

Etymology of *Bentinckia condapanna*

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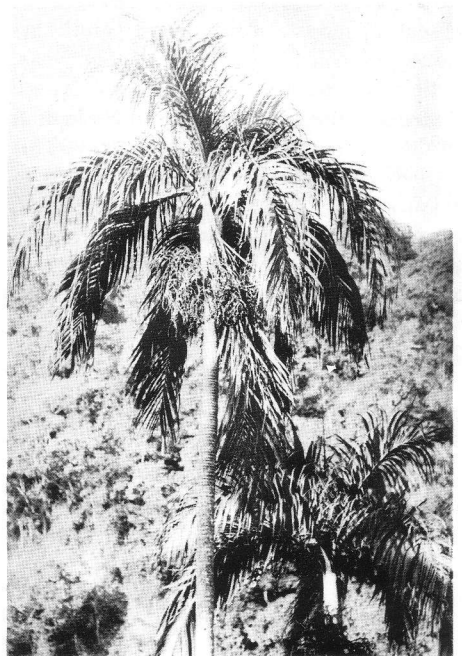
Bentinckia was established by Berry, and commemorates William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck (Governor General of the East Indies, 1774-1839). The genus includes only two species, both native to different regions of India. One, *B. nicobarica*, is found in the Nicobar Islands, commonly associated with *Areca catechu*, *Pinanga manii* and *Rhopaloblaste augusta*.

The other species, *B. condapanna*, is native to Travancore and South Kerala, and grows on precipitous cliffs within its restricted range. The specific epithet comes from its local name. In Roxburgh's *Flora Indica*, 3: 621 (1832), in which Berry described the species, its spelling is given as "*condapanna*." However, various subsequent authors who have dealt with the species give their spellings variously as "*coddapanna*," "*condapanna*," "*codapanna*" and "*condapana*" (cf., Griffith 1850, Hooker 1894, Blatter 1926, Fischer 1931, Padmanabhan and Regupathy 1981). Among these, the first version is the commonest, although different from that originally given by Berry.

This species occurs in the border areas between the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The language of Kerala is Malayalam while that of Tamil Nadu is Tamil. The specific name is a compound word derived from two words—"conda" and "pana." Both these words happen to occur in Malayalam as well as Tamil and have the same meaning in both languages. There is one more local name for this species, i.e., "vari-kamugu," meaning "hill-arecanut" in both languages. The

word "pana" means palm. "Conda" is the word used to describe a characteristic, rather casual knot of hair (hair style) commonly worn by women in South India. The similarity between the "conda" hair style and the just-opened inflorescence of the palm is striking even from a distance, and hence the popular local name "conda + pana" for the plant, which when compounded together should become "condapanna." The additional "d" in the spelling used by some authors is superfluous.

"Panna" is the name used (in Malayalam, and sometimes in Tamil also) to designate an altogether different class of



1. *Bentinckia condapanna* Berry.

plants, namely the ferns. Various types of "pannas" (ferns) such as "Arana panna" (*Aspidium splendens*), "Valli panna" (*Lygodium flexuosum*), "Weli panna" (*Polypodium* spp.), "Para panna" (*Asplenium* spp.), etc. had been described from this region as long ago as 1693 by Van Rhee in his *Hortus Malabaricus*. Even today the word "panna" means fern. Therefore, the latter half of the specific name of the palm ought not to have been "-panna," which would be misleading as the name of a palm; instead it should have been "-pana."

The difference in the spellings of the specific name of the palm given by different authors is evidently due to the dispar-

ity between its correct local name and its validly published binomial.

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