Breeding and Inheritance Studies on Cowpea, 
Vigna Sinensis

R. S. Roy and R. H. Richharia

The cowpea is a warm season crop throughout the world. It is said to be a native of South Africa. Its varied uses as forage, green manure, and human food have increased its importance everywhere. It can be grown even in poor soils. In the East it is known as vegetable meat because of its high protein content. Aiyar (1) has reported the protein content to be 24.6%.

Cowpea, locally known as "Bodi," "Bora," and "Barbati" is cultivated in the province of Bihar, India, as a garden and field crop during the period between June and November. The evolution of an early-maturing variety with desirable economic characters, not found in any of the strains evolved so far in Bihar, has been an important economic problem. Hybridization work, therefore, was carried out at the Agricultural Research Institute at Sabour, Bihar, India, to develop an ideal cowpea strain that would combine the desirable characters from two established varieties, viz., T2, early-maturing and long-podded, and T3 late-maturing and short-podded. Thus, the main purpose of the experiment was to develop an early-maturing cowpea with long and tender fruits bearing closely spaced seeds, preferably with a red seedcoat.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hedrick (10) states that there are 60 species of Vigna known. Vigna forms a connecting link between Dolichos and Phaseolus. It differs from the former in having a lateral rather than a terminal stigma and from the latter in having a curved rather than twisted or coiled keel. The important cultivated species is the cowpea, with its various forms, the catjang, and the asparagus bean. They are differentiated as follows:

1. Vigna sinensis Savi ex Hassk—cowpea—pods 8-30 cm long and pendent.
2. Vigna sinensis subsp Cylindrica Vas Es—catjang—pods 8-30 cm long, erect or somewhat deflexed
3. Vigna sinensis subsp Sesquipedalis Vas Es—asparagus bean—pods 30-90 cm long, fleshy, becoming flabby and inflated

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Formerly Senior Research Assistant at the Botanical Experiment Station, Agricultural Research Institute, Sabour, Bihar, India, now Graduate Student, College of Agriculture, Davis, Calif., and Economic Botanist to the Government of Bihar, respectively.

Numbers in parenthesis refer to "Literature Cited," p. 489.