The Prison and the Sea

Jan Mrázek*

[*Abstract*]

The essay reflects on the work of Adrian Lapian (1929-2011), an Indonesian scholar of archipelagic/maritime Southeast Asia and its "sea people—sea pirates—sea kings." The essay suggests that Lapian's writing mirrors navigation at sea, and the constant re-orientation and ever-changing, multiple points of view that are part of it. This is contrasted to Foucault's "panopticism" and academic desire for discipline. Taking cue from Lapian's writing and from the present author's experience of seafaring, the essay envisions Southeast Asian studies as a fluid, precarious, disorienting, even nauseating multiplicity of experiences, dialogues, and moving, unstable, and uncertain points of view; a style of learning that is less (neo)colonial, more humble, and closer to experiences in the region, than super-scholarship that imposes universalizing, panoptic standards, theories and methods (typically self-styled as "new") that reduce the particular into a specimen of the general, a cell in the Panopticon. The essay concludes with reflections on certain learning initiatives/traditions at the National University of

* Associate Professor, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, seajm@nus.edu.sg

Singapore, including seafaring voyages—experiences, encounters, and conversations that make students and scholars alike to move and see differently, to be touched, blown away, rocked, swayed, disoriented, swallowed, transformed, and feel anew their places, roots, bonds, distances, fears, blindness, powerlessness.

Keywords: Adrian Lapian, Michel Foucault, Michel Serres, panopticism, maritime Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Riau Islands, archipelagic studies, area studies and disciplines, seafaring, experiential learning

Ⅰ. Points of View

The Call for Papers of the 2018 Southeast Asian Studies conference in Busan, where this paper was originally presented, echoes familiar anxieties and complaints about the state of Southeast Asian Studies: area studies "has not been established as an academic discipline furnished with its own unique research methodologies," as it is "conducted by scholars from various disciplines." "[A]rea studies is experiencing […] identity crisis by lacking of its own uniqueness." We need "to establish area studies as an academic discipline." The conference aims to explore "new approaches."

The desire for discipline, characterized by unity more than diversity, makes me think of Michel Foucault. His use of the word "disciplines," as instruments of subjugation through which "docile bodies" are produced, crosses boundaries between the prison system, discipline in military and schools, and organization of knowledge. I think of his discussion of the Panopticon, an envisioned prison in which all inmates, all cells, can be seen by a single, centrally positioned watchman, himself invisible to the inmates (1991: 195-228). Foucault speaks of panopticism as a form of subjugation, and also subjugation of knowledge. I am not going to comment here on academic disciplines generally, but specifically on the desire to make Southeast Asian Studies into "a discipline," as opposed to the existing involvement of "scholars from various disciplines," which is seen as a weakness, an "identity crisis," or a

lack of "uniqueness." It is this particular project that makes me think of Foucault's image of a single all-seeing, controlling, central vision. Moreover, the image resonates with the powerful global perspective that posits Southeast Asian studies primarily as a sub-species of area studies, as one cell in a panoptic prison.

So, "for better or worse" (to evoke the title of a book on colonial relationship: Lapian 2010), I think of Foucault. But—it feels like I am escaping—hurriedly I think away from Foucault's Panopticon; I think of the Indonesian scholar Adrian Lapian, whose work in some ways resonates with Foucault's (both reflect on knowledge and power/violence, and both often think in terms of the politics of seeing), yet in other respects it is diametrically opposed—as if Foucault and Lapian were describing the same phenomena from different spaces, different points of view, in different motions. One speaks of the prison, the other of the sea.

Lapian's work in Indonesia is varied, yet he is best known as a scholar of maritime history. In his writings, this focus is presented in terms of position, point of view, and as a response to the particular, archipelagic seascape of Indonesia. He writes at the outset of his dissertation (written in 1986, and published as a book in 2011), a history of the Sulawesi Sea in the nineteenth century:

> Until now, the study of Indonesian history has privileged events that happen on land, even though more than half of Indonesian Republic consists of the sea. … A large part of the experience and actions of the inhabitants of Nusantara in the past escapes the observation and research of our historians. To see Indonesian history from land only makes our knowledge and view of the past—which form the basis for seeing the present—constantly weighted to one side (2011: 1).

As Lapian writes this, he is already seeing Indonesia from the sea: the words for "land" that he uses—*darat(an)*—generally imply land as seen from, or as contrasted with, the sea. A dictionary definition, "*tanah yang tidak digenangi air*" ("land not immersed in water"), gives a sense of this: *darat* is defined in terms of its opposite, it is the non-sea. I am reminded of marine charts, where sea appears as a complex landscape with variegated features, while the land beyond the coastline is blank. Yet, and this is typical of

Lapian's optics and non-positionality, he never remains grounded in one point of view (while we like scholarship to be grounded, for a ship this is the greatest danger): he emphasizes that a view from the sea is a complementary part of Indonesian history, which so far "prioritizes the land element in what should be a history of *tanah air*" (2011: 1). His focus on the sea is a matter of a shift to a previously less dominant position and point of view, where one is conscious, however, that this, too, is merely one position among others. Lapian further relativizes the view from the sea by referring to the statement of the Dutch historian Van Leur that (I quote Lapian's paraphrase) "Indonesia should not be seen from the deck of Dutch ships and VOC forts, as has been done by many Dutch writers at that time," but, Lapian adds, it is often forgotten that "view from indigenous boats and coastal towns must not be ignored" (2011: 1-2). By pointing out that from every boat one sees differently, Lapian adds to the number of views, the boats, the positions, creating a sense of multiple, changing views and moving sights, which "must not be ignored." Moreover, rather than speaking of "new approaches," he brings out the continuity of his focus with past positions, both colonial and local (*Pribumi*). There are many vessels, and from each one sees differently.

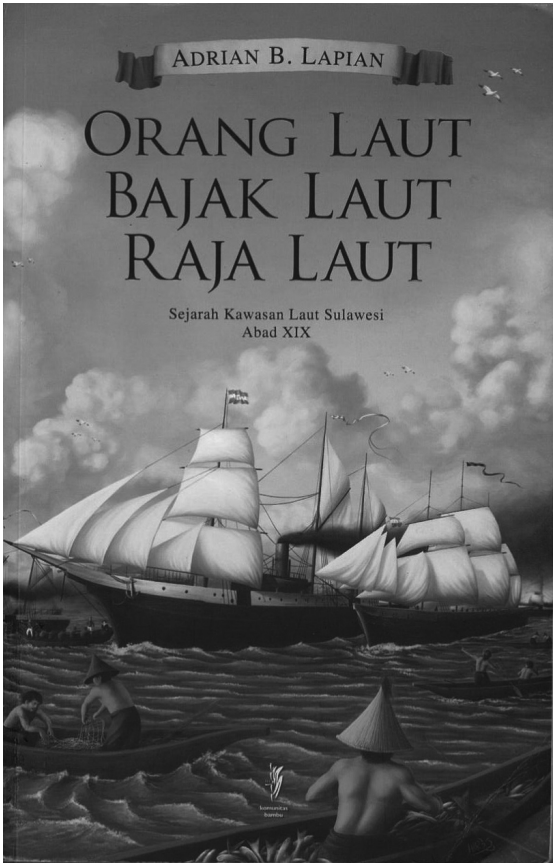
At the back of my mind, evoked though contrast and opposition, is Foucault's panoptic, disciplining view from the fixed, central position in the prison.

Lapian's initial shift of gaze from land to the sea, is merely the beginning of his exploration. When he looks at people, violence, region, or his sources, his point of view keeps moving, always conscious that what one sees now is bound to change, sometimes ever so slightly, sometimes stunningly.

Ⅱ. Kekerasan I: Sea People—Sea Pirates—Sea Kings

Looking at the cover image of Lapian's book, I seem to be on a small indigenous fishing boat—not very stable, moving with the waves and the currents—along with another fisherman (or are we

pirates? shall we be pirates?) looking at other vessels, local and Dutch (which of those might be pirates, and which the kings? does it make any difference for me?).



<Figure 1> Cover of Adrian Lapian's book (2011).

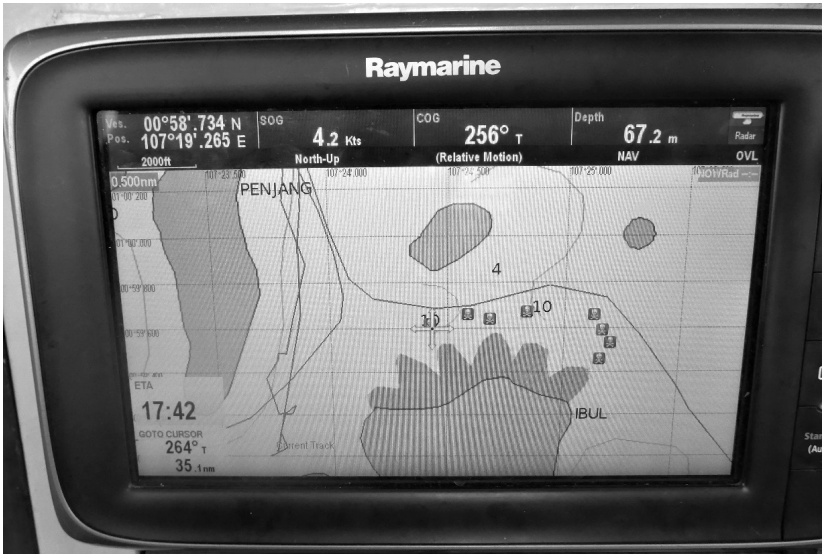
Reading Lapian, I am reminded of learning to sail and navigate, and of my experience of seafaring in Indonesia. Sea is the same everywhere (as Jules Verne writes somewhere, truthfully) and everywhere it is different. Indonesian seas are like, but also very much unlike any other. One grasps this by navigating them. One can sail for days without being out of sight of multiple islands—

"pencil dots" and long coastlines—and in some areas the sea is a maze of waterways through dense archipelagoes. In such seascape, tidal currents tend to be particularly strong, and both wind and currents tend to be especially variable in direction and speed, with various forms of dangers created by multiple currents, and "overfalls" where wind-driven waves crash against tidal currents. Weather, too, is archipelagic, with unpredictable brief squalls and highly localized and quickly-changing weather patterns more important than extensive weather systems. In the narrow straights between islands, in the restricted space between coasts, it often feels like sailing along a river with a very strong current, and such "rivers" can form extensive networks. In such archipelagic waters, watching islands and trying to understand their configurations (and their effects on current, sea depth, wind, waves, etc.), is a key part of navigation and orientation, and it is a part of the experience of seeing Indonesia from the sea. As one sails through an archipelago, configurations of islands keep changing,

<Figure 2> Land-seascape in Riau Islands, Indonesia. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2017.

each island or a group of islands appears different depending on one's position, islands that from a distance appeared to be next to each other turn out to be miles away, their sizes may be difficult to estimate, unsuspected vistas open, inviting bays suddenly appear

only to turn, moments later, into treacherous straights, and one is constantly aware that some danger may be at the moment invisible.



<Figure 3> Finding way through the Tambelan Archipelago (Riau Islands Province, Indonesia), as seen on electronic marine chart, which depicts remote areas such as this extremely inaccurately, as seamen love to demonstrate. The line shows the ship's track, and the danger marks were added by us. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2018.

Navigation involves continuous re-orienting in relation to multiple, changing directions, speeds, and positions. It happens not in the contemplative calm and stability of one's office, but as the wind, current, and other aspects of the situation change, as do one's own position, point of view, orientation, and speed. Nothing is fixed. How one orients oneself and how one fares, and what are the most important variables to watch, depend also on the boat: whether one sails or motors, on the size, draft, power of engine, available navigational instruments and charts, and other factors. But on every vessel, navigation involves multiple variables and the changing point of view within a changing situation.

<Figure 4> A small sailboat and a cargo motorboat, Riau Islands, Indonesia. Near islands or within island clusters, one-person boats (made of wood or plastic barrels) propelled by paddles and oars are also commonly used around the islands. Photo by the author, taken on an NUS student voyage, 2017.

Imbued with the sea, more movement than position, Lapian's writings show "sea people—sea pirates—sea kings," who they are, how they are seen, and the various configurations of their relationships, from multiple, moving points of view. For example, in the case of "pirates," he introduces a colonial view of piracy as a "criminal phenomenon." He discusses pirates as a colonial category, emphasizing the subjectivity and the politics of the colonial perspective and categorization ("actions that they grouped in the category of sea pirates"; 2011: 3-4). He then moves to a contrasting view, resulting from "the process of decolonizing of our history writing," in which pirates are seen as "rebels against colonial regime, as freedom fighters and national heroes" and the conflicts of nineteenth century as "a maritime guerrilla war" (2011: 5). "Such view [*pandangan*: also gaze, look] approaches the problem from the opposite direction," but "reversing our view/gaze [*pandangan*] like that does not mean yet that we have achieved an Indonesia-centric view [*pandangan*]. Fundamentally this approach is still based on European vision [*visi*], only the eyesight [*penglihatan*] is reversed. It

would be too simplistic and naïve to change colonial, Europe-centric view [*pandangan*] just by turning the boat's bow [*haluan;* boat's bow; course] 180°." And so he sails on, looking at "piracy" from yet other points of view: as Holy War, European romantic representations of piracy, images of "pirates" in Indonesian literature, as well as positive and negative views of "pirates" in coastal communities, where they are not always seen as "pirates." The result is not a single conclusion or argument, but rather a voyage wherein one has seen "sea pirates"—who by now, it becomes clear, are not simply pirates—from different angles and in different light, a voyage wherein one learns to navigate and see in this way.

The voyage involves navigation among historical sources and secondary literature from a variety of disciplines and genres. Lapian presents diverse perspectives and views—*pandangan* is the word he likes to use, along with *pendapat*, "opinion"— not rushing to dismiss or accept any one of them, avoiding being grounded, steering deliberately from one to another. The "opinions" from different sea scholars are presented like the fluid "points of view" from which sea people, sea pirates and sea kings see each other.

The title of Lapian's book/dissertation, *Orang Laut—Bajak Laut—Raja Laut* ("Sea People—Sea Pirates—Sea Kings") sounds like three waves, connected by *laut*, the sea, each alike and each different. On the book cover, the words appear in three rows, alive with the continuous movement of *laut*, repetitive yet not geometrical, against the background of an image of the sea and ships. Repetition suggests continuity beyond borders, possibly endless (that is how the infinity and eternity of God is evoked in Islamic art). The waves, *Orang Laut—Bajak Laut—Raja Laut*, continue to sound throughout the book, as the names of its chapters (preceded by another wave, another *laut*-chapter, titled *Laut Sulawesi*, Sulawesi Sea) and resound throughout the text.

Lapian writes that sea people, sea pirates, and sea kings are "ideal types," employed for the sake of understanding Southeast Asian phenomena rather than universal theory (2011: 18-19). As "ideal types," they become like interchangeable roles in a play where an actor might don this or that mask. Identities of sea people

—sea pirates—sea kings are fluid, relative, and temporary. The repetition of "sea" brings out that sea people—sea pirates—sea kings are all related, like three variations of one motif, like three views of the sea.

Having introduced the three ideal types, Lapian writes: "But the continuity of the sea world [*dunia bahari*] unifies and is the background [*melatarbelakangi*] of all [*semua*]" (2011: 23).

Lapian uses the word *bahari*, which (as he discusses prior to this passage [2011: 2]) means both "maritime" and "prehistoric, ancient." The sea and ancient time are unified in one word. Repetition, with its continuity, might help in translating (I think of waves):

> The continuity of the sea world unifies and is the background of all.
>
> The continuity of the ancient world unifies and is the background of all.

Now listen again to the ancient continuity of time and sea:

> sea people—sea pirates—sea kings—sea people—sea pirates—sea kings—

They are unified, not in the single instant of a happy end, but through time, in an ancient/sea play of struggle and collaboration, a play of interchanging roles, points of view, and names.

He writes in a sea-passage-like passage during which the "same" people are seen from varying angles and changing distance:

> But the continuity of the ancient sea world unifies and is the background of all, as is implicit in the names. … Both Sea Kings and Sea Pirates are sea people in a general sense, as distinct from land people. Sea Kings (including the subtype Sea Superkings [i.e., colonial powers]) and Sea People in their actions can be sea pirates, in the sense that they use violence at sea in forcing other boats and ships to follow their will, while Sea People and Sea Pirates (…) can consider themselves sea kings in a certain region where they do not recognize other power that is higher and greater than them (2011: 23).

Lapian relativizes all views by presenting other views: *orang laut*, known in literature also as "sea nomads," "sea gypsies," and similar names, are not simply free and nomadic, but typically limit themselves to a rather small marine area; pirates not simply criminal, not simply resistance fighters, not simply fighting infidels, but somehow potentially all of those and more. Every group is seen from multiple points of view, and Lapian is interested in the tidal currents between groups: pirates become kings—kings become pirates—pirates work for and/or against kings and super-kings—and so on.

The one "common denominator" that Lapian accepts is *kekerasan* (2011: 17) – "violence, hardness." The common denominator, however, is immediately complicated. Lapian writes that while the state (*negara*) considers itself to have the "sole authority" over violence, in nineteenth century maritime Indonesia there were multiple political formations, of different kinds, from several colonial powers, whose presence varied in different parts of Indonesian seas, to various local kingdoms and groups, each claiming to be the sole authority over violence in a certain area, while regarding violent actions by other groups as piratical. What we get from this is less a single picture or map, but multiple maps, multiple views, each claiming right to violence.

Lapian's *kekerasan* is like the sea: one overwhelming reality that "unifies and is the background of all." The "common denominator" allows for, but in its sea-like, ancient unity also starkly contrasts with, the multiplicity of views in Lapian's writing, the fluidity of identities, and the movement of Lapian's gaze.

Morality or legality are relativized as functions of position, point of view, and violence/hardness. Who is the king and who is the pirate depends on who is "harder." When law and morality come into view, one sees them as *keras*, hard and violent, as when Lapian writes that the colonial powers, "in their eradicating enthusiasm often grouped all 'suspicious' local vessels as pirates" (2011:24).

This relativity, in which law and whether one is a pirate or a king depends simply on violence and hardness, is, however, itself

softly relativized by introducing the perspective of the *orang laut*, sea people, who are relatively least powerful, but who have a strong sense of traditional ownership of marine territory—a sense of justice not backed by, and therefore not dependent on, sufficient hardness, or potential for violence—and so the *orang laut* have no choice but either to collaborate with pirates and kings, or move away from their territory. From the position of the *orang laut*, the kings and pirates may be for their purposes identical—as both the sea pirates and the sea kings are more powerful than sea people. But the configuration is always subject to change: sea people might become pirates, or might have been pirates, and in collaborating with the sea pirates or sea kings, they share in their violence.

With the same sense of relativity, Lapian views the colonial empires. He calls them *Adiraja Laut*, Sea Superkings, a subtype of Sea Kings. They are thus not essentially different from the other players, and colonial violence is not essentially different from other forms of violence, except that the Sea Superkings have a greater potential for violence, primarily because of superior technology in the nineteenth century, especially steam power—a technology which local groups attempted but generally failed to appropriate. Lapian (again not rejecting any view) writes that in "local-foreign or East-West polarizations, the subtype Sea Superking can be separated from Sea People/Sea Pirates/Sea Kings. …. But continuity of the sea/ancient world unifies and is the background of everything." (2011:23)

Ⅲ. Nation and Region

Moving, sea-based views characterize also Lapian's representation of region. We have already seen that he presents his focus on the sea in the context of understanding Indonesia better, and that his focus on sea involves a shift of position and view, to include not only views from land but also from the sea. He writes at the outset of his dissertation: "History writing that claims or aspires to be national in a true sense cannot be considered complete as long as only the land element is prioritized, in what must be history of *tanah air*"

(2011: 1). The English translation of *tanah air* as "homeland" captures neither the elementary, watery-earthy image of an archipelago evoked by *tanah air* ("land water"), nor the expression's emotional and imaginative particularity and intensity—all these, and the way they are united in the words *tanah air*, are key to understanding Lapian. His discussion of *tanah air* leads him to a reflection on the principle of Indonesia as an archipelagic state, proclaimed in 1957 and "struggled for on an international level for 25 years," until it was ratified as an international maritime law in 1985 (2011: 2). Lapian thus frames his work in the context of a postcolonial struggle of the nation-state, so that its territory would be recognized not as multiple islands, but one *tanah air*. His focus on all-unifying sea is at the same time a focus on the unity and integrity of the nation.

Here again Lapian presents this national struggle and his historical argument in terms of a "reversed" view: "So archipelagic state in fact must be understood as 'great sea state' sprinkled with islands, and not islands surrounded by sea. Thus the paradigm of our country should be reversed, that is, a sea state where there are islands" (2011: 2).

Lapian's reversals always have a political dimension. The multiplicity of views and the constant movement of the historian's gaze, as well as the particularity of his thought that emphasizes the archipelagic character of Indonesia, undermine any single, "panoptic" perspective, any dominant hardness/violence.

Frequently, the politics of these reversals are specifically anti-colonial, and are part of a "history writing that claims or aspires to be national in a true sense," which for Lapian means not turning the boat's bow 180° to reach a new, single view (and thus a new, national panopticism), but rather gaining a multiplicity of fluid views. In a lecture at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, at the opening of the exhibition "Netherlands' encounter with Asia," Lapian began by playfully shifting positions and reversing the perspective of the exhibition's title, and asking how this was Asia's encounter with Netherlands (the possessive marker is moved to Asia), and how it was "experienced by people of Asia" (2010: 1). But,

as we could already expect, he does not adhere to this reversed view. Rather, in his text, he looks now from one side, now from the other, presenting multiple, contradictory perspectives and changing "roles"—change in position is linked to change in seeing *as*—in the human (tragi)comedy. Speaking in Dutch, in Amsterdam, Lapian described how in the earliest days of the encounter, people in the archipelago—influenced by "news" spread by the Portuguese—saw the Dutch as "nothing but insurgents and pirates … people without a king and without a state" (2010: 3). In 1602, a group of Achinese travelled to Holland "to see for themselves that they were not dealing with pirates…. Much later, in the nineteenth century, the roles were reversed and the Achinese were depicted as pirates," which, according to a frank 1837 document, was to be used as a pretext for colonial expansion (2010: 4). The reversals continue. In 1946, at the time of "colonial wars, or 'police actions' as some Dutch writers used to call them" (again we are alerted to the perspective, to "seeing as", that words articulate and hide, as in the case of "pirates" and "kings"):

> the Netherlands regarded the *Republik* as consisting of a handful of insurgents and 'extremists' only. We were back once again in the seventeenth century when an Achinese delegation was needed to determine that the Republic of the United Netherlands was really a full-fledged state. This time a [Dutch] commission…had to ascertain for themselves that the Indonesian Republic was an 'organized and viable' state (2010: 9).

Lapian concludes:

> I hope that between the lines, I have shown that…throughout all these meetings, Indonesians encountered their own self. Through Dutch patriotic songs…the many ethnic groups that pledged to become the Indonesian nation, came to the conclusion that they, too, 'wanted to live in freedom in the little spot that was once bequeathed by their ancestors' (*willen vrij op't plekje wonen dat eens tot hun erfdeel kwam*) (2010: 9-10).

This recognition of oneself in the other, the culminating moment of colonial reversals, is the anti-colonial national revolution

—the reversal of who is the king and who the pirate in this land. The constant reversals and changes of points of view in Lapian's work are subtle revolutions, anti-colonial, and "national in the true sense." As always, Lapian performs his truth, here also by speaking of the Indonesian revolution in Dutch and discovering it in Dutch patriotic songs.

Lapian's insistence that Pirates and Kings are "ideal types" allows his logic of violence to flow freely between past and present. When he argues for the need to include views from the sea, he writes that our "knowledge and view of the past… form the basis for seeing the present" (2011: 1). Elsewhere he suggests that the role of steam technology in the nineteenth century—as that which allows for the dominant violence of Sea Superkings—is comparable to the political significance of nuclear power today (2011: 23). Yet, elsewhere, he sees a continuity between "pirates" (in the past and present) and contemporary "international terrorists" (2011: xii). While these are just occasional cues, they do show that Lapian does not see the eternal play of power in the colonial period as being finished, but rather encourages us to think of connections between pirates, kings, and super-kings in the past and in the present. In this way, too, his historical work on *tanah air* is part of an ongoing, ancient struggle, "national in a true sense."

I think of what the Filipino historian Reynaldo Ileto (2013: 17) wrote, in response to a text that categorized Southeast Asian scholars into three distinct generations, with the "senior" generation —like Lapian and Ileto—being characterized by focus on colonialism, empire, and nation, and the younger generation on challenging the nation-state:

> A borderless world with debilitated and fractured nation-states is the dream setting for an imperial order that scholars can unwittingly help to consolidate. What we need is a more careful and sympathetic reading of the "senior" generation's preoccupation with empire, colonialism, revolution and nation-building so that lessons can be learned from a past that lives on in the present.

"National in a true sense" seems to suggest that Lapian

believes that "national" historiography is sometimes misunderstood. In proposing to study Indonesia from the sea, Lapian criticizes national history written from land alone—a one-sided view, one that is "weighted to one side" (*berat sebelah*; one thinks of a badly balanced boat). We have seen how Lapian finds "simplistic and naïve" the idea that changing the course 180° from colonial view would afford us an Indonesia-centric view—although clearly he is interested in moving toward the later. So, it would seem, history writing that is "national in a true sense" means for Lapian that it is not simplistic, imbalanced, or limited to a single point of view or position.

This allows him to challenge simplistic views of Indonesia, as *tanah air*, and the writing of national history—indeed, part of him seems to look at national maps with the smile of a pirate who is most at home in crossing borders. This is the beginning of Lapian's chapter on the Sulawesi Sea:

> The national map stops at state borders. Area laying outside the border lines is not in color, because it is foreign territory. On an Indonesian map that shows the Sulawesi Sea region, the northern part of Kalimantan Island and islands to the north are pictured as a white area. … But on Malaysian national map, the picture of the same region is different. Here only Sabah is in color, because for Malaysians the other regions are foreign regions, the place where strange things happen, which are not commonly found in their country. Reversely, if we use Filipino national map, precisely those parts that are painted white on Indonesian and Malaysian maps get special attention, while other parts, namely the western and southern part of the Sulawesi Sea area, is not given color. For the Filipinos this realm is foreign. (2011:41)

The three "national" maps represent the same area from three points of view, each showing a different picture, like an actor changing roles as he changes masks, or like the different story versions in Kurosawa's *Rashomon*. There is a characteristic touch of gentle amusement in Lapian's account—one can almost see the old, bearded captain, puzzled by the three maps—like when he observes how, with changing points of view, roles change, and kings turn into pirates and pirates into kings. Lapian goes on to say that "the state

border line does not always follow lines separating cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or economic differences. … Climate and weather… as well as sea currents, earthquakes, tsunami, typhoons, and so on, do not bother about state borders" (2011: 43). He then introduces yet another position: "From the point of view of local inhabitants, the assertion of border lines places them in a difficult situation" (2011: 43). He also writes that "the sea for maritime inhabitants is not seen as something that separates. On the contrary, the sea for them is a unifier [*pemersatu*]—a continuum that enables them to connect with inhabitants in the regions across the sea. … Even though [Sulawesi Sea] is a border region for Filipino, Malaysian, and Indonesian states, there is a continuum when seen from the point of view of the world/environment [*alam*] and from the point of view of the inhabitants" (2011: 44). The rest of the chapter is a rich description of the physical and socio-cultural geography and history of the area, which represents it as variegated but continuous and interconnected.

Rather than a description from above, as if merely looking at a map—although that view, too, may be part of seafaring—one is taken on a voyage around the Sulawesi Sea. One often senses that one perceives the sea from a boat and from the perspective of seamen or sea people: "sailing from outside the area, one can enter Laut Sulawesi from three directions" (2011: 53); "from December to April, seafaring in Sulawesi sea is made difficult by very big waves" (2011: 48); he points out to us "several bays which form very good harbors" and where mountains "are good for taking bearing when sailing along the coast" (2011: 53). Elsewhere, "for the visitor who for the first time enters Berau River, the views are a bit boring and tiring for the eyes" and the "river is dangerous to navigate," with shallow waters "which leads to boats being grounded, and that slows down the voyage" (2011: 54). And so we navigate around the Sulawesi Sea, resting in sheltered bays and exploring rivers, across Indonesian, Malaysian, and Filipino waters, sensing the diversity and the continuities. One learns about the people in this area, but as much about physical geography, weather patterns, currents, and the biosphere—people are only one element of the ancient sea world.

Lapian's focus on border region in some ways resembles

current academic interest in those areas, in marginal groups, and in moving beyond national perspectives to "a borderless world" with "fractured nation-states," in Ileto's words. But while in this dominant scholarly perspective, this tends to constitute a 180° turn away from national perspectives, for Lapian his focus on a fluid border region is part of writing a "national history in a true sense," a history that is not simplistic and one-sided. His work shows, in other words, that writing "national history in a true sense" can include multiplicity and fluidity of positions and perspectives. The continuity between past and present implied in his work—between steam and nuclear power, between "pirates" and "international terrorists"—and his concern with careful decolonizing of Indonesian history writing (one which does not consist in simply changing course 180°), also suggest that such national perspectives can be part of a continually needed decolonization in a world of globally dominant, panoptic super-perspectives.

Lapian's geographic focus shows Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines as connected in the physical, historical and cultural continuity of the Sulawesi Sea region. "The sea for them is a unifier," he writes. Again the "the ancient/sea [*bahari*] world unifies everything." Lapian's "national history in a true sense" thus does not stop at the borders, unlike the national maps, but rather shows the connectedness with neighbors, and through a picture of one area, the connectedness and continuities across maritime Southeast Asia.

In some ways, this view is reminiscent of a long history of seeing the region as a culturally and historically continuous space, either the Malay World, or a larger area of Southeast Asia. In many ways, Lapian's vision is part of this tradition, in which, rather than seeing one nation in contrast to the other, there is no contradiction between a national and regional perspective, where there is a continuity between (national) I and (regional) we, rather than a contrast between an I and a them.

A maritime example that both resembles and contrasts with Lapian's thought, is the project of the Filipino adventurer and former government official Arturo Valdez who, in consultation with the National Museum of the Philippines, organized the building of

"replicas" of the *balangay* boats, based on archaeological finds in Mindanao. He sailed on them first around the Philippines, and in 2009, set out on a seventeen-month voyage across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Cambodia. His project is strongly nationalistic—his group is called "Kaya ng Pinoy," "the Filipino can"—and anti-colonial (he emphasizes that the Spanish have turned the Filipinos away from the sea, inland, in order to disempower them), yet this fervent patriotism includes both the "margins" and neighboring countries, as his travels have shown, and as is clear from his discourse. In it, the Austronesian world figures prominently (construed with an orientation toward Southeast Asia more than the Pacific), but even its extent is not clearly limited or limiting—unifying continuity overshadows border lines. His voyages are presented and experienced as "retracing the routes of our Austronesian ancestors," and he speaks of his encounters with their spirits on his boat. Significantly—considering the polemical debates about Tagalog-centrism and the dominance of Catholicism in the Philippines, and the "problematic" southern, Moslem territories—the boats were built by traditional boat builders from the Tawi-Tawi in Southern Philippines, in the Sulawesi Sea area, and they, Moslems, have been key members of the crew. In 2018, a voyage to China was organized in honor of the Sulu Sultan who sailed and died there in the fifteenth century. One of the boats is named the Sama Tawi-Tawi, in honor of the Moslem crew members, another one is the Sultan di Sulu.

Lapian's vision concurs with the various visions of regional unity in many ways, but there is a difference in emphasis, especially when compared to those variations in which "Malay race" or "Austronesian ancestors" are emphasized: what unifies the world for Lapian is not primarily race or ancestry, but something more open, uniting the whole world, yet also intensely physical, local, and everywhere different; something ancient [*bahari*] and constantly changing and moving: the sea.

The sea: Do not think just of those light blue, flat areas on the map, although they have their own poetry. Reading Lapian's work, with its images and echoes of the sea, as well as his ways of seeing and writing permeated by the sea, brings us to a closer

understanding of Southeast Asian waters. My comments on Lapian's work above might give some sense of what I mean, but I have hardly touched on his descriptions of Indonesian seas, or the chapter in one of his books on wind in the archipelago: the many kinds of winds, their names and significances in Indonesian languages (including, for example, seventeen names for different wind directions used on one Indonesian island in the Sulawesi Sea), the seasonal and local wind variations, all of which form what Lapian considers a "technology of sailing," and a history of seasonal movement and trade across and beyond the archipelago (2008: 2-17). From this kind of writing, one gets a sense of the sea as intensely local and particular *and* a "unifier"; one gets a sense of sea as simple and complex, inviting and dangerous, predictable and not, eternally fluid, in other words, impossible to capture in one view or one word. One is, above all, led to the material reality of the sea and life at sea, and the necessity to experience the sea, to navigate it—a point made by Lapian on which I will develop later in the essay.

Ⅳ. Kekerasan II: Academic Panopticism vs. Southeast Asian Studies

To read Foucault on panopticism is to be taken inside the prison, not into one of the cells but to that central position; to see through the prison also the world outside, which is revealed to be, like the prison, disciplined through various forms of panopticism. What one does not see is what the prisoners might really see and think. We are told that the system produces "docile bodies." But is the watchman, and perhaps the architect, and even the philosopher, any less disciplined? We too are drawn into a panoptic view, its power and blindness. It is a powerful position, powerful writing. To read Lapian is to be taken on a voyage of continually changing, unstable views, unstable configurations of violence, with a constant awareness that one never sees everything. Rather than adopting a position, one moves and sees in a way that responds to the particularity of *tanah air*. Eternally the waves rock the boat.

The juxtaposition of Lapian's and Foucault's ways of seeing can be instructive, considering the increasing presence of what I see as panoptic tendencies/fantasies in Southeast Asian studies: to do away with the variety and movement of views/perspectives/ disciplines that it brings together, crosses, and blends or allows to clash; to bemoan the lack of what is misleadingly seen as "theory" (rather than to appreciate the multiple theoretical and methodological currents that flow from and into engagement with the world in Southeast Asia); or to think about Southeast Asian studies as a sub-category of area studies, as if it was better understood from a central point by "area studies" theorists and critics, the "hardest" of whom (to evoke Lapian's Superkings) are not involved in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian studies, but generalize about area studies from elsewhere, and who aspire for the central observatory position.

In the current academic Panopticon, "local" scholars like Lapian appear insignificant, as if imprisoned in the regional. What might not be easily visible from the center, is that in Indonesia, Lapian is widely read and discussed by younger scholars, who build on his work. Most of this happens in Indonesian language, rather than English. A lively conference in honor of Lapian's memory, which took place in Semarang in 2017, as well as an 823-page festschrift titled *Arung Samudera*, "Crossing the Ocean" (Sedyawati and Zuhdi 2001) were just some of the symptoms of a certain kind of significance and intellectual liveliness that remains invisible from the center.

Nor is this scholarship disconnected from, say, European scholarship. When Lapian (who widely quotes from Dutch, French, and English sources), was asked who his favorite scholar was, he responded, "Braudel, of course." Yet somehow, Lapian—like and unlike Oliver Wolters (1982: 41-45), in his Braudelian discussion of the significance of "the single ocean" for understanding Southeast Asia—has fundamentally "localized" the ideas of the French historian of the Mediterranean, in a lively dialogue across seas, no doubt because of Lapian's knowledge of and immersion in Southeast Asian reality.

Foucault warns that panopticism produces "docile bodies." One could think of how scholars, also in Southeast Asia, are pressured to adopt panoptic vocabulary and perspectives, in hope that they too will get into that central observatory. When I visit universities in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, I find everywhere, alongside intellectual liveliness, the desire or fantasy (partly financial) of publishing in ISI journals, of having local journals accepted into the "ISI" (the abbreviation, which has taken on a demonic life of its own, refers to the Institute for Scientific Information). The fantasy is present as a kind of burden, as a feeling of lack or inferiority. It is a violent, hard world. And yet, Southeast Asian Studies, especially in Asia, are *in some ways* flourishing. What their particular drift is, in each different place, is a question that should be explored. I would like to briefly share my own experiences in Singapore.

First, some historical background. I moved to Singapore in 2003, just when the Filipino scholar Reynaldo Ileto became the Coordinator of the Southeast Asian Studies Programme. Ileto had a strong vision of the Programme. It contrasted with—and has to be understood in relation, as a reaction to—the dominant, hard orientation at the university to follow and mimic a primarily American value system, seen as panopticly "global." In contrast, in response to this hardness, Ileto aimed to create a space for conversations for scholars and students from the region and beyond, exploiting the potential of Singapore, as a port, an entrepôt, a meeting place—for people from different places and various disciplines. There was lively, informal interaction among teachers and undergraduate and graduate students, often reminiscent of conversations in coffee shops (e.g., *warung kopi*, an Indonesian institution of knowledge production). Ileto's was a vision of Southeast Asian Studies in Southeast Asia, where one would be shaped by being in the region and experiencing the world here, being touched by it, the way one is touched by living in a place. Ileto encouraged studying important scholars in Southeast Asian Studies, but he would criticize people for citing "big names," if they read the "classics" uncritically. He was empowering students to see and judge (the world, ideas, literature) for themselves, from their

own position, on the basis of their life experience and their own research. An example—one that particularly affected me: Ileto supported the acquisition of a large set of Javanese gamelan instruments, around which, for the last fifteen years, people have come together and created an inclusive community of students, scholars, and anyone else, from within and (even more) without the university. Experiencing Southeast Asian life here means to become comfortable in a particular physical and social space and soundscape, to be immersed in music and music-making, being swayed and rocked by it like waves and carried away by it like currents, rather than just thinking and writing about it.

In those days, in Ileto's times, the Southeast Asian Studies Programme had its own space, its own corridor with rooms, including a room for majors and one for graduate students. Like the gamelan room, these were meeting places where we all barged in, talked, ate, and drank together. The Programme was like a ship where a certain sense of community and closeness develops during a long voyage, a closeness that makes people think, speak, and learn from each other in ways they would not be able to do otherwise.

I write in the past tense because things have changed. But again, I would like to focus on the bright side. As I meet students and some of my colleagues, I realize that something of that old vision survives, and in some ways it has been further realized. The gamelan is still there, still a lively, ship-like meeting and learning space, and increasingly the base for much back and forth travel between Singapore and Java. The undergraduate students, perhaps more than anyone, have a passion for and pride in Southeast Asian Studies that reminds me of the old days: they have a strikingly clear, balanced understanding of the importance and role of Southeast Asian studies at the university, as an alternative and a complement to disciplinary departments, most are fluent in at least one Southeast Asian language; they also take advantage of various opportunities to study and live in other Southeast Asian countries, including the semester abroad program and the large number of courses that involve travel to and learning or research in other Southeast Asian countries.

I would like to conclude with a glimpse of a recent initiative, which is continuous with Ileto's vision, but which also brings us back to Lapian and the sea.

Ⅴ. "We Must Go Sailing"

In an interview, Lapian said: "I think that we must go sailing to have a fresh comprehensive look at our past" (2010: 194). It does not seem that he meant this merely metaphorically. Lapian travelled extensively by sea, and he advised his students to go to sea. Hilmar Farid, one of Lapian's former students, a historian with a PhD from NUS, and at the time the Director General of Culture at the Ministry of Education and Culture, narrated in a conference honoring Lapian's memory, how Lapian would emphasize to his students that they have to get out of classrooms and libraries, and go to sea, and that Lapian himself travelled extensively by the sea, often for weeks. Lapian said:

> As staff member and later the head of the historical section of the Navy, I had the opportunity to join several sea expeditions to various places of the archipelago. … This is how I learned to observe Indonesia from the sea (2010:187).

When asked about his dissertation, Lapian again connected it to his actual experience of seafaring, where he discovered his topic as a real, contemporary phenomenon:

> My dissertation deals with the phenomenon of piracy. In the 1960s during one of our sea expeditions, we landed on a tiny island … Only two days before, pirates had raided the small village. … Piracy, I thought, was something you only read in newspapers, history books, or novels (2010: 193).

One senses here that this is another key moment at which position and point of view are changed—here from thinking based on texts to what one seas during an actual voyage. It is not a "new approach" that would be necessarily better— Lapian was also known for his huge book collection. As in the case of seeing *tanah*

air from both land and sea, the current view complements others.

Lapian speaks of the sea as "unifier." He also sailed beyond Indonesia, and on those occasions he met with historians of neighboring countries:

> We also had to deliver provisions to faraway places, for instance, lighthouses and remote islands. Once we went to Thailand as the Navy had to procure rice during the hard times in the middle sixties. That gave me the opportunity to meet Thai historians (2010: 187).

Seafaring overflows into academic conversations across the Southeast Asian neighborhood. Farid, in reflecting on Lapian's teachings and on what one learns during sea travel in Indonesia, talked about long conversations on boats, and an "intimacy" (*keakraban*) that is nurtured by the long hours and days of sea travel, and how that seaborne intimacy enables one to speak and listen differently. Sanjiava S. Wijesinha (1992), professor of medicine from Sri Lanka, reports on a United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-sponsored voyage along the maritime silk route, from Italy through Indonesia to China, which Lapian also joined as Co-Leader of the Scientific Team:

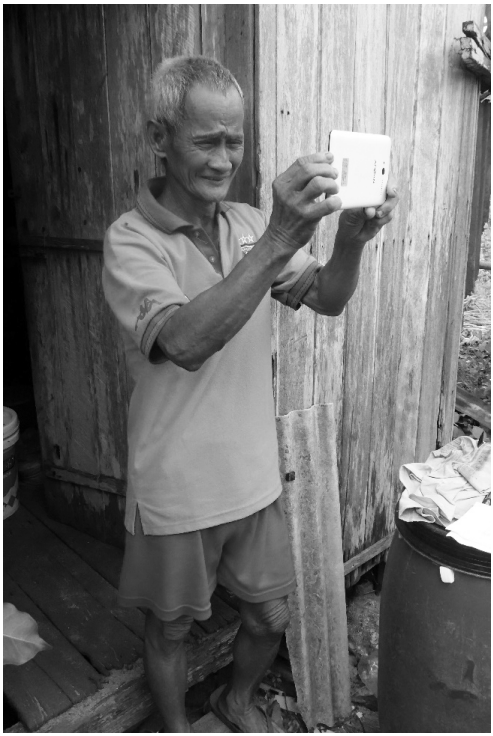
> "The prime objective is dialogue," explained my shipmate, Dr. Adrian Lapian, Professor of Maritime History at the University of Indonesia, at the beginning of our voyage. "First of all, to create dialogue between us and the people in each of the ports where we will drop anchor, for this is where the first contacts between East and West developed. Secondly, to stimulate dialogue on board of our ship, where we will be discussing what we see at each Silk Route port…" … Our team included an archaeologist from Greece, historians from China and Malaysia, an art expert from France, and a host of other scholars drawn from diverse specialties and countries. Put such an international, interdisciplinary team together, let them live, and eat, and visit the Silk Route ports together and undoubtedly there will be a rich exchange of views and a fertile cross-pollination of ideas (Wijesinha 1992).

In the last two years, I have led several seafaring voyages with students from different NUS faculties (the comments below are

based on two Indonesian voyages, in May 2017 and June 2018; for images and stories from the latter voyage, please surf to blog.nus.edu.sg/borneoduewest/). During the two weeks of each voyage, a dozen students and I lived together on the deck of an old wooden motor-sailing vessel, evocative of nineteenth century sailing boats, but, built in Malaysia, in some ways quite like a local fishing boat. It was an intense experience: of beauty, pleasure, fatigue, discomfort, disorientation, nausea, and fear. We were learning how to navigate, steer, keep watch, hoist sails, and otherwise work as a crew; but also to simply live on the boat, move about, and perform life's "basic functions." This meant learning about the sea—the boat (as a space for being and as an instrument through which one is at sea), the archipelagic land-seascape, the currents, the winds, the weather—in an immediate, originary way, as if we were learning to walk and see again.

We stopped on many islands, some inhabited, most not, but all with marks of humanity (an airline lifejacket on the beach of the extremely remote Tokong Kemudi island; some garbage, sometimes from other countries, brought by the sea on most beaches; signs of coconut harvesting and turtle egg collecting on some). We saw pristine green islands covered with dense, impenetrable forest, and red islands, the color of soil, with no vegetation left, utterly destroyed by mining. We visited tiny fishing communities, maritime market towns built over water, and tin mines abandoned by foreign companies and now exploited on a small scale by locals. We talked to fishermen on boats, satisfying both our and their curiosity, bartering provisions or asking for directions and local knowledge. In some cases especially, encounters in villages developed into spontaneous performances in which both locals and crew were involved, with cheering children, laughter, speech-making, and extensive photographic and video documentation by the locals as much as by us. Most people these days have camera phones, and picture-taking was very much mutual—nothing like the panopticon; or panopticon gone mad. I remember long games of domino, and hours in coffee shops or under a tree sharing experiences and stories. Many people were as eager to learn about our world as we were about theirs, even as preconceptions about what is "ours" and

“theirs” were quickly shattered. I think of that old Chinese man who has lived his whole life, and for the last several decades all alone, on an island in the small Badas Archipelago. He is occasionally visited by people from other islands, among whom he has become something of a legend. We heard stories about his spirit wife, ghosts of dead children appearing on his island, and people being pulled under water by a mysterious force nearby. After we talked to



<Figure 5> The old man living alone on the Kapahiang Island (Badas Archipelago), taking a picture of the NUS group with his smartphone. Photo by the author, 2018.

him for a while (he spoke mostly Hainan dialect of Chinese and a little bit of Malay, and referred to Indonesia as *Hindia*, as in the colonial times), he suddenly took out his Samsung smart phone/tablet to take pictures of us (smartphones are commonplace even from places far away from mobile signals, but somehow we didn’t expect it from him), and when he saw that we were surprised, he took out his

tablet, showed us his home-made solar charger, and insisted that we transfer our photos and videos of his island to his devices.

<Figure 6> In the uninhabited Penau Island (Badas Archipelago), a local girl (who came here with her family to collect turtle eggs) is teaching an NUS student how to use the bluetooth feature to transfer pictures from one smartphone to another. The monkey also seems to be interested. Photo by the author, 2018.

We were utter outsiders, but not simply that: we were realizing how interconnected our worlds are, across and through the sea. In the Riau Islands, one feels strong cultural and economic links with Singapore and Malaysia (for example, language, food, etc., is closer to Singapore than to, say, Java). Our group was ethnically predominantly local Chinese and Malay (with a couple of "others," to use the Singaporean categorization), just like the communities we visited. Even islands far from any ferry service or mobile phone coverage, are places where people, often from afar, come and stay, or move on after weeks, months, or years. Locals are used to all kinds of outsiders, some easier to categorize than others. Island communities are both remote and strikingly cosmopolitan, and we were perhaps less out of place and less unknown than it might seem.

<Figure 7> A tire embedded in the sea bottom near the extremely remote Pejantan Island. It brings to mind the traces of mysterious rail tracks found on the same small island, possibly the traces of an (apparently unrealized?) fantasy of mining in the area during the colonial period. Photo by the author, 2018.

Fishing vessels travel large distances, and they often carry some merchandise to sell or barter (mostly for fish) on islands. Even as they lack certain things common elsewhere and life is very different, island villages are mostly quite well-to-do and well taken care of, there are no slums and extreme poverty comparable to bigger cities, and people are self-conscious about both the disadvantages and advantages of living here—for many, it is a choice to stay. Rather than merely isolation—which is always there, as one side of the coin—one gets a sense that islands are connected through various networks, and there is a thriving economic activity, communication, and interchange across great distances. We were often told that our presence had become a topic of conversations several days before we arrived, and the news that proceeded us has been often enhanced as it passed from mouth to mouth; in some places, we were rumored to travel on three boats rather than one, while in another place—perhaps because one of the students had a camera drone—we were expected to arrive in a helicopter.

Singapore is commonly known to fishermen even in distant settlements, as the place where their best fish is eventually sold, through multiple middlemen. More than an object of desire (the way Singapore figures for the middle and upper classes in Jakarta or Manila), here it is an important although distant node in a trade network. Some older fishermen remember bringing fish directly to Pasir Panjang Wholesale Market in Singapore, before borders became less porous. Places like Tanjung Pinang and Tambelan function as smaller but locally important nodes and entrepôts, to where fish flows, and from where rice and other commodities come, as well as the occasional school teacher or nurse. Children are also sent to higher schools there.

I mentioned the dead, red islands, devastated by mining. Relatively near Singapore, one sees barges loaded with sand, headed in the direction of the city state. As one approaches Singapore and the more "developed" Indonesian islands nearby, large-scale human destruction is more apparent everywhere. Certainly some of the "legal" things we saw and talked about with villagers, such as a particular kind of "development," especially on islands closest to Singapore, with the involvement of money from both Singapore and far away continents—seemed like nothing but (super)piracy. But *kekerasan*, violence and hardness, permeates everything, and all levels of the "lively communication and interchange," between the various islands, trade nodes, and middlemen. For example, "dynamite fishing"—with disastrous effects on sea life and the livelihood of local fishermen—continues to be practiced. While some such forms of violence and destruction strike one as outrageous, in other cases one feels one is not in a position to judge —such as widespread illegal and environmentally destructive collecting of turtle eggs, which is an important source of nutrition and culinary pleasure in the islands.

Encountering people and catching glimpses of their lives were part of these voyages, but this shouldn't be misconstrued as ethnographic fieldwork. Rather, on sea, one experiences "the ancient sea world that unifies and forms the background of everything," of which humanity forms a small element. Martin Henz, a colleague of mine who pioneered the seafaring voyages, works in computer

science and engineering, and he likes to think about our experience in terms of systems theory: physical, climatic, biological, economic, cultural and political elements are interconnected and interdependent parts of a system. I have also noted that when Lapian describes the Sulawesi Sea, his description is not limited to people. On the voyage, this total interconnection, including people and the natural world, is not encountered as a theory, but rather, like the sea, it unifies and forms the background to thought. People are part of this ancient sea world, but not its absolute center; that is, if they are the center, they have the centrality of the king, who, as we know, is in some ways just another pirate, only a particularly violent/hard one. It is almost a platitude to say that the ocean makes one realize one's smallness, but there is a truth in this sensation that is fundamental to understanding the sea world and our (non-)positionality—even when one focuses on people, even when one realizes their great powers of destruction, they are merely part of the ancient sea world that unifies everything. Even when one can never quite exceed one's own or human perspective, at sea one feels particularly strongly its limits and how transitory it is.

Students from various academic fields and disciplines came together on these voyages. That enriched our conversations, steered it in interesting and difficult ways, and helped and complicated our understanding and practical dealings with whatever we encountered. Living together in the small space of the boat, working in a team and caring for each other's well-being, sharing new experiences, "getting to know intimately each other's bowel movements" (as one student put it) and egos, learning to respect each person's privacy, loneliness, nausea, or cheerfulness, we were constantly reminded that the world is not neatly separated by disciplines, but everything and everyone is interconnected, through dependence, exchange, and violence: "the ancient/sea world unifies and forms the background of everything," even as sea people, sea pirates, and sea kings see and deal with the world differently.

Try Sutrisno Foo Bin Abdul Rahman's name reads like a short biography: his father is Singaporean Chinese who converted to Islam, his mother Indonesian/Minang, and he grew up partly in Singapore and partly in Tanjung Pinang, the provincial capital of the

Riau archipelago. A Southeast Asian Studies undergraduate student who joined all my voyages, he told us how when during the anti-Chinese unrests in Jakarta in late 1990s, some (Indonesian) Chinese from the capital moved to Tanjung Pinang. The local Chinese in Tanjung Pinang, where there were not the same problems, warned them "not to bring their politics with them." Perhaps the same could be said about certain kinds of universalizing theories, methodologies, preconceptions, fears, ethics, political correctness—battles imported from elsewhere. Realizing the interconnection of everything on our voyages, one also realizes that "one must go sailing," one must go beyond seeing from any single dominant, central point of view, especially a powerful point of view from somewhere else; one must constantly move and keep reorienting one's vision, constantly on the verge of disorientation and loss of control.

In the disorientation and uncertainty of waves, changing currents, sudden storms, and increasingly murky, muddy seas (as islands are destroyed and eroded, as land is "reclaimed"), we might be lead to this, in the words of a French seaman who became a philosopher:

> The painter, Goya, has plunged the duelists knee-deep in the mud. With every move they make, a slimy hole swallows them up, so that they are gradually burying themselves together…. [A]ren't we forgetting the world of things themselves, the sand, the water, the mud, the reeds of the marsh? In what quicksands are we, active adversaries and sick voyeurs, floundering side by side? (Serres 1995: 1-2).

Lapian grew up in *colonial* Southeast Asia, and yet, or rather because of that, his work, his continuing concern with colonialism, is as relevant today as ever, under the current imperial regime. I feel equally lucky to be learning from my students, the future generation of pirates, kings, and maybe even people, as we talk over coffee or travel together. Even as, especially when, humanity may be sinking into a quicksand, more slime than sea (rising sea levels? dead islands and dead seas? oceans of plastic bags? smartphone selfies? journal rankings? theoretical frameworks?—global all). More than searching for "new approaches" or a unique methodology, I cherish

conversations across times and generations. I speak as I am sinking: A fluid, precarious, disorienting, even nauseating multiplicity of experiences, dialogues, and moving, unstable, uncertain points of view, along with a respect for both the particular and a continuity/fluidity across borders, can open a space for learning that is less violent, less kingly, less colonial, and more truthful than super-scholarship that imposes universalizing, panoptic standards, theories and methods (typically self-styled as "new") that reduce the particular into a specimen of the general, a mere cell in the panopticon. Especially as we are all being swallowed by this slimy mud.

Some people look at me with suspicion when I go on and on about seafaring. When I told Professor Ileto about my experiences, about conversations across disciplines, ages and personal backgrounds, about meeting and talking with people on islands, about mud, he listened carefully and commented simply: "That is Southeast Asian Studies."

References

Alford, Fred. 2000. What Would It Matter if Everything Foucault Said About Prison Were Wrong? Discipline and Punish After Twenty Years. *Theory and Society*, 29(1): 125-146.

Foucault, Michel. 1991. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin.

Ileto, Reynaldo C. 2013. Nation and Empire in the Intellectual Biographies of Southeast Asian Scholars. *Asian Studies,* 59(3.4): 9-17.

Lapian, Adrian B. 2008. *Pelayaran dan Perniagaan Nusantara: Abad Ke-16 dan 17*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.

_____. 2010. *For Better or Worse: Collected Essays on Indonesian-Dutch Encounters*. Jakarta: Tatanusa.

_____. 2011. *Orang Laut—Bajak Laut—Raja Laut: Sejarah Kawasan Laut Sulawesi Abad XIX*. Depok: Komunitas Bambu.

Wijesinha, Sanjiava S. 1992. Setting the sail on the silky way. *The*

Rotarian, 160(4):16-19.

Wolters, Oliver. 1982. *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Sedyawati, Edi, and Susanto Zuhdi, eds. 2001. *Arung Samudera: Persembahan Memperingati Sembilan Windu A.B. Lapian*. Depok: Pusat Penelitian Kemasyarakatan dan Budaya, Lembaga Penelitian, Universitas Indonesia.

Serres, Michel. 1995. *The Natural Contract*. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, Trans. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Received: Apr. 10, 2018; Reviewed: Sep. 13, 2018; Accepted: Dec. 15, 2018