

Gilbert Cuzent, *Archipel de Tahiti: Recherches sur les principales productions végétales*. Revised and expanded by Jacques Florence, Michel Gúerin, Francine and Daniel Margueron, Denise and Robert Koenig. Papeete, Tahiti: Editions Haere Po No Tahiti, 1983. Pp. 208, illustrations, index, bibliography.

The botany of the Pacific Islands, in a scientific sense, started in Tahiti in 1769 with the field work of Banks and Solander on Captain James Cook's first voyage around the world. Their *Prima Flora* was never published. The first paper on Pacific botany was a chapter on plants used by the Tahitians in the posthumously published journal of Sydney Parkinson, artist of the expedition, in 1773.

Since then numerous papers and several major works have appeared, treating in one way or another the plants of Tahiti and the rest of the Society Islands. Most of these were fairly unprofessional in nature, or if

professional, leaving much to be desired in quality. Exceptions were works of Nadeaud--which, however, suffered from the author's lack of access to herbarium and library facilities--and of Drake del Castillo, which suffered from the author's complete lack of field acquaintance with the plants of the Society Islands. Several treatments of Society Island plants have been published in the twentieth century, but for the most part these were neither complete nor of very high botanical quality.

Of the nineteenth-century works, one of the more interesting--but by no means professional--was a 275-page treatise entitled "Tahiti" published in 1860 by Gilbert Cuzent, a French naval pharmacist. This brought together the material from numerous previously published articles by the same author, to form an account of the geography, ethnology, and economic botany of the island. It includes a "Conspectus de la Flore de Tahiti," one of the first attempts at a complete listing of the plants of Tahiti, based on the work of Pancher. This enumerates 532 species, of which 248 were considered introduced, the rest indigenous. This book has long been out of print and is of little help in identifying more than the most common plants of the island. It does contain much valuable information on the properties and uses of the plants, and is a principal source on then-current ethnobotany.

In 1983 appeared a "reedition" of Cuzent's work, "Revue et augmentée par Jacques Florence, Michel Guérin, Francine et Daniel Margueron, Denise et Robert Koenig," Since this is the first properly published product of what appears to be a revival of local French interest in Polynesian botany, it seems appropriate to review it rather fully and critically and to provide comments and suggestions that may be of help and guidance for the development of this renewed interest in the flora. The book was published by Editions Haere Po No Tahiti, sponsored by the Société des Études Océaniques, Papeete, Tahiti.

The first main section of the book, entitled "Archipel de Tahiti," is a series of eighteen essays on assorted geographical, historical, and social topics. These are fairly faithfully copied, though somewhat edited, from the corresponding section of the 1860 work. An attempt has been made, unfortunately, to change the plant names in this section to correspond to current usage.

By far the most valuable section is the second, "Recherches sur les Principales Productions Végétales de l'Île." This has chapters on kava, oils, resinous saps, gums, coloring materials, starches, "produits divers," "cultures" (garden cultivations), and woods. Under these headings

many plants are discussed, some in considerable detail, others cursorily. The various treatments, totaling a considerable number of plant species (plus the pearl oyster), are transcribed rather faithfully, excepting, again, an attempt to substitute botanical names in current use for those used by Cuzent. The names used in this section are mostly correct, but it is unfortunate that the names used by Cuzent were not included in parentheses. For some species, analytical data apparently generated by Cuzent himself are given. He was clearly motivated by a firm belief that there were many valuable plants that could be profitably exploited to make the colony an economic asset to France. Both a preface and postface by Michel Guérin have been added to this section, The preface is a commentary on horticulture, past and present, Tahiti and the introduction of exotic economic species. The postface comments on Cuzent's agricultural and horticultural aims and the reasons why most of them came to naught.

The most botanically interesting chapter in this section of the original work--the "Conspectus de la Flore de Tahiti," a list contributed by Pancher, government horticulturist-- is not included in the 1983 edition. If critically annotated, this would have been an important botanical contribution.

Cuzent's Dictionnaire Français-Tahitien and accompanying "Dialogue" and astronomical legend, which conclude the 1860 work, are faithfully transcribed and are worthwhile contributions to our knowledge of the Tahitian language as spoken in 1860.

The remaining forty pages of the 1983 book consist of two "annexes," plus an Index Général des Plantes, a short bibliography of works consulted, a list of original illustrations, acknowledgements, and table of contents.

The Annexe Botanique, by Jacques Florence, contains a short but informative account of the present botanical landscapes of Tahiti, the changes since Cuzent's time, and concern about the surge of exotics that are taking over the islands; remarks on naming a plant; a list of "correct" scientific names in the present book--a surprising proportion of them really correct, considering the resources available in Tahiti for work on plant nomenclature; a list of the authors of the plant names and their abbreviations; remarks concerning synonymy and a list of synonyms (names in the 1860 edition but changed in this one); and a lexicon of Tahitian plant names and their scientific equivalents. Unfortunately a few errors have crept into the list of "correct" names: for example, inclusion of both *Bombax ceiba* L. and *Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn.,

the former used in the chapter on kapok, the latter the actually correct name of the kapok; *Citrus aurantium* L. instead of *C. sinensis* (L.) Osb. for the sweet orange; *Citrus medica* L. instead of *C. aurantifolia* (Christm.) Swingle for the lime; *Physalis pubescens* for *P. peruviana*; *Vanilla planifolia* for the cultivated *Vanilla mexicana*, and so on.

No source has been given for the Tahitian names listed, whether they were compiled from the 1860 edition or collected from present-day sources. No attempt has been made anywhere in this "reedition" to account for the majority of botanical names used in the 1860 edition, which if critically done would have been the most useful feature in the book.

The Annexe Bibliographique (pp. 184-193) by Francine and Daniel Margueron, is one of the most important parts of this edition. It contains a biography of Gilbert Cuzent (1820-1891) including high points and many details that enable a reader to place this man and his work in the context of his time. A chronological table of his life is provided. Most important is a bibliography of "articles et ouvrages écrits par Cuzent sur l'Océanie," arranged according to the journals in which they were originally published, with dates. His article on kava, in *Messenger de Tahiti*, is reproduced in facsimile.

There remain to be pointed out the illustrations. The original book had almost none. Throughout the 1983 edition are scattered several maps and many appropriate reproductions of historical and landscape subjects from various sources, these carefully noted along with the pictures. Some are of great interest, giving a feeling of the landscapes of Cuzent's time and even earlier. Finally, distributed throughout the volume are eighteen magnificent original drawings of important plants, native and exotic, by Guy Wallert, a local artist. These are a major contribution to the work. The drawing of the kava (*Piper methysticum*) has also been reproduced on the front cover.

To conclude, obviously an enormous amount of work went into this publication. It is, however, a pity that the original text of Cuzent was not reproduced exactly, with original pagination, and the corrections clearly separated from but carefully correlated with the original. The 1860 book is so rare that many present-day users will not have access to it and may well think that pages 17 through 163 are quoted from the original, citing or quoting them as such, resulting in lasting confusion. If care had been taken to avoid this confusion, the book would have been a much more valuable contribution to Tahitian botany. It is not sufficient excuse to say that the work is not intended for botanists, as botanists will surely use it. And, in this reviewer's opinion, it is equally

important to confuse neither the general, nonbotanical user nor the botanist.

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