

**ON THE QUESTION RAISED BY DR. HELEN MUIR-WOOD  
WHETHER TWO NAMES DIFFERING FROM ONE ANOTHER  
ONLY BY THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE RESPECTIVELY  
OF A DIACRITIC MARK SHOULD BE REGARDED AS  
HOMONYMS OF ONE ANOTHER**

By E. M. HERING  
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**(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)538)**

(Extracts from letters dated 11th August and 26th September, 1951)

**A. Letter dated 11th August, 1951**

In answer to your question whether generic names differing from one another only by the presence in one case and the absence in the other of a diacritic mark should be regarded as homonyms, I give you my opinion on the four points raised :—

- (1) Words differing by reason of a diacritic mark possess in most cases a different pronunciation and mostly a different sense. Zoological names differing in this manner are derived from different words and should not be regarded as homonyms.
- (2) The difference between two zoological names so created is sufficient to make them suitable for concurrent use in every case. It is not desirable that the *Règles* should provide that any pair of such names should be treated as homonyms of one another. (Törnquist means thorn-twig, Tornquist means literally tower-twig. In the Czechoslovak language *r* is spoken = *r*, but *ř* is spoken *rsh* and words differing in "*r*" and "*ř*" have a different sense !)
- (3) In the example of "*Mülleria*" and "*Mulleria*" the diacritic mark is sufficient to distinguish the two names ; the difference points out also the difference between the grandfather and grandson !\*
- (4) In the present language use Tornquist cannot be regarded as a German name ; in the most cases one may assume that this is the surname of a man, the ancestors of whom came from Sweden. But there are so many names in German which were common to Germany and Sweden in older times that it may be that in some parts of Germany there are to be found families bearing names identical or nearly identical with Swedish names. There are also many names in Sweden with alternative modes of spelling but with the same sense, especially the composita with twig : -quist, -qvist, -kvist, etc. All these have the same sense and the same pronunciation, but zoological names derived from these composita cannot be regarded as homonyms of another. There is no other possibility than to use them as different zoological names, and the same must be binding for the names differing by reason of a diacritic mark.

\*The reference here is to a question in my letter to Dr. Hering of 5th August, 1951, regarding a hypothetical case in which a generic name *Mülleria* was based upon the name of a German zoologist and another generic name *Mulleria* without an umlaut based on the name of the foregoing zoologist's grandson who was an American citizen and who had discontinued the use of the umlaut. (Signed) Francis Hemming, 5th February, 1951.

**B. Letter dated 26th September, 1951**

I have corresponded with my Czech friend Dalibor Povolný and I asked him for the name of the diacritic mark "ˇ" in the Czech language. I now give you his remarks on this matter. He tells me that all his colleagues at Brno hold the same opinion as that expressed in my last letter on this matter.

The Czech name of this diacritic mark is "*háček*" (pronounced hatcheck) ; this name means "a little hook."



The effect of this mark which can occur above the majority of the consonants (and above some vowels also) is to soften the sound. Thus "c" is pronounced as "ts," but "č" is pronounced as "tch" or "cz" as in the word Czech (čechič). The letter "s" is pronounced as "ss," but "š" as "sh." Again the letter "z" is pronounced as "z" (in the word "zoological"), and the letter "ž" as "j" (in the word "journal"). The letter "r" is the normal "r," but the letter "ř" is not found in the English or German languages; it comes near to "rj." The letters with the "háček" are found in other Slav languages as self-dependent letters.

It is not possible to homonymise words, in which in one case the letter is written without, in the other, with, the diacritic mark "háček." In every case the two words possess their own pronunciation and, what is more important, their own sense. There was described a Thysanopter to the honour of the paleontologist Frič (pronounced Fritch) as *Thaeniothrips friči*. If this name were to be written as *frici*, then it would be pronounced "fritsi," and this would sound as though the species had been named after a German named Fritz.

The name of the well known Czech entomologist Šulc is pronounced like the German name Schulz, and if a hypothetical generic name Šulcia were written without the hook, it would not be pronounced as in English "Shoultsia" but "Ssoultsia."

So I cannot see any other possibility than to treat two different names the one with, the other without, a diacritic mark as separate and not homonym names.

## ON THE SIGNIFICANCE TO BE ATTACHED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE LAW OF HOMONYMY TO THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF A DIACRITIC MARK

By LEIF STØRMER

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(Commission's reference Z.N.(S.)538)

(Letter dated 29th August, 1951)

Concerning your: "Question whether generic names differing from one another only by the presence in one case and the absence in the other of a diacritic mark over one of the letters should be regarded as homonyms," my opinion is as follows:—

- (1) In the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Norway and Sweden) as well as in Germany, the letters o and ö are distinctly different vowels. They are pronounced differently and words such as "stor"—meaning great or large—and "stör"—meaning sturgeon—are distinctly different words.
- (2) I think, as a consequence of what is said above, that scientific names containing the letters o and ö, but otherwise similar, should be treated as separate names. This also implies that families and Orders could be established with names only separable by the diacrite mark.
- (3) It may create some confusion that some persons drop the umlaut in their names. In spite of this, I would prefer to maintain o and ö, and u and ü as separate letters, distinguishing different zoological names. This would mean that, if there exists a name *Mülleria* it would be possible also to establish a new genera *Mulleria* based on a person by name Muller, even if that person or his ancestors once used the name Müller.



Hering, E M. 1952. "On the question raised by Dr. Helen Muir-Wood whether two names differing from one another only by the presence or absence respectively of a diacritic mark should be regarded as homonyms of one another." *The Bulletin of zoological nomenclature* 6, 252–253.

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