Please Leave Article 32 Alone!

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au genre *Eulophus*, doivent être considérés comme ayant créé la combinaison *Eulophus peucedanoides*.

Il est dangereux de faire dire aux auteurs ce qu'ils n'ont pas dit. En l'occurrence, Bentham et Hooker désignent leur espèce par les deux binômes *Smyrnium lineare* Benth. et *Cnidium peucedanoides* H.B.K. Pourquoi leur attribuer la combinaison *Eulophus peucedanoides* plutôt qu'une combinaison *Eulophus linearis*?


**Proposition n° 56**

M. Janchen (Taxon 2 (8) : 208. novembre 1953) propose que soit conservé *Elisma* Buchenau (1869) et rejeté *Luronium* Raf. (1840).

Deux arguments paraissent militer contre cette proposition:

1. Il y a danger de confusion entre *Elisma* et *Alisma*, en raison de la ressemblance des deux noms.


**PLEASE LEAVE ARTICLE 32 ALONE!**

by

W. T. Stearn

As change upon change in plant names comes to public notice, so the opinion grows among botanists and others who are not nomenclaturlists that the main function if not the intent of the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature is to provide opportunity and excuse for changes in botanical nomenclature under the pretext of thereby reaching stability. In justification for this opinion it has to be admitted that almost every International Botanical Congress approves the introduction into the Rules (now the International Code) of provisions leading to such changes. The Rapporteur général is accordingly to be congratulated on advising against the acceptance of certain proposals in the Recueil synoptique des Propositions for the Paris Congress on the grounds that he finds them “unnecessary”, “extremely dangerous”, “apt to cause misunderstandings”, leading “to numerous changes”, etc. From the taxonomist’s viewpoint it is regrettable that the Rapporteur did not likewise oppose all the proposals (Prop. A—G, not simply A and D) set out on p. 51 for the alteration of Article 32, the same damning expressions being equally applicable to them. There is nothing new in these proposals, which were discussed at Stockholm in dealing with Article 26bis. From this discussion resulted the present Article 32, which, *with its application deliberately restricted to subgenera*, was carried by a large majority. That article reads: — “The subgenus containing the type species of a generic name must bear that name unaltered”. This means that the subgenus containing the type species of the accepted generic name of the genus to which it belongs must bear that name unaltered, notwithstanding the existence of an earlier and widely used subgeneric name. Extensions of this method of naming to other generic subdivisions, i.e. to sections, subsections, series and subseries, would create difficulties and inconvenience not yet apparent to those, who on grounds of *a priori* logic rather than experience in the classification of large genera, now propose the alteration of Article 32. They should therefore be opposed. Of Article 32 itself the mycologist Rolf Singer has remarked (*Lilloa* 22 : 750): — “It is a bad rule because the Congress has taken upon
itself to act on this proposal before the question of the lectotype list was settled and because it is in contradiction with Art. 3 and 4(1). But since it has been accepted, we shall probably have to bear the consequences.” With this conclusion I agree. The present Article 32 should be accepted (though made clearer in wording) but it should certainly not be extended. The International Code is intended to be an aid for users of plant-names, not a rod of perpetual castigation; it even states (Art. 3) that its provisions “should be founded on considerations sufficiently clear and forcible for everyone to comprehend and be disposed to accept”. The proposals to alter Article 32 are not founded on such considerations although they may well appeal strongly to those whom they will inconvenience least!

The objections to these drastic proposals are several and important. Space does not permit more than an indication of them here, but the whole matter should be thoroughly discussed in Paris. Unfortunately, as experience with Article 35 has shown, the difficulties inherent in changes of nomenclatural procedure have an unpleasant habit of only becoming evident after people have left the Congress room believing everything logically and satisfactorily settled.

Quite apart from the conflict of proposals B, E and G with the long established Article 31, which states that “for subsections and lower subdivisions the epithets are preferably plural adjectives”, whereas the name of a genus is, as stated in Article 30, “a substantive, or an adjective used as a substantive, in the singular number”, proposals B, C, E and G will lead to a vast number of name changes involving breaks in the continuity of botanical literature. They will thus render more difficult the finding of definitions. Nomenclaturists are apt to forget that in taxonomic work (e.g. the identification of material, the use and making of keys, definitions and descriptions) the circumscription of a group is as important as its type, and this circumscription can only be ascertained by research or the consultation of descriptive works to which the names in use provide the guides. There is no intrinsic objection to a subgeneric or sectional epithet (as distinct from the epithet of a subsection, series or subseries) being the same as the generic name; proposal A should therefore be rejected along with the other proposals. The objection is to changing thousands of names of sections etc. well established in major systematic works of everyday use by working taxonomists; deliberately to make the nomenclature of such works obsolete is sheer folly, comparable to that of the man up a tree who sawed off the branch he was sitting on. It just happens that the repetition of the generic name as a subdivisional name has never been widely employed. Stephan Endlicher did it more than most authors. Taking a hundred consecutive genera divided into sections in Endlicher’s Genera Plantarum (1836–41) I find sixteen examples of the sectional name repeating the generic name (e.g. Orites sect. Orites), 22 examples of Eu- added as a prefix to the generic name (e.g. Lomatia sect. Euomatia) and 62 examples of the section containing what may be the generitype named in another way (e.g. Aristolochia sect. Clematitis). Later the prefix Eu- became more popular and repetition of the generic name disappeared. In a hundred consecutive genera sectionally divided in Bentham and Hooker’s Genera Plantarum (1862–83) I find only 4 examples of the generic name repeated, 53 examples of the prefix Eu-, 43 examples of other names. In a hundred such consecutive genera in Engler and Prantl’s Pflanzenfamilien (1887–98) I find no example of the generic name repeated, 55 examples of the prefix Eu-, 45 examples of other names. In Rehder’s Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs 2nd. ed. (1940), during the preparation of which Rehder devoted much careful bibliographical and taxonomic research to ascertaining the correct sectional names under the International Rules then prevailing, I find 1 example of the generic name repeated, 35 examples with the prefix Eu-, 22 examples of other names. It is important to note that these names were associated at their original publication with definitions which form an important element in the framework of classification within-genus which we inherit, and only by means of these names can they be found and cited. Leaving aside the names prefixed by Eu-, which can be dealt with, it desired, in another Article (c.f. 78bis A) while Article 32 remains unchanged, acceptance of proposals B, C, E, F and G means discarding some 50% of the sectional names in use for the division containing the generitype as well as all subsectional and series names; nevertheless we shall still have to use these discarded names as synonyms to indicate the circumscription! The new names by themselves will long be meaningless. The exact systematic position of a new species
described as belonging to *Rhododendron* subg. *Rhododendron* sect. *Rhododendron* subsect. *Rhododendron* will only become evident when this nomenclature is translated back into the naturally quite different nomenclature employed in Sleumer’s "*System der Gattung Rhododendron*" (Engler, *Bot. Jahrb.* 74 : 511-553; 1949). Even so careful and recent a classification as Lawrence’s work on *Iris* (*Gentes Herbarum* 8 : 346-371; 1953) loses utility when the name *Iris* subgen. *Iris* sect. *Iris* subsect. *Pogoniris* series *Iris* is made obligatory. The substitution of such an indirect time-consuming approach to information for the direct approach can benefit no-one.

Moreover if proposals B, C, E, F and G are accepted, it will be a long time before they can be consistently and accurately applied, owing to difficulties of typification, which in some groups (c.f. Corner in *Nature* 168 : 1031; 1951) are immense. Applied quickly, in order to adhere to the letter of the *International Code*, they will inevitably lead to hasty typification or typification based on inadequate information, to subsequent controversy and to confusing shifts in the application of names. Many genera have from the start of their nomenclature included a diversity of species; the selection of a generitype demands a knowledge of all these original species and of all the relevant literature. Moreover there are genera at whose original publication no species was mentioned. The selection of a type is essentially a task for a monographer of experience. As Article 32 stands at present there is no urgency over the selection of types unless subgenera are recognised and as a subgenus can include several sections etc. the chance of doing harm by choosing an inappropriate generitype is less than with lower subdivisions, it being for example of no consequence as regards subgenera whether *Anemone coronaria* or *A. nemorosa* be selected as the generitype of *Anemone* although they belong to different sections, but the proposed alterations mean that for every genus in which subdivisions are recognised a type must be immediately selected to make its subdivisional nomenclature conform to the new rule .... This will often have to be done by people preparing regional treatments and lacking adequate facilities. The lectotypes for the genera of Linnaeus’s *Species Plantarum* were chosen by two botanists of experience with full library facilities; nevertheless even they selected a number of species which have proved unacceptable because they lacked a knowledge of all the species concerned. Little but harm can result from the hasty typification these dangerous proposals will encourage. In mycology the proposed new rule will be especially productive of confusion and distress. It will be better not to have the rule at all than lower the prestige of the *International Code* by the introduction of a rule which conscientious workers will often be obliged to ignore.

The above remarks do not exhaust the objections to the proposed alterations to Article 32. They are intended to indicate that these alterations should not be uncritically accepted. These proposals do not "expriment la nécessité de suivre la méthode des types dans toute la nomenclature botanique". They simply create difficulties and solve none. The type-method is a device for supplying fixed points of reference to which names are attached and which must be kept within the circumscription of given groups. It is completely in accordance with the type-method that groups shall be typified on their own hierarchic levels by reference to immediate facts. The chaos which can result from the extension of Article 32 to all subdivisions containing the generitype and then — by some bright boy out to show the world how badly these things were done by such industrious old fools as the De Candolles, Asa Gray, Bentham, Engler and others — of the same principle to subdivisions of all subgenera and then of sections, which we may expect at later Congresses if these proposals are accepted, will do nothing but harm. Experience gained in dealing with subdivisional names within a considerable number of genera leads to the conclusion that the Paris Congress will best serve taxonomy by having the good sense to leave Article 32 as it stands and to reject all proposals for its suppression and all for its extension. Recommendation 68B should likewise be left undisturbed.