

Introduction

New Approaches to Pre-Modern Maritime Networks

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In the field of world history research the Roman and Mongol Empires are often described as characterised by contact and integration between distant regions of the Old World. It has long been known from historical and literary sources that port cities on the southern seaboard of the Eurasian landmass were connected by a wide-stretching maritime network or series of networks during the above periods. However, despite recent advances—stemming from archaeological research—in our knowledge of the material aspect of this exchange, deeper analysis of the structure and characteristics of the Eurasian maritime network(s) has been hampered by the relatively sparse, fragmented nature of the data.

The combination of methodological advances, such as the introduction of network analysis to the historical sciences, with new finds and advances in the fields of epigraphy and palaeography makes it possible to obtain a new picture of Eurasian mari-

time history. Such studies have the potential to increase the breadth and depth of our knowledge of seaborne networks in the pre-modern period, and to contribute new material and methodological perspectives for the comparative study of continuity in maritime networks from ancient to modern times.

I. BACKGROUND

Fernand Braudel's monumental work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (published in French in 1949 and in English in 1972-3), exerted a wide and long-lasting influence on historians working on mega-regions interconnected by maritime networks. The tradition inaugurated by Braudel sees not only individual ports and routes, but a total system constituting a mesh of trade and communications networks. Following Braudel, K. N. Chaudhuri and Anthony Reid, working respectively on the Indian Ocean and maritime Southeast Asia, depicted these maritime regions functioning as total systems of communications. Later, the idea of an East Asian 'Mediterranean' world was actively discussed among scholars of East Asian maritime history, such as Angela Schottenhammer. Several seminal works were published on the topic.¹

Complementing these empirical works, theoretical analyses on these regional systems were developed by Fernand Braudel, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Janet Abu-Lughod. These authors used the term *world-economy* or *world system*, referencing to 'an economically autonomous section of the planet [...] to which its internal links and exchanges give a certain organic unity,' and which is 'not bounded by a unitary political structure.'² For Wal-

¹ See Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, originally published Paris: Armand Colin, 1949 (The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols, Trans. by Siân Reynolds. New York: Harper & Row, 1972-3); Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *Trade and Transfer Across the East Asian "Mediterranean"* (East Asian Economic and Socio-Cultural Studies: East Asian Maritime History 1). Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2005. On an East Asian 'Mediterranean', see also Angela Schottenhammer, "The 'China Seas' in world history: A general outline of the role of Chinese and East Asian maritime space from its origins to c. 1800," *Journal of Marine and Island Cultures* 1, no. 2 (2012): 85.

² See Fernand Braudel, *La dynamique du capitalisme*, Paris: Champs Histoire, 1976, 87; *Le temps du monde* (Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle, tome 3) (*The Perspective of the World* [Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, Vol.

lerstein, the only world-economy to have survived for a long time was the modern world-system that emerged at the end of the fifteenth century. In contrast, Braudel argued that world-economies have existed for a very long time, just as there were societies, civilizations, states, and empires.³ Wallerstein's view was based on the assumption of a single-centred system; in contrast, that of Abu-Lughod assumes a multiple-centred system:⁴ a Eurasia-wide total system existing from 1250 to 1350 C.E. and consisting of several sub-systems corresponding to different regions: Europe, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and East Asia. Major routes ('edges') and cities ('nodes') were clearly described and mapped by Abu-Lughod; this basic structure seems legitimate. However, there is no consensus about how many such sub-systems existed. The ways the various sorts of networks linked edges and nodes may have been more diverse than we generally assume. To obtain further knowledge about actual networks in these regions during the pre-modern period, developments in archaeological, palaeogeographical, and epigraphical study and, above all, further collaboration among researchers in these fields will play a key role.

Archaeologists working on Roman-and Mongol-era sites and shipwrecks have produced important findings that jibe with findings from the re-examination of ancient texts. For example, plenty of Roman coins dating to the first to third centuries C.E. have been found around the southwest coast of the Indian sub-continent, evidencing Rome-India maritime trade and matching the description of Muziris, a port on the Malabar Coast, in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* and in an ancient Tamil poem (of the genre known as *Sangam* literature). Similarly, archaeological findings at Arikamedu in the south of Pondicherry seem to af-

III]), trans. by Siân Reynold, University of California Press, 1992, 22; Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, 23.

³ See Fernand Braudel, *La dynamique du capitalisme*, Paris: Miss A. Noble, 1976; *Le temps du monde* (Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle, tome 3) (*The Perspective of the World* [Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, Vol. III]), trans. by Siân Reynold, University of California Press, 1992, 24-25.

⁴ See Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 9, 34. 364-365.

firm the site of the port of Poduke, mentioned in the *Periplus*.⁵ In the fields of the history of medieval maritime trade in East and Southeast Asia, the role of underwater archaeology and that of research on ceramics excavated from kiln sites are especially significant and have resulted in several volumes, including collaborative works.⁶

In Japan, Yokkaichi Yasuhiro and a group of collaborating historians and archaeologists have presented detailed evidence of Sino–Japan trade during the Song and Yuan periods.⁷ Haneda Koichi and Yokkaichi Yasuhiro also organised a team of specialists to research multilingual documents of the Ilkhanid dynasty from Ardabil in Iran and compare them to examples from Yuan China, finding evidence that common formats and stamps were used in Iran and China under Mongol rule. The documents were written in Persian, Arabic, Turkic, Mongolian and Chinese, and reflected both co-dependent and adversarial relationships in these multi-ethnic societies. The initial results of the project were published in 2015, and there is a new publication under preparation presently.

Epigraphy is also playing an important role. Two groups of Christian inscriptions have been studied recently in a collaborative project by Iain Gardner, Samuel N. C. Lieu, and Ken Parry—one in the West, in Palmyra (modern Syria), a caravan city on the Silk Road from the Roman period, and another in the East, in

⁵ See Karashima Noboru, “Kodai chūsei tōnan ajia ni okeru bunka hatten to indo yō nettowāku [Cultural development in Ancient and Medieval Southeast Asia and Indian Ocean network],” in Iwanami kōza tōnan ajia shi 1: Genshi tōnan ajia sekai [Iwanami Lecture Series: History of Southeast Asia Vol. 1: Proto-History of Southeast Asia], ed. by Yamamoto Tatsuro, Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001, 311–312, based on Mortimer Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, Penguin Books, 1954; Vimala Begley, Richard Daniel de Puma, eds., *Rome and India: The Ancient Sea Trade*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991; Vimala Begley, ed. *The Ancient Port of Arikamedu: New Excavations and Researches 1989–1992*, Vol. I, Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1996; P. T. Srinivas Iyengar, *History of the Tamils from the Earliest Times to 600 A.D.*, Madras: C. Coomaraswamy Naidu and Sons, 1929.

⁶ For examples of contributions of archaeological data to the reconstruction of Maritime Asian history, see Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The Emporium of the World: Maritime Quanzhou, 1000–1400*, Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 2001; Derek Heng, *Sino-Malay Trade and Diplomacy from the Tenth Through the Fourteenth Century* (Research in International Studies, Southeast Asia Series), Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009.

⁷ Yokkaichi Yasuhiro, ed. *Monokara mita kaiiki ajia shi* [Maritime Asian History from the Viewpoint of Materials], Fukuoka: Kyushu daigaku shuppankai, 2008.

the port city of Zaitun (Quanzhou, China) from the Mongol period. It was out of this unique and productive collaboration that the idea for this special issue sprang.⁸ As an example of archaeology–epigraphy collaboration, Claude Guillot, Daniel Perret, Ludvik Kalus and their colleagues conducted a series of excavations around Indonesia, whose results were published in several French and Indonesian works.⁹ Indonesian archaeologists also found old Islamic tombstones at the burial site of Makam Troloyo near Trowulan, the capital of the Majapahit Kingdom, considered to have been the last Hindu kingdom in Java. The dates of the tombstones attest the existence of a Muslim population there as early as the late fourteenth century, which had been only tentatively suggested by the poem *Kidung Sunda* narrating the story of the Majapahit king Hayam Wuruk (r. 1350–1389) and the *Yinya Shenglan* by Ma Huan of Ming China.¹⁰

In Japan, a boom in maritime history occurred since the 1990s, producing a number of innovative studies. Momoki Shiro, along with more than thirty colleagues including Yamauchi Shinji, Fujita Kayoko, and Hasuda Takashi, published *Kaiiki ajia shi kenkyu nyumon* [An Introductory Guide to Maritime Asian History, 2008], containing articles on the structure of maritime trade over several periods and reviews of specific topics in this field, in-

⁸ Iain Gardner, Samuel N.C. Lieu, Ken Parry, *From Palmyra to Zayton: Epigraphy and Iconography*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2005.

⁹ See Claude Guillot, Ludvik Kalus, *Inskripsi Islam Tertua Di Indonesia* [The Earliest Islamic Inscriptions in Indonesia], Jakarta: KPG (Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia), École française d'Extrême-Orient, Forum Jakarta-Paris, 2008; Claude Guillot, *Histoire de Barus Sumatra: Le site de Lobu Tua I: Études et Documents* (Cahier d'Archipel 30), Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1998; Claude Guillot, Marie-France Dupoizat, Daniel Perret, Untung Sunaryo, Hedy Surachman, *Histoire de Barus Sumatra: Le site de Lobu Tua II: Études archéologique et Documents* (Cahier d'Archipel 30), Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2003; Daniel Perret, Hedy Surachman (eds.), *Histoire de Barus Sumatra III: Regards sur une place marchande de l'océan Indien (XIIe-milieu du XVIIe s.)* (Cahier d'Archipel 38), Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2009; Daniel Perret, Kamarudin Ab. Razak, *Batu Aceh: Warisan Sejarah Johor*, Johor Baru: École française d'Extrême-Orient, Yayasan Warisan johor, 1999; Daniel Perret, Kamarudin Ab. Razak, *Batu Aceh: Dalam Perbandingan*, Johor Baru: École française d'Extrême-Orient, Yayasan Warisan johor, 2004; Claude Guillot, Ludvik Kalus, *Les monuments funéraires et l'histoire du sultanat de Pasai à Sumatra (XIIIe-XVIe siècles)* (Cahier d'Archipel 37), Paris: Msh Paris, 2008.

¹⁰ See Uka Tjandrasmita, *Arkeologi Islam Nusantara* [Archaeology of Islam in the Archipelago], Jakarta: KPG, 2009, 11–36; I Made Kusumajaya, Aris Soviyani, Wicaksono Dwi Nugroho, Jawa Timur, *Mengenal Kepurbakalaan MAJAPAHIT Di Daerah Trowulan*, Balai Pelestarian Peninggalan Purbakala Jatim, n.d., 22.

cluding the ceramic trade and the circulation of silver in the early modern period.

The recent achievements of Japanese scholars in this realm have also been reflected in a joint work edited by Haneda Masashi, *Higashi ajia-ni kogidasu 1: Umi kara mita rekishi* [Rowing Out to East Asia 1: A History Viewed from the Sea, 2013],¹¹ published as a product of a collaborative research project titled ‘The Maritime Cross-Cultural Exchange in East Asia and the Formation of Japanese Traditional Culture’ (the ‘Ningbo Project’), organised by Kojima Tsuyoshi from 2005 to 2009. Unfortunately, the usage of archaeological data in this project was limited, because the authors were mainly historians.

Since the publication of these two seminal works, there have been few projects that cover the Eurasian world as a whole before the fifteenth century. Masaki Mukai, in cooperation with Eivind Heldaas Seland, organised panels at the conferences of the Asian Association for World Historians (AAWH) in order to continue discussions on ‘trade networks’ and ‘diasporas’ connecting inland and maritime Eurasian worlds. At the second congress of the AAWH, held in Seoul in 2012, Seland and Mukai discussed the combination of ‘trading diasporas’ and certain religious traditions. Three of the papers presented in this special issue were also presented at the third congress of the AAWH, held in Singapore in 2015, in a panel titled ‘Pax Romana and Pax Mongolica’.

II. THIS SPECIAL ISSUE: CONCEPTS AND GOALS

The present special issue introduces new perspectives on the maritime movements of peoples, commodities and ideas in the period between the two eras known as ‘Pax Romana’ and ‘Pax Mongolica’. Despite the popular use of these two terms in World History literature, the discourse based on them is often flawed, usually concentrating too heavily on a few major people or groups in positions of hegemonic political power or playing a major role in interregional commerce. In reality, a larger number of people

¹¹ Haneda Masashi, ed., *Higashi ajia-ni kogidasu 1: Umi kara mita rekishi* [Rowing Out to East Asia 1: A History Viewed from the Sea], Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 2013.

from various social strata joined and sustained the system of supra-regional communication.¹²

In this special issue, the effectiveness of Network Analysis, Palaeography, and Epigraphy is also seen, both for detailed analysis of networks of port cities and for a conceptual idea of networks as a structuring basis of the past world.

Eivind Heldaas Seland has been conducting a project called ‘Mechanisms of Cross-cultural Interaction: Networks in the Roman Near East’ (NeRONE) at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies, and Religion of the University of Bergen since 2013 (<http://neroneproject.blogspot.jp/>). In this special issue, he presents an innovative study employing network analysis methodologies and software to map, visualise, and measure interregional interconnectedness in the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*. His paper shows that we can uncover a hidden but real structure of Indian Ocean trade not by textual analysis of information concerning ports and products itself but by the application of network analysis to this information.

Network analysis can also give us a more sophisticated understanding of strings of port-city linkages. Furthermore, they yield insight not only into economic structures but also into the migration of peoples and the movement of thoughts and ideas. In this special issue, Kusabu Hisatsugu tries to explore the horizons of network analysis in the field of Byzantine history. Rather than ask questions about the architectural aspect of networks, that is, how they were shaped and how they functioned, he instead asks what kinds of mediators were moving within these networks and what these mediators mediated between in the Byzantine realm. There is a certain accumulation of studies on the structures of routes and movements of materials as mediators in the field of Byzantine history. However, we should pay more attention to another sort of mediators—falling under the general heading of ‘world views’—that are often considered to have underlain and

¹² As Masashi Haneda at the University of Tokyo recently proposed in his book *Atarashi'i sekaishi-he* [Toward a New World History] that we should deconstruct the centre/periphery scheme and view active long-distance interactions under the peaces enforced by Eurasian empires as a phenomenon enabled by the collective activities of various people(s). This is why we pay special attention to ‘network’ and ‘diaspora’: as conceptual tools to deconstruct this dichotomy.

ruled the networks above them; these may include nonmaterial elements such as lifestyles, types of worship, ruling ideas (justifying ideologies), and discourses, all moving on the trade, travel, and communication networks of the Eastern Mediterranean world. He pays particular attention to discourses such as rumours and labelling of heterodoxy, which have not been adequately analysed in the Byzantine context.

Masaki Mukai presents a paper on Muslims, mainly from Transoxiana and Iran in Yuan China. His paper reflects the insights of a thriving field of ‘diaspora’ studies, spanning anthropology, sociology, and history. Authors in this field have defined ‘trading diasporas’ as ‘expansion [...] in search of work, in pursuit of trade, or to further colonial ambitions,’¹³ leading to the emergence of ‘entrepreneurial networks’ or ‘diaspora networks’: ‘organized group[s] of merchant families and their extended regional networks having the same ethnic origin’.¹⁴ The Greek and Roman diaspora played a significant role in the India–Rome trade network as depicted in *Periplus*; Arab and Persian diasporas spread across a wide region from the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea during the medieval period, engaged in maritime trade.

Such entrepreneurial or diaspora networks are also certainly related to the spread of Christianity and Islam.¹⁵ As Manuel A. Vásquez points out, ‘the notion of diaspora bears a close elective affinity with religion’:

because religion and diaspora operate in similar ways in the management of time and space and in the articulation of individual and collective identities, they have historically been closely intertwined, often buttressing and reinforcing each other.¹⁶

¹³ Abner Cohen, “Cultural strategies in the organization of trading diasporas,” *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, edited by C. Meillassoux, London: Oxford University Press, 1971; Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

¹⁴ Ina Baghdiantz McGabe, Gelina Harlaftis, Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglou, eds., *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, New York: Berg, 2005, xviii.

¹⁵ For a discussion of diaspora and the spread of Islam, see André Wink, *Early Medieval India and the Expansion of Islam, 7th–11th Centuries* (Al-Hind: The Making of the Islamic World, vol. 1), Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1990.

¹⁶ Manuel A. Vásquez, “Diasporas and religion,” in *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersec-*

Indeed, the term ‘diaspora’ is deeply characteristic of discussion about global religious ‘communities’ including Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Confucian, Huguenot, Muslim, and Catholic diasporas.¹⁷ However, ‘some scholars have suggested that “diaspora” may have become an exhausted concept emptied of meaning by overuse and lack of precise and agreed definition’.¹⁸ and have proposed solutions such as the one from Brubaker below.

We should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as an idiom, a stance, a claim. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a category of practice, and only then ask whether, and how, it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis.¹⁹

Kevin Kenny contends that ‘diaspora should be both a category of analysis and a category of practice’; that is,

People who write about migration use diaspora as one of their central categories. But actual migrants and their offspring [...] also use the idea of diaspora to make sense of their experience, to build communities, to express themselves culturally, and to mobilize politically.²⁰

This sort of shift from ‘substantial’ to ‘non-substantial’ diaspora (or both) seems applicable to the Muslim diaspora. Actually, several scholars have argued about the ‘diasporic identity’ and ‘imagined identity’ of Muslims in the past and the present.²¹ The

tions, Identities, ed. by Kim Knott and Seán McLoughlin, New York: Zed Books, 2010, 128-133.

¹⁷ On the contrary, as Brubaker notes, one may reject generalised extension of the term ‘diaspora’ to dispersed adherents of religious faiths if one wishes to retain it for non-proselytising ‘ethnic religions’ like Hinduism, Judaism, and Sikhism. See Brubaker, “The diaspora ‘diaspora’,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 1-19, 14, n. 3.

¹⁸ See Kim Knott, Seán McLoughlin, eds., *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities*, New York: Zed Books, 2010, 2.

¹⁹ See Brubaker, “The diaspora ‘diaspora’,” 12-13.

²⁰ See Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, 14.

²¹ Pnina Werbner, *Imagined Diasporas Among Manchester Muslims*, Oxford: James Currey, 2002, 10-11; John Chaffee, “Diasporic identities in the historical development of the

headstone inscriptions regarding the death of a foreign Muslim who had died in China as ‘the death of an Exile’ quoting the tradition of the Prophet spread from Iran to China and shared by Muslim immigrants in the Coastal region, as described in Mukai’s article in the present special issue, is also relating to ‘diasporic identity’ and it is a similar sort of mediators moving on networks argued in Kusabu’s paper.

To conclude let me mention the goals of this special issue. First, we wish to show the potential of recent innovations in the field of pre-modern maritime history through these individual efforts. There is considerable difficulty executing close analysis of the structure and character of maritime networks due to scant historical records; however, as seen above, new approaches such as network analysis and discoveries in the fields of archaeology, epigraphy, and palaeography can greatly enhance our knowledge.

In this sense, the articles in this special issue have succeeded in gaining new knowledge and this is the second goal of this issue. Eivind Heldaas Seland reveals the unknown structure of an Indo-Roman trade network, while Masaki Mukai shows that there is a difference between the well-known narrative of Muslim migration to the southeast coast of China through South and Southeast Asian routes and what can be learned through the analysis of Islamic inscriptions—that is, the total absence of evidence of South and Southeast Asian migrations and the evidence of large migration through Central Asian routes.

Third, this special issue suggests the possibility that scholars can cross-reference with each other’s methodologies. For instance, network analysis as used by Seland (as described above) can also be applied to other maritime trade networks, especially in the East and South China seas, which yield plenty of geographical texts containing information on products and articles exchanged in that region. Similarly, the diffusion of intangible concepts through networks as shown in Kusabu’s article can also be applied to other ideas and idea-systems, such as the conceptual kingship of Tantric Buddhism, which was prevalent among

Eastern Eurasian dynasties. Further collaboration, now under discussion among the authors whose work is collected here, will make it possible to analyse pre-modern history in detail from network and diaspora viewpoints which will yield new sources of material and new knowledge in maritime history.