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**THE HOMO SAPIENS SEAFARER DIASPORA IN
THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHIPELAGO:
TRAVERSING TRANSOCEANIC WATERS FROM
THE MESOLITHIC TO THE NEOLITHIC ERA**

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the profound impact of waters, seas, and oceans on the historical trajectory of Southeast Asia, challenging the prevailing narratives that have often overlooked the vital contributions of the region's seafaring ancestors. Traditionally dismissed as mere sources of inspiration, these maritime expanses were instrumental in shaping the transition from traditional kingdoms to modern nation-states in Southeast Asia. While historical theories such as the Out of Yunan and Out of Taiwan paradigms proposed by Western scholars have dominated discussions on the development of traditional civilizations in the Southeast Asian Archipelago (Nusantara), this paper advocates for a Southeast Asia-centric perspective to rectify

the marginalization of historical realities. The narrative encompasses the ancient epoch and prehistoric eras marked by the migrations of *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* from mainland Asia, providing a comprehensive understanding of the early evolution of maritime civilizations in the region. This exploration highlights the risks and sacrifices made by seafaring communities from B.C. to A.D., as they navigated treacherous waters and stormy weathers to ensure the legacy and continuity of future generations. Far from being trivial, their millennia-long contributions have been likened to “shipwrecks laying at the bottom of the sea in their forgotten watery graves.” By elucidating how these communities utilized seas and oceans as sources of emancipation and development, this study aims to reposition Southeast Asia as an epicentre of civilization, rivalling any in the ancient world. Ultimately, this research provides a nuanced perspective on the region’s maritime history, challenging existing paradigms and contributing to the broader international discourse on the development of civilizations.

Keywords: Maritime, Southeast Asia, *Homo sapiens*, Seafarer Diaspora, Theory of Man Out of Java.

INTRODUCTION

Bearing in mind that the seas have existed for millions of years, and that studies of their turbulent and formative past are limited, it is certainly no easy task to compile a comprehensive history of the maritime world. Considering that about 70 percent of the earth’s surface area consists of seas and oceans, the life of the creatures that lie within their depths is still largely a mystery to us. It is an unknown world steeped in myth and superstition, a fact that has led to a cautious approach to its exploration, in contrast to the ceaseless exploitation of *terra firma* (Bentley, 1999: Mukherjee, 2023). Awareness of the importance of mastering marine-related sciences first arose when people realized the role and contribution of the sea, ocean and seafaring tribes in building and shaping world civilizations (Ali & Singgih Tri Sulistiyyono, 2023). Starting with the science and technology of early shipping, which was rather limited, but also characterised by great enthusiasm and courage, pre-literate, pre-historic seafarers began to unite the land, sea, and islands (Shamsul Bahri, 2023: Howe, 2023). The end of the pre-historic age and the emergence of historical epochs marked by the emergence of the world’s early kingdoms has revealed, not only the determination of rulers, seafarers and traders to control

the seas around them, but also the persistent desire of Arab, Persian, Indian, Funan, Chinese and Southeast Asian Archipelago sailors or archipelagos to explore the world's various seas and seas for the purpose of migration and trade. These impulses spawned the world's major maritime powers (Ramli & Nik Abd. Rahman, 2012: Bellwood & Glover (Eds.), 2023). Likewise, the successes that followed finally opened the minds of European sailors and traders not only to opportunities on land, but also to see the seas as an important agenda for the formation of nation-states (Quinn & Ryan, 2023). It is no wonder that from the 6th to the 19th centuries, the world's major seas were populated with boats and ships of all shapes and sizes, engaged in a frantic pursuit of trade and/or empirical expansion (Gough, 2023: Vo Van That et al., 2023).

The present study delves into the profound impact of waters, seas, and oceans on the historical trajectory of Southeast Asia during pivotal periods such as the Mesolithic and Neolithic eras (Mohammad et al., 2023: Andaya, 2018). These epochs witnessed significant maritime activities and human migration, shaping the region's cultural landscape (Abdullah & Abdul Kadir, 2020). However, understanding this maritime historical dimension requires situating it within the political frameworks of ancient Southeast Asia. Throughout history, the region was home to various political entities, including early kingdoms, empires, and maritime regimes such as those of Kedah, Srivijaya, Majapahit, and the Champa Kingdom (Sémah et al., 2023: Kamaruddin & Musa, 2023). These entities played crucial roles in facilitating maritime trade, exploration, and cultural exchange across the Southeast Asian archipelago.

In addressing this gap, the present study poses a central research question: How can a Southeast Asia-centric perspective rectify historical marginalization and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the development of maritime civilization in the Southeast Asia Archipelago? To answer this question, the present research sets forth the following objectives:

- (1) to reassess the significance of ancient epochs and prehistoric migrations,
- (2) to explore the risks and sacrifices of seafaring communities,
- (3) to critique prevailing historical paradigms, and
- (4) to highlight the emancipatory role of waters in Southeast Asia's maritime history

By undertaking these objectives, this study aims to foster a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of the region's maritime past within the broader international discourse on civilization development. Its role is also to provide a comprehensive understanding of the region's maritime heritage and its significance in shaping early civilizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In alignment with the proposed research on “The *Homo sapiens* Seafarer Diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago: Traversing Transoceanic Waters from Mesolithic to Neolithic Eras” a qualitative research design methodology will be employed. The research will commence with a comprehensive review of existing literature, drawing insights from historical documents, anthropological studies, and archaeological findings related to maritime history in Southeast Asia. The initial heuristic phase will involve systematically collecting and scrutinizing information from various sources, such as maritime archives, archaeological reports, and anthropological studies. The research will integrate a source critique process, cross-referencing information from diverse repositories, including national archives, libraries, and academic publications. This critical evaluation aims to ensure the accuracy and reliability of historical data pertaining to the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago (Topolski, 2012).

To enhance the research framework, spatial analysis and mapping techniques will be employed to visualize and analyse migration patterns, cultural exchanges, and maritime activities in the region. The analytical process, as outlined in the exemplary methodology, will involve synthesizing information from primary and secondary sources to draw inferences and derive a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Finally, following the historiography process, the study will culminate in the synthesis of findings and the development of a narrative that contributes to the understanding of the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago. This holistic methodology, combining archival research and analytical processes, ensures a robust exploration of the maritime historical dimensions under investigation (Mohd Noor, 2006).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Maritime activities have historically played a pivotal role in the development of port cities and human migration patterns across Southeast Asia, shaping the region's history across various temporal and spatial dimensions (Emmerson, 1984: Ali, 2009: Nik Abd. Rahman, 2016: Ramli & Sulaiman, 2017). Despite the significance of these maritime activities, contemporary scholarly discourse often overlooks the importance of revisiting ancient migration patterns and maritime contexts in understanding the region's complex history. Therefore, this literature review aims to address this gap by examining theories and evidence surrounding the origins and dispersal of *Homo sapiens* in the Southeast Asian Archipelago, with a particular focus on migration and maritime activities. By delving into the distant past, this review seeks to shed light on the historical, anthropological, and geopolitical dimensions of human movement and maritime exchange in Southeast Asia.

In addition to traditional perspectives on migration and civilization construction, this review proposes integrating elements of cosmopolitanism and geopolitics into the theoretical framework. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach drawing from international studies, we can better grasp the transactional and ideational nature of migration and maritime activities in Southeast Asia (Blaut, 1987: Bellwood, 2007). This expanded theoretical lens allows for a more nuanced understanding of how interactions between diverse cultures and geopolitical dynamics have shaped the region's maritime history.

Existing literature on the origins of *Homo sapiens* in Southeast Asia predominantly focuses on two main theoretical schools: external origins (such as the Out of Yunan, Out of Taiwan, and Out of Africa Theories) and internal origins (including the Theory of Sundaland, Theory of Atlantis, and Nusantao Theory) (Unger, 1944: Santos, 2011: Solheim et al., 2006). While these theories provide valuable insights into ancient migration patterns and cultural exchanges, they often overlook the cosmopolitan nature of maritime interactions and the geopolitical factors influencing human movement. To bridge this gap, the present research incorporates elements of cosmopolitanism and geopolitics into the study of migration and maritime history in Southeast Asia. By analysing how trade networks, diplomatic relations, and power dynamics intersected with human migration, the international reader can gain a more holistic understanding of the region's maritime past (Ishak, 2009: Samodra Wibawa, 2011).

Additionally, emphasizing the role of cosmopolitanism highlights the diversity of cultures and ideas that have enriched Southeast Asia's maritime heritage, challenging simplistic narratives of external influence or internal development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reassessing Ancient Epochs and Unravelling the Risks and Sacrifices of Seafaring Communities

Although the Sundaland, Atlantis, Nusantao and Nusantara theories mentioned earlier can be used as alternatives to reconstruct history in the region, the Out of Africa Theory can also offer a coherent explanation and should be given due attention. Africans, who managed to reach the archipelago or Sundaland could have continued their migration to Papua New Guinea and the west coast of Australia via Lombok on the islands of Java, Sulawesi and Flores using "simple rafts of logs or bamboo," in or around 38,000 BC (Nei, 1995).

Figure 1

*Map of the Site of the Discovery of *Homo Sapiens* Man (Java Man) in Java, Indonesia*



In 2003, a prehistoric human fossil, belonging to *Homo floresiensis* or "Liang Bua man" was discovered by Australian archaeologists in a prehistoric cave settlement in Flores. Evidently, this Javanese

man, first sailed his wooden boat or raft along the coast of Java Island before navigating to various islands in the Flores, Sawu, Banda, and Timor Seas before venturing further to Sulawesi, Maluku, Banda, Timor-Timor and Papua New Guinea (Sutikna et al., 2016: Roberts et al., 2023). Geoffrey Irwin, an archaeologist from the University of Auckland and also a tough seafarer, once suspected that the sea between the southern Philippines and northern Indonesia, or more precisely between Sulawesi and Maluku, had become the initial focus of the Javanese Man. This zone was to become a significant meeting and shipping corridor for Austronesian and Melanesian sailors starting from the first century AD (Irwin, 1994: Dennell et al., 2014).

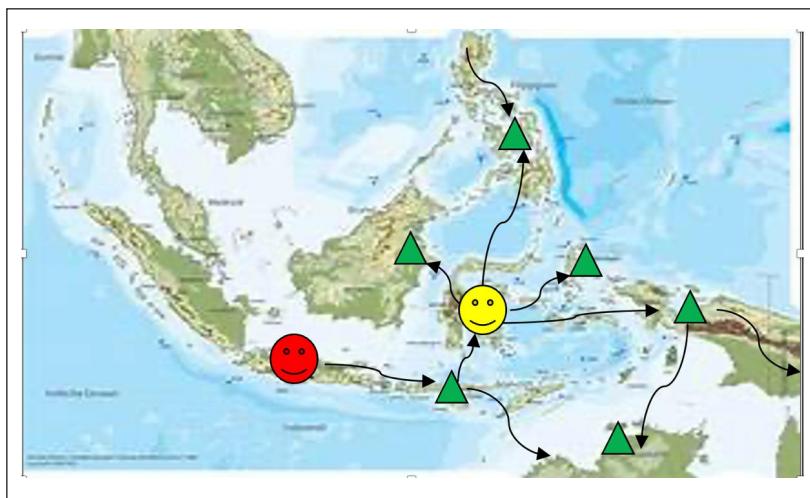
Along the Sulawesi Sea corridor, the Maluku and Banda Seas were the locations where these ancient seafarers honed their skills as makers and helmsmen of single and double outriggers (catamarans), perfecting their sail-based technology and rudder designs. If Irwin's statement is credible, then it is possible that these seafarers, utilising their superior seafaring acumen migrated to Taiwan via Sulawesi to the north of the Philippines, to Lan Yu Island and Lu Tao Island located between the north of the Philippines and south of Taiwan, or the Luzon Strait, and were not Taiwanese seafarers who migrated to the Philippines as alleged by Bellwood (2007) (2023) and Blust (2019). From the earliest times there had been clashes fuelled by intercultural disputes between the ancient seafarer communities from the southern Philippines such as the Bajau Sama or Samal, Illanion, Balangingi, Tausog (Suluk), Maimbung, Maranao and Maguindanao, and sailors from Indonesia (Sulawesi, Maluku and Banda including Austronesian and Melanesian sailors) including those from Sangir, Tobello, Sape, Papua, Bajo, Talaud, Bugis, Mandar and Buton in the Sulawesi corridor. This resulted in the cross-fertilisation of regional cultures, and the establishment of the region's proud boat-making and sailing tradition. (Irwin, 1994: Roberts et al., 2023).

The pioneering voyages and cultural dissemination conducted by Javanese-Man seafarers before and after 6,000BC led to the assimilation and the formation of four (4) clearly identifiable groups, namely the Melanesians, a mixture of sub-mongoloid and rhyme types characterized as African; the Proto-Austronesians including the Wajak Man, also characterized as African; and finally the Polynesians and Micronesians. These four groups produced various tribes in the region, principally the Acehnese, Minangkabau and Batak in Sumatra,

the Sundanese and Javanese in Java, the Madurese in Madura, the Sasak in Lombok, the Timorese, the Dayak tribes in Kalimantan, the Bugis, Makassar, Toraja and Minahasa in Sulawesi; and the Papuan tribes on the borders of the region (Simangunsong, 2015). Based on this historical reality, it is time for a new theory to be introduced, namely the “Man Out of Java” Theory to celebrate the diversity of views and balance previous hypotheses.

Figure 2

Map Showing the Java Man’s Migration Routes through Southeast Asia, Oceania and Australia



The Man Out of Java Theory offers a unique lens through which to explore the ancient past of Southeast Asia and Oceania, particularly in relation to human migration and cultural dissemination. This theoretical framework posits that early *Homo sapiens* originating from Java, Indonesia, embarked on maritime voyages, and spread out across the region to influence the development of diverse populations. To operationalize this theory, one can analyse specific instances of migration and cultural exchange using archaeological evidence and genetic studies. For example, the discovery of the Java Man and the activities of prehistoric humans, such as *Homo floresiensis* provide tangible evidence of early maritime activity in the region. By examining the distribution of archaeological sites and the genetic makeup of modern populations, one can trace the migratory routes

taken by these ancient seafarers and the impact of their interactions with indigenous populations. Furthermore, one can apply analytical operations derived from the Man Out of Java Theory to interpret these findings. This could involve developing frameworks for assessing the cultural similarities and differences between different human groups, identifying common linguistic and technological traits, and elucidating the mechanisms driving population movements. By incorporating these analytical operations into the present study, one can gain deeper insights into the dynamics of ancient human migration and cultural exchange in Southeast Asia and Oceania. This systematic approach underscores the originality of the present research, and as the distant past through a scientific lens is revisited, it will help to shed light on the complexities of human history in the region.

As the second hypothesis states, these migrants from Taiwan did not actually migrate by sea to Luzon in the northern Philippines because it is believed that at that time they did not yet have sufficient marine knowledge to allow them to sail in the Pacific Ocean openly (Lin et al., 2020). These researchers also believe that migrants from Taiwan did not use the sea as a means to reach these territories, but instead returned to mainland China by sailing rafts across the Taiwan Straits to join other tribes from provinces in southern China to the south of the Southeast Asian Islands using land means. Historical records show that before the island was visited by people from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan was inhabited by indigenous tribes or aborigines such as the Ami, Yami, Paiwan, Puyuma, Rukai, Bunun, Tsou, Thao, Atayal and others, are said to have originated not from Taiwan itself, but from the south of mainland Yunan. The Chinese themselves are said to have started their migration around 2,500BC. Taiwan, also known as *Pakan* or *Tapanga* by the aboriginal inhabitants is an island located to the east and separated from mainland China by the Taiwan Straits (Cauquelin, 2004).

According to Chinese sources, the name ‘Taiwan’ only began to appear in historical records from the 7th century. Taiwan’s own historical accounts as mentioned earlier, state that the terrestrial aborigines were concentrated in the hills and inland areas, and were characterized as practitioners of agrarian culture (agriculture) just like their ancestors from mainland China. In contrast, the aboriginal tribes residing on the coastline overlooking the Taiwan Straits and mainland China, and those in the northern part of Taiwan near Ryuku Island in southern Japan, were primarily focused on trade and fishing related

activities. In other words, the life of these aboriginal tribes seems to have been overshadowed by their more entrepreneurial neighbours from the Chinese mainland and the islands of southern Japan. Based on this explanation, it is clear that the aboriginal tribes on the island of Taiwan were not characteristically resilient or a nation of sailors, and thus did not have extensive experience of navigating the high seas (Li, 2019).

Apart from that, the extensive tracts of land available for agrarian purposes on Taiwan, and the absence of small islands in the vicinity must have contributed to the Taiwanese agrarian spirit, while at the same time dampening their maritime ambitions and causing them to turn their attention to terrestrial pursuits. Due to the absence of records proving the existence of great sailors, such as Zheng He from China, it is hard to say whether the early inhabitants of Taiwan Island had a sea-going spirit or possessed any flair for maritime adventure that would have propelled them to explore the seas far beyond their shores (Davison & Reed, 1998: Chou, 2024).

The previous hypothesis stated that it was not the aboriginal tribes from Taiwan who migrated to the Philippines; on the contrary, the seafaring tribes from the Philippines and Sulawesi migrated to Taiwan and integrated with the aboriginal people there. The process of turning around was bringing aboriginal tribes from Taiwan to the Philippines and Sulawesi by sea and using outrigger boats manned by Filipino sailors (Tausug-Iranun-Balangingi-Bajau seafarers) and Sulawesi seafarers characterized as Malayo-Polynesian sailors. Taking into account the Nusantao Theory as proposed by Solheim (1984), it is possible that the early Filipino sailors (probably from the Tausug-Iranun-Balangingi-Bajau tribes) were characterised as Austronesian sailors who had migrated to Taiwan along with other tribes from Borneo (Mohammad et al., 2023: Sulaiman et al., 2023).

Maritime historical records, also suggest that Chinese / Taiwanese awareness of the potential value of exploring the world's seas and oceans was quite "backward" compared to that of other large ethnic groups, i.e., the Arabs, Indians and Malays due to the closed door policy practiced by the early dynasties in China (Levathes, 2014). If one were to acknowledge this historical fact, then it is certainly unlikely that migrants from Taiwan could have built and deployed sea craft capable of transporting large numbers of immigrants across vast, storm-laden seas. What is clear is that the history of ancient

maritime civilization in China began with the creation of raft boats made of bamboo as the main means of transport for voyages on rivers, coastlines, and inter-islands in close proximity only. This is because this type of boat is inherently weak and unable to weather the ferocious waves and storms of the Pacific Ocean (Xie, 2014).

Navigating Historical Waters: Critiquing Paradigms and Embracing Emancipation in Southeast Asia's Maritime History

Although there are no clear data showing the path and spread of *Homo erectus* from Africa, based on the latest genetic, physical and archaeological studies, it can be assumed that these people reached and made settlements in Asia and Southeast Asia. Through the passage of time, they migrated further to the south of the region's territories and split into two groups and directions, with one group heading to Borneo Island, and another, to Java Island (Mohammad et al., 2023: Sulaiman et al., 2023: Rightmire, 1991). At a time when the territories in the region were still converging (at least before 12,000SM) it is believed that these people, especially those on the island of Java, the main settlement of African people, must have continued their migration out of Sundaland towards Sahuland, near the eastern part of the Southeast Asia Archipelago, and onward to Sulawesi, Papua New Guinea and the Australian continent.

Archaeological evidence shows that the *Homo sapiens* who replaced *Homo erectus* gradually developed ancient shipping technology to move over short distances from one region to another in Sundaland and Sahuland after 12,000BC. For example, from Papua New Guinea, some *Homo sapiens* seafarers were said to have spread to provinces in the Southeast Asia Archipelago (Sundaland), especially to the Maluku Islands and settled on Gebe Island located between Halmahera and Papua. In addition to the Maluku Islands, *Homo sapiens* also migrated to the Talaud Islands, Sulawesi and the eastern coastal part of Kalimantan. What becomes clear here is that the spread or migration of *Homo sapiens* could not have been done by road because during this time the age of stone water melt had ended the formation of land and sea lands as they exist today (Hannigan, 2015).

Two hypotheses could be used as a basis in this study: (1) the existence of marine culture in Austronesian, Polynesian, Micronesian and Melanesian regions by pre-historic humans (*Homo sapiens*) inhabiting the Southeast Asia Archipelago during pre-historic times before the

rise in sea levels that resulted in physical changes in Sundaland and Sahulland, and (2) the absence of open migration by aboriginal or indigenous tribes originating from Taiwan using sea means to the Philippines and their subsequent spread throughout Austronesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia, and on the contrary seafaring tribes originating from this region or rather from the Philippines and Sulawesi who had migrated to Taiwan and assimilated with the aboriginal people there and brought aboriginal tribes from Taiwan to Philippines.

Wilhelm G. Solheim (1994) discovered the settlement and remains of ancient human artifacts estimated to be 40,000 years old and concluded that the civilisation in this region had begun earlier than Chinese and Indian civilisations or any other civilisation in the world. Several ancient cave settlements were discovered in Southeast Asia by archaeologists around the 1960s and 1970s. In Malaysia, the Niah Caves in Sarawak (Borneo Island) are deemed to be among the oldest settlements in Southeast Asia and were occupied by humans over 40,000 years ago (Barker, 2005). Similarly, excavations in the Lenggong Valley conducted by Malaysian archaeologists led by Zurina Majid and Adi Taha discovered a human skeleton known as the *Perak Man*, which has been estimated to be 74,000 years old (Majid, 1994).

In Thailand three ancient dwelling areas discovered by archaeologists, namely Spirit Caves located in the northwest, Non Nok Tha in the north and Ban Chiang in the northeast are estimated to exist from 12,000BC to 6,000BC, a period associated to the Neolithic age (New Stone Age) based on carbon dating methods. Excavations at the sites found various artifacts in the form of pottery items, axe heads and knives made of hard stone. Also found were remains of rice husks and various plant residues used as food; all indicative of these ancient humans conducting farming activities earlier than 6,000BC (Penth, 2001). Arysio Nunes Dos Santos (2009) in his book *Atlantis: The Lost Continent Finally Found* conducted various studies related to the theory of the existence and location of Atlantis, and finally concluded that this civilisation was on the Sundanese stage and referred to the humans who existed at that time as “water people” and “swimmers”. However, the assertion by Dos Santos (2009) is not supported by solid evidence, but based on the notes and descriptions by Plato. In Timaeus and Critias, his two famous dialogues on Atlantis, Plato described this region as the “Old World” with islands (*as nesos*),

mountains, volcanic eruptions (the theory of plate tectonics), rich in various precious minerals and people living in peace (Lampert & Planeaux, 1998). Dos Santos (2009) was convinced that the Atlantean civilisation was located in Sundaland (Pacific Ocean) based on the various geographical similarities given by Plato, matching the geography of the Southeast Asia Archipelago and the fact that the melting of glaciers that submerged regions of the world only occurred in this region (Arysio Nunes Dos Santos, 2009). Stephen Oppenheimer in his book *Eden in the East: The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia* argued that the Southeast Asia Archipelago referred to the Sundaland area of 6 million square kilometres was the birthplace of the first civilisation in the world and said to have sunk due to rising sea levels, as well as marking the end of the age of stone water melt (1998).

In his writings Oppenheimer (1998) had imagined the Lemurian civilisation (Sahuland) and the Altantis civilisation (Sundaland) as the oldest civilisations of man and were in a class of their own. The search for these civilisations is still going on even today with the focus centred on the perimeter of the islands of Southeast Asia and Oceania. The Lemurian civilisation is said to be an ancient civilisation that appeared first before the Atlantis civilisation, which existed around 75,000BC. Oppenheimer (1998) also proposed that the Lemurian civilisation that existed on the Sahul Stage underwent an age of destruction due to the emergence of the Atlantis civilisation and a prolonged dispute between these two. The Atlantis civilisation that replaced the Lemurian civilisation located on Sundaland was perceived to be more advanced than the latter and uniquely exceptional in that it had government cities, settlements and high technology in terms of trade, agriculture and military (Oppenheimer, 1998).

However, the Atlantis civilisation eventually experienced destruction and vanished from the face of the earth when the sea levels rose. The surviving Atlantis inhabitants migrated to the mainland in Asia and continental Europe and established various new civilisations in these new localities. Oppenheimer (1998) also opined that the Atlantis populace, who had successfully built numerous new civilisations in the Asian continent and continental Europe, re-engineered migration to the Southeast Asia Archipelago, which he estimated to have occurred after 5,000SM with the return of sea levels and the formation of land and islands as they are today. According to Oppenheimer (1998), the

migrants created two new civilisations based on the Neolithic culture (New Stone Age) in eastern Indonesia and the Southern Philippines (around Sulawesi).

Oppenheimer (1998) further suggested that a systematic culture of farming existed in Indonesia earlier than in other areas of mainland Asia with the discovery of wild yam and taro remains estimated to be between 15,000BC and 10,000BC in the country. Although the studies and writings of Oppenheimer (1998) were more in the form of hypotheses and theories due to the lack of scientific evidence, his views nonetheless gave rise to new thinking to balance the classical theory that the construction of civilisation in this region originated from Yunan and Taiwan, rather than developed by *Homo erectus* and *Homo sapiens* who had been habituating in the Sundanese stage for a long time. Oki Oktariadi (2010) in his paper “Nusantara di Whirlpool Early World Civilization” presented in a conference themed “Discussion of the Influence of Nusantara Civilization in the World” in Jakarta in 2010 stated that before the increase in sea levels around 8,000BC, the Southeast Asia Archipelago was still joined to the Asian Continent (Sundaland) and had been inhabited by prehistoric humans. According to him:

“... But as the earth warmed, the polar ice deposits melted and caused massive floods that hit lowlands around the world... There were three major floods that occurred around 14,000, 11,000 and 8,000BC. The last major flood even raised the sea level to 5-140 meters higher than the [then] current one. The biggest flooded were Sundaland and the coast of South China. Sundaland eventually became islands, namely Kalimantan, Java, Bali and Sumatra. At that time this area was enough to be inhabited by prehistoric humans who made a living as fishermen...” (Oki Oktariadi, 2010).

Lessons for the field of International Studies

The present study has advocated for a shift towards a global perspective when examining maritime history within the context of the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago. This implies a departure from a Eurocentric or regionally biased approach to international studies (Tahir et al., 2023). Instead, it encourages scholars to consider the interconnectedness of different

regions and communities in the development of maritime civilisation. Traditionally, maritime history has often been approached from the standpoint of well-documented Western narratives, leading to the neglect of equally significant maritime developments in other parts of the world. By emphasising the importance of a global perspective, the present research has suggested that international studies should embrace a more inclusive and comprehensive framework. This involves acknowledging and integrating diverse maritime narratives from various regions and recognising their unique contributions and roles in shaping global maritime history. Incorporating a global perspective in academic writing within the field of international studies will involve actively seeking out and integrating relevant research, data and perspectives from different regions. It calls for a conscious effort to move beyond established narratives and to consider the maritime interactions and contributions of Southeast Asia within the broader context of global history. By doing so, scholars contribute to a more nuanced, balanced, and holistic understanding of the complex dynamics that have shaped the development of maritime civilisations worldwide (Prange, 2013).

The present study has strongly advocated for a fundamental shift in the approach to historical narratives within the field of international studies, emphasising the critical need to rectify historical marginalisation (Abdullah et al., 2023). Historically, certain regions and communities have been marginalised or overlooked in favour of more dominant narratives, contributing to a skewed understanding of global maritime civilisation. The present research contends that addressing this historical bias is not only an ethical imperative, but also essential for constructing a more accurate and comprehensive historical framework (Tahir et al., 2023). By focusing on the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago, the study contends that international studies must actively work towards inclusivity. Lessons from this research suggest that neglecting the contributions of specific regions not only perpetuates historical injustice, but also impedes one's ability to fully comprehend the intricate web of global maritime interactions. The Southeast Asia-centric perspective advocated in this study serves as a clarion call for scholars to intentionally incorporate diverse narratives, acknowledging the agency and significance of historically marginalised communities. Moreover, the call for rectification goes beyond mere acknowledgment; it necessitates a paradigm shift in how historical research is conceptualised and conducted. Scholars in

international studies are urged to actively seek out and integrate voices that have been historically muted or ignored. This rectification process involves a re-evaluation of source materials, a critical reassessment of historical interpretations, and an intentional effort to construct a more inclusive narrative that reflects the true diversity of human maritime endeavours (Andreou et al., 2022; Jákl, 2017).

The imperative for a Southeast Asia-centric perspective, as articulated in the research question, propels a fundamental reconsideration of prevailing methodologies within the realm of international studies (Abdullah et al., 2023). This approach underscores the critical need to transcend conventional Eurocentric frameworks and adopt a regional-centric lens when scrutinising maritime history. By emphasising the Southeast Asia Archipelago as a focal point, the present study has called attention to the inherent diversity of historical experiences and maritime developments across different regions. This regional-centric approach challenges the prevailing tendency within international studies to adopt a generalised and often Western-dominated perspective and offers instead a corrective lens for historical narratives that have traditionally marginalised contributions from Southeast Asia. Such an approach acknowledges the uniqueness of the Southeast Asian context, urging scholars in international studies to recognise and incorporate diverse cultural, social and economic factors that have shaped the maritime civilisation of the region. In doing so, this lesson advocates for a more nuanced, inclusive, and accurate understanding of global maritime history, positioning regional-centric approaches as pivotal in rectifying historical imbalances within the field (Mehmood & Khan, 2022).

In the realm of international studies, the lesson derived from the reassessment of ancient epochs and prehistoric migrations underscores the dynamic and evolving nature of historical understanding. This lesson advocates for a continual scrutiny and re-evaluation of our perceptions regarding significant historical periods and human migrations. The imperative to reassess arises from the acknowledgment that historical narratives are not static; they are subject to reinterpretation as new archaeological discoveries, technological advancements and diverse perspectives emerge. By emphasising the need for reassessment, this lesson challenges the conventional notion of historical epochs as being fixed and unchanging. For international studies, it implies that scholars should be vigilant in incorporating the latest research findings and methodological approaches into their analyses. This approach is

particularly relevant in the context of maritime history, where the exploration of the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago necessitates a defined understanding of historical timelines and migration patterns. Moreover, the lesson encourages scholars to adopt a more nuanced view of prehistoric migrations, recognising the complexity of human movement and interaction across geographical spaces. This entails an openness to reinterpreting existing frameworks and challenging established paradigms that may have inadvertently marginalised certain perspectives or regions. It invites scholars to question assumptions about the motivations behind migrations, the routes taken and the interactions between different seafaring communities (Wei, 2020).

The exploration of maritime historical dimensions necessitates a refined understanding of the human experience within seafaring communities. Emphasising the risks and sacrifices encountered by these communities serves as a crucial lesson for international studies. Often overshadowed by the grandeur of maritime achievements, the resilience and hardships faced by seafarers provide invaluable insights into the intricacies of maritime civilisation. Delving into the challenges faced by these communities, such as navigating treacherous waters, contending with adverse weather conditions, and enduring extended periods away from land, enriches our comprehension of the human dimension of maritime history. Recognising the human aspect is not merely an exercise in empathy, but a methodological imperative for a more comprehensive and accurate historical narrative. By shedding light on the struggles and perseverance of seafaring communities, international studies can move beyond a triumphalist perspective and foster a deeper appreciation for the complexities inherent in the development of maritime civilisations (Chen et al., 2022; Mezzoli, 2022).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has embarked on a comprehensive exploration of the maritime historical dimensions of the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora in the Southeast Asia Archipelago, propelled by the Theory of Man Out of Java. By adopting a Southeast Asia-centric perspective, this research has sought to rectify historical marginalisation and contribute to a more refined understanding of the region's maritime

civilisation development. Through multifaceted investigations into the waters, seas and oceans, this study has achieved its objectives on several fronts. Firstly, it has re-evaluated the significance of ancient epochs and prehistoric migrations, illuminating the intricate tapestry of maritime history in Southeast Asia. By foregrounding the seafaring activities of *Homo sapiens*, the research has underscored the pivotal role of the region in shaping early human civilisations, challenging previous narratives that may have overlooked maritime contributions to societal development.

Secondly, the study has delved into the risks and sacrifices endured by seafaring communities and offers a better comprehension of the challenges intrinsic to maritime endeavours. By unpacking the complexities of maritime life, this research has highlighted the resilience and adaptability of these communities, illustrating the intricate interplay between human societies and the maritime environment. Moreover, a critical analysis of prevailing historical paradigms has been instrumental in unveiling biases that may have perpetuated the marginalisation of Southeast Asia in historical discourse. The study advocates for a re-evaluation of existing frameworks, urging scholars to consider the unique maritime dimensions that have shaped the region's history and cultural evolution. Lastly, the integration of a Southeast Asia-centric perspective has contributed to a more holistic narrative of maritime civilisation. By centring the analysis on the waters, seas and oceans that have interconnected the diverse cultures of the archipelago, the research has fostered a deeper appreciation for the multifaceted interactions that have defined Southeast Asia's maritime history.

In essence, this academic endeavour, guided by the Theory of Man Out of Java, has not only addressed the research question but also opened avenues for further inquiry and a continued re-examination of Southeast Asia's maritime historical dimensions. As scholars continue to navigate the seas of knowledge, it is imperative to recognise the importance of a region-specific lens in uncovering the intricacies of the *Homo sapiens* seafarer diaspora and its profound impact on the Southeast Asia Archipelago. The evolution of marine historiography in the Southeast Asia Archipelago, from Eurocentric to Asian and Malay-centric perspectives, marks a pivotal shift in scholarly discourse. This transition has been driven by a responsibility to realign facts and interpretations, correcting the historical record that may have

been skewed by various interests. It is crucial to acknowledge that some Western writers may have recorded observations without fully grasping the cultural intricacies and historical contexts of the region.

Understanding the maritime history of the Southeast Asia Archipelago therefore necessitates a holistic approach, tracing back to prehistoric times through relics such as artifacts, rock art and inscriptions. By embracing the Man Out of Java Theory, we may well unravel the maritime heritage of the region, enrich our comprehension of its past and foster a deeper appreciation for its cultural diversity and historical significance.

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