

University of Koblenz-Landau

Systematics and Ecology of *Dracaena* L. (Ruscaceae) in Central, East and Southern Africa

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences

by

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Abstract

Dracaena L. (Ruscaceae) is a predominantly African genus with a smaller centre of diversity in south-east Asia. The taxonomy of the 29 species occurring in Central, East and Southern Africa was revised through phenetic and phylogenetic analyses of the morphology as well as through herbarium, literature and field studies. An infrageneric classification is proposed, in which four sub-genera are recognised for the first time. A taxonomic account for the study area incorporating an identification key, distribution maps and an IUCN Red List assessment is presented. Analysis of *Dracaena* phytogeography reveals that the Guineo-Congolian centre of endemism is the richest with 21 species while the Maputaland-Pondoland regional mosaic and the Guinea-Congolia/Sudania regional transition zone are the poorest, having only one species each. Investigation of the ecology of *Dracaena* in the Kakamega Forest, Kenya, shows that it plays an important role in the forest ecology and is an indicator of forest quality.

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