
Ethnobotany of Mountain Regions

Series Editors

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Saving Knowledge
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Saving Knowledge
La Paz, Bolivia

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Ethnobotanical research in recent years has increasingly shifted into applied aspects of the discipline, including climate change research, conservation, and sustainable development. It has by now widely been recognized that “traditional” knowledge is always in flux and adapting to a quickly changing environment. Trends of globalization, especially the globalization of plant markets, have greatly influenced how plant resources are managed nowadays. While ethnobotanical studies are now available from many regions of the world, no comprehensive encyclopedic series focusing on the worlds mountain regions is available in the market. Scholars in plant sciences worldwide will be interested in this website and its dynamic content.

The field (and thus the market) of ethnobotany and ethnopharmacology has grown considerably in recent years. Student interest is on the rise, attendance at professional conferences has grown steadily, and the number of professionals calling themselves ethnobotanists has increased significantly (the various societies—Society for Economic Botany, International Society of Ethnopharmacology, Society of Ethnobiology, International Society for Ethnobiology, and many regional and national societies in the field currently have thousands of members). Growth has been most robust in BRIC countries.

The objective of this new series on Ethnobotany of Mountain Regions is to take advantage of the increasing international interest and scholarship in the field of mountain research. We anticipate including the best and latest research on a full range of descriptive, methodological, theoretical, and applied research on the most important plants for each region. Each contribution will be scientifically rigorous and contribute to the overall field of study.

More information about this series at <http://www.springer.com/series/15885>

Rainer W. Bussmann
Editor

Ethnobotany of the Mountain Regions of Africa

With 666 Figures

 Springer

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***This volume is dedicated to three great
“African” botanists:***

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Erwin Beck, who never
hesitated to give an enthusiastic student,
including this editor, the opportunity for
botanical work in Africa.

Prof. Dr. John O. Kokwaro, 1940–2019,
leading scholar in East African plant
taxonomy and ethnobotany, whose *Medicinal
Plants of East Africa* was the first
encyclopedia on the topic.

Mr. Simon G. Mathenge, ca. 1938–2017,
para-taxonomist at the University of Nairobi
Herbarium, without whose help the fieldwork
and plant identification of none of many a
thesis, including of this editor, would have
been done.

Preface

The use of plants by humans stretches back to the very beginning of human evolution, and Africa, as the cradle of humankind, is certainly a hotspot of human-plant interactions.

While much of the African continent shows some mountain regions and high plateaus, the East African Rift and Ethiopian plateau are without doubt the mountainous areas of largest extension of the continent. In many ways, they are also the most populated and ethnically diverse systems of Africa. However, many peoples in mountain areas arrived relatively late, especially during the large Bantu migration in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Interestingly, in contrast to many other areas where leaves are used as medicine, plant use in Africa often focuses on barks and tubers, raising the issue of sustainability. Many species are used to produce strengthening soups, often important for the digestion of meat consumed during rituals, and many medicinal species are still used to purge disease-causing agents from patients' bodies.

Plant use in Africa has been documented especially since the 1970s, and the above-cited *Medicinal Plants of East Africa* of Prof. John Kokwaro is a striking example of these efforts. In the last two decades, lots of local ethnobotanical studies have been published, with Ethiopian scientists leading the way into modern ethnobotanical research, while the documentation – and recuperation – of traditional knowledge has gained renewed importance in the whole of Africa more recently.

With the present volume, we aim to provide an in-depth introduction to the plant use knowledge of the peoples of the main tropical African mountain areas. Following an introduction to Africa and the wider region, over 170 plant chapters feature a modern overview on taxonomy, local names, and information on the ecology and distribution of all species. The ethnobotanical information provides both an overview on historic uses as well as data from the most recent scientific studies of plant use in the region and contains the most up-to-date literature sources.

We hope that the present volume will give both interested laypeople as well as professionals an opportunity to learn about the fascinating biodiversity and plant use culture of the African mountains, and will spark interest in its further documentation, sustainable use, and conservation.

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Dr. Bussmann is a past President of the Society for Economic Botany and has served as board/council member of the International Society for Ethnopharmacology, Society of Ethnobiology, Botanical Society of America, and International Society of Ethnobiology. See more of his work on his website (<https://www.cejaandina.org/rainer-w-bussmann/>) and download publications from ResearchGate (https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Rainer_Bussmann).

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