

Prof. Kai Larsen, the Danish co-editor of the Flora of Thailand, established the Flora of Thailand project in 1965 after the first joint Thai-Danish Botanical expedition in 1958, organized as a cooperative effort with Prof. Tem Smitinand, the then director of the Forest Herbarium (BKF). Prof. Larsen found that it was time for Thailand to have a contemporary Flora to update the only existing work covering Thailand's plants - the 'Flora Siamensis Enumeratio' written by W.G. Craib and A.F.G. Kerr in 1931. He contacted renowned botanists, mainly from prestigious botanical institutes in Europe, i.e. Aarhus, Copenhagen, Edinburgh, Kew, Leiden, and Paris, whom he knew, to join the Flora of Thailand project on a voluntary basis to pursue the production of taxonomic treatments of Thai vascular plant families. The editors and editorial board members of the Flora of Thailand were comprised of K. Larsen and Tem Smitinand as co-editors, B. Hansen as assistant editor and Chamlong Phengkklai, R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink Jr., B.L. Burt, L.L. Forman and J.E. Vidal as editorial members. Prof. Larsen dedicated himself to the Thai flora, and tirelessly conducted many Thai-Danish botanical expeditions in remote areas throughout Thailand. Despite the difficult and discouraging access to botanical sites, a great number of Thai plant collections were made and deposited in the herbaria of Aarhus University and the Forest Herbarium, Royal Forest Department in Bangkok. Together with BKF staff, Kai managed to conduct botanical collections in the once luxuriant forests, and he became aware that the Thai flora encompassed far more undescribed species than expected. When it became more and more difficult to recruit foreign specialists to work for the Flora of Thailand project, he therefore encouraged a new young generation of Thai botanists to continue their own Flora. The Flora of Thailand can be proud that a large number of families have been revised by local botanists - more than for any other tropical Flora. Prof. Larsen succeeded in securing substantial aid from the Carlsberg Foundation and DANIDA, the Danish Development Aid Programme, for botanical expeditions, printing costs, and, most importantly, financial support for the higher education of promising young Thai botanists in Denmark. Some have already got their Ph.D. degrees, while many received support for short or long periods of study, and this lengthy academic collaboration has continued to the present day. It was encouraging to see that several young Thai botanists were successfully

educated and trained abroad, and plant taxonomy in Thailand was recognized and promoted. Prof. Larsen knew the history, as well as the present and the future vision of the Flora of Thailand when he saw so many young Thai botanists working on the Thai flora. He encouraged them to assure that the Flora of Thailand Project would be best in the hands of the younger generation. Due to his initiatives, and his remarkable work on the Thai flora in collaboration with BKF staff, the Flora of Thailand has reached an international standard and recognition, and serves as the base for floristic study. The Forest Herbarium is also known as a national herbarium well equipped with knowledgeable and well-trained botanists, herbarium specimens and botanical references.

Since the beginning of the Flora of Thailand Project, Prof. Larsen took 40 years to do this indispensable task - not only writing the Flora on his own but also recruiting family experts for contributing to the Flora. In the early years, the Flora of Thailand progressed slowly, but at present the treatments of the remaining families are not far from completion. Prof. Larsen had sat as Chair of the Flora of Thailand editorial board meeting since the first meeting till the fourteenth meeting in Copenhagen, but we were very regretful that he could not join the latest meeting in Chiang Mai in 2011 because of his health (though he gave a videotaped presentation. At the Flora of Thailand Board meeting he always brought up questions to be discussed including the possibility of the next meeting. Among other future initiatives to be considered by the Board, was a closer collaboration between the organizers of the Flora of Thailand and the other projects such as the Flora Malesiana and Flora du Cambodge, du Laos et du Viêt Nam; and through his knowledge of experts, the Flora of Thailand has become a strong team to work on the Thai Flora.

Prof. Kai Larsen devoted his life to the work on the Flora of Thailand, particularly on his most favourite family the Zingiberaceae, until his last years. He served as co-editor of the Flora of Thailand from the very first volume until he passed away in 2012. He will always be remembered by Thai colleagues, and without his initiative and help the Flora of Thailand would have not materialised. He has done a great job for the Thai flora, and his name will forever remain in the history of the Flora of Thailand as one of the great Danish botanical explorers of the Thai flora.

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