roots in the land. Therefore, while installing exhibits in the A.D. Gallery, he and his Chinese counterpart enjoyed interactions with local tobacco, cotton, and produce growers whose Lumbee ancestors have farmed the same land over centuries (see http://artradarjournal.com/2011/01/05/taiwan-eco-art-exhibition-going-green-tours-america-curator-interview).

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The East Asian Mediterranean?

The "Braudelian Framework" and Maritime History in East Asia

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No discussion of maritime history could be complete without reference to Fernand Braudel's magisterial research, first published in 1949. In his *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II), Braudel defines and depicts the Mediterranean in its broadest geographical context, inclusive of the great civilizations of Iraq and Egypt, the steppes of Russia, the forests of Germany, and the deserts of the Sahara. He sees the Mediterranean as a body of water that facilitated rather than barricaded trades and contacts between its surrounding nations. As a major surface for movement, Braudel claimed the Mediterranean has been contested as a circulation-space and contact zone. It served as an arena for many political, economic, and cultural contests. He further makes the essential point that "the Mediterranean has no unity but that created by the movements of men, the relationships they imply, and the routes they follow."

This analysis, widely known as the "Braudelian Mediterranean structure," has inspired a lot of maritime studies, in which the classic model itself is readily employed. For instance W. Blockmans, Lex Heerma van Voss, Ralph Kauz, and Paul Gilroy have scrutinized the common cultural traits of the North Sea and the Baltic areas with reference to the Braudelian pattern. Angela Schottenhammer, when leading a maritime research project in Munich, likewise suggests that the Braudelian model can be taken as a frame that illuminates the geological structure shared among China, Taiwan, the Ryukyu Islands, Japan, and Korea. Despite their differences, the East Asian Sea, Schottenhammer explained, can be anatomized as an oceanic space of economic and cultural exchange comparable to that of the European Mediterranean, and therefore, the Braudelian concept is applicable to the maritime context of East Asia for "underlin[ing] different forms of political, commercial, and cultural exchange" between the related countries. Lyman van Slyke even ruminates over the Yangzi region in Braudelian terms. He further develops a view of Northwest China between the Gobi desert in the North and the Himalayas in the West as an economic and cultural contact zone with similarities to the Mediterranean. In Roy Bin Wong's description, Slyke replaces "camel caravans with ships on Mediterranean waters." In fact, on occasion, when Braudel wrote of the Mediterranean, he somehow found close connection with the Baltic, the Atlantic, the North Sea, and the Indian Ocean. So also with the East Asian Sea.

Braudel's constructive model, written in the late 1940s, has rung in our ears repeatedly since the 1970s. Yet can we simply place the Baltic, the Pacific, the Atlantic, the Indian, or the East Asian seas/oceans in the "Mediterranean category" without reservation? As distinguished maritime historian K.N. Chaudhur has asked with resonance, "Does the history of the civilizations around and beyond the ocean exhibit any intrinsic and perceptible unity, expressed in terms of space, time or structure, which allows us to construct a Braudelian framework?" To me, the Braudelian model is an ineffective classifying category when widely adopted in a global historical context, because the difference between the aforementioned maritime spaces is indeed vast. First of all, regarding the difference of scale, one may realize that the Baltic covers 414,000 km^2, the North Sea 520,000 km^2, and the Mediterranean 2,516,000 km^2. The East Asian Sea, in the largest definition, going down to the coast of Indonesia, covers no less than 12,378,796km^2, which is nearly five times bigger than the Mediterranean. In addition to its smaller size, the Mediterranean is more manageable and topographically enclosed than the East Asian Sea. Cultural and economic ties across the Mediterranean are weaker than those across some oceans that are larger in size and more open-ended. Oceanic passages of the East Asian Sea, from east to south, from Tianjin to Makassar, and from Singapore to the Birds Head coast of New Guinea, connect people from very distant places; by definition passages across the Mediterranean, as highlighted by Michael Pearson, do not. The East Asian Sea is not only larger in size; it also has a fundamentally different history. The Mediterranean has always been dominated by peoples from its littoral; the North Atlantic is the creation of people from one of its coasts; the Pacific arguably was constructed by the Europeans; but a significant portion of the East Asian Sea is firmly linked to a major continental empire: China. In a sense, applying a Braudelian framework to construct Asian maritime history is thus Eurocentric.

Indeed, Heather Sutherland, Maurice Aymard, Roy Bin Wong, O.W. Wolters, and Rene Barendse, to name but a few, have reconfirmed the need for a more sensitive understanding of the asymmetrical maritime settings in Asia. All of them advocate approaching Asian maritime history with fewer Braudelian (European) conceptions. To Heather Sutherland the Braudelian model is not suitable enough for us to refer [to] the East Asian Sea as the "East Asian Mediterranean." She maintains that even though "Braudel's prose and intellectual ambition are justly seen as inspiring, conceptual confusion and analytic evasion limit his contribution." Likewise, Roy Bin Wong disagrees with the idea of a Chinese Mediterranean in the South China Sea, proposing that the seas off China's shores were much more open. Maurice Aymard finds the only possible way to read Braudel is to receive inspiration for exploring unknown fields, not to try to imitate or repeat him. In exploring the sea's influence on shaping history in Southeast Asia, O.W. Wolters rejects viewing the Mediterranean "as a fitting analogy for the region's sea." Rene Barendse also reminds us to avoid negatively contrasting the essentialized Asian oceans with European sea-spaces. All in all, this simple stereotype, narrowly based on the Braudelian framework, to investigate Asian maritime histories makes the European experience of the ocean into the normative standard against which others are measured. It also by and large assumes that external factors with relations to the Europeans play a more dominant and decisive role than internal historical experience in shaping East Asian understandings of the maritime world.

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