8 *Origin-oriented names of borrowings in New Caledonia*

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Origin-oriented names are those which give or purport to give the origin or source of the item bearing the borrowed name. In *Wörter und Sachen* terms, the name followed the item, so *chou de Chine* and *Chinese cabbage* are names for a variety of cabbage originating in China and introduced into Europe.

This simplistic view of origin-oriented names conceals a complex set of meanings, for example, the name may indicate:

- the place of introduction:[1] CAC *jali chê lui* 'taro clone introduced at Saint-Louis';
- the person who introduced it: FRE *herbe de Greslan* 'grass, *Echinochloa colonum*' introduced in 1870 by E. de Greslan;
- the place where first found: *herbe de la pointe Chaleix*, a 'silky blue grass', *Dichanthium sericeum*, first found at Chaleix Point';
- the regular users: FRE *persil chinois* 'coriander or cilantro', *Coriandrum sativum*, a standard item in Vietnamese (Indochinois) cuisine.

However, the point of this study is not motivation, but the pattern of origins, and the reasons for the incorrect origins implied by some of these names.

[1] BEL – Belep; CAC – Caaàc; CAW – Caawac; DEH – Drehu (Lifu); ENG – English; FWA – Fwai; FRE – New Caledonian French; JAW – Jawe; KUM – Kumak; NEG – Nengone (Mare); NMI – Nemi; PIJ – Pije; YAL – Nyelâyu.

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I

In a study of FRE plant names (Hollyman 1993), two frequencies of occurrence were recorded, one reflecting the totality of uses irrespective of currency, the other noting only current usage. The regions credited with providing the origin-oriented names, the two frequencies of use, and the resulting rankings, were as follows:

Pacific[2]	036/024	1/1
Southeast Asia & Far East	035/018	2/2
Central & South America	019/118	3/3
Indian Ocean	013/005	4/4
Europe	007/003	6/5
North America	004/002	7/6
Equatorial & South Africa	010/001	5/7
Middle East	002/001	9/8
North Africa	003/000	8/-
Totals	129/062	

A similar study of FRE animal names of all kinds (air, land, sea) (Hollyman 1995), produced the following results:

Pacific	030/019	1/1
Southeast Asia & Far East	015/005	2/2
Indian Ocean	002/000	6/–
Europe	013/002	3/4
North America	003/003	5/3
Equatorial & South Africa	005/000	4/–
Totals	068/029	

There are of course substantial reasons for some of the differences between these two lists:

- Various animals have regional variants, and often the variant region is part of the name: *Perna caliculus*, the 'green-lipped mussel' is called both *moule verte* and *moule verte des Philippines*;
- Birds of the Cuculidae family include the *coucou de Nouvelle-Zélande*, *Eudynamis tahitensis*, which migrates between Tahiti and New Zealand; and the *coucou des Iles, Cacomantis p. pyrrhophanus*, recorded from the Tasmania–Australia–New Guinea area through New Caledonia and Vanuatu to Fiji.

We do not of course have to believe what these names imply, and indeed they are not infrequently mistaken. Thus of the four FRE names for a blue spur shrub (Labiatae), *Plectranthus amboinicus—aromate des Martiniquais, aromate des Javanais, thym antillais,*

[2] The term Pacific excludes the extensive references to local New Caledonian origin.

thym martiniquais—only the second is a reasonably accurate guide to the plant's Indonesian origin. One significant point is that the origin-oriented name may be mistaken as to the prime origin, but accurate as to the proximate origin. Thus *Circus*, a genus of cosmopolitan harriers with representatives in the Old World and the New, has a regional representative, *C. a. approximans*, called the *busard australien* 'Australian buzzard' although its area extends from Fiji and Tahiti down to Norfolk, the Kermadecs and the Chathams.

This last kind of example provides a further name which will take us into the centre of my interest. *Samanaea saman* is a tree native to tropical America introduced as FRE *bois noir de Haiti*. The name has been modified to *bois noir de Tahiti* because, like the timber of *Samanaea*, the timber of the local *bois noir* (*Albizia lebbek*) darkens with age. But why Tahiti instead of Haiti? Clearly because the former was much more familiar than the latter.

In fact when plant names are looked at as a group, 71/42 out of the total 129/062 (55%/68%) imply a Pacific or Southeast Asia – Far East origin. With animal names, 45/24 out of 68/29 (66%/83%) do the same. While this is not surprising in terms of the number of plants and animals which do originate in these areas, other explanations are needed where the origin-oriented name is a misnomer or a mistake, as with *violette du Japon*, *Saintpaulia* sp., the African violet of Australian and New Zealand English.

The fact is that the sources of the exotic and the new are radically different in geographical terms from those encountered in European linguistic history, and these new parameters have to be recognised. New Caledonia has had close relations of one kind or another with Australia, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Fiji, Vanuatu and Tahiti in the Pacific, and with Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam and China in Southeast Asia and the Far East.

We may with reason take Tahiti as a typical example of Pacific exotic. There are six different vines called *lianes de Tahiti*:

- *Allamanda cathartica*, known as *liane de Tahiti*, *liane jaune*, *liane jaune de Tahiti*, *liane Tahiti*, *monette jaune*, *alamanda*. It is in fact a native of Guiana.
- *Allamanda violacea* (incorrectly so identified), known as *liane de Tahiti*, *liane Tahiti*, *liane Tahiti violette*, *alamanda*. Its origin is unknown.
- *Solanum seaforthianum*, var. *disjunctum*, known as *liane de Tahiti*, *liane pomme de terre*. It is a native of Brazil.
- *Thunbergia mysorensis*, known as *liane de Tahiti*, *grandes gueules*, *liane de Noel*, *liane lampion*, *sabot de Noel*, *thunbergia*. It is a native of India.
- *Antigonon leptopus*, known as *liane de Tahiti*, *antigone*, *liane corail*, *vigne vierge*. This vine comes from Mexico.
- An unidentified vine with coral red flowers lasting three weeks, and called *liane de Tahiti*, *liane de corail*. Its origin is unknown.

Japan, though not as well favoured as Tahiti, nevertheless can figure as the main source of Asian exotic:

- *Allium tuberosum*, known as *ail du Japon*, is indeed from Japan.
- *Impatiens sultanii*, known as *balsamine du Japon*, is from Zanzibar.

- *Eugenia brasiliensis*, known as *cerisier du Japon* and as *cerisier du Bresil*, is indeed from Brazil.
- *Pentas lanceolata*, ssp. *cymosa*, var. *carnea*, and ssp. *quartiniana*, var. *alba*, are from Arabia.
- *Phlox du Japon* is unidentified and of unknown origin.
- *Saintpaulia* sp., is called *violette du Japon*. As has been mentioned above, it is of African origin.

Origin-oriented terms are sometimes difficult with birds, because of their migratory patterns. What must be realised, however, is that those very migratory patterns offer a choice: the long-tailed cuckoo is a native of New Zealand and of Island Polynesia, and as mentioned above it migrates between New Zealand and Tahiti. The New Caledonian French chose to call it *coucou de Nouvelle-Zélande*. Other birds may cover a wide area, may in fact be termed cosmopolitan, and this again offers choice: *Tyto alba*, the common barn owl, is known everywhere except temperate Asia, but has become known as FRE *hibou de Ceylan*.

One of the most interesting birds is the mynah, *Acridotheres tristis*. Its standard range is from Afghanistan and Russian Turkestan to India and Sri Lanka, and it has been widely introduced into Southeast Asia and Australasia. This has given rise to a series of proximate origin-oriented names: FRE *merle des Philippines*, *martin de Bourbon*, *merle des Moluques*, with its farcical deformation, *merle des mollusques*, which reveals a clear lack of geographical and ornithological knowledge.

Phalacrocorax m. melanoleucos, the 'little pied cormorant', is native to Australasia (including New Caledonia and New Zealand), yet its origin-oriented name is FRE *canard japonais*. This is because of the custom, attributed to the Japanese, of training it to catch fish which its trainer then obliges it to disgorge for his benefit. Some orientations, then, have cultural rather than purely geographical significance.

II

External relations of the Kanak inhabitants of New Caledonia in pre-European times were very limited, earlier stages of their migrations being generally forgotten. But relations were maintained between the Loyalties and Central and Southern Vanuatu, and these have left traces in the languages of Mare and Lifu.[3] The latter in particular maintained matrimonial and trade relations with the island which the Lifuans called Kiamu—Aneityum, which also had relations with Tas, the area around Epi. So we find the following origin-oriented names, the occasional one of which spread to the mainland:[4]

- DEH *wakiamu*, NEG *kiamu* 'banana clone';
- DEH *tasuo* 'clone of yam (*Dioscorea alata*)'; CAC *ta-chuo* 'red-fleshed clone of sweet potato'.

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[3] Most of the information in this section is from Lenormand (1998) and Dubois and Capell (n.d.).

[4] We may note that these names usually indicate an immediate or proximate origin.

Probably also before European contact, the Beleps assumed a role as introducers of new yam and sweet potato clones:

- DEH, NEG *belep* clones of *Dioscorea alata*;
- CAC *paa-velep* clone of *Dioscorea pentaphylla* (*paak*);
- abandoned clones of sweet potato: CAC, JAW *belep*, KUM *beelep*.

There was also contact with Fiji, the earliest known being about the time of first European contact:[5]

- CAC *phejuê* (< FRE *fidjien*) 'large white-fleshed clone of *Dioscorea alata*'; *phejuê miia* 'clone of *D. alata* with red skin, white flesh'.

Later, after European contact, when teachers from the Loyalties were used to evangelise parts of New Guinea, we find:

- DEH, NEG, NMI, PIJ *papua* 'clone of *D. alata*'; this spread to the Beleps and the mainland: BEL *papwa*, YAL, KUM *pwapua*.

Now that the international horizon has expanded, origin-oriented names become standard for many new introductions:

- *Ipomoea batatas*, the sweet potato: clones with pink flesh: CAC *japone*, CAW *chapone*; with different colours: CAC *japone kari* (yellow), *japone miia* (red), *japone phuulo* but no external source for these is known; CAC *amerikana* clone with yellow flesh and red skin. It seems probable that these uses of *japone* and *amerikana* for exotic clones are in line with French usage.
- New Caledonia had at least two native species of banana of the *Eumusa* series: CAC *phwexac* and *muujic*. These were different from the species introduced from Samoa by the missionaries and teachers. So the Samoan ones received origin-oriented names: CAC *chamua*, YAL *chamoa*, JAW, coastal NMI *saamua*, inland NMI, FWA, PIJ *saahmua*, etc. In CAC *chamua* took on an extra role as designation of the little-known seeded and inedible banana *chamua po karoon*.
- *Piia zebrid* for the introduced *Xanthosoma* sp. parallels the FRE name, *taro des Hébrides*. The fuller name, *taro des Nouvelles-Hébrides*, is less common and generally restricted to botanical usage.

III

In New Caledonia, origin-oriented names, whether in European or Oceanic usage, reflect most importantly (i.e. rather more than actual origin) the parameters of exoticism as determined by the administrative, commercial, exchange and cultural relationships the islands

[5] An Auckland entrepreneur named Fitzgerald tried in 1849 to found a beche-de-mer fishery in the north with Fijian labour (Douglas 1971:161–164).

have developed with their more distant neighbours, in particular Tahiti and Japan. The parameters of exoticism are radically different from those current in Europe.

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