Indian Ocean Trade Networks

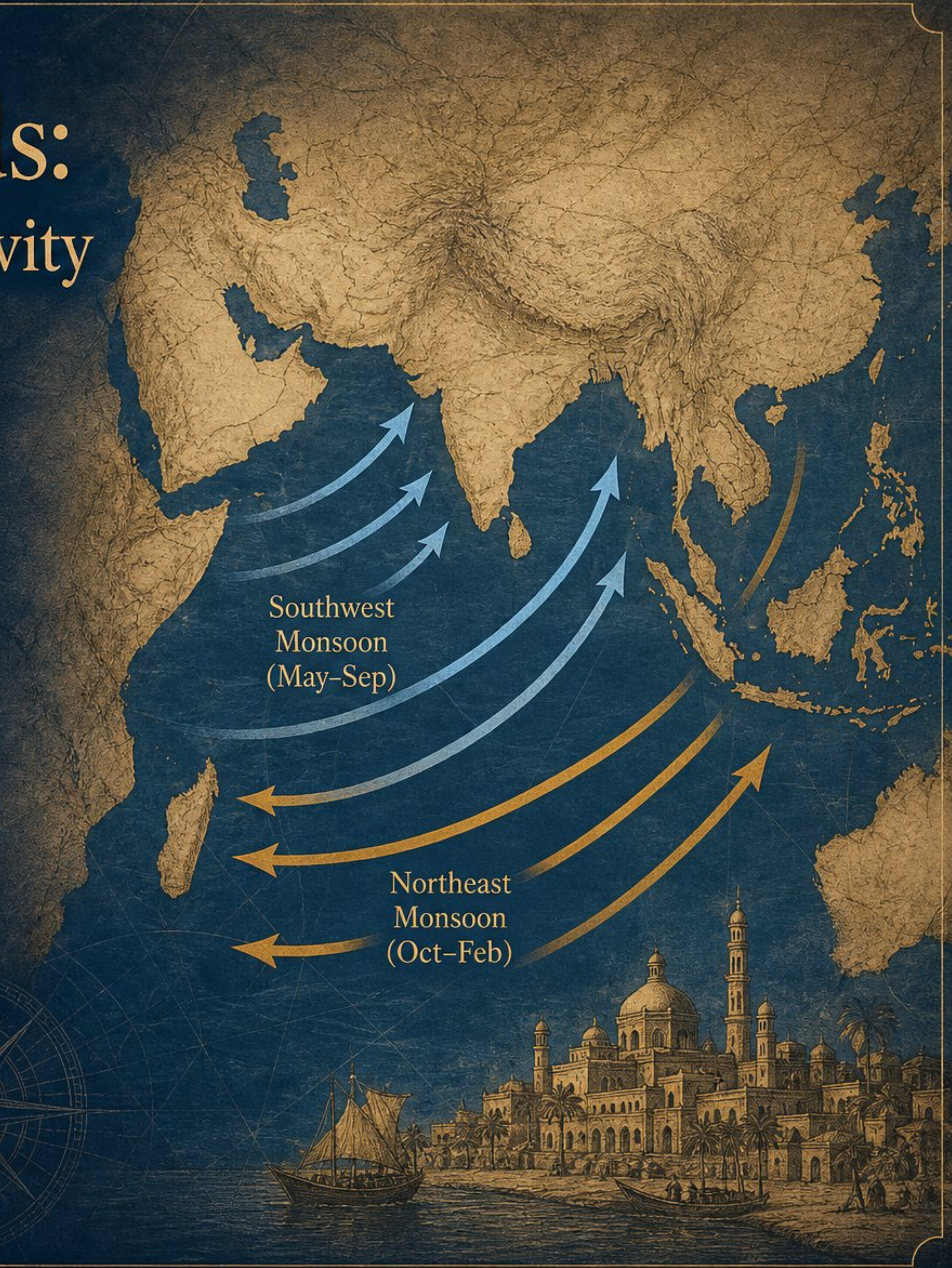
- - World's oldest, most durable maritime trade system
- - Chronology: from Austronesian voyages to European dominance
- - Geography: East Africa to East Asia via South/Southeast Asia
- - Exchanged goods, religions, languages, technologies, political ideas
- - Sophisticated, largely peaceful, multi-centered trading world before Europe

Why the Indian Ocean Matters in World History

- A zone of human interaction, not a civilization (Braudel's 'new thalassology')
- Maritime regions were historically neglected in favor of land-based empires
- Austronesian voyages and Harappan-Mesopotamian exchange predate Islam
- The region did not 'enter history' with Vasco da Gama in 1498
- Training arc: environment, commerce, cities, culture, power, European entry, legacies

Monsoon Winds:
The Engine of Connectivity

- Seasonal wind reversal dictated all sailing schedules across the ocean
- Southwest monsoon (May–Sep): Africa to India; northeast (Oct–Feb): return
- Long port stays forced months of cultural mixing, learning, and intermarriage
- Winds shaped entrepôt ports like Hormuz, Calicut, and Malacca
- Kachchh and Gulf sailing calendars show seasonal opening and closing



Ships and Non-Instrument Navigation

- Sewn-plank dhow, Chinese junk, Southeast Asian outrigger canoe
- Stars, swells, birds, seabed sampling guided voyage
- Nakhoda and mu’allim led; Ibn Majid wrote famed manuals
- Knowledge passed through texts and apprenticeships
- ’Zam’ measured distance: about 20 km per unit

Goods that Moved the Ocean

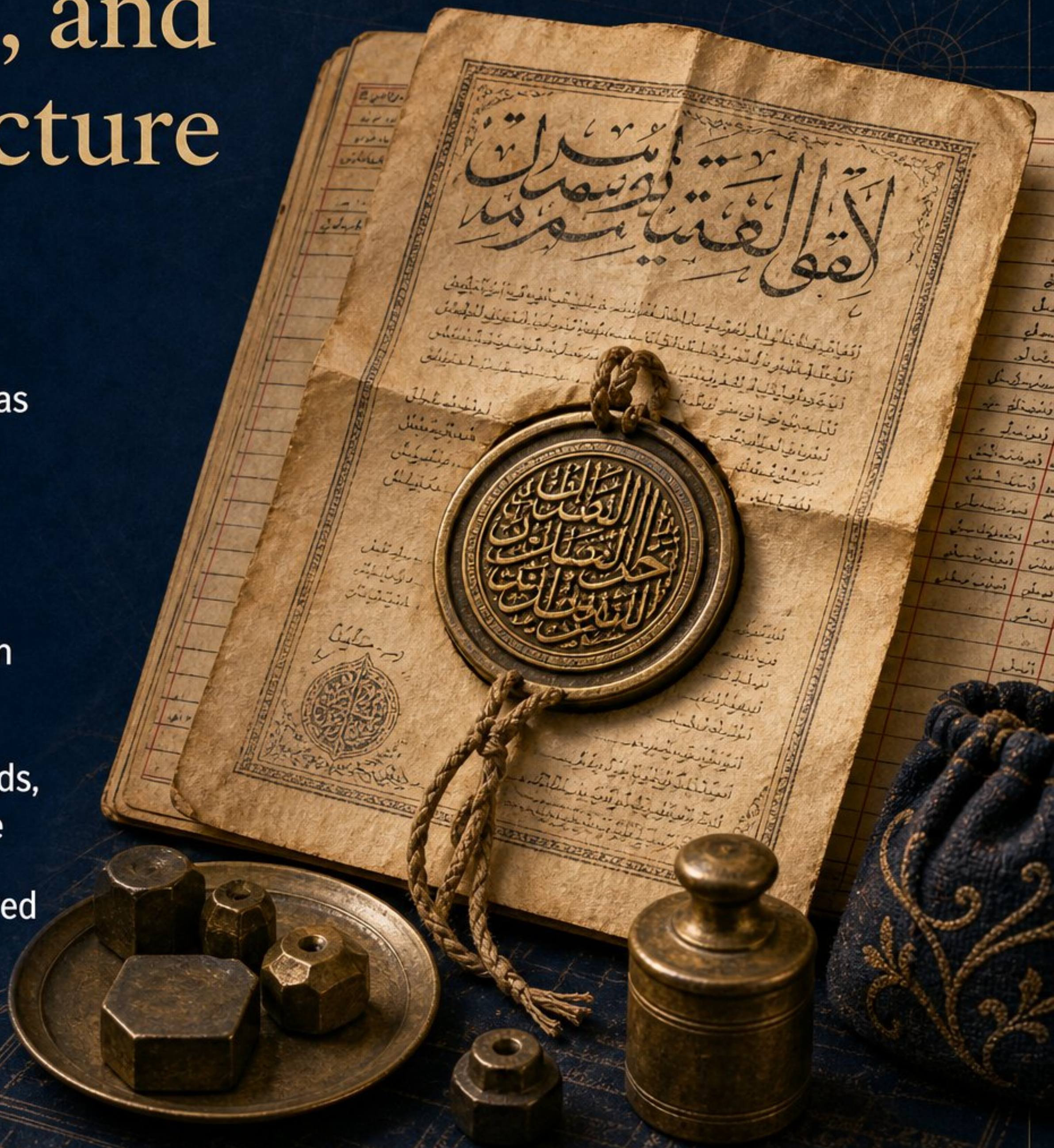
- Spices, textiles, ivory, gold, porcelain, slaves, and frankincense circulated widely
- Luxury goods traveled with merchants; bulk goods moved on seasonal rhythms
- Indian textiles were exchanged for Southeast Asian spices
- Gujarati cotton functioned as the essential medium of exchange
- Cloves from Moluccas, gold from Great Zimbabwe, porcelain from China

Port Cities and Merchant Diasporas

- Kilwa, Hormuz, Calicut, Malacca, and Quanzhou as key entrepôts
- Ports served as cosmopolitan mixing zones, not agrarian capitals
- Merchants relied on diasporic ties for trust and credit
- 'Port of trade' differed from territorial capitals
- Cambay and Malacca interdependence integrated the network

Trust, Credit, and the Infrastructure of Trade

- Long-distance trade's core problem was trust, not transport distance
- Religious, ethnic, and linguistic ties enabled credit and contracts
- Merchant diasporas sustained cohesion across vast maritime networks
- Legal instruments—shares, debt records, safe-conduct—underpinned commerce
- Shared Islamic legal frameworks lowered transaction costs for all merchants



Religious and Cultural Exchange

- Maritime routes spread Buddhism, Hinduism, then Islam over centuries
- Islam became the dominant commercial culture by the 13th century
- Sufi traders and scholars carried Islam to Southeast Asia and East Africa
- Syncretism blended Islam with local African and Southeast Asian practices
- Swahili and Javanese cultures show deep Islamic-local fusion

Thalassocracies: Power over the Sea

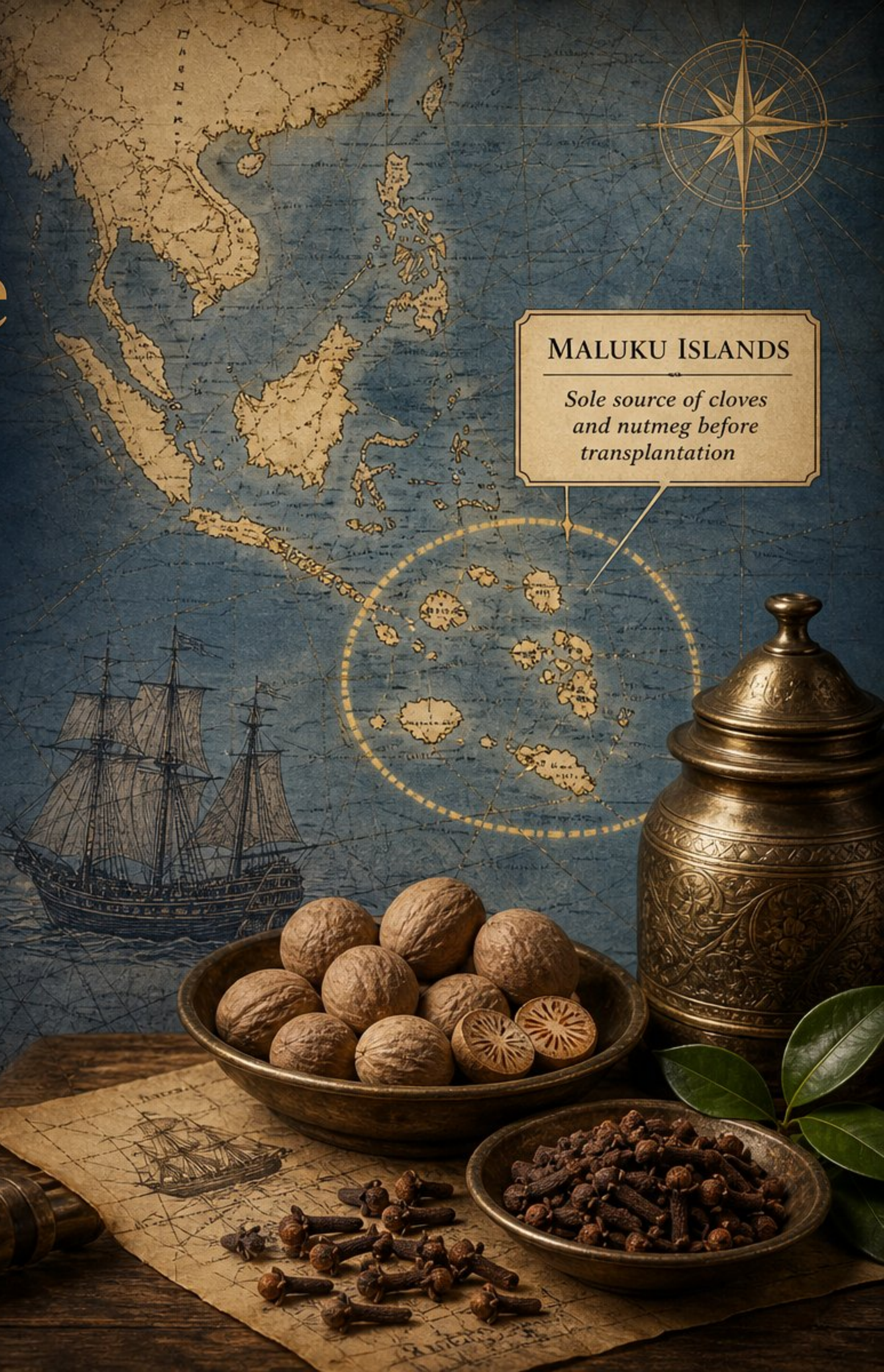
- Thalassocracy: rule through control of the sea, not land
- Srivijaya controlled Malacca and Sunda straits, profiting from trade
- Chola naval raids of 1025: rare conflict in a peaceful commercial world
- Piracy and protection payments shaped routes and political authority
- Pre-European rule: cooperative; Portuguese rule: coercive

The Swahili Coast:
Africa's Maritime Gateway

- East African coast integrated via monsoon sailing networks
- City-states thrived from 800–1500 CE: Kilwa, Mombasa, Sofala
- Key exports: gold, ivory, slaves, mangrove poles, tortoise shell
- Swahili culture emerged from African, Arab, and Persian interaction
- Syncretic identity: African population, Islamic religion, cosmopolitan culture

Southeast Asia and the Spice Trade

- Maluku Islands: sole source of cloves and nutmeg before transplantation
- Srivijaya and later Malacca controlled the vital strait choke points
- Southeast Asian rulers adopted Islam to access Muslim trading networks
- VOC enforced violent monopoly, destroying clove trees outside Ambon and Banda
- 1667 Treaty of Breda: Manhattan traded for the nutmeg island of Run



European Entry and Its Consequences

- 1498: Vasco da Gama joined, did not create, a thriving system
- Portugal: state-led monopoly; Dutch and English: chartered companies
- Europeans first adapted to Asian networks, not replacing them
- Cartaz pass: coercive tax on ships under threat of seizure
- 18th-century dominance grew slowly; Asian merchants showed resilience

Reassessing the European Impact

- 1498 marked a documentation turning point, not a commercial one
- Portuguese joined an already advanced financial and trade system
- Dutch spice monopoly used devastating violence and treaties
- Portuguese and English approaches were more limited and adaptive
- Calicut continued to prosper as a center of non-European trade

Legacies and Contemporary Relevance

- Shaped Swahili, Indonesian Islam, and Indian Ocean diaspora cuisines
- Modern lanes still carry most seaborne oil and bulk cargo
- Port cities from Singapore to Mombasa remain global trade hubs
- Challenges Eurocentric “discovery” and one-way globalization narratives