BOUNDARIES AND IDENTITY

In the first session of the seminar scholars representing various disciplines were asked to set the cartographic boundaries for subsequent papers. Here an anthropologist, a linguist, a biogeographer and a prehistorian locate Melanesia.

Melanesian Boundaries

Definitions of people and place

ROGER M. KEESING

The linguistic point of view

S.A. WURM

Biogeographical markers

DONALD WALKER

Prehistoric movement and mapping

JACK GOLSON
DEFINITIONS OF PEOPLE AND PLACE

Roger M. Keesing

Where is Melanesia? What is Melanesia? And who are the Melanesians? It is worth pausing at the beginning of a volume on Melanesia to ask what universe we have chosen as our subject - and why. Unfortunately, the answers are not simple; but sketching them will give a useful initial orientation.

The term 'Melanesia - Black Islands', or in this case 'islands of black people' - has been with us since the French navigator Dumont d'Urville introduced it in 1832. It began to acquire a meaning in anthropology and linguistics about a century ago.

'Melanesia' as a noun is a geographical term: it refers to an area with somewhat ambiguous edges. I will come back to it. The term 'Melanesian' - as an adjective (as in 'Melanesian countries', 'Melanesian cultures', 'Melanesian languages') and as a noun ('Melanesians and Polynesians') - is more interesting historically, and more complicated.

'Melanesian', as adjective and noun, has been used both in a narrower sense and a broader sense. In its narrower sense, which emerged about a century ago in anthropological and linguistic usage, Melanesian is contrasted with 'Papuan'. 'Melanesian' in this sense referred to the languages and peoples of most of the islands east of New Guinea, across a zone extending as far as Fiji and New Caledonia. These Melanesian peoples spoke languages that were visibly related to those of Indonesia to the west and Polynesia to the east, as they were known from the philology of the time. But the languages of these Melanesians were different, and themselves diverse; and the people who spoke them, unlike Indonesians and Polynesians, had dark skin and frizzy hair. Their cultures were diverse, but had a certain commonality in economy, social organization, and in religions focussed on spirits and ghosts of the dead.

The Melanesian cultures and languages, in this sense, that were known by the turn of the century were those of Fiji, parts of the Banks Islands and New Hebrides, the southeast Solomons, some of the islands off eastern New Guinea, and the Torres Strait. Knowledge of them had come from pioneer missionary scholars (notably Cordrington and Leenhardt), administrator-scholars, and pioneers of social anthropology (notably Rivers and Haddon).

The Papuans with whom the Melanesians were contrasted inhabited the vast continental island of New Guinea (and some of the islands to the west, known from the early spice trade and Dutch sources). Little was known of the 'Papuan' peoples, but they seemed to be different (and to European eye, more 'primitive') physically and culturally, and to speak scores of
languages unrelated to one another as well as to Indonesian, Polynesian, and Melanesian.

In another, broader usage, 'Melanesian' was used to refer to all the dark-skinned, frizzly-haired peoples of Oceania (other than Aboriginal Australians), thus lumping Papuans with Melanesians. In this sense, the term can be used to refer to people, and (slightly less comfortably) to cultures - but not to languages. All the Melanesians, in this sense, had in European eyes a 'primitive' cast, physically and culturally. They lacked the centralized political systems, elaborate systems of rank, priesthoods and other elaborations that since Cook's day had stamped the Polynesians; they seemed given to internecine warfare and dark deeds of cannibalism. With the exception of some of the Fijians - who for this reason appealed to British upper class imagination (and fit uncomfortably into the 'Melanesian' category) they had no proper appreciation of hereditary rank, sanctified by deities.

Two points are worth noting about these usages. First, Melanesian-ness was in many ways negatively defined. Melanesian languages were Malayo-Polynesian (now Austronesian) languages that were not Polynesian or Indonesian. Melanesian cultures in the narrow sense, those of Melanesian-speaking peoples, were again cast in terms of what they (and those who practised them) were not. Even more negatively defined were the 'Papuans', who linguistically and culturally were the ultimate residual category, dark-skinned ' primitives' whose languages and cultures had not even the saving grace of affinity with those of Indonesia and Polynesia.

This characterization suggests a second pervasive theme: racism. Melanesians fell unfortunate heir to the racism toward dark-skinned peoples brought from Africa to the Pacific, with its associations to primitivism, black savagery and mumbo jumbo. Melanesians - and especially the Papuans, who by early stereotype could not count past five - were targets for European scorn and condescension, and projections of ideas about cannibalism and savage rites. When Polynesians practised cannibalism or human sacrifice, European apologists rose on all sides to defend their noble 'race'; when Melanesians practised cannibalism, it was a natural expression of their savagery. This racism is largely - though not, I fear, entirely - gone from Pacific scholarship. But scholars are finding that the negative lumping of 'Melanesian' and 'Papuan' no longer fit the very complicated facts. The more complex, and more fascinating, picture that is emerging in place of this rough early lumping will be set out in the papers that follow.

What, then, of 'Melanesia'? In a broad, and loose, geographical sense (as in the title Melanesia: Beyond Diversity), it remains useful. Partly, I suggest, this is because the term is ambiguous. The fuzzy and shifting boundaries of what, in a particular context, is included in 'Melanesia' will serve us well. In a particular context of political, historical or anthropological discourse, we can use it so as to include all of the island of New Guinea (and sometimes islands to the west) or to exclude Irian Jaya. We can use it to include the Torres Straits Islands in anthropological discourse, and to exclude them in referring to contemporary states. We can use 'Melanesia' to include, or exclude, Fiji. Such conceptual ambiguity, distressing as it might seem to those who imagine that scholarly categories
can or should be neatly defined, is in my view inherent in (and essential to) the way we humans (including academics) use language.

Melanesia, as a zone of the southwest Pacific between island Southwest Pacific between island Southeast Asia and Polynesia, has fuzzy edges; and Melanesia as a conceptual category with fuzzy edges, will prove usefully ambiguous as we move from context to context in the papers to follow.
THE LINGUISTIC POINT OF VIEW

S.A. Wurm

The linguistic boundaries of Melanesia are in part not very clear-cut, though it is possible in all cases to delineate at least linguistic border areas of Melanesia which are however quite fuzzy in the west and to a lesser extent in the north. Melanesia contains two types of languages, Papuan (or non-Austronesian) and Austronesian. Numerically, both from the point of view of the number of languages and from that of the numbers of speakers, the Papuan languages dominate. There are close to 750 Papuan languages in the area, but only about 400 Austronesian languages. The number of speakers of Papuan languages is over 2.9 million, whereas that of Austronesian languages is only 1.2 million with the Fijians and some Austronesian areas in the extreme western fringe of Melanesia accounting for about a third of the speakers of the Austronesian languages in Melanesia.

The Papuan languages belong to Melanesia par excellence, only in the extreme southwest of the indistinct western border region of Melanesia around Timor, Alor and Pantar they overlap to some extent into areas in which the local Austronesian languages do not quite belong to the Austronesian languages of Melanesia, but constitute languages which are to some extent transitional between the Austronesian languages of Indonesia and Melanesia. There is still the possibility that one or two hitherto unknown Papuan languages may be discovered further west - there are rumours of strange languages being located westwards in the lesser Sunda Islands. In any event, some Papuan linguistic influence appears to be present in those areas. The southern border of Melanesia in terms of Papuan languages is fairly clear-cut vis-à-vis the Australian languages, though mutual influences of the two language types across Torres Straits appear to be present. One Australian language, Mabuiag, which is spoken on the western Torres Strait Islands, shows strong influences in its basic vocabulary and its phonology from a particular Papuan language, Miriam, which is spoken on the eastern Torres Strait Islands. There is a possibility that the speakers of this western Torres Strait Islands language, who show very strong Papuan racial influence, may have been originally speakers of a Papuan language and have taken over an Australian language. In the north and east, there is no potential overlapping of Papuan languages into areas outside Melanesia.

The question arises whether the Austronesian languages of Melanesia constitute something typically Melanesian. In the eastern half of the Austronesian world, the Polynesian languages clearly form a group and are set off from other Austronesian languages through a number of features and
characteristics. The same can be said to some extent about the majority of the Austronesian languages of Micronesia which constitute another group. Only a few of the Austronesian languages of Micronesia are quite aberrant and are at present not even regarded as belonging to the Oceanic type of Austronesian languages. Disregarding these languages, the Micronesian languages can as a group be separated to some extent from the Austronesian languages of Melanesia, because they share some features largely in contrast to the latter.

In contrast to these two language groups, the Austronesian languages of Melanesia do not form a single language group and it is therefore a priori only possible on geographical grounds to speak of Melanesian Austronesian languages. In some respects, especially on the lexical level, the differences between the individual Austronesian language groups in Melanesia are sometimes greater than such differences between individual Austronesian language groups in Melanesia and Austronesian languages outside Melanesia. However, the existence of clear-cut borders of Polynesian languages in areas where they abut on Austronesian languages of Melanesia, of less clear-cut borders of Micronesian languages where they abut on the latter, and the different nature of Indonesian Austronesian languages to the west of the western geographical border area of Melanesia, makes it possible to regard the Austronesian languages of Melanesia, by way of a negative definition, as something different from all the surrounding Austronesian languages. At the same time, there are some structural features which are typical of Austronesian languages of Melanesia in general in contrast to languages of other Austronesian groups, though the borders of the distribution of such features are quite fuzzy and tenuous in some areas, especially in the west. As a non-linguistic factor, the interesting point may be mentioned that speakers of Austronesian languages of Melanesia are generally melanid, i.e. more dark-skinned than speakers of other Austronesian languages, though here again the borders of this phenomenon towards the west are very blurred.

The delineation of groups within the Austronesian languages is essentially based on the findings of comparative linguistics which takes into account mainly phonological criteria, i.e. features of sound structure. Blust (1978) established that the Austronesian languages of southern Halmahera and northwestern New Guinea constitute a transitional form between the Indonesian and Oceanic Austronesian languages, and that languages of the Moluccas constitute a further transitional form between the southern Halmahera-northwestern New Guinea languages and Indonesian languages further west. He regards the south Halmahera-northwestern New Guinea languages plus the Oceanic Austronesian languages as constituting a higher-order group which he contrasts with the Indonesian Austronesian languages further west. This results in a fuzzy, transitional border of Melanesian Austronesian languages towards the west. On phonological grounds, there is a clear border in the east between the Austronesian languages of Melanesia and those of Polynesia. In Polynesian languages, certain consonants which are separate in Austronesian languages of Melanesia, have coalesced into one type of consonant. So for instance, \( b \) and \( p \) which are distinct sounds in Austronesian languages of Melanesia and serve to distinguish between different words (as in English 'back' and 'pack') coalesce into \( p \) in Polynesian languages. In the north towards the Micronesian languages, the border is less clear-cut on this level though the Micronesian languages differ from most Austronesian languages of
Melanesia through certain phenomena in their sound structure, especially through a very high elaboration of their vowel systems. Towards the south of the Austronesian languages of Melanesia, no other Austronesian languages exist.

It has already been pointed out that on the level of lexical relationships between the Austronesian languages of Melanesia and other Austronesian languages, the borders are not clear. Fijian for instance, shows a greater sharing of lexical items with Polynesian languages than with a number of Austronesian languages of Melanesia, though phonologically and structurally, Fijian is much closer to Austronesian languages of Melanesia than to Polynesian languages. Apart from the phonological features referred to above which define the border between the Polynesian languages and the Austronesian languages of Melanesia (and Micronesia), and determine the fuzzy border area between the Austronesian languages of Melanesia and those of Indonesia, it is only on the level of some features of language structure where, with the exception of areas to the west of Melanesia, the borders between the Austronesian languages of Melanesia and other Austronesian languages are relatively well defined and on which, at the same time, the Austronesian languages of Melanesia can be regarded as constituting, to some small extent, a unit vis-à-vis other Austronesian languages. The expression of possession in Austronesian languages of Melanesia is a feature typical of them: the nouns are divided into one group of nouns indicating close possession which are provided with possessive suffixes, and another group indicating less close possession with which possession is expressed with the help of auxiliary words to which possessive suffixes are added. There are usually at least two, sometimes a few, separate auxiliary words of this kind, with one of them indicating general possession and the other one food (with the few additional categories relating for instance to drink, etc.). In Austronesian languages of Indonesia, the possessive systems are different except in areas abutting Melanesia where systems similar to the one just described are found. The Polynesian possessive system is based on different principles, whereas the Micronesian one is in essence similar to the one found in Austronesian languages in Melanesia, but the categories indicated by auxiliary words are very much more numerous than those generally found in Austronesian languages of Melanesia. At the same time, in some Austronesian languages of Melanesia, especially in the southeast, highly complex systems of the indication of possession are found which differ to some extent from the usual system found in Austronesian languages of Melanesia. Some other structural features shared by a large number of Austronesian languages of Melanesia, to some extent in contrast to other Austronesian languages, can be observed, though the borders of the distribution of such features are again unclear and their appearance can only be described as a trend – the delineation towards Micronesia is especially difficult in this respect.

To sum up, it can be said that with some reservations, it is loosely possible to say that linguistic borders between Melanesia and the surrounding areas exist though in some regions, especially in the west, and to a lesser extent in the north, these borders are very fuzzy and indeterminate.
REFERENCE

BIOGEOGRAPHICAL MARKERS

Donald Walker

GEOLOGY

The Melanesian islands are situated roughly along the border between the Australian and Pacific crustal plates. They are composed of material thrown up as a result of subduction of one plate edge beneath the other, or of continental fragments drifted into the region and modified by tectonism in it. Northward and northwestward shear at the interface between the plates also affects the positions of the islands as does local seafloor spreading within some island groups. Mainland New Guinea is formed on a fragment of continental Australian origin extended by mountain building in the present location and the resultant accumulation of extensive lowlands from the materials eroded from these highlands. Westward from New Guinea, the Asian crustal plate replaces the Pacific plate as the Australian plate's neighbour and the Indo-malaysian island arcs are, in some senses, analogous to the Melanesian islands. Perhaps the best, if somewhat arbitrary, northwestern boundary should be drawn at the limit of the contribution of Australian plate fragments to the islands; this would include Timor and cut through Sulawesi according to some geological reconstructions.

Superimposed on this basic lay-out are coral reefs and islands more-or-less recently constructed around or on top of older rocks in warm seas.

BOTANY

On the basis of similarities and differences of the floras at the generic level, the following classification can be derived (following Balgooy 1971).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Subprovince</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indomalesian</td>
<td>Malesian</td>
<td>East Malesian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Southwest Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Caledonian</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>New Zealand + Kermadec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chatham etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lord Howe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Norfolk</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Melanesia therefore contains the distinct floristic region of New Caledonia (including the Isle of Pines and Loyalty Islands) with high species endemcity and the subprovinces of East Malesia and Southwest Pacific. The plant genera of these three areas have the following general relationships (data simplified from Balgooy 1971):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>E.Malesia</th>
<th>S.W.Pacific</th>
<th>New Caledonia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan genera (%)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old world genera (%)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian genera (%)</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>&lt;2</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New world genera (%)</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other genera (%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A rather weak northwestern boundary passes between Borneo and Sulawesi but an almost equally good one could be drawn immediately west of New Guinea; the Nusa Tenggara and Timor are outside the region. The flora of Melanesia thus defined is essentially one of cosmopolitan genera together with a large Asian component attenuating southeastwards. A few islands with ancient continental fragments (e.g. New Caledonia, New Guinea) have a significant element derived from Gondwana and held in common with parts of the Australian region. The size of the flora (i.e. the numbers of species) on an island is also strongly influenced by the size of the island and its distance from its neighbours, particularly those with richer biota.

ZOOLOGY

The boundary between the Australian and Oriental Realms defines the southwestern limit of Melanesia. Within the Papuan and the Polynesian divisions of the Oriental Realm (which includes all Melanesia) the fauna is dominantly related to that of Southeast Asia with considerable local speciation. The faunas of particular islands become increasingly depauperate with distance from Southeast Asia and New Guinea and, as with plants, the numbers of different animals on an island are related to its size and isolation.

The western boundary might be traditionally defined by 'Wallace's Line' but this represents an oversimplification of the definition of a region of very pronounced faunal change between western Indonesia and Malaysia on the one hand, and New Guinea and points east and south on the other. There is also a significant intrusion from the Australian Realm into New Guinea and, to a lesser extent, New Caledonia.

There is no well defined northeastern boundary between Melanesia and the rest of the Oriental Realm but American influences, which exist for instance in Hawaii, are negligible in Melanesia.

SUMMARY

Geologically Melanesia is definable as a chain of islands along the interface between two crustal plates of opposed movements. Biologically its strongest regional relationships are with Southeast Asia substantially
modified by the effects of island size, isolation and latterly by the effects of man himself in moving organisms from one place to another.

REFERENCE

PREHISTORIC MOVEMENT AND MAPPING

Jack Golson

The boundaries the prehistorian draws for Melanesia are similar to those of the ethnographer, the linguist and the physical anthropologist, despite the difficulties and dangers, some would say the virtual impossibility, of translating archaeological evidence into the categories used by them. If the fit is close, it is in large measure the result of the geographical character of the region, which imparted a particular character to its colonization.

I

Between Asia and Australasia are the water barriers of the eastern Indonesian archipelago, which prevented the eastwards expansion of Asiatic mammals, since they persisted even at times of Pleistocene low sea levels, when the Sunda shelf was dry land extending the Southeast Asian mainland as far as Borneo and Bali and the Sahul shelf linked New Guinea to Australia. The evidence from Java is that human settlement was very ancient in Sundaland, beginning with extinct forms of man related to early types in other parts of the world. The general conclusion from world prehistory must be that it took humankind a long time to achieve the capability to settle effectively over sea crossings of the width involved (see Birdsell 1977:124-125; Jones 1979:447-450). We do not know when people started moving out from Sundaland to settle the eastern islands, or indeed who they were. Excavations in southeast Australia show, however, that those who eventually made landfall on the Greater Australia continent were people of modern type, Homo sapiens sapiens, and had arrived by 40,000 years ago. The stone tools which form the only basis of widespread comparison between the early communities spread over the new continent show a family resemblance (cf. Jones 1979:455-457) but the sites from which they come are too scattered in time and space to support more detailed conclusions as to relationships.

Though the colonists came by sea, we assume for a number of reasons that their watercraft were simple and limited in performance, so that they arrived in small numbers, intermittently, from a number of possible points of immediate origin, at the 2,500 km coastline which the enlarged continent presented to the islands north and west (cf. Birdsell 1977:124-125). Small groups of later comers would have found this coastline increasingly filled up, their own successful establishment there increasingly difficult and their impact on the life styles of resident communities correspondingly reduced. Even such an apparently radical innovation as the appearance of
agriculture, claimed for a site in the Papua New Guinea highlands 9,000 years ago (see Golson, this volume), may, according to one interpretation (Yen, this volume), have been an indigenous New Guinea process out of existing hunter-gatherer systems of plant management, in circumstances which have yet to be adequately identified. If the alternative interpretation of the evidence is correct, that the earliest New Guinea agriculture already incorporated Southeast Asian plants, as well as the Southeast Asian pig, there is nevertheless no archaeological evidence from the highlands, where alone sites of the period have been discovered, that the intrusion was accompanied by innovations in material culture signifying, even indirectly, the arrival of other cultural traditions.

What is clear is that the process whose beginnings we see in the highlands 9,000 years ago, and which certainly by 6,000 years ago was associated with pigs and possibly with Southeast Asian crops, was the one which most decisively reflects the divergence of New Guinea and Australian cultural history. Much attention has been focussed recently on its geographical expression at Torres Strait (Moore 1972, 1979; Beckett 1972; Golson 1972a; Wurm 1972; Harris 1977).

II

Movement east from the New Guinea mainland into the nearer islands had begun before the end of the Pleistocene. The specific case, recently established, is that of New Britain, itself visible from the mainland, where excavations at a rockshelter in the southwest of the island have not only produced a date of 11,000 years ago for human settlement, but also discovered the presence of obsidian probably from the source at Talasea on the mid-north coast (Specht et al. 1981:14-15). Talasea obsidian occurs throughout the deposit at Balof rockshelter, at the northern tip of the closely neighbouring island of New Ireland, where the earliest occupation goes back about 7,000 years (Downie and White 1978). It appears then that the main Bismarck Archipelago was widely settled at an early date, perhaps considerably earlier than is indicated by the present evidence, since the first sites excavated are hardly likely to be the oldest on these archaeologically little known islands. Given their geographical position in relation to the mainland and each other, this would not be a surprising result. Beyond them, however, west to the Admiralties and east to the Solomons, there are wider water gaps without the benefit of a string of intervisible islands and requiring efficient watercraft and proficient seamanship for their crossing.

The Solomons are a long chain of islands, many of them large and high, which open a way deep into the Pacific, once they have been reached. Yet the earliest archaeological evidence we have for the group, around 3,500 years ago, is no older than that for remoter islands to the southeast (compare Green 1979:47 and White 1979:357 with Green 1979:33). Like the Bismarcks, the Solomons are archaeologically not well known and there is a strong likelihood that their settlement goes back further than is presently indicated. Some years ago (Golson 1968:5-7) I suggested, as possible evidence of such greater antiquity, that a number of undated artifact types from the northern Solomons had parallels in New Britain and beyond that on the New Guinea mainland and that their occurrence might be explained in the light of the presence in both the Bismarcks and the Solomons of so-called
Papuan languages related to those of New Guinea itself (see Wurm this section). Though the original comparative net was thrown too widely (cf. Golson 1972/1974:546), the suggestion has, I think, some validity and has found some support (eg. Bellwood 1978:242-244). The artifact types in question are, however, still undated and we do not know whether they belong to a period of settlement in the Solomons earlier than the current dates. In the same way it cannot be assumed that speakers of Papuan languages, to whom they have been plausibly attributed, were older settlers in the area than speakers of the Austronesian languages found there (cf. Green 1976:52-55).

III

Beyond the Solomons, the world becomes increasingly oceanic, the islands or island groups more remote and more impoverished in terrestrial resources. It is today axiomatic amongst Pacific prehistorians that successful discovery and settlement in these circumstances required efficient ocean-going watercraft, well developed navigational techniques and an integrated set of cultivated plants and appropriate agricultural procedures. These were evidently all in the possession of the people of the Lapita culture who left their highly distinctive pottery at a string of sites from the Bismarcks to Samoa in the course of a remarkable millennium of expansion and settlement between 4,000 and 3,000 years ago (Green 1979; cf. Irwin 1980). It has for some years now been generally accepted that the Lapita communities which settled the Fiji-Tonga-Samoa region towards the end of that millennium were ancestral to the culture we know as Polynesian (Green 1981 for the most recent statement).

To account for the greater diversity of language and physical type in the Melanesian islands further west, it has been argued that Austronesian speakers must have settled the islands southeast of the Solomons well before Lapita made its appearance there (eg. Bellwood 1979:18-20). However, evidence for such prior settlement in what is archaeologically the best known region of Melanesia has just not been found and the archaeological arguments advanced in its support and against the primacy of Lapita are becoming increasingly strained (eg. those of Green 1979:47-48).

The time is ripe for a reconsideration of the proposition that the greater diversity in southern Melanesia compared to Polynesia is due to events and developments that took place there subsequent to Lapita colonization and not before it. This is a point of view taken some years ago in the linguistic field by Wurm (1967) and on archaeological grounds by myself (1968:10; cf. 1972b:10-11, 13-14) and at one stage by Green (1963: 243, 266-267, 250). The archaeological evidence is in general much as it was then: the southern Melanesian islands see the appearance of one or more pottery traditions later than Lapita and not readily derivable from it. Though the details are complex and their interpretation matters of dispute, this post-Lapita ceramic innovation extends no further east than Fiji, which thus stands at the border of Melanesia against Polynesia. The innovation affecting Fiji seems to have been particularly late - about 900 years ago in a Lapita-based settlement history of more than 3,000 years - so that what Frost calls the Polynesian vector of Fijian culture was not overwhelmed (Frost 1979:79-80, but I follow Hunt (1980) in considering
Frost's first post-Lapita intrusive Melanesian ceramic tradition as derived from Lapita in Fiji).

IV

We do not know the origin of the post-Lapita ceramic innovations of which I have been speaking. There are a few general resemblances in form and decoration between some pottery in southern Melanesia and some in the northern Solomons, while fairly specific similarities in decorative technique and motif have been indicated between material at a number of New Caledonian sites and undated pottery from surface sites in northern Bougainville (Golson 1972/74:574-576). What we know of Solomon Islands archaeology suggests that there is a more complex history to be discovered here than is emerging for southern Melanesia. This is perhaps only to be expected for a large archipelago, containing islands of substantial size between which communication is easy and lying adjacent to the major landmass formed by New Guinea and the Bismarck archipelago, which together present a long northern coastline running west to Indonesia, open to receive and transmit cultural influences at all times during the sea-going era.

We are beginning to get some localized insights into New Guinea coastal and island archaeology, but there are so many areas unknown, or known only from surface collections of pottery in a superficially bewildering variety of styles, that it is impossible to generalize. All we can say is that the vast arc of whose prehistory I have been confessing our essential ignorance - the New Guinea north coast, the Bismarcks and the Solomons - forms the frontier of Melanesia against the Micronesian islands to the north.

V

The most arbitrary archaeological boundary to Melanesia is that to the west, which I draw at the western tip of Indonesian New Guinea. This is not simply because Irian Jaya and the eastern Indonesian islands are archaeologically the least known of any region I have surveyed. More importantly it is because the lands west of the line underwent a historical experience similar to that in particular of the eastern regions of mainland and island New Guinea, which resulted in some of the features we characterize as Melanesian. This was the coming into contact, along the entire gamut of relationships which that phrase allows, of resident populations speaking Papuan languages and possessing particular characteristics of physical and social type, with groups of physically and socially variant Austronesian speakers arriving over a period in the relatively recent past. It can further be argued, as Wurm (1967) has done, that it is the physical and cultural results of these prolonged and varied encounters transported into the islands of the southwest Pacific as far as Fiji that make them Melanesian.

The particular Austronesian impact that was experienced in Indonesia was massive by comparison, and longer-lived, though it was weaker in the east and locally patchy. The more recent growth of regional politics and the intrusion of outside forces like the Chinese, Islam and eventually the
Europeans tended to pull the islands west of New Guinea into the orbit of systems centred still further west. The far western coasts of New Guinea itself had indeed been caught up in this wider world by the time the region was first visited by Europeans in the sixteenth century. Hughes (1977:15-18) discusses the antiquity, nature and extent of outside contact with the island of New Guinea as a whole up to the arrival of the Europeans, beginning with the discovery of bronze objects of so-called Dongson (Southeast Asian metal age) type in Irian Jaya and the claims for Dongson influence in prehistoric and ethnographic art styles further east. The very thinness of the record he compiles, however, underlines the essential isolation of the Melanesian world from events beyond the western boundary I have nominated.

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