

An Antillean plant of beauty, a French botanist, and a German name: naming plants in the Early Modern Atlantic world

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Abstract. This paper investigates the naming of plants in the work of the French botanist Charles Plumier (1646–1704). Plumier made three trips to the French Antilles between 1690 and 1697, was appointed royal botanist in 1693, and published his first work, *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique*, in the same year. Plumier was the first ‘modern’ botanist to describe the flora of the Caribbean in a time when natural history underwent significant qualitative changes as a result of the European expansion and transatlantic contacts. Plumier’s ambition was to replace the confusing multitude of names given to New World plants with a universal taxonomically based nomenclature. His modernity and scientific ethos manifest themselves in his neutral way of organizing the plants according to a taxonomic system and his use of a Latin nomenclature, often naming plants after well-known botanists. Through Plumier’s naming process, I argue, it is possible to highlight the colonial and Atlantic context of his work, his network as part of the scientific elite of his country, and his professionalism resulting from years of botanical studies.

Key words: history of botany, early modern natural history, plant nomenclature.

INTRODUCTION

According to a story entitled ‘The Tree of Riches’, the French botanist Charles Plumier decided that he would like to travel the world and get rich (Pellowski, 1990). In order for this to happen, a fortune teller told him, he had to find a tree with blossoms of the colour of the new moon that grows near churches and graveyards. Hence Plumier travelled to the West Indies where he was told by an old wise woman that such a tree indeed existed and that shaking its branches would bring him riches beyond imagining. As Plumier did so, the story goes, his soul was overpowered by the lovely smell and sight of the cascade of flowers, glistening like golden coins, and he realized that the real wealth in this life was beauty, not riches. Instead of searching for material riches he then went on to look for wealth in nature and discovered many plants. The genus of the tree he found came to be named *Plumeria*.

This old tale is probably based on the facts that the French priest and botanist Charles Plumier (1646–1704) really did botanize in the West Indies and that the tree commonly known as *frangipani* was named after him. His personal motives,

however, probably had more to do with scientific interest and duty than economic gain, although exotic plants often were of great economic value in early modern times (Schiebinger, 2004). Plumier was a monk, a member of the order of the Minims, characterized by great penance and abnegation, including abstinence from all meat. The order is called the Minims because its members regard themselves as the least (*minimi*) of all the religious and devote themselves to prayer, study, and scholarship (Whitmore, 1967). The genus name *Plumeria* was given by fellow botanists Joseph Pitton de Tournefort and Carl von Linné, who wanted to honour a colleague they highly respected. Plumier in his turn named several plants after well-known botanists. An example of this is a plant he found in St. Domingue, called *Molla Ecantu* (plant of beauty) by the indigenous people, which he named *Fuchsia triphylla* after the German botanist Leonard Fuchs (Plumier, 1703–1704).

Knowledge of a plant is usually understood to include, besides knowledge of its physical characteristics, the ability to name it. The vernacular name sometimes refers to the form or the colour of the plant, sometimes to its habitat, and in some cases to the ways the plant has been used. In all these cases the name provides at least some information about the plant. These descriptive references continued when botanists began giving plants Latin names, although then only those who knew Latin understood the significance of the names. The European expansion and the transatlantic contacts created a situation where natural historians of several nationalities botanized in the colonies, each giving the plants they ‘discovered’ a different name. In addition, a practice of naming plants after prominent men, often botanists, developed in early modern Europe. The custom of naming plants after people was in fact already practised in ancient Greece, but Charles Plumier has been credited with reviving the classical Greek habit of naming plants after people. He was also the first European botanist to give names of European botanists to plants growing on another continent. Linné later adopted this practice.

The object of this article is to discuss Charles Plumier’s description, classification, and naming of plants, mainly based on his first work *Description des Plantes de l’Amérique* (1693). Through examining his naming of plants, I argue, it is possible to highlight the colonial and Atlantic context of Plumier’s work, his network as part of the scientific elite of his country, and his professionalism resulting from years of botanical studies. Plumier’s naming practice illustrates how ways of knowing plants and nature changed in the latter part of the 17th century. His naming of plants according to his own brand of polynomial nomenclature, often giving plants names after well-known botanists, can be seen as a stage in the development towards a binomial nomenclature. His way of organizing plants according to a taxonomic system was a decidedly modern trait in the science of botany (see Ogilvie, 2006). Plumier’s modernity further manifests itself in his detailed and ‘neutral’ descriptions of plants and his habit of including a description of the plant’s habitat. Finally, Plumier had the ambition to create a common universal nomenclature, which would facilitate the spreading of the knowledge about Caribbean and South American plants.

Plumier's work, like other historical and natural historical works, can be viewed from the perspective of the history of science. In this context Plumier's practices shed light on changes in taxonomy and on the processes whereby new knowledge was created. The history of early modern botany is closely interlinked with European contacts across the Atlantic world. According to Pratt (1992), the discipline of natural history served the imperial project, where the naming and classifying of unfamiliar species implied conquest and control of them. Other scholars have stressed the significance of the acquired knowledge of the previously unfamiliar nature for the development of the scientific world view (Drayton, 2000). As Schiebinger (2004) argues, the way objects are referred to is a deeply social process. The names given to New World plants show to what extent European botanists valued indigenous knowledge, whether indigenous names were used, Latinized or, as often was the case, completely ignored. The term 'linguistic imperialism' describes a policy of naming that accompanied and promoted European global expansion and colonization (Schiebinger, 2004). Instead of using the local indigenous names, the European botanists imprinted the colonized nature with names of their own. In addition to its scientific motives, such as standardized description and scientific communication, naming is thus a political process when considered in the larger context of the Atlantic world. Through examining this process it is possible to study the cultural history of plants, including the way knowledge about them changed as it travelled across the Atlantic world.

THE TRAVELLING ROYAL BOTANIST

Charles Plumier was a travelling botanist in the Caribbean in the 17th century when knowledge about American plants spread in Europe as a result of escalating mobility in the Early Modern Atlantic world. Plants had great economic value in the early modern era and new exotic plants from the tropics were sought-after resources, bought and sold for their value as food or medicine. As the European colonial empires expanded their territories and searched for ways of making use of their colonies, botanists were increasingly employed in the service of the government. In France, the *Académie des Sciences* had correspondents stationed in the Americas at least from the 1690s onwards (McClellan & Regoud, 2000), and Guy-Crescent Fagon, the king's physician and director of *Jardin du Roi* after 1693, had a great interest in Caribbean and South American plants (Safier, 2008). As Mukerji (2005) noted, the collection and display of imported exotic plants took on a strategic significance in 17th century France. Exhibiting imported plants from the colonies displayed the nation's capacity and intelligence in the use of its territorial resources and the ability to improve life at home. The plant demonstrations at the *Jardin du Roi* were exhibitions of advanced natural knowledge, the capacity to administrate distant colonies, and the ability to use the plants to improve the health of the king and his subjects (see Mukerji, 2005). As a result, medicinal plants such as aloe, sarsaparilla, and guaiac, as well as timber used in

shipbuilding and spices from the Antilles, were of both practical and symbolic significance. Natural history was hence closely associated with colonization.

Botanists usually travelled by ships that were involved in long-distance trade. With the help of assistants, botanists collected plants and brought them back to the ‘knowledge centres’ of Europe (Sheller, 2003). Before the French crown started sending botanists to the colonies, its representatives received information about the flora and fauna of the colonies from missionaries; for instance, the Jesuit Thomas Gouyé (1650–1725) served as an intermediary between his order and the *Académie des Sciences* (McClellan & Regourd, 2000). The first botanists were sent to the French Antilles in the 1690s. Being a botanist meant being prepared to travel and endure hardships in order to collect, analyse, and describe plants. Plumier’s teacher Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, professor at the *Jardin du Roi* from 1683 and member of the Academy from 1692, went on several voyages to observe plants, travelling to Greece and the Orient. Bernard de Fontanelle, secretary of the *Académie des Sciences* from 1697, praised the admirable qualities of Tournefort as a botanist:

Botany is not a sedentary and lazy science which can be learnt in the peace and quiet of a *cabinet* like geometry and history; or which, at most, involves operations requiring little movement like chemistry, anatomy and astronomy. It forces one to explore the mountains and forests, climb steep rocks, perch on the edge of precipices. The only books capable of instructing us deeply in this subject have been scattered haphazardly on the surface of the earth, and it is necessary to accept fatigue and danger in searching and collecting them (quoted in Sturdy, 1995: 229).

On his botanical excursions to the Alps and to Provence, Tournefort brought along his student Charles Plumier (Fig. 1). Plumier was suited for the life of a



Fig. 1. Charles Plumier, ‘Father of the West Indian Flora’. Engraving by J. Blanchouse (Urban, 1920).

botanist in many ways. Born in Marseille in 1646, he had been accepted into the order of the Minims at the age of 16. He studied mathematics, physics, and painting, learned to make optical instruments, and became a proficient draughtsman and turner. He studied botany under the Cistercian botanist, Paolo Boccone, in Rome, and on his return to France became a student of Tournefort (Whitmore, 1967).

In 1689 Plumier was sent to accompany royal botanist Joseph Donat Surian on an expedition to the French Antilles to search for useful medicinal plants. Surian collected plants and studied their medicinal properties while Plumier documented their physical characteristics and classified them. Shortly after the successful trip, Surian died, so Plumier was appointed royal botanist and received a pension. By order of Louis XIV, he made two more journeys to the Antilles and South America between 1693 and 1697. He was about to embark on his fourth journey, this time to Peru to study the origin of the cinchona tree, but died at Puerto de Sta Maria near Cadiz in 1704 (Mottram, 2002).

The result of Plumier's first journey was *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique* (1693). This was followed by *Nova plantarum americanarum genera* (1703–1704) with descriptions of 700 species. Plumier had another work on American ferns ready to be printed, *Traité des fougères de l'Amérique*, when he died. He also left a large number of manuscripts, some of which are preserved in European libraries.

BOTANY AS PROFESSION

Charles Plumier was the first 'professional' botanist to be sent to the French Antilles. Unlike other scientific travellers who were missionaries or physicians botanizing in their spare time, bioprospecting was Plumier's main task. Previous accounts of the flora and fauna of the French Antilles had been written by two Dominican missionaries: Jean Baptiste du Tertre in *Histoire générale des Antilles habitées par les Français* (1667–1671), based on his long sojourns in the Caribbean, and Raymond Breton in *Dictionnaire caraïbe* (1665), based on 10 years of missionary work in Dominica. Many missionaries travelling in the Caribbean contributed greatly to the science of botany, such as the Dominican missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat, author of *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amérique* (1722), who made several trips to the French Antilles and helped Plumier in his work (Labat 1722, vol. IV).

As a result of his studies and acquaintances Plumier was part of a tradition and a network of natural historians. If there was such a thing as a European scientific elite in the late 17th century, Plumier was part of it. He was appointed *botaniste du roi* by the king and had received financing for his voyages. Besides the king, he had other benefactors who helped him on his travels, among them Michel Begon, the former governor of St. Domingue. He corresponded with important botanists of Europe, among them the English natural historians John Ray and Hans Sloane. Botanists were aware of what their colleagues were doing even in

the 17th century. For example, in the preface of his book Plumier lists some works he had consulted on the nature of South America and the Caribbean, whose authors include Gaspard Bauhin, Leonhard Fuchs, Gonzalo Oviedo, Jean Baptiste du Tertre, José (Christophorus) Acosta, Piso, and Marcgrave (Plumier, 1693). Likewise, Sloane announced in his natural history of Jamaica that he had not included pictures of plants Charles Plumier had already illustrated: '[Plumier] has saved me a great deal of trouble, finding his Figures so Good, that I did not judge it necessary the same plants should be engraved again, but only referr'd to, in my *History*' (Sloane 1707, vol. I).

European overseas expansion contributed to a change in the way scholars observed and understood nature. The confusion created by the multitude of new species, and the difficulty of describing them according to the traditional methods of describing plants and animals, were factors in the development of a new kind of natural history (Livingstone, 1992). Natural history in the Renaissance had been a literary form, offered on the premise that the writer had read everything about the plant or animal in question, beginning with the Egyptian hieroglyphs (Foucault, 1970). The usefulness of plants to humans – be it practical or symbolic – played a vital role in botanical descriptions. The colonial expansion to the western hemisphere challenged this traditional form of natural history. The first natural historians of the New World had no tradition of literary knowledge to draw from, and consequently they were left with only their faculties of sensory perception upon which to base their reports. This led to a change in how plants were understood, a move from a distinctly anthropocentric view to the idea of nature as an organism with a life of its own. Thus, the encounter with the tropical nature of colonies like the Caribbean islands was one factor in the changing of the associative natural history of the Renaissance to the more empirical science of the late 17th century. The new empirically based accounts of the flora of the New World represented a more neutral and 'stripped' natural history.

Even if the literary tradition of natural history gave way to observation and documentary, most natural historians still adhered to the tradition of including the medical or practical usefulness of plants as an essential part of the descriptions. Botany and medicine were in the 17th century still thought of as the same branch of learning, although a process of their separation was underway; in the latter part of the century, botany increasingly emerged as a distinct scholarly discipline of its own while the medical aspects of natural history were to be found in pharmacopoeias (see Ogilvie, 2006).

Charles Plumier's work aptly exemplifies this development. Although he often notes how the plants he observed were used, he is clearly a representative for a new way of practising botany. Among the natural histories and travellers' accounts that described the Caribbean flora, *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique* (1693) is the most reminiscent of a modern flora. Plumier's works represent a new approach to natural history in the Caribbean, which is much more 'professional' in that he is more conscious of the plants' structure and more objective in his presentation. Instead of including anecdotes and medicinal properties (although he devotes more attention to the latter in the posthumously published *Traité des*

fougères de l'Amérique from 1705 than in *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique*), not to mention signs and symbols, he focused on classification. To him, the structure of plants was more important than their properties.

CLASSIFYING PLANTS

While botanists were sent to the colonies to hunt for plants that could be of economic interest they also did what Sörlin (2000) called 'ordering the world for Europe'. One of the systems created by humans in order to make sense of the natural world is taxonomy, which includes both the theory and practice of classification. As Slaughter (1982) observed, the traditional medieval taxonomy, which was based on Aristotle and folk medicine, broke down as a result of an explosion of new information as botanical observations increased both in Europe and in its colonies. Reports from the tropics with their strange flora and fauna confused earlier conceptions of the structure of the natural world.

Plumier wrote his natural history at a time when natural historians did not have to feel obliged to use a single pre-eminent principle of classification; there was still room for rivalling systems (see Cooper, 2007). Plumier used a scientific taxonomy that was being developed by his teacher Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, the 'father of the genus concept'. Tournefort adhered to a tradition of classification following Aristotle's view according to which all beings possessed essential features that expressed their essential nature. He differentiated genera on the basis of floral and vegetative characteristics.

Plumier's *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique* (Fig. 2) is a well-organized study divided into two parts, the first consisting of descriptions and the second of illustrations. Carefully drawn pictures, often of full size, are included. The descriptions are short and objective, eventual medicinal properties are mentioned briefly, if at all (one of the reasons for this may have been that Plumier made his first trip together with his colleague J. D. Surian, whose task it had been to examine and report on the medicinal plants). In the preface, Plumier praised earlier writers treating the flora of the Antilles, but acknowledged the difficulty in finding the plant classes, as the local names of the plants were being used. He brought order to the matter by regrouping the plants in three classes, divided into genera, and by giving them Latin names: the first class included *Fougères*, *Hemionites*, *Polypodes*, *Langues-de-cerf*, and *Capillaires*, the second *Arum & Dracontium* and *Saururus*, and the third *Perploques* (climbing plants). *Saururus* was a new genus for which Plumier invented the name based on the Greek word for lizard tail because Plumier thought that the plants in this genus were reminiscent of lizards' tails. The plants were grouped according to the structure of the flower and the fruit, as recommended by Tournefort. The plants were mostly named according to a polynomial nomenclature in which the names were composed of several Latin words describing the plant. Linné first used the polynomial system but abandoned it in favour of the binomial one in which a generic name was followed by a specific epithet, using only the two first parts of the polynomial.

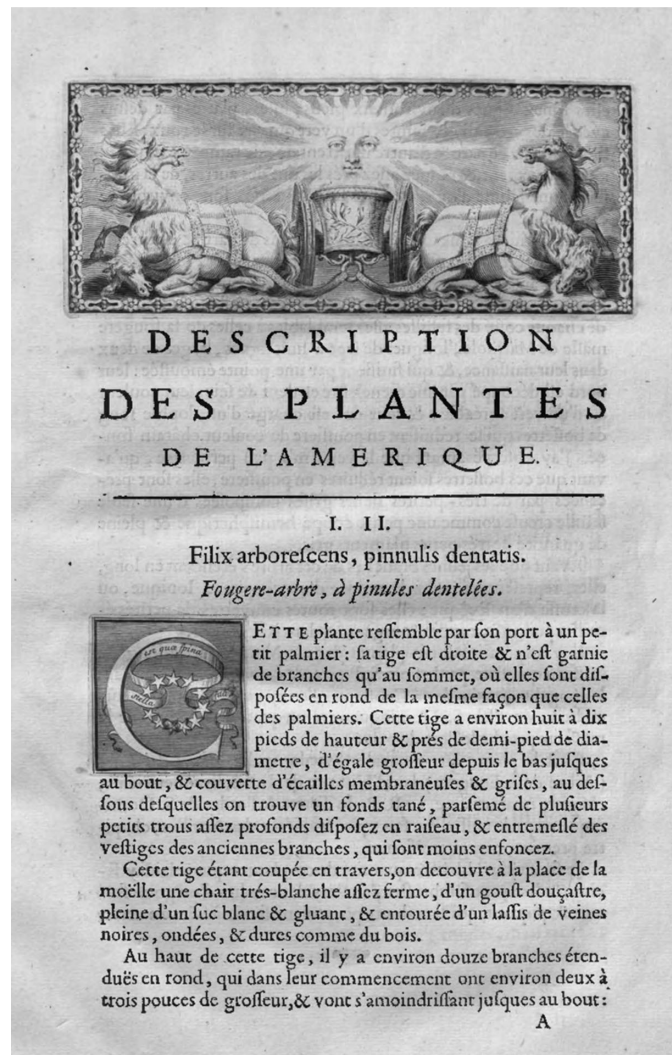


Fig. 2. The first page of *Description des Plantes de l'Amérique* (Plumier, 1693).

Thus Plumier's *Fuchsia triphylla flore coccinea* (which means 'three-leaved fuchsia with red flowers') became simply *Fuchsia triphylla*. Carl von Linné accepted, almost without change, Plumier's descriptions and arrangement of several genera and species.

NAMING PLANTS FROM THE ANTILLES

Botanists travelling in America were faced with the task of naming the animals and plants they encountered for the first time. By the time of Plumier's travels in

the Antilles, American animals and plants had been written about, collected, and transported to Europe for almost two hundred years. The foreign flora and fauna were still exotic but the initial confusion created by them had given way to a more pragmatic view. The plants had to be given names and, it was hoped, put to use. The pragmatic methods used in the naming of plants meant that the old Adamic ideal according to which plants' names corresponded to their nature had definitely come to an end (Irving, 2008).

On the whole, the inclination was to fit the new species into the already existing picture. Stearns (1970) distinguishes four methods of naming species in the New World. First, the species could be given a generic name already used for a previously known species. Second, a new name could be invented to describe a previously unknown American species, such as the rattlesnake. Third, some unknown species were given names adapted from what either was, or was thought to be, the already existing indigenous name, as in the cases of the papaya, potato, or tobacco plants. Fourth, more complicated situations arose when a European name was given to a species similar but not identical to one found in Europe. For instance, the Spanish natural historian Oviedo describes 'a fruit that the Christians call quince, but it is not a quince. But they are the same size, and round and yellow' (Oviedo, 1959).

Different nationalities bioprospecting in the Caribbean used different names for indigenous species. For example, the English gave the pineapple its name because of its resemblance to a pine cone while the French word *ananas* is derived from the Guarani word for exquisite fruit. Plumier was caught in the confusion of the naming practices of New World plants. For example, he called one plant used to cure snake bites *Arum hederaceum, amplis foliis & perforates* (Fig. 3), although according to him the plant was called *Clematis malabarensis, solus vitis, colore dracunculi* by Gaspard Bauhin and *lignum colubrinum primum* by Acosta, whereas Father du Tertre for his part had called this same plant simply *bois des coulevres* (Plumier, 1693). The correct taxonomic placement would come later in 1829 when the genus name was changed and the plant was named *Philodendron hederaceum*. Another plant used for serpent bites Plumier named *Clematis baccifera, glabra & villosa, rotundo & umbilico folio*. The French population of Martinique, however, called it, according to Plumier, *Liane a serpent* and in South America the plant had several names: *Caapeba des Brasiliens*, (in Marcgrave's work) *l'erva di nostra Senora, Herbe de Nostre-Dame*, and *Cipo de Cobras des Portugais* (Plumier, 1693). Plumier by no means had the last word on this plant: it was called *Cissampelos caapeba* by Linné, and later became known as *Pareira brava* and *Cissampelos pareira*.

With so many parallel names in use, it is no wonder that Plumier felt there should be a common universal system of nomenclature (see Cooper, 2007). He writes that he had profited greatly from the work of earlier authors, but that their accounts may appear confusing to readers as they often only give the name of the plant in the 'vulgar language' of the country. Therefore, those who have never seen these plants in nature will have much trouble finding out what genera they

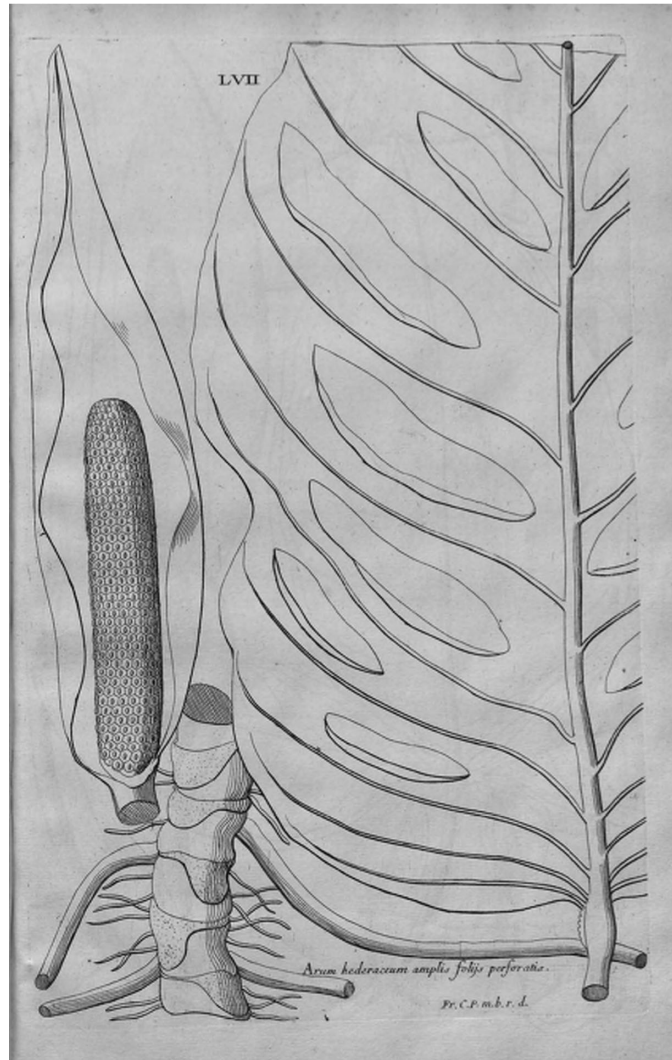


Fig. 3. Plumier's drawing of the plant he named *Arum hederaceum, amplis foliis & perforatis* (Plumier, 1693), but which was renamed *Philodendron hederaceum* in the 19th century.

represent; these people, Plumier states, will be grateful to him (Plumier, 1693). As Plumier set out to bring order to the situation, he converted indigenous names to Latin. For example, he renamed 'vainillia', which the Spanish physician Hernandez had found in Mexico in 1571, *Vanilla planifolia*. He rarely adopted names used by the indigenous people. He described an Antillean bean he named *Phaseolus siliquis latis, hispidis, & rugolis, fructu nigro* (in French *Phaseole à gousses larges, values, & froncées*). After a long and detailed description of the physical characteristics and different stages of the plant, he mentions that the indigenous people, the Caribs, used the beans for food and the plant's leaves in

the making of their hammocks. In addition, Plumier explains that this was the plant named *Mucuna des Brasiliens* by Marcgrave and *phaseolus Nigritarum* (*phaseole des Nègres*) by Clusius (Plumier, 1693). In the midst of all these names one would expect Plumier to refer to a local Carib name, but he does not do so. Many naturalists received information from the indigenous people (although these are seldom credited in the final works) but Plumier gives very little information about any possible contacts with indigenous people. On the whole, Plumier's ability to obtain accurate information about plants from local people does not appear to have been particularly satisfactory. Father Labat, who sometimes accompanied Plumier on his excursions, wrote that on many occasions he had witnessed how Plumier's 'credulity and simplicity' had been abused. Labat even declared that he had never met a man as prone to error as the celebrated botanist. According to Labat, Plumier readily believed anything people told him, even when they were just telling stories (Laissus, 1981).

Plumier provides few personal anecdotes but, on rare occasions, he abandons his cool and objective descriptions to recount something personally experienced. After a long description of *Colocasia montante* (which he calls *Colocasia* because the leaves are almost of the same consistence as *Colocasia d'Egypte*, described by Gaspar Bauhin) he tells how, after tasting the plants, his mouth became so inflamed that he was not able to speak for two hours and could taste nothing for two weeks (Plumier, 1693). This experience explained to him the vernacular name of the plant, *liane brulante*. Because of his habit of tasting plants, Plumier has been called an experimentalist (Whitmore, 1967).

THE GREAT MEN OF BOTANY

The Latin names given by Plumier often give detailed descriptions of the plants. In some cases, however, he named plants after distinguished European men. The naming of plants after people was an ancient Greek practice he revived. He named a plant he found in South America *Pittonia* after Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (although Linné later changed its name to *Tournefortia*). The *Begonia* received its name after one of Plumier's benefactors, Michel Begon, the former governor of St. Domingue, who decided that a botanical survey of the Antilles was necessary. In addition, he named plants *Sloanea* after Hans Sloane, *Suriana* after his dead colleague Surian, *Lobelia* after the curator of the botanical garden at Oxford, and *Magnolia* after Pierre Magnol (1637–1715), director of the botanical garden at Marseille. *Bromelia* was named after the Swedish physician Olaf Bromelius (1639–1705) while *Ximenia* was named in honour of the Spanish monk Ximénes. The name *Bauhinia* was chosen as a tribute to Gaspard Bauhin. This paying of homage to his teachers, colleagues, and benefactors places Plumier in a tradition and a network of botanists who had provided him with inspiration and furthered his career.

Naming plants after people was a culturally specific and highly unusual practice. Schiebinger (2004) argues, in the context of discussing Carl von Linné's habit

of naming plants after people, that this practice contributed to the consolidation of Western hegemony in the colonies and brought a history of celebrating European men into botanical nomenclature. Many of the men whose names were given to Caribbean and South American plants had never been to the New World and probably never laid eyes on the plants that were named after them. The names were not given, as sometimes happens, to the person who ‘discovered the plant’ but simply to celebrate certain men who were part of the botanical network to which Plumier belonged. With the names, knowledge about the plants travelled to Europe. This knowledge, mediated through the works of natural history, was different from the knowledge born out of an immediate contact with a plant. Substituting a name based on medicinal use or habitat with the name of a person changes the ways in which plants are perceived and, ultimately, the way they are known. Instead of focusing on their practical usefulness or visible physical characteristics, the plants became part of a botanical tradition and were viewed as part of a taxonomical system. For instance, the *Ximenia Americana* (named after two men, Ximénes and Amerigo Vespucci) creates a different kind of mental association than its indigenous Taino name, *macaby* (spiny fish), which refers to its appearance (Austin, 2004).

Plumier’s practice of naming the plants of the Antilles can be viewed as an episode in and element of the larger process of colonization. Plants were ‘discovered’ and renamed just as islands were conquered, named, described, and rearranged into a productive landscape after the European model. Plumier’s work also highlights the changes in the theory of natural history that led to more precise descriptions of plants. These changes directly influenced the ways in which nature was perceived and known. An anthropocentric view, where non-human nature was valued according to its usefulness to humans, was replaced by a more objective and scientific view. Names such as *Fuchsia* and *Bauhinia* created mental associations with the European science of botany where the plants now belonged. As decades have passed, the dissociation between name and plant has further increased and the names have become even less transparent. Begonias, lobelias, and fuchsias are no more remembered for the people whose names were given to them.

The transfer of these plants from Caribbean wildlife into European gardens is a part of the Columbian exchange (Crosby, 1972), a process that contributed to the diversification of European nature and new systems of ordering the flora and fauna of the Atlantic world, together with the more pragmatic economic interests. In his capacity as royal botanist it was one of Plumier’s tasks to collect plants to the *Jardin du Roi* where exotic plants were acclimatized and nurtured, to be transported to places where they could be grown cheaply and effectively. Plumier’s death is one last example of his professional activity in the Atlantic world. He died on an expedition to Peru where he was ordered to look for quinine by commission of the king. As Plumier was acting in the service of colonialism, he became its victim.

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Antillide taimeludus, prantsuse botaanik ja saksa nimi: taimenimede andmine varauusaegses Atlandi regioonis

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On võetud vaatluse alla taimenimede andmise praktika prantsuse botaaniku Charles Plumier' (1646–1704) töödes. Plumier sooritas ajavahemikul 1690–1697 kolm reisi Prantsuse Antillidele, 1693. aastal nimetati ta kuninglikuks botaanikuks ja samal aastal avaldas ta oma esimese töö: “Description des Plantes de l’Amérique”. Plumier oli esimene uusaegne botaanik, kes kirjeldas Kariibi floorat ajal, mil looduseuurimises toimusid olulised kvalitatiivsed muutused seoses Euroopa ekspansiooni ja Atlandi-üleste kontaktidega. Plumier’ sooviks oli asendada segadusse ajav hulk Uue Maailma taimedele antud nimesid universaalse, taksonoomial põhineva nomenklatuuriga. Kaasaegsus ja teaduslik hoiak avalduvad tema neutraalses viisis korraldada taimi taksonoomilise süsteemi kohaselt ning ladinakeelse nomenklatuuri kasutamises, mille raames nimetas ta paljud taimed ka tuntud botaanikute järgi. Osutan, et Plumier’ taimenimedelase tegevuse kaudu on võimalik esile tuua tema töö koloniaalset ja atlantilist konteksti, tema positsiooni oma maa ning aja teadusliku eliidi võrgustikus ja tema aastatepikkusest botaanilisest tegevusest tulevat professionaalsust.