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The number of vittae as a useful aid to *Ferulago* systematics and geography

I never concealed from myself when I was surveying with an eagle's eye (or better, a goose's) the three genera, that a vital, possibly conclusive character was still to be dealt with: the fruit with its morphology and chiefly the number of vittae. KOCH (1825) fiercely trumpeted *Ferulago* as a new genus for its large number of vittae with respect to *Ferula*. That is only partially true, by the way, as I elucidated sometime ago (BERNARDI, 1975: 73). All the *Umbelliferae* authors, besides, see truly "Vittae number addicts", or at least very reverential toward them. But very soon, checking the number of vittae I had obtained in *Ferulago* species against the number given by different authors, I noticed that either I was always wrong or they were! This Hamlet's matter was instrumental in deciding me on an extended vittae count in more fruits of more samples of the same species. Eventually, I decided I was not wrong.

It is odd, on the other hand, that this easily ascertainable and helpful character is not taken into account at all in TUTIN & al. "Flora europaea" (vol. 2. 1968, passim) and very badly reported in the admirable DAVIS's "Flora of Turkey" (vol. 4: 453-471. 1972) where we can read at length: "Dorsal and commissural vittae more than 10... or more than 14"; this evidently contributed nothing to the systematics of a taxon. But I could not add the number of vittae to the four chosen characters for all the three genera: that would have been too burdensome. Restricted myself to *Ferulago*, I give in this paper the number of vittae in every case for the whole fruit, not for a

single mericarp, because it is common, mainly in dorsal vittae, to encounter a slight different number in the two mericarps. I noted also:

- a)* a restricted variation in the number of vittae for the same species after examining several specimens. This variation is always indicated on the “visiting card” of the species, and in the botanical key;
- b)* the dorsal vittae are as a rule more numerous than the commissural, even in the species with very flat fruits. *Ferulago humilis* Boiss. has however the same vittae number (36) for both.