

PROPOSED ADOPTION OF A "DECLARATION" ON THE QUESTION WHETHER ADJECTIVAL SPECIFIC NAMES CONSISTING OF NOT FULLY LATINISED WORDS SHOULD BE TREATED, UNDER ARTICLE 14 OF THE "RÈGLES", AS CONSISTING OF "BARBAROUS" WORDS AND THEREFORE AS BEING EXEMPT FROM CHANGE IN GENDER

By **FRANCIS HEMMING, C.M.G., C.B.E.**

(Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature)

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The purpose of the present application is to place before the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature certain difficulties which have come to light in connection with the spelling to be adopted for specific names consisting of direct transliterations of Greek adjectives and to invite the International Commission to provide a solution by rendering a *Declaration* clarifying the action which under Article 14 of the *Règles* should be taken in such cases.

2. This problem was first brought to the attention of the Office of the Commission by Dr. Leo Sheljuzhko (*Zoologische Sammlung des Bayerischen Staates, München, Germany*) who in a letter dated 9th December 1955 enquired what was the correct form for the specific name *melaina* if placed in a genus having a name which was masculine in gender. The word "melaina" is a direct transliteration of the feminine form of a Greek adjective, a direct transliteration of the masculine of which is "melas" and of the neuter "melan". The question for consideration is how a specific or subspecific name consisting of the word "melaina" should be formed when combined with a generic name consisting of a word having either a masculine or a neuter gender.

3. In a case such as that discussed above there are broadly two alternatives : either a specific name such as *melaina* should take the form *melas* if placed in a genus having a name of masculine gender such as *Parnassius* (the genus to which the taxon bearing the above name cited by Dr. Sheljuzhko is currently referred) or (b) such a name should be treated as not being subject to change when the taxon bearing that name is placed in a genus having a name which is either masculine or neuter in gender.

4. As a preliminary to the further consideration of the present problem, I invited Professor the Rev. L. W. Grensted, Consulting Classical Adviser to the International Commission, to examine and report on the problems involved. The very interesting Report subsequently furnished by Professor Grensted is attached to the present note as an Appendix. It will be seen from Professor Grensted's Report that he takes the view that the best course will be to treat specific names of the class discussed above as consisting (in the terminology of the *Règles*) of "barbarous" words and therefore as being exempt from the normal rules regarding the agreement in gender of adjectival specific names with the generic names with which they are combined. It will be seen also that in his Report Professor Grensted raises also the question of the treatment to be accorded to specific names belonging to a somewhat analogous group, namely names consisting of compound words which are adjectival in form in cases where the final component of the name is wholly Greek in form.

5. Professor Grensted's proposals appear to me to merit full support, for in addition to being logical and self-consistent, they provide a solution which is in harmony with current usage, the adoption of which would avoid unnecessary and undesirable name-changing.

6. If provision in regard to this matter is to be made in the revised text of the *Règles* by the Fifteenth International Congress of Zoology when it meets in London next year, it is clearly desirable that the present problem should be thrown open to general discussion as soon as possible. It is for the purpose of providing a basis for such a discussion that, in agreement with Professor Grensted, I now submit for consideration the proposal that the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature should adopt a *Declaration* clarifying as follows the provisions of Article 14 in the above regard :—

Draft Declaration

(1) Where a specific name consists of a word which is an adjective in Greek or in any other language, except Latin, and where the exact form of that adjective is retained when the word in question is published as a zoological name, the name is to be treated as being composed of a "barbarous" word and accordingly is not to be subject to change in termination if the specific name consisting of that word is combined with a generic name having a gender different from that in which the specific name in question was cited at the time when it was first published.

Example : A specific name consisting of the word "*melaina*", that word being an exact transliteration of the feminine form of a Greek adjective, the transliteration of the masculine of which is "*melas*", is to retain the form in which it was originally published, irrespective of the gender of any generic name with which it may be combined.

(2) The Rule prescribed in (1) above is to be applied also to any specific name consisting of a compound word where that word is adjectival in form and its final component is wholly Greek in form and origin.

Example: A specific name consisting of the compound word "celebrachys", being a word which is adjectival in form, its final component being wholly Greek in form and origin, is not to be changed to "celebracheia" if the taxon so named is placed in a genus having a name of feminine gender but is to retain its original form, irrespective of the gender of any generic name with which it may be combined.

APPENDIX

On the application of the Rule of Gender Agreement in the case of specific names which are adjectival but have not been Latinised

By L. W. GRENSTED, M.A., D.D.

(Consulting Classical Adviser to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature)

Dr. Sheljuzhko, in a letter to the Secretary of the Commission, has raised a question as to the correct form of the sub-specific name in the case of *Parnassius mnemosyne melaina*. The name *melaina* was first used by von Honrath as the name for an aberration, but later von Bryk raised the form to the status of a sub-species, and accordingly gave *melaina* its masculine form in Greek, *melas*. This raises a question involving a number of specific names which are Greek in form and which have sometimes been attached to generic names with a curious disregard for agreement in gender. Specific names, under the Rules, are regarded as Latin. Should they, when wholly Greek in form, follow the laws of Greek grammar, or not?

2. The common Greek adjective *melas*, *melaina*, *melan* is a case in point. *Melas* is only found in classical Latin as a proper name, and the feminine *melaina* is not found at all. In Souter's *Glossary of Later Latin* an obscure writer of 4th century A.D. is cited as giving the Latinised *melas*, *melaena*, *melan*, but this is nothing more than a transliteration of the genders of a common Greek adjective. It does not amount to its use. But it enables us to treat *melaena* as a proper Latin transcription of μέλαινα, a fact which may be of service in circumstances which might arise. In zoological nomenclature the use of *melas* begins with an anomaly, never challenged down to the present day, in *Erebia melas* Herbst, where *Erebia* is feminine and *melas* masculine. But *melas* in this case is doubtlessly the name *Melas*, taken from classical mythology, as with so many butterflies, and not the adjective. For *melaina* we have *Sitta melaina* Beseke (1787), and, twenty years later, *melaena* appears

in *Haltica melaena* Illiger (1807), followed by *Atherix melaena* Hoffmansegg (1820), *Mordella melaena* Germar (1824), *Baris melaena* Germar (1826), *Membracis melaena* Germar (1835), *Cetonia melaena* McCleay (1838), *Locusta melaena* de Haan (1842), etc. As all these names are feminine no question arises, and none can arise unless one of these species is transferred to a masculine genus, when the question raised by Dr. Sheljuzhko would have to be asked again.

3. *Melas* and *melaina* are purely Greek in form. It is more difficult to know how to regard *melaena*. One solution is to treat it as a neo-Latin adjective in spite of its obviously Greek origin. This solution appears in such regrettable forms as *Abramis melaenus* Agassiz (1835), *Aradis melaenus* Germar (1840), and *Sphaeridium melaenum* Germar (1824). Obviously Germar, who uses the specific name five times, treated it in that way. The alternative is to treat *melaena*, with *melaina*, as a fixed form, not varying in gender. The case can fairly be argued on either side.

4. In this connection the use of the very common Greek adjective *micros*-a-on is illuminating. This appears as a specific name with a complete and undisputed disregard of gender. Thus *micros*, used correctly with *Tachys*, *Trechus* and *Miarus*, appears in *Bembidium micros* (Sturm) C. R. Sahlberg, *Diss. Ent. Ins. Fenn.* 205 (1827), where the neuter *micron* would naturally be expected. Still more curious are *Bulimus micra* d'Orb, 1837, and *Obeliscus micra* H. Beck, 1837, where the feminine is doubtless based on *Helix micra* d'Orb, 1835. The danger here is that *micra*, like *melaena*, might come to be regarded as a Latin feminine, giving rise to a masculine *micrus*, a form which is wholly unclassical. The obvious suggestion is that an original *micros* or *micra* should remain unchanged, whatever may be the gender of any generic name under which the species concerned may come to be placed.

5. To confirm this we have *Metallina lampros* Herbst, where *Metallina* is feminine, for which the accepted name now is *Bembidion lampros*, where *Bembidion* is neuter, *lampros* being the masculine form of the Greek adjective.

6. In such a specific name as *Eulophus myodes* Walker the difficulty does not arise, for though *myodes* (μυώδης) is a purely Greek form it would not vary at all in any gender when put into Latin lettering.

7. The natural suggestion, upon this evidence, is that where a specific name is wholly Greek in form (or, indeed, of any other language than Latin) it should be treated as "barbarous" and not be subject to any change of

gender, even when there is a change of gender in the generic name to which it is attached. This rule might apply when the diphthong ai is transliterated ae, thus covering such cases as *melaena*, but there is an arguable case for treating *melaenus-a-um* as a neo-Latin adjective.

8. Such a form as *melaneus*, *melanea*, which has been used (as in *Saxicola melanea* Rueppell) is, of course, a true neo-Latin adjective, and would not come under such a rule.

9. The above rule should also apply in compound specific names where the final component of the name is wholly Greek and cannot naturally be given a Latin change of gender. Such names are rare, but a form such as *celebrachys* (*Eustrigiphilus celebrachys* Nitsch in Denny, 1842) would have as its natural Greek feminine *celebracheia*. It would be far better to keep the original form of the name unchanged.

10. There is one group of Greek adjectives which might perhaps be held to constitute an exception to the principle. These are compound two-termination adjectives ending in -os. These do not change in the feminine, but end in -on in the neuter, and were often taken over in their Greek form by Latin writers with a taste for Greek, such as Petronius and Pliny. Thus we find *monochromos* -on, *monochordos* -on, *paraphoros* -on, and many others. The case has not actually arisen with *Nymphalis polychloros* (L.), but *polychloros*, though not classical in either Greek or Latin, is clearly an adjective of this type, and there would be strong classical precedent for writing *polychloron* if the species were ever placed under a generic name of neuter gender. The case is a most unlikely one, and such specific names appear to be extremely rare, if indeed there is another to be found. Probably the best course would be to treat this case too as coming under the Rule suggested above.

11. This note is not intended to be a complete survey of the cases that may arise. Actually it is a very difficult matter to cover the field, since an Index of specific names does not afford a ready clue to their termination. It would be very desirable, before a final decision is taken in this matter, that comments should be obtained from experts in different parts of the field. It would be particularly helpful if specialists who may be aware of analogous cases which would not fall within the scope of the rule suggested above would furnish particulars of those cases, so that the rule might be expanded to such extent as may be necessary.



Hemming, Francis. 1957. "Proposed adoption of a " declaration " on the question whether adjectival specific names consisting of not fully Latinised words should be treated, under Article 14 of the " Regies," as consisting of " barbarous " words and." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 13, 235–239. <https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.part.3561>.

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