A Proposal on "Date of Publication"
Author(s): H. W. Rickett
Published by: International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT)
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1217651
Accessed: 08/03/2014 08:09

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to Taxon.
and floras should be thrown away. Again: "A name of a taxonomic group must be rejected ..." This does not mean that the word "group" must be rejected, or the word "species," or the name of any other concept; it means the name of a certain assemblage of plants — an abstraction if you like, but embracing real plants having certain characteristics (as leaves) in common. This is a taxon, one of the objective realities with which taxonomy deals.

"To use the word [taxon] to mean plants, populations, races, species ... is to debase it and to turn it into a meaningless catch-all." Well, perhaps to call a single plant a taxon would strain the sense a bit; I have not noticed such usage by a taxonomist. But if a particular species (not the category "species") is a taxon, why then you must recognize that a population is — or may be — a taxon. And if a particular variety is a taxon, and a particular form, why not a particular race?

But is this interpretation contrary to the intention of the botanist who introduced it to taxonomy? That I cannot say. But I was present when it was proposed at Utrecht and immediately adopted in place of the old "taxonomic group." And if it must now mean something different, then the Code must be rewritten. For, as I have shown above, the "taxonomic groups" of the Code were actual species and genera and families and so on.

Lam is now worried about what constitutes a "natural" group. "Any group of organisms with some common character ... has some right to be called a natural group." Quite right: we can classify objects by any criteria we like. A group of botanists discussing the meaning of "taxon" do indeed form a group which can be called "natural." This word has been much misused, especially in modern writing. Botanists discussing the history of taxonomy will assure you that the "natural system" dates only from Darwin and the acceptance of a classification of organisms based on descent. They ignore the "natural system" sought by Linnaeus, de Jussieu, and other pre-evolutionists; "natural" meant something different to them. However, in modern taxonomy there is no dissent from a system based on evolution, and no disposition to use the word "natural" in any other sense than that of relatedness by descent. A taxon or taxonomic group, as taxonomists use such expressions, can mean only a group of organisms related genetically (or so related to the best of our knowledge).

If the foregoing remarks are correct, a taxon is not an abstraction, nor does it include the categories of taxonomic thought. It is a taxonomic group or assemblage of plants or animals, having certain characteristics in common which we take as evidence of genetic relationship, and possessed of some degree of objective reality. We can use the word wherever we can use "taxonomic group," in referring to the characteristics, dynamics, distribution, or uses of such an assemblage.

---

A PROPOSAL ON "DATE OF PUBLICATION"

H. W. Rickett (New York)

One of the preoccupations of taxonomists is the "date of publication" of printed matter. It is often difficult to discover, sometimes impossible; when it can be fixed, it may be valuable in establishing a stable nomenclature. Many modern publishers are careful to state on their covers or title-pages or elsewhere the date on which a book or an issue of a serial is published.

"The date of effective publication is the date on which the printed matter became available as defined in Art. 29." So runs Art. 30. The reference is apparently to the statement in Art. 29 that publication is effected "by distribution of printed matter
(through sale, exchange, or gift ..." The date of valid publication is presumably the same as that of effective publication if all tests of validity are met. "When the various conditions for valid publication are not simultaneously fulfilled, the date is that on which the last is fulfilled" (Art. 45).

The date we want is therefore the date of "availability." A publication becomes "available" by "distribution." When is it distributed? When it reaches the hands of the persons to whom it is addressed or by whom it is purchased? If so, it would usually be impossible to determine the date and always impossible to state it in advance. The second sentence of Art. 30 would scarcely make sense: "In the absence of proof establishing some other date, the one appearing in the printed matter must be accepted as correct." Actually it would almost never be correct!

There has been a tendency at least in the United States to interpret "distribution" as delivery to the post office, since practically all botanical books and serials reach individuals through this channel. This interpretation is open to question, particularly in the light of recent experiences. Several American magazines have been plagued by excessive irregularity and lateness of delivery. One printer reports that a widely distributed garden periodical required 21 days to be delivered in a neighboring city, after leaving his place of business. At other times the same magazine moved promptly and reached its subscribers in a day or two. An investigator in another post office reported that magazines were piled up in packages and ignored for days in favor of other mail. What was the date of their distribution?

The printer quoted above, who prints several botanical serials, in spite of such facts holds that the date of distribution is the day the printed copies leave his hands. "This is the day [he writes] on which the contents of the journal became public property," and what happened afterwards did not affect that fact. Whether any one actually read it on that day or not, the work was then available for reading in printed form.

In spite of the obvious objections, I am inclined to agree with this view. An author can certainly be excused for assigning a name to a taxon which is antedated (in the above sense) by another name unfortunately marooned "in packages" somewhere in a post office. But the advantage of a fixed and usable interpretation of "date of publication" should outweigh the possibility of such unnecessary duplications and personal annoyances. At any rate, the matter should be discussed, to the end of getting a more precise meaning for "distribution" in the article cited. Accordingly I propose* that Art. 29 be modified, in the next edition of the Code, to provide that the availability of printed matter means its delivery by the printer to one of the usual carriers by which it is distributed to the public. The exact wording of the revised article may be left to the Editorial Committee.

---

ZUR NOMENKLATUR CHEMISCHER SIPPEN

R. Hegnauer (Leiden)

Vom 9.-11. September 1957 fand am I.V.T. (Instituut voor de Veredeling van Tuinbouwwegassen; Direktor Dr. O. Banga) zu Wageningen, Holland, eine internationale Arbeitstagung über Arznei- und Nutzpflanzenforschung statt, die durch Teilnehmer aus 16 Länder besucht wurde. Am zweiten Tage wurde das Thema "chemische Rassen" diskutiert. Der Ausdruck Rasse ist in diesem Zusammenhang als gleichbedeutend mit dem Ausdruck infraspezifische Sippe zu betrachten.

*) Proposal no. 20 submitted to the IXth International Botanical Congress, Montreal 1959.