

‘Epigyne’ vs. ‘epigynum’ revisited

‘Epigyne’ или ‘epigynum’: возвращение к дискуссии

Yuri M. Marusik
Ю.М. Марусик

¹ Institute for Biological Problems of the North FEB RAS, Portovaya Str. 18, Magadan 685000, Russia. E-mail: yurmar@mail.ru; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4499-5148>

² Altai State University, Lenina Pr., 61, Barnaul, RF-656049, Russia.

³ Department of Zoology & Entomology, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa.

¹ Институт биологических проблем Севера ДВО РАН, Портовая 18, Магадан 685000 Россия.

² Алтайский государственный университет, пр. Ленина, д. 61, Барнаул 656049 Россия.

KEY WORDS: Aranei, Araneae, terminology, grammatical gender.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: Aranei, Araneae, терминология, грамматический род.

ABSTRACT. A discussion is continued on what term is correct, ‘epigyne’ or ‘epigynum’, and what is a correct grammatical gender of this word. New arguments are provided in favour of the former variant. Term ‘epigyne’ was used by classics of arachnology in the texts published in Latin, and they considered this word as belonging to feminine grammatical gender. Same spelling was used in several other languages (French, German, English, Swedish). The variant ‘epigynum’ was first invented by an American author [Emerton, 1875] in an English text. Neither Emerton [1875], who considered it to be of neuter gender, nor his followers have publications written in Latin.

How to cite this paper: Marusik Yu.M. 2023. ‘Epigyne’ vs. ‘epigynum’ revisited // *Arthropoda Selecta*. Vol.32. No.2. P.229–230. doi: 10.15298/arthsel.32.2.09

РЕЗЮМЕ. Продолжена дискуссия о правильном написании слова ‘epigyne’ или ‘epigynum’, и о том, к какому грамматическому роду исходно принадлежит этот термин. Представлены дополнительные аргументы в пользу первого варианта. Термин ‘epigyne’ использовали классики арахнологии, которые писали на латыни и считали этот термин словом женского рода. Этот же термин употребляли в других языках, как-то: французском, немецком, английском, шведском. Вариант ‘epigynum’ был впервые использован американским автором в английском тексте, но как латинское слово, при том, что ни у самого автора, Эмертона [Emerton, 1875], ни у его последователей нет ни одного текста на латыни.

There are two different spellings of ending of the morphological term referring to the female copulatory organ in spiders: “epigyne” and “epigynum”. Marusik [2021] provided a historical overview of use of the term(s) and their modifications, arguing that the correct spelling of this term in many European languages

(English, German, French, Spanish, and also Latin) is ‘epigyne’. The statement was based on the ground that the word ‘epigyne’ is a noun of the Greek origin consisting of two words, *ἐπί* (on or above) and *γυνή* (female or female sexual organ) and therefore has a feminine gender. Marusik [2021] also provided historical facts in support of his statements. Breitling [2022] opposed Marusik’s arguments and provided very detailed arguments based on an excellent knowledge of Latin, French and other languages, arguing that term “was derived from nominalization from French adjective *épigyne*, very widely used in French botanical texts of the time and adopted in various forms in all major European languages”. His conclusion was that the neuter gender is actually correct and therefore term should be spelled as ‘epigynum’.

Although the statement of Breitling [2022] on the neuter gender of ‘epigynum’ is technically correct, it contradicts several historical facts of scientific usage of Latin in arachnological publications.

Most, if not all, morphological terms used as Latin or Latinized in English text (e.g. *seta*, *tarsus*, *bulbus*, *tibia*, *patella*, *femur*, *coxa*, *cephalothorax*, *prosoma*, *opisthosoma*, *chelicera*, etc.) have the same grammatical gender as the derived nouns in Greek or Latin. None of them are derived from nominalization of French adjectives or indeed those of other European languages.

Classical arachnological workers, who wrote descriptions in Latin, used the word ‘epigyne’ exclusively. It appears that the first author who mentioned the term *epigyne* in a Latin text description was Sundevall [1833: p. 261] “*apertura sexualis (epigyne Sav.)*”.

Westring [1861: p. 13] also used the word ‘epigyne’ in Latin. He defined the term in the glossary “*Termini technici cum eorum explicatione*”: “*Epigyne (oviductus?)*, appendix vaginaeformis, quae in pluribus feminis ex apertura genitali jam longius, jam brevius eminet. *Apertura genitalis (vulva Walck.) ante medium ventris, basin versus, sita est, in adultis conspicua, in junioribus occlusa*”.

Furthermore, Westring [1861] used the word *epigyne* throughout the whole text in all of his descriptions. Ten years earlier, Westring [1851] used the same word in a paper written in Swedish. It is worth noting that in the 20th century another Swedish arachnologist, Tullgren [1946] used the word ‘*epigyn*’ [sic].

Kulczyński [1895a, b; 1898: p. 33; 1899, 1901] and Chyzer & Kulczyński [1891, 1894, 1897] exclusively used ‘*epigyne*’ in their Latin descriptions. Alexander van Hasselt [1888] also used the word ‘*epigyne*’ in an article written in Latin.

Another doyen of arachnology, Thorell, used the term ‘*vulva*’, in his descriptions written in Latin as a synonym of *epigyne*. His considered ‘synonymy’ of the two terms is evident in Thorell [1869: p. 84] in the English textual discussion, but “*epigyne*” was placed in quotes: “... with prediction to deduce the distinctions of *species* from the almost endlessly varying forms of the palpi of the males and the “*epigyne*” or *vulva* of the females”.

The classic German arachnologist L. Koch [1867, 1868], who did not write his taxon descriptions in Latin, also used the word ‘*epigyne*’ in his publications, written in his native German.

The first author to introduce the word ‘*epigynum*’ — in an American English text — was Emerton [1875]. Emerton has at least 30 taxonomic publications on spiders [WSC, 2023]. All of these publications are in American English and Emerton never utilized Latin in his species descriptions. This was contrary to the common practice in arachnological works in many other countries at that time (as mentioned earlier), as well as the present use of Latin in botanical literature. Therefore, it is hard to believe that Sundevall, Westring, Kulczyński, and van Hasselt, who published a number of papers in Latin, were not familiar with Latin grammar, but conversely that Emerton was expert in Latin.

Among European classics of arachnology, I found that only Eugène Simon [1892] used the word ‘*epigynum*’ as a synonym of the French ‘*épigyne*’ in the introductory and discussion parts of his text, written in French. However, it is important to note, however, that his taxon descriptions were written in Latin, he exclusively used the term ‘*vulva*’ and never employed ‘*epigynum*’. It is worth noting that Simon was not proficient in Latin and Greek grammar [Cameron, 2005].

My knowledge in Latin is very limited; however, my argument in favour of ‘*epigyne*’ is based on three main points: 1) all the so-called classical authors (see above) who wrote in Latin only used the word ‘*epigyne*’ in their Latin descriptions; 2) British authors used this term as a word of English vocabulary, and 3) the word ‘*epigynum*’ was introduced in American English by Emerton [1875], as a Latinized term with pluralization as ‘*epigyna*’, while he had no publications written in Latin.

Acknowledgements. I thank Danni Sherwood (London, UK), Victor Fet (Huntington, USA) and Alireza Zamani (Turku, Finland) for reviewing the text and editing my English. Special thanks are to Alexaner N. Sennikov (Helsinki, Finland) for consultations dealing with Latin grammar.

References

- Breitling R. 2022. *Epigyne* or *epigynum*? Some philological notes // *Arthropoda Selecta*. Vol.31. No.1. P.129–131
- Cameron H.D. 2005. An etymological dictionary of North American spider genus names // D. Ubick et al. (eds.). *Spiders of North America: an identification manual*. American Arachnological Society. P.274–330.
- Chyzer C., Kulczyński W. 1891. *Araneae Hungariae*. Tomus I. *Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae Budapest*. 170 pp., Pl. I–IV.
- Chyzer C., Kulczyński W. 1894. *Araneae Hungariae*. Tomus II. Pars 1. *Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae Budapest*. P.1–151, Pl. I–V.
- Chyzer C., Kulczyński W. 1897. *Araneae Hungariae*. Tomus II. Pars 2. *Academia Scientiarum Hungaricae Budapest*. P.147–366, Pl. VI–X.
- Emerton J.H. 1875. Notes on spiders from Caves in Kentucky, Virginia and Indiana // *American Naturalist*. Vol.9. No.5. P.278–281.
- Hasselt A.W.M., van. 1888. *Araneae exoticae quas collegit, pro Museo Lugdunensi, Dr H. Ten Kate Jr. in Guyana Hollandica (Suriname)* // *Tijdschrift voor Entomologie*. Vol.31. P.165–200.
- Koch L. 1867. Beschreibungen neuer Arachniden und Myriapoden. II // *Verhandlungen der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Zoologisch-Botanischen Gesellschaft in Wien*. Bd.17. S.173–250.
- Koch L. 1868. Die Arachnidengattungen *Amaurobius*, *Coelotes* und *Cybaeus* // *Abhandlungen der Naturhistorischen Gesellschaft zu Nürnberg*. Bd.4. S.1–52.
- Kulczyński W. 1895a. *Araneae a Dre G. Horvath in Bessarabia, Chersoneso Taurico, Transcaucasia et Armenia Russica collectae* // *Természtrajzi Füzetek*. K.18. P.3–38.
- Kulczyński W. 1895b. *Attidae musei zoologici Varsoviensis in Siberia orientali collecti* // *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania z Posiedzen Wydziału Matematyczno Przyrodniczego Akademji Umiejtnosci, Kraków*. T.32. S.45–98.
- Kulczyński W. 1898. *Symbola ad faunam aranearum Austriae inferioris cognoscendam* // *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania z Posiedzen Wydziału Matematyczno Przyrodniczego Akademji Umiejtnosci, Kraków*. T.36. S.1–114.
- Kulczyński W. 1899. *Arachnoidea opera Rev. E. Schmitz collecta in insulis Maderianis et in insulis Selvages dictis* // *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania z Posiedzen Wydziału Matematyczno Przyrodniczego Akademji Umiejtnosci, Kraków*. T.36. S.319–461.
- Kulczyński W. 1901. *Arachnoidea* // Horvath G. (Hrsg.) *Zoologische Ergebnisse der dritten asiatischen Forschungsreise des Grafen Eugen Zichy*. Budapest. Bd.2. S.311–369.
- Marusik Yu.M. 2021. *Epigyne* or *epigynum*: what is correct? // *Arthropoda Selecta*. Vol.30. No.1. P.130–132
- Simon E. 1892. *Histoire naturelle des araignées*. Deuxième édition. Tome premier. Paris: Roret. 256 p.
- Sundevall C.J. 1833. *Svenska spindlarnes beskrifning*. Fortsättning och slut // *Bihang till Kongliga Svenska Vetenskaps-Akademiens Handlingar 1832*. S.172–272.
- Thorell T. 1869. On European spiders. Review of the European genera of spiders, preceded by some observations on zoological nomenclature // *Nova Acta Regiae Societatis Scientiarum Upsaliensis*. Ser.3. Vol.7. Fasc.1. P.1–108.
- Tullgren A. 1946. *Svensk spindelfauna: 3. Egentliga spindlar*. *Araneae*. Fam. 5–7. Clubionidae, Zoridae och Gnaphosidae. Stockholm: Entomologiska Föreningen. S.1–141, Pl. 1–21.
- Westring N. 1851. Förteckning öfver de till närvarande tid Kände, i Sverige förekommande Spindlarter, utgörande ett antal af 253, deraf 132 äro nya för svenska Faunan // *Göteborgs Kungliga Vetenskaps och Vitterhets Samhälles Handlingar*. Bd.2. S.25–62.
- Westring N. 1861. *Araneae svecicae* // *Göteborgs Kungliga Vetenskaps och Vitterhets Samhälles Handlingar*. Bd.7. S.1–615.
- WSC. 2023. *World Spider Catalog*. Version 24. Natural History Museum Bern, online at <http://wsc.nmbe.ch>, accessed on January 20, 2023. doi: 10.24436/2