

Foreword

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The world is at a crossroad of the meeting of cultural and civilization multitudes toward a more complex world system. The new movement contains more elements and voices of multiculturalism than what seems to be suggested by thinkers who support the thesis of the hegemonic domination of one culture. Understanding how these meetings have been taking place and the dynamics of cultures themselves is central to rethinking and projecting a better tomorrow.

Globalization is a tangible and functional phenomenon, as it manifests itself in the dynamics of international political economy, the quests for universal democratic values, universalization of the Internet and Google, etc. However, this globalization is not functioning as a monolithic force. It is dynamics shaped by multitudes of cultures. Furthermore, at the cultural level, we are still struggling to understand how the above factors, for instance, have been affecting or affected by specific national and regional cultures in positive manners.

I, very much, thank Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, the University of London, England, who gathered, once again, noted experts in different academic disciplines, both from the Global North and Global South, who have collaborated in making systemic studies of the Indian Ocean cultures. The volume draws attention to the positive outcomes of cultural dynamics. It aims also to advance our knowledge of the cultural history of the Indian Oceanic peoples and their African links.

By involving academics that have first-hand experience of the geographical areas and taking a multidisciplinary approach, this volume will not be limited to a particular area of the Indian Ocean. The main hypothesis that Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya and her contributors put forward is “that interethnic contact, which was a by-product of commercial relationships between, not only westerners and easterners, but also between Asian subgroups, has unconsciously resulted in shaping the cultures of the Indian Ocean world.”

This special issue is, to a large extent, the continuation of the special issue of the African and Asian Studies of 2007 with preoccupation of African or black migration to Asia and cultural exchanges between Africans and Asians, the local implications of these exchanges in the languages and people's cultural identifications in both selected parts of Africa and Asia. This specific issue concerns migration to, and within, the Indian Ocean, in any direction and at any period. The main themes include history and culture.

The dynamics of the new colonial political economy contributed to the development of new cultural exchanges among the actors of this economy and their exchanges have been the outcomes of syncretism, some aspects of assimilationism, and some dimensions of retention of local and in-come cultures. However, all the cultures that have met since the 17th century have been systematically changing. The degrees of change have depended on the consciousness of the actors involved, the flexibility of their perspectives, and the intelligence of their cultures to co-exist with others. The dress codes, for instance, among the Yemenis and Swahili people in Zanzibar created and advanced new markets for these products. They have also served as means of definition and consolidation of cultural identities.

The colonial state building used effectively cultural exchanges as tools of articulating its legitimacy and also as new venues for mobilization of new human and material resources. While European-American transatlantic slavery and colonization of Africa and Asian played a central role in migration, as the new colonial economy required free labor and cheap labor, raw materials, and the political space, not all patterns of migrations were caused by the dynamics of the colonial political economy.

The Indian Ocean is a means of communication, unification, and expansionism of colonial powers, their agents and the African people. The mastery of navigation through the Indian Ocean created new problems as well as new opportunities, ways of thinking and, ways of political relations, and cultural definitions of people on both sides of the Ocean. For instance, the Yemenis in East Africa, especially in Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar did not find an Africa that was not static. They also came with their own cultural elements, which were projected into the new land. But their adaptation was a necessary requirement for their survival and their effectiveness as functioning ethnic groups.

MIGRANTS AND THE MAKING OF INDIAN OCEAN CULTURES

INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, the Indian Ocean has been a space for cultural exchanges between peoples of different races and faiths. Arab, Indian, Malay and Chinese oceanic commerce had to compete with European participants from the 16th century onwards. The Lusitanians who turned the Indian Ocean into a Portuguese lake for an entire century, ushered other Europeans into commerce in Asia. From the 17th to the mid-20th centuries, the Dutch, French and the British became major players in these waters widening the spectrum of cross-cultural contact. From 1602, both the Dutch East India Company and West India Company began to threaten Portugal's maritime superiority. Portuguese colonies in Asia, Africa and the Americas became sites of war between two European nations struggling for supremacy in commerce. In the late 18th century, however, Dutch control gave way and the British emerged as rulers of the Indian Ocean. The French were slower than other Europeans in engaging with international trade and overseas expansion. Eventually, in the 17th century, when mercantilist ideas dominated, colonial commerce provided France with goods that it could not produce, in return for manufactured goods from the metropole (Vaughan 2005: 19). The scramble for oriental goods and soil to cultivate crops such as coffee or sugar made the Indian Ocean a region where Europeans competed and fought against each other.

For scholars concerned with historical studies of cross-continental migration, the Indian Ocean slave trade poses challenges. In this volume, **Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London)** focuses on involuntary migrants, in her paper entitled **East India Company in Sumatra: Cross-Cultural Interactions**. Based on 18th and 19th century administrative records from the East India Company, the case study on Sumatra considers the circumstances surrounding inter-ethnic contact.

When people of different cultures come into contact over long periods, cultural hybridity is not an unexpected result. The paper by **Susan Beckerleg (University of Warwick)** entitled **From the Ocean to the Lakes: Cultural Transformations of Yemenis in Kenya and Uganda** demonstrates that migrants are faced with a choice of identity between the culture of the host society and their own. She argues that Kenyan Yemenis are part of the Swahili community, while the Ugandan Yemenis maintain an Arab identity.

The autobiography of Salme bin Said-Ruete, daughter of Sayid Said ibn Sultan Al Bu Said (1791-1856) who extended the Omani empire in the western Indian Ocean with Zanzibar as its capital, has been a valuable source to **Ivan van der Biesen (Katholik University, Leuven, Belgium)**. He also draws upon the ethnographical accounts of Sir Richard Burton and Charles Guillain in his paper entitled **The social and intercultural relations in 19th century Zanzibar** which focuses on the different social layers, cultures and genders in Zanzibar.

Beatrice Nicolini (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy) attempts a new analysis of the history of trade networks throughout the Western Indian Ocean during the 19th century, and re-values the importance of the spice trade as a means of creating mercantile and power elites within the different groups of power. She

examines the role played by the Omani Sultans in **The Myth of the Sultans in the Western Indian Ocean during the 19th century: A New Hypothesis.**

Shweta Sachdeva (School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London) uses leisure as a lens to explore ideas of nation and identity-making, and to demonstrate how Eurasian women are complex subjects to include within histories of national music, theatre or film. In **Eurasian Women as Tawa'if Singers, Actors and Recording Artists: Leisure, Identity and Nation-making in Colonial India**, she analyses the life-histories of Eurasian women, drawing attention to their ability to negotiate their status as celebrity *tawa'if* singers, actors and recording artists in an emergent nation-space.

Language is an important element in cross-cultural contact. The Malays have been intrepid sailors reaching as far as Africa and peopling Madagascar. European colonizers in the Indian Ocean, on the other hand, moved Malays westwards to Sri Lanka and the Cape. Intercultural contact led to alterations in the lexicon and typology of the Sri Lanka Malay language. In **Cross-cultural Influences on the Language of the Sri Lankan Malays**, **Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London)** discusses the circumstances that led to the input from other linguistic groups.

The papers illustrate not only north-south interactions but also those which are south-south. The expertise of the contributors are in different academic disciplines, both from the East and the West. They collaborate to make a systemic study of the Indian Ocean cultures. Perhaps more importantly, this volume draws attention to the positive outcomes of cultures in contact and aims to advance our knowledge of the cultural history of the Indian Oceanic peoples. The papers concern migrants, cultural identity, hybridity, border crossing and post-colonialism. They support the hypothesis that interethnic contact which was a by-product of commercial relationships between, not only westerners and easterners, but also between Asian subgroups, has unconsciously resulted in shaping the cultures of the Indian Ocean world.

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