

ASIAN AND AUSTRALIAN BIRDS IN THE *HISTOIRE NATURELLE DES OISEAUX D'AFRIQUE* (1796-1813) BY FRANCOIS LEVAILLANT¹

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Key words: Taxonomy, Nomenclature, Asia, Australia, Ornithology, Levaillant
18th Century, Zoology

The Frenchman François Levaillant included in his monumental *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique* (6 volumes, 1796-1813) the descriptions and plates of 45 birds known only from Australia and Asian countries, mainly India and the South-East Asian region. Although Levaillant indicated the species by French names only, many scientific names were proposed in the first quarter of the 19th century which were solely based on his work. Out of these, 14 are still in current use for species or subspecies of Asian birds, of which Levaillant's specimens are the types. The history of these specimens and the existence of drawings based on them is briefly discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A taxonomist working on Asian birds would not soon think to consult a volume on the birds of Africa. Yet, such a book appears with some regularity in the synonymies or taxonomic sections of serious text-books like (to give just two examples) Ali & Ripley's *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN* (cf. 1987) and Ripley's *SYNOPSIS* (1982). For instance, Ripley (1982 : 270) gave the reference to the original description of *Dicrurus macrocercus* by Vieillot, with the statement that the name was "based on 'Le Drongolon' of Levaillant, 1805, Ois. d'Afr. 4, pl. 174: 72..." In this paper I would like to give some background to this work by Levaillant, while adding a complete list of all Asian birds found there. I have discussed Levaillant's ornithological studies in more detail in my recent book on *The Zoological Exploration of Southern Africa 1650- 1790*, but this title too would not immediately appeal to students of Asian ornithology.

LIFE OF LEVAILLANT

The Frenchman François Levaillant (1753-1828) should be considered one of the pioneer ornithologists of the late 18th century. Born in Suriname (South America) of French parents, educated in France, he decided to travel to the Cape of Good Hope to collect and study birds. He stayed in South Africa from 14 April 1781 to 14 July 1784.

During these years, he undertook two expeditions into the interior. After his return to Europe he wrote two general accounts of his travels first published in French in 1790 and 1795. There were many later editions and translations in all major European languages. Levaillant's main purpose during his travels was to collect bird specimens. Although we are not sure what number of birds he brought home to France, it surely must have been significant. He studied and traded these African birds. He compared them to specimens in European museums and private collections. In the course of his investigations, he came across many birds from all over the world which had not yet been described. Levaillant remained active as a student of or-

¹Accepted November 1990.

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nithology, as author, and probably also as trader of bird skins until the end of his life in 1828.

THE BIRDS OF AFRICA

Levaillant published the results of his ornithological studies in five works, which mainly consisted of descriptions of birds illustrated by plates of each species (often found in coloured plates).

These works appeared in instalments, usually containing descriptions and plates of six birds. His major work is considered to be the *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique* [Natural History of African Birds], which appeared in 52 instalments to be bound in 6 volumes between 1796 and 1812 or 1813. In this work he treated 288 birds illustrated on 300 plates.

One would expect that Levaillant would have written about the species which he found in South Africa. While many of those are found there, the book also contains descriptions of other birds. In his text, Levaillant often recorded that he received or saw birds similar to the African species, which he discussed in comparison. His book with the abbreviated title *Oiseaux d'Afrique* or *Ois. Afr.* contains descriptions of 80 species of which Levaillant stated occurred in countries outside South Africa.

The *Oiseaux d'Afrique*, therefore, is quite a mixture. There are two other problems connected with it. First, there has been (and is) some serious doubt about the validity of Levaillant's statements. Some birds in the book are described in great detail, including its habits in the field and Levaillant's assurance that he shot one or more during his African expeditions, while in fact the species was never found there. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, there are many valuable parts which even today should not be overlooked.

The second problem in connection with the work of Levaillant is that he provided the birds only with French names. However, soon after almost all the species were provided with one or more binominal names. My analysis showed that there were at least 315 names based only on the *Oiseaux d'Afrique*, of which quite a number is in current use. The animals described or illustrated should be considered the type specimens of all these species, which means that the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* will continue to be important to taxonomists. The list which follows shows that the book included descriptions of 45 birds occurring or said to occur in the present Asia and Australia. This has resulted in at least 50 new names given on the basis of Levaillant's descriptions only.

There are two questions which I tried to answer in my book of 1989: what happened to the specimens studied by Levaillant, and what other sources exist about their morphology. I have given some clues about the South African species in my book. I shall give some details about the Asian birds here.

COLLECTIONS OF BIRD SPECIMENS

Levaillant brought many birds with him from his South African journey. Their present whereabouts are unknown in almost all cases. These species do not concern us here. In case of species which did not occur in South Africa and which Levaillant treated in the *Oiseaux d'Afrique*, he almost invariably indicated where he saw them. A few notes about four of the main private collections, with which he was familiar, may be given here.

1. *Jacob Temminck*: The treasurer of the Dutch East India Company, Jacob Temminck (1748-1822) had a great interest in natural history and maintained a collection of skins and

other specimens. He probably was helpful in arranging Levaillant's journey. It is certain that Temminck received some birds from Levaillant after his return from the Cape of Good Hope. At the same time, Levaillant spent time with Temminck and in several instances he recorded that a certain bird was found in that collection. A catalogue of the animals preserved there was published in 1807 by the son, Coenraad Jacob Temminck (1778-1858). Later the collection became the nucleus of the national museum of natural history in Leiden, Holland (founded in 1825), the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie (RMNH). Many of Temminck's specimens are still found there.

2. *Joan Raye*: The Dutch businessman Joan Raye (1737-1823) was Levaillant's best friend and main contact in Holland. He also maintained a cabinet of natural history, which included birds collected by Levaillant. This collection was auctioned in 1827; the sales catalogue included 1103 bird species. Part of it was bought by the museum in Leiden.

3. *W.S. Boers*: Not much is known about the collection of Boers in The Hague, Holland. However, Levaillant had some contact with Boers and he mentions him a few times in the *Oiseaux d'Afrique*. There is a sales catalogue of this collection of 1797 including 337 birds, but what happened to them is not known.

4. *Levaillant's own collection*: Levaillant himself also had a large collection of birds, consisting of specimens which he brought from the Cape of Good Hope and other specimens which he traded or received otherwise. It is likely that most birds in the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* with un-stated depository in fact were in this private collection. Levaillant sold a large part during his life, but unfortunately it has been impossible to

determine their present existence (Rookmaaker 1989).

COLLECTIONS OF WATERCOLOURS

While the actual specimens studied by Levaillant are very difficult to retrieve (due to uncertain labelling of the old specimens in many museums), there is one other way to get some idea about their appearance. All the birds were illustrated on the plates in *Oiseaux d'Afrique*, but there are also some drawings or watercolours depicting (probably) the same specimens. Although one needs to be careful to generalise, it is possible that some of these watercolours depicting types can shed some light in taxonomic puzzles where the colour of the published plates is important. There are five places known, where such drawings connected with Levaillant's travels and publications are kept (Rookmaaker 1989). Only two need concern us here.

1. *Watercolours in RMNH* [Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden, Holland]. The library of the museum has a set of Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique* which came from Joan Raye. These volumes contain 53 original watercolours showing birds stated to be in Raye's private cabinet. These drawings are identified below by the prefix RMNH followed by a number (see Rookmaaker 1989: 235-240).

2. *Watercolours in the University of Leiden*. The main library of the Leiden University owns a 4-volume set of the two travel accounts by François Levaillant. These books include 242 original watercolours, showing 163 birds, 33 mammals and some topographical and ethnographical subjects. They too came from the library of Joan Raye. These drawings are mentioned below by the prefix UBL followed by a number (see Rookmaaker 1989: 214-235).

LIST OF ASIAN AND AUSTRALIAN BIRDS

The species in the *Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux d'Afrique* stated to be from an Asian country or from Australia are listed below. The references in the second line of each entry refer to the book by Levaillant stating plate number, volume and page reference, and its probable date of publication. The page references are to the folio edition, which differ from the quarto editions.

1. *Haliaeetus leucogaster* (Gmelin, 1788)

Plate 5 (Volume 1, pp. 15-17), 1796: Le Blagre

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Falco blagrus Daudin, 1800, II: 70.

Levaillant claimed that he saw this bird on rare occasions in the dry interior of southern Africa. The plate does not represent an African species, but depicts *Haliaeetus leucogaster* from India and South-East Asia, which was known from earlier sources.

2. *Gyps bengalensis* Gmelin, 1788

Plate 11 (Volume 1, pp. 32-33), 1796/97: Le Chaugoun

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Vultur indus J.R. Forster, 1798: xvi, 40.

Vultur chaugoun Daudin, 1800, II: 14.

Levaillant had received a specimen from 'Bengal' where the bird was known as 'chaugoun'. The bird was earlier described by Gmelin as *Gyps bengalensis*. Levaillant's specimen, the type of *V. indus* and *V. chaugoun* apparently was preserved in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden (Rookmaaker 1989: 266).

3. *Vultur monachus* (Linnaeus, 1766)

Plate 12 (Volume 1, pp. 34-37), 1796/97: Le Chincou

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Vultur sinensis J. R. Forster, 1798: xvi, 42.

Vultur chincou Daudin, 1800, II: 12.

Linnaeus was the first to name this bird. Levaillant saw a specimen alive in the aviary of Arnoldus Ameshoff (1749-1819). Ameshoff had a small collection of living birds (and mammals?) in his residence near Amsterdam, Holland, where Levaillant visited him either in 1780 or in 1785. The bird was supposed to be from China, but Levaillant does not inform us how it came to Holland or what happened with it after it died. We may assume that the specimen is no longer existing.

4. *Falco chicquera* Daudin, 1800

Plate 30 (Volume 1, p. 84), 1798: Le Chicquera

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Falco chicquera Daudin, 1800, II: 12.

Levaillant described a specimen of this bird which he saw 'dans une collection que j'ai achetée faite au Bengal' [in a collection which I bought from Bengal]. The current name of the species was proposed by Daudin after Levaillant's description. The type-locality is Bengal. There is a drawing of this species bound in Joan Raye's copy of Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique* (RMNH 14 in Rookmaaker 1989: 238). It is likely that Levaillant gave the bird to Raye in Amsterdam, because it is mentioned in the catalogue of the sale of Raye's collection in 1827: "7. *Falco chiquera* (sic), le Chiquera" (Raye 1827: 4). It is unknown what happened to it later. There are, therefore, two known depictions of this type specimen, plate 30 in the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* and the watercolour in Raye's copy of Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique* (RMNH 14 in Rookmaaker 1989: 238). It is likely that Levaillant gave the bird to Raye in Amsterdam, because it is mentioned in the catalogue of the sale of Raye's collection in 1827: "7. *Falco*

chiquera (sic), le Chiquera" (Raye 1827: 4). It is unknown what happened to it later. There are, therefore, two known depictions of this type specimen, plate 30 in the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* and the watercolour in Raye's copy of the book (now in Leiden).

5. *Circus melanoleucos* (Pennant, 1769)

Plate 32 (Volume 1, pp. 87-88), 1798: Le Tchoug

Levaillant knew this bird from Bengal. No new names were based on his description. One specimen in the collection of Joan Raye in Amsterdam was drawn on two drawings (depicting the whole bird and its head and feet) bound in Raye's copy of Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique* (RMNH 15, 16). The same bird is mentioned in the catalogue of Raye's sale in 1827: 'no. 22 *Falco melanoleucos*, le Tchoug' (Raye 1827: 5). The present whereabouts of the specimen are not recorded.

6. *Crypsirina temia* (Daudin, 1800)

Plate 56 (Volume 2, pp. 17-18), 1800: Le Temia

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Corvus temia Daudin, 1800: 244.

Corvus varians Latham, 1801: xxvi.

There was only one specimen in Europe when Levaillant compiled his works. He saw it in the collection of Jacob Temminck in Holland and he stated that it had been received from Batavia in Java. Temminck's specimen was listed in the catalogue of the collection compiled by C.J. Temminck (1807: 41) as *Corvus varians* from 'Ceylon'. Later the same specimen was mentioned by Temminck (1838, II: text on *Glaucoptis*), who stated that the bird was in a poor condition, but it was the same as the one figured by Levaillant, because no others had yet become known. It is likely that the skin is still preserved in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in

Leiden. Peters *Check-list* (1962, XV: 250) gives the type locality as "Africa, error for Java". Levaillant or Daudin, however, did not refer to its supposed occurrence in Africa.

7. *Urocissa flavirostris* (Blyth, 1846)

Plate 57 (Volume 2, pp. 19-21), 1800: La Pie Bleue

Levaillant knew this bird correctly from China. He had one specimen in his own collection and also saw others owned by Temminck, Boers, C. Gygot-d'Orcy and the Paris museum. There is a drawing similar to the published plate (in reverse) in the RMNH copy of his book (RMNH 29). That drawing has no caption and it is not recorded that Raye owned a specimen. It may be that Temminck's bird was borrowed for the illustration. No new names were based on Levaillant's plate, probably due to confusion with *Urocissa erythrorhyncha* (Boddaert, 1783), but the bird on the plate has a yellow (not a red) bill.

8. Artefact

Plate 58 (Volume 2, pp. 22-23), 1800: La Pie Bleue à Tête Noire

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Corvus melanocephalus Daudin, 1800, II: 241.

Levaillant figured a bird which had come from China. Although he usually mentioned where he saw his specimens, this information is absent in the description of this species. It was probably in his own collection. The bird has never been seen again and must have been composed by a dealer in Europe.

9. *Dendrocitta vagabunda* (Latham, 1790)

Plate 59 (Volume 2, pp. 24-25), 1800: La Pie Rousse

Levaillant received one of these birds from Bengal. It is likely that this means no more than that it was collected somewhere in the Indian

region. It is probable that the specimen belonged to the nominate subspecies, even though this cannot be seen on the plate.

10. *Lanius cristatus superciliosus* Latham, 1801

Plate 66 Fig. 2 (Volume 2, pp. 45-47), 1800:
Le Rousseau

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Lanius superciliosus Latham, 1801: 20.

According to Levaillant, the bird lived on Java around Batavia (Jakarta). One specimen had been received by Jacob Temminck in Holland, which he gave to Levaillant. The current name of the species is based on this description and plate by Levaillant. It is not possible to retrieve what happened to the type specimen.

11. Artefact

Plate 82 (Volume 2, pp. 92-96), 1801: Le Sicrin

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Corvus crinitus Daudin, 1800, II: 253.

Corvus indicus Wilkes, 1802, V: 242.

Corvus sexsetaceus Shaw, 1809, VII (2): 380.

Levaillant bought his own specimen from a 'dealer of natural history specimens' supposed to be 'des Indes' (from India?). A similar bird was owned by W.S. Boers in Holland. Even though three names were based on the plate, the bird is unknown and must have been made by the dealer.

12. *Prothemadera novaeseelandiae* (Gmelin, 1784)

Plate 92 (Volume 2, pp. 126-128), 1801-04:
La Cravate Frisée

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Sturnus crispicollis Daudin, 1800, II: 314.

One of these birds from the South Seas ('un des îles de la Mer du Sud') was in the collection of C. Gigot-d'Orcy. It had been sent there by

'Woodfort' in London to be painted. It is not very clear why this happened. 'Woodfort' may have been John Alexander Woodfort (d. 1817), paymaster in England of French emigres allowances. The species was already known since 1773 when George Forster saw one in Queen Charlotte Sound and several specimens were recorded in England.

13. *Sturnus pagodarum* (Gmelin, 1789)

Plate 95 fig. 1 (Volume 2, pp. 135-136), 1801-04: Le Martin-Brame

On the plate the bird is called 'Martin-Brame', in the text 'Martin-Blanc'. Levaillant stated that it was very common in many parts of India, but he also saw it in South Africa where he killed two of them. The species is unknown in Africa and we must assume that Levaillant did not preserve his African specimens and later confused them with the Indian bird.

14. *Acridotheres ginginianus* (Latham, 1790)

Plate 95 fig. 2 (Volume 2, pp. 137-138), 1801-04: Le Martin Gris-de Fer.

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Gracula grisea Daudin, 1800, II: 286.

Like in the former species of figure 1, Levaillant was confused. He knew that the bird on the plate came from India, but at the same time he stated that he killed five of them in South Africa; he even gave an exact place and date.

15. *Pycnonotus aurigaster* (Vieillot, 1818)

Plate 107 fig. 2 (Volume 3, p. 31), 1801-04:
Le Cudor

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Turdus aurigaster Vieillot, 1818, XX: 258.

In this case, one wonders at what mistake Levaillant made. He states that his companion Klaas killed this male bird 'sur les bords du Groot-Vis-Rivière du Pays des Caffres' [on the banks of the Great Fish River in Caffraria]. The

bird on the plate is originally only known from Java.

16. *Copsychus saularis* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Plate 109 (Volume 3, pp. 33-34), 1801-04:
Le Cadran

Although Levaillant claimed that he saw this bird in South Africa, he recognised it as the 'dial bird' from Bengal described by Albin. It is a purely Indian bird.

17. *Copsychus malabaricus tricolor* (Vieillot, 1818)

Plate 114 (Volume 3, p. 45), 1801-04: Le Merle Tricolor à Longue Queue

Name based on Levaillant's description:
Turdus tricolor Vieillot, 1818, XX: 291.

Levaillant saw one of these birds in Paris in the collection of C. Gigot-d'Orcy. Its provenance was not known but assumed to be the islands of the South Sea. The type locality of *Turdus tricolor* Vieillot was correctly changed to Bantam, West Java. There is no clue what happened to the type specimen.

18. *Pachycephala pectoralis* (Latham, 1801)

Plate 115 (Volume 3, pp. 46-47), 1801-04:
La Cravatte Blanche

Names based on Levaillant's description:
Laniarius albicollis Vieillot, 1817, XIII:

299.

Turdus lunularis Stephens, 1826, XIII: 200.

Levaillant saw one specimen in the collection of Jacob Temminck. The same one was listed in Temminck (1807 : 89, no. 462): 'Le merle à cravatte blanche' (without binominal name). Temminck's specimen was reported to have been brought from Batavia, Java. The subspecies cannot be clearly identified on the plate, and it may be added that the locality 'Batavia' could mean no more than that the specimen was sent from there after having been collected elsewhere.

19. *Xanthomyza phrygia* (Shaw, 1794)

Plate 116 (Volume 3, p. 48), 1801-04: Le Merle Ecaillé

Name based on Levaillant's description:
Turdus squameus Vieillot, 1818, XX: 259.

Levaillant had seen one specimen in the collection of Jacob Temminck. It was said to have come from Java. However, this must have been a mistake, because *Xanthomyza phrygia* is only known to occur in Australia.

20. *Stipiturus malachurus* (Shaw, 1798)

Plate 130 fig. 2 (Volume 3, pp. 86-87), 1801-04: La Queue Gazée

Name based on Levaillant's description:
Motacilla fimbriata Wilkes, 1817, XVI:

102.

Jacob Temminck showed one of these birds from Java to Levaillant. Later he may have obtained a second one, as Temminck (1807 : 128) recorded a pair as 'no. 451 *Sylvia malachura*'. The locality must have been mistaken. *Stipiturus malachurus* is known only from Australia.

21. *Dicaeum trochileum* (Sparrman, 1789)

Plate 136 (Volume 3, p. 104), 1801-04: Le Figuier Rouge

Name based on Levaillant's description:
Motacillaamboynensis Wilkes, 1817, XVI:

91.

Levaillant was given two of these birds by W.S. Boers in Holland. They came from Amboina. The species is not known to exist on that island, so there might again be a mistake in the locality.

22. *Parus major cinereus* Vieillot, 1818

Plate 139 fig. 2 (Volume 3, p. 117), 1804:
La Mésange Grise au Joue Blanche

Name based on Levaillant's description:
Parus cinereus Vieillot, 1818, XX: 316.

Jacob Temminck received a specimen from Batavia and he donated it to Levaillant. The

current name of the subspecies was based on the description by Levaillant. The type locality was correctly recorded as Batavia, Java. There is no trace of the type specimen.

23. *Pycnonotus melanicterus* (Gmelin, 1789)

Plate 140 (Volume 3, pp. 118-120), 1804:
Le Cap Nègre

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Aegithina atricapilla Vieillot, 1816, I: 176;
nec Sylvia atricapilla Linnaeus, 1758.

Parus dubius Wilkes, 1821, XVIII: 727.

Levaillant received six specimens of this bird from Ceylon. The names based on his plate are preceded by the current one given by Gmelin in 1789, with type locality Ceylon.

24. *Aegithina tiphia multicolor* (Gmelin, 1789)

Plate 141 (Volume 3, pp. 121-125), 1804:
Le Quadricolor

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Aegithina quadricolor Vieillot, 1816, I: 176.

Levaillant received a specimen from Ceylon. It is unknown what happened to that bird.

25. *Terpsiphone paradisi* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Plates 144-146 (Volume 3, pp. 130-134),
1804, 1805: Le Tchitrec bé

There were three varieties known of this bird from Ceylon, probably found in a number of collections in Europe (although these are not identified). It had already been described earlier.

26. *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* (Linnaeus, 1766)

Plate 155 (Volume 4, pp. 13-15), 1805:
L'Oranor

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Muscicapa subflava Vieillot, 1818, XXI: 483.

Muscicapa parus Wilkes, 1818, XVI: 262.

There was one of these birds in the collection of Jacob Temminck, received from Ceylon. It was listed by C. J. Temminck (1807 : 117) as '*Muscicapa malabarica* (Ceylan)'

27. *Dicrurus leucophaeus* Vieillot, 1817

Plate 170 (Volume 4, p. 48), 1805: Le
Drongri

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Dicrurus leucophaeus Vieillot, 1817, IX: 587.

Dicrurus cinereus Swainson, 1837, II: 223.

Levaillant knew (or owned) 13 specimens, all stated to be from Ceylon. This is the type locality of the species, whose description by Vieillot was based on Levaillant's note and plate. The locality was probably a mistake; Tweeddale (1878 : 75) and Vaurie (1949 : 262) corrected the type locality to Java.

28. Artefact

Plate 171 (Volume 4, p. 49), 1805: Le
Drongri à Ventre Blanc

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Dicrurus leucogaster Vieillot, 1817, IX: 287.

Muscicapa albiventris Wilkes, 1818, XVI: 272.

Edolius albiventer Voigt, 1831, I: 465.

Jacob Temminck gave two of his specimens originating from Java to Levaillant. One of these was again donated to Mr Gevers in Rotterdam, Holland. The bird has never been seen again and it must have been composed by some dealer or sailor, as found by Tweeddale (1878 : 75), who saw the type specimen in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, Leiden.

29. *Dicrurus caerulescens* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Plate 172 (Volume 4, pp. 50-51), 1805: Le
Drongo Fingah

This species was known from Bengal. Levaillant saw one of them in the collection of W.S. Boers in Holland (who gave it to him).

30. *Dicrurus paradiseus lophorinus* Vieillot, 1817

Plate 173 (Volume 4, p. 52), 1805: Le Dron-gup

Name based on Levaillant's description: *Dicrurus lophorinus* Vieillot, 1817, IX: 587.

Levaillant saw one of these birds in the collection of Jacob Temminck in Holland, which came from 'des Indes'. It was later listed by Temminck (1807: 114) as 'Le grand drongo ou le drong-up des Indes.' The locality 'des Indes' was a general term which may have included Ceylon, the only place where the bird is known to live.

31. *Dicrurus macrocercus* Vieillot, 1817
Plate 174 (Volume 4, p. 53), 1805: Le Dron-golon

Names based on Levaillant's description: *Dicrurus macrocercus* Vieillot, 1817, IX: 588.

Muscicapa longicauda Wilkes, 1818, XVI: 272.

Muscicapa biloba Lichtenstein, 1823: 52.
Dicrurus indicus Stephens, 1826, XIII (2): 139.

Dicrurus longus Bonaparte, Consp. Av. I: 352.

Levaillant stated that the bird was received in the same shipment as the 'drongup' of plate 173. He didn't say explicitly that it was in Temminck's collection, but maybe that is the inference (not found in Temminck, 1807). It must have been a mixed shipment with animals collected both in India and in Ceylon. The species of this plate 174 is known in peninsular India and the type locality was restricted with

some justification to Madras City (Vaurie 1949 : 238).

32. *Dicrurus paradiseus platurus* Vieillot, 1817

Plate 175 (Volume 4, pp. 54-55), 1805: Le Dron-go à Raquettes

Name based on Levaillant's description: *Dicrurus platurus* Vieillot, 1817, IX: 588.

Levaillant knew a number of specimens in the collections of Jacob Temminck, C. Gigot-d'Orcy and the Paris Museum. They were said to have come from Batavia, Java. The current name of the subspecies was based on Levaillant's description. The type locality was later restricted to Malacca (Tweeddale 1877).

33. *Dicrurus aeneus* Vieillot, 1817
Plate 176 (Volume 4, p. 56), 1805: Le Dron-go Bronzé

Names based on Levaillant's description: *Dicrurus aeneus* Vieillot, 1817, IX: 586.
Dicrurus aerea Wilkes, 1818, XVI: 272.
Dicrurus aeratus Stephens, 1826, XIII (2): 138.

Edolius metallicus Voigt, 1831, I: 465.
Levaillant had a specimen from Bengal, which is taken as the type locality of this species based on Levaillant's note. He did not state where he saw the specimen, and we may assume that he had it in his own collection. It is not known what happened to it later.

34. *Saxicoloides fulicata* (Linnaeus, 1766)
Plate 188 Fig. 1 (Volume 4, p. 82), 1806: Le Traquet à Queue Striée

Name based on Levaillant's description: *Motacilla rubra* Wilkes, 1817, XVI: 86.

Oenanthe pygmatura Vieillot, 1818, XXI: 436. [Peters *Check-List* has it incorrectly as *pygmatura*]

Thamnobia rufiventer Swainson, 1832, in Swainson & Richardson, p. 489.

Levaillant knew one specimen from Bengal in the collection of Joan Raye in Amsterdam, but he claimed that he also shot it in South Africa (where it does not occur). Raye's specimen is shown on a drawing bound into Raye's copy of Levaillant's travel account (UBL 114) where the locality is stated to be the 'Pais des Caffres' (Caffraria in South Africa). It is not clear what happened to Raye's specimen; it is not listed in Raye (1827).

35. *Phoenicurus ochuros rufiventris* (Vieillot, 1818)

Plate 188 fig. 2 (Volume 4, p. 83), 1806: Le Traquet à Cul Roux

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Motacilla rubra Wilkes, 1817, XVI: 186.

Oenanthe rufiventris Vieillot, 1818, XXI: 431.

Levaillant knew the bird from the same places as the bird on plate 188 f.1, i.e. Bengal and South Africa. Vieillot's name was based on Levaillant. Vieillot's name is predated by *O. rubra* Wilkes, 1818 by which it should be replaced.

36. *Clamator coromandus* (Linnaeus, 1766)

Plate 213 (Volume 5, pp. 40-41), 1806: Le Coucou à Collier Blanc

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Cuculus collaris Vieillot, 1817, VIII: 229.

In this case, Levaillant was wide off the mark. He said that the species was known in Senegal, while he had also seen it in South Africa. Actually it is an Indian species, unknown in the African continent.

37. *Eudynamys scolopacea* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Plate 214 (Volume 5, p. 42), 1806: Le Coucou à Gros Bec

Levaillant thought that he had seen this bird in Africa (where it does not occur), but he illustrated the text with a specimen from India in the collection of Joan Raye. The same bird was listed in Raye's sales catalogue as 'no. 738 *Cuculus crassirostris*, le coucou à bec gris'.

38. *Centropus nigrorufus* (Cuvier, 1816)

Plate 220 (Volume 5, pp. 58-60), 1807: Le Coucal Noirou

Name based on Levaillant's description:

Cuculus nigrorufus Cuvier, 1816, I: 426.

Cuvier (1816 : 426) only gave the name with reference to Levaillant's plate 220. Levaillant said that he had killed the bird in South Africa, where it does not occur. It is not known which specimen was figured by Levaillant.

39. *Cuculus phasianinus* (Latham, 1801)

Plate 223 (Volume 5, pp. 64-65), 1807: Le Coucal Géant

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Polophilus gigas Stephens, 1815, IX (1):

45.

Corydonix giganteus Vieillot, 1817, XXXIV: 295.

This species was first described by Latham from New Holland (Australia). Levaillant saw one from the same place in the collection of Jacob Temminck in Holland. It is again listed by C.J. Temminck (1807: 59, 188) as 'le coucal-géant ou coucou rayé de blanc de la Nouvelle Hollande, mâle'. It is not known what happened to the specimen.

40. *Phaenicophaeus pyrrhocephalus* (Pennant, 1769)

Plate 224 (Volume 5, pp. 68-69), 1807: Le Malkoha

Levaillant saw several of these birds from Ceylon in a number of collections. One of these owned by Joan Raye in Amsterdam was depicted

on a drawing inserted in Raye's copy of the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* (RMNH 38).

41. *Rhamphococcyx curvirostris* (Shaw, 1810)

Plate 225 (Volume 5, p. 70), 1807: Le Malkoha Rouverdin

Names based on Levaillant's description:

Cuculus curvirostris Shaw, 1810, XXI: 905.

Phoenicophaeus tricolor Stephens, 1815, IX (1): 61.

Phoenicophaeus viridis Vieillot, 1817, XVIII: 426.

Levaillant saw one specimen in the collection of Jacob Temminck, supposed to have come from Ceylon. The same bird was listed by C.J. Temminck (1807: 55, 209) as 'Malkoha rouverdin de Ceylan, mâle'. This was the type specimen, as Shaw based his name on Levaillant's description. Ceylon is an incorrect provenance, as the species only occurs in Java.

42. *Rhytroceros undulatus* (Shaw, 1811)

Plate 239 (Volume 5, pp. 96-97), 1807: Le Calao Javan

This bird was known from Java. Levaillant saw several specimens, among others in the collection of Joan Raye in Amsterdam, also depicted on two drawings in his copies of Levaillant's books (UBL 111, RMNH 50).

43. *Buceros hydrocorax* Linnaeus, 1758

Plate 240 (Volume 5, pp. 98-99), 1807: Le Calao à Casque Plat

The species had earlier been described by Linnaeus.

44. *Caloenas nicobarica* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Plate 279 (Volume 6, pp. 73-76), 1810: Le Colombigalline à Camail

Levaillant said that there were no less than 17 specimens from the Nicobar islands in the collection of Ameshoff in Holland.

45. *Goura cristata* (Pallas, 1764)

Plate 280 (Volume 6, pp. 77-79), 1810: Le Colombi-Hocco

This species is only known from New Guinea. Levaillant saw one in the collection of Boers in Cape Town, which was supposed to have come from Banda. Pallas had made the same mistake in the locality and one wonders how this came into being. Another specimen of the same species owned by Joan Raye was depicted on a drawing inserted in Raye's copy of the *Oiseaux d'Afrique* (RMNH 52).

DISCUSSION

Among the 288 birds treated in Levaillant's *Oiseaux d'Afrique*, we have identified 45 species from Australia and Asia. The localities as mentioned by Levaillant can be further defined: Africa 4, India and Sri Lanka 22, South-East Asia 13, China 3 and Australia 3. These indications were not always correct. This is a general problem in books from that period. The people in Europe depended on specimens brought home by a variety of travellers. Many of these did not consider the scientific value. It is quite likely that birds picked up during the voyage between, for instance, China and the Cape of Good Hope were mixed and later the travellers and traders invented the places of provenance.

Perusal of the above list of 45 species shows another problem with Levaillant's work. Some of his statements were unquestionably false and in some cases one could even suspect him to have known that they were incorrect. He claimed to have shot some birds in Africa (see numbers 1, 15, 36, and 38 above), while no such bird was ever seen there before or after his visit. I very much doubt that Levaillant purposely told lies, although even this has been said (Layard 1867). It is more likely that there was a lack of care in

the selection of the illustrations. Levaillant collected a large number of bird skins during his South African travels, which he brought to Europe. Some he kept, others he gave or sold to others (like Temminck and Raye). By the time that he examined his specimens, he must have found that they had deteriorated, lost their colour, or disappeared. His plates were all drawn after skins in Europe and obviously skins in poor condition could not well be used for such purpose. Probably Levaillant then selected (to him) similar birds to be drawn. Hence the confusion.

Among these species, 14 bear names proposed exclusively on the basis of

Levaillant's descriptions and plates. These specimens examined by Levaillant are the type specimens of these taxa. Most of these birds must be considered irretrievable, although in some cases it may still exist, and one has the best chance to find them in the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie in Leiden, Holland. It has been shown above (no. 35), that the current name *Phoenicurus ochuros rufiventris* Vieillot, 1818 is predated by *Motacilla rubra* proposed by John Wilkes in 1817. This latter name was published in an obscure encyclopedia (Rookmaaker 1989: 192-193), which however does not affect its availability.

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