



The Starting Points for Fungi

Author(s): G. W. Martin

Source: *Taxon*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1960), pp. 1-3

Published by: [International Association for Plant Taxonomy \(IAPT\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1217347>

Accessed: 29/03/2014 09:17

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*.

<http://www.jstor.org>



JANUARY 1960
VOL. IX No. 1

TAXON

Official News Bulletin of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy. Edited and Published for I.A.P.T.
by the International Bureau for Plant Taxonomy and Nomenclature. 106 Lange Nieuwstraat, Utrecht, Netherlands

THE STARTING POINTS FOR FUNGI

G. W. Martin (Iowa City, Iowa)

In the 2nd edition of the International Rules of Botanical nomenclature (Jena, 1912, p. 32) Art. 3 reads: "The rules of nomenclature should neither be arbitrary nor imposed by authority. They must be simple and founded on considerations clear and forcible enough for everyone to comprehend and be disposed to accept". In the 3rd edition (Jena, 1935, p. 1) Art. 3 is amended to read: "The rules of nomenclature should be simple and founded on considerations sufficiently clear and forcible for everyone to comprehend and be disposed to accept". This was repeated without change in the Code compiled after the Stockholm Congress (Utrecht, 1952, p. 13) but was omitted from the edition issued after the Paris Congress. The deletion of the phrase, "neither be arbitrary nor imposed by authority" from the 1935 Rules, and the removal of the article from the 1952 Code may be interpreted partly as unconscious deference to the growing spirit of authoritarianism in the world and partly to a feeling that the rules are steadily growing less simple, clear and comprehensible. It might be well to replace the 1912 statement as a principle.

It is to be noted, as was amply demonstrated in the discussions at Stockholm in 1950, that there was at that time wide difference of opinion concerning the interpretation of Art. 20f of the 1935 Rules (Art. 19f of the 1912 Rules). As a result, very late in the discussions, Art. 23f of the 1952 Code was adopted by the close vote of 9 to 7 by the Special Committee for Fungi and approved by the Congress. It was incorporated, without change, in the 1956 Code as Art. 13f. As a result, Art. 13 recognizes eight starting points for the fungi: 1753 (Lichenes, Myxomycetes); 1801 (Uredinales, Ustilaginales, Gasteromycetes); 1821, 1822, 1823, 1828, 1830, 1832 (Fungi caeteri). The last six dates are, of course, those of the dates of publication of Fries's *Systema Mycologicum*, including the *Elenchus Fungorum*.

The present Art. 13 has now been in effect for a decade, and, in the opinion of many mycologists who have tried sincerely to apply it, it has proved to be unduly complicated, subject to varying interpretations and highly unsatisfactory. This is partly because of what seems to be the unnecessarily large number of starting points, and partly because Fries's interests were almost entirely with the large and more conspicuous fungi and the treatment of many of the smaller forms, especially of the Fungi Imperfecti, in which he was frankly not greatly interested, was based mainly on the work of others, not always, it has been claimed, with critical discrimination.

If the dissatisfaction with the present starting points is in reality not as widespread as I have sensed it to be, but merely the expression of an opinion held by a small group of mycologists, obviously nothing need be done about it. The dissidents will go their way and sooner or later the names they apply, where not in accord with the

present system, will be replaced by others that are; a case in point would be the important work by Kühner and Romagnesi, *Flore analytique des champignons supérieurs*, 1953, in which the starting point adopted is Fries's *Epicresis* of 1838. There are doubtless others who, while not satisfied with the present rules, feel that it is better to put up with their complexities than to attempt to revise them.

If, however, a sufficient number of mycologists believe the present starting points for fungi are not satisfactory, several things might be done, of which the following seem to be most practicable:

1. Make the starting point for all fungi 1 May 1753, thus not only providing a single starting point for all fungi but uniting them in this respect with the great majority of other taxa covered by the botanical Code. Linnaeus, it is true, did not think highly of the fungi, but he did give binomials to the species of earlier systematists and most of his species can be recognized by reference to the descriptions and illustrations of the earlier authors he cites. This starting point has operated satisfactorily for the Myxomycetes and apparently for the Lichenes, and — what would answer some of the objections which have been expressed — even for the bacteria. It would have the further advantage of giving full priority to the work of Bulliard, Nees, Persoon, Schweinitz and other pre-Friesian authors. It was widely used by mycologists prior to 1905, and was designated as the starting point for all plants, including fungi, in the American Code of 1907, followed by many mycologists until 1935 and by some since that time.

2. Make the starting point for all fungi Persoon's *Synopsis Methodica Fungorum* of 1801. This is a comprehensive work, written by an author who was the leading mycologist of his era and whose interest in all groups of fungi then known was probably wider than that of Fries. Persoon's herbarium is still in existence and it is easier to typify his names than those of Fries. His work is at present the designated starting point for Ustilaginales, Uredinales and Gasteromycetes and a proposal by Hughes to add the Hyphomycetes to this list was presented to the Montreal Congress. This was amended by the Special Committee to include all Fungi Imperfecti and both the original proposal and the amended proposal were referred, for lack of time for discussion, to the Special Committee for Fungi for final action. The advantages of extending this starting point to all fungi are worthy of careful consideration.

3. Make the starting point of the *Fungi caeteri* 1 January 1821, the date of publication of Volume 1 of Fries's *Systema Mycologicum* and treat the other parts of that work on the same basis as other later works. This will interfere little with the several important works on the agarics and other larger fungi which have appeared since 1950 and have followed the current Code, and will permit a much more favorable approach to the other groups. This would not alter the illogical situation in other groups, but that is less serious. The Myxomycetes is a small group and few, if any, new combinations would be required if the starting point were to be changed, although undoubtedly some names now recognized as valid would have to be replaced by some now regarded as synonyms. If the Lichenes are considered an autonomous group it does not matter what starting point is used. If, as many mycologists suspect, they must eventually be intercalated amongst the *Fungi caeteri*, then the starting point for them becomes that of the *Fungi caeteri*. The Gasteromycetes is no longer regarded by many mycologists as a natural group and in the case of genera formerly included in the Gasteromycetes and now considered as closely related to the agarics and boletes, the starting point must be that of their relatives. Fortunately, the names of the great majority of them will not be affected by becoming subject to any of these proposals.

One of the arguments used at the Montreal Congress against any changes in the present rules was that it is now too late to make them. It may be pointed out that

if a considerable number of mycologists believe the adoption of the present rules was unwise and makes for undue complication and confusion, it is highly desirable that a change in the direction of simplicity and clarity be seriously considered before it becomes even later.

Another argument repeatedly used at the Montreal Congress was that the changes proposed in the report of the Committee on Fungi, as adopted by majority vote, had not been sufficiently discussed in advance of the Congress. This argument has great merit, but it applies equally to the present Art. 13f. This was not discussed in advance but was presented to the Committee on Fungi after long and sometimes acrimonious discussion and, as previously stated, was finally adopted by a vote of 9 to 7 shortly before the report had to be submitted to the Congress.

It is my present intention to present to the next Congress a proposal involving a restatement of those parts of Art. 13 relating to Fungi which will embody one of the three possibilities here outlined. I have already consulted a number of North American mycologists but before submitting a specific proposal, I feel it is desirable to ask all mycologists interested to present their views publicly on the subject.

LATER STARTING POINTS VERSUS THE TYPE METHOD*

Paul C. Silva (Urbana, Illinois)

Two articles recently published in *Taxon* (8: 86-90. 1959) take issue with my proposal to eliminate later starting points in algae (*Taxon* 7: 181-184. 1958). The first, by J. Komárek, Z. Pouzar, and J. Ruzicka, is thoughtfully written, although it clearly shows a lack of understanding of the type method. The second, by Rolf Grönblad and Arthur M. Scott, is largely a collection of specious and sophomoric arguments. The purpose of the present paper is to show how the type method has been distorted by these authors to accommodate and justify later starting points.

The type method is based on the following rationale: the application of a name is fixed by associating it with a type; for a taxon of the rank of species or below, the type is a preserved specimen, which is assumed to show sufficient characters to permit its association with a taxon. This rationale has been attacked by certain authors, including Komárek, as follows: for some plants a preserved specimen does not show sufficient characters to permit its association with a taxon; therefore, the assumption is invalid. Exceptions to the principle that botanical nomenclature should be based on type specimens have been introduced into the Code on the one hand by persons who were dealing with names not capable of being associated with type specimens (certain Linnaean and post-Linnaean names based on pre-Linnaean references), and on the other hand by persons who shared Komárek's opinion.

In the Cambridge Code we find the following statement (Art. 18): "In some species, however, the type is a description or figure given by a previous author." The example clearly indicates the intention of this exception: "the type of the name *Polyporus amboinensis* Fries is the figure and description in Rumph. *Herb. Amboin.* VI, p. 129, t. 57, fig. 1." At Stockholm this provision was changed to read (Art. 21, Note 2): "For a species without a type specimen, the type may be a description or figure." This conflicted, however, with another provision adopted at Stockholm (Art.

* This paper was submitted for publication prior to the Montreal Congress. Meeting at Montreal, the Committee for Algae decided to postpone action on the proposal to eliminate later starting points in algae pending further study of the question. Phycologists who favor retention of later starting points will be invited to submit detailed supporting arguments.