

***Physospermum cornubiense* in Cyprus – reported in error**

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Abstract. – It can be shown that the sole record for *Physospermum cornubiense* from Cyprus is based on a misidentification. It refers to *Scaligeria*, most probably to *S. alziarii*.

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Introduction

In the “Flora of Cyprus” (Meikle 1977, 1985) only very few taxa have been accepted in the absence of substantiating specimens. An umbellifer species belonging to that group is *Physospermum cornubiense* (L.) DC., which is known to occur in parts of W Europe and which is widespread in S Europe, eastwards to the Caucasus and N Iran (Meikle 1977, Hand 2011). According to Meikle (1977) there is “only one record, and the specimen has not been examined, though, as the species was known to Kotschy [its collector], one may reasonably assume that his identification is correct”. The outcome of a search for the specimen in question revealed that Kotschy’s record is most probably based on a misidentification.

Results

Kotschy (in Unger & Kotschy 1865: 308) lists *P. aquilegi[i]folium* (All.) W. D. J. Koch, nowadays treated as synonym of *P. cornubiense*, with his specimen no. 935, collected “Bei Paleo Milo unweit vom Kloster Panteleimon” [near Paleo Milo not far from Panteleimon Monastery]. No collection date is given but the period of collection can be narrowed down. Unfortunately, the itinerary listed by Meikle (1977: 9) is incomplete. Based on the climatological details presented by Unger & Kotschy (1865: 83) the authors descended from the Troodos mountains to the wider Morphou area and the adjacent foothills of Pentadaktylos range between 23rd and 25th of May 1862 before returning to Larnaka.

Meikle (1977) did not find specimen no. 935 in any of the herbaria that he had taken into account. It is not clearly stated by him which collections apart from those at British herbaria were considered. Further searching by the present author in various German collections which hold more or less extensive Kotschy gatherings were not successful (B, GOET, JE, HAL). The search was therefore expanded to the potentially misidentified taxa including *Scaligeria* and eventually, a specimen was found at P (Muséum national d’Histoire naturelle, Paris 2017).

Specimen P 03212527 comprises several young infructescences without any leaves and without subterranean parts. The label reads “ad Paleo Milo prope Panteleimon”, which is a translation of the site description given by Unger & Kotschy (1865: 309). The specimen is said to be collected on 23rd of May 1862 which matches the above

mentioned period of time. The material is difficult to identify with certainty because of the lack of leaves and subterranean parts. It is most likely *S. alziarii*, a recently described endemic of Cyprus, probably the only species occurring in the Pentadaktylos range and its foothills (Hand & al. 2012).

Kotschy never used identical collection numbers for gatherings of two different taxa; a thorough control of his lists confirms that. However, it is most likely that Kotschy found *S. alziarii* and was confused by its unusual characters compared to *S. napiformis* well known to him from travels in the E Mediterranean. This may have led him to the initial diagnosis of *Physospermum*. Obviously, he became aware of his misidentification, listed the umbellifer from Paleo Milo under *S. cretica* (Mill.) Boiss. (now *S. napiformis* (Spreng.) Grande) and forgot to eliminate the entry under *Physospermum*, since both entries are given the identical collection no. 935. This also escaped the attention of Meikle (1977) who lists it both under *S. cretica* and *P. cornubiense*.

Such details will probably never be proven but in the absence of any specimen of *P. cornubiense* from Cyprus it is recommended to eliminate this umbellifer taxon from the island's checklist. The only known specimen no. 935 of Kotschy's travel in 1862 is definitely not *P. cornubiense*.

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