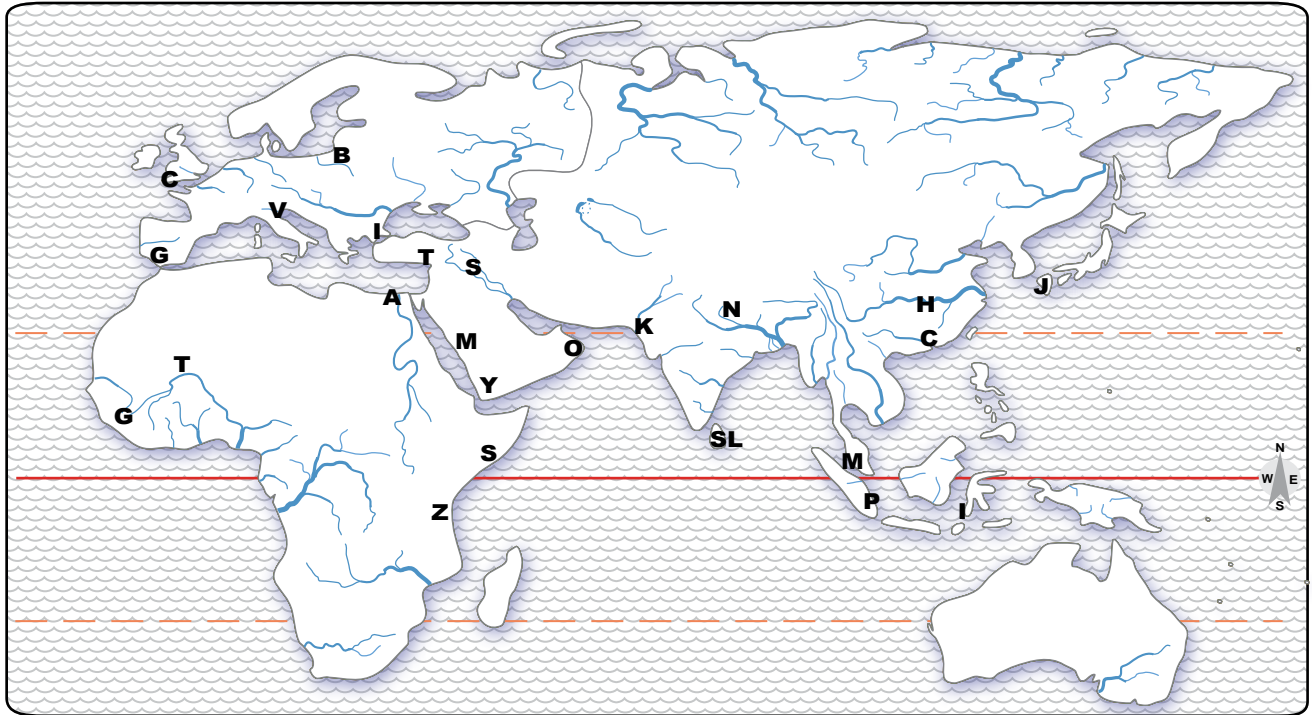


## Trade in the Ancient World - Evidence from a Shipwreck



About the year 830 CE, a ship sank near Palembang (P), capital of the Srivijaya empire. (For more than 500 years, Palembang was one of the largest trade ports in the world.)

1. The ship was made in Oman (O). Some wood in it came from the African rainforest near Zanzibar (Z). **Draw how a ship might go from Zanzibar to Oman.**
2. **Draw another sailing route** from Oman past the island of Sri Lanka (SL), through the Strait of Malacca (M), to Palembang.
3. The ship carried some cloves, mace, and nutmeg from the Spice Islands, in what is now called Indonesia (I). **Draw a route from I to Palembang.**
4. The main cargo was nearly 60,000 bowls made in Hunan, China (H). **Draw a route from Hunan** east down the Yangtze River to the ocean, then south to Palembang.
5. Bowls from Hunan have been found in many ancient markets, including Japan (J), Palembang, and Malacca in East Asia; Sri Lanka and Karachi (K) in South Asia; Mecca (M), Yemen (Y), Oman, Samarra (S), and Tarsus (T) in Southwest Asia; Somalia (S) and Zanzibar in Africa; and Istanbul (I) and Venice (V) in Europe. **Draw a small square around each of those letters.**
6. Clay jars from Samarra have also been found in many old market places, including Karachi, Sri Lanka, Malacca, Somalia, Zanzibar, Yemen, Oman, Mecca, Istanbul, Venice, Alexandria (A), Gibraltar (G) in Europe, and Timbuktu in West Africa (T). **Draw a larger circle around each of those letters.**
7. The ship also had some gold bars and statues from Guinea (G) in west Africa. Guinea gold has been found in old trading centers from Venice and Istanbul to Zanzibar, Palembang, and Canton, China (C). **Draw a gold bar** by all places where you think people might trade African gold for other products.
8. Finally, the ship had some amber from northern Europe, near the Baltic Sea (B). **Draw a dotted line to show a route** from B through Istanbul to Indonesia.

**Thought question:** Where would be good places for pirates to hang out at this time? Be ready to defend your choice of a location for a pirate base.

Teacher’s Guide: **Trade in the Ancient World – Evidence from a Shipwreck**

Overview: Students trace the objects found in a shipwreck back to their origins, and then see where else these objects were found.

This can give them an idea about how people traded to get the things they wanted at a particular time in history. It can also offer perspective on the role of trade today. Incidentally, they also learn the locations of some important trading centers, past and present.

Grade: 5-7

Related Discipline: History

GLCE: 6G4.2.1

Time: 10-20 minutes

**Preparation:** Review the clickable map to anticipate questions that students might ask, like “Why did they choose to buy pottery from a distant country rather than making it themselves?” Students should realize that people in a particular place may lack the resources (the right kind of clay, tin for glaze, etc.), or the energy, technology, time, or skill to make something for themselves.

**Setup:** One good setup is to have students record the origins of some of their possessions. For example, my closet has 16 shirts of various kinds, and the labels say they were made in 11 different countries.

Another approach is to compare two stores by looking at the origins of their stocks of the same basic item. Shirts are a good choice, but many other products have distinctive patterns of origin.

**Procedure:** The worksheet is self-explanatory, but teachers should think of several ways to diagnose class readiness and provide assistance in finding places.

You can have each student do the entire worksheet, but that takes a lot of time for a relatively small point. A better tactic is to have all students do questions 1 to 3, then some do questions 4 and 5, others do question 6. A third group does question 7, or you can use it as a summary. Question 8 is a bonus.

Then all students can address the thought question, based on their findings for their particular product.

**Answers:** You can collect maps and inspect them, or have students check each other’s work.

Caution: as with any mapping activity, there is room for individual interpretation.

**Debrief:** During the debrief discussion, emphasize that ancient peoples traded widely long before Columbus tried to sail to Asia by going west around the world. The question about pirates can help them focus on the most strategic parts of the trade network. This, in turn, leads to a more serious question – what countries were likely to gain riches by controlling key chokepoints in trade? That question underlies a surprisingly large fraction of all conflicts in recorded human history!!

**Vocabulary:** distance route trade export import luxury chokepoint

**Extension:** Look at trade networks at different times in history. Students can get information from a variety of internet sources as well as William Bernstein’s outstanding book, *A Splendid Exchange* – your library could get a reference copy of Krahl, ed. *Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds* – the photos tell an amazing story of 9<sup>th</sup> century technology, art, and wealth.

It is useful to make a connection between trade networks and the prosperity of “civilizations.” During Roman times, places like Spain (copper), Cornwall (tin), Yemen (frankincense), India (spices), and China (silk) were sources of rare and valued commodities. Cities like Alexandria, Byzantium, Petra, and Tarsus became rich as early trade centers. At the time of the shipwreck in this activity, cities like Baghdad, Mecca, Malacca, Palembang, and Canton had become trade centers. Other places became rich as sources of key commodities: examples include Guinea (gold), Samarra (pottery), China (silk and ceramics), and Indonesia (spices). Still later, these became targets for European colonization.

In the present day, trade often starts in places like Arabia (oil), Brazil (tropical wood), Chile (food), and countries like China, Germany, Korea, Thailand, and Bangladesh (manufactured goods). Key trading centers and chokepoints in the world today include Dubai, Panama, Hong Kong, Rotterdam, Singapore, and New York City. This activity makes an important point: many nodes in the modern trading system have been important as trade centers for more than a thousand years.