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On the taxonomy of some Palaearctic Aleocharinae (Coleoptera: Staphylinidae)

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A b s t r a c t : The synonymy of *Atlantostiba* PACE 1994 with *Alevonota* THOMSON 1858 is confirmed. The replacement name *Emmelostiba gansuica* nom. n. is proposed for *E. chinensis* PACE 1998. *Emmelostiba xinjiangensis* PACE 2004, syn. n., an unnecessary replacement name, is an objective synonym of *Alevonota chinensis* PACE 1993. Four names are revalidated: *Euphorbagria* ASSING 1997, *Alevonota pacei* ASSING 2002, *Cordalia permutata* ASSING 2002, and *Leptusa acuta* ASSING 2002.

K e y w o r d s : Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Aleocharinae, Palaearctic region, new synonymy, nomen novum, revalidation.

Introduction

Among scientific taxonomists, it is generally agreed upon that serious taxonomic research must rely on a thorough evaluation of available data, on a consideration of as many characters as possible, on a revision of the relevant material (including the types), on a sound knowledge of the taxa involved, and on due consideration of phylogenetic principles. In a recent article on Aleocharinae from China, however, PACE (2004) changes generic attributions without stating any reasons whatsoever, revalidates names and proposes synonymies without studying types and partly referring to species from the Canary Islands [sic], in at least two cases apparently even without knowing the species involved. Phylogenetic principles are neglected completely. Some of these proposals are addressed in more detail below.

Alevonota THOMSON

Atlantostiba PACE 1994: 72 ff., resyn.

C o m m e n t s : In the course of a comprehensive taxonomic and systematic study of the Canarian aleocharines previously attributed to the genera *Alevonota*, *Apteranopsis* JEANNEL (now a subgenus of *Drusilla* LEACH of the Lomechusini), *Geostiba* THOMSON, and *Atlantostiba* PACE it was concluded that (1) they all belonged to *Alevonota* and that (2), except for *A. sollemnis* ASSING, they were probably monophyletic, suggesting a single colonisation event. Furthermore, *Atlantostiba franzi* from the Anaga range (Tenerife), *Sipalia franzi* PALM from the Teno range (Tenerife), and *Alevonota oromii* ASSING from Palo Blanco (Tenerife) are very closely related; it seems likely that they form a monophyletic group. Consequently *Atlantostiba* was synonymised with *Alevonota*

and the replacement name *A. pacei* was proposed for the secondary homonym *A. franzi* PACE 1994 (nec *Sipalia franzi* PALM 1976) (ASSING 2002c). Without any reference to the arguments put forward in this study, apparently without knowing other Canarian representatives of *Alevonota* (including *A. franzi* (PALM)), and completely neglecting phylogenetic considerations, PACE (2004) revalidated both the genus *Atlantostiba* and the species-group name *A. franzi*. His argumentation is exclusively typological and solely relies on six morphological "differences", which, he believes, distinguish *Atlantostiba* from *Alevonota*: the shapes of the spermathecal duct and the aedeagal apex, the transverse pronotum, the presence of spines on the protibia, the two-jointed labial palpi, and the shape of the ligula. However, a comparison with other species, especially from the Canaries, reveals no differences in the morphology of the protibiae (in *A. franzi* (PALM), for instance, the distribution of spines and setae is similar) and in the shape of the ligula. In addition, the morphological diversity of the spermatheca and the aedeagus in *Alevonota* is similar to that of other athetine genera; apart from that, the characteristics of the primary sexual characters in *A. franzi* are doubtlessly apomorphic and consequently phylogenetically irrelevant. The pronotum is even less transverse than in some other *Alevonota* species (e. g. *A. gracilentia*), and the observation that the labial palpi are two-jointed is erroneous (they are, in fact, three-jointed). Apparently, some characters pointed out by PACE (1994, 2004) are based on artefacts; he examined only a single specimen. In conclusion, his argumentation is insufficient even by typological standards, so that his proposal to reinstate *Atlantostiba* and *A. franzi* as valid names is reversed and the following synonymies are established again:

Alevonota THOMSON = *Atlantostiba* PACE 1994; resyn.

Alevonota pacei Assing 2002 = *Atlantostiba franzi* PACE 1994; resyn.

"*Emmelostiba*" chinensis PACE

C o m m e n t s : Apparently realising that what he had described as *Alevonota chinensis* PACE 1993 was not congeneric with other representatives of the genus, PACE (2004) moved the species to *Emmelostiba* PACE. He noticed the secondary homonymy with *Emmelostiba chinensis* PACE 1998, but instead of replacing the junior name he proposed a nomen novum, *E. xinjiangensis*, for the senior name. Thus, *E. xinjiangensis* PACE 2004 must be regarded as an unnecessary replacement name and a junior objective synonym of *Alevonota chinensis* PACE, and *Emmelostiba chinensis* PACE 1998 is a junior secondary homonym of *E. chinensis* (PACE 1993). SMETANA & LÖBL (2004) indicate *E. xinjiangensis* as a replacement name for *E. chinensis* PACE 1998, but this is apparently based on a misinterpretation of PACE's proposals. The taxonomic situation is additionally complicated by the fact that *Emmelostiba* is a synonymic genus-group name (VOGEL pers. comm.), that there is considerable doubt that the representatives currently attributed to the genus are monophyletic, and that the description of *Alevonota chinensis* is based on a single female, so that is not even certain that the two species concerned are congeners. However, until the true generic affiliations of these species are examined, at least a preliminary taxonomic rectification is required and the following nomenclatural changes are proposed:

"*Emmelostiba*" *chinensis* (PACE 1993) [ex *Alevonota*] = *Emmelostiba xinjiangensis* PACE 2004, syn. n. [unnecessary replacement name]

"*Emmelostiba*" *gansuica* nom. n. = *Emmelostiba chinensis* PACE 1998.

***Euphorbagria* ASSING, revalidated**

Euphorbagria ASSING 1997b: 64 ff.

C o m m e n t s : PACE (2004) proposes a synonymy of *Melagria* CASEY 1906 and *Euphorbagria* ASSING 1997 of the Falagriini, apparently unaware of the long-standing objective synonymy of *Melagria* with *Anaulacaspis* GANGLBAUER 1895; both genus-group names have the same type species, *Anaulacaspis nigra* (GRAVENHORST 1802). The only argument supporting PACE's (2004) argument is the similar general morphology of the spermatheca in *Melagria* (i. e. *Anaulacaspis*) and *Euphorbagria*. Firstly, however, morphological diversity of the spermatheca in Falagriini is generally low (see e. g. ASSING 1997a and HOEBEKE (1985), so that this is one of the least useful characters for taxonomic and systematic purposes, not to mention the fact that any conclusions resulting in taxonomic changes on the generic level (in fact, at any level) should always be based on as many characters as possible. Secondly, anyone at least faintly familiar with both aleocharine taxonomy and the two genera concerned would see at first glance that *Euphorbagria* is only distantly related to *Anaulacaspis* and impossibly congeneric. This only leaves the conclusion that PACE has never actually seen a specimen of *Euphorbagria*. In consequence, the latter name is here revalidated.

***Leptusa acuta* ASSING, revalidated**

Leptusa acuta ASSING 2002a: 978 f.

C o m m e n t s : PACE (2004) proposes a synonymy of *L. acuta* with *L. anmashanensis* PACE 1996. However, he neither studied the types nor does he refer to any of the distinguishing characters addressed in the original description of *L. acuta*, so that his proposal fails to meet any of the basic requirements of taxonomic work. His synonymy is based on the similarity of the aedeagus. This, however, is already explicitly mentioned in the original description of *L. acuta*, which is distinguished from *L. anmashanensis* especially by the male secondary sexual characters, which were not studied by PACE (1996, 2004), although they are highly distinctive and very conspicuous. In addition, the morphological diversity of the aedeagus is generally very low in the subgenus *Aphaireleptusa* PACE.

***Cordalia permutata* ASSING, revalidated**

Cordalia permutata ASSING 2002b: 5 ff.

C o m m e n t s : The synonymy of *C. permutata* with *C. chinensis* PACE 1993 as suggested by PACE 2004 is supported neither by a study of types nor by any arguments whatsoever and consequently not acceptable (see introduction). His reference to *C. vestita* (BOHEMAN) is somewhat doubtful, since he misinterpreted the species, as can be concluded from his identification labels attached to numerous specimens examined. For details see ASSING (2002b).

Zusammenfassung

Die Synonymie von *Atlantostiba* PACE 1994 mit *Alevonota* THOMSON 1858 wird bestätigt. *Emmelostiba gansuica* nom.n. tritt ein für das sekundäre Homonym *E. chinensis* PACE 1998.

Emmelostiba xinjiangensis PACE 2004, syn.n., ein unnötiger Ersatzname, ist ein objektives jüngeres Synonym von *Alevonota chinensis* PACE 1993. Vier Namen werden revalidiert: *Euphorbagria* ASSING 1997, *Alevonota pacei* ASSING 2002, *Cordalia permutata* ASSING 2002 und *Leptusa acuta* ASSING 2002.

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