

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LICHENOLOGY IN GREECE

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In this article, a brief presentation of the history of lichenology in Greece is attempted, mainly on the base of the material assembled for the checklist of the lichens of Greece (which is presently in preparation by S.A. Pirintsos, S. Loppi, H. Sipman and P.L. Nimis). The checklist is being carried out in the framework of the program for monitoring the biodiversity of Mediterranean lichens, within the context of an international project of OPTIMA under the co-ordination of Prof. P.L. Nimis.

History of lichenological exploration

The classic and Roman periods

In these periods, lichens have been reported by Theophrastus (372-287 B.C.) and Dioscorides (1st century A.D.) as sources of dyes and substances of high pharmacological interest.

1700 to 1840

The expansion of the use of lichens as dyes has been reported by Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (Professor and director at the Jardin des Plantes, Paris) for the 16th and 17th centuries, but it has not yet been checked whether this pre-Linnaean traveller visiting the Orient passing through Greece (1700-1702) collected lichen samples from Greece or described lichens.

From the meta-Linnaean part of this period, it is known that the French explorers J.B.G.M. Bory de Saint-Vincent and L.C. Chaubard, during their scientific expedition in Greece, reported almost 50 species of lichens in their publication entitled "Expédition Scientifique de Morée" which appeared in 1832.

1840 to 1880

G. Koerber and T. Von Heldreich are the two scientists which published about the lichens of Greece. Koerber published an article reporting about 40 lichen taxa, while Von Heldreich, the director of the Botanic Garden of Athens,

published an article about *Roccella phycopsis* Ach. from the Archipelago (Aegean sea).

Late 19th and early 20th century

This period is characterized by an intense floristic activity. Among the others, M. Cengia-Sambo, E. Halácsy, J. Harmand, R. Maire, A. Hayek, A.H. Magnusson, K. Rechinger, J. Steiner. and A. Zahlbruckner published articles about Greek lichens.

1930 to present

In the first part of this period, reports of Greek lichens were included in the publications of G. Lettau, A.H. Magnusson, K. Rechinger, V. Räsänen, M. Servit and Ö. Szatala. One of the most important publications of this period is the paper of Karl Heinz Rechinger titled “Flora Aegean” (1943), where a large number of lichen species is listed.

In the second part of this period, an ever increasing number of botanists have been active in the exploration and study of the Greek lichen flora, and in 1984 the first article on lichens and air pollution in Athens appeared by Eitschberger, who surveyed the epiphytic lichen communities in the low-elevation metropolitan area, while in 1988 the first article where lichens have been used for monitoring metal pollution at the fir forest in Parnis National Park appeared by Heliotis et al.

Unfortunately, at the moment only a small number of Greek lichenologists is active (the author is in contact with less than five people), while the absence of a Greek Lichenological Society could be considered as a drawback for the further development of lichenology in Greece.

One of the active laboratories in the field of lichenology is the Laboratory of Plant Ecology and Terrestrial Ecosystem Management (Univ. of Crete) under the supervision of the author. The lichenological activities of the Laboratory are mainly concentrated on lichen ecology and biomonitoring of air pollution. Equipments for physiological and molecular techniques are included among the lab facilities and the head of the laboratory is in close collaboration with several lichenologists from abroad, e.g. Stefano Loppi (Univ. of Siena), Pier Luigi Nimis (Univ. of Trieste), Martin Grube (Univ. of Graz), Harrie Sipman (Free Univ. of Berlin), William Purvis (Natural History Museum of London), Gregory Insarov (Institute of Climate Change, Russia), Laszlo Lokos (Natural History Museum of Budapest), Mirko Cvijan (Univ. of Belgrade).