

Takeaway 1 - 08/09

What did you learn? List of words, sites, people and concepts in week's reading assignment with which you hadn't before been familiar AND brief statement of what you learned (latter 250-500 words)

List of new words

- Emporia: a place of trading or a business centre ([source](#))
- Epoch: an era or period of time usually categorised by a series of notable events ([source](#))
- Territorial anachronism: a person or thing that is geographically out of place ([source](#))

The first reading, 1989 Indian Ocean System by Abu-Lughod, talked about how the boundaries of trade in the 13th century were shaped by weather patterns. It was interesting to learn about how these invisible borders were set by geographical features such as seasons and wind movement. One thing I learned that was particularly interesting was how the area of Malaysia and Southeast Asia is included in the 'Hinduised sphere'. As someone who grew up in Singapore, I always found it interesting how countries such as Malaysia and Thailand have such clear Hindu influences despite being countries with majority religions that are not Hinduism. For example, there is a large Hindu population in Bali, and you can find large statues of scenes from the Mahabharata or Ramayan despite the majority religion being Muslim or Buddhist. Therefore, it is interesting to understand where this influence comes from.

Another interesting piece of information was regarding the monsoon season. Especially since my mother's side is Maharashtran, I know about how harsh the monsoon seasons can get. While I was aware that the season affected agriculture, I did not consider how it affected and shaped trade, especially in the 13th century. Now I better understand why it was such a large task for explorers such as Vasco da Gama and Columbus to find new sea trade routes to India. The last thing that was particularly interesting was thinking about the shift to Eurocentric hegemony in terms of the East falling rather than the West rising.

The second reading, Presidential Address (Ludden 2003), talked about maps and how they hold power but also do not properly represent the cultural boundaries of the world. This made me think of modern-day globalisation and how we have borders on the map, but there is a lot of cross-cultural mixing across countries globally due to the continuous rise in globalisation. I also thought about how maps still hold so much power even today. For example, the size of Africa is misrepresented on the map because certain countries want to make themselves look more powerful. Another example is how the US president has changed the name of the Gulf of Mexico and Lake Ontario; however, on Google Maps, this change is reflected differently depending on which country you log into Google Maps from. If you are in a country outside of the US, the new names are shown in brackets. This whole situation makes me think about how powerful maps can still be even today.