

I. EDITORIAL

Every morning, the Saturdays included, the bright green VW beetle can be seen parked near the Rijksherbarium. It is there usually till after five, when most of the active staff have gone already. Its owner was born on 31 October 1901, and hence later this year will reach the age of 80. In 1947, he established this Bulletin. From his recent book Rheophytes of the World (see Van Steenis, under Reviews), the cover illustration of this issue was taken. With its strong roots, tough body, finding hard conditions indispensable to flourish and be in command of his habitat, this rheophyte could symbolize the author of that book. His vitality is such that it is never mentioned; it is accepted as a matter of course. To tactful questions on how he would like to celebrate his birthday, he answered that he did not care for public exposure. He did, however, consent to attending a symposium in his honour. This will be a Dutch affair, to be organized by the Committee on Plant Taxonomy and Plant Geography of the Royal Netherlands Botanical Society, on 30 November 1981. The theme will be 'Plant Systematics and Phytogeography of Malesia, and its Relations to other Parts of the World'. Twelve speakers have been found. There will be a reception, and perhaps an Indonesian Rijsttafel with Rijksherbarium staff. We congratulate him and Mrs. M.J. van Steenis-Kruseman, and wish them well!

Flora Malesiana parts did not come from the press during 1980, but series ii Volume 1 Part 5 is in page proof and may be published at about the same time as the present Bulletin issue. It deals with the formidable fern family Thelypteridaceae, 22 genera with 413 species, by R.E. Holttum, in pages 331-560. As this part completes the volume, there will be a Dedication, to Carl Christensen, 15 pages, also by Holttum, some Additions and Corrections, and the Index. Orders can be placed with Sijthoff-Noordhoff, Box 4, Alphen a/d Rijn, Netherlands.

To follow is the Olacaceae by H.O. Sleumer and the Dipterocarpaceae by P.S. Ashton.

Time and again the question is brought up whether taxonomic efforts of a local, floristic kind should be given priority over work of a regional, monographic character. Those who advocate emphasis on local work, e.g. on Malaya, Sarawak, or other parts of Malesia, do so with reference to 'practical needs'. This distinguishes them, they feel, from botanists like those at the Rijksherbarium, who are more of the academic sort. Besides, their own government authorities are right in demanding speedy results. Being of tropical countries, development must be fast; the botanical establishment in long-rich countries should not sit in judgement when needs have to be filled. Shouldn't we at Leiden better assist the Malaysians towards a Flora of Malaya, the Filipinos towards a Flora of the Philippines, &c., rather than slowly to build forth on our own Flora Malesiana which is growing more and more expensive?

Of course, the question is not in the first place who is right. The task is huge, the means are limited, progress is slow. How can the means

be applied more effectively towards a useful output? Before venturing an answer, let me observe that no government authority would have the faintest idea to ask for anything taxonomic, unless taxonomists have made suggestions for projects and fundings. Taxonomists therefore should have the courage and find the right terms to explain what must be done and why, what is feasible and why, what are the priorities and why, and what can be expected in quantity (i.e. number of genera revised in X years) as well as in quality (i.e. durability of the names accepted in the work). They also should be able to explain the value of their work and who the customers are. This requires clear and articulated thought over a wide range, to comment on all the lines in the whole enormous spectrum of misunderstanding about descriptive botany.

To find a way out of our dilemma: local and floristic vs. regional and monographic, we should realize that each institute and person has different possibilities, and that their functioning in the fabric of science therefore requires a division of roles between them. It is clear enough that a Great Old Herbarium in Europe, with direct access to masses of dried plants and old literature but not to the living creatures has not the same options as a Small Forest Herbarium in the Malesian region. That is why exchanges of working visits between them are so valuable: to get acquainted with the facilities of each, and hence to appreciate their specific role in the works of botany, which is no less intricately structured than a Shakespeare play. Once the structures and the roles are clearly understood, we can return to our first question: how to apply the means?

Local revisions, we know by experience, do not result in durable names. A deeper digging, as only the monographer can do, brings up older names, leads to combination of taxa, in short: name changes. This will reflect badly on our trade. We at Leiden are fully aware how critically our work is followed by a second echelon of colleagues who often are diligent enough to point out errors and omissions, but only in groups already worked up. We simply can't afford to lower our standards and still do a credible job.

Local authorities in tropical countries may object that this does not help them: their needs for names can be satisfied sooner than Leiden dictates. They may be willing to settle for a say 70% accuracy. This could eventually mean that he who asks for the mostest the quickest the most forcefully would be the one to set the standards? Botanists who comply are bound to create more problems than they can hope to solve.

In fact, the dilemma is a spurious one: both local floristic and regional monographic work is needed. Which one should come first? is mostly the question. Is a monograph to be built piecemeal, through series of local papers finally to culminate in a Flora Malesiana revision, or is a FM text to be prepared first, from which local papers can be derived? Since in the Flora Malesiana centre the second way is always followed, this is apparently the most satisfactory one to botanists who have all the facilities. In other conditions, like frequent interruption, lack of experience, only part of the material needed available at a time, want of old taxonomic literature, a publish-or-perish atmosphere — what to do?

How to build up a Flora Malesiana revision piecemeal? A few suggestions may help.

1. Know what you are going to make. At a certain moment, when the decision has been taken to work towards a Flora Malesiana revision, thoroughly familiarize yourself with its editorial design. Form precedes contents. Once the right form has been found, the job is to fill it. In general, the taxonomic work on a group results in 3 publications:

a. The Flora Malesiana text. Since its editorial design is fixed, this is rather inflexible. See the Directions and Hints for Collaborators which are supplied by the Editor.

b. The Identification List, i.e. the index to examined specimens. It is at Leiden typed from the slip index supplied by the author. For the compilation of the slip index, see Collections Cited under Abbreviations, FMBulletin (22): 1571-1578 (1968).

c. Precursory papers. These contain, so to speak, the spill-over from the FM-text, namely typification, diagnoses of new taxa, non-Malesian species, technical notes on nomenclature, on morphology, &c.

As a fourth category come such papers of local scope as are required. In the present context, they are additional, falling outside the above triad, because the triad is to be produced anyway and the need for local papers depends on circumstances.

The three items a, b, and c should have minimal overlap, for reasons of sheer economy, in the preparation as well as in the printing. It means that as the FM gives a name with also its subsequent references, in the Precursor the first reference to that name will do. If in the Precursor under a taxon those specimens are cited which are important for the knowledge of its range of distribution, the description of the area can be reserved for the FM text in the customary manner. A conscious effort to distribute the information along these lines was made with regard to Rinorea (Violaceae): a in Fl. Males. i 7 (1971) 180-192, b in Identification List number 27 (1966), c in Blumea 15 (1967) 127-138.

2. From the very first, use standard literature references with the correct date of publication. The Citation of Serials and some Books, Fl. Males. i 5 (1956) cxlv-clxv, is not complete but quite useful. In case of doubt or difficulty, valuable suggestions can be had from the works of Merrill, whose bibliographical concepts have largely been adopted by Flora Malesiana. The largest list of abbreviations occurs probably in Merrill & Walker, A Bibliography of Eastern Asiatic Botany (1938) xiii-xlii and its Supplement by Walker (1960) ix-xxxiv. As for publication dates, the pioneer list in Flora Malesiana i 4 (1954) cxliii-ccxix has been followed by many additions and refinements; many of these can be found in Stafleu, Taxonomic Literature (1967) and a great deal more in Stafleu & Cowan's 2nd edition of the latter (1976-). At the Rijksherbarium, Dr. H.O. Sleumer for years kept track of all published publication dates, which he brought together in a loose-leaf ledger index. It now consists of 7 volumes, in care of Dr. P.W. Leenhouts. Queries can probably be answered by staff members.

3. Select literature from the start. Items which are not critical contributions to the knowledge of a taxon, like repetitive information or mere species lists (of which the specimens can eventually be found anyway in the Identification List), need not to be retained. To make the selection, the literature must be gone through in strictly chronological order. Rejected items are to be marked as such and kept in the file lest they are hunted again.

4. Compile the FM-text and the Precursor simultaneously. Going back to manuscripts on the same taxa is boring and it takes time to recall all the details. Not all facts are likely to be available when needed; that is, however, a different matter. When the manuscripts are set up according to their proper design, gaps will show, but as data come in (in their standardized form, of course) they can be filled in without any need to revise the text as such. In this manner, Mr. T.A. Hattink, besides his precursory text on Caesalpinia (Reinwardtia 9: 1-69. 1974) prepared an FM-text which is now waiting on the shelf until the rest of the family has been completed.

5. Start in a manuscript the chief items on new pages. It facilitates correction and re-arrangement, and increases flexibility when information has to be extracted for partial publication. In practice the nomenclature section FM-style and Precursor style are to be written out on a new page for each; so are the description, the 'specimens examined', the complex of 'Distribution, Ecology, Vernacular Names, Uses', and the Notes. I bet that in the long run this even will cost less paper.

It all amounts to a plea for clarity in method, for doing things from the beginning in the right way. This will require a sort of reverse approach to the work: a planning that starts at the end and ends at the beginning. It may not be what taxonomists had in mind when full of enthusiasm they set out to examine the plants, which is already difficult enough. Moreover, it may seem disappointing advice, to beforehand reduce the production of a scientific paper to the filling in of a form. However, the work is to be done all the same, and observations of the above 5 points leads to a clearer segregation of the routine part and the creative part of the taxonomic job, and this opens possibilities for a more convenient allocation of either, to the benefit of those colleagues who only can do research intermittently.

Whether a Flora Malesiana revision or local papers are completed first or last, may become less material because the organization of the actual work along these lines provides for both. This will enable the taxonomist better to overcome the more specific obstacles on his path.

During a visit to our beloved area I was privy to some conversations about the possibility of establishing a Regional Flora Malesiana Committee. Nothing can be more welcome. When the Flora was set up, it was felt that the editing should be done in proximity of the European Herbaria, for the consultation of old literature and type specimens. But it has always been held that the Flora should 'live' in the countries where the plants grow. A regional body of botanists could do some very valuable things, for instance:

- make it clear to governments that taxonomy is an internationally co-ordinated enterprise, and that initiatives taken are not isolated efforts, but are intended to fit in and to strengthen the whole structure of existing knowledge;

- speak up united in the interest of plant taxonomy and related disciplines, whenever there is an occasion;

- get better acquainted with each other's institutes, their potentials and problems, so that a more effective division of roles may result, and forces can be joined with more vigour;

- coordinate exploration efforts in the various parts of Malesia;

- organize field training, taxonomy courses and workshops for advanced students from the region;

- find ways towards wider and more effective application of the results of taxonomy and related disciplines.

These are but offhand suggestions which were discussed. We really hope that things will take shape, through the initiatives and energies of our colleagues in Malesia!

Word has come from the publisher, that the stock of the Flora of Java, 3 vol. (1963-1968), by C.A. Backer & R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink, is running out. At the time of writing this, a few sets were still available, at Dfl. 420 (abroad) from Sijthoff & Noordhoff, Box 4, Alphen a/d Rijn, The Netherlands.

One reader asked for a clarification of the terms Malesia and Malaysia. I suggest that he open the Flora Malesiana 1 1 (1950). On the title page he reads that this work is an account of the Malaysian flora. Page xiii informs him that "the bio-geographical concept 'Malaysia' (in Latin, German, Italian, &c.: 'Malesia') was circumscribed by H. Zollinger in 1857. On p. lxx-lxxiii, 'The delimitation of Malaysia' is given, with more precision, on account of generic ranges. The region was also subdivided into West M. (Sumatra, Malaya, Borneo, the Philippines), South M. (Java, Lesser Sunda Islands), and East M. (Celebes, Moluccas, New Guinea). The Bismarck Archipelago, left out on the sketch maps, was duly included on p. xcix and maps 1-3 in the same volume. Towards the East, the area was still limited by a question mark (fig. 26); later, Van Balgooy established that "the strait between the Solomons and the New Hebrides can be regarded as the eastern boundary of the E. Malesian province" (Blumea Suppl. 6: 93-94. 1971; earlier delimitations are there also given). Hence Malesia can be taken as to consist of 10 sub-areas: Sumatra, Malaya, Java, Lesser Sunda Islands, Borneo, the Philippines, Celebes, Moluccas, New Guinea, Solomons. For botanical purposes, we should consistently use these entities (detailed in Flora Malesiana 1 1 chapter 4) and avoid political names.

Malaya has often been termed the Malay Peninsula, to give the early term Malaya - which sometimes was used for Sumatra, Riau, Borneo, where Malay was spoken - a more precise meaning; to that end, it was also referred to as 'British Malaya'; see Gard. Bull. 7 (1937) 187-189. When the English withdrew from it and also Sarawak and British North Borneo (now Sabah) became autonomous, the three parts together formed the Federation

Malaysia. This nation was divided into West Malaysia or Peninsular Malaysia (i.e. Malaya) and East Malaysia (i.e. Sarawak + Sabah). To avert confusion, it was decided in the mid-1960's to adopt the term Malesia for the botanical region.

Your editor is always thankful for the several Season's Greetings he receives about Christmas, although he himself is subject to a certain laziness in this sector. Even more thankful he is if such messages are accompanied by news items, as these are the corpuscles of the Bulletin's life blood. Larger bits as contributions are also most welcome and will be considered with pleasure. Some readers suspect that the FMBulletin is run as a one-man show. This is done only for practical reasons, as getting others involved in an active role takes precious time. However, if things can be made easy for the editor by sending him ready copy, this gives freedom on both sides. Thanks very much already!

Gratitude again we owe to Dr. C.G.G.J. van Steenis for contributing the Bibliography. The task of going through literature is becoming heavier as more botanists are making more (but not necessarily more important) contributions. This necessitates a measure of sifting and giving briefer annotations. As before, there is more in the FM files than appears in the Bibliography. But what is only mentioned in letters and annual reports but not sent us, we cannot incorporate: to see is to believe. So even if botanists are not sure that their paper is an important one, send us a reprint by all means!