

XI. FLORA MALESIANA SERIES PTERIDOPHYTA

The preparation of a new account of the pteridophytes of the whole Malayan region is a very large undertaking, and when one is at the beginning of it, one cannot foresee what may happen during the course of its execution. It is in part a voyage of discovery.

The work will have to be done in stages, and published in parts. To wait until it is all completed, and then to coordinate and re-arrange it before publication, would mean an unreasonably long delay. But to publish it in parts will inevitably mean that one will have new ideas about the early parts as one works on the later ones. My hope is that, when the work is finished, it will be possible to have a new and better conception of the inter-relations of the parts. Present schemes for definition of families for the great majority of ferns are no more than tentative, and that is one reason why I see no need to carry out the work in any pre-arranged sequence.

My plan certainly is to take one natural group at a time, and to try to complete the more primitive ferns before embarking on the vast mass of what used to be called Polypodiaceae. But some of the more primitive families present special problems (e.g., Cyatheaceae) and it may not be practicable to deal with them all as early as I should wish.

The problem of examining very large collections of specimens which are in different parts of the world is itself a considerable one. The collections at Bogor, Singapore, Leiden, Paris, Kew and the British Museum (especially Mr Alston's recent extensive collections, made during his travels in Indonesia in 1953/54) will be the basis of the work; but it will be necessary to study type specimens which are in other herbaria if the new work is to be well founded.

Doubtless there remain many species, especially in the mountainous regions of Borneo, Celebes and New Guinea, which are not represented in any herbaria. Any collections of specimens, especially from the more remote regions, will be welcomed. But senders will realize that a considered verdict on the identity of any specimen may have to wait until the group of species in question receives special study. If any reader of this note is able and willing to send specimens, I should be glad to hear from him.

At present living plants of a number of species of ferns from the Malay Peninsula, collected by me during the past few years, are in cultivation in the tropical fern house

at Kew. These plants have formed the subject of cytological investigations by Professor I. Manton. I am certain that further investigations of this nature will throw much further light on the problems of the taxonomy of ferns, and I hope additions will be made to this collection of living plants. The morphological study of living plants of a few species is also often a great help in the understanding of others which are represented only as dried specimens. I am very grateful to the Director and staff at Kew for their co-operation in this matter, especially to Mr H.J. Bruty, who is in charge of the fern houses.

I hope that the main part of my own work for Flora Malesiana will be carried out at Kew, where I have been working for the past year. I would like to express my thanks to the Director and to the staff of the Herbarium at Kew for their past hospitality, and for their willingness that their hospitality should extend to this new work.

R.E. Holttum