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*Adansonia*

*Malvaceae*

[*Bombacaceae*]

*Adansonia* commemorates a French botanist and author, Michel Adanson (1727-1806) who promoted a classification of plants anticipating today's practices – one that authorities note was in some sympathy with views expressed by earlier naturalists such as the Englishman John Ray (1627-1705) and the Frenchman Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708) but distinct from those being argued by his contemporary naturalist peers the Swedish, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) and the French, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) from whom he met resistance. In 1748 he travelled to western Africa (Senegal) returning to Paris in 1754 with thousands of plant, animal and other specimens, as well as copious notes covering descriptions of flora and fauna, astronomical and meteorological observations, and maps drawn of the region, as well as grammatical descriptions of the regional languages and supporting dictionaries. In 1759 he became a member of the Academy of Sciences in Paris and in 1774 sought the Academy's approval for a massive work he had in progress (27 large volumes with 150 more to follow). Not only was that approval withheld but he also received unacceptable advice on publication and lost his membership of that scientific body. The magnum opus never saw the light of day and from then on he lived in poverty, while continuing his writing and research as possible. When later the French Institute indicated a wish to offer him membership he could not afford to take it up. His publications include *Histoire naturelle du Senegal*, *Familles naturelles des plantes* and a paper on baobab (*Adansonia digitata*).