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MISCELLANEOUS BOTANICAL NOTES XXIII

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142. MELICYTUS NEW FOR THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AREA (VIOLACEAE)

A sheet of the BSIP collections, gathered in Vanikoro Island, Santa Cruz group, near the proper Solomon Is., had tentatively been identified as probably belonging to *Euphorbiaceae*, but was discarded by Airy Shaw in 1962 and now again in 1974. Closer examination showed it to belong to *Melicytus*, a suggestion made by Dr. R. C. Bakhuizen van den Brink Jr. This genus is distributed in the West Pacific Islands, from New Zealand to Samoa; it was mapped by Van Balgooy in Pacific Plant Areas (2, 1966, 103). Though the specimen is male, we assume it to belong to *Melicytus*, not *Hymenanthera*. This represents a considerable extension of the generic area.

Comparing the floral structure it is distinctly different from the Samoan form and also from *M. ramiflorus* Forst. by the large, elongated, long-acuminate petals. It is a good match of the Fijian

Melicytus fasciger Gillespie, Bull. B.P. Bish. Mus. 91 (1932) 20.

SANTA CRUZ GROUP. Vanikoro I.: south coast at Emwa, in ridge forest, *c.* 450 m alt., a small tree with greenish white flowers, on deep, red, sticky clay under a mull-type of humus layer, *BSIP 1695 T. C. Whitmore*, 8 April 1963.

143. DESMODIUM ORMOCARPOIDES DC. IN QUEENSLAND (LEGUMINOSAE)

Desmodium ormocarpoides DC.; Knaap-van Meeuwen, Reinwardtia 6 (1962) 255. — *D. dependens* Bl. *ex* Miq., Fl. Ind. Bat. 1, 1 (1855) 248.

Mrs. Knaap-van Meeuwen doubted this to occur in Australia, but it is definitely found there.

QUEENSLAND. Alligator Creek Catchment, 12°35′ S, 143°20′ E, *B. Hyland 6440*; Claudie River, 12°45′ S, 143°15′ E, *B. Hyland 6407*.

144. A NOTE ON NEPTUNIA LOUR. (LEGUMINOSAE) IN MALESIA[1])

A *Neptunia* collected by Cinnati (*s.n.*, 1962—1963, L!) in Portuguese Timor without more precise locality proved to be *N. dimorphantha* Domin, new for Malesia.

Another plant from Faulkopa, SW. Timor (*C. W. Kooy 271*, L!) was identified as *N. gracilis* Benth. forma *gracilis*, so far in Malesia only known from Luzon.

Both species belong to the otherwise strictly Australian section *Pentanthera*; the other Malesian species are placed in the section *Neptunia* (see Backer & Bakh. *f.*, Fl. Java 1, 1964, 562). According to Windler (Austr. J. Bot. 14, 1966, 384) the sections and species can be distinguished as follows:

[1]) By M. Lavaleye & J. F. Veldkamp, Rijksherbarium, Leiden.

1a. Flowers with 10 stamens . . . . . Sect. **Neptunia**
b. Flowers with 5 stamens . . . . . Sect. **Pentanthera**...2
2a. Legume regularly with more than 1 seed; peduncles usually longer than 4.5 cm; bracts frequently deciduous before flowering; spikes with less than 35 flowers (frequently with less than 25); ovary glabrous, regularly with more than 1 ovule; petiole glandless . . . . . **N. gracilis** forma **gracilis**
b. Legume with 1 (rarely 2) seeds; peduncles less than 4.5 cm long; bracts persistent; spikes with 35—55 flowers; ovary usually covered with straight white hairs, with 1 or 2 ovules; petioles usually with a conspicuous gland . . . . . **N. dimorphantha**

145. THE INTRODUCTION IN WEST MALESIA OF BELLUCIA AXINANTHERA TRIANA (MELASTOMATACEAE), AN AMERICAN ORNAMENTAL AND FRUIT TREE

Recently Dr. B. C. Stone (Planter, Kuala Lumpur 48, 1972, 276—278, 1 fig.) gave a figure and a description of **Bellucia axinanthera**, a small lowland tree, belonging to the *Melastomataceae*, native in South America (from southern Mexico to Peru). This had been collected in Malaya not far from Batu Caves along the Sungei Dua, probably persisting from old garden plantings. It is an attractive treelet, carrying the flowers in clusters on the twigs below the leaves. The berries are edible and resemble for fragrance and flavour djambu or guava; the flesh is pale yellow or reddish and is quite soft when ripe, according to Stone with a fresh appealing fragrance and mild flavour. There are numerous small seeds.

Stone assumes that the introduction in Malaya was derived from cultivated plants in Java, dating some few decades ago. This may be true, but as will appear below they may also have been derived from the Botanic Garden Sibolangit in North Sumatra which garden presumably got the plant from Bogor. Burkill does not mention it in his Dictionary (1935).

Indeed the introduction is rather recent. This is revealed in a paper by Daubanton in Teysmannia (vol. 28, 1917, 296—300), who communicated that the species was introduced some years earlier by Dr. P. J. S. Cramer, of the Department of Agriculture, from Costa Rica. This Department experimented at Bogor on growth and propagation of this species on which Daubanton provided the data. According to him it is easily grown from seed and produced already fruit in the first year. Heyne (Nutt. Pl. Ned. Ind. ed. 2, 1927, 1205) inserted the species in his work with reference to Daubanton; he is not so enthusiastic about the taste of the fruit as Stone; "de gustibus non est disputandum".

The collections of the Rijksherbarium indicate some finds rather widely apart: — West Java: Tjiomas, near Bogor, 1923. — East Coast Res. of Sumatra, Sibolangit, 1927 (*Lörzing 11969*), cultivated and spontaneously regenerating; also 1962. — West Borneo, Kapuas R., near Meliau, 1949 (Main, exp. Polak no 1771), cultivated. — South Sumatra, Palembang, Tjaban Forest Reserve, 1957 (Kostermans 12085).

146. DISPERSIBILITY AND RANGE

Recently, A. R. Smith (Biotropica 4, 1972, 4—9) has made statistics on the generic ranges of ferns and compares these with ranges of flowering plants. This showed that the number of endemic fern genera is much lower than that of the Phanerogams, viz. 121 genera out of 351 (34%) against 10.000 genera out of 12.500 (80%) respectively. 'Endemic' is here taken in a large sense, comprising also major areas of continental size.

It led him to conclude that: — "these distributional differences cannot be accounted for by the longer geologic history of ferns, but can be attributed to their greater dispersibility".