

## Prof. Elissaveta Bozilova, DSc: a tribute to her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday

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Prof. Elissaveta Bozilova, DSc, was born on 17<sup>th</sup> March 1932 in Sofia. In 1951 she enrolled to study biology at the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Sofia, Faculty of Biology-Geology-Geography, and graduated at the Department of Botany in 1956. Her interest in botany, and subsequently in palynology, was encouraged by Prof. Boris Kitanov. While sitting for her graduation diploma under his supervision, she carried out a geobotanical investigation of Mt. Vitosha near Sofia. In 1956 Elissaveta Bozilova began her teaching activity as a part-time Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Pharmacy at the Medical University in Sofia. Later on, in September 1958 she joined the academic staff of the Department of Botany at Sofia University, again as an Assistant Professor.

The next decade was one of the most intensive periods in her remarkable career, during which she combined successfully both teaching and research. In her initial years of research Elissaveta Bozilova devoted much of her time to the investigation of the pollen morphology of gymnosperm and flowering plant taxa (genera *Pinus*, *Carpinus*, *Fraxinus*, *Viola*, *Minuartia*, *Linum*, *Trifolium* etc.), but soon she realized how important it was to apply this knowledge to the investigation of the history of the Bulgarian flora and vegetation. She started to analyse the fossil pollen content in peat-bogs from different parts of the Rila Mts. In 1972 she defended a PhD thesis entitled *Lateglacial and Postglacial History of Vegetation in*



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*the Rila Mountains*, which became a turning point in the establishment of modern Quaternary palaeoecological studies in Bulgaria. In this research, supplemented for the first time with radiocarbon datings, she postulated the main forest stages and characteristic features of the postglacial vegetation development during the last 12 000 years (tree migrations, fluctuations in the timberline, formation of vegetation belts, pollen dispersal mechanisms and human impact) in the highest mountain area of the Balkans. Subsequently, such investigations were extended to other

mountain areas in Southwestern Bulgaria, the Pirin Mts in particular, along with the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast and the Danube River. An important premise for the recognition of Elissaveta Bozilova as a leading Bulgarian botanist-palynologist was the establishment of personal scientific contacts with foreign specialists from the then leading palynological centers in Krakow (Poland), Moscow (Russia), Göttingen (Germany), Amsterdam (The Netherlands), etc. She was invited to visit the Moscow State University, the Botanical Institute in St. Petersburg, the Botanical Institute in Krakow, the University of Göttingen, and the University of Amsterdam, in order to improve her professional qualification. These visits laid the foundation of fruitful joint research of long standing and of personal contacts with Prof. Magdalena Ralska-Jasiewiczowa, Prof. Hans-Jürgen Beug, Dr Anton Smit, and many others.



With colleagues from the Department of Botany, 1966.

Along with her own research work and already as Associated Professor of Botany (1976), in the mid-1970s Elissaveta Bozilova organized a Laboratory of Palynology at the Department of Botany, which she was heading successfully until 2000. Within a short period of time the Laboratory established itself as a leading centre in fundamental and applied palynology. The staff enthusiastically worked on a wide range of scientific problems related not only to the field of Quaternary palynology, but also to such developing new trends as aeropalynology, archaeobotany, melissopalynology, and pollination ecology. Apart from her teaching activities in courses on Higher Plant Systematics, Plant Geography, Plant Resources, Quaternary Palynology and Palaeoecology, Elissaveta Bozilova supervised over 20 graduate students sitting for their MSc degrees. The majority of her students (R. Yankova, A. Petrova, M. Anchev, L. Evstatieva, P. Yurukova, V. Goranova, M. Lazarova, V. Vulchev, J. Atanassova, D. Pavlova, Ts. Popova, I. Stefanova,



With participants of the 3<sup>d</sup> International Palynological Conference, Novossibirsk, 1971.

H. Panovska, etc.) have engaged in further developmental research and teaching in the field of botanical science at various universities, institutes, laboratories and museums.

In 1980 Elissaveta Bozilova headed the Bulgarian national working group within the IGCP Project 158B *Palaeohydrological Changes in the Temperate Zone During the Last 15000 Years – Lake and Mire Environments* led by Prof. Björn Berglund from the University of Lund in Sweden. Along with this project, Elissaveta Bozilova devoted most of her time to introducing the new standardized approach to palynological and palaeoecological investigations of the Late Quaternary deposits in Bulgaria. The development of the project, the visits and lectures by Prof. Bjorn Berglund in Bulgaria (1982, 1986) and the participation of Bulgarian palynologists in several international meetings (Shrewsbury 1983, Marseille 1984, Bern 1985, Bergen 1986, etc.) opened the door for the latest methodological and technological achievements in European palaeoecology and palynology. In the autumn of 1985, Elissaveta Bozilova organized in Varna an international symposium on *Palaeoecology and Palaeohydrology of the Balkan Peninsula and Adjacent Areas*, where the Bulgarian scientists had the unique opportunity to present and discuss their results with outstanding foreign colleagues. The intensive work on this international project during the period 1980–1988, coordinated efficiently by Elissaveta Bozilova, resulted in the establishment of a national set of standardised reference sites (lakes, mires, peat-bogs) in the high (Rila, Pirin, Western Rhodopes) and lower (Vitoshka, Stara Planina, Sredna Gora, Konyavska) mountains and along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Valuable high-resolution information on the environmental changes and human impact in the past, in both the lowlands and the montane areas of Bulgaria,



With Greek students of Biology, Sofia, 1988.

was collected and subsequently synthesized in a separate chapter of the monograph *Palaeoecological Events During the Last 15000 Years-Regional Syntheses of Palaeoecological Studies of Lakes and Mires in Europe* (1996). This information was subsequently integrated into the *European Pollen Database*. It is important to point out that on Elissaveta Bozilova's invitation a number of outstanding palynologists and palaeoecologists, including Prof. Hans-Jürgen Beug, Prof. Gerhard Lang, Prof. John Birks, Prof. Yrjö Vasari, Prof. Sigmar Bortenschlager, Prof. Lars-König Königsson, Prof. Peter-Emil Kaland, Prof. Herbert Wright, Prof. Brigitta Ammann, Prof. Sheila Hicks, Prof. Carl-Adam Haeggstrom, and many others, visited Bulgaria as guest-lecturers to share generously their knowledge and experience in palaeoecological and palaeobotanical research, both in the field and in the laboratory.

In the 1980s and 1990s Elissaveta Bozilova supervised successfully eight researchers sitting for their PhD degree in the fields of Quaternary palynology and palaeoecology, marinopalynology, aeropalynology and melissopalynology.

Elissaveta Bozilova's own research studies culminated in the defence of her DSc thesis (1986) entitled *Palaeoecological Conditions and Vegetation Changes in Eastern and Southwestern Bulgaria During the Last 15 000 Years*, for which she received wide recognition abroad and in her own country, including a professorship (1988) at the Department of Botany of Sofia University. This brilliant work summarised her profound palaeoecological results and knowledge on the Lateglacial and Holocene flora, vegetation history and climate changes, based on analyses of coastal lakes' and Black Sea marine sediments, montane peat bogs and mires. An important part of her thesis was the interpretation of the millennium-strong human impact on

the natural environment during prehistoric times and her insights into the history of land-use related to human subsistence and economy. It also demonstrated the long years of her fruitful contacts and joint research with Bulgarian archaeologists.

Elissaveta Bozilova spent much of her time in administrative work both for the Department of Botany and the Faculty of Biology, aimed at improving the education in biology. She was elected twice Vice-Dean of the Faculty responsible for the education. For many years she was an active member of the Faculty Council and served a term at the Academic University Council. Since 1984 she has been Editor-in-Chief of the *Annual of Sofia University – Botany Volume*, one of the oldest botanical periodicals in Bulgaria. On her initiative, since 1992 this journal has been published in English language, which made it accessible to foreign scientists as well. For many years Elissaveta Bozilova has been on the Editorial Board of the *Phytologia Balcanica* journal published by the Institute of Botany at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia.

In the 1990s, serving for two successive terms on the Advisory Board, Elissaveta Bozilova participated actively in the organization and launching of the *European Pollen Database*, a new initiative of the international palynological community aimed at collecting and synthesizing palaeoecological information from all over Europe and utilising the modern information technology for solving specific research issues.



Prof. E. Bozilova, 1985.



Celebration of 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Prof. B. Kitanov, 1992.



Visit in Gottingen – with family Beug, 1989.



The Rector of Sofia University Prof. I. Lalov bestows on Prof. E. Bozilova the jubilee medallion 100 year Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski.

Elissaveta Bozilova's experience and esteem credited to her for contacting and organizing scientists helped her play an active role in the current European research project *Pollen Monitoring Programme* (1996–) led by Prof. Sheila Hicks from the University in Oulu (Finland).

Besides her numerous professional duties at the university, Elissaveta Bozilova took an active part in the life of the Bulgarian botanical community as member of a number of research and expertise councils. In the 1990s she served for two terms of office as Chairman of the Expert Commission of Biology and Ecology at the National Science Fund in Sofia.

Mention deserves the fact that, whilst successfully completing the numerous and varied teaching duties at the university before and after her retirement in 2000, as well as participating in scientific and expertise councils, Elissaveta Bozilova continues her productive involvement in research projects by active field work and publication of results. As a well-known scientist during the last 30 years, Elissaveta Bozilova had attended numerous congresses, conferences, meetings, workshops, and field trips in almost all European countries. In her long and productive scientific career of over 40 years she has published alone or jointly over 150 research articles in monographs, books, national and international journals, magazines, symposia and workshop proceedings.

As a highly dedicated and erudite person, she continues teaching at the Department of Botany, thus helping the younger colleagues and sharing her vast knowledge on palynology, palaeoecology, plant systematics, plant geography, archaeobotany, pollination ecology and melisopalynology. With respect to her research, a number of notable new publications in international and national

journals have appeared in the last years, focused mainly on the fulfilment of her long held idea to study sediments from the glacial lakes in the Rila and Pirin Mts.

The enthusiasm and active position of Elissaveta Bozilova in modern botanical science are a logical answer to the present-day challenges. All her colleagues, students and friends in Bulgaria and abroad, with whom she has worked and continues to work, express their gratitude now to the person and professor who has contributed so much to the development of modern botanical science in Bulgaria, both as a teacher and as an outstanding researcher in the field of palynology and palaeoecology.

### Research students of Prof. DSc Elissaveta Bozilova registered for the degree of PhD

**Rayna Yankova** (1980). Aeropalynological studies of some sites in Bulgaria in relation to pollen allergy.

**Olga Petkova** (1984). Palynological study of honey and pollen from the Smolyan and Beden regions.

**Spassimir Tonkov** (1985). Palynological study of the vegetation changes during the last 8000 years in several mountains in Southwestern Bulgaria.

**Mariana Filipova** (1986). Pollen-analytical investigations of Lake Shabla – Ezeretz and the North Bulgarian Black Sea Shelf.

**Juliana Atanassova** (1990). Late Quaternary vegetation development based on data from spore-pollen analysis of sediments from the western sector of the Black Sea.

**Ivanka Stefanova** (1991). Palaeoecological investigation of peat-bogs and lakes in the Northern Pirin Mts.

**Hristina Panovska** (1993). Palaeoecological investigations in some mountains in Southwestern Bulgaria.

**Maria Lazarova** (1994). Pollen-analytical investigation of Holocene sediments from the Danubian lakes Sreburna and Garvan.

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