Trans-Pacific Distribution of the Honorific apu

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JOHN S. CARROLL

The Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian family of languages has two principal subfamilies: Malay and Polynesian. Malay languages abound from Madagascar on the west, Indonesia on the south, the Marianas on the east, and Taiwan on the north. Polynesian languages extend across the Pacific Ocean in a triangle marked by Hawaii, Easter Island, and New Zealand.

In the Quechua language of Perú — the language of the Inca empire — the honorific *apu* means "lord, high dignitary."¹

The dialects of Polynesia are not identical, but they are so close as to be mutually intelligible. A Hawaiian can communicate in Hawaiian with a Maori in New Zealand or with an Easter Islander. Because dictionaries of all the myriad Polynesian dialects are not readily available, I have chosen five Polynesian tongues that are representative: Hawaiian,² Easter Island,³ Samoan,⁴ Tahitian,⁵ and Maori.⁶ The honorific *apu* is in none of these dialects and therefore a reasonable conclusion is that it exists nowhere in Polynesia.⁷

7. In Maori, one meaning of *pu* is "wise person," but it apparently is a
Melanesian dictionaries are more difficult to acquire; but three of them show no honorific even remotely similar to apo.  

Strangely, however, apo is ubiquitous in the Philippine Archipelago, where the languages are Malay-type, and exists on Java but is absent in the Malay Peninsula.

The Ilocano tongue, spoken on the northwestern coast of Luzon, has apo meaning "lord" or "sir." Among the Kalingas in the central highlands of northern Luzon, "apo refers to grandparent, grandchild, or any lateral kin of their generations" and "is a term of greatest respect as well, so that a distinguished stranger is addressed by that title, even by people of his own age." An adjacent group, the Igorots, use apó to signify "leader, sir; ancestors before grandparents' generation, grandson or grandson's descendants," with the verbs men-apó and apoén being "to lead." Tagalog, which is the language of Manila and the surrounding provinces, retains apó as a "term used as a sign of respect and reverence for the aged; idolize; worship; boss" or "headman, grandfather" and pó as a "particle used in respectful address, more or less equivalent to English 'sir' or 'madam.' ”

In the Bikol language on the southern tip of Luzon, apo and po short form of pukenga, "teacher" or "wise person." In Hawaiian, kupuna, shortened to puna, means "grandparent, ancestor, relative of the grandparents' generation, grandaunt, granduncle."


have the same meanings as *apò* and *pó* in Tagalog. On the island of Mindanao in the southern Philippines, the Bagobos use the word *apo* to mean "grandfather"; these people live on the flanks of a mountain called Apo. And in *bahasa* Sug, spoken in the Sulu Archipelago between Mindanao and Borneo and in Sabah (North Borneo), *apoh* is "sir." In the peninsular Malay language, which prevails in southern Thailand, south throughout the Malay Peninsula, and in some parts of Sumatra, Borneo, and the Moluccas and which is substantially the same as *bahasa* Indonesia, the honorific meaning "lord," "sir," or "master" is *tuan*, and the word signifying "grandfather" or "chief" is *dato*. *Apu* is not in peninsular Malay. Likewise, the Sea Dayaks (Ibons) of Sarawak use *tuan*


17. *Ibid*. However, two Chinese sources say that before the Yuan Dynasty the honorific *pu* was current in San-bo-tsai or San-fo-ts'i, believed to be Palembang in a Malay-speaking region on Sumatra. The *Sung Shih* (History of the Sung Dynasty) records: "The king [of San-bo-tsai] is styled Chan-p'i, and in his country there are many people whose family name is P'u." See To To et al., *Sung Shih*, Book 489, translated in W. P. Groenveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca," *Miscellaneous Papers Relating to Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago*, Trübner & Co., London (1887) vol. I p. 188. The dates of the Sung Dynasty are 912–1279 A.D., but the authors of the *Sung Shih* compiled it in 1343 or 1367. Chau Ju-kua in his *Chu Fan Shih* (Records of Barbarous Nations) wrote in 1225 A.D.: "A large proportion of the people of this country [San-fo-ts'i]
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to mean "master, lord" and datu to mean "nobleman, chief" but not apu. The Kadazans in Sabah employ tuan as "lord, sir, master, priest" and datu as "native chief, especially one who is wealthy" but lack apu. Datu has a similar meaning in the Maranao and Maguindanao languages of Mindanao. Dato' perhaps is an old peninsular Malay word, for it appears as atö signifying "grandfather" among the aboriginal Sakais. Perhaps dato' or atö in peninsular Malay became apo in the Philippines, but a t-p correspondence is not common.

In fourteenth century Javanese, pu meant "sir." The honorific apu is not in the Malagasy language of Madagascar, the western-most Malay-type language.

The Philippine Archipelago has some 156 languages, and Indonesia has more than 200. Peru had many, but all except Quechua and Aymara are extinct or virtually extinct. I have been able to compare only a few of these many vocabularies. Within this limitation, the indications are:

1. That the honorific apu exists in the Quechua language of Peru.
2. That the honorific apu is absent in Polynesia and Melanesia.
3. That the honorific apu extends throughout the Philippine Archipelago, the bahasa Sug-speaking part of Sabah, and Java but not in the Malay Peninsula or Madagascar.

are surnamed P'u." See Friedrich Hirth and W. W. Rockhill, Chau Ju-Kua: His Work on the Chinese and Arab Trade in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries, Entitled Chu-fan-chi, Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg (1911) p. 60. In Chinese, the family name comes first; hence, a Chinese would assume that a Javanese called Pu Wiramandaliike would be surnamed "P'ľ whereas the "Pu" actually means "sir" and is not a patronym. Either the honorific pu faded from the Malay language after the thirteenth century, or the people called pu were Javanese.

If it is not sheer coincidence, this trans-Pacific distribution of the honorific *apu* suggests the possibility of contacts in the past between the Quechuas of Perú and the peoples of the Philippines and Java. One word, however, is not enough to prove either migration, trade, or conquest.

History offers one parallel for consideration: the Arawak word *cacique* from Cuba and the Caribbean, meaning "chief," exists not only in the Castilian of Spain but also in the Tagalog of the Philippines. The Spaniards borrowed the word from the Arawaks when Spanish adventurers conquered the Caribbean islands, carried it to Spain, and introduced it in the Philippines a half century later. Yet no Arawaks were ever in the Philippines, and no Arawaks were ever in Spain except a few captives. *Apu*, however, antedated the Europeans not only in Perú but also in Southeast Asia.23

The mountain-dwelling Quechuas in Perú were not sailors, but the Yungas who lived on the coast did venture onto the Pacific Ocean.24 Even so, the known fragments of the Yunga language contain no mention of *apu* or any similar honorific.25


24. *Ibid.*; Miguel Cabello Valboa, *Miscelánea antártica*, Instituto de Etnología, Facultad de Letras, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, Lima (1951) pp. 322-325. The Spaniards and Quechuas called all lowland dwellers Yungas. The Tallanes of Tumbez, who were Yungas, were excellent sailors.

25. Fernando de la Carrera, *Arte de la lengua yunga*, Instituto de Antropología, Tucumán (1939). This edition of Fernando de la Carrera's text, originally written in 1644 and re-edited by Radames A. Altieri in 1939, contains not only de la Carrera's Yunga vocabulary but also Yunga word lists compiled by Adolfo Bastian in 1878, Federico Villareal in 1920, and Rafael Larco Hoyle in 1939. This Yunga language is the coastal Yunga, which had four dialects: (1) a fishermen's tongue called Pescadora by the Spaniards, (2) Sec spoken by the Tallanes of Tumbéz, (3) Muchic spoken by the Mochica, and (4) Chimú or Quinquinam used from the Moche Valley 200 miles south to the Rimac River near Lima. The Yunga language is virtually extinct, even though it was the language of the great Chimú civilization conquered by the Incas, and now exists only in the village of Iten and possibly in the village of Monsefú. These published remnants of the coastal Yunga dialects are so scanty that no one can be sure whether these people had the honorific *apu*. Federico Villareal, *La lengua yunga o
No people in the Philippine and Indonesian Archipelagoes has any recorded history or legend about a voyage across the Pacific Ocean. In Perú, the Spaniards heard tales that the merchants of Tumbéz and Tupac Inca Yupanqui, who was the tenth Inca, sailed west onto the sea in the fifteenth century and that the god Tici-Viracocha left by way of the sea centuries earlier. But no archaeologist has found any South American artifacts in Southeast Asia or any Southeast Asian artifacts in South America. In the absence of artifacts, scholars should not hasten to postulate trans-Pacific voyages between South America and Southeast Asia before Magellan even though the trans-Pacific distribution of the honorific apu is provocative evidence.

mochica, Imprenta Peruana de E. Z. Casanova, Lima (1921) listed çieç, çieqn.eio, and çieçen as meaning señor (lord, sir) and çiequich as gran señor (great lord).