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HABENARIA RHODOCHEILA HANCE- A NEW RECORD TO INDIA FROM MIZORAM

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Abstract

Habenaria rhodocheila Hance, a new record to India is described and illustrated from Mizoram.

Introduction

THE GENUS *Habenaria* Wild. (Orchidaceae) commonly called as a group of bog orchids comprises 600-800 species spread in all the continents except Antarctica (Seidenfaden, 1977). In India, it has 73 species (Singh *et al*., 1990) 26 of which met with in North East India. Five species, *Habenaria dentata* (Sw.) Schltr., *H. furcifera* Lindl., *H. khasiana* Hk.f., *H. malliefera* Hk.f., *H.stenopetala* Lindl. are reported from Mizoram (Chowdhery, 2009).

During the month of November (2007), many orchids were collected for research purposes study from Thingsai forest, Lungley district, Mizoram by the first two authors. One of the species collected in vegetative condition was very interesting resembling the Jewel orchids. Out of curiosity, the species was grown in orchid house (Mizoram University) where it flowered in July, 2008. With critical observations and literature studies (Seidenfaden, 1977, 1992), it was identified as *Habenaria rhodocheila* Hance. Though reported earlier from Thailand, Malaya, China, Philippines, the species was unrecorded from India (Chowdhery, 2009; Fischer, 1938; Rao, 2007; Singh *et al.*, 1990, 2001). The present report thus represents its first record in India from Mizoram. A detailed description, illustrations Figs. 1(a-c), 2(a-g), and relevant notes are given here to facilitate its identification in the field.

Species Description

Habenaria rhodocheila Hance. Ann. Sci. nat.5.s.5:243, 1866; Rolfe. in Orch. Rev. 3:242.1895; Hook.f.,in Bot. Mag. 123:T.7571.1897: Seidenf. in Bull. Mus. Paris 3. s. 71, Bot.5:133.1973; Dansk Bot. Tidsskr. 71:134; Op. Bot. 114:69.1992. *Habenaria pusilla* Rchb.f., Otia Hamb. 2: 33, 1878.

Habit terrestrial, erect. *Roots* bulbous fleshy. *Stem* 18 - 25 cm long. *Leaves* 2-4, oblong, acuminate, olive green with darker fine networks, mid vein distinct, margin

Fig.1 a-c. *Habenaria rhodocheila:* a, Red flower type; b, Pink flower type; c, Infloresence (close up).

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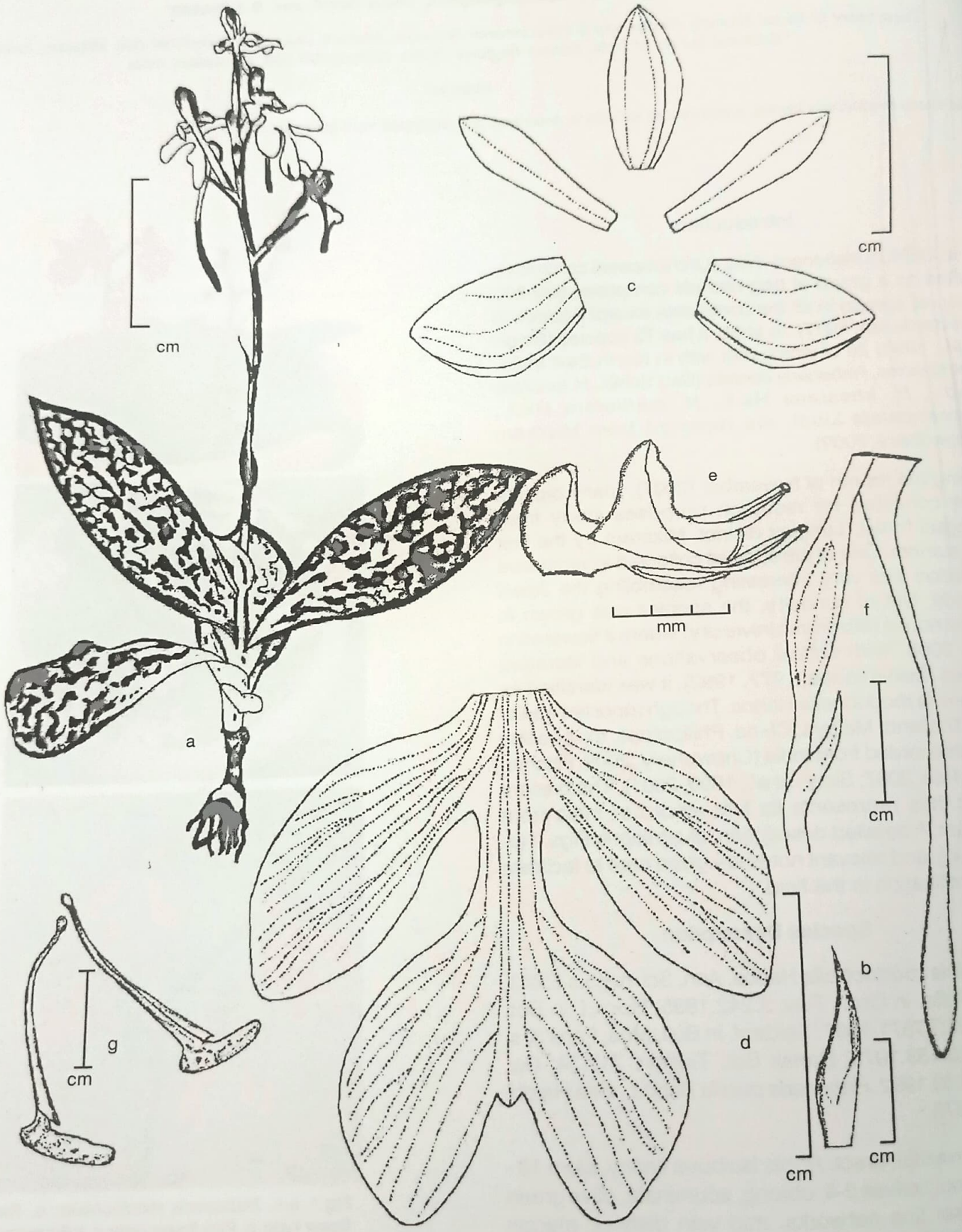

Fig. 2.a-g. *Habenaria rhodocheila* Hance. a, Habit; b, Floral bract; c, Floral parts; d, Lip front view; e, Column; f, Ovary pedicel & column foot g, Caudicles with pollinia.

reddish brown, 4-9 × 1.5-3 cm. *Inflorescence* 10-16 cm long, less dense, erect, usually 4-6 flowers, racemose. *Pedicel* and *ovary* 35 mm long. *Floral bracts* 20 - 22 × 4-6 mm, ovate acuminate. *Flowers* 15 - 25 mm across, pinkish-reddish. *Sepals* unequal, *dorsal sepal* 9 - 11 × 4 - 5.5 mm, concave, elliptic, obtuse, 3-veined; *lateral sepals* 9 - 10 × 5 - 5.5 mm, decurved, elliptic-lanceolate, obtuse, 3-4-veined; *petals* 10 × 2 mm, slender, sub-equal, slightly spathulate, linear-lanceolate sub-acute-acute, 1-veined. *Lip* 4-lobed,16-21 × 20 - 22 mm, 10-veined with branching nerves running from the base to the apices of lateral and mid-lobes; *lateral lobes* sub-equal, obtuse; *mid-lobe* sub-equal, bilobed with a small erect apex at the centre; *spur* 45-55 mm long, slender. *Column* 6 - 6.5 mm broad, with large protruding rostellum, reddish brown, staminodes slender triangular obtuse raising above anther channels, stigmatic processes short, fat. *Pollinia,* oblong, caudicles slender, long.

Flowering: July

Distribution: India, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaya, North to South China, and Philippines.

Note: *Habenaria rhodocheila* in the wild is rare and was found growing in subtropical forest in the ground below tall grasses along with other terrestrial species.

Specimen Examined: India: Mizoram, Lunglei District, Thingsai Forest, 1650 m alt., Saithantluangi Zote 0562 (MZU).

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