

ORIGIN OF THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN COCHIN BANTAM (PEKIN)



Photo: Bobo Athes

By: Dr. Pierre FRESSY, France

If a young fancier asks you these questions: "Is there something known on the origin of the Pekin? Is it a 'true' bantam? Are its colour varieties original?" he is likely to receive these conclusive answers: The Pekin all originate from a small group of buff coloured bantams imported in 1860 in England, after the Old Summer Palace of the Chinese emperors was destroyed. And, of course, as it is written in books, the Pekin is a true bantam and not the dwarf form of the Cochins!

False truth or true legend? It is all said and repeated in the aisles of exhibitions and in the poultry literature, but will a repeated affirmation make it a truth? These items, are they verified knowledge, or the Golden Legend?

Most books and articles available to the (French) fanciers are technically well made and useful extension materials, but generally do not pretend to be a detailed scientific truth, or the historical facts are often based on a predominantly French-speaking bibliography.

The large-scale digitization of English (Anglo-Saxon) literature from the late 18th to early 20th century, however, has opened new horizons for us, even though it is not much and we cannot compare in terms of literature research, because some French reference books are saved in closed libraries are or even anxiously kept to themselves by some 'bibliophilic' fanciers.

Breeding fancy fowl was not invented by the English, but it must be recognized that, historically, they have been the 'Key' to introduction of 'Asian blood' into the European poultry population.



Above: Bantams by JW Ludlow, L Wright, The new book of poultry 1902

As A. Blanchon states in his monography 'Toutes les poules et leurs variétés' from 1924, the English were indeed the ones who began seeing poultry keeping as a *Fancy* – or, better said, as a 'sport'.

Therefore, it seems important to look for "first hand" sources of information - especially in the case of the Cochin bantam / Pekin.

Thus, the theory of 'Adam and Eve Pekin', is that the truth or a legend? What does the time machine tells us?

When we search the Internet for 'Pekin', we will undoubtedly find an English writer who has had a very important role in the mythical introduction and more generally in the development of bantams in England.

This is William Flamank Entwisle, deceased in 1892 in Wakefield UK. His book "Bantams" was published posthumously in 1894.



*Yours truly
W. Entwisle.*

This man, originally a cloth merchant, made his fortune in the wake of the new passion of the upper classes in the United Kingdom, in the late 19th century: the breeding of Asian imported chickens (one spoke at that time of 'hen fever'). He focused on breeding bantams and especially the Cochin bantams /Pekin and Game bantams and gave them a lot of attention in his esteemed writings.

American writers of the early 20th century, such as TF Mc Grew, said he had launched the 'Bantam craze' ...

In his book, 'Bantams', WF Entwisle – same as William Cook, the creator of the Orpingtons – he offers, for the first time, very detailed information about our favorite bantam.

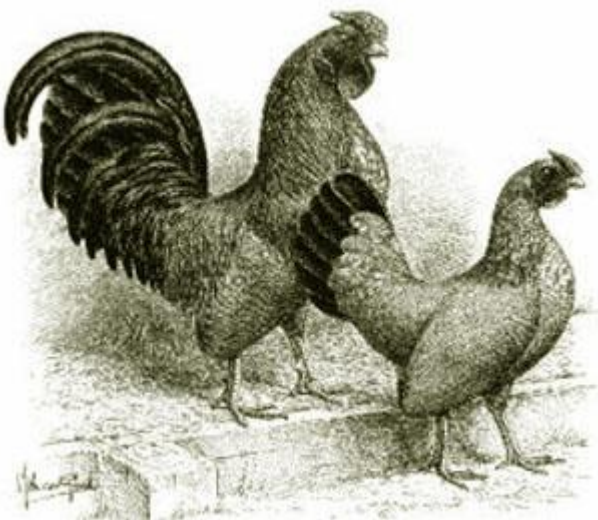
What did he tell us?

He confirms that their first introduction into England was not until the year 1860 or 1861. They were all buff coloured and had been captured by an officer of the British Army, after the Emperor of China's Summer Palace in Peking was captured by the allied British and French armies in 1860 during the Second Opium War (1856-1860).

He gave them to a friend, Mr. Kerrick, a gentleman residing near Dorking, who bred for nearly twenty years, until he in the mid-1870's or even later, accepted that he had better pass on several birds to another fancier, Mr. Beldon.

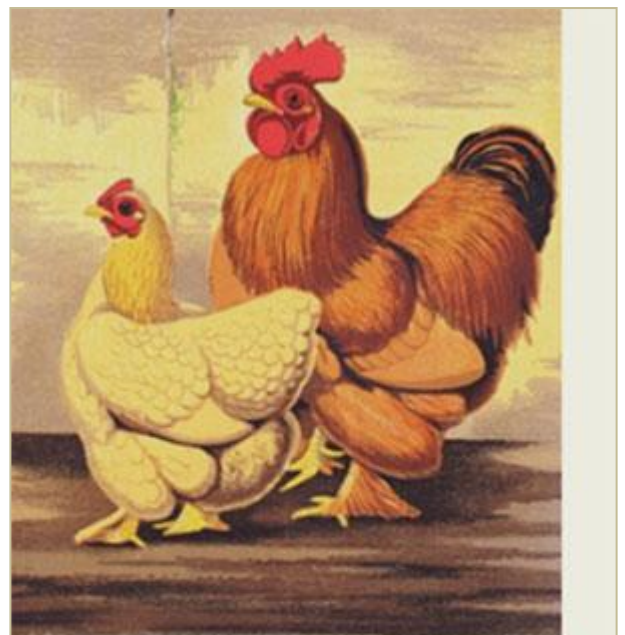
The bantams of this breeding line were the first Cochin bantams/Pekins showed at the 1863 Exhibition, where they caused a sensation and incited the English breeders of large Cochins to breed those with just such curves as the Cochin bantams.

However, after these many years of inbreeding, the constitution became weakened, and sterility ensued, despite the efforts of several other enthusiastic breeders: Mr. H. B. Smith from Preston; Mr. W. J. Cope from Barnsley; Mr. John Newsome and Mr. J. S. Senior from Batley; here, the fancy showed for the first time its limits. Two of these breeders, H.B. Smith and W.J. Cope, crossed the weakened Cochin bantams with Nankin Bantams and other bantams that were present in England in those days.



Left: Pair of Nankin bantams by Van Gink.
Below, left: Nankin bantams, 2011. Photo: Archives P. Fressy, taken from website <http://garlandspoultry.webs.com>

Below, right: Cochin bantams, 1st prize at the Wolverhampton show in 1873 (the first European line) from Cassell's Poultry Book 1880, detail of engraving by J. Ludlow.



DODCOCKS
SE BANTAMS.
AT CRYSTAL PALACE 1872.
MR H. B. SMITH'S
PEKIN BANTAMS.
FIRST PRIZE AT WOLVERHAMPTON, 1873.



Entwisle tells us that "...the chickens certainly were not spoilt in colour, but, as certainly, they lost character, and became long and weedy in body, leg, and tail; scantily feathered on shanks and feet, and many of them dark legged".

A number of the Pekins that had been crossed with the Nankin bantams were transported to the USA, where they were crossed with buff Cochins of a small size, as it is written by T.F. Mc Grew, an American writer, in his book 'The Bantam Fowl', 1903.

Fortunately, the virtual disappearance of the first Pekins in England was offset by a range of new imports, less in the news, but clearly able to achieve sustainable and diversified development of the breed.

The second arrival of Cochin bantams/Pekin in England, again brought over by an officer from the British Army, were Black ones, and not Buffs! (in 1875?)

According to Entwisle, they were "a number of black hens, excellent in every particular, but the cocks were none of them free from white, or straw colour in the hackles, and several had brassy wings".

This information provides us with the first evidence that not all Pekins in China were buff coloured ...

Entwisle suggests a possible third arrival of Cochin bantams, this time again buff coloured, in 1880, received through Belley and Sons, of London, but of these he never saw a feather.

The buff colour, however, was very popular at that time, hence the huge craze for Cochin in this colour. Entwisle, busy improving the blacks, did not dare to hope once again to take advantage of some newly imported birds, and started working on dwarfing the large buff Cochin ... with which he had already been well on the way – according to his own words (weight of 2.5 to 3.5 lb / 1100 to 1580 g) when in 1884 a new group of ten Chinese Cochin bantams arrived in England.

He was able to purchase them, together with a breeder named E. Walton.

Then, in 1885, Entwisle was informed of the existence of Cochin bantams in the United States, descendants of Kerrick's line of buff coloured bantams, crossing Nankin / Pekin.



In an American publication 'The book of the bantams' in 1886 by H.H. Stoddard, the Cochin bantams are indeed from this date registered in the American Standard of Perfection.

Left: A pair of buff Cochin bantams in 1885.

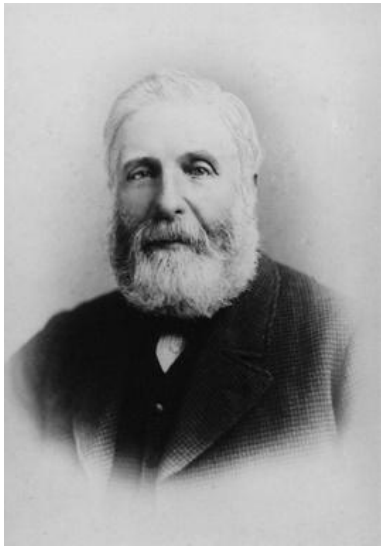
The book of the Bantams, STODDARD 1886 (USA)

W.F. ENTWISLE went to look for these 'American' Cochin bantams and managed to secure some of the best birds that could be sent from that country – a bit

crossbred, but in fact descendants from the first line of the Summer Palace.

Then he points to the continuation of cooperation with American breeders e.g. by lending one of his cup winning English cocks in 1890 to an American judge for a breeding season across the Atlantic.

Later there were other imports 'from China'- often at the initiative of wealthy individuals, such as gentleman farmer Matthew Leno(1830-1904).



Left: Matthew Leno (1830-1904) Gentleman farmer, specialized in breeding pheasants. Also one of the country's top poultry judges in his days. Photo: Archives P. Fressy, taken from website: <http://bacchronicle.homestead.com/MLeno.html>

Entwisle tells us that the "friendly Mr. LENO" who had managed to import a cuckoo Cochin bantam cockerel, allowed him to use this rooster a few times.

At this point in our journey through time, it is 'off' with the legend that the Cochin bantams be descended from only a few buff coloured birds, given the multiple imports - even if they were not important in terms of frequency and number of birds.

But what about the facts and chronology of appearance of the first colours? After the extinction of the first buff coloured strain of 1860, it was a line of black birds "Made in China" that really opened the ball of Cochin bantam in Europe.

Entwisle applied inbreeding, but having learned from the failure of Kerrick, he also used - Oh, sacrilege! - In his crossings large black Cochin that were somewhat small in size, and another bantam breed, the Booted bantam. The black colour was stabilized around 1889.

Left: A pair of Booted bantams in 1890
From the book « Bantams » ENTWISLE, 1894



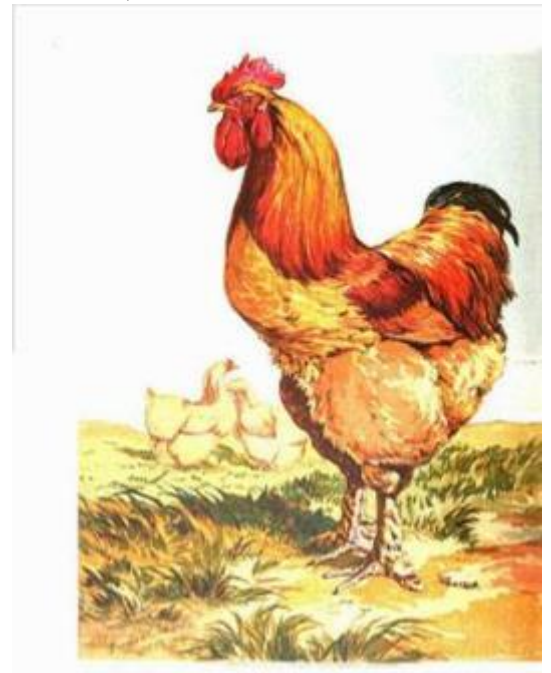
Right: Black LF Cochins in 1850
From: "Moubray's treatise on domestic and ornamental poultry. A practical guide", B.MOUBRAY, 1854.





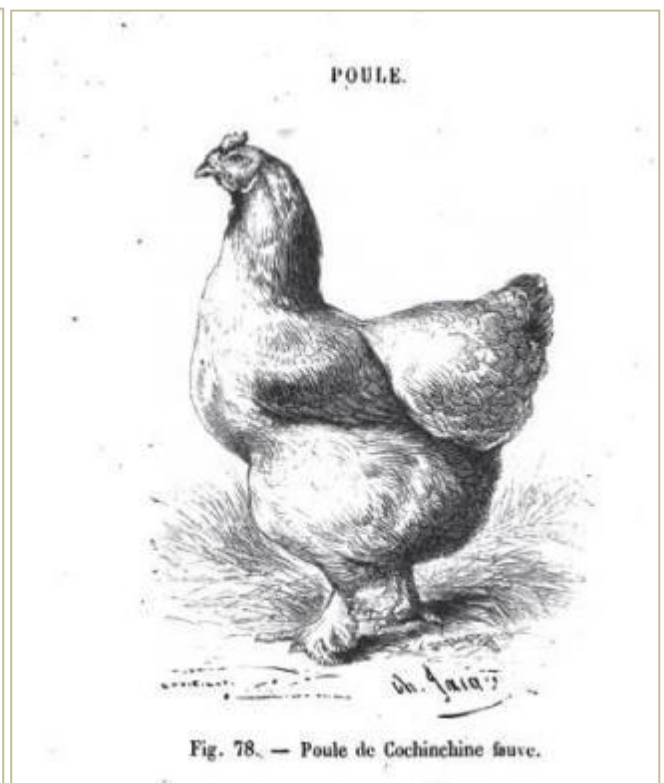
Left: Buff Cochins in 1850
From: Moubray's treatise on domestic and ornamental poultry. A practical guide, 1854.

Below: Buff Cochin male in 1860
From: Poultry Book, W. WINGFIELD, 1861



The precious 'new' buff colored bantams, obtained from China in 1884, were - for fear of losing by inbreeding - immediately crossed with large buff coloured Cochins that had remained rather small! Again sacrilege!

Below: A pair of Cochins in 1858
From the book by C.JACQUES, « Le poulailler, monographies des poules exotiques et indigènes », 1858



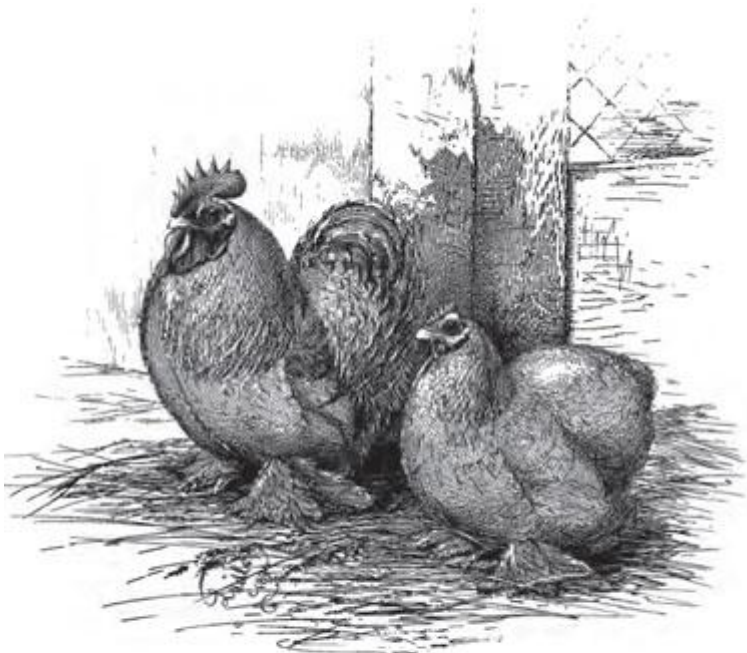
After one had first tried to breed the large Cochin in rounded outlines, to make them look like the first Cochin bantams from Kerrick, here the case is reversed and the large Cochin is used to improve the Cochin bantam....

To avoid fatal inbreeding, Entwisle, besides his collaboration with his friend E. Walton, also sought to develop collaboration with as many breeders as possible, from England but also from the USA.

In his book "The Bantam", 1903, T. F. Mc Grew wrote that the American breeders did the same.

Left: From: *Bantams*, ENTWISLE, 1894

Below: From: *Bantams as a hobby*, P.PROUD, 1900



BUFF PEKIN OR COCHIN BANTAMS.

Bred by Mr. Entwisle, and the Property of Mrs. Entwisle, Calder Grove House, near Wakefield.

Cock, winner of First Prizes at Thorse, March, Lincoln, Market Harbo', 1892; First and Cup at Crystal Palace, First at Tambridge Wells, etc., etc., 1893.

Hen, First Prize at Tambridge Wells, 1893; Second at Odley, etc., etc., 1894.

SCALE OF POINTS—PEKINS.							
Head and comb	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Length of feather and fluff	..	..	..	..	..	..	25
Colour	..	..	..	..	..	..	20
Shape and carriage	..	..	..	..	..	..	15
Shortness of leg	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Size	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
Condition	..	..	..	..	..	..	10
							100

The first purebred white Cochin came from crosses of black Cochin bantam roosters with white in their plumage, with white Booted Bantams, who probably did not have the 'silver' gene. This is assumed because the first birds were described as 'straw-coloured'.

Right: *White Sabelpoot bantam cockerel 2013*
Photo: Jan Schaareman (NL)

To enhance the white colour Entwisle again appealed to the Large Cochin. With this contribution, he probably succeeded to introduce the allele "S" Silver, after which the chicks no longer had 'white-yellowish' down but 'whitish-grey' down like the original parents without the straw-coloured sheen.



Left: A pair of white Cochins LF in 1850
From: *Moubrays treatise on domestic and ornamental poultry. A practical guide, 1854*



The cuckoo colour that Entwisle created was also partly derived from these crosses, originally made to obtain white bantams. He spontaneously obtained the first poorly coloured bantams that he initially mistook for just 'splash'.



Left: White Cochin LF male in 1860
From: Poultry Book, W. WINGFIELD, 1861

He also benefited from the input at the right time, as mentioned above, of a cuckoo cockerel 'Made in China', which enabled him to further refine this variety. With this contribution, the cuckoo colour could be already established in 1888.

This information sheds light on the creation of the cuckoo Cochin bantam in Europe, but also teaches us that in "The Land of the Morning Calm" also black and cuckoo Cochin bantams were present...

The last colour created by Entwisle is the partridge colour. He obtained the first chicks that approached this colour by crossing black and buff Cochin bantams, but then again, sacrilege! He tells us once again that the colour is stabilized by means of crosses with Large partridge Cochin.



Left: A pair of Large partridge Cochins in 1900.
From: L. Wright, 'The new book of poultry' 1902.

So here we are really faced with the opposite of the basic concept that the real Cochin bantam/Pekin would have nothing to do with the 'Large' counterpart... This blood addition of the 'Cochin' at the first European Cochin bantams is fully confirmed by other English authors as P. Proud in his book 'Bantams as a Hobby', written in 1900.

Ultimately, this information somewhat undermines our initial certainties about the Cochin bantam/Pekin. We obviously have to accept that:

- The Cochin bantams in Europe did not evolve from a single pair;
- The Cochin bantams were immediately called 'bantams' in Europe, but the first animals from China were soon crossed with Large Cochin;
- The Buffs were certainly the first in Europe, but were certainly not at the origin of all the other colours;

It should be noted that this contradicts the words of Adolphe Blanchon who stated in his book Toutes les poules et leurs variétés,, 1924, "...by using

the imported buff variety, by various crosses the other four varieties have been obtained that are currently bred: black, cuckoo, white, partridge". This proves the rapid distortion of facts in the course of time and geographical distance.

- At least one other bantam breed, the Booted bantam, took part in the creation of the first European Cochin bantams (and two, if we count in the Nankin bantam).

The years 1860-1900 were indeed fundamental to the creation and development of Cochin bantams, which, over a period of 40 years, grew from an unknown breed into one of the most sought-after bantams in Europe, next to the Sebright Bantams and Rosecomb bantams, and in five basic colours: black, white, buff, cuckoo and partridge.

In 1902, in his book 'The New Book of Poultry' L. Wright already adds the porcelain colour.

Below: A pair of American Cochin bantams in 1903. From: Bantam fowl, T.F. Mc GREW, 1903



A PAIR OF BLACK COCHIN BANTAMS.

Based on this data, we can again establish the truth had changed, yet again shedding light on the origins of Cochin bantams/Pekins in Europe. But do not forget that the European history of Cochin bantam is undoubtedly short compared with its long history in the Asian continent.

On this last point, we must recognize that in 2012 we know little more than in the late 19th century and probably even less, because the officers of the British Army and the American or European traders of that time undoubtedly had a chance to see at least some real Cochin bantams in their country of origin.

So let us be glad, there is still plenty of work for the fanciers, such as detailed analysis of rare writings of people from the past, poultry connoisseurs or not, but

also by taking advantage of the new research methods made possible by globalization.

Especially the opening up of today's China creates opportunities to examine old Chinese prints and writings. So why not plan a study trip by the Club for Bantam Breeders of France, or by the Club of Cochin and Cochin bantams, searching for the "lost Cochin bantam - that may not be there anymore, or is it still present . ?

In an attempt to be the most comprehensive on the subject of 'origin', it does not seem unreasonable to ask yourself if - before the English soldiers and merchants - the hardened Dutch sailors possibly could have been the first to import the more or less archaic Cochin Bantam into Europe, where they were then in the Netherlands developed under the name Booted Bantam and Uccle Bearded Bantam?



*Left: Sabelpoot bantam cockerel.
Photo: Rupert Stephenson.*



*Right: Uccle Bearded Bantam pullet.
Photo: Aviculture Europe.*

A bold question - or for some, even heresy, because in fact it is of course true that the Cochin bantam is full and round where the Booted bantam is just slender, but could this not simply be the result of two different lines of selection of common ancestors? Also, a study of the writings of sailors, adventurers and Dutch traders might be useful, in view of a forgotten book.

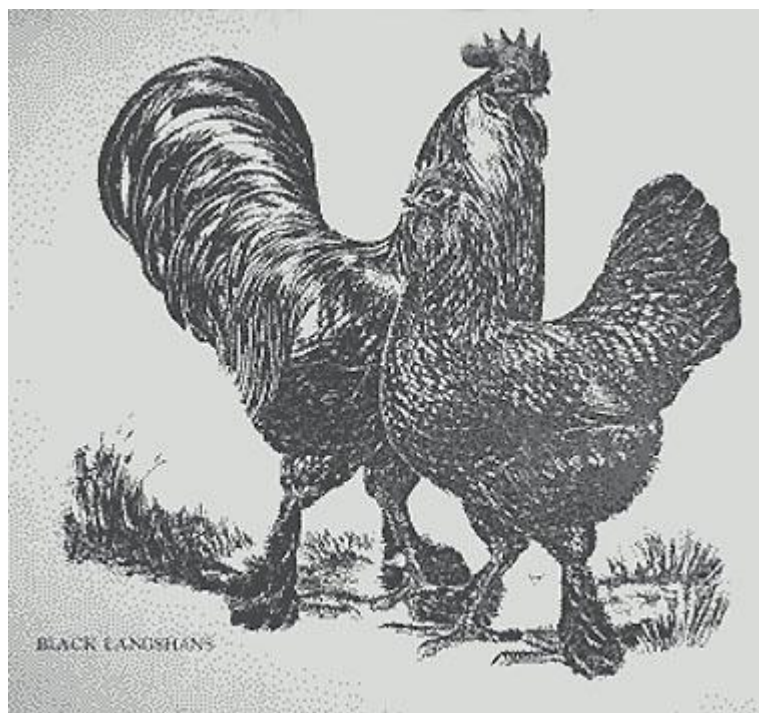
To get a clearer picture on this issue, another way of knowledge is open to us by modern science through a comparative study of molecular biology of the genome of these three breeds to research (and even date) a possible common origin.

Such a - technically quite possible - study would also be interesting to compare the genome of the Cochin Bantams / Pekins with Large Cochins (ex Shanghai) but also with that of the Croad Langshans, of which the famous English author and poultry breeder Lewis Wright (1838-1905) tells us that they are actually very close to the archaic type of the first Cochins ...



Left: A Large Cochin rooster in 2011. Photo: Bobo Athes.

Below: A pair of Langshans in 1880.



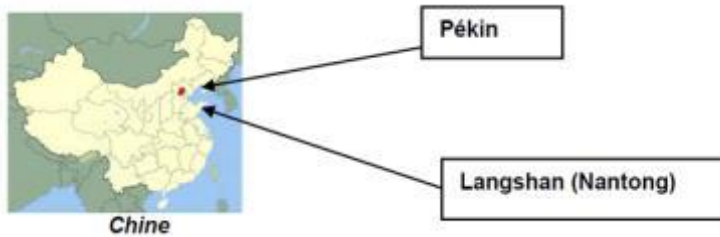
Left: Croad Langshan cock and his hens in 2008. Photo: British Croad Langshan Club - Archives AE.



The techniques of molecular biology are now routine in many university laboratories. The first step of the SCAF (French Poultry Association), the BCF (Bantam Club France) and the French Cochin Club (PSC) to veterinary schools or agricultural engineers would undoubtedly provide opportunities for this ambition - via the proposal of an interesting topic of a Thesis.

All this actually deserves an objective analysis above any mere discussion between breeders. It's not so crazy to dare to imagine a phylogenetic link between the large breeds Langshan and Cochin, and the bantam varieties Booted Bantam and Cochin Bantam... and why not an original Chinese link between the large Cochin and the Cochin Bantam in one way or another. (Let's not forget that the large breeds are giants compared to their wild ancestors, and not vice versa.)

It is rather confusing to note that the Langshan monastery where Major FT Croad of the British army in 1872 saw the first animals of this breed, is located in North-East China, not far from Beijing/Pekin...



If these connections or original relationships were true, they legitimize the subsequent crossings made by Entwisle.

Sources:

Books, for the greater part to download on one of the following two websites, for free and legally:

American libraries: <http://www.archive.org/details/americana>

Google books: http://books.google.fr/advanced_book_search

Old books, Poultry, general

B.MOUBRAY et J.LAWRENCE« *Moubrays treatrise on domestic and ornamental poultry, A practical guide*, 1854, UK

C.JACQUES, « *Le poulailler, monographies des poules exotiques et indigènes* », 1858

W .WINGFIELD , C.W.HNSON , "*Poultry Book* », 1861, UK

L.WRIGHT, "*The new book of poultry*" 1902, UK

A.BLANCHON, DELAMARRE DE MONCHAUX, monographie « *Toutes les poules et leurs variétés* », 1924, F

SHLEWER " *Wright's Book of Poultry*", 1921, UK

Old books, especially on Bantam Fowl

H.H.STODDARD, "*The book of the Bantams*", 1886, USA

W.F.ENTWISLE, "*Bantams*", 1894, UK

P.PROUD, "*Bantams as a hobby*" 1900, UK

T.F.Mc GREW, "*Bantam fowl* », 1903, USA

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