The Austronesians in Madagascar and on the East African coast

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surveying the linguistic evidence for domestic and translocated animals

References to the pigs

Summary

The Malagasy language is generally linked to the Barito languages of Borneo and recent research sugges occurred in the 7th century or thereabouts, impelled by the expansion of the Srivijaya Malay. This is in line with the current archaeological dates for settlement in Madagascar which fall within the period 5-7th centuries AD. The role of the Malay in this process, as the protagonists with experience of open ocean voyaging may well explain why Malagasy terms in this lexical field are all Malay borrowings. However, this does not fully explain the evidence for Austronesian presence on the East African coast, as textual and other evidence suggests that there were contacts around 0 AD. Trying to develop a single model to account for the late dates of settlement on Madagascar, and the rather different nature of evidence for the East African coast has proven difficult, and it is here proposed that the reason is that the two migrations were essentially unrelated. Austronesian navigators were crossing the Indian Ocean prior to 0 AD, probably for trading reasons but may have come from a different region, perhaps the Philippines. There is no direct linguistic evidence for this, but cultural evidence is presented in Blench (1994). The original settlers on Madagascar seem not to have transported domestic animals directly and therefore carried a memorised terminology to apply to animals they encountered on the island itself. Interactions between human populations has allowed the interchange and re-application of vocabulary, such that Bantu words have entered Malagasy and Austronesian terms have now spread into Bantu languages. Recent zoogeographic research suggests the translocation of domestic and wild species across the Mozambique Channel and between the islands. An intriguing example of this is the Malagasy name for the wild pig, lambo, which reflects Austronesian names for ?bovine?. Given the importance of pigs in Austronesian culture, such a replacement may seem surprising, but it seems that the ancestors of the Malagasy transported very large wild pigs from the African mainland as a food source, and these seemed more comparable to cattle than pigs. In the meantime, the importation of mainland cattle brought the Bantu name ?ombe, which replaced exist Austronesian terms. The term lambo, in turn spread to Shimaore, the Bantu language of Mayotte, where it is applied to the dugong.

The complete paper can be downloaded here. Malagasy domestic animal terminology for indications of historical interactions between populations. Surprisingly, almost all names for domestic animals are borrowed from languages of the coastal Bantu and Austronesian traces are found only in fossil forms. This may reflect the nature of the voyage; if the navigators were using the Equatorial current to cross the Indian Ocean without staging points, then it may not have been possible to keep domestic animals on the journey.

Hereabove are introduced references about the case of
pigs
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Pig

The history of the domestic pig in Africa is highly controversial (Blench 2000). Conventional wisdom has it that the pig was domesticated in the Near East around 9000 BP and also in Asia at a similar date, as the ancestral wild forms are separated by more than half a million years (Jones 1998; Giuffra et al. 2000). Larson et al. (2005) use mtDNA sequences from wild boar to argue for multiple domestications across the entire range of the pig. Crossbreeding European with Asian pigs in the nineteenth century has blurred the genetic picture and since both types were brought to Africa, the overall picture is very mixed. The ancestor of the Eurasian pig, Sus scrofa, is native to north Africa, and its range extends along the Atlantic coast. The Maghreb race is sometimes known as Sus scrofa barbarus and there was in addition a Saharan race known as sahariensis (Epstein 1971, I:314). Pig populations were found from northwest Africa to the Nile Valley, down the Nile and into the Ethio-Sudan borderlands. Whether they spread any further into Sub-Saharan Africa is still in doubt; Murdock (1959) considered that evidence for cultural embedding made it likely that there were old populations of pigs in various parts of the continent. This is possible but has yet to be confirmed by archaeozoology. Domestic pigs are also reported from ninth century Natal (Plug 1996).

One of the more surprising pig populations in Africa are the feral pigs on Madagascar and the Comoro islands, Potamochoerus larvatus (Vercammen et al. 1993; Kingdon 1997; Garbutt 1999). Madagascar has a modern pig industry of French inspiration, but the wild pig is apparently related to the mainland bushpig, P. larvatus. These pigs have undergone some adaptive radiation and show signs of semi-domestication, even though there is no evidence for traditional rearing of P. larvatus on the mainland. Some zoologists9 divide these Potamochoerus spp. into two subgroups; Potamochoerus larvatus larvatus from Mayotte (Comoro Is. and western Madagascar); Potamochoerus larvatus hova from eastern Madagascar. but the evidence for this is disputed. Jori (op. cit.) gives the lamboala and lambosui for the two races recognised on the island; but this is not confirmed by the dictionaries.

The Malagasy bushpigs appear to be most closely related to the southern African form P.l. koiropotamus, which currently ranges from mid-Tanzania southwards. This suggests that they originally came from somewhere between the central Tanzanian coast and the Cape. If this is correct, then the ancestors of the Austronesian migrants who reached Madagascar may have captured wild pigs on the African mainland, transported them to Madagascar, and made an attempt to domesticate them. Certainly the Malagasy pigs must have been translocated from the mainland at some point in the past by populations with experience of pig production. Presumably the introduction to the Comores was from western Madagascar, more recently still. Rather than comparing them to pigs, they gave the feral Potamochoerus the name for bovines familiar from their home island. Perhaps their large size compared with the island pigs of SE Asia may have inspired this analogy with cattle.

Pigs are a highly typical Austronesian domestic species (e.g. Lynch 1991) it would seem likely they were carried to Madagascar with their names. But it seems that the Austronesian migrants were not transporting domestic pigs and that furthermore there were no mainland pigs to be adopted into their subsistence systems. Proto-Austronesian is *babuy, which presumably applied originally to the wild pig, Sus taivanus, on Formosa, where Paiwan has vavuy, ?wild pig?. At the level of Malayo-Polynesian, the need to distinguish ?wild? and ?domestic? became evident and PMP has *babuy halas for ?wild pig? and babuy banua for the domestic type. Somewhat inconsistently, there is another PAN term for domestic pig, *beRek, reflected, for example, as Puyuma verek (Ferrell 1969). Blust (2002) suggests the following explanation, ?It now appears likely that the meanings of PAn *babuy and *beRek were not complementary, but partially overlapping: *beRek meant ?domesticated pig?, while *babuy meant ?pig? in general, with qualification where needed?. In other words, rather than a distinction between wild and domestic, the contrast is between specific and generic.

There is no trace of a typical Bantu root for domestic pig, such as is attested in Comorian. Proto-Bantu for pig is *gU$ dU$ bè, which is found widely across the Bantu zone. The domestic pig may therefore have arrived late in many parts of Madagascar, as it is known by a loanword, kisoa, from French cochon. Table 5 shows the terms for 'pig' and ?wild boar? in Malagasy and

Comorien lects;

The Masikoro term, mous, is only given in de Flacourt (Ferrand 1905:84) and its origin is obscure. An intriguing etymological problem is the #puruku root, which resembles Portuguese porco, pig, and is asserted to be the source of the typical Comorian forms. However, the Sakalava also apply it to ?wild boar?, which would presumably have been familiar to the Sakalava long before the Portuguese incursions. Another candidate might be the rather similar Austronesian root. Blust (2002:93) observes ?Finally, PAn *beRek ?domesticated pig? became Proto-Oceanic *boRok ?pig?, a form which would better account for the back vowels in the Malagasy terms.

Yes