## Book Review

**The major groups of palms.** Originally published as a paper in *Gentes Herbarium*, H. E. Moore's review of palm groups and their distribution now makes its appearance in book form. It is thus accessible to a wider audience and more easily usable as a travel companion for those working with or looking at palms. But one wishes that more changes had been made in the transition as it remains very much a technical paper when it could so easily have been a book with a much wider appeal. Much jargon could have been avoided in the descriptions without loss: why could we not have, "reed-like or creeping" instead of "Arundinaceous or repent" (p. 73)? However the descriptions though technical are of a very high standard. A few diagrams inserted in the early pages would have been clearer than the cross-referencing to photographs and drawings, particularly in the section on terms (p. 8) and leaf types (p. 10) where the photographs are not always clear in illustrating the terms used or points being made; figure 16 for instance, can hardly be said to clearly illustrate one-ribbed pinnae. A short glossary would have been helpful to many and an index could usefully have been added.

The tables are excellent in content and form valuable digests of information but it is a pity that the vertical headings of horizontal tables are printed so that they appear upside-down in normal orientation of the book and make the tables more difficult to read. The figures in table 4 are also difficult to follow without a guide. The numerous black and white photographs are generally of excellent quality and illustrate a fine range of form; the drawings too are well executed and illustrate reproductive details in a way that nicely complement the photographs. The forty maps convey distributional information that is immediately meaningful and generally they are very clear, but those of figure 55 have been over-reduced so that one has to search for the triangles indicating fossil seeds.

The new informal taxonomic groupings that have been made will prove a stimulating basis for discussion but should generally be acceptable. They follow outlines indicated by anatomical and other studies, thus following trends set in other similarly isolated groups of monocotyledons, but are well backed with the author's excellent first-hand acquaintance with a wide range of the living plants so essential to the study of a group inevitably poorly represented in herbaria. It is to be hoped that the author will ascribe some rank to his major groups in the near future. Designation of rank is probably more arbitrary than many biologists care to admit but designation of the palm groups without rank is only a temporary solution.

The book is well-produced, apart from the appallingly flimsy paper cover, and can be warmly recommended as a stimulating summary of much recent research on taxonomy at the higher levels within the Palmae.

G. Argent

* The major Groups of Palms and their Distribution. By Harold E. Moore Jr., reprinted and repaged with cover and table of contents from Gentes Herbarium 11, 27–141 (1973) published by the L. H. Bailey Hortorium of the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, a statutory college of the state university, at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14850. 115 pp. 62 photographs, 40 maps and 21 other figs.