

Vaillant rides again?

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Abstract

VAILLANT RIDES AGAIN?.—The unwanted consequences of accepting post-1753 translations of pre-Linnean works are shortly discussed using the case of Vaillant and the genus *Rhaponticum* as a timely example. A modification of the current code of botanical nomenclature is suggested.

Key words: Nomenclature, pre-Linnean works, *Rhaponticum*.

Resumen

VAILLANT CABALGA DE NUEVO?.—Las consecuencias no deseadas de aceptar traducciones posteriores a 1753 de obras prelinneanas se analizan brevemente utilizando el caso de Vaillant y el género *Rhaponticum* como un oportuno ejemplo. Se propone una modificación del actual código de nomenclatura botánica.

Palabras clave: Nomenclatura, obras prelinneanas, *Rhaponticum*.

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Vaillant's shadow is long, and the undesirable consequences of the acceptance of the nomenclatural validity of a German translation of a pre-Linnean work by Vaillant (Greuter *et al.*, 2005) have resurfaced once again. The story is well documented and discussed in Brummitt (2008), Greuter & McNeill (2008), Susanna (2009) and Hind (2019), and I will offer a short recapitulation.

Greuter *et al.* (2005) unearthed an old German translation of a pre-Linnean work by Vaillant and claimed that, the translation being published after 1753, the generic names proposed in that work were nomenclaturally valid. Since then, we reluctantly

assigned to Vaillant the authorship of several genera in our most important contributions to the systematics of the Compositae-Cardueae (Susanna & Garcia-Jacas, 2007, 2009; Herrando-Moraira *et al.*, 2019). Reluctantly, because we anticipated the potential problems of a proposal that we considered contrary to nomenclatural stability and even to common sense; without any hope (and without any tangible results, like a nomenclatural Cassandra), I warned on the consequences of playing around with names (Susanna, 2009). In fact, trouble had already started when Brummitt (2008) proposed the rejection of Vaillant's translation as *opera utique*

oppressa. Brummitt's proposal was eventually approved (Brummitt, 2011; Turland *et al.*, 2018) and, accordingly, the IPNI webpage (2019) considers *Rhaponticum* Vaill. *nomen invalidum*.

As I had predicted, Hind (2019) re-lived the problem by proposing a new nomenclatural combination, *Leuzea repens* (L.) D. J. N. Hind. The reason is clear: nowadays it is widely accepted that *Leuzea* Cass. and *Rhaponticum* Adans. are the same genus (Susanna & Garcia-Jacas, 2007, 2009). If we accept Vaillant's authorship for *Rhaponticum*, the priority name is *Rhaponticum*. After "damning Vaillant" (in the words of Greuter & McNeill, 2008), the priority name is *Leuzea* Cass. However, other translations of Vaillant have been published and the issue of the validity of Vaillant's generic names is far from resolved (Alexander Sennikov, pers. comm.). We are again at the starting point, and the nomenclatural instability resulting from these interchanges of ingenuities is exasperating.

Taxonomy, and its sibling, botanical nomenclature, should never be a frivolous game of wits. It is a frivolity to dig up from a library an obscure treaty that nobody has cared to read to mess around with the authorship of names in common use as in the case of *Centaurea crocata* Franco discussed by Garcia-Jacas & Susanna (2020). It is a frivolity to begin a new round of nomenclatural combinations when the ink of the previous ones has barely dried out. The pilgrimage of Linnaeus' *Centaurea repens* L. through *Acroptilon* Cass., *Rhaponticum* and *Leuzea* is an appalling example. Incidentally, all of the species of *Rhaponticum* were combined under *Leuzea* by Holub (1973). One species, however, is missing from the list, and I will hereby propose the new combination as my personal contribution to the fray (see appendix).

There is an obvious and very easy solution, and I believe that it is quite sensible too: The International Code of Nomenclature (Turland *et al.*, 2018) should state clearly in article 30 that a post-1753 translation of a pre-Linnaean work does not automatically infuse nomenclatural validity to that work, which should be automatically rejected as *opera utique oppressa*. In the meantime, I would ask my colleagues for a more serious approach to botanical nomenclature.

APPENDIX

Leuzea chinensis (S. Moore) Susanna, **comb. nov.**
 ≡ *Serratula chinensis* S. Moore in *Journal of Botany, British and Foreign* 13: 228 (1875) [Basionym]
 ≡ *Rhaponticum chinense* (S. Moore) L. Martins & Hidalgo in *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 152(4): 461 (11 December 2006) ≡ *Klaseopsis chinensis* (S. Moore) L. Martins, *Taxon* 55(4): 974 (20 December 2006). **Type:** China, Kewkiang, *G. Shearer s. n.*, 1873 (isotype K000251780 [photo!])

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