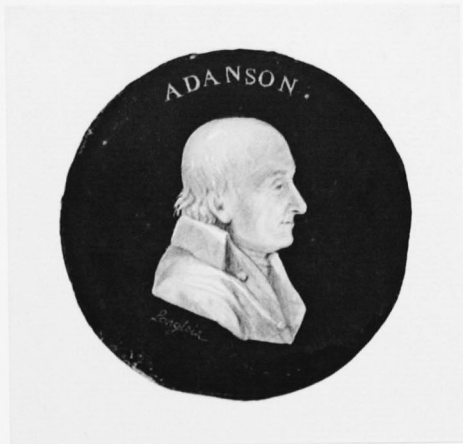


ADANSON

The Bicentennial of Michel Adanson's

«Familles des plantes»

Part One



The Hunt Botanical Library

Carnegie Institute of Technology Pittsburgh Pennsylvania

1963

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Foreword

History at its best is rendered imperfect through the loss of factual information, and too often is recorded even more imperfectly through deliberate or inadvertent misinterpretations. Such has been the record of the story of Michel Adanson, one of the great eighteenth-century French naturalists, and of the era whose door he helped to open.

This study, *Adanson*, represents in large measure the efforts of many persons to recount and set straight the record of one segment of the history of the natural sciences. These efforts have been based on more facts—hitherto buried in relatively unavailable archives—than have previously been considered. These newly available facts have now been given more enlightened interpretations of greater breadth and objectivity than is true of the earlier works on Michel Adanson. A new concept of values and priorities of events results. This concerted effort is more than the study of the man and his manyfold accomplishments; it is a critical analysis of the impact of his thinking—and that of his contemporaries—on what proved to be a new era in biological thought; an era then emerging through a suppressive blanket of inhibiting ideologies. New evidence here replaces myths of long standing, restores to their proper origins the priorities of some concepts, and reestablishes the correctness of some of Adanson's views long buried by half-truths and fallacies.

Through this study it is hoped that students of the history of botany may refocus their attentions on, and reorient their evaluations of, the old data in the light of the new; a combination here woven into a new fabric to be recognized for its strength and for its clarity of pattern.

This volume, and the companion volume to follow, contain in full the papers of six scholars who have delved deeply into the affairs and contributions of Michel Adanson and others of his time. The essence of these same papers was presented at the two sessions of a symposium held at the Hunt Botanical Library, August 18 and 19, 1963, to commemorate the bicentennial of Adanson's publication of his *Familles des plantes*.

Such a symposium was first conceived and proposed by Dr. H. P. Traub, of the American Plant Life Society, who graciously transferred the responsibility for its production to this Library.

This Library's interest in Michel Adanson resulted from its acquisition of the botanical library, letters, and manuscripts of that botanist, as recounted in this volume by our staff cataloguer of the collection, W. D. Margadant (*cf.* p. 265). On receipt of the collection, it was clear that a new biography of the man must be written. To accomplish this, it was recognized there must be found one who knew Adanson's work, who was familiar with the language and with the botanical literature of the period, and who could read and decipher the minuscule handwriting of the thousands of manuscript pages in our collection. Such a person is J.-P. Nicolas, of Paris and Dakar, whose eight years of earlier study of Adanson eminently qualified him for the task. His experiences while completing the biographical account published here are expressed succinctly on p. iii.

The *raison d'être* for this symposium, and for these papers, is Adanson's two-volume classic *Familles des plantes* published in 1763-64; a work spawned in part by his urgency to establish priority for his ideas and concepts, in part from the ego of his strong personality and from a motivation to seek recognition from his colleagues, and in part that he might present and defend in detail a premise whose validity is today more widely accepted than it was in his own time. To present this story, to analyze the data in technical detail and with requisite acumen, one man—Frans A. Stafleu, of the Botanical Museum, Utrecht—was recognized as the scholar to be invited. His paper produced here will long be studied by students of the science.

The miniature of Michel Adanson on the title-page of this volume is an exact reproduction of the only original portrait known to exist of him and to have been painted during his lifetime (a late nineteenth-century copy of a portrait of him as a young man is possessed by his descendants). The original miniature, now in the Adanson Collection at this Library, in the gilt period-frame in which it was received, was acquired in 1962 through a representative of the de Rocquigny-Adanson family in whose possession it was held since Adanson's death in 1806.

Acknowledgements have been given by authors of the several papers for assistance each received. This Library, too, in presenting this work and in staging the associated symposium, has received gratefully acknowledged assistance from many quarters. We are indebted particularly

to Prof. Roger Heim, director of the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, and president of the Académie des Sciences, Paris, for his unstinted cooperation and collaboration in so many matters, and to his two colleagues, to Mme. Gabrielle Duprat of the Museum's Bibliothèque Centrale, and to Prof. Théodore Monod of the Museum's Laboratoire d'Herpétologie, Paris, and of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire, Dakar. Dr. R. A. Dyer of the National Herbarium, Pretoria, South Africa, provided materials essential to the Adanson exhibition, as did Mr. Howard I. Chapelle of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Letters and manuscripts essential to the study were made available by the librarians at The Royal Society and at the Linnean Society, London, at the American Philosophical Society and at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, and at the several libraries holding state and Académie documents in Paris. The former owner of the Adanson library, and direct descendant of Adanson, Guillaume de Rocquigny-Adanson, has provided pertinent genealogical data on the more recent generations of the Adanson family (*cf.* Fig. 1, p. 3).

The two volumes of *Adanson*, and all that they embody, would not have materialized in their present form, scope, or character had not Mr. Roy Arthur Hunt and his wife, the late Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt, recognized the importance to posterity of keeping the Adanson botanical library and associated documents intact, and had they not acquired them for presentation to this Library. The studies embodied herein would not now exist had not Roy Arthur Hunt himself made it clear that this collection of Adansoniana was to serve a useful purpose if acquired, nor would they exist had he not given continuous encouragement and support to assure the production now in hand. For his vision, perspicacity, and confidence, all concerned with this study express our gratitude.

George H. M. Lawrence
Editor

26 July 1963

