



15th September 2022

To the IAPT Biodiversity Challenge Review Committee:

I am pleased to recommend Dr. Siti Fatimah Binti Md Isa for an IAPT Biodiversity Challenge Award. Siti has been an excellent Acanthaceae collaborator and fellow colleague of mine for over 10 years. Here I discuss both the work that she has accomplished as well as her potential for future achievement in the field of Plant Sciences.

I have always been impressed with Siti's overall drive, ability to work collaboratively and independently, and her commitment to research. In the past, Siti and I worked on various research projects in Acanthaceae at California Botanic Garden (formerly Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden). As a Research Assistant at the Garden, she quickly absorbed taxonomic knowledge in the plant family and took the lead in gathering data for several research projects in Ruellieae under the guidance of Dr. Erin Tripp. Siti is very skilled in methods in plant anatomy and morphology – while at the Garden she quickly gained expertise in thin sectioning / microtomy, tissue staining, and scanning electron microscopy. She even participated in graduate course work at the Garden including Phylogenetic Discussion Group and Plant Anatomy and Morphology. Siti is also proficient in applications in the molecular lab. As a Research Assistant she extracted DNA and sequenced 100s of taxa in the tribe Ruellieae. Overall, the results of her hard work contributed to three important publications for the family, all of which she co-authored with Dr. Erin Tripp. One of these publications is notable as it is the only account of wide hybridization in Acanthaceae. Importantly her work has contributed to our current understanding of the systematics and classification of the pantropical tribe Ruellieae.

I truly enjoyed working with Siti at the Garden as she is an excellent colleague and collaborator. It was bittersweet to see her leave our lab group but we knew that she was destined for greater things. After working for a few years in Malaysia she attended graduate school and received a Masters and a Ph.D. at the University of Putra Malaysia. During that time, she had worked on other plant systems including orchids and *Eusideroxylon* while expanding her expertise in plant systematics and conservation. Siti is now a Senior Lecturer at the University of Malaysia Sabah and I am thrilled that she is turning her research focus back to Acanthaceae. Although Malaysia is known for its rich species diversity across many plant groups, our current taxonomic and phylogenetic knowledge of Acanthaceae from Malaysia is surprisingly depauperate. Siti plans to concentrate her research efforts on the Acanthaceae of Maliau Basin – a botanical blackhole for the group. This exciting work will contribute to several important studies including the Flora of Malesiana Project and it will contribute to future collaborations with our Acanthaceae Working Group. This work will not only advance our current



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understanding of species diversity in Malaysia, it will also inform important conservation decisions for the group and it will have a high likelihood of uncovering new undescribed taxa.

When considering her exceptional qualities and achievements, and her commitment to research, I strongly recommend Dr. Siti Fatimah Binti Md Isa for IAPT support. I have the utmost confidence that she will continue to excel in her research and in her professional life. I hope that you will look favorably on her proposal.

Sincerely,

Carrie A. Kiel, Ph.D.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie A. Kiel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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