

Global Geographies: the Indian Ocean in historical perspective

Collaborative workshop between BASAS and BIEA, with IIRNS, India

Royal Asiatic Society, 31st October 2009

Global Geographies: the Indian Ocean in Historical Perspective is a one-day event organized jointly by the British Institute in Eastern Africa and the British Association for South Asian Studies. This collaborative workshop will explore developments across the Indian Ocean from the Roman occupation of Egypt to the rise of Islam, offering an opportunity for invited delegates to participate in discussions. We aim to assess the role that archaeology can play in our understandings of the late antique period across a region that is typically studied as discrete areas and as part of very different national archaeologies.

The chronological focus is on the late antique period – from the time of Hadrian in the early second century CE to the rise of Islam from the seventh century – beginning during the heyday of east-west trade and ending with the appearance of a new political and socio-religious dispensation that fundamentally changed the geographical horizon and dynamics of movement across the Indian Ocean. This era is also little studied, often assumed to be a time of precipitous decline in trade, or glossed as a precursor to the Islamic period that followed.

The ways in which the Indian Ocean brought together an array of societies with different histories, economies, languages and religious traditions makes any study centred on that ocean a daunting task. A key aim of the workshop is therefore simply to encourage dialogue between researchers from different geographical areas, exploring spaces of possible collaboration. The structure of the day is designed to facilitate this, with a series of presentations in the morning followed by a roundtable discussion in the afternoon.

Venue: Royal Asiatic Society, 14 Stephenson Way, London NW1 2HD
<http://royalasiaticsociety.org/site/>

Date: Saturday, 31st October 2009

Lunch and refreshments will be provided for invited participants

Conference organizers: Dr Stephanie Wynne-Jones (University of Bristol);
Professor Michael Willis (British Museum);
Dr Derek Kennet (University of Durham).

Enquiries should be directed to: Stephanie.Wynne-Jones@bristol.ac.uk

Global Geographies: Programme

31st October 2009

- 09.00 – 09.30am: Foreigners and the Historiography of India's Golden Age
(Dr Michael Willis, British Museum)
- 09.30 – 10.00am: African Responses to the Transformation of the Late Antique World
(Professor Mark Horton, University of Bristol)
- 10.00 – 10.30am Archaeological evidence for international exchanges and the possibilities
of inter-disciplinary research: Pattanam excavations, Kerala, India
(Professor PJ Cherian, Kerala Council for Historical Research)
- 10.30 – 11.00am *Coffee break*
- 11.00 – 11.30am Beyond/Before Trade and Politics on the East African Coast: Daily Life
at Tumbwe on Pemba Island, Tanzania, AD 600-950
(Dr Jeffrey Fleisher, Rice University and Dr Adria LaViolette, University
of Virginia)
- 11.30am – 12.00pm Indian traders between Africa and South-Arabia: The Indian inscriptions
from the cave Hoq on Socotra
(Dr Ingo Strauch, Freie Universität Berlin)
- 12.00 – 12.30pm Indian Ocean trade viewed from a Sri Lankan pottery sequence
(Dr. Heidrun Schenk-Weisshaar, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut)
- 12.30 – 1.00pm From the Red Sea to India: early versus late Roman trade
(Dr Roberta Tomber, British Museum)
- 1.00 – 2.00pm *LUNCH*
- 2.00 – 4.00pm Roundtable discussion: 'What can archaeology contribute to our
understandings of the Indian Ocean in the late first millennium AD?'
Chair: Dr Derek Kennet

