RUTTER
MAKING THE EARTH GLOBAL

SAILING THE EARLY MODERN INDIAN OCEAN:
Texts and Practices in Contact

PROGRAMME

(all times are GMT/WET; trying to suit our colleagues in Asia and the Americas as best as possible)

MONDAY 24 JANUARY

14:00–14:15 · Welcome and introduction: Juan Acevedo and Henrique Leitão.

14:15–15:00

KEYNOTE LECTURE

Dionisius Agius

(University of Exeter, UK)

"The Maritime Language Dominance in the Indian Ocean of the Post Medieval Period"

15:00–15:30 · **Eric Staples** (Zayed University, Abu Dhabi)

"Deciphering Celestial Riddles: The use of Stellarium astronomy software to reconstruct Ibn Mājid's navigational practices"

Abstract:
Aḥmad b. Mājid is the most well-known Arab navigator of the pre-modern period, and arguably of all time. He was a prolific author, with over forty known works attributed to him in the latter half of the fifteenth century. One of the most enduring themes of his writings, both in verse and prose, is the specific technical practice of measuring star heights to determine latitude (*qiyās*). This includes the different methods of star-altitude measurements, such as single star measurements, circumpolar horizontal measurements (*iʿtidālāt*), non-circumpolar horizontal measurements (*abdāl*), and one-star fixed measurements (*qayyada*), as well as Pole Star measurement calibrations (*bāshiyyāt*) based on the specific lunar mansion positions (*al-manāzil*) necessary to correctly interpret the measurements made.

Although Ibn Mājid's writings provide a wealth of information on these technical astronomical practices of maritime navigation in the pre-modern Indian Ocean, certain sections of the texts themselves are often difficult to interpret correctly. This paper will examine specific textual passages to discuss the ways in which Stellarium, a free and open-sourced planetarium application, can be used to recreate the night sky in the fifteenth century and better decipher the specific star references and celestial navigational practices being described. Collectively, these examples provide an interesting case study in the ways in which this software can be used to help understand not only obscure passages in Arabic navigational texts but more broadly historical navigational literature in any language.

15:30–15:45 · Tea break

15:45–16:15 · **Fahad Bishara** (University of Virginia, USA)

"The Twentieth-Century Navigation Notebooks of the Nakhoda ʿAbdulmajeed Al-Failakawi."

Abstract:
My paper explores the notebook of the nakhoda ʿAbdulmajeed Al-Failakawi, who captained a dhow from Kuwait between 1920 and 1945. Al-Failakawi was one of several seafaring nakhodas from the island of Failaka who hired themselves out to merchant families in the port of Kuwait, and spent several months of the year sailing around the coasts of the Western Indian Ocean. Alongside other materials the nakhoda left behind—books, maps, and instruments—there are three notebooks. These mostly include logs of his voyages around the Western Indian Ocean, but also other materials: poetry, copies of contracts, and a considerable amount of notes on navigational matters—data and principles.

The bulk of my presentation will involve sharing these materials and thinking through the navigational material that one finds in Al-Failakawi's notebook. There is reason to believe that these were written not by him but by his father-in-law, Mansur Al-Khariji (from the island of Kharj) under whom Al-Failakawi apprenticed, and whose own notebook has been published by the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait. I want to think through the contents of the notebooks, using them to reflect on how nakhodas read, excerpted, and thought alongside past authors, and how this navigational knowledge passed from one captain to another.

16:15–16:45 · **Zeeshan Shaikh** (University of Southampton, UK)

"'Text-cavating' Travelogues: A spatiotemporal approach to investigate indigenous navigation practices of pre-modern Red Sea sailors from non-indigenous travel sources."

Abstract:
This presentation explores the spatiotemporal methodological approach to extract indigenous navigational information from non-indigenous sources. The pre-modern Red Sea was a unitary and borderless space that eased mobility, migration and other forms of network in which indigenous Red Sea sailors undoubtedly played a vital role. Their main role as navigators is least understood and has been lost in a much wider study of the Indian Ocean. Furthermore, the navigation knowledge being intangible in nature and often transmitted orally from one generation to the next, local sailors hardly left any written account of their own navigation activities. This makes it challenging to trace the level of detail that is required to understand how local sailors moved and constructed the Red Sea space. The paucity of indigenous sources led the author to explore non-indigenous sources. What is proposed is to discuss how non-indigenous European travel accounts such as travel diaries, personal letters and ships' journals can be used as a significant source to understand indigenous navigation practices. The presentation also discusses the geo-spatial and spatio-temporal methodologies that can be used to extract or 'text-cavate' data and information from aforementioned travelogues by using Irwin's voyage in the Red Sea as a case study.

16:45–17:10 · Closing comments and discussion.

END OF FIRST DAY

* * *

* *

*

TUESDAY 25 JANUARY

14:00–14:30 · **Pierre-Yves Manguin** (École française d'Extrême-Orient, Paris, France)

"Transmission and Innovation in Crossing the South China Sea."

Abstract:
For more than two millennia, two major economic nodes in Asian history lay at the Northern and Southern ends of the South China Sea: China and the so-called Straits area of Insular Southeast Asia.

When the Portuguese arrived in the region in 1509–11, locally developed knowledge on maritime routes joining these two nodes was transmitted to the newcomers. Asian rutters and charts were soon gathered by the Portuguese and local pilots employed, a practice that was pursued in the following century.

This presentation will show evidence of this transmission of maritime knowledge, both legendary tales and accurate data. Innovative routes used to sail across the China Sea after the mid-17th century appear, on the other hand, to have been Portuguese innovations.

14:30–15:00 · **Elke Papelitzky** (KU Leuven, Belgium)

"Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century Chinese Rutters and the Routes to the Philippines."

Abstract:
Several rutters and other texts that include similar information from the Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911) periods describe routes that integrate various ports of the Philippines with other places in East and Southeast Asia. Detailed information including compass instructions and a description of distances between places can be found in rutters such as the Ming *Shunfeng xiangsong* 順風相送. Less detailed but still relevant descriptions are contained in texts that describe the maritime world, such as Chen Lunjiong's *Haiguo wenjian lu* 海國聞見錄 (1730). The routes described mainly link Luzon to Fujian, but several explanations also connect ports in the Philippine archipelago with Brunei, Siam, and Japan. In this paper, I will give an overview of the sources and the routes that integrate the Philippines to the East and Southeast Asian trading network, as well as discuss the problems that arise when analyzing Chinese rutters.

15:00–15:15 · Tea break

15:15–15:45 · **Renu Elizabeth Abraham** (O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India)

"*Vocabulário Malaio*: Nautical Word Exchange on a Portuguese Ship in the Indian Ocean."

Abstract:
My paper aims to organize, analyze, and explore the future research potential of a list of Portuguese words and their corresponding Malayalam terms found in *Vocabulário Malaio: Esta he a. linguajem de calecut*. The list appears in one of the appendices to the journal of Vasco da Gama's first voyage to India, published in Porto in 2016 as *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia, 1497–99*. The *Vocabulário* signals one of the earliest linguistic exchanges between the Portuguese sailors and the natives of the port town of Calicut on the Malabar coast, ostensibly on a Portuguese ship. For the purpose of the workshop, the paper is specifically interested in the nautical word exchange between the Portuguese and the Malabari seafarers within the setting of the Indian Ocean.

15:45–16:15 · **Juan Acevedo & Inês Bénard** (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

"The Status of Pilots in Comparison: Arabic, Indian, and European Craftsmen, Scientists, Experts?"

Abstract:
In the context of the "artisanal turn" in history of science, reappraising the role of crafts in the development of modern empirical science, we want to determine the status of the men who mastered and pioneered the global navigation routes. In their different cultures, on the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, were they master craftsmen, scientists, mere practitioners, civil servants, guild initiates, artists? These questions are directly related to the definitions of art, science, and other key terms. We shall methodically tease out from the early modern nautical texts any indicators that can help us answer these questions. We shall start from Arabic, Portuguese and Spanish sources, and we look forward to hearing about sister nautical traditions in other languages.

16:45–17:10 · Final comments and discussion.

The RUTTER project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 833438).