

Seascapes: The Universal Thalassa of Indian Ocean World History

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To uncover the mysteries of what the Scientific Committee on Oceanographic Research believed to be “the greatest unknown” of global oceans,” researchers from around the world created the International Indian Ocean Expedition (IOE), a comprehensive survey of the Indian Ocean that lasted from 1959 to 1965. For a short time, this initiative attracted much-needed attention to the ocean, but only in ways that benefited the fields of science, including geophysics, maritime cartography, and oceanography. Decades later, individuals studying the Indian Ocean have a fresh set of issues to resolve unrelated to ocean management, marine life, or oil spills. When approaching the study of oceans from a historical perspective, some modern historians now distance themselves from the idea that oceans served no other purpose apart from a trade network system and a means to transport bodies from one place to another. These archaic narratives often cast the ocean as the backdrop of an event, rather than a vast, bustling “interregional arena” with its own monologue to share upon history’s global stage.¹ By departing from former themes, historians propose focusing instead on the influences of geography, community, culture and pre-modern globalization on what is now known as the Indian Ocean *World* (IOW). Along with this, after revisiting the multifaceted practices of their predecessors, many are receptive to expanding the historical investigative lens and merging with other disciplines. As a result, alternative fields such as zooarchaeology and archaeobotanical are leading the way in IOW study.

As a relatively new area of concentration, disagreement on how to adequately classify the field continues. Despite this, most scholars agree few books played as an essential role in the ongoing development of oceans and seas' study as *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (1949)* written by French historian Fernand Braudel. This is stated

¹ Bose, Sugata. “Space and Time On the Indian Ocean Rim.” In *A Hundred Horizons: Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*. (Harvard University Press, 2006), 6.

not to minimize the likes of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1926), or Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1934-1961). Both are considered authoritative pieces and still receive acclaim for their unorthodox assumptions concerning the tenants of world history. In fact, Spengler was a proponent for extending the historical perspective beyond a Eurocentric lens and declared no culture held a more favorable position over another.² Influenced by compatriot Jules Michelet (1798-1874), the author of *La Mer* (1861), and the *Annales* School, Braudel's book shifted the historiographical trajectory from political events to themes based on cultural history. In relation to any body of water categorized as a sea, Braudel intertwines historical information with biology, ecology, and stated, without "[measuring] these expanses of water in relation to human activity; their history would otherwise be incomprehensible if indeed it could be written at all."³ On the other hand, although Michelet's poetic style and "romantic historiography" omitted him from the scholarly circles of some of his contemporaries, the work he left behind illustrates an evolutionary history that engages with the primitiveness of nature and the impact external pressures from the immaterial world have on the human subconscious. Such a sentiment is reminiscent of Toynbee who speculated the fate of civilizations relied on the reactions to these influences. French literature scholar Lionel Gossman notes, Braudel's approach was not at all unique and in nineteenth century Europe, many scholars endorsed philology. Besides this, history was not yet a separate discipline, and Michelet opposed making it one.⁴ In his own words, the "resurrection" of history was to record it in such a way that others can grasp it not by the intellect alone but through the senses. According to Braudel, in its purest form, the history of the Mediter-

² Northrop Frye, *The Decline of the West* by Oswald Spengler. *Daedalus: The MIT Press on behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences*. Vol. 103, No. 1 (Winter, 1974): 4-5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20024181>.

³ Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949; repr., Harper & Row, 1972), 103.

⁴ Barzun, Jacques. "Jules Michelet and Romantic Historiography." In *Scribner's European Writers*, eds. Jacques Barzun and George Stade (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), vol. 5, 14.

ranean is the history of humans. He was not hesitant to draw from many tools at his disposal including works of literature, philosophy, and art to demonstrate this.

Contemporary historians aspire to apply a similar methodology by combining *thalassography* (the scientific study of the ocean) with historiography. Ultimately, both Michelet and Braudel's laid the foundation for a more interdisciplinary approach to the once neglected field of Indian Ocean World and a disengagement with the prevailing Eurocentric retelling of world history. It should also be noted that not all historians agree with Braudel. Peter N. Miller's essay in *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, has a different opinion regarding how influential Braudel's contribution is to history of the oceans. He summarizes Braudel's piece as an attempt to redefine history as "an ongoing interaction between human and natural forces, encompassing geography, environment, climate and disease", but claims it is a history *in* the sea, and falls short of being about the history *of* the sea.⁵ Conversely, Michael Pearson's *The Indian Ocean: Seas in History* argues, "the tendency to global integration continues today... so strong is this integration to worlds far beyond the ocean that it is now impossible to write a history *of* the Indian Ocean. All Indian Ocean history is now a history *in* the ocean, part of a larger, indeed global history."⁶ Gelina Harlaftis, a loyal supporter of maritime history, regards Pearson's books as one of the best, due to his proficiency as a maritime historian. She seconds his universal, and ultimately global view that does not ignore the, ocean, the ships and trade, the local merchants and seafarers, the voyagers, the European maritime empires and the influence in maritime communities, the ports in the hinterland and the intercommunication of the ocean."⁷

⁵ Miller, Peter N., ed., "Introduction: The Sea Is the Land's Edge Also" In *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, 5.

⁶ Pearson, Michael. *The Indian Ocean. Seas in History*. New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003, 12.

⁷ Harlaftis, Gelina, "Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version and the True History of the Sea". *The International Journal of Maritime History*. (2020) Vol 32(2), 387.

In 1996, maritime historian Frank Broeze introduced the phrase “Asian Seas” in a journal publication to describe the Indian Ocean as a port system link with the Southeast and Asian seas. The phrase never caught on, and a decade will pass before historians make a conscious distinction between an ocean and a sea. Simply put, outlining the Indian Ocean’s geographical boundaries (if any) has been a problematic theme. Equally confusing is how the word Mediterranean is used. Without the addition of “sea” serving as the forename given to sea, it can also be used as it will be throughout this essay to reference a collection of Mediterranean *seas* within the Indian Ocean. This however may be a misuse of the name, according to historians Nicolas Purcell and Peregrine Horden. In an essay published in 2000, they set out to prove the phrase is a modern construct based on an individual(s) biases and intentions. Horden and Purcell write, “the region as it is usually defined today was delineated in the nineteenth century, not earlier.”⁸ Prior to this application, they state the term assumed a “cultural exclusivism” that made “a claim that this area and some of its cultures have a special status among historical subjects, and that comparisons further afield are scarcely needed.”⁹ In reference to the nineteenth century, they continue by saying, “the “invention” of the Mediterranean, as a region and not just a sea...[became], like Bismarck’s Europe, a full-fledge geographical expression.”¹⁰ To further demonstrate how diverse the perception of the Indian Ocean’s geography is, historian Toussaint, a native of Mauritian, which is an island within the “ocean of islands,” whimsically referred to the ocean as a “call to expansion [rather] than a geographical expression.”¹¹ Even with conflicting options and lack of a resolution, both Miller and Pearson’s pieces steer IOW study toward connectivity. Similarly, contem-

⁸ Horden, Peregrine, and Nicholas Purcell. “The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology.” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. No 3 (June 2006), 728.

⁹ Horden and Purcell, 727.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 728.

¹¹ Toussaint, Auguste. *History of the Indian Ocean*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 245.

porary historians do not always agree on the ways connectivity or its opposite, isolation, affects its history.

Whether communities reside along the coast, or on one of the IOW's many archipelagos, historically the ocean's location affects all those within its domain. The significance of location is intimately tied to the seasons, climatology and meteorology, which interfered with ocean travel for centuries. In fact written records and other archaeological evidence confirm the presence of voyages across the world's smallest ocean as early as 2,000 BCE. Unfortunately primary sources are limited as to how much they can reveal and vary in quality. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* is an example of this. The exact date of publication is unknown, however more experts believe it was created around the latter portion of 1st century CE. Written predominately in Greek, the manual which contains documentation of the sailing itineraries and demographics of ports along the IOW, including those of Roman Egypt, is full of grammatical errors. Furthermore, even ancient civilizations viewed the Indian Ocean's boundaries differently. First century scientist Ptolemy understood that in order to understand the ocean world, one would need to understand geography. In addition to producing the first map with longitudinal and latitudinal lines, he depicted the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean as separate entities.¹² Centuries before extensive European sea navigation, Arab cartographers were the first to include Indian Ocean ports. Having access to this knowledge long before their European counterparts is evidence that circulating ideas about the known world were dissimilar. Journal entries also paint vivid illustrations of battles between humans and nature - especially monsoons. Harlaftis cautions historians to not rely on these alone since unlike seaman, they were only 'guests' at sea. Even further she puts forward the possibility that the wives of seamen could uncover additional narratives.¹³ The result of Brau-

¹² Alpers, Edward, A. *The Indian Ocean in World History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 21.

¹³ Harlaftis, Gelina, "Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version and the True History of the Sea," 390.

del's all encompassing research supports the idea that the Mediterranean's distinct geography contributed to the creation of an isolated "pathology."¹⁴ In an essay titled "An Ocean of Islands: Islands, Insularity, and Historiography of the Indian Ocean" included in Peter N. Miller's *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, historian Roxani Margariti argues IOW history should include "nesiology", the study of islands. The Indian Ocean is home to a small archipelago, or island chain, and Margariti believes as a result of insularity, they were able to establish separate communities, each with their own diverse cultures and governments.¹⁵ Author of *The Indian Ocean: Seas in History* Michael Pearson disagrees, and claims, "islands do not qualify as fully "of the coast."¹⁶ In several ways Margariti views align with Braudel's concerning these "microcosms and miniature continents."¹⁷ Miller's cites the purpose of his compilation, which also acknowledges the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Mediterranean, is to promote the idea that the future ocean historiography depends on thalassology. Miller quotes Atlantic world specialist, Willem Klooster, who believes the Atlantic world, arguably the most studied ocean was, "one with clear national divisions, with each colony closely tied to its mother country."¹⁸ Historians were aware that definite boundaries exist and these boundaries make a difference. In contrast, due to it being bound by four continents, (Africa, Asia, Australia, and Antarctica), the Indian Ocean World cannot claim such pronounced ties. Klooster goes on to say the Atlantic World "displayed scant interest in integration, networks, social history, trans-imperial comparisons, and actors across boundaries. It [their Atlantic world] was shaped by Europeans, with Native Americans and Afri-

¹⁴ Braudel, Fernand, 64.

¹⁵ Margariti, Roxani. Miller, Peter, N., ed. "An Ocean of Islands: Islands, Insularity, and Historiography of the Indian Ocean." In *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013), 199.

¹⁶ Pearson, Michael, 226.

¹⁷ Miller, Peter, N., ed. *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013, 201.

¹⁸ Miller, Peter, N., ed., "Introduction: The Sea Is the Land's Edge Also," In *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography*, 24.

cans at best reacting to European initiatives, but not actively creating their own destinies.”¹⁹ Krish Seetah, another Mauritius native whose expertise lies in the hybrid discipline of zoo archaeology, warns historians about relying strictly on a geographical approach. In a series of books dedicated to the Indian Ocean he asserts that “defining oceanic worlds largely in geographical terms can also impede a deeper understanding of the ways in which different regions have interacted with one another through time.”²⁰

The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History, a book written years before Miller’s, is thought to be the third edition in the trinity of historiographical classic books on Mediterranean study. Nearly eight hundred pages, the groundbreaking piece could function as an anthology of all IOW and Mediterranean research prior to the turn of the twenty-first century. Like Baudel’s *The Mediterranean*, Purcell and Horden start off by revisiting the immaterial world to reveal how seas were imagined. Along with chapters dedicated to ecology, geology, botany, religion, and social anthropology, a fair amount of text is spent on discussing connectivity. Overall, the book fails to mention specific details on the Indian Ocean itself. A few years later its authors publish an article proposing that a new “thalassology” is required to study bodies of water which are directly linked to studying the world. Concerning geography, they emphasize, “the layout of sea and land makes the oceans and their embayment’s a way of approaching most parts of the world.”²¹ Purcell and Horden deviate from Margariti’s focus on island culture identities and instead claim the Mediterranean region’s “unity is not that of ecological or cultural types so much as of connectivity between structurally similar (similarly mutable) microecologies.”²² The his-

¹⁹ Miller, Peter, N., ed., “Introduction: The Sea Is the Land’s Edge Also,” 9.

²⁰ Seetah, Krish and Richard B. Allen. “Interdisciplinary Ripples Across the Indian Ocean.” In *Connecting Continents: Archaeology and History in the Indian Ocean World*. Indian Ocean Studies Series. Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008, 5.

²¹ Horden and Purcell. “The Mediterranean and the New Thalassology.” , 723.

²² Horden and Purcell, 734.

torians also address what they believe to be “thalassophobia” amongst their contemporaries and a prevailing preference to choosing a specific area of dry land as a starting point when studying global history. Lastly, when it comes to issues surrounding the identity of the Indian Ocean, Edward Alpers issued an important reminder to “landlubber” historians to make sure they understand oceans are not “a substitute for a continental land mass.” He instead argues,

Oceans do have currents and winds that determine how humans can sail upon their waters, as well as coastlines that connect them to land masses that do possess such resources and settled societies. Oceans also yield protein-rich fish and salt, two of life’s real necessities. In the case of the Indian Ocean, it is the way in which these elements combine during different historical periods that give shape and meaning to its history.²³

Research concerning the significance of how communities formed around the Indian Ocean is currently in the early stages. Alpers believes modern scholars are on an erroneous path if they center their argument on the exchange of culture between Asia and Africa where trade by sea was not the primary source of commerce.²⁴ Historian Philippe Beaujard, falls into this category by alluding to this method in his article published in for the *Journal of World History* in 2005.²⁵ Although scholars who subscribe to the thalassology method view the IOW as a multitude of cultures impacting the coasts and countries it comes into contact with, many still approach its history through the lens of colonial encounters. Some wish to overcome this “cultural imperialism” whereas others, like Seetah claim, “European involvement with the Indian Ocean is a major marker” in its history.²⁶ Created in 2007, McGill University’s Indian Ocean World Centre aimed to “study the history, economy, and cultures of the lands and peoples of the Indian

²³ Alpers, Edward, A. *The Indian Ocean in World History*, 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁵ Philippe Beaujard and S. Fee. “The Indian Ocean in Eurasian and African World-Systems before the Sixteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 16, no. 4 (Dec., 2005): 411-465, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/20079346>.

²⁶ Seetah and Allen, 7.

Ocean World from China to Africa” Its director, Gwyn Campbell believes Seetah’s approach promotes the notion of “technological backwardness” amongst certain nations, especially that of East Africa. To overcome this hurdle, Campbell suggests injecting archaeological evidence into the discourse. He brings up another issue and speculates current research is stifled by historians who apply the readily available Atlantic-centric model to the Indian Ocean. Versions of these histories often rely on states and empire. It is thought that whoever controlled the Indian Ocean during a specific moment in time would receive the starring role of the narrative. The presumption that the Atlantic Ocean was the only body of water utilized during the trade of African slaves incorrectly attributes its centrality to the world’s first global economy is one example of this. Both Alpers and Campbell use the communities of Madagascar and Swahili as case studies to discuss the exchange of technological and cultural advances. Existing archaeological evidence shows how language and maritime skills were transferred from Somalia to Mozambique as early as first century BCE. Campbell also notes that previously, beneath the influence of Eurocentric historiography and without the assistance of archaeology, these advances were attributed to the Middle East.²⁷ Likewise, Bose’s *A Hundred Horizons* adds, “colonial frontiers came to obstruct the study of comparisons and links across regions and left as a lasting legacy a general narrowing of scholarly focus within the framework of area studies.”²⁸ The influence of colonial encounter on the IOW should not be removed entirely. For example, Alpers reflects on how the Portuguese were the first to introduce “state violence to the seaborne trade.”²⁹

After developing an interest in archaeology herself, former molecular and microbial biologist Nicole Boivin proposes a counterargument by acknowledging the absence of Africa in the

²⁷ Campbell, Gwyn. “Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and the Early Modern Historiographical Conventions and Problems.” *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* 1, no. 1 (September), <https://doi.org/10.26443/jiows.v1i1.25>, 28.

²⁸ Broeze, Frank. “The Ports and Port System of the Asian Seas: An Overview With Historical Perspective from c. 1750.” *Australian Association for Maritime History* 18, no. 2 (1996), 7.

²⁹ Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, 64.

IOW historical narrative. She backs Alpers outlook on this issue and in, “Indian Ocean Food Globalization and Africa”, a collaborative article, she applies her former expertise with the new. She argues nonnative crops and animals found their way to African continent via the Indian Ocean, and conversely, native African resources to other places across the IOW. Boivin hones in on a specific area of globalization process (food globalization) and also refutes the very popular conclusion that exchange occurred prior to the medieval era. On the contrary, in “The Unity and Disunity of Indian Ocean History from the Rise of Islam to 1750: The Outline of a Theory and Historical Discourse”, K.N. Chaudhuri’s research invalidates this entirely. “Many dishes mentioned in the Qur’anic tradition, in dated cookery books, and in copper inscriptions from Java are still clearly recognizable and continue to be prepared to the present day,” he argues.³⁰ Referred by some historians as the equivalent to the land based Silk Trade, exchanges across the Indian Ocean consisted of commodities, as well as religions, and biological diseases. As expected, its more famous sister, the Atlantic Ocean received a thorough analysis decades before, and in 1986, historian Alfred Crosby coined the phrase “ecological imperialism” to describe the devastating affects of foreign plants and animals in the New World. Boivin asserts an identical transaction took place in the IOW, but is not insistent upon its ancient time frame. His is not convinced that the ancient trade “move to India *via* the same route or along different pathways.”³¹

Some historians do not view IOW history as an overlooked field of study, and vice versa. Those who disagree blame it on the popularity of modernism. Maritime history had its own presence in historical discourse for a much longer time, and some believe that the resurging interest in the history of oceans will alter the way it is studied going into the future. An essay by scholar

³⁰ Chaudhuri, K.N., “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*. Published by University of Hawaii Press on behalf of World History Association, Spring, 1993, Vol. 4, No 1. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20078544>, 11.

³¹ Boivin, N., Crowther, A., Prendergast, M. *et al.* Indian Ocean Food Globalisation and Africa. *Afr Archaeol Rev* 31, (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-014-9173-4>, 551.

Amélia Polónia in *Maritime History as Global History* counters this proposal and states that maritime history cannot be applied to historical research since it overlaps with a variety of disciplines. To add to this argument, Frank Broeze maintains that the phrase itself will cause misconception within the field since it is often associated exclusively with ships and navigation. Gelina Harlaftis disagrees and in a scholarly journal she outrightly sums up her position. “Maritime History provides a methodology for linking the local, the regional, the national, the international, the global, so giving us the possibility of comparing the small and the unimportant, the big and the important, the everyday life, the material culture and the transactions of the most remote places around the world.”³² In another essay, “Maritime History or the History of Thalassa”, Harlaftis, offers a summarized background of maritime history. She divides it into two halves between French and English speaking scholars. She adds other Europeans to the French speaking historians, like Braudel and the *Annales* School who produced research solely on the 15th-18th centuries. She credits resurrection of maritime history to the *Annales* who merged with other disciplines. The English speaking historians (U.K., Canada, and Norway) contributed to economic and social history from the 18th century to the 21st.³³ With this information she concludes that maritime history will be understood in multiple ways. Throughout the essay she uses maritime history interchangeably with thalassa. Her simplified definition of both states that it is the “history of the people who sail on the sea and live around the sea.”³⁴ Polónia’s essay, “Maritime History: A Gateway to Global History?” aligns herself with a similar belief and believes that maritime history is global history. She states, maritime history “encompasses all the dynamics which result

³² Harlaftis, Gelina, “Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version and the True History of the Sea”. *The International Journal of Maritime History*. (2020) Vol 32(2) 388.

³³ Harlaftis, Gelina. “Maritime History or the History of Thalassa.” In *New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography*, edited by Kostas Sbonias, Nikos Karapidakis, Vaios Vaiopoulos, and Gelina Harlaftis, 211–37. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, 215.

³⁴ Harlaftis, Gelina. “Maritime History or the History of Thalassa.” In *New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography*, 2010, 211.

from and are required by the ways humans use the sea.”³⁵ For some historians, the topic of global history makes the discourse more complex. Braudel and others alluded to the existence of a universal history. Not only does historian Kirti N. Chaudhuri find weaknesses in Braudel’s Mediterranean hypotheses, he recognizes the issues that arise due to attempts to formulate a periodization based on a society’s understanding of their history. Inside an article written in 1993, Chaudhuri claims Braudel’s proposed “one size fits all” theory along with meshing any similarities found in significantly different sets of information does not make the comparable compatible.³⁶ Additionally he claims when studying their own history, Asian historians have resorted to a self imposed cultural imperialism by employing Eurocentric models.

The final issue historians will face involves agreeing on which methodology to apply to the thalassa of the IOW. Should thalassology be a subset of world history? Is the study of IOW considered a micro history or sub theme? In regards to history, is the Mediterranean a subsystem to the Indian Ocean? Or vice versa? These challenging questions can not be answered without the assistance of other disciplines. Like Campbell, Krish Seetah’s *Connecting Continents* finds the discourse surrounding these issues are influenced by the Atlantic World model. Seetah sides with archaeological finds “there is deeper diachronic continuity between cultures throughout much of the Indian Ocean world than is found in the Atlantic.”³⁷ This shift draws attention to material culture instead of dates. Without a doubt, dates are important but other historians prefer a more thematic approach. In place of periodicity, Seetah suggests observing the “regular reoccur-

³⁵ Fusaro, Maria, and Amélia Polónia, eds. “Maritime History: A Gateway to Global History?” In *Maritime History as Global History*. St. John’s Liverpool University Press, 2010, 1.

³⁶ Chaudhuri, K.N., “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*. Published by University of Hawaii Press on behalf of World History Association 4, No 1, (Spring, 1993), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20078544>, 11.

³⁷ Seetah and Allen, 6.

ring patterns of trade, movements of peoples and ideas.”³⁸ Alpers almost has an identical opinion, but he does not subscribe to any theoretical model. Alternatively, his approach is to

“focus on the movement of people, things, and ideas, as well as what I regard as key epochs and linking themes that both drove and were driven by such movements. In order to understand these movements and to create a meaningful periodization by which to organize them I am obliged to draw upon many different kinds of evidence and scholarship.”³⁹

Another categorizing mechanism commonly mentioned among historians of global history is the “world-system” or “systematic theory”. Its founder, sociologist and economic historian, Immanuel Wallerstein, concluded that the origins of “world-system or capitalist world economy” can be traced to the 16th century and it consists of studying globalism by employing more than one discipline.⁴⁰ Harlaftis, who equates world history with maritime history, appears to also be an advocate for this methodology and embraces the idea that the history of the sea, “transcends the history of a nation or a people...maritime activities are nation-less, they are international/global industries.”⁴¹ The “world-system” is not confined to political, military, and economical realms. Nor is it static or permanent. Any culture, society, or country with the most prevalent ideologies, (“tools of ideological power”) or institutions could become the hegemon, or dominate entity. For example, McCornick includes an instance of this as it relates to ideologies surrounding America and the Cold War. When the focal point is removed from one element, in this case strictly Soviet-American relations, a redundant historical pattern within the global system reveals itself, and rids the Cold War “of its mystique and uniqueness.”⁴² To better comprehend Indian Ocean World history, historian Philippe Beaujard removes Europe as the pre-modern

³⁸ Seetah, Krish and Richard B. Allen. “Interdisciplinary Ripples Across the Indian Ocean.”, 7.

³⁹ Alpers, Edward, A. *The Indian Ocean in World History*, 92-93.

⁴⁰ McCornick, Thomas, J. “World Systems”, *The Journal of American History*, (June 1990): 125.

⁴¹ Harlaftis, “Maritime History: A New Version of the Old Version,” 385.

⁴² McCornick. “World Systems,” 132.

globalization arena and replaces it with the IOW. According to Beaujard, the success of pre-colonial economies depended on the accessibility of diverse resources and services. Whoever possessed these resources, became the dominate society. His argument also relies on archaeological evidence and like Gwyn Cambell, Africa, more specifically, the existence of a pre-Swahili culture provides enough detail to support his claims. In the pre-colonial IOW, this culture, along with other Indian Ocean ports maintained an aspect of independence powered by a world-system.

Gelina Harlaftis critiques the lack of communication among historians in general but stresses its prevalence in the relationship between scholars of thalassology and maritime history. Her sentiments veer towards the opinion that the outcome of this lack of discourse stifled research in the field of maritime history. Apart from migration on foot with (or without) the support of domesticated animals, as one of the earliest means of international transportation before the era of railway travel, studying the world's oceans - especially the Indian Ocean should become a priority. Miller's *The Sea: Thalassography and Historiography* states the poet Góngora proclaimed trans-ocean travel as "the greatest thing since the advent of Jesus Christ himself."⁴³ Modern-day IOW historians must follow their predecessors' footsteps and not be afraid to be innovative. Thalassophobia must be conquered in the name of historiographical progress. They must be receptive to approaching age-old challenges in new ways and be willing to utilize other scholars without historical backgrounds. Lastly, if necessary, they must be willing to disassociate themselves from any preconceived notions about what oceans are and why they are essential to the study of history. Despite many obstacles to overcome, in the end, like the boundlessness of an ocean, progress within the study of the Indian Ocean World will continue to ebb and flow and is not expected to evaporate anytime soon.

⁴³ Miller, "Introduction: The Sea Is the Land's Edge Also," 2.

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