

## DR. DING HOU 80 YEARS YOUNG

Eleven October 2001 is the 80th birthday of Dr. Ding Hou, much appreciated Honorary Staff Member of our Nationaal Herbarium Nederland. Time to reflect on the life and career of this modest but highly productive and talented botanist.

Ding Hou was born in 1921 in Hsingkan, Kiangsi Province, China. From 1941–1945 he studied Botany for his BSc degree at the National Chung-Cheng University in Kiangsi, where he spent another two years as Botanical Assistant. From 1947–1951 he held a similar position at the National Taiwan University in Taipei. He then moved to the United States of America where he earned an MA in Plant Taxonomy at the Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri in 1952, and his PhD on a revision of the genus *Celastrus* in 1955 under supervision of Robert E. Woodson, Jr. He also held research assistantships in St. Louis, from 1951–1952 in the Missouri Botanical Garden, and from 1954–1955 in the MO Herbarium. In 1955 he was appointed as Botanist at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, but in 1956 he was lured away to Leiden by C.G.G.J. van Steenis who attached him to his then externally funded Flora Malesiana Team. In 1960 his appointment as Senior Scientific Officer at the Rijksherbarium secured him tenure until his retirement in 1986. However, that retirement date did not change Ding's daily pattern of work in the herbarium which will hopefully continue until long after his 80th birthday.



Ding Hou's importance for Malesian Botany is formidable. Single-handedly he revised the Celastraceae (including Hippocrateaceae), Centrolepidaceae, Rhizophoraceae, Anacardiaceae, Thymelaeaceae, Aristolochiaceae, and jointly with the Larsens the speciose Caesalpiniaceae. With about 600 good species revised, many more names reduced to synonymy, almost 50 species newly described for botanical science, and one new genus discovered during his only substantial fieldtrip in Malaysia in 1966 (*Sarawakodendron* in the Celastraceae), his contributions rank him amongst the most productive taxonomists in the Flora Malesiana family such as Ashton, Kostermans, Leenhouts, Sleumer, Soepadmo, and De Wilde. This productivity can only be understood because he allows himself little time for diversions away from the taxonomic grindstone, although he is very interested in cytological and anatomical aspects, gleaned from material grown by himself in the windowsills of the various offices he occupied in the herbarium. It was a great pleasure for one of us (PB) and two MSc students to work with him on the systematic leaf anatomy of the Celastraceae in the seventies.

Many colleagues, including large numbers of overseas visitors have experienced Ding's helpful, friendly and hospitable personality. That friendliness far transcends Qing Dynasty politeness but is real and truly charitable. Close to his eighties now, he still looks a few decades younger than his age. His young looks were already the cause of the Beadle of Leiden University to mistake him for a student at an MSc degree ceremony in 1967, 12 years after his own PhD, and to wish him good luck for the day when his graduation would come. Currently he is still actively revising a number of Papilionoid genera for Flora Malesiana, preparing a treatment of Celastraceae for the Flora of Thailand, and assisting our institute in scientific collection management. Two of his hobbies, photography and working with computers are also put in the service of his work. His splendid *Rafflesia* pictures of 1966 even made it into the Time-Life Books.

In 1957 he married Su-Ying Liu, a fellow botanist whom he met in the USA, but who continued her career in Holland as a Chinese language teacher. She shares a passion with Ding for flower shows and other horticultural and fruticultural events, and hosted many memorable dinner parties in their home in Leiderdorp. We wish them both many more healthy, happy, and productive years.

PIETER BAAS & FRITS ADEMA

### Eponymy

*Aristolochia dinghoui* Favio González & Poncy — In: *Brittonia* 51 (4) 1999: 452

*Hippocratea ding-houi* Chakrab. & Gang. — In: *J. Econ. Taxon. Bot.* 14 (1) 1990: 119

*Thottea dinghoui* Swarupan. — In: *Blumea* 28 (2) 1983: 407

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