

MAJOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH INITIATIVE

NEWSLETTER

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

Second International MCRI Conference

“Crossroads between Empires and Peripheries — Knowledge Transfer, Product Exchange and Human Movement in the Indian Ocean World” 21–23 June 2012

The project held its second international conference 21–23 June in Ghent, Belgium. The event was held in Het Pand, an old Dominican monastery located in the heart of the city on the banks of the river Leie that now serves as the university’s conference centre. Beautifully preserved, Ghent’s medieval architecture dates back to the 12th century and notably includes the Saint Bavo Cathedral, Gravensteen castle and the old Graslei harbour.

Hosted by the University of Ghent, the three-day conference brought together members of the MCRI project and other leading IOW scholars —in total more than 55 participants from 14 countries. They delivered papers that in turn stimulated discussion on topics ranging from knowledge transfer and technologies to global exchange and human migration across the Indian Ocean world (IOW). Participation was more interdisciplinary than most conferences. Historians, economists, geographers, museum curators and maritime archaeologists, to name but a few, took part in sessions organized around the central themes of the conference:

- Private and official commercial exchange
- Exchange of knowledge, technology and ideology
- Human movement and migration (including the slave trade)
- Tribute and trade
- Indirect impacts of IOW global exchange (e.g., disease, espionage, creolization, etc.)

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The first of two keynote speeches was given by Professor Pierre-Yves Manguin of the École française d'Extrême-Orient (France) on the topic of proto-historic exchange in the Eastern Indian Ocean. The paper emphasized the fact that maritime Southeast Asia did not experience a sudden phase of "Indianization" (that is, the adoption of many Indian culture traits, religions and languages such as Sanskrit), but rather went through a millennium-long process of cultural assimilation that started as early as 500 BC. This process was preceded by agricultural intensification, the adoption of cash crops, craft specialization, a growing regional exchange giving rise to a social hierarchy and locally induced state formation during which Southeast Asia integrated into the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis." Given the paucity of indigenous written sources much evidence for the history of this period derives from archaeological excavations.

The rest of Thursday's sessions went on to cover other topics related to the transfer of knowledge and technologies, borders, commodities and human movement across the IOW. The day wrapped up with a little taste of local culture at the Belgium beer reception in Het Pand.

Day two focused on themes of religion, ideologies and both private and official commercial exchange. Professor William G. Clarence-Smith of the School of African and Oriental Studies at the



Second International MCRI Conference in Ghent, Belgium. Photo credit: Mathieu Torck

University of London opened the afternoon session with the second keynote speech that examined the trade and breeding of donkeys and mules in the Indian Ocean between 1780 and 1918. The paper stressed the commercial importance of donkeys and mules in the Indian Ocean world for military, mining and agricultural purposes. Surprisingly, donkeys and mules were - and still are - constantly neglected by historians in favor of horses. In terms of commerce, the shipping of mules and donkeys has received little attention, even though the mechanics of moving animals over long distances were complicated. Clarence-Smith notes that the problem is not a lack of sources either, but of historiography.

Hands-on demonstrations of the online collaborative platform ICRA that is being developed by Professor Mohamed Cheriet and his team at the École de technologie supérieure in Montreal were also offered throughout the three days of the conference. Participants were invited to sit down and see first-hand how the program's teleconferencing, document sharing and interactive annotation capabilities enhance collaboration between researchers who work together in online environments.

The final day of the conference included a morning session on tribute, trade and global exchange,

Upcoming Event

ARC/MCRI Conference

"The Dimensions of the Indian Ocean World Past: Sources and Opportunities for interdisciplinary work in Indian Ocean World History, 9th-19th Centuries"

The Western Australian Maritime Museum, Victoria Quay, Fremantle
12-14 November 2012

as well as parallel afternoon sessions on (i) the indirect impact of Indian Ocean world global exchange and (ii) human movement and migration. The meeting concluded with remarks from the head of the organization committee, Professor Angela Schottenhammer, who, along with Dr. Mathieu Torck, worked tirelessly to make this a very successful project conference. Special thanks to Angela and Mathieu for all their efforts!



Gwyn Campbell, McGill University

Prof. Campbell is the Director of the Indian Ocean World Centre (IOWC) at McGill University, where he also holds the Canada Research Chair in Indian Ocean World History. He is a specialist in the economic history of the Indian Ocean region and is currently researching a variety of archival materials, notably from Britain, France and Madagascar, concerning the movement of commodities, peoples, technologies and ideas within the Western Indian Ocean world, as well as natural “events,” such as climatic change and human disasters.



Prof. Gwyn Campbell

As the project’s Principal Investigator and leader of Team 1, Prof. Campbell and his collaborators are focused on researching themes related to the rise and development of the first “global” economy in the Indian Ocean world (IOW), with a special focus on maritime connections and exchanges within Africa and between the western Indian Ocean, as well as the wider IOW; the relationship between the environment and the IOW slave trade; human migration across the Western IOW; and the environmental history (especially human-

environment interaction) of the Western IOW.

Recently, Prof. Campbell published “Servitude and the Changing Face of Demand for Labour in the Indian Ocean World, c.1800-1900” in Bob Harms and Bernard Freamon’s *Slavery and the Slave Trades in the Indian Ocean World: Global Connections and Disconnections* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012) and his paper, “Forest Depletion in Imperial Madagascar, c.1790-61,” will be printed in his forthcoming book, *The Politics of Marketing Land: Value, Conservation and Development in Madagascar*, which he co-edited with Sandra Evers and Michael Lambek (Leiden: Brill, 2013).



Amitava Chowdhury, Queen’s University

Prof. Chowdhury’s research is interdisciplinary and comparative with a strong focus on the southwestern Indian Ocean and the British Caribbean. His current research is on diasporic subject formation in a global comparative perspective. Within this broad area, he is specifically interested in Indian indentured labour in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the Indian Ocean, particularly in Mauritius and Réunion. In the past, he has led several historical archaeology projects in Mauritius and unraveled and investigated archaeological sites related to marronage and indentured labour. Two of his excavated sites, Le Morne Brabant and Aapravasi Ghat, were inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage sites. More recently, he has been asking questions about British colonial welfare policies, as well as on early Indian nationalism in the Indian Ocean arena.

For the past two years, since the MCRI project started, Prof. Chowdhury has investigated some of the above research questions in archives in the



Prof. Amitava Chowdhury

United Kingdom. Specifically, he has concentrated on colonial office papers in Kew, India Office Records in the British library, and numerous private papers in the provincial archives.

Prof. Chowdhury had just submitted a book manuscript for consideration for publication. Its theme is identity and diasporic subject formation in the Indian indentured labour diaspora in Mauritius and Jamaica in a comparative perspective. The author rejects the existing stance of assuming an immutable and pre-discursive view of labour diasporic identity and instead engages in unraveling the formational aspects of identity claims. He also recently completed two commissioned book chapters on marronage in Mauritius, and is preparing a theoretical piece on the methodological problems of maroon archaeology in Dutch Mauritius.



Hideaki Suzuki, Japan Society for the Promotion of the Science

Dr. Suzuki arrived at the IOWC in February 2012 as a visiting scholar after receiving his PhD from the University of Tokyo in 2010. He joined the MCRI in December 2011, and as a collaborator of Team 1 focuses on the slave trade in the western Indian Ocean.

Dr. Suzuki's research interest continues to be slave traders in 19th century western Indian Ocean, but there are many topics in this period he would like to explore. His particular interest is to find some connectedness through slave trade between the western Indian Ocean and other parts

of the world. He read a paper focusing on the anti-slave trade patrol of the Royal Navy at the MCRI conference in Ghent this July, and another paper on the east African coast is currently being prepared for the ARC/MCRI conference, "The Dimensions of the Indian Ocean World Past," to be held at Fremantle, Australia, this November.

Dr. Suzuki has recently extended his research scope towards the 20th century. In this direction he particularly focuses on slave narratives produced in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. He has collected about 1,700



Dr. Hideaki Suzuki

statements and analyzed them with a quantitative method, which involves reading slave narratives comprehensively and expressing the experiences recounted there statistically, thus making it possible to identify general patterns and trends in slaves' experiences. This makes it possible to embed each individual experience into the body of experiences recounted in the data. He hopes this work will contribute not only to the study of twentieth-century slavery and slave trade in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, which have been largely ignored by existing literatures, but also methodologically to advance our understanding of slavery and the slave trade in the IOW, and beyond.



Alberto Tiburcio Urquiola, McGill University

Mr. Tiburcio is a PhD student at McGill's Institute of Islamic Studies who has been collaborating with the MCRI project for two years. His dissertation topic focuses on religious minorities in late seventeenth-century Iran. His sources

consist of Persian court chronicles, Arabic legal texts, and European missionary accounts. and He has undertaken research trips to Iran in 2010, and more recently to Italy, where he spent a summer doing research at the Propaganda Fide archive in Rome.



Mr. Alberto Tiburcio Urquiola

Mr. Tiburcio is also involved in retrieving data on plagues and natural catastrophes in the Middle East for the MCRI database. This is no easy task given the scattered nature of source references, especially for pre-modern Iran, which is his major area of concern. He recently presented a paper at the Conference of the International Society of Iranian Studies in which he addressed some of these challenges. As more data on natural phenomena is fed into the MCRI database, researchers will be able to correlate historical epidemic outbreaks that occurred simultaneously in different parts of the Indian Ocean world. This will affect the way researchers study sub-regions, leading to a more cross-regional and global approach.



Anna Winterbottom, McGill University

Dr. Winterbottom's current research focuses on the topic of medicine in the Indian Ocean in the early modern period (c. 1400–1800). Medicinal goods were an important part of the regional trade, and the multi-directional trade in them necessitated not only economic exchanges but also the communication of ideas about the body and the natural environment. The use of medicines by migrant communities, both free and enslaved, relates to the theme of human migrations. One example is the healing practices among Siddi

communities in India. The study of medicine can also provide a lens on colonialism and resistance by exploring how colonial powers, including the Omani, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British, aimed to control regional drugs trades and how successful they were. Part of the aim of her project is to draw together different types of source material, including physical objects and plant materials as well as manuscript and print pharmacopoeia and works of medicine.

Dr. Winterbottom uses the archives and museums at McGill University, which contain many unique collections. Of particular interest are Casey Wood's collections of medical instruments from Sri Lanka, held in the Redpath Museum, and of medical manuscripts, kept in the Ostler library. As the project develops she hopes to access overseas archives, particularly in East Africa. Dr. Winterbottom is currently seeking contributions to a conference on the subject of medicine in the Indian Ocean in any historical period, to be held at the IOWC April 26–27, 2012.



A medicinal root from an apothecary's drawer and an illustration of the *Ficus Indica* from the Jesuit botanist Georg Camelli, both from the Natural History Museum, London.

Photo credit: Anna Winterbottom

Exploring Russia's Asian Dimension in Vladivostok

Dr. Rashed Chowdhury

After a 28-hour flight, including layovers in New York and Moscow, I arrived in Vladivostok, the capital of Russia's Primorsky Krai (Maritime Territory), early on a cold February morning. I was 16 time zones east of Montreal, and was very curious about what I would find in this part of Russia that was completely new to me. While I had been to Moscow several times previously, Vladivostok, located on the Russian Pacific coast, was a different matter. The city is situated only 505 km from Harbin, China and 680 km from Pyongyang, North Korea, but as much as 6,430 km from Moscow. Predictably, I was to find a strong East Asian influence in Vladivostok. I caught my first ever glimpse of the Pacific Ocean as my taxi approached the city from the inland airport. The landscape was marked by the characteristic low hills known in the Russian Far East as *sopki*. Despite the thick, acrid smog surrounding the city (caused by coal-burning heating plants and car exhaust), I was excited to be there.

I was in Vladivostok to conduct research on the history of political and commercial relations between this part of Russia and the neighbouring Asian countries. Vladivostok, a city whose name

tellingly means "Own the East," was founded by the Russians in 1860 on land that had, until the previous year, been part of Manchuria. Over the course of two weeks' work at the Russian State History Archive of the Far East, I found many nineteenth-century documents reflecting the development of Vladivostok

from a remote military outpost to a port of growing international importance. Of particular interest

were documents showing early interactions between the Russians and the indigenous inhabitants of the Russian Far East, Russian trade with China, and Russia's sometimes clumsy attempts to break the international isolation of Korea.



Vladivostok streetscape

Photo credit: Rashed Chowdhury

Vladivostok had emerged as a cosmopolitan, ethnically mixed city prior to the Communist takeover in 1922 (five years after the October Revolution), and residents of today's city of about 600,000 take pride in that history, as Vladivostok attempts to open itself up to the world again. The only cars one sees in Vladivostok are made in Japan (featuring left-hand steering in a country that drives on the right), the public buses are Korean-made (still bearing advertisements in Korean inside), and the ads on stores emphasise the East Asian origins of the products on offer ("Children's goods from Korea" or "Cosmetics from Japan"). There is a large number of recent Central Asian and Chinese immigrants, and a fair number of Korean tourists. The food on offer in the city is similarly multicultural: most street food is Central Asian, while the restaurants often feature Georgian or Azeri kebabs, or Chinese food. Instead of Coke or Pepsi, vending machines offer Japanese brands of bottled tea and coffee. One of Vladivostok's



Dr. Rashed Chowdhury

major musical events in February was a concert by a guitarist from Quebec.

Vladivostok is a very young place compared to many cities in European Russia, which often date back to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, its historical charm quickly grows on you. After all, where else can you get a tour of the former Communist leadership's WWII-era bunker under a nineteenth-century street? A few days in Vladivostok show you that the city's international history is by no means confined to the archive, and that this city is quite likely to live up to its increasingly popular nickname as Russia's "window into Asia."



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)

For more information on these opportunities, see Shastri - Grants, Awards & Opportunities.

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.

Contact Gwyn Campbell through e-mail to discuss being hosted by the IOWC at McGill University. For more information on the application process, see McGill - Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships.

Canadian Commonwealth Scholarships

The Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program (CCSP) offers scholarships of excellence to all member countries of the Commonwealth. The Government wishes to support research that clearly advances the scholar's own career and that is useful to Canada or to the research team within which the scholar proposes to work. These awards are valued at \$36,500 CAD and are tenable for one year at a Canadian university.

For more information on the application process, see Canadian Commonwealth Scholarships.

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.

For more information on the application process, see SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships.

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.

For more information on the application process, see the McGill - Vanier Fellowship.



ICRA, the Internet-based Collaboration and Resource Application that offers project team members an online platform in which to have meetings and discuss research, has recently added a new feature: sticky notes.

Sticky notes can be placed anywhere within an uploaded document, enabling researchers to leave comments or questions exactly where they come up. The notes can be closed to avoid taking up too much space and re-opened for editing or reference when needed. A little placeholder lets people know where sticky notes have been inserted.

If you haven't started using ICRA yet, contact the Project Manager, Lori Callaghan, to get your team's conference up and running.

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, Canadian Research Chair in Indian Ocean World History, and is expected to possess a good reading knowledge of one or more relevant languages. Value: \$15,000 CAD per year, with the possibility of renewal.

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 resident) 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.

For more information on the application process, see SSHRC - Doctoral Awards.

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. Value: \$12,000 CAD for one year (with the possibility of renewal for thesis track MA students).

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.

For more information on the application process, see Joseph-Armand Bombardier Master's Scholarship.

