



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

**Max Planck Institute  
for Social Anthropology**

**Report 2014–2016**

**Max Planck Fellow Group  
‘Connectivity in Motion:  
Port Cities of the  
Indian Ocean’**



## Imprint

Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Report 2014–2016  
Max Planck Fellow Group ‘Connectivity in Motion:  
Port Cities of the Indian Ocean’

Edited by Burkhard Schnepel

Cover photo: Fisherman, Penang, Malaysia,  
Mareike Pampus, 2015

Published by  
Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale  
P.O. Box 11 03 51  
D-06017 Halle/Saale  
Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)345 2927-0  
<http://www.eth.mpg.de>

Printed 2017 by IMPRESS Druckerei, Halle/Saale

Responsibility for the content of the contributions lies with the individual authors.

© 2017 Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology  
ISSN 1618-8683

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‘Connectivity in Motion: Port Cities of the Indian Ocean’

*edited by Burkhard Schnepel*

Halle/Saale



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## Structure and Organisation of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology 2014–2016

Because questions concerning the equivalence of academic titles that are conferred by institutions of higher learning in different countries have still not been resolved completely, all academic titles have been omitted from this report.

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**Research Scientist***joined in 2015*

Iain Walker (until 3/2016)

**Doctoral Students**

Varsha Patel (until 10/2016)

*joined in 2014*

Mareike Pampus

## 1. The Intellectual Aims of the Programme (2013–2018)

This five-year programme, sponsored under the auspices of a Max Planck Fellow Group Award of the Max Planck Society, was launched in November 2013. In this report we wish to present the main activities undertaken during the period of report, to convey its intellectual aims and to present briefly some of the findings that our research has brought forth.

The intellectual aims of the programme were formulated and released online in 2013 as reproduced below. These two pages show how, during the last three and a half years, the intellectual aims and self-declared expectations have been successfully pursued, while also allowing us to indicate later whenever we needed to depart in new directions or previous approaches had to be set aside, as well as to assess the issues that still need to be addressed in the time remaining on the project.

### **Brief Outline (<http://www.eth.mpg.de/2945140/mpfg02>)**

*“This research programme examines the socio-cultural and historical dimensions of movements across the Indian Ocean. For this intellectual pursuit, several paradigmatic port cities of the Indian Ocean are taken as prime foci and starting points for social anthropological and ethnohistorical research.*

*In its wider theoretical and methodological aims, the programme is guided by the theorem of ‘connectivity in motion’. It studies the manifold linkages and networks across the Indian Ocean, focusing on the maritime movements of human beings, animals, diseases, material objects, ideas, religions, technologies, languages, political systems and other ‘things’, through which alone such connections come to life. In this respect, the programme challenges static and bounded notions of culture and society, substituting these with an emphasis on various aspects of motion and with a strong consideration of the means, modes and methods of connectivity in time and space.*

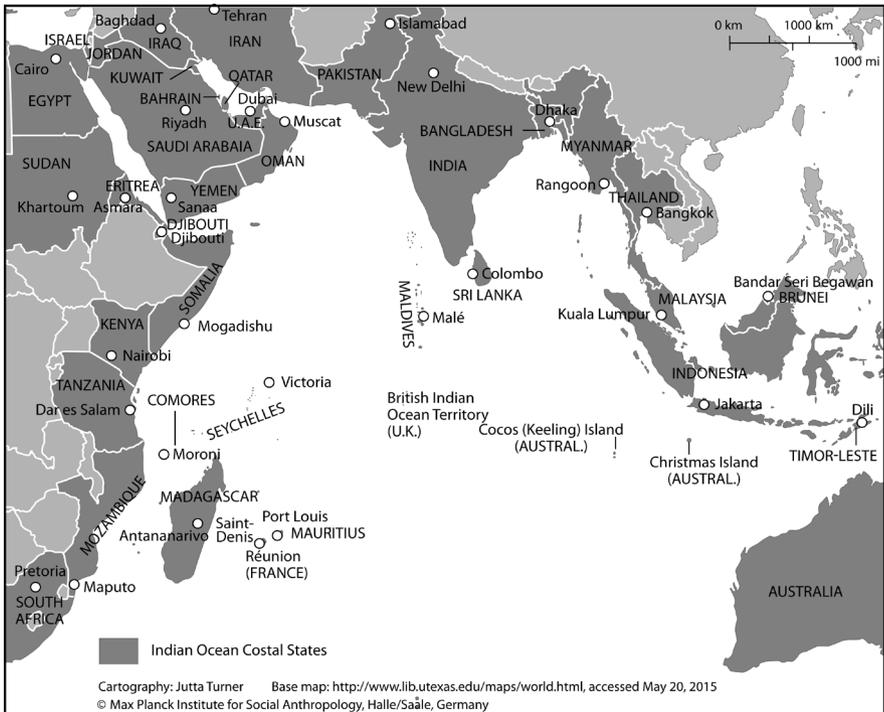
*In order to structure the analysis of ‘connectivity in motion’ in the Indian Ocean with a focus on port cities, three analytically distinct though factually interdependent dimensions are distinguished. First, there is the temporal dimension of ‘connectivity in motion’. Within this dimension we identify three sub-sections called a) ‘history’, b) ‘ethno-history’ and c) ‘endo-history’ which will look at the histories and various forms of historical imaginations concerning port cities. Secondly, there is the spatial dimension. Here we differentiate between a) the external side of the connections and movements, studying linkages across the ocean from and to port cities, and b) the hinterland, looking at the contacts of port cities to their hinterlands connecting maritime and terrestrial affairs. Thirdly, there is the internal dimension in the study of port cities of the Indian Ocean and their role in transmaritime connectivity. This third dimension refers to the architectural set-ups and socio-cultural as well as politico-economic dynamics within port cities. Here questions of power and politics, as well as of technological and scientific developments, come to the fore.*

*All in all, in this programme it is acknowledged that the macro region of the Indian Ocean is one of the oldest and most important trade and contact zones in the world. But its importance is not just seen as being historical. At present, the Indian Ocean is re-emerging as a significant arena of globalisation, with India and China as prime movers at its centre and far eastern corner respectively, but also with Southeast Asian states and the oil-rich Arabian peninsula playing vital global roles these days. Therefore, taking the Indian Ocean as a frame of reference and applying a transregional perspective on 'connectivity in motion' will seek to achieve new insights in the problematic of globalisation. It will add historical depth to and re-orient our view of globalisation, because it will be concerned not only with earlier, but also with present eastern and southern forms of globalisation.*

*This programme has a decidedly empirical base. Port cities offer the paradigmatic analytical foci, as well as starting and end points of social anthropological and ethnohistorical investigation. In this capacity, however, port cities are seen less as essentialised and a priori facts or even foundations of the networks, movements, transits and translations; rather they are viewed as their relational effects. As products of relational processes they may no doubt achieve stability and agency of their own and thus become important actors in an interplay with a vast number of other (human as well as non-human) actors. All of these, however, are decidedly seen in the programme as the outcome of the dynamic, ever-changing and precarious relations between heterogeneous actors. The programme is then more about processes of 'networking' than about static networks; it is about changing relations between elements and actors, in as much as it is about the change and breaking down of already existing institutional linkages and the constitution of new ones. It is also about those elements of the networks which are 'being-acted-upon' rather than acting (actively), about the agents as well as 'patients' of these processes, about power and suffering. How do some of the 'bits and pieces' of the networks become agentive, whereas others lose agency.*

*Basically, therefore, the various projects and activities within the programme start their investigations with an initial non-decidedness as to what or who are the 'moving forces' and foundational entities in the complex webs of heterogeneous relations and translations. Moreover, there is a programmatic openness as to why these 'actants' move and shift. Instead, the projects rather seek to explore the how of 'connectivity in motion', and they do so in a number of decidedly empirical case studies. The programme, then, will seek to explore how diverse actors (such as sailors and merchant companies, but also boats, rats, tides, peace treaties, generals, war declarations, inequalities, machines, knowledge systems, material objects, monsoon winds, sailing technologies, or cholera) strategically relate to, connect with and interact among each other in various and shifting ways; and how they thereby, if often only in provisional ways, perform, enact, produce and assemble relatively stable entities, i.e. port cities, in the network (and possibly dissolve others)."*

Given its temporal and financial limits (five years, 500,000 Euros), the programme has focused its energies and activities on two distinct, but highly interconnected pursuits. On the one hand **(1)**, it has sought to contribute empirically and theoretically to the field of “Indian Ocean Studies” and to the methodological issue of ‘connectivity in motion’. This has been done **(a)** by means of four individual projects concentrating on the ethnohistory and social anthropology of concrete port cities, islands, and bays of the Indian Ocean world, and **(b)** through the organisation of international conferences which have addressed various sub-themes pertinent to the overall programme. On the other hand **(2)**, these activities and resources were also meant to help establish “Indian Ocean Studies” within the German academic context and to transform some of the programme’s resources into ‘seed money’ with the aim of extending these research activities beyond the five-year period allocated, and beyond the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. I shall expand on these points in what follows.



Map: *The Indian Ocean World*.

### **1a) The Individual Projects**

The programme started with two doctoral students. One was Varsha Patel from New Delhi, who proposed a study on the Gulf of Khambat in northwestern India with historically important port cities such as Surat or Diu. She took up her work in November 2013 and continued for a period of three years through October 2016. The second doctoral student, Mareike Pampus, started her doctoral research in November 2014. She has concentrated her continuing studies on George Town, Penang, in Malaysia. As it was not possible to find a suitable candidate to do research on an East African port city, it was decided to fill this gap by offering a senior post-doc position to a scholar of international repute in the field of Swahili and Indian Ocean Studies, Iain Walker from Oxford, who arrived in Halle in March 2014 and contributed substantially to the programme's activities for a year. A final individual project was conducted, intermittently, by myself, in which I continued and deepened my own ongoing ethnohistorical research on Mauritius and its port city of Port Louis. I have also continued my library and archival research on the macro-region as a whole so as not to lose sight of the overall picture. All the individual projects on these four 'paradigmatic' port cities and archipelagos have contributed, in their own specific ways and with their own foci, to a better understanding of the wider-reaching set of problems in the programme. These individual projects will be outlined in greater detail below in Section 2.

### **1b) The International Conferences**

One important dimension of the programme has consisted in the organisation and holding of international conferences bringing together some of the leading scholars in all sub-fields and scientific disciplines involved in the field of "Indian Ocean Studies". There have been three conferences so far. The first conference took place at the Max Planck Institute in Halle in October 2014. Its intention was more general, namely to provide a boost to the programme and its international recognition. The participants, hailing from disciplines including social anthropology, history, political science, social geography, and archaeology, assembled under the title of "Connectivity in motion: new studies on the Indian Ocean". The second conference took place in October 2015 and was again conducted in Halle. The focus of this conference was the small islands of the Indian Ocean world, with the title "The art of hubbing: the role of small islands in Indian Ocean connectivity". The third international conference took place in Montreal in September 2016. It was organised and conducted in cooperation with the Indian Ocean World Centre, McGill University, and its director Gwyn Campbell. At that conference, the overriding 'connectivity in motion' perspective of the Max Planck Fellow Group was addressed with a special focus on disease, this time combined with a concern for human-environmental interaction, which guides research activities in Montreal. The conference title was

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“The disease dispersion and impact in the Indian Ocean World”. All three conferences were highly interdisciplinary, and the various contributions covered a wide regional spectrum, from East Africa and India to Southeast Asia and China, as well as most of the various historical periods, all in a balanced manner. The conferences will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 3 of this report.

## **2) Indian Ocean Studies**

By inviting and assembling some of the most eminent scholars in the field of “Indian Ocean Studies”, as well as a number of younger, promising scholars, the conferences also played a vital role in promoting the academic aims of the programme that I indicated briefly above. These consisted, to repeat, in establishing “Indian Ocean Studies” in Halle and Germany (whereby ‘areas’ are still defined more conventionally) and in making the Halle programme known internationally. Conferences were one important means of achieving this ‘networking dimension’ of the programme. Scholars arriving in Halle from, among other places, Los Angeles, Montreal, Cape Town, Delhi, Paris, and Shanghai, as well as from major German institutions, such as the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg or the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin, contributed significantly not only to the intellectual exchanges during the conferences, but in many cases by extending cooperation beyond these meetings. In this context, it is also worth mentioning that several international scholars stayed in Halle after the conferences or independently of them for longer periods and more in depth academic exchanges. These stays, most notably by Gwyn Campbell (Montreal), Tansen Sen (Shanghai), and Timothy Brook (Vancouver), included their giving guest lectures and teaching. All these cooperative activities extending beyond the limits of the programme are described further below in Chapters 4 and 5.

## 2. The Individual Projects

### **a) Memories, Royal Ports and Ruins of Sailing Boats: sediments of maritime routes along the Bhāvnagar Coast, Western India, 1900–2015**

*Varsha Patel*

Fieldwork and archival research in India: 9 months (June 2015–March 2016).

#### *Background and Main Findings:*

The Gulf of Cambay was a central node in Indian Ocean trading networks until 1750 or 1780, according to varying archival records. The circulation of materials through the ports of this gulf in western India brought about an Indian Ocean world according to scholars including Ashin Das Gupta and Michael Pearson. I soon, however, found that the site had been overresearched by historians up through the modern period as it is not a usual field site for an anthropologist working on tracing Indian Ocean connections, as it has been largely disconnected from the Indian Ocean world for the past 200 years. Even traces of historical linkages with regions across the Indian Ocean are hard to find today so that the Gulf of Cambay is not an appropriate field site for Indian Ocean studies from an anthropological perspective. I altered my research perspective, taking an historical anthropological stance instead, for which I was initially not equipped. It was my hope, however, to approach Indian Ocean studies in this way, engaging in regional Western Indian area studies and to conduct research into the princely states of India. Initially I planned an ethnographic study on the shipbreaking yards in Alang and on the private ports that have emerged in the Gulf of Cambay in recent years. However, it was nearly impossible to access some of the key persons, institutions, and communities involved in researching the controversial social and material fabric of this region in 2015, due to reasons beyond the control of a researcher. History was a more accessible field in this regard, opening up small-scale maritime connections (and long distance disconnections) that speak the language of disconnection in the face of the plethora of studies that highlight connectivity in the Indian Ocean world. I include an abstract of my thesis that summarises my findings and presents the contents of my thesis below:

Drawing upon 9 months of fieldwork and archival research, this dissertation chronicles the decline of maritime trade along the coast of the former princely state of Bhāvnagar (1723–1948) in Western India between 1900 and 2015. In doing so, it argues that, contrary to the assumption of an integrated Indian Ocean world, the Bhāvnagar coast is not entirely oriented towards the Indian Ocean. In contrast to scholars who show how smaller ports have linked up with the networks of larger ports, I demonstrate that coastal and trans-regional maritime routes have sometimes run parallel to each other and have not always been connected. An examination of

the decline of maritime trade along the Bhāvnagar coast shows how the destruction of port infrastructure, transformations in livelihoods, individual and collective identities, and the legacy of ideas of modernity and geography have contributed to the incorporation of port towns and littoral settlements into a society that is primarily connected by land. These findings from coastal Gujarāt that formed a central node in Indian Ocean trading networks (until at least 1780), enable me to challenge the assumption that the entire Indian Ocean rim is oriented towards the ocean, forming a single, interconnected zone glued together by port cities.

The dissertation suggests that constellations of specific maritime routes, commodities, and littoral settlements, together with the peoples involved in maritime trade and who adapted to its decline, can form an alternative approach toward understanding the degree of a coast's maritime orientation at a particular point of time. I have given presentations within two MPI departments as well as outside MPI, discussing my work with scholars open to sharing ideas, who have contributed to my understanding of concepts connected to my dissertation.

**b) The 'Pearl of the Orient':  
travelling imaginaries in the case of George Town (Malaysia)**

*Mareike Pampus*

I joined the research programme in November 2014 as a doctoral student with a proposal to conduct research on George Town, a port city on the small island of Penang at the northern end of the Straits of Malacca. In that first proposal I stressed a concept I wanted to work with, namely that of imaginaries, and planned to trace them and their materialisations through time and space, hence the preliminary title of my thesis. My main questions were what kind of imaginaries can be found, where they originate, how and why they travel and how they transform themselves as well as the things and places they are involved with. After spending the first couple of months reading about Penang's histories and designing my research outline, I spent three weeks in February 2015 doing archival research in London. The aim was to acquire a deeper knowledge of why and how Penang had been chosen as a location for a new port by the British East India Company at the end of the 18th century. I also looked for travel guides and advertisements in newspapers dealing with imaginaries of 'the East' and 'the Orient', and collected reports written by a missionary who was stationed in Penang in the early 19th century. The whole of the Malay Archipelago had long been crucial for the trading routes across the Indian Ocean, and its richness in sought-after spices was one of the major reasons for international trading rivalry in the region. The Dutch held a virtual monopoly in the spice trade, a state of affairs the British wanted to challenge. Penang, with George Town as its main settlement, rapidly became a trading centre in the Straits and soon overtook

Melaka in importance. Constituted as a free trading port, and elevated for a while to the status as the fourth presidency of British India, many people came to the island and stayed there to seek their fortune. Most traders required or preferred stopovers at such intermediate points. The colonial history of Penang has therefore mainly been a story of trade, exchange, and connectivity (Langdon 2013).



Map: Straits of Malacca, 1860. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%281860%29\\_STRAITS\\_OF\\_MALACCA.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%281860%29_STRAITS_OF_MALACCA.jpg); Public Domain)

In April 2015 I travelled to Penang for the first part of my field research and stayed there for a period of six months. I decided to split the predefined twelve months of field research in half in order to create a momentum of return and to be able to work on collected data in between. To explain the specific notion of port cities, what makes them different, and why they are often more similar to one another than to inland cities in the same country, I decided to develop the concept of imaginaries further to see how they work with and within realities, how they are materialised, and how they are acted out and acted upon. While I was in the field, I realised that the way people deal with imaginaries is highly versatile, and I therefore became more and more interested in the link between imaginaries and practices. This link is crucial

in order to understand the dynamics of a port city and to explain the question mentioned above. I decided to focus on how global and local imaginaries are acted out and acted upon in a port city. During my stay I conducted interviews, participated in guided tours, and attended seminars for tour guides as well as public talks.



*Interview with Informant (Lee Saw Bee). (Photo: M. Pampus, 2016)*

In contrast to other former colonised places, George Town did not change many of its street names or try to dismantle colonial remnants after independence in 1957. Some names have been translated into Malay while others have been altered, but the Penangites still refer to the places by their English names. “George Town is not a place of a colonial trauma”, a local friend told me once. “What was traumatic was the Japanese occupation during the war and the riots that followed, but not being a Crown Colony.” Instead of getting rid of the colonial heritage, the opposite seems to be the case. The more time I spent in George Town, the more I encountered a notion of nostalgia when people remembered earlier times. And this is not only the case in people’s narratives: I also came across many nostalgic themes in buildings, cafes, and shops, for example, in the Eastern & Oriental Hotel (E&O Hotel), built in George Town in 1885. During my research I did not focus on the consumption of colonial nostalgia by tourists (e.g. Graburn 1995; Peleggi 2005) but was mainly interested in the frequent visits to those places by the local population. I consider nostalgia not only to be a longing for an imagined past, but also as a longing for an ‘other’ in its anthropological sense. Through this I came across a notion of Occidentalism, which I understand as a set of imaginaries of the West. During my research

I also became involved with different concepts and notions of heritage. In 2008 George Town was listed, together with Melaka, as a UNESCO World Heritage site. The listing's rationale stresses the "multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia and European colonial influences" (UNESCO 2008). The side effect of the listing of George Town has been a rapid process of gentrification that is changing its social structure.



*Armenian Street, UNESCO Heritage Zone. (Photo: M. Pampus, 2015)*

The "multi-cultural heritage and tradition of Asia and European colonial influences" (UNESCO 2008), which UNESCO used to describe George Town, also points towards one of the difficult issues in Malaysia in general, one linked to its ethnic labels. Being approached by the state as belonging to one of the four ethnic/racial categories (Malay/Chinese/Indian/Others) raises questions, especially for those in-between who belong and do not belong at the same time. These rapid changes, state transformations and struggles trigger notions of nostalgia, including colonial nostalgia, which is often represented as a foreign heritage in the extant literature. By looking at the dynamics of a port city and the hybrid cultures in George Town as their outcome, whose members were mostly educated in English-medium colonial schools and held positions in the municipal administration as well as in trade, I suggest that colonial heritage is *not* a foreign heritage. Through mimetic strategies, some aspects of Western cultures have become inherent elements of Penang's hybrid cultures. Through this (re)composition they created something new, different, enduring and their *own*. Putative colonial heritage has been neglected in the narrative of national

heritage since independence through the attempt to strengthen an ‘authentic’ national identity. But to claim that a phenomenon like colonial nostalgia, as made visible, for example, in the E&O Hotel, as “a blind imitation of even the shallowest trends in Western culture” (Tay and Goh 2003), let alone a form of neocolonialism, simply neglects the fact that a port city like George Town has always been a place of connectivity and exchange. For over two centuries it has been a place where new cultures have emerged, in which the influences of Western cultures played a role and became part of a local and unique heritage.



*E&O Hotel, Sarkies Corner. (Photo: M. Pampus, 2015)*

I returned to Halle in October 2015 and revisited the first set of data, interviews, photos, and other material I had accumulated during my six-month stay in Penang. I also used the time in Halle to present my research in the *Werkstatt*, a colloquium that takes place at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology every two weeks during the semester to discuss work in progress. From the initial analyses and helpful comments I received through presentations in the colloquium, as well as the Indian Ocean Studies group (for further details, see point 4 of this report) and other discussions among colleagues, I designed a preliminary outline to develop a focus for the second half of my research. I acquired additional input through the second conference which was organised within the Fellowship Programme (for further details, see point 3 of this report) and took place during my intermediate time in Germany.

In March 2016, I went back to Penang to conduct the second half of my field research. For this stay I had decided to become further involved with Peranakan

groups of Penang. Peranakan is the Malay term for locally born people of different descent, often described as the offspring of foreign traders and local women. There are different groups of Peranakan, categorised according to their origins. The two groups I became involved with during my field research were the Jawi Peranakan and the Baba Nyonya. In terms of their material and immaterial heritage and their narratives of origin, the Jawi Peranakan are a mixture of Indians or Arabs with Malay influences. The Baba Nyonya, on the other hand, are considered to be the offspring of Chinese traders and local women resident in the Malay Archipelago for over five generations. Both groups emerged in port cities and are therefore interesting for an anthropological approach to port city dynamics, as they can be seen as a form of embodiment of connectivity processes.



*Nyonya dishes. (Photo: M. Pampus, 2016)*

In order to analyse the connections that become visible in their material culture, I decided to involve myself with Nyonya cuisine. This allowed me to employ the method of participant observation by learning how to cook some Nyonya dishes that are considered to be as old as the group itself and that function as an important identity marker. The way food is prepared, performed, eaten, and offered is strongly influenced by various histories, techniques, and localities. This influence is attributable to the routes and transformations that certain dishes took and reveal. By analys-

ing them, I explore the dynamics of port cities and the emergence of hybrid cultures, such as the Peranakan in Penang. In different approaches towards the anthropology of food we find discussions oscillating between cultural continuity, where terms like 'traditional' and 'authentic' play a role, and local transformation, which deals with the concepts of assimilation, acculturation, and the creolisation of cuisine. Dishes can be seen as the materialisation of what I call connectivity processes, which are defined by changes in local and global settings as well as by the movements of people, goods, ingredients, and techniques. Anthropologists as well as sociologists have been particularly interested in food and their movements for the last four decades. The extant literature on the relationship between food and identity has emphasised ethnicity and notions of homeland. However, such studies do not apply to hybrid dishes, as these dishes cannot be linked to any one particular ethnicity or homeland. Rather, as my research reveals, these dishes refer to a port city and its highly mixed groups. Therefore, I am interested in how socio-cultural adaptation took place and how identities are shaped through and with food. By analysing the hybrid cuisine of the Baba Nyonya in Penang, I aim to elucidate how this hybrid culture emerged both through and in the port city.

In October 2016, I returned to Halle and continued to analyse the materials I had gathered, including those I had collected during the second half of my field research. I revisited the preliminary outline of the thesis and had started my writing process by the end of the year. Generally, the thesis looks at the dynamics of a port city and how historical connectivity processes are visible, materialised, and embodied. Since it is neither possible to write an ethnography of a whole city nor to look at all types of connectivity that may be relevant to its emergence, I decided to focus on the hybridity and hybrid cultures that emerged out of those connections. The idea is to treat the material and immaterial heritage of the Peranakan groups of Penang as the embodiment and/or materialisation of those connectivity processes. Therefore, this study is representative of other port cities of the Indian Ocean that share geographical, historical, and social backgrounds that differ from the experiences of inland cities. The aim is to use this approach to provide a deeper understanding of how a port city comes into being by focusing on its ethnohistories and adding to discussions of acculturation, assimilation, and transculturalism.

In 2016, I had the opportunity to present some of my work at three different conferences which were all interdisciplinary and helped me to develop my ideas further. The first conference I attended took place in early April and dealt with heritage issues: "Inheriting the City: Advancing Understandings of Urban Heritage". There, I worked with what I have already referred to as colonial nostalgia and gave a paper entitled: "Urban Heritage: The Historicisation of Places and Imaginaries of the 'West'". The second conference on urbansim was entitled "Lanes and Neighbourhoods in Cities in Asia" and took place in Singapore in June/July 2016. Here, I looked at the layout of George Town and spoke about the social role that proximity plays: "Knowing Your Neighbour: Connectivity, Proximity and Identity in George

Town, Malaysia”. At the third conference, in August 2016, on “Asia and Intra-Asian Connections”, I spoke about how connectivity can be seen in cuisines and their movements: “Straits Chinese: Globalisation in Food”.

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### **c) Hubs and Spokes: connectivity in the western Indian Ocean**

*Iain Walker*

From March 2015 to March 2016 I held a position as senior researcher within the Fellow Group for which this publication reports. My individual project was entitled “Hubs and spokes: connectivity in the western Indian Ocean”. The intention during this year was to complete works in progress; to engage with new material within the overall framework of the project; and, given the impossibility of continuing my research in Yemen, to reorient my research towards to the Comoros, where I have worked since my doctorate. I also submitted a funding application to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. This application was successful, and the project began in January 2017, and so although I am no longer formally affiliated I remain in Halle and I continue to remain associated with the Fellow Group in my capacity as project leader of this new project.

It is in the nature of these things that much of the output during the year was the product of research undertaken prior to commencing the fellowship, and that the results of the work carried out over the year will appear subsequently. Nevertheless, I have engaged in a number of activities linked, specifically or in a wider sense, to the theme of the project, conferences and meetings at which I was a participant, or



Map: Comoros in the Indian Ocean.

organiser, as detailed below. Likewise, during my stay at the Institute, I have had several texts published, some of which were submitted prior to my arrival.

A number of other articles, most of which were completed during my stay in Halle, were published after the end of my year in Halle within the fellow group.

Finally, there are texts that have been submitted for publication or are in the process of being completed for submission.

Until the end of 2015, I was a member of the five-year Oxford Diasporas Programme funded by the Leverhulme Trust, working on the Hadrami diaspora in the western Indian Ocean. Many of my conference interventions and my publications are the product of this research programme. This programme has now ended, and during my year within the Fellow Group I returned to my interests on the African coast, reorienting my activities towards Zanzibar and the Comoro Islands, both long-term research sites. In the first semesters of 2015–2016 and 2016–2017, the fellow group came together for a weekly Indian Ocean colloquium at which group members and other associated scholars at Martin Luther University presented works in progress. I presented papers during both series on my current research project on identities in Mayotte. Also amongst my engagements in Halle were some teaching duties and in the first semester 2015–2016 I taught a seminar on the “Ethnography of Identities in Eastern Africa” for the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology Master’s programme.

Following my departure from the Institute, and prior to taking up my position at MLU, I was invited to lead on the Comoros Origins Project at the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena. This project was the fruit of several years of discussions with the director of the Department of Archaeology in Jena, Nicole Boivin, who had previously led the EU-funded Sealinks Indian Ocean research programme on the history of migrations and settlement of the Western Indian Ocean, based at the University of Oxford. It aims to decipher the population structure and settlement history of the Comoro Islands using recent advances in sequencing and whole genome analysis as well as novel statistical approaches to understanding population relationships and admixture. An understanding of the origins of the Comorian people, coupled with archaeological findings, historical documents, and oral narratives, will help in explaining the movements of peoples in the region: Africans, Arabs, Austronesians, Europeans, and others, all of whom have contributed in varying degrees to the settlement, and to the contemporary cultures and social structures of Madagascar and the African coast as well as the Comoros. I was invited to lead on this project in view of my knowledge of the Comoros, and I spent one month in the Comoros in November 2016 collecting DNA samples for analysis.

During my year within the Fellow Group, I prepared my application to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for funding for a three-year project entitled “Remembering, forgetting, imagining: identity strategies in Mayotte”. As noted above, this application was successful, and the project is now hosted at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Regional Studies at Martin Luther University. This project will analyse strategies engaged by the people of Mayotte, the Maorais, to deny their Comorian identity and express a French one. In 2011 the Comorian island of Mayotte became a French department. This was the culmination of a political process that

began with accusations of political and economic domination by the other islands during the late colonial period, provoked in particular by the transfer of the seat of the colonial administration from Mayotte to Ngazidja in 1962, and followed by the refusal of Mayotte to join the Comorian state at independence in 1975. This latest transition appears to reward the islanders' longstanding rejection of a Comorian identity and their persistent claims to a French one.



*Street sign in Moroni, Comoros: "Beloved Mayotte, we will not forget you." (Photo: I. Walker, 2016)*

The social and historical evidence suggests that the majority of Maorais are descended from immigrants from the other islands, yet despite maintaining personal ties, they often exhibit deep hostility toward individuals from those islands and reject any commonality of identity. This project will look at how the category "Maorais" is explicitly constructed not as a different sort of "Comorian", but in opposition to "Comorian", both through claims to French-ness, and, given the obvious difficulties inherent in such claims, through strategies such as an emphasis on the Malagasy or Creole character of Maorais society. It will analyse how memories, individual and collective, of belonging are constructed and narrated, and how memories of being 'foreign' are erased.

As Maorais invoke claims to being French, they must confront profound social and cultural changes. French civil law is replacing customary and Islamic legal

systems; customary systems of land tenure are being abolished; and Maorais are required to assume family names. This project will probe the contradictions inherent in, on the one hand, a denial of Comorian identity and, on the other, laments of the loss of customary practices. It will ask if resistance to social and cultural change can be reconciled with a rejection of the identity to which such resistance appeals.

Data will be gathered through fieldwork on Mayotte, aimed at elucidating identity narratives and discourses in a variety of contexts from the urban to the rural, the elite to the subaltern. Informants will include metropolitan French on Mayotte who are increasingly complicit in constructing an exotic ‘Other’, particularly in the light of negative perceptions of ‘Comorians’, and particularly through a writing of identities, in a range of spheres. Fieldwork on neighbouring Ndzuani will provide perspectives on Maorais identity construction in a different context. The three perspectives on memory, narrative, and practice will allow for a synthetic analysis of identity discourses in Mayotte. Outcomes will include contributions to the anthropology of identity and of memory, contributions to popular and informed debates over identity in Mayotte, and ethnographic contributions to Comorian studies.

### *Conferences and Workshops*

My Oxford Diasporas Programme project on the “Hadrami diaspora in the Indian Ocean” produced a number of conference papers. In March 2015 I presented a paper on *The Hadrami diaspora in East Africa* at “Rediscovering Hadhramaut”, the inaugural conference of the Hadhramaut Research Centre held at SOAS in London. In September 2015 I presented *The Hadramis abroad: a ‘diaspora for others’* at “The impact of diasporas” conference held at the Royal Geographical Society in London, September 2015. I was a co-organiser of this conference, which marked the culmination of the five-year Oxford Diasporas Programme and was held jointly with the University of Leicester, whose own five-year Impact of Diasporas programme was also ending. I presented this paper again at a sister event, “DiasporaS: a journey within African diasporas”, held at the Université Libre de Bruxelles in November. In October 2015 I presented *Hadrami Identities in Saudi Arabia* at a conference to accompany a book launch, “Rebuilding Yemen: political, economic and social challenges”, at the King Faisal Centre for Research & Islamic Studies in Riyadh, and in November 2015 I convened a panel on “Arabian Identities and the Nation State” at the Middle East Studies Association Annual Conference in Denver.

I am a co-ordinator of the Africa-Europe Group for Interdisciplinary Studies Collaborative Research Group (AEGIS CRG) “Africa in the Indian Ocean”, and in this capacity I co-convened the 2nd International AEGIS Thematic Conference on Africa and the Indian Ocean “Fluid Networks and Hegemonic Powers in the Western Indian Ocean”, held at the University of Lisbon, April 2015. An edited volume, of which I am co-editor, of proceedings from this conference is in the final stages of preparation. I also served as discussant on a CRG panel, “Collective Mobilisations

in Africa and the Indian Ocean”, at the European Conference on African Studies in Paris, July 2015; and I was invited to serve as a panellist at a roundtable discussion, “Transregional histories within and without Africa” at the AEGIS 3rd biennial conference on African history in Leipzig, March 2016.

I have participated in the two Fellow Group conferences held to date. At the first I presented a paper on *Islands and Deserts: making space for places in the ports of the Indian Ocean*, which I revised and presented again at the “Cosmopolitan Currents in the Indian Ocean” conference held at NYU in Abu Dhabi in March 2015. This paper has now been submitted for publication. At the 2015 conference I presented *Zanzibar: a Comorian hub in the Indian Ocean*, of which, again, a revised version was presented at the Ninth European Swahili Workshop held at the EHSS in Paris in April 2016. This has also now been accepted for publication.



*Hadrami businesses in a street in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Photo: I. Walker, 2012)*

### *Publications*

2014. Identity and citizenship among the Comorians of Zanzibar, 1886–1963. In: Abdul Sheriff and Engseng Ho (eds.). *The Indian Ocean: oceanic connections & creation of new societies*. London: Hurst & Co, pp. 239–266.

This text emerged from a prior research project on the Comorian community in Zanzibar and analyses the identity strategies engaged by the Comorians of the protectorate who, as French subjects, struggled to maintain a distance from the “native” population, while simultaneously negotiating internal differences over relationships with the homeland. As independence loomed, however, strategies shifted to emphasise local belonging and Comorians assumed Zanzibari nationality.

2014. Comoro Islands. In: Thomas Spear (ed.). *Oxford bibliographies in African Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press. (DOI: 10.1093/OBO/9780199846733-0148)

2015. A diaspora-for-others: Hadramis in the world. In: Nando Sigona, Alan Gamlen, Giulia Liberatore and H el ene Neveu Kringelbach (eds.). *Diasporas reimagined: spaces, practices and belonging*. Oxford: Oxford Diasporas Programme, pp. 83–86.

This text presented an overview of my research on the Oxford Diasporas Programme, which was concerned with the Hadrami diaspora in the western Indian Ocean. I develop the concept of a ‘diaspora for others’ in order to provide an analytical framework that would distinguish diasporas with a coherence across time and space from diasporas in the vernacular sense, which is increasingly coming to stand simply for a group of migrants.

2015. Hadrami Identities in Saudi Arabia. In: Noel Brehony and Saud al Sarhan (eds.). *Rebuilding Yemen: political, economic and social challenges*. Berlin: Gerlach Books, pp. 42–60.

This chapter looks at the identity strategies being developed by Hadramis in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia in the context of the political crisis in Yemen and the distinct identity of Hadramis and their homeland, with specific attention to the development of an independence movement in Hadramawt and appeals to Saudi Arabia to recognise Hadramis as not being Yemenis.

An Arabic translation of this text has also been published by the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies.

2016. African island migration. In: Susan K. Brown and Frank D. Bean (eds.). *Encyclopedia of migration*. New York: Springer Reference.

This is a reference article on migration in the Indian Ocean.

2016. Joanna Story and Iain Walker. The impact of diasporas: markers of identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39(2): 135–141.

This introductory article presents a collection of texts intended to showcase a representative cross-section of projects from the two Leverhulme-funded diasporas programmes.

2016. Place and space on Ngazidja and among Comorians in Zanzibar. *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Paper* 172. Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

This working paper is the outcome of ongoing work on concepts of space and place among Comorians. It draws on the theories of Henri Lefebvre to analyse how Comorians use places, both real and conceptual, to organise social and spatial relationships both in their homeland and abroad.

2017. Citizenship and belonging amongst the Hadramis of Kenya. In: Noel Brehony (ed.). *Migration from Yemen: the politics and identity of the Hadhrami diaspora*. London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 164–186.

This chapter explores how Hadramis in Kenya negotiated their liminal position in the colony and, later, independent state of Kenya, maintaining both a distinct identity while also being Kenyan.

2017. Introduction. In: Iain Walker (ed.). *Contemporary issues in Swahili ethnography*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 1–6.

This chapter is the introduction to a collection of articles, some new, that emerged from a conference I organised in Oxford in 2010 and which have only now come together in a single volume.

2017. Is social capital fungible? The rise and fall of the Sanduk microcredit project in Ngazidja. In: Iain Walker (ed.). *Contemporary issues in Swahili ethnography*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 178–195.

2017. Damir Ben Ali and Iain Walker. Attempts at fusion of the Comorian educational systems: religious education in Comorian and Arabic and secular education in French. In: Iain Walker (ed.). *Contemporary issues in Swahili ethnography*. Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 196–214.

This article was developed from a hitherto unpublished paper presented at the above conference in 2010. My contribution as a co-author was to translate from the original French and provide a theoretical and comparative framework for my co-author's ethnography.

2017. Joanna Story and Iain Walker (eds.). *The impact of diasporas: markers of identity*. Farnham: Ashgate.

The edited volume emerging from the Leverhulme diasporas programmes.

Two further texts have been accepted for inclusion in edited volumes:

The Comoros: strategies of islandness in the Indian Ocean. In: Toyin Falola (ed.). *African Islands*.

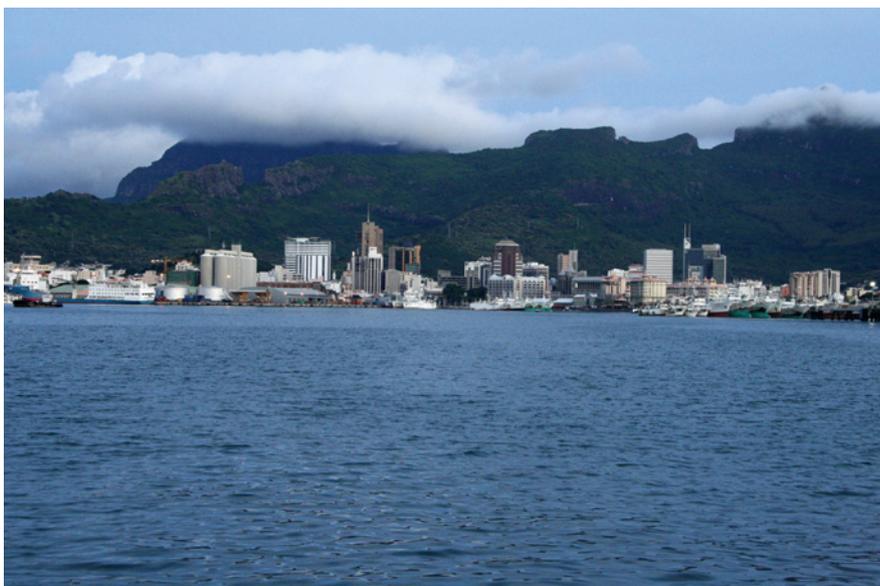
This is a text that theorises the concept of the island and arguing that the fact of being an island has strongly shaped Comorian social practice and worldviews.

Ali Mfaume of Zanzibar: a Comorian hub in the Western Indian Ocean. In: Burkhard Schnepel and Edward A. Alpers (eds.). *Connectivity in motion: island hubs in the Indian Ocean world*.

This text was the outcome of the 2015 conference held at Halle and uses the concept of the hub to analyse the activities of certain networked individuals.



In my own empirical research, I concentrated my fieldwork as well as library and archival research on Mauritius, the island in the southwestern Indian Ocean which I have been studying since 2002. During the two one-month periods of fieldwork which I was able to undertake in the period covered by this report, one in February/March 2014, the other in February/March 2016, I mainly conducted research on matters of cultural heritage. I assembled information on the two important world heritage sites on Mauritius, the Aapravasi Ghat, celebrating the dock onto which Indian migrant workers disembarked from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and Le Morne, the mountain in the south of the island which came to be associated with the tragic fate of African slaves. I also undertook a survey of most of the other *lieux de mémoire* that are scattered all over the island, especially in its port city of Port Louis. In addition, I conducted a number of interviews with practitioners of Sega, a music and dance form which was recognised as an instance of Intangible World Heritage in 2015. I also repeatedly visited the Mauritian National Archive to collect data on the French period of the island’s history.



*Port Louis, Mauritius. (Photo: C. Schnepel, 2014)*

Complementing these research activities, I gave papers at the universities of Mauritius, Montreal, Leipzig, Göttingen, and Heidelberg on matters arising out of the Fellow Group programme. Within the framework of the three conferences I organised with the resources of the Fellowship (see below), I gave three introductory papers on the particular themes of the conferences, as well as three papers pertinent to these themes with Mauritius as the focus.

In this context, some of my publications have come out or are in press:

2014. *Piracy in the Indian Ocean (ca. 1680–1750)*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 160. Halle: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.

In this paper, I adopt an ethnohistorical perspective to pursue the question of whether piracy was detrimental or instrumental in the period of early European colonisation of the Indian Ocean world, especially with regard to the French colonisation of the Mascarenes. I argue that, in this early phase of colonisation, the prototypes of pirate, settler, sailor, captain, merchant, coloniser, and adventurer were not clearly distinguishable from each other. One *personnage* could become or transform into another or be looked on differently. An individual who for some was a ruthless pirate might be a heroic corsair for others; a person who today was a respected captain of an Englishmen could tomorrow become an outlaw hanging from Tyburn in London. Hence, even though in later, more institutionalised and secure phases of colonialism piracy became a menace to the various East India Companies and the local powers, in the early period of European penetration of the Indian Ocean world, many activities and pirates, corsairs, and East India Company officials were complementary actions or actors integral to connectivity in motion across the Indian Ocean, rather than being opposed to one another.

In print:

2017. Guests without a host. The Indian diaspora(s) in Mauritius. In: Elfriede Hermann (ed.). *India Beyond India*.

This article (which has gone through the last stage of editing but not been published at the time of writing this report) looks at the specific diasporic situation to be found in Mauritius. In this multi-ethnic society, none of the forefathers of today's citizens can claim to possess indigeneity; even first-settler status cannot be claimed by anyone. From this basic fact there arise further particularities in the contemporary Mauritian socio-cultural set-up, which I spell out one by one in this paper.

2017. Burkhard Schnepel and Edward A. Alpers (eds.). *Connectivity in motion: island hubs in the Indian Ocean world*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. See more below under "Conferences".

2017. Introduction. In: Burkhard Schnepel and Edward A. Alpers (eds.). *Connectivity in motion: island hubs in the Indian Ocean world*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1–24.

2017. The art of hubbing. In: Burkhard Schnepel and Edward A. Alpers (eds.). *Connectivity in motion: island hubs in the Indian Ocean world*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 283–317.

All throughout this time I have also been working on a monograph, entitled *Der Indische Ozean: Eine transmaritime Führung*, into which were also channelled the activities and insights from within the framework of the Max Planck Fellow Group. I also held three seminars and two lecture series on Indian Ocean themes in the period covered by this report.

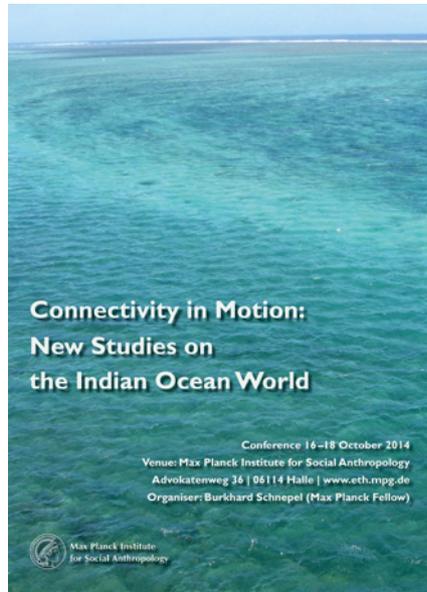
### 3. The Conferences

#### Connectivity in Motion: new studies on the Indian Ocean world

Organiser: Burkhard Schnepel  
 Venue: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale  
 Dates: 16–18 October, 2014

##### *Conference Aims*

This conference examined the socio-cultural and historical dimensions of movements across the Indian Ocean. For this intellectual pursuit, the port cities and small islands of the Indian Ocean were taken as the prime foci and starting points for social anthropological, ethnohistorical, and historical research. In its wider theoretical and methodological aims, the conference was therefore guided by the concept of “connectivity in motion”. It thus studied the manifold linkages and networks that exist across the Indian Ocean, focusing on the maritime movements of human beings, animals, diseases, material objects (including waste), ideas, religions, technologies, languages, political systems and the other ‘things’ through which alone such connections come to life. In this respect, the conference also sought to challenge static and bounded notions of culture and society, replacing these with an emphasis on various aspects of motion and a strong focus on the means, modes, and methods of connectivity in both time and space.



##### *List of Papers (in order of presentation)*

Burkhard Schnepel (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Introduction to the aims of the conference*; Gita Dharampal-Frick (Ruprecht-Karls-University Heidelberg) *Transcultural networks in the Eastern Indian Ocean, 1000–1800: continuities and transformations*; Hermann Kulke (Christian-Albrechts-University, Kiel) *Srivijaya revisited*; Pius Malekandathil (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) *Maritime India and the world in motion: a study on the*

*changing patterns of exchanges in the Indian Ocean, 1500–1800*; Patrick Neveling (University of Utrecht) *Port-hinterland connectivities and the motions of global trade: rooting contemporary export processing zones and special economic zones in the Indian Ocean*; Engseong Ho (Duke University, Durham NC) *Dubai and Singapore: Asian diasporics, global logistics, company rule*; Jacqueline Knörr (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Betawi, Peranakan, Indo: mixed heritage and connectivity as constituents of Jakarta identity*; Iain Walker (University of Oxford) *Islands and deserts: making space for places in the ports of the Indian Ocean*; Kjersti Larsen (Museum of Cultural History, Oslo) *Moving ideas, connecting practices: a discussion of knowledge, motion and continuity seen from Zanzibar Town*; Noel Salazar (University of Leuven) *From 'Area Studies' to 'Ocean Studies', from fixity to mobility: anthropological notes and queries on 'cool' academic imaginaries and 'fluid' concept-metaphors*; Jean-Claude Galey (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris) *Mangalore, Tulu society and the Oman Sea: ethnographic traces and historical fragments of an inclusive interaction*; Burkhard Schnepel (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Pirates in the southwestern Indian Ocean (1680–1730): detrimental or vital to 'connectivity in motion'?*; Ulrike Freitag (Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin) *Educational reform across the ocean: the network of the al-Falah schools*; Angela Schottenhammer (University of Salzburg) *China's gate to the south: Iranian and Arab networks in Guangzhou during the Tang-Song transition*; Eva-Maria Knoll (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna) *Considering Male' as a hub for health-related mobilities*; Karl-Heinz Kohl (Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt) *Indian commodities in East Indonesian matrimonial exchange cycles*.

### Results

This conference did not result in a publication, though some of the papers were included in publications arising out of the 2015 conference. However, more permanent international and national contacts were established with both individuals and institutions. Intellectually, the conference's contributions, as well as the discussions arising from them, led to greater clarity in how to define the framework of research, in spatio-temporal and methodological regards. Thus we agreed hitherto to substitute 'Indian Ocean' with 'Indian Ocean World', preferring a socio-cultural, politico-economic and historical rather than a purely geographical circumscription of the area of research, and we achieved greater clarity in how to utilise the mobility factor and the 'trans' category for 'the connectivity-in-motion' part of our intellectual journey.

## **The Art of Hubbing: the role of small islands in Indian Ocean connectivity**

Organiser: Burkhard Schnepel  
 Venue: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale  
 Dates: 15–17 October, 2015

### *Conference Aims*

This conference looked at connectivity in motion, with specific reference to the significant role that islands, or better ‘island hubs’, have played in history and are playing in contemporary maritime exchanges, translations, and networks across the Indian Ocean World. Edward A. Alpers (2009. *East Africa and the Indian Ocean*. Princeton: Wiener Publications, 39–54) identifies what he calls “the island factor”. Writing especially with regard to the studies of the premodern economic history of the Indian Ocean, he deplors “the continental perspective” (ibid.: 41), which “only discusses islands in passing” (ibid.). The conference drew encouragement from Alpers’ acknowledgement of “the integral role that these islands have played and continue to play over several millennia in the history of Indian Ocean Africa” (ibid.: 54). By way of taking Alpers’ plea further, the participants focused on the Indian Ocean as a whole in more all-embracing interdisciplinary as well as systematic terms. This endeavor was also undertaken with a focus on those islands in the Indian Ocean that count as ‘small’. Hence, our prime attention was drawn to ‘smallness’ not just empirically, but also methodologically, by inquiring whether the criterion of size has made a difference, and if so, how.



### *List of Papers (in order of presentation)*

Burkhard Schnepel (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Introduction into the conference theme*; Andre Gingrich (Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna) *Smallness and insular hubs: some working hypotheses from historical anthropology*; Keebet von Benda-Beckmann (Max Planck Institute for Social

Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Ambon, a spicy hub*; Jürgen G. Nagel (Fernuniversität Hagen) *Commodities and creeds: changing connectivity of Makassar (South Sulawesi), 16th to 20th century*; Ajay Gandhi (Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen) *Specks that speak loudly: the view from Mumbai and Ilha de Moçambique*; Beatrice Nicolini (Catholic University of Milan) *Global Indian Ocean ports: sailing from Arabia, to Zanzibar, and to New York*; Martin Ramstedt (Martin-Luther-University, Halle) *Bali and Indian-Indonesian connectivity: why a small island has mattered*; Tansen Sen (City University of New York/Shanghai) *Small? Big? Island?: the perceptions of Sri Lanka in Chinese sources*; Edward A. Alpers (University of California, Los Angeles) *Islands connect: people, things and ideas among the small islands of the western Indian Ocean*; Godfrey Baldacchino (University of Malta) *Nomadic island citizens, nation building and geo-strategic interests in the Indian Ocean*; Iain Walker (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Zanzibar: a hub in Comorian diasporic networks in the western Indian Ocean*; Kjersti Larsen (University of Oslo) *Multifaceted identities, multiple dwellings: connectivity and flexible household configurations in Zanzibar Town*; Gwyn Campbell (McGill University, Montreal) *Kilwa Island and the Western Indian Ocean World*; Burkhard Schnepel (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Port Louis (Mauritius) and the making of a 'hub society'*; Vijaya Teelock (University of Mauritius) *The emergence of 'local cosmopolitans' in Port Louis: migration and settlement in early 18th up to Mid-19th century Port Louis*; Steffen F. Johannessen (Norwegian Business School, Oslo) *From coconut trade to 'War on Terror': connectivity and disconnections in the Indian Ocean*.

The proceedings of this conference are being published by Palgrave in summer 2017. As the substantial editorial work fell within the reporting period, I reproduce the content here:

### **Connectivity in Motion: island hubs in the Indian Ocean world**

(edited by Burkhard Schnepel and Edward A. Alpers)

#### *Contents:*

Edward A. Alpers and Burkhard Schnepel Prologue;

**Themes:** Burkhard Schnepel "Connectivity in motion": *island hubs in the Indian Ocean World*; Edward A. Alpers *Islands connect: people, things and ideas among the small islands of the western Indian Ocean*; Andre Gingrich *Small island hubs and connectivity in the Indian Ocean World: some concepts and hypotheses from historical anthropology*; Godfrey Baldacchino *Displaced passengers: states, movements and disappearances in the Indian Ocean*;

**Case Studies/Swahili Coast, Zanzibar and the Comoros:** Gwyn Campbell *The role of Kilwa in the trade of the western Indian Ocean*; Jeremy Prestholdt *Zanzibar, the Indian Ocean and nineteenth-century global interface*; Iain Walker *Ali Mfaume: a*

*Comorian hub in the western Indian Ocean*; Kjersti Larsen *Multifaceted identities, multiple dwellings: connectivity and flexible household configurations in Zanzibar Town*;

**Case Studies/Mid-Ocean Archipelagos:** Vijayalakshmi Teelock *A hub of “local cosmopolitans” : migration and settlement in early eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Port Louis*; Burkhard Schnepel *The making of a hub society: Mauritius’ path from port of call to cyber island*; Steffen F. Johannessen *Dis/entangled hubs: connectivity and disconnections in the Chagos Archipelago*; Boris Wille *Big men politics and insularity in the Maldivian world of islands*; Eva-Maria Knoll *Considering the island capital Male’ as a hub for health-related mobilities*;

**Case Studies/South and Southeast Asia:** Himanshu Prabha Ray *From Salsette to Socotra: islands across the seas and implications for heritage*; Tansen Sen *Serendipitous connections: the Chinese engagements with Sri Lanka*; Jürgen G. Nagel *Changing connectivity in a world of small islands: the role of Makassar (Sulawesi) as a hub under Dutch hegemony*; Keebet von Benda-Beckmann *Ambon, a spicy hub: connectivity at the fringe of the Indian Ocean*.

### Results

Not all, or even most, of the islands in the Indian Ocean made it into stopover places, and even fewer developed into sought-after ports of call for refuge and refreshment, let alone into hubs of regional and trans-regional importance. However, many small Indian Ocean islands had ‘the potential to become’ a port of call and hub, which quite a number realised. Or, to put the matter the other way round, the fact that not a few important port cities and other places of maritime exchange in the Indian Ocean world were and are based on small islands (and not, for example, located in bays or natural harbors on nearby mainland coasts) leads one to assume that there is ‘something’ that makes islands, especially small ones, particularly well-suited to becoming knots in maritime networks of relations and in exchanges of both material and ideational items. The conference and the forthcoming book address the question of what this ‘something’ might be empirically, methodologically, and theoretically.

## Disease Dispersion and Impact in the Indian Ocean World

Organiser: Gwyn Campbell, Indian Ocean World Centre (IOWC), McGill University, Canada; Burkhard Schnepel, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale

Venue: McGill University, Montreal

Dates: 23–24 September, 2016

### *Conference Aims*

This conference focused on the causes, means of dispersal, geographical extent, and impact of human diseases in the Indian Ocean World (IOW), from early times to the present day. The disease histories of this macro region have been affected by a number of both human and environmental factors, including war, land distribution, water storage and distribution, deforestation, migration, volcanism, cyclones, and climate change. The conference hosted papers that explored the dispersion and impact of human diseases in and across the IOW in any time period, and in any region. Papers which addressed theoretical and methodological questions about how to study 'travelling diseases' and/or epidemiological issues, on the basis of their empirical data, were also welcome. We particularly welcomed interdisciplinary studies that focused on societies indigenous to the IOW, and on women and children.

### *List of Papers (in order of presentation)*

Gwyn Campbell (IOWC), Burkhard Schnepel (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale) *Introduction*; Gwyn Campbell (IOWC) *Disease in the Indian Ocean World global economy*; Eric Strahorn (Florida Gulf Coast University) *Rethinking the early history of leprosy in light of advances in paleopathology*; Lori Jones, presenter (University of Ottawa) and Monica H. Green (Arizona State University) *Connectivity in the Indian Ocean World and the extent of disease spread in the medieval period*; James Warren (Murdoch University) *Climate, weather and pestilence in the Philippines since the 16th century*; Rashed Chowdhury (IOWC) *Fear of cholera or fear of Islam? An Ottoman cholera epidemic and Russian pilgrimage policy in the 1870s*; Krish Seetah (Stanford University) *Malaria in the Indian Ocean: an archaeo-historic case study from Mauritius*; Kit Heintzman (Harvard University) *Parasitic relations: the intersections of natural history and medicine in Les Isles de France et Bourbon, 1770–1810*; Anna Winterbottom (IOWC) *The Foreigner's disease: syphilis in the Indian Ocean*; Yoshina Hurgobin (IOWC) *Hookworm and migrant workers in the Indian Ocean World*; Edward A. Alpers (UCLA) *Chikungunya and epidemic disease in the Indian Ocean World*; Peter Hynd (IOWC) *Health, disease, and alcohol policy in British India, 1860–1905*; Burkhard Schnepel (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg) *Infections on the move: epidemic*

*diseases and other catastrophes in the history of Mauritius*; Isacar Bolaños (Ohio State University) *The Ottoman response to the third plague pandemic: Bombay, Basra, and the "Sanitary Protection of the Gulf," 1896–1899*; Manikarnika Dutta (University of Oxford) *Disease, health and maritime concerns in the port of Bombay 1860–1900*; Michael Sugarman (University of Cambridge) *Plague and public housing: slums, squatters and urban improvement schemes in Bombay, Rangoon and Singapore, 1896–1941*; Eva-Maria Knoll (Austrian Academy of Sciences) *Maldivian fever and its aftermath*; Karine Aasgaard Jansen (Umeå University) *Challenging Chikungunya: local resistance to public health interventions during the 2005 to 2007 epidemic in Réunion*; Kohei Wakimura (Osaka City University) *Situating the East Asian quarantine politics in the international context: the issue of "the Indian Ocean standard"*.

### Results

The conference fruitfully brought together two ‘heuristic devices’, namely the connectivity-in-motion approach of the Max Planck Fellow Group and the concern with human-environmental interaction on which Montreal focuses. From the Halle point of view, it was encouraging and relatively novel to see how a concern with transmaritime journeys and translations was extended beyond commercial cargoes and human passengers to what could be called the ‘history and impact stowaways’, namely the pathogens and germs that caused devastating epidemics all over the Indian Ocean World. In the history of the Indian Ocean World, these unwanted passengers had the same local roots and took the same routes as all the other cargoes and passengers.

### The Conferences in General

The conference themes convey the work of the Max Planck Fellow-Group to shed light on the programme’s overall intellectual aims, both empirically and methodologically, from different angles and with different foci. We are not, of course, claiming that all themes, periods, and regions could be covered in an all-encompassing and systematic way. But we are confident that in both the individual projects and the conferences a pars-pro-toto approach was applied successfully. This assessment is made against the background of the awareness that different kinds of disciplinary and empirical (historical and geographical) expertise and perspective are needed, in critical exchange with each other, to understand the Indian Ocean World in its spatial and temporal vastness. (A fourth international conference, organised by Schnepel, took place in Halle in May 2017. It was dedicated to the topic of “Travelling pasts: the politics of cultural heritage in the Indian Ocean World”.)

## **4. Indian Ocean Studies in Halle: networking, summer schools, successful applications**

The Max Planck Fellow-Group scheme of the Max Planck Society is explicitly meant for scholars from university institutes that have already been co-operating with Max Planck Institutes in various respects. In this vein I believe that one necessary and welcome dimension of the Fellowship is that it strengthens the bridge between the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology on the one hand and Martin Luther University’s Institute for Social Anthropology, which I cofounded in 2002, on the other. These strong and very productive links over the years have been both academic and organisational in character.

To start with the first, it may be mentioned that, during the period of the programme’s activities so far, I was not only Full Professor (and intermittently Director) at the Institute for Social Anthropology of Martin Luther University, but also Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy (until October 2014), Senator of the Academic Senate of the MLU (ongoing), Member of the Board of the Faculty of Philosophy (ongoing), and Acting Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Area Studies (since 2008 and ongoing). The forms and venues of cooperation between the University and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, of which I have been a part, are therefore manifold and extend beyond the limits of the Institute for Social Anthropology.

The status of the Max Planck Fellow and the other academic positions mentioned above helped considerably in the acquisition, in a very competitive academic environment, of two visiting professorships at MLU for two of the scholars mentioned above: Gwyn Campbell (Montreal) in May 2016, and Tansen Sen (New York/Shanghai) in June 2017. In both cases, these positions were associated with an additional honour: Campbell was invited to hold the well-received “Amo Lecture” of that year. Sen’s visiting professorship was transformed into a named one, as he was offered the prestigious Christian Wolff Visiting Professorship for 2017. The Max Planck Institute was positively affected by these visiting professorships, as these scholars were accommodated at the MPI Guesthouse, enabling them to continue their lively scientific exchanges with MPI directors and researchers. Similarly, the stay of the eminent historian of China (and of China’s ventures into the Indian Ocean world), Timothy Brooks, of Vancouver, within the framework of the Fellow Group programme in June 2016 proved to be thought-inspiring and offered a perspective on future cooperation.

In yet another continuation of the programme, Iain Walker used part of his time in Halle as a Max Planck scholar to prepare an application to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft for a three year-research project on the identity problematic in Mayotte in the Comoros Islands. This was granted so that he was able to start a new research project at Martin Luther University, Centre for Interdisciplinary Regional Studies, in January 2017. At about the same time another long-term associate of the

University Institute, Peter Kneitz, was granted a Marie Curie Global Award from the European Research Foundation. His project on Madagascar started in November 2016 and will last three years.

The intensive collaboration with Tansen Sen, New York University Shanghai, which was first made possible through the Max Planck Fellowship, led to a successful joint application to the Volkswagen Stiftung for an International Summer School on “The Indian Ocean World and Eurasian Connections”, consisting of three parts. The first Summer School took place in Halle in August 2016, the second in Halle in July 2017, and the last will take place in Shanghai in August 2018.

My close collaboration with Gwyn Campbell led me to suggest him for the prestigious Humboldt Award of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. This was indeed granted in November 2016, and Professor Campbell has begun his research visits to Halle in this capacity in spring/summer 2017; another, longer stay in Germany will follow in 2018.

At the university institute, I have organised and headed the regular fortnightly meetings of the “Indian Ocean Studies Group” in which, apart from Walker, Kneitz, Pampus, Patel, and some visiting scholars, two doctoral students of mine (Boris Wille and Farhat Jahan, financed and supported by the university) are also working on their theses, which both have an Indian Ocean focus (Maldives and Bay of Bengal respectively).

The macro-region of the Indian Ocean is also back in the focus of politicians worldwide. In 2015 the German Foreign Office therefore decided to stage an international conference on the Indian Ocean region in which Iain Walker and I participated. The region was found to be of such contemporary importance that an “Expert Group” on the Indian Ocean region was founded to which we were both invited. I have been able to participate in all three meetings of this group so far, thereby adding a much needed socio-cultural and historical perspective to the political and economic perspectives that naturally dominate this circle.

## 5. Assessment and Outlook

The programme's admittedly rather ambitious aim to understand the Indian Ocean world as a whole, throughout its long history and in all its geographical areas, could and can only be pursued by attributing some kind of paradigmatic status to the individual port cities, islands and sub-regions being investigated. What is more, this could only be attempted by being guided methodologically by the heuristic device of 'connectivity in motion', which places the emphasis on maritime exchanges and translations. Certainly the studies undertaken by the programme so far and initially presented at the conferences do no more than just add some more empirical pieces to a larger puzzle. However, all the projects and conferences were unfailingly pursued with a keen awareness of the macro-region as a (special kind of) unity. Various social, political, cultural, historical, religious, and economic processes have shaped the macro-region over the millennia and made it into what it is today, namely a vital and important maritime region that is, as one political commentator remarked, "neglected no longer". Hence, while we have concentrated mostly on specific case studies, we have not neglected to marry these particular findings to a spatial and temporal bird's eye view of the Indian Ocean World. We feel confident that we have thus successfully engaged in the old anthropological endeavour of casting light on large issues, not although but exactly because we study small places, not to mention brief periods and micro-histories.

Apart from its empirical aspect, the programme's aims are decidedly methodological and theoretical in character. The fact that "connectivity in motion" forms the first part of the programme's title is meant to underline this emphasis. The fact that we have looked at empirical cases with a view not only to connectivity, that is, to the links that dominate the maritime region in question, but also at "motion", thus including the important factor of mobility through space and time, has proved important and influenced the empirical studies in significant ways. These empirical findings, in turn, have decisively helped us theorise the "connectivity in motion" concept. The conference on small islands especially resulted in a deepening of our understanding of the problematic. And new concepts, such as the concept of the 'hub' as one principal *actant* managing motions and translations in an ever-mobile maritime world, arose out of the discussion and were sharpened in the process. Last but not least, our contribution to what could be called 'mobility studies' did not merely celebrate mobility and flows uncritically, as can often be found these days. Rather, we have voiced and theorised criticisms against such distortions of actual situation. These 'against flow' arguments, which integrate stoppages, immobilities, and forced migration (as well as forced stasis) – in short, the power question – into the analysis, have proved equally important.

Looking at the bits and pieces that will eventually contribute toward arriving at a more complete picture of the whole prompts one to look briefly ahead. Three more conferences lie outside the period of reporting, and are dedicated to 1) the politics

of cultural heritage in the Indian Ocean World (May 2017); 2) to cargoes (October 2018); and 3) to the inner life and dynamics of port cities (October 2019). All in all, we are confident that the resources made available through the Max Planck Fellowship have been put to good use thus far. They also have been used in a way that will make Indian Ocean Studies possible in Halle at both the Max Planck Institute and Martin Luther University for some years to come.

## Publications

This list also includes publications based on research done while at the MPI although the researchers are no longer with the Institute.

### Max Planck Fellow Group

#### ‘Connectivity in Motion: Port Cities of the Indian Ocean’

#### *Edited Volumes and Special Issues*

Joanna Story and **Iain Walker** (eds.). 2016. The impact of diasporas: markers of identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39 (2).

#### *Chapters in Edited Volumes*

- Patel, Varsha. 2015. Going green: washing stones in world-class Delhi. In: Cindy Isenhour, Gary McDonogh and Melissa Checker (eds.). *Sustainability in the global city: myth and practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 82–103.
- Schnepel, Burkhard. 2015. Gedanken zu einer Geschichte der Nacht. In: Jürgen Heyde, Karsten Holste, Dietlind Hüchtker, Yvonne Kleinmann and Katrin Steffen (eds.). *Dekonstruieren und doch erzählen: polnische und andere Geschichten*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, pp. 209–216.
- . 2015. The little kingdom in South Asia: history of the model. In: Bhairabi Prasad Sahu and Hermann Kulke (eds.). *Interrogating political systems: integrative processes and states in pre-modern India*. Delhi: Manohar, pp. 123–137.
- Walker, Iain. 2015. African island migration. In: Frank D. Bean and Susan K. Brown (eds.). *Encyclopedia of migration*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 1–8.
- . 2015. A diaspora-for-others: Hadramis in the world. In: Nando Sigona, Alan Gamlen, Giulia Liberatore and Hélène Neveu Kringelbach (eds.). *Diasporas reimagined: spaces, practices and belonging*. Oxford: Oxford Diasporas Programme, pp. 83–86.
- . 2015. Hadrami identities in Saudi Arabia. In: Noel Brehony and Saud Al-Sarhan (eds.). *Rebuilding Yemen: political, economic and social challenges*. Berlin: Gerlach Press, pp. 42–60.
- Cinnamon, John and **Iain Walker**. 2015. Comoros. In: Thomas Riggs (ed.). *World-mark encyclopedia of religious practices*. Vol. 2. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, Cengage Learning, pp. 357–363.

***Articles in Thomson ISI (Web of Science) listed Journals***

- Schnepel, Burkhard. 2014. Contact zone: ethnohistorical notes on the relationship between kings and tribes in Middle India. *Asian Ethnology* 73 (1/2): 233–257.
- Story, Joanna and **Iain Walker**. 2016. The impact of diasporas: markers of identity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39 (2): 135–141. 10.1080/01419870.2016.1105999.

***Miscellaneous Publications***

- Schnepel, Burkhard. 2014. *Piracy in the Indian Ocean (ca. 1680–1750)*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 160. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology.
- Walker, Iain. 2016. *Place and space on Ngazidja and among Comorians in Zanzibar*. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 172. Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology,

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# Location of the Institute



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**G – Guest House of the MPI for Social Anthropology**  
Reichardtstraße 12



**SfE – Seminar für Ethnologie**  
Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology  
Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg  
Reichardtstraße 11



**ZIRS – Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien**  
Centre for Interdisciplinary Area Studies  
Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg  
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