



Forgotten types of *Strobilanthes* (Acanthaceae) in The Central National Herbarium, Kolkata, India

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Abstract

This paper draws attention to the presence of neglected types of *Strobilanthes* (Acanthaceae) in the Central National Herbarium (CAL) in Kolkata, focussing on those described in the 19th century by Thomas Anderson and Sulpiz Kurz from China, India and Myanmar. Eleven species are typified and illustrated. Their synonymy and distribution are discussed. Attention is drawn to close similarities between *Strobilanthes elongata* C.B. Clarke, *S. neesii* Kurz and *S. spicata* T. Anderson with species described from China. The name *Strobilanthes anisophylla* (Hooker) T. Anderson is reinstated.

Key words: China, India, Kolkata herbarium (CAL), Myanmar, *Strobilanthes*, type specimens

Introduction

The Botanic Garden at Kolkata has a distinguished history going back to 1787, but its herbarium, now the Central National Herbarium, was slower to get off the ground, and in its early days had a decidedly chequered history. However, after William Griffith's premature death in 1845, his friend John McClelland saw to it that a set of his specimens was retained in Calcutta and this process continued throughout the 19th century, especially under Sir George King, and there were half a million specimens by 1890 (Desmond 1992). Specimens also started to arrive from herbaria such as Kew and Edinburgh, so that long overdue sets of Wight and Wallich specimens were received. In addition, collections from other territories in Asia found their way into the herbarium at Kolkata, including those of Hance and Forrest from China. There is, consequently, no question that it is the most important collection in South Asia and a glance at the impressive list of collectors represented at CAL in Index Herbariorum (<http://sciweb.nybg.org/science2/IndexHerbariorum.asp>) will only serve to emphasize its significance.

Although duplicates of collections from British India were generally sent to European herbaria, especially to Kew, this was not always the case. Collections by many 19th century botanists including William Griffith, Thomas Anderson, Charles Simons, J.W. Masters, Sulpiz Kurz, and George King are deposited at Kolkata but often not duplicated at Kew or other British herbaria. This pattern continued into the 20th century especially with collections by forest botanists from Myanmar. The neglect of these specimens deposited at CAL is well illustrated by the appendix provided by C.B. Clarke to his account of *Strobilanthes* in the Flora of British India (Clarke 1884: 476 - 477). Here he lists those species of *Strobilanthes* recorded from India which he had not seen or included in the main body of his account, totalling nine. None of these are represented at Kew and all have been neglected by botanists working on the Indian flora although six are represented in the Kolkata herbarium.