



The rediscovery of *Astragalus autranii* (Fabaceae) on Mt Tomor, south central Albania

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Abstract

Astragalus autranii (Fabaceae) placed by Sytin & Podlech in a section of its own (*A. sect. Baldaccia*) was described from a single specimen in the Barbey-Boissier Herbarium at Geneva. Our observations show that its placement in *A. sect. Hololeuce* would also be appropriate. The species was first collected by Baldacci in 1892 on Mt Tomor in south central Albania and rediscovered by Markgraf at the *locus classicus* in June 1928. A complete and amended description of the species is here provided as corolla features were not available in the type material and the flower colour was incorrectly described by Markgraf. Information on habitat, ecology and threat status are also detailed for the first time. Mt Tomor is designated as a protected National Park; however, some of the *Astragalus* populations may be affected by future road construction.

Key words: amended species description, Balkans, narrow endemic, Southern Albanian mountains

Introduction

In the year 1895 Antonio Baldacci described a new species of *Astragalus* endemic to the summit of Mt Tomor, east of the town of Berat in present-day south central Albania (Baldacci 1894, 1895). He named it after his friend, Eugène Autran, curator of the Boissier herbarium in Geneva. The species is very rare, being known only from the single plant collected in August 1892 which is preserved in the Barbey-Boissier Herbarium at Geneva. The protologue can be seen in Fig. 1. There has obviously been a change in species name and authorship before publication as *A. baldaccii* Barbey & Autran, *sp. nov.* is pencilled on an attached label together with the date 22 June 1894. A second plant collected by Markgraf in June 1928 at the *locus classicus* (Markgraf 1931) and deposited in the herbarium at Berlin was apparently destroyed when the city was bombed in an Allied raid during the Second World War. Alston and Sandwith (1940) did not mention the species during their exploration of Mt Tomor during 12–15 August 1935.

The silvery-grey, adpressed-sericeous leaves of *Astragalus autranii* Bald. are reminiscent of the leaves of the yellow-flowered *A. idaeus* Bunge endemic to the summit area of Mt Dikti on Crete and the lilac-purple *A. agraniotii* Orph. ex Boiss. from the summit of Mt Parnon in southern Peloponnese, and in *Flora Europaea* (Tutin & al. 1969) it is positioned between these two species. Both of them belong to *A. sect. Chlorosphaerus* Bunge, which was united with *A. sect. Hololeuce* Bunge by Chamberlain & Matthews (1970). Podlech & Sytin (2002), however, considered *A. autranii* to have unique features, and established *A. sect. Baldaccia* Sytin & Podlech to accommodate it; there it comprises the type and only species. The section was retained by Podlech (2008) in his review of the genus in Europe, unchanged in the most recent monograph for the Old World (Podlech & Zarre 2013).

Astragalus autranii had previously been noted by Barbey and Autran as belonging to *A. sect. Dasyphyllium* Bunge (see Fig. 1, pencilled label) and placed in *A. sect. Stereothrix* Bunge by Baldacci (1895). Both these sections are defined by a caulescent herbaceous perennial habit, simple-hairy leaflets, non-inflated calyx and sessile flowers.