Waves are Sleeping

Surf Tourism and Human-Waves Relationship in Siberut, Mentawai Islands

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“Hidup sungguh sangat sederhana. Yang hebat-hebat hanya tafsirannya.”

(Pramoedya Ananta Toer)

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Shanty Novriaty,

the most kind-hearted of all my teachers,

who passed away on January 15th, 2018.

The last time we met was in FISIP UI, Depok, circa 2016. She gave me a recommendation letter for the scholarship which finally brought me to Wageningen. She said, “I always wanted to study in Wageningen, Sarani. But, I never had a chance to do so. I hope you finish my dream.”

Acknowledgment

I write this thesis with an egoistic “I”, but I will not regard this piece of work as mine. This is co-created by various beings: humans, nonhumans, animate, inanimate. In this occasion, I especially would like to thank Meghann Ormond whose supervision has given me freedom, care, and assurance to finish this thesis. Furthermore, I thank my family (Bapak, Ibu, Uti, Mas Lolo, Iik, Dek Dya, etc.) for giving me space to be whatever I want; all my friends, especially The Emily with whom I have shared this Wageningen journey; and Christal for keeping me poetic during the process. Last but not least, I want to thank all Mentawaians I encountered in Wageningen, Padang, Siberut, and Pulau: thanks for showing me kindness in its purest form.

Masurabagata.

Moile moile.

Disclaimer

I would like to make a disclaimer about the use of pictures, figures, and non-English words in this thesis. All pictures were taken by myself during the fieldwork, except two: the cover picture which I got from Hiber Sapelege (which portrays himself surfing) and the picture of *The Great Wave* painting (figure 1) which I downloaded from Google. Besides, the conceptual framework (figure 2) was created by myself, while fieldwork area map (figure 3) by Wintia Arindina. The non-English words I use in this thesis are Indonesian and Mentawaian. They are in italics.

Abstract

Studies about surfing and surf tourism in Mentawai Islands have been full of numbers, profiles, and conflicts. However, the most basic materiality of surfing itself, namely waves, is rarely emphasized. Besides, academic discourses have long portrayed Mentawai's association with land and forest, while their relationship with the sea and waves has been overlooked. Thus, this thesis explores the waves as the focus, aiming in understanding how Mentawaians relate with waves within the context of surf tourism.

Drawing on Tim Ingold (2000), dwelling perspective and engagement provide theoretical tools to situate the relationship between Mentawaians and the waves. Siberut is the case studied here; through anthropology research and by employing classic qualitative methods of participant-observation, everyday conversation, and interviewing.

This thesis explores the way Mentawaians engage with waves through various practices – at the sea and on the land. Their practices of engagement with waves are based on and sustained by attentiveness toward waves. Furthermore, since perception is not an a priori social/cultural construction of human mind, engagement with waves takes Mentawaians to perception. In Siberut, waves are perceived contradictory through contradiction in 'good waves' and contrast of fearful/playful waves. Finally, this leads to the nature of Mentawai human-waves relationship. Both relate with such intimacy, but within the dilemma of 'avoidance/encounter'. Materiality of Mentawai waves provides a basis of such relationship. Lastly, surf tourism mediates the processes of engagement with and perception of waves among Mentawaians.

This thesis adds a new case to the body of research on the human-environment relationship, while offers a different point of view to understand surf tourism phenomenon in Mentawai Islands. Moreover, this article intends to encourage two things in tourism studies: promoting scholarly quests on seemingly trivial nonhuman being, such as waves; as well as emphasizing local people's voices, practices, and perceptions within ever-growing tourism settings.

Keywords: waves, surf tourism, human-environment relationship, engagement, perception

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1. Introduction

Ever since the first foreign surfers came to Mentawai Islands in 1980s, not much are known about how Mentawaians perceive their waves. In the academic world, many scholars have travelled to and done research in Mentawai, including on surfing and surf tourism, but no one seems interested to understand local people's relation with waves. Moreover, in general, studies on surfing and surf tourism rarely emphasize on waves, one of the basic materiality of surfing. I began to wonder: what is 'wave' for Mentawai people? This is my first concern: to investigate, know, and understand about the ways Mentawai people relate with the waves and how they perceive it under the context of growing surf tourism industry.

While that concern seems epistemological, my second concern is more ontological. In my attempt to understand Mentawai human-waves relationship, I found an ontological collision concerning human-environment relationship between Western/Eurocentric/modern way of thinking and its alternatives. While the former emphasizes the (often dualistic and dichotomist) separation between human and environment, the latter – non-Western/non-Eurocentric/non-modern ways of thinking – regards that human and environment are ontologically and practically inseparable from each other. This is my second concern: to investigate, know, and understand how human and environment (especially waves in my case study) can live inseparably.

I will cover the first concern in this introduction by discussing my Mentawai case study. Meanwhile the second concern will be explored deeply in the next part. I decide to begin from Mentawai because, as I will keep repeating this later, this thesis was started from my fascination of Mentawai and my curiosity toward waves. Then, I tried to combine both and eventually found surf tourism as an interesting context to explore the interrelation between them.

1.1. Case study

Mentawaians and their waves

I was first fascinated by Mentawai Islands as a place where surf tourism and indigenous culture may interact. The interaction, I thought sporadically in the first place, might be interesting to study. In my exploration of case study, I start from the narrative of surf tourism in Mentawai. After that, I discuss Mentawai in their relationships with waves, sea, water, and environment. Before setting off, I would like to make clear about the use of the term 'Mentawai'. As Reeves (1999: 35) suggests, the term 'Mentawai' should not be treated as unproblematic. He thinks that the outsider's usage of term 'Mentawai' has enjoyed 'a quasi-official status indicating a general

geographical location'.[1] However, for the sake of clarity, following Darmanto and Setyowati (2012: 45), besides referring to geographical notion, 'Mentawai' here refers to groups of people in Mentawai Islands who speak Mentawai language and come from the same ancestral line. Furthermore, Mentawaians also refer themselves as indigenous people of Mentawai Islands (2012: 43). More than 85,000 people inhabit Mentawai Islands in 2015 (BPS Mentawai, 2016) and about eighty per cent are indigenous Mentawaians (Tulius, 2016: 339)

1.1.1. Surf tourism in Mentawai

There was no surf tourism in Mentawai Islands before Australian surfers 'discovered' the perfect waves near the islands in the 1980s. Surfers are the unique kind in a sense that they are united by waves, but they do not like to share it – at least with too many people. Hence, when popular surf breaks in Nias Islands became over-crowded, they had no choice but to move. About 300 miles south, they found their next playground (Warshaw, 2004: 411). They played with the waves and started the surf tourism in Mentawai.

Situated about 100 kilometers off west coast of Sumatra and surrounded by Indian Ocean, Mentawai Islands is an important name in the surfing scene worldwide. Ponting (2008: 110) mentions some facts which point out the surfing-related importance of Mentawai, such as being the world's richest surf zone (according Warshaw, 2004), experiencing the rapid growth of surf tourism, generating high number of media coverage, inspiring the world's first surfer-initiated humanitarian organization (Surf Aid International), and hosting the world's top surfing contest (Op Pro 2001). Moreover, he adds that Mentawai surf breaks are considered among the world's best because the complex combination of quality swell, wind condition, and favorable reefs. Mentawai offers 'exceptionally high-quality surf breaks with unusual consistency' (2008: 118).

Three Sydney-based surfers (Scott Wakefield, Chris Goodnow, and Tony Fitzpatrick) were believed to be the first foreign surfers in Mentawai. It happened in 1980s. Yet, it was 1990s which marked the significant growth of surfing in Mentawai (2008: 123-126). In 1990, Danny Madre started the second wave of surf travelers in the islands. In the same year, Lance Knight surfed the virgin breaks which afterwards carry his name, Lance's Left and Lance's Right. In 1992, Martin Daley brought professional surfers to some Mentawai's surf breaks with his salvage boat. He did it again with more trips in the following year. In the 1994, two Australian-based companies started selling off surf charter boat trip publicly. Many surf tour operators followed in the next years. Competition between tour operators started to become chaotic, resulting in the intervention of

[1] Reeves (1999) argues that the term 'Mentawai', referring to the culture and people, has passed through a long journey of discursive construction, mainly driven by the works of anthropologists and other scholars. Outsiders tend to homogenize people who live in Mentawai Islands under the term 'Mentawai', while people living in the islands usually called other people by calling where she/he specifically comes from (for example, Siberut people or Pagai people). Term 'Mentawai' is also problematic in relation to other ethnic groups, especially Minangkabau. Some Minangkabau people who grown up in Mentawai Islands refer themselves as 'Mentawaian', whereas the indigenous Mentawai people do not treat them as such (Jongerius, 2013: 15).

government. During 1990s, West Sumatra provincial government published two decrees to regulate and manage surf tourism in Mentawai Islands, as well as to make tax money out of it. By 2000, Mentawai had become major surf tourism destination, attracted thousands of surfers in the April-October peak season, and been featured in many surf advertisements and films.

After 2001, surf tourism in Mentawai began to slow down. Ponting (2008: 128) mentions some external factors, such as Bali bombings 2002, Jakarta Marriot Hotel bombing 2003, Indian Ocean tsunami 2004, Nias earthquake 2005, and 2007 Sumatra earthquake. To prolong the list, Mentawai tsunami 2010 might become additional factors. The legislation dynamic of surf tourism has also changed as Mentawai Islands became autonomous regency in 1999 – before it was under Padang Pariaman regency. Nevertheless, the core of surfing market remains as surfers tend to believe that surf breaks will be less crowded in the time of natural and political instability. Surf tourism, with its ebb and flow, still exists in Mentawai today. It has even developed more, in the sense that there has been growing numbers of land-based surf accommodations in the islands. Jongerius' (2013) study portrays that homestays are now also key actors in Mentawai's surf tourism industry. They compete with charter boats and surf resorts which have been settled first, adding more surfing-related conflicts in the islands.

Conflict is common theme in academic literature about surf tourism in Mentawai, ever since Persoon (2003) published *Conflicts over Trees and Waves on Siberut Island*. Other common themes are management (Buckley, 2002b; Ponting, 2014; Towner, 2016) and social inequality (Ponting et al., 2005; Towner, 2013)[2]. I argue that both themes are related to conflict, making it an umbrella theme. The keyword is resource. In Jongerius' (2013: 77) words, 'waves are becoming resources'. Resource, consequently, is related to the issue of access. Theoretically, both are the sources of all surfing-related conflicts in Mentawai. They raise the urgency of surf management and (re-)produce social inequality between local people (or within them) and foreign actors. In this thesis, the issues of conflict, management, and inequality are only relevant because they show that surf tourism 'interacts' with local people, although probably through undesirable forms.

This raises the question of Mentawaians' involvement in surf tourism in the islands. Schwidder (2016: 46) depicts how Mentawai people participate in surfing. Some of them work in the surf resort, either in the kitchen and bar or as cleaner for minimal wage. Others participate in the surf charter boats, unsurprisingly as low-paid workers. The more independent ones create local homestays for surfers. Interestingly, some younger generations involve in the surfing activity as surfers. Alike their fellow locals in Bali (after Leonard, 2004), young Mentawaians have begun to learn to surf. They befriend with foreign surfers and sometimes are given surfing-related gifts, such as surf clothes or even (broken) surfboard. Yet, Mentawaians' involvement in surf tourism remains insignificant. Borrowing Barilotti (2002: 37), local people in surf destination are mostly seen as 'an obstacle or a friendly nuisance to sidestep on the way to the water'.

[2]Management- and social inequality-themed academic works on Mentawai's surf tourism usually apply sustainability as the foundational issue (Martin & Assenov, 2011: 269).

Many scholars point out that locals are written off in the process. Writing about Mentawai as surfing wonderland, Ponting et al. (2005: 141) remark: "The myth that underpins Wonderland has seen indigenous communities largely written out of marketing copy and imagery or relegated to the role of exotic curios. The reality is that the Mentawai people live in poverty." In Schwidder's (2016: 31) account, Mentawaians are neglected and marginalized in the surf tourism processes in the islands. Their involvement remains low under the dominance of foreign corporations and non-indigenous local tourism businesses (mostly from Minangkabau-descent). Offering more empirical analysis, Persoon (2003: 260) argues that Mentawaians do not have strong feeling about surfing because it takes place in the area which is out of the sight for most of them. His analysis might invite us to wonder: as Mentawai Islands is surrounded by Indian Ocean, why does the sea still become 'out of sight' for most Mentawaians? How is their relationship with it?

1.1.2. Sea and waves: Mentawai-environment relationship

Academic discourses have long portrayed Mentawai's close association with land and forest, while their relationship with sea and waves is overlooked. This is somewhat odd, simply because the islands are surrounded by ocean. The emergence of surf tourism in 1990s might complicate the situation a little bit. The influx of surf tourist to the islands prompted the shift of attitude of Mentawaians toward the ocean (Schwidder, 2016: 42). Traditionally, they believe the waves and the sea are inhabited with souls. Hence, they could not be owned. Persoon explains (2003: 260): "Sea and waves were never conceptualized as resources to which access had to be regulated. But now the situation is changing." The shift of situation started in the time of surfing boom in Mentawai, circa the beginning of 21th century. Mentawaians wanted the surf tourism's piece of cake, so claims of ownership have been made. As the indigenous people of the islands, Mentawaians claimed themselves as the owner of the waves. Thus, conflicts over waves became unavoidable, either among them or against the outsiders.

Scholarly neglect on Mentawai people's relationship with the ocean, I argue, is mainly caused by academic fascination on its exotic culture, especially on the groups of people who live in the deep interior of the forest. Needless to say, they are not so much connected to the sea. Besides, nature enthusiasts were more interested on endemic flora and fauna on the islands (Schwidder, 2016: 40). The sea was once again forgotten. The coming of (cultural) tourism in the 1970s also focused more on the forest interior area. In parallel with academic interests on Mentawai culture, tourists came to the islands to go deep into the forest and see primitive culture they previously saw in the magazine. They wanted to see tattooed indigenous people in loincloths and experience shamanic rituals. Ocean acted only as a backdrop, or at least as a pathway which connected their mediated imagination and tourist gaze. We can see that the contestation between land/forest and sea/waves in Mentawai always put the latter in the inferior position.

In fact, sea is not completely denied by Mentawaians. Schefold (1991: 15-22), speaking on cosmology, recounts that Mentawaians believe that their islands are the center of world's ocean, surrounded by other islands. Some Mentawai myths mention the sea, too. For example the legend

about a giant crocodile which lives under the sea and occasionally eats up the sun and moon; or the legend about a giant crab inside the ocean which appears on the sea surface whenever it wants to eat.[3] Besides, the indigenous religion *arat sabulungan*[4] regards the sea as sacred thing – along with forests, rivers, swamps, mountains, and hills (Elfiondri et al., 2016: 109). In general, water is believed as god, living beings, and earth blood. Traditional religion says that god *Sipagetasabbau* brought land, forest, and water down to earth. Thus, Mentawaians treat the land, forest, and water as inseparable three-element unity which created the whole universe. Water, including sea as one form of it, is regarded as an embodiment of god. However, in practice, the attitude toward water is not equal to all water bodies. For instance, Mentawaians apply the water-as-sacred belief to some rivers from which its water is used for religious ceremonies (2016: 113).

Outside surf tourism context, Mentawai people's relation with the sea are mainly depicted by the activity of fishing. Yet, although surrounded by the sea, Mentawaians have never been famous as sea people or fishermen communities. They are more known as the forest-dwelling people. This dominant view is most likely parallel with general and academic discourses on Mentawai. Nevertheless, fishing does exist in Mentawai. Jongerius (2013: 47) recounts that lobster, turtle, and fish are the main sea products among Mentawaians. *Aggau* (a kind of crab) is also important one, yet it can only be caught less regularly. Still, surfing is the most dominant behavior on the Mentawaian seas. Some Mentawaians believe surfing has made fishing more difficult because surfers scare the fish away, while the others think the opposite as surfing and fishing take place in very different area in the sea (ibid.).

For surfers, Mentawai offers (socially constructed) perfect waves, commonly interpreted as tubing waves which can be easily found in the islands (Ponting, 2006: 171). However, considering tsunami disaster in 2010, Mentawaians' views on waves are completely different than surfers'. Jongerius (2013: 46) reveals that 'the idea of fear dominated in Mentawai people's perceptions of waves'. Many people were still afraid of the big waves. Tsunami has left trauma in many Mentawaians' psyche. The evidence of collective fear could be shown by tsunami evacuation signs in some coastal towns. They point in the direction of mountains, so people know where to go in case the tragedy occurs again. Besides, Mentawaians do not directly live at the shore, unlike the Minangkabau-descent people who live in the islands.

To sum up, Mentawaians' relation with sea and waves are constantly changing throughout history. This is not surprising at all. Darmanto and Setyowati (2012) reminds that Mentawai is a very adaptive ethnic group. They have long history of interactions with *sasareu* (non-Mentawaian

[3] In Mentawai mythology, crocodile story explains the day and night phenomenon while crab story symbolizes the ebb and flow of the sea.

[4] Alike many traditional religions in Indonesia, *arat sabulungan* still persists under the dominance of 'official' religions, such as Christian or Islam. Mentawaians keep practicing their traditional belief, although with the forms that are not totally same as decades ago. Now, it 'hybridizes' with official religions, among them Christian is the most common. This religions hybrid is common in Indonesia. *Arat sabulungan* believers experienced two main conflicts in its history: with Indonesian central government which regarded it as primitive, backward, and barrier of development; and with Christian missionaries who treated it as misguided and barbarous (Darmanto & Setyowati, 2012).

outsiders), such as biodiversity enthusiasts, academic researchers, colonial rulers, Christian missionaries, Indonesian central government, logging industries, non-governmental organizations, cultural and surf tourists, and so forth. In every encounter, Mentawaians have always been open to potential change, while able to keep what they think is needed to be maintained. Under this realization, I would like to explore human-environment relationship in Mentawai, by focusing on the waves and by putting surf tourism as the context where all kinds of processes occur.

1.2. Research questions

Waves for me and waves for you will not be the same. So do the rain, sun, river, tree, thunder, and anything else. This is a basic anthropological motivation (Ingold, 2000: 157). Take men from various background in one situation, they will make it differently. I guess, I have been driven by such motivation, too. Then, it motivates me to ask questions.

In this thesis, my main objective is to comprehend human-waves relationship in Mentawai and how surf tourism mediates its processes. To respond to that objective, I need to inquire more empirical questions related to practices and perception, and how both are related and functioned in the processes of human-waves relationship. My research questions are:

Main research question

1. How does surf tourism mediate the Mentawai human-waves relationship in Siberut?

Sub-research questions

2. How do Mentawaians engage with waves in Siberut?
3. How does attentiveness underlie Mentawaians' engagement with waves?
4. How are waves perceived by Mentawaians in Siberut?

Surf tourism is posed as context and boundary of exploration. In this exploration, I will play with the perspective and conceptual framework inspired from Tim Ingold (2000), whose works on human-environment relationship and perception of environment are much celebrated. The concept of engagement will be central, as it is viewed as the formative process of perception. Furthermore, engagement is also interlinked with other concepts, especially practices and attentiveness, to make sense of human-environment/waves relationship. Next, I will discuss my conceptual settings, the ones who set me thinking about Mentawai and waves in more structured, academic, and theoretical manner.

2. Conceptual settings

This part consists of literature review and conceptual framework. The former, in particular, has shaped the way I engage with case study – and life in general. I depart from grand debate of nature-culture dualism, which slowly brings me to Tim Ingold who offers the alternative way of thinking outside that dualism. After that, I explore issue of human-environment relationship through various academic works on water, sea, and waves. Eventually, I end up on surfing and surf tourism by discussing both as embodiment of human-environment interaction. The whole body of literature review provides me with conceptual framework, through which I encountered the fieldwork and address my field data in result/analysis/discussion.

2.1. Human-environment relationship

It is slightly problematic for me to write about human-environment relationship. I can feel there is a clash in my head between 'me who reads Western science' and 'me as a non-Western'. The notions of 'Western' and 'non-Western' are important because most academic literature talks about human-environment dualism – either the authors support it or not, while the wisdom I inherit from my ancestors whispers the opposite.[5] In this in-between, I try to make peace of it. I will start with the debate on nature-culture dualism. Then, I will focus more on the works of Tim Ingold to position myself in such debate.

2.1.1. The infamous divide: nature-culture

The nature-culture dichotomy is a long-term debate in academia. Started with the emergence of natural sciences centuries ago, it ontologically divides human culture from natural environment, as if both are fundamentally two separate spheres. Culture is often defined as human artifact while nature as external environment (Haila, 2000: 155). This dichotomy has provoked scholars from social sciences since many decades and has produced different understandings on seeing human-environment relationship.

There is a kind of polar opposition, that is nature shaping culture versus culture imposing meaning on nature (Descola & Palsson, 1996: 3). The first perspective considers nature as basic determinant of human cultures. Cultural features, such as human behavior or social institution, are viewed as responses or expressions to external environmental and biological constraints. On the other hand, the latter takes emphasis on the superior position of human culture over the non-human nature. Following Anderson (2009: 120), the agency of nature is relegated into a mere

[5] One day in September 2017, I had just realized that there is no 'it' in Bahasa Indonesia. My mother language has never taught me to separate human and nonhuman. This is just one simple example.

passive object of human actions. Both perspectives maintain the separation of nature and culture, although the latter adds the dimension of power relation into the debate.

In Western metaphysics, the unbalanced relation between nature and culture can be traced back in the Rene Descartes' *res cogitans* (thinking substance) and *res extensa* (physical substance). This metaphysical dualism can be regarded as the beginning of other kinds of dualism, namely subject-object, mind-body, and of course, nature-culture. In every dualism, the relation is asymmetrical in which *res cogitans* is valorized more than *res extensa.* Subject, mind, and culture are metaphysically dominant to their respective non-thinking 'other'. Thus, nature-culture dichotomy is basically the inherent product of Western metaphysics. Tsing puts it nicely: "Ever since the enlightenment, Western Philosophers have shown us a Nature that is grand and universal but also passive and mechanical. Nature was a backdrop and resource for the moral intentionality of Man, which could tame and master Nature" (2015: vii).

Freudenburg et al. (1995), speaking in more sociological analysis, review four common approaches on nature-society dichotomy. First is analytical separation in which scholars tend to divide society and nature for analytical purpose. For example, Talcott Parsons who separate physical environment from behavioral, cultural, and social systems. Second, analytical primacy which maintains the dichotomy but favor one over another. This leads to what are called environmental- and sociocultural-determinism. Third, dualistic balance which regards both nature and culture as equally important and none is more significant than other. The fourth approach is rather alternative. While the previous three believe that the natural and the social are distinct and independent from each other, conjoint constitution acknowledges that physical facts and social worlds are interdependently shaping each other.

In another field of social sciences, anthropologist Gisli Palsson (1996) breakdowns human-environment relation into three paradigms: orientalism, paternalism, and communalism. The first two share things in common as they are 'intellectual heirs of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and early positivist science' (1996: 76). Both preserve the nature-culture distinction and assign human as master of nature, as the one in charge. While orientalism is more exploitative and dominative to nature, paternalism is more protective and responsible. Finally, communalism stands at extremely different point. It rejects the radical separation of human and environment by taking emphasis on practice, reciprocity, and engagement. Communalism paradigm, Palsson (1996: 72) argues, echoes the writings of the young Karl Marx who insisted that human cannot be separated from nature, and vice versa.

Running through post-1950 cultural geography, Braun (2004) discusses the nature-culture problematic by explaining four 'moments': cultural ecology, political ecology, cultural studies of the environment, and nonmodern ontologies. Cultural ecology attempts to unify human and ecology, but in the process, it collapses culture into nature by the mantra of 'ecosystem'. On the contrary, political ecology aims the turn to social by focusing on larger contexts of politics and economy. As result, it overemphasizes culture and regards nature as static, external, and social. The third moment is a cultural turn, in which the most defined feature is the inclusion of

power/knowledge into the debate of nature-culture relation. However, cultural studies of environment is accused of discursive-determinism. Although epistemologically different, the three programs share one common thing, that is maintaining nature-culture dualism. That is exactly what the last moment attacks.

Nonmodern ontologies is meant to oppose what Latour (1993) termed as 'modern constitution'. He argues modern people constitute themselves as 'modern' by creating dichotomies, such as science-politics, god-world, and human-nonhuman. Modern constitution can be viewed as the attempt by human to discipline the chaotic reality of the world. This is done through dividing the chaos of reality into distinct conceptual categories, added with labels such as 'human', 'economy', 'politics', 'culture', 'nature', etc. Modern constitution and its ontological separations are much criticized. For the critics, including Latour, there has never been an ontological separation between human and nature. Whatmore calls human-nature dichotomy 'a historical fallacy' (1999: 10), while Haila regards it as 'a conceptual prison' (2000: 158). Nonmodern ontologies is a call to leave human-nature dichotomy behind by focusing on the entanglement process between human and nonhuman beings.

The call to challenge Cartesian dualisms, including nature-culture, is responded by many scholars with enthusiasm. What is similar in these scholars' responses is: they look for radically different understandings, rationalities, knowledges, or ontologies beyond modern and Western settings. Many, such as Ingold (2000) and Descola (2013), find that people outside modern/Western contexts have never been separating human and nonhuman. In their thoughts and practices, there are no such things as nature-culture, mind-body, human-environment, and subject-object. Instead they inhabit the world as it is, without pre-conception and pre-existing categories in their heads. They engage with(in) their environment and allow their perception to form itself, 'without a-priori arresting it in imposed concepts' (Pauwelassen, 2017: 24).

2.1.2. Dwelling perspective and engagement

The debate on nature-culture dichotomy, and its parallels (mind-body, subject-object, social-natural, society-ecology, human-environment, etc.), has brought me to Tim Ingold, especially his book *The Perception of the Environment* (2000). His ideas on human-environment relationship share commonalities with rather alternative perspectives mentioned above, either by sociologists, anthropologists, or geographers. First of all, Ingold clearly rejects the ontological separations related to human and environment. By doing so, the superior position of human over nonhuman is automatically denied. Instead, human and nonhuman intertwine and entangle together in this messy world we live in. Ingold asserts, "all creatures, human and nonhuman, are fellow passengers in the one world which they all live, and through their activities continually create the conditions for each other's existence" (2005: 503).

The genealogy of Ingold's thought derived from his urge to bring two sides of anthropology together: social/cultural anthropology and physical/biological anthropology. He says, "I am an

anthropologist: not a social or cultural anthropologist; not a biological or archaeological anthropologist; just an anthropologist" (2011: xi). To put together sociocultural and biophysical anthropology, it needs coherent connection between human as biological organism and as social person. Such coherence could not be achieved without studying mind, and without passing through psychology. Then, Ingold became the jack of all trades. He studied everything, range from biology to philosophy. His thoughts were generated from three different fields: developmental biology, ecological psychology, and relational anthropology (2011a: 4).

In this thesis, I will borrow his thoughts on dwelling perspective, engagement, and attention. They offer alternative theoretical tools outside Cartesian thinking to make sense of human-environment relationship. Dwelling perspective is a kind of lens through which we see our relationship with fellow nonhumans, or reality in general. This perspective was offered by Ingold as an opposition to building perspective. The latter, in his view, is a popular understanding in social sciences that "people inhabit a world to which form and meaning have already been attached […] they must perforce 'construct' the world, in consciousness, before they can act in it" (2000: 153). Based on my own reading, building perspective is the belief of 'everything is socially (or culturally) constructed'. The point of departure of this perspective is a mind detached from the world, or a mind which has to formulate (intentional) world prior to any worldly engagement (2000: 42).

Dwelling, on the contrary, is against a priori construction. Ingold sums up the difference between two perspectives: "a 'building perspective', according to which worlds are made before they are lived in […] a 'dwelling perspective', according to which the forms people build, whether in the imagination or on the ground, only arise within the current of their life activities" (2000: 154). For this perspective, humans do not construct or build the worlds, rather we dwell and engage *with* the world. In his words, humans are "not of making a view *of* the world but of taking up a view *in* it" (2000: 42, original emphasis).

In thinking of dwelling perspective, Ingold was inspired by Martin Heidegger and Karl Marx. When *The Perception of the Environment* was first published, he only mentioned Heidegger as the source of inspiration. The latter's essay, *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1971), provoked Ingold so deeply. He even quoted Heidegger's separated passages in length and pointed it out as founding statement of dwelling perspective. Here they are: "We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers […] To build is in itself already to dwell […] *Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build*" (Ingold, 2000: 186; quoted from Heidegger, 1971: 148, 146, 160, original emphasis from Heidegger).

However, later on, Ingold also mentioned Marx's influence (2005, 2011). "It was Marx, not Heidegger, who set me thinking about it," he claims (2011: 9). This was primarily done as his defense to his critics, who noticed the absence of the political in his formulation of dwelling perspective. Particularly, he was impressed by Marx's notions of human beings as producers of their actual material life and of the mode of production as a mode of life. It is worthy to quote Ingold's reading of Marx in length here:

> "I argued that production, in the sense implied here, must be understood *intransitively*, not as a transitive relation of image to object. The transitive relation may be expressed by verbs like 'to make' and 'to build'. Thus every particular act of making or building begins with an end in mind and ends with a material object that one can then begin to use. Life, however, does not begin or end anywhere, but is rather carried on *through* the successive acts that punctuate its flow […] The intransitive verb 'to dwell' aptly conveys this conception of the production of life as a *task* that has continually to be worked at." (2005: 504, original emphasis)

To make it clearer, Ingold compares building and dwelling perspectives to making and weaving activities (2011: 10). Making, as building, highlights the production process in which the final ends has been already determined in advance, in the mind of the maker. On the contrary, weaving, alike dwelling, prioritize process over product. Weaving is the process of *working with* materials, not just *doing to* them. Thus, dwelling is not about the transitivity of 'design' and 'final product', but about what is happened in the middle. Dwelling perspective emphasizes the importance of environmental engagement.

While dwelling perspective is a lens through which we see reality, engagement is the core of that reality. Campbell (2005: 288) praises Ingold for challenging our tendency to think about environment and material world through cultural symbol, belief, and social construction. Instead, knowledge of the world is gained through engagement with it. Ingold brings our attention to the very real material processes. Ontologically speaking, human understands environment through practices of engagement rather than social constructs. I consider engagement as the primary tool to challenge constructivism. In this sense, the perception (of environment) is not socially or culturally constructed but embedded and embodied in the engagement processes. Thus, human and environment are engaged and engaging together to co-constitute knowledge and perception. This thought can only be appreciated when we have already believed that human and environment are not in the separated spheres since the beginning.

Engagement emphasizes the role of body and senses. Ingold (2000) several times uses phrases like 'sensory experience/engagement' or 'bodily experience/engagement'. I assume that is because body and senses emphasize the importance of material and practical processes in human-environment engagement. Both body and senses, in phenomenological sense, mediate human's being-in-the-world, which is manifested through the act of experience. They are the keys to active and perceptual engagement. Engagement should not be a passive process. Body and senses activate the process, so human can be sensible and sentient to the percepts in the environment. Body and senses are tightly relational in engagement process. They are closely interactive to shape the practices of human-environment engagement.

Through my own reading on Ingold (2000), I understand engagement as central and focal point. I argue it can potentially be an expression of 'politics'. It may reconcile human's detached relationship with nonhumans, body, and environment. Moreover, it can only be done by realizing that active, practical, and perceptual engagement with environment is not only necessary, but vital. He repeatedly reminds the importance of body, senses, sensitivity, and sensibility to become

actively engaged with environment. 'Sentient ecology' is a term he coins to express this kind of human-environment relation (2000: 10).

The practices of engagement (re-)constitute the perception of environment. It is not the mind which shapes the perception, as perception depends on the practices of human-environment engagement. There is no perception with*out*, in phenomenological term, being in the world. Perception lies on the perceiver's engagement with*in* his/her environment. However, it is very important to note that human being is not the only active actor in the practices of engagement. They do engage with their 'fellow passengers' (Ingold 2005: 503), which are nonhumans, landscape, inanimate things, environment, or any available vocabularies in academia. We, the various active actors in this messy world we live in together, co-constitute the realities, each other's existence, and our perception of environment. I argue that taking this into account is a 'political' act, because we appreciate the equal roles of nonhumans and hand over our mastery over the world. There is no master anymore, we all are brothers and sisters.

Then, how does the engagement (with environment) work in practice? Ingold (2001) pays a great attention to the importance of attention in human-environment relationship. I regard his focus on attention as his weapon to challenge Cartesian way of thinking about knowledge and understanding. He believes that our knowledge and understanding (about environment) comes not from transmission of representation, but education of attention. For Ingold, the former is an act of instilling knowledge, meaning, and values into the mind of human being (Ergul, 2017: 8). What implies here is a separation between mind and body which is a kind of ontological dualism Ingold wants to reject. Besides, it also implies that knowledge, meaning, and values can be transmitted from one to another without any practical engagement in the environment. He offers education of attention as an alternative, as an antithesis.

In Ingold's perspective, education is not about instilling knowledge or transmitting representation (of environment) *into* a person, but leading a person *out to* environment. He departs from etymological root of the word 'education', coming from Latin compound of '*ex* (out) plus *ducere* (to lead)'. Being educated, in this original sense, means being out and being *ex*posed to things and to world. "It teaches us to attend and to learn from what we observe," he argues (ibid.) This, then, relates with attention. To relate with and understand environment, it is necessary for human to attend it. 'To attend things or persons carries connotations of looking after them, doing their bidding, and following what they do," Ingold explains (2014: 157). In this regard, attention necessitates waiting – French word '*attendre*' means 'to wait'. We need to wait for environment to 'tell' us what to do, so we can follow its flow and flux, to be in rhythm with it. This reflects a sort of interaction. Furthermore, we can interact and understand what environment 'tells' us if we pay attention to it. That is why Ingold always accentuates the importance of senses, feelings, and bodies. They allow human to be in attentive engagement with environment.

Finally, Ingold invites us to appreciate the reciprocal, relational, interactive, and participatory nature of human-environment relationship. In Cartesian/Western/modern way of thinking, environment is something to be perceived, which has been already laid out *there.* It is

just a passive recipient of human actions and perceptions. On the contrary, in Ingold's thoughts of dwelling perspective, engagement, and education of attention, human and environment are both active and inseparable actors who are decisive to the formation of actions and perceptions. Both are related in the joint participation of being in the world. Both act like two old friends sitting in the open air and talking about what should be done to live together in harmony. In such conversation, reciprocity occurs because both are equal. In fact, they have become one through and within the practices of engagement.

2.2. Water-human relationship

The debates on human-environment relationship often touch specific issue, such as water. Academic interests on water-human relationship are understandable because water, apart from air and soil, is the most omnipresent and essential substance in life. Scholars from different social science backgrounds have offered various perspectives on seeing water-human relationship. In this part, I will discuss how human's relationship with water has changed over time in various temporal, spatial, and sociocultural contexts. Using previous part as a 'foothold', we might see how nature-culture dualism and its more recent alternatives have shaped and reshaped academic understandings about water-human relationship.

2.2.1. The metaphorical and the sacred

Meganck believes that "water is the tie that binds everything, both animate and inanimate" (2012: v). For human, it has been a common knowledge that we can survive a month without food, but less than a week without water. Aside from its vital biological function, water is pivotal in socio-cultural terms. Klaver (2012: 10) reminds that all cultures are virtually developed around water, from pre-historic tribes settled near water bodies – sea, river, or lake – to cities which originated at confluence of rivers. Even the first complex societies were irrigation-based cultures, such as Rome, Mesopotamia, India, and Peru.

The importance of water for human civilizations can be traced from its usage in philosophy, mythology, and religion. Heraclitus found principle of *panta rhei* – all things flow – through the water movement. The myth of Narcissus seeing his own reflection on the still water represents the rise of self-consciousness. Lao Tzu metaphorizes leadership and humility through water, which is powerful yet soft. Besides, water symbolizes cleansing and resurrection in Christian baptism, while Islam requires self-cleaning with it before praying. These are just few manifestations of human's endless relationship with water. Moreover, water also often inspires art, poetry, and music. Strang (2005: 97) recalls that "there is probably more poetry, more literature, and more art describing the form of water than any other aspect of the environment".

The examples of metaphorical power of water can be prolonged. In his poetry *The Dry Salvages,* poet T.S. Eliot writes about Mississippi river: "I do not know much about gods, but I think the river is a strong brown god". In Kyrgyzstan, water is often associated with *tazalyk,* which means

purity, hygiene, or uprightness. Many pilgrims go to *mazar* (sacred sites) to drink water from sacred springs (Feaux de la Croix, 2011: 489-490). In Uzbekistan, the first thing people think about water is *suv hayot,* which means 'water is life'. For Uzbeks, water has symbolic meaning as a gift from God, thus wasting water is considered a sin (Oberkircher & Hornidge, 2011: 406-407). The notion of water as God- or nature-given thing is shared in many places. Balinese believes water is 'gift of the gods' (Wright, 2015: 7), while locals of Akwa Ibom, Nigeria, claim water as 'free gift from nature' (Akpabio, 2011: 590). Such belief underlies water management practices in both places. Thus, water-related practices are connected to beliefs people hold on water.

Water (and water bodies) are highly respected and sacred in many traditions. Balinese religion is called *agama tirtha* (the religion of holy water). Water is mainly used as purification, to cleanse individuals, ritual objects, and religious sites (Wright, 2015: 9). Hindus in India treat Ganga as goddess and the most sacred river. They even call it Mother Ganga, to underline their intimate relationship with the river. For Maori in New Zealand, Whanganui river is an ancestor. This is parallel to Maori's view of themselves as part of universe, at one and equal with mountain, river, and sea. Alike river, lake is considered as sacred in many traditions. Lake Loloru in Papua New Guinea is believed by locals as a place where the souls of the dead go to. In Tibet, Lhamo Latso is known as a life-spirit-lake of goddess Palden Lhamo, the principal protectress of Tibet.

The status of water as sacred entity is very well-reflected in India. Taittiriya Samhita, one of Hindu scriptures, states 'water is the greatest sustainer and hence is like a mother' (Shiva, 2002: 131). In chapter *The Sacred Waters,* Shiva (2002) reveals how sacred water is for Hindus in India. Every river in India is sacred and seen as manifestations of divine gods. Rigvedic cosmology tells that life began when heavenly waters from Indra, the god of rain, fell to the earth. In Hindu mythology, Ganga river originates in heaven and hence is a sacred bridge to the divine. This 'bridging' role of Ganga is manifested through death rituals among Hindus who cast the ashes of the dead in Ganga, so they can proceed to heaven. Ganga and other rivers in India are also used to cleanse material and spiritual impurities.

The notions of water as metaphorical and sacred are contrast to Western (metaphysics) ideas on water – which will be discussed hereafter. Non-Western knowledges on water depend a lot on relationality and oneness between human and water. In this sense, both beings relate intimately and spiritually, often imbued with words like 'Mother' and 'Holy'. Human-water relationship is equal, as there is no superiority implied in one of each. They co-constitute each other together: water inspires human civilizations, while human reversely assigns metaphor, philosophy, and spirituality on water.

2.2.2. Disconnection

There is no flawless relationship. Disconnection happens in water-human relationship, at least conceptually, echoing the grand discussion of nature-culture dualism. Water began to be recognized as H_2O in the Enlightenment era. It was no longer sacred anymore. Treating water as

'mother' and 'holy' was considered irrational, as it had to be measured and quantified. Then, with the rise of capitalism and nation-state, water had to be controlled and governed even more, way beyond its pre-existing irrigation function. All the sacred, philosophical, and metaphorical notion of water was faded away, although never fully vanished. It becomes socio-political resource and economic commodity. Water becomes the object of government (or governance).

I am not saying that this more Cartesian vision on water immediately destroyed the more traditional knowledge of water. Strang (2005: 106) reminds that "even in a primarily secular cosmos, water is still presented as the 'essence' of a living […] whether as a religious or secular essence, water is also regularly used as a metaphor of time, appearing in songs and poems as a 'river of life' that contains the time/life of all individuals." However, it is necessary to understand how Western metaphysics through the emblem of science interacts with water differently. Following Cartesian logic, water and human being are put in separated spheres.

In social sciences, the debates on water are much decorated with discourse of problems. Water is captured as problem(atic) that needs to be solved. Klaver (2012: 20) notes some major water-related problems in the world, such as increasing pressure on water use, freshwater 'stock' decline, uneven distribution of water, water quality decline, and low water-use efficiency in agriculture. She framed all the problems as 'legacies of modernity'. The notion of 'legacies of modernity' is interesting to be explored. Writing more about river, she points out several 'sins' of modernity on water (2012: 15-19). Obviously, industrialization processes played its role as it turned river into 'arteries' of economic activity. Rivers were seen as 'cheap waste transportation to the sea' and subsequently harmed human health and water quality. However, cities and industries were not the only sinners as farming and logging also played their roles. They caused erosion which, as a result, washed down vast amount of soil to river and sea.

Problem also rests on the building of dams to produce energy and support water-related activities – irrigation, household water-use, aquaculture, etc. Unfortunately, dams are not only carrying electricity to the cities, but also disrupting hydrological, ecological, and cultural systems. Millions of people were displaced from their livelihoods, not only because of forced eviction but also dam-induced environmental changes. Feaux de la Croix (2011), in studying local's perception on three water places in Kyrgyzstan, found that hydroelectric dam is less valued and spoken less enthusiastically than water in mountain pastures and sacred sites. It is mainly due to history of displacement and local value on flowing water – compared to dammed water.

However, the notion of 'legacies of modernity' is more appealing when it is paired with Latour's (1993) 'modern constitution'. Within nature-culture dualism, water is 'the other' for human being. Both are in different spheres and distinct from each other. As non-human 'other', water is seen merely as passive, non-thinking object – compared to human as active, thinking subject – which is inherently uncontrollable and unknown. This is precisely when human senses of rationality and superiority start to work together to (scientifically) comprehend and control water. The inferior water becomes H_2O and manageable for human purpose.

Vandana Shiva vividly portrays the radical shift from water as sacred entity to water as governable resource. She writes, "the advent of water taps and water bottles has made us forget that before water flows through pipes and before it is sold to consumers in plastic, it is a gift from nature" (2002: 131). Echoing Latour, it is exactly our ambition to be modern which has disconnected us from water. (Western) Rationality provides us weapon to capitalize water as resource, as well as to manage and manipulate its flow. Water is no longer a mother anymore. It becomes something else; far and distinct. This is the legacy of modernity. However, as Latour (1993: 46) claims, we have never actually been modern.

2.2.3. (Re-)Learn to live with water

In a dammed watercourse, nothing flows. (Ingold, 2014: 52)

Social science scholars have contributed to the ebb and flow of human-water relationship. Knowledge they produced often echoed Cartesian nature-culture dualism and, as Gibbs termed, Eurocentric thinking – which draws on 'Enlightenment science, industrial revolution technologies, market economics, and/or Judeo-Christian philosophies' (2010: 364). They reproduced the ontological separation of human and water. Some recent studies try to challenge, oppose, 'replace' (Strang, 2014), 'decenter' (Gibbs, 2010), or 'shift' (Krause and Strang, 2016) Cartesian/Eurocentric approach on water. I notice three important points these studies aim to address. First, they want to reconcile the disconnected relation of human and water by offering relational approach and putting emphasis on reciprocity. Second, related to the previous one, they intend to bring back the active agency of water by 'politicizing' the ontological nature of non-human being. Finally, they propose alternative understandings by exploring diverse knowledges, rationalities, and ontologies outside Western metaphysics.

As Strang (2005: 94) notices, in the past decades, there has been an increase on theoretical models of human-environment relationship which appreciate 'the recursive nature of human engagement with a sociocultural and physical environment.' In these models, relationality is central to dissolve the ontological and conceptual separation of human and environment. Bird-David even suggests that we must replace Cartesian logic with 'I relate, therefore I am' (1999: 77). Water, in this context, is not something that human has to think *of,* but to think *with* (Krause and Strang, 2016). However, important to note, the human-water relationality here is not merely relation, but reciprocal relation based on the equal 'agentive power' (Strang, 2014: 134) between both. If this notion of reciprocity is agreed, then we need to bring back the agency of water.

Strang (2014: 133) suggests that water is not passive recipient of human meaning. It has generative power to co-constitute meaning together with human. It is not *tabula rasa*, instead it has qualities, elements, and characteristics which are crucial to create meaning (2005: 97). For Strang, water's diversity is a key to its meaning. "Here is an object that is endlessly transmutable, moving readily from one shape to another […] This process of transformation never ceases: water is always undergoing change, movement, and progress," she declares (2005: 98). Based on its

fundamental characteristics, through comparative ethnographies, Strang found the most common themes of meaning of water: "as a matter of life and death; as a potent generative, and regenerative force; as the substance of social and spiritual identity; and as a symbol of power and agency" (2005: 115). These meanings are not necessarily the product of human mind. They are constituted through the process of engagement between human and water in which both share the equal contributions. Strang reminds that human sensory and perceptual experiences are equally important in this process of engagement and co-constitution of meaning.

The notions of reciprocal relation and water's active agency are like bringing back the conceptual contexts where water is regarded as metaphorical and sacred. The label of such contexts can vary: non-modern, non-Western, non-Cartesian, or non-Eurocentric. Some scholars propose terms 'indigenous knowledge' (Johnson, 2012), 'ontological pluralism' (Gibbs, 2010), or 'pluriverse' (Mignolo, 2013) to reject dominant mode of thinking derived from Western metaphysics and to celebrate the diverse rationalities. Those concepts illustrate the recent tendency to look for and respect alternative modes of thinking, usually derived from patient and sentient ethnographic endeavors in different societies.

Gibbs (2010) invites us to reflect about water beyond Eurocentrism through his fieldwork in Lake Eyre Basin, Central Australia. His can be posed as critique of natural resource management which has long been driven by Eurocentric knowledge, while consequently marginalized other ways of thinking. There are many details in Gibbs' work which portray local knowledge on water. In particular, he chooses 'a beautiful soaking rain' as the title. The phrase comes from an interview with a local. In Gibbs' view, the word 'beautiful' points out the 'value beyond utility' of water for locals (2010: 368). The values of water, in Lake Eyre Basin, cannot be neatly categorized as social, economic, or environmental. He writes, "People develop understandings of and attachments to specific waters and water places. The variability of forms and patterns of rainfall and river flow are known intimately […] rain is not known in an abstract or generic way" (2010: 367).

Many studies from different sociocultural contexts provide diverse understandings and knowledges about water. Strang (2005: 99) found that locals in Dorset 'feel at one with water', emphasizing the intimate and unseparated relationship of human and water, opposed to Cartesian human-environment dichotomy. Meanwhile, Feaux de la Croix found that locals in Toktogul, Kyrgyzstan, really value the movement of water. It is its movement that "is praised in conversation, in poetry or in proverbs […] the waves of a lake, the gurgle and thunder of streams and rivers, the sparkle and rush of waterfalls" (2011: 492). This knowledge explains why locals feel uneasy about hydroelectric dam, far beyond scientific explanation about sociocultural and ecological impacts of dam. The examples show how local knowledge may offer radical understanding on water.

Klaver (2012: 28), writing about river, notices that there have been recent tendencies 'to minimize any culture of managerialism' around water issues. Therefore, she proposed a culture of re-learning to live with flood. The title of this sub-part is inspired by her proposal. The phrase 're-learning to live with water' contains some underlying reasonings. First, it realizes that previously human beings were living with water (more) intimately. Second, it emphasizes the idea of engaging

with water in more reciprocal manner, without the feeling of superiority over non-human being. Finally, it recognizes that human's relationship with water has been disconnected for long time. It needs to be reconciled as soon as possible, before it is too late. Before all watercourses are dammed and nothing flows anymore.

2.3. Sea-human relationship

Nenek moyangku orang pelaut / My ancestor is a sea man (Indonesian children song)

As one kind of water bodies, sea is not excluded from scholarly debate. It is even recognized as sub-discipline, for instance maritime/marine anthropology or sociology. Interests on maritime lives can be traced back from the work of Ferdinand Tonnies in 1986 about working conditions of various maritime professions, or many anthropological studies on folklore and culture of coastal communities. Pauwelussen (2017: 3) writes, "social science studies of maritime worlds have long portrayed the sea as a dynamic yet singular background against which people organize their social lives." In this part, I will discuss how human's relationship with sea has been shifted throughout history and recent academic perspectives about sea-human relationship. Finally, I will touch the issue of waves as one element of sea and as one form of water.

2.3.1. Sea as other

The narratives about sea are mostly driven by land-based way of thinking. It is generally seen as either distinct and unknowable or (overly) romantic. Brown (2015: 15-19) discusses three representations of sea in Western thought. First is the dangerous and chaotic sea. This view is influenced from Judeo-Christian teachings and Greek mythologies which capture sea as 'barbaric vagueness and disorder out of which civilization has emerged' (Auden, 1951; quoted by Brown, 2015: 15). Sea is a place of fear and repulsion. Second is sea as blank public space. This is drawn by the development of science and technology, as well as the rise of imperialism and capitalism. Sea is seen as an empty, asocial, and non-territorial domain which nobody owns, neither states nor corporations. This supports economic and political agenda of Western imperialist and capitalist societies, along with their Mare Liberum law. Third is the sublime and wild sea. This one is a child of European romanticism which reacts against rationalism, imperialism, materialism, and industrialization. Sea is a symbol of freedom and escapism from (morally) polluted cities, as well as an epitome for 'real' against 'fake' land lives.

The changing ideas on sea might be reflected by the development of seaside holiday, particularly in England. Before 18th century, sea symbolized a place of danger, desolation, and abandonment. In Mack's account, sea is a space of forgetting. He continues: "Sea has no history in the sense that it lacks both accessible archaeological remains and historical monuments […] It can, therefore, be a convenient dumping place of inconvenient evidence […] a place where things could be made to disappear, never to be seen again" (2011: 91-92). In short, nobody was going to sea(side) for pleasure and enjoyment. It was only a place to dispose unwanted people, such as

‘suicides, the victims of murder, disfigured children, unwanted passengers on a ship, and enemies’. However, sea(side) slowly became holiday place, thanks to development of train transportation and romantic movement. “The seaside was indeed increasingly being recognized as a healthy alternative to the cities,” Mack (2011: 96) recalls. In this account, sea was no longer a dangerous and desolated place but turned into therapeutic and restorative one, as contrast to ‘unhealthy’ and stressful industrial urban life.

Mack's (2011) *The Sea: A Cultural History* offers various insights on human-sea relationship. For instance, he confirms the Western notion of sea as a void, ahistorical, and wild space. At best, sea becomes a merely ‘symbolic and metaphorical narrative device rather than a real place’ (2011: 17). There is an imaginary separating line between human and sea, as the latter becomes ‘the other’. For human, sea is something distinct and ‘not us’. It is even clearer when Mack quotes a passage from Victor Hugo's *Toilers of the Sea*: “What happens there (in the sea) no longer concerns the human race.” In a certain sense, as I put in the beginning, the ideas of inhuman and uncultured sea are influenced by the way of thinking which regards the land as focal point.

The nature of the sea is liquid and fluid, yet this is the source of problematic. The liquid and fluid sea can only offer ‘categorical difficulty and ontological uncertainty’ (Connery, 1999: 291; quoted by Brown, 2015: 19). However, as Brown argues, the notion of fluidity is ‘only problematic if one views stability as the norm’. Land, as the opposite of thee sea, is a place with stability and ontological certainty. For most human being, land is the conceptual reference point.

> “In practice, the seas are portrayed either as the backdrop to the stage on which the real action is seen to take place – that is, the land – or they are portrayed simply as the means of connection between activities taking place at coasts and in their interiors.” (Mack, 2011: 19)

Land is the ‘*norm*al’, the real stage, and the interior. Sea is the ‘abnormal’, the backdrop, and the exterior. I am tempted to regard this contrast as a legacy of Western metaphysics. Whichever it is, the land-based way of thinking has made ‘the characteristics of the sea, the nature of man's interactions with it, the alliances and liaisons which take place on it and because of it […] are largely absent from historiography’ (2011: 19-20).

The consequence is simple yet fatal. Sea life is marginalized. As the land is central, sea is viewed as periphery. Human’s interaction with the sea are considered as temporary. Nothing permanent happens at sea. What occurs at sea can occur only in the interest of land life. No human communities can completely live on the sea without the land. Even Bajau people in Southeast Asia, called as 'sea gypsies' and spend most of their lives on seawaters, they always come to the land occasionally for essential supplies of freshwater and land products (2011: 13-14). Land is the conceptual reference point. Therefore, the sea is conceptualized in terms of the land. Either technologically or socially, human's interaction with sea is very much predetermined by this land-based way of thinking. I want to challenge such perspective in the next part.

2.3.2. Engaging with sea

Some scholars recently have offered alternative understanding about sea and sea-human relationship. The first step for those alternatives is simply challenging Western/Eurocentric land-based way of thinking. Mack (2011: 20) puts it clear:

> "To explore the range of cultural experience of the seas we need to move beyond the confines of any individual sea or oceanic system. In a world where Eurocentric preoccupations have found their way to the very heart of historical thinking, an attention to oceans in wider context immediately opens up a globalized perspective."

He warns that 'being at sea is not simply a version being on land' (2011: 14) because the nature of sea is different. The fluidity of the sea, its constant change and movement, cannot be easily comprehended by land-based way of thinking. Pauwelussen (2017: 6-7) realized it when studying sea-nomadic Bajau people on Indonesian seawaters. The social and material movements and exchanges which Bajau people perform at the sea have surpassed her ability to understand from land-based perspective. She continues with the problematic notions of center and periphery. For Bajau people, land is a place 'up there' which difficult to reach from the sea. They adopt a sea-towards-land perspective, contrasts to land inhabitants who see Bajau villages as remote and peripheral places, at 'the edge of the land'.

Brown (2015: 19-20) argues that we owe postmodern thinkers for opening up our minds to understand the sea radically different. They have disrupted the power/knowledge regimes by challenging the established ontological and epistemological positions. The so-called postmodern turn has turned the conceptualization of static and bounded (terrestrial) human life into mobile and always-in-process perspective. Consequently, this radical shift has recognized, embraced, and celebrated the fluidity and dynamism of unstable sea (and water). Now, it may be possible to think of the sea as a conceptual reference point, replacing the on-going supremacy of land.

The concept of seascape is proposed to facilitate the new way of thinking about sea (Brown & Humberstone, 2015). Seascape regards sea as the active participant in various physical and social processes which happen on and around it. It is no longer just a backdrop of human experiences (McNiven, 2008: 154). Indeed, sea is resource of food for many cultures and pathway that connects human interactions. However, within seascape, it is not something exterior to human being. Sea becomes an integral part of who we are (Brown, 2015: 20). Seascape refuses the dichotomies of culture-nature, mind-matter, and inner-outer world in our understanding of sea. We may need to borrow Ingold's conceptualization of landscape:

> "Neither is the [seascape] identical to nature, nor is it on the side of humanity against nature. As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is *with* us, not *against* us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the [seascape] becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it." (1993: 154, original emphasis, adaptation of original quote by replacing 'landscape' with 'seascape')

To escape from Eurocentric land-based way of thinking, it is beneficial to look at various maritime cultures. Contrast to Western thought on sea as unwelcome and barbaric wilderness,

many cultures see it as familiar and unthreatening. If Eurocentric thinking regards being at sea as romantic and heroic, many cultures see it as normal and ordinary. Conceptions about sea are multiple, though, because engagements with it are diverse (Mack, 2011: 74, 14). There are two stories from Australia and Madagascar (2011: 76-82). For Aborigines, sea contains spiritual and ancestral energy and is always inhabited by spirits. That is why, in Aboriginal context, people can never be alone at the sea. One implication of 'ancestral sea' is sea tenure, which means it is owned by community. Sea is not a non-territorial domain, instead indigenous people can claim their rights on specific territory. On the contrary, Vezo people who live in Madagascar seashore have no ancestral connection about sea. Their relationship with sea is based on practical basis, not a spiritual one. They simply see the sea as provider of daily food. They only need to throw a net in the sea or go out in canoe to take what it provides.

In other maritime contexts, sea is perceived differently. Van Zyl (2009) discusses about fishermen in Kassiesbaai, South Africa, who consider sea as gift from God. Sea plays a significant role as living entity, not merely a place or a thing. As living entities, sea and fishermen share experiences together, either through the death of relatives in the sea or fishing activities. There is also much emotion invested in the sea. It can be seen through the words they use when speaking about sea, such as angry *(kwaai)* and restful *(rustig).* Fishermen in Kassiesbaai relate to the sea on deeply personal level. "They claim they know it – how could they not after such long lives together?", van Zyl asks rhetorically (2009: 55). Kassiesbaai fishermen are deeply and inseparably linked to the sea because they have become so immersed in it. Van Zyl adds, "their identities, skills, practices, and beliefs make sense only in the context of it."

In Makassar Strait waters in Indonesia, Pauwelussen (2017) encounters another reality. Her study on Bajau people is full of details, which sometimes resemble other maritime contexts and sometimes offer very distinct characteristics. Alike some other maritime cultures, Bajau people perceive sea as 'a living space for people and spirits' in which 'the movement and rhythm of the water affects almost every aspect of daily life' (2017: 2). They also maintain spiritual and practical relations with the sea. What makes Pauwelussen awestruck of Bajau marine lives is their multiplicity and amphibiousness. Bajau people perform and engage with the sea in a complex web of practices and through amphibious land-sea interface. Her research offers not only narratives of sea-human relationship in its complexity and multiplicity, but also invitation to challenge the ontological nature of the sea and sea-human relationship.

I argue that the concept of engagement and dwelling perspective are worthy if we really want to challenge the established ontology on the sea. They might offer us theoretical tools to move beyond sea-as-metaphor notion which virtually strengthen the immateriality of the sea. The concept of seascape includes materiality of the sea as biophysical thing, sociocultural lens through which human perceives the sea, and most importantly, the practical engagement of being *with* the sea (Brown, 2015: 21). Drawing on Ingold (2000), practices of engagement are crucial because they are the meaning's generative source. They can make the sea not become meaningless. As

Tyrrell (2006: 229) puts it philosophically in the context of Canadian seawaters: “The more I ventured out to sea, the more meaningful it became for me”.

2.3.3. The waves ~~ Within and around

I can finally talk about waves: the non-human being which has driven me since the beginning. I want to say it bluntly, that the idea of studying waves is attractive because they seem trivial and insignificant. I wonder whether they may be significant, especially in a place where surfing has become one way of engaging with sea. I need to remind that waves are not exclusively the sea’s property. Other water bodies, such as river and lake, might also have waves as one of their elements. I focus on sea waves with no intention to exclude its potentiality in river or lake. Precisely with the same logic, I focus on waves as form of water with no intention to exclude the role of wind which has also made it exists. In this sub-part, I will discuss the waves in relation to human engagement with it and values around it.

Figure 1. Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Katsushika Hokusai, 1829)

Katsushika Hokusai’s artwork, *Under the Wave of Kanagawa* (or simply called *The Great Wave*), is not only the world’s most iconic portrait of sea waves (Helmreich, 2015: 203), but also the most iconic of all Japanese artworks (Mack, 2011: 85). Hokusai produced *The Great Wave* during Tokugawa era when Japan adopted exclusionist policy. They isolated themselves from foreign influences and had only limited contact with overseas world. In that era, Japanese arts were fulfilled with aesthetic pleasure with land, especially the iconic Mount Fuji. Sea also appeared, but through its calmness and tranquility. Its boundlessness and turmoil were hidden. That was precisely why *The Great Wave* stood out and became distinctive. Mack notices that its ‘viewpoint is actually from the sea […] it is almost entirely a maritime scene’. Mount Fuji also

appeared in it, but only in distance and as a small figure. For many readers, the portrait symbolized not only the uncontrollable force of nature over human or Buddhist ideas of transience and eternity, but also foreign threat from across the seas in the context of exclusionist policy of Tokugawa. Here, waves become metaphor in many layers.

Waves as metaphor is only one manifestation of human's relationship with waves. In Mack's (2011) account, seafarers in Pacific Ocean, such as those from Micronesia and Polynesia, can navigate their ways at the sea by seeing and, more importantly, 'feeling' the movement of the waves. The waves – its pattern, rhythm, color, sound, and other features – can tell them where they exactly are at the sea. Even in these days of compass and maps, the Pacific seafarers can still rely on the waves in wayfinding. Other than Pacific Ocean, Bajau people in Indonesian seas also rely much on the waves in finding their way. I really want to quote one interview transcript of Pauwelassen (2017: 57) in length here:

> "I will tell you a story: Once I left Donggala [Sulawesi] to go here [Sarang Island]. In my boat [was] my family, and some other passengers. When we were halfway, in the middle of the deep sea, storm and rain caught us. My wife, she was afraid. The thing is, one just can't overpower the sea, it is always much stronger than us. So I gave in and waited while the sea rocked our boat to and fro. After the storm, the stars were hiding behind clouds. But lying down in the boat I felt the rhythm of the waves. There are different ones; long and short waves. The wind can make the short waves change but the long waves… they change with the seasons. We use those to know where to go. You get used to it. If we are on the sea often, we start feeling it inside, without being aware. As long as I am at sea, I feel [the motion] here [He places his hand on his stomach]. From that I knew in which direction to continue. We arrived here safely. I was never in doubt."

The navigational function of waves is related to human senses. Here, I would like to focus on two kinds of human senses: sight and hearing. They who have been in the middle of the sea, or at least on the beach, must have seen and heard the waves. For Leos Janacek, a Czech composer, the sound of waves is not univocal: they shout, yell, and bubble. He even made musical notation of waves sound. For Ingold (2000: 24), Janacek was not just hearing, he was listening. His perception of the shouting, yelling, and bubbling waves were based on the practice of attention. This idea reminds me of my own experience. In 2012, I did a sea voyage with Indonesian military ship and one time the captain taught us, the university students, to operate the ship. He said that we have to pay attention on the waves in sight to decide whether we should keep going straight or steer the wheel to the left/right. The similar practice of attention toward waves is also needed when we swim on the beach. I argue that these stories resonate with Pacific seafarers and Bajau people's attentive engagement with waves.

The attention toward waves brings us to the fact that waves, as biophysical and cultural beings, are not uniform. Waves in the middle of the ocean are different than the ones in littoral area, or the ones which really close to the beach. For instance, the accessible waves for surfing are mostly in littoral area, which technically is the area where land, sea, and air meet. It is the area 'both between and beyond the land and sea' (Brown, 2015: 56-57). Even in surfing scene, there

are many terms to spell out different kinds of waves – barrel, left, right, wall, trough, etc. Waves in the north and south hemispheres are clearly not similar, too, because they have different oceanic and meteorological dynamics (Helmreich, 2014: 276). In general, natural science scholars understand the formation of sea waves as below:

> "It begins with the sun heating the Earth, driving air pressure changes. This creates wind, initiating waves, transferring energy from air to sea. Persistent wind across an area of water, a "fetch" of windsea, generates waves with a predictable range of heights."(2014: 271)

However, waves are not only biophysical being, but also cultural one. Helmreich argues that they have anthropology inside them: 'they are artifacts that materialize territories, properties, relations, and agencies' (2014: 279). They consist sociocultural values which might fascinate social sciences scholars to go out to the sea and study the waves.

Jongerius' (2013) study can reflect how the waves are not only biophysical matter, but also having social, cultural, economic, and even political aspects. In Mentawai Islands, a place with hyperbolic nicknames of 'surfing Mecca' or 'surfer's nirvana', waves are full of stories. Jongerius finds that there has been shift of value of waves in Mentawai through the process of access and exclusion. Economic value of waves, cultural practices on waves, and sociopolitical narratives surrounding waves intersect and interact to turn the waves into empirical-conceptual hybrid (Helmreich, 2014). Other interesting studies were written by lisahunter (2015) and Prins (2017) who recognize the (self) pedagogic values of waves. Both draw on the activity of surfing, which is the most popular way of engaging with waves nowadays. Such accounts automatically attack Schmitt's (2003: 43) argument 'on the waves there is nothing but waves'. As Helmreich (2014: 267) suggests, the materiality of waves cannot be separated from its abstractions, either generated by scientists, artists, fishermen, politicians, businessmen, surfers, or locals.

2.4. Surfing as human-environment interaction

Surfing can be read as anything you want: sport, adventure, art, subculture, or even spirituality. Nevertheless, as Warren and Gibson (2014: 1) suggest, it is basically an 'ancient interaction between humans and environment'. This part will explore the history and practices of surfing based on that premise. Started from ancient Hawaii (or Peru in another version), surfing has now become global phenomenon. Human's relationship with the waves, sea, water, and environment, through the act of surfing, has been changing throughout history. Besides, the development of surfing has always been colliding with many other things, such as tradition, commercialization, counter-culture, and tourism. The last thing, namely surf tourism, will also be discussed to bridge literature review with empirical case study in Mentawai Islands.

2.4.1. From Hawaii to the world

Many scholars agree that surfing began in ancient Hawaii. Riding the waves was a long-time glorified tradition in the islands. Finney (1959: 327) notes some phrases which portray the importance of surfing among Hawaiian, such as 'national pastime', 'most prominent and popular pastime', 'national sport', and 'favorite amusement'. One might notice the paradox here: a leisure at one hand, a sport at the other hand. In ancient Hawaii, surfing was indeed not only the spectacular amusement, but also a physical training, especially for the chiefs. However, surfing was practiced by all kinds of people: male and female, chiefs and commoners, adults and children. The universality of surfing confirmed its status as the favorite Hawaiian pastime.

History always has more than one version. Other version claims ancient Peruvians as the first surfers in the world. Based on archaeological evidence of antique art and architecture, speculation says Peruvians were riding the waves using small reed-woven boats as early as 3,000 BC (Taylor, 2007: 927). However, this Peruvian narrative is less dominant than the Pacific one. Not only in Hawaii, surfing was common in many cultures around Pacific Ocean. Among all, Hawaii and Tahiti were the most outstanding places for surfing tradition. Tahitians even have special deity for surfing, which is Huaori, the god of surfing. In both places, it was very usual to see people sitting, kneeling, or standing on the board in the middle of waves. In other parts of Pacific, the surfing style was mostly lying prone on the board.

There were, at least, three forms of surfing in ancient Hawaii: body-surfing (*kaha nalu*), outrigger canoe-surfing (*no ka pakaka ale*), and surfboarding (*he'e nalu*). Surely, surfboarding was the most popular one. Therefore, board was important aspect since the early days of surfing. Hawaiian tradition put a very great respect on the act of making surfboard. It even contained sacred rituals and spiritual values. Rites and ceremonies in making surfboard were believed would ensure its success in riding the waves. When selecting suitable tree for surfboard, the board maker placed a red fish (*kumu*) in its trunk. After cutting down the tree with stone axe, he dug a hole and put the fish in it as an offering in return for the tree. Then, before the surfboard could be used in the sea, it had to pass through another ritual.

Besides in relation to surfboard, religious ritual related to surfing also occurred when the waves were still. Hawaiian surfers prayed for the good waves by taking the strands of beach morning-glory flowers (*pohuehue*), lashing them in the sea surface in unison, and singing the surf chant. One of the surf chants was this: "Arise, arise ye great surfs from Kahiki / The powerful curling waves / Arise with *pohuehue* / Well up, long raging surf" (Finney, 1959: 338). However, surf chants were sung not only for rising the waves, but also to praise the renowned surfers. Hawaiian tradition used songs and stories to adore the skill of surfers. The act of praising was related to two important features of Hawaiian surfing: courtship and contest.

As surfing was practiced by male and female, it became one way to attract the opposite sex by displaying the skills on the waves. There was also unwritten rule stating that when man and woman ride the same wave, sexual intercourse could follow. Sexual freedom was one of the reasons why missionaries banned surfing in Hawaii circa 1800s. The other reason was related to

surfing contest. Long before modern days of surfing, Hawaiian had considered it as a kind of sport. Its competitive character was shown by serious contest which held occasionally. Nothing was wrong about competing, yet it created gambling. The latter was additional factor of surfing ban in Hawaii. Missionaries regarded sexual intercourse and gambling as sins, adding other evils of surfing, such as animistic practices of making surfboard, rising the waves, praying in *heiau* (stone temple) dedicated to surfing, and worshiping the ocean (god Kanaloa for Hawaiian). Nendel (2009: 2434) sums up that 'missionaries viewed surfing as an unwholesome act of play which failed to bring one closer to God or to the modern work ethic.'

Surfing disappeared in Hawaii during the most of 19th century. It persisted until the late 1880s when King David Kalakaua desired to restore some native Hawaiian traditions. Surfing was one of them. The revival of surfing was welcomed with growing interest in it, either by native Hawaiian or foreigners. Slowly, surfing was not only reborn in Hawaii, but also spread to other places. There was one important figure in the popularity of surfing: Duke Kahanamoku. Titled as 'Father of Surfing', Kahanamoku was a full-blooded Hawaiian athlete. His story was interesting because he was actually a swimmer. Winning three gold Olympic medals during his career, Kahanamoku had privilege to travel the world. Swimming had first made him famous, but surfing was always his first love. Whenever he went, he always spread his love of surfing to locals and expanded the influence of traditional Hawaiian sport.

Today, surfing is practiced everywhere in the world. It is no longer just a local Hawaiian pastime or sport but has become a global thing. Warren and Gibson (2014: 174) mention 1960s as a period of 'surf craze', an era when 'the mass popularity of surfing began'. The notion of globalization is inevitable in the analysis of proliferation of surfing. In its outspread, surfing turns into 'discourse' which is practiced and perceived differently for many different people and cultures. I mention earlier that surfing can be many different things: sport for pro surfers, passion and adventure for non-professional surfers[6], spirituality for 'soul surfers' (Taylor, 2007), counter-culture for beach bums, fashion for lots of people (including non-surfers), money for businessmen, or strange thing for many others. As said by Canniford (2005: 206), "surfing has become a scene that may transcend boundaries of age, sex, race, nationality, income, and location, so that it presents a complex and often oxymoronic cultural jumble".

2.4.2. Communion x conquest

Hawaiian narrative of surfing history regards the importance of communion with environment and nonhuman beings. It is not about man versus nature. In ancient Hawaii, surfing was a spiritual human endeavor to interact with the water, sea, and waves. Nendel (2009: 2433) writes very beautifully about this matter:

[6] In October 2017, I met another student in Wageningen and it turned out that he does surfing. I said to him, "I see you do surfing." He replied, "Yes, man! It is my big passion."

> "The act of surfing for Hawaiians held a deep spiritual connection to the water and the waves. Its adherents describe the Hawaiian surfing event as 'dancing with the waves'. This style is a graceful, flowing method in smooth rhythm in the direction that the wave is going. This technique follows a Polynesian approach to understand the direction of inertia and go with it."

The element of 'oneness with the world and especially the ocean wave' is important in Hawaiian way of surfing. Through riding the waves, surfers have opportunities to 'share an intimate rapport with nature' (2009: 2434). The conjunction 'with' is relevant to be discussed because it emphasizes the nature of relationship between Hawaiian surfer and the waves. In this sense, surfing is a manifestation of equal relationship between human and nonhuman being. No one is more dominant than the other, because both co-constitute the experience of surfing together.

Emphasis on 'with' is central in feminist approach of surfing. Rather than 'on the waves', which more masculine and stresses the element of control and mastery, phrase like 'with the waves' emphasizes connectedness, intimacy, and attachment. This thought is echoed by Marilyn Edwards, a publisher of *Wahine*[7] magazine, when comparing men and women's way of surfing:

> "When I see a female on a wave, I see the connectedness with the wave. Women's emotional energy is about unity. The masculine energy is more independent, more "me" out front. And that is not true for all men, but sometimes men surf "on" the wave, whereas women surf "with" the wave […] It is about being a part of, not about dictating or ruling it." (Taylor, 2007: 936)

Alike Edwards, female surfer Jericho Poppler believed that 'men go out […] to conquer the waves and to show the[ir] power […] Women go out there to dance and be part of this kingdom' (Booth, 2001: 11). This gender difference is much related to surfing style. While male surfer's style is considered aggressive, the female's is graceful.

'Soul surfer' movement reflects the emphasis on communion in surfing practice. Taylor (2007) discusses this movement as a form of nature religion, where human (surfer) is spiritually connected with the ocean. Surfing offers the feeling of communion and kinship with nonhuman being. 'Soul surfers' use term like 'Mother Ocean' to illustrate their intimacy with nature. The rise of surfing as spiritual practice is parallel with the growth of Zen lifestyle in Western societies. There was connection between spiritual revival of surfing in 1960s and anti-establishment philosophy, counter-culture movement, and the rising popularity of Asian (or other non-Western) religions (2007: 931). This phenomenon can be viewed as a challenge to more 'masculine' approach of surfing and as a (romantic) attempt to restore the old Hawaiian philosophy of surfing.

Attempts to restore traditional philosophy are apparent in Australian surfing scene. McGloin's (2007) account offers the narrative of Aboriginal surfing, which intends to challenge white Australian dominance in surfing scene by placing emphasis on Aborigine cultural heritage and its close relationship with sea and waves. For Aboriginal surfers, surfing is about being part of the waves because they believe they belong to the ocean. One surfer says, "Some fellas, they talk about ripping the wave to pieces. I reckon the wave tells you what to do" (2007: 93). In this

[7] *Wahine* is a popular term to call a female surfer. It is also a Hawaiian word for 'woman'.

account, surfing is an expression of culture, of long-preserved tradition, not a merely 'generic representation of surfing popular culture' (McGloin, 2007: 95). To underline the main point here, this tradition demands surfers to commune *with* waves.

Surfing as a practice of communion with nonhuman being contrasts to surfing as a practice of conquering nature. Nendel (2009) recounts how surfing passed through the process of appropriation from Hawaiian transcendence experience to competitive American sport. In the early 20th century, surfing started to become something different than traditional Hawaiian pastime and sport. The cause was simple: an interaction with outside world. Jack London's article *A Royal Sport* (1907) was one key point in this interaction, alongside the influence of Alexander Hume Ford, the earliest promoter of Hawaiian tradition. George Freeth, an Irish-Hawaiian surfer, was also an important figure as he demonstrated surfing in California on daily basis. All of them, and many others, introduced surfing to people outside Hawaii. The change slowly began.

In Nendel's words, surfing 'became more Americanized' (2009: 2441). It was Tom Blake, the innovator of surfboard, who made surfing more accessible for everyone. In Blake's vision, the original Hawaiian wooden surfboards were too large and too heavy for most people. Then, he invented the shorter, lighter, and more dynamic solid plastic foam surfboard. Blake's invention allowed the new approach to surfing. This passage from Nendel is worth to consider:

> "Rather than dancing with the wave, and becoming one with it, surfers could now challenge the wave and conquer it, a method much more appealing to mainland Americans who loved to control their recreational activities, and lives, in every sense […] For Westerners, nature was something to be conquered […] the essence of man's relationship with nature was threatened." (2009: 2443)

The elements of control and conquest are indeed apparent in Western approach towards environment. We can see it through many things, such as nature conservation practices, sustainability agenda, or climate change. Surfing can only prolong that list.

Conquering the waves is also very masculine approach of surfing. Displaying physical prowess is considered as principal among (male) surfers. When riding the waves, they are expected to show their 'skill, muscular strength, endurance, cunning, aggression and, above all, courage'. They regard such things as masculine trait and comparatively deem female surfers as 'frail, delicate, passive, and neurotic' (Booth, 2001: 6). The stress on physical prowess is also related to competitive feature of surfing. Either against other surfers or the waves, it is about competing, beating, and winning. Warren and Gibson (2014) recount that the competitive character of surfing in post-1960 surf craze was driven by negative stigma of it. Tired of being labeled as lazy and self-indulgent beach bums, many surfers went from 'anticompetitive, soulful wave riders to sportspeople […] to showcase their talents and abilities to the rest of society' (2014: 176). In fact, they had to conform to Western ideal of being part of society.

Thus, the waves have become something to be maneuvered and overcame. The surfing culture has to be appropriated with Euro-American morality of living. Flynn regards surfing as a kind of dance, and by that he means 'an organic unity between man and nature that is mediated

by cultural processes' (quoted in Booth, 1999: 36). Today, surfing is still about human and waves, alike the ancient Hawaiian era. However, the cultural processes which mediate them are different and changing over time, based on various sociocultural, economic, political, and geographical contexts. In the next part, we might consider tourism as one of cultural processes where human-environment relationship through surfing takes place.

2.4.3. Surf tourism

Travel to surf could possibly be as old as the surfing itself, Buckey (2002a: 407) believes, simply because the good waves for surfing are not everywhere in the sea. Surfers have to go somewhere in the sea to wait for the waves and ride them. Moreover, in the early days of modern surfing, the mass production of cars allowed surfers to travel further and more freely to search for the good waves (Booth, 2001: 36). First, it is surfer's fascination on the waves. Then, it becomes tourism. The waves stimulate surfers to travel to many places and interact with many different cultures, together with the surfboard in their airport trolleys or rented cars/motorcycles.[8]

Buckley reminds us that surfing requires surf [9]. Technically, some oceanic and meteorological factors influence the quality of surf, such as 'swell height, fetch and wave length; seabed profile and nearshore seafloor shape and structure; tide and wind regimes' (2002a: 409). Simply put, not all parts of earth are blessed with consistent surf. It is a scarce resource which not every place has and not everyone can access. What happens next is the struggle over waves. Surfing, since the beginning, is about struggle. For instance, surfers often have to queue and wait for good waves. Surfing scene has code of ethics which prohibit surfers to 'steal' someone else's (turn to ride the) waves. Besides, crowding[10] is one of the most debated topics within surfing scene. Surf tourism provides a context where struggle over waves is legitimized.

The link between surfing and tourism started in the beginning of 20th century. Early tourism promoters in Hawaii noticed the allure of surfing to attract tourists (Nendel, 2009: 2435). The strategy was successful, making Hawaii the first pioneer of surf destinations. Other places in the world slowly followed. Some destinations are specifically designed for surf tourism, while many others offer other niches. The dispersion of surf tourism was influenced by crowding problem in local surf breaks in places where many surfers originate and strong surf culture exists, such as Southern California and east coast of Australia. Crowding contributed to the growing tendency of surfers, especially those who can afford, to travel to more 'remote' areas to catch and ride the perfect, uncrowded waves.

[8] Writing this reminds me of my own experiences when I observed foreign surfers carried their surfboards in El Tari Airport, Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara (circa 2010). I knew they were going to Rote Islands for surfing. At that time, I was fascinated by the idea of why they travel so far *only* for surfing. At other time, on the streets of Bali, I often saw tourists with surfboard in their motorcycle. I thought, "It must be heavy, mustn't it?"

[9] Surf, technically, is the name of the swell/waves which are breaking in the littoral area, usually near the shore.

[10] Crowding refers to situation where there are too many surfers waiting for a wave.

Surf tourism is rather complex. Buckley (2002a: 407 & 410) provides several typologies of this niche. He conceptually divides the recreational surf travel and commercial surf tourism. Seemingly, this divide follows tourist-traveler dichotomy. In the former, surfers plan their travel independently with relatively low budget. In the latter, tour operators handle all the logistical issues of the surf trips. Surfers only need to pay the tour price and bring their own personal surfboards and other equipment. Moreover, other typology is related to actual practice of surfers in the destination. Two most apparent sub-types are those who stay on charter boat and those who stay on the land. Where the surfers stay consequently affects their practices during the trip. For example, those who stay on the sea will have limited contact with local culture on the land. In contrast, those who stay on the land-based accommodation may have bigger chance to interact with local culture and are usually more interested to do so.

One should not be reminded that surf tourists are surfers first and tourists second (2002a: 414). Surfing is the main purpose to travel and the primary activity during the trip. Waves are the core. Nothing else really matters. Surf tourism facilitates surfers with their primal instinct to interact with the waves and sea. Nonetheless, surfer's interaction with environment is not confined with only natural environment, but also sociocultural one. Some studies show that surfer's interaction with host environment might transform a place. For instance, Leonard (2007) narrates how some Balinese proceeded from enthusiastic kids who mingled with foreign surfers to become professional surfers. Bali, as many other cultures in Indonesia, traditionally did not have surfing culture. Balinese surfing scene will never be as it is today without Western travelers who introduced their pastime to Kuta kids long time ago (2007: 4-5).

The connection between surf tourism and local culture is a concern of this thesis. Writing about Indo-Pacific surf destinations, Buckley (2002a: 421) reveals the cultural impact of surf tourism which manifests through the contestation of fishing and surfing. The former is local's way of engaging with sea and waves. Surfers think that everyone can access the sea and waves, while locals do not think so. Local communities may control access over sea through traditional customs they need to protect their fishing areas. The implication of surfing and surf breaks to host communities, either in developing or developed countries, is indeed the primary trend in surf tourism studies (Martin & Assenov, 2011: 269). Many studies focus more on issues like social justice, inequality, and surf management. Among all surf destinations in the world, Indonesia is one of the most researched – only below Australia and United States – while Mentawai Islands is on the top list domestically (2011: 270). After all, debates of human-environment relationship, peculiar concern over waves, and the dynamic between surf tourism and host culture will tightly interweave the whole content of this thesis.

2.5. Conceptual framework

The literature review has provided me a particular way of thinking about human-environment relationship. In this thesis, I will rely on dwelling perspective and engagement as theoretical tools to understand how Mentawai people relate with waves and environment. Inspired by works of Tim Ingold (2000), I will explore such relationship by trying to reject Cartesian/Western/Eurocentric modes of thinking which have been dominant in discussing the human-environment relationship and by realizing that the practices of engagement are the formative process of the perception of environment. It is not the human mind which a priori constructs our perception of nonhuman beings. As shown in conceptual framework (figure 2), the key to perception lies on actual and practical engagement with nonhuman beings, which is the waves in my case study. Thus, understanding Mentawaians' engagement with waves is pivotal. Surf tourism will be the context in which the processes of engagement and perception occur in Mentawai. Finally, the processes will depict Mentawai human-waves relationship.

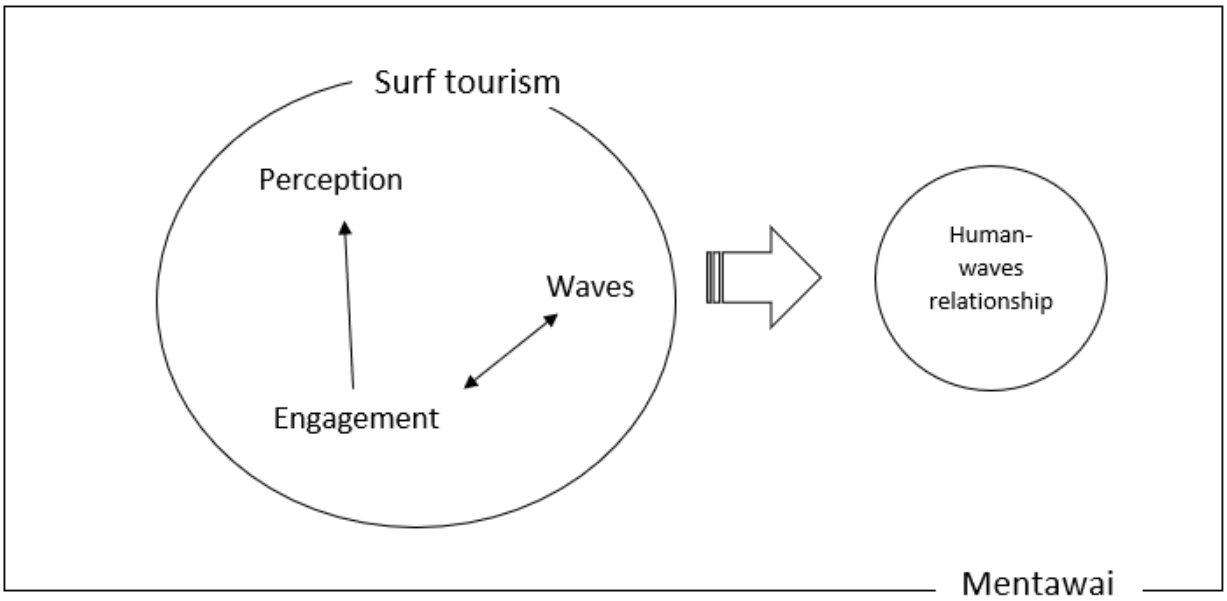

Figure 2. Conceptual framework

Academic discourses have long portrayed Mentawai's association with land and forest, while their relationship with the sea and waves has been overlooked. Being the major surf destination since the end of 1990s, Mentawai Islands offers an interesting case study on how surf tourism might mediate the processes of engaging with and perceiving the waves. Surrounded by Indian Ocean, Mentawai has never been known as sea-dwelling people, instead as forest-dwelling people. Their relationship with sea and waves were rarely touched by scholars, especially before surf tourism era. In this thesis, waves are the central point and will be seen as hybrid biophysical-sociocultural nonhuman being. Human-waves relation of Mentawai will be the focus of exploration. Thus, the main objective is to understand how surf tourism mediate the processes of engaging with and perceiving the waves in Mentawai.

3. Methodology

Preparing, waiting, attending, corresponding

Moile moile

Slowly slowly

(Mentawai saying)

3.1. Setting off

Since the beginning, I was driven by my peculiar curiosity toward waves. If I look back, this curiosity is not ahistorical at all. One night at my home in Depok, I was thinking that what makes life as it is now is mundane, everyday things. There are countless seemingly insignificant things in our life: frying pan, fallen leaves, smell of gasoline, house fence, bacteria on the carpet, motorcycle's sound, drops of the rain, and you-can-continue-the-list. Countless. Then, by borrowing Tsing, "what if […] what we imagine as trivial are the center of the systematicity we seek?" (2015: 20). In short, I started this thesis with that kind of thoughts.

In studying human-waves relationship, I was led to the path of anthropology. The question I raise in this thesis is anthropological, that is how human beings relate with their environment, with waves in particular, in their everyday settings. Ingold, in the interview with Ergul (2017: 9), makes clear about the objective of anthropology.

> "It is to draw on the experience of our studies with people and things, with materials and documents, indeed with all to which and to whom we attend, to speculate on the conditions and possibilities of life in the inhabited world."

What implies in above quote are several vital issues about the discipline. First, anthropology contains subjective experience of the researcher. It is not anthropology's task to objectify. Second, contrary to ethnography which more of a study of specific group of people, anthropology is a study with people we encounter in the field. Even it is not only people, but all events, feelings, materials, and things. Third, anthropology necessitates a researcher to attend whatever and whoever she/he encounter during the processes of research. 'To attend', then, also means to pay attention to people and things – to be attentive. Fourth, as Ingold (2014: 393) argues elsewhere, anthropology lies in the tension between speculation of what life could be like and experience-based knowledge of what life is like. Then, as it is speculative, anthropology opens us up to the possibilities of life – the ones we might have never imagined.

3.1.1. The interplay of methods

To respond my research questions, I played with three classic qualitative methods: participant observation, everyday conversation, and interviewing. Of the three, I consider participant observation and everyday conversation as basis of my field understanding. Both methods were also very important because they allowed me to blend with local people in Siberut and to gain their trust. Meanwhile interviewing provided me with re-checked findings, confirmation, and the feeling of assurance. The interplay of them also acted as triangulation, to ensure the accuracy of my field data. I recorded daily participant observation and everyday conversation in field notes. Agar (1996: 161) writes that field notes are very central in anthropology, so anthropologists often refer to analysis as 'writing up your notes'. I, too, found my field notes very pivotal because they kept me in touch with whichever I encountered in the field. For interviewing, I recorded all thirteen interviews with voice recorder and transcribed them

all into text. Of thirteen, one interview was done in the mix of Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Mentawai, through the help of Leonardo who acted as interpreter during interview. It was the interview with Teteu Lakka, a 78 years old shaman, whose Bahasa Indonesia is limited. The rest were in Bahasa Indonesia. All was transcribed in Bahasa Indonesia.

Madden (2010: 25) tells us that "methods are what tools you use; a methodology is an explanation of why you use those tools." Thus, I guess, I have to explain my methodological decisions. Ingold (2014: 386) thinks of participant observation as anthropology's tried and tested way of working. He regards it as practice: "to attend to what others are doing or saying and to what is going on around and about; to follow along where others go and to do their bidding, whatever this might entail and wherever it might take you" (2014: 389). In his account, everyday conversation seems included in participant observation. Let me explain them on by one.

In my field work, participant observation worked as a way to gather information related to Mentawaians' practices of engagement with waves. Such practices were very everyday things for them; that was where participant observation became so important, because I need to make sense of everyday-ness in Siberut. I had *to be in* that everyday settings: doing things with them, being with them, and killing time together. Only participating in the current of locals' daily life I could, little by little, understand their waves-related actions and perceptions. This way of working really necessitated attention. I had to pay attention on small details. It was about being ready for any kinds of events, situations, and moments. Then, when those happened, I had to use all my body and senses to grasp and absorb them into my understanding.

Everyday conversation also demanded deep attentiveness. Agar (1996: 140) takes informal interview – which is the way some scholars call 'everyday conversation' – as central form of data. In Mentawai setting, this method was even more significant. As Mentawaians do not have written tradition (Tulius, 2012: 15), but oral tradition, stories they told in daily settings were particularly important. By engaging in everyday conversation with Mentawaians, I paid attention to how, what, why, and when they talked about waves and their relationship with it. By being attentive to those, I aimed to understand how they perceive the waves as such. In this sense, participant observation and everyday conversation were linked in my way to understand human-waves relationship in Siberut. The former was more about practices of engagement, the later was more about perception. As both engagement and perception are inseparable, so do the methods.

Interviewing was rather different. In my fieldwork, I started first with participant observation and everyday conversation. Only in the latter phase I began doing interviews. This sequence was also found because I tried and tested. At first, I have not fully realized the very anthropological-ness of my research. I thought I would rely more on interviewing, while other methods would act as supplemental. I was wrong. I did two first interviews with that initial plan and those did not work satisfyingly. Then, I realized that I first needed to understand more about the people I worked with, through participant observation and informal conversation, before having 'formal' interview with them. Thus, as I said before, interviewing acted as a method of confirming and rechecking of what I found before through other methods. This is not to say

interviewing was less important. Three methods I played with in Siberut were intertwined and entangled in creating what I will discuss later in next chapter.

3.1.2. The rationale of sampling

Participant observation and everyday conversation also allowed me to know whom I had to talk to and the settings I needed to encounter. Here, I want to assert that my study is about Mentawai, so my focus has always been on Mentawaians (i.e. local people) and not surf tourists. For the sake of clarity of whom I should talk to, I divided local people into four groups: (1) surfer and involved in surf tourism; (2) not surfer and involved in surf tourism; (3) surfer and not involved in surf tourism; and (4) not surfer and not involved in surf tourism. Because I put surfing and surf tourism as the contexts of this research, I based my grouping on people's involvement on both. The division was meant to ensure the richness of my field data, so I could encompass all kinds of perspectives in the field. Besides, this was also done to have balance of voices, so the understanding I built was not one-sided. Furthermore, this might be helpful in the investigating the mediating role of surf tourism for human-waves relationship.

Based on the grouping, I also decided whom I interviewed. It was as follows: Hiber (surfer, surf homestay entrepreneur); Meken (surfer, worker in surf resort); Dudum (surfer, worker in surf camp); Lemanus (not surfer, *peladang,* not involved in surf tourism); Jetri (not surfer, worker in surf camp); Paskah (not surfer, worker in surf resort); Yusuf (surfer, involved in surf homestay); Joni (surfer, *peladang,* involved in surf homestay); Baril (not surfer, craftsman, involved in surf tourism); Teteu Lakka (not surfer, shaman, partially involved in surf tourism by performing Mentawai traditional dance occasionally in surf resort); Parlin (surfer, not involved in surf tourism); Valerius (not surfer, surf tourism entrepreneur); and Anto (not surfer, involved indirectly in surf tourism as government official). The first nine interviews were done in Nyangnyang Island, while the last four were in Muara Siberut. All interviews lasted between 40 minutes to two hours.

For participant observation and everyday conversation, I did them in various research 'sites'. First was surf workplace. This included surf homestay, surf camps, surf resorts, and surf charter boat (through stories from those who have worked there). Second was surf playground, which covered the area of beach, sea, and waves. Third was surf village. This meant people's settlements which close to surf workplace and playground; this was also including *ladang* setting. As addition, I regarded the district town of Muara Siberut as 'site' as well, because that is the main entrance of Siberut Island and where some surf tourism actors live.

3.1.3. The 'why' about 'where'

I chose Mentawai as case study – which I have explained in Case Study (1.1). From all places in Mentawai Islands, I decided to do fieldwork in Siberut Island. It is the biggest island in Mentawai, even though the regency government is seated in Sipora Island. Speaking from tourism perspective, Siberut is also the most popular one in which many tourist activities have occured

since 1970s, starting with cultural tourism and followed by surf tourism. Besides, Siberut is commonly known among Mentawai scholars as a part of the islands where Mentawai tradition and belief still persist in great degree. I do not intend to say that other islands are 'less Mentawaian' than Siberut. My choice on Siberut is not only methodological and theoretical – because I want to study about 'Mentawai' – but also personal. I would like to experience a place in the islands where indigenous Mentawai tradition and belief can be felt, seen, and heard rather easily, either in its 'original' or revitalized forms.

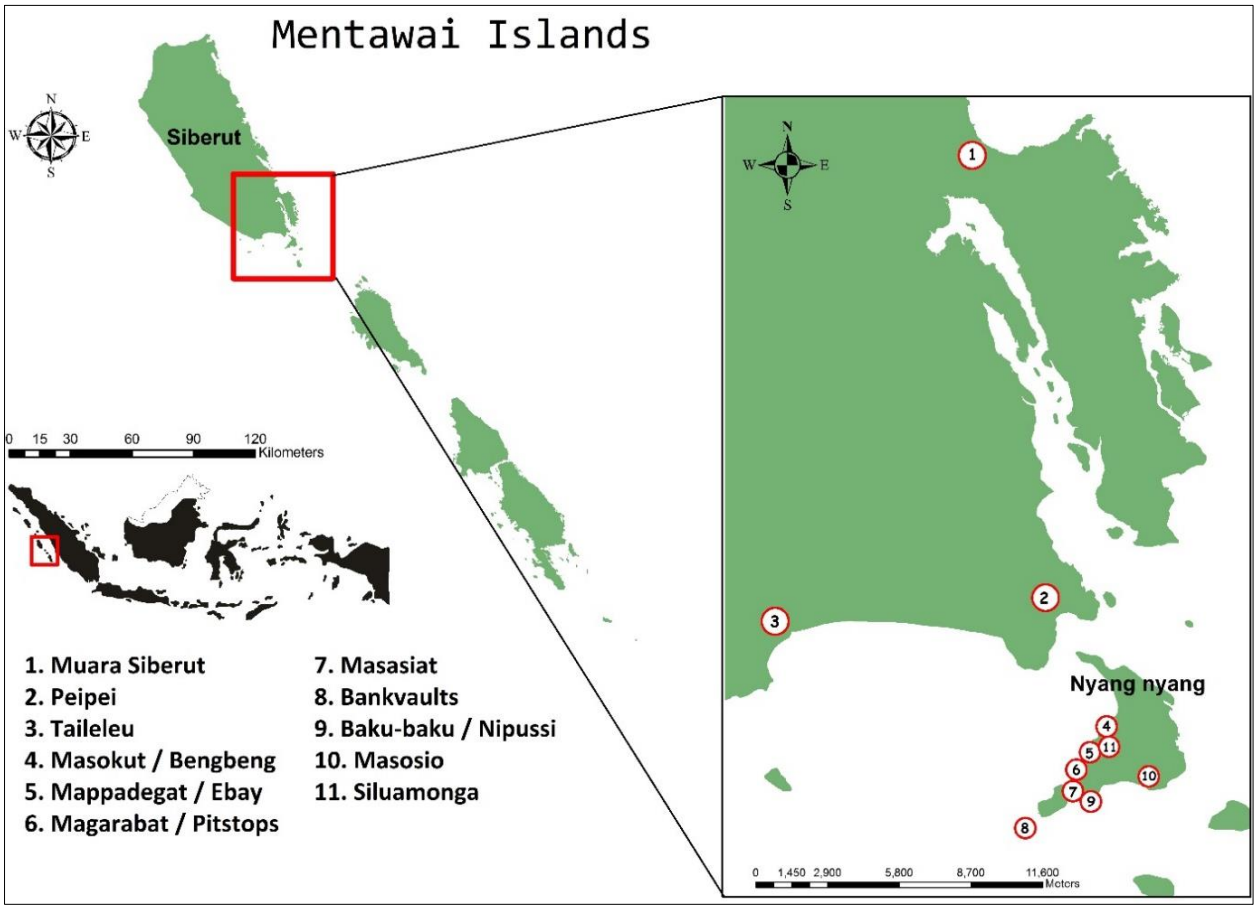

Figure 3. Map of fieldwork area

Among five districts in Siberut, district of Southwestern Siberut is the main surf tourism destination where several major surf breaks and many surf accommodations are located. Of Southwestern Siberut, Nyangnyang Island is the busiest surf tourism area. Subsequently, of Nyangnyang Island, Mapaddegat is the liveliest place for surf tourism. That is why I was 'stranded' in Mapaddegat of Nyangnyang Island for almost two months. Mapaddegat consists of various surf camps and homestays. There were six surf camps and one homestay which were active – means hosting guests – when I did the fieldwork. Besides, there are five surf breaks near Mapaddegat where surf tourists and local surfers can reach by walking. They are Nipussi, Bankvaults, Pitstops, Ebay, and Bengbeng. In the next chapter, I explain about Mapaddegat in details.

Even though living in Mapaddegat, I covered areas from Baku-Baku to Masokut as well. Other than Mapaddegat, the coverage included local settlements of Masasiat, Magarabat, Masosio, Siluamonga, and Masokut. In Masasiat and Masosio, there are only local *peladang*'s houses. Meanwhile, Baku-Baku only consists of Mentawai In Action (MIA) Resort, Magarabat area has local settlements as well as two surf resorts (Pitstop Hill and Mentawai Surf Retreat), and Masokut has Gingin Resort and Jupy's homestay. Furthermore, I spent ten days of fieldwork in Muara Siberut – before and after my stay in Mapaddegat.

3.2. Going down to the field

In Indonesia, we call 'fieldwork' by a beautiful term *'turun lapangan'* (often abbreviated as *'turlap'*). It literally means 'going down to the field'. Yes, going down! Perhaps there is indeed hierarchy. Thus, fieldwork allows us to go down to the brutal and chaotic realities of life. It lets us to leave the comfort of academic highness; to become humble again; to talk with mundane, everyday words; and to set aside sophisticated terminologies for a moment. By experiences, I have learned that research starts and ends in library. Still, I believe, what matters most is what happens in the middle. Fieldwork is that in-between. Personally, that is what I love about research: the possibility that all this time we might be wrong.

My own fieldwork is like surfing. In surfing, you have to prepare: checking the surfboard, putting sunscreen on the face, and else. You walk or take boat to the surfing spot. Then, you must paddle to where the waves break. Once there, you must wait. Sometimes, it takes long time before you surf your first wave. Sometimes, there are no waves to surf. But, you keep waiting and waiting. Until, suddenly there is one good swell from the ocean forming the nice surf. The wind condition supports it. You catch that wave and stand on the board. Finally, you can play with the waves. Fieldwork is just like that, especially the anthropological one. Waiting is crucial. Often, during fieldwork, I was impressed by the patience of surfers. Especially in the times of less consistent surf breaks, surfers have to wait: for a good swell, for the wind condition, for the waves. They are unique tribe, I thought. They are passionate with the waves and wanting to play with them at all cost, but they know something is bigger than them. Mother Ocean cannot be intervened. They only have to wait. I look on the mirror and see myself is quite similar. I prepare, I wait. Sometimes, there is no 'waves' for me. But, at one point, my 'waves' are coming. I take it with a smile. I play with it. Perhaps, I can get a 'barrel'!

I spent two months in the field. Most of the time, I stayed in Mapaddegat, a homestay and surf camp area in Nyangnyang Island. How did I decide to stay there? When I first reached Siberut, I did not know where exactly to do the fieldwork. Then, I was introduced to Valerius. He is one of the important figure in tourism of Siberut. He is involved in surf tourism and cultural tourism in Siberut region. He has joint-business of surf camp in Mapadegat, has worked in Kandui Resort in several positions (boat operator, surf guide, and bar man), and is linked with many foreign surfers. He told me that if I want to study about surf tourism in Siberut, I should go to Mapaddegat.

I lived with the family of Hiber during my stay in Mapaddegat. As most of the families in Mapaddegat, they come from Taileleu village in Siberut mainland. The family runs surf homestay as well. When I first came, there were two French surfers staying there – Julien and Fabien. Initially, I planned to live with the family who is involved in surf tourism industry, then to move to another one who is not involved. Interestingly, I found the house became different when Julien and Fabien were gone. I experienced the transition from surf homestay to ordinary local's house and the difference between both. For instance, I could fully talk in Bahasa Indonesia after it switched to 'normal' house. Besides, in the terrace, there was no eating cutlery, glasses, coffee, tea, and snacks anymore after the surfers gone. So, from the beginning until the end of my fieldwork in Mapaddegat, I lived with family of Hiber.

My decision to keep staying there was also methodological in other sense. As my fieldwork period was relatively short, I felt it did not make sense to move to another family and try to gain their trust, while I just gained the trust from former family. Slowly, I felt like a member of family. I eventually called the parents by intimate calls 'Bapak' and 'Mamak'. Few days before I left, Hiber gave me a necklace from reef which he created himself. The design is same to his and his brother Yusuf's necklaces. He said, "This is souvenir for *sepupu.*" Many friends in Mapaddegat called me *sepupu,* means the cousin. To reflect on that moment, I wrote in my field notes: "I was not a strange researcher anymore."

During my fieldwork, from November to January, it was already low surfing season in Mentawai. Locals told me that Mapaddegat 'has become quiet', compared to the already-done high season. Methodologically speaking, it was advantageous. Mentawaians living and working there had more free time, so I could easily make conversations with them. However, sometimes I also wondered about how the island looks like during high surfing season. As my focus of study is Mentawai people, the limited numbers of surf tourists did not affect much. I could still grasp the processes of surf tourism in Mapaddegat, but perhaps it would be different 'face' in high season – from April to October. Approaching Christmas, Mapaddegat became even quieter as many locals already went back to their original village in Taileleu.

I experienced storm (*badai*), too. From end of November until early December, the weather was very bad. However, those days of storm offered me revelation. I began to realize, understand, and make sense of many things in my fieldwork. I found preliminary themes; noticed the importance of other environmental elements (such as weather, wind, and swell); and felt first-handedly how the force of nature (*alam*), especially sea, could be very terrifying. It was also in those days where I could relate myself to Mentawaian experiences and perceptions of sea and waves. Furthermore, during the storm, I finally realized the ‘everyday’ and ‘anthropological’ nature of my research; that is waves and sea are everyday realities of people living in Mapaddegat. That is precisely why the fieldwork was challenging, because I intended to make sense the everyday-ness, mundaneness, and ordinariness of life in the island. Hence, this is an ordinary research about ordinary people with their ordinary lives in their ordinary environment.

3.3. Talking back

…being slow with our stories, giving them room for people and objects instead of battles and heroes. (Yates-Doerr, 2014)

I came back from the fieldwork with a lot of puzzles awaited to be solved. The first question when I stepped on Sumatra mainland was: how would I make sense of my disorganized field data? In qualitative research, as Creswell (2007: 41) argue, after-fieldwork phase is exhausting because researcher must "engage in the complex, time-consuming process of data analysis through the ambitious task of sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few themes". He adds that "it is a lonely, isolated time of struggling with the data."

As I learned from Mentawaians, I (re-)started slowly. First, I read and coded my 63-pages field notes, mainly contains field data from participant observation and everyday conversation. My field notes are full of details and significances, but they are alike chaotic pieces. The practice of coding was my attempt to organize what I encountered and recorded in daily Siberut life. Afterwards, I transcribed all thirteen interviews by myself, then I coded them. The codes I found in field notes and interview transcriptions provided me themes to make sense of Mentawaians and their waves. The next chapter, along with its subchapters, are written based on those themes. In coding, I did not use any coding applications. Instead I did manually.

I began to write after my field data was, more or less, organized. Since the beginning, I did not intend to separate empirical findings, analysis, and discussion. I would like to blend them all into one single section. The next chapter – 'Living with The Waves' – is basically my attempt to respond to my research questions by blending findings, analysis, and discussion into one. I regard the next chapter as a part of correspondence, in which I talk back: to Tim Ingold who has provided me conceptual groundwork and even a kind of paradigm through which I saw, heard, and felt things in Siberut; to other literatures that I have read and reviewed before fieldwork which helped me to understand Ingold and my own field experiences; and to whoever and whatever I encountered during the fieldwork, which once in Siberut have responded to my questions and passions through their willingness to answer, respond, and engage with me within the tiresome/pleasurable fieldwork processes.

Now, it is time to tell you a story from Siberut.

4. Living with the waves

Engagement, perception, and whatnots

"Dan dengarkan ombak yang datang menerjang kuatmu […] Langit dan laut dan hal-hal yang tak kita bicarakan, biar jadi rahasia, menyublim ke udara."

"And listen to the waves which come and run into your vigor […] sky and sea and things we never talk about, let them be secrets, sublimated into air."

(Banda Neira – Langit dan Laut)

This is a story about everydayness; about how human and waves live together within surf tourism context; and about the simple yet complex nature of human-waves relationship in Siberut. There are six parts. First, I start by giving descriptive background about my main fieldwork area in Mapaddegat, where surf tourism is one of the dominant modes of dwelling (but not the only one!) and waves are significant part of everyday environment. This background is meant to illustrate the life in surf tourism place of Mapaddegat. Second, narrate the discussion of attentiveness to provide a groundwork for understanding the practices of engagement with waves among Mentawaians. My main argument: attentiveness is the cornerstone of engagement with waves in Siberut. Third, I start the exploration on practices of engagement by discussing sea-based practices with waves. Fourth, I move to the land and try to grasp human-waves relationship through the land-based practices with waves. Fifth, all practices of engagement with waves slowly lead me to the notion of perception. Here, I discuss more about how and why the waves are perceived contradictory in Siberut. Sixth, I attempt to make sense of previous explorations – about attentiveness, practices, engagement, and perception – by putting them together under the umbrella theme of 'human-waves relationship'. In this last part, I offer my (almost) final thoughts by emphasizing the notions of avoidance/encounter, materiality, and intimacy.

4.1. Waves behind coconuts: A background

Most of the time, during the fieldwork, I stayed in Mapaddegat. Mentawaians also called it 'Ebay', which is the name of surfing spot nearby. They have already been accustomed with 'Ebay' but nobody knows why and since when they called it like that. Mapaddegat is one of the settlements in Nyangnyang Island. Although staying in Mapaddegat, my coverage reached all areas between Baku-Baku (Nipussi) and Masokut (Bengbeng). Mapaddegat is in the middle of both; 40-minutes walking to Baku-Baku and 30-minutes to Masokut.

Mapaddegat consists of various local people's houses, surf homestays, and surf camps. There is no surf resort. Surf resorts can be found in Baku-Baku (Mentawai in Action Resort), near Masasiat (Yanto's Place), Magarabat (Pitstop Hill and Mentawai Surf Retreat), and Masokut (Gingin Resort). Thus, Mapaddegat is a sort of homestay/surf camp area in Nyangnyang Island. Many locals argued it is 'like a village' (*seperti kampung*), because it is not an actual administrative village. Mentawaians living there originally come from Taileleu, about 30-minutes to one-hour sea trip from/to Mapaddegat. Traditionally, Mapaddegat is Taileleu people's *ladang* area to grow coconuts and cloves. *Ladang* is a place where people plant and cultivate agricultural products. In short, before surfing came to Mentawai Islands, Taileleu people *berladang* (verb of 'doing *ladang* activities' or 'cultivating *ladang*') in Mapaddegat. It exists until now, making *ladang* one of the two dominant modes of dwelling there. The other one is, of course, surf tourism.

4.1.1. Surf tourism

Mentawaians living in Mapaddegat could not remember exactly when surf tourism began in the island. They were likely to be confused when I asked the question of 'when'. The educated guess will be either before or after 2000 – end of 1990s or early of 2000s. The story was classic. The first foreign surfers in Mapaddegat came to the island to look for a place to stay during their surfing trip. They asked to stay in locals' houses. Surfers only paid for the room to sleep and brought and cooked their own food. Thus, in the early stage of surf tourism era in Mapaddegat, the 'original' notion of homestay existed – tourist stays in local people's house. It was not like homestay as it is today, where locals run it on purpose to host surfers. Back then, foreign surfers just came, asked permission to stay, and surfed. On the other side, locals allowed surfers to stay in the house while kept doing what they always do since long time, *berladang*.

What makes Mapaddegat special is the existence of various waves nearby: Nipussi, Bankvaults, Pitstops, Ebay, and Bengbeng. All of them can be reached by walking. Ebay is the nearest, while Nipussi and Bankvaults are the furthest (about 40-minutes walking). If surfers rent a boat, they can even go to other waves not too far from Nyangnyang Island, such as Goodtime, Burgerworld, Hideaways, or Playground. In the past, many surfers coming to Mentawai did not know about land-based accommodations. Most surfers only knew the sea-based option, that is surf charter boat. Apparently, the latter is too expensive for some surfers – often called 'surf backpacker', so they look for cheaper alternatives. In economic terms, staying on the land is cheaper. In terms of experience, it offers higher chance for surfers to interact with local people. In his study in Mentawai Islands, Towner (2013: 155) finds that surf tourists who live aboard in charter boat are 'tended to be much more focused on the waves', while surfers who stay on local villages 'frequently immersed themselves in the Mentawai culture' (2013: 154).

Then came another classic story under the name of Rick Cameron. He was an Australian surfer with a business mind and a lot of money. He rented some pieces of land in Mapaddegat for a duration of five-years. Initially he planned to build surf resort, but the plan has never been realized. Locals always mentioned Rick Cameron's name when I asked about the early days of surf tourism in Mapaddegat. It seems impossible to recount those old days without mentioning his name. He is some sort of mythical figure. After five-years rent duration was over, the land was cultivated as *ladang* again, either by land owners or land renters[11]. In cultivating *ladang*, Mentawaians always build small hut (*pondok)* – which is a temporary place to stay – near their *ladang.* Back then, *peladang* (those who *berladang*) in Mapaddegat occasionally hosted surfers in their huts, especially in Mentawai's high surfing season.

Eventually, surf tourism in Mapaddegat became more 'industrialized'. Mentawaians began to realize the economic potential of hosting foreign surfers in their houses. So, they started building 'proper' (*memadai*) surf homestays and surf camps. Locals admitted that surf homestay and surf camp are more proper than local people's houses, either in Taileleu or Mapaddegat. I was

[11] In Mentawai, the practice of land-renting for *ladang* purpose is very common.

told that Bidet was the first Mentawaian who ran a homestay business in Mapaddegat. Slowly, he changed it into a surf camp. Here the conceptual problematic of surf accommodations began. What is the difference between surf camp and homestay and resort?

According to locals, there are several criteria. Homestay is regarded as 'just a local house used by tourist'. Tourists can decide whether they pay only for the room and buy their own food supplies themselves or all is included in one price. In homestay, there is no other facilities. On the other hand, surf camp offers other facilities, such as boat facility (bringing tourists to surfing spots everyday) and *'antar-jemput'* facility (picking and bringing tourist from/to Muara Siberut). Resort's facilities are quite similar to surf camp's. The difference lies on the higher standard of facilities and, consequently, higher price. Besides, resort must have license from government, while surf camp might not. Even the latter has legal license, it will be for much lower amount of money. Furthermore, resort (and some surf camps) apply 'booking' system prior arrival, while homestay (and some surf camps) do not apply such system. The latter only accept 'wild guest' (*tamu liar*), which means the surfers come to the island independently.

Figure 4. surf accommodation (left) and 'normal' local's house/'hut' (right)

In 'waves season' (*musim ombak*), homestays and surf camps in Mapaddegat are usually fully occupied. Hundreds of surfers come to the island during April-October high season. During November-March, there are still surfers coming as well, but the number is much lower. Locals learned that surfers who come in off-season are usually less skillful than those in high-season. That is in terms of surfing skills. In terms of experience, surfing in off-season offers less crowded waves. Some surfers told me that they chose to come in off-season because they 'just wanted to have fun' by surfing in the not-so-big waves without many surfers in the line-up. It resonates with what Reeves (n.d.) argues, also in Mentawai setting, that "whilst the swell could be fickle with unfavorable wind directions, there was more than adequate recompense in the lack of crowds." In high-season, waves are big-sized – some can reach nine feet – and very crowded.

In the surf tourism businesses, various roles and works exist. Of course, there are owners. Most homestay and surf camp owners in Mapaddegat are Mentawaians from Taileleu. Only Bintang Surf Camp was owned by Minang-descent one. Some local businessmen collaborate with foreigners, such as Sabit with Paco and Ivan (Spanish) and Bidet with Massimo (Italian). 'Having foreign partner' (*punya teman bule*) is prestigious among surf tourism entrepreneurs in Mapaddegat. Moreover, surf resorts are mainly owned by foreigners, although the lands are still owned by indigenous Mentawaians. Resort enterprises only rent the land for specific duration. Land owners usually do not have any role in the running of resort, although some others participate in the business.

Then, there are workers. In the resort, the working tasks consist of management, surf guide, boat operator, skipping, cleaning service, gardening, bartender, kitchen, security, and electricity. Sometimes one person has more than one task. The role of surf guide is usually taken by foreigner. Other workers are Indonesian nationals, mostly Mentawaians. In surf camp and homestay, the task division is simpler. There is no official surf guide role. The boat operator or owner usually play 'surf guide' role, i.e. guiding the guests to suitable waves. Other tasks exist as well but are done by less people – compared to resort. One man can do three or four tasks at once. Homestay is different. It is family-run business, so there is no such thing as 'workers'. There are roles and family members share them. However, in high-season when many guests are staying, an extra cook (*tukang masak*) is usually hired to help the family in the kitchen.

To conclude, surf tourism in Mapaddegat has developed since its starting point about two decades ago. It is more 'industrialized' today. The 'industrialization' process has made surf tourism one dominant mode of dwelling in Mapaddegat. As a mode of dwelling, it contains various elements, actors, practices, and mechanisms to keep itself going in the island. In this thesis, the importance of surf tourism should be seen not merely as an industry but a way of living, in which Mentawaians in Mapaddegat are involved in and exposed by it on daily basis. Only by seeing it as such, we can understand how surf tourism mediates Mentawai human-waves relationship.

4.1.2. Ladang

Enough of surf tourism. *Ladang* is also a dominant mode of dwelling in Mapaddegat – and throughout Mentawai Islands. The most important products of *ladang* are coconut and cloves. Besides, Mentawaians also grow other plants, such as sago, banana, sweet potato, pinang, pineapple, cocoa, and many others. However, other than coconut and cloves, they do not commercialize other products. They do not sell them to middlemen from Padang, Muara Siberut, Taileleu, or Peipei. Instead they use them for daily food. It is only when they have extra harvests, they might sell any products other than coconut and cloves. The existence of *ladang,* which grows many kinds of vegetables and fruits, makes local people seemingly subsistent. Almost every day, I always eat food product from my host family's own *ladang*. One local told me that Mentawaians do not have 'culture of specialization' in farming or *berladang.* Instead they plant everything they can plant. Still, coconuts and cloves are two important agricultural products in Mentawai.

Mentawaians make use of every part of coconut. The most important one, at least commercially, is by producing copra. Compared to cloves, the production process of copra is rather complex. First, *peladang* collect the coconut fruits from their own trees. Usually, they use the service of 'coconut climber' to climb the trees and fall off the fruits. After the fruits have been collected in one place, *peladang* break them into two. They wait until the fruits become 'old' enough, marked by the green-brownish color. They throw away the water, then collect the coconut meat into large rattan baskets. Such activity is called '*mencukil*' – scraping the meat from the 'skin'. Coconut husks and shells are utilized to make a fire. All collected coconut meat is gathered in one place to be smoked (*'salai'*). It requires half or full day to produce well-done copra. They are ready when the color becomes dark. Finally, *peladang* put the finished copra into large sack; ready to be picked up by middlemen. They process copra every three months.

Figure 5. Salai process in copra production

To process cloves is rather easier than copra. However, its harvest is only once every year; sometimes even once in two years. When it is time to harvest cloves, *peladang* only need to pick up the fruits, collect them in one place, and dry them under the sun. If there are too many trees to be harvested, other people are hired to pick the cloves. Some *peladang* in Mapaddegat believe that copra is more profitable than cloves, because it is processed more often. Others think cloves is as beneficial as copra, because the price is higher – although it is harvested less often.

Peladang in Mapaddegat go to their *ladang* almost every day, except Sunday. They do various activities in *ladang*, such as clearing/chopping *ladang* (*'merambah'*), checking plants, planting new seeds, cutting woods for firewood, picking some products for daily food, taking some coconut fruits to produce 'sweet oil' (frying oil), and feeding the chickens (as they usually raise chickens in *ladang*). *Peladang* may go to more than one *ladang* in a day. For instance, they go to *ladang* of coconut in the morning and *ladang* of cloves in the afternoon. In general, Mentawaians have *ladang* in more than one area of land.

Interestingly, the practice of *ladang* lives harmoniously with surf tourism. Mentawaians in Mapaddegat do not think that surf tourism disturbs *ladang* activities. Instead, most of them are happy because surf tourists make the island merrier than before. *Peladang* may also treat surf tourism as alternative for *ladang*. For instance, when they have nothing to do anymore in *ladang*, they can ask for temporary work in surf camp or homestay – e.g. as cleaning service. Vice versa. When the 'waves season' is over, Mentawaian entrepreneurs or workers in surf tourism industry might go back to *ladang,* their traditional mode of dwelling. At first, I wanted to separate Mentawaians in Mapaddegat into two groups, based on their involvement in surf tourism. After having lived there for weeks, I realized it makes no sense because their involvements in *ladang* and surf tourism are rather fluid. Those who are involved in surf camp or homestay cultivate *ladang* in some degrees, or they (or their family) own *ladang.*

Family of Hiber, from Sapelege clan, is a decent example to illustrate the harmony of *ladang* and surf tourism in Mapaddegat. I stayed in their house during my fieldwork. The family runs surf homestay. Hiber acts as the main 'player' in this family's homestay business, because he has rich working experience in surf tourism industry. The youngest child Yusuf surfs as well and the eldest Anti used to surf. Now, Anti is mostly active in *ladang* activities. The parents, Mamak (mother) and Bapak (father), are *berladang* everyday. During low surfing season, Mamak cooks for the guests, too. Hence, she is practically involved both in *ladang* and surf tourism. Occasionally, Hiber and Yusuf also go to *ladang* to help their parents, even though they have more interest in surfing. As a reminder, family of Hiber is not a unique case in Mapaddegat. Mentawaians living there breath *ladang* and surf tourism with one long consistent and harmonious breath.

4.2. Attentiveness as cornerstone

Before exploring the practices of engagement with waves, I would like to discuss about attentiveness. I argue that attentiveness is the cornerstone of engagement with and perception of waves in Siberut. It is the basis of Mentawaians' waves-related practices and their human-waves relationship. I will start with the narrative of 'waves checking' in Mapaddegat. This habit can be illustrative to what attentiveness means for Mentawaians, within their relationship with waves. Then, slowly, I will explore on the notion of attention by relating it with the importance of experiences and other environmental elements.

Waves checking habit is regularly practiced by Mentawaians in Mapaddegat; not only by those who surf, but also by those who do not. Every morning, they go to the shore, look at the sea, and check the waves condition. At the first place, I thought only local surfers who did waves checking. Slowly, I began to realize that others did the same. For instance, if a *peladang* plans to go angling at sea or go home to Taileleu village, he will first check the sea and waves conditions, along with weather, before making his decision. Hence, waves checking is done for different purposes: surfing, traveling by sea, searching for fish, and surf tourism-related works. Waves checking is a kind of preparatory activity before locals enter the sea. Waves may decide where the

local surfers play, where the boat operator works, whether locals can travel to Muara Siberut or not, or which fishing method is more suitable.

In checking the waves, locals mainly paid attention to the largeness of the waves. This aspect of size is decisive for locals to know what they would do next. Lemanus gave me an example. He is a peladang, does not surf, and is not involved in surf tourism industry. When I talked with him, the waves were (observed as) big, so he pointed to the waves.

> "Here we see that the waves are big, aren't they? Surely, people are not going (to the sea). If the waves are big, people are not going for angling or netting. If we want to go home to Taileleu […] we wait until (the waves are) good." (Lemanus)

Furthermore, locals could also see the foam of the waves from afar. This was especially relevant for local surfers. Hiber often noticed the waves foam from his house, about 20-30 meters from seashore. When that happened, which means there were waves, he would go to the seashore to check the waves further. He checked to see if there were any surfable waves for him. Usually, he would check the (largeness) condition of Ebay waves. He told me that waves can be connected, especially if they are close to each other. For instance, if there are quite big surf breaks in Ebay, Pitstops waves will probably be bigger and surfable, and Nipussi will be even bigger. This kind of waves checking is also crucial for boat operator or surf guide who will bring surf tourists to surfing spots. Thus, waves (checking) can be decisive for any kinds of activity and purpose.

In waves checking, seeing is indeed important. But, it is not a mere practice of seeing (or looking at) – see also Seeing-Hearing (4.4.3). It necessitates attention toward waves. This is where I start focusing on attentiveness. Waves checking is basically an act of paying attention and being attentive toward waves. Echoing James Gibson, Ingold argues that perceiving (waves) means attending (waves). Then, to attend means to notice (2014: 157). To borrow Tsing (2015: 17), waves checking is an 'art of noticing'. When Mentawaians stood on the shore and looked at the waves, they were attending the waves. They managed to do so by the help of their senses, feelings, and bodies. In his analysis on education of attention, Ingold (2001) regards the importance of 'looking, listening, or feeling' in being attentive. Through waves checking and other kinds of practice, Mentawaians have participated in 'situated and attentive engagement' with waves.

Looking, listening, and feeling are not solitary tools of attentiveness. In fact, they might be useless without past experiences. As argued by Valerius, experiences are very important in the relation between Mentawaians and their waves.

> "The point is experience […] Like me. In the past, I did not understand about direction (at sea), natural condition, or weather situation. Because I have been there (at sea) often, then it became experience […] We are experienced because we have gone through, lived, and felt it." (Valerius)

Attentiveness toward sea and waves is not something they can gain for one night. It is derived from long process of being with sea and waves. Such process necessitates actual and practical participation in the environment – through the course of sensory and bodily experiences. It has nothing much to do with intellectual endeavor. Ingold (2001) may call the processes as 'education

of attention'. So, it may be not random at all when Valerius also mentioned about 'education'. In his words: "No teacher, no experience, no education." His account reminds me of an old saying 'experience is the best teacher'. That saying might have become cliché, but I learned that it was practically central in human-waves relationship in Siberut.

Interestingly, according to Valerius, it is not only people's own experience which matters. In practicing attentiveness toward waves, Mentawaians also need the experiences of other people – parents, family, relatives, friends, or strangers. Hence, the habit of talking about waves is significant in Siberut because they can share each other's experiences – see also Waves Talk (4.4.2). How do experiences of others play a role in attentiveness? "We take others' experience, then we copy […] If we do not copy others' experiences, we will not 'get'," Valerius told me. Two things interest me in his account. First, he seemed not finishing the sentence as the word 'get' looks like suspended. Perhaps, I would like to speculate, he meant 'get the feel of it (sea or waves)'. This is resonated with Ingold's (2001) idea that being attentive is alike being tuned up or getting the feel of it. Second, he used the English word 'copy'. Once again, it is like he echoed Ingold.

> "Copying is not the automatic transcription of mental content from one head to another, but is rather a matter of following what other people do […] through repeated trials to bring his own bodily movements into line with those of his attention so as to achieve the kind of rhythmic adjustment of perception and action […] This process of copying, as I have already shown, is one not of information transmission but of guided rediscovery." (Ingold, 2011)

Ingold puts the phrase 'guided rediscovery' because, for him, copying is not totally imitative. It is a mix of imitation and improvisation. In my Siberut case, personal or others' experiences have guided Mentawaian to be attentive at the sea and waves. Yet, they would not be attentive and knowledgeable only by purely imitating the past experiences. They are required to be improvisatory, so they can discover knowledge for themselves.

Improvisation is important because attentiveness toward waves is not isolated from other environmental elements. Waves are related to swell, wind, and weather. Mentawaians consider them when attending the waves. The notion of weather brings me again to Ingold (2011). He introduces a term 'weather-world', refers to the fluxes of medium through which we inhabit the open world. For Ingold, weather – like sound, light, and feeling – is not an object of perception, instead we perceive *in* it. He argues, "in the open world, beings relate not as closed, objective forms but by virtue of their common immersion in the fluxes of the medium" – which is weather (2011: 115). In this sense, human and waves are immersed and engaged together *in* the weather. Ingold adds, "seasoned inhabitants know how to read the land as an intimate register of wind and weather" (2011: 119). Through this quote, I would like to go back to Mentawaians.

Personally, I was often impressed by the way locals in Mapaddegat befriended with weather, sea, sky, and other natural phenomena. Mentawaians related with them with a kind of attentiveness which I cannot fully grasp. I remember one morning in the terrace of my living place in Mapaddegat. The wind was blowing calmly, when Mamak said, "there will be big storm at

12pm." That exactly happened. It was one of the first days of storm during my fieldwork. How she could know that is still a mystery to me. Nevertheless, Mamak was a seasoned inhabitant – in Ingold's account – who could read weather through attentiveness and intimacy between various environmental beings – including herself. In attending waves, Mentawaians also practice Mamak's kind of attentiveness toward weather.

Besides weather, Mentawaians also noticed the swell and wind. Locals surfers understand them very well. They know each wave requires different wind and swell conditions. In general, no-wind is the best situation for surfing. Furthermore, off-shore wind is way more preferable than on-shore wind. Let's take Pitstops waves as example. Yusuf told me that Pitstops requires southerly or northerly wind to become surfable. In terms of swell, Hiber explained me that Pitstops needs medium swell[12] so they can be surfable. In other sea activities, such as seafaring and angling, wind and swell are also decisive. For Valerius, the former is even more significant. "If the wind is good, no matter how is the swell, people will keep going (to sea)," he claimed. Waves, weather, swell, wind, human, and other environmental elements are virtually inseparable. In the context of weather-world, weather binds all into the complex fluxes and flows of life.

To sum up, I would like to underline again my main argument in this section: attentiveness is the cornerstone of engagement with waves in Siberut. In being attentive toward waves, Mentawaians encompass attention, experiences, understanding, and knowledge. All is entangled to underlie their engagement with waves. In the two next sections – Being at Sea (4.3) and 'Waves' on the Land (4.4) – I will narrate various practices of engagement with waves among Mentawaians. In all those practices, attentiveness is crucial.

4.3. Being at sea

Mentawaians do 'being at the sea' through four dominant practices: surfing, searching for fish, seafaring, and working. To various degrees, the existence of surf tourism provides rationale of these practices at sea. Surfing with surfboard among Mentawaians, for instance, would have never been existed without the presence of foreign surfers. Seafaring although has been practiced since long time ago, becomes more frequent because of surf tourism. As there is no commercial fisherman among Mentawaians, working at sea is basically only related to surf tourism business. Finally, searching for fish might be the only practice which is not relying too much on surf tourism. Each practice of being at sea has its own interplay with waves.

4.3.1. Surfing

Mentawaian children have played with the waves since long time ago. Both Lemanus and Hiber, respectively 43 and 31 years old, recounted their childhood stories of playing at the wave

[12] Medium swell means 8 to 10-seconds period between waves (https://www.surfertoday.com/surfing/9116-the-importance-of-swell-period-in-surfing). Swell (period) is related not only to waves' size, but also its frequencies.

breaks near the shore in Taileleu village. They use wooden board around one-meter length, usually from *pulai* wood, commonly used for house materials, to play with the waves. Unlike popular form of surfing, they were not standing but lying prone on the board. As Dudum confirmed, it was like bodyboarding. Indeed, Hiber likened the wooden board he used to use to boogie board, which is used in bodyboarding. As alternative, the children also used sago leaves which were assembled and nailed with bamboo nails. Hiber recalled this childhood pastime as 'funny' (*lucu*) and 'strange but real' (*aneh tapi nyata*[13]). Lemanus affirmed that such pastime was played at 'the beach not sea', on 'sand waves not reef waves', and with 'sleeping position not standing or sitting'.

Mentawaians started knowing surfing, or riding the waves by standing on the surfboard, after foreign surfers came to their islands. Beforehand, no one stood on the waves in Mentawai. In fact, in the early days of surf tourism in Mentawai, many locals were astonished by surfing. Joni recalled, "From one tip to other tip (of the island), many people lined up watching surfing, that is in the old days when surfing first came here, around 2000s or 1990s. Amazed. Why do people stand on the waves? How come? Weird!" In similar tone, Hiber told his own version: "Impossible that people go into the hollow of waves break […] we didn't believe because we didn't see the real proof […] During school break I went here. There were those foreigners. Since then we believed that surfing is real." Today, Mentawaians are getting used to surfing. Even many of them surf nowadays, usually young male. How did they know how to surf?

Local surfers narrated how surf tourism has become a primal factor of their ability to surf. For instance, they often mentioned broken surfboards which foreign surfers left to locals, either as souvenir or not. It all began with a broken surfboard. Slowly, they abandoned the wooden board and started playing with surfboard. Father of Hiber told me that his son started surfing when he got broken surfboard from one foreign guest in their family homestay. Then, Hiber tried to surf by himself at the sea; first paddling with surfboard and eventually standing on it. Dudum's story was quite similar. He got his first surfboard from Jangguy, his elder brother, who had worked in surf charter boat. One time, Jangguy came home with some broken surfboards from the boat's guests. He fixed them and gave one to Dudum. "Then I tried to play (surfing) […] there is a spot in front of our house […] waves spot named Ngungutkirip[14]," Dudum said.

Yusuf told me that nowadays there are many more small children learning to surf, compared to a decade ago when he started to learn surfing in Taileleu. I observed the same thing in Muara Siberut. There is one surfing spot in 'door of estuary' (*pintu muara*) where many children learned to surf. Meken, Joni, and Parlin are only few of them. The waves are relatively small, perfect for little children to learn to surf. The group of children usually bring only one surfboard and take turns to play with it. This resonates with what Fletcher (2014: 132) argues in the context of rafting in Costa Rica. He writes that many Costa Rican rafters were first exposed to rafting as small children who enthusiastically greeted the rafts at the end of trip. So do Mentawaian surfers. They were first exposed to surfing as little children who amazedly watched foreign surfers riding

[13] Typical Indonesian expression to refer to something which seemingly unreal, but actually real.
[14] It literally means 'the tip of Kirip'. Kirip is a name of the place in Taileleu village.

the waves. On the development of surfing culture in Bali, Leonard (2004) found similar thing. Balinese surfers started as enthusiastic children who saw foreign surfers on the waves, interacted with them at the beach, and were slowly brave enough to borrow their surfboards and try to surf.

The notions of 'learning' (*belajar*) and 'trying' (*coba*) are much apparent when local surfers recounted how they have become able to surf. Most of them learned to surf during elementary or junior high school. Some started with wooden board, while the others already started with surfboard, usually given by foreign surfers, either directly or through family member who worked in surf tourism industry. Many local surfers recalled that, back then, they were at the waves almost everyday. They went to the waves after school and went back home when it was almost dark. In the weekend, they also did the same but with longer time. I argue that learning to surf was a childhood pastime for many Mentawaian boys who live near the waves break. If they can surf well today, it contains years of playing with the waves as enthusiastic little boys.

Learning and trying are inseparable. They are parts of the same coin. For Tepa, learning and trying to surf contain the element of falling. He started learning to surf when he was no longer a child anymore. He has worked as a boat operator in Sabbit Surf Camp for several months when his boss motivated him to learn surfing. At first, he was not interested at all. Then, he eventually tried. Interestingly, he told me that he felt 'addicted' (*kecanduan*) of surfing when he was able to stand on the surfboard for the first time, then fell. I had not noticed the importance of falling for him before he told me the same thing for second time. "I feel addicted in the first moment I can stand, then fell hit by the waves," I recalled him saying this. After that, he cannot stop surfing. He even once had eight stitches on his head because of surfing accident. Like a wise man, he lectured me: "If we take the waves, we must accept the risk."

The way Mentawaian surfers got immersed in surfing reminds me of enskilment. Ingold (2000: 37) proposes the concept of enskilment to oppose enculturation. What implies in enskilment is not knowledge, skill, or understanding derived from a process of (cultural) transmission prior any contact with environment. Instead, enskilment is the process of "understanding in practice […] in which learning is inseparable from doing, and in which both are embedded in the context of a practical engagement in the world" (2000: 146). Palsson (1994: 919) adds that enskilment is not a total cognitive process as it involves the whole person interacting with environment. I argue that enskilment might reflect Mentawaians surfer's learning process. They never had any (in)formal surf school or teacher. Instead, the waves are their teachers. Joni put it bluntly: "I learned here (in Bengbeng waves) […] I practiced it immediately at the waves […] we never attend surfing school, we surf straightaway."

4.3.2. Searching fish

Mentawaians also do 'being at sea' through activity of 'searching fish' (*cari ikan*). In Mapaddegat, locals search for fish in various ways. There are, at least, five fishing methods: *menjaring* (net trapping), *menjala* (net throwing), *memancing* (angling), *menombak* (spearing), and

panu (hand fishing net). Each also has different technologies of catching fish. In Mapaddegat, every family use traditional fyke net (*jaring*) to trap the fish in daily basis. They put the *jaring* in the sea, usually near the shore or in the reefs, and just leave it there. Every morning, they check if there are any fishes caught in their *jaring*. Net throwing is also common to see. Using the cast net (*jala*), they throw the *jala* in the seawater near the shore. Before throwing the *jala*, they pay attention to the splash of seawater which indicates the presence of fishes. Then, they pull and drag the *jala* to the beach to take out the caught fishes. *Panu* also uses net technology but in different way. It uses hand fishing net which is installed with bamboo or rattan wood. As net throwing, they pay attention on the splash of seawater before scooping their *panu* to catch fish. The three methods show that handline fishing techniques and use of net are dominant in Mentawai's fishing practice.

Angling and spearing can also be seen in Mentawai seawater. There are some variations of angling. Mentawaians go to the sea with sampan or angle around the reefs near the shore. In Mapaddegat, sometimes I observed locals using surfboard to go out to the sea and angle the fish. If they angle around the reefs, they might do it during the day or in the night. They usually use nylon string and worm or small fish baits. They may use fishing rod or without it – they hold the nylon string by their hand if not using fishing rod. Compared to other methods, spearing is practiced less often. Obviously, spear (*tombak*) is the main component in spearing fish. Besides, they may use diving goggle and snorkel if they go spearing at the sea – surely not too far from seashore. They can also spear fish around the reefs or in the shore, usually in the night by using flashlight – Joni said that the fish will be motionless if highlighted by the flashlight so it will be easier to spear it.

Figure 6. Jala (cast net)

Many locals confirmed that there is no *nelayan*[15] (fisherman) among Mentawaians. Fishing is not their source of income, rather it is just for daily needs. The traditional and simple fishing techniques they practice might also reflect it. Lemanus said, "For Mentawai people, if we have fish, not important to sell it. That is why we are not fishermen. We go, we eat by ourselves. If we get fish,

[15] *Nelayan* refers to those whose primary 'bread and butter' is catching fish at the sea.

it is for the family, for the children." The issue of *nelayan* sometimes confused me. In Mapaddegat, I only found one man who deliberately looked for shrimps for commercial purpose. However, he does it not in regular basis, but rather occasionally. Valerius explained me, "No fishermen here. If one claims to be fisherman, it is a lie. Fisherman's focus of economy is on the sea, right? Here, if people get fish, they don't sell it. Only for own belly." If one asks why there is no fisherman among Mentawaians, the answer lies on *ladang* as their dominant traditional mode of dwelling. Traditionally and historically, *ladang* of coconuts and cloves is their main economic focus.

However, it does not necessarily mean that sea and fish are not important at all. In Mapaddegat, along with the family whom I live with, I ate fresh-caught fish almost everyday. During the time of storm, when locals could not go fishing, I could feel their anxiety when they realized that they would not eat fish. "Ouch, no fish for today," they complained. In Mentawaian family's dining table, fish is the most common source of animal protein – chicken and pork are eaten less regularly – especially for they who live on the coast or island. Usually, they eat rice or sago with vegetables and fish. In this sense, sea becomes integral part of Mentawaians because it provides them daily food – fishes. Because of that practical basis of human-sea relationship, locals need to understand the sea and its elements, including the waves.

How does the practice of searching fish interplay with the waves in Siberut? To response such question I am tempted to cite my own field notes:

> "Mamak came back from throwing net at the beach. "Waves are not good," she complained. I asked why. She said that it was because the waves are small, so there weren't many fishes. She added that if the waves are big, there will be a lot of big fishes […] Waves are related to the fish, to the food supplies. People in this island are quite relying on the sea to fulfil their food provision. Hence, waves are indirectly crucial because they may influence what people eat in the next dinner or breakfast." (field notes, 24 November 2017)

Each fishing method has different interplay with waves. Dudum's account on angling reflects that: "If the waves are big, the water is not clear. So, the fish will be rarely caught because the bait is unseen. Small waves are better." Similar thing applies in spearing. As Paskah told me, the fish cannot be seen and be speared if the waves are big. Big waves are also not good if one wants to go angling or putting the net trap at the sea. Interestingly, related to waves, I observed that locals are often going to the sea area near Ebay surf breaks to do angling or to put the net trap. The similar thing I observed in Pitstops surf breaks. They search fish at the edge of surfing spots; making a good scene of surfer riding the waves while, behind it, the angler fishing on the sampan. As *ladang* and surf tourism modes of dwelling which live harmoniously, so do surfing and fishing. Many non-surfer locals claimed that surfing does not disturb their activities of searching fish, because both are practiced in the different areas of sea. According to Jongerius (2013: 47), "the surfing does not impact the fishing, because the fishing does not directly take place on the big waves, as the surfing does."

4.3.3. Seafaring

For locals in Mapaddegat and surrounding area in Nyangnyang Island, traveling by sea is an inevitability. Originally, they come from administrative villages in Siberut mainland and sea is the only connection between Siberut and Nyangnyang. In my field notes, I wrote:

> "There is no way to turn one's back on the sea. Here, sea is a responsibility which has to be done. People must go through it to hug their relatives, to buy food supplies from shops in Siberut, or to eat fish for dinner. Sea is the reality which cannot be postponed." (field notes, 15 December 2017)

Mentawaians' seafaring experiences existed long before surf tourism came to the islands. In Mapaddegat, for a long time, locals have travelled by sea from their village in Taileleu to cultivate their *ladang* of coconuts and cloves. They live in the island for several weeks or months before going back to the village. Some of them go back to Taileleu every weekend. "To meet family and go to church on Sunday" was the common answer I got about their going-home-on-weekend habits. They usually work in *ladang* from Monday to Friday, so they can go home on Saturday and come back to the island on Monday.

Figure 7. Pompong (front) and motor engine boat (back)

The difference between past and present lies on the technology. Back then, Mentawaians waded through the sea by rowing the sampan. Now, they might still use the sampan itself but using engine instead of paddle. Rowing sampan is still used only when they go angling or putting net trap in the sea not far from shore. For seafaring in far distance, they rely on engine. There are two types of engine locals use nowadays: *pompong* and motor boat engine. *Pompong* is less developed engine, compared to motor boat. The engine itself is not specifically for sampan or boat. It can also be used in water system, cutting the grass, and producing sago or coconut. Meanwhile, motor boat engine is specifically designed to travel by sea. While *pompong* is installed in sampan, motor engine is used in boat – either wooden or fiberglass boat. Obviously, motor boat has more power than *pompong* and rowing boat, thus it can travel faster than the others.

In one way or another, surf tourism reshaped Mentawaians' seafaring experiences and its technologies. One of the changes is intensity. Valerius noticed that surf tourism has made locals from Mapaddegat go to Muara Siberut more often than before. It has become routine.

> "Now it is easy for people to go here. They don't think about operational costs anymore. There is enough income from tourism. In the past, when they only focused on coconuts, it was not an insignificant matter. It was not as often as now, as routine as now. Because they need 500,000 to 600,000 rupiahs to be thrown just like that." (Valerius)

Normatively, we can assume that those who are involved in surf tourism industry earn higher income from surf tourism than from *ladang* before. Now, they can invest on motor boat engine and spend money on gasoline without much hesitation. Besides, they also need to have a motor boat engine so they can guarantee tourist's safety and comfort during sea journey. The needs and routine of surf tourism has also shaped Mentawaians' seafaring motives.

There are three places that locals in Mapaddegat regularly go to: Taileleu, Peipei, and Muara Siberut. Taileleu village is where their actual houses are, so they go there to be back home. Peipei is the capital of Northwestern Siberut, approximately 15 minutes boat trip from Mapaddegat. They usually go to Peipei to buy urgently needed stuff, such as potable water, groceries, or diesel oil (for electricity generator). They also go to Peipei for emergencies, such as going to health centre. However, in general, they prefer to buy food supplies and other things in Muara Siberut, about a one-and-a-half-hour boat trip away. There is another important motive why they regularly go to Muara Siberut: picking and bringing surfers. Muara Siberut is the main entrance in Siberut Island. Ferries and passenger ships from Padang bring surfers to Muara Siberut's port. Local boat crews of surf accommodations pick or bring the surfers there. While in Muara Siberut, they also buy food supplies, oftentimes not only for their own accommodation but also other accommodations and families. It is very common for locals in Mapaddegat to entrust boat crew who go to Muara Siberut to buy their food supplies.

Seafaring in Mentawai seas necessitate bravery, skills, and understanding of sea. Three of them are not isolated, but interplayed. Daniel, boat operator of Gingin Resort, once told me locals who living and working in the island should be able to operate the boat. "No matter the weather is good or not, you must be able," he insisted. Daniel said so because many workmates of his have not been able to operate boat. He continued with rhetorical question, "The problem is: you brave enough or not?" Joni, for instance, is able to operate boat but he admitted he was not brave enough to travel alone and to bring surfers to surfing spots – because he regarded the seas near surf breaks in Siberut are rather difficult. 'Not skillful yet' is his explanation. So, ability is one thing and skillfulness is another thing. Understanding might bridge both of them, so people are not merely able but also skillful on seafaring.

What is to understand about sea? Valerius told me that, for Mentawaians, wind is the most important aspect – aside from sea tides – which will decide whether they go seafaring or not. Meanwhile sea swell is not so decisive. Locals will keep going when the wind is friendly, which

means no wind at all or small wind. Strong wind, especially the westerly wind, is considerably not good for seafaring. Sergio regarded westerly wind as 'the most dangerous of all'. He added that sea current is significant in seafaring. Talking with me during a day of storm, he said that one must know how to control boat in such situation and one must understand the movement of current. He understands about sea current in stormy days, so he was confident to travel by sea that morning – he came from his village Tololago to sell souvenirs in Mapaddegat. "But never go against the sea current! It means looking for death," he warned me. Sergio's account depicts the interplay of skill (to operate boat), understanding (of sea conditions), and bravery (confidence).

Understanding of sea includes attention on waves. Valerius went further by stating that waves can be like a compass in seafaring. As Sergio and many others, he agreed about the expression of 'never go against the waves'.

> "For example, we want to go to Tuapejat and we don't use compass. From here, our direction is ahead. We don't know about radius, can be 40 or 45 degrees, we don't know. The important thing is the island can be seen, so we just move forward. To make it safer, we just follow the waves. Don't go against the waves. Our compass is the waves. If the waves go here (making hand gestures), we don't go there, we follow beside them." (Valerius)

Furthermore, Valerius told me another nuance of waves as compass. In the times of trouble, for instance when the boat engine is broken while we are at the sea, waves can lead us to the land. "We just follow the flow of the waves. Waves will go to the shore, they never go to the sea. We will be brought to the shore," he added. Valerius described the simple fact of waves that many people, including me, seem to ignore. He said that seafarers' understanding can be generated by two things: the experiences they had at the sea and the stories of others – parents, family, relatives, friends, etc. Thus, not only one's own embodied experience but also others' experiences may (co-)constitute one's understanding of sea and waves.

4.3.4. Working

What surf tourism offers to many Mentawaians is job opportunity. It includes the works at sea. In Mapaddegat, working tasks at sea consist of operating boat, surf guiding, photographing, bringing/picking the guests, and buying food supplies. The last two of them have been discussed in the previous section. Here, I will only discuss about the three others. Of the three, boat operator is central. Basically, its main daily task is to bring the surf tourists to surfing spots. Still, they also undertake the roles of surf guide and photographer, especially in Mapaddegat which is more of surf camps and homestays area. Discussing the works of boat operator might illustrate the daily life of surfing island. Furthermore, it is important to note that 'working at sea' here is basically the mixture of surfing and seafaring. So, in working, attentiveness toward sea and waves are connected to those two activities.

Usually, the guests surf two times a day – morning and afternoon, so the boat operator works for two shifts every day. They go out to the sea after breakfast, go back to the island for

lunch at surf camp/resort, go out to the sea again after lunch, and go back home before it is dark. This kind of schedule is related to sea tides. Lunch time is usually when the tide is low. So, surfers play before and after that time. Dudum recounted his daily work like this:

> "In the beginning I prepare the gasoline […] then I pick up the guests at the beach. Before going I ask the guests about where to play […] we check each other's opinion. I give them options of spots, based on wind, weather, and waves. They just choose. For example, for southerly wind there are some spots which can be played, they just decide. Then we go directly to the place they have agreed […] I just drive the boat […] (after arrived) the boat is anchored, tidied up, and cleaned. After all is done, I go to play. When one guest has returned to the boat, I have to return as well to help them taking the surfboard." (Dudum)

As Dudum's account shows, boat operator works contain not only the skill of operating boat and opportunity to surf, but also attentiveness toward waves and weather. Attentiveness and understanding cannot be acquired in one night. Dudum mentioned about 'learning' (*belajar*) and 'experience' (*pengalaman*) to explain how he is able to understand the waves. He learned a lot about waves and weather when he worked as substitute boat operator in Mentawai Surf Retreat (MSR). As a surf resort, MSR has an official position of surf guide who decides where the guests will play. From experience of working with surf guide, Dudum slowly learned about waves. Especially on the boat, he often communicated with surf guide about sea, waves, and weather. What he has learned and experienced shapes his understanding of waves.

During my fieldwork, he worked in Sabbit Surf Camp. For surf camp's boat operator like him, understanding of waves is not only for driving the boat, but also for arguing about today's best surfing spots with his guests. Actually, that should be the role of surf guide. However, unlike surf resort, surf camp usually does not have official role of surf guide, so the boat operator takes an additional role of guiding the surfers. In surf resort, the role of boat operator and surf guide is rigidly separated. Valerius told me that surf guide has responsibility to guide the guests and to decide which surf breaks they will play on, based on natural conditions – such as weather, swell, wind, and waves – and the guests' surfing skills - "if the guests only have beginner skills, do not give them the big waves." Most of surf guides who work for surf resort in Siberut are foreigners. Valerius thought it should not be the case. "Surf guide should be locals, because we who know nature condition in Mentawai," he argued. For now, Mentawaians take the role of surf guide only as substitute – in the absence of official one – and as additional task.

Boat operator who works in surf camp, like Dudum, basically carries all the tasks related to boat and sea. For instance, they also bring and pick the guest to/from Muara Siberut and operating boat to Peipei or Muara Siberut to buy food supplies. When the season is off, they also have responsibility to bring the kitchen staffs home – to various villages in mainland Siberut. In daily basis, besides operating boat and surf guiding, Dudum is also occasionally assigned as photographer. It happens when the guests also pay for 'photo package'. Simply put, he needs the skills of operating boat, understanding of waves and guest's surfing skills, and photography skills. His task as photographer is taking as many photos as possible when his guests surf the waves.

Depends on the surf breaks, he may take photos from the boat or go off to the beach and take photos from the land. Dudum mentioned some criteria of good surf photographs: quality of the picture (brightness, contrast, sharpness, etc.), type of waves – “surely the big waves”, technique and position of photographing, and background of the picture.

Besides all I discuss above, there is one other type of working at sea: working in surf charter boat. This work is rather unique as it is not based on the land. During specific period of surfing trip, the workers only stay at the sea. Hiber and Jangguy have experienced working in charter boat, although they no longer do that anymore. Hiber recalled his charter boat experience like this: "I work as a crew […] bringing the guests for surfing, picking them up, washing the boat, cleaning the dishes, tidying up the boat." He worked in charter boat for more than ten years – about eight months per year. During that time, he was not only seafaring in Mentawai seas, but also went further to seas and surf breaks in Nias Islands and Aceh. From many informal conversations with Hiber, I can assume that his charter boat experience has made him learned and understand a lot about boat (seafaring skills), waves (for surfing), and sea (along with its various weathers).

To conclude, being at sea in Siberut leads Mentawaians to engage with waves. However, each practice of being at sea has different interplay with waves. They develop specific attentiveness and understanding about waves based on different practices. For instance, engagement with waves in surfing are different from the ones in seafaring and fishing. For Mentawaians, waves ‘are not known in an abstract or generic way’ (after Gibbs, 2010: 367). Besides, I also have shown how surf tourism plays in such interplay between practice at sea and waves. Surf tourism enacts different mediating roles in surfing, fishing, seafaring, and working. As you may notice, it has complicated Mentawaians’ practices of being at sea.

4.4. ‘Waves’ on the land

Other than being at sea, Mentawaians relate with waves through land-based practices of engagement. In this part, I will explore how waves has ‘penetrated’ into the land through its visual representation, talks on waves, practices of seeing and hearing, and waves-driven commercial activities. This exploration of ‘waves’ may offer understanding on how Mentawaians keep engaging with waves, including when being on the land. Especially in Mapaddegat, this penetrative nature of waves was very much apparent. Through this part, we may realize that waves and sea have influenced Mentawaians’ (land) life so deeply.

4.4.1. Visual representation

Engagement with waves in Siberut is not restricted only with 'real' waves, but also with visual representation of waves. In the first days of fieldwork, while I was still at Muara Siberut, I observed that 'waves' are everywhere. In the very first night, I was eating in a small restaurant

when I saw three surf posters on the wall. Each pictured the big waves with men riding them – unfortunately I did not notice whether they are Mentawaian waves or not. Two days later, I watched dozens of high school students playing indoor football. I wrote a note on that occasion: "What interested me is seeing many surfing clothes and accessories around: t-shirt, shorts, sunglasses, sandal, and cap. I remembered one kid was wearing shorts with waves motif. I thought: well, waves are everywhere." The next day, before I headed to Mapaddegat, I entered one clothing shop and looked at what it was selling. One thing caught my attention, that is a maroon blue t-shirt with a phrase 'the men and the wave', along with artistic design of waves. The seller told me that surfing clothes are fast-moving product in Siberut as they are local's favorite. They are mostly imported from Bandung (West Java) and Bukittinggi (West Sumatra).

Figure 8. Yusuf's waves drawing

In Mapaddegat, a surf tourism place, visuals of waves are more apparent. My living place – a surf homestay – was full of waves visuals, ranging from pictures, photographs, and paintings. In the hallway, there is a framed photograph of Hiber while he surfed in Pitstops. The photo was taken and given by his Brazilian friend. Hiber has many surf photos, either of himself or others. His phone wallpaper was the photo of himself surfing. I noticed the importance of photograph for Mentawaian surfers when one night we gathered in my living place. Dudum showed his surf photos to Yusuf. I looked at them: many kinds of waves and Dudum riding them. Occasionally, he posted his surf photos on social media. "Mostly, the photos are for handphone wallpaper and profile picture. Whenever I have internet, I post it on Facebook or Instagram […] I feel cool, happy, and satisfied. When we have photos, we can see our surfing output," Dudum explained.

Not only one's own photos, some Mentawaians also enjoy picture of other surfers, usually foreign professional surfers. Yusuf, for instance, has some surfing pictures which he downloaded from the internet. The pictures he collected are typical, that are the man riding the waves, mostly

the 'barrel'[16]. What is the importance of those pictures for him? His answer portrays a romantic relationship between man and the waves:

> "It is like: when we are far and miss the waves, we can only see pictures of waves, many kinds of waves. For instance, when the waves are infrequent, or when living in the village for a week without waves, the pictures can be seen, as a consolation before sleeping." (Yusuf)

Besides, Yusuf also likes to draw. Sometimes he draws in the paper with pen or pencil. Some other times, he draws in a piece of plywood with colorful marker or pen. One of his favorite themes in drawing is waves. He recounted his hobby of drawing the waves: "I did it because I was bored, nothing to do. This is it, looking for something to do, drawing [...] (why waves?) because the environment here is about waves, about surfing, surfing life. So, mostly I draw about it." Some of his drawings are hanging on the wall of the house, especially the plywood ones.

The pictures of waves can also be enjoyed through reading surf magazine. In all surf resorts and some surf camps that I visited, there were always (international) surf magazines – mostly English-written. Occasionally, local staffs are likely to open its pages and see its pictures.

> "The visual representation of waves and surfing can be clearly seen by turning every page of surf magazines. There are (picture of) waves everywhere […] In the place with not so much entertainment, with surfing as dominant practice, reading (or opening) surf magazine is a very reasonable thing to do. It kills time, it fills the passion." (field notes, 14 December 2017)

Hiber admitted that surf magazine is not only enjoyable, but also a source of inspiration. He mentioned *Surf Time Magazine* as one of the means how he knew surfing in the first place. Moreover, surf film/video are important visual representation of waves and inspiration to surf. Many Mentawaian surfers thought of surf film when telling their early days of getting in touch with surfing. Parlin told me, "At the beginning, I watched videos to look at how to play. From there, I noticed it is a nice sport." Meanwhile, Dudum has his own story as he used to watch surf films brought by his seniors who worked at surf charter boat. He said: "That was still CD (compact disc) era. They always brought CD as souvenirs for Taileleu children, then we watched together. Sometimes we turned on the electricity in the afternoon only for watching surfing CD."

In Mapaddegat, watching surf film/video is practiced daily, especially by local surfers. In Gingin Resort, for instance, I often watched surf films with the staffs when there were no guests. In homestays or surf camps, local surfers were often seen watching surf video through their smartphone. For them, watching surf film/video is a way of learning. Yusuf narrated like this: "We can learn from there. We watch and learn how people can do that. For example, how to take the waves, or how to stand, or how to surf inside barrel. We look at the techniques." Furthermore, Yusuf often went surfing with his GoPro action camera. Among surfers, video technology is an important gear for self-learning and showing off – either to friends or to get a sponsor. Yusuf share

[16] Barrel or tube waves is 'the most sough-after surfing experience' (Weiner, 2008). Barrel occurs when the top of the wave pitches over the surfer, so he/she is completely enclosed inside the barrel/tube/hollow. Mentawaian surfers often called barrel with Indonesian word '*lubang*' (literally means 'hole').

this surfer's rationale, especially on learning: "Actually I really want to watch my own video. From there, we can learn. For example, how to catch the waves. Sometimes we make a mistake and fall. From video, we can know our mistakes, so we can correct ourselves."

Figure 9. Waves souvenirs

Lastly, waves are visually represented in souvenirs. In Siberut, surf souvenirs are crafted by locals from Tololago. Baril said that 'almost half of village population are craftsmen' and 'only Tololago people who make souvenirs, no other villages'. Several days a week, they go to the islands where surf accommodations are located to offer their handicrafts. They craft the souvenirs in the village and try to sell it by moving from one island to another. They craft and sell various wooden articles, such as surfboard (in various sizes), little box, many kinds of waves cravings, little paddle, and sampan miniature. Waves are represented in almost all souvenir items they craft, either figure of waves (in wood craving or little box) or waves names (in surfboard). The most fast-moving souvenir is wooden surfboard. "Tourists like it," one craftsman told me. He added that surfboard souvenir must consists of word 'Mentawai', picture of the islands, and names of surf breaks. For me, the most interesting article is wooden carving of waves, that is a kind of painting but carved manually by hands (without machine at all) and showing the scenery of waves. For the craftsmen, waves are translated into artistry, before sold as commodity.

4.4.2. Waves talk

Methodologically speaking, the pleasure to talk among Mentawaians helped me to engage easily in informal conversations with them. In Siberut, you can just jump on local people's terrace and make a conversation. I still remember the very first morning in Siberut when I talked with Yoyok and Leonardo from 6 am to 2 pm! It was an almost non-stop conversation, only interrupted by some toilet breaks. In his master thesis, Bakker (1999) states: "The favorite pastime of most

Mentawaians is to sit on the porch of the house, smoke, if available drink coffee, but above all: talk! Every conceivable subject proved interesting to start a conversation."

However, talking is actually not only significant in gathering local people's stories. I had not realized the real worth of everyday talks until I sat in staff house's terrace of Sabbit Surf Camp in one fine afternoon. I wrote this account on my field notes:

> "They offered me snacks and tea. Then, they talked in Mentawai language. Men were smoking. I didn't understand a word. But, I realized one important thing. 'Talking in terrace' is not only important in methodological sense but also can be the finding." (field notes, 24 November 2017)

What I meant by 'finding' was this: talking about waves is a practice of engagement with waves among Mentawaians, especially in Mapaddegat. To apply Bakker's argument, waves are interesting subject to spark a dialogue. I often started a conversation with little question like: "how's the waves today?" (*gimana ombak*?) or "good waves?" (*maeru koat*?). At first, I thought that would be relevant only for surfers, but apparently it was not. Conversations about waves were also relevant to those who do not surf. Still, it depends on the situation.

'Situation' (*situasi*) is the keyword for Valerius. "Situation decides the talk about waves," he argued. For instance, one morning I just woke up, sat in the terrace, and even had not sipped my coffee yet, when a guy I had not known before started a conversation by saying: "The waves are tricky this morning." It was Sergio, a craftsman who just came from Tololago village. There was storm that morning. To reach Mapaddegat, he travelled through the sea for about an hour with his *pompong.* He does not surf. Waves talk I had with him was mainly about seafaring. The other day – I also write it in 'Searching Fish', Mamak had just come back from throwing net when she sat with me in the terrace and said, "The waves are not good". She does not surf. Waves talk I had with her was about fishing, especially net throwing technique.

Still, surf waves are the most discussed topic in the island, especially among young local men or when Mentawaians gathered with foreign surfers.

> "What people talk depends on the situation. That is the first. Second, with whom they talk. If they talk with foreigners, it must be about waves (in English). If they talk with their parents, it is impossible to talk about waves all the time. There is a limit. But among young people, in general, the core of conversation (in Bahasa Indonesia or Mentawai) is surfing waves. That is the base. They meet: 'how's the waves?', 'where?', is it good?'" (Valerius)

In one night, I gathered with Hiber and a French surfer, Julien. The two talked a lot about waves. Hiber recounted his experiences of surfing in many surf breaks throughout Mentawai Islands, Nias Islands, and Aceh. He talked about waves with the intimacy which I often wondered: this wave is left, that wave is slow, this wave is good with southern wind, that wave is not good with too big swell, and so forth. At the end, they closed the conversation with such a film-like dialogue:

> *Julien: When I close my eyes, I see the waves.*
> *Hiber: I am thinking about the waves. I want to surf a good wave.*

Whenever I gathered with local surfers, the topic of waves would appear. Sometimes, they discussed about waves while watching surf video or looking at surf photos. They also talked about their today's surfing – whether they were satisfied or whether the waves were good. The plan for tomorrow was also often heard – prediction about where the good waves would be based on swell, wind, and weather. Moreover, sharing past surfing experiences – like what Hiber did with me and Julien – was also part of the waves talk. Dudum explained that 'news' about waves situation was important for local surfers: "Others often ask me about where I play in the morning, whether it is good or not […] the point is waves. They ask about where to play and waves condition." In Mapaddegat, where phone signal and internet were luxuries – so locals and tourists cannot have easy access to surf forecast – mouth-to-mouth 'news' on waves is vital.

Finally, for Mentawaian surfers, waves talk is not only about 'talk about waves' but also 'talk at the waves' – meaning when they surf together. In surfing, waiting is part of the deal. First, surfers have to wait for good swell or supportive wind condition, especially in the season with less consistent waves. Then, while already at the sea, they have to wait again for the waves to come so they can catch it and play with it. In those times of waiting, talking with surf mates becomes a part of surfing joy, as well as a method to kill the time.

> "(We talk) about waves, also funny stories. Some are serious, some are hilarious. We share stories. When we have right companion at the sea, we always laugh. There is always something funny […] we imitate each other's surfing style to make fun, so we are not bored when waiting for waves. If we are daydreamed or playing alone, if we stay silent, waiting the waves feels so long." (Hiber)

4.4.3. Seeing-hearing

In Mapaddegat, everyone practically cannot escape from the sound of waves. I had anticipated this even when I was still in Muara Siberut. One day, when I explained to Bapak (father of) Leonardo that I would do fieldwork in Nyangnyang Island, he said that I would hear the waves everyday. In essence, the sound of the waves is always there for full 24-hours and seven days. It has never ceased. Sometimes it was like a roar, sometimes it was so soft. When I did transcriptions of my interviews in Mapaddegat, I could always hear the waves. Waves are the background to conversations, or precisely, it is an aural medium to every action in Mapaddegat.

In writing about the sound of waves, I would like to think more comparatively. During my first two weeks in Mapaddegat, I shared a living place with two French surfers. Sometimes, when we gathered in terrace, they complained about the sound of electricity generator which was located near the house. Generator was off for several times, so was the sound. When it happened, both were seemingly relieved. They argued that it was much better without the generator's noisy sound, so they could hear the peaceful waves – without any disturbance. I suspect a nuance of romanticism in their argument. Besides, theirs was quite similar to Bapak Leonardo's statement. It was coming from the ones who were impermanent in the island. Bapak Leonardo might not think of the sound of waves with romanticism, nonetheless equally imaginative.

For locals in Mapaddegat, waves are not just imagination but everyday reality. The question I often asked to myself during fieldwork was: how do they perceive the sound of waves? Then, I found such question was wrongly posed. For Ingold (2011: 137-138), sound is not what we hear because sound is not the *object of* but the *medium for* perception. What we hear is not the sound of waves, but the waves. The perceiver perceives the environment *in* it – sound. If we agree with Ingold, it means that everyone is always *in* the sound of waves when being in Mapaddegat. Like the inevitability of seafaring, those who live in Mapaddegat practically cannot choose to not hear the waves. Thus, it was not that they engage with and perceive the sound of waves. Instead, they engage with and perceive the waves through the medium of (waves) sound.

What about the sight of waves? I would like to explore it through three kinds of practices: seeing, looking, and watching. Unlike hearing, seeing the waves is not unavoidable in Mapaddegat. Then, what do Mentawaians see in waves? Paskah, a kitchen staff of Gingin Resort, offered an interesting perspective: "For me, if there are no waves, as sometimes it happens, it is not beautiful. If the sea is flat, no waves, only flat seawater, it becomes not beautiful." For Paskah, waves are the subject of visual perception. She sees waves – through the light – and perceives its beauty. Still, one needs to be critical in reading her account. How did she perceive waves as beauty? The answer, perhaps, lies on what Jetri said about Mentawai waves: "I am proud. Many people from foreign countries come to Mentawai to see, to enjoy natural resources here, to see sceneries here, to enjoy waves here." The Mentawaians' perception of beautiful waves might be derived from surf tourism processes, in which surf tourists perceive (the sight of) waves as such[17].

Compared to seeing, looking demands more attention. I noticed it through the habit of checking waves. As I have explored before, Mentawaians in Mapaddegat look at the waves and check its condition on a daily basis. Local surfers usually looked at Ebay or Bengbeng surf breaks – which could be seen from Mapaddegat shore. For them, those waves acted as parameter. Dudum told me that all surf breaks are related to each other. If waves in Ebay were small, the waves in Pitstops were probably bigger, and the ones in Nipussi were even bigger. So, they might find surfable waves in the latter. For anglers, they always looked at the movement and size of the waves before carrying their sampan to the sea. Sometimes, they decided to not go to the sea because 'the waves are already big'. It seems like the waves spoke to them. For Ingold (2000: 273), that is indeed the case. Mentawaians in Mapaddegat were not merely '*looking at* an inert, opaque object', but rather '*looking into* the eyes of an active, lively subject'. Thus, looking into (eyes of) waves is an act of interaction between two equal subjects. The outcome of interaction, which may decide where the surfers go and whether the anglers fish or not, comes not from the human mind or waves condition per se, but from 'a critical nexus in this process' (2000: 258).

The attentiveness of 'looking' is relevant in watching, too. In surf tourism place like Mapaddegat, watching surfers riding the waves is a kind of pastime for Mentawaians. Daniel does

[17] Following Fletcher (2014: 138), this perception of beauty might be a part of 'education', through which local people in tourist destination are 'educated'/'disciplined'/'governed' to 'see the extraordinary beauty' of their place. This 'education' is delivered by 'those who already see the light', namely (surf) tourists.

not surf, even though he goes to surfing spots almost everyday to work as boat operator. Surfing does not interest him so much. Instead, he prefers to watch people surfing. He finds it more enjoyable and pleasurable than doing surfing himself. For Daniel, waves which rode on by surfers are spectacles. Daniel was not the only spectator though. I often observed locals sitting by the shore and watching people surfing from afar. Many locals told me that in 'waves season', when the waves are big and many surfers come to Mentawai – usually from April to October, they like to go to the beach near surfing spots just to watch the waves surfed by surfers. In fact, by watching (the surfing), Mentawaians participate in every movement of the waves through their gazing eyes. Thus, watching is a practice of engagement with waves, which is participatory and involved both subjects of environment, (Mentawai) human beings and (Mentawai) waves.

In his celebrated chapter *Stop, Look and Listen!*, Ingold (2000: 243) even goes further by rejecting the distinction of sight and hearing, of 'to see' and 'to hear'. He thinks of seeing and hearing as not two separated activities, but as single activity which involves the whole organism in the environment. He assumes that eyes might hear and ears might see. The waves in Mapaddegat environment are perceptually engaged and perceived by Mentawaians by their whole selves, including senses and body, through the mediums of light and sound. Furthermore, here I discuss only about sight and hearing without disregarding the roles of taste, smell, and touch in human engagements with environment. Nothing is more important than others.

4.4.4. Waves as money

Avoiding the discussion on economy of waves is practically impossible in Mentawai Islands – the famous surfer's Mecca. Jongerius (2013) and I share the same fieldwork area, that is Mapaddegat. However, while she focuses on 'waves as resource', I choose to focus on 'waves as physical-sociocultural hybrid'. In short, she (2013: 12) investigates "how something (waves) becomes a resource and a social space, and how this relates to access and exclusion." Meanwhile I started the fieldwork with intention to not emphasize the commercial side of waves. Perhaps I managed to do so, but I cannot fully eschew the notion of 'waves as money'. I commit to use 'money', instead of 'resource', because I do not intend to make such a big theoretical leap in narrating the reality in Siberut.[18] I encountered and will discuss 'waves as money' mainly through issue of surfer tax, supported by other issues – land-based assets, souvenir, and jobs.

It was surfer tax which first made me think of 'waves as money'. Mentawai Islands Regency has applied surfer tax since August 2016, in which every international surfer who enters Mentawai is obliged to pay a retribution tax of one million rupiah (about 60 euro) for 15-days period. Besides, domestic surfer has to pay one hundred rupiah (about 6 euro) for same period. The only ones who do not have to spend money to play the waves in Mentawai are locals – those who are registered as residents of Mentawai Islands. The surf tourists have to pay the retribution tax, either via their

[18] Based on interview with Valerius in Siberut and conversation with Jeske Jongerius in Amsterdam, both were doubtful that Mentawaians have seen waves as resource. Thus, I choose to not use the concept of resource.

accommodation or by themselves in Tourist Information Center (TIC) or the port in Muara Siberut. How does the relation between surfer tax and waves in Siberut? I would like to quote Anto, a government official in TIC Siberut:

> "Why should there be this surfer tax? In terms of regional autonomy, sea is owned by state, here is Mentawai Islands Regency government. They (surfers) are using Mentawai waves, so it is compulsory for them to pay the retribution […] Mentawai waves are one of the riches of Mentawai, aren't they? Mentawai's asset. If it is used by tourist, either international or domestic, because these are local waves, so they need to pay." (Anto)

Anto's account reflects a kind of utilitarian perspective which sees waves as asset. During the interview, he often expressed the term 'use' (menggunakan/digunakan) – either in its active or passive forms. On one hand, surfers use the waves to play. On the other hand, regency government use the waves to generate regional income. According to this perspective, waves have use value. For regency government, waves bring money to the government treasury. As explained by Anto, the money generated from surfer tax will be returned to community, in the forms of 'social service, infrastructure development […] road construction, building health clinics, and building schools.' Furthermore, surfer tax mechanism also targets surf tourism development, through 'provision of tourist transportation, beach cleaning program, building baywatch post, and building more information centres'. Anto claimed that surfer tax has brought 4 billion rupiah (around 239,000 euro) in 2016 and 6 billion rupiah (around 358,000 euro) in 2017.

Figure 10. Surfer tax pamphlet

According to surfers whom I met during fieldwork, Mentawai is the only surf destination applying special tax for surfer. Anto told me that regency government plans to implement tax to cultural tourist – they who go to jungle interior to 'gaze' Mentawai culture. Still, until that happens, only surfers who have to pay tax when entering Mentawai. Before surfer tax, surfer is 'free, not paying' to play all famous Mentawai waves. Why surfers were not paying anything before but are paying tax now. Anto answered: "In the past, waves are ignored […] The rolls of the waves used to be not really useful for Mentawaians. After the existence of surfing here, younger generations realized that waves are important. Waves are useful now." To put simply, Mentawaians have become aware of the use value of waves, thus waves are not for free anymore now.

The notion of 'free waves' also came up during some informal conversations I had with Mentawaians. In my first night in the island, I gathered with Gingin Resort's staffs – I hitchhiked their boat to go to Mapaddegat and stayed for one night in the staff's house. At one moment, I asked them whether Kandui waves are accessible for everyone as there are Kandui Resort and Kandui Villas – the biggest and most expensive surf resorts in Siberut. Then, I got some responses: "Sea waves are free, nobody owns them"; "Some people think they own it just because they have money"; "Waves come from above (God)"; and "If waves can be owned, Mentawai people will be rich!"). They asserted that everyone should have free access to the waves. With surfer tax, the idea of 'free waves' is basically challenged.

Surfer tax is problematic, especially economically speaking. For locals who involve in surf tourism industry, either as entrepreneurs or workers, surfer tax is not very well welcomed. There were two dominant arguments when I talked with people in Mapaddegat about surfer tax. First, they questioned where the money goes because they could not see the visible impact of surfer tax in surf tourism industry in Siberut. "I was confused about surfer tax […] What is it for? What is the benefit? […] We don't know where the money goes," Dudum said. Many people told me that nothing was changed since surfer tax applied by regency government. Prior to implementation of surfer tax, government did socialization to surf tourism businesses. They promised the money would be given back to community, including to Mapaddegat as lively surf accommodation area in Siberut. For instance, it will be used to create garbage dump, to provide emergency boat, and to hire people to clean the beach. Still, none of them is seen in Mapaddegat.

Second, many local entrepreneurs were furious about surfer tax because 'it kills the business'. They claimed that surfer tax has made many surf tourists reduced the length of stay, has reduced the numbers of surf tourists, and has resulted into some people losing their job. In short, they wanted to say that their income was lessened because of surfer tax. Some people accused surf resorts, that they have influenced regency government to apply the surfer tax, so their guests can play in less crowded waves in Mentawai. Expressing his bitterness toward surfer tax, Joni even had a crazy idea: "If surfer tax keeps going on, we will apply the tax here […] I mean we will charge every foreigner who surf here. So that everything is going to be chaotic,". The surfing spot in front of his family homestay is Bengbeng surf breaks. I would like to argue that:

through mechanism of surfer tax, Mentawaians engage with (the idea of) waves differently than before. It may complicate the way they perceive their waves.

Beside surfer tax, 'waves as money' can be examined through discussion on other issues. Waves are (indirectly) bringing money to Mentawaians, yet only through specific vehicles. One of them is land-based assets. Undoubtedly, many Mapaddegat locals are economically benefitting from surf tourism. Surely, not all people are involved in surf tourism. Only they who own the land and they who have capitals to build surf accommodations who can take advantage from waves. Valerius argued that all locals in Mapaddegat must be tempted to be involved in surf tourism industry, but 'they do not have land ownership, then they do not have economic capitals to build (surf accommodation)'. Thus, waves can only become money when locals have the right vehicles, namely land and accommodation. Without them, they will not be able to get surf tourism's piece of cake. They just continue *berladang* and cultivate coconuts into copra. Nothing new for them; except, as Lemanus admitted, surfers have made the islands merrier than before.

The other vehicle is skills, which can be seen through the case of craftsmen and surf camp and resort workers. They may not own the land and not run surf accommodations, but they have expertise on something to turn waves into money. Craftsmen from Tololago know it very well. Waves have become inspiration for them to make art, so they can craft various wooden stuffs, such as mini surfboard and waves cravings. Then they become souvenirs; the commodities to be sold to surf tourists. Baril claimed, "We make a lot of profit. These souvenirs contain a lot of money. If we accumulate, we can get fifty million rupiah (around 3,000 euro) every year." Not only the art-making, other skills also matter. The abilities to operate boat, to cook delicious food, or to speak English can lead people to work in surf resort or surf camp. Dudum, who are skilful at operating boat, said to me: "For me now, waves are the source of life. I can play with the waves. Because of waves I could land a job, I could know so many people at the waves."

To sum up, land-based practices has enriched the engagement with waves in Siberut through visualizing, talking, seeing-hearing, and making money. Obviously, the nature of those practices is different that sea-based practices. Still, those practices necessitate and portray Mentawaians' attentiveness, understanding, and knowledge about waves. Both sea- and land-based practices, basically, have shown how waves has become integral part of who they are (after Brown, 2015: 20). As we have learned how Mentawaians engage with waves, at the sea and on the land, now it is time to find out how they perceive the waves they engage with.

4.5. Contradictory perception

Waves are perceived contradictory for Mentawaians in Siberut. There is no single and stable perception of waves. Alike the unsteady nature of waves, so does Mentawaians' perception of them. Surf tourism has complicated the processes of engaging with and perceiving waves in

Siberut, so now Mentawaians are living in contradictions. I intend to show the contrast, firstly, through the discussion of 'good waves' (*maeru koat*). Then, I will move to contradictory narratives of fearful waves and playful waves. This part is basically about perception of waves in Siberut. Before I start, I suggest that this part is read with the realization that perception is derived directly from Mentawaians' engagement with waves. As Crossley writes, the nature of perception is practical, "what I see is shaped or framed by the activity in which I am involve" (2007: 90).

4.5.1. Maeru koat

At the beginning, I was confused when local people talk about good waves. Sometimes the good waves are the big ones, sometimes the small ones. The relevant questions are: good waves for whom, for when, for what, and for where? Those questions led me to understand slightly more about what it means by good waves. We may understand *maeru koat* through distinction between surfing and non-surfing practices; surfer and non-surfer; big and small waves. In surfing, good waves are usually big. On the contrary, in angling and seafaring, big waves are 'not good' (*ta maeru).* Surf tourism plays a role in (re-)producing those distinction and difference. Prior to surf tourism era, according to Anto, Mentawaians only associated big waves with 'a very bad situation', simply because 'it is not comfortable to go anywhere'. 'To go anywhere' means not only seafaring, but also 'searching fish' at the sea (and seashore). Situation has changed since foreign surfers came, because 'for tourist, big waves mean good condition'. Consequently, Mentawaians started to adopt the then-foreign idea of 'big waves are good'.

Still, the notion of 'good waves' is not simple at all. 'Good', 'not good', 'big', and 'small' are always relative. That is where the problematic lies. *Maeru koat* is not easy to understand because of its relativity, which depends on the interplay between human, waves, and practices of engagement. Valerius used the term 'situation' to sum up such interplay. He argued: "When we want to throw net to trap turtles, small waves are indeed good. When the waves are big, that is good to play surfing […] Situation leads." Thus, the perception of (good) waves is not socially constructed. Whatever it means, it exists neither because of human mind nor waves' quality; but because human and waves meet, interact, and entangle together within the engagement.

Maeru koat in surfing activity was not easy to understand, too. Good waves for surfing do not necessarily have to be big. Joni's account about Bengbeng waves has enriched and complicated understanding of surfing's good waves: "Here (in Bengbeng), small waves are better, because the waves become long. But, if the waves are big, there will be no hole […] they just break, irregular. So, we are not satisfied. Small is better." For Joni, the long and regular waves are important because it can be surfed satisfyingly. So, the big waves are useless if it cannot be played well. Perhaps, feeling 'satisfied' is related to feeling 'comfortable'. Dudum argued:

> "(Good waves) for me is the comfortable ones. Not too big. Nine feet is too big for me. I can still play if it is around seven feet. It means I can guarantee it will not harm me […] If I think it is not comfortable, I do not surf." (Dudum)

He used the Indonesian word *'nyaman'* (comfortable), which is usually used to describe people's relation to others or to a place. For Dudum, the comfortable waves are not too big and not harmful, so they are surfable. Furthermore, he added that waves are comfortable if he can surf 'backside'[19] – he said 'because I am goofy'[20]. Among all surf breaks he has ever surfed in Mentawai, he referred to Pitstops as the comfortable one. He explained: "Pitstops is comfortable. Close to the shore. So if shit happens, suppose that the board is broken, we are close to the shore. Besides, there is the beach and not so many reefs." Size matters, but not really; because other things also matter and add the complexities of *maeru koat* in surfing.

In non-surfing activities, such as fishing, good waves are not less complex. I discuss in Searching Fish (4.3.2) that what constitutes 'good waves' might be different in each fishing method. Good waves for angling are apparently the small ones. Big waves make the seawater not clear, so the fish cannot see the bait. Small waves are better as the seawater becomes more transparent, thus the fish might be caught rather easier. On the contrary, with net throwing method, bigger waves are better. Locals in Mapaddegat told me that big waves will 'carry' many fishes to the shore, sometimes the big ones. So, the chance is bigger to net more fishes in more areas of seawater. In seafaring, the perception of good waves among Mentawaians is probably more stable than other practices. Simply put, good waves for seafarer are preferably small waves. Whichever technology that locals use, either rowing sampan, *pompong* (sampan with engine), or motor-engine boat, small waves are always preferred. It is because they associated big waves with storm, which is undoubtedly dangerous in seafaring.

Finally, 'good waves' can also be read from business perspective. I would like to recount the conversation with Bapak Jam during one sunset time:

> "About changing view on waves, he said: *"Kalau dulu kita takut sama ombak besar. Sekarang, kalau ombak kecil malah dibilang tidak bagus"* ("Back then, we were afraid of big waves. Now, we say that small waves are not good") […] Small waves mean no surfers. No surfer means no money. Then, I replied him: "But small waves are good for fishing, aren't they?" He smiled and said, "Yes, that's also true."" (field notes, 15 December 2017)

I show the passage above to illustrate three points. First, Mentawaians who are involved in surf tourism industry, such as accommodation entrepreneurs, regarded big waves as good waves. This is related to the potential arrival of tourists – along with their money. Valerius explained: "If the waves are good, and there is swell, internet (surf forecast) will show that swell and waves are good in Ebay. That is a golden opportunity. A lot of guests will come." So, good waves for local surf entrepreneurs are whatever 'good waves' mean for surfers, which usually is big (or, at least, not small) waves. Second, it confirms that there has been shift in the way Mentawaians perceive (good) waves. This shift was mainly driven by surf tourism processes in Mentawai. Third, the passage also asserts the contradictory nature of perception of waves in Siberut. The small waves

[19] Backside refers to situation when surfer is facing away from the waves, so the waves are at his/her back.
[20] Goofy means a surfer put the right foot forward when riding the surfboard. The opposite is called 'regular'.

can be bad and good at the same time, for the same people. So do the big waves. The good thing is Mentawaians always have reason to celebrate the (big/small) waves.

4.5.2. Fearful waves

Celebration is one thing, fear is another thing. In general, Mentawaians are afraid of the waves. I even had not reached Siberut when I encountered the notion of 'waves as source of fear' for Mentawai people. At that time, I was having dinner with Larun in a street food stall in Padang – in mainland Sumatra. Larun is *orang hulu*[21], a Mentawaian from Salappa, one of the hinterland areas in Siberut. Knowing that I would study about waves, he said:

> "For us hinterland people, the waves are killer. It is not a friend for us […] I am afraid of the waves […] If I am on the boat when the waves are big, I pray a lot and often piss on my pants. The big waves scare me." (Larun)

Furthermore, Larun distinguished himself from *orang pulau* ('island people'), Mentawaians who live near the sea, in the coast, or in the island. According to him, *orang pulau* 'are not afraid of the waves, not like us (*orang hulu*)' and 'the waves as high as the door are normal thing, they say the sea is okay.' Is it the case, that *orang pulau* are not afraid of waves? My fieldwork experiences told the opposite. Apparently, waves also scare Mentawaians who live near the sea and engage with waves on daily basis.

One morning, I was talking with Lemanus in his copra production place. I asked his opinion about surfers, as he does not surf. With a smile on his face, he said: "They do not think about their wives." Obviously, he referred to the danger of surfing in Mentawai waves. His reference to 'danger' was related to his perception of waves. He used the word *'takut'* (fear/afraid) to describe his view on the waves. Unsurprisingly, *takut* was the most common word I heard when talking about waves with Mentawaians in Siberut. Important to note, *takut* was common not only for those who do not surf, but also for those local surfers. I had not met a single local surfer who was totally immune from feeling of fear toward waves.

Mentawaians indicated the fear of sea and waves through the narratives of misfortune (*kemalangan*) and accident. For them, misfortune means death. They often associated uncalm sea and big waves with phrases like '*cari mati*' (searching for death) and '*antar nyawa*' (delivering life). Both phrases came from those who do not surf; respectively a craftsman from Tololago and a *peladang* in Masasiat. In fact, death at sea is not unusual happening in Siberut. During the fieldwork, I often heard stories about Mentawaians who died at sea in the past. Besides, there are some Mentawaians who used to surf but now have stopped. Why did they stop surfing? Hiber argued, "They are afraid of big waves and 'rolled' (*digulung)* by waves. (They) think they will die." Unlike his former surf mates, Hiber keeps his passion on surfing. Nevertheless, fear of death is also

[21] *Orang hulu* means 'upriver people'. It refers to Mentawaians who live or come from area in hinterland (*pedalaman*) areas. Mostly, *orang hulu* are forest-dwelling people.

existent in him. “Actually, playing with waves is like betting the life,” he admitted. Other Mentawaian surfers apparently realized that engaging with waves through surfing may kill them. In telling his surf experience in Burgerworld waves, Joni noticed that surfing necessitates decent breath-holding ability, if not ‘it is possible to die or get accident’.

Beside death, there is also accident at sea. For Mentawaians who surf, waves-related accident was very much apparent through their surf stories. For instance, Tepa once got a fatal accident when surfing in Pitstops waves. His head was hit by his friend’s surfboard; as a result, his scalp was cut open. Then, he was brought to health center in Peipei and got eight stitches. Mateus, who has stopped surfing, even once got 21 stitches in the head because of surfing accident. Other local surfers were more ‘fortunate’. Hiber frequently got blisters (*lecet)* in his legs and feet, while Joni’s hand was once sprained because ‘hit by the waves’ (*dipukul ombak*). Moreover, many of them showed me their surfing scars, usually because of reefs – they called reef-caused scar as ‘tattoo’. Alike actual tattoo, surfing scar marks off and represents something, which most probably is the risk of playing with the waves.

Outside surfing activity, sea accident was also common. I remember one morning when there was sea accident near Mapaddegat. A *pompong* filled with six people was almost drowned during the sea trip from Taileleu to Mapaddegat. The exact location was near Ebay waves. As most locals agreed, that morning was not a good time to travel by sea, especially with small sampan. Indeed, the weather was very bad that morning. In my field notes, I labeled the weather of that day as ‘the worst since I came’. Fortunately, after being tossed around at the sea for about an hour, those six people were rescued by two men on a motor-engine boat who, by chance, were passing through the sea to go to Muara Siberut. An old woman was fainted, while an old man looked very pale – perhaps almost fainted. Some middle-aged women in Mapaddegat cried hysterically when the survivors were brought to the shore. The situation was emotional and panicky. I was nervous. I thought of two things at that moment of accident:

> “First, how the sea can be very horrific. It seems reasonable that many Mentawaians mentioned about ‘afraid’ when I asked them about waves (and sea). Second, I remembered what Larun told me on the first day in Padang. “Waves are killer,” he said. Perhaps he was right. That morning, Mentawai waves almost took casualties. Yusuf and Hiber agreed that accident like this was not the first time. Some accidents even took casualties.” (field notes, 27 November 2017)

Mentawaians make sense of misfortune (death) and accident at sea through their belief. Teteu Lakka, a shaman who often performs in surf resort, told me: “If misfortune happens in (sea) water, it means our family has ‘problem’.” In Mentawai belief, ‘problem’ is related to the spirits world; thus ‘problem’ means there is something wrong with our soul or our family’s. What is going wrong? Things go wrong because we or our family break the taboo. When it happens, our soul becomes unhappy. The soul may leave us – our corporeal body – so we can be sick or die. A very important taboo in Mentawai society is related to food. When we go to the sea and catch many fishes – more than enough for our family – or hunt in the jungle and get more than enough wild boar, we have to share to our relatives or neighbors nearby. Then, when we have already shared

it, we cannot moan about or show off our good deed. When we share, we have to be genuine. In Teteu Lakka's words: "For example, we have fish. We cannot eat it alone in the room. Very taboo. If we eat, we eat together. No matter how small the fish is, we eat together." This taboo and belief are not only related to the misfortune at sea, but also in other places.

Accident at sea – which do not cause death – is made sense differently in Mentawai belief. They think of accident as a kind of 'natural selection' (*seleksi alam*). Teteu Lakka used parable to explain this. Assume there are three men being at the sea:

> "They want to travel somewhere but suddenly the waves are strong. But only one person stranded[22], the others two are safe. It means they are filtered. That is called natural selection. The two will wonder about the unlucky one. Why do this happen? What is the problem? […] If we see logically, the waves are big, why don't three of them die?" (Teteu Lakka)

Mentawaian believes that everything in environment has spirit, including sea and waves. There are three kinds of them at the sea: good spirit, bad spirit, and indulgent spirit. When Mentawaian is being at the sea, these spirits debate each other. The good want to lead human to good fortune, the bad to bad fortune, and the indulgent acts as an intermediary spirit. Such belief on sea spirits explains what Joni said: "I am scared of the waves during seafaring […] It makes me think: this wave will kill or save people?" For Joni, based on spiritual belief, 'this wave' is not only a wave, but contains three spirits which 'fight' each other to decide the Mentawaian's fate at the sea.

When there is misfortune at the sea, it means the bad spirit wins over the other spirits. The bad spirit wins because something is wrong with the (soul of) human. "Forget the big waves, even small waves we will be stranded (if something wrong)," Teteu Lakka added. On the contrary, the good spirit will save the (soul of) human if 'they are kind people'.[23] It may seem that if things go south at the sea or waves, it is not because of both, but the human. Mentawaian belief does not directly lead to the feeling of fear toward waves per se, but toward the complex environmental relation between human, nonhuman sea and waves, and their (human and nonhuman) spirits. Perhaps, what Mentawaians fear of is not the waves, but the possibility that they are not kind person. Still, waves are the source of fear in Siberut.

4.5.3. Playful waves

I started the previous section with my conversation with Larun, for whom waves are killer and not a friend. In Mapaddegat, I seemingly found the contradiction. I often accompanied local

[22] Some Mentawaians use 'stranded' (*terdampar*, to the shore) to explain about 'drowned' (*tenggelam*). In this context, 'stranded' is closer to Indonesian word '*kandas*', which means stranded to the sea bottom.

[23] In Mentawai, whale is believed as a kind sea animal, through which the good spirit manifests itself. If there is accident at sea but the human has no 'problem', the whale will probably save him/her by bringing the body and soul to the shore. "That often happens here," Teteu Lakka reminded.

surfers walking to the surfing spot. I did not surf, but merely watched them from afar. Comparing Larun's account and my own observation in Nipussi waves, I wrote:

> "These *silainge*[24] went to their waves; with a surfboard stuck in their hands and sunscreen covering their faces from ultraviolet. Afterwards was a contrast. In Nipussi, I did not see pale-faced people who hold the urine near the rolling waves. The fear was gone, turned into a dance. They swam to the middle of sea, waited for their waves, and dance. And dance. And dance. They went home with barrel." (field notes, 15 December 2017)

What if Larun was not completely right, that feeling of fear is not the only perception of waves among Mentawaians? My Mentawaian friends in the island – Hiber, Yusuf, Dudum, Tepa, Nyinyo, Meken, Joni, Jusen, Guntur, Yakub, Daniel, Tupang, Jangguy – did not show me that fear, or the face of horror, when they surfed their waves. They even smiled and laughed, including when the waves hit them down. Waves are their friends. The ones they always play with.

Most Mentawaians who surf regarded surfing as 'hobby'. As hobby, being and playing with the waves offer them pleasure and liberation from boredom and problem. About what they feel at the waves, Meken and Yusuf told me:

> "I feel happy. When I have problem, I go playing surf, the problem is gone. Yes, hahaha (laughing). This is true. When I have issues with friends, I go to the waves, I forget the issues. But the waves should be good. Then, I become happy again. When I stress, I go surfing. Even when I get sick, I could recover if I play surfing." (Meken)

> "Happiness. The boredom is gone. Happy. I have experienced whenever we have problems in the family, for example I am nagged by dad or mom, I go surfing. When I surf, there is no problem anymore. I do not remember it anymore, because I only think about waves." (Yusuf)

The notion of hobby was emerged in Hiber's comparison of surfing with volleyball and *sepak takraw*[25]. The two latter are popular (sport) hobbies in Siberut – and many rural areas in Indonesia. Locals usually play volley ball every late afternoon in village's common field. He told me: "It is fun to surf in the late afternoon, like playing volley or *takraw*. In *kampung* (village), we play volley every late afternoon. In the island, if there is no *takraw,* we do surfing, especially when the waves are good." Besides, Hiber added the idea of surfing as sport – he said "I take it as my sport". This might show the relation between surf tourism and 'new' Mentawaian pleasure toward waves.

Hiber's surfing life story is interesting to tell. First, he played with waves and wooden board as a little child in Taileleu seashore. It was a kind of childhood pleasure. By age of 15, he stopped his education, 'because of surfing'. When he first started surfing, he wanted to be a

[24] *Silainge* is a Mentawaian term for young unmarried man. Schefold (1991: 106) argues that being *silainge* (or *siokkok* for woman) is the most celebrated phase for Mentawaian.

[25] *Sepak takraw* is a popular sport in Indonesia, as well as in other Southeast Asian countries. It is a kind of volleyball, but the players only use their feet – so the kick volleyball. Officially, it is only played by three players per team. The ball is smaller than volley ball. In Indonesia, the *sepak takraw* ball is usually made from rattan.

professional surfer from Mentawai. "I must challenge those Balinese[26]," he recalled his past. Then, life led him to other direction. He worked in Surfaid, surf charter boat, and surf camp for more than a decade. He told me his reason of taking surfing as his sport: "because I have worked in *bule*[27]." Unconsciously, he adopted surfing as sport from foreign surfers he met during his long working experience in surf-related businesses. His experiences also brought him to many big waves, mostly in Mentawai. Interestingly, now he surfs 'only for fun, only for the relaxing (easy) waves [...] only for getting new friends'. He has metamorphosed from a little boy who played with waves only for fun, to an ambitious teenager who wanted to be a pro – for whom surfing was not only for fun but an ambition, to a local worker who adopted foreign sport of surfing, and finally to a man in his 30s who surfs only for fun – like he used to be.

For most Mentawaian surfers, 'hobby' means they surf only for fun. It is like what they, or their seniors, did long time ago; when they as children played with the waves on the wooden board. Then, surf tourism came and turned that childhood pleasure into something 'new'. They still play with the waves for fun, but they also have added some elements. First, now they are standing on the surfboard, not a wooden board. Second, in various degrees, many of them added the element of competitiveness in their 'fun' surfing. For instance, Meken claimed that he has 'beaten *bule* (foreign surfers) who come here (to Mentawai)' and he 'surfs better than *bule*'. Hiber's foregone ambition to 'conquer Ebay' and 'to challenge Balinese' reflected the added element of competitiveness, too. I write about this not to say that Mentawaian surfers has completely lost the sense of pleasure toward waves. The waves still offer them genuine pleasure and liberation, but along with a little of 'foreign' feeling.

Riding the waves is likewise addiction for some local surfers. Joni called himself 'addict of surfing' (*pecandu surfing*) while Yusuf likened surfing to smoking. In the latter's words: "We are like cigarette addicts. When we knew it for the first time, we always want to surf. Even one day we cannot (live without surfing)." Still, that happens. During some days in my fieldwork, there were only very small or even no waves at all. For local surfers, those days were full of despair. "It is boring being in the island if there is no waves," Dudum complained, in one of those no-waves days. The issue of boredom (*bosan* or *suntuk*) was very apparent in Mapaddegat. Imagine an island without any kind of 'modern' luxuries: shops, phone signal, internet, cars, motorcycles, asphalt roads, and so forth. It is very important to find ways to kill the time there. Surely, waves could become one way to escape boredom for Mentawaians living there.

Waves as pleasure and liberation (from problem or boredom) are not something exclusive for Mentawaians who surf. It is relevant for those who do not surf, too. I observed locals often sat in the little 'bar' in front of Ebay waves and looked at them; mostly when there were surfers at it, but not always. Sometimes they just looked at the waves crashing into two big coral reefs in Ebay. I observed the same thing in Nipussi, Pitstops, and Bengbeng waves – there are surf resorts in near those waves. Resort workers often sat and watched the surfers surfing. Seeing

[26] Bali has generated many professional surfers.
[27] *Bule* is Indonesian slang to call foreigner, usually white people.

people riding the waves, probably, still offers a fascination for Mentawaians– as they used to be in the early days of surf tourism. The fascination of surfing was also emerged when I talked with Jetri and Paskah. They work in surf camp and surf resort respectively; they do not surf. Interestingly, they really wanted to be able to surf. Jetri admitted: "What appears in my mind when seeing friends played surfing is I really want to play surfing." Paskah's account was more interesting because she was female – I did not meet any local female surfer in Siberut and I was told there was none. Paskah told me: "When I see people who are good at it, I want to play it: surfing."

Finally, the perception of playful waves among Mentawaians surely cannot be separated from the existence of surf tourism in Siberut. However, I do not want to see it as total imposition of foreign practice of surfing toward local's way of perceiving the waves. This view is primarily based on the fact that Mentawaians have played with the waves since a long time ago. What surf tourism does is restoring and complicating the way Mentawaians enjoy their waves, either through the mimetic practice of surfing or through the act of seeing and watching. Still, I would like to argue that, while feeling of fear is 'old' Mentawaian perception of waves, sense of pleasure is the 'new' one. This 'new' perception is derived from 'new' mode of dwelling in Siberut, namely surf tourism. A local song might indicate my argument: "Look at the waves / there are people surfing / that is the favorite of tourist / they really like Mentawai waves / because the beauty of Mentawai beach and waves." Without surf tourism, the perception of waves among Mentawaians would have been dominated by feeling of fear.

4.6. Understanding human-waves relationship

I have explored the contradictory perception of waves in Siberut by the discussions of good/bad waves and fearful/playful waves. Based on that exploration, I try to make sense of human-waves relationship in Siberut. There are three main points I want to address in part. First, Mentawaians relate with the waves within the tension of 'to avoid' and 'to encounter'. Second, this avoidance/encounter relationship is possible and reasonable because of the materiality of Mentawai waves. Third, contradiction/tension/dilemma in the way Mentawaians perceive their waves do not prevent them to build intimate relationship with waves.

4.6.1. Avoidance/encounter

First and foremost, I conceptualize the nature of human-waves relationship in Siberut as 'avoidance/encounter'. There is always a tension of 'to avoid' and 'to encounter' in Mentawaians' practices of engagement with waves. Besides, this kind of relationship is possible because of the contradictions of *maeru koat* and feelings of fear/pleasure toward waves. Thus, Mentawai human-waves relationship is an uneasy one, in which both human and nonhuman beings interact through dilemma of avoiding/encountering. This is a kind of love/hate relationship between a couple which has been destined to be together.

The notion of avoidance/encounter can be illustrated through the ways Mentawaians associated 'waves season' (*musim ombak*) with 'crab season' (*musim aggau*) and 'storm season' (*musim badai*). *Aggau* is very popular type of endemic crab in Mentawai. *Aggau* has its own season, which means there can be millions of *aggau* in Mentawai seashores during specific time.[28] Teteu Lakka mentioned June-August as crab season – he said: "August is the peak of the peaks". In the crab season, Mentawai has '*muanggau*' tradition, in which they search for *aggau* together in the seashore. Valerius told me this tradition is even much more apparent in Nyangnyang Island and among Taileleu people. During the crab season, they always go to the island to do *muanggau.* Valerius said that *muanggau* is often associated to 'mate finding' (*cari jodoh*). As it gathers a lot of people to find *aggau,* it is believed that unmarried young men and women might find her/his mate during *muanggau.* In short, *aggau* and *muanggau* are very much celebrated in Mentawai. In 2017, the regency government even initiated the inaugural *aggau* festival in Mentawai.

The association of crab season with waves season can be seen through my conversation with Teteu Lakka. He said, "When the waves are not good, that is crab season. Big waves are in the crab season, *muanggau* season." Indeed, the coming of crabs in Mentawai coincides with the waves season which usually starts in April and ends in October. Thus, when millions of *aggau* hit Mentawai seashores from June until Augusts, it is when the waves are still big. Interestingly, the same period is not only filled by big waves and many crabs, but also storms.

Mentawaians associate big waves with storm weather and, thus, waves season to storm season. Unlike *aggau* which is celebrated, storm is not. During New Year's dinner, Leonardo's uncle told me, "Storm weather means good waves for them (surfers), whereas we are afraid of the storm." When he equated storm to surfer's good waves, basically he linked storm to the big waves – which attract many foreign surfers to go to Mentawai. So, while surfers associate big waves as glorious time, 'ordinary' locals see it as 'storm', as something disastrous. In Siberut, storm weather happens in the end (November and December) and middle of the year (June-August). Both are different. The former occurs because of westerly wind and is not identical with big waves. The latter is caused by easterly wind and identical with big waves. Indeed, the mid-year storms happens at the same time as crab season, as well as waves season. What makes me wonder is: why do Mentawaians associate waves season to *aggau* and storm seasons? I would like to speculate that waves may be meaningless before being associated with *aggau* and storm.

The phenomenon is same, that is big waves, but the associations to it are contradictory. One is related to the celebrated crab season which drives many Mentawaians to flock in the seashore to catch *aggau.* They welcome the big waves which bring them a lot of *aggau* to eat. Besides, as Teteu Lakka explained, there are also many other kinds of fish in the crab season. The other one is related to unwelcomed storms which may be catastrophic and limit their activities at the sea, such as seafaring and fishing. Surely, they avoid the big waves in the storm weather, either they do not go to the sea at all or they make sure that their being at sea will not harm themselves.

[28] In other times of the year, *aggau* still can be found, but not in the massive amount as in its season.

Furthermore, *aggau* is considered as *rezeki* (fortune) for Mentawaians, while storm (plus big waves) is identical with disaster – especially as Mentawai experienced tsunami in 2010.

The notion of avoidance/encounter can also be traced in Mentawaians' practices of engagement with waves. Let's talk about their being at sea. Local surfers look for the waves. They want to encounter and to be with the waves everyday. They do it because they think of the waves as pleasure. On the contrary, seafarers and anglers avoid the waves. Especially before surf tourism era, Towner (2013: 152) claims that Mentawaians regard the waves as 'distraction to work'. Lemanus and Sergio, in different occasions, explained me that they must avoid the waves when seafaring or angling at the sea. Although it may be shorter to go straight to the waves and pass it, they never do that. They always do a little detour for the sake of their own lives. "Don't go straight, you will be rolled up (by waves)," Lemanus reminded. In seafaring or angling, the feeling of fear toward waves dominates and provides rationale to avoid it.

What makes avoidance/encounter interesting is both aspects (avoid and encounter) virtually cannot be separated from each other. In practical sense, it is a necessity for Mentawaians to encounter and avoid the waves at the same time, especially Mapaddegat locals. They must encounter the sea and waves in regular basis, either through seafaring or fishing. Waves are everyday reality for them, so they cannot avoid it. Still, in such an unavoidable encounter with waves, they need to avoid it. They need to do a detour and to not go against the waves. For local surfers, this tension of avoidance/encounter is also practical. They encounter their waves with a smile, but on the other hand, they absolutely know it is wise to avoid some aspects of waves which may be harmful. To sum up, to attend the waves in Siberut means to encounter/avoid it. Avoidance will make not much sense without the encounter. Encounter without avoidance is suicidal.

4.6.2. Materiality matters

The next questions are: What lies the avoidance/encounter relationship between human and waves in Siberut? What makes Mentawaians perception of waves is contradictory? The answer lies on the matter of materiality. I have gone so far without discussing materiality in details, although I sometimes talk about the character of waves. That is what I intend to do in this section: to talk about the materiality and character of Mentawai waves as nonhuman beings which, along with Mentawai human beings, co-constitute the practices of engagement and the perception of (waves and sea) environment. Materiality is important because, as Ingold (2011: 27-28) reminds us, it has etymological root in Latin word '*mater*' (mother). Thus, waves contain life-giving qualities and are 'the active constituents of a world-in-formation' in Siberut.

There were two properties of Mentawai waves which came up very often during my fieldwork: (big) size and reefs. This was especially apparent when Mentawaians talked about why they are afraid of waves. Even for local surfers, the feeling of fear toward big and reef waves were not hidden. Hiber admitted, "I am afraid of big waves, I can be rolled on (by waves). I might die." Meanwhile Joni had more concern about the reefs under the waves.

> "The reefs make us afraid […] Balinese (surfers) are quick to be skillful because they have sand waves. Here in Mentawai, in every surfing spots in Mentawai, or at least in Siberut, there are no sand waves. All is reef (waves) […] If we make mistakes and rolled on (by waves), we could hit the reefs, we might die." (Joni)

In fact, Joni was not entirely true. There is one sand surf break near Taileleu, in mainland Siberut. Still, most of the surf breaks in Mentawai are reef waves. Many local surfers know very well what it means by reef waves. They often got 'reef tattoo' – surfing scar caused by reef. When motivating me to learn to surf, Nyinyo said: "(Surfing) depends on whether we are brave or not. I already get used to reefs." Reef element in Mentawai waves is both very characteristic and problematic, including to those who do not surf. "I am afraid (of waves). Especially when I saw surfers came home with many marks of reefs. Even there was a guest who broke his hand," Jetri argued. Locals who do not surf, such as *peladang*, also mentioned about reef when talking about waves.

The reefs under the waves can illustrate the contradictory perception of waves and the complex human-waves relationship in Siberut. Indeed, Mentawaians are scare of it and they always try to avoid it as much as possible. But, the reefs contain paradox. Reefs are also what make Mentawai waves considered as 'good waves' for surfing and, thus, playfully for those who surf. Reefs are the property of Mentawai waves which Mentawaians encounter/avoid, sometimes with the dilemma of fear/pleasure. There will be no famous Mentawai waves without the existence of reefs. In Meken's understanding: "Speaking of reefs, if the waves are breaking, it means there are reefs underneath […] If there are no reefs, it means it (the sea) is deep. So, there are no waves." Thus, reefs element of Mentawai waves lies the notions of good waves, fearful waves, playful waves, and avoidance/encounter relationship.

Reefs are pivotal to the other important property of Mentawai waves: big size. According to Tony Butt, co-author of *Surf Science,* the existence of reefs underneath the waves resulted in the big and powerful waves. So, reef and largeness of Mentawai waves are technically related. Ponting (2008: 188) claims that reefs in Mentawai are favorable for surfing. Along with other elements, reefs generate 'good' waves for surfers. He also mentions about swell, wind, and tide as other elements which co-constitute the high-quality waves in Mentawai, the ones which attract many foreign surfers to come and consider it as surfing Mecca. They want the big and powerful waves. In Valerius' words: "What they (foreign surfers) look for is not the Mentawai, but the Mentawai waves." Then, due to surf tourism, the 'foreign' favoritism toward big and powerful waves is adopted by Mentawaians. They, especially local surfers and surf entrepreneurs, have considered the character of Mentawai waves as 'good waves'. In narrating his most favorite waves Hideaways, Meken pointed out his fondness of powerful waves. "It is very strong. Left waves and strong. Its power is strong. This wave has strong blow when it falls […] It is more savage."

Ganas (savage) was the word Meken used to describe the powerfulness of Mentawai waves. He liked it, the savage waves. Yet, the 'savageness' of Mentawai waves causes the feeling of fear, too. In general, Mentawaians regard sea and waves as dangerous. One time in Muara Siberut, Yoyok warned me to not go to the sea because it is dangerous. In Mapaddegat, although

locals engage with sea and waves in regular basis, they also thought of both as harmful. In this discourse of danger, (big) size matters. When telling the experience about storm, Mentawaians often use the phrase 'big waves' (*ombak besar*) in their stories.

> "I have been drowned, (when seafaring) with *pompong* […] There is the waves behind the Erret waves. I was drowned there because of storm, seawater went into *pompong,* drowned […] Since then, I become afraid of the waves. Seeing the big waves make me fearful." (Paskah)

What is interesting about Paskah's account above is the word '*pompong*'. The measurement of 'big' on waves is inseparable from the technologies Mentawaians use at sea. For them, *pompong* is incomparable to run into the (big and powerful) waves. With similar tone, Lemanus said: "When being at the sea, we are afraid of big waves. Big waves, little sampan, we can be flipped over." They are more confident about big waves when seafaring with big boat. "If like this (bad weather), we cannot travel if we go with small boat. With big boat is no problem," Joni argued. Here, we might see the interplay between materiality of waves, human's technologies, practices at sea, and avoidance/encounter relationship.

Such interplay brings us again to Ingold. He invites us to think of material, waves in this case, as something processual and relational. The properties and qualities of Mentawai waves are constantly shaped by its environmental processes and its relations with other human and nonhuman beings. In this case, Mentawai waves need to be seen as 'neither objectively determined nor subjectively imagined but practically experienced' (Ingold, 2011: 30). As Ingold also argues, the way to understanding lies in practical experience (2011: 20). Understanding of the Mentawai waves may seem complex, but it is actually a matter of materiality and practicality. Then, both lead to the intimacy between Mentawaians and their waves.

4.6.3. The poetic of intimacy

What I learned from two-months fieldwork in Siberut was how intimate is the relationship of Mentawaians and their waves. At the first place, I was doubtful of my thought. My perspective as someone from a city near Jakarta and now living in The Netherlands could be over-romanticizing. But, it is actually not. If we reflect a bit, our relationship with our own environment might be not a far cry from Mentawaians' with theirs. Perhaps the human-environment relationship has been too taken-for-granted, so we no longer notice the intimacy between ourselves and our environment – in which we are a small part of it. Yet, this kind of intimate relationship is what makes my fieldwork challenging. I once wrote:

> "Like it or not, want it or not, (wo)men here have to relate with the sea. This is not a command, but a way of responding to life. That relationship is intense, tight, and sticky; so sometimes it is hard to understand. It has become too 'everyday'. Sea and (wo)man has become one, no longer two, like Neruda's Sonnet XVII." (field notes, 15 December 2017)

My main argument in this section is this: that the study of human-environment relationship is basically the study about intimacy; because, without it, how can both live together?

I would like to narrate the poetic of intimacy firstly through the ways Mentawaians talked about waves. In Mapaddegat, my favorite local expression about waves is '*ombak tidur*' (waves are sleeping). Locals used it to say that 'there are no waves at all' or 'there are only small waves'. Interestingly, this local expression was sometimes replaced by 'more foreign' expressions, such as '*ombak flat'* (waves are flat) or '*seperti kolam renang'* (like a swimming pool). The former – 'flat' – is an absolute adoption from English, while the latter is also influenced by foreign surfers' way of saying – as Mentawaians do not have habit of swimming in the pool. By those expressions, I would like to say that intimacy is not necessarily about localness or nativeness. Besides, they illustrate how surf tourism has mediated the way Mentawaians communicate of/about the waves.

Other common expression is '*digulung ombak'* (rolled on by waves). This was usually used to tell stories of misfortune (death) at sea, waves-related accident, or feeling of fear toward waves. In general, we in Indonesia use phrases like '*gulungan ombak*' (the roll of the waves) or '*ombak menggulung*' (the waves are rolling) to talk about the movement of waves. Besides, *'maeru koat'* or '*ombak bagus*' (good waves) were also often heard from locals. So were '*ombak besar*' (big waves) and '*ombak kecil*' (small waves). Furthermore, waves vocabularies of local surfers are richer because they have been accustomed to many surfing terms. To mention only some, there are: '*ambil ombak*' (take the waves), '*dipukul/dihantam ombak*' (hit by the waves), '*ombak tajam*' (sharp waves), '*jatuhnya ombak*' (falling of the waves), '*ombak kiri/kanan*' (left/right waves), '*ombak cepat*' (fast waves), '*masuk* lubang' (go into barrel), and so forth. Lastly, Mentawaians often used '*main ombak*' (playing [with) waves) for the replacement of surfing. This may justify why they perceive the waves as something playful – as well as something fearful.

Mentawaians' intimacy with waves might be related to belief. As Teteu Lakka told me, "All the life of Mentawai people is in nature (*alam*)." They believe that all things in environment have their own spirit. So, when Mentawaians relate with the sea or waves – or tree, soil, bird, river, mountain, you-name-it – they basically relate with the spirit of them, too. They do not relate with *just* waves, but the waves with its soul. Perhaps, that is where the intimate human-waves relationship in Siberut spiritually lies on. Although sometimes in the form of fear or avoidance, it does not negate the intimacy Mentawaians have with waves.

This brings me to my next point, that the intimacy does not have to be resemblant with romanticism. Indeed, some local surfers pointed out their intimate relationship with waves through nostalgic and romantic phrases like '*rindu ombak*' (longing of waves) or '*ombak sebagai penghibur*' (waves as consolation). They understand the waves like they understand their brothers/sisters or friends; for example, 'Bankvaults is fast and has thick breaks' or 'Pitstop is slowly breaking, relaxing.' As Hiber said, 'every wave is different' for local surfers. However, that is only one side of the coin. The other side of intimacy is not always romantic and understandable, because it may be related to the feeling of horror, awful past experiences, or the decision to avoid the waves. In Mapaddegat, either through practice of seafaring, fishing, or surfing, Mentawaians followed what waves tell them. They often said "*ombak jangan dilawan*" (never against waves). They know all too well what will happen if they are against it.

Finally, I will go back again to attentiveness, on which the intimate human-waves relationship in Siberut is based. I would like to situate 'attentiveness' and 'intimacy' within rhetoric of *harus(/)terbiasa* (must[/]become habitual). In Indonesia, we have a saying *'bisa karena terbiasa'* ('being able because get used to'). This is reflected in Mentawai setting. Valerius argued that Mentawaians can be attentive and intimate toward waves because of '*kebiasaan*' (habit[ual]).

> "They have become habitual […] It has entered the memory of those living in seashore. For those who go to the sea for fishing, they know the waves like this (big) are not good for them because of its high risk. It is same for those who surf." (Valerius)

Moreover, he denied the importance of 'tradition' which, as Oxford Dictionary tells us, refers 'the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation'. Valerius' focus on 'becoming habitual' means a rejection to a priori (social) construction and transmission of (cultural) representation. Such rejection lies at the very heart of dwelling perspective. In Ingold's words, it is "a perspective which situates the practitioner, right from the start, in the context of an active engagement with the constituents of his or her surroundings" (2000: 5). Thus, knowledge, understanding, attentiveness, and intimacy are not pre-constructed or pre-transmitted prior to practical engagement in environment. Human beings first need to relate and become habitual with their surroundings, so they can become knowledgeable, understood, attentive, and intimate.

Becoming habitual may provide rationale on how the human-waves intimacy in Siberut does not have to be romantic, as it also contains fearfulness. Joni put it very simply, "I am afraid of big waves, too. But I have become habitual, habitual, habitual (*terbiasa, terbiasa, terbiasa*)." I argue, this is what poetic about Mentawai human-waves intimate relationship. Becoming habitual with waves does not necessarily mean that Mentawaians become not afraid of waves anymore. The feeling of fear remains, but they can make peace of it – through becoming habitual. As Tsing rhetorically asks, "There might not be a collective happy ending. Then why bother getting up in the morning?" (2015: 21). But, seriously, why?

Perhaps, the answer lies on the mundane Indonesian word '*harus*' (must). Mentawaians must understand, be attentive to, and be intimate with waves because both – human and waves – inhabit the same environment. Speaking of Mentawaians' deep attentiveness toward waves, Valerius argued: "Not only very (attentive) but must! They must be familiar with it and they must understand it. […] They must really understand, not only just to know. Surely must! […] For all people, equally. Including children, they also must know." He added that Mentawaians must understand the waves because 'life is the risk'. Then, 'must' and 'become habitual' are inseparable. Mentawaians *must become habitual* with waves. However, as I already put in the beginning, this 'must' is not a kind of command, but simply a way of responding life – a life with the waves.

5. Final thoughts

Should there be a conclusion? Perhaps no, for Ingold: "The world stands still for no one, least of all for the artist or the anthropologist, and the latter's description, like the former's depiction, can do no more than catch a fleeting moment in a never-ending process" (2011: 232). Like all things in life, this thesis will be always in becoming. Still, it is my academic responsibility to put a closure, a finality, an end. First, I will respond quickly to my main research question: how does surf tourism mediate human-waves relationship in Siberut? Then, I will utter my very final thought by pointing out this thesis' theoretical contribution, methodological implication, and suggestion for future research.

Figure 11. A t-shirt in a clothing shop in Muara Siberut

5.1. Conclusion

In this thesis, surf tourism is the context where Mentawai human-waves relationship takes place. It is more of a medium of engagement and perception. That is why I decided to stay in Mapaddegat, where I could attend to and correspond with the currents of surf tourism daily life. The existence of surf tourism in Mentawai Islands has provided a setting for studying human-waves relationship, as the waves is the core of surfing and the primary reason of travel for surfers. Within this leisure and tourism context, I have narrated my response (to my question) by taking emphasis on the engagement with waves among Mentawaians.

Ever since I read Ingold (2000), I always regard engagement as his key concept in his attempts to challenge Cartesian/Western/modern way of thinking, especially about human-environment relationship. Thus, I put engagement as the most central and focal point. It is the

core of human-waves relationship in Siberut. However, it will be a mistake to put engagement in isolation. This concept is interrelated to other concepts and impossible to stand alone. All are interwoven into each other; making complex webs of concepts, narratives, and explanations; and allowing us to think of human-environment relationship differently.

First of all, engagement cannot exist without practices. I have explored various practices of engagement with waves in Siberut; started with practices of being at sea – surfing, seafaring, fishing, working – and equipped by four land-based practices – visual representation, talking, seeing-hearing, money-making. From all these practices, I see attentiveness toward waves as a cornerstone of engagement. What implies in the notion of attentiveness is the relatedness between attention, experience, understanding, and human senses. Together they constitute what is meant by attentiveness. Furthermore, in practicing attentiveness, waves should be attended, experienced, understood, and engaged within its relation with weather, swell, and wind.

Mentawaians' engagement with waves provides rationale on how waves are perceived contradictory in Siberut. In general, Mentawaians perceive waves as something fearful/playful. They are trapped in those two contradictory adjectives but can always find a way to live together with the waves. Besides, there is no fix agreement about what is meant by 'good waves', as it is always related to context of practices and situations. Confusion on and contradiction of 'good waves' are unavoidable. Then, contradictory perception of waves in Siberut provoked me to understand more about the nature of Mentawai human-waves relationship.

First, their relationship is based on an avoidance/encounter rhetoric, in which Mentawaians relate with waves in the tension of 'to avoid' and 'to encounter'. Each makes not much sense without the other. That is a very nature of Mentawai human-waves relationship. Second, materiality of Mentawai waves cannot be disregarded if one wants to understand practices of engagement and perception of waves in Siberut. In particular, largeness and reefs create the character of Mentawai waves, which subsequently underlie Mentawaians' engagement with and perception of waves. Lastly, contradictions in perception and dilemma of avoidance/encounter cannot hinder the intimacy between Mentawaians and their waves. They always lived, live, and will live intimately with waves.

5.2. Do we need revolution or revelation?

My study of/with Mentawai people and waves in Siberut cannot be separated from a larger theoretical agenda in academia. I am not walking alone but – borrowing Ingold (2011) – guided to rediscover the path(s) which many have stepped on. Gibson (2018), in his revisit on critical tourism studies, argues that tourism studies in recent years has been 'influenced especially by relational, materialist and more-than-human thinking'. He adds, "such themes as nature-cultures, embodied expressive performances, and everyday practices in material and cultural geographic spaces, are now commonplace. New critical scholarly concepts have proliferated." I am sure enough that this thesis is situated within such trend in critical tourism studies. Since the beginning, it is my intention

to promote scholarly quests on seemingly trivial nonhuman being, such as waves. More-than-human thinking is precisely what I have been applied during the process. Such thinking, consequently, led me to issues of materiality, relationality, and everyday practices.

The latter, 'everyday practices', is related to my second initial intention (toward tourism studies): to encourage the emphasis on local people's voices within ever-growing tourism industry. Fletcher (2014: 131-148) mentions that cultural transformation is underappreciated by scholars. Even if there is appreciation, it is mainly through the narratives of tourism development that runs in parallel with monolithic global capitalism. Whereas, in fact, local people appropriate and make their own meaning of tourism. In short, tourism is not a one-way acculturation from tourist's world-view to local's. Fletcher invites tourism scholars to document the diversity of views from local perspectives. I welcome his invitation through this thesis. I argue that (surf) tourism is not a total imposition of foreign practice, culture, ideas, and values to (Mentawai) local people. Rather, echoing Fletcher, local people are actually doing negotiation, resistance, subversion, or alteration. Everyday practices are precisely the arena where they negotiate (or even resist). It is through attending, recording, and understanding Mentawaians' everyday practices with waves – which lead to their engagement/perception of waves – that I can express their voices.

Furthermore, my Siberut study has contributed a new case on the studies of human-environment relationship by focusing on waves and putting surf tourism as study's context. Within Mentawai scholarship, I offer a different perspective in our understanding about surf tourism in the islands and about Mentawai in general, by providing story of the sea/waves which is often marginalized and forgotten. As you may realize, my focus on waves is very central. Following that realization, I would like to ask one philosophical question.

Throughout this thesis, I have shown how focusing on waves may offer revelation to our way of thinking about many other things: life, sea, environment, land, tourism, relationship, etc. We can think *through* waves. This revelation provokes me to reflect on the 'political' nature of this research, that is to challenge Cartesian/Western/modern way of thinking about human, environment, life, things, and so forth. I began to question: do we need revolution or revelation? In many places, the narrative of change is often glorified and the will to change is celebrated. Studying about waves makes me think that – perhaps – what we need actually are not a kind of revolution (to change things), but a revelation (to realize things). There are many things in life that we often forget, marginalize, overlook, or underestimate – like waves – but through them we actually can learn and understand; not to change but to appreciate.

Moreover, I would like to point out the implication I may have made methodologically through this thesis[29]. If one aims to study human-environment relationship, she/he needs to attend to individual stories of people, as well as to understand 'cultural biography' of nonhuman environment or beings. Through those attention and understanding, one can make sense of 'methodology of encounter' between human and nonhuman environment or beings which might

[29] This part is inspired by my reading note of Probyn's *Swimming with Tuna* (2016: 78-100).

have multiple layers, facets, and aspects. In addition, comprehension on technique and technology applied/used within such encounter is necessary. In short, human-environment relationship can be understood by encompassing all of those.

Lastly, I will offer my suggestion for future research. Through Waves of Knowing, Ingersoll (2016) beautifully depicts how waves, and knowledge about waves, have formed 'oceanic literacy' and contribute to 'seascape epistemology' for Hawaiians to make sense of their identity. Waves (including knowledge about and practice in waves) has become the way of understanding for Hawaiians. Mine and hers are related in a way that both of us study the meaning of waves for local people in world's famous surfing destinations. The difference lies on surfing tradition. While Hawaii has strong tradition on surfing since hundred years ago – even considered as spiritual home of surfing, Mentawai does not have. Interestingly, Ingersoll situates her study within a neo-colonial perspective. She regards wave zone 'as place of autonomy, resistance, and survival' for Hawaiians within the context of neo-colonial surf tourism industry in Hawaii.

Ingersoll's account makes me think of Siberut case and inspires me to propose a suggestion. Surf tourism is still growing intensively and extensively in Mentawai Islands, especially in Siberut where *Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus* (Special Economic Zone) is planned to be developed in the coming years[30]. In the KEK/SEZ of Mentawai, which will be concentrated in Southwestern Siberut, surf tourism is the top priority. Honestly, I am a little bit worried to this kind of 'development plan'. A critical research on this, by relating it through Mentawaian knowledge (of environment [land, sea, waves, etc.]) and by putting it within the context of neo-colonial (surf tourism) development, can be interesting and crucial to be done. The research will be important to ensure that Mentawaians have their voices fully heard, understood, and considered in 'foreign' development project in the islands. A view that simply regards Mentawai waves as 'just a commodity' will not be enough. We need waves to tell us what to do.

[30] KEK/SEZ is a program of Indonesian central government to 'accelerate the accomplishment of national economic development […] through setting up the zone which has economic and geo-strategic excellence' (http://kek.go.id/kek-indonesia).

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