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Elements in the Global Middle Ages

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SOUTHEAST ASIAN INTERCONNECTIONS

Geography, Networks and Trade

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Southeast Asian Interconnections

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Abstract: Since the late first millennium CE, Maritime Southeast Asia has been an interconnected zone, with its societies and states maintaining economic and diplomatic relations with both China and Japan to the east and the Indian subcontinent and Middle East to the west. This global connectedness was facilitated by merchant and shipping networks that originated from within and outside Southeast Asia, resulting in a transregional economy developing by the early second millennium CE. Sojourning populations began to appear in Maritime Southeast Asia, culminating in records of Chinese and Indian settlers in such places as Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula and the Gulf of Siam by the mid-first millennium CE. At the same time, information about products that were harvested in Southeast Asia began to be appropriated by pockets of society in China, India and the Middle East, resulting in the production of new knowledge of and uses for these products in these markets.

Keywords: Southeast Asia, commercial networks, shipping and trade, economic integration, trade products

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