

REVIEW

N. A. HARRIMAN (ed.): *Gramineae*. In: M. D. Dassanayake, F. R. Fosberg & W. D. Clayton (eds.), A revised handbook to the Flora of Ceylon 8. 1994. v + 458 pp., *not* illus. Amerind Publ. Co., New Delhi (for India and Sri Lanka), no ISBN, price unknown, and Balkema, Rotterdam/Brookfield (world), ISBN 90-6191-552-X, price Dfl. 120.00.

It is not the custom to review publications not directly pertaining to the Malesian flora. However, as most of the lowland species of grasses have a wide distribution from Africa through India to Malesia and beyond, the value is surpassing the geographical limits of this flora. Firstly, the present work is a thorough updating of a previous treatment of the grasses for Sri Lanka by Seneratna, 'Grasses of Ceylon' (1956). Secondly, by having descriptions, it is a useful companion to Bor's 'Grasses of Burma, Ceylon, India and Pakistan' (1960).

It is a compilation of contributions by various authors (W. D. Clayton, G. Davidse, F. Gould, M. Lazarides, T. R. Soderstrom), causing a rather variable 'flavour and phrasing' retained as best as possible by the final editor.

First of all, it is a pity that, like its 7 predecessors, no index to names is provided. The taxa are arranged alphabetically, and if the currently accepted names are known, easy to find. However, many botanists, especially in India, only have Hooker's treatments in the Flora of British India (1896–1897) and in Trimen, Handbook of the Flora of Ceylon (1900), and works based on that. In the past century many changes have taken place, and then the names are not so easy to retrieve, e.g. *Eleusine verticillata* is now *Acrachne racemosa*, *Dichanthium polytychon* is *Andropogon polytychos*, *Indocalamus* spp. and *Chimonobambusa densifolia* are now *Arundinaria* spp. *Teinostachyum attenuata* is *Davidsea*, *Eremopogon foveolatum* is *Dichanthium foveolatum*, etc.

Perhaps due to the various dates on which the treatments were made, there is a lack of references to recent revisions. To take mine and my student's as examples: *Brachypodium* (Veldkamp et al., 1989), *Deyeuxia* (Korthof & Veldkamp, 1985; which would perhaps have caused the new species *Calamagrostis srilankensis* to be placed in that genus), *Cynodon* (Nowack, 1992, where *C. arcuatus* is reduced to *C. radiatus*), *Digitaria* (Veldkamp, 1973; *D. radicata* is a good species and not a synonym of *D. ciliaris*; here I have given a synonymy much more extensive and up-to-date than Bor's, 1960; *Panicum adscendens* was placed in *Digitaria* by both Seneratna and Bor; *D. wallichiana* has a curious disjunct distribution, occurs also in Java and Bali). One may dispute the union of *Diplachne* with *Leptochloa*, but in the first place *D. fusca* surely must be called *D. malabarica* (Veldkamp, 1971), a name not even mentioned. Reference, even when the decisions were not accepted, should have been made to the reduction of *Hackelochloa* and *Heteropholis* to *Mnesithea* (Veldkamp et al., 1986; only *M. laevis* var. *laevis* in Sri Lanka), and under *Heteropholis* to the revision by Koning et al. (1983). *Ischaemum indicum* is *I. ciliare* as the basionym *Phleum indicum* turned out to be *Polytrias indica* (Veldkamp, 1991), which may well occur in Sri Lanka as it is so widely cultivated. *Paspalum* (Koning & Sosef, 1985; only *P. scrobiculatum* var. *bispicatum* occurs in Sri Lanka). *Phragmites karka* is *P. vallatoria* (Veldkamp, 1992). *Sporobolus* (Baaijens & Veldkamp, 1991, where it also is shown that *Thysanolaena maxima* should be called *T. latifolia*). *Zoysia* Goudswaard (1980; I would not be surprised if *Z. matrella* var. *pacifica* was cultivated in Sri Lanka).

Gould should have referred to his own revision of *Garnotia* (1972). Under *Heteropogon* Deshpande (1990) might have been mentioned. Under *Ichnanthus* Stieber (1987: *I. vicinus* reduced to *I. pallens*). Under *Oplismenus* Scholz (1981). *Stenotaphrum* was treated by Sauer (1972). *Tragus* by Anton (1981). And so on.

It may be noted that there are two editions of this work, differing in publisher, cover, and quality of paper. I am informed that they were simultaneously printed and that the Balkema edition arrived a few months later in the Netherlands by ship. The Amerind edition (April 1994) presumably has priority.

It is a pity that there are no illustrations at all. At least some might have been gleaned from the Kew and Smithsonian archives.

Notwithstanding these grumbles an important contribution to the knowledge of grasses of South-east Asia has been made, which should be useful to agronomists worldwide

J. F. VELDKAMP