

Study links Polynesians, Taiwanese

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A genetic study finds Polynesians and the indigenous inhabitants of Taiwan are closely related.

Jean Trejaut of the Mackay Memorial Hospital in Taipei and his colleagues analyzed mitochondrial DNA from indigenous Taiwanese, mainland Chinese, Polynesians and other southeast Asian peoples. He found the Taiwanese, Melanesians and Polynesians share three mutations, indicating a close relationship, that are absent from mainland populations.

Polynesian legends say that the people came from a mythical place called Hawaiki. The Polynesians spread across the Pacific, ranging from New Zealand to Easter Island and Hawaii, and their origin has been debated for centuries.

Genetic analysis showed the Taiwanese appear to have been isolated from mainland Chinese for 10,000 to 20,000 years, confirming archaeological evidence Taiwan has been inhabited for a long time.

The study was published in the journal Public Library of Science Biology.

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