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Civilizational Bonds Across the Deep Blue: *Global Historical Perspectives in Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series*

Li Yao

Abstract: *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series*, edited by Professor Wang Songlin, is grounded in the global-historical vision of “New Thalassology” and aligns with China’s strategic goal of becoming a maritime power. The series offers a systematic introduction to the latest achievements in contemporary international oceanic humanities. Drawing on ten seminal works that encompass the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, and other oceanic regions, it weaves together the dimensions of “reshaping the historical landscape,” “decoding maritime civilizations,” “unveiling the power of the sea,” and “breakthroughs in methodology and perspective.” In doing so, it illuminates the ocean’s multifaceted role as civilizational bonds, a site of power, and an ecological system. By moving beyond land-centered historiography, the series constructs an interconnected, interactive, and symbiotic maritime-centered narrative of human history. Though the volumes differ in focus and approach, they remain coherent in logic, self-aware in method, and marked by genuine innovation. Collectively, the series makes a significant contribution to maritime history and cultural studies in China, carrying lasting academic value for the development of blue humanities and the cultivation of an independent body of knowledge.

Keywords: Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series; New Thalassology; Global Historical Reflections

Author Biography: Li Yao, Postdoctoral Fellow at the School of Foreign Languages, Huazhong University of Science and Technology. His research interests include marine literature and culture, interdisciplinary studies of literature and economics. Email: glaciern@yeah.net.

题目: 跨越深蓝的文明纽带: 《世界海洋文化与历史研究译丛》的全球史启示

摘要: 王松林教授主编的《世界海洋文化与历史研究译丛》以“新海洋学”的全球史视野为旨归, 回应中国建设海洋强国的需求, 系统引介当代国际海洋人文研究前沿成果。该译丛涵盖太平洋、大

西洋、印度洋等多海域的十部重要著作，在“重塑历史图景”“解码海洋文明”“透视海洋之力”“方法与视野突破”等维度交织下，揭示海洋作为文明纽带、权力场域与生态系统的复杂角色，突破陆地中心史观，构建以海洋为中心的互联、互动、共生叙事。译丛风格多元而逻辑自洽，创新性突出，是推动中国海洋人文研究与自主知识体系构建的重要译介成果。

关键词：《世界海洋文化与历史研究译丛》；新海洋学；全球史启示

作者简介：李尧，华中科技大学在站博士后，华中科技大学外国语学院在站博士后，研究方向：海洋文学与文化、文学与经济跨学科研究。电邮：glaciern@yeah.net。

Introduction

When we gaze upon our blue planet, the vast oceans covering more than 70% of its surface remind us that the sea is not only the cradle of life but also an invisible force that has profoundly shaped the course of human civilization. Yet within the grand narrative of history, the ocean has long been marginalized by a land-centered gaze, portrayed as a silent backdrop to civilization rather than as a driving force in its own right. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, the humanities and social sciences have witnessed an intellectual surge that scholars term the “New Thalassology.” As Wang Songlin (2023, p.37) observes, this New Thalassology seeks “to provide a new method for global historical research by exploring the world’s various maritime regions and their links, interactions, and interconnections with terrestrial environments.” Hence, this movement urges a decisive break from terrestrial bias, calling upon researchers to restore the sea to the center of historical and cultural inquiry.

Against this intellectual backdrop, historians and human geographers of the new century have begun to recalibrate their perception and depiction of world space, initiating a shift “from land-centered perspectives to a maritime-centered orientation” (Wang, 2023, p.38). This intellectual turn has also exerted a deep influence on Chinese scholarship. In literary studies in particular, researchers have come to recognize the sea’s central role in the making of civilization and the circulation of culture, endeavoring to “re-anchor their work in the ocean and adjust the traditional land-based conception of literature and literary history” (Songlin, 2023, p.38). It is within this academic climate that *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* (2025) has taken shape. Edited by Professor Wang Songlin of Ningbo University, the series represents a landmark scholarly enterprise introducing international achievements in maritime humanities to Chinese readers. It is more than a compilation of translations; rather, it is a carefully curated selection that encompasses representative studies of the Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Black, and Mediterranean seas. Crossing disciplinary boundaries, from astronomy, history, geography and literature to anthropology, economics and political thought, the series embodies an ambitious interdisciplinarity and a panoramic global vision. Its publication is especially timely. It resonates with China’s national strategy of becoming a maritime power and echoes the United Nations’ declaration of the “Oceanic Century” in May 2002. By filling a critical gap in China’s engagement with global maritime studies, the series offers fresh perspectives for understanding the nation’s role and responsibility in a new oceanic age. Thus, *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* serves not merely as a vehicle for knowledge transmission but as an innovative framework for re-imagining the sea and re-conceptualizing the complex dynamics of maritime civilization.

Building on this foundation, this article offers a critical review of the first ten volumes of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* from multiple analytical angles. It examines how the collection redefines historical consciousness by uncovering global networks long overshadowed by land-based historiography. It further explores the evolving concept of oceanic civilization, revealing the diverse cultural meanings and identities embedded within maritime worlds. In addition, it considers how the series clarifies the interplay of power, ecology, and history that shapes oceanic forces. Finally, it reflects on the series' methodological and theoretical innovations, showing how its interdisciplinary vision opens a new path for understanding the enduring relationship between the ocean and humanity.

I. Reshaping the Historical Landscape: Reconstructing the Global Network Through the Lens of the Sea

In *The Land and the Sea*, Carl Schmitt contends that humans are terrestrial creatures, beings whose feet are planted on the solid ground. They stand, walk, and move upon the earth. It is their foothold and foundation; from it, they gain their perspective, and it shapes the way they perceive and interpret the world" (Schmitt, 2006, p.1). Thus, traditional historical narratives have often been anchored on land, portraying the rise and fall of empires and the drama of terrestrial warfare as the dominant thread of history, while the oceans were pushed to the margins or treated merely as spaces to be conquered. In contrast, *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* acts as a mirror of the seas, reflecting a fundamentally different and more dynamic vision of the past that highlights connection, movement, and transformation. The series demonstrates that the evolution of human civilization has never been limited to isolated land-based entities but has instead unfolded within an immense network shaped by ocean currents, monsoons, and maritime trade routes. Through ongoing cross-ocean exchanges, encounters, and flows of culture and power, this network has profoundly influenced the course of human history. The most significant scholarly contribution of the series lies in its invitation to move beyond land-centered thinking and to embrace an oceanic perspective that rediscovers and reinterprets the world as an interconnected whole bound together by the ceaseless motion of the seas.

To begin with, this series fundamentally challenges historical narratives that privilege land-based civilizations as the central axis of world history. A striking example of this reorientation appears in *The Indian Ocean in World History*, which offers a compelling reinterpretation of global development. The book moves beyond conventional oceanic history and contends that "the rise and fall of the leading states and regions of the world through history is linked in important measure to the extent of their participation in Indian Ocean trade" (Kearney, 2004, p.6). It argues persuasively that a nation's ascent to global prominence and its ability to establish hegemony have been closely tied to its control or deep involvement in the Indian Ocean trade network. From ancient Mesopotamia and Rome to the Arab Empire, and later to the maritime powers of Portugal, the Netherlands, and the British Empire, the prosperity and influence of these states were inseparable from their command of the Indian Ocean, often described as the central artery of world wealth. This perspective repositions the Indian Ocean from the margins to the center of world history, transforming it into a key indicator of shifting global power. Complementing this view, *Empire, the Sea and Global History: Britain's Maritime World, c.1760–c.1840* illustrates through a series of case studies how the British Empire's national

identity and hegemonic structure were not confined to its territorial possessions. As the editor notes, Britain's "maritime world" extended far beyond the formal boundaries of its "land empire," rooted instead in a global network of naval power, commercial exchange, and intellectual circulation (Cannadine, 2007, pp.1–5). From this oceanic perspective, the true limits of an empire are not defined by its territorial borders but by the farthest reach of its merchant and naval fleets.

Expanding upon this spatial reorientation, the series broadens its scope beyond the modern era to explore the origins of civilization itself. The Black Sea and the Early Civilizations in Europe, the Near East and Asia situate the Black Sea as a crucial center of prehistoric "proto-globalization." As noted in the translator's introduction, "millets, originally from China, were transmitted to Central Europe along the northern pathways of the Mongol steppes; pottery techniques also spread westward along the grassland corridors from Siberia" (Ma, 2025, p.9). Drawing upon the French concept of technologic culture, the author, Mariya Ivanova, interprets agricultural, metallurgical, textile, and funerary practices as interrelated components of a unified technological and cultural system. She proposes that the Black Sea region functioned as an important conduit for the transmission of technologies and ideas across Eurasia as early as the fourth millennium BCE. This study underscores that the roots of globalization did not originate with the voyages of Columbus but were already evident in prehistoric times, when oceans and river corridors served as vital routes for cultural contact and technological exchange.

From another vantage point, the series' in-depth analysis of specific maritime regions effectively dismantles the long-standing notion of isolated or self-sufficient societies. *Pacific Histories: Oceans, Land, and People* offers a critical reflection on the paradox of the Pacific in global historiography. Although the Pacific is the largest geographical unit on Earth, it has often been marginalized in historical narratives and has rarely received the systematic and coherent attention given to the Atlantic. This volume seeks to reconstruct the historical significance of the Pacific, portraying it not as an empty expanse separating Asia and the Americas, but as a relational space defined by intense internal interaction, such as the extensive voyages of Polynesian navigators, and, by its deep connections to global processes, including the Manila Galleon trade. This interpretation encourages a reexamination of the Pacific islands, transforming them from passive objects of discovery into active agents of history, while recasting the surrounding continents of Asia and the Americas as integral parts of a fluid and interconnected global network. In a similar spirit, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination* turns to the Mediterranean, traditionally regarded as the cradle of Western civilization, and reveals that its ancient inhabitants never perceived the sea as a barrier. Instead, the sea was understood as "a highway between the realms of humans, gods, and the underworld" (Xu, 2025, p.9), a medium through which people could transcend their limitations and encounter the unknown. This conceptualization of the sea as a vital element of the world order laid the cultural and ideological groundwork for Europe's later maritime expansion.

In conclusion, one of the central insights of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* lies in its articulation of a methodology for historical reconstruction grounded in the oceanic perspective. This "mirror of the seas" reshapes our understanding of historical processes. It reveals that global power shifts often arose from contests over maritime routes, resources, and networks rather than from land-based conflicts. In

doing so, it expands both the spatial and temporal dimensions through which we interpret civilizational interaction. By extending the history of global interconnectedness to prehistoric times, the series demonstrates how the seas served as conduits for technological exchange and cultural integration, laying the foundation for the emergence of the modern global order. Equally important, this perspective restores the historical significance of long-overlooked actors such as island societies, coastal communities, sailors, and merchants, showing that they were not passive recipients of change but active participants who shaped transoceanic networks and the broader global landscape. By shifting our gaze from land to sea, the series reveals that the oceans are not barriers but bridges that weave together distant lands and diverse civilizations. Ultimately, it presents a vision of world history as an interactive, interconnected, and symbiotic process, reminding us that human civilization has always been a shared narrative written across the expanse of the deep blue.

II. Decoding Oceanic Civilizations: Exploring the Multifaceted Essence of Maritime Culture

If the first scholarly contribution of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* lies in its reconstruction of the macrohistorical framework, its second major value is found in its systematic and penetrating approach to decoding oceanic civilizations. The series invites readers to explore the underlying structures of these civilizations, moving beyond conventional historical narratives that focus primarily on economic data and military strategy. It seeks to uncover the distinctive ways of life, belief systems, social organizations, and identities that have emerged through the enduring interaction between humanity and the sea. Viewed through this lens, the series reveals that oceanic civilizations are not homogeneous entities but intricate and diverse formations shaped by local knowledge, continuous cultural exchange, and adaptive strategies that reflect the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the maritime world.

In this series, the ocean is first understood as a conceptual and imaginative entity that profoundly shaped early human perceptions of the world and of the self. *The Sea in the Greek Imagination* serves as a prime example of this interpretive approach. The book demonstrates that the ocean occupied a paradoxical yet central position in the spiritual worldview of the ancient Greeks. It is simultaneously the origin of life, embodied by Oceanus, and the passageway to death into the underworld. It is at once a chaotic abyss beyond order and a sacred medium through which mortals and gods communicate. Through close readings of the voyages of heroes such as Perseus and Theseus, as well as the maritime journeys of tragic figures like Danaë, the author presents the ocean as a powerful liminal space in which every crossing signifies a profound transformation of identity, whether it entails maturation, divinization, or death. This conception of the sea, deeply rooted in the beginnings of Western civilization, provided both the cultural narrative and the spiritual drive that later propelled maritime exploration, expansion, and colonization.

Beyond this conceptual dimension, the ocean emerges as a vital medium for the construction of identity in this series. *Maritime History and Identity: The Sea and Culture in the Modern World* directly engages with this theme. The book's introduction emphasizes that the ocean plays an essential role in shaping the cultural characteristics of individuals, communities,

and nations. Through discussions of the British Royal Navy's contribution to imperial identity and heroic narratives, the evolving postwar memory of Japan's Imperial Navy, and the deeply rooted maritime influence on Norwegian national character, the book demonstrates how "oceanicity" intertwines with "ethnicity," forming a fundamental dimension of modern national identity. In a similar vein, *Maritime Fiction: Sailors and the Sea in British and American Novels, 1719–1917* approaches this issue from a literary perspective, examining how the sea functions as a crucible for the formation of masculinity, where the values of maritime life both conflict with and complement those of the terrestrial world. As translator Duan Bo perceptively notes, these novels "explore the complex issues of national identity, cultural attributes, statehood, imperial expansion, and the nature of capitalist society through the differences or tensions between maritime masculinity, autocratic rule, and domestic life on land" (Duan, 2025, p.9). The ships depicted in these narratives also operate as microcosms of nations and societies, magnifying power hierarchies, bodily discipline, and moral conflict in ways that mirror the internal contradictions of land-based civilization.

Indeed, the ocean is also constructed as a space of cultural collision and fusion, where new cultural forms are constantly generated. *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* proposes that the ocean should be seen as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Klein, 2004, p.2). The book thus shifts away from grand narrative frameworks, focusing instead on specific sites such as ships, islands, and ports, where cross-cultural encounters took place. For instance, it explores how different gender concepts shaped interactions between European sailors and Pacific Islanders, and examines the often-overlooked yet crucial contributions of Asian and Oceanic navigators during the European Age of Discovery. It also reveals how the oppression and resistance within the transatlantic slave trade, or the "Black Atlantic," led to the emergence of new cross-ethnic cultural forms. These studies decisively dismantle the traditional paradigm of unidirectional transmission of advanced civilization, presenting the ocean as a multidimensional interactive space full of agency, negotiation, and creative misinterpretation. The resulting cultural outcomes are always hybrid, multidirectional, and dynamic.

At the same time, the series underscores that decoding a true oceanic civilization demands confronting its suffering and the silenced voices within it. *The Story of the Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* shifts the focus from grand historical narratives to the intimate struggles of individual survival. The book not only records the accomplishments of figures such as Cook but also devotes substantial attention to the tragic experiences of forcibly conscripted sailors, enslaved people crossing the seas, exiled convicts, and ordinary individuals fighting for their lives amid shipwrecks. These stories of pain and marginalization expose the harsh realities of the "wooden ship world," marked by brutal corporal punishments, rampant disease, and staggering mortality. Through this lens, the work systematically dismantles the romanticized image of the sea, revealing that the early global web of interconnection was built not solely upon trade and discovery, but also upon the blood, tears, and lives of countless men and women.

Undoubtedly, through its profound exploration of myth, identity, contact zones, and subaltern experiences, *Studies on Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* accomplishes a multidimensional decoding of oceanic civilization. The series

reveals that oceanic civilization is not only spiritual, born from humanity's imagination of the unknown, reflection on fate, and pursuit of transcendence, but also deeply tied to identity, playing a vital role in shaping individual, collective, and national self-understanding. It further demonstrates that oceanic civilization is inherently complex, with its most significant achievements arising from cross-cultural encounters that generate new cultural forms beyond any single origin. Above all, oceanic civilization emerges as a dynamic and tension-filled whole, embodying both grandeur and tragedy, creativity and destruction, freedom and oppression. Ultimately, the series resists reducing oceanic civilization to either a romantic spectacle or a mere outcome of economic determinism, instead restoring it as a living field of inquiry that unites human emotion, cultural richness, and historical depth, thereby greatly expanding and deepening our understanding of the multiplicity of human civilization.

III. Unveiling the Power of the Ocean: Geopolitical Struggles, Ecological Transformations, and the Driving Forces of History

Certainly, the distinctive value of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* lies not only in its systematic portrayal of the vast web of connections nurtured by the ocean and its rich cultural interpretations, but also in its profound illumination of the ocean as a fundamental driving force in human history. The series strips away the romantic veneer that often surrounds maritime narratives and argues that the essence of oceanic history is a history of power, encompassing its generation, projection, and contestation across maritime spaces. At the same time, it reveals a parallel history of ecosystems deeply transformed by human activity, which in turn constrains the trajectories of civilization. Thus, the series offers a sweeping historical panorama that integrates environmental, economic, and political dimensions into a coherent and interconnected vision of the ocean's role in shaping the human past.

First and foremost, the series reveals that the ocean has always been the highest stage for power politics. Multiple volumes collectively sketch a millennia-spanning view of imperial competition. The *Indian Ocean in World History* clearly demonstrates the geopolitical logic that to control sea routes is to control wealth and power. This book connects the shifts in key maritime routes like the Strait of Malacca, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and the Cape of Good Hope directly with the rise and fall of global hegemonies such as Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, and the United States. It emphasizes that the struggle over these maritime choke-points has always been at the heart of geopolitical maneuvering. Similarly, *Empires, the Sea, and Global History* explores how, during the 18th and 19th centuries, Britain integrated its naval power, financial capital, knowledge systems (like astronomical navigation and charting), and ideological narratives (such as the "Empire of Liberty") into an efficient "maritime empire" complex, enabling it to project and maintain global power. In *Pacific Histories*, the discussion of the "Pacific Rim" further exposes the contemporary representations of power and discourse. From the "Spanish lake" to the "Anglo-Saxon lake" and the so-called "Chinese lake," the very name of the Pacific Ocean has come to symbolize the strategic anxieties and ambitions of great powers. These works together highlight that maritime power is not limited to fleets alone; it constitutes a comprehensive system of rule, combining technology, economics, knowledge production, and cultural narratives.

Another significant contribution of the series is its systematic inclusion of the environmental dimension into the core narrative of ocean history, clearly demonstrating the immense ecological costs of oceanic exploitation. *The Ocean of Life: The Fate of Man and the Sea* stand as a representative work on this topic. The book analyzes how, since the Industrial Revolution, phenomena like overfishing, ocean pollution (including fertilizers, toxic chemicals, and plastics), climate change-induced warming and acidification, and rising sea levels have collectively eroded marine life systems. It compels readers to recognize that humanity's history of conquering the ocean is equally a history of modifying, exploiting, and depleting the world's largest ecosystem. Moreover, the ecological perspective profoundly impacts studies of ancient maritime history. For instance, *The Black Sea and Early Civilizations of Europe*, the Near East and Asia primarily discuss the transmission of prehistoric technologies but also reveals, through detailed analysis of specific ecological areas like the northern steppe and the western wetlands of the Black Sea, how early civilizations adapted to the ocean-land interaction environment. In *The Story of the Voyage*, the widespread devastation of sailors by scurvy serves as a microcosmic depiction of humanity's direct encounter with the ecological backlash during the conquest of the seas. These discussions expand the depth and boundaries of maritime history, emphasizing the key role of ecological factors in long-term civilizational evolution.

More importantly, *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* guides us beyond surface-level events to examine deeper, slower, and more fundamental historical dynamics. First, it places resources at the heart of its narrative. Whether it's the spices, gemstones, and oil described in *The Indian Ocean*, the gold rush discussed in *Pacific Histories*, or the prehistoric mineral and agricultural resources explored in *The Black Sea*, the pursuit of scarce resources has always been the primal force driving oceanic exploration, trade, and conflict. Second, it does not overlook the crucial role of disease in shaping historical processes. As *The Indian Ocean* points out in its analysis of Europe's rise on the seas, the 13th-century Mongol invasions and the pandemics they triggered caused far more devastation to Asian societies than to Europe, creating an "ecological-population" imbalance that ultimately provided objective conditions for later European maritime expansion. Disease, as an invisible passenger, traveled with fleets, its impact often far exceeding that of military forces and directly determining the success or failure of colonial endeavors. Third, the series reveals the complex interaction between climate and the ocean. For example, *The Indian Ocean* emphasizes the importance of the monsoon system, and *Pacific Histories* discusses the El Niño phenomenon, both of which have long profoundly affected trade cycles, navigation strategies, and the rise and fall of entire civilizations. These elements, together with human technologies, ambitions, and institutions, form a complex system of forces that propel world history forward, transcending the conventional framework of national or political narratives.

In brief, the third major insight of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* lies in its capacity to offer a penetrating perspective that compels us to reconsider the true role of the ocean in human history. The ocean is not merely a battlefield of power. The history of maritime conquest is also a chronicle of concentrated geopolitical and imperial struggles. At the same time, it functions as an ecological vessel, within which humanity's pursuit of progress must be viewed in relation to the ocean's environmental limits and the consequences of overexploitation. The modern question of sustainable development is deeply rooted in these historical experiences. Furthermore, the ocean serves as a comprehensive

driver of history, where long-term forces such as resources, disease, and climate intersect with human technological innovation, ambition, and institutional evolution to shape the trajectory of global civilization. Ultimately, the series achieves a deepened intellectual progression from “connections” to “culture” and finally to “dynamics,” demonstrating that without understanding the complex powers and mechanisms inherent in the ocean, we cannot fully comprehend the history of globalization or effectively address its present and future challenges.

IV. Breakthroughs in Methodology and Perspective: Interdisciplinary Fusion and Innovative Maritime Narratives

In fact, the value of *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* lies not only in the wealth of specific knowledge and multiple perspectives it offers but also in the profound innovations and insights it brings to research methods and historical narrative paradigms. This series itself is a systematic presentation and scholarly practice of the “Oceanic Turn” or “New Thalassology.” It demonstrates that a deep understanding of the ocean is far from the domain of any single discipline, and must instead rely on a thorough interdisciplinary integration, which in turn drives a fundamental reconstruction and innovation in narrative perspectives.

At the heart of this intellectual enterprise is the series’ high degree of methodological self-awareness and multidisciplinary integration. This series breaks down traditional academic boundaries across history, literature, anthropology, archaeology, international relations, and environmental science, and establishes a comprehensive research paradigm guided by concrete questions. For example, *The Black Sea and Early Civilizations of Europe, the Near East and Asia* follows a “*technologie culturelle*” approach, considering technologies like agriculture, metallurgy, and pottery as an integrated operational chain and social practice system. It interprets the deep cultural interaction networks across the Eurasian continent in the prehistoric era, far surpassing traditional typological comparisons of artifacts. Meanwhile, *Maritime Fiction and The Sea in the Greek Imagination* demonstrate the significance of literature as historical evidence through literary analysis and historical verification. The former examines the body representations and spatial politics in novels to analyze the social contradictions of the rise of capitalism, while the latter delves into the evolution of ancient Greek spiritual structures through mythology, showing that imagination, metaphor, and narrative are also powerful forces in shaping historical realities. Additionally, *The Ocean of Life and Pacific Histories* integrate environmental history and global history, seamlessly connecting the evolution of ecosystems such as ocean health, resource capacity, and climate events with human political and economic histories. They position natural factors as dynamic variables in explaining the rise and fall of histories and conflicts, rather than static backgrounds. This interdisciplinary fusion of methodologies genuinely realizes the academic goal of reuniting natural history and human history into a cohesive whole.

Building upon this methodological depth, the series further brings about a fundamental shift in narrative perspective, one that is closely linked to its methodological innovations and its challenge to the long-dominant, single-line historical narrative. The series advocates for a bottom-up view of history, as exemplified in *The Story of the Voyage*, where the narrative focus

moves away from great captains such as Cook toward forcibly conscripted sailors, enslaved Africans, exiled criminals, and ordinary passengers. By uncovering the hidden human costs of global networks through individual experiences, the series deepens the moral and emotional dimensions of historical writing. At the same time, the series seeks to construct a decentralized global history that moves beyond Western-centered frameworks. The *Indian Ocean in World History* underscores the central role of South Asia, the Middle East, and East Asia in shaping long-term global processes; *Pacific History* balances “island perspectives” and “coastal perspectives” to restore the navigational agency of the Polynesians; and *Sea Changes* highlights the contributions of indigenous sailors and African groups to the formation of maritime knowledge systems. The aim is not to create a new center of focus but to show a world made up of many connected centers that interact with each other. Moreover, some researchers use the idea of a “contact zone” to describe small and everyday settings such as ships, ports, or markets where people from different backgrounds meet, sometimes clash, and often exchange ideas and cultures in creative ways. This approach reveals that globalization does not emerge from abstract forces but from countless human interactions charged with tension, negotiation, and transformation. Together, these narrative shifts significantly broaden the scope and depth of historical understanding, illuminating the ocean as a profoundly complex arena in the evolution of human civilization.

Extending this line of thought even further, the series reveals that the ocean itself can be understood as a methodology, a cognitive framework for rethinking the entirety of human history. It calls for a mode of fluid thinking that traces the continuous circulation and transformation of people, objects, and ideas within oceanic networks, rather than adhering to static divisions between civilizations. It also advocates a relational perspective, situating the local within wider global connections and rejecting isolated or fragmented analyses. Moreover, it embraces complexity, recognizing that contradictions, paradoxes, and uncertainties are intrinsic to oceanic history, just as the sea simultaneously connects and divides, sustains life and brings destruction. This methodological lens not only deepens our understanding of the ocean itself but also offers a dynamic, interactive, and inclusive way of engaging with history.

Taken together, the methodological breakthroughs in *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* represent one of its most significant academic contributions. The series compellingly demonstrates that genuine scholarly innovation often arises at the intersection of disciplines. When engaging with complex subjects such as the ocean, it becomes essential to transcend disciplinary boundaries and foster collaboration and integration across diverse methodologies, thereby forming a pluralistic research paradigm. Furthermore, the series offers a profound insight into how narrative perspectives shape historical understanding: who tells the story, for whom, and from what position all decisively influence the historical truths that become visible. By shifting attention toward marginalized and grassroots groups, it restores many historical actors long concealed by dominant narratives. More importantly, the series shows that the ocean is not merely an object of study but also a powerful analytical lens. It provides a mode of thinking that values fluidity, interconnection, and contradiction, enabling a reexamination of human history as a whole. Consequently, the series not only expands our knowledge of the ocean but also equips us with new tools, perspectives, and languages for interpreting that knowledge, laying a firm methodological foundation for deeper, more equitable, and more insightful reflections in this emerging Ocean Century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* is not only an introduction to maritime knowledge but also a source of profound historical insight and intellectual inspiration as we enter the Ocean Century. The series systematically reveals that maritime consciousness is closely intertwined with national destiny: throughout history, nations that understood and valued the sea have harnessed its power to shape global influence, whereas those that ignored it have often found themselves in a passive position within the world order. The publication of this series prompts us to reconsider what it truly means to be a maritime power—not in the logic of conquest or expansion, but in building a sustainable and mutually beneficial maritime governance system and promoting the construction of a community with a shared maritime future.

At the same time, the series exemplifies the strength of interdisciplinary inquiry, demonstrating that a full understanding of the ocean requires the integration of historical, literary, scientific, and political perspectives. Such an approach is not only a foundation for academic innovation but also a vital capability for nations seeking to develop comprehensive strategies and cultivate versatile talent. By bridging multiple disciplines, the translation series not only broadens the cognitive boundaries of oceanic humanities but also strengthens the intellectual foundations for global cooperation in maritime research and education. Moreover, fostering maritime consciousness and sustainable oceanic resource use must be grounded not only in academic discourse or policy frameworks but also in education and cultural dissemination. As has been increasingly emphasized in recent ocean literacy initiatives, “ocean education requires the effective sharing of global resources, the systematic organization and integration of marine education materials from around the world, and the establishment of an online sharing model through the Internet, which is an essential pathway toward achieving the goal of universal ocean literacy” (Liu, 2025, p.9). In other words, the effective sharing and integration of global ocean education resources through online platforms constitute a vital pathway toward achieving universal ocean literacy. Such educational cooperation transforms the ideals of the Ocean Century into accessible, participatory knowledge systems, ensuring that the humanities of the sea are not confined to academic elites but become a shared intellectual and ethical foundation for all humankind.

Ultimately, *Studies on Global Maritime Cultures and Histories: A Translation Series* contributes to the formation of a maritime-centered cognitive framework that expands our vision, deepens our understanding, and guides humanity toward a clearer, more inclusive, and more determined future in the global Ocean Century.

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ORCID

Li Yao ^{ID} <http://orcid.org/0009-0005-8758-1120>

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