
JIEWS

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

The *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* (JIOWS) is a multidisciplinary, open access journal that accepts articles on all aspects of the history and culture of the Indian Ocean World (IOW) – a macro-region that runs from Africa to the Far East, and includes the Indian Ocean, Indonesian and China seas and their continental hinterlands. The rationale for considering this vast area as a “world” is the historical influence upon it of the monsoon system and related environmental factors. This governs all IOW maritime spheres in the northern hemisphere and to about 12° south of the equator, and much of their continental hinterlands. In the boreal summer, as the Asian continent warms, hot air rises and through a process of convection sucks in moist air from the seas to the south, creating the southwest monsoon. In winter, the reverse process occurs, creating the northeast monsoon. The monsoons have had a fundamental impact upon human activity. The monsoon rains have moulded the agricultural regime in which, for most of human history, the vast bulk of the population has been engaged. The southwest monsoons bring rains that create the wet-crop (chiefly rice) cultivation zone of the littoral regions of the IOW, beyond which lie first the dry-crop (wheat, barley) cultivation zone, and beyond that the arid pastoral regions. At the same time, the biannual changeover in monsoon winds and currents created the possibility for regular direct trans-oceanic exchange. Moreover, to the south of the monsoon system, southeast trade winds operate that feed into the monsoon system. This permitted the development by the BCE/CE changeover of an IOW “global” economy – a sophisticated, regular system of long-distance exchange of commodities, peoples, ideas, and technologies across the IOW and beyond that – albeit with considerable fluctuations, which has continued to the present day. The JIOWS welcomes both geographically focused case studies and wider comparative analyses, ones dealing with limited time periods, and those adopting a *longue durée* approach. Prospective authors are particularly encouraged to consider environmental factors and the role of human-environment interaction.

This inaugural issue focuses on various instances of interaction in the IOW. From commercial exchange between otherwise opposing commercial enterprises, to personal interactions between Europeans and peoples indigenous to the IOW, to the experiences and strategies of slaves, the issue explores various instances in which categories of “foreign” and “indigenous” come into alignment or conflict in historiography, colonial narratives, or commercial enterprises.

Michael Pearson here addresses an issue which has long interested him – and which is beginning to gain traction in the mainstream historiography – that of the different and evolving meanings of place and space in the maritime and terrestrial spheres. He underscores the fact that, historically, both European and indigenous IOW ships were

overcrowded, and space on them allocated according to rank. More attention thus needs to be paid to enforced, cramped conditions, the status that allocations of space reflected, and the conflicts they engendered. He further addresses the issue of the ecotone or “zone of transition” between sea and land, arguing that while, historically, there was in the ecotone a reasonable balance of maritime and terrestrial influences, that balance has over the last 200 years been undermined as the littoral has increasingly been colonised and its natural features destroyed by peoples of the hinterland. While Pearson focuses on the IOW, his comments will resonate with scholars of the Atlantic, Pacific and Mediterranean worlds.

Gwyn Campbell’s article argues that the conventional emphasis on the “early modern” in African historiography needs revisiting. Such temporal paradigms are based on traditional interpretations of European history that, imposed upon extra-European regions, give overwhelming emphasis to European agency and dominance that, in the case of East Africa, assumes that a previously vibrant African entrepreneurship and trade relationship with the wider IOW disappeared with the advent of Europeans in the Indian Ocean from around 1500. He here contends that a radical revision of this conventional Eurocentric viewpoint is long overdue.

Michael Laffan presents a rich and at times ethnographic account of his journey to understand the life and impact of an eighteenth century exile, known as “Oupa” or Tuan Skapie (Grandpa/’Lord Sheepy’). Remembered as a slave who came to Cape Town from Java in the 1770s, rather than a herder and well-digger on the slopes of Signal Hill, Tuan Skapie, it would appear, was successful at concealing his identity (and abilities) from his former jailers and two colonial regimes. This allowed him a certain mobility and access to burial; his final resting place, high on the ridge above Cape Town, lay above the space assigned to his otherwise more superior rival.

Edward A. Alpers and Matthew S. Hopper describe the experiences of three African slaves who, at the end of 1878, were seized by officers of HMS *London* from the American bark, *Lacouia*, from New Bedford, Massachusetts. The authors draw upon letters sent by W.H. Hawthorne, the United States Consul at Zanzibar, aboard the HMS (“His/Her Majesty’s Ship”) of London, and his highlighting of the problem of translation in understanding who these slaves were. In particular, he brings into light the difference between ‘Wa-Makua’ and ‘Waswaheli’ terms used to describe slaves. The authors insist that, while scholars of Indian Ocean world slavery have identified African voices among the enslaved, virtually all of them are mediated in one way or another by differences in language and translation.

Mahmood Kooria explores the distinction between “native” and “foreigner” in his discussion of the social, political and religious imaginations of territory among Muslim intelligentsia in sixteenth-century Malabar, situated on the south-western coast of the Indian subcontinent. Analyzing texts from this period, the author considers how a minority Muslim community, living under otherwise “secular” domination, struggled against near-

constant conflict with the Portuguese and, by extension, the Iberian Peninsula and rest of Europe. In doing so, he unravels the unfamiliar political, social and economic territory dealt with by Muslim and Hindu people in Malabar, and how they coped with categories of identity: re-envisioning the Indian Ocean littoral zone as an area “without borders.”

Carey McCormack draws on nineteenth-century, published narratives of botanist Sir Alfred Russel Wallace. She analyzes his travel diaries and correspondence with Britain to trace his travels in Southeast Asia, arguing that Eurocentric narratives of “discovery,” depicted as a primarily white, male endeavor, is highly problematic. She suggests these narratives exclude the significant role of indigenous Southeast Asians in the development and advancement of scientific knowledge; indeed, Wallace’s claims of “discovery” could not have come into fruition without the vast network of knowledge and exchange he held, across the IOW, as well as with assistance from minorities: Chinese immigrants, female travel writers, indigenous tribes, and European assistants. Nonetheless, Wallace often excluded these people from his narratives of “discovery.”

Finally, Rafael Thiebaut discusses the commercial interactions that occurred between the Dutch Cape Colony and the French Mascarenes, during the eighteenth-century regime of the *Compagnie des Indes*. He argues that conventional historical interpretations of European trade companies, which depict commercial interests as narrowly defined: nationalistic and competitive, and in constant opposition to one another, are inaccurate. When the French Islands (known today as Réunion and Mauritius) were in need of food during the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763), local authorities did not hesitate to establish direct maritime connections with the Dutch Cape Colony in order to obtain wheat and wine. Friendly relations between the governors of the two colonies assured commercial exchange, and for the Mascarenes, important shipments of cargo containing food, lasting throughout the conflict. These favourable interactions paved the way for closer Dutch-French cooperation in the IOW during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

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