

List of unfamiliar words, sites, people and concepts:

1. Tribute Trade – Maybe referring to the tributary system in China? A model of trade that positioned China as culturally and materially superior to other states, requiring a “tribute” to be shown to the emperor to establish trading rights
2. Port Emporia – A water-based trading post where multiple cultures/regions coalesce to exchange goods
3. Ceylon – Former colonial name for Sri Lanka
4. Java – Island in Indonesia, lying between Sumatra and Bali
5. Persian Sassanids – Members of the last great pre-Islamic Persian empire
6. Metallurgy – Basically ancient science/technology of working with/extracting/purifying metals
7. The “Great Game” – Originally the 19th century political stand-off between the British Empire and the Russian Empire over Afghanistan and neighboring territories. India was at the center of this too.

What I learned:

In reading both of these texts, Ludden’s *Presidential Address: Maps in the Mind and the Mobility of Asia* and Abu-Lughod’s *Before European Hegemony*, I was struck by the idea of movement. Movement as a phenomenon governed by geography, government, and people. Movement as not just a recurring consequence of civilization, but a birthing place for identity. I really enjoyed learning about the three circuits of the Indian Ocean—each one characterized by its own trade winds, and the people and ideas carried over by them—which mutated over time with the development of “power vacuums” created by the absence, fall, or removal of key players on either shore. The idea of free-flowing, mostly peaceful, trade and exchange between 4+ sea powers is something that I marveled at. I don’t know why the concept feels foreign to me; perhaps it ties into my “modern” reluctance to accept mobility as an integral, sometimes contesting, facet of identity.

Ludden’s text made me uncomfortable in a good way. I struggled at first to delineate territorialism and mobility, however, thinking of it from the map perspective helped. Particularly, the line, “As a result, we imagine that mobility is border crossing, as though borders came first, and mobility second,” sent the point home for me. Both mobility and territorialism coexist as opposites. They feed off of each other and butt heads all the time, and for periods, it may seem one comes out on top. Right now, we are seeing an influx of territorialism that is tinged with a new flavor of globalization. This has turned borders into boundaries of identity—boundaries that the common person has no say in and that will always fail to account for the mobile nature of people. Mobility, in this global, territorial, realm, has continued. People move, wealth piles, and ideas clash. But there is a danger to it: with the fanaticism of nationality and security, the moving identity finds itself alienated and subject to repercussions. I’m still not sure I completely understand, but I’m comfortable with stating that mobility, and movement in general, is something that is fundamental to us, and holds an increasingly precarious position in modern society. As such, when considering our study of South Asia, which is steeped in multiculturalism and diversity as found in its people and trade, we must take care to use a more fluid lens of identity and work against the rigidly drawn parameters of modern-day territorialism.