

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Stefan Stanev. 2010

**History of Botany in Bulgaria (until 1944)**

Plovdiv Univ. Paisiy Hilendarski Press, Plovdiv. 701 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-954-423-631-1 (in Bulgarian with English summary)

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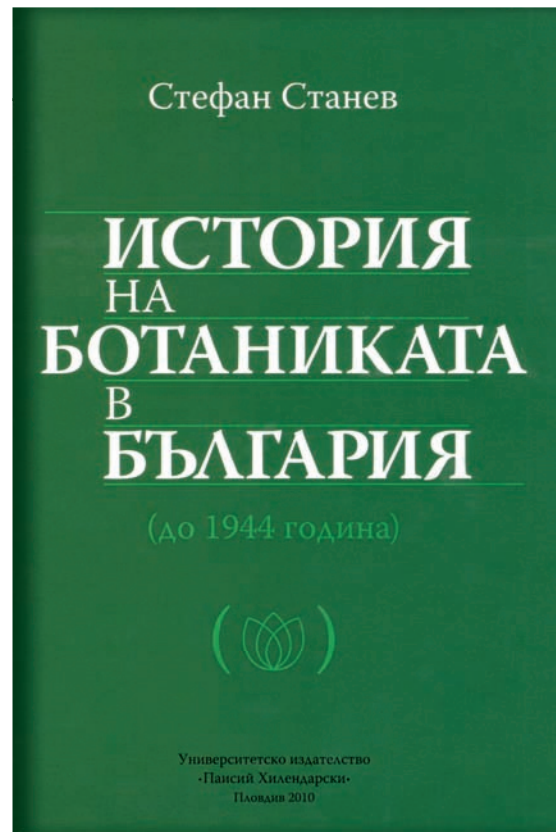
**Book chapters:** 1. Botanical centres in Bulgaria. 2. Morphology and anatomy. 3. Embryology and cytology. 4. Physiology and biochemistry. 5. Floristics. 6. Taxonomy. 7. Phytogeography. 8. Ecology. 9. Phytocoenology. 10. Palaeobotany. 11. Phytofolklore

*History of Botany in Bulgaria*, another new book by Prof. Stefan Stanev, could be defined concisely as an event in book publishing, a significant work to be read and reread by all specialists in the field.

The need in such a book is beyond doubt. Resurrecting the past, it projects its ideas to the present generations and to posterity.

The author presents the development of botany since its emergence in Bulgaria and up to 1944 – a period during which, according to him, it “formulates itself and forms traditions and trends of its own, undergoes difficult moments and times of upsurge, marks definite success and establishes scholarly names in the scientific world”. It would be appropriate also to add that the book not only characterises the status and problems of the development of botany, but on many occasions outlines the ideas and ways for their solution, the methods and means for their achievement, the enrichment of knowledge by the newly emerging sciences.

The author’s difficulties in making the book are conditioned, above all, by the complexity of biological problems, specialisation of biological and especial-



ly botanical studies, the huge volume of information, few summarising works and distance back in time.

The development centres of botany in Bulgaria in the years after the Liberation in 1868 underlay the composition of the book. The nine chapters correspond to the hierarchy of organisation of the live systems reflected in the complexes of different profiles and the sciences studying them. Although without any direct emphasis, the author starts with the sciences dealing with micro- and mesosystems studying the plants on cell, tissue, organ and organism level, and proceeds through the species level to the macrosystems, with phytocoenology, phytogeography and synecology, respectively.

Structuring of the different chapters is subjected to the specificities of sciences and the profiles in them, to the subdivisions and their problems, but irrespective of the differences, they always start with notes on their emergence and end with summarising notes and

bibliography. Especially valuable is the information on teaching the respective disciplines.

This huge volume of material is presented with extraordinary skill in combining detail with generalisation, probing into the heart of the problem and revealing the laws, commensurability with the world levels of that time, and often of the present time too.

The book is a result of the never-ending, accumulated through the years and the entire creative life of the author interest in the history of science, combined with an enviable and seldom encountered erudition and ability of tracing down, accumulating, analysing and summarising a vast number of literary data. Each of the 700 pages of the book bears the stamp of the author's competency and precision. Because it is necessary not only to thoroughly know the scientific papers, but to possess a notable encyclopaedic biological culture so as to analyse in-depth the versatile ideas of the builders of Bulgarian Botany, their thoughts and scholarly insights, in order to assess the stance and precision of the conclusions, to take an attitude to the newly discovered species for the Bulgarian flora, to discuss the sundry theoretical interpretations of the global problems of phylogeny and evolution, and to properly summarise the various contributions.

If the history of nations should be impartial, in order to reflect the objective truth, then it seems proper for the history of science to reflect undeniable truth, being enriched and updated at the same time by the author's views, especially if this author is selflessly dedicated to the idea. With reliance on the facts and respect for the creative scholar Prof. Stanev makes his readers part of the difficulties, objective or otherwise, considerably pointing out some weaknesses and looking for an explanation in the historical moment, the level of knowledge, etc.

The author's position could be often found in the small print of the footnotes. Thus, for instance, noting that a photograph of vegetation was taken without mentioning the association and dominant types, the author states: *"Irrespective of these notes, which could not be regarded as faults, for such was the practice of research then, one should point out that the descriptions of Daki Jordanov were precise, comprehensive and give a clear idea about the vegetation cover in the investigated regions"*. Or in another citation: *"Kitanov wrote that this type of plant formation had been mentioned for the first time by Matfeld in 1943. He probably meant the botanical literature, because in the forestry writings*

*there were several papers on riparian forests already in 1899"*. Occasionally, emotion sparkles in some of the footnotes, for instance, on pg. 667 one can read: *"The interest of our first teachers in natural sciences in the phytofolklore completely corresponds to the spirit of the Revival ideas still enthralling the young intelligentsia after the Liberation. These noble motives and enthusiasm – to find out and promote things native, Bulgarian, to make one's efforts useful to the people and to contribute to their speedier cultural, educational and scientific maturing – could justify to a certain extent some of their omissions and partialities in collection, publication and establishment of phytofolklore."*

Although the book is dedicated to the history of science in Bulgaria, in many instances the state of researches in other Balkan states and in Europe in general is commented on. Thus their commensurability is outlined, as well as the pride that we had such creative workers like Academicians Boris Stefanov, Nikolai Stojanov, Daki Jordanov, Prof. Boris Kitanov, etc., valued in Europe both in the past and now.

Writing of the book has required tremendous efforts in tracing out some long-forgotten journals, archives, reports, original articles difficult to find both in Bulgaria and abroad, as well as in making sense of them and analysing their content, in following up the development and unfolding of problems, clash of positions, flight of thought and imagination in the philosophical concepts, of the progress from descriptive to experimental and precise botany, of specialisation and differentiation of new lines in it. Hundreds of thousands of pages, hundreds of titles and authors! Mind-shattering wealth of facts!

Only a man, who lives with science, who breaths with science, who has become part of its history and for whom science is a mission and destiny, could pen such a work. Only then, by reviving history, one could create something unique, like this botanical Green Bible, which should not be eschewed by any Bulgarian expert of self-respect.

This book appears at a time of changing values, of silicone thinking and culture, of drastic elementariness, mercantilism and guillotining of the spiritual, of razing the creative self-confidence to the ground. Besides other things, this book brings hope. It is for this hope and for that unprecedented Green Bible that we want to thank the author. Maybe this book is his Everest, but let him remember that there are other peaks awaiting him. May he live a long and healthy life to climb them all!

Mention deserves too the work of the book's editor, Assoc. Prof. Dr Petya Dushkova.

And let me finish with an old wisdom that *history is useful not only because we read in it about the past, but because we can see in it also the future. History of*

*Botany in Bulgaria* makes us believe that, no matter what, there is a future: for Nature, for science, for the creative person.

That is why, congratulations and thanks to the author, Prof. Stefan Stanev.

Arne Strid & Barbro Strid (eds). 2010

## Sibthorp & Smith: Flora Graeca

Vols 3–4 (1819–1824)

Annotated re-issue

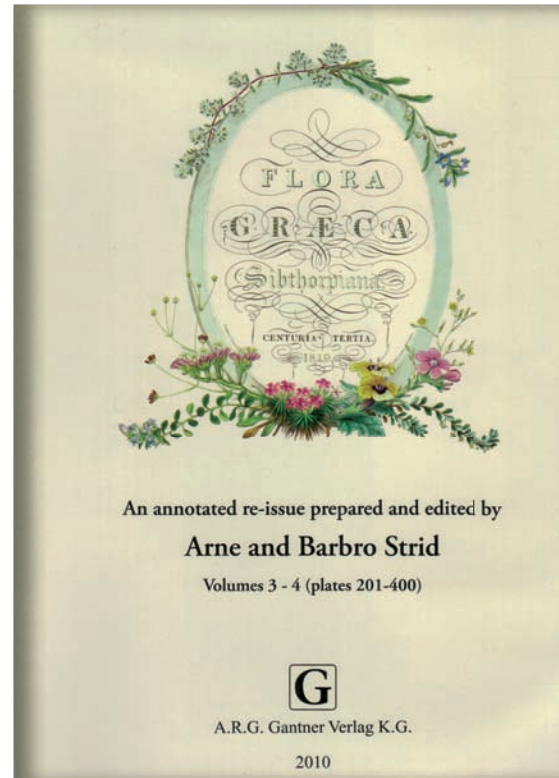
A.R.G. Gantner Verlag, K.G., Ruggell. 412 + v pp. Hardback.  
ISBN 978-3-906166-80-3

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The second volume of the annotated reissue of Sibthorp & Smith's *Flora Graeca* has been recently brought out. It comprises 200 species presented in vols 3 & 4 (plates 201 to 400) of the original. The arrangement of taxa follows that in Linnaeus's *Species Plantarum* (1753), and thus represents a mixture of several families as understood nowadays, e.g. in *Flora Europaea* (1964–1980). It covers parts of the following families and larger genera: *Aceraceae*, *Amaryllidaceae*, *Apiaceae* (many genera), *Berberidaceae*, *Campanulaceae* (*Campanula*), *Caryophyllaceae* (*Dianthus*, *Petrorhagia* and many other genera), *Chenopodiaceae*, *Convolvulaceae*, *Cuscutaceae*, *Ericaceae*, *Gentianaceae*, *Liliaceae* s.l. (e.g. *Allium*), *Linaceae*, *Plumbaginaceae* (*Limonium*), *Polygonaceae*, *Rhamnaceae*, *Rutaceae*, *Saxifragaceae* (*Saxifraga*), *Scrophulariaceae* (*Verbascum*), *Solanaceae*, *Tamaricaceae*, *Thymelaeaceae*, *Violaceae*, *Zygophyllaceae*, etc.

The original *Flora Graeca* by Sibthorp & Smith is considered one of the greatest illustrated Floras produced in 10 volumes in 1806–1840. It contains excellent colour illustrations (hand-coloured copper engravings based on the superb water-colours by F. Bauer) of 966 plant species mostly observed and collected during the botanical tour of Prof. John Sibthorp



(Oxford) and artist Ferdinand Bauer (Vienna) to Greece, Cyprus and West Anatolia in 1786–1787. The *Flora* was printed in less than 30 copies which were mostly privately owned and only a few are kept in public libraries. Therefore, it has been basically unavailable for study, especially to those from the region the *Flora* covers. It was an excellent idea of the authors, Arne and Barbro Strid, to make this reissue to which there is an easier access. Especially, considering the promise that the original texts of *Flora Graeca* will be supplemented on a CD with the last, fifth volume of the reissue.

The Introduction to the second volume briefly presents the coverage of the book and mentions some species of particular interest, e.g. *Hyosciamus aureus*, *Rhamnus sibthorpianus*, *Pancratium maritimum*, *Sternbergia colchiciflora*, *Fritillaria sibthorpi-*

na, *Bruckenthalia spiculifolia*, and *Saxifraga sempervivum*. Also, it refers to the Introduction in the first volume which provides information on the production of both the original *Flora Graeca* (details taken from an article of Stearn (1967) and especially from the *Flora Graeca Story* by Lack with Mabberly, 1999) and this reissued “pseudo-facsimile”. It must have been very time-consuming and difficult for the Strids to produce this edition, but the result deserves the efforts! It is a real pleasure to hold the volumes, watch the beautiful and botanically precise colour illustrations and enjoy reading. Each species is presented on a two-page spread with the colour plate to the right. In the upper half of the left-hand page are placed the comments on the current name and taxonomic status, ecology and distribution of the species, the most likely locality of its observation/collection by Sibthorp

and Bauer, and a concise morphological description of the taxon. In the lower half of the page a dot distribution map generated from the extensive Flora Hellenica Database is presented for those taxa occurring within present-day Greece.

At the end of the volume an alphabetical index of the Latin names of the taxa facilitates the finding of species (which is of great help to users who are not familiar in detail with the arrangement of taxa in Linnaeus's *Species Plantarum*).

The book is undeniably a treasure for anybody interested in botanical art. However, with the comments, concise morphological descriptions and distribution maps, it is also very informative for botanists studying the plants of Greece and adjacent areas in the Eastern Mediterranean. The book is available from Koeltz Scientific Books, <http://www.koeltz.com>.

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS\*

Matevski, V. 2010

### **The flora of the Republic of Macedonia**

#### **Vol. 2, book 1**

Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Skopje. 190 pp. Paperback.  
ISBN 978-608-203-052-4 (in Macedonian)

**Content:** Content of the volume, Foreword (in Macedonian and English), [presentation of the taxa], addenda, appendices (abbreviations of the collectors of herbarium material; Index alphabeticus; contributions of the authors of the particular entries).

The Flora includes taxonomic treatment of the families *Oleaceae*, *Gentianaceae*, *Menyanthaceae*, *Apocynaceae*, *Asclepiadaceae*, *Convolvulaceae*, and *Boraginaceae*. The presentation of the families, genera, species and infraspecific taxa follows the conventions already established in the previous volumes of this multivolume edition, i.e. with identification keys, detailed morphological descriptions of the taxa, concise habitat description and detailed distribution in the country. A new taxon – *Anchusa procera* var. *alboprocera* Matevski – has been described in the Addenda.



\*Items for book reviews and announcements to be sent to: Vladimir Vladimirov, Department of Plant and Fungal Diversity and Resources, Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Acad. Georgi Bonchev St., bl. 23, 1113 Sofia, Bulgaria, e-mail: [vdvlad@bio.bas.bg](mailto:vdvlad@bio.bas.bg)

Štěpánková, J., Chrtek, J. jun. & Kaplan, Z. (eds). 2010

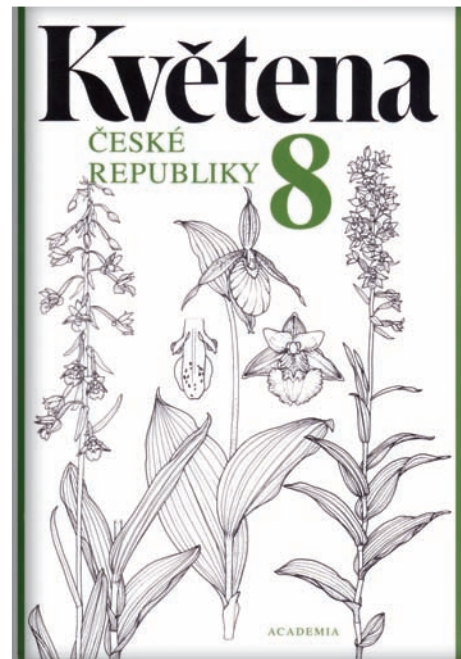
## Flora of the Czech Republic

### Vol. 8.

Akademia, Praha. 712 pp., 104 tab., 1 colour photo. Hardback.  
ISBN 978-80-200-1824-3 (in Czech)

**Content:** Contents, Preface (in Czech & English), Introduction (in Czech & English), Abbreviations and symbols used in this volume, Part special [taxonomic treatment of the included groups], Index to scientific plant names, Index to Czech plant names, Errata, Flora of the Czech Republic – List of published families, Citation of published volumes.

This volume includes taxonomic treatment of the following groups of vascular plants: *Cichoriaceae* – *Taraxacum* (first complete and taxonomically critical treatment for the country, with 179 species), and 27 families of monocotyledons with 75 genera and 199 species: *Acoraceae*, *Araceae*, *Lemnaceae*, *Butomaceae*, *Alismataceae*, *Hydrocharitaceae*, *Najadaceae*, *Scheuchzeriaceae*, *Juncaginaceae*, *Potamogetonaceae*, *Zannichelliaceae*, *Tofieldiaceae*, *Nartheciaceae*, *Melanthiaceae*, *Trilliaceae*, *Colchicaceae*, *Uvulariaceae*, *Liliaceae*, *Orchidaceae*, *Iridaceae*, *Hemerocallidaceae*, *Convallariaceae*, *Asparagaceae*, *Hyacinthaceae*, *Anthericaceae*, *Alliaceae*, and *Amaryllidaceae*. Presentation of the taxa follows the conventions already established in the previous volumes, i.e. with identification keys, for families and genera – valid taxon name, list of common synonyms, review of literature relevant to the taxonomy of the particular group, or to the Czech Republic; for species – current taxonomic name, synonyms, exsiccata, morphological description, chromosome number, variability, ecology and phytocoenological characteristics, distribution in the Czech Republic, total geographical distribution and economic significance. Species are illustrated with precise drawings on a total of 104 tables.



Topalova-Zhezhiha, L., Gogushev, G., Ivanova, R. & Kostadinova-Ilkova, S. 2010

## The interesting plants of Belasitsa Mt

Bulgarian Biodiversity Foundation, Sofia. 208 pp., colour photographs and map (on cover page). Paperback. ISBN 978-954-9959-52-9 (in Bulgarian)

**Content:** Symbols used (on cover page inside), Introductory part and acknowledgements, Species information and photographs, Index to Bulgarian plant names, Index to Latin plant names, References.

The book presents concise information and photographs about 200 species of the flora of Mt Belasitsa, considered interesting by the authors: endemic and rare species, species of conservational concern, some widespread in the mountain species. The information on each taxon includes very short morphological description (divided into: general habit, leaves, flowers/inflorescences and fruits) and distribution (worldwide, in Bulgaria and in



Mt Belasitsa). Symbols are used to indicate the legal protection of the species, national IUCN threat category, presence in the respective annex of the Habitats Directive, CITES and Bern Convention, floristic element, medicinal plant, poisonous plant and altitude of occurrence. Flowering time is also indicated. Each species is illustrated with two excellent colour photographs. The species are divided into three groups:

ferns, trees and shrubs, and herbaceous plants. Within each group the species are arranged in systematic order. The book is intended mainly for tourists and nature-lovers who intend to visit the mountain and enjoy the beauty of the plant world there. It is a pity the symbols have explanations only in Bulgarian but most of them are self-explanatory and can easily be understood by foreigners too.

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