A Proposal to Introduce the Term "Typonym" into the Code

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Amend Art. 7.11 by deleting the phrase “an older name is typified by the type of the older name” and replacing it with “a typonym is typified by the type of the typonym.”

If this proposal passes, changes would be needed elsewhere, such as: (1) Rephrase last line of Art. 7, Ex. 1 as “type of the typonym, M. laevis O. Berg,” and (2) in the 4th line of Art. 33.2, replace “the replaced synonym” with “typonym.” The latter is particularly important and would be the place to add the definition of “typonym” to that of “basionym.”

When new names are proposed as avowed substitutes, they are based on the type of an earlier synonym, usually referred as “replaced synonym” or “older name”. The present Code does not have a one-word name for this, proposed here, “typonym”. This word is to the replaced synonym what the basionym is to the epithet-bringing synonym.

The term “typonym” is not new to botanical literature. It was used in Canon 18 of the American Code of botanical nomenclature (Bull. Torrey Bot. Club 34: 175. 1907) to indicate what is presently known as a superfluous name. Regarding its past and present usage, Nicolson (US; pers. comm.) remarked that in the 1907 usage, the typonym “had a pejorative sense of what we now might call the later element of a superfluous renaming;” whereas in the present proposal, it has “the positive sense of the earlier element of a non-superfluous renaming.”

Although both basionym and typonym are type-bringing names, they differ in their status: a basionym is always legitimate, whereas a typonym may be legitimate (e.g., an infraspecific name altered in rank with a different epithet) or illegitimate (e.g., a replaced later homonym).

Some authors correctly use the word “basionym” for the basis of a new combination (comb. nov.) but, perhaps unaware of the concept of a replaced synonym, incorrectly use the same word for the replaced type-bearer of a new name (nom. nov.). If the Code recognizes the word “typonym”, and defines it as type-bringing name of a nom. nov., such misusage of “basionym” might be avoided.