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1

South from Nagasaki, West from Hormuz

> Suddenly the full long wail of a ship's horn surged through the open window and flooded the dim room . . . burdened with all the passion of the tides, the memory of voyages beyond counting.
>
> —YUKIO MISHIMA, *THE SAILOR WHO FELL FROM GRACE WITH THE SEA*

WHEN I ARRIVED IN NAGASAKI, the first thing I did was to climb into the hills. These hills ring the port on almost all sides, leaving a narrow basin of water below, where the ships come in from the sea. Four hundred years ago, as these vessels began to bring in more and more "things," including strange commodities and strange, foreign ideas, the local ruler of Nagasaki decided that enough was enough. He had better act before he lost his kingdom. The sea was dangerous; its gifts were equally dangerous. He rounded up several dozen Christians, those who had converted to the new religion that had come through the port, along with a few foreign Christians, and he held them captive. Then he ordered his men to crucify them on wooden posts ringing Nagasaki harbor. Within full view of the docking ships, the strangers who had come by sea—and their impressionable Japanese audiences, some of whom had dared to believe their teachings—were told in no uncertain terms who ruled this place. Dejima (Deshima), the little island settlement in the bay where the foreign ships were quarantined so as to take advantage of their trade, but not their dangerous notions, fell into disrepair for a while after this. As an act of terror the local *daimyo*, or chief, had done his work well—the maritime "foreign" had been intimidated into acquiescence. But only for a while. Soon Deshima's commerce picked up again, and over the next two centuries, while

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Japan tried to some extent to isolate itself from the currents of the maritime world, a trickle of influence still came in through the port. Guns came, and were adopted quickly, though with much angst, moral hand-wringing, and discussion. Clocks came too, as did Western calendars, and more ideas. But the shadow of those executions can still be felt in the hills of the port city even now, some half a millennium away.[1] One wonders if the martyred believers felt their sacrifice was worth it, to bring gifts from the sea to a place that so clearly did not want such offerings.[2]

On the seacoast of Oman, in a town called Sur, I walked in the huge, sprawling fish market until I was weary. Sur is on the coast of Oman jutting out into the Arabian Sea; farther west along those shores, the waterway bends into the Gulf of Hormuz, and then sweeps into the Persian Gulf. From the Omani coastline farther up the strand, on a clear day, you can barely make out the dust-pink shimmer of Iran across the water. I had been walking in that fish market for hours, writing down the names of the fish that I could recognize, though there were many species that I did not know. But all of nature's plenty was there—huge sharks whose fins had been sliced off, destined for the Chinese market; tiny reef fish, neon red and orange and magenta-blue. A manta ray as big as a motorcycle sat in its own blood on the grimy concrete floor, its rattail pointing out to the sea like a beckoning, spindly arm. Here, too, as in Nagasaki, lay evidence of the foreign, and the distant—in addition to the shark

1. For a sense of Catholic missionary interactions with Japan in the early centuries of contact, and voyages in both directions, see G. O. Schurhammer, "Il contributo dei missionary cattolici nei secoli XVI e XVII alla conoscenza del Giappone," in *Le missioni cattoliche e la cultura dell'Oriente. Conferenze 'Massimo Piccinini'* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1943), 115–17; G. Berchet, *Le antiche ambasciate giapponesi in Italia: Saggio storico con documenti* (Venice 1877), 53–54; "Ragionamento I che contiene la partenza dall'Isole Filippine a quelle del Giappone ed altre cose notabili di quel paese," in *Ragionamenti di Fancesco Carletti fiorentino sopra le cose da lui vedute ne'suoi viaggi si dell'Indie Occidentali, e Orientali come d'altri paesi. All'Illustriss. Sig. Marchese Cosimo da Castiglione gentiluomo della Camera del Serenissimo Granduca di Toscana* (Florence 1701), part II: *Ragionamenti . . . sopra le cose da lui vedute ne' suoi viaggi dell'Indie Orientali, e d'altri paesi*, 35–36.

2. For the big-picture view on these interactions, see Matsukata Fuyoko, "From the Threat of Roman Catholicism to the Shadow of Western Imperialism," in *Large and Broad: The Dutch Impact on Early Modern Asia*, ed. Yoko Nagazumi (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 2010); Adam Clulow, *The Company and the Shogun: The Dutch Encounters with Tokugawa Japan* (New York: Columbia University, 2013); Robert Hellyer, *Defining Engagement: Japan and Global Contexts, 1640–1868* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009); and Leonard Blussé, *Visible Cities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

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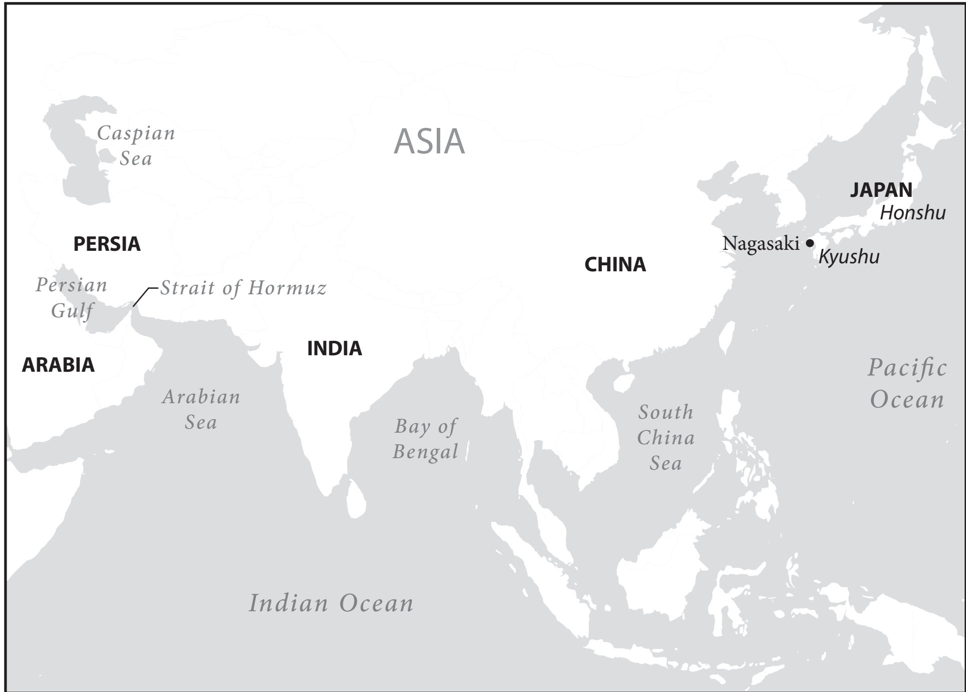

MAP 1.1. Maritime Asia: South from Nagasaki, West from Hormuz

fins, a small café advertised its connections with Indonesia. A sign in Bahasa told visitors—likely construction crewmen from the polar opposite side of the Indian Ocean—that they could come here to make phone calls back to Jakarta, as well as grab snacks that they missed from home. Fins and coffee; Christianity and quiet ships, moored on the tide. These ports on the opposite ends of Asia had much in common, and yet nothing in common. Arabic could be heard in one, and Japanese was spoken in the other, in both cases by gnarled, suntanned men on the docks. But the murmur of connection between these places was unmistakable. One didn't even need to listen; one simply had to watch. As several dhows headed out to sea from Sur, pulling east with the monsoon winds toward the open waters of the Indian Ocean, I asked myself, "Haven't I seen all of this before?" When I couldn't answer that question to my own satisfaction, I started taking notes in preparation for writing this book.

When one drinks coffee in the morning, it is partly because of the sea routes of Asia. If one hears Chinese being spoken on one's way to work in the Western

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world, it is partly because of the sea routes of Asia. If a call center in Mumbai approved your credit card purchase today (and it probably did), this was partly because of the sea routes of Asia as well. How can this be so? How can maritime pathways that have existed for centuries be partially responsible for so many of the day-to-day realities of our lived existence?[3] It seems counterintuitive, yet this observation is true. The slow-moving, elegant ships that brought coffee to the world from early modern Yemen; the quiet sailing vessels that brought Chinese immigrants to all of the planet's shores; the growth of industry and population along India's arid outstretched coasts—all are interconnected phenomena. All of these circumfusing actors have in common the single crucial element of the sea linking local places to far larger, translocal realities. It would not be an exaggeration, perhaps, to say that the sea routes of this part of the globe—and all of the people, ideas, and materiel that have traversed them—are partially responsible for creating large parts of our modern world.[4] Most of us are connected to this history in one form or another, whether we realize this on a daily basis or not.

In Asian Waters attempts to tie together the maritime history of Asia into a single, interconnected web. The volume charts out some of the ways in which the sea has linked and connected the various littorals of Asia into a segmented and (at the same time) a unitary circuit over roughly the past five hundred

3. There has been a small renaissance, lately, in looking at the sea for big-picture ideas on history; see, for example, Lincoln Paine, *The Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2013); Philip de Souza, *Seafaring and Civilization: Maritime Perspectives on World History* (London: Profile Books, 2001); Jerry Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen, eds., *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2007); Kären Wigen, "Oceans of History," *American Historical Review*, 111, no. 3 (2006): 717–21; Barry Cunliffe, *By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean: The Birth of Eurasia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Tsukaya Mizushima, George Souza, and Dennis Flynn, eds., *Hinterlands and Commodities: Place, Space, Time and the Political Economic Development of Asia over the Long Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Lin Yu-ju and Madeleine Zelin, eds., *Merchant Communities in Asia, 1600–1800* (London: Routledge, 2016); Alain Forest, "L'Asie du sud-est continentale vue de la mer," in *Commerce et navigation en Asie du sud-est (XIVe–XIXe siècles)*, ed. Nguyễn Thế Anh and Yoshiaki Ishizawa, 7–30 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999); and Geoffrey Gunn, *History without Borders: The Making of an Asian World Region, 1000–1800* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

4. See Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); see also Lauren Benton and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, eds., *A World at Sea: Maritime Practices and Global History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

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years, since the so-called contact age initiated a quickening of patterns and engagement that had already begun.[5] As such, it is part and parcel of the new transnational history now being written widely across the discipline; this is a history that makes the broad sweep, both of geography and of time, the center of the narrative. Janet Abu-Lughod famously said of Asia in the time period just before this book takes place: "In a system, it is the connections between the parts that must be studied. When these strengthen and reticulate, the system may be said to 'rise'; when they fray, the system declines, although it may later undergo reorganization and revitalization."[6] This book integrates transnational history à la Abu-Lughod with other avenues of historical vision that are now being used more and more by scholars, such as environmental history, science and technology studies, subalternity, and the critical history of empire. How these approaches fit together provides a window into the working gears of the globe as we know it.

I argue in this volume that by looking at the half-millennium "grand curve" of Asia's seas, a number of important themes that ultimately helped forge our common, modern world come to the fore. The creeping advance of external power, and indigenous action and agency in dealing with this phenomenon, form one of these themes. The regional and eventually global trade in a wide variety of objects, both sea-related and non-sea-centered, but passing through the region on thousands of ships, is another. Finally, the maritime movement of religion and concomitant political challenges to earlier forms of entrenched authority are but some of these ideas. These notions—power; trade; the oscillation of empires; diaspora; and religion-in-transit—are among the main linking themes of the book. *In Asian Waters* tries to connect these disparate notions into a single study through a series of topical windows, and asks how our vision of the world's largest continent and its history might vary if we see this vast expanse of territory not by land, but rather from the sea, as part of a unitary story.[7] How does that shift in cadence change our collective historical vision?

5. Parts of the narrative go even further back in time, where I think a more extended timeline is useful; see particularly chapters 2, 6, and 8.

6. Janet Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System AD 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 368.

7. Some scholars have already been moving in this direction; I am by no means the first. I outline many of these studies in the notes of the pages that follow here in the introduction, but for a useful overview of the issues, see Markus Vink, "Indian Ocean Studies and the New Thalassology," *Journal of Global History* 2, 2007: 41–62.

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Writing histories of large bodies of water is not new; not all explanations of the past are geochronometric in character.[8] Among the first historians to do this was the great Fernand Braudel, whose two-volume study of the Mediterranean world in the early modern age became the gold standard for a generation of historians following in his wake.[9] Instead of studying Europe per se or even any of its nation-states, Braudel unified the history of southern Europe and North Africa's Maghreb into one story. The results made great sense to the profession, who saw in his books new ways of approaching history generally. Bernard Bailyn did something along the same lines for the Atlantic, when he refused the disaggregated approaches of "European" and "American" history and instead sewed the two other in his own work, forming a single, coherent world.[10] This approach also ensnared many admirers, and different takes on

8. For just a limited sense of some of the possibilities, see David Armitage, Alison Bashford, and Sujit Sivasundaram, eds., *Oceanic Histories* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Jerry H. Bentley, "Sea and Ocean Basins as Frameworks of Historical Analysis," *Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1999), 215–24; Beernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Martin Lewis, "Dividing the Ocean Sea," *Geographical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1999): 188–214; Philip E. Steinberg, *The Social Construction of the Ocean* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Daniel Finamore, ed., *Maritime History As World History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Jennifer L. Gaynor, "Maritime Ideologies and Ethnic Anomalies: Sea Space and the Structure of Subalternality in the Southeast Asian Littoral," in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, ed. Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen, 53–68 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); and Bernhard Klein and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Sea Changes: Historicizing the Ocean* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

9. Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (Berkeley: University of California Press Reprints, 1996), 2 vols.

10. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (New York: Vintage Press, 1988); and Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Vintage Press, 1988). For some of the intellectual descendants of Bailyn, see Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Erik R. Seeman, eds., *The Atlantic in Global History, 1500–2000*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2018); Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, eds., *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Pye, *The Edge of the World: A Cultural History of the North Sea and the Transformation of Europe* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2014); Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of the Spanish Empire, 1492–1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Julius S. Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American*

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"Atlantic history" eventually became very popular. Perhaps this was no more so than in the well-received (and often imitated) study of the "Black Atlantic" by Paul Gilroy. If Braudel brought the worlds of Christianity and Islam together through trade and the environment of the Mediterranean, then Bailyn brought what used to be called the "old" and the "new" worlds together through migration, and the exchange of revolutionary ideas across the North Atlantic. Gilroy added race into this potent mixture, and when triangle trades, the genesis of capitalism, and new forms of cultural history were grafted in as well, the study of the sea showed all kinds of new possibilities.[11] Historians of the Left, too, found fecund possibilities here; Marcus Rediker and others then moved the paradigm forward in the Caribbean, with studies of piracy, class, and the advent of shipborne democracies as part of this evolution. Indeed, the Caribbean, much like the Mediterranean on the other side of the Atlantic, has become a complicated site of historical experimentation, especially when it comes to looking at transgression and innovation in history as regards race, class, and the rise of the modern state.[12]

The Pacific has not been as popular a site for this sort of experimentation, at least until fairly recently. Significantly larger than the Atlantic and also less obviously connected in terms of the kinds of sources that could illustrate such ties, it has only been in the past several decades that Pacific history has caught up to the Atlantic paradigm. Thick, somewhat popular-tinged volumes were published, and these look at the vast ambit of this ocean, from Tierra del Fuego north to the Aleutians, and the Kamchatka Peninsula down to Tasmania and New Zealand.[13] Here again themes abound: the importance of whaling in the

Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution (New York: Verso, 2020); John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1800*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

11. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

12. Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and (with Peter Linebaugh), *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (New York: Beacon Press, 2013); Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997); and see Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

13. Frank Sherry, *Pacific Passions: The European Struggle for Power in the Great Ocean in the Age of Exploration* (New York: William Morrow, 1994); and Walter McDougall, *Let the Sea Make*

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Pacific interocean economy, for example, or the diaspora of indigenous peoples who were seeded through the ocean via ethno-astronomy and outrigger canoes, outfitted for epic, long-distance journeys. Only recently, however, have there been more sophisticated attempts to define and tabulate what all of this movement has meant.[14] The injection of indigenous perspectives into this dialogue by scholars such as Epeli Hau'ofa and Kealani Cook has been of crucial importance, both by writers of Pacific heritage themselves, and sometimes by non-indigenes, who have nonetheless been sympathetic to the decades-long writing of local people out of Pacific History by earlier practitioners of the genre.[15] It has been through these more recent studies by Matt Matsuda and others that Pacific History has taken on a new sophistication, and also a mooring of sorts within the larger global histories that are now being written.[16] The history of the polar seas, for example, does not yet show much evidence of this sort of incorporation or evolution, focused as it still is on narratives of heroic exploration. The first Europeans who penetrated the polar seas certainly did not lack courage. But their stories are still for the most part told in isolation

a Noise: Four Hundred Years of Cataclysm, Conquest, War and Folly in the North Pacific (New York: Avon Books, 1993).

14. Two early exceptions to this rule were Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land; Marquesas 1774–1880* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1980); and David A. Chappell, *Double Ghosts: Oceanian Voyagers on Euroamerican Ships* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1997). For a range of newer and more inclusive approaches, see Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Lands, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Rainer F. Buschmann, Edward R. Slack Jr., and James B. Tueller, *Navigating the Spanish Lake: The Pacific in the Iberian World, 1521–1898* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014); and David A. Chang, *The World and All the Things upon It: Native Hawaiian Geographies of Exploration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

15. See, for example, Epeli Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 2008; Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994); and K. R. Howe, *Nature, Culture and History: The "Knowing" of Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000). Also see Kealani Cook, *Return to Kahiki: Native Hawaiians in Oceania* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

16. Matt Matsuda, *Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Lorenz Gonschor, *A Power in the World: The Hawaiian Kingdom in Oceania* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019); Ricardo Padrón, *The Indies of the Setting Sun: How Early Modern Spain Mapped the Far East as the Transpacific West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); and Nicholas Thomas, *Islanders: The Pacific in the Age of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

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from local communities, as the exploits of "great men" who conquered nature, as if no one else was standing on the ice with them in their travels.

With only one recent exception, in the work of Sunil Amrith, there has not really been a single study looking at Asia's seas through a broad macro-lens, and that is a lacuna that the present book hopes to fill.[17] But that does not mean that scholars have not looked at maritime issues in Asia in novel and interesting ways. For East Asia, and the seas that have abutted and fed into the South China Sea as a sort of middle body of water, binding the region proper, comparatively few authors have staked out claims. The ones who have done so have often been very, very good, however. Andre Gunder Frank is one of these scholars, and his remarkable *ReOrient*—though not a maritime history in its constitution—laid down the gauntlet to others.[18] *ReOrient* asks us to try to reconceptualize both space and the histories of those who have flowed through such spaces in novel and fascinating ways. Asians are at the center of his world history, and not (as has almost always been the case) figures upon whom history solely has acted, mainly through the expansion of Europeans. This was a real shift in lenses, and the production of Gunder Frank's book led to new ways of thinking about Asian History as constituting its own motor for transformative events in the world over the last several centuries.[19] Takeshi Hamashita has been more centrally located in the maritime paradigm, and his studies of the South China Sea (from the Ryukyu Kingdom of Okinawa down to Southeast Asia) have given us new impetus in thinking about the connections between China and the Sinicized countries of Northeast Asia in powerful ways.[20]

17. The closest thing we have is Amrith's wonderful study. This is a very different kind of work than the present one, however, as it looks at water in all forms, and it is primarily geared toward the Indian Ocean. See Sunil Amrith, *Unruly Waters: How Rains, Rivers, Coasts, and Seas Have Shaped Asia's History* (New York: Basic Books, 2018).

18. Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

19. For a more comparative approach, and equally excellent, see Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

20. Takeshi Hamashita, *China, East Asia, and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Takeshi Hamashita, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia," trans. Neil Burton and Christian Daniels, in Takeshi Hamashita, *China, East Asia, and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives*, eds. Linda Grove and Mark Selden, 12–26 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Takeshi Hamashita, "The Intra-regional System in East Asia in Modern Times," in *Network Power: Japan and Asia*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein and Takashi Shiraishi, 113–35 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

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Hamashita has led this charge, though there have been other important figures more recently in this movement, too.[21] But his work is based on the painstaking accumulation of many other scholars' findings as well, so that he is in conversation with many Chinese and Japanese researchers whose data might not otherwise have been seen by English-speaking reading publics. Finally, Dian Murray has also been important in this context, with her pioneering *Pirates of the South China Coasts* also breaking new ground, in at least two ways. First, the book brought China and Sinicized Southeast Asia into one frame, to be discussed as equals in the maritime history that flowed between them. Second, her book also introduced gender to this debate in ways that had not previously been tried. Her monograph has become a classic of sorts in both of these senses, and is regularly cited not just by historians of a transnational bent but by scholars who are receptive to gender analyses in the drive of history as well.[22]

In the lower latitudes of the South China Sea, and into maritime Southeast Asia itself, the history of the sea has also been a topic for vigorous debate.[23] In this area, the "lands beneath the winds," the ocean has been a necessary format for writing history for quite some time. Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, with some seventeen thousand islands, and when the Philippines and Malaysia and other regional cultures are thrown in, one can easily see why

21. For just a few, see Giovanni Arrighi, Takeshi Hamashita, and Mark Selden, "Introduction: The Rise of East Asia in Regional and World Historical Perspective," in *The Resurgence of East Asia: 500, 150 and 50 Year Perspectives*, ed. Arrighi et al., 1–16 (London and New York: Routledge, 2003); and Angela Schottenhammer, ed., *The East Asian Maritime World 1400–1800: Its Fabrics of Power and Dynamics of Exchanges* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2007); John E. Wills, "Maritime Asia 1500–1800: The Interactive Emergence of European Domination," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 1 (1993): 83–105; Charlotte von Verschuer, *Across the Perilous Sea: Japanese Trade with China and Korea from the Seventh to the Sixteenth Centuries*, trans. Kristen Lee Hunter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); and William D. Wray, "The Seventeenth-century Japanese Diaspora: Questions of Boundary and Policy," in *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, ed. Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ioanna Pepelasis Minoglu, 73–79 (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005).

22. Dian Murray, *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790–1810* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1987).

23. See Derek Heng, "Trans-Regionalism and Economic Co-dependency in the South China Sea: The Case of China and the Malay Region (Tenth to Fourteenth Centuries AD)," *International History Review* 35, no. 3 (2013): 486–510; David C. Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and Geoffrey C. Gunn, *History without Borders: The Making of an Asian World Region, 1000–1800* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

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lucid conceptualizations of maritime history become immediately necessary in this part of the world. The touchstone study here has been Anthony Reid's two-volume *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce*, which bound the early modern history of Southeast Asia—and especially insular Southeast Asia—into one coherent story.[24] Reid took on how all of these seemingly separate societies in fact had much in common, attributes often transmitted or shared by maritime means. Though some of his assertions were later challenged by scholars such as Victor Lieberman and Barbara Watson Andaya, the core assumptions seem to have been largely right, even if the farther one goes from island Southeast Asia up and onto the mainland (or as one takes gender more centrally into account), several of his points may lose some valence.[25] But Reid's was only the largest and most ambitious study to try to encircle the region's seas, and to spin a narrative out of local waters that he saw as connecting cultures more than separating them. On a slightly smaller scale, the great French scholar Denys Lombard tried much the same thing with his remarkable *Le Carrefour Javanais*, and in the Southern Philippines James Francis Warren also moved along these intrepid lines in his path-breaking *The Sulu Zone*.[26] In eastern Indonesia, Roy Ellen, too, did this for what he called the Banda Zone, and on the opposite side of the archipelago Dianne Lewis and later Leonard Andaya sought similar results from marking off the Melaka Straits.[27] Clearly the notion of bodies of water hit home in Southeast Asian History, expanding the sea as a unit of analysis that could then tell us new things about historical patterns as a whole.[28]

24. Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce: The Lands beneath the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993 and 1998).

25. Two important revisionist critiques have come from Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), and Barbara Watson Andaya, *The Flaming Womb: Repositioning Women in Early Modern Southeast Asian History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006).

26. Denys Lombard, *Le carrefour javanais: Essai d'histoire globale* (Paris: École Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1990); James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone* (Singapore; Singapore University Press, 1981).

27. Roy Ellen, *On the Edge of the Banda Zone: Past and Present in the Social Organization of a Moluccan Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003); Dianne Lewis, *Jan Compagnie in the Straits of Malacca* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1995); Leonard Andaya, *Leaves from the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

28. See, in addition, Alain Forest, "L'Asie du Sud-est continentale vue de la mer," in *Commerce et navigation*, ed. Nguyễn and Ishizawa, 7–30; and Peter Boomgaard, ed., *A World of Water: Rain, Rivers, and Seas in Southeast Asian Histories* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2007.

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Yet if moves have been made in these directions over the past several decades for Southeast Asia, the site of the most frenetic intellectual exchange vis-à-vis Asia's seas has undoubtedly been the Indian Ocean. It has been here, more than anywhere else in the region, that historiographical battle lines have been drawn, and in the starkest terms. K. N. Chaudhuri was undoubtedly the *pater nostrum* of this scholarship, with his *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean* making him the intellectual counterpart of Braudel and Bailyn for this part of the world. The level of synthesis of his study of the Indian Ocean was formative, and he managed to combine analysis of the monsoons, the environment, trade, and human actors all into one seamless web.[29] His monograph was followed by others', with Ashin Das Gupta, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Michael Pearson, Sugata Bose, Kerry Ward, and others all contributing studies that made the level of complexity and detail of Indian Ocean Studies quite something to behold.[30] Engseng Ho, Clare Anderson, Michael Laffan, Isabel Hofmeyer, Ronit Ricci, Sebouh Aslanian, and Gwyn Campbell (among many others) have only deepened the evolving picture in the last twenty years.[31]

29. K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

30. Ashin Das Gupta, *Merchants of Maritime India: Collected Studies, 1500–1800* (Ashgate: Variorum, 1994); Sanjay Subhramanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500–1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

31. See Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Engseng Ho, "Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 2 (Apr. 2004); Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Michael Laffan, *The Makings of Indonesian Islam: Orientalism and the Narraiton of a Sufi Past* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) Isabel Hofmeyer, "The Complicating Sea: The Indian Ocean as Method," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32, no. 3 (2012): 584–90; Ronit Ricci, *Islam Translated* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Gwyn Campbell, *Africa and the Indian Ocean World from Early Times to circa 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). See also, in a slightly more specialized vein, Robert Harms, Bernard K. Freamon, and David W. Blight, eds. *Indian Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); and, for more of a wide-angled approach, see Thomas Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian*

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There are now Indian Ocean study centers in places as distant from one another as Montreal and Perth, and Cambridge University Press has commissioned a two-volume history of the ocean, while classes are taught on the region in universities worldwide. There are even now excellent studies of regional avatars of the Indian Ocean, such as René Barendse's *The Arabian Seas* and Sunil Amrith's *Crossing the Bay of Bengal*.[32] This is a kind of rude health for the examination of an ocean that few could have imagined when the study of such seas was just in its infancy and questions were being asked whether this kind of history could (or should) be done at all. It is being done, and more and more PhDs are being minted in the large research institutions who take this sort of vantage as their own, rather than relying on land-based geographies. That more than anything else may be a clue as to where the profession is going, as new knowledge is produced and the scale of analysis is brought closer and closer to the ground (or to the sea, in this case).

Yet, perhaps a better index of how important Indian Ocean Studies has become as a kind of vanguard of maritime scholarship might be in the phalanx of smaller, topic-specific studies that are now out there to be used by researchers. A number of large, syncretic studies have now been done (as above), and these will doubtless be challenged in the years to come by others, who will focus on highlighting differing themes. But we can now rely on literally shelves of smaller studies that allow us to focus down on Indian Ocean ontologies that can come only from painstaking, small-scale research. It is in this vein that we have scholarship on the archaeology of individual ports, as well as on cyclones, mangroves, and the tidal basins of historical harbors.[33] The histories of the large East India companies are known, but we are also learning about the Danes, the Armenians, and others in this respect, and the parts they played in

Ocean Arena, 1860–1920 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007); and Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

32. René J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Sunil Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

33. See S. Z. Qasim, "Concepts of Tides, Navigation and Trade in Ancient India," *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* 8, nos. 1/2 (2000): 97–102; T. S. S. Rao and Ray Griffiths, *Understanding the Indian Ocean: Perspectives on Oceanography* (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), 21–60; Zahoor Qasim, "The Indian Ocean and Cyclones," *Journal of Indian Ocean* Studies 1, no. 2 (1994): 30–40; and Zahoor Qasim, "The Indian Ocean and Mangroves," *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* 2, no. 1 (1994): 1–10.

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the ocean's contact and commerce.[34] We are now able even to get to the roots of interaction on India's seacoasts century by century, in micro-histories (often written by indigenous authors) that tell us details from the sixteenth century period of open trade to the imposition of British control in the late imperial age.[35] When we add this all together, the benefits are clear. Writing histories of maritime Asia is easier now than ever before; many people have put in the hard, local work to make this so, whether in the archives, in the field, or on the ocean itself, collecting data. This is so from Hokkaido all the way to Aden, and in all the stretches of Asia's seas in between. It will be the task of this volume to reveal some of these connections through a series of topical windows, which in turn can show us the unity and relatedness of these seas as the centuries have slowly swept by.

The book is organized into fourteen chapters. Two of these are an introduction and a conclusion with wide vantages on the importance of the oceans, as seen

34. Martin Krieger, "Danish Country Trade on the Indian Ocean in the 17th and 18th Centuries," in ed., *Indian Ocean and Cultural Interaction, 1400–1800*, ed. K. S. Mathew, 122–29 (Pondicherry: Pondicherry University, 1996); Vahe Baladouni and Margaret Makepeace, eds., *Armenian Merchants of the Early Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998); and Charles Borges, "Intercultural Movements in the Indian Ocean Region: Churchmen, Travelers, and Chroniclers in Voyage and in Action," in *Indian Ocean and Cultural Interaction*, ed. Mathew, 21–34.

35. For the sixteenth century, for example, see K. S. Mathew, "Trade in the Indian Ocean During the Sixteenth Century and the Portuguese," in *Studies in Maritime History*, ed. K. S. Mathew (Pondicherry: Pondicherry University, 1990): 13–28; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Profit at the Apostle's Feet: The Portuguese Settlement of Mylapur in the Sixteenth Century," in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990): 47–67; Syed Hasan Askarai, "Mughal Naval Weakness and Aurangzeb's Attitude Towards the Traders and Pirates on the Western Coast," *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 236–42. For the seventeenth century, see Shireen Moosvi, "The Gujurat Ports and Their Hinterland: The Economic Relationship," in *Ports and Their Hinterlands in India, 1700–1950*, ed. Indu Banga (Delhi: Manohar, 1992), 121–30; and Aniruddha Ray, "Cambay and Its Hinterland: The Early Eighteenth Century," in *Ports and Their Hinterlands*, ed. Banga, 131–52. For the eighteenth century, see Lakshmi Subramanian, "Western India in the Eighteenth Century: Ports, Inland Towns, and States" in *Ports and Their Hinterlands*, ed. Banga, 153–80; and Rajat Datta, "Merchants and Peasants: A Study of the Structure of Local Trade in Grain in Late Eighteenth Century Bengal," in *Merchants, Markets, and the State in Early Modern India*, ed. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 139–62 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

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from Japan and the Middle East at the volume's start (the two geographic poles of this study), and China at the book's end. The remaining twelve chapters are evenly subdivided into six rubrics, each dealing with a particular theme that has been crucial to the history of these seas. Each of the six parts of the book has a short preface so that readers are given background into the rubric at hand. The two thematically linked chapters following then serve (in juxtaposition) as broad yet detailed windows into the dynamics of these large, ocean-related topics. As such, they function like an accordion that can be compressed or expanded, with one of the two chapters moving in each direction—as apertures—one widening, and one narrowing toward the theme at hand. Together, the essays span the waters between Pacific Russia and Japan on the one hand and eastern Arabia and the Red Sea on the other, making stops along the way in China, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East, all through a variety of analytical windows. Southeast Asia forms the "center" of the volume in some senses. This is both because I am a card-carrying Southeast Asianist by trade, and also because this region was the geographic center of these routes, in many ways. This is history on a continental scale, therefore, and the book attempts to reach out to scholars, students, and the interested reading public along the width and breadth of these sea lanes. It is explicitly *not* a history of every ship that has ever set sail in Asia over the past centuries. It *is*, however, a way of looking at all of these ships—encapsulated into thematic form—so that these voyages and the people who made them can be thought about in one, expansive sweep. I do not see any of the human populations referred to in this book as static, either, in "ethnic composition." Rather, I agree with some of the formative scholarship on ethnicity in Asia that all of the people chronicled here passed in and out of evolving "categories" as they connected to the routes.[36] Each of the six thematic rubrics in the book mixes approaches to the sea and its histories by using a number of different methodologies: archival history, anthropology, archaeology, art history, and geography/resource studies. I have spent time on the ground in all of the regions that I write about here over the past thirty years, and there is a mixture in the source bases between history and lived experience, usually in the form of interviewing and oral history reportage for the latter.

36. See Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954); Renato Rosaldo, *Ilongot Headhunting* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1980); Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

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Wherever possible I have tried to allow local people to speak into the record themselves, so that their own voices are heard.[37] This happens through ethnographic work done in the markets and ports of many of these places: a variety of harbors in Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, as well as interviews with merchants of spices and marine goods throughout Hong Kong, Taiwan, and southern China, as well as Singapore, Malaysia, and southern India. Travels in the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and coastal East Africa also informed this book. I have been fortunate to live or work in Asia for roughly ten of the past thirty years, cumulatively, and the rubrics of the book reflect these experiences. The languages of the sources and interviewing used in these chapters include Indonesian/Malay, Chinese, Dutch, French, and Italian (as well as English), so a wide mixture of reporting has been possible. *In Asian Waters* is a book that connects a large swath of geography and a large temporal frame at the same time, but it is a story that is indeed connected, and one that must be seen in its breadth to be appreciated for its coherence. Asia is the world's most dynamic region, but beyond the neon of Tokyo harbor, the factories of southern China, and the seaside villages surrounding Mumbai there is the story of how these worlds fit together. Merchants—indigenous and foreign—once sailed between all of these ports in sleek, elegant ships. They still do, though the vessels now might carry huge cargo containers, the corrugated-iron descendants of this maritime past.

The first part of this book looks at "maritime connections." Chapter 2, "From China to Africa," does this by adopting the widest possible lens in Asian waters—looking at the long, though little discussed, history of connection between China and East Africa. The ties between these places, improbable as they are, go back many centuries, and are discernible through chronicles and histories, as well as through archaeology and DNA. Trade contacts between these two poles of Asian waters (the Indian Ocean after all washes up against East Africa's shores) have existed for a long time. We do know that this connection persisted over the ages, and that at one moment at least—during the famed Zheng He voyages of the early fifteenth century—Africa was very much on the minds of the Chinese court. At that time, a live giraffe was brought back from one of the Zheng He expeditions, and was paraded through the streets of Nanjing. One can only imagine what local Chinese must have thought,

37. For a terrific new book that accomplishes this across much of Asia in the fin-de-siècle period, see Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Overthrow of Europe's Empires in the East* (London: Allen Lane, 2019).

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looking up at this strange beast for the first time. Chapter 3, "Vietnam's Maritime Trade Orbit," also looks at maritime connections, but instead of adopting a "tie the endpoints together" approach, as in chapter 2, proceeds with the opposite logic, discussing the ties between one place—the outstretched coasts of Vietnam during the early modern period—and the wider maritime world. During this time, as Vietnam began to coalesce into something more than a collection of small polities, the country began trading with an extraordinary range of distant peoples by sea. This chapter analyzes that trade, and asks what its conduct can tell us about the gradual opening up of a centuries-old polity to the new possibilities of the international routes. Vietnam, of course, traded with other places before this time, but during these centuries maritime commerce took on an importance that had been generally more muted before.

The second part of the monograph focuses down on "bodies of water," of which two are of paramount importance in Asia. Chapter 4, "Smuggling in the South China Sea," takes a *longue-durée* approach, focusing specifically on smuggling patterns and subaltern movement. It questions how strong states try to control nonstate spaces such as the South China Sea, and asks how local populations have resisted these enforced realities, often by voting with their feet to move trade and commerce outside of officially sanctioned channels. The chapter is both historical and concerned with the present in the relationship between China and Southeast Asia as "macro-regions." Chapter 5, "The Center and Its Margins," then looks at the Indian Ocean over a three-hundred-year period, from roughly 1600 to 1900 CE. It problematizes currents of exchange that were taking place over this huge geography, as Asian contact with European companies phased toward colonial domination over a broad sweep of time. The chapter catalogues these changes partially through the ideas of thinkers such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx who witnessed them in their own lifetimes, but also through close studies of events on the ground, and on several different rims of this vast ocean.

The third part of the book looks at "religion on the tides," its two chapters showing first the transmission of early Indian religions overseas, and then how global religions have been incorporated into a single out-if-the-way place in the Philippines. Chapter 6, "Passage of Amulets," analyzes the transit of Buddhism from South Asia (southern India and Sri Lanka) to mainland Southeast Asia and back. It takes the Bay of Bengal as a single sphere of study, and asks how this space became worn with the tracks of ships carrying Buddhist monks, who eventually proselytized their faith into the majority religion of this region. The chapter relies on studies of Buddhist canonical scripture, material culture

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(including the archaeology of amulets and statuary), as well as anthropology in sketching out this complicated and fascinating history of transmission, especially to southern Siam. Chapter 7 examines one remarkably understudied city: Zamboanga, the main port of southwestern Mindanao in the southern Philippines. Zamboanga has had a Spanish fort and Spanish cannon trying to control local Muslim populations for many hundreds of years. It also has a thriving Muslim secessionist presence, replete with men with more guns in the streets, and a splinter group of Al-Qaeda in the form of Abu Sayyaf. Yet Zamboanga also has a large Catholic community, and a history of remarkable tolerance, too. This chapter scrutinizes these two opposing trends, and asks how the port is both representative of Asia's maritime roots and anomalous at the same time.

The fourth part of the book then queries what Asia's "cities and the sea" mean for this huge sweep of geography along the trade routes. Chapter 8 looks at the history of coastal cities in "greater Southeast Asia," but this description is a very loose one, as it incorporates ports now lying at some distance from what most now consider to be this region, including Canton (Guangzhou) and Hong Kong. The chapter asks how coastal cities became important on the Asian trade routes, when this happened, why, and in what eventual formations of urbanism alongside the edge of the sea. A wide lens is employed in order to examine these patterns over a broad stretch of geography, and an equally large cross-section of time. Chapter 9 then ties the even larger maritime geography of (mainly British) empire together in Asia: from Aden (in Yemen) to Bombay in India; from Singapore in Southeast Asia up to Pusan in colonial Korea. The chapter looks at the "circuits" of travel, movement, and ideas along this thoroughfare, both of colonial officials and administrators, and of Asians who both served the empire and eventually challenged it in the desire for their own postcolonial states. The chapter uses a range of reporting from predominantly British civil servants that bind these entwined histories together into a single, complex story.

The fifth part of our story then moves into greener, less urban directions, taking in the ecological sweep and "bounty of the oceans." Chapter 10, "Fins, Slugs, Pearls," dives literally into the sea: under scrutiny here is the (lived) history of marine-goods transport, all along the trade routes that have connected East and Southeast Asia for the past several hundred years. The high point of this commerce, in many ways, was the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when sea produce helped fuel the "opening of China," both to global commerce and to opium addiction (opium and sea produce were two

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of the main commercial products exchanged for Chinese tea, porcelain, and silk). But the chapter is half ethnographic as well, looking at how these Sino-Southeast Asian marine trades operate now, in our own time. Chapter 11, "On the Docks," queries how the coasts of southern India became "central" to the passage of spices across the Indian Ocean. This happened on the wider shipping routes of the great companies (the East India Co, the VOC, etc.) before the region was later backwatered to some extent by the main oceanic steamship lines (the P & O, Rotterdamsche Lloyd, etc.). Since antiquity the Malabar and Coromandel coasts have had a number of ports that connected Asia to the wider world in fascinating ways (mostly through spices). But the opening of Suez in 1869 significantly changed these patterns, and also changed the nature of the commerce carried out on these ancient slipways. This chapter (which, like the previous one, is historical but also anthropological at the same time, both of them making use of fieldwork and interviewing), explores these processes, particularly vis-à-vis connections with Southeast Asia.

The sixth part of the book takes on "technologies of the sea" as a theme of Asian interconnectivity. Chapter 12, "Foucault's Other Panopticon, or Lighting Colonial Southeast Asia," is an analysis of one maritime-specific technology among many: the history of lighthouses in the area, stretching from Aceh in North Sumatra all the way to New Guinea and the fluid borders of Oceania. Lighthouses were critical structures in maintaining the safety of ships and commerce, yet they were also appropriated by burgeoning colonial states to "herd" and surveille Asian shipping into pathways deemed acceptable by imperial regimes. Chapter 13, "Of Maps and Men," presents the history of another vital technology in the history of Asia's oceans: sea-mapping, or hydrography, as it was called in colonial times. The mapping of the sea in this part of the world was at least as important as any land-based cartography, and this was so starting from the earliest European voyages to the region, around the turn of the sixteenth century. Mapping out shoals, reefs, and other dangers of the sea allowed European colonial projects to get off the ground with less and less loss of life. It also eventually gave rise (in Foucault's terms) to a conjuncture between power and knowledge that eventually swung the way of the numerically inferior visitors from the West.

Chapter 14, "If China Rules the Waves," concludes the book by looking both toward the past and toward the future. The primary locus of this final chapter is the China coasts—the place that many observers, both "expert" and casual, seem to think will be the engine of the world economy in the coming century. This last chapter looks at this assumption from the standpoint of

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history, asking how reasonable this hypothesis might be, given past and present conditions. Some two thousand years ago, in the Han Dynasty, deceased Chinese courtiers were found with cloves buried in their mouths. Since at that time cloves only grew thousands of kilometers away in eastern Indonesia, off the outstretched coasts of New Guinea, we can see how powerful the maritime trade impulse was for much of human history. On those same Chinese coasts now, some two millennia later, newer Chinese ships are setting sail every day, their holds full of cargo for the outside world. What will happen if China becomes master of the sea? Will this be a peaceful process, as it was when the Han were looking for cloves to freshen the breath of their princes for the afterlife? Or will it be an altogether different approach to the wider world, whereby the sea becomes an avenue less of trade and connection, but one of conquest, recalling other (Western) histories of landings on distant shores, when the "contact age" began? This chapter asks these questions. It also leaves us with some historical perspective on the hyping of the world's newest superpower, one that we are told is destined to rule the waves.

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