ORTHOGRAPHIC VARIANCE

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It is stated in the Code (Art. 75) that when two or more generic names are so similar that may be confused for any reason, they should be treated as orthographic variants, and when based upon different types, as homonyms. The examples given, however, are not in accordance with the precept, and show a fine disregard for its logical application. Thus Columella and Columellia are cited as variants, but Desmostachys and Desmostachya are cited as “names not likely to be confused”.

One criterion of non-confusability seems to rest in the degree of taxonomic or geographical separation, as Peponia and Peponium which are said to be so far apart taxonomically as not to be confused. This may be true when taxonomists only are concerned, and applies equally to Adenia and Adenium. But plant names are not designed for the exclusive use of taxonomists. An ecologist could easily refer to both Adenia and Adenium in the same sentence — certainly in the same paper; the printer confronted with both names could readily transpose them, make them the same or carry out both operations in the same paper; the proof-reader would be hard put to it to make the necessary corrections and even the author might inadvertently write one in place of the other. In speech the risk of confusion in such names is no less real and in both speech and in the written word the context would not always or readily reveal an error.

It seems fairly clear that names differing only in gender should be regarded as orthographic variants, and as homonyms when based upon different types. It may be observed that difference in gender does not invariably involve difference in spelling, as is pointed out implicitly in Rec. 75A, but it could not be argued that this is sufficient to separate two names. Some trivial spelling differences are, however, sufficient for such separation; they usually involve a difference in origin and meaning. Thus Rubia and Rubus are not likely to be confused, but the proposal of a new name such as “Rubius” might very well alter the case and be a cause of confusion between all three. So far as the examples given in the Code are concerned, however, “Rubius” would be acceptable even if ill-advised.

The application of Art. 75 will always present considerable difficulty, because differences in spelling have a different significance in different languages or groups of languages. Spelling of words in different languages usually follows accepted rules or practice, but the spelling of plant names is, under Art. 20, completely arbitrary. In this context it should be noted that Art. 20 and Art. 73 are to some extent contradictory; there have been numerous cases of “correction” of philologically badly formed generic names which are inadmissible under Art. 73. The adoption of a “wrong” spelling may be due to ignorance on the part of the author; it may be, on the other hand, deliberate. It is for this reason that “the liberty of correcting a name must be used with reserve” (Art. 73, Note 4); it is clear also that the corrected form is always an orthographic variant, so far as plant names are concerned, of the incorrect form. Thus Raphiacme is the corrected (but inadmissible) form of Raphionacme, and not a different name, though it was treated as such by N. E. Brown (in Fl. Trop. Afr. 4(1): 269. 1902).

The arbitrary nature of plant names must be always in mind when considering two or more names of different origin or meaning which have almost identical spelling, or names with the same origin and meaning which have been given different spellings. All these must be treated on their own merits and it is not possible to
obtain from the Code more guidance than is already given under Art. 73, Art. 75 and the recommendations following Art. 73. The last, it should be noted, refers particularly to the formation of new names and epithets. The principles enunciated do not have any retroactive effect, nor are authors obliged to follow them.

Examination of the list of *nomina conservanda* and *nomina rejicienda*, particularly the annotated and corrected list of Rickett and Stafleu (Taxon, vols. 8 and 9, 1959—1960) does, however, give some further guidance. It shows that on the one hand certain spellings sometimes have been preferred which differed slightly from the original; these are orthographic variants of the same name applied to the same genus. On the other hand similar slight differences in spelling between names applied to different genera also have been regarded as orthographic variants causing homonymy.

Many of these differences consist merely in the presence, substitution or absence of an “i” or “e” in the ending, as *Aristotelia* L’Hér. conserved against *Aristotela* Adanson, *Anneslea* Wall. against *Annesia* Salish., *Maximiliana* Martius against *Maximilianaea* Martius. Others have more noticeable differences, such as *Schelhammera* R. Br. conserved against *Schelhameria* Fabr., *Vallota* Herb. against *Valota* Adanson (but see Green in Bull. Misc. Inf. Kew 1935: 528. 1935), *Berniera* Baillon against *Berniara* DC., *Lepidostemon* Hooker et Thomson against *Lepistemone* Bl., and *Boenninghausenia* Reichb. against *Boenninghausia* Sprengel.

All these, however, are recognisably similar names, and they serve to emphasize that the insistence, in Art. 73, on retention of the “original spelling of a name or epithet” is readily set aside by conservation and its significance lost by an inconsistent treatment of orthographic variance. Two courses are available to reduce orthographic difficulties and enable botanists to make logical decisions as to what is to be regarded as orthographic variance causing homonymy. These are (1) to declare unequivocally that spellings (including demonstrable errors) originally adopted for a name or epithet by authors must be maintained, and that any variation of that spelling is to be regarded as a different name or epithet, or (2) different spellings of names and epithets with the same or similar derivation must be treated as orthographic variants as well as names or epithets of different derivation but the same or similar spelling, including mere differences in gender.

In view of current usage, the second of these is almost obligatory, and this enforces a reconsideration of the examples quoted in the Code under the various relevant articles. In addition, the following additions and amendments to the text of the Code are proposed:

(1) Art. 14 Add the new note:

“Note 7. When a name is conserved only to preserve a particular orthography, it is to be attributed to the author who originally described the taxon concerned using the rejected orthography, without change in priority. (See also Art. 18, 19, 73)”.

(2) Art. 20 Add:

“Note. Even when the derivation of a new name or epithet is stated by the author, or is evident from the protologue, it is to be regarded as an arbitrarily formed Latin substantive or adjective. (See also Chap. VI. Sect. 1 and Principle V.)”

(3) Rec. 20a Add the new subparagraph:

“(j) Not to propose a name which may be confused with another on account of similarity in orthography or phonetics.”
Das genaue Publikationsdatum von Band 5, Teil 1 der von WILLDENOW besorgten Auflage der „Species Plantarum“ von CARL VON LINNÉ nebst einiger weiterer, anno 1810 erschienener Werke

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In der verdienstvollen Zusammenstellung der Publikationsdaten der verschiedenen Bände der von WILLDENOW besorgten Auflage der „Species Plantarum“ von CARL VON LINNÉ von B. C. SCHUBERT 1942: 147 wird als Erscheinungsdatum für den ersten Teil des fünften Bandes allein das dem Band aufgedruckte Jahr „1810“ aufgeführt. Gerade für diesen Band erschien jedoch die Feststellung des genauen Publikationsdatums besonders wichtig, wie bereits PICCHI-SERMOLLI 1951: 220 dargelegt hat: „Thus we come to the conclusion that both books, WILLDENOW’s and ROBERT BROWN’s were issued and distributed in March 1810. I think it is very difficult to establish on which day of March 1810 they were issued. Probably we shall be compelled to accept conventionally one of them as the first issued book. For the moment since the publication of WILLDENOW’s book was effected by sale to the public without any restriction and the date of publication is proved by a published review [vgl. im nachfolgenden Text], while the publication of ROBERT BROWN’s Prodromus was effected by the distribution of a limited number of copies, and, moreover, it is proved by a private memorandum (see BRITTON I.c. [BRITTON 1907: 246-248], footnote 37), I think that for the purpose of priority WILLDENOW’s book is to be considered as published before ROBERT BROWN’s Prodromus.” Im gleichen Jahre erschienen nämlich zwei weitere für die Nomenklatur der Gefäßkryptogamen wichtige Publikationen, nämlich der erste

*) Compare Deighton in Taxon 7: 270. 1958.
**) Both derived from the Latin verb colo — to inhabit, etc.