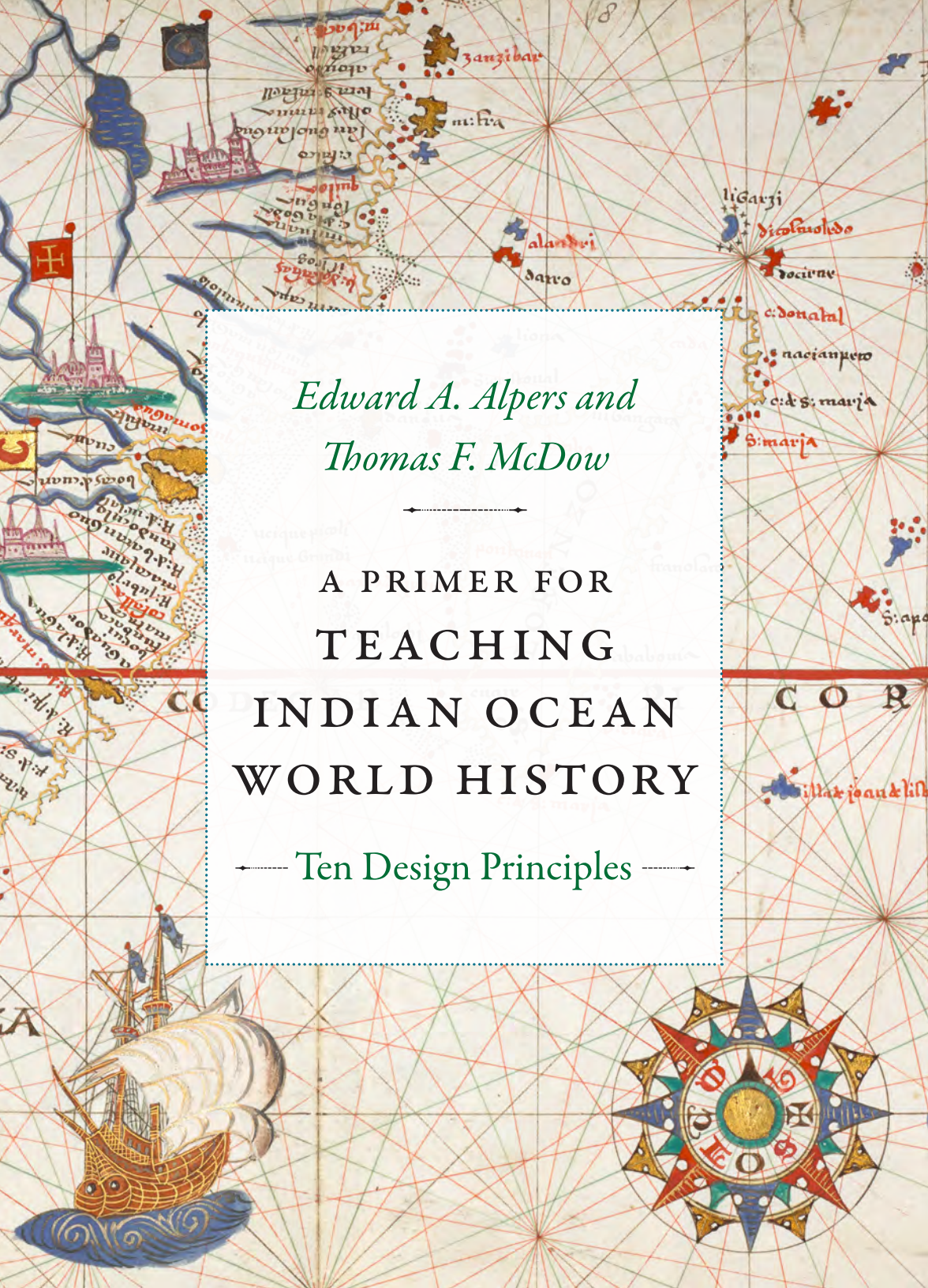

Edward A. Alpers and
Thomas F. McDow

A PRIMER FOR TEACHING INDIAN OCEAN WORLD HISTORY

Ten Design Principles

A Primer for Teaching Indian Ocean World History

DESIGN PRINCIPLES
FOR TEACHING HISTORY
A series edited by Antoinette Burton

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DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Durham and London
2024

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper ∞
Project Editor: Michael Trudeau
Typeset in Garamond Premier Pro
by Westchester Publishing Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Alpers, Edward A., author. | McDow, Thomas F., author.
Title: A primer for teaching Indian Ocean world history : ten design principles / Edward A. Alpers and Thomas F. McDow.
Other titles: Design principles for teaching history.
Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2024. | Series: Design principles for teaching history | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2023034818 (print)
LCCN 2023034819 (ebook)
ISBN 9781478030294 (paperback)
ISBN 9781478026068 (hardcover)
ISBN 9781478059295 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: History—Study and teaching. | Teachers—Training of. | Indian Ocean Region—Study and teaching. | Indian Ocean Region—History. BISAC: HISTORY / Asia / South / India. | EDUCATION / Teaching / Subjects / Social Science
Classification: LCC DS339.8 .A47 2024 (print) | LCC DS339.8 (ebook) | DDC 909/.09824—DC23/ENG/20240130
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023034818
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023034819

Cover art: Joan Martines (1556–1590), *A Map of Africa, South of the Equator, with Part of the Indian Ocean*, from *An Atlas of 17 Sea Charts*, by Joan Martines, 1578 (vellum). British Library, London, UK. © British Library Board. All rights reserved / Bridgeman Images.

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Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK TRACES ITS ORIGINS TO October 2014, when both Ned Alpers and Thomas (Dodie) McDow had participated in a conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign titled "The Indian Ocean: History, Networks, and Spaces of the Imagination." The day after the conference ended, Alpers offered a talk on "Writing and Teaching the History of the Indian Ocean" for "Integrating the Indian Ocean into World History: A Workshop for K-14 Educators," which had been organized by Professor Antoinette Burton. The talk was based on his experience teaching the history of the Indian Ocean in a world history context at UCLA since 2005. Although the audience was small, the only participant who had also attended the preceding academic conference was Dodie McDow. When Professor Burton subsequently asked Alpers if he would be interested in contributing to the series of which this volume is now a part, Alpers stated that he had just become emeritus, was no longer teaching, and so would like to collaborate with a younger historian who would be teaching Indian Ocean history in the future. Thus was born the collaboration that has produced this book.

Writing together has been a very gratifying experience for both of us, as each brings a different set of research skills and knowledge to the table. As we worked to define the shape of this volume within the structural constraints of the series, we

were guided both by Burton's inaugural volume for the series on teaching world history and by Trevor Getz's prospectus for teaching African history, which Burton kindly shared with us. We submitted a draft proposal to the press in 2016, and after receiving two very positive reader reports, both of which included many helpful suggestions for improvement, we signed a contract with Duke University Press in December 2016. Over the next couple of years, we exchanged drafts of our individual chapters, edited them for context and language, came to adopt a common voice in our writing, and finally submitted a complete draft to the press in August 2021. The next step in the revision process was a wonderful roundtable discussion convened by Antoinette Burton that was held on Zoom on October 1, 2021, right in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants included Fahad Bishara, Jim Brennan, Steve Fabian, Thavolia Glymph, Matthew Hopper, Doug Jones, Adam LoBue, Pedro Machado, Renisa Mawani, Jenny Peruski, Amanda Respess, Robert Rouphail, Lex Sundarsingh, Kerry Ward, and Priyanka Zylstra. We are deeply grateful to all the participants at the roundtable discussion for their enthusiastic encouragement and critical assessments. Because they followed up the roundtable exchanges with specific written comments to us, we particularly wish to thank Antoinette Burton, Pedro Machado, and Kerry Ward, as well as Matt Hopper, who sent us copies of their own Indian Ocean history course syllabuses. Along the way we also learned from the syllabi and assignments of Jane Hooper, Johan Mathew, Roxani Margariti, and Rebekah Pite. Encouraged by the many detailed and enthusiastic suggestions, we proceeded to revise our text in response to our helpful critics and submitted the revised draft to the press in early 2022.

We received two very enthusiastic external reviews, again with some valuable suggestions for additions and inquiries about specific details in our text. We are especially grateful for the extremely detailed attention paid to our draft by one of the external readers for the press. Over the summer we worked on the text accordingly and sent the revised manuscript to the press in September 2022. After some excellent final recommendations by Antoinette, we finished final editing in February 2023. We are also grateful to project editor Michael Trudeau at Duke University Press

for his exceptional assistance. This was a lengthy process, but we have no doubt that the final product benefited unusually from the input of so many informed reviewers.

Finally, as we worked on this book together, we have been—and remain—especially grateful for the support and encouragement of our wives and partners, Annie Alpers and Alison Norris.

Introduction

INITIAL THOUGHTS

THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD (IOW) encompasses a vast world region with which American students are almost entirely unfamiliar. Bounding neither the Atlantic nor Pacific shores of the United States, it is as distant from most students' worldview and imagination as can be. Yet for all its distance both geographically and conceptually, the Indian Ocean, its surrounding continental landmasses, and its thousands of large and small islands offer as many opportunities to a teacher of world history as challenges. The very fact that the Indian Ocean is so unfamiliar means that students carry few, if any, preconceived notions about this world region. If they bring anything with them, it is likely to be no more than knowledge of a small part of the whole that comprises the IOW. Spanning what area studies specialists have divided into five distinct regions—Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia—most world history texts that adopt a chronological organization broadly survey these separate regional units or include specific examples from them, while those texts that emphasize broad themes in world history similarly tend to draw upon area studies–based case studies.

Although there is a rich body of historical literature on different aspects of the Indian Ocean past, until recently most of this scholarship has focused on specific subregions and topics and has not attempted to reflect the broader place of the

Indian Ocean in world history. To take only a few examples, Roman trade with India, Islamic empires, and Indian Ocean trade, European expansion, and empire all have their own focused historiographies. But historical scholarship on the Indian Ocean as a world region really dates from Mauritian archivist-historian Auguste Toussaint's *History of the Indian Ocean* (1966), which was first published in French in 1960. Even then, however, it took another quarter-century and the publication of K. N. Chaudhuri's *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (1985) for the rapidly emerging field of Indian Ocean history to begin to take off intellectually. Since then Chaudhuri's pioneering intervention has been followed by important historical syntheses by Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (1993); Michael N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (2003); and Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (2014), while important contributions with more focused geographical or chronological parameters within a larger Indian Ocean framework include Patricia Risso's *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean* (1995), R. J. Barendse's *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (2002), Sugata Bose's *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (2006), and Abdul Sheriff's *Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce, and Islam* (2010).[1] The past twenty-five years have also witnessed the production of numerous monographs, collections of essays, and a huge range of journal articles on every aspect of Indian Ocean history. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, new university centers or coordinating networks for studying the Indian Ocean and its world have been established in Canada, India, Denmark, and South Africa, while others feature a particular subregional focus in the context of the Indian Ocean. Yet, despite all this exhilarating intellectual activity, the teaching of Indian Ocean history remains underdeveloped.

Like most students of the Indian Ocean and IOW, the authors of this book came to the teaching of this vast global region from more specific subregional research and teaching specializations. Alpers trained as an Africanist whose research has focused on East Africa and the western

Indian Ocean, reflecting the way in which graduate training has developed over the years. McDow cross-trained in both African and Middle Eastern history, but similarly with a western Indian Ocean focus. Teaching Indian Ocean history forces both of us to stretch well beyond our formal training and research specializations not only to come to grips with the eastern Indian Ocean World, but also to position ourselves more centrally as broad Indian Oceanists. In striving to achieve an Indian Ocean perspective as teachers we also seek to arrive at a balance between our own more specialized knowledge of the western Indian Ocean and synthesizing the work of other scholars on the eastern reaches of this vast region by employing certain integrative and comparative concepts. These include notions such as Michael Pearson's concept of littoral societies and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's notion of connected histories, among others, both of which we discuss at greater length in subsequent chapters.[2] As teachers we each continue to think about how best to construct meaningful and approachable paths to introduce students to the IOW so that they can see for themselves the great variety of human histories that have flourished, and faded, across the entire region. In a series created to emphasize "design principles for teaching world history," we take it as our responsibility to share with our readers—teachers at both high school and undergraduate levels—those ways that have worked for us. We have also benefited from the input of several colleagues who teach Indian Ocean history. We do not claim, however, that there is any one design that will work for you; indeed, one rewarding aspect of cowriting this book is that we each brought our unique perspectives, design, and methods for teaching Indian Ocean history to this project. In that spirit, we hope you will think of this primer as a cookbook—a set of recipes rather than the meal.

As such this is one of many useful "cookbooks" in this series of primers from Duke University Press on teaching different histories that connect to world history. These books are nonprescriptive guides to developing a syllabus and designing a course using broadly applicable design principles for a diverse audience of instructors. This primer is for faculty, teachers, and graduate students at the college or high school level who may be teaching an introductory Indian Ocean World history course for the first

time, those who already teach one and want new approaches, and those teaching a world or other history course with a brief or sustained focus on the Indian Ocean World.

In this primer, we want to emphasize the importance in teaching Indian Ocean history of establishing a clear vision of what one wants to cover and how one wants to accomplish one's pedagogical goals. For us, the most important overriding issues in the field of Indian Ocean World history are connectivity and the destabilization of boundaries. These are themes that also align with the broader fields of world history and global history.[3] Your students will come to this topic with very little if any knowledge of the Indian Ocean region or its millions of peoples; so that they will not be overwhelmed by details or lost in the forest for the trees, to use a peculiarly terrestrial metaphor, careful attention to their needs, skills, and the demands of the subject matter is necessary to achieve meaningful learning. We hope that the ideas and methods that we discuss and propose in the following chapters will help you to achieve your classroom goals.

Structure of the Book

We divide the book into three unequal sections: Foundations and Sources, Global Themes, and Teaching Strategies. In each chapter of each section, we seek both to establish a meaningful chronology and to achieve a representative, or at least illustrative, balance between the eastern and western reaches of the Indian Ocean World. Under the rubric of "Foundations and Sources," we introduce questions concerning the spatial and imaginative dimensions of the IOW, the importance of questioning Eurocentric perspectives on the region, and the value of seeking out a multiplicity of sources for a more Indian Oceanic view of this history. In chapter 1, "Mapping the Indian Ocean," we argue that for students to engage with this unfamiliar world region it is critical that they gain a solid appreciation of its geography and the significance of mapping. In chapter 2, "Beyond Eurocentrism," we suggest that to appreciate the world of the Indian Ocean, students need to acquire some knowledge of indigenous, as well as Western, sources of information and perspectives. In chapter 3, "Beyond

the Text," we explore the multiplicity of nonwritten sources for reconstructing the history of the IOW and suggest ways to encourage students to think, and read, beyond literary texts to reconstruct a more human history of the region and its peoples.

The section "Global Themes" includes five chapters, each addressing a set of issues that are integral to the history of the IOW and that resonate with larger themes in world history. In chapter 4, "Indian Ocean Commodities," we discuss several major commodities that dominated the history of trade in the IOW. Students can relate these to both similar and different commodities around the globe. In chapter 5, "People on the Move," broader themes in the movement of people are raised, including labor migration, trading diasporas, and religious pilgrimage. In chapter 6, "Rethinking Slavery," we introduce students to the different types of enslavement and indenture that characterized so much of the region's labor history. Here the comparisons with the Atlantic World and contemporary issues of race and identity will be especially striking. Throughout the primer we refer to "enslaved people" rather than "slaves"; when we use the word *slave* it is an adjective and not a noun. Chapter 7, "Empire and Its Aftermath," focuses on the ways in which imperialism (both indigenous and European), colonialism and nationalism, and Big Power competition have played out in the IOW. Finally, with chapter 8 we look at "Disease and Environment," two issues that resonate especially well with world history themes and are certainly relevant to twenty-first-century students.

The third section, "Teaching Strategies," includes two chapters on teaching technologies that lay out various methods for engaging your students in the classroom and through online teaching. We also suggest ways in which undertaking original research can enrich their experience of studying the history of the IOW. The projects we have used to engage students in Indian Ocean World history are not the traditional pedagogy of the region. The most Indian Ocean–centered pedagogy might be the chanting and recitation of Quranic verses as a prelude to copying them out on slates. While these techniques have been used for generations, they may not yield the degree of student engagement and reflective learning

that our secondary schools and colleges hold in high regard. Our approach to teaching Indian Ocean World history has been influenced by backward design, student-driven inquiry, frequent use of student reflective writing, and assignments that have audiences beyond the instructor. Backward design encourages instructors to think about their own goals for students in each assignment and to work from there backward, creating the tasks and steps that will achieve those outcomes. We have also created and used assignments that give students great leeway in topics but guide them to common formats. By allowing students to proceed from areas of their own interest and make connections to topics in the IOW, we see a greater degree of engagement. Likewise, by asking students to reflect on their work, we gain a much better perspective on their process, what they have learned, where they need more help, and what they are proud of. By combining these practices with projects that require students to write or present for other kinds of audiences—not just an instructor—we help students gain the skills that they will be able to use long after they leave our world history classroom.

It is our hope that the endnotes to each chapter might serve as starting points for you and your students to follow up on specific topics of interest, but we also include a selected bibliography of essential books and articles that will provide a solid foundation for further study. Our aim throughout the primer is to engage both you and your students in coming to grips with the exciting field of Indian Ocean World history.

Notes

Introduction. Initial Thoughts

1. For an overview of this historiography, see Edward A. Alpers, "Indian Ocean Studies: How Did We Get Here and Where Are We Going? A Historian's Perspective," *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* 5, no. 2 (2022): 314–36.
2. Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast," *Great Circle* 7, no. 1 (April 1985): 1–8, reprinted in Michael N. Pearson, *The World of the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800: Studies in Economic, Social and Cultural History* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate/Variorum, 2005), chap. 6; Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 353–73; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1997): 735–62.
3. In this book we generally use the term *world history* to imply a commonsense usage that takes account of the "global turn" in history. We also sometimes use *global* as a category, and some may wonder what distinction we understand between world history and global history. In 2006, in the very first issue of the new *Journal of Global History*, the editors noted the "subtle difference between the closely related endeavours of global and world history." Without defining *world history*, but implying its shortcomings, the journal editors argued for historicizing the processes of globalization and continuing to deconstruct Western metanarratives. The journal aimed to amplify scholarship that followed the life cycles of commodities and paid attention to the cultures of consumption and labor. Rather than covering the whole globe, they desired to publish work that both straddled regions and made cross-regional comparisons. William Gervase Clarence-Smith, Kenneth Pomeranz, and Peer Vries, editorial in *Journal of Global History* 1, no. 1 (March 2006): 1–2, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1740022806000015. These broad outlines of a "global turn" in history inform

our approach here. While the attempts to distinguish between world history and global history have attracted scholarly debate, historian Peer Vries, one of the *Journal of Global History*'s original editors, recently dismissed the focus on distinguishing between world and global. For a lively discussion of this topic with useful references, see Jordan Barnes, "Defining World History vs. Global History," H-World, March 3, 2015, https://networks.h-net.org/node/20292/discussions/66052/defining-world-history-vs-global-history.

The maturation of the fields of global/world history has led scholars to recognize two subbranches: one that focuses on universal processes and largely draws from secondary material, and one that focuses on microhistories and local histories from primary sources but does not make global claims. Cátia Antunes, "An Old Practitioner Still in Search of the *métier d'historien* Response to Peer Vries, 'The Prospects of Global History: Personal Reflections of an Old Believer,'" *International Review of Social History* 64, no. 1 (April 2019): 123–27, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859019000087. In this primer, we draw from both subbranches to keep the focus on a strong tradition within the field of world history: teaching and providing a synthesis for students.

One. Mapping the Indian Ocean

1. Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Case for the Coast," *Great Circle* 7, no. 1 (April 1985): 1–8; Michael N. Pearson, "Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 353–73.
2. Michael N. Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, India, and Portugal in the Early Modern Period* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 67.
3. G. R. Tibbetts, *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the Coming of the Portuguese: Being a Translation of Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī uṣūl al-baḥr wa'l-qawā'id of Aḥmad b. Mājid al-Najdī* [. . .] (London: Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971); George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, rev. ed. by John Carswell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995). For two valuable overviews, see Marina Tolmacheva, "Long-Distance Sailing in the Indian Ocean before the Portuguese," in *Maritime Cultures in East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean*, ed. Akshay Sarathi (Abingdon, UK: Archaeopress, 2018), 215–26; and Eric Staples, "Indian Ocean Navigation in Islamic Sources 850–1560 CE," *History Compass* 16, no. 9 (September 2018), https://compass.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hic3.12485.
4. The best modern English translation is by Lionel Casson, *The Periplus Maris Erythraei* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). Teachers should also be