

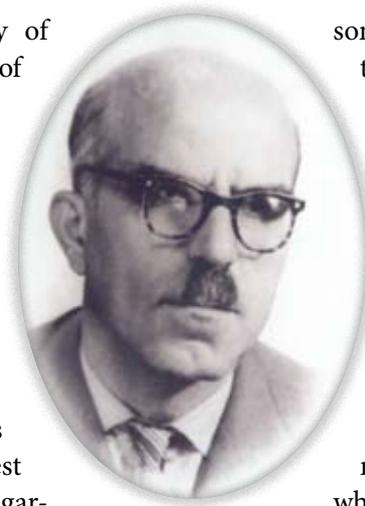
*IN MEMORIAM***Professor BORIS PAVLOV KITANOV (1912–1996) —
a versatile botanist and naturalist**

Dimitar S. Dimitrov

Section of Botany, National Natural History Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,
1 Tsar Osvoboditel Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria, e-mail: dimitrov.npm@gmail.com

In 2012, a centenary of the birth of PROFESSOR BORIS KITANOV (1912–1996) was celebrated. He was one of the founders of paleobotanical research in Bulgaria. His first article in this scientific field dates back to 1938 and he reported in it the Pliocene *Juglans cinerea* L. f. *fossilis* Bronn in the area of Lom. In the same year he wrote also an article on the age of Pernik and Bobov Dol's Coal Basin, which aroused great interest both of botanists and geologists in Bulgaria and abroad. Chronologically, then followed a research of the fossil flora of Lozenets in Sofia and description of a new species *Alnus dimitrovii* D. Jord. et Kitan. sp. nov. in the Nevrokop area, dated back to the Tertiary. By 1984, the Professor came up with nine more paleobotanical publications.

Boris Pavlov Kitanov was born into a family of Bulgarian parents from Macedonia. His father, Pavel Kitanov, descended from the rebellious village of Kruševo in the central neighborhood of Miatsite, and participated actively in the Ilinden Uprising of 1903. His mother, Vangelia Kitanova, was born in the village of Prosochen (nowadays Prosotsani, near the town of Drama, Greece). After the suppression of the Uprising, the family had to flee to Bulgaria. Little Boris grew up in a large family of six kids. His father was a master builder and took part in the construction of



some of the most emblematic buildings in the centre of Sofia. The Sofia Grand Hotel is now one of those buildings. The Professor's interest in plants dates back to his early student years and subsequently he dedicated his entire life to their researching and study. Boris Kitanov was a studious and hard-working person, who had encountered many hardships throughout his life.

The Professor had repeatedly related to me how he had become a botanist, inspired by the botanist Ivan Urumov, who used to send young student Boris to the mountains in Southwest Bulgaria to collect plants.

On many occasions Urumov gave Boris Kitanov money and equipment, so that the young student could go alone or with another fellow-student to the Rila, Pirin or Vlahina mountains. During one of those trips to the Pirin Mountains in 1927, the future Professor met some of the most renowned botanists of that time: Nikolay Stoyanov, Boris Stefanov, Toma Georgiev and the German F. Hermann. Of all these people, it was Nikolay Stoyanov that helped Boris Kitanov in growing into a scientist. Prof. Kitanov told me a lot about their friendship and mutual work with the flora of the islands of Thasos and Samothrace, in the Eastern Rhodopes and South Dobrudzha. Their mutual work lasted a lifetime.

In 1931, Boris Kitanov graduated from the Technical High School in Sofia, majoring in Forestry. In 1933, he enrolled as a student in Natural History at the

University of Belgrade. A year later he transferred to the University of Sofia and graduated there in 1937 as a top student in his class.

Still as a university student, the Professor was accepted and later on took an active part in the activities of the Botanical, Entomological, Geological and Cave Societies. In 1937, after winning a Polish government competition, Kitanov went to specialize in Paleobotany and Phytogeography at the University of Krakow, in the department of the renowned botanist Wladyslaw Szafer.

In the period of 1939–1940, he did his military service in the Eastern Rhodopes. Subsequently, he taught at the High School of Nevrokop (now the town of Gotse Delchev) until 1942. During that period he studied the flora of the Eastern Rhodopes and Bozdag (now Falakron Mountain, Greece).

In 1942, Boris Kitanov began work as an Assistant at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Sofia, in the Department of Plant Systematics and Phytogeography headed by Prof. Nikolay Stoyanov. By that time, Kitanov and Prof. Stoyanov were researching the flora of the islands of Thasos and Samothrace in the Aegean.

Boris Kitanov also happened to be one of the founders of the University of Skopje. In 1946, he went to the city of Skopje on invitation of the Government of Macedonia. There he engaged officially in professorial work and headed the Department of Special Botany. At the University of Skopje, with a lot of effort, hard work and determination, Boris Kitanov managed in a very short time to create a department and a laboratory where he read lectures to the university students. Some of his students became the future Academicians Kiril Mitsevski and Liupcho Grupche. During the three years of his stay there Kitanov toured all mountains of Macedonia. He managed to collect a vast amount of herbarium materials that later on laid the foundations of the Herbarium at the Department headed by him. Many of the collected plants were brought to Bulgaria. Prof. Kitanov personally handed to me many of those plants to register and describe in the Herbarium of the Biological Faculty of the University of Sofia (over 4000 plant specimens). In 2011, we succeeded in saving the entire collection of those specimens from discarding and transferred them to the National Museum of Natural Sciences of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

In 1948, Boris Kitanov worked as an Associate Professor at the newly founded Botanical Institute of the

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He worked there until 1951 and subsequently moved to the Biological Faculty of the University of Sofia, where in 1952 he obtained the scientific title of Professor.

In the period of 1957–1962, Prof. Kitanov worked as Director of the Botanical Garden of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. During that period he had the opportunity of traveling around the Soviet Union, North Korea, China, and Albania, where he acquainted himself with the local flora.

In 1962, he returned again to the University of Sofia as Head of the Department of Plant Systematics and Phytogeography and worked there for the next 16 years, until his retirement in 1977. During those years Kitanov was also elected Dean of the Biological Faculty for the period 1964–1967.

In 1967, he went to Cuba as a Professor of Botany at the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Habana. Once again, owing to his devotion, skills and knowledge, Prof. Kitanov organized and structured the entire academic process of lectures in Plant Anatomy, Plant Morphology and Plant Systematics. Despite the harsh and moist local tropical weather conditions, Boris Kitanov headed scientific expeditions across the whole island of Cuba and studied thoroughly the local flora. He managed to collect an enormous amount of herbarium materials (20 000 exsiccates belonging to 2400 species) which he later donated to the Thirteen Centuries of Bulgaria Fund. That Fund could be found today in the Herbarium of the Biological Faculty of the University of Sofia.

After his retirement, Boris Kitanov did not stop his scientific research activities. He participated actively in many projects as an Adviser with the Scientific Research Sector for Biological Resources (for the period of 1977–1983). Meanwhile, he continued reading lectures at the Biogeography in the Geological Geography Faculty of the University of Sofia. His scientific research is very original, many-sided and fascinating. He worked in every aspect of botanical science: Floristic, Taxonomy, Phenomenology, Phytogeography, Paleobotany, and Plant Resources. Boris Kitanov's publications (more than 120) stand out with their accurate, concise and analytical style and are cited still by many Bulgarian and foreign authors.

Prof. Kitanov had found about 100 new plant species for different countries: of these, 17 were new species for the Bulgarian flora, 42 for the flora of Greece, eight for the Albanian flora, four for the Yugoslavian, and 29 new species for the Cuban flora.

He penned nine textbooks in Botany, a Manual of Botany and a Botanical Dictionary (Bulgarian–Latin–Russian–English–French–German).

Boris Kitanov wrote more than 200 popular science articles, published in many journals, including *Prirodoznanie*, *Geografia*, *Priroda i Znanie*, *Biologia i Himiya*, *Turist*. He also contributed to the newspapers *Novini*, *Rabotnichesko Delo*, *Anteni*, and *Echo*.

Out of respect for Boris Kitanov and his scientific contribution, fellow botanists have named a few vascular plants in his honour: *Jurinea kitanovii* Iljin, *Anthemis kitanovii* Thin, and *Minuartia kitanovii* Panov.

Personally, I am truly grateful for the opportunity of studying under this incredible and one of the last fully knowledgeable naturalists in Bulgaria – Prof. Boris Kitanov. It was not by mere coincidence that Academician Boris Stefanov, known for his strict character, gave Boris Kitanov a working position in his department, while Kitanov was still a university student. With his lectures Prof. Kitanov educated hundreds of student naturalists, biologists, geographers and pharmacists in the fields of Botany, Plant Geography and Medical Herbology. In his personal and professional life, Boris Kitanov valued, above all, honesty and downrightness and abided by these values in his contacts and interactions with friends, colleagues and even strangers. He used to comment that many people in the field of science in Bulgaria had obtained their titles, power and privileges in rather immoral and non-scientific ways. Prof. Kitanov always checked the level of lectures in the Department of Botany at the Biological Faculty of the University of Sofia and always took steps to mend it, if the level was not satisfactory.

For his scientific and conservational work, Prof. Kitanov was rewarded repeatedly by Bulgarian and foreign scientific institutions. He was a Honorary Member of the Bulgarian Botanical Society, Bulgarian Society of Natural Research, as well as of the universities of Saint Petersburg, Kiev and Skopje.

Publications devoted to Prof. Boris P. Kitanov

- Antonova, S.** 1986. Exotic at a Sofia address [Екзотика на софийски адрес]. – *Rabotnichesko Delo*, no 169 (in Bulgarian).
- Antonova, S.** 1987. Our Sunday guest – Prof. Kitanov [Нашият неделен гост – Проф. Борис Китанов]. – *Rabotnichesko Delo*, no 39 (in Bulgarian).
- Antonova, S.** 1987. Such a vitality [Такая жизненность]. – *Sofiiskie Novosti*, no 10 (in Russian).
- Editor's article.** 1982. Congratulation on jubilee! Prof. Boris Pavlov Kitanov [На юбилеяра честито! Проф. Борис Павлов Китанов]. – *Priroda i Znanie*, 10: 38 (in Bulgarian).
- Editor's article.** 1987. Prof. Boris Pavlov Kitanov. An example of diligence [Проф. Борис Павлов Китанов. Пример за трудолюбие]. – *Priroda i Znanie*, 7: 43-44 (in Bulgarian).
- Georgiev, M.** 1989. A 75-year anniversary of Prof. Boris Kitanov [75-годишен юбилей на . Geography, 1: 22-23. (in Bulgarian)
- Gyoshev, S.** 1986. Following the dream [След мечтата]. – *Puls*, no 33 (in Bulgarian).
- Gyoshev, S.** 1987. The prominent botanist Prof. Boris Kitanov at the age of 75 [Изтъкнатият ботаник проф. Борис Китанов на 75 години]. – *Daritel*, 4: 17-18 (in Bulgarian).
- Golemanski, V.** 1992. Professor Boris Kitanov at the age of 80 [Професор Борис Китанов на 80 години]. – *Priroda i Znanie*, 3-4: 2 (in Bulgarian).
- Iliev, L.** (ed.). 1972. Kitanov, Boris Pavlov (28.III.1912), botanist, professor. – In: 100 Years Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1869–1969). Vol. 3, pp. 308-310. Publishing House Bulg. Acad. Sci., Sofia (in Bulgarian).
- Kochev, H.** 1989. Professor Boris Pavlov Kitanov at the age of 75 [Професор Борис Павлов Китанов на 75 години]. – *Fitologiya*, 36: 69-78 (in Bulgarian).
- Mateina, E.** 1994. Love – destiny. An attempted to describe Prof. Boris Kitanov [Обич – съдба. Опит за портрет на проф. Борис Китанов]. – *Az-Buki*, no 7: 16 (in Bulgarian).
- Mateina, E.** 1994. The knight of crocus [Рицарят на минзухара]. – *Az-Buki*, no 52 (in Bulgarian).
- Palamarev, E.** 1987. Prof. Boris P. Kitanov at the age of 75 [Проф. Борис П. Китанов на 75 години]. – *Nauchen Zhivot*, 4: 27 (in Bulgarian).
- Palamarev, E.** 1992. A life dedicated to science (in honour of the 80th birthday of Prof. Boris Kitanov) [Живот отдаден на науката (по случай 80-я рожден ден на проф. Борис Китанов)]. – *Biologiya*, 3: 49-54 (in Bulgarian).
- Penev, I.** 1979. Professor Boris Pavlov Kitanov at the age of 65 [Професор Борис Павлов Китанов на 65 години]. – *Fitologiya*, 9: 73-75 (in Bulgarian).
- Pisareva, L.** 1987. Exotismo cubano [Кубинска екзотика]. – *Noticias de Bulgaria*, 153: 27. Habana (in Spain).
- Pisareva, L. & Chipeva, S.** 1994. A name perpetuated twenty times [Име увековечено двадесеткратно]. – *Bulgaria v Stroezh*, no 4 (in Bulgarian).
- Radeva, V.** 1992. A loyal friend [Верен приятел]. – *Priroda i Znanie*, 3-4: 3-5 (in Bulgarian).
- Stanev, S.** 1970. A reknowned scientist and a personal friend [Виден учен и наш приятел]. – *Turist*, 8: 28 (in Bulgarian).
- Vesselinov, J.** 1970. A tourist and a scientist [Турист и учен]. – *Echo*, no 18(639) (in Bulgarian).

