
Nice work – but wrong label

'A tale of two countries' going successfully

BOOK REVIEW Himalayan Journal of Sciences 1(1): 15-16, 2003Download in PDF format

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Review of "Himalayan Botany in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries" By S. Noshiro, and K.R. Rajbhandari (eds.) The Society of Himalayan Botany Tokyo, Japan, 2002 212 pp. ISBN 4-9900825-2-4 Price not mentioned

The book cannot claim to be a history of Himalayan flora for two reasons: first, it basically deals with history of Nepal-Japan collaboration rather than with botanical advancement, and second, the taxonomic development is exclusively confined within the last 40 years' period.

The Society of Himalayan Botany is contributing, since last two decades, by publishing a series of books on Himalayan Botany. The present captivating book entitled "Himalayan Botany in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries", is another welcome publication of the society, edited by Shuichi Noshiro (Japan) and Keshab R. Rajbhandari (Nepal). The editors have adequately compiled more than 30 articles of Nepali and Japanese botanists that directly reflects on collaborative botanical explorations in the last forty years, to explore and document the plant resources of Nepal. The first part, History of Himalayan Botany, consists of eight general papers by veteran botanists of Nepal (S.B. Malla, S.B. Rajbhandari, T.B. Shrestha, M.S. Bista, Y. Vaidya, and K.R. Rajbhandari), and two review papers by Japanese veterans (H. Kanai and H. Ohba). The second part, Achievements in Himalayan Botany, consists of 13 research articles by Japanese authors, and two review articles by Nepali (K.R. Rajbhandari) and the Japanese (M. Suzuki) botanists. Similarly, the third part, Sharing of Field Experience, consists of eight general articles by Nepali botanists (A.V. Upadhyay, P.R. Shakya, M.K. Adhikary, H.K. Sainju, L. Joshi, M.N. Subedi, K.J. Malla, and B. Roy).

Apparently, the contributed articles are the compilation of the papers presented in a seminar organized jointly by Department of Plant Resources (Nepal) and Society of Himalayan Botany (Japan) on 14-15 May 2001, in Kathmandu, to commemorate the forty years of collaboration for botanical explorations in Nepal. Obviously, this book is considered as the 'proceedings' of the seminar. Focusing on the contributed articles, it can be noted that almost all papers contributed by Nepali botanists are based on sharing of experiences working with the Japanese botanists during and before the field trips, whereas, the entire research articles are contributed by the Japanese botanists. For the taxonomists this book is of special interest, due to two exciting review articles by Nepali botanist (K.R. Rajbhandari), and three review articles by Japanese botanists (H. Kanai, H. Ohba, and M. Suzuki). Moreover, the spectacular book comprises about a dozen short research articles by Japanese botanists, based on the plant materials of Nepal and Sino-Himalayan regions. Certainly, the readers would be highly disappointed by the lack of research articles from Nepali botanists. We hope Nepali botanists will fulfill this huge gap, by contributing research papers in the forthcoming 'proceedings'.

The review articles by Hideaki Ohba, 'Three epochs of Himalayan Botany' and K.R. Rajbhandari's 'Flora of Nepal: 200 year's march' are outstanding articles in the book. In his article, Ohba has presented his last 20 years of involvement in botanical research in Nepal, narrating his experience and active contribution in exploration and tireless efforts to publish 'Flora of Nepal' – comprehensive description of vascular plants of Nepal. He is disappointed with the authorities of Nepal government, due to lack of commitment and interest to publish a series of publication on 'Flora of Nepal'. Bibliography related to Flora of Nepal and Himalaya, from 1960 to 2001, summary of the botanical explorations by Japanese botanists from 1983-2001 in chronological order, and expedition routes shown in the maps are invaluable references. Similarly, in Rajbhandari's article, he has thoroughly summarized the history of botanical explorations in Nepal from 1802-1948, 1949-1982 by foreign expedition group, collections during 1962-1988 by the Department of Plant Resources, and recent collections during 1983-2001 by foreign botanists in collaboration with Nepali botanists are well documented. List of new species of flowering plants described from Nepal in the years 1983-1996 is also given. Both articles are no doubt invaluable source of information leading to history of botanical explorations, taxonomic research and publications on Flora of Nepal, including Flora of the Himalayas.

It is worth mentioning here that the title of this book needs explanation, because the title and its contents appear to be not matching at all. For example, almost all articles in Part I and Part III deal with the history of collaboration between Japan and Nepal from 1960 onwards. All research articles in Part II are based on recent taxonomic research. Only two

review articles by Rajbhandari deals with a brief account of the history in 19th and 20th century, but more on the historical events during last forty years. Moreover, except one review article by Ohba, and couple of research articles on Sino-Himalayan region, almost all articles deal with the Nepalese botany. Hence the title of the book should be 'Botanical Research in Nepal in the last forty years: 1960-2000 (Proceedings of the Seminar to commemorate forty years of Japan-Nepal collaboration)' or 'Forty Years of Collaboration between Japan and Nepal for Botanical Exploration in Nepal'.

In general, this nicely produced book reveals an overview of collaborative research in the field of botany during the last four decades. The heart of the book, however, is indeed the compilation of thorough references on Himalayan botany. The high grade paper and printing, as well as size and format of the book is outstanding. Several photographs, maps, graphs and other illustrations greatly enhance the attraction of the book. Though minor typological mistakes and misleading information exist in the book, it has not reduced the value of the book at all. Overall, this book is a most welcome and interesting series of publications by Society of Himalayan Botany, with lots of fascinating information about history of botanical exploration in Nepal, and ongoing taxonomic research pertaining to Flora of Nepal.

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