Maritime Silk Routes: discussion paper

For UNESCO Expert Meeting, London, 30-31st May, 2017

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Drafted by Tim Williams[1], Institute of Archaeology, UCL, for the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO

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Introduction

The overland Silk Roads have received considerable scholarly attention, and recently were the focus of the UNESCO World Heritage serial transboundary nomination project (Williams 2014)[2]. It is evident that the maritime routes, however, also have considerable potential for understanding the movements of people, ideas and goods within and between Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe. Eivind Seland, for example, notes that the study of early maritime commerce has "long depended on separate regional archaeologies and a handful of literary sources with Western/Roman bias … [but a] recent surge in scholarly interest has led to a vast increase in data that has fostered a more balanced understanding of the commercial, human, and material aspects of ancient Indian Ocean trade" (Seland 2014, 367). The same is happening in Southeast and East Asia, where major developments in maritime and coastal archaeology are adding complexity and depth to our understanding of the Maritime Silk Routes and their impact on the development of the region.

As with the landward Silk Roads, there was no single route, but a multiplicity of interactions, varying in scale and impact, both over time and across vast regions. Key evidence will include ports, their hinterlands, forts, coastal navigation sites, wrecks and cargoes; it will need to encompass changing and complex developments in shipbuilding, navigation, trade, migration, and international relations; and reflect the exchange of science, technology, religions, beliefs and cultures.

How might we best encompass this heritage, spread across a vast region and oceans within any World Heritage nomination project?

This discussion paper aims to set out briefly a few of the crucial issues that will be explored at the UNESCO Expert Meeting in London, 30-31 May 2017, as a starting point for a consideration of the concept, strategy and way forward for any potential World Heritage nomination of the Maritime Silk Routes.

Aims of the meeting

1) Consider the chronological and geographic scope of the Maritime Silk Routes (MSR)
2) Explore the range of archaeological evidence for the MSR, considering how these might comprise 'attributes' and values of the MSR
3) To explore potential for serial nominations of the MSR, including trans-national working, coordination mechanism, and data exchange.

Terminology/name

The term Silk Road was first used by the 19th century German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen (1877) to describe the network of landward routes between Western and Eastern Asia. Èdouard Chavannes (1903) expanded the term to encompass maritime routes, especially those connecting Indian ports. The concept spread widely through the 20th century, most often called the Maritime Silk Roads, but with many other variants being used as well. Indeed, numerous terms have been applied to maritime shipping networks: ***Maritime Silk Roads***, the ***Maritime Silk Routes*** and the ***Spice Routes*** being the most common, but other terms, such as the *Cinnamon Route*, *Clove Route*, and *Monsoon Route*, have also been used for specific regions, cargoes or chronologies.

The term **Maritime Silk Routes**, both plural (as there were multiple routes) and routes (rather than 'Roads'), might be preferable, and that has been used in this discussion paper

[2] Available from http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1356660/ or http://www.icomos.org/images/mediatheque/ICOMOS_WHThematicStudy_SilkRoads_final_lv_201406.pdf

(but the meeting may wish to discuss this!).

Chronology

Chronology and geographic scope (below) are intimately related.

As with the land routes, there is no doubt that very early trading/exchange took place within the area covered by the Silk Routes, dating back to at least the 2nd millennium BCE. Neither is there any question that shipping lanes are still of huge international significance today. The question, as with the land routes, is during which periods did these maritime routes have shape the societies and civilizations along them?

Early evidence of long distance movement includes cloves, probably from the Maluku Islands in eastern Indonesia, found in the Syrian city of Terqa, on the banks of the middle Euphrates, and dated to c. 1700 BCE (Potts 1997, 270). By the 5th century BCE the Greek historian Herodotus wrote about the spice cassia, which probably came from China.

Figure 1. Periplous of the Erythreaen Sea: map according to the description from source text (George Tsiagalakis / CC-BY-SA-4 licence).

Start of major movements/impacts

As with land routes, the scale of interactions seem to have developed during the Han dynasty (starting 206 BCE). There appears to have been a substantial increase in the scale of exchange, particularly between Japan, the Korea peninsular and China, and an increased in the volume of movement between China and Southeast Asia. Perhaps crucially, by the 2nd century BCE, regular contact had been established between China and the Malay peninsula/Straits of Malacca region, and this brought traders into contact with Indian traders. The latter had already established strong links with the Persian Gulf and Southeast Asia. Thus it might be argued that the 2nd century BCE could mark the beginning of major

impacts of long-distance maritime exchange and movement on the development of societies, for the first time bringing significant interactions ranging from the Persian Gulf in the west to Japan in the East. Materials found in the Hepu Tombs on the south coast of Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, bordering the Gulf of Tonkin, China, demonstrate the range and geographic spread of material at this time, including semi-precious beads from India and ceramics from the Parthian Empire (Xiong 2014).

Alternatively, others have argued that it was in the 1st century CE that exchanges transformed the Indian Ocean into a unified space, embedded in a Eurasian and African world-system (Beaujard 2005, 420). An example of this, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (Figure 1), probably dating from the mid-1st century CE, described navigation and trading from Roman ports such as Berenice, on the coast of the Red Sea, to Sindh and South Western India.

Xinru Liu (2001) argues that maritime trade only formed the main share of interregional trade, surpassing the land routes, in the 11th century CE. This may the case, but there is little doubt that earlier maritime exchange had already made a significant impact upon the communities and polities throughout the region (for example, see Rajan 2011).

The end

This may be even more difficult to agree upon. The sea lanes of the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and East Asia are still vitally important today, so when will any nomination concept/strategy set the cut-off? The main impact of the maritime routes was certainly later than the overland Silk Roads, and the end date must be later than the 16th century cut-off that was adopted for the landward nomination strategy.

There is a need to consider whether to encompass the impact of early European colonisation and trading empires, and their impacts across the Silk Routes:

- With the discovery of new navigation routes in the ***late fifteenth century***, European ships made their way to East and South Asia in increasing numbers, leading to an intensification of European engagement with Asia and East Africa, with major political and commercial impacts.
- The arrival of European organisations in force at the ***beginning of the 17th century***, with the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) (1602) and the British East India Company (1600), for example, might be taken as a major change in how the routes operated, and where their impact was felt.
- The ***mid or late-19th century*** (end of the Second Opium War in 1860), with changes in the nature of trading relationships across many regions.
- The second half of the ***19th century*** with the advent of steamships, which changed maritime activity from ‘fair weather’ to ‘all weather’, broke the dominance of the Monsoon winds sailing patterns, and enabled longer port-to-port journeys, which marginalized some communities/coastal groups (see Ray 2015, 193).

Geographic extent

In part, this of course depends on which chronology is adopted.

The MSR spans a vast region, including: East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, East Africa, Western Asia, and the Mediterranean (Figure 2). It encompassed interactions across the East Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea, South China Sea, Java Sea, Strait of Malacca, Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, at the very least.

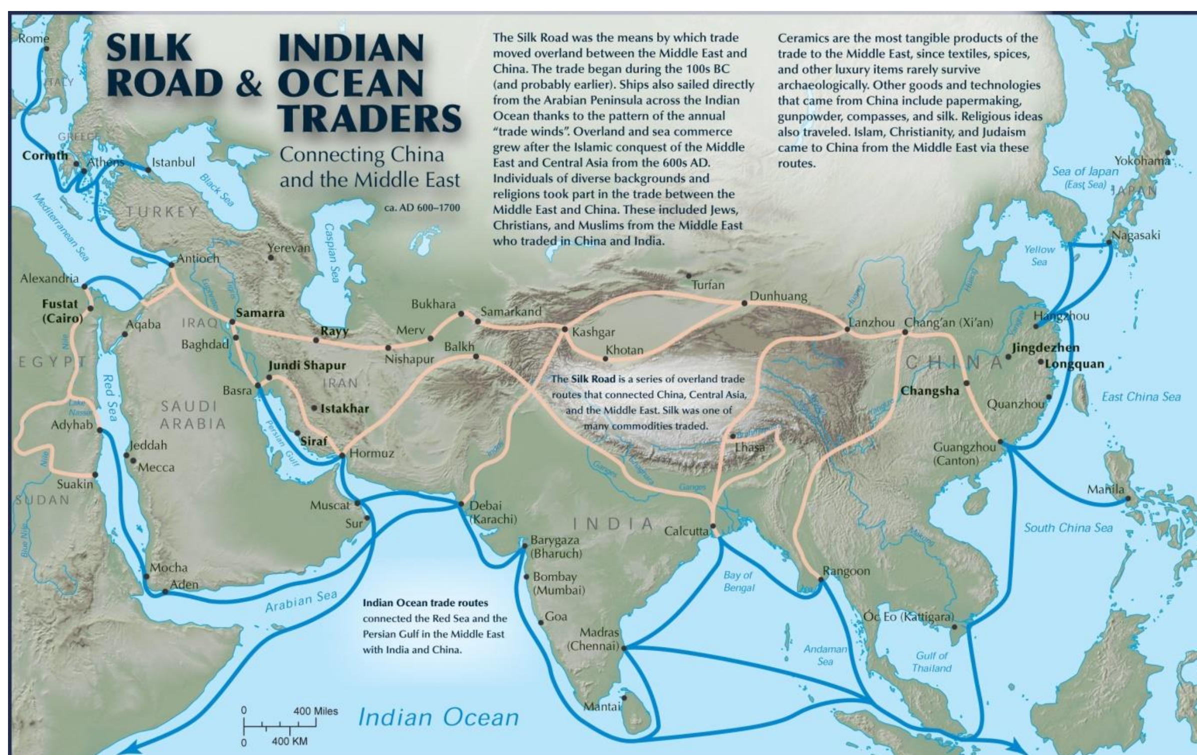

Figure 2. Land and Maritime Silk Routes (© National Geographic).

Modern-day nation states

The MSR might encompass at least the following modern-day political entities:

East Asia: Japan, Korean peninsula, China, Taiwan

South East Asia: Philippines, Indonesia (including Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and the Maluku Islands), Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia (including Sabah), Myanmar

South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives

Middle East and the Gulf: Iran, Iraq, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt

North-east Africa and East Africa: Djibouti, Eretria, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania ... and further south?

Mediterranean: Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy ... and on (see Robinson and Wilson 2011, for a full discussion).

Some theoretical issues and constructs

Complex exchange system: Nodes, corridors and sections

Philippe Beaujard (2005, 412-3) defined a complex exchange system as: "(1) a system represents a '*complex* unit and the complex of relations between the whole and its parts'; (2) a system is made up of cumulative *interactions*; (3) which constitute the *organization* of the system. The character of this organization is, in essence, both complex and dynamic. The system generates both order and disorder, unity and diversity".

A Deleuzian conception of assemblage has been deployed to develop the framework for cultural routes (Smith 2007): nodes-corridors-sections. This was explicitly used for the landward Silk Roads nomination strategy (Williams 2014). This framework envisions civilisation as territorial output of the flow of goods and people and the encounter of ideas: and thus, sections of nodes are linked by corridors of movement. The corridor, projected to the geographic plane, takes a form of surface with its overall value outweighing the sum of the nodes. The objective is to create dialogue between various nodes (probably the port cities) and communities with an equal status. However, along these corridors of interaction, smaller sites are significant in understanding the complexity of encounters and exchange.

Diversity of routes

As with landward Silk Roads, within the MSR there was never just one route but many. These change over time (especially with the development of ship technology), reflect the waxing and waning importance of specific ports (and the empires/polities that controlled them), and change with the seasons (e.g. the monsoon winds) (see Beresford 2013). This changes are also reflected by the impact that the MSR has on coastal communities and their hinterlands.

As a result, with the land routes, it is perhaps better to think of corridors of movement between nodes (ports), rather than hard and fast lines on maps?

Maritime regions/hubs

To what extent can we see maritime hubs or networks developing in different regions? Can we compartmentalise regions as having specific characteristics, such as the Mediterranean, the Red Sea/Gulf, the Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and Southern China, and Eastern Asia? Are such maritime 'hubs' or regions useful in conceptualising the MSR? If so, when and how do these interact to form long-distance exchange systems?

Maritime cultural landscapes and seascapes

Christer Westerdahl's (1992) concept of maritime cultural landscapes has now applied in many regions. In the Mediterranean, for example, Fernand Braudel's (1996) conceptualization of the northern and southern shores as distinct entities. This concept has also been used to define the boundaries of Southeast Asia (e.g. Manguin, Mani, and Wade 2011; Reid 1993).

There are clear strengths in this conception. "The concept of a maritime cultural landscape highlights the interconnectedness of maritime spaces and cultural traditions. It highlights varied articulations of social and political power, as well as regional and local nautical traditions" (Ray 2016, 11).

The extent to which we can use maritime cultural landscapes/seascapes to help define maritime regions is worthy of debate. One challenge, for any large transnational nomination project, is the consideration of whether the nomination can be divided into a series of interlinked nomination projects, perhaps with a smaller groups of State Parties and geographic range in each: defining regions/cultural landscapes may be a way forward.

Mechanisms of exchange

> "Trade is not the only method for transferring surplus. Political domination and conflict also play roles (for example, the imposition of tribute and taxes, looting, and so forth), as do religious networks and relations of production (the relationship between the governing elites and the producers). The export and import of products

> are closely tied to ideologies, themselves inseparably meshed with political forms" (Beaujard 2005, 415).

An example of this is Himanshu Prabha Ray's exploration of maritime trade of India (Ray 2003; Ray 2006; Ray and Alpers 2007), which makes a strong argument that Buddhism was key to the relationship between seaports, riverine sites, and hinterland routes seaports.

As with the landward Silk Roads, the balance between trade and elite exchange, and the impacts of travel and contact, need to be explored within the nomination project. These are often intermeshed. For example, Takeshi Hamashita noted that between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries CE tributary states would send regular tribute missions to the Chinese capital, under the tribute-envoy system, and new envoys were sent in return by the Chinese emperor each time the ruler of a tributary state changed. 'This tributary relationship was at the same time a political, economic, and trade relationship. … This tribute trade was not limited to Chinese merchants from East and Southeast Asia; Indian, Muslim, and European merchants also participated, confirming the link among coastal ports' (Hamashita 2011, 125). However, perhaps even more so than the landward Silk Roads, the maritime routes had a strong commercial trading element, and well before the arrival of westerners, there had been a substantive shift away from tribute to trade (Dreyer 2015). The changes from command economies, to commercialised trade, may be part of this narrative.

> "By thinking of trade as a composite process in which production, transport, and marketing processes are intrinsically linked, the level of organization and development that were required to succeed in commerce becomes readily apparent. … The evidence of the people involved in maritime trade further brings to light the complexity of managing successful trading ventures: trading diasporas reveal a high level of sophistication in dealing with problems of communication inherent in pre-industrial trade; the obvious level of specialization among merchants and traders further speaks to the advanced structure and scale of maritime trade." (Rice 2016, 111)

Paul Gilroy, for example, discusses the interaction of sailors, pirates, and port city dock workers, and how these marginalized historical actors influence maritime urban centres (Gilroy 2007). The port is far more than a place where cargoes are loaded and unloaded: it belongs to a wider world.

Initially perhaps, most maritime trade was conducted over relatively short distances, with material being exchanged in ports and coastal markets, with some of the cargo being consumed locally, or moved into landward/riverine exchange systems, and some goods moving on with different ships. This is much the same as happened on the landward routes: a single caravan did not travel the whole length of the route. As Beckwith notes (2009, 28), for the land routes, it is impossible to separate long distance trade from local trade components (be that nomadic, pastoral, agricultural, or urban economic activity); the same can be said of at least the early maritime trade.

Before the development of larger ships capable of travelling on long-distance open-sea routes, shipping, and the associated inter-cultural interaction, the bulk of shipping may have been largely confined to coastal routes. For example, early shipping routes between the southern Korean Peninsula and mainland China are likely to have hugged the coastline around the Yellow Sea. Similarly, ships bound for China from Japan crossed to Korea first rather than braving long-distance routes direct to southern China. However, as ship technology advanced (e.g. Quipeng 2003, 497), new routes opened up, taking advantage of (and adapting to) the winds, currents and monsoon weather of the region. By the c 7/8th century CE single ships began to travel considerably distances. This is a significantly different kind of operation, probably increasing the scale of material moved over long distances. By the Tang Dynasty, for example, there is evidence of sea routes between Yeongam (South Jeolla Province, Republic of Korea) and the Shanghai region (China), but

also continued use of the land routes between Namyang (Gyeonggi Province, South Korea) and the Shandong Peninsula (China) (Woo 2010, 208).

Goods & cargoes

While there is evidence of a wide range of materials and products being moved across the regions, much more research is needed: an analysis of commodities requires more archaeological work (excavations to retrieve well-dated sequences, and not just from elite production and consumption sites), technological/materials-based research and historical research.

We are aware, of course, of a number of prominent high value goods: for example, silk, other textiles (including cotton, woollens, carpets), ceramics (porcelain, celadon, etc.), lacquerware, metals, gemstones, pearls, ivory, tea, hardwoods, slaves, opium, and spices (for example, originally from Southeast Asia - pepper, ginger, cloves, turmeric, nutmeg, camphor, cassia; India – cardamom; Sri Lanka - cardamom and cinnamon; Somalia - myrrh; Arabian Peninsula - frankincense; Middle East - saffron).

An understanding of cargoes, their composition, the balance of goods, single merchants or groups of suppliers, change over time, etc., still needs considerable research. Recent wrecks, such as Nanhai One, being studied in the Guangdong Maritime Silk Road Museum, will make a significant contribution to this. How any nomination project reflects the character of materials and the organisation of exchange, will be an important consideration.

Colonialism

The impacts of colonialism will be a crucial issue to consider for any nomination strategy. This does not simply apply to the later European interventions, but there were numerous episodes of encounter and conquest. How these are integrated into the narrative of exchange and dialogue needs to be sensitively addressed.

Types of sites/landscapes

The interconnected land and sea routes in coastal zones encompassed crucial articulations in systems of production, supply and redistribution. The interrelationship between land routes and port cities is already very evident on the Indian subcontinent, and in the current Indian tentative list[3]. The relationship between hinterlands, long-distance land routes and ports (the port-catchment nexus) must be a vital part of the complex narrative of the Maritime Silk Routes.

The historic city of Seoul is a good example of a city that was impacted by the links that existed between terrestrial routes and river-based transportation, with the latter linking the city with seaborne traffic. Similarly, Hepu (Beihai, Guangxi), a coastal port in southern China, was connected to a network of rivers that enabled ships to penetrate, via the Ling canal, directly to the Yangtze River and thus the Central Plains (Xiong 2014, 1231-2). Maritime exchange between East Asia, China and South-East/South Asia was conducted through a very large number of regional and local ports. The complexity of these networks cannot be underrated.

Port cities

The term port "is often used rather loosely to indicate a coastal center, with no attempt to differentiate it from landing place, beach and inlet market places, tidal harbors at which cargoes were exchanged, or coastal centers where customs duties were levied" (Ray 2016,

[3] http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5492/

11). Here we focus on substantial port cities, in terms of establishing major nodes within maritime routes, but it is evident that any nomination concept/strategy would also needs to consider this wider range of archaeological sites (see below).

Port cities have always been nodal points on the intersecting webs of trade, interaction and acculturation. As a nexuses of cultural, economic and personnel connections in a world system, ports have been facilitators of both immigration and emigration, transit points for goods and people. They are also markers of patterns of empires, colonialism and development. "Cities are sited at the nodes of the networks; they direct production and exchange according to a hierarchical structure" (Beaujard 2005, 414).

Major port cities are likely to be an important starting point for identifying significant nodes on the MSR (see below).

Buildings & activities

Within port cities, there will need to be consideration of the selection of specific buildings, areas and activities. It will be important to look beyond elite housing/structures, to capture evidence of the range of Maritime Silk Routes impacts within port communities. For example, it is likely that there will need to be a representative sample of:

- harbour installations
- wharfs
- warehouses
- factories/production sites
- shipyards
- markets
- elite housing
- domestic housing
- customs and administrative buildings
- foreign residents/districts
- religious buildings (including shrines)
- enclaves
- etc.

A significant problem with ports is their often continued use into the modern era, with resultant impacts on the scale of archaeological deposits and historic building/structure survival (see survival, below).

Ports and their hinterlands

Ports are the hubs for regional trade between coast and hinterland. This port-hinterland nexus is crucial to the Maritime Silk Routes, so consideration of hinterland routes, supply sites, way-stations and connectivity will be vital. The relationship of the coast to inland waterways, such as rivers and streams, is also important: for example, "the mouths of large rivers have always served as points in the development of commerce and trade" (Beaujard 2005, 415).

Other forms of coastal exchange

As Ray mentioned (2016, 11) there were numerous possible coastal interactions with maritime shipping, including landing places, beaches, inlet market places, and tidal harbours. Archaeologically, many of these may be very difficult to identify, and may lack the physical remains that are often associated with World Heritage nomination. Nevertheless, their impact on understanding the complexity of routes and impacts should not be ignored.

Forts

At various times and places forts were important for tracking coastal movements, for administrative and commercial/taxation roles, and/or provide protection for coastal settlements. These range from major harbour protection and control, to small coastal stations, but all of these will be important to consider in the context of reflecting the range of maritime heritage associated with the MSR.

Navigation markers

Another aspect of maritime networks was the visual landscape that provided landmarks to shipping. These included prominent natural features, but also included easily visible coastal structures. Many of these were religious in nature, such as the Buddhist temple at Nagapattinam, on the Tamil coast, which was a major landmark for shipping from the 7th century CE, or the Islamic minaret at the Huaisheng Mosque in Guangzhou. They could also include purpose built structures, such as wooden posts, with or without lanterns, “driven into the seabed to assist navigators in approaching the coast” (Ray 2016, 12). Coastal forts were also important structures that could be seen from a long distance.

Production sites

We are aware of a number of prominent goods, for some of which we might identify the archaeological evidence of production sites: for example, ceramics (porcelain, celadon, etc.), textile workshops, raw material extraction sites, tea plantations, etc.

Survival: long-term coastal change, inter-tidal and submerged archaeology

In many places, coastal erosion, changing sea levels, silting, etc. have radically changed the ancient coastline, and thus the archaeological record. In some case this has improved archaeological deposit survival: for example, the silting of the harbours at Miletus (Turkey) which is now located 9-10 km away from the Aegean Coast, or Ephesus some 5 km from the coast, potentially preserving significant archaeological evidence of the harbour installations at both cities. However, other sites along the same coastline, such as Gümüşlük (ancient city of Myndos), have been eroded and masonry harbour installations can now be seen under a few metres of water.

Coastal change, likely to be exacerbated in this era of climate change, may lead to significant loss of archaeological sites, or sometimes providing a context for submerged preservation. Any nomination strategy would need to be cognisant of the regional biases in the surviving archaeological record, and the challenges that these sites present for site management and conservation (see below).

Wreck sites, underwater archaeological preserves & maritime collections

There is a huge amount of data regarding the Maritime Silk Routes comes from underwater sites. Primarily, this focuses on wrecks, with crucial information regarding ***cargoes***, ***ships and ship technologies***, and the contribution that such material can have for the ***organisation of trade/exchange***.

Individual wreck sites can be preserved in-situ, although long-term degradation and management issues, present significant challenges. The inclusion of in-situ wrecks sites in a Maritime Silk Routes project would be complex. Underwater preserves, to protect areas of shipwrecks/cargoes and/or submerged features, may offer a management strategy, but still

present long-term challenges for sustainable management. Whether such sites would be considered within a MSR nomination, and the problems of not including this aspect of the MSR evidence, needs to be discussed.

Museum collections, based on archaeologically recovered ships and cargoes, provide vital evidence for the MSR. Lifted, conserved and managed ships, and the artefactual and ecofactual data associated with them, are a major testimony to the processes of exchange, travel, navigation and cultural change that underpin the values of the MSR. Given the difficulty of protecting and managing such underwater sites, there is a discussion to be has as to whether museum collections should be considered as part of the nomination strategy, and if so, what criteria would apply to these. At present, they can be considered as supporting evidence.

Approaches to a potential nomination concept/strategy

The crucial issue in creating an effective concept/strategy for the Maritime Silk Routes will be in developing an understanding of the range and variability of archaeological and historic sites, and their current condition. As with the overland Silk Roads, it is crucial not to just end up with the nomination of 'star' sites: those sites that could probably be nominated in their own right. It is essential to recognize the complexity and range of sites that enabled the Maritime Silk Routes to function. The value of the Maritime Silk Routes is not limited to the most impressive outcomes – great cities/ports – but extends to the smaller settlements, smaller ports, shipbuilding centres, administrative centres, and military sites, such as naval bases and forts. An example of the latter is the Dangsung Fortress (Republic of Korea), which had a crucial role in controlling access to the sea, as exemplified by its rebuilding and extensions.

A second major issue for any nomination strategy is whether the vast network of routes might be divided into distinctive sections that could be seen as manageable serial nominations with the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value.

Nodes and corridors

The concept of significant nodes (major port cities) and the interaction/routes between these (corridors of movement and impact), might provide a useful conceptual approach, as it did for the landward routes.

Corridors may not appear to easily translate to the maritime routes. However, the concept is quite similar. Routes between nodes shift over time, between season and reflecting changing shipping and navigational technologies: this means that there is not a single shipping lane, as a narrowly defined seascape, but rather a zone of interaction and movement between nodes.

The identification of nodal points on the Maritime Silk Routes might be a useful starting point for understanding broader connections. These nodes could then be used as a basis to build and critique the identification of routes and chronologies, drawing in smaller sites to create an increasingly complex picture.

Similarities/differences to the Landward Silk Roads strategy

There are undoubtedly differences to landward routes and these need to be articulated and explored. However, it might be more useful to explore the similarities. In part, because these are real (see below), but also because they might enable the existing Silk Roads strategy, already approved by ICOMOS and the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, to form part of the framework for MSR nominations.

The **similarities** lie in:

- The complexity of interactions on land and sea: routes changed over time, with different empire systems, technologies and opportunities.
- Because of the rhythm of the monsoon, people often had to wait before returning on long distance journeys: so, nodes were not only places for transit, but also for stay. However, on the landward routes, journeys were arduous and exacting, and 'foreign' communities grew up in many places along the Silk Roads, assembling new cargoes or residing for long periods to establish trading centres/enclaves and purchasing goods in advance of caravans arriving. Enclave communities were not restricted to the MSR, even if they are clearly a feature of it.
- The value of commodities in part depended upon rarity and/or distance from source, but also gained value from the process of transportation.
- Regions situated between apparently major production and consumption zones were integral parts of the system. On the landward routes, Central Asia, for example; on the MSR the importance of the Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Gulf: regions without which the routes would not function. These regions also produced important goods, many of which fuelled regional and intra-regional trade. Both the landward and maritime routes are so much more than just East and West.

Differences:

- The goods transported were somewhat different. The land routes are often characterised as being dependent upon high-value, light-weight goods, whereas the MSR could overcome the limitation of weight, eventually enabling the movement of material such as metals and porcelains in bulk quantities. The land routes did also transport heavy, high value, products, such as porcelain, but not in the same quantities that the MSR enabled. The land routes, however, did move bulkier, lower value, goods, mainly over short distances to supply local markets. The early coastal trading along the MSR, before long-distance shipping was feasible, probably functioned in similar ways to the land routes, with local goods also significant in the composition of cargoes.

Differences certainly exist, but this is an opportunity, not an obstacle. By linking the MSR framework as closely as possible with the landward strategy, would this make the maritime routes concept/strategy easier to advance? Perhaps zones of interaction might be a way of conceiving this.

Attributes

The overland Silk Roads strategy adopted three categories (Williams 2014, 34) within which sites were explored, to try to get a coverage of all of these aspects within nominations:

1) ***Category 1 Infrastructure*** – places facilitating and controlling exchange, trade, movement and transportation, including forts, landmarks, warehouses, harbours, etc.
2) ***Category 2 Production*** – of trade/exchange goods
3) ***Category 3 Outcomes*** – places associated with the movement of artistic/architectural styles, knowledge exchange, religious/spiritual/ceremonial, political events, transfer of ideas/technologies, etc.

These may equally work for the MSR, but there are some issues for the MSR to consider: most obviously, port cities might easily encompass elements of all three categories. Does this matter? These categories could be usefully debated at the meeting.

Transnational or single State Party nominations

One of the principles of the overland Silk Roads, agreed by the Silk Roads Serial World Heritage Nomination Coordinating Committee, was the idea of only taking forward transnational nominations (no single State Party nominations). This was not simply a factor of the complexity of the Silk Roads, but rather the desire to reflect the transnational nature of the Silk Roads, and to encourage interstate working and cooperation.

Defining zones of interaction that are appropriate to the selection of attributes to support Outstanding Universal Value on the MSR may suggest that single State Party nominations are appropriate. However, transnational working lies at the heart of the endeavour.

If transnational projects are the way forward, then regions (see discussion above) may enable specific segments to be identified within an overarching concept/strategy. A similar approach was adopted for the overland Silk Roads, with the establishment of an overarching Coordinating Committee to consider general concerns regarding the manageability of complex transnational, serial properties, and assessment of their OUVs. A broad suggestion might be:

- **China, Korean peninsular & Japan**: East Asian transmissions and connections, starting with initially through coastal routes and then with more direct shipping. Vital in the spread and interaction of Buddhism, and central to the development of many of the polities within the region.
- **China and Southeast Asia**: the exchange systems, tribute and political interaction between Southeast and South China, and Southeast Asia, are crucial in developing the patterns of east-south-west interactions that form the drivers for the MSR.
- **Southeast Asia and South Asia**: the Indian Ocean powerhouse, that provides the fulcrum of the MSR. Initially involves a number of coastal/short seagoing interactions, drawing in polities across the Bay of Bengal, and ultimately reflecting the advent and impact of long-distance shipping.
- **South Asia, East Africa and the Persian Gulf**: a vital sphere of exchange from much earlier than the MSR (however we define the chronology of the latter). Crucial for the engagement of the Classical world with the East, but as significant in terms of the exchange of ideologies and cultures between the diverse polities bordering the region. Fundamental to the shaping of communities and peoples.
- **The Gulf, Red Sea and into the Mediterranean**: the region was vital in the rise of long-distance exchange, with massive impacts on all the cultures and polities of the region. This is perhaps especially true before the long-distance routes around the Cape of Good Hope were developed, although still vital after that.
- **East Africa and Western Europe**: if we go beyond Vasco de Gama's voyages in terms of the chronology, and into the era of VOC, etc., then we need to consider what European countries are engaged in the process. Certainly France, Portugal, England, the Netherlands and Sweden would want to participate in that dialogue.

Whatever concept/strategy is adopted, it will be crucial that a very explicit framework is presented to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, so that they understand the scale of the project, its intellectual framework, and the likely concomitant parts.

Thematic study

Is a thematic study of the MSR needed, in the same way that one was compiled for the overland Silk Roads, in order to understand its extent, complexity and survival? Could it provide the intellectual framework necessary to underpin discussion of possible nomination strategies? Would a thematic study help to build wider feelings of ownership in the concept/strategy amongst the State Parties? Perhaps an inventory is needed to act as basis

for a thematic desk study/research on the potential sites for nomination, and to provide a basis for more detailed analysis of the potential sites/sections?

Any inventory or thematic study would have to be achieved by developing a collaborative project between appropriate agencies in the State Parties. The latter are best placed to understand the range of sites available, and certainly best placed to understand the chronological data, the quality of survival, and the state of conservation and preservation.

Management and protection strategies in the 21st century

Given that any MSR nomination strategy will need to address the management and sustainability of the resource being nominated, there are some fundamental challenges to nominating the MSR.

Protecting underwater heritage

Major advances have taken place recently in the technology of underwater survey, including the use of remote sensing, robotics, and 3D photogrammetry, but there remain numerous practical problems in managing and protecting underwater sites (see above).

No East Asian state party has ratified the UNESCO 2001 *Convention on the protection of underwater cultural heritage*. In part, this may be because it does not resolve the issues around the sovereign immunity of warship wrecks, and perhaps more fundamentally, the principle of preservation in situ has not been readily accepted in the region. Within the Indian Ocean sphere, some countries have ratified the UNESCO convention, but by no means all.

If underwater heritage is included in the nomination concept/strategy, then the challenge of managing and sustained underwater heritage will need to be addressed.

The protection of historic harbour/port sites

An approach to the Maritime Silk Routes nomination needs to consider the interrelationship of the land and sea routes. Any maritime cultural landscape consists not simply of the remains of shipping, but also of land-based infrastructure. Primarily, this comprises harbours, ports and anchorages, with their component elements, such as shipyards, warehouses and forts. These are core attributes, which any World Heritage nomination concept/strategy will need to address.

Given that many historic harbours, ports and anchorages continue to function to this day, research into their surviving archaeological evidence is often complex and compromised, but it is urgently needed if such sites are to be protected as part of a Maritime Silk Routes project. Ongoing urbanization will increase pressure on governments, heritage agencies and users to formulate approaches to the management of the maritime cultural heritage of the region. Over a decade ago, Louis highlighted this issue, noting that ‘it is essential that we define the settings of this cultural route; assess the threats and vulnerabilities from physical, historical and cultural settings of the heritage sites along the [maritime] Silk Route; and draw up an integral and long-term conservation policy while respecting the diverse cultural traditions and heritage conservation systems of the different regions through which the route meanders’ (Louis 2005, 1). Progress on this appears to have been limited, but it is vital that this challenge is addressed now.

The meeting may wish to discuss the integral and long-term conservation policy, and the physical, historical and cultural settings of the heritage sites along the MSR.

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