Without conservation some 20 new combinations would be required under *Cardiacanthus,* and the Committee recommends avoidance of this by acceptance of the proposal.

(741) Proposal on 1558 *Oberonia* Lindley (Orchidaceae). Proposed by G. Panigrahi and A. K. Dubey in Taxon 33: 333–334. 1984. Votes: part a) 7–2, 1 abstention; part b) 12–0.

Oberonia is already conserved, and the proposal is merely to make two editorial changes in the listing. a) it was proposed to delete 'typ. cons.' and the Committee agrees that this should be done. b) it was proposed to indicate that *O. iridifolia* Lindley, given as the type of *Oberonia,* is illegitimate since its protologue included *Malaxis ensiformis* J. E. Smith, and again the Committee is in agreement. Both changes proposed should be made.

Correction. In Report 30 of this Committee, under Proposal 594 on *Euphorbia verrucosa* (Taxon 35: 560. 1986), four lines from the end of this item, the word 'not' should read 'now'. This corrects the former rather unexpected advice.

R. K. Brummitt, The Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AE, U.K.

RETENTION OF BOTANICAL LATIN FOR DESCRIPTION OF NEW TAXA

William T. Stearn[1]

The use of Latin in systematic botany for the naming and description of new taxa, as an act of international convenience now made obligatory, derives from its medieval use as the international language of diplomacy, scholarship and the Christian church. In the 16th century, when botany developed as a descriptive science out of herbalism, it remained the natural language in which Ruel, Brasavola, Gessner, Fuchs, Mattioli, Euricius Cordus, Valerius Cordus, Cesalpino, L'Obel, Clusius, Camerarius, Thal, Colonna, Alpino and Gaspard Bauhin communicated previously unrecorded knowledge, even though some of them also wrote in their own vernacular languages for more local use. Without this wide 16th-century usage of Latin, it is doubtful whether we would have Latin-based international botanical nomenclature now. Their Latin was a living derivative of medieval Latin, not the classical literary Latin of the Golden and Silver Ages of Latin literature, not that of Caesar, Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, Pliny, Tacitus and others. Further modified for scientific use it became the language in which during the 17th century the two Bauhin brothers, Aldrovandi, Morison and Ray, and in the 18th century Tournefort, Dillenius, Gmelin, Haller, Linnaeus and others published important works. Had Linnaeus's publications been solely in his native Swedish their impact on botany would have been as slight as those in Czech by Jan Svatopluk Presl, whereas those of his brother Karel Borivoj Presl written in Latin became internationally known, particularly to pteridologists.

A list of the fundamental works in botanical Latin published during the 19th and 20th centuries would be very long. No-one doing taxonomic research can avoid consulting them. They include such massive works as J. G. Agardh, *Species, Genera et Ordines Algarum*; Bentham and Hooker, *Genera Plantarum*; Boissier, *Flora Orientalis*; de Candolle, *Prodromus*; De Toni, *Sylloge Algarum*; Engler, *Das Pflanzenreich*; Hayek, *Prodromus Florae Balcanicae*; Martius, *Flora Brasiliensis*; Rechinger, *Flora Iranica*; and Saccardo, *Sylloge Fungarum,* as well as lesser works. These have not been superseded in their coverage. Those botanists who need examples for their own descriptions will find them in abundance here. There is also a multitude of lesser but important works in botanical Latin such as Kerner, *Monographia Pulmonariarum*; indeed the number of original Latin descriptions and diagnoses certainly exceeds 400,000. For many plants there exists no description in any other language. Thus like it or not, we are obliged to refer to this monumental accumulation of information in Latin.

An article on the place of Latin in systematic botany in *Annals of the Bolus Herbarium* 4: 120–122

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[1] % Department of Botany, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London SW7 5DB, England.

(1927) noted that 'A serious problem arises from the virtual disappearance of Latin from the curricula of many schools, more especially in the Dominions and the United States of America'. The author then gave an extensive list of standard works in Latin, then went on to state: 'It is evident that without a good working knowledge of botanical Latin a systematic botanist is so badly handicapped that he cannot be regarded as really efficient. It is incumbent on every professional systematist who at the commencement of his career is without such knowledge to acquire it without delay, so that he may be able to profit by the works of his predecessors and to check modern identifications by comparison with the original descriptions'. That remains true.

Nevertheless, a great number of taxa native to the United States and Canada having been first described in English, it was to be expected that there should be proposals from North America to replace the compulsory botanical Latin description or diagnosis by one in English on the grounds that this in its various forms is the nearest approach now to an international language as well as the one most convenient for English speakers. Such a proposal in the past to allow English has been met by the objection that large groups of people use German, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian and these languages should also be permitted; thereby botanists would lose the convenience of having one international and politically neutral language.

A serious objection to English alone is that it is not the most suitable and precise language for recording the characters of new taxa. Over the past 50 years I have translated many English descriptions into botanical Latin for fellow botanists. Almost invariably I have had to see either a specimen or an illustration in order to ascertain what the English description was supposed to mean. As I stated in 1966, 'the care needed to draw up a description in Latin is often in itself an aid to description in the writer's mother tongue, wherein an expression may possibly bear several meanings each with a different Latin equivalent; the act of translation reveals ambiguities and forces the writer to become clear in his own mind as to what the original means'. Thus, apart from its international convenience, the retention of botanical Latin for descriptions of new taxa promotes scientific precision. It restrains hasty and careless publication. To abandon botanical Latin as the obligatory language, however much favoured by English speakers, would be a loss to taxonomy. Ideally each Latin account of a new taxon should be accompanied by a description in a modern language, a photograph of the type-specimen and an accurate drawing of significant parts enlarged, but this is rarely achieved. The argument, at one time valid, that there existed no guide to botanical Latin has been made obsolete by four modern works: Baranov, A. 1968. *Basic Latin for Plant Taxonomists.* New Delhi; Petit, E. 1979. *Grammaire Latine pour servir aux travaux de phytographie et de nomenclature botanique.* Meise (Jardin botanique nationale de Belgique); and Stearn, W. T. 1983. *Botanical Latin.* 3rd ed. Newton Abbot (David & Charles). Rizzini, C. T. 1978. Latim para biologista. Rio de Janeiro.

[Nom. Ed. note: This paper opposes Proposal 316 by McNeill et al. (Taxon 35: 882. 1986), to be voted upon as Art. 36 Prop. A. D.H.N.]

ON PARALECTOTYPES AND LECTOPARATYPES

Duncan M. Porter[1]

Hansen and Seberg (1984a) have done Peter Sell and me a disservice by ending their otherwise useful discussion of paralectotypes with the sentence (p. 709): "It should be added that the term has been used once in botany, namely by Porter (1980), who however attributed it to Sell." This implies that the term was used in a rather offhanded way. However, what I wrote in 1980 (p. 92) was,

Although the term isolectotype (Blake, 1956) does not appear in the taxonomist's lexicon (McVaugh, Ross, & Stafleu, 1968), its denotation of the duplicate of a lectotype makes it quite useful. Likewise, when a lectotype is chosen from among syntypes, it is useful to refer to the remaining syntypes as

[1] Department of Biology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, Blacksburg, VA 24061, U.S.A.