nach dem Iran, 1937, I. - Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien **50**: 409-536.
55. – (1940) Kritische Revision von *Phlomis* Sekt. *Gymnophlomis* Benth. - Österr. Bot. Z. **89**: 257-299.
56. – (1940) Plantae novae iranicae I. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **48**: 33-48.
57. – (1940) Plantae novae iranicae.II. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **48**: 121-167.
58. – (1940) Beiträge zur Kenntnis von *Rumex* VIII. Kritische Bemerkungen zu einigen russischen *Rumex*-



- Arten. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **49**: 1-4.
59. – (1941) Ergebnisse einer botanischen Reise nach dem Iran, 1937. II. Teil - Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien **51**: 374-428.
60. – (1941) Monographische Studie über *Teucrium* Sect. *Chamaedrys*. - Bot. Arch. **42**: 335-420.
61. – (1941) Plantae novae iranicae (et regionum adjacentium). III. - Repert. Spec. Nov. Regni Veg. **50**: 255-262.
62. – (1941) *Scutellaria* Sect. *Vulgares* Subsect. *Peregrinae* im Mittelmeergebiet und Orient. - Bot. Arch. **43**: 1-70.
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 Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh 89 B (1986) – dedicated to K. H. Rechinger  
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#### Appendix 6 – Eponymia Rechingeriana

This appendix lists names of plant and animal species and genera dedicated to members of the Rechinger family. It is restricted to basionyms; no attempt is made to correct orthography or exclude names formed in disagreement with the Botanical and Zoological Codes of Nomenclature.

It is notable that vascular plants from all five continents have received names commemorating K. H. Rechinger. For plant names see 1 – 10, for animal names 11.

##### 1. Names of plant genera dedicated to K. H. Rechinger

*Rechingerella* J. Fröhlich (Musci)  
*Rechingeria* Servit (Lichenes)  
*Rechingeriella* Petr. (Fungi)

##### 2. Names of plant species dedicated to K. H. Rechinger

<i>Acantholimon rechingeri</i> Freitag	<i>Eremus rechingeri</i> Wendelbo
<i>Aconogonon rechingeri</i> S. P. Hong	<i>Erinacella rechingeri</i> Dostál
<i>Agropyron rechingeri</i> Runemark	<i>Eryngium rechingeri</i> Tamamsch. & Pimenov
<i>Ajuga rechingeri</i> Bilik	<i>Erysimum rechingeri</i> Jáv.
<i>Alchemilla rechingeri</i> Rothm.	<i>Euphorbia rechingeri</i> Greuter
<i>Allium caroli-henrici</i> Wendelbo	<i>Ferula rechingeri</i> D. F. Chamb.
<i>A. rechingeri</i> Wendelbo	<i>Festuca rechingeri</i> Alekssev
<i>Alyssum rechingeri</i> Nyár.	<i>F. rechingeri</i> Markgr.-Dann.
<i>Anchusa rechingeri</i> Riedl	<i>Gongylotaxis rechingeri</i> Pimenov & Kljuykov
<i>Androcymbium rechingeri</i> Greuter	<i>Habenaria rechingeri</i> Renz
<i>Anthochlamys rechingeri</i> Aellen	<i>Haplophyllum rechingeri</i> C. C. Towns.
<i>Aristolochia rechingeriana</i> Kit Tan & Sorger	<i>Heracleum rechingeri</i> Manden.
<i>Arnebia rechingeri</i> Riedl	<i>Heliotropium rechingeri</i> Riedl
<i>Asperula rechingeri</i> Ehrend. & Schönb.-Tem.	<i>Hesperis rechingeri</i> F. Dvůrák
<i>Astragalus caroli-henrici</i> Deml	<i>Juncus rechingeri</i> Snogerup
<i>A. rechingeri</i> Širj.	<i>Knautia caroli-rechingeri</i> Micevski
<i>Bromus caroli-henrici</i> Greuter	<i>Knautia rechingeri</i> A. T. Szabó
<i>B. rechingeri</i> Melderis	<i>Lappula rechingeri</i> Riedl
<i>B. regni</i> H. Scholz	<i>Laser rechingeri</i> Akhani
<i>Calamintha caroli-henricana</i> Kit Tan & Sorger	<i>Ligusticopsis rechingerana</i> Leute
<i>Campanula rechingeri</i> Phitos	<i>Limoniastrum rechingeri</i> J. R. Edm.
<i>Carduus rechingerianus</i> Kazmi	<i>Lotus rechingeri</i> Chrtková
<i>Carthamus rechingeri</i> P. H. Davis	<i>Melitella rechingeri</i> Zoffran
<i>Centaurea caroli-henrici</i> Gabrieljan & Dittrich	<i>Nepeta rechingeri</i> Hedge
<i>C. rechingeri</i> Phitos	<i>Onosma rechingeri</i> Riedl
<i>Cephalorrhynchus rechingeranus</i> Tuisl	<i>Orobanche rechingeri</i> Gilli
<i>Cerasus rechingeri</i> Browicz	<i>Oryzopsis rechingeri</i> Bor
<i>Cicer rechingeri</i> Podlech	<i>Othonna rechingeri</i> B. Nord.
<i>Cotoneaster rechingeri</i> G. Klotz	<i>Oxytropis rechingeri</i> Vassilcz.
<i>Daphne rechingeri</i> Wendelbo	<i>Papaver rechingeri</i> Kadereit
<i>Drosera rechingeri</i> Strid	<i>Parietaria rechingeri</i> Chrtek
<i>Elymus rechingeri</i> Runemark	<i>Paronychia rechingeri</i> Chaudhri
<i>Epilobium rechingeri</i> P. H. Raven	<i>Pedicularis rechingeri</i> Wendelbo
<i>Epipactis rechingeri</i> Renz	<i>Pelargonium caroli-henrici</i> B. Nord.

<i>Peucedanum rechingeri</i> Leute	<i>Silene rechingeri</i> Bocquet
<i>Phagnalon rechingeri</i> Lack & Qaiser	<i>Stipa rechingeri</i> Martinovsk'
<i>Phlomis x rechingeri</i> Hub.- Mor.	<i>Taraxacum rechingeri</i> Soest
<i>Quercus x rechingeri</i> O. Schwarz	<i>Tephrosia rechingeri</i> Ali
<i>Rosa rechingeri</i> Klášť.	<i>Thlaspiceras rechingeri</i> F. K. Mey.
<i>Rosularia rechingeri</i> C.-A. Jansson	<i>Thymus rechingeri</i> Hartvig
<i>Rubia rechingeri</i> Ehrend.	<i>Th. x rechingeri</i> Ronniger
<i>Rumex rechingerianus</i> Losinsk.	<i>Tragopogon rechingeri</i> Ownbey
<i>Salvia rechingeri</i> Hedge	<i>Trifolium rechingeri</i> Rothm.
<i>Satureja rechingeri</i> Jamzad	<i>Trigonella rechingeri</i> Širj.
<i>Schoenoplectus rechingeri</i> Kukkonen	<i>T. rechingeri</i> Vasilcz.
<i>Scleorhachis rechingeri</i> Iranshahr	<i>Trisetum rechingeri</i> Chrték
<i>Scrophularia rechingeri</i> Grau	<i>Veronica rechingeri</i> M. A. Fisch.
<i>Sedum caroli-henrici</i> Kit Tan	<i>Vicia rechingeri</i> Chrtková
<i>Silene caroli-henrici</i> Melzh.	

## 3. Names of plant species dedicated to K. H. and F. Rechinger

*Cousinia rechingerorum* Bornm.  
*Hieracium rechingeriorum* Zahn  
*Rubus rechingerorum* J. Scheff.

## 4. Names of plant species dedicated to K. H. and W. Rechinger

*Delphinium rechingerorum* Iranshahr  
*Kandaharia rechingerorum* R. Alava  
*Onobrychis rechingerorum* Wendelbo

## 5. Name of plant species dedicated to K. H. Rechinger and C. H. Schultz Bipontinus

*Picris carolorum-henricorum* Lack

## 6. Names of plant species dedicated to F. Rechinger

*Astragalus fridae* Rech. f.  
*Cousinia rechingerae* Bornm.  
*Geum x fridae* Rech. f.  
*Verbascum x fridae* Murb.

## 7. Names of plant species dedicated to W. Rechinger

*Acantholimon wilhelminae* Rech. f. & Schiman-Czeika  
*Alcea wilhelminae* I. Riedl  
*Astragalus wilhelminae* I. Deml  
*Cousinia wilhelminae* Rech. f.  
*Delphinium wilhelminae* Iranshahr  
*Gypsophila wilhelminae* Rech. f.

## 8. Names of plant species dedicated to K. Rechinger

<i>Alpinia rechingeri</i> Gagnep.	<i>Euphrasia rechingeri</i> Wettst.
<i>Areca rechingeriana</i> Becc.	<i>Galeopsis rechingeri</i> Sennen
<i>Balaka rechingeriana</i> Burret	<i>Guillainia rechingeri</i> Gagnep.
<i>Berberis rechingeri</i> C. K. Schneider	<i>Laportea rechingeri</i> H. Winkl.
<i>Carduus rechingeri</i> Hayek	<i>Lycianthes rechingeri</i> Bitter
<i>Carex rechingeri</i> Palla	<i>Mariscus rechingeri</i> Palla
<i>Celsia rechingeri</i> Murb.	<i>Masdevallia rechingeriana</i> Kraenzl.

*Melothria rechingeri* Cogn.  
*Oncidium rechingerianum* Kraenzl.  
*Ophrys rechingeri* Soó  
*Pandanus rechingerii* Martelli  
*Petasites rechingeri* Hayek  
*Piper rechingeri* C. DC.

*Primula rechingeri* Derganc  
*Schomburgkia rechingerana* H. G. Jones  
*Solanum rechingeri* Witasek  
*Syzygium rechingeri* Merr. & L. M. Perry  
*Tylophora rechingeri* Schlechter  
*Wedelia rechingeriana* Muschl.

9. Names of plant species dedicated to K. and L. Rechinger

*Dendrobium rechingerorum* Schlechter

10. Names of plant species dedicated to L. Rechinger

*Aglaiia rechingeriae* C. DC.  
*Peperomia rechingeriae* C. DC.

11. Names of animal species dedicated to K. H. Rechinger (vertebrates only)

*Eirenis rechingeri* Eiselt  
*Elaphe rechingeri* Werner  
*Lacerta erhardii rechingeri* Wettstein

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