

Principes 29(1), 1985, p. 42

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Avoira (a vóy ra) is a Latinization of the vernacular name recorded by Aublet and taken up by Giseke.

Barkerwebbia (bár kerr wéb ee a) commemorates Philip Barker Webb (1793–1854) a wealthy British botanist who bequeathed his herbarium to the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the city of Florence, where it formed the core of the Florence Herbarium.

Catis (káy tis) is derived from *kata* (Greek—downward), referring to the drooping leaflets characteristic of *C. martiniana* (= *Euterpe oleracea*).

Chrysalidosperma (críss al id oh spém a) combines the Greek *chrysalis* (a chrysalis) with *sperma* (a seed), the seed of the palm bearing a resemblance to a chrysalis (see *Principes* 7:107).

Cryosophila (cry oh sóf ill a) is highly problematic. Blume based his new name on the species *Corypha nana* published by Humboldt, Bonpland, and Kunth, Blume taking up their suggestion that *Corypha nana* did not perhaps belong in *Corypha*. Most subsequent authors have assumed that the name is derived from the Greek *cryo* (ice) and *phila* (loving), but if this were so, we would perhaps expect Blume to have used *Cryophila* rather than *Cryosophila*. Kuntze suggested that the spelling should be *Criosophila* from *crios* (a goat) and *phila* (loving) but this seems absurd. Blume states “palma humilis in calidissimis Regni Mexicani observata”—a low palm growing in the hottest parts of the Mexican Kingdom. Was this a joke—a plant from the hottest regions being ice loving? If we turn to Humboldt, Bonpland, and Kunth, we find “crescit in calidissimis Regni Mexicana, in

summo monte Cuesta de los Pocuelos inter Acapulco et Masatlan, alt. 230 hexap.”—it grows in the hottest parts of the Mexican Kingdom on the top of the mountain Cuesta de los Pocuelos between Acapulco and Masatlan, at 230 fathoms altitude (i.e., 1380 feet—scarcely high enough for ice). Could it be that Blume had a lapsus mentis and mistranslated “calidissimis” as “coldest”? Blume’s name is valid and is used by many a palm lover, but we still have no reasonable explanation of its meaning.

Kerriodoxa (kerry oh dóx a) combines the Greek *doxa* (glory) with the name of the most important collector of Thai plants. Arthur Francis George Kerr (born 1877 at Kinlough, N.W. Ireland, died 1942 in Kent, England) went to Thailand as a physician in the service of the Government of Siam, and from 1921–1931 was in charge of the Botanical Section, Ministry of Commerce, during which period he collected plants throughout Thailand.

Raphia (ráff ee a) has nothing to do with needles or sharp points (from the Greek *rhapidos*—a rod) as suggested by many authors, but is, quite simply, a latinization of the Malagasy local name for *Raphia farinifera*—*raffia*, *rofia* or *ruffia*.

Wallichia (wall íck ee a) honors Nathaniel Wallich (1786 Copenhagen, Denmark, 1854 London, England) who in 1807 was appointed Danish Medical Attaché at Serampore, Bengal and later became Superintendent of the East India Company’s Garden at Calcutta. He was the author of many important early botanical publications dealing with the flora of India, and his large herbarium is housed at Kew.

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