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Research

Primula subansirica G.D. Pal is not a *Primula* (Primulaceae), but rather belongs to Gesneriaceae

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Examination of type specimens has shown that *Primula subansirica* G.D. Pal is a Gesneriad and conspecific with *Beccarinda cordifolia* (Anthony) B.L. Burtt (Gesneriaceae), thus a reduction is made and a new synonymy is proposed.

Keywords: *Beccarinda*, *Primula*, synonymy

Introduction

In the course of revising the genus *Primula* L. for The Flora of Pan-Himalaya, scrutiny of the literature and examination of a number of specimens revealed that *P. subansirica* G.D. Pal is a species erroneously placed in the genus and the rather striking difference of indumentum and flower structure does not support the suggestion of some horticulturists to treat it as a subspecies of *P. erythra* Fletcher or as a synonym of *P. firmipes* Balf. f. & Forrest (Halda 1992, Richards 1993, 2002). Moreover, placement of this species in the section *Sikkimensis* Balf. f. of *Primula* is quite out of place and does not conform to the sectional characters.

Primula subansirica was described and illustrated in 1985 (Pal 1985), on the basis of a single collection of G.D. Pal 78219 (CAL, holotype) (Fig. 1) from Lower Subansiri district of the E. Himalayan region (26°55'–28°55'N, 92°40'–94°21'E). The protologue stated that it is morphologically close to *P. erythra*, but the illustration clearly showed the presence of multicellular hairs on the whole plant, which is not found in any species of *P.* sect. *Sikkimensis* including *P. erythra*. In addition, the corollas are parted near to the base, almost without a corolla-tube. It thus looks more like a species of *Androsace* L., rather than a *Primula*.

With these doubts in mind, we visited the Central Natural Herbarium, Botanical Survey of India (CAL), and by the courtesy of the Curator, we got the opportunity to examine the type specimen of *P. subansirica* and confirm that it is not a *Primula* at all. Moreover, several deviations between the original description and illustration on the one hand and the type specimen were noted, namely, the corolla being bilabiate rather than actinomorphic, stamens 4 rather than 5, and anthers coherent rather than free. Careful examination revealed that those key floral features of the plant, in combination of some other vegetative and floral characters, are all identical to those of *Beccarinda cordifolia* (Anthony) B.L. Burtt in



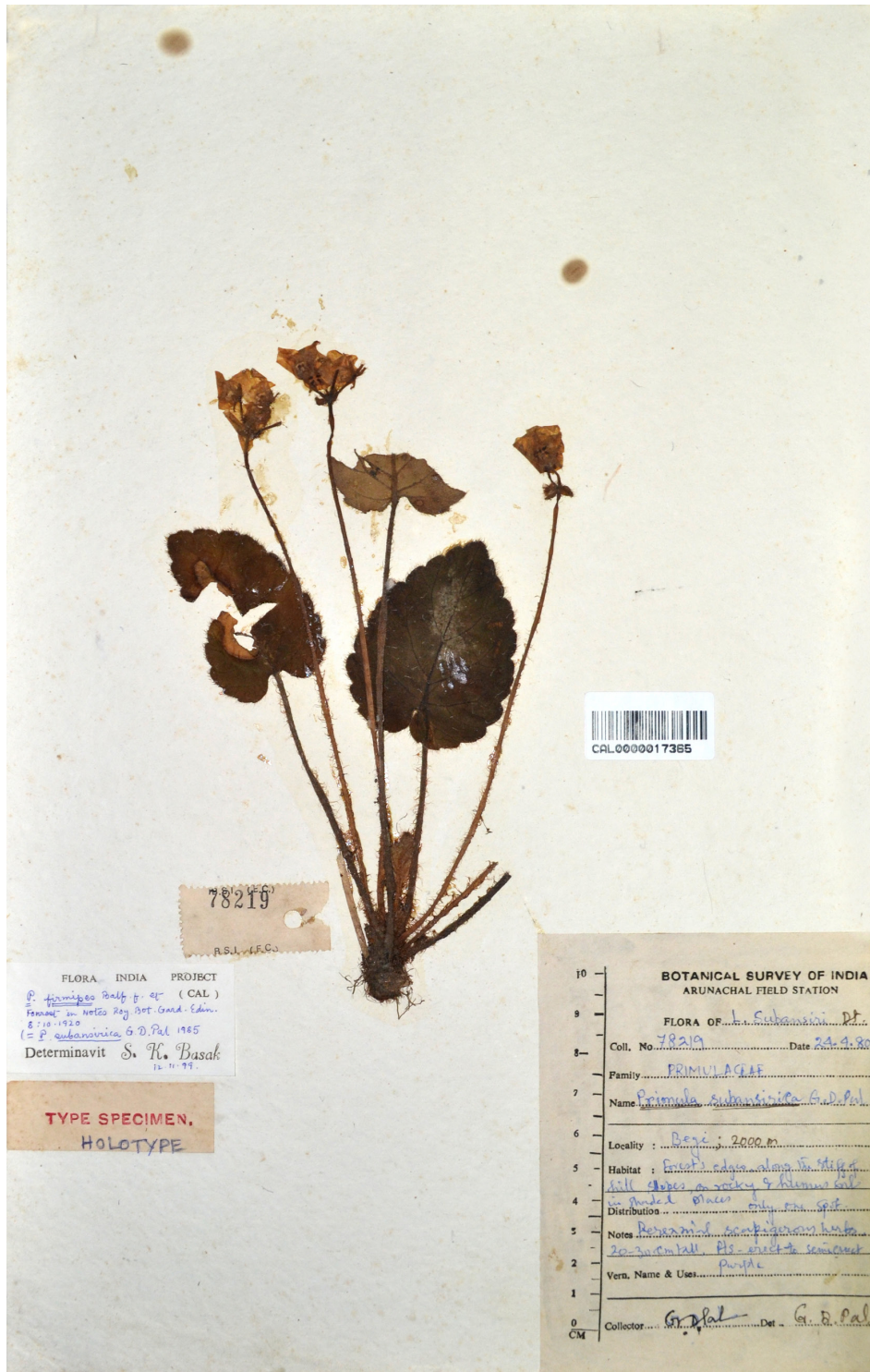


Figure 1. Holotype sheet of *P. subansirica* (G.D. Pal 78219, CAL barcode CAL0000017365).

Gesneriaceae (Fig. 2) (Anthony 1934, Burt 1955, Möller et al. 2017). The following reduction was thus made.

***Beccarinda cordifolia* (Anthony) B.L. Burt (1955, p. 63); M. Moller et al. Rheedea 27 (1): 29. 2017 (Fig. 2)**

Basionym: *Petrodosa cordifolia* J. Anthony (1934, p. 204).

Holotype

Upper Myanmar. North of Htawgaw, 2300–3000 m a.s.l., G. Forrest 24549 (E barcode E00096857).

Taxonomic synonyms

Primula subansirica G. D. Pal (1985, p. 617) syn. nov.; Richards (1993, p. 209) pro syn. sub *Primula firmipes*.



Figure 2. Holotype sheet of *Beccarinda cordifolia* (G. Forrest 24549, E barcode E00096857, <https://data.rbge.org.uk/search/herbarium/?specimen_num=119340&cfg=zoom.cfg&filename=E00096857.zip>).

Primula erythra Fletcher subsp. *subansirica* (G.D. Pal) Halda (1992, p. 179). *Primula firmipes* Balf. f. et Forrest subsp. *subansirica* (G.D. Pal) Basak et Maiti (2014, p. 365).

Holotype: East Himalaya, Subansiri district, Begi, 2000 m a.s.l., G.D. Pal 78219 (CAL barcode CAL0000017365) (Fig. 1).

Distribution

Myanmar: Htawgaw Bun 26°10'N, 98°25'E, 2100 m a.s.l.; Hills S.E. of Htawgaw, 26°N, 98°30'E, 1800–2010 m a.s.l.; Nam Tamai Valley 1800 m a.s.l.; east Himalaya: lower Subansiri district, Begi, 2000 m a.s.l.

Special mention should be made of the experienced collector R. Farrer (Anthony 1934), when he collected *Petrododoxa cordifolia*, he specially noted 'while still in light bud the plant is at once taken for a *Primula*', '...looking very Primuloid when out of flower' (Anthony 1934).

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