

1. LIFE AND ACTIVITIES OF DR. MING-JOU LAI

Ming-Jou Lai (1949–2007), bryologist, lichenologist, ornamental horticulturist and generous benefactor

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Received Dec. 11, 2009, accepted Jan. 21, 2010

Koponen, T. 2010: Ming-Jou Lai (1949–2007), bryologist, lichenologist, ornamental horticulturist and generous benefactor. — In: Koponen, T., Piippo, S. & Reinikka, E. (eds.), Dr. Ming-Jou Lai Memorial Volume. — *Acta Bryolichenologica Asiatica* 3: xx-xx.

Dr. Ming-Jou Lai was a many-sided botanist, developer of methods in landscape gardening and a generous benefactor. He was educated to be a vascular plant taxonomist but soon changed to the taxonomy of bryophytes and lichens. He also became a specialist in garden design and construction and he developed new methods for cultivating bryophytes on a large scale. He invented a method to transform wasted textile material into a soil substitute which could be used in cultivation of decorative plants and vegetables. His business enterprises were profitable and allowed him to fund many botanical projects, especially in mainland China. The donations of fund were done through the Finnish-Chinese Botanical Foundation established by him. One of the purposes of the foundation was to finance the visits of young Chinese botanists to the University of Helsinki. The foundation was officially registered in Finland in 1998, and is still active. By establishing the journal “*Acta Bryolichenologica Asiatica*” he offered a possibility to publish short scientific notes and brief articles on Asiatic bryophytes and lichens. Unfortunately, only two volumes of the journal have been issued.

Since Lai’s life and scientific career often had dealings with me both as a scientist and as a teacher, I base this biography on our personal contacts, correspondence and on documents he sent to me.

Key words: Finnish-Chinese Botanical Foundation, Ming-Jou Lai, obituary