

THE SEA IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

By

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PREAMBLE

- Gratitude to God for His goodness & grace
“The earth – and that includes the seas - is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.”
- Thanks to mentor, Prof. Emeritus Akinjide Osuntokun, OON, FNAL
- Staff and Students of the Department of History and International Relations, RUN

OF IRONY & PARADOX

- A non-swimmer, hailing from craggy Oka-Akoko, Ondo State, w/o significant body of water
- Yet, delivered country's first maritime history Inaugural ("Ports, Hinterlands and Forelands"), June 21, 2006
- Research and publications on Nigerian and Japanese ports, shipping and trade
- First African on the ExCo. of global professional body, International Maritime Economic History Association (IMEHA)
- First historian to teach maritime history courses at any West African university (UNILAG & OSU, Ikire).
- Tribute to the God of all possibilities

OCEANS & SEAS

- Often wrongly used interchangeably, both are vast collections of saline water
- Only 5 oceans (Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Southern & Arctic) vs dozens of seas
- Seas linked to proximate oceans, as rivers empty into the sea
- Black Sea linked to the Atlantic, 2,000 miles away via the Mediterranean & intermediate straits
- Some seas are stranded: Dead and Aral Seas

OCEAN AND SEA SIZES

- Oceans cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface
- Contain 97% of the planet's water.
- Largest ocean, the Pacific, covers 64,186,000 sq. miles.
- Smallest, Arctic Ocean, covers 5,427,000 sq. miles.
- Mediterranean, the largest sea, 1,144,800 sq. miles, only about 1/4 the size of smallest ocean

TRADITIONAL MARITIME NATIONS & THE SEA

- Seafaring by the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, Greek: the sea as window, not a barrier; alternative path to expansion
- Seafaring traditions, port communities and careers at sea; shipbuilding traditions from sail to steam
- Mercantile marine as nation's reserve navy
- Sea as bulwark – Great Britain, Japan, the US

SEAFARING, URBANIZATION & CULTURE

- Coastal urbanization & littoral culture: port-cities as gateways between hinterlands and forelands; not mere convey belts or parasites; early centres of modernity and adoption of new ideas, exotic crops & lifestyles
- Cultural melting pots (language, cuisine, music [cf. Kru Bass guitar in W.Afr.] dress, religion)
- Colonization and non-indigenous peoples: miscegenation, culture transfer
- Rise of non-traditional/subaltern mariners- Lascars, Kru and their descendants

THE SEA AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

- Imagine a world without seas - highways of global communication!
- Sea-based economic enterprises – shipbuilding, fisheries, whaling, seabed energy resources – hydrocarbons (offshore crude oil and gas) cf. North Sea Oil & UK economy; the Falklands War
- Global cross-ecological product transfers: commodities of empire – tin, oils & fats, cocoa, etc; devt of refrigeration; steam shipping and shorter travel time

SEA TRANSPORT, IMPERIALISM & COLONIZATION

- Technology & comparative advantage of sea transport – freight (cost vis-a-vis other modes); carrying capacity, steam shipping vs sail: speed and non-dependence on wind direction
- Shipping and Colonization: Slave, convict & other human transplantations: Brazil, US, Canada, Australia, Dutch Colonies in Batavia, South Africa & South America

THE SEA AND NATIONAL POWER-1

- “Britannia Rules the Waves”: sea supremacy & global dominance
- Alfred Thayer Mahan (*The Influence of Sea Power upon History*) : concentrated battle fleets, offence as defence; bases, allies
- US fleet: 1890 – 42 (no battleship, 8 steel); 1900 – 140 (8 battleships, 100 steel)
- Cf. Land-based WWI; submarines, aircraft carriers, ICT –based weaponry devts -ICBMs)
- Navy as cornerstone: national icons - Nelson, von Tirpitz, Yamamoto, Nimitz

THE SEA AND NATIONAL POWER-2

- Landlocked vs littoral countries
- Port-cities as national/regional hubs – Porto, Singapore, Banjul, Dakar, Lagos
- “Developmental ports:” MIDAs, *kombinato* (Kashima)
- Regional and global power projection: Imagine a world without the US and its bases, aircraft carriers, battleships, submarines, improvements in naval armaments
- Counter-terrorism at sea – oil platforms, anti-piracy and oil theft challenges
- Sea: battlefield for control of oil & gas deposits; rich fishing grounds – ongoing tension in SE Asia; overlapping EEZs?

SEA-BASED SPORTS AND LEISURE

- Recreation - sports (sailing and rowing – cf. Mainsail on CNN)
- Cruise ship sailings & tourism
- Seaside resorts
- Sea-inspired festivals in Africa and Asia
- Literature books, comics and films (Pirates of the Caribbean), sea lore & mythology

CONCLUDING REMARKS-1

- TMNs saw the sea as a window of opportunity; an avenue for expansion blocked on the continent
- Portugal and the Netherlands – led the way, with disproportionate imprimatur in Africa, Latin America and Asia
- Naval power is pivotal : 1853 (Perry), 1941 (Midway)
- The sea remains a vast resource and a major national or regional asset today – offshore oil deposits (but with danger of pollution!), EEZs, yet “Oceanic Commons” - freedom of navigation and seaborne trade
- But epidemics (plagues), invasions, piracy, maritime terrorism and tsunamis are some of the negative influences via the sea

CONCLUDING REMARKS-2

- African engagement with the sea is marginal - % of world trade, shipping, scholarship, etc.
- Yet, the sea is a world of great possibilities
- I hope I have fired the imagination of those who want to join me in studying, researching & teaching maritime history
- By God's grace, I shall complete a textbook on it this year and return to teaching it in the nearest future.

GRATITUDE

- Thank you for your time
- God bless!