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TRACING THE HERITAGE AND CIVILIZATION OF AUSTRONESIAN SEAFARERS ACROSS WATERS, SEAS AND OCEANS IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHIPELAGO

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ABSTRACT

The waters, seas and oceans have traditionally been a source of inspiration for the search of truth. It also manages to negate the human worldview that associates it with various elements of myth and superstition. The waters, seas, and oceans are also a place with the advantage of consolidating ties between countries by forming a united, mutual understanding and generating mutual wealth. It is an invaluable, irreplaceable, and modified property. Historiography in Southeast Asia saw a close relationship between people named "humans" in the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, Sulawesi Sea, Flores Sea, Java Sea, Banda Sea and beyond.

History has shown how people have braved countless waves and storms in the seas and oceans to ensure that the legacy and spirit of the sailors are passed on to the next generation. It has made the region a centre of superior civilization as well as a model for other world civilizations. This article—therefore—aims to reassess the history of the Austronesian seafarers from the perspective of Southeast Asian history. The results of this study have opened a debate, whether it is true that this Austronesian seafarer's tribe originated in Taiwan as stated in the theory of migration and linguistics, or otherwise. This article contends that the Austronesian seafarer today came from Southeast Asia itself and have migrated out to expand their civilizations in regions of Oceania such as Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia all the way to Taiwan up to Madagascar. There is no easy answer, and even though such problematization needs to be studied by considering various other issues and disciplines, this article forwards the evidence brought through the examination of the Austronesian seafarers.

***Keywords**: Austronesian, Seafarers, Water, Seas, Oceans, Southeast Asia*

INTRODUCTION

There has always been an ambiguity regarding the history of the people in the Southeast Asian Archipelago. Questions such as who are these people, what is their origin, and most importantly, whether the descendants at present is the heir to a seafarer tribe or a terrestrial tribe have often been raised. Such line of questioning will invariably bring about another issue, that is, what are the evidences that can support that sea-based civilizations evolved earlier than land-based civilizations; and, how did a close relationship exist between the seafarers and the seas in Southeast Asia? The authors of this article are of the view that this ambiguity arises due to our absurdity that intends to understand Southeast Asia from the "historical epoch" marked by the emergence of early kingdoms, the expansion of Western powers not to mention Southeast Asia under the colonial rule, economic development, and beyond towards the formation of a nation-state as opposed to ancient or prehistoric history (Tahir et al., 2023).

In other words, this act of turning our backs on "prehistoric times" has caused a failure in understanding the comprehensive history (*total history*) of Southeast Asia. Having reassessed the theories regarding the history of the construction of civilization in Southeast Asia seems to have raised a fundamental question, which trends should we accept as a platform in understanding the history of the origin of ancestors as a nation and culture of seafarers? It is worth noting that prehistoric times have always been considered as "the age of no history" because it does not have an official written form to record the history of ancient mankind. It should also be noted that this prehistoric period still has its own events translated into other forms of artifacts and art such as cave paintings (Ali, 2009).

The civilization that existed during the prehistoric period cannot be equated with the times in the region after entering the historical epoch (the age of writing). We should note that early mankind or human civilization was marked by before the great flood event (Ishak et al., 2014: Abdullah et al., 2022). The world's first flood that had occurred around 12,000BC was then followed by events after the second major flood that occurred around 9,500BC and the events

after the last major flood that occurred around 6,000BC were of varying historiography and civilization (Behringer, 2010).

To understand the origin of the ancestors as a nation of seafarers and merchants we should begin with the prehistoric period (the Holosen period), which is the period before the end of the third great flood rather than after the year 6,000BC which is often marked by the entry of humans from mainland Asia (Fuller & Qin, 2009). To this end, some fundamental perceptions which have been widely accepted have contributed to the present confusion, and needs to be resolved first. Although there are differences in the theory and opinions of scholars regarding the construction of civilization in the Southeast Asian Archipelago, in principle, they still agree that the construction of civilization in the region is closely related to the theory of the Pangaea Theory and Great Flood Theory which is said to have hit this region three times (Frazer, 1916: Dietz & Holden, 1970: Blount, 2017). Most importantly, it was made the basis for the evolution of human civilization in the region. This study reassesses the history of Austronesian seafarers from a Southeast Asian perspective, highlighting the existing ambiguities and emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of this maritime history. Specifically, this research seeks to explore the primary factors that influenced the seafaring routes and navigation techniques of Austronesian seafarers, the ways in which their interactions with other maritime cultures shaped the socio-political landscape of Southeast Asia, and the role that environmental and climatic conditions played in the development and evolution of the maritime practices. By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the socio-political and environmental factors that influenced Austronesian seafaring as well as examine the broader impact of maritime practices on Southeast Asia, and integrate various forms of evidence—archaeological, linguistic, and ethnographic—to resolve historical ambiguities. Through this approach, the research contributes to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the maritime history of Austronesian seafarers.

METHODOLOGY

In line with the proposed investigation titled "Tracing the Civilization of Austronesian Seafarers Across Waters, Seas, and Oceans in the Archipelago of Southeast Asia," this study will employ a qualitative research design. The research involves a thorough examination of existing literature by extracting insights from historical documents as well as extrapolating information from anthropological sources and archaeological findings related to maritime history in Southeast Asia. The initial heuristic phase entails the systematic collection and scrutiny of information from diverse sources, including maritime archives, archaeological reports, and anthropological studies. An integrated source critique process is applied by cross-referencing data from various repositories such as the national archives, library research, and academic publications. This critical evaluation aims to ensure the accuracy and reliability of historical data concerning the *homo-sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asian Archipelago (Topolski, 2012). Besides that, the study also uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from archaeology, anthropology, and maritime sources. By integrating data from these diverse fields, the research aims to build a more holistic understanding of Austronesian maritime history.

To augment the research framework, spatial analysis and mapping techniques will be employed to visually represent and analyze migration patterns, cultural exchanges, and maritime activities in the region. The analytical process, as outlined in the exemplary methodology, involves synthesizing information from primary and secondary sources to draw inferences and develop a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Ultimately, following the historiography process, the study will conclude with the synthesis of findings and the creation of a narrative contributing to the comprehension of the *homo-sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asian Archipelago. This holistic methodology, combining archival research and analytical processes, ensures a robust exploration of the maritime historical dimensions under investigation (Mohd Noor, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The exploration of Southeast Asia's maritime history often begins with the contention that a civilization flourished in the region during the Pleistocene and Holocene eras, closely associated with the presence of *homo-erectus*, or the "upright man" (Bernard Campbell, 1976; John Hayward, 2008). The widely accepted Out of Africa Theory, also known as the Replacement Theory, suggests that early humans began their migration from Africa between 1.9 million and 15,000 years ago, subsequently spreading across the globe. John Hayward (2008) delves into this migration in "The Great Migration from the Earliest Humans to the Age of Globalization," highlighting how these ancient African migrants contributed to the development of major civilizations worldwide.

Recent scholarship, such as that conducted by Robert G. Bednarik (2015), has provided new insights into the early seafaring capabilities that may have facilitated human migration to Southeast Asia earlier than previously thought. Similarly, Dizon (2019) offers comprehensive analyses of how early maritime technology contributed to these migration patterns. These works align with Kardulias (2018), which reexamines the routes and timelines of early human migration, emphasizing the complexity of their spread into Southeast Asia. Further supporting this revised perspective, Summerhayes (2019) challenges traditional views with recent genetic and archaeological findings. These studies, along with Rabett's (2018), suggest that rudimentary seafaring played a crucial role in the spread of *homo-sapiens* to Southeast Asia. Additionally, Hoh et al.'s (2022) genetic study in Human Genetics provides evidence of early human settlement in the Malay Peninsula, reinforcing the idea that these migrations were more complex and widespread than previously believed.

THEORIES OF THE FORMATION OF MARITIME CIVILIZATION IN ARCHIPELAGIC SOUTHEAST ASIA

Before discussing the maritime historiography of Southeast Asia, it is essential to explore various theories proposed by scholars that shed light on the early construction of civilizations in the region. Broadly, two main theoretical trends exist, debating the early history of Southeast Asian civilizations: (1) external origin theories, such as Out of Yunan, Out of Taiwan, and Out of Africa, and (2) internal origin theories, including the Sundaland theory, Atlantis theory, Nusantao theory, and Out of Atlantis theory.

The Out of Yunan theory posits that the ancestors of Southeast Asian nations originated from outside the region, specifically from the Yunan province in southern China. Advocates of this theory include J.H.C. Kern, Robert Barron van Heine Geldern, N.J. Krom, Mohd Ali, and others (Emmerson, 1984; Ali, 2009; Nik Abd. Rahman, 2016; Ramli & Sulaiman, 2017). Arguments supporting this theory include the discovery of an ancient axe in Southeast Asia resembling the one found in Central Asia, and also the linguistic similarities between the Malay language and the Champa language in Cambodia. Proponents suggest three main waves of human migration from Yunan to Southeast Asia: the proto-Malay around 2,500 BC, the Deutero-Malay around 1,500 BC, and the Negrito people around 1,000 BC (Andaya, 2001; Hakim, 2017).

Heine Geldern's theory adds that the migration of ancestors from southern China, Yunan, to Southeast Asia led to the formation of a new civilization characterized by seafaring nomads, navigators and merchants (Keyes, 2002). Another theory, Out of Taiwan by Peter Bellwood, asserts that the ancestors of Southeast Asia came from Taiwan or Formosa (Bellwood, 1985). According to the Diffusionist theory by Robert Blust, Austronesian, spoken widely in Southeast Asia, originated from Taiwan, with Austronesians arriving in the region around 4,000 BC (Blaut, 1987; Bellwood, 1985).

Contrasting these external origin theories is the Out of Africa theory, which suggests that ancient humans migrated out of Africa around 100,000 BC, reaching Southeast Asia by 50,000 BC and subsequently spreading to Papua and Australia by 40,000 BC (Watson, 2004; Regal, 2022; Ingman, 2003). Meanwhile, the Sundaland theory by Stephen Oppenheimer (1998), Atlantis theory by Arysio Nunes Dos Santos (2009), and Nusantao theory by Wilhelm G. Solheim (1984) argue that the builders of civilization in Southeast Asia were not brought from the outside but rather developed by ancient inhabitants within the region, specifically in Sundaland and Sahulland.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The implications of these findings are profound to understand the historical development of Southeast Asian maritime cultures. The study underscores the importance of seafaring in the dissemination of linguistic, agricultural, and technological innovations across the region. Moreover, the evidence of sustained maritime interactions challenges the notion of Southeast Asia as a periphery in early global trade networks, positioning it instead as a central player in the prehistoric exchange systems. The region of Southeast Asia is still converging, at least before the 12,000BC, marked by the first major floods. However, we believe that they are on the island of Java, which is the main settlement of African migrants, that has continued its migration out of Sundaland towards Sahulland. These migrants headed to the eastern part of Southeast Asia mainly to Sulawesi and Papua New Guinea and the Australian continent. Archaeological evidence shows that the Austronesian who replaced this *homo-eractus* slowly developed an ancient voyage technology and travelled from one region to another at Sundaland and Sahulland after 12,000BC (Behringer, 2010). For example, from Papua New Guinea, some of the Austronesian seafarers spread back to the region of Southeast Asia (*Sundaland*) to Maluku and settled on Gebe Island located between Halmahera and Papua (Moore, 2003). In addition to the Maluku Islands, they have also migrated to the Talaud Islands, Sulawesi and

the eastern coastal part of Kalimantan (Ono et al., 2022). Evidentially, the spread or migration of Austronesians was not possible by land.

To date, historians still have difficulty determining the exact date when these Austronesian seafarers began to have knowledge particularly regarding sailing or its skills. Early archaeological evidence has not yet been discovered to reconstruct the early technology of their voyage. However, the authentic evidence showing that the Austronesian seafarers has had good knowledge with a navigation technology can only be tracked around 10,000BC (Collins, 2022). This has enabled them to reach the seas of Southeast Asia to various destinations and expand their civilizations. There are two hypotheses that can be used as a basis in revisiting the research and writing of maritime historiography in Southeast Asia (Archipelagic). First hypotheses - (1) there has been a simple ancient maritime culture in the region of Austronesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia by prehistoric humans (*homo-sapiens*). They had inhabited Southeast Asia during the prehistoric period, which was before the first major floods around 12,000BC and continued to flourish after the subsequent floods, in 9,500BC and 6,000BC, which led to the change in the shape of the Sundaland and Sahulland (Behringer, 2010: Ishak et al., 2014: Abdullah et al., 2022).

Second hypothesis is regarding the fact that, there was no open migration by indigenous tribes originating from Taiwan using the means of the sea to the Philippines and subsequently spread throughout the regions of Austronesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, Melanesia. On the other hand, the Austronesian seafarers who came from the region or rather from the Philippines and Sulawesi had migrated to Taiwan and assimilated with the indigenous people there and brought the indigenous tribes from Taiwan to the Philippines. As mentioned earlier, the classical theory holds that the Austronesian seafarers in the Malay Archipelago are from the mainland of China (Yunan) and Taiwan. They are said to have carried out a series of migration waves thousands of years ago. This classical theory seems to interpret that "no human culture" existed in the Archipelagic Southeast Asia and Oceania after the third major flood and before the arrival of the Austronesians from Yunan and Taiwan (Ishak, 2009: Samodra Wibawa, 2011).

Nevertheless, the latest studies and findings carried out by scholars seem to question the veracity of such classical theory. There is an opinion that the construction of civilizations in the Archipelagic Southeast Asia and Oceania was self-developed in ancient times, although it does not specifically mention whether this ancient man came from Africa. Wilhelm G. Solheim has discovered settlements and various remains of ancient human artifacts estimated to be 40,000 years old. He concluded that civilization in this territory had begun earlier than the civilizations of China and India or any other civilization in the world. Several ancient caves were discovered in Southeast Asia by archaeologists in the 1960s and 1970s (Solheim, 1984).

In Malaysia, the Niah Cave in Sarawak (Kalimantan) is said to be one of the oldest settlements in Southeast Asia that is said to have been occupied by humans for the past 40,000 years. The same goes for the excavation in the Lenggong Valley carried out by a group of Malaysian archaeologists led by Zurina Majid and Adi Taha. They have found a human skeleton known as the *Silver Man* which is estimated to be 74,000 years old. In addition, there are three ancient residential areas in Thailand that have been discovered by archaeologists estimated to be aged 12,000BC to 6,000BC namely the Neolithic period (New Stone Age) based on *carbon dating* methods as well as the Spirit Caves located in the northwest, Non Nok Tha in the north and Ban Chiang in the northeast. In these sites, various artifacts in the form of pottery, axe eyes

and knives made from hard rock have been found. Also found are the remains of paddy husks and various plant wastes that are used as food and thus depict the ancient had carried out farming activities earlier than 6,000BC (Barker, 2005: Majid, 1994).

Arysio Nunes Dos Santos (2009) in his book *Atlantis: The Lost Continent Finally Found* summed up that this civilization was on the Sundaland and called the man who existed in those days as "water man" and "swimmer". Although this study is merely hypothetical and theoretical for its lack in scientific evidence, at least this writing has spawned a new theory to balance the classical theory that the construction of civilizations in this region was brought from Yunan and Taiwan instead of being developed by *homo-eractus* and *homo-sapiens* who have been living in the Sundaland for a long time (Joseph, 2006). Oki Oktariadi (2010) in his paper entitled "Archipelago in the Swirl of the World Civilization," at a conference themed "Discussion of the Influence of the World's Archipelago Civilization" in Jakarta in 2010, stated that prior to the third major uprising sea level, which was around 6,000BC, Archipelagic Southeast Asia was still affiliated with the continent of Asia and has been inhabited by prehistoric humans. According to him:

"... But as the earth heats up, the polarized ice heaps melt and cause major floods that hit the lowlands in various corners of the world... There were three major floods that occurred in about 14,000, 11,000 and 8,000BC ago. The last major flood even raised the sea water to 5-140 meters higher than it is now. The biggest hit by the floods were Sundaland and the South China coast. Sundaland eventually became the islands, namely Kalimantan, Java, Bali and Sumatra. By then this area was enough to be inhabited by prehistoric humans who lived as farmers and fishermen."

Although the Sundaland theory, the Atlantis theory and the Nusantao theory mentioned earlier can be used as an alternative to reconstruct the history of the region, the presence of the Out of Africa theory should be given due attention. According to John Hayward, African humans have managed to reach the Archipelagic Southeast Asia and continued migrating to Papua New Guinea and the west coast of Australia through Lombok (Java), Sulawesi and Flores. They used simple rafts of logs or bamboo that occurred around 38,000BC. At this time, there has not yet been a huge rise in sea level and it was therefore a completely subdued Sundaland. At this time, Papua New Guinea was still affiliated with Australia. It was stated that the distance between Lombok and the west coast of Australia was short. Based on archaeological evidence, some of the early settlements of ancient African such as Bobangara in Papua New Guinea were estimated to exist around 38,000BC and in Australia, namely Devil's Lair (around 34,000BC), Lake Mungo (around 33,000BC), Kow Swamp (around 14,000BC) and Bluff Rock Shelter which is estimated to be 31,000BC (Hayward, 2008).

We believe that such conclusions were derived from the physical characteristics of the people in this region such as their dark-skin and curly hair which were remarkably different from the physical and cultural characteristics of the people in the Southeast Asian Archipelago. At that time, the people from Polynesia, Melanesia, and Oceania regions including the aborigine tribes of Australia did not identify themselves as Austronesians. They, on the other hand, identified with their regions, namely Polynesian, Micronesian, or Melanesian or by simply relying on their tribal names or calling themselves as *Lapita People* only. Based on the Out of Africa theory and the discovery of various ancient human fossil, it shows that the *homo-eractus*

species of the Negroid race that equals the characteristics of the African was estimated to be in the region 50,000 years ago (Mellars, 2006).

Through a long period of evolution, *homo-eractus* were eventually replaced by *homo-sapiens* that were estimated to date back to around 25,000BC. For example, *homo-wajakensis* or "manusia Wajak" were discovered by B.D. van Rietschoten and Eugene Dubois in 1889 in Wajak, East Java (Widianto & Noerwidi, 2023). Another human fossil that was found was known as *homo-soloensis* or "human-solo" by Von Koenigswald and Weidenrich which was between 1931-1934 around the Bengawan River, Solo. It was estimated that this human had lived between 900,000 years and 300,000 years ago (Weidenreich, 1940). In 2003, another prehistoric human fossil known as *homo-floresiensis* or "human Liang Bua" was discovered by Australian archaeologists in a prehistoric settlement cave in Glores, Flores (Aiello, 2010). In addition to migrating and making settlements in Indonesia, these Africans have also made settlements in Niah Cave, Sarawak in Malaysia which is estimated to be about 40,000 years old (Aiello, 2010). There was also one human fossil found in the Lenggong Valley, Malaya known as "Perak-Man" which is estimated to be 74,000 years old (Gabriel & Northup, 2012). Thus, it is these human species (*homo-wajakensis, homo-soloensis,* and *homo-floresiensis*) that have become the earliest *prehistoric* humans to inhabit the Archipelagic Southeast Asia. They spread and created the Australoid race that became the early ancestors of the archipelago (Miksic & Yian, 2016).

It is worth explaining here that the earliest and oldest humans who appeared in the Sundaland region during the Pleistocene period were from the *meganthropus Paleojavanicus* or *homo-eractus* species that were not yet the characteristic of the seafarers (Saraswati & Widaningsih, 2008). In addition, the migration of Javanese seafarers to the northern and eastern parts of the Southeast Asian Archipelago especially to Papua New Guinea before 12,000BC was only by using the means of land, which is on foot because, at that time, the archipelago was still intertwined or merged with mainland Asia (Hutterer, 1983). Therefore, the migration is estimated to have only begun after the second floods of the sea when some low-lying areas in Sundaland and Sahulland began to be flooded. It was clear again after 6,000BC when all the lowlands in Sundaland and Sahulland were flooded which led to the separation of the region as it is today (Allen & O'Connell, 2008).

Javanese seafarers have started sailing on wooden boats or rafts by tracing the coast of Java and began crossing the sea towards various islands in the Flores Sea, Sawu Sea, Banda Sea, and Timor Sea. It spread mainly to Sulawesi, Maluku, Banda, Timor-Timor, and Papua New Guinea which we call "Theory Out of Java". Geoffrey Irwin (1994), an archaeologist from the University of Auckland and a tough seafarer, once guessed that the waters between the southern Philippines and northern Indonesia or more precisely in Sulawesi and Maluku, had been the early focus of Javanese seafarers. Finally, they turned into a corridor of meeting and voyage for the seafarers of Austronesian and Melanesian from the beginning of the century. According to Irwin, along the corridor of the Sulawesi Sea, the Maluku Sea and the Banda Sea were the seas where ancient seafarers made and practiced the single outrigger boats and, they developed double outrigger boats (*catamaran*) and the sail and steering technology (Irwin, 1994).

If Irwin's statement is applicable, then there is no way that the seafarers with good sailing technology have migrated to Taiwan via Sulawesi heading to the northern Philippines towards

the island of Lan Yu and Lu Tao Island located between the northern Philippines and Taiwan or the Luzon Strait (Scott, 1989). This shows that it was not the Taiwanese seafarers who migrated to the Philippines as claimed by Bellwood and Blust (1985). As time passed, different cultures came together family ties between ancient seafarers from the southern Philippines who, during colonial times, were known as the Bajau Sama or Samal, Illanon, Balangingi, Tausog (Suluk), and Maimbung (Tahir & Mohd Noor, 2013: Mohammad et al., 2023). Maranao and Maguindanao were the early seafarers from Indonesia (Sulawesi, Maluku and Banda including Austronesia and Melanesia seafarers) such as the Sangir, Tobello, Sape, Papua, Bajo, Talaud, Bugis, Mandar and Buton in the Sulawesi corridor. Consequently, this resulted in the assimilation of cultures as well as the art of making and sailing boats. For example, ancient seafarers from the Philippines created and introduced boats now known as *sapit, lipa, vinta, barangayan, kora-kora and salisipan* (Warren, 2002).

Also with the ancient seafarers from Sulawesi, Maluku and Banda who produced various types of boats now known as *padewakang, sappe, gobang, kamamoni, juanga, rorehe, kalulus, lakafunu, arumbai, compreng, sape, dogol, jegong, kolek, congkreng, jukung, mayang, janggolan, golekan, lete-lete, sande, patorani, lis-brow, butung lambo, kora-kora, klotok, ketingting, pancalang, palari, orembai, balaso-e, eretan, canoe* and so on. Through the voyage and early expansion carried out by the Javanese seafarers before and after 6,000BC, it has led to assimilation and created four (4) clusters of seafarers in the Southeast Asian Archipelago – Melanesian, Proto-Austronesian, Polynesian and the Micronesian. Through these four groups, they have finally created various tribes in the region such as the Aceh, Minangkabau and Batak tribes in Sumatra, the Sunda and Javanese tribes in Java, the Madura tribe in Madura, the Sasak tribe in Lombok of Timor in Timor-Timor, the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan, the Bugis, the Makasar, the Toraja and the Minahasa in Sulawesi, and the Papuans on the border of the archipelago (Drs. Bonar Simangunsong, 2015).

The question as to why the ancient Africans (*homo-eractus* and *homo-sapiens*), who migrated and settled in these Oceania regions, despite being said to be the pioneers of the Pacific and masters of navigation by John Hayward, but did not carry out long-distance migration, instead simply spread and developed their civilizations on the surrounding islands in the Pacific Ocean, still remains unanswered. In other words, to date there has not been any comprehensive academic studies about the history and civilization of the seafarers in Oceania. However, it is possible that this question can be answered based on the assumptions drawn from archaeological relics, documentaries and files that are still intact. It is also based on oral stories passed down from one generation to another by their ancestors (Hayward, 2008).

In returning to the second hypothesis, we contend that that these migrants from Taiwan (*Pakan* or *Tapanga*) did not actually migrate using the sea means towards Luzon in Northern Philippines. We believe that in that era, these Taiwanese people did not have the tough science of the seas to allow them to sail in the Pacific Ocean. Turning back to mainland China by boat, they crossed the Taiwan Strait to join other seafarers from the southern provinces of China heading south to the Archipelagic Southeast Asia by land. The traditional Taiwanese pointed out that, before the island was joined by the Chinese from mainland China, Taiwan was inhabited by indigenous tribes such as Ami, Yami, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Bunun, Tsou, Thao, Atayal, and many others (Zen et al., 2014).

Historical sources of China note that the name "Taiwan" only began to be recorded in the Chinese history from the 7th century onwards. The indigenous tribes are concentrated in the hills and inland areas and are characterized by agrarian culture as practiced by the ancestors in mainland China. Indigenous tribes that settled on the coastline in the Taiwan Strait overlooking mainland China and the northern part of Taiwan near Ryuku Island in southern Japan, were more focused on trade and fisheries activities only. Obviously, the life of these indigenous tribes seemed to have been overshadowed by tribes from mainland China and islands in southern Japan. Based on this explanation, it shows that the tribe in Taiwan is not characterized by seafarers and does not have any extensive experience in the knowledge of the sea (Wright, 2020).

In addition, the large size of Taiwan, which has a large land area and is suitable for agrarian purposes with a few small islands around it, has made the island's people agrarian. Based on the historical reality, aside from the fact that no records have ever shown that people in Taiwan have ever made history or produced such great seafarers or navigators such as Zheng He from China, it is difficult to state that the early people in Taiwan have the technology or the capacity to explore the seas and oceans over long distances using the sea as their main means. In the previous hypothesis, we have stated that it was not the indigenous tribes from Taiwan that migrated to the Philippines, but rather the tribes of seafarers who came from the Philippines and Sulawesi. They have migrated to Taiwan and assimilated with the indigenous people there (Li, 2019).

There was also a reverse process, which was to bring the indigenous tribes from Taiwan to the Philippines and Sulawesi by sea led by Filipino seafarers (the Tausug-Iranun- Balangingi-Bajau seafarer) and the Sulawesi sailors who were characterized by Malayo-Polynesian seafarers. Considering the *Theory* of *Nusantao* introduced by Solheim (1984), it is possible that the early Filipino sailors (possibly the Tausug-Iranun-Balangingi-Bajau tribe) had migrated to Taiwan along with other seafarers from Kalimantan. Based on the fieldwork conducted in the Philippines, Kalimantan, and Taiwan from 2016 until 2018, many cultural and language similarities were observable. It is based on the hinterland between indigenous tribes in the Philippines and Kalimantan such as Aeta, Igorot, Lumad, Mangyan, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Ibanag, Ivatan, Dayak, Murut, Rungus, and Dusun with indigenous tribes in Taiwan especially in the eastern part such as Amis, Atayal, Bunun, Piwan, Puyuma, Kavalan, Yami, and Paiwan. The maritime history records also suggest that the awareness of the Chinese (including the Taiwanese) to explore and dominate the world's seas and oceans is somewhat "backward" compared to the others such as the Arabs, Indians, and Malays. This is due to the policy of closing the doors practiced by the early dynasties in China. If we acknowledge this historical fact, it would be illogical in terms of common sense that the migrants in Taiwan have built and used boats or ships capable of weathering waves and storms in the Pacific Ocean with the ability to carry large numbers of immigrants.

One thing that is clear is that the history of ancient maritime civilization in China began with the creation of raft boats made of bamboo as the main material for sailing activities in rivers, coastlines and between islands within close proximity. This is because this type of boat is not strong and is unable to endure the high waves and storms of the Pacific Ocean. Yousuke Kaifu (2019) and his team conducted an experiment on the use of bamboo boats (*Ma bamboo* or *dendrocalamus latiflorus munro*) among the Taiwanese sailors (Amis tribe) around 8,000BC. It was published in a report entitled *Paleolithic Seafaring in East Asia: Testing the Bamboo*

Raft Hypothesis. The results of the study concluded that it must have been impossible for the Taiwanese seafarers to use bamboo boats for long-distance voyages because they are difficult to sail in choppy waters; boats can easily sink and the ropes used to bind the bamboos can easily get ripped.

The other question that duly needs to be addressed is that, is it true that these indigenous tribes from Taiwan have reached Luzon in the northern part of the Philippines and expanded their civilization to other regions of Polynesia, Melanesia, and Oceania? Or is it another tribe or seafarers who have continued the migration from the Philippines to Easter Island about 500BC, which is the most distant and last island in the Pacific Ocean? To answer, we must return to the Sundaland, the Atlantis, and Nusantao theories. The theories state that there has been a civilization in the Southeast Asian Archipelago which is estimated to be between 15,000BC-10,000BC and even earlier than the Taiwanese civilization itself. As Solheim (1984) explained, the people who survived the second major flood have rebuilt a new civilization in the Southeast Asian Archipelago which is to the east of Indonesia and the southern Philippines (around Sulawesi) known as the "Nusantao Civilization".

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of the heritage and civilization of Austronesian seafarers across the waters, seas, and oceans in the Southeast Asian Archipelago unveils a rich tapestry of history and connectivity. The seas, often shrouded in myth and superstition, have played a pivotal role in shaping the identity and unity of the diverse cultures inhabiting the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, Sulawesi Sea, Flores Sea, Java Sea, Banda Sea, and beyond. As we delve into the historiography of this region, it becomes evident that the Austronesian seafarers have navigated through challenges, storms, and waves, driven by an unwavering commitment to preserve their heritage for future generations. The narrative challenges the prevailing theory of migration and linguistics, suggesting that the Austronesian seafarers may have originated in Southeast Asia itself, moving outwards to Oceania, from Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia to Taiwan and Madagascar.

The multifaceted nature of this inquiry underscores the need for interdisciplinary studies and a global perspective to unearth compelling evidence about the origins and movements of the Austronesian seafarers. The exploration of linguistics, archaeology, anthropology, and other disciplines must converge to piece together the puzzle of their migration and civilization. In moving forward, it is imperative to foster continued research and collaboration among scholars, drawing from diverse fields and geographic locations. The quest to understand the Austronesian seafarers' history is not only a scholarly pursuit but a collective endeavor to appreciate and preserve the invaluable maritime heritage of Southeast Asia. As we look ahead, let us be guided by the hope that future investigations will illuminate the intricate web of connections between Southeast Asia and the wider world. By unraveling the mysteries of the Austronesian seafarers, we can celebrate the resilience, adaptability, and cultural richness that have thrived across the waters, seas, and oceans. In doing so, we contribute to a shared global understanding and appreciation of the remarkable journey that has shaped the civilizations of the Austronesian seafarers.

The study's findings reveal a complex network of maritime routes used by Austronesian seafarers, highlighting their advanced navigational skills and the significant role these routes played in the cultural and economic exchanges across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The identification of key trade hubs and settlement patterns corroborates existing theories about Austronesian migration but also introduces new perspectives on the adaptability and resilience of these communities in diverse marine environments. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on Austronesian maritime history by offering new evidence and interpretations that both support and challenge existing theories. By integrating historical document analysis, spatial analysis, and interdisciplinary approaches, the research provides a more comprehensive view of the seafaring practices that shaped the cultural and economic landscapes of Southeast Asia. Future research should continue to explore these themes, particularly in light of emerging evidence and alternative perspectives, to further refine our understanding of this pivotal period in human history.

While this study provides significant insights into the maritime history of Austronesian seafarers, several areas warrant further exploration. Future research could delve deeper into the technological innovations that enabled these seafarers to navigate vast oceanic distances, focusing on the construction techniques of their vessels and their sophisticated navigation methods. Additionally, integrating genetic data with linguistic studies could offer more precise timelines for Austronesian migrations, providing a clearer understanding of their spread across Southeast Asia. Comparative analyses with other contemporary maritime cultures, such as those in the Indian Ocean, could further contextualize the Austronesian experience within a global framework. Investigating the impact of historical climate change on migration patterns could also reveal how environmental factors influenced their movements and adaptability. Moreover, exploring the trade networks facilitated by Austronesian seafarers could illuminate the cultural and economic exchanges that shaped the region. Finally, by re-examining the Out of Taiwan hypothesis through a more focused archaeological research could offer alternative perspectives on the origins and routes of Austronesian migrations. These avenues of inquiry could significantly enhance our understanding of Austronesian seafaring and its broader implications.

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