

REVIEW

R. E. HOLTUM, *A revised flora of Malaya etc. Vol II. Ferns of Malaya.* 2nd ed. — Government Printing Office, Singapore, 1966, 653 pp., 362 textfigs, 3 plates. 20 Mal. \$.

Professor Holtum's book on the ferns of Malaya has been regarded a major contribution to the systematics of ferns. It is the result of several decades of active study by an expert botanist. Based on both living and dried material, it goes far beyond that what is generally found in a flora. There is still no general agreement among pteridologists as to the division and status of the major groups, their nomenclature, etc. and the comments Holtum added to most of the larger groups, often implying original ideas, are of particular interest. Besides, detailed ecological information is provided for nearly all the species involved.

It is therefore not surprising that after a second printing in 1960, the book became soon out of print again. Another unchanged reprint was unsatisfactorily as in recent years several species new to Malaya were discovered (mainly thanks to Mrs Allen) and important new information on several groups has become available. A revision of the book seemed recommendable but fell outside the scope of the author's present activities.

The problem has been solved in a rather unusual way and my criticism of the book is largely restricted to that. If compared with the original edition a few errors have been corrected in the text itself, e.g. the description of *Dryopteris* and *Polystichum*, and asterisks, added in the margin before several taxa, refer to appendix II. (Appendix I, written by Prof. Manton and dealing with cytological aspects was already included). The new appendix comprises further corrections, name changes, the new records, several new keys, and comments. These mainly apply to families studied recently by the author for the Flora Malesiana, and for instance to *Ophioglossum* (based on Wieffering's studies), *Diplazium* which was formerly united by Holtum with *Athyrium* but now recognized as a separate genus also on account of karyological evidence, and *Polypodium* species which are rightly considered to be better included in *Thylacopteris* and *Gonio-plebium*. The many names mentioned in the appendix can only be traced by indirect reference as they have not been included in the original index, although the appendix is placed before the index which is continuously pagged.

For those possessing already the first edition it would doubtless have been more practical if appendix II was (also) separately published (preferably with its own index) next to the present edition.

This well-printed and -illustrated book should be on the shelf of every pteridologist both professional and amateur. The price is moderate.

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