Cambridge Oceanic Histories

Edited by

David Armitage
Alison Bashford
Sujit Sivasundaram

Across the world, historians have taken an oceanic turn. New maritime histories offer fresh approaches to the study of global regions, and to long-distance and long-term connections. Cambridge Oceanic Histories includes studies across whole oceans (the Pacific, the Indian, the Atlantic) and particular seas (among them, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, the North Sea, the Black Sea). The series is global in geography, ecumenical in historical method, and wide in temporal coverage, intended as a key repository for the most innovative transnational and world histories over the *longue durée*. It brings maritime history into productive conversation with other strands of historical research, including environmental history, legal history, intellectual history, labour history, cultural history, economic history and the history of science and technology. The editors invite studies that analyse the human and natural history of the world's oceans and seas from anywhere on the globe and from any and all historical periods.

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Introduction
Writing World Oceanic Histories

Sujit Sivasundaram, Alison Bashford and David Armitage

'World Oceans Day' was first proposed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro; the United Nations General Assembly formalised it in 2008. It was proposed with a view to the ocean's status as vital matter for humankind: 'Our rainwater, drinking water, weather, climate, coastlines, much of our food, and even the oxygen in the air we breathe, are all ultimately provided and regulated by the sea.' The oceanic past – indeed a shared oceanic heritage – was also foregrounded in a bid to make World Oceans Day meaningful: throughout history, the UN stated, oceans and seas have linked the peoples of the world through trade and transportation.[1] It is clear from this effort that oceans do all kinds of discursive work for the UN, offering ways to make the world appear to be one. Indeed, UN materials shift constantly and tellingly between the plural oceans of the world and the singular 'world ocean'. On the one hand, for example, World Oceans Day aims to draw attention to how 'the world's oceans – their temperature, chemistry, currents and life – drive global systems that make the Earth habitable for humankind'.[2] On the other, the spin-off network Réseau Océan Mondial, based in Brussels, resolutely posits a single ocean, the world ocean. Its statutes define the key objective of a global network of oceanographers as working 'towards achieving a healthy and productive world ocean and to encourage sustainable use of its resources'.[3] Even more directly, a singular and shared 'world ocean' drives the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission of the UN Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) under the slogan 'One Planet, One Ocean'.[4]

[1] 'Throughout history, oceans and seas have been vital conduits for trade and transportation'; World Oceans Day – Background, United Nations: www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/background.shtml (accessed 28 February 2017).
[2] World Oceans Day – Background, United Nations: www.un.org/en/events/oceansday/background.shtml (accessed 28 February 2017).
[3] Constitution, Réseau Océan Mondial, 28 January 2006: www.worldoceannetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/WON-STATUT-2006-ENG.pdf (accessed 28 February 2017).
[4] Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission, UNESCO, *One planet, one ocean* (Paris, 2017).

Oceanic Histories analyses both the plural oceans of the world and the singular world ocean while bringing both into dialogue, placing oceans and seas within world history and envisaging world history through oceanic and maritime regions. The chapters present assessments of historians' work on the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, the Arctic and the Southern Oceans and some of the world's major seas: the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, the Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea, the Baltic, the Red Sea and the South China Sea. Other chapters might be imagined – for example on the Caribbean, the Java Sea, the North Sea or the Caspian Sea. However, as the first such collective survey by multiple authors, the book's aim is to be extensive more than comprehensive, wide-ranging rather than yet all-encompassing.

Most of the chapters in *Oceanic Histories* have a historiographical objective in the first instance. They seek to chart how the human and natural pasts of these oceans and seas have been framed, written, presented and disputed over time, where they stand now and what might be their prospects for the future. Some seas and oceans – notably, the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean – have long, variegated and ramified historiographies; others, such as the Red Sea, the Black Sea and the Southern Ocean, have shorter traditions and therefore demand more historical treatment than historiographical reconstruction at this stage. Every chapter works on the leading edge of its field even if the timelines and terms of discussion differ from sea to sea, ocean to ocean. Yet in every case, we can see that historical scholarship on each oceanic topic was established and influential well before 'World Oceans Day' emerged as a subject of international interest barely a generation ago.

Taken together and read in sequence, the chapters in the volume chart how histories and geographies as modes of knowledge became linked to the sea and its relation with land over the *longue durée*. The move early this century to promote a supposed 'new thalassology' often assumed the primacy of Mediterranean models for oceanic history with frequent reference to Fernand Braudel's work as germinal;[5] more recently, the runaway institutional success of Atlantic history in the early 2000s, spearheaded by Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn, added another influential avatar.[6] However, one running theme of this volume is to critique

5 For consideration and critique, see W. V. Harris, ed., *Rethinking the Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2005); Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and "the new thalassology"', *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006): 722–40; Molly Greene, 'The Mediterranean Sea', below.

6 David Armitage, 'The Atlantic Ocean', below.

and recontextualise this genealogy, by showing how thinkers, narrators and historians have written of the sea beyond the Mediterranean – and, by extension, the Atlantic – over long periods before the rise of US- and Europe-based scholarship on seas. Many of our authors place the historiography of the *Annales* and the Atlantic, of Braudel and Bailyn, within a totally different intellectual ecology often with origins well before the twentieth century. Some also show how inhibiting these prevalent trends have been for generating historiographies for other tracts of water, for instance the Arctic or the Red Sea.[7] And the longer genealogies of, say, the Pacific and Indian Oceans presented here question the claim that they derived, or should draw inspiration, from the Atlantic or Mediterranean, and argue forcefully that they 'should be considered as original model[s] for the historicising of oceans' in their own right.[8]

This recalibration of influence, and resurrection of alternative inspirations, should have effects not only for the specific oceanic histories treated here but also for the future of Mediterranean and Atlantic histories themselves. With these revisions in mind, the authors recognise and take full account of the fact that the accelerated writing of oceanic histories over the 1990s and 2000s paralleled and often intersected with that same environmental and global sensibility that gave rise to such a thing as an 'Earth summit' and a 'World Oceans Day' in the first place. In this regard, the book provides the most comprehensive, comparative and critical mapping now available of the distinct timelines and growth patterns in the historiography of oceanic history.[9] Given the misunderstanding of the origins of ocean histories, it also considers what can be drawn from reading across these separated literatures now.

Oceanic Histories aims, through its various chapters, to answer the question: what is the historical and historiographical relation between world histories, the world's oceans and the world ocean? (This will also be the informing concern of the monographic series, 'Cambridge Oceanic Histories', that this volume inaugurates.) Oceanic historians, especially those rooted in a tradition of maritime scholarship, often claim a particular stake in a world history configured geographically and

7 Sverker Sörlin, 'The Arctic Ocean', and Jonathan Miran, 'The Red Sea', below; also Alexis Wick, *The Red Sea: In search of lost space* (Oakland, CA, 2016).

8 Sujit Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', and Alison Bashford, 'The Pacific Ocean' (quoted), below.

9 For an earlier, less comprehensive, effort see Peter N. Miller, ed., *The sea: Thalassography and historiography* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2013), and for contemporaneous enterprises attempting a *longue durée* sweep, see now Michael North, *Zwischen Hafen und Horizont: Weltgeschichte der Meere* (Munich, 2016), and Christian Buchet, gen. ed., *La mer dans l'histoire/The sea in history*, 4 vols. (Paris and Woodbridge, 2017).

economically: that is, in the historical geo-economics of a globe increasingly connected by large waterways and the exchange and commerce they facilitated. This is an approach to oceanic histories in which, broadly speaking, globalisation took place in a maritime world connected forcefully, but certainly not solely, through the European maritime empires and coastal polities in commercial relation with each other, and with regional maritime traders, labourers and navigators in different parts of the world.[10]

While paying attention to the role of European maritime empires as drivers and conduits of world history, *Oceanic Histories* also foregrounds another tradition of world history-writing that concentrates attention on extra-European worlds on their own terms.[11] For example, our authors examine the Middle Kingdom-centred Nanyang, the maritime Malay world, the seafaring traders between Arabia and India and the complex of colonial and Indigenous whalers and sealers in the Southern Ocean.[12] In both of these traditions of world history, some scholarship is squarely maritime while other parts are more oceanic. We suggest below some of the differences as well as the synergies between these proximate and overlapping approaches.

Many recent historians of oceans and seas identify their work within a tradition of transnational history-writing. This is unsurprising, because none of the oceans and seas align with any one polity and the move to their histories represents an 'escape' from the prevailing 'terracentrism' of traditional history-writing.[13] But is 'transnational' the best indicator of the substance and method of oceanic histories? Perhaps not – not least

[10] For example, Philip de Souza, *Seafaring and civilization: Maritime perspectives on world history* (London, 2001); Daniel Finamore, ed., *Maritime history as world history* (Gainesville, FL, 2004); David Cannadine, ed., *Empire, the sea and global history: Britain's maritime world, c. 1760–c. 1840* (Basingstoke, 2007); Maria Fusaro and Amélia Polónia, eds., *Maritime history as global history* (St John's, Newfoundland, 2010); Lincoln Paine, *The sea and civilization: A maritime history of the world* (New York, 2013); Ingo Heidbrink, Lewis R. Fischer, Jari Ojala, Fei Sheng, Stig Tenold and Malcolm Tull, 'Forum: Closing the "blue hole": Maritime history as a core element of historical research', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 29 (2017): 325–66.

[11] For example, K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An economic history from the rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985); Wang Gungwu and Ng Chin-keong, eds., *Maritime China in transition, 1750–1850* (Wiesbaden, 2004); Markus P. M. Vink, 'Indian Ocean studies and the "new thalassology"', *Journal of Global History*, 2 (2007): 41–62. Also note Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Geneaology and mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA, 2006).

[12] Eric Tagliacozzo, 'The South China Sea', Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', Jonathan Miran, 'The Red Sea', and Alessandro Antonello, 'The Southern Ocean', below.

[13] Rila Mukherjee, 'Escape from terracentrism: Writing a water history', *Indian Historical Review*, 41 (2014): 87–101; see also Isabel Hofmeyr, 'The complicating sea: The Indian Ocean as method', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 32 (2012): 584–90.

because, at the heart of the 'transnational', we always find the nation.[14] In many ways it is more useful, or at least as useful, to consider how oceanic histories have been trans-*local* studies.[15] Littoral societies often shared more in common with similar formations across seas and oceans than they did with their own nearby hinterlands.[16] Coastal entrepôts operated in a global geography of connection, not with nations or the capitals of other polities, but primarily, even exclusively, with other local port towns. Many of these were the key urban sites for a converging world history over the long modern period: for instance, Guangzhou, Valparaiso, Cape Town, Manila, Florence or Singapore. These ports hold the trans-local history that constituted world history. Yet at the same time, several authors below highlight how sea-facing cosmopolitans were disowned by their others, necessitating the need for historians to place ports and entrepôts in a broader oceanic context. Ports encompass many divergent histories: for instance, of labourers who travelled through them; of commodities that were transshipped at the site of the port; of technicians, journalists and activists who set up stall in port cities; and of the imperial photographers who roamed across ports to visualise maritime travel and urban development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[17]

Oceanic histories are also perhaps better conceptualised as area or regional (and inter-area and inter-regional) studies, notwithstanding the Cold War scholarly and political connotations of this approach. This is often what is meant by the 'world' or 'worlds' often attributed to oceans: 'the Indian Ocean world', or 'the Pacific world' or 'the Atlantic world', as strategic arenas defined by ideas of political community or even of civilisation. In this respect, it is important to recall that conceptions of an 'Atlantic world' and a 'Pacific world' were products of strategic thinking during the Second World War and diplomatic plans for

[14] C. A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol and Patricia Seed, '*AHR* conversation: On transnational history', *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006): 1441–64.

[15] Matt Matsuda, *Pacific worlds: A history of seas, peoples, and cultures* (Cambridge, 2012), is an exemplary use of the 'trans-local' within oceanic history.

[16] Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral society: The concept and the problems', *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006): 353–74.

[17] Arndt Graf and Chua Beng Huat, eds., *Port cities in Asia and Europe* (London, 2009); Haneda Masashi, ed., *Asian port cities, 1600–1800: Local and foreign cultural interactions* (Singapore, 2009); Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Robert James, eds., *Port towns and urban cultures: International histories of the waterfront, c. 1700–2000* (Basingstoke, 2016); Nile Green, 'Maritime worlds and global history: Comparing the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through Barcelona and Bombay', *History Compass* 11, 7 (July 2013): 513–23; and C. A. Bayly and Leila Tarazi Fawaz, eds., *Modernity and culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, 1890–1920* (New York, 2002).

reconstruction after it.[18] More recently, political and economic concerns have generated parallel designators, such as the 'Indo-Pacific', or given new geopolitical heft to the Baltic and Black Sea as regions of international collaboration.[19] While the nomination of such 'worlds' and areas suggests an underlying bias towards integration, their pluralisation, as a multiplicity of such worlds, reflects division, even competition, among and within them.

The ideological history of oceans and seas is most evident in the continuous geopolitical and epistemological battles over their naming. These can reflect the reactions of outsiders to, say, a South Sea deemed to be relatively calm or 'pacific' or a Black Sea perceived as either threatening (*Axeinos*) or welcoming (*Euxinos*).[20] It can also be an attempt to insert cultural presence: note the debate about renaming the Indian Ocean as the 'Afrasian' Sea.[21] Sometimes the names of bodies of water explicitly signal sovereignty, if controversially so: the Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea or the South China Sea, for instance.[22] Sometimes, they do so by inference, flagging an orientation and therefore a presumed centre, as in the Nanyang or the Southern Ocean – south, that is, from imperial China's standpoint – the East Sea (east seen from Korea) or the Southern Ocean, north of Antarctica but south of Australia. One history of the naming of the Atlantic Ocean signals a Mediterranean perspective of, and upon, the world; the ocean beyond the pillars of Hercules that enclosed all land, as Atlas supported the heavens. But the Atlantic had a simultaneously diminished and larger function in *longue-durée* world history: from this standpoint, it shifted over the centuries from being the ocean that enclosed all land to the ocean that separated an 'old world' from a 'new

[18] For example, in Arnold Ræstad, *Europe and the Atlantic world*, ed. Winthrop W. Case (Princeton, NJ, 1941), and Fairfield Osborn, ed., *The Pacific world* (Washington, DC, 1945).

[19] Rory Medcalf, 'The Indo-Pacific: What's in a name?', *The American Interest*, 9, 2 (November–December 2013): 60–65.

[20] O. H. K. Spate, '"South Sea" to "Pacific Ocean": A note on nomenclature', *Journal of Pacific History*, 12 (1977): 205–11; Mark Peterson, 'Naming the Pacific', *Common-place*, 5, 2 (January 2005): www.common-place-archives.org/vol-05/no-02/peterson/index.shtml (accessed 28 February 2017); François de Blois, 'The name of the Black Sea', in Maria Macuch, Mauro Maggi and Werner Sundermann, eds., *Iranian Languages and Texts from Iran and Turan* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 1–8; Bashford, 'The Pacific Ocean', and Stella Ghervas, 'The Black Sea', below.

[21] See for instance, Michael N. Pearson, *Port cities and intruders: The Swahili coast, India, and Portugal in the early modern era* (Baltimore, MD, 1998) and Michael N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London, 2013), p. 14.

[22] As well as Tagliacozzo, 'The South China Sea', and Alexis Dudden, 'The Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea', below, see Si Jin Oh, 'An identity aspect to the "wars" of maps in East Asia: Focusing on the East Sea/Sea of Japan name debate', *Korea Observer*, 48 (2017): 57–83.

world'. Similarly, the Mediterranean gradually moved from being the centre of the world within the Greco-Roman ecumene to simply one sea among many, with no presumed priority or predominance, flowing into the world ocean itself. And of course it was not the 'Mediterranean' to Arabic and Muslim observers until the term entered Arabic in the nineteenth century by way of European languages.[23]

There is also a curious history in which regional nomination has shifted between watery and territorial spaces, part of the 'terraqueous history' of the globe.[24] For example, 'Australia' became the name for the continent (in part due to its maritime circumnavigation between 1801 and 1803), yet in some early charts it is the ocean to its east that is labelled 'Greater Australia' or sometimes 'Australasia'.[25] This great archipelago of Pacific islands came to be named for the water surrounding them – 'Oceania', now the formal UN regional nomenclature.[26] To take another example, the *Mare Aethiopicum* of Antiquity was still in use as 'the Ethiopic Ocean' on nineteenth-century world maps. Over time it became the South Atlantic and then subsumed by the late nineteenth century into a holistic Atlantic, stretching almost from pole to pole.[27] But modern 'Ethiopia' shifted to the horn of Africa, far closer to the Indian Ocean than the Atlantic: it is, ironically, land-locked. In counterpoint, it is curious to note how our planet is named Earth when 70 per cent of its surface is Ocean. In this regard, it may be exceptional among the known planets, but it is not alone within the solar system and beyond in having oceans, even if these extra-terrestrial 'water worlds' – on Mars or on Saturn's moons, for instance – remain for the moment beyond the reach of historians.[28]

Though divided by oceans and seas, the chapters here indicate clearly the fluid movement between them in the context of the world ocean and how their histories and material forms are entangled. In this way, the history of the Indian Ocean connects with the history of the Red Sea, the

[23] Greene, 'The Mediterranean Sea', below.

[24] Alison Bashford, 'Terraqueous histories', *The Historical Journal*, 60 (2017): 253–72; see also Hester Blum, 'Terraqueous planet: The case for oceanic studies', in Amy J. Elias and Christian Moraru, eds., *The planetary turn: Relationality and geoaesthetics in the twenty-first century* (Evanston, IL, 2015), pp. 25–36.

[25] National Library of Australia, *Mapping our world: Terra incognita to Australia* (Canberra, 2013).

[26] Bronwen Douglas, '*Terra Australis* to Oceania: Racial geography in the "fifth part of the world"', *Journal of Pacific* History, 45 (2010): 179–210.

[27] Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, 'The Ethiopic Ocean – History and historiography, 1600–1975', *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*, 27 (2015): 1–79.

[28] Jan Zalasiewicz and Mark Williams, *Ocean worlds: The story of seas on Earth and other planets* (Oxford, 2014), ch. 9, 'Oceans of the solar system'.

history of the Red Sea to the history of the Mediterranean, the history of the Mediterranean becomes the history of the Atlantic, the Atlantic of the Pacific, the Pacific of the Southern Ocean, and so forth. Strangely, though, the two oceans most physically distant from one another – the Arctic Ocean and the Southern Ocean – are closely combined, institutionally and historiographically, under 'polar history' and 'polar studies', as in the *Journal of Polar Studies*, for example, or at the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge; accordingly, we have linked them here.[29]

As maritime historians have shown, it was circumnavigators and merchant mariners, whalers and navies in peace and war, who directly experienced the world ocean: the waters of the eastern and western, northern and southern hemispheres. And as environmental historians discuss, the world ocean also belonged to the mammals and fishes who swam, fed and migrated beneath it.[30] As a research enterprise for hydrographers, the 'world ocean' has been essential to oceanography since the 1960s.[31] It has also become a highly politicised entity, linked both to an environmentalist global ecology and to the global history of capitalism. The world ocean, some argue, was the natural entity that facilitated the world system of commercial globalisation.[32] And the world history of that globalisation depended on diverse human ingenuity and capacity to pass over the sea and to live upon it.

The Naval and the Oceanic

The challenge of making the sea a home has been a perennial human quest. Its persistence comes from how the ocean is seen to teem with life but is still unfit for our species. To venture onto the ocean has long been seen as somehow unnatural, with shipwreck and drowning the fitting rewards for hubris in contravening our terrestrial destiny.[33] Humans can swim, but only just. Swimming itself has a cross-cultural history including how European explorers of the sixteenth century such as Francis Drake attempted to frighten off Pacific islander swimmers who attacked

[29] Sörlin, 'The Arctic Ocean', and Antonello, 'The Southern Ocean', below.
[30] Ryan Tucker Jones, 'Running into whales: The history of the north Pacific from below the waves', *American Historical Review*, 118 (2013): 349–77.
[31] Richard Carrington, *A biography of the sea: The story of the world ocean, its animal and plant populations, and its influence on human history* (New York, 1960); William A. Anikouchine and Richard W. Sternberg, *The world ocean: An introduction to oceanography* (London, 1981).
[32] For example, Peter Jacques, *Globalization and the world ocean* (Oxford, 2006).
[33] Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with spectator: Paradigm of a metaphor for existence*, trans. Steven Rendall (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

them.[34] In much of the West, from the fall of Rome to the nineteenth century, there was an active prejudice against swimming. The quest to be with the sea means that those who cross the vast swathes of the world ocean have been cast as heroes. The challenge now combines with the prediction of a watery human future. As one set of authors notes, conceiving the sea in this way has been gendered: 'Could the ocean then, be thought of as a source of all things, a kind of maternal sublime?'[35]

If such is the tension in human engagements with the sea, the ship has served as a vehicle for experiments in habitation: how to live on board ship; how to create, distil or transform social and cultural norms in such spaces; how to govern and legislate on a ship over prisoners, sailors or 'natives'; how to control a ship so that it transfers materials, ideas, nature and people across locales; and, how to proclaim and dramatise a culture from the deck and 'across the beach' to a newfound land or indeed to go to war with other nations on the water. It is as if the ship becomes a floating piece of land, practically, socially and often legally.[36] As the ship is given a name and biography, also a launch and decommissioning, along with flags, papers and nationality, it becomes akin to a person on the sea. On the casting of ships as alive, tales of Indigenous people who mistook European ships as birds or islands are many; they reveal as much about Euro-American projections and self-mythology as about indigenous cosmologies. When placed together with the difficulties of being at home with the sea, and the Foucauldian labelling of ships as classic 'heterotopias', it is unsurprising that epic moments of shipping have been commemorated with grandeur as alleged turning points in the human past.[37]

Take for instance, the over-confident ship-shaped memorial to Portuguese early modern 'discoveries', the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, at one of the most westward points of Europe, on the River Tagus as it flows into the Atlantic in Lisbon. The memorial originated in 1940 from an exhibition of the Portuguese World held to celebrate the birth of the Portuguese nation in 1140, a celebration which chimed with the country's authoritarian Estado Novo.[38] It was built in permanent form in 1960 to coincide with the death anniversary of Henry the Navigator. Set

[34] Nicholas Orme, *Early British swimming, 55 BC–AD 1719* (Exeter, 1983), p. 49.
[35] David Lambert, Luciana Martins and Miles Ogborn, eds. 'Currents, visions and voyages: Historical geographies of the sea', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006): 484.
[36] Lauren Benton, *A search for sovereignty: Law and geography in European empires, 1400–1800* (Cambridge, 2010).
[37] Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986): 27.
[38] Ellen W. Sapega, 'Image and counter-image: The place of Salazarist images of national identity in contemporary Portuguese visual culture', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 39, 2 (Winter 2002): 48–50.

in rose-tinted stone and cement and shaped like a Portuguese caravel, it depicts men, following Henry the Navigator who is at the prow, reaching in fervent pose for the sea. The monument itself is firmly rooted on the shore, and yet it stretches from the land to the water. If this ship takes its meaning from its physical setting as such a bridge, then a similar reading is open for another ship-shaped monument to epic 'discovery', the so-called 'Singing Ship' monument in Emu Park in Queensland, Australia, which marked the Cook bicentenary in 1970. Here the element that plays a role is the wind: the ship is designed to 'sing' as the wind blows through it.[39] If successful navigation is about rising above the elements and taming them so as to live at sea and to cross the sea, it is curious that ship monuments like these are still environmental signs.

Indeed, such monuments serve as evidence of the multiply conflicted roles played by ships. For ship memorials are also found which are tokens not of achievement but of death on a vast scale. One example is the National Famine Monument or 'Coffin Ship' in Murrisk, County Mayo, Ireland.[40] A bronze sculpture with skeleton bodies in the riggings, it commemorates those who left Ireland for the New World. It was built by the Irish government for the 150th anniversary of the Great Famine. In popular telling, sharks followed the 'coffin ships' for the number of dead who were thrown overboard.[41] Memorials to the Middle Passage also point to the ship as a bearer of memories of enslavement, violence, dehumanisation and death. One instance of this is the slave ship which is a part of the African American Monument in the South Carolina State House. If such is the memory of ships, this volume asks: how should historians return to the ship from the perspective of the world ocean?

To begin such an enterprise, it is important to contend with the variegated dimensions of human engagement with ships. Ships have served as experimental sites for life at sea as much as spaces of death, and watery tombs beneath the waves continue to fascinate the public as well as archaeologists. Modernity could quite literally be shipped as much as shipwrecked.[42] Ships are, as revealed even by their monuments, environmental projects. They are also legal personalities and even cast as figures, as is evident from the elaborate figureheads kept in many maritime

39 Ros Bandt, 'Taming the wind: Aeolian sound practices in Australasia', *Organised Sound*, 8 (2003): 198–99.
40 Emily Mark-Fitzgerald, *Commemorating the Irish famine: Memory and the monument* (Liverpool, 2013).
41 Marcus Rediker, 'History from below the water line: Sharks and the Atlantic slave trade', *Atlantic Studies*, 5 (2008): 285–97.
42 Steve Mentz, *Shipwreck modernity: Ecologies of globalization, 1550–1719* (Minneapolis, MN, 2015).

museums around the world. Ships are material and artefactual and as some new scholarship reminds us they can be traded and exchanged, even shifting cultural signification in the process: Japanese sampans could become American Hawai'ian vessels.[43] As things, they are composites requiring labour to produce and maintain; Indigenous communities could raid a wrecked ship on their shores for precisely this reason, only taking what they valued and what they wished to recycle. The passage from sail to steam, and increasing containerisation has made shipping so successful that, though it is the main conduit of global trade, it has taken on an invisible life when compared with air or land travel.[44] However, this should not allow historians to forget how ships still fail and spill (oil and garbage for instance). In addition, the ship has been the vector of a 'world hunt'.[45] In the Southern Ocean, for instance, this began with a trade in seals and whales. That world hunt started from a human desire to exploit the seas' resources and that desire in turn fed into, as is argued below, scientific, commercial and diplomatic concerns and programmes of order.[46]

The social, political, legislative, economic and social and cultural histories of navigation are thus connected here with environmental history: it is important to insist on the mutually constitutive force of these historiographies. Otherwise the history of the ship is taken to mean the history of shipping techniques and technologies alone or simply the history of war; this does not get to the complexity of how the ship intervenes between humans and the sea or how it serves as an intensive site for working out power and submission. As one recent argument puts it, the ship is the perfect object which with to consider 'transit' and global connections and disconnection, and it serves as a topic of global microhistory.[47] If so, the 'transit' is between places and terrains and among mediums. This transition is also evident in how ships can speak to nationalist idealisation as much as to the fragility of the human condition and how they can stand for some achievements cast as the greatest human triumphs as much as terrible calamity. The Indian state can thus glorify its boat-building culture as a bulwark of nationalism as much as Portugal has in

43 See Hans Konrad Van Tilburg, 'Vessels of exchange: The global shipwright in the Pacific', in Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen, eds. *Seascapes: Maritime histories, littoral cultures and transoceanic exchanges* (Honolulu, HI, 2007), pp. 38–52.
44 Marc Levinson, *The box: How the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy bigger* (Princeton, NJ, 2006).
45 John F. Richards, *The world hunt: An environmental history of the commodification of animals* (Berkeley, CA, 2014).
46 Antonello, 'The Southern Ocean', below.
47 Martin Dusinberre and Roland Wenzlhuemer, eds., 'Special issue: Being in transit: Ships and global incompatibilities', *Journal of Global History*, 11, 2 (July 2016).

the past. Meanwhile, in the Sea of Japan, what are called 'ghost ships' can continue to arrive on the coast of Japan with North Korean refugees, while another ship, the SS *Meredith Victory*, has been memorialised as a 'Ship of Miracles' for its humanitarian rescue of refugees in the midst of the Korean War.[48]

To undercut the imperial, military and national inclinations of much maritime historiography, it is important to highlight how many different cultures of navigation and boat-making have intersected in world history. While past historians have denied or ornamentalised the maritime culture of non-Western societies, or used assessments of boats as a stadial measure of advancement, our authors instead highlight the fact that encounter was often from ship to ship rather than ship to beach. Pacific double-hulled canoes were not insignificant in size and capacity when placed next to the sailing vessels they met; they were comparable to European ships. Riverine Burmese war-boats meanwhile outstripped the *Diana*, the first steamship used in war, during the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824–26).[49] Further, our authors deconstruct such stereotypes as the Muslim fear of the sea or the classificatory labelling of the Chinese 'junks' and Indian Ocean 'dhows', showing how such classifications were colonial products beneath which lay a dizzying range of traditions of manufacture and boat-making.[50] Engagements with the sea have been surprisingly wide-ranging and even those empires which were once cast as landlubbers – for example, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires – are now being seen as maritime.[51]

The site of the shipyard is fast emerging as a key topic for world historiography, drawing in questions about modernisation, scientific exchange, migration, labour and capitalism. Until the early nineteenth century, shipyards like the Arsenal in Venice comprised the world's largest industrial plants:[52] a single ship of the line, like Nelson's flagship *Victory*, could command a greater investment of capital than a contemporary factory. Indeed, tracking ships through cycles of making and

48 Dudden, 'The Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea', below.
49 Compare with Satpal Sangwan, 'Technology and imperialism in the Indian context: The case of steamboats, 1819–1839', in Teresa A. Meade and Mark Walker, eds., *Science, medicine and cultural imperialism* (London, 1991), pp. 61–64.
50 Greene, 'The Mediterannean Sea', and Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', below.
51 Alison Frank, 'Continental and maritime empires in an age of global commerce', *East European Politics and Societies*, 25 (2011): 779–84; Julia Leikin, 'Across the seven seas: Is Russian maritime history more than regional history?', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 17 (2016): 631–46.
52 Frederic Chapin Lane, *Venetian ships and shipbuilders of the Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD, 1934); Robert C. Davis, *Shipbuilders of the Venetian arsenal: Workers and workplace in the preindustrial city* (Baltimore, MD, 1991).

unmaking, in turn, has been a way of following a long-distance trade in wood, between South Asia and Arabia for instance; and research on wood carries on to the present in order to determine the provenance and histories of ship parts in museums. In this way too, the history of the ship does not now assume that the ship is a stable subject of research.[53] In the South China Sea, techniques of ship-making have a long history, taking in the important Sung period, propelling Chinese engagements with Southeast Asia. In the Southern Ocean, the ship-building of sealers from America and France was seen as an affront to the settled sovereignty of the British Empire. The ability to make a ship was in both these cases a means of state-making and, curiously, it was also a token of settlement and of power over land, even a claim to that land.

Oceanic Environments and Ecologies

The study of humans and their sea-going vessels has long defined maritime history. But what is the relationship between this field and oceanic history? While they overlap in clear and important ways, we suggest that it is an environmental approach that is the distinguishing point. Environmental history has helped turn a longstanding historiography of humans, vessels and exploration, toward analysis of complex relations between elements (winds, tides, currents), ocean life (mammals, fish, crustaceans, birds, plants), and human activity in and on the seas. Put another way, oceanic histories require the equivalent consideration of marine and maritime actors in all their complex relations with each other.

This approach is ecological in both substance and method, and inquires into past conjunctions of human and non-human life. Oceans are full of organisms, some still as strange to humans as the fantastic monsters of the sea on medieval and early modern maps. While maritime and economic histories have documented mariners' and researchers' interest in, and often dependence on, sea mammals, birds and fish, environmental historians have documented the human impact on marine ecologies.[54] Whaling and fishing histories are especially significant, often

53 See Alastair J. Reid, *The tide of democracy: Shipyard workers and social relations in Britain, 1870–1950* (Manchester, 2010); for the Bombay shipyard, see Frank Broeze, 'Underdevelopment and dependency: Maritime India during the Raj', *Modern Asian Studies*, 18 (1984): 429–57; for shipyards in China, see Benjamin A. Elman, *On their own terms: Science in China, 1550–1900* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 370–86.
54 Paul Holm, Tim D. Smith and David J. Starkey, eds., *The exploited seas: New directions for marine environmental history* (Liverpool, 2001); W. Jeffrey Bolster, 'Opportunities in marine environmental history', *Environmental History*, 11 (2006): 567–97; Kathleen Schwerdtner Máñez and Bo Poulsen, eds., *Perspectives on oceans past: A handbook of marine environmental history* (Dordrecht, 2016).

foreshadowing the project of world history; these histories track the whalers who themselves tracked the whales across the world ocean.[55] Indeed whaling history *is* world history over time and place, from early modern Basque whaling in Labrador to Japanese whalers in Antarctic waters – the whales in their own habitat, the humans far from home. Whaling as an environmentalist issue has prompted a specifically international history as well; that is, a history of the intergovernmental regulation of the industry and of its scientific foundations.[56] Sometimes troubling international treaties and agreement is longstanding Indigenous and Aboriginal whaling practice, and both historical and anthropological studies have had particular impact in terms of establishing continuing rights to hunt, and sometimes renewed rights to hunt. The Makahs of America's northwest coast, for example, harpooned and brought ashore a female grey whale in 1999, the first for seventy years. It was a highly publicised event, the outcome of a successful negotiation with the International Whaling Commission and based on evidence and history of customary hunts.[57]

Environmental history, then, has helped broaden the scope of maritime history. It is also the case that the study of oceans has lifted and expanded environmental history from its traditional soil-based concerns. While geographical and historical scholarship between the 1920s and 1960s plainly incorporated seas and oceans, the first generation of self-nominated 'environmental historians' tended to privilege land over sea, *terra* over *aqua*. Historical analyses focused on over-cultivation, forest-clearing, land-based species extinctions, 'wilderness' and the exchange of old world and new world biota, microbes and crops. When it came to water, fresh waters generally trumped salt waters. Rivers were certainly investigated early within the environmental history corpus,[58] and to some extent lakes, a focus that perhaps signalled the influence of canonical Great Lakes ecological studies. But environmental history slowly turned toward the sea, a re-orientation strongly directed by interest in the inverse of territorially surrounded lakes: that is, ocean-surrounded islands.[59] By

[55] See the analysis of global whaling in J. N. Tønnessen and A. O. Johnsen, *The history of modern whaling*, trans. R. I. Christophersen (Berkeley, CA, 1982), and Richard Ellis, *Men and whales* (New York, 1991).

[56] For example, Ray Gambell, 'International management of whales and whaling: An historical review of the regulation of commercial and Aboriginal subsistence whaling', *Arctic*, 46 (1993): 97–107; D. Graham Burnett, *The sounding of the whale: Science and cetaceans in the twentieth century* (Chicago, IL, 2012).

[57] Joshua L. Reid, *The sea is my country: The maritime world of the Makahs, an indigenous borderlands people* (New Haven, CT, 2015), pp. 271–79.

[58] For example, Richard White, *The organic machine: The remaking of the Columbia river* (New York, 1995).

[59] Richard H. Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens, and the origins of environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, 1995); John R. McNeill, 'Of rats and

the late 1990s, a sub-field of environmental history was identifiable that recognised oceans as themselves objects of inquiry, as historians more generally claimed that the spaces and scales of world history might be re-ordered on the basis of natural boundaries of oceans.[60] Yet it was only in the twenty-first century that scholars put the ocean into history, revealing changes in the sea as earlier pioneers in the field had mapped changes in the land.[61]

The oceanic turn in environmental history indicates a larger cultural and political shift in which 'blue' has, to some extent, succeeded 'green'. The 'blue humanities' have engaged scholars in adjacent fields – literary studies and cultural studies – to create a rich conversation focussing on the sea, imagination and cultural production in the past and present.[62] There is already an emergent 'sociology of the oceans',[63] while oceanic histories might collectively present a blue history of the world, drawing inspiration from green histories of the world.[64] In this vein, there is a Pacific-centred 'Blue Revolution', focused on the management of fish stocks, to stand alongside the agricultural 'Green Revolution'.[65] More broadly, the idea of a 'blue planet' has gained real purchase, an image that can more readily unify (and simplify) a deeply divided world polity than the continental distance and disparity of soil-based 'green' politics.

men: A synoptic environmental history of the island Pacific', *Journal of World History*, 5 (1994): 299–349; Lill-Ann Körber, Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport, eds., *Arctic environmental modernities: From the age of polar exploration to the era of the Anthropocene* (Basingstoke, 2017).

[60] Jerry H. Bentley, 'Sea and ocean basins as frameworks of historical analysis', *Geographical Review*, 89 (1999), 215–24; Martin Lewis and Kären E. Wigen, *The myth of continents: A critique of metageography* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

[61] For example, Jeffrey Bolster, 'Putting the ocean in Atlantic history: Maritime communities and marine ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500–1800', *American Historical Review*, 113 (2008): 19–47; Bolster, *The mortal sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the age of sail* (Cambridge, MA, 2012).

[62] Steven Mentz, 'Toward a blue cultural studies: The sea, maritime culture and early modern English literature', *Literature Compass*, 6, 5 (September 2009): 997–1013; Hester Blum, 'The prospect of oceanic studies', *PMLA*, 125 (2010): 770–79; Susan Gillman, 'Oceans of *longue durées*', *PMLA*, 127 (2012): 328–34; Blum, ed., 'Special issue: Oceanic studies', *Atlantic Studies*, 10, 2 (April 2013): 151–227; John Gillis, 'The blue humanities', *Humanities*, 34, 3 (May/June 2013): 10–13; Tricia Cusack, ed., *Framing the ocean, 1700 to the present: Envisaging the sea as social space* (Farnham, 2014); Kerry Bystrom, Ashley L. Cohen, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Isobel Hofmeyr, Rachel Price, Meg Samuelson and Alice Te Punga Somerville, 'ACLA Forum: Oceanic routes', *Comparative Literature*, 69 (2017): 1–31.

[63] John Hannigan, 'Toward a sociology of oceans', *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 54 (2017): 8–27.

[64] For example, Clive Ponting, *A green history of the world: Environments and the collapse of great civilizations* (London, 1991).

[65] As proposed by Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the opening of the Pacific world: A global ecological history* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 289–96 and Md Saidul Islam, *Confronting the blue revolution: Industrial aquaculture and sustainability in the Global South* (Toronto, 2014), among others.

This is largely because a blue, ocean-oriented environmentalism has the fact of the world ocean at its disposal, singular and shared: 'Acting together for the Future of the Blue Planet.'[66] Such UN-oriented usage derives from and conflates the 'one world' idea from the political realm and the 'one planet' idea from the environmental realm. There is a long-standing history of the United Nations deploying and advancing both – hence, 'World Oceans Day'.

Watery Spaces

Oceans, then, have served as critical spaces in world history, for all kinds of projects of the imagination, governance and material exchange. Indeed, the waves which link the world's oceans can stand for the diversity of these spatial endeavours. For scientists, waves can be described as populations, systems, events, rogues, tsunamis and formations which eat away at coasts or which are malleable and controllable. They are depicted as both male and as female. For writers, they are a source of terror and inspiration. As one scholar notes: 'waves are phenomenological-technical-mathematical-political-legal objects'.[67] They are now taken as indicators of climate change (will climate change generate more significant wave heights?) and there is even scepticism about applying northern science to the southern hemisphere of waves, which are exposed to more solar radiation than in the north, more oceanic connectivity and thus more swell. Waves have also been central to the way humans conceive of the sea as a boundary. They are a frontier to the undersea and crash upon the crossing point of the beach. As surfers know well, the surfed wave is a 'convergence' or 'assemblage', between mind, body and sea.[68] The difficulty of theorising a wave as a space, given how it is always in an act of becoming, and as an object, because of its entanglement with a whole series of human framings, predictive models and intensive experiences, is a telling fact for a book about the comparative histories of oceans.

The seas located in this volume, like the waves which run across them, oscillate between objecthood and fragmentation, internal coherence and trans-oceanic connection, openness and closure. From Braudel in the 1940s to Bailyn in the early 2000s, many oceanic historians, especially

[66] UNESCO, *One planet, one ocean*.

[67] This paragraph follows Stephen Helmreich, 'Waves: An anthropology of scientific things (The 2014 Lewis Henry Morgan lecture)', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 4 (2014): 273.

[68] See for instance, Jon Anderson, 'Merging with the medium: Knowing the place of the surfed wave', in Anderson and Kimberley Peters, eds., *Water worlds: Human geographies of the ocean* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 73–88.

of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, had stressed oceans as connectors among lands, peoples, cultures and environments. In more recent years, oceanic historians have focused instead on disaggregation, from the multiple micro-environments composing the natural history of the Mediterranean to the 'hundred horizons' imagined in the Indian Ocean.[69] Many of the chapters collected here follow this approach of 'revisionist pluralism – across space and time', as Sujit Sivasundaram calls it in his chapter on the Indian Ocean, while others emphasise in parallel the geopolitics of oceanic spaces, especially those like the Red Sea, the Black Sea or the Baltic, whose shores were more susceptible to capture by imperial powers, leading to periods of relative closedness as seas became 'lakes', under the temporary dominance of hegemonic powers such as the Ottomans, Dutch, Swedes or Russians, or the South China Sea, where in the twentieth century 'spheres of influence were carved into what had formerly been a freewheeling, liquid space'.[70]

Oceanic Histories does not for this reason essentialise or classify the seas of the world as spaces set apart from each other, nor does it prioritise the spatial scale of the global over the micro-regional, the whole ocean over the little sea, the ship over the port, the interior sea over the open ocean. Instead, it follows and collects an eclectic body of work by historians who are all interested in the different scales and optics appropriate for their subjects. Although all approach their subjects holistically, their arguments are in dialogue with those of other scholars who study infra- and inter-oceanic regions such as the Singapore and Malacca Straits, the Persian Gulf, the Tasman Sea and the Bay of Bengal or the English Channel/La Manche and the Suez Canal.[71] Indeed, we expect that histories of such 'narrow seas' – bays and straits, channels and deltas, as well as other enclosed, borderland, connective and intermediary bodies of water – will attract increasing historical attention in future. Like watery

[69] Nicholas Purcell and Peregrine Horden, *The corrupting sea: A study of Mediterranean history* (Oxford, 2000); Sugata Bose, *A hundred horizons: The Indian Ocean in the age of global empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

[70] Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', Miran, 'The Red Sea', Ghervas, 'The Black Sea', Michael North, 'The Baltic Sea', and Tagliacozzo, 'The South China Sea' (quoted), p. 115 below.

[71] For example, Peter Borschberg, *The Singapore and Melaka Straits: Violence, security and diplomacy in the 17th century* (Singapore, 2010); Lawrence G. Potter, ed., *The Persian Gulf in history* (Basingstoke, 2009); Neville Peat, *The Tasman: Biography of an ocean* (North Shore, NZ, 2010); Sunil Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The furies of nature and the fortunes of migrants* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Renaud Morieux, *The Channel: England, France and the construction of a maritime border in the eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 2016); Valeska Huber, *Channelling mobilities: Migration and globalisation in the Suez canal region and beyond, 1869–1914* (Cambridge, 2013).

undulations, spaces and scales continuously emerge and then merge with each other.

Though entangled in history, there are certainly different historiographical tenors in each of these seas, for instance, the anthropologised Pacific or the frontiered Southern Ocean, cast as the 'last ocean'. They even present in different colours: from the white ice of the Arctic to the medieval mapping which gave rise to the Red Sea as a name. The waters of these seas change in salinity; from the high salinity of the Mediterranean, arising as it does from a high ratio of evaporation compared with the extent to which freshwater is added through rivers and rains, to the low salinity of the waters of the Antarctic as icebergs melt or the brackish waters of the Baltic Sea with its many emptying rivers. Regardless, in thinking of these spaces of the world ocean and their inter-relations, it is helpful to adopt what has recently been called a 'fluid ontology', where coastal frontiers are margins constituted by land and fresh and salty water and amongst the most fertile regions of the world in terms of biodiversity and for the co-constitution of the human and the non-human.[72] By symmetry, a fluid ontology should be applied to think not just of the coast, but the series of spaces – from ship to world ocean – over which the terraqueous realm extends.

Approached in this way, oceanic histories revise traditional spatial considerations in world historiography. Take this classic question: is global history in danger of taking the view from outer space? Such a question, with its suggestion of the vertical as methodologically imperial, looks utterly different when considered from the undersea. Maritime histories have too often ignored the seabed as ground. In this vein, maritime histories are cast as horizontal motion across a flat wave-less sea – a literally superficial view that does not penetrate beneath the surface. From the viewpoint of undersea historians, as with recent histories of mountainous and elevated zones, the vertical axis should be reinserted rather than dismissed and the surface of the sea should be seen as spatially changeable and rugged even as undersea currents and turbulences are brought

[72] John Gillis and Franziska Torma, 'Introduction', in Gillis and Torma, eds. *Fluid frontiers: New currents in marine environmental history* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 9, and Jon Anderson and Kimberley Peters, '"A perfect and absolute blank": Human geographies of water worlds', in Anderson and Peters, eds., *Water worlds*, pp. 3–19 (p. 12 quoted). See also, for work in the historical and political geography of the sea, Philip Steinberg, *The social construction of the ocean* (Cambridge, 2001), and David Lambert, Luciana Martins and Miles Ogborn, eds., 'Currents, visions and voyages: Historical geographies of the sea', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006): 479–93.

to view.[73] Oceanic histories of the submarine and subaquatic realm are thus a new way to write a history 'from below'.[74]

From another perspective, a focus on the sea also critiques how area studies collapses into the history of subcontinents and large landmasses, ignoring their watery margins and in turn losing how forms of law, government, or racial and cosmopolitan thought and practice are crystallised at the water's edge in the modern era, in the Qing empire, or in South Asian successor states in the eighteenth century for instance. This is relevant in considering how a sea like the Red Sea only becomes a passageway of transit between two regions studied separately by area studies scholars.[75]

To think of seas is thus to add several more dimensions, planes and viewing points to the present global turn in historiography and at once to consider spaces as concatenations of the human and non-human. A specific theme which has generated great debate in world history is the nature of connection. On this score, the rise of oceanic histories intersected with postcoloniality, a critique of empires and nations which led into attempts to find a common ground of exchange between the dominated. This is apparent is such elaborations as the 'Black Atlantic', the Pacific as a 'sea of islands', or the 'subaltern' Indian Ocean.[76] Yet an emphasis on such connectivity can achieve an end opposite to its aim, by privileging the cosmopolitan and the mobile in motion rather than the enslaved or the labouring *lascar* in place. It can naturalise a space of exchange and interaction which is disconnected from hinterlands, the confined, the subjugated and the particular.

One response to this critique is to track the evolution of fluid frontiers to more discrete edges, as the law and the state established their protocols over the oceans and as cartographers went about delineating the ocean with their compasses and sounding devices. As one set of authors write: 'Coasts lost the quality of a margin and became an edge.'[77] In such

[73] Michael S. Reidy, 'From oceans to mountains: Constructing space in the imperial mind', in Jeremy Vetter, ed., *Knowing global environments: New historical perspectives on the field sciences* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2010), pp. 17–38.

[74] For the European discovery of the undersea, see Rebekka von Mallinckrodt, 'Taucherglocken, U-Boote und Aquanauten—Die Erschließung der Meere im 17. Jahrhundert zwischen Utopie und Experiment', in Karin Friedrich, ed., *Die Erschließung des Raumes: Konstruktion, Imagination und Darstellung von Räumen und Grenzen im Barockzeitalter* (Wiesbaden, 2014), pp. 337–54; Helen Rozwadowski, *Fathoming the ocean: The discovery and exploration of the deep sea* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).

[75] Miran, 'The Red Sea', below.

[76] Paul Gilroy, *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness* (Cambridge, MA, 1993); Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our sea of islands', *The Contemporary Pacific*, 6 (1994): 147–61; Clare Anderson, *Subaltern lives: Biographies of colonialism in the Indian Ocean world, 1790–1820* (Cambridge, 2012).

[77] Gillis and Torma, 'Introduction', in Gillis and Torma, eds., *Fluid frontiers*, p. 9.

a narrative, connection veered into its opposite (and back again too) and this was very much in keeping with the spatiality of the ocean and its clashing and crashing waves. For terraqueous zones are changeable in their relationality and embeddedness. How to conceive of the boundaries and endings of connectedness, a key concern of the newest world historiography as it responds to its critics, is thus at the heart of oceanic histories too.[78] In what follows, it is striking to see the Mediterranean undergoing repeated integration and disintegration and even 'vanishing' with modernity, or the Indian Ocean as a space over which narrators have sought to create unity despite their efforts being constantly challenged by plurality.[79] Further, theories of the 'Ming Gap', though critiqued are said still to hold in pointing to the mutable rhythms of Sino–Southeast Asian relations.[80]

For too long the oceans have been conceived simply either as dead and without history or as inescapably other to the landlocked gaze. Indeed this tradition has played a particular role in an ocean like the Arctic.[81] This emptying of the ocean is often said to be a Western and European tradition. Yet note what the Qianlong Emperor wrote to George III in 1793: 'I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea.'[82] If the creation of edges between land and sea was tied to the positing of the sea as placeless and wasted, this was not a trope that was necessarily shared by all cultures. For instance, the genealogical tradition of Pacific islanders cast their islands as alive, arising out of the seas. For the Ainu, the chapter on the Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea, below attends to Repun, the god of the Sea.[83] But rather than taking the imposition of human frames such as the law, the state and metaphor, for granted, the task of oceanic histories is to trace how the emerging spatiality in fluid zones still bears the interruptions of the waves. The world ocean is not a set of spaces which is easily habitable, readily researchable or smoothly narrated. In this sense, the

[78] See for instance, Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Towards a critical history of connection: The port of Colombo, the geographical "circuit" and the visual politics of new imperialism, ca. 1880–1914', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59 (2017): 346–84.

[79] Greene, 'The Mediterranean Sea', and Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', below.

[80] Tagliacozzo, 'The South China Sea', below; Roxanna M. Brown, *The Ming gap and shipwreck ceramics in Southeast Asia: Towards a chronology of Thai trade ware* (Bangkok, 2009).

[81] Sörlin, 'The Arctic Ocean', below.

[82] The Qianlong Emperor to King George III (1793), in Edmund Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals and memoirs of the court of Peking* (London, 1914), pp. 322–31, on which see Henrietta Harrison, 'The Qianlong Emperor's letter to George III and the early-twentieth-century origins of ideas about traditional China's foreign relations', *American Historical Review*, 122 (2017): 680–701.

[83] Dudden, 'The Sea of Japan/Korea's East Sea', below.

elusive quality of the sea as itself an agent of history should still be kept in view, even as modernisation led to boundary-making in watery zones.

Oceanic cartography was a key mechanism of such boundary-making and sought to impose stillness on to the changeable medium of water. The success of oceanic maps depended on geographical points and features that could be assumed to be changeless. Many of the chapters in this volume trace the rolling out of scientific cartography in precisely this manner. For instance, the South China Sea moved, it is said, from *mare liberum* to a closed sea by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[84] Yet despite the rise of a still view of the wavy ocean, mapping was tied to the paths of mobile ships. Recent work shows how the nature of the ships affected the resulting traces; ships themselves were scientific instruments of cartography.[85] At the same time, oceanic mapping was also about tracking Pacific migrations and dealing with sea-borne ethnological puzzles.[86] If this is so and ship-based scientific mapping was performative as well as evacuative, about human absence as much as human movement, the maps generated by European mariners need to placed alongside the equally embodied sailing instructions, charts and tablets which are also discussed below, used and left by Chinese explorers, Arab mariners or Roman cartographers.

The spread of Western cartography over the seas never had the capability to set itself free from extant traditions, neither has it yet become universal in its reach, notwithstanding Greenwich Mean Time. For international debates carry on with respect to the legal regimes of seas stretching from the South China Sea to the poles and historic maps and evidence of contact are still used as evidence of presence, claims and sovereignty. In other words, oceanic histories, especially as they respond to the critique that it was European imperialists and later nationalists who named many of the world's seas, includes important new work that stretches the category of mapping out to include diverse ways of knowing maritime space. In this sense, the chapters below also fit oceanic mapping together with other oceanic knowledges, ranging from knowledge of weather and the sky to tellings of natural history and natural calamity, such as debates over the mythical sunken continents of Lemuria and Atlantis. In all of these spheres, there was a braiding of ways of knowing.

[84] Tagliacozzo, 'The South China Sea', below.

[85] The classic article on this is Richard Sorrensen, 'The ship as a scientific instrument in the eighteenth century', *Osiris*, 11 (1996): 221–36.

[86] Bronwen Douglas, *Science, voyages and encounters in Oceania, 1511–1850* (Basingstoke, 2014).

Historical Temporalities of the Sea

Finally, how is historical periodisation affected by oceanic histories, and conversely how do we periodise oceanic histories? Notwithstanding historians' lament over the dominance of national frameworks, it is a curious fact that historic 'ages' have sometimes been identified by oceans or the progression of world history through its basins, in a Hegelian circuit from a 'Mediterranean Age' to a 'Pacific Age' via an Atlantic era. 'The Pacific Age' or 'Pacific Century' is the most prominent example in which periodisation has accrued to an ocean, and new kinds and intensities of human activity on it.[87] Atlantic historians similarly identified an Atlantic age, between the late fifteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with modernity itself. In other instances, canonical periodisation in world history has been called into sharp question by historians of the seas. For example, Kirti Chaudhuri's *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean* (1985) challenged a world historiography of maritime commerce and traffic dominated by European expansion after 1500, by periodising his study 'from the rise of Islam' in the mid-seventh century.[88] Conventional historical markers, often drawn from dynasties and diplomacy, rarely map comfortably onto the fluid histories of oceans and seas. Historical periodisation has often followed the determinations of territoriality and sovereignty:[89] by evading such logics, oceanic histories can be not only transnational but also transtemporal in scope. As a result, they may be productively disruptive, especially as defences against the capture of oceanic regions by national interests or attempts to carve out geopolitical spheres of influence, whether in the post-Soviet arena or in the regional competition among Asian powers for instance in the Indian Ocean.

Before most of these watery regions had historians, they had histories, in the plural, most extending back millennia rather than centuries, as shown by the continuity of human migration and mobility in the Pacific, the Red Sea, the South China Sea and the Black Sea, among others. As many of the chapters below demonstrate, the deep histories of oceans and seas provide better frameworks for historical understanding than Eurocentric categories like modernity and Enlightenment. From such a terrestrial standpoint, 'the sea which will permit no records' could appear to be outside history and beyond time.[90] This was the implicit claim behind a long series of attempts to place the prime meridian offshore, in the eastern Atlantic or through the Bering Strait, before it was finally planted at Greenwich in the late nineteenth century.[91] Even then, the oceans slipped the bonds of modernist webs of universal time. It has been hardly a century since time-zones were extended from land to sea: 'Until 1920, oceans and seas remained timeless.'[92]

Oceans may have been formally timeless, until recently, but they were enmeshed in multiple temporalities. Many students of oceans and seas claim *longue durée* ambitions for their studies, picking up the traditions of narration of Arab cosmographers, or explicitly and implicitly recalling Braudel. This is with good reason and application for some oceanic spaces, but for others plainly fails to encompass the incommensurable temporalities of non-Western cultures.[93] Human history in the Pacific, for example, challenges historians to think in different temporal terms altogether: simultaneously tens of thousands of years (human movement into Papua New Guinea and the Australian continent), seven to eight centuries (human movement across Polynesia), five centuries (European maritime traffic) and two centuries (European colonisation). Just as significantly, comprehension of time past and passed across the sea is recounted generationally and genealogically by some Islanders, a productive challenge to historians considering oceanic pasts. Even in the Atlantic, that most time-bound of oceans, enslaved Africans experienced time quite differently from their masters and those who profited from their labour: the Atlantic, like parallel regions, was a sea of histories, not an ocean with a single history.[94] Oceans were therefore arenas for the competition of time-scales and the negotiation of histories. Artificial efforts to demarcate and define them, whether by inscribing territorial limits, slicing them longitudinally with treaty zones or date-lines or bisecting them across the equator, were only writ in water.

It is also striking that oceans have served as sites for telling futures. The contemplation of rising levels of sea is not simply a recent phenomenon. Scientific debate around the long-term relation between land and sea, drawing on catastrophist and evolutionist geological models, attracted

[87] Pekka Korhonen, 'The Pacific Age in world history', *Journal of World History*, 7 (1996): 41–70.
[88] Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean*.
[89] Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and sovereignty: How ideas of feudalism and secularization govern the politics of time* (Philadelphia, PA, 2008).
[90] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851), quoted in Blum, 'Terraqueous planet', p. 25.
[91] Charles W. J. Withers, *Zero degrees: Geographies of the prime meridian* (Cambridge, MA, 2017), pp. 29–37, 159–67.
[92] Vanessa Ogle, *The global transformation of time, 1870–1950* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), pp. 87–88.
[93] See, for example, Damon Salesa, 'The Pacific in indigenous time', in David Armitage and Alison Bashford, eds., *Pacific histories: Ocean, land, people* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 31–52.
[94] Walter Johnson, 'Possible pasts: Some speculations on time, temporality, and the history of the Atlantic slave trade', *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, 45 (2000): 485–99.

controversy because they were also a claim on the future.[95] Meanwhile, the clash of futures told over the sea is especially obvious across the axis of coloniser/colonised; Indigenous peoples have used the sea as a horizon of expectation and a space of the imagination in the face of terrestrial political threat and at times of decolonisation or when faced with colonial narratives of progress and improvement.[96] The arrival of new and future-facing technologies that have bypassed the sea – from air travel to space travel, have often returned by way of metaphor, comparison, naming or routes, or even by the new images they provide of the sea, to the maritime.[97] Present concerns about climate refugees and extreme weather events and debates about the way ahead after the proposal of the Anthropocene, as also the unfolding intersection of climate studies and postcolonialism, will feed into oceanic histories.[98] Thinking with the oceans therefore opens up the possibility of a wide-scale recalibration of our senses of historical temporality and human and terrestrial subjectivities, while at the same time prising open vistas on time's future, in historiography and beyond.

Conclusions

Oceanic Histories takes to the sea, in order to compare and place alongside each other a series of terraqueous zones which have not previously been brought together. This is not an exercise in comparativism for the sake of comparison; rather, it is motivated by the aim of engaging what have been vastly separated historiographies of water, distanced from each other despite their undoubted inter-relation, spatial entanglement and human and non-human connectivity. That distancing has occurred because of the politics of empires, nations, area studies, indigeneity and internationalism. It has also happened because of the way historiographies easily operate as worlds – oceanic and otherwise – unto themselves.

The ordering of the chapters that follows highlights a new route through oceanic historiography; we have prevented ourselves from starting with the Mediterranean, thus enabling a new historiographic cartography,

[95] Sujit Sivasundaram, 'Science', in Armitage and Bashford, eds., *Pacific histories*, pp. 237–60.
[96] See for instance, Tracey Banivanua Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous globalisation and the ends of empire* (Cambridge, 2016).
[97] Frances Steele, 'Maritime mobilities in Pacific history: Towards a scholarship of betweenness', in Gijs Mom, Gordon Pirie and Laurent Tissot, eds., *Mobility in history: Themes in transport* (Neuchatel, 2010), pp. 199–204.
[98] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The climate of history: Four theses', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009): 197–222.

and begin instead with three oceans – the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic – in rough order of the histories of attempts to integrate them, but also to displace the Atlantic in favour of other oceanic models. Then, the book proceeds through pairings of seas also with the goal of avoiding geographical determinism and narratives that spread outward from the false universal of Europe or of the Mediterranean. The novel juxtapositions in this section – for instance, the South China Sea with the Mediterranean, the Red Sea and the Sea of Japan – are designed to highlight historiographical similarities even across geographical expanses, while the more conventional pairing of the Black Sea and the Baltic should facilitate comparison between two regions which have recently experienced political efforts to reintegrate them after a century or more of historical division. Finally, the closing dialogue between the Arctic and Southern Oceans returns the book to two seas more often linked institutionally and intellectually despite their separation at greatest distance from each other. Readers and teachers using the volume can, of course, rearrange the chapters for their own purposes. Nonetheless, we hope our oceanic reshuffling will divert them from conventional tracks and suggest new visions of their oceans and their histories.

The seas that are narrated below are connected and disconnected, spatially interwoven with micro-ecologies and micro-geographies as much as the global plane. In a similar way, we expect that the series that this volume inaugurates will attend to a further cluster of spaces: ports and ships, straits, bays and islands and the undersea realm. All of these travel across, above and below the seas of this volume: ships and airplanes, telegraph lines and missiles, refugees and migrants, trepang and whales, monsoonal winds and El Niño, currents and underwater storms. Taken together, these seas constitute the watery horizons of our planet and a historiographical horizon too.

Our project is inter-disciplinary and methodologically capacious in historical terms. This is evident in how history itself is stretched out over time in what follows, in making the case that the origins of oceanic historiography are long and multicentred and that it overlaps with geographies, cartographies, astronomies, ethnographies, climatic studies and natural histories. Though each of the sub-fields of oceanic historiography surveyed below has developed with a critical sense of its own distinctive flavour, there has been and continues to be a borrowing of concepts and methods. This borrowing at times has been detrimental to the emergence of original questions; and yet at other times the inability to talk beyond the divides of Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Pacific and Mediterranean history for instance, has closed down subjects and areas. To think critically about the relatedness and becoming of each of these seas is thus an

urgent concern, moving beyond the simplistic and dichotomous impasse which questions whether world historiography collapses everything into one or creates new grids of imperial, regional and national difference. To consider the world historiography of oceans in this way is also to take account of the environmental politics of our age and its implication of the need to think of the world ocean as a whole and as a commons. In keeping with the avowed spirit of 'World Oceans Day', it represents a historiographical commitment to plural seas and oceans as well as to the singular ocean itself.

Further Reading

While naval, maritime and ocean histories were written throughout the twentieth century, and indeed earlier, historiographical reflection on, and meta-histories of these fields appeared in the 1990s, led by Indian Ocean historians; see K. N. Chaudhuri, 'The unity and disunity of Indian Ocean history from the rise of Islam to 1750: The outline of a theory and historical discourse', *Journal of World History*, 1 (1993): 1–21. Considerations of the potential of oceans to reframe world historical scholarship suddenly flourished in the first decade of the twenty-first century: Bernard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea changes: Historicizing the ocean* (New York, 2004); Rainer F. Buschmann, 'Oceans of world history: Delineating aquacentric notions in the global past', *History Compass*, 2 (2004): 1–10. And for early links between environmental history and marine worlds, see W. Jeffrey Bolster, 'Opportunities in marine environmental history', *Environmental History*, 11 (2006): 567–97. Kären Wigen convened and edited the much-cited forum in *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006): 717–80, 'Oceans of history', considering the Mediterranean (Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell), the Pacific (Matt Matsuda) and the Atlantic (Alison Games). See also Gelina Harlaftis, 'Maritime history, or the history of *Thalassa*', in Harlaftis, Nikos Karapidakis, Kostas Sbonias and Vaios Vaipoulos, eds., *The new ways of history: Developments in historiography* (London, 2010), pp. 211–38; Rila Mukherjee, 'Escape from terracentrism: Writing a water history', *Indian Historical Review*, 41 (2014): 87–101; and Michael Pearson, 'Oceanic history', in Prasenjit Duara, Viren Murthy and Andrew Sartori, eds., *A companion to global historical thought* (Chichester, 2014), pp. 337–50. Meanwhile, historians of the Indian Ocean and of the Malay maritime world provided important collected statements about substance and methodology, including Rila Mukherjee, ed., *Oceans connect: Reflections on water worlds across space and time* (Delhi, 2013), and Antoinette Burton, Madhavi Kale, Isabel Hofmeyr, Clare Anderson, Christopher J. Lee and Nile Green, 'Sea tracks and trails: Indian Ocean worlds as method', *History Compass*, 11, 7 (July 2013): 497–535. Throughout, two key journals have consistently presented and challenged the bounds of maritime history: *The Journal for Maritime Research*, established by the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich in 1999, and the *International Journal of Maritime History*, originally the organ of the International Maritime Economic History Association. A special issue of the former has recently brought a gendered analysis to maritime and oceanic history: Quintin Colville, Elin Jones and Katherine Parker, eds., 'Gendering the maritime world', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 17 (2015): 97–181. Cultural, political and human geographers have contributed significant historical work, including Philip Steinberg, *The social construction of the ocean* (London, 2001), who investigates a geography of law of the sea. See also Jon Anderson and Kimberly Peters, eds., *Water worlds: human geographies of the ocean* (Farnham, 2014). On land/sea connections, see Alison Bashford, 'Terraqueous histories', *The Historical Journal*, 60 (2017): 253–72; Michael N. Pearson, 'Littoral society: The concept and the problems', *Journal of World History*, 17 (2006): 353–73; Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime histories, littoral cultures and transoceanic exchanges* (Honolulu, HI, 2007); and Donna Gabaccía and Dirk Hoerder, eds., *Connecting seas and connected ocean rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden, 2011). Coastlines have received particular treatment in John R. Gillis, *The human shore: Seacoasts in history* (Chicago, IL, 2012) and with a focus on fishing and fishers in Charu Gupta and Mukul Sharma, *Contested coastlines: Fisherfolk, nations and borders in South Asia* (New Delhi, 2008). For recent studies of the connections between world history and oceanic histories, including comparative methods, see Nile Green, 'Maritime worlds and global history: Comparing the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through Barcelona and Bombay', *History Compass*, 11, 7 (July 2013): 513–23; Michael N. Pearson, 'Notes on world history and maritime history', *Asian Review of World History*, 3 (2015): 137–51. There is a growing cultural history of oceans, including calls for a new 'blue humanities': for example, Steven Mentz, 'Toward a blue cultural studies: The sea, maritime culture and early modern English literature', *Literature Compass*, 6, 5 (September 2009): 997–1013; Hester Blum, 'The prospect of oceanic studies', *PMLA*, 125 (2010): 770–79; and Charlotte Mathieson, ed., *Sea narratives: Cultural responses to the sea, 1600–present* (London, 2016).