

THE CASE OF STEVENSONIA

STEVENSONIA, Duncan, Cat. Roy. Bot. Gard. Mauritius (1863), *nomen*; Van Houtte, Fl. des Serr. xv, 177, t. 1595-6 (1865), not *Stephensonia* as quoted by Index Kewensis and Della Torre & Harms for this citation. *Phœnicophorium*, H. Wendl. Ill. Hort. xii, misc. 5 and t. 433 (1865).

† *Stevensonia Borsigiana*, n. tr.

Astrocaryum Borsigianum, K. Koch, Wochenschr. Gärt. u. Pflanzenk. 401; Gartenfl. 1861, 29.

Astrocaryum Borsigii, Hort., apud Koch, l.c.

Astrocaryum aureo-pictum, Hort., apud Koch, l.c.

Areca sechellarum, Hort., apud Koch, l.c.

Astrocaryum aureo-punctatum, Lem. Ill. Hort. vi, note sub t. 229, *nomen* (1859).

Stevensonia grandifolia, Duncan, Cat. Roy. Bot. Gard. Mauritius (1863) *nomen*; Van Houtte in Fl. des Serr. xv, p. 177 (Apr. 1865). *Stephensonia grandifolia*, Hort.; Proc. Roy. Hort. Soc. Lond. iv, 134 (1864).

Stevensonia sechellarum, Van Houtte, Fl. des Serr. xv, t. 1595-6 (Apr. 1865). (Feb. 1865)

Phœnicophorium Sechellarum, H. Wendl. Ill. Hort. xii, misc. 5, t. 433 (Apr. 1865).

Phœnicophorium Borsigianum, Stuntz, Inventory Seed and Plant Import. no. 31, p. 88, Bur. Pl. Ind., U. S. Dept. Agr. (1914).

This beautiful palm of the Seychelles, now widely planted in tropics and sometimes seen under glass, is the subject of an unpleasant confusion as to its name. It appears to have been first mentioned with Latin name in two journals bearing date December 1859: as *Astrocaryum aureo-punctatum* in note under t. 229 vol. vi, L'illustration Horticole, without description, and as *A. Borsigianum* by Karl Koch in Wochenschrift für Gärtnerei und Pflanzenkunde. The latter account, by Koch, is sufficient to constitute a regular publication of the species although it states that the plant had been known in cultivation as *Areca sechellarum*, *Astrocaryum aureo-pictum* and *A. Borsigii*. The nativity of this palm was unknown to Koch, for he supposes it may have come from Brazil, Verschaffelt said it was from India, and in England it was known as from the Seychelles. From Koch's description and the subsequent history there seems to be no doubt as to the application of the different names and references to the same species of the Seychelle Islands; Koch drew his description from a virgin plant only 3 feet high.

The history of the plant as given by Koch in the Wochenschrift being translated is as follows:

Astrocaryum Borsigianum seems to have been first in the Paris gardens; perhaps it was discovered by the traveler Morel in Brazil and brought by him to Europe; he now lives in Paris. During the great Industrial Exposition of 1855 Kommerzienrath Borsig saw a small plant at the establishment of a commercial horticulturist in the metropolis of the French empire, and purchased it at a fairly high price to place it in his palm collection. We do not know whether at that time the plant was in other gardens, but rather doubt it. In any case it must have been in rather isolated cases, for certainly so beautiful a plant would have been better known otherwise.

It is said to have been introduced into England from the Seychelles during the last two or three years, under the name *Areca sechellarum*, and from there have come to Belgium. But Ambr. Verschaffelt of Ghent also claims to have received it from India, for it appears for the first time in his recent "List of Plants", which contains so many new and no less beautiful species, under the name of *Astrocaryum aureo-pictum* at a price of 250 to 500 francs. To be sure this is the highest-priced species in his catalogue, and it is a very high price, but it is yet to be matched for beauty. Therefore we cannot recommend it too highly. Aside from the fact that this plant was named *Astrocaryum Borsigii* some time ago, Verschaffelt's designation "aureo-pictum" seems to be inappropriate because the small ochre-colored (not yellow) spots are sometimes less distinct, and even may disappear, it seems.

This palm is not an *Astrocaryum*, but the specific name *Borsigianum*, duly described, is to be retained under the rules in whatever genus is accepted. The plant is so distinct from others as to be placed properly in a genus by itself. It was first separated in 1863 by James Duncan in his Catalogue of the Plants in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Mauritius, as *Stevensonia grandiflora* but corrected in the Errata of the same publication to *S. grandifolia*, named in compliment to the Governor of Mauritius; but there is no description and therefore the name is not tenable although the record "Palmaceæ. Dependencies of Mauritius" leaves no doubt as to the plant that was intended, and the subsequent history is continuous. In July, 1864, in Proceedings of the Royal Horticultural Society, London (iv, p. 134) appears the first description under a separate genus, but the generic name is misspelled: "*Stephensonia grandifolia*. A bold-habited Palm with broad leaves, two-lobed and incisely toothed at the end, the stalks and stem clothed with abundant brown needle-shaped spines. Mr. Veitch, 1st certificate". This description, although not technical, together with the known habitat and the horticultural record, sufficiently identifies the palm. A similar description under the same name is given in Hogg's Gardeners Year-Book, published in 1865, p. 52.

In 1864, also, the palm appears in the Catalogue of Ambroise Verschaffelt, no. 74, p. 12, Ghent, as follows: "*Astrocaryum aureopictum* (*Stephensonia grandifolia*) 250 fr. Magnifique espèce, présentant par ses nombreux et longs aiguillons sur le rachis de ses frondes, un aspect aussi singulier que pittoresque; frondes pinnées tres grandes, d'un verte superbe, élégamment piquete-moucheté de petites macules d'un fauve vif, comme

doré". Undoubtedly this description or a similar one had appeared in an earlier Catalogue of Verschaffelt, which I am unable to verify, as indicated by the reference in Flore des Serres, xv (1865), 177, to *Astrocaryum aureopictum* "Hort. A. Versch. in Catal. Illustr. XII, misc. page 5".

In England, small plants were grown at Kew but one of them was stolen, as the record goes, by a foreign gardener and was afterwards found in a private garden on the Continent. It was on this circumstance that Wendland proposed the generic name *Phœnicophorium*, "thief palm", and published it in 1865 as *P. sechellarum*, with Latin diagnosis of genus and species but flowers not mentioned. Wendland knew the previous names of the palm for he cites them from Koch, Verschaffelt, and Hort., and Duncan's *Stevensonia grandifolia* was added by the editor on the authority of a letter from Wendland; these names are important elements in his identification; there was no necessity to make a new generic name, but only to diagnose and therefore stabilize the one in use among growers. There were no doubts as to the application of current names. Wendland says that the plant was introduced directly from the Seychelles eight or nine years before by the house of A. Verschaffelt. The plant was well figured as *Stevensonia* in the same month (April 1865) as it was figured and described under the absurd name *Phœnicophorium*.

It has been assumed that under arbitrary formal botanical usage the name *Phœnicophorium* holds because accompanied by a diagnosis, but this question is open to interpretation; and even in nomenclature a rule of reason should be admissable on occasion. The International Rules wisely allow for such leeway (Art. 5): "No custom contrary to rule can be upheld if it leads to confusion or error. When a custom offers no serious inconvenience of this kind, it may be a ground for exceptions. . . ." Aside from the question of technical priority of names applied within a very brief space of time, the name *Phœnicophorium* is highly objectionable not only because it is formidable but because it perpetuates merely a misdemeanor, and also because it establishes the name "thief palm" in horticulture. J. D. Hooker, writing in *Botanical Magazine* in 1893 (t. 7277) quotes J. Smith on the history and name of the palm. Smith considers the name *Phœnicophorium* as "not justified" under the circumstances, and "also that it was a very undignified name for such a noble palm, and founded on such an ignoble circumstance". Hooker adopts *Stevensonia*, as also Bentham & Hooker in *Genera Plantarum*, but Drude in Engler & Prantl accepts *Phœnicophorium*.

A portrait of the palm appeared in *L'illustration Horticole* in fascicle bearing date April 1865, under the name *Phœnicophorium sechellarum*, by Ch. Lemaire. In the same month another portrait appeared in *Flore des Serres* published in the same city (Ghent) under the authorship of L. Van Houtte. The plate in *Flore des Serres* is under the name *Stevensonia*

sechellarum with *Phœnicophorium sechellarum* apparently intended as a synonym; the text carries the Phœnicophorium name as the leader with *Stevensonia grandifolia* Dunc. apparently intended as a synonym; the Wendland publication in Ill. Hort. (*Phœnicophorium*) appears to antedate the Van Houtte treatment because the latter quotes the former, but it is unsafe to make such decision for Van Houtte may have seen an advance proof. In the Flore des Serres account Van Houtte roundly protests and ridicules the name Phœnicophorium.

I am convinced that the generic name *Phœnicophorium* should be outlawed; but the specific name *Borsigianum* is the oldest tenable one we yet know and it may now follow the palm into *Stevensonia*, the binomial becoming *Stevensonia Borsigiana*.

THE ARIKURY PALM

In 1891 Barbosa-Rodrigues founded the genus Arikuryroba for a single Cocos-like small palm in Brazil, adopting an Indian vernacular name. The species is *A. Capanemæ*, named in compliment to the Brazilian botanist and geologist Professor Dr. Guilherme Schuch de Capanema. In 1897 it appeared as *Cocos Capanemæ* by Drude, and in 1898 as *Cocos Arikuryroba* by Barbosa himself as if he had changed his mind about the disposition of it although in 1903 in his great Sertum Palmarum Brasiliensium he describes and figures it again as *Arikuryroba Capanemæ*. In 1916 Beccari identified the palm with *Cocos schizophylla* of Martius (1826) by means of flowers and fruits of the Cocos cultivated in the botanic garden in Calcutta. Beccari accepts the Barbosan genus but shortens the word to Arikury, making in fact a new generic name; the plant becomes *Arikury schizophylla*, and this is the current binomial. We cannot adopt this abridgement of the generic nomen under any organized rule of nomenclature, however much we may prefer the shorter name. The problem remains of finding a tenable binomial under the full name Arikuryroba if we accept the segregation from Cocos (as I think we must).

Martius founded *Cocos schizophylla* in Volume II of *Historia Naturalis Palmarum*, in a fascicle published in 1826. As a record he cites "*Cocos de Aricui vel de Aracuri*, Maximilian Prinz von Neuwied, *Reise in Brasilien*, I, p. 272", quoted also by Beccari in "*Il Genere Cocos*", 1916. This reference becomes "*Cocos Aricui Prinz v. Neuwied, Reise in Brazil, I, 272*" by Drude in *Flora Brasiliensis*, 1882. It is now necessary, therefore, to examine the old account in Maximilian, for *Aricui* becomes the oldest specific name if it is there botanically published.

The work in question is "*Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817 von Maximilian Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied*". On page 271 of Volume I (Frankfurt a. M. 1820) begins an account of "*Stachellose Arten von Palmen*", of which nine kinds are listed, and the last entry is the one we seek