

the blurring of the security interface between the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean region and the logic of the Indo-Pacific construct.

The linkages between security affairs in the Korean Peninsula and the Indo-Pacific region are further illustrated through resource security and growing geoeconomic competition. Though they are a significant source of security tension, regional politics of resources offer opportunities for cooperation, argues Baruah in her chapter that explores the linkages between natural resources and regional security dynamics in the Northeast Asian context. In the chapter on geoeconomic competition in the region, Kang compares the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy of the USA and Belt and Road Initiative of China. In doing so, she argues that the ensuing geoeconomic battle between the two undermines the strategic autonomy and shirks the manoeuvring space of middle power countries like South Korea, as there is more pressure to choose sides.

Though the volume attempts to locate the strategic and security significance of the Korean Peninsula in the Indo-Pacific region, it provides very little explanation of what the Indo-Pacific concept is all about and its strategic implications. An analytical account of the Indo-Pacific and its emerging features could have provided a useful analytical framework to locate developments and changes in the Korean Peninsula in the transforming regional context. Notwithstanding the above shortcoming, the editor has done an excellent job in bringing together a diverse set of scholars to provide a fresh analysis of the Korean Peninsula's strategic and security issues and its broader regional implications. This volume is highly recommended for students, scholars and policymakers interested in security and international affairs in the Korean Peninsula and Indo-Pacific.

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H. P. Ray, *Coastal Shrines and Transnational Maritime Networks Across India and Southeast Asia*. Routledge, 2021 Hardback, 255 pages, ISBN: 978-0-3677-0804-7 Price: ₹995.

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Ray's latest book represents an innovative approach to studying the littoral of South and Southeast Asia in the premodern period before European colonisation when 'mobility and connectivity...were not restricted and when trade and maximizing profits were not the sole leitmotif of sea travel (Ray 1)'. This project is undertaken through the study of maritime cultural landscapes, defined as both material and intangible, thus including structures and artefacts, communities and people as well as the geography and meanings assigned to these natural and cultural features of the landscape. This timely discussion also connects the study of the past to present concerns. Ray argues that the extensive cultural connectivity so apparent in the premodern period can provide lessons for the

present-day push towards conceptualising transnational heritage, especially in the light of UNESCO's World Heritage Convention of 1972.

I will highlight certain themes that represent significant interventions in multiple fields of analysis, including archaeological and historical studies of Indian Ocean networks as well as the emerging field of heritage studies.

First, Ray's work questions top-heavy, elite-focused histories and the spotlight is moved away from the prominent trend of land-centred histories. In Chapter 2, this is done by arguing that the origin and spread of writing was not solely connected to the supposed impetus provided by the Mauryan Empire and the prolific Asoka. Moreover, an emphasis on trade and trading activity as being the motive force behind the spread of writing overshadows other dynamic and vibrant networks, such as those created by religious clergy, merchants, traders, fisher people, etc. The examination of archaeological evidence such as inscribed potsherds shows evidence for pre-Ashokan writing in the subcontinent and in Sri Lanka where additional evidence from the site of Tissamaharama indicates that maritime networks predated the Mauryan Empire. Moreover, Rouletted Ware (late 3rd c. BCE to the 1st c. CE), considered an elite ware of coastal communities, found along the east coast of South Asia and outside, delineates a shared knowledge system extending as far east as the south China sea and west to the Red Sea coast. This Ware also shows a close association with Buddhist monastic centres along the east coast of India, which are in turn associated with market towns, as indicated by inscriptional evidence.

Ray points out that the tendency to separate the study of economy, politics and religion (of the past) as distinct fields of study is a limitation arising out of the imposition of contemporary concepts on the past. On the contrary, such divisions might not have been meaningful and are not reflected in historical texts like the *Arthashastra*. As Ray argues, even considering 'trade' as a monolithic category is limiting, since in reality, it '...involved a complex range of transactions' (46) that included gift-giving, barter and monetary exchanges across a spectrum of participants.

Ray argues for considering coastal shrines as primarily religious and social institutions, in a move away from looking at the coast solely through the lens of trade or the economy. Ray also questions traditional historiographies that 'restricts the role of religions to ensuring the legitimization of early states'; instead, Chapter 3 examines the complex religious landscapes of coastal shrines along the Bay of Bengal in coastal Andhra, Thailand and the Indonesian archipelago between the fourth and seventh centuries CE to show that religious places frequently were tools of social integration (community, kings and monks) and of expanding maritime networks. Archaeological and inscriptional evidence from such sites as Nagarjunakonda seem to show that these were multi-period, multi-religious sites that were embedded within multiple networks, both local and trans-oceanic. Similarly, in Chapter 5, Ray argues that there were a range of Hindu temples, of which the royal temple was the only one directly concerned with elite legitimisation. Coastal temples, as in Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu and My Son in Vietnam, were a distinct category of structures with long histories and stylistic patterns that drew on shared Buddhist and Hindu religious imagery and tradition, as well as represented an active engagement with the ocean.

A second underlying theme that permeates all the chapters is the diversity of maritime networks and cross-cultural connections and actors through an examination of coastal sites, shrines and artefacts. In the colonial period, many of these shrines came to be appreciated as stand-alone monuments of aesthetic or artistic significance. In doing so, however, something of the complexity of their role at the centre of diverse networks that reached both inland and outwards across the sea was lost.

This book complicates the study of the past by highlighting intersections between archaeological patterns in the South Asian subcontinent and in Southeast Asia, envisaging a shared maritime world of the past but avoids one-sided historical explanations such as Sanskritisation or Indianisation where cultural patterns are seen as flowing out of South Asia to other regions. Throughout the discussion, along with interconnectedness, there is a constant awareness of the presence of distinct local traditions and diversity as well as of the reinterpretation of shared traditions in other cultural contexts; for instance, while noting commonalities of script between the Tamil region and the kingdoms of Southeast Asia, regional differences in language, script and materials are also highlighted.

In fact, by delinking temples and the state, it is possible to delve more deeply into the networks within which coastal shrines were embedded. Chapter 6 highlights the complexity of these connections through an examination of the sacred geography and religious architecture along the Tamil coast and in the Indonesian archipelago between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. Instead of considering kings and political authority as the primary actors in the creation and maintenance of coastal temples, an examination of inscriptions highlights networks created by merchant guilds, religious groups and individuals such as pilgrims, Buddhist monks and Hindu brahmanas, as well as a diversity of fishing and sailing communities as forming the basis for maritime connectivity.

Chapter 4 too expands on this theme by examining the expansion of Buddhism across the sea and the role of monks and nuns. The chapter highlights the dynamic role of Buddhist relics such as stupas and ritual bronzes in maintaining and creating both vertical (i.e., between local communities, elites and monks) and horizontal networks (i.e., through the spread of the relic cult across the ocean). The geographical focus in this chapter is the Odisha coast and the Indonesian archipelago between the fifth and thirteenth centuries CE.

Third, the book questions essentialised constructed categories that emphasise difference and separation in favour of thinking of shared transnational maritime cultural landscapes. Chapter 5 begins to question constructed categories of Hindu/Buddhist, emerging in part from colonial knowledge projects, and emphasises that in the premodern period it would be difficult to discuss Hinduism and Buddhism as clearly demarcated silos; for instance, even royal temple cities such as Kanchipuram were not solely Hindu but also held an important position in the Buddhist sacred landscape.

Chapter 7 further explores this theme through a micro study of Buddhist images to question deeply held academic notions about the existence of a unified Buddhist Cosmopolis. Such essentialised types, Ray argues, elide the dynamic and changing ways in which the Buddha and his life were depicted in sculptures from the tenth century onwards and also the multiplicity of networks that become

evident from such a study; for instance, the data from eastern India show distinct sculptural representations of the Buddha not found in contemporary sites in Odisha or in South India but similar to those in sites as far away as Myanmar. Similarly, the worship of Avalokiteshwara could delineate a distinct network connecting parts of South Asia to Java or even China.

Chapter 8 continues taking apart constructed categories, in this case the association of specific shipwrecks with particular ethnic groups or, as it played out in modern geopolitics, into an association with a specific modern nation state. This fragmentation of shared traditions is also seen in colonial attempts to work out a boat typology associated with ethnic groups. Ray instead argues for the understanding of a holistic maritime cultural landscape, especially through the study of maritime communities. Ultimately, Ray questions historiographical traditions rooted in colonial forms of knowledge that led to the study of coastal monuments and artefacts in terms of form or from the perspective of religious texts, ignoring the networks of interconnectedness they created.

This book argues for a paradigm shift away from traditional modes of writing the history of the Indian Ocean world through the connected themes of writing, coastal shrines, religious architecture and mobility across the ocean, one that is not focused on land-based dynastic politics, essentialised categories or bounded by the geographies of modern nation states where the ocean is a mere pathway for movement, but one where the ocean becomes an active arena of engagement and interaction, studied through markers of maritime cultural landscapes—the people places and things that inhabited this space. Therefore, the book highlights both the local diversity of coastal shrines, maritime communities and archaeological/architectural remains and the transnational networks and connections that these places, actors and materials/structures enacted. Ultimately, the book suggests a possible road map for the future by highlighting the inclusion of coastal shrines as transnational sites of ‘outstanding value to humanity’, as well as the possibilities inherent in a more holistic cultural landscape perspective in the management of heritage sites.

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Ravinder Kaur, *Brand New Nation: Capitalist Dreams and Nationalist Designs in Twenty-First-Century India* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2020), pp. 360., \$28, ISBN 9781503612594 (Paperback).

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Ravinder Kaur's *Brand New Nation: Capitalist Dreams and Nationalist Designs in Twenty-First-Century India* is a carefully crafted research that examines India's massive nation branding campaigns and analyses the relationship between a nation-state and twenty-first-century global capitalism. The book introduces the