(262) A proposal concerning the valid publication of suprageneric “autonyms”

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The Berlin Code (Greuter & al. in Regnum Veg. 118. 1988) provided for autonyms at three taxonomic levels: subdivisions of families (Art. 19.3–19.4), subdivisions of genera (Art. 22.1–22.2), and infraspecific taxa (Art. 26.1–26.2). Autonyms were accepted as validly published names (Art. 32.6). The status of names, in these rank groups, that included the type of the adopted name of the family, genus, or species to which they were assigned but were not autonyms was not explicitly defined. The latter names violated Art. 19.3, 22.1, or 26.1, respectively:

“The name of any [subdivision of a family, subdivision of a genus, infraspecific taxon] that includes the type of the adopted, legitimate name of the [family, genus, species] to which it is assigned is to [be based on the generic name equivalent to that type, repeat that generic name unaltered as its epithet, repeat the specific epithet unaltered as its final epithet].”

As Art. 32.1 of the Berlin Code required that “In order to be validly published, a name of a taxon (autonyms excepted) must [...] have a form which complies with the provisions of Arts. 16-27”, one could by implication conclude that such names were not validly published.

In the case of infraspecific taxa and subdivisions of genera, the fact that names that did not conform to the autonym provisions were not validly published was made explicit in the Tokyo Code (Greuter & al. in Regnum Veg. 131. 1994), in Art. 22.2 and 26.2, respectively. But while the quoted portions of Art. 32.1 and Art. 19.3 (which had become Art. 19.4) in the Tokyo Code remained unchanged, the names of subdivisions of families covered by Art. 19.4 were no longer considered autonyms, and there was no corresponding provision to the effect that names that did not conform to Art. 19.4 were not validly published. The reason for this divergence of treatment was the fact that names of subdivisions of families are not combinations; and although it is customary to do so, there is no obligation to assign the named taxa in these ranks to a validly named family. At present it must be inferred that names published in contravention of Art. 19.4, while incorrect, can nevertheless be validly published, but we believe that it is desirable to make this conclusion explicit by adding an apposite Note to Art. 19.

(262) Proposal to add the following Note to Art. 19.4 of the Melbourne Code:

“Note 2bis. A name of a subdivision of a family that includes the type of the adopted, legitimate name of the family to which it is assigned, but is not formed from the generic name equivalent to that type, is incorrect but may nevertheless be validly published and may become correct in a different context.”

The following Example could be added to Art. 19:

“Ex. 4bis. The name Lippieae Endl. (Gen. Pl.: 633. 1838), designating a tribe of Verbenaceae J. St.-Hil. that includes both Lippia L. and Verbena L., the name from which the accepted name of the family is formed, was nevertheless validly published by Endlicher. Although originally incorrect, it may become correct if used for a tribe of Verbenaceae that includes Lippia but excludes Verbena.”