A Proposal regarding Isonyms
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(42) A proposal regarding isonyms

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A taxon may have been described by different authors with the same name and type, yet such names are not homonyms in the sense of Art. 53.1, which states that homonyms are based on different types. Such “homotypic homonyms” were extensively discussed by Nicolson (in Taxon 24: 461-466. 1975), who called them “isonym” and concluded that a later isonym has no nomenclatural status. As this is not clearly explained by the Code, as is shown by the case presented below, isonyms perplex even experienced nomenclaturalists. Therefore, it appears useful to include a relevant example in the Code, whose exact placement is left to the discretion of its editors.

(42) Add an example, with appropriate cross-references elsewhere, where the Editorial Committee deems best (e.g. Art. 14, 33, 45, 53):

“Ex. X. “Canarium pimela Leenh. nom. nov.” (in Blumea 9: 406. 1959) was published to replace the illegitimate C. pimela K. D. König (1805). The two names are so-called ‘isonym’ (homotypic, orthographically identical names published by different authors). A later isonym has no nomenclatural status and is to be regarded as a bibliographic error of citation to be corrected (see Art. 33.3).”

The combination Canarium pimela K. D. König (in Ann. Bot. (König & Sims) 1: 361, t. 7, f. 1. 1805) (Burseraceae) was based on Pimela nigra Lour. (Fl. Cochinch.: 407. 1790) and is therefore illegitimate although still in general use.

Roxburgh (Fl. Ind. 3: 138. 1832) described a different species as Canarium nigrum, which is why C. nigrum (Lour.) Engl. (in Engler & Prantl, Nat. Pflanzenfam. 3(4): 240. 1896) is a later homonym. The species remained without a legitimate name until Canarium tramdenum C. D. Dai & Yakovlev (in Bot. Žurn. 70: 784. 1985) was correctly, but unfortunately without any comment, proposed as a substitute name.

Leenhouts (in Blumea 9: 406-408. 1959), wanting to maintain usage, proposed “Canarium pimela Leenh. nom. nov.” for Pimela nigra. According to Art. 53.1 “C. pimela Leenh.” is not a later homonym of C. pimela K. D. König as the two names are homotypic. Acceptance of a later isonym does not seem to be in accordance with the general “spirit” of the Code, but determining the status of C. pimela Leenh. is not a straightforward matter.

As the statutory base for his action, Leenhouts invoked Art. 81 of the Stockholm Code of 1952, now Art. 58.3, which states that “... an author may adopt the epithet of a previously illegitimate name of the taxon if there is no obstacle to its employment in the new position or sense ...”. However, except for authorship, there is nothing new to “C. pimela Leenh.”, and Art. 58.3 cannot be applied to cover the case. Art. 33 Ex. 6 indirectly suggests that Leenhouts’s combination is to be regarded as a bibliographic error for C. pimela K. D. König. Art. 45.4 may be applicable.

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as to intent in the current case: "... validly published earlier homonyms ... shall cause rejection of their later homonyms", when for "homonyms" one might read "hominyms and isonyms". Finally, Art. 14 Note 1 refers to the "... same name with the same type but with a different place and date of valid publication", i.e. an isonym, though in a different context not relevant to our case.

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