(265) Proposal regarding Autonyms
Author(s): F. R. Fosberg
Reviewed work(s):
Published by: International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT)
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1221677
Accessed: 26/07/2012 14:02

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.
incorrect since the conserved type species of these genera are typified by illustrations (see Wijnands, The Botany of the Commelins p. 56, 180. 1983).

The proposed change from “specimen” to “specimen or other element” will remove a useless complication and restore the consistency of the Code in its basal type concept.

The stimulus to formulate this proposal has been conservation proposal 785 (Taxon 34: 309) on the citation and nomenclature of the conserved type of 2406 Talinum. I feel obliged to read “element” for “specimen” since the type of Talinum is an illustration, not a specimen. Rigid application of Art. 10 would make the typification of Talinum an unsolvable problem.

Proposal 45 by Dr. P. G. Parkinson (Taxon 34: 328–329) deals with Art. 10 as well. In particular his proposed Art. 10.5 covers the same ground. There is, however, as far as I can see no real overlap, so that the proposals can be considered independently.

Acknowledgment
I thank Gea Zijlstra for valuable comments and suggestions.

Proposed by: D. Onno Wijnands, Department of Plant Taxonomy, Wageningen Agricultural University, P.O. Box 8010, 6700 ED Wageningen, The Netherlands.

(264) Proposal to abolish conservation of specific names.

Summary

Definition of “major economic importance” is an indefinable concept, and leads to endless or inconclusive arguments on proposals to conserve particular specific names. Conservation of specific names has, in the past, been regarded as an unwise weakening of the ICBN, and still seems to be so. Hence the present proposal to restore the pre-1981 status quo limitation of Art. 14.

(264) Proposal to delete “and species” and replace “and” before “genera” in Art. 14.1; delete the second sentence in Art. 14.2; and delete the last sentence in Art. 14.4.

Rationale: The addition of conservation of specific names to Art. 14 was the subject of much debate and accepted by a close vote at the Sydney Congress. There seems little doubt that the proposal would have been defeated if an amendment had not been offered from the floor to restrict such conservation to names of “species of major economic importance.” The only example offered to illustrate the meaning of this amendment was wheat, Triticum aestivum. Later in the discussion Lycopersicum esculentum was mentioned.

From the first it seemed clear to some of us that “major economic importance” is indefinable and would be a continuing matter of controversy, and this has been the case. We voted for the amendment because of the possibility that the proposal for conservation might pass without such a restriction, rather than with any idea that the restriction was workable.

It is my opinion that we should have in the Code neither an unworkable provision nor a blank check to wholesale proposals for conservation of specific names. I do not feel that the conditions behind the wisdom of the nomenclature sections of earlier congresses in rejecting the idea of conserved species names have changed. Only an unworkable compromise led to the adoption of this proposal at Sydney. I feel that it is not too late to go back to the pre-Sydney status quo. Therefore, I propose appropriate alterations in the present wording of the Code.

Proposed by: F. R. Fosberg, Botany Dept., Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560, U.S.A.

(265) Proposal regarding autonyms.

Summary

Actions at the Sydney Congress, especially the addition to the Code of Art. 57.3, have given rise to strong differences of opinion and forced decisions regarding certain infraspecific names that went against the judgement of the proposers of the combinations affected. A discussion of the nature of autonyms, their logical nomenclatural status and limitations is provided. Modifications, especially in
Art. 6.8, are proposed to make explicit the nature and limitations of autonyms that have been left implicit in the Code, and which may mitigate some of the objectionable features that have crept into the application of the autonym concept. It is proposed to delete Art. 57.3 and to make autonyms simply an automatic device to use in referring to the nomenclaturally typical element of a species or higher taxon.

(265) Proposal to change "as can be" to 'as are' in Art. 6. Delete "whether they are formally created as names", replace by "they have no existence as validly published names, and, thus, are not taken into account for purposes of priority or homonymy, nor can they be transferred. They cannot be later published validly, as the result would be later homonyms. There would, however, be no obstacle to the epithets being used in other combinations, if otherwise the combinations would be legitimate.'

Art. 7.18: Delete in its entirety.
Art. 32.6: Delete in its entirety.
Art. 46.1: Delete "unless the provisions for autonyms apply (Arts. 19.3, 22.1, and 26.1; see also Art. 16.1)." and insert: 'this does not apply to autonyms, as they are not validly published and depend only on the higher rank name to which they apply, which is accompanied by an author citation.'

Art. 57.3: Delete in its entirety.

Necessary adjustments will then be needed in Arts. 14.9, 32.1, 33.1, and 57.2, to be made by the Editorial Committee.

Rationale for the Proposal: In 1950, at the Stockholm Congress, a step was taken to formalize a concept then held by many plant taxonomists, but not, till then, expressed in the International Rules of Botanical Nomenclature, that a species comprises the sum of its subordinate taxa (Art. 25). In other words the formerly current idea that varieties, subspecies, and other lower rank entities were appendages, outgrowths from or attachments to species, was openly admitted to be outdated. Previously the idea of a species being the sum of its parts had to be expressed by the publication and use of such epithets as var. typicus, var. originalis, and such, or by the clumsy expression, the species name, "sensu stricto", or "in a narrow sense." This was necessary in order to talk about the former "species itself." A few of us occasionally published and used a repetition of the species name as a varietal epithet for the nomenclaturally typical variety.

In the 1940's or earlier an idea started to be discussed, doubtless borrowed from zoological nomenclature, that the element including the nomenclatural type, throughout the hierarchy of names, should be designated merely by a repetition of the name or epithet of the next higher ranked element of which it was a part, only, of course, for the element including the type. I first heard this idea expressed by Henry Allen Gleason, I think in 1940 or 1941. By 1950, it had spread and taken hold to the extent of being formally adopted and included in the Stockholm edition of the Rules (or Code, as it later became known).

The real innovation, for botanists, was that the original element was to be designated by a trinomial created automatically by the publication of any subdivision of a species (or higher taxon, or lower, for that matter), an epithet which did not need to be published, and hence had no author. It did not even need to be printed. Later, for such designations, the term autonym was coined.

As long as it was clearly understood that such epithets had no standing, or even nomenclatural existence, except in combination with the higher level name that supplied the repeated epithet, there was no important confusion. The lack of an author citation was a provision to prevent such epithets from being transferred. This was implicit, and I am almost sure, expressed in the discussion preceding adoption of this system into the Rules. A key provision, also implicit rather than stated, is the automatic creation of these combinations, later to be called "autonyms," was that they were not required to be validly published. If not validly published they were not names, in the formal nomenclatural sense (Art. 6.6). Hence, though they could be used to communicate information, they could not be manipulated nomenclaturally.

If the above outlined ideas had been explicit, in the Code, rather than left implicit, we might have spared the controversy that has occurred since the term autonym was introduced. We also might have been spared several alterations in the articles concerning autonyms that have been proposed and adopted into the Code in the last several international congresses. These have happened when workers began to treat autonyms as names. The final result was the introduction of Art. 57.3 which made these non-names praiseworthy.

This introduction was vigorously debated at Sydney, and only accepted under the guise of com-
promise. That the resulting present situation is not very satisfactory is evidenced by the acrimonious debate that has taken place in Taxon since the Sydney Congress. I do not intend to list the articles or to recapitulate this argument, as Brummitt (Taxon 34: 342. 1985) has done this adequately. I will present a proposal that might defuse it to some extent.

If it were explicitly stated that autonyms are not names, in a formal sense, that they do not exist in a nomenclatural sense, as with nomen nuda, they could not be transferred. Taxa in a group under consideration with valid names could be manipulated, transferred, combined, segregated, changed in rank, as taxonomic research dictated. The Code could be applied to determine their correct names, to guide the creation of new names when necessary. Autonyms would have no role in this. They would be available when appropriate and would disappear if they were no longer appropriate. Not even a record of them would be necessary. They need not even appear in synonymy.

The above was written, then compared carefully with the lengthy discussion on autonyms on the floor of the Nomenclature session at Sydney, Aug. 18, 1981, published in Englera 2: 18–32. 1982. The ideas expressed above are, in most respects, similar to those discussed as “status quo”, but differ from that in being more explicit as to the nature and limitations of autonyms. The vote against the status quo was taken with little discussion of the status quo as such and without much understanding of why it had been changed at Seattle. I feel that my suggestions of more careful and explicit definition and limitation of autonyms, effected by the changes suggested, will remove the causes of the problems raised as to the operation of Art. 6, and also of those new problems created by giving autonyms priorability and status as valid names.

Proposed by: F. R. Fosberg, Botany Dept., Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560, U.S.A.

(266)–(268) Proposals relating to the rejection of names under Art. 69.

Summary

It is proposed to tighten up the wording of Art. 69.1 and Art. 69.2 to minimize the submission of proposals to reject names that are of only local interest geographically, or are bothersome to less than a major part of the botanical community or of the practical users of plant names, and thus, the committee work necessary to screen, approve, or disapprove such proposals. Alternatively, failing acceptance of the first two of these proposals, it is proposed to delete Art. 69 altogether.

(266) Proposal to replace “widely and persistently” with “widely, persistently, and consistently” in Art. 69.1.

(267) Proposal to insert after the second sentence in Art. 69.2, “Proposals to reject names of only limited geographical interest, or of little concern outside of technical taxonomic circles, will not be entertained or considered.”

(268) Proposal (alternative to the above two) to delete the entire article.

Rationale: Proposals for rejection of specific binomials under Art. 69 are a continuing and increasing cause for unnecessary work on the part of members of the special committees. Even if the requirement in the first sentence of Art. 69, that a name proposed “may be rejected if it has been widely and persistently used for a taxon or taxa not including its type” were strictly adhered to, the decision as to whether this be actually the case is hard to make, both by the proposers and the special committees. Widely and persistently used in the state of California, in Spain, in South Africa, in Micronesia, in India, or in the Alps, for example, should not fulfill this criterion, unless the Code is to be made ridiculous. But where does one draw the line? The Code is designed to give a means of settling questions about the correct names of plants. When used carefully it serves this purpose very well. This necessarily results in inconvenience for someone in many cases, where there is controversy. It is perhaps reasonable to have a means of mitigating this where the entire, or a very large segment of, the botanical public or the community of users of plant names are inconvenienced. Many proposals are made that serve much smaller groups, and these still must be dealt with by the appropriate special committees.

In the past I have proposed to eliminate this problem by deleting Article 69. I would still vote for this solution if such a proposal were to reach the floor of the Congress. However, to reduce the number

NOVEMBER 1986