4.696 A Global History of Architecture Writing Seminar
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<center>Global Port Cities c. 1300</center>

<political centers of the Mongol world>

In the last class we looked at the architecture and urbanism of the world as it was known to the Mongolians. During that class I introduced Janet Abu-Lughod's idea that a 'pre-modern world-system' existed c. 1300.

<abu-lughod excerpt>

In our continuing effort to understand the architectural and geographic dimensions of Abu-Lughod's assertion that c. 1300 the globe was integrated through exchange in unprecedented ways, we will examine port cities. Specifically, we will look at ports on the Indian Ocean that facilitated global exchange, *and* nurtured new tastes for luxuries and ornaments like silk and porcelain.

<trading centers of the indian ocean region>

Besides thinking about the architectural connections and social relationships across these ports, it is important to analyze the relationship between ports and non-coastal centers of power, commerce and production.

<pilgrimage cities that connected significantly with trading activities>

No less important are the connections between ports and places of pilgrimage. While the map on the screen is not intended as an exhaustive list of major religious sites in the 14th century, it does list places that we know influential traders visited—in some cases routinely. Mecca, for example, was the site of a large market in the mid-14th century and numerous traders journeyed from Cairo via Suez to Jeddah and then overland to Mecca for religious and commercial reasons.

<defining a global port city>

What preliminary inferences can we draw from this example? Let us begin our work today by defining port cities as:

a) hubs that connect to non-coastal markets, landmarks, production centers

b) inter-linked zones of commerce

c) politically, a distinct entity from other types of cities

In other words, we do not want to think of ports as just cities on the water. If that myth of geographic determinism were true, then the entire coastline of East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Deccan, and South-East Asia would have been littered with port cities. Yet, we know this was not the case c. 1300

<e. africa historical settlements map>

Judging by just the East African case we can see that it would be too hasty to assume that every jetty or landing on the coast gave rise to a city or significant settlement.

<circles of influence>

Moreover, we find that not all port cities were equal. Some were more important than others, even though the same sailors and merchants visited both major and minor ports. Throughout this class we will want to return to this question: why were some port cities architecturally grander, or more commercially important than others

<dhow>

The answers to those questions tend to come to us from economic and social histories of the Indian Ocean. That branch of history sometimes refers to this as the Dhow Trade—a dhow being the particular kind of sail boat used by Arab merchants and sailors at this time to navigate the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

\<monsoon wind patterns\>

Here some attention to geography would be helpful. The monsoons—the word itself derived from the Arabic *mowsim* meaning weather—are periodic winds. This means that the move from the high pressure area off the Indian Ocean to the low pressure region of the Indian sub-continent in the summer, and reverse direction in the winter.

\<trade routes\>

The implication of monsoon wind patters appears to be that sailors navigated a course quite close to the coast, making numerous stops—even at minor ports and settlements.

\<case studies thumbnails\>

Drawing on translations travel accounts from the 13th and 14th centuries as well as later studies of buildings that still exist, we will look in-depth at four ports: Kilwa, Cambay, Mangalore and Majapahit. Each case is architecturally and historically distinct, and all four port cities were visited by the same merchants, clerics, and sailors c 1300.

\<kilwa google map\>

With Kilwa, on the East African Coast, we have a powerful entrepôt or trading post where merchandise was imported and re-exported, each such transaction profiting Kilwa's small trading and ruling community. Kilwa, perhaps through its military might, was also a key point on the trade route of southern African gold to Mamluk Egypt and Rasulid Hadramawt.

\<kilwa complex map\>

Remarkably, less than 4 sq km of the island appears to have been settled as an entrepôt in the 13th century, although there is some evidence that smaller agrarian and fishing communities lived on the rest of the island.

<the great mosque x 2>

The oldest sections of the Great Mosque date back to the 11th century, to when the ruling elite of Kilwa may have been Shi'í rather Sunni Muslims. The large prayer hall was first built in the 14th century.

<coral construction>

Much of the southern part of the mosque is rebuilt in the 15th century, with the stone pillars of the 14th century prayer wall re-fashioned in coral block—a construction technique widely associated with Red Sea port town of Suakin.

<the great house>

Immediately south of the Great Mosque is a large, and now ruined, residential complex. Its footprint and arrangement as well as the archaeological remnants found at the site have led scholars to believe that this structure was home to a powerful merchant family. The oldest parts of the structure date back to the 14th century, and there is evidence that it was in continuous use up until the 16th century.

<kilwa google map>

Briefly turning to another section of the island we find two rather intriguing structures

<husuni complex map>

Although our concern is with the strange and wonderful story of the Husuni Kubwa palace, the Husuni Ndogo structure merits attention for its striking plan and age (12th century)

<husuni kubwa plan>

The collective best guess on Husuni Kubwa was that it accommodated a mix of public, private and commercial programs. This may well be where Ibn-Battuta stayed in 1331. In stark contrast to the other landmarks on the island, Husuni Kubwa has no columns. Load-bearing perimeter walls held up its rather complex (if not muddled) roofing system. It is possible that work on the complex was never completed and in all likelihood the site was altogether abandoned sometime after 1335 when the Sultan (the building's patron) died. The root '*h-S-n*' in Husuni probably refers to the strength of its fortification.

<husuni kubwa reconstructed>

The palace's ornamental pool has been likened to a form found in Mamluk Egypt and its conical domes have been likened to tent-shaped ones found in Persia and Seljuk Turkey. If any of these connections bear out, should it be interpreted as evidence of globe-trotting architects, or does it prove that Kilwa's elite, through trade and travel, were aware of architectural wonders in distant metropolises? Was it a 14th century architectural attempt by Kilwa's elite to claim Persian ancestry?

<ornament goes global>

Ultimately, we can be much surer about the import and deployment of luxury ornaments like the Yuan vase and porcelain. In fact these new tastes, for porcelain in Kilwa and for gold in Rasulid Hadramawt and Mamluk Egypt, *drive* sea trade. My point is distinct from the idea that increased exchange or the globalization of trade created surpluses that were converted into domestic luxuries. Rather, in Kilwa, and in the other cities we will 'visit', textiles facilitated trade. To paraphrase one my favorite characters from *Ugly Betty*: In the Medieval, fashion was currency.

<cambay google map>

Cambay, much like Kilwa, was very small demographically and spatially. Ibn Battuta, and Marco Polo, amongst others, noted the linguistic and ethnic diversity of the city's resident and itinerant population, which would differentiate it considerably from Kilwa. Although certainly connected to the Delhi Sultanate, it is not clear that it was directly ruled by Delhi in the 13th century. The port's decline is generally attributed to the silting of the harbor, which is evident from this recent satellite image.

<jam-e-masjid satellite image>

The most widely documented landmark in Cambay is the Jam-e-Masjid, although this building from 1325 was probably not the first Jami or Friday mosque in the city. A prominent feature of the building is it central court surrounded by colonnaded and domed corridors. In fact the series of 21 domes that cover the corridors are supported by a system of 156 columns and 70 pilasters, all of which rise to 15 feet.

<jam-e-masjid photograph of colonnaded walkway>

<jam-e-masjid & al-Kazeruni tomb plan>

The mosque had multiple entrances, including a grand east portico. Other features of the building include two raised galleries for women (*zenana*) and the enclosure for the tomb of al-Kazeruni (1333) and for his daughter (1381).

<jam-e-masjid courtyard photograph by Henry Cousens>

<jam-e-masjid ceiling photograph>

Architectural historians, drawing partly on inscriptions and a formal analysis of elements of the building (portico, ceilings), have suggested that this mosque was a reconstruction of a 12th century mosque on the same site.

<inscription about architect, architectural patron and political patron>

These inscriptions prove that merchants rather than Sultans were the patrons for mosques in 14th century Cambay. They also express the relationship of benefactor and beneficiary that existed between the Sultan and the merchant.

Unfortunately, within standard South Asian architectural history Cambay is portrayed as a Muslim town. Thus, despite the presence of non-Muslim merchant groups in 14th century Cambay, all architectural surveys exclusively focus on the city's mosques.

<portrait of a donor-couple>

This early 13th century portrait depicts a family of merchants who supported a Jain shrine in Cambay that has not been studied architecturally. Sadly, I was not able to even locate the city's Santināth temple, which housed one of the earliest Jain Grantha Bhandārs or scripture storerooms.

<illustrations from 13th century jaina palm leaf mss>

The best I was able to do was locate copies of the only illustrations found amongst the Grantha Bhandār's scriptural and literary texts. A bit like our very own Library Storage Annexe, the Grantha Bhandār was an entirely new program type in the late 12th century. There is neither any evidence of Jains having previously stored manuscripts in a single location, nor is there any extant Jain manuscript dating to before the 11th century.

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Although the Jarzombek/Prakash textbook does not deal exclusively with medieval port cities, its year 1000 chapter introduces students to Jainism and describes Jains as a mercantile community. I found this section of the year 1000 chapter a little strange. For one, there is a large body of Jain iconography and architecture from preceding periods (notably at Ellora). Moreover, a global history of architecture should avoid organizing information according to 'civilizational' categories. Still, I want to make sure that we do cover a few Jain sites that bear on our understanding of global port cities.

\<karnataka google map\>

Although not a coastal town, or a hub in global trade, the Jain complex at Sravan Belgola is important to coastal Karnataka and is featured in Jarzombek/Prakash.

\<bahubali statue\>

This statue of Bahubali was carved out of a single stone around 981 AD. At 57 feet, it is arguably the most widely known Bahubali statute. The statue shows Bahubali in a meditative pose, his clothes having withered away and creepers beginning to climb up his limbs. In Jain epic literature, Bahubali's renunciation followed a battle between him and his elder brother Bharat over their kingdoms and wealth. During the battle, as Bahubali raised his arm to strike his brother, he realized the folly of fighting his elder brother over land, wealth, and power, and instead of striking his older brother with his raised arm he removed his hair. Renunciation during or immediately after a battle (in the Bahubali epic it is marked by his ad hoc tonsure ceremony) is a key trope in Jain heroic literature of the early medieval period. In sculpture, Bahubali is shown naked—victorious over his desire for wealth and power and thus appears as the paradigmatic hero.

\<sravan belgola complex\>

Between the 10th and 18th centuries a number of different iconographic and architectural arrangements were commissioned and executed in Sravan Belgola.

\<mahamastakabhishekha\>

The site is perhaps best known in popular imagination for *Mahamastakabhishekha*, when devotees bathe and anoint the statue with milk, water, sugarcane juice, turmeric, saffron, vermillion, and sandal wood. Offerings of gold and silver coins and a helicopter showering flower petals are all part of the contemporary spectacle. The ceremony is held every 12 years, with the first one dating back to the 11th century and the most recent one held in 2006.

These photographs are perhaps also the most useful to understand the epigraphic importance of Sravan Belgola. More than 800 inscriptions have been documented at the site. What makes the ones at the base of the Bahubali statue or Gomateshwara is its content.

<inscription >

At the foot of the statue we can read the following phrase in three languages: "Cāmundarāya made this". Written in Kannada (using Kannada characters), Tamil (using Grantha and Vattelutu scripts), and Marathi (using Nagari), this act of inscription marks the inauguration of a new political and social imagination. Whereas for the previous 10 centuries courts like the one Cāmundarāya belonged to had used and patronized Sanskrit literature, in the 10 – 12th centuries multiple *desh-bhashas* or languages of place began to be used in place of Sanskrit. While it would be impossible to provide a singular account of the history of this practice, global trade and the emergence of highly localized centers of power in this period may be a part of the story.

<karnataka google map>

And it is within the architectural story of the emergence of localized centers of power within a global system that we find ourselves visiting Karkala and Moodbidri. It was from the agricultural lands surrounding these towns that native Tulu-speaking merchants would buy produce to sell to Arabic-speaking merchants.[1] Tulunad (literally the land of Tulu speaking people and the term generally applied to the Mangalore area) is a good 14th century example of a globally linked 'zone of commerce' (zone of commerce being one of the definitions for a port city that I offered at the beginning of the class).

When we looked at the Jam-e-Masjid in Cambay I had pointed to the patronal role of merchants in the 14th century. I want to now focus on the other ways in which different religious institutions intersected with the crisscross of global trade. We know for sure that mosques constituted a network of credit and social infrastructure that nurtured seafaring and overland trade. I suspect something similar can be said of the Jain sites in Karkala and Moodbidri.

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[1] I emphasize that the merchants buying spices were Arabic-speaking because they were organized or bound by linguistic rather than religious affinities. Cultural historians seem to be ceaselessly amazed by the presence of Arabic-speaking Jewish traders who were based in Mangalore c.1200. Admittedly, their presence is interesting not least of all because 13th century Mangalore was a small town of 2,000. But it is also noteworthy in our context that we know as much we do about 13th century Jewish merchants because so many of their papers and letters were preserved in the Cairo Genizah. A Genizah is the store-room or depository in a synagogue (or cemetery) where documents that contained the word God could be stored. It should also be noted that while merchants on the buying side were Arabic-speaking Muslims and Jews, on the selling side they were Tulu-speaking Jains and Vaishnavas.

\<karkala + moodbidri images\>

The slides I am showing are of works built in the 15th and 16th centuries by Jain landowners and merchants. Documents stored in repositories in Moodbidri suggest that the temples and religious schools probably supported trade in a variety of ways, even serving as vehicles for credit and investment at times.

\<karnataka google map\>

Moving back towards the coast, I thought it would be useful to look at the Udupi Krisna Matha. A *matha* is principally a place of learning. The Udupi Krisna Matha was founded in 1278 AD by Madhvācārya and constitutes the historical and spiritual center of a Madhva community. I should add that administrative control of this community is rotated every two years between eight *matha*s spread across coastal Karnataka.

\<map + plans of the sri krisna matha + icon\>

What makes the site in Udupi architecturally interesting is its mix of liturgical programs. The Krisna icon that Madhvācārya consecrated in 1278 is believed to have been found by him on the adjacent beach, perhaps from a boat originating off Dwarka in Gujarat that may have been lost at sea. The icon is a *bālrupā* figure meaning that it is in the likeness of the infant Krisna. It is only 20 inches high and is marked for its relative lack of sculptural ornament.

\<toran + column photographs\>

The complex, like most other Vaishnava and Devi temples in Tulunad, is principally a timber structure. The complex is perhaps best known to people outside its immediate community for the *Saptotsava*, which is held annually in mid-January. During this festival priests and lay-worshippers alike pull chariots of various sizes around the complex on the road appropriately named 'Car Street'.

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Part of my interest in this including the Sri Krisna Matha in today's case study of Mangalore was to continue thinking about how a religious institution associated with particular architectural structures defined commercial and social practices throughout a wider coastal region c. 1300. Can *dvaita* (or dualist) philosophy, which Madhvācārya defined c. 1300, be thought of as an embrace of the sensuous? Sadly, very few studies of religion pay close enough attention to the aesthetic, particularly to the engagement of pre-modern aesthetic and literary theory within theological tracts. I remain unsure but hopeful that the elite of Tulunad's taste for Chinese silk, Gujarati fabrics and North Indian idols (all of which came to the region through the Mangalore port) is somehow related to Madhvācārya's theories of beauty.[2]

<all cities map>

Our final case today comes from Sumatra and Java, and is perhaps going to be the least satisfying (not the best note to end on, I know). At the beginning of class I suggested that port cities were a distinct political type. Kilwa was probably a single island-state. Cambay and the many towns of Tulunad were certainly related to the Delhi Sultanate and the Vijaynagar empire, respectively, but seem to have retained a fair measure of autonomy. However, it does not seem that 14th century Cambay had substantial military resources of its own. Boats approaching the Mangalore port on the other hand were apparently regularly attacked by pirates, and 14th century travel accounts do mention local chieftains providing protection from piracy. Oral histories, of a more contemporary vintage, also recount local fishermen protecting visiting Arab sailors from time to time.

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[2] Phyllis Granoff's essay in *Ars Orientalis* (34) is an important contribution to our understanding of the connections between pre-modern literary and sectarian traditions (specifically Nyāya-Vaiśesika) and 10th century innovations in textile design.

The Srivijaya kingdom of early medieval Sumatra offers an interesting comparative story. The kingdom included a network of small ports all along the east coast of Sumatra from Pasai to Jambi, which were often controlled independently of each other and Palembalang (the Srivijaya till the 11th century). Each port was controlled by a local military functionary of the Srivijaya kingdom, who may or may not have also been a landowner or merchant.[3]

\<Bajang Ratu Gate\>

This sort of relationship between political center and trading periphery seems to have been maintained in the Javanese Hindu kingdom of Majapahit. The Javanese poem Desawarnana (more commonly known as Nagarkrtagama) written in 1365 lists Temasik (modern Singapore) as one of the dependencies of Majapahit.

Sadly, only a few buildings from the Majapahit kingdom remain. They represent an almost complete abandonment of stone as a building material in favor of brick. We have no explanation for this practice, though it should be mentioned that in other parts of Java in the 14th century, stone continued to be use as a building material, and that stone sculptures can be found amongst the Majapahit ruins. We also know from travel accounts that buildings in coastal Java and Sumatra were almost exclusively built of wood, which may explain why there are no standing structures from the period.

The Bajang Ratu gate is 50' high. Analysis of the iconographic program has led scholars to think that the Bajang Ratu Gate was used to enter a holy building commemorating the death of King Jayanegara (1328) who was believed to reborn as Visnu.

\<other majapahit structures\>

Evidence from a surface survey conducted in the early '90s points to the existence of manufacturing and long-distance trading activities within Majapahit/Trowulan.

Next class: The Iberian World (System)

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[3] Srivijaya, and its inland capital Palembalang, were ruined following an attaclk in the late 11th century by the Cholas of Southern India Later, the Hindu kingdoms of central Java (Kediri and Majapahit) conquered the remnants of Srivijaya. Interestingly, the Malacca kingdom that conquered Majapahit claimed its origins amongst the vanquished of Srivijaya.

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