



Review: *Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae Tomus 9(1) (Chinese)*. Editors P C Keng & Z P Wang

Chris Stapleton

Publication of the bamboo account for the Flora of China is a major milestone along the road towards comprehensive knowledge of the Old World bamboos. 29 contributors have taken 22 years to produce this 700 page work, the first edition of which is completely in Chinese except for botanical names and references.

Started in 1974, the project has seen tremendous efforts to collect and document the bamboos of China. The contribution made by Professors T.P. Yi and J.R. Hsueh in describing so many species from S W China is particularly remarkable.

Several Chinese journals have published descriptions and names as the project developed. Many new genera as well as species have been described. Chinese descriptions are now compiled into a single volume with keys (also in Chinese) to the species of each genus.

To illustrate this work there are 215 black and white plates, but many include 2—several species. These are all from herbarium specimens, mostly from the original illustrations accompanying the original publication of the species. Quality of reproduction is usually better than in some of the journals in which they were initially reproduced, but not all the illustrations are represented for each species, and sorting out which illustrations represent each species is tedious where more than one species is included in a plate. Nevertheless it is convenient to have so many illustrations together in one publication. More recently published species are nearly all illustrated.

It was initially intended that the closing date for manuscripts would be 1985, but this became 1989, when the first draft was sent for review. The revised draft was completed in 1991. Some species published in 1991 were included, while others were not, so there seems to be no precise cut-off date, but species and genera published from 1992-96 are not included.

A total of 468 species are listed, in 37 genera. The genera are placed in the system of tribes and subtribes first published in the opening editions of the Journal of Bamboo Research by Professor Keng in 1982, and revised in 1987. This is now rather out of date. For example phylogenetic and morphological information make it difficult to accept Chinese genera placed alongside S American bamboos in the tribe *Chusqueae*, and subtribes are now generally followed rather than tribes within the woody bamboos.

The generic circumscription will be familiar to readers of the Journal of Bamboo Research. *Sinarundinaria* is not only considered a synonym of *Fargesia*, it is listed as being invalid. The interpretation of *Fargesia* is broad. As this is a Chinese account, the genus does not include species such as *Arundinaria racemosa* and *Drepanostachyum falcatum* from the Himalayas, which have found their way into some accounts, but the section *Ampullares* is still there. This section has oval buds, and it includes series *Collares*, with larger central branches, and series *Ampullares* with uniform branching. The former seems synonymous with *Himalayacalamus* and the latter with *Drepanostachyum*, which is included in this treatment as a separate genus.

A similar problem is the inclusion of section *Patellares* within *Dendrocalamus*, based upon the species *Dendrocalamus patellaris*, which is now known to belong in the genus *Ampelocalamus*, which is included in this account, although some of its species seem to be listed under *Drepanostachyum*.

These slight anomalies can easily be corrected, and post 1991 genera and species added, when the English version is produced in association with Missouri Botanic Garden. More difficult is the consideration of which species names are synonymous, and the correlation of older species names with more recently described ones.

The production of such a large account of these taxonomically difficult plants by so many collaborating authors is a substantial achievement for the editors. Professor Keng is now over 80 and Dr De-Zhu Li of Kunming Botanical Institute is taking over as the Editor. He is presently working on the basis for the next (English) version, which is intended not only to translate the Chinese version, but to bring it into line with more recent taxonomic developments and to accommodate Western understanding of Chinese plants. It is hoped that collaborative herbarium visits, fieldwork, and molecular research will assist him. We are indebted to Professors Keng and Wang for taking the work this far, and wish Dr Li every success with the English version.