

reflects the solid research work for the book. A glossary of nautical terms is provided for readers without a background in maritime history.

This slim volume adds to our understanding of the career of a naval officer at the turn of the nineteenth century. It is the result of lengthy and full research; little if anything was missed. The importance of the book is that it examines the naval career of an average officer, who happened to be there for three major fleet actions and the capture of a rich prize. It will appeal to anyone interested in officer development during the era of Nelson, and more broadly, the activities of the British navy during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

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**Philip Bowring. *Empire of the Winds. The Global Role of Asia's Great Archipelago*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, [www.bloomsbury.com](http://www.bloomsbury.com), 2020. xviii+317 pp., illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. UK £17.99, US \$35.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-350-16234-1. (E-book available.)**

Philip Bowring's maritime history work focuses on an ethnic seafaring society called the Austronesians located in southeast Asia traditionally known as Nusantara. This extensive geographical land and oceanic region is home to many diverse and polyglot nations speaking native languages that include Indonesian, Javanese, Malayan, Sanskrit, Sudanese, and Madurese. Island hopping across the south, seafarers from the Asian mainland first explored and colonized large nearby islands. Their descendants ventured into the labyrinth of islands and atolls that formed steppingstones deeper into the great ocean. Philip Bowring traverses the cultural and commercial achievements of the region's multi-ethnic people from the dawn of history through to today's globalized interactions.

Much of the history of Nusantara is likely unfamiliar to those not specializing in this area of academia. This less than 300-page work provides a scholarly, if not comprehensive, examination of one of the world's least understood regions. Journalist Bowring chose to organize the chapters partly "by chronology, partly by geography, partly by theme" (xvii) in describing the main aspects of Nusantarian history. He emphasizes commerce and federations rather than culture and social order to create an approximate balance between the region's different areas.

The author incorporates a wide range of sources from archaeology to fragmented and scattered linguistic evidence from Indonesian, Malaysia, Taiwan, and the Philippines to move his story along. He begins with pre-

historic times, then moves through the spread of trade networks, religions, architecture, language evolution, and imperialism. Local populations were greatly shaped by the arrival of European western culture and their differing religious beliefs. The book ends by examining the region today, emphasizing how its history shaped the geographic and political influences that evolved and continue to evolve in the present.

One reason why this aspect of oceanic history has rarely been the subject of maritime historical inquiries may be due to the scarcity of primary sources. Much of the earliest records were inscribed on fragile palm leaves that did not survive. Also, this area of peninsulas and archipelagos has changed over time because of rising seas, tsunamis, typhoons, and annual monsoons. Their location along the “ring of fire,” comprised of volcanic arcs and oceanic trenches that partly encircle the Pacific Basin formed a zone of frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Its endemic population dealt with a multitude of microclimates that produced deserts, rainforests and mountain ranges – all engendering dissimilar agricultural lands – which meant that certain crops could be grown in only specific areas. Therefore, this vast archipelago, the largest on the globe, has been treated as a subcontinent rather than a southeast Asian appendage containing a rich, if sometimes contradictory and confusing, narrative.

Nusantaria was governed by Indigenous tribes or conquering neighbours who invaded by sea. Replacing Indigenous tribal religions, successive foreign faiths found their way into this society. First came Buddhism and Hinduism from nearby India, followed by rival Semitic faiths replete with demanding priests and charismatic prophets. These included three subsets of Islam (Sunni, Shia, and Sufi) imported from Arab traders and Roman Catholic Christianity mostly from the Spanish who were extremely drawn to proselytizing. Other Catholics, the Portuguese and French, were more fixated upon trade, while the Dutch and British colonized and added Protestant faiths. In order to have each of their creeds accepted by the local population, incoming religions incorporated traditional local customs that were familiar and important to the natives, thus forming a spiritual kaleidoscope in the vast region. These usually conflicting sets of beliefs and moral attitudes led to a wide range of interpretations toward sexual promiscuity and the institution of marriage, particularly Islam’s permissive view of polygamy. Morality is another issue: besides trafficking in slaves, this region boasts a very long jungled and mangrove-filled coastline, where piracy took root and, to a lesser extent, persists to this day.

Bowring avoids narrating a chronical stream of events, but intermingles geology, linguistics and genetics as critical elements in the early pre-history of Nusantaria. Cultural issues such as the use of ethnic artifacts, perceived different racial types, megaliths, and folk myths all are identified as playing

crucial roles. Overlying this is the changing climate, wind patterns and oceans currents that affected the area's seafaring history. This led to the development of unique water crafts such as Joncos (junks), large sailed and rowed outriggers and more diminutive sail-powered crafts, such as the prahus. As larger sea vessels made their way into Nusantara starting with Magellan's voyage, local boat builders adapted their designs to compete in predictable fierce sea battles that followed. Foreign traders chiefly exchanged silver for silk, cotton, timber, tin, copper, tea, tobacco, pepper, cloves, and sadly, also for slaves. Human trafficking became a valuable commodity that flourished as the demand for labour increased to provide profitable trading goods. Mostly missing was a discussion of their endemic tropical diseases and especially the novel diseases introduced by western traders. The impact of disease outbreaks likely had a major effect upon commerce and population growth or decline.

A helpful glossary starts this book because many of the words and locations are unfamiliar and some changed their spelling over time making it difficult to keep track of the specifics of the people, places and events. Particularly disappointing is that the many maps contain exceedingly small print and, although places are identified, they often do not correlate to the nearby text. The role of the United States is covered as it entered into Nusantara during the clipper ship era, which is a point of interest, although it plays a small part in the book. This development was significant because the powerful North American nation became important with its occupation of the Philippines as a consequence of the Spanish American War.

*Empire of the Winds* is a challenging but quite rewarding book. It is an ambitious, broadly cast read dealing with seemingly ever-changing names of people and places within a vast area influenced by commerce and successful attempts at hegemony. Bowring provides an enjoyable exploration of these little-known maritime nations and the seas upon which they and their many intruders sailed. This balanced yet complex scholarly work largely succeeds in tracing much of the Austronesian people's history of ethnic and cultural mixing, imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, nationalism; a book that I recommend to all maritime historians.

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**Les Brown. *ShipCraft 27: British Sloops and Frigates of the Second World War*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publishing, [www.seaforthpublishing.com](http://www.seaforthpublishing.com), 2021. 64 pp., illustrations, bibliography. £16.99, paper; ISBN 978-1-52679-387-4. (E-book available.)**