

XVI. REVIEWS
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MOGEA, J.P., D. GANDAWIDJAJA, H. WIRIADINATA, R.E. NASUTION & IRAWATI. 2001. **Tumbuhan langka Indonesia (Rare plants of Indonesia)**. 86 pp, illus. Puslitbang Biologi-LIPI. ISBN 979-579-036-6 (In Bahasa Indonesia).

This is an illustrated guide to and descriptions of 40 rare or endangered plants of Indonesia. Not surprisingly several species of *Aquilaria*, mercilessly sought after for their scented wood (gaharu), are included as well as several species of orchids and *Rafflesia*, of which habitat destruction is the main threat. This is also true for *Amorphophallus titanum* which, by the way, has been successfully propagated by seeds in the Leiden Botanical Garden, alongside other species of the genus.

Besides these 40 main species the authors list another 200 which are not further discussed. The enumeration partly reflects the interest of the individual authors, which explains the large numbers of palms (Mogea) and Legumes (Wiriadinata). I noted that all species selected have some economic, medicinal or ornamental potential. I can think of numerous other species which are even less common than the ones mentioned. Take for instance the large number of species in Flora Malesiana or in revisions which are labelled as: "only known from the type" or "not found since ...".

I doubt if some species listed deserve to be included: *Caesalpinia bonduc*, *C. crista*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Timonius timon*, and *Vatica rassak*. *Rasamala (Altingia excelsa)* is mentioned in the introduction but is not in the list. The three species of *Sommieria* have recently been reduced to one. *Macadamia hildebrandii* is mentioned twice and *Toona* belongs to the Meliaceae, not Verbenaceae.

Despite these few critical remarks I hope this booklet will help to stimulate appreciation of the public at large for the many botanical treasures that Indonesia harbours. — M.M.J. van Balgooy

PURI, R.K. 2001. **Bulungan Ethnobiology Handbook**. xxxv + 310 pp, illus. ISBN 979-8764-45-5. Center for International Forestry Research, Indonesia.

The term Ethnobiology in the title suggests an in-depth study of the interrelations between peoples and their environments. This starting point would be valid for every study of ethnobiology. Does Puri's 'handbook' meet these requirements?

The author has chosen 18 different groups, as "a sample of residents representing all the large linguistic/cultural groups across the Bulungan area" (p. xx). But what exactly have been the criteria of choice, however, is not clear. Puri mentions a choice on the basis of linguistic data. The linguistic mosaic in Bulungan, however, is quite complicated because of the great mobility of ethnic groups in the recent past and is still going on. Moreover, the linguistic map does not coincide with the ethnic one, which makes the criteria of choice less than reliable.

The author's research methods are said to be "standard survey and interview techniques, used in anthropology and ethnobiology". But doing fieldwork, the basis of any ethnobiological study, means that the researcher has to live in the group studied – to gain

confidence of the people – to observe the functioning of the group in its environment; it is the method of direct observation. Interviews and surveys alone do not lead to an understanding of a group's culture, but are a supplement to the data acquired.

It seems more useful to me to divide the 18 groups chosen by Puri on the basis of subsistence, which has also more meaning to an ethnobiologist.

We then could put the Punan groups and the Penan in one category. These people, until recently, were forest nomads, foragers, who lived on inland sago, *Eugeissona utilis* Becc. and did not practice agriculture.

The two Lun Daye groups on the contrary have a rich tradition of agriculture, cultivated food plants on irrigated fields, having from times immemorial swiddens besides.

The remaining groups could be placed under the great Kenyah-Kayan group of traditional shifting cultivators.

In view of what has been explained above, it becomes doubtful whether the produced word lists (Environmental Glossary) reflect the groups' knowledge of their environment. The Punan groups, for example, have taken over terms for all things agricultural from their neighbours. Also terms for house, house construction, kitchens and kitchen utensils, furniture and the like, have been adopted from permanently settled groups.

Some remarks on the names and uses of plants and animals in the word lists: I doubt whether the young leaves and stem tips of *Millettia sericea* (p. 57) (this species – a liana – has not yet been found in Kalimantan/Borneo up to now) are eaten. The leaves are hairy (*sericea* = silky hairy) and hard. Moreover, the plant contains a chemical substance, rotenone, and is used as a fish poison, against fevers and tooth ache.

The differences between the two hornbill birds (p. 211) are not well described. *Buceros vigil*, the Helmeted hornbill, has a massive casque for which it has been hunted for centuries and traded – besides elephant ivory – in particular with China, where it is engraved for ornamentation.

It is also quite unlikely that hornbills are eaten by Dayaks in view of their important roles in their cosmologies and ceremonies. Eating them is taboo for all Dayak groups. It could be that Punans consume them. Which then would again illustrate the great difference between the groups chosen as to their attitude towards their environment because of the differences in culture.

Some botanical names have become obsolete or are erroneously written. *Gendarussa vulgaris* (p. 1) is now *Justicia gendarussa* Burm.f. *Holochlamis* (p. 14) should be written *Holochlamys*. *Millettia* (p. 57) is rightly *Millettia*. *Elmerrillia mollis* (p. 85) is now *Elmerrillia tsiampacca* subsp. *mollis* (Dandy) Noot. Recently *Elmerrillia* has been reduced to *Magnolia*.

Puri has done much work with the surveys based on interviews but in an ethnobiological handbook one would expect detailed data on the several uses of plants, especially in view of the medicinal purposes, such as application and the medicinal concept.

Perhaps 'An Introduction to ethnobiological researches in the Bulungan area, East Kalimantan, Indonesia' would have been a more appropriate title for this book, which then would still serve as a valuable field guide. — W. Avé