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Rural Communities' Exploitation from Surrounding Biodiversity in Khamin Protected Area: An Ethnobotanical Survey

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Abstract

Diverse linkages between people's lifestyles, their local knowledge and their utilisation of the surrounding biodiversity can be observed. Khamin mountainous protected area with a domain of 25 586 ha is located in southwestern Iran in tension of the Zagros Mountains range. In order to study the exploitation of local inhabitants of the surrounding phyto-society, an ethnobotanical survey was conducted from April to September 2008. By using a semi-structured questionnaire and through interviews with local informants, information on exploitation patterns was gathered. Altogether 75 species belonging to 35 plant families were utilised by the local population. These species were mainly shrubs and perennial herbes. The most utilised plant families were Umbelliferae, Compositae, and Rosaceae with 11, 7 and 7 species respectively.

The analysis of the utilisation patterns showed that from the 75 recorded plants, 43 species (57.3 %) had food uses, and 38 species (50.7 %) had medical uses. This demonstrates the important linkages and dependency of local people with their surrounding natural phyto-society. Also a magnitude of plants, were employed for producing instruments and as construction material, but only two species *i.e.* *Quercus brantii* Lindl. and *Tamarix* sp. were used for preparing fuel. Persian oak (*Quercus brantii* Lindl.) as dominant cover, was the most utilised plant species for local inhabitants, although local informants declared their local knowledge as quickly disappearing. Some species were conserved in rural farming systems and some such as *Pyrus syriaca* Boiss., wild varieties of *Ficus carica*, *Celtis caucasica* Willd., *Pistachia atlantica* Desf., and *Rhus coriaria* L., were at transition to domestication process in gardens and rural homegardens. It seems that more attention and considerations should be paid on local communities in protected areas and their knowledge should to be more esteemed.

Keywords: Ethnobotany, local knowledge, protected area, rural community, sustainable management