

Presentation

With the aim of contributing to the strengthening of the Herbarium of the Department of Botanical Sciences of the University of Palermo, in 1983, on the occasion of the IV OPTIMA Meeting held in Palermo, the proposal was launched to create an internationally renowned Herbarium in the host university that would bring together further collections of *exsiccata* and writings on Mediterranean flora, in order to make it a reference for scientific community. Hence the name *Herbarium Mediterraneum* that was immediately given to the Herbarium of the University of Palermo located partly in the historic site of the Botanical Garden, partly in the site of what was, even before being a departmental site, the site of the Institute of Botany of the then Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences. The proposal was the subject of one of the final resolutions approved at the end of the proceedings by the Assembly of participants: a total of over 300 scholars of 31 nationalities.

To start the process of enriching the collections of *exsiccata* from all countries of the Mediterranean area, the opportunity was taken during the first day of Plant Taxonomy, organized a few years later in Seville by Benito Valdés. To relaunch the proposal of the new Herbarium of Palermo, on the same occasion a feasibility study was presented, which also included the publication, in the Palermo headquarters, of two scientific periodicals, precisely *Flora Mediterranea* and *Bocconeae*. To finance the publication and at the same time to stimulate the academic context of Palermo to carry out the project of the new Herbarium, under the aegis of OPTIMA, it was decided to start the constitution of a special international foundation: the International Foundation *pro Herbario Mediterraneo*. Shortly thereafter, with the first financial contribution from OPTIMA, its General Secretary of the time, will invite the then Rector of the University of Palermo to start the fundraising to establish and endow the proposed foundation with the capital necessary to ensure an annual income sufficient to guarantee the printing and shipping of the volumes of the two periodicals, mainly to support exchanges with other botanical institutions and to form the bibliographic heritage of the Foundation to support the planned *Herbarium Mediterraneum*.

The completion of the fundraising campaign for the formation of the capital of the Foundation *pro Herbario Mediterraneo* went on for over two years and in 1992 the established goal was reached. Thus the Rector of the University will sign the deed of incorporation without charges to the University budget. The notarial deed, at the expense of the funds raised, was issued in Palermo, on June 11th 1992.

Before the legal recognition of the Foundation – which occurred, following the opinion of the Council of State, more than two years after the signing of the deed of incorporation, with the Decree of the Minister of University and Scientific Research of March 1st 1995 –

its management was ensured by the same Promoting Committee that in the meantime had started the publication of the first issues of the two periodicals, thanks to resources sought from institutional sponsors. For this reason, a restricted Editorial Committee and a Referees Committee will be set up for both journals. The printing of the first issue of *Flora Mediterranea* (Fig. 1) was entirely financed by Pollino National Park (Southern Italy), that of the first issue of *Bocconeia* (Fig. 2) by Madonie Regional Park (Sicily).

More than 30 years have passed since the establishment of the Foundation and most tangible results of its activity lie precisely in the publication of the two journals. They give voice to a multitude of scholars from countries around the Mediterranean, often eager to open up and engage with the most advanced scientific community. All this was and continues to be the primary reason for maintaining the two periodicals, despite the difficulty of the current system of evaluation of research products, based on parameters that are not easily achievable.

Palermo, December 30th 2024

Francesco M. Raimondo

President of the International Foundation *pro Herbario Mediterraneo*

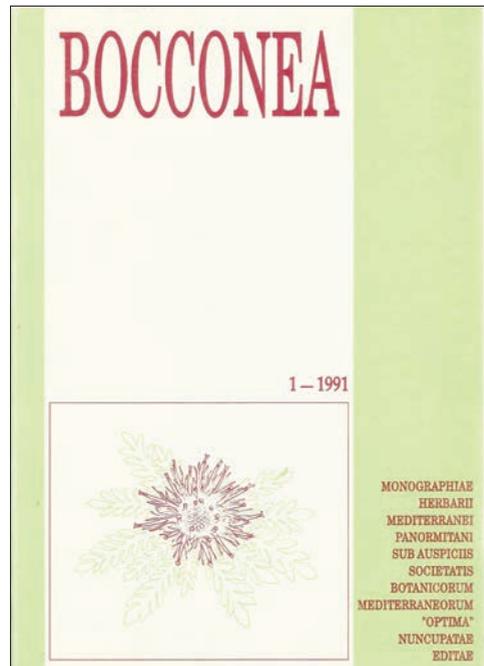


Fig. 1. Cover of the first issue of *Flora Mediterranea* (1991). Fig. 2. Cover of the first issue of *Bocconeia* (1991).