

IN MEMORIAM

Prof. Dr. Božidar Čurčić
(1946 – 2015)



Prof. Dr. Božidar Čurčić was born in Belgrade on 3rd July 1946, where he completed his elementary and secondary education. After graduating in 1969 at the Faculty of Science, University of Belgrade, he was posted in the Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Science, University of Belgrade, where he spent his whole successful and fruitful teaching and research career.

Arachnology was and remained the main focus throughout his scientific research (pseudoscorpions in particular). Several early papers were dedicated to the study of scorpions.

In the early days of his scientific career, Prof. Čurčić met Academician Jovan Hadži, a famous Slovenian zoologist and arachnologist of Serbian origin, in Ljubljana. Although short-lasting, this cooperation between the two scientists had an important impact on Prof. Čurčić, who directed his studies to pseudoscorpions – a small group of arachnids that has not been in the focus of arachnological investigations in Yugoslavia until then.

As a token of appreciation to the whole opus of Academician Hadži, Prof. Dr. Čurčić named one pseudoscorpion species new to science from Bosnia and Herzegovina after him (*Pselaphochernes hadzii* Čurčić, 1972). In 2000, Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade published, on the behalf of 114 years of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and 62 years of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, a monograph entitled „The Life and Work of Academician Jovan Hadži“ by Božidar Čurčić, Marija Fabjančič and Ozren Karamata.

Prof. Dr. Čurčić studied different aspects of pseudoscorpions (systematics, taxonomy, developmental biology, evolutionary biology, teratology and biospeleology). More than four decades of devoted study of this group of arachnids resulted in erecting more than 160 species and genera, both epigeal, endogean and cave-dwelling, new to science from Yugoslavia (Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, France, USSR, China, Afghanistan, Nepal, Vietnam, Israel, the Philippines and the USA. Many of the taxa which Prof. Dr. Čurčić has erected are endemics and relics to Serbia or the Balkan region.

As an avid biospeleologist, Prof. Čurčić investigated numerous underground habitats in Serbia and all other republics of the former Yugoslavia and contributed immensely to the better understanding of the cave fauna (primarily pseudoscorpions). As a result of these investigations several monographs dealing with cavernicolous pseudoscorpions were published – „Cave-Dwelling Pseudoscorpions of the Dinaric Karst“ (1988), „New and Little-Known False Scorpions from the Balkan Peninsula, Principally from Caves, Belonging to the Families Chthoniidae and Neobisiidae (Arachnida, Pseudoscorpiones)“ (1997), „The Pseudoscorpions of Serbia, Montenegro and the Republic of Macedonia“ (2004) and „Cave Fauna of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia“ (2014).

Well aware of the importance of cave protection and conservation of these fragile ecosystems Prof. Čurčić was the founder of the Center for Biospeleology at the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, and NGO Centre for Biospeleology of Southeast Europe.

Although pseudoscorpions were the main object of his studies, Prof. Čurčić, as a zoologist of broad interests, devoted a part of his scientific investigations to the study of some other arthropod taxa as well (spiders, millipedes, springtails, coleopterans). These studies in collaboration with his younger colleagues from the Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade resulted in establishing numerous genera and species new to science (seven genera and 32 species of coleopterans, six genera and 16 species of millipedes, one genus and 13 species of springtails) from Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece.

Among twenty monographs written by Prof. Dr. Božidar Čurčić, two of them were published by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. In 1974 „Catalogus Faunae Jugoslaviae: Arachnoidea, Pseudoscorpiones“ was published, and in 1988 „Cave-Dwelling Pseudoscorpions of the Dinaric Karst“ appeared.

Prof. Čurčić was a fellow and a member of numerous Serbian and foreign scientific societies – Russian Arachnological Society, Japanese Arachnological Society, British Arachnological Society, American Arachnological Society, Royal Entomological Society, Council of the European Association of Arachnologists, Swiss Zoological Society, Serbian Biological Society, Entomological Society of Serbia, etc. He was the president of the latter two societies. For many years Prof. Dr. Čurčić was the correspondent of the former Yugoslavia in the International Society of Arachnology.

Prof. Čurčić was the editor-in-chief and the member of the editorial boards of several scientific journals and other types of publications – Archives of Biological

Sciences, Monographs of the Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, Acta entomologica serbica, Proceedings of the Geographical Institute „Jovan Cvijić“ of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Acta zoologica bulgarica and Journal of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Owing to him the Archives of Biological Sciences entered the SCI list.

In the course of his studies on pseudoscorpions Prof. Ćurčić visited and spent time in research in many scientific institutions such as: Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Sofia); CNRS (Moulis); Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (Barro Colorado, Panama); Museum of Natural History (Paris); Museum of Natural History (London); Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), to name a few. As an expert in the field of arachnology, Prof. Ćurčić had close contacts with numerous institutions and researchers in many countries worldwide. He was a visiting professor and lectured at a number of universities and scientific institutions (e.g., in Skopje, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Bucharest, Paris, Moulis, Frankfurt am Main, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Boston, Cambridge, Florence, Thessaloniki, Athens).

As a token of his scientific recognition and contributions to zoology, above all arachnology, several invertebrate taxa new to science were named after him (*Curcicia* Ćurčić & Brajković, 2003, *Neobisium bozidarcurcici* Dimitrijević, 2009, *Svarogosoma bozidarcurcici* Makarov, Mitić & Ćurčić, 2003, *Schizmohetera curcici* Makarov, 2001, *Belgrandiella bozidarcurcici* Glöer & Pešić, 2014, *Serbiella curcici* Lučić, 2001, *Magdelainella bozidarcurcici* Ćurčić & Brajković, 2002).

On the behalf of forty years of Professor Ćurčić's fruitful scientific career and teaching activity, in 2008 „Advances in Arachnology and Developmental Biology – Papers Dedicated to Professor Božidar P. M. Ćurčić“ was published. This monograph contains scientific papers written by eminent Serbian and foreign zoologists.

In 2001 he was elected as a foreign member to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia. Prof. Ćurčić was the chairman of the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Committee, Commission of Serbia for UNESCO.

During his teaching career in the Institute of Zoology, Faculty of Biology, University of Belgrade, Prof. Ćurčić lectured several courses, both on graduate and post-graduate levels (Animal Development, Systematics and Phylogeny of Invertebrates, Human Embryology, Biology of Aging, Comparative Animal Development, Pedo-zoology). He was the author and co-author of 28 textbooks for secondary schools and universities.

Prof. Ćurčić paid special attention to support his younger colleagues and associates, especially in the early days of their professional careers, enabling them professional specialisation and training in eminent foreign institutions (natural history museums, institutes, faculties). His constructive criticism and valuable advices meant a lot to them. He was the mentor of 23 PhD and MSc theses.

Apart from lecturing and scientific research, Prof. Ćurčić held many important professional positions at the Faculty of Biology and the University of Belgrade. He was the Director of the Institute of Zoology; Head of the Department of Animal Development at the Institute of Zoology; President of the Trade Union, Faculty of Biology; Vice-President of the Academic Council of the Faculty of Biology; President

of the Council, Vice-Dean and President of the Executive Council of the Faculty of Biology; member of the Council on Biology and Genetics of the Serbian Ministry of Science and Technology; expert advisor at the Federal Ministry of Development, Science and Environment; and President of the Council of Biological Sciences at the University of Belgrade.

Prof. Ćurčić was both the founder and the leader of several national and international scientific projects sponsored by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Macedonian Ministries of Culture and Ecology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

The bibliography of Prof. Ćurčić contains more than 600 entries. He was the author of 20 monographs, as well as the editor of 20 monographs.

Alongside his scientific work, Prof. Ćurčić had a broad sphere of interests and knowledge on many topics such as literature, art, languages and ethnology. He was especially interested and well versed in ancient mythology (Roman, Greek and Slavic). That enabled him to name numerous pseudoscorpion species new to science after various gods and deities.

Untimely death of Prof. Ćurčić is a great loss to Serbian science, above all arachnology, and all who knew him. He will be remembered as a devoted and fastidious scientist and a person willing to share his broad knowledge, experience and help whenever was needed. His vast professional opus will serve as a guideline to his younger associates. Although Prof. Ćurčić is no longer with us, he will not be forgotten. To me it was a great privilege to be a student, a colleague and a friend of a person of such professional and personal qualities.

Povzetek

Prof. Dr. Božidar Ćurčić se je rodil v Beogradu leta 1946. Vso svojo znanstveno pot je preživel na Zoološkem inštitutu Fakultete za biologijo Univerze v Beogradu, kjer je predaval več predmetov. Bil je začetnik srbske arahnologije in je opisal več kot 160 nadzemnih, talnih in jamskih rodov in vrst paščipalcev, novih za znanost, iz mnogih držav sveta. Prof. Ćurčić je bil ustanovitelj Centra za biospeleologijo na Fakulteti za biologijo v Beogradu in nevladne organizacije Center za biospeleologijo jugovzhodne Evrope. Njegova bibliografija obsega več kot 600 naslovov. Bil je avtor ali soavtor 20 monografij, urednik 20 monografij in avtor 28 srednješolskih in univerzitetnih učbenikov. Prof. Ćurčić je bil glavni urednik "Arhiva bioloških znanosti" in "Monografij Zoološkega inštituta Fakultete za biologijo Univerze v Beogradu" ter član uredniških odborov več znanstvenih revij. Bil je član Bolgarske akademije znanosti.

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