

THE GENUS *ONTHEODENDRON* SAHNI & RAO 1933

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THE genus *Ontheodendron* was instituted by Sahni and Rao (1933) for certain plant remains from Onthea, Rajmahal Hills which they interpreted as lax cylindrical cones with single-seeded ligulate scales. Ganju (1947) also figured an apparently similar detached scale. Rao and Bose (1960) re-examined the figured specimens of *Ontheodendron florinii* Sahni & Rao, the type species of the genus, as well as a large number of cycadophyte stem impressions and moulds in different degrees of decortication. They discovered that "the apical regions of some of these stem specimens showed a striking resemblance to *O. florini* Sahni & Rao". They, therefore, opined that *O. florini* could possibly be a partially decorticated cycadophytic stem, though its affinities within the group remained uncertain. Hence, Rao and Bose (1960) instituted a new genus *Cycadophytites* for such cycadophytic stems which could not be definitely assigned either to the Bennettiales or the Cycadales. They removed *Ontheodendron florinii*, the type species, from the genus *Ontheodendron* and transferred it to the genus *Cycadophytites* as the type species of that genus.

Thus we find that the form genus *Cycadophytites* was instituted for the same fossil specimens for which the form genus *Ontheodendron* was already existent. The name *Ontheodendron* was rejected in favour of the new name *Cycadophytites* merely because the later researches showed that the affinities of such forms were not with the Coniferales but with the Cycadophytes. This change of name is, however, not permissible under the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature which clearly says — "A legitimate name or epithet must not be rejected merely because it is inappropriate or disagreeable, or because another is preferable or better known, or because it has lost its original meaning." — Article 62. Not only that, even "An alteration of diagnostic characters or of the circumscription of a taxon does not warrant a change in its name, except as may be required (1) by transference of the

taxon (Arts. 54-56), or (2) by its union with another taxon of the same rank (Arts. 57, 58, Rec. 57A), or (3) by a change of its rank (Art. 60)." (Article 51, ICBN).

According to para 2 of article 11 of the ICBN "For any taxon from family to genus inclusive, the correct name is the earliest legitimate one with the same rank, except in cases of limitation of priority by conservation (see Arts. 14 & 15) or where Arts. 13f, 58 or 59 apply." As the name *Cycadophytites* Rao & Bose 1960 is not covered by articles 14 and 15 of the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature dealing with the *Nomina conservanda*, it becomes nomenclaturely superfluous (Article 63, ICBN). Therefore, the name *Ontheodendron* Sahni & Rao 1933 has priority over *Cycadophytites* Rao & Bose 1960.

Genus — *Ontheodendron* Sahni & Rao 1933 emend.

1960 — *Cycadophytites* Rao & Bose, Palaeobotanist, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 30.

Type Species—*Ontheodendron florinii* Sahni & Rao, 1933.

Diagnosis — (after Rao & Bose, 1960, p. 30) "Impressions, casts and moulds of cycadophytic stems, not definitely referable to either the Bennettiales or the Cycadales".

Ontheodendron florinii Sahni & Rao 1933 emend.

1933 — *Ontheodendron florinii* Sahni & Rao, p. 200, pl. 15, fig. 33; pl. 16, figs. 31, 32, 34.

1947 — *Ontheodendron florini* Sahni & Rao: Ganju, p. 72, pl. 5, fig. 32.

1960 — *Cycadophytites florini* (Sahni & Rao) Rao & Bose, p. 30, pl. 1, figs. 1-6, text-fig. 1.

Diagnosis — (after Rao & Bose, 1960) Impressions or moulds of decorticated cycadophytic stems. Leaf-scars rhomboid-oval or ovoid, narrowing to a fine point towards the petiolar end, show vertical striations but no vascular traces.

Holotype — Type specimen no. F10a of the Botany Department, University of Lucknow.

Type Locality — Onthea, Rajmahal Hills, Bihar.

Horizon & Age — Rajmahal Stage, Upper Jurassic.

Affinities — Probably with the Cycadopsida.

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