

Kwan Koriba

KWAN KORIBA was born at Aomori, in the north of Honshu, in the year 1882. As a boy he was educated in the Middle School of the neighbouring city of Hirosaki, to which he finally returned in 1954, and where he died, suddenly, on 15th December, 1957.

Koriba received his higher education at the University of Tokyo, where he graduated in 1907, taking his doctor's degree five years later. He was Professor at the University of Tohoku from 1915 to 1920, and then at the University of Kyoto. In 1942, at the age of 60, he retired from the latter post, and was appointed Director of the Botanic Gardens, Singapore, under the Japanese military administration. Returning to Japan early in 1946, he lived in retirement, continuing his botanical studies, until 1954, when he was requested to undertake the office of President of the University, in which office he continued until his death.

From his youth Koriba was interested in field botany, and in observing the behaviour of plants in nature; on such subjects he published several papers. He travelled extensively at various times, to Europe, North and South America, and nearer home to Micronesia and Java, taking the opportunities of such travel to widen his acquaintance with plant life. While at Tokyo, he began to devote himself to the study of environmental factors and their effects on plants, and in this utilized his considerable knowledge of physics; this work involved extensive research on transpiration and evaporation. He continued his interest in the relation of plant-behaviour to climate in Singapore, where he made records of the periodicity of growth and leaf-change in many kinds of trees. A summary of these observations has recently been published in Vol. 17 (1) of the *Gardens Bulletin*.

During his period of retirement from administrative duties, in 1946-54, he published two books, one on the forms of plants in relation to organization and function, and one on plant physiology and ecology. He planned a further book on the evolution of plants.

At Singapore he was given the rank of Brigadier-general, but wore the uniform of that rank only on ceremonial occasions. He devoted himself to his administrative duties and to his botanical studies. He was dependent on the military organization for funds and supplies of all kinds, and took every opportunity of securing such amenities as were possible for the gardens staff. On several occasions he took energetic action to prevent encroachment on the

Nature Reserves of Singapore, in which he took great interest. He was also greatly concerned that the herbarium and library at the Gardens should be maintained intact. To his single-minded devotion to botanical science the Singapore Botanic Gardens owes much.

He was a man that commanded respect by his simplicity of life and unfailing devotion to his duty, by his very broad scientific outlook, and also by his sympathetic understanding of human nature, an understanding that transcended racial boundaries, even in time of war and of privation. *R.E.H.*