A new species of Cycas (Cycadaceae) from Peninsular Malaysia

M. Jutta¹, K.L. Chew², L.G. Saw³

Key words

Cvcadaceae Cycas Peninsular Malaysia Abstract A new species of Cycas, C. cantafolia (Cycadaceae) from the southern part of Peninsular Malaysia is described and illustrated. A key to the species of Cycas in Peninsular Malaysia is provided.

Published on 11 November 2010

INTRODUCTION

Up until the closing years of the last century Peninsular Malaysia was believed to have only two native species of Cycas: C. rumphii Miq. and C. siamensis Miq. (Ridley 1911, 1925, Keng 1969, Jones 1980, Turner 1997). Hill in Hill & Yang (1999) assigned these names, repeatedly applied to various taxa in various revisions (Smitinand 1971, 1972, De Laubenfels & Adema 1998), to other taxa and described the Peninsular Malaysian ones as new species, C. litoralis K.D.Hill and C. clivicola K.D.Hill respectively. Hill (1995) also 'rediscovered' C. macrocarpa Griff., first described by Griffith in 1854, but subsequently overlooked by other workers, the plants being routinely assigned to C. rumphii (Hill 1995), although Ridley (1925) acknowledged the possibility that inland specimens of C. rumphii might represent a separate species. Until now records of inland Cycas were restricted to limestone outcrops in the northern half of the Peninsula (C. clivicola), while the southernmost record of C. macrocarpa was Griffith's record from Tabung, Malacca.

A chance encounter by the second author of Cycas plants cultivated in a local garden eventually led to the discovery of several populations of Cycas on an isolated chain of granite hills proximate to the base of Gunung Ledang (Mount Ophir) that proved to be a yet undescribed species. This new find is also the first confirmed record of inland Cycas from the state of Johor in the south of Peninsular Malaysia.

Cycas cantafolia Jutta, K.L.Chew & Saw, sp. nov. — Fig. 1

Inter sectionem Indosinenses similis Cycadis clivicolae foliis non carinatis, cortice crassio suberosio et strobilis feminis typo inapertae, sed foliis majoribus, megasporophyllis spinis lateralis, apicalis et habitatio in clivis saxis graniticis differt. — Typus: Jutta & Chew FRI 59721 (holo KEP), Malaysia, Johor, Ledang, Bukit Belading, 10 Jan. 2009.

Stems arborescent, often decumbent, to 5.5 m or more tall, diam at narrowest point to 25 cm, usually with an enlarged bulbous base, to 64 cm diam at the widest point, in the distal portion with distinct annular rings; bark light grey, with age becoming corky with deep polygonal fissuring. Leaves up to 50 or more, discolourous, dark green and semi-glossy above, to 200 cm long, flat (not keeled) in cross section (opposing pinnae inserted at 180° on rachis), with up to 330 pinnae, the white tomentum shedding as the leaf expands; rachis terminated either by a spine, 23 mm long, or by paired pinnae; petiole 45-50 cm long (22-25 % of total leaf), glabrous, spinescent to 60 % of length; basal pinnae 130 mm long, not gradually reducing in size or becoming spinescent; median pinnae simple, linear, straight to slightly falcate, strongly discolourous, 220-275 by 8 mm, inserted at 50-60° to rachis, decurrent for 2-3 mm, narrowed to 2-3 mm at base, margins slightly rolled in, apex acute, spinescent; midrib raised above and below. Cataphylls narrowly triangular, pilose, in the upper half the hairs extending beyond the margin and appearing shaggy, 88-112 by 15 mm, widest at base. Male cones ovoid, golden yellow or orange, 33 by 13 cm (mature size, pre-anthesis measurement); microsporophylls: lamina firm, not dorsiventrally thickened, 40 by 13-15 mm; fertile zone 30 mm long; sterile apex 10 mm long, level; apical spine soft, sharply upturned at c. 70°, 3 mm long. Megasporophylls 18-22 cm long, grey to light-brown, tomentose, closely spaced with laminae overlapping each other and forming a low dome-shaped structure enclosing the apical meristem; lamina elliptic, 60-65 mm long, 40 mm wide, pectinate; lateral spines 25-30, soft, 10-18 mm long, 3 mm wide at base; apical spine distinct from lateral spines, 36-50 mm long, 6 mm wide at base; ovules 1-4, glabrous. Seeds subglobose, laterally flattened, 35-39 by 35-37 mm, 25-30 mm deep including the sarcotesta; sarcotesta yellow, not pruinose, 2-4 mm thick, fibrous layer present; sclerotesta smooth; spongy layer beneath sclerotesta absent.

Distribution — Endemic to a chain of low-elevation hills west of the southern tip of the Gunung Ledang massif (Mount Ophir) in Johor in southern Peninsular Malaysia.

Habitat — Cycas cantafolia is locally abundant on precipitous granite cliffs up to an elevation of 200-500 m, usually rooted directly in crevices and cracks on bare rock.

Conservation status — IUCN Red List Category (IUCN 2007): Critically Endangered (CR A3c, B2ab (iii) & C1). The species has a very narrow localized distribution, even though within its range it is abundant. The present threat is to its habitat because the entire area has been designated for quarrying activities. In future, the most serious threat is posed by potential harvesting for the ornamental trade, although at present there is no evidence of harvesting. The species is dioecious, very slow growing, with irregular reproductive activity, extended seed maturation rates, high seed and seedling mortality. Pollination is entomophilous (by weevils) and believed to be highly hostspecific (Oberprieler 2004).

© 2010 Nationaal Herbarium Nederland

You are free to share - to copy, distribute and transmit the work, under the following conditions:

Attribution:

You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).

Non-commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.

No derivative works: You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work, which can be found at http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/legalcode. Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder. Nothing in this license impairs or restricts the author's moral rights.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palmoil (RSPO), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; corresponding author e-mail: waldelf@gmail.com.

² Taman Hutan Lagenda, Johor National Parks, 84020 Sagil, Ledang, Johor, Malaysia.

³ Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), 52109 Kepong, Selangor, Malaysia.

250 Blumea – Volume 55 / 3, 2010

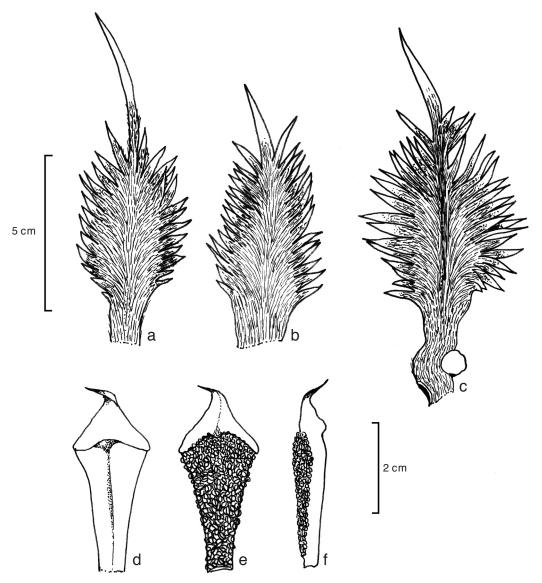


Fig. 1 Cycas cantafolia Jutta, K.L.Chew & Saw. Megasporophyll lamina: a-c. Microsporophyll; d. upper view; e. lower view; f. side view (a, b from FRI 59722; c from FRI 59721; d-f from FRI 59723). — Drawn by M. Jutta.

Etymology — Latin for singing leaves (canto = song, singing; folium = leaf); in reference to the name 'paku lagu' used by the local Temuan community that alludes to the sound created when the leaves rustle in the wind. The Temuan also know the plants as 'paku mas' (golden cycad) in reference to the prominent colour of the male cones.

Notes — Cycas cantafolia is readily distinguished from the other native Peninsular Malaysian Cycas species. The closed-type female cone immediately separates it from both C. litoralis and C. macrocarpa which have open-type cones. Also its new growth lacks the bluish sheen and the thick reddish brown indumentum of C. macrocarpa. Seed, megasporophyll and midrib morphology are also distinct in C. cantafolia. Cycas clivicola and C. cantafolia share the closed-type female cone. In dry material there are clear differences in the midrib (Fig. 2) and megasporophyll morphology (lamina shape, length and number of the lateral spines) (Table 1). In addition, its habitat is different. Among South East Asian Cycas, C. cantafolia keys out close to C. tansachana K.D.Hill & S.L.Yang and C. chamaoensis K.D. Hill, both native to Thailand (Hill 1998–2004, Hill & Yang 1999, Jones 2002) and having closed-type cones, but differing in habitat and in details of leaf and mega- and microsporophyll morphology (Table 1). Despite the similarities between C. cantafolia, C. clivicola, C. chamaoensis and C. tansachana, C. cantafolia separates easily from these three by the ovate megasporophyll lamina opposed to the orbicular lamina shape in the others; it further separates in choice of habitat from *C. chamaoensis* and *C. clivicola* which are both restricted to limestone, and from *C. tansachana*, despite similarities in habitat, in the former having larger seeds.

Despite Gunung Ledang (previously known as Mount Ophir) being among the best collected locations in Peninsular Malaysia, this large and highly visible plant was until now overlooked by both botanists and collectors. This and many other new discoveries, both of flora and fauna, illustrate the need for continued and increased field work to document the rich diversity in Malaysia. Comparison of the beetle pollinators collected from male cones of each of the Peninsular Malaysian species of *Cycas* shows distinct morphological differences between the specimens collected from *C. cantafolia* and weevil specimens collected from other Peninsular Malaysia *Cycas* (Azmi Mahyuddin & S.P. Ong pers. comm.), another indication that this new *Cycas* species is distinct from the other Malaysian species.

Specimens examined. Malaysia, Johor, Ledang, Bukit Belading, 10 Jan. 2009, female plant, *Jutta & Chew FRI 59721* (KEP), *FRI 59722* (KEP), male plant, *FRI 59723* (KEP); 21 May 2009, female plant, *Saw, Chew & Chua FRI 48220* (K, KEP, L, SING), male plant, *FRI 48221* (K, KEP, L, SING).

≡

iffs

Table 1 Characters separating Cycas cantafolia from other Peninsular Malaysian Cycas and two closely related species in Section Indosinenses (differences with C. cantafolia are in bold).

Species Section/subsection	Distribution	Female cone type	Megasporophyll	Seeds	Habitat
C. cantafolia Sect. Indosinenses	Only in Ledang, Johor, Malaysia	Closed	Lamina elliptic, margins shallowly pectinate, lateral spines 25–30, to 18 mm long	Flattened-ovoid, 35–39 by 35–37 mm, sarcotesta yellow, drying brown, surface smooth, fibrous layer present	Granite, on bare rock on steep inclines, cliff
C. chamaoensis Sect. Indosinenses	Only known from Khao Chamao, northeast of Ban Nam Sae, Rayong province, Thailand	Closed	Lamina orbicular, margins deeply pectinate, lateral spines 30–40, to 30 mm long	Flattened ovoid, 35–40 by 30–40 mm, sarcotesta yellow, fibrous layer present	Granite, on bare rock on slopes and cliffs
C. clivicola Sect. Indosinenses	Northern half of Peninsular Malaysia, Southern Peninsular Thailand	Closed	Lamina orbicular, margins deeply pectinate, lateral spines 26–54, to 40 mm long	Flattened-ovoid, 33–39 by 26–35 mm, sarcotesta yellow, drying light brown, surface smooth, fibrous layer present	Limestone, on bare rock, cliffs
C. <i>Itionalis</i> Sect. <i>Cycas</i> , subsect. <i>Rumphiae</i>	From southern Vietnam and southern Myanmar to southern Thailand, Peninsular Malaysia and the northern coast of Borneo	Open	Lamina lanceolate, margins entire to more or less dentate, lateral spines up to 10, 1–2 mm long	Subglobose, 60–80 by up to 50 mm, sarcotesta orange-brown, drying reddish brown, surface with a few shallow, widely spaced wrinkles, fibrous layer absent	Beach forest, over granite or limestone
C. macrocarpa Sect. Cycas, subsect. Cycas	Peninsular Malaysia and southern Peninsular Thailand	Open	Lamina lanceolate, margins shallowly pectinate, lateral spines 10-22, to 17 mm long	Oblong, 45–53 by 35–42 mm, sarcotesta yellow, drying black, with surface in very fine closely spaced wrinkles, fibrous layer absent	Primary ridge forest, in well-drained soil accumulations over granite or limestone, also on flat land in the lowlands
C. tansachana Sect. Indosinenses	Only known from hills northeast of Khong Khi Sua, Saraburi Province, Thailand	Closed	Lamina orbicular, margins deeply pectinate, lateral spines 40–60, 18–25 mm long	Flattened ovoid, 45–50 by 35–40 mm, sarcotesta yellow, fibrous layer present	Limestone, on bare rock and cliffs

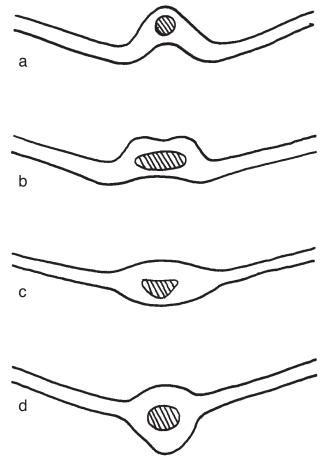


Fig. 2 Transverse sections of the leaflet midribs of Peninsular Malaysian *Cycas* species. a. *Cycas macrocarpa*; b. *C. litoralis*; c. *C. clivicola*; d. *C. cantafolia*. — Drawn by M. Jutta.

KEY TO THE PENINSULAR MALAYSIA SPECIES OF CYCAS

Acknowledgements We thank the Temuan community, especially our field guide J'Mecdey Jengkeng, who were instrumental in facilitating access to both ex situ and in situ plants, Ong Poh Teck from Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) for generously assisting with specimen processing, voucher preparation and 'beetle tracking and drowning', Ruth Kiew (FRIM) who helped with taxonomic advice and the preparation of the manuscript, Azmi Mahyuddin and Ong Su Ping (FRIM) for their assistance with identification of the pollinator weevils, Lillian S.L. Chua (FRIM) for advice and for assessing conservation status and Keith Fletcher for providing geological information. The cycad project was funded by the Timber Levy Fund of Flora Malaysiana Centre project on 'Impacts of ornamental plant trade on some rare forest plants' under the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities.

252 Blumea – Volume 55 / 3, 2010

REFERENCES

De Laubenfels DJ, Adema F. 1998. Revision of Cycas and Epicycas. Blumea 43: 351–400.

Griffith W. 1854. Notulae ad Plantas Asiaticas 4: 11–14, pl. 362, fig. 2.

Hill KD. 1995. The rediscovery of Cycas macrocarpa. Palms & Cycads 46: 18–23.

Hill KD. 1998–2004. The Cycad pages. http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/PlantNet/cycad/cyckey.html (accessed on 27 May 2009).

Hill KD, Yang SL. 1999. The genus Cycas in Thailand. Brittonia 51: 48–73. IUCN 2007. 2007 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

www.iucnredlist.org (downloaded on 15 March 2009).

Jones DT. 1980. Gymnosperms of Malaysia – the Cycads. Nature Malaysiana 9, 3: 4–11.

Jones DL. 2002. Cycads of the world. 2nd edn. Reed, Sydney.

Keng H. 1969. Orders and families of Malayan seed plants. National University of Singapore.

Oberprieler RG. 2004. "Evil weevils" – the key to cycad survival and diversification? In: Lindstrom JA (ed), The biology, structure and systematics of the Cycadales. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on Cycad Biology, Thailand: 170–194.

Ridley HN. 1911. The Gymnosperms of the Malay Peninsula. Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 60: 53–68.

Ridley HN. 1925. The Flora of the Malay Peninsula. Reeve & Co., London, United Kingdom.

Smitinand T. 1971. The genus Cycas (Cycadacae) in Thailand. Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society 24: 163–175.

Smitinand T. 1972. Cycadaceae. Flora of Thailand 2: 185-192.

Turner IM. 1997. A catalogue of the vascular plants of Malaya. Gardens' Bulletin Singapore 47: 1–757.