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Vepris viridis (Rutaceae), a new name for the most frequent and widespread unifoliolate African *Vepris* sp.

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Abstract. We show that the name *Vepris simplex* Cheek (Rutaceae) intended to replace the illegitimate *V. simplicifolia* (Engl.) Mziray, is itself a nom. illeg. & nom. superfl. according to the *Code*. Therefore, we make the new combination *Vepris viridis* (I.Verd.) Cheek, Q.Luke & Gereau for the most widespread and frequent species of unifoliolate *Vepris* in continental Africa, which occurs in the E African rift from Ethiopia to Malawi and is ecologically important as a food plant for elephants.

Keywords. *Teclea simplicifolia*, *Toddalia simplicifolia*, *Vepris simplex*, *Vepris simplicifolia*.

INTRODUCTION

In our synopsis of the unifoliolate species of continental Africa (Cheek and Luke 2023) a new name, *Vepris simplex* Cheek, was published for the most widespread and frequent species, previously known as *Vepris simplicifolia* (Engl.) Mziray (Mziray 1992: 75). This seemed necessary because we had discovered that the name *Vepris simplicifolia* had already been used (*Vepris simplicifolia* Endl. (Endlicher 1833: 89)) and so Mziray's name was a *hom. illeg.*

However, we overlooked the fact that the epithet of a name that we had listed as a synonym of this taxon is available. This is *Teclea viridis* I. Verd. (1926: 410), the epithet of which has not been taken up in *Vepris*. This means that *Vepris simplex* Cheek is both a nom. illeg. and a nom. superfl. according to Art. 52.1 of the *Code* (Turland et al. 2018), as pointed out by IPNI (continuously updated) and by the third author. Therefore, we hereby make the new combination needed and reduce *Vepris simplex* to synonymy.

TAXONOMIC TREATMENT

Vepris viridis (I.Verd.) Cheek, Q.Luke & Gereau, **comb. nov.**

Bas.: *Teclea viridis* I. Verd. (1926: 410). Type: Kenya, Nairobi Forests, 5500 ft, fl. Feb. 1914, *Battiscombe* 867 (Holotype K barcode 000199480!; isotype EA)

Syn: *Toddalia simplicifolia* Engl. (Engler 1895: 228), *Teclea simplicifolia* (Engl.) I. Verd. (1926: 410; Kokwaro 1982: 25; Gilbert 1989: 427; Friis 1992: 183; Beentje 1994: 369), *Vepris simplicifolia* (Engl.) Mziray (Mziray 1992: 75) *hom. illegit.* (non *Vepris simplicifolia* Endl. (Endlicher 1833 : 89), *Vepris simplex* Cheek (Cheek and Luke 2023: 488) *nom. illeg.*, *nom. superfl.*

Type: Tanzania, “Hochwaldes” (indicated as Usambara Mts on EA isotype), 1300-1600 m, Sept. 1892, *Holst* 3801 (holotype B, probably destroyed; isotype EA barcode EA000003191!; epitype (designated in Cheek and Luke 2023) Tanzania, Tanga Province, Lushoto Distr., Manola, 6,600 ft, fl. 16 June 1953, *Parry* 222 (K barcode K000593353!).

Vepris viridis is an ecologically important montane species, being locally frequent and a preferred fodder plant of elephants (Cheek and Luke 2023). It occurs from the Ethiopian Highlands in the vicinity of Addis Abeba southwards along the E African rift mountains through the highlands of Kenya, and Tanzania to the Mafinga Mts of northern Malawi (Cheek & Luke 2023).

To the thirteen species of continental African *Vepris* species accepted by Cheek and Luke (2023), a fourteenth, *V. usambarensis* Ciambrone & Cheek was added by Ciambrone et al. (2024).

CONCLUSION

This article corrects the long overdue nomenclatural error of accepting the illegitimate later homonym *Vepris simplicifolia* (I.Verd.) Mziray, which has been in use since its publication (Mziray 1992) until the present. Its immediate publication will stop continued misapplication of the wrong name to the species in question.

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