

Turkish Journal of Botany

Turkish Journal


of

Botany

Biogeography of South-West Asian Bryophytes – With Special Emphasis on the Tropical Element

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Abstract: The recent bryophyte flora of South-West Asia is heterogeneous and consists of 6 floral elements [(Sub)cosmopolitan taxa, northern taxa, xerotherm-Pangaeian taxa, circum-Tethyan taxa, tropical taxa, and endemics of various origins] that are derived from the different Pangaeian ancestral floral stocks. Analysis of the flora and vegetation indicates that there is a very strong tropical - and especially palaeotropical and Afromontane - influence in the bryophyte flora of the area. Altogether, more than 95 taxa, or nearly 10% of South-West Asia's total known bryoflora, are of xero-tropical origin. They concentrate mainly in the escarpment mountains of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra Island, and often are unique relicts of a former wider distributed Tertiary xero-tropical flora that today links South Arabia with East Africa and South-East Asia.

Key Words: Chorology, circum-Tethyan, floral history, liverworts, mosses, xerotherm-Pangaeian

Turk. J. Bot., **32**, (2008), 433-446.

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