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καὶ ἡμᾶς οἰκεῖν ...ἐν σμικρῷ τινι μορίῳ,
ὥσπερ περὶ τέλμα μύρμηκας ἢ βατράχους
περὶ τὴν θάλατταν οἰκοῦντας
*We inhabit... a small portion of the earth
iving round the sea like ants and frogs round a pond.*
Socrates in Plato, Phaedo, 109B

Θάλασσα [*thalassa*] in Greek is the sea, *mare* in Latin is the sea. Maritime history or the history of *thalassa* is the history of mankind's relation to the sea. Maritime history is primarily international and comparative, with a global perspective. It is the history of the people who sail on the sea and live round the sea, that is, of littoral societies, of maritime regions, of seas and oceans, of the effects on land of man's interaction with the sea. Maritime history offers the liberation of a borderless world in a synthesis of history and the social sciences, including economics, sociology, politics, anthropology, linguistics and geography. It 'sails' on the sea-routes opened by Fernand Braudel in his sea history *par excellence*, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, the 'total history' of the *Annales* School, which inspired the emergence of maritime history as a new field of history and which stressed an interdisciplinary approach.ⁱ The history of *thalassa* is a sub-history that subsumes all 'histories'. However, maritime history or the history of *thalassa* means different things to different historians.

Maritime history should be defined as widely as possible wrote Frank Broeze, who, in his seminal article in the *Great Circle*, in 1989, gave the definition that delineated the field of maritime history in his famous six categories of man's relation to the sea.ⁱⁱ The first category is the use of the resources of the sea and its subsoil; it includes fishing industries, economic and social life of local

communities. The second category is the use of the sea for transport; the sea as a means of communication, of carrying people and cargoes, of the development of ports and port cities for the development of the hinterland. This category is usually the largest in maritime history and includes sea-trade, ships, navigation, seamen, island communities, port cities, shipowners/shipping companies and shipping institutions (insurance, banking, international registers, etc.). The third category is the use of the sea for power projection; this focuses on commerce-raiding, corsairing/piracy, naval power, strategy and technology, government policies. The fourth category is the use of the sea for scientific exploration; this includes oceanography and climatology, and current policies of governments regarding marine science and technology in a historical perspective. The fifth category is the use of the sea for leisure activities; this views, in a historical perspective, the seacoast as a regenerative environment, a place for recreation, swimming, surfing and yachting. And the sixth and last category is the use of the sea as an inspiration in culture and ideology; this includes the role of the sea in visual arts and literature, the sea in the self-vision of a nation.

These are the lines along which maritime history has flourished in the past two decades. Maritime history has been organized internationally under the professional body of the International Association of Maritime Economic History (IMEHA), which was formed initially in 1986 as a 'Maritime History Group' and was instituted formally as the IMEHA in 1990. The IMEHA has published the *International Journal of Maritime History* (IJMH) since 1989 and has organized the International Congresses of Maritime History since 1992. One of its principal aims was to espouse an international/ comparative dimension, a global perspective. Each historian functions in a national environment and studies the local, the regional, the national. Maritime history gives historians the tools for comparing beyond their own boundaries and with the burgeoning of maritime history publications, opportunities have arisen to compare across the oceans and the seas globally.

As maritime historians have repeatedly noted, historians have too often neglected the sea, they have long suffered from 'thalassophobia', chief symptom of which is a land-based bias.ⁱⁱⁱ However, over the last decade, the history of the

seas has become very much *en vogue* and historians' 'rediscovery' of the sea has produced a large bibliography on the history of the seas. So, we have the History of the Atlantic Ocean, of the Indian Ocean, of the Pacific Ocean, of the Baltic Sea, of the Black Sea, of the Mediterranean Sea, of the Corrupting Sea, of the Unnatural Sea, of the Oceans Past, and so on.^{iv}

'If Braudel did not invent thalassology in 1949 ... he certainly put it spectacularly on the historian's map', wrote Edward Peters, who coined the phrase 'new thalassology' in reviewing the seminal work by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History*.^v The 'new thalassology' has 'sailed' together with the upsurge of global history in the twenty-first century, carrying the echoes of the abatement of the cultural history of the 1990s.^{vi} But does the 'new thalassology' relate to maritime history? The first part of this chapter will discuss what is understood by maritime history in relation to the 'new thalassology'. The second part will deal with maritime history 'on board' the IMEHA. The last part of the chapter will present a sample of the 'poetic' of the sea; the inspiration that literature and history of *thalassa* gives.

What's in a name? Maritime History, the 'new thalassology' and global history

'One of the major problems of maritime history is its very name and some very fundamental misconceptions that have arisen from it. Many people, and not only outside the field, believe that maritime history is all about ships and navigation, and about nothing else', wrote Frank Broeze, a Dutchman, in 1989.^{vii} It seems that this misconception continues to the present day, as is indicated by another Dutchman, Henk Driessen, when he writes, in 2008, about 'the emergence of late of a maritime perspective and a "new thalassology" beyond the narrow specializations of maritime history...'.^{viii} Driessen sees maritime history as 'narrow' and in so doing he is representative of the line of thinking of a main group of scholars engaged in the wave of 'new thalassology', a group that has ignored maritime history. At the same time, in a book entitled *Maritime History as World History*, Felipe Fernández-Armesto argues that it is through knowledge of the seas, of their winds, currents and tides, along with advancements in sailing ship technology that enabled reliable long distance voyage, that 'global history

became a reality. It grew out of maritime history'.^{ix} How and why can maritime history be defined as 'narrow' and 'global' at the same time? I propose six reasons.

The first reason is that even after so many decades, maritime history is still identified with ships, navigation and naval history. And this has a lot to do with the importance of the maritime tradition and heritage of nations, as shown and highlighted in their national histories, in maritime museums and maritime societies. The 'glory at sea', from antiquity to today, of the Greeks, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Italians, the British and Americans, has concentrated on famous sea-warriors, sea-battles and admirals, and has formed an important part of hero-worship and the national self-image. The immense output of naval history in both the United Kingdom and the United States, not only for the imperial or colonial era but also for the two world wars of the twentieth century, has intensified its identification with maritime history. Harvard University's first Professor in 'Oceanic History and Affairs', in 1948, Robert Greenhalgh Albion, considered as the 'dean of American maritime historians', despite his wide perspective that included 'maritime and naval' history was best known for his work in naval history. And as some of the significant American maritime historians of the second half of the twentieth century continued to excel in naval history, the continuation of this old preconception on the other side of the Atlantic was intensified further.^x In Britain, naval history has been thriving since the nineteenth century, with the formation of the Navy Records Society in 1893, and of several nautical historical societies subsequently, and it continues to thrive today, at the University of Exeter, at King's College, London, with Andrew Lambert, and, recently, at the University of Oxford with Nicholas Rodger. The last has given to naval historical writing another dimension, elevating it from a history of warships and sea-battles to an outstanding synthesis of sea history, war history and social history, of the people of the Navy on board and on land, in all the world's seas and oceans in the wider context of the expansion of the British Empire.^{xi} For all its growth, naval history can only be accepted and flourish academically when it regards itself as a sub-field of maritime history and uses the interdisciplinary and comparative historical

methods of this field. Because the popularity of the history of the sea has meant the wide involvement of many non-professional historians, in combination with the many nautical museums and 'friends of the museums', extolling the virtues of antiquarianism and of local narratives of port-towns and cities, concentrating on the study of glorious ships, admirals or navigators. This has had a negative effect on the name of maritime history, responsible in part for the prejudice of its parochialism.^{xii}

The second reason is that despite the fact that maritime history has attempted to accomplish the goal of 'total history', through an interdisciplinary approach, it has developed mainly as an economic and social history focused on communication and exchange, on port-cities, littoral maritime communities, long-distance trade, shipping routes, seamen and maritime enterprise. We can distinguish two periods in the discipline of maritime history in the second half of the twentieth century. The first period, during which the French-speaking world in general and the *Annales* School in particular were pre-eminent, commenced in the mid-1950s and continued into the 1970s. Research was conducted almost exclusively by European scholars and centred on the early modern age, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century.^{xiii}

In the second period, starting in the 1970s, the route of maritime history departed from the *Annales* School, and the centre of gravity shifted to English-speaking historians, mainly based in the UK, Canada and Norway, who still kept the wheel geared towards economic and social history and who focused on the modern age, from the eighteenth century to the present day.^{xiv} The great impetus of this upsurge came from the other side of the Atlantic, which many a time sets the pace by funding grand projects; not least, the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project that ran from 1976-1982 at Memorial University of Newfoundland, which has been a centre of maritime history ever since. The Atlantic Canada Shipping Project combined 'the skills of economists, geographers, maritime historians and regional Canadian historians', who looked at merchant fleets of the North Atlantic, shipowners and economic development, voyage patterns, bulk trades, seafaring labour force, harbours and metropolis, migration, landward and seaward economies, state and regional economic development.^{xv} Its objectives

were to study, document and explain the rise and fall of Atlantic Canadian shipping in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through the use of the official documents of the crew lists of the British fleet, which the University of Newfoundland had 'inherited' from the British Public Record Office, today known as the National Archives. The project contributed to the discipline by offering pioneering techniques in the computer-assisted quantitative analysis of large masses of historical material, and attracted the attention of prominent economic historians involved in cliometrics, such as Douglass North and C. Knick Harley, who took part in the conferences held.^{xvi} The studies that came out of this project, however, were not along the lines of new economic history and cliometrics, rather they were consistent with the economic and social history of the Marxist and neo-Marxist tradition, of a 'history from below'; about seamen and their wages, maritime labour movements and labour relations on board, maritime communities.^{xvii} The main contribution of this project to the field of maritime history was the creation of the Maritime History Group, which not only processed the above material but also produced some of the most important maritime historians, among them Lewis R. Fischer, who, as we shall see in the next section, is one of the discipline's leading figures.

Nevertheless, the fact that maritime history developed in the 1970s and 1980s as an economic and social history of the modern age meant that it suffered in popularity in the 1990s, as is indicated clearly in Peter Mathias' chapter in this volume. As its most prominent practitioners were economic and social historians, maritime history was hit hard by the upsurge of post-modernism and cultural studies.

The third reason is that the 'new thalassology' that marked the beginning of the twenty-first century, with Horden and Purcell's *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* published in 2000, which provided a highly interesting new account of history *in* the Mediterranean, and history *of* the Mediterranean, covered a period from ancient to early modern times, a period neglected by maritime-history practitioners of the IMEHA.^{xviii} As we have already indicated, maritime history in the last twenty-five years has focused on early modern and modern history in the seas and oceans other than the Mediterranean, hence

Horden and Purcell were right in commenting that in Mediterranean history ‘the majority of scholarly writing is conventional, relatively local, political, social, or economic “history in” some Mediterranean country – of no immediate wider significance and with little attention to geography or environment’.^{xix} Horden and Purcell, although specialized in ancient and medieval times, have transcended time and have taken under consideration some of the bibliography produced by maritime history in the last twenty-five years. But maybe this is because they are based in Europe, a continent with an ‘inherent’ sense of the diachronic sea. What is remarkable is what has been happening in the ‘discovery of the sea’ in the other side of the Atlantic, over the past decade.

The history of the seas and oceans of the early modern and the modern age has been ‘discovered’ to a large extent by geographers, anthropologists and cultural historians mainly from the United States, and these have formed the most important body of scholars involved in the ‘new thalassology’. This trend seems to be linked with a crisis in the financing of regional/area studies projects and the promotion (that is the funding by National Resource Centres) of ‘globalism’, which has triggered a re-thinking of ways in which the world is divided.^{xx} Within this framework, it seems that the Sea was suddenly discovered, and many cried with joy *Thalatta! Thalatta!* (The Sea! The Sea!), like the Ten Thousand Greeks who sighted the Black Sea after their long march from the interior of Babylon.^{xxi} In this way the sea and maritime connections were brought to the centre of many new projects; the sea, as it was ‘discovered’, is vast and gives an amazingly different perspective from that of the land.

However, those who have only recently discovered the sea consider maritime history ‘narrow’ or completely ignore the existence and the work of maritime history in the previous decades. And this is the fourth reason for the neglect of maritime history. It is also the pest of our profession and our times: specialization and lack of communication due to abundance of information. It is actually one of the *raisons d’être* of this book. It is ironic that in the history of the sea, a *par excellence* history of communications, the historians of different periods or different seas, or different histories, or different ‘slices’ of history, do not communicate with each other. It is telling, to say the least, that in the Forum of

the *American History Review* of June 2006, 'Oceans Connect', the organizers seem to have never heard of what has been going on in maritime history just a few hundred (land) miles north, in Canada.^{xxii}

It is true that geography, anthropology and cultural studies have not been at the centre of the interests of maritime history practitioners. Nevertheless, they have not been neglected. In the 1990s, prominent maritime historians such as David J. Starkey and Poul Holm introduced environmental history into maritime history, through the History of Marine Animal Population projects, in a fruitful combination of history and the natural world that produced in 2001 *The Exploited Seas: New Directions for Marine Environmental History* and in 2008 *The Oceans Past*.^{xxiii} More maritime interpretations, perceptions, identities and symbols than ever before were presented in the Fifth International Congress of Maritime History, which took place at Greenwich in 2008.^{xxiv} There were multiple sessions with papers in which ships were enhanced as places of liberation or freedom, or as a source of fresh identities on board; the various symbols of tattooing in the Victorian Navy were examined; song lyrics were used to analyse tango and sea; film representations of the sea, Victorian myths on Cornish wrecks reminding us of Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*, the maritime feasts in Messina, or the womenfolk of seamen as icons, merely indicate the abundance and the inspiration of maritime culture and heritage from archipelagoes, islands and port-towns. Maritime culture was discussed as the image of a nation and its relation to the sea, and maritime museums questioned traditional approaches and presented ways in which new insights and perspectives could be accommodated in maritime history.

The fourth reason lies in maritime history's relation to imperial, colonial history or the history of exploration of the early modern age, otherwise described as overseas or European expansion.^{xxv} This is a history that has a fully maritime perspective; it is all about sea-voyages, sea trade, slave trade, migration, formation of port-cities, corsairing, privateering, development of navigation and scientific exploration with maps and instruments, ship technology, large overseas shipping and trading companies, fishing and maritime communities, seamen. It is

all about maritime empires, or sea history in which maritime connections encompass the globe.

Maritime historians have always regarded this kind of history as maritime history; even so, the largest number of the authors on this field did not and do not describe themselves as maritime historians. A prominent example would be J.H. Parry, Professor of Oceanic History and Affairs at Harvard University – a chair that has remained vacant since his death in 1982 – with his books *The Age of Discovery*, *The Spanish Seaborne Empire*, *The Discovery of the Sea*, to mention just a few titles.^{xxvi} Another one would be Geoffrey V. Scammell of the University of Cambridge, with his works *The World Encompassed: the First European Maritime Empires c. 800-1650*, *The First Imperial Age: European Overseas Expansion c.1400-1715*, *Seafaring, Sailors and Trade 1450-1750: studies in British and European maritime and imperial history*. More examples are Richard Unger with his *Dutch Shipbuilding before 1800: ships and guilds* and *Ships and Shipping in the North Sea and Atlantic, 1400-1800*; Carla Rahn Phillips with her *Life at Sea in the Sixteenth Century: the landlubber's lament of Eugenio de Salazar* and *The Treasure of the San José: Death at Sea in the War of the Spanish Succession*; Felipe Fernández-Armesto, with his *Columbus and Pathfinders: a global history of exploration*; Marcus Rediker with his *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: merchant seamen, pirates, and the Anglo-American maritime world, 1700-1750*.^{xxvii}

Ultimately, however, maritime history has profited from historians who consider themselves as working in different historical fields but are involved with their maritime aspects; this was well illustrated at the international congresses of Maritime History, in Corfu (2004) and Greenwich (2008), where scholars in maritime history of the early modern and the modern age finally met. The resurgence of history of the sea and the new wave of 'thalassology' has turned things upside down: early modern imperial history presents itself under the history of sea. As Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan remark, 'Atlantic history is merely imperial history in a more acceptable guise'.^{xxviii}

The fifth reason lies in the relation of maritime history to the history of the sea. Horden and Purcell were only partially right when they wrote that 'Sea and Ocean history is more novel than it sounds. It admirably explicates a new historiography of

large areas'.^{xxix} There have been important studies of seas and oceans by prominent maritime historians. The Indian Ocean, for example, has provided a rich and remarkable historiography, at least since 1985, particularly from Kirti Chaudhuri, Kenneth McPherson, Frank Broeze and Michael Pearson who has written one of the the best books on the history of an ocean.^{xxx} Reflection on large maritime regions has been part of the way of thinking of such outstanding maritime historians as Lewis R. Fischer and Frank Broeze. Fischer's *People of the Northern Seas* was published in 1992,^{xxxi} while Frank Broeze had been writing on the Asian seas since the early 1980s.^{xxxii} In fact, Frank Broeze suggested that the term 'Asian Seas' should be used instead of 'Indian Ocean', as it is 'a string of closely related regional systems stretching from East Asia around the continent and across the Indian Ocean to East Africa (to which sea space a new generic name, such as the "the Asian Seas", might well be given)'.^{xxxiii} Broeze had been preparing his book on the Pacific Ocean since the late 1990s, and it was a great loss to maritime history that he left it unfinished in 2001; it would have been a landmark of the convergence of maritime history with the 'new thalassology' that marked the beginning of the twenty-first century.^{xxxiv} 'The true oceanic history', wrote Broeze, 'is the history in which the sea is not merely the setting but also the main dynamic agent'.^{xxxv}

Geoffrey Scammel, who was always concerned with large maritime empires and large maritime regions, started his series 'Seas in History' in the 1990s. It is not accidental that the first book in this series was a translation from the French of Paul Butel's *Histoire de l'Atlantique*; for the French have never ceased dealing with the seas and wide maritime regions, as borne out by Michel Mollat's *Europe and the Sea*, or the 'hidden' work of Michel Fontenay, steadfastly devoted to the whole Mediterranean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.^{xxxvi}

The sixth reason lies in the relation of maritime history to global history. Global history is the history of contacts and interactions between different civilizations.^{xxxvii} Maritime history has gained much from its interaction with global history through the re-emergence of ocean/seas studies. Pamela Kyle Crossley supports the view that the history of the oceans has provided a wide new theme, an 'extremely productive sub-genre' of global history 'that will probably only

continue to deepen its methodological sophistications and conceptual coherence'.^{xxxviii} One of the main trends in the current bibliography of global history is the comeback of the periphery/core argument and the 'great divergence', an Asia-centric versus a Euro-centric history.^{xxxix} At the centre of the analysis lies the history of the oceans. And the history of the oceans is not Euro-centric. In fact, the study of an ocean or a sea gives the possibility of transforming periphery into core, and forms an exceptionally rich field for comparative study of systems, relations and perceptions. Studies of the seas promote a comparative perspective between, for example, Western Europe, North Africa, West Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The study of the Indian Ocean includes the relations between South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and East Africa, apart from its relations with Europe.

Maritime historians have always regarded maritime history as global. All globalization is about is global connections and as the sea covers three-quarters of the earth's surface, these are mainly maritime connections.^{xl} Maritime history is international by nature and global by coverage; it can hardly be written without crossing borders and seas, without dealing constantly with maritime links between different countries, economies and cultures. The titles of a sample of the monographs published by the IMEHA in the series Research in Maritime History suffice to show the importance of the global: in 1998 *Global Markets: The Internationalization of The Sea Transport Industries*,^{xli} in 2002 *The Globalisation of the Oceans: Containerisation from the 1950s to the Present*, in 2007 *Making Global and Local Connections: Historical Perspectives on Ports* where ship technology becomes a major agent of transformation of port systems and globalization.^{xlii} Nonetheless, the argument that because 'maritime historians deal with a global industry in itself does not make it global', does contain elements of truth.^{xliii} The importance of shipping and sea-trade as an international business has promoted globalization; this has more to do with the importance of multinational business, which shipping has always been, as the shipping sector constitutes the international sector *par excellence* of any economy. But maritime historians do not deal only with a global industry. It is not only through the shipping fleet, shipping businesses or ship technology that maritime history

regards itself as global. Although traditionally it has given more weight to port-cities, seamen, shipping, ships, cargoes and long-distance trade, equally important are maritime communities, perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and symbols, violence at sea, or the clash of Islam and Christianity.

What maritime history has done is to provide 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. The view from the sea gives the opportunity to look at maritime regions/seas/oceans that transcend the conventional Euro-centric first/second/third world approaches. Maritime history brings the periphery of world history to the centre of historical research, and this is how it is linked with world and/or global history. What is more, an impressive scaffolding has been built by many a maritime historian, which over the past decades has formed a rich maritime historiography that cannot possibly be ignored by the neophytes of the history of the oceans.

Maritime History on board the IMEHA

The most important international organisation involved with maritime history is the International Maritime Economic History Association, (IMEHA), which was formed in 1990 and essentially continued the tradition of the French *histoire maritime*. Maritime History emerged almost simultaneously in France and England in the 1950s, but it was only natural that it was organized first in France, under the *Commission Internationale Maritime*, which was set up in the early 1960s and prospered under the roof of the International Commission for Historical Sciences (that changed its title from French to English), which held conferences every five years.

‘The uniquely international character of the European maritime economy undoubtedly reflects the production and circulation of goods of the world economy’,^{xliv} wrote the first President of the International Commission of Maritime History, Michel Mollat du Jourdin of the University of Paris in 1962.^{xlv} ‘Maritime history is a key to general history’, wrote Jean Meuvret, Head of the

École Pratique des Hautes Études, at the same period.^{xlvi} On the other side of the Channel, England, on a lower key, followed the same path as France, opening the way for maritime history through the booming of economic and social history in the London School of Economics and Cambridge University. The development of history in France and in Britain followed parallel paths. In this way, the *Annales*, the University of Paris and the French *Histoire Economique et Sociale* kept up an open dialogue with the British Economic and Social History. The move of Michael Postan, a man with wide knowledge and a cosmopolitan spirit, from the London School of Economics to the Chair of Economic History at Cambridge, was, according to Eric Hobsbawm, pivotal for tightening the relations of the French School of *Annales* with the English Economic and Social History.^{xlvii}

In the English-speaking world, the 1970s were decisive. In London, Robin Craig was appointed at University College to teach economic and social history, and became the mentor for maritime history to a whole generation of up-and-coming scholars. He also became the editor of the first *Journal of Maritime History*, which ran for a few years, an academic journal focused exclusively on the economic and social history of merchant shipping – a radical departure from traditional naval history. And last but not least, Robin Craig, not only ‘discovered’ but also helped to save a voluminous collection of crew lists of the British fleet from the Public Record Office, that were rescued and deposited at Memorial University in St John’s, Newfoundland in 1971; this move set its seal on the development of maritime history and the IMEHA.

Another centre of maritime history other than London emerged in the shape of the so-called Liverpool School. There, Peter Davies, a former student of, and successor to, Francis Hyde, continued the line of research on maritime business history. The ‘boom’ in maritime history prompted other universities (Essex, Glasgow and Leicester) to follow the lead of University College, London and the University of Liverpool. At the University of Leicester, for example, Ralph Davis and David Williams must be considered two of the founding fathers of Britain’s ‘new’ maritime history.^{xlviii}

In Canada, the Maritime Archive of the Memorial University of Newfoundland became the centre for the ‘production’ of some of the leading maritime historians

of the following decades. The protagonist responsible for the international organisation and development of maritime history from this group of historians in Canada is Professor Lewis R. Fischer, one of the founders of the IMEHA and of the *International Journal of Maritime History (IJMH)*.^{xlix}

The other two 'production' centres in maritime history were the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries, particularly Norway. Leiden University's Jaap Bruijn is not only the author of a large number of publications on the maritime history of the Netherlands, and a dynamic member of all international maritime and economic history commissions, French or English, but also the mentor to more than fifty maritime historians, including the late Frank Broeze. Norway, one of the most dynamic maritime nations of the twentieth century, could not be left out. Its contribution is due in large part to Helge Nordvik, one of the founders of the IMEHA and co-editor of *IJM*H with Lewis R. Fischer.

In 1986, at the Ninth International Economic History Congress in Bern, the new Maritime History Group was formed, with the aim of creating a new international network of maritime history led by Lewis R. Fischer from Canada, Helge Nordvik from Norway, Peter Davies from Britain and Keiichiro Nakagawa from Japan. In 1990, at the Tenth International Economic History Congress in Leuven, Belgium, the IMEHA was formed. That same year, Frank Broeze was elected as President of the Commission Internationale d'Histoire Maritime/ International Commission for Maritime History, for the period 1990-1995. A distinguished maritime historian of the IMEHA group, Broeze also became Vice-President of the IMEHA. The first volume of the *International Journal of Maritime History* was published in 1989, with editors Lewis R. Fischer and Helge Nordvik, and an editorial board of 24 academics from 15 countries in four continents.

What the IMEHA and the *International Journal of Maritime History* have achieved over the last two decades is a steady-growing output of quality writing in maritime history, along the lines of the definition proposed by Broeze. From 1989 to 2008, the IMEHA produced 40 volumes of the *International Journal of Maritime History* or 15,000 pages, and 35 volumes of *Research in Maritime History* or about 10,000 pages, a formidable contribution to scholarship in the field. In the 40 volumes of the *IJM*H there are also scholarly reviews of some

2,500 books. Apart from the *IJM*, the academic dialogue was kept alive and thriving through the international congresses, which were launched in 1992 and continue, ever bigger, every four years. So, if at the First International Congress of Maritime History, in Liverpool in 1992, there were about forty participants, at the Third Congress, in Esbjerg (Denmark) in 2000, there were about 80, at the Fourth Congress, in Corfu in 2004, there were about 160 scholars from 23 countries, and at the Fifth International Congress of Maritime History, in Greenwich in 2008, there were 315 participants from 30 countries.

A major achievement of the last – and largest – the Fifth ICMH was that it attracted a large number of historians who would not describe themselves as maritime historians but who write maritime history. Under the IMEHA, maritime history has profited from the wide definition it adopted and from the emerging interest in the history of the seas and global history. Thus, it is no coincidence that the Sixth ICMH is scheduled to take place in 2012 at the University of Ghent, where maritime history will ‘sail’ along with global history.

A long-standing strategy of the IMEHA, from its inception, has been to embrace the whole world and to promote the periphery versus the domination of northern European and North American scholars. Indicative of these efforts is the fact that for the period 2008-2012, the elected Executive Committee comprises [Jesús M. Valdaliso from Spain, \(President\)](#), Amelia Polonia from Portugal (Vice-President), [Malcolm Tull from Australia, \(Vice-President\)](#), [Berit Eide Johnsen from Norway \(Secretary\)](#) and [Ayodeji Olukoju from Nigeria \(Treasurer\)](#). The composition of the Editorial Board of the Journal is likewise indicative of the efforts to achieve a wide representation of scholars from all over the world.

Existing associations of various seas, such as the Association for the History of the Northern Seas, organized by scholars from the Scandinavian countries, are affiliated to the IMEHA. One handicap of the IMEHA was that until the beginning of the twenty-first century there was a conspicuous under-representation of scholars from main European countries, such as France, Italy, Spain, and from the Mediterranean. It seemed as if the IMEHA had taken Maritime History out to the big oceans but had isolated the Mediterranean, whose *lingua franca* was still largely French. It was only at the Third International Maritime History Congress, in

Ejsberg in 2000, that historians specialized in Mediterranean maritime history attended, six in all. From their meeting and discussions the Mediterranean Maritime History Network was born, which had its first Conference in Malta in 2002, and in many respects opened the way for a larger representation of Mediterranean Maritime History at the Fourth ICMH, in Corfu in 2004, where French was introduced as a second official language of the Congress. A large number of Italian maritime historians took part in the Corfu congress, and also in the Second Mediterranean Maritime History Conference, held in Messina in May 2006; this was a successful and fruitful gathering of about 80 scholars from Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Malta, Tunis, Cyprus, Israel, Britain, United States and Ukraine. The next conference is scheduled to take place in Smyrna in 2010.

Another effect of the IMEHA was the re-organisation of French maritime history. In 2007, at the University of Bretagne-Sud, a conference was organized with the title 'La Recherche Internationale en Histoire Maritime. Essai d'Evaluation', with the participation not only of scholars from 9 countries, but also of 33 French researchers and professors from 13 French universities and research institutions. As Professor Bouedec pointed out in his introductory address, 'the organisation of this colloquium was born in 2004 from a sentiment of fragility as one saw the marginalization of French research at an international level and the need to restructure research and place it within an international perspective'. 'The beneficial shock', he writes, 'was given by the International Maritime Economic History Congress in Corfu in June 2004 ... where I discovered the power of the international maritime history network'. So, in 2005 French maritime historians formed the 'French Scientific Interest Group of Maritime History', in which 23 French universities and research centres, and 70 maritime historians and 30 PhD students participated. Since 2004 they have undertaken the publication of the *Revue d' Histoire Maritime* with the Professor Jean Pierre Poussou of University of Paris IV-Sorbonne as the editor of the journal.

The IMEHA is formed worldwide by a group of people who regard themselves as maritime historians, who follow an interdisciplinary path by offering considerable insights over a wider historical field and who publish in both

maritime and non-maritime academic journals. However, maritime history as a new field of history has been institutionalized in higher education and is taught at undergraduate and/or post-graduate level mainly in European universities: in Britain at the Maritime Historical Studies Centre of the University of Hull, at the Centre of Maritime History of the University of Exeter, at the University of Swansea and at the Greenwich Maritime Institute of the University of Greenwich; in Norway at Bergen University and the University of Oslo; in Denmark at the University of Southern Denmark; in the Netherlands at the University of Leiden; in Germany at Bremen University; in Greece at the University of Piraeus, the Aegean University and the Ionian University. Beyond Europe, it is taught mainly in Canada, at the Memorial University of Newfoundland, and in Western Australia, at Murdoch University. Furthermore, aspects of maritime history are taught in courses on colonial/imperial histories of the early modern age in many other European, Australian, American and Asian universities. With the wave of 'new thalassology' there are also hopes that interest in maritime history will be boosted in the United States.

Back in 1989, Frank Broeze wrote that the 'maritime element has until now remained underdeveloped and isolated; our challenge then is to push forward with maritime history and to bring it from the periphery to the mainstream'. So, has maritime history come from the periphery to the centre of historical studies? This is what every discipline that is not considered 'mainstream' wonders. One can find in many chapters of this book authors evaluating *ubi sumus*. But this is the job of the historians, to question and re-write history from many angles.

At Greenwich in the June 2008 the President of the IMEHA announced that, after a voyage of twenty years, the 'crew' of the IMEHA have brought Maritime History from the periphery to the centre, as a collective act of many historians:¹ 'Historians have come on board and manned the fleet of Maritime History, as international crew sailing under various flags, in harmonious collaboration, at conferences, seminars, workshops, colloquiums, lectures, committees. The quality of human relations in any restricted community is set when there are sentiments of camaraderie, co-operation, 'synagonism' and not antagonism, friendliness, respect of seniority, creation of opportunities and the 'opening of doors' to the

younger generation'. And the IMEHA has been for many a maritime historian suffocating in the micro-politics of national waters, the academic utopia of heterotopia.

The 'poetic' of the sea and history

The sea and the ship have been an inspiration to many. Michael Foucault, writing on heterotopia, meaning a space with several places, explained the concept by using the metaphor of a ship. The ship, 'a piece of floating space' is a place without a place that moves to many places, is the epitome of heterotopia.^{li} There is the 'new thalassology', which draws more from postmodernism, and the 'linguistic turn', which discusses the relation of the man with the sea from perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and symbols. And it is mainly human geographers who have used the concept of 'place' in their analysis of the social, political cultural aspects of this world.^{lii}

The 'linguistic turn' has given maritime history the freedom to use some of the 'poetic' of the sea, for a more popular approach. The sea is a source of inspiration for historians. In the words of Felipe Fernández-Armesto:

The sea can shape island civilizations either by confining them or by linking them to other lands. Either way, proximity to the sea is such a powerful feature of any environment which includes it that it dwarfs all the others. Whatever the nature of the soil or temperature, the relief or biota, if the sea is at hand it has a shaping force. Nearness to the shore moulds one's outlook and affects the way one thinks. The sea is awesome because it is intractable, untrappable; it changes everything it touches without being easily changed in turn. It makes coral bones and pearls of eyes. It reshapes shorelines, erodes coasts, gulps swards and cities, chews continents. At us land-creatures it flings weather systems which, after all millennia of civilization, symbolize the continuing feebleness of our power over the environment. The sea has no appointed limits, except in the pious cravings of the prayerful. It is part of chaos that survived creation. It makes us feel small.^{liii}

It is the journey that gives magic to the writing of history and it is true that history has a lot to gain from literature. As Karen van Dyck observes, ‘...what makes literature important to the historian is not only the way it can be mined for historical details and descriptions of times and places we no longer inhabit and philosophical and political insights we no longer remember, but also for the manner in which it presents its messages’. One of her examples is the Greek writer Giannis Psycharis, who starts his book *Journey* with a chapter entitled ‘The Secret Passion’. The passion, it turns out, is the Greek sea and its ability to bring him home after many years in exile in Paris:

I saw the beautiful view before me, above me the sky with its brilliance, beside me the hills and green, and suddenly, further below, if I raised my eyes, the endless sea with the purple waves, the laughing sea, decorated in white foam. Ah! the sea, why did I have to see her? Why couldn't the plane trees, the willows, and the other trees that grow out of the French earth conceal her? As soon as I saw the sea my fantasy took me in a new direction. I remembered my homeland! It was to this homeland that the sea could take me.^{liv}

In some of the American ‘new thalassology’ it seems to me that *thalassa* (apart from the fact that Americans almost never say ‘*thalassa/sea*’ but ‘ocean’) is nobody’s homeland. A lot of writing is about the history of the sea, without the sea. It is as if the sea has been lost; it seems that the people who write about it have never had a true feeling of it; they have just imagined it. They remind me of the verses of the Greek seaman and poet Nikos Kavadias, who in his poem *Mal de Depart* talks of ‘an ideal but unworthy lover of the endless voyages and blue oceans’, who sits ‘in an office bent over some nautical maps making calculations in ledger books’, while ‘Proudly as always, the ship will set sail/For Madras, Algeria and Singapore’.^{lv} And I suppose if someone wants to ‘deconstruct’ my writing in this paragraph, he may say that because I am a maritime historian I cannot believe that one can write the history of the sea, of man’s relationship with the sea, without understanding sea voyages, without trying to get a feeling

of how it must have been to struggle with the waves, to get some sense of 'the men who get wet' on board a vessel.^{lvi}

I will finish this chapter, there where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean, in the Portuguese novel that superbly blends land and sea, José Saramago's *A jangada de pedra* (*A Stone Raft*, 1986), a novel inspired by older Portuguese myths about Portuguese explorers and Vasco de Gama. There, the Iberian peninsula becomes a land that suddenly drifts apart from the European continent and becomes an island, a stone raft, that sails around the world, the land like a ship, a place in no place. 'As a raft-island it does not anchor in any port but, on the contrary, opens itself to all exchanges and communications because its border is the sea.'^{lvii} The sea that embraces the globe and history.

ⁱ See also Harlaftis, Gelina, 'Storia maritime e storia dei porti', *Memoria e Ricerca* 11 (2002), pp. 5-22 and eadem, 'Maritime History since Braudel', in Harlaftis, Gelina and Carmel Vassalo (eds), *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*, RMH no. 28, (St. John's, Newfoundland, IMEHA, 2004).

ⁱⁱ Broeze, Frank, 'From the Periphery to the Mainstream: The Challenge of Australia's Maritime History', *The Great Circle* 11/1 (1989), pp. 1-14.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pearson, Michael, *The Indian Ocean* (London, Routledge, 2003), p. 3; Driessen, Henk, 'Seascapes and Mediterranean crossings', *Journal of Global History* 3 (2008), pp. 445-9.

^{iv} Just to give some titles, Butel, Paul, *The Atlantic* (New York, Routledge, 1999); Matvejević, Predrag, *Mediterranean: a cultural landscape* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999); Horden, Peregrine and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2000); Kirby, David and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (London & New York, Routledge, 2000); Pearson, Michael, *The Indian Ocean* (London & New York, Routledge, 2003); King, Charles, *The Black Sea: a History* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2004); Roberts, Callum, *The Unnatural History of the Sea* (Washington, DC, Island Press/Shearwater Books, 2007); Starkey, David J., Poul Holm and Michaela Barnard (eds), *Oceans Past: Management Insights From The History of Marine Animal Populations* (London, Earthscan, 2008).

^v Peters, Edward, 'Quid nobis cum pelage? The New Thalassology and the Economic History of Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* xxxiv/I (summer 2003), pp. 49-61. Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*.

^{vi} Driessen, 'Seascapes and Mediterranean Crossings', pp. 445-9.

^{vii} Broeze, Frank, 'From the Periphery to the Mainstream: the Challenge of Australia's Maritime History', *The Great Circle* 11/1 (1989), pp. 1-14.

^{viii} Driessen, 'Seascapes and Mediterranean Crossings'.

^{ix} Finamore, Daniel (ed.), *Maritime History as World History* (University Press of Florida, 2004), p. 2.

^x Hattendorf, John B. (ed.), *Ubi Sumus? The State of Naval and Maritime History* (Newport, RI, 1994); Labaree, Benjamin W., 'The State of American Maritime History in the 1990s', in Hattendorf, *Ubi Sumus*.

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- ^{xii} See Broeze, Frank, 'Maritime History at the Crossroads: A Critical Review of Recent Historiography', in Frank Broeze, *Maritime History at the Crossroads: A Critical Review of Recent Historiography*, RMH no. 9, (St John's, Newfoundland, IMEHA, 1995); Bruijn, Jaap, 'Recent Developments in the Historiography of Maritime History in the Netherlands', in Broeze, *Maritime History at the Crossroads*, pp. 193-212; Valdaliso, Jesús, 'The Progress of Maritime History in Spain since 1975', in Broeze, *Maritime History*, pp. 229-48; Harlaftis, Gelina, 'The Maritime Historiography of Greece in Recent Decades', in Broeze, *Maritime History at the Crossroads*, pp. 135-50; D' Angelo, Michela and Elisabetta Tonizzi, 'Recent Maritime Historiography on Italy', in Harlaftis and Vassalo (eds), *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*.
- ^{xiii} See also Harlaftis, 'Storia marittima' and 'Maritime History since Braudel', in Harlaftis and Vassalo (eds), *New Directions in Mediterranean Maritime History*.
- ^{xiv} Ibid.
- ^{xv} Fischer, Lewis R. and Eric W. Sager (eds), *Merchant Shipping and Economic Development in Atlantic Canada*, Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, Maritime History Group, (St John's, Newfoundland, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1982).
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- ^{xix} Horden and Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology'', *Forum, American Historical Review* (June 2006), pp. 722-740.
- ^{xx} Lewis, Martin W. and Kären Wigen, 'A Maritime Response to the Crisis in Area Studies', *The Geographical Review* 89/2 (April 1999), pp. 161-8.
- ^{xxi} Written by Xenophon in his *Anabasis*; this is a popular saying among modern Greeks as it is included in all Greek high-school ancient history books. For translation in English see *The Anabasis of Cyrus*, transl. by Wayne Ambler, (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2008).
- ^{xxii} *The International Journal of Maritime History* is published in the Memorial University of Newfoundland, St John's, Canada. See also the Editor's note, the *International Journal of Maritime History* XVIII/2 (December 2006), pp. xiii-xiv. It is worth mentioning here that this particular volume of the *IJM* runs to 654 pages of articles, research notes, source essays, forums, roundtables and reviews of 97 books on maritime history of all periods and themes.
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- ^{xxv} For example, the National Maritime Museum of the United Kingdom has its Centre for Imperial and Maritime Studies. See also Cannadine, David (ed.), *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c. 1760- c. 1840* (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).
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- ^{xxix} Horden and Purcell, 'The Mediterranean and 'the New Thalassology''.
- ^{xxx} For an insightful overview see Vink, Markus P.M., 'Indian Ocean Studies and the "new thalassology"', *Journal of Global History* 2 (2007), pp. 41-62.
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