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## Arisaema in Arunachal Pradesh

By Anne M Chambers



Fig.2 looking southeast down the Kameng River

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**Editor :** Carla Kostelac  
**Layout :** Albert Huntington

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I first visited the eastern Himalaya in 1977 when my interest was in primulas and other alpines, but I could not fail to notice some unfamiliar, exotic-looking plants as I climbed up through the forests. Increasingly, I came to appreciate these arisaemas for their fascinating diversity. My last three expeditions in '02, '04 and '06 were to the province of Arunachal Pradesh in India near its northwestern borders with China and Bhutan. They were organised by Peter Cox or his son Kenneth primarily to look at the genus *Rhododendron*, a field in which Peter especially has had a long and distinguished

career. It would be harsh to describe my good companions as blinkered but, since their overwhelming passion is for *Rhododendron*, other Himalayan genera such as *Primula* and *Meconopsis* arouse some interest, aroids and *Arisaema* in particular rate hardly at all. This, then, is an account of the arisaemas and their habitats seen in brief pauses while rhododendron-hunting in Arunachal.

Our first trip to the area in '02 was unrewarding in finding arisaemas. We went in October that year to cross the unexplored dividing ridge between the Subansiri River and the Siang (Tsangpo) watershed. From our

# Gunung Mulu National Park: A Heaven for Aroiders

Wong Sin Yeng<sup>1</sup> and Peter C. Boyce<sup>2</sup>

...continued from the previous issue

6<sup>th</sup> August 2006.

Trail to Skywalk, Deer and Lang Caves.

We decided to follow the same trail, but this time straight to the main trail to Deer and Lang Caves. After the seasonally inundated forest, we moved in mixed forest lowland forest on Karst limestone on each side of the pathway.

*Amorphophallus julaihii* Ipor, Tawan & P.C.Boyce is a common sight here on the limestones, it is astonishing that it was only recently described in 2004. It has a striking purple spathe and the whole inflorescence could reach up to ca 40 cm tall (Fig. 15). Another common species here, *Schismatoglottis muluensis* M. Hotta (Figs. 16 & 17) is interesting in that whereas Hay & Yuzammi (2000) sunk it into *Schismatoglottis calyptrata* (Roxb.) Zoll. & Moritz, based on our field observations, we think that *S. muluensis* warrants recognition as a local endemic in that same way as *S. niahensis* A.Hay, which replaces *S. muluensis* at Niah Caves. Further along we encountered more colonies of *S. colocasioidea* in flower, with its distinctive deep purple to black petioles and two striking stripes on the leaf adaxial surface (Fig. 18)

We made a short detour to the canopy skywalk, encountering more *S. multinervia* occurring in pockets in the limestone together with a further colony of the *Schismatoglottis* with pellucid veins, but here climbing on the limestones and thus the first climbing *Schismatoglottis*! Then we hit the path to the caves. The widespread limestone-specialists, *Pothos insignis* Engl. and *P. ovatifolius* Merr., were abundant here. Also on the limestones we found scattered *Alocasia princeps* W.Bull and a remarkable *Alocasia* near to *Alocasia scabriuscula* N.E.Br. Initially, Peter thought it was *A. scabriuscula* but after few days of field work, when it proved to be widespread on the limestone especially on this trail, with robust growth and yellow petioles, it is most certainly another overlooked locally endemic species. *Bucephalandra motleyana* Schott on the shale bedrock stream before the entrance to the caves was flowering gregariously (Fig. 19).

Deer and Lang Caves are two distinctly different caves situated 150 m. apart in the Southern Hills area of the park. We went into Deer Cave, the largest cave passage in the world, and it was pretty dark but magnificent; simply breathtaking, you have to be there to experience it. When we came out from the cave, saw many tourists waiting for a nature show of two million bats to emerge from the cave at dusk. We decided to call it a day.



Fig. 15 *Amorphophallus julaihii* Ipor, Tawan & P.C. Boyce.



Fig. 16 *Schismatoglottis muluensis* M. Hotta.



Figs. 17 *Schismatoglottis muluensis*.



Fig. 20 *Schismatoglottis monoplocenta* M. Hotta.



Fig. 18 *Schismatoglottis colocasioidea* M. Hotta.