



Archipel

Études interdisciplinaires sur le monde insulindien

100 | 2020

Varia

An Appreciation of *Archipel* 1971-2020, from a Distant Fan

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Édition électronique

URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/archipel/2036>

DOI : [10.4000/archipel.2036](https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.2036)

ISSN : 2104-3655

Éditeur

Association Archipel

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 15 décembre 2020

Pagination : 21-22

ISBN : 978-2-910513-84-9

ISSN : 0044-8613

Référence électronique

Anthony Reid, « An Appreciation of *Archipel* 1971-2020, from a Distant Fan », *Archipel* [En ligne], 100 | 2020, mis en ligne le 28 novembre 2020, consulté le 10 novembre 2024. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/archipel/2036> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/archipel.2036>



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An Appreciation of *Archipel* 1971-2020, from a Distant Fan

I congratulate *l'équipe Archipel* on having stayed the course so heroically and creatively. Few journals are worth subscribing to for a lifetime, but *Archipel* is one. Its half-century is roughly the same period as my active life as a Southeast Asianist. I was there at the beginning as a subscriber and distant admirer, and I am happy to note that we are both still standing, though only *Archipel* with as much vigour as ever. It has retained over the half-century a remarkable mix of the deeply learned and the lightly entertaining, the relevant and the obscure. In insisting on the importance, even primacy, of culture over *l'événementiel*, it has given courage to us all in challenging times.

While the KITLV's *Bijdragen* struggled to survive in and adapt to the post-colonial world, partly by shedding much of its textual focus, three new specialist journals of quality on Indonesia emerged from the 1965 crisis and the beginnings of Soeharto's *Orde Baru*. Cornell's *Indonesia* was overtly political – in part a protest against the military takeover and all that ensued. ANU's *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* might be seen as its opposite, hoping that its pragmatic economic emphasis would support Soeharto's technocrats and contribute to making the *Orde Baru* an economic success.

Archipel was the third response, the most unexpected of the three since France had been seen as the centre for all things *indochinoises* but with no special interest in Indonesia. Perhaps that was its strength. *Archipel* appeared to have no political axe to grind or debts to pay, save to emphasise the splendid continuities of Indonesian culture despite the political upheavals and reversals of the mid-

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20th century. While the other two new journals and the earlier *Bijdragen* were sustained by committed specialist institutions, *Archipel* arose from the inspiration, optimism and hard work of a few dedicated individuals scattered among Paris's notoriously fragmented academic scene. Indeed it seemed to be the journal itself that persuaded people in EFEO, EHESS, CNRS, Langues O' and the universities to work together and achieve miracles of coherence and longevity.

I tried to visit Paris and the Archipel office whenever in Europe, even though it was the archives of London and The Hague that drew me across the world. I must have first met Denys Lombard during my 1968 sabbatical, as one of the handful of fellow-researchers on Aceh, so I may have been on the list of potential subscribers even before the birth. I picked up *Le Sultanat d'Atjeh* in time to publish a description in 1971 of three books on Aceh that appeared in 1969 after a long hiatus – his, mine, and Jim Siegel's *Rope of God*. But things warmed up when I was able to spend a few weeks in Paris in 1978, when Denys invited me to talk to his seminar about Indonesian Studies in Australia. That paper appeared in *Archipel* 21 (1981) as "'Alterity' and 'Reformism'" – a polarity of motivation that still continues to intrigue me.

That visit began a period when we tried to build real bridges across the Anglophone-Francophone divide. In 1979 I was able to invite Denys and Claudine for a period in Canberra, which Denys described as a kind of trial as to whether he could overcome his resentment of Anglophone arrogance with this lesser Australian surrogate before tackling America. Denys reviewed a couple of my books, in *Archipel* and elsewhere, and translated an article of mine on Southeast Asian cities; I reviewed a few books of the *Archipel* group in English, beginning with a review of *Archipel* 17 & 18 in the new Australian journal I was editing, then called *ASAA Review* (1980). We shared an interest in the two under-appreciated French accounts of 17th century Aceh, by François Martin and Augustin de Beaulieu, and I was delighted that we were both able to remedy this to some extent by my English translations (1994) and his new edition of Beaulieu (1996) and *Archipel* article on Martin (over-generously dedicated to me, 1997).

I should also acknowledge here my debt to Christian Pelras and his very dedicated wife, for all they did both for *Archipel* and for South Sulawesi Studies. In 1980 I succeeded Christian in his pioneering role as *Tenaga Ahli Utama* in the PLPIIS (Social Science Research Training Centre) in Ujung Pandang (now rightly again Makassar). No only was his advice and example indispensable for me in negotiating a complex and unfamiliar territory, but the special issue he organized and partly wrote on South Sulawesi, *Archipel* 10, was my constant companion in exploring the region.

In these terribly difficult times for journals everywhere, *Archipel* continues to inspire hope that interdisciplinary comprehensiveness, cultural finesse and imaginative flair can still find a place. I wish it another 50 years of vigour – *vive Archipel*.