

# **An Essay on Afro-Indonesian Population Development Prior to the Twentieth Century**

William John Page

## **Abstract**

The study includes a multi-discipline analysis to identify the main process through which Afro-Indonesians became established on Madagascar within the first Millennium. The conclusion proposes an extended and extensive exploration of the great rivers of Mocambique by Paleo-Indonesian expeditions. They bartered their Asian food plants grown on homes set up on islands or riverside settlements with aquatic Bantu on periodic expeditions. This process left trace patterns reflecting: 1. the Paleo-Indonesian river trade and, 2. dispersion of these crops by the Bantu agriculturalists and led to the formation of Afro-Indonesians ancestral to the Sakalava and Vezo people of western Madagascar. This paper was prepared from 1980 to 1990 and donated to the Mitchell Library in Sydney, Australia.

An Essay on Afro-Indonesian Population  
Development Prior to the Twelfth Century

by William John Page

Summary

The author has defined the 'Indonesian Problem' as follows:

*'to identify the main integration process through which Afro-Indonesians became established as the majority on Madagascar.'*

In a consideration of (a) the nature of early Indonesian contact with Africa and Madagascar and (b) the focus of EIA African populations and resources in the Southeast African interior it is proposed that from the initiation of long-distance river trading expeditions by paleo-Indonesians, notably on the Zambezi, there developed an extended acculturation process with a variety of African groups at riverside villages during the first millenium. In this process the local trade of the African interior was linked to the East African coast, Madagascar and the maritime commerce of the Indian Ocean. Cultures comparable to the ethnographic vezo (acting as the middle-men) grew up within an Indonesian dominated culture but having an increasing African component. The process envisaged is subsistence food exchanges in periodic expeditionary fleets from the EA Coast to the upriver villages, where southeast Asian foodplants, seashells, and marine goods were exchanged for the exotic products of the interior. Idrisi's comment (circa 1154) that Indonesians traded with people on the EA coast whose language they could understand is significant in regard to Afro-Indonesians. The assignment of the term Kun-lun Tsong-ki to Afro-Indonesians in coastal Mozambique at about the same period by the translators of the Chu-fan-chi is also relevant.

Archeological work on Madagascar indicates the settlement of what are classed as 'fishing' cultures in the south-west coast of Madagascar, and with ceramic links to certain groups in southeast Africa. This Vezo-Antavelo tradition begins in the 12th century, and suggests a main period of settlement in that region of Madagascar after previous settlement and integration in Southeast Africa.

Idrisi also remarked on the lack of seafaring ability among the Zanj. The Indonesians, as James Hornell well knew, were seafarers par excellence.

In the context of a possible extended and extensive development of the EA coastal-river trade an assessment was made of the feasibility of deep penetration of the Zambezi-Kafue, and Lualaba-Zaire systems; the arterial river route across central Africa, using historical accounts since Livingstone's Zambezi expedition. Patterns claimed to be relics of Indonesian influence across Central Africa, ie xylophones, southeast Asian food plants, are overlain on the arterial river system in conjunction with a plot of the location of earliest coastal goods found in archeological sites in the interior. Lars Sundstrom's research into the exchange economy of pre-colonial Africa is also briefly considered in regard to the local river trade.

The author proposes that the above process may account for the 'Indonesian Problem' and was substantially completed from the 5th to 12th centuries AD. He considers it may also account for the EA coastal tradition archeology. In essence paleo-Indonesians pioneered long distance coastal-river trade into the EA rivers by expeditionary fleets of shallow vessels and drew the exotic African products of the short-distance trade of the interior into the Indian Ocean "monsoon" trade. There is literary evidence, in which we may interpret that near the end of the first century a neo-Indonesian expeditionary fleet was bartering with Afro-Indonesian middle-men on the Mozambique coast.

**AN ESSAY ON AFRO-INDONESIAN POPULATION DEVELOPMENT  
PRIOR TO THE TWELFTH CENTURY A.D.**

**Definition of the 'Indonesian Problem' in the Afro-Malagasy Region**

The population of Madagascar is dominated by people of Afro-Indonesian stock,<sup>1</sup> and Indonesian words comprise 94 per cent of the Malagasy vocabulary. Linguists infer that Bantu, Persian and Sanskrit loans in the various dialects stem from an early period in the formation of Malagasy; which they tentatively estimate began to develop in the 5th century.

Archaeology has confirmed links between the northern coastal échelles of Madagascar and Swahili trading stations on the East African islands which extend back to the eighth century; a period of regeneration of maritime trade since the 'Periplus' which *inter alia* described a coastal trade from the Red Sea to Tanzania.

Competition between the Persians and Arabs with Indonesians for the resources of South East Africa appears as the framework from which there evolved the dichotomy of Swahili and Afro-Indonesian populations across the Mozambique Channel until the Indonesian expeditions to the coast ended c.1200.

An authority on the Malagasy has proposed an initial process of intrusion by paleo-Indonesians who, from substantial mixing with Africans, came to exhibit marked 'African' physical features; and neo-Indonesians, the ancestors of the Merina, of Indonesian appearance.<sup>2</sup>

While linguistic analyses have provided an estimate of the general area from which the Indonesian fleets were accumulated, the process of their integration with Africans has remained an enigma. The author therefore defines the 'Indonesian Problem' as:

*Identification of the main integration process in which Afro-Indonesians became established as the majority on Madagascar.*

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1. *The Courier*, September-October 1988:31. *EEC-ACP Bimonthly Periodical* cites the population of the Malagasy Republic as 10.3 million in 1986; R.P. Henri Dubois, *Africa*, Vol. VI, 1933:206-219. From a total Malagasy population of just over three million in c.1933, the Merina, the principal ethnic group, amounted to 900,000; *Atlas de Madagascar* 1970, Planches 21, 24 and 28 detail the ethnic groups, population density and demography. A chart in Planche 28 shows evolution of the Malgache population from 1902 (2.3 million) to 1966 (6.4 million).

2. P. Verin (1990), chapter on "Madagascar" in *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 2 (abridged edition); 1986, *The History of Civilisation in North Madagascar*, translated by David Smith, pp.1-69. (This work is a major synthesis on the Malagasy.)

## An Outline of the Oriental Trade with South Eastern Africa to 1200 AD

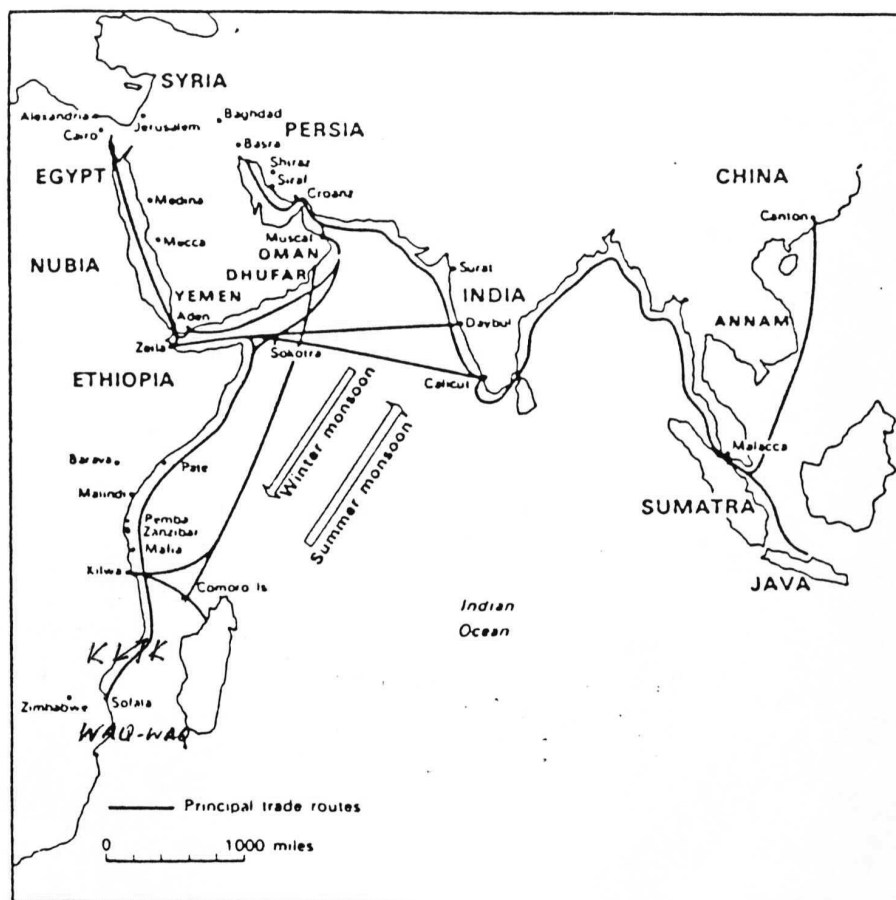


Figure 1: The Indian Ocean trade about AD 1200

At the earliest period of record for the Oriental trade with Mozambique, Indonesian or Indonesian affiliated groups were recorded at 'Waq-Waq' to the south of Sofala coast; 'at the extremity of the land of the Zanj' (Masudi, 916-7). Three decades later Buzurg provides information about the nature and objectives of a raid by a massive Indonesian expeditionary fleet first on villages in the Sofala region and then to the north at Qanbaloh: ivory, turtle shell, panther skins, ambergris and Zanj slaves were sought for both Indonesia and China. Masudi described the method by which the Zanj obtained ivory and its uses in India and China (Figure 1).

In 1154 Idrisi informs that both Malagasy and Indonesians were trading on the Mozambique coast; the latter with people whose language they could understand. And Indonesians transported iron from the middle part of the Sofalan coast to India where it was used for the manufacture of swords of unequalled excellence. He also knew that the



Indonesian islands 'belonged to India'. He names and locates a number of villages along the Sofala and Waq-Waq sections of the Mozambique coast, and advises that a colony of Indians were settled near the Zambezi mouth.<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese author Chao K'U-fei (1178) refers to a country called K'Un-Lun Tsong K'i, which suggests the presence of Afro-Indonesians on the Mozambique coastal region; the country produced 'big elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns'<sup>4</sup> (see Figure 2)

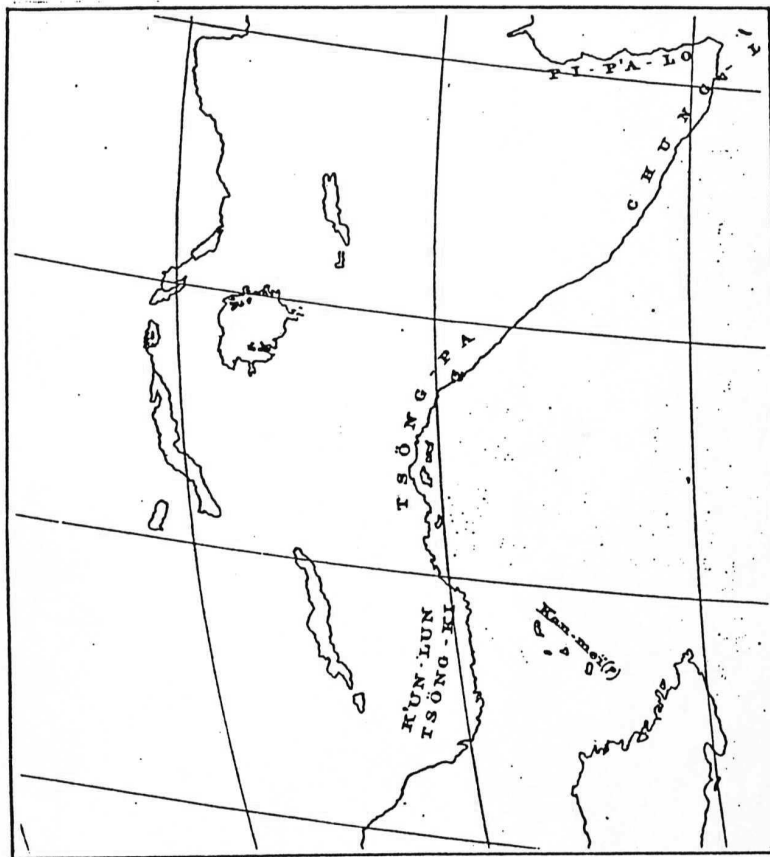


Figure 2: Extract from sketch-map accompanying Hirth and Rockhill's translation of the 'Chu-fan-chi'

3. J. Spencer-Trimingham, "The Arab geographers and the East African coast", article in *East Africa and the Orient*, editors R.I. Rotberg and H.N. Chittick (1975); H.N. Chittick, "The East Coast, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean", *Cambridge History of Africa*, Volume 3: 192-4 (1977).
4. "K'un-un Ts'eng-chi is in the south-western sea. It is adjacent to a large island in the sea ... The products of the country are big elephants' tusks and rhinoceros' horns'. ex. Ling-wai-ta-ta, by Chou Ch'ü-fei (1178). Reference is made by Chao to both the country adjacent to a large island which is certainly Madagascar, and Madagascar itself. J.J.L. Duyvendak explains the mixed race Afro-Indonesian composition of KLTK in his "China's Discovery of Africa" (1947), pp.22-23. Hirth and Rockhill in the map accompanying the translation of the Chu-fan-chi assign KLTK to Mozambique, i.e., opposite Madagascar. J.S. Trimingham, "The Arab Geographers ..." (1975), pp.125-6, conjectures from a passage by Idrisi that the mutual comprehensibility between Indonesian expeditionists and people on the coast with whom they traded reflected settlement by the Malagasy on the Sofalan coast.

*It is logical to assume that by c.1200 a substantial part of the process of Afro-Indonesian integration had been effected with the Indonesian language domination established. Observe the contrast between the references to Indonesians on the coast of Mozambique (916-1154), and the absence of records concerning Indonesian trade with Madagascar.*

In the above context, although both Persian and Indonesian traders were recorded at Ceylon in the 5th century, and Indonesians evidently captured in India by a Persian military expedition to Sind in 632-4, *it was not until the late 7th and early 8th century that we have accounts of East African products in the Oriental trade.*

A series of uprisings by large groups of Zanj slaves in Persia 669 to 883 indicate a significant sea trade with East Africa; and may be compared with the earliest record of their presence in the far east. A single Zanj girl was offered as part of Srivijayan tribute to the Tang Emperor in 724. Subsequently between 813 and 818 the Javanese nation of Kalinga (in three missions) offered several Zanj boys and girls ("The African diaspora in Asia",\* article in *The General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, 704-733).

The slave trade between East Africa and the Middle East is described in <sup>\*</sup>Talib-Samir (p. 714). Masudi details the ivory trade and the role of African hunters, and *how the Zanj and men from other lands harpoon the whale on the coast and islands of East Africa, in the quest for ambergris. This is interesting as it contradicts a later statement by Idrisi in which he indicates the Zanj did not engage in oceanic voyaging.*

Mozambique had become an important zone for the Oriental trade by 916: according to Masao and Mutoro (*Unesco General History of Africa*, 3:615), "the only region where there was significant trade with the interior seems to have been the Sofala coast ..."

Chao K'U-fei 1178 and D. Barbosa 1517-8 advise that Mozambique was the source of large elephants and rhinoceros (see footnote 4 and Freeman-Grenville, 1962:130).

We also learn from Barbosa that the Zambezi River was the artery by which the gold was brought down from the Kingdom of Benametapa in the interior (Freeman-Grenville, 1962:129; "The East African Coast ...").

*Summarising: had focused*  
 Exploitation was on the Mozambique coast by the early tenth century; with competition between Persians and Arabs on the one hand and Indonesians on the other until 1200. Trading contacts with Africans was at <sup>small</sup> <sup>one</sup> ports, a coastal <sup>and</sup> island locations. Both Africans and Indonesians had shallow-draft vessels capable of upriver transportation. African hunters <sup>supplied</sup> ivory and panther skins, and an extensive slave trade was operating out Mozambique by Masudi's time. This southernmost trade generated the early Afro-Indonesian populations, in a comparable way to the Swahili, and as indicated below the coastal-<sup>river</sup> trade appears the probable setting.

## An Assessment of Population Development on Madagascar, from a Comparison of Archaeological-Historical-Demographic-Ethnographic Patterns

The archaeological sites of Madagascar which concern the early period of human occupation have been subdivided by the present author into four main categories. An inspection of Planche 19 of the Atlas de Madagascar shows that each of these categories exhibit a geographical separation from each other across the island. The four main categories are: *Islamic*, *Chlorite-Schist*, *Fortified Sites* and *Fishing Camps*.

*Islamic* sites extend along the north-west coast as far to the west and south as Andranolava and Maintirano Maty, where they interface with the northern most sites of the *Fishing Camps*. The latter extend down the west coast and along the south coast to their limit at Analapasy (see Figure 3).

*Fortified Sites* are mostly confined to a specific area within the Central Highlands, and with concentration around 'Imerina Central' and the capital of Madagascar, Antananarivo. There are a few Merina forts external to this area.

*Chlorite-Schist* sites reflect trading activity in the 'soapstone' industry, used for carving ornaments or food bowls; they extend down the north-east coast from the site of Vohemar with concentration to Antalaha and more sporadically down the long straight eastern coast to the Matitata site.

To this pattern of sites c.1970, may be added those given in Sinclair (1991).<sup>5</sup> The effect is to increase the concentration in the 'Merina' zone in the highlands, with a lesser number of coastal sites in the south-east, south-west and the north.

The intention is to compare the geographical distribution of the above four archaeological categories relating to early settlement with historical, ethnic and demographic data contained in the *Atlas de Madagascar*. Consider the extent of the Islamic category with the following statement:

The pioneering work of Verin and the more recent follow-up research by Radimilahy at Mahilaka have underlined the fact that the north-west coast of Madagascar was closely integrated into the trading networks linking the Comoro archipelago with the East African seaboard. Detailed occupation sequences are available (Sinclair, 1991: 196).<sup>6</sup>

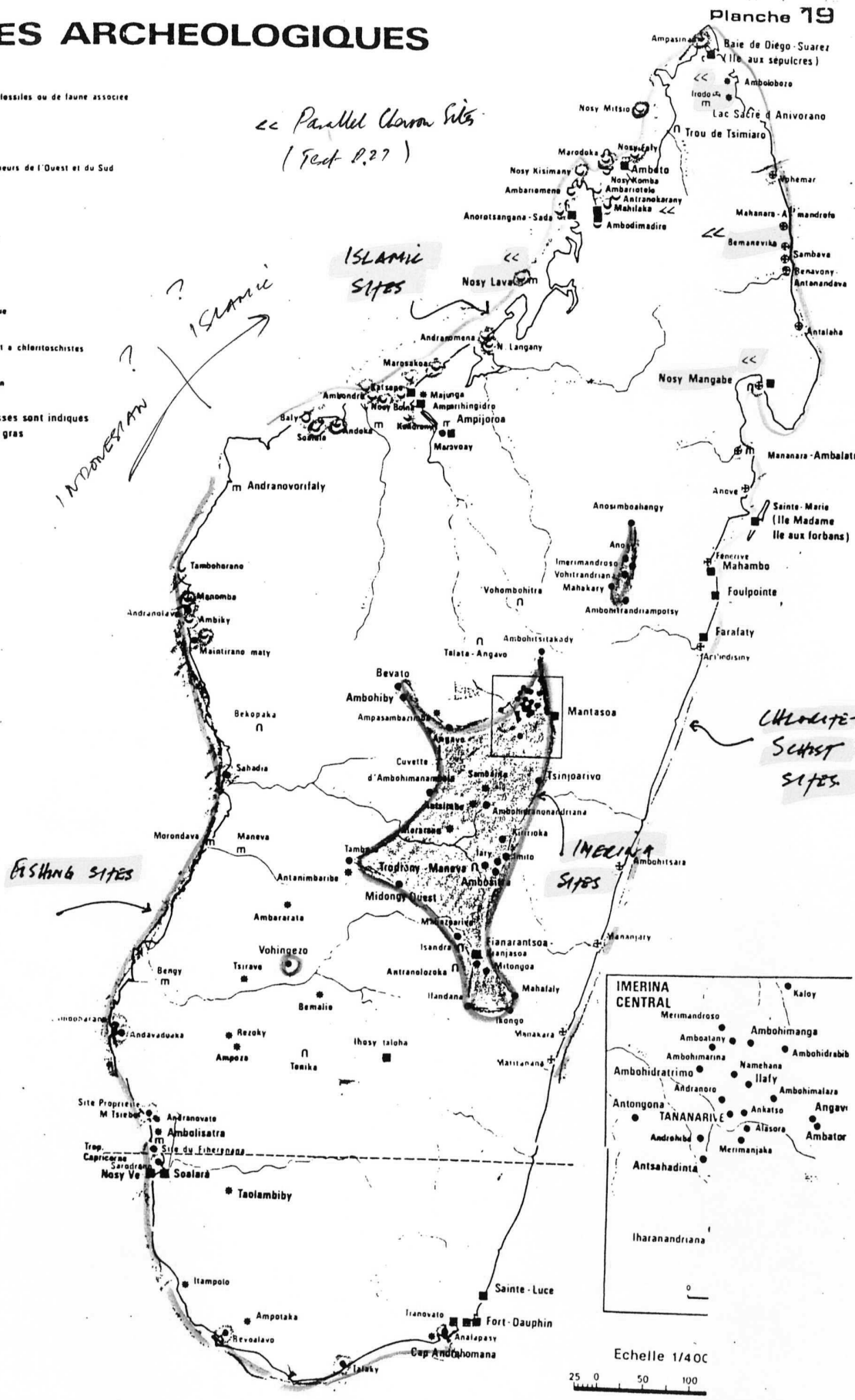
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5. P.J.J. Sinclair, "Archaeology in Eastern Africa: An overview of current chronological issues", *Journal of African History* 32 (1991), pp.193-197, 'Madagascar'.  
6. *Ibid.*

# SITES ARCHEOLOGIQUES

- Site de subsillons ou de laune associée
- Gracie
- Site de pêcheurs de l'Ouest et du Sud
- Site fortifié
- Fort Merina
- m Lieu sacré
- Site islamique
- Site de l'Est à chloritoscistes
- Site Européen

Les Sites classés sont indiqués en caractères gras



from Atlas de Madagascar  
1970

Figure 3.

The *Chlorite-Schist* category on the north-east and eastern coast was associated by Verin-Battistini with either Islamic or Islamised populations and there have been finds in Kilwa, Siraf (Persian Gulf) and Bhambore (Pakistan).<sup>7</sup> This material has also been identified in the important Mahilaka<sup>8</sup> site dated to the ninth and twelfth centuries on the north-west coast.

The *fortified sites* category in the Central Highlands, from historical and ethnographic data, may clearly be associated with the development of Merina population (and it will be recalled that Verin has proposed an association between the ancestral Merina and neo-Indonesians). From archaeological work the earliest fortified site in the Highlands is Ankadivory associated with the Fiekena<sup>9</sup> phase in the 12th century. The Merina are the principal Afro-Indonesian ethnic group, comprising about thirty per cent of the total population of Madagascar.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth category of sites, *Fishing Camps* (who the authors Verin and Battistini associate with the ethnographic Vezo), are classed as semi-nomadic marine cultures combining seasons of sedentary agriculture on holms, where they grow their yams, taro, plantains and store them for exchange in periodic trading expeditions along the coast; and subsist with fishing and shell fishing.<sup>11</sup>

These 'fishing' cultures are associated with the Vezo-Antavalo tradition on the west and south coast. The earliest site is Talaky, dated to the 12th century;<sup>12</sup> and, as discussed below, ceramic parallels have been noted with Shona pottery and Dambwa tradition on the middle Zambezi. There are indications that the Vezo are related to the Vazimba; and they are of Afro-Indonesian stock (Verin, 1986:48).

One of the earliest Islamic accounts of Madagascar is by Yakut (1179-1229). Consider the inception of defended sites in the highlands with the following passage. (Students of Austronesian migrations may also note the reference to the betel leaf):

... Komr is an island in the middle of the Zanj, which does not include a bigger island than that. It contains a great number of towns and kingdoms. Each king is at war with every other king. On its shores, amber and the leaf known as Komazi are found. It is a perfume, also known by the name of betel leaf. Wax is also derived from it.<sup>13</sup>

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7. P. Verin and R. Battistini, "Text H associated with Planche 19: Sites Archéologique", in *Atlas de Madagascar* (1970).
  8. C. Radimilahy, "Mahilaka: Rapport préliminaire", in Sinclair and Rakotoarisoa (eds.), *Urban Origins in Eastern Africa: Proceedings of the 1989 Madagascar Workshop, Project Working Papers*. Sweden, Paper No. 4. Central Board of National Antiquities, Stockholm (1989).
  9. Sinclair, *op.cit.*, p.196.
  10. *Atlas de Madagascar* (1970), text by Jean Poirier.
  11. B. Koechlin (1975), *Les Vezo du sud-ouest de Madagascar: Contribution a' l'étude de l'écosystème de semi-nomades marine*, The Hague Press, Mouton.
  12. Sinclair, *op.cit.*, p.197, cités Gak 276 and the paper by R. Battistini and P. Verin, "Irodo et la tradition Vohemariene", *Revue de Madagascar*, 36 (1966), pp.11-32.
  13. Verin, *North Madagascar*, cites G. Ferrand's translation from the Mujam el Buldan (Dictionary of the Land).

The geographical separation of the four categories has been highlighted in conjunction with the report of tribal warfare c.1200 and the inception of defensive sites in the highlands. Separation between Islamised groups confined to the northern and eastern coast, i.e., Islamic/Chlorite-Schist categories and the Afro-Indonesians in the south-west and west in the early archaeological settlement, can be compared with the following statement: "Neither the Portuguese nor the Africans (Arabs) frequent the coasts of Madagascar at a point further south than the Baixos Prancel" (Blank, 1663).<sup>14</sup> And two centuries later, A. Grandidier observed that Islamised people ventured no further south than the Tsiribihina River.<sup>15</sup>

### Discussion

There is no evidence of any significant Stone Age or *Austronesian* settlements in Madagascar.<sup>16</sup> From a comparison of the four archaeological categories which relate to earliest settlement of the island with the pattern of modern ethnic distribution and historical data, there are grounds to interpret (a) that the Islamic and Chlorite Schist categories reflected an extension of Swahili trading enterprise from the East African island to échelles along the north-west and most of the eastern coast (e.g., Verin, 1986:53); (b) the highland fortified sites are ancestral Merina, and reflect the settlement by the Afro-Indonesians of (muted) neo-Indonesian affiliation; (c) the Fisher-Camps indicate Afro-Indonesian cultures of paleo-Indonesian derivation and of ancestral Vezo culture and form part of the Vezo-Antarelo tradition. In addition, there are tenuous grounds to propose that the latter are associated with Vazimba; groups of paleo-Indonesians who moved eastwards from the coast into the interior and referred to in historical accounts.

If we compare the interface between Islamic sites and Fisher-Camps at about 18° south on the west coast with the historical statements given above by Blank (1663), and Grandidier in the 19th century, there is an impression of a coastal 'border' beyond which the Islamic groups did not intrude. A probable explanation for this is the fear of Afro-Indonesian raiding fleets; as attested by European accounts over the 17-19th centuries concerning the Sakalava.

Sakalava raiding expeditions and conquests are recorded in c.1690 (Verin, 1986:106-7), along the northwest coast; drawn from Afro-Indonesian groups further to the south (and c.f. the Fishing-Camp category). Their raids are also reported in a later context at Kilwa and Kua Island (Freeman-Grenville, 1962, *East African Coast* ..., pp.224, 248).

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14. Verin, *op.cit.*, p.4. Nosy Barren. About 18° 30' south.

15. *Ibid.*

16. J.A. Rakotoarisoa, personal communication, August 18, 1987. "From analysis of plant pollen found in lakes on Madagascar, it is interpreted that people arrived and 'perturbed the eco-system' centuries before the earliest known sites; but so far no definite evidence has been found of Austronesian voyagers". Robert E. Dewar article, "Malagasy Roots", *Natural History Journal*, July 1988, p.51, in reference to the Stone Age.



De Froberville (1845: 196-197) describes how a large raid was accumulated from Madagascan groups over the north-west and north coast for the objective of plundering the Comoros and East African islands.

It will be recalled that Yakut (1179-1229) recorded endemic warfare *among the Malagasy*, at a time nearly coincident with the earliest fortified site in the Imerina highlands. He does not indicate conflict at this time between Islamic peoples and the interior. According to Verin (1986:5), "*Before the Europeans came to the Island, the échelles of the northern coast of Madagascar were extremely prosperous. None of them were seriously threatened from the interior of the country*".

It is reasonable to interpret therefore that from the twelfth century the Vazimba groups were engaged in tribal conflict, and the Merina obliged to defend themselves in the Central Highlands.

The archaeological map (Planche 19) shows the distribution of extinct fauna sites in the south-west region of the island, and a number of cave sites (see Figure 3).

It is plausible to associate the extinction of the fauna and the cave habitation with the Vazimba population in the hinterland, outside the zone of Imerina forts.

Referring to the Ethnic Map (Planche 21; see Figure 4), there is a large region extending over most of the western half of the island (outside the Merina areas), which indicates mixed populations.

The archaeological data on Madagascar *indicates significant Afro-Indonesian settlement from the 12th century. If, as the historical information suggests, Indonesian contact with East Africa ended in c.1200, then it is a logical proposition that the Afro-Indonesian culture evolved from prior integration in Africa rather than Madagascar.*

In addition, *there appears to be a coincidence between (a) the end of Indonesian contact with Mozambique, and Afro-Indonesian trading activity c.1200, and (b) the establishment of neo-Indonesian and paleo-Indonesian settlement on Madagascar.*

A question arises as to the extent of the paleo-Indonesian intrusion of the South East African interior via coastal river trade.<sup>17</sup>

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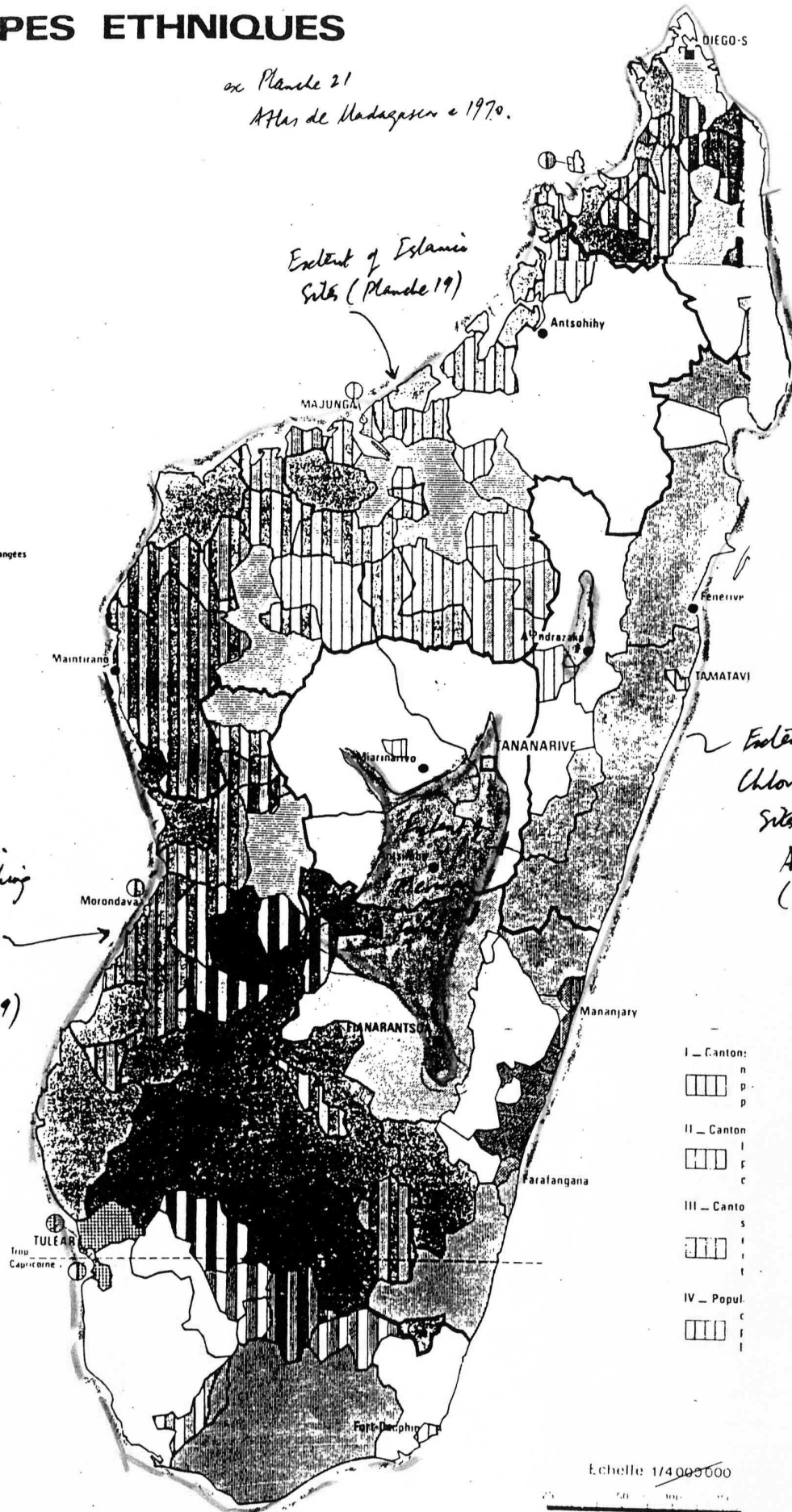
17. D.W. Phillipson (1977), *The Later Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa*, Heinemann, p.207.



# GROUPES ETHNIQUES

ex Planche 21  
Atlas de Madagascar e 1970.

- Antakarana
- Antambahoaka
- Antaimoro
- Antanosy
- Antandroy
- Antaifasy
- Antaisaka
- Bara
- Betsileo
- Betsimisaraka
- Bezanozano
- Mahafaly
- Merina
- Sakalava
- S' Mariens
- Sihanaka
- Ianala
- Tsimihety
- Zafisoro
- Vevo
- Populations melangees



Extent of Islamic Sites (Planche 19)

Extent of Chlorite-Schist Sites from Archaeology. (Planche 19)

Extent of Fishing Sites (From Archaeology Planche 19)

- I - Canton: n p p
- II - Canton: f c
- III - Canto: s f t
- IV - Popul: c f t

Echelle 1/4 000 000

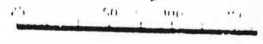


Figure 4.

From Atlas de Madagascar

**Distribution of Local Populations in Africa and Madagascar over the 'Indonesian Period' of contact**

According to Robert E. Dewar, "the earliest reliable radiocarbon date for an archaeological site on the island is from Lakaton 'i Anja, a rock-shelter in the extreme north that we discovered in 1986".<sup>18</sup> Associated iron-blades and pottery were found with stone weights, and remains of land and marine animals; the lowest occupation level dates to about AD700.

Dewar also refers to soapstone food vessels found in the island trading stations of East Africa leading to the Persian Gulf and the north-east coast of Madagascar since the 10th century.

Apart from the northern coastal échelles the archaeological work to date suggests that the rest of the island, along the coast and interior, was sparsely populated until the evidence of settlement on the west coast (fishing sites) and central highlands during the twelfth century.

If we now consider the EIA in South-central Africa, it will be observed from the diagram<sup>19</sup> that the majority of sites were situated between 500-1000 kilometres from the east coast. Most of the sites are in the Savannah, above 1000 metres elevation, and hence remote from the malaria-tsetse infested coastal lowland.<sup>20</sup> Their relation to the major rivers and facility that the Zambezi in particular offered for *linkage to the Mozambique coast* may be noted in Figure 5.

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18. Robert E. Dewar, "Malagasy roots", article in *National History*, July 1988, p.51.
19. D.W. Phillipson (1977), "The Later Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa". Sketch shows 'groups and streams of the Early Iron Age industrial complex'. "There is no indication that early iron age pottery was used on the coast itself until the closing centuries of the first millennium", p.110.
20. J.E.G. Sutton (1981), "East Africa before the seventh century", in *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 2, p.580; J.I. Clark (1975), *An Advanced Geography of Africa*, pp.340, 342; M. Posnansky (1981), "Introduction to the later prehistory of sub-Saharan Africa", *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 2, p.534; D.W. Phillipson, *Later Prehistory*, pp.229-30. If Phillipson's proposal that a major expansion was generated from the Kansanshi mining region in the eleventh century is accurate, this would have largely post-dated the Indonesian period.

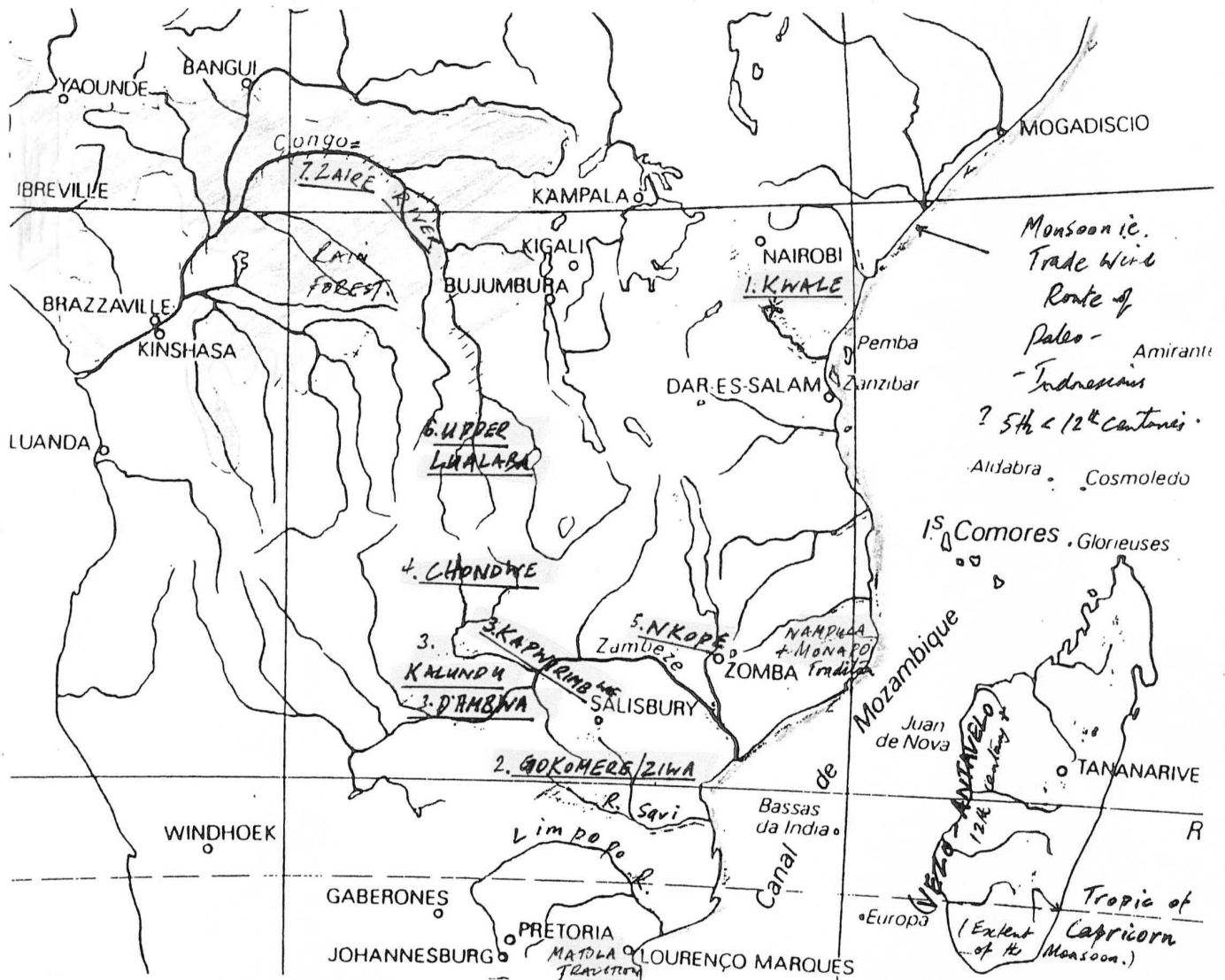


Figure 5: Groups (Selected) of the Early Iron Age.

Ceramic traditions have been assigned to respective areas as follows:

- 1) Usambara Mountains-Pangani River; thinning out of site density along the coast (Kwale);
- 2) Zimbabwe Plateau (Gokomere-Ziwa);
- 3) Middle Zambezi River (Kalundu-Dambwa-Kapwirimbe);
- 4) Upper Kafue-Lunga Rivers (Chondwe);
- 5) Shire River (Nkope);
- 6) Upper Lualaba River (Upper Congo);
- 7) In addition to the above, I include the Zaire River.

Subsistence agriculture and pastoralism with active mining and manufacturing in iron and copper from hillside ore-bodies were combined with local trading networks. The great river systems of the Zambezi and Zaire had been transited and fishing was significant in their exploration. In the equatorial rain forest EIA populations to a substantial degree were confined to the river banks by the forest, until the use of iron and fire for tree clearance facilitated plantation development. From the accumulation of the great body of data on the Bantu language in the 19th and 20th centuries, it can hardly be doubted that the Bantu formed the major component of the EIA population across the Zambezi-Zaire catchments.

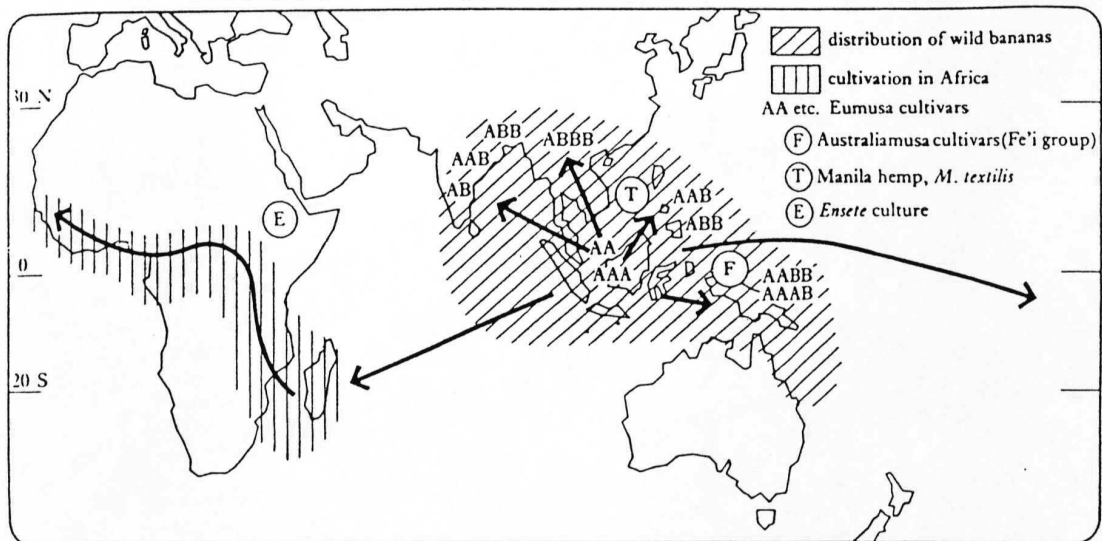
*With the introduction of paleo-Indonesian cultures to South East Africa during the second half of the first millenium, the coastal-river trade seems the logical process in which contact and integration developed with the aquatic Bantu. As Livingstone came to realise, the Zambezi River was the great artery to the interior. The introduction of South-east Asian food plants is considered to have facilitated population expansion within the*

**Factors Relating to Afro-Indonesian Integration Prior to c.1200 AD** *Zaire river and coastal-river trade involving food exchange and*

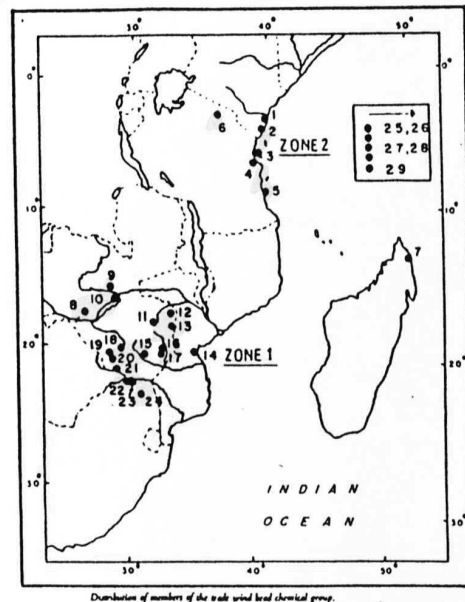
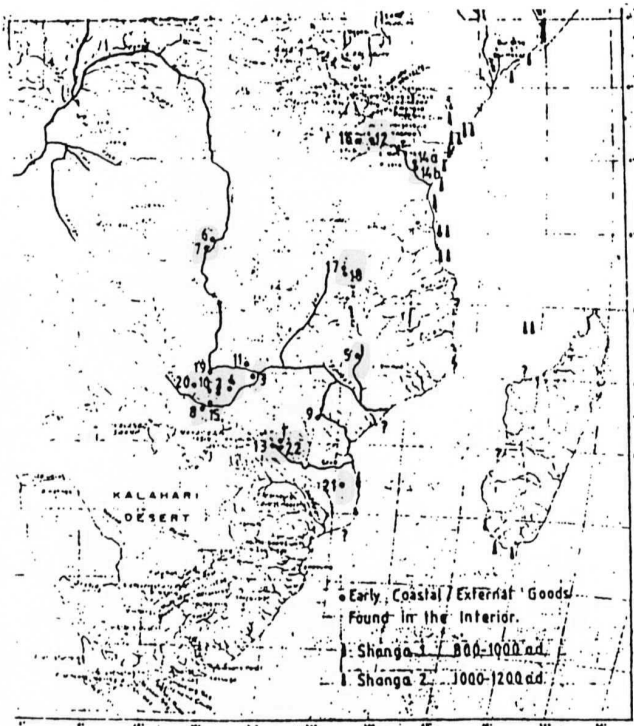
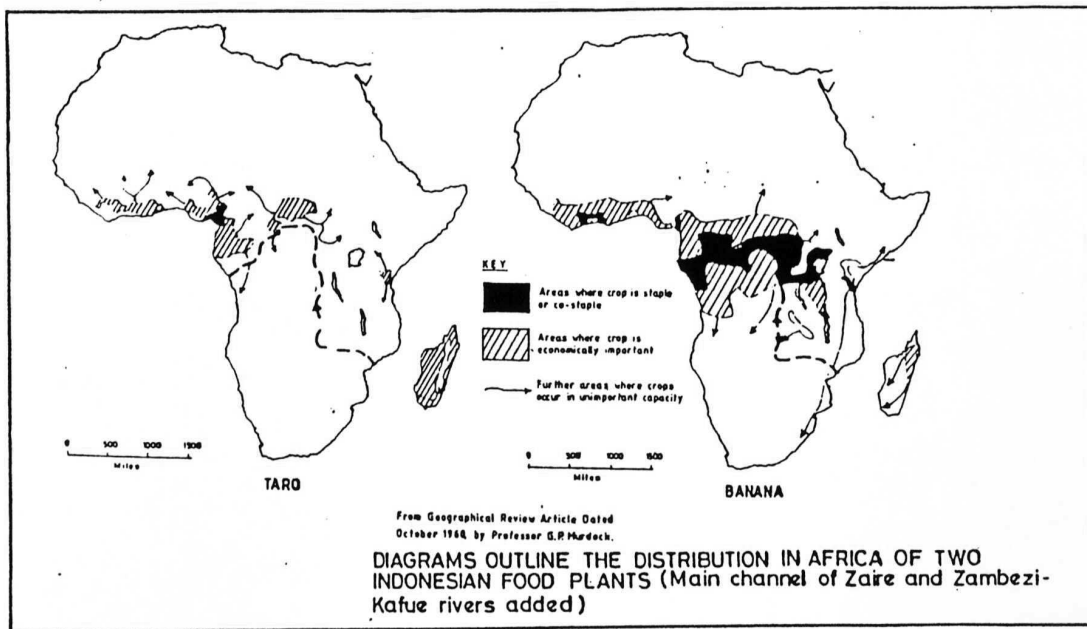
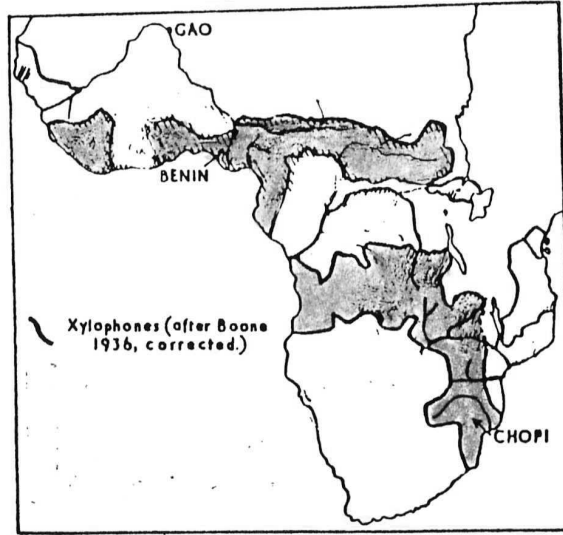
The linguistic estimate for the formation of the Malagasy language points to its inception around the 5th century; whereas the archaeological work indicates settlement of Madagascar by Afro-Indonesians, as opposed to Austronesians, in the 12th century. Historical evidence confirms an Indonesian-affiliated presence in southern Mozambique from the time of earliest record for that part of the coast, i.e., Masudi 916-7.

*expedition after the Vezo fishermen are envisaged.*

Evolutionary geography of the bananas, *Musa*.



*From N.W. Simons 1979 (ed) 'Evolution of Crop Plants'*



Trade Wind Beads  
 oc. Dawson and J.D. Clark  
 Asiaia 1976

Figure 6

Comparison of Patterns.



The possibility that Indonesian traders explored the Zambezi had been realised in the 1960s<sup>21</sup> with the patterns of Indonesian influence traced widely across equatorial Africa to far West Africa. The plantain and taro were most conspicuous among the South East Asian food complex and the botanist, Simmonds, considered that a Zambezi-Zaire River or great lakes routes were the only ones conceivable.<sup>22</sup> A.M. Jones' musicological study of the xylophone added to the pattern provided by the plantain.<sup>23</sup> In addition an enigmatic feature of the archaeology was the find of sea-shells in sites far in the interior, notably between the Zambezi-Kafue confluence (Figure 6).

They were found over the 5th to 12th centuries. At the Katoto site on the upper Lualaba River both Atlantic and Indian Ocean shells were found in a 10th century context; and associated with a civilisation formed in the fertile region around the lakes of the Upemba depression. *How the shells reached so far inland is unknown.*

An authority on Central African archaeology, F. Van Noten, on the evidence of the imported shells and other articles, interpreted long-distance trade. If we compare this with Simmonds' proposal about a transmission route orientated to the Zambezi-Zaire for the introduction of the plantain, then a long distance river trade is interpretable. *In this regard*

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21. F.D. Fage, article on West Africa in the *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p.467; M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 1966, p.33; R. Oliver, *History of East Africa*, 1963, p.110; B. Fagan et al. (1969), *Iron Age Cultures in Zambia*, Vol. 2, pp.145-6; "There can be little doubt that there was inconspicuous but widespread trading between south-east Asia and the east coast of Africa during the first millennium ... Asian penetration of the lower Zambezi is more than probable".
22. N.W. Simmonds (1962), *The Evolution of the Bananas*. Simmonds' opinion about the transmission route of the banana, as stated in 1962, he continues to maintain and has been received by botanists D.R. Harris, J.W. Pursglove, in J.R. Harlan et al. (1976), p.334 and p.295, *The Origins of African Plant Domestication*. See also the opinion of T. Shaw, p.137. Article by M.D. Gwynne, "The origin and spread of some domestic foodplants of Eastern Africa", in *East Africa and the Orient*, ed. R.I. Rotberg and H.N. Chittick (1975). J. Vansina (1984), "Western Bantu Expansion", *Journal of African History*, 25, pp.129-145 and reference to J. Barrau. More recently, an article by C. Ehret in *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, "The East African Interior", pp.633-4. Simmonds' opinion can be compared with a diagram in a work he edited, *Evolution of Crop Plants* (1979). His opinion from the 1962 work: "an overwhelmingly more likely route into the heart of the continent is from the Madagascar area, up the Zambezi Valley and great lakes, and across to the Congo and West Africa" (p.144), and "it is usually assumed that the crop reached West Africa across the moist centre of the continent, any other route is inconceivable" (p.312). From the above references it is the more durable plantain or 'cooking banana' which achieved such importance in the development of Bantu populations in the rain forest. While Vansina does not accept Simmonds' opinion, there a number of botanists and the linguist, C. Ehret, who do. Hence the dispersion in Africa could be associated with paleo-Indonesian long distance river trade. "Farmers also exchanged bananas for the fish of the water people. The complex pattern of symbiosis in the rain forest developed as a result. Because bananas do well in any rain forest, huge areas of suitable land were now opened up for farming", Vansina, "Western Bantu Expansion", *Journal of African History*. The introduction of the taro to Central Africa, especially the Ubangi-Congo marsh by this route, is also feasible. See also M. Miracle, 1967, p.18.
23. A.M. Jones (1964), *Africa and Indonesia: The evidence of the xylophone and other musical and cultural factors*, Leiden; (1969), "The influence of Indonesia: The musicological evidence reconsidered", *Azania* 4, pp.131-145. In the 1969 paper he provides additional data and discusses reviews of his 1964 book.

*it is interesting that the sea-shell temporal pattern coincides with the estimated period of Indonesian contact. There is a prospect of subsistence food exchanges operated through long distance river trading expeditions from the coast to the interior by paleo-Afro-Indonesian cultures.*

Van Noten's statement about the integration between local and long-distance trade is given below:

Trade seems to have been limited to areas near the big rivers, the Zaire and the Zambezi. Sites a long way from the rivers or lake region yield very few imported articles. A distinction needs to be made between two kinds of trade; regional trade, mostly in metals, pottery, basket work, dried fish and salt, and long distance trade, the latter dealing in shells (cowries and conuses), glass beads and metals like copper. In Zaire, at Sanga and at Katoto, all the shells and beads come from the east coast, with the exception of a conus at Katoto from the Atlantic, a distance of some 900 miles as the crow flies.

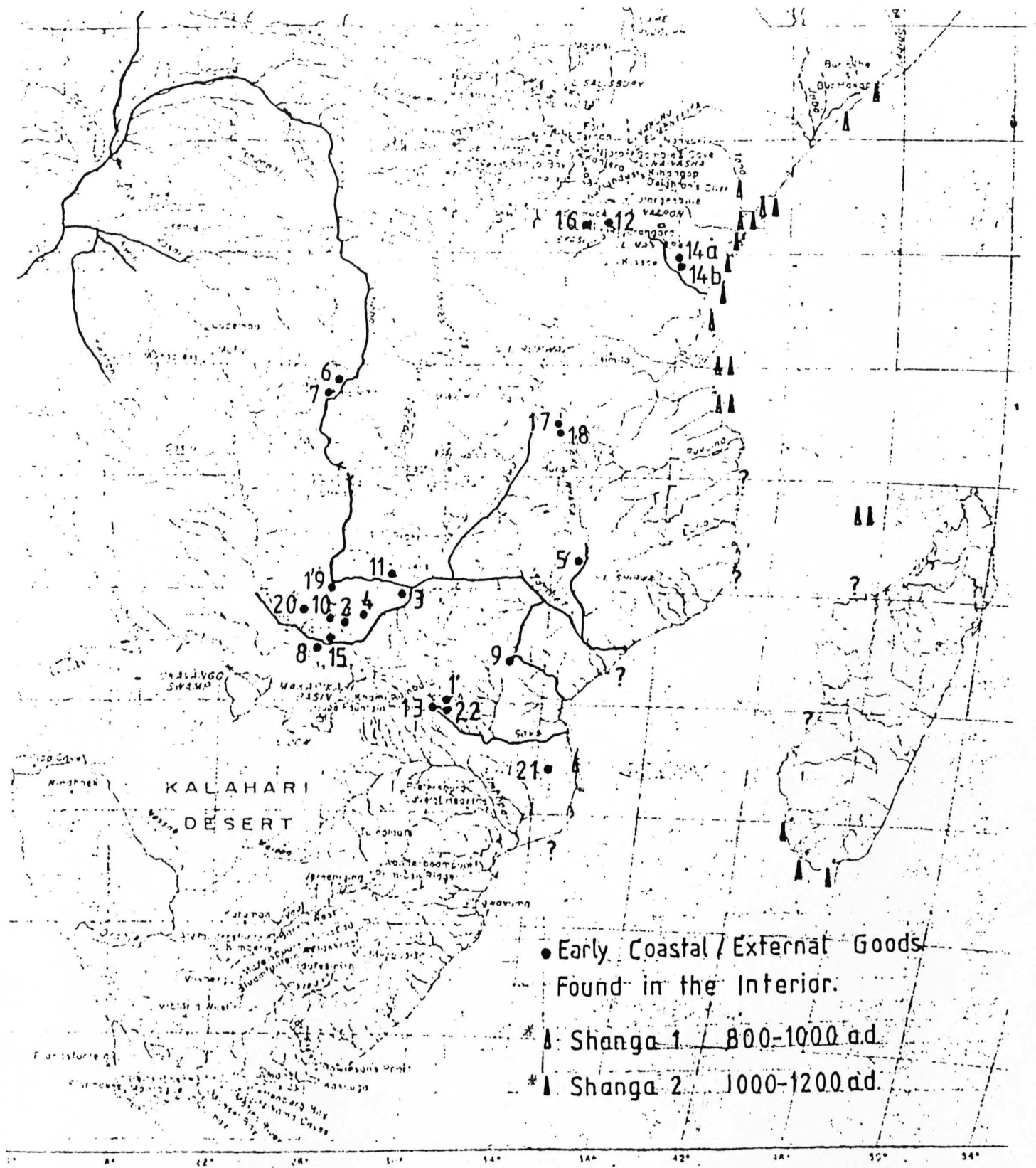
I prepared a diagram and schedule of the early coastal goods found in the interior, and compared them with the trade-wind bead survey by Davison and Clark<sup>24</sup> (Figures 7 and 7a). Over the 5th to 12th centuries the sea-shells were the principal introduced article. (It has been noted that data on marine shells which incorporate old carbon from sea water *is* often inaccurate; but in the case of the interior shells I presume this would not be applicable.)

Most sites with sea shells were situated between the Zambezi-Kafue confluence, but extended to the upper Lualaba in the 10th century sites at Sanga and Katoto. After the 12th century the trade wind beads dominate as the principal introduced article, replacing the sea-shells. The beads were concentrated between the Zambezi and Limpopo upper catchment area. (It occurred to me that the sea shell and trade-wind bead patterns might reflect an earlier 'Indonesian Period' of domination of trade in the river-coastal trade oriented to the interior replaced by a later Swahili Period, which was focused on the Zimbabwe gold fields.)

The sea-shell finds on the upper Lualaba coincided with historical references to 'Indonesian' presence in Mozambique, i.e., Masudi, 916-7 and Buzurg 945-6. In the 12th century Islam began a long period of control of the East African and Indian Ocean trade leading to Indonesia and China.<sup>25</sup>

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24. C.C. Davison and J.D. Clark (1974), "Trade wind beads: An interim report of chemical studies", *Azania*, 9, pp.75-86.
  25. F. Hirth and W.W. Rockhill (1991). Translation of the *Chu-fan-chi*, by Chau-ju-Kua, p.23. "Of all the wealthy foreign lands which have great stores of precious and varied goods; none surpass the realm of the Arab (Ta-Shi). Next to them comes Java (Shō-p'o); the third is Palembang (San-fo-ts'i); many others come in the next rank". Attributed to Chao k'u-fei writing in 1178 (Ling-wai-ta-ta).





- Early Coastal / Externat Goods Found in the Interior.
- \* ▲ Shanga 1 / 800-1000 ad.
- \* ▲ Shanga 2 / 1000-1200 ad.

\* M. Horton 1984  
Ph.D. Thesis.

Fig. 7

**PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE EARLIEST COASTAL AND EXTERNAL GOODS FOUND IN THE AFRICAN INTERIOR**

No.	NAME OF SITE	DETAILS OF GOODS FOUND	DATING ASSIGNED TO FIND A.D.	REFERENCE
1	Gokamere	Conus hebraeus L. ie east coast cone shell. + glass beads	530 ± 120 ie 6 or 7th Century	R1: 67,93. R2: 115 (Robinson).
2	Kalundu	Single cowrie shell in bedrock level	Mid 7th century or earlier	R1: 67,93. R2: Various
	Kalundu	Cowrie (East Coast Species)	445 ± 95 (SR-123)	Fagan J.A.H. 1969: 9
3	Ingombe Ilede	East coast cone shells, one with gold backing	? Late first millennium	Dating assessment ?)
4	Gundu	Cowries (East Coast Species)	440 ± 85 (G X-1114)	Fagan J.A.H. 1969: 9
5	Namichimba	Fragment of cowrie shell (?S.O. beads local or imported)	995 (SR 242)	Robinson 1973: 22, (M.A.D.P. 13)
6	Sanga	Rare perforated cowrie shell and glass bead	• About the tenth century	Harzquin 1963: 17b, *R2: 132
7	Katoto	Complete and sawn-off disc of cone shells Both Atlantic tenebra and Indian Ocean cowries (most)	? tenth century	R2: 133, Unesco 2, 1982: 633
8	Chundu	Cowrie shells ? Shell disc beads	About the 8C* or 7C**	*R2: 125, **Unesco 2 (1982: 678)
9	Place of offerings	Part of a cowrie shell. ? shell beads imported or local	Undated open site EIA	R2: 115, 151, Unesco 2: 680
10	Isamu Pati	Cowrie shells, glass beads (S beads ? local or imported)	* 720 to 1000	*R1: 69 (Daniels), R2: 171
11	Twickenham road	Cowrie shell and a single glass bead	? Eleventh C Luangwa tradition	R2: 173 Azania 1970: 111-112
12	Ngorongoro	Pierced cowries and other marine shells	Not datable	R2: 77 (Leckey 1966, Sassoon 1968)
13	Matweni	Pierced marine shells and glass beads	First 2/3 of first millennium	R2: 115, Unesco 2: 680
14a	Ganja type A sites	Cowries with backs removed Marine shell disc beads	870 ± 115	} Azania 1967: 26-28 (Soper)
14b	Bomba type B sites	and glass beads	890 ± 110	
15	Kamudzulo	Fragment of imported glass	By the seventh century	R2: 125
16	Engaruka	Cowries and glass beads	Not datable ? 1500	J.A.H. 1967: 216, Azania 1966: 95
17	Mwamasapa	Trade glass beads	1190 ±	} J.A.H. 1967: 161-162. Earliest E. Coast
18	Mwenepera	Trade glass beads	1240 ±	
19	Basanga-Mwanamaimpa	Handfull of glass beads, 4 cowries	c 1000 A.D.	Trade goods in N.W. Malawi
20	Namakala	One cowrie shell (c. annulus) split	500 - 1000	Azania 1978: 128-30 (Fagan)
21	Manekweni	Many glass beads and sea shells		Azania 1978: 147-8
22	Zimbabwe	Many glass beads and sea shells	} Twelfth century	Azania 1976: 42, Garlake

R1 = B.M. Fagan 1965 'Southern Africa'. R2 = D.W. Phillipson 1977 'The Later Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa'

**EAST AFRICAN COAST AND ISLAND SITES.**

Manda Island: Cowries, shell disc bead industry. Period 1 mid 9th to early eleventh. R2: 155, Chittick's 'MANDA' 1984.  
 Kilwa Island: As for Manda. Period 1a 79th to c 1000. Chittick's 'Kilwa' 1974.

**COASTAL (TANA) TRADITION CULTURES - SEE ALSO DIAGRAM ON E.A. COAST**

**SHANGA 1 Sites:** 800 - 1000 A.D. Shanga (1-S), MANDA (1-M), PATE (1-P), UNGWANA (1-U), BARAWA (1-B), GÉZIRA (1-GZ), UNGUJA UKUU (1-UU), KISIMANI MAFIA (1-KM), KILWA (1-K), COMORO ISLAND (1-C), CHIBUENE (1-CB).

**SHANGA 2 Sites:** 1000 - 1200 SHANGA (2-S), MANDA (2-M), BUI (2-BU), MOMBASA HOSPITAL SITE (2-MH), UNGWANA (2-U), GEDI (2-G) KILWA (2-K), K. MAFIA (2-KM), RAS MKUMBUU (2-RM), RAS AL HADD (2-RAH) (OMAN) (22° 31'N, 59° 45' E)

**SHANGA 3 Sites:** 1200 - 1350 SHANGA (3-S), RAS MKUMBUU (3-RM), LAMU GROUP SITES

**SHANGA 4 Sites:** 1350 +

Localised to the Lamu Archipelago, Gedi (4-G) and KILEPWA (4-KL)

Substantial displacement of shell disc makers and outreach to Ras-al-Hadd

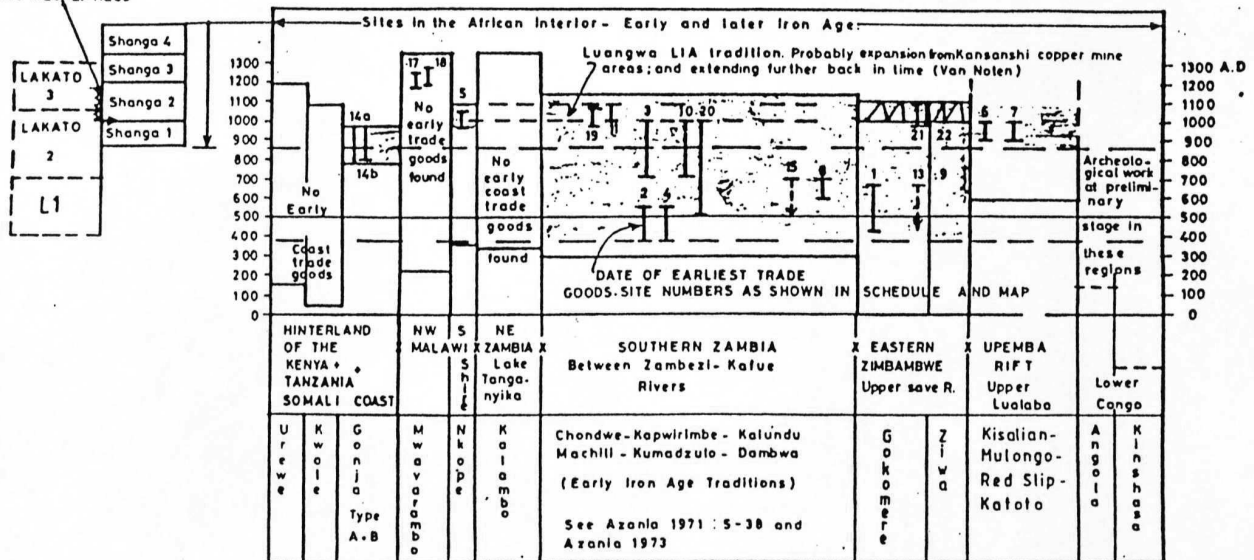


DIAGRAM SHOWS THE EARLIEST TRADE GOODS IN THE AFRICAN INTERIOR. THE RELATED COASTAL TRADITIONS AND THE 'LAKATO' AFRO-INDONESIAN 'TRUE OUTRIGGER' CULTURAL PERIODS.

*Figure 7a*

With the objective of assessing the technical feasibility of paleo-Indonesian penetration of the Zambezi-Zaire I combined the river voyages of Livingstone on the Zambezi<sup>26</sup> with that of H.M. Stanley on the Lualaba-Zaire<sup>27</sup> (Figures 8 and 9). A major portion of a trans-African arterial route emerged, with the Kafue-Lualaba the 'missing link'. Livingstone established a depot near the Zambezi-Kafue confluence with the objective of using it as a base for northward river-borne penetration into the Congo rain forest. It was his failure to inspect the Kebrabassa Rapids, and evaluate the magnitude of this principal obstacle that forced him to abandon his original plan and (after an overland journey along the Zambezi to the Victorian Falls) to concentrate on river-borne exploration of the Shire and Lake Malawi.<sup>28</sup>

It appears from these two 19th century expeditions that deep penetration of the Zambezi-Zaire system (cf. Simmonds' proposal for the plantain transmission route) was technically feasible using shallow-draft vessels.

There is no evidence of long distance river trade by the Bantu outside the Indonesian period.<sup>29</sup> Stanley found that Swahili slaving expeditions into the upper Lualaba were just beginning in c.1876, and from an overland route across Tanganyika linked to Zanzibar. At the close of the sixteenth century the Portuguese found many Arab traders at Sena. Black Portuguese slave-hunters reached up to near the Luangwa confluence and mixed-race cultures evolved from centuries of Portuguese trade on the Zambezi.<sup>30</sup>

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26. G. Martelli (1970), *Livingstone's River: A History of the Zambezi Expedition 1858-1864*, pp.228-229, diagram of journey.
27. Richard Hall (1974), *An Adventurer Explored*. H.M. Stanley's down river voyage on the Congo from Nyangwe on the Lualaba from November 1876 to Boma, August 1877. He also travelled up the Congo in 1877-79; Peter Forbath (1977), *The River Congo ...*, p.292, shows Stanley's voyage down river.
28. Martelli, *op.cit.*, pp.36-7, 92-101, 116.
29. J. Vansina, "Long distance trade routes in Central Africa", *Journal of African History*, 1962, p.376. "Long distance trade, the third type of trade, was unknown in Central Africa before the arrival of the Europeans in the 15th century"; R. Harris (1981), p.23, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500-1891*, "Before 1500, long distance trade was not a major factor in the lives of people of the upper river". L. Sundstrom, *The Exchange Economy of Pre-Colonial Africa*, indicates the widespread bartering of preferred articles and refers to Austronesian parallels, p.49. He indicates that cowries are widespread over much of West Africa and the Congo Basin; and that they were better suited to the professional trader rather than the average consumer who preferred staple commodities in exchange for his goods, pp.107-8. The Arab and Berbers developed the trans-Saharan trade only after the 8th century, according to G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville (1986), *Atlas of African History*, p.24, and there is a prospect that their caravans introduced Maldivian cowries into the Central Zaire Basin (Sundstrom, pp.85-92). The Loanda shell (*Olivella Nana*) was fished at Loanda Island as a royal monopoly and used in the Western Congo as money (Sundstrom, pp.94-5). A. Roberts (1976), *A history of Zambia*, p.12, "In earlier centuries, the unbroken woodland of the Zaire-Zambezi watershed was the scene of prolonged migration and trade ... in practice water transport has been unimportant in Zambia, except on the upper Zambezi, the lower Luapula and Lake Bangweulu".
30. H.H. Johnson (1891), *Livingstone and the Exploration of Central Africa*, pp.226-33.

DIAGRAM TO COMPARE

1) TRANSMISSION ROUTE PROPOSED

FOR PLANTAIN ACROSS

AFRICA, 2) LOCATION OF EARLY

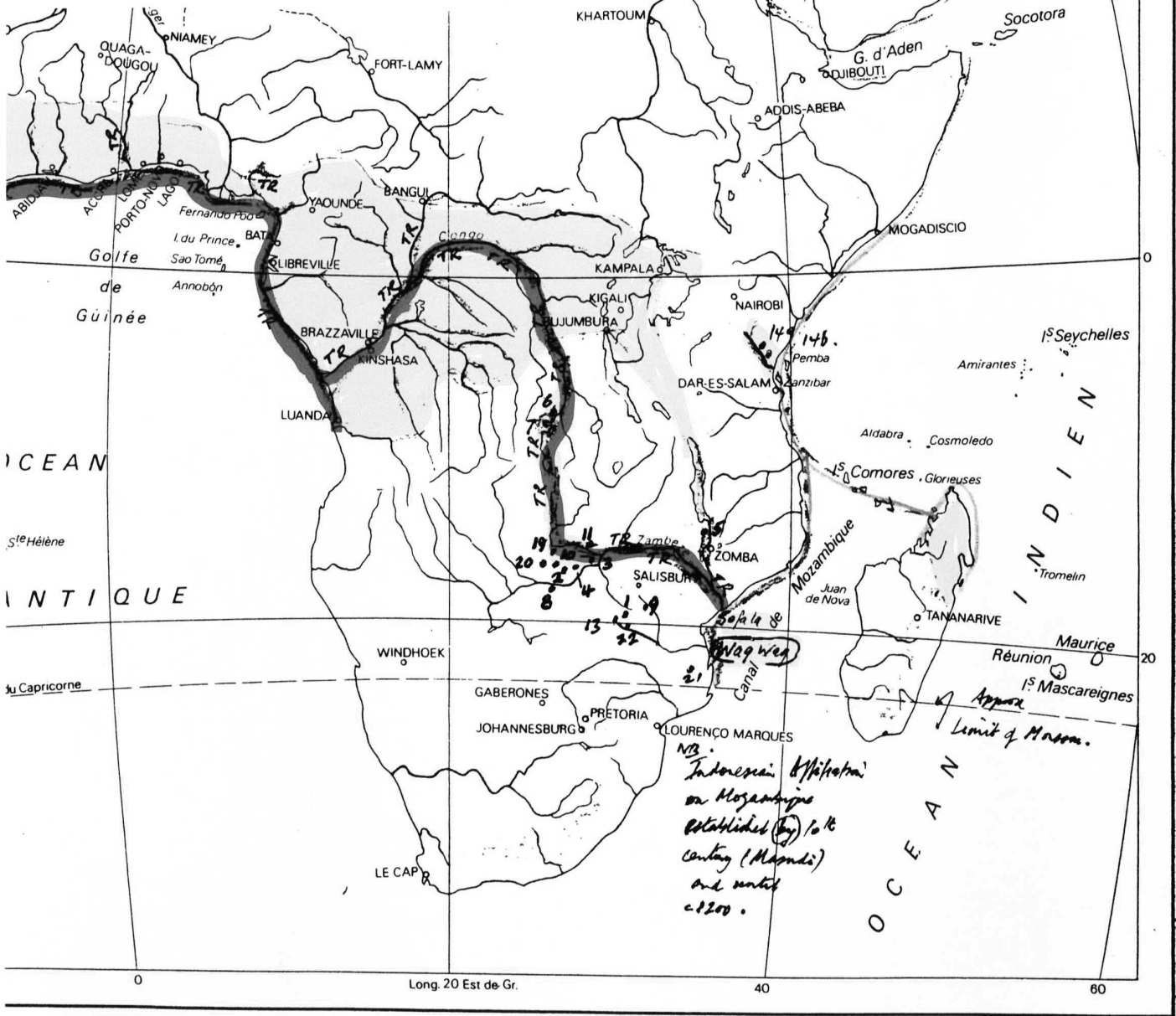
SEA SHELL FINDS (5K-12Kc),

AND 3) AREAS OVER WHICH

PLANTAIN IS STAPLE OR

CO-STAPLE (AFTER

G. MUNDACK 1960).



NB. Indonesian & Malayan  
on Mozambique  
established by 10th  
Century (Mundack)  
and earlier  
c. 1200.



Figure 8

11. Early Sea-Shell Finds, 5K-12Kc.

Plantain - Banana Staple or Co-Staple.  
(After Mundack 1960)

TR

Proposed Transmission Route for  
Plantain to Interior (After N.W. Simmonds  
1962)

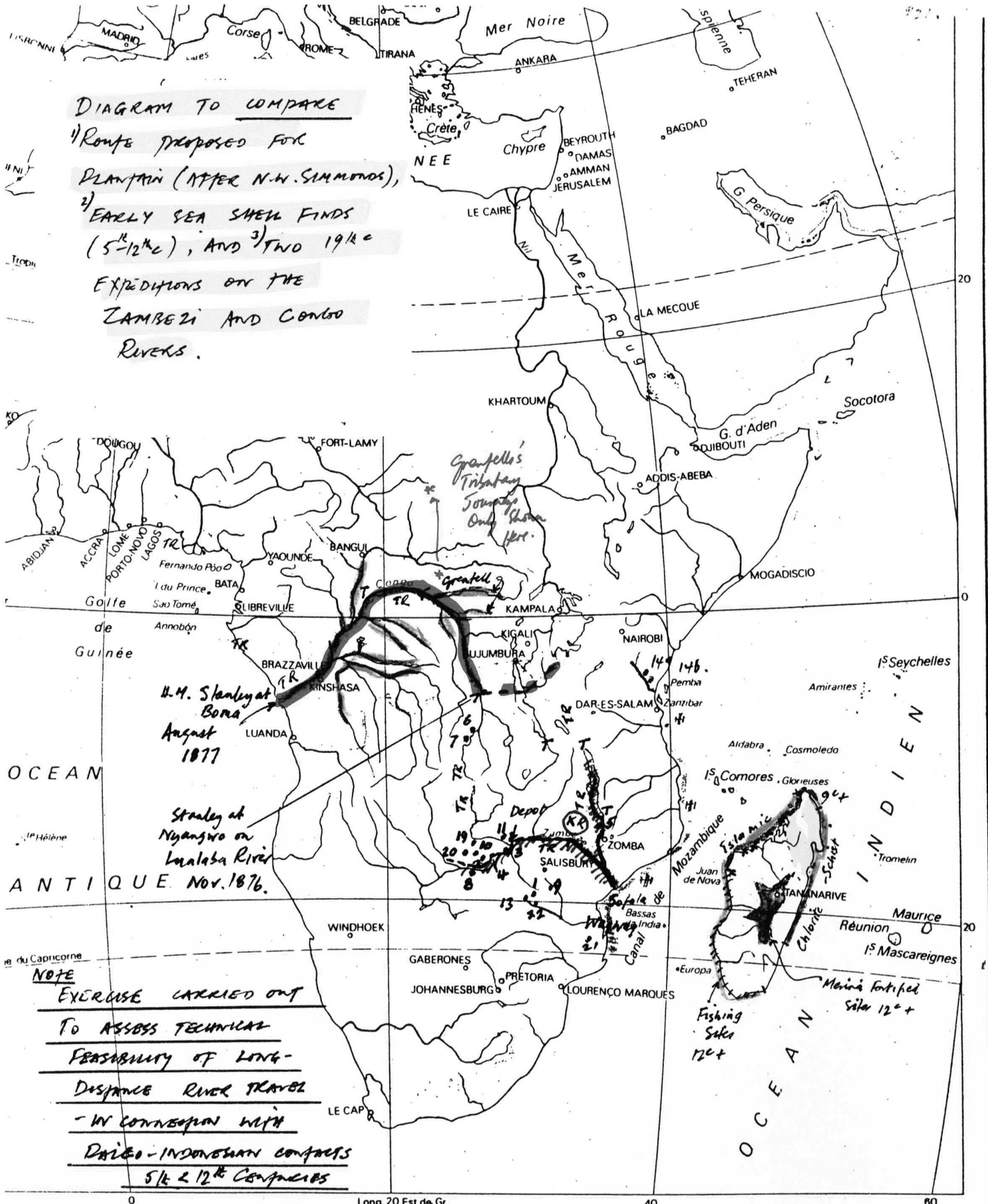


DIAGRAM TO COMPARE  
 1) Route proposed for  
 Plantain (After N.W. Simmons),  
 2) EARLY SEA SHELL FINDS  
 (5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> C), AND 3) TWO 19<sup>th</sup> C  
 EXPEDITIONS ON THE  
 ZAMBESI AND CONGO  
 RIVERS.

**NOTE**  
 EXERCISE CARRIED OUT  
 TO ASSESS TECHNICAL  
 FEASIBILITY OF LONG-  
 DISTANCE RIVER TRAVEL  
 - IN CONNECTION WITH  
 DAIGO-INDONESIAN CONTACTS  
 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

— George Grantell (Grantell & the Congo, H.H. Johnston)  
 — H.M. Stanley, Expedition on the Congo 1876-7. River Journey — Overland  
~~---~~ D. Livingstone, Expedition on the Zambesi 1854 By River. ~~---~~ Overland.  
 (KA) = Kebrabross Rapids.  
 Depot - At Zambesi-Kape Confluence.

11. Early Sea-Shell Finds, 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> C.  
 Plantain - Brnana Stable or Co-Stable.  
 (After Mandrot 1960)  
 Proposed Transmission Route for  
 Plantain to East Africa (After N.W. Simmons,  
 1962)  
 T = Taro

Figure 9.



The facility that the Zambezi and river transport offered was appreciated by Dr. Livingstone after his earlier overland journeys. And in the flat Congo Basin within a few decades near the end of the 19th century George Grenfell explored to near the limits of its navigability.<sup>31</sup> With due respect to these great explorers they were landlubbers compared to the paleo-Indonesians who possessed unique and exceptional skills, the incentive of trade, and the security of expeditionary fleets. There is a prospect that the patterns of sea-shells, plantain-taro and xylophone across equatorial Africa reflected an extended and extensive process of intrusion over the Indonesian period. An arterial route orientated to the Zambezi-Kafue and Lualaba-Zaire, or including Lakes Malawi and Tanganyika may have been pioneered through long distance expeditions and a river-orientated colonisation process.

In Western Africa a diagram by D.R. Harris<sup>32</sup> indicates how the plantain-taro pattern appears to intrude from the coast into the much larger West African yam zone; suggestive perhaps of a coastal river trade link from the Congo estuary into and through the rain forest barrier via certain rivers. Some concentration of 'Indonesian' features overlap on the Cross, Katsina Ala, and Benue Rivers, i.e., the plantain-taro, xylophone and Hutton's bead-hunting complex. The rain forest provides a great barrier to contact with the interior from the coast and the rivers offered a convenient means of access (Figure 9a). Turning again to Madagascar:

Most scholars assume that Indonesians penetrated the western Indian Ocean for the purpose of long-distance trade ... Since an uninhabited island would have been an unlikely terminus for traders, Indonesian traders probably first landed in Africa, and the fusion of African and Asian traditions began there. How soon this was followed by colonisation of Madagascar is not known.<sup>33</sup>

Within the context of development of the dichotomy between Swahili and Afro-Indonesian cultures across the Mozambique Channel the following factors appear significant in regard to Afro-Indonesian ethnogenesis prior to c.1200:

- 1) Afro-Indonesians form majority populations in modern Madagascar.
- 2) Indonesian language predominant. Bantu words assigned to early stage in development of Malagasy language and culture.
- 3) Indonesian trading contact with East African coast ended c.1200 AD.
- 4) Earliest evidence of Afro-Indonesian cultures in Madagascar 12th century.
- 5) Historical evidence of Indonesian trade in East Africa (Mozambique) 10th-12th century.
- 6) Swahili trading stations linked with north Madagascan Echelles from 8th century.
- 7) Linguistic estimate for formation of Malagasy language 5th century, or earlier.
- 8) Oriental maritime trade focused on South East Africa rather than Madagascar.

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31. H.H. Johnston, *Grenfell of the Congo*.

32. D.H. Harris (1976), "Traditional systems of plant food production and the origins of agriculture in West Africa", article in J. Harlan (ed.), *Origins of African Plant Domestication*, p.319.

33. Robert E. Dewar, "Malagasy roots", article in *Natural History*, July 1988, p.51.

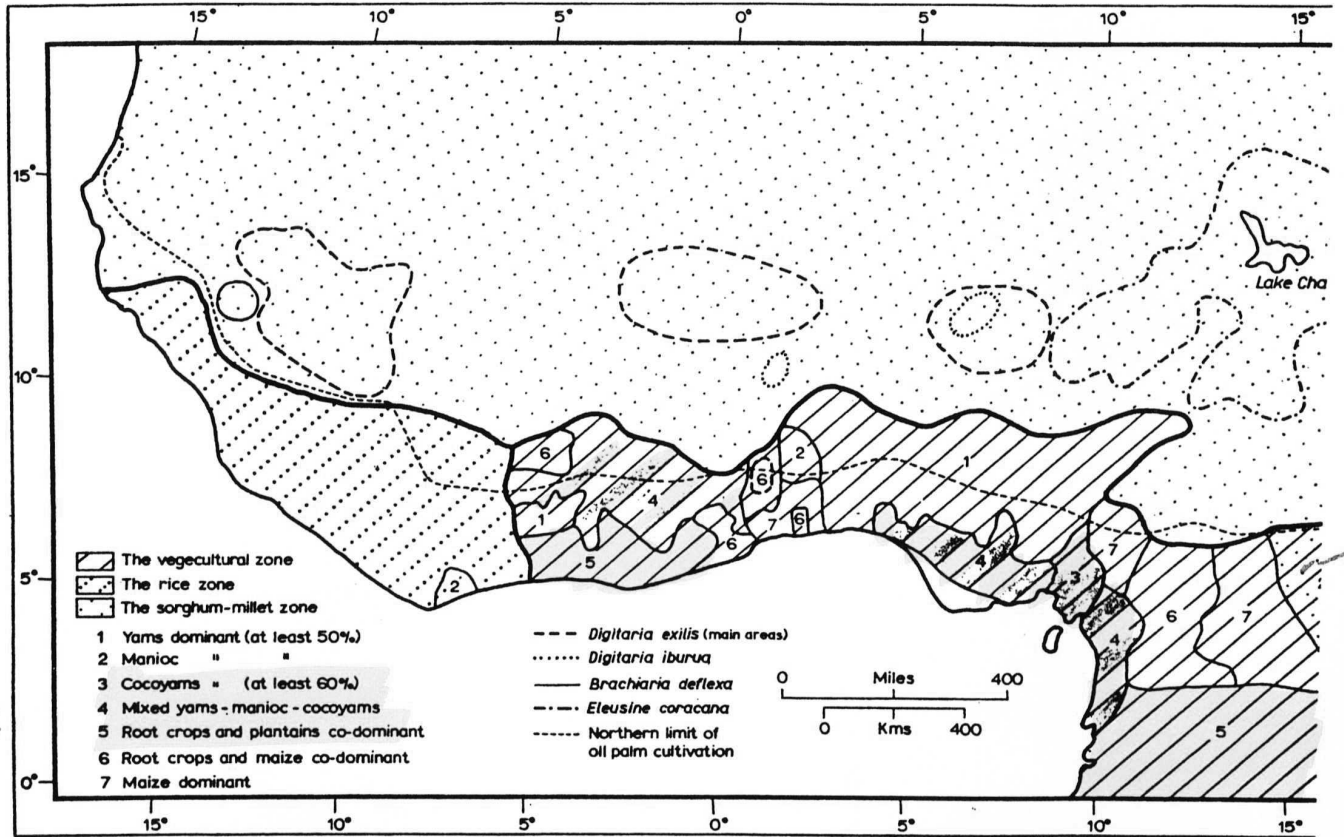


Figure 4. West Africa: traditional crop zones and subareas of crop dominance (based on Johnston 1958: 59, 70, 81; Portères 1955a)

DIAGRAM SHOWS ? INTRUSION OF SE ASIAN PLANTAIN  
AND COCOYAM ALONG WEST AFRICAN COAST.

Figure 9a.

From  
D.R. Harris  
1976: 319

in  
J. Harlan  
editor.  
'Origins of  
African  
Plant  
Domestication'



- 9) No archaeological evidence of Austronesian culture found in Afro-Madagascan region.
- 10) Pattern of EIA sites, resources, and demography suggests population focused in the South East African interior over most of Indonesian Period.
- 11) Islamic trade dominates East African coast, Indian Ocean, and China trade from 12th century. Coincident with end of Indonesian contact in East Africa.
- 12) Patterns of extensive Indonesian influence traced across Equatorial Africa, i.e. South East Asian food-plant complex, xylophone (plantain and taro alone attain staple status).
- 13) Relics of Indonesian influence claimed on East African coast by Hornell (1934)<sup>34</sup> and in South East Nigeria by J. Hutton (1947).<sup>35</sup>
- 14) Preliminary assessment of linguistic-culture parallels between Madagascar and Africa traced by R.K. Kent (1970),<sup>36</sup> led him to propose a former Indonesian intrusion and integration.
- 15) Various authorities on Malagasy culture have given opinions in favour of a former Indonesian colonisation of Africa, i.e., Julien (1908), Ferrand (1908), Deschamps (1960), Kent (1970).<sup>37</sup>

**The East African and Madagascar Coastal Traditions: Possible method of testing the hypothesis of long-distance Paleo-Indonesian coastal-river trading expeditions**

There are historical grounds to infer that Afro-Indonesians were trading on the Mozambique coast until 1200; when the link with Indonesia appears to have been broken, and near coincident with archaeological evidence of a major period of settlement by Afro-Indonesians on western-central Madagascar in the 12th century. In addition, there are factors which suggest that Afro-Indonesian integration took place in Africa from an extension of coastal-river trade. But a key question is the extent of the Afro-Indonesian integration; whether it was restricted to the East African coast or 'extended' through the interior.

Some of the cultural features noted by James Hornell, i.e., the outrigger and flat-bar zither, and the ethno-botanical research may be the vestiges of former contact by Afro-Indonesians, and near locations where river routes gave access to significant African populations. The Pangani River in Tanzania, and the shell finds (8-10th century) in the Gonja type 'A' and Bombo type 'B' sites, with the focus of the taro-plantain-banana xylophone/flat bar zither could be an artery of coastal-river trade and perhaps a colony for paleo-Indonesian development in c.1000.

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34. J. Hornell (1934), "Indonesian influences on East African culture", *JRAI* (37), pp.305-322.
  35. J. Hutton (1946-7), "West Africa and Indonesia: A problem in distribution", *JRAI* (76), pp.5-12.
  36. R.K. Kent (1970), "Early Kingdoms in Madagascar".
  37. P. Verin, "North Madagascar", discussed, pp.45-6.

It is usually considered that coastal populations were thin in the EIA, and in serological tests carried out among the Bantu of East Africa the researchers found no data allowing them to infer that there had been an Indonesian contribution (Verin, 1986, pp.40-1).

In addition, no evidence of Austronesian culture has come to light in the 8th century levels of the East African coast, Madagascar or the African interior: in contrast to the linguistic domination of Madagascar. For the neo-Indonesian Merina it has been interpreted that they had a limited integration with Africa; and became established in the Central Highlands. Thus it is to the paleo-Indonesian process that we concentrate.

The sea shell-plantain/taro, xylophone patterns are possible relics of an extended-extensive operation of long distance river trade on the Zambezi-Zaire over the Indonesian Period operated by paleo-Indonesians which was linked to the East African coast.

In recent decades there has gradually come to light a geographically extensive coastal tradition archaeology. Horton<sup>38</sup> has put forward an 'independent generation' theory whereby a series of coastal Africans evolved in a so-called Swahili corridor;<sup>39</sup> there is an alternative explanation for such a thesis which 'goes against' Idrisi's statement about the lack of seafaring ability amongst the Zanj.

It is also feasible that the material over the 8th-12th centuries reflects the activity of Afro-Indonesian and Swahili cultures linked as agents in the exploitation of the South East African trade. *Hence the unravelling-linking of the ceramic traditions on Madagascar, the East African coastal traditions with those of Africa offers a method of testing hypotheses of population development.*

A feature of the coastal tradition material to 1200 is the use of sea shells either for manufacturing shell-disc beads as food or for inscribing motifs on pottery. The material economy appears to be based on a subsistence exchange of food-plants with coastal people (Africans or Afro-Indonesians) and fishing, shell fishing.

Archaeologists are beginning to establish associations between these geographically separated groups.<sup>40</sup> (*Figure 9b*).

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38. M.C. Horton (1984), Cambridge Ph.D. thesis.

39. M.C. Horton (1986), "The Swahili corridor and the Southern African Iron Age", African History Seminar, November 12, 1986, SOAS, University of London.

40. P. Verin (1986), *North Madagascar*, pp.41, 42, 394.



The Tana tradition ceramics exhibit an array of (usually) incised patterns. According to Horton (1984, p.286):

Early coastal incised pottery which seems to appear all along the coast in remarkably homogeneous form from at least Manda Island and Shanga in the Lamu Islands to Mozambique and may be the Comores in about the 8th or 9th century,

and

excavated contexts abound but the origin of this material is unknown.

From the comparative analytical work over the respective sites Horton proposes a distinction between Shanga 1 and Shanga 2:

A later group developed out of Shanga 1. The decoration becomes more uniform and principally consists of lattice interlace although the total number of forms increased. The material dates from about 1000 to 1200 AD. One type, type H, with red burnishings is particularly characteristic of this ceramic group ... These developments can be followed at other sites in the Lamu area; at Bui, Pate and further afield at the Mombasa hospital site, Ungwana, Gedi, Kilwa, Kisimani Mafia and Ras Mkuumbu. Pottery of this tradition has been found on the coast of Oman at Ras al Hadd (Whitcomb, 1976) clearly derived from the East African coast confirming that local pottery or its contents were traded extensively (Horton, 1984, pp.288-9, Figure 84, and pp.432-5).

In his 1991 work Sinclair elaborates on this material, in connection with re-investigation work by Abungu at the Ungwana site, by the mouth of the Tana River:

The surveys have turned up a number of so-called 'Tana Tradition' sites along the interior stretches of the Tana River, with pottery similar to that published by Kirkman in 1966 from Ungwana and by Chittick in 1974 from Kilwa. The coastal extension of very similar wares is documented as far away as the Comoro archipelago, north-western Madagascar and from Chibuene on the southern coast of Mozambique, but they are found in the coastal hinterland especially in Tanzania in the eastern Usambara mountains and further south in the Kisarawe area south of Das es Salaam. The continental extension of these assemblages including both the coastal and hinterland sites seems coincident with the Zanzibar-Inhambane floral mosaic.<sup>41</sup>

On the islands which have been archaeologically investigated, e.g., Kilwa and Manda, there are 'basal shell middens' with no indication of Near Eastern or Indonesian cultures. The inhabitants of Kilwa in the earliest periods, i.e., 1a and 1b (800-1000, 1000-1150 or 1200) were (from the remains) mostly trader-fishermen who exchanged fish, shell-fish, sea-shells with coastal peoples (Chittick, *Kilwa*, Vol. 1, 293, 1974).

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41. Sinclair, *Archaeology in Eastern Africa*, p.186.

From recent work in Mozambique there is evidence of a possible coastal river trade on the Monapa River over the 5th-6th century inferred from finds of shell-stamped pottery:

Phase II of the Monapa tradition is dated at the same site (Namelepiwa) to the sixth century. Pottery finds decorated with zigzag shell stamping motifs, bands of horizontal shell impression and space motifs are characteristic of Monapa Phase II while bowls are rare.<sup>42</sup>

Contact with the coast is indicated with some shell stamping motifs on Nampula 'A' pottery from Murrapania and also Muhekani.<sup>43</sup>

Both the latter sites are near Namelepiwa town some 180 kilometres up the Monapa River from the coast; the dating of the Namelepiwa A is not exactly clear from the text but in the context of the above statement appears to refer to the 5th century.

(The shell stamping, from Sinclair's review of recent work in northern Mozambique, is specific to the above sites, in the 5th-6th centuries.)

In Southern Mozambique the identification of a fragment of green glazed ware (of a type known from pre-Islamic sites in the Persian Gulf), at the lower levels of the trading site of Chibuene suggests early Persian maritime trade.

According to Huffman, the Shashi/Limpopo region and the Vilanculos area (from his archaeological investigations), is one of the first in the interior of Southern Africa to be integrated into the Indian Ocean commercial network. The Schroda and K2 sites are conspicuous among EIA deposits in conjunction with glass beads from the 8th century. He envisages a complete trade hypothesis evolving from early links with pastoralist-orientated; presumably Bantu communities and subsequently the command of the ivory-slave-gold trade. Imported wound and drawn glass beads being conspicuous.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of the development of Swahili and Afro-Indonesian populations to the 12th century, and the progressive unravelling of ceramic association:

On the Comoro archipelago and the Great Island of Madagascar itself no pottery similar to the Kwale-Matola wares nor to the Gokomere-Ziwa wares has been observed in any of the collections housed in museums from these countries observed by the present author. This lack is of course disappointing from a number of points of view and current investigation in the Comoran islands and planned work in north-west Madagascar is aimed at adding to this early picture. But this dearth of evidence is balanced to a great extent by the remarkable correlations between the early imported wares from Ras Hafun and Chibuene and later by the equally impressive distribution of the red-slipped ware which occur at least as early as the late first millennium and onwards from Somalia in the north, down the Kenya-Tanzania coast across to the Comoran islands and Northern Madagascar as far as Chibuene in Southern Mozambique.<sup>45</sup>

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42. *Ibid.*, p.189.

43. *Ibid.*, p.188.

44. T.N. Huffman, "Southern Africa to the South of the Zambezi", article in *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 3, p.673.

45. Sinclair, *op.cit.*, p.192.



Other evidence of 9th century trade from the Persian Gulf stems from finds of Sassanian-Islamic pottery and glassware at Manda, Kilwa and the old site of Irodo in north-east Madagascar.<sup>46</sup>

In reference to Afro-Indonesian ethnogenesis, it will be recalled that a relationship had been proposed between the Vezo trader-fishermen of south west Madagascar and the earliest fishing camp sites extending back to the Talaky site in the 12th century. Verin associates these with a Vezo-Antavelo ceramic tradition which extends along the west and south coast. He has noted resemblances to the pottery of the Shona in Zimbabwe.

One real exception to the lack of archaeological evidence of an Indonesian presence on the African coast is the pottery of the Shona, whom certain scholars regard as the descendants of the builders of Zimbabwe. This Shona pottery bears a strange similarity to the Vezo-Antavelo style of the west and the north-west. Even this, however, may be an African contribution to Madagascar. The fact remains that there may have been connections between the proto-Shona and the Indonesians, contributing to the development of Vezo-Antavelo groups.<sup>47</sup>

The extent of this tradition along the west Madagascan coast is indicated by the same author:

In the Maharamba and at Maintirano, the majority of the pots are coated on their surfaces. I have frequently noted that these receptacles form part of the Vezo-Antavelo tradition that was widespread along the whole of the west coast.

And in respect to another link with Africa:

The parallel chevron<sup>\*</sup> pattern broken at intervals, on the other hand is the typical decorative motif of the coast from Sambirano to the Bay of Antongil. Objects with this decoration have been found at Mahilaka, Lanivato, Irodo, Mahanara (Nosy Lava), Bemanevika and Nosy Mangabe. The chevron pattern never overlaps the combing pattern as in the West, but is always isolated. It is linked to the Hanundro style (Comoros). Other motifs found on these receptacles follow the rim around the neck and the principal forms are a series of dots and decorations consisting of stripes, hatching and sections filled with triangles. The triangular motif, which has been found at Kingany, belongs in my opinion to an African tradition and is found at Ankazoabo and Vondrozo (1986, p.394). \* *Fig 3 and 9\**

The Zambian pottery of Dambwa (Fagan and colleagues, 1969) with its herring-bone pattern is similar in many respects to the pottery of the Madagascan coast (1986, p.52, fn. 25).

Thus the comparative analysis of the Madagascan and African ceramic traditions will in time provide new information and establish linkages within the framework of the Swahili-Indonesian trading competition and consequent population developments to and beyond 1200.

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46. Verin (1986), *North Madagascar*, p.57.

47. *Ibid.*, p.41.

## SYNTHESIS

The period of regeneration of Oriental maritime trade with Southeast Africa closely coincides with the settlement on Madagascar, i.e., from c.700.

Considering the dichotomy between Afro-Near Eastern (Swahili) and Afro-Indonesian populations across the Mozambique Channel, and historical evidence of competition for the resources of Southeast Africa 916-1154, *there are grounds to infer that until c.1200 the island was populated as a consequence of two main processes of integration with Africans, i.e., those which developed from Near Eastern and Indonesian exploitation of the Southeast African trade.*

The absence of archaeological evidence of Austronesian settlements across the Afro-Malagasy region is in contrast to the Indonesian domination of the Malagasy language which had occurred before 1200.

Historical evidence indicates that the commercial interests of both groups of Oriental traders focused on Southeast Africa rather than Madagascar from 916-1200; and there are indications from Idrisi 1154 (and as discussed above) that paleo-Indonesians were active as middle-men in development of long distance coastal-river trading expeditions into the African interior.

Historical and archaeological evidence indicates that Afro-Indonesian settlement on Madagascar began to be of significance in the 12th century.

From the distribution of EIA sites in the region and other factors there is reason to interpret that the bulk of African population over the estimated period of Indonesian contact was far from the east coast and to some extent orientated to the Zambezi and its tributaries and the Lualaba-Zaire.

Within the context of this enquiry, and the interpretation that the early sea shell finds in the interior reflect long-distance trade, it would seem reasonable to associate paleo-Indonesian coastal-river trading activity with the sea-shell pattern/long-distance trade interpretation, the plantain-xylophone patterns and the East African coastal traditions.

In addition to the linguistic links between the Malagasy and Bantu Africa, and the process outlined above, we may include archaeological links between the Vezo-Antavelo tradition and those of the East African coast and interior.



By comparing the patterns (a) of early sea-shells in the African interior; (b) trade-wind beads; (c) plantain; (d) taro; and (e) xylophone with the river expeditions of Livingstone, Stanley and Grenfell, one can assess the technical feasibility of an arterial-river route across Equatorial Africa orientated to the Zambezi-Kafue, Lualaba-Congo.

A crucial question is the extent that the paleo-Indonesians penetrated the African interior before 1200.

The paleo-Indonesian cultures which reached Southeast Africa were comprised of long-distance expeditionary fleets organised for the purpose of trade and plunder along the monsoon routes of the Indian Ocean. They were 'water people' par excellence, accustomed to virtually living on their boats, with seasons of sedentary agriculture at riverside plots for growing plantain, taro, Asian yam, coconut, egg-plant, turmeric etc.; and exchanged along with sea-shells, mussels and fish on trading expeditions. From the evidence on Western Madagascar the fishing groups; probably ancestral to the modern day Vezo, left only shell middens for the archaeologists.

Thus we may anticipate little other than the above in the archaeological record. The plantain-taro-xylophone patterns and perhaps the sea-shells in the interior are conformable with intrusion by such cultures.

If, as has been suggested, there is no evidence of long-distance river trade by the Bantu outside the 'Indonesian Period', and the sea-shells coincide with this period, then the paleo-Indonesians must surely be considered prime candidates. In Western Africa there is an impression, from the pattern of the plantain-taro intruding from the West African coast into the much larger yam zone, of a coastal-river trade extending from the Zaire River mouth; perhaps the only means of entrance through the West African rain forest barrier.

In this survey the author finds there are grounds to propose the following process, in regard to the development of Afro-Indonesian populations prior to 1200.

Beginning in about the fifth century paleo-Indonesian long-distance expeditionary fleets extended their activities from southern India and the monsoon routes to Southeast Africa and probed the coasts and rivers operating subsistence food exchanges and with raiding and piracy. From contact with local African groups on the rivers there began a process of Afro-Indonesian ethno-genesis which extended to the Zambezi River and Mozambique until 916 when their presence was recorded by Masudi in the land of Waq-Waq to the south of Sofala. They developed long-distance river expeditions into the Zambezi-Congo Basin and introduced Southeast Asian food plants and musical instruments: the flat-bar zither (East Africa), the xylophone (across equatorial Africa), and until the 12th century operated as middle-men who brought the African products of the interior to the Mozambique coast; exchanged with neo-Indonesian expeditions in 1154. On the tenuous basis of the finds of both Atlantic and Indian Ocean sea-shells at the Katoto site in the 10th century it is possible to infer that at this time a trans-African river trade had been developed from paleo-Indonesian expeditions and a transient acculturation process with a variety of riverside Bantu.

In c.1200 a migration of Afro-Indonesian cultures took place from the Mozambique coast to Western Madagascar at the time when Indonesian contact ended and Islam began a long period of domination of the gold, ivory, slave trade in East Africa; and the Indian Ocean in general. Competition for land resources in Madagascar is inferred from 1200 with evidence of tribal warfare among Malagasy groups and the earliest fortified settlement of the highlands.

### The Xylophone and the Plantain

The evidence of Indonesian influence across Africa rests largely on the researches concerning the xylophone and plantain.

As indicated in footnote 26, there is considerable (but not universal) support for Professor N.W. Simmonds' opinion about a Zambezi-Zaire-Great Lakes route for the transmission of the plantain across to West Africa. Support comes from M.D. Gwynne 1975: 265-6, J.W. Purseglove, 1976:295 and his 'Tropical Crops', p.349, D.R. Harris, 1976:334, T. Shaw 1976:137, and more recently C. Ehret, *Unesco General History of Africa*, Vol. 3: 633.

Although Vansina acknowledges the importance of the plantain for Bantu population development in the Congo to 1000, he is unable to accept Simmonds' view in his paper on 'Western Bantu Expansion'. In a letter to the author (March 24, 1989), Vansina informed me that "He (Simmonds) did not realise that two of the three AAB blocks occur in Africa and only in Australasia".

A key passage seems to be the following one taken from the third edition of Simmonds' book on "Bananas", 1987:124:

The distribution of the plantains presents some features of interest. 'French' plantains are known only in India, Africa including Egypt (Tackholm and Drar, 1954) and America; the 'Horn' plantains occur in the same areas but extend further east into Indonesia, the Philippines and the Pacific where, however, there is no evidence of the occurrence of variability. South India is therefore the only area in Asia where the group is at all variable and this is almost certainly its centre of origin. Secondary variability in America and Africa (especially in Zaire) is well developed.

Regarding the xylophone and in particular the research of A.M. Jones (1964, 1969), it is evident from the 1969 paper that he had extended his data on tuning characteristics and responded to his critics on the basis of the ethno-musicological evidence. His comparative analysis of organology and tuning was reviewed by J.D. Fage in the *Journal of African History*, Vol. 6: 413-5 (1965):

His achievement is to develop a powerful and convincing argument for the Indonesian and Southeast Asian origin of African xylophones and some other musical phenomena.

Fage then questions whether colonisation was the explanation, and this view of the plantain and xylophone evidence appears to be the one taken up by D.W. Phillipson (1977:207).

## On Evaluating Parallels between Madagascar and Africa

R.K. Kent, in his "Early Kingdoms of Madagascar" (1970), develops a concept of the Lakato, i.e., true outrigger culture and its diffusion-integration into Central Africa.

In the above work (p.192) he cites the research of Birkeli:

Taking into account dialectical variations, Birkeli found that several hundred Malagasy words had Bantu equivalents, with over 100 for Bisa alone, of which 55 corresponded with Sakalava words, 23 with Vazimba, 22 with Betsileo and 12 with Merina – many can hardly be said to be recent borrowings.

In regard to comparative work it should be borne in mind that the intrusion over a long period by paleo-Indonesians through a series of coastal-river trading expeditions would have made them a transient minority group as compared to the mass of mainly Bantu populations over a geographically extensive aquatic domain.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his lecture, 'The Archaeology of Cult' (at Sydney University on September 17, 1992), Professor C. Renfrew emphasised the difficulties and ambiguities in interpreting archaeological finds; a thesis long maintained by Professor L.R. Binford.

There is no doubt that the archaeological and other material concerning the Indonesian contact with the Afro-Malagasy region is open to widely varying interpretations. And thus the eclectic approach adopted in this enquiry will serve only to provide another hypothesis for a possible solution to the 'Indonesian Problem'.

The interpretation that the paleo-Indonesians may have acted as 'middle-men' in the development of coastal-river trading links with the African interior prior to their 'replacement/displacement' by the Swahili is, as far as I am aware, original. And from data which permits a reconstruction of the first Indonesians who contacted African populations in the Mozambique coast-Zambezi during the first millennium, it is a reasonable presumption that patterns of sea-shells, plantains, Southeast Asia foodplants and xylophones, flat-bar zithers are about all that one may expect to find from contact orientated to coastal-river trading expeditions.

Thus the absence of archaeological and linguistic evidence of Indonesians in the river networks (Phillipson, 1977:207) is not an *a priori* basis for rejecting the thesis of extensive penetration; for it is feasible that through acculturation their Austronesian characteristics were absorbed as Afro-Indonesian cultures evolved in a transient river-trade, without permanent settlement. From their transit of the Indian Ocean monsoon route the paleo-Indonesians were better equipped than any other foreign groups for deep penetration and trade on the African river system with the aquatic Bantu.

The role of Bantu fisherman in the exploration of the Zaire-Zambezi River is not well understood, but in view of the constraint imposed by the rain-forest on human movement, it is logical to suppose their contribution was significant in Zaire.

Consider some research conclusions on the excavations in the Upemba Rift sites (around a series of lakes on the upper Lualaba River). According to Pierre de Maret (*Current Anthropology*, 1979: 234):

The principal means of subsistence of the inhabitants of the Upemba rift was fishing. In the Kisalian period, numerous fish hooks and harpoons of all sizes were buried with the dead, and remains of fish were found inside the grave pots. A special kind of trilobate brazier used at the time is still employed by fishermen in certain areas of Central Africa for cooking done in the pirogues.

Trade with people of the Indian Ocean coastal region during the Classic Kisalian is demonstrated by the presence of cowrie shells (*Classic Kisalian 11th Century to the end of 14th*, p.233).

(From the distribution pattern of EIA sites, and the extent of their orientation to the Zambezi-Zaire River system one might question to what extent the Bantu fisherman may have pioneered and contributed to trade and movement from the Zaire to the Zambezi.)

According to Maret (1979:233):

The Iron Age originated in the 5th century AD with the Kamilambian tradition, which was then replaced by the Kisalian tradition around at the end of the 8th century. The Ancient Kisalian gave way to the Classic Kisalian in the 11th century.

Villages were established on the shores of the numerous lakes and streams of the Upemba depression. These sites have been in use since the Early Iron Age, with little or no lateral movement.

Although the use of iron and copper ~~in~~ the mining and manufacturing operations and trade on the upper Kafue and Lua ~~in~~ (near the Zaire-Zambezi River) are highlighted in the archaeological record over the second half of the first millennium, the trader-fishermen were a part of the EIA culture at that time.<sup>48</sup>

*The transmission of cowrie shells, plantain etc. remain important factors.*

From c.800 at a number of East African coastal sites, e.g., Kilwa, Manda and Chibuene, trader-fishermen were the earliest settlers, living a transient existence in fishing camps. Cowrie shells and evidence of a shell-disc bead industry were found with 'African' ceramics (N.H. Chittick, *Kilwa*, Volume 1: 29, 1974; G. Connah, *African Civilisation*, 1987: 169-170). *These may have been Afro-Indonesians.*

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48. S.Lwanga-Lunyiigo and J. Vansina, "The Bantu Speaking Peoples and their Expansion", *Unesco General History of Africa*, Volume 3: 154-5.

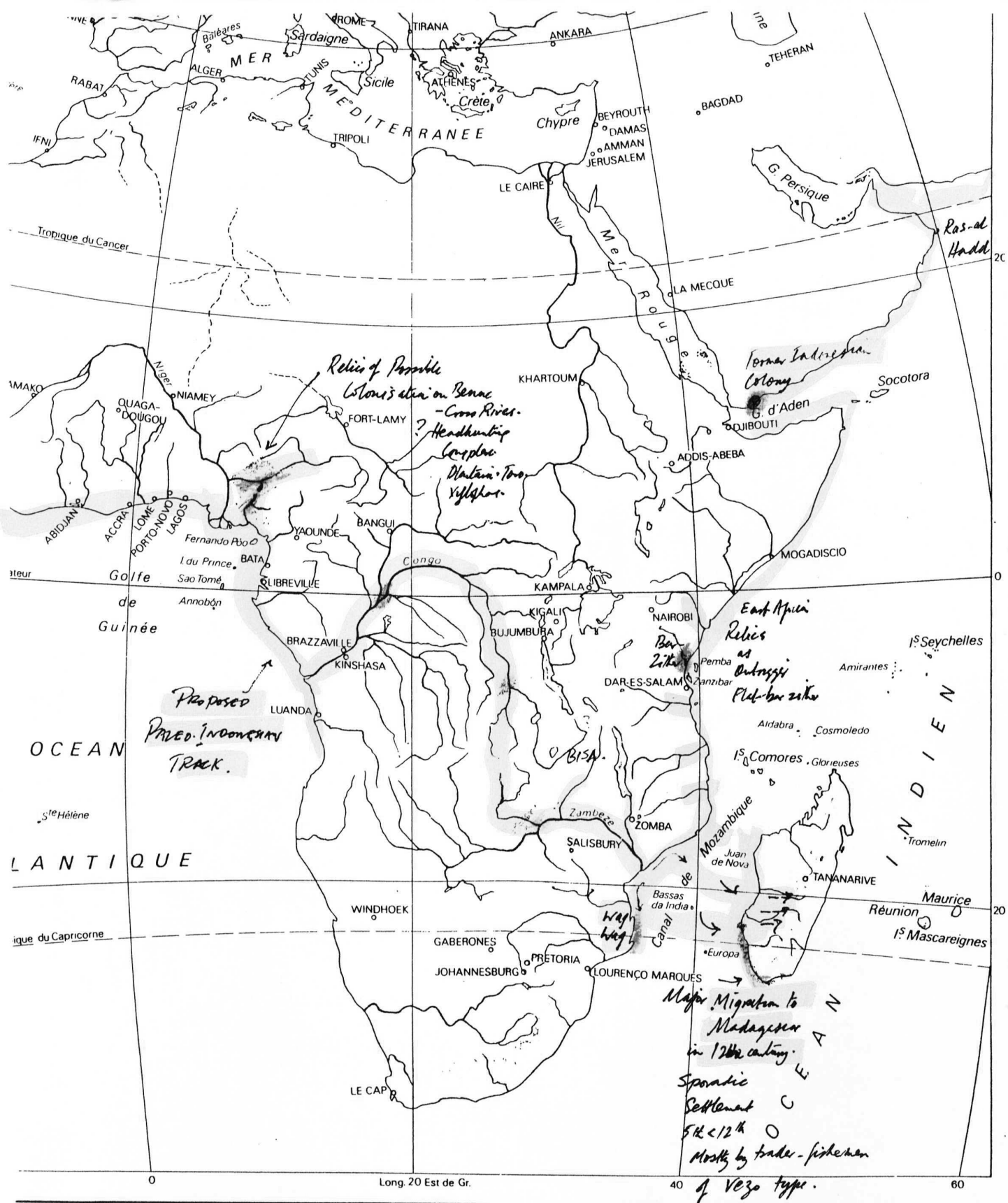


Figure 10.

SKETCH SHOWS SUGGESTED TRACK OF PALEO-INDONESIAN LONG-DISTANCE TRADING EXPEDITIONS INTO AFRICA FROM C. 5TH CENTURY TO C. 1200.

(from Sea-Shell, Xylophane, Plantain, Taro, Patterns)

Possible Colony.

A. Marij



The paleo-Indonesian contact and subsistence-exchange with the aquatic Bantu through long-distance coastal-river expeditions until c.1200 is the preferred Afro-Indonesian process.

Figure 10 indicates the maximum extent of this process as inferred from a consideration of the various patterns discussed in the text.