

# Observation and Discussion on the History of Maritime Archipelago

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**ABSTRACT:** *Traditionally, ocean is seen as the source of inspiration in the quest for truth that denies the theory of worldview which is always related to myths and superstitions. Ocean has its advantage to tie relationship between nations, to form the will of togetherness, to understand each other as well as to generate wealth. It is priceless treasure which cannot be traded and changed. On the contrary, ocean can also be regarded as a conflict zone that has brought the fall of many ancient traditional civilizations and caused the distant relationship between nations. In relation to this, this article will review the importance of observation relating to maritime aspects of this region and the ability of maritime in re-uniting modern countries of South East Asia that have destroyed due to past colonization. To realize the mission and vision of uniting the nations of this region, a paradigm shift in the government policy as well as in the mind of the people should first be done, i.e. to see oceans as an uniting factor not as separator. In a bigger framework, all nations of this region should instil the determination and awareness that the historical and cultural maritime of Southeast Asia belongs to everybody and it is the joint heritage of every states and nations in this region.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Ocean, united nation, islands of South East Asia, archipelago, and the history of maritime.*

## INTRODUCTION

Ocean is known as *samudera* in the Malay language and it derives from a Latin word, *oceanus*, which is originated from an ancient Greek word, *okeanoe*, which means ocean that separates European and African lands and it does not consist of Middle Sea. Traditionally, ocean or sea has become an inspiration for humans to seek for truthfulness and it has successfully denied human's worldview which relates to myths and superstitions. It is capable to unite nations, to form togetherness as well as understanding and to generate wealth. Ocean is our priceless asset that cannot be traded

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and transformed. Ocean can also act as the conflict zone and cause the fall of ancient traditional kingdoms as well as estrange the relationship between nations.

It is undoubtedly that the main oceans such as the South East China Sea, Sulu Sea, Celebes Sea, Java Sea, Banda Sea and others, which are in the region of Hindi and Pacific Oceans play an important role in the building an oceanic nation in the Malay archipelago. Through sailing and expedition in Hindi and Pacific Oceans, world sailing route map, trading routes, religion dissemination and conquering of new territories happen. According to Ong Jin Eong and Gong Wooi Khoon:

For centuries these easily navigated waters have been at the heart of, first, Southeast Asian and then later world maritime trade. These trade brought waves of traders and travellers from China, India and further a field including Arabia and Europe, all of which have influenced the cultures and traditions that developed throughout the country (Ong Jin Eong & Gong Wooi Khoon, 2001:8).

## **FRAMEWORK OF REVIEW**

The historical sources during the traditional era until the occurrence of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War (1939-1945) are mainly relied on the notes and records done by sailors, merchants, officers and Western missionaries. Generally, these notes and records are based on observation and judgements of the note-takers which took place on the deck of a ship or even on land. For instance, a well known English sailor and merchant, Alexander Dalrymple (1808:499-578), wrote a note about his meeting with a group of Bajau fishermen doing diving and pearl collection during his sail from Balambangan Island to Jolo (Philippines). Thomas Forrest (1969:221), in his journey from Calcutta to Mergui Island, witnessed and made a note on the making of coarse salt by the Samal, Samal Sea Bajau and Kalibungan people in Kabug during the reign of Sulu Sultanate.

On the contrary, the British Navy Officers such as Captain Edward Belcher (1848), Captain Henry Keppel (1874), and Captain Rodney Mundy and few others pictured the Sea Dayaks at the estuary and head of Sungai Batang Lupar and Sungai Batang Saribas of Sarawak (Borneo and Kalimantan), who were famous for their “head hunters” culture, as uncivilized, wild and dangerous. In southern Philippines, Captain Silver described the Iranun (Ilanun) as “so poor was the early eighteenth century image of the Iranun [...] branded them murderers and man-eaters”; and Thomas Forest pictured this group of people as “dangerous people” (cited by Warren, 2002:42).

All in all, these descriptions, reports and notes by the Westerners on the various matters of this region traditionally and up until the time before the occurrence of World War II are mainly based on spontaneous observation and judgement and also from the West perspective and colonial interest, and none of these reports, descriptions and notes are based on the perspective of this region.

After the end of the war, mainly during the 1960s and 1970s, we can see the change in the rewriting of the history of South East Asia. In other words, the writings and observations of the Western scholars are no longer confined to the Western sources and colonial records but revolve around the locals' records too. From the themes, observation frameworks and writings, they are more focused on the questions of centrality and arguments of the facts and historical reality from two different views. Among the scholars are D.G.E. Hall, John R.W. Smail, John Bastin, W.F. Wertheim, J.C. Van Leur, James C. Ingram, Harry J. Benda, O.W. Walters, Clifford Geertz, Micheal Adas, Martin J. Murray, John A. Larkin, Benedict John Kerkvliet, and others.

These scholars started to argue the truth and originality of the historical facts written by the scholars before World War II, which they assumed as more Western centric or bias – the facts were written from the perspectives of the writers themselves and colonial interest by ignoring the importance of understanding the local history. This problem is acknowledged by a Dutch scholar, J.C. Van Leur with a strong statement stating that “[...] much of Asia history has in the past been observed from the decks of European ships, from the ramparts of the fortress, the high gallery of the trading-house” (Van Leur, 1960). In Indonesia, this problem is further stressed by Adrian B. Lapian (2009:1). He proposed that “[...] *pendekatan hendaknya bersifat Indonesia-sentris [...] sejarah dari dalam juga berarti pendekatan melalui geladak kapal pribumi*”, which means that the writings of Indonesia history should be based on the Indonesian-centric and it should be viewed through the eyes of the locals. The same problem was also raised in Malaysia by Mohammad Raduan Mohd Ariff and Shahril Talib (1995). According to them:

Satu persoalan yang telah menjadi pokok perhatian adalah di antara kesahihan ilmu sejarah dan realiti sejarah. Sejarah yang dimaksudkan di sini bukanlah sejarah kronologi yang sempit tetapi sejarah dalam erti kata yang lebih luas yang menyingkap masa lampau dengan menitikberatkan proses-proses sosial, politik dan ekonomi [...] dan juga tidak bijak menganalisa sejarah dengan pendekatan satu-satu negara bangsa [...]. Ini dilakukan atas kesedaran dan keinsafan bahawa wadah ilmu berhubung sejarah negara bangsa jauh berbeza dengan keadaan sebenar yang berlaku (Mohammad Raduan Mohd Ariff & Shahril Talib, 1995:131).

They questioned the authenticity of the past history which was recorded and written based on foreign perspectives. In relation to this, scholars begin to start observing and re-writing the maritime history of this region from the Asian centric and scholarship of scholars perspectives through various approaches, spaces and themes. Among the Western and Eastern scholars who have successfully re-written the maritime history of the South East Asia before and during the colonial era are J.C. Van Leur, Melink Roelofsz, Anthony Reid, Kenneth K. Hall, O.W. Wolters, Lynda Norene Shaffer, Adrian B. Lapan, Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, and others.

J.C. Van Leur, in his book entitled *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essay in Asian Social and Economic History* (1960), discusses the history of Asian trade from the beginning up until during the VOC (*Vereneegde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) involvement in Southeast Asia by focusing on Indonesia. Melink Roelofsz, in his work entitled *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1680* (1962), discusses about the development of Asian trade. A Western scholar, whose name is so famous in the maritime history of this region, Anthony Reid, in his book entitled *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680* (1988), shows the importance of oceans in this archipelago as the route and main bridge that connect the East and West traders after the end of the golden era of *silk route* in the mainland Asia. Apart from Anthony Reid, Kenneth R. Hall, in his book entitled *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (1985), shows the importance of understanding the relationship between the sea merchants and the emergence of early empires in Southeast Asia.

O.W. Wolters, in his book entitled *The Fall of Srivijaya in Malay History* (1969), has also shown us the influence of maritime on the fall of Srivijaya in Palembang during the 7<sup>th</sup> until 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Lynda Norene Shaffer, in her book entitled *Maritime Southeast Asia to 1500* (1996), also discusses in detail about the territories and early maritime empires in Southeast Asia such as Funan, Srivijaya, Majapahit and Mataram. George Coedes's observation and writing in the *The Indianized States of Southeast Asia* (1971) also shows us that the *indianization* of few early maritime empires in Southeast Asia (Munoz, 2006).

All these observation and writings by the Western and local scholars, which are based on Eastern perspectives, have enabled us to decipher and re-study various facts. For example, by using the history of piracy in Southeast Asia and its culture as a debated topic, questions on the eradication of these pirates or Sea Bajau and the practice of slavery hunting are among the imperative topics in the history of Western colonization in this region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The conqueror regarded piracy as an act of heavy crime and uncivilized, and its perpetrator would be labelled as pirates, savage seaborne terrorists, robbers of the sea, murderers and man-eaters, dangerous people and others. Owen Rutter, in his work entitled *The Pirate Wind* (1930), labels the pirates of Southeast Asia as the “Vikings of the Eastern Seas” which is similar to the Vikings in the West who are terrified by the Europeans and he described the greatness of these pirates as “No merchant ship of the colonial powers and no shore village was immune from their attack [...] European, American, Chinese, and native vessels who had been sold into slavery”. His views have shown us how piracy and slavery hunting issues of the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Bajau become the reason for the British, Dutch and Spanish people to interfere and colonize the Malay world. However, this argument was rectified by scholars such as Nicholas Tarling, James Warren, Anne Reber, C.A. Majul, Adrian B. Lapian, Ahmed Jelani Halimi and few others. For instance, Nicholas Tarling, in his work entitled *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World: A Study of British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century South East Asia* (1972), questioned the use of the word “piracy” to the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Dayak of Southeast Asia by the West and he regarded the act of piracy of these people as an honourable activity if it is understood from the ethno-history’s perspective.

James Warren, in his work entitled *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the British of Ethnicity* (2002), stated that the marauding activity and maritime slave riding by the Iranun, from the perspective of Iranun cultural history, are honourable occupation [...] no stigma associated with the cultural label “marauder” [...] the Iranun world saw them as “born and bred” to a life of maritime marauding which they simply regarded as a means of living and not as a notorious criminal occupation. According to James F. Warren, this negative occurred because [...] on the eighteenth century, the Iranun and Balangingi world was still usually observed from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, and the high gallery of the trading-house and consequently this world remained “grey and undifferentiated” (Warren, 2002:45).

This statement was further supported by Anne Reber, in her work entitled *The Sulu World in the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries: A Historiographical Problem in British Writings on Malay Piracy* (1966). She wrote that there was a historical misconception by the British on the Malay pirates, where she stated that the marauding activities are not a natural behaviour of the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Dayak people. It is the need of labour caused by the West-China trading development and the pressure given by the Spanish people in the Philippine that caused them to get involve in marauding

activities. In the Philippine, Caser Adib Majul, in his book entitled *Muslim in the Philippines* (1978); and Julusari Hajad, in a book entitled *Tausug & Kesultananan Sulu* (2007), show the marauding activities of the Iranun and Balangingi people as a *jihad* of the Sulu people against the spread of Christianity by the Spanish people in the Philippines.

For the above mentioned scholars, the piracy activities in the Malay world (the Strait of Malacca), Borneo, Indonesia and the Philippines existed due to the localized response towards the Western colonization which had monopolized the trades, taken over the sovereignty of the local authority, spread Christianity (the Philippines case) and colonized their own motherland. Today, the focus of these observation and writings are no longer confined to history per se but based on problem oriented and it adopts interdisciplinary approaches such as sociology and anthropology, economic, sciences, politics and others in order to understand the contemporary maritime issues. Also, the focus and themes are varied covering all forms of crime activities such as terrorism, smuggling, illegal immigrants, claim on overlapping territories and borders; culture and arts such as water village, craftsmanship; economy such as eco-tourism, fishery, oil and gas search; sea community and others.

For example, Clifford Sather, in his work entitled *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, History and Fate in a Maritime Fishing Society of South-Eastern Sabah* (1997); David E. Spoher, in his work entitled *The Sea Nomads: A Study of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia* (1965); Francois Robert Zacot in *Orang Bajo Suku Pengembara laut*; and Christian Pelras in *Manusia Bugis* (2006) have focused their study on the sea nomads and Bugis using the historical and anthropological approaches. Moreover, the maritime archaeology has started to get attention with the discovery of priceless treasures from hundreds of sinking ships in the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, Celebes Sea, Java Sea and few others.

Derek Johnson and Mark Valencia, in their work entitled *Piracy in Southeast Asia: Status, Issues and Responses* (2005), analyzes the piracy activity from the terrorism's perspective. Agus S. Djamil (2004), on the other hand, discusses the maritime activity from the Islamic point of view in his book entitled *Al-Quran dan Lautan*. Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that there is a transformation in the observation and writings of the maritime study of Southeast Asia. Starting from the Western centric during the holocaust, it has moved to Asian centric after the holocaust and now it is more problem-oriented which is more focus on finding the differences and problems rather than showing the similarity of the history that should be shared and is belong to everybody.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF OBSERVATION AND WRITINGS ON THE HISTORY OF MARITIME**

If we were to view generally the aspects of observation, writings and publications of various fields and disciplines, we can conclude that most of the studies are based on land (70%) than sea (30%), although the facts and the geographical reality of our earth shows that 70% of earth's surface is covered with water and the remaining 30% is land. Why does this happen? There are various reasons explaining this phenomenon such as the sources and records on land are more accessible than oceans; observation on land is much easier than oceans; discoveries on lands are more evident than those from oceans and others. Today, the awareness on the importance of observation and re-writing of the maritime knowledge has started to grow among scholars and authorities as they begin to realize the importance as well as the strength of the maritime knowledge in realizing the idea of forming a nation that is still unsolved and has become the central focus of this region. This importance, mainly from the Indonesian perspective and generally from the Southeast Asian perspective, was loudly advocated by Adrian B. Lopian as the following:

Studi sejarah Indonesia hingga sekarang lebih banyak mementingkan peristiwa yang terjadi di darat, walaupun sesungguhnya lebih dari separuh wilayah Republik Indonesia terdiri dari laut [...]. Dengan demikian ada bagian yang besar dari pengalaman dan kegiatan penduduk Nusantara pada masa lampau yang lolos dari pengamatan dan penelitian sejarawan bangsa kita [...] perhatian terhadap aspek maritim bukan lagi merupakan hal yang pantas dilakukan, melainkan menjadi sesuatu yang wajib mendapat prioritas istimewa (Lopian, 2009:1-2).

Clearly, his advocacy states that the study of Indonesian history has up until now still more focused on events occurred on land rather than oceans, and it is time for the focus to shift to oceans as they are as important as the lands. Geographically, the countries in Southeast Asia are archipelago states – they are surrounded by oceans and influenced by two main oceans, i.e. Hindi and Pacific Oceans.

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1965), who is famous for his Sea Power Theory, demonstrates that a powerful country should control the oceans for economic and political stability in the country. For instance, Indonesia is the second largest country in Southeast Asia. It has 5.8 million km<sup>2</sup> of sea width, i.e. its ocean territorial space is about 0.8 million km<sup>2</sup>, the archipelago ocean is about 2.3 million km<sup>2</sup> and the exclusive economic zone is about 2.7 million km<sup>2</sup>. Apart from the vast oceans, Indonesia has many islands, i.e. about 17,480 islands and the length of its beaches is 95,181 km<sup>2</sup>,

which is the fourth longest in the world after Russia. Other than Indonesia, Malaysia which consists of Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah is also categorized as a maritime country with 4,490 km<sup>2</sup> long (beach) and 598,450 km<sup>2</sup> of exclusive economic zone. These geographical facts show clearly the vast oceanic territory and the wealth of natural resources (such as fisheries, gas and petroleum) of the countries of this region.

Next, the importance of the oceans is not only discussed from the materialism aspects but also religion aspects. For example, in the Quran, there are 32 verses on oceans and only 13 verses were on lands. The total percentage of water on the earth surface mentioned in the Quran is similar to the percentage given by scientists that is 71% (oceans, rivers, lakes, swamps and others) and the remaining 29% is land. If the verses are added, we will get 45 verses, and if these 32 verses on oceans are divided by these total 45 verses, and then multiply by 100%, we can get 71.11% which is 71% of earth's surface is water. And, if these 13 verses on land are to be divided with 45 verses on oceans and lands, and then multiply the total with 100%, we can get the answer of 28.88% which is similar to 28% of earth's surface is land (Djamil, 2004). Sir Walter Raleigh, in *The History of the World* (1971), once said that "*Whoever conquer the oceans, will definitely control the earth's wealth, which therefore he will control the world*".

Peter Aughton, in his work entitled *Voyages that Changed the World* (2007), has shown how sailing through oceans by sailors for the purpose of trading, religion dissemination, colonization, voyage and others will surely change the world. In his work, Peter Aughton shows the determination of the world's famous sailors during the primitive as well as contemporary eras to sail through high seas only because they wanted to fulfil their dreams. According to Peter Aughton, the result of this sailing has successfully connected and developed human civilization up until today. Louise E. Levathes, in *When China Ruled the Seas* (1994), shows how oceans have turned China into a maritime power (1405-1433) that was terrified by the world through its seven voyages by Captain Zheng He and his fleet, which was known as *the Treasure Fleet* to the Archipelago, India and Africa. Other than European and Chinese sailors, our local Malay sailors are definitely as great as the others in the development of world's civilization.

Robert Dick-Read, in his work entitled *The Phantom Voyagers: Evidence of Indonesian Settlement in Africa in Ancient Times* (2008), illustrates the determination of Indonesian sailors in sailing through the Hindi Ocean and opening up a new settlement in Madagascar and Africa. Christian Pelras and his work entitled *The Bugis*; and Leonrad Y. Andaya in *The Heritage of Arung Palaka: A History of South Sulawesi (Celebes) in the Seventeenth Century*,

show the determination of Bugis sailors in sailing through the Archipelago Oceans before the Dutch era. They also show the journey of Indonesian sailors to Africa in the early era that is during the 5<sup>th</sup> century, which is much earlier than Zheng He and Columbus. The Indonesian government is aware of the importance of the maritime that they have collaborated with the *Pusat Kajian Sejarah* and the Southeast Asia Maritime Culture, *Lembaga Penelitian UNDIP* (*Universitas Diponegoro* or Diponegoro University) and Ministry of Maritime and Fishery through a book entitled *Sejarah Maritim Indonesia: Menelusuri Jiwa Bahari Bangsa Indonesia hingga Abad ke-17*.

The publication of this book is an effort of the Indonesian government in studying back the achievement of the Indonesian people since the prehistoric era until the 17<sup>th</sup> century in order to bring back the union spirit and organization of the Indonesian people which is now facing problem. James F. Warren, in his work entitled *The Sulu Zone, 1786-1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (1981), discusses in detail on the emergence of the Sulu reign as a maritime state in the Southeast Asia during the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Adrian B. Lopian, a great scholar in Indonesian maritime history, stated that the Indonesian history is an ancient history. In his speech about *Sejarah Nusantara Sejarah Bahari* in 1991, in conjunction with the fortification of *Guru Besar Fakultas Sastra Universitas Indonesia* (Professor at the Faculty of Arts, University of Indonesia, Jakarta), he stresses on the importance of maritime in the Southeast Asia as the backbone in the formation of the history Archipelago and it should not be seen as an insignificant history. He strongly stated that it is very important to discuss the history of archipelago together with the oceanic elements because he believes that the history of archipelago (Southeast Asia) should be viewed from the global perspective and not only from the local perspective. The approach of studying back the Indonesian maritime history is actually see the all of its coastal states as the united factor that has played a role in integrating thousands of separated islands.

In his prime speech, Adrian B. Lopian showed how the seas in the archipelago (Java Sea, Flores Sea, Banda Sea, and Celebes Sea) play a vital role in connecting and uniting the island community in Indonesia. The result of their ancestors' sailing has spread the Indonesian language. In relation to that, Adrian B. Lopian has published a few works on the maritime history such as *Pelayaran dan Perniagaan Nusantara Abad ke-16 dan 17* (2008); and *Orang Laut, Bajak Laut, Raja Laut* (2009) in order to show the history of the golden and dynamic era of Southeast Asia during

that time. By analysing the traditional and ancient history as well as the modern history of this region, it can be said that despite running their own government, countries like Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines, till they have the same maritime history and culture. In other words, although the countries of this region experiencing changes due to changes in time, still the identity and maritime history does not change much and until today it can be seen as joint culture.

Based on the past records and writings by past scholars, we can see the influence of the archipelago seas in the formation of maritime reigns and the main trading route for voyagers and merchants' ships coming from the west through Hindi Sea and from the east through the Pacific Ocean as well as the local *prahus* which are also doing trading activities. For example, the influence of maritime in the history of formation and prosperity of these traditional kingdoms before the colonial period was clearly discussed in detail by James F. Warren in *The Sulu Zone, 1768-1898* (1981); Kenneth R. Hall in *Maritime Trade and State Development in Early Southeast Asia* (1985); and Anthony Reid in *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680* (1988). Meanwhile, the importance of archipelago seas for European traders such as the Dutch, Portuguese, British and Spanish and others during the colonial era was clearly discussed by J.C. Van Leur in *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essay in Asian Social and Economic History* (1960); and Melink Roelofsz in *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1680* (1962). Through this observation and the re-writing of the Southeast Asia history by the Western and local scholars with the Eastern's view has enabled us to interpret the data collected more detailed. This can be seen clearly when we discuss about the piracy history and culture in Southeast Asia.

James F. Warren, in his book entitled *Iranun dan Balangingi* (2002), depicts the existence and heroic presence of the Iranun and Balangingi people in Sulu, Celebes and South China Seas, who were regarded as the pirates and slave hunters, as "heroes" of the sea. This group of people had become a nightmare for the European and Chinese sailors who sailed at the Borneo and Southeast Asia waters at that time. It can be said that the period can be referred as the second *dark ages* for the Westerners as they had just experienced the *dark ages* in the West during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Iranun and Balangingi activities had terrified famous voyagers like Alexander Dalrymple, William Dampier, Thomas Forrest, J. Hunt and others who had passed through the waters of South China Sea, Sulu, and Celebes Seas during the mid 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and they named the centuries as the "age of the pirates" and labelled the month August-October as "pirate

seasons” or “private wind”. Owen Rutter, in his work entitled *The Pirate Wind* (1930), labelled the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Dayaks of the Sulu Islands and Southeast Asia waters as the “Vikings of the Eastern Seas” that resembles the greatness of the terrifying Viking in Europe.

For the conqueror, this activity is seen as a heavy crime and uncivilized and they labelled this group of people as pirates, savage seaborne terrorists, robbers of the sea, murders and man-eaters, dangerous people and others. However, this label was rejected and cleared by scholars such as Nicholas Tarling, James F. Warren, Anne Reber, Care Adib Majul, Adrian B. Lopian, Ahmed Jelani Halimi, and others. For example, Nicholas Tarling, in *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World: A Study of British Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century South East Asia* (1972), questioned the use of *piracy* word on the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Dayaks of Southeast Asia by the West and regarded the activities by these ethnics as honourable activity if their actions are to be understood from the ethnohistory perspective. James F. Warren, in *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Birth of Ethnicity* (2002), discusses the actions by the Iranun people from the Iranun ethnohistory perspective where he described the Iranun activities as:

honourable occupation [...] no stigma associated with the cultural label “marauder” [...] the Iranun world saw them as “born and bred” to a life of maritime marauding which they simply regarded as a means of living and not as a notorious criminal occupation (Warren, 2002:43).

According to James F. Warren, this negative view is the result of non-participative observation on the people itself as he said “on the eighteenth century, the Iranun and Balangingi world was still usually observed from the deck of the ship, the ramparts of the fortress, and the high gallery of the trading-house and consequently this world remain the grey and undifferentiated” (Warren, 2002:45). Anne Reber, in *The Sulu World in the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries: A Historiographical Problem in British Writings on Malay Piracy* (1966), states that it is the historical misconception of the British on the “Malay Pirates” and the marauding activities are not the natural behaviour of the Iranun, Balangingi and Sea Dayaks as at that time there was a need of labour due the development of West-China trading and pressure from the Spanish people in the Philippines.

In the Philippines, Caser Adib Majul in his book entitled *Muslim in the Philippines* (1978); and Julasari Hajad in a book entitled *Tausug & Kesultananan Sulu* (2007), show the marauding activities of the Iranun and Balangingi people as a *jihad* of the Sulu people against the

spread of Christianity by the Spanish people in the Philippines. For the abovementioned scholars, piracy in Malaya (Straits of Malacca), Borneo Islands, Indonesia and the Philippines is a local response towards the Western colonization that had monopolized their trades, taken over their power, spread Christianity (the Philippines case) and conquered their lands.

### **WRITING THE HISTORY OF MARITIME AS AN ACT OF UNITING THE PEOPLE OF THIS ARCHIPELAGO**

Before the coming of foreign powers to the states of Southeast Asia, these states, as called by Lynda N. Shaffer (1996), were known as maritime realm as they had kingdoms that were based on strong maritime concept and they were also terrified by the agrarian kingdoms of the Southeast Asian islands and mainland. Among the kingdoms were Srivijaya and Majapahit of Indonesia; the Malacca Malay reign in Malaya; and the Sulu Sultanate in the southern Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Historically, the emergence and development of these kingdoms as the powerful economic and politic states of this region is due to the wisdom of its ruler who used seas and straits as means of trading and ports, which at the end made them as the maritime power and trading emporium between East and West; the rulers' ability to mobilize fully the state's natural sources and its people (Sea people and slaves) in nearby states has also made them the most powerful economic and politic states of this region.

The rulers' wisdom on developing the economy and political power during the 7<sup>th</sup> until 17<sup>th</sup> centuries has enabled the region to develop and become the focus for traders from all over the world to come; and this period was called by Anthony Reid as *the age of commerce* (1988). Before the 13<sup>th</sup> century, geo-politically, the establishment of these kingdoms in this region was limited due to space, power and obviously they were separated from each other. However, this pattern and geo-politic started to change during the 13<sup>th</sup> century with the emergence of Majapahit reign in Java. Under the reign of Hayam Wuruk and Patih Gadjah Mada, the states of this region began to be united under one name, which is known as the Archipelago, as visioned by Patih Gadjah Mada. The Archipelago,<sup>2</sup> which is

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<sup>1</sup>For further explanation refer to historical journey of Srivijaya and Majapahit, see Paul Michel Munoz (2006); for further explanation refer to the historical journey of the Sulu Sultanat, see Teodoro A. Agoncillo (1974); and James F. Warren (1981).

<sup>2</sup>During the ancient ages, there were a lot of names were given to the islands found in Southeast Asia. The voyagers from China named the islands of this region as *Nan-Hai* (Islands of the Southern Sea); ancients Indian notes called the islands as *Dwipantara* (the islands of the other land) i.e. a name that was taken from Sansekerta language that is

also known as the Malay Archipelago,<sup>3</sup> by the British; and *Nederlandsch-Indie* (Indian-Dutch) by the Dutch during the colonization; and now it is called as *Southeast Asia*, refers to the states that are based on maritime and has unique historical background (Reid, 2004). This is because Archipelago was not “discovered” by voyagers and traders and it is different from the American continent which was claimed to be discovered by Christopher Columbus (Portugal), Cape of Hope by Vasco de Gamma (Spain), and Australia by James Cook (English), and others.

The states and the Archipelago Sea have long been occupied by humans; it has high civilization and was a stop for voyagers and traders from outside before the West learnt the meaning of “the Age of Exploration” and “the Age of Voyages” during the 15<sup>th</sup> century by sailing to all over the world for colonization and trading commodities (Mahan, 1965). From the cultural perspective, the term *Archipelago* refers to islands in the south of Southeast Asia which include Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesian islands, except for New Guinea (Irian island). Linguistically, this concept covers a wider scope as it includes the islands in Taiwan and Madagaskar because the original language of these islands is a part of Austronesian Language. Geopolitically, Archipelago refers to areas which include Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesian islands, including Timor island and Irian island. Ethymologically, the word archipelago appeared for the first time in the history of this region during the Majapahit reign (1293-1478) in Java under the reign of Hayam Wuruk and Patih Gadjah Mada (Prime Minister). During the coronation as a Prime Minister, Gadjah Mada had made a vow which is known as the *Sumpah Amukti Palapa* (recorded in a book called *Pararaton* or the book of kings).

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*dwipa* (islands) and *antara* (among, outside, foreign). The Arabs called them as *Jaza'ir al-Jawi*; and in Latin is called as *Benzoe*. The European called it as *Indische Archipel*, *Indian Archipelago*, *l'Archipel Indien* or *Oost Indie*, *East Indies*, and *Indes Orientales*. Other names such as *Maleische Archipel*, *Malay Archipelago*, *l'Archipel Malais* were also used. During the Dutch colonization, an official name was used i.e. *Nederlandsch-Indie*, while the Japanese (1942-1945) used the term *To-Indo* or *Hindia Timur*. See Alfred Wallace (1869); and Bernard H.M. Vlekke (2008).

<sup>3</sup>The Malay Island is the biggest island and has the maximum number of volcano in the world. It covers Indonesia, Filipina, Brunei, Timor Leste and East Malaysia. This island covers 2 million km<sup>2</sup> width and has about 300 million population. Its biggest islands are Borneo and Sumatra, whereas the highest number of population focuses on Java island. Its highest peak is Kinabalu Mountain in Sabah, Malaysia. Generally, the islands are divided into four main parts i.e. the Malay islands of the West, South East islands, Maluku Islands and the Philippines. Among the islands situated in these areas are Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Bali, South East islands (*Nusa Tenggara*), Sulawesi, Luzon and Mindanao. See Alfred Wallace (1962).

In his vow, he vowed not to eat spices until all the states which he called as the Archipelago were united under the Majapahit reign. During the Hayam Wuruk reign (1350-1389), who replaced Tribhuwanatunggadewi, Patih Gadjah Mada had continuously worked hard to achieve his vow by conquering Bedahulu (Bali) and Lombok (1343), Palembang, Swarnabhumi (Srivijaya), Tamiang, Samudra Pasai, and other states in Swarnadwipa (Sumatra). He passed through Bintan Island, Tumasik (Singapore), Peninsular Malaya, and several territories in Kalimantan like Kapuas, Katingan, Sampit, Kotalingga (Tanjunglingga), Kotawaringin, Sambas, Lawai, Kandangan, Landak, Samadang, Tirem, Sedu, Brunei, Kalka, Saludung, Solok, Pasir, Barito, Sawaktu, Tabalung, Tanjungkutei and Malano.

After the fall of Majapahit empire, there were a few emergence of other empires which were eventually conquered by the West. The Archipelago geo-political concept and term proposed by Patih Gadjah Mada was then destroyed and disappeared from the map of Archipelago. Through the British-Dutch Treaty in 1824, Malaya along with Singapore and a part of North Borneo were placed under the British rule and they were known as the *Malay Archipelago* (*Maleische Archipel* and *l'Archipel Malais*), and the territories in Sumatera, Riau-Lingga, Java, Sulawesi, Kalimantan and others were placed under the Dutch rule and they were known as *Nederlandsch-Indie*. At the same time, the Sulu Sultanate experienced a fall when the Spanish conquered the Philippines during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under these colonial reigns, the sea functions and roles that had become the economic backbone for the formation of history, its golden era and the united factor for the early kingdoms in archipelago were slowly ignored and replaced with economy that was based on lands and the geo-politic of Archipelago was again destroyed following the needs of these colonial powers.

Even though there were many attempts to restore the Archipelago spirit by the anti-colonization in Indonesia, Malaya and the Philippines, still the efforts end with failure. The history of the Second World War and the Japanese occupation in 1941-1945, which was the worst nightmare for all, turned out to be a blessing in disguise as it unites back the Archipelago. The failure of these colonial powers, i.e. the Dutch (Indonesia), British (Malaya) and Spanish (the Philippines) in defending their territories in this region and the slogans *Asia untuk Orang Asia* or Asia for Asians; and *Kawasan Kemakmuran Bersama Asia Timur Raya* created by the Japanese had inspired back the nationalists and revived back the determination to unite the territories of this region which was once inspired by Patih Gadjah Mada through slogans or new visions such as *Melayu Raya*, *Indonesia Raya*, *Gagasan Persekutuan Negara-negara Melayu*, and others. Among

the famous nationalists are Apolinario Mabini, Wanceslao Q. Vinzons and Diosado Macapagal (the Philippines); Muhamad Yamin, Soekarno and Mohamad Hatta (Indonesia); and Ibrahim Yaacob, Dr. Burhanuddin al-Helmi, and Ahmad Boestamam (Malaysia) who had fought for *Melayu Raya* and *Indonesia Raya* (the Great Malay and Indonesia).

However, the scenario and political situation during the Second World War does not encourage the reunion of the Archipelago states. For example, Soekarno had announced the independence for Indonesia much earlier without involving Malaya in 1945. Malaysia, under the reign Tunku Abdul Rahman, achieved its independence from British in 1957. All these show that the nationalists fight for freedom only manages to free a country from its conqueror and establishes a sovereign nation and not a united Archipelago that is based on the Malays. Although Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore and the Philippines have gained their independence and develop fast as well as united under ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations), still the formation of nation state and the regional determination become the prime agenda for countries in Southeast Asia. This is because Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Brunei are independent countries as well as at their young age, i.e. free from the colonial powers, after the end of the Second World War.

According to Abdul Rahman Embong, this happens due to the specialization in history caused by colonialism, formation of *bangsa cita* or dream nation, these countries are the result of their independence fight (Embong, 2001:25). In other words, the determination of togetherness inspired in ASEAN is just factual and it is still far from reality. This is proven when there are conflicts in the region such as the confrontation between Malaysia-Indonesia, the Philippines claim on Sabah, overlapping territories issues, rights for the oil and gas concession, illegal immigrants, military and others are still happening and it is difficult to solve.

This is further worsened by global and world issues that currently affect everybody. Francis Fukuyama, in *The End of History* (1992), strongly stated that the 20<sup>th</sup> century, mainly after the Cold War, is the end of history. His statement is further supported by Kenichi Ohmae, in *The Ends of the Nation-State: The Rise of Regional Economics* (1995), where he stated that the questions on the formation and fortification of united nation should no longer become the main agenda for the countries at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries because countries are now having political boundaries, economy and social obligation which separate them from other countries in this world. Kenichi Ohmae tries to convince us that the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a century where our world has no boundaries and functions globally in line

with the recent globalisation especially in economy. According to Kenichi Ohmae, a proud ruler and people, who has a “nation-state”, is merely have a state by name that is outdated and has been destroyed by a new ideology called capitalism, which is based on “region-state”.

For Francis Fukuyama and Kenichi Ohmae, these ex-colonized states are not going to be developed or share similar achievements with other prospered states if they are still relying on the nation-state ideology, which they saw as a dream state of the colonial power. But can this approach become the best mechanism to revive back the united determination of the countries in Southeast Asia? As we discussed earlier, the traditional idea of an Archipelago inspired by Patih Gadjah Mada and “the land relationship” have failed due to clear breaking and separation in the traditional geopolitical archipelago through independence which has separated the countries of the region.

If on land these nation-state and regional state ideologies fail to unite the Archipelago’s spirit, what other choice do we have? By taking into consideration the geography and maritime borders in Southeast Asia, which are geometrical boundary and archipelagic state, it is very impossible to record everything in charts due to often irregular configuration of the coasts, which may be broken by bays, estuaries, lagoons, and include projecting headlands and offshore islands.<sup>4</sup> In other words, before an area becomes an oceanic territorial zone, it has to determine its water straight baseline system. For continents, the responsibility to determine these oceanic territorial zones and their straight baseline system is much easier than states which are island-based like the Philippines and Indonesia that are based on archipelago and internal waters. For instance, the archipelago and internal waters system have made it difficult to maritime nations because it gives negative effects on the international trading activities.

It will be more difficult if most of the people in this region believes in a fact that nation-state like Indonesia (excluding Kalimantan), Malaysia and

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<sup>4</sup>Based on the claim dated 18 February 1960, Indonesia has announced that its sea lines covering 8,167.6 nautical miles which covers about 666,000 nautical miles of its internal waters which include five baselines in excess of 100 nautical miles through *Wawasan Nusantara*; and the Philippines has about 8,174 straight baseline including 148,921.5 nautical miles of internal waters through. In the case of Indonesia-Malaysia water case in the Malacca Strait, Indonesia has come up with a concept known as the *Wawasan Nusantara* on 13 December 1957 which means “*the seas and the straits must be utilized to bridge the physical separations between the islands, region and the manifold ethnic groups; this is also the case with our air space*”; and Malaysia has introduced an *Informal Composite Negotiating Text* with the purpose to *safeguard its existing rights in the seas separating its two territories*. For further explanation see Lee Yong Leng (1978).

the Philippines are separated by South China, Sulu, Celebes and Java Seas. If the physical characteristics of lands and oceans are compared, obviously, lands are more hard and easy to explore than seas. However, all the lands in Southeast Asia are surrounded by sea. Undeniably, the nation-states of this region are based on geometrical boundary<sup>5</sup> and have sole rights on its territorial water; however, in reality, oceans will never separate the territorial lands of this region but it has been connecting us all this while without we realize it. As a Malay saying says, *air laut dicancang tidak akan putus*, or the sea can never be separated, I would like to suggest the best mechanism in reviving back the determination of uniting the states of this region that is to change our perception that sea is not the separator but the uniting factor that will bring back the golden era of this archipelago.

Choosing maritime as the uniting bridge is done due to the mobility of the sea which does not know the meaning of international borders, and it was used once to unite the states of this region. Sea functions as the civilization creator, and it is proven by sailors and traders since centuries ago. Therefore, the capability of the ocean in uniting the nation-state in this region is undeniable. Hugo Grotius, a legal advisor appointed by the Dutch through the *Nederlandsch-Indie Company*, was asked to defend a Dutch action on hijacking a trading ship belongs to Portuguese in the Strait of Malacca defended the action by saying “the sea is like air, it cannot be conquered and does not belong to any nations” (Sazlan, 2000). We all know that it is not easy to unite back the Archipelago spirit which was once fought by Patih Gadjah Mada due to the fall of geo-political Malay world and the formation of nation created by the colonials. In my opinion, it is difficult to readapt this spirit due its past history. However, this spirit can be revived if we are able to find the similarities in the history and geo-cultural maritime

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<sup>5</sup>Taking into consideration that the maritime boundaries are geometrical boundary, it has created many unexpected difficulties in the recording of any information in charts due to often irregular configuration of the coasts, which may be broken by bays, estuaries, lagoons, and include projecting headlands and offshore islands (Lee Yong Leng, 1978:16). In other words, before a zone is called oceanic territorial zone, a state must first determine its baseline. A continent based state has an easier task in determining its sea baseline and straight baseline system compared to island-based states such as the Philippines and Indonesia which are based on “archipelago and internal waters”. For example, archipelago and internal waters system has made it difficult to other maritime nations because of its negative effects of its international trading activity in the archipelago and internal waters. For Indonesia and Malaysia, the awareness on the importance of maritime started with the announcement of Malaysian continent in 1979 which involves Spratly Island in the South China Sea and the AMBALAT (*Ambang Batas Lautan*) zone in Sulawesi Sea received a negative response from neighboring countries.

of our ancestors in the past and not only focus on the differences. With the belief that we have common similarities that is “our ancestors are seamen or sailors”, I believe the archipelago spirit can be revived.

## **CONCLUSION**

As discussed earlier, history has shown us that oceans in Southeast Asia play an important role in building the civilization in this region such as the kingdoms of Srivijaya and Majapahit in Indonesia; the Malacca Malay Sultanate in Malaysia; the Brunei Sultanate in Brunei; and the Sulu Sultanate in the Philippines. Our history also shows us that oceans in the Southeast Asia does play a role in the fall of these great kingdoms when they were colonized by the Dutch (Indonesia); Portuguese, Dutch and British (Malaysia); and Spanish and Americans (the Philippines). Today, the stability of these countries who have just achieved independence begins to quiver with various internal and external crisis as if there will never be solutions to it. For example, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia have thousands islands which are separated from each other and different ethnicities and religions, and all these elements make it difficult for our government to unite us all under one nation. This is shown in incidents happening around the region, i.e. ethnic crisis, autonomy claim and others that took place in Indonesia and the Philippines.

We can also say that the government’s actions to ignore the role and contribution of maritime, as one of the agenda in building up a nation, and their preference of adapting the colonial way of building up a nation, will result in the above mentioned crisis. Although we have gained independence in the 1940s and 1960s, still the colonial impacts can be felt as the result of break and rule policy of the colonial power. This was clearly expressed Abdul Rahman Embong where he states that even though the Federation of Malaysia was formed in 1963, for him it is the formation of a state and not a nation. In this matter, Indonesia begins to get the clues in managing problems relating to nation building when it has started to use the history and culture of its maritime as a tool in patching up its nation. They realize the difficulty in the uniting its nation from the geo-political aspects. Other states than Indonesia have also moved towards the same directions.

To realize the mission and vision of uniting the nations of this region, a paradigm shift in the government policy as well as in the mind of the people should first be done, i.e. to see oceans as an uniting factor not a separator. In a bigger framework, all nations of this region should instil the determination and awareness that the historical and cultural maritime of Southeast Asia belongs to everybody and it is the joint heritage of every

states and nations in this region. This should be instilled using the fact that the surface of the earth is dominated by oceans, as a Malay saying says, “*air dicencang tidak akan putus*”, the sea level will never decrease; yet it will increase due to global warming, and now the power of oceans (tsunami) can and will make us shudder.

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