

Synopsis and Classification of Living Organisms



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and
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of Living
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Volume 1

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Preface

The great system of classification developed by C. Linnaeus in the 18th century remains in many ways the primary system of classification and is central to all other classifications of biological variation (see the Appendix). Despite the importance of Linnaean classification to biological research, there exists no single, comprehensive reference to the classification of living organisms with descriptions of taxa above the generic level. With this in mind, *Synopsis and Classification of Living Organisms* was conceived to treat higher-level taxonomy. In these volumes, the systematic positions and affinities of all living organisms are presented in synoptic articles for all taxa down to the family level. This reference also provides Linnaean classifications and citations which serve as a guide to the specialized literature. Much of the information has previously been available only in obscure journals; in many cases, this information is presented in English for the first time; and, for a few groups, the classification is published here for the first time.

This reference is restricted to Recent organisms, that is, those observed alive by scientists or recorded in some form compatible with scientific methods. Exclusion of purely fossil groups was necessary in order to restrict the size of the work; of course, this results in little or no discussion of the primitive groups of most major taxa.

The concept of living organism, as delimited here, includes viruses. The decision to place viruses as a kingdom in the classification system was based on knowledge that viruses have evolved from more complicated free-living organisms and have become secondarily simplified as parasites—a well-known pattern of evolutionary change.

The classification used in these volumes recognizes four kingdoms (Virus, Monera, Plantae, and Animalia) arranged in two superkingdoms—the Prokaryotae and the Eukaryotae. Almost all workers agree that these two superkingdoms reflect a basic difference in organization of living organisms. Decision on this arrangement is based on a compromise between the most useful groups and the highest degree of monophyly of these taxa. The kingdoms recognized herein and some of the subkingdoms are still minimally monophyletic. Many workers will disagree with certain aspects of this classification, especially not recognizing the Protista. Although the four-kingdom system advocated herein has the greatest advantage, the differences between it and some other systems, such as a five-kingdom system recognizing the Protista, are not significant.

Synoptic articles (totaling 8200) constitute the major portion of this reference. They are designed to give an idea of the biology of each group and are presented in the same order as the classification in the Appendix. All recognized taxa are listed in the classification, even though articles are not included for monotypic groups or those groups whose classification has not been sufficiently

clarified. Each article provides a brief overview of the characteristics, biology, ecology, and distribution of the taxon. For family treatments, there is mention of the number of included genera, and major genera are named. These articles are limited in scope and therefore are not intended to serve as a means of identifying unknown specimens, to supply a thorough diagnosis for each taxon, or to treat the complete diversity of each group.

The classification for each section was the responsibility of the author. In cases where the classification has not been worked out completely, the one that is given reflects the best current knowledge of the group. Authors were asked to avoid unaccepted classifications but were encouraged to express their views as to the validity of alternate schemes. There has been no attempt to force all groups into a rigid standard system since this would have produced artificial results.

The literature citations at the end of a synoptic article are an extremely useful feature. Criteria for selection of these citations were: to include the principal English and/or foreign language publication; to include recent publications as well as those of historical significance; and to include research papers in addition to comprehensive references. Very often, however, the best references for a particular taxon are the same as the references for the taxon immediately superior. To avoid repetition in such cases, references were deleted in the inferior taxon. Therefore, when a taxon is not cited with references, the reader should look in the taxon immediately superior. Also, even if a taxon is listed with references, the references of the taxon immediately superior may also be relevant.

Illustrations selected by the authors include both line drawings and photographs since all groups are not well represented in the same way. Photographs are presented in a series of plates, identified by number, and listed by group name in the front matter of volume 1. Each subject in a plate is labeled with a specific name followed by the family (in a few cases, a higher taxon) name in parentheses. The plates are not referenced in the text because photographs generally have only intrinsic interest. Line drawings are similarly labeled (species, family), sometimes supplemented by captions. These appear on folioed pages and are called out at appropriate points in the text by page number.

Articles are signed by authors, who retain full responsibility for content. In general, each author contributed a group of articles and the writer's name is given following the article title that identifies the group. If a large group was prepared by several authors, the names are repeated as individual contributions are interspersed. For a group which was handled principally by one author but which includes isolated entries by a second author, the second name is given at the end of appropriate articles.

The Appendix has a brief article on biological nomenclature with sources for additional information; an article on biological classification, including a discussion of systems of kingdoms and a bibliography; and the classification listing of living organisms. Although nomenclature is not an integral part of this reference, it is an essential aspect of systematics and is of primary importance to biologists. No matter how carefully it is worked out, classification for living organisms would not work unless definite rules of nomenclature were followed by all biologists.

Access to the information in this reference is achieved most efficiently via the Index which contains the names of all taxa, including genera and species, mentioned in the

text of the synoptic articles. Also listed are common names, synonyms, and names used in other or older systems of classification. There are more than 35,000 entries in the Index.

To publish a work of such magnitude required the dedicated efforts of hundreds of specialists working together over several years. We are indebted to the authors, who were committed to the completion of this project; without them it would have been impossible. A special acknowledgment is also due the consultants, who extended themselves in planning the work and finding the authors.

SYBIL P. PARKER
Editor in Chief

Credits for Plates and Illustrations

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- Plate 3** *Stigmatella*: From G. T. Quails, K. Stephens, and D. White. Light stimulated morphogenesis in the fruiting myxobacterium *Stigmatella aurantiaca*, *Science*, 201(4354):444–445, © 1978 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Plate 4** *Simonsiella*: From J. Pangborn, D. A. Kuhn, and J. R. Woods. Dorsal-ventral differentiation in *Simonsiella* and other aspects of its morphology and ultrastructure, *Arch. Microbiol.*, 113:197–204, 1977.
- Plate 6** *Rhizobium*: From C. R. MacKenzie, W. J. Vail, and D. C. Jordan. Ultrastructure of free-living and nitrogen fixing forms of *Rhizobium meliloti* as revealed by freeze-etching, *J. Bacteriol.*, 113:387–393, 1973.
- Plate 8** Top (phase contrast micrograph): From S. Razin, B. J. Cosenza, and M. E. Tourtellotte. Filamentous growth of mycoplasma, *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.*, 143:66–72, 1967.
Top (scanning electron micrograph): From G. Biberfeld and P. Biberfeld. Ultrastructural features of *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, *J. Bacteriol.*, 102:855–861, 1970.
Bottom (*Spiroplasma*): From R. M. Cole et al. Morphology, ultrastructure, and bacteriophage infection of the helical mycoplasma-like organism *Spiroplasma citri* gen. nov., sp. nov., cultured from “stubborn” disease of atrus, *J. Bacteriol.*, 115:367–386, 1973.
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Cavostelium sorocarp: From L. S. Olive and C. Stoianovitch. A new two-spored species of *Cavostelium* (Protostelida), *Mycologia*, 58: 440–451, 1966.
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Copromyxaella: From K. B. Raper et al., *Copromyxaella*: A new genus of Acrasidac, *Amer. J. Bot.*, 65:1011–1026, 1978.
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Echinosteliopsis: From D. J. Reinhardt and L. S. Olive. *Echinosteliopsis*, a new genus of the Mycetozoa, *Mycologia*, 58:966–970, 1966.
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- Plate 67** From K. G. Grell, Ober den Ursprung der Metazoen, *Mikrokosmos*, 60:97–102, 1971.
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Pages 462–465 Drawings by J. O. Howell and M. L. Williams.

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PROKARYOTAE

JOHN O. CORLISS

Predominantly unicellular microorganisms or infectious agents of cells (the viruses), prokaryotic, with reproduction asexual and chromosomal and with recombination unidirectional. The Prokaryotae sensu lato may be considered to include a kingdom for viruses, although such "organisms" are considered acellular or noncellular (even nonliving) by many authorities, and one for the typical moneran forms, the many kinds of "true" bacteria plus the aphragmobacteria (the "nonwalled" mycoplasmas), the myxobacteria (gliding forms), the cyanobacteria (the "blue-green algae"), and the curious chloroxybacteria (the recently discovered Prochloron).

The 2 kingdoms constituting this superkingdom possess little in common, besides such superficial characters as microscopic (or ultramicroscopic) size and frequent involvement in causing diseases in other organisms, including human beings, and such negative characters as not being eukaryotic, not possessing any mouth opening, and not being multicellular (or, in the case of viruses, even cellular) in their organization. In the smallest dimension, prokaryotes measure from 0.2 to 10 μm ; viruses show a diameter of 10 to 300 nm, the largest, therefore, just barely overlapping in width with the smallest bacterium.

Monerans (above the virus level) are generally solitary, unicellular forms; but some species are filamen-

tous, colonial, or mycelial. Some are also motile, either by gliding or by the action of bacterial flagella containing the protein flagellin. Modes of nutrition are diverse: absorptive, chemosynthetic, photoheterotrophic, and photoautotrophic. Respiration is anaerobic or aerobic, or facultatively either one. Respiratory and photosynthetic functions are both generally associated with the plasma membrane system: there are no specialized organelles such as mitochondria or plastids, although thylakoids are present in cyanobacteria and in *Prochloron*.

Virus particles can survive in a dried, crystalline, metabolically inert state. Bacteria may produce endospores of great resistance to a variety of environmental stresses; the trophic forms occur ubiquitously in aquatic or moist habitats, including cells and tissues of hosts belonging to all other groups of organisms. Complex viruses have an envelope surrounding the nucleocapsid; many bacteria possess rigid cell walls, and some produce outer sheaths.

Viruses replicate only in (other living) cells: that is, they are obligate intracellular parasites in the cytoplasm or nuclei of unicellular organisms or in the cells of tissues or organs of multicellular organisms. Viral nucleic acid (RNA or DNA) contains the proper genetic information to cause the infected host cell to synthesize the materials needed for making more viruses of the same kind as the invader. In the monerans, reproduction of the haploid cell is essentially asexual, by fission or budding. But mechanisms of gene transfer and recombination occur, though without involvement of

the processes so common in even the lower eukaryotes, namely, gametogenesis and zygote formation. The nucleoplasm is not enclosed by a nuclear membrane, no microtubular spindle is formed, no centrioles are present, and genic material is associated with single chromonemata rather than chromosomes. Recombination is either unidirectional or mediated by viruses present.

Fewer than 50 families have been recognized by taxonomic students of the kingdom Virus, and most of these have been formally proposed only recently. With respect to the combined 3 divisions (Bacteria, Cyanophycota, Prochlorophycota) of the kingdom Monera, scores of families (or equivalent taxonomic groups) have been described.

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