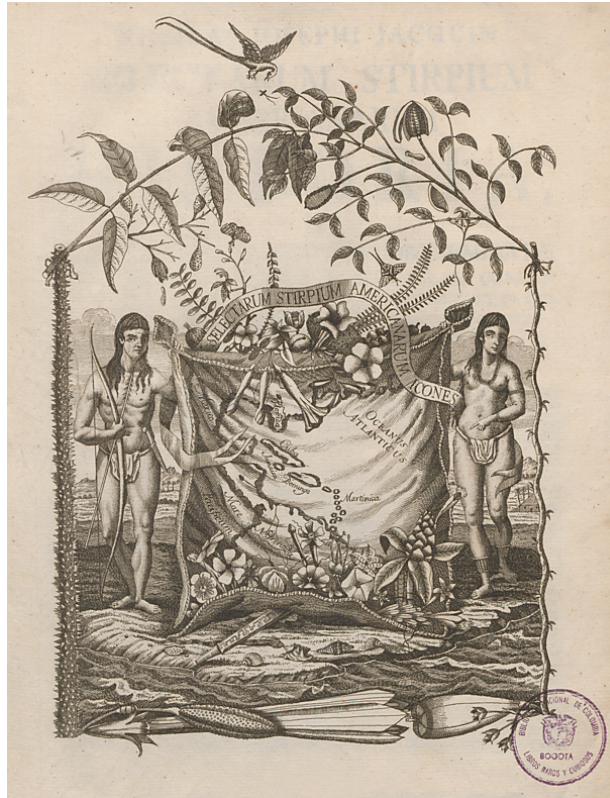

Jacquin's American Plants

Evening Meeting

18:00 Thursday 16th October 2014



The Austrian botanist Nikolaus Joseph Jacquin was born in Leiden in 1727 and died in Vienna 1817. From 1769 he was Professor at the University of Vienna and director of the Botanic Garden. Between 1755 and 1759 he travelled to the Caribbean on the Emperor's behalf, to collect live plants and animals for the Schönbrunn palace. Biographic research of Nikolaus Joseph Jacquin has concentrated mostly with aspects of Jacquin's life in Vienna. Little attention has been given to his American voyage, with works dealing only partially with this aspect of Jacquin's life. Thus, no detailed data of his itinerary, dates, contacts, collaborators, etc., nor of his botanical explorations have been published up to now. Much information on Jacquin's Caribbean expedition and the botanical works resulting from his studies of America plants can be extracted from various primary sources available. Amongst these are Jacquin's own publications (1760, 1763, 1780, and 1797), which, if studied in a systematic way, can bear data on the itinerary of the voyage, and of his botanical researches. Additionally, an unpublished biographical sketch of Jacquin's life written by his son, Joseph Franz Jacquin (most likely dictated by Jacquin himself from his death bed), is available at the manuscript collection of the Austrian National Library in Vienna and has recently been fully transcribed and translated to Spanish and English. Additionally, a wealth of information on the post-expedition work by Jacquin on his American plants can be extracted from his ample

correspondence with Linnaeus. The letters from Linnaeus to Jacquin now reside in the Manuscript Collection of the Uppsala University Library, and have long since been transcribed in their totality by Schreiber. On the other hand, the letters from Jacquin to Linnaeus, which consist of 184 folios, are held at the Linnaean Society in London. Partial transcriptions and some summaries of this last correspondence are now available at the [Linnaean Correspondence Project](#). With these two sets of letters, it is possible to trace with great detail the process of identification of specimens that Jacquin followed leading to the publication of the books relating to his American Plants, in addition to gaining insight on other aspects of Jacquin's professional work, including his systematic method. The numerous beautifully illustrated works written by Jacquin have left a mark in the history of botany. Three of his works, the result of his botanical investigations in the Caribbean, are of special importance for the history and development of tropical American botany. These are: 1) the *Enumeratio Systematica Plantarum*, a preliminary catalogue of the collections made by him in America, published in Leiden in 1760;; 2) the *Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia*, a folio sized book with detailed descriptions of the plants cited in the *Enumeratio*, and illustrated in 184 monochrome plates, published in Vienna in 1763;; and 3) the colour edition of the *Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia*, an imperial folio sized volume in which the descriptions of the previous edition are further expanded, and accompanied with 264 hand coloured illustrations. Of this last work only 30 copies were produced in Vienna in 1780–1. The works previously mentioned are amongst the first comprehensive botanical works of the Caribbean, and constitute essential references for the study of the botany of this region. Despite this, these works are rarely cited due to their limited availability to the botanical and historical community, and the public in general.

Santiago Madriñán, PhD, FLS, is professor of Botany at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá Colombia and has worked extensively on the botany of tropical America, in particular, on the evolution of the flora of the Páramos, a high-elevation ecosystem restricted to tropical America, with a unique and highly diverse flora. Dr. Madriñán has also worked on aspects of the history of Botany in tropical America, including an essay entitled “Richard Spruce's pioneering work on tree architecture” delivered at the Linnean Society's Commemorative Conference in 1993. Today, Dr. Madriñán will talk about his recently published book “[Nikolaus Joseph Jacquin's American Plants: Botanical Expedition to the Caribbean \(1754–1759\) and the Publication of the Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia](#).” Brill, Leiden, 2013

Image: frontispiece of Jacquin's Selectarum Stirpium Americanarum Historia, 1763 (c) Biblioteca Nacional de Colombia (reproduced with permission)

This meeting is free and open to all; registration is not necessary. Tea and coffee will be served in the Library from 17:30 and a wine reception will follow.