

Discovering Flora in Laos

Floristic and vegetation studies in Lao PDR (Lao People's Democratic Republic) are important for understanding the plant geography of the Indochina peninsula. However, such studies have been rather rare.

Based on entries in the checklist of the vascular plants of Laos, a team led by ZHU Hua from the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG), CAS has completed an updated list of native seed plants in the country. The scientists analyzed the floristic patterns and geographical elements, and examined their floristic affinity to neighboring countries. They also discussed biogeography of the Indochina peninsula.

They presented a revised list of native seed plants which comprises 5,005 species in 1,373 genera and 188 families. Geographical elements show that the families with tropical distribution contribute to 62.23% of the total sum of the flora, including flora with pantropical distribution (42.02%).

The genera with a tropical distribution contribute by 82.30%, in which the genera of tropical Asia account for 30.08%. This result means that the flora of Lao PDR is tropical in nature and has a conspicuously tropical Asian affinity.

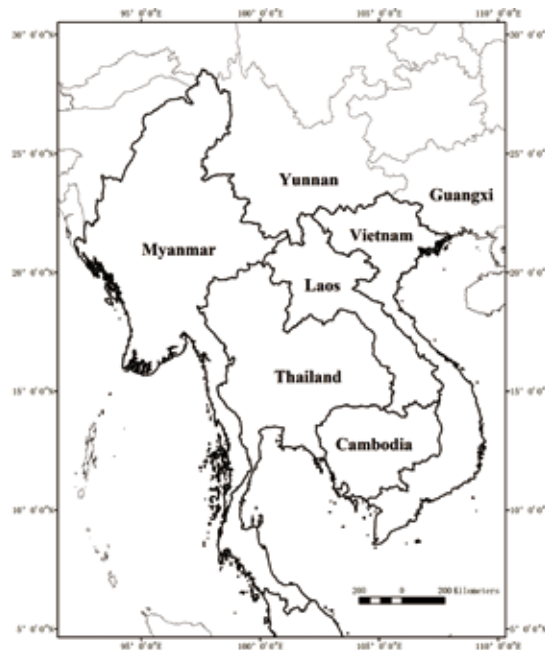
They also found that the flora of Laos has similar floristic composition and geographical elements to its neighboring countries from the Indochina peninsula, and belongs to the same bio-geographical unit.

Compared with other Indochinese countries, the flora of Laos has the highest similarity with the flora of Vietnam (92.13% at the generic level and 61.19% at the specific level), followed by Myanmar at the generic level and Thailand at the specific level.

Their paper has been published in *PLoS ONE*.



Dok Champa, or the frangipani, the national flower of Laos.



Geographical location of Lao PDR and neighboring countries.