

# INDONESIAN CULTURE AND MALAGASY ORIGINS

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The purpose of this paper is to look at what is known of the prehistory of Indonesia and from this present some idea of what the culture of the first Indonesian settlers of Madagascar may have been like. M. VÉRIN asked me to give a description of « Indonesian or Malayo-Polynesian culture » in Southeast Asia and the adjacent islands around the beginning of the Christian era, which, we could infer, would be similar to the culture of the first Indonesian settlers in Madagascar. This, I do not feel I will be able to do before another twenty or thirty years. Therefore, I have reframed my task to that stated above.

Indonesian prehistoric archeology is not well enough known to infer in any detail, with hope for accuracy, what can be expected to be present in Madagascar in early prehistoric times. No single area in Southeast Asia or Indonesia is well known prehistorically. There are data from surface collections scattered widely over the whole area. From this data plus data from linguistic distribution studies and ethnographic studies there have been general reconstructions of the Malayo-Polynesian or Austronesian migrations (HEINE-GELDERN 1932) (1) and reconstructions for more specific areas, such as for the Philippines (BEYER 1948) (2) and Malaya (TWEEDIE 1955) (3). Examination of HEINE-GELDERN's (1945) (4) and HEEKEREN's (1957 and 1958) (5) reviews of Indonesian archeology demonstrate clearly the impossibility of presenting a detailed picture of Indonesian prehistory.

- (1) Heine-Geldern, Robert. 1932 — Urheimat und Früheste Wanderungen der Austronesier. *Anthropos*, 27, 543-619.
- (2) Beyer, H. Otley — Philippines and East Asian Archaeology, and its relation to the origin of the Pacific Island population. *Bull. Nat. Res. Council Phil.*, n° 29.
- (3) Tweedie, M.W.F. — *Prehistoric Malaya*, (Background to Malaya Series n° 6) Singapore, Donald Moore.
- (4) Heine-Geldern, Robert. 1945 — Prehistoric research in the Netherlands Indies. *Science and Scientists in the Netherlands Indies*, 129-167, Ed. by Pieter Honig and Frans Verdoorn, New York, Riverside Press.
- (5) Heekeren, H. R. van — 1957 and 1958 — The Stone Age of Indonesia, *Verhandelingen van Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal — Land — en Volkendunde*, XXI The Bronze-Iron Age of Indonesia, *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal — Land — en Volkendunde*, XXII.

Three recent American publications, in varying degrees, have considered the prehistoric origins of the Malagasy in Indonesia. Murdock, in « Part Seven » of work on Africa (1959, 212-270) (1) is concerned with the « Cultural Impact of Indonesia ». His first chapter in this section deals with the Malagasy (212-221) and he begins this with a consideration of Indonesian origins and what the Indonesian ancestors of the Malagasy brought with them. LINTON, in his *Tree of Culture*, presents the most recently published extensive discussion of the « Southeast Asiatic Complex » (1955, 173-222). In the first part of this section LINTON covers the « Southeast Asiatic Neolithic » 1955, 173-82) (2) and here presents a summary of what he felt was the general culture pattern in the late prehistoric period of Southeast Asia. While LINTON did not use the most recent archeological reports from Southeast Asia that were available to him, his review is, in general, good. I have reviewed his section on the Southeast Asian Neolithic in some detail elsewhere (SOLHEIM 1957, 46-50) (3), so will not repeat this here. Linton's second chapter in his Southeast Asia section, titled « Oceania and Madagascar », deals with the spread of the Malayo-Polynesian speaking peoples from Southeast Asia, and here he briefly discusses the origins of Indonesian culture in Madagascar (1955, 202-04) (4). The most recent paper which includes a consideration of Indonesian movement to Madagascar is concerned with the movements of these peoples as seen from a study of prehistoric and present day pottery (SOLHEIM 1964) (5). The inclusion of Madagascar in this paper is brief, but I mention it here because it provides background for my discussion of the culture of the first Indonesian settlers in Madagascar.

Murdock apparently feels, on the basis of linguistic evidence, that the Indonesian settlers that came to Madagascar were Maanyan from southeastern Borneo (1959, 214) (6). If this were so, the logical procedure for this paper would be to reconstruct as far as possible the ancestral culture of the Maanyan shortly before the beginning of the Christian era and that would be sufficient. I do not do this for several reasons. First, there is not available the needed evidence, archeological or otherwise, to reconstruct an ancestral Maanyan culture as distinct from any other of the many unknown « cultures » of that time in Southeast Asia. Second, there is no evidence, that I know of, to

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- (1) Murdock, George Peter 1959 — *Africa its Peoples and their Culture History*, New York, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc.
  - (2) Linton, Ralph 1955 — *The Tree of Culture*, New-York, Alfred A. Knopf.
  - (3) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1957 *Southeast Asia, Asian Perspectives*, 1, 46-52.
  - (4) Linton, Ralph 1955 — *The Tree of Culture*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.
  - (5) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1964 — *Pottery and the Malayo-Polynesians, Current Anthropology*, V (5).
  - (6) Murdock, George Peter 1959 — *Africa, its Peoples and their Culture History*, New York, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

indicate that the ancestors of the Maanyan, with whom we are presumably concerned, were living along the coast of southeastern Borneo at the time in which we are interested. Therefore, any archeological evidence in this area for this time period may or may not have a relationship to the ancestral Maanyan. Third, I doubt that we can say that these ancestral Maanyan are also *the* ancestors of the Indonesian element of the Malagasy peoples.

The history of a language and the history of the specific ethnic group that speaks that language are not necessarily the same. I do not question the close relationship of the Malagasy language to the Maanyan language, but I do question the assumption that from this it follows that there is an equal relationship of the present day speakers of these two languages. Just because we speak English in the United States at the present time, it does not mean that the ancestors of the Americans of the United States lived in southern England about 500 years ago. Even if we could assume this, if we followed the ancestry of the English in southern England back another 1,500 years, I am sure we would not find these ancestors all living in southern England shortly before the beginning of the Christian era. While the documented history of Southeast Asia and Indonesia is not as complete as that of Western Europe, there is still data indicating considerable movement of peoples and tribes during the last 500 years in Southeast Asia, particularly among many of the slash and burn agriculturists, whom, I would expect, would include the ancestors of the Maanyan.

The bearers of the culture (s) that I feel came to Madagascar were scattered widely over Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and into New Guinea around 500 B.C. They were expert sailors and many of them from many different home were sailing, fishing, and trading. In ethnographic terms, these sailors must have come from several different cultures, but cultures which were closely related and which probably derived primarily from one culture 1,000 to 1,500 years earlier. They were all speakers of different languages and dialects of the Malayo-Polynesian family. Probably several of these ethnic groups included traders among their number who regularly came in contact with each other. No doubt, the language of the traders of one of these groups came to serve as a *lingua franca* among the traders, and this language was probably either the ancestral language of both Maanyan and the languages of Madagascar, or a dialect of the ancestral language of Maanyan, of which the only remaining descendant languages are those of Madagascar.

These, then, are the assumptions that I make about the ancestors of the first Indonesian arrivals in Madagascar : they were sailors, moving, at least to some degree, with families, coming from several different but closely related cultures in Southeast Asia and Indonesia, speaking different Malayo-Polynesian language but having in common

as a *lingua franca* the language ancestral to Maanyan, or one closely related to it. These sailors, or their ancestors, may have last touched their home port in Southeast Asia or Indonesia anywhere between 1,000 B.C. and 500 A.D., though the period between 500 and 1 B.C. is the most likely. It is possible that there were small relatively permanent settlements of these people along the east coast of India but no definite indications of such have been found. It is possible that many of the Indonesian settlers in Madagascar came after voyaging from Indonesia, along the intervening coast lines, in a matter of a very few years. It seems likely to me, however, that for many Indonesian arrivals in Madagascar it had been a number of years since they were last in Indonesian and in some cases it may have been several generations.

The general Indonesian culture which I feel would have most recently included among its bearers the Indonesian ancestry of the Malayo-Polynesian speaking peoples of Madagascar is that known from widely scattered archaeological sites in Indonesia and Southeast Asia dating from the latter half of the first millennium B.C.

### MALAGASY ANCESTRAL INDONESIAN CULTURE

The ancestral culture (s) of the Indonesian culture that evolved in Madagascar is at best hypothetical. I do not attempt to reconstruct that culture but present elements that I think probably were a part of that ancestral culture (s). For alternate presentations see MURDOCK (1959) and LINTON (1955) (1).

#### MATERIAL CULTURE

One of the best known elements of the material culture of Southeast Asia for the second half of the first millennium B.C. is pottery. There is one pottery tradition that appears to have been widespread in Southeast Asia and it is most likely that the first potters in Madagascar made pottery of this tradition. This tradition is called the Sa-huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition and has been reported from prehistoric sites in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya, the central Philippines, New Guinea, Celebes, Borneo, Bali, and Java (SOLHEIM

(1) Murdock, Georg Peter 1959 — *Africa, its Peoples and their Culture History*, New-York, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc.  
Linton, Ralph 1955 — *The Tree of Culture*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf.

1961 (1), 1964 (2) and 1965 (3). Though these sites come from a considerably greater period of time than the 500 year period we are concerned with here, I feel that probably this pottery tradition was present in all these areas during our period of reference.

A general description of this pottery is being published (SOLHEIM 1965 (4), but would be worthwhile repeating it here :

« The pottery of this tradition is characterized as a sophisticated, technologically well-made pottery with variation in decoration and much variety in form. Surface markings on vessels from many sites indicate the use of some form of a slow wheel in manufacture. The use of paddle and anvil is also important in manufacture. Surfaces are usually well smoothed, if not patterned, and are often highly polished. The use of wrapped or carved paddles in manufacture was not uncommon, as shown by the cord-marked pottery of all complexes except for the Kalanay complex, and the less common patterns from basketry wrapped paddles as grooved and crossed carved paddles. Paddle decoration appears to be early. Red slipping is common.

« Decoration includes elements made by incising, impressing, painting, and carving. Besides the impressed decoration from a carved or bound paddle, there are simple tool impressions of punctuations and circles, and compound tool impressions from a dentate tool and from Arca shells. Painting, always found within incised borders, is done in red, or rarely, in red and black, both on the natural tan background. Carving is used to notch or scallop rims or flanges. The patterns of decoration are commonly in horizontal bands, and include vertical or diagonal rectangular elements, curvilinear scrolls, rectangular scrolls or meanders, zigzags, triangles, and chevrons... The incised decoration is often emphasized by impressed punctuations or circles, painting, or more rarely by a white inlay in the incised lines (p. 183) (5).

« The great variety in form is brought about by different combinations of three primary forms : the cylinder, the truncated cone, and the sphere (not truly spherical but rounded) (p. 183). In the

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- (1) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1961 — Ed. of Sa-huynh Pottery Relationships in Southeast Asia, *Asian Perspectives*, III (ii), 97-188.
  - (2) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1964 — *The Archaeology of Central Philippines : A Study Chiefly of the Iron Age and its Relationships*, Manila, Monographs of the National Institute of Science and Technology, n° 10.
  - (3) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1965 — Further Relationships of the Sa-huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition, *Asian Perspectives*, VIII (in press).
  - (4) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1965 — Two Pottery Traditions of Late Prehistoric Times in Southeast Asia. *Proceedings of the Golden Jubilee Congress, University of Hong-Kong*. (in press).
  - (5) Solheim II, Wilhelm G. — 1961 — Sa-huynh Related Pottery in Southeast Asia, *Asian Perspectives*, III (ii) 177-188.

various combinations of these primary forms there is often an angle at the line of change from one form to the other and not uncommonly the angle is accented with a flange. Both high and low ring stands are used, having been made separately from the rest of the vessel and then joined together. Rounded bottoms are the most common but flat bottoms are present. Very rare tetrapods are found in the Philippines and... tripods are present in Malaya. Multiple rims are occasionally found, added one above the other. The ring stands, and other portions of vessels, are often perforated ».

More detailed descriptions of several of the pottery complexes found within this tradition presents more of the variety of the pottery and should be of interest for comparative purposes if this pottery is found in Madagascar. A specific example of the importance of this variation might be the presence on many vessels of the Sa-huynh complex in Annam of « ... a blackish, probably polished surface, as if graphite had been spread over the outer surface » (p. 177).

Jar burial has been found in a number of the sites with Sa-huynh-Kalanay pottery, so it could very well be found in Madagascar, with large ovoid jars, with either a special pottery lid or large worked stone for a lid (JANSE 1961 ; SOLHEIM 1965) (1-2).

The last half of the first millenium B.C. saw both stone and metal in use for tools. Polished stone adzes, rectangular in cross section, or possibly trapezoidal, are often associated with the Sa-huynh-Kalanay pottery and may well be found in Madagascar. Bronze socketed axes and/or iron socketed and/or tanged tools could be found in the earliest sites in Madagascar.

Ornaments of much variety will probably be found. Ornaments of non-Indonesian or Southeast Asian types could be found as these could easily have been picked up in India or Africa during the movement to Madagascar. From Southeast Asia and Indonesia could come stone and transparent green glass beads. Bracelets of stone, green glass, or shell in several different forms may be found.

The lack of published data on sites of approximately our period of interest prevents further profitable conjecture on specific elements of material culture that may be found in archaeological sites in Madagascar.

#### ECONOMY

No attempt is made in this and the following section to present

- (1) Janse, Olov. R.T. 1961 — Some Notes on the Sa-huynh Complex, *Asian Perspectives*, III (ii), 109-111.
- (2) Solheim II, Wilhem G. — 1965 — Further Relationships of the Sa-huynh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition, *Asian Perspectives*, VIII (in press).

a rounded and complete picture of the non-material culture of the Malagasy Indonesian ancestors. Only scattered elements of this culture are mentioned with hopes that they may give useful suggestions for reconstruction of the culture represented in the early prehistoric sites to be found and excavated.

It would seem to me that there were three general kinds of Indonesian voyagers that found their way to Madagascar. In different areas of Southeast Asia and Indonesia today there are both full time professional sailor-traders and part-time sailor-fisher-farmers. The former work back and forth along some coastal area in their relatively small sail and power boats transporting passengers and local produce. The latter might be considered primarily a farmer as he owns and works his own land but his responsibility in the agricultural cycle requires his presence for only two or three months out of the year while the women in the family are much more concerned with the farming. When he is not needed at home he may spend considerable time fishing or do a bit of part time trading of his own or neighbors' produce. Some tribes, such as the Iban in Sarawak, have a tradition that the young men, and older men too on occasion, leave the community for several years while they travel far and wide ; most of them, but not all, to return after five to ten years to raise a family and stay, more or less, at home. One of the apparent purposes of this voyaging was to scout out new areas of virgin jungle for future settlement by these slash-and-burn farmers (FREEMAN 1955) (1).

These three kinds of voyagers were probably present during our period of interest as well. The full time trader could very well have become scattered along the coasts from Indonesia, along both coasts of India, over to Africa and down to Madagascar. The permanent farmer who would ordinarily return to his farm for a period every year would not have gotten very far along this route of trade but would have been in contact with those who had and would hear from them stories of the far distant lands. The young man out for adventure, however, in ten years time could well work his way at least to India and some cases could have gone as far as Madagascar and then return home.

There is no indication of inhabitants on Madagascar before the arrival of the Indonesians (MURDOCK 1959) (2). The full time traders reaching here would have found an uninhabited land of little interest but any of the young adventurers from a slash-and-burn society would have found the possibilities of this island very exciting. Stories of the island would have worked back to Southeast Asia and Indonesia

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(1) Freeman, J.D. 1955 — *Iban Agriculture*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

(2) Murdock, George Peter — 1959 — *Africa, its Peoples and their Culture History*, New York, Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Inc.

So that either the moving slash-and-burn, the sedentary slash-and-burn, or the permanent farmer could have known of this island and decided that, because the country was so crowded at home, this would be a good place to move to. The farmers, of whatever variety, could have brought young wives, or families, with them all the way from Southeast Asia or Indonesia. The women in this area today do not often move very far however, so, if it was the same in the past, it may be that not many families moved all the way from Southeast Asia or Indonesia.

Unlike the part time voyager, the full time voyager probably had his family with or had them at a home port situated anywhere along this great length of coastline. They probably produced a surplus of daughters as the sons would have gone into the dangerous trader's life while the daughters would have remained at home where there probably was less chance of early death. Here was a source of wives for the adventurers ; wives with generally similar values and who spoke the *lingua franca* the young men understood. The traders would probably be pleased to have a daughter marry one of these young men and go with him to Madagascar to start slash-and-burn farming and to gather forest products, and whatever other materials Madagascar might have been able to produce.

Slash-and-burn farming thus would probably have been the economic base for the newly arrived Indonesians but they would also have grown the taro, bananas, and other foods they were used to, plus dogs and chickens. They would have known fishing, so both fresh water fishing, with many kinds of traps, weirs, and possibly poisons, and salt water fishing, with nets and spears, would have been important. Besides these food products, honey, beeswax, and many other products that could be gathered from the forests for trade with their trader relatives would have been of importance.

The first Indonesia settlers, even though they may have been permanent farmers back in Indonesia or Southeast Asia, probably did not know irrigated rice farming. There are no indications from archaeology that irrigation of rice was known in Southeast Asia before the beginning of the Christian era. Once it was begun it only spread slowly into some areas. The irrigation of rice may have been picked up after a stay in India for a time, or it may well be that a continuing small trickle of settlers came from Southeast Asia and Indonesia for several hundred years and those that left after rice irrigation had started in the east, introduced it into Madagascar at a later date.

#### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

There is considerable variation of detail in the social organization of Southeast Asia, but there are certain elements of organization that are very widely spread.



There was a distinct sexual division of labor as has already been noted, but with this there was a near equality in the position of men and women. Bilateral kinship is the general rule with considerable variation of residence after marriage, probably the most common practice being for the new couple to live near parents from whom they could inherit more. With virgin land available for the working a new couple often is neolocal.

Indications of individual accumulation in wealth, and probably with that, prestige, are evident in some of the archaeological sites containing Sa-huynh-Kalanay pottery. There are no indications of political organization beyond family ties but with differences in status due to differential wealth more complex organization of power within communities could easily come into any of these societies as happened in many cases in Southeast Asia and Indonesia during the first half of the first millenium A.D. following Indian influence.

Religion was organized around ancestor worship and general appeasement of local spirits. There were apparently no full time religious specialists but there were probably part time specialists as some of the ceremonies were probably rather complex. These part time specialists no doubt had more than the ordinary prestige but there was no indication that the religion could become an organized religion with a church and a hierarchy of priests. This idea could, however, come in from the outside, as it did with both Buddhism and Islam in Southeast Asia and Oceania.

It is likely that early Madagascar societies were relatively open with wealth differential, but with the possibility, and desirability, of a man or family improving its position by hard work, help from the ancestors, and no hindrance by the local spirits.

## R É S U M É

W. SOLHEIM dia nitantara izay fantatra ankehitriny momba ny sivilizasiona indoneziana tamin' ny fiandohan' ny arivo taona voalohany amin' izao fotoana iainantsika izao. Fahizay ny sasany tamin' izy ireo dia angamba nisaraka tamin' ny maro ka nanaraka ny morony andrefana amin' ny Ranomasina Indiana. Asehony ilay hevitr' i MURDOCK momba ny toerana nisehoan' ny koltora indoneziana ary tadiaviny izay marina amin' izany, toy izany koa ny amin' ny hevitr' i LINTON momba ny « firaisamben' i Azia Atsimo ». Marihiny koa fa ny fampitahana ny endriky ny vilany tany dia ahitana hevitra vaovao momba ny fifindran-tany taloha. Ny vilany tamin' ireo razam-ben' ny Malagasy avy amin' ny tarazo Sa-Huynh-Kalanay. Ireo toerana nipe-trahan' ny olona fahizay dia mety ahitana famaky vato, na vy sy fitaovana hafa izay mitovy endrika amin' ny any Indonezia tamin' izany fotoana izany. Amin' ny haingon-javatra kosa dia karazan' ny avy any India na Afrika no tokony ho hita koa.

Ny amin' ireo hevitra naroso momba ny toe-karena na fixinambahoaka kosa dia hita fa nanan-toerana lehibe teo amin' ny fambolena ny tavy, ary tsy nisy kosa ny tanimbary tondra-drano. Izany toe-javatra izany dia nohamarinin' ny fandinihana ny teny.

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W. SOLHEIM establishes precisely what is known up to date of the ancient Indonesian civilisation at the beginning of the first millenary of our era, a period when some of its members perhaps broke away and emigrated to the western shores of the Indian Ocean. He sets out and discusses MURDOCK's theory of the Indonesian cultural impact and LINTON's idea of a « South Asiatic Complex ». He also notes that the comparative study of styles in pottery had added new data to our knowledge of the ancient migrations. The pottery of the Proto-Malagasy of Indonesian origin is probably connected with the Sa-Huynh-Kalanay tradition. The oldest Malagasy sites may yield stone or metal axes and adzes similar to the Indonesian shapes of this period. As to ornaments, we must expect in addition a variety of types coming from Africa and India. As regards the assumptions about the ancient economic and social system, we must note the importance of slash-and-burn agriculture and the absence of flooding in rice-growing, suppositions apparently confirmed by linguistic research.