



Acranthera burmanica, a new species of Rubiaceae from Kachin State, Myanmar

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Acranthera burmanica, a new species of Rubiaceae from Kachin, Myanmar, is here described and illustrated. It is morphologically similar to *A. sinensis*, but can be easily distinguished from the latter by its stem and branches densely strigose throughout; ovate leaves; calyx distinctly shorter than corolla tube, lobes lanceolate, apex attenuate; stipules triangular, apex acute not cuspidate; lower part of filaments connate into a tube.

Keywords: *Acranthera*, biodiversity, Kachin, morphology, Myanmar, taxonomy

Acranthera Arn. ex Meisn. (1838:115) is distributed in India, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and consists of about 40 species of sparsely branched subshrubs (Bremekamp 1947; Govaerts *et al.* 2006; Chen *et al.* 2011). The flowers of *Acranthera* are unique within Rubiaceae and are characterized by the presence of united connective appendages, which in turn are united with the stigma by means of a columnar tissue (Puff *et al.* 1995). The position of *Acranthera* within Rubiaceae has always been controversial since its original description. Traditionally, the genus was placed in tribe Mussaendeae (Meisner, 1838; Hooker, 1873; Baillon, 1880; and Schumann, 1891) of subfamily Cinchonoideae, however, Bremekamp (1947) questioned this affinity in his monograph of the genus and considered the position of *Acranthera* unknown. He later classified *Acranthera* as a monogeneric tribe within Ixoroideae (Bremekamp 1966). Based on molecular data, Alejandro *et al.* (2005) placed *Acranthera* as sister to the rest of subfamily Rubioideae; Rydin *et al.*, (2009) included *Acranthera* in the tribe Coptosapelteae, strongly supported as sister to *Coptosapelta* (1851:112).

During November to December in 2014, a team from Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG) and Kunming Institute of Botany (KIB), in collaboration with the Forest Research Institute of Myanmar, conducted field work in northern Myanmar to survey plant diversity. During field work, specimens of *Acranthera* were found in Putao, Kachin state. Interestingly, the genus has never been reported from Myanmar before. Based on a detailed examination of the morphological and anatomical characters of our material and possible closely similar species (Bremekamp 1947; Govaerts *et al.* 2006; Chen *et al.* 2011), we arrived at conclusion that the specimens collected in Myanmar belong to a species new to science, which we hereby describe and illustrate.

Taxonomic treatment

Acranthera burmanica Y. H. Tan & B. Yang, *sp. nov.* (Figs. 1–2)

Type:—MYANMAR. Kachin State: Putao, Pananding. Understory shrubby herbs in tropical seasonal rain forests, 97° 51' 9.47" E, 27° 43' 28.99" N, alt. 1020 m, 30 Nov. 2014, *Myanmar Exped. 313* (holotype HITBC 155761; isotype KUN 1262575).

Diagnosis: *Acranthera burmanica* is similar to *A. sinensis* C. Y. Wu (1957:295), differing from the latter by its stem and branches densely strigose throughout (vs. glabrescent when aged); ovate to ovate-lanceolate leaves (vs. elliptic or obovate); calyx distinctly shorter than corolla tube (vs. equal to corolla tube), calyx lobes lanceolate (vs. linear-lanceolate), apex attenuate (vs. acuminate); stipules triangular, apex acute not cuspidate (vs. broadly ovate to triangular, glabrescent, cuspidate); lower part of filaments connate into a tube (vs. free).