

I. EDITORIAL NEWS

The biggest event for the Flora Malesiana of the last year was of course the Fifth Flora Malesiana Symposium in Sydney. Unfortunately, I could not attend. A brief personal account is given below by M.C. Roos. Perhaps in the next issue we will have the Proceedings to tell us ALL! At present only some reports of the Workshops could be included in Chapter III.

The Sixth Symposium will be held in Los Baños, Philippines, probably in September 2004, to be organized by Dr. E.S. Fernando, Director, Makiling Centre for Mountain Ecosystem, University of the Philippines, Los Baños, College, Laguna, The Philippines 4031 [e-mail: esf@mudspring.uplb.edu.ph].

Saw, Chua & Khoo (2001) edited the Proceedings of the Fourth Symposium in Kuala Lumpur (1998) as *Taxonomy: the cornerstone of biodiversity* (an intended pun that refers to Corner and Stone to whom special attention was paid). It's a nicely executed piece of work showing the broad scope of interests that the Flora Malesiana is able to generate.

The year 2002 will commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of the famous Georg Everhard Rumphius of Ambon (1627–1702). He is one of the foremost academic naturalists who ever lived and worked in Malesia, and the founder of botanical, malacological, crustaceological, ichthyological, geological, juridical, ethnological, pharmaceutical, religious, and historical sciences of the Moluccas and beyond. Rightly the honorific cognomen, Plinius, was bestowed upon him by a prominent German Scientific Society, which published a few of his letters in their journal. Otherwise there was little contemporary recognition as the East Indian Company (VOC) found his writings too sensitive for their commercial interests and locked them up in their vaults. Gradually they were published, the last one as late as 2001 by Buijze (see Chapter XVII) on the geography of Ambon. All his work is the more remarkable, because it was dictated after he had been struck by blindness, loss of family, collections, library, and manuscripts, and had to rely on his obviously fabulous memory, good secretaries, and draughtsmen. Suitably, he has also been called the 'Blind seer of Ambon'.

As apparently little will be done by the Dutch and Indonesian authorities to commemorate our great predecessor, I have tried to summarize his life and works in a brief biography in Chapter II.

The year 2001 saw the appearance of *Flora Malesiana I, 15, Nepenthaceae*, by M. Cheek & M. Jebb, enumerating 83 species. It apparently has already become a best-seller!

The volume with the Potamogetonaceae, Cymodoceaceae, Zosteraceae, Caryophyllaceae, and Cunoniaceae is in preparation.

The first volume for the Araceae awaits the finalizing of a small group, the second still needs the elaboration of a few large ones.

A REPORT FROM THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL
FLORA MALESIANA SYMPOSIUM,
SYDNEY 9–14 SEPTEMBER 2001

The opening and welcome of this lustrum symposium was on Sunday, September 9, which I cannot report on, as I was stuck with almost all delegates from Indonesia in Jakarta, as our flight was cancelled. However, on arriving on Monday morning at the symposium venue, it was clear that many people had very much enjoyed the Australian hospitality, including the welcome drinks.

The symposium was attended by some 130 people from 19 countries. The programme comprised plenary sessions, mini-symposiums, workshops, and social events.

The start was on the first day with plenary sessions on Stakeholders and the Status of Botany in the Region. The Stakeholder session was opened by Baas, who gave a somewhat gloomier picture of the future of FM than people would have liked, realistic as it was though. Of special interest was the talk on the World Bank perspective as it revealed that there are chances of funding for particular initiatives. The session as a whole nicely illustrated the interest in taxonomic knowledge from various sides, the international initiatives in this respect and the problems how to match funding possibilities with the core business of FM.

The Status of Malesian Botany session was opened by myself discussing what has been achieved in the nineties of last century, and what was not achieved. It appears that we indeed have accelerated the production of species treated, but that at the same time the estimated total number of species to be covered raised accordingly. The picture emerging from this session is, on the one hand, that most countries in the region face serious problems with respect to taxonomy. These relate to staff retirements, lack of trained taxonomists, and, of course, lack of funding. On the other hand, a great variety of activities have been initiated, but mostly not dealing with revision work.

The second day was almost completely devoted to sessions on ferns, with papers ranging from floristic overviews and overviews of distribution patterns, to taxonomic treatments and species delimitations, to molecular phylogenies. In the afternoon there was a parallel session on other cryptogamic taxa, especially bryophytes, but also mushrooms and diatoms. (In the case of parallel sessions, it was only possible to change from one to the other at the cost of one paper, as they were in different buildings.)

On Wednesday morning there were three parallel sessions, one on ecology and floristics, in which Middleton gave a very nice overview on the adjacent Flora of Thailand project in comparison to FM and Tjitrosoedirdjo showed the importance of BIOTROP as a regional centre in capacity building. I also found the papers on invasive plant species most interesting. The two other sessions were on taxonomy and systematics of Malesian plants. A great many families were represented, with more than one contribution on the Gesneriaceae, *Begonias*, and Zingiberaceae.

Wednesday afternoon was completely devoted to workshops, 12 in total (of which 11 on families and 1 on Bioinformatics). As the afternoon was divided into two sub-sessions, it was possible to attend 2 workshops (except for the ferns and the palms, which attracted so much contributors that they lasted for both sub-sessions). The two workshops I was able to attend (Lamiaceae II and Annonaceae) were quite lively and stimulating, resulting in quite some realistic plans. That this was also the case for the other work-

shops was obvious during the plenary, closing session on Friday afternoon, where all workshops reported on their results, which for almost all was quite substantial (see for more detailed reports elsewhere in this volume).

Thursday had on the one hand a day long row of papers on Palms, in sessions focusing on New Guinea, on inventory work, on biological aspects of pollination and morphological diversification, and on systematic topics on biogeography and species delimitation. On the other hand there was a full day parallel programme on bioinformatics, with papers on theoretical background of taxonomic data bases and electronic tools. It started with papers on various examples of data bases, data manipulation, identification tools, etc. which are being developed. This was followed by a demonstration of CD-ROMs and Online products. In the afternoon the future aspects of bioinformatics in relation to FM was discussed. It was decided that we should put more effort in communication by developing a website coordinated by CSIRO with mirror sites at Bangi and Leiden. Such a site can also be used to put preliminary results at the test within the FM network.

On Friday, the last day, there were again two parallel sessions in the morning. One was on Orchids, with a great variety of topics covered (molecular dating and historical biogeography, floral structure and development (very impressive work), revisions, molecular phylogenies and total evidence analyses, floristics, conservation genetics and colonisation). The other session was on ethnobotany. It started with several, lively contributions on Aboriginal knowledge of plants and their uses. Subsequently, various topics were covered: the value of vernacular names for inventories, distribution patterns of crop species, the distribution of knowledge over gender and age classes, medicinal plants, property rights, and the relation researchers/indigenous people (bilingual, jointly by a representative of each group).

The Australian Organising Committee deserves a great compliment for the enormous effort they have put in the organisation and developing a new programme. The attendants were most enthusiastic about the accompanying workshop in Cairns, preceding the symposium. It was very nice that The Nancy Burbidge Memorial lecture was incorporated in the programme. Judy West gave a most inspiring lecture on her vistas on systematics on that occasion. Also, the additional cultural events were most appreciated by the participants: e.g. the Wallace-line exhibition (never before encountered an artist who used *Drynaria* nest fronds in his work) and the Botanical Illustration workshop. The location of the symposium diner with a great view on the Sydney Opera House was excellent, and the cancellation of the diner speech was hilariously compensated by Baas and the presentation of recent and new books on Malesian botany (always wondered why the World Series is restricted to the States?). However, on returning in my hotel room, this fine evening was shadowed by the 11 September disaster in New York.

My sincere thanks go to the co-chairs of the organising committee Dr. A. Hay and Dr. J. West, who made a very nice duet at the opening and closing ceremonies, for sure illustrative of the close harmony within the Organising Committee, resulting in this most successful and stimulating symposium. Many people were gathered together to exchange knowledge and information (with a bit of a bias to ferns and palms; a call for the other taxon specialists for next time). It was good to see what tremendous progress has been made with respect to data basing, CD-ROM publication, and Online information.

Looking forward to 2004 in Los Baños. — M.C. Roos



Fig. 1. Portrait of Rumphius for his 68th birthday made by his son Paulus.