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DOMINION OVER PALM AND PINE

Early Indonesia's Maritime Reach

Ann Kumar

The first five words of the above title are taken from a poem by Rudyard Kipling which until rather recently was well-known in Australia, where its words were sung every Anzac Day in commemoration of the deaths of many young compatriots in bygone but not forgotten battles of the British Empire.¹ In this poem Kipling reflects on how an excess of imperial pride might see the mighty British Empire pass away like its predecessors, and extols humility and contrition. Kipling's empire was based on British supremacy at sea. So was the much earlier dominion to be described here, which also extended over palm — not just the Indonesian ones, but also the Madagascan ones, so perhaps one should say 'palm and baobab' — and pine, a Japanese one.

In this paper, after briefly sketching Indonesia's maritime reach, I will also argue that it is not simply meaningless to classify Indonesia as 'Southeast Asian' but is in fact a major barrier to any real understanding of its history.

On what criteria might one judge the coherence of a portfolio category such as 'Europe' or 'Southeast Asia'? Some obvious ones suggest themselves: cultural and religious commonality, linguistic commonality, and political unification, of which Europe has the first two, with the great predominance of Indo-European languages, and of Christianity for the last two millennia.



It scores less consistently over time with regards to political unification, since the significant achievements of the Romans were not maintained thereafter, though the constant competitive striving for pan-European empire, especially in the period from Napoleon to Hitler, has allowed historians to pin their narrative to an account of the resultant warfare. Southeast Asia has none of these things.

This lack of any of the unifying factors that make 'Europe' a coherent category causes major problems for historians of Southeast Asia. Attempts are generally made to solve these by one of the following strategies: breaking up Southeast Asia and dealing with the component parts separately;² adopting a *pars pro toto* strategy;³ or attempting to generalize across the whole of Southeast Asia. These generalizations usually have to be very broad indeed to capture all of Southeast Asia and hence are hardly ever peculiar to it. Owen⁴ for example oscillates between the first and last strategies, the latter clearly demonstrating the sort of generalization that results. By way of general categories we find, for example '... when the biggest rogues were overthrown — Thanom in Thailand, Marcos and Estrada in the Philippines, Suharto in Indonesia — most of the reformers who replaced them came from similar backgrounds, so there was little change in the overall trajectory of government policy.'⁵ 'Rogue' is hardly specific to Southeast Asia — nor to a particular type of polity, unlike analytical categories of the type of 'feudal lord,' for example, which facilitate productive comparative work. What illuminating comparisons might one make with 'rogue'? Might one ask whether Suharto was a bigger or a different sort of rogue from the other rogues who were contemporaneously, and illegally, saturation bombing Laos? He did rather a lot of bad things but also not a few good things (for example in education and health). This sort of comparison is prejudicial, relying on judgments as to whom one is prepared to stigmatize and whom not.

Southeast Asia not only has many different languages but also a significant array of different language *families*. Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines belong to the Austronesian language family — a family unknown on the Southeast Asian mainland with the exception of the Cham languages, whose speakers are relatively recent migrants from Indonesia.⁶

Here I will deal with that part of the Austronesian language family I know best, i.e. the sub-group conventionally referred to as Western Malayo-Polynesian, which includes the languages of Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. The paper will review two case studies from pre-modern history which I hope will be of some interest. But first, some background.

THE AUSTRONESIAN MIGRATION: FROM TAIWAN TO EASTER ISLAND

Horridge points out that the earliest Austronesian colonists in the Pacific were in the same situation as the Vikings on the coast of Norway, and in later times the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch, all faced by the prevailing south-west winds of the Atlantic — a situation that created a continual stimulus for sailors.⁷ These Austronesians were part of an East Asian ‘Neolithic Revolution’ which had profound implications for many other parts of the world. This particular language family was distinguished from others originating in the same general area in that it had an extraordinary nautical tradition, enabling Austronesians to migrate all across the Pacific. This major population expansion had begun in Taiwan, where Neolithic finds date from 4300 BCE,⁸ with some evidence for rice by 3000 BCE. The Austronesian Neolithic was based on agriculture and animal husbandry. It spread rapidly: the earliest Southeast Asian date is from around 3000 BCE, and by 2500 BCE the culture extended all over the region. Neolithic populations occupied the whole region of mainland Southeast Asia, including the Malay Peninsula, by at least 2000 BCE. Bellwood believes that by 1500 BCE Austronesians had reached Indonesia, but it seems to me that a date of 1500 BCE for the *earliest* arrival of Austronesians may be too late. By 1000 BCE we already have highly sophisticated Bronze-Iron societies — not just Neolithic agricultural societies — whose archaeological remains include gold objects, evidence of a wealthy society with an élite class. Such a society would have required some time to develop.

Austronesians reached the Marquesas Islands by about 200 BCE, and by about 500 CE had colonized Hawai’i and Easter Island.⁹ This process was so little understood until very recently that the dashing Thor Heyerdahl achieved enormous world-wide fame with his Kon-Tiki voyage, which was based on the premise that early rafts and reed boats *followed* winds and currents, and that Easter Island was settled from South America rather than Asia. Kirch¹⁰ describes the long scholarly debate between those who view Austronesian expansion as resulting from purposive voyages of exploration versus those (such as Sharp¹¹) who see it as resulting from accidental drift of canoes being blown off course. Archaeologists however have always favoured the former explanation because of the evidence they have found of *preparedness* — the pigs, dogs, fowl, and crop plants brought along by the settlers. “Drift” also simply does not make sense given Pacific wind and current patterns. Theories concerning drift, shipwreck and chance reflect the fact that modern Europeans tend to think of large solid craft as necessary for trans-oceanic voyages. In

1893 however Norwegians crossed the north Atlantic in a reproduction of the Gokstad Viking ship, taking only 27 days to cross 2,000 miles in bad weather. This feat was repeated in 1958 when seven Norwegians crossed the Atlantic in 22 days in a reproduction Viking ship.¹²

Another factor preventing Western scholars from accepting that the Pacific was settled by purposive voyages of exploration has been that this involves travelling eastwards *against* the prevailing winds and currents. Horridge's response is that the problem of how the Pacific was colonized against prevailing winds and currents is solved if we accept that the earliest pathfinders had boats of similar design to the fast, long-distance single-outrigger with a tilting triangular sail, because these boats sail best a little upwind or with the wind on the beam.¹³ Austronesian exploration is considered to have favoured sailing into the wind, with a downwind return. Horridge also remarks that downwind from an undiscovered island there is a scent of land and an interference pattern of the wind-created waves converging behind the island, as well as flotsam on the surface, which numerous sailors have described. Nature thus provides clues of land on the approach side of the island exactly where they are needed.¹⁴ Expert seamen approach land upwind and lay-off until they find a calm landing, as they could certainly do in an outrigger canoe with a tilting triangular sail. Those looking for new land, sons of chiefs in Horridge's hypothesized scenario, had to sail eastwards because that was the direction their boats would naturally take them on the least foolhardy explorations with the expectation of a safe return.

The reality is that the Austronesians developed in early times a precocious command of the sea which many Europeans have been slow and reluctant to realize. As Finney remarks: "Long before the Portuguese and Spanish inaugurated Europe's Age of Exploration, even before the Vikings ventured across the North Atlantic, on the other side of the globe another seafaring race had already spread over two oceans. The geographical spread of these Austronesian-speaking peoples far surpassed that of the world's next largest cultural-linguistic grouping, the Indo-Europeans. Just take Polynesia alone, the easternmost province of the Austronesian world. The Polynesian triangle, bounded by New Zealand, Hawaii and Easter Island, would if cast upon Eurasia stretch from England across Europe and Asia to the Aleutians and then south almost to the tip of India!"¹⁵

In Indonesia, the Austronesians introduced not only their extraordinary seamanship but also agriculture and advanced craftsmanship, as well as a preference for notably hierarchical societies that made a lasting impact.

JAVANESE MIGRATION TO JAPAN IN THE YAYOI PERIOD

One Austronesian people produced a migration that sailed in the opposite direction — back north, in this case as far north as Japan. The Javanese immigrants who brought about the transformation of Japanese society in the Yayoi revolution were responsible for the greatest migration-induced cultural changes of any that I know. Within the space of a few centuries, a millennia-old hunter-gatherer population (the Jōmon) was not only brought into the ‘Neolithic Revolution’ which elsewhere in the world saw the introduction of agriculture and all the cultural changes this brought: it was also brought into the bronze-iron age which is attested by the beautifully crafted bells and weaponry of the period. The exuberantly individualistic, ornate and fantastic Jōmon pottery was replaced by a repertoire of simple, function-specific shapes with restrained geometric decoration which constitute the pottery of mass production. Wet-rice agriculture supported a court civilization, the arts, and a hierarchical social order.¹⁶ As in Java, the origin of this revolutionary transformation, we find the establishment of a ruling élite which was immensely preoccupied with distinguishing itself from the rural population, and which brought with them the name of their home kingdom, Taruma. Loanwords which tell the story of this wide-ranging transformation range from specific material items (cloth and plates and rice-cookers in the domestic sphere, fences in the social sphere) through basic everyday vocabulary (for example, words meaning to pour, or to cover) through to specialized words relating to land usage and notably to leadership, divine kingship, and religion. One such word borrowed was Javanese *matur-*, which became Old Japanese *maturi* and modern Japanese *matsuri*, denoting religious observance. In other words, this migration though in numerical terms small — but nevertheless significantly larger than the Norman migration to England¹⁷ — must have involved no less than the transplanting of a whole society. There would have been farmers, chieftains, highly skilled artisans, women as well as men as is indicated by the mitochondrial DNA, bringing with them their provisions, rice seed, domestic implements, tools and weapons. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that this revolution ultimately derived from the pre-existence of maritime networks of a fluid, and perhaps busy, nature.

Working on this project starkly revealed the immense strength of regional barriers in the academic establishment, with their built-in incentives to create exclusive guilds of experts on ‘Southeast Asia’ and ‘[North]East Asia’. It also revealed just how many scholars working on Southeast Asia had very low expectations of the generic Southeast Asian and regarded them as beyond dispute. This attitude is compounded by perhaps the major error for historians,

which is to read the present back into the past. Technological and social hierarchies do not remain the same over the centuries, as is amply evidenced by the British example. This one-time Roman colony and backwater went on to become the greatest industrial power in the world, colonizing more of it than any other nation, before losing its empire and de-industrializing.

The Yayoi transformation of Jōmon Japan has obvious similarities to a migration process that took place nearly two millennia later, i.e. the great English migration to the New World, and its impact on the indigenous populations of the various countries affected. There was a huge technological gap between the immigrants and the locals. This English migration partly or completely destroyed indigenous society and culture depending on their capacity for resistance, with varying results for Zulus, American Indians, Maoris, and Australian aborigines, without giving them an entrée into the culture and society of the dominant migrants. In the Yayoi case however the immigrants seem to have drawn most of the Jōmon into the agricultural and hierarchical society that they introduced — suggesting some interesting comparative work for the future.

THE INDONESIO-MALAYAN COLONIZATION OF MADAGASCAR

The Indian Ocean whose wide expanse stretches between Indonesia and Africa was a challenge even to nineteenth-century British sailors, who found it had a much more complicated and difficult system of winds and currents than is found in other parts of the globe.¹⁸ That Southeast Asians could have crossed it in their pre-modern ships seems incredible to many. But there is too much evidence to allow any reasonable doubt that they did.

The Linguistic Evidence

The first mention of a relationship between Malagasy, the language of Madagascar, and Malay languages was by the Portuguese priest Luis Mariano in his description of a voyage to Madagascar in 1613–14: he says that the inhabitants must have come from Malacca.¹⁹

More than two centuries later William Marsden described the relationship of Malagasy with Indonesian languages as one of the most extraordinary facts in the history of language, when we consider the immensity of the intervening ocean. He remarks, after an examination of the vocabulary on the opposite coasts of Madagascar, that the language had been thoroughly

disseminated, in a remarkably uniform way, across this great island. Even in modern times, the difference between dialects is restricted to their phonetic evolution and particularly their vocabulary. Grammar is remarkably uniform, and no dialectal differences are very great.²⁰ Dahl finds this linguistic uniformity of the world's fourth largest island astonishing when compared with the linguistic diversity of Indonesia.²¹ It is in fact astonishing with regard to most of the world, except for such later colonial creations as America and Australia, though these differ significantly in being politically united, whereas Madagascar is not.

Dahl succeeded in narrowing down Madagascar's already recognized affinities with Malay languages and demonstrating that Malagasy was a Southeast Barito language, claiming that Maanyan was its closest relative. This claim has never been successfully challenged, though Dahl has received little recognition for such a major discovery. Linguistic work is ongoing in the Barito area²² and this may add to the picture. Malagasy also has quite numerous Malay and Javanese loanwords, which belong to all sorts of semantic domains.²³

The DNA Evidence

Unlike the language, the DNA of Madagascar has only recently been subject to study, by Hurler and his colleagues.²⁴ This study was able to attribute every maternal and paternal lineage found in the Malagasy to a likely geographic origin, revealing approximately equal African and Indonesian contributions. The most likely origin of the Indonesian ones is Borneo [Kalimantan]. The Island Southeast Asian or Oceanic population closest to the Malagasy (of the relatively small number studied) is that from Banjarmasin. The pooled Borneo population [i.e. including the second sample from Kota Kinabalu] is significantly closer to the Malagasy than is any other Island Southeast Asian population studied — of which there was only one, from the Philippines. No other Indonesian population apart from the two from Kalimantan was sampled, so no light is shed on how many groups from other Indonesian or Malayan populations might have been involved.

Rice and Other Plants

Botanists estimate that 27 per cent of the flora of Madagascar is African and 7 per cent Indonesian.²⁵ The latter group includes groups of plants sharing a forest or steppe environment, and especially food-producing plants such

as rice. Javanese *bulu* (*javanica*) rice is very widely distributed globally and among the places it grows is Madagascar. On this island it is cultivated in part by the wet-rice cultivation mode for which Java is famous. Blench's work demonstrates that some particular Indonesian cultigens of certain plants — especially water-yam (*dioscorea alata*) and taro and some types of banana — were imported into Madagascar in early times.²⁶ Diamond notes that bananas, Asian yams and taro were already widespread in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1400s.²⁷ In fact the banana, native to Southeast Asia and New Guinea, had reached Africa a good deal earlier than Portuguese times. A relatively conservative account²⁸ puts the arrival of plantains, probably accompanied by taro and water-yam at 3,000 years ago in West Africa, while others²⁹ tentatively suggest 5,000 years ago for Uganda.

Ships and Shipping

The double outrigger is found only a) in Indonesia and its outskirts and b) in Madagascar and East Africa. The centre from which the outrigger spread was Indonesia.³⁰ Written sources on the early history of Indonesian shipping are few and patchy, with Chinese accounts rather limited before around the seventh century.³¹ We do know however that the inhabitants of Southeast Asia already had very large, very fast ships in the early centuries CE. A third century Chinese account says that these large Southeast Asian *po* — to use the Chinese term — are more than 50 metres long and stand out of the water 4 to 5 metres. They carry from six to seven hundred persons, with 10,000 bushels of cargo [according to different interpretations anywhere between 250 to 1,000 tons]. They may have as many as four sails which do not face directly forward but are set obliquely and so arranged that they can all be fixed in the same direction, to receive the wind and to spill it. The pressure of the wind swells the sails from behind and is thrown from one to the other, so that they all profit from its force. If it is violent, they diminish or augment [the surface area of the sails] according to the conditions. This oblique rig, which permits the sails to receive from one another the breath of the wind, obviates the anxiety attendant upon having high masts. Thus these ships can sail without avoiding strong winds and dashing waves, by the aid of which they can make great speed.

An eighth-century account says the *po* can carry more than 1,000 men besides cargo, and are over 60 metres long, lying six or seven feet deep in the water. They are constructed by assembling several thickness of side-planks, for the boards are thin and might break. No iron is used in fastening.³² We can assume that these ships had no outriggers, as the Chinese would have

mentioned such a conspicuous feature. It is important to note that China itself did not possess ocean-going ships before the eighth or ninth centuries CE.

The features mentioned in these Chinese accounts are the same as those of the sixteenth century *jung* as described by the Portuguese, after whose arrival we have rather more descriptions of traditional Southeast Asian craft. The Portuguese found the *jung* were more often than not larger than their own ships and made extensive use of them. One is described as having four super-imposed layers of planks. Wooden dowels were used, there were two masts [other accounts say two to four masts and a bowsprit] and three rudders, and no iron was used. The average burthen was 4–500 metric tons, with a range of 85 to 700 tons; one owned by Pati Unus of Japara may have been 1,000 tons and carried 1,000 men.³³ Multiple sheathing was used for the hull. Sails were made of vegetal matting, and the canted square sail was in common use. Portuguese sources say that the main shipbuilding areas were the north coast of Java, especially around Rembang and Cirebon; the southern coast of Borneo and adjacent islands; and Pegu, which was the largest. The main differences from the Chinese junk were that the Chinese used iron nails and clamps and had different steering — from earliest times they used the single axial stern-post rudder considered one of China's greatest contributions to nautical technology. Southeast Asian ships generally used two lateral quarter-rudders.³⁴

The Borobudur Ships

The eleven boats carved in the galleries of the eighth century Buddhist temple Borobudur range from a simple canoe with upturned ends to several large ships with outriggers. There are a number of small ships with upturned stem and stern, a single tall mast, and tilted rectangular sail. Then there are five bas-relief depictions of large vessels with outriggers. They are not five depictions of the same vessel: while the five vessels are obviously similar, and may be seen as illustrating a distinct type of vessel, there are differences in the clearly evident details. These depictions are probably not all by the same artist. The larger boats have two sails, two tripod masts, lateral rudders, and outrigger. They also have a bowsprit on which hung a square sail somewhat similar to the foresail (*artemon*) on a Greek ship of classical times, or on the junk. They are unlike any other ship described from the ancient world; neither are they like any modern sailing ship in Indonesia. The hulls of the best delineated boats at Borobudur have outrigger floats supported on paired outrigger booms. They have tripod masts supporting tilted rectangular sails. They also have lateral rudders and a superstructure built up with poles, which probably were

at times covered with mats — all this resembles the *kora-kora*, the fighting ship of the Moluccas encountered by early Western explorers/colonists,³⁵ a very distinctive and unusual type of outrigger vessel owned by potentates.³⁶ This Moluccan boat was very thin and long (roughly 10 metres) and carried as many as five rows of oarsmen. It was originally used for raiding and later put to more peaceful purposes. The *perahu konteng* of East Java when planked up to increase the freeboard and cargo capacity also has a profile much like a Borobudur ship. Horridge believes that the Borobudur ships were fighting ships and that there were certainly better cargo boats at that period.

So could Indonesians have sailed to Madagascar on ships like the ones depicted on Borobudur with their ‘towering hulls’? Probably they could have, because their remote descendants managed to do so in a replica of a Borobudur ship, called the *Samudra Raksa*, built according to the ratios of a nineteenth century *kora-kora*, which was sailed across the Indian Ocean and around the Cape in 2003–04.³⁷

Arab Accounts of Indonesian Attackers

The tenth century Ajayeb al-Hind (*Marvels of India*), attributed to Bozorg ibn Shahriyar, a Persian from Ramhormoz, gives an account of an invasion, said to have taken place on the coast of Tanganyika and Mozambique in the mid-tenth century CE,³⁸ launched by a force of people called the Wakwak or Waqwaq.

This work says that the inhabitants of Waqwaq are numerous. Some of them resemble the Turks. They are the most industrious of all Allah’s creatures but are treacherous, cunning and lying. They are said by Ibn Lakis to do incredible things, for example in 334 [945–6 CE] they arrived in 1,000 boats and fought with extreme vigour in an attempt to take the citadel of Qanbaloh,³⁹ though eventually without success. [Later] some Waqwaq were asked why they had chosen this particular place and they said it was because it had goods suitable for their country and for China, such as ivory, tortoise shells, panther [skins] and ambergris, and because they wanted to get Bantu (known as Zeng or Zenj) who were strong and bore slavery easily.

The name Waqwaq was said by some to come from a wonderful tree called Wakwak, the fruit of which looks like a human and makes a ‘wakwak’ sound when it falls: Mauny thinks this may be the pandanus tree, called Bakkuwan by the Bataks and grown in Madagascar where it is called Vakwa. Tom Hoogervorst⁴⁰ is of the opinion that the Malagasy word *vahoak*, ‘people, clan, tribe’ — from the Malay *awak-awak*, ‘people, crew’ — is a more plausible derivation.



Al-Biruni in the eleventh century describes shipping between Sofala, China and island Southeast Asia.⁴¹ Al Idrisi in 1154 speaks of the people of Komr (i.e. Madagascar), and the merchants of the land of the Maharaja [Sumatra] visiting the nations of the eastern coast of Africa where they are well-received and trade is conducted. The people of the islands of Zabag are said to visit the land of the Zenj (Bantu) in large and small ships and export merchandise from it, a trade made easier because they understand one another's language.

Music and Culture

It has long been suggested that the xylophone was imported into Africa from Indonesia, and Jones claims that not only the instrument but a whole musical tradition was imported.⁴² Other African cultural features which Jones considers to be of Indonesian origin are board games, a particular design of bellows, *plangi* dyeing, patterns and bronzes, some tribal customs, and social organization into kingdoms.⁴³

The Wider Context of Indonesian Voyages to Africa

We have surveyed the evidence for Indonesian settlement of Madagascar: the question for many people is why did they 'suddenly think of sailing right across the Indian Ocean to such a remote island?' In fact the voyages to Madagascar and its settlement were not part of an isolated adventure but were intimately linked to old and enduring trade networks that reached beyond the Austronesian domain, to China at one extreme and to Rome at the other. These trade links also had a powerful effect on state formation.

It is most likely that the earliest trade routes of the Indian Ocean developed about 5,000 years ago between the Indus Valley and the Persian Gulf, possibly contemporaneously with initial Austronesian expansion in Southeast Asia. Though there is a lack of good archaeological documentation for the millennium from the fifth century BCE onwards,⁴⁴ it is clear that by the last centuries BCE Southeast Asia was already part of a world trading system linking the civilizations of the Mediterranean Basin and Han China.⁴⁵ Wisseman Christie describes an 'explosion of trading activity' between about 500 and 200 BCE in the Malacca Straits and in the Java Sea, due to the rise of substantial élites in southern China and parts of India, forming a market for high-status commodities and medicinal substances. This trade stimulated the spread of advanced metallurgical techniques in Southeast Asia, a region already tied into maritime trade networks of considerable



antiquity and possessing what was by the standards of the time an advanced marine technology and considerable navigational experience. Trade also led to the growth of states in island Southeast Asia. Wisseman Christie regards trade, not a Marxian Asiatic Mode of Production or Wittfogelian Oriental Despotism, as the mainstay of these early states — even those of Java and Bali.⁴⁶ The Javanese states had large-scale distribution systems, exported local crops, handled the spices of the eastern islands, and manufactured bronze axes which were traded to other islands. This trade fed into Indian trade to the West. Cloves were already known in China in the third century BCE and were described by Pliny in the first century CE.⁴⁷ In the last centuries BCE Malay sailors were delivering cinnamon from South China Sea ports to East Africa and the Red Sea. Malay sailors were also responsible for opening up an all-sea route to China.⁴⁸

The second stage in the process of state formation in the maritime region seems to have occurred between about 200 BCE and 300 CE when the coastal polities of maritime Southeast Asia were drawn into more direct contact with the major empires of the time and became both a link in the chain and a supplier of the first great Old World trading system, which coalesced in the first century CE. The favoured coasts of this system included the north coasts of Java and Bali and the coast of central Vietnam.⁴⁹ Trade continued to expand with the fourth century CE increase in population and wealth in south China, increasing the volume of trade in maritime Southeast Asia.⁵⁰ Important early historic polities were Srivijaya, located on the southeast coast of Sumatra, and the state called Ho-ling by the Chinese, probably located on the north coast of central Java (between Pekalongan and Semarang). Ho-ling was the major trading centre linking China with northeast India in the mid-seventh century and must have taken over from the ports of west Java the dominant position in the spice and sandalwood trades. By the late seventh century Srivijaya was dominant, but the balance of economic power shifted back to Java again by the end of the eighth century after Ho-ling merged into the larger central Javanese polity of Mataram.⁵¹

We can expand this context still further by taking on board perspectives on global history provided by the Wallerstein school. Beaujard⁵² points out that Wallerstein created the concept of the world-system in relation to the modern era whereas in fact the emergence of a Eurasian and African world-system can be traced very much further back in time, specifically to the first century CE. It had three sub-systems, the China Sea, the eastern Indian Ocean and the Western Indian Ocean. The maritime historian Alfred Mahan once categorically claimed that both travel and traffic have always been easier and cheaper by water than by land — *pace* the landlubber's acute awareness of

the perils of the deep⁵³ — and we can see that the world-system described above is a maritime system. Zones at the intersection of two sub-systems were particularly favoured as they had good opportunities to become a trade nexus — and maritime Southeast Asia is one such zone. Beaujard posits a direct link between Indonesia and Africa/Madagascar in the first to third centuries.⁵⁴ He also concludes that maritime Southeast Asia was relatively proof against the recessions the system periodically suffered (the intervening period might have been as short as 70 years or as long as four centuries), due to climactic stability, to the strategic importance of the Straits of Malacca, and to the high demand for spices from the Moluccas. Traders could also quickly respond when China emerged from a recession and entered upon an upward trend. As is well known, in Wallerstein's core-periphery dichotomy the periphery is exploited, subordinated and dependent, but Beaujard concludes that Southeast Asia, a 'semiperiphery', was not without the power to innovate — notably in the development of navigation around the first century CE. It was in fact a 'pivotal' region that retained a 'primordial' role in the networks throughout history. Hence the settlement of Madagascar. But when did this occur in the long life of this trade system, and how was it settled?

When and How was Madagascar First Colonized by Indonesians and Malays?

A good deal has been written on the date when the first Indonesian colony was planted on Madagascar, but no consensus has yet emerged. The following wide range of dates has been put forward:

- The early centuries BCE, proposed by Blench⁵⁵ on the basis of plant cultigens, and also suggested by the 'explosion of trading activity' to the west between c. 500 and 200 BCE (see above), and by the archaeological work of Ardika and Bellwood.⁵⁶
- Around 400 CE: Marre and much later Dahl pointed out that the number of Sanskrit words in Malagasy is very limited compared with the large number now found in Indonesian languages — which means that the Indonesian settlers must have come at an early stage of Hindu influence.⁵⁷ The *yūpa* post with its Sanskrit inscription of around 400 CE in Muara Kaman, east Kalimantan [one of seven from this area] prompts Dahl to suggest this as the approximate date of the Maanyan migration.⁵⁸
- No earlier than the seventh century: Adelaar's conclusion that the Sanskrit loans in Malagasy must have come from Malay and that Sanskrit influence on Malay cannot be earlier than the seventh century Sumatran Old Malay

inscriptions⁵⁹ impel him to date the migration that brought the Maanyan to Madagascar to that time at the earliest.

The situation is complicated by the fact that while some authors envisage only one migration only, others envisage two migrations or even waves of migration. Hornell was one of the earliest to suggest two migrations, on rather speculative grounds.⁶⁰ Adelaar concludes on the basis of Blench's work on plant cultigens that there may have been some earlier, pre-Barito connection between Indonesia and Madagascar. The very great span of the different dates and the differing opinions concerning how many migrations there may have been reflects, of course, the fact that there is as yet no really conclusive evidence. After all, the fact that Indonesians *could* have colonized Madagascar in the early centuries BCE does not prove that they *did*, and on the other hand the dates provided by the Indonesian inscriptions of the fifth and seventh centuries have no necessary connection at all with the date at which the migration began.

More archaeological work is clearly needed particularly in the coastal areas. Further archaeological work may not be easy, with problems in excavating coastal sites of an early date. Blench remarks that the African coast across from Madagascar lacks archaeological sites even though we know from the Periplus that there was a coastal community there. The traces of this community may have been obliterated by geomorphological change.⁶¹

As we have seen, the main source of the Indonesian element in Malagasy is Maanyan or a closely-related neighboring language, with smaller contributions from Malay and Javanese. However, the Maanyan and their neighbours are forest-dwelling Dayaks, not sailors. Also, some Malagasy are wet rice farmers, while Dayaks are generally dry rice cultivators. This raises the questions of how and why these inland forest dwellers came to live on a rather inaccessible island at the other side of a great ocean, and establish wet-rice cultivation there. As we have seen, there are Malay and Javanese words in Malagasy. It is also claimed that certain aspects of the administration, culture, and statecraft of the Merina kingdom are strikingly like those of the Indianized Malays and Javanese and unlike anything found in Maanyan society. While Dahl supports the idea of a direct migration of Maanyan, Adelaar suggests, in my opinion more plausibly, that the Maanyan were brought by Malays. This raises the question of why Malays as well as Javanese (given the loan-words and the wet-rice cultivation) took the Maanyan on their trading fleets. It seems unlikely that it was just as extra hands on deck, particularly since they would have had no seagoing experience. It seems more likely that it was to

provide labour to grow rice, thus ensuring their masters a local food supply which would enable them to spend more time scouring the African mainland for trade goods. They may well have been slaves, since we know that one of the main things the Indonesians sought from Africa was Bantu slaves. So the whole enterprise must have been highly capitalized, well organized and technologically advanced.

How long did the Indonesian connection last? As we have seen, Mauny reports tenth-century Arab accounts of an Indonesian invasion of the coast between Mombasa and Sofala, which captured Bantu-speaking slaves and presumably took them to Madagascar,⁶² and thereafter continuing trade until at least the twelfth century. When al-Idrisi was writing in the twelfth century there were still links between Sumatra and Sofala. It is possible that Indonesian trade declined in this century, which was one of Muslim expansion in Madagascar, with Arabs settling on the south-east coast. However a connection must have endured until much later than this if the Portuguese really did see 'Javanese,' a term which might have also included other Indonesian and Malay peoples, in Madagascar.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Southeast Asia is a good one for numerous purposes: for armies of occupation, for example, and maps for wartime pilots. But as a historical category, particularly for the pre-modern period, it forms a sort of conceptual corral imposed on and bisecting the maritime highway from Japan to Madagascar, cutting off the western and northern parts of the Indonesian world. Within this conceptual corral the pressing agenda is to find similarities, since these are hard to come by. Differences and exceptions, particularly major ones, cause only problems and tend to be brushed aside. Over time they vanish from sight as far as the historical profession is concerned, though they may still be observed by scientists and non-area-based specialists. Yet it is differences that are most stimulating to historical analysis. Can one imagine an analogous neglect of the Industrial Revolution because it was not common to all European countries? Of course not; and the Industrial Revolution has been a testing ground for historical hypotheses, ranging from the ideological 'Protestant Ethic' to the prosaic 'availability of coal and iron,' and the many combinations and permutations of hypotheses. So we have to ask why Indonesia-Malaya alone among 'Southeast Asian' countries has this extraordinary reach from Japan to Madagascar. At present however we do not have the mental space to do this, and ignorance of this reach, and incredulity

when it is pointed out, are the usual consequences. Even within the more well-grounded Austronesian grouping, Java in particular is strikingly anomalous, with its combination of land-based and sea-based power: its wealthy wet-rice kingdoms and its enormous ships, so different from Pacific shipping.⁶³

So the Indonesian/Malayan world needs to be re-assigned. It might be re-assigned to a different *geographical* category: the world of what Martin Lewis⁶⁴ has called the 'Afro-Asian seaway' (and which I might prefer to call the Asia-Africa seaway) whose peoples were part of the same vast maritime trading network. A maritime approach to global studies is certainly needed to complement the usual land-based approach.⁶⁵ Or it might be re-assigned to a *conceptual* category of peoples who might be geographically remote and not in direct contact but which are *typologically* the same — expansionist maritime societies, for examples, or colonizing societies: Indonesia/Malaya was not always the colonized area that it was to become. Finally, the Indonesian case would also contribute much light to any study of the global spread of technology and social differentiation. These many contributions of the Indonesian case depend on the adoption of a perspective no longer cabined, cribbed, and confined, but open to an immense maritime world.

Notes

1. Rudyard Kipling, "Recessional", for which see <<http://www.bartleby.com/101/867.html>>.
2. For instance in David Joel Steinberg (ed.), *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
3. As in Charles Higham, *The Bronze Age of Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) which actually deals with the Bronze Age of *mainland* Southeast Asia.
4. Norman G. Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).
5. Owen et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, p. 403.
6. See K. Alexander Adelaar, "Where does Malay come from? Twenty years of discussion about homeland, migrations and classifications", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 160, no. 1 (2004): 1–30. The diagram on p. 13 includes Chamic in the Malayo-Sumbawan Subgroup, which includes also Madurese, Sundanese, Sasak, Sumbawan, Balinese and Malayic.
7. Adrian Horridge, "The Austronesian Conquest of the Sea — Upwind" in *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Peter Bellwood, James J. Fox and Darrell Tryon (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 1995), p. 157.
8. Peter Bellwood, *Prehistory of the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago*, revised ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), p. 212.

9. According to Martin Lewis (personal communication) these travellers must actually have reached South America, as otherwise one cannot explain the presence of the sweet potato in New Zealand.
10. Patrick Kirch, *Feathered gods and fishhooks: an introduction to Hawaiian archaeology and prehistory* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1985), pp. 58–66.
11. Andrew Sharp, *Ancient voyagers in the Pacific*, Memoirs of the Polynesian Society No. 32 (Wellington: Polynesian Society, 1956).
12. A.M. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia: the Evidence of the Xylophone and Other Musical and Cultural Factors* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1964), p. 183.
13. Horridge, "The Austronesian Conquest of the Sea", pp. 157–58.
14. In contrast, Heyerdahl's square-sailed raft Kon-Tiki ended its journey by crashing helplessly on the windward side of a reef, which is not the way to explore or colonize.
15. Edwin Doran Jr. *Wangka: Austronesian Canoe Origins* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981), p. 11.
16. For a fuller account, see Ann Kumar, *Globalizing the Prehistory of Japan: Language, Genes and Civilization*, Routledge Studies in the Early History of Asia (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).
17. Masashi Tanaka et al., "Mitochondrial Genome Variation in Eastern Asia and the Peopling of Japan", *Genome Research* 14 (2004): 1832–50.
18. Alexander George Findlay, *A Directory for the Navigation of the Indian Ocean with Descriptions of its Coasts, Islands, etc., from the Cape of Good Hope to the Strait of Sunda and Western Australia; including also the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf; the Winds, Monsoons and Currents and the Passages from Europe to its Various Ports*, third edition (London: Richard Holmes Laurie, 1876), p. 32.
19. Otto Chr. Dahl, *Malgache et Maanjan: une comparaison linguistique*, Egede-Instituttet Avhandling, no. 3 (Oslo: Egede-Instituttet, 1951), p. 13.
20. William M. Marsden, *Miscellaneous Works of William Marsden* (London: Parbury, Allen and Co., 1834), pp. 31–32.
21. Dahl, *Malgache et Maanjan*, p. 6.
22. Alexander Adelaar, personal communication.
23. There are also some Sulawesi loanwords, which Adelaar attributes to contact prior to the migration to Madagascar: See K. Alexander Adelaar, "The Indonesian Migrations to Madagascar: Making Sense of the Multidisciplinary Evidence", in Truman Simanjuntak, Ingrid Harriet Eileen Pojoh and Muhammad Hisyam (eds.), *Austronesian Diaspora and the Ethnogenesis of People in Indonesian Archipelago*, (Jakarta: Indonesian Institute of Sciences, 2006), pp. 8–9.
24. M.E. Hurler et al., "The dual origin of the Malagasy in Island Southeast Asia and East Africa: evidence from maternal and paternal lineages", *American Journal of Human Genetics* 76 (2005): 894–901.
25. Michel Mollat du Jourdin, "Les contacts historiques de l'Afrique et de Madagascar avec l'Asie du Sud et du Sud-Est: le rôle de l'Océan indien", *Archipel* 21 (1981): 35–53. See p. 37.

26. Roger Blench, "The Ethnographic Evidence for Long-distance Contacts Between Oceania and East Africa", in *The Indian Ocean in Antiquity*, edited by Julian Reade (London: Kegan Paul/British Museum, 1996), pp. 417–38. See p. 417.
27. Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: A Short History of Everybody for the Last 13,000 Years* (London: Vintage 1998), p. 381.
28. Roger Blench, "Bananas and Plantains in Africa: Reinterpreting the Linguistic Evidence", *Ethnobotany Research and Applications*, Vol. 7 (2009): 363–80.
29. Tim Denham and Mark Donohue, "Pre-Austronesian dispersal of banana cultivars West from New Guinea: linguistic relics from Eastern Indonesia", *Archaeologica Oceania* 44 (2009): 18–28. See p. 26.
30. James Hornell, *Water Transport: Origins and Early Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1946), p. 263.
31. J. Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia: A Consideration of the Theories and the Data", *Bijdragen tot de taal- land- en volkenkunde* 151, no. 2 (1995): 235–88. See p. 263.
32. Pierre-Yves Manguin, "The Southeast Asian Ship: An Historical Approach", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 266–76. See p. 275.
33. Manguin, "The Southeast Asian Ship", pp. 267–68.
34. Manguin, "The Southeast Asian Ship", pp. 270–72.
35. Adrian Horridge, *Sailing Craft of Indonesia*, Images of Asia Series (Singapore & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 6.
36. Hornell, *Water Transport*, p. 259.
37. For details of the Borobudur Ship Expedition, see the website at <<http://www.borobudurshipexpedition.com/>>.
38. Raymond Mauny, "The Wakwak and the Indonesian invasion in East Africa in 945 A.D.", *Studia* 15 (May 1965): 7–16. See p. 7.
39. Another place name whose location is a matter of debate, but which appears to have been in or close to Zanzibar. See Georges Loire, *Gens de Mere à Dar-es-Salaam*, (Karthala 1993), p. 67.
40. Personal communication.
41. Mauny, "The Wakwak and the Indonesian Invasion in East Africa in 945 A.D.", pp. 9–10.
42. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia*. See Chapter Ten. Others have cast doubt on the Indonesian origin of the xylophone while suggesting that *other* Indonesian musical instruments *were* imported into Africa.
43. Jones, *Africa and Indonesia*, pp. 227–28.
44. Bérénice Bellina and Ian Glover, "The Archaeology of Early Contact with India and the Mediterranean World, from the Fourth Century BC to the Fourth Century AD", in *Southeast Asia: From Prehistory to History*, edited by Ian C. Glover and Peter Bellwood (London/New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), pp. 68–89. See pp. 69–71.

45. Bellina and Glover, "The Archaeology of Early Contact with India and the Mediterranean World", p. 83.
46. Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia", pp. 242 and 250–51.
47. Bellina and Glover, "The Archaeology of Early Contact with India and the Mediterranean World", p. 69.
48. Lynda Shaffer, 'Southernization', *Journal of World History* 5 no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1–21. See pp. 4–5.
49. Philippe Beaujard, "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century", *Journal of World History* 16, no. 4 (December 2005): 411–65.
50. Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia", p. 253.
51. Wisseman Christie, "State Formation in Early Maritime Southeast Asia", pp. 263 and 374.
52. Ibid.
53. Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History: 1660–1783* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1890). See p. 25.
54. Beaujard, "The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems", Map 1.
55. Blench, "The Ethnographic Evidence for Long-distance Contacts", p. 432.
56. I. W. Ardika & P. Bellwood, "Sembiran: The Beginnings of Indian Contact with Bali", *Antiquity* 65 (1991): 221–32. See also I. W. Ardika, P. Bellwood, I. M. Sutaba & K. C. Yuliati, "Sembiran and the First Indian Contacts with Bali: An Update", *Antiquity* 71(1997): 193–95.
57. Dahl, *Malgache et Maanjan*, p. 367.
58. Dahl, *Malgache et Maanjan*, p. 368.
59. Adelaar, "The Indonesian Migrations to Madagascar", p. 15.
60. Hornell, *Water Transport*, p. 264.
61. Blench, "The Ethnographic Evidence for Long-distance Contacts Between Oceania and East Africa" p. 432.
62. Mauny, "The Wakwak and the Indonesian invasion in East Africa in 945 A.D.", p. 14.
63. The Merina of Madagascar — who are highlanders! — have shown an understanding of the importance of this maritime history by representing themselves as Nusantaraans reclaiming the role of traditional masters of the ocean.
64. Personal communication.
65. See Martin W. Lewis, "Dividing the Ocean Sea." *The Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (1999): 188–214, and Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen, "A Maritime Response to the Crisis in Asian Studies", *The Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (1999): 161–68.

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