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Webbia: 120 years of history between difficulties and milestones

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PROLOGUE

This issue is dedicated to the 120th anniversary of *Webbia*'s founding. It is a fitting tribute to a journal that has been and continues to be a point of reference in the history of Plant Taxonomy and Geography in Italy and abroad. The contributions presented here reflect the journal's international vision, focused on enhancing plant biodiversity in increasingly threatened parts of the World. Thanks go to all the authors present here who responded to my appeal, and for whom I am deeply grateful.

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In 1905, the first issue of a new journal on the Italian botanical scene was published. The journal was called *Webbia*, a Latinization of the surname of a great British botanist and benefactor: Philip Barker Webb (1793-1843). The initiative behind this journal was primarily due to a pupil of the Italian botanist Odoardo Beccari (1843-1920) (Fig. 1): Ugolino Martelli (1860-1934) (Fig. 2), who with a *Beccarian impetus* (Lenzi Grillini 1988) and on his 'private' initiative began publishing a new botanical journal on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of P.B. Webb's death. Martelli's initiative was not at all supported by the academic and botanical world of the time (Martelli 1904, 1905a; Lenzi Grillini 1988; Francisco-Ortega et al. 2022). It aroused bitterness between Martelli and the Italian Botanical Society based in Florence, which he recognized as being ungrateful towards the memory of P.B. Webb, who, before his death, had donated to Florence his large and precious collections, a rich botanical library and a financial bequest that could support the preservation of his testimony and legacy for many years.

The first period

In spite of the initial controversies, from 1905 to 1921-1923, *Webbia* was published as a-periodic journal on the private initiative of U. Martelli[1]: from

[1] For a complete biography of U. Martelli see the obituary published on the occasion of his death in 1934 (Negri 1935).

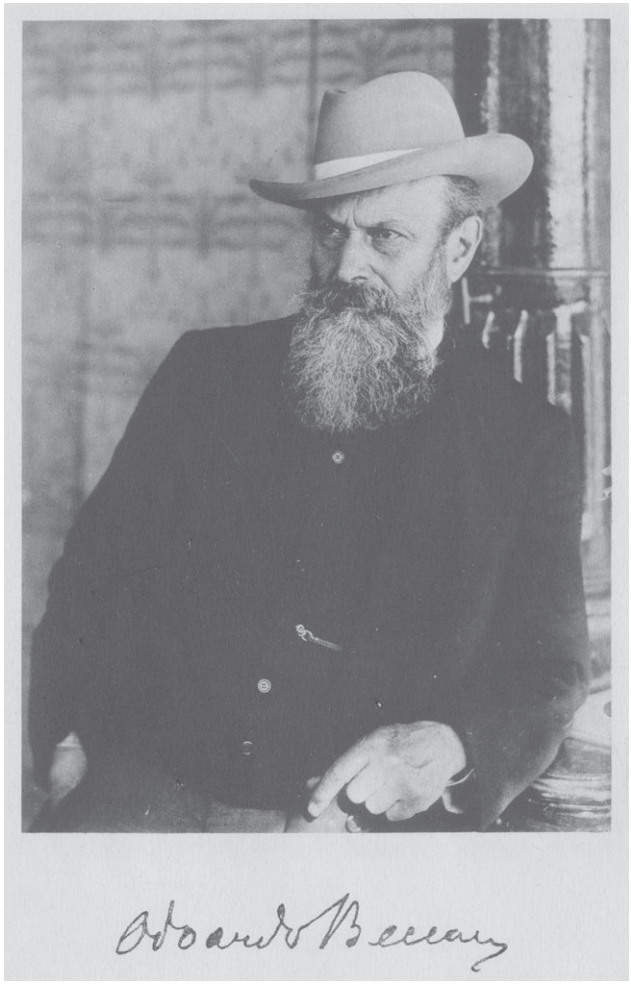

Figure 1. Odoardo Beccari (1843-1920; photo from *Webbia* 5. 1921).

number 1 (1905) to 5 (1921-1923). Despite financial risks assumed by its founder and during this early period, *Webbia* saw the publication of several landmark contributions, such as those of O. Beccari (Beccari 1905a, 1905b, 1905c, 1905d, 1905e, 1907, 1910a, 1910b, 1910c, 1910d, 1910e, 1910f, 1921, 1923), and U. Martelli (1905a, 1905b, 1905c, 1907, 1910a, 1910b, 1910c, 1913, 1914, 1921a, 1921b), as well as those of younger eminent tropical botanists of the period, among them also Chiovenda (1921, 1923), all showing a clear interest verging towards tropical botany [2].

[2] The two papers of E. Chiovenda (1921, 1923) on the origin of *Cocos nucifera* L. published in *Webbia* are part in a broader debate on the origin of the coconut palm, taking place between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (see Cook 1901, 1910). O. Beccari himself joined in this debate by enunciating his original theory on the origin and dispersal of *Cocos nucifera* L. (Beccari 1917). 108 years after this publication, O. Beccari's ideas have been recently reviewed, tested in the field and confirmed (Harries et al. 2020; Griffith et al. 2025).

Figure 2. A. Ugolino Martelli (1860-1934); **B.** Front cover of the first issue of *Webbia* (1905). (From Francisco-Ortega et al. 2022).

The number of contributions from O. Beccari and U. Martelli document the influence of both scholars in this early period, both due to their mutual personal and scientific esteem and the devotion of U. Martelli to his master, O. Beccari. The works of O. Beccari and U. Martelli still represent milestones in the study of the Arecaceae and Pandanaceae families. Nevertheless in the first issues between 1905 and 1923, it is possible to find other important contributions on systematics, for example an account of the European Umbelliferae (Calestani 1905), a paper with a review of the history of botany at the time of Linnaeus (Baroni 1905), and a contribution on the Italian Bryophyta (Bottini 1905, 1907, 1913, 1914). Furthermore, U. Martelli's courageous editorial initiative brought O. Beccari back to pro-minence with his last works after his brief stint with the journal *Malesia* (Beccari 1902), which he had founded and financed on his own between 1877 and 1890.[3]

After having started the first issue of *Webbia* with the *Testamento di Filippo Barker Vebb* [The will of

[3] From 1880 O. Beccari retired into a private life, away from the academic world, which he always considered hostile and incompatible with his personal ideas and scientific research. This was the period in which he showed his disappointment with the Botanical Museum and Botanical Garden at 'La Specola' in Florence (Beccari 1881), and during which he began writing his final and most comprehensive work: *Nelle Foreste del Borneo* (Beccari 1902), later translated into English by E. Giglioli and revised and edited by F.H.H. Guillemard (1904) as *Wanderings in the great forests of Borneo*. These works reveal Beccari as a complete, mature, and interdisciplinary naturalist, characteristics not found in many of his contemporaries, who were devoted to academic and often international politics. Complete biographies with list of publications of O. Beccari are available in works by Pichi Sermolli and van Steenis (1979-1983) and Pichi Sermolli (1994).

Philip Barker Webb] and a personal correspondence of the latter, U. Martelli concluded his editorial task with the fifth issue, which he dedicated to O. Beccari on the occasion of his death in 1920 at the age of 77 after an intense life full of vicissitudes that made O. Beccari a sort of myth of tropical plant systematics. Lately, the last of O. Beccari's posthumous work (Beccari† and Pichi Sermolli 1956) was published under the supervision and curatorship of R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli (1912-2005) (Fig. 3, 4), 33 years after the publication of the fifth issue of *Webbia*. It is clear how the first five issues of *Webbia* were inspired by the deep friendship and esteem of U. Martelli towards his teacher and mentor O. Beccari.

However, U. Martelli, in the preface to the second issue published in December 1907, did not hesitate to express his hope that *Webbia* in due time would become a regular periodical journal, appealing to those friends and colleagues who had appreciated the publication since its first issue in 1905. This was a legitimate and desirable wish, but it was not entirely realized since *Webbia* by then had not yet achieved the status of a truly regular periodical.[4]

However, financial unsustainability, combined with a hostile environment in the academic field led U. Martelli to cease publication of the journal in 1923, beginning a 27-year period of silence.

Figure 3. Rodolfo Emilio Giuseppe Pichi Sermolli (1912-2005) at Kew in 1947. (Courtesy of R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli family).

The transition period between the two world wars and post-war reconstruction until the 21st century

From the interwar period until the end of the Second World War, the official and most important journal of the Italian Botanical Society was the *Giornale Botanico Italiano*, later *Nuovo Giornale Botanico Italiano*, currently *Plant Biosystems*. It served as the primary point of reference for Italian botanical publishing, although with a number of other journals (Lenzi Grillini 1988). As described by Lenzi Grillini, the war period was a test of self-denial on the part of prominent Italian scientists such as, for example, Alberto Chiarugi, who had to fight even under semi-clandestine conditions in order to keep the Italian Botanical Society alive. The desire for redemption after Italy's tragic war-experience led to

[4] In the preface to the second issue published in December 1907, U. Martelli expressed hope for a truly regular periodical status for *Webbia*:

Prefazione
"Quando nell'Aprile dell'anno 1905, per onorare la memoria di un illustre botanico inglese, benemerito della nostra scienza in Italia, io pubblicai una piccola raccolta di scritti botanici sotto il titolo Webbia*, non ebbi in animo di iniziare una pubblicazione periodica; ma la buona accoglienza fatta a quel volume mi ha dato coraggio ad invitare nuovamente alcuni chiarissimi amici e colleghi a favorirmi dei lavori per comporne un secondo portante lo stesso titolo. Con ciò non intendo fare promesse per il futuro, né dare un carattere di regolare periodicità alla '*Webbia'*; se però, come spero, l'esito del presente volume non sarà inferiore a quello del primo, mi propongo di farne seguire altri più o meno sollecitamente. Rivolgo intanto agli amici collaboratori i miei ringraziamenti".*

[Preface
"When, in April 1905, to honor the memory of an illustrious English botanist who had contributed greatly to our science in Italy, I published a small collection of botanical writings under the title 'Webbia,' I had no intention of starting a periodical. However, the warm reception to that volume encouraged me to once again invite some very distinguished friends and colleagues to contribute their work to a second volume bearing the same title. With this, I do not intend to make any promises for the future, nor to establish a regular periodicity for 'Webbia'; however, if, as I hope, the outcome of this volume is not inferior to that of the first, I intend to publish others more or less promptly. In the meantime, I extend my thanks to my collaborators."].

Da Firenze, Dicembre 1907

Prof. Ugolino Martelli

Figure 4. Rodolfo Emilio Giuseppe Pichi Sermolli in Addis Ababa (6th October 1966), receiving from the hands of Emperor Hailé Selassié an Ethiopian imperial award for his studies and investigations on the Flora and Vegetation of Ethiopia, most of them published in *Webbia* (Photo from an Ethiopian newspaper via Ib Friis).

the birth and rebirth of new publishing tools. In this context, thanks to the initiative of the phytogeographer Giovanni Negri (1877-1960), *Webbia* saw its rebirth as the official organ of the Botanical Institute of the University of Florence, at the same time as the founding of the *Centro per lo Studio della Flora e Vegetazione Italiana* [Center for the Study of Italian Flora and Vegetation] as part of the *Centro Nazionale delle Ricerche* [National Research Center], founded years earlier in 1923.

Webbia saw its new debut with a monograph by R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli entitled *Flora e vegetazione delle serpentine e delle altre ofioliti dell'alta valle del Tevere (Toscana)*, [Flora and vegetation of the serpentines and other ophiolites of the Upper Tiber Valley (Tuscany)]. It is interesting to point out that Giovanni Negri was advised by R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli, as heir of the *Beccarian* tradition, to resume the publication of *Webbia* in an institutional form and based in Florence. Later, it is worth mentioning, under the direction of Alberto Chiarugi (1901-1960), that the volume 11 of *Webbia* was published in 1956 on the occasion of the centenary of the death of Philip Barker Webb (Chiarugi 1956a) in which *Beccarian* ideas of global botany are celebrated after many years with the publication of 19 monographs on tropical flora, but also with contributions on Italian flora, including the monumental study on the flora and vegetation of the island of Marettimo (Egadi Islands) by Francini and Messeri (1956).

Between 1953 and 1978, Webbia published a series of 34 monographs on the flora of the Horn of Africa, with the common heading *Adumbratio Florae Aethiopicae*.[5] This ambitious project was based on the valuable botanical collections of the *Erbario Coloniale Italiano* [Italian Colonial Herbarium], later the *Erbario Tropicale di Firenze* [Tropical Herbarium of Florence (FT)], currently the *Centro Studi Erbario Tropicale dell'Università*

[5] The complete bibliography of *Adumbratio Florae Aethiopicae* can be found in the bibliography section in Baldini (2010). The translation into English of the Latin title *Adumbratio Florae Aethiopicae* could be *Description of Ethiopian Flora*, remembering that *Aethiopia* (Ethiopia) is taken in a broad sense as explained by Chiarugi in his introduction to the project.

di Firenze (FT) [Tropical Herbarium Study Center of the University of Florence (FT)]. The aim and objectives of the *Adumbratio Florae Aethiopicae* were well described in the introduction by Alberto Chiarugi (Chiarugi 1953), introducing the historical and geographical contexts of the project.[6] One of the milestones in this period is represented by the publication in *Webbia* of *Una carta geobotanica dell'Africa Orientale (Eritrea, Etiopia, Somalia)* [A geobotanical map of Eastern Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia)] by Pichi Sermolli (1957) followed 8 years later by the *Map of the extent of the floristic exploration in Africa South of the Sahara* by Léonard (1965)[7]. Furthermore, in 1963 *Webbia* hosted the *Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium of A.E.T.F.A.T. (Association pour l'Étude Taxonomique de la Flore de l'Afrique Tropicale)* organized by R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli, a publication later commented on by Hepper (1963)[8].

Lately, under the direction of Guido Moggi (1960-1963; 1976-1999)[9], followed a period lasting 27 years, during which the journal opened the doors also to 'heretical' authors like the Italian Leon Croizat (1894-1982)[10,11]. During these years, *Webbia* continued hosting international monographs and proceedings of international symposia (Chiarugi 1956b; Heywood and Pichi Sermolli 1961[12]; Pichi Sermolli 1965[13]; Moggi 1979, 1992) (Fig. 5). Since 1948 until at least the nineteen-nineties, *Webbia* maintained its strong tropical legacy, although it gradually became more focused on studies of the flora and vegetation of Italy and the Mediterranean area becoming a landmark for many Italian and foreign researchers. This is the transition time between the dominant role of *Webbia* in the scenario of the Plant Taxonomy and Geography in Italy and up to the impact of the new century, the 21st, in which publishing underwent a change towards increasing competition, both in Italy and abroad.

However, contributions of international significance for both Italy and the world continued to be published in *Webbia*, rediscovering the journal's tropical vocation in the issue 60(1). 2005[14], a monograph revision of about 400 pages on the pteridological collections made in Brazil by Giuseppe Raddi (1770-1829), thanks to R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli, who died a few days after its publication in April 2005, while he was working on his planned last work on the ferns of Ethiopia and Eritrea (Pichi Sermolli and Bizzarri 2005)[15].

In this period of time, Italy also witnessed a proliferation of other botanical journals, often reflecting the provincial sentiment of having a journal for each academic institution, rather than national Italian ones. However, before the advent of the strong international editorial competition, and partly due to new printing and distribution technologies, *Webbia* continued to be a point of reference for the Plant Taxonomy and Geography of Italy and other countries.

With the advent of important and significant new researches, particularly with molecular techniques, plant taxonomic publishing underwent rapid change, and not all journals, including *Webbia*, immediately grasped the momentum of this transformation. Added to this global phenomenon was the transformation of botany from an autonomous discipline to a more fragmented one.

The fragmentation of Plant Taxonomy and Geography increasingly pushed young botanists to consider it

[6] Chiarugi (1953), in his introduction to the *Adumbratio Florae Aethiopicae*, not only illustrates the aim of the project, but also the criteria of the study and the choice of the overall territory, which includes Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and the Soqotra Archipelago, a choice based on phytogeographical, historical and cultural evidence.

[7] These contributions should be added to other subsequent ones that have encouraged the study of the flora and vegetation of Africa (White 1976, 1983, 1993a, b).

[8] R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli was member of the A.E.T.F.A.T.-UNESCO Vegetation Map Committee and contributed with material from the Horn of Africa to the A.E.T.F.A.T.-UNESCO Vegetation Map of Africa published by White (1983).

[9] Under the careful direction of Guido Moggi, *Webbia* rapidly expanded its influence in Italy and abroad, attracting authors of international value.

[10] In the 1960s, thanks to the foresight of its director, Guido Moggi, *Webbia* hosted the contributions of Leon Croizat, the father of *panbiogeography* or the subsequent *cladistic biogeography*, in the wake of the teachings developed by the Italian zoologist Daniele Rosa (1857-1944), supporter of the *theory of hologenesis*, then pursued further by the German entomologist Willi Hennig (see Hennig 1950; Croizat 1952, 1958a, 1958b, 1958c, 1962; Llorente et al. 2000; Morrone 2006, 2021; Williams and Ebach 2008; Mahlfeld and Parenti 2023). L. Croizat, not having received much recognition in the scientific community of the time, thanked *Webbia* for the opportunity to freely disseminate his ideas, confirming *Webbia's* inclusive stance compared to other journals of the time. It is worth mentioning that L. Croizat dedicated a paper on *panbiogeography* published in *Webbia* to his friend R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli (Croizat 1973).

[11] At the end of the third chapter on the infrageneric classification of the genus *Euphorbia* focused on the South African and Malagasy areas, L. Croizat points out the role of *Webbia* in the diffusion of his monographic works thanking the attentiveness of the Director Guido Moggi (Croizat 1972) as follows:

"*As a parting statement, I wish to express heartfelt thanks to Prof. Dr. Guido Moggi for his thoroughly open-minded – contrary to inured editorial usage, so particular in Anglo-Saxon and socialist countries – acceptance of this long series of articles. Should their readers agree that they have derived some increment of knowledge from what they impart, they ought to feel no less grateful to the Editor than to the author, if ever. It has virtually become impossible to find today takers for literature which enters the field of general ideas and method beyond the stale limits of a standard 'technical paper'.*

[12] A further example of cultural inclusiveness beyond territorial and ideological borders was the hosting of scientists from both opposing political blocs during the Cold War at the second Flora Europea symposium.

[13] The photo in Fig. 4 was kindly provided by Paola Bizzarri.

[14] The issue 60(1) was published on occasion of the 100 years since the foundation of *Webbia*.

[15] A fond memory of R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli was written by his dear colleague and friend R.K. Brummitt (Brummitt 2007).

Figure 5. Participants in the Fifth Meeting of the *Association pour l'étude taxonomique que de la Flore d'Afrique tropical (A.E.T.F.A.T.)* held in Genoa and Florence on the 9th-14th September 1963. Photo taken at the Botanical Garden of Florence (Courtesy of Paola Bizzarri). Legend: (1) A.Y.M. Leeuwenberg; (2) G. Moggi; (3) Ake-Assi; (4) A. Getahun; (5) A. Aubreville; (6) J. Leonard; (7) R.E.G. Pichi Sermolli; (8) A. Fernandes; (9) H. Wild; (10) J. Aymonin; (11) E. Milne Readhead; (12) O. Hedberg; (13) F. White; (14) R. Corti; (15) A.W. Exell; (16) F.N. Hepper; (17) H. Heine; (18) B. Peterson; (19) J.B. Gillett; (20) G. Cufodontis; (21) A.M. Raynal; (22) M.P. Bizzarri; (23) M. Kerauden; (23) E. Francini Corti; (25) R. Fernandes; (26) I. Hedberg.

old-fashioned and *boring*, trapped into an ever-increasing scientific reductionism (Crisci 2008; Muller 2018; Crisci et al. 2020; Baldini et al. 2021) that influenced botanical publishing including *Webbia*.

The world changed and the competition became increasingly hard even for Webbia

Thus, the scientific editorial scenario changed in the last 20 years, producing an epochal novelty in which the ways of publishing and spreading of scientific knowledge were literally shocked, especially by the latest technological innovations in the editorial field. The introduction of metric evaluations such as the *devilish* number called *impact factor* not only subverting the idea of global science but also contaminating the idea of *Academia* as a repository of knowledge and experience, and above all the methods according to which university recruitment could be carried out, based on statistical-algorithmic assessments, and forgetting often the quality of scientific experience and production of new knowledge (Krell 2000; Woodland 2007; Garwood 2013[16]; Stephan et al. 2017; Müller 2018).

Due to strategic local editorial mistakes in the first years of XXI century, *Webbia* suffered during the new era due to academic provincialism and competition from *predatory journals*, unethical publications that prioritize profit over scholarly integrity and often lacking proper reviews. The fate of *Webbia* went into the hands of a few people, often the Editor in Chief alone, and even in conjunction with difficulties at financial and management level. These were hard times that saw *Webbia* abandoned by most of the Italian audience due also to the logic (or illogic?) of the university recruitment based on citation metrics, impact factor, and other scholarly dynamics,

[16] As reported in Garwood (2013: 19) "(...) *the journal IF* [impact factor] *was developed to help librarians make subscription decisions. (...) Researchers are now judged by "where" they publish and not by "what" they publish"; "The IF obsession is warping our scientific judgement, damaging careers, and wasting time and valuable works*".

often questionable with regard to the progress of science. Since the beginning of my role as Editor in Chief in 2008 until 2013, *Webbia* tried to survive with great difficulty until it landed at a British Publisher: Taylor & Francis. This went on until, finally, in 2020 *Webbia* came *back home*, beginning a new improving opportunity and collaboration with the Florence University Press (FUP) (Fig. 6). In collaboration with FUP, it has been possible to publish more proceedings of symposia (see Baldini 2015, 2017, 2018), and supplement monographs (Delprete 2022; Friis et al. 2022; Wong 2023[17]).

In the time span of 120 years seven botanists have managed the direction of *Webbia* (Fig. 7, 8):

Ugolino Martelli: Vol. 1 (1905) - Vol. 5 (1923).
Giovanni Negri: Vol. 6 (1948).
Alberto Chiarugi: Vol. 7 (1950) - Vol. 14 (1960).
Eleonora Francini Corti: Vol. 18 (1963) - Vol. 29 (1975).
Guido Moggi: Vol. 15 (1960) - Vol. 17 (1963), and Vol. 30 (1976) - Vol. 53 (1999).
Mauro Raffaelli: Vol. 54 (1999) - Vol. 62 (2007).
Riccardo Maria Baldini: Vol. 63 (2008) - Vol. 80 (2025).

In the recent volumes, rediscovery and reevaluation of plant taxonomy, as well as new aspects of the history of botany, have been recorded, especially in studies in overseas countries, confirming the importance of the *traditional and historical* approaches as an essential basis for achieving more advanced and refined results. In this regard, as the current Editor in Chief, I must express my thanks to those who have believed in *Webbia* and supported its cause, especially in recent years (see also Baldini 2025).

Some data about Webbia since its foundation: the proof that Plant Taxonomy and Geography have always existed and still are alive and well

The contribution of *Webbia* to the knowledge of plant taxonomy can be evaluated by the number of botanical names published from its foundation in 1905 to the current year, 2025, after 120 years of activities. If we consider as a whole, new species, subspecies, varieties, forms and new supraspecific categories such as new families, genera, tribes, sections etc., including also new combinations, and new names, their number, according to the International Plant Names Index (IPNI 2025) database, reached 1982 names until 2021 and, adding to this the names from the latest years until 2025, a total amounting to 2212 names. This is an appreciable result in an increasingly competitive international publishing scenario permitted also by the current synergy between *Webbia* and the *Centro Studi Erbario Tropicale (FT herbarium)*.

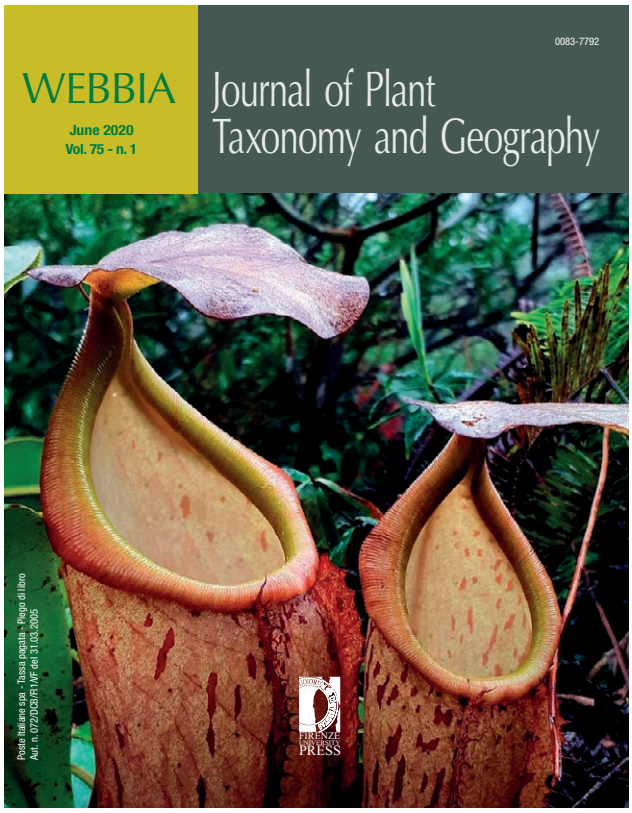

Figure 6. Front cover of the first issue published by Firenze University Press in 2020.

This positive trend can only be improved thanks to the future understanding of the new plant taxonomists, which I hope will continue to grow. It seems paradoxical in an era where we hear ever increasing demand for more and more *biodiversity*, as if that concept, but perhaps without that name, had never existed in the minds of taxonomists and biologists, or among non-scientists as well.[18]

The rediscovery and development of classical taxonomic and geographical methods, varying from more intense field research to deeper herbarium study, better

[17] Sin Yeng Wong's work on the genera of Borneo is also a tribute and reminder of O. Beccari's immense contribution to the study of the Malaysian Flora.

[18] There's no doubt that in recent years, the word 'biodiversity' has been used in the mainstream as if no one had addressed this issue in the past. However, consulting journals like *Webbia* and similar publications we understand how many Italian and foreign researchers have addressed *biodiversity*, perhaps without using the specific term, and have contributed to the knowledge of the fundamentals for environmental issues that today are often addressed by neophytes unaware of past literature.

Figure 7. Left top: Giovanni Negri (1877-1960); right top: Alberto Chiarugi (1901-1960); left bottom: Eleonora Francini Corti (1904-1984); right bottom: Guido Moggi (1927-) (photos from Moggi 2006).

mapping techniques based on much more material, and finally to integration with new phylogenetic and phylogeographic methodologies, will lead to the reaffirmation of Plant Taxonomy and Geography in its broadest senses, rediscovering its true operational meaning and usefulness for future generations.

I hope that young taxonomists will rediscover and re-evaluate what patience in research and the use of historical-comparative approach can achieve in combination with new methods, eschewing the easy solutions and the frenzy of publishing as well as relying on the predation of many journals that are nothing more than sneaky baits.

120 years of taxonomic, phytogeographical and floristic history represent a long time and should make us reflect on how many people have employed their intellectual forces to achieve a deeper knowledge of plants and ultimately a better world. Because our masters are often forgotten or ignored, journals like *Webbia*, covering more than a century, may hopefully help new generations of botanists to rediscover the link between historical and future meaning of Plant Taxonomy and Geography, often at risk of being left without the historical legacy. It is my hope that a look at the history of *Webbia* may help the coming generations to rediscover the central role of Plant Taxonomy and Geography in the study of biodiversity and the distribution of plants.[19]

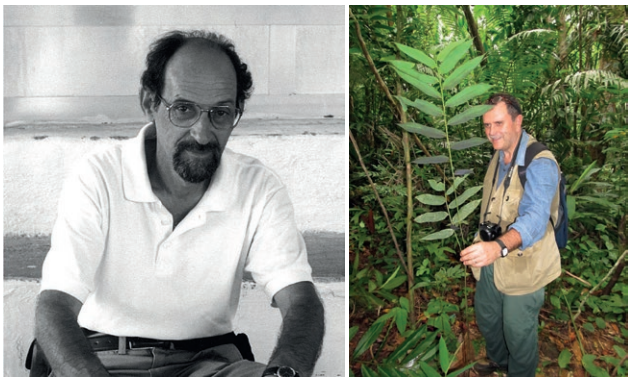

Figure 8. Left hand: Mauro Raffaelli (1944-), photo from Moggi (2006); right hand: Riccardo Maria Baldini (1958-).

In this, *Webbia* and other botanical journals with a long history may have a surge of pride for the future: this is, at least, my hope.

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[19] These methodological aspects are well summarized in White (1971, 1993a) and emphasized by Thompson et al. (2018).

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[20] The most significant works from the first issues of *Webbia* here cited show the reaction to U. Martelli's initiative: only the attentiveness of colleagues and trusted friends of him allowed the beginning of *Webbia*, certainly not the general botanical *academia* of the time around U. Martelli. Martelli's merit was to allow the publication of major contributions that have shaped the history of taxonomy in Italy and abroad. Martelli's initial sense of frustration with the academic environment (see Martelli 1905a) was comparable only to that experienced by his master O. Beccari in the most part of his life.

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