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A NEW GUINEA CINNAMON USED AS A CONTRACEPTIVE

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In 1966 an expedition worked in W. Irian to find the sources of vegetal medicaments for practising contraception.

Dr. W. Soengeng Reksodihardjo and myself were assigned to locate the plants and to bring the material together. The field testing (vaginal smears of injected white mice) was carried out by Dr. R. C. Barnett, whereas the Office of General Hartono of the Indonesian Army provided transportation.

As missionaries were interested in the problem too, we received much help from that side.

It proved not too easy to find out, what vegetable products were used in W. Irian, as these are kept a secret by the women.

Most material said to have the desirable properties, proved to be inactive on mice. One bark, that gave some positive results, was collected by us on the slopes surrounding the Baliem valley. The local tribe informed us that the bark (chewed) was used as a disinfectant when a woman had to chop one of her fingers off, when one of her children died (a custom still practised). Furthermore a decoction of the bark, which has a strong spicy odour of cloves and nutmeg is used against coughs, stomach ache etc. For us the interesting information was, that it was used also as a contraceptive, and well-known under the local name "Kami".

In order to draw attention to this plant, I describe it here.

Cinnamomum kami Kosterm., *spec. nov.* — Fig. 30

Arbor in omnibus partibus inflorescentiis exceptis glabris Tamulis angulatis foliis oppositis rigide coriaceis ovato-ellipticis acuminatis basi cuneatis utrinque laevis nerviis tres supra filiformis prominulis, subtus prominentibus nerviis secundariis obscuris petioles concavis inflorescentiis brevis apicem versus minutissime pilosis vix ramosis fructus immaturus globoso-ellipsoideus cupula parva margine subintegra.

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Typus: Kostermans & Reksodihardjo 790 (BO).

Tree 12 m, diam. 20 cm; bark brown, fissured, peeling off in narrow strips, 2 mm thick, inside smooth; living bark 10 mm thick, orange-brown with pungent clove and nutmeg smell, slimy. Branchlets quadrangular, glabrous; end bud glabrous. Leaves glabrous, opposite, very rigidly coriaceous, ovate-elliptical, 2 X 5.5 (or less) — 4 x 9 cm, shortly acuminate, base shortly cuneate; both surfaces smooth, midrib and the 2 subbasal lateral nerves (which run out at 1 — 1.5 cm below the acumen) slender, prominulous on the upper surface, prominent on the lower one, where the faint, horizontal secondary nerves connect them. Petiole up to 1 cm long, concave above.

Infructescences axillary, up to 1.5 cm long, hardly, very shortly branched, with 1-3 fruit, minutely pilose at the apex. Fruit very shortly stalked; cup semi-globose, up to 4 mm diam, 3 mm high, ribbed, the margin entire; immature fruit subglobose-ellipsoid.

W. Irian, Baliem valley, Wellesey near Wamena, alt. 2500 m, Aug., young fr., *Kostermans & Reksodihardjo 790* (BO, K, L, US), local name "Kami"; Territory of New Guinea, Sirunki, W. Highlands, ridge of Andyuku, alt. 3200 m, *Walker ANU 745* (LAE), tree 20 m, diam. 13 cm.

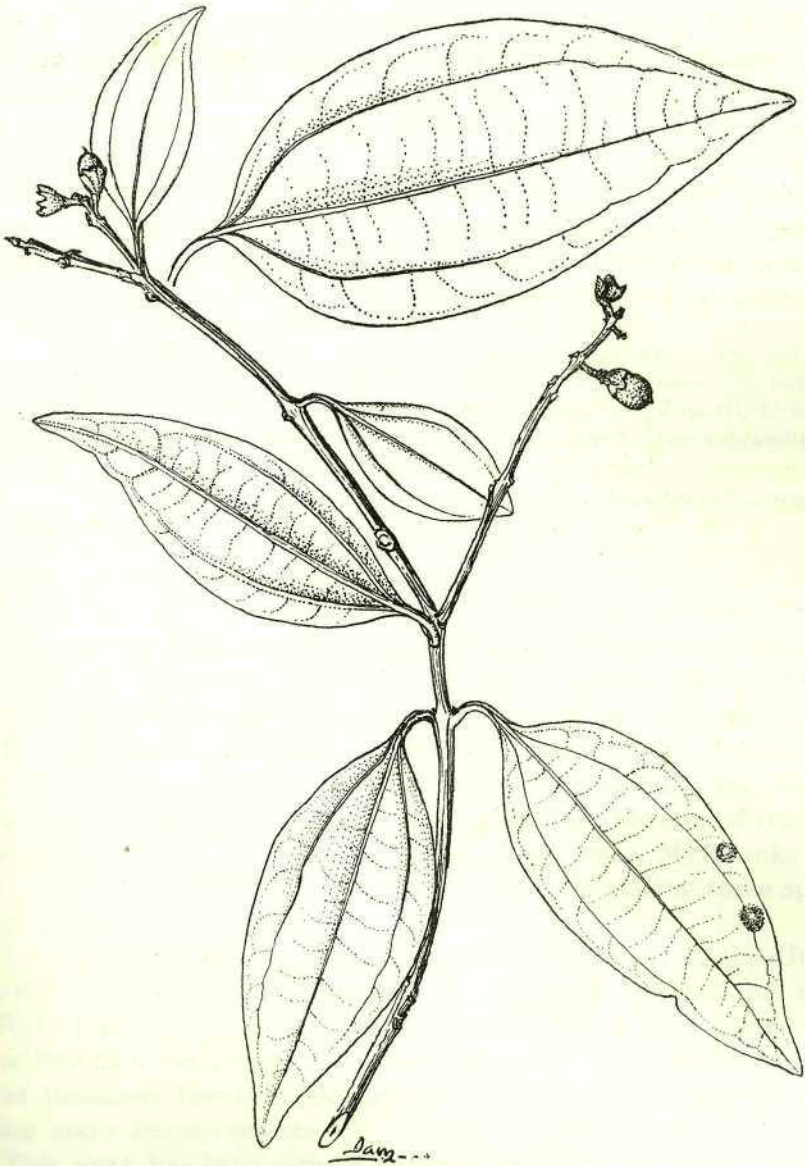


Fig. 30 — *Cinnamomum kami* Kosterm. — *Holo-typus*

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