

## XII. AN OVERVIEW OF DIOSPYROS OF BORNEO

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After a long absence from taxonomy, I accepted a contract to revise *Diospyros* for the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak in July 1999. The last comprehensive revision of *Diospyros* that covered Borneo was Bakhuizen van den Brink's *Revisio ebenacearum malayensium* [Bull. Jard. Bot. Buitenzorg III, 15 (1936–1941) 1–515]. In the present revision, 22 species are reduced to synonymy and 12 new taxa will be described. This brings the total number of confirmed species in Borneo to 78. Another 8 species cannot be resolved until I can examine their types, because all other evidence available is insufficient to support decision-making.

Of these 78 species, 33 (42%) are endemic to Borneo. Within Borneo, most range across political boundaries. Consequently, Sarawak has only 8 endemics, Sabah has 5, Kalimantan 2, and Brunei none. However, Brunei has *D. yeobii*, which occurs nowhere else in Borneo, but is found on the other side of the South China Sea, in Peninsular Malaysia. The level of endemism will certainly drop if *Diospyros* is revised for the Philippines and E Indonesia. Indeed, the revision of *Diospyros* for Borneo had a spill over effect on the status of *Diospyros* in Peninsular Malaysia (which I had revised for the Tree Flora of Malaya in 1978). Four peninsular species had to be reduced to synonymy and the number of peninsular endemics dropped from 23 to 17 due to extension of their known ranges to Borneo.

The problem of accessibility to types hinders the progress of taxonomy in Borneo. In Sabah, all the types deposited before World War II were lost through fire, as a result of which SAN has great difficulty finding the correct names for plants described from Sabah. Until this revision, for example, *D. oligantha* was just a name on a type specimen kept overseas, which had not been applied to any other specimens from Borneo. When I finally saw the types in BO and SING, *D. oligantha* turned out to be a common species in Sabah, represented by numerous previously undetermined specimens. I also found 4 type duplicates of the now politically incorrect, but nomenclaturally valid *D. britanno-borneensis* in BO and was able to obtain one as a gift to KEP. There is no duplicate of this in Malaysia and Singapore. Hence the problem is not so bad for Sabah types, because most of them are represented by duplicates in BO and SING. The problem is more serious where the types can only be seen in Europe. Of the Bornean species that presently remain unresolved, 4 have Beccari types, 1 has a Haviland type, and 2 have Hackenberg types, all of which can only be tracked down by going to Europe, but there is no funding available for long journeys to track down type specimens. It looks as if 'unresolved species' are going to be a lasting feature of Bornean taxonomy. If I do track down these types, it is likely that their names will have priority over currently used names. This does not help nomenclatural stability at all. I think the current rules allowing conservation of species names do not go far enough. If a name has not been kept relevant

through recognition and application in the region of its type for 50 years, I think, it should lose automatically all its claims to nomenclatural priority. If a 50-year rule is too radical, how about a 100-year rule?

Editor's note: Such proposals for so-called 'nomina oblita', forgotten names, have always been heavily defeated at Botanical Congresses, but are accepted by the zoologists, ICZN, ed. 4 (1999) Art. 23.9.

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#### *The Nutmeg family revised*

*Myristicaceae*, the Nutmeg family, is a medium-sized pantropical family, well represented with six genera and about 350 species in Southeast Asia. In the Malesian area there occur altogether 335 species: *Endocomia* (4), *Gymnacranthera* (6), *Horsfieldia* (97), *Knema* (75), *Myristica* (152), and *Paramyristica* (1). Some are of economic importance, of which the nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) is the most famous.

The trees generally can be found in all types of primary forest, most of them in lowland rain forest, and are readily recognisable by their characteristic architecture. The heavy seeds are short-lived, but may be dispersed by larger birds, for instance hornbills in West Malesia and big pigeons in New Guinea. Especially New Guinea is rich in endemic *Myristica* species. Practically all species are threatened by the ongoing forest destruction.

Flora Malesiana Series I, Volume 14 contains an up-to-date overview of this ancient dioecious family, fully treating the Malesian species, of which many are illustrated by line drawings of habit and morphological details, often full-page. Since the species are notoriously difficult to recognise, both general and regional keys have been given, separately for male flowering as well as fruiting specimens. For many species relationships to other species are discussed.

In addition to a general morphological introduction, specialists provide information on leaf and wood anatomy (Baas, Koster), palynology (Van der Ham), and phytochemistry and chemotaxonomy (Hegnauer). An index to scientific plant names is given.

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