Rethinking Tapenkeng Culture in the Earliest Neolithic Taiwan and the Issue Relating to Austronesian Homeland

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Abstract

Tapenkeng Culture is recognized as the earliest Neolithic culture in Taiwan. K.C. Chang was the first proposed Tapenkeng inhabitants were probably the ancestor of modern aboriginal peoples in Taiwan. Archaeologists and linguists have long recognized Taiwan as homeland to those so-called Austronesian speaking peoples. Recent advances in archaeology, linguistics and genetics have made tremendous efforts. However, the arguments remain unsettled. The purposes of this paper are at first presenting advanced research results of newly discovered archaeological materials and second, try to proposing an alternative interpretation relating the issue of homeland of Austronesian speaking peoples in prehistoric Taiwan. Up to this year, 60 archaeological sites have been recorded and salvage excavations were carried out at 34 archaeological sites in and nearby Tainan Science Park (TNSP). The artifacts in TNSP yielded from sites covering a time span of 4800 to 300 B.P. and have been chronologically divided into 6 phases: Tapenkeng Culture, Niuchoutzu Culture, Tahu Culture, Niaosung Culture, Siraya Culture, and recent Han Chinese Culture. Remarkable advances have been made on the archaeological evidence uncovered from the sites of Nan-kuan-li and Nan-kuan-li East. Together with the archaeological remains and ecological perspectives, I would like to propose an alternative interpretation to provide essential information for discussing the homeland of Austronesian and peopling of Taiwan.
南島語族的擴散——蘭嶼觀點

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摘要

2005年Peter Bellwood與Eusebio Dizon共同發表的一篇文章——“The Batanes Archaeological Project and the ‘Out of Taiwan’ Hypothesis for Austronesian Dispersal”，其主要內容除了總結其自2002年至2005年在巴丹地區的考古調查與發掘工作的主要成果，同時認為巴丹地區的資料，進一步支持其主張的（南島語族）台灣起源的假說。本文則試圖藉由近年蘭嶼與鄰近地區遺傳學的研究成果，並結合考古學、民族學的資料，對南島語族擴散的議題，提出一個「在地」的觀點。
From the Yangtze Valley of Southern China to the Pacific: An update of Archaeological Perspectives on Austronesian Prehistory

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Abstract

In order to present a holistic view and update information on the dispersal history of ancient Austronesian-speaking populations, this paper will present recent archaeological data from the region between the Yangtze Valley of southern China and Micronesia. This paper focuses on our primary archaeological data, especially the new dating results and cultural remains from the early Neolithic phase in the Marianas (Micronesia) and northern Luzon (Philippines), as well as discussion on newly unearthed findings by colleagues in Taiwan and Hainan Island (China).

According to the findings of cultural assemblages and earliest Neolithic dates, this paper traces the homeland of the earliest Neolithic migrants in the Pacific back to Taiwan and eventually to southern China. The cultural relations between the last hunter-gatherers and earliest farmers in southern China ca. 18,000-3000 BC played a significant role in our understanding of the origin of the TPK (Dabenkeng) population - the earliest Neolithic horizon in Taiwan, regarded as the earliest Austronesian archaeological culture.

In the paper, we also noticed that there are many questions yet to be answered. However, it is evident that the ancient Austronesians not only crossed the Taiwan Strait 5500-6000 years ago from southern China to Taiwan, but also made the longest sea-crossing undertaken by 3500 BP in human history, from northern Philippines to the Marians, and eventually reaching throughout the great Pacific region.