

*Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1850.* Pedro Machado. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9781107070264

It is perhaps banal to point out that the Indian Ocean World (IOW) has not received the amount or quality of scholarly attention that has been devoted to the history of the Atlantic World, but it is inarguably a fact of the scholarship and one reason among many why world history classes often focus more heavily on the Atlantic World. Pedro Machado aims to both increase the quality and quantity of this scholarship in *Ocean of Trade*, as well as re-center scholarship on the role that Africa and Africans played in the IOW as consumers. The book, which uses the lens of trade by Vāniyā, Hindu traders from the Kathiawar Peninsula in Gujarat, from the Portuguese enclaves of Diu and Daman to and from Mozambique from 1750 to 1850, succeeds admirably on all counts. The strength of the work comes from Machado's decision to tell a story of global trade and imperial change from a perspective that focuses on consumer demand in India and Africa, the mechanics and politics of IOW shipping, and how merchants managed to get disparate production networks to produce particular items in demand a continent away. The central argument of the book, that consumer demands for particular styles and types of Gujarati textiles in Mozambique were driving production in India, underpinning the trade in ivory and slaves, and allowing the Vāniyā merchant community to act as key interlocutors between Indian producers and African consumers, is important and novel. The importance of the book and the argument come to light through the wealth of fine-grain evidence Machado uses to tie Gujarati textiles to networks of trade that extended throughout the IOW and into the Atlantic World as well, and to argue that South Asian economic networks in the era of European Indian Ocean expansion "did not simply 'adapt' to changing landscapes but shaped them in fundamental ways" (274). Thus,

Machado captures the daily concerns of inter-continental and intercultural merchants, textile producers in India, consumers in Mozambique, and slaves involved in the shipping and trading of these textiles in order to subtly reconfigure our understanding of relations within the Portuguese empire, relations between Indian merchants and emerging British power in the IOW, and connections between Africans and Indians in the IOW.

Machado's book is, first of all, an impressive research accomplishment, using significant archival collections from three continents, published travelogues, and an extensive list of unpublished theses and dissertations written about the western IOW. This voluminous source base allows Machado to trace in exquisite detail the relationship between Gujarati textiles, ivory from Mozambique and the African interior, the IOW turn to slave trading, relations between Arab and Vāṇiyā merchants, the role of Spanish silver in the IOW, and Atlantic World slave traders in Mozambique. If this sounds like a lot to tackle in a monograph, it is! It makes for a dense, hard read, but a particularly impressive feature of the book is how the chapters both stand on their own as well as add up to a complete, coherent, and significant argument. After an introduction in which the author lays out the main actors and boundaries of the various interconnected trades, chapter one describes the changing fortunes of Vāṇiyā merchants as they navigated the western IOW from 1750 to 1850. The second chapter presents a fine-grain explanation of Vāṇiyā shipping practices, including a detailed analysis of the risks and rewards of setting up operations on two continents. Chapter three, probably the key chapter in the book, focuses on the Gujarati textiles that made Vāṇiyā merchants such powerful players in IOW trade. It exposes Portuguese imperial weakness as administrators, having to rely heavily on Vāṇiyā tariff payments to make their Indian possessions valuable, but also explores the connection

between Gujarati production networks and African demand, a gap bridged by Vāṇiyā communication, trade, and finance networks. The fourth chapter explains shifting demand in India for African ivory, and how changes in African supply practices helped shape global trade in the IOW and beyond. The final chapter tackles slave trading, arguing that Gujarati cloth and access to ivory both drove Vāṇiyā merchants to be central to the slave trade, even if it was only in financing the textiles upon which the trade depended. Tracing how Vāṇiyā merchants financed slave traders of many nationalities, helped attract Spanish silver to the IOW, and even fronted capital to Portuguese imperial interests like local administrations in Diu and Daman, this chapter brings the argument full circle and complicates our understandings of the inner workings of trade and empire.

This book is particularly good at translating closely read narratives of individual merchant journeys into broader points about the nature of empire, colonial control (or lack thereof), and how trade networks persisted and changed over time despite structural obstacles. The level of detail in this book makes it a dense read and not suitable for use in undergraduate or secondary classrooms. It should find a home in graduate courses on global trade, comparative imperial history, Indian Ocean World history, and, perhaps, methodological classes as a marvelous example of writing from the bottom-up to address big themes. Where it could be of great use as well is for those tasked with teaching on the Indian Ocean World who want to be able to include more details on how people made connections across the ocean—the mechanics of trade and finance. The sections on the conduct of trade would be particularly useful for giving teachers a sense of how ships were loaded, considerations of timing in terms of markets and weather, and how merchants hedged commercial risk by diversifying cargo loads. The book's emphasis on the

small-scale details and logistics of trade also gives a detailed understanding of IOW trade in three key commodities: textiles, ivory, and slaves. The brilliance of having chapters that can stand alone means that teachers could easily pick up a relevant chapter to learn some specifics, and still get a good sense of how the nitty-gritty details add up to make Machado's larger points about empires, geography, and trade, without having to tackle the entire book. While its length and density make *Ocean of Trade* an unlikely candidate to become a popular classic, it should occupy an important place in the canon for those who want to better understand the workings of global trade at the local level, how Indian merchants managed to carve out and expand their operations in the IOW through the era of European expansion, and how demand from African consumers drove production of the Gujarati textiles that underpinned the slave trade and facilitated the arrival of Spanish New World silver into distant corners of the Indian Ocean World.

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