

## BOOK REVIEW

### Borneo Orchids

ORCHIDS OF BORNEO, Vol. 2. *BULBOPHYLLUM*. Vermeulen, J. J. 1991. Bentham Moxon Trust, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; & Toihaan with the Sabah Society. i-x, 1-340, figs. 1-100, p. 1-19 (with 107 color photographs). ISBN 9-950-4876-9-4. Price £ 25 sterling (hard-cover).

This is part of a new series of books on Bornean orchids, edited by P. J. Cribb with the assistance of Anthony Lamb and Chan Chew Lun (C. L. Chan). The plan is that each volume will be uniform in size containing 100 species. In a large genus such as *Bulbophyllum*, the entire volume is devoted to the genus, but in fact there are more than 200 species, so presumably another volume, as well as part of a third, will be required to complete the account.

The presentation is rather lavish, with each species receiving at least one full page of text and another full page of illustrations (line drawings). In addition there are many fine color photos, 6 per page, combined in a section of plates at the back of the book. Both the line drawings and the photographs are of a very high standard (in taking and in reproducing). The range of color and form is very impressive and sometimes quite astonishing. The photographs were taken by A. Lamb, P. Jongejan, J. J. Vermeulen, H. Duistermaat, J. Dransfield, and G. Argent. The line drawings are all by Vermeulen.

There are some introductory chapters concerning the genus, the materials and methods employed, a list of Bornean species of *Bulbophyllum* (arranged by generic section, and with synonym). Eighteen sections of the genus are represented in Borneo (two species are left "incertae sedis"). The main text (Descriptions and Figures—Chapter 4) forms the bulk of the book. Besides species descriptions, each section is described and its name and synonymy presented.

*Bulbophyllum* may probably be the most speciose genus of plants, though *Carex* and perhaps some others (e.g., *Psychotria*) may come close. Certainly, Borneo contains a generous number of its species.

To identify specimens the reader will have to depend exclusively on the illustrations and descriptions. There are no keys. Probably, given the quality of text and pictures, one may reach an

identification in time, but to be sure, perhaps one must wait until the account is completed, for a genus of this size.

There are numerous (about 50) new species described. Vermeulen has clearly been very active indeed in the field; and the assistance of Tony Lamb and Chan Chew-Lun, both very keen orchidologists, and probably other eager companions in Borneo has been of fundamental importance in accumulating so much, often new, data.

The book itself is very attractive, well printed on beautiful white, nonglossy and rather heavy stock, and well bound, somewhat large (about 10 × 7 inches), with pale green endpapers bearing a regional map and a map of Borneo. The dust jacket cover shows an inset view of the flower of *Bulbophyllum lobbii*, against a background photo of Mt. Kinabalu. (It should be remembered that the orchid flora of Mt. Kinabalu is huge, certainly over 1000 species, though of course not all *Bulbophyllum* species may be expected there).

The printing and proofreading appears to have been very well done. In a relatively rapid examination I found no typographic errors.

The book is aimed at the advanced amateur and the general botanist, and should generally please both. Only a few criticisms seem necessary. First, of course, is the concept of 100 species per volume; this arbitrary content is bound to cause awkward problems later on. Also, it is rather surprising that neither the hard cover (face and spine) nor the dust jacket specifically mentions *Bulbophyllum*. This will hinder convenient use of the volumes after several have been published.

Then there is the absence of keys. Is this evidence of a return to the Hookerian tradition, a belief that keys are an abomination, or that they are too confusing for amateurs, or that a good key to *Bulbophyllum* cannot be written? Or will the reader seeking a key be referred later to some other publication? Another point is that due to the organization of the volume, there are 28 blank pages—about 8% of the book.

This is an attractive book with a sound scientific basis. It should appeal to a wide audience and it is strongly recommended. One may hope that further volumes in the series will maintain the obvious high quality of this one.

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