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| **Bibliography** | Grimaldi, I.M.; Van Andel, T.R.; Denham, T.P. (2021) Looking beyond history: tracing the dispersal of the Malaysian complex of crops to Africa, In: American Journal of Botany, Vol.109 (2), 193-208, URL: https://bsapubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ajb2.1821 |
| **Associated conference** |  |
| **Abstract / Content summary** | In his 1959 book, Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History, George P. Murdock suggested that a Malaysian complex of crops dispersed to Africa in ancient times across the Indian Ocean along the Sabaean Lane. The Malaysian complex comprised bananas, sugarcane, taro, three yam species, rice, Polynesian arrowroot, breadfruit, coconut, areca palm, and betel leaf. Except for rice, arrowroot, and potentially taro, most of these crops were domesticated in the Island Southeast Asia‐New Guinea region, from where they dispersed to Africa. Our reassessment of agronomic, archaeological, classical, genetic, and historical sources shows that we need to go beneath standard historical narratives to recover a much more ancient and complex history of crop introductions to Africa. Despite considerable uncertainty and fragmented research, we were able to conclude that the Malaysian complex of crops did not arrive in Africa as a complete assemblage at one time or along one route. Multiple
lines of evidence suggest that these crops arrived in Africa at different times and followed different pathways of introduction to the continent.
Keywords: archaeobotany, classical antiquity, crop dispersal, crop introduction, G. P. Murdock, Indian Ocean, Malaysian complex, tropical food kit |
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