INTRODUCTION

There are four papers in this proceedings having to do specifically with the origins of the Austronesian speakers and the Austronesian language family plus a fifth indirectly concerned with the same subject (Bellwood, Blust, Meacham, this paper, and Reid). While there is considerable agreement between some of these papers, no two are in full accord and there is major disagreement between one of the papers and two others. Does this mean that either the one is wrong or the other two are wrong? I think this is not necessarily so and that there may be a generally unnoticed factor that is disturbing our interpretations. Bellwood has gone into this to some extent.

There is an inherent misunderstanding in the subject of "Austronesian" origins, since in the way it is usually considered it concerns three different subjects, not just one. While there is probably a positive correlation in the present distribution and in the history of "Austronesian" as seen for the three subjects there is no doubt not a 100 percent correlation between any two of the three. "Austronesian" is the name of a very old and widespread language family; it is neither a people nor a culture. Many authors in writing on "The Austronesians" are referring at the same time to the language family, the people who speak or spoke languages belonging to this family, and often as well to the culture of one or more of the ethnic groups that speak an Austronesian language.

Bellwood, in his paper in this issue, states that "The question of Austronesian origins is basically a linguistic question, since the taxon itself is a linguistic construct." This statement is a bit off the mark as the question is not basically but totally a linguistic question. If we were able to locate, without question, a distinct homeland of Austronesian, this homeland might only partially overlap the homeland of a culture which was, in part, ancestral to the cultures found today in the areas where Austronesian languages are spoken. As Bellwood has pointed out, the Austronesian languages have been influenced by non-Austronesian languages and the same is certainly true of the cultures held by the many speakers of the different Austronesian languages and of the people speaking these languages. They have been influenced in differing ways by cultures held by non-Austronesian speakers and have had genetic input from peoples who were not Austronesian speakers.
If it were necessary in our studies to be purists it would be necessary to study Austronesian, and its origins, using only linguistic data; to study the origins, spread, and evolution of the cultures of the ethnic groups today speaking Austronesian languages we could only use archaeological data; and to study the biological origins, evolution, and spread of the people making up the ethnic groups today speaking Austronesian languages could only be done through physical anthropology. If we were to proceed in this way, however, we could probably never reconstruct anyone of these three subjects. For purposes of prehistory all three subjects must be taken into account and their results combined. Apparent disagreements in interpretation by two of the fields, of an assumed single event, should be defined and then studied by both fields to find an interpretation that would fit in both fields. There are, of course, many other disciplines which are of somewhat lesser value in reconstructing prehistory.

TRADITIONAL HYPOTHESES

I do not attempt a detailed review of all earlier hypotheses that have been generally accepted or not accepted by archaeologists and prehistorians interested in Southeast Asia and the Pacific but review briefly some of those better known over the last 25 years. All of these hypotheses consider eastern South China, or neighboring northern Viet Nam, as the homeland of the Austronesian languages and speakers. They differ in their routes of spread into and through Southeast Asia and the Pacific island world.

The best known, and longest held, of these hypotheses was that of Robert Heine-Geldern, presented first in 1932 with his better-known additions and changes to this in 1937, 1951, 1958, 1966, and 1974 (see also Skinner 1957). He felt that from the South China homeland the Austronesian speakers spread south across "Indo-China," down the Malay Peninsula, then into western Indonesia by 2000 B.C. From there he proposed that they spread eastward dividing into two branches east of Java, one moving northward through Sulawesi, into the Philippines and Taiwan with ultimately a small number reaching Japan, and the other continuing to the east and out into the Pacific.

Two post-Second World War hypotheses had the Philippines as their first Island Southeast Asia stopping point before moving into the Pacific. H. Otley Beyer (Beyer and de Veyra 1947:2, 6–9; Beyer 1948: 28–37) hypothesized several different movements (waves of migration) of Austronesian speakers from South China and northern Viet Nam over to the Philippines. He considered that a new adze type (the Luzon Adze with a central ridge, leading to a differentiated or tanged butt) was developed in the Philippines and was carried by the first migrants into western Polynesia. William Howells (1973:256–257) proposed that from a South China homeland the Austronesian speakers sailed to the Philippines and from there went southeast to Melanesia, but not as far as Fiji, and east to Micronesia as far as the Gilberts, between 4000 and 2000 B.C., and that from 2000 to 1000 B.C. they moved from the Gilberts through the Ellice Islands to eastern Melanesia, including Fiji. Earlier workers had proposed similar movements to those of Beyer and Howells.

Thor Heyerdahl (1964) presented a unique proposal with the original homeland in coastal South China or northern Viet Nam. From here he had the Austronesian speakers move east to the Japan current along the west coast of Luzon, Philippines, north and east with the current between Luzon and Taiwan, northeast past the southeastern coasts of southern and central Japan, across the North Pacific and then south along the west coast.
of Canada to the neighborhood of Vancouver. Some stopped there while others continued south and then west where the Japan current joins the westerly current at around 20° north, then out to Hawaii. Micronesia and the rest of Polynesia were then populated from Hawaii according to this hypothesis. (For more information on these currents see Voitov and Tumarkin 1967.)

The current, widely accepted, hypothesis was proposed by Richard Shutler and Jeffrey Marck (1975) and since has been supported by Peter Bellwood (1984–1985), and Robert Blust (1984–1985), all working from a linguistic foundation (see Blust article this issue for a brief review of the linguistic hypotheses of Austronesian origins). The original presentation was based on a linguistic subdivision of the Austronesian languages by Marck. This hypothesis has the first movement of Austronesian or Pre-Austronesian speakers from South China to Taiwan, around 6000 years ago, then south through the Philippines and from the southern Philippines moving both west, to spread the related ancestral languages of Indonesia, and east into Island Melanesia. From there they moved further east to Tonga, Samoa, and east for the rest of Polynesia, and north for Micronesia. I am in general disagreement with all of these, but only for the very beginning.

THE NUSANTAO HYPOTHESIS

I first proposed the name Nusantao (people of the island homeland) for the Austronesian speakers, and their origin in southeastern Island Southeast Asia, in 1975 (151–158). The purpose for introducing this term was to provide a name for the people who spoke, and speak, Austronesian in place of the rather awkward "Austronesian speakers." Also, it was to provide a name based on Austronesian roots rather than Indo-European roots (Ibid.:158). This did not eliminate the problem examined above as it referred both to the culture and to the people, though not to the language. I will modify my definition of "Nusantao" below, after examining several factors involved in my new use of this term.

I have hypothesized (Ibid.:152) that Austric were spoken throughout Southeast Asia, including Sundaland, during the Late Pleistocene. With the raising sea levels and conversion of Sundaland into the islands of today, the eastern third of Southeast Asia became separated from the western and northern two-thirds, isolating the speakers in the east from those to the west and north (Solheim 1975:156). Here I add to this hypothesis that this isolation led to Pre-Austrasian developing on the mainland and Sumatra and Pre-Austronesian developing in eastern Indonesian and southern Philippine islands. Those people to the west on the mainland and Sumatra would become more land oriented relative to those on the east, who would become more marine oriented as their land turned into many islands, often in sight of each other. If this hypothesis is correct, the next question is where, within this considerable area, did the next step in this development take place. At this point it is worth looking at reconstruction of Proto-Austronesian to see what this can tell us about the physical surroundings of the Austronesian homeland.

From their reconstruction of Proto-Austronesian Pawley and Green (1973:35–36), among other things, had the following to say about the culture of its speakers:

They had a mixed economy, based on agriculture and fishing, but supplemented by hunting and arboriculture. Cultivated crops included taro, yams, banana, sugarcane, breadfruit, coconut, the aroids Cytosperma and Alocasia, sago, and (probably) rice. . . . They sailed outrigger canoes. Their tools were of stone, wood and shell. . . .
Blust, in his paper in this issue, has presented evidence that the Austronesian homeland was not in a tropical but in a subtropical area, "consistent with a homeland in Taiwan or the adjacent mainland of China. . ." Pawley and Green (Ibid.:35) arrive at Proto-Austronesian reconstructions by restricting themselves "to reconstructions which are represented in both western Austronesian and Oceanic languages." Blust (personal communication), on the other hand, reconstructs Proto-Austronesian by restricting himself to reconstructions which are represented in both Formosan languages and non-Formosan, Austronesian languages. This depends on the assumption that the Formosan languages were the first to break off, or become isolated, from the developing line of Austronesian. I would agree with this assumption. What I do not agree with is that this necessarily makes Taiwan the homeland of Austronesian.

I have previously pointed out that the archaeological data, with its rather insecure dating, suggest that the technology for the blade and blade-like stone tools of the southern and central Philippines was brought north from eastern Indonesia, reaching Palawan by 5000 B.C. but never reaching northern Philippines or Taiwan and that shortly after this the technique of edge-grinding of stone tools was also brought northward from eastern Indonesia (Solheim 1981:25-30; n.d. a). From the above list we see that shell tools were a part of the tool kit of the Nusantao who spoke Proto-Austronesian. Shell tools, including edge-ground adzes, dating to the fifth millennium B.C. and earlier, have been reported from sites in Palawan and southern Mindanao, as well as from islands in eastern Indonesia but with no dating there (Solheim 1976a:35-37). A modest variety of shell tools, made on operculum, have been recovered from O-Luan-Pi Park at the southern tip of Taiwan (Li 1983b:Pls. 30-31). These are from what Li (Ibid.:79) calls OLP Prehistoric Cultural Phase I, dating from about 3000 B.C. I have noted a few shell tools from sites in coastal Fujian of neolithic provenience, in the Fujian Provincial Museum. I see no reason why the use of shell to make tools would be developed in a mainland location where stone, much easier to work than shell, would be readily available. I have not seen shell adzes among these tools from Taiwan and China. The site of Sham Wan, in Hong Kong, is the best-reported site in English from coastal South China and was more or less continually in use back to around 4000 B.C. No shell tools have been found in this site, or others of the same dating in Hong Kong (Meacham 1978). This would suggest that this shell tool tradition started on small islands in the south, where good stone for such tools was hard to find, and was brought in part north into areas where good stone was available. The use of shell for adzes and other sorts of shell tools not found in the north did not move as far north. I have earlier hypothesized that the tool kit of the early Nusantao, in their homeland, included a flaked stone and shell industry (1976a:37-39, 1979:196, 1981:28-30), and here suggest edge-ground stone and shell as well.

I have hypothesized that Proto-Austronesian developed primarily in Mindanao and northeastern Indonesia (Solheim 1976a:36-37, 1976b:138) and was carried north by a developing maritime population through the Philippine Islands to Taiwan, and across to South China and then north and south along the coast. I now change this from Proto-Austronesian to Pre-Austronesian which was carried north through Mindanao and the Visayan Islands and probably southern Luzon, and would add that this had been done by 5000 B.C. The Pre-Austronesian included the Proto-Austronesian words for sugarcane, which appears to have been domesticated in New Guinea (Yen 1984:319), shell tools, and possibly the vocabulary concerned with the outrigger canoe complex (see Blust, this issue).
I now hypothesize that Proto-Austronesian developed as the trade language—perhaps better called a barter language as trade infers capitalization which would not have been present—among the maritime Nusantao along the coasts of northern Luzon, southern Taiwan, and South China, between 4500 and 5000 B.C. Austronesian then developed among this maritime people, possibly serving at first as a barter language. I hypothesize that these people intermarried with coastal people making a distinct coastal population along the western shore of the South China Sea where safe anchorage and fresh water were available, with words in this barter language from both the southern area and the northern mainland for plants such as sugarcane and rice. Soon after this development Taiwan became relatively isolated and its Austronesian languages evolved locally with relatively little input from outside. On the other hand the subregionally developing Austronesian languages, now Proto-Malayo-Polynesian, maintained contact with each other through the maritime-oriented Nusantao and evolved away from each other more slowly.

This hypothesis would fit with Blust's Table 1 (this issue), with the Formosan and Malayo-Polynesian languages developing out of the parent Austronesian at the same time, with neither one developing out of the other. If ancestral Thai speakers were along the coast of South China, say in the neighborhood of the mouth of the Pearl River, the spread of the Proto-Austronesian language by the Nusantao along the coast of South China would have provided the possibility for the development of Austro-Thai sometime around 5000 B.C. or shortly thereafter.

Proto-Malayo Polynesian would then filter south through the Philippines among the closely related Pre-Austronesian speakers, carried by the maritime Nusantao. A Proto-Austronesian language would also move south along the coast of Viet Nam until sometime around 3500 B.C. when from the southeastern-facing coast of Viet Nam its Nusantao bearers discover the currents and seasonal winds to cross over to Palawan and the Calamianes Islands of the western Philippines during the summer monsoon and over to western Borneo during the winter season. There the two branches of the Nusantao, by now speaking different but related Austronesian languages, could have come together and continued south, east, and west carrying, possibly, two major variants of Nusantao culture and related but somewhat different Austronesian languages. This hypothesis would also have Nusantao movement of an exploring/bartering nature north from the South China coast to southern Korea and Kyushu, Japan.

My major reason for leaving Taiwan out of the movement of Austronesian is the very difficult channels between Luzon and Taiwan. During the winter the winds are so strong from the northeast that no sailors would venture out unless they were protected by land to the northeast. During the summer both winds and currents are going north so it would not be a problem to move north from the Philippines to Taiwan before the typhoon season starts, but it would be difficult to move south. During the change of seasons the winds would not be bad, but the currents are always running to the north. It is not impossible to sail between Taiwan and Luzon, but it is very difficult, and it is much easier to sail north from Luzon to Taiwan (Maps 1 to 4). I also feel that what archaeological data we have that suggest movement in any one direction in eastern Island Southeast Asia point to movement from eastern Indonesia north. Whatever the case, I do not feel that we have sufficient archaeological data to be certain as to the homeland of either Austronesian or the Nusantao but I do feel that the data are stronger for my hypothesis than they are for Taiwan as the homeland of both Austronesian and the Austronesian speakers. Also, my interpretation of the Taiwan archaeological data does not suggest any close connection with northern Luzon.
Map 1. Prevailing surface currents—spring, between Taiwan and Luzon. These four maps were taken from a term paper by Ms. Sae Kusaka in 1986. She adapted them from maps of the U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval Oceanographic Office Special Publications.

Map 2. Prevailing surface currents—summer.
Map 3. Prevailing surface currents—autumn.

Map 4. Prevailing surface currents—winter.
Bellwood (1985:216, 223) feels that rice agriculture was one of the driving forces in the early expansion of the Austronesian speakers. He (Ibid.:239) postulates a first stage of “Austronesian expansion, centered in southern China, Taiwan and the northern Philippines, and commencing from 4500 B.C.” He (Ibid.:216) identifies the first Austronesian presence in Taiwan as the Tâ-p’en-k’eng culture and states: “Hence the Tâ-p’en-k’eng culture is of enormous importance as a potential record of the oldest stage of Austronesian society which can be identified on linguistic grounds (that is Initial Austronesian).” I would question whether the Tâ-p’en-k’eng people spoke Initial Austronesian or any Austronesian related language; but I fear the corded-ware sherds of this culture do not speak to us in any language. In any case, he (Ibid.:223) feels that rice and/or millet was brought in from South China by these first Austronesian speakers. Yet the earliest reasonably definite evidence for rice in Taiwan is from the site of K’en-ting, at the southern end of Taiwan where three sherds were found with impressions of possible rice husk (Li 1983b:105), and dated to around 4000 B.P. From present evidence rice does not appear to have been in Taiwan much before 4000 years ago and then was not common, hardly a driving force. Another point of interest, Tê-Tzu Chang (this issue) says that the rice of northern Luzon and of the mountain tribes in Taiwan, until two decades ago, was the javanica race which probably evolved in Java and moved north from there. This, of course, may or may not have been the first rice in these areas. The earliest rice so far reported from a site in the Philippines comes from a site in the northern Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon. T–T. Chang reports that this rice is “intermediate between cultivated rice . . . and its immediate wild relatives . . .” and has been dated at about 3400 B.P. (Snow and Shutler 1986:4–5). This is too late to help us with our origin problem.

A study of myths of agricultural origins by Obayashi (1985:162–164) distinguishes a Hainuwele Mytholgue, at first concerning the origins of cereals, found “widely and densely distributed in the Austronesian-speaking areas. Non-Austronesian areas where this mythologem is found are mostly adjacent to the Austronesian ones.” This form of myth is absent in Taiwan. Obayashi (Ibid.:163) also remarks on pile-dwellings being absent in Taiwan. Bellwood (1985:114) does not include pile dwellings in his list of early Austronesian terms having to do with houses and their contents. Yet pile dwellings were common at Hemudu (CPAM 1978:94), the Chinese site with the earliest yet known domesticated rice (in coastal South China), and are widely found in other Austronesian speaking areas of Southeast Asia, as well as non-Austronesian speaking areas on the mainland.

I have previously discussed at some length the possible relationship between the Nusantao of eastern Indonesia and the southern Philippines to reach Melanesia and Micronesia (Solheim 1976b). There is much new data from all of these areas so that much more could be said on this matter now but I wish to bring up only one problem here. I also remarked sometime ago (1975:149) in referring to the Sa-huyhn–Kalanay pottery and the Lapita pottery that “The meaning of the relationship of the two pottery traditions is vital for the understanding of the culture history of the Austronesian-speaking peoples.” I feel that no one else has considered this matter. When early Lapita pottery in Melanesia was dated back into the second millennium B.C. with no dates that early for the Sa-huyhn–Kalanay pottery, at that time it was pointed out that the Sa-huyhn–Kalanay pottery could not be ancestral to the Lapita pottery and others lost their interest in a possible relationship between the two. Yet it is obvious that there is
great similarity in form and considerable sharing of elements of design between the two pottery traditions (Golson 1974: Fig. 3; Solheim 1976b:146). There is nothing in the earliest pottery so far known in the Philippines that would suggest that it is fully ancestral to the Sa-huynh–Kalanay Pottery Tradition. The elements of decoration and most of the elements of form of both the Sa-huynh–Kalanay Pottery Tradition and of the Lapita Pottery Tradition must have come from coastal Viet Nam around 2000 B.C. or earlier. I repeat an earlier statement (1975:153): “I hypothesize that the Sa-huynh–Kalanay and the Lapita pottery traditions had a common origin somewhere in the Palawan–Sarawak–Sulu Sea–Sulawesi area and that it was at this point in time and space that a second and main stage in the spread of the Austronesian languages began.” This would have been the spread of the Malayo-Polynesian languages, with Proto-Malayo-Polynesian in the northern and central Philippines, possibly with additions from the (Proto-) Austronesian language of coastal Viet Nam, being ancestral.

I would like here to thank Ngo The Phong and Ha Van Tan for the recent information that they presented in their papers in this issue on the early pottery in Viet Nam and its development. Tan does not think that my concept of the Sa-huynh–Kalanay Pottery Tradition is a useful one but rather would possibly agree with my alternative suggestion that the decoration presented in what I consider this pottery tradition is a part of what I have proposed to call the Old Southeast Asian Complex (OSEAC; Solheim 1979:195). I feel, however, that the concept of the Sa-huynh–Kalanay Pottery Tradition is a better way to account for the extremely widespread area where these forms and decoration of pottery are found. I agree with Tan that “The formation of those similar characteristics was due to the population movement, cultural contacts . . .” but not to cultural convergence. As stated here, this is not a matter of right or wrong but simply a matter of preference. Even should I be able, in time, to demonstrate that the Nusantao were the agents who spread these pottery forms, methods and style of decorating, and patterns over such an extremely wide area, it could still be considered that these elements just made up a part of the Old Southeast Asian Complex.

I have elsewhere presented a new hypothesis as to the homeland of the Sa-huynh–Kalanay Pottery Tradition (Solheim n.d.b). Simplified, this is that this pottery tradition was brought together by the Nusantao in their maritime communication over the very wide area along the coast of South China and Viet Nam, from about the Hong Kong area to the southern end of Viet Nam, and the other shore of the South China Sea on the east from southern Taiwan to Sarawak plus the Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon. While I feel that elements of this tradition came from Taiwan I do not feel that the tradition itself was ever present in Taiwan.

This brings up my final point, my redefinition of the Nusantao. I originally defined Nusantao as people who speak Austronesian and meant this to apply prehistorically, historically, and for the present day. I had disregarded my own cautions about the equivalence of language, people, and culture. This equivalency would have meaning at any one time but could not be followed through time. Also, I was not thinking of people in a biological sense but of their culture. To remove it from a direct relation to a language and to a biological entity, I now define Nusantao as natives of Southeast Asia, and their descendants, with a maritime-oriented culture from their beginnings, these beginnings probably in southeastern Island Southeast Asia around 5000 B.C. or possibly somewhat earlier. A majority of the people with this culture, at any one time, probably spoke a pre-, proto-, or Austronesian language but there was no doubt a varying sized minority of them, from
time to time, who did not speak an Austronesian-related language. At any one time there
were also many other Austronesian speakers living in the interior of the larger islands
who were not maritime oriented, and I would not consider these as Nusantao. The
Nusantao and the nonmaritime-Austronesian speakers no doubt were constantly mixing
genetically, culturally, and linguistically. Their genetic ancestry no doubt varied from
time to time and place to place to include Southern Mongoloid—probably as a central
core—and Melanesoid, and I would suggest that this may well have been the case from
their very beginning. Thus, while I am referring to a people when I say Nusantao, I am
not considering them a people in a genetic sense but identified by their maritime-oriented
culture. Even this presents problems as I feel there was much variety in this maritime ori-
etation, extending from families who lived on their boats almost constantly to families
who lived on land, farmed, and/or traded on land but from which, for a substantial part
of each year, or for a few months or years every few years, one or more males of the
family were at sea fishing and/or sailing off on trading expeditions. I would hypothesize that
the most direct descendants of these people in Southeast Asia would be the Sea Gypsies of
Malaysia, the Samal, and similar groups of southern Mindanao and adjacent Malaysia and
Indonesia and the relatively poorly known boat people of Hong Kong and other port cit-
ties of Viet Nam and South China. These people in the recent past would have borne rela-
tively little cultural resemblance to their Nusantao ancestors. During the last few hun-
dred years their status has deteriorated, bringing them to the bottom of the local pecking
order instead of being, as they were around 2000 years ago, economically prosperous and
the masters of their homes and livelihood, the southern and eastern seas, from Madagas-
car to Japan to Easter Island.

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