

# Between Mainland and Island Southeast Asia: Evidence for a Mon-Khmer presence in Borneo

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# Introduction

- ▶ The Austronesian (AN) and Austroasiatic (AA) families run in parallel through Southeast Asia, facing each other across the South China Sea.
- ▶ The Austronesians are traced to Taiwan roughly 6,000 BP. After 1,500-2,000 years of inhabiting Taiwan one group ventured southwards and ultimately gave rise to the roughly 1,200 Austronesian ethnolinguistic groups found outside of Taiwan from Madagascar to Easter Island. For obvious reasons,
- ▶ **Austronesians are identified as a maritime people par excellence.**
- ▶ Speakers of AA languages are thought to have been among the first rice agriculturalists of Southeast Asia. Their languages are spread from eastern India in the north to the Malaysian Peninsula and the Nicobar islands in the south.
- ▶ **Austroasiatics are identified as early agriculturalists and landlubbers par excellence.**

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- ▶ There have been two points of contact proposed for these families:
  - ▶ In distant pre-history, there may have been contact or even a phylogenetic relation between the two families before the Austronesians left the Asian mainland for Taiwan. The Austric hypothesis (Benedict 1975; Shorto 1975; Reid 1999) holds that Austroasiatic and Austronesian (and possibly other families of the mainland) all descend from a single ancestor.
  - ▶ When Austronesians arrived at Sumatra (~3,000 BP), they were thought to have come into contact with Austroasiatic populations in the Malay Peninsula.
- ▶ I have argued previously that linguistic evidence does not offer strong support for an ancient phylogenetic relationship between the two families.
- ▶ Here, I will argue that there exists much overlooked evidence for extensive contact between the families once Austronesians made their way to **Borneo**.

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- ▶ It has long been recognized that Malay/Indonesian contains several Mon-Khmer loans although these have never been investigated systematically. Mahdi (2008) cites the following forms: *panah* ‘arrow’, *kərbau* ‘water buffalo’, *perak* ‘silver’ (“borrowed during the Funan period from Old Khmer *prak*”), *elang* ‘eagle’, *kətam* ‘crab’, *ketiak* ‘armpit’, *lalang* ‘elephant grass’, *merak* ‘peacock’, *semut* ‘ant’
- ▶ These items are already suspicious for trade-based loans or inter-polity relations.

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- ▶ Note also that there has been much confusion about the time depth of this relationship.
- ▶ The first word in the list, *panah* ‘arrow’, can be reconstructed all the way back to Proto-Austronesian, spoken 6,000 years ago in Taiwan.
- ▶ Other words, like *kərbau* ‘water buffalo’ and *perak*, are found in the Philippines but seem to have spread secondarily from Malay at a far later period.
- ▶ Other words, like *elang* ‘eagle’, *kətam* ‘crab’, *səmut* ‘ant’, have a very restricted distribution, either being in Malay alone or a small number of Bornean languages.

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- ▶ The linguistic evidence shows clear signs of contact but the nature of the contact is still mysterious. Some possibilities:
  - ▶ The substrate scenario: Borneo was already populated by one or more AA speaking groups when the Austronesians entered the scene.
    - ▶ AA seafaring took place earlier than previously thought.
    - ▶ Borneo was part of an AA speaking mainland region before the rise of sea levels(!)
  - ▶ AA speakers were brought by Austronesians from the mainland (as spouses? as slaves?).
  - ▶ AA and AN populations had already been mixing previous to their arrival on Borneo in a “South China Interaction Zone” (ala Solheim).

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- ▶ What kind of data can help us establish an AA presence in Island Southeast Asia?
  - ▶ Language: the nature and distribution of AA vocabulary in AN languages
  - ▶ Genes: the presence of identifiable pockets of AA ancestry in Island Southeast Asia
  - ▶ Archeology and material culture: the nature and distribution of uniquely shared objects
- ▶ I focus here on language but will present what we know about the genetic and archeological picture as well

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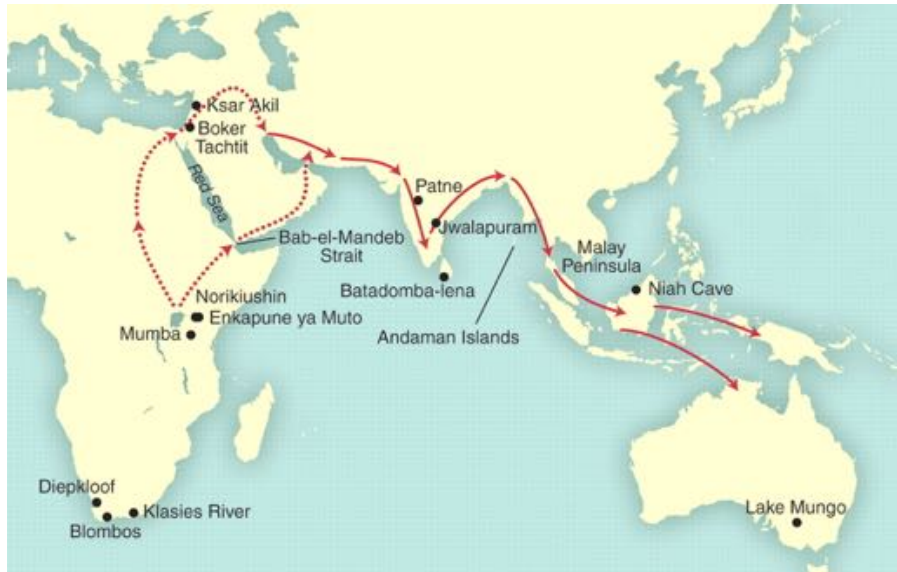
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(Mellars 2006)



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- ▶ Humans first settle Borneo between 35,000 to 40,000 BP. The pre-Austronesian population is often said to have been of “Australoid” or “Australo-Melanesian” stock (King 1993:61).
- ▶ As noted by King, unlike other parts of Island Southeast Asia, there are no clear representatives of “Australoid” populations in Borneo and they are presumed to have been completely displaced by the Austronesians (but see Sellato 1980).
- ▶ “All the evidence suggests that in Borneo and throughout the island region the pre-Austronesian economy was based on hunting and gathering.” (King 1993:67)

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Niah cave was occupied by hunter gatherers until ~8,000 years ago and then abandoned until the arrival of neolithic farmers 4,000 ago.



(Starlightchild CC BY-SA 3.0,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15548430>)

# Who are the

## “Australoids/Aslians/Negritos/Ayta/Agta”?

- ▶ These populations go by a number of poorly chosen names and have been at the center of speculation for several centuries.
- ▶ The only thing uniting them is an approximate phenotype and an (approximate) hunter-gatherer life style.
- ▶ Today, they are distributed in several parts of the Philippines, Sumatra, the Malaysian Peninsula, Thailand and environs.
- ▶ Because they are not a discrete genetic, linguistic, or cultural group, they are often grouped together with Andaman Islanders, Papuans, and even Australian Aborigines.

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# Satun, Thailand



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Who are the “Australoids/Aslians/Negritos/Ayta/Agta”?

- ▶ “Australoid” populations in the Philippines speak Austronesian languages and those on the mainland speak Austroasiatic languages.
- ▶ Their original languages in these areas were replaced almost without a trace (but see Reid 1994a,b).
- ▶ However, they maintain a lifestyle that is more heavily dependent on hunting and foraging in contrast to their neighbors.

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# The Austronesians

- ▶ The Austronesians are responsible for one of the greatest human migrations and expansions in the world, diversifying into over 1,200 language groups and spanning half the globe, from Madagascar to Easter Island.
- ▶ Their origins are now uncontroversially traced to Taiwan ~6,000 years ago.
- ▶ (More controversial: What does it mean to **be** Austronesian?)

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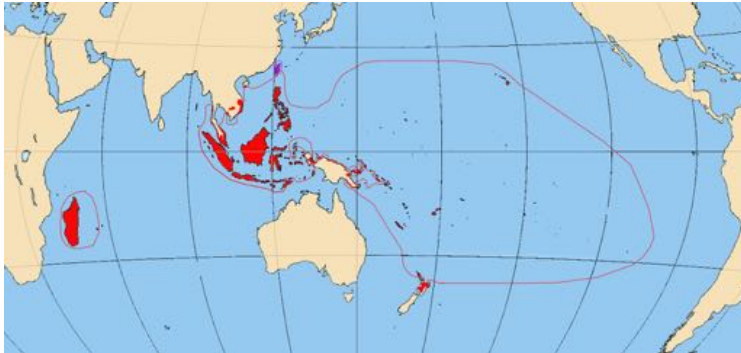
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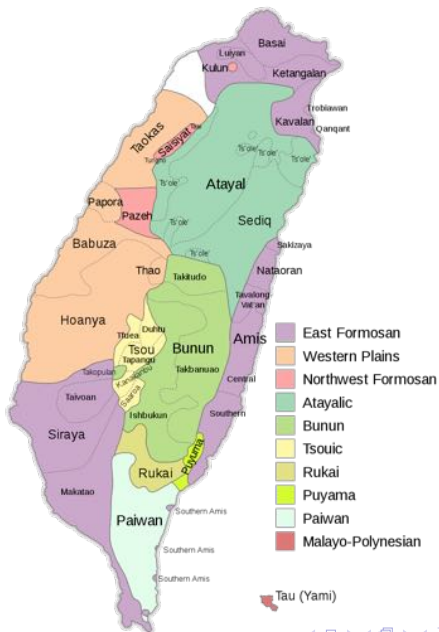
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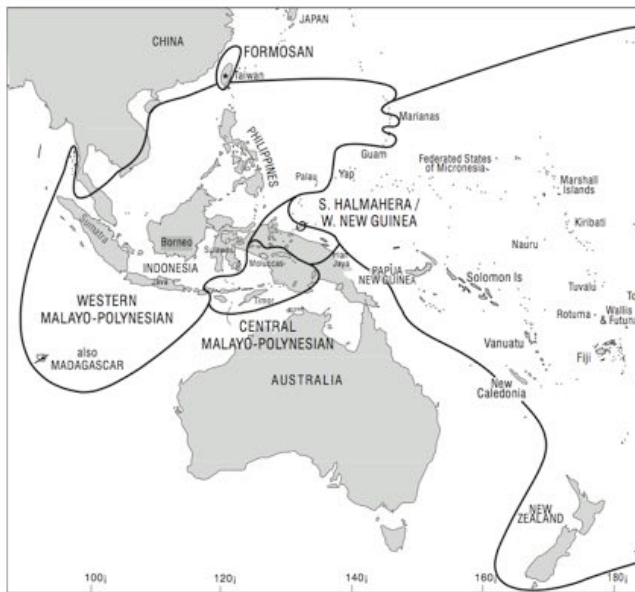
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Map 6.1 The Austronesian family and major Austronesian language groups

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- ▶ The Austronesians are thought to have inhabited Taiwan for ~2,000 years before sailing southwards in what would be the beginning of their long expansion.
- ▶ Rapid spread from the Philippines the Indonesia/Malaysia region.
- ▶ The standard view argued for by Peter Bellwood (2013) and Bob Blust is that Austronesians brought with them domesticated pigs, dogs and chickens as well as rice agriculture and that their spread was facilitated by farming.
- ▶ On this view, the spread of Austronesian languages was due almost entirely to a technology-driven **demic expansion**.

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# The Austroasiatics

- ▶ First rice farmers enter MSEA in second millennium BCE. Population explosion around 2700 BCE at the same time as rice farmers expand into Southern China.
- ▶ Laurent Sagart and others have argued on linguistic grounds that AA people must have been responsible for some of the earliest rice cultivation.
- ▶ Various words relating to rice cultivation (rice plant, bran, outer husk, dibbling stick) can be traced to Proto-AA.

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# The Austroasiatics

- ▶ Most modern AA languages are spoken by small groups spread throughout MSEA, with the exception of Khmer, Vietnamese and some of the larger Munda languages of India.
- ▶ The history, origins and subgrouping of AA are not nearly as well understood as Austronesian although Paul Sidwell and others are making progress on these questions.

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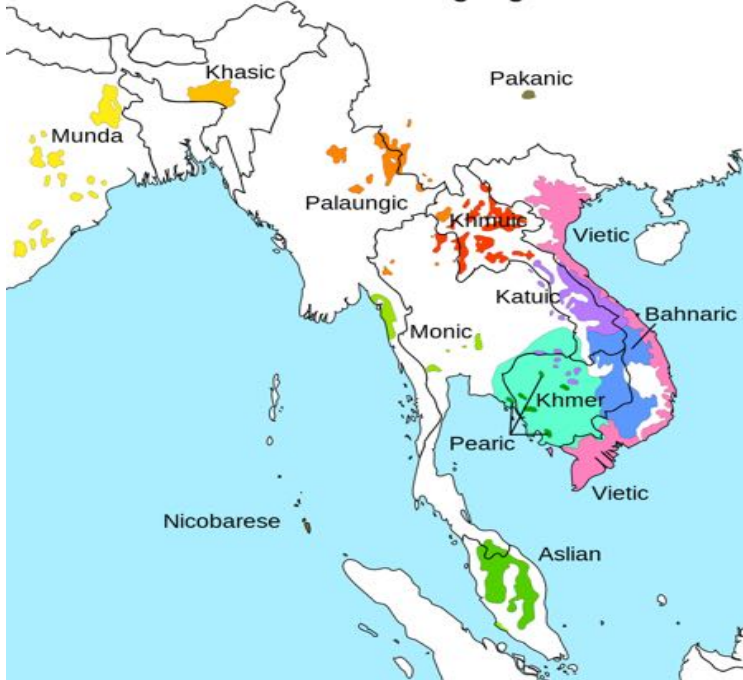
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# The Austroasiatics

- ▶ When the AN speakers expand southwards and westwards towards the mainland, they inevitably encounter AA speakers. Where did this happen?
- ▶ It happened most dramatically in Champa.

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## AA/AN contact: Chamic

- ▶ Champa was founded by an AN-speaking population in 2nd century CE on the Vietnamese coast and continued as a polity until the 19th century.
- ▶ Chamic languages are still spoken in modern Vietnam and the island of Hainan.
- ▶ Thurgood (1999) details the history of the Chamic language and delineates the various sources of Chamic words.
- ▶ It is widely accepted that Chamic is related closely to Malay and Acehnese although how they achieved their present locations is debated.

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## AA/AN contact: Chamic

- ▶ It is also clear that Chamic underwent considerable restructuring over time under the influence of surrounding Bahnaric and Katuic languages.
- ▶ Thurgood (1999:65) cites the following examples of reduction:

<b>PMP</b>		<b>Chru (Chamic)</b>
<i>*daRaq</i>	>	<i>drah</i>
<i>*bulu</i>	>	<i>bləu</i>
<i>*paqit</i>	>	<i>phi:?</i>

- ▶ Chru has created monosyllables from disyllabic words. It's also created a new set of onset clusters: *dr*, *bl* and a set of aspirated stops *p<sup>h</sup>*. It has reduced the number of possible codas (syllable final consonants). Finally, it has stretched out the final syllable (in these cases the only syllable) to make it long.

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- ▶ Thurgood's overall assessment of the contact situation:

*“The restructuring of Chamic lexicon and phonology both provide eloquent testimony to the intensity and the intimacy of the Austronesian contact with MK. Lexically, of the roughly 700 forms Lee (1966) reconstructed for PC, Headley (1976) identified roughly 10% of them as MK in origin – and, 10% is a conservative figure. Included among the MK incorporated early enough to be incorporated into PC are basic vocabulary including pronouns, and a number of kinship terms. The fact that these reconstruct to PC shows that the early contact was intense and intimate, suggesting both considerable bilingualism and intermarriage.” (Thurgood 1999:61)*

- ▶ Anthropological evidence connecting Borneo to the mainland:
  - ▶ the presence of longhouses, which are known on the mainland but very uncommon in ISEA,
  - ▶ apparent reversion to nomadism!
- ▶ Linguistic evidence for Austronesian/Austroasiatic contact was thought to be largely restricted to MSEA, the Malaysian peninsula and N. Sumatra.
- ▶ Still no decisive linguistic evidence for a Bornean *substratum*.

- ▶ Roger Blench has recently adduced new arguments for an AA substrate in Borneo from agricultural history, material culture, and nine apparent loans:

# Material culture (Blench 2011)



Photo 1. Orang Ulu mouth-organ, Sarawak Museum



Photo 2. Vietnamese mouth organ, Institute of Musicology, Hanoi

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- ▶ A bit more investigation revealed that both the Kayan pipe and certain mainland models also employ six tubes.
- ▶ Kayan: *klerdi*
- ▶ Tampuan: *khlai* ‘panpipes with 9 pipes’ (Cro2004:C:2473-1N)
- ▶ We can also consider the relation between another instrument.



- ▶ But this is complicated by:
  - ▶ the *kacapi* of Jawi, a zither
  - ▶ the *kecapi* of South Sulawesi, a small 2-string lute
  - ▶ the *kudyapi*’/*kutyapi*’ of the Philippines, a 2 string lute
  - ▶ The distribution of the k- initial form follows Malay trade patterns. The *sape*’ appears to represent an independent connection to the mainland. The final *e* vowel is also crucial here.

# Linguistic evidence for Austroasiatic contact

- ▶ Alexander Adelaar (1995) is cited as the most explicit claim for a substratum.
- ▶ He notes lexical and phonological similarities between the Land Dayak languages of Borneo and the Austroasiatic Aslian languages of the Malaysian Peninsula.
- ▶ But this is based on just two lexemes (for ‘die’ and ‘bathe’) as well as “preploded nasals”.

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*“Although it is evidently far too early to make any sort of inference about the history of Land Dayak, there are some similarities between this group and some of the Orang Asli languages which are striking enough to be mentioned, and which are certainly a topic for further investigation. One is the presence of a series of nasally released stops, or, as they are also called, “preploded nasals” [...] Preploded nasals are not uncommon in other languages, but the change of final nasals to nasally released stops seems to be an areal feature which is typical for the languages of mainland Southeast Asia and some parts of Sumatra and Borneo.” (Adelaar 1995a:93-5)*

# The distribution of preploded nasals

- ▶ Nasal consonants: m, n, ŋ  
Oral consonants: p, t, k  
Preploded nasal consonants: <sup>p</sup>m, <sup>t</sup>n, <sup>k</sup>ŋ
- ▶ Typically, in languages that have this feature, a nasal consonant is “preploded” or “prestopped” when the preceding vowel is not nasal, e.g. /cium/ → [ciu<sup>p</sup>m]
- ▶ When the preceding vowel is nasal, no prepllosion occurs, e.g. /amun/ → [amũn]
- ▶ Similar alternations under similar conditions are found in AA languages.

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- ▶ In fact, there are far more features to add to the mix:
- ▶ Phonological areal features:
  - ▶ prestopped nasals (Adelaar 1995b; Blust 1997)
  - ▶ large number of vowels
  - ▶ imploded stops (although not unique to area)
  - ▶ monosyllabicization
  - ▶ heavy final syllables through epenthesis of glottal stops and vowel breaking (Thurgood 1999:308)
  - ▶ historically contrastive nasalization(?)
- ▶ Morphosyntactic areal features:
  - ▶ SVO word order
  - ▶ simplification of the voice system (after the Malagasy departure)
  - ▶ loss of tense/aspect marking
  - ▶ general move towards isolating type

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- ▶ There is a further piece of evidence in the number of “Pan-Bornean near cognates” identified by Smith (2017).
- ▶ These are lexemes distributed throughout Borneo that have neither an Austronesian etymology nor regular sound correspondences across the relevant languages and thus cannot be reconstructed.
- ▶ Concerning these, Smith states:

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*“There is one scenario involving a non-Austronesian source which has the potential to explain the phonological differences found in near-cognates. If there were non-Austronesian languages in Borneo at one time, they would have had cognates with regular sound correspondences among themselves. It could be that different Austronesian speaking communities borrowed cognate words from different subgroups of a non-Austronesian family in Borneo. This in turn would give rise to identical forms of similar shape in widely separated Austronesian languages. After the last non-Austronesian languages in Borneo were lost, what was left was several sets of words in Austronesian languages with similar shapes but irreconcilable differences in sound correspondences from an Austronesian point of view. This scenario, however, is speculative, and it cannot be stressed enough that this chapter does not endorse such a view without the presence of positive evidence from a non-Austronesian source language. Such evidence does not appear to exist. [...]”*  
(Smith 2017:318)

# Linguistic evidence for MK contact in Borneo

- ▶ Two common angles regarding MK etyma in Indonesia:
- ▶ For Malay, these words must have arrived through relation between states or other polities, probably through trade, with hints towards Khmer itself as the source.
- ▶ For (other) languages of Borneo, these words may have come from a pre-Austronesian “Aslian” population.

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- ▶ The evidence presented here suggests that neither the Khmer trading scenario nor the Aslian substrate scenario account for MK vocabulary in Austronesian languages.
- ▶ The Khmer words are not the best matches phonologically and the semantic domains of the loan words are not what one would expect from a trade relationship. Even the well-known ‘twin’ word does not have a good match in Khmer.
- ▶ Many etyma most resemble cognates in the Bahnaric and Katuic subgroups of Mon-Khmer without any documented cognates in Aslian languages.
- ▶ Adelaar’s language shift scenario appears correct but the substrate may not have been related very closely to any documented AA language.

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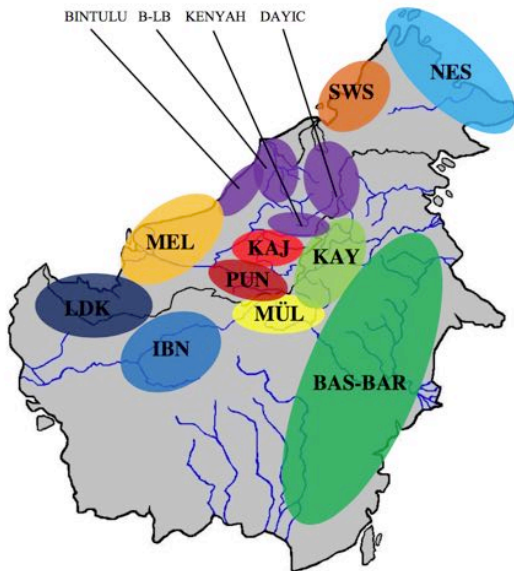
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# Bornean languages before the 1800's (Smith 2017:417)



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# The data (handout)

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# Making sense of the data

- ▶ In a recent presentation on Nicobarese, Paul Sidwell concluded by asking if AA settlement of the Nicobar islands could have been associated with early Chamic migration out of MSEA that settled Aceh or with earlier maritime activity in the Andaman Sea.
- ▶ We find ourselves asking precisely the same question with regard to Borneo. Was the AA presence there related to Funan or Chamic polities or was it far earlier.

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- ▶ Blench (2011) posits these pre-historic migration routes:



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# Making sense of the data

- ▶ Archeological evidence for a migration in Chamic times includes the distribution of Sa Huynh ceramics. Bellwood (1985:276) draws a connection from this between Cham and North Borneo.
- ▶ But these items are also found in Philippines in areas without any trace of AA populations.

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# The historical scene: Funan and Champa

- ▶ The earliest “state” in the relevant area is Funan, an Indianized state established at the turn of the common era and continuing until 550 CE when it was overtaken by one of its vassal states, Chenla, a Khmer kingdom.
- ▶ We cannot yet say whether the Funan were essentially an AA or AN speaking people because all surviving inscriptions are in Sanskrit.

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# The historical scene: Funan and Champa

- ▶ Blust, Thurgood and others have argued for an AN identity - could this be the key to understanding the Borneo link to the mainland?
- ▶ Vickery casts doubt on the AN story:

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*“Among the details in the description of Tun-sun were that it had five kings, and that the language was “a little bit different from that of Funan”. 54 I once wrote that if the early historical studies of Cambodia had been dominated by Mon-Khmer linguists, rather than Indologists and Sanskritists, progress in the field would have been much different, and here is an example. It now seems certain that “the Chinese graphs [for ’Tun-sun’] were a transcription of a Proto-Mon \*duñ sun, meaning ‘five cities’ [literally ‘cities five’]”, and if the language was only a little different from that of Funan, the latter must have been, if not Khmer, at least a type of Mon-Khmer. (Vickery 2003:112)*

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- ▶ Vickery also notes that the Malaysian peninsula in Funan times was most likely inhabited by speakers of an Austroasiatic languages related to Aslian.
- ▶ Evidence from several areas suggests that Malay speakers are relative newcomers to Malaysian peninsula.
- ▶ AN languages/dialects of the Malaysian Peninsula are relatively uniform.
- ▶ The nomadic interior populations all speak AA languages.

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# The historical scene: Funan and Champa

- ▶ It is thus unlikely that Borneo was part of an earlier AN-AA kingdom based on the mainland.
- ▶ It is unclear what type of traffic existed between Cham and Borneo.
- ▶ Most importantly, the linguistic evidence does not show that the MK influence was *uniform*.
- ▶ Even Cham and Acehnese, which are supposed to be closely related, do not share the same AA vocabulary!
- ▶ This suggests that AA influence was *ongoing* and *local to ISEA*.

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- ▶ There were **three** layers of settlement in Borneo: Australoid, Austroasiatic, followed by Austronesian.
- ▶ AA populations probably arrived independently of Austronesians.
- ▶ Prolonged bilingualism could have led to the features we see in the modern AN languages of Borneo.
- ▶ The enriched set of comparisons allows us to safely dispose of the kingdom-to-kingdom hypothesis for AA loans in Malay (Tadmor 2009:693) as well as the Aslian hypothesis (Adelaar 1995a:93-5).

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- ▶ The South China Sea was thought to represent a barrier between Austronesian and Austroasiatic peoples with only occasional slippage (Aceh, Chamic, etc.). The real barrier is one of scholarship: there are virtually no scholars with expertise in both Austronesian and Austroasiatic families.
- ▶ Austronesianists have tacitly accepted the idea that Borneo is a natural hotspot for linguistic innovation.
- ▶ But radical innovation is very often contact-induced and Borneo looks like another such case.

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## ► Demic diffusion vs. culture spread:

*Bellina (2017:246) “Solheim and Bulbeck see a trans-ethnic trading and communication network which ended up producing a common culture and an Austronesian lingua franca whose main incentive was trade (Solheim 2006). Recently, Bulbeck (2008) suggested that the Austronesian-speaking traders were, thanks to their advances in navigation technology, highly mobile fisher-foragers entering a previously existing Austro-Asiatic interaction sphere. Bulbeck (ibid.), Blench (2012) and Soares et al. (2016) disconnect the movements of Austronesian-speakers from agriculture. Blench opposes an alternative view whereby the so-called “Austronesian cultural package” is a late construction made from elements that Austronesian speakers integrated opportunistically from the various pre-existing populations they encountered on their way, a long process he calls “austronesianization”. For him, a pan-Austronesian religion and trade were the incentive of this cultural harmonization.”*

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- ▶ The patterns we find do *not* at all suggest a creole/trade-language.
- ▶ A “pan-Austronesian religion” is also far-fetched.
- ▶ They are consistent with mobile AN fisher-foragers entering a previous AA agriculture + foraging sphere.

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