(2338) Proposal to conserve the name Gynochthodes against Stigmanthus (Rubiaceae)

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Type: G. coriacea Blume.
(=) Stigmanthus Lour., Fl. Cochinch.: 96, 146. Sep 1790, nom. rej. prop.
Type: S. cymosus Lour.

Gynochthodes Blume is a Paleotropical and the most species-rich genus of the tribe Morindeae (Razafimandimbison & al. in Molec. Phylogen. Evol. 52: 879–886. 2009) in the subfamily Rubioideae of the coffee family (Rubiaceae). The genus currently contains at least 93 species mostly of lianas, which are distributed in tropical Asia, the Pacific, tropical Australia, and Madagascar (Razafimandimbison & Bremer in Adansonia 33: 283–309. 2011). Gynochthodes is sister to the genus Coelospermum Blume (l.c.: 994. 1826–1827), and is distinguished by its mostly head-like inflorescences, small flowers with anthers well-exserted beyond the corolla lobes, and mostly simple drupes as in the latter genus. The generic name Tetralopha Hook. f. (in Hooker’s Icon. Pl. 11: t. 1072. 1870) is a long-established synonym of Gynochthodes and further synonymy has recently been proposed involving Guttenbergia Zoll. & Moritzi (in Natuur- Geneesk. Arch. Ned.-Indië 2: 2. 1845) (Razafimandimbison & Bremer, l.c.), Imantina Hook. f. (in Bentham & Hooker, Gen. Pl. 2: 120. 1873), Pogonanthus Montouz. (in Mém. Acad. Imp. Sci. Lyon, Sect. Sci. 10: 225. 1860), and Sphaerophora Blume (Mus. Bot. 1: 179, fig. 36. 1850) non (Hassal) Lindl. 1846 (Razafimandimbison & al., l.c.: 885. 2009).

None of these names predates Gynochthodes but Stigmanthus Lour. (l.c.), applying to a monotypic genus comprising Stigmatanthus cymosus Lour., is an earlier name. [Schultes (in Roemer & Schultes, Syst. Veg. 5: 225, 628. 1819) used the name as Stigmatanthus cymosus, but this orthographic variant was never used in the Rubiaceae literature.] The type specimen of Stigmatanthus cymosus at the BM herbarium is conspecific with Morinda umbellata L. (not M. umbellata Lour.) (Moore in J. Bot. 63: 252. 1925). As a result, S. cymosus has always been synonymized under Linnaeus’s M. umbellata (e.g., Merrill in Trans. Amer. Philos. Soc. 24: 374. 1935). Recently, the lianescent species of Morinda L., including M. umbellata, were shown to be more closely related to Gynochthodes than to Morinda (Razafimandimbison & al., l.c. 2009). Accordingly, all lianescent species of the genus Morinda (with the exceptions of the African Morinda morindoides (Baker) Milne-Redh. and M. longiflora G. Don, both with large and hermaphroditic flowers) were formally transferred to Gynochthodes (Razafimandimbison & Bremer, l.c.). However, it was only recently noticed that Stigmanthus predates and has priority over Gynochthodes according to the Art. 11.3 of the International Code of Nomenclature (McNeill & al. in Regnum Veg. 154. 2012). Therefore, the current proposal is necessary to maintain established usage of Gynochthodes. If the proposal is declined, all 93 species of Gynochthodes as currently delimited (Razafimandimbison & al., l.c. 2009) would have to be formally transferred to Stigmanthus, requiring that number of new combinations. This would cause tremendous nomenclatural instability because the generic name Gynochthodes is well established in the Rubiaceae literature, and has for long been widely accepted (e.g., Candolle, Prodr. 4: 467. 1830; Richard in Mém. Soc. Hist. Nat. Paris 5: 208. 1830; Pittard in Lecomte, Fl. Indo-Chine 3: 432. 1924; Johansson in Austral. Syst. Bot. 1: 369–372. 1988; Johansson in Opera Bot. 122: 5–67. 1994; Halford in Austrobaileya 6: 891–894. 2004; Razafimandimbison & al. in Molec. Phylogen. Evol. 48: 207–223. 2008; Rusham & al. in Bot. J. Linn. Soc. 157: 115–124. 2008; Razafimandimbison & al., l.c. 2009; Razafimandimbison &
Bremer, l.c.; Razafimandimbison & al. in PLoS ONE 7(7): e40851. 2012 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0040851]; Oguri & al. in Molec. Phylogen. Evol. 68: 699–708. 2013. As a consequence, the name Gynochthodes would be lost in favour of the almost unknown Stigmanthus for which only Loureiro’s original binomial has ever been published. We therefore propose conservation of Gynochthodes against Stigmanthus.

Acceptance of this proposal will also have the benefit of establishing unequivocally (under Art. 14.8) the correctness of the long accepted spelling of the generic name. Blume (l.c. 1826) originally spelled the name “Gynochtodes” but in a later publication (Blume, Fl. Java: v–viii. 1828) corrected this and other spellings noting that the earlier spellings were errors occasioned by his illness and the fact that he did not have access to the literature at the time (cf. Brummitt in Taxon 39: 305. 1990). Blume’s correction has been generally accepted but there have been exceptions (e.g., Smith, Fl. Vitiensis Nova 4: 341. 1988; NCU-3 – Greuter & al. in Regnum Veg. 129. 1993; and the online version of Index Nominum Genericorum – http://botany.si.edu/ing/, accessed 4 Nov 2014). As we believe that Blume’s later correction is in accord with Art. 60.1 (“correction of typographical and orthographical errors”) so that Gynochthodes is currently the correct spelling under the Code, we do not think it appropriate to propose this as an “orth. cons.” Art. 14.8 will, however, ensure universal acceptance of Gynochthodes.