

Review: Crop adaptation through introgression from wild relatives

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The traditional paradigm in crop domestication has been origin from a wild relative within one or more geographically-defined centers followed by expansion to the modern-day extent of cultivation. Absent from this paradigm are the effects of hybridization between a diffusing nascent crop species and closely-related, locally-adapted wild relatives outside the center of origin. New methods have recently been employed to detect genome-wide patterns of introgression in a number of species. In this review, we will: 1) briefly describe these methods and provide a summary of their application for detecting crop-wild introgression, 2) review evidence supporting the hypothesis that wild-to-crop introgression has conferred local adaptation, 3) consider how the prevalence of this introgression alters traditional concepts of domestication, and 4) describe future advances in both basic and applied genetics that can be made through the study of introgression in agroecosystems.

Introgression methods and their applications

The recent availability of genome-wide resequencing and reduced-representation genotyping (*e.g.*, GBS and RAD-Seq) data combined with new analytical methods have facilitated comprehensive study of introgression across a number of species (**Table 1**).

1. High-density marker data can be used with haplotype-based and other methods to assign specific genomic regions to a taxon of origin and to identify introgression across taxa [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6].
2. Application of these approaches across a number of plant and animal species suggests introgression can play an adaptive role. For example, introgression from ancient hominins (*e.g.*, Neanderthals and Denisovans) to humans has been detected at loci controlling skin pigmentation, defense against pathogens, and toleration of high altitude (reviewed in [7]), introgression has conferred Müllerian mimicry across butterfly species ([8]; **Figure 1**), introgression has spread insecticide resistance across mosquito species [9], and introgression across *Mimulus* (*i.e.*, monkeyflower) species has resulted in adaptation to pollinator preference and contributed to speciation [10].

Table 1: List and brief description of recently developed methods and examples of empirical studies employing these methods.

Figure 1: Wing coloration patterns in *Heliconius* and evidence for introgression across species based on Patterson’s *D*-statistic; adapted from [8].

Crop adaptation through introgression

Over the last few years, several high-profile publications based on genome-wide data have documented introgression between crops and wild relatives outside putative domestication centers. A history of introgression during diffusion appears to be the rule for crops rather than the exception.

1. Theory suggests that colonizing species will overwhelmingly be recipients of introgression from locally-adapted native species [11]. Crops, given their frequent history of diffusion from defined centers of origin, are therefore potential recipients of adaptive introgression.
2. Recent empirical studies have revealed that introgression has occurred in many of the world’s most important crops (**Table 2**).
 - (a) Maize: As maize spread from a lowland center of origin into the Mexican highlands, it received introgression from a highland-adapted wild relative. Introgression occurred predominantly at loci previously shown to underlie highland adaptation traits, strongly suggesting adaptive introgression [12].
 - (b) Cassava: Substantial introgression from a closely-related wild species has been found in cassava, occurring both naturally and through a targeted breeding program to introduce disease resistance [13].
 - (c) Rice: Introgression appears to have played an important role in the history of rice. Japonica rice cultivars were likely domesticated first from wild rice populations in southern China, and indica cultivars later developed through hybridization of ancient japonica with new wild rice populations in south and southeast Asia [14]. Whether this wild introgression conferred local adaptation to indica has yet to be shown.
 - (d) Barley: Landraces of barley show shared ancestry with geographically-proximate populations of wild relatives, suggesting introgression but not demonstrating conclusively that this was adaptive [15].
 - (e) Olive: Hybridization between wild and domesticated olive has been prevalent throughout the Mediterranean Basin. [16].
 - (f) Sunflower: Domesticated sunflower has received substantial introgression from wild relatives through breeding efforts to reintroduce a branching morphology. Natural introgression appears prominent in this system as well [17].
3. Predictions regarding the likelihood of adaptive introgression in additional crops can be made through comparison of their centers of origin to both their current extent of cultivation and the distribution of wild relatives across environmental gradients (**Figure 2**).

Table 2: Overview of literature evaluating potential for crop-wild introgression in the world’s 15 most important crops including a column of references and a column summarizing major findings.

Figure 2: Multi-panel figure showing maps of crop centers of domestication, distributions of wild relatives, and current extent of cultivation across gradients of (a) temperature, (b) precipitation, and (c) elevation. This figure will illustrate the adaptive potential of wild-to-crop introgression.

Re-evaluating concepts of domestication

A framework in which crops were domesticated from a single population or even a single species is, in several instances, an oversimplification. A demography incorporating introgression from additional

sources appears to be more correct for many crops. With this in mind, certain aspects of crop evolution must be re-evaluated:

1. Estimates of the initial domestication bottleneck may be skewed when introgression is not considered. Chromosomal regions experiencing introgression may have an altered effective population size (N_e) relative to non-introgressed regions depending on diversity within the donor taxon. For example, introgression from wild taxa with historically high N_e will lead to underestimates of the strength of the domestication bottleneck.
2. Estimates of the timing of domestication based on levels of sequence divergence may be affected when introgressed haplotypes are included.
3. Loci under selection during domestication are often identified based on signatures of substantially-reduced nucleotide diversity in the domesticated taxon relative to the wild progenitor and high allele frequency differentiation between these taxa. Introgression may alter these signatures and confound detection of domestication loci.

Future studies in crop-wild introgression

Additional study of introgression in agroecosystems could lead to advances in both basic and applied genetics:

1. Basic questions:
 - (a) To what extent does the level of introgression across taxa depend on divergence time between donor and recipient taxa?
 - (b) At what geographic scale does adaptive introgression occur? Is introgression frequently restricted to very local populations or is it often seen over broad geographic ranges? To what extent does this depend on the slope of environmental gradients such as temperature, precipitation, and elevation?
 - (c) Can colonizing species served as bridges for gene flow between previously allopatric taxa?
2. Applications:
 - (a) Loci underlying the domesticated phenotype which may be beneficial targets for crop improvement can be more clearly identified by removing the confounding population genetic signal of introgression.
 - (b) Adaptive introgression that is clearly tied to a specific environment may include beneficial alleles that can be utilized in crop breeding.

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