



Bulgarian Mineralogical Society



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HISTORY

Have you heard of the International Conferences on Mineralogy and Museums? If you have not, the next one (MM9) is being organized by the Bulgarian Mineralogical Society (BMS) and will take place 5–7 July 2020 at the Earth and Man National Museum in Sofia (Fig. 1). The BMS (Българско минералогическо дружество) is one of the oldest members of the



FIGURE 1 Earth and Man National Museum, Sofia.

IMA: two of its members attended the inaugural IMA meeting in Zürich (Switzerland) in 1959. The eminent Bulgarian mineralogist Ivan Kostov (1913–2004) served as a national representative in the IMA from 1959 to 2004, further contributing as a councilor (1970–1974), vice-president (1978–1982), president (1982–1986) and past-president (1986–1990). Bulgaria hosted the 13th IMA General Meeting in the beautiful seaside city of Varna in 1982. The Bulgarian mineralogical community has made significant contributions to the activities of various IMA commissions and working groups.

The BMS was founded as an independent professional organization on 21 February 1990 in Sofia. Prior to that, mineralogists, as well as some geochemists and petrologists, had been an active group within the Bulgarian Geological Society (BGS) (www.bgd.bg) in its Mineralogical Section. For example, the first President of the BGS, elected in 1925, was the pioneer Bulgarian mineralogist and petrographer Georgi N. Bonchev (1866–1955) (Fig. 2), who also served as Rector of Sofia University (1914–1915). One of his greatest contributions to the advancement of mineral sciences in Bulgaria was writing the first university textbooks on mineralogy, crystallography, and petrography in Bulgarian. Classification of minerals on a geochemical and crystal chemical basis was the backbone of Ivan Kostov's 1957 textbook *Mineralogy*, its subsequent 1973 and 1993 editions, and its translation into English in 1968 and Russian in 1971.



FIGURE 2 Georgi Bonchev

The BMS membership has, over the years, remained at a roughly 50 professionals (mineralogists, crystallographers, geochemists, petrologists, and mineral deposit geologists), as well as some amateur mineral enthusiasts. Most of the professional members are affiliated with universities or institutions of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”; University of Mining and Geology “St. Ivan Rilski”; Geological Institute “Acad. Strashimir Dimitrov”; Institute of Mineralogy and Crystallography “Acad. Ivan Kostov”; National Museum of Natural History), as well as the Ministry of Culture (Earth and Man National Museum). Academician Ivan Kostov (Fig. 3) was elected the first President (1990–1995) and Honorary President of the BMS. Several other mineralogists served as its presidents later on, and two of them – Jordanka Mincheva-Stefanova and Dobrinka Stavrakeva – were also elected as its honorary presidents.



FIGURE 3 Ivan Kostov

ACTIVITIES

The BMS organizes annual meetings, either on its own or jointly with the BGS. General meetings take place every three years. Both Bulgarian nationals and foreign scholars who have made significant contributions to the advancement of mineralogy in Bulgaria can be elected as honorary members of the society. Preparations are currently underway for MM9 (<http://www.bgminsoc.bg/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/MM9Circular1Web.pdf>). (Tune in regularly for COVID-19 related updates!). The scientific program will include four sessions: Mineralogical Research and Museums; Archaeomineralogy and Cultural Heritage; Collection Management and Development; Museums, Environment and Society.

Members of the BMS have been principally responsible for the systematic regional study of Bulgarian mineralogy, as well as of crystal morphology and the chemistry of different ore and associated minerals. Among these, of major importance to Bulgaria, has been the study of Cu–Au deposits in the Srednogorie Zone and of the Pb–Zn deposits in the Rhodope Mountains. To date, some 500 minerals, including 11 new species, have been identified in Bulgaria. A few of these new discoveries remain unique. Other “Bulgarian” minerals, such as strashimirite [Cu₈(AsO₄)₄(OH)₄·5H₂O] and kostovite (CuAuTe₄), have since been reported from many other places around the world. During the 1980s, Bulgarian mineralogists, led by I. Kostov, were involved in a major collaborative program with their Russian colleagues (D.P. Grigoriev, N.Z. Evzikova, and others) aimed at establishing how spatial and temporal changes in crystal morphology were linked to the natural processes of crystal nucleation and growth. The outcome of this program was the recognition of evolutionary trends in crystal habits peculiar to individual mineral bodies, deposits, and ore fields. These ideas were initially reported at the 13th IMA meeting in Varna in 1982.

An essential part of current BMS activities is the publication of *Geochemistry, Mineralogy and Petrology* (ISSN 0324-1718), which in 1975 succeeded the *Bulletin of the Geological Institute, Series Geochemistry, Mineralogy and Petrography*. It is a nonperiodic journal, which is distributed in some 30 countries by the library exchange department of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

BULGARIA'S HERITAGE

Besides the two national museums mentioned above, both universities and research institutes house mineral collections representing Bulgarian and foreign localities. Thanks to the discovery of emeralds (Fig. 4) and other rare minerals, the Urdini Ezera site in the Rila Mountains was declared a national mineralogical reserve in 1984. Because Bulgaria is richly endowed in prehistoric and historic cultural heritage, a large volume of recent publications and other forms of research activity have focused on archaeometry, archaeometallurgy, and related fields. Some of the noteworthy examples include the Neolithic Balkan nephrite culture, some of Europe's oldest copper mines (near Stara Zagora), the prehistoric salt works at Provadia–Solnitsata (from six millenia ago), the world's oldest gold treasure in the Varna Necropolis, plus gold- and graphite-decorated pottery and other artifacts from a variety of prehistoric sites. Do not miss your opportunity to see Bulgaria's mineral heritage and its extraordinary history. We look forward to seeing you at MM9!



FIGURE 4 Beryl (emerald) from the Urdini Lakes area of the Rila Mountains.

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