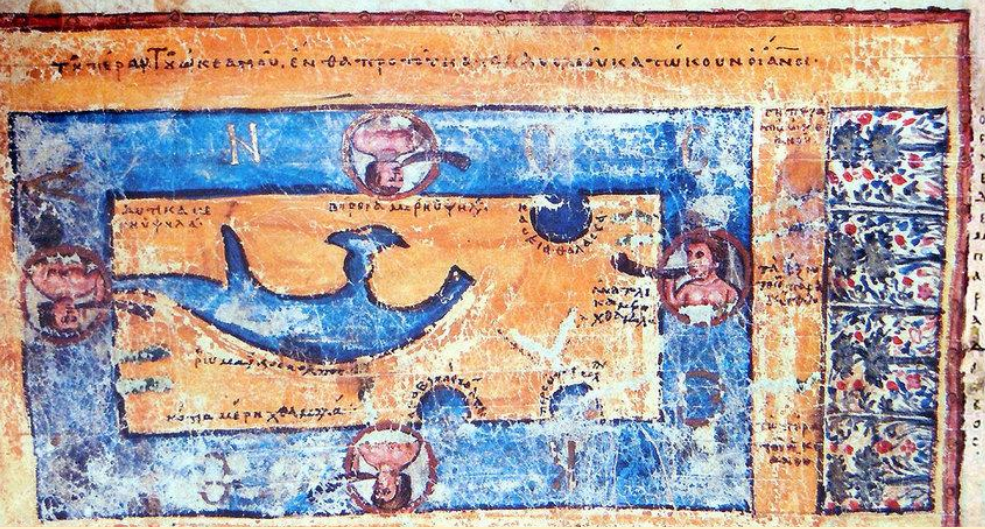


Entangled mariners and sharing beliefs

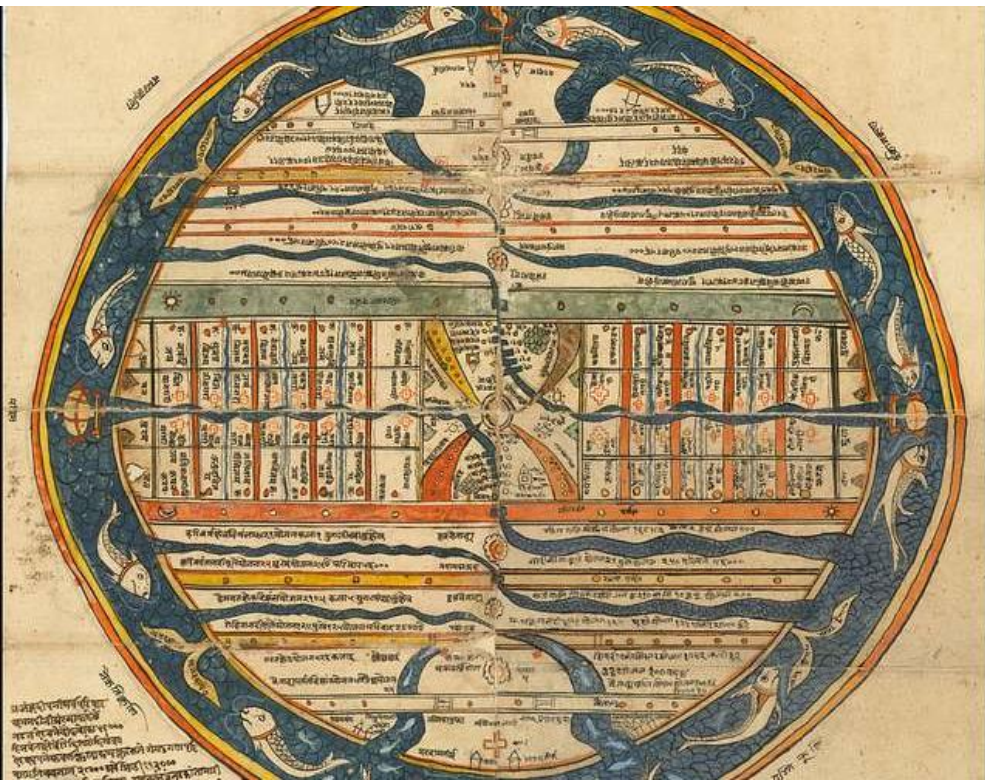


**Myth and Mythology:
How Stories Shape the
World (HPHP4006)**



Codex Sinaiticus graecus 1186, St. Katherine's monastery, Sinai, 1st century

Cosmology



- The ocean, the earth and the cosmos:
 - Island of Jambudvipa (*Vishnu Purana*)
 - River Ocean
 - Judaeo-Christian imagery
 - From Genesis (1:6-10) to Cosmas.
 - Sea as a "Hyperobject" (Campbell 2020), but (often) with intentionality!
- Terror and utopia.



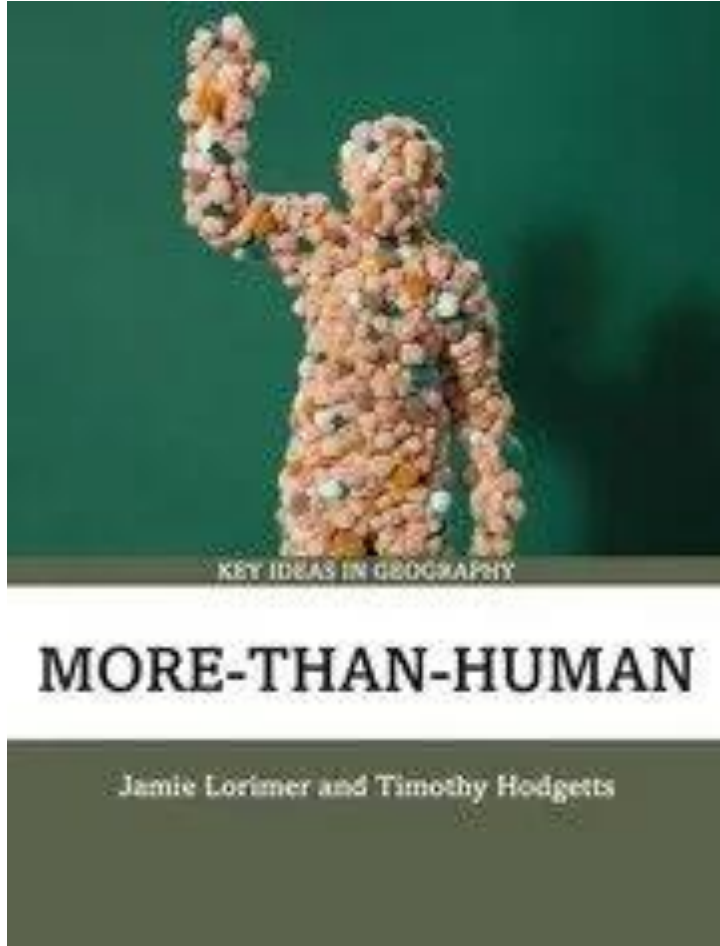
Points we will consider

Focus: maritime communities and the emotive and psychological dimension of engaging with the sea.

Enriching perspectives by try to tease out how seascapes were experienced by mariners and travellers.

Temple of Isis at Berenike as a shared ritual space?

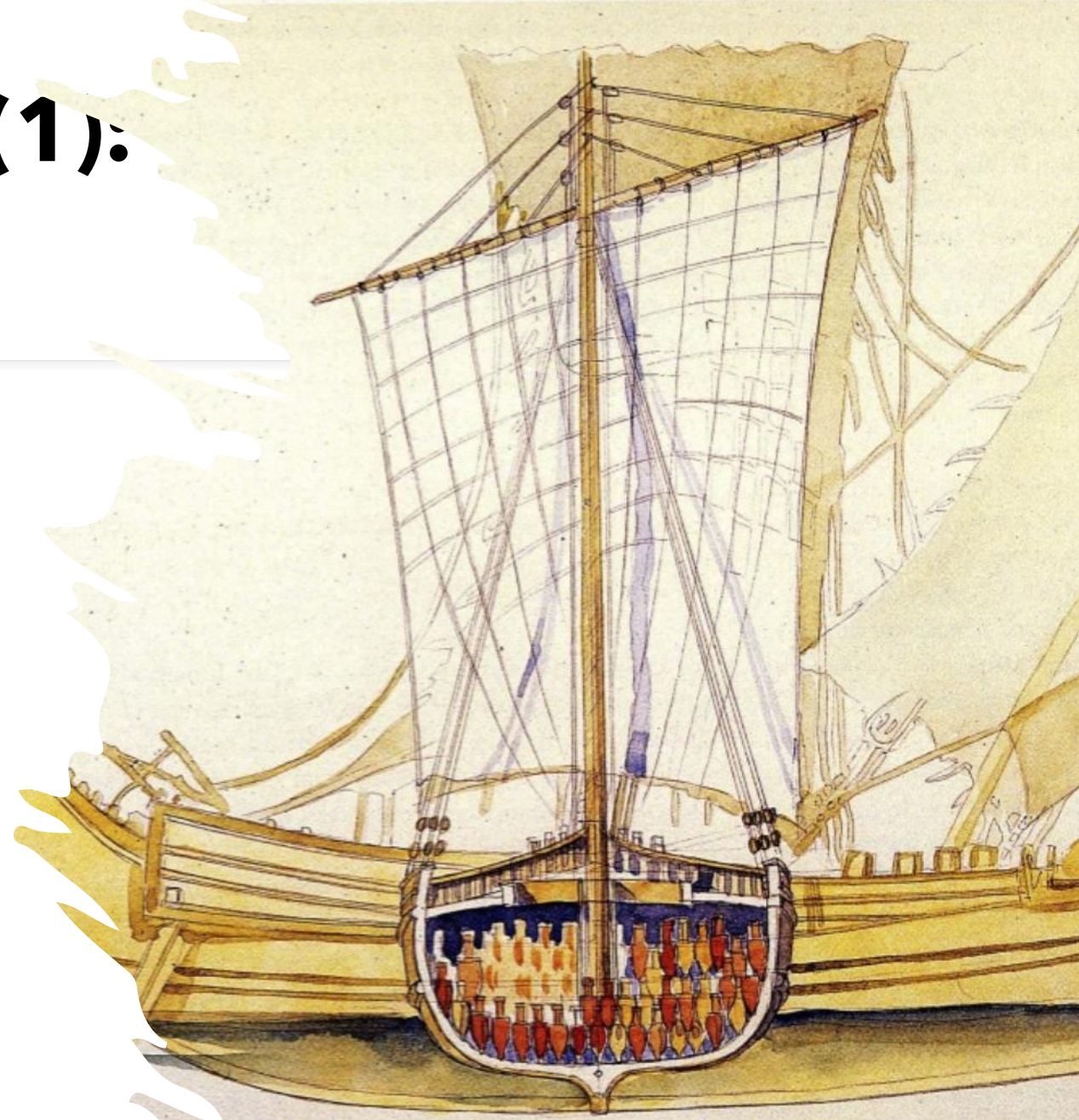
More-Than-Human



- More-Than-Human framework and seascapes as useful theoretical tools.
- Seascapes (and spiritscapes) “alive” and possessing agency.
- Parallels (“sea-peoples” of Southeast Asia).
- Animate ships and Isis Pelagia.

Methodological issues (1): textual narratives

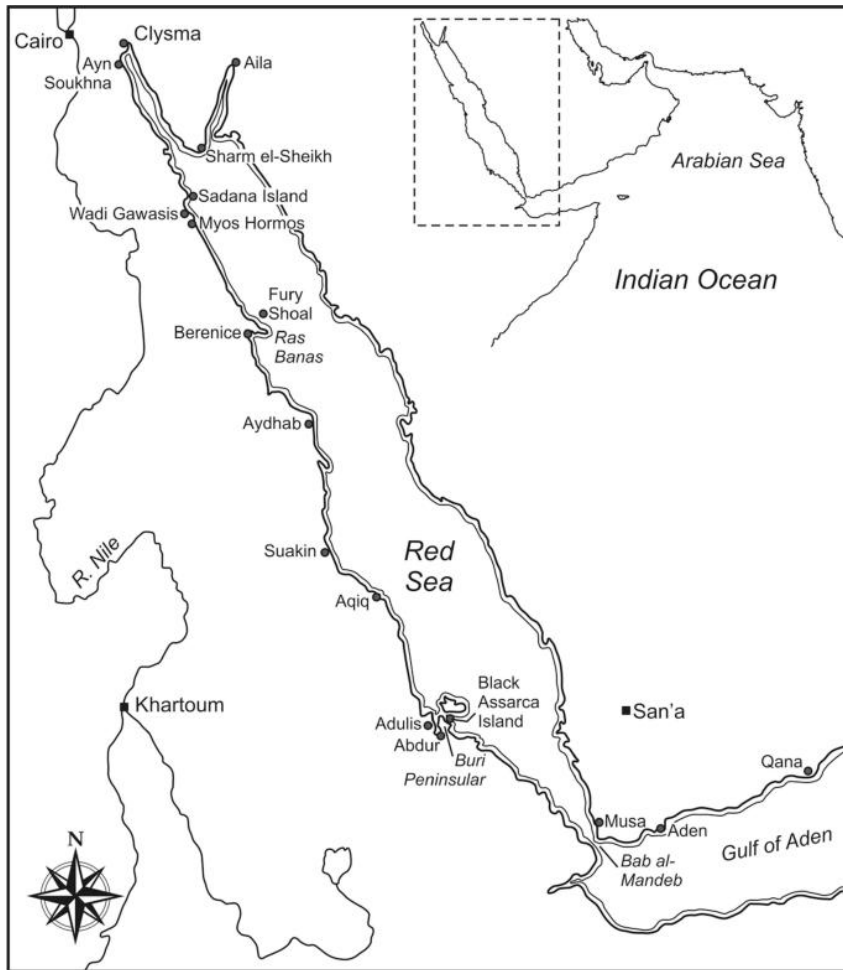
- The sea as a literary *topos*.
 - The unperturbed philosopher (e.g., Pyrrho of Elis).
 - Roman poetry: the detached observer and beleaguered seafarer (e.g., Lucretius, Juvenal).
- “Irrational” sailors.
 - Encolpius, his companions and the enraged ship’s captain (*Satyricon*).
- Merchants as liars or untrustworthy.
 - Strabo (15.1.4): ‘only a small number have sailed as far as the Ganges; and even these are merely private citizens and of no use as regards the history of the places they have seen.’ [Transl. Jones 1932]



| Emic perspectives?

- Viewpoints from *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (henceforth PME) and Cosmas' *Christian Topography*.
- Neither are uncomplicated biographic reports of either a merchant or ship's captain.
 - genre, textual composition, the reception of earlier ideas, literary topoi, and authorial agenda (also manuscript tradition).
- Traces in *PME*:
 - Spice Emporion (Ἀρωμάτων ἐμπόριον) and observing natural phenomenon (*PME* 12).
 - when the depths become murky it is best to seek shelter at the nearby promontory of Tabai.
 - Black sea-serpents, with short heads and blood-red eyes - approaching Bakarē (*PME* 55).
 - Sachalitis bay (coast of Oman) (*PME* 32).





Map from Whitewright 2007

Methodological issues (2): material culture and context

- Ritual spaces not necessarily fixed.
- Challenges of interpreting material finds in isolation.
 - 2nd century CE figurine of Harpocrates has been recovered from the Nahal Ovadia shipwreck vs. marble discs as "ship eyes" from the Hellenistic shipwreck near Megadim.
- Limitations of shipwreck evidence from Red Sea and IOW (Kotarba-Morley 2017; NEOM project).



The maritime community of Berenike

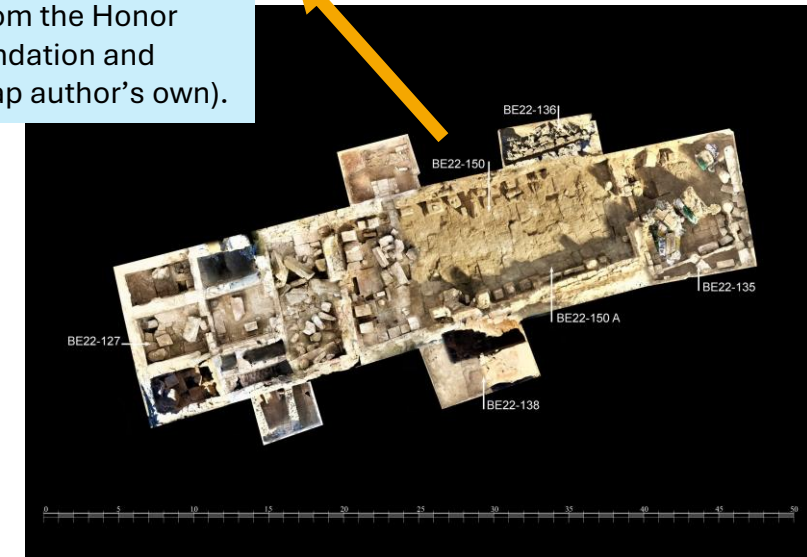
- The temple of Isis at Berenike (and Northern Complex).
 - Marcus Laelius Cosmus (Μάρκος Λαίλιος Κόσμος).
- “Dry offerings”
 - crescent-shaped silver pieces (Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 372d-e),
 - cowries,
 - Serapis bust.

The Temple of Isis

- *Navigium Isidis* / Πλοιαφέσια at Berenike (Sidebotham 2014)?
- Diverse backgrounds:
 - Sanskrit (with Brahmi script) and Greek inscription at Temple of Isis (Berenike).
 - The inscription mentions a Vasula, of Kshatriya status, making a dedication, likely to the Buddha.
 - Small heads of the Buddha + body and head of Buddha.



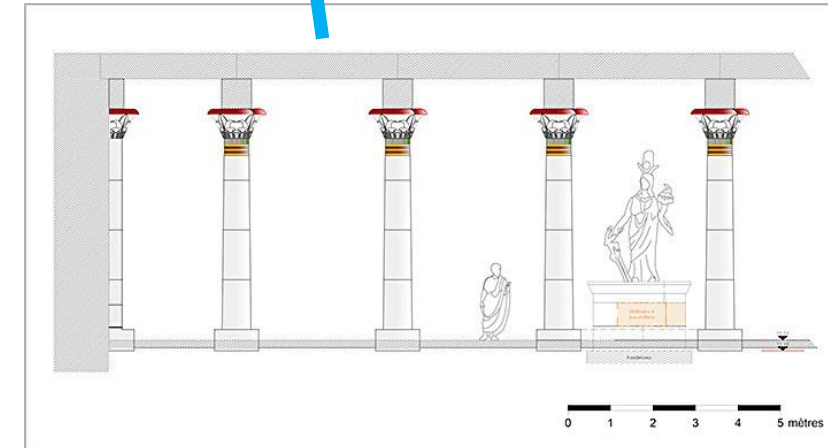
Images from the Honor Frost Foundation and PCMA (map author's own).



To what extent were ideas shared, comprehend and rearticulated?

- Arabian merchant called Hermeros, the son of Athenion, who describes himself as coming from Aden (Ἀδανείτης Ἐρυθραῖος ἔμπορος), set up a dedication to Isis and Hera at Koptos (I. Portes 65).
 - Also Δα[πάνης] who set up dedication to Isis (I. Portes 62 = SEG 34/1594).
- Tamil-Brahmi inscription on bench (Temple of Isis).
 - as '(This) seat (of) Vayitevi (= Sita = Isis) ??? (is a gift of) -(....)'
 - I. Strauch (2024), *Georg-Bühler-Lectures*, 16 April.
 - *interpretatio*? [PME 58 and the worshippers at Cape Comari]
- Fynes (1993) claims 'cultural transference' in the development of the worship of Pattinī (from ideas connected to Isis).

Map of the routes to Berenike and to Myos Hormos at the end of the first century AD. © J.-P. Brun [2018]



Restitution of the eastern colonnade and of the statue dedicated by Hermeros. © Coptos Mission: S. Louvion [from Pantalacci 2018].

Epilogue: A comparative perspective



Identifying other maritime communities for comparison with Berenike.



Using Gambin's (2014) 4 themes for comparing maritime religious expression?

deities, rituals, dry offerings 'maritime-cultic landscapes' (M-T-H seascapes).