

AFRICA-INDIA: *Encounters, Episodes, Entanglements*

Monday, April 2 – Tuesday, April 3, 2018
Ahmadih Family Lecture Hall, C105, Bay 4, Smith Warehouse

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6:00 – 7:30 PM

Ahmadih Family Lecture Hall, C105, Bay 4, Smith Warehouse
Evening Keynote

“Out of Time: Africa, India and Possible Histories”

Dilip Menon

Mellon Chair of Indian Studies and the Director of the Centre for Indian Studies in Africa
University of the Witwatersrand

The idea of Africa-India, within an area studies paradigm compels us to think with two spaces that are the constructs and residues of an European modernity. How can we think about spaces as constituted through the circulation of material, ideas, and people, rather than as always already given concrete geographies? Yet again, how do we think with the tropes of time that determine our thought: running out of time; time out of synch; outside of Time; “futures past” and so on.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

Ahmadih Family Lecture Hall, C105, Bay 4, Smith Warehouse
Multiple Sessions

8:30 AM *Coffee and Refreshments*

9:00 – 10:30 AM

INDIA, CHINA AND THE NEW SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

"On Archives, Asylums and Asiatic Dangers"

Gaurav Desai, Professor of English
University of Michigan

The Archives/Asylums portion refers to some material I found in the Maharashtra State Archives and that I am working on, and the Asiatic Dangers refers to the blue-sky portion which thinks about contemporary China/Africa through the lens of India/Africa.

“Natural resources: India and its competitors in East Africa”

Peter Bofin, Director
Martello Research

I will discuss India’s interests in East Africa in natural resources, and energy markets. It will identify sectors of interest to India, patterns of investment, and how this may shape, or be shaped by, political economy dynamics. This will be discussed in a context of increasing investment interest from other emerging powers from Africa such as Morocco, Turkey, and China. Some implications of this for natural resources governance globally will be highlighted.

“Mining Solidarity, Dredging Precarity”

Rohit Negi, Assistant Professor, School of Human Ecology
Ambedkar University, Delhi, India

My entry into Africa-India relations is primarily through two concerns: mining and urbanism. The work on mining locates the millennial extractive boom in Africa at the shifting intersections of global commodity markets, national policy regimes, and local negotiations between diverse agents. China has loomed large in this story. India is also present. More recently, I have looked to spatialise Africa-India by focusing on the urban worlds in which African migrants to India become enmeshed. While official narratives excavate cooperation, critical research more closely resembles dredging, which equally brings tensions and precarity to the surface. Such is the available material to forge solidarities.

10:30 AM *Coffee Break*

11:00 AM – 1:00 PM

AFRICA-INDIA: EPISODES, ENCOUNTERS, ENTANGLEMENTS

“Personalizing Abyssinia-India in the Early Modern Period”

Omar Ali, Dean of Lloyd International Honors College and Professor of Global and Comparative African Diaspora History
University of North Carolina at Greensboro

The flow of people, products, ideas, and practices from East Africa to India during the early modern era through maritime trade and the military slave system may be viewed through the life of Malik Ambar, among the most prominent of Abyssinian (Ethiopian) figures in India at the time. Upon news of his death in 1627 the Mughal court chronicler Mu'tamad Khan wrote: "In warfare, in command, in sound judgement, and in administration, he had no rival or equal ... History records no other instance of an Abyssinian slave arriving at such eminence."

“Encounters at Sea: Motherships and the Hospitality of Somali Piracy”

Jatin Dua, Assistant Professor of Anthropology
University of Michigan

In March 2010, seven Indian motorized sailing vessels (dhows) were captured by Somali pirates as they traveled from ports in Western India to Somalia. Unlike cargo ships, the *dhows* were captured not for their value as ransom but rather transformed into motherships—vessels used by pirates to traverse the Indian Ocean in search of elusive cargo vessels. The transformation of the *dhow* into the mothership is perhaps the latest incarnation of the wooden sailing vessels that exemplify the histories of trade and exchange in the Indian Ocean. At the same time the idioms of hospitality (and hostility) that shape these mothership encounters also provide a window onto African-Indian futures not as exchanges between geographically distinct worlds, but as modes of co-habitation in liquid and other domains.

“Materializing Exchange: On India/Africa Entanglements”

Pedro Machado, Assistant Professor in the Department of History
Indiana University, Bloomington

In this presentation, I consider the histories of exchange that have defined understandings of India/Africa relations. These have tended to focus on the centrality of Indian cotton textiles (to the exclusion of other Indian Ocean cloths), which have served both transactional and symbolic purposes in economic and cultural life along the coasts and interiors of eastern Africa. They were also key in connecting the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic world in the eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries. A central element in all of these exchanges was slavery and its networks of merchant capital stretching from coastal Gujarat to Mozambique, Zanzibar, Madagascar, Mauritius, the Cape, Brazil and Europe. I suggest in the presentation that these histories of slavery open up the possibility of theorizing India/Africa around the broader framework of labour in its myriad forms. The ocean as a scape of labour allows us not only to consider the cultural and social spaces of labour but also to establish new geographies that pluralize the ocean, ‘India’ and ‘Africa.’

“Bazaar Entanglements: India, Africa, and the Age(s) of Global Economy”

Fahad Bishara, Assistant Professor of History
University of Virginia

I’ll be thinking about vernacular forms of contracting and alternative epistemologies of property rights that bound together Indian capital and the African commercial landscape in the 19th century “global capitalist” moment, and will reflect on what an alternative narrative of the vectors of global economy, past and present, might look like. So, in a sense, it is using Africa-India contracting to think about “world history” more broadly.

1:00 PM Lunch

2:00 – 3:30 PM

IS INDIAN EAST AFRICAN? ENMESHMENTS

“The Asian Question in East African Business History”

Chambi Chachage, African and African American Studies
Harvard University

This talk traces the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the identity of the ‘Indian Businessman’ in East Africa. It argues that the construction of this racial, class and gendered identity during the transition from pre-colonial to colonial Africa has continued in the post-colonial era, albeit with various attempts to deconstruct or reconstruct it. Such attempts, in Tanzania, occurred in successive contexts of localization through Africanization, socialization through nationalization, and indigenization through privatization. Nevertheless, the question remains unresolved given that, with a few exceptions, businessmen of Indian origin are the leading Captains of Commerce and Industry in the country.

“Resuming ‘Indian-ness’ from the assumed ‘homeland’”

Fatima Bapumia-Sharif, Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

The second and third generation Indians in Tanzania maintained links with the assumed ‘homeland’ through Bollywood films and Hindi songs. In recent years, satellite cable televisions have provoked new forms of assuming ‘Indianness’. The fourth and fifth generation Indian youth seek to imitate the reality shows aired on Indian television. The existing local Indian [religious] communities and the Indian High Commission provide platform for youngsters to explore their ‘Indianness’. The question of sociological interest is: how at national level India banks on the long history of cultural ties with Tanzania for strengthening its economic relations; yet at the same time offer avenues for Tanzanians of Indian origin to negotiate their ethnic positioning.

“The Ties that Bind Indo-Kenya Relations”

Gidraph Wairire, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Social Work
University of Nairobi, Kenya

Indo-Kenya relations have been in existence for over a century now with India directly or indirectly influencing various sectors of Kenya’s socio-economic development. The relations have been strong over the years leading to a noticeable impact on virtually every aspect of what defines Kenya be it education, politics, health care, and industrialisation amongst many others. What builds and sustains these ties, their influence and by extension, their transformative agenda for Africa in general will constitute my presentation.

3:30 PM *Coffee Break*

4:00 – 5:30 PM

THEMATIC REFLECTIONS AND PLENARY DISCUSSION: HISTORIC CIRCULATIONS, NEW NATIONS, FUTURE PROGNOSTICATIONS

Enseng Ho, Duke University
Achille Mbembe, University of the Witwatersrand
Célestin Monga, African Development Bank
Giovanni Zanalda, Duke University