

**WAS THERE AN AUSTROASIATIC  
PRESENCE IN ISLAND SE ASIA  
PRIOR TO THE AUSTRONESIAN  
EXPANSION?**

IPPA XIX

Hanoi, November 29-  
December 4, 2009

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## Problems in the prehistory of island SE Asia

- The dominant model for the Neolithic settlement of island SE Asia is the Austronesian expansion. There are good reasons for attributing high evidential value to this model because;
- Only Austronesian languages are spoken in the islands today except where they are in contact with Papuan
- There is a widespread 'package' (red-slipped (but otherwise undecorated) pottery with associated stone adzes, shell beads and bracelets, fish bones, pig and dog bones) which does seem to point to an important demographic expansion
- We know that there were pre-Austronesian populations as a consequence of archaeology, going back to the Pleistocene (Tabon, Niah) and it is generally presumed that these are the forebears of the Negrito populations today (although direct evidence for this is limited)
- Only the Philippines have existing Negrito populations, all of whom speak Austronesian languages.
- Laurie Reid has argued, to general assent, that residual vocabulary in geographically dispersed Negrito languages allows us to reconstruct some lexicon of a now-vanished language phylum

## Problems in the prehistory of island SE Asia II

- However, archaeologists have generally been dissatisfied with this model at least in its simplest version, claiming that the complexity of material culture, for example on Palawan or Borneo, does not support a monolithic Austronesian expansion (O'Connor, Lewis et al.)
- Donohue & Denham (2009) have recently mounted a major challenge to the Austronesian expansion model, but without yet coming up with an convincing alternative version, except to say it is all rather diverse and perhaps more coming from New Guinea than we previously thought
- But a major alternative in accounting for diversity would be to suppose that the expanding Austronesians encountered 'Neolithic' farmers already *in situ*?
- And if so, who were they, where did they come from and when did they arrive?

# Trade interpretations

- Since at least Solheim (1964) it has been observed that there are remarkable similarities between types of pottery found in the Southern Philippines, Borneo, Vietnam and parts of Thailand, the 'Kalanay' tradition.
- Recent further studies (e.g. Yamagata 2008) have extended and expanded the evidence for connections with Vietnam.
- This led Solheim (1975, 2000) to propose a 'Nusantao' trading network which was deemed to account for these similarities and was to go back to 5000 BC.
- It is hard to know what archaeological evidence supports such an old date. Austronesian shows no sign at all of being a scattered trade language. Malay, of course, does, but that is significantly later.
- Could it be nonetheless, that these similarities are simply to be explained by early trade?
- This paper will argue that while trade evidently played a role, there was pre-Austronesian settlement and we can make hypotheses about its nature

# Language classification issues

- ✚ Austronesian and Austroasiatic are generally recognised as coherently and internally consistent language phyla.
- ✚ However, it has been recognised since Schmidt (1906) that they share a great deal of common vocabulary, which has led to proposals to join them together in a single phylum, generally known as Austric.
- ✚ Linguists go up and down about this and Reid (2005) is the latest defender of an Austric macrophylum. Shorto (2006) is probably the largest compilation of Austronesian/Austroasiatic cognates, although the interpretation of this is left open
- ✚ Other linguists have viewed these similarities as either 'chance' (unlikely) or as a complex mosaic of loanwords (a view which will be defended here)

## Austronesian and Austroasiatic contact

- Briefly, the origin of PAN/PAS cognates is through Daic, which is assumed to be a branch of Austronesian (Ostapirat/Sagart etc.)
- However, other cognates are the consequence of intensive contact between mainland Austroasiatic languages and Austronesian languages (probably due to early Austroasiatic settlement of Borneo and the Southern Philippines)
- We should therefore expect to find AS/AN cognates at this level and I suggest that this can be demonstrated from some of Shorto's observations of cognates

# Bornean substrate languages I

## Chamic in Vietnam

- The presence of Chamic in Vietnam points to early maritime contact between Borneo and the mainland, presumably migration from Borneo
- However, there is extremely strong cultural evidence for mainland presence *on* Borneo, presumably earlier still
- Sander Adelaar (1995) has pointed to unusual phonological features of Borneo languages as a consequence of a possible Austroasiatic substrate.

Figure 4: The modern distribution of Chamic and Mon-Khmer



# Bornean substrate languages II

- Adelaar (1995) says '*The Land Dayak languages have a few striking lexical and phonological similarities in common with Aslian languages. This suggests that Land Dayak originated as the result of a language shift from Aslian to Austronesian, or that both Land Dayak and Aslian have in common a substratum from an unknown third language.*'
  - The observation that there are surprising cognates between Borneo Austronesian and Aslian goes back to Skeat & Blagden (1906).
  - Moreover, these are in fundamental vocabulary, such as the word 'to die' and 'to wash', clearly not the result of casual trade contact.



## Some examples

Die, death, dead

**Dayak Bakatiq**

**kabih**

**Land Dayak)**

**kobus**

Kensiu

gabis

Semelai

khbəs

Temiar

kʌbəs

rain

**Central Dusun**

**rasam**

**Visayan**

**lafam**

Batek

ləsəm

Semelai

lsəm

to rain

# Some examples

**stomach, belly**

**Semoq Beri**

**ləput**

Kavalan

pələs

Iban

perut

Acehnese

pruet

Banjarese Malay

parut

Indonesian

perut

back (of body)

Kayan (Uma Juman)

laʔuŋ

Acehnese

rueng

Phan Rang Cham (Eastern Cham)

rauŋ

proto Katuic

\*klooŋ, \*kloŋ

# The taro story

- ❖ Taro is a sort of archetypical Austronesian crop and indeed the source of the English word
- ❖ However, it seems likely that taro was not cultivated on Taiwan until recently, and the ancient crop was rather *Alocasia macrorrhizos*
- ❖ Taro is a purported Proto-Malayo-Polynesian reconstruction *\*tales* but in fact this is not attested in the Northern Philippines at all, but only in other parts of island SE Asia including Palawan, Borneo and Sulawesi
- ❖ However, it is attested across Austroasiatic even into Munda with the same shape
- ❖ Which strongly suggests it is a *borrowing* into Austronesian from Austroasiatic and associated with early Austroasiatic settlement in Borneo and Palawan

**Taro**

**vs.**

**Alocasia**



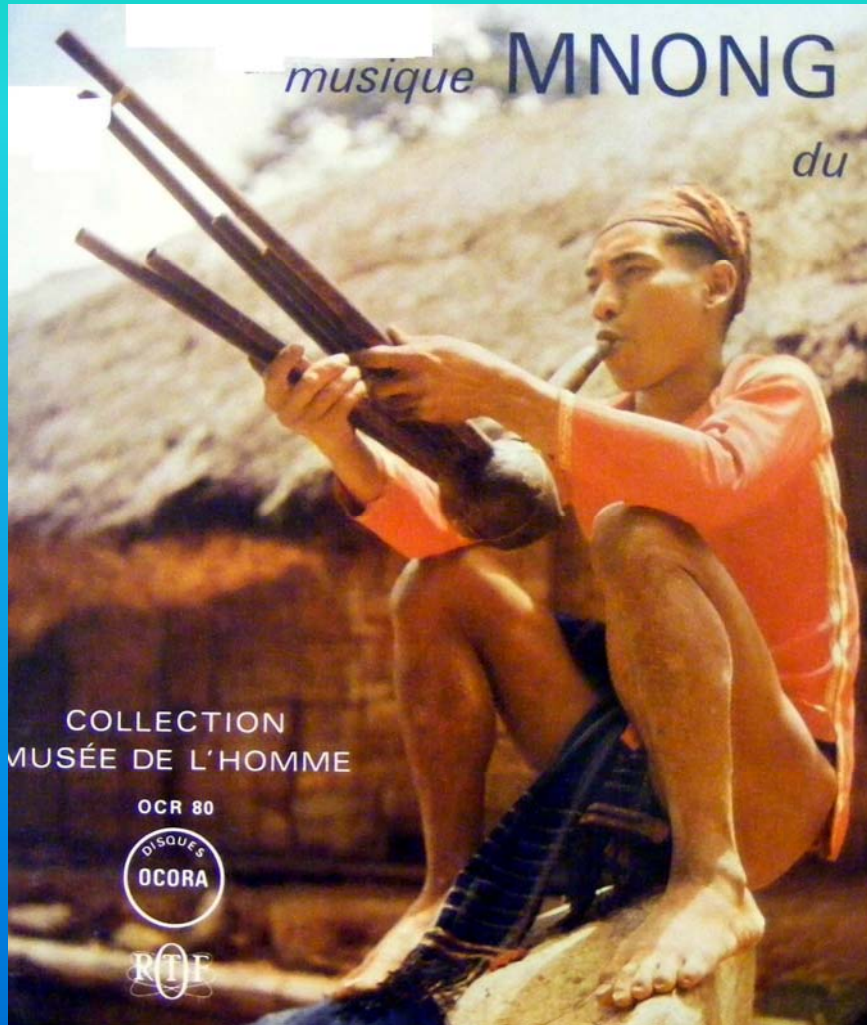
# Taro in Austroasiatic and Austronesian

Branch	Language	Attestation	Source
Palaungic	Riang	sro?	Ferlus (1996b)
Monic	Mon	krao	Shorto
Vietic	Proto-Vietic	*sro?	Ferlus (1996b)
Khmeric	Old Khmer	trav	Ferlus (1996b)
Khmuic	Khmu	sro?	Ferlus (1996b)
Pearic	Chong	k <sup>h</sup> re : A	Ploykaew (2001)
Bahnaric	PSB	*təraw	Sidwell (2000)
Katuic	Ong	raw	Ferlus (1996b)
Khasian	Khasi	shriew	
Muṅḍā	Santal	saru	
	<b>PMP</b>	<b>*tales</b>	<b>Dempwolff (1938)</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Palawan</b>	<b>talas</b>	<b>Arnaud et al. (1997)</b>

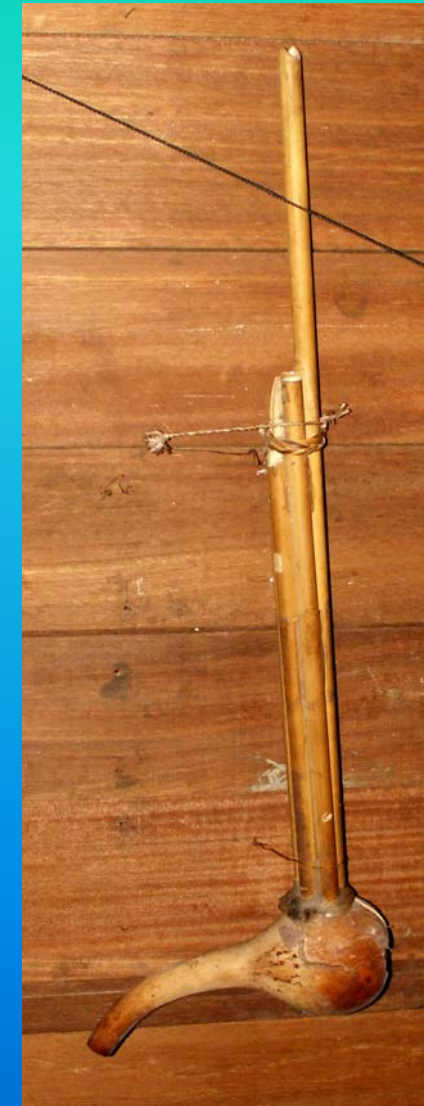
# Material culture

- Synchronic ethnography should also point to this type of early contact and indeed we find similarities in material culture between mainland SE Asia and western Kalimantan.
- The mouth-organ is highly characteristic of MSEA and not at all of the Austronesian instrumentarium
- However, it is found all along the western side of Borneo as far as Sabah. Moreover the morphology of the instrument is virtually identical to Vietnam (there are many subtypes on the mainland)
- There are further examples of this type of possible (pre-Chamic) influence in Borneo in the area of textiles, and other instruments

# The *mouth organ*



Mnong Gar Vietnam



Orang Ulu, Borneo

# Can we tie this to archaeology?

- If there is this type of linguistic and cultural evidence how is this reflected in the archaeology?
- A recent publication by Dave Bulbeck showing material cultural similarities in the SE Asia and Pacific region seems to suggest we can see some early links.
- Basket-impressed pottery has the requisite distribution, linking mainland Vietnam and Kalimantan; this is clearly not spreading from the islands to the mainland



# Basket-impressed pottery

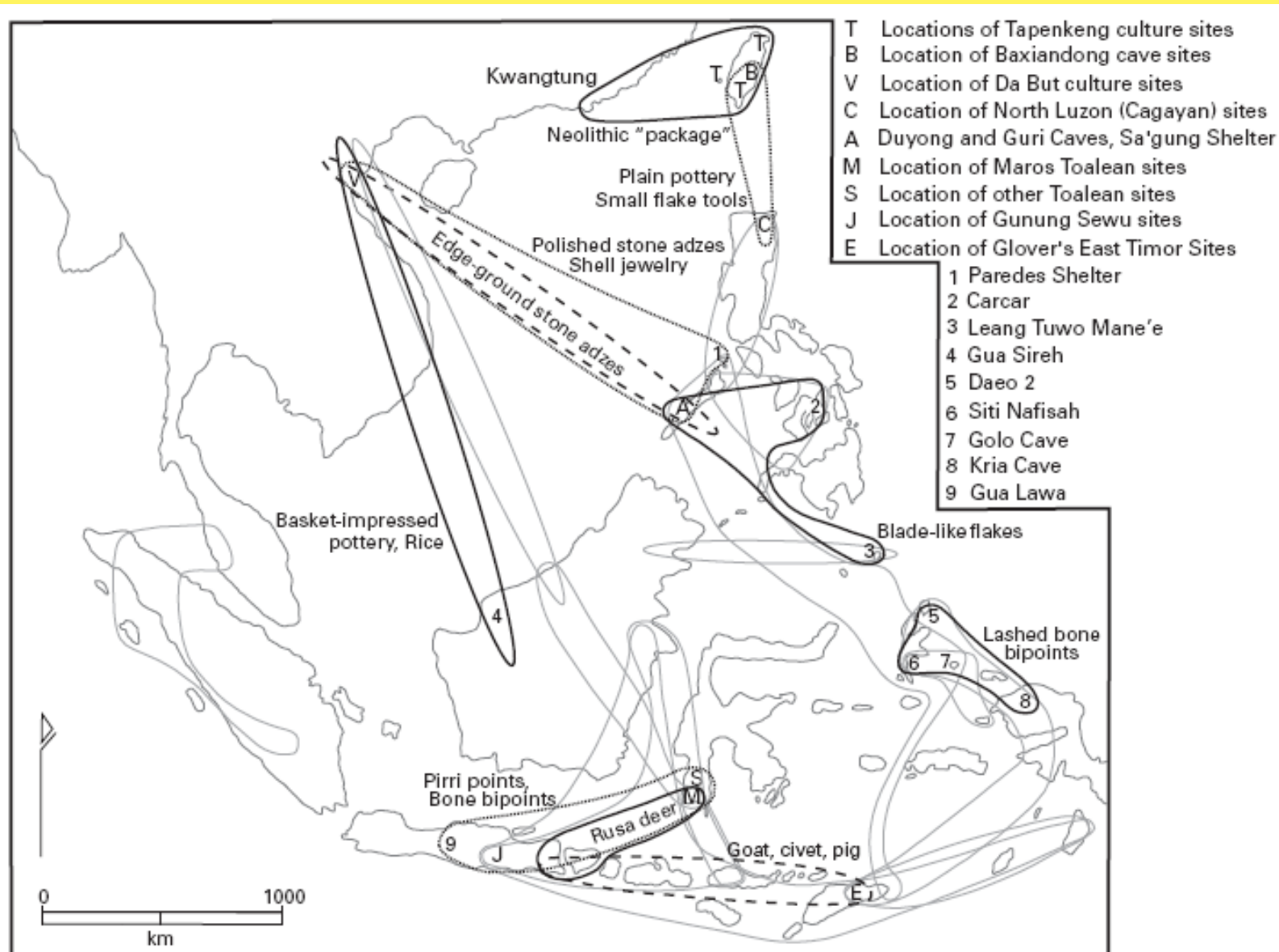


Figure 3 Specifically mid-Holocene maritime interaction axes in ISEA and adjacent regions.

## The later links to peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra

- In addition, the distribution of paddle-impressed pottery seems to tie together Borneo, Sumatra and peninsula Malaysia in a way which fits the cultural and linguistic evidence very well.
- The recent Denham and Donohue article points to marked substrate features in Sumatra and the links with Aslian languages demonstrated earlier shows there was a 'community of culture' before the levelling expansion of Malay
- Acehnese is the one remaining trace of this...

# Paddle-impressed pottery

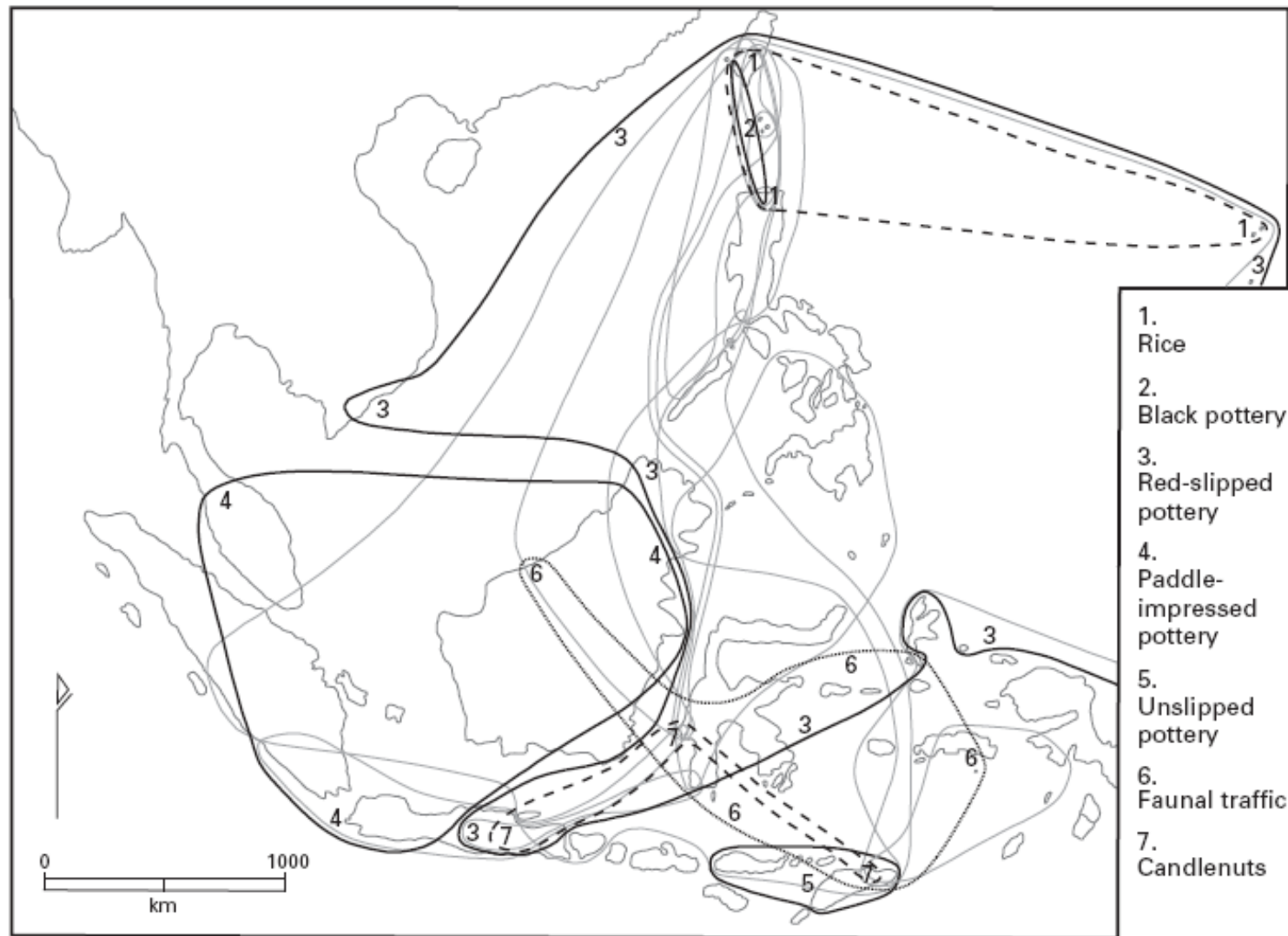


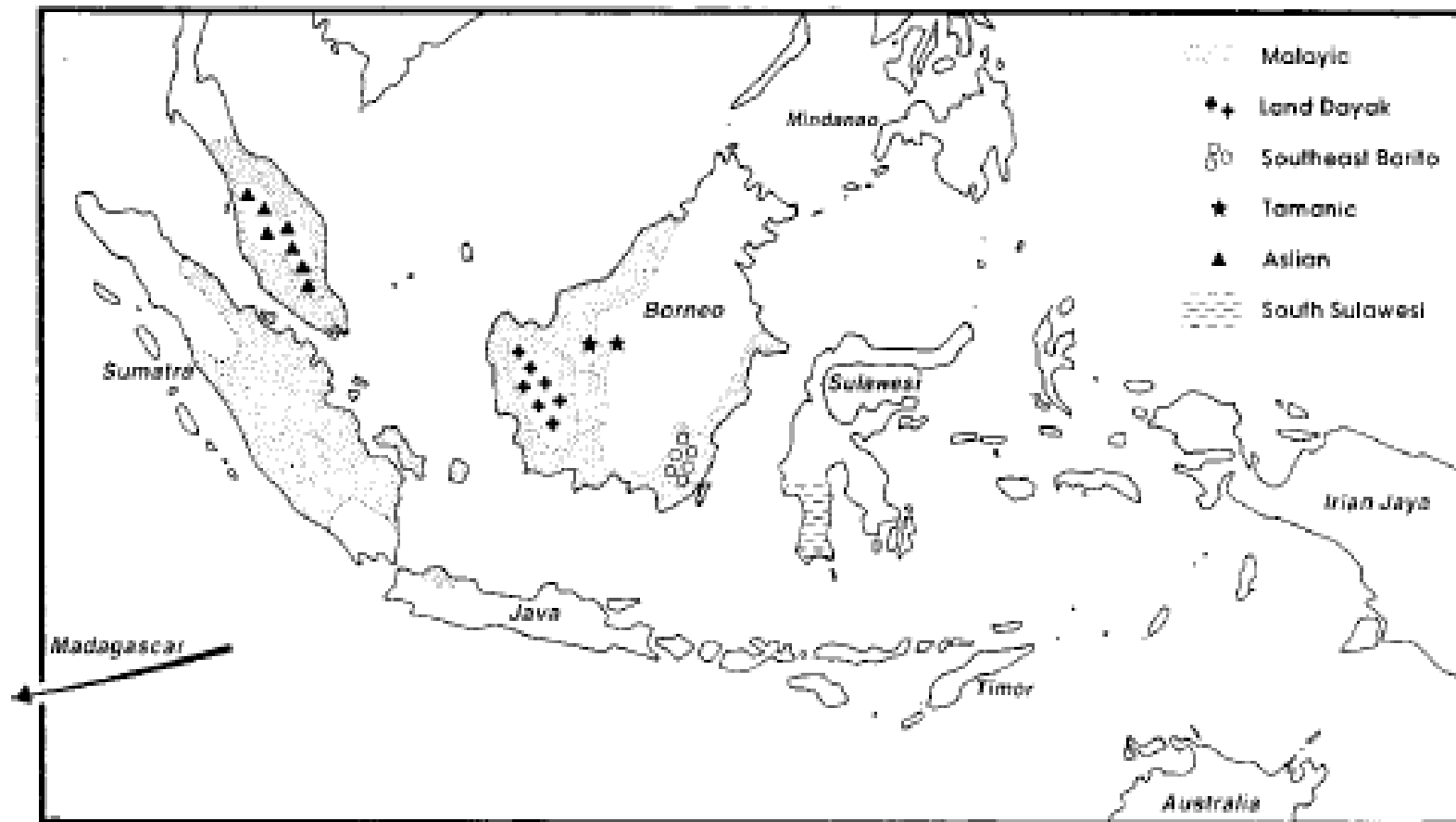
Figure 4 Distribution of pottery, economic plants and transported fauna across ISEA and adjacent regions 2500–4000 BP.

# Austronesian music among the Aslian



Sakai stamping tubes and nose-flute

# Bornean and Aslian languages



**Map 1: Borneo language subgroups and their relationships to exo-Bornean subgroups.**

# General conclusions

- Austroasiatic speakers, cultivating taro, making basket-impressed pottery and playing mouth-organs, have reached western Kalimantan and Palawan prior to Austronesian expansion
- The Austronesian speakers assimilate them and take over taro and many other things. A mixed AS/Austronesian culture develops and they sail on to peninsular Malaysia and Sumatra reflected in paddle-impressed pottery
- In Malaysia they meet resident Austroasiatic speakers (negritos? Or was this a subsequent assimilation?) and overwhelm them culturally, hence Austronesian features of Aslian culture
- In Sumatra they meet resident foragers but almost certainly other Austroasiatic-speaking groups
- A mixed linguistic culture develops on Sumatra
- Probably subsequent to this there is the Chamic (i.e. Austronesian ) expansion coming out of SW Kalimantan or a similar Malayic region about 2200 BP.
- This is reflected both in Chamic languages of Vietnam, in Acehese.
- Feathered men in canoes with bird –prows on Dong Son drums probably reflect the shock of this contact.

# Borneo connections: synthesis



# THANKS

- To Kay Williamson Educational Foundation for supporting fieldwork and my presence here
- To a wide variety of scholars for discussions over the years

