Maritime Ideologies and Ethnic Anomalies
Sea Space and the Structure of Subalternity
in the Southeast Asian Littoral

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Conceptions of sea space have been integral to political imaginaries in
Southeast Asia. While in other parts of the world, national ideologies
were often expressed in relation to a homeland, for Indonesia
and the Dutch East Indies before it, geopolitical notions of place included
the seas in increasingly explicit and more territorialized ways. Touching on
imperial, colonial, national, and postnational settings, this piece concen-
trates on how the space of the seas was articulated in maritime ideologies
of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In addition to examining maritime ideologies from different historical
moments, I also explore how they may inform our understanding of changes
in the configuration of social difference, especially in the region’s littoral.
Maritime ideologies offer a privileged view into political imaginaries, yet
they also suggest how structures of governance underwent changes during
the late-colonial and post-independence periods. Linked to increasingly ter-
ritorialized notions of space and belonging, these structures continue to play
an important role in shaping Indonesian ideas of “ethnic” difference and
the anomalous position of “sea people.”

The piece begins with a look at the “free seas,” Hugo Grotius’s Mare
Liberum written in the early seventeenth century. Despite its mercantile un-
derpinning, the Mare Liberum was composed in an anti-imperial setting,
opposed to Iberian domination in both hemispheres. A similar conception
of sea space as the common inheritance of all mankind appears in the re-
marks of a contemporaneous Southeast Asian ruler who protested Dutch
attempts to monopolize trade. In contrast with these anti-imperial views,
the late-colonial seas of the region appear along with their island chains
in a grand image of archipelagic empire, “Insulinde.” Another notion of
archipelagic space, “Nusantara,” came to represent the nation. Reinvented
in the nineteenth century, this Javanese word from fourteenth-century java
was originally a term of reference for others, outside of Java. Only later did

1 Hans Konrad Van Tilburg
it signify an archipelagic expanse, and then a unitary national territory. The Malay expression tanah air prefigured this nation-centered usage. Meaning “land (and) water” or “land of water,” early twentieth-century anticolonial nationalists used “Tanah Air” to refer to the space of national belonging, much as people elsewhere might use the term “homeland.” Finally, I draw attention to the most recent incarnation of Nusantara in emergent visions of the archipelago as an Islamic political space. Like earlier maritime ideologies, this rendition of sea space in a postnational Southeast Asia proffers an alternative political imaginary.

WHY “MARITIME IDEOLOGY”?  

It has often been said that the seas in Southeast Asia, rather than an obstacle or hindrance, are a unifying factor for the peoples who live along the region’s rivers and coasts. The seas also provide a geographical framework for discussing the possibility of regionwide themes. Comparing Southeast Asian seas with the Mediterranean, the historian O. W. Wolters pointed out that in Fernand Braudel’s portrayal, the unity of the Mediterranean was created by the movements of people over the sea routes—movements that facilitated the growth of urban-based trade. In Southeast Asia, however, maritime communications did not lead to similar permanent and substantial polities. Wolters reckoned that when we examine the sea’s influence on shaping history in Southeast Asia, we do not stumble upon a useful theme, for in his view the seas there fit into a polycentric landscape. Nevertheless he went on to suggest another way that the seas did have an impact on the region’s history, namely, the influence they exerted on the possibilities for an intraregional communality of historical experience. It was in connection with this idea, rather than any Southeast Asian “Mediterranean,” that Wolters argued for a “single ocean” stretching from East Africa to South Asia and on to the coasts of China. He viewed this “single ocean” as a “vast zone of neutral water . . . with a genuine unity of its own.” This view usefully locates the seas as a mediator of historical experience shared between disparate places. Yet the proposition that this sea space was part of a “vast zone of neutral water . . . with a genuine unity of its own”—our different temporal foci notwithstanding—provides a sharp contrast with my aims here. For Southeast Asian seas have in fact been a symbolic and material resource significant to imperial, national, local, and ethnic contexts. Whatever sea-related “unities” have appeared as natural, the seas have hardly constituted a “neutral” medium. On the contrary, they have been the terrain, as it were, of contestation.

The view of ideology employed here does not reduce it to the notion of an illusion, a mask, or false consciousness. Rather, ideology here primarily concerns the representation of unities where, if not contestations, social divisions certainly abound. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are formulations of apparently legitimate political visions for social groupings—for collectivities either explicitly named or simply presupposed—whose internal differences are effaced. Such apparently legitimate political visions may also be called political imaginaries. Those I focus on below use different versions of the space of Southeast Asian seas—different seascapes—as their vehicle. Like other political imaginaries grooping for legitimacy, the maritime ideologies I examine reach back to the past for “names, battle cries and costumes” and project this “time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language” onto claims in the present and for possible futures.

A history that looks at ideological forms—discourses in which multiple social divisions are effaced—is by no means a substitute for studying either the multifarious things that people do or their empirical distribution in a production process. This is an important caveat. Yet ideological discourse is a crucial part of the social. Once we recognize that ideology operates through language and that language is a medium of social action, we must also acknowledge that ideology is partially constitutive of what, in our societies, is “real.” Ideology is not a pale image of the social world but is a part of that world, a creative and constitutive element of our social lives.

To study ideology, then, is to study, in part, how these creative actions serve to sustain the organization of power in unequal social relations.

EMPIRES REAL AND IMAGINED

While I trace a history of the region’s seas as an area that, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, became increasingly territorialized, it should be mentioned that in an earlier period European sovereigns staked claims to exclusive privileges in enormous swaths of ocean. Often discussed as dividing the seas between Spain and Portugal, the 1494 Treaty of Tordesillas is best understood as an allocation of routes for movement and spheres for exploration, rather than as an apportionment of boundable, claimable territory. Nevertheless, this and other Luso–Spanish treaties of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries did create a new politicization of ocean space wherein efforts to exclude others did not go uncontested.

Certainly the Dutch disputed such efforts, and the seas of Southeast Asia were a crucial arena for their contestation. The legal treatise Mare Liberum, or Freedom of the Seas, compiled by Grotius in 1604–1605, argued against
the ownership of the high seas, and it did so in the interest of Dutch trade. Part of a larger work, *De Jure Praedae* (DJP), or *The Law of Prize and Booty*, it was composed after a decision by the Amsterdam Admiralty Board investigating the seizure of the Portuguese vessel, the *Sta. Catarina*. The *Sta. Catarina* was seized in 1603 near the mouth of the Johor River and the present-day Straits of Singapore by the Dutch captain—later admiral—Jakob van Heemskerck who sailed under a precursor of the newly established VOC or Dutch East India Company. The Admiralty Board resolved that the vessel was lawfully seized and her cargo confiscated in an act of war. Whether the services of Grotius—a scholar of law and classics and a theologian—were sought to provide the strongest possible legal and moral justification for the Dutch action, or rather, in an apologia, to popularize it, the framework in which Grotius interpreted this capture was not just about trade rivalries and retaliation for damages suffered by Heemskerck’s expedition. It was also about the United Provinces’ revolt against Iberian domination and the extension of this struggle to the waters of Southeast Asia.

Even before the *Sta. Catarina*’s capture in 1603, we find that Grotius himself considered Dutch military exploits in the waters of the Indies in light of the revolt against Spain. Grotius celebrated the exploits of the Dutch army and navy from 1588 to 1609 in a series of elegies called the Maurice Epigrams. In one of these poems, *Itinera Indica* or *Expedition to the East Indies*, composed in 1602, he writes of a fleet that comes far from the Northern sky, or hemisphere, “a free people, Batavians by name; sole hope and effort lest both skies know a single master.” The Batavians, in other words, were the only hope for preventing Iberian dominance in both hemispheres. Grotius here refers not simply to the Dutch settlers at Batavia (contemporary Jakarta) on Java, but also to the ancient Batavians who provided the Dutch with a myth of descent from magnificent ancestors predating Spanish rule. This myth, represented as a historical continuity, helped to justify the United Provinces’ revolt against Spain. *Itinera Indica* thus provides a lens onto Grotius’s understanding of the Dutch presence overseas: it had both anti-Iberian and anti-imperial significance. Ironically, the events that spurred the composition of the DJP would, in turn, anchor the efforts of the Dutch to expand their own influence in the region.

Grotius based his arguments in the DJP partly on the notion that the act of preventing or actively impeding a party from exercising a right bestowed by nature is in itself a sufficient legal ground upon which to initiate and wage a just war. Based less on natural law than on more theological grounds, the ruler of Makassar in 1615 put forward a notion similar to “the free seas” in protest against the Dutch: “God has made the earth and sea, has divided the earth among mankind and given the sea in common. It is a thing unheard of that anyone should be forbidden to sail the seas….”

In the seventeenth century, the South Sulawesi state of Makassar, which had a large-scale transit trade in spices from the Moluccas, had no choice but to fight the VOC’s efforts to gain a monopoly in the nutmeg and clove trade. During Dutch negotiations for a treaty in 1659, Makassar’s Sultan Hasanuddin objected to the prohibition of trade with Company islands and ports. It ran counter to the commandment of God, he said, “who created the world in order that all people should have the enjoyment thereof, or do you believe that God has reserved these islands, so far away from the place of your nations, for your trade alone…” Within a decade, with the help of Makassar’s rivals, Ternate and the Bugis realm of Boné, the Dutch took over the port of Makassar, dramatically altering the dynamics of trade and power in the region.

Despite his mocking tone, Sultan Hasanuddin’s rather prescient remarks neatly describe an archipelagic vision of empire that appears in the mid-nineteenth-century work of the famous Dutch author Multatuli. Multatuli’s novel *Max Havelaar* decries the treatment of the native Javanese under the yoke of colonialism and bemoans the equivocal position of an official who tries to ameliorate their conditions. This, however, is no anticolonialist tract, but a reformist rallying cry. The author-cum-narrator threatens:

Deliverance and help, by legal means, if possible, by the legitimate means of force, if necessary. This book is only a beginning. I shall wax in power and keenness of weapons, in proportion as shall be necessary. God grant that it may not be necessary! No! It will not be necessary! For I dedicate my book to You, William the Third, King, Grand Duke, Prince—more than Prince, Grand Duke and King—Emperor of the glorious realm of Insulinde, that coils yonder round the Equator like a girdle of emerald….

Although concerned with the suffering of Javanese peasants under colonialism, in seeking a way out of their predicament and his, Multatuli envisioned an entire archipelagic realm of which perhaps he himself, or William the Third, would be the rescuer and emperor. The realm, “Insulinde,” a name that he coined by combining *insula*—“island” and *Ind(i)je*, was the brainchild of a loyal—if critical—imperial subject. This mythic image of the entire archipelago as a political space prefigured later colonial and nationalist spatial imaginings that explicitly included the seas together with the archipelago’s islands.

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Similar territorial myths of dominion were supported by the work of colonial cartographers and hydrographers who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, began to map in earnest the maritime features of the region and to incorporate coastal waters as part of colonial territory. Maps were used as a quasi-legal means to reconstruct the property histories of the new colonial possessions, legitimizing the spread of colonial power. They thus reworked what were acknowledged in other legal contexts to be the coasts of independent native realms.

G. J. Resink worked hard to bring to light these other legal articulations in which native realms were still recognized as independent and to deflate the territorial myths of extensive colonial control outside of Java before the twentieth century. Resink had a keen eye for noting the passing remarks of colonial officials, remarks that show, for instance, that the independence of the allied realms and vassal principalities on Celebes was recognized between 1871 and 1881 by courts of every level in the lesser Netherlands East Indies. What Resink shows, I would like to stress, is that certain lands, which officials considered to be independent realms, still—in the legal sense—had shores that were not washed by the waters of the Netherlands East Indies in the late nineteenth century. In other words, at that time there had not been a sense of the Netherlands East Indies as a unified territory, least of all one that encompassed the entire archipelago. It is important to bear this in mind, for Mutilatu’s vision of Insulinde and the dominance of subsequent maritime ideologies seem to obscure these historical circumstances.

Following the capitulation of realms outside of Java between 1905 and 1915, the waters of the archipelago increasingly became the object of scientific attention. Scientific discourse and practice composed part of the arsenal by which the Dutch appropriated these waters. By 1922 one could learn about ocean science in the colony by reading the popular book De zeeën van Nederlandsch Oost-Indië (The Seas of the Netherlands East-Indies). Scientific chapters discussed sea depths and soundings, the temperature and salinity of the water, the biology of the seas, its geology, the tides, and the delineation of coasts. The chapter on biology contains two environmental sections: the sea as an environment for animals, and the sea as an environment for plants. One finds here no mention at all of orang laut or “sea people”—the various people whose lives were closely associated with the waters. Although the maritime realm was also their “environment,” they were not studied under the rubric of scientific discourses about the sea. Yet, within discourses of colonial knowledge produced about “natives” it was also difficult to locate “sea people,” who were dispersed, peripatetic to varying degrees, and who claimed no land as collectively theirs or to which their “origins” might be traced.

Just as colonial mapping did not recognize the presence and practices of upland shifting agriculturalists, the littoral zones that sea people lived in and the waters they traversed were likewise generally not considered to be places in which people resided. This contrasted markedly with how places on land began to index groups of people in colonial knowledge about “natives.” As with late colonial administration and military operations, the organization of this knowledge worked largely within a discourse of mapping. Particular places on land stood for groups of people in a way that was not applicable to sea people. Apparently lacking a singular place on land from which they might claim to hail as a group, sea people occupied a kind of structural blind spot. While their “lack” of a homeland and their mobility earned them a place in the colonial imagination as “sea gypsies,” the land-oriented organization of colonial governance and the association of specific lands with particular groups of “natives” created a structure in which sea people did not seem to “fit,” and through which they began to appear out of place. This out-of-placeness persisted despite more explicit incorporation of the seas in colonial geographic imaginaries, and even when these borrowed terms from indigenous sources.

The introduction to The Seas of the Netherlands East-Indies provides an illustration of how the Dutch appropriated Javanese geographical knowledge. In its discussion of the historical background to the research, Marco Polo’s travel notes are downplayed as “not of any oceanographic importance,” for the beginnings of our knowledge lie not with Marco Polo. One seeks it (it speaks for itself) in the knowledge of the natives themselves. It is the Nagarakertagama (1365) which, through an enumeration of many geographic proper names, demonstrates that the Javanese of the fourteenth century were acquainted, even though only superficially, with the whole of our “East,” from Sumatra including the Malay peninsula to the west coast of New Guinea, and thus, from their own experience, had acquired a certain degree of familiarity with its coasts and principal channels.

In this passage, Javanese enumeration of other locales is used to express the sweep or expanse of colonial territory: the whole of our East. Yet the Javanese term that came to represent this sweep, musantara, did not mean “archipelago” and still less “Dutch empire in the East.” Rather, this term,
as used in the fourteenth century, referred to the other islands, that is, those beyond Java. In the next section I examine the permutations “nusantara” underwent as an emblem of archipelagic national space.

SPACES OF NATIONALIST UNITY

Images of political unity were crucial to the success of the anticolonial movement, and calls for national unity had been clearly voiced as early as the 1928 Youth Congress in Batavia. These calls explicitly included the seas in the space of the future nation. The Sumpah Pemuda or Youth Pledge of the 1928 Congress adopted the ideals of one nation, one language, and one homeland.” However, the term used was not “homeland” but tanah air, which can mean “land (and) water” or “land of water.” “Tanah” denotes land or soil, and cognates of this Malay term were widely used in place names. These vaguely defined “lands” became more carefully demarcated as the authorities drew the boundaries of administrative units. Yet, unlike the tana Bali of the Balinese and the tana Jawa of the Javanese, the region’s sea people, while maintaining attachments to particular places, had no taken-for-granted “homeland” and thus developed no ideologically primordial attachment to a locale from which they could collectively be said to come. Although tanah air includes the waters, it has a specifically nationalist referent and does not allude to any particular subgroup.

Nusantara, since at least the mid-twentieth century, has basically served as a synonym for tanah air. As mentioned above, the term can be traced to fourteenth-century Javanese texts where it meant “the other islands,” as seen from Majapahit Java. The self-consciously colonial appropriation of this term of Javanese derivation implicitly exaggerated the reach of a Majapahit “empire,” thus serving both Javanese pretensions as well as those of the Dutch who claimed to want to restore the luster of the glorious “Indianized” states of Java’s pre-Islamic past.

While these colonial connotations of an authentic Javanese imperial past persisted, more recent usage of nusantara denotes a national space in which the Javanese frame of reference has largely fallen away. Since the mid-1940s nusantara has clearly stood for the whole archipelago as it encompasses national space. Contemporary Indonesians give it a believable, if mistaken, folk etymology. The folk etymology asserts that nusa, from the Javanese for “island,” and antara, modern Indonesian for “between,” combine to represent the islands between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (or the China Sea), or refer to the islands between the Asian mainland and Australia.

Bernard Vlekke used the term in his book, Nusantara: A History of the East Indian Archipelago, published in English in 1943. He was the first to see that the history of “Indonesia”—a term already in scholarly use for a century—had begun to vacillate between a colonial history of the Netherlands East Indies and a national history of Indonesia. The 1943 edition was reprinted in 1977, but in revised versions from 1959 and 1960 the title was indeed changed to Nusantara: A History of Indonesia, a change that registered the anticolonial nationalist revolution following the end of World War II.

A complex period of “regional rebellions” followed the revolution, fraught with tension over inequities between Jakarta and the “outer islands” as well as friction between civilian politicians and the transforming military. As part of its effort to bring these “regional rebellions” to a close, in 1957 the central government issued a statement of national unity called the Djuanda Declaration, in which nusantara was reinvented. This Declaration asserted national territorial unity on the basis of what was ostensibly bequeathed by the former colonial power. It differed, however, from earlier, colonial visions of territory by having not just a narrow strip of coastal zone around each of the islands, but including instead all of the waters between Indonesia’s many islands within a single body. It marked the creation of a national “geo-body,” an abstract geographical signifier that was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent.

This new geo-body, which included all of the intra-island waters, resonated with the early nationalist formulation of tanah air, while it simultaneously invoked a supposedly imperial Javanese past. In this way a notion of the precolonial past was used to underwrite a presumption of Javanese supremacy with pseudohistorical legitimacy. It should not be forgotten that the Djuanda Declaration’s particular reinvention of nusantara was intended not simply to buttress national unity, but quite explicitly to justify measures taken against “rebellions” in “the regions” in the name of “national security.”

Heavily promoted as a national ideology since 1973, the “Nusantara Concept” (Wawasan Nusantara) gained even further legitimacy with Indonesia’s participation in the third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which lasted from 1973 to 1982. In this third UNCLOS, the Djuanda geo-body of Nusantara gained an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), a 200-nautical-mile swath around an imaginary line connecting the outermost points of all the islands. Like the colonial use of maps in an earlier time, the new nusantara borders reconfigured a property history. In this international context of legal discourses, the Nusantara
Concept was used to justify state ownership of all material resources within and below the waters between the archipelago’s islands as well as within the EEZ.

Most nations involved in UNCLOS had both strategic and material concerns. Strategic concerns included rights of passage through certain waterways, and material concerns focused primarily on deep-sea floor hydrocarbon resources—hence the deeply felt disappearance of East Timor from the Nusantara geo-body, leaving few legal grounds to contest the loss of the resource-rich Timor Gap. Such material interests also underlie ongoing disputes over the ownership of particular small islands and the EEZs that would be extended by sovereignty over them. One factor in deciding territorial disputes over such islands is the question of whether they support a “permanent settled population.” However, like colonial mapping, this criterion does not recognize that historically sea people have lived intermittently on many of the small islands that dot the waters of the region.

ANOMALOUS ETHNICITY AND THE NEW NUSANTARA

Perhaps nothing in Indonesia better illustrates the use of place as an icon of “identity” than Taman Mini—the Mini Theme Park of the high Soeharto era that John Pemberton writes about so revealingly in On the Subject of “Java.” The park presents emblems of “cultural” difference from various parts of the archipelago to people for their self-recognition as Indonesian subjects. Such emblems of difference include, among other things, styles of dress and architecture. The pièce de résistance, however, is the park’s pond, which contains the archipelago in miniature. Through it, people are meant to read isometric relations between the particular places, and the presumably distinct peoples, of Indonesia. Of course, sea people are nowhere to be found in such a scheme, for there is no place in the pond that represents for them, what is, for others, a notion of “their land.” While on the one hand, the archipelago in miniature iconically manifests the national motto “Unity in Diversity,” on the other hand, the bounded pond taken as a whole is an iconic representation, not just of the space of the nation, but of the EEZ-expanded Nusantara.

A focus on such ideological structures of ethnic difference and the production of national subjects makes for a remarkably flat picture that iron out social complexity and hierarchy. Yet it is against precisely this structure of apparently equivalent differences that sea people come across as a kind of ethnic anomaly. Their romanticization as sea gypsies in the colonial period gave the impression that most sea people were always on the move. This same image under the present rubric of “formerly nomadic” facilitates the sense that they no longer move anywhere at all. Indeed, over roughly the past century there has been a great deal of settlement both by choice and by government policy. However, just as sea people were not itinerant in the romantic fashion of the colonial image, it is also not the case that they no longer get around nautically. Yet, viewed as formerly nomadic sea gypsies, they are now nevertheless widely considered to have lost their authenticity.

Sama and other sea people in Indonesia have, moreover, been relentlessly subjected to primitivizing discourses, which cast them as the inverse of the “modern” and the “developed.” In the Soeharto period they were administratively classed with masyarakat terasing (isolated peoples) or suku-suku terasing (isolated tribes). Terasing here has two meanings, and there is slippage between them: it means “secluded,” “separate,” “isolated” on the one hand and “very foreign” or “exotic” on the other. What sea people have often been isolated from, however, are not other people and places—they have continually been involved in some degree of travel and trade. Rather, they have become isolated in relation to administrative structures and their centers.

The cause of this is not physical distance, but social distance and a perception of inconvenience: small islands and coastal settlements must often be reached by boat, and civil servants consider them out of the way. Yet even when the way is clear and not so far, officials are generally reluctant to get into boats they consider risky with people they sometimes call “primatif.” The apparent “lack” of collective identification with a particular place on land has prevented sea people, for their part, from forming the kinds of ethnic patronage networks that are supported by territorial administrative structures. Even when, for instance, Sama people do manage to rise in the bureaucracy, they may shed their ethnic markedness and “disappear” to would-be clients. Not only in terms of infrastructure then, but also for structural-ideological reasons, many sea people have become administratively marginal, surviving, and in some cases flourishing, on the edges of governance.

One is tempted to look to them for an alternative maritime ideology, yet it is hard to find any evidence for such a thing. Although associated with the waters, with lives that often revolve around the tides, since sea people have been scattered throughout the region and have had no history of political unity, there has been no context in which they might ideologically objectify the space of the seas. While they may, then, consider themselves as “belonging” somehow to maritime and littoral worlds, they apparently have not produced explicit discourses that represent the seas and coasts as a collectively salient political space.
As outlined at the beginning, this chapter attempts to trace a history that looks at ideological forms—discourses in which multiple social divisions are effaced—an approach that complements other types of analysis. What I have argued is that the space of the seas has been a crucial part of political imaginaries at different historical moments in Southeast Asia and particularly in Indonesia. As part of political imaginaries, sea space became increasingly territorialized, while at the same time, people of the littoral came to be viewed as more, or perhaps less, than just another ethnic group. Romanticized as sea gypsies, their putative origins as a group not traced to any particular land, sea people eluded the impetus to find ethnic "identity" or historical "origin" on place. Like "gypsies" elsewhere, they reveal a dominant structure of equivalent ethnic oppositions through their implicit placement outside of it—a kind of anomaly to that structure, despite increasing encompassment of the seas. What I have done here is sketch a broad sequence of maritime ideologies, rather like a stone skipping over the surface of history. More than simply a sequence, however, I have tried to show how these maritime ideologies reach back to the "past" and then use that "past" to project a design from the political present into the future.

The UNCLOS-inspired Nusantara was the height of attempts to use this term to represent a precisely delimited Indonesian territorial unity. After Suharto's fall in 1998, the "regions" began to call for decentralization. Coupled with the referendum and independence in East Timor as well as other violent conflicts in a number of areas, fears mounted that Indonesia might disintegrate. National anxiety resurrected the acronym NKRI—Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (the United State of the Republic of Indonesia). But there was little talk of "nusantara" as an emblem of national unity.

The latest incarnation of nusantara appears amid concerns over Islamic radicalism in the region. In late 2001 and early 2002 a series of arrests were made under Malaysia's and Singapore's internal security acts, detaining people connected with the militant groups Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and Kumpulan Militan Malaysiа (KMM). These groups reportedly had the goal of setting up a union of Islamic states, or a single entity, variously called Nusantara Raya, Darul Islamiah Nusantara, or Daulah Islamiah Nusantara. Malaysian and Singaporean authorities have made much out of calls to establish an Islamic state as evidence of possible links to al-Qaeda. But calls like this have become such a common theme among militant groups in Indonesia that, as the International Crisis Group has noted, it is hard to see how, by itself, this indicates much of anything. By itself it does not indicate much. However, taken together with the other maritime ideologies sketched here, in which the space of the sea forms an important resource in the production of powerful political imaginaries, this example illustrates a reformulation that draws on similar terms, but turns them toward a new agenda. In this it is much like Insulinde, tanah air, and earlier versions of nusantara, taking a "time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language" and projecting them onto a new political project and possible futures.

NOTES

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1. The focus here is primarily on Indonesia, yet sea space has also been integrally important to the political imaginaries of the Philippines and Malaysia.
2. As in Indonesia, Malaysians also used Tanah Air to refer to their country.
6. Wolters, History, Culture and Region, p. 38. He used the metaphor of "mandala" polities to describe this "polycentric landscape."
8. Philip Steinberg similarly argues that the "world-ocean" has been perceived, constructed, and managed under modernity in various ways by competing interest groups; see his The Social Construction of the Ocean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
9. I am indebted to John B. Thompson's work on ideology, especially his attention to the work of Castoriadis, Lefort, and Bourdieu. Thompson sought to redirect the study of ideology away from the search for collectively shared values, and, as with shifts in the study of "culture," to aim investigation instead at "the complex ways in which meaning is mobilized for the maintenance of relations of domination"; see Studies in The Theory of Ideology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 5, 35.
12. Ibid., p. 6. Limitations of space preclude a discussion of Bakhtin and how el-
ements of language are historically transformed through the concreteness of present circumstances.


18. Grotius incorrectly places the incident in the Straits of Malacca. See Borschberg, *"Sta. Catarina,"* n. 12, p. 34.


22. The *Sta. Catarina* incident should be seen against the background of the union of Spain and Portugal under Hapsburg rule by 1580, and by 1590 the extension of attacks to Portuguese targets by Spain’s avowed enemies—England and the United Provinces. In this context, Stadtholder Prince Maurice of Orange instructed Dutch captains under the VOC’s predecessors to “defend” themselves against any party that might impede their voyage or inflict harm, and to seek reparations for damages suffered. DJP, p. 376, in Borschberg, *"Sta. Catarina,"* p. 50.


24. See Borschberg, *"Sta. Catarina,"* for details on the longer-term impacts of the incident: the consolidation of the Dutch presence in the region, the opening of the China and Japan markets to the VOC, the securing of Johor’s independence vis-à-vis regional powers, and the evocation of Portugal as a maritime and land-based military force from the Straits of Malacca.


37. Similarly, Trouillot remarks that Jews and gypsies were in an awkward position not accounted for by a here/elsewhere dichotomy. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), n. 21, p. 143.


40. It has carried this nationalist sense in Malaysian usage as well.


42. Resink, *Indonesia’s History Between the Myths*, p. 18. Vlekke owed the title to Ki Hadjar Dewantoro.

44. The Djusunda Declaration was later ratified in 1960. Earlier in 1957 martial law had also been declared.

45. Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped, p. 130.

46. This was rather like Grotius invoking, "a free people, Batavians by name," a poetic reference to a myth of glorious ancestors set out as a proposition of historical continuity.

47. This was the same year in which oil prices shot up, and the remains of Indonesian political parties were fused into two groups barred from organizing below the district level.


49. I elaborate this concept in a publication in preparation. There is a certain craft — interpretive and practical — involved in taking advantage of this position in order to survive materially and socially.

50. Given the right political circumstances and means of communication, this could conceivably change. A historical alternative maritime ideology may be a pipe dream, but one may nevertheless reconsider regional sea space from the perspective of sea people's practices, precisely the task I took up in my dissertation, "Liquid Territory: Subordination, Memory and Manuscripts among Sama People of Sulawesi's Southern Littoral" (University of Michigan, 2005). In addition to analysis of livelihood and political economy, it explores maritime practices through stories of relocation in Sama tales of the past, through the circulation of related oral narratives and Bugis-language manuscripts, as well as through memories of conflict avoidance in the coastal zone.

51. These fears were serious enough to warrant public affirmation of support from the United States. See "U.S. Backs Indonesian Territorial Integrity," The Jakarta Post, February 18, 2000, p. 2.
