



Four flowering plant species described from Katanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) are based on specimens collected in Guangxi, China

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Key words

Caesalpinia bonduc
Caesalpinia homblei
Digitaria abludens
Digitaria polybotryoides
Drosera insolita
Drosera lunata
flora of Guangxi
flora of Katanga
Grewia cuspidatoserrata
Grewia katangensis
H. Homblé
Impatiens chinensis
Lysimachia candida
specimen labelling

Abstract The original set of botanical collections of the agronomist H.A. Homblé is conserved in the herbarium BR. Homblé was one of the first collectors (1911–1913) for the flora of Katanga, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many Homblé specimens were described as taxonomic novelties; 107 tropical African plant species are named after him. Before his colonial career in Katanga, Homblé stayed about two years (1909–1911) in Guangxi, China. His incompletely labelled Chinese collections were erroneously considered as collected in Katanga. This supposed African origin has led to confusion with regard to the identification, and even resulted in the description of four species believed to be new for science. This paper presents and discusses Homblé's collection made in Guangxi, and the assumed novelties in it. *Drosera insolita* is a synonym of the Asian *Drosera lunata*, widespread from India to Australia. Three other species are new synonyms. *Caesalpinia homblei* is a synonym of the pantropical *Caesalpinia bonduc*. *Digitaria polybotryoides* is a synonym of *Digitaria abludens*, a widespread species in tropical Asia. *Grewia katangensis* is the only species that proved to be synonymous with an endemic species, *Grewia cuspidatoserrata*, only known from S Yunnan, and here reported as a new record for Guangxi. *Lysimachia candida* and *Impatiens chinensis* should be deleted from the list of the Congo Flora. The importance of careful specimen labelling and label interpretation is discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

The Herbarium of Meise Botanic Garden (Belgium; acronym BR; Thiers continuously updated) holds the entire original set of the herbarium collection of vascular plants of Henri Antoine Homblé (1883–1921). He was an agronomist, who spent most of his career in Katanga, in the former Belgian Congo, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (further DR Congo). More biographical information, and a survey of Homblé's collections, will be given in the page on Collectors (under reconstruction; available late 2021) of the website of Meise Botanic Garden (<https://www.plantentuinmeise.be/en/home/>).

Before his post in the colony, Homblé spent some time (1910–1911) in Guilin, the then capital of Guangxi, China, as a professor at the agronomical institute. Here he prepared nearly 200 herbarium specimens. For a long time, BR staff assumed that all the collections of Homblé were collected in Katanga (e.g., Lanjouw & Stafleu 1954) and it was overlooked that he collected specimens in China before his work in Africa. His Guangxi material was indeed filed in the African herbarium of BR. Moreover, the field labels added by Homblé only contained a number, a date and some description of the plant, and they missed all locality information. His duplicate way of numbering further contributed to the confusion – he started the numbering of his

specimens three times from 1 onwards (see web page cited above). It is plausible that Homblé's labels were so incomplete, because he left the institute in Guilin all of a sudden, together with the other European scientists, because of troubles in the revolution year 1911. His untimely death in Africa later on prevented that he visited BR, where he could have detected the error, and/or provided more complete labels. This has caused much taxonomic confusion until the 1970s, when the Chinese origin was established.

The present paper draws attention to the Chinese specimens of Homblé, in particular to four species once thought to be new for science, and establishes the latter's genuine identity. Comparable cases of confusion with regard to the origin of botanical material are given, and data quality management of specimen labels is briefly discussed.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In the past it was difficult to trace the Chinese specimens collected by Homblé, because no collector books nor specimen lists were available. During many years annotated lists of specimens were retroactively compiled, mainly by the late Paul Bamps, former curator of the vascular plant herbarium in BR (Lachenaud & Fabri 2020). His work laid the foundation for the present contribution.

Information in the archives of the herbarium – one letter sent to BR by Homblé from 'Kwei-lin', 11 June 1911; Fig. 1, Appendix 1 – was consulted. Some 165 out of 180 specimens

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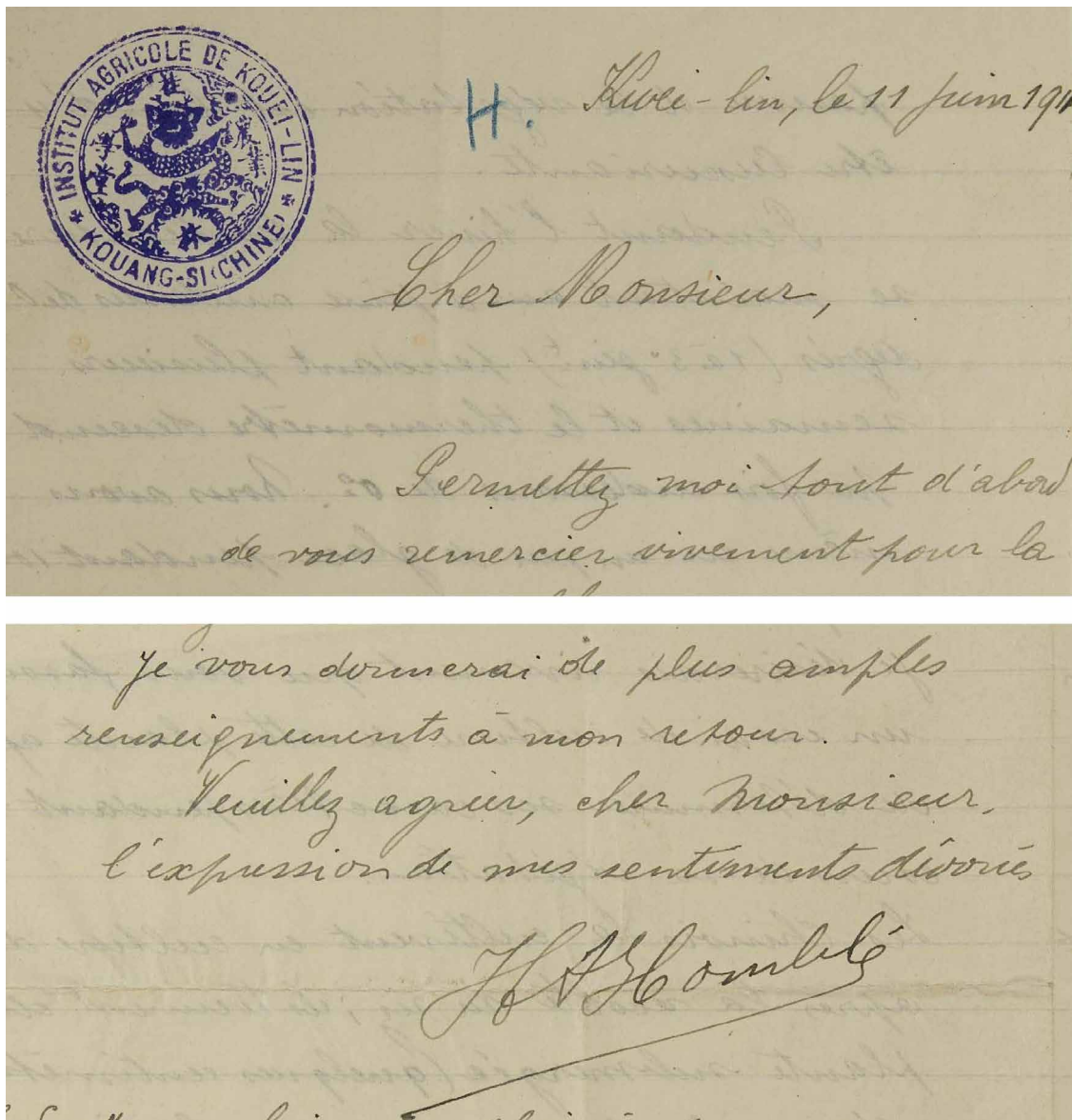


Fig. 1 Handwriting and signature of Henri Homblé, from the letter of 11 June 1911 (see Appendix 1).

collected by Homblé in China were inspected. Most of these specimens are incorporated in the BR virtual herbarium (<https://www.botanicalcollections.be>). Table 1 lists the 180 specimens collected in China and contains direct links to the images and the specimen database. Identifications or confirmations of identifications were made mainly using the Flora of China (Hu & Kelso 1996, Lianli & Kondo 2001, Chen & Phillips 2006, Tang et al. 2007, Chen et al. 2007, 2010, Puhua et al. 2010) and comparison with other material in BR.

RESULTS

The specimens of Homblé, dated between November 1909 and 11 June 1911, were exclusively collected in China (Guangxi), mostly during a journey (probably September 1910; numbers 44–122) to 'Lieou-Tcheou-Fou' (Liuzhou; Fou or Fu stands for 'administrative division') – information in letter of Homblé, Appendix 1. This letter also announced his intention to donate the specimens to BR, and gave some information about the meteorology and vegetation of the Guangxi Province. The collection reflects Homblé's agrostological interest; according to the same letter, he collected almost exclusively pasture plants. A majority of his specimens belong to *Poaceae* and *Cyperaceae*.

We established that students of the Homblé collections described four plant species as new to science and endemic to Katanga, viz. in *Caesalpinia* L., *Digitaria* Haller, *Drosera* L. and *Grewia* L. Gibson et al. (2012) reduced the species in *Drosera* to synonymy. Our study disclosed the identity of the species in the three other genera (for all four see last paragraphs of Discussion).

We also newly identified many other specimens (see Table 1).

DISCUSSION

Unclear labelling of specimens and misinformation in databases

The case reported here exemplifies how herbarium based taxonomy depends on the quality of collection labels. Goodwin et al. (2015) claimed that worldwide more than 50 % of herbarium sheets are filed under wrong names. That astonishingly high number of errors refers, however, to the quality of specimen identifications and cannot be compared with the case we studied here. It is, however, a warning for global data analysis – nowadays common – from herbarium records without checking the accuracy of the data. Working with data from large scale initiatives such as the Global Biodiversity Information

Table 1 List of specimens collected in China by H.A. Homblé. All from Guangxi. Missing numbers correspond to material not yet located in BR. First line: Homblé number & accepted identification. Following lines: identification history or comments. Last line: permanent hyperlink to the specimen on botanicalcollections.be, the virtual herbarium of Meise Botanic Garden (links active, but missing images will be added from late 2021 onwards). Identifications from before 1974 were made when the specimens were inserted in the African collection. The identifier is unknown when he is not mentioned.

November 1909 (1–16)

- 1 *Poaceae, Poaceae* indet.
Previously filed as *Miscanthidium* sp., det. P. Bamps s.d.
Genus not represented in China
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532510>
- 2 *Poaceae, Cymbopogon* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530219>
- 3 *Poaceae, Saccharum narenga* Wall., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Miscanthidium* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530141>
- 4 *Poaceae, Phragmites* sp.
Note Verloove 2020: "Hairy tongue like *Phragmites* but characteristics of the spikelet not correct for that genus. Presumably no *Arundineae* (Flora of China, vol. 22). No idea what then"
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532183>
- 5 *Poaceae, Pennisetum alopecuroides* (L.) Spreng., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Pennisetum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530516>
- 6 *Cyperaceae, Cyperus pilosus* Vahl, det. Verloove 2014
Previously filed as *Cyperus congensis* C.B. Clarke, det. J. Raynal 1970
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530363>
- 7 *Verbenaceae, Vitex negundo* L. var. *negundo*, *Vitex negundo* L., det. Moldenke 1951
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532459>
- 8 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532305>
- 9 *Poaceae, Arundo donax* L., det. Tournay 1954
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530776>
- 10 *Poaceae, Eleusine indica* (L.) Gaertn., det. Vinck 1971;
conf. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530158>
- 11 *Amaranthaceae, Celosia argentea* L., det. Suessenguth 1938; vidit Hauman 1945
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491282>
- 12 *Araceae, Arisaema heterophyllum* Blume, det. G. Gusman 1999
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491275>
- 13 *Rosaceae, Duchesnea indica* (Andrews) Teschem., det. unknown
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000031628815>
- 14 *Poaceae, Eragrostis japonica* (Thunb.) Trin., det. Verloove 2011
Eragrostis cfr. *tenella*, det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531797>
- 15 *Polygonaceae, Polygonum* sp., det. unknown
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532015>
- 16 *Malvaceae*, cf. *Sida rhombifolia* L., det. Hauman 1960
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530714>

July 1910 (17–31)

- 17 *Poaceae, Setaria viridis* (L.) P.Beauv., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Setaria* cf. *acromelaena* (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz, det. Robyns 1931; referring to drawing 3324 prepared by Hélène Durand
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531179>
- 18 *Poaceae, Echinochloa* sp., det. Bamps s.d. (= 24 & 61)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532091>
- 19 *Poaceae, Imperata cylindrica* (L.) Raeusch. var. *major* (Nees) C.E. Hubb., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Imperata cylindrica* (L.) P.Beauv., det. Vinck 1971
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531469>
- 20 *Amaranthaceae, Celosia argentea* L., det. Suessenguth 1938
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491299>
- 21 *Cyperaceae, Cyperus rotundus* L., det. Bamps s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530035>
- 22 *Poaceae, Eragrostis cilianensis* (All.) Vignolo ex Janch., det. P. van der Veken 1954, conf. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531131>
- 23 *Poaceae, Eleusine indica* (L.) Gaertn., det. Vinck 1971;
conf. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530189>
- 24 *Poaceae, Echinochloa* sp. (= 18 & 61)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532756>

- 25 *Poaceae, Setaria viridis* (L.) P.Beauv., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Setaria acromelaena* (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz, det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531445>
- 26 *Verbenaceae, Vitex negundo* L. var. *negundo*
Previously filed as *Vitex negundo* L. var. *heterophylla* (Franch.) Rehder, det. Moldenke 1951
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532787>
- 27 Indet.
Non *Malpighiaceae, Myrtaceae?*, det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000021469015>
- 28 *Poaceae, Setaria viridis* (L.) P.Beauv., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Setaria* cfr. *acromelaena* (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz, det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531773>
- 29 *Chenopodiaceae, Chenopodium ficifolium* Sm., det. Aellen 1964
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530608>
- 30 Indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000021468995>
- 31 Not located at present in BR

August 1910 (32–43)

- 32 *Buddlejaceae, Buddleja lindleyana* Fortune ex Lindl., det. Leeuwenberg 1976
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000028090762>
- 33 *Solanaceae, Datura* sp., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532527>
- 34 *Poaceae, Setaria pumila* (Poir.) Roem. & Schult., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Setaria acromelaena* (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz, det. W. Robyns 1932
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531100>
- 35 *Cyperaceae, Cyperus iria* L., det. Van der Veken 1954
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530691>
- 36 *Poaceae, Ischaemum ciliare* Retz., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Andropogon* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532138>
- 37 Indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000021469008>
- 38 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532497>
- 39 *Melastomataceae, Osbeckia zeylanica* L.f., det. Hansen 1974
Previously filed as *Osbeckia chinensis* L., det. Jacques-Félix 1972
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000030781535>
- 40 *Scrophulariaceae, Veronica* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532602>
- 41 *Fabaceae, Desmodium* sp., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530028>
- 42 *Fabaceae, Uraria lagopodioides* (L.) Desv. ex DC., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Uraria* cf. *gossweileri*, det. J. Léonard 1954, also mentioning 'voir image *U. lagopodioides*, Backer Onkruidflora Java Atlas 7, pl. 340'
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531261>
- 43 *Poaceae, Sporobolus fertilis* (Steud.) Clayton, det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Sporobolus* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532640>

September 1910 (44–121)

- 44 *Verbenaceae, Clerodendrum silvaeanum* Henriq., det. Moldenke 1953
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532121>
- 45 *Poaceae, Arundinella setosa* Trin., det. Reddi 1972
Previously filed as *Arundinella ecklonii* Nees, det. Van der Veken 1955
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532794>
- 46 *Poaceae, Themeda triandra* Forssk., det. Vinck 1970
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531193>
- 47 *Poaceae, Eragrostis* sp.
Note Verloove 2020: "this specimen shows characteristics of both *Eragrostis cummingii* and *Eragrostis perluxa*, both known from Guangxi (Shouliang & Petersen, Flora of China 22: 475, 476. 2006)"
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530127>

Table 1 (cont.)

- 48a *Poaceae, Arundinella setosa* Trin., det. unknown
Arundinella ecklonii Nees, det. Van der Veken 1955
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530097>
- 48b *Poaceae, Arundinella setosa* Trin., det. unknown
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530752>
- 49 *Poaceae, Ischaemum ciliare* Retz., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Andropogon* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532466>
- 50 *Poaceae, Heteropogon contortus* (L.) P.Beauv. ex Roem. & Schult., det. Bamps 1996; conf. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532817>
- 51 *Poaceae, Arundinella setosa* Trin., det. unknown
Arundinella ecklonii Nees, det. Van der Veken 1955
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530424>
- 52 *Fabaceae, Senna sophora* (L.) Roxb.
Previously filed as *Cassia occidentalis* L., det. Ghesquière 1933; *Sophora*, det. LG
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000017615129>
- 53 Not located at present in BR
- 54 *Papaveraceae, Macleaya cordata* R.Br., det. P. Bamps 1964
Bamps noted: "N.B. Plante ornamentale!"
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530271>
- 55 *Poaceae, Themeda triandra* Forssk., det. Vinck 1970
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531520>
- 56 *Poaceae, Setaria* cfr. *acromelaena* (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz, det. W. Robyns 1932
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532480>
- 57 *Poaceae, Sorghastrum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532732>
- 58 *Balsaminaceae, Impatiens chinensis* L., det. Wilczek 1959; conf. Grey-Wilson 1973 (= 84)
Previously filed as *Impatiens manikaensis*, Type, G.M.Schulze & Wilczek, det. Wilczek s.d.
Intended type for supposed novelty that remained unpublished & cited as *I. chinensis* (Wilczek & Schulze 1960: 402)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530295>
- 59 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531735>
- 60 *Verbenaceae, Verbenaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531353>
- 61 *Poaceae, Echinochloa* sp., det. Bamps (= 18 & 24)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531025>
- 62 *Poaceae, Calamagrostis epigeios* (L.) Roxb., det. Vinck 1971
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000033260877>
- 63 *Cyperaceae, Schoenoplectus mucronatus* (L.) Palla, det. Raynal 1978
Previously filed as *Scirpus mucronatus* L., det. Lawalrée 1968
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491084>
- 64 *Poaceae, Pennisetum alopecuroides* (L.) Spreng., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Pennisetum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530844>
- 65 Not located at present in BR
- 65bis *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis complanata* (Retz.) Link
Separated from 65 by BR staff
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532046>
- 66 *Cyperaceae, Kyllingiella microcephala* (Steud.) R.W.Haines & Lye
Previously *Scirpus microcephalus* (Steud.) Dandy, det. 'GT' (G. Troupin) s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000020451981>
- 66B *Cyperaceae, Pycreus flavidus* (Retz.) Koyama ssp. *flavidus*
Separated from 66 by G. Troupin, on same sheet as 66
Previously filed as *Pycreus globosus* (All.) Rchb., det. unknown 1969
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000018184884>
- 67 *Asteraceae, Artemisia* sp.
Note Verloove 2020: "Material insufficient, amongst others lowest leaves missing. Resembles *Artemisia japonica*"
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531537>
- 68 *Poaceae, Isachne kiyalaensis* (Vanderyst) Robyns, det. H. Vinck 1971
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000020448790>
- 69 Not located at present in BR
- 69bis *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis complanata* (Retz.) Link
Separated from 69 by BR staff
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532374>
- 70 *Scrophulariaceae, Scrophulariaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532633>
- 71 *Cyperaceae, Pycreus* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000021150708>
- 72 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531674>
- 73 *Dryopteridaceae, Dryopteris* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008506986>
- 74 *Pteridaceae, Pteris vittata* L., det. Vinck 1972
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008505354>
- 75 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530066>
- 76 *Poaceae, Sporobolus fertilis* (Steud.) Clayton, det. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532558>
- 77 *Poaceae, Eragrostis atrovirens* (Desf.) Trin. ex Steud., det. Bamps s.d.; conf. Verloove 2011
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532428>
- 78 *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis dichotoma* (L.) Vahl, det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531384>
- 79 *Poaceae, Setaria pumila* (Poir.) Roem. & Schult., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Setaria* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531858>
- 80 *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis dichotoma* (L.) Vahl, det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531711>
- 81 *Cyperaceae* mixture of four *Fimbristylis* sp., indicated a, b, c, d by J. Raynal, November 1978, and identified by him as follows:
- 81a [*Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis littoralis* Gaudich..., det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532886>
- 81b *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis miliacea* (L.) Vahl, det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530394>
- 81c *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis dichotoma* (L.) Vahl, det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530721>
- 81d *Cyperaceae, Fimbristylis complanata* (Retz.) Link, det. J. Raynal 1978
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531056>
- 82 Not located at present in BR
- 83 *Fabaceae, Crotalaria sessiliflora* L., det. Verloove 2011 (= 116)
Previously filed as *Crotalaria calycina* Schrank, det. Wilczek 1957
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530660>
- 84 *Balsaminaceae, Impatiens chinensis* L., det. Wilczek 1959; conf. Grey-Wilson 1973
Previously filed as *Impatiens manikaensis* (unpublished name), det. Wilczek 1959
Annotations identical to number 58 (except 'type')
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531209>
- 85 *Verbenaceae, Clerodendrum silvaeanum* Henriq., det. Moldenke 1953
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532077>
- 86 *Acanthaceae, Thunbergia* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491312>
- 87 *Fabaceae, Desmodium* sp., det. unknown s.d. (= collection 128)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531322>
- 88 *Fabaceae, Caesalpinia bonduc* (L.) Roxb., det. E. Robbrecht 2020
holotype of *Caesalpinia homblei* R.Wilczek
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530998>
- 89 *Asteraceae, Anisopappus chinensis* (L.) Hook. & Arn., det. Wild 1962
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532916>
- 90 *Tiliaceae, Grewia cuspidatoserrata* Burret, det. Stoffelen s.d.
holotype of *Grewia katangensis* R.Wilczek, det. Wilczek 1963
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530240>
- 91 *Lamiaceae, Ocimum* sp., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530684>
- 92 *Poaceae, Digitaria ciliaris* (Retz.) Koel., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed under *Digitaria nuda* Schumach., det. unknown
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530110>
- 93 *Anacardiaceae, Anacardiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008505804>
- 94 *Euphorbiaceae, Manihot esculenta* Crantz, det. Bamps s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000030197251>
- 95 *Fabaceae, Albizia chinensis* (Osbeck) Merr., det. Willems 1956, considering as introduced in Katanga
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532039>

Table 1 (cont.)

- 96 *Poaceae, Sorghastrum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532152>
- 97 *Poaceae, Pennisetum alopecuroides* (L.) Spreng., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Pennisetum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530783>
- 98 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531865>
- 99 Not located at present in BR
- 100 *Rhamnaceae, Paliurus* sp.
Previously filed as *Zizyphus abyssinica* Hochst. ex A.Rich.,
det. C. Evrard 1950; *Paliurus* cf. *ramosissimus*, redet. M. Johnston 1969
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530578>
- 101 *Poaceae, Setaria sphacelata* (Schumach.) Stapf. & Hubbard,
det. W. Robyns 1932
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531438>
- 102 *Poaceae, Eragrostis unioloides* (Retz) Nees ex Steud., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Eragrostis paniciformis* (A.Braun) Steud.,
det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531766>
- 103 *Pontederiaceae, Eichhornia crassipes* (Mart.) Solms
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008491305>
- 104 *Poaceae, Poaceae* indet.
Brachypodium?, det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531117>
- 105 *Malvaceae, Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530813>
- 106 Not located at present in BR
- 107 *Poaceae, Saccharum officinarum* L., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000020451776>
- 108 *Cyperaceae, Cyperus pilosus* Vahl, det. Verloove 2014
Previously filed as *Cyperus congensis* C.B. Clarke, det. Raynal 1970
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530080>
- 109 *Poaceae, Phragmites* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532107>
- 110 *Poaceae, Digitaria polybotryoides* Robyns & Van der Veken, **holotype**
On loan to GENT without barcode and there not located at present
- 111 *Poaceae, Ophiurus* sp., det. unknown
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532435>
- 112 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532336>
- 113 *Poaceae, Saccharum narenga* Wall., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Miscanthidium* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530479>
- 114 *Fabaceae, Senna occidentalis* (L.) Link, det. Bamps s.d.
Previously filed as *Cassia occidentalis* L. var. *aristata* Collad.,
det. Ghesquière 1933
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000029524334>
- 115 *Euphorbiaceae, Phyllanthus* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532367>
- 116 *Fabaceae, Crotalaria calycina* Schrank, det. Wilczek 1957
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531599>
- 117 *Fabaceae, Uraria lagopodioides* (L.) Desv. ex DC., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Uraria* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531704>
- 118 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532619>
- 119 *Fabaceae, Desmodium* sp.
Previously filed as *Desmodium* cf. *heterocarpon* (L.) DC.,
det. P. Bamps s.d. / cf. *Desmodium polycarpon* (Poir.) DC.,
det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000029640294>
- 120 *Convolvulaceae, Merremia hederacea* (Burm.f.) Hallier f., det. E. Petit s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531230>
- 121 *Solanaceae, Solanaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532312>
- No date**
- 122 *Euphorbiaceae, Triadica sebifera* (L.) Small, det. Stoffelen s.d.
Previously filed as *Sapium sebiferum* (L.) Roxb., det. Léonard 1958;
he adds "E'ville, cultivé" (cultivated at Elisabethville, now Lubumbashi);
supposed cultivation in Katanga mentioned in Léonard (1962: 152)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000020451752>
- November 1910** (Not numbered in chronological order)
- 123 *Poaceae, Saccharum officinarum* L., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000020451769>
- October 1910 (124–155)**
- 124 *Poaceae, Eragrostis japonica* (Thunb.) Trin.
Previously filed as *Eragrostis namaquensis* Nees ex Schrad.,
det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000020451745>
- 125 *Verbenaceae, Verbenaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530301>
- 126 *Fabaceae, Pueraria montana* (Lour.) Merr. var. *lobata* (Willd.) Maesen & S.M.Almeida ex Sanjappa & Predeep, det. Van der Maesen 2009
Previously filed as *Pueraria thunbergiana* (Siebold & Zucc.) Benth.,
det. W. Robyns 1954
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000018306644>
- 127 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532947>
- 128 *Fabaceae, Desmodium* sp., det. unknown s.d. (= collection 87)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531926>
- 129 Not located at present in BR
- 130 *Amaranthaceae, Achyranthes aspera* L. var. *aspera*,
det. Van der Veken 1952
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000013836818>
- 131 *Polygonaceae, Polygonum acuminatum* Kunth, det. Staner 1938;
conf. Lawalrée & Robyns 1945, but specimen not cited by Robyns (1948)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531896>
- 132 *Malvaceae, Urena lobata* L., det. Hauman 1960
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532671>
- 133 *Sapindaceae, Cardiospermum halicababum* L., det. Hauman s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000018158960>
- 134 *Scrophulariaceae, Torenia* sp., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532930>
- 135 *Poaceae, Panicum* cf. *repens* L., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Panicum* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530455>
- 136 *Poaceae, Sorghastrum* sp. (= 96)
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532220>
- 137 *Poaceae, Sporobolus fertilis* (Steud.) Clayton, det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Sporobolus* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532978>
- 138 *Poaceae, Saccharum narenga* Wall., det. Verloove 2011
Previously filed as *Miscanthidium* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530806>
- 139 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531285>
- 140 *Poaceae, Cymbopogon* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530875>
- 141 *Poaceae, Cymbopogon* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530547>
- 142 *Fabaceae, Cajanus cajan* (L.) Millsp., det. Staner 1936;
conf. Van der Maesen 1980
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530059>
- 143 *Lamiaceae, Mentha* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530967>
- 144 *Scrophulariaceae, Bacopa* sp., det. unknown s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532404>
- 145 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532008>
- 146 *Asteraceae, Asteraceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530950>
- 147 *Apiaceae, Pimpinella* sp., det. Bamps s.d.; conf. Robbrecht s.d.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531988>
- 148 *Poaceae, Eragrostis japonica* (Thunb.) Trin.
Previously filed as *Eragrostis namaquensis* Nees ex Schrad. var.
diplochoides (Steud.) Clayton, det. Liben & Ohoto 1975
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531506>
- 149 *Lamiaceae, Lamiaceae* indet.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532664>
- 150 *Cyperaceae, Pycnus* sp.
<http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR00000021150722>

Table 1 (cont.)

| | |
|--|---|
| 151 <i>Poaceae</i> , <i>Hackelochloa granularis</i> (L.) Kuntze, det. Van der Veken s.d.; conf. Verloove 2011 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530448 | 166 <i>Meliaceae</i> , <i>Melia azedarach</i> L., det. Staner 1939; conf. Troupin 1956 Cited by Staner & Gilbert (1958: 173); these authors discuss the morphology of the leaves of the specimen as deviating from other DR Congo specimens http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530486 |
| 152 <i>Poaceae</i> , <i>Phragmites mauritianus</i> Kunth., det. Tournay 1954 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532763 | 167 Not located at present in BR |
| 153 <i>Cyperaceae</i> , <i>Fuirena umbellata</i> Rottb., det. Wingfield 1975, he added "unusual form, in having hypogynous scales swollen at tip" Previously filed as <i>Fuirena pubescens</i> (Poir.) Kunth, det. J. Raynal 1970 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000020451738 | 168 <i>Campanulaceae</i> , <i>Wahlenbergia marginata</i> (Thunb.) A.DC., det. M. Thulin 1975 Thulin added "not African, ? cultivated" http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530332 |
| 154 <i>Moraceae</i> , cf. <i>Ficus asperifolia</i> Miq., det. Boutique 1948 – expressing doubt about Congo origin http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532343 | 169 <i>Droseraceae</i> , <i>Drosera lunata</i> (Buch.-Ham. ex DC.) C.B. Clarke holotype of <i>Drosera insolita</i> Taton , det. Taton 1945 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530387 |
| 155 <i>Cyperaceae</i> , <i>Fimbristylis littoralis</i> Gaudich., det J. Raynal 1978 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532701 | 170 <i>Orchidaceae</i> , <i>Spiranthes</i> sp., det. Summerhayes 1953 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532589 |
| November 1910 | 171 <i>Acanthaceae</i> , <i>Acanthaceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008639745 |
| 156 <i>Viscaceae</i> , <i>Viscum combreticola</i> Engl., det. Balle s.d. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531346 | 172 <i>Lamiaceae</i> , <i>Lamiaceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531681 |
| March 1911 (157–158) | 173 <i>Primulaceae</i> , <i>Lysimachia candida</i> Lindl., det. Boutique 1971 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530905 |
| 157 <i>Orchidaceae</i> , <i>Orchidaceae</i> sp. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532251 | 174 <i>Lamiaceae</i> , cf. <i>Orthosiphon</i> sp. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532282 |
| 158 <i>Lamiaceae</i> , <i>Scutellaria</i> sp., det. A.R. s.d. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531018 | 175 <i>Asteraceae</i> , <i>Asteraceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530622 |
| April 1911 (159–178) | 176 <i>Asteraceae</i> , <i>Asteraceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532190 |
| 159 <i>Euphorbiaceae</i> , <i>Acalypha</i> sp., det. unknown s.d. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532695 | 177 <i>Bignoniaceae</i> , <i>Bignoniaceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530936 |
| 160 <i>Scrophulariaceae</i> , <i>Mazus</i> sp., det. unknown s.d. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008530639 | 178 <i>Fabaceae</i> , <i>Caesalpinia decapetala</i> (Roth) Alston, det. Wilczek 1950 Previously filed as <i>Caesalpinia sepiaria</i> Roxb. (nom. inval.), det. Ghesquière 1934 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000017704557 |
| 161 <i>Polygalaceae</i> , <i>Polygala</i> sp. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531568 | May 1911 |
| 162 <i>Fabaceae</i> , <i>Lotus</i> sp., det. unknown s.d. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008531650 | 179 <i>Rubiaceae</i> , <i>Gardenia jasminoides</i> J.Ellis Previously filed as <i>Gardenia augusta</i> (L.) Merr., det. Pauwels 1985 http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532275 |
| 163 <i>Rosaceae</i> , <i>Cotoneaster</i> sp., det. Bamps 1964 Bamps added "Probablement introduit et cultivé" http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000031765718 | September 1910 (Not numbered in chronological order) |
| 164 Not located at present in BR | 180 <i>Asteraceae</i> , <i>Asteraceae</i> indet. http://www.botanicalcollections.be/specimen/BR0000008532855 |
| 165 Not located at present in BR | |

Facility (<https://www.gbif.org/>) or the forthcoming Distributed System of Scientific Collections (<https://www.dissco.eu/>) should be undertaken with caution.

Large distance confusions such as the one subject of this paper have probably occurred quite a number of times. Van Steenis and co-workers reported, e.g., collections from Principe (Gulf of Guinea, Africa) and Sri Lanka considered to come from Java (Van Ooststroom & Van Steenis 1950, Van Steenis & Van Steenis-Kruseman 1950). The intercontinental confusion reported in the present paper was never mentioned in literature. A takeaway lesson for present day collectors and herbarium curators is: herbaria should only deposit specimens with complete labels and specimens with provisional labelling should never be distributed. This is the more important because hypotheses based on wrong basic data can result in the formulation of even more incorrect hypotheses; the *Drosera* case (see below) shows such a chain of wrong assumptions.

Although such extreme cases of mislabelling are exceptional, misinterpretation of label information and wrong geolocalisation are not at all rare, due to poor labels and lack of knowledge on the history of collections. Special caution needs always to be exercised when working with historical collections. Taxonomists need expertise in geography and should be able to decipher handwritings and they should become suspicious when reaching apparent contradictory taxonomic or biogeographical con-

clusions. They have to build up thorough background knowledge on the collections they work on, or they can take advantage of a collaboration with curators with a sound knowledge of the collections in their institutes and their collectors. Herbaria, as other biological collections, need to invest in the study of and transfer of collection knowledge. Collaboration between experienced curators and scientists can significantly increase the quality of research output and avoid serious misinterpretations of collection information.

The confusion around the Homblé collections from Guangxi solved

The supposed Katangan origin lasted until the middle of the 20th century. In the 1970s the then curator of BR, the late Paul Bamps (pers. comm. to Robbrecht) became suspicious about the origin after a visit of Henri Jacques-Félix to study African *Melastomataceae*. Jacques-Félix's conclusion that Homblé 39 represents without any doubt an Asian taxon, *Osbeckia chinensis* L., urged Bamps to look for more information about the collector. He found Homblé's letter (Fig. 1, Appendix 1) in the archives, and retroactively compiled a catalogue of his specimens collected in Guangxi. In 1972–1973 he added the information 'Chine, prov. Kwang-Si' to each specimen, and transferred them from the African to the general collection in BR. This curatorial action prevented further misinterpretation of Chinese Homblé specimens.

Taxonomic issues

The study of Chinese material as collected in Katanga resulted in confusion and taxonomic problems, especially from the 1940s onwards. At that time, work on the African collection in BR intensified, because the 'Flore du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi' (and later names for the series) was launched, and published from 1948 onwards (see Robyns 1965, Léonard 1994, Bamps & Degreef 2003). It is nowadays continued in a new series (Sosef 2016) and here further referred to as 'Congo Flora'. A digitized version is available on the internet and contains more information on the history of the Flora (<https://www.floredafriquecentrale.be/#/en/history>).

From 1940 to 1960, work for the Congo Flora was carried out following the systematic order of Engler's Syllabus (Engler 1936), starting with the gymnosperms and 'Choripetalae'. Especially material belonging to families in these groups was examined by family specialists. This explains why earlier identifications of Homblé specimens of sympetalous families (e.g., *Lamiaceae*, *Asteraceae*) or monocotyledons are rare. The case of the grasses – well represented in this collection of pasture plants – is an exception in the latter category, because an agrostological flora (Robyns 1929, 1934) was published before the start of the mentioned Congo Flora project. However, it appears that Robyns only identified *Setaria* specimens from Homblé's China collection (see Table 1).

Only a limited number of identifications were considered not to be suspicious (Table 2, row 1). *Celosia argentea* L. (Homblé 11 & 20), a widespread weed with a paleotropical distribution, is an example. These two specimens were seen (but not cited) by Lucien Hauman for his treatment of the *Amaranthaceae* in the Congo Flora (Hauman 1951). Their identification was not problematic at all for him, because *Celosia argentea* is common throughout the Congo Flora area. The cases of *Crotalaria calycina* Schrank, *Merremia hederacea* (Burm.f.) Hallier f. and *Polygonum acuminatum* Kunth are comparable.

For most specimens identified to species level, however, authors gave a variety of plausible explanations for supposedly aberrant patterns (Table 2, rows 2–9).

In a number of cases, material identified as belonging to an Asian species was supposed to be collected from cultivated material. This holds for *Albizia chinensis* (Osbeck) Merr. and *Wahlenbergia marginata* (Thunb.) A.DC. The same way, Jean Léonard, a specialist of the *Euphorbiaceae*, erroneously reported the cultivation of *Sapium sebiferum* (L.) Roxb. (synonym of *Triadica sebifera* (L.) Small) at Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) (Léonard 1962: 152). This tree is native to China and Japan but invasive in many parts of the world. It is now occasionally planted throughout tropical Africa (Jansen 2007). Cultivation in DR Congo seems limited to the botanical garden of Kisanu, according to data in BR.

Table 2 Explanations for the supposed African origin of plants collected in China by Homblé. Numbers in the second column are Homblé numbers.

| Explanations | Identifications or tentative identifications | Determinavit slip or publication / comments |
|--|---|---|
| 1 – identification considered as unproblematic because of wide distribution including Central Africa | 11 & 20: <i>Celosia argentea</i> L. [widespread weed with paleotropical distribution] | det. Suessenguth 1938; vidit L. Hauman 1945 |
| | 83 & 116: <i>Crotalaria calycina</i> Schrank [widespread in paleotropics] | det. R.Wilczek 1957 |
| | 120: <i>Merremia hederacea</i> (Burm.f.) Hall.f. [widespread in paleotropics] | det. E. Petit, s.d. |
| | 131: <i>Polygonum acuminatum</i> Kunth [tropical Africa and America] | Identified for treatment of <i>Polygonaceae</i> in Congo Flora (Robyns 1948), but specimen not cited therein |
| 2 – believed to be an African species or tentatively identified as such | 6 & 108: <i>Cyperus congensis</i> C.B.Clarke | det. J. Raynal 1970 |
| | 34 & 56: <i>Setaria acromelaena</i> (Hochst.) T.Durand & Schinz [widely spread afro-tropical] | det. W. Robyns 1932; species included in his agrostological flora (Robyns 1934: 272; no specimen citations herein) |
| 3 – believed to be collected from plants cultivated in Katanga | 95: <i>Albizia chinensis</i> (Osbeck) Merr. | det. Willems 1956 |
| | 168: <i>Wahlenbergia marginata</i> (Thunb.) A.DC. | det. M. Thulin 1975 |
| | 122: <i>Sapium sebiferum</i> L. (= <i>Triadica sebifera</i> (L.) Small) | det. J. Léonard 1958; voucher for erroneous report of cultivation in Katanga (Léonard 1962) |
| 4 – suggested to be an ornamental plant | 54: <i>Macleaya cordata</i> R.Br. | det. P. Bamps 1964 |
| 5 – supposed to be introduced | 173: <i>Lysimachia candida</i> Lindl. from East Asia | Boutique (1971); species to be deleted from list of Congo Flora |
| 6 – first record for DR Congo or Katanga | 29: <i>Chenopodium ficifolium</i> Sm. | Aellen (1964) |
| 7 – aberrant morphology discussed | 166: <i>Melia azedarach</i> L. | Staner & Gilbert (1958) |
| 8 – doubtful identification, kept unpublished | 42: <i>Uraria</i> cf. <i>gossweileri</i> Baker f. | det. J. Léonard 1954; not published in Léonard (1954); redet. <i>Uraria lagopodioides</i> (L.) Desv. ex D.C., F. Verloove 2011 |
| 9 – new to science | 169: <i>Drosera insolita</i> Taton | Taton (1945) |
| | 88: <i>Caesalpinia homblei</i> R.Wilczek | Wilczek (1951) |
| | 110: <i>Digitaria polybotryoides</i> Robyns & Van der Veken | Robyns & Van der Veken (1952) |
| | 90: <i>Grewia katangensis</i> R.Wilczek | Wilczek (1963) |
| | 58 & 84: <i>Impatiens manikaensis</i> G.M.Schulze & R.Wilczek | New species remained unpublished; specimens cited as <i>I. chinensis</i> in Wilczek & Schulze (1960); this latter species to be deleted from list of Congo Flora |

On his determinavit slip identifying *Macleaya cordata* R.Br., Paul Bamps indicated that *Homblé 54* was collected from an ornamental plant. The species is grown worldwide indeed.

When Raymond Boutique prepared the *Primulaceae* for the Congo Flora (Boutique 1971), he included *Lysimachia candida* Lindl. as an introduced element: “Les graines ... ont peut-être été introduites avec celles de plantes de cultures originaires d’Asie [The seeds ... were probably introduced with crop seeds of Asian origin]”. His treatment of this species is only based on the Chinese *Homblé 173*, and the species (<https://www.floredafriquecentrale.be/species/S566349>) should be deleted from the list of the Congo Flora. The species is an agricultural weed limited to China (Global Compendium of Weeds, <http://www.hear.org/gcw/>, accessed 3 June 2020), and recorded from Guangxi (Hu & Kelso 1996).

Other collections were considered to represent the first record for DR Congo or Katanga. In 1963, for instance, Paul Aellen paid a visit to BR and revised the unnamed *Chenopodiaceae* from Central Africa. He identified the Chinese *Homblé 29* as *Chenopodium ficifolium* Sm., and reported (Aellen 1964) the widespread species as new for DR Congo. This common ruderal from Europe, northern and southern Africa and temperate Asia remains, however, unrecorded for Central Africa until today (African Plant Database, <https://ville-ge.ch/musinfo/bd/cjb/africa/details.php?langue=en&id=26581>, accessed 10 June 2020; and GBIF, <https://www.gbif.org/>, accessed 6 September 2020). Aellen’s identification was made a decade after the publication of the *Chenopodiaceae* in the Congo Flora (Hauman 1951), so *C. ficifolium* was not included in its list.

Pierre Staner and Georges Gilbert cited *Homblé 166* in their treatment of *Melia azedarach* L. (*Meliaceae*) in the Congo Flora (Staner & Gilbert 1958: 173), but discussed the morphological differences between this specimen and other material introduced in DR Congo. As an explanation, they referred to the existence of many ecotypes in the species.

Jean Léonard, when preparing the *Fabaceae* tribe *Hedysareae* for the Congo Flora, obviously had concerns with the identification of *Homblé 42*, identified by him as *Uria cf. gossweileri* Baker f., but at the same time his determinavit slip referred to *Uria lagopodoides* (L.) Desv. ex DC. (see Table 1). His doubt was, however, not mentioned in the Flora instalment (Léonard 1954: 232). We confirm that specimen 42 indeed belongs to *Uria lagopodoides*. The species is widespread in tropical Asia and reported from Guangxi (Puhua et al. 2010).

The Chinese specimen *Homblé 58* is labelled ‘*Impatiens manikaensis*, Type, G.M.Schulze & Wilczek’, without date. It is the intended type for a supposed novelty that remained unpublished. Rudolf Wilczek indeed collaborated with Georg Schulze to study the *Balsaminaceae* for the Congo Flora and at first interpreted two *Homblé* specimens supposed to be from the Manika Plateau in Katanga as a novelty (see Table 1, number 58 for details). They finally included the specimens under the correct identification *Impatiens chinensis* L. in the Congo Flora (Wilczek & Schulze 1960), stating that they remained puzzled to explain the presence of an Asian species in DR Congo. A determinavit slip from 1973 by Christopher Grey-Wilson confirmed the identification. The species occurs from India to China and is reported from Guangxi (Chen et al. 2007). It should be deleted too from the list of the Congo Flora (<https://www.floredafriquecentrale.be/species/S563702>).

In four other cases, Chinese *Homblé*’s material, supposed to be from Katanga, was described as a novelty for science:

Caesalpinia

Rudolf Wilczek contributed many family treatments to the Congo Flora. When working on parts of the legumes, he described two new species in *Caesalpinia*, one of them, *C. homblei*

R. Wilczek, based on *Homblé*’s Guangxi collection; he stressed that the genus is mainly represented in tropical Asia and America, although also citing the few natives then known from the African continent, mainly East Africa (Wilczek 1951, 1952). Wilczek placed *C. homblei* in sect. *Guilandina* Benth. where he assumed a relationship with *C. bonduc* (L.) Roxb., widespread from tropical Africa to Australasia. *Caesalpinia homblei* remains an accepted name in the International Legume Database & Information Service (<http://www.ildis.org/LegumeWeb>; accessed 8 June 2020).

Caesalpinia homblei needs to be reduced to synonymy of *C. bonduc*. *Homblé 88* possesses the characteristic features of this very variable pantropical species (Chen et al. 2010): prickly stems and pods densely covered with slender spines. The measurements in Wilczek’s description, based on the poor type specimen, match the description in the Flora of China (Chen et al. 2010), where *C. bonduc* is reported from Guangxi. Our comparison with the numerous specimens available in BR confirmed the postulated synonymy.

The specimen *Homblé 88* also bears an identification from 1934, by the hand of Jean Ghesquière: *Caesalpinia sepiaria* Roxb., a synonym of *Caesalpinia decapetala* (Roth) Alston, which is reported from Guangxi too. It is also a spiny climber, but differs from *C. bonduc* in having fragile leathery, shiny, glabrous pods. Ghesquière’s determination, not mentioned by Wilczek, is obviously wrong.

Digitaria

Robyns & Van der Veken (1952), in complement to Robyns’ (1931) earlier revision of the genus *Digitaria* in DR Congo, described *Digitaria polybotryoides* Robyns & Van der Veken based on the Chinese *Homblé* specimen number 110. They believed it to be related to *D. nigritiana* (Hack.) Stapf, an African species of section *Cirripilae*. In GrassBase – The Online World Grass Flora (<http://www.kew.org/data/grasses-db/>; accessed 8 June 2020) *D. polybotryoides* is included as an accepted species restricted to Katanga.

The type specimen was sent on loan to GENT, but could at present not be located there. The description of *D. polybotryoides* was therefore compared with several keys for Asian species of *Digitaria* (Bor 1956, Veldkamp 1973, Chen & Phillips 2006). This showed an obvious match with a rather common species, *Digitaria abludens* (Roem. & Schult.) Veldkamp, in the older literature recorded under the synonym *Digitaria granularis* (Trin.) Henrard. The diagnostic features are: annual species, racemes 2–8, rachis triquetrous, spikelets binate and ternate, 1.3–1.75 mm long, hairs smooth and with dilated apex, lower glume absent, fertile floret protruding, acuminate.

In China, *D. abludens* is only recorded from Hainan, S Henan, Sichuan and Yunnan (Chen & Phillips 2006) but the latter province is bordering Guangxi. *Homblé 110* seems to represent a single and new record for Guangxi.

Drosera

When Taton (1945) described *Drosera insolita* Taton, he stressed that the species was the first African representative of subgenus *Ergaleium*, a mainly Asian-Australian alliance. He believed the widespread *D. peltata* Sm. ex Willd. to be the closest relative. In 1978, Taton, now aware of the Chinese origin, reidentified the specimen as *Drosera peltata* Thunb. var. *lunata* (Buch.-Ham. ex DC.) C.B. Clarke, but he never published the correction. *Drosera peltata* is widespread in China and recorded from Guangxi (Lianli & Kondo 2001). The latter authors did not recognize var. *lunata*.

Taton’s species caused erroneous assumptions in the literature on carnivorous plants. Degreef (1989) considered it as a “very slightly mutated form” of a species complex involving *D. peltata*

and *D. auriculata* Backh. ex Planch. and stated that the range expansion into Africa was important when considering glaciation and dispersion events in *Drosera*. Schlauer (1996), in a synoptic overview of *Drosera*, explained the aberrant occurrence in east (*sic*) Africa as resulting from an ‘almost certainly recent – synanthropic? – range extension’.

Gibson et al. (2012) made a morphological evaluation of the *D. peltata* complex in Australia. This study recognized six species in the complex, including *D. lunata* Buch.-Ham. ex DC., widespread from India to eastern Australia. The authors accessed the virtual herbarium of BR on 5 April 2011 and were hence aware of the Chinese origin of *Homblé 169*. They reduced *D. insolita* to a synonym of *D. lunata* (Gibson et al. 2012: 75), that way corroborating Taton’s above mentioned reidentification.

Grewia

When preparing the *Tiliaceae* for the Congo Flora, Wilczek (1963) described a species in the genus *Grewia* based on *Homblé 90*, collected in China. *Grewia katangensis* R. Wilczek was published with eleven other novelties recognized during his revision. The species was believed to be related to *G. woodiana* K. Schum., but no further comments were given.

Using the Flora of China (Tang et al. 2007), the *Homblé* specimen keys out as *Grewia cuspidatoserrata* Burret. It has the characteristics of this species: 2-lobed fruits, and abaxially tomentose lanceolate leaf-blades with a symmetrical base. This submontane species is only reported from S Yunnan, where *Homblé* was not botanizing. The type specimen is dated September 1910, so was seemingly collected during the above mentioned trip to Liuzhou, possibly at the mountainous end point of that voyage. Our identification is hence plausible, and *Homblé*’s specimen might represent the first record of the species for Guangxi. The trip from Guilin was some 150 km toward the SSW, in the direction of S Yunnan, though still 500 km away from it.

Taxonomic survey

Caesalpinia homblei R. Wilczek, *syn. nov.* (*Fabaceae*)
(Wilczek 1951: 85)

Type. *Homblé 88* (holo BR0000008530998), China, Guangxi, July 1910 = *Caesalpinia bonduc* (L.) Roxb.

Digitaria polybotryoides Robyns & Van der Veken, *syn. nov.* (*Poaceae*) (Robyns & Van der Veken 1952: 152)

Type. *Homblé 110* (holo BR; on loan to GENT and not traced there), China, Guangxi, September 1910 = *Digitaria abludens* (Roem. & Schult.) Veldkamp.

Drosera insolita Taton (*Droseraceae*) (Taton 1945: 307)

Type. *Homblé 169* (holo BR0000008530387), China, Guangxi, April 1911 = *Drosera lunata* Buch.-Ham ex DC. (synonymy proposed by Taton (as var. *lunata*) on a determinavit slip, 1978, and not published by him; corroborated by Gibson et al. 2012: 75).

Grewia katangensis R. Wilczek, *syn. nov.* (*Malvaceae-Grewioideae*) (Wilczek 1963: 464).

Type. *Homblé 90* (holo BR0000008530240), China, Guangxi, September 1910 = *Grewia cuspidatoserrata* Burret.

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Appendix 1 Typed version of letter by Homblé (Fig. 1). The parts in **bold** (bold added here) refer to the herbarium and are translated. Errors were not corrected. # indicates a new page of the original letter.

[stamp 'Institut Agricole de Kouei-Lin / Kouang-Si (Chine)']
[no mention of addressee]

Kwei-lin, le 11 juin 1911

Cher Monsieur,

Permettez moi tout d'abord de vous remercier vivement pour la carte si aimable que vous m'avez adressée en février dernier. Je quitte Kwei-lin dans quelques jours ainsi que tous mes collègues pour rentrer en Europe.

J'aurai ainsi bientôt le plaisir de vous revoir et l'occasion de vous donner quelques renseignements sur ce que j'ai pu observer ici. **J'ai formé un herbier pas très volumineux malheureusement, mais que je vous destine entièrement. Il comprend presque exclusivement des plantes de prairies.** [I assembled a herbarium, unfortunately not very large, but that I entirely destine to you. It is almost exclusively composed of pasture plants].

La flore du Kwang-si me paraît # pauvre et la végétation est loin d'y être luxuriante.

Pendant l'hiver la température se maintient à peine au-dessus de 0 degrés (1 à 3° gén.) pendant plusieurs semaines et le thermomètre descend parfois en dessous de 0°. Nous avons même eu un peu de glace pendant 1 ou 2 jours au cours de deux hivers successifs. Des jeunes caféiers et papayers que j'avais essayé de conserver sous abri ont tous péri.

L'été est fort chaud (temp. max. 30 à 38°). Le régime des pluies est très défavorable. La pluie tombe principalement de février à fin juillet et elle est presque toujours torrentielle (maxim. enregistré en 24 heures = 14½ cm.); elle provoque à tous moments le débordement des ruisseaux qui sont à sec la plus grande partie de l'année.

Ces pluies torrentielles tassent le sol et le pénètrent peu ainsi que je l'ai # contrôlé. Aussi les plantes souffrent-elles souvent de la sécheresse quelques jours après une pluie abondante et cela en pleine saison des pluies.

Parmi les terres basses les unes sont livrées à la culture du riz, les autres forment de mauvais pâturages inondés fréquemment et soumis à la pratique de l'écobuage pendant la période sèche.

Les terres hautes qui ont une toute autre constitution sont très sèches et très arides; elles sont très rarement mises en cultures. Elles ne portent le plus souvent que quelques touffes d'herbes, rares et petites, laissant le sol nu sur sa plus grande surface.

D'autres fois on y trouve des broussailles. Herbes et broussailles servent à alimenter de nombreux fours à chaux (les chinois répandent chaque année de grandes quantités de chaux dans toutes leurs rizières) #

Quelques arbres entourent les villages qui se trouvent toujours situés sur des tertres, mais c'est tout; on ne rencontre de forêts nulle part dans la plus grande partie du Kwang-si (il n'en est pas de même du côté de l'Indo-Chine)

Les massifs calcaires qui se dressent partout ne portent que quelques broussailles et jamais d'arbres. (Il est à noter que nous résidons près de Kweilin – capitale du Kwang-si – et que celle-ci a été placée au cœur d'une des parties les plus pauvres de la province)

Le marasme dans lequel patauge les habitants du Kwang-si et les finances de la province par suite des mauvaises conditions de milieu est aggravé encore du fait de l'état pitoyablement rudimentaire des moyens de communication.

Bref le Kwang-si est, sous tous les rapports, une des contrées les plus déshéritées de la Chine et où l'on ne # rencontre par conséquent que bien peu choses intéressantes.

La plus grande partie des plantes que j'ai séchées a été recueillie au cours d'un voyage que j'ai fait dans une partie du pays (Lieou-tchéou-fou) où les pâturages sont plus riches que ceux qui nous environnent; d'autre part je pouvais me consacrer librement à ce moment à la récolte de plantes à sécher ce qui ne fut guère le cas à l'Institut où des occupations d'ordre trop divers m'absorbèrent entièrement. Les Chinois n'ont jamais pu comprendre l'intérêt qu'il pouvait y avoir à former un herbier, je ne le regrette d'ailleurs pas ... car c'est ce qui me permettra de ramener avec moi toutes les plantes que j'ai séchées pour vous les donner !

J'ai séché indifféremment toutes les plantes rencontrées sans chercher à exclure celles qui peuvent se rencontrer # dans nos pays à climat tempéré.

[The largest part of the plants that I have dried was collected during a voyage made in a part of the country (Lieou-tchéou-fou) where the pastures are more rich than those around us here ; on the other hand, at that time I could freely devote my time to collecting and drying plants, what only rarely was the case at the Institute where a diversity of occupations entirely absorbed me. The Chinese never understood the interest of making an herbarium, and by the way, I do not regret that, because it enables me to bring with me all the plants that I have dried to give them to you !

I have dried without distinction all the plants that I encountered without trying to exclude those which can be found in our countries with temperate climate.]

Je ramènerai avec moi également quelques échantillons de graines notamment de variétés de riz que j'ai pu me procurer à Lieou tchéou fou. J'ai passé une partie de ces graines à mon collègue Mr. Ragondet à qui Mr. de Wildeman a demandé des échantillons de riz.

Je vous envoie dès à présent un échantillon de bulbes, de crainte que ceux que j'ai mis dans mes malles ne pourrissent en cours de route. C'est une plante très couramment cultivée dans cette région et dont je n'ai pu trouver mention dans aucun traité de cultures coloniales. Le nom Chinois en est Ma-tei; des missionnaires m'ont prétendu que c'était une espèce de trapa ou châtaigne d'eau que l'on rencontre également dans le sud de la France. Mais il doit y avoir erreur car les feuilles ne ressemblent pas du tout avec celles de cette dernière plante. #

Sans doute s'agit-il d'une cypéracée dont les Chinois utilisent plusieurs espèces paraît-il. La partie herbacée se compose exclusivement de tiges vertes cylindriques, creuses et sans nœuds partant tous du sol. Je n'ai jamais vu fleurir cette plante.

Je désirerais vivement que vous fassiez un essai de culture de cette plante afin de déterminer ses caractères pendant le cours de sa végétation. Les Chinois la cultivent en culture dérobée après la récolte du riz; ils tiennent cette plante submergée (quelques centimètres d'eau) tout comme pour le riz. La plantation a donc lieu fin juillet-commencement et août (la température est encore très élevée à cette époque).

La plante finit par manquer d'eau à mesure que l'hiver approche. La récolte des bulbes se fait à temps perdu en hiver; le chaume qui est sec depuis longtemps à ce moment est très blanc. #

Ces bulbes se consomment crus après les avoir épluchés au couteau. Le goût en est celui d'un féculent, et est un peu douceâtre. Les Chinois en sont très friands et les mangent comme dessert. On les mange rarement cuits.

Je vous donnerai de plus amples renseignements à mon retour.

Veuillez agréer, Cher Monsieur, l'expression de mes sentiments dévoués.

[signed] H.A. Homblé

P.S. Je me fais un plaisir de vous envoyer la présente lettre recommandée afin d'avoir l'occasion de mettre sur l'enveloppe des timbres de 1. 2. 3. 5 et 10 cents. H.