

Proverbial Wisdom and Planetary: Re-imagining Coral Reef Communities

Jeffner Allen
State University of New York, Binghamton University
jeffn@binghamton.edu

Abstract

Propelled by a proverb, “Air dicencang tidak putus” | “Cut water is not severed,” which has numerous formulations and referents, “*Proverbial Wisdom . . .*” traverses present-day imaginings, underwater and terrestrial histories and contemporary dilemmas, of several eastern Sulawesi tropical reef communities.

Pedagogical practices of transdisciplinary reflection and writerly experimentation join together in this work to examine mindscapes that give shape to marine and human reef communities. An interactive listening to the proverb highlights three vital dynamics: the timeliness of Sama narratives of dispersed belonging for creating an understanding of culture and the coral reefs from the perspective of transnational flows; the benefits of representing reef, including the “pristine reef,” the “bombed reef,” the “tourist reef,” the “over-fished reef,” etc., apart from neocolonial frameworks that render “reef” as essentially “natural” and “local” cultures as peculiarly “indigenous”; the need to recognize ways in which seemingly local events exercise, always and already, determinant impacts on sustainability and global community.

These reflections on language and water are an event, and a poetic reflection. The proverb will be enacted through an immersion in the invigorating currents of the archipelagos of east Sulawesi. In a time beset by the treacherous fractals of overpowering domination and luminous liberation, the unfolding of a proverb that inhabits a plurality of narratives seeks to foster the intertwining of planetary, ecological equilibrium, and transcultural interpretation.

Dive before dawn

Sun burst underwater opening pulsating canopy of shadows and light Quivering
aglow billowing clouds and thick grey sky stream upwards through rollicking
waves Floating silhouette of aggregation monumental breaks apart into golden
flashings as hundreds of fish wake wander latticed reflections of obsidian fingers

spiraling outwards from canopied clearing until swept into darkness of unfathomable depths

Suspended between reef and sky heart is cast ahead of body a fluttering lure shaped as worm or shrimp or even swimming like a small fish Reflections on water in this the most voluminous flow of water on earth visible invisible circulations invigorating currents disperse plankton and debris swirling arms of swift currents pull

Pink light lifts jagged shapes of islands from sea early morning shadows afloat on magenta flame chugging sputter of slowly speeding boats with fishers singing upon return from night's work drifts across bay to rest among tall coconut palms covered by rising smoke of daybreak fires

A long line one dugout canoe tied by lengths of rope to another attached to yet another at the head of which a small boat with motor files across rose colored sea each soon to scatter fishing gathering sea creatures trading foodstuffs electronics exchanging daily news On water a few hours days or pausing at stilt houses directly over reef for months at a time women and men reel in put out lines nets check bobbling bamboo traps spread here and there celebrate holidays raise children share tales glean critters along shore

Neither one tale nor two a wriggling entanglement passes beneath reflections of round straw hat in waves as paddle in hand she leans over edge of wooden hull following toss of fishing line archipelagic routes of traverse trade at long distance communications connections slavery vast mobility infinite small inlets and waterways liquid intervals ancestors of a future become present waves that become calm following disturbance
A boat passes through the seagrasses come back together again¹

¹An old Malay saying, “biduk lalu kiambang bertaut” or “[after] a prau passed through the waterweed will close [again],” refers to a situation that becomes quiet after a disturbance.

The octopus left the airplane landed departures and arrivals twist uneasily overgrowing matting erupting irregularly into fuzzy branching filaments Like a long rolling wave, as recounted in the *Kendari Post* (July 11, 2001), “secara gelombang,” villagers arrived by dugout or walked overland by night to inaugurate the airstrip

The first landing: government dignitaries tumbled out of the small aircraft pronouncing hope for stimulus to economic growth in the province the son of the last sultan in the region extolled the mission impossible a handful of light skinned people assured by the eco resort’s owner that a singularly efficient private conservation model would protect the finest reefs still surviving on the planet set foot on the one mile private paved airstrip in the middle of the sea clicking photos in every direction a small sum of cash and promise of employment was passed on to those who could oppose the event by virtue of previously using the land to tend fruit trees their roots now under fresh asphalt All were welcomed with a holy ceremony

That local villagers never imagined their small island could have been chosen to have such a great airstrip constructed by a foreign company as reported by a newspaper on the mainland is not so certain One event flows into another and for some time it had been recognized that the waters beneath the recently laid tarmac were losing power not only were there fewer fish to catch but the four-fingered octopus had withdrawn

Perhaps a few fishers had neglected to make appropriate offerings several divers had visited the sacred cavern of the octopus which was quickly becoming a tourist attraction handmade bombs had been detonated on a nearby reef to extract live fish for trade

One Moba’a’s richly adorned cave lacked not in octopi three eight-armed octopi can be found there at almost any time hanging from arched cave ceiling lime green tangerine

lemon buttery yellow copper persimmon peach plum soft corals fleshy translucent rich
clusters tufts of polyps extended from branch tips red flame scallop flashes neon
green sea turtle circles alights fluorescent orange outline of batfish hovers near bushes
of black coral bending into current Nor could the change be attributed to lack of
strength or nimbleness strong flexible muscular tentacles studded with suckers

Have you tried to catch an octopus as it slips and slides over your back arms face
changing colors shapes no permanent holdfast unpredictable movements
responsive to each turning of events?

Sea foam opal bubbles scum phytoplankton increase release organic matter agitated
by wind waves spacings between words not words alone in flurries logics reassemble
perhaps without need to define frothy mixing increases then dissipates

Spoken tales accumulate recombine precise negotiations marking subordination to land-
based rulers kingdoms pirates slavers wealthy traders maritime accomplishments
navigational skills links to nobility plants animals ancestors healing interventions in
colonialism nationalism global commerce of Bajau Bajo those who refer to
themselves as the Samalan-speaking people Sama people moving about blown on the
unbounded between of shoreline reefs mangroves boats seas and all that is considered
water which is not to exclude land

Tumbling out of the Welenreng tree eggs hatch in the sea Sama people sail are taken
into servitude a Sama woman marries a noble ruler As the gigantic Welenreng tree
drops into the sea felled to hollow into a boat so many are the bird eggs that rain from
its branches that an enormous flood of egg yokes arises washing away the Sama who
remain in perpetual motion tree sinking slowly into sea eggs break swirling
flood takes young girl to distant ocean navigating fishing trading her people's boat
raided she is married to a king

Next to a fishing float one time a young girl certainly a queen was found inside sea foam some sea foam big as a house² and today Sama people find each other everywhere along water's edge²

erratic transport forced relocations chosen

migrations fluid navigation not necessarily to be carried along by *the power to move with many forces skillfully mediating land sea*

These lines on water invoke the between of the coral reefs from long moments of immersion in the frequently quick currents of the Tukang Besi archipelago, scattered southeast from the outstretched arms that shape mainland Sulawesi, the Sangihearchipelago, curving northeast along the island's volcanic ring of fire, and the Togeans, hilly islands that cluster within the undulations of Sulawesi's eastern coast. The practice of thinking water from water while suspended in the rapid churning, entrapments, disruptions and stillness of the most voluminous through flow of water on the planet occasions a perturbation of mindscapes that conjoin human and marine dimensions. Amazingly, the currents' circumnavigation of the more than 17,000 islands, along with the underwater trenches, basins, channels, ridges, shelves and sills, which form Indonesia, consumes so much energy that it slows the spinning of the globe (Pickell & Siagian 2000:130-131).

The abundance, expanse, and sheer beauty of the tropical coral reefs in the waters of Sulawesi is vitalized by upwellings of nutrients from deep water basins. Influenced by the Pacific Ocean from the east and the Indian Ocean from the west, the corals and reef life of eastern Sulawesi contain genetic breaks and minglings that foster an exponential diversity. The line of connection between apparently discrete terrestrial fauna, which lead Alfred Russel Wallace (1872) to surmise that Sulawesi might have been connected

²The Sama song poem "Ningkinda ma Buburah," "The Girl in the Sea Foam," as chanted by Mbo Biba, is presented by C. Lowe (2006). Several accounts of Sama ancestry also are given in Bugis' oral histories, compiled as *La Galigo*.

with both Asian and Pacific-Australian continents in a single land mass that shifted and broke apart, is echoed in the distribution of marine organisms, including the diverse acropora hard corals along the east coast of Sulawesi in the area now designated as Wallacea (Wallace, C.C. 2002). Although Wallace's theory of gradual evolution has been supplanted by the concept of punctuated equilibrium, according to which new species evolve suddenly, followed by longer periods in which there is little genetic change, the uniqueness of the zone has brought the reefs of Sulawesi to international attention.

In a nation that is eighty percent water, President Susilo Yudhoyono discourse, "Indonesia's Transformation in the Globalization Era" (2007), which announced that Indonesia will become a "developed country" by 2050, provided that significant changes are made in the provinces, could not but have particular implications for the peoples and the reefs of central and eastern Sulawesi. The three major steps proposed to effect an "integrated" change, "giving the provinces the chance to develop themselves," combining natural and knowledge resources, and achieving economic growth with equity, present both an opportunity to reorient and the risk of continuing a longstanding history in which the provinces are perceived by courts and officials not only as less economically prosperous, but as backward and a hindrance to nation building.

Of timely relevance to the historical and conceptual environment in which "development" might occur is the observation by renown literary writer and intellectual leader, Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1999:252), that insofar as Indonesia's revolution against the Dutch and all colonial powers was followed not by social unification, but by a reification of social caste, the final restoration of Indonesia's sovereignty in 1949 failed to achieve the aspirations behind the struggle for national independence. During the Indonesian National Revolution, Pramoedya was imprisoned by the Dutch and while in prison wrote his first book. His subsequent reprobation of the Sukarno government for being focused on the well-being of Java and inattentive to the cultural values and economic needs of the many regions and peoples of the nation, as well as for exclusionary treatment of the Chinese in Indonesia, led to his arrest again for nine

months. After the military coup in Jakarta in 1965, a period in which hundreds of thousands of people were murdered and a million and a half people imprisoned, Pramoedya was taken as a political prisoner by the Suharto military regime, which was supported by the United States. He was initially held on Java, and then exiled for ten years to the penal colony on Buru Island, where hundreds and hundreds prisoners died or went insane from forced labor, brutality, torture, starvation and disease. While in exile on Buru, an island in Maluku, to the east of Sulawesi, he was denied even a pencil with which to write. Nonetheless, he narrated stories to the other prisoners to bring relief from exhaustion, and hope. Supported by prisoners who did extra labor in his stead, an act that occasioned him considerable moral struggle, and upon obtaining access to writing materials, during his last years on the island he was able to record the stories from memory. Following his release from exile in 1979, he reworked the writings, only half of which could be smuggled to safety, into the Buru Quartet, remaining under house arrest in Jakarta until 1992.

The scope of Pramoedya's literary production, which emerges through a life of speaking out and involvement, is sculpted by astute analysis and insight into impediments to fulfillment of the national aspiration for freedom and, concomitantly, the well-being of the nation's many peoples and cultures. The narrator of *The Mute's Soliloquy* (Toer 1999:252, 253) makes manifest the effects of the arbitrary use of capital through reference to the continuing impact of Suharto's New Order, which saw Indonesia, and especially the more easterly islands of the nation, as a fresh source of cheap labor and raw materials, remarking, "Perhaps history will one day remind us that 'capital' is not just a stack of money: Capital is the energy that has, over the last four centuries, altered the face of the world and driven away to reservations, jungles, and the outback those people who would not compromise." Neither silenced nor swallowed by the wind, but reaching far into the future, the voice of Nyai Ontosoroh, perhaps Pramoedya's most famous figure, continues to resonate from and of the "Millions upon millions of people [who] suffer silently, like the river stones" (Toer 1984:56, 57). Nyai, born Sanikem, herself a village woman who was purchased as a child by a Dutch plantation owner, exercises a keen wisdom and moral authority as sole head of household, building and

running a thriving business and raising her half-European children, with no legal rights over her children or the business because she is caste as “Native.”

That it was Buru, an island two thousand miles from the centers of power in Jakarta, which was transfigured into the site of exile and untimely death not only for the more than 12,000 prisoners of the Suharto regime, but also the laborers forced to cultivate the island’s indigo plantations during and after colonialism and, under the Japanese occupation, the Javanese women who were sent to Buru to be “comfort women” (Toer 2001), is not explained by geographic happenstance. Indeed, to consider while locked within centrist perspectives the islands and waterways that became Indonesia limits not only reflection on the provinces, but on Indonesia as a nation, by missing, failing to acknowledge and undergo *the destabilizing agitation of the winds on waves, the shifts of orbit in the global circulations of peoples, economics, and values that is generated by the diverse cosmopolitan histories and present day involvements of the peoples of the aquatic “frontier.”*

A perturbation of mindscapes, disordering and throwing into confusion logics which claim efficacy through the demarcation and classification of substance, is effected by the several Sama peoples of Indonesia, southern Philippines, eastern Malaysia and southern Thailand, *simply by the assumption of an unbounded mobility*. Indifferently, and at this point in history, sometimes, purposively, crossing and re-crossing national lines, the dispersal on the waters of these peoples of the sea, who also are peoples of land, mixed, and not only one, unsettles frameworks of development based on territorial discipline. Loosely linked by language, styles of fishing, farming, and navigation in the currents of life, Sama peoples recognize one another by scattering.

The tactile, visceral contours of a saying may carry one swiftly to an encounter, change course, or vanish, leaving but their fleeting wake. A proverb on water, this proverb on water which has more than a single meaning, or it would not be a proverb, inhabits plural sets of meanings borne by diverse sayings and substitutions of words. Spoken in oral-oriented societies, it is not fixed. Replete with intergenerational, regional, and

occupational variations, with ancient, new, popular, and marketplace forms, it may have been learned at school, read in a novel, or leapt from dictionaries.³ Familiar since childhood, or perhaps never heard, this proverb may pass without notice or come to attention only as one departs from the space to which, already, one has been propelled.

ting pling ti ti plingg she stirs vigorously with table knife water in tall drinking glass
play of young girl water glass knife slicing through water and this morning her
mother tells her once again air potong tak putus what child's play!!! as everyone
knows what is one can be sliced through but what is two is also one and what is one is
two

Air dipotong tidak putus as what is spoken on this eastern shore Indonesian a second
language or third must nonetheless be written potong cut in the most general sense air
water such childish chatter

Jutting abruptly from oceanic trenches so deep that long slender shadows of silver
needlefish sweeping across pinnacle beneath water's rippling surface elude sight sharp
edge of submarine ridge thin blade of vitality lifts plummets erupts upwards towering
then sinks fullness of open water

Upwelling flows carve tapered blade ever sharper Wide bands of discrete textures and
shading currents progenitor bring and carry away as ink that leaves brush to flow into
shapes of equilibrium debris of extinct volcano unknown

³ Indeed, the interpretation of a proverb involves a sharing of experiences and perspectives. For conversations concerning formulations of the saying that guides this reflection I thank Linda Sinke, Jennifer Gaynor, Ariel Heryanto, Sanher Adelaar, Isa Kamari, Jan Van Der Putten, John Roosa, Peter Suwarno, and also Asim Gunarwan, Okki Kurniawan, Anton Moeliono, Uri Tadmor, and John Wolff.

Butterfly fish rise in pairs over giant barrel sponges as profusion of blade's spine opens into light rainbows of blue fusiliers arc fall in endless streams fast current flows through mint nectarine strawberry sea fans waving crinoid arms wire coral spiraling red
Hard corals soft corals of every volume dimension crowd and stinging squeeze into prime space

Colors bounce a magnification of shapes on warm shallow ledge Slow sway of round-tipped translucent paddles dotted with orange bundles held perpendicular to alighting rays of sun gardening for sugars solar powered sea slug keeps algae from coral alive in thin covering of long flattened organs a living photosynthesis (Behrens 1005:26-28) recharges solar cells

Far out at sea unbounded drifting fast and faster flying alongside the blade water turns colder pushes back then impels Cloud of churning eddies fast spiraling down air sucked down confusion of upwards and down

Perhaps there is nothing but to ride the currents impossibility of swimming against though at an angle might suffice An intimate responsiveness even a slow current can be strong stillness of focus if not of motion

Fairy basslets lemon pink violet apricot sky blue soar over blade in every direction medium current basslets hover in schools barely above ridge fining fiercely strong current basslets hide among tossed branches of soft coral feeding on plankton

Rounding coral outcropping current in full force grab onto the blade inhale exhale descend to currents less intense cling to the bottom but blade is abyssal be swept away or pause behind coral mound

leaning into the currents passing just above divers with only drinking straws and masks sip bubbles pierce bells of rising exhalations with straws⁴ breathe confident in the moment

Coastlines awash with long reaches of maritime routes that built small kingdoms
cosmopolitan centers thriving empires⁵ Sama traders of sea cucumbers fish giant
clams pearls dried seaweed coral to burn into lime dye plants mangrove wood birds'
nests coconuts honey cloves Sama taken enslaved by raids and piracy at sea
relays of triangulations Makassar Ternate Batavia Jolo Canton the Cape Colony
London leave their imprints on water

Twinned by placenta spirit swimming free in ocean currents⁶ listening tasting shape-
shifting occasioning upheavals and triumphs Sama peoples of dis/connectivities and
mixings move about to pursue livelihoods move on as need be

Arriving on shores shaken by earthquakes eruptions of boiling steam molten rock
plumes of ash three miles high incandescent cloud of fire sweeping down volcano to
sea suffocating clouds and simultaneously a tsunami only the old mosque remained

Stepping through ephemeral architectures bamboo poles open frames houses of palm
bark and leaves a few homes of cinder block with metal gate families return

⁴Divers sipping air from short tubes of plastic or bamboo appear in tales told by young divers of east Sulawesi, some of whom first take up diving in this manner, though not without risk, and in the story of an old pearl diver with a straw, recounted by Pickell and Siagian (2000:16-18).

⁵Sama from eastern Sulawesi participated in trade routes to Maluku under the Sultanate of Ternate, the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, as well as to the southern Philippines, Java, China, and as intermediaries in the circulation of goods to India, North Africa, and southeast Asia. Peoples of Sulawesi, in particular, the Sama, were among the enslaved who constituted half of the population of Batavia (Jakarta), at the center of the Dutch empire, and the Cape of Good Hope (Vink 2003). Pirates and raiders, including the Iranum and Balangini, enslaved Sama to support colonial trade that supplied tea and other goods from China to England and the Americas and to work in the fisheries, wilderness, and all areas, of the Sulu Sultanate (Warren 2002). The narrator of Toer's *House of Glass* (1996) speaks of white pirates who enslaved fishers at sea in north Sulawesi to work in the mines of South America. In effect, the routes of Sama trade and enslavement were extensive and far reaching (Pelras 1996; Gaynor 2005).

⁶The return to the sea of the placenta of each newborn is retold by Stacey (2007).

newcomers arrive and in the coming and going vacated dwellings open to all to inhabit and modify

One who has been away almost twenty years since five years of age returns walks along path by the sea with ducks chickens clacking of cow bells across the commons goats zebu bouncing bicycles nearly colliding carts is recognized and greeted by people young and old chatting and engaged in tasks of the day asked about family given wishes for health and good fortune

Friends linger at turn of flower strewn path to verdant fields of coconut palms and cloves take homecoming videos on cell phones no tower in village to relay phone calls

And with gratitude and joy departs on boat resuming journey⁷ Amid the currents belonging

Holding fast to reef as object a predatory intelligence gropes at empty water fashioning songs of woe the uninhabitability of Una-Una island covered by volcanic ash bombing of coral reefs as harbinger of their terminal destruction impending extinction of the Sama as a peoples irretrievable loss of the four-fingered octopus and sea foam maiden Insisting disingenuously on the effectual absence and demise of presumed static entities and situations which have never offered themselves to its grasp while promoting its own psychic cultural and economic aggrandizement

Amid clouds of ink reef image hides and escapes startles accompanies and sends forth

Succession of cephalopod-sized blobs mucosal pseudomorphs jetting forth into currents inking that obscure view leaving undetected escapes and erratic changes of direction

⁷Thanks to Anton for sharing this experience in the village of Una-Una, where Gunung Colo erupted July 1983. Prior to the major eruption, the people of the island were evacuated.

Spotches unrelenting perhaps there are but these persistent puffs which Stinging enter bodies in long rolling waves of decoys and disorientations rarely settling chemical compounds irritating eyes temporarily paralyzing sense of taste and smell

By daylight dark ink screens under moonlight bacterial effulgences conceal a long line of formless forms at the end of which octopus tints itself and hangs in currents (Norman 2000:101, 103) mimicking ink cloud

chenchang cencang resonant sound of large knives on cutting boards chop hack mince not just a simple cutting but multiple cuts down to little bits air *dicincang* tidak putus minced water does not separate chopped water will not separate water minced did not separate a striking acoustic impression *cincang* in modern Indonesian to mince shred resulting in fragmentation of the object being cut into small pieces and dispersed vivid evocative but odd in terms of water

Thwack of large knives on cutting tables aligned in rows across wide deck of fish processing boat where at midday fishers stand shoulder to shoulder chopping mincing shredding catch to be flash frozen shipped to Java Hong Kong Thailand China Singapore

An economics of chopping: One blade raises up quick quick another lowers slicing through and up again and in the cycling gas for a motorboat school fees and uniforms a dwindling fish supply cash to buy food Labors of the fishers chopping cut into small pieces dispersed *ayer dichenchang tiada putus* may itself be split separated head from tail

Just two months time in this eastern zone 15 billion rupiah dispensed by the Indonesian government to build fishery ports Cargil Indonesia the Philippines Netherlands United States South Korea Germany China increase investments in fish processing palm oil biofuels 462 tons of canned fish exported to Yemen Syria Saudi Arabia Egypt Libya

Jordan Japan rejects billions of cultivated shrimp due to contamination from antibiotics and chemicals

WALHI Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Friends of the Earth Indonesia protests mercury pollution of bays as British mining companies pour 500 million additional pounds into extraction of gold coal nickel gas chromium Earth Friendly Underwear of coconut shell husks and bamboo is launched by United States' sports companies China pursues new gold mines South Korea invests in wind power

Imported wines and air conditioning are announced by one dive resort as an option “in this remote tropical paradise where most locals do not have running water” for “people like you—exceptional people that have worked hard to get where they are in life and that refuse to settle for less than the very best”

Motile debris residue of implosions scatters into a fractious gnawing ever in relation to memory and vast forgetting omissions burials and denials Carried by currents of simulation the winds of the seas dead and decaying memories of the living

Limbs crisscross outstretch circle at diagonals flap like wings mouths open jerking movements push upward blue and gold fusiliers quiver roll over and over flip-flop slide into gaping craters pewter luster of rotting bodies sinks does not float rupture of swim bladders the last fish cease

Currents sweep mounds of coral skeletons across blast zone deeper reef unchanged gather let drift fall ashes particles of time

Dynamited reef live fish trade in polka dot grouper Napoleon wrasse pulsating polyps of soft coral spread over rubble Hard corals without space on which to settle diminish succumb unless over long time devising ways to resist encroachment

Broken fragments *neither resemblance nor imitation* cabik-cabik bulu ayam cancang
aia indak putuih⁸ when one tears out the feathers of a chicken or one splits water
nothing will break nothing will be severed

Diving the reef ruins a navigation of circumstance fishers who have blown selves up
setting reef bombs widows mining dead coral boulders for income a few tiny fish

Prohibited from traditional fishing grounds fishing with hand lines for several days
What to eat? Devastation of a thousand years growth in one split second or is a
particular reef designated to be bombed time and again so that other reefs remain? thick
algal mats shade overgrow smother scorpionfish perch in crevices of sand covered
detritus

*Ugliness beauty knowledges not-knowing justice and its absence impossible to get rid
of some and grab the others how to deal with each thing changing? (Ryokan
1959:1.348) no perfect action but a necessary practice of skillful mediations that
unsettle logics of permanence*

Water bound? Do not the currents still flow? coral reef zone no taking of fish no entry
marine zone no take entry allowed tourism zone tourists only traditional zone.
local communities restricted to unmotorized boats and hand lines general use zone
controlled by large oceanic fisheries special zones national parks Patrols enforce
rigid separations disregard diverse local traditions of lightly skimming waterways by
plural seasonal cycling throughout reefs and fishing grounds

Rather than kaleidoscope into the near future habits of conservation that exclude no one
reef pictured as delicate pristine nature is set aside for conservation preserved for

⁸ An early formulation of the saying, from Minangkabau, a language spoken in West Sumatra. Over time various vocabulary, grammar and linguistic structures were borrowed from Malay and related dialects and translated into Bahasa Indonesia.

eco-tourists and their upcoming generations those living in the unbounded
between designated as exploitative so frequently does the conjunction of Sama and
exploitative appear subjected to resettlement through transmigration model village
programs socialization sessions new labors

from reef lease 3200 acres of waterways given by village to ecology foundation in
exchange for reef patrol speedboat radio equipment guardhouse one waterline a paved
road repair of mosque years later many of the projects incomplete some not even
begun

release cut holes into single pipeline designed to bring water to but one destination
the village center divert fresh water along the way for use by all

Fluid negotiations fish multiply though not accessible to locals incomes rise for some
islanders press for increase in yearly payments and tithing Lease to one resort of
traditional fishing grounds 12.5 miles of reefs and waterways and a diving monopoly
in return for electricity which can be turned off in moments of discord funds for schools
school uniforms books students to keep island clear of trash paid jobs in maintenance
waste facilities and construction

Moneys in tandem with vigilant patrol not sufficient to keep at bay protests by groups
of coral walkers who take by surprise and trample hard corals in shallow

Currents may be slow or fast water may be minced zoned bound leased Blade sharp
edge of submarine ridge unceasingly is being moved through water⁹ Chopped water
air dicencang tiada putus` the condition of water that of always being cut through

⁹ An ancient use of the saying offers the insight that blade is always cutting, with no beginning or finish point. Such a state of being does not require grammatically or for its existence a subject that chops.

Seven years later a public airport to be built on nearby island for locals' use the first airport restricted to private resort guests peoples of the sea do not await the second landing but assuming a motility unbounded lean into the currents

Immersion one who dived time and again by a few underwater photos encountered by chance while growing up in village of volcanic peaks accompanies family to port city without expectation works jobs here and there borrows a dive mask jumps in and comes to know well the liquid between Quick currents lightly pull one who never expecting to see the water moves to island shores to help lift anchor reeling in anchor lines by hand and navigating the flows still in the second decade of life guides underwater expeditions staying in balance by listening to iPod tunes¹⁰

snap click beep sends photos on cell phones the flying fish glide pristine reef bombed reef tourist reef over-fished reef fishers hauling day's catch routes of communication that might shift orbits air dicincang tidak putus in its most common understanding that family ties necessarily national global planetary entangled circulations do not get severed Amid conflicts how to reconcile?

Small cuts these sea foam tales evisceration of bodily organs rapid irregular motions vibrations a vulnerability of imagination mimics tempts stings inconsequential nothings voluminous flows so hard to catch the unbounded between

When heart is cast as a fluttering lure shaped as worm or shrimp or even swimming like a small fish banyu pinerang¹¹ like cutting water!

References

Behrens, D.W. (2005). *Nudibranch Behavior*. Jacksonville: New World Publications.

¹⁰ My appreciation to Ungke for discussing this riding of the currents.

¹¹ A Javanese equivalent of the proverb, which means the same: water can't be split.

- Gaynor, J.L. (2005). "Liquid Territory: Subordination, Memory and Manuscripts among Sama People of Sulawesi's Southern Littoral." *Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation*. University of Michigan.
- Lowe, C. (2006). *Wild Profusion: Biodiversity Conservation in an Indonesian Archipelago*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Norman, M. (2000). *Cephalopods: A World Guide*. Hackenheim: Conch Books.
- Roykan (1959). *Ryokan Zenshu*, Toyohara, T, (ed.). Tokyo: Sogensha.
- Pelras, C. (1996). *The Bugis*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Pickell, D. and Siagian, W. (2000). *Diving Bali*. Singapore: Periplus.
- Stacey, N. (2007). *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: Australian National University E-Press.
- Toer, P.A. (1984). *Child of All Nations*, New York: Penguin.
- _____, (1996). *House of Glass*. New York: Morrow.
- _____, (1999). *The Mute's Soliloquy*. New York: Penguin.
- _____(2001). *Perawan Remaja dalam Cengkraman Militer*. Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia.
- Vink, M. (2003). "'The World's Oldest Trade': Dutch Slavery and Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," *Journal of World History*, 14(2). pp.131-178.
- Wallace, A.R. (1872). *The Malay Archipelago: The land of the orang-utan, and the bird of paradise. A narrative of travel with sketches of man and nature.* London: Macmillan.
- Wallace, C.C. (2002). "Journey to the heart of the centre—Origins of high marine faunal diversity in the central Indo-Pacific from the perspective of an acropologist," *Proceedings of the Ninth International Coral Reef Symposium, Bali*, 1. pp. 33-39.
- Warren, J.F. (2002). *Iranun and Balangini: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Birth of Ethnicity*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Yudhoyono, S.B. (2007). "Indonesia's Transformation in the Globalization Era." *Antara News*, September 4.