

Origin and Migrations of Daic-speaking Populations: A Tale of Y Chromosomes

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Daic is a language family that is distributed in Thailand, China, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and India. Its major branches include Kam-Sui, Tai, Hlai and Kadai. Historical records indicate that the distribution of Daic speaking populations may extended to a much larger area including much part of southeast coast of China. In particular, the possible connection between the Yue people, the aborigines that once dominated the southern part of China has long been suggested by ethnologists and historians. We recently studied over 100 East Asian populations including 30 Daic speaking ones and reached the following conclusions. First, the Daic-speaking populations show a great deal of genetic similarity although admixture with local populations did occur after its expansion. Second, a significant proportion of southern Chinese populations carry a signature of Daic-speaking populations. Third, Taiwanese aborigines are more similar to Daic-speaking populations than they are to the other Austronesian populations, i.e. Malayo-Polynesians. Forth, the clustering of subfamilies of Daic-speaking populations correlates well with that based on their genetic similarity indicating limited gene flow between them after their separation. We propose that Daic-speaking populations originated in the southern part of East Asia and then migrated northwards and eastwards with Kam-Sui probably being the oldest.