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A NOTE ON “PLANT COLLECTORS IN WEST AFRICA” — AND A SUGGESTED STANDARD FORMAT FOR SIMILAR INDEXES TO OTHER PARTS OF AFRICA

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This biographical index covers the same area as the “Flora of West Tropical Africa” and it is (Sept. 1970) at the press for publication as a part of *Regnum Vegetabile*. It includes the names of over 1660 people who have collected herbarium specimens in West Africa. A concise, abbreviated format has been adopted in accordance with that proposed below. No portraits are being included but samples of handwriting and a map of the area covered are being reproduced.

I am only too conscious of the fact that such a work is never complete, but there comes a point in time when further detailed work becomes impossible (and also uneconomic) and it must be concluded — or else left for an indefinite period without publication. I am very indebted to Mrs. F. NEATE for her assistance with the compilation and to Dr. STAFLEU for agreeing to its printing.

Concerning the preparation of similar indexes to other parts of Africa I hope it will be possible for AETFAT to encourage their publication. One of the aims of the Association is to co-ordinate the efforts of its members and to facilitate interchange of information. Taxonomists frequently require information about collectors and this is not always easy to find. From my own experience in collecting material for West Africa, I am sure it is unrealistic to expect busy editors to prepare full-length biographies. Even the collection of such detailed information as may be found in *Flora Malesiana* is a daunting prospect, however useful it may be. On the other hand our sights must not be set too low for there is a tendency to reduce the information to a minimum that is of little use.

I have found, therefore, by trial over some years that the information which is both practicable to attempt to gather and likely to be required by taxonomists (and also librarians) falls under a series of headings I have adopted for the West African index. Compilers may find it convenient to have the headings listed below and I propose that they be adopted as AETFAT standard.

1. Surname, other names
2. Nationality
3. Date of birth and place
4. Date of death and place
5. Brief biographical notes with dates, especially those relating to his botanical activities in Africa
6. Botanical books on Africa by him (but not papers)
7. Genera named after him
8. Selected references to biographical information
9. Selected references to itineraries
10. Country (countries) in which collections were made with any detailed information, such as dates, localities and numbers of specimens
11. Herbaria in which material is deposited and their quantity

Of course, I know very well that all this information will not be obtainable for everybody, but I think it practicable and it should be the ultimate aim of editors.

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