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Correspondence

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The taxonomic identity of *Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica* (Leguminosae: Caesalpinioideae)

SUBIR BANDYOPADHYAY*,[1]
[1]*Botanical Survey of India, Central National Herbarium, Howrah 711103, West Bengal, India.*
**E-mail: subirbandyopadhyay@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Bauhinia bassacensis var. *nicobarica* has been treated here as a synonym of *Phanera bassacensis.*

Key Words: *Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica*, new synonym, *Phanera bassacensis*

Introduction

Tiwari *et al.* (2013) described a new variety *Bauhinia bassacensis* var. *nicobarica* Tiwari *et al.* (2013: 13) from Great Nicobar Island and stated in the protologue that it differs from the typical variety of *B. bassacensis* Pierre ex Gagnepain (1912: 168) in having exstipulate leaves, lobes of the leaves obtuse at apex, bracts ovate and rusty-tomentose, bracteoles 2, lanceolate, rusty-tomentose, fertile stamens always 2, filaments hairy, anther-lobes brown.

The genus *Bauhinia* always has stipules (Wunderlin *et al.* 1987). However, the stipules may be deciduous or persistent. In the new variety described by Tiwari *et al.* (2013) the stipules are likely to be deciduous. Supee Saksuwan Larsen in 1977 determined the two specimens at P (00798474 and 00798475) to be of *B. bassacensis* var. *bassacensis,* which have leaves with perfectly obtuse lobes at apex. The bracteoles are 2 in var. *bassacensis* too. They are similar in shape to those found in var. *bassacensis* and rusty-tomentose. Tiwari *et al.* (2013) stated in table 1 that filaments of var. *bassacensis* are glabrous based on Larsen & Larsen (1996) but those authors in the key to the varieties of *B. bassacensis* and in the morphological description of var. *bassacensis* as well, stated the fertile stamens/filaments are pubescent. Tiwari *et al.* (2013) overlooked the excellent publication of de Wit (1956) where he too stated that fertile stamens of the typical variety are (densely) rusty-pubescent to sparsely woolly-pubescent.

The stated difference in the number of stamens does not hold good because in var. *bassacensis* the number of fertile stamens is 2, rarely 3. Larsen & Larsen (1984) stated that var. *bassacensis* is a polymorphic taxon and the size of the bracts varies considerably and I have found that like the bracteoles the bracts are also rusty-tomentose. I, however, could not find any reliable record of the colour of the anthers in *B. bassacensis* but in my opinion even if the colour difference exists, it does not alone, warrant the recognition of any separate taxonomic entity. Hence I am treating here *B. bassacensis* var. *nicobarica* as a new synonym of *Phanera bassacensis* (Pierre ex Gagnepain) de Wit (1956: 472) following recent phylogenetic studies based on DNA sequence data (Lewis & Forest 2005; Sinou *et al*. 2009) that suggest that *Bauhinia* subgen. *Phanera* (Wunderlin *et al*. 1987) should be recognised as a genus distinct from *Bauhinia*.

Phanera bassacensis (Pierre ex Gagnepain) de Wit (1956: 472).

Bauhinia bassacensis Pierre ex Gagnepain (1912: 168).

Type:—*Harmand* 1540 (lectotype P, *n.v.*). Gagnepain (1912) in the protologue of *B. bassacensis* cited 'Laos: Attopeu, mars 1877, n° 1540 [*Harmand*]. Cochin-chine: Phu-quoc, janvier 1874, n° 1399 [*Pierre*]' after the morphological description. de Wit (1956) cited *Harmand* 1540 at P as the lectotype. Whereas, Larsen & Larsen (1996) cited *Harmand* 1240 at P as the holotype but it was not cited in the protologue of *B. bassacensis.* I have seen a Harmand's collection having the field number 1240 at P (00798474, image!) with

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the same locality and date of collection as given in the protologue. The other collections of *Harmand* 1240 at P (00798475 image!) and K (000760864 image!) have been collected from Attopeu in 2/77.

B. bassacensis Pierre ex Gagnep. var. *nicobarica* Tiwari *et al.* (2013: 13), syn. nov.

Type:— INDIA. Andaman & Nicobar Islands: Great Nicobar Island, Campbell Bay, 20.2.2013, 16 m, *K. Ravikumar, N. Balachandran & Umeshkumar Tiwari 115533* (holotype FRLH image!; isotypes FRLH image!, PBL).

Prior to the publication of Tiwari *et al.* (2013) this species was known to occur in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Malay Peninsula (Larsen & Larsen 1996). In var. *bassacensis* all the petals were known to be greenish yellow or two of them with purple blotch at tip whereas in var. *backeri* de Wit (1956: 473) to be greenish yellow with purple veins and two or all of them with purple blotch at tip. In the present collection of var. *nicobarica*, Tiwari *et al.* (2013) stated the petals to be creamish with purple-red veins. From the image of the flower given in the protologue the petals appear to me as light yellow with purple veins. There is no purple blotch at tip in any of the petals. Thus not much difference in the colour of the petals exists between the said varieties. The herbarium specimens of var. *bassacensis* can easily be separated from var. *backeri* by the length and pubescence of the filaments and colour of the flower buds (Larsen & Larsen 1996). Larsen & Larsen (1996) recorded the filaments in the former variety to be 1.5–2 cm long and pubescent whereas in the latter variety the filaments were found to be 2.5–3.5 cm long and glabrous or sparsely hairy at base. Further the buds in the former variety are brownish pubescent whereas in the latter variety greyish pubescent.

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