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Research Article

AFRICAN AND DRAVIDIAN ORIGINS OF THE MELANESIANS

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ABSTRACT
The Melanesians are assumed to be a relic population of the Pacific, that probably made their way to Oceania shortly after the Out of Africa event. The toponymic, archaeological, craniometric and pan-African genomic evidence indicate that the Melanesians probably came to Oceania from Africa and Southeast (SE) Asia 4kya.

Keywords: *Haplogroup, Melanoid, Toponym, Haplotype, Oceania, Craniometric*

INTRODUCTION
Controversy surrounds the origin of the low-land Melanesians. Some researchers believe Melanesians are a "relic" population of Oceania, who share craniometric features related to the Australians (Fredlaender *et al.,* 2007; Reyes-Centeno *et al.,* 2014). These researchers believe that the Melanesians may date back to shortly after the out of Africa (OoA) exit 60kya.
Coastal Melanesians usually show phenotypical features commonly found among Africans and Dravidians (Winters, 2013). Although, Melanesians share phenotypical features with Africans and Dravidians researchers claim that Melanesians and Africans are not genetically related. In this paper we will explore the relationship between Melanesian and Dravido-African populations and determine if the Melanesians are a "relic" population related to the Australians.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
A collection of archaeological, craniometric and genomic evidence from Africa, India and Oceania was analyzed for this study. The primary purpose of this study is to determine if a genetic relationship exist between African, Dravidian and Melanesians.
A database of mtDNA and y-chromosome haplotypes from modern populations in Africa, India and Oceania was constructed using published data. Using published haplogroup data from the same populations in this study a database of haplogroup frequencies was built.

RESULTS
Craniometric and DNA evidence support a late Neolithic colonization of Oceania by African and Dravidian populations. This migration went through mainland East Asia and Southeast Asia onto the Pacific Islands.
Reyes-Centeno *et al.,* (2014) model hypothetical geographical migration routes out of Africa (OoA). These researchers maintain that cranial shape and genetic polymorphisms indicate Australo-Melenesian populations as representative of isolated early population dispersal.
Although this is the view of Reyes-Centeno *et al.,* (2014) there is no archaeological or genetic evidence which suggest that the Melanesians represent a "relic" population.
Reyes-Centeno *et al.,* (2014) fails to recognize that there is a craniometric difference between Australoids/Australians, Mongoloids (Polynesians) and Melanoids; craniometric differences that indicate two migrations of the Black Variety: Australians and Melanesians into the Pacific. Tsuenehiko Hanihare (2005) discussed the phenotypic variations between these populations.
The Australian aborigines and Melanesians show cranial variants and represent two distinct Black populations. There is no denying that the Australians probably represent a "relic" population relating to an early OoA event during the late Pleistocene, but the craniometrics, archaeological and toponymic evidence indicate a fairly recent migration of Melanesians into Oceania (Winters, 2013).

The Australoids or Australians live mainly in Australia and the highland regions of Oceania. The Melanoid people on the otherhand live in the coastal regions of Near Oceania and Fiji. Laubenfels (1968) discussed the variety of Blacks found in Asia. Laubenfiels (1968) explained that Negroids/Melanoids such as the Tasmanians are characterized by wooly black hair and sparse body hair.

Laubenfels (1968) argues that the Australians are remnants of the original African migration to the region 60kya. Australoids or Australians on the otherhand have curly, wavy or straight hair and abundant body hair. Other differences between these Black populations include Negroid / Melanoid brows being vertical and without eyebrow ridges, whereas Australoid brows are sloping and with prominent ridges.

This view is supported by Bulbeck (2008) who found that the Australian craniometrics are different from the Mongoloid (Polynesian), and Melanoid craniometrics. This research indicates that whereas Australian aborigine crania agree with the archaic population of Asia and first group of Africans to exit Africa, they fail to correspond to the Sahulland crania which are distinctly of Southwest Pacific or Melanoid affinity (Bulbeck, 2008; Laubenfels, 1968).

This led Pietrusewky (1989, 2005) to recognize two separate colonizations of the Pacific by morphologically distinct populations one Polynesian and the other Melanesian. The research indicates a clear separation between Australian and Melanesian populations (Chang, 1964; Laubenfels, 1968).

The MRCA of the Melanesian originally lived on the East Asian mainland (Pietrusewky, 2005; Winters, 2013). Pietrusewky (1989, 2005) believes the Melanesians are associated with cultivati on of millet at Yangshao and Longshan. The Melanesians were forced off the mainland by the mongoloid people of Anyang Shang (Winters, 2013). This is supported by Lapita skeletal remains, that lack the characteristic 9bp deletion of the Polynesians, but show Melanesian similarities (Pietrusewky, 1989).

The ancestors of the Melanesians and Polynesians probably lived in East Asia (Chang, 1964). The late appearance of Melanoid people from East Asia on the shore areas of Oceania would explain the differences between the genetic makeup of Melanesians living in the highlands and Melanesians living along the shore (Kayser *et al.,* 2008).

The skeletal evidence from East Asia suggests that the TMRCAs of the Polynesians and some of the coastal Melanesians may be mainland East Asia, not Taiwan (Weidenreich, 1938; Chang, 1986). The ancestral population for the shoreline Melanesians was probably forced from East Asia by Proto-Polynesians as they were pushed into Southeast Asia by the Han or contemporary Chinese (Winters, 1985). This would explain the genetic diversity existing among shoreline Melanesians, in comparison to the genetic homogeneity among isolated inland Melanesian, like the Highland New Guineans (Kayser *et al.*, 2008).

The first dynasty of China was Xia (She-ya). The Xia civilization of ancient China. lasted from 2205 to 1766 B.C. According to the Chinese book Guben zhu Shu zhi Nien, the Xia dynasty "from Yu to Zhieh had seventeen kings... and lasted 471 years" (Chang 1987).

The first two civilizations of ancient China were founded by Dravidian and Manding speaking people who had formerly lived in Africa (Winters, 1985, 1986). As a result the substratum languages in many languages spoken in the Pacific are of Manding and Dravidian origin (Winters, 2013).

The Xia Dynasty is considered the first dynasty of the *sandai* (three Dynasties) of ancient China: Xia, Shang and Zhou. There are many references to the Xia people. The Xia people were recognized as westerners, because they settled the middle Yellow river region of China. As a result they were called the Hua Xia "the middle states people". The people who founded the Xia Dynasty were Manding speaking people who had founded the Elamite civilization in Iran (Winters, 1985). This suggest that the MRCA of the Melanesian speakers were probably Manding and Dravidian speakers who formerly lived in East Asia (Winters, 1985, 2013)

The Chinese histories tell us much about the Xia Dynasty. According to Chinese tradition the Xia built their settlements near rivers, lakes and streams. The Xia Dynasty is mentioned in the oracle bone records. The Chinese called the Xia*: li min* “black people”.

There were two Shang Dynasties, one Melanoid or Dravidian speaking (Qiang-Shang) and the other Proto-Polynesian (Yin-Shang). The first Shang Dynasty was founded by Proto-Melanesians or Melanoids

who predominately spoke Tamil. These Melanoid people in the Chinese literature belonged to the *Yueh* tribe that was also called *Qiang* (Winters, 1985). The *Qiang* lived in Qiangfeng, a country to the west of Yin-Shang, Shensi and Yunnan provinces (Chang, 1964; 1987, Winters, 1986).

The archaeological evidence also indicates that the Polynesians probably originated in East Asia. In the old ethnographic literature the Polynesians/Indonesians/Vietnamese, and etc., were called "classical mongoloid" due to their shorter stature than the mongoloid people of China, Mongolia and Korea (Chang, 1964). The Proto-Polynesians were pushed mainly into Yunnan province, Southeast Asia, Indonesia and on to the Pacific Islands by the *Hua* (contemporary mongoloid people of China and Korea) (Winters, 1985, 1986). Consequently, the Polynesian migration to the Pacific probably began in East Asia, not Southeast Asia.

Taiwanese genetically probably belongs to the early Polynesians who settled Taiwan before they expanded into outer Oceania. Taiwanese origin tales claim the Island was first inhabited by *negrito* or *pygmy* people.

Given the archaeological record of intimate contact between Proto-Polynesians and Proto-Melanoids, in East Asia (Chang, 1964), neither a "slow boat" or "express train" explains the genetic relationship between the Melanesian and Polynesian or 'classical mongoloid" populations (Winters, 1986). This record makes it clear that these populations lived in intimate contact for thousands of years (Chang, 1964, 1987), and during this extended period of interactions both groups probably exchanged genes.

Most of the low-land Melanesian inhabitants of Oceania are of Dravido-African origin (Winters, 2013), the highland people are probably of Australian origin. The Melanesians made their way eastward from Africa through India, to Southeast Asia, southern China, and Indonesia on to the islands in the Pacific. Some of these Islands, like Taiwan may have been originally settled by negrito people.

The Dravidians and Manding people originated in Africa. They belonged to the C-Group culture of Nubia (Winters, 2007). After 3000 BC they began to migrate out of Africa into Eurasia (Winters, 2008).

The languages of Dravidian and African speakers are genetically related (Winters, 2007, 2008). The Dravidians and Africans also share genes (Winters, 2008b, 2010, 2010b).

Due to the Dravido-African origin of the MRCA of the Melanesian, there are genetic markers which point to a relationship between the Fijians and Africans. In Table 1, we see the shared Afro-Dravido y-Chromosomes. Merriwether *et al.*, (n.d, 2005) for example noted that haplogroup E-M78 appears in New Guinea, while haplogroup E-M2 has been found in New Guinea, Near Oceania and Northwestern most Micronesia.

Cordaux *et al.*, (2003) found E-M35 in Africa and the Pacific. In addition, Merriwether (1994) observed that Africans and Asians share the T-->C transition at nt position 16189 and the D-loop sequence of nts 15975 to 00048.

Africans and Fijians share the Y-Chromosome K-M9.The K haplogroup is found in Africa and Oceania.

The common Fijian Y-chromosome is M-M4; it exist as derived subgroup M-P34 of Melanesians. Both of these genes are found among Africans as noted by Wood *et al.*, (2005).

Table 1: Shared Y-Chromosome Ocenia and Africa

Haplogroup	Oceania	Africa	Author
K-M9	X	X	Cordaux,2003
M-M4	X	X	"
E-M2	Northwestern Micronesia, New Guinea	X	Merriwether, n.d.
E-35	New Guinea, Near Oceania	X	Cordaux,2003
E-M78	New Guinea	X	Cordaux,2003

The mtDNA M clade is the best genetic marker of the connection between Africans and Melanesians. The M1 haplogroup is a member of the M macrohaplogroup. M1 is a sister haplogroup to Haplogroup D, one of the major Asian subgroups in Macrohaplogroup M.

In Table 2, we see the defining control region mutations for African Dravidian and Oceanian haplotypes. The shared haplotypes correspond to the L3(M/Q) haplogroups. These haplotypes are predominately the pan-African haplotypes: 16129,16223,16189 and 16311.

Table 2: Definining control region mutations for African,Dravidian and Oceanian Haplotypes

Haplogroups	HVS1 (add 16000)
M	129 241 311
M1	129 189 249 311
M27a	223 048 077T 172 311 320 189 136
M28a	223 148 468 362 086 129 320
M29a	223 189 311
M29'Q	129 241
Q1	223 148 265 343
D4	223 189 129 311 249

The M, N, and R macrohaplogroups are found throughout East and South and Southeast Asia, the Andaman Islands and Africa (Cabrera *et al.,* 2004).

Haplotypes with HVSI transitions defining 16129-16223-16249-16278-16311-16362; and 16129-16223-16234-16249-16211-16362 have been found in Thailand and among the Han Chinese (Fucharon *et al.,* 2001), these haplotypes were originally thought to be members of Haplogroup M1. However, on the basis of currently available FGS sequences, carriers of these markers have been found to be in the D4a branch of Haplogroup D, the most widespread branch of M1 in East Asia (Fucharon *et al.,* 2001; Gondor *et al.,* 2006; Yao *et al.,* 2002). The transitions 16129, 16189, 16249 and 16311 are known to be recurrent in various branches of Haplogroup M, especially M1 and D4. Gonder *et al.,* (2006) for example, noted that the mtDNAs of Tanzanians belonging to haplogroup M1 cluster with peoples from Oceania**.**

Discussion

The Shang literature makes it clear that the Yueh and other people living in Southern China possessed watercraft (Ling, 1970). In the Shang Oracle writing the term for boat was ba, and outrigger canoe (two canoes connected together) was fang (Ling, 1970). The double canoe was popular in Fiji up to 1913 (Ling, 1970). The Shang term for boat ba (fa), agrees with the Polynesian words for boat pahi, and pae.

The Yin or Polynesian type is associated with the Austronesian speakers (Chang, 1967; Winters, 1986).. The Austronesian or "Oceanic classical Mongoloid" type was called Yin, Feng, Yen, Zhiu Yi and Lun Yi (Winters, 1985, 1986). The Yin established the second Shang Dynasty at Anyang, China.

During the Anyang-Shang period, the *Qiang* or Proto-Melanesian people were often referred to as the *Ta Qiang* "many Qiang" (Chang, 1980). The Qiang were used as agricultural workers on Yin farms, and used in Yin-Shang ancestral rites as sacrifice victims (Chang, 1980).

The intimate relations between Proto-Polynesians and Proto-Melanesians back to Shang times in China (Chang, 1964; Winters 1985, 1986), supports the hypothesis of an ancient spread of Melanesian mtDNA among (Proto-) Polynesians. Some researchers have assumed that this genetic sharing took place in Fiji (Fredlaender, 2007), but it is more probable that the sharing of Y chromosome and mtDNA types took place in mainland East Asia. This would explain the differences between shared Asian and Melanesian haplotypes and haplogroups in the Pacific.

The Dravidians in East Asia were called *Yuehchih* or *Kuishuang* (Kushana) in Indian literature (Winters, 1986, 2013). In the Pali Chronicals and the Ramayana, the Dravidians were called *Yakshas* or *Kosars* (Winters, 1986).

Handy, a leading Oceanic ethnologist of the 1930's hypothesized that the Polynesians resulted from two "waves of migration" the first had an Indian Brahmanical culture' and the second wave coming from 'Dynastic Indo-Malaysian culture'

Polynesians and Oceanic-Dravido-Africoids practiced artificial irrigation, megalithic architecture, well developed religion and divine kingship. Matrilineal descent was part of many Pacific societies.

The people in this area practiced the Lapita culture. These folk were long distance merchants. They were mobile colonists who communicated by sea.

The ancestors of the Lapita culture were coastal *Yueh* people. The Dravidian *Yueh* people founded the Dongson culture of Southeast Asia. In Southeast Asia the Dravidians were called *Yakshas* or *Kamboja* (Winters, 1986).

The names for the Pacific islands relate to the people who lived on the islands. For example, Melanesia, means "Black Islands"; Micronesia, means "Small Islands"; and Polynesian, means "Many Islands".

The earliest Neolithic culture of the Pacific was the Lapita culture. It spread in the Pacific area between 1600-1200 B.C. (Kirch, 1980; Craib, 1983). The Lapita culture is characterized by ceramic cooking pots, bowls and dishes. The ceramics are laced with intricate horizontal bands and geometric designs (Craib 1983). The motifs on the ceramics agree with Polynesian tattoo signs.

The Lapita people ate seafood and collected nuts and fruits. The Lapita folk also had domesticated animals including pigs and chickens.

Some of the Lapita people may have been part of the megalithic culture element which invaded the Pacific area directly from Africa.

The Oceanic Dravido-Africans or Melanesians were expert seamen. Lapita culture was early established in the area of the Bismarck Archipelago. From here bearers of Lapita culture colonized Tonga and Samoa (White & Allen 1980).

The Lapita folk used the stars to navigate the Pacific. There was an extensive network of trade routes extending over 2700 Kilometers.

Yueh ethnic groups from southern China began to settle in the Pacific after 500 B.C.. These people spoke Dravidian and African languages. Between A.D. 200 to 700, *classical Mongoloids* began to dominate Eastern Polynesian. These Mongoloids are called *Yin*, in the Chinese literature, but they should not be confused with the *black Yi* ethnic groups who formerly dominated coastal China.

As the Mongoloid people began to occupy the Southeast Asian mainland, the Dravido-African populations set out by boat to settle the Polynesian islands. J. Fraser believed that Hawaiian art gained much of its inspiration from India (Bellwood, 1979). He felt that Polynesia had first been settled by Black races from India. E.S. Handy had a theory that the first settlers of the Polynesian islands were Dravidians (Winters, 1986). The linguistic evidence supports this theory in many ways.

Figure 1: FPN and WAPN

The Dravidian languages are closely related to languages spoken in the Pacific. For example in 1919, Schmidt in Die Gleederung der Australischen Sprachen, presented evidence which pointed to a connection between Dravidian languages and the Australian languages. This theme was also discussed by N.M. Holmes in On the History and Structure of the Australian Languages, he illustrated that the grammar and phonetics of Australian and Dravidian languages coincide.

We find many toponyms in Oceania that corresponds to West African and Indian place names. In Figure 1, we see 36 place names from Oceania and West Africa that share full correspondence (Winters, 1986). In Figures 2, 4 and 6, we see that the, Manding language, which is spoken in West Africa, share many terms with the, Polynesian and Melanesian languages. These cognate terms include the names for kinship, dwellings, topographical features, dwellings and utensils. Many of these terms were taken to East Asia by the Manding people who founded the Xia civilization of ancient China (Winters, 1985).

Many of these place names were discovered by Page (1988), he provides the most interesting data supporting a recent migration of Melanesians to the Pacific. Page (1988) has found numerous Pacific toponyms that are of West African origin. Toponyms found in the Pacific, especially on Fiji indicate that many Melanesians came from Africa. These place names can be divided into place names that are made up of African ethnic names (AEN) as roots for Fijian place names (FPN), and Fijian place names that are identical to place names in West Africa (Page, 1988). The fact that most Niger-Congo speakers did not enter West Africa until after 2000BC, make it clear that for these terms to appear in the Pacific, the people planting these toponyms in the Pacific did not reach the region until somewhere between 3.5-4kya.

These toponyms include a multitude of hills, streams and villages composed of a simple AEN root plus a Fijian placenames e.g.,koro, wai-ni-, vatu and na-, as illustrated in Figure 2. Page (1988) found 270 AEN's forming part of Fijian place names (FPN). The interesting fact about the AEN and FPN cognates is that they are found in West Africa and not East Africa (Page, 1988).The fact that the AENs that are FPN's are prefixed to a multitude of hills, streams and villages" indicate that these place names are very old because the names for hills and streams are rarely changed.

The earliest Austronesian language speakers appeared on the mainland around 6000 years ago. The original Austronesian speakers were probably *negrito* or *pygmy* people. Except for Formosa/Taiwan, there are no Austronesian speakers on the mainland today (Bellwood 1991). The people in Taiwan claim the original inhabitants were pgymies or *negritos.* Benedict (1990) a specialist in Austronesian languages sees a relationship between the Austronesian and Thai languages.

It should be remembered that the ancient Chinese called the Austronesians or *classical mongoloid people*: Yin. The first Austronesian sites in Southeast Asia and southern China include the Qlinglingkang culture. The antiquity of this culture suggest that it was founded by *negritos*.

Here 6000 years ago negrito people made stone knives and pottery and raised cattle and pigs. Other Austronesian ancient sites include Dapenkeng, Longshanoid, Hoabinhian and Yuanshan. (Chang 1987, Bellwood 1990) The ancient Austronesians cultivated rice, millet, yams and sugarcane (Bellwood 1990, p.92).

Although the *negritos* probably founded the Longshanoid and Yuanshan sites, the most important influence on the Neolithic cultures of the Pacific, was introduced by the Lapita culture people who probably spoke Dravido-African languages. This is obvious when we look at the culture terms used by people in contemporary Oceania.

In Figure 3, we see cognate Mande and Melanesian terms. These terms suggest that the words for vase, pot, arrow cattle/ox and fish are of Manding (African) origin. The Manding or Mande languages are spoken in West Africa.

It would also appear that the Polynesians learned agriculture from the Manding as illustrated below:

Polynesian English Manding

****talun fallow, land daa***
****tanem to plant, sow daa***
****suluq torch, jet of flame suu***
****kuDen cooking pot,bowl ku***

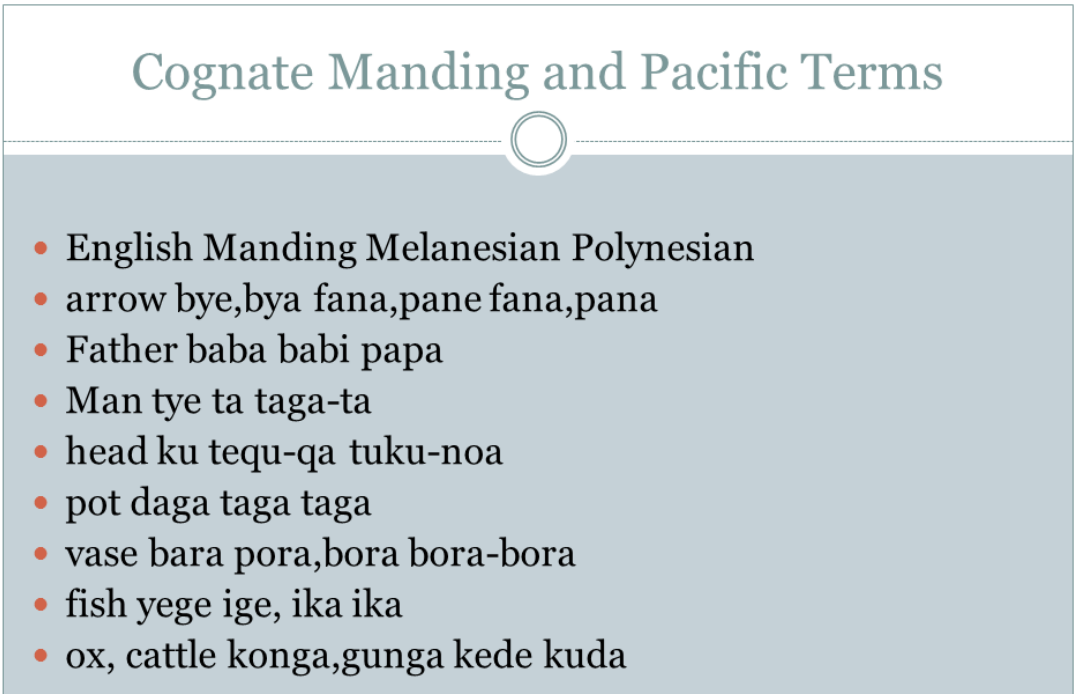

Figure 3: Cognate terms from Mande and Melanesian terms

In Figure 4, we can see that there is a close relationship between the Austronesian /Polynesian, Manding and Tamil culture terms:
The cognition of these languages is not surprising given the affinity between the Dravidian languages in spoken Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and the fact that the Manding founded the Xia dynasty.

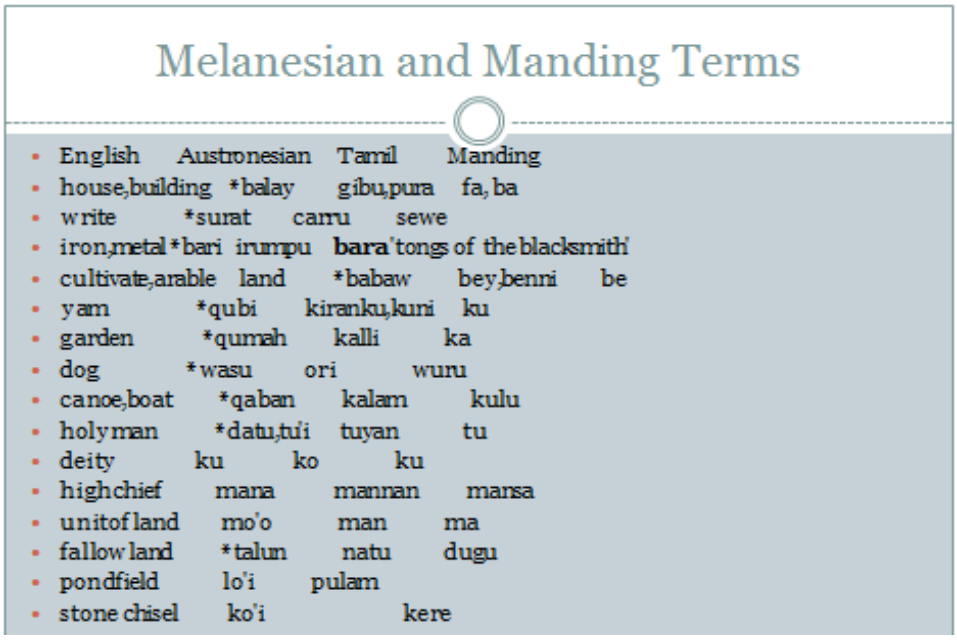

Figure 4: Melanesian and Manding terms

The presence of cognate Melanesian and Manding terms in the Pacific should not be surprising because Manding speakers helped found the Xia dynasty in China, and would have been among the ethnic groups

pushed into south China and thence the Pacific islands by the mongoloid peoples after 500 B.C Other Manding may have settled the islands before then as explorers given the persistence of Manding terms agreeing with Pacific island place names.

The Austronesian speakers built the earliest sea going canoes and were great fishermen. During their spread from the mainland to the Islands, they took along tubers and fruits. Cereal plant cultivation was not taken with these sea-voyagers as they occupied the islands in Micronesia and Polynesia (Bellwood 1979).

These ancient folk made their homes atop mounds and used irrigation to grow the crops. They used stone and wooden tools.

Black Austronesians are credited with inventing outrigger canoes and even the Chinese Junk and Sampan (Ling 1970, p.211).

There are also many West African placenames in India and the Pacific (Winters, 2013). A recent article on Nigerian place names found in India was published by Dr. R. Balakrishnan (2005). Dr. Balakrishnan found almost 500 Nigerian placenames, and 46 tribal names in Koraput, India; and 110 ethnonyms of Koyas in Nigeria. This led Dr. Balakrishnan (2005) to declare that :"However, the overwhelming evidence available from the toponymic corpuses of Koraput and Nigeria, and ethnonyms, surnames and personal names of Koyas seem more adequate to propose an African origin to the Koyas, the Dravidian speakers" (p.177).

Page (1988) noted the numerous African place names in the Pacific as seen in Figure 1. The Dravidians also took many place names to Oceania. In Figure 5, we see that many of these place names are also found in Africa.

In Figure 5 we see Dravidian placenames in Oceania. It is interesting that these common place names for Oceania and India, are related to urban centers. It suggest that Dravidian speakers probably founded many towns in Oceania.

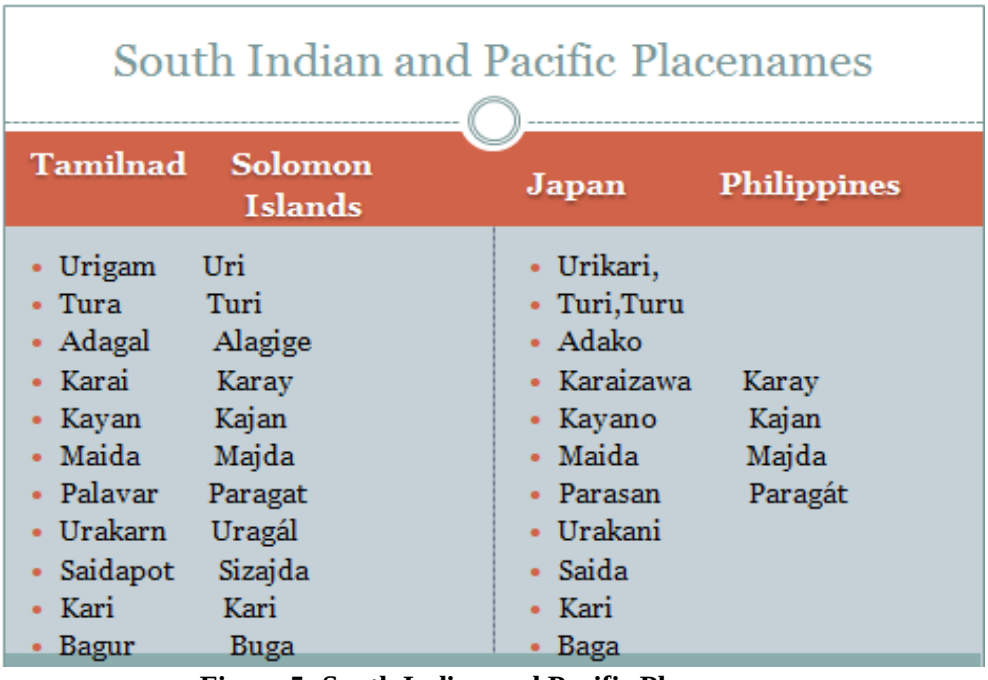

Figure 5: South Indian and Pacific Placenames

Among the cognate Dravidian (Tamilnad) and Pacific place names there are ten common prefixes for these toponyms Ada,Kana,Karu, szu, tala, tom and vara. The suffixes are very interesting because they indicate city or market, i.e., vara, ur-, ar-, and ra/i.

In Figure 6 we a list some of the Melanesian and Manding terms.

Figure 6: Austronesian, Tamil and Manding Culture terms

This clearly illustrates an African influence over Oceanian agriculture. This was especially true for high garden, yam, arable land, and canoe as illustrated in Figure 6. In the Figure 6, you will also notice that the terms for deity, holy man and chief are related to Tamil and Manding religious and political terms.

It is interesting to note that we find Koya place names in Nigeria, and Nigerian place names on the East Coast of India (Balakrishnan, 2005), compare favorably to place names throughout the Pacific (see: Figures 1,3,5) and Nigerian place names and surnames in Japan. This shows a direct spread of West African place names from Africa, across the Indian Ocean into the Pacific. The discovery of common place names in three different regions cannot be accounted by coincidence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the crania dating to the first OoA exit has Australian characteristics and support an early migration of this group into the Pacific. The craniometric and archaeological evidence indicates that the Melanesians are not a "relic" population in the Pacific.

The genetic evidence indicates that the Melanesians share many pan-African mtDNA genes including 16189, 16223, and 16311 and y-chromosome haplogroups. Cognate place names in Africa, India and Oceania shows a direct spread of place names from Africa, across the Indian Ocean into the Pacific. The discovery of common place names in three different regions cannot be accounted by coincidence.

There is gene flow to Australia, in addition to the existence of the pan-African haplotypes among Oceanians, that support an involvement of the Dravidians in seafaring around the time the Lapita culture expanded into the Pacific. Pugach *et al.*, (2013) found evidence of Dravidian gene flow from India to Australia. This gene flow dates back to 4230ya (years ago). This would correspond to the Lapita migration from mainland East and Southeast Asia into Oceania.

Around the estimated time for Dravidian gene flow into Australia we find new tools and the *dingo* dog in the fossil record (Pugach *et al.*, 2013). The DNA for the dingo is of SE Asian origin, but morphologically the dingo resembles Indian dogs.

In summary, the Lapita culture originated in East and SE Asia. It was founded by the Yueh and Kamboja Dravidian speaking tribes (Winters, 1986). The Melanesian or Dravido-African skeletal remains dating back to the Lapita culture, shared DNA and y-Chromosomes, and cognate Melanesian and West African place names suggest a recent migration of Melanesians from Africa and East Asia into the Pacific. The

late entry of the Melanesians into the Pacific would explain the genetic differences between Near Oceania coastal inhabitants (Fredlaender *et al.*, 2007), and the Oceania Highlanders who usually show Australian physical features.

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