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PALM BRIEF

A Distichous *Mauritia flexuosa*

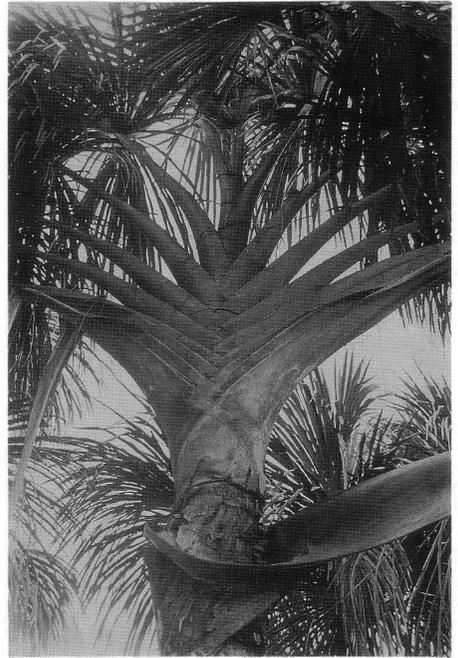
A trunked palm with leaves arranged in two ranks (Fig. 1) was found in a population of *Mauritia flexuosa* near Iquitos on waterlogged soils. Since March 1984, the date of its discovery, this peculiar palm has not produced inflorescences. The distichous crown arrangement may prevent the development of flowers by the compression of buds between successive sheaths in the same rank.

A few palms are known to have a distichous crown; *Halmoorea trispatha* (Dransfield and Uhl 1984), *Oenocarpus distichus*, *Orania disticha*, *Wallichia disticha* (Dransfield 1978), *Catoblastus distichus* and *Aiphanes linearis* (Bernal-Gonzales 1986). In these cases, distichous growth is characteristic of the species.

"The significance of the distichous habit is not understood" concluded Dransfield (1978). *Oenocarpus bacaba*, with several leaf ranks and *O. distichus*, both arborescent, single-stemmed species occur in the same forest of the lower Rio Tocantins valley, Brazil (Kahn 1986). Adults of both species are found in the same stratum (15–25 m) under discontinuities of the forest canopy. The ecological conditions (soil and light) are also identical for the "abnormal" distichous *Mauritia flexuosa* and for its "normal" congeners. These facts suggest that the distichous crown arrangement in palms does not have ecological significance, but much of the biology of these palms remains unknown.

LITERATURE CITED

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1. A *Mauritia flexuosa* palm with a distichous crown.

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