

On Family Names of Spiders*

Norman Platnick and Herbert W. Levi

Museum of Comparative Zoology,
Harvard University, Cambridge,
Massachusetts 02138, U.S.A.

The names of several important families of spiders have recently been a source of contention. Although most of these cases are not easily settled, it is hoped that a review of the nomenclatural history will prove of value to the practising arachnologist. Two different problems are involved. The first involves the question of priority and the use of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature. As the preamble to the code states, the purpose of the code is "... to promote stability and universality in the scientific names of animals, and to ensure that each name is unique and distinct. All its provisions are subservient to these ends..." Thus, priority should not be used as an absolute principle designed to honour the first scientist to use a name, but as a tool to be used to promote stability, universality and specificity. If there is only one name in use, that name should be maintained even if it is "wrong" by some provisions of the Code taken out of context. The second problem stems from the introduction of the type species concept. Many of our oldest and most common genera were described without reference to a type species, and even when a type species is listed in a catalogue, it is almost impossible to determine when and by whom the type designation was made. When such a designation is cited here, the reader should remember that there may well be an earlier one. As the majority of these old genera were as broad as our present-day families, the type designation is crucial in transferring the name from its early general meaning to its modern specific one.

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SPARASSIDAE-HETEROPODIDAE-EUSPARASSIDAE

Sparassidae (type genus *Sparassus* Walckenaer, 1805) was first used by Bertkau, 1872, Arch. Naturgeschichte 38(1,2):232, rather than by Simon, 1874, as indicated by Bonnet in his *Bibliographia Araneorum* 2:4096. Sparassidae thus has priority over Heteropodidae (Thorell, 1873, type genus *Heteropoda* Latreille, 1804) and Eusparassidae (Järvi, 1912, type genus *Eusparassus* Simon, 1903). Originally Walckenaer, 1805, placed five species in *Sparassus*. Of these *Sparassus smaragdulus*, *S. roseus*, and *S. ornatus* are now placed in the genus *Micrommata* Latreille, 1804. *Sparassus argelasius* was a nomen nudum in 1805, as it was published without a description, and *S. pallens* (Fabricius) remains unrecognizable, but may belong to *Olios*. Thus *Sparassus* has no certain type species. Simon was aware of the problem and designated *argelasius* Walckenaer as type for his new genus *Eusparassus* Simon, 1903. Subsequently Järvi, unaware of Heteropodidae, established Eusparassidae as a family name. Finally Simon, 1932 published *Eusparassus dufouri* n. nov. for *argelasius*, and this name is cited as the type species of *Sparassus* by Bonnet. *Sparassus* may be a junior synonym of *Micrommata* or a senior synonym of *Olios*. No conclusion on this matter can be reached until a revision of the family is carried out. If *Sparassus* proves unrecognizable, as it seems to be, Heteropodidae must be used.

ARANEIDAE-EPEIRIDAE-ARGIOPIDAE

The oldest name for the family is Araneides Latreille, 1806. The family Araneides, later changed to Araneidae by Leach 1819, has the type genus *Aranea* Linnaeus (= *Araneus* Clerck). Since Dahl, 1912 the name has been used as Araneidae. Sundevall in 1833 called the family Epeirides, subsequently used as Epeiridae having the type genus *Epeira* (= *Araneus*, objective synonym). In 1890 Simon (Ann. Soc. Entomol. France (6) 10:81) called the family Argiopidae with the type genus *Argiope*. (All type genera have well known type species, Levi, 1968). Of the family names, Epeiridae has been used most, Araneidae least. Until recently Araneidae has been used by German and some American authors, Argiopidae by French (including Bonnet's catalogue) and by many British and American authors while Epeiridae disappeared from use. Bonnet (in

correspondence) favoured Argiopidae to avoid confusion with the Order name Araneae or Araneida. But Scorpionidae, Acaridae and numerous other family names in animals present similar minor problems.

An informal poll conducted several years ago indicated a worldwide preference by specialists in spider systematics, as well as biologists working with species of the family, for Araneidae, the oldest name and the one to be used by strict application of the International Code on Zoological Nomenclature.

MICRYPHANTIDAE-ERIGONIDAE

Micryphantidae (Bertkau, 1872, type genus *Micryphantes* C. L. Koch, 1833) has priority over Erigonidae (Gerhardt, 1923, type genus *Erigone* Savigny and Audouin, 1825; also, as section Erigonini of Theridiidae, in Simon, 1884). However, *Micryphantes ovatus* C. L. Koch, 1833, the type species (Bonnet, *Bibliographia Araneorum* 2:2907; original designation unknown) has been listed in the genus *Meioneta* Hull, 1920 by Roewer in his *Katalog der Araneae*. *Micryphantes rurestris*, listed as type by Petrunkevitch 1928 in his *Systema Araneorum*, was not included by the original author at the time the genus was described and cannot be the type. If revisionary studies reveal this to be correct, *Meioneta* will have to be regarded as a junior synonym of *Micryphantes*. Further, the species now placed in *Meioneta* are regarded as true Linyphiidae or Linyphiinae. If this is the case, Micryphantidae becomes a junior synonym of Linyphiidae Blackwall, 1859, and the name Erigonidae (or Erigoninae, if the group is regarded as a subfamily) should be used.

ATTIDAE-SALTICIDAE

Attidae (Sundevall, 1833, type genus *Attus* Walckenaer, 1805) has priority over Salticidae (Blackwall, 1841, type genus *Salticus* Latreille, 1804). *Attus*, however, is an objective junior synonym of *Salticus*, both genera claiming *Araneus scenicus* Clerck, 1757 as their type species (see Bonnet, *Bibliographia Araneorum* 2:781). Although this synonymy would not affect the family name if it were discovered today, Article 40A states that when a family name was changed prior to 1961 because of a synonymy of its type genus, and the new name has won general acceptance, the change is not to be

reversed. Thus, Salticidae is to be maintained.

DRASSIDAE-GNAPHOSIDAE-DRASSODIDAE

Drassidae (Sundevall, 1833, type genus *Drassus* Walckenaer, 1805) has priority over Gnaphosidae (Pocock, 1898, type genus *Gnaphosa* Latreille, 1804) and Drassodidae (Berland, 1932, type genus *Drassodes* Westring, 1851). *Drassus*, however, is an objective junior synonym of *Gnaphosa*, both genera claiming *Aranea lucifuga* Walckenaer, 1802 as their type species. The type of *Drassus* is a subsequent designation by Latreille, 1810; the type of *Gnaphosa* a subsequent designation by Thorell, 1868. As in the previous case, Article 40A protects Gnaphosidae because it won general acceptance prior to 1961. Simon, Petrunkevitch and Bonnet have preferred to keep Drassidae, although there is no essential difference between this case and the *Salticus-Attus* synonymy. Drassodidae is a subjective junior synonym of both earlier names.

AMAUROBIIDAE-CINIFLONIDAE

The request (Levi and Kraus, 1964) to have the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature suppress *Cliniflo* Blackwell, 1840 and Ciniflonidae Blackwall, 1841 and place *Amaurobius* C. L. Koch, 1837 and Amaurobiidae Thorell, 1870 on the *Official Indices of Generic and Family Names in Zoology* has not been acted on. Under Article 80, existing usage (Amaurobiidae) is to be maintained until the decision of the Commission is published.

References

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