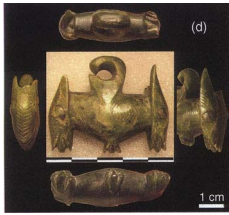


# Book reviews

PETER S. BELLWOOD. *First islanders: prehistory and human migration in Island Southeast Asia*. 2017. Hoboken (NJ): Wiley Blackwell; 978-1-119-25154-5 £60.



This book is a synthesis of the archaeology of Island Southeast Asia (ISEA) from within the view that human population and cultural movement is a central explanatory dynamic to societal change across

time. No student of ISEA and Pacific archaeology is unfamiliar with the scholarship of Peter Bellwood. He is a synthesiser of the region's archaeology, interested, as he mentions in the book, in both the macro and micro narratives, and combining multidisciplinary approaches (p. 351). One may disagree with him at certain levels and particular details, but no one amongst the active researchers in the region can match Bellwood's depth and breadth of knowledge of the literature.

This book succeeds the *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian archipelago* (1985) and is the latest addition in a series of Wiley Blackwell books that give a platform to Bellwood's macro ideas. The first book, *First farmers* (2005), explains the origins of agricultural societies across the globe, and was followed by *First migrants* (2013), which presents ancient migrations in a global perspective. This latest book homes-in on Southeast Asia, the core research region for Bellwood's academic contribution to world archaeology. It is a text for academics interested in the deep history of the region; indeed, human ancestries and population migration patterns in deep history is what excites Bellwood as a scholar (p. 2). Bellwood's treatise is divided into 10 chapters, with the contribution of colleagues spread out from Chapter 3. An effective index section was also provided. The short first chapter explains the rationale of the work and defines terms and conventions used in the book, e.g. geographic coverage/definitions and how he applies a modified three-age periodisation—the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Para-Neolithic, Early Metal Age and Early Historical.

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The next two chapters summarise the latest information and views on the formation of the landscape of ISEA. This serves as backdrop for a synthesis of what we know of the migration to the region by Homininae and *Homo sapiens*. Inserted at the end of Chapter 3 is Colin Groves's invited perspective that focuses on the dating and morphological study of *Homo erectus* from Java, and that argues against the evolution of *Homo sapiens* from this species. This is followed by Debbie Argue's contribution, describing morphological studies of the remains of *Homo floresiensis*. She supports the dominant position, namely that it is indeed a different species, while maintaining that there is still room for discussion on the phylogeny of these finds.

Chapters 4–5 cover the Late Pleistocene and Early Holocene, or the period before what is considered to be the 'Neolithic' in ISEA. Bellwood very capably synthesises the latest information on the archaeology of ISEA for this time period, presenting a picture of a region that was unlike the adjunct areas, especially New Guinea. Within these two chapters are three contributions that buttress the argument for movements not only of human populations, but also of other ecological elements in a biogeographic framework. The invited perspective of Matsumura *et al.* discusses the human biological history of Mainland and ISEA, based chiefly on human remains from Late Pleistocene and Holocene cemetery sites. It provides a very important and useful summary table of relevant sites and finds, and, more importantly for Bellwood, cranial data supporting the movement of people in Southeast Asia, thus supporting the main argument of the book. This is also the case for the population genetics data provided by Cox in her take on the genetic history of human populations in the same time period. The following chapter discusses the archaeological data on the Late Palaeolithic in the region, with a contribution from Philip J. Piper on the changing patterns of hunting across ISEA from 45–4.5 kya, or before the Neolithic; he uses zooarchaeological data and evidence of bone modifications to argue that there is still very weak evidence for the translocation of animals across the region at this time, which supports the hypothesis of the book that such human behaviour is strongly demonstrated only during the region's Neolithic, when Austronesian populations and cultures spread.

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Chapter 6 summarises what we know, through historical linguistics, about the early history of the Austronesian-language family. This is part of the core argument for the Neolithic transformation of the region that Bellwood advocates. It is further reinforced by Blust, the foremost historical linguist on this subject matter and a long-term collaborator of Bellwood. In Blust's contribution, he reiterates his historical linguistic arguments on why the constructed Austronesian-language family originated in Taiwan. Another invited perspective from Daud Aris Tanudirjo explains the influence of the Austronesian dispersal discourse on Indonesian archaeology, and its contribution to the formation of Indonesian national identity. The chapter that follows holds the central data discussion on the origins and spread of rice and the Austronesian language in ISEA. It includes a survey of what is known from the archaeology of southern China and Taiwan; this is very handy for anyone overwhelmed by the amount of research that this region has produced in both Chinese and English. Bellwood succinctly presents the 'Out-of-Taiwan' hypothesis and the archaeological information for the Neolithic of southern China, Taiwan and the Philippines. It is worth pointing out that, for the most part, the information Bellwood presents comes from his own research projects, especially the data he presents for the Neolithic of northern Luzon. Hsiao-chun Hung contributes a section on the current archaeological information in this landscape that directly supports Bellwood's hypotheses. Mike T. Larson discusses the coastal palaeo-landscapes of the Neolithic, arguing for the relevance of this analytic approach, and cautions those who would try to understand Neolithic lifeways through current landscape configurations. Larson provides very useful maps generated from his landscape modelling of Taiwan and northern Luzon.

Chapter 8 deals with the Neolithic of east Malaysia and Indonesia, divided into the eastern and western streams. The details of artefact assemblages from major sites are presented, and it becomes clear how complex and confusing the picture is now. This is reflected by the second Piper contribution, where he reviews the evidence of domesticated animal remains from Neolithic sites in ISEA. He argues that seeing these iconic domesticates (i.e. pig, dog and chicken) as a package moving through the landscape cannot be supported by what we know from the skeletal and genetic data. Chapter 9 focuses on the Early Metal Age and its intercultural connections in ISEA. Bellwood places much emphasis on the Dong Son

drum assemblages and the jar-burial traditions for this period, and presents his views on the regional megalithic traditions. This chapter also emphasises the significance of latter-day migrations into ISEA, such as the Malay, Cham and Indian influx, to push the treaties of the book further. Included in this chapter is a detailed contribution by Hung on nephrite artefacts and Early Metal Age exchange networks across the South China Sea. The final short chapter is an excellent recap of the entire book, comparing the region with Mainland Southeast Asia, China, New Guinea/Melanesia and Australia. Bellwood underscores that the substantial differentiation of ISEA as a region took place only after the coming of the Austronesian-speaking cultures during the Neolithic, understood within the concept of the farming/language hypothesis.

This is a must-read book for anyone interested in Island Southeast Asian archaeology and early human history. It truly comes from Bellwood's mastery of a large amount of literature, and his background as a field-grounded scholar. What I like about the way he presents his views is his effort not to preach a dogma (or make one). He is level and fair in answering criticism from colleagues who have engaged with his ideas, especially in the discourse on the Austronesian dispersal. He respectfully recognises the views of critical colleagues, and appropriately integrates their contributions in his work. It is clear that Bellwood listens and engages with critiques, and when he agrees, makes adjustments/refinements in light of new data, but he does demand a higher standard before he agrees.

In conclusion, the overall positive elements of the book outweigh my critical points. The last sentence of the last chapter ends with the words "I wish all my colleagues well in their searches for the truth about the past, or at least a convincing version of it" (p. 351). We can only take this as a positive challenge, and thank Peter Bellwood for updating his synthesis of the region's archaeology, and for providing colleagues and students with exciting talking points at both the small and large scales of human history.

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JOHN SIMONSEN. *Daily life at the turn of the Neolithic. A comparative study of longhouses with sunken floors at Resengard and nine other settlements in the Limfjord region, South Scandinavia*. 2017. Aarhus. Jutland Archaeological Society, Museum Salling and Aarhus University Press; 978-87-93423-14-5 475kr.



Simonsen's book is the pinnacle of almost 40 years of archaeological research scrutinising Final Stone Age and

earliest Bronze Age longhouses and settlements in the Limfjord region of Denmark c. 2600–1500 BC. This extraordinary achievement is entrenched in years of fieldwork campaigns led by Simonsen himself. The scientifically, and literally, heavy thesis was defended in September 2017, for the Danish higher doctoral degree in philosophy at Aarhus University. The habilitation comprises five lengthy chapters in addition to appendices and catalogues.

Chapter 1 sets the scene, with aims, methods and research history. It is remarkable how two-aisled longhouses occur throughout and beyond Scandinavia while the characteristic sunken-floor variety, with turf-built walls, is a Jutlandish invention that changed very little over several centuries. This tradition probably commenced during the Single Grave Culture 2800–2350 BC (Corded Ware) and flourished during the Beaker Period (the Late Neolithic) until 1600–1500 BC, when the rise of the Nordic Bronze Age introduced three-aisled longhouses standing tall and impressive in the landscape. Sunken-floor longhouses are known from 200 sites so far and predominantly from Jutland. Chapter 2 is the engine of the entire study, dealing with a core of 26 houses from Resengard, and 17 houses from the central Limfjord area, encompassing the Beaker period. The fulcrum is the fully excavated settlement at the low hill of Resengard, which, due to unusually well-preserved house constructions, has provided new knowledge about daily life and the maintenance and rhythms of

tradition. The life-cycle biography of major longhouse plots suggests a cycle of abandoning the old house and building a replica house elsewhere on the hill, with generational intervals of approximately 25 years. Simonsen convincingly argues that only one household (one major longhouse and 1–2 attached small-houses) existed at a time. This means that we can follow generational shifts, cycles and continuities on the same hill over three centuries. Based on abundant pottery in each longhouse, and coupled with radiocarbon dating, Chapter 3 makes a case for a three-phased chronology applicable to post-Beaker settlements from c. 1800–1500 BC (albeit with clear threads back into the Beaker Period). With the demonstrated life-biography of each longhouse, the pottery chronology supports the recurring movement of longhouses along the perimeter of the Resengard hill, approximately 12 times until around 1500 BC, when the hill was temporarily abandoned. Chapter 4 dives into the daily life of the households inhabiting longhouses spread across the archipelago of the central Limfjord region. The detailed spatial analysis of house finds and their contexts reveals well-ordered communities engaged in a wide array of indoor activities, which were allocated particular spaces on the floor, while the fertile hill accommodated crop agriculture and livestock. Chapter 5 is devoted to social interpretations of longhouse economies in terms of an exchange system linking the many single farmsteads spread across the archipelago. Due to differences among the region's longhouses in relation to the attached activities, it is argued that household production worked in a tiered manner. All households undertook basic activities such as agriculture, livestock herding and making simple flint tools. Many households produced woollen textiles, leatherwork, coarse pottery and small amounts of beer (based on moderate quantities of charred cereals), while only a small minority of households produced exquisite flint daggers, metal items, fine ware pottery, large quantities of beer (based on large amounts of charred cereals on floors) or collected and worked amber for trading. The system of single farmsteads must have necessitated strict rules for social interaction and biological reproduction. Drawing on the anthropological literature, Simonsen argues for a non-hierarchical, albeit highly competitive, social system.

A great strength of this book is the rich, nuanced documentation of the characteristic sunken-floor area occupying the eastern half of the two-aisled longhouses, revealing that these were dwelling spaces for humans

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