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On the validity of the generic name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 (Coleoptera, Ryzophagidae)

by P. Říha

Abstract: The generic name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 is valid while the name *Rhizophagus* Erichson, 1843 is to be considered as its junior synonym. The authorship of the name *Rhizophagus* has been incorrectly attributed to Herbst. The name *Rhyzophagus* Gyllenhal, 1813 is only an incorrect subsequent spelling. The family name Rhizophagidae is to be changed to Ryzophagidae.

Key-words: Coleoptera Ryzophagidae – validity of the name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 – synonymy – family name.

In most publications on Coleoptera the generic name “*Rhizophagus* Herbst, 1793” [sic!] is used in spite of that this name has never been established. The aim of this brief nomenclatural contribution is to draw the attention to this fact and to demonstrate in the following paragraphs the validity of the name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 and to elucidate its synonymy.

The name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793

The generic name *Ryzophagus* was published for the first time by HERBST in 1793. This name is derived from the Greek words *říza* and *fágow*, as HERBST (1793, p.19) pointed out himself: «Die ... Arten dieser Gattung halten sich zwischen faulen Baumrinden auf, so wie auch an den Wurzeln der Bäume, wovon sie leben, und worauf der Gattungsname anspielen soll». However, the transliteration of the mentioned Greek words into the Latin alphabet is not correct. In spite of that the generic name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 is valid under Article 32 b of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature and represents a correct original spelling.

The name *Rhyzophagus* Gyllenhal, 1813

Twenty years later GYLLENHAL (1813, p.420) changed the above mentioned valid generic name to *Rhyzophagus*. This action is to be

regarded as an incorrect subsequent spelling under Article 33c with no status in the nomenclature; in no place of his paper Gyllenhal quoted the name *Ryzophagus* and on p.425 he twice referred incorrectly to “*Rhyzophagus*” in quotations of Herbst’s binominal names of species. Gyllenhal obviously believed that Herbst had used “*Rhyzophagus*” as an original spelling.

The name *Rhizophagus* and its author

A more complicated situation exists with *Rhizophagus* Erichson, 1843. ERICHSON (1843, p.360) established an unjustified emendation under Article 33b iii since *Rhizophagus* (used as a heading) is followed by reference to “*Rhyzophagus* Herbst” in the synonymy on p.360. Although the latter spelling had not actually been used by Herbst, Erichson’s intention to change Herbst’s name is clear. In his later work ERICHSON (1845, p.226) used the unjustified emendation *Rhizophagus* (in a heading) jointly with a correct reference to *Ryzophagus* Herbst in the synonymy (p.226). It could be disputable whether the unjustified emendation *Rhizophagus* Erichson should be dated as from 1843 or from 1845, but I believe that the former date should be used since the intentional change is clear already from ERICHSON’S (1843) work and his reference to non-existent name “*Rhyzophagus* Herbst” might have been only a lapsus calami. Nevertheless Erichson’s junior synonym became commonly used in the literature (and is still so used) but it was erroneously attributed to Herbst (i.e. as *Rhizophagus* Herbst, 1793).

Nomenclatural conclusions

As shown in the above paragraphs the generic name *Ryzophagus* Herbst, 1793 is a correct original spelling under Article 32b of the Code and should be used. The name *Rhyzophagus* Gyllenhal, 1813 is an incorrect subsequent spelling, and *Rhizophagus* Erichson, 1843 is an unjustified emendation and must be regarded as a junior synonym under Article 33b iii of the Code. The commonly used name “*Rhizophagus* Herbst, 1793” [sic!] has never been established. Consequently under Article 29a and 35d ii the family name Rhizophagidae is to be changed to Ryzophagidae.

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