

CAETANO XAVIER FURTADO

1897 - 1980

AN OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we have to record the sad demise of Dr C. X. Furtado. Dr Furtado passed away on 13th June 1980 at the Singapore General Hospital after a short illness. Caetano Xavier Furtado was born in Goa, India on 14th October 1897. Upon his graduation at the Poona Agricultural College in 1921 he was employed in Burma for some time before he joined the Singapore Botanic Gardens as Field Assistant in 1923. He was later promoted to the post of Botanist. He was awarded the Doctorate of Science by the University of Bombay just before the outbreak of the war.

Dr Furtado is the author of many papers especially on nomenclature and on the systematics of the Palmae and Araceae. Outstanding are his papers on the complex genera of rattan palms (*Calamus* and *Daemonorops*) which are so important in local use and so elaborately varied in their structure. He added greatly to our knowledge of these plants and also corrected many errors in earlier statements upon them. Most of his works have been published in the Gardens' Bulletin, as well as in *Sonderabdruck aus Fedde Repertorium*, the *Philippine Journal of Science and Taxon*. He has contributed much towards the work at the Gardens' Herbarium and as an administrator he managed the Gardens well. During the critical period of the war years under the Japanese occupation forces, Furtado together with Dr R. E. Holtum, Dr E. J. H. Corner and the Gardens' Staff, worked unselfishly to preserve the herbarium and maintain the living collections in the Gardens.

Although Furtado retired from service in 1952 he was re-employed in the same post until August 1960. Thereafter he visited the Gardens regularly to continue his botanical work, until a few years back when his health deteriorated and we saw little of him. In the years after 1960 he supervised the work of Colombo Plan students from other countries in South East Asia.

Furtado took a keen interest in things historical and he wrote a number of articles in connection with the history of Malacca especially the era when Malacca was under Portuguese rule.

Being a very religious and devout Catholic, he was awarded a Papal Medal in 1964 for his contributions to the Catholic press.

In recognition of his work on the family, a palm *Maxburretia furtadoana* was named after him by Dr John Dransfield (*Gentes Herbarium*, 11 (4) p. 191. 1978) to mark the occasion of his eightieth birthday.

Furtado was a gentle and kindly man. It was both a pleasure and honour for me to have been associated with him for over 30 years in the work of the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters and two sons, one of whom is Professor J. I. R. Furtado of the Department of Zoology, University of Malaya.

To his widow and family we extend our deepest sympathy.

A G ALPHONSO



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