Book Review

Flora of Bangladesh. Although the reviewer's main botanical interests lie further east, the country now known as Bangladesh is not unfamiliar to him due to a military sojourn in Chittagong and Sylhet for some months in the 1940s; the appearance of a *Flora of Bangladesh* has thus evoked many non-botanical memories. Add to this a personal acquaintance with the editor of the Flora, Dr Khan, who studied for his Ph.D. at Edinburgh University, and my credentials for drawing attention to the Flora are established.

The Flora of Bangladesh project is now funded by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, although originally supported by other bodies. Dr Md Salar Khan, Associate Professor of Botany at Dacca University, has had a major hand in all five parts of the Flora issued* and is to be commended, along with certain Government departments and the BARC, for initiating this project at such an early stage in the development of Bangladesh.

The format for parts 4 and 5 of the Flora has been changed slightly from the first three parts (published in 1972–75), and the families will appear independently in any order as they are completed. Part 4, containing Commelinaceae, is particularly important, giving as it does an indication of the pattern for future parts, and including a comprehensive chapter on the topography and vegetation of the country. Every issue will also contain a district map of Bangladesh, which is particularly useful for those not acquainted with the geography of the country. Family, generic and specific descriptions are all in English and these are followed by the citation of specimens (clearly linked to the district map), and the general distribution. Full synonymy is not always given but basionyms are included. There are line drawings in all the parts issued to date.

Commelinaceae is the largest family dealt with so far and of the 23 native species, 22 are to be found in Hook. f., *Flora of British India*, but under a variety of different generic and specific names. Whether this will be the pattern for other families remains to be seen.

The parts are very reasonably priced and Commelinaceae, for instance, with 42 pages and 20 figures, costs only 50p.

For a country without easy access either to a large herbarium, type specimens or a comprehensive library, the undertaking of a Flora is a very difficult task and usually depends on the energy and enterprise of a few people being sustained over a long peroid. Dr Khan estimates that the flora of Bangladesh has about 5,000 species and 186 families. This is a very substantial total and Dr Khan and his small band of collaborators will need all the moral, scientific and financial support that they can muster in order to see the project through to a successful conclusion. It is to be hoped that this support, both within Bangladesh and elsewhere, will be forthcoming and long-lasting.

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* Flora of Bangladesh No. 1 1972. (Casuarinaceae, Phytolaccaceae, Hydrophyllaceae, Martyniaceae, Caricaceae). No. 2 1973. (Moringaceae, Polemoniaceae, Pedaliaceae, Basellaceae, Butomaceae). No. 3 1975. (Ochnaceae, Turneraceae, Fumariaceae, Tropaeolaceae, Flagellariaceae). No. 4 1977. (Commelinaceae). No. 5 1977. (Sphenocleaceae). Edited by Md Salar Khan. Obtainable from Bangladesh National Herbarium, 229 Green Road, Dhanmondi, Dacca-5, Bangladesh.