

Traditional Taxonomies

Lecture #7

Optional Reading:

Berlin 1992 *Ethnobiological Classification*

Traditional Taxonomy

- Traditional taxonomic groupings of plants and plant names have been assigned in sensible patterns.
- All human cultures assign names in sensible patterns.
- Understanding the patterns provides insights into the cultural perspectives and evolutionary histories of those who developed the groupings and names

Definitions

- Folk taxonomy:
 - Definition
 - Importance
- Ethnotaxonomy:
 - Definition
 - Importance

Discrimination among Things

- Naming things (Nomenclature)
- Grouping same kinds of things (Taxonomy)
- Making clusters and higher categories of similar things (Classification)

Discrimination among Things

- Naming things
- Unique or very important plants > one name
- Similar kinds of plants > two names

Discrimination among Things

- Grouping same kinds of things (Taxonomy)

Discrimination among Things

- Making clusters and higher categories of similar things (Classification)

Ethnobiological Classification

- General Principles
 - Almost universal elements
 - Ranks include:
 - Kingdom, Lifeform, Generic, Subgeneric(specific)
 - Knowledge holders:
 - Generic (common people)
 - Subgeneric (experts/traditional scientists)
 - Higher order categories
 - General considerations

Assigning Names to Things

- Recognizing patterns
- Collecting data
- Types of knowledge
- Culture specific patterns
- Cognitive variations

Assigning Names to Things

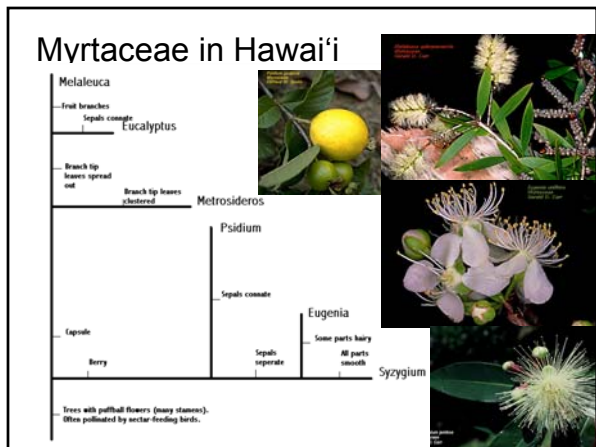
- Non-arbitrariness
 - Sound symbolism
 - Lexical reflections
- Substance and Evolution of Categories
 - Substance of “All” human categories?
 - Evolution of categories based upon experience: types....

Project: What are Things Called?

- Proposed projects
 - Identify a culture’s taxonomy and classification system.
 - Prepare a comparative study of two cultures systems.
 - Determine the patterns of naming and classifying plants used by your own family (and yourself).
 - Ask family and friends about a category of plants to see what meanings they have for different kinds (e.g., meanings of different kinds of flowers when given to someone.)

Traditional Taxonomies

- Ethnobotanical Examples:
 - *Eugenia reinwardtiana* Nioi
 - *Metrosideros polymorpha* ‘ohi‘a lehua
 - *Metrosideros tremuloides* ‘ohi‘a ‘ahihi
 - *Syzygium malaccense* ‘ohi‘a ‘ai
 - *Syzygium sandwicensis* ‘ohi‘a ha



STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS