

Taxonomic revision of *Saussurea* subgenus *Amphilaena*

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Snow lotus (*Saussurea obvallata* and its relatives) is one of the most emblematic plants of the Himalaya, the Tibetan plateau and adjacent mountain systems. Worshipped in Hindu temples in India as “Brahmakamal”, much collected in Tibet, the Altai and the Tien Shan and used in Tibetan and Chinese traditional medicine as “Xuelianhua”, these plants inhabit high-alpine situations up to 5400 meters above sea-level. Snow lotus belongs to the subgenus *Amphilaena* of the genus *Saussurea*, the saw-worts of the *Compositae* family. The whole genus comprises more than 450 species, mainly distributed in high-mountain systems of eastern and central Asia, but also in Europe and North America.

This book is the first comprehensive monograph of the snow lotus and its relatives, a group of 35 species inhabiting Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan and Russia. As a result of examining more than 5000 herbarium specimens and making three field expeditions in China and Russia, seven species new to science are described here.

The keys, detailed descriptions, illustrations and distribution maps will help anyone interested in plant diversity of the Asian mountains to reliably identify the diverse species of the snow lotus group. This book also provides much detail about the taxonomic history, first collectors and their travels, and the evolution of one of the most fascinating plant groups in the Himalaya and adjacent high mountains.

