

Margarita Lazarova Markova – her life and career (1932–2004)

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On March 13, 2004 the Bulgarian botanical community parted forever with Dr Margarita Markova, Associate Professor, PhD, and prominent botanical scholar. We lost a colleague, a scientist, a friend, but her 36 year strong scientific contribution to the field of taxonomy of vascular plants remained.

Margarita Markova was born on 3rd July 1932 in Sofia. She graduated from a German college in Sofia where she acquired a perfect command of the German language, a great help in her scientific work and contacts for the cooperation with many foreign colleagues.

In 1956 she graduated with flying colours from the Faculty of Biology and Geography at the St Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia, in the specialty of biology and as a graduate of the Chair of Botany.

After a successful contest in the same year Margarita Markova was appointed at the Institute of Botany with the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as a PhD student in the Department of *Plant Systematics*. Her supervisor was Dr Boris Ahtarov and after his death – Academician N. Stoyanov. Markova's *PhD Thesis* was on the difficult polymorphic genus *Rubus*, *Taxonomic study of genus Rubus L. in South Bulgaria*, which she successfully defended in 1961. In the same year she was appointed at the Institute of Botany as an Assistant Professor. In 1975 she became Associate Professor.

In 1965 Margarita Markova specialized in Prague, in the field of biosystematics of vascular plants at the Institute of Experimental Botany, which enabled her to apply modern methods in her scientific research work.

The major research projects in which she took part as one of the main authors were: *Flora of the People's Republic of Bulgaria*, *Chromosome Atlas of the Bulgarian Vascular Flora*, *Conservation of Rare and Protected Plants*. She also worked on Problem XII of CMEA's *Global System Monitoring for Environment Protection*, as well as on projects featured in the international cooperation of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences.

In the period 1975–1981 Markova headed the herbarium collection of the Institute and dedicated much efforts and vigour to the fulfilment of her ideas how it should be managed. Many centuria were organised and published under her supervision and the Herbarium took with them an active part in the exchange of material with different herbaria all over the world.

She participated at all National Conferences on Botany, as well as at many international botanical symposia and congresses, as for instance, the First Balkan Symposium on the Problems of Balkan Flora and Vegetation in Varna in 1973; 2nd Balkan Symposium in Istanbul in 1977; 12th International Congress of Botany in St Petersburg (Leningrad) in 1975; the International Symposium on the Carpathian Flora in Smolenice, Slovakia in 1988; 7th International OPTIMA Symposium in Borovets, Bulgaria, in 1993, etc.

Margarita Markova elaborated and prepared for print 15 families and 30 genera of six other families that were included in seven volumes of the multivolume edition of the *Flora of the People's Republic of Bulgaria*. Many of them, such as *Potentilla*, *Rubus*, *Thymus*, *Salvia*, etc. posed grave taxonomic problems and were represented by a considerable number of species in the country. She described 15 taxa new for the science, discovered and reported for the first time for the Bulgarian flora the distribution of a number of taxa, including such species as *Cephalanthera epipactoides*, *Salvia pinnata*, *Arbutus unedo*, *A. andrachne*, etc.

Mention deserve her achievements in caryological studies of the Bulgarian vascular flora, where she was one of the trail-blazers at the Institute. She determined the chromosome numbers, the specificities of the karyotypes and the main trends in variability and evolution of different families, including *Lamiaceae*, *Boraginaceae*, *Scrophulariaceae*, *Cistaceae*, *Malvaceae*, etc. She studied and reported for the first time for science the chromosome numbers and peculiarities of the karyotype of many endemic, rare and protected species, all elaborated and interpreted with a precision typical of her. She took an active part in the implementation of a number of national and international projects.

Margarita Markova was awarded the 13 Centuries of Bulgaria Medal for her contribution to the preparation, editing and publication of the *Red Data Book of the People's Republic of Bulgaria* (1986) and an OPTIMA Silver Medal for her participation in the authorship of the *Field Guide to the Vascular Plants in Bulgaria* (1993). She received the Badge of Honour of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for active scientific research and organization work. At the 10th Jubilee OPTIMA Symposium held in Palermo in 2001, the team of the multivolume edition of *Flora of the People's Republic of Bulgaria*, with Markova as one of its main

authors, got a special commemorative medal from the Pro Herbario Mediterraneo International Foundation: "In acknowledgement of the high worth of the botanical edition *Flora of Bulgaria*".

She was member of the Specialised Scientific Botanical Council with the Higher Attestation Commission, of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Botany, of the Editorial Board of the *Fytologia* series, of the Editorial Board of the *Red Data Book of People's Republic of Bulgaria*, of the International Association of Plant Taxonomy (IAPT), of the Organization for the Phytotaxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area (OPTIMA), of the Union of Scientists in Bulgaria, of the Bulgarian Botanical Society, of the Bulgarian Natural History Society, etc.

Margarita Markova was a highly organized person, with insight for the detail and possessing an unbelievably strong spirit and optimism, which sustained her in pain and difficulties. She was very understanding, tolerant and considerate in her relations with colleagues and other people. She never complained about difficulties, hated people to be sorry of her and was a proud person. Markova had respect for her colleagues, friends, for the person close by and had the knack to show and express it. She was very inventive and original in communicating this and never repeated herself.

A fungus parasitizing on the species of genus *Cistus*, discovered during the terrain studies with her participation and elaborated by her for the *Flora of the People's Republic of Bulgaria*, was named after her: *Septoria margaritae* Vanev & Sameva. A species of genus *Myosotis*, a Forget-Me-Not described by the Czech botanist Jitka Stepankova, also bears Markova's name – *Myosotis margaritae* Štěpánková – in respect for their collaboration. And this is how Margarita Markova will remain in our memory through the years: like the flower Forget-Me-Not.

As author of 111 scientific publications (Supplement 1), of which 70% were penned exclusively by her and 25 popular science articles of significant scientific import, Margarita Markova will remain forever in the history of Bulgarian botany. We, her colleagues, now mourn her loss, but every day brings us in contact with her scientific work, a process to be continued by those who come after us, because a creative scientist never dies. Such a person lives forever through her scientific contribution, until that science exists. And science is eternal!

Supplement 1

List of publications

1. **Маркова, М.** 1960. Нов вариетет и критични бележки за род *Rubus* L. в България. [Neue Varietät und Kritische Notizen über die Gattung *Rubus* L. in Bulgarien.] Изв. на Отд. за биол. и мед. науки [Izv. Otd. Biol. Med. Nauki], **3**(4): 129-131 (in Bulgarian with summaries in German and Russian).
2. **Маркова, М.** 1961. Критични бележки върху рода *Rubus* L. [Kritische Notizen über die Gattung *Rubus* L.] – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **8**: 159-168 (in Bulgarian with summaries in German and Russian).
3. **Маркова, М.** 1961. Neue Angaben über *Rubus tomentosus* Borkh. in Bulgarien. – Dokl. Bulg. Akad. Nauk., **14**(6): 619-621.
4. **Маркова, М.** 1962. Бележки върху труда “*Rubi Peninsulae Balcanae*” и хербарните материали събрани от д-р J. Hruby на Рила. [Bemerkungen zu der Abhandlung “*Rubi Peninsulae Balcanae*” von Dr J. Hruby und den von ihm im Rila-Gebirge Gesammelten Herbariummaterialen.] – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **8**: 79-90 (in Bulgarian with summaries in German and Russian).
5. **Маркова, М.** 1962. Нови видове, вариетети и местонаходища на род *Rubus* L. в България. [Neue Arten, Varietäten und Fundorte der Gattung *Rubus* L. in Bulgarien.] – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **10**: 199-200 (in Bulgarian with summaries in German and Russian).
6. **Маркова, М.** 1964. Род 128 (1). Пикреус – *Pycreus* P. Beauv. [Yellow grass – *Pycreus* P. Beauv.] – In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **2**, pp. 21-28. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
7. **Маркова, М.** 1964. Род 129 (2). Циперус – *Cyperus* L. [Flat sedge – *Cyperus* L.] In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **2**, pp. 28-31. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
8. **Маркова, М.** 1964. Род 130 (3). Акореулус – *Acorellus* Palla. [Acorelus – *Acorellus* Palla.] – In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **2**, p. 32. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
9. **Маркова, М.** 1964. Род 131 (4). Галилея – *Galilea* Parl. [Galilea – *Galilea* Parl.] – In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **2**, pp. 32-33. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
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11. **Маркова, М.** 1966. Род 273 (1). Куча лобода, Сладка трева – *Chenopodium* L. [Goosefoot – *Chenopodium* L.] – In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **3**, pp. 525-541. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
12. **Бондев, И., Маркова, М., Раденкова, Й.** 1967. Материали за флората на Родопите и Югоизточна България. [Materials on the flora of the Rhodopes and South-Eastern Bulgarian.] – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **17**: 263-266 (in Bulgarian with summaries in English and Russian).
13. **Маркова, М.** 1968. Chromosome numbers of four Bulgarian taxa of the genus *Rubus* L. – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **18**: 75-77.
14. **Маркова, М.** 1968. Karyological study of *Epimedium pubigerum* (DC.) Morren et Decne and *Chenopodium multifidum* L. – Dokl. Bulg. Akad. Nauk., **21**(1): 51-53.
15. **Atanasova-Shopova, S., Russinov, K. & Markova, M.** 1969. Pharmacological studies of Bulgarian plants with a view to their anticonvulsive effect. – Изв. Инст. Физиолог. [Izv. Inst. Fiziolog. (Sofia)], **12**: 205-215.
16. **Йорданов, Д., Маркова, М.** 1970. Ново находище на *Symphyandra wannerii* Heuff. в България. [New locality of *Symphyandra wannerii* Heuff. in Bulgaria.] – Изв. Бот. инст. [Izv. Bot. Inst. (Sofia)], **20**: 231 (in Bulgarian).
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23. **Маркова, М.** 1970. Сем. XLIX. Роголистникови – *Ceratophyllaceae* S. F. Gray. [Hornwort family – *Ceratophyllaceae* S. F. Gray.] – In: **Jordanov, D.** (ed.), Fl. Reipubl. Popularis Bulgaricae. Vol. **4**, pp. 209-210. In Aedibus Acad. Sci. Bulgaricae, Serdicae (in Bulgarian).
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