

PALM LITERATURE

EXOTIC FRUITS AND NUTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD – TOMOHIRO KOBAYASHI, TOMOKI SANDO AND HIDEHARU YAMADA, Sogensha Co., Ltd., Osaka, Japan. 2020. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-4-422-43033-1. Price ¥3000 (ca. US\$29). Pp. 176, color illustrations and map. Available from www.sogensha.co.jp

Like everyone fascinated by the diversity of palms, I have a bowl of dried fruits and seeds sitting on a table in my home. There are *Hyphaene*, *Calamus* and *Metroxylon* fruits and *Attalea*, *Wodyetia* and *Latania* endocarps, all long desiccated and dead. I keep them for their sculptural beauty, like natural netsukes, and because they remind me of both the people and places where I saw these palms. Over the years, my “carpological collection” grew to include a few “sea beans” (*Entada* and *Mucuna* seeds), some interesting pinecones and the winged fruits of some dipterocarps. If you have a similar collection of fruits and seeds in your home, this book is for you.

Authors Tomohiro Kobayashi and Tomoki Sando and photographer Hideharu Yamada present a visual feast of fruit and seed diversity across the plant kingdom. The first part of the book profiles families diverse in their seeds and fruits, such as acorns and beans, and includes a section devoted to palms. The illustrations of the double coconut and *Phytelephas aequatorialis* occupy two-page spreads. The second part illustrates how fruit form relates to function, i.e., dispersal. *Manicaria* and *Nypa* are illustrated as examples of drift seeds. The book focuses on dispersal by water or wind, so no attention is paid to fruits as food for animal dispersers. The third section focuses on shapes and forms. Six pages are devoted to various species of Calamoid palms, whose scaly fruits are eminently



photogenic. The section ends with a world distribution map of notable fruits and seeds. The book closes with an index of scientific names.

The text throughout is in Japanese, but each illustration is captioned with the scientific name, the plant family and the length or width of the object (in cm). Yamada’s photographs are spectacular: studio portraits with a neutral background so nothing detracts from the images of the fruits and seeds.

For those of us that cannot read Japanese, the format lends itself to casual browsing, enjoying the spectacular photographs and perhaps Googling some of the plant names. The book is similar in scope to *Seeds: Time Capsules of Life* and *Fruit: Edible, Inedible, Incredible*, both by W. Stuppy and R. Kessler, but with more palms. *Exotic Fruits and Nuts...* is a lavish tribute to plant diversity, a book that anyone with a bowl of palm seeds at home will appreciate.

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