

NORTH NICOBAR : Car Nicobar, 23.9.1976, N. G. Nair 4489 ; Pygmalion Point, 25.6.1981, D. K. Hore 8841 (PBL).

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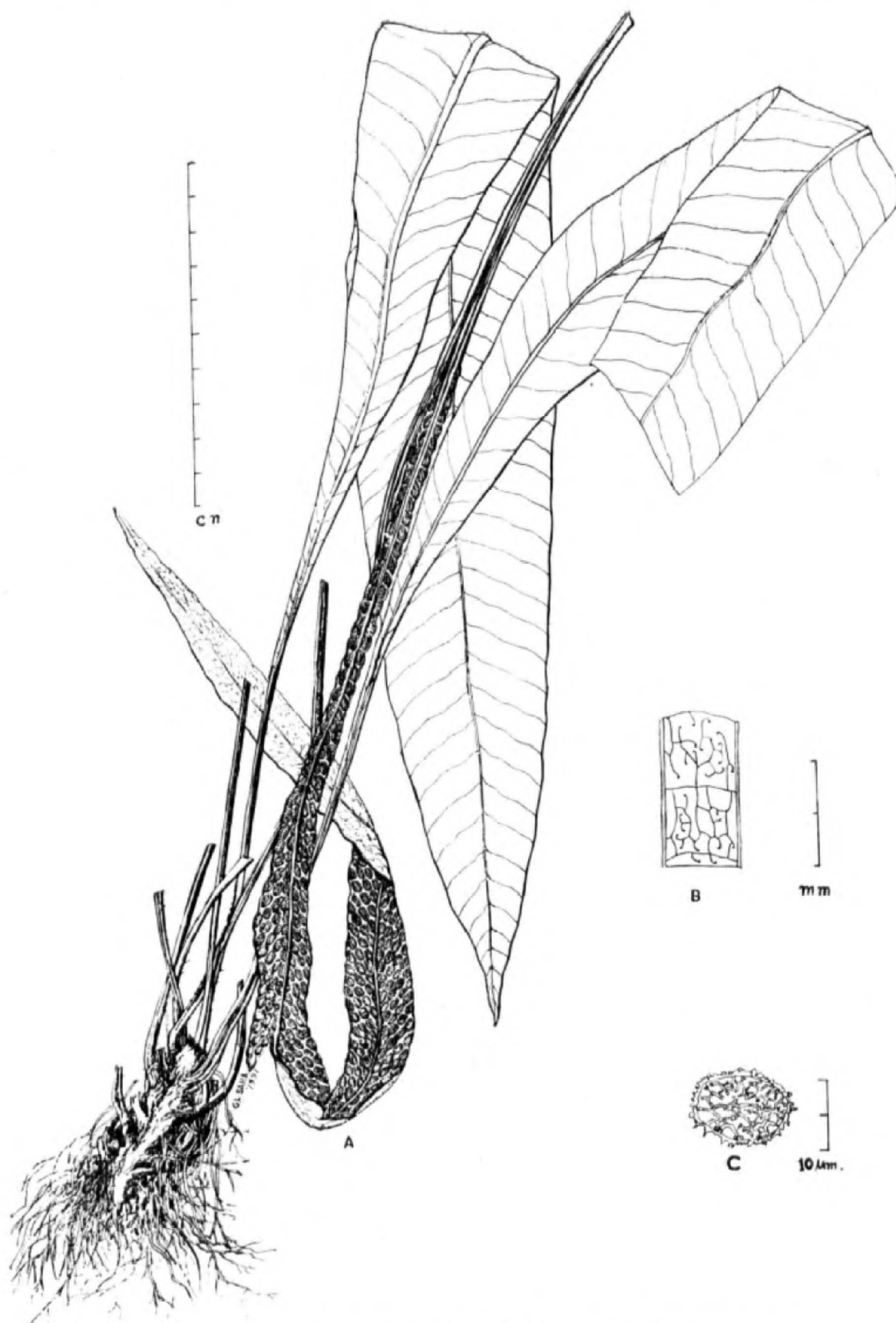
### LUERSSENIA KUHN—A NEW GENERIC FERN RECORD FROM THE NICOBAR ISLANDS, INDIA

*Luerssenia* Kuhn—a monotypic genus earlier known from Sumatra only is reported as new generic fern record from the Nicobar Islands of India for the first time. *L. kehdingiana* Kuhn is described in detail with illustrations. It is one of the rare species of fern.

The monotypic genus *Luerssenia* Kuhn is represented by *L. kehdingiana* Kuhn belonging to the family Aspidiaceae (cf. Copeland, 1947 ; Pichi-sermilli, 1977). The species was known so far only from Sumatra. During the course of incorporation of duplicate herbarium specimens received from Port Blair Herbarium (PBL), the authors came across a peculiar specimen obviously akin to and tentatively identified as *Tectaria singaporensis* Ching but on the scrutiny of literature, the present specimen can be easily segregated by erect rhizome, subdimorphic fronds i.e. fertile frond with much contracted lamina and longer stalk, sori elongated against rhizome creeping, fronds not sub-dimorphic i.e. fertile frond lamina slightly contracted, not on longer stipe and sori globular in *T. singaporensis* Ching. In view of confirmation of the

specimen, a request was made to obtain the authentic sheet from Herb. Leiden. Since the type housed in Herb. Berlin (B) was later destroyed, we received a herbarium sheet determined by R. E. Holttum and verified by Jong hecre and van Steenis as *Luerssenia kehdingiana* Kuhn with the remark on covering letter "as only one specimen present" in the Herbarium and as "Second collection" on the herbarium label. This specimen exactly matches with the Nicobar specimen in all respects. Its occurrence in Nicobar Islands establishes its new distributional record for the region. A perusal of literature reveals that the genus *Luerssenia* Kuhn is extremely rare in its occurrence in Sumatra, since Copeland (1947) remarked that 'I have never seen this fern nor any record of any except the original collection'

We received the only collection available in Leiden collected in the year 1937. Recently it has been collected from the Nicobar Islands from only one site, any habitat disturbance may cause its total disappearance. Hence, *ex situ* conservation is recommended,



Figs. A-C: *Luerssenia kehdingiana* Kuhn—A. Habit. B. Venation. C. Proximal part of spore.

The *Luerssenia* was validly published by Kuhn while writing notes on Pteridophytic collections of Dr. Chr. Lauerksen in 1882. Lauerksen named a herbarium sheet as *Aspidium kehdingianum* in his Herb. Fil. No. 9834 and the same was validated by Christ in 1897, unknowingly that the monotypic genus *Luerssenia* has already been published by Kuhn in 1882. Therefore, *Aspidium kehdingianum* Lueress ex Christ is cited here as synonymous to *Luerssenia kehdingianum* Kuhn.

*Luerssenia kehdingiana* Kuhn is described with detailed text and illustrations to facilitate easy identification in the field and herbarium.

***Luerssenia kehdingiana*** Kuhn in Bot. Centralbl. 11 : 77. 1882 ; C. Chr. Ind. Fil. 411. 1905. *Aspidium kehdingianum* Lueress. in msc. no. 9834 (*Nom. nud.*) ex Christ, Farnkr. 235. 1897.

Terrestrial fern, 70-100 cm high ; rhizome thick, clothed with dark-brown scales, ovate-lanceolate 2.5 × 1-20 mm, a few scales persistent on stipes also. Fronds simple subdimorphic, margins entire ; sterile fronds on short stipes 10-17 cm long, lamina broadest above the middle, elliptic lanceolate, 35-40 × 5-6.5 cm, gradually tapering on both the sides but long narrowly decurrent on the lower side, apex acute, texture thin and much fragile on drying ; venation reticulate with free included veinlets. Fertile frond on much longer stalk 40-50 cm long, lamina much narrower 30-40 × 1.8-2.0 cm, oblong-lanceolate, long decurrent at the base ; sori indusiate, indusium elongate, hipocrepiform, sori terminal on veinlets, elongated, one in each areole, 1-6 in longitudinal rows ; spores yellow monolet 17-25 µm in diameter (Figs. A-C).

Plants grow in inland forests along stream sides,

*Specimens examined* : INDIA : South Nicobars—Great Nicobars ; 38 km. on North-South Road from Campbell Bay, ± 20 m, 27-11-1978, Nair 7113 (CAL, PBL) ; On the East-sides of hills, 39-40 km Point, ± 25 m, 23-7-1984, Sanjappa & Chatterjee 18044 (CAL-2 specimens). SUMATRA : Atjeh : Gajolanden, 400 to 500 m, 25-02-1937, van Steenis 9299 (Leiden).

*Earlier records* : WESTERN SUMATRA : Lankat.

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