

Homage to Ferenc Schweitzer on his 70th birthday



Professor SCHWEITZER, who has been working in the Geographical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (GRI HAS) for 45 years, started his academic career in the institution then led by MÁRTON PÉCSI. In the field of physical geography he was mainly influenced by the heritage of LAJOS LÓCZY and JENŐ CHOLNOKY. At the same time he was supported by and has maintained close contacts with the senior contemporary representatives of geomorphology (ZOLTÁN BORSY, ZOLTÁN PINCZÉS), karst morphology (LÁSZLÓ JAKUCS), and of related sciences such as paleontology (MIKLÓS KRETZOI, DÉNES JÁNOSSY), archeology (LÁSZLÓ VÉRTES, MIKLÓS GÁBORI), geology (GYÖRGY WEIN), hydrogeology (MIHÁLY ERDÉLYI), and hydrology (LÁSZLÓ ALFÖLDI).

Having joined the team led by professor PÉCSI, F. SCHWEITZER became immediately involved in chronostratigraphical studies on Quaternary deposits, mainly on loess and loess-like sediments. Broad orientation, capability and diligence in data collection and sampling coupled with sharp-sightedness in field work, observations and mapping have been his strong points from the very beginning. Terrace morphological investigations with a special reference to the position of travertine horizons formed the topic of his Candidate of Sciences (CSc) thesis defended in 1983. These and subsequent fundamental studies have greatly contributed to the understanding of the geomorphic evolution in the Carpathian Basin during late Cenozoic and of the interpretation of the Plio-Pleistocene boundary; SCHWEITZER's DSc thesis (1993) was mainly based on them. More recently he became interested in climate and environmental cycles in the region during the past 12–10 million years starting with the subarid phase of late Miocene, with stages of desertification, and ice ages during the Pleistocene. SCHWEITZER's interest is not restricted to Planet Earth; the Mars Mission inspired his recent essay "Ventifacts on Mars".

Along with his involvement in classical problems of morphology, SCHWEITZER was active in applied research in physical geography. These activities started back to the 1970s with engineering geomorphological survey in general and mapping of surfaces affected by mass movements (collapses, slumps in loess and other landslides) in particular. They were epitomized in expertises and series of large-scale maps, and led eventually to the methodological issues of the morphological approach to environmental impact analysis of large projects such as the Paks Nuclear Power Plant (e.g. transit routes of migration of radionuclides emitted). Professor SCHWEITZER has acted as member of the expert committees on the safe disposal of radioactive wastes of PNPP and on the extension of the operation of the power station. His interest in fluvial geomorphology led him to important conclusions about natural levee formation and floodplain sedimentation and to practical aspects of these processes in flood control on the Tisza river where he is also among the advisors.



Two former PhD students GÁBOR VARGA and GIZELLA BÁTORI with the master



Congratulations by SZABOLCS ÁKOS FÁBIÁN, accompanied with profs JÓZSEF TÓTH and ZOLTÁN DÖVÉNYI

FERENC SCHWEITZER became deputy director of the GRI HAS in 1994 and he has been serving in the capacity of director since 1997. He is a regular member of Szent István Academy of Sciences (2002), honorary member of the Hungarian Geographical Society (2001) and its vice president since 2009, honorary member of the Hungarian Karst- and Cave Research Society (2001), member of the Hungarian Geological Society. He held positions in commissions of the International Union of Quaternary Research (INQUA), Carpatho-Balkanian Geomorphological Association, and in those of the HAS (geography, geomorphology).

As participant of congresses and conferences of INQUA, IGU (International Geographical Union), IAG/AIG (International Association of Geomorphologists), Professor SCHWEITZER has travelled extensively. Apart from appearances across Europe he made professional trips in Central Asia, Siberia, and Alaska, Israel and Iran, India, China and Japan, Mexico and Brasilia, South Africa, Australia and Oceania. These journeys allowed comparative analyses e.g. between warm and cold loesses developed under various environmental conditions.

FERENC SCHWEITZER had nearly 250 scientific contributions published in Hungarian and foreign languages.

His teaching activities began by the end of the 1980s as visiting lecturer in environmental and engineering geomorphology at a teachers' training college in the city of Pécs. Later his attractive personality and informality in personal contacts won the sympathy and affection of students at the University of Pécs, where a school from his disciples was created almost spontaneously. His title of dr. habil dates back to 1995. He has been tutor at a doctoral school since 1997 and numerous PhD theses were prepared under his guidance. For his birthday a volume of studies were edited by his former students, now researchers and university lecturers on their own, and most of the authors also belong to this circle (of "SCHWEITZER Hussars"). "From travertines to desert varnish" says the title which best reflects his life work. The about thirty laudations by a university rector, a former minister, academicians, colleagues and disciples cover forty pages, and somebody even wrote seven haikus and a limerick for him. On congratulations and celebrations you may read in another report of Chronicle in this issue of the Bulletin.

ÉVA KIS