SOUÈGES, R. (1954). L'origine du cône végétatif de la tige et la question de la "terminalita" du cotylédon des monocotylédons. *Ann. Sci. Nat. XI (Bot.)* 15: 1–20.

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Plant families for Malayan students. Here is a book* to which an unreserved welcome can be given. Taxonomic teaching in the tropics has long been hampered by a lack of texts designed to cover the plants a student actually has a chance of seeing around him. Dr. Hsuan Keng has wisely included a good many cultivated plants in his account, so that it may well have a much wider area of utility than the Malay Peninsula and Singapore, for which it is designed.

One interesting feature is the attempt to use the order as a teaching unit. Dr. Keng admits that some of these are rather a mixed bag—he is not proposing a new system, merely adapting the best of what is to hand—but thinks that on the whole they are useful teaching guides. The 188 families that he includes are thus grouped into 41 orders. Most of these are reasonable enough and a help to the student; perhaps the merit of Geraniales is just that it does provide a sharp contrast. Personally, to stand up and tell a class anything useful about an order including Meliaceae, Polygalaceae and Euphorbiaceae would defeat me entirely; but the fact that the dicotyledonous families cannot all be grouped into satisfactory orders is a taxonomic fact which the student should learn.

It is good to have an entirely new set of illustrations, and Dr. Keng's wife is to be congratulated on these. A few are rather thin (e.g. figs 82, 126) and just occasionally (*Lagerstroemia flos-reginae:* fig. 91) they fail to conjure up the plant; here, and in a few others the floral detail is too small. On the whole, however, they are just what is needed for a book at family level.

The main part of the work is, of course, the family descriptions and the keys and these are admirable. There is a key to the orders, to families under each order and often to genera or tribes within the families. There is also a brief description (c. 10 lines) for each family and a few notes of general interest. All this adds up to a very solid body of information.

One part, however, I would like to see completely re-written for a second edition. This is the Introduction. As it stands this is simply an "introduction explanatory" for teacher, taxonomist or reviewer: what is needed is an "introduction exhortatory" for the student; a few words to arouse his enthusiasm for finding out about the plants around him. In fact I would happily sacrifice some of the taxonomic detail in the main text for a few more items of biological interest. Araceae and Annonaceae, Dipterocarpaceae and Orchidaceae and many others all deserve a few lines to bring them alive.

B. L. BURTT.

* Orders and families of Malayan seed plants. By Hsuan Keng. Pp. xxiii + 429, 1 pl., 207 figs. Kuala Lumpur & Singapore, University of Malaya Press. 1969. 25 cm. Price M$ 60. (Sole distributor: University of Malaya Cooperative Bookshop Ltd., Kuala Lumpur).