

The Abu-Lughod reading expands on the idea of the international coast of India from last week by establishing three key cultural areas. The first is to the east, encompassing from Hormuz to Calicut, and is strongly influenced by Muslim merchant ships from the Arabian Peninsula. Many sailors from these ships assimilated into the region, spurring on the adoption of Muslim traditions and languages. The second surrounded the Bay of Bengal, where Hindu culture was central. This region also included many islands of Southeast Asia, and most importantly, the Strait of Malacca, which controlled trade up the Eastern Chinese coastline. The final region exists around what is now the South China Sea, and Chinese influence was strong here, including the principles of Confucianism and general practices of Buddhism. However, by the time comprehensive guides were being made between these three spheres of cultural influence, China had closed its ports to foreigners, making what was once a worthwhile journey that may take a year or more much more unappealing to the merchants who had once sailed the coastline.

The Ludden text explores the impact of map making on mobility, particularly the effect of the American understanding of Asia on Asian studies and spatial histories. Imperialism worked with territorialism to slowly end any nomadicism or freedom of mobility an individual might feel. Where once societies may have been mobile and diverse, they became rooted and weaponized this rootedness to create a sense of patriotism associated with the social identity of the space. As maps became larger and more standardized, borders became rigid social structures that alienated the migrant and the refugee, roles defined of course by those making the maps, through both political and militant plays. America launched wars to structure Southeast Asia territories to its liking while simultaneously emphasizing the roles of Japan and China on the global stage. Thus, the modern field of Asian studies came to focus on these countries, but there is hope it may lead to celebration of mobility in the face of a world of territorialism.

Unfamiliar Concepts List:

The tribute trade

Territorialism (but the text makes it pretty clear)

Quilon

Coromandel

Gujarat

Ibn Majid

References:

Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350* (OUP 1989):

“The Indian Ocean System: Divided Into Three Parts,” pp. 251-260

Ludden, “Presidential Address: Maps in the Mind and the Mobility of Asia,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 62, no. 4 (November 2003):1057–1078