

NOTES ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE GENUS *LOPHATHERUM* (POACEAE) IN MIZORAM

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The genus *Lophatherum* Brongn. of the tribe Centothecae Ridley (Poaceae) is characterised by its sterile upper florets with retrorsely scaberulous awns (Bor, 1960; Clayton & Renvoize, 1986 and Shukla, 1996). The genus occurs in tropical and temperate Asia (Clayton & Renvoize, 1986; Clayton & al., 2006) and represented by two species viz. *L. gracile* Brongn. and *L. sinense* Rendle. Of these *L. gracile* is recorded in India (Mitra, 1958; Bor, 1960; Kartikeyan & al., 1989; Shukla, 1996) from Northeast and Southern (Kerala, Tamil Nadu) parts of the India.

During a field exploration of Murlen National Park, Champhai, Mizoram an interesting grass was collected. On critical study of the specimen and comparison with authentic specimens at ASSAM followed by the scrutiny of literature (Hooker, 1896; Bor, 1960; Clayton & Renvoize, 1986; Shukla, 1996), it was identified as *Lophatherum gracile* a species so far known from the Arunachal Pradesh (Chauhan & al., 1996), Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland in Northeast India (Shukla, 1996; Karthikeyan & al., 1998; Bor, 1960). The same has been reported here for the first time from the State of Mizoram. It is interesting to note that the present report of this species constitute the first generic record for the state of Mizoram. A detailed description and illustration is provided here for its easy identification.

Lopotherum gracile Brongn. in Duperrey, Voy. Coq. Boit.: 50. t. 8, 1831. 1896; Bor, Fl. Assam: 60, 1940 & Grass Burm. Ceyl. India Pak.: 460. 1960; Mitra, Fl. Pl. Eastern India: 150. 1958; Shukla, Grass N-E India: 238. 1996; Karthik. & al., Fl. Ind. Enum. Monocot.: 236. 1989.

Loosly tufted perennial with fleshy roots. Culms erect or ascending, 0.3 - 1.5m tall, glabrous and smooth. Leaf sheaths loose, keeled, glabrous or sparsely hairy, prominently striate. Ligule obscure. Leaf blades lanceolate or ovate, 10 - 20cm long, 1 - 3cm wide, glabrous or sparsely hairy white tessellate (cross) nerves, acute or acuminate, narrowed into a pseudopetiole at base; pseudopetiole up to 1.2cm long. Panicle open or contracted, 15 - 50cm long, branches distant or clustered, triquetrous. Spikelets c. 0.6cm long, distantly arranged on panicle branches, many flowered, lowest floret up to 7mm long, fertile; other florets sterile, sterile florets represented by empty lemmas, with minute paleas. Rhachilla glabrous, lowest rhachilla attachment longest, c. 4mm long, upper rhachilla joints smaller, 0.5 - 1mm long. Lower glume 2.5 - 4mm long, 5-nerved, entire, hyaline and bearing bristles on margins. Upper glume 3.5 - 5.5mm long, 7-nerved. Fertile lemma 5 - 6.5mm long, 7 - 9-nerved, aristate; arista up to 2mm long, sometimes recovered. Palea slightly shorter than lemma, glabrous, 2-keeled, stamens 2 or 3, c. 1.5mm long.

Flowering : July - October.

Habitat : In buffer forest areas having c 50% canopy.

Specimens examined : Mizoram, Murlen National Park, 23.09.2012. Ramesh Kumar & party 127297; Arunachal Pradesh, Namdapha WLS, 22.8.1964. M.S. Swaminathan 65092 (ASSAM).

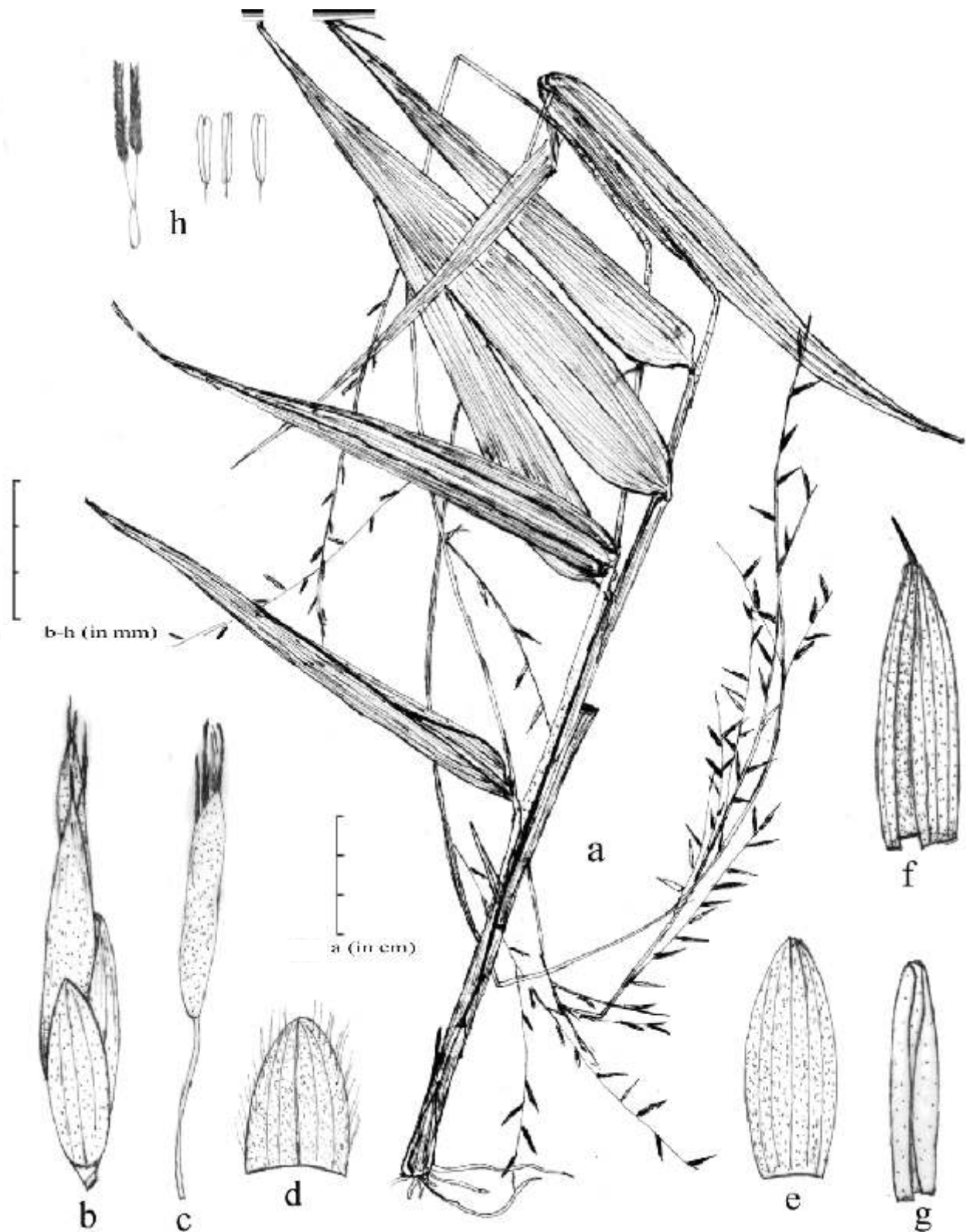


Plate 1. : a. Habit, b. Spikelet, c. Upper sterile floret with awns and rachilla d. Lower glume, e. Upper glume, f. Lowest lemma, g. Palea, h. Anthers and ovary.

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