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Indian Ocean Odyssey A Look at Palms from Good Hope to Sri Lanka

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There are times when palm enthusiasts have to sit back and wonder what will happen in the sweep of world events, that might well lead to destruction of what remains of some of the world's finest flora. Little enough of it is left as it is. At this writing ominous rumblings come forth not far from places that harbor rare plants dear to collectors. The threat spews out from the highly volatile areas of S.W. Asia, fanning on down the coast of E. Africa and indeed, embracing much of the Indian Ocean area.

Interruption of travel can be threatened even though isolated palm collecting localities may not be immediately involved. There are no present barriers to travel in the Indian Ocean area. But my wife, Phyllis, and I would encourage would-be palm seekers who anticipate traveling there to go ahead with it-perhaps to be ahead of changing circumstances. Key places in the area are without parallel anywhere in the world with regard to relatively easy access to unique assemblages of palms. There are some limitations too, which might deter one's anticipation about travel into some areas. We shall mention them.

The Indian Ocean is vast and we're not about to cover all of it in this article. It fills an enormous expanse from South Africa to Australia in the south, curving northwesterly along the stretch of Indonesia to Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and westerly to the "horn" of Africa brushing the Arabian Sea, which separates India from Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Yemen. The continental United States would fit into it with room to spare. We intend here to highlight places that could be of primary interest to palm collectors. So on with it!

After exploring the splendid palm collection in the Botanical Gardens in Rio de Janeiro we flew the long trek over the South Atlantic to Cape Town, South Africa. The Indian Ocean begins at the Cape of Good Hope, near Cape Town, which divides it from the South Atlantic.

South Africa

By design we arrived in Cape Town in October 1978, the month when much of the indigenous South African flora, sparkling with wild flowers, is at its best. The beauty of it defies description, highlighted by the tantalizingly colorful and diverse Proteaceae which include three or four genera with perhaps 250 species. Much of this can be seen at Kirstenbosch, the National Botanic Gardens of South Africa. which is devoted exclusively to the indigenous flora, some 20,000 different plants. For climatic reasons Kirstenbosch doesn't have all of them, and six regional gardens have been established in other places in South Africa.

Accordingly Kirstenbosch does not



1. Jubaeopsis caffra, Kirstenbosch Gardens, Cape Town.

boast of a palm collection, but the garden does have a few specimens including the indigenous Jubaeopsis caffra (Fig. 1). More often than not this is a trunkless palm; seed germination is poor and it is not widely cultivated. We were unable to collect seed.

Cape Town is too windy and pernaps too cool to provide a hospitable environment for many palm species, although we feel that more could be grown there if introduced. Nevertheess, splendid avenues downtown are ined with *Phoenix canariensis*, as are the beautifully landscaped grounds of the Mount Nelson Hotel, which is away from downtown with an excellent view of Table Mountain, Cape Town's pest known landmark (Fig. 2).

We flew on to Johannesburg where one sees more evidence of gold mining than palms. But from there it's only about 30 miles to Pretoria, our destination for a rendezvous with dedicated nembers of The Palm Society.

Amid the beauty of jacarandas in full bloom, lining the avenues of Precoria, we were met by Dieter van Staden of the Department of Horticulture, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Pretoria, and member of The Palm



2. Table Mountain backdrops Phoenix, Cape Town.

Society, who hosted our brief stay. We were privileged to visit his home, which is sited on ample grounds for his young collection of palms, and he introduced us to the Botanic Garden which has a fine collection of cycads but not many established palms. However, palms are on the way, judging from the rather extensive assemblage of seedlings and larger potted plants thriving in plant houses on the grounds.

We met Dr. Cris Scheepers, Research Officer at the laboratories, and a long-time member of The Palm Society. He has been responsible for the oncoming palm collection in the nurseries. He was enthusiastic about palms and pointed out many plants started from seed furnished by The Palm Society Seed Bank. We explored the garden, admiring the well-tended landscaping with accent on cycads (Fig. 3), and the different collections which included a large assemblage of coveted succulents indigenous to Madagascar. Also, one may see there the extraordinary Reynold's Gate at one entrance to the garden, which in the magic of its wrought iron depicts species of Aloe indigenous to South Africa.



3. Left to right: Dr. Cris Scheepers, Dieter van Staden, Phyllis Sneed and Mr. Piet Vorster, Botanic Garden, Pretoria.

Dieter and Mrs. van Staden motored us back to Johannesburg from where we went on to Durban, which is South Africa's "Miami Beach" on the shores of the Indian Ocean. Durban is subtropical, being a little more south of the Tropic of Capricorn than Miami, Florida is north of the Tropic of Cancer. We were in a world that to us was rather upside down. But Durban has palms-lots of them. We explored the area as far out as Zulu Land and environs, largely devoid of palms, but the most memorable experiences palmwise were in Durban itself, which has a very fine botanical garden dating back to 1849. It is interesting, as outlined in a small brochure we obtained that "The first curator of the Gardens was Mark J. McKen," a gardener with Kew training who had recently arrived in Natal, and who was appointed at the princely salary of fifty pounds per annum and a free hut. How McKen contrived to live is not recorded, but presumably a little money went a long way in those days, and it is apparent that he set about his duties with vigor, as in 1850 he reported having under cultivation "Bread Fruit, Ginger, Coffee, Camphor, Mangoes, Paw-paws, Cinnamon, Citrus, Tea and Pepper, and miscellaneous vegetables."

Palms were not mentioned among the early introductions, which were experimental, and no doubt possible commerical uses of palms were not thought of at the time. Later on a "Victoria Jubilee Conservatory" structure was opened in 1899, which housed a large collection of tropical plants—most of which it was discovered later could be grown and survive outdoors quite well in the Durban cli-





5. Hyphaene natalensis, on Natal Herbarium grounds, Durban.

4. Licuala in avenue of palms, Durban Botanical Gardens, South Africa.

mate. Palms were in the "Conservatory" assemblage and the garden now has more than 50 mature species growing in avenues and elsewhere as specimens (Fig. 4). The garden could in our judgment accommodate the introduction of many exotic palms which have not been tried there.

At the far side of the garden from the public entrance is the Botanical Research Unit, Department of Agricultural Technical Services, and the Natal Herbarium. Here we contacted Pierre du Toit of the staff who took time to show us around and inform us about palms on the grounds. Growing in front of the lab building was a specimen of the hard-to-find (for us, at least) Hyphaene natalensis, a species indigenous to South Africa (Fig. 5). Pierre du Toit gave us seeds from this tree which we mailed to Fairchild Tropical Garden in Florida, but their germination remains doubtful. Also on the grounds there was what we were told was *Raphia australis*. We were not familiar with this species, but it was huge and handsome (Fig. 6). New leaves of this palm are said to be red and the sap makes a potent drink. We neither saw the red nor took a sip.

After visiting the sunken gardens, cycad collection and orchid house, the latter presenting the best organized display of such plants we have seen anywhere, we were satisfied and delighted with our stay in Durban. We prepared to go on to further destinations in the Indian Ocean, some of which we had visited previously and will be dealt with briefly. On 18 October 1978 we went on to Mauritius.

Mauritius

Landing here seemed like a homecoming. We had visited Mauritius almost exactly four years earlier. Not



6. Raphia, Natal Herbarium, Durban.

much had changed apparently; it's still a very much cut-over, sugar-cane exploited, little island. Yet it is one of the Mascarene Islands which before their exploitation were the source of several of the world's most coveted palms, including such favorites as Hyophorbe lagenicaulis (the bottle palm), H. verschaffeltii, three species of Latania, and Acanthophoenix, among others. We reported on our earlier visit here in Principes 20: 11-16, 1976.

We would like to remind palm lovers that Mauritius, although out of the way, is a vacation mecca for Western Europeans especially the French, for South Africans, and others. But the rock bed, ongoing attraction for palm devotees are the Royal Botanical Gardens (at) Pamplemousses, which are in the northern part of the Island, northeast of the capital Port Louis. This is some distance from the International airport at the southern end of the island.

It seems likely that the Gardens at Pamplemousses may well be the oldest established tropical botanical garden in the world. Debate arises as to definition of a botanical garden. Pamplemousses does not afford research facilities, it does not have a herbarium, and qualifies as a botanical garden only because it has a fine, longexisting collection of tropical plants, and palms in particular. The beginnings of the Garden can be traced back well over 200 years. In 1735, when Mauritius was known as "Ile de France," vegetable gardens along with a nursery were created at the present entrance to Pamplemousses.

Since our earlier visit to Mauritius, an excellent guide to the gardens has been published for the first time, and is available from offices of the Minister of Agriculture. Again, we loved exploring the gardens, which are beautifully maintained, and no one admonished us this time about collecting fallen palm seed. Supplementing our previously published pictures of the garden is a general view (Fig. 7) and an avenue of old *Hyophorbe lagenicaulis* (Fig. 8).

Again we left Mauritius very much indebted to Tony Gardner of the Forestry Service, and member of The Palm Society, who guided us into areas of the rugged southern section of the island, which still affords a look at what remains of some indigenous flora. This included *Tectiphiala ferox*, the new palm genus recently named by Dr. Moore (see *Principes* 24: 45– 46, 1980). The rugged nature of the southern part of Mauritius is shown in Figure 9.

Reunion

Only a few minutes flight time from Mauritius, Reunion is the largest and most rugged of the Mascarene Islands. It is strictly French and more isolated



7. Palms at Pamplemousses, Mauritius.

than Mauritius. After deplaning at the very modern air terminal in Saint Denis, the capital, we rented a car and headed for St. Pierre at the lower end of the island, following the beautiful coastline most of the way. Operating out of St. Pierre, we explored the rugged interior of the island which furnished some of the most awesomely spectacular scenery one can find. The roads are well surfaced but very narrow, following contours through ravines and hugging the cliff sides. Cultivated gardens of annual flowers (chiefly plants for perfumes) made the homes attractive, for Reunion claims to be the world's largest producer of fragrance from geraniums.

As on Mauritius, much of Reunion's indigenous palm flora has been destroyed. *Latania lontaroides* can be found here and there, sometimes in seemingly implausible small groups surrounded by sugar cane, or along the coast hemmed by volcanic rocks (Fig. 10). *Hyophorbe indica*, indigenous to Reunion, is hard to find in the wild, and *Acanthophoenix* is also elusive. But there's a delightful little botanic garden, which we discovered upon returning to Saint Denis, that has specimens of these palms.

On one excursion out of St. Pierre we came across a phenomenal exhibition of what one might say is "strictly for the birds." Near the road was a towering coconut palm whose leaves supported dozens of upside down birds' nests (Fig. 11). Only once before had we seen anything like it; that was near Cape Town, South Africa, where the nests were larger and appended to limbs of a massive tree quite unrelated to the palm family. There, we were told, it was the "Weaver bird." Our linguistic incapacity in French Reu-



8. Avenue of older Hyophorbe lagenicaulis, Pamplemousses.

nion, no doubt, will give us an alibi for leaving there without obtaining proper identification of this obviously palmloving bird.

Back in Saint Denis, before going on to Madagascar, we visited Jardin Botanique, which offers specimens of *Neodypsis*, *Livistona*, *Corypha*, *Caryota*, *Rhapis* and others, including the indigenous *Hyophorbe indica*, which are more prominent in the garden than elsewhere over sections of the island we had explored. We enjoyed Reunion, fully aware that one can relax there and not be bothered very much, if at all, by huge events which might be going on elsewhere in the world.

Madagascar

On 26 October we flew on to Tananarive, the capital of Madagascar, 600 air miles west of Saint Denis. In striking contrast to the minutia that are the



9. Tony Gardner with the author in southern part of Mauritius.



10. Latania lontaroides, Reunion.

Mascarene Islands, Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world. It's 1,000 miles long and averages over 300 miles wide, with an area of about 228,000 square miles, lying some 200 miles off the African east coast of Mozambique. Although tropical, the island has considerable diversity of climate and topography. It is known, of course, as the source of some of the world's finest tropical flora.

But things change and one now can be "hard put" to find any of the indigenes within one's preconception of a touring radius. Madagascar's roads are poor or practically non-existent. About the only good surfaced stretches fan out of Tananarive to Majunga and Tulear. Elsewhere most of the roads are not surfaced and many are literally impassable, especially during the rainy season.

So transportation is a problem, al-

though one can fly the long distances between Tananarive and principal cities over the island. We went to Madagascar with some trepidation because of its reputation as being inhospitable



11. Bird nests compete with coconuts, Reunion.



12. Alfred Razafindratsira and Phyllis view succulents in his nursery, near Tananarive.

to tourists. But, excepting an instance or two, we were thoroughly intrigued with the island, and certainly appreciated the splendid hospitality shown us by Palm Society member, Alfred Razafindratsira, who went out of his way to show us around. He, and his family before him, have been long identified with the cultivation of Madagascar flora.

Alfred Razafindratsira is in the process of expanding his nurseries, devoted largely to cultivation of Madagascar's famed succulents for foreign export, as shown in Figure 12. After showing us the nurseries, Alfred took us into Jardin Botanique at Tsimbazaga, which is Tananarive's botanical garden and zoo combined. It should be noted, however, that the zoo part of the combination has deteriorated, and with only a crocodile and a lonesome, but persuasive lemur remaining be-

hind bars, one can devote full attention to palms which dominate the garden. Among these were Dypsis gracilis, Neophloga lutea, Hyphaene schatan, Bismarckia nobilis, Latania, Dictyosperma, and an avenue of Chrysalidocarpus madagascariensis. Macrophloga decipiens (formerly Chrysalidocarpus decipiens) was most impressive (Fig. 13) and fruit seemed to be available, but we were not permitted to collect it. Neodypsis baroni was frequent (Fig. 14) and after a bit of searching we found Neophloga linearis growing in the shade behind the museum, which houses Madagascar's splendid butterfly collection (Fig. 15). Near here we saw the rare Neophloga lutea, but there was no seed collecting of any of these species.

One day we explored Tananarive on foot, and elected to look for some of the find handicraft items brought in by



13. Macrophloga decipiens, botanical garden, Tananarive.



14. Neodypsis baroni, botanical garden, Tananarive.



15. Neophloga linearis, botanical garden, Tananarive.



16. Neodypsis lastelliana, on residential property, Tananarive vicinity.

their creators to the Zoma Market downtown. Market holds forth one day each week when vendors spread their wares over the walkways of arcades and out into the streets. It is an occasion not to be missed, but one must guard his pockets as he elbows through the teeming throngs in the market, which stretches several blocks along Avenue de l'Independence.

We wanted to collect *Neodypsis lastelliana* but didn't arrange to get to places where the palm could be found in any numbers. Alfred Razafindratsira did guide us to a private property in Tananarive where we saw a most attractive young specimen (Fig. 16), but this was the only one to be seen in the area. Also, we drove some 100 miles north to the Forest Station at Manankazo where palms can be found in some quantity, mostly *Macrophloga*, which we had seen earlier in the



17. Macrophloga, Forest Station, Manankazo.

botanical garden. Some fine older specimens were here towering into the sky (Fig. 17), and the forest was rife with other interesting plants.

On the way to the Forest Station we passed through numerous villages, always colorful with people going about their business and often conversing in groups (Fig. 18). In rural Madagascar the group predominates-the individual is subordinate-and outsiders and their advice are not welcomed. As mentioned in a booklet we obtained, A Glance at Madagascar, "A stranger can integrate into a village or community but it takes considerable time. And it must be remembered that the village is composed of both the dead (the invisible beings) and the living (the visible); the former being the more important." It is said that ancestors "often exercise more influence dead than they did alive"! This pattern, which seems to be changing slowly, may be in part responsible for persisting agricultural practices that not only have led to denuding the landscape of indigenous flora, but also have kept it that way through periodic burning even of existing stubble for grazing purposes. One can see expansive vistas, as in Figure 19, utterly devoid of

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18. Village scene, north of Tananarive.

the plant life that surely thrived there previously. Madagascar has been called the Red Island because the soil is indeed red and much of it is visible.

Alfred and Mrs. Razafindratsira had us at their home one evening for dinner, where we were privileged to meet their children and see some of the exceptionally fine plants in the nursery of the enclave surrounding their property. We were most intrigued with a potted specimen of *Dypsis hirtula* (Fig. 20), and admired this little gem with covetous eyes.

So after only 10 days in Madagascar we didn't get into the remote areas where one must go if any real collecting is to be accomplished. (For a realistic and more informative treatment of palms in Madagascar see Dr. Moore's article in *Principes* 9: 14–26, 1965.) We hadn't allowed time enough for such excursions, bearing in mind that Madagascar is a huge territory, nor were we disposed or prepared to "rough it" sufficiently to accomplish much in the way of seed collecting. We were, after all, on only one leg of a long trip which beckoned. On 1st November we went to Mahé in the Seychelles, some 1,000 miles to the north, northeast, on farther into the reaches of the Indian Ocean.

The Seychelles

We had visited the Seychelles previously, as reported in *Principes* 20: 16-23, 1976, and were eager to return. Subsequently the Islands were granted independent status from the United Kingdom (June 1976) while retaining membership as a Commonwealth Nation. There have been some changes, subtle and otherwise, but these little islands, whose economy is almost



19. Vista, central Madagascar.

wholly dependent upon tourism, are as delightful as ever, and remain a "must-do" objective for everyone interested in palms. Not far away, though not on our itinerary, is Diego Garcia which has become an island base for the U.S. Navy.

In Victoria, the capital, we contacted Guy Lionnet, former Director of Agriculture, author of publications on the Seychelles, and a long-time member of The Palm Society. He brought us up to date regarding the status of requirements governing seed collection and forwarding them. It certainly was good to see him again. After revisiting Victoria's botanical garden and interesting curio shops, we flew the short hop to Praslin Island.

On Praslin we again rented a Mini Moke at the air strip and got established for several delightful, although partly rainy, days on this tiny island which mothers the Vallée de Mai. Six single-species genera, comprising an assemblage of some of the world's most fascinating palms are found here,



20. Dypsis hirtula, Razafindratsira nursery, Tananarive.



21. Lodoicea maldivica tops memorial to Seychelles independence on Praslin Island.

all of which are indigenous to the Seychelles.

From the air strip, the Mini Moke seemed to known where it was going, so we held on! Going along the only road available, the Mini arrived shortly at a newly created circular area where the road went left. But not the Moke, which skidded, then jerked to a halt. There at the curve was a new monument to the independence of the Sevchelles and to palms as well (Fig. 21). In its magnificant simplicity the monument announces independence for the Seychelles while acknowledging responsibilities, represented by shouldering the heavy fruit of Lodoicea maldivica (Coco de Mer), which is perhaps the world's most fascinating palm. Arching around the nut are male inflorescences. Palm lovers visiting there should be thrilled with such an introduction to Praslin Island.



22. Fruits of Lodoicea, Vallée de Mai.

The Vallée de Mai had not changed since our visit earlier, and we reveled again in its beauty and the awesomeness of its attraction. The narrow pathways are continously swept clean and as one proceeds along them, the view of the surroundings is beyond description. Supplementing earlier articles in Principes, we captured a picture of Lodoicea in fruit (Fig. 22) and saw a splendid male inflorescence on a nearby tree. Although the Vallee is overwhelmed with Lodoicea, the other five indigenous palms are there too. One never can forget an on-the-spot viewing of Deckenia nobilis, with a spathe and inflorescence close enough to touch (Fig. 23).

Again we collected seed on Praslin to send back to The Palm Society Seed Bank, after making arrangements to do so at the headquarters of the Forest Department on Praslin. We had arrived there this time with a request



23. Deckenia nobilis, Vallée de Mai.

from the President of The Palm Society, Donn Carlsmith of Hawaii, to procure for him some viable seeds of *Lodoicea*. Thanks to the Forest Ranger and his aides on Praslin, we were privileged to acquire them and they were transported back to Mahé for forwarding to Hawaii. The four of them filled a gunny sack weighing well over 100 lbs. At the same time we acquired two additional viable seeds which were forwarded and donated to Fairchild Tropical Garden back in Miami, Florida.

Seychelles independence, coupled with international monetary inflation, no doubt led to a price of approximately US \$60 per *Lodoicea* seed f.o.b. Praslin Island. The Seychelles government regulates the price. When we visited Praslin in 1974 before independence, the comparable price was approximately US \$6. It should be added that back on Mahé this last trip,



24. Avenue of *Roystonea oleracea*, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

the going rate for a tourist's souvenir nut (dead) was US \$100.

Back on Mahé, our schedule was delayed more than a day when the plane to Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), failed to arrive, but we were more than consoled with hospitality and helpfulness from friends living there who were former neighbors when we resided in Jamaica.

Sri Lanka (Ceylon)

Going from the Cape of Good Hope to Sri Lanka, just off the lower tip of India, one will have traversed the western part of the Indian Ocean. This large area is not "loaded" with palms for the would-be collector, but it has been the source of some of the world's finest palm species, which exist nowhere else. The eastern fringes of the ocean, southeasterly from Sri Lanka,



25. Borassus flabellifer fronts dagaba near Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka.



 Mr. D. T. Ekanayake, Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka.

skirt Sumatra and drift on through the expanses of Indonesia to the western tracts of Australia. But all this southeasterly area is not usually considered Indian Ocean territory, palm-wise. It is Southeast Asia, with its profusion of palms, or Western Australia, which is not known for palms.

For palm lovers, Sri Lanka, at the northern tip of the Indian Ocean, furnishes the jewel that crowns the botanical attraction of the whole area, excepting only the Vallée de Mai, in the Seychelles. Ceylon itself is a verdant tropical gem. Palms grace the landscape, which covers about 25,000 square miles, especially in the spectacular southern half of the island, where it is mountainous and famous for its tea plantations. Palm-wise, it is renowned for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Peradeniya, which embrace almost 150 acres of beautiful landscaping, located near Kandy, about 70 miles northeast of Colombo, the nation's capital and main port of entry. Established in 1821, the gardens have persisted and in our judgment must be ranked in the top five of the world's finest tropical botanic gardens. (Please refer to D. M. A. Jayaweera's article on the Peradeniya Gardens in *Principes* 5: 53-59, 1961, and H. E. Moore, Jr. in *Principes* 9: 28-29, 1965.)

Peradeniya has perhaps 150 species of palms. In numbers this falls far short of Miami, Florida's Fairchild Tropical Garden, which may have 400 to 500 species. But Peradeniya had a substantial collection of palms growing a century before Fairchild Tropical Garden was created. Outside the main palm collection covering about four acres in the southern part of Perade-



27. Phyllis Sneed and Stanley Keppetipola furnish scale for *Loxococcus rupicola*, Peradeniya.

niya, the garden has been noted for its palm avenues, which extend magnificently through divergent parts of the garden. There is a grand, almost unbelievable, avenue of *Roystonea oleracea* (Fig. 24). Only in Rio de Janeiro's splendid botanical garden can one see comparable avenues of this species, which is indigenous to parts of the southern Caribbean and South America. It is the tallest *Roystonea*, attaining 100 to 150 feet with no bulges in the trunk.

Borassus flabellifer, indigenous to Sri Lanka and southern India, line another avenue in Peradeniya. Often called the Palmyra Palm, this indigene has hundreds of uses, not the least of which is jaggery (brown sugar in a hard ball), vinegar and various potent "spirits," which are processed from toddy that is tapped from the palm and its inflorescences. This palm is also or-



28. Vonitra thouarsiana, Peradeniya.

namental and grows well even in the northern dry areas of Sri Lanka. It can grow tall, perhaps up to 70 feet, which we guessed an old one to be that stood in the foreground of the Ruwanveliseya dagaba, with its surrounding (base) frieze of elephants, up north at Anuradhapura (Fig. 25).

Peradeniya has a fine avenue of Roystonea regia. A few years earlier it had a magnificant avenue of Corypha umbraculifera, indigenous to Sri Lanka, but the trees matured and died, and have not been restarted. The garden also affords an avenue of Lodoicea maldivica which, excepting a male specimen some 120 years old and a female over 75 years old, is comprised of relatively young trees. Due to the palm's slow growth, it will be many years hence before the avenue will appear to be complete. We are unaware of any other botanic garden that has an avenue of these rare palms. Interestingly, Peradeniya's older fruiting lodoiceas are prolific



29. Oxen and cart along roadway bordering Peradeniya's palm collection.



30. Caryota urens, south of Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka.



31. Areca catechu, south central Sri Lanka, high elevation in the "tea country."

enough now to furnish seed for further plantings and are being dispersed over the gardens.

Before setting out on our exploration at Peradeniya we were delighted to meet and talk about palms with D. T. Ekanayake, the current Director of the Gardens, and a member of The Palm Society (Fig. 26). We certainly appreciated the time he gave us and his assistance in approving our seed collecting mission.

Peradeniya is not unfriendly about collecting seeds as long as one identifies himself and gets permission to do so. Indeed, the garden assembles seeds of all sorts and makes them available in packets at low cost to residents and visitors. Indiscriminate collecting for obvious reasons is not permitted. The man responsible for Peradeniva's seed service is Stanley T. Keppetipola. We had met him when we first visited the gardens in 1974. corresponded with him later on, and exchanged palm seeds when we resided in Jamaica. This time he was more than helpful, as is his custom.

Away from the picturesque palm avenues, Peradeniya has many beautiful, mature palms. Stanley Keppetipola guided us back to one of them which we had admired on our earlier visit. The small *Loxococcus rupicola*,

nad blev branning a ann ann e Bleverslever (1911) - Comming an indigenous to Sri Lanka, which we had seen earlier, had grown into a graceful and elegant specimen (see Fig. 27). And nearby were two clumps of *Vonitra thouarsiana*, a rare palm indigenous to Madagascar, and one we didn't see when we passed through there on our current odyssey (Fig. 28).

The casual, delightful, and perhaps peaceful ambience of Peradeniya may well be depicted in Figure 29, showing oxen in their unhurried progress with their cart being drawn slowly along the route adjoining the garden's palm collection.

Fanning out in any direction from Peradeniya one can see palms in Sri Lanka, like the magnificent *Caryota urens* in Figure 30, which is being approached on the left by a group of tea "pluckers" on their way to work. The betel-nut palm *Areca catechu* is everywhere (as in Fig. 31).

As noted, we have revisited some of the Indian Ocean areas, and will not pass a chance to do so again. It is certain indeed, that palm lovers will always be thrilled with even a brief glance at the Vallée de Mai or a short visit to Peradeniya. We only can hope that the palms there will ward off exploiters, survive potential destruction, and welcome all of us to their splendors in years to come.

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