

[this piece was written as a chapter for Wim van Binsbergen's new book now in the press: *Sunda pre and protohistorical continuity between Asia and Africa*]

TOWARDS A GLOBAL MARITIME NETWORK FROM THE BRONZE AGE ONWARD

by Wim van Binsbergen (2020)

*to the memory of Kurt Tauchmann, exponent of the Sunda thesis,
who died on June 13, 2020, while this chapter was being written*

Introduction

After preoccupying myself for a quarter of a century with, among other things, transcontinental continuities such as became manifest in my fieldwork data from various locations in Africa (later also Asia) and in library research on the global history of geomantic divination systems, leopard-skin symbolism, and other aspects of comparative mythology, I have become convinced *that from the Early Bronze Age onward, a transcontinental global maritime network has emerged, with minute beginnings at first, but gradually, with the growth of technology and navigational experience, extending and reinforcing so as to finally encompass the entire globe.* The explanatory potential of such a model – provided it can be substantiated in the first place! – are obvious: amazing and persistent parallels (such as we have studied in Part II of the present book) between continents, in the fields of genetics, demography, comparative ethnography, comparative religion and comparative mythology, no longer need to be attributed to chance nor to the alleged converging working of the universal human mind, but can be understood on the basis of plain mechanisms of communication commensurate to the level of technology of the periods involved.

One major implication of the idea of such a network is that all transcontinental continuities in principle extend in all directions across the full width and height of the global.

The great advantage of a global network is that insights and connections understood at one end of the network, may – with sufficient care – be taken and applied to explain phenomena at a very different end of the network. For instance, the symbolic function and narrative connotations of a mythical wagtail bird surfacing in a Japanese cosmogonic myth (*Kojiki*, Philippi 1968; Chamberlain 1982) where the primal gods and siblings Izanami and Izanagi learn from the bird's movements the secret of human sexual intercourse) may in principle be invoked to shed light on a cosmogonic myth from South Central Africa in which, apparently out of the blue, the same bird appears (van Binsbergen 2010; Jacottet 1899-1901).

Another implication of this postulated world maritime system amounting to a *network* is that in principle, strictly unidirectional movements are to be considered exceptions, and movements in all directions the normal situation. The network allows for the percolation of narratives, ideas, objects, institutions, people, without enabling us to point out any very definite origin and definite destination. *In this light the analysis of Sunda effects in our preceding examination of East-West parallels needs to be reconsidered with great caution, and on many points its unidirectionality to be corrected.* If in Nigeria, Polynesia, and Ancient Greece, the mating of the two primal gods is thought to have prevented reality to be born

because the birth channel was obstructed, such a myth need not have travelled from A to B to C, but it may in the first place be considered the shared transcontinental mythical package derived from an unknown context to which all three attested cases may be indebted. We may exert great efforts to identify that unknown context, but it could be anywhere in space (as long as we stick to terrestrial space – Temple’s 1976 appeal to extraterrestrials must be rejected) and time, considering the fact that basic knowledge of human and mammal obstetrics is inevitably universal among Anatomically Modern Humans,

But can such a model of a global maritime network be substantiated at all?

The series of world maps presented here offer a graphic representation of this model, according to which a global maritime network began to establish itself in the Early Bronze Age, and gradually expanded and contracted and closed into itself so as to become a coherent system of transcontinental connections in subsequent millennia – with the last phase attained with European mercantile expansion in the Early Modern Age. A widespread scholarly contention (represented, among others, by Witzel 2012) is that preciously little is known with certainty about transregional and transcontinental contacts in prehistory; hence Witzel’s strategy, when unfolding his argument in his 2012 magnum opus on the *The Origins of the World’s Mythologies*, to dispense with the consideration of transcontinental continuities in their own right, ignore such equi-temporal horizontal transcontinental exchanges as no doubt – to judge by the data advanced in the present book – have taken place, and instead to give precedence to such genetic reconstruction as the retrieval of the human genome in recent decades has made possible. Needless to say that by doing so, Witzel had to ignore one of the fundamental principles of the anthropological discipline (to the effect that culture is emphatically not anchored in the genes but acquired and transmitted through a social communicative learning process, that may well transcend the – usually merely statistical, dynamic, imperceptible – boundaries of a local or regional gene pool. He also had to ignore (as he was bound to do, as essentially a *Geisteswissenschaftler* who has no personal, independent access to genetics and its present-day statistical techniques) the fact that recent molecular-biological reconstructions of the genetic history of Anatomically Modern Humans invariably involve such enormous error functions that any attempt to use such reconstructions as inputs in qualitative analyses such as comparative mythology, is bound to be based on sand, on mere reified analytical artefacts, handled by a sorcerer’s apprentice.

Despite Witzel’s ignoring of transcontinental continuities, rather the opposite is the case (also *cf.* Mair 2006). As I will demonstrate below, the relevant scholarly literature is extensive, but since the hypothesis of a gradually unfolding global maritime network is relatively new and counter-paradigmatic, relatively little of that literature – written with very different world models in mind, *e.g.* Eurocentric hegemonic expansion and domination – can be directly pressed into service to substantiate that model. As a result I cannot claim that the following discussion does effectively and totally underpin the validity of the model of a transcontinental maritime network evolving since the Early Bronze Age. All I can maintain is that the existing literature suggests such a model to be very plausible. This is really as far as I can go, and need to go. As a retired Africanist anthropologist *cum* intercultural philosopher I largely lack the knowledge, the facilities, the funding, and the institutional support to bring such an enormous, world-wide task of substantiation through library research to a good end – I gladly leave that task to others. In fact, part of that task has already been completed by others.¹

¹ *E.g.* in the work of Philippe Beaujard (2010); Beaujard & Fee 2005; Bodomo 2001. Ackermann *et al.* 2008 (on maritime trade routes 1st c CE, Africa / Asia, 2008: I, 24; 1st c. CE: I M24; 2nd mill BCE, Central Mediterranean, I M8)); Early Modern period, South East Asia and Japan (2008: III); Harley & Woodward, I-II) bring together a splendid overview of the global

Genetic indications

Shortly after the discovery of blood groups and Rhesus factors, and the mapping of other genetic markers, it was realised that these markers could be used to gauge transcontinental contacts. The Australian-born, South African-based physical anthropologist Raymond Dart (famous for his crucial discoveries in the field of the *Australopithecus* early hominids in Southern Africa) pioneered such transcontinental links using blood groups and other classic genetic markers. A quarter of a century ago, when – just before genetics made the paradigm shift towards molecular biology – the leading Italian geneticists Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* (1994) wrote what may be regarded as the swan's song of that classic genetic paradigm, the numerous global and continental maps they constructed may largely be read as evidence for the emerging transcontinental contacts – often overland but also maritime. This is the type of material which the British paediatrician / geneticist Stephen Oppenheimer used in his seminal formulation of the Sunda Hypothesis (1998). Especially various types of thalassaemias (hereditary anaemic conditions) play a large role in his argument. Meanwhile, as a mere gate crasher in genetics,² I have argued (van Binsbergen 2019b) that the evidence from thalassaemias is less than totally conclusive, but that other markers support Oppenheimer's findings nonetheless. Even the Greeks – so pivotal in the hegemonic construction of European cultural and racial superiority since Early Modern times; Bernal 1987 – have been demonstrated to have not a local but a transcontinental origin (Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* 2001) – the displacement of entire peoples was a time-honoured political strategy in the Ancient Near East, and part of the alleged Egyptian-Greek continuity which has been the bone of contention in the *Black Athena* debate, may have its roots in this strategy (another part may remain to be explained, as Bernal with limited plausibility, in terms of colonisation of the Aegean by Egyptians in Old Kingdom times).

Sunda: Indications from Comparative mythology and comparative ethnography

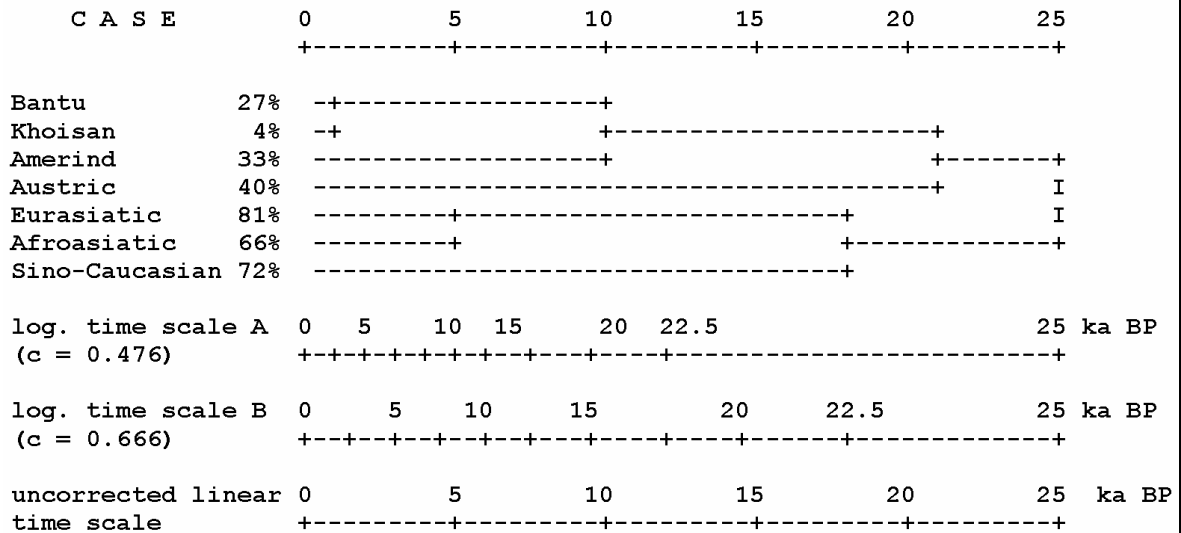
Much of the present book, and particularly the extensive discussion of East-West parallels in Part II, deals with the empirical substantiation, if any, of one particular kind of transcontinental contact: the Sunda Hypothesis (General, or in the specifically mythological Special variant). Oppenheimer, Dick-Read and Tauchmann (with Hutton 1946 as a major predecessor) have insisted on the relevance of Sunda demic or cultural diffusion, by maritime means, from the Indo-Pacific / Oceania to (among other destinations) the coasts of the Indian Ocean. The viewpoint is relatively new in the light on the much older, and better established,

history of cartography, indispensable for our present topic; equally entertaining is Lester 1011 / 2009. Africa's transcontinental connections are traced, e.g. in Mitchell 2005; van Binsbergen 2019. Moreover, entire libraries have been filled with travel reports, studies and commentaries relating to the European Age of Discovery, Early Modern times. I mention a mere selection: Amherst & Thomson 1901; Burney 1803; Prévost *et al.* 1746; Hakluyt 1905 and many dozens of publications by the Hakluyt Society; HARRISSE 1890, 1892; Murray 2001.

² As part of my undergraduate training in anthropology at Amsterdam University in the 1960s, I did a mere field – including genetics – with the physical anthropologist R.A.M. Bergman, a vocal advocate (like Lévi-Strauss, and Ashley Montagu) of the total abolition of the concept of race from the canon of science.

BANTU AS BOREAN (AN EXCERPT FROM VAN BINSBERGEN 2011b: 314 f, cf. in press (d)) My statistical outcomes do suggest an initial bifurcation of the *Borean-speaking linguistic, cultural and demographic stock, with

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



Van Binsbergen, *Cluster*, o.c. The logarithmic scale was experimentally determined so as to fit an estimated age for *Borean of 25 ka (proposed date of the split separating the African-Amerind-Austric macrophyla from the Eurasianic-Afroasiatic-Sino-Caucasian macrophyla), and, as a benchmark, the dissociation between Afroasiatic and Eurasianic at 12.5 ka BP (under the Natufian hypothesis – cf. Militarev, A.Y., 1996, 'Home for AfriAsian?: African or Asian: area linguistic arguments', in: C. Griefenow-Mewis & R.M. Voigt, eds., *Cushitic and Omotic Languages: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium Berlin, March 17-19, 1994*, Köln: Köppe, pp. 13-32; Militarev, A.Y., 2002, 'The prehistory of a dispersal: the Proto-AfriAsian (Afroasiatic) farming', in: Bellwood, P., & Renfrew, C., eds., *Examining the farming / language dispersal hypothesis*, Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research; Militarev, A.Y. & V.A. Shnirelman, 1988, 'The problem of proto-AfriAsian home and culture (an essay in linguoarchaeological reconstruction)', Paper presented at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, Zagreb; Turner II, Christy G., 2008, 'A dental anthropological hypothesis relating to the ethnogenesis, origin and antiquity of the Afro-Asiatic language family: Peopling of the EurafriAsian-South Asian triangle IV', in: Bengtson, John D., 2008, ed., *In hot pursuit of language in prehistory: Essays in the four fields of anthropology in honour of Harold Crane Fleming*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 17-23; and references cited there) according to which Afroasiatic emerged in Syro-Palestine in the context of the Mesolithic Natufian culture, c. 14.5 – 11.5 ka BP; and moreover assuming that the middle of the Natufian period marks the dissociation of Eurasianic and Afroasiatic). The relative length k of each scale unit of 2.5 ka is given by:

$$k = 1 / (a + b * \log(c * q + d)) = 1 / \log(0.476 * q)$$

where q is the inversed rank of that scale unit, counting from the origin. Other choices for the parameters (the constants: c, here 0.476; a and d, here 0; b, here 1; and r, here 10) would produce a similar logarithmic scale but with lesser or greater acceleration of rate of change towards more recent millennia. The present parameter choice (scale A) gives a greatly accelerated rate of change from the Mesolithic onward. Stipulating a very high rate of acceleration for the most recent millennia, scale A situates the node splitting Austric from the African / Amerind macrophyla at c. 24 ka BP; the node splitting the Eurasianic / Afroasiatic from the Sino-Caucasian macrophyla at c. 23 ka BP; and the node splitting African macrophyla from Amerind at c. 20 ka BP. These are excessively high dates, which can be brought down by assuming the split between Eurasianic and Afroasiatic to have occurred several ka later, and adjusting the parameters accordingly – as in scale B, with which I am more comfortable (c = 0.666).

Fig. 3. [original number] Dendrogram setting out the relative positions of the *Borean-associated linguistic macro-phyla in relation to Bantu and Khoisan

Perhaps there is a simple explanation for the bifurcation between the peripheral branch (African languages, Amerind and Austric) and the central branch (Eurasianic / Nostratic, Afroasiatic, and Sino-Caucasian) that strikingly emerges from Fig. 3. When we confront these statistical results with the reconstruction of the global history of mtDNA haplo groups (Forster 2004) the peripheral branch appears to derive from mtDNA type M, the central branch from type N – the linguistic bifurcation then appears to mainly reflect an initial segmentation, already in the Arabian peninsula as early as 60 ka BP, of the second sally 'Out of Africa'.

Table 1. Glottochronological analysis of the desintegration of *Borean

studies of East Africa as the scene of the transcontinentally-produced Swahili identity,³ in which Austric / Austronesian elements have seldom been recognised.⁴

In connection of the Indian Ocean, Oppenheimer stressed the impact on Asia (Indus Valley,⁵ Persian Gulf (where many scholars situate the Sumerians's⁶ mythical island of Dilmun, *e.g.* Bahrayn; Alster 1983)– and from there possibly to the Red Sea, Egypt, and Phoenicia⁷) and Dick-Read and

³ Chittick & Rotberg 1979; Middleton 1991; Horton & Middleton 2000; de Vere 1992; Horton 1986; Nurse & Spear 1985; Prins 1967; V erin 1989; and, as an unfortunately hegemonic statement slighting African initiative, Hromn ik 1981.

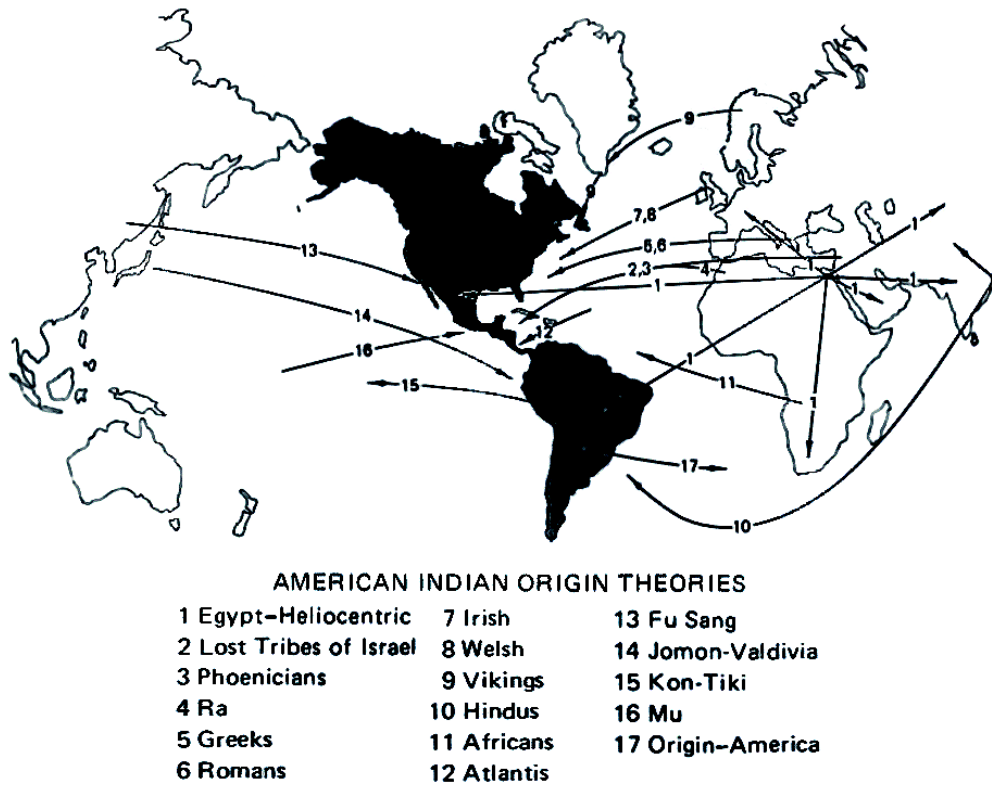
⁴ To the once Leiden professor of African linguistics, Thilo Schadeberg (1994) I owe the – apparently contentious – observation to the effect that in the East African Bantu language Mukuwa, as in Sotho / Tswana, peculiar features occur which he was inclined to interpret as evidence of a Madagascar substrate, *i.e.* as Austronesian < Austric. Much later I conducted my own statistical analyses of the reconstructed proto-lexicons of the world's macrophyla including Niger-Congo (> Bantu), which led me to recognition of a Peripheral Branch as one of the two Branches (the other being the Central or Continental Branch, with Eurasiatic, Afroasiatic and Sinocaucasian) into which the hypothetical *Borean language form desintegrated in Central to East Asia during the late Palaeolithic (*cf.* Fig. 4.5 in van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 77; van Binsbergen 2010b; van Binsbergen, in press (d)).

⁵ The rise of Early Dynastic Egypt (from c. 3100 BCE) occurred at least a millennium before the rise of the Indus civilisation; the latter was in relatively well documented maritime contact (Thapar 1983) with Sumer on the mouth of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. The impact of Sumer upon Early Dynastic Egypt, *e.g.* in terms of writing system and architecture is generally accepted (Rice 1990; Mark 1998). Various authorities (Cornelius 1957; Stricker 1963-1989, especially vol. V: Conclusion) have stressed the continuity between Ancient Egypt religion, and that of Hinduism especially among Dravidian-speakers now concentrated in South India. While rejecting the sweeping Heliocentric Hypothesis of Smith and Perry, there is certainly a case for the maritime transmission of Egyptian religion and other aspects of culture, to South Asia of the late 2nd and the 1st mill BCE. Religion tends to be a domain of culture where extreme cultural inertia tends to manifest itself – largely because of the formidable structures of institutional power and supernatural sanctioning surrounding and underpinning that domain. This makes it possible for Tamil-speaking Hindu religious practice in South India today to be still strikingly reminiscent– as I could personally witness during fieldwork in 1012 – of Ancient Egyptian religion as massively documented in ancient sources, and studied in numerous Egyptological monographs.

⁶ Sumer occupies a key position in Sunda discussions, since the Persian Gulf (at the mouth of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris) is supposed to be the site of the landfall of Sunda influence in West Asia (Oppenheimer 1998; Temple 1976). Nonetheless it is doubtful whether we may situate here the emergence of nautical skills that were to inspire the western Old World in subsequent millennia: as Tom Vosmer (1997) declared: 'no ancient wreck of a vessel indigenous to the western Indian Ocean has ever been found'. Forgotten for over two millennia, the Sumerian language, polity and culture were rediscovered by modern North Atlantic scholarship in the course of the 19th c. CE, despite the immense difficulty of early cuneiform writing the language has now been fully understood, but its comparative classification continues to present difficulties. Striking affinities between Sumerian and Austronesian were claimed by Rivet (1929; I owe this reference to Vaclav Bla zek); *cf.* Manansala (n.d. and 1995). This is an additional argument for a Sunda connection of Sumer. The big problem with all such affinities is that they need not be explained from horizontal borrowing across language (macro-)phyla at a given moment in history (at time T_1), but often may be explained more plausibly, under conditions of the desintegration of a hypothetical but reliably reconstructed parent language *Borean, as different reflexes from the same higher-level etymon having ended up in different phyla and different parts of the globe, in other words of two lexical forms, wide apart in space and time, having a common origin in the remote past, *i.e.* at T_0 ($T_1 \gg T_0$). Our linguistic long-range methodologies are not always powerful enough to reliably distinguish between two such situations. The same problematic of course rises when we believe to discern Austric lexical elements in Indo-European or Afroasiatic (Pedersen n.d., who applies Oppenheimer's Sunda Hypothesis in order to explain his claimed findings).

⁷ *Cf.* Curl 1885, whose argument however does not rise above the simple comparison of a few graphic signs. Much more serious and convincing is Harrison 1875 on Phoenician characters from Sumatra. Since much of the gold of Western Eurasia from the Early Bronze Age on derived from either Sumatra or Zimbabwe, the presence of West (and South) Asian prospectors and traders in Indonesia (and in South Central and Southern Africa, for that matter) need not surprise us. The Phoenicians became the main navigators of 1st mill. CE Western Eurasian Antiquity, serving a series of West Asian kings over the centuries, and their hypothetical Sunda connection may have acquired another role to play when the

Tauchmann especially the impact upon Africa including Madagascar (cf. Vérin 1975; Madagascar, Birkeli 1936 claims, may have been populated not directly from Indonesia, but indirectly via continental Africa). Dick-Read, and in his footsteps I myself, insisted that the Sunda influence was not limited to the Indian Ocean but spilled over into the Atlantic Ocean; there are some indications that from there it may even have penetrated to the Mediterranean, the North Sea, and the Baltic Sea. Many more cases could be made for other regions, and for other mechanisms of transmission than Sunda. But again, the counter-paradigmatic nature of this line of transcontinental research (often ridiculed as and ‘antiquarian’ form of ‘diffusionism’ (cf. Cazeau & Scott 1979: ch. 1) has ensured that few mainstream studies actually provide the empirical discussions so much needed on this point.



Source: Cazeau & Sott 1978: Fig. 1-1, p. 21

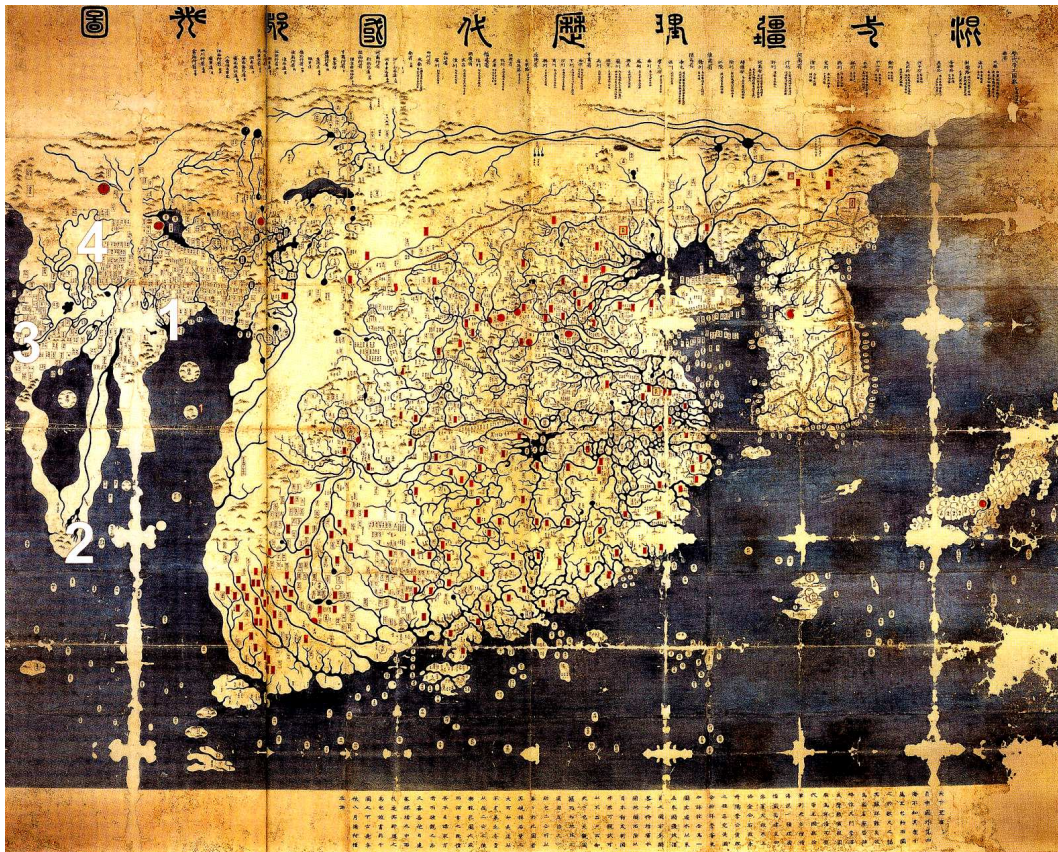
Fig. 1. American-origins theories: A network of alleged interhemispheric voyages in prehistoric times

Meanwhile we must not overlook the extent of uncontested Sunda influence eastward upon Oceania, where due to relatively recent immigration (mainly during the last handful of millennia) virtually the entire Pacific Ocean region shares the same substrate culture,

prominent philologist-Europeanist Waddell (1925) claims a Phoenician origin for the British – albeit in a study that has since generally been rejected (but see Bernal 1987, where the 18th c. CE idea of the Phoenician origin of the British is extensively discussed). Meanwhile the focus in British origin studies has shifted towards the Basques (Oppenheimer 2006) which may not be an entirely different cup of tea, considering that the now obsolete Strassburg-based Armenologist Karst was not only among the advocates of a Caucasian / Sinocaucasian-speaking origin of the Basques (Karst 1954; confirmed by recent molecular-biology genetics, Forster 2004) but also saw the Basques as involved, subsequently, in an eastbound return migration along the full axis of the Mediterranean in the Middle Bronze Age, so that Basque seafaring skills could be imparted to the people of the Levant – foremost the ancestors of the Phoenicians. In Karst’s work, Sunda themes mainly come to the fore in connection with the notorious, and largely imaginary, *Atlanteans*, popular among Theosophists and Anthroposophists around 1900 CE, and allegedly involved in a westbound civilising across the Old World. Had Karst had access to the Sunda thesis, then he might have solved his puzzle concerning the rise of nautical skills in the Ancient Mediterranean in a more recognisable (although still contentious) way.

religion, and linguistic sub-macrophyllum (Austronesian; cf. Bellwood 1991; Blust 1995).

In this field, zoogeography and phytogeography are useful branches of scholarship, testifying to the transcontinental transmission of domesticated cattle, chickens (Storey *et al.* 2007; Carter 1971), etc., and of such food plants as cloves, sesame, banana, taro, – sometimes overland but often overseas (Anonymous, Movements; Brand 1971; Carter 1950, 1964, 1971; Mindzie *et al.* 2001; Mundkur 1980 – the latter a contribution to a debate, protracted across decades, on the pre-Columbian presence of maize in Asia and Africa, cf. Jeffreys 1971, 1975; Mundkur 1980; Johannessen, & Parker 1989; Dick-Read 2005). The fact that the North American Ojibwa, near the Great Lakes, cultivate rice and cherish cowries (Landes 1957; Anonymous, ‘cowry’;⁸ Jeffreys 1938) – makes us wonder about their possible transcontinental connections. A related field is that of medical geography, where *e.g.* the hypothesis of a Polynesian origin for African elephantiasis (Laurence 1968) seems to contain a further corroboration of the Sunda Hypothesis. An unexpected application of the Sunda idea (*avant la lettre*) is from Chatterji (1945; cf. Hembram 1982; Manansala 1995, 2006), who claims to perceive a Polynesian basis for Indian civilisation and thought. Such a model would throw new light on the similarities (admittedly very slight) between the graphic systems of the Indus Valley and of Rapanui / Easter Island, discussed elsewhere in this book (de Hevesy 1938; the similarity was first pointed out by the controversial French-British Sinologist Terrien de Lacouperie c. 1880).



Source: van Binsbergen 2017: 363, with references

Fig. 2. The Korean Kangnido map (1402), with indication of the major regions for the historical use of divining bowls: (1) Mesopotamia; (2) Vanda (3); Bight of Benin; (4) Ancient Greece.

⁸ In the course of the 2nd mill. CE cowries were massively, and through European mercantile nautical intervention, imported from the Indian Ocean to West Africa, where – like in Ancient China, where the cowry sign 貝 still stands for ‘money’ – they constituted an important currency. Incidentally, shell fragments virtually indistinguishable from Oceanian shell money were found in the royal graves of Sumer – which Oppenheimer (1998) advanced as a sign of Sunda influence.

Gradually it dawned upon me that, regarded from their apparent ultimate destination (*e.g.* sub-Saharan Africa) it may not have been very relevant to distinguish between South Asia, South East Asian, and East Asian sources of transcontinental impact. As various surviving maps demonstrate eloquently, the West African coast was essentially known to Chinese cartographers (either directly, or from hearsay) from the early 2nd mill. CE on.



(a)

(b)

Sources, with thanks: (a) <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/173036810663880115/> (b) Sumerian shell money, at: <http://images.channeladvisor.com/Sell/SSProfiles/10053242/Images/sumeriashells.JPG...>

Fig. 3. Shell money (a) from the Salomon's Islands, Melanesia, Pacific; and (b) from Southern Mesopotamia, 3rd mill. BCE, as an indication of possible Sunda influence

Among the Manjacos of Guinea-Bissau, and among the Bamileke of the Western Grassfields, Cameroon, my fieldwork made me aware of extensive traces of likely Chinese cultural impact: irrigated rice cultivation and isolated words in the former case, the (Taoist!) key concepts of medical cosmology in the latter case (van Binsbergen 2017 and in press (c)). Even in the African interior, notably among the Nkoya people of Zambia with whom I have been very closely associated ever since the early 1970s, Chinese influence may be detected notably in the specifics of the Nkoya clan system (van Binsbergen 2012). By the same token, I suggest that we also apply the term *Sunda*, in a very broad sense, to the traces of South Asian influence in Africa, *e.g.* in the form of royal institutions (often of a Buddhist signature), royal orchestras (for which particularly a South East Asian detour seems to be preferred), ecstatic cults, and the localised veneration of Hindu gods (Wuaku 2013). Hornbill veneration (Waterson 1989), and (as discussed elsewhere in this book) head-hunting, may also be mentioned in this connection of Sunda continuities in sub-Saharan, especially West, Africa.

Besides Sunda

Apart from the Sunda context on which the present book focusses, there have been other large areas of the earth's surface allegedly involved in long-range intracontinental and transcontinental continuities, usually supported by maritime technology. The *circum-Pacific region*, ranging from the Indo-Pacific to the Bering Strait and then again South along the American west coast to Peru and Chili, and hinging on Beringia and the Aleutian Islands

where even modest nautical technologies and skills already may ensure transcontinental maritime continuity, has long been recognised as such a contiguous area.^{9, 10} Partly overlapping with the proposed Sunda region, one may expect interesting feed-back phenomena here, Sunda elements being carried far forward along the Pacific coasts, and vice-versa. The renowned polar ethnographer Birket-Smith even mentioned what struck him as a remarkable continuity between Eskimos and Melanesians. Elsewhere,¹¹ I have extensively discussed the so-called *Pelasgian realm*, a complex and extensive bundle of cultural and political traits, which, emerging in Neolithic West Asia, diffused and transformed in the Bronze Age Mediterranean (especially in Syro-Palestine and Egypt), and from there was transmitted, sporadically, and often by maritime means, in all four directions: Western and Northern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, West, Central, East, South and South-East Asia, and ultimately even into Oceania and the New World. When diffusion was still the standard paradigm of anthropology, in the early 20th c. CE, two Manchester researchers (the Australian anatomist cum Egyptologist Grafton Elliot Smith, and the British anthropologist William Perry) were of the opinion that Ancient Egypt, as the centre of the Ra^c sun cult and of gigantic architecture, by maritime means¹² had sought to disseminate its sun cult to other continents notably to the Pacific. This postulated '*heliocentric*' ('*sun-centred*') movement was thought to coincide more or less with the alleged dissemination of a *megalithic ideology*, whose alleged material signs were claimed to be recognisable all over the European and African Atlantic coast, in the interior of Africa, in West Asia, and along the Indian and Pacific Ocean coasts to India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Korea, and selected Oceanian islands. In present-day archaeology, the idea of one nearly global megalithic movement encompassing all remotely megalithic structures and practices is no longer the dominant paradigm (Rendrew 1967, 1976b, 1983; Miksic 1991). Which makes it all the more remarkable that two Dutch senior archaeologists, de Jonge and IJzereef, in 1996 came up with a totally new interpretation of signs often found at megalithic monuments: as nautical maps assisting Bronze Age (human) transcontinental navigators. However, the substantiation of this imaginative hypothesis is still far from convincing, and anyway it overlooks the most conspicuous megalithic markings: the *cup-ring marks or cupules*, whose arrangement may sometimes be reminiscent of stellar maps,¹³ but whose application are far too general and

⁹ Heine-Geldern 1937; Hentze 1933; Matsumura 2010; Needham & Lu 1985; Dart 1957; Ekholm 1964; Tezuka 1998; Leroi-Gourhan 1946; in this connection especially animal symbolism was studied by Kelley 1960).

¹⁰ Nonetheless, crossing from East Asia to the New World at Beringia, however well studied and found to have been a complex and repeated to-and-fro process (Tamm *et al.* 2007) is not the only thinkable transcontinental connection linking the Old en the New World. Stanford & Bradley 2004 have argued the case for 'The North Atlantic Ice-Edge Corridor', not necessarily involving navigation. Heyerdahl (1952, 1975) sought to reverse the equation and saw Native Americans in the Pacific. Cavalli-Sforza *et al.* 1994 believed they could endorse his hypothesis with genetic data; also *cf.* Hurler *et al.* 2003. Yet the comparative study of decoration styles, political leadership, boat construction, would lead one to suspect, in addition, a significant flow from the tropical (West) Pacific to North-West Coast America.

¹¹ van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011; van Binsbergen 2011b, and in press (a)

¹² Which in itself are well documented – we have numerous documents and temple reliefs representing ships and transcontinental expeditions *e.g.* to the land of Punt (often equated with Somalia).

¹³ There is an enormous literature on cupules, but even the most cursory discussion would be beyond our present scope. In van Binsbergen 2018: 277 *f.* I discuss, with careful attention to the complex astronomical realities involved, a Neanderthal (70 ka BP) arrangement of cupules from Mousterian France as a stellar map; this is to replace a fuller but more extensively referenced discussion (van Binsbergen with Lacroix, 2000).

apparently too decorative to impress us as nautical charts. A final context of transcontinental navigation may be found in Chinese navigation especially from the T'ang dynasty onward (after the 7th c. CE).

The Chinese invention of the lode compass reveals a keen interest in seafaring, and in fact Chinese ships in the Late Middle Age were the largest and most accomplished of their time world-wide (*cf.* Needham with Wang Ling & Lu Gwei Djen 1971). For a long time scholarship has been familiar with the figure of the Eunuch Admiral 鄭和 Zheng He who in the early 15th c. CE sailed the Chinese Sea and the Indian Ocean with a large fleet of huge ships, reaching Indonesia and Zanzibar, and bringing envoys and exotic mammals from the African coast back to China (Davidson 1959; Duyvendak 1939, 1949). The British submarine commander Gavin Menzies fell into the groove of the unmistakable chauvinistic trend among Chinese historians and archaeologists, by publishing a series of books claiming that Zheng He did not only visit Indonesia and East Asia, but on the basis of the Chinese's superior nautical and navigational skills managed to sail to all continents, including Oceania, the New World, and West Africa, allegedly leaving everywhere material and linguistic, perhaps even genetic, traces of the passing of his enormous fleet. It is not difficult to find fault with the overall argument and many details of Menzies's synthesis (Finlay 2004; van Binsbergen 2012b). Some of Menzies's more spectacular claims, such as the alleged presence of elephants in Meso and South America, and the invention of the sail, had already extensively been treated by earlier authors (*e.g.* Buckland 1885¹⁴; Henshaw 1880-1881; Putnam 1885). Yet as a sustained exercise in innovative counter-hegemonic (amateur) historiography (a characteristic reminiscent of Oppenheimer and Martin Bernal) Menzies's work deserves some sympathy.

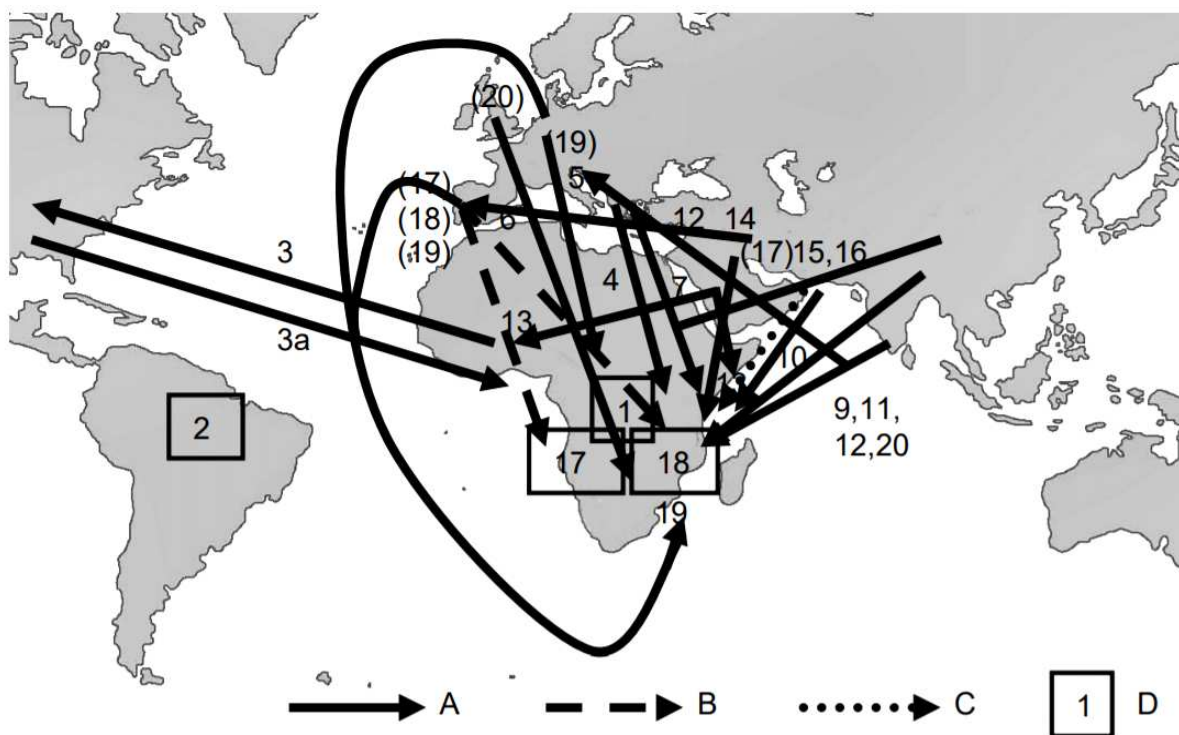
The silence of traditions, as a against the eloquence of artefacts and formal systems

Whenever we approach to study of transcontinental continuities, we are confronted with the following problem: *there is in most cultures a premium on autochthony; to be able to claim*

¹⁴ Buckland claimed (1886: 12) that one and the same lexical root is used for elephant all across the Pacific from Japan to Central America. Bearing the hallmarks of its time, such a claim – involving three different linguistic macrophyla, Eurasiatic (> Altaic > Japonic), Austric (> Austronesian), and Amerind – is inherently suspect. Yet it is not completely impossible: dozens of comparable (near-) global etymologies have been attested (Bengtson & Ruhlen 1994; van Binsbergen 2018: Appendix III, IV, pp. 531 *f.* presents additional global etymologies for 'speckledness / leopard' and for 'human / earth / bottom'; however, see the case against global etymologies: Picard 1998). Meanwhile the fact that the animal species in question is scarcely endemic in the vast circum-Pacific region claimed (it only occurs in South East Asia, and further West: India, sub-Saharan Africa) makes the claim so implausible that I have not even bothered to check it lexically. Even so, the more general claim of East Asian influence on Meso America has been with us as a leading idea ever since the writings of the pioneer British anthropologists Tylor on games and colour symbolism (Tylor 1865, 1880, 1882, 1896). Von Heine-Geldern, during the mid-20th c. CE a leading author in this field (in 1966 he generously discussed the links between Chinese and Maori art, New Zealand), authoritatively assessed the case for trans-Pacific influences on Meso America (von Heine-Geldern 1964, 1964-1967). More recently, Meggers (1975) claimed 'the trans-Pacific origin of Meso-american civilization'. A heated debate on such a flow of influence was waged in *Current Anthropology* (Cheek & Mundkur 1979). In his 1980 article, Mundkur came back to the question of elephants in Meso America. By and large, the evidence is surprisingly checkered, and we should not rush to conclusions. Of course, like the horse, the elephant / mammoth was once endemic in the New World during the Upper Pleistocene / the Upper Palaeolithic, but became extinct more than a handful millennia BP, so that their survival in living Native American memory is rather unlikely.

local origins has often higher status than to claim immigrant descent, and as a result memories of alien origin tend to be suppressed from consciousness – often they are enshrined in oblique myths which need to be methodically and intersubjectively decoded so as to spill their historical contents if any. Foreign origins therefore are often suppressed or forgotten. By contrast, some special categories of the population (e.g. priests, healers) may thrive on emphasising their strangerhood. Now, whereas human oral testimonies are totally dependent upon the capricious mechanisms of transmission, retention and revision, material artefacts and formal systems that as integrated and functioning wholes are likely to retain their foreign traits more or less intact, are much easier to recognise als non-local, and , as the case may be, as transcontinental. Throughout the Old World, astronomies, astrologies, divinatory systems, writing systems, other graphic signs of recording and transmission, decorative patterns, myths¹⁵ and fairy tales, tend to display two features which make them particularly useful as testimonies of transcontinental contacts:

- (a) an amazing inertia in withstanding the universal pressures towards (local) loss of (translocal) meaning, and towards cultural drift
- (b) the capability of transgressing, more or less intact and still functioning, boundaries of a cultural, linguistic, class, religious or political nature.



A: proposed direction of borrowing; B: only partial borrowing; C: conjectural; D: local motif; numbering as in Table 1

Source: van Binsbergen 2011a (q.v. for the Table 1 to which reference is made), on the basis of Werner 1968 / 1933.

Fig. 4. Transcontinental trajectories of selected African stories

¹⁵ The transcontinental transmission of myths and other narratives is a specialist field in its own right, and one extensively covered in the present book especially in connection with East-West parallels. Yet the leading scholar in today's New Comparative Mythology, the German-born Harvard Sanskritist Michael Witzel, denies the importance of transcontinentality in this connection. Others in his circle, e.g. Berezkin and myself, have often argued the opposite. Cf. Thompson. 1919; Berezkin 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006; van Binsbergen 2010, 2011a.

Much of the argument on transcontinental continuities has to be based on the observation of artefacts (including downright works of art) and of formal systems, and they spell out what the local historical consciousness cannot elucidate for us anymore. Hence much of the argument on transcontinental continuity, may be based on analyses in the field of art history, e.g. the Indo-Pacific bead;¹⁶ the convention of the squatting figure (Lommel 1976, as an indication of Sunda impact); the bicephalous image (or even forked branch), as an indication of Eurasian / American links (Abrahamian *et al.* 1985); representations of the dragon as indicative of old World – North American continuities (Barbeau 1952; Beyer 1908; Smith 1919); and the lunar motifs indicative of circum-Pacific continuities (von Heine Geldern 1937, 1964, 1964-1967, 1966; Hentze 1933). Weapons and musical instruments are particularly interesting as indications of transcontinental maritime contacts, for these artefacts – in ways that do not apply to works of art, where the flight of imagination may be limitless – have to operate within very narrow practical, mechanical and cultural constraints, and therefore tend to be culturally inert and rather impervious for localistion transformation over wide distances of space and time. In the course of the present book's argument, musical instruments have served as cases in point (Prologue, with attending refs, including Jones 1971). The case of the throwing wood / boomerang is likewise discussed in another chapter; for the blow gun and its transcontinental ramifications, see Jett 1991; also Oppenheimer 1998 touches on this topic. From a viewpoint of diffusion studies, the analysis of such an apparently abstruse topic as fish poisons has also been instructive though controversial (Quigley 1956). Another example of a tell-tale weapon is the Melanesian hand-held bow, whose global distribution and affinities were studied by the once leading German anthropologist Graebner (1909), with surprising results: these affinities turn out to extend to West and Central Africa, part of the New World, the Balkan and the North Sea region – but not to Egypt; with our idea of Sunda expansion in mind, we would expect a totally different pattern, and the likely conclusion is that this type of bow was not diffused transcontinentally by any maritime Sunda effect but that the affinities (if they are not mere spurious artefacts of method) go back much further in prehistory, to demic diffusion patterns in the Upper Palaeolithic, when (see Table 1 above) Central to East Asia was the scene of *Borean desintegrating into a Peripheral Branch ultimately ending up in the New World (Amerind), Africa (African languages), and South East Asia / Oceania (Austriac > Austronesian). Such connections are not only to be gauged from the lexical residues / reflexes detectable in reconstructed proto-forms of the present-day world's macrophyla. Elsewhere in this book, particularly in the discussion of East-West parallels in the mythological and ethnographic field, we have encountered several tell-tale indications of cultural continuities that are apparently peculiar to the speakers of the Peripheral Branch as one of the two branches into which *Borean has desintegration over 20 ka BP. The work of C. Schuster (1951) on 'joint-marks' shows that this iconographic / decorative convention is distributed exactly as the macrophyla of the Peripheral Branch, hence suggests this motif to have been a substrate in Austriac-, Amerind-, and African-languages-speakers since the Upper Palaeolithic. A similar example that comes to mind is that of the *lightning bird* – a motif attested in both sub-Saharan Africa and North America (Thurber & Thurber 1959; Schlosser 1972, 1992). Even wider global distributions, suggestive of the entire scope of the *Borean realm, appear to be associated with the *swastika* (Wilson 1973 / 1896; needless to say that the 20th c. CE appropriation of this very ancient symbol by the German Nazis has made it unfit now for objective research), the spindle

¹⁶ Wood 2011; Abraham & Christie 2010.; Thornton 2019; van der Sleen 1958; however, the bead trade to Southern Africa from the Mediterranean should not be overlooked, cf. Saitowitz & Reid 1996.

whorl (formally similar in shape, and partly coinciding with the swastika), and the symbolism of *speckledness* (van Binsbergen 2004, 2018: 531 *f.*, and in press (b)).

Across a distance of thousands of kms, artefacts (both on Rapanui / Easter island and in Chilean graves) indicate the extent of prehistoric nautical contact in the Pacific (Aichel 1925; Heyerdahl 1975). When the lotus is venerated, not only in Ancient Egypt and in Buddhist South and South East Asia, but also during male puberty rites at the Salomons Islands (Blackwood 1935; von Heine-Geldern 1937); or when remarkable Indo-Pacific / Oceanian features appear in the centre of the African continent (such as head-hunting and the elongated headdress of the Ila; or the very ethnic name Tonga, of multiple use in South Central Africa; Mitchel 1964) – we may reach for the kill-sports of coincidence or the converging workings of the human mind – but as an historically and intellectually more attractive explanation, transcontinental diffusion cannot be ruled out offhand.

The extent to which an adversary paradigm may blind us for obvious continuities in the transcontinental domain, may be clear from Franz Boas's – the leading North American / German anthropologist of his generation – comparative treatment of North American stories concerning the origin of death. This is one of the principal, and probably one of the oldest, African mythical themes (Berezkin 2006), with Sunda parallels which Oppenheimer (1998) has argued extensively in the wake of Frazer 1918 – but the idea of conducting myth comparison between continents was apparently so anathema to Boas that he did not even consider the possibility.

From Early Modern times on, the history of the Americas has largely been one of transcontinental immigration combined with the subjugation and extermination of local populations and their cultures. In such a context one would expect studies of maritime transcontinentality to be a well-established local industry – but perhaps it was again the shameful connotations of the admission of immigrant status which thwarted such an industry. Instead, the insistence on this topic has largely remained a counter-paradigmatic minority expression among American scholars. Claims of trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic continuities have been numerous¹⁷ but they have failed to affirm themselves as mainstream, and have occasionally been combated viciously (*e.g.* Ortiz de Montellano, 2000; Ortiz de Montellano, *et al.* 1997).

From the mid-20th c. CE on, the rise of Afrocentrism as a rallying point for counter-mainstream Black scholars gave rise to new claims of maritime transcontinentality. Van Sertima¹⁸ contested the conventional wisdom that Columbus discovered the New World in 1492 CE, and instead edited arguments (to which also left-wing White researchers such as Basil Davidson and Martin Gardiner Bernal contributed) to the effect that both in Europe and in the Americas the African demographic

¹⁷ *e.g.* Hittite influence: Campbell 1881; Phoenician: Gordon 1968 and Nuttall 1909, who found evidence of major Phoenician cultural traits including purple industry on the Pacific coast of Mexico; Ross 1968; Assyrian: Kadman 2015; Viking (Ingstad 1964, 1969; Skelton *et al.* 1971); Welsh (Burder 1922); West African: (Van Sertima 1985; Wiener 1919-1922. Slight suggestions of North European nautical influence (the theme of the 'bearded White man') upon Peru also formed one of the initial inspirations of Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki Hypothesis (Heyerdahl 1952; Melander 2020). Also see Fig. 1 above, after Cazeau & Scott 1979. Many studies have claimed continuity between individual Amerind languages and phyla or individual languages of the Old World, *e.g.* Californian and Uralic (von Sadvovszky 1996); Jett 2002 cites many more specific examples of this phenomenon, with references.

¹⁸ van Sertima 1976, 1985; for converging, non-Afrocentrist views *cf.* Gilmore & McElroy 1998; Jett 1983; Riley *et al.* 2014; Sorenson & Johannessen 2004 / 2006.

and cultural element had been considerable, and decisive. The American educationalist Clyde Winters (1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1988) advanced controversial but peer-reviewed linguistics and epigraphical arguments claiming a West African (Manding) impact upon Nubia (present-day Northern Sudan), the Dravidian-speaking world of South Asia, China, and Japan – all implying massive maritime transcontinentality.

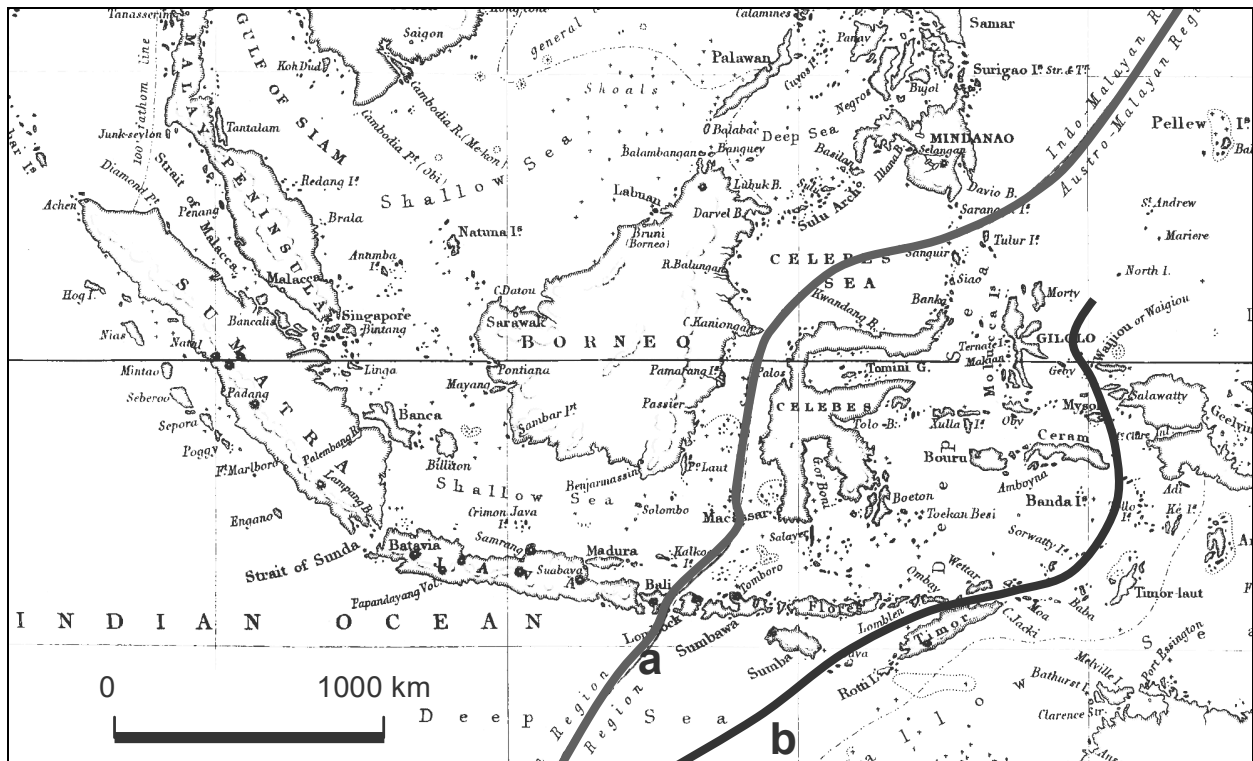
The evidence from world religions; forced transcontinental migration in the context of slavery

For the two or three most recent millennia, archaeology and documentary historiography has advanced numerous instances of linguistic, cultural, and religious evidence of transcontinental navigation and the ensuing networks. Buddhism spread to Sri Lanka (an island), Indonesia, China, and Japan largely by maritime means. The same holds true for Christianity, not only in regard of the same Asian regions, but especially in regard of Africa and the New World. By the same token, Islam spread to the Iberian peninsula in medieval times, in South East Asia, and to a more limited extent to East and Southern Africa, largely by maritime means. Recent research found that the Berbers and agriculture may have reached the Maghrib by maritime means. Boivin *et al.* 2010 have looked at the history of seafaring around the Arabian peninsula; *cf.* Haurani 1951. The institution of the pilgrimage to Mecca as one of the five pillars of Islam brought millions to transcontinental travel, where overland routes (*e.g.* from Benin and Sokoto) tended to be linked to maritime routes (*e.g.* across the Red Sea). The travels of Ibn Battuta (first half 14th c. CE; Dunn 2012) show us the width and depth of these intercontinental nautical contacts in his time. The rise of an intensive commercial and cultural field of interaction across the full width of the Indian Ocean (Patnaik 2003; Ray 2000; Mookerji 1912; Reade 1996) brought not only manufactured products such as luxury ceramics and beads to African coasts in exchange for gold, cattle, slaves, but also political, musical, cosmological systems such as a Hinduist, Buddhist and Taoist inspiration (van Binsbergen 2017: 361-412, ecstatic healing cults (in East and Central Africa, the South Asian background of such cults has become increasingly manifest (*e.g.* Bulmer 1894; Alpers 1984; van Binsbergen 2003), divination systems (Nettleton 2000; van Binsbergen 2012a; Davis 1955, games (van Binsbergen 1997 / 2011, 2012c), musical instruments and their cognitive frameworks, today somewhat difficult to retrieve from the overlays of subsequently African transformative localisations, yet increasingly manifest (van Binsbergen 2019). Forced transcontinental migration in the context of slavery (*e.g.* for the Indian Ocean and China,¹⁹ created the tragic conditions for an enormous volume of population, cultural, religious (in the form of ancient African religious forms subsequently transformed and revitalised in the New World), and linguistic movement across the Atlantic Ocean, and to a more limited extent across the Indian Ocean, all the way to India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines (Aiyar 1934-1935; Asuncion 1964), and China. Forced transcontinental migration often goes hand in hand with the spread of conspicuous somatic characteristics: relatively high or low skin pigmentation, facial architecture of nose and eyes, lank-haired, curly and dotted hair structure. Initially, such somatic characteristics were selectively privileged as a result of regional climatic conditions (a desert, tropical, mountaineous, maritime, *etc.* environment), but once established, they came to function as a socially recognised marker of gene-pool in-group

¹⁹ *Cf.* de Silva Jayasuriya & Angenot, 2017; de Silva Jayasuriya 2019; Mann 2012; Wilensky 2002; Harris 1971; Irwin 1977 (according to whom the abundance of Black slaves in China led to the rise of a peculiar literary genre of picaresque Black heroes); Gerbeau 1978. The large literature on the trans-Atlantic slave trade is sufficiently accessible, *cf.* Davidson 1980; Lovejoy 1982; Rawley & Behrendt 2005; Curtin 1972; Eltis & Richardson 2008; Postma 1990; Uya 2007.

belonging, hence (after displacement across substantial distances) as a sign of alienness in the eyes of locals. Since much social exclusion and discrimination has, since times immemorial,²⁰ attached to such characteristics, they are now rightly being recognised as being conducive to racist hatred and violence. Therefore the anti-hegemonic scholar cannot simply take such somatic characteristics for granted as legitimate inputs in scientific research; yet it is unmistakable that they are the tell-tale signs of past transcontinental displacement, often by maritime means.

The Middle Palaeolithic evidence for human sea-faring



Source: van Binsbergen 2019: 36, Fig. 1.2; after Wallace 1863; at no point in human history the Sahul line had less than 70 kms of open sea, which necessitated seafaring in order to populate New Guinea and Australia by c. 60 ka BP

Fig. 5. The Wallace line (a) and the Sahul line (b)

²⁰ 'Black' people have been reported, in Ancient Western Eurasia, from Ireland to Colchis (the Caucasus; Pindar, *Pythian Ode*; Anonymous, *Abkhazians...*; Jairazbhoy 1985). Elsewhere (van Binsbergen 2018: 348n, in a section entitled '#50. High Skin Pigmentation In Western Eurasian Prehistory: An Afrocentrist Perspective') I state my contention, with some supporting arguments, to the effect that the populations of Western Eurasia were originally far more highly pigmented, and that the Early Modern (pre-20th-c.-CE globalisation) situation world-wide, with highly pigmented populations being confined to the Southern and Eastern fringes of the Old World (sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Andaman Islands, New Guinea, Australia, Melanesia) was the result of actual, deliberate exclusion, expulsion and genocide on the part of less pigmented population groups, not just since Early Modern times (as myopic optimists like the Sinologist / self-styled Ancient Historian Martin Bernal Gardiner (1987, vol. I) and the African American physical anthropologist Snowdon (1970, 1989) would have it), but since Early Neolithic times. Most unfortunately, ethnic colour blindness is clearly not the default feature of the mind and perception of Anatomically Modern Humans, but a painfully, inconsistently achieved and often failing condition only attained among privileged pockets of the world's population during the last three millennia. Whenever a local society has more than the minimum level of somatic heterogeneity and complexity, a 'somatic normative image' (Hoetink 1967) tends to develop reflecting the bodily ideal of what is, or was in the recent past, its most privileged segments.

In addition to the Sunda complex, a number of recognisable situations clearly stand out as unmistakable evidence of transcontinental navigation. In the first place, human navigation has been found to go back to at least the Middle Palaeolithic.²¹ At no point during the history of Anatomically Modern Humans (with a time depth of 200 ka), or even during the history of Humans in general (with a time depth of some 4,000 ka) has there been less than 70 kms of open sea to cross between South East Asia and its former sub-continental extension all the way to Sumba, on the one hand, and Flores, Timor, Australia, and New Guinea on the other (Birdsell 1977). If this divide (close to the famous zoogeographical Wallace line between Bali and Lombok; cf. Jones 1989) was crossed c. 60 ka BP (as is archaeologically undeniable; Roberts *et al.* 1993) the Anatomically Modern Humans at the time must have had navigation at their disposal – not long after their sally out of the African continent in which their genes and cultural achievements had evolved and circulated since 200 BP.

Whether such sea voyagers were undertaken deliberately were merely accidental remains a moot point – Andrew Sharp’s defence of the latter view is still contested (Golson 1972). Anyway, the solid finding of undeniable sailing across the Flores trough must be taken as the starting point for any argument concerning the growth of navigation and the emergence of closing of maritime networks in subsequent millennia. Archaeological attestations are much more recent: Mesopotamia and Kuwait, c. 7000 BCE,²² boat depictions on cylinder seals; a precocious plank boat in Abydos, Early Dynastic Egypt (Ward 2006). Notwithstanding the mythical claims which we have seen above for Daedalos (Minoan Crete / Ancient Greece) and for the Polynesian / Hawaiian culture hero Pakaá, Barnett (1958) believed that the sail was invented in the Nile Valley, and points at the Cheops boat in the Sphinx temple.²³ Also cf. the Pesse dug-out boat from the Netherlands Mesolithic (early 8th mill BCE; Anonymous, Pesse canoe). Early depictions of ships abound throughout prehistory, from Scandinavia to Southeast Asia (Ballard 2004); even in Bronze-Age, land-locked Central Europe they constitute a conspicuous theme (for examples cf. Goto 2005; van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 356 f., Fig. 28.5), suggestive of an ancient boat cult and perhaps – by a very long shot – of Sunda influence.

²¹ Bednarik [year] , 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 87c, 1999a, 1999b, 2000b; cf. Finney 1982; Hambruch 1908; McGrail 1991.

²² Administration, n.d. [2007] , Boats of Early Mesopotamia, at: <http://historyhuntersinternational.org/index.php?page=153>. Strasser declared in 1996:

‘It has been received wisdom for nearly half a century that 6th-millennium BP models, discovered at Eridu in southern Mesopotamia, are the earliest direct evidence for sailing-boats. [present-day displays and depictions of the models are usually artificially completed so as to enhance this impression – WvB] Yet certain features of the models, and their contexts, identify them instead as spinning bowls used by weavers.’

²³ Also cf. Jenkins n.d.; Kadry 1986; O’Connor 1995. Is the sacred nature of the boat in a culture – such as Early Dynastic Egypt – scarcely depending yet on international seafaring an indication of the foundational impact of navigators, in other words of Sunda presence? Such sacrality is certainly not a sufficient condition for this question to be answered affirmatively, but in combination with a few other indicators a firmer case begins to shape up: the plausible Austric etymologies of key Egyptian names such as Neith, Min / Menes, and Osiris; the firmly established Sumerian influence on Early Dynastic Egypt; the extensive Pelasgian element which plausibly may be considered to be continuous with Sunda; the sun cult which, initially inconspicuous, (Kaplony 1963) gained great ascendancy from the 5th Dynasty on – so that in fact the vector posed by Perry and Smith (from Egypt to Sunda) may have to be reversed: from Sunda to Egypt.

Prehistoric growth of the transcontinental maritime network

Already during the Neolithic exchanges of domesticated mammals (bovines, especially) and food crops (*e.g.* sesame) were the archaeologically attested objects of transcontinental maritime trade between South Asia and Africa (Rowlands 2019; Darlington 1969). It is in this period²⁴ that, somewhat enigmatically as if out of the blue, maritime trade begins to be perceptible on the Western coast of the Black Sea, and that the first major shipping harbours on the Mediterranean emerged: Joppe in Syro-Palestine, and Corinth on the Aegean. In prehistoric Jericho, one of the oldest settlements of the world, Kenyon (1957) found an approach to skulls (separated from the bodies, second burial practices) reminiscent – at least, in my own eyes – of Sunda patterns; as well as evidence of a substrate population who were dwelling in round houses like those in PPNB Anatolia, where indications (at Göbekli Tepe) of elongation of the labia suggest proto-Bantu affinities (*cf.* van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 86; Hawkes with Trump 1977). Scholars like Joseph Karst have often wondered what instigated this rise of maritime elements in the Ancient Mediterranean, and whereas he laid much stress on the hypothetical factor of a Basque nautical back-migration eastward along the axis of the Mediterranean, I think that precisely in this case the Sunda hypothesis could have been pressed into service.

In the Early Bronze Age a transcontinental network begins to shape up, *e.g.* between the Indus Valley and the Persian Gulf, and between Egypt, the Aegean, and the whole of the Central and Eastern Mediterranean. The Sea Peoples's Episode, which brought the Hittite Empire down and permanently damaged the Egyptian Empire, testifies to the enormous importance seafaring had taken on in the course of the Bronze Age; the Trojan war – regardless of its historic or mythical status²⁵ – brings out the same. In subsequent centuries, the Aegean and surroundings would be plagued by a variety of marauding / pirating peoples in succession (Leleges, Carians, Teucrians, Philoistine, Cappadocians, Cretans, whose linguistic and ethnic status is not always clear and whose possible Sunda associations remain to be investigated. By the same time, navigation from India and China begins to develop, and before long the two processes meet --- as is clear from the enormous volume of Greek and Roman trade on the Indian Ocean (borne out by shipping handbooks (*e.g.* Casson 1989, 1991; Miller 1839; Picard 1982; Schoff 1912); and by Roman coins widely dispersed all over the Indian Ocean region), the consumption of Chinese trade goods (especially silk and spices; Innes Miller 1969; McLaughlin 2010; Warmington 1974 / 1928) by the Roman elite of the early Imperial period, *etc.* After the Sea Peoples Episode (ca. 1300 BCE) the Phoenicians, with a traditional home in the Persian Gulf, increasingly dominate the Mediterranean navigation and commerce, ramifying all the way to the British Isles and Cameroon, and circumnavigating Africa; soon they founded Carthage (Picard 1982), which half a millennia later has to succumb to Roman expansion. After the Greek and Roman navigation handbooks, around the year 1000 CE we see nautical descriptions of the Indian Ocean and the Chinese Sea in Arabic and Chinese, as a sign of intensive maritime contact

²⁴ 5th mill. BCE; Ivanova 2012; Perlès 1979 goes back all the way to the earliest Holocene in considering Mediterranean navigation; much later, the narratives of the exploits of Odysseus (Homer, *Odyssey*) and of the Argonauts (Apollonius Rhodius 1912) celebrate Bronze Age navigation in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea

²⁵ In van Binsbergen & Woudhuizen 2011: 91 *f.* the case is presented for a non-historical, mythical reading of the story of the Trojan War.

(Ahmad 1989; Chau Ju-Kua 1911). But more than half a millennium earlier the Chinese 法顯 Fa Hsien (having arrived in India on foot) had already sailed back from to China (via Ceylon) with a load of precious Buddhist literature (Giles 1923).

Conclusion

I concede that with this densely referenced overview, I have not yet fully accomplished the task – rather impossible even for a nautical historical, which I am certainly not – of proving beyond doubt the existence and growth of a global maritime network ever since the Early Bronze Age. However, the plausibility of such a hypothesis has at least been demonstrated, and that is all we need for our present discussion of the Sunda Hypothesis especially when applied to the many case of East West parallels discussed in Part II of this book.

In the process we have learned a few worthwhile lessons:

- the narrow research horizons in space and time that were the inevitable consequences of the rise of prolonged participatory fieldwork in the first decades of the 20th c. CE as the main anthropological technique of data collection, have made us close our eyes for *long-range effects in cultural history, both in space and in time*
- the unmistakable empirical reality of such long-range effects reminds us that (proto-) globalisation has always been the inevitable consequence of Anatomically Modern Humans's tendency (and not only theirs!) to spatial displacement across the Earth's spherical surface, finite but endless, so closed into itself. From the last quarter of the 1900s, we have seen a timely spate of globalisation studies²⁶ – which among other advantages have meant a qualified rehabilitation of diffusion at least in such fields as the spread and acceptance of commodities and technological innovations. It is high time we realise that, while the globalisation based on the technological reduction of the costs of space and time to practically zero may be a postmodern phenomenon, *proto-globalisation has been of all times*.
- the vision of extreme fragmentation of the world's cultures, languages, genes, which has been a political tool for propping up delusions of White, European superiority during the Mercantile and Colonial Eras, needs to be supplanted by *a vision of unbounded connectedness, continuity, and the fundamental unity of humankind* (van Binsbergen 1915, 2020)

²⁶ Harking back to topics that, to the untutored, myopic, Eurocentric, or juvenile postmodern mind, may have a ring of antiquarianism, such as nautical history, the study of games, head-hunting, my work on transcontinentality of which the present argument is a new instalment, has sprung directly from my central preoccupation with modern globalisation studies. With the Dutch anthropologist Peter Geschiere I initiated, in the early 1990s, a generously funded research project on Globalisation and the Construction of Communal Identities (Netherlands Research Foundation NWO / Netherlands Foundation for Tropical Research WOTRO), which constituted a network comprising dozens of senior and junior researchers both in the Netherlands, in Europe, and transcontinentally. The project ran throughout the 1990s and was administered, in addition to ourselves, by Bonno Thoden van Velzen and Peter van der Veer. At the African Studies Centre, Leiden, one wing of this network was formed by the Theme Group on Globalisation under my direction. The result was a fair number of publications that reflect the international growth of globalisation studies (as well as, I am afraid, their ephemeral and theoretically somewhat isolated and barren nature); cf. van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005; van Binsbergen & van Dijk 1999; Fardon *et al.* 1999; van Binsbergen 1998 / 2015.

- The Oppenheimer–Dick-Read–Tauchmann Sunda Hypothesis (Special, in regard of *Genesis* mythology; and General, in regard of everything else) is a useful reminder of the above and may be invoked to help explain a number transcontinental continuities, but it *needs to be applied with reticence* since many of the genetic, linguistic and cultural (including religious) continuities among Anatomically Modern Humans are much older than Sunda and stem from a dynamics (for instance the unfolding of global mythology; Witzel 2012; van Binsbergen 2006) that is much more comprehensive than the flooding of Sundaland in the Early Holocene.
- The great weakness of the diffusion paradigm that ruled early anthropology a century ago, was that it had no theory of culture, and therefore could not take into account the local embedding of travelling cultural items, both at their origin and at their destination, and their localising transformation at the latter. Today we have a fairly adequate theory of culture, but it tends to make us close our eyes for *what is not yet or no longer embedded and integrated, and still bears the marks of long-range displacement and virtualisation in space and time* (cf. van Binsbergen 1997b / 2015, 1998).
- Another weakness of the old diffusion paradigm was its *tacit assumption of one-way continuities*: if trait Q at Z can be argued to have travelled from Y to Z, any effect of Z upon Y tends to be ignored. However, the idea of a global maritime network is that once a nautical trajectory has been sailed and has served as a means of transcontinental transmission, it is likely that it will also begin to serve for traffic of people, objects and ideas in the opposite direction, so that soon the direction of flows becomes blurred, indistinguishable, and irrelevant. One of the most intriguing and most difficult to dismiss ideas of the Theosophist and Anthroposophists (Helena Blavatsky, Rudolph Steiner etc.) who dreamed of a new world model even through around them North Atlantic colonialism and imperialism was approaching its paroxysm, was the following: through space and time, all over the Old World (and perhaps even the New) there has been, ever since the Early Bronze Age, a loose network of sages, healers, seers, proto-scientists, who secretly were in contact across boundaries of culture, language and polities; for decades I have studied the history of a particularly widespread form of divination (the geomantic family) and I have often had reason to believe that I was seeing such a network in action. Or take another, less abstruse, example. If Chinese objects, practices and words turn out to have ended up in West Africa, we may patently assume (a point insisted upon by Clyde Winters) that West African counterparts ended up in China – and this has demonstrably been the case. Yet another example: if mating primal gods delay cosmogony in the Greek mythical past, and if the same is claimed in the mythology of Nigeria and of Polynesia, ultimately the question should not be ‘what was the epicentre K from which this trait travelled to L and M’, but ‘what other indications are there of the suggested continuity between K, L and M, and what is their time depth?’ *Multidirectionality* is an important feature of the global maritime network whose likely emergence we have studied in the present argument.²⁷

²⁷ Since formal cultural systems, such as languages, games, divination practices, decorative styles, tend to traverse, in more or less intact state, whatever boundaries in space, time, culture and polity they meet on their way, two topics that have occupied my attention for decades may be relevant in the present connection (cf. van Binsbergen 2012a, 2012c). *Mankala* / mancala is a board game where, by complex rules, tokens are to be

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circulated along a series of holes, and in the process may be captured or stored in a larger hole / bank. Its oldest archaeological attestations are in West Asia, its oldest documentary attestation is in an 8th c. CE Arabic text, but its global distribution concentrates on Africa (the founder of 'ludology'—the systematic study of games – Culin (1896) wrote on *Mankala, the national game of Africa*) whereas also Chinese cases have been described (Eagle 1995, 1998). That the game was diffused by maritime means, among others, often in connection with the migration of Africans as slaves or soldiers, is clear from its distribution in the New World, South India, Sri Lanka, and (Barnes 1975) Indonesia. Could the same Africo-centred mechanism explain the Chinese cases? Or did early *mankala* emerged independently in China? By the same token, geomancy is a widespread form of divination whose distribution is remarkably similar to that of *mankala*, with transcontinental linkages both overland and maritime *e.g.* into the African interior and the New World. By means of a physical random generator which tends to be associated with the earth (*e.g.* a stick that makes a series of indentures when its tip is swept over the ground; or tablets of ivory or wood, or four-ended divination tassels (*kpelle*), or millfoil stalks, that are thrown to the ground) the basic input is produced in the forms of a finite series of numbers is generated, and this is systematically converted into a significant pattern to be interpreted by means of a fixed, conventionalised divinatory catalogue of meanings. The most famous system of geomantic divination is that based on the Chinese classic 易經 *yi jing* (*I Ching*), which given the extensive nautical communications at the port of Başra, Southern Iraq is likely to have influenced the classic Arabic formulation of geomantic divination (*ilm al-raml*, علم الرمل) compiled at that port c. 1000 CE. However, an inveterate tradition and various other indications (*e.g.* the Berber identity of the main codifier of *ilm al-raml*, Muḥammad al-Zanati) have insisted on the African origin of geomantic divination. The region of origin of *yi king* is contested, and Terrien de Lacouperie's suggestion as to a West Asian origin was ridiculed, probably too soon (van Binsbergen 2012). A maritime and overland African impact upon either West Asia, or China, or both, in the early centuries of our proclaimed maritime network might enable us to strike a compromise between these conflicting data.

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