

# Palm-Collecting Adventures in Asia

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## II. Indonesia

On 11 September 1975, we left Kuala Lumpur for Medan in northern Sumatra. An early flight got us there with ample time to establish ourselves in the modern Danau Toba International, make arrangements for a guide and transportation, and resume our palm quest shortly after noon. The main objective of this leg of our adventure was Sibolangit Garden, one of five branches established by the Bogor Botanic Gardens. Specifically we wanted to see the mature *Pigafetta filaris* and this garden, only 25 miles from Medan, has a beautiful stand of them within a short walking distance of the entrance. Dr. John Dransfield invited attention to Sibolangit in *Principes* 17: 105-107 which includes photographs of *Pigafetta* there. We photographed them also but through a regrettable misadventure with the camera lost the pictures.

No question that these towering, stately trees with sheer glistening trunks, rate among the most beautiful of palms. Although we had received seeds supplied by John Dransfield to the Seed Bank from these very same trees, we looked for more without success. And despite ample warning, one in quest of Sibolangit seeds must hazard contact with a nettlelike, stinging shrub to which Phyllis will attest.

Seeds of *Pinanga* and several unidentified palms were found, and we literally "struck pay dirt" in a ditch along the main road extending from each side of the garden's entrance. The trench was the receptacle for an accumulation

of fallen fruits from a line of magnificent *Actinorhysis calapparia*. Buried in the soggy humus of the ditch, many of the seeds were germinating and we promptly gathered and cleaned several dozen of these egg-sized gems for the Seed Bank. Subsequent packaging and posting was as complicated as the collecting had been easy; we toted a parcel for two weeks before affixing the postage.

Along the road back to Medan *Arenga pinnata*, often in fruit, was conspicuous and we were introduced to that famed, protein-rich dietary item of Southeast Asia—the durian. Our reaction to the fruit, which tastes good but smells bad, was mixed. Phyllis didn't like it, the author tolerated it, and our driver ate most of it!

With appreciation for the very able assistance rendered by Mr. Soripada Lubis, who had arranged the transportation and accompanied us as interpreter in Medan, we flew on to Jakarta next day, following the forested volcanic ranges that span the 1,000 mile stretch of Sumatra. We were met at the domestic flight terminal there by Eric Taylor, accompanied by Mr. Richard W. Sulingan, a Jakarta proprietor and friend, who were to drive us on to Bogor, some 30 miles south of Jakarta. Coupled with the language barrier, transportation can be a vexing problem for the uninitiated palm traveler in Indonesia, and we were relieved that Eric had been able to precede us to Jakarta and arrange it.

The two-lane curving road to Bogor was heavily trafficked and tedious, but

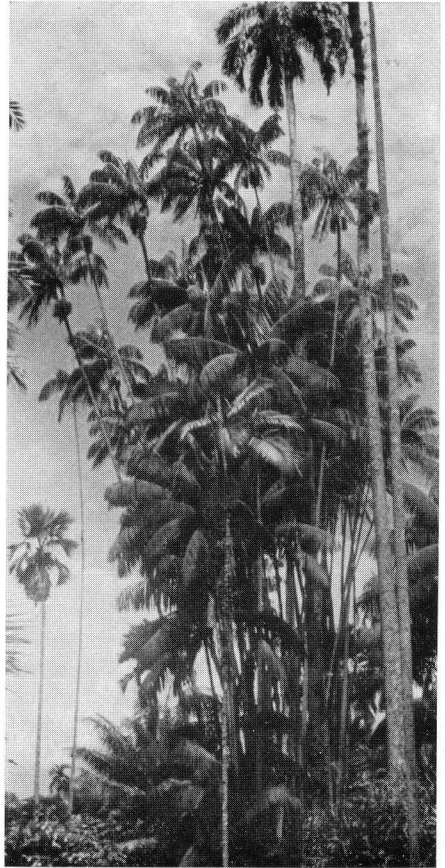


1. Richard Sulingan, Eric Taylor, the author and Dr. John Dransfield at Bogor, Indonesia.

Richard Sulingan made it a delight, stopping at a favored place to treat us to *kelapa puan*, a soothing coconut milk drink derived from the so-called dodal coconut, said to be found occasionally only in Java. With it came a unique durian candy, packaged in long, sausagelike rolls, tasting somewhat like soft caramel and otherwise not resembling the durian fruit.

Upon arrival at the Salak Hotel, the only conveniently located hostelry in Bogor, albeit not at all geared to modern hotel standards, we were near the gates of Bogor Botanic Gardens with the allure of its famed palm collection. Also, we looked forward to meeting John Dransfield at Bogor, to which he had returned for a short working vacation a few days before our arrival. He joined us while Phyllis photographed the group (Fig. 1).

We saw John at the herbarium the morning of the 13th when he graciously got us started on our first excursion through the gardens. We obtained a late (1973) catalog of plants, got permission to collect, and followed him into the nursery, which featured palms. A small, potted *Synechanthus warscewiczianus* in fruit was particularly interesting—the seed had been furnished by DeArmand Hull, who collaborates with Lucita Wait in The Palm Society Seed



2. Some of the palms in Bogor.

Bank. We surmised that in his tenure at Bogor during recent years John Dransfield had been much involved with revival and reemphasis in operation of the Bogor nursery.

Although the gardens' palms have been much photographed, they command attention and we captured some limited views of different parts of the collection (Fig. 2). We admired a young specimen of *Pigafetta filaris*, which embodies reestablishment of this palm in Bogor. Earlier the gardens had two mature specimens, but they were lost. The tree in Fig. 3 grew from a batch of seedlings brought to Bogor



3. John Dransfield inspecting *Pigafetta filaris*, recently reestablished in Bogor.

from Sibolangit by John Dransfield. Also an avenue of *Pigafetta* has been planted near the laboratories, but these were not as advanced as the one pictured. Near the *Pigafetta* was a handsome specimen of *Phoenicophorum borsigianum* which invited scrutiny (Fig. 4) and, of course, we gleaned seeds here and there as we went along. Interestingly enough we were delighted to find viable seeds of *Oenocarpus panamanus* and *Roystonea oleracea*, which are seldom seen in Jamaica, though both are indigenous to the Caribbean area.

We returned to our lodging in late afternoon just steps ahead of Bogor's heavy daily rain shower. Thanks to John Dransfield's command of the language, we had arranged for transportation next day to the Tjibodas Mountain Garden, another branch of the Bogor gardens. Tjibodas is on the



4. *Phoenicophorum borsigianum* gets attention in Bogor.

slopes of Mt. Gedeh at an elevation of 4,200 feet, some 40 miles southwest of Bogor, with 200 acres of park and 3,000 acres of forest reserve.

To get there one drives past rice fields, ascending on up through tea cultivations and the picturesque Puntjak pass, a mountain resort area, hence off the main highway on an interesting narrow road to the garden. Tjibodas does not have an extensive palm collection but there we found *Pinanga javana*, which we had not been able to collect previously.

We arrived at the headquarters armed with a note penned by John Dransfield in Indonesian, requesting the attendants' assistance in helping us find and collect the palm. They were very cordial



5. *Pinanga javana* at Tjibodas, near Bogor. Seedlings are being collected.

and pointed out many interesting plantings as they guided us to the upper parts of the garden, bordering the forest, where mature specimens of the palm were growing. This tall, slender *Pinanga* is a fine ornamental (Fig. 5) and will take full sun as a juvenile at Tjibodas. Fruits on the trees seen were not ripe but the ground yielded a few seeds as well as a crop of seedlings. These were wrapped in wet moss growing nearby and most of them subse-

quently survived the long return journey. More of these palms have been planted out in Tjibodas without forest cover.

Tjibodas has splendid *Araucaria* and *Eucalyptus* collections and fine specimens of *Dracaena draco*, among others, and its rolling lawns, vistas, and crisp clear air are superb. With the cherished *Pinanga* in hand and appropriate gestures to our patiently waiting driver we headed back to Bogor, stopping for refreshments and to make inquiries for future reference regarding hotel facilities on the road some 20 miles from Bogor.

Next day we returned to the Bogor gardens starting with a visit to the office of Dr. Juan V. Pancho, a Palm Society member from the Philippines, who was on a corporate research assignment in the Bogor laboratories. After a good chat, he joined us for a while in the gardens. Perhaps the most exciting palm in Bogor during the time of our visit was the rare *Arenga borneensis*. It had started fruiting, and it seemed that every knowledgeable person around the gardens was anxious about progress of the fruits—rather like expectant fathers in the waiting room! John Dransfield had pointed it out to us earlier, and Juan Pancho steered us back to it again. Though we didn't collect it, we did enjoy seeing this rare palm, along with Juan whom many Palm Society members met when he attended the 1974 biennial meeting in Florida.

The day passed quickly as we further explored the reaches of these magnificent gardens. As our time there drew to an end we had the feeling that we had seen the gardens but certainly hadn't studied them in much detail. While we coursed the gardens, John Dransfield was on a short field trip nearby but returned in time to join us



6. Rice paddies and palms dominate the countryside of Bali.

for dinner that evening. We said au revoir, with heartfelt appreciation, and John gave us some seeds gleaned from his field trip, namely, *Pinanga pumila* and *Ceratolobus glaucescens*, an endangered species. He was to return to his base in Kew Gardens and we were going on in Indonesia.

Next morning, 16 September, Eric Taylor drove from Jakarta and took us back to the international airport where we left for Jogjakarta in central Java. We also said au revoir to Eric and could only hope that he knew how much we had appreciated his help and companionship.

Jogjakarta is more renowned as the Javanese cultural center and the city of bicycles than it is for palm hunting. First off we luxuriated in the modern Ambarukmo Palace Hotel, indulging in the first running water shower bath we had had for some time, then explor-

ing the trim, well-landscaped surroundings. Dinner and an exotic Javanese ballet performance were accompanied by the unfamiliar sounds of gamelan music.

Transportation was easily arranged here, and we proceeded next day to Borobudur and Mendut Temples, then to the Prambanan temple complex. Some palm species were seen from the roads but none adorned the temple bases. Flowering ornamentals were in outer landscaped areas, and in lieu of palms we collected a few of these. After visiting silverware and batik workshops, we readied to continue east to Bali.

We arrived in Denpasar 18 September, and after settling in the recently opened Hotel Sanur Beach we were ready to resume our adventures in a uniquely different setting. Bali's 2,269 square miles class it as a small island, but its charm and beauty and



7. Profusion of plantings visible from Balinese kampong entrance.

its friendly people unfold to the visitor who is willing to desert the beaches and take to the interior mountains and by-roads. With an interpreter and transportation lined up, we began several days' exploration.

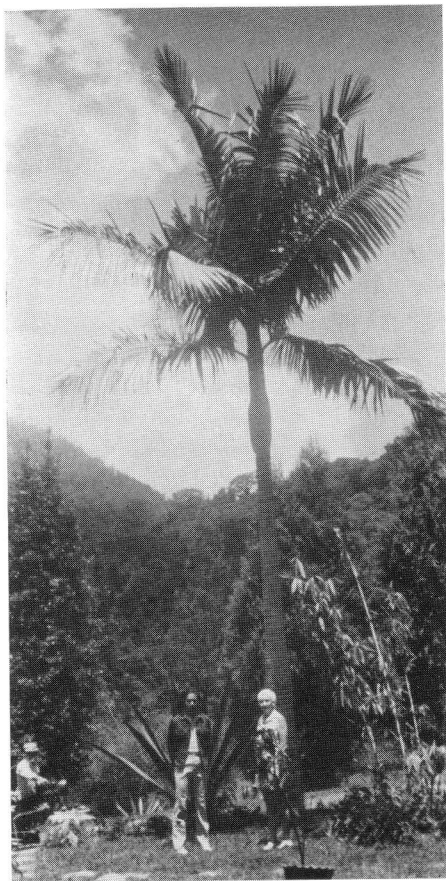
Palms are seen all over the island, with cultivations of *Areca catechu* and coconut species outlining the many steeply tiered rice paddies (Fig. 6). Though most of Bali's dense population resides in family or village kampongs, walled in, end-to-end along and back from the main roads, occasional palm-thatched structures are seen apart in picturesque surroundings.

The kampongs not only are the hallmark of family living and the Bali-Hinduism culture of the island, with its many colorful ceremonial processions and celebrations, but they also harbor palm and other exotic plantings that,

if one could somehow catalog them all, might well eclipse collections in many botanic gardens. The Balinese adore plants and make artistic use of flowers and leaves of all sorts in their ceremonies. We visited some kampongs at random, as we went along, always with a friendly reception even though we couldn't handle the language. Perhaps typical of them is a scene in Figure 7, where a few of the plantings are visible.

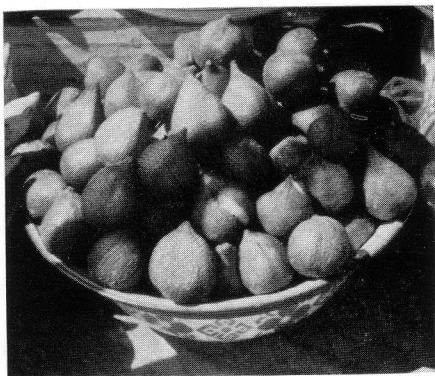
On one occasion, driving through a remote rural area, we sighted an isolated palm which at first glance seemed insect-ridden, if not diseased. We were puzzled. Thanks to a cheerful, elderly lady who soon appeared out of a small cultivation near the road, and to our interpreter, we learned that the palm's missing leaflets had been plucked for ceremonial rites.

All the while, we had been anticipat-



8. Gede Kanten and Phyllis furnish scale for the largest of the pinangas, Bedugal Forest Reserve, Bali.

ing arrival at the Bedugal Forest Reserve, the Bali branch of Bogor Gardens. Before leaving Bogor, John Dransfield had written another note for us in Indonesian introducing us to Mr. Gede Kanten, in charge of Bedugal. Our prime objective there was a *Pinanga* sp., the largest of the pinangas. Mr. Kanten very obligingly took the time to show us a beautiful mature specimen of it growing not far from the headquarters. We were somewhat astonished to see a *Pinanga* that seemed almost as large as some of our roy-



9. Pear-shaped fruits of *Salacca edulis* prominently displayed by roadside fruit vendor.

stoneas back in Jamaica. It is indeed a handsome tree (Fig. 8). But it wasn't fruiting and no seedlings were under it. Though this was disappointing, Gede Kanten promised to collect seeds later, and we received them after returning to Jamaica. The palm flourishes on the mountain slopes of the reserve. As we prepared to leave Bedugal, it seemed that everyone connected with the reserve had assembled to see us off.

We explored Bali rather thoroughly, visiting the sacred springs where, before admittance into the precincts, the custodians had difficulty furnishing the author with a requisite ceremonial sash of sufficient girth, and attending a morning performance of the Barong and Kris dancers. We admired the superb craftsmanship of the Balinese woodcarvers and enjoyed outrigger adventures off shore, all interspersed with palm hunting. *Salacca edulis* is cultivated over much of the island, and we stopped frequently to admire stands of this spiny, clustering, usually trunkless palm which we found growing on hill-sides as well as in lowlands. Its fruits are tasty and a feature of roadside stands around the island (Fig. 9).

But sojourns for palm enthusiasts, even in "paradise," end quickly, and as the moon silhouetted the tall coconut trees along the beach at our hotel cottage we readied for another departure, another destination. We recall with gratitude Mr. Stanley Allison, our hotel manager who had helped with travel arrangements and made our stay in Bali so worthwhile, Mr. Philippus Hartono, our erudite guide and interpreter, who accompanied us over the

island, and the many friendly people we met along the way.

We departed 23 September for Singapore, buoyant with expectations of the journey ahead which was to include not only Singapore Island but an excursion into Johore in quest of *Johannesteijsmannia*, meeting more Palm Society members, and discovering the relatively unpublicized palm collections in Taiwan. This will be the final chapter of our account.

## PALM QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q. Recently I heard that more palm species have been added to the list of palms susceptible to the lethal yellowing disease. Can you give me an updated list of the susceptible species?
- A. As of April 1, 1977, there are 22 palms *officially* appearing on the list of palms susceptible to the lethal yellowing disease. The palm species with their common names, their subfamily and their origin are listed below.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Palm Group	Origin
1. <i>Arenga engleri</i>	Sugar palm	Caryotoid	Formosa
2. <i>Arikuryroba schizophylla</i>	Arikury palm	Cocosoid	Brazil
3. <i>Borassus flabellifer</i>	Palmyra palm	Borassoid	India, Ceylon, Burma
4. <i>Caryota mitis</i>	Cluster fishtail palm	Caryotoid	Southeast Asia
5. <i>Chrysalidocarpus cabadae</i>	Cabada palm	Arecoid	?
6. <i>Cocos nucifera</i>	Coconut palm	Cocosoid	Old World tropics
7. <i>Corypha elata</i>	Buri palm	Coryphoid	Andaman Is. to Philippines
8. <i>Dictyosperma album</i>	Hurricane palm	Arecoid	Mascarene Is.
9. <i>Gaussia attenuata</i>	Puerto Rican gaussia palm	Chamaedoreoid	Puerto Rico
10. <i>Hyophorbe verschaffeltii</i>	Spindle palm	Chamaedoreoid	Mascarene Is.
11. <i>Latania</i> sp.	Latan palm	Borassoid	Mascarene Is.
12. <i>Livistona chinensis</i>	Chinese fan palm	Coryphoid	Japan to Bonin Is.
13. <i>Nannorrhops ritchiana</i>	Mazari palm	Coryphoid	Afghanistan, Iran
14. <i>Phoenix canariensis</i>	Canary Island date palm	Phoenicoid	Canary Is.
15. <i>Phoenix dactylifera</i>	True date palm	Phoenicoid	W. Asia, N. Africa