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MARITIME—AQUATIC; TERRITORIAL—TERRITORIALITY: TRACING MICHAEL N. PEARSON'S WORK ON THE SEA

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ABSTRACT

This essay traces Michael Pearson's work from writing maritime history to a more inclusive oceanic history, and also his later interest in water histories. It evokes Michael's nostalgic remembering of the littoral and his condemnation of the territorialisation of the shore and the seas from the 1990s that changed its nature radically. It argues that Michael's notion of territoriality remains unfinished because he ignored the flows of global capital that re-ordered territoriality.

Michael Pearson has been an amphibious historian, moving effortlessly between land and sea, but he is primarily known for his single authored works on maritime history—*The Indian Ocean* (2003), *Pilgrimage to Mecca* (1996) and *Pious Passengers* (1994), as well as his many edited volumes on oceanic history.¹ His other books are the more land-based *The Portuguese in India* (1987) and *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* (1976).² The publication dates make it abundantly clear that his interests gradually shifted from land to maritime history, and then to a more inclusive oceanic history that interrogated religion, violence, gender, class and authority, cosmopolitanism, life on ship board, communication, medical connections; and the roles of brokers, metals and spices in the Indian Ocean world. From his interest in sixteenth-century Portuguese Diu and Mughal politics, Pearson's romance with the Indian Ocean led him to bring the East African coast into his works. He was possibly the first to do this, feeling increasingly that the Indian Ocean was not just India's ocean. Although he rarely brought the eastern Indian Ocean and China into his discussions.

1. Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2002); *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience, 1500-1800* (Princeton, New Jersey: Markus Wiener, 1996); *Pious Passengers: The Hajj in Earlier Times* (London: Hurst, 1994).

2. Michael Pearson, *The Portuguese in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat: The Response to the Portuguese in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

I. UNIVERSALISM AND TERRITORIALISATION

Michael Pearson wrote about universalism along the shores of the Indian Ocean, particularly in his essays on the commonalities of littoral societies, but this article—inspired by the draft of the unpublished keynote address he sent ahead of the 2015 conference at Chandernagore, India—addresses instead Pearson’s notion of territorialisation—something he saw as the product of globalisation and being universally rooted in a nation-state engaging with global forces. Although the keynote, titled “Territoriality and the Decline of the Ecotone”, was fragmentary in nature (unfortunately Michael could not finish it prior to publication), a discussion of his notion of territoriality arising out of his ideas on territorialisation is important. This is not only because of on-going discussions about the former in this era of globalisation, but also to underscore the fact that Michael continued to engage with new theories and current strategies in order to impart what he called a “whiff of ozone” into the ocean. The references cited here reveal that historians have been noticeably absent in discussions about territoriality—a field dominated by political scientists, geographers and policy studies practitioners. Michael remains, to my knowledge, one of the few historians to engage with territoriality, but his ideas on the anthropocene and nineteenth-century European legal history on territorialisation were, at the time of writing, still unformed, so I shall not discuss them here.

Although the keynote remained unfinished, this present essay is not intended as a critique of its shortcomings, but is instead a visualisation of Michael’s conceptual framework within which he situated his arguments. The essay has three strands running through it: an examination of Michael’s ideas on territorialisation; their intellectual antecedents—not just in his keynote essay but also in his other, recent, publications; and a critique thereof. It makes a distinction between territoriality—how people *use* space to communicate ownership or occupancy, and territorialisation—the *act* of organising as a territory. It also distinguishes between Pearson’s notion of coastal societies first proposed in 1985 and his concept of littoral societies elaborated in 2006—a crucial distinction that is all too often blurred when we consider Pearson’s body of work.³ But first, a few words about Michael’s ideas on the coast and the littoral and how these link to landscape studies.

II. COAST, LITTORAL AND LANDSCAPE

From 1985, Pearson began constructing a history of the coast, not from the viewpoint of merchants, rulers and admirals, but through the lens of a more fundamental social

3. M. N. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast”, *The Great Circle*, 7, no. 1 (APRIL 1985); Michael N. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems”, *Journal of World History*, 17, no. 4 (2006). A shorter version of the second essay came out in *History in Focus* in 2007 in a special issue titled “The Sea.” See <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Sea/articles/pearson.html> accessed 25 January 2017.

history, asking whether deep oceanic structures could influence life on the coast. This led to the *Great Circle* publication of 1985.⁴ In the 2015 keynote on territorialisation in the littoral, Pearson once again re-considered the shore, choosing to speak on “Territoriality and the Decline of the Ecotone” and to consider the role of the anthropocene in the degradation of the littoral.

The keynote can be read as an extension of Pearson's 2006 publication titled “Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems”, where he noted that the tourism and oil industries were destroying the shore and trawler-fishing was ruining the sea bed, so much so that:

The complex symbiosis between land and sea that we found to characterize littoral society for most of history is fast being transformed. Land influences, often from far away, are profoundly modifying what used to be an important, albeit elusive, segment of human society. People still live on the coast, but a littoral society that moves easily between land and sea, an amphibious society governed by *ressac*, back and forth, has now been overwhelmed by forces from far inland and far away. It is not a matter of the end of littoral society, but rather that it has undergone, over the last century or so, more major changes, huge stresses, even transformations than was ever the case before this.⁵

Although Pearson used the terms “coast”, “littoral”, and “marge” interchangeably, for him the coast was a spatial unit the histories of which, while certainly distinct, were part of maritime as well as terrestrial societies. Pearson noted, following Philip Steinberg, that the coastal zone was like land in that it was susceptible to being claimed, controlled, regulated, and managed by individual state-actors.⁶ This engendered various types of relations, as we see from Lindsay Lloyd-Smith and Eric Tagliacozzo:

By these processes, and through reflecting upon the meaning and management of “water” [...], “water” becomes a medium and metaphor for navigating social relations. This happens both within and between communities. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that waterscapes, both real and imaginary, are integral to [...] identity-formation, and to “being in the world.” They help order the multiple universes [...] in ways that are seen through the passage of time, and also in ways that we clearly can still see today.⁷

4. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast.”

5. Pearson, “Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems”, 372-3.

6. Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 115.

7. Lindsay Lloyd-Smith and Eric Tagliacozzo, “Water in Southeast Asia: Navigating Contradictions”, *TRaNS: Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia* 4, no. 2 (2016), 238.

But the notion of territoriality comes not out of water but from landscape studies which see landscape not as a neutral arena for social relations to unfold, but rather as a subjective medium through which biographies and relations are shaped and reshaped, as is also the case of material practices in Pearson's littoral.⁸ Landscape is marked by, according to Pierre Bourdieu, *habitus*:

a product of history, produc[ing] individual and collective practices [...] in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the "correctness" of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms.⁹

This way of seeing space is not something new. For Denis Cosgrove, landscape was a way of seeing the external world that emerged in the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries; it was a visual term arising from renaissance humanist concepts and constructions of space.¹⁰ In practical terms the landscape idea was bound up with the practical appropriation of space and attendant spatial hierarchies. Landscape was as much to do with the control and celebration of property—and therefore of objectification—as a subjective way of seeing space; this had earlier been defined by Carl Sauer as cultural landscape.¹¹ The objectification of space leads us to the subject of this essay—territoriality—the linkage between ground and governance or, in Pearson's case, between water and rule.

III. PEARSON'S AQUATIC LANDSCAPE

For Isaac Land, whom Pearson quoted, littoral history functioned as a sub-category of coastal history.¹² This was seemingly not the case for Pearson who saw the littoral—the fringe—a blend-zone of land and sea, as a particular zone he called the "marge", and known also as the marches. While coastal zones can be terrestrial, the littoral was purely aquatic. According to Pearson, "the coasts are seen as fungible, so that one can write an amphibious history which moves easily between land and sea. ... at present, it is not possible to abstract the sea from the land."¹³ Writing further, "I am convinced that

8. David C. Harvey, "Landscape Organization, Identity and Change: territoriality and hagiography in medieval west Cornwall", *Landscape Research*, 25, no. 2 (2002), 201.

9. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 54.

10. Denis Cosgrove, "Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 10, no. 1 (1985): 45-62.

11. Carl O. Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape" (originally published in 1925) in *Foundation Papers in Landscape Ecology*, eds. John A. Wiens *et al* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 63.

12. Isaac Land, "Tidal Waves: The New Coastal History", *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 3 (2007), 731-743.

13. Michael Pearson, Nigel Worden, Claire Chambers, et al, "Reviews", *Wasafiri*, 26, no. 2 (2011), 80-1.

is the marge, the coast, where we can write the most distinctive maritime, water-based history.”¹⁴ Could one then write an aquatic history where societies were amphibious?

A careful reading of Pearson's later writings reveals that this new preoccupation with coastal histories has a fairly recent lineage.¹⁵ He reflected on this issue at a conference, also held at Chandernagore, in 2012:

Let me suggest that a history that takes full account of water as well as land is one that focuses on the beach, the littoral. Here is where we may find a society which by including both land and sea is distinctive from further inland or further out to sea [...] This points to the way forward. Rather than worry about extreme cases, binaries, with the land and sea being totally separate, we need to be amphibious, moving easily between land and sea [...] The crucial distinction I've been trying to make has to do with flexibility and the ability to move, and to accept new ideas. [...] Only on the coast do we find a unique combination of fixed and yet fluid.¹⁶

This interest in seascapes led Pearson to interrogate maritime territoriality, for water, we just noted, is a vehicle containing many types of relations over time.

IV. TERRITORIALITY: DEFINITIONS

Traditionally, theories of territoriality have been linked to the concept of land. It is defined as a “geographical expression of social power.”¹⁷ It is the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area. However, only recently have historians begun to consider issues of territoriality and how it affects and also manipulates social settings for action. For John Ruggie “the process of social empowerment was part of the means by which the new units of political discourse were inscribed in social life to produce new units of political order.”¹⁸ In turn, Charles Maier saw territoriality as bordered political space, creating the framework of national and often of ethnic identity; and although on the wane currently, territoriality represented one of the most fundamental socio-political trends in modern world development.¹⁹ While territoriality has been seen as a social,

14. Michael N. Pearson, “Water and History: Some Sceptical Notes” in *Living with Water: Peoples, Lives, and Livelihoods in Asia and Beyond* ed. Rila Mukherjee (Delhi: Primus Books, 2016), 50.

15. Michael Pearson, “Foreword” in *Coastal Histories, Society and Ecology in Pre-modern India*, ed. Yogesh Sharma (Delhi: Primus Books, 2010).

16. Pearson, “Water and History”, 45, 49.

17. Robert David Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: CUP Archive, 1986), 19.

18. John Gerard Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations”, *International Organization*, 47, no. 1 (1993), 163.

19. Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era”, *American Historical Review* 105(3), (2000), 807-809.

cultural and political phenomenon, Saskia Sassen sees territoriality as first and foremost a legal construct that marks the state's exclusive authority over its territory, and law as the dominant mode of establishing claims to territory. Historically, territoriality was a powerful innovation, and it worked well to legitimate and cement the power of the modern state over a territory.²⁰

Territoriality is strongest in the core and weakest at the edges of a landed space. According to Robert Sack, territoriality should not be confused with spatiality, although the exercise of territoriality does yield diverse spatialities. Territorial rules about what is in or out of place structure our lives and impart power to place. The power of place is not secondary to social power, because the various forms of social power cannot exist without territorial rules. Territorial and social rules are mutually constitutive.²¹

But territoriality is also cultural—it is implicit in the determination of landscape, and the ability to control access to particular settings for action. Additionally, the notion of territory is a reification of the locales and landscapes that gives rise to a feeling of belonging and rootedness. This sense of familiarity, not born just out of knowledge but of *concern*, provides ontological security—something very different from just rule or governance. It thus also is suggestive of openness. Although made and re-made in relation to “rocks, rivers, trees, etc”, it is the societal expressions and symbolic meaning of territoriality that are the crucial elements in any interpretation of landscape and society.²² Therefore, while acknowledging the importance of recognising the experiences of these features in earlier times, historians need to recognise that it is territory and a developing sense of territoriality as place which is perhaps most pertinent, and through which the significance of such features is organised and understood.²³

It is thus clear that scholars see and define territoriality in different ways. From a political standpoint, territoriality is linked with the idea of the nation and its corollary—the state. Tributary states and empires—both continental and maritime—attempted to control space, but usually failed; territorial states—or nation-states—control land mostly successfully despite invasions and wars. In such a sense, territoriality implies enclosure.

Since territoriality is the medium through which landscapes are organised and perceived, reference to territorial patterns and their developments is necessary in order to understand both *how* and *why* societies (and their landscapes) are organised over time.²⁴ As Sack notes, there is a need to distinguish:

between these related effects of space and place and the role of humans as agents. What is the connection between people and these geographical factors? The answer

20. Saskia Sassen, “When Territory Deborders Territoriality”, *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 1, no. 1 (2013), 24.

21. Sack, *Human Territoriality*, 23; Robert D. Sack, “The power of place and space”, *Geographical Review*, 83, no. 3 (1993), 326-7.

22. Harvey, “Landscape Organization”, 202.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

is complex.[...] The argument has been that place and space are constitutive of nature, social relations, and meaning. Just as these elements are part of place, so too can they be found in the self: people are natural beings, social beings, and intellectual beings. How these are connected by the self depends on how they are connected by the places the person occupies. People are always in a place, and places constrain and enable. If a person is locked in solitary confinement without contact with nature, society, or intellectual stimulus, personal sense of self disintegrates. Sanity and personality need the stimulation of nature, society, and meaning to give them form. Not only can place help mold or destroy the self, it can also liberate it. A person who craves intellectual stimulation may find life at a university positively explosive. But place depends on people, who construct and organize it. In these complex ways, self and place are themselves mutually constitutive.²⁵

We therefore approach place, territory, scale and network as intertwined. Willem van Schendel introduces us to the concept of “thick” and “thin” places—the former open, the latter closed. Thick places are those:

to which we are committed because they enhance our sense of meaning, belonging and connectedness: they provide us with enriching experiences. Thin places lack this specificity; they are of fleeting importance to us or leave us cold. Places may oscillate between thickness and thinness over time and for specific social groups or individuals.²⁶

Here, place does not just belong in the physical world but also contains within it elements such as self, body and landscape, through which the “geographical self” constitutes itself. As Edward Casey emphasises, habitus can be seen as a middle term between place and self and, in particular, between lived place and the geographical self.²⁷ And it is here that Pearson's notion of territoriality becomes significant, because his littoral is both a thick and a thin place at different moments for different categories of people.

25. Sack, “The power of place and space”, 328-9.

26. Willem van Schendel, “Spatial Moments: Chittagong in Four Scenes” in *Asia Inside Out: Connected Places*, eds. Eric Tagliacozzo, Helen F. Siu and Peter C. Perdue (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 99-100; Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner, Martin Jones, “Theorizing sociospatial relations”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26, no. 3, (2008), 26.

27. Edward S. Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91, no. 4 (2001), 686.

V. TERRITORIALITY IN AQUATIC SPACES

So far, the examples I quoted emanate from landed territoriality. However, Pearson applied the notion of territoriality to modern oceanic spaces where, even when systems of rule were territorial and territoriality was relatively fixed, the prevailing concept of territory did not entail mutual exclusion. Prior to the nineteenth century, non-exclusive territorial rule could be seen in oceanic polities that existed in a “patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights of government,” which were “inextricably superimposed and tangled” in an era of archaic globalisation when power was grounded in authority and hierarchy, and not on territory.²⁸ Territorialisation as we now know it emerged in Europe and in much of colonial Asia and Africa only from the nineteenth century.²⁹ By contrast, the new maritime territorialisation of the 1990s, Pearson felt, was a process whereby the sovereignty, exclusive rights and specific jurisdiction of coastal areas were spatially implemented at sea through the creation of maritime zones and the setting of limits and boundaries by individual states in line with the dictates of the new globalisation.³⁰

Although Pearson often referred to himself as a magpie, taking bits and pieces from diverse disciplines to fashion his concepts, he eschewed political and cultural geography in locating littoral territoriality. Instead, in his 2015 keynote, he saw territoriality through the lens of physical geography, underscoring the impact of ecotone and anthropocene on the marge:

I have previously written extensively about littoral society. What is new now is that I have found the concept of an ecotone to be extremely fruitful, not only to describe the coast before the anthropocene era, but also to illuminate what has subsequently happened. Where once people of the shore could be both farmers and fishers, they now are one or the other, not both. [...] The ecotone which I am interested in is of course the coast, the littoral, the marge.³¹

In this deeply philosophical keynote, Pearson paid attention to space and time, concerns not always central to his earlier body of work. His method was:

suggesting a way to combine spatial matters and chronology, the relevant spatial area being the shore or the littoral, and the chronological aspect concerns the

28. Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond”, 149.

29. C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Malden, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Michael Biggs, “Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41, no. 2 (1999).

30. See Dennis Rumley, Sanjay Chaturvedi, Mat Taib Yasin, *The Security of Sea Lanes of Communication in the Indian Ocean Region* (Oxon, New York: Routledge, 2016).

31. Pearson, “Territoriality and the Decline of the Ecotone”, Unpublished 2015 Chandernagore keynote.

end of the shore as an ecotone. I will also suggest that this sort of study helps to bridge the gap between maritime and terrestrial history.³²

Space and time had multiple dimensions since:

Ecotones occur over a broad spectrum of space and time scales. They may be narrow or broad, and can be on the one hand local, as in the zone between a field and forest, or regional, such as the transition between forest and grassland. Crucially, chronology is central and must be taken into account.³³

For Pearson, the imbrication of spatiality and chronology in the ecotone could be seen through the lens of territoriality:

I hope that taking space seriously, always though insisting on movement and change, that is chronology, can contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of how the coast has been territorialised. The concept of an ecotone turns out to be very useful as we try to understand how the spatial area of the coast has changed over the last 200 or so years.³⁴

Pearson's concept of the vibrant shore approached Doreen Massey's notion of a translocationally networked area. The relational networks operating within that space bound a particular locality into more expanded relations and processes. These networks spanned not only land, i.e. various political units, but also extended over wider areas, such as seas and mountains. The networks were spatial in nature, embedded within them were political, military, material and ritualistic relations, that is, also territorial notions and actual territorialisation—the subject of Pearson's keynote in 2015.³⁵

But how did Pearson reconcile land and sea? I am thinking here of the different qualities of earth and water and the diverse spatialities engendered. Land is a bounded place; the sea is not. The exercise of territoriality on water seems more fluid and difficult to locate, although in the last five centuries oceanic space has been a central arena of imperial struggle.³⁶

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Doreen Massey, *Place Space and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 120.

36. Elizabeth Mancke, "Early Modern Expansion and the Politicization of Oceanic Space", *Geographical Review*, 89, no. 2, (1999), 234.

VI. TERRITORIALITY AND TERRA-CENTRISM

Landed territoriality is directly linked to sovereignty, as in the Westphalian model that became the founding principle of the modern states system after 1648. This then became an enduring principle. The legal construct of territoriality as jurisdiction not only relies on the idea of a state's exclusive authority over a territory, but on the construction of people as a nation within that territory, thereby bringing nation-territory together with state-territory in the socio-historical construction of a nation-state territoriality.³⁷

But borders are made and re-made, scales and networks shift, territories undergo de- and re-territorialisation. Matthias Middell and Katja Nauman suggested that:

the dissolution of a hierarchical spatial order of political sovereignty dominated by the nation-state, the multitude of actors taking part in worldwide interactions, and the plurality of locations that are incorporated in global worldwide entanglements – indicate that globalization is the central problem of the day, and the debate around it has been expanding for at least two decades. This confirms our approach of interpreting globalization as a dialectical process of de- and re-territorialization.³⁸

Although the current shift towards borderless globalisation has seemingly dealt a blow to territoriality, Peter Taylor insisted it was mutable. While the state as container of power still has plenty of life left in it, and territoriality is too effective a strategy to dispatch to history, what is contained and why it is contained, and always has been, is changeable. The territoriality that we see now is not eternal. The ultimate conflict between states as containers and the global ecosystem can be interpreted as leading to a future end of the state.³⁹

Since the notion of territoriality has been fundamentally terra-centric, how did Pearson extend a continental concept to the edges? Pearson's answer to the dilemma of locating and defining the exercise of territoriality at sea was that its exercise in sea-spaces is linked to the dominance of global capital. This sees a resurgence of the Tordesillas system (the treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 that divided the extra-European discoveries of Portugal and Castile throughout the world's oceans), resulting from the 1970s in the creation of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZS) that were enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982. As Pearson observed,

37. Sassen, "When Territory Deborders Territoriality", 25.

38. Matthias Middell and Katja Naumann, "Global history and the spatial turn: from the impact of area studies to the study of critical junctures of globalization", *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010), 152.

39. Peter J. Taylor, "The State as Container: Territoriality in the Modern World-system", *Progress in Human Geography*, 18, no. 2 (1994), 152.

[The] sea has become continentalised. Land has for long been parcelled and divided and clearly owned as either private or official property. Now this is happening to the sea as states extend their fishing limits and exclusive economic zones. A modern state's territory extends out from the coast for 12 nautical miles, but the EEZ is 200 miles. This can be enforced because modern planners, using satellite navigation techniques, can now draw lines in the ocean to show boundaries, just like on land. [...] And for a minute let's think about our terminology, which reflects again the dominance of the land. What about the continental shelf, so terracentric vocab, and then we write about the "field" of maritime history!⁴⁰

At the time Pearson was writing this passage, notions of territoriality had undergone a sea of changes. As Taylor noted, a triple and paradoxical layering of territoriality was emerging: the state as power container tended to preserve existing boundaries; the state as wealth container tended towards larger territories; and the state as cultural container tended towards smaller territories.⁴¹ An emerging instability of traditional versions of territoriality, partly as a consequence of globalisation, was a paradox that Pearson would perhaps have studied later.⁴² But since the agency of the state is noticeably absent in Pearson's conceptualisation, his notion of territorialisation—or what he called continentalisation—remains, unfortunately, incomplete.

VII. A CRITIQUE OF PEARSON'S NOTIONS OF TERRITORIALISATION

Pearson's condemnation of the universalising nature of capitalism makes the history of the littoral a linear narrative with the emergence of a new territorialisation of sea spaces from the 1990s, emphasising the force of global capital in the present world.

That territorialisation is linked to ideas of territoriality and sovereignty is not something new in the history of the Indian Ocean world. One of the earliest experiments in territorialisation of the ocean was initiated by Chola South India in the eleventh to twelfth centuries when, in defeating the Srivijayan coalition, it attempted to create a "Chola Sea" extending to China. The next attempt at maritime territorialisation was undertaken by fifteenth-century Ming China. Fleets under the overall captaincy of Admiral Zheng He blasted the seas in attempts to impose tributary relations and underline Chinese hegemony in the Indian Ocean. The Iberian sea-based empires, bursting on to the historical stage a while later, had a more global vision and pursued a different strategy. As noted above, the treaty of Tordesillas (1494) divided the extra-European discoveries of Portugal and Castile on a global maritime basis. That of Zaragoza (1529) defined the

40. Pearson, "Territoriality and the Decline of the Ecotone", Unpublished Chandernagore 2015 keynote.

41. Taylor, "The State as Container", 160.

42. Sassen, "When Territory Deborders Territoriality", 24.

areas of Castilian and Portuguese influence in Asia to resolve the “Moluccas issue” when Portugal, approaching the Maluku islands from Melaka and the Lesser Sunda Islands in 1512 and Spain, approaching from the Philippine archipelago in 1521, each claimed that the islands were that nation’s “discovery.” During this period we see territorial notions being extended to seas everywhere—Pierre Descelier’s map of 1553, for instance, shows the “sea of France” and the “sea of Spain.” Later, in Nicholas Sanson’s atlas of 1719, we encounter a “sea of Brazil”, a “sea of Peru”, and a “sea of Chile.”

The examples of the Chola, Ming and Iberians show different notions of territoriality at work; at the same time they are also about control of oceanic space. But the strategies employed were different—violence and diplomacy in the case of the Chola and Ming, and legal sanction, additionally, in the case of the Iberian empires. In precolonial Asia, the concept of sovereignty as legitimate authority over political space, and of state “territoriality” as arranging and producing space defined through cartography, had never been fully operational. The Srivijayan ports enforcement of the “right of bandar”, by which foreign vessels plying in its waters had to call in at their ports, is an exception. Sovereignty was mostly defined in terms of human residence and social organisation. Island chains were considered as connectors rather than as integrated parts of national territory.

Oceans and seas became progressively militarised from the nineteenth century as European sea-borne powers used maritime access to force territorial submission in Asia. The African story was somewhat different. Gwyn Campbell critiques the prevailing assumption that Africa became integrated into the international economy only from the late nineteenth century when the Scramble for Africa began. He instead argues that Eastern African history in the period 1500–1800 needs to be placed in the context of an Indian Ocean world economy instead.⁴³ The Eurocentric viewpoint that 1500 marked a major turning point in the history of the world, an era of “European discoveries” leading to European military, economic, and political domination in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean worlds is being increasingly challenged for the Indian Ocean world. While Europeans might have scored some initial military victories, this in no way ensured their dominance in the region. Moreover, apart from a toehold at the Cape and later on the Mascarenes, European presence in Indian Ocean Africa was negligible until the eighteenth century when its spread was mainly restricted again to the Cape and the Mascarenes. Elsewhere, attempts by Europeans to gain any foothold in Indian Ocean Africa were thwarted by a combination of malaria, which generally decimated European settlements, and hostility from locals.⁴⁴

The situation was again different in the eastern Indian Ocean. When the Portuguese used their armed vessels to wrest control of islands and ports from local rulers, they were met with relatively little resistance. This was due to the fact that Asian powers had no war

43. Gwyn Campbell, “Africa, the Indian Ocean World, and the “Early Modern”: Historiographical Conventions and Problems”, *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies*, 1 (2017): 24-37, 25.

44. *Ibid.*, 34.

navy to speak of, and claiming sovereignty over the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea became easy once the Mings withdrew from maritime trade. The Portuguese imposed the *cartaz* system or the licensing of travel on maritime trade routes—a politicisation of oceanic space that had no equivalent in Asian practice.

However, with the emergence of maritime borders, the category of “stateless” spaces vanished and the livelihood of coastal communities became inscribed in the cartographic order of the modern nation-state from the 1860s onwards.⁴⁵ There was an eruption of British legal thinking in the Indian Ocean at this time since, next to the Portuguese, they were the most assiduous imperial power in imposing sovereignty over maritime space. In 1691, the merchant-shipper Abd al-Ghafur of Surat complained to the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb (1618-1707), that one of his ships had been taken by English mariners. Investigation identified these particular culprits as Danish, but Abd al-Ghafur argued that since most culpable mariners were English, the English East India Company had to take responsibility for all unlawful seizures at sea.⁴⁶

Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford show how British treaties functioned less to define British jurisdiction over piracy and slavers than to license the extension of British law into oceanic spaces.⁴⁷ Earlier, territorialisation had been patchy. The pattern of imperial expansion in which empires laid claim to vast stretches of territory, but only exercised control over narrow bands, corridors, and enclaves of various sizes, was represented most clearly in early modern European maritime empires. Extensive claims to ocean territory coexisted with effective control over sea-lanes connecting dispersed settlements or trading posts. For example, Portuguese claims in Asia recognised by the Treaty of Tordesillas included control of the eastern seas, but the geography of the Portuguese trading-post empire in sixteenth-century Asia was shaped by the ability to monitor sea lanes and ports. Both Spanish and Portuguese rulers understood the Treaty of Tordesillas as an agreement dividing the globe into spheres of influence rather than realms of sovereignty. European powers had long recognised the Indian Ocean as in some respects a different sort of ocean space, one of specific and crowded sea-lanes dominated by coastal polities and ethnic traders. This idea matched the Ptolemaic image of the Indian Ocean as a separate sea encircled by land. But mariners after Vasco da Gama, especially from the second half of the sixteenth century, increasingly experienced travel around the Cape of Good Hope as routine, and carried expectations about maritime affairs across ocean basins. Europeans did not invent a new maritime politics for the Indian Ocean but sought to continue older

45. Mancke, “Early Modern Expansion”, 229; Martin W. Lewis, “Dividing the ocean sea”, *Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (Apr. 1999), 199, 204; Edyta Roszko, “Maritime territorialisation as performance of sovereignty and nationhood in the South China Sea”, *Nations and Nationalism* 21, no. 2 (2015), 233.

46. Patricia Risso, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region during a Long Eighteenth Century”, *Journal of World History*, 12, no. 2 (2001), 307.

47. Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800-1850* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard Press, 2016), 147.

practices from the Mediterranean and, later, from the West Indies.⁴⁸

As already seen, examples of early attempts at territorialisation came from European attempts to stop maritime predation through the imposition of anti-piracy laws. J. L. Anderson finds an interesting link between the conclusion of war and the worldwide resurgence of piracy. There were clear economic reasons for episodes of increased piracy at the close of major European wars. Peace was usually followed by readjustment or recession, which threw merchant seamen out of employment. Sailors discharged from privateers and men-of-war glutted the maritime labour market, ships lay idle, and merchants could find fewer profitable outlets for their capital. Piracy therefore offered an alternative to starvation or bankruptcy.⁴⁹ The legal problem of suppression of piracy was compounded by the question of jurisdiction. The emergence of nation-states in late nineteenth-century Europe helped the emergence of clearer, though often disputed, frontiers between territorial units, and within each unit jurisdiction was by definition not in question. By contrast, the sea offered no such defined frontiers other than coastlines, variously defined by law.⁵⁰

Instances of territoriality in the pre-modern age are therefore subject to varying interpretations. Bo Theutenberg saw a vague notion of territorial seas emerging in Europe from the late Roman period, manifest in the doctrines of protection and jurisdiction of the nearest polity; this however did not interfere with navigation rights over the deep sea. The Teutonic-Nordic region, by contrast, had a clearly defined notion of maritime territoriality; that of a national sea, protected and in some way administered by the littoral state. But it also possessed a clear notion of the open seas beyond territorial waters. Actually, the notion of territorial waters existed among all western nations. English monarchs were called “Lords of the Seas”, a tradition dating back to the Anglo Saxon king Edgar, “the sovereign Lord of all Albion”, who in 964 rhetorically laid claim to the ocean around Britain—regarded traditionally as the King’s Chambers. Although according to Roman law and its later Italian interpretation the sea was common and free to all, in the Middle Ages many seas had been more or less appropriated by the closest polity. Writers began to assign to maritime states, as a principle of law, a certain jurisdiction in waters adjacent to their coasts. The distance from the coast to which the writers allowed such jurisdiction to extend varied, sometimes extending to 60 or even 100 miles from land—much like the modern EEZs. Italian legal writers established in their doctrines the notion of a specific sea territory connected with the land area, over which the littoral state could exercise exclusive jurisdiction. Examples of such closed seas were Venetian rights over the Adriatic Sea, Genoa’s rights over the Ligurian Sea, the Papal Sea extending from Monte

48. Lauren Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47, 4, (2005), 702.

49. *Ibid.*, 194.

50. J. L. Anderson, “Piracy and World History: An Economic Perspective on Maritime Predation”, *Journal of World History*, 6, no. 2 (1995), 178.

Argentino to Terracina and the *Dominium maris Baltici* of the Danish-Norwegian kings. European law recognised the concepts of *mare clausum*, *mare liberum* and the distant *mare vastum*—the waters of Oceanus—from very early times. The Treaty of Tordesillas, therefore, saw the culmination of the principle of *mare clausum*.⁵¹

For Philip Steinberg however, the Treaty of Tordesillas did not advocate marine enclosure. Pointing out the various degrees of territoriality existing in the early modern world and moving from the idea of stewardship to that of territoriality, and finally of enclosure, Steinberg shows how debates in modern ocean governance have revolved around who should compose the community of stewards and to what ends stewardship should be exercised, rather than being attempts at drawing lines to generate extreme relations of exclusion or connection. Unlike the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius, the English jurist and parliamentarian John Selden had focused on those spaces in which coastal states could exercise effective possession, and here he did permit incorporation into the territory of the state. But, as with Grotius, state governance in oceans was not to interfere with the natural right of all European nations to free navigation.⁵² This has changed from the 1990s—territoriality at sea is becoming an accepted principle, reconstituting power over seas and access to it for peoples and states.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Despite treating post-1990s littoral history as a passive recipient of global flows in a linear end-of-history narrative, Pearson's view of the territorialisation of the littoral opens up a window for writing a new aquatic history. Until the end of the twentieth century the study of world areas was shaped by the notion of space as a stable, fixed container. Within this, ideas of territoriality and the territorialisation of sea space came about from attempts to impose maritime order, which from the nineteenth century were exemplified in attempts to enforce maritime law(s). We have argued in this essay that this was nothing new. States have struggled to control space throughout history, as can be seen by fortified frontiers at the edges and putative enclosures within.

But this state of affairs is now becoming blurred by the current “global condition” which is theorised by the “spatial turn”, a move that sees space framing history as much as time does.⁵³ David Bodenhamer notes that:

In landscapes and timescapes, we impose imprecise divisions—eras and epochs, cultural footprints and spheres of influence—that allow us to manage complexity.

51. Bo Johnsen Theutenberg, “Mare Clausum et Mare Liberum”, *Arctic*, 37, no. 4 (December 1984), 485, 488, 490.

52. Philip E. Steinberg, “Lines of Division, Lines of Connection: Stewardship in the World Ocean”, *Geographical Review*, 89, no. 2 (1999), 256, 258, 260.

53. Middell & Naumann, “Global History and the Spatial Turn”, 156.

We move freely across these grids, ignoring issues of scale, as we compare and contrast one place or one time with another in an effort to recapture a sense of the whole...We employ narrative, not algorithms, to qualify, highlight, or subdue these threads and rely upon emphasis, nuance, and other literary devices to achieve the complex construction of past worlds.⁵⁴

Bodenhamer feels the way out is to employ the following:

what scholars have labeled more broadly as “the spatial turn,” the recognition of how concepts of space bind history, culture, and memory as much as they do attributes of a physical world. The humanities traditionally have been conceived and organized within a temporal framework, a notion influenced by nineteenth century scientific schemes of sequential or evolutionary development in which society and culture move from one stage to another, all linked to periods of time. History was the keystone discipline among the various branches of the humanities because it dealt with time explicitly; philosophy, literature, and the arts depended on their special histories to give shape their subjects. Time was more than our agent, it was our master. Space was the unexamined landscape on which time played out its game.⁵⁵

While space is becoming central, problems in writing about maritime territoriality are compounded by the fact that there are difficulties in locating conceptual continuities in the writing of extra-European history, namely the essentialization of the spatial units of analysis. When a fluid entity like water transforms into closed “territory”, the paradox becomes obvious. Yet, Pearson’s ideas concerning territoriality can underpin and shape emerging alternatives and counter-narratives of the coast defined as a natural conclusion to European medieval formulations shaped from Roman law and subsequent Western imperial domination, and perhaps also as heir to the hegemony of global capital along the shores of the Indian Ocean.⁵⁶

54. David J. Bodenhamer, “Creating a Landscape of Memory: The Potential of Humanities GIS”, *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 1 no. 2, (2007), 97–110, 102.

55. *Ibid.*, 99.

56. Kwa Chong Guan, “The Maritime Silk Road: History of an Idea”, *Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre Working Paper Series*, 23 (2016), 21.