

Areal and Universal Issues in Plant and Animal Nomenclature

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 著者(英) | James A. Matisoff |
| journal or publication title | Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology |
| volume | 35 |
| number | 4 |
| page range | 655-679 |
| year | 2011-03-31 |
| URL | http://doi.org/10.15021/00003881 |

Areal and Universal Issues in Plant and Animal Nomenclature

James A. Matisoff*

動植物命名法の地域性と普遍性

ジェイムズ・A・マティソフ

This paper explores the semantic and syntactic structure of names for plants and animals in a variety of languages, including English, Chinese, and Lahu, with additional examples from Thai, Japanese, and other languages. Cross-linguistic similarities and differences in the nomenclatural strategies of these languages are discussed, with special emphasis placed on compound names for plants that include animal names, and vice versa (e.g. *tiger lily*, *pine rat*).

小稿は様々な言語における動植物名称の意味的、統語論的構造を、主として英語、中国語、ラフ語について論じる。必要に応じ、タイ語、日本語などの例を適宜加える。動植物の命名法における通言語的な類似と相異を上記の言語について考察するが、動物名を含む植物名あるいはその逆のケースについて、特に留意した。

* University of California, Berkeley

This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. 0712570 and by the National Endowment for the Humanities under Grant No. PW-50674-10. The first version of this paper was presented at the 38th *International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics*, Xiamen University, Fujian, China (Oct. 28, 2005). It was subsequently presented at the 11th *Spring Workshop on Theory and Method in Linguistic Reconstruction*, Ann Arbor (April 7-9, 2006). I am grateful to several participants at those conferences for useful comments, as well as to the three anonymous referees who have reviewed it for publication in this journal. My thanks to Daniel Bruhn for formatting the present version.

Key Words : plant and animal names, universal and areal features, semantic and syntactic patterns

キーワード : 動植物の命名法, 普遍性と地域性, 意味的・統語的類型

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 Introduction | 3.8 Semantically exocentric/metaphorical (head-noun is not a hypernym) |
| 1.1 Common vs. scientific names | 3.8.1 Semantically interesting (head-noun is a hypernym, but modifying element is idiosyncratic) |
| 1.2 Independent lexemes (monomorphemic; opaque) vs. transparent compounds | 3.9 Some Lahu myconyms |
| 1.3 Long vs. short zoonyms | 4 Intra- and inter-kingdom associations |
| 1.4 Multiple names for the same species | 4.1 Floraffloric compounds: plant names modified by another plant name |
| 2 Syntactic structure of collocational zoonyms and phytonyms | 4.2 Faunafloric compounds: plant names modified by an animal name |
| 3 Semantic bases for collocational zoonyms and phytonyms | 4.3 Faunafaunic compounds: animal names modified by another animal name |
| 3.1 Locational/habitational | 4.4 Florafaunic: animal name modified by a plant name |
| 3.2 Appearance | 5 Theoretical issues, synchronic and diachronic |
| 3.2.1 A feature of its own appearance | 5.1 Descriptive vs. metaphorical collocations |
| 3.2.2 A feature of another object in the world that resembles or is associated with the plant or animal | 5.2 Transparency vs. opacity |
| 3.3 Geographical origin (especially of exotic species) | 5.2.1 Opacification through morphosemantic change |
| 3.4 [animals only] Favorite food; host (of a parasite): zoophagonyms | 5.3 Universal and areal questions |
| 3.5 [animals only] Sounds made by the species | 5.4 Cross-linguistic classificatory criteria for plant and animal terminology |
| 3.6 [plants only] Taste | |
| 3.7 [plants only] Time when the plant comes into season | |

1 Introduction

The compilation of the *Plant and Animal Indexes* for my recently completed *English-Lahu Lexicon* served as a reminder of how very complex and interesting plant and animal names (phytonyms and zoonyms) are for the lexicographer, both from the synchronic and diachronic points of view¹⁾.

1.1 Common vs. scientific names

The modern scientific system of bipartite taxonomic nomenclature for plants and animals is due to the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus (Karl von Linné), 1707–1778. The first element in these names identifies the *genus*, while the second specifies the *species*, e.g. *Ficus lyrata* ‘fiddle-leaf fig’ (“lyre-shaped fig”), *Coffea arabica* ‘coffee’ (“Arabian coffee”), *Canis familiaris* ‘dog’ (“familiar dog”), *Felis domesticus*²⁾ ‘cat’ (“house cat”); *Homo sapiens* ‘human being’ (“rational human”). These scientific names are well worth a detailed study in themselves, but this paper confines itself to common or popular names.

1.2 Independent lexemes (monomorphemic; opaque) vs. transparent compounds

One could hardly blame Adam if he felt a bit overwhelmed when God had him name all the animals in the Garden of Eden (*Genesis* 2: 19–20). There are in fact so

many plant and animal species in the world that it would be hopeless for any language to give them all monomorphemic unanalyzable names. The vast majority of plant and animal names must of necessity be polymorphemic collocations. A few random examples:

| | <i>Simple names</i> | <i>Collocational names</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|---|
| <i>English</i> | <i>drongo</i> | <i>bracket-tailed drongo</i> ³⁾ |
| <i>French</i> | <i>putois</i> ‘polecat’ | <i>putois d’Amérique</i> ‘skunk’ (“American polecat”) ⁴⁾ |
| <i>Chinese</i> | 猫 <i>māo</i> ‘cat’ | 熊猫 <i>xióng-māo</i> ‘giant panda’ (“bear cat”) |
| <i>Thai</i> | <i>məkhǎa</i> ‘eggplant’ | <i>məkhǎa-thêet</i> ‘tomato’ (“foreign eggplant”) |
| <i>Japanese</i> | <i>negi</i> ‘leek’ | <i>tama-negi</i> ‘onion’ (“spherical leek”) |

Needless to say, a species that is monomorphemic in one language may be collocational in another. In English *pike eel*, *river eel*, *sea eel*, *conger eel*, *electric eel* are all hyponyms of *eel*. In Japanese, *unagi* ‘eel’ and *anago* ‘sea eel; conger eel’ are independent lexemes; *anago* is not considered a subtype of *unagi*, or vice versa. English *leech* is a hypernym for *land leech* and *water leech*, while Tibeto-Burman has two independent lexemes (reconstructed as PTB **r-pat* ‘land leech’, **m-li:t* ‘water leech’). In Lahu, *duck* and *goose* are not treated as separate species: *á-pè* ‘duck’, *á-pè=ló* ‘goose’ (“great duck”)⁵⁾.

The degree of bonding between the elements of a collocation is of diachronic interest, since it is relevant to the problem of whether the collocation remains semantically transparent or becomes opaque (below 5.2, 5.2.1). English orthography makes a stab at a three-way distinction (threeway? three way?), by either running the constituents together, separating them by hyphens, or leaving spaces between them (e.g. *kingfisher* vs. *jack-in-the-pulpit* vs. *barn owl*), though this is largely arbitrary and native speakers do not always agree with each other, nor do they always write a given item in the same way themselves. This problem does not arise (or is swept under the rug) in languages with orthographies that do not leave spaces between words (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Burmese)⁶⁾.

1.3 Long vs. short zoonyms

Sometimes big animals have long names in English, a phenomenon that children seem to find iconically satisfying (*hippopotamus*, *elephant*, *rhinoceros*). This is especially true of dinosaur names (*archeopteryx*, *tyrannosaurus*, *stegosaurus*), since these are really scientific names artificially created. On the other hand, exceptions can readily be found (*whale*, *ape*), and no valid generalization can be drawn⁷⁾.

Paradoxically there seems to be a somewhat greater correlation between tiny animals (insects, arachnids, snails) and long names, both in English (e.g. *caterpillar*, *daddy-longlegs*, *creepy-crawly*) and in TB languages like Lahu. Although Lahu has a few monosyllabic names for the most common insects (e.g. *pê* ‘bee’; *ŋe* ‘louse’)⁸⁾, most names for these lower animals are compounds, sometimes very long and/or obscure, and subject to much variation^{9,10)}.

- ‘snail/slug’ **pū-cà-á-lùʔ-qú, pū-šē-á-lòʔ-qú**
 ‘spider’ **a-gò-a-lí-pè, a-gù-na-gá-pè, a-gò-a-gá-pè, na-gò-na-gá-pè,
 na-gù-na-gá-pè.**
 ‘dragonfly’ **pā-pā-qú-ti-ni, pā-pā-qú-tu-ni, pā-pā-tú-qu-ni, pā-pā-cú-qu-ni,
 pā-pā-šú-qu-ni, cà-pā-šú-qhu-ni**

Hawaiian is a special case, since its paucity of phonemes and penchant for reduplication leads to highly polysyllabic words in general. The state fish is a little beauty called *humuhumunukunukuapuaʻa*, fully analyzable as *humuhumu* ‘trigger-fish’ + *nukunuku* ‘snout’ + *a* ‘genitive particle’ + *puaʻa* ‘pig’. This is a faunafaunic formation, involving a bodypart of another animal (see below 3.2.2[b]).

1.4 Multiple names for the same species

No insect name is subject to more regional variation in American English than *dragonfly*; nearly 80 have been recorded. The greatest variety of terms is to be found in the South, where the most widespread term is *snake doctor* (based on a belief that dragonflies take care of snakes). The Midland equivalent is *snake feeder*. Speakers from the Lower South and the Mississippi Valley call them *mosquito fly*, *mosquito hawk*, or, in the South Atlantic states, *skeeter hawk*. Outside the South, the names refer more often to the insect’s shape, rather than its behavior or diet: *darner*; *needle*; *darning needle*; *devil’s darning needle*; *spindle*; *ear sewer* (i.e. a creature that sews up your ears)^{11,12}.

It is not surprising that species names occasionally vary between British and American English, e.g.:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>British</i> | <i>American</i> |
| <i>poplar</i> | <i>cottonwood</i> ¹³ |
| <i>courgette</i> (<Fr.) | <i>squash</i> (<Narragansett <i>askútasquash</i>) |
| <i>aubergine</i> (<Fr.) | <i>eggplant</i> ¹⁴ |
| <i>maize</i> | <i>corn</i> ¹⁵ |

The civet-like animal (*Arctictis binturong*) called either *binturong* (< Malay) or *bearcat* in English, has no less than five names in Black Lahu, according to the particular characteristic of the animal that is taken as criterial (see below 5.4).

2 Syntactic structure of collocational zoonyms and phytonyms

Compound plant and animal names may be classified according to their syntactic structure, e.g.:

(a) $N_{\text{attrib}} + N_{\text{h}}$ vs. $N_{\text{h}} + N_{\text{attrib}}$

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| <i>English</i> | <i>Thai</i> |
| <i>banana slug</i> | plaa-mÿk ‘squid’ (“fish + ink” = inkfish) |
| <i>tiger lily</i> | mə̀lɛɛŋ-mum ‘spider’ (“bug + corner” = cornerbug) |

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Chinese</i> | |
| 松鼠 sōng-shǔ | ‘squirrel’ (“pine rat”) |
| 木瓜 mù-guā | ‘papaya’ (“tree melon”) |

Lahu has both orders, sometimes as variants for the same species:

vì-nḡ? ~ **nḡ?-vì** ‘butterfly pea’ (“snake bean”)
fâ?-pí-lí=jí-bɔ ~ **jí-bɔ=fâ?-pí-lí** ‘wild ginger’ (**fâ?-pí-lí** is an unidentified species of rodent)

(b) $Adj + N$ vs. $N + Adj$

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>English</i> | |
| <i>sweet corn, sourgrass, bitter vetch, knotty pine, cloudy leopard, wildcat, slow loris, scaly anteater, little bee-eater</i> | |

The adjective often refers to color:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>English</i> | <i>Lahu</i> |
| <i>whitefish, bluefish, blackbird</i> | nū-phu ‘white sesame’ (phu ‘white’) |
| <i>blackberry, blueberry</i> | nū-nâ? ‘black sesame’ ¹⁶⁾ (nâ? ‘black’) |
| <i>white pine, white sesame</i> | |

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Chinese</i> | |
| 白菜 bái-cài | ‘Chinese cabbage’ (“white vegetable”) |
| 白鹤 bái-hé | ‘white crane’ |
| 白狐 bái-hú | ‘Arctic fox’ (“white fox”) |
| 黑熊 hēi-xióng | ‘black bear’ |
| 黑豆 hēi-dòu | ‘black soybean’ |

(c) $V_{\text{present participle}} + N_{\text{h}}$ vs. $N_{\text{h}} + V_{\text{act-attr}}$

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>English</i> | <i>Lahu</i> |
| <i>whooping crane</i> | fâ?=tí-šî? ‘Asiatic chipmunk; striped Burmese tree squirrel’ (“whistling rodent”: fâ? ‘rodent’, tí-šî? ‘to whistle’) |
| <i>flowering dogwood</i> | |
| <i>trailing arbutus</i> | |
| <i>flying squirrel</i> | |
| <i>weeping willow</i> | |
| <i>weeping cherry</i> | |
| <i>fishing cat</i> | |
| <i>hummingbird</i> | |
| <i>praying mantis</i> ¹⁷⁾ | |

- (d) $V_{\text{past participle}} + N_h$

English

reticulated python *horned toad*
banded krait (snake) *clouded rainbowfish*

- (e) $(NP_{\text{attrib}} + -ed) + N_h$, where the NP_{attrib} is $Adj + N$ or $N_{\text{attrib}} + N_h$

English

red-headed woodpecker *duck-bill(ed) platypus* *bracket-tailed drongo*
star-nose(d) mole *hog-nosed badger* *sharp-tailed munia*
velvet-fronted nuthatch *saber-tooth(ed) tiger* *stump-tailed macaque*
ring-necked pheasant *yellow-bellied sapsucker* *bay-headed bee-eater*

There is a strong tendency to omit the *-ed* suffix in many cases (e.g. *star-nose mole*, *duck-bill platypus*, *saber-tooth tiger*), especially after *head* (*fiddle-head fern*, *hammerhead shark*). This same tendency operates in similar English compounds, where the truncated form becomes a $N_{\text{attrib}} + N_h$ compound, e.g. *corn beef*, *wax paper* (instead of the original *corned beef*, *waxed paper*).

- (f) $(NP_{\text{attrib}} + -ed) + N_{\text{attrib}} + N_h$, where the NP_{attrib} is $Adj + N$:

English

long-billed scimitar babbler

Chinese

银颊犀鸟 **yín-jiá xī-niǎo** ‘silver-cheeked rhinoceros-bird’¹⁸⁾

- (g) $(N_h + NP_{\text{attrib}})$, where NP_{attrib} consists of $N_h + Adj$ (the N_h of which is itself a N-N compound)

Lahu

a-lŕ=cha-mu=bŕ ‘large hairy raspberry sp.’ (‘raspberry + pussy-hair + bushy’)

- (h) $N_{\text{gen}} + N_h$, where the N_{gen} is the zoologist or botanist who first described the lifeform:

English

Steller’s jay
Temminck’s cat
Schomburgk’s deer
 (*Queen Anne’s lace* is different! See below 3.8.)

In English, a botanist’s name often becomes the name of a plant itself, with the help of the suffix *-ia*:

begonia, *bougainvillea*, *dahlia*, *difffenbachia*, *forsythia*, *fuchsia*, *plumeria*, *poinsettia*, *robinnia*, *sandersonia*, *wistaria*, *zinnia*.

(i) N_h + PP

English

lily-of-the-valley

jack-in-the-pulpit (kind of flower)

flame-of-the-forest (kind of tree with bright red flowers)

chicken of the sea (brand-name for a kind of tuna)

(j) Noun-head and verb plus argument:

• (N_{obj} + V)_{attrib} + N_h vs. N_h + (V + N_{obj})_{attrib}

Lahu

Thai

ṣṣṣṣ-ṣṣṣṣ=ṣṣṣṣ ‘sunbear’

(“tree + climb + bear”)

nók-kin-plaa ‘kingfishers’ (fam. *Alcedinidae*)

(“bird + eat + fish”)

ṣṣṣṣ-ṣṣṣṣ=ṣṣṣṣ ‘nuthatch’

(“tree + climb + bird”)

nók-càp-mələeŋ ‘flycatchers’ (fam. *Muscicapinae*)

(“bird + catch + bug”)

• N_h + V_{act-attrib} vs. (V+N_{obj})_{attrib} + N_h

Lahu

Chinese

fṣṣṣṣ=ṣṣṣṣ-ṣṣṣṣ ‘Asiatic chipmunk’

(“whistling rodent”)

开心果 **kāi-xīn-guǒ** ‘pistachio’

(“open-heart-fruit”)

3 Semantic bases for collocational zoonyms and phytonyms

3.1 Locational/habitational

Names of this type are based on a plant’s growing location or an animal’s preferred habitat:

English

Cf. compounds with *water, field, tree, river, mountain, rock, ground, sea, etc.*:

water lily tree shrew mountain lion sand dab

field mouse river rat rock ape¹⁹⁾ sea horse

ground ivy sea cucumber sea anemone^{20,21)}

Hippopotamus, from Greek “river horse”, is an opacified example.

Lahu

Cf. compounds with ṣṣṣṣ ‘water, river’, **he** ≈ **hé-** ‘field; wild’:

ṣṣṣṣ-**phṣṣ** ‘otter’ (“water dog”); ṣṣṣṣ-**šo-lo** ‘otter’ (ṣṣṣṣ ‘water’; **šo** < ***sram** ‘otter’)

he=chṣṣ-pí ‘wild ginger’; **he-nṣṣṣ** ‘wild lablab’ (“field-bean”); **he-nṣṣ** ‘wild cattle’;

he-phṣṣ ‘jackal; wild canine’; **he-vàṣṣ** ‘wild boar’; **hé-ṣṣṣṣ** ‘jungle chicken’

dà-nṣṣ=cṣṣ ‘ebony tree sp.’ (“near-ferns tree”)

Chinese

- 木瓜 **mù-guā** ‘papaya’ (“tree melon”)
 松鼠 **sōng-shǔ** ‘squirrel’ (“pine rat”)
 海象 **hǎi-xiàng** ‘walrus’ (“sea elephant”)

3.2 Appearance

3.2.1 A feature of its own appearance

Names of this category are based on the color, shape, or size of the plant or animal itself or of a part thereof:

English

- white pine, black bean, white gourd*
eggplant (ovoid in shape)
bluefin tuna (fins are blue)
red-vented bulbul (vent is red)

An opacified English example is *pomegranate*, from Old French *pome grenate* “many-seeded apple”.

Lahu

- mù-cho=ní** ‘kind of edible red mushroom’ (“sweet red mushroom”: **cho** ‘sweet’, **ní** ‘red’)

3.2.2 A feature of another object in the world that resembles or is associated with the plant or animal

[a] another plant or animal²²⁾

Lahu

- ho-ŋâ?** ‘turkey’ (“elephant-bird”): because of the trunk-like appearance of its nose-wattle
ś-qā=ŋâ? ‘mynah’ (“buffalo bird”); because it hangs out on buffalos’ backs to eat the rich assortment of parasites on their skin

English

- banana slug* (body is yellow and shaped like a banana)

[b] part of another plant or animal

Lahu

- nû=fî-qō=šī** ‘jackfruit’ (“cow-stomach fruit”; because of its compartmented structure)
á-pô=nû-pā=kho ‘plantain sp.’ (“bull-horn banana”)
á-phê?=fâ?-qhê ‘medium-sized chili sp.’ (“rat-shit pepper”)²³⁾
a-pi=cha-mu=bî=šī ‘passion vine’ (“grandmother’s bushy-pussy fruit”)
ś-qā=cha-pê? ‘kind of giant waterbug’ (“buffalo vagina”)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ph̄=cha-cú-ni=vê? | ‘roselle flower’ (“dog-clitoris flower”) |
| ph̄=mē-tu=vê? | ‘kind of orchid’ (“dog-tail flower”) |
| mò?-mē=s̄? | ‘tree with inedible fruits that dangle like a monkey’s tail’ (“monkey-tail tree”) |
| γâ?-qhê=á-phê | ‘kind of melon a span long and not very thick’ (“chickenshit melon”) |
| γâ?-qhê=nê?=cè | ‘wild pear tree’ (“wet chickenshit tree”) |
| và?-qhê=á-bê=mù? | ‘goose grass; wire grass’ (“pigshit sedge”) |
| lâ-mē=te | ‘vine used as fish poison’ (“tiger-tail vine”) |
| γâ?=nā-jì=vê? | ‘red flower with multiple hairlike anthers’ (“coxcomb flower”) |

Kokborok (a TB language of Tripura, NE India)

| | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| tha-li | ‘banana’ (“penis fruit”) |
|---------------|--------------------------|

Chinese

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 猫头鹰 māo-tóu-yīng | ‘owl’ (“cat-headed eagle”) |
| 腰果 yāo-guǒ | ‘cashew’ (“waist-fruit”: because of concavity in the middle) |

Hawaiian

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <i>humuhumunukunukuapua?</i> <i>a</i> | ‘pig-snouted triggerfish’ (<i>humuhumu</i> ‘triggerfish’; <i>nukunuku</i> ‘snout’; <i>a</i> ‘genitive particle’; <i>pua?</i> ‘pig’) |
|---------------------------------------|---|

English

(animal + bodypart) (bodypart only)

crowfoot grass kidney bean

horse-eye bean liverwort

hog-nosed badger lungfish

pig-tailed macaque heartworm

fox-face rabbit fish blood orange

[c] something that is neither a plant nor an animal

English

swordfish (has long sword-like extension of upper jaw)

surgeonfish (has sharp erectile spines near base of tail)

trumpet vine (its flowers are shaped like a trumpet)

scimitar babbler (kind of bird whose beak resembles a curved sword)

bracket-tailed drongo (tail looks like a bracket)

wax gourd (its skin is smooth and waxy)

Lahu

| | |
|------------------|--|
| mù=khí-dō | ‘grayish mushroom with a cup of tissue around the stalk, suggesting a stocking’ (“sock-mushroom”) |
|------------------|--|

Chinese

袋鼠 **dài-shǔ** ‘kangaroo’ (“bag/pocket-rat”)

3.3 Geographical origin (especially of exotic species)

English

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Italian parsley</i> | <i>Indian milkweed</i> | <i>Javan mongoose</i> |
| <i>Malay tapir</i> | <i>Himalayan bear</i> | <i>Napa cabbage</i> ²⁴⁾ |
| <i>Chinese cabbage</i> | <i>Burmese striped tree squirrel</i> | <i>Idaho potato</i> |
| <i>Indian hemp</i> | <i>Asiatic chipmunk</i> | <i>Vidalia onion</i> |
| <i>Indian corn</i> | <i>turkey</i> ²⁵⁾ | <i>Brussels sprout</i> ²⁶⁾ |

English *walnut* is an opacified example: *wal-* < OE **wealh** ‘Celt; foreigner’.

Chinese

洋葱 **yáng-cōng** ‘onion’ (“foreign/Western scallion”)

洋芋 **yáng-yù** ‘potato’ (“Western taro” [dialectal])²⁷⁾

Lahu

kâlâ=á-lâ-ni ‘strawberry’ (“foreign raspberry”)

kâlâ=γδ-ma ‘carrot; beet’ (“foreign vegetable”)

kâlâ=bî-ni ‘pink and white shower’ (ornamental flower) [*Cassia jannaica*]:
bî ‘bushy’, **ni** ‘red’)

Thai

məkhǎ-thêet ‘tomato’ (“foreign eggplant”)

man-fàràŋ ‘potato’ (“foreign tuber”)

phàkchii-fàràŋ ‘parsley’ (“foreign coriander”)

Japanese

tō-morokoshi ‘maize; Indian corn’ (“Tang [i.e. Tang Dynasty China] sorghum”)

3.4 [animals only] Favorite food; host (of a parasite): zoophagonyms

English

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>anteater</i> | <i>fruit bat</i> | <i>flycatcher</i> (bird) | <i>sapsucker</i> (bird) |
| <i>bee-eater</i> (bird) | <i>fruit fly</i> | <i>rat snake</i> | <i>chickweed</i> ²⁸⁾ |
| <i>dung beetle</i> | <i>chicken hawk</i> ²⁹⁾ | <i>bloodsucker</i> (leech) | |

Lahu

môʔ-yǎʔ ‘cloudy leopard’ [*Felis nebulosa*] (“monkey-leopard” [it eats monkeys];
yǎʔ < PTB ***g-zik** ‘leopard’)

γâʔ-še ‘chicken louse’; **phî-še** ‘flea’ (“dog louse”)

vǎ-fâʔ ‘mongoose’ (“snake rodent”)

phî-lâ ‘small wildcat that attacks pigs or dogs’ (“dog tiger”)

vàʔ-lâ ‘id.’ (“pig tiger”)

Chinese

牛虱 **niú-shī** ‘ox-louse’
 牛虻 **niú-méng** ‘gadfly’

Note that this nomenclatural strategy is insulting when applied to human beings, e.g. English slang *frogs* (= Frenchmen; because of their stereotypical predilection for frog’s legs); English *krauts* (= Germans); Yiddish *Doiger shtinkes* (“smelts from Doig”: name applied to inhabitants of Doig, a Lithuanian fishing village in which my maternal grandmother was born, where smelts formed a large part of the diet)³⁰. In times past Westerners were sometimes characterized as *bata-kusai* (i.e. “stinking of butter”) in Japanese³¹.

3.5 [animals only] Sounds made by the species³²

In Anglophone children’s language, familiar animals are frequently named by the sound they make: “Look at that cute bow-wow!”

In East and SE Asia, words for *cat* are sometimes monosyllabic and onomatopoeic (e.g. Mandarin 猫 **māo**, Thai **mɛɛw**), but this sort of naming seems much more characteristic of birds and insects than of mammals, e.g. Lahu **kru-γâʔ** ‘kind of bird like a dove; the cry of this bird’ ([r] does not ordinarily occur in Lahu) (Matisoff 1988: 362); **ʃi-ʃi-lòʔ-e** ‘kind of cicada active in February’; **tɔ-tɔ-é** ‘kind of cicada active in the spring’; **yɔ-yɔ-ē** ‘kind of cicada’ (Matisoff 2006: 45).

Japanese has many such names for species of cicada (which are often kept as pets), e.g. **minmin-zemi** (*Oncotympana maculaticollis*); **kirigirisu** (*Gampsocleis buergeri*); **chitchi-zemi** (*Cicadetta radiator*); **niinii-zemi** (*Platypleura kaempferi*); **tsukutsuku-bōshi** (*Meimuna opalifera*)³³.

3.6 [plants only] Taste

Lahu

mù=ʃā-nê ‘very chewy white mushroom that grows on logs’ (ʃā ‘flesh’, nê ‘chewy’)
pû-cho ‘sugarcane’ (cho ‘sweet’)
mù-cho=ní ‘kind of edible red mushroom’ (cho ‘sweet’, ní ‘red’)

English

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <i>sweet corn</i> | <i>sourgrass</i> | <i>bitter almond</i> |
| <i>sweet basil</i> | <i>sour orange</i> | <i>bitter melon</i> |
| <i>sweet alyssum</i> | <i>soursop</i> | <i>bitter vetch</i> |

3.7 [plants only] Time when the plant comes into season

English

summer squash
winter wheat
spring onion

Chinese

- 冬瓜 **dōng-guā** ‘wax gourd; white gourd’ (“winter melon”)
 秋海棠 **qiū-hǎitáng** ‘begonia’ (“autumn crabapple”)
 冬小麦 **dōng-xiǎomài** ‘winter wheat’

Japanese

- haru-jion** ‘Japanese honeysuckle’ [*Erigeron philadelphicus*] (*haru* ‘spring’)
aki no kirinsō ‘goldenrod’ [*Solidago virgaurea*] (*aki* ‘autumn’)
higan-bana ‘red spider lily’ [*Lycoris radiata*] (*higan* ‘equinox’: “equinoctial flower”)
higan-zakura ‘weeping cherry’ [*Prunus subhirtella*]

Lahu

- qhǒʔ-vêʔ** ‘poinsettia’ (“[New] Year’s flower”)
khîʔʃĩmâʔ-vêʔ ‘id’ (“Christmas flower” [Christian Lahu only])

3.8 Semantically exocentric/metaphorical (head-noun is not a hypernym)

English

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>walking stick</i> | stick-like insect |
| <i>Queen Anne’s lace</i> | kind of lacy plant |
| <i>toadstool</i> | poisonous mushroom (suitable for toads to sit on?) |
| <i>foxglove</i> | herb with flowers resembling the fingers of a glove |
| <i>snapdragon</i> | flower resembling the mouth of a dragon |
| <i>wandering Jew</i> | trailing plant |
| <i>cattail</i> | herb with dense clusters of minute flowers and fruits |
| <i>elephant’s foot</i> | kind of yam with clusters of tubers aboveground |
| <i>bird of paradise</i> | herb with wing-like orange and blue flowers |
| <i>sea horse</i> | kind of fish resembling a horse |
| <i>sea cucumber</i> | kind of slug resembling a cucumber |
| <i>Portuguese man-of-war</i> | kind of marine hydrozoan or siphonophore |
| <i>sea star</i> ³⁴⁾ | kind of echinoderm |
| <i>jellyfish</i> ³⁵⁾ | marine coelenterate |
| <i>Flora’s paintbrush</i> | kind of edible plant |
| <i>Indian paintbrush</i> | kind of colorful wildflower |
| <i>Scotch bonnet</i> | kind of very hot chili-pepper |
| <i>Venus flytrap</i> | kind of insectivorous plant (<i>Dionaea muscipula</i>) |
| <i>John Dory</i> | kind of fish |

Chinese

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 木耳 mù'é | 'kind of mushroom that grows on trees' ("tree-ear") ³⁶⁾ |
| 牛膝 niúxī | 'medicinal root of bidendate achyranthis' [<i>Achyranthis bidentata</i>] ("cow's knee") |
| 鹰爪 yīng-zhǎo | 'cactus' ("eagle claw") |
| 豆娘 dòu-niáng | 'damselfly' ("bean maiden") |
| 猪笼草 zhū-lóng-cǎo | 'pitcher-plant' (<i>Nepenthes mirabilis</i>) ("pig-basket grass"; a carnivorous species) |

Lahu

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| ph̄=ñī-qé | 'kind of wild medicinal plant' ("retracted dog foreskin") |
| hɔ-gì | 'plant that indicates good land for opium' ("elephant-skin") |
| ɔ-qā=cha-pé? | 'kind of giant waterbug' ("buffalo vagina") |
| và?=qhê-tê? | 'gray-headed flycatcher' ("pig-fart"; so called because of its sharp chattering call) ³⁷⁾ |

Japanese

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| tatsu no otoshigo | 'sea horse' ("bastard child of the dragon") |
|--------------------------|---|

3.8.1 Semantically interesting (head-noun is a hypernym, but modifying element is idiosyncratic)

Formations of this type tend to be idiosyncratic to a particular language and culture.

Lahu

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| qha-cí=mù? | 'weed indicating bad crop-land' ("fireplace weed") |
| khî-cí-qu=phà? | 'kind of plant' ("kneeling leaf") |
| chí-chî=á-cu-ka=vê? | 'kind of wildflower with pointed stamens' ("vampire's chopstick flower") |
| tí-qhâ?=šī=vê? | 'ornamental flower species' ("button flower") |
| kú-châ=mù? | 'kind of medicinal grass' ("communist grass"; first two syllables < Chinese 共产 gōngchǎn : so called "because it's red and it's everywhere") |
| mê-chô-pā=vê? | 'kind of orchid (<i>Vanda sp.</i>)' ("widower's flower"; probably so called because it is faded violet, the "widower's color") |
| yà?-tɔ=mù? | 'sensitive plant' ("shame-weed"; its leaves sag when touched) |
| vì=tí-qhâ?=šī | 'kind of plant' (<i>Pratia nummularia</i>) ("snake button") |

3.9 Some Lahu myconyms

Lahu myconyms (names for kinds of mushrooms) illustrate most of the above categories³⁸⁾:

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| mè-šâ=mù | 'edible white mushroom that grows in clumps of mè-šâ bamboo' /location (3.1)/ |
|-----------------|--|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| γâʔ=u-ši=mù | ‘yellow mushroom with large flat cap’ (“hen’s egg-yolk mushroom”) /appearance; resemblance to a part of an animal (3.2.2[b])/ |
| fâʔ-ša=mù | ‘tasty white mushroom that grows on logs’ (“flying squirrel mushroom”) /faunafloric association with an animal (4.2), either based on appearance (3.2.2[a]), or perhaps because flying squirrels like to eat them (3.4)/ |
| mù=khí-dô | ‘grayish mushroom with a cup of tissue around the stalk, suggesting a stocking’ (“sock-mushroom”) /appearance; resemblance to an object that is neither a plant nor an animal (3.2.2[c])/ |
| mù(-khi)=thòʔ-qō | ‘inedible mushroom with a thick stalk resembling a leg’ (khi=thòʔ-qō ‘leggings, puttees’) /appearance; looks like a leg wearing leggings (3.2.2[b])/ |
| mù=ní-γo | ‘tasty red mushroom with a cap resembling a glans penis’ (there is a pun between ní (≠ ni) ‘red’ and nī ‘penis’) /appearance: resemblance to part of an animal (3.2.2[b])/ |
| mù=šā-nê | ‘very chewy white mushroom that grows on logs’ (šā ‘flesh’, nê ‘chewy’) /taste (3.6)/ |

4 Intra- and inter-kingdom associations

This section is an expansion of category 3.2.2[a], comprising compound terms where a plant or animal name is modified by the name of another plant or animal. Using the biologist’s terms *animal kingdom* and *vegetable kingdom*, we may speak of intra-kingdom associations (where a plant name is modified by another plant name, or an animal name is modified by another animal name), as opposed to inter-kingdom associations (where a plant name is modified by an animal name, or an animal is modified by a plant name). More specifically, we may distinguish four subtypes according to whether it is an animal or a plant that is being associated with an animal or a plant: (1) *florafloric*: plant names modified by another plant name; (2) *faunafloric*: plant names modified by an animal name; (3) *faunafaunic*: animal names modified by another animal name; (4) *florafaunic*: animal names modified by a plant name³⁹.

The same plant or animal may of course be expressed by different subtypes of compound, according to the language, e.g. English *ginger lily* (florafloric) vs. Lahu

ó-qā=ji-bɔ (“buffalo ginger”; faunafloric), referring to the same species of plant.

4.1 Florafloric compounds: plant names modified by another plant name

These formations are relatively rare in our limited data:

English

tulip tree nut grass apple pear⁴⁰⁾ ginger lily
 rose-apple pineapple⁴¹⁾ lemon grass yam-bean

Chinese

木瓜 mù-guā ‘papaya’ (“tree melon”)

Lahu

ji-bɔ=á-phè? ‘white ginger’ (“ginger pepper”)

4.2 Faunafloric compounds: plant names modified by an animal name

These formations are quite common:

English

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| tiger lily | alligator weed | tiger grass | eggplant |
| elephant garlic | cowpea | pigeon pea | goose grass ⁴²⁾ |
| dogwood | butterfly pea | buffalo clover | spider lily |
| bush-monkey flower | elephant grass | crab grass | |
| spider mushroom | hog plum | horseradish | |
| chickpea | pigweed | snakeweed | |
| alligator pear ⁴³⁾ | bearcat (=binturong) | crabapple | |

Lahu

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| ó-qā=ji-bɔ | ‘ginger lily’ (“buffalo ginger”) |
| fâ?-ša=mù | ‘tasty white mushroom that grows on logs’ (“flying-squirrel mushroom”) |
| á-ci-ku=ši | ‘pomegranate’ (“crab fruit”) |
| a-lô=chè?-pā=ši | ‘raspberry sp.’ (“male-goat raspberry”; probably because they resemble goat testicles) |
| tò-qú=cè | ‘screwpine; pandanus’ (“turtle tree”) |
| vì-nô? ~ nô?-vì | ‘butterfly pea’ (“snake bean”) ⁴⁴⁾ |
| pê-tù=šf? | ‘fairly large sp. of tree’ (“giant-wasp tree”) |
| mé-ni=á-phê=bù? | ‘woody sp. of climber’ (“cat muskmelon”) |
| mé-ni=gô | ‘small sticky sp. of rattan’ (“cat rattan”) |
| yè-mí-tô=sf? | ‘kind of jungle tree’ (“bear tree”) |
| fâ?-khô?=vê? | ‘crown flower; Indian milkweed’ (“pangolin flower”) |
| pi-pā=ô | ‘buffalo clover; Alice clover’ (“cricket rice”) |

Chinese

- 牛蒡 **niú-bàng** ‘great burdock’ (牛 **niú** ‘cattle’)
 豬苓 **zhū-líng** ‘umbellate pore fungus’ (*Polyporus umbellata*) (豬 **zhū** ‘pig’)
 豬籠草 **zhū-lóng-cǎo** ‘pitcher-plant’ (*Nepenthes mirabilis*) (“pig-basket grass”; a carnivorous species)

4.3 Faunafaunic compounds: animal names modified by another animal name

This is also a very productive semantic type:

English

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>pike eel</i> | <i>zebra fish</i> | <i>sparrowhawk</i> |
| <i>elephant seal</i> | <i>frog fish</i> | <i>catfish</i> |
| <i>peacock pheasant</i> | <i>dragonfly</i> | <i>shrike babbler</i> |
| <i>turkey fish</i> | <i>crab beetle</i> | <i>wren babbler</i> |
| <i>squirrel fish</i> | <i>butterfly fish</i> | <i>stag beetle</i> |
| <i>beetle crab</i> | <i>turtledove</i> | <i>mole cricket</i> |
| <i>cuckoo dove</i> | <i>mouse deer</i> | <i>serpent eagle</i> |
| <i>ferret badger</i> | <i>goat antelope</i> | <i>horsefly</i> |
| <i>leopard cat</i> | <i>magpie robin</i> | <i>gopher rat</i> |
| <i>horse mackerel</i> ⁴⁵⁾ | <i>coon cat</i> | <i>lion monkey</i> |
| <i>horse leech</i> | | |

An example of a “second-order compound” of this type is *raccoon butterfly fish* (a subtype of butterfly fish) where the faunafaunic compound is itself modified by another attributive noun.

An opacified example is *walrus* < WHALE + HORSE (see below 5.2.1).

Lahu

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ŋâ-vî | ‘eel’ (“snake fish”) |
| hɔ-ŋâ? | ‘turkey’ (“elephant bird”; because of trunk-like appearance of its beak-wattle) |
| ɔ-qā=tá-ve-le | ‘black cicada active in October’ (“buffalo cicada”) |
| ɔ-qā=pá-cè? | ‘locust; large grasshopper’ (“buffalo grasshopper”) |
| ɔ-qā=yè-mí-tō | ‘Asiatic black bear’ (“buffalo bear”) |
| ɔ-qā=vè? | ‘freshwater leech sp.’ (“buffalo leech”) |
| pê-tù=pú-γô? | ‘sp. of ant’ (“wasp ant”) |
| hɔ-ŋâ | ‘kind of loach’ (“elephant fish”) |
| hɔ-và? | ‘Malay tapir’ (“elephant pig”) |
| fâ?-thô?=yè-mí-tō | ‘binturong’ (“squirrel bear”) |

*Lisu*⁴⁶⁾

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| njǎ-lámǫ | ‘shrike’ (“tiger bird”) |
| ŋwá-lá | ‘otter’ (“tiger fish”) |
| ŋwá-fu | ‘eel’ (“snake fish”) |

Chinese

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 猪獾 zhū-huān | ‘sand badger’ (“pig badger”) |
| 牛蛙 niú-wā | ‘bullfrog’ (“ox frog”) /This is a parallel English/Chinese compound formation./ |
| 牛舌鱼 niú-shé-yú | ‘tonguefish; tongue sole’ (“ox-tongue-fish”) /This is a similar English/Chinese compound formation./ |
| 熊猫 xióng-māo | ‘giant panda’ (“bear cat”) /Bearcat is used to mean ‘binturong’ in English. These formations are non-parallel in the two languages./ |
| 马蜂 mǎ-fēng | ‘wasp’ (“horse bee”) |
| 龙虾 lóng-xiā | ‘lobster’ (“dragon shrimp”) |
| 蝎虎 xiē-hǔ | ‘kind of gecko’ (“scorpion tiger”) |

An interesting example of a faunafaunic formation for a type of food is Thai **khǎj-jiāw-máa**, lit. “horse-piss eggs”, i.e. the Chinese delicacy commonly referred to in the U.S. as “thousand year old eggs”.

4.4 Florafaunic: animal name modified by a plant name

This type of formation seems to be relatively rare:

Chinese

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 松鼠 sōng-shǔ | ‘squirrel’ (“pine-rat”) |
|--------------------|-------------------------|

Lahu

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| á-phèʔ=ŋâʔ | ‘red-billed malkoha’ (“pepper-bird”) |
| á-phèʔ=vì | ‘kind of snake’ (“pepper-snake”) |
| qhâʔ-cá=pú-γôʔ | ‘sp. of ant’ (“jube-ant”) |
| chû-pí=ŋâʔ | ‘long-tailed broadbill’ (“ginger bird”) |

English

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>fruit bat</i> | (eats fruit) |
| <i>banana slug</i> | (looks like banana) |
| <i>chestnut bunting</i> | (chestnut-colored bird) |

5 Theoretical issues, synchronic and diachronic

5.1 Descriptive vs. metaphorical collocations

As we have seen (3.8 above), plant and animal collocations are *descriptive* (i.e.

semantically endocentric) if the head-noun belongs explicitly to the plant or animal category, e.g. Lahu **nû=fî-qō=šī** ‘jackfruit’, literally “cow + stomach + fruit”, where **šī** ‘fruit’ is the head of the construction.

On the other hand, English *wandering Jew* ‘any of three tropical American trailing plants, widely grown as houseplants’ is semantically exocentric, since it does not literally refer to the Wandering Jew (a Jew of medieval legend condemned to wander the earth until the Day of Judgment for having mocked Jesus on the day of the Crucifixion). The point of comparison in this metaphor is the trailing nature of the plant, which seems to wander all over the place, overflowing the pot in which it is rooted.

5.2 Transparency vs. opacity

Descriptive collocations are semantically transparent. Thai is a good example of a language where zoo- and phytonyms are maximally transparent, in terms of explicitly identifying the broad class of plants or animals to which they refer.

Although mammals do not have a particular prefix in Thai,

birds take the prefix **nók-**:

nók-kêew ‘parrot’

nók-hûuk ‘owl’

fish take the prefix **plaa-**:

plaa-karaŋ ‘grouper’

plaa-chəlǎam ‘shark’

flowers take the prefix **dòk-**:

dòk-kulàap ‘rose’

dòk-məlǐ? ‘jasmine’

fruits take the prefix **mə-** (< PTai *hmaak):⁴⁷⁾

mə-phráaw ‘coconut’

mə-mûaŋ ‘mango’

insects/arachnids take the prefix **mələeŋ-** or **meeŋ-**:

mələeŋ-mum ‘spider’

mələeŋ-pɔɔ ‘dragonfly’

snakes take the prefix **ŋuu-**:

ŋuu-lǎam ‘python’

ŋuu-hàw ‘cobra’

trees take the prefix **má(a)j-**:

má(a)j-sàk ‘teak’

má(a)j-məklya ‘ebony’

These morphemes (all of which are free nouns except for **mə-**) function rather like the radicals in Chinese characters, furnishing reliable clues to the semantic category to which the word belongs, e.g. 艹 for plants, 虫 for insects, 鱼 for fish, 木 for trees, 鸟 for birds⁴⁸⁾.

Needless to say, one and the same species may have an unanalyzable opaque name in one language, but a transparent compound in another. Compare Eng. *pistachio* (opaque; perhaps ult. < Middle Persian ***pistak**) with the transparent Chinese compound 开心果 **kāi-xīn-guǒ** (“open-hearted fruit/nut”, because of the split in its shell). Similarly, English *cashew* (prob. ult. < Tupi **cajú**) is opaque, while the Chinese equivalent 腰果 **yāo-guǒ** (“waist-nut”) is transparent.

5.2.1 Opacification through morphosemantic change

The phenomenon of semantic opacification is of special interest to compilers of etymological thesauri. A once-transparent compound can become opaque through sound change, destressing (“prefixization”), or semantic obsolescence of one or both constituents. A metaphor can die, leaving the way open for “retransparentization” by folk etymology⁴⁹.

Few English speakers are aware of curious facts like the following:

- (a) *sole* (fish) is the same root as *sole* (of foot), because of its flat shape (< Latin *solea* ‘sandal’)
- (b) *palm* of the hand is ultimately the same etymon as the palm tree
- (c) *dandelion* is a deformation of French *dent de lion* (“lion’s tooth”)
- (d) *hippopotamus* is from two Greek morphemes meaning “river-horse”; *rhinoceros* is from Greek “nose + horn”
- (e) *orchid* (< Gk. *orchis* ‘testicle’) is ultimately faunafloric
- (f) *gladiolus* is from Latin ‘wild iris’, ult. < *gladius* ‘sword’, because of its pointed shape
- (g) *gooseberry* (< **groze-berry* (cf. Fr. *groseille* ‘currant’) has nothing to do with geese
- (h) *mushroom* (< Fr. *mousseron*) has nothing to do with *mush* or *room*⁵⁰
- (i) a *woodchuck* does not chuck wood; this is a folk etymological deformation of an Algonkian word
- (j) *walrus* is an old compound meaning “whale-horse”, and remains overtly so in Swedish *hvalros*

5.3 Universal and areal questions

One can point to a few “botanical universals” in plant nomenclature that are based on the objective nature of the plants themselves, e.g.:

cabbage + *flower* → *cauliflower*, French *chou-fleur*

cf. Lahu **γᵛᵛ-cá** ‘cabbage’, **γᵛᵛ-cá=vêʔ** ‘cauliflower’)

ground + *nut* → *groundnut*, *peanut*

cf. Lahu **mì-nᵛᵛʔ** (“ground-bean”), dialectal Thai **thùà- dìn** (“bean + ground”)⁵¹.

We can also find an occasional example of parallel compound formations between widely separated languages like English and Chinese, or English and Lahu. It is often difficult to tell whether calques are involved, or whether the names developed independently in each language.

| <i>Chinese</i> | <i>English</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|--|--------------------------------|--|
| 牛蛙 niú-wā (lit. “ox-frog”) | <i>bullfrog</i> | |
| 牛舌鱼 niú-shé-yú (lit. “ox-tongue-fish”) | <i>tonguefish; tongue sole</i> | |
| | <i>broomgrass</i> | Lahu mì-šǐʔ=cē (mì-šǐʔ ‘broom’) |
| | <i>sunflower</i> | Lahu mû-ni=ha-pa=vêʔ (“sun-moon-flower”) |
| 金鱼 jīn-yú (lit. “gold-fish”) | <i>goldfish</i> | Thai plaa-tkɔŋ |
| 海马 hǎi-mǎ (lit. “sea-horse”) | <i>sea horse</i> | |
| | <i>starfish</i> | Thai plaa-daaw |
| | <i>sloth</i> | Jse. <i>namakemono</i> 1. ‘lazy person’ 怠け者 2. ‘sloth’ (animal) 樹懶 |

But cross-linguistic differences abound as well:

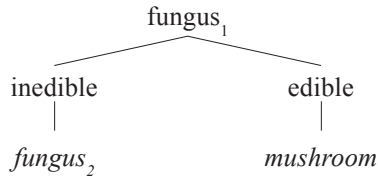
| <i>Chinese</i> | <i>English</i> |
|--|------------------------------|
| 熊猫 xiónɡ-māo ‘giant panda’ (“bear cat”) | <i>bearcat</i> (= binturong) |

From the diachronic point of view, the plant and animal names reconstructible for a proto-language can provide valuable clues to the original homeland of a language family⁵². However this approach may be complicated by the fact that such names can easily change their referents when populations migrate to new areas. The Old World plant called *hemlock* was first applied to poisonous plants of the genera *Conium* and *Cicuta* (used in the brew with which Socrates committed suicide), and later to coniferous evergreen trees of the genus *Tsuga*, found in North America and East Asia⁵³.

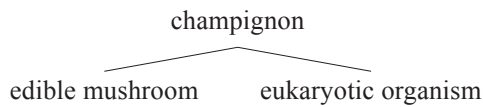
Sometimes we can plausibly hypothesize that a language has borrowed a compound from a language with which it has been in close contact. Lahu **hɔ-ŋâʔ** ‘turkey’ (“elephant-bird”; because of the trunk-like appearance of its nose-wattle) is probably a calque on Burmese **cɛʔ-hsī** (Written Burmese **krak-chaŋ**) (“fowl-elephant”), though the constituents appear in reverse order in the two languages.

Yet once we go into detail, each language seems largely to be a law unto itself in plant and animal nomenclature. We may take a random example from two geneti-

cally related languages that have been in close cultural contact for centuries, English and French. English makes a strict repartition between edible fungi (=mushrooms), and the disgusting non-edible kind that grows between your toes:



French, with Gallic insouciance, uses *champignon* for both:



5.4 Cross-linguistic classificatory criteria for plant and animal terminology

I have often intentionally used the same examples in connection with several different classificatory dimensions, in order to demonstrate that a given plant or animal name may be approached simultaneously from a number of points of view. Thus *banana slug* is analyzable as $N_{\text{attrib}} + N_h$ in terms of its syntactic structure; its semantic composition is based on the appearance of the animal, specifically its color and shape; the compound is transparently descriptive rather than opaquely exocentric; it is florafaunic in terms of its “kingdom dynamics”; it is idiosyncratic to English (as far as I know). The five Black Lahu names for *binturong* or *bearcat* (above 1.4) reflect a number of different classificatory criteria:

- fâʔ-thôʔ=yè-mí-tō** (“squirrel bear”): faunafaunic; $N_{\text{attrib}} + N_h$; presumably based on its arboreal habits, as well as on its resemblance to a bear
- pā-vî=nɔ-ma** (“green civet”): $N_h + N_{\text{attrib}}$; because of its greenish fur
- yè-mí-tō=mē=yɛ-ma** (“long-tailed bear”): $N_h + N_{\text{attrib}}$; because of its long prehensile tail
- yè=mē-tu** (“tailed bear”): $N_h + N_{\text{attrib}}$; for the same reason
- yè=hó-ma** (“fragrant bear”): $N_h + N_{\text{attrib}}$; because of the skunk-like fluid it can secrete

Are there measurable cross-linguistic and cross-areal similarities and differences in terms of which inter- and intra-kingdom associations are most productive in a given language or linguistic area? Judging impressionistically from my extremely limited data, faunaflore associations seem more common than florafaunic ones, while faunafaunic formations seem especially common.

Hill-tribes like the Lahu are closer to nature, and can identify many more species of plants and animals than city-dwellers. How many New Yorkers know the

difference between *poplar* and *cottonwood*; *eupatoria* and *broomgrass*; *crow* and *raven*; *rabbit* and *hare*; *alligator* and *crocodile*; *orangutan*, *gorilla* and *chimpanzee*?

Is there evidence that different nomenclatural processes operate for plants as opposed to animals? Are the various kinds of animals (mammals, birds, fish, insects, etc.) subject to significantly different morphosemantic treatment cross-linguistically or cross-areally?⁵⁴⁾

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Adj | Adjective |
| N | Noun |
| N _{attrib} | Attributive noun |
| N _{gen} | Genitive noun |
| N _h | Noun head |
| N _{obj} | Object noun |
| NP | Noun phrase |
| TB | Tibeto-Burman |
| V | Verb |
| V _{act} | Action verb |

Notes

- 1) This paper is to be viewed as preliminary to a more extensive study, intended to feed into the long-term STEDT enterprise of presenting etymologies according to semantic area. The limited data in this pilot study are taken mostly from English, Chinese, and Lahu, with occasional examples from Thai, Japanese, and other languages.
- 2) The Latin noun *felis* is feminine, so it is a mystery why it takes the masculine form of the adjective *domesticus*, instead of *domestica*. Other species of felines take feminine adjectives, e.g. *Felis marmorata* ‘marbled cat’, *Felis vivverina* ‘fishing cat’. I have consulted several Indo-Europeanists for an explanation, without success.
- 3) Forms in Asian languages are cited in boldface; forms in other languages are in italics. Literal meanings of collocations are parenthesized with double quotes.
- 4) The polecat is properly speaking a skunk-like European species, but in some American dialects it is used synonymously with *skunk*.
- 5) This leads to the paradoxical formation **á-pě=łó=é** ‘gosling’ (lit. “little big duck”).
- 6) I have devised a complex (perhaps over-complex) system of single, double, triple, and quadruple hyphens to separate the elements in Lahu collocations, herein simplified to single hyphens between each syllable, modified to double hyphens (=) at major constituent breaks.
- 7) In Lahu big animals are as likely to have monosyllabic names as little ones (e.g. **ho** ‘elephant’, **lâ** ‘tiger’). Paul Newman observes that in Hausa (Nigeria) big animals have short names and small animals have long ones.
- 8) It is of course these most common insects that have the best entomological etymologies in Tibeto-Burman as a whole.
- 9) One reason for this may be that Lahu children use little animals as playthings, and probably create new names for them in every generation.
- 10) Another concept which is expressed by long, unanalyzable, and highly variable forms in TB lan-

- guages is *rainbow*, which Vial (1909) declared to be “le mot le plus long que je connaisse en lolo” (cf. Lahu **a-lâ-mi-ší-jɔ**, **á-lâ-mi-ší-jɔ**, **a-lâ-mê-ší-jɔ**).
- 11) See *American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th Edition, p. 544.
 - 12) Another such multi-named animal is the common burrowing rodent known in American English either as *woodchuck* or *groundhog* (also called *whistle pig* in the Appalachian region). See below 5.2.1, in connection with folk etymology.
 - 13) This florafioric compound (see below 4.1) is applied to any of several North American poplars, especially *Populus deltoides*.
 - 14) A florafioric compound based on shape (below 3.2.1). This vegetable is called *brinjal* in Indian English (<Portuguese *berinjela*, ult. probably from Persian via Arabic).
 - 15) The original meaning of *corn* was ‘grain’ (cognate to Latin *grānum*), a sense which survives faintly in *peppercorn*.
 - 16) As the stress and spelling indicate, the English forms that are written as single words (e.g. *white-fish*) are true compounds, with initial stress; while those written with spaces (e.g. *white pine*) are syntactic constructions, with final stress. The Lahu forms are true compounds.
 - 17) My personal folk etymology for this insect name used to be “preying mantis”, reinforced by the old New Yorker cartoon showing a happy group of vultures on a branch, captioned as: “The family that preys together, stays together.”
 - 18) This is a species I observed in an aviary in Xiamen (Nov. 2005), but whose English and scientific names I have yet to discover.
 - 19) The case of the *rock fish* is rather different. This species actually looks like a rock, in order to camouflage itself against the background of the rocks among which it lives. Its name is therefore both habitational and based on its appearance (3.2.1[c]).
 - 20) The term *anemone* was used originally for a perennial herb, apparently so called because its leaves are lost easily in the wind (cf. Greek *ánemos* ‘wind’), and only later to the sea anemone, a marine coelenterate of the class *Anthozoa*. But since the marine animal is now better known than the herb, the qualifier *sea* is usually omitted, leading to the paradox of the same name being applied to both a plant and an animal.
 - 21) A more obscure example of plant/animal ambiguity is *fritillary*, which may be applied either to bulbous plants of the genus *Fritillaria*, or to butterflies of the family *Nymphalidae*.
 - 22) See Section 4, below.
 - 23) Cf. the Thai name for a small green very hot chili-pepper, *phrík khîi nók* (lit. “bird-shit chili”), now usually sanitized to “Thai bird chili” on U.S. menus.
 - 24) It has been suggested to me that *Napa* is not geographical in this expression (i.e. does not refer to Napa County, California), but is rather from Japanese *nappa* ‘rape leaves; greens in general’, perhaps so named by gardeners of Japanese descent.
 - 25) This bird is so called because of confusion with the guinea fowl, once thought to have originated in Turkey. Other languages associate the bird rather with India (e.g. French *dinde* < *d’Inde*, Yiddish *indik*, archaic German *Kalkuhn*, [“Calcutta hen”], Dutch *kalkoen*). Portuguese *peru* ‘turkey’ offers an opposite geographical association with South America; this Portuguese word has been borrowed into many Indian languages like Hindi and Bengali.
 - 26) Usually pronounced *Brussel sprout* in the U.S.
 - 27) This word has been borrowed into Lahu as **yàʔ-yí=šī** (**šī** ‘round object; fruit’).
 - 28) So called because chickens eat it. This is different from *chickpea* < Old French *chiche* < Lat. *cicer*, which has nothing to do with chickens.
 - 29) The superficially similar *turkey buzzard* is a different type of faunafaunomic formation, based rather on appearance; the turkey buzzard (also known as *turkey vulture*) has a bare head and neck like a turkey.
 - 30) If one were to insist on consistent terminology, we could call these *anthropophagonyms*.
 - 31) It is interesting to note in passing that *butter* is borrowed in Japanese with short vowels (**bata**), while *barter* is borrowed with long vowels in both syllables (**baataa**), following the general treatment of English vowels + *r*.
 - 32) A couple of minor categories specific to animals may also be mentioned: 3.5[a] **animal product** +

- animal** (e.g. Eng. *honeybee*, *silkworm*; Chinese 蜜蜂 **mì-fēng** ‘honeybee’); 3.5[b] **manner/location of motion** (e.g. Eng. *sidewinder*; *roadrunner*; *mudskipper*; *grasshopper*; *woodpecker*).
- 33) Thanks to Reiko Kataoka for calling this to my attention. See also the splendid listing of Japanese cicada names at the following website: homepage2.nifty.com/saisho/cicadalist.html.
- 34) This name is now preferred by aquaria to the old misnomer *starfish*.
- 35) Aquaria now prefer to refer to these creatures simply as *jellies*, since they are not fish.
- 36) Contrast this with the locational compound **mù-guā** ‘papaya’ (“tree-melon”), 3.1 above.
- 37) Cf. Eng. *partridge*, ult. < PIE ***perd-** ‘fart’, because of the sharp whirring sound it makes when suddenly flushed.
- 38) See Matisoff 1988: 1004–1005. For the purposes of this paper, mushrooms are considered as plants, even though botanically they belong to an independent kingdom, *Fungi*, which also includes yeasts, molds, and smuts.
- 39) Possible Chinese translations of these mellifluous terms might be: *florafloric* 植像植名 **zhí-xiàng-zhí-míng** “plant-like-plant name”, *faunafloric* 植像动名 **zhí-xiàng-dòng-míng** “plant-like-animal name”, *faunafaunic* 动像动名 **dòng-xiàng-dòng-míng** “animal-like-animal name”, and *florafaunic* 动像植名 **dòng-xiàng-zhí-míng** “animal-like-plant name”.
- 40) This refers to a fruit with both apple- and pear-like characteristics (called *nashi* in Japanese). This is subtly different from the numberless florafloric compounds like *apple tree*, *pepper bush*, *tomato vine*, which refer to the matrix plant on which a fruit or vegetable grows. Note that in languages like French, names of fruit trees are single words, usually formed by means of the derivational suffix *-ier* (e.g. *pommier* ‘apple tree’, *châtaignier* ‘chestnut tree’, *prunier* ‘plum tree’). Spanish distinguishes some trees from their fruits by grammatical gender, e.g. *manzana* ‘apple’, *manzano* ‘apple tree’; *naranja* ‘orange’, *naranjo* ‘orange tree’.
- 41) The original meaning of *pineapple* was what we now call *pinecone*, i.e. the fruit of the pine tree. (French *pomme de pin* retains this original meaning.) When the tropical fruit we now call *pineapple* reached Europe in the 17th century, its resemblance to a pinecone caused the name to be transferred from the fruit of the pine to the fruit of the genus *Ananassa* (See Matisoff 2004: 360).
- 42) This is the place to mention *sparrow-grass*, an American folk-etymologization of *asparagus*. See below 5.2.1.
- 43) This is an old name for *avocado*, based undoubtedly on its rough knobby skin. The English word descends ultimately from Nahuatl *ahuacatl* ‘testicle’, an association of the type 3.2.2[b], above.
- 44) Note that semantically this compound is faunafloric, whether the head precedes or follows the modifier. The English equivalent (*butterfly pea*) is also faunafloric, though a different species is used as modifier.
- 45) This is an old name for *tuna*, purposely replaced by the fishing industry because of its unappetizing connotations reminding one of horsemeat.
- 46) A Central Loloish language closely related to Lahu.
- 47) A similar “prefixation” of a morpheme meaning ‘insect’ has occurred in the Burmese word for ‘ant’: Written Burmese **pūi** ‘insect’, **pərwak** ‘ant’ < PLB ***pūi-rwak** < PTB ***bəw-k-rwak**; cf. Lahu **pū** ‘insect’, **pū-γδ?** ‘ant’, and Written Tibetan **grog-ma** ‘ant’.
- 48) Rather similarly, Lushai (=Mizo), a Tibeto-Burman language of the Central Chin group, has a semi-productive prefix **sa-** (<PTB ***sya** ‘animal’), which attaches to many animal names, e.g. **sa-vom** ‘bear’, **sa-kei** ‘tiger’, **sa-hram** ‘otter’ (See Matisoff 2003: 102).
- 49) Polysyllabic words with no recognizable subparts are particularly prone to folk etymologization. A classic example is *asparagus* (<Greek), shortened in the 1600’s to *sparagus*, thence to *sparagrass*, and ultimately to *sparrow-grass*, a new faunafloric creation.
- 50) I think it is derived from French *mousse* ‘moss’.
- 51) See Matisoff 2004: 352.
- 52) A famous example with respect to the Indo-European *Urheimat* is Friedrich (1970).
- 53) I am indebted for this example to the late linguist and botanist André-Georges Haudricourt.
- 54) With respect to ichthyonyms, Zev Handel observes that fish names often include a component referring to a land animal (e.g. *turkey fish*), whereas land animals seem seldom if ever to include fish names.

References

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. 4th Edition. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Friedrich, Paul

1970 *Proto-Indo-European Trees: the Arboreal System of a Prehistoric People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Matisoff, James A.

1978 *Variational Semantics in Tibeto-Burman: the 'organic' approach to linguistic comparison*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.

1988 *The Dictionary of Lahu*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

2003 *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: system and philosophy of Sino-Tibetan reconstruction*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

2004 Areal semantics: is there such a thing? In Anju Saxena (ed.) *Himalayan Languages, Past and Present*, pp. 347–393. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

2006 *English-Lahu Lexicon*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Vial, Paul

1909 *Dictionnaire français-lolo, dialecte gni*. Hongkong: Imprimerie de la Société des Missions Etrangères.

Website

Cicadae in Japan

List of Japanese cicadas. <http://homepage2.nifty.com/saisho/cicadalist.html> (December 1, 2010).