



*Hyphaene ventricosa*, Rusizi Plain, Burundi. Branched and unbranched specimens. Younger specimens have stems with persistent leaf bases.

## PALM BRIEFS

### A Note on *Hyphaene ventricosa*

The genus *Hyphaene* is familiar as one in which a regular dichotomy of the trunk is evident. Not all species of *Hyphaene*, however, have branched stems. Odoardo Beccari in his *Palme della tribù Borasseae* (Florence, 1924) divided the genus into two sections, a larger one with 20 species in which the stem is divided and a smaller one with 8 species in which the trunk is undivided. In this small group, *Hyphaene ventricosa* Kirk is most widespread in Central and East Africa and Beccari described a large number of subspecies. A distinctive fea-

ture, which gives *H. ventricosa* its name, is the swelling on the upper part of the trunk in tall specimens.

A number of unusual individuals of this species with divided stems have been located and they are illustrated in the accompanying photographs. The palms are growing on the Rusizi plain in Burundi. The Rusizi River is the river between Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika. The plain has a special savanna vegetation with some tall trees of *Euphorbia candelabrum* and many *Capripidaceae* as well as *Hyphaene*.

It is curious to know if branching in these specimens was induced patho-

logically since this type of stimulus to branching is known in many palms. However, since *Hyphaene* includes so many species in which the trunk is habitually branched, these trees may represent a genetic reversion. This latter interpretation is supported by the small area to which the branched palms are restricted. In this area there are eight or nine palms of different sizes. On the other hand all the specimens had only

divided once. The location on the Ru-sizi plain is 3° 14' S, 29° 15' E and at an altitude of 800 m.

It seems likely that the palms in question can be referred to *Hyphaene ventricosa* subspecies *rusisiensis* Beccari which was described from the same general locality.

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## NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

### *Dr. Furtado Studies Hyphaene*

Dr. C. X. Furtado, long active at the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, Cluny Road, Singapore 10, now retired, has been a student of the palms for many years. In a letter recently received by The Palm Society, he writes:

"For health reasons I spent last summer in Lisbon and to keep myself busy, I tried to get myself acquainted with *Hyphaene*, a small genus almost entirely confined to Africa. But what an appalling confusion over the species I found in floras, books, etc. I note PRINCIPES is publishing some papers containing references to these palms. Though Kew has mislaid its specimens, Florence's were unavailable for consultation because of floods in 1966, and Berlin's were destroyed during the war, I persisted in my inquiry of some species that occurred in Portuguese Africa. Though Beccari's nomenclatural treatment was unserviceable, his photographs were most useful; and I think I have solved also the puzzles *re H. coriacea* and *H. crinita*—two binomials that have been misapplied most. A paper is already in press.

"In view of this I wonder if some members of The Palm Society could

help to prosecute my study of the genus further by sending me (even from cultivated specimens): (1) about 2 fruits of each species, (2) a specimen of the ligule or hastula of the leaf. In absence of specimens photos could be sent; photos of the plants to show their habit would be useful.

"Please do not send me spathes, spikes, leaves, petioles, etc. I want the specimens to be as small as possible, for the important characters are found in the fruits. But whatever is sent to me would be retained here for future consultation and perhaps revision, so the material or the photos should be adequately numbered so that when a determination is made, the material of the sender could be easily identified from the number. The fruits, ligule and the photo of the plant should receive the same number so that when the species is identified from the fruit, one could study what sort of ligule the species has, and what the habit of the plant is. Most of the species are named on the fruit alone and so one does not know the habit of the palm that produces the fruit.

"I have received excellent photos from Africa showing the habit of the palms (mostly wrongly named as *H.*