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Interdisciplinary Ripples across the Indian Ocean

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THE INDIAN OCEAN, LARGELY ignored by historians and social scientists until the 1980s, has become the focus of increasing interest to academics from disciplines as varied as anthropology, political science, and sociology. These scholars have been attracted by the social and cultural diversity of an oceanic world that encompasses southern and eastern Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian subcontinent, the Malay Peninsula, the Indonesian archipelago, and Australia (map 1.1). Evidence of this scholarly interest includes the organization of a growing number of international conferences on this oceanic world since 1979. The launching of journals dedicated to Indian Ocean studies in 1982, 1993, and, most recently, 2015; the establishment of an Indian Ocean World Centre at McGill University in Montréal in 2004; and vigorous discussion among historians about how the Indian Ocean world should be conceptualized further attest to this expanding scholarly interest. Of greater practical significance is the publication of ever-increasing
numbers of articles, monographs, and edited collections that explore social, economic, cultural, and political life in this oceanic basin and seek to situate the Indian Ocean in the broader context of world history.5

Frequently missing from this burgeoning discourse, however, are contributions by archaeologists, and historical archaeologists in particular,6 as well as conscious attempts to study this region’s past from an interdisciplinary perspective. A recent special edition of the journal *Slavery and Abolition* demonstrates that some historians are increasingly aware of the potential insights that the study of material culture in archaeological contexts can provide,7 an awareness matched by a growing appreciation among some archaeologists of the value of “text-aided” archaeology.8 Despite such developments, concerted efforts to cultivate interdisciplinary approaches to individual research projects and, ultimately, to academic disciplines remain tangential at best.

This book seeks to begin the process of creating a more explicitly interdisciplinary approach to Indian Ocean studies by drawing on the expertise of the archaeologists, historians, artists, and anthropologists who participated in the workshop Connecting Continents: Case Studies from the Indian Ocean World held at Stanford University in March 2014. In addition to encouraging scholars to adopt interdisciplinary approaches to studying this region’s peoples, cultures, and history, the workshop sought to establish a research agenda for a part of the world that is just beginning to be a subject of serious historical archaeological interest. In so doing, the workshop’s participants set out to transcend the kind of disciplinary and subdisciplinary particularism that all too often plagues research agendas and programs, especially in parts of the world that have hitherto attracted limited scholarly interest.9

**CONCEPTUALIZING CONNECTIONS**

Such an undertaking requires an awareness of the problems that can easily complicate attempts, especially interdisciplinary ones, to reconstruct and analyze the complexities of the human experience in the Indian Ocean in greater detail. Historians of slavery, for example, have long appreciated the evidentiary and conceptual difficulties that hamper attempts to reconstruct slave trading in this oceanic basin. These problems include a paucity of archival sources, the pervasive Atlantic-centrism in modern slavery and African diaspora studies, and
MAP 1.1. The Indian Ocean, with locations discussed in the volume.
a penchant for geographical, chronological, and topical compartmentalization that often inhibits attempts to study human interaction from a comparative or panregional perspective. Archaeologists working in the Indian Ocean face similar problems, the most salient of which is the extent to which Atlantic-inspired models influence research in the Mare Indicum. While archaeologists working in the Indian Ocean obviously need to be aware of such conceptual frameworks, we must remember that the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds differed from one another in significant ways. Such differences are readily apparent whenever historians discuss the various free and forced labor trades and systems that have been major features of life in both of these oceanic worlds. Archaeologists need to be equally aware of such differences as they seek to understand the nature, dynamics, and impact of population movements within and between vast and diverse geographic regions.

A particularly serious problem facing Indian Ocean archaeologists is the general lack of research on this part of the globe. Except for the Swahili Coast and South Africa, few sites in the Indian Ocean basin have been subject to the kind of careful excavation and analysis that can shed substantive new light on social, economic, and cultural connections within and across this region. A dearth of artifacts, artifact catalogues, and other basic forms of data has, in turn, precluded development of the kinds of typologies upon which archaeological analysis of material culture often rests. Other problems include nonexistent or poorly calibrated dating profiles for the region as a whole, particularly for historical but also for prehistorical periods, and minimal mapping of the crossregional movement of goods.

Reconstructing the social, economic, cultural, and political connections that have existed for hundreds of years between the disparate regions and peoples of this oceanic basin invariably entails addressing multiple conceptual issues, perhaps foremost of which is, What do archaeologists understand by the notion of an Indian Ocean “world”? There can be little doubt that many historians readily subscribe to the notion, first popularized by Fernand Braudel’s classic work on the Mediterranean in the age of Philip II, that oceanic basins can be viewed as integrated “worlds” whose constituent parts are linked together in various ways, be they ecological, cultural, economic, or political. This concept’s popularity reflects the belief that because such worlds are distinct zones of biological, cultural, and economic interaction and integration,
they allow large-scale historical processes to be seen in sharper relief. However, as recent discussions among historians about the nature of the Atlantic “world” attest, defining oceanic worlds largely in geographical terms can also impede a deeper understanding of the ways in which different regions have interacted with one another through time. Recent studies of the Dutch East India Company’s multinational labor force, the politics and ideology of the early British East India Company state, the geography of color lines in Madras and New York, identity and authority in eighteenth-century British frontier areas, British transoceanic humanitarian and moral reform programs, and European slave trading in the Indian Ocean indicate that these concerns are equally relevant to the Indian Ocean. Archaeologists should also be concerned about this concept’s limitations, especially since one of their discipline’s major strengths lies in its emphasis on studying interaction through time and across space.

Other problems reflect the differences between what historians and archaeologists do and how they do it (i.e., the scale of research, types of data collected, and questions asked and addressed). Historical research is usually heavily dependent on written documents, although other sources, such as oral tradition, may also help in reconstructing the past. The extent to which historians are able to practice their craft invariably depends on not just the quantity, but also the quality, of the sources at their disposal. On occasion, the richness of the archival record allows the life histories of obscure individuals to be reconstructed in considerable detail. In other instances, however, even the most astute reading of the archival record does not allow us to reconstruct various aspects of the human experience at the macro-regional, much less local, level.

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The utility of the term “historical archaeology” in Indian Ocean studies was a subject of considerable discussion during the Stanford workshop. This is a topic that, beginning with the important work of Kent Lightfoot, has been much debated in archaeology, particularly when juxtaposed with prehistory, and continues to be a subject of discussion. For the wider Indian Ocean, archaeological research has tended to focus on evolutionary archaeology or prehistoric civilizations. Limited opportunities for historical archaeology in this oceanic basin can easily
be traced to inadequate funding for archaeological research, a problem compounded by the region’s vastness and the complexity of patterns of interaction within it. Such an explanation is ultimately not particularly convincing, however, especially when we remember that an equally vast, diverse, and complex Atlantic world has long been a subject of extensive historical archaeological research. Such an explanation becomes even less satisfactory in light of what we now know about the Indian Ocean’s importance in global history and the history of globalization.

The development of historical archaeology as a discipline has strong connections to the Atlantic. In the United Kingdom and European Union, archaeologists have adopted chronological markers, such as “postmedieval,” and thematic framing, such as industrial archaeology. A useful point of departure is Charles Orser’s description of the subject as “text aided archaeology that uses a combination of archaeology and historical methods, sources, and perspectives to study the recent past.” However, for the Indian Ocean, as with many parts of Europe, Africa, and China, we must wrestle with the much deeper antiquity of the written word and the implications this has for defining historical archaeology in these settings.

As the workshop’s participants appreciated, the issue of periodization is central to defining what may or may not constitute “historical” archaeology in the Indian Ocean. The limited and often problematic nature of the textual sources at our disposal and the absence of the kind of commonly agreed upon chronological markers found in the Atlantic world make it difficult to apply Orser’s definition to the Indian Ocean world. As the archaeological record demonstrates, there is deeper diachronic continuity between cultures throughout much of the Indian Ocean world than is found in the Atlantic. The question often facing the historical archaeologist working in the Indian Ocean is not just, When does archaeology become historical, but also, Where does it do so? Even in cases such as Mauritius, where the point in time at which archaeology becomes historical is seemingly straightforward (i.e., when Europeans colonized this previously uninhabited island), the question of when Mauritian history begins can be problematic. That the island was subject to two periods of Dutch settlement and subsequent abandonment (1638–58 and 1664–1710) before being permanently colonized by the French in 1721 raises the question of which of these dates marks the “real” beginning of the Mauritian historical experience and, hence,
of Mauritian historical archaeology. The point in time at which historical archaeology begins, or should begin, in other parts of this oceanic world is even more difficult to ascertain. Doing so requires us to confront a number of ethical as well as methodological questions: Is it appropriate to apply periodization schemes grounded in European history to reconstructing the past of peoples who were established in locales long before Europeans arrived on the scene? Is such a practice consistent with the growing recognition of the need for and importance of community-oriented archaeology and concerns about how archaeological practice is undertaken in local settings? The difficulties of addressing such questions are underscored by research that demonstrates that “European” involvement with parts of the northwestern Indian Ocean long predated the event commonly used as a major, if not the major, historical marker in Indian Ocean history: Vasco da Gama’s arrival at Calicut in 1498 and the subsequent establishment of the Portuguese Estado da Índia between 1500 and 1515.

These problems could, of course, be addressed by simply rejecting the idea that we should define historical archaeology in the Indian Ocean in terms of periodization (i.e., specific dates or series of dates), and relying instead on chronological models that emphasize periodicity (i.e., the regular recurrence of patterns of trade, movements of peoples and ideas, etc.). Doing so would emphasize the relative relationship between broader patterns of change in material culture, rather than dates. Similar questions and issues have concerned historians and archaeologists exploring various aspects of Africa’s past.

To emphasize periodicity over periodization invariably raises questions about what Orser argues is historical archaeology’s “special ability to address issues with which we continue to wrestle today: multiculturalism, changing gender roles, internationalism, racism, class development and maintenance, and mass consumption and consumerism.” His point that there is, or should be, a singular connection between the modern world and historical archaeology is particularly well taken when we discuss historical archaeology in the Indian Ocean. It highlights the need to move beyond stale debates about nomenclature and develop new skills and approaches to investigate complex cultural phenomena in this oceanic basin.

To avoid the conceptual and other problems that can easily arise from relying on Eurocentric terms such as “postmedieval,” “colonial,”
“later-historic,” or “industrial,” we choose to appropriate the term “modern world” from Charles Orser’s work. To define Indian Ocean historical archaeology in such an admittedly imprecise way can, of course, be unsettling, if not problematic. Doing so, however, allows us to avoid many of the pitfalls that can result from viewing multifaceted developments through the prism of simplistic or deterministic chronological frameworks. This term also provides the conceptual context that encourages a fuller understanding of the complex patterns of human interaction through time that are hallmarks of Indian Ocean history.

**HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

A major goal of the Stanford workshop was to explore the ways in which we can develop collaborative approaches between archaeology and history to reconstruct and better understand the complex and nuanced patterns of human interaction within, and ultimately beyond, the Indian Ocean’s confines. Doing so will undoubtedly require archaeologists and historians to put aside stereotypical images of what the other does or does not do. While the role that historical sources can play in defining the parameters of archaeological research are well known and understood, the extent to which archaeology can help to shape historical research agendas or deepen historians’ understanding of social, cultural, and economic developments has received much less attention, especially in the Indian Ocean. The question before us, then, is to consider specific contributions that archaeological research can bring to this interdisciplinary dialogue. The following topics, while far from exhaustive, are particularly relevant to discussions about integrating archaeology and history in the Indian Ocean world.

**Contextualizing Complex Contact: Later-Historic Diasporas**

One of the Indian Ocean’s distinguishing features is the movement of substantial populations of African, Arab, Indian, Southeast Asian, and East Asian origin within and beyond this basin, especially since the seventeenth century. These migrations, often driven by the constant demand for “free” and “unfree” labor in various parts of this oceanic world, led to the creation of plural societies distinguished not only by their demographic complexity, but also by their cultural diversity and hybridity. The story of the later-historic Indian Ocean is, in essence,
inseparable from that of the diasporas that scattered hundreds of thousands of slaves, convicts, indentured laborers, merchants, and other free immigrants throughout this oceanic world. Their presence not only altered the demographic structure of local populations in relatively short periods of time, but also transformed local and/or regional social, economic, cultural, religious, and political life in ways that continue to resonate in our own day and age.

Archaeology is particularly well suited to probe the dynamics and consequences of these migrations. More specifically, archaeology holds out the promise of being able to reveal detailed information about diasporic populations’ origins, characteristics, health, and so on, that rarely, if ever, surfaces in the archival record. While there is a general paucity of genetic research detailing the characteristics of populations for this region, genetic research on Siddis (the descendants of East African slaves), sailors, and other migrants who reached India over the centuries illustrates that DNA and other molecular studies promise to do far more than merely corroborate the archival record. Although we still need to be aware of their limitations, genetic data bring a degree of scientific robustness, accuracy, and objectivity to the study of population movement that written sources can never provide. Studies using mitochondrial DNA, for example, have already demonstrated their ability to dramatically enhance our understanding of how regional populations interacted with one another, while Y-chromosome datasets have revealed differences between male and female migration patterns. These methods, particularly when combined with isotopic research, yield multiple lines of evidence about where people originated, information that can, in turn, be integrated with ecological and social data to better understand why people participated in these diasporas. The potential of next-generation sequencing (NGS)—genomic-level study—promises to enhance our ability to correlate population movements with other important variables, such as disease.

As both historical and archaeological research have demonstrated, islands such as Mauritius, Réunion, Rodrigues, and the Seychelles can serve as important microcosms for understanding wider regional developments. The islands’ small size, together with the absence of human populations before the seventeenth century in the case of Mauritius and Réunion and the eighteenth century in the case of Rodrigues and the Seychelles, affords archaeologists an opportunity to control for spatial,
chronological, environmental, and biological variables. Doing so is central to developing a fuller understanding of the context and dynamics of colonization and demographic change over time in islands that were important nodes in wider economic and political networks. Such studies can only benefit both archaeologists as well as historians.

The Material Record of Sociocultural Life

Reconstructing a people’s culture invariably depends on a willingness to come to terms with the diversity of human interaction, when that interaction occurred, and the various factors that can serve as catalysts for sociocultural change. There can be little doubt that later-historic archaeological studies in the Indian Ocean need to explore the nature and dynamics of sociocultural life in this region far more vigorously than has hitherto been the case. The need for such undertakings is illustrated by research on Middle Eastern and Indian merchants who established themselves throughout the Indian Ocean basin. Recent studies have revealed that the socioeconomic and cultural life of these communities was far more complex and nuanced than previously believed. Archival sources often shed little, if any, light on important aspects of people’s sociocultural life, unlike the material record, which has the capacity to provide greater information about and insight into social and cultural practices and to situate these practices in both time and space.

The need for such information and contextualization reflects the fact that while facets of sociocultural life are often jealously guarded and maintained, they can also undergo significant transformations through time, especially in diasporic contexts. One of the most important of these is religion. The Indian Ocean is home to large populations that adhere to major world religions—Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam—and we need to develop a much better archaeohistorical understanding of the role that these faiths played in people’s lives, including the development of syncretic belief systems. In the case of Hinduism, for example, beliefs and practices found in India were transformed during the nineteenth century as hundreds of thousands of indentured Indians migrated across the Indian Ocean to colonies such as Mauritius, Natal, Kenya, Malaya, and Réunion. This act obliged these men and women to reinterpret key aspects of their faith and religious identity as they sought to negotiate how they could still be Hindu while contravening one of their religion’s main doctrines: to never cross the
Kali Pani, or “Black Water.” The Indian Ocean world is accordingly not only the birthplace of Hinduism, but also the setting in which new ideas and beliefs developed about what it means to be Hindu.41

If the Indian Ocean is a region characterized by the negotiation of new forms of established religious beliefs, practices, and identities, it is also an area that has witnessed significant syncretism between Christian and African belief systems. Unlike in the Atlantic world,42 religious syncretism remains an understudied phenomenon in the Indian Ocean. The practice known as Longanis in Mauritius offers a tantalizing example of such activity in this region, all the more so because it incorporates Asian as well as European components in the new ways in which traditional African rites are practiced in this part of the world.43 This example of how some modern Mauritians conceptualize death and spirituality holds out the promise of correlating the results of ethnological fieldwork with materials that can be recovered from the archaeohistorical record. 44

Important work on disease and migration by scholars such as John Aberth and J. R. McNeill,45 together with what we know about slave, convict, and indentured labor mortality rates in the Indian Ocean,46 points to the need for both archaeologists and historians to pay greater attention to the sociodemographic dimensions and impact of disease in this part of the globe. David Arnold’s assessment of this oceanic world as a “disease basin,”47 coupled with research on Africa, Australia, India, and Mauritius,48 highlights the ways in which epidemic disease could influence, if not transform, social, economic, and political life both locally and regionally. The large-scale mapping of disease and related vectors currently being undertaken by the EUROSTAT project illustrates the ways in which scientifically driven approaches can inform both archaeohistorical and historical studies of slavery and disease.49 The value of such a project is underscored by the fact that historians frequently have trouble discerning the exact nature of a disease that is described in textual sources only as a “fever” or “plague,”50 a difficulty that can limit our understanding of the politics of health and disease in general (e.g., the establishment and operation of quarantine stations), and governmental responses to outbreaks of epidemic disease in particular. Archaeological research also holds out the promise of providing evidence of and insight into the physiological impact of disease on individual men, women, and children, and clues about how and to what extent
disease influenced people’s lives. The archaeohistorical record also has the potential to shed substantial light on other important health-related topics, such as nutrition, including determining the accuracy of archival and other reports about daily rations, diets, eating patterns, and so on, and the ways nutrition influenced the lives of specific populations such as women and children.51

 Ecological Implications of Colonialism

Disease is an important segue to ecology and environment. The need to explore ecological and environmental issues is underscored by assessments of the insights that can result from integrating social and environmental history,52 and the contributions of historians and archaeologists who appreciate that socioeconomic life in the colonial plantation world cannot be properly understood without considering environmental issues.53 The connections between climate, changes to landscapes as a result of anthropogenic activity, and the spread of disease are topics that readily lend themselves to future collaborative research. This is especially important for the Indian Ocean’s smaller islands, since such research can be directly relevant to modern populations in an age of significant human-driven climate change. Research from Kenya on the ecological consequences of precolonial and colonial activity on local landscapes is representative of the kinds of insights such research can reveal.54 More specifically, the Kenyan study demonstrates that the ecological ramifications of human activity, such as the introduction of livestock, often have far-reaching implications. Cattle not only increase nitrogen in lagoon systems through surface runoff, but also create paths into forested areas during foraging. This in turn allows other invasive species to penetrate more deeply and rapidly into otherwise inaccessible habitat.55

Other ecologically related topics that invite careful archaeohistorical consideration include the relationship between environment and technology. While maritime technology has been a major component in discussions about how and why people were able to cross vast oceanic expanses to new lands,56 comparatively little attention has been devoted to environmental variables, such as wind patterns, currents, and climatic change, that can have a marked impact on patterns of human migration, settlement, and cultural interaction. While the importance of the monsoons and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)57 have long been acknowledged, recent work highlights the need to pay attention to
climatic events farther afield, such as El Niño, which has been shown to influence weather patterns in the Indian Ocean. While specific crops in Indian Ocean prehistory have been a subject of significant interest, we know much less about the ecological, economic, and social impact of such crops in later periods or the introduction of new crops on particular areas. Once again, such information can be of direct and immediate relevance to modern populations attempting to come to terms with transformative agricultural processes.

Material Flow and Exchanges
No discussion of archaeology’s place in Indian Ocean studies can be complete without briefly mentioning the discipline’s greatest potential contribution to cross-disciplinary research: the study of material culture, including establishing objects’ provenance and appropriate typologies for these objects. As archaeologists appreciate, understanding the ways in which material objects relate to one another through space and time, or how and why such objects acquire sociocultural meaning as well as economic value is central to establishing the context within which the nature and dynamics of change can be discerned.

The study of material culture in the Indian Ocean needs to reflect several facts: the region’s inherent complexity; that “streams of things” have multiple levels of sociocultural and ecological meaning; and that such streams have often been responsible for significant demographic change. Approaching the region’s material cultures in this manner can allow us to better appreciate that a wider range of actors and not just sociocultural elites can be, and often are, instrumental in cultural transformations. The same can be said about the nature and dynamics of trade. While commodities such as ivory, opium, rice, and spices have all been important objects of exchange between various regions of the Indian Ocean and between the Indian Ocean and the wider world, they did not have the global transformative impact that sugar had. Sugar’s evolution from luxury good to an article of everyday consumption has, for example, had a resounding effect on people’s lives that continues to the present day, particularly as we become increasingly aware of sugar’s effect on our health. Recent archaeological research is revealing the physiological repercussions of our love affair with sugar in compelling detail. Such studies underscore the need for archaeologists to pay greater attention, as historians have done, to the multifaceted ways in which sugar and labor were connected.
These comments and observations leave a basic question unanswered: How can we facilitate collaborative research between archaeologists and historians that will permit a fuller understanding of interaction between the disparate regions and diverse peoples of this vast oceanic basin? Addressing this question successfully will require scholars to avoid the propensity to draw boundaries, and instead emphasize interconnections between people, things, and places not only within this oceanic world, but also between this world and other parts of the globe such as the Atlantic and Pacific. For archaeologists, doing so means, as Atholl Anderson cogently observed during the Stanford workshop, examining “the archaeologies of the Indian Ocean and the world.”

Central to any such endeavor is the need to reconceptualize how we approach this oceanic world. Both archaeologists and historians would do well, for example, to view the Indian Ocean not as a bounded geographical entity, but as “an ocean of sea- and landscapes” that connect bodies of water and the peoples who live on them as well as far-flung landmasses. Such a conceptual framework highlights the need for members of both disciplines to actively search out a multiplicity of source materials—artifactual, molecular, and textual—and make perceptive use of the information that these materials may reveal.

As those trained in multiple disciplines know only too well, to talk about engaging in interdisciplinary study is one thing; to actually do so is something else. How, then, can we facilitate the kind of fruitful conversation between archaeologists and historians that a fuller understanding of the Indian Ocean requires? For historians, archaeology provides an opportunity to expand beyond the interests that usually dominate historical research and scholarship. Even a cursory review of Indian Ocean historiography reveals an emphasis on studying slavery, labor diasporas, commerce and trade, and religion, especially Islam. Archaeologists, on the other hand, often focus on reconstructing social relationships, exploring the dynamics of cultural plurality, and assessing the impact of environment on human activity. In so doing, they often make extensive use of geographic/geospatial information systems (GIS) that can easily incorporate historical data, thereby providing historians with a way to study material culture in well-defined spatial contexts.
While GIS has been used extensively to study terrestrial features such as prehistoric and historic settlements and urban areas,\(^68\) its greatest potential may lie in its capacity to change how we look at and think about the sea. As Jeffrey Bolster has observed, what remains untouched in Atlantic world research is the *ocean* itself.\(^69\)

If archaeology has the capacity to expose history to new perspectives and tools for recovering and reconstructing the past, we would be remiss not to note that historians also have much to offer archaeologists beyond supplying them with textual information that can be crucial to framing the contours of archaeological research.\(^70\) In essence, good history can compel the archaeologist to look beyond the immediacy of the excavation trench and research lab to consider various ways in which the physical evidence at our disposal can best be understood and interpreted.

At a more practical level, how can we facilitate collaboration between archaeologists and historians working on the Indian Ocean to encourage the kind of conceptual and methodological cross-fertilization that underpinned the Stanford workshop? One obvious way is for historians to draw consciously on archaeological research as they formulate research projects and interpret the results of their archival research. Another is to write historians into archaeological project grants in the same way that other specialists are, including integrating their expertise from a project’s outset. There is compelling precedent for doing so. The Resilience in East African Landscapes (REAL) and Ecology of Crusading projects are cases in point.\(^71\) Integrating historians into the Mauritian Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (MACH) project has also paid substantial dividends, not only in terms of identifying and locating new sites associated with slavery and indentured labor, but also in understanding the socioeconomic transitions that occurred on the island in the wake of slave emancipation in 1835.\(^72\)

**EVER-INCREASING CIRCLES: INTERDISCIPLINARY RIPPLES ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN**

The following chapters consider how interdisciplinary research can deepen our understanding of the ways in which the disparate peoples of the vast and diverse Indian Ocean world have been and continue to be connected with each other. It should be noted that the authors’
propensity to focus on the western Indian Ocean reflects the fact that much of the research currently being conducted on the Indian Ocean world focuses on its western rather than eastern reaches, an imbalance that we hope archaeologists, historians, and other scholars will set out to correct with all due dispatch.

The first five chapters consider theoretical and methodological approaches to the interdisciplinary study of Indian Ocean history. Atholl Anderson, Aaron Camens, Geoffrey Clark, and Simon Haberle begin this process by examining the complex settlement patterns that are a hallmark of Indian Ocean prehistory from a panoceanic and comparative perspective that sets the stage for a better understanding of European activity and colonization in the Indian Ocean after 1500, including the ways in which connections between the region’s island systems can be evaluated. This introduction to prehistoric human migration in the Mare Indicum is followed by Mark Horton, Alison Crowther, and Nicole Boivin’s chapter on the development of Swahili culture along the East African coast, which investigates the ways in which integrating different kinds of archaeological evidence can provide more nuanced insights into processes of cultural development and protoglobalization.

The chapters by Edward A. Alpers and Richard B. Allen provide insights into what interdisciplinary approaches to Indian Ocean history can look like from a historian’s point of view. Alpers focuses on several case studies, ranging from the early settlement of Madagascar to the development of cultural identity in small colonial enclaves such as the Mascarenes, to explore important questions about the dynamics and consequences of human migration in the Indian Ocean world. Allen considers the ways in which history and historical archaeology can work in tandem to enhance our understanding of how and why hundreds of thousands of free and forced laborers migrated throughout this oceanic world, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the socioeconomic ramifications of these migrations.

The role that indigenous brokers, actors, and populations and not just Europeans played in shaping the contours of Indian Ocean history is the subject of Paul Lane’s contribution. More specifically, Lane examines the complex transformations that were set in motion by the arrival of the Portuguese along the East African coast during the sixteenth century, changes that, while completely new and different in some ways, nevertheless need to be viewed in light of long-standing interactions
between these East African coastal populations and the wider Indian Ocean world.

Alistair Paterson’s chapter is the first of five case studies that focus on specific parts of the Indian Ocean world. Patterson’s account of the impact that pearling and the exploitation of pearl shell along the Western Australian coast had on the aboriginal and indentured laborers who worked in these extractive industries provides an important historical archaeological counterpoint to studies of pearling elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. Diana Heise and Martin Mhando in turn provide a novel perspective on the relationship between anthropology and history in their discussion about the production of two films that focus on the creation and cultural meaning of material objects in modern Mauritius and Zanzibar.

The last three chapters draw on research undertaken as part of the MACH project. In the first of these case studies, Saša Čaval examines the ways in which archaeology can assist in better understanding the origins, nature, and dynamics of the syncretic Mauritian religio-cultural belief system known as Longanis. Diego Calaon and Corinne Forest explore the role that historical heritage has played and continues to play in the construction of modern Mauritian identity. In the final chapter, Krish Seetah considers how historical, archaeological, genetic, and climate proxy research can influence contemporary concerns about and responses to climate change and epidemic diseases, and the ways in which islands such as Mauritius can serve as exemplars for understanding comparable developments elsewhere in the Indian Ocean world.

NOTES


3. *Études Océan Indien* (France), *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* (India), and *Journal of Indian Ocean World Studies* (Canada), respectively.

6. Most of the articles appearing in the *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology*, which began publication in 2003, focus on South Asia (India and Sri Lanka) rather than the wider Indian Ocean world.


12. For example, R. Allen, *European Slave Trading*.


need to view the western Indian Ocean as a unified region, see Erik Gilbert, “Coastal East Africa and the Western Indian Ocean: Long-Distance Trade, Empire, Migration, and Regional Unity, 1750–1970,” History Teacher 36, no. 1 (2002): 7–34.


22. For an example illustrating regional as well as chronological connections, see Mark Horton, “Artisans, Communities and Commodities,” Ars Orientalis 34 (2004): 62–80. Exceptions include areas such as Western Australia and a small number of islands, such as the Mascarenes.


27. Orser, “Historical Archaeology,” 279.

28. For an insightful methodological approach to engaging with oral traditions and archaeological materials, for example, refer to Peter R. Schmidt, Historical Archaeology: A Structural Approach in an African Culture (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978). Similarly, for an account of regional interaction–based varied datasets, see Boivin et al., “East Africa and Madagascar,” 213–81. For recent debate on future directions in


40. For example: Ho, Graves of Tarim; Hawley, India in Africa; Simpson and Kresse, Struggling with History; Sebouh David Aslanian, From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa (Berkeley: University of California Press,
2014); Pedro Machado, Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750–1850 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Sheriff and Ho, Oceanic Connections.


49. The project’s goal is to undertake interdisciplinary research to explore the history and contemporary legacies of the transatlantic slave trade (http://eurotast.eu/services/esr2-molecular-perspectives-on-slave-health-and-disease-2/). See also Schroeder et al., “Trans-Atlantic Slavery,” 547–57.


53. For example: Bonham C. Richardson, *Economy and Environment in the Caribbean: Barbados and the Windwards in the Late 1800s* (Cave Hill, Barbados: University Press of the West Indies, 1997); James L. A. Webb


57. The Indian Ocean Dipole indicates an irregular fluctuation in sea-surface temperature that results in the western Indian Ocean becoming alternatively warmer and then colder than the eastern Indian Ocean.


60. For example, the REAL project headed by Paul Lane employs a broad cross-disciplinary approach to address ecological issues and their consequences for contemporary communities (http://www.arkeologi.uu.se/Research/Projects/real/).


62. Fuller et al., “Across the Indian Ocean.”


72. See https://sites.stanford.edu/MauritianArchaeology/