

# MAJOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

The Indian Ocean World: The Making of  
the First Global Economy in the Context of  
Human-Environment Interaction

## **Fourth International MCRI Conference, “The European Impact on the Indian Ocean World”**

**9-10 September 2013**

*By Jennifer Craig*

The project held its fourth international conference last fall in Montreal, Canada. Hosted by the Indian Ocean World Centre at McGill University, the two-day event brought together members of the project and scholars from Canada, Belgium, the UK, Brazil and the US. Teams reported on their developing projects and their findings to date, emphasizing Europe’s role in the development of the Indian Ocean world (IOW). More than 40 participants engaged in multidisciplinary discussions of topics ranging from the current state and direction of IOW history to future opportunities for the interdisciplinary study of the IOW past. Some of the broad themes covered included:

- The economic, political, social and religious impact of Europeans on the Indian Ocean world from Africa to the Far East.
- The identification of conventional Eurocentric views and their reconsideration in light of new research.
- The European impact on both intra-IOW and extra-IOW exchange, including, but not limited to, commodities, humans, animals, plants, technologies, ideologies, monies and disease.

Ronald Kydd (Tyndale Seminary, Ontario, Canada) opened the conference with his talk on the patterns of exchange that existed across Eurasia about a millennia prior to the European impact. Providing examples, he emphasized that when the West turned towards the East it was following land routes and sea lanes that others had been using for centuries. He asked participants to think about the use of terms such as “nodes,” “zones” and “routes.” These concepts, the context of their use and their

### **In this Issue...**

1. Fourth International MCRI Conference
2. Team Three Updates
3. Student Funding Opportunities

*This research was supported by the Social  
Sciences and Humanities Research Council.*

implied interpretation were a common discussion point throughout the conference. Gwyn Campbell (IOWC, McGill University, Quebec, Canada) began the second day's sessions with a paper on the patterns of exchange in the IOW from the perspective of Europeans who lived and/or operated in the IOW, challenging preconceived Eurocentric ideas that slavery models similar to those found in the Atlantic can be transposed onto the Indian Ocean world.

The project's newest partner, McGill's Geographic Information Centre, was also present at the conference. The Centre's Director, Dr. J. Pablo Arroyo-Mora, spoke about the ways in which his centre will support the on-going technical development of the project's database, issues that surround data collection on this scale, and ways that data can be visualized to enhance the communication of results.

This conference was made possible by the hard work of Project Leader Gwyn Campbell and Project Manager Lori Callaghan with the assistance of PhD student Caroline Seagle. We thank them for all their efforts in organizing this successful project conference!



## Angela Schottenhammer, University of Salzburg

One focus of my research during the last 12 months was an embassy that had obviously secretly been sent to the court of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 785 by the Chinese Emperor Dezong 德宗 (Li Gua 李适; 742–805; r. 780–805) and his close adviser, Li Mi 李泌 (722–789). The embassy is, however, not mentioned in official historiography, neither Chinese nor Arab. Also, literary sources contain only indirect hints and allusions. The only source that records this mis-

sion is a stone stele that was unearthed in 1984 in Northwest China (Shaanxi Province): The stele records the biography of a Tang period eunuch, Yang Liangyao 楊良瑤 (736–806), who served as an envoy to the Abbasid Caliphate.

On the basis of the excellent research of two Chinese historians, Zhang Shimin 張世民 and Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, who first introduced Yang's stele and started to examine details and the route of his embassy, I did not only deepen research on the historical context of this embassy but particularly focused on the question of why it is not mentioned in other sources. Analysing the historical, political and military context of the time, my hypothesis is that it is possible that the mission was concealed intentionally – not only because it was supposed to solve a delicate problem (gaining the Abbasids for a “pan-Asiatic” alliance and military assistance against the Tibetans), but because the complicated domestic political situation, and the somewhat crippled and weak positions of the emperor, also have to be taken into consideration. This mission, thus, constitutes an important diplomatic milestone in the history of Sino-Arab relations and would prove that as early as 785 a eunuch was sent to Baghdad on a mission with important diplomatic purposes – more than 600 years earlier than the famous Zheng He (1371–c. 1433) missions in the early fifteenth century.

The first diplomatic contacts between China and the Arabs can be traced back to the seventh century. In 651, the third caliph of the Umayyads, Uthman Ibn 'Affan (644–656 AD/23–35 AH), is said to have sent a tribute mission to the court of the Tang Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (reg. 649–683) in Chang'an. In 750, Abū'l 'Abbās (r. 750–754, designated as Abu Luoba 阿蒲·羅拔 in Chinese sources) overthrew the Umayyad caliphate (660–749) and established the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258; Heiyi Dashi 黑衣大食 or “Black-dressed Tadjik” in Tang period historical accounts). The political centre of the Abbasids expanded gradually eastwards and they soon controlled the en-

tire eastern part of the Islamic world. Famous in this context is the Battle of Talas (in modern Tashkent) in 751, where Chinese troops were defeated by the Arabs. This military defeat, however, did not affect Sino-Arab relations in a negative way in the long perspective. Commercial relations flourished as never before. And, obviously, as my research intends to show, the Chinese, in particular the emperor's advisor Li Mi, diplomatically speaking regarded the Abbasids as potential "partners" of equal status on par with China – the Chinese dominating the eastern and the black-dressed Tadjik the western hemisphere – who were strong and powerful in military and political terms and could be gained for a potential alliance against the threat of the Tibetans at China's western frontiers.

Results of this research will be published in early 2014 in German as a booklet entitled, *Sino-arabische Beziehungen im 8. Jahrhundert: Eine frühe pan-asiatische Mächte-Allianz? Yang Liangyaos Gesandtschaftsreise von 785 an den Hof des Abbasiden-Kalifats (750–1258)? (Sino-Arab Relations in the 8th Century: An early pan-Asiatic Power Alliance? Yang Liangyao's embassy to the Court of the Abbasid Caliphate in 785)* (c. 100 pages). An English translation is in preparation.



Compilation of activities on-going in Team 3.  
Photo credit: Angela Schottenhammer

## Akifumi Iwabuchi, Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology

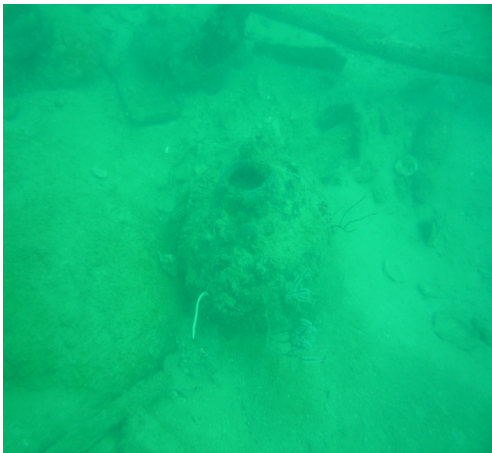
In February 2013, I finished long-term fieldwork at Bangka and Belitung islands in the Java Sea. I conducted this maritime research single-handedly, supported by a grant: Japanese Governmental Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (2011-2013). The research aims include maritime anthropology and archaeology. Below are short introductions to the projects associated with these aims.

### Archaeology

Bangka and Belitung islands are important and strategic points in terms of seaborne routes between Arabia and Asia. My research is on the movement of peoples and goods over water between these areas up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The classic Chinese record, *Account of Buddhism Sent from the South Seas*, written by Yijing



in the 8<sup>th</sup> century might have alluded to the islands. Some Indonesian researchers as well as I suppose that Yijing may have visited the Srivijaya fort of Kota Kapur in Bangka Island. However, to confirm this we require further historical and archaeological investigations. Recently, the famous shipwreck *Batu Hitam*, otherwise known as the *Tang Shipwreck*, was discovered on the seabed near Belitung Island. Studies have purported that this is an Arabian dhow, which may date to the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and sunk in the 9<sup>th</sup> century with all its cargo aboard. During my research I succeeded in locating many other shipwrecks and cargos, perhaps dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Underwater Cultural Heritage off Bangka Island. Photo credit: Akifumi Iwabuchi

### *Anthropology*

The Sekak sea nomad group continues to lead a traditional marine life. Their habitations are on houseboats around Bangka and Belitung islands. Historic materials of this area's colonial era often depict the Sekak as ruthless pirates. I hypothesize the Sekak have a strong mind-set of anti-colonial resistance, and are not pirates. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, they fought to defend local Malays from the Ilanun pirates, who attacked Bangka and Belitung islands. These events are still remembered by Sekak nomads and Malay villagers.

### *Research Outcomes*

On September 11 and 12, 2013, I was invited

to deliver the keynote speech titled, "Maritime Southeast Asia: How to See and How to Study," at the 2nd International Conference on Malay Excellence: "Nusantara Maritime Culture and Heritage," held at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. In this paper I discussed not only the results of my fieldwork in Bangka and Belitung islands but also the historical transition of maritime *entrepôt* in Southeast Asia from 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, the geography of my research included the area between Jolo Island in the Philippines' Sulu Archipelago and Bagan si Api-api in eastern Sumatra, Indonesia. For details on the archaeology please see Iwabuchi, A. "Underwater Archaeology in Indonesia." *Archaeology Quarterly* 123 (2013): 94-96 (in Japanese).



## **Jun Kimura, Chicago Field Museum**

Dr. Kimura is a maritime archaeologist who specialises in medieval East Asian Shipbuilding. He completed his PhD in 2010 at Flinders University, Australia, with the support of a prestigious Endeavour Award. He has engaged in several maritime archaeology projects, including a current one that conducts survey and excavation at 13th century naval battlefield sites related to the Kublai Khan invasion of Japan (1281) and Vietnam (1288). This work is supported by the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University, Monash University and the Konosuke Matsushita Memorial Foundation. These sponsors offer the expertise of multidisciplinary specialists from Australia, the US, Canada and Japan on approaches to warfare and conflict. The team worked on sites where aggression of the descendants of the Mongol Empire during the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) took place. Specifically, Dr. Kimura's focus is on the emergence and expansion of naval power in

Asian regions and the impact of imperialism on trans-regional human movements and diasporas before the European colonization period.

His recent fieldwork in Vietnam, supported by the above institutes, aimed to contribute to national human capacity building in maritime archaeology methodology, and underwater cultural heritage management and protection. The country continues to deal with the difficulty of controlling the pillage and commercial salvage of underwater cultural resources (e.g. shipwrecks). Eight years involvement in maritime archaeology in Vietnam, through cooperation with the Institute of Archaeology, evolved to the establish the Underwater Archaeology Department in 2013. The first mission of the new department included the exploration of unidentified naval battle fields of the Yuan invasion in the Ha Long Bay area. During the 2013 fieldwork season, Dr. Kimura conducted non-disruptive SCUBA dive searches on ceramic scattered areas. This was conducted with a team of people including Bui Van Hieu, Deputy Head of the Department (see photo).



Jun Kimura (right) and Bui Van Hieu (Deputy Head, Department of Underwater Archaeology, Vietnam)



## Ma Guang, Ghent University and University of Salzburg

I am a PhD candidate with Professor Angela Schottenhammer and I have been working on “Wokou-Diplomacy in Northeast Asia: From Hope to Disappointment,” within the project, “China’s Maritime Commerce and Naval Activities in Northeast Asia During the ‘Yuan-Ming Rupture’,” supported by the Special Research Fund (BOF, Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds) at Ghent University, Belgium.

*Wokou* is the historic East Asian word for pirates from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. They constituted a permanent threat to both merchants and coastal populations along the littoral from north to south China. Piracy was mostly a big problem along the rich east and southeast coasts of China, but the northeast province of Shandong also suffered the *Wokou*, especially in the early Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

This sub-project will thoroughly investigate the origins and particular characteristics of pirates and pirate activities in Northeast Asia, a topic that has been almost completely neglected by historians. We will apply a comparative global historical perspective to document texts. The geographic space my research covers is the area of the Shandong Peninsula (northeast China) and Northeast Asian waters contextualized within the wider Asia continent. In my analysis I may also include texts from peripheral areas, such as Korea and Japan, along with other regions because activities in these places may explain developments in my core area.

After the establishment of the Ming Dynasty and the ascension of the Hongwu Emperor (r. 1368-1398) to the throne, the economy needed to recover after many years of wars with the Mongols. The government did not possess sufficient means to suppress the pirates that terrorized the

coastal regions. At the beginning of the Hongwu Emperor reign, Hongwu was under the illusion that the Japanese government could help to suppress the *Wokou*. He dispatched several envoys to Japan to start, what I would call, “*Wokou* diplomacy.” However, negotiations turned out to be very difficult and all attempts to find a diplomatic solution eventually failed. The Chinese emperor decided to abandon official relations with Japan and turned his attention instead to the strengthening of coastal defences in order to ward off the *Wokou*. Nevertheless, the problem could never be satisfactorily resolved.

My research will investigate questions such as: Where exactly did the pirates come from? Where did they get their ships and what kind of ships did they use? To what extent are developments overseas responsible for a rise in piracy along the Chinese coasts? Can we find links between legal/official and illegal/pirate as well as between commercial and political-military purposes?



## Elke Papelitzky, University of Salzburg

I am a PhD student at the University of Salzburg and a member of Team 3 since October 2013. Currently, I am analyzing the Chinese work, *Siyi guangji*, compiled by Shen Maoshang, who lived during the late 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century. This book contains information on different countries the Chinese had contact with, for example Korea and Japan, but also countries in Southeast Asia, along with Arabia and Europe. I am focusing on trade relations between China and the other countries as well as on several short navigational texts in the *Siyi guangji*. These texts describe routes mostly from China to places in Southeast Asia, Japan and Korea, and include information on places the

sailors visited along the journey, compass bearings and the distance between places. The texts also include details such as warnings of hazards like coral reefs or shallow water. When analyzing these texts I first try to obtain their modern-day latitude and longitude coordinates by identifying the place names mentioned and locate them on a modern map. With these coordinates I can calculate the distance between two points as well as the direction.

My methods are new and include calculations I have not thus far seen in use in historical research. I set up an Excel sheet to automatically calculate values and to compare them with the old Chinese information given in the text. This allows me to determine the accuracy of the sailing directions. As the earth is not a perfect sphere, the mathematical formula for calculating distance and direction is very complicated. With the help of my sister Ellen, who is studying mathematics for her Master’s degree at the Technische Universität München, I managed to find a formula that works for my purposes.



## Wim De Winter, Ghent University

In October 2013, my book chapter, “Belgian-Indian contact in historical perspective,” in *Het wiel van Ashoka (The Wheel of Ashoka)* was published by Leuven University. The book was launched at the European exposition, *Europalia India*. My chapter was concerned with aspects of cross-cultural negotiations between European sailor-merchants from the port of Ostend and local courtly environments on the north-east coast of Mughal India, in the context of 18<sup>th</sup> century Indian maritime commerce.

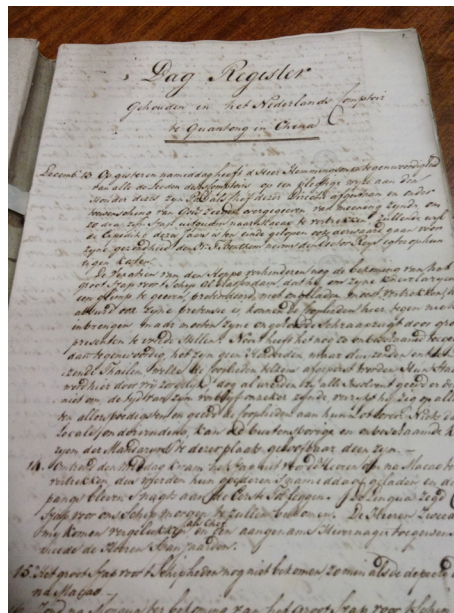


I started my doctorate in January 2014 with a grant from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung. My research is done from a historical anthropological perspective on a connected comparison of cross-cultural interaction. I focus on socio-cultural aspects of exchange as building blocks of historical connection at local levels. My period is the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and geographically I focus on China (esp. Canton) and India (esp. Bengal) against the socio-political background of Chinese foreign policy. Within this larger framework the first phase of my research will concern the European maritime perspective. This is a continuation of the aforementioned book chapter. The heterogenous Ostend Company archive features “Dagregisters,” logbooks and personal diaries of maritime travellers who operated on the sea and inland waterways, especially the routes to the port of Canton (China) and Bengal (Hughli-River area, Chander-nagor, Murshidabad). At this time, sources agree most ships that sailed to China anchored in rivers, where exchange generally seemed to occur. The comparison of sources from both trajectories will allow me to study and compare multiple social levels of interaction taking place within the diplomacy of commerce.

In this comparative approach I highlight behaviour or mentalities towards exchange. I aim to understand how these varied according to the context or destination of travel. For example, the Chinese establishment of commerce might also have influenced European interaction in Bengal.

Preliminary literature review has revealed that interpersonal connection (“cultural brokers”) played a very important role. I consider cross-cultural interaction as a process of learning. From this perspective it appears that past peoples with different cultural identities could understand one another and exchange was thus created. In some cases, differences were bridged via performative interaction and improvised encounters on a local level. Further, my methodology is text-based document research, with which I intend to reveal

different past options of contact and/or strategy. I hope to address if exchange was purely strategic or if some degree of personal connection took place on both private and official levels.



Example of Ostend Company archive.  
Photo credit: Wim de Winter

The Ostend Company archive housed at Ghent University and the City of Antwerp have rarely been examined and never from either a culture-historical nor from a truly comparative perspective. This archive is therefore expected to yield new results and compliment existing research. They will also add a relatively unaddressed source to the interpretation of past activities in China and Bengal.



# Student Funding Opportunities

## Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute

The Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute offers several awards to assist Canadian and Indian undergraduate and graduate students further their study of India and prepare them for a career in an India-related field. These awards include:

- Student Excellence Award (\$2,000 CAD)
- Policy Research Grant (\$7,000-10,000 CAD)
- Student Mobility Programme (varies)
- Understanding Canada: Doctoral Research Fellowship (varies)

## Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships

Canada is building world-class research capacity by recruiting top-tier postdoctoral researchers at an internationally competitive level of funding and positioning them for success as the research leaders of tomorrow. These prestigious two-year fellowships, worth \$70,000 CAD per year, are open to both Canadian and international researchers who have recently completed a PhD, PhD-equivalent or health professional degree. Seventy fellowships will be awarded each year.

## SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) offers Postdoctoral Fellowships to support the most promising Canadian (citizen or permanent resident) new scholars in the social sciences and humanities in order to assist them in establishing a research base at an important time in their research careers. These fellowships are valued at \$38,000 CAD per year with a research allowance of up to \$5,000 CAD. Fellowships will normally be awarded to candidates affiliated with a university other than the one that awarded their PhD.

## Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships

The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS) program aims to attract and retain world-class doctoral students, and helps establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning. The scholarships are open to both Canadian and international PhD students studying at Canadian universities. They are valued at \$50,000 CAD per year for up to three years.

## PhD Fellowship in Indian Ocean World History

The Indian Ocean World Centre (IOWC) is offering a PhD Fellowship in Indian Ocean World History. While all proposals within this broad field will be considered, historical studies of (i) the Indian Ocean world trade in animals and/or animal products or (ii) the slave trade indigenous to the eastern sector of the Indian Ocean world (i.e., any region South and Southeast Asia to China) are particularly welcome. The successful candidate will work under the supervision of Prof. Gwyn Campbell, Canada Research Chair in Indian Ocean World History, and is expected to possess a good reading knowledge of one or more relevant languages.

This award is tenable at the Department of History and Classical Studies, McGill University. It is open to all qualified applicants without restriction as to nationality. In applying to the McGill PhD program, please indicate your wish to be considered for the Indian Ocean World History PhD Fellowship.

## Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarships and SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) offers two types of funding for Canadian (citizen or permanent resi-



dent) doctoral students:

- Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS): Doctoral Scholarships valued at \$35,000 CAD per year for 36 months, and
- SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships valued at \$20,000 CAD per year for 12, 24, 36 or 48 months.

These funding opportunities aim to develop research skills and assist in the training of highly qualified personnel by supporting students who demonstrate a high standard of scholarly achievement in undergraduate and graduate studies in the social sciences and humanities. SSHRC determines the value and duration of an award based on the number of months of full-time study (or equivalent) the applicant will have completed at the proposed start date of the award.

### **MA in Indian Ocean World History**

The Indian Ocean World Centre (IOWC) is offering an MA Scholarship to conduct research into the history of the Indian Ocean world, an arena of primary geo-political importance that includes eastern Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and emerging superpowers China and India. While all proposals within this broad field will be considered, historical studies of (i) human-environment interaction, (ii) natural disasters (including shipwrecks) and (iii) disease are particularly welcome. The successful candidate will work under the supervision of Prof. Gwyn Campbell Canadian Research Chair in Indian Ocean World History, and have access to the IOWC's specialized research archive.

This award is tenable at the Department of History and Classical Studies, McGill University. It is open to all qualified applicants without restriction as to nationality. In applying to the McGill MA program, please indicate your wish to be considered for the MA Scholarship in Indian Ocean World History.

### **Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Master's Scholarship**

The Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Master's Scholarships aim to develop research skills and assist in the training of highly qualified personnel by supporting students in the social sciences and humanities who demonstrate a high standard of achievement in undergraduate and early graduate studies. Canadian citizens and permanent residents pursuing their first graduate degree are eligible to apply for this non-renewable, one-year award valued at \$17,500 CAD.

