

## CHEIRONITIS LANSBERGE, 1875 — ITS CORRECT SPELLING AND VALIDITY (COLEOPTERA, SCARABAEIDAE)

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**Abstract:** The correct spelling and the validity of the genus-group name *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875 are established.

**Keywords:** Coleoptera, Scarabaeidae, nomenclature, spelling, validity, *Cheironitis*, *Chironitis*, *Uposlotus*.

### Introduction

Lansberge (1875) erected the genus *Cheironitis* for 14 species, four of which new, the remaining 10 previously ranged in the genus *Onitis* Fabricius, 1798. *Scarabaeus furcifer* Rossi, 1792 is one of those species, and was subsequently designated as the type species by Arrow (1931). The first authors who dealt with Lansberge's taxon changed the spelling to "Chironitis" which some years ago was the most frequently used spelling but, as we shall demonstrate below, not anymore today.

*Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875 is a junior objective synonym of *Uposlotus* A. Costa, 1853, and *Uposlotus* A. Costa is used as the valid name by Ádám (2003). M. Dellacasa (2004) proposes that A. Costa's name should be deemed a forgotten name. We do absolutely agree with him. However, as M. Dellacasa does not provide the evidence supporting his contention, we do it here.

M. Dellacasa (2004) further contends that the emended spelling "Chironitis" is in prevailing usage. For the reasons presented below, we disagree with him on this point.

Throughout this note "Article" means an article of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (1999).

### The question of spelling

According to Gillet (1911), the first authors who dealt with Lansberge's taxon were Bedel (1892) and Reitter (1892). They both used the changed spelling "Chironitis" attributing its authorship to Lansberge, 1875. The change was probably motivated by grammatical considerations, the Greek diphthong *ei* changing in *i* when the word is latinized. However, neither Bedel (1892) nor Reitter (1892) made any explicit statement of intention. Therefore, unless in prevailing usage (Article 33.3.1) "Chironitis" in Bedel (1892) and Reitter (1892) is an incorrect subsequent spelling and, as such, it is not an available name from any of the above authors, does not enter into homonymy and cannot be used as a substitute name (Article 33.3).

Janssens (1937) used also the spelling "Chironitis" but made an explicit statement of intention (page 152, footnote). Therefore, unless in prevailing usage (Article 33.2.3.1) "Chironitis" in Janssens (1937) is an unjustified emendation

(Article 33.2.3) and, as such, it is available from Janssens (1937), is a junior objective synonym of *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875, enters into homonymy and can be used as a substitute name.

Possibly under the influence of Bedel (1892) and Reitter (1892) most authors, in the period that followed used the changed spelling "Chironitis", attributing its authorship invariably to Lansberge, 1875.

The first author who reverted back to the original spelling was Krikken (1977), noting merely (page 164): «**I prefer to use the original spelling of the generic name instead of Chironitis.**». Krikken's preference does not seem to have had much influence on immediate subsequent authors but, as we shall see below, more recently the original spelling became the favoured one, albeit by a small margin.

The usage in the last 50 years (1955-2004) of both spellings is listed below. We do not pretend that these lists are exhaustive, but do believe that they are a reasonably accurate representation of the rates of usage of both spellings. Works are listed in chronological order.

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These lists may suggest, at first sight, that "Chironitis" is in prevailing usage. Yet, as illustrated in the table below, a closer examination shows that in recent times usage of the original spelling became more and more common, and that of the changed spelling less and less prevalent.

Number of usages in the last:	50 years (1955-2004)	20 years (1985-2004)	15 years (1990-2004)	10 years (1995-2004)	5 years (2000-2004)
<i>Cheironitis</i>	19 (15%)	18 (26%)	18 (35%)	11 (33%)	9 (53%)
<i>Chironitis</i>	110 (85%)	50 (74%)	33 (65%)	22 (67%)	8 (47%)

Prevailing usage of a name is defined in the Glossary of the Code as follows: «that usage of the name which is adopted by at least a substantial majority of the most recent authors concerned with the relevant taxon, irrespective of how long ago their work was published.»

As it is clear from the table above, in most recent years the original spelling became the favoured one, even though by a slight margin. The obvious conclusion is that, although the situation was different some years ago, today "Chironitis" is no longer in prevailing usage.

Consequently, *Cheironitis* must keep its status of correct original spelling. *Chironitis* Bedel, 1892 and *Chironitis* Reitter, 1892 are incorrect subsequent spellings and, as such, they are unavailable names. *Chironitis* Janssens, 1937, however, is an unjustified emendation and, as such, a junior objective synonym of *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875.

### The question of validity

A. Costa (1853) splits the genus *Onitis* Fabricius, 1798 in two subgenera, explaining his reasons as follows (page 20): «In mezzo ad un' abito assai uniforme le specie di questo genere offrono nel prosterno un carattere differenziale di molto rilievo, per lo quale noi crediamo indispensabile ripartirle in due sottogeneri. Il prosterno in talune specie è semplice senza alcun prolungamento in ambedue i sessi; in altre presenta inferiormente ne' maschi una lamina che divide in due branche a modo di forca, variando nella forma e grandezza secondo le specie. Noi riteniamo pei primi il nome di *Onitis*, proponiamo pei secondi quello di *Uposlotus*.».

The description of the new subgenus follows (page 23):

«UPOSLOTUS (<sup>1</sup>), A.Cost. — *Prosternum processu furciformi infra armatum % inerme &*

(<sup>1</sup>) Dalla voce greca ουποσλωιη, furca, forca.».

A. Costa (1853) places two species in his new subgenus, the new species *Onitis pugil* A. Costa, 1853 currently considered a synonym of *Cheironitis furcifer* (Rossi, 1792), and *Scarabaeus furcifer* Rossi, 1792.

*Uposlotus* is unquestionably available from A. Costa (1853). Yet, for reasons unknown to us, seemingly inexplicable, A. Costa's name was ignored by the great majority of subsequent authors. It is listed by Harold (1869) and Gillet (1911) as a junior synonym of *Onitis* Fabricius, 1798. Luigioni (1929) lists "*Uposlotus* Costa" as a junior synonym of "*Chironitis* Lansberge" no dates being given. It is also listed by Neave (1940), with its authorship wrongly attributed to "O. Costa", and without comments as to its validity. Neave (page 613) writes: «**Uposlotus Costa (O.) [1853], Fauna Regno Napoli, Col., Scarab., 22. – Col.**». We could not find it anywhere else in the literature, until Ádám (2003).

Ádám (2003) uses *Uposlotus* A. Costa, 1853 as the valid name without any explanation, but obviously on grounds of priority. Ádám (2003) designates *Scarabaeus furcifer* Rossi, 1792 as its type species, making it a senior objective synonym of *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875.

According to Article 23.9.1, prevailing usage must be maintained when the following conditions are both met:

23.9.1.1. the senior synonym or homonym has not been used as a valid name after 1899, and

23.9.1.2. the junior synonym or homonym has been used for a particular taxon, as its presumed valid name, in at least 25 works, published by at least 10 authors in the immediately preceding 50 years and encompassing a span of not less than 10 years.

As we wrote above, we could only find four citations of *Uposlotus* A. Costa, 1853 in the literature after 1899, by Gillet (1911), Luigioni (1929), Neave (1940), and Ádám (2003). Neither Gillet (1911) nor Luigioni (1929) use *Uposlotus* as the valid name. According to Article 23.9.6,

Neave's (1940) and Ádám's (2003) works must not be taken into account in determining usage under Article 23.9.1.1, Neave's because it is a nomenclator, Ádám's because his usage of *Uploslotus* A. Costa, 1853 as the valid name contravenes Article 23.9.1. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, the first condition of Article 23.9.1 is met.

As it is evident from the lists above, the second condition of Article 23.9.1 is also met. Two works from those lists must not be taken into account (Article 23.9.6): Ádám (2003) because it contravenes Article 23.9.1 by using *Uploslotus* A. Costa, 1853 as the valid name, and Cambefort (1991) because it is an index. Even if works such as Ádám (1994), Alfieri (1976), Bunalski (2001), Carpaneto & Piatella (1995), Carpaneto *et al.* (2000), Chikatunov & Pavlí.ek (1997), Hariri (1971), Kocher (1958), Lumaret (1990), Zairi (1976) are also left out because they could arguably be excluded under Article 23.9.6, there are still in our lists 117 works published in the last 50 years, by 64 (first) authors and encompassing a span of 50 years, in which *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875, either in its original or changed spelling, is used as the valid name.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the arguments presented above, we suggest that the valid name of the genus is:

*Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875, correct original spelling, *nomen protectum*. Type species: *Scarabaeus furcifer* Rossi, 1792, by subsequent designation of Arrow, 1931.

Two invalid names are also available:

*Uploslotus* A. Costa, 1853, an objective senior synonym of *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875, but a *nomen oblitum*. Type species: *Scarabaeus furcifer* Rossi, 1792, by subsequent designation of Ádám, 2003.

*Chironitis* Janssens, 1937, a junior objective synonym (unjustified emendation) of *Cheironitis* Lansberge, 1875.

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