

Madagascar, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia

A REVIEW ARTICLE

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Histoire Ancienne du Nord-Ouest de Madagascar. Pierre Vérin. *Taloha* 5—Revue du Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie. Tananarive: Université de Madagascar, 1972. 174 pp., 46 figs., references, index. No price listed (paper).

Madagascar les Comores et le Sud-Ouest de l'Océan Indien. Paul Ottino. Publications du Centre d'Anthropologie Culturelle et Sociale. Tananarive: Université de Madagascar, 1974. 102 pp., 2 maps, references, index. No price listed (paper).

SPECIALISTS in the prehistory and archaeology of East Asia and particularly of Southeast Asia do not often include Madagascar in their general thinking about Southeast Asian prehistory. There is general knowledge that the primary language spoken there is an Austronesian language and that it is more closely related to the Indonesian languages than to others. Very few American archaeologists and anthropologists are closely acquainted with both the cultures of Madagascar and the Southeast Asian and Pacific cultures using Austronesian languages. Ralph Linton is the only name that comes to my mind. This is not the case with the French, and the authors of both of the books here reviewed have worked in the Pacific as well as in Madagascar. It would be good to have a Southeast Asian specialist, particularly on Island Southeast Asia, spend some time studying the Madagascar equivalents of his or her special interests in Southeast Asia. The insights that such a person would have about Madagascar subjects would be of great value to Madagascar scholarship, and I strongly suspect that there would be feedback to Southeast Asian studies. Even more important could be the beginning of the Indian Ocean as a focus for archaeological, historical, and cultural studies. The Indian Ocean has been the pathway for trade, probably for thousands of years, that has led to the movement of peoples and ideas between China and East Africa and innumerable points between. These contacts have been extremely important

to much of Africa and probably have been of importance in the opposite direction as well; we just do not know.

These two books, both in French, are concerned partly with the presence of Indonesian peoples in Madagascar, where they came from, when they came, and by what route or routes. Both are primarily historic in approach though V \acute{e} rin uses archaeological materials, mostly from unpublished archaeological research, as a part of his approach (p. 1).

The title of V \acute{e} rin's book indicates that the ancient history of northwestern Madagascar is its subject. This is both more and less than what he actually covers, but it is the focus of the book. The area covered is primarily the coast of the northern tip of Madagascar, from Maintirano on the west coast around to Mananara on the east coast. The subject concerned is the trade along the East African coast west and north and in the Western Indian Ocean. The period covered starts with the first human occupation of Madagascar, possibly as much as 2000 years ago, and continues up to the 19th century.

The first chapter (pp. 1-34) is a general introduction that includes the purpose of the book, methods of research, history of research on this area, a physical description of the coast, the preferred site locations, wind directions, ocean currents along the coast, climate, and flora and fauna. The second chapter is of the most relevance to Asia; it concerns "The Problem of Pre-Islamic Migrations, the Coming of Indonesians and Africans to Madagascar" (pp. 35-64). I will return to this topic. The third chapter is concerned with "The African Coast, The Swahili Civilization, and The Cradle of the Culture of Malgache Seaports" (pp. 65-82). The fourth chapter discusses "The Coming of the Moslems to Madagascar" (pp. 83-115), the fifth "The Intrusion of the Europeans in the World of the Seaports" (pp. 117-132), and the sixth "The Sakalava Epoque" (pp. 133-150). The last two chapters are "The Development of the Trade System and Its Extension to the Comores and the East Coast of Africa (1785-1823)" (pp. 151-163) and "The Seaports of the 19th Century and the French-Merina Rivalry" (pp. 165-174). The references and index are bound together separate from the book, and are enclosed in a packet in the back cover. This makes for great convenience in checking references while reading the book.

One aspect of archaeological research on Madagascar which has puzzled me is why the archaeologists have not looked for and excavated the earliest possible sites on the islands; I wondered whether they might have a policy of working backward in time (Solheim 1974). V \acute{e} rin expresses this as an explicit strategy of archaeological research in Madagascar (p. 7). In general this is a sensible policy to follow, but when there appears to be so much interest in the earliest arrivals and when they arrived, it would not seem unreasonable also to look for these sites and at least to test them.

A cover to a burial jar has been pictured from a site near Alaotra Lake (V \acute{e} rin 1962: Pl. IIa). The form and decoration of incised and painted red and black pattern (V \acute{e} rin 1962: 206) looks and sounds like Sa-hu \acute{y} nh-Kalanay pottery. This site was at Vohimasina. Archaeological exploration and excavations near Alaotra Lake were reported by Fernandez (1970), but I find no indication that this site was examined. The sites reported were fortified and were all relatively late. In spite of the lateness of these sites, several elements of form and incised patterns on recovered pottery (Fernandez 1970: 32, 34, 36, 39) are typical of the Sa-hu \acute{y} nh-Kalanay pottery. The impressed triangles and circles from various Alaotra sites (Fernandez

1970: 36, 39) are similar to those from Buni in west Java (Soejono 1962: Fig. 1 g,h,i) and other Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay sites in Southeast Asia. This area archaeologically appears logical for early (2000 B.P. \pm 500 years) Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay sites. Similar typical Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay forms and decoration are found at Antanambe (Arnaud 1970: 119, 123, 124), and Alaotra (Anon. 1964: first two plates following catalogue), while a somewhat different, but still distinctly Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay, pottery was found in sites of the Isandra culture (Vérin 1965: 273, 278–281).

Vérin begins his second chapter on the pre-Islamic migrations by examining the early geographers' accounts of Indian Ocean trade and the various studies and interpretations of these early works. The geographic area covered here ranges from the west coast of India past the Arabian Peninsula and down the Azanian coast of East Africa (pp. 35–43). He follows with a look at linguistic and physical anthropological data on the Indonesian portion of the Malgache population (pp. 43–46). Next he looks at the possible culture of the Malgache ancestors before they left Indonesia (pp. 46–50). Here it is necessary to look at two different cultures and two different time periods. The earlier people which Vérin suggests arrived around A.D. 400 were sea-oriented people who knew slash-and-burn agriculture, made pottery, and had metal tools. If they were using stone or bronze tools, these were used only for a short time after arrival (p. 44). The two incomplete polished stone tools that have been found in Madagascar (p. 49) interestingly are generally of an eastern Indonesian-southern Philippine rather than a western Indonesian type, but which is also found in Borneo (Solheim et al. n.d.). The second culture, arriving around 1300, was similar to the earlier culture with the addition of irrigated rice, the greater importance of metallurgy, and contact with Islam apparently before arrival (p. 44).

Vérin says that the Malgache pottery of the central and eastern portion of Madagascar has many affinities with the "Bau-Kalanay" complex (p. 50). These are two distinct pottery traditions in Southeast Asia, the "Bau-Malay" Pottery Tradition and the Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay Pottery Tradition (Solheim 1967), not one complex. People who made "Bau-Malay" Pottery probably didn't get into the Indonesian islands until around A.D. 500, and their entrance into the western Indonesian islands and Malaya probably came several hundred years later. I have seen nothing like the typical early "Bau-Malay" Pottery in Madagascar. I suspect that by A.D. 1000 or soon thereafter there was a mixing in Sumatra of the earlier people who made the Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay pottery and the later arrivals who made the "Bau-Malay" pottery. One of the pot types that I felt came with that mixture was the multiple-spouted vessel that is found in Madagascar (Vérin 1964: 2nd figure). This one type of pot is the only indication of "Bau-Malay" pottery in combination with the Sa-huỳnh-Kalanay pottery that I am acquainted with in Madagascar.

The next part of the second chapter concerns the route followed from Indonesia to Madagascar (pp. 50–54). Some have suggested the route was directly across the Indian Ocean, from Sumatra to Madagascar. Vérin does not agree with this (p. 51) but feels the coastal route from southern India and Ceylon to have been more likely. While movement between Indonesia and Madagascar probably came to an end in the 13th century, trade continued with the Orient as indicated by the considerable quantity of Chinese porcelain found in many sites of the western Indian Ocean

(pp. 57-58). This chapter closes with a section on migration from Africa to Madagascar and the relationship of the new migrants with the descendants of the Indonesians (pp. 50-64).

Paul Ottino's book covers much the same subject as V \acute{e} rin's but is based on a different thesis as far as the Indonesians in Madagascar are concerned. He questions that there was an early movement of Indonesians. He says that there is no proof of such a movement and that unquestionable documents indicating the presence of Indonesians in the western Indian Ocean are late (p. 14). He suggests that the two Indonesian cultures evident in Madagascar, that is, slash-and-burn agriculture base and irrigated-rice base, came to Madagascar at the same time, from the 10th to the 12th centuries, the first being brought by the common people and the second by aristocrats (p. 16).

This is a possible explanation, and as Ottino says, there is no archaeological proof or disproof of an early arrival. I strongly suspect that the lack of archaeological proof, however, results from the archaeological policy in Madagascar of working backward in time from historic sites. It is possible that the sites are not there, but I suspect that they are. My evidence is the common pottery in many late Madagascar sites which is so similar to Sa-hu \ddot{y} nh-Kalanay pottery. To my knowledge the variable, decorated Sa-hu \ddot{y} nh-Kalanay pottery was no longer being made by A.D. 1000 in Southeast Asia. Only one site, Galumpang in west-central Sulawesi, has been dated to later than A.D. 1000, and I have questioned this dating (Solheim et al. n.d.). The ancestors of the Malgache who made this kind of pottery, I believe, must have left central or eastern Indonesia or the central or southern Philippines well before A.D. 1000, or they would no longer have been making this kind of pottery. Ottino suggests that there were Indonesian colonies on the Malabar coast of India and in Ceylon between the 10th and 15th centuries and that the Indonesian migrants to Madagascar may have come from here (pp. 7, 37, 39, 40). I do not know the archaeology of the Malabar coast but I have looked at many Indian archaeological reports specifically to determine if there were anything like the Sa-hu \ddot{y} nh-Kalanay pottery and have seen nothing similar to it. I spent one month on Sri Lanka examining museum collections and surveying extensively on the east coast but saw nothing of the nature of the Sa-hu \ddot{y} nh-Kalanay pottery (Solheim and Deraniyagala 1972).

In one place Ottino uses the name of a language group for a people or culture. The three times he uses 'Austroasiatic' in this way he has it between quotes (pp. 11, 18 [n. 6], 20). As long as the quotes are used this is all right. Not having a name for the people who spoke Austroasiatic languages is awkward, so it would be well to make up a word for this purpose, using Austroasiatic root words. When Ottino uses the term 'Malayo-Polynesians' for a people (p. 20) or refers to the 'Malayo-Polynesian tradition' (p. 37), he does not use quotes. I have suggested Nusantau as the name for the people who speak these related languages (Solheim 1975: 158).

I had not realized what an important position Malay or Indonesian peoples must have taken in the Indian Ocean during both the first and second millennia A.D. Ottino reports that up until the 20th century in the Hadramaout (south coastal Arabia), Malay and Swahili were the most widely spoken languages after Arabian, attesting to a long tradition (p. 36). He states that the Indonesian presence in the Indian Ocean was continuous from the 4th and 5th centuries until the 13th and

14th centuries. The first form of that presence was the non-Hindu 'Malayo-Polynesian' tradition. With the development of Srivijaya, a Hinduized form gained the ascendancy, finally to be supplanted by an Islamized form (p. 37).

He suggests that during this time there was considerable Indonesian colonization in Ceylon and south India, particularly during the 12th century (pp. 39-40), and that Indonesian "merchant navigators" and their commercial colonies were even more widespread (pp. 41-42). On the basis of the very widespread activity of the Nusantau in Island Southeast Asia and in the Pacific from the second half of the second millennium B.C. until European arrival, with what I feel was rather a climax of activity in Island Southeast Asia from perhaps 300 B.C. to A.D. 300, I strongly suspect that the Nusantau were also active in the Indian Ocean for much of this time or at least well before the 4th century A.D.

The term for the Hinduized Indonesians and for Madagascar was Śri/buzā. This term would refer to the country of the *buzi*, according to Ottino. Variants of the word in Malgache are "... *buzā*, *buzi*, and *bushe*, or *bushi* (Comores), *buki* (Swahili) which gives *buque* of the Portuguese and which Hebert equated with the Indonesian *bugi*. . . . Also Grottanelli notes that the Malay of Cape Province, South Africa are always called *bugi*" (p. 42). This is certainly an indication that if not the actual ancestors of the present-day Bugis of Indonesia and Malaysia, at least a very similar people go a long way back in Island Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The rest of this book (pp. 38-68) is concerned with the Indonesian peoples in Madagascar and their relationships with East African and nearby island groups. To a considerable degree Ottino presents problems in the context of the Indian Ocean which are in need of study. It could be said that actually this is a call for the organization of studies on the Indian Ocean (pp. 23-24). I would heartily second this call. From 1972 to 1974 I put some effort into an attempt to found an institute for prehistoric research on the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia to be established in India. While my project was not successful, I did find that there was considerable and widespread interest in the subject. I would hope that Ottino could move in this direction with more success than I had.

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