

New Book on African Araceae

Thomas B. Croat

A recent French language publication by Marianne Knecht entitled "Aracées de la Cote d'Ivoire" is an important publication dealing with African Araceae. The work, which is fully titled "Phanerogamarum Monographiae Tomus XVII, Contribution à l'étude biosystématique des représentants d' Aracées de la Cote de 'Ivoire" was published as a book by J. Cramer (FL-9490, Vaduz, Switzerland) in 1983. It contains 290 pages and includes 76 figures and 21 black and white plates.

The study was a Ph.D. thesis topic carried out in the Ivory Coast of tropical West Africa. It consists of a thorough ecotaxonomic study on the thirteen genera and thirty-five species of Araceae from the Ivory Coast.

The thesis is divided into four sections: A. General part; B. Morphology and biology; C. Systematics and D. Miscellaneous section.

The first and general part includes sections on the geographical distribution of Araceae, the centers of diversity for African Araceae and the geographic distribution of Central and West African genera with accompanying distribution maps. Two distribution patterns, namely "guineo-occidental" and "guineo-congolais" are isolated and discussed with specific species represented by dis-

tribution maps. Other sections deal with local ecological diversity, habitat diversity and topographic sequence.

The second part has sections on embryology, habit types and growth forms. It also contains a detailed discussion of the vegetative and floral parts of different representatives including a detailed analysis of pollen grain types and chromosome morphology. In addition there is a discussion of the different types of vegetative reproduction exhibited.

The systematic section includes keys to genera with both sexual and asexual characters, as well as keys to all species and complete species descriptions. Species are well illustrated and details are presented for key characters. A list of specimens studied is provided for each species.

The fourth and final part deals with miscellaneous subjects including introduced species of Araceae and their use as food plants and the use of Araceae in traditional West African medicine.

Although the African members of the Araceae are relatively well studied by comparison with their more diverse American counterparts, this work by Knecht is the most in-depth study of an entire aroid flora ever published and it is a welcome contribution to the study of the complex aroid family.