

Forewords

The journey towards a flora of Borneo relentlessly continues. Whereas specialists in specific taxonomic groups (see the many contributions in the Flora Malesiana and journals such as *Blumea*, *Gardens' Bulletin Singapore*, *Journal of the Arnold Arboretum*, *Kew Bulletin*, *Reinwardtia*, *Sandakania*, *Webbia*, and the *Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak*) are always involved, spurred on by their passionate interest in various aspects of the plant life, it is a different matter altogether to contribute to the systematic management of regional floristic accounts. Few contemporary scholars of Bornean botany, even with modern approaches to plant taxonomy, could dispense with the work of Merrill (1921), who advanced what would be the most complete catalogue of the flora up to his time. Taxonomic enumerations, typically in the form of checklists, while extremely tedious to compile, are still very much among our best starting points in addressing how to draw specialist attention to a flora, or in working out the plant diversity present. This wisdom grows on the botanist who appreciates the botanical enormity of Borneo and works on its flora, which had so captivated great natural history explorers and collectors such as Beccari (1877–1883 et seq.) and others around and after his time.

The present effort, checklisting the vascular plant genera, born of such antecedence, comes just after something of a century following Merrill's masterly account of an attempted species enumeration. Not only have the number of known taxa increased, but their taxonomy, often necessitating name changes, has, naturally, become of considerable complexity. It is surely time to stock-take the many taxa described and accounts published over these hundred years or so, particularly over an ever-widening horizon of publication avenues with an (fortunately) increasing retinue of botanists. Whatever philosophical arguments apply, the family and the genus are still veritable 'handles' to inventorying diversity. An endeavour like this certainly benefits from 'insider' experience and energy in plant taxonomy and classification, so this compilation by the author, herself an acknowledged specialist of the Araceae and other plant groups, and centred in the ultra biodiversity-rich territory of Sarawak, is of great moment. This product of so many years of tireless research would have pleased Merrill. It is a giant step forward for the botany of Borneo.

K.M. Wong,
Singapore Botanic Gardens

It is an honour and a pride for me, as Editor in Chief of *Webbia*, to host this powerful work by Sin Yeng Wong on the vascular plant genera of the Flora of Borneo. In addition to its scientific importance and significance for insiders, I believe it is a tribute to those who have dedicated themselves, and still do, to the study and defence of an area considered one of the richest biodiversity hotspots in the world. With this contribution *Webbia* returns to celebrate its initial vocation which saw among the authors Ugolino Martelli, founder and scholar of Paleotropical Botany, and Odoardo Beccari, perhaps one of the most prolific Italian botanists of Tropical Botany and above all known for his contributions to the Flora of the South East Asia including, and celebrated Borneo in his fascinating work entitled "*Nelle Foreste del Borneo*" published shortly before his death in 1920, a milestone in the history of the Natural Sciences of Far East Asia. For the accurate taxonomic and nomenclatural reconstruction and related bibliographic documentation, the author demonstrates not only competence, but above all a declared love for the territory she deals with, suggesting an invitation to the new generations of Plant Taxonomists, Tropical in particular, to carry out their researches with a rigorous method not forgetting the historical layout of the Flora of each territory, before arriving at new interpretative proposals also on advanced technological bases.

From the abstract, the importance of this contribution is clearly evident, as a basis for further studies and discoveries, and a warning not to lose one's often lost orientation in Plant Taxonomy.

For this I thank Sin Yeng Wong for having given *Webbia* the honour of hosting this important work, worthy of every attention also in the name of those Italian botanists such as Beccari who have given a lot to the knowledge base of the Flora of Borneo.

Riccardo M. Baldini,
Dipartimento di Biologia/Centro Studi
Erbario Tropicale, Università di Firenze
Editor in Chief of *Webbia*