

VII. BECCARI'S ASCENT OF "MOUNT POI", SARAWAK

In chapter VII of his book "Wanderings in the Great Forests of Borneo" Beccari records his ascent of Mount Poi (Poe, Pueh) in south-western Sarawak, and subsequently Poi has been cited as the type locality for a number of species described from his material. The purpose of this note is to put on record the fact that although Beccari ascended the Poi range, he did not climb Gunong Poi, as that name is used on modern maps, but a more south-easterly peak in the range, Gunong Berumput (Gunong Rumpu).

In August 1962 I collected on Gunong Berumput with my colleague P.J.B.Woods: the choice of this peak rather than Gunong Poi itself was made on the advice of Mr B.E.Smythies, Conservator of Forests, who said he thought we should find it more interesting. On returning home I re-read Beccari's book and realized immediately that we had virtually followed in his footsteps.

Our starting points were slightly different. Beccari set out from Sadomak, then a large Dyak village but, as far as I can see from maps, only now represented by a stream of that name which lies half-way between Lundu and Kampong Serayan. We obtained porters from Kampong Keranji, not far from Serayan, and also the services of Tua Kampong Koronggong as guide. Beccari camped by the 'Burangan torrent' and this is obviously Sungei Perunggan - our own camp being near where this meets the boundary of the present Forest Reserve.

Beccari then records "After a climb of several hours we reached an elevation of about 4,300 ft, and camped in a kind of grotto between two huge blocks of granite, which met above our heads and formed a good natural shelter from the rain." Beccari's altitudes are always too high and 3,500 ft is nearer the mark in this case, but otherwise his description of our higher camping place is perfect. We too continued up the ridge to the summit (4,877 ft on modern maps rather than the 5,520 ft given by Beccari), and there we found the same plants as Beccari: two species of Nepenthes, Dacrydium, and Spathoglottis aurea.

Lured on by tales of Rafflesia at the foot of the mountain, Beccari took the descent at the double! We stayed in the granite grotto for 4 (very cold) nights making a second ascent to the summit of Berumput and on as far as the next peak, Gunong Kanyi (5,000 ft); we also spent some time exploring the gullies on the sides of Berumput. These were particularly rewarding in the family we had specially gone to seek, Gesneriaceae. Amongst the huge granite boulders of these gullies we found the remarkable Cyrtandra mirabilis C.B.Cl. and C.impar Kraenzl. both known previously from Indonesian Borneo. In all the mountain yielded 9 species of Cyrtandra, some undescribed. Didymocarpus scabrinervius C.B.Cl.

is plentiful on the pathside near the grotto camp and this seems to be the only species of the family collected by Beccari. The type locality has, of course, hitherto been cited as Mt Poi. Other species described from Beccari's collections here are Dacrydium beccarii Parl., Agathis beccarii Warb., Petrosavia stellaris Becc. and Rhododendron variolosum Becc.

"Mount Poi" was climbed by another collector, E.Mjöberg (see his book "Forest Life and Adventures in the Malay Archipelago") and in this case again it seems likely that the peak was Berumput. There are no topographical details to clinch this, but he gives a photograph of Spathoglottis aurea at the summit and Mr Smythies tells me that this is absent from Gunung Poi itself. If this is so, then Berumput becomes the type locality also for Loxocarpus longipetiolatus B.L.Burt (Didymocarpus longipetiolatus Merr. non Gardn.) and it is, indeed, frequent on rocks by the path between 2,700 and 4,000 ft, while above about 4,300 ft another closely related species is found: an interesting case of altitudinal replacement.

The references to the main object of my own trip, the collection of Gesneriaceae, perhaps justify my finishing this note with a plea for herbarium specimens, seeds or cuttings of this family. Although we now have a good many species in cultivation at Edinburgh, material of known wild origin is always needed and is very unlikely to duplicate what we already have. The flowers of pressed specimens, especially species of Cyrtandra, need careful handling and should be put in a separate envelope. Herbaria are full of sheets with colour notes on the label but no corolla on the specimen!

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B.L.Burt.

VARIA

"Now as they seized on all characters indifferently, whether they were accidental or essential, and so constituted a new species on account of some trifling characteristic, there has arisen such confusion, such a barbarous collection of names, such an accumulation of false species, that it were easier to cleanse the Augean Stable than Botany."

C.Linnaeus, *Critica botanica* (1737)
§ 259, transl. A.Hort (1938).