



The endings of specific nomina dedicated to persons should not be emended: nomenclatural issues in Phalangopsidae (Hexapoda: Grylloidea)

ANDRÉ NEMÉSIO¹ & ALAIN DUBOIS²

¹Instituto de Biologia, Universidade Federal de Uberlândia, Rua Ceará, S/N, Campus Umarama, Uberlândia, MG 38.400-902, Brazil. E-mail: andre.nemesio@gmail.com

²Vertébrés: Reptiles & Amphibiens, UMR 7205 OSEB, Département Systématique & Evolution, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, CP 30, 25 rue Cuvier, 75005 Paris, France. E-mail: adubois@mnhn.fr

Costa (2012) intended to “correct” the spellings of the specific epithets of two species of phalangopsid crickets (Grylloidea: Phalangopsidae) described from Brazil in Mews *et al.* (2009). According to Costa (2012), both specific nomina “were incorrectly formed under the articles of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (1999), leading to the need of justified emendations according to the article 33.2.2 of the Code...”.

The alleged “incorrectness” is the fact that Mews & Mól (in Mews *et al.* 2009) dedicated the specific epithets of both cricket species to two different women, but used the traditional masculine genitive ending in *-i*, instead of the more conventional feminine genitive ending in *-ae* (in both cases, it would be only needed to add *-e*, since both names already ended in “a”). Thus, according to Costa (2012), *Izecksohniella almeidai* Mews & Mól in Mews, Mól & Sperber, 2009 should be corrected to *Izecksohniella almeidae* and *Marliella titai* Mews & Mól in Mews, Mól & Sperber, 2009 should be corrected to *Marliella titae*.

Costa (2012) presented a very simple rationale for his action, only quoting Article 31.1.2 of the *Code* (Anonymous 1999 – “A species-group name, if a noun in the genitive case [...] formed **directly** [our bold] from a modern personal name, is to be formed by adding to the stem of that name *-i* if the personal name is that of a man, *-orum* if of men or of man (men) and woman (women) together, *-ae* if of a woman, and *-arum* if of women; the stem of such a name is determined by the action of the original author when forming the genitive”) and invoked Article 31.1.3 (“The original spelling of a name formed under Articles 31.1.1 and 31.1.2 is to be preserved (Art. 32.2) unless it is incorrect...”).

Costa (2012) largely ignored all previous discussions on the subject of emendation of specific nomina derived from personal names (*e.g.* Brandon-Jones *et al.* 2007; Dubois 2007) as well as other parts of the *Code* itself which clearly define what should be considered “incorrect”. For example, article 32.5.1 (“If there is in the original publication itself, without recourse to any external source of information, clear evidence of an inadvertent error, such as a lapsus calami or a copyist’s or printer’s error, it must be corrected. **Incorrect transliteration or latinization**, or use of an inappropriate connecting vowel, **are not to be considered inadvertent errors.**” [our bolds]) was not considered at all. It explicitly means that if an author makes a latinization mistake, even as a consequence of ignorance, it is not to be considered an inadvertent error. Furthermore, as shown by Dubois (2007), a genitive in *-i* for a nomen based on a woman’s name is not necessarily a latinization mistake if this nomen is treated as a Latin nomen of the second declension, as some nomina of this declension in classical Latin are indeed feminine.

One of the most important philosophical novelties of the Linnean revolutionary nomenclatural system was its recognition that nomina serve just to label, not to describe, characterize or diagnose taxa. In order to be efficient and unambiguous, any system which uses “labels” must require a stability of the latter. If these labels are words, this means that the spelling of these words should not change, or should change only in exceptional cases. In the nomenclatural system of the *Code*, only two situations require changes in the spellings of nomina, but both are strictly regulated: (i) the endings of specific and subspecific epithets may change when these epithets are combined with generic nomina having a grammatical gender different from that of the original nomen; (ii) the endings of any nomen of family, tribe or related taxon must change whenever this nomen is transferred to a taxon of a different rank. Apart from these two situations, the spelling of a nomen should not change, except in very rare cases (see below). Scientific nomina do not need to “mean” anything. The *Code*, by the way, recognizes this particularity when it allows that nomina be formed by arbitrary combination of letters, given that they form an euphonious (but of course meaningless) “word”. Brandon-Jones *et al.* (2007) and Dubois (2007), although disagreeing in specific points, agreed that specific epithets derived from personal names should not be emended and there is no ground in the *Code* to justify such emendations (for several reasons