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Furkat Orunbayevich KHASSANOV
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Furkat Orunbayevich Khassanov (1959–2024) – widely renowned systematic botanist and expert on the flora of Central Asia, especially of Uzbekistan – passed away in peace on 20 October 2024. With him, we lost a respected colleague, admired teacher, and dear friend (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 Furkat O. Khassanov. The photo was taken in the vicinity of the locus classicus of *Allium giganteum* Regel during an expedition to Iran (Kopetdag ridge) in 2006

Furkat Orunbayevich Khassanov was born on March 24, 1959 in Tashkent. After graduating from high school in 1976, he was accepted to Tashkent State University (now the National University of Uzbekistan) and received a degree in biology in 1981 (Turdiboev et al. 2024). He completed his graduate thesis in 1987 on the "Xerophilous tree-shrub vegetation of the Kugitangtau ridge" under the supervision of R.V. Kamelin at the Specialized Council of the Institute of Botany of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan and later defended his doctoral thesis on "The genus *Allium* L. in the flora of Central Asia" in 2008 at the Institute of Botany of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Turdiboev et al. 2024). He worked at the Institute of Botany of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan from 1982 until the end of his life, particularly concentrating on the polymorphic genera *Allium* L. and *Astragalus* L.

Throughout his scientific investigations into Central Asian plant life, he undertook extensive field research in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Russia, Great Britain, the United States, Panama,

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Figure 2 Komiljon Tojibaev (left) and Bakhtiyor Karimov (right) with Furkat O. Khassanov (center). The photo was taken at the Tashkent Institute of Botany on 28 September, 2022

among others. There, he examined plant species native to the flora of Central Asia, through locus classicus observations and by studying specimens preserved in international herbarium collections.

Furkat O. Khassanov described one new genus (*Kamelinia* F.O. Khass. & I.I. Malzev), 34 new species and subspecies and 19 new sections of the genus *Allium* L., 10 new species and 2 new sections of the genus *Astragalus* L., as well as 14 new species of other genera for the flora of Central Asia (Turdiboev et al. 2024, IPNI 2025).

The flora of Central Asia, and especially Uzbekistan, is characterized by a high level of endemism, with 42 strictly endemic and 19 subendemic genera (Khassanov et al. 2024, Li & Tojibaev 2024, Ma et al. 2024, Verkhozina et al. 2024). F.O. Khassanov explained the recent dynamics of changes in the flora of Central Asia by two main factors, both attributed to human activities in the region.

1. Sociopolitical processes (migrations) have affected the composition of the flora of Central Asia, particularly of Uzbekistan: Several species originated in rather restricted small areas. Local human populations migrated to other regions and established new settlements, bringing with them livestock and plants (cultivated crops and other plants) which spread in new locations. Consequently, the range of some species has changed with their original occurrence still preserved in often small areas, as in the case of *Paeonia hybrida* Pall. and *Rhus coriaria* L.

2. The vegetation of Central Asia has long been affected by trade routes (i.e., especially the Great Silk Road), connecting East and West. This led to the introduction and spread, often unintentional, of various plant species to the flora of the region. Some species in the flora of Uzbekistan can be clearly traced to ancient villages, as, for instance, *Salvia aethiopis* L.

Furkat O. Khassanov supervised 5 graduate candidates (PhDs) and 3 DScs, including Komiljon Tojibaev, now Academician of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan (Fig. 2).

The majority of F.O. Khassanov's publications are available online via ResearchGate (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Furkat-Khassanov). Among others, he edited the 2019 Red Book of Uzbekistan and the 11th volume of the Conspectus Florae Asiae Mediae (Khassanov 2015, 2019).

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