Claude-Olivier Doron:
“The Geographic-Genealogical Map”

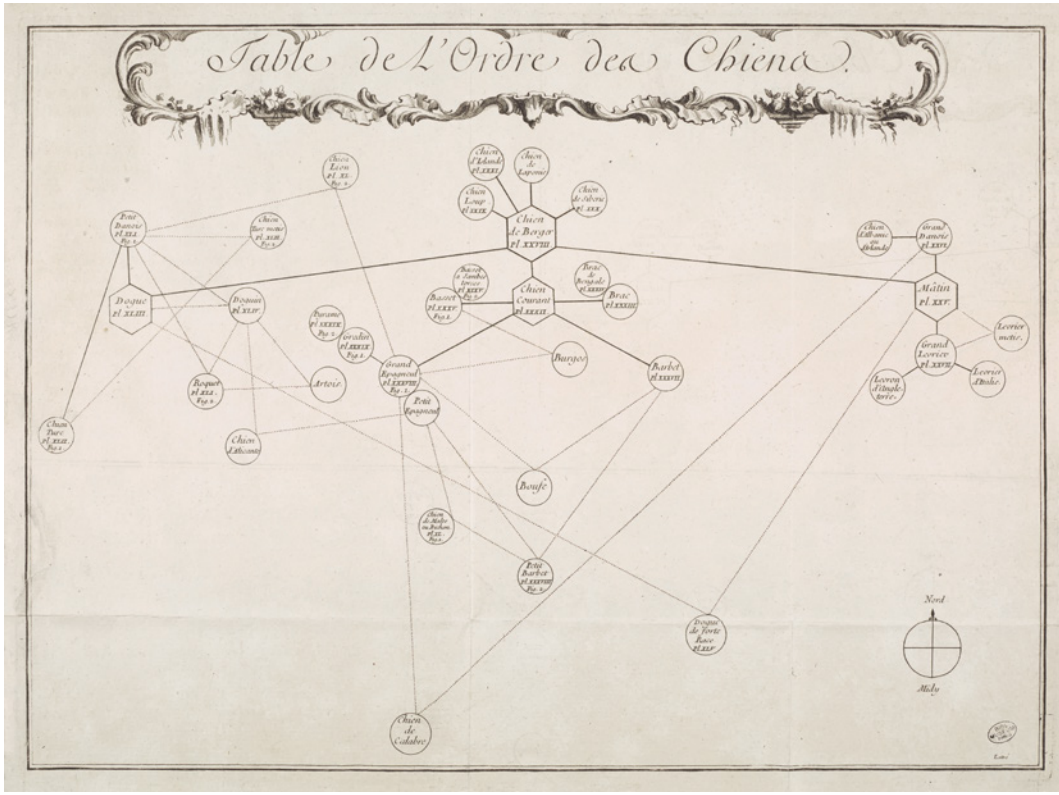
in: Eric Hounshell, Ruth Amstutz (eds.):

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SHADOW OF THE TREE

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THE GEOGRAPHIC-GENEALOGICAL MAP
Genealogy of a Species

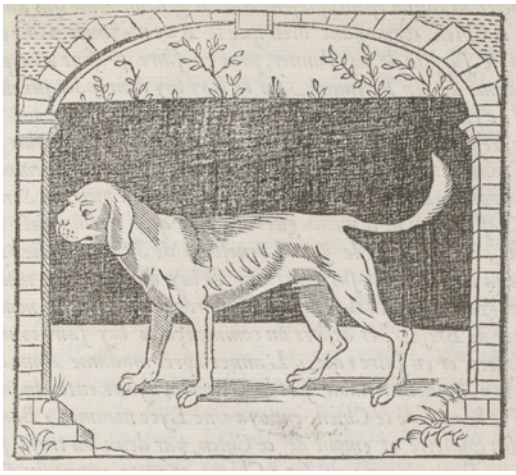


Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi: Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), pp. 228–229. Reproduction from 2010 facsimile edition from H. Champion, Paris by Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Paris.

In 1755, the French naturalist Buffon illustrated his article on Dog with a graphic innovation that was widely noticed by his contemporaries (one of whom called it a "geographic-genealogical map").[1] It was a "kind of family tree" that allowed the beholder to embrace "at a single glance" the whole history of the dog species and its different races by showing their relatedness and ancestry. To this genealogical dimension, Buffon added a geographical axis: the table is "oriented like geographical maps" so that the distribution of the races on the map reflects their dispersion in different climates.[2]

THE GEOGRAPHIC-GENEALOGICAL MAP
Race and Genealogies

Buffon's graphic innovation captured a new genealogical style of reasoning in natural history in order to analyze the relationships between groups defined by the relatively constant transmission of their characteristics along generations, which Buffon called "races."[3] If Buffon's work inherited an older genealogical knowledge on dog breeds, one difference should be noted: breeders built familial genealogies, the most famous of which are those proposed by Fouilloux, tracing especially "noble" dogs back to their mythical ancestors.[4]



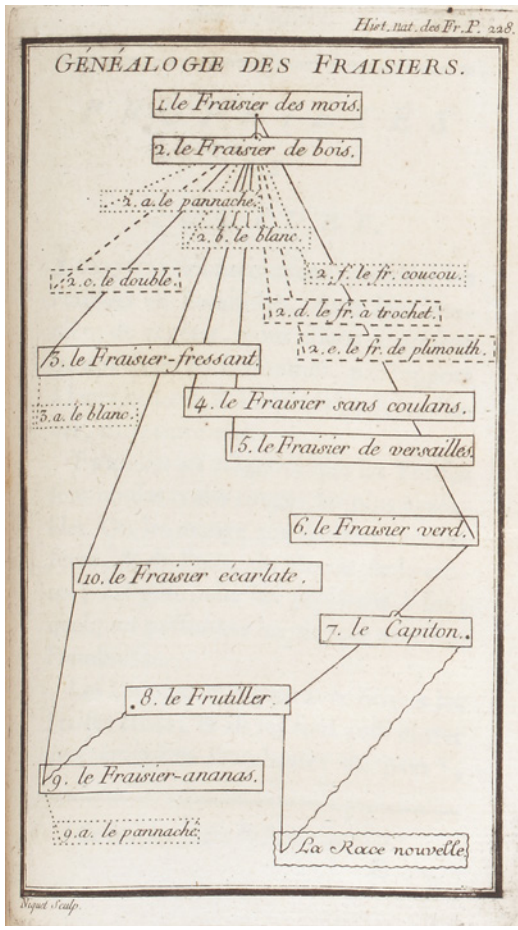
"Chien blanc", in: Jacques de Fouilloux: *La Venerie*, Poitiers: Marnesz et Bouchetz Frères (1561), p. 5. Online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k15131176.

For Buffon, genealogy applies to races understood as broad lineages that share some hereditary physical characteristics. These races form, within a species, varieties of a particular kind – "permanent varieties" based on hereditary transmission. In the case of dogs, these races are so marked that they are, according to Buffon's collaborator Daubenton, "acknowledged by nature" itself: there is a tendency to return to the main races after a few generations when they have admixed.[5] Buffon's table aims precisely at tracing these admixtures. It distinguishes between "pure races" and "mongrel *(métives)* races" (and even "double mongrel races"), i.e. races formed by the mixing of pure races.[6] These relationships between admixed races and parent races are shown in his table by dotted lines. This table thus provides a cartography of what used to be a grey area in natural history, i.e the domain of "varieties," by organizing it according to genealogical criteria and making race a central concept in natural history. It participates in a larger debate opposing an "artificial," catalog-like mode of classification and a system based on the "real" affinities between natural beings, which were linked to kinship and ancestry. As Duchesne noted in 1766 (in a work inspired precisely by Buffon's table) "the genealogical order [...] is the only one that nature indicates [...] any other is arbitrary and devoid of meaning."[7] Kant, who systematically contrasted two ways of doing natural history – the genealogical history of nature and the mere description of nature – also had Buffon's picture in mind while building his opposition.[8]

THE GEOGRAPHIC-GENEALOGICAL MAP
Tracing the Original Type

For Buffon, a diagram such as his "Table de l'ordre des chiens" was actually part of a broader investigation aimed at reducing the diversity of races to their original unity and discovering, under the differences imposed by climates, food, domesticity, and crossbreeding, "the character of the primitive race, of the original race, of the mother race of all races," that is "the true dog of nature."[9] Among all animals, the dog is the one whose original type has been the most altered, but it is nevertheless possible, by cross-referencing clues, to go back to the original race. To do this, Buffon compared the various races of dogs in order to retain their common characteristics, examined their instincts, and related them to close species (wolf or fox). This led him to retain "the shepherd's dog" *(chien du berger)*, placed here in the center of the picture, as "the root *(souche)* of the tree" from which the main races (mastiff,

foxhound...) are directly derived.[10] We find here a pattern typical of Buffon, who explains the formation of these main races by a degeneration, linked to a change of climate and living conditions (domesticity, food) which produced alterations that are incorporated into the lineage. Hence the importance of geographical coordinates. This scheme goes hand in hand with a hierarchy, which takes the original stock as reference, the various races being described as deviations from the "true dog of nature." On this point, it is useful to contrast Buffon's diagram with the one proposed by Duchesne in 1766 in his *Histoire des fraisiers*.



Antoine Nicolas Duchesne: "Généalogie des fraisiers", in: *Histoire naturelle des fraisiers*, Paris: Didot (1766), p. 228. Online: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k10417853.

Like Buffon, Duchesne strived to identify "the primitive race" and the "root of the tree," which is also "the most perfect" race (the *fraisier des mois*).[11] However, his approach was more dynamic, performative, and future-oriented. He tried to illustrate the production of new constant varieties, or races, while inscribing them in a genealogical continuity. This point is illustrated by the phrase "the new race" (a new constant variety he has produced) that concluded his genealogy.

Notes

1 Joseph Le Large de Lignac: *Suite des lettres à un amériquain sur l'histoire naturelle*, IX, Hamburg (1756), p. 249.
2 Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi: Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), p. 225.

3 For a detailed discussion, see Claude-Olivier Doron: *L'homme altéré: Races et dégénérescence*, Cézeyrieu: Champ Vallon (2016); Claude-Olivier Doron: "The Genealogical Order and the Emergence of the Concept of 'Race' in Natural History", in: Stéphane Jettot, Jean-Paul Zuñiga (eds.): *Genealogy and Social Status in the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2021), pp. 185–205; Staffan Müller-Wille: "Reproducing Difference: Race and Heredity from a *longue durée* Perspective", in: Susan Lettow (ed.): *Reproduction, Race, and Gender in Philosophy and the Early Life Sciences*, Albany: SUNY Press (2015), pp. 217–235; Philip Sloan: "Buffon, German Biology and the Historical Interpretation of the Biological Species", in: *The British Journal for the History of Science* 12/2 (1979), pp. 109–153.
4 Jacques de Fouilloux: *La venerie*, Poitiers: Marnesz et Bouchetz Frères (1561).
5 Louis Jean-Marie Daubenton: "Description du chien", in: Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi. Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), p. 232.
6 Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi: Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), p. 227–228.
7 Antoine Nicolas Duchesne: *Histoire naturelle des fraisiers*, Paris: Didot (1766), p. 220.
8 See Jon Mikkelsen: *Kant and the Concept of Race*, Albany: SUNY Press (2013).
9 Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi: Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), pp. 193 and 202.
10 Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon: "Table de l'ordre des chiens", in: *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière, avec la description du cabinet du roi: Tome V,* Paris: Imprimerie Royale (1755), p. 225.
11 Antoine Nicolas Duchesne: "Généalogie des fraisiers", in: *Histoire naturelle des fraisiers*, Paris: Didot (1766), pp. 7-8.

Further Readings

Claude-Olivier Doron: *L'homme altéré: Races et dégénérescence*, Cézeyrieu: Champ Vallon (2016).

Claude-Olivier Doron: "The Genealogical Order and the Emergence of the Concept of 'Race' in Natural History", in: Stéphane Jettot, Jean-Paul Zuñiga (eds.), *Genealogy and Social Status in the Enlightenment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2021), pp. 185–205.

John M. Mikkelsen: *Kant and the Concept of Race*, Albany: SUNY Press (2013).

Staffan Müller-Wille: "Figures of Inheritance, 1650–1850", in: Staffan Müller-Wille, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (eds.), *Heredity Produced: At the Crossroads of Biology, Politics and Culture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press (2007), pp. 177–204.

Staffan Müller-Wille: "Reproducing Difference: Race and Heredity from a *longue durée* Perspective", in: Susan Lettow (ed.): *Reproduction, Race, and Gender in Philosophy and the Early Life Sciences*, Albany: SUNY Press (2015), pp. 217–235.

Marc J. Ratcliff: "Duchesne's Strawberries: Between Growers' Practice and Academic Knowledge", in: Staffan Müller-Wille, Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (eds.): *Heredity Produced: At the Crossroads of Biology, Politics and Culture*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press (2007), pp. 205–228.

Phillip R. Sloan: "Buffon, German Biology and the Historical Interpretation of the Biological Species", in: *The British Journal for the History of Science* 12/2 (1979), pp. 109–153.