

These clones have arisen sexually in South East Asia. They have been distributed asexually wherever the people of South East Asia have carried them in outrigger canoes ; that is to say from Hawaii to Madagascar whence they have proceeded overland, or round the Cape, to West Africa.

Dr Simmonds has himself elucidated a large part of this story by systematic exploration, by chromosome study, and by breeding experiments. He gives the results in this book illustrated with tables, diagrams and maps. Naturally the conclusions he reaches extend far beyond the banana. For the evidence of this valuable food plant is of course related to the evidence of the spread of the people who depended on it for food. The vast maritime expansion of the Indonesian people depended on their invention of suitable boats and their discovery of suitable crops. And it paralleled a number of other great linguistic expansions (as we may call them) one of which, the Bantu, may, as Simmonds suggests, be derived from it.

This book allows us to expect that a great deal more can be discovered, especially about the history of Africa, from the study of the Indonesian crop plants. It also shows how the detailed study of individual crops can be connected with the history of the people who bred and distributed them.

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