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## Stephen C. Levinson and Asifa Majid

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Email us via http://fieldmanuals.mpi.nl/contact/

Language and Cognition Group
Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics
Postbox310, 6500AH, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

# MELANESIAN KINSHIP AND CULTURE[8]
## Eva Lindström[*9]

[*]Stockholm University

**Project**         Pioneers of Island Melanesia[10]

**Task**            Two questionnaires and collection of kin terminology and marriage distances

**Goal of subproject** We want to get at ancient patterns of social <mark>organization</mark> and culture buried deep under a thick layer of Austronesian influence of much more recent origin. This can be done because in culture, as in language, features typically bundle in particular ways, and a mixed bouquet has a tale to tell. This task is designed to pick out any deviating features in particular societies to try and wrest from them their separate story of the distant past.

## Background

The Pioneers project aims to investigate the pre-Austronesian populations in Island Melanesia. This is done by collaboration among researchers representing linguistics, archaeology, biological anthropology and genetics, each adding their understanding of the remote past, as well as their scientific approach and methods, to the overall picture. This sub-project contributes the added dimension of culture and social structure to our composite understanding of the earliest Melanesians.

Kin terminology structure and other social and cultural traits cluster in particular ways on a global level, such that "disharmonic" features can be interpreted as retentions of earlier systems, resulting from shifts in key aspects (such as a change from descent reckoning in the male line to the female line). In Island Melanesia, matrilinearity is the norm today, and it is highly likely that this pattern was brought by speakers of Austronesian languages and spread to the populations they encountered when they arrived in the area around 4,000 years ago. Since matrilinearity is marked in a global perspective, there is a good chance that our pre-Austronesian populations had a different system (just as the interior of New Guinea is heavily patrilinear while areas of the coast where Austronesian languages are spoken have matrilinear systems). The idea is that the ancient systems will show up as partial deviances from the matrilinear norm (e.g. virilocal rather than uxorilocal post-marital settlement, particular aspects of kin term systems etc.).[11]

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[8] The first questionnaire in this task appeared in the 2003 manual (slightly modified for this year)

[9] A collaboration with Pioneers of Island Melanesia members – MPI contact person: Michael Dunn

[10] Others are welcome to use the Kin terms & Linearity questionnaire in their field areas but we can only promise to analyse Melanesian data at present. For other field areas, note that data from a range of societies is necessary to obtain results with this method. The Culture & Social Structure questionnaire targets Melanesia specifically.

[11] Burton, M et al. 1996, Whiting, JWM et al. 1988, and Murdock, GP (1949, 1967, 1970) provide the global data and analyses that define typical clusterings of the traits examined, against which we can identify the stray elements that point to ancient retentions.

**Research questions**

The question we want to answer in this sub-project is what can be said about the remote past of Island Melanesians based on statistical analyses of multiple features that are known "markers" of particular cultural and social systems. Can we pick up traces of earlier systems, and can we discern cultural diffusion areas and migration routes beneath the layer of Austronesian influence of the last several millennia? How does that picture tally with those that emerge from the other sub-projects, and how can they be reconciled into a single account of the deep past?

**Task**

There are two questionnaires:

1.    Culture & Social Structure        (file [MASTER-]CULTquest04.xls)
2.    Kin terms & Linearity            (file [MASTER-]KINquest04.xls)

This is motivated by the partly different analyses that will be performed on the data from the respective questionnaires (see Analysis below). A few questions recur in both questionnaires – this is unfortunate but it is better that the owner of the data fills it in twice than risking transfer errors.

The first document is essentially the same as that distributed for the field season of 2003, but with some updates and clarifications. New or altered questions have been marked with bolded numerical headings (and green shading), so that those who filled in the previous version will only have to revise those.

The second questionnaire is new for this season.

Project members will work on their field languages and with neighbouring communities, and will collect genealogies and kin term systems. For each community investigated, please:

- complete both questionnaires
- collect genealogies with kin terminology and marriage distances

Sections to do with kin terminology will be answered by the researcher based on the collected genealogy and terminology materials; other questions can be put directly to members of the language community.

Ideally, we will have data for the same language groups for the kin questionnaires as for the grammatical questionnaire (see Field Manual 2003).

In answering the questions, it is fine to write as if it's a generation or two ago, but please state in the notes field if you shift perspectives.

Collecting all the information from a community sometimes takes a full day. In other words, if you are planning to collect vocabulary or carry out other tasks as well, make sure you have enough time.

Members of the Pioneers of Island Melanesia project are referred to the members section of the project web site for the following useful supporting materials as needed:

- Kinship_Domain.doc (Levinson/Enfield; how to go about collecting)
  http://www.eastpapuan.ling.su.se/members/Kinship_Domain.doc
- SCL-kinship1.ppt (Levinson; lots of information on kinship and kin term systems, and what to collect to get a full picture)
  http://www.eastpapuan.ling.su.se/members/SCL-kinship1.ppt
- kin-systems-w-graphs.rtf (Lindström, collated off the web)
  http://www.eastpapuan.ling.su.se/members/kin-systems-w-graphs.rtf
- glossaries and other info from the web, linked from the page
  http://www.eastpapuan.ling.su.se/members/m-read.html#anth

These may be downloaded along with the questionnaire files. For genealogy collection, some A3 sheets and pens in a few different colours are useful.

On return, please submit the filled-in questionnaires to Eva Lindström (evali @ ling.su.se)

**Analysis**
Several analyses will be run on the data. The results from both forms will be analysed with cladistic and similar methods in parallel with the data from the grammatical questionnaire (Field Manual 2003). The linguistic and cultural tree structures will be compared. For some purposes, culture and language data will be run together for language groups where we have both language and culture data.

The data from the second questionnaire will further be analysed using correspondence analysis. This technique extracts similarities between variables such as the traits targeted in the questionnaire, and expresses similarity graphically as proximity. Societies can be plotted in the same space and will be shown close to the traits that define them. This questionnaire is designed to be compatible with a global sample of 351 populations analysed with the same technique (Whiting, JWM et al. 1988; Burton, M et al. 1996), on which we can draw for data on other societies in the area, and for a global background to our findings.

**Outcomes**
We hope to see non-Austronesian-speaking societies (a) cluster away from Austronesian-speaking communities, and (b) show particular relations to each other, and perhaps to particular Austronesian societies. We also want to combine those findings with those of the other participating disciplines into an integrated whole.

**References**

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Murdock, G. P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press.

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