

## Foreword\*

I feel honored to have been asked to write the Foreword to a work which will, without doubt, stand as the major reference work on Philippine botanical names for decades to come. Building upon the major works of Elmer D. Merrill, and a host of subsequent botanists, linguists, and others who have had reason to write down the local names of various flora and have had them scientifically identified, Dr. Domingo Madulid has produced an encyclopedic work, covering for the first time in a single set of volumes a comprehensive enumeration of local names and identifications from every major group of the Plant Kingdom. Local names from well over a hundred different Philippine languages and dialects are included, providing a wealth of comparative material.

As a linguist interested in the historical development of Philippine languages, I find this work to be a very useful tool to throw light on early stages of the settlement of the Philippine archipelago. Armed with a knowledge of the sound changes that have taken place in the history of Philippine languages, a linguist can reconstruct from this data a picture of the flora that must have been present and have been named by the first intrepid Austronesian settlers, ancestors of most of today's Filipinos, as they made their way into the Philippines from their Formosan homeland some four thousand years or more ago. Reflexes of those original terms can now be found throughout the Philippines, spread by the original settlers as they multiplied and moved south exploring new and fertile river valleys, plains, and other terrain where they could hunt and fish, plant rice, and exploit the rich flora that they encountered on their way. We can determine, by comparing related words in the Austronesian languages still extant in the Taiwan of today, which plants the settlers may have brought with them, which plants present in the Philippines they already knew about when they first arrived, and which may have been completely unknown to them. Similarly, it is possible by comparing the terms of Philippine flora with their cognates in the languages of Indonesia and Malaysia and other geographical areas to which the settlers subsequently moved, to discover which plants in those countries were

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\* Foreword to: Domingo Madulid's *Dictionary of Philippine plant names*. 2 Vols. Makati City, Philippines: Bookmark Inc. (2002).

also recognized by them as being the same as, or similar to, those in the Philippines from which they had come.

The value of this work is not only in helping to unravel the story of past generations, it may well be part of the key which will affect the lives of future generations of Filipinos and others around the world. With the recent push to discover medicinal plants that may be of use in the treatment of debilitating and often fatal diseases, for species that may someday play a role in solving the world's dependence on fossil fuels, for plants which may have significant economic value to the country, and for those whose natural beauty can enhance the lives of people who are surrounded by the noise and bustle of the modern metropolis, there has been a pressing need for a dictionary of this type which can assist in discovering the identity of such plants and their distribution throughout the country.

This work is the fruit of literally decades of often mind-numbing labor. It was begun in the days when computer technology was in its infancy, and has been plagued by the necessity to move from one kind of computer system to another, with all the problems of overcoming ensuing incompatibilities in both hardware and software. As the years have passed by, the influx of new data (much of it from the author's own field work), and revisions in classification and changes in nomenclature have required constant attention to ensure that vernacular names are spelled appropriately, that they are correctly sorted in the dictionary, and that the scientific identifications are up-to-date and accurate. This kind of time-consuming work requires a special devotion to the field. Only a person who is so committed can have the patience to endure the frustrations and the fortitude to overcome the difficulties. The Philippines is fortunate in having such a scholar in the person of Dr. Madulid. His dedication has produced a work for which botanists, linguists, scholars from a wide range of other disciplines, and the general public can all be thankful.