

# Water, water everywhere: Charting new courses for architectural history

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**ABSTRACT:** Too often the basic framework upon which historians hang the facts of architecture's past is constructed from presumptions that the only historic events of any consequence are those based on *terra firma* because that is where foundations must necessarily come to rest. Occasionally, we need to upend the usual exposition of contextual historical circumstances in order to chart new courses for our explorations of architecture worldwide. Michael Shenefelt's seafaring proposition, proffered as a template by which to explore the ebb and flow of any number of historical forces, can challenge the tyranny of Western architectural canon as well as doctrines of Western cultural hegemony. Ultimately, it can undermine those obdurately insoluble formulations that have typically imparted historical narratives as separately cloven chapters of different global building traditions clumsily butted together in reputedly comprehensive texts.

The integration of non-Western traditions in traditionally Eurocentric courses has always been problematic; but, with Shenefelt's approach as a springboard, this paper models an alternative didactic strategy that leaves deeply-rooted principles of historical taxonomy behind, embarking instead on a more fluid exposition of how the legacies of several cultures are rendered more coherent if studied as a great confluence of cross-cultural currents that overlap each other in one boundless yet tentacled sea.

The particular case study outlined here demonstrates how the historical dominion given to Atlantic trade is subsumed within a universal global impulse to sail the "Seven Seas" – evidenced in particular by the far-flung voyages, from Africa to Indonesia, of Ming dynasty sailors. However, in a larger sense, tales of Chinese nautical enterprises grant students permission to fathom, to think critically about the interconnectedness of other-worldly cultures – yesterday and today. These new yarns reorient the magnifications of storied European adventures through different lenses thereby correcting (mis)perceptions of supposed Western-only "ages of discovery" or cultural superiority.

**KEYWORDS:** architectural history, multiculturalism, thematic pedagogies

*Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

I live at the bottom of an ocean – or, more accurately, what was once an ocean over 65 million years ago. Lying near the geodetic center of a great land mass, largely treeless, and semi-arid in the last weeks of summer, the Flint Hills of Kansas convey such an incontrovertible image of "earth" that it strains credibility to encounter indisputable evidence to the contrary. Yet, Kansas was once inundated by a great inland sea (Everhart 2005). To accede to the essential truth of that alternative proposition is to challenge one's own deeply embedded and presumptive perceptions of the world. Ultimately, the reconciliation of two equally valid viewpoints offers a more complete conceptualization of the world which, in this case, means that I can never again

roll through the undulating terrain of the Flint Hills without simultaneously envisioning the floor of that prehistoric ocean. Parenthetically, the emblematic city of the Flint Hills, Manhattan, Kansas, is situated precisely where it is because its first settlers, having run their paddle steamer aground on a sandbar in the Kansas river, had literally run out of navigable waterways (Parrish 2004).

### 1.0 DARING TO VENTURE TO TIMBUKTU AND BACK

Arab conquerors of the Maghreb – which includes present-day Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco – came to regard the Sahara’s flowing sands as a turbulent river with treacherous currents that could sweep unwary travelers away to lands unknown. Abu al-Muhajir, by one account the last conquering commander of Islamic armies to have swept across the North African littoral in the seventh century, arrived at the shores of the Atlantic, dipped his toe into its vast stretches of water, and declared that there was nothing left to conquer. Moored securely to the land, he had reached the limits of what was conceivable to him. The unconquerable ocean was, from his vantage point, a barrier. It delimited his world and tethered his cosmopolitan reach. This single evocative passage, recounted twice by Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle in their book *Timbuktu: The Sahara’s Fabled City of Gold*, employs water as an analog for obstructions to further conquest and expanded knowledge as it alerts us to those other vibrant worlds that co-existed alongside the admirable accomplishments of Western civilization (de Villiers 2007).<sup>2</sup> However, those other “exotic” worlds are now proving more and more to have equaled and even outshone what we have routinely extolled about the West.

Implicitly, de Villiers and Hirtle urge us not merely to dip a toe into that unfathomable ocean and then turn away. We should take the plunge, explore its vast reaches, and then bring back our discoveries and fresh insights to our students in order to expand and redirect their parochial vistas outward toward a worldwide culture replete with both divergent and parallel happenstances.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.0 THE BAY OF NAPLES

Now, imagine how much more enriched intellectual constructs could become were we to introduce our students to yet another maritime-themed narrative that sits in counterpoise to the historic journey’s ending of Abu al-Muhajir. The end of the road for Romulus Augustulus, the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire, was Campania. After having been deposed by a “barbarian” and exiled from Ravenna in 476 CE to live in a villa on the Bay of Naples, the teenage Romulus Augustulus passed his last days in relative royal comfort, always visually cognizant of the sea.

In his book *Are We Rome?*, Cullen Murphy muses:

But the breeze off the bay is fresh and constant. Even without vendors selling *granita al limone* it would have been a congenial spot in which to endure your exile, especially on 6,000 *soldi* a year and with Vesuvius quiet. For many Roman emperors, the end had been far less kind, and the breeze far more fleeting, and felt only on the back of the neck (Murphy 2007, 189).

Even if more apocryphal than accurate, these romanticized embellishments of ancient accounts suggest that Romulus Augustulus did spend many of his idle hours on that headland gazing at the waters of the Mediterranean. The boy emperor had never constructed a single piece of architecture; but did he sit in his seaside villa contemplating the course of the great empire he had lost? Did it dawn on him that the edifying strength of that empire had been founded on and around eminently navigable waterways? Rome was, after all, the only historic entity to control the entire Mediterranean coastline (Norwich 2006). From the perspective of Augustulus, water then would have been not an insurmountable barrier to conquest or to the acquisition of knowledge. Abu al-Muhajir’s tribes had navigated the Sahara’s ocean of sand, guided by stars like a ship’s pilot, from the backs of “ships of the desert” – camels. For the

Romans, deserts and mountains were the more formidable barriers; it was the mighty sea that fortified a united “Romanized” citizenry.

### 3.0 PLOTTING NEW COURSES

Together these two counterbalancing tales, both set against the backdrop of water, conspire to plot a new course for the purveyors of history courses. They speak tellingly, through the metaphor of water seen alternately as impossibility or potentiality, of the diverse cultural modalities that inherently govern our worldviews. Now, it has been the standard schema in history courses to relegate non-Western cultures and their architectural styles to secondary roles, if they are espied at all. As a corollary, the standard architectural history textbook has tended, until recently, to distort all the thousands of years of all non-Western architecture by fusing it into a single chapter, dropped somewhere between chapters on the Byzantine and Romanesque styles, instead of dispersing its contents throughout the sweep of the annals of history.

Too often the basic framework upon which we hang the facts of architectural history is constructed out of a kit of parts that presumes the only historic events of any real relevance are those based on *terra firma* because that is where the foundations of structures must necessarily come to rest – on solid ground. By contrast, the role of great Neptune’s multitudinous, briny seas is more often than not whole neglected, as if ingesting their reputedly noxious waters could ever satiate those who thirst for wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

What if, from time to time, we were to swamp and upend the usual exposition of contextual circumstances in our architectural history courses? Michael Shenefelt had done just that in 2003 when he published his essay “Why Study the Greeks? Check the Map.” Arguing that “in most historical periods, land transport was largely irrelevant” (Shenefelt 2003, B11), the NYU philosophy professor effectively wielded a seafaring proposition to explain why the ancient Greeks dominated their world and why they continue to deserve to predominate in college curricula. In brief, the Greeks were masters of their world not just because they had assembled a coherent superior philosophical or artistic culture but because their separate city-states and islands could exchange cultural breakthroughs by virtue of their mastery of transport across an exceptionally smooth sea.<sup>5</sup>

His emphasis upon the free exercise of seafaring skills was a new take on an old proposition – that transportation technologies were crucial mechanisms for cultural dissemination and exchange. While his tactic buttressed the “Great Books” and “Dead White Men” models of a general, or liberal, education, Shenefelt had demonstrated, first, the intellectual necessity for reversing the perspective of authoritative texts – in this case, vistas of buildings seen not from the obdurate land but from the tireless seas – and then, second, the didactic mechanisms by which to introduce those countertexts.

### 4.0 WHY NOT STUDY THE GREEKS?

Shenefelt’s work anticipated a uniquely maritime history of the Greeks authored by John R. Hale. In *Lords of the Sea*, Hale contended that it was Athenian commitment to naval power and their mastery of the sea that propelled free inquiry, forged a democratic spirit, and underwrote “arts and letters.” In Hale’s view, the Parthenon, although elevated on the Acropolis, stood in the shadows of the greater, but now little referenced naval arsenal of Philo. “Philo himself . . . felt so proud of his naval arsenal that he wrote a book about it. No such sign of respect or public interest had been accorded the more prestigious Parthenon on the Acropolis” (Hale 2009, xxx). The arsenal was designed in the Doric style, like the Parthenon, but it far surpassed it or any other temple in Greece in size. Ought not it then also be covered in a history course as a complement to – not necessarily a substitute for – the more aesthetically prestigious Parthenon? After all, the arsenal stood at the true epicenter of Athenian power – Athens’s port of Piraeus.

When Hale does first focus our attention on the Parthenon, it is from a vantage point that is, at first, disconcertingly detached from our usual perception of the temple’s importance:

The glories of the Acropolis dominate our modern view of Athens. Ancient Athenians saw their city differently. In terms of civic pride, the temples of the gods were eclipsed by the vast complex of installations for the navy. . . . Only one contemporary literary reference to the Parthenon has survived to our time, in fragments of an anonymous comedy. Even here the Parthenon takes second place to [the mention of] nautical monuments (Hale 2009, xxx).<sup>6</sup>

To paraphrase Hale further, were a history class to devote as much time to the lively, daily functioning of Philo's Arsenal as to the shell of the creature – the Parthenon – that it spawned (Hale 2009, xxxiii), would not our perception of ancient Greek culture and its touchstone of matchless poise and grandeur be more balanced, not to mention more complete? An expansive, comprehensive panoramic vista from Zea Harbor at Piraeus rather than the delimiting, calculated framed view through the portal of the Propylaea alerts us to the urgency to chart new courses of action that similarly seek the fluid incorporation (not interjection) and the comfortable amassing (not coagulation) of non-Western building traditions into our architectural history classes. That urgency is underscored not only by the contemporary academy's self-stated mission to instill multicultural competencies among all its students but also by the demands imposed by accreditation criteria that undergo continual adjustment.<sup>7</sup>

### **5.0 CLAIMING NEW CULTURAL COMPETENCIES**

The integration of non-Western traditions in traditionally Eurocentric architectural history courses has always been problematic; but, by employing Shenefelt's approach as a springboard, history instructors can model for their students alternative didactic strategies that channel non-Western traditions into the usual reservoir of Western historical examples. That is, by leaving behind from time to time those deeply-rooted principles of Western art historical taxonomy, the history class can embark instead upon those more fluid thematic expositions wholly demonstrative of suggestions that diverse cultural manifestations do not always run as crosscurrents to each other but are, in fact, the result of great confluences of cultural streams that overlap with each other, merge with each other, and then part from each other through the medium of – as in the case of this paper – one boundless yet tentacled sea. Certainly, the ultimate goal here is to imbue students with multicultural competencies; and, by regularly treating course content in just such thematic groupings, we stake out and claim new contextual territories on which to prepare the ground for improved critical thinking skills among our students.<sup>8</sup>

### **6.0 WHEN CHINA RULED THE SEAS**

For instance, a substantial amount of ground in non-Western building traditions can be covered – and covered coherently in ways that are meaningful to today's students so as to emphasize both parallel and divergent building canons within a global culture – by sailing the same far-flung sea trading routes that the legendary Ming Dynasty treasure ships had plied. From Africa to Indonesia and perhaps parts beyond, this long-presumed exclusively landed civilization in China actually exerted quite a formidable naval presence when, at the order of the Yongle Emperor (Zhu Di) in 1403, it began building a flotilla of 317 large ships to be commanded by Zheng He, a eunuch admiral believed to have been a Muslim. He sailed most of the known world between 1405 and 1433 in seven epic voyages (Levathes 1994).<sup>9</sup>

The odyssey of China's treasure ships is revelatory for at least three reasons. First, the stereotypically isolationist Chinese were, at least briefly, a sublime naval power that ruled the waves over nearly half the world. Second, not only did these inconceivably gigantic Oriental junks dwarf anything in Columbus's modest Western exploratory fleet but they antedated Columbus's mere four Atlantic crossings by nearly 100 years. Third, these early 15th-century titanic Chinese treasure ships were such marvels of wooden structural engineering that they more than equaled Brunelleschi's contemporaneous structural acumen in building the masonry dome of Florence's cathedral. Thus, greater clarity and more detail about Ming dynasty accomplishments – beyond the conventional exposition of Beijing's Temple of Heaven – challenge the canon of a hegemonic, Western-only "renaissance."

The treasure ships – so named because they were laden with porcelains, silks, and art objects to be traded for African and Middle Eastern products – ivory, rare woods, incense, tortoise shells, medicines, pearls, and precious stones – facilitated the establishment of a system of tribute to the Chinese emperor throughout the Indian Ocean and the southern Pacific Ocean. Ironically, the primary exports of Europe – wool and wine – held little appeal for the Chinese (Levathes 1994).

When, in 1497/98, the Portuguese sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to the east coast of Africa, they found natives there wearing fine embroidered Chinese silk. The natives scoffed at the trinkets that Vasco da Gama offered them – bells, beads, and coral – in trade. The natives told tales about large treasure ships that had visited them long, long ago (Levathes 1994).

## **7.0 DEEPEST, DARKEST LANDLOCKED AFRICA**

Our perceptions of maritime explorations are so skewed toward an emphasis on Europeans working their way down the west coast of Africa that we are all but blind to the exploration of that continent's east coast by not only the Chinese but Indians and Arabs as well. The two latter cultures found their way aboard dhows southward to the prosperous coastline towns sitting at the termini of trading routes that originated inland at Great Zimbabwe (Garlake 1973).<sup>10</sup>

Great Zimbabwe is sub-Saharan Africa's largest known stone structure, a wondrous formal countertext to hackneyed historical perceptions that suggest Africa's only monumental architecture of note arose in ancient Egypt. Archaeologist Peter S. Garlake has deduced that the landlocked and culturally isolated circumstances of Great Zimbabwe did not prevent it from benefiting "from the economic growth of its coastal partners and eventually of remote peoples in other continents" (Garlake 1973, 173). As not only a political and religious center but a great trading reservoir of gold, copper, ivory, and perhaps even slaves, Great Zimbabwe was the ultimate basis for all those legends that hinted at the existence of cities of great wealth deep in the heart of darkest Africa (Gates 1999). Great Zimbabwe reached its zenith just as Zheng He was commanding his fleet (Garlake 1973).

## **8.0 A DELUGE OF THE WORLD'S MOST COMMON HOUSE TYPE**

While the record is not clear regarding any direct Chinese contact with Great Zimbabwe's trading ambit, it is well documented that, by the end of the 1300s, Chinese merchants had already established vibrant trading colonies on Java (Levathes 1994).<sup>11</sup> The Javanese kingdom, then at the peak of its ascendancy, had come to dominate large portions of the other islands of the archipelago including Sumatra, Borneo, Sulawesi, Papua, and Bali – essentially the modern-day Indonesia – in what is called the Majapahit Empire.

Indigenous gold and silver Javanese coins were eventually replaced by a copper coinage system that was first introduced there by the Chinese; and the importation of Chinese money had become widespread by the 1400s when Zheng He sailed the seas (Miksic 1996).<sup>12</sup> As more and more foreign merchants were attracted to Java, making it a major Southeast Asian trading center, copper coinage became so plentiful that practical ways had to be found to store it in individual households. The solution was to craft terra cotta money boxes, many of which were fashioned to look like animals – especially pigs because they were associated with prosperity (Miksic 1996). Owned by individuals, "piggy banks" probably also held some sort of ritualistic significance within a household.

The ancestral home of the Toraja region of Sulawesi was the focus of that culture. Called a "tongkonan" (meaning "a place where one sits"), this type of stilt house was the place where family members sat down together to discuss important affairs or to partake in ceremonies. The tongkonan was the symbol of familial identity and traditions, encompassing all the descendants of the founding ancestor (Kis-Jovak 1988).<sup>13</sup> Now, given population densities in this part of the globe – India to Southeast Asia to China – and given the prevalence of the tongkonan, the stilt house (of which there are other Asian and Oceanic variations besides the tongkonan) may be the most common house type in the world and thus a particularly noteworthy specimen for any global survey of architectural history.

The most dominant feature of any tongkonan was decidedly its saddleback roof. Deliberately accentuated in varying sizes to convey the degree of family wealth, it also symbolized the arc of the cosmos as well as the boats upon which the first settlers were said in tribal stories to have arrived (Kis-Jovak 1988).<sup>14</sup> Under the floor of the more important tongkonan dwellings, positioned somewhat centrally, an *a'ri ri posi* rose to symbolize the genesis of the house as well as its connection to the earth. It was literally the “navel post,” and its vertical line continued as a *petuo* post inside the house’s living quarters thus creating a symbolic world axis. It also referenced the fabled destruction of an entire early Toraja village by a downpour of water blown in on winds and channeled down each house’s central post, so engulfing all its cursed, incestuous villagers that nothing remained after the deluge (Kis-Jovak 1988).

The thick stilts of a tongkonan were a response to climate, lifting the dwelling above tropical dampness, although not necessarily floodwaters, while also facilitating ventilation, protecting families and foodstuffs from pests, providing undercroft shelter for livestock, and defending inhabitants from intruders by affording them time enough to retaliate against those attackers as they labored to saw through the stout supports. The heavy-timber structural members and construction techniques, like those employed in the saddleback roofs, are evocative of shipbuilding methods (Kis-Jovak 1988).

## 9.0 A PREDOMINANTLY WATER-COVERED SPHERICITY

In *Critical Path*, R. Buckminster Fuller extolled the majesty of those “massively keeled and ribbed, deep-bellied ships” (Fuller 1981, xx) that had altered the course of human history. Their admirals had proven the essential “water-covered sphericity” (Fuller 1981, xxi) of planet earth. Noting how humanity the world over, before the advent of continental highways, had “always strung [itself] out along the brooks, rivers, ponds, lakes, seas, and oceanfronts” (Fuller 1981, 5), Fuller was prompted in the 1940s to re-envision the global map. The resultant “Airocean World Map” – also called the “Dymaxion map” or “Fuller map” – depicted the earth’s several continents as a single island comprised of very nearly contiguous land masses. He had cleverly managed to find a way to construct a globe of the earth that, when unfolded and laid flat, portrayed a “nonvisibly distorted, one-world-island-in-one-world-ocean” (Fuller 1981, xxxi). The effect was visually striking and intellectually transformative. Fuller’s version of Pangaea was eminently sensible as a graphic means by which to demonstrate just how responsive the entirety of a coast-hugging human species had been to the one element that irrefutably surrounds and yet isolates us all – together. Acknowledgment of humanity’s deep dependence on water naturally propels us toward the revision of the story of humankind’s cultural milestones not as neatly partitioned chapters of bounded content but as interwoven, oversailing episodes, thus jettisoning what Fuller had decried as “remotely-deployed-from-one-another, differently colored, differently credoed, differently cultured” and “multipeopled, bias-fostering” notions of “otherness” (Fuller 1981, xvii, xii, xi).

## 10.0 CHINA’S CURRENT GLOBAL REACH

The nautical enterprises of the Chinese of yesteryear grant our students today permission to fathom the interconnectedness of other world cultures as diverse as the Zimbabweans and the Javanese. Knowledge of the epic Chinese voyages reorients storied European explorations – like that of Columbus in 1492; and that very different lens corrects inordinately magnified (mis)representations of a Western-only “Age of Discovery.”

That same lens of critical reflection also helps us to make sense of current events. Six hundred years after Zheng He sailed the oceans, modern China is reaching out once again. It claims it merely wants to hug the world. However, it is clear that modern China is seeking something more than exploratory adventurism. It is exerting a growing presence in African countries such as Kenya where, by sponsoring the building of much needed infrastructure projects such as highways and ports, the Chinese hope to curry favor among the Kenyans in exchange for access to energy resources that can fuel Beijing’s economic program. That prospering economy allows the average Chinese worker to afford exotic products from overseas like his Ming era forebears. Naturally, Kenyan wildlife is at risk as the Chinese seek to quench their deeply inculcated cultural thirst for medicinal rhino horn and high grade, sculpture-worthy

elephant ivory. And, in Europe, China's most important infrastructure project is its investment in the Greek port of Piraeus, which the Chinese see as a crucial gateway to the European and Black Sea markets (National Public Radio 2011). We have come full circle.

## 11.0 HISTORY REFUSES TO BE CONTAINED

Every dedicated scholar, writes historian Robert Darnton, understands the frustration associated with the inability to convey to others the “fathomlessness” (Darnton 2009, 75) of the past. Historiography “refuses to be contained within the confines of a single discipline” (Darnton 2009, 206). In charting new routes for architectural history, the best of its critical thinkers will find “themselves crossing paths in a no-man’s land located at the intersection of [dozens of] fields of study” (Darnton 2009, 176). Multicultural countertexts – such as a basic familiarity with the ebb and flow of worldwide maritime explorations – can suddenly plop unfamiliar phenomena into familiar waters. The resultant, ever-outward expanding ripples eventually envelop the world. It becomes a phenomenon so sweeping in scope that, as Darnton contends, it defies “conclusive interpretations” (Darnton 2009, 86) and, therefore, scuttles the exclusionary “otherness” brought about by canonical interpretations.

## CONCLUSION

More than many others, architectural historians, especially those teaching in architecture programs, must take the mariner's helm of well-trimmed ships. Despite being moored securely to their individuated backgrounds and anchored to their professional specializations, safely covering familiar territory by teaching what they have come to know best in the same manner by which they themselves were once taught, historians must conceive alternative courses of global exploration. It is incumbent upon them, especially today, to embark upon sweeping odysseys that sail out courageously across the rolling seas of worldwide cultural literacy, tacking back and forth across that bar that has for too long separated their generally Westernized scholarly passions, methodological constructs, and didactic objectives too sharply from the rest of humanity — a humanity that, as in millennia past, still largely lies strung along the world's waterways. Water is everywhere.

*He went like one that hath been stunned,  
And is of sense forlorn;  
A sadder and a wiser man,  
He rose the morrow morn.*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge  
*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*<sup>15</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," *Adventures in English Literature*, eds. J. B. Priestley and Josephine Spear (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963) 401 [lines 119-122].

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the majority of scholars of Islamic conquests in the Maghreb agree that it was actually Uqba bin Nafi al-Fihri, Abu al-Muhajir's great rival, who rode his horse into the Atlantic until its waters lapped up onto the steed's belly whereupon Uqba, invoking the Lord's name, lamented his inability to extend the faith any further. In either case, "...the moment passed into legend..." and the image of the progress of a religious conqueror being "halted only by the ocean remains one of the most arresting and memorable in the history of conquests" (Kennedy 2007, 214). In 670, Uqba founded Kairouan in what is now Tunisia. Again, according to legend, it was one of Uqba's soldiers who there had unearthed a golden goblet from the Sahara's sands. A spring miraculously gushed forth with waters held to have originated from the same source as waters that fed a sacred well in Mecca. Kairouan became the "Mecca of the Maghreb."

<sup>3</sup> For instance, one such happenstance occurred in Western civilization's seminal year 1492. The Songhai Empire, centered at the bend of the Niger river in western Africa, was then ruled by Sonni Ali Ber, whose repressive policies were most directly felt by the scholars in Timbuktu. The tyrannical ruler boasted a fleet of 400 war barges. Yet, astonishingly, on 6 November 1492, he died accidentally by drowning in a flash flood while encamped in a desert wadi (de Villiers 2007). That very same day, the Italian sea captain Christopher Columbus was exploring the northeast coast of Cuba near the mouth of the Río de Mares (Dor-Ner 1991). Soon afterward, in 1493, the usurper Askia Mohamed I seized the Songhai throne and, to legitimize his power, allied himself with the scholars of Timbuktu, thus ushering in the second and greatest golden age in that city's history, a period of intellectual inquiry that coincided with and rivaled the High Renaissance in Italy (de Villiers 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Some phrasing here was inspired by William Shakespeare, "Macbeth," *Adventures in English Literature*, eds. J. B. Priestley and Josephine Spear (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1963) 147 [Act II, Scene II, lines 61-64], specifically the lines: *Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood | Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather | The multitudinous seas incarnadine, | Making the green one red.*

<sup>5</sup> John Julius Norwich is one of several historians who has recently reaffirmed the essential benevolence of the Mediterranean, calling it "utterly unique, a body of water that might have been deliberately designed, like no other on the surface of the globe, as a cradle of cultures. Almost enclosed by its surrounding lands, it is saved from stagnation by the Straits of Gibraltar, those ancient Pillars of Hercules which protect it from the worst of the Atlantic storms and keep its waters fresh and . . .

unpolluted. It links three of the world's six continents; . . . it also provided the principal means of communication. Roads in ancient times were virtually nonexistent; the only effective method of transport was by water, which had the added advantage of being able to support immense weights immovable by any other means. The art of navigation may have been still in its infancy, but early sailors were greatly assisted by the fact that throughout much of the eastern Mediterranean it was possible to sail from port to port without ever losing sight of land" (Norwich 2006, 1).

<sup>6</sup> It is not only the Parthenon, of all things quintessentially Greek, that takes second place to the sea in Hale's nautical history; the legendary prowess of Greece's hoplite (citizen-soldier) land forces is also downplayed in contrast to Hale's emphasis on naval campaigns. For instance, when first beheld by Hale, the epic Battle of Thermopylae that pitted Spartans against Persians (480 BCE), so utterly synonymous with courage against overwhelming odds, is seen but distantly, as if from sea through a spyglass. His countertext concentrates, instead, on the sometimes neglected naval battle at Artemisium that raged on simultaneously with the defeat of the 300 Spartans at the "gate of hot [water] springs." Rather than recount the land battle from a vantage point *in situ*, Hale presents it as a second-hand narrative reported to a squadron of Greek ships, or triremes. In some ways, Hale's proposition is the rhetorical counterpart to that wonderful panoramic vista in Albrecht Altdorfer's 1529 painting *The Battle of Issus* in which the heady march of classical Western culture confronts the sobering enormity of countervailing Oriental forces marshaled from around the rest of the world. As we scrutinize the mass of humanity engaged in an intense battle between Alexander the Great and Darius III, the king of Persia, we realize that the Mediterranean basin and its European coastlines are barely identifiable, for Altdorfer has chosen to reverse the vantage point from which we might normally expect to witness the *melée*. We are coerced into looking across the Mediterranean *from* the North to the South because, in this instance, "North" uncustomarily coincides with the *bottom* edge of the canvas. If only architectural history courses had the same courage to swivel round, to "come about" — even upside down.

<sup>7</sup> Most notably, the National Architectural Accrediting Board [NAAB] validates the necessity for all architecture students to be broadly and liberally educated. It recently modified its conditions for accreditation so that the artificial fault line within the previous set of performance criteria dividing an understanding of "traditions" (not "histories") into separate Western versus non-Western categories was erased in favor of a rubric that now blends the perspectives of "parallel and divergent canons and traditions" all into a single great "historical traditions and global culture" criterion (National Architectural Accrediting Board 2009, 20).

<sup>8</sup> The viability of thematic approaches in art history survey courses has been recently reaffirmed by other art historians (Dell'Aria 2013). The important point here, however, is that instructors should take care to thread themes as signposts throughout the course and not merely interject them as singular and, therefore, disconnected interludes.

<sup>9</sup> Zheng He's flotilla of 317 ships, along with over 3,000 other Chinese vessels, comprised the largest navy in the world at that time and housed a virtual "floating city" populated by 27,000 to 28,000 crew members aboard the treasure ships and their support vessels — supply ships, water tankers, cavalry transports, warships, and patrol boats — the largest armada ever assembled until the Allied invasion fleets of World War I. Zheng He died during his last voyage in 1433 and was buried at sea. During the course of the next century, China began to retreat from the sea and turned inward, into a period of self-imposed isolation. Because of rival private Chinese sea merchants, the government restricted the size of sailing ships to just two masts. Then it forbade the going-to-sea entirely, making it a capital offense — punishable by death. Ship building became a lost art; and the treasure ships were left to rot away in their ports.

<sup>10</sup> The Great Zimbabwe site was first settled in the 200s AD; but the first major stone structures appeared there in the 1100s AD and were eventually expanded to their present size by the year AD 1450. Great Zimbabwe ("zimbabwe" means "stone house") consisted of two major parts: (1) a Hill-Fortress, or Acropolis, which served as a citadel and tribal chieftain's official and ceremonial residence; and (2) the Valley Ruins, of which the Great Enclosure, or Temple, was the most impressive structure. The Great Enclosure, or Temple, was comprised of an elliptical circuit of stone walls, laid without mortar, ranging 16 to 35 feet high. The lower wall on the north side permitted easy surveillance of any activity within the enclosure from atop the Hill-Fortress. Initial assumptions that the Great Enclosure functioned originally to protect a cluster of habitable huts have been superseded in recent decades by theories surmising that the Great Enclosure served as a transit camp for slaves awaiting shipment to the coast. These same slaves, traded to Indian and Arab explorers and merchants, may have also formed the caravans that transported other treasures and commodities down to the east coast of Africa (Mallows 1984).

<sup>11</sup> In fact, Chinese refugees, most likely seeking relief from the duress of persecution, famine or floods, had begun settling on Java as early as the tenth century.

<sup>12</sup> Gold and silver were not well suited to commonplace monetary transactions. By contrast, Chinese copper coins, available in much smaller denominations, proved more desirable as a medium of exchange in the everyday marketplace. In a prospering Javanese economy that was growing more

complex with increasing numbers of small, daily monetary transactions, a shift to copper coinage indicates that the Javanese work force was moving from agrarian jobs into a wide variety of wage-based occupational specialties; and they were, as a consequence, compelled to acquire most of their daily needs through purchase rather than self-sustenance.

<sup>13</sup> Ancestry was traced on both sides – father and mother – so that a house did not belong to any one individual but an individual belonged to many houses.

<sup>14</sup> Toraja origin stories speak of a small fleet of eight boats, or proas, sailing forth from the mythical island of Pongko' only to be driven off course by a storm and eventually landing on Sulawesi. These first settlers of the Toraja region followed the Sa'dan river upstream where they fashioned their houses to look like proas. Each end of the most daringly pronounced saddleback roofs was supported by a vertical wooden post, or *tulak somba*, that, in turn, was ornamented with buffalo horns or buffalo head sculptures. Buffalos were common symbols of prosperity and ritual sacrifice. Their horns were arrayed as talismans against evil.

<sup>15</sup> Coleridge, *Adventures* 414 [lines 622-625].