

Analyses d'ouvrages / Book reviews

Fowler D. G. 2007. — *Zambian Plants: Their Vernacular Names and Uses*. Kew Publishing, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 298 p.
ISBN 978-1-84246-212-6.
Format: 29.7 × 20.9 cm. Price: 50.00 £.

The present book is a good illustration of the bright expansion of a primarily linguistic work, i.e. a dictionary of Ila – one among more than seventy languages spoken in Zambia – published in 2000. The author was struck by the richness of Ila in vernacular names, especially for woody plants and, encouraged by several field foresters and botanists from Kew, he decided to spread his inquiry in 15 other linguistic groups, to harmonise the variant spellings, and to coordinate these data with both sound scientific names and the reported medicinal uses. Of course, the author inserted and checked the literature compiled by many missionaries and district officers since the early 20th century ago.

The presentation of results makes this book easy to use for further developments, especially for field researchers. All the names (families, species, common names, uses) are alphabetically arranged and dispatched in five separate parts, giving the state of knowledge by the decreasing range in combination of known data: 1) families-species-local names-uses (incl. sources); 2) families-species-uses (no local names); 3) local names-uses (unidentified plants); 4) local names-species; and 5) diseases-traditional remedies. This last part is introduced by a short and interesting comment in the interpretation of the medicinal practice in Zambia and the classical role of tropical forests as sources of active drugs. A detailed taxonomic index ends the book.

Although the immediate usefulness of this work, it is unfortunate that no herbarium specimen was linked to vernacular names (e.g., by referring to a database), so that the Zambian pharmacopoeia should be more firmly established. However, the misprints are very

few for such a catalogue, but some filings appear questionable (e.g., *Bixa orellana* in the Dipterocarpaceae, at p. 23).

As reminded by Paul P. Smith in his stimulating foreword, a right knowledge of wild plants remains an essential basis for ensuring the survival of mankind. It is to be hoped traditional botanical learning will be always kept and summarized with the care demonstrated by D. G. Fowler, so that sound botanical and pharmacological interpretations are made possible.

Thierry Deroin

Rasolohery A. 2006. — *Inventaire des fougères de Zahamena, Madagascar*. Missouri Botanical Garden, Madagascar Research and Conservation Program, 111 p., 51 figs.
Format: 25,8 × 17,7 cm.
Pas de prix indiqué.

Cet ouvrage sans prétention a pour objet de faire mieux connaître la flore ptéridologique de la réserve de Zahamena, située dans la province de Toamasina, à 20 km à l'est du lac Alaotra, sur le rebord oriental des « Hautes-Terres ». En effet, avec des altitudes comprises entre 750 et 1500 m, et un climat perhumide à humide, les fougères y sont particulièrement diversifiées (230 espèces, réparties en 63 genres et 24 familles).

L'aspect pratique de ce guide est souligné par l'organisation du texte, avec la table des matières, les index alphabétiques et le glossaire placés en tête, ainsi que par l'importance de l'illustration finement exécutée par Roger Lala Andriamiarisoa. L'introduction tient en sept pages seulement, mais elle est très informative et renferme de précieux conseils de récolte. On notera aussi le souci de mentionner les noms vernaculaires, les usages locaux, et même les synonymes avec les références bibliographiques précises. Il n'y a aucune clé de détermination, mais les principaux caractères des familles et des genres sont donnés en quelques lignes.

Les espèces sont décrites dans un style « télégraphique », un peu comme des étiquettes de terrain. L'écologie, la fréquence, la distribution et même les références des spécimens étudiés sont précisées.

Ce travail est donc remarquable par son approche didactique car, à partir d'un rappel scolaire des bases de la ptéridologie, il parvient à introduire le lecteur assez loin dans la taxonomie des fougères malgaches. Le grand nombre de genres présentés en fait un guide de terrain précieux, au moins pour toute la zone orientale de la Grande Île.

C'est pourquoi il est dommage de constater certaines maladresses, qu'il aurait été facile de corriger dans un texte aussi court. Le glossaire (p. iiiii) présente des fautes d'orthographe nombreuses, et on n'y trouve pas le terme technique « sobole », employé dans la présentation des Sélaginellacées (p. 10). Plus loin (p. 14) on parle de nervures « auréolées » (pour aréolées). Inconvénients plus graves dans un ouvrage sans clé : les planches sont rarement en regard du texte correspondant et, d'autre part, elles ne montrent pas toujours les caractères diagnostiques majeurs. Par exemple, les stipules basales de la fronde de *Marattia boivinii* (fig. 8, p. 17) ne sont pas figurées. L'illustration semble avoir été exécutée sans contrôle de l'auteur.

Cet ouvrage, réalisé dans le cadre du programme International Cooperative Biodiversity Group (ICBG), avec le soutien financier de l'American National Institute of Health et de la National Science Foundation, et l'appui scientifique notamment du Missouri Botanical Garden, du CNARP (Antananarivo) et du Dr. F. Rakotondrainibe (P), est donc une excellente initiative, mais devrait faire l'objet d'une solide révision éditoriale, ainsi que d'une diffusion moins confidentielle (150 exemplaires seulement).

Thierry Deroin

Tohmé G. & Tohmé H. 2007. — *Illustrated Flora of Lebanon, 2600 wild flowers*. CNRS Publication, National Council for Scientific Research, Beirut, Lebanon, 609 p.

ISBN 978-9953-0-1085-4.

Format: 30.4 × 21.5 × 3.7 cm. Price: 75.00 \$.

After the classical floras of G. E. Post (*Flora of Syria, Palestine and Sinai*, 1932), and P. Mouterde (*Nouvelle*

Flore du Liban et de la Syrie, 1966-1983), no floristic survey of Lebanon was undertaken, mainly due to the political troubles and conflicts which tore this captivating country apart. Nevertheless the need of such a large work appeared desperately urgent with the pacification since 1993, when Lebanese environment was suddenly altered by excessive urban and tourist developments. These constraints added further to those from time immemorial common around the Mediterranean basin, such as uncontrolled grazing, logging and forest fires.

In this context, the *Illustrated Flora of Lebanon* is noteworthy by its basically ecological approach.

First it was written by a couple of passionate and well-experienced naturalists, famous in Lebanon for their action in teaching, research and education for protection of the environment. They published intensively on entomology, at first under the supervision of Pr. Pierre-Paul Grassé, but quickly spread their activities toward several other zoological fields (mammals, birds, and terrestrial molluscs) and ecological studies, performing bright university careers. Their botanical work is logically in line with these previous concerns, and was prepared by five floristic notes in the *Lebanese Science Journal*, and above all by a preliminary field-guide: *A Thousand and One Flowers of Lebanon*, published in 2002.

Second, Georges and Henriette Tohmé focussed in the most significant features, so that this flora may be used both as a field-guide as well as an updated background document for further studies on the Lebanese vascular plants. The emphasis is put in the retrieval of all previously quoted plants. In this scope, the authors travelled the roads of the whole country during 12 years, looking after rare plants in their classical localities, even discovering them in many new ones, and sometimes noting possible extinction or recent introduction of foreign species (e.g., *Ipomoea sinensis* likely transferred by migrating birds from North East Africa). All sampled specimens (now c. 4000 sheets) were properly housed in the new herbarium of the CNRS (Beirut), where they are computerized in a database similar to SONNERAT, used at P, and available for consultation. They drew thus the current condition of the Lebanese flora, carefully and firmly based on a good knowledge of field, botanical literature and Lebanese collections of P (especially

Blanche, Frère Louis, Gombault and Thiébaud), those of AUB and G being already well-analyzed by Post and Mouterde. Moreover, and despite the unfortunate episode of July 2006, the writing of this Flora was an opportunity for restoring fruitful contacts between Lebanon and Paris, and for establishing exchanges of duplicates between their herbaria, with the helpful support of the CNRS (Beirut) and the Ministère français des Affaires étrangères.

The *Illustrated Flora* is concisely presented by an enthusiastic foreword of Pr. Mouïin Hamzé, Secretary General of National Council for Scientific Research and by the authors themselves. Plant families, genera and species are filed alphabetically. Each family is introduced by some descriptive sentences, and characters of genera or groups of genera are frequently given (e.g., Caryophyllaceae, p. 173). Next to each colour illustration – sometimes with a magnified detail –, we have an informative legend with the scientific name, main localities, habitat, distribution, vernacular names (English, French and Arabic), a brief description of the species and its flowering time. When the plant was no more found, a picture from a sheet of P is given (e.g., *Cousinia alleppica* Boiss., p. 73). In some cases (especially in Apiaceae), no specimen appears to be available, and the species is briefly described after

literature. As expected for Lebanon the chapters about Fabaceae, Lamiaceae, Liliaceae and Scrophulariaceae are very wide and nice to consult, however the most remarkable attention was paid to Poaceae, a highly ecologically relevant family covering here more than 40 pages.

As a whole 2597 species are reported for Lebanon, of which 1185 are growing in the East Mediterranean region only. There are no more than 3% endemic species for Lebanon, but many of them are endangered, especially the coastal ones. Yet the classical literature pinpointed 118 species, which were not found since more than 40 years ago.

The authors did not intend to do a taxonomical revision of all vascular plants growing in Lebanon, and refer them in major part to species and varieties names already recognized by Mouterde. Such a work would have greatly delayed the publication, and moreover need a consideration of the floristics for the whole Near East, an aim outside the scope of this handy book, and moreover hardly feasible in the extant political situation.

In brief, this wonderful book provides an updated account about the Lebanese vascular flora and will be of the highest interest to all naturalists and ecologists concerned with the East Mediterranean basin.

Thierry Deroin