
JIEWS

Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies

Vol. 2 • Iss. 1

This special issue of the *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* features contributions by scholars who at once celebrate and reflect on the impact of Michael Pearson's work on the study of the Indian Ocean world. This *festschrift* represents the first of two issues dedicated to Pearson.

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Editor's Preface

***JIEWS* Special Issue: Festschrift to Michael Pearson**

This edition of the *JIEWS* is the first of two special collections of *Festschrift* essays in honour of Michael Pearson. Michael has established himself as one of the formative figures in Indian Ocean world (IOW) studies. Pioneer IOW scholar K.N. Chaudhuri was largely responsible for adapting Braudelian concepts to the IOW, a macro-region running from the Red Sea to East Asia. Thus he established the central significance of environmental factors, notably the monsoon system, in IOW history. He also challenged conventional histories that for traditional IOW societies stressed the primacy of non-economic factors, ones that slowed or retarded economic development. Such conventional histories argued that the advent into the IOW from 1500 of Europeans dominated by capitalist ideology that placed to the fore the primacy of individual enterprise, the profit motive, and protection of private property quickly established the economic, technological, military and political dominance of Europeans – a dominance cemented by the widespread imposition of European colonial rule in the late nineteenth century. Other scholars have followed Chaudhuri's challenge to conventional Eurocentric interpretations of IOW history. However, Michael Pearson has greatly advanced the frontier of Indian Ocean world studies in new and highly significant ways. Firstly, albeit by training a historian of India, Pearson eschewed the Asia-centric tendencies of Chaudhuri and his immediate followers by including Africa as an integral part of the IOW, and of Africans as not merely passive spectators of an IOW history created by Asians, or worse, victims of a slave trade organised initially by Arabs and later also Europeans, but as making vibrant positive contributions to IOW history. The second major way in which Pearson has helped advance IOW studies is through a subtle and profound study of the historical interplay between the peoples of the maritime spaces of the IOW, its littorals, and its terrestrial (island and continental) hinterlands. Pearson's contributions, of course, go beyond these salient issues, as the following essays – some more personal in nature than others – make clear. It is our hope that these two special editions will encourage readers who have yet to explore Michael's works, to do so.

Gwyn Campbell