

Nomenclature of Ostracoda, Responsibility of Authors, and the Code of Ethics

Eugen Karl KEMPF

Ostracodologists are using living or fossil Ostracoda as objects of their studies. Like in other fields of zoology and palaeontology, genera and species are described and Latin names are given for them according to the Linnaean system and since Linnaean times. That makes it easier to handle Ostracoda for different aspects of research. With time, a lot of information is connected with the name of a genus or species, so that the mere mentioning of a generic or binominal name is answering questions to knowledgeable persons. For the formation and handling of names for genera and species, as well as for higher levels, an International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (ICZN) has been established. Since the end of 1999, the 4th edition of that code is in effect (International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature 1999).

Early in the seventies of the last century, after the elaboration of a database system for ostracod genera and species, I started to extract and compile the data from the original literature. Immediately, I was confronted with several problems. Most of these are described in detail on the introductory pages of the published volumes from my database (KEMPF 1980–1997; 1986–1996; 2002–2006; 2002–2008).

The greatest problem was connected with changed combinations, that is to answer the question who for the first time combined a species-group name with a generic name other than the original. In this respect a weak point exists in the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. The rules of that code are regulating the establishment of valid names for genera and species in great detail, but what is happening afterwards, when these names are used and combinations are changed, is less well or not at all regulated. The citation of the names of authors is optional, for instance, and merely recommendations are given as far as the change of combinations is concerned. Changes in rank, however, and some other procedures are regulated, but differently from the way computers work.

In practice, new combinations of ostracod species appear in the text of original publications often without any explanation, or even implicitly. As a consequence, for some years I had to keep most changed combinations in a separate file, until the author who had used a certain changed combination for the first time seemed to be reliably detected.

Looking at species lists of Ostracoda on the internet, like Global Names Index or WoRMS, hardly ever the names of authors of changed combinations can be found. That is no service for scientific research, and regarding Ostracoda a state of the art of decades ago.

A less important problem was connected with homonyms. Astonishingly, a great number of homonyms could be registered. To a certain degree this was resulting from the fact that for the first time the names of extant and of fossil ostracod species of all geological ages were brought together in one index.

What to do with homonyms and how to create substitutional names is regulated quite well, and mainly for that reason also a Code of Ethics has been embodied in the ICZN. Accordingly, from the early nineteen-seventies onward I wrote letters to quite a number of authors of junior homonyms. The reactions were quite different. Some authors answered promptly and within a certain span of time published a replacement name. Others answered that they will try to publish a new name, or want to leave that problem to other colleagues, or are not knowing how to solve that problem. Some authors did not answer at all, and nothing happened. Somehow, there seems to exist a growing deficiency of responsibility for created names of taxa of which authors should be aware of.

In recent years, with the establishment and electronic accessibility of lists of genera and species with the aid of the internet, persons outside of ostracodology are producing new names for ostracod taxa, too. Some of those new generic names are: *Oertlia* for *Vernoniella*, *Soleaua* for *Victoria*, *Crasquinia* for *Valentinia*, *Cemalia* for *Delosia*, *Hartmannosa* for *Palaciosia*, *Bektasia* for *Reubenella*, *Keslingolophia* for *Endolophia*, *Aysegulina* for *Limburgina*. In all those cases naked names were published without mentioning of the type species, or citing changed combinations.

Such jobs could have been done by the ostracodologists themselves. It would even be better, if homonyms could be avoided as far as possible. The necessary reference works are available. Authors of manuscripts, and also the colleagues reviewing manuscripts for publication, should carefully check the proposals of new names, especially in such cases where simple descriptive Latin words are used to name a new species.

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Authors address:

Eugen Karl Kempf

University at Cologne, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Institute of Geology and Mineralogy, Zülpicher Str. 49a, D-50674 Köln, Germany

kempf@uni-koeln.de