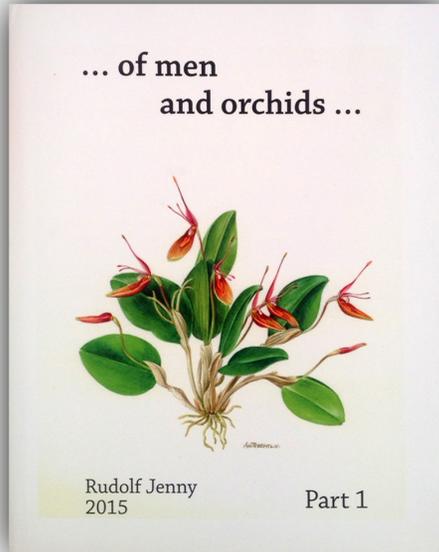


BOOKS

Jenny, R. 2015. **...of men and orchids... Part 1**. 302 pages, with hundreds of photographs, historical illustrations, and portraits. Hardbound with dust jacket, 27 x 22 cm. Quito, Imprenta Mariscal, privately printed by the author. 140 US\$ plus shipping at RJOrchid@gmx.ch.



The human history of orchids has long been a neglected topic when compared with the information available on the natural history of this fascinating group of plants. Nonetheless, orchidology, both on the scientific and the horticultural sides, has expressed a number of preeminent figures, whose contributions are often appreciated and broadly used with no cues about their creators.

Rudolf Jenny's "...of men and orchids..." is neither a book on how humans grow orchids nor a treatise of how they classify plants, but an extraordinary look at the bond that unites men – botanists, gardeners, plant hunters, explorers – to the names of orchids and the histories behind their discovery and scientific apprehension. The work is a great step into the realm of history, and orchids are the perfect excuse to expose the efforts, the courage and bravery, the ambition and jealousies, and the indomitable will of those men in the flesh who have made it possible to discover and name the amazing diversity of plants.

Each of the 41 chapters that compose the volume tell the story of an orchid (or a few orchids) and a man,

beginning with *Acineta beyrodtiana* and Otto Beyrodt, going through complete biographical sketches of the protagonists and discussing the sometimes complex taxonomy of the concerned orchid species. You will find very acknowledged names in plant history, like the Loddiges and Wendland dynasties, or botanists of the eminence of Eduard Friedrich Poeppig and Achille Richard, or famous explorers like Kegel and Jenman, but you will be also surprised at finding several less known names who compose the extraordinary story of orchidology. Vriese, Comparetti, Haller, Raddi, Loefgren, Lauche and Brade, Moquette and Hasskarl, are just a few of the many characters that are presented in the book, together with the orchids that immortalize their names. The sound of these names is often somewhat familiar to the passionate of orchids, because it echoes in the name of the plants that we study and cultivate, and Jenny's book has the merit of giving them – often for the first time – a face, a place and a story. They are botanists, taxonomists, plant-collectors, growers and voyagers who, over more than a century, contributed to our knowledge

and appreciation of orchids.

The texts, synthetic without being dry, and extraordinarily informative, are accompanied by an excellent and generous selection of illustrations, shown in full color, including portraits of historical characters, ancient drawings, paintings, type specimens and engravings, watercolors or simple sketches of the concerned plants, as well as sharp photographs of their modern counterparts, mostly taken by the author himself. The whole is superbly packed into a beautifully designed and printed volume.

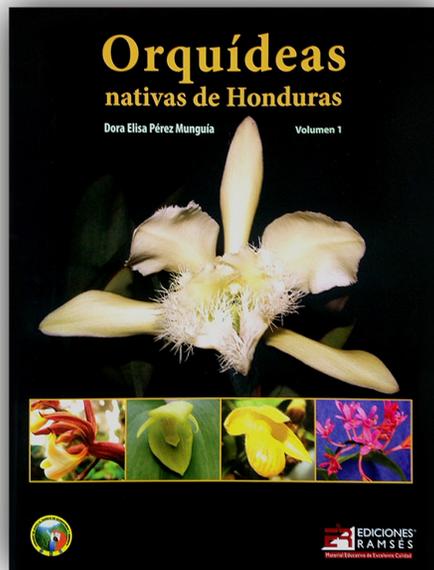
“...of men and orchids...” is an entertaining and instructive lecture, which benefits of the vast

experience of the author in both the areas of orchid taxonomy and botanical history. The only criticism I would express to this superb book is the lack of a real frontispiece, which will probably cause some headaches to the responsible for cataloging in the large libraries where this work will surely find a place.

Because the edition is quite limited, I warmly suggest the interested readers trying to secure a copy soon. According to the author, this first volume will be followed in the coming years by two, or maybe three more. I, for one, am already hungrily waiting for the next volume.

Franco Pupulin

Pérez Munguía, D. E. 2015. **Orquídeas nativas de Honduras. Volumen 1.** Texts in Spanish. 224 pages, 219 color photographs, 5 illustrations, 1 map. Paperback with dust jacket, 28 x 22 cm. Tegucigalpa. Ediciones Ramses. Price not indicated. Available with the author at doraelisa.perez53@gmail.com.



The comparative and phylogeographic study of the Central American orchids has been historically hampered by the lack of a detailed treatment of the orchids from Honduras. If one checks the literature cited by Ossenbach and collaborators in their “*Orchids of the Central American isthmus: checklist and conservation status*” (Ossenbach *et al.* 2007), it is easy to note how Honduras represents a “black hole” in our knowledge of the orchid flora native to the isthmus: only 2 out of the 103 works cited in the

bibliography are expressly devoted to the Honduran orchids, a figure that boldly contrasts with the high number of studies, both on the small and large scales, carried out in neighboring countries. Apart from the fundamental contributions by Cyril H. Nelson (2007, 2008, 2010), a few other papers on the rich orchid flora of Honduras have been published even in recent years (Vega *et al.* 2014, Wiese 2015, in this same fascicle of *Lankesteriana*). Nelson himself notes, in his introduction to the book, that only 8 orchid

species are known to be endemic to Honduras, a figure that certainly does not reflect the real diversity of this family of plants in the country.

It is therefore with a particular pleasure that I received from Dora Elisa Pérez Munguía her recently published book on the native orchids of Honduras, the first of a series of six volumes (according to an interview that the author gave to the Honduran television), which culminate twenty years of Pérez Munguía's personal research on this topic.

The book begins with two short introductions, and two synthetic chapters on orchid morphology and the main natural habitats where orchids can be observed on Honduras. Then it follows with the taxonomic treatment, which presents a total of 123 species in 54 genera. This first volume of the series opens with the taxonomically disputed *Anacheilium* (that most authors include into a broader concept of *Prosthechea*), with 4 species, and ends with a single species of *Vanilla*. As only 23 species of *Epidendrum*, 3 species of *Pleurothallis*, and a single species of *Dichaea* are treated in the present tome, I presume that the following volumes will continue presenting new genera together with more species in those groups that offer the greatest diversity.

Each genus is introduced by a short chapter with its taxonomic history, generalities, a few ecological notes, and the photograph of a representative species. Species treatments include a reduced synonymy (mostly limited to homotypic names), etymology, a quite accurate description, phenology, general and local distribution (and ecology), conservation status, and selected bibliography. All the species are illustrated by at least one color photograph; photographs are quite variable in quality, but mostly amply useful for identification purposes. A short glossary and an index of scientific names conclude the book.

For the serious reader, it is of paramount value that all the portrayed orchids were photographed in Honduras, so that – independently of the name used by the author in its treatment – they represent real taxa of the Honduran orchid flora. So, for example, *Campylocentrum fasciola* on page 49 seems to be a different species, and the *Encyclia amanda* of p. 83 is more similar to *E. chloroleuca*, but both of these records are interesting for the flora of Honduras. Interestingly, both *Sobralia decora* and *S. fenziiana*

are recorded in Honduras (moving toward the North the distribution limit of the latter species), while the *Sobralia macra* photographed for the book could be different from its Costa Rican (and typic) counterpart.

Nomenclaturally, the author usually follows the most accepted generic circumscriptions, with the exception of the “*Epidendrum*” groups, where *Anacheilium*, *Coilostylis*, *Hormidium*, and *Oerstedella* are treated independently. It is a disputable but legitimate decision, while it is questionable that both *Epidendrum* and *Oerstedella* were maintained as distinct, but with some of the species of the former genus combined into *Epidendrum* (i.e., *E. centropetalum*). Also, it is somewhat questionable that *Maxillaria* is treated according to its smaller units (i.e., *Camaridium*, *Maxillariella*, *Mormolyca*), but species of *Rhetinantha* are sunked within *Maxillaria* without any rationale.

The work of Pérez Munguía (who acknowledges Cyril H. Nelson and Diego Antonio Pavón as collaborators) represents a great step towards a better understanding of the orchid diversity in Honduras. It is the result of a first-hand experience with the orchids of the country, and a great labor to present it in uniform and usable way. I warmly recommend it to anyone interested in the flora of Honduras and, more generally, to those interested in the orchid flora of Central America.

Franco Pupulin

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