

South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa: Sunda before Bantu? African parallels to the Balinese fire dance?

Transcontinental explorations inspired by an Africanist's recent trip to South East Asia

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Abstract: this paper falls into two, loosely connected parts. 1. The first part explores the evidence for a genetic and linguistic perspective on the long-range cultural relations between sub-Saharan Africa, and South East Asia, and finds that in fact there is a strong case for the hypothesis (Kurt Tauchmann 2010, in line with Stephen Oppenheimer 1998) of a recent Asian *genetic* substrate in sub-Saharan Africa – and by extension, following the logic of demic diffusion,¹ of a recent Asian *cultural* substrate in sub-Saharan Africa as well; 2. The second part applies the first part specifically to ecstatic religion and the fire cult in both regions, and explores possible explanations for their similarities. Throughout two rival models are contrasted and, in part, reconciled: Oppenheimer's General Sunda Hypothesis with Tauchmann's application to sub-Saharan Africa, and van Binsbergen Pelasgian Hypothesis.

N.B. In an earlier version which already circulated on the Internet for a year before being replaced by the present version, I argued that the available genetic data compels us to reject Oppenheimer's Sunda thesis (which did not extend to Africa) and Tauchmann's similar hypothesis, which is specifically aimed at sub-Saharan Africa. My main reason for this position was that Oppenheimer's specific comparative-mythological application to the core myths of the Ancient Near East including the Bible did not stand up to multivariate statistical analysis (van Binsbergen with Isaak 2008). Further scrutiny of the genetic data however has now brought me to the above, positive assessment of Tauchmann's thesis. Also, a wealth of culture-historical material outside the domain of comparative mythology has now convinced me of the considerable heuristic value of an extension of Oppenheimer's hypothesis to sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ The archaeological concept of 'demic diffusion' simply refers to the cultural effect of 'populations on the move', leading to a geographical displacement not only of their genes but also of the cultural traits they are possessing. Since culture is by definition learned through a social process of communication, and not transmitted genetically, demic diffusion is not the most obvious way for the geographical spread of cultural traits – contact and communication without major geographical displacement of genes is the more typical form.

1. Sunda before Bantu, in East and South-Western Africa?

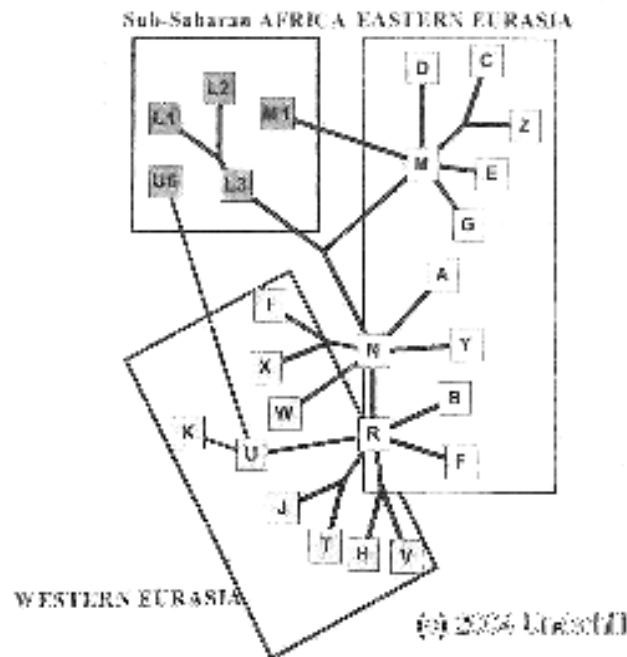
1.1. Sunda influence on sub-Saharan Africa? An exercise in genetic distribution patterns

In preceding months, Professor Kurt Tauchmann of Cologne University, Germany, has been so kind as to comment on one of my book drafts on the Sunda thesis from his own specialist perspective – he has been looking at South East Asian / African connections for many years. He proposed to add a few specific traits (paramour, joking relations and rulers' *ius primae noctis*) to my list of Sunda traits which I propose are detectable in Africa. While corroborating the incidental, personalised South East Asian effect upon Africa through traders and royals – a factor stressed in my draft analyses so far – his main point was that attention should be given to a massive *demic-diffusion* element, i.e. cultural diffusion because populations on the move bring their cultural baggage with them. In his opinion, prior to the Bantu expansion in East and South-East Africa, pre- and proto-historic migrations from South East Asia (such as have long been recognised to have populated Madagascar and given it its distinction cultural and linguistic characteristics) had given rise to a considerable Austronesian genetic and linguistic presence in those parts of Africa. This is a moot point – the historian Kent who claimed – 1970 – extensive Sunda kingdoms on the East African coast was not taken seriously.

This presumed Sunda presence in Africa would then have to be detectable in the form of an Austronesian substrate in Eastern and Southern Bantu languages (a phenomenon already suggested – albeit for only a few East and South-eastern African languages, notably Makuwa, and the SothoTswana cluster – , by the sometime Leiden Professor of African Linguistics Thilo Schadeberg; personal communication 1994). Also, Tauchmann's point calls to mind the fact that recently, population geneticists have formulated the 'Back-into-Africa' hypothesis, which conceivably might specifically have involved an influx of East Asian and South East Asian genes into sub-Saharan Africa in pre- and proto-historical times (e.g. Hammer et al. 1998; Cruciani et al. 2002; Underhill 2004; Coia et al. 2005).

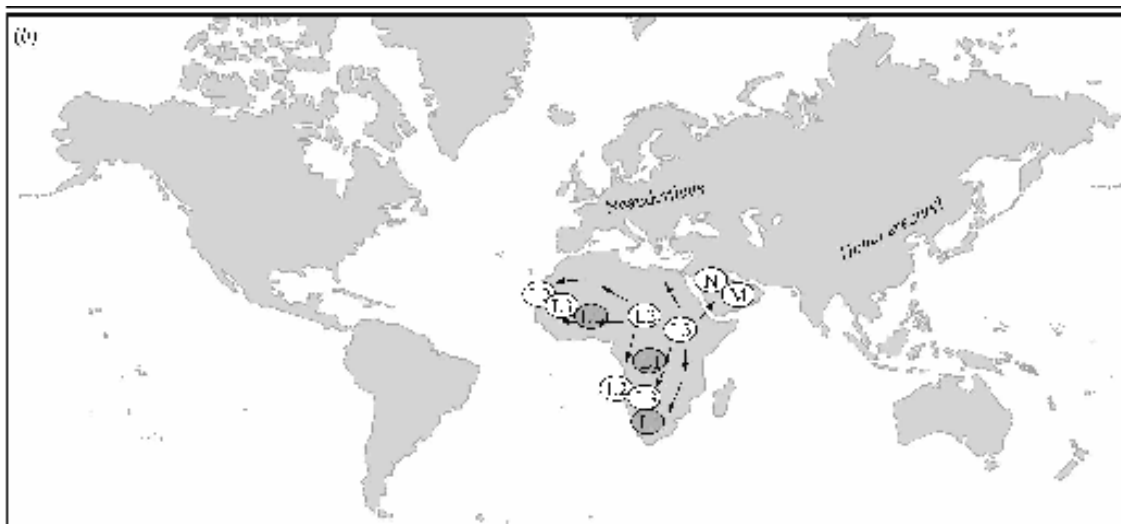
In his 2004 paper, Peter Underhill rendered this process as a transmission of haplo group M from Eastern Eurasia to sub-Saharan Africa, yielding haplo group M – complementary to the transmission of Western Eurasian haplo group U to sub-Saharan Africa, in the form of haplo group U6.

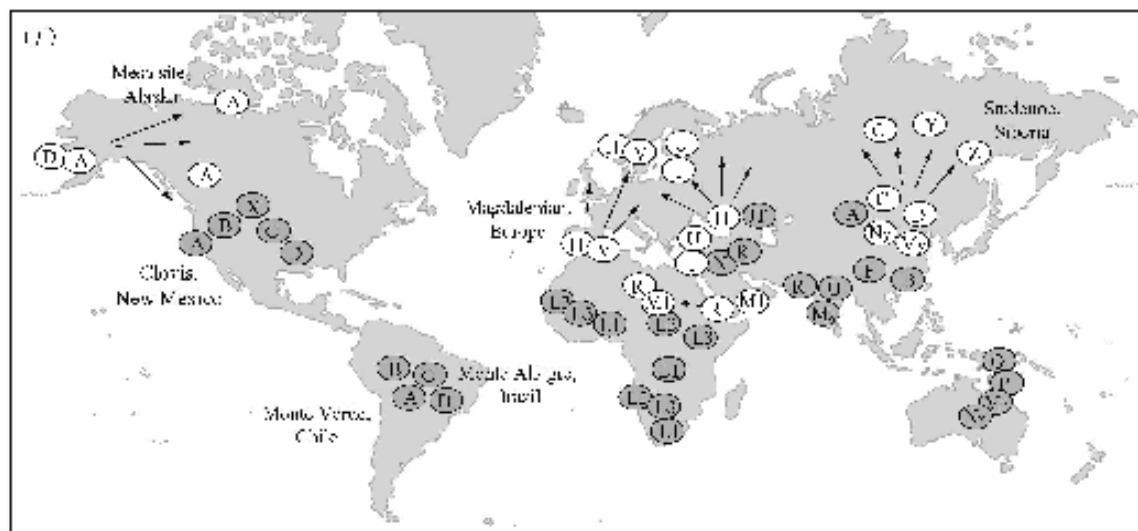
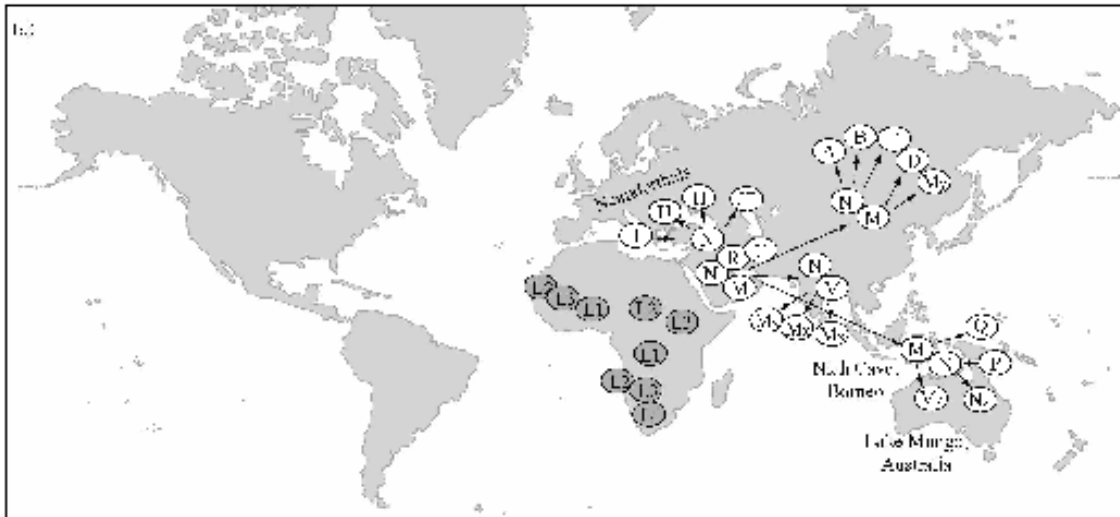
Fig. 1. 'Back into Africa' according to Underhill (2004)



Forster (2004: Fig. 2b (80-60 ka BP), 2c (60-30 ka BP); and 2g (15-2 ka BP; ka = kiloannum = 1,000 years; BP = Before Present) renders essentially the same process in a geographically more explicit and detailed form. Although the complexities of the U haplo group in Western parts of the Old World during the Upper Palaeolithic are notorious (Maca-Meyer et al. 2003; Plaza et al. 2003; Cherni et al. 2005; González et al. 2003), it may not be impossible to read the transmission of Eurasian U to sub-Saharan African U6 as corresponding with the cultural transmission of Scythian, Uralic, or otherwise West Asia / Pelasgian traits into sub-Saharan Africa from the Late Bronze Age onward, as a result of chariot technology, as discussed in some detail in some of my recent work (van Binsbergen 2009, 2010b).

Fig. 2. Back-into-Africa according to Forster 2004, b, c and g





Forster's rendering highlights the South and South East Asian connotations of haplo group M (as a gradual transformation, along the South coast of Eastern Eurasia, of haplo group M brought to South West Asia (the Arabian peninsula) in the second sally 'Out of Africa' (from 60 ka BP on) – while another offshoot of M was transmitted to East Central Asia and eventually became ancestral to part of the population of the Americas. Moreover, Forster's diagram c brings out the strategic position of the Niah Cave, Borneo, as yielding evidence of a 40,000 BP (hence, extremely early) Anatomically Modern population in South East Asia. Finally, Forster shows how the M1 haplo group was transmitted via the Persian Gulf into Northern Central Africa; considering the prominence of other M haplogroups in South East Asia, this region might also have been the ultimate origin of M1, but so far the evidence for such an assumption does not seem to be available.

Against this background, it was inspiring to be able to visit Niah Cave on Borneo, at the end of an exciting journey through the primary and secondary tropical rain forest of the Niah Cave National Park, Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo – even though this environment has been thoroughly domesticated under park conditions. Of course, no Middle Palaeolithic remains were available here for inspection by passing visiting scholars, but that did not diminish the thrill of visiting one of the earliest archaeological

sites manifesting evidence of the (hypothetical) Out-of-Africa exodus, which has been at the heart of long-range genetic and culture historical reconstructions since the late 1980s (Cann et al. 1987).

To my ongoing research, the Niah Cave (especially the subsidiary site called the 'Painted Cave' or 'Painting Cave') had a further point of interest. In 1998, the British paediatrician and subsequently leading geneticist Stephen Oppenheimer formulated his Sunda thesis, claiming:

- (a) with the melting of the polar caps at the end of the last Ice Age (10 ka BP), the ensuing global rise of the ocean level with 200 m and the inevitable flooding of much of the then subcontinent of South East Asia ('Sunda'), a massive Sunda out-migration came to populate not only Oceania but also ramified in a westerly direction along the Indian Ocean coast, all the way to the Indus and the Persian Gulf (and by implication possibly even to Africa, although that continent remains out of Oppenheimer's scope)
- (b) this Sunda influx into South-western Eurasia is held responsible, according to Oppenheimer, for fertilising the Indus and Sumerian civilisations, bringing the cosmology and mythology of the Ancient Near East including that of Genesis.

In a recent publication I have sought (van Binsbergen 2008) to demonstrate, by a painstaking statistical analysis of flood myths worldwide, that Oppenheimer's 'Special Sunda thesis', i.e. (b) (which I thus designate by analogy with Einstein's Special and General Theory of Relativity; Einstein 1960) does not stand up to the empirical evidence. However, Oppenheimer's 'general Sunda thesis', claiming an overall South East Asian influence on Western Eurasia (and by extension, on sub-Saharan Africa) during the last 6 ka or so, I have found rather inspiring especially for an understanding of the long-range cultural dynamics in the recent prehistory, and the proto-history, of sub-Saharan Africa; cf. Dick-Read 2005; van Binsbergen 2007b; in press [2010c]).

Oppenheimer's 1998 book contains a brief depiction and discussion of the Niah Cave. With his occasional tendency to the fallacy of misplaced concreteness (Whitehead 1997: 52, 58), Oppenheimer seems inclined to see the boat representations in the Painted Cave as a reminiscence of the Sunda flood and the resulting out-migration, which play such a large part in his argument. Along with pottery (Solheim et al. 1966), boat-shaped plank coffins dating from 1-3 ka BP (calibrated C¹⁴ analysis) have in fact been excavated in the Painted Cave (Fig. 3b). However, I would be disinclined to regard this as evidence of flood-related events: the Niah Cave, as typical *Karst* phenomenon, is situated in a limestone plateau 20 km away from the present coast of the South China Sea – there never was a serious local flood threat here. Alternatively, the Niah boat coffins tally with the religious and cosmological symbolism of the 'funerary ships' or 'death ships', widespread in South East Asia and representing the final journey to the land of the dead. But let us not rush to conclusion: it certainly remains remarkable that this westerly direction should at the same time be the route of Oppenheimer's proposed Sunda migration fertilising Western Eurasia (and Africa) with what he believes are the unique early achievements of Sunda in the Early Neolithic; so perhaps there is yet more to Oppenheimer's Special thesis than meets the eye.

Fig. 3. Excavations at Niah main cave (a), and a boat-shaped plank coffin, Painted Cave (b), Niah National Park, Sarawak, Borneo, Malaysia



By now the rock paintings in the Painted Cave have become barely visible, and although I managed to photograph whatever remains of them, I was relieved to find, on the spot, copies of the pictures taken in 1987, when the signs were still well-defined. I reproduce these copies here (Fig. 4).

Given the great variety of ethnic and cultural groups in Malaysian Borneo; the considerable impact of globalisation, the money economy and the modern state; and the fact that this was fieldwork of the barest exploratory nature, there was no reason to expect that this trip would shed any new light on my ongoing work on African / South East Asian cultural and demographic connections. I kept Tauchmann's challenging hypothesis revolving in my head, though, and the result of these reflections will be found in the genetic discussion below.

One thing meanwhile struck me: the illusion of having familiar African faces around me. I began to realise that the model of the finely featured, beautiful young woman's face, that for decades has constituted my point of reference for African beauty, in fact had many parallels in Borneo, and later in Bali. Also faces of my male Nkoya friends and relatives, which have been familiar to me since the early 1970s, came to mind when looking at some of the members of, especially, Borneo's 'tribal' populations. From the highly stylised, tense faces depicted in Dan and other West African facial sculpture, to the somewhat similar faces, with taut frown and pouting lips, familiar from my Tswana and Sotho (Lozi) speaking friends and informants in Southern Africa, – despite the considerable difference in complexion and hair texture, the parallels with Bali and especially Borneo seemed persuasive although hard to substantiate (after all, I was only peripherally trained in physical anthropology, 45 years ago, and the subject is no longer popular, has even become suspect among non-initiates for its apparent association with the reification of 'race'). I was reminded of linguistic theories that sought the origin of Austronesian populations on Madagascar especially in Borneo

(e.g. Adelaar, 1995 and in press). Could it be that I was looking some of the ramifications of the M haplo type in the face, distributed both in South East Asia, and in East and South-eastern Africa? *Or were this merely subjective projections of an Africanist who intended to serve Africa by exploring Asia, but now is being punished with nostalgia for the continent on which he has concentrated for decades?*

Fig. 4. Rock paintings from the 'Painted Cave', Niah National Park, Sarawak, Borneo, Malaysia, photographed in 1987

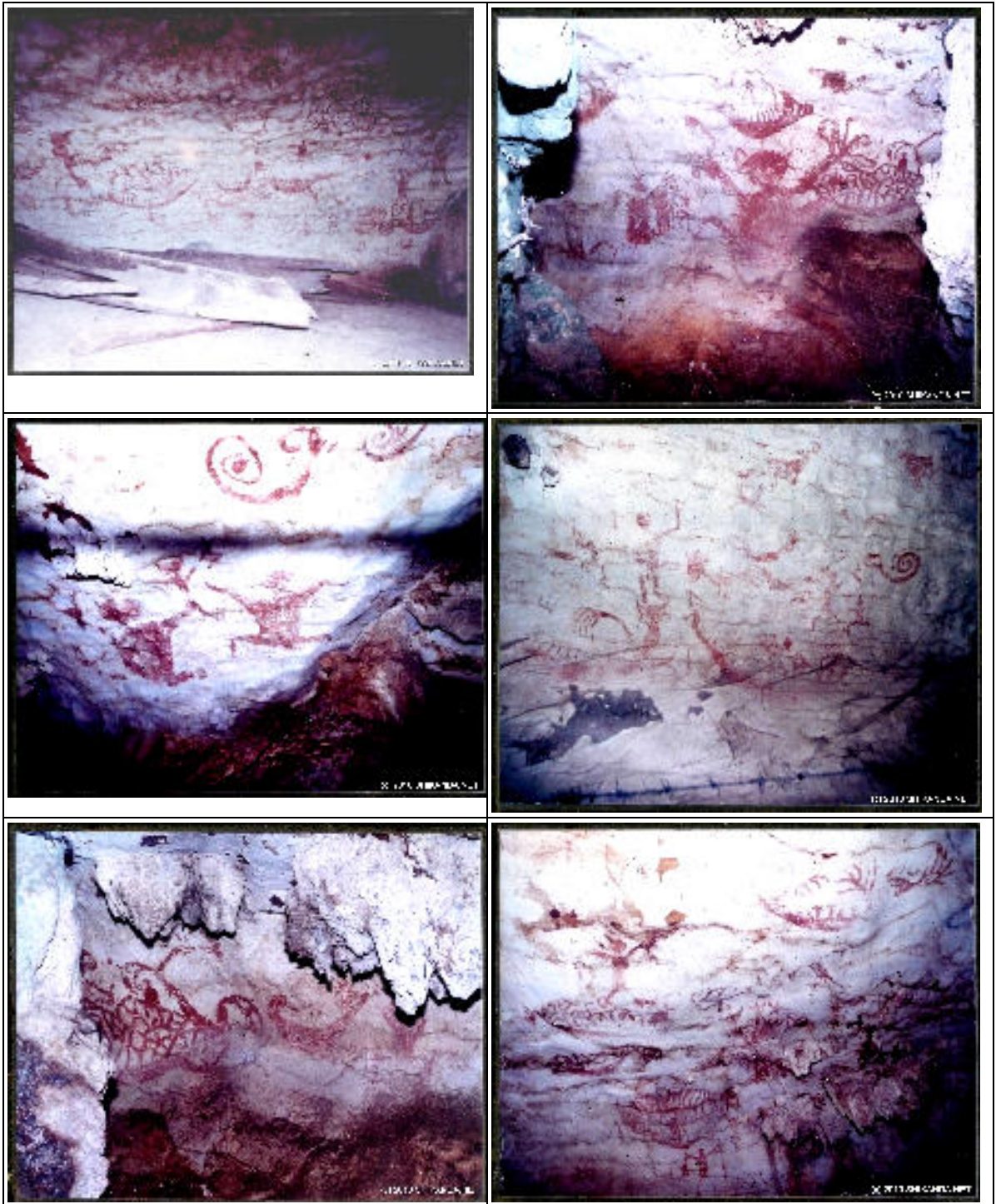




Fig. 5. African faces in South East Asia?



1.2. Sunda and the Pelasgian hypothesis

However, if Tauchmann's hypothesis is correct (it certainly tallies with Oppenheimer's General Sunda thesis even though Oppenheimer does not touch on Africa), then this would have considerable consequences for the Pelasgian thesis I have recently formulated as an alternative to the General Sunda thesis. With the Pelasgian hypothesis, I postulate that much of the long-range cultural dynamics of the Old World since the Early Neolithic may be explained on the basis of a Primary Pelasgian Realm extending from the fertile Sahara to Central Asia ca. 7 ka BP, and containing, *in nucleo*, a considerable number of cultural and genetic traits, which (while undergoing transformations in detail) subsequently spread West to cover the entire Mediterranean,

and East to cover China, to finally be transmitted, on the wings of chariot technology (invented in Central Asia 4 ka BP) in the four directions of the compass (hence my term '*cross-model*' for this process): to North Western Europe, to Northern Europe, to East Asia, and to sub-Saharan Africa. The empirical backing for this hypothesis is supplied by an extensive lists of over 80 traits (some genetic, most of them cultural), with summary indications of their distributions in West Asia, the Mediterranean, Western Europe, Northern Europe, the Steppe region of Asia with extensions to East, South and South East Asia, and finally in sub-Saharan Africa.

Under the Pelasgian hypothesis, I have tended to consider the prevalence of Pelasgian traits in sub-Saharan Africa mainly as a result of southward diffusion from the Mediterranean / West Asia – using as important indications: Steppe traits (such as the skull complex / headhunting), the Bantu language (for which I demonstrate – cf. Fig. 7 below – the *Borean affinity – *Borean is a reconstructed parental language form which is hypothesised to be spoken in Central Asia some 25 ka BP, and to have left abundant traces in all linguistic macrophyla spoken today – , and for which I propose a West to Central Asian origin), the dominant mythology of the Separation of Heaven and Earth, the central institution of kingship, and continuities in the kinship and gender field. The parallels between South East Asia / Sunda, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Bronze Age Mediterranean I explain, under the Pelasgian thesis, as resulting from the spread of Pelasgian traits from their postulated West Asian / Eastern Mediterranean origin into the Western Mediterranean, Africa and South East Asia.

My Pelasgian hypothesis, meanwhile, emerged as a less radical and uotimately more convincing alternative to an earlier model of mine, in which both the Mediterranean and the African distributions of 'Pelasgian' traits were in fact interpreted as reflecting, in accordance with Oppenheimer, the presumable penetration of Sunda (i.e. South East Asian, Austric) traits, both into the Mediterranean and into sub-Saharan Africa. In my more extensive discussions (e.g. van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011), I have not concealed a number of indications of the possible Sunda background of West Asian and Eastern Mediterranean phenomena, e.g. the potentially Austric etymology of Dilmun, and of a number of central names / concepts in Ancient Egyptian religion.

Fig. 6. The Pelasgian hypothesis

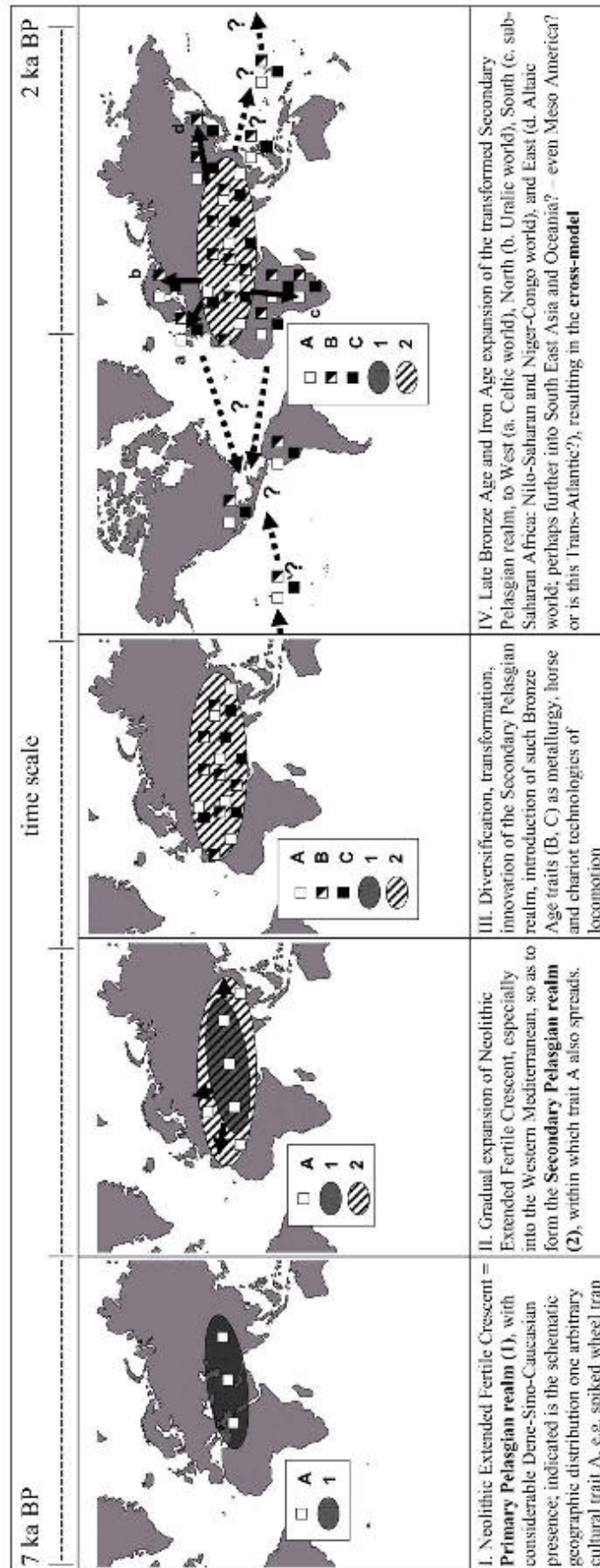
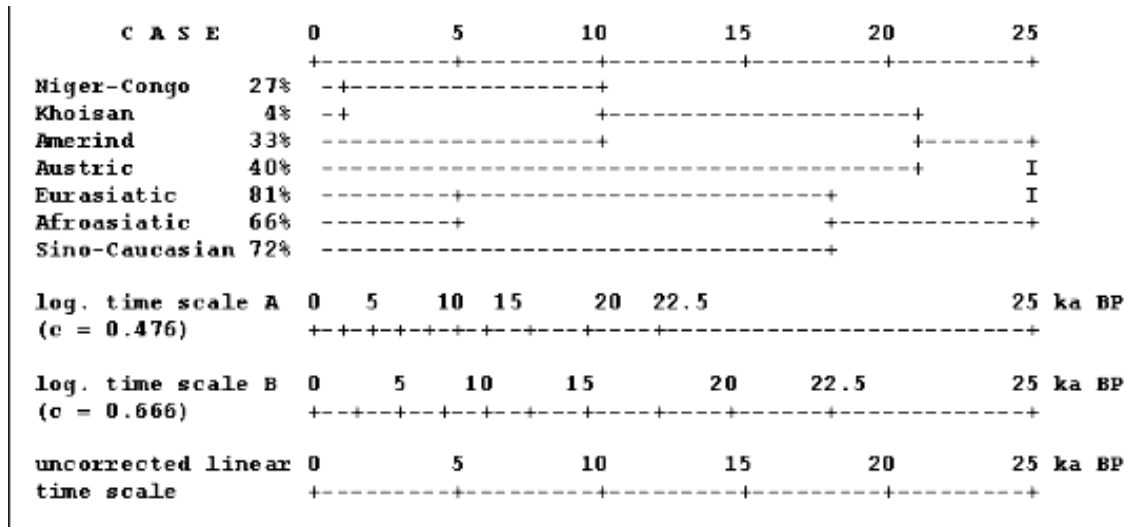


Fig. 7. Dendrogram setting out the relative positions of the *Borean-associated linguistic macro-phyla in relation to Niger-Congo (> Bantu) and Khoisan



Explanation. In this figure, the percentages next to the names of the macro-phyla indicate which proportion of the *Borean lexicon is represented in the reconstructed proto-lexicon of the respective macro-phyla; for Khoisan I rely here on the *Tower of Babel* treatment (Starostin & Starostin 1998-2008), but I suspect that closer and more systematic scrutiny would yield a much higher percentage – like I found for Niger-Congo. Note the closeness of Niger-Congo and Khoisan, their joint clustering with Amerind (which helps to explain a great many surprising parallels between North American and sub-Saharan African cultures, in such fields as puberty rites, divination, mythology, astronomy, games, basketry / weaving, hunting and fishing technology, and confirm the hitherto overlooked Central Asian affinities of today’s sub-Saharan African cultures), while these three macro-phyla together with Austriac constitute one main branch of *Borean, the other main branch being composed of the dominant languages of Eurasia (with Eurasianic and Afroasiatic constituting one rather close cluster, and with Sino-Caucasian at a considerable distance). In the light of this analysis, recent suggestions by Manansala (e.g. 2006) and Pedersen (n.d.) as to the closeness of Indo-European and Austriac cannot be systematically sustained – such affinities as have been identified can only be due to intrusion / borrowing and not to a direct, shared genetic origin. My statistical outcomes suggest an initial bifurcation of the *Borean-speaking linguistic, cultural and demographic stock, with

1. one, ultimately peripheral branch vacating the Central Asian homeland and moving on (being chased? or differentially equipped with the necessary technology to explore new continents and their own initiative?) to South East Asia, Oceania, the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa, and
2. the other, ultimately central, branch remaining in the Eurasian homeland, gradually expanding westward to finally occupy most of Eurasia, and the Northern half of Africa.

When we confront these statistical results with the reconstruction of the global history of mtDNA haplo groups as given about by reference to Forster 2004 (Fig. 2, above), an elegant solution presents itself to explain the proposed initial bifurcation of *Borean into a peripheral and a central branch: the peripheral branch, producing African languages, Amerind and Austriac appears to derive from mtDNA haplo type M, the central branch from type N – the bifurcation appears to mainly reflect an initial segmentation, already in the Arabian peninsula some 60 ka BP, of the second sally ‘Out of Africa’.

Let us now go back to Tauchmann’s hypothesis of major demic diffusion from South East Asia to sub-Saharan Africa prior to Bantu expansion. In his 2004 paper, Peter Underhill (2004) rendered the Back-into-Africa migration as a transmission of haplo group M from Eastern Eurasia to sub-Saharan Africa, yielding haplo group M – complementary to the transmission of Western Eurasian haplo group U to sub-Saharan Africa, in the form of haplo group U6. Forster (2004) renders essentially the same process in a geographically more explicit and detailed form. Although the complexities

of the U haplo group in Western parts of the Old World during the Upper Palaeolithic are notorious,² it may not be impossible to read the transmission of Eurasian U to sub-Saharan African U6 as corresponding with the cultural transmission of Scythian, Uralic, or otherwise West Asia / Pelasgian traits into sub-Saharan Africa from the Late Bronze Age onward, as a result of chariot technology.

Forster's global rendering highlights the South and South East Asian connotations of haplo group M (as a gradual transformation, along the South coast of Eastern Eurasia, of haplo group M brought to South West Asia (the Arabian peninsula) along the Northern Route 'Out of Africa' (from 60 ka BP on) – while another offshoot of M was transmitted to East Central Asia and eventually became ancestral to part of the population of the Americas. Forster shows how the M1 haplo group was transmitted via the Persian Gulf into Northern Central Africa; considering the prominence of other M haplogroups in South East Asia, this region might also have been the ultimate origin of M1, but so far the evidence for such an assumption does not seem to be available.

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² Cf. Maca-Meyer *et al.* 2003; Plaza *et al.* 2003; Cherni *et al.* 2005; González *et al.* 2003.

³ My Pelasgian hypothesis, meanwhile, emerged as a less radical and ultimately more convincing alternative to an earlier model of mine, in which both the Mediterranean and the African distributions of

However, if Tauchmann is right and there was in fact a massive South East Asian / Austric presence in East and South East Africa prior to the effective penetration of the Bantu expansion there, then this would have to show in the genetic record. In that case distribution maps of classic genetic markers and of single genes would have to bring out patterns that link sub-Saharan Africa with South East Asia, more than with most other parts of the Old World.

At the level of mitochondrial DNA types (Forster 2004), this is certainly the case: African continuities in terms of the 'Back-into-Africa' thesis are to be found in relation with the haplo groups M1 and U6, but these have no recognised South East Asian connotations.

Although belonging to a phase in the genetic sciences prior to the advances in molecular biology in the 1990s, yet the distribution maps which Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* (1994) present in abundance, offer a further opportunity of testing Tauchmann's hypothesis.

Here we expect, in the first place, to derive insight from the distribution of thalassaemias (hereditary blood conditions that have a debilitating effect yet render immunity to malaria), for Oppenheimer (one of the main researchers of the genetic aspects of these conditions) advances the world distribution of thalassaemias alpha and beta as the main genetic underpinning of his Sunda hypothesis (Oppenheimer 1998). I reproduce his global distribution map of thalassaemia here as Fig. XXX. He offers a genetic argument identifying South East Asia as the place of origin of these mutations.

'Pelagian' traits were in fact interpreted as reflecting, in accordance with Oppenheimer, the presumable penetration of 'Sunda' (i.e. South East Asian, Austric) traits, both into the Mediterranean and into sub-Saharan Africa. In my more extensive discussions, I have not concealed a number of indications of the possible Sunda background of West Asian and Eastern Mediterranean phenomena, e.g. the potentially Austric etymology of Dilmun (the Sumerians' sacred island and trade centre in the Persian Gulf), and of a number of central names / concepts in Ancient Egyptian religion (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 370-372, Table 28.4). Now, under Tauchmann's hypothesis of an extensive pre-Bantu Asian presence in East and South Africa during the first, and perhaps early second, millennium of the common era, my earlier, Sunda-centred model may need to be, to some extent, restored to the central explanatory position in which I held it a few years ago. A considerable number, perhaps even the majority, of 'Pelagian' traits in sub-Saharan Africa might have come to the latter region, not directly as a result of southward expansion of Pelagian traits from the Mediterranean, but only indirectly, carried on the wings of Sunda expansion, so via the detour of South and South East Asia. We may have to interpret the apparent Bantu elements in the West Asian and the Eastern Mediterranean Bronze Age (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011) as a further indication of Sunda influence – and by the same token we would interpret as distant Sunda effects the rapid improvement, in the Eastern Mediterranean, of nautical skills, and the emergence of Neolithic trading ports (such as Jafa / Joppe and Corinth). Puzzling elements such as shell money (indistinguishable from current Melanesian versions) in the royal tombs of Ur would come closer to a solution; the European / Oceanian parallels in the field of mythology (the separation of Heaven and Earth as the end of their divine intercourse and the release of their children; gods fishing up Land from the Sea; the invention of the sail) would be explained as Sunda (in line, after all, with Oppenheimer), and the emergence of Indus and Sumerian civilisation may have been indebted to some Sunda catalytic influence, again just as postulated by Oppenheimer. Thus the General Sunda hypothesis seems to have no lack of explanatory power and appeal, and my dismissal of the Special Sunda thesis with regard to Genesis mythology specially flood myths (van Binsbergen with Isaak 2008), does not in the least mean that I consider the General Sunda hypothesis to have been refuted wholesale and once for all.

Note that beta thalassaemia is mainly confined to a belt that extends from Northern Spain to New Zealand, north of sub-Saharan Africa; but that it also occurs on the Bight of Benin -- although not in Madagascar, nor in Southern Africa. The latter threatens to make this finding less convincing as evidence of direct seaborne Asian influence during the last millennium and a half.

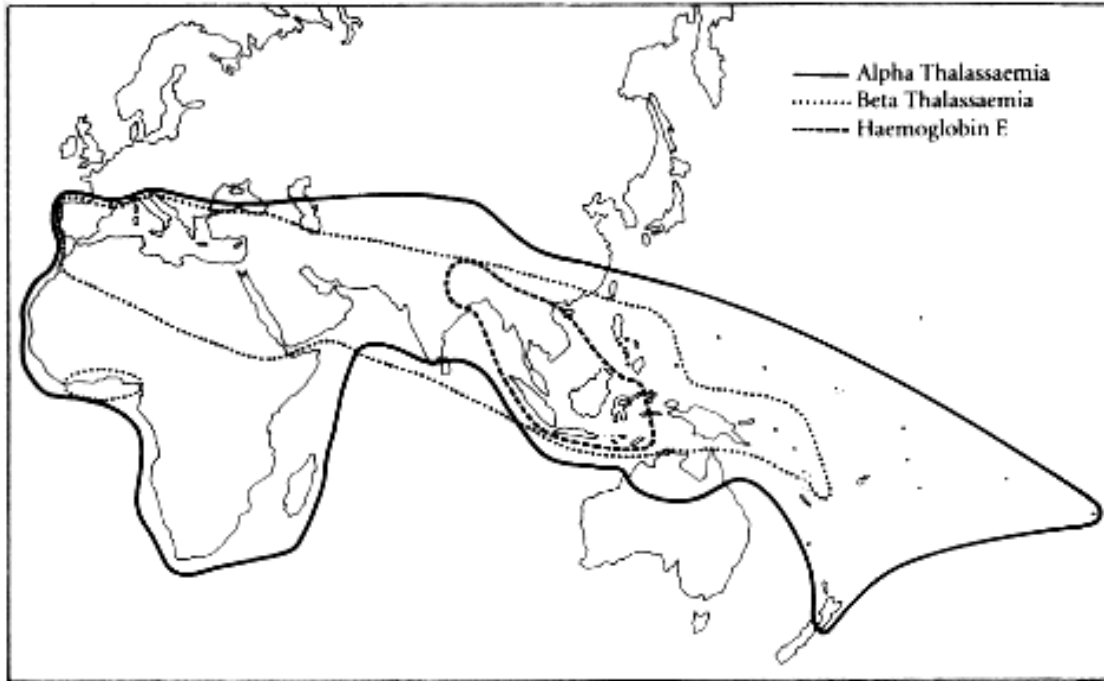


Fig. 8. Global distribution of alpha and beta thalassaemia according to Oppenheimer (1998); note the isolated coastal attestation of beta thalassaemia along the Bight of Benin.

Fortunately we have the additional evidence from Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994, showing more than minimum readings for Madagascar and the East African coast – somewhat in line with the Oppenheimer / Tauchmann hypotheses. Yet, for beta thalassaemia the evidence does not look good (Fig. XXXX). Without denying the possible implications of the relative highs, in Africa, in Eritrea and the Maghrib, the African incidence of beta thalassaemia remains so low, across the continent, that no massive Asian substrate influence throughout East and South East Africa can possibly be based on it.

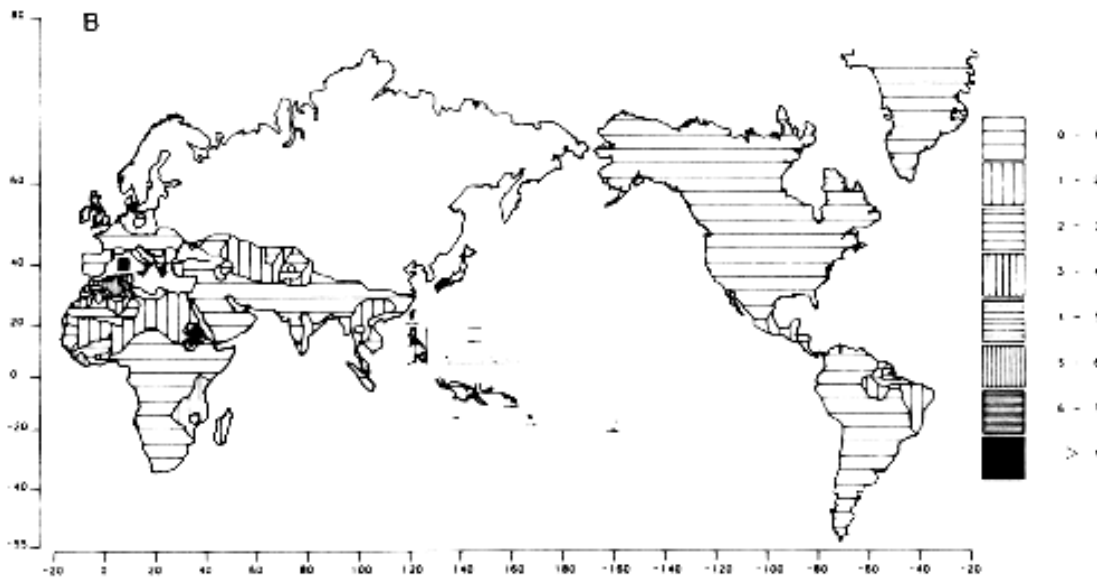


Fig. 9. World distribution of beta thalassaemias (after Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* 1994: Fig. 2.14.6.B; numbers to the right indicate the gene frequency in %)

For alpha thalassaemia (Fig. XXX) the conclusion concerning an Asian substrate in sub-Saharan African can be even more straightforward:

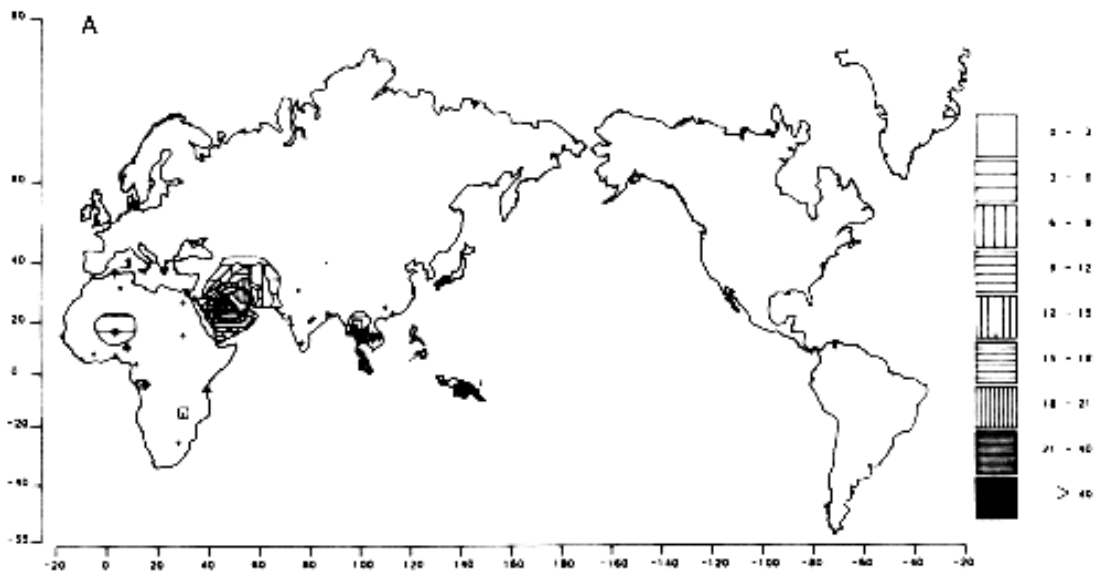
- there is clearly a succession of highs extending from South East Asia to South West Asia (Iran and Arabian peninsula), suggestive of movement along an East-West axis; but the direction of that movement cannot be determined from the distribution alone – it may have been from East to West as postulated by Oppenheimer, but just as well from West to East, as would be in line with the Pelasgian hypothesis;⁴
- anyway, none of these high frequencies of alpha thalassaemia have reached sub-Saharan Africa.

Thalassaemia distribution is clearly not the way to genetically prove a massive Asian substrate presence on the African continent. Yet some other single-gene distributions offered by Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* 1994 may have more in stock for us:

- not HLAB*12 (which reaches even a global low in South East Asia);
- nor RH*CDe neither RH*C (both of which are very high in South East Asia, but not conspicuous in Africa);
- but we have a hit in the case of the Rhesus marker RH*D
- and perhaps also in the case of IGHGIG3*za;b0blb3b4b5,
- and GC*IF

⁴ In fact, looking at the distribution, the most likely interpretation would be an original epicentre in South-west Asia (Iran and Arabian peninsula – in line with my Pelasgian hypothesis), whence subsequent transmission to South East Asia and New Guinea.

Fig. 10. World distribution of alpha thalassaemias (after Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994: Fig. 2.14.5.A; numbers to the right indicate the gene frequency in %); unfortunately, no information is given on Madagascar, South East Asia, Oceania and Australia



For the latter three single-gene markers I give the global distributions:

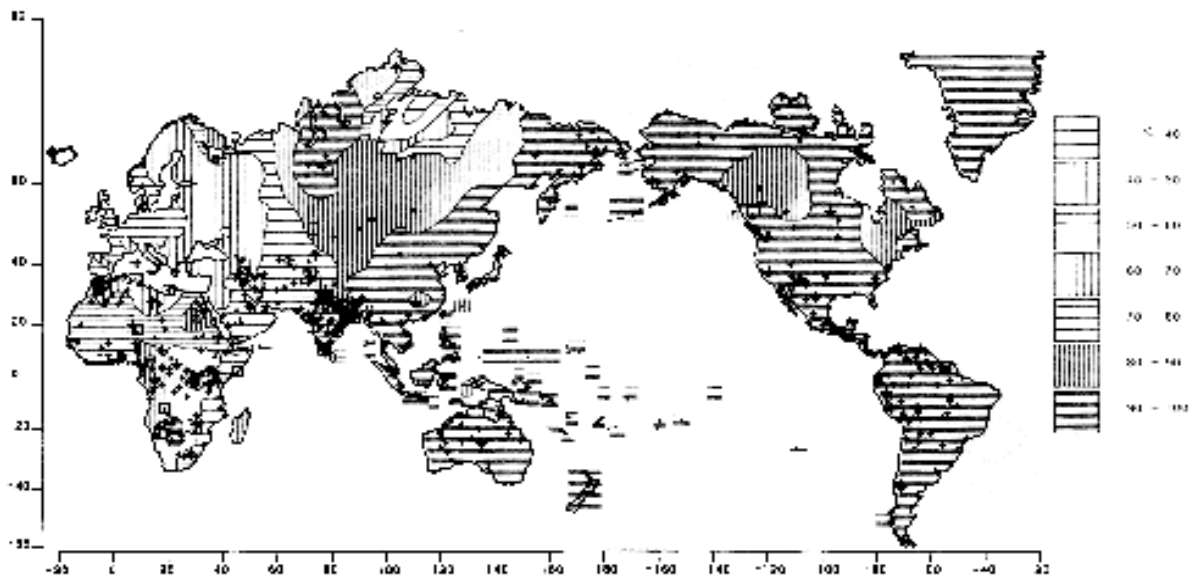
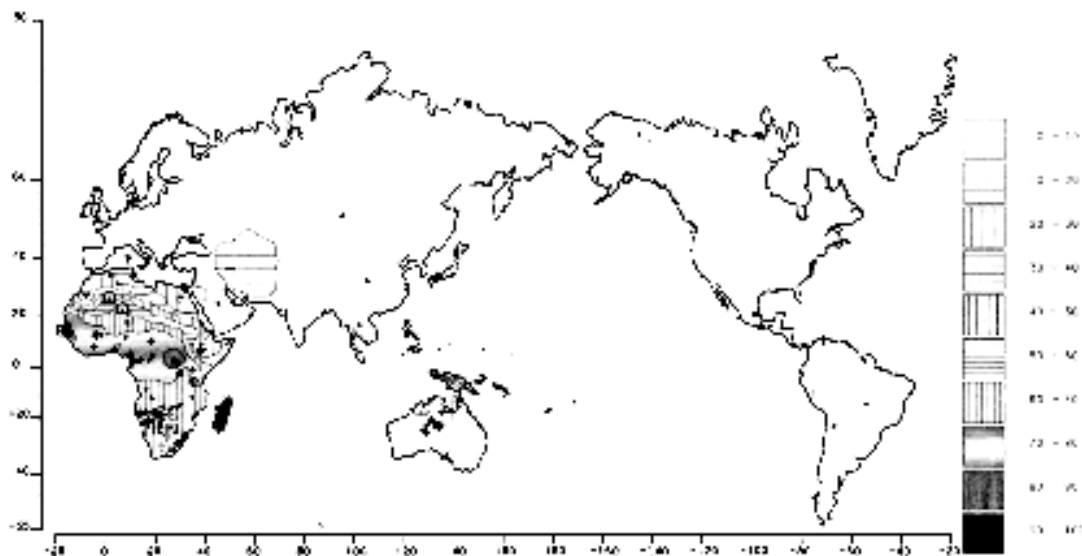


Fig. 11. The global distribution of the RH*D Rhesus marker offers support for the idea of recent Asian substrate presence in Africa (Cavalli-Sforza et al. 1994: app. 79).

As is manifest from Fig. XX, the RH*D marker obtains in most parts of Africa frequencies that are relatively low by global standards (although normal for the Western Old World – for the same pattern obtains in Europe); in Central Africa (from the Northern to the Southern savannah, with the exception of Mozambique and Eastern South Africa) frequencies rise to intermediate levels found in certain parts of North America and Northern Eurasia; high African frequencies at a par with common levels

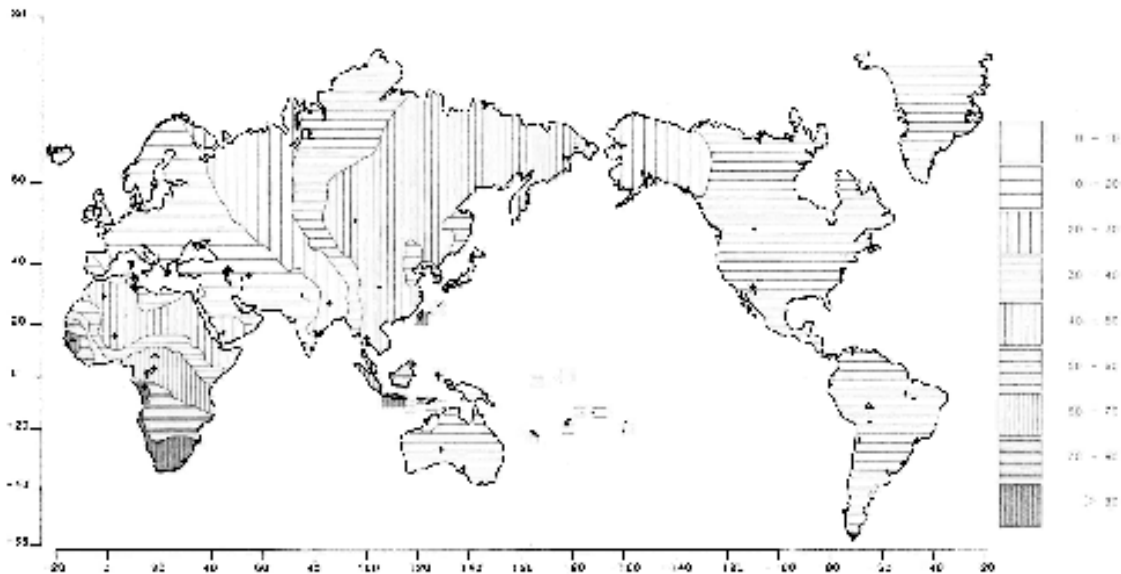
in the New World, South East and East Asia, Oceania and Australia are reached in four regions of Africa: (a) the Zimbabwe-Botswana Plateau, (b) the Western Grassfields of Cameroon, (c) Upper Egypt, and (d) the Eastern Maghrib. Given the limited extent and the plurality of these four African areas, they look like destinations rather than origins of transcontinental gene transfer. Of these four regions, (a) and (b) qualify as likely targets of substantial South East and East Asian influence in recent millennia – in such fields as divination, musical instruments, sculpturing styles, burial customs, kingship, etc. For Ancient Egypt, a possible Sunda connection was argued on the ground of possible Austric etymologies of major theonyms (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 370 f; also *cf.* Pedersen n.d.). The Maghreb case remains to be explained, possibly as the northernmost extension, into the Mediterranean, of Sunda maritime influences from the Bight of Benin or from Egypt; the giant child of Poseidon / Water and Gē / Earth Antaios / Anti (a well-chosen parentage if Antaios is to symbolise seaborne influence from afar), one of the divinities associated with this region, has a namesake and counterpart in Egypt (Anti), and there are indications of migrations from Egypt via the Maghreb and then South across the Sahara in the Late Bronze Age (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 385 f).

*Fig. 12. Global distribution of IGHGIG3*za;b0blb3b4b5 as a possible indication of recent Asian substrate presence in sub-Saharan Africa*



The geographic distribution of IGHGIG3*za;b0blb3b4b5) gives the impression of two narrow inland corridors: one stretching from Southern Sudan via the Western Grassfields of Cameroon, to Mali and Senegal; the other, less conspicuous, from Mozambique to Angola. In my provisional analysis of African-Asian continuities so far, my empirical ethnographic discussions of Sunda traits in Africa have concentrated on these two inland corridors. Admittedly, some of the data on these corridors are also amenable to an interpretation in terms of my Pelasgian hypothesis – as Pelasgian traits brought to sub-Saharan Africa as southern extensions of the cross-model, from the Late Bronze Age onward. Probably a combination of Sunda and Pelasgian models works best, but at any rate a considerable Asian substrate effect on the genetic makeup sub-Saharan Africa appears to be detectable.

*Fig. 13. Global distribution of GC*IF as a possible indication of recent Asian substrate presence in sub-Saharan Africa*



I suggest that in connection with the geographic distribution of GC*IF in coastal South and West Africa we could point to the regrettable forced migration of inhabitants of South East Asia, Ceylon and Madagascar to South Africa (where they contributed greatly to the emergence of the so-called ‘Coloured’ segment of the modern South African population, and to the implantation of Islam in that country) and perhaps onward to West Africa (where the Isle of Gorée was a main transit port for slaves destined for the West Indies) under the aegis of the United East Indien Company, in historical times from the 17th c. CE onward

By and large, we have found substantial empirical, genetic evidence for the Oppenheimer / Tauchmann hypotheses of an extensive recent Asian substrate presence in sub-Saharan Africa.

2. African parallels to the Balinese fire dance? Further explorations into the transcontinental connections between sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia

2.1. The problem

Elsewhere (van Binsbergen 2003: ch. 8, and 2005b) I have argued that the ecstatic *sangoma* cult of Southern Africa, into which I was initiated in 1990, shows many indications of a South Asian origin. The symbolic repertoire of these cults includes elements that have Asian connotations and that have no counterpart in local African

cultures, e.g. black cloaks, prostration, use of staves / batons as signs of office, stipulation of animal skins as initiatory garments according to a logic identical to that of the *Satapatha-Brahmana V* (Eggeling 1988), leopard / panther / tiger symbolism with shamanic overtones reminiscent of the South Asian connotations of Indra (Thompson 2004). This would make one expect, in principle, parallels between *sangoma* and Bali religion, which has been recognised to be largely South Asian.

2.2. Braving fire as proof of sacred invulnerability

The prominence of an ecstatic cult on Bali is one indication of such a parallel between Bali and *sangoma*. In Bali, after temple dances that enact the central drama of the classic Indian Ramayana epic, a typical sequel is a ‘fire dance’ in which an entranced medium, inspired by the sacred atmosphere engendered by the Ramayana, wields a hobby-horse mask and tramples in glowing embers of burnt coconut as a sign of sacred election and of the presence of the gods. On other occasions, the dancers are reported to pierce themselves with knives.

Fig. 14. The chorus during the kecak dance, the subsequent fire dance, and (bottom) key episode of the Ramayana





These two proofs of sacred invulnerability under trance: withstanding fire and stabbing / piercing, have detailed parallels in the ecstatic cult which I studied in the 1960s-70s in the highlands of North-western Tunisia (van Binsbergen 1980, 1985, 1988). Here the ecstatic cult (which throughout the Mediterranean goes back to at least Graeco-Roman Antiquity, so most probably also in Tunisia; cf. Vandebroek 1997) has come to be incorporated in popular Islam, and locally more specifically in the ritual of the Qadīriyya Islamic brotherhood. During more or less public seances, including the communal ones staged in the evenings of local saint's festivals, some of the local members (Arab. *faqīr*, plur. *fūqra*) of the Qadīrī brotherhood (and 20% of the adult male village population counted as members) would perform ecstatic dances to the specialist trance music of flute (Arabic: *qosba*) and tympanon (Arabic: *bendīr*). When in trance, the dancers (closely supervised by non-tranced colleagues and superiors in their spiritual order) would manipulate fiery chunks of charcoal, would stick women's *uḥlil* (*fibulae*, clasps; the pointed rods in question may be up to 5 mm in diameter) through their hands and cheeks, would stab themselves with knives or would roll over cactus leaves full of long and hard thorns. All these provocative actions the entranced dancers undertake without hurting themselves, without developing blisters, or without drawing blood. These actions are all in proof of their being possessed by the local saint (or his *jinn* demon servants, or *jinn*s, *tout court*) and therefore having attained sacred invulnerability.⁵ There are close parallels with the *dhikrs* (ecstatic prayer sessions) of the ^cAissawa brotherhood of Morocco, described in detail by Brunel (1926). In other parts of North and West Africa, it is the unharmed manipulation of snakes that is taken as sacred proof. Such ritual proofs of invulnerability are found over much of Southern Eurasia, and even (specifically in snake ritual) in modern North America.

⁵ I cannot go here into the physiology and psychology of such temporary suspension of ordinary bodily response patterns; there is a some literature on this point (cf. Winkelman 1986, 1997, 2000 and references cited there). All I can say is that during my Tunisian fieldwork I observed the facts of such suspension dozens of times, at close quarters, in the typical objectifying and distancing frame of mind of the participant observer. At other times, both during the Tunisian fieldwork and decades later in Botswana, I did also engage in the ecstatic dance myself, and reached trance; however, I never tried to produce the proofs of invulnerability that are associated, in the local culture of Tunisia, with the trance state, but not in Botswana.

2.3. Transcontinental connections?

Proofs of sacred invulnerability are not conspicuous in the forms of trance ritual in sub-Saharan Africa, which were the central topic of my 1979 doctoral dissertation, cf. van Binsbergen 1981. Yet it is not to be ruled out that these forms of ecstatic religion might derive from a common source. Considering that North African ecstatic ritual is commonly attributed to the influence of the *bori* cult brought by West African Haussa slaves (Tremearne 1914, 1915; on *bori*, also cf. Besmer 1983; Masquelier 1994, 2001), we might consider the North African attestation as merely secondary, and then are left with a parallel between Bali and West Africa. Again,

1. the Pelasgian and
2. the Sunda thesis

as juxtaposed in Section 1 of these Notes provide rival – but possibly complementary – explanations.⁶

Could West African *bori* be continuous with the ecstatic cults we find in East and South Central Africa? Their superficial, outside form certainly appear to be rather similar – so much so that the dancing movements including animal figurations I learned as an apprentice *faqīr* in North Africa in 1968-1970, did come in quite handy when studying the *bituma* ecstatic cult in Western Zambia, from 1972 on. However, beyond these impressionistic assertions a rigorous typological approach is needed before claims of comparability and continuity can be properly made.

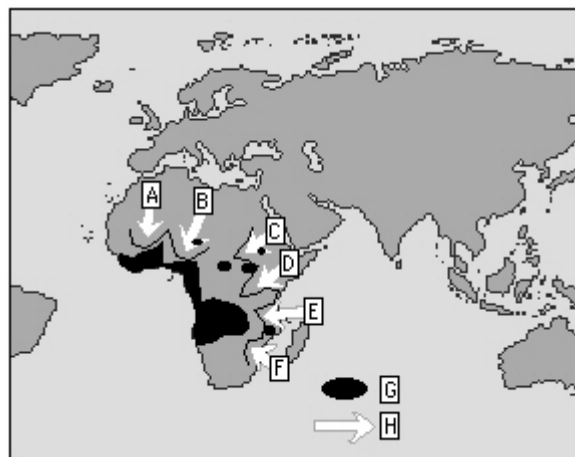
⁶ Two things have recently sensitised me to the extent of fire mythology and fire cults throughout the Old World – although outside West Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean much of the research remains to be done:

1. Having recently drafted a book on the fire god Hephaestus and his alleged Egyptian counterpart Ptah (my argument in that book highlights the transformative nature of the element Fire, of which Hephaestus is the main expression in the Ancient Greek context – in a way not at all paralleled by Ancient Egyptian Ptah, *contra* Blažek 2008), and
2. my studies (van Binsbergen 2009 and 2010d) on the cyclical system of elemental transformation throughout the Old World, starting out from the Japanese cosmogonic myth of Izanami giving birth to Kagutsuchi / Fire (and thus, perhaps in a transformation of a much older and very wide theme which Yuri Berezhin sees as originally pre-Exodus African: through her own death in the process, bringing death into the world)

What is striking, and pertinent in our present context of fire ritual, is the exceptional cosmological position of Fire. Making Fire (as I did in my Japan paper) appear as part of a transformative elemental cycle, completely at a par with the other elements, risks obscuring that, in comparative mythology, Fire is often in an exceptional outsider position. This is the case with Hephaestus (disfigured outsider kicked out of heaven, but – like Agni, 'child of the waters'...(Satapatha Brahmana III, Julius Eggeling tr., 6.8.2.2 ff, – with a watery background of sea nymphs and islanders taking care of him) and with Prometheus' stealing of fire, but also in Uralic mythology (Kalevala discusses the birth and early career of Fire in terms very similar to Hephaestus and Kagutsuchi; I know there are doubts about the integrity of the Kalevala cycle but I am inclined to see very ancient materials in it) – and I suppose this theme could be further pursued, with fire mythologies from all over the world. I suspect the case could be made (it has been made, but not yet on solid grounds) for fire being among a more original, smaller set of elements than four, five, six or eight, perhaps paired with water – and later augmented and systematised with the addition of Earth, Wood, Metal, Air, etc. Fire, and to a lesser extent Water (but see what it does to Fire!) are much more obviously aggressive and destructive than the other elements, and the cycles of destruction and production (insult and blessing) in transformation may be primarily inspired by Fire and Water.

If indeed we are justified to made the uncertain step from West Africa to East and South Central Africa (but that is, admittedly, an open question), then the step from the latter regions to Sunda is somewhat more secure.⁷ With regard to East and South Central Africa the general feeling is that ecstatic cults of affliction were relatively recent (19th-c. CE) introductions from the Indian Ocean region (Bourgignon 1968; van Binsbergen 1981; Lambek 1978; Alpers 1984), which makes an East-West, Sunda / South East Asian connection in terms of Oppenheimer (1998) quite conceivable. Frobenius, who more than half a century ago pioneered this sort of problematics, takes an even broader view, suggesting the general inroads of shamanism into Africa in an overall (south-)west-bound direction eminently compatible with the Sunda thesis, and being inversely related to the preservation, or emergence, of representational sculptural art in Africa (Fig. 13).

Fig. 15. Summary of Frobenius' views on the spread of shamanism and the distribution of representational sculptural art are opposed, complementary movements



Frobenius (1954):
A-F, inroads of shamanism;
G: 'pristine' centres of figurative art

This model may even cover the West African ecstatic forms of the *bori* type, for the evidence of *mankala*, geomancy, divining bowls (reminiscent of a particular type of Chinese ritual vessel, and of Chinese nautical compasses; there is ample evidence that the Chinese sailed the East and Southern African coasts in the first half of the 2nd mill CE), *Voodoo*, musical instruments especially the xylophone, food crops, the massive import of cowries with their East and South East Asian symbolism apparently transmitted to West Africa (Jackson 1917), even a stray Roman coin ending up on Mt Cameroon via the probable detour of the Indian Ocean (Dick-Read 2005), and also the limited evidence from the global distribution of the GC*IF genetic marker discussed in

⁷ Above, in Section 1, we discussed possible indications for Sunda protohistorical presence on African soil, and came up (on the basis of a consideration of the global distribution of IGHGIG3*za;b0blb3b4b5) with some genetic evidence suggesting two possible corridors of Sunda influence in the interior of Africa: one stretching from Mozambique to Angola, the other from Somalia via the Western Grassfields of Cameroon, to West Africa. On the Atlantic coast, the western ends of these corridors can be argued to converge with the postulated litoral Sunda influence, around the Cape, suggested by the distribution of GC*IF.

Section 1 of these Notes – all of this *might* be read (but see below) as suggesting a major cultic influence from the Indian Ocean (Sri Lanka, Madagascar, possibly South East Asia) around the Cape to West Africa, in the course of the second millennium CE.

But again this cannot be the entire truth, for already in the Mediterranean Mesolithic cowries sporadically appear in ritual and jewellery context.⁸ And in the second millennium BCE changes in the therapeutic system of Ancient Mesopotamia (cf. Ritter 1965; Black & Green 1992: 123f; van Binsbergen & Wiggermann 2000) suggested the arrival⁹ of shamanism, i.e. ecstatic religion – traces of which also abound in Graeco-Roman classical Antiquity (cf. Fig. 14) – perhaps not entirely unrelated to the cult of the Hephaestus fire god, cognate forms of which are found all over the Pelasgian realm.

Fig. 16. Dionysus, satyrus, bacchante (British Museum: Imperial Rome, c. 100 CE)



source www.theoi.com, with thanks

Like in Section 1 of these Notes, again the dilemma appears to be between Pelasgian and Sunda explanations: the ecstatic cult could be

- an ancient West to Central Asian trait (this appears to be the Bronze Age epicentre of the fire cult) transmitted both to South and South East Asia and (either directly from West Asia, or via South East Asia) to Africa

⁸ Could they be traces of the kind of very early Sunda influence which was Oppenheimer's original Sunda thesis (related to the rise of the sea level by the onset of the Holocene), and possibly belonging to the wider class of phenomena on which the Sunda thesis might throw light, including (see Section 1) the rise of the Indus and Sumerian civilisations, the shell money of Ur, the many Mediterranean / Oceanian parallels in comparative mythology, the rise of nautical skills and early sea ports in the Mediterranean, and possible Austric etymologies for key concepts in Early Dynastic Egyptian religion and society? Or are these just as many red herrings? When I wrote (van Binsbergen 2007b; van Binsbergen c.s. 2008) my dismissive analysis of Oppenheimer's Special Sunda thesis on the basis of my statistical analysis of flood myths world-wide, I was sure these apparent traces were red herrings and nothing more. Today I am not so sure any more.

⁹ I suggest, from West Central Asia, rather than North Asia which today dominate the image of shamanism. I have an elaborate distributional argument for this which I cannot reproduce here. Cf. van Binsbergen 2004.

- or it could be an original South / South East Asian trait spreading westward, with the Mesopotamian and Graeco-Roman forms to be interpreted as merely the early indications of a remote Sunda presence in Western Eurasia.

2.4. An Afrocentrist perspective? Exploring equine imagery

However, there is a third possibility which, as an Africanist known for his defence of Afrocentrism (van Binsbergen 1997a, 2000a, 2000b, 2005), I should not overlook.

It is significant that the Balinese trance-dancer in the fire dancer should masquerade as a *horse*. The imagery of trance possession as a horse being ridden by a spiritual rider, is central to *bori* trance possession (Besmer 1983), and is also found in other trance contexts (Goodman 1990). The use of the horse-rider metaphor is very widespread (e.g. in Plato's *Phaedrus* and throughout classical and late Graeco-Roman Antiquity it appears as a metaphor for the relation between body and soul), and could hardly be considered specific to West African ecstatic cults, even including their Caribbean derivatives (Deren 1970). In folklore studies, the widespread hobby-horse has also been brought in connection with the ecstatic cult (Alford 1978; Elwin 1942). Horse-riding (as distinct to horse-drawn chariots, which appears to be one or two millennia younger) seems to have started in Central Asia in the 5th millennium BCE (Chamberlin 2006) – very much later than the religious significance of the horse as a symbol of the sky, the sea, and the divine, as amply attested by European Upper Palaeolithic art (Rappenglueck 1999; Carr 1995), where the (undomesticated) horse is by far the most frequently depicted animal; traces of this may still be found in the mythologies of Greece (where Poseidon and Demeter appear as horses) and South Asia (the horse-headed Hayagriva, an avatar of Vishnu). The horse / rider metaphor in ecstatic religion is likely to be younger than horseback riding as such,¹⁰ and a 5th millennium / Central Asian origin for horseback riding would be eminently compatible with a Pelasgian interpretation of the horse-rider symbolism in ecstatic religion, diffusing into West Africa and South East Asia in the course of millennia from a common Central Asian source.

Admittedly, sub-Saharan African need not have been the passive recipient of transcontinental influences as it appears in this model. Afrocentrists take Africa as the source of much of the achievements in world cultural history since c. 10 ka BP. In their view, such widespread formal systems as geomantic divination and mankala board games have a West African origin and from there were diffused over much of the Old and the New World.

When West African xylophones are found to have exactly the same tuning as Indonesian ones (Jones 1964), our first inclination would be to conclude to borrowing from Indonesia to Africa (after all, there is the evidence of massive linguistic and cultural transmission from South East Asia to Madagascar), but theoretically an Afrocentrist counter-view would be to postulate borrowing from West Africa to Indonesia. For the (as compared to African equivalents) cheap and clumsy, locally

¹⁰ However, one could imagine the reverse relation: a prior trance / ritual imagery of being ridden in the form of an as yet undomesticated horse, bringing people secondarily to experiment with horseback riding.

produced thumb pianos now to be found in Balinese curio shops (Fig 15) a similar argument may be made, and more convincingly so.

Fig. 17. Tourist-market thumb piano from Indonesia



Source: http://dryleafdesign.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/images/thumb-piano.298165621_std.gif , with thanks

A similar situation may be argued for *mankala* board games (cf. Fig. 17; van Binsbergen 1997b), used for a game that consists in the redistribution and harvesting, by two or more players and according to strict roles, of tokens (usually seeds) over a gaming board consisting of two to four rows of shallow holes. Mankala boards appear sporadically in the South Asian (Sri Lanka: Parker 1909: 587f), South East Asian (Jones 1964: 198f; Barnes 1975) and East Asian context (Eagle 1995, 1999), may be considered the results of diffusion from the oldest forms of such boards as were archaeologically attested in Neolithic West Asia (Kirkbride 1966; Rollefson 1992; Simpson 1999).¹¹ However, these Asian attestations could also be seen as more recent direct diffusions from Africa, where, in Culin's (1896) words, *mankala* has become the national game. Indian-Ocean trade, discovery and occasional conquest between East

¹¹ On the basis of one stone slab (Fig. 16) with *mankala*-like indentures, Oppenheimer – 1998, under his General Sunda thesis – suggests *mankala* to be among the original Sunda package to be diffused westward from a South East Asian origin in early to middle Holocene times, but considering the global distribution of *mankala* in space and time (cf. van Binsbergen 1997b, to be slightly revised in the light of later work), this is very unlikely.

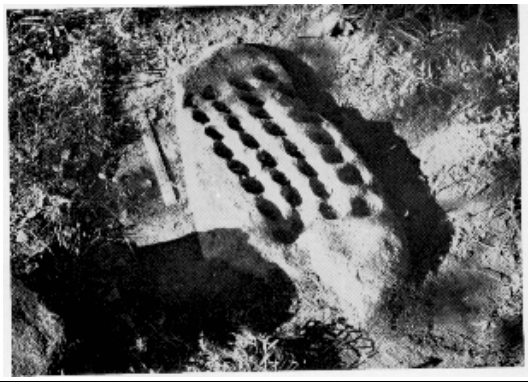
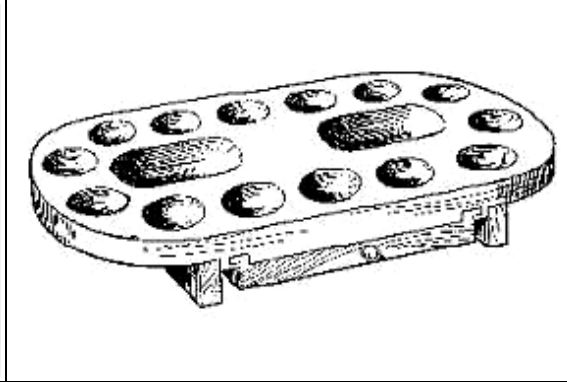
Fig. 18. Mankala board from Oppenheimer 1998.


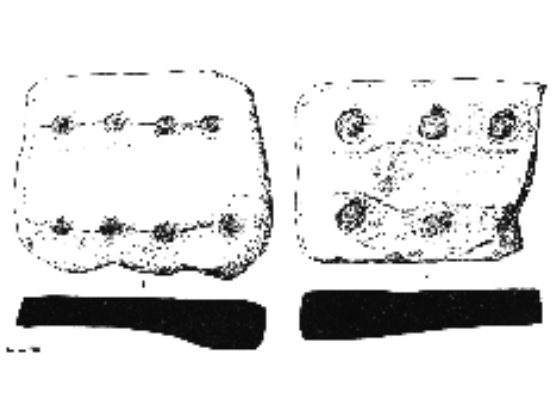




Africa, Persian, India, Indonesia and China has been established extensively and is attested in an extensive literature (e.g. Neville et al. 1975; Duyvendak 1949; Snow 1988; Li Anshan 2000), to which the Afrocentric scholar Clyde Winters (1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1983a, 1983b, 1985, 1988, 1989) has made surprising but substantial contributions. Black African slaves were sufficiently abundant in T'ang dynasty China (618-907 CE) to give rise to an entire genre of belletrist there, highlighting the exploits of a Black hero with trickster connotations (Irwin 1977). Most probably, African slaves also went to other parts of East and South East Asia, and they may have brought African traits such as mankala and thumb pianos with them. In the course of the 19th century CE, Ashanti (Ghanaian) soldiers were recruited for the Royal Dutch Indies Army, and also to them the introduction of mankala in the Indonesian archipelago has been attributed. Against this background, we may have found an alternative explanation for my subjective impression of African faces in South East Asia: they may be due to a very sporadic gene flow from sub-Saharan Africa to South East Asia in historical times.

And against the same background it becomes just conceivable that also the Balinese fire dance with its trance and equine connotations, is a recent introduction from Africa in the course of the second millennium CE. This presses all the more, in view of the fact that the equine imaginery has been retained so emphatically. Horses have played a considerable role in Indonesian history in the second millennium CE (Boomgaard 2004) but they seem to be hardly conspicuous in Balinese iconography; this makes it thinkable that the horse imagery in the fire cult is a recent foreign import.

Fig. 19. Selected mankala boards from various parts of the Old World and various periods

	
<p>A four-row mankala game board excavated at Khami, Zimbabwe (ca. 1700 CE) (after Robinson 1959: plate xxvii)</p>	<p>mankala board, Ceylon (Parker 1909: 587f)</p>

	
<p>Mankala board supported by contorted human figures (one missing head), on display in a low-cost guest house on Gili Meno, Lombok, Indonesia, 2010</p>	<p>gaming board, Beidha, Jordan, Neolithic (Kirkbride 1966: 34)</p>
	
<p>Limestone game board from PPNC ^c Ain Ghazal. The scale bars are 5 cm long (photo by L. Rolston; Rollefson 1992: 2)</p>	<p>sculptural representation (c. 19 c. CE) of King Shamba of the Bushongo Kuba, Congo, seated behind a Mankala board (Parrinder 1968)</p>

2.5. Sub-Saharan Africa as a vacant cultural niche for West Asian formal systems at the end of the Bronze Age

At this point it is imperative that I explain why such an Afrocentrist interpretation of Mankala, and by analogy of the equine ecstatic imagery, does not appeal to me, despite the lip-service which I have repeatedly paid to Afrocentrism (van Binsbergen 1997a, 2000a, 2000b, 2005).

Mankala is not alone in the peculiar nature of its distribution and attestation pattern. This pattern may be summarised as follows:

- *in historical times to be found all over Africa*
- *and only sporadically elsewhere,*

- *and in practice to be considered a typical African phenomenon,*
- *even though its oldest attestations are not found in Africa but in Neolithic West Asia.*

In my recent drafts towards the Pelasgian hypothesis, the Sea peoples' ethnicity in the Mediterranean Bronze Age, and the assessment, after more than 20 years, of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* thesis (van Binsbergen, in press as 2010e), I have considered in detail several other formal systems whose distribution and attestation pattern is very similar to that of mankala:

- geomantic divination (cf. van Binsbergen 1997b),
- the spiked wheel trap,
- and the unilateral mythical being (cf. von Sicard 1968-1969) with only one side to his body (and variously associated with the weather, hunting, cattle, and metallurgy).

Also the Niger-Congo / Bantu linguistic macrophylum could be considered to belong to the same series: while about a quarter of the proto-Bantu vocabulary can be demonstrated to derive from *Borean, and proto-Bantu can be attested in Bronze Age West Asia (van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen, in press; van Binsbergen, 2010a), yet this macrophylum now features only as the main macrophylum of the Southern half of the African continent, from Senegal to Kenya and South Africa.

I do not think these five formal systems have an origin in sub-Saharan Africa – they originate in West to Central Asia where their oldest attestations have been found. Subsequently, in West Asia they were superseded and supplanted by other such formal systems. After all, especially after the invention of agriculture, and of the potent package consisting of writing, the state, organised religion and protoscience, West Asia has been seething with a succession of some of global cultural history's most important and most successful cultural and technological innovations. But while being eclipsed in West Asia, our five formal systems managed to find a permanent and fertile niche in sub-Saharan Africa, where they were only up against the social-organisationally, economically and conceptually relatively defenseless prior formal cultural systems of Palaeo-African hunter-gatherers. I therefore take the distribution and attestation pattern of these five formal systems as corroborating evidence for my Pelasgian hypothesis, and prefer to see African / South East Asian parallels (such as the presence of mankala, and ecstatic cults with equine imagery) not in the first place as resulting from transmission from West to East or East to West, but as parallel transmission of the West to Central Asian Pelasgian heritage.

2.6. Provisional conclusion concerning South East Asian / African connection in ecstatic religion including sacred invulnerability from fire

Spinning and twining the threads of an argument is often easier than weaving it all together to one coherent texture. Perhaps the following long-range pattern is emerging from the above argument – but certain much further reflection and consideration of additional material is needed before any definite conclusion can be drawn:

- in general, the transmission – as postulated by my Pelasgian Hypothesis – of a West to Central Asian cultural heritage of the Early Bronze Age, both to sub-Saharan Africa and (in part via South Asia) to South East Asia, explains much of the parallels and apparent continuities between South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa in historical times; shamanism, ecstatic religion, a fire cult, appear to have been part of the Primary Pelasgian cultural package
- even so, we may have to reckon with a significant undercurrent, from the early Holocene (c. 7 ka BP) on, of Indonesian influence on West Asia and the Mediterranean, which as a substrate also made its way into sub-Saharan Africa in the course of Pelasgian transmission
- to this effect we may add, in far more recent historic times (1st and 2nd mill. CE) bilateral exchanges between South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; this is the more specific, fairly recent context in which the equine imagery of the ecstatic cult in West Asia and in Bali may be profitably considered.

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