

Preface

During the last decades Turkey experienced an enormous touristic boom. At present about 20 million visitors are pouring into the country each year, among them a considerable number with an interest in Turkey's natural beauties. Unfortunately this desire to learn more about nature is hindered gravely by the lack of well illustrated literature. With 4153 species of ferns and flowering plants in full colour this book intends to close the gap. It should make plant identifications much easier for both, professional botanists but also interested "laymen" as entomologists, geographers, gardeners or naturalists.

Knowledge of the Turkish Flora is still rather rudimentary in comparison with the situation in European countries. This is due partly to its high botanic diversity, but also to the peculiar development of scientific botany in Turkey. Until the middle of the 20. century, floristic exploration was mainly done by foreigners. The most important of these early pioneers was PIERRE EDMOND BOISSIER, a Swiss citizen. With his monumental "Flora Orientalis" (5 vols., 1867-1888) he laid the fundamentals for all further research in this area. The first local botanist with an international reputation was GEORGES VINCENT AZNAVOUR (1861-1920), a wealthy Armenian of Christian confession. His collection of plants from the Bosphorus region comprised about 20.000 samples. After his death Turkish botany again sank back into stagnation. One possible reason was repeated ethnic cleansing by the Turkish Republic. Thereby a considerable part of the intelligentsia was slaughtered or expelled, namely Armenians and Greeks.

A final impetus to the exploration of the Turkish flora came from the Flora of Turkey Project (DAVIES & al. 1965-2000). Specialists from many European countries contributed to this monumental work. One of the most active collectors at that time was my compatriot Mrs. FRIEDERIKE SORGER (Linz). Her private herbarium of Turkish plants finally comprised about 33,000 samples. The Flora of Turkey Project was also a considerable stimulus for the development of systematic botany in Turkey. In consequence the last supplement to the "Flora of Turkey" was already published by an exclusively Turkish team of scientists (GUENER & al. 2000).

The present book is the result of my 5-years stay as a teacher at the Austrian school ("Avusturya Lisesi") in Istanbul. Field work for this project was originally planned for at least 8 years. Unfortunately, however, my Turkish work permit was withdrawn suddenly in summer 2004. The Turkish authorities argued that I was „a danger to the security of the Turkish Republic". But apart from a single use of the word "Kurdistan" in a completely apolitical manner there was no concrete accusation whatsoever against me. Unfortunately, the Austrian government showed no interest at all in starting diplomatic quarrels with the Turks because of this human rights violation against an Austrian teacher. Therefore all my attempts to take legal steps against this completely arbitrary verdict were undermined by the Austrian authorities. In the end also my wife lost her job at the Austrian school and we had to leave Turkey¹

¹ The withdrawal of my working permit was an obvious violation of articles 6 und 8 of the Human Rights Convention (right for a fair trial, protection of the family) and the Agreement of Association between Turkey and the EU. Nonetheless the Austrian education ministry ordered my immediate transfer back to Austria, refusing any possibility of objection. In addition the Austrian ministry of foreign affairs did everything possible to hinder my defence against the Turkish verdict. For form's sake the lawyer of the Austrian embassy in Ankara was entrusted with my defence. But the man did not even write a simple objection in time. In last minute I had to do everything by myself, including translation works. Then at the crucial moment of deciding over a suit against the Turkish authorities, I was forced to renounce due to false informations from the ministry. Attempts of the Austrian Television Company (ORF) to inform the public about the affair were blocked. Only some months later, when my case already had been discussed in the Austrian press, the ORF was allowed to report; but this was done in a completely one-sided manner. Finally the education ministry directly intervened, forbidding any further information of the press. But the peak of hypocrisy was reached by Dr. U. Plassnik, Austrian minister for foreign relations, when she informed the public about her personal efforts to solve my case. As far as I can judge, these efforts had been purely symbolic. Their intention was to deceive the public over the previous nine month of continuous sabotage by her own ministry.

With our return to Austria my botanical projects in Turkey came to an abrupt end. Also this book could not be finished in the planned way. A lot of species I would have liked to include could not be photographed any more (e.g. *Phelypaea tournefortii*, *Zelkova carpinifolia*). But nonetheless about 45% of the Turkish Flora could be illustrated, making this photo guide by far the most comprehensive one for Mediterranean, Black Sea and Irano-Turanian flora. As I intended to keep the book within reasonable dimensions, text had to be limited to an absolute necessary minimum. Therefore no keys were added. For non specialists they would be of a rather limited use, whereas for scientific purposes they never could replace the use of "Flora of Turkey".

The preparation of a book of this kind would have been completely impossible without the continuous support of my wife Inge. In the first years she was a most reliable and patient companion on my journeys to the most remote corners of Anatolia. At this time we climbed together a lot of the best known peaks of the country. After the birth of our son Felix, she took by far the bigger part of parental obligations, thus keeping me free for further work on the project.

Another crucial point was access to scientific literature. In Turkey I was confronted with such a lot of bureaucratic obstacles that I decided to do my literature studies whenever possible in Austria. Most disappointing was the refusal of admitting loans, photocopies or photos by the Istanbul office of WWF, which is in custody of a rather interesting collection of local botanical literature.

The contrast to the generous and always friendly treatment by my Austrian colleagues could not have been greater. Dr. G. Leute and Dr. R. Eberwein, both botanists at the Kärnter Landesherbar, gave me free access to scientific literature in a completely unbureaucratic way. The same is valid for the botanists at the Vienna Natural History Museum, Dr. E. Vitek und Dr. B. Wallnöfer as well as for Doz. Dr. F. Speta (Biologiezentrum Linz). The latter also controlled my identifications of *Scilla* and *Ornithogalum* and identified *Ornithogalum cydni*, not included in Flora of Turkey. Mag. H. Standhartinger (Linz) had the kindness to review the English text.

All of them I would like to thank for their help.

Gerhard Pils

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