

XIII. COMMENT ON A FEW NOMENCLATORIAL CONGRESS PROPOSALS

In the Synopsis of Proposals for the Botanical Congress at Montreal Dr Lanjouw has in his capacity of Rapporteur général given his well-considered opinion on each proposal, except for that on nomina specifica conservanda where he found fit to postpone his comment.

There are three proposals on which I cannot follow his advice. These three instances are the following:

Principle IV (Synopsis page 8)

The present text in the Code reads:

"Each taxonomic group can bear only one correct name, the earliest that is in accordance with the Rules, except in specified cases."

In the Rules, however, it is stated in Art.6 and 11 that the correct name depends on the "circumscription, position, and rank", which means that more than one correct name is admitted. Therefore in the present version of the Code Principle IV is contrary to Art.6 and 11. This is a very principal question.

The new version proposed by Silva (Taxon 8, p.7) removes this contradiction. It is worded:

"Each taxonomic group with a given circumscription, position, and rank can bear only one correct name."

Unfortunately Silva has omitted to add the restriction at the end of the version in the Code: "except in specified cases". This should be retained, as in Art.16 "the principle of priority is stated not to be applicable to names of taxa above the rank of order" resulting in a certain freedom of correct names, and in Art.18 note 2 certain specified families have two correct names, whereas there were also alternatives for naming hybrids.

Therefore it seems that the old version can stand if behind "one correct name" is simply added "under a certain circumscription, position, and rank", which is the essence of Silva's proposal.

New Principle VIII (Synopsis page 9)

Proposal A by Silva reads:

"Names of taxonomic groups of the rank of genus and above are monomial; names of taxonomic groups of the rank of subgenus down to and including species are binomial; names of taxonomic groups of the rank of subspecies and below are trinomial."

The names treated in this proposed principle are of four categories: 1) generic and above, 2) infrageneric, 3) specific, and 4) infraspecific.

- 1) Generic name and above. This is agreed are monomials.
- 2) Infrageneric names are by Silva assumed to be binomials. But this is contrary to Art.21 in which it is clearly stated that they are a combination of a generic name and a subdivisional epithet connected by a term denoting its rank. If there is only one epithet, the name of the infrageneric taxon is a binary combination, in case of more epithets it may be a tertiary, quaternary, etc. combination, each subsequent epithet being preceded by an indication of its rank. This is logically similar to the way in which infraspecific epithets are indicated as explained in Art.24.
They are clearly not binomials, but binary, tertiary, etc. combinations, as the mention of the rank must separate the words indicating the name of the genus and the epithets.
- 3) Specific names. A specific name is, naturally, also a combination, viz a binary combination, i.e. a monomial (generic name) followed by a specific epithet, but through the unique position of the rank of species in botanical nomenclature and taxonomy the indication of the rank of the specific epithet is omitted, by which the specific name becomes a binomial form.
- 4) Infraspecific taxa. Silva states in his proposal that infraspecific taxa are trinomials, three words following each other. This would lead to a nomenclature as used in zoology, *Pica pica pica* L. This system is not in accordance with the Rules and it is not desirable. It is also contrary to, for example, Art.24 where names of infraspecific taxa are rightly called "ternary combinations" in

which the rank of the third word (the infraspecific epithet) is preceded by an indication of its rank. Moreover, names of infraspecific taxa are frequently more complicated, quaternary, etc., which may for convenient use be abbreviated to ternary combinations. A ternary combination is a binomial (the specific name), followed by indication of rank, and the epithet. But that is not a trinomial.

Conclusion. The definitions contained in the proposed new principle have already been adequately defined in Art.16-24, as is mentioned by the Rapporteur, who rightly denies their position among the principles and refers the proposal to chapter III.

To me it seems entirely superfluous to introduce this kind of "summary" of sections 2-6 of chapter III as a new article.

Anyhow, as I hope to have shown above, its present wording is distinctly inadequate.

New Article 62bis (Synopsis page 61)

This article, by Rickett & Camp, is a most extraordinarily revolutionary proposal put forward for the Congress. Its advantage, meaning, and application go beyond my understanding. It reads:

"No name, even prior, may displace a hitherto accepted name unless it is associated with a holotype cited in the original place of publication."

In the first place it violates the principle of priority, the basis of our Rules. Though we have, for matters of convenience, already curtailed that principle in accepting starting dates and a few hundreds of specified nomina generica conservanda, the principle of priority should remain the essence of the Rules.

In the second place the proposed new article refers to "names", that is of all categories. As the supraspecific names have no holotype in the sense of Art.7 their inclusion makes the proposal impossible, because inapplicable.

In the third place I have through three decades of daily experience learned how very few species or infraspecific taxa actually are represented by an indubitable holotype. It is specially in the last two decades that the gradually more strict application of the Rules is laying such value on the holotype, and that holotypes are (now: must) actually (be) designated in descriptions of new taxa. According to my estimate of at most 5% of all species a holotype is in existence. It is extremely rare that the original author has in-

licated one single specimen or sheet as the holotype, and in a still smaller percentage the holotype has been cited in the original place of publication. This situation is precisely the reason that all systematists in their revisions and monographs are actively engaged in taking care of choosing lectotypes from syntypes or paratypes or when the original material has been destroyed, or cannot be located, to try to replace them by isotypes or neotypes. In the light of the new article all this work will be useless, even syntypes, isotypes, and paratypes will lose their value (sic).

Fourth. As the article is intended to be retroactive its consequence will be that the names through almost the entire plant kingdom are forever "untouchables" except the so-called "accepted names" for which inter alia obviously no holotype is required! Taxonomic work will thereby seriously be impeded as combining genera and species or segregating them, or giving them another rank, will be impossible unless they are based on a "holotype indicated by the original author in the original place of publication". But as the majority of the names will belong to the untouchables they will be unmanageable" and an unimaginably confused situation will arise.

Fifth. The latter point leads immediately to consider "what are accepted names?" By whom must they have been accepted? Because all names must have definitely been accepted by their author in order to be validly published (Art.33). Nomenclaturally we know of no alternative.

The proposal is obviously emanated from the utopian wishful thinking that we can in a simple way start a new nomenclature and do away with the history of the past two centuries of taxonomical work. But plant taxonomy is essentially a historical science.

Therefore, let us go on with typification as best as we can to attain in future a situation in which all names are typified.