Phycological Trailblazer
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Ante Ercegović

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The main reason to include Ante Ercegović (Fig. 1) in this series of Phycological Trailblazers is to call attention to his many contributions in describing the algal flora, including Cyanobacteria, of Croatia and the Adriatic Sea. He was born on 25 October, 1895, in the town of Jesenice near Split, Croatia, into a farming family of modest means. He was able to carry out his studies with the aid of foreign assistance. After a classical education in Split, he completed his initial studies in the Faculty of Theology. Later, he enrolled in the Faculty of Natural Sciences of Ljubljana and Zagreb, where he studied biology and where in 1924 he obtained the degree of doctor of natural sciences. In his doctoral research involving the lithophilic vegetation inhabiting the dolomitic and calcareous habitats of Croatia, he discovered microscopic algae living on and in the rocks, forms whose existence had been unknown up till then. This initiated his scientific studies of the algae and led to his broader interest in both lithophytic/terrestrial and marine algae. Over his career, he described a large number of new genera and new species. It is worthwhile to call attention to his body of work and also to discuss the current status of some of the new taxa that he described.

Fig. 1. Ante Ercegović at Dinard Colloque, France, 1957 (Image taken by W. R. Taylor)

According to Alfirević (1970), the body of Ercegović's scientific work can be divided into three distinct periods: 1) his research on lithophytic algae, including on submarine rocks; 2) basic questions of oceanography, such as productivity of the Adriatic, the capacity of this body of water to produce organic matter; and 3) his exploration phase, studying the vegetation of the benthos, the macroalgae attached on the bottom of the sea. In the early part of his professional career (the 1920s-30s), while in the Botany Dept. of Zagreb University, Ercegović worked on Cyanobacteria. In his first publication (1925) he described several new genera of rock-penetrating Cyanobacteria (*Croatella, Lithococcus, Lithocapsa, Pseudocapsa*, and *Voukiella*). *Croatella* is now regarded as a later taxonomic synonym of *Petalonema* (Geitler, 1932), and *Lithocapsa* is no longer recognized. But the other three names are included in the "Approved list of generic cyanobacterial names" (Komárek & Hauer, 2009). In 1927, he described three additional new genera of lithophytic "Cyanophycean" algae. Although the generic status of *Solentia* has held up, Frémy (1934) later interpreted Ercegović's *Aspalatia* to be a developmental stage of the red alga *Bangia*, and Geitler (1942) considered *Boanema* to be a developmental stage of the red algal genus *Nemalion*. He described other new genera

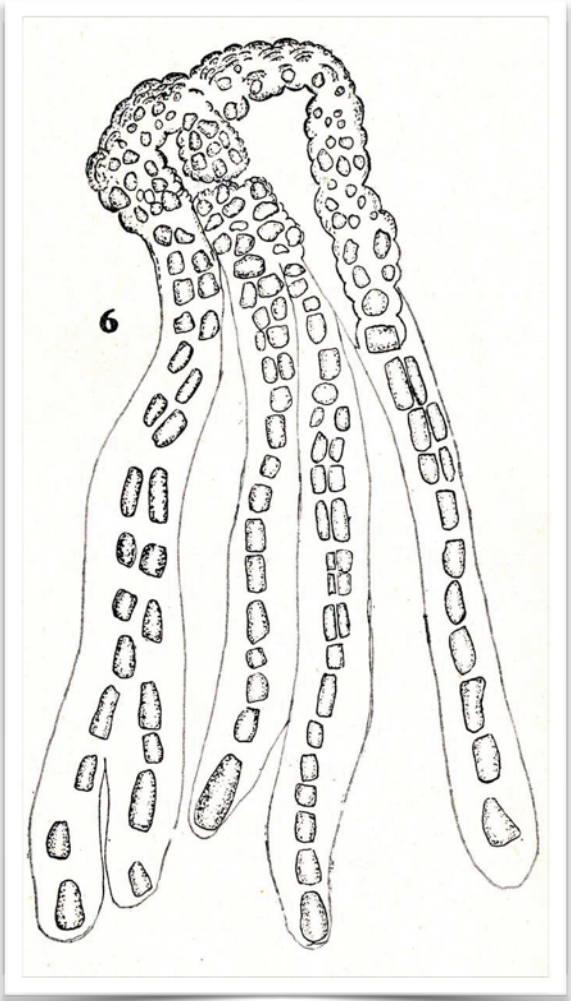

Fig. 2. *Dalmatella buanesis* (from Ercegović, 1929a, fig 6).

assigned to the Cyanophyceae, including *Dalmatella* (1929a) (Fig. 2). But his new genus *Kyrtuthrix* (1929b) was treated by Frémy (1934) as a synonym of the earlier name *Brachytrichia* Bornet et Flahault. His *Hormathonema* (Ercegović, 1929b) was merged with his own *Solentia* when Le Campion-Alsumard & Golubic (1985) proposed the transfer of the type species, *H. paulocellulare*, to *Solentia*, a proposal subsequently validated by Beljakova (1988). According to Geitler (1942), his *Tryponema* (1929b) is obviously not cyanophycean. Ercegović's (1929c) *Lithonema* was a later homonym and was replaced with *Adrianema* by De Toni (1936) (Komárek & Hauer, 2009).

The new genus *Scopulonema* (Ercegović, 1930), though recognized by Geitler (1942), was later treated as congeneric with *Pleurocapsa* by Komárek & Anagnostidis (1999). In 1931 he described two new genera of Cyanobacteria, *Brachynema* and *Podocapsa*, but both were later homonyms and thus illegitimate. The former was renamed *Ercegovicia* by De Toni (1936). His (1932b) *Epilithia* was also a later homonym, predated by *Epilithia* Nylander (1853). He was not only describing new genera of Cyanobacteria but in this period was also describing many new species (of *Borzia, Calothrix, Chroococcus, Isocystis, Lyngbya, Radaisia, Scytonema*), often re-cycling the epithets "*endolithica*", "*epilithica*", and "*lithophila*".

In 1930 the Oceanographic Institute at Split was founded with the goal of fostering the exploration of the flora and fauna of the Adriatic. As a young naturalist, Ercegović was drawn to the rocky coastline and the azure depths of the Adriatic Sea. Ercegović moved from Zagreb to Split to become a researcher and teacher at the Institute. The second phase of his career commenced when he began investigating the physical-chemical conditions of the Adriatic, including seawater temperature, salinity, concentrations of inorganic compounds, and correlations of these factors with changes in the productivity of the phytoplankton, the first step in the food-chain, leading up to the various fish. Ercevović's studies led him to conclude that the quantity of phytoplankton in the Adriatic was dependent on the dissolved salts, especially the level of phosphates, and the concentration of phosphate in the Adriatic was ten times (or more) less than that of seas of northern Europe. The amount of dissolved phosphate was only about 3 mg per ton of seawater. This fact explained why the Adriatic lacked the potential for a large fisheries industry

compared to northern seas (Ercegović, 1936, 1940).

In the third phase of Ercegović's career, his attention was drawn to the benthic macroalgae, forms that could grow attached to rocks and at great depths. Ercegović (1948) provided an account of some of the brown algae occurring in the Adriatic basin, including several new species: *Elachistea jabukae, Myriactis microscopica*, and *Desmarestia adriatica* [now regarded as conspecific with *D. ligulata*], as well as the new var. *adriatica* of *Spermatochus paradoxus* and a new forma (*profunda*) of *Elachista intermedia*.

Ercegović (1949a) described the new genus *Yadranella* (*Y. adriatica* sp. nov.), placing it in the Nemaliales. Kraft & Abbott (1971), however, offered evidence to treat *Yadranella* within *Predaea* (family Nemastomataceae), namely, as conspecific with *P. ollivieri* J. Feldmann. Also in 1949, Ercegović (1949b) described several new species, including *Halymenia rhodymenioides* and *H. pluriloba* (Fig. 3), *Nitophyllum flabellatum, Peyssonnelia magna, Phyllophora fimbriata, Rodriguezella pennata*, these all being currently recognized (Guiry & Guiry, 2009). But in that same paper his new species *Nemastoma constrictum* was treated as a synonym of *N. dichotomum* J. Agardh var. *caulescens* (Kütz.) C. Rodríguez-Prieto, M. Verlaque & A. Vergés (Rodríguez-Prieto et al, 2004). His *Halymenia trabeculata* is now thought to be either conspecific with *H. latifolia* Kütz. or as var. *trabeculata* within that species (Parkinson, 1980), and his *H. mucosa* was treated by Codomier (1972) to be conspecific with *Sebdenia rodrigueziana*, the latter binomial later being validated by Parkinson (1980) (Manghisi & Ribera 2007). Regarding his new species *Dudresnaya nodulosa*, it is now thought that he misinterpreted the condensed young primordia of indeterminate branches to be initial elements of sexual reproduction in the

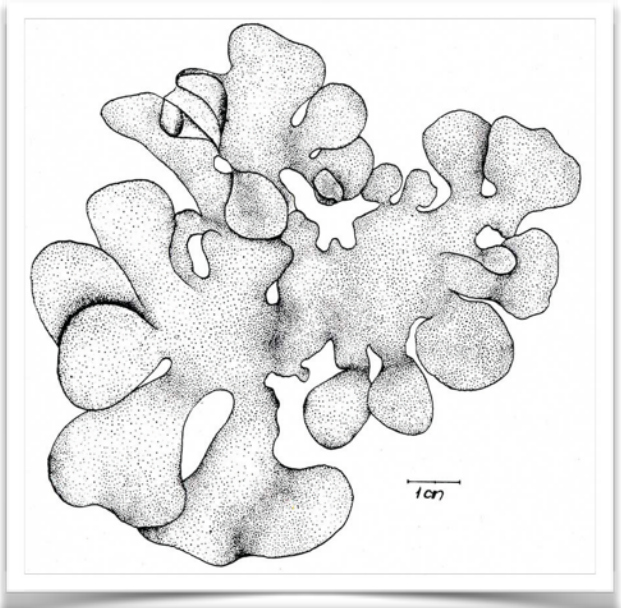

Fig. 3. *Halymenia pluriloba*
(from Ercegović, 1963, fig. 8)

genus *Dudresnaya*. Feldmann & Feldmann (1967) recognized that this species was Ceramiacean, in a genus related to *Crouania*. This taxon is now known as *Gulsonia nodulosa* (Ercegović) J. Feldman & G. Feldmann (Berecibar et al., 2009).

He produced a lengthy treatment (1955a) of the genus *Ectocarpus* from the central Adriatic, describing many new species His *E. adriaticus* was treated at the varietal level of *E. siliculosus* by Cormaci & Furnari (1987). These same authors transferred Ercegović's *E. battersioides* and E. *paradoxoides* to the genus *Feldmannia*. Cormaci & Furnari (in Gallardo, 1992) transferred three of these species of *Ectocarpus* (*E. dalmaticus, E. geniculatus, and E. hauckii*) to the genus *Hincksia*. *Ectocarpus pectenis* appears unscathed.

In the same year (1955b) Ercegović described three new genera of brown algae: *Adriogloia* and *Dalmatogloia* (both Chordariaceae), and *Padinopsis* (Dictyotaceae) Although these three genera are still recognized as "Current" by AlgaeBase (Guiry & Guiry, 2009), Ribera et al. (1992) put

all three genera in their category of "Taxa inquirenda". They remain poorly understood. For example, *Padinopsis* is known only from Ercegović's original single vegetative collection from a depth of 50-70 m off Jabuka Island. Ercegović (1956) described several new species of *Lomentaria* (*L. clavaeformis, L. jabukae*, and *L. subdichotoma*), which were all recently recognized by Afonso-Carrillo et al. (2009). Eregović's *Lomentaria tenera*, however, was a later homonym and was replaced with the new name *L. ercegovicii* by Verlaque et al. (1977). His *Chylocladia pelagosae* remains recognized.

It was obvious that the small wind-exposed Adriatic island of Jabuka, at 43° 5.7' N. lat. and 15° 26.9' E. long., captured Ercegović's attention. From 1947 and continuing into 1956, he was able to carry out littoral and sublittoral collections, culminating in his 1957a publication He compiled a list of about 300 species of algae from Jabuka. This list included the description of a number of new species, including *Acrochaetium incrassatum*, *Pseudochlorodesmis tenuis*, and *Pseudodictyon inflatum* [later transferred to *Acrochaete* by Gallardo et al. (1993)]. Nielsen (1972) transferred Ercegović's *Endoderma* (?) *hirsutum* to *Phaeophila* (with a query) and his *Endoderma* (?) *endolithicum* to *Entocladia* (with a query).

The culmination of Ercegović's research was his monographic treatment of the brown algal genus *Cystoseira* in the Adriatic Sea. In 1952 he produced an impressive work in which a total of 15 species were recognized and described in detail, some with infraspecific taxa. The picture that emerged was that the genus was undergoing active speciation in the Adriatic (Ercegović, 1953). The new species included *C. crinitophylla, C. jabukae*, and *C. pelagosae*, which remain recognized. His *C. platyramosa*, however, was regarded as *C. spinosa* var. *compressa* (Ercegović) M. Cormaci et al. (Cormaci et al. 1992), and his *C. spicata* was treated as *C. amentacea* var. *spicata* (Ercegović) Giaccone in Gallardo (1992). He also delineated many infraspecific taxa of *C. abrotanifolia, C. adriatica, C. barbata*, and *C. discors.* Roberts (1978) has put Ercegović's findings into perspective. As a result of Ercegović's important work, several leading phycologists of the time communicated with Ercegović their interest in becoming better acquainted with the marine vegetation of the Adriatic and in sharing their own recent research findings. This all led to Ercegović hosting an international colloquium of phycologists that took place at the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries in Split on 16-27 July, 1958. This gathering included Kurt Beth of Naples, Trygve Braarud of Oslo, Adrien Davy de Virville and Jean and Genevieve Feldmann of Paris, Carl Levring of Göteborg, Søren Lund of Copenhagen, Tscharna Rayss of Jerusalem, and Francis Walker of Edinburgh. At the conclusion of their discussions, the participants boarded a vessel of the station and cruised the Adriatic, stopping to dive and dredge at the island of Jabuka, where sublittoral collections were made (Alfirević, 1970).

In 1963 Ercegović described *Halymenia hvarii*, named for the island of Hvar, off the Croatian coast. He also described *Pterocladiopsis hirsuta* as a new genus and species of red algae but of uncertain taxonomic assignment because reproductive organs were lacking. His great love for his home region and the Adriatic Sea was reflected by some of the generic names that he proposed: *Croatella, Dalmatella, Dalmatogloia*, and *Yadranella*. His early collections are probably deposited in the Herbarium of Zagreb University (ZA). Although Ercegović initially failed to designate type specimens, he did state that he was depositing his original material in the herbarium of Zagreb or that of the Institute at Split. Designation of a type specimen was

not a requirement of the Code (ICBN) until 1 January, 1958. According to Stafleu & Menenga (2000), his herbarium and types were left with the Oceanographic Institute in Split. But a major part of his herbarium was destroyed during the 1991-1995 local war in Yugoslavia, except for specimens of *Cystoseira* and *Sargassum* that were out on loan at the time (A. L. Lovric, pers. comm.). According to Verlaque et al. (1999), the holotype of *Cystoseria jabukae* was in the "Ercegović Herbarium at Split", but because of its poor condition, they were unable to borrow it.

By the time of his death at the age of 74 on 25 April, 1969, Ercegović had become know as an internationally recognized scientist. He was a member of the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, the recipient of a prize from the Socialist Republic of Croatia, and a senior scientific advisor of the Institute for Oceanography and Fisheries in Split. Lovric's (1971) new subsp. *ercegovicii* of *Lithophyllum tortuosum* honored Ercegović's name. Ercegović was also remembered in tributes by Alfirević (1970), Pavletic (1970), and Pucher- Petkovic (1970). On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death, a publication (Ercegović, 1980) was issued that serves as a useful synthesis of his work on the marine algae occurring on the littoral shores and in the depths of the Adriatic Sea. It presented a checklist of species (including Cyanophyceae) that came to an impressive total of 544 taxa. It also provided a break-down of the vertical range of each taxon, their occurrence in the eulittoral and sublittoral. Some species were recorded to depths of 100 m, which corresponded to the lower sublittoral.

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