

Ships, Ports, and the Sea as Colonial Infrastructure: Hydrocolonialism in Iksaka Banu's *Semua Untuk Hindia*

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Abstract

This article examines Iksaka Banu's Pollux and Penabur Benih, two short stories from Semua untuk Hindia (2014), through the framework of hydrocolonialism. Departing from previous have read colonialism in Banu's Eiction mainly through subject ambivalence, hegemony, resistance, and traumatic memory, this study redirects attention to the sea, ports, ships, mobility, and navigational knowledge as mechanisms of colonial power. Using close reading, it analyzes detention, deportation, embarkation, exile, burial at sea, trade-mission conElict, signaling systems, maps, and territorial naming. This analysis reveals that Pollux portrays colonialism as a process of bodies from land to sea: detainees are classiEied at the Stadhuis, made visible and controlled at Sunda Kelapa Port, and transferred to the colonial periphery through the corvette Pollux. Conversely, Penabur Benih stages colonialism from sea to land. The sea becomes a disposal zone that normalizes death; the DuyEken functions as a trade-religious microcolony; and maps, signal Elags, and the naming of Enggano place land under colonial knowledge before physical occupation begins. This article argues that sea, port, and ship are not passive maritime settings, but narrative and political infrastructures that govern bodies, mobility, visibility, disposal, and knowledge. This study reads colonialism as material-spatial governance through water, not merely territorial conquest..

Keywords: Hydrocolonialism, Iksaka Banu, Semua untuk Hindia, Micro Colony, Dockside Reading, Ocean as Disposala

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji dua cerpen Iksaka Banu, *Pollux* dan *Penabur Benih*, dalam *Semua untuk Hindia* (2014) sebagai kerangka hidrokolonialisme. Berbeda dengan studi lain sebelumnya yang cenderung menempatkan kolonialisme dalam karya Banu melalui ambivalensi subjek, hegemoni, resistensi, atau memori traumatik, artikel ini mengalihkan perhatian pada laut, pelabuhan, kapal, mobilitas, dan pengetahuan navigasional sebagai mekanisme kuasa kolonial. Dengan metode pembacaan intens (*close reading*), analisis difokuskan pada unit-unit tekstual seperti penahanan, deportasi, embarkasi, pengasingan, pemakaman di laut, konflik misi dagang, sistem isyarat, peta, dan penamaan wilayah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa *Pollux* merepresentasikan kolonialisme sebagai arus perpindahan tubuh dari darat ke laut: tubuh para tahanan diklasifikasikan di Stadhuis, diatur visibilitasnya di Pelabuhan Sunda Kelapa, lalu dipindahkan ke wilayah pinggiran kolonial melalui korvet *Pollux*. Sebaliknya, *Penabur Benih* menampilkan kolonialisme dari laut menuju darat. Laut menjadi ruang pembuangan yang menormalkan kematian; kapal *DuyEken* berfungsi sebagai mikrokoloni dagang-religius; sedangkan peta, bendera isyarat, dan penamaan Enggano menundukkan daratan ke dalam rezim pengetahuan kolonial sebelum pendaratan berlangsung. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa laut, pelabuhan, dan kapal bukan sekadar latar maritim, melainkan infrastruktur naratif sekaligus infrastruktur kuasa yang mengatur tubuh, mobilitas, visibilitas, pembuangan, dan otoritas pengetahuan. Artikel ini membaca gejala kolonialisme sebagai tata kelola material-spasial melalui air, bukan semata pendudukan teritorial.

Kata kunci: hidrokolonialisme, Iksaka Banu, Semua untuk Hindia, mikro-koloni, pembacaan dermaga, laut sebagai ruang pembuangan.



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INTRODUCTION

Maritime themes in Indonesian literature—encompassing the maritime imagination, the coast, seafaring, ports, maritime rituals, and the coastal cultural economy—are increasingly recognized as a vast body of work that deserves to be treated as a distinct field of study, rather than merely a geographical locus. A key indicator of this is the publication of the academic essay anthology *Sastra Maritim* by Anoeграjekti et al. (2022), which is extensively compiled and demonstrates a serious effort to map out maritime themes as both a subject and a literary critical approach. Indeed, the anthology's epilogue concludes with the title “Kebangkitan Sastra Maritim di Indonesia” as if to affirm that the sea, the coast, navigation, and maritime culture are present across periods, genres, and disciplines in the reading of Indonesian literature. Within a broader framework, studies of colonial literature, *oceanic studies*, and *blue humanities* are increasingly positioning water not as a neutral backdrop, but as a material medium that helps shape the workings of imperial power: from the circulation of goods and people, port inspection regimes, the management of mobility, to practices of *disposal* that erase the traces of violence.

This shift in perspective is significant because the tradition of colonial criticism in Indonesia still often operates within a relatively terrestrial model: colonialism is primarily analyzed through the control of land territories, administrative cities, plantations, colonial offices, prisons, or social relations between colonizers and the colonized. This model remains important, of course, but it is not yet fully adequate for understanding the colonial experience in an archipelagic world like Indonesia. In the colonial history of the Dutch East Indies, the sea, rivers, canals, ports, ships, trade routes, exile routes, and maritime bureaucracy were not peripheral elements. On the contrary, these constituted the infrastructure that enabled colonialism to operate, classify bodies, regulate movement, control commodities, and produce knowledge about space. Therefore, the reading of Indonesian colonial literature requires conceptual frameworks capable of capturing colonialism not merely as the occupation of land, but also as the governance of flows, thresholds, and mobility.

It is in this context that the concept of *hydrocolonialism* becomes significant. Isabel Hofmeyr (2019), for example, describes port cities as spaces that seek to pave over the ocean and assert sovereignty at the land-sea interface, yet remain inherently fragile due to their reliance on land reclamation, underwater engineering, and coastal regulatory systems. It is upon this artificial land that port authorities design regimes of identification, documentation, and regulatory mechanisms to control the movement of people and cargo from ship to shore. Within this framework, Bystrom and Hofmeyr (2017) propose *hydrocolonialism* as a neologism that echoes *postcolonialism*, but shifts the analytical focus to land-sea relations and the ways colonialism organizes life through water. The scope of this concept is intentionally broad:

colonization through water, colonization over water, colonies on water, and even the colonization of the idea of water as a resource that can be measured, regulated, and secularized (Hofmeyr, 2021).

Thus, *hydrocolonialism* does not stop at identifying a text as having a maritime theme. Rather, it enables a reading of how elementary elements such as wetness, distance, wind, currents, disease risks, alienation, and water depth are translated into institutional orders such as port protocols, ship commands, administrative categories, navigational knowledge, maps, and documents. The concept of *dockside reading* then explains how power operates in liminal spaces: port authorities develop object-oriented hermeneutic practices, reading external signs on commodities and bodies, testing for contamination, examining documents, while simultaneously regulating what is permitted to disembark and what must be detained (Srivastava, 2023). Here, the politics of water cannot be separated from the politics of text. Water and paper, circulation and documentation, ports and archives, are all part of the colonial regime that determines who may move, who may be seen, and who can be excluded.

This discussion is also connected to what has frequently been referred to over the past two decades as the *oceanic turn*, *critical ocean studies*, and *blue humanities*. Hester Blum (2010) notes that in much transnational work, the ocean is often rendered immaterial because it is too readily employed as a metaphor for fluidity, mobility, or interconnectedness. What is needed, according to Blum, is attention to the ocean as a material condition and a concrete space of practice. Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2019) then demonstrates that *critical ocean studies* must not only celebrate currents, mobility, and connectivity but also account for the strategic grammar of the ocean—such as *blue-water navies*, *sea lanes of communication*, *high-seas exclusion zones*, and *maritime choke points*—which transform the ocean into a battlefield of power, not merely a medium of movement. In a recent formulation, Mentz (2023) understands *blue humanities* as an interdisciplinary field that examines waters from the perspectives of literature, history, aesthetics, ethics, and theory, so that water is no longer positioned as a passive backdrop, but rather as an element that helps shape the social and cultural world.

However, to bring *hydrocolonialism* into the realm of Indonesian literature, the scope of inquiry must not be limited to maritime theory within the Anglo-American tradition or global postcolonial discourse. The context of the Indonesian archipelago must be understood within the networks of the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia, and the broader colonial maritime world. In this regard, *Indian Ocean* studies and archipelagic studies provide an important regional perspective. Ho (2006), for example, demonstrates how mobility, genealogy, and religious networks traverse the Indian Ocean, while Bose (2009) shows that the Indian Ocean during the era of global empires was a historical space shaped by trade, migration, labor, and colonial power. By situating

Indonesia within such a framework, the sea becomes not merely a metaphor for nationhood or an exotic backdrop, but a historical terrain where mobility, commodities, administration, religion, and colonial violence are intertwined.

At the same time, *port city* studies and *littoral studies* also reveal that ports and waterfront areas are crucial nodes of capitalism and imperialism. Steinberg (2001) emphasizes that the ocean is a socially and politically constructed space, not a neutral natural expanse. Brandon, Frykman, and Røge (2019) demonstrate that colonial port cities in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans served as hubs for the flow of commodities, free and unfree labor, and the expansion of global capitalism. Freed-Thall (2021) positions coasts and ports as ecological and industrial *force fields*—spaces where industry, biology, texts, and imagery overlap. Thus, the theoretical framework relevant to this article does not rely solely on Hofmeyr's single interpretive approach but also on a broader discourse regarding the sea as a social space, the port as a threshold, and the ship as a mobile space that concentrates power.

When applied to Iksaka Banu's prose, *hydrocolonialism* offers a productive entry point. Iksaka Banu's works have become well-established within contemporary Indonesian literary studies, primarily because she consistently addresses the theme of Dutch colonialism, blending fiction with historical detail, and frequently positions European characters as narrators or central figures who are not always portrayed as unambiguous colonizers. Iksaka Banu's prose presents colonialism not merely as a grand theme of oppression, but as an operational machine: a series of procedures, rituals, disciplines, administrative decisions, and material details that appear orderly on the surface yet harbor violence as their logistical cost. He frequently situates the narrative within institutional nodes such as offices, barracks, warehouses, docks, and ships, and relies on objects like documents, records, maps, lists, uniforms, entry-exit routes, and commands to make power feel concretely operational (Ferdiansyah et al., 2025).

Academic attention to Iksaka Banu's work has indeed developed productively so far, but it has been directed more toward colonialism as a matter of subjectivity, power relations, ambivalence, resistance, and historical memory. Suweleh (2020), for example, analyzes *Semua Untuk Hindia* through the concepts of *nativephilia* and *split* to highlight the internal conflict of European figures navigating between colonial positions and sympathy for the indigenous population. Nuratikah and Wiyatmi (2021) focus on forms of Western hegemony and Eastern resistance, including postcolonial phenomena such as *mimicry*, *ambivalence*, and *hybridity*. Meanwhile, Sudibyoy, Andalas, and Taufiqurrohman (2025) shift the focus to collective memory and colonial trauma by situating Iksaka Banu's work within a network of *sites of memory* that transmit the wounds of colonialism across generations. These three approaches are significant because they demonstrate that Iksaka Banu's corpus has been taken seriously within a

postcolonial framework. However, the center of gravity remains largely situated on the psychology of the subject, ideologies of domination, resistance, and the legacy of historical violence.

This article does not intend to reject those interpretive approaches. Rather, it builds upon the achievements of previous studies to shift the focus of analysis. The gap this article seeks to address is not the claim that no research has been conducted on colonialism in Iksaka Banu's works, nor that no attention has been paid to the element of water in Iksaka Banu's prose. The study by Ferdiansyah, Ayun, and Khasanah (2025), for example, has interpreted *Rasina* through the lenses of canals, ports, water, and *hydrocolonialism*. Therefore, the novelty of this article is not formulated as an absolute claim that this is the first *hydrocolonial* reading of Iksaka Banu. The novelty of this article is more limited but more precise: this article reads "Pollux" and "Penabur Benih" in *Semua untuk Hindia* (2014) as two short stories that present ships, ports, and the sea as operational tools of colonialism, not merely as settings for events or symbols of maritime culture.

These two short stories were chosen because they both feature spatial architectures situated right on the water's edge, yet move in different directions. "Pollux" traverses the Stadhuis, Sunda Kelapa Port, and the corvette Pollux as a land-coast-sea circuit of power encompassing detention, displacement, embarkation, and exile. In this story, colonialism operates through the classification of bodies, the regulation of visibility in the port, and the displacement of subjects to the periphery via the ship as a mobile space of punishment. Conversely, "Penabur Benih" situates the colonial experience primarily on the water: the rhythm of voyages, disease, death, sea burials, trade-mission conflicts, signaling systems, maps, and the naming of land reveal that maritime colonialism was already in production before the colonial project had even landed. While "Pollux" illustrates how bodies are channeled from land to sea, "Penabur Benih" demonstrates how the sea first shapes the material, epistemological, and social conditions for colonialism.

From this perspective, this article argues that a *hydrocolonial* reading of "Pollux" and "Penabur Benih" enables a shift in how to understand colonialism in Iksaka Banu's prose: from colonialism as ideological representation toward colonialism as material-spatial governance. The sea, ships, and ports are not understood as narrative decor, but as infrastructures of power that regulate mobility, thresholds, bodies, disposal, and the authority of knowledge. In "Pollux," the concept of *dockside reading* helps explain how Sunda Kelapa Port functions as a regime of identification and visibility: the bodies of detainees are read as signs that must be concealed, directed, and converted into legitimate cargo bound for the periphery. In "Penabur Benih," ships can be read as *micro colonies* that condense hierarchies of trade, religion, command, and knowledge, while the sea functions as an *ocean as disposal*—a space of disposal that normalizes

death while erasing the social traces of the body. Through these two readings, this article positions *hydrocolonialism* not as a thematic label for the presence of the sea, but as a framework for understanding how colonialism operates through water, routes, ships, ports, maps, and names.

This study is a qualitative literary analysis employing the *close reading* method to examine two short stories by Iksaka Banu, namely “Pollux” and “Penabur Benih,” from the collection *Semua untuk Hindia* (2014). Both were selected because they illustrate two directions of maritime colonialism: “Pollux” moves from land to sea through detention, ports, ships, and exile; while “Penabur Benih” moves from sea to land through voyages, disease, sea burials, trade-mission conflicts, signaling systems, maps, and naming. The units of analysis in this study include scenes as well as material details such as shackles, iron balls, blankets, hatches, corpse weights, signal flags, shipping routes, and place names that reveal how colonial power regulated bodies, mobility, visibility, disposal, and knowledge.

The primary framework of this research is *hydrocolonialism* as developed by Hofmeyr (2019, 2021), a framework that views colonialism not merely as the occupation of land, but as the governance of water, the sea, ports, ships, routes, documents, and mobility. To sharpen the analysis, the concept of *dockside reading* is used to interpret ports as spaces of identification and the regulation of visibility, *micro colony* to interpret ships as mini-social spaces that condense colonial hierarchies and conflicts, and *ocean as disposal* to interpret the sea as a space of disposal and the erasure of traces (Hofmeyr et al., 2022). The analysis is conducted by identifying key scenes, interpreting quotations through diction, imagery, perspective, sequences of actions, and material objects, and then linking them to the framework of *hydrocolonialism*.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pollux

Body Classification and Peripheral Circulation

In the short story “Pollux,” maritime colonialism does not initially manifest through the sea, ports, or ships, but rather through the detention cells at the *Stadhuis*. The story opens with the body of the narrator, Antoine Pascale Renard, being forced into a damp corridor and confronted by Jaap Willenkens, the chief guard, who immediately establishes the power dynamic between the colonial authorities and the prisoner’s body. At this point, the *Stadhuis* functions not merely as a setting for imprisonment, but as an initial space where the body is separated from its social status, military rank, and personal experiences. He is no longer primarily present as a lieutenant, a sailor, or a political subject, but as a prisoner who must be secured, examined, and prepared for transfer. In other words, from the opening scene, the body has entered the colonial

administrative machinery.

The details of the detention space reveal this process in a tangible way. When Renard regained consciousness, he found himself in a basement that was extremely dark, low-ceilinged, filthy, moss-covered, straw-floored, and separated from the city's surface. Even the Stadhuis was said to be about ten feet below ground level, not far from the Raad van Justitie, the center of colonial justice. This contrast is significant: the center of justice is above, while the prisoner's body is placed below. Colonial justice, within such a spatial configuration, does not appear as a neutral moral principle, but as a vertical structure that places problematic bodies in a lower, dark, and isolated realm. The presence of the "iron ball" on Renard's leg reinforces the transformation of the body into a controlled object. The body is not merely restrained, but made heavy, slow, and difficult to move. Its mobility is reduced before being redirected toward another route of colonial-controlled mobility.

This is where the *hydrocolonial* reading begins to take effect. The sea is not yet visible in the Stadhuis scene, but maritime logic is already present through the way the body is prepared for transport. Blum (2010) reminds us that the sea must be read as a material condition, not merely a metaphor for fluidity. In "Pollux," this material condition has not yet emerged as an expanse of water, but as an institutional orientation: bodies deemed disruptive must be processed so they can enter the water-based transport route. Stadhuis becomes a pre-maritime space—a place where colonial power transforms humans into administrative units ready to be channeled toward ships, ports, and peripheral territories.

This classification process becomes increasingly clear through the officials' discussions regarding Renard's identity. He is not interpreted through psychological depth or political motives, but rather through operational categories: Walloon, Belgian, instigator of rebellion, leader of chaos aboard the *Noordster*, and a defendant awaiting the decision of the military court in Manado. The mention of the Manado military court is significant because it indicates that from the outset, Renard's fate was directed away from Batavia. Identity categories do not serve to understand the subject, but rather to activate procedures: surveillance, restraint, transfer, and exile. Within Hofmeyr's (2019) framework, the relationships between land and sea, administration and mobility, and body and water are never entirely separate. Consequently, the classification at the Stadhuis already incorporates a maritime orientation: the body is read not to be understood, but to be directed toward specific routes.

The maritime dimension becomes even more pronounced when Renard's conversation with Philippe Lecroix links his detention to the mutiny on the schooner *Noordster*. Renard explains that the ship was laden with opium and that its captain had used a military vessel as a means of smuggling. This means that Renard's case cannot be reduced to individual criminality.

It is connected to the ship, opium, the Strait of Malacca, non-Dutch crew members, British merchants, and internal conflicts within the colonial maritime economy. The mutiny on the ship arose due to unfair profit-sharing, cuts to the wages of the non-Dutch crew, and the captain's abuse of authority. Renard's situation became problematic because he was situated at the intersection of the military, trade, smuggling, race, and maritime mobility.

At this point, the sea does not function as the backdrop for adventure, but as a medium connecting the colonial economy, military discipline, and administrative violence. Cowen (2014) demonstrates that logistics often appears neutral because it relates to the circulation of goods, shipping, and the smooth flow of trade, yet the history of logistics is always intertwined with violence, war, and the security of trade. In "Pollux," the disruption of the *Noordster* is met with the same logic: subjects deemed to disrupt the flow of commodities are shifted into the flow of punishment. They are removed from the profitable black-market economic channels of the colonial captain and placed into the legal-military channel leading to trial and exile. In other words, colonialism not only punishes the body but also redirects its course.

The plan to send Renard to Manado demonstrates that the colonial resolution of maritime disruptions is achieved through geographical displacement. In this short story, Manado is not merely an administrative location but a periphery that enables the colonial center to maintain its order. By transferring Renard from Batavia to Manado, colonialism not only separates the body from the place of its original detention but also severs the possibility of his political articulation. Distance becomes an instrument of power. Water, in this context, is not merely a surface to be crossed, but a medium of severance. The concept of *reading for water* by Hofmeyr, Nuttall, and Lavery (2022) helps to sharpen this point: water does not only function horizontally as a route of movement, but also volumetrically as a space of separation, delay, and the severing of connections.

Sunda Kelapa Port as a Regime of Visibility

If the *Stadhuis* functions as a space of classification, Sunda Kelapa Harbor in "Pollux" functions as a space of regulating visibility. After being dragged from the detention room, Renard arrives at the port wounded, hungry, and shackled. However, the first sight he encounters is not chaos, but a choreography of order: a procession of high-ranking officials, golden umbrellas, the strains of an aubade, a military band, and a three-masted corvette with POLLUX inscribed on its hull. This scene portrays the harbor as a stage for colonial representation. There, power presents itself as order, ceremony, music, honor, and the regularity of movement.

However, that order is actually built by concealing violence. Renard's wounded body becomes a visual disruption to the colonial ceremony. Blood, open wounds, a white shirt stained red, a staggering body, and shackles on his hands and feet do not align with the image of order

intended to be displayed at the pier. Therefore, Willenkens ordered that Renard's body be forced to walk through a specific gate and be covered so that neither the colonial officials nor the Javanese prince would see this unsightly spectacle. This order is the core of the regime of visibility in this short story. What is regulated is not only the movement of the body but also its visual status: whether the body is permitted to appear, must be covered, or must be diverted from official view.

Hofmeyr's (2021) concept of *dockside reading* helps interpret the function of such a port. A port is not merely a transit point between land and sea, but a hermeneutic space where objects, documents, commodities, and bodies are read through their surface signs. Srivastava (2023) also emphasizes that colonial ports operate through practices of sorting, identifying, testing, and regulating what is permitted to move from ship to land or from land to ship. In "Pollux," Renard's body is read not through his voice, but through his appearance. His wounds, blood, and unsteady movements become signs that must be managed because they have the potential to disrupt the aesthetics of power. Thus, the body is wrapped and directed to the second hold, behind a row of musicians forming a human barrier.

The details of the blanket, hold, and musicians' barrier are significant because they reveal how the port regulates the relationship between mobility and visibility. The shroud transforms the wounded body into a concealed object; the hold transforms the body into cargo; the musicians' barrier transforms violence into something hidden behind a ritual of honor. In this way, Renard's body undergoes a semiotic transition: from a vocal subject into an object that is covered, pushed, and loaded onto the ship. The port does not merely channel bodies but also regulates how those bodies may or may not be seen.

The music in this scene also functions as more than mere atmospheric background. The aubade and the military band form a sensory layer accompanying the procession of officials and the departure of the corvette. Sound works in tandem with the visual to create an impression of order. Rancière (2005) refers to the division of what may be seen, heard, and felt as the *distribution of the sensible*. In "Pollux," this distribution is starkly evident: officials, umbrellas, music, ships, and the procession are placed on the side deemed fit for display; while blood, wounds, shackles, and violence are directed behind the curtain, behind the musicians, and behind the hatch door. The port becomes a sensory space that has been partitioned: there are sounds permitted to fill the dock, and there are bodies that must be silenced.

However, this sensory division is unstable. When the unsteady Renard crashes into the line of musicians and tumbles right in front of the procession, the music stops. The fragment: the music stopped instantly becomes a pivotal moment because it reveals the fragility of colonial choreography. The body meant to be hidden suddenly bursts into the space of representation.

The violence that was supposed to remain behind the scenes emerged onto the stage. For a moment, the pier failed to maintain the boundary between ceremony and coercion, between honor and wound, between official representation and the logistical costs of colonialism.

The presence of Prince Diponegoro further complicates this scene. He is part of the honorable procession, yet simultaneously on his way to exile. The short story's epilogue notes that before being exiled to Manado, Diponegoro was detained on the second floor of the *Stadhuis* in Batavia and received special treatment—both during his detention, upon his release at the port on May 3, 1830, and in exile. This paratext reveals a visual differentiation in colonial practice: Diponegoro is portrayed as a revered figure even while being removed, whereas Renard must be obscured and diverted because his body is deemed to disrupt the ceremonial image.

These two forms of visibility demonstrate that the port is not a neutral space. It sorts bodies according to their political and symbolic value. Diponegoro is made visible in a measured way to reinforce colonial authority: colonial power can demonstrate that it respects a great enemy who has been defeated. Renard, conversely, had to be rendered invisible because his body revealed the brutal side of power: beatings, wounds, blood, and forced displacement. The port functions as a regime of visibility that not only determines who is allowed to move but also who is allowed to be seen, in what form, and by whom.

Moretti (2021) refers to the port as a *threshold space*, a liminal space that constantly mediates between openness and control. In “Pollux,” this threshold operates concretely through hatch doors, musicians' corridors, covering blankets, pushed bodies, and processions of officials. The port opens a path to the sea, but that opening is achieved through visual and procedural filtering. Thus, Sunda Kelapa is not merely a departure point; it is a threshold machine that transforms prisoners into cargo, wounds into visual disturbances, and forced departures into a seemingly orderly colonial ceremony.

Ships as Moving Prisons

After Renard's body was identified at the *Stadhuis* and his remains were laid to rest at Sunda Kelapa Harbor, the corvette *Pollux* became the next phase of maritime colonialism. This ship was not merely a means of transportation from Batavia to Manado. It was a mobile space of punishment that severed the body from the center, placed it under a new authority, and channeled it toward the periphery. If the *Stadhuis* transformed humans into cases, and the port transformed bodies into signs to be managed, then the ship transformed prisoners into moving political cargo.

The name “Pollux” itself emerged amidst the harbor ceremony as a powerful visual sign. The three-masted ship docked gracefully, becoming the center of attention for officials and the military band. Yet, the ship's elegance stood in stark contrast to its function: it carried problematic

figures out of the seat of power. On one hand, the ship becomes part of the ceremonial honors for Diponegoro; on the other, it serves as the means to transport Renard to a military court in Manado. These two forms of transfer differ symbolically, yet operate within the same logic: the sea is utilized as a corridor to sever subjects deemed problematic from the colonial center.

Within the framework of *hydrocolonialism*, the ship is a space that condenses multiple functions simultaneously: a means of mobility, a space of discipline, a legal apparatus, and an infrastructure of exile. Rediker (2007) interprets the ship as a dense, hierarchical microcosm governed by bodily discipline. This interpretation is relevant to “Pollux” because once Renard’s body was transferred to the ship, the nature of power over him shifted. The overt violence at the Stadhuis and the docks did not entirely disappear, but it took on a new form as the management of the body under maritime authority. Renard was no longer merely beaten and dragged; he would also be treated by the ship’s doctor and placed in the upper cabin.

This change is significant because it demonstrates that colonial punishment does not always manifest as direct brutality. It can also operate through care, reclassification, and the differentiation of facilities. When Renard’s shackles were removed at Diponegoro’s request and De Kock approved better treatment for him, colonial power appeared lenient. Yet, this leniency did not eliminate the punitive function. A body being cared for remains a body being sent to a military court; the upper cabin remains within the exile ship; the ship’s doctor remains part of the system ensuring the body reaches its destination. Care, in this context, is not the opposite of punishment, but rather a technique enabling punishment to proceed.

The Pollux also demonstrates that colonialism operates through differentiation, not merely uniform repression. Diponegoro, as a major political figure, received symbolic honor; Renard, as a Walloon prisoner, was initially treated as a dirty body that must be hidden, but later received some protection due to Diponegoro’s intervention. This difference in treatment does not signify the absence of power, but rather the complexity of colonial power. It could strike, hide, honor, care for, and exile all at once. All these actions are part of the same sequence: maintaining control over the center by relocating problematic figures outside the center.

Within this framework, Manado is not merely a geographical destination. It is a periphery produced by maritime routes. The relocation to Manado transforms distance into a political instrument. While aboard the ship, Renard existed in an in-between space: he was no longer in a land-based prison, yet had not yet arrived at the place of trial and exile. It is precisely this in-between space that makes the ship effective as a colonial technology. The ship extends the threshold; it keeps the prisoner in a state of limbo, under surveillance, and separated. The sea need not manifest as a storm or a natural threat; by simply providing distance, it functions as a medium of power.

If the port regulates visibility, the ship regulates separation. The port determines how bodies may enter maritime space without disrupting the colonial image, while the ship ensures those bodies are truly severed from their original socio-political networks. Thus, the *Pollux* serves as a mobile colonial miniature. Within it are concentrated laws, commands, medical care, symbolic hierarchies, and the purpose of exile. The ship does not merely transport bodies but also redefines their status: from *Stadhuis* detainees to forced passengers, from political subjects to legal cargo, from central disturbances to cases channeled to the periphery.

Ultimately, “*Pollux*” reveals colonialism as a governance of mobility and thresholds. Colonialism operates not only when territories are occupied or when physical violence is inflicted, but also when bodies are classified, confined, directed, stowed in holds, kept alive through care, and shipped across the sea toward the site of legal adjudication. With this reading, the sea, the port, and the ship can no longer be regarded merely as the backdrop of events. All three are both narrative infrastructure and infrastructure of power: the *Stadhuis* prepares the body, the port regulates its visibility, and the ship operates its severance from the center. This is the core of how *hydrocolonialism* functions in “*Pollux*”: colonialism operates through water even before water truly becomes the center of the scene, for all terrestrial procedures have been directed toward maritime mobility from the very beginning.

Penabur Benih

The Ocean as a Disposal Site and the Normalization of Death

While “*Pollux*” explores maritime colonialism through bodily classification, the staging of visibility in the harbor, and the marginalization of subjects to the periphery, “*Penabur Benih*” shifts the focus to a more fundamental level: colonial life that was, from the very beginning, shaped upon the water. This short story does not open with a landing scene, trade negotiations, or an encounter with the local population, but rather with a sea burial. The narrator, Jacob, a novice accompanying Father Albrecht van der Gracht, immediately places the reader in the midst of a hastily conducted death rite: a prayer for the departed is recited in Latin before the stiffened body, weighted down, is launched into the sea via a plank. Death here is granted no proper pause; it is immediately subsumed into the rhythm of the voyage, which demands continuity. From the outset, the sea appears not as a space for adventure, but as a medium for disposing of bodies.

The details of the deceased’s body reveal that the funeral is not merely a religious event, but also a process of dehumanization. The body of Lieutenant Meeus van Scheveningen was not wrapped in linen because the cloth was no longer available; his body appeared as it was, with gums and lips damaged by canker sores, and clothing still bearing stains of vomit, blood, and urine. By focusing on the damaged, dirty, and exposed details of the body, the narrative eliminates the aesthetic distance that typically accompanies heroic death. Yet, before becoming a corpse, he

was the revered Antwerp war legend. This is precisely where the power of this scene lies: a figure who previously held high symbolic value is reduced to a biological body that must be swiftly disposed of. The sea erases the hierarchy of honor that might still be maintained on land.

Jacob's metaphor that they were punishing a rebel by throwing him alive into the sea underscores the shift in meaning from burial to disposal. The body is not treated as a subject still entitled to respect, but as a burden that must be removed from the ship. Religious rites are indeed present through the Latin prayer, but that prayer is insufficient to restore the body's dignity. What dominates is the logistical process: the body is weighted down, placed on a plank, and then launched into the sea. Here, the sea functions as an *ocean of disposal*: a space that receives the body, erases its traces, and ensures the journey can continue. Within the framework of *hydrocolonialism*, water is not merely a medium of transportation but also a medium of erasure.

The absence of expressions of grief further underscores the normalization of death aboard the ship. Jacob notes that he found no faces of grief, compassion, or respect among the crew. This lack of emotional response cannot be interpreted solely as individual moral failure, but rather as a result of the fundamental conditions of the voyage: starvation, disease, distance, uncertainty, and recurring death. The narrative then provides context that since departing from Texel, deaths from *scurvy* have continued to occur, followed by an outbreak of *the Black Death* when the ship stopped in Madagascar. These conditions hardened our hearts, making them cold and callous; indeed, some of the sick even wished to vanish from the face of the earth as soon as possible because there was no one left capable of caring for them. The sea, disease, and distance thus shaped a new social ethic aboard the ship: death became a common occurrence, no longer a shocking event.

The concept of *reading for water* by Hofmeyr, Nuttall, and Lavery (2022) helps interpret this scene because water is not merely present as a surface traversed by the ship, but as a volumetric condition that shapes social relations, bodily rhythms, and the emotional capacities of the crew. At sea, death cannot be postponed for too long, bodies cannot be preserved, and funeral rites must adapt to the ship's spatial constraints. Thus, water helps determine the social form of death. The sea is not merely where the deceased end up; it is an element that shapes how bodies die, are treated, prayed over, and forgotten.

In this context, "Penabur Benih" reveals maritime colonialism from a darker angle: colonialism does not operate solely through conquest, trade, or religious missions, but also through the sea's capacity to absorb victims without leaving a trace. Lieutenant Meeus van Scheveningen's body received no land, grave, headstone, family, or memorial site. He fell into the water and vanished. The sea functions as a space that resolves the issue of the body while simultaneously erasing the possibility of memorialization. Death does not hinder colonial

logistics; rather, logistics determine the acceptable form of death. Thus, the sea burial in “Penabur Benih” serves as an entry point for interpreting the sea as a medium of dehumanization, the normalization of death, and the erasure of traces.

Ships as Commercial-Religious Micro Colonies

Following an opening that portrays the sea as a medium of disposal, “Penabur Benih” shifts its focus to social life aboard the ship. Here, the ship does not appear as a neutral vessel transporting people to the Indies, but rather as a microcosm of social life that is, from the very beginning, saturated with hierarchy, division of roles, conflicts of authority, disease, and colonial interests. Jacob and Father Albrecht van der Gracht are stationed on the *Duyfken*, a small three-masted vanguard ship carrying only about twenty people. Meanwhile, the three large ships of Cornelis de Houtman’s fleet each had their own Calvinist chaplain. The placement of Father Albrecht as the sole Catholic chaplain on the small ship indicates that life at sea was not organized solely by the technical necessities of navigation, but also by religious divisions and institutional positions within the expedition.

This configuration allows the ship to be interpreted as a *micro-colony*. On board the *Duyfken*, the basic elements of colonialism were already present: naval command, commercial interests, religious mandates, sick bodies, navigational knowledge, and social hierarchy. The ship did not merely carry Europeans toward the New World; it carried European structures—along with their conflicts—out onto the sea. The Catholic-Calvinist divide, the tension between commerce and the preaching of the faith, and the debate over navigational authority demonstrate that colonialism did not wait for land to begin its work. It had already taken shape on the deck, the stern, the cabins, and the ship’s cramped quarters.

The conflict between Father Albrecht and Elias Goeswijn became central to the formation of the ship as a trade-religious *micro colony*. Goeswijn, the head of trade affairs, articulated the expedition’s mission with great clarity: This is an ordinary trading ship. An ordinary trading mission. This statement is significant because it reveals the expedition’s primary rationale: the sea is a route for accumulation, and the ship is a tool for opening up trade territories. In Goeswijn’s view, the Father’s presence must not interfere with commercial interests. He positioned the Father solely as a prayer leader, much like the Calvinist priests on other ships. In other words, religion was accepted only to the extent that it supported the crew’s morale, but it must not alter the expedition’s commercial course.

Father Albrecht rejected this reduction. He asserted that the message of faith was enshrined in a letter signed by the King, the State Council, and the Bishop. He even declared that, with or without the crew’s assistance, upon reaching his destination he would remain a sower of seeds and follow in the footsteps of Francis Xavier in Ambonia. Here, religion is not present as a

matter of personal piety, but as an institutional mandate. However, Goeswijn exposes the political function of that mandate by stating that the proposal for the preaching of the faith was added by the Chamber of Commerce solely to facilitate the King's approval. This exchange reveals that the ship is a space where commerce and religion mutually utilize one another: commerce requires moral legitimacy, while religion requires trade routes to reach new territories.

The power of this scene lies in how the dialogue unfolds within the ship's space. Jacob notes that the conversation between the Father and Goeswijn is so loud it overpowers the creaking of the overlapping planks as they are battered by the waves. This auditory detail is crucial. The creaking of the deck typically serves as the background sound of shipboard life, but in this scene it is drowned out by the clash of two colonial mandates: the commercial mandate and the religious mandate. In other words, the ship becomes a space where ideological conflict is made audibly tangible. The deck, the waves, the sick body, and the voices of the debate form a composition that reveals that maritime colonialism is not a calm and cohesive system, but rather a tense space filled with negotiation.

The condition of Pater's body after the debate also reveals that the ship, as a *micro colony*, not only condenses ideology but also oppresses the body. After leaving Goeswijn, Pater suddenly collapsed; his face was pale, his body temperature was high, and the swelling in his gums had worsened. The religious body intended to carry the seeds of faith was itself eroded by the material conditions of the voyage: illness, weakness, and limited medical care. The ship is thus not merely a space for ideological struggle but also a biological space where colonial bodies become fragile. It condenses the empire's grand ambitions while revealing the fragility of the humans carrying them out.

This commercial-religious conflict was exacerbated by Goeswijn's criticism of Cornelis de Houtman's leadership. Goeswijn referred to the crew as a horde of the living dead, noting that the death toll had reached seventy, and lamenting that the port of Bantam had still not been found. He also blamed the overly circuitous route, the rejection of proposals to procure fruits, and De Houtman's incompetence in navigation. His criticism of De Houtman demonstrates that the ship was not merely a space for the division of labor, but also a space for the contestation of knowledge. Who has the right to determine the route? Formal command, cartographic knowledge, or the helmsman's experience? In this situation, navigational decisions are directly tied to the body: a wrong route means starvation, disease, and death.

Rediker (2007), who interprets the ship as a small, autonomous, dense, hierarchical world governed by bodily discipline, helps sharpen this point. The *Duyfken* in "Penabur Benih" is not merely a setting for a voyage; it is a micro-society that forces all colonial conflicts to play out within a confined space. On land, conflicts between commerce, religion, and knowledge might be

dispersed across various institutions. On the ship, everything converges within a single enclosed space: the merchant, the priest, the ship's doctor, the captain, the helmsman, the soldiers, the sailors, and the sick bodies. Thus, the ship becomes a moving colonial miniature. It carries colonial hierarchies, mandates, and conflicts before colonialism has even set foot on the shores of the Indies.

The Politics of Signs, Cartography, and the Authority of Knowledge

In the final section of "Penabur Benih" maritime colonialism is no longer primarily manifested through death, disease, or conflicts between commerce and religion, but rather through the ways in which the sea is interpreted, mapped, and made navigable. Before the scene of the discovery of land, Father Albrecht first reflects on the transformation of the world through science. He mentions the discovery of timekeepers, pistols, lenses, spectacles, microscopes, and telescopes, then connects them to Copernicus and Galileo, who unveiled the secrets of celestial bodies and revealed the Earth's spherical shape. This reflection is significant because it positions navigation not merely as a physical feat of courage, but as the result of an epistemological shift: the world became navigable only after it was first rendered calculable, observable, measurable, and cosmologically imaginable.

Thus, colonial politics in this short story operates not only through ships and bodies but also through knowledge. Maps, measuring instruments, celestial observations, and systems of signs transform the sea from a realm of uncertainty into a space that can be coordinated. Steinberg (2001) emphasizes that the ocean is not a neutral natural space, but a social space constructed through material practices, regulations, and representations. "Penabur Benih" illustrates this very clearly: the sea is not merely faced, but read; not merely crossed, but converted into a route.

The short story's climax arrives through the cry: "Land! Land!" that rouses Jacob from his exhaustion. However, the land does not appear as an object simply there for the taking. The narrative first arranges a sequence of signs: a strange, refreshing scent, a blue-orange sky, the silhouette of the mainland, the possibility of three islands that later appear as a single, hilly island, and the wide mouth of the bay. This sequence demonstrates that the landing is preceded by sensory work. Land first appears as scent, form, distance, and silhouette. It has not yet become a political territory, but has already begun to enter the European field of perception.

Once the sensory signs appear, they immediately enter the fleet's communication system. The signalman arranges small flags and hoists them between the masts. Through this action, individual vision is transformed into collective information. The crew's shouts and Jacob's observations do not remain as personal experiences, but are translated into a code understandable by other ships. The sea here demands the coordination of signs. Small flags

transform possibilities into instructions; signals turn the horizon into decisions; and those decisions prepare the ship to move toward land. Within the framework of *hydrocolonialism*, such a signaling system is part of the governance of water: colonialism operates through the ability to translate the marine environment into operational information.

The politics of signs reaches its strongest form when the visible island is named. Captain Simon Lambrecht stated that, according to Van Linschoten's map, the island's name was Enggano. He even added that in Portuguese, *engano* means disappointment, while hoping that meaning did not apply to them. This naming reveals that the land was not merely discovered but immediately incorporated into the linguistic regime already brought by Europe. The island had not yet been truly entered, but it had already been placed on the map, in the memory of Portuguese voyages, and within the European knowledge network. Thus, a symbolic landing occurred before material control took place.

J. B. Harley's (1989) focus on maps as representations of power helps sharpen this scene. Maps are not neutral mirrors of space, but texts containing rhetoric, choices, and operations of power. In "Penabur Benih" Van Linschoten's map is not merely a navigational aid; it becomes a device that enables the island to be recognized, referenced, and named through European authority. The name Enggano brought the land into the colonial archives even before any trade, war, or occupation took place. Here, maritime colonialism operates as the production of legibility: the sea is turned into a route, the island into a name, and the horizon into an object that can be claimed.

The scene following the naming further reveals a shift in the ship's atmosphere. Captain Simon Lambrecht Mau became very busy issuing orders; the eight remaining royal soldiers fell back into formation, wearing helmets, armor, and rifles oiled until they gleamed. Jacob described the atmosphere as a parade of hope, full of smiles and enthusiasm, as if illness, canker sores, and yellow fever were momentarily forgotten. This detail reveals that the discovery of land reactivated the colonial body. A body that had previously been weak and sick was suddenly reorganized into a military formation. Weapons were cleaned, orders issued, and the ship prepared to enter a new phase: from survival at sea toward the possibility of contact, trade, and domination.

However, that hope was soon met with the death of Father Albrecht. When Jacob returned to the cabin, the priest had died. This death renders the title "Penabur Benih" ironic. The figure who claimed to sow faith never even set foot on land. The religious mission he defended in his debate with Goeswijn ended on the ship, while the commercial and military missions continued beyond the cabin. Thus, colonialism in this short story does not depend on a single type of mandate. If religion fails to reach its destination, trade, maps, weapons, and command continue

the colonial advance.

The story's conclusion brings the European ship face-to-face with local inhabitants arriving in canoes. Jacob observes a group of people with elaborate headdresses, small, stocky, brown-skinned figures, shouting short phrases that sound foreign to him. Immediately, he envisions the story of Columbus and the Taino people in Hispaniola, which in his imagination is linked to cannibalism. Jacob's response indicates that this first encounter is already mediated by an archive of fear and prior colonial narratives. The local inhabitants do not truly appear as autonomous subjects, but are immediately interpreted through the lens of Atlantic colonial memory. Jacob's question—is this the garden of God that I must cultivate?—closes the short story with ambiguity: the new land appears as a mission field, yet also as a space that has been overshadowed by European categories from the very beginning.

From this, it is evident that the politics of signs in "Penabur Benih" operates on three levels. First, the sensory level: the land is recognized through scent, silhouette, and form. Second, the communicative level: observations are translated into signal flags and naval orders. Third, the cartographic-colonial level: the island is named based on Van Linschoten's map and incorporated into the European knowledge network. All three levels demonstrate that colonialism did not begin after the occupation of the mainland, but rather from the moment the sea and land were made legible, measurable, signaled, and named. Thus, "Penabur Benih" asserts that the sea is not merely a space that carried colonialism to the Indies; the sea is the place where colonialism was produced first through death, mandate conflicts, maps, signaling systems, and naming.

CONCLUSION

A reading of "Pollux" and "Penabur Benih" reveals that colonialism in *Semua Untuk Hindia* (2014) operates not only through land occupation, ideological domination, or direct violence, but also through the governance of mobility, thresholds, visibility, expulsion, and maritime knowledge. In "Pollux," colonialism moves from land to sea: the body of Antoine Pascale Renard is classified and immobilized at the Stadhuis, its visibility staged at Sunda Kelapa Harbor, then channeled to the periphery via the corvette Pollux toward Manado. Conversely, "Penabur Benih" illustrates the direction from sea to land: the burial of Lieutenant Meeus van Scheveningen portrays the sea as a space of disposal; the Duyfken ship becomes a *micro colony* that intensifies commercial-religious conflicts; while maps, signal flags, and the naming of Enggano indicate that colonialism was already at work even before the landing took place.

When read together, these two short stories reveal that the sea, the port, and the ship are not merely the backdrop of events, but both narrative infrastructure and colonial infrastructure. The port regulates what may be seen and what must be hidden; the ship condenses hierarchy,

command, law, religion, trade, and colonial conflict; while the sea functions as a medium of severance, disposal, and the production of distance. Thus, the contribution of this article lies in a specific reading of “Pollux” and “Penabur Benih” through the framework of *hydrocolonialism*—not as a claim that Iksaka Banu has never been read in relation to water or maritime space, but as an effort to position ships, ports, and the sea as operational tools of colonialism. This reading shifts the focus from colonialism as an ambivalence of the subject, hegemony, resistance, or traumatic memory toward colonialism as material-spatial governance through objects, routes, bodies, procedures, and knowledge.

The implication is that Indonesian postcolonial studies need to be expanded from overly terrestrial models toward a more archipelagic-maritime reading. In the context of Indonesia as an archipelago, colonialism cannot be fully understood through forts, offices, plantations, administrative cities, or social relations on land, but also through ports, ships, maritime routes, exile, deportation, navigation, and the naming of spaces. Therefore, *hydrocolonialism* is useful not merely for adding a maritime theme to literary studies, but for reading the sea as an analytical category that shapes how colonialism operates materially, procedurally, and symbolically. This approach can be further developed to analyze narratives of exile, port city fiction, coastal literature, smuggling, maritime labor, maritime violence, colonial ecology, and archipelagic memory in Indonesian literature.

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