

THE CITATION OF SPECIES NAMES AND THE ROLE OF THE AUTHOR'S NAME

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ABSTRACT. - The rationale and procedure of using author's names after species names is discussed. The present comment argues against both the practices of having more than three authors describe a new taxon, and of one or several authors describing a new taxon in the paper of others. The choice of species names is also discussed with perspective to general scientific usage. To this effect, several recommendations are made for the new version of the zoological code now under preparation by the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature.

Article 51 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) (1985) recommends that when a species' name is cited in a scientific publication for the first time, the author(s) of the scientific name and the year it was published should also be indicated. The following note comments on this practice, disusses some of the problems faced, and makes suggestions on how the misuse of this recommendation can be avoided.

The inclusion of author's (or authors') names in citing a species is primarily intended for the purpose of aiding the search for literature and information. It is not, as many detractors would have it, merely to promote the reputation of a scientist or simply an egotistical exercise. The value of knowing the author's name so as to be able to track down the original reference which describes the species is much more important than merely knowing who the person responsible for the name is. There is, as yet, no other effective way to keep track of authors, publication dates and to trace the original references.

In recent years, there has been a tendency for some taxonomists to credit the authorship for a species different from the authorship of the whole paper. For example, one may give the authors for a new species as "Smith & Tan", whereas the whole paper, which describes several other new species as well, is authored by "Tan, Sim & Yussof". In cases such as this, it is often obvious that even though there is only one paper, different people have apparently prepared the descriptions of different species, and the authors of the paper wish to have the credits shared accordingly. The problem however, is that authors sometimes unknowingly contravene a part of the Code. New species are given authors' names (say

“Smith & Tan”, in the above example) different from that which appear in the title page (say “Tan, Sim & Yussuf” in the above example), but there is no specific mention anywhere else in the main paper that the particular new species in question was described only by “Smith & Tan”. In a few cases, species author names which do not appear in the main title page are acknowledged for their support, help and/or assistance, but rarely is the kind of “help” or “assistance” specified.

As to the proper citation of authors, the Code is quite clear in that in the original description, it has to be explained if someone other than the author of the paper is responsible for the name and for the conditions that make that name available (here the description). Article 50a states that “The author of a name is the person who first publishes it [Art. 8] in a way that satisfies the criteria of availability [Arts. 10 to 20] ... If it is clear from the contents of the publication that only one of joint authors, or some other person, is alone responsible both for the name and the satisfying the criteria of availability other than publication, then that person is the author of the name”.

By citing just an authors’ name after the new species name does not make clear that the description is the work of that author. Henri Milne Edwards (1834) in his “Histoire Naturelles des Crustacés” in several instances used the author’s name “Lamarck” or “Latreille” after a new species name, usually with a footnote “coll. du Muséum”. It proved later that in such cases, Milne Edwards had used names written on the labels of the type specimens by Lamarck or Latreille, who, however, never published that name or the description of the species whose name Milne Edwards used. Milne Edwards used these old manuscript names and provided the descriptions himself. Many later authors cited the species name with Lamarck (or Latreille) as author. The Code effectively did away with this practice. This is the origin for Article 50a. Similarly, De Haan (1841), in his Fauna Japonica published a new scyllarid lobster species “*Scyllarus Haani* v. Siebold”. Von Siebold had suggested this name, and asked De Haan to use it. As the description was entirely by De Haan, carcinologists now cite the species as “*Scyllarides haani* (De Haan, 1841)”.

In a few cases, an author’s name does not appear in the main title page but is cited as the author or co-author for a species described within the paper and is acknowledged for his assistance. In such a case, the citation of the actual author(s) responsible for a name becomes very difficult to decide.

In fact, it is usually a single author who actually makes the description. Even if more than one author is responsible for the work, and both have to be cited, Article 50a does not need to cause any “unpleasantness” as it still allows authors for a new species different from the authors of the paper. It only has to be clearly specified somewhere in the text, preferably in the introduction. The addition of an additional line or two will not significantly “pad up” a paper. If credits need to be duely shared, this is the best way to do it. It is ignoring the strict application of the Code that causes the difficulty (and confusion).

Having said all this, it is worth remembering that Science itself is sometimes affected by political realities and it is often easy to criticise without understanding the circumstances behind certain actions. For example, in its heyday, strict Communist egalitarian ideology demanded that even the non-scientific members of a laboratory share in the authorship of the resident scientist’s discoveries. Not surprisingly, the list of authors for a paper or a species becomes frightfully long.

In any event, there are several ways of looking at this practice of having the author of a species different from that in the title page of the paper.

As citing an author's name is primarily for co-workers to track down the paper which describes the species, to have one author describe a species in another author's paper complicates matters. Thus for example, if "Smith & Tan" describe a species in a paper by "Tan, Sim & Yussof (1994)"; the citing of the author of a species reads as either "Smith & Tan, in Tan, Sim & Yussof, 1994", or merely "Smith & Tan, 1994". Usage of just "Smith & Tan, 1994" alone makes it virtually impossible to track down the reference in almost any major compilation of papers (e.g. Zoological Records). This effectively defeats the purpose for having author's names cited in the first place. Only by citing "Smith & Tan, in Tan, Sim & Yussof, 1994", can the original reference be traced. The situation becomes even worse if the authors' names are very long, like those of Zariquiey-Alvarez, Delamare-Deboutteville or Ducrotay de Blainville, are involved. Having such a long author citation can only make nomenclature all the more tedious and loathsome; as well as reinforce perceptions that taxonomists are egocentric publicists who are less interested in science than fame. Having a list of authors' names which is substantially longer than the actual scientific name of the species becomes quite ridiculous under any circumstance.

The second point pertains to reducing the number of papers which "flood" the information services annually. A paper which describes ten species is certainly "better" than ten papers which each describe one species. This is fine if there is only one author. But if in the former case, each species has a different author (or combination of authors), it effectively defeats the purpose for having one paper in the first place. The citing of each species and its synonymy becomes very tedious. In such cases, it is probably less confusing if there were ten separate papers under different authorships.

It is also worth noting here that when naming a species, the taxonomist forces the use of the specific name he (or she or they) has chosen (as well as his, her or their name(s)) on zoologists of this and subsequent generations. Zoologists and the Code have almost no defence against species (or genus) names which are tediously long, unpronounceable, atrocious, stupid or grammatically incorrect; nor can they do anything about ridiculously long multiple authors names. Taxonomists must feel that their responsibility is to provide tools or devices (which is what names are) which are as easy to use as possible. Names should be short, euphonious, non-controversial, and if possible, help bring attention to outstanding features of the taxon to facilitate identification. There have been only a few instances in which the names proposed by taxonomists were such that the Commission had to intervene. In a classic case, Dybowski in 1926 created generic and subgeneric names for amphipods which were so long and awkward that it would have resulted in untold nightmares for zoologists if the Commission had not stepped in. Names like "*Siemieniewicziechinogammarus*", *Axelboeckia**kytodermogammarus*, *Garjajewia**kytodermogammarus*, and "*Cancelloidokyto**dermogammarus* (*Loveninuskytodermogammarus*)" defied common sense and it was no surprise that the Commission suppressed these names in 1929 (ICZN, Opinion 105) with the comment that if it had not done so, it "... will clearly result in greater confusion than uniformity".

A chosen name can also sometimes become contentious for other, e.g. religious reasons. A case in point was brought to the Commission by Joshua Baily in 1954 and Myra Keen in 1955 (see Baily, 1955; Keen, 1955). The generic name *Jumala* (a group of boreal whelks) was first proposed by Friele in 1882, thinking that it was the name of an old Lapp deity.

Jumala later proved, however, to be the present Lapp and Finnish name for the Christian God. For this reason, Friele requested Norman in 1893 (p. 352) to substitute the name *Ukko* (the old Finnish God of the Winds) for *Jumala*. According to the Code however, *Jumala* Friele, 1882, has priority over *Ukko* Friele, 1893, despite what Friele might have wished for. Bailey and Keen applied to the Commission to suppress the name *Jumala* as it is "... calculated to give offense on religious grounds". It was an actively argued case, and the final voting by the Commission was very close - 13 for suppressing *Jumala* and 11 against. In Asia, an name like *Barilius buddhae* (a cyprinid fish), so-named because it was "... found near a cave sacred to Buddha" (Fowler, 1934: 144), might similarly be regarded as offensive on religious grounds. All this goes to show that a zoologist has to be very careful indeed in giving names. The zoologist has a responsibility to future generations to ensure that the chosen name can be used with ease and without problems.

The discovery and naming of new species can also be highly competitive in some taxa, and that has led to another unfortunate situation in the taxonomic sciences. The citation of author's names after new species often becomes a "symbol" for personal recognition and publicity. In such cases, the charges that taxonomy is no more than an egotistical exercise in self-glorification appear justified. A practice which encourages the use of multiple species authorships, or worse, different combinations of multiple authors in one paper, even if construed for the best of reasons, can only invite further criticisms of an important science whose main function is to describe, document and better understand the diversity of animal life.

In view of some of the above discussion, the new version of the Code currently under preparation by the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature should seriously consider some of the following amendments to the current (1985) version:

1. Authors should be discouraged from publishing new species in the papers of other authors.
2. The Code should ban the practice of rearranging the authors' names for different species in different combinations in one paper.
3. The wording for Article 50a must be made even more explicit so that there can be no "misinterpretation" of its contents. Incorrect practices should be specifically mentioned and pertinent examples given.
4. The number of authors of a species should be restricted to three at most. Having too many authors serves no real purpose.

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