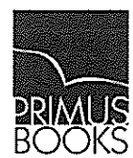
ISSUES IN HISTORY

OCEANS CONNECT

Reflections on Water Worlds Across Time and Space

edited by
RILA MUKHERJEE



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TO

RANAJIT BANERJEE

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Introduction

Marine, Maritime and Visionary Worlds

RILA MUKHERJEE

The twenty-first century sees a renewed interest in the study of oceans. A series of conferences—the proceedings of which were published as edited volumes and in journals, and numerous special themed issue journals, have covered a broad yet nuanced canvas of seascapes,[1] 'Oceans of History' a themed issue of the *American Historical Review* covering the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, urging for a new thalassology—the study of oceans.[2]

Oceanic Studies

In its new avatar from the earlier maritime history, oceanic studies are therefore once again in vogue. In 2007, Meghan Vaughn wrote 'oceans are not blank spaces on the map, nor are they gaps in the histories of a world consisting of continents'.[3] We are urged to rethink notions of waterscapes not just as fringed by land or as an empty space, but as an autonomous bodies. Yet, the land is hard to ignore. As Chakravarti has noted:

> In the understanding of Indian history the land question has for long been considered critically important. There has been an unbroken continuity over several millennia especially during pre-modern times in the overwhelming importance of agriculture in the economic life of the subcontinent. The making or unmaking of large territorial powers, the daily life, the belief systems and associated ritual practices in India cannot be delinked from the agrarian scenario. There is, however, another geographical reality: the subcontinent is washed on three sides by the sea.[4]

How we frame waterscapes is the central concern of several chapters in this volume.

Marine Worlds

This volume is divided into four sections. The first section looks at a marine world as opposed to a maritime world. In Chapter 1, Paul D'Arcy evokes the necessity of bringing back the marine vision, by noting:

> most maritime historians specialize in maritime areas bounded and defined by contiguous landmasses. These conceptual maritime regions often artificially restrict

or distort the true seafaring range and seaborne interactions of maritime peoples. Colonial history and historiography have accentuated this continental perspective by further dividing sea worlds into worlds perceived to be discrete, restricted and controlled spaces unified by the language of the colonizer. Such perceived spaces impose colonial order on maritime environments.... They represent seascapes of desire by the powerful rather than reflections of reality. ... It follows that attempts to map and narrate the range and vision of maritime peoples before their domination and marginalization by land-based, numerically or militarily superior, peoples offer a way of decolonizing their history. Part of this decolonizing involves a form of subaltern history whereby the centrality of sea, forever present in the world view of maritime peoples, is restored to its former central place.

To buttress his argument, D'Arcy cites Tongan writer and scholar Epeli Hau'ofa's notion of 'Our Sea of Islands', which directly reversed the notion of 'wastes'. This notion was part of the sixteenth century debate surrounding the idea of empty space as waste. Europeans held that nature abhorred a vacuum; therefore, colonization of that space was not just desirable but necessary. Hau'ofa eschewed the emptiness of waterscapes and re-imagined them as oceanic transits. This vision rescues oceanic history from its dependence on external histories. As Anne Salmond put it, history is a two-way process: 'When the *Dolphin* arrived at Tahiti, the island was "discovered" and the islanders entered European history. Equally, however, the Europeans entered Tahitian history, tangling these histories together.'[5]

In Chapter 2, Rila Mukherjee stretches this argument further by writing: 'not only do littorals connect, ... this connectivity is in symbiosis with the larger premise in this volume: that "oceans connect"'. Rivers and seas are braided in a particular manner to create a curious set of connections over maritime and terrestrial areas, thereby creating an alternate history moving between sea and land. Marine deities, marine iconography and marine goods, such as *kauri* and conch shells, circulated over a vast maritime space and reached far inland into India's north-east and into north Myanmar, Tibet and Yunnan through the Brahmaputra River.

Examples of the circulation of marine iconography and deities are seen in stories of fish-women, depicted as dragons in Western folklore, of dragons and serpents in island South-East Asia and north-east India, and, in some cases, in the changeover from folk deities and foundation myths into royal cults. The synergy in beliefs between the landlocked region of India's north-east and island South-East Asia suggests that the early history of older state forms which clustered around the northern Bay of Bengal and which lost out in the negotiation for statehood, comes down to us today as a history of aquatic dreams and lost desires.

Chapter 3 sounds a cautionary note. Arvind S. Susarla contends, emphatically, that we have not been able to construct a social science discipline that moves effortlessly between land and sea; that rather than 'oceans connect', we should do well to remember that frequently it is a

case of 'oceans bypassed'. As evidence, Susarla writes: 'our understanding or explanations of oceans are predominantly place-based/centric ... because I find in literature that land and oceans are separate from each other, which in turn allows for a discourse on oceans that is centred on land.' We come full circle because Susarla's chapter endorses many of the arguments in Chapter 1.

Maritime Worlds

If the first section dealt with marine perspectives, the second section of *Oceans Connect* deals with the maritime life of oceans and takes us to a more familiar terrain—or should I say sea!—that is, the history created in oceans and seas between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries by the great empires: the Spanish, Portuguese and Russian. It is uncommon to think of the Russian empire as a maritime empire. Therefore, Ryan Jones' chapter on Russia's pacific moment is a welcome corrective to the more conventional ways of visualizing the Russian empire.

Maritime Networks

The four other essays in the second section emphasize cooperation and knowledge transfer as indisputable factors in the sustenance and viability of mercantile empires. Ana Crespo Solana examines the many ways by which the Spanish maritime enterprise left its mark on Atlantic communities and vice versa, while the chapters of Amelia Polonia and Amandio Barros study the diverse ways, and the manifold mechanisms, by which the Portuguese connected three quite different worlds: those of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and the Mediterranean sea.

Dilating upon the Portuguese dimensions, the chapter by J.B. Owens suggests:

> how historians can promote more effectively interest in the Portuguese contribution to the creation and maintenance of the First Global Age, 1400–1800, through the narration of selected stories ... of new forms of entrepreneurship, gender and political interactions, and cultural expression across a vast geographic landscape. ... these ... are fundamental for a grasp of world history, and because the history of no place can be understood without understanding its connections to other places, for a grasp of American, African, Asian, and European history as well.

Like Owens, Ana Crespo Solana too looks at the Spanish expansion as a global history. She writes: 'on the interactions that happen in the world as a result of the formation of transnational diasporas and the development of certain specialized mercantile societies fed by a continuous human and economic flow from one end of the oceans to the other' and that 'nowadays it is possible to carry out a work of theoretical-methodological nature that analyzes the phenomenon of the formation of mercantile diasporas and the formation of societies, states and transnational identities from the perspective of the Atlantic and the World History.'

Amélia Polónia sees the Portuguese experience between 1400 and 1800 as one of 'Jumping Frontiers, Crossing Barriers' and writes 'maritime dynamics present themselves as a main agent for exchange on a global scale, since they foster, historically, connections between local, the regional and the global levels. These dynamics provided the means of technological and knowledge transfers, global trade networks, human migrations, and cultural flows'. She adds:

> the sixteenth century, defined as the time of the 'world economies' or of 'world systems', or even as the 'First Global Age', is seen as a time of growing connectivity between several world spaces. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how people, products and ideas moved in space, apparently ignoring geographical, religious and political boundaries. The use of the oceans as highways of communication, rather than as insurmountable barriers, was one of the pre-conditions for such an achievement.

Barros writes of technology and knowledge transfer between three seas. The Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean was marked by way in which they transferred techniques already in use in Europe. Such techniques were the result of medieval contacts with the Mediterranean, i.e. in mercantile organization (trade and commercial networks, account books, and cooperation). Besides trade and trading methods, Barros also writes of port organization, port defenses and shipbuilding, citing examples of oceanic transfers, for instance, how the Portuguese adopted models of fortresses developed in Italy in the early sixteenth century (*la trace italienne*) that were known in every European port, from the Mediterranean to the Baltic Sea. They transferred those models to the African factories, to the Indian Ocean region and to Brazil. He underlines the case of human resources and capital by noting it was a fact from the beginning that the Portuguese Crown had to rely on German and Italian money and foreign nautical technicians (shipmasters and sailors), as also capital and sailors from the Indian Ocean region to be effective and to survive.

As does Amelia Polonia, Barros too devotes particular attention to the issue of shipbuilding (a subject with a long history of knowledge transference). He proposes that the notion of Portuguese naval superiority has to be set against the fact that Indian Ocean navigation was performed with ships adapted to the specific conditions that the Portuguese encountered. To this end, Barros gives the striking example of the galleon, specifying that the galleon was developed in the Indian Ocean by the Portuguese and then brought back to Europe where it became the most effective defensive ship in the Atlantic.

Finally, in support of our hypothesis that 'oceans connect', Barros cites documentary proof of cooperation between Portuguese and Indian Ocean traders, the manifold networks and the way numerous Portuguese trade communities self-organized and developed their activity outside the official sphere, as for instance in the Bay of Bengal.

European Cartography and the Indian Ocean as Space

The third section's focus on the Indian Ocean explores the geographical construction of this space from the perspective of Europe. Revisiting late medieval maps of the world such as those by Creques Abraham, Walsperger, Fra Mauro and the globe of Martin Behaim, Antoni Picazo Muntaner argues that the Indian Ocean as space became gradually known to Europe and that, in the process, this space was reduced into a place to be explored and enjoyed by Europeans. Rila Mukherjee while studying maps dated from the sixteenth century onward, argues that once the Indian Ocean became a place it was once again socially constructed as *space* from the seventeenth century as Europeans became aware of its immensity and were confused by its varied constituent units. Therefore, Mukherjee sees a movement from space to place and back to space.

Maps and Cartography

How do we study maps? Maps are graphic symbols, tools of social communication as well as tools for technical and intellectual mediation, at the same time, and by virtue of this porous quality, maps are also fragile documents.[6] The fragility is seen in the fact that there is no one word for 'map'; it means different things in different languages. The origin of the English word 'map' is of course the Latin 'mappa', but the French use 'carte', the Italians have three terms—'mappa', 'carta' and 'piano', the ancient Greeks called it 'pinax', Latin took this term and translated it as 'tabula' (orbisterrarum, the term 'orb' suggesting roundedness and plenitude, much like the Sanskrit word 'bhugola' for earth), medieval and renaissance Europe called it 'imago' or 'descriptio'—the list goes on.[7] The Arabs call it 'naksha', Hindus call it 'manchitra' while Buddhists call their depiction of the world, 'mandala'.

The history of cartography, Jacob observed is one of rhythms. Each map represents a new step, a new level, in the discovery and appropriation of the world. Maps always emanate from an authority—Church, State, monastery, scientific society, commerce—the list is endless.[8]

Mappaemundi and Discoveries

Picazo Muntaner writes in this volume:

> In the late Middle Ages, Europe was already fully aware of main trading centres and networks in distant markets, particularly Indo-Asian ones. This knowledge necessarily implied a certain defined geo-spatial vision, linked in particular to an emerging desire. ... the need to gain access to these centres and networks, reducing costs and increasing the profits derived from trade. This perception would spread and become more widely extended with the development of cartography in a constant feedback

process, since *perceiving is seeing*.... Europe's connections with the Far East in the early stages of the First Global Age facilitated a substantial increase in geographical 'information'. This information was gradually improved on, acquiring more technical detail and finally bringing about a fundamental change, both in the new vision of the world and in market strategies, the extension of trade and political expansion, helping to forge the beginning of the Modern Age in Europe and an economic system that was already in its incipient stages: capitalism.

He adds: 'In the late Middle Ages, Europeans began to forge a highly developed spatial understanding, grasping complex references to major far-away markets. ... With all this, a much more complex vision was gradually formed.' This vision fed into cartography in the fourteenth century, most visible in Cresques Abraham's *Catalan Atlas* (1375) from Mallorca, then under Aragon. Mallorca was located in a prime geographic position to act as mediator in this knowledge transfer between East and West.

Cartographic Changes

What are the changes visible between thirteenth and fifteenth century cartography? Edson writes: 'The mappaemundi of the thirteenth century pulled together the world view of the High Middle ages and presented it in spatial format, incorporating history, geography, botany, zoology, ethnology, and theology into one harmonious and dazzling whole.'[9] In orientation, until the fourteenth century, all world maps were oriented to the East, the direction of sunrise and location of the earthly Paradise. The centre was not usually stressed until the thirteenth century, when Jerusalem, because of Europe's crusades, was put in the middle.[10] For a while after, possible due to Islamic influence, maps were oriented to the south, but from 1500, as Europe's geographical knowledge expanded greatly, maps were oriented to the north.[11] The northward orientation meant that the eastward Garden of Eden was removed from maps and Jerusalem was displaced as the centre of the world as the greater extent of Asia gradually came to be known. More important, maps from 1500 hailed the triumph of the sea charts and the north-pointing compass.[12]

In the thirteenth century, routes and distances as depicted on the maps were allegorical: the Hereford mappamundi showed the route taken by the Israelites from Egypt through the desert into the Promised Land.[13] Geographical knowledge of rivers was vague and the Bible remained the ultimate authority, the Tigris and the Euphrates were known, as well as two rivers called Phison and Gyon, usually taken to be the Ganga and the Nile. These rivers formed the connecting link between the earthly paradise and the known human world.[14] Gradually, this geographic format was gradually shaken as Europeans explored the maritime worlds of Africa and Asia and the Far East.

In contrast to mappaemundi, medieval portolans were route maps for coasts, giving distances and acting as harbour guides. They provided

information on winds, freshwater supplies, hazards and landmarks; and they were indispensable nautical guides.[15] Portolans supplemented the ancient *periploi* to a large extent and paved the way for the development of the sea chart in early modern Europe, the last an indispensable guide for conquering the maritime world.

The *Catalan Atlas* shows the transition between the medieval mappaemundi and the more modern portolan, later refined into the sea chart.[16] This was effected by accessing new geographical information; for example, the cartographer, Cresques Abraham used Marco Polo extensively, although some of Marco's information on Asia was already obsolete as the empire of the Great Khan had by then fallen. Cresques Abraham also drew on information from the Mallorcan Jewish trading community to present a realistic view of the resources and commercial centres of Africa, called the 'India trade' as Picazo Muntaner also notes;[17] similar to Fra Mauro's enigmatic reference in his world map of the 1450s to a 'ship of India'—a *concho* or junk—that sailed around the African coast in 1420.[18]

Thus, the tensions between medieval cosmography and the new geographical knowledge that was coming into Europe surface in the *Catalan Atlas*. Edison notes that the *Catalan Atlas* catapults us into a new world, crisscrossed with trading ships and caravans originating in the Mediterranean.[19] Mallorcan mapmakers, linked by profession to the society of seafaring merchants—Arabs, Jews and Christians—faithfully recorded all new information.[20] Travellers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, armed with their new information, presented a challenge to the traditional mappamundi format; more particularly, the arrangement and depiction of space. The mappamundi was a paradigm of the conception of the arrangement of the world in the European High Middle Ages; however, the information brought back by the explorers, coupled with new ways of mapping as evident in the sea charts, began to break it apart.[21] In the fifteenth century this tension became more acute, particularly visible in Fra Mauro's World Map.[22]

Competing Geographies

Seven Seas and Seven Worlds

Simultaneously, there were also competing geographies that emanated from the Arab world. Equal inheritors of the classical Greek cosmographical notions, these geographies too were supplemented by practical experience derived from actual sailings in Asian waters. While actual exploration of the larger maritime space by Europeans started only from the late fifteenth-early sixteenth centuries, with the arrival of the Portuguese and Spanish in the 'new' oceans, an older navigational heritage had already breached the divide between classical notions and lived-experience.

As an example of how the earliest navigators from the West perceived the Indian Ocean, we can quote al-Ya'qubi (d. 897), who, following oral tradition, emphasized the different seas in the Indian Ocean:

> Whoever wants to go to China must cross seven seas, each one with its own color and wind and fish and breeze, completely unlike the sea that lies beside it. The first of them is the Sea of Fars [Persian Gulf], which men sail setting out from Siraf. It ends at Ra's al-Jumha; it is a strait where pearls are fished. The second sea begins at Ra's al-Jumha and is called Larwi [Gujarat coast, the Gulf of Khambhat]. It is a big sea, and in it is the island of Waqwaq and others that belong to the Zanj. These islands have kings. One can only sail this sea by the stars. It contains huge fish, and in it are many wonders and things that pass description. The third sea is called Harkand [Bay of Bengal], and in it lies the island of Sarandib, in which are precious stones and rubies. Here are islands with kings, but there is one king over them. In the islands of this sea grow bamboo and rattan. The fourth sea is called Kalah-bar [identified as the Straits of Melaka] and is shallow and filled with huge serpents. Sometimes they ride the wind and smash ships. Here are islands where the camphor tree grows. The fifth sea is called Salahit and is very large and filled with wonders. The sixth sea is called Kardanj [Gulf of Siam]; it is very rainy. The seventh sea is called the sea of Sanji also known as Kanjli [South China Sea]. It is the sea of China; one is driven by the south wind until one reaches a freshwater bay, along which are fortified places and cities, until one reaches Khanfu [Canton].[23]

In successive centuries, these spaces underwent further fragmentation. In the western Indian Ocean, the Sea of Larwi, where Waqwaq (identified as the Mascarene islands, although some scholars hold that it could equally refer to Japan) lay,[24] was perceived to contain infinite seas: al-Bahr al-Muhit (the Atlantic into which the Western Indian Ocean flowed),[25] Bahr al-Hind, al-Bahr al-Hindi, Bahr al-Zanj, Bahr al-Habashi and Bahr Fars (the Persian Sea).[26] The Bahr al-Hind melted, in its turn, to the Bahr al-Zulma (or Zulumat), called the 'Sea of Obscurity'.[27] There was also the al-Bahr al-Zifti, frequently called the Sea of Pitch or Black Sea or Gravelly Sea.[28]

In the eastern Indian Ocean the boundaries changed once again, as new frontiers were found, new limits were enforced. The waterscape between the Sea of Harkhand and the Sea of Salahit, which contained al-Ya'qubi's Sea of Kalah-Bar, tentatively identified as the Melaka Straits, is fuzzy. In the *Akhbar Al-Sin wa'l Hind*, part of the *Silsilat al-Tawarikh*, compiled by Abu Zayd al-Sirafi around AD 916 and based on accounts dating *c.* 851, but often mistakenly attributed to Sulayman al-Tajir who was merely one of the informants, there is no Sea of Kalah-Bar. The Sea of Harkhand flows directly into the Sea of Salahit.[29] Here the Sea of Salahit, and not the Sea of Kalah-Bar, is identified as the Melaka Straits.[30] However, in another translation of the same work, there is a Sea of Shelahet (Salahit), around the Andaman Sea.[31] To confuse matters still further, this same work also mentions a Sea of Andaman lying between the seas of Harkhand and Shelahet.[32]

While al-Ya'qubi spoke of seven seas in the Indian Ocean, there was also a notion, prevalent in Islamic lands and derived from older Persian and Arab traditions, that there existed seven seas in the *known world*. These were the Sea of China, the Sea of India, the Sea of Persia, the Sea of Kolzum or the Red Sea, the Sea of Rum (or of Greece, this meant the Mediterranean), the sea called al-Chozar (Kasvin or the Caspian), and the Sea of Bont (Pontus Euxinus, also known as the Scythian or Black Sea).[33]

Renaudot notes that the seven seas also had popular names, possibly derived from nautical practice: the Sea of India was called the Green Sea, that of Persia was known as the Sea of Basra and so forth:

> In like manner the Sea of Harkand, the Sea of Delarowi [the Sea of Larwi or Gujarat], the Sea of Zinge, or that on the coast of Barbary, and the Dark Sea which was almost unknown to the Arabs, it stretching away beyond the Island of Madagascar or St. Lawrence [was this the Bahr al-Zulma (or Zulumat), called the 'Sea of Obscurity' or the al-Bahr al-Zifti, frequently called the Sea of Pitch or Black Sea or Gravelly Sea?: Editor's note], have different Names from the different Coasts they wash, and which they also call the Salt Sea.[34]

Had Arab navigation then discarded the idea of the 'river oceanus'? Not so, as will be seen in the next section.

The Ocean Sea and the Mediterranean

Simultaneous to the idea of the seven seas, there also existed a notion that the water body now known as the Indian Ocean extended into the Mediterranean. Abu Zayd al-Sirafi wrote in the tenth century:

> In our Times, Discovery has been made of a Thing quite new.... No Body imagined that the Sea which extends from the Indies to China, had any communication with the Sea of Syria.... Now behold what has come to pass in our Days.... In the Sea of Rum, or the Mediterrranean, they found the wreck of an Arabian Ship which had been shattered by Tempest ... the Remains of her were driven by Wind and Weather into the Sea of Chozars, and from thence to the Canal of the Mediterranean Sea, and at last were thrown on the Shore of Syria. This evinces that the Sea surrounds all the Country of China, and of Cila [or Sila-Japan] the uttermost parts of Turkestan, and the country of the Chozars, and that then it enters at the Strait till it washes the Shore of Syria. The Proof of this is deduced from the Build of the ship we are speaking of; for none but the Ships of Siraf are so put together, that the planks are not nailed ... whereas the Planking of all the Ships of the Mediterranean Sea, and of the Coast of Syria, is nailed and not joined together the other way.[35]

This passage reflects the idea of the Ocean Sea connecting with the Mediterranean; seen in the classical Graeco-Roman tradition as the middle of the earth. But, in truth such a connection would actually go through the Black Sea, which connects with the Mediterranean Sea by the Bosporus, the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles, an absurd itinerary in hindsight. However, there existed the Arab notion that there was a northern route connecting the East with the Mediterranean. This was through a sea above China (perhaps the Arctic Ocean) that flowed into either the Caspian

or the Sea of Muscovy (the latter is either the Baltic Sea or the White Sea which is an inlet of the Barents Sea) and thereby linked up with the eastern Mediterranean, which is what the author refers to.

Different Geographies in the Same Space

These two passages prove that in the ninth century Arab world, real, lived-experience was confronting older geographic notions. While people actually sailed from the Persian Gulf to China and encountered seas other than the Mediterranean in the process, they were also swayed by the belief of an all-encircling ocean on which the earth floated. This must have made travel difficult, and ideologically hazardous; yet this did not deter travel, trade and pilgrimage.

What is important to note here is that the Great Eastern Sea that Ibn Khurdadhbih spoke of—the Oriental or Eastern Ocean—had different meanings and boundaries for all those who wrote about it.[36] Therefore, we see that maritime realities were themselves disputed, depending on prevailing geographical notions but also being mediated through individual experience, both for Arabs and Europeans.

A New Space

Europe Triumphant

As Picazo Muntaner emphasizes, from the sixteenth century a whole new kind of space entered the European consciousness. The notions of space, place and time, as depicted by the medieval mappaemundi, indeed its ambition to be a veritable encyclopaedia of human knowledge and belief about the world, slipped out of use and yielded instead to a plain representation of physical space. As Christian Jacob put it, the imaginary seduction of the map was now replaced by a rational construction, a tension visible in what he calls the ephemeral versus the concrete map.[37] In the first category Jacob places the 'sand' maps of the Tuareg, while the second comprises the atlases inspired by sea charts that began to appear increasingly from 1500—the *Atlas Miller* (1519), the *Atlas Catalan*, the Atlas of Jean Rotz called the *Boke of Hydrography* (1542) and the Atlas of Guillaume Le Testu (1555). The Tuaregs inscribed the map with their physical presence, for them the map *was* place, while the monumental constructed so called 'rational' maps were an abstract rendering of space.[38]

Thus, from the first the mappaemundi, which had first appeared in Europe from 821–2 CE, had imbued space with divine meaning and had presented the world as a stage for sacred history with all the grand themes: creation, death, temptation and sin. They depicted places that could never be entered or mapped, such as the earthly paradise, and attempted to chart time, so as to present the unfolding of human history in space.[39]

The cultural agreement of the High Middle Ages in Europe, as expressed in the mappaemundi and the great encyclopaedic compilations of the late thirteenth century, therefore began to fall apart by the 1400s. In geography, authority and spiritual goals were displaced by experience—a forerunner of the emphasis put on *la sperienza* in Renaissance art increasingly from 1500. While the medieval mappaemundi had tried to answer the fundamental questions: what, when and why, the transformed map only answered the question: where?[40]

A Tangible Space?

The new notions of space are visible in the maps constructing the Indian Ocean discussed by Mukherjee. Using these maps to discuss classical and medieval ideas on oceans and seas, Rila Mukherjee argues that older cosmographical and maritime imaginaries continued to colour the historical cartography of the Indian Ocean. Geographical knowledge was actually getting fragmented as Europeans encountered new worlds. She argues that the Indian 'Ocean' was a new ocean and achieved conceptual solidity only from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Networks

The fourth section focuses on formal and informal networks in the constituent units of the Indian Ocean. Chapter 11 by Lipi Ghosh takes us to the Bay of Bengal where she detects an 'informal' Bay of Bengal port and trade management from Thai sources, while in Chapter 12 Radhika Seshan unfolds the many strands of information floating about in the Arabian Sea, by focusing on a single event: rumours about piracy at Surat in 1720.

Lipi Ghosh writes: 'the ports in southern Thailand ... became very important in maintaining an east-west connectivity ... the eastern Indian Ocean, particularly the Bay of Bengal, had significant connectivity with other waterscapes through its ports and routes throughout history'. She adds:

> the loose administrative control system allowed both indigenous and local rulers to exert a high degree of local autonomy. Therefore, the existing idea that the kings of Siam or Burma were controlling the area throughout history before the arrival of Britain cannot be accepted. So, it is wise to conclude that instead of 'centralist historical ideology', it is better to look at the history of the region as a 'history from the below'.

A similar functioning of history from below is observable in Radhika Seshan's chapter where she writes:

> the informal networks of communication spanned the Arabian Sea far faster than the ships, and having reached Surat, further details were added.... History, in the shape of memory rather than recorded instance ... was used, both to prove the point that the Surat merchants were trying to make, and to force the official system to act. To go back to the beginning, gossip fed into rumour, rumour to report, report to

information, and on the basis of this information, charges could be laid, and specific action taken....

Ruby Maloni asks us to consider the myriad networks spawned by European private traders; yet another example of history from below, here viewed as the underbelly of official history. Commenting on trading practices she writes:

> European private traders sought advantages to ensure personal and corporate enrichment, while their Indian counterparts sought security for their enterprises. Competition and co-operation combined to create a basic coincidence of interests between European and Indian merchants. Indigenous groups collaborated not as a product of free choice but as a compulsory outcome of a lack of real alternatives.

This is important because she points out that cooperation, an indispensable feature of networking, could also be 'forced', paving the way to collaboration rather than cooperation.

Finally, in Chapter 14 Om Prakash shows us how the Dutch East India Company connected oceans and seas in a specie-for-Indian textiles network in the seventeenth century. The circulation of specie is essential in trade and its role in connecting the oceans cannot be overemphasized, Flynn noting that American and Japanese silver bridged the gap between East and West from the late sixteenth century,[41] and also that Japanese silver supplies became prolific only from the sixteenth century and tapered off at the end of the seventeenth century.[42] This circulation of silver specie enabled the flow of Indian textiles across seas, Hall, Krishnan and Devare mentioning the circulation of Gujarat cloth as a symbol of royal power as well as holy cloth in South-East Asia, particularly in the fifteenth century,[43] the period prior to that studied by Prakash in this volume.

The Mediterranean Analogy

No volume on oceans can escape the weight of studies on the Mediterranean Sea, and this volume too feels it weight, particularly in the second and third sections.The Mediterranean is the only sea that has been studied and constructed as a visionary maritime world. While it has been argued that ancient hegemonic thought did not invent a Mediterranean[44] and that later it was tradition that did this, the notion of the Mediterranean as prescriptive category is hard to escape.

The Weight of the Mediterranean in Maritime Scholarship

The Mediterranean was not always regarded in this fashion. Ancient Greek geographical tradition made a claim to the Mediterranean as 'the sea in our area', and the Romans rendered that as *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea), the latter reflecting boundless dominion on land and sea.

While seen as 'our sea' we find that in the classical period the Mediterranean was also seen as an 'away-place'. Lindenlauf finds:

> For the ancient Greeks—as for so many other seafaring nations ... the sea was part of the divine order of the universe, the power realm of a distinct god, and definitely an ambiguous place. It had many different guises, one of which was the perception of the sea as a place of no return. When the sea fulfilled its powers to take life away and to make things disappear permanently, it was regarded as dangerous and corrupting. Yet, when humans used it as a place of no return for their own purposes, exploiting its depths, its vastness, its constant movements and its ability to purge itself, this aspect appears to have been viewed more positively.[45]

The Mediterranean as Map

Describing this space as a cognitive map, Portugali writes: '"Mediterranean" also refers to a long list of traits that together form the Mediterranean landscape, culture, and society, and the examination of what these traits represent in people's minds reveals a wide gap between the Mediterranean and the image of the Mediterranean.'[46]

The Mediterranean therefore starts as a personal sea, then becomes an ambiguous, 'away-place' and finally becomes a cognitive space; as both a cultural and spatial category. Its poetry invokes olives, silks and vines; its colours, the harsh tones of pearl blues and hot greens, its landscape a medley of tumbling castles and ruined abbeys, of golden sands and azure seas.

Boundaries in the Mediterranean

Braudel noted of his subject that in physical terms the Mediterranean is not even a single sea, but rather 'a complex of seas; and these seas are broken up by islands, interrupted by peninsulas, ringed by intricate coastlines'.[47] He wrote that 'the question of *boundaries* is the first to be encountered (emphasis mine)'.[48]

Purcell notes the boundaries in this seemingly boundless sea:

> The boundaries of the Mediterraneans of conventional historical geography have been variously conceived, but three interrelated types have achieved notable prominence: the climatically based ones, in which, for instance, certain isohyets are selected to demarcate the regions characterized by low precipitation in the summer months; environmentally determined versions of these, in which it is the distribution of certain flora and especially economically important crops that maps the Mediterranean edge (the limits of cultivation of olive and vine have been popular); and cultural derivatives of the first two types, such as the supposed frontier between the oil-eaters and the butter-eaters.[49]

Portugali sees this space in terms of cores and peripheries:

> the Mediterranean has a core-periphery structure: some of its geographical parts, properties, and traits are core entities in the sense that there is no doubt about their 'Mediterraneanness', while others are more peripheral in this respect. Second, it is

clear that, similar to many other entities (e.g., mathematical, geographical, cultural), 'the Mediterranean' has what are often called 'fuzzy boundaries'—boundaries that are more like the boundaries of a cloud or a desert or the boundary between day and night or between two cultural areas in a city than the politico-administrative boundaries of a city or a country.[50]

Bromberger also visualizes thematic boundaries and writes:

How are we to think anthropologically about the Mediterranean world, 'this complex, cumbersome, one-of-a-kind entity', to use Fernand Braudel's ... terminology? It is no simple task and provokes lively controversy among anthropologists. For many, a line obviously must be drawn between the southern and eastern façades of the sea, which come under studies of the Arab-Muslim world, the Middle East, and the northern façade, which is naturally included in the field of European ethnology. This particular choice is encouraged by the old Orientalist tradition, comfortable in its certainty, and by current European rhetoric that lends itself to a withdrawal into the continent. Unlike other regions in the world, the neighbouring Iranian territory, for example, the Mediterranean world is not a single unit either by virtue of its languages or its religious traditions. Need one point out that only under the Roman Empire was the region united for several centuries around '*mare nostrum*' by encouraging the flowering of a Greco-Latin culture with a universal vocation, and by developing political institutions modelled on Rome all along its shores? Since then, the history of the Mediterranean has been one of divisions, schisms, crusades, wars between empires and colonial conquests that led, after peripatetic violence, to the contemporary situation where three entities, themselves further divided, co-exist: a Latin, largely secularized Catholic Mediterranean, integral part of Occidental Europe; an orthodox Balkan Mediterranean with its Islamic pockets; and an Arab-Muslim Mediterranean.[51]

Bromberger therefore proposes to see in his Mediterranean three Mediterraneans:

This sense of unease is reinforced by contradictory images of the Mediterranean world that emerge in the work of historians and anthropologists, as well as in literature, as an alternative way of seeing the world. Three Mediterraneans, each with its well chiselled profile, appear when one examines the disparate works that have taken the Mediterranean as subject: *a Mediterranean of exchanges and encounters; a Mediterranean of conflicts and hatred; and a Mediterranean whose societies bordering it reveal a 'family likeness', with underlying cultural complicities beyond the schisms that divide them* (emphasis mine). I would like to ... propose another way of seeing and perceiving the Mediterranean world: neither as an entity united by the same culture, nor as a juxtaposition of heterogeneous blocs, but rather as a system of complementary differences.[52]

Nordman sees the Mediterranean as a maritime space, a geographical space, and an ecological space marked by human intervention and it is, most of all, the place of historical, economic and political activities of the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs.[53] Nordman writes that internal frontiers within time and space have also to be considered, as well as tensions and exchanges within the western and eastern Mediterranean, within the

northern and southern Mediterranean, and within Christianity and Islam. Where then do we situate the limits of the Mediterranean world in the third century, in the sixteenth, in the eighteenth or the nineteenth centuries? Do the limits extend as far as the Near East; into Europe as far as the Alps; toward the Iberian peninsula; or further northward toward England, because the latter, by virtue of its control over Gibraltar, Cyprus, Malta and Egypt had also become a Mediterranean power; or also toward the Sahara and the Maghreb? Therefore, does the term Mediterranean always designate the same object? Do we not pass from the maritime basin of the Mediterranean into river valleys and marginal lands when talking of a Mediterranean world?[54] These too are questions to ponder.

Subrahmanyam endorses the idea of at least two Mediterraneans between 1400 and 1800 and observes that the utility of the *concept* of the Mediterranean enables us to practice a form of world history, and allows us to 'transcend or refashion national boundaries in the search for meaningful objects for historical research'.[55]

The Mediterranean Now

Contemporary scholarship then continues to reinvent the Mediterranean.[56] Horden finds four strategies that were utilized for studying the Mediterranean: the reductivist, the rhapsode, the reflexive, and the realist.[57] The Mediterranean has become a place for contesting scholarships and an arena of globalization. Even today, the Mediterranean and the 'Mediterranean world' are remaking themselves. Ian Morris terms the fracturing and fuzziness of Mediterranean boundaries a response to globalization.[58] He adds that the earlier model of scholarship emphasized static cells, rigid structures, and powerful institutions, while the new one emphasizes fluidity and connectedness: decenteredness, mobility, connectivity are the key words here.[59] Where Finley emphasized fixedness and Braudel stressed routes, the new model sees interaction and mobility too various and detailed to be called routes.

The Mediterranean is now seen as a place of networks and fluidity. The Mediterranean has been conventionally studied through the frame of cosmopolitanism. In 2005, the journal *History and Anthropology* devoted a special issue on cosmopolitanism in the Mediterranean.[60] And yet, it was also noted that distinct identities prevailed from classical times: islanders in the Aegean had a distinct identity.[61] It was argued that peoples of port cities felt a natural affinity with each other as compared to their brethren inland. This is the Pearson littoral society argument stretched into the Mediterranean. And yet, archaeological studies in the Mediterranean, especially on port sites, find evidence of 'closed' or walled harbours, hardly evidence of mobility and cosmopolitanism![62]

In any study of oceans, the Mediterranean analogy is hard to escape.

The Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean

One of the primary reason for devoting space to the Mediterranean is because many of the essays in this volume link the Mediterranean with other seas, in keeping with the premise 'oceans connect'.

How does the Mediterranean connect with the Indian Ocean? We know, of course, that it connected on diplomatic, political and economic interests with the Indian Ocean, but can we also discern a geographical coupling between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean? Salles shows us that we can envisage this coupling by way of the Persian Gulf which was designated as the 'borders of India' by Latin texts of the second century, and Syriac sources of the same period called the Gulf the 'Indian Sea'.[63] al-Sirafi, talking of routes prevalent in the ninth and tenth centuries, also envisaged a geographical connection described earlier: from the Arab notion that there was a northern route connecting the East with the Mediterranean. This was through a sea above China, possibly the Arctic Ocean, that flowed into either the Caspian Sea or the Sea of Muscovy—the latter would be either the Baltic Sea or the White Sea which is an inlet of the Barents Sea—and thereby linked up with the eastern Mediterranean. If this route was a forerunner of what is hailed today as the Arctic Sea Route—or the Northern Sea Route—via Russia, then this exciting possibility means that Arab navigation did not only connect the Mediterranean with the Indian Ocean and the China seas, but other seas as well, and more research on 'oceans connect' will bring other connectivities into focus.

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13. Ibid., p. 22.
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18. Ibid., p. 155. Edson suggests that a possible inspiration for Fra Mauro's world map may have been the circular Catalan world map of Modena, dated *c.* 1450. See Edson, *World Map*, p. 158. Both maps followed a geometric design, which was a new way of breaking up space. This is significant as the European Renaissance of the fifteenth century replaced arithmetic with geometry as the new abstract mathematical language, because geometry lent itself better to the depiction of space.
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PART I
MARINE WORLDS

1

Sea Worlds

Pacific and South-East Asian History Centred on the Philippines

PAUL D'ARCY

Most maritime historians specialize in maritime areas bounded and defined by contiguous landmasses. These conceptual maritime regions often artificially restrict or distort the true seafaring range and seaborne interactions of maritime peoples. Colonial history and historiography have accentuated this continental perspective[1] by further dividing sea worlds into worlds perceived to be discrete, restricted and controlled spaces, unified by the language of the colonizer. Such perceived spaces impose colonial order on maritime environments that have almost always resisted attempts to control and master them by human communities, and upon independent seafaring peoples who have always dwelt beyond the power of the State, or existed at its margins. They represent seascapes of desire by the powerful rather than reflections of reality. It follows that attempts to map and narrate the range and vision of maritime peoples before their domination and marginalization by land-based, numerically or militarily superior, peoples offer a way of decolonizing their history. A part of this decolonizing involves a form of subaltern history whereby the centrality of the sea, forever present in the world view of maritime peoples, is restored to its former central place.

In his 1994 article 'Our Sea of Islands', the late Pacific Island scholar and cultural visionary Epeli Hau'ofa, urged the people of the Pacific Islands to undertake such a subaltern act so as to free themselves from being what he saw as independent in name alone, but still imprisoned by the visions that outsiders held of their maritime world as restricted and restricting. According to Hau'ofa:

> The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating their waters, and the spirit to traverse even the few large gaps that separated their island groups... Theirs was a large world in which peoples and cultures moved and mingled, unhindered by boundaries of the kind erected much later by imperial powers.[2]

To overcome this legacy, Hau'ofa urged Pacific Islanders to decolonize their minds, and recast their sense of identity by rediscovering the vision of their ancestors for whom seas were seen as boundless spaces of possibilities and opportunities. A wealth of colonial and explorer's journals and rich indigenous traditions have permitted Hau'ofa's vision of the pre-colonial Pacific past to be elaborated by scholars in ways that offer lessons beyond the geographies of the Pacific Islands, or Oceania as the French more appropriately named it. Adopting a name focused on the ocean rather than islands represents the first step in decolonizing Pacific history. The second is already underway—replacing Oceania with its indigenous equivalent, Moana.

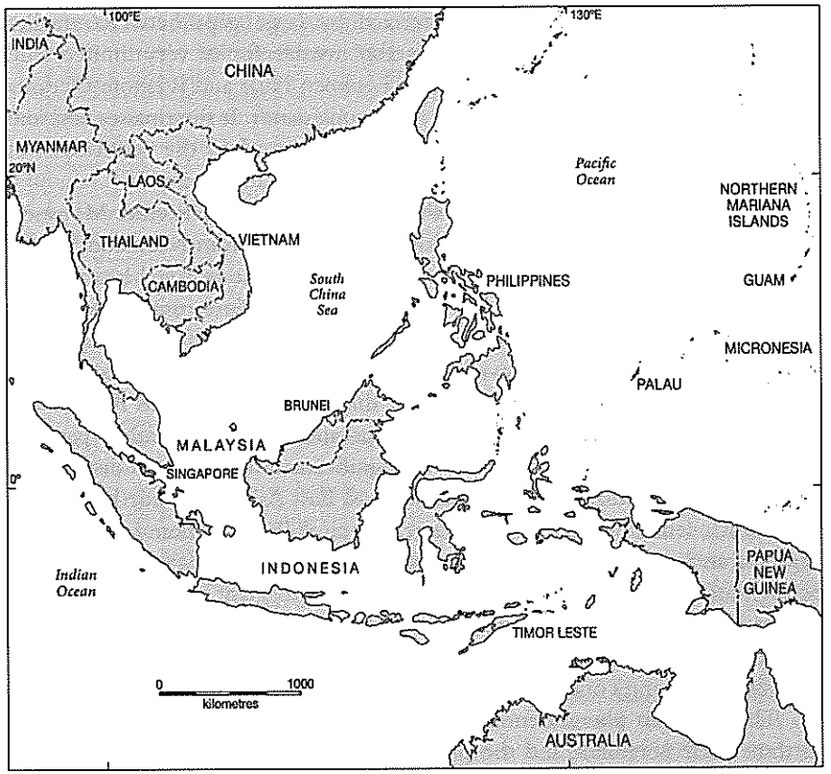
The Philippines, as both a nation and an archipelago (henceforth Philippines), is an ideal location for reconceptualizing maritime history and decolonizing regional history through defining it by ocean spaces rather than land borders. Located on the Pacific boundary of Island South-East Asia, the Philippines is usually described as Asian or South-East Asian despite its climatic, linguistic, cultural and migration linkages towards the East into the Pacific. Colonial rule by the Spanish and then the United States has left the present-day Philippines sitting somewhat uncomfortably on the eastern margins of Island South-East Asia as a nation of Catholics in a region where Islam is the predominant religion, and uncomfortably defending territorial waters with armed forces that are designed to fight internal land wars against separatists (despite being an archipelagic nation whose fleets once roamed as far as Java on predatory slaving raids).[3] The Philippines now looks predominantly to the continents for salvation—access to the Chinese market for its goods, and to the United States Asian, and Middle Eastern labour markets.

The sea offers one means of decolonizing Filipino history. Filipinos are Malay peoples like other Island South-East Asians, but ultimately, they are also part of a much wider community that encompassed half the world—the Austronesian language community that spread from a region centred on southern Chinese coastlines and islands to conduct the greatest ancient feat of maritime exploration and colonization in world history, to colonize most archipelagic and oceanic worlds from Madagascar in the west to Rapanui (Easter Island) in the east.[4] Filipino influences extend thousands of kilometres eastward into the Pacific, and Pacific Islanders regularly appeared in historical records that relate to the present-day Philippines and eastern Indonesia. Therefore, by emphasizing the extent of Filipino maritime links and their fluid and expansive oceanic spheres of influence, maritime historians can refocus maritime history on maritime spaces. In so doing, they help to decolonize Filipino history as well as South East Asian history by placing an emphasis on pre-colonial patterns of affiliation based on culture, kin and mobile residence that endure to this day, rather than Euro-centric patterns of power based on bounded territoriality and State coercion. Such a reinterpretation of national

identity and history allows a move towards repositioning the modern, post-colonial nation of the Philippines as an outward-looking, regional fulcrum point and mediator, rather than just a marginal archipelago on the edge of Asia.

Conceptualizing a Philippines-centred Maritime Region

Map 1.1 below illustrates a regional map centred on the Philippines rather than Borneo, as is usually the case. It produces a region that is as much oceanic as it is archipelagic. The area to the east of the Philippines consists of thousands of kilometres of ocean before the Marianas Archipelago appears on the horizon. It is oceanic in that the scattering of islands constitutes much less than 5 per cent of the surface area as compared to the sea. To the west of the Philippines, sea spaces pervade relative to land area, but in an archipelagic way, with much smaller sea gaps between much larger islands.[5] The western Pacific and eastern South-East Asian maritime environments are linked through currents that influence the dispersal of marine species and the



MAP 1.1: A Philippines-centred Regional Map

Source: By kind permission of Cartography, GIS, Australian National University.

connectivity of local marine populations in ways that are only now beginning to be understood. The North Equatorial Current for example, flows westward from the Caroline Islands to the waters just east of the southern Philippines before flowing south past the island of Mindanao and then swinging west into the Pacific as the North Equatorial Countercurrent.[6] While the nineteenth century scholar Alfred Russel Wallace linked biological species found in the Philippines with those to the west and north, and as distinct from species further eastward, T.H. Huxley's subsequent modification of the so-called Wallace Line placed the Philippines eastward of the bio-geographical boundary dividing eastern South-East Asia.[7]

The eastern bio-geographical region, also comprising the Philippines merges into two distinct zones to its east: Near Oceania and Remote Oceania.[8] These divisions map the progressive diminution of terrestrial and marine species' diversity eastward from their dispersal point into the Pacific, as the gaps between islands increase.[9] Near Oceania is located in the western Pacific, and demonstrates a great deal of environmental continuity with Island South-East Asia in terms of its large 'continental' islands, and small gaps between islands. In contrast, Remote Oceania, broadly coinciding with Micronesia and Polynesia, is characterized by large gaps between smaller Oceanic islands and archipelagoes. It is also notable for its very limited land area relative to ocean area. The boundary between Near and Remote Oceania lies east and south of the present-day Solomon Islands. It then passes east and north of the Bismarck archipelago, extending westward off the north coast of New Guinea before turning north to pass east of the Philippines.

Weather patterns also connect the Philippines to the Pacific. Monsoon weather patterns are such that they flow east and west from Mainland South-East Asia well into the Pacific Ocean in response to the seasonal heating and cooling of the mainland Asian landmass providing seafarers and traders with assisted passages for return voyages across this vast expanse of archipelagos and seas. The monsoon winds blow from the north-west away from Asia in the Northern Hemisphere winter, and from the south-east towards Asia in the Northern Hemisphere summer.[10] Typhoons and El Niño weather patterns that form far out in the Pacific exercise significant influences and disruptions on Island and Mainland South-East Asia and East Asia as far north as Japan. Typhoons occur in much of the western tropical Pacific. These spiral storms begin as areas of slowly circulating cloud that gather energy from the warm ocean waters that they pass over. They develop into giant mobile whirlwinds that can last for weeks. Their high winds and associated torrential rains carve a path of destruction, while the accompanying storm waves devastate coastal areas and low lying coral islands.[11]

The El Niño phenomenon involves the periodic disruption of weather patterns such as rainfall, and the production in fisheries across much of Asia and the Americas, as well as across the entire width of the Pacific Ocean. This phenomenon is explained in terms of variations in the strength of the south-east trade winds. When strong, these winds were believed to allow upwelling by displacing surface water westward away from the coast. El Niño conditions result from a weakening of these winds.[12] Rather than being abnormal, El Niño is merely the extreme warm surface phase of an 18–24 month cycle that also exhibits an extreme, cool surface water phase known as La Niña. The occurrence of these cycles is irregular, although they seem to occur on average every three to seven years. Historical records also suggest that these cycles vary in intensity. In a La Niña phase the opposite conditions apply. These conditions may cause strong trade winds that push water westward, so that the sea level in the western Pacific is up to two feet higher than in the east.[13]

In addition to these natural world linkages, academic conventions shaped in the nations that exercised colonial rule over Asia and the Pacific have combined with other colonial legacies and modern political and economic imperatives to closely link the Philippines to South-East Asia, and to place it beyond the vision of scholars and policymakers concerned with Western Pacific nations alone. The standard fourfold cultural classification of the peoples of South-East Asia and Oceania that derived from European interpretations labelled the peoples of the Philippines as Malays and as distinct from Oceania's Micronesians, Melanesians and Polynesians. Most closely associated with the French explorer D'Urville, this fourfold classification has held sway for two centuries, although it is now increasingly challenged within the academy, especially thanks to the work of Pacific specialist Bronwen Douglas.[14] While the oldest, ongoing journal with a Pacific focus, the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, contained an article on the Philippines in its first issue in 1893, the current generation of scholars has in general considered the extensive sea gaps east of the Philippines as largely insurmountable barriers to the flow of peoples, goods and ideas.[15]

After independence in 1946, the Philippines maintained strong ties with its former colonizer, the United States because of the cultural affinity felt by the ruling elite, and because the United States, in its role as liberator during World War II further tied this elite to the Americans as the only viable protector from internal and regional communism. Moreover, the United States saw that it was also in its national interests to maintain a significant military presence in the Philippines. Over time, the United States also became valued as a wealthy market for Filipino exports and labour. This eastward orientation largely bypassed Oceania, which remained an area to fly over rather than a region to engage with in any substantial manner. Exceptions to these were Guam and Hawaii, which served as entry points into the United States. The expansion of South-East Asian economies from the 1960s and their proximity led to increasing movement of migrant workers from the Philippines as their economy fell behind much of the rest of Asia.[16] During this period, the Muslim community of the southern Philippines remained marginalized and increasingly alienated from the government, spurring

the government to seek better relations with its Muslim neighbours, and to actively engage them in the peacemaking and reconciliation process. In recent years, Malaysia has been especially central to peace initiatives.[17] In contrast, western Pacific Island nations are minute by comparison, and offered few job, migration, or export opportunities. While Filipinos remain the dominant migrant group in Western Micronesia, the disparity in size between Pacific microstates and South-East Asian states has deterred a regional grouping that could link the estimated 94 million people of the Philippines with the Pacific Forum (the regional grouping of independent nations whose largest member, Papua New Guinea, has just over 7 million people). The looming behemoth of China draws the Philippines' vision northward and tangentially, also gathers South-East Asian nations together for economic and political security.

Filipino National Narratives and Sub-National Realities

Like most post-colonial states in the region, the Philippines inherited a diverse cultural mosaic of citizens for whom only the common point was residence in a territorial entity which had been defined by outsiders. These territorial boundaries took little or no account of existing cultural boundaries and flows of goods, traders, related communities and marriage partners. Spanish and American rule created a 'Filipino' landed elite that was isolated from the vast majority of the population they ruled over, while at the same time stifling cultural diversity and autonomy in the name of religion and economy. In his brilliant analysis of Filipino 'cacique' democracy, American scholar Benedict Anderson demonstrates how the old elite controls democratic government and national narratives to advance its own ends at the expense of the vast majority of the population.[18] These political processes and myth-making also privilege Manila as the centre of the government finances and offices fought over within this elite. Thus, geographically peripheral areas become further marginalized as economic changes increasingly favour modern service sectors over the old primary product staples of the economy such as sugar and coconut.[19] Simultaneously, as these national narratives are being played out, a host of local struggles continue as sea peoples, 'Moro' and Lumad hill peoples and forest dwellers are forced off their lands and seascapes because of the expansion of the dominant agricultural lowland Christian culture.[20] From the beginning, this expansion was fuelled by divisions within this dominant culture between an elite clique of powerful families that control politics and land, landless peasantry eager for land on the frontier of marginalized peoples' territories or forced to migrate to cities in search of work, and an educated, urban middle class that remains marginal to the political process and often seeks opportunities for advancement overseas.

Multiple language groups, an archipelago with significant deficiencies in transport infrastructure, and deficiencies in government control and provision of services lead to GAP (gray area phenomenon) where effective control

by Manila does not extend over large parts of the sovereign territory of the Philippines. The main area where the pre-colonial seafaring heritage shows the greatest continuity till today is in the south where Muslim sea peoples like the Tausug ('People of the Tide') of the Sulu Sea maintain old links with Sabah (now Malaysia), and south of the Sangir-Talaud Islands and beyond to northern Sulawesi (now Indonesia). These movements reinforce patterns of trade and interaction that have endured for centuries despite colonial and post-colonial sea borders being imposed upon the seascape by outsiders that neither understand nor control the area. Importantly, some of these southern cross-border links are stronger than their links with the national capital Manila. People and goods move freely across these maritime borders with Indonesia and Malaysian Sabah. Sulu 'pirates' continued to range across the length and breadth of South-East Asia in search of slaves and goods into the nineteenth century many generations after Spain nominally took control of the region. The Tausug have always resisted outsiders' attempts to control them and define them.[21]

Another significant Filipino group to move beyond the current nation state's territory before the modern mass outmigration in search of work and remittances, were Filipinos working for the Spanish administration in the Mariana Islands from the late 1600s until the overthrow of Spanish rule by the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Soon, Guamanians with Filipino blood were the majority ethnic group on Guam in the wake of the decimation of the indigenous Chamorro population due to their exposure to Western diseases. Even though this group has been well studied in several histories of Guam written by Guamanians, they remain invisible in the Filipino national discourse. Only one history has been written on them in the Philippines and if they are known at all, they are frequently perceived as just another group from the modern remittance-seeking diaspora. Many are, but many also belong to an older group who extended the Filipino cultural sphere over 2,000 km. to the east, and settled permanently in their new island homes.[22]

Augusto de Viana's *In the Far Islands* is the first study from the Philippines that has examined the Filipino role in forming the Marianas current Chamorro culture and population between 1668 and 1903. De Viana suggests that while this culture mixed indigenous Chamorro and Filipino practices, much of its fishing and maritime culture was transplanted from the Philippines.[23] In other words, although these colonizers travelled by means of Spanish vessels as part of a Spanish imperial enterprise, they carried with them ancient maritime practices that evolved in local contexts, but ultimately or originally derived from proto-Austronesian ancestors whom they shared with Chamorro. In so doing they thus harked back to their ancestors who colonized the entire region and inhabited a fluid and expansive world. Even today, the local unit for social relations and administration in the Philippines is the baranguay/barangay, a word derived from the Malay term 'balangay', or

sailing canoe, by which communities presumably traced their ancestral origins back to the pre-European protocols of coastal communities.

Archaeologists continue to view the wide sea gap between the Philippines and Marianas essentially as a barrier to Austronesian peoples, despite their maritime exploration and colonization prowess across much of the Pacific and Indian Ocean worlds. Even the initial Austronesian colonization of Micronesia is postulated to have emanated as much from the south as the west, and colonists from the latter direction are not posited to have retained strong links with their home communities.[24] This open ocean voyage for Philippines-based seafarers would have represented a change in kind as well as scale—from the shallow archipelagic seas of Island South-East Asia to the deep oceanic seas with larger sea gaps between small island archipelagos in Micronesia. When the Spanish arrived in these seas they noted divergent seafaring cultures and technology as adaptations to local sea conditions. The Philippines was notable for canoes with double outriggers and greater use made of the paddle and oar, whereas Micronesian seagoing canoes had single outriggers and asymmetrical hulls to control direction, and made greater use of the sail in vessels known as flying *proa* (canoe) because of their speed and manoeuvrability into, across, and with the wind.[25]

However, a different image emerges when combining the scattered references in the archival records of the Spanish colonial era to Micronesian and 'Malay' drift voyagers and deliberate, navigated two-way voyages between the Philippines and Eastern Indonesia and Western Micronesia. That Malay and Micronesian canoes both negotiated this sea passage in the Spanish era, raises the possibility that the Marianas and neighbouring Micronesian islands may have been linked to the Philippines (before the Spanish) by deliberate voyaging that emanated to the east of the sea gap, and perhaps also from its western margins along the weather coasts of the Visayas and Mindanao in the Philippines, and eastern islands in modern Indonesia. At the very least, certain groups of Filipinos and Micronesians knew of each other's existence without Spanish involvement, and many communities on either side of the sea gap had the potential to cross it, especially if accompanied by voyagers from target islands who had found their way to their shores, either accidentally or deliberately. It is important to note that the sea gap between Palau and Mindanao is only 1,049 km. wide, and the Chamorro were in regular contact with Yapese, who in turn had regular contacts with Palau. French Canadian scholar Rod Lévesque is the only researcher to have conducted a comprehensive investigation of Spanish archives relating to Micronesia. Lévesque was not able to explore all archives in the Philippines and regional holdings remain especially unexplored, particularly those that relate to the western coasts of Mindanao, Samar and Leyte, which are the closest coasts to Micronesia in the Philippines.[26]

There is sufficient evidence to suggest the existence of a zone of maritime interaction linking the Philippines and Micronesia that operated

independently of the Spanish, and which almost certainly predated it. Many Micronesian drift voyages are recorded to Sulawesi, Mindanao, Samar and Leyte in Spanish colonial records. Given the relatively remote location of many of these coasts from centres of colonial power, it is highly likely that they represent a mere fraction of the total voyages. These records suggest that regular traffic took place, with Micronesian landfalls in the Philippines in the early Spanish period being recorded in 1664, 1669, 1674, 1678, 1696, 1708, 1709, 1731, among others.[27] An author of one such account, Fr Andre Serrano, refers to an encounter with Micronesians in the Philippines as being the eighth such drift voyage he had personally encountered in 40 years.[28] Most recorded voyagers are described as drift voyagers, although some of those interviewed knew where their home island was and many were eager to set sail and return.

In 1859, for example, Fr Jager met four Woleai Islanders from the Central Caroline Islands who had sailed to Mindanao to dive for Mother of Pearl shells.[29] While such a deliberate voyage for a specific resource late into the colonial era might be dismissed as perhaps stimulated by earlier visits on board a Western vessel, the Woleai men nonetheless sailed in traditional *proa* and used traditional Micronesian navigation techniques. At this time, Woleai lay beyond the reach of the Spanish administration in Guam. The nineteenth century Russian explorer Otto von Kotzebue was informed that sweet potato and other useful exotic seed crops had been brought to Yap from the Visayas by historical two-way voyages conducted by Carolinians sometime in the 1700s.[30] The Palauan word for sweet potato, 'chemuti', clearly derives from the Filipino name for them, camuti, and as such argues for a rapid introduction from the Philippines soon after their introduction to the Philippines by the Spanish in the sixteenth century.[31] Yap also lay beyond Spanish control at this time. Olit, Fr. Klein's Carolinian assistant on Samar, reported that Yapese drift voyagers noted that their *proa* took 10 days to make a return voyage between the Philippines and Yap, a testimony that suggests they had either made the voyage previously themselves, or knew others who had. Klein reported that Olit also,

> told us that six natives from Eap [Yap] Island had once been stranded in the Philippines and then returned to Eap, and that their voyage lasted ten days. When they returned to that island they told the natives there that they had been there for five months, and that there were many islands there; that there was a great deal of food, rice, coconuts, Gabi [taro]; that they had seen Fathers there, and that the people from these islands had looked at their hands when they arrived and told them that they were good people.[32]

The mention of rice is interesting, as fragments of domesticated rice (Oryza sativa L.) ingrained in Mariana pottery shards have been dated to around the early 1500s by archaeologists. No earlier rice encrusted pottery has been found, suggesting a late pre-Spanish introduction rather than a

remnant carried with original Austronesian explorers and colonists centuries earlier.[33]

One of the most dramatic testimonies to modern scholars and contemporary European officials' underestimation of the expansive world of indigenous peoples in this region, comes in the form of extensive interviews conducted with Ifalik drift voyagers from the Central Caroline Islands by Fr Miedes in 1664 in north Sulawesi. Miedes was informed that they inhabited and knew of a vast world beyond their atoll of 500 persons and the usual sailing limits generally ascribed to them by modern scholars. They relied on a mix of remembered and first-hand information to name 83 individual islands spanning the entire east to west length of their Carolinian home archipelago, as well as reaching up to Spanish Guam, and westward to incorporate the Miangas and Talaud Islands, and the Ternate area of modern Indonesia, and south to Manus, the Sepik coast, and the Bismarck Archipelago of modern day Papua New Guinea.[34] Though the accuracy of their directions could not be tested, a later incident on Guam provided dramatic vindication of the power and precision of remembered navigational knowledge. In 1804, Caroline Islanders reinstituted annual trade voyages across the 756 km. sea gap between their archipelago and Guam for the first time since 1676 when tales of the brutality of the Spanish conquerors by Chamorro refugees had prompted their cessation. The directions had been remembered and preserved in chants throughout the intervening 130 years, and then used to reach the two-kilometre wide target of Talofofo Bay on Guam's east coast.[35]

Less information is available about the voyages by Filipinos and other Malay peoples out into Micronesia. Certain kinds of beads were used in Palau for exchange, and status beads, which may have arrived as trade items, display a close affinity with beads made in the Philippines.[36] Palauans recounted the arrival of drift voyagers from Sulawesi, Halmahera, and Mindanao, while in 1791 the English seafarer Hockin reported the presence of a Malay *proa* on Peleliu in Palau, and also that a Malay seen by the crew of the *Antelope* under Captain Wilson on Palau in 1783 was still there and now married to a local woman with whom he had five children.[37] Some Micronesians interviewed by Fr Serrano on Samar in 1696 claimed to have seen residents from Samar on their home islands.[38]

The material already unearthed forms an embryonic, but significant base for subaltern histories to challenge the dominant discourses of Filipino maritime containment, atrophy, and decline in the colonial era. Recent studies in the neighbouring Pacific have emphasized the continuity of traditional seaborne exchanges between communities in the colonial era in the Caroline Islands. The next challenge may well be to overturn long-held external assumptions of maritime limit and decline in the Western Pacific as a region centred on the Philippines. Such a project will require greater openness to the possibility of indigenous discourses hidden from Western officials and academic researchers that demonstrate a reality more in line with

Hau'ofa's vision of expansive and interconnected maritime pasts cited earlier. Field research among maritime communities, archaeology in likely sites of contact and exploration of archives and museum collections for objects that have crossed the sea gap are the next steps in this process.

Contemporary Implications

Reorienting Filipino history and identity by taking greater account of maritime peoples and processes not only offers a way of decolonizing the history of those at the margins of Filipino power and identity, but also offers a means of elevating the regional and national identity of the contemporary Philippines. The rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has led to changing relationships and tensions in the Western Pacific in areas just beyond the Philippines' current maritime borders as defined by the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Almost by accident, the Philippines now finds itself in the centre of evolving and fluid relationships centred on maritime regions: the South China Sea, and Micronesia.

In the recent past, tensions and confrontations have increased in the disputed maritime territories of the South China Sea between the PRC and Vietnam over the Paracel Islands, and the PRC and the Philippines over the Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal. All parties have reiterated their commitment to a peaceful and consensus-based solution to the problem of user rights and territoriality in waters either beyond 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) or claimed by more than one party. At stake are potential oil and gas reserves, ensuring safe passage for commercial shipping in an area prone to piracy and full of bottlenecks for hostile sources seeking to block or disrupt shipping. The Philippines has one of the strongest claims based on proximity, to the Spratly Islands at least, but a relatively weak historical case with little confirmed evidence able to be put forward of historical usage.[39]

Another potential flashpoint is Micronesia, centred on the Philippines' eastern neighbour, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), which occupies the Caroline Islands from which so many past voyaging contacts with Filipino sea peoples emanated. A potential escalation of competition to buy influence also looms as the old regional powers, Japan and the USA seek to counter mounting PRC influence. Japan recently doubled its aid to the Pacific in response to perceived rising PRC influence.[40] Tensions between Japan and the USA over American military bases in southern Japan, combined with the USA's concerns about the rise of the PRC's influence further south in Micronesia have led to plans for a major increase in the USA military presence on Guam and perhaps also the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). At the same time, the USA has announced a major stepping up of its presence in the south-west Pacific out of concern for PRC influence and the erosion of democratic institutions in the region. Yet it has

also recently signalled an uncompromising intention to end the Compact of Free Association with FSM in 2023 and dramatically reduce its financial aid after this date despite the rising PRC presence in FSM.[41] These apparent contradictions and fluid stances suggest that a period of external great power induced instability may soon descend on the region, especially if the idea that aid buys compliance continues to persist among Pacific Rim nations.

The Filipino presence in the Western Pacific is accelerating. The second-largest Asian resident population in the Pacific Islands after Chinese is Filipino. Over 25 per cent of Guam's 1,60,000 people and 35 per cent of the CNMI's 70,000 people are post World War II migrants from the Philippines, while the most dominant indigenous Chamorro category also have Filipino ancestry as a result of 300 years of Spanish colonial rule that linked these three Spanish possessions. In Papua New Guinea, Filipinos are the second-largest Asian resident group after Chinese, with an estimated population of between 8,000 and 15,000. Filipino companies are involved in fisheries and forestry in Papua New Guinea on a significant scale.[42] The scale of the proposed Pacific Marine Industrial Zone (PMIZ) also has significant implications for one of the last remaining healthy tuna fisheries in the Western Pacific.[43]

Conclusion: Re-centring the Peripheral?

Maritime centred visions of Filipino and regional history offer a potential means of articulating the perspectives of marginalized players within the Philippines. Further, they encourage a broadening of the vision of what it is to be Filipino, which emphasizes diversity and dissent. These visions also argue for the potential centrality of the Philippines, both geographically and in terms of legitimate maritime interests and histories to any attempt to resolve mounting marine-centred disputes and rivalries between the two global superpowers, the PRC and the USA.

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www.navytimes.com/news/2011/01/gannett-guam-okinawa-officials-discuss-buildup-012911/; and on the ending of Compact monies in 2023 see, Federated States of Micronesia, 2003. *Compact of Free Association, As Amended, Between the Government of The United States of America And the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia, 2003*, available at http://pidp.eastwestcenter.org/pireport/special/cofa_special.htm.

42. On Filipinos in Guam and the Marianas, see Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny's Landfall: A History of Guam*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1995, pp. 47, 60, 79, 101, 104–6, 124–5, 217–18, 224, 236, 238, 251, 287. For an historical overview of Filipinos in Papua New Guinea, see Alfredo P. Hernandez, 'Invading PNG, Filipino style', *The National, Weekender*, 12 January 2007. The most recent reliable estimate of the Filipino population in PNG is the Philippines' Embassy in PNG's figure of 12,850 in November 2009. See 'Philippines Dismisses Claims of 16,000 Illegal Filipinos in PNG', Radio Australia interview with Shirley Ho Vicario, Philippine Ambassador to PNG, www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200911/s2742530.htm. I am indebted to my ANU colleagues Deveni Temu for the Radio Australia reference and Robin Hide for a copy of the Hernandez article. The largest Filipino company in PNG is RD Tuna Canners and Fishing Pty who are based outside Madang in the huge Pacific Maritime Industrial Zone (PMIZ)—the most comprehensive source for RD Tuna's activities in PNG is Madang-based anthropologist Nancy Sullivan's webpage at http://www.rdtunapng.a/docs/sullivan report.htm.

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2

Chasing the Many Faces of a Marine Goddess Across the Eastern Indian Ocean

RILA MUKHERJEE

Littorals have a distinct material culture dictated by the sea, however, since a littoral society interfaces with both river and sea there is also considerable hybridity. My argument in this chapter is that not only do littorals connect, their connectivities transcend the coast into the interior and this distinctive connectivity is also in symbiosis with the larger premise of this volume: 'oceans connect'.

Connecting the Littorals through the Marine Goddess

Along the shores of the Indian Ocean the littoral is a world of coconuts,[1] coral, turtle and turtle shells and palms, all of which are used in material life—in cooking, rituals, boat-making and housing.[2] Historically, the coconut and the palm, both coastal flora, found a place in royal foundation myths. In Champa, the ruling families claimed to be divided into two clans—the Areca clan (in Panduranga) and the Coconut clan (in the north)—which were finally united in 1080 by King Harivarman, Prince Thãï, who descended from both clans, the Coconut on his father's side and the Areca on his mother's.[3]

Evidence from Rasulid Yemen in the fourteenth century shows similar divisions, including a verse controversy at the sultan's court regarding the superiority of the palm (the coast here exemplified by T'ihama) over the inland vine (Ta'izz).[4] As in the Champa foundation myth, the conflict in Yemen showed the emergence of regional identities based on location (upland versus coast) and also demonstrated the growing competition between them for power and recognition. These were identities based on littoral products and a littoral culture. Such identities were becoming significantly assertive in the early medieval period along the shores of the Indian Ocean—an aspect that has been documented recently for the Bay of Bengal as well.[5]