

**1903-NO. 8. DEPARTMENT OF THE
INTERIOR. BUREAU OF
GOVERNMENT LABORATORIES. A
DICTIONARY OF THE PLANT
NAMES OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS**

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1903-No. 8. Department of the Interior. Bureau of Government Laboratories. A Dictionary of the Plant Names of the Philippine Islands by Elmer D. Merrill

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ELMER D. MERRILL

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF GOVERNMENT LABORATORIES,
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF LABORATORIES,
Manila, P. I., September 22, 1903.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith manuscript of a paper entitled "A dictionary of the plant names of the Philippine Islands," by Elmer D. Merrill, Botanist.

I am, very respectfully,

PAUL C. FREER,
Superintendent of Government Laboratories.

HON. JAMES F. SMITH,
Acting Secretary of the Interior, Manila, P. I.

315291

A DICTIONARY OF THE NATIVE PLANT NAMES OF THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

By ELMER D. MEMMILL, *Botanist.*

INTRODUCTION.

The preparation of the present work was undertaken at the request of Capt. G. P. Ahern, Chief of the Forestry Bureau, the object being to facilitate the work of the various employees of that Bureau in identifying the tree species of economic importance found in the Archipelago.

For the interests of the Forestry Bureau the names of the various tree species only are of importance, but in compiling this list all plant names available have been included in order to make the present work more generally useful to those Americans resident in the Archipelago who are interested in the vegetation about them.

In the preparation of this paper the double arrangement alphabetically, both under the native and scientific names, has been deemed essential, the latter arrangement especially, because it is often very important to have all the synonyms of the native names together in one place, and, moreover, the notes regarding the species are best given under the scientific name in order to prevent repetition of the same information under each of the native names given for the same species. The family of each genus and short notes regarding species of economic importance have been given in order to aid in the identification of the species.

The native names used to designate species of economic importance, those which produce edible fruits, medicinal plants, trees valuable for timber, etc., are almost invariably applied to the same species, although in critical genera some variation and confusion of names are found, which is to be expected. The names applied to plants of little or no economic importance are frequently very unreliable, and accordingly, in using this dictionary, whenever

possible the plant should be compared with at least the generic description before accepting the scientific name to which the native name refers.

Most of the names in the present work not compiled from data on the specimens now in the herbarium have been taken from the following works: Blanco, "Flora de Filipinas," first edition, 1837, and second edition, 1845; Fernandez-Villar and Navas, "Novissima Appendix ad Floram Philippinarum," 1880-1883; Vigil, "Diccionario de los nombres vulgares que se dan en filipinas á muchas plantas usuales y notables," 1879; Vidal, S., "Sinopsis de familias y generos de plantas leñosas de filipinas," 1883; "Reseña de la flora del archipelago filipino," 1883; "Revisión de plantas vasculares de filipinas," 1886; Ceron, "Catálogo de las plantas del herbario," 1892; Puigduelles, "Apuntes para el mejor conocimiento, clasificación, y valuación de las principales especies arborocoforestales de filipinas," 1895; Tavera, "Plantas medicinales de filipinas," 1892; Espejo, "Cartilla de agricultura filipina," 1892; "Catálogo de la exposición general de las islas filipinas," Madrid, 1887; "Guía oficial de las islas filipinas," 1898.

In many instances much difficulty was experienced in properly referring many of the native names recorded in some of these works to the accepted scientific names of to-day, due to the present chaotic state of Philippine botany. The greatest difficulty was met with in attempting to properly refer the many names given by Blanco, for, in spite of all the work done on the Philippine flora since the publication of Blanco's "Flora de Filipinas," his species are to-day very imperfectly known. In most cases in referring the native names given by Blanco to their scientific names I have followed F.-Villar in his generic identifications, as given in the Novissima Appendix, but, except in the case of widely distributed and well-known species, his specific identifications have been discarded. In identifying Blanco's species F.-Villar made few errors in his generic identifications, but his specific identifications of a large per cent of the species can not be accepted.

The present paper enumerates about 5,000 plant names used by natives of the Philippines, and has been compiled chiefly from the publications of the various Spanish botanists who have worked on the flora of the Archipelago. So far as possible these names have been compared with the names on specimens in the herbarium of this Bureau for verification. It seems that in the past there was

never any serious attempt made to carefully compile the various native plant names, and therefore the present list, though drawn from many sources, is comparatively incomplete. By far the greater number of names in the present enumeration are those of the Tagalog language, while of many of the dialects spoken in the Archipelago not a single plant name has ever been recorded.

It is probable that the people of the mountain tribes, the Negritos, the Igorrotes, the Mangyanes, etc., employ even a greater variety of names in specifying the various species of plants than do the more civilized tribes of the lands at lower elevations, but little or no attention has ever been given to the names used by these peoples. The limitations of the present enumeration can best be realized from the fact that most of the names here recorded are from perhaps 12 or 15 of the 70 or 80 dialects spoken by the various peoples of the Archipelago. With the great variation of the names in the same dialect, and the great number of dialects spoken in the Archipelago, the task of compiling a complete or nearly complete dictionary of the native plant names of the Archipelago is an unending one, and one that could be completed only with great difficulty even if the subject were of sufficient importance to warrant it.

Previously but two attempts have been made to compile any extensive lists of the plant names used by the natives of the Archipelago. The first was Vigil's "Diccionario," a pamphlet of 50 pages published in the year 1879, which enumerates about 2,400 names, the identifications being largely based on Blanco's "Flora de Filipinas." The second list is that given by Vidal in Appendix II to his "Sinopsis," where he enumerates about 1,800 names of tree species, giving the generic identifications only. Blanco, in his index to the native names given in his "Flora," gives but a small per cent of the total number enumerated in his text, while F.-Villar gives no index to the native names in his "Novissima Appendix."

The words "puti" or "maputi" (white) and "pula" or "mapula" (red) are frequently used in combination with other words to designate certain species, as are also the words "lalaqui" (man), "babaye" (woman), "dagat" (ocean), "itim" (black), "usá" (deer), "áso" (dog), "bundoc" or "gubat" (forest), and other words. The prefix "mala" is used in the sense that we use the word "false"—"malaacle" is "false acle," "malabaniaba" is "false

banaba," etc. Frequently combinations of native and Spanish words are used to designate certain species, such as "matang diablo" (*Erodia*), "the devil's eye"; "malacafé" (*Glochidion*, *Randia*), "false coffee." Sometimes some of the words introduced by the Spaniards have persisted without change, such as tabaco, maiz, cacao, piña, and others, while on the other hand some have become greatly corrupted—for example, see the word "camanchiles" under *Pithecolobium dulce* (p. 176), or "achúete," under *Bixa orellana* (p. 129).

Some of the introduced species are known only by their Spanish names, while for other species native names have been adapted. Of the names of Spanish origin we find two classes—those of pure Spanish origin and those of American origin adopted by the Spaniards and transmitted by them with the plants to the Philippines. Of the former we have such names as coronitas (*Lantana camara*); manzanitas (*Zizyphus jujuba*); madre cacao (*Gliricidia maculata*); dama de noche (*Cestrum nocturnum*); hoyá cruz (*Crescentia alata*); caballero, or rosas de caballero (*Cesalpinia pulcherrima*). Of the second class we have such names as chicos (*Achras sapota*); maney or chico maney (*Lucuma mammosa*); tabaco (*Nicotiana tabaco*); scheute (*Bixa orellana*); maiz (*Zea mays*); cacuate (*Arachis hypogaea*); maguey (*Agave americana*); casuy (*Anacardium occidentale*); guayabas (*Psidium guajaba*). Among the species that have been introduced into the Archipelago since the Spanish occupation and to which the natives have adapted names may be mentioned durang parang (*Dalea nigra*); macahiya, or damohia, literally, "ashamed," suggested no doubt by the sensitive leaves of the plant (*Mimosa pudica*); diluario (*Argemone mexicana*), etc.

Many of the native plant names are also the names of towns such as Iba (*Phyllanthus distichus*), Quiapo (*Pistia stratiotes*), Paco (*Asplenium esculentum*), Sampaloc or Salomague (*Tamarindus indica*), Calumpit (*Terminalia edulis*), Iloilo (*Aglaiá argentea*), and others.

During the past two hundred years there has been considerable change in many of the native plant names, as is proved by an examination of the earlier publications on Philippine botany, such as the works of Camell, Mercado, and Delgado. In all these works, but especially in the first, are found a very large number of names which are unknown to us to-day, and many of the ones of

well-known species are spelled quite differently from their accepted form to-day. One example from Camell's work, published in the year 1704, is sufficient to illustrate this point: Camell's "Conyza Helenitis odoris salviae" is undoubtedly the plant known to-day as *Blumea balsamifera* DC., and Camell gives the following native names for his species, which should be compared with those given under *Blumea balsamifera* on page 129: *Sambon, Lacarbulan, Lagdambulan, Anacadbulan, Olacdambulan, Guitinggitan, Gabucu, Lalacdan, Ayolan, Alibon, Hantilibun.*

None of the names of these earlier authors, not found in later publications, are included in the present publication, for the reason that we can not accurately identify many of the species.

So far as the dialects of the various names were determinable they have been specified by the following abbreviations: B., Bicol; Cag., Cagayan; Ig., Igorrote; Il., Ilocano; Mang., Mangyane; Pamp., Pampangan; Pang., Pangasinan; Sp., Spanish; Sp.-Fil., Spanish-Filipino; T., Tagalog; V., Visayan; Z., Zambales. Frequently, where the dialect of the name is not specified, the name of the island or province where the name is used has been given in parentheses. It has been impossible to identify the dialects of a large number of the names for the reason that many of the Spanish investigators did not consider such data of sufficient value to warrant recording the same. With the exception of the data compiled from the herbarium of this Bureau, the authority for the dialects of the various names is that of the several Spanish investigators, and certain allowance must be made for errors.

Most of the Spanish authors gave little or no attention to accentuation, and frequently where accent marks were given they were erroneously placed. In the present paper an attempt has been made to properly accent the various words, and with this end in view all the names have been carefully checked over with various native employees of the office familiar with many of the dialects.

As the names have been compiled from different works of Spanish authors, it is to be presumed that the latter recorded the native names by the phonetic system of spelling, giving the different letters the same values as in the Spanish language. A cursory examination of the following work will show at once that there is a great variation in the spelling of the same word, *e* and *i*, *o* and *u*, and frequently *i* and *y* have the same values and are interchangeable. With the exception of *ñg*, which is pronounced like *ng* in sing, bring,

etc., the letters in the various words have the same values as in the Spanish language.

The only Philippine author who has used any other method of spelling the native names is Tavera in his "Plantas Medicinales." In this work the consonants are pronounced as follows: *g* always as in get; *h* a gutturalized aspirate; *k* as in English; *w* always as the initial *w* in English, as win, won; *ñ* as *ng* in sing, hung, etc. While this method of spelling the native names has much to commend it, it has not been adopted in the present work, for the reason that no attempt has been made by the Americans so far to change the spelling of the words of the native dialects, and accordingly it was deemed advisable to retain the plant names under the spelling recorded.