

### Gwyn Campbell (ed.)

*Early Exchange Between Africa and the Wider Indian Ocean World*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016, xvi + 378 pp. [Palgrave Series in Indian Ocean World Studies]. ISBN 9783319338217. Price: EUR 106.99 (hardback).

Historical interactions between Africa and Asia through the maritime highway of the Indian Ocean world have been gaining an increasing scholarly attention in the last decades (for a recent survey, see Tor Sellström, 2016). Going beyond the contemporary political and security concerns, scholars have been exploring the long histories of socio-economic, cultural and demographic exchanges between the two continents and the ways in which the Indian Ocean world facilitated such long distance circulations, of which Southeast Asia formed a crucial part. The volume under review contributes to this growing literature with its focus on Africa's early exchanges with the Indian Ocean world.

In the volume, Southeast Asia gets considerable attention as a major area of focus in Africa's Indian Ocean networks, and this is unprecedented. Out of twelve chapters, four chapters directly deal with contributions from regions of present Southeast Asia to the African history from prehistoric times up until the fifteenth century CE, while three more chapters dedicate appreciable portions on the same regions in their discussions of other broader themes. In this review, I focus mainly on these chapters while briefly touching upon others.

In the introductory chapter, Gwyn Campbell outlines the environmental context that determined the African involvement in the 'global economy' of the Indian Ocean world. Even though drastic changes in the environment interrupted Africa's participation in the maritime flow of goods, people, and capital from the prehistoric period onward, the continent always resumed its connections more forcefully. As part of this network, Southeast Asia contributed to Africa various commodities (like the 'tropical crop complex' consisting of banana, sweet potato, cassava, Southeast Asian yam, taro and rice) and communities (like the Malagasy, inhabiting the island Madagascar) between 4950–4440 BCE and 1600 CE, giving new dimensions for oceanic interactions along with the spread of new technological and demographic developments.

Precisely these themes are taken up by the following two chapters. In the second chapter, 'Origins of Southeast Asian Shipping and Maritime Communication across the Indian Ocean', Waruno Mahdi deals with the technologies that enabled the mobility of Malayo-Polynesian equatorial populations. Although Africa as such is not at the center of his analysis, he tells us how these peoples' watercraft techniques must have motivated them to travel long distances westward to South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa as well eastwards into Oceania. He argues that Negritos of the Sunda Shelf played a key role 'in primeval mar-

itime communication and earliest transfer of shipping technology' (p. 40). In the next chapter, 'Austronesian Shipping in the Indian Ocean: From Outrigger Boats to Trading Ships', Pierre-Yves Manguin focuses further on the Southeast Asian technological developments in shipping in proto-historical and historical times. He contends that the technical tradition called 'stitched-plank and lashed-lug tradition', developed exclusively in Southeast Asia, is not only the archipelago's contribution to the shipping world, but also enabled the movement of populations speaking Austronesian languages into Madagascar, sailing large vessels via either the northern or southern half of the Indian Ocean.

In the fourth chapter, 'Austronesians in Madagascar: A Critical Assessment of the Works of Paul Ottino and Philippe Beaujard', Alexander Adelaar zooms into the cultural history of Madagascar through the arguments of these two prominent scholars on the island's linkages with South and Southeast Asia. He argues that despite the earlier scholarship's effective attempts to map out several nuances of Madagascar's past, they have flawed in historical and linguistic rigor. Pitching the works of Ottino and Beaujard, who both argued for the strong Malay and Javanese influence on Madagascar, against several primary materials and methodological issues, he argues that Islam and the Arabic language arrived in Madagascar from Southeast Asia and not from the Middle East. Jason A. Hodgson also argues along this line in his chapter (Chapter 10) titled 'A Genomic Investigation of the Malagasy Confirms the Highland-Coastal Divide, and the Lack of Middle Eastern Gene Flow'. He argues that the people of the island nation lack Middle Eastern or European genomic contributions and there is a 'predominance of Southeast Asian ancestry in the highlands and African ancestry on the coasts' (p. 249) and therefore 'the Islamic contribution to Madagascar and the Malagasy was entirely cultural' (p. 248).

Relatedly, J.M. Mwacharo holds that a similar genetic analysis of the domesticated animals like chickens provides evidence suggesting the patterns of ancient human migration via maritime and terrestrial corridors. Thus taking the chicken mtDNA in his chapter, titled 'Intercontinental Networks between Africa and Asia across the Indian Ocean: What do Village Chickens Reveal?', he sheds light upon the multiple origins and introductions of chickens from South, Southeast, and East Asia to the African regions. Interestingly, the chicken clade of the Indonesian islands has been heavily found in East Africa and Madagascar and it reached there via the maritime corridor. This resonates with the arguments made by Mahdi and Campbell about the deliberate cultivation of banana in Papua-New Guinea and its potential propagation to East Africa (pp. 6, 28).

In the remaining chapters, the authors explore various themes related to the role of East Africa in the Indian Ocean world. Ephraim Lytle surveys and

scrutinizes early Greek and Latin sources on the Indian Ocean and Eastern Africa, which are well known to the historians of the early Indian Ocean world. He has a brief section on Southeast Asian traders and navigation, but it does not contribute much to our existing knowledge. Carl Hughes and Ruben Post take the Geographic Information System (GIS) approach to locate the ancient East African metropolis Rhapta. They conclude that it was 'located in the proximity of present-day Dar es Salam' (p. 153). In the following three chapters, we have studies on East Africa's three different contacts with the wider Indian Ocean world in and around the first millennium CE: Sunil Gupta focuses on its connections with India; Marilee Wood analyses the glass bead evidence related to the maritime networks; Anneli Ekblom, Paul Lane, Chantal Radimilhay and others emphasize East African contact with Madagascar based on the archaeological evidences. Wood's discussion of the so-called v-Na-Ca glass beads demonstrates another Southeast Asian contribution to the region: the bead was made in Thailand using glass from Iraq/Iran. After fine-tuning it was exported to East Africa via Mantai, a hub in northern Sri Lanka that facilitated further trans-regional trade in beads. In the final chapter of the volume, Campbell revisits the debates around the 'Zanj Revolt' in Lower Iraq in 869–883 CE and argues that most slaves in the rebellion came from Ethiopia and the Sudan and not from the Swahili coast, which became 'a significant slave export centre only from the mid-eighteenth century' (p. 296).

Overall, the volume presents new insights to the maritime engagements of East Africa with the Indian Ocean littoral, in which Southeast Asia plays an important role. It brings together a variety of disciplines, including historical linguistics, genetic studies, archaeology, history, anthropology, geography, and sheds light on an array of themes. However, it generally tends to deal with old debates related to the Southeast Asia-East Africa connections, and it would have been more compelling if the volume had paid closer attention to the new areas of the Indian Ocean's cultural history, intellectual interactions, and the contemporary Afrasian imaginations of such early contacts (as with Edward Curtis' 2014 study, *The Call of Bilal*).

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### References

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- Sellström, Tor (2016), *Africa in the Indian Ocean. Islands in Ebb and Flow*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.