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Is Rosa arabica identical to R. abyssinica?

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ABSTRACT

BOULOS, L. (1985). Is Rosa arabica identical to R. abyssinica? *Candollea* 40: 389-390. In English, French abstract.

The phytogeographical and ecological relationships as well as the gross morphological characters show that *Rosa abyssinica* R. Br. ex Lindl. and *R. arabica* Crépin are almost identical. It is proposed to consider *Rosa arabica* as a synonym of *R. abyssinica.*

RÉSUMÉ

BOULOS, L. (1985). Rosa arabica est-elle identique à R. abyssinica? *Candollea* 40: 389-390. En anglais, résumé français.

Les parentés phytogéographiques et écologiques de même que les principaux caractères morphologiques montrent que *Rosa abyssinica* R. Br. ex Lindl. et *R. arabica* Crépin sont pratiquement identiques. Il est proposé de considérer *Rosa arabica* comme un synonyme de *R. abyssinica.*

Several *Rosa* species are known from the southeast Mediterranean (POST & DINSMORE, 1932; MOUTERDE, 1970; ZOHARY, 1972; TÄCKHOLM, 1974, MEIKLE, 1977), one from the western mountains of Saudi Arabia (MIGAHID, 1978; BOULOS, 1985), four from North and South Yemen (BOULANGER, 1933), two from Ethiopia (CUFODONTIS, 1954), and none from East Africa: Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (GRAHAM, 1960). Within their range of distribution, the different roses of the southeast Mediterranean are known to occupy diverse habitats: *Rosa phoenicia* Boiss. grows along river banks, swamp edges, scrubs and coastal forests, often forming hedges, and is restricted to the eastern Mediterranean, with slight extension eastwards (MOUTERDE, 1970; ZOHARY, 1972); *R. sicula* Tratt. is a mountainous (900-1700 m), almost circum-Mediterranean species (MOUTERDE, l.c.; NILSSON, 1972); *R. micrantha* Sm. grows in hedges, margins of woods, dry rocky slopes, amongst scrub at 400-1400 m (NILSSON, l.c.), in the mountainous regions of Lebanon (MOUTERDE, l.c.), and is also known from western, southern and central Europe, extending to northern Ukraine (KLÁŠTERSKÝ, 1968); *R. glutinosa* Sibth. & Sm., known from the mountains of Lebanon and Syria (MOUTERDE, l.c.), has its main distribution in East and central Mediterranean, Balkan Peninsula (KLÁŠTERSKÝ, l.c.), with extension eastwards to Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan (MOUTERDE, l.c.); *R. canina* L. (two varieties) grows in hedgerows, by margins of vineyards, roadsides and in open Pine forest, is widespread in Europe and western Asia (MEIKLE, 1977); *R. chionistrae* Lindberg fil. grows in hedges, roadsides, screes and clearings in *Pinus nigra* woodland at an altitude of 3800-5400 ft., and is described as "apparently endemic" (MEIKLE, l.c.), however annotated by him as "closely allied to *R. iberica* Stev., and perhaps better regarded as a subspecies of this rose,...". The result is that we are left with only one endemic species in the southeast Mediterranean: *Rosa arabica* Crépin (TÄCKHOLM, 1974), which is restricted to a few populations in the mountains of southern Sinai, also the only spontaneous rose in Egypt (TÄCKHOLM, l.c.) *Rosa abyssinica* R. Br. ex Lindl., a species closely related to *R. arabica,* is known according to CUFODONTIS (1954), from four mountain regions in Ethiopia, the northern mountains of Somalia and from the Arabian Peninsula.

It is most probable that the endemic *Rosa arabica* known from southern Sinai is just a variety of, unless identical to *Rosa abyssinica,* and that the former 'species' remains as the northernmost extension, represented by few relic populations of the entire area occupied by the latter. The discon-

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tinuity in the geographical range of distribution of *R. abyssinica* may be attributed to the disjunction of the high mountains in the new extended regions, by adding southern Sinai, occupied by the species in its new concept including *R. arabica,* as the plant usually grows on altitudes over 2000 m. I have collected specimens of *R. abyssinica* from a few localities from Ethiopia and Asir Mountains in southwest Saudi Arabia, and the specimens from Sinai seem to be identical to those from Arabia and Ethiopia.

None of the eight spontaneous species of *Rosa* known from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon is endemic, and the two species from Palestine are also known from Syria and Lebanon, as well as from the areas northwards in Turkey, etc. These eight species possess rather wide ranges of distribution (cf. MOUTERDE, l.c.; ZOHARY, l.c.; NILSSON, l.c.). Therefore, the complete absence of any endemic roses in eastern and southeastern Mediterranean leaves the 'endemic' *Rosa arabica* of Sinai in a unique situation, at least difficult to explain on phytogeographical relationships. Although no detailed taxonomic investigations are carried out to justify that both species are identical, there is evidence based on ecological and phytogeographical premises, besides the gross morphological similarities, to support this assumption and to consider *Rosa arabica* as a synonym of *R. abyssinica.*

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