The taxonomic relations of Peucedanum, Ferula and Ferulago

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I will now describe my theory (under the epigraphic shield of the Darwin quotation) concerning the three genera after the evaluation of the four characters.

Briefly: *Peucedanum* is richly endowed with all the four; the other two lack of one of them (but not the same one) or they exaggerate one of them (again not the same one): e.g. in: *Ferula,* the leave sheaths and in *Ferulago,* the hypsophylls.

The morphogenetic wealth of *Peucedanum* covers — in my opinion — both *Ferula* and *Ferulago*. I know very well that for explaining closely-related taxa are usually described as having a "common ancestor". The pity is that the common ancestor is lying under some sediments still to be worked, or has disappeared, or is represented by a very small and puzzling vestige. I believe instead that *Peucedanum* is that "ancestor" but still full of life, ecologically even more fit than them and also nearer to each than they are to one another: in the same way that two branches divide from the same bole; they are immediate to it, but separated from each other. Paraphrasing G. K. Chesterton,[1] I confess to being attracted to the ideas of J. C. Willis at the start

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[1]He wrote in some part of his numerous writings about his long cruise in quest of the best religion, as it were the most beautiful Island, and on coming back he discovered that the Roman Catholic was that so-longed-for Island of St. Anselm (of Canterbury, for the English, of Aosta for the Italians).

of my study ("Age and Area", "The Birth and Spread of Plants") and now at the conclusion, I am even more Willisist.

Accepting the distribution of *Peucedanum* (see Fig. 13) to "only" three Continents, Asia, Europe and Africa (granting *Lomatium* to America, more for a kind of botanical Monroe Doctrine, than for other reasons), it remains, nevertheless, an overwhelming larger area than those of *Ferula* (Fig. 12) and *Ferulago* (Fig. 11).

It could be disappointing for an orthodox Willisist to find in the 8th edition of J. C. Willis "Dictionary" (1973) that *Peucedanum,* in spite of its vast area, amounts only to 120 species while *Ferula* 133, but these dubious figures will be discussed later.

In this respect, I have displayed doubts about several *Ferula,* which I think, are *Peucedanum* species; I also believe that E. Korovin, in his beautiful Monograph, described too many species from very few samples. It is an odd but acknowledged fact that with more material at hand, the revising botanist can put many insignificant and ill differentiated species into synonymy. It is even more strange however to find the total of the published *Peucedanum* spp. in "Index Kewensis" (up to date and excluding all the old American species) is 342 binomials!