

PLANTS NAMED IN HONOUR OF THE LATE
H.H. PRINCE DISAKUMARA
KROM PHRAYA DAMRONG RACHANUPHAP

by

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Much has been already written about this illustrious Prince; only the field of Natural History seems to have been neglected. This paper, being a late comer, will appropriately give an additional commendation to His Highness.

There appear in the botanical annals three plants named to commemorate the good deeds of the Prince by his contemporaries, i.e. *Polygonum damrongianum* HOSS. (1911); *Homalium damrongianum* CRAIB (1915) and *Damrongia purpureo-lineata* KERR (1918). Except *P. damrongianum*, which is later treated as a synonym of *P. chinense* LINN. by STEWARD (1930), the other two are valid taxa and will be forever cited by botanists to come.

As these species are known only from descriptions, they are for the first time illustrated in this article.

Dr. C.C. HOSSEUS in 1911 named a new species, collected by himself during his 1900-1901 trip in Thailand, in honour of the Prince, as *Polygonum damrongianum* (Polygonaceae), stating "für die so überaus huldvolle Unterstützung." This is a perennial herb with pink flowers and is found on the limestone formation of Doi Chiang Dao in Chiang Mai at 1400-2100 m altitude, later it was also recorded from Nam Pat, Uttaradit also a limestone bearing region (Fig. 1). The plant seems to prefer calcareous soil. In treating this species as a synonym of *P. chinense* LINN. STEWARD (op. cit) remarks "*P. damrongianum* HOSS. is characterised by the form of the leaf and the ochrea, the position of the inflorescence, and the bristle-like hairs of the pedicel." Unfortunately the type specimen is not available for a critical study but the collections, believed to belong to this species, in the Forest Herbarium (BKF) show a trailing habit and glandular bristle-like hairs, which characters are remarkably unlike *P. chinense* LINN.

In 1915, when the study of Thai botany was just progressing, the late Prof. W.G. CRAIB, presumably at the suggestion of the late Dr. A.F.G. KERR named a new species in honour of the Prince: *Homalium damrongianum* CRAIB (Samydaceae); this is a unique tree species, locally known as *Op*, *Takhian Phueak* or *Phikun Pa*. The name 'Phikun Pa' suggests the similarity of its flowers to the temple-grown Phikun (*Mimusops elengi* LINN.), a far cry from it both in the scent and its relations. This species also prefers calcareous soil, and is widely distributed in the country, outside its type locality, Pang Puai in Lampang. Recently the timber has been introduced into the market, as the shortage of hardwood becomes evident (Fig. 2).

Dr. A.F.G. KERR in 1918 named a new genus, *Damrongia* (Gesneriaceae) dedicated to the Prince, "who himself interested in scientific pursuits, has done so much for the advancement of education in his country." This monotypic genus is known only by *Damrongia purpureo-lineata* KERR, a species so far endemic to Thailand. The plant is known only from the type specimen (KERR 2196), collected at the gorge below Ban Kaw in Mae Ping rapids, about 195 m altitude. As the type locality is now partly submerged after the completion of the Phumiphon Dam, it is, therefore, worthwhile to search for this unique species in order to save it from extinction.

Unfortunately the type specimen is not in Bangkok therefore, illustration has to be by a photograph of the type collection (Pl. XIV), kindly supplied by the Director, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England, whose ready co-operation is herewith thankfully acknowledged.

To render a service to collectors, a rough translation of the Latin diagnosis is herewith appended.

"Stemless plant, on damp rocks in the jungle. Leaves rosulate, very variable in shape and form, generally obovate, elliptic-obovate, with obtuse tip, attenuate into a wedge-shaped base, 9 cm long, 5.8 cm broad, thin, upperpart with sparse, longish, white hairs, underpart paler and densely clothed along the midrib with short, brown hairs, margins subregularly serrate, except towards the base; leaf stalk 1 cm long. Scape one-to many-flowered, 3-5 cm long. Sepals 1 cm long, clothed with short, brown hairs; petals white with purple lines in the throat, corolla-tube 1 cm long, lobes 4-5 mm long. Capsule 5-7 mm long, enclosed by the persistent sepals.

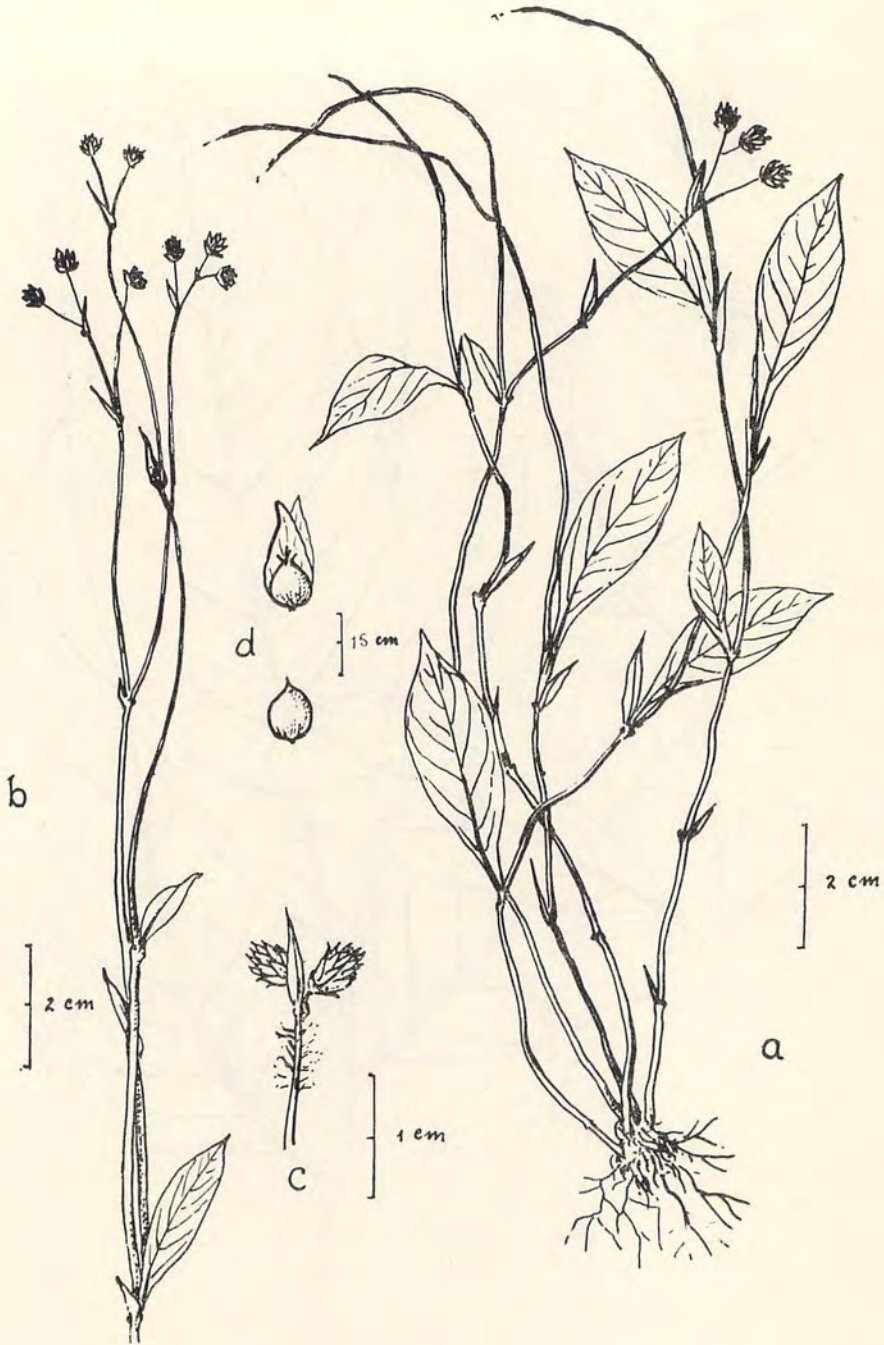


Fig. 1 *Polygonum damrongianum* Craib
a. Whole plant; b. Flowering part;
c. Inflorescence (Enlarged); d. Fruits (Enlarged).



Fig. 2 *Homalium damrongianum* Craib
a. Flowering twig; b. Flower (enlarged);
c. Stamen and ovary (enlarged).

REFERENCES

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