

# Multidisciplinary documentation of Austroasiatic

## Repository and Workspace for Austroasiatic Intangible Heritage

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### RWAAI

- Aslian
  - Central
    - Lanoh
    - Semai
    - Semnam
    - Temiar
    - Benjamin Collection**
      - 1964-1965
        - Audio
        - Field notebooks
        - Rough field notes
        - Temiar lexicon
      - 1968-1972
      - 1979-1980
      - 2006
      - 2007-2010
      - Collected items
      - Maps
      - Papers
      - Roseman tape
  - General Aslian
  - Jah Hut
  - Northern
  - Southern
  - Bahnaric
  - Katuic
  - Khasian
  - Khmeric
  - Khmuic
  - Maps
  - Monic
  - Munda
  - Nicobarese
  - Non-Austroasiatic
  - Pakanic
  - Palaungic
  - Pearic
  - Vietic

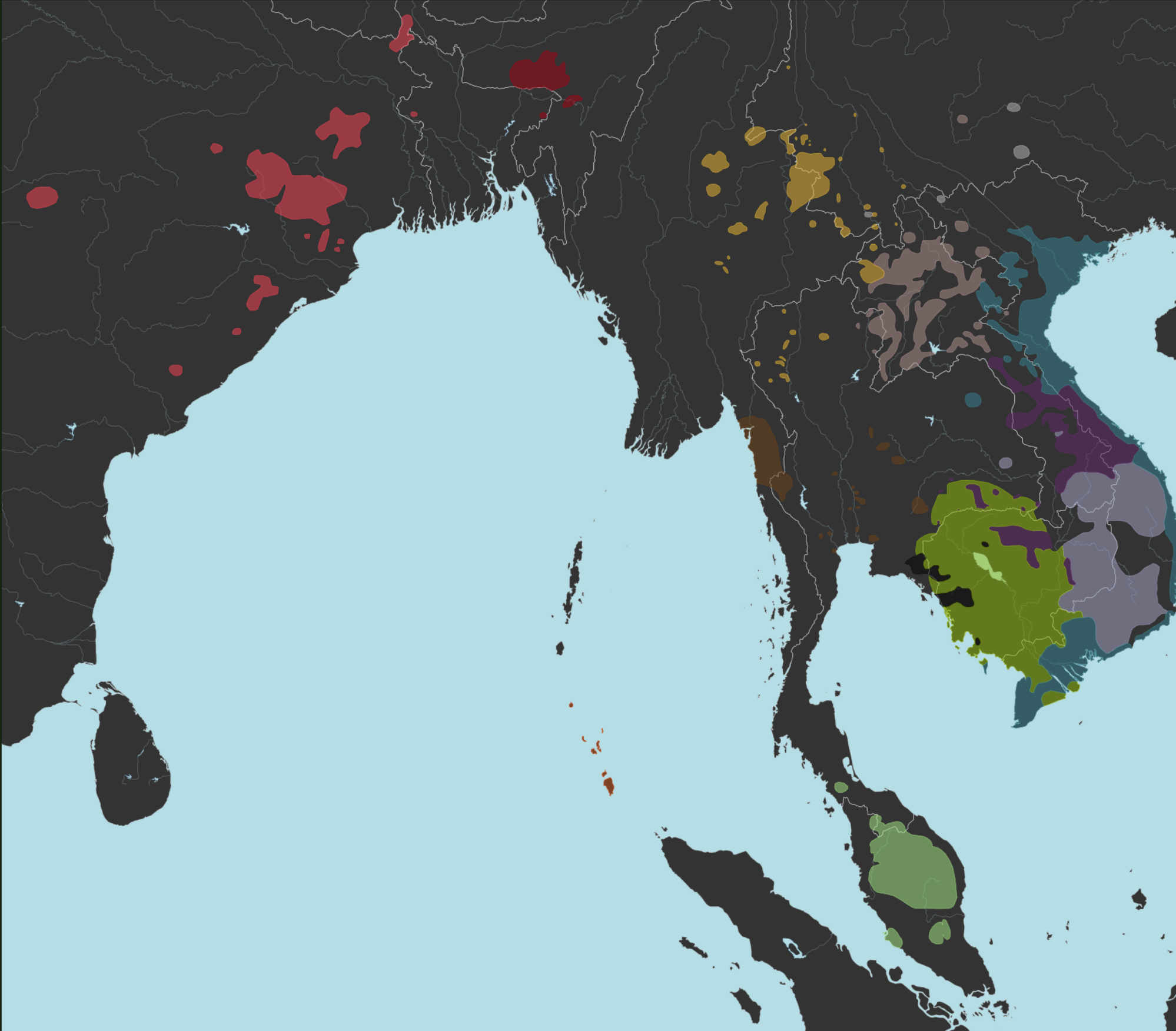
RWAAI—whose name is inspired by the reconstructed Proto-Austroasiatic term *\*rwaay* ‘soul’—is a digital multimedia resource at Lund University, Sweden, committed to the preservation of research collections documenting the languages and cultures of communities from the Austroasiatic language family. Apart from the language sciences, RWAAI houses collections from anthropology, botany, cultural heritage, ethnomusicology and human ecology. Our data span six decades, documenting some of the earliest multimedia research in intangible cultural heritage in the region. RWAAI currently holds data from 52 languages. Materials include audio and video recordings, transcriptions, field notes and images. Accessing much of the legacy material requires time-consuming manual searches. We are currently working to implement automated solutions to make the collections more accessible.

[www.lu.se/rwaai](http://www.lu.se/rwaai)



Jahai speaker Rempoy fashions blowpipe darts from stems of the bertam palm (*Eugeissona tristis*)  
Image: G. Burenhult

### Austroasiatic



Austroasiatic languages are spoken in Mainland Southeast Asia and India by highly diverse communities, ranging from mobile hunter-gatherers and hill-tribe farmers to city dwellers. They are considered to be the autochthonous languages of Mainland Southeast Asia, predating all other language families present in the region today. All but two of the 168 Austroasiatic languages are spoken in minority communities and most are therefore considered endangered. Many of the languages remain poorly described, and few have been researched using the modern principles and techniques of language documentation.

### Wave of Destruction



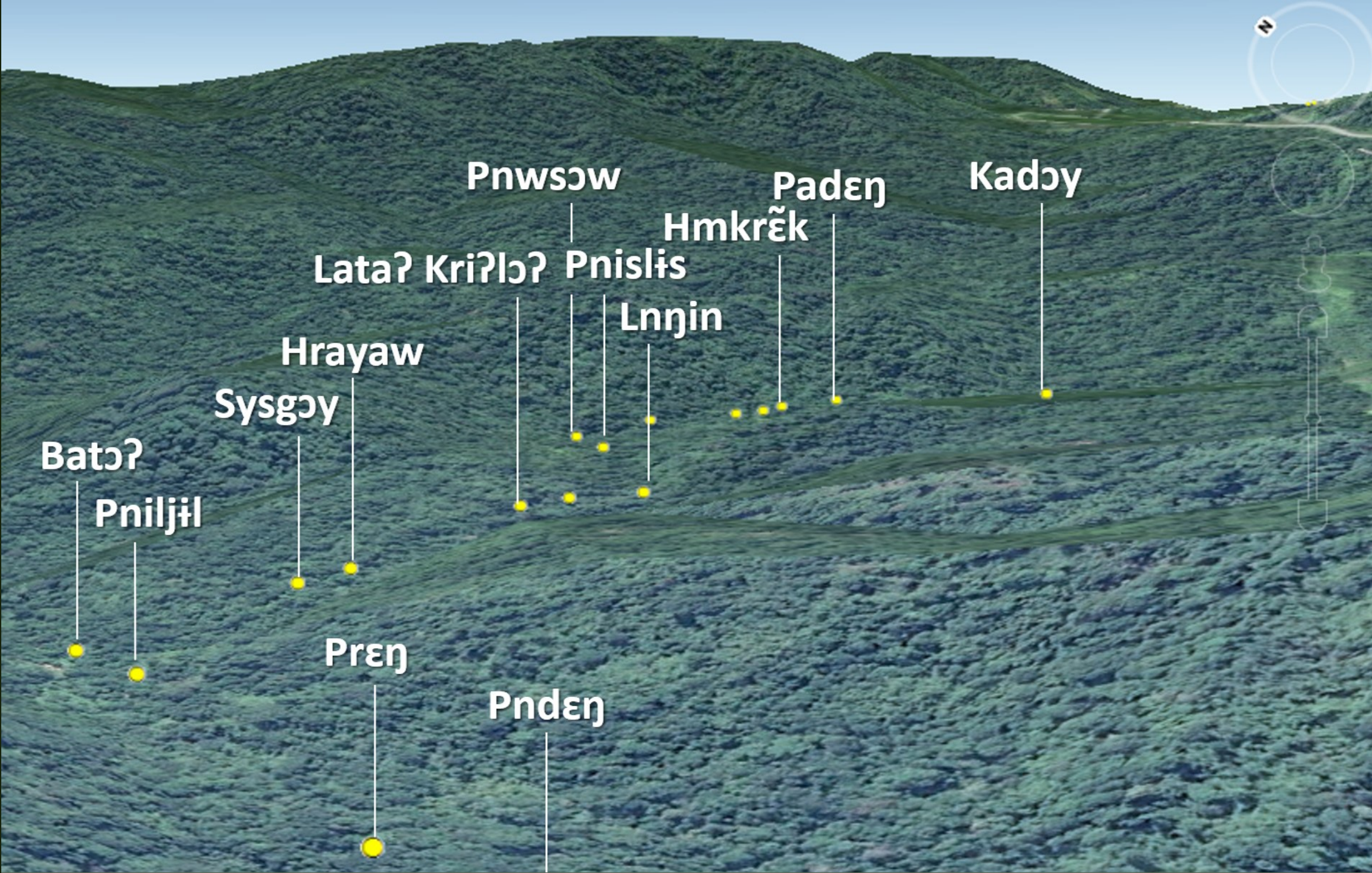
The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami abruptly ended the traditional way of life of the people of the Nicobar Islands. The languages spoken by the Nicobarese people belong to an isolated and little-known branch of the Austroasiatic language family. Human ecologist Simron Jit Singh spent 4 years (1999–2003) collecting data for his PhD dissertation *In the Sea of Influence: A World-System Perspective of the Nicobar Islands* (Lund University, 2003), returning following the tsunami. His remarkable multimedia collection, recently acquired by RWAAI, captures life both before and after the instant devastation of 2004. Audio and video recordings and images document myths, music and song, daily life, rituals, architecture and material culture, and are complemented by several volumes of field notes and historical documents.

### Plants of the Uplands



The Kammu Botanical Resource comprises over 400 images of pressed botanical specimens and will be a new a dataset in the larger Lund Kammu Collection. The specimens were collected in Laos and Thailand in 2001 in a collaboration instigated by the late Kam Raw, a native speaker of the Austroasiatic language Kammu, and Lund University botanists Marie Widén, Björn Widén and Lennart Engstrand. The botanists collected and identified the specimens; Kam documented the Kammu language names, and usage and cultural significance of the plants in Kammu society. The collection of pressed specimens is complemented by digital photos of numerous kinds of bamboo. This will be an important botanical reference collection for any researcher working with hill tribes in this ecozone of Mainland Southeast Asia.

### Documenting the ‘Where’



RWAAI explores how geo-coding can be integrated as an ontological and analytical dimension in both metadata and collections. By applying geo-coding not only to document locations of languages—but also to the exact locations of data collection, recordings, referents in narratives and conversations (current and historical), typological and lexical features, as well as spatial categories in language (place names, landforms, directionals)—RWAAI probes ways of developing comprehensive, integrated environments for spatial search and analysis.



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