

Dietrich Brandis

Sir Dietrich Brandis, KCIE, FRS (31 March 1824 – 28 May 1907, Bonn) was a German-British botanist and forestry academic and administrator, who worked with the British Imperial Forestry Service in colonial India for nearly 30 years. He joined the British civil service in Burma in 1856, shortly after became head of the British forestry administration in all of Burma, and served as Inspector General of Forests in India from 1864 to 1883. He returned to Europe in 1883, dividing his time between Bonn and Greater London. In retirement he dedicated himself to scholarly work, resulting in his monumental book *Indian Trees* (1906). He is considered the father of tropical forestry and has also been described as the father of scientific forestry. In addition to his work in India, he also had a significant influence on forest management in the United States.

**Sir
Dietrich Brandis**
KCIE, FRS



Born	31 March 1824 Bonn
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Died	29 May 1907 (aged 83) Bonn
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Nationality	German
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Scientific career

Author abbrev. (botany)	Brandis
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Early life, education and family

A member of the patrician Brandis family, Dietrich Brandis was born in Bonn, and was the son of the prominent philosopher Christian August Brandis, who was tutor to the young King Otho of Greece and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bonn. His grandfather Joachim Dietrich Brandis was personal physician to Queen Marie of Denmark and Norway and a member of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters

He studied at the universities of Copenhagen, Göttingen and Bonn. In 1849 he took up a post of a lecturer in botany at Bonn. His interest in forest management was initially from a botanical perspective.

In 1854, he married Rachel Marshman, a daughter of the Indian scholar and missionary Joshua Marshman and a sister of the wife of General Havelock. His brother-in-law Havelock was a friend of Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, and it was this connection that brought him to Burma and eventually India.^[1] His wife died in India in 1862, and during a two-year sabbatical in Europe 1865–1867 he met and married Katharina Hasse, eighteen years his junior. She moved to India with him and the couple had six children, some of whom did not reach adulthood.^{[2][3]}

Dietrich Brandis was the father of supreme court justice [Bernhard Brandis](#) and the grandfather of the microbiologist [Henning Brandis](#).

Forestry administrator in India

The British government in India was interested in the use of [forest produce](#). The felling of trees was unregulated, and between 1847 and 1850 The British government realized that the forests in India were being lost. In 1850, the [British Association](#) in Edinburgh formed a committee to study forest destruction at the behest of [Dr. Hugh Cleghorn](#). In 1855, [Lord Dalhousie](#), the [Governor-General of India](#) issued a Memorandum of the Government of India dated 3-8-1855. This was based on reports submitted by John McClelland, then Superintendent of Forests in [Burma](#) (then part of the Indian Empire). This was a time when the need for forest management was felt.

Burma

Brandis joined the British civil service in 1856 as superintendent of the teak forests of [Pegu](#) division in eastern [Burma](#). In 1858 he became head of the imperial forest administration of all [British Burma](#).

During that time Burma's [teak](#) forests were controlled by militant [Karen](#) tribals. He introduced the "taungya" system (King KFS (1968). "Agro-silviculture (the taungya system)". University of Ibadan / Dept. of Forestry, Bulletin no. 1, 109pp.), in which Karen villagers provided labour for clearing, planting and weeding teak plantations. In return they were allowed to plant crops for the first few years between the trees. As the teak trees grew, villagers were moved to new land and the process was repeated. As a result of this process, many villagers became dependent on the state forestry service and local resistance to the state takeover of forests became increasingly difficult.

Brandis was initially interested in botany. His herbarium and botanical library which he shipped from Calcutta to Rangoon were lost when the boat carrying it capsized. This loss led him to shift his focus from botanical studies to forestry

Brandis' work included determination of teak volume, rate of growth, identifying rate of harvest, developing forest protection plans against pests and fire. He also introduced timber purchase rules, clearing rules and the establishment of managed teak areas called *conservancies* with officers who were appointed as *Conservators*.

Contribution to forestry management in India

In 1864 Brandis became Inspector General of Forests in India, a position he served in for 20 years. He formulated new forest legislation and helped establish research and training institutions. The [Imperial Forest School](#) at [Dehradun](#) was founded by him. Brandis was created a Companion of the Indian Empire in 1878. He became a Knight Commander of the same order in 1887. He helped formulate the Indian Forest Act of 1865. Brandis documented the [sacred groves](#) in Rajputana and *Kans* (woodlands) of [Mysore](#), the Garo and Khasia hills which he visited in 1879, the [Devarakadus](#) of [Coorg](#) in 1868, and the hill ranges of the Salem district in the Madras Presidency in 1882, the *Swami Shola* on the [Yelagiris](#), the sacred grove at Pudur on the [Javadis](#) and several sacred forests on the [Shevaroy](#)s. He was among the earliest in India to formally link forest protection with local peoples.

He also took an interest in the forest flora of northwest and central India and Indian trees. Even after retirement Brandis continued to work on Indian forestry and at the age of 75 he started his principal botanical work, *Indian Trees*, dealing with 4400 species. It was first published in 1906 and re-issued several times afterwards, the last time in 1971. He was posted at [Balaghat](#) in M.P. as a principal of forester training institute for a long time in his service period.

He introduced scientific forestry in which some trees of given area are cut and timber was planted.

Retirement

After his retirement from the position as Inspector General of Forests in India in 1883, he returned to Bonn, but frequently visited England in the following years. From 1900 until 1906 he lived permanently in Kew in Greater London. Shortly after returning to Bonn in late 1906, he was hospitalized and died few months later on 28 May 1907 finally

In retirement, he dedicated much of his time to academic activities, notably resulting in his monumental book, *Indian Trees* (1906). He also supervised training of forestry students at the Royal Indian Engineering College in England for eight years (1888–1896). His interest in American affairs led him to take special care of American foresters visiting Europe, for which he received a personal letter of thanks by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1904.^[4]

Broader influence

Brandis was also involved in forestry education in England at Coopers' Hill. He also influenced and mentored many like Berthold Ribbentrop, W. Schlich and C.A. Schenck of Germany (while a visiting professor at the University of Giessen), and Gifford Pinchot and Henry Graves (the first and second chiefs of the USDA Forest Service) of the United States.

He influenced the forestry movement in the United States by mentoring Pinchot, Graves, and others who came to study with him in Germany, and through his voluminous correspondence with many other men such as Charles Sprague Sargent and Franklin Hough involved in establishing the U.S. national forest system. Pinchot relied heavily upon Brandis' advice for introducing professional forest management in the U.S. and on how to structure the Forest Service when Pinchot established it in 1905. His influence was so great that President Roosevelt, sent him a photograph in 1896 with the inscription

To Sir Dietrich Brandis, in high appreciation of his services to forestry in the United States. From Theodore Roosevelt.^[6]



Dalbergia sissoo from "Illustrations of the Forest Flora of North-West and Central India"

Honours

- Honorary member of the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society 1874
- Fellow of the Royal Society 1875
- Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire 1878
- Knight Commander of the Order of the Indian Empire 1887
- The honorary title Professor awarded by the Prussian Minister for Agriculture and Forestry 1893
- Doctor honoris causa of law University of Edinburgh 1898
- Honorary member of the Society of American Foresters 1904

Legacy

Many species of plants are named after him:

- *Dendrocalamus brandisii* (Munro) Kurz
- *Diospyros brandisiana* Kurz
- *Ochlandra brandisii* Gamble
- *Macaranga brandisii* King
- *Millettia brandisiana* Kurz
- *Orophea brandisii* Hook.f. & Thomson
- *Quercus brandisiana* Kurz
- *Ardisia brandisiana* Kurz
- *Iodes brandisii* Kurz

- *Ixora brandisiana* Kurz
- *Loranthus brandisanus* Kurz
- The genus *Brandisia* Hook.f. & Thomson is also named after him.

Notes

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2.  Prain, David (1912). 'Brandis, Dietrich'. In Lee, Sidney. *Dictionary of National Biography 1912 supplement* London: Smith, Elder & Co
3. "Obituary Notices of Fellows deceased. Sir Dietrich Brandis, 1824-1907 (<https://archive.org/stream/philtrans03206745/03206745#page/n1/mode/2up>) *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* **80**: iii–vi. 1908.
4. R.P. Sharma, *The Indian Forester*, vol. 112, 1986
5. Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences, Volume 80, page V paragraph IV
6. IPNI. *Brandis* (http://www.ipni.org/ipni/advAuthorSearch.do?find_abbreviation=Brandis)

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External links

- [Scanned plates from the Indian forest flora of Dietrich Brandis](#)
- Jan Oosthoek, [The colonial origins of scientific forestry in Britain](#)
- <http://www.ifs.nic.in>

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