

ECAI Austronesia and Pacific Language Mapping - Ten Years of Collaboration

David BLUNDELL

University of California, Los Angeles, USA

pacific@berkeley.edu

Austronesian speaking people have voyaged for centuries across the Pacific and Indian oceans creating communication networks within a linguistic family that became the most extensive in the world prior to European expansion. The cultures were launched from the Western Pacific. Then early Austronesian speakers reached islands at great distances, traveling in lashed and pegged canoes across vast expanses of ocean.

ECAI Austronesian projects were first proposed by the founder and chairman of ECAI, Lewis Lancaster, at a meeting entitled Austronesian Studies in Taiwan -- Retrospective and Prospect at UC Berkeley sponsored by the Shung Ye Museum in 1997. Since then collaborators have taken up the idea, researching the possibilities of cultural mapping to integrate the heritage of the Pacific.

Many ECAI affiliates have participated in projects which showcase the opportunities to use time and space to integrate multi-disciplinary and multi-media information. Several major projects, including the most recent project to create a Cultural Atlas of the Batanes Islands of the Philippines as a regional cultural atlas, will be demonstrated. The Batanes are a group of small islands between Taiwan and the major islands of the present day Philippines. It is proposed that they played a pivotal role in documenting the dispersion of Austronesian speaking people across the region of the Western Pacific to Oceania.

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