

**S. 9. 5. – DEEP BORDERS AND MARITIME HINTERLANDS: THE GULF OF GUINEA,
SOUTH CHINA SEA AND INDIAN OCEAN**
Chair: LISA HELLMAN
(Lund University)

Panel Abstract

Borders are fluid – sometimes physically, but more often intellectually, economically and emotionally as definitions about belonging, sovereignty and power ebb and flow. Rather than treating “potential” borders (such as politically, ethnically, or religiously imagined borders between continents, states, empires and communities) as absolute or fixed, this panel will instead interrogate how specific sites (such as ports, transport nodes or customs facilities) can be assessed not as the physical edges between distinct areas but the contact zones between them. In turn, we can understand these spaces as interlocutors between distinct networks on either side of the border, forging connections in areas such as trade, diplomacy and migration. In this way, we can ask broader questions about how states, empires, and smaller sub-national units are shaped by their relationships with the edges of their perceived places in the world while also examining how individuals and communities navigates the spaces in between such zones of control.

The three case studies will consider these themes in locations where “deep borders” in the hinterlands of maritime borders can reveal the impact of exchange both as points of maritime contact but also the ongoing distribution of this impact through extensive inland zones. In doing so, they will contribute to the continuing adaptation and development of maritime history as a methodological approach that can inform our understanding of global systems and exchanges – economic, political and cultural.

Keywords

borders, empire, hinterland, global

Beyond the Edge of the World: Responses to Globalisation in the Akan Goldfields

EDMOND SMITH (University of Manchester)

Abstract

Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Akan goldfields became intricately linked into commercial webs that spread from Africa across the world. To the north, Wangara Arab merchants travelled south from Timbuktu to Bitu to trade for the precious commodity, and to the south Portuguese and other European traders sought to build new trading posts through which to access the trade. In the eyes of both groups, the Akan heartland lay beyond the edges of their worlds. Lying between these two expanding commercial and imperial zones, the Akan sought to carefully manage both borders, maintaining their independent productive and commercial practices while taking advantage of the opportunities each group offered. In this paper, the Akan response to their changing borders will be examined to offer a new perspective on both the history of early modern economic cultures in West Africa and how patterns of integration and exclusion were shaped by African practices of border making.

Biography

Edmond Smith (PhD University of Cambridge 2016) is Presidential Fellow in Economic Cultures at the University of Manchester, with research interests in early modern global cross-cultural trade. They have published articles on investment practices, international law, and labour relations in the *Economic History Review*, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* and with W. Pettigrew in *Journal of Social History*. Their current project concerns the emergence of globalising commercial cultures in West Africa, the Middle East, and South-East Asia.

A Land-Sea Divide in the Medieval Indian Ocean World

RENU ELIZABETH ABRAHAM (O. P. Jindal Global University)

Abstract

Some historians consider the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean to have transformed what was essentially an open sea (*mare liberum*) into a closed sea (*mare clausum*). They see the transformation reflected in the use of cannons on ships, the introduction of the cartaz system, the network of forts along the littorals, the patrolling of the seas, and the establishment of the Portuguese Estado da Índia with its headquarters in Goa. In sharp contrast, the pre-Portuguese era Asian rulers are seen as passive, even averse to sea matters, while deriving profits from maritime trade through custom duties. This state of affairs is deemed to have continued even after the advent of the Portuguese.

Against this literature, my paper argues for continuities in the Indian Ocean world from before and after the arrival of the Portuguese. The paper proposes a land-sea divide in the way Asian rulers engaged with the sea, typically entrusting maritime trade and defence to an array of sea nomads, traders and pirates. The paper contends that the arrival of the Portuguese did not signal a break from the existing pattern. Rather, the Portuguese traders fit into the pattern by doubling up as privateers for the littoral polities. The paper brings together existing case studies on Asian maritime powers, as well as sheds new light on some old evidence pertaining to the medieval rulers of the Malabar Coast.

Keywords

Maritime Policies, Indian Ocean, the Portuguese Empire, Calicut

Biography

Renu completed her Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorate degree in Text and Event in Early Modern Europe (TEEME) at the University of Kent and the University of Porto in 2020. She is currently employed as Assistant Professor in History at the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA), Sonapat. She is a native of Kerala.

Setting the Western Indian Ocean World: Seasonality Perspective

HIDEAKI SUZUKI (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan)

Abstract

How do we set maritime sphere of history is one of the fundamental questions for those who work in maritime history. This paper focus on the 19th century western Indian Ocean which stretch between western coast of the Indian sub-continent and eastern coast of African continent, and argue the western Indian Ocean “world.” The western Indian Ocean as space and the western Indian Ocean “world” are differentiated. The latter indicates the web of flows of human beings, trading items, information, belief, though and money. In addition, this network cannot be fully understood as static model, but as dynamic model. To capture its dynamics, this paper focuses on seasonality of human activities found in that network. Human activities here includes sailing, trading, land-transport, agriculture etc. These various activities engaged each other and flows of the network activated.

Biography

Hideaki Suzuki is assistant professor at National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. He specializes Indian Ocean world history. His publications include *Slave Trade Profiteers in the Western Indian Ocean: Suppression and Resistance in the Nineteenth Century* (2017, New York; Palgrave) and he is the editor of *Abolitions as A Global Experience* (2016, Singapore: NUS Press).