

Yale MacMillan Center, Yale Council on African Studies, and Yale Institute of Sacred Music
present

The Black Indian Ocean

Slavery, Religion, and Expressive
Cultures (1400-1700)

April 2-3, 2025

Conference Program

organized by Janie Cole

Sponsored by: Yale MacMillan Center's Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund | Yale Institute of Sacred Music | Yale Council on Middle East Studies |
Yale Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition | Music Beyond Borders | Yale Religion and Society in Africa | Yale School of Music

Photo Credit: Arab dhow with East Africans from Al-Ḥarīrī *Maqāmāt* (13th century)

Register Here



Program Details

A two-day webinar and interdisciplinary conference organized by Dr. Janie Cole (University of Connecticut) as a second exploration into the Black Indian Ocean following the groundbreaking Yale ISM symposium in 2024

The conference explores new perspectives on the impact of slavery, religions, migration and displacement across the Indian Ocean on Afro-Asian communities and their expressive cultures in the early modern world (1400-1700). It aims to uncover the untold musical histories of migration and migratory histories of artistic and material cultures of Afro-Asian communities in the Indian Ocean world and its diasporas, how these mobilities can be identified in various cultural manifestations, and how expressive cultures and ritual articulated identity, self-fashioning, community and resistance to human rights' violations.

The event will culminate in a live performance by the Afro-Asian Kukutana Ensemble (founded by Janie Cole) of *Gabriel's Odyssey*, a musical and visual narrative of slavery, conversion, persecution, and resilience from a 16th-century Indian Ocean world, at Yale Luce Hall on April 4, 2025, 7.30pm.

Gabriel's Odyssey is a vibrant narrative that tells the true 16th-century story of Gabriel, a Beta Israel Ethiopian Jew, who was abducted as a young child and sold into slavery in the Arab world, and his woeful wanderings between faiths, love and persecution in Asia to his final encounter with the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa, as based on historical reconstructions by Matteo Salvatore. Drawing on imaginary and sumptuous soundscapes, visuals and voices of an early modern Indian Ocean world, Gabriel's life represents a universal story of oppression, faith, migration and self-fashioning like the experiences of countless other early modern Africans.

Program Schedule

Day 1

April 2, 2025

9.00am-9.15am Welcome and Opening Remarks: Janie Cole (University of Connecticut, USA)

9.15am-10.45am **Panel I:** Mobilities: Indian Ocean World Slavery

Chair: Steven Kaplan (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)

- **Stephanie Hassell** (Clemson University, USA), "African Experiences of Slavery in Portuguese India, 16th -18th Centuries"
- **Mark Aranha** (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa): "Contextualising Gabriel in the Politics of the Deccan"
- Respondent: **Steven Kaplan** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel): "Situating Early Modern Falasha Communities in the Wider Context of Ethiopian Culture and Slavery"

15-minute break

11.00am-12.30pm **Panel II:** Identities: Indian Ocean Slave Narratives and the Case of 'Gabriel Abexim'
Chair: Kay Kaufman Shelemay (Harvard University, USA)

- **Mark Aranha** (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), **Bronwen Clacherty** (University of Cape Town, South Africa), **Tesfa Yayeh Hussen** (Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia), **Grasella Luigi** (Ethiopian National Theatre, Ethiopia), and **Cara Stacey** (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa): "The Music of *Gabriel's Odyssey*: Reflecting on Collective Compositional Praxis"
- **Kristy Stone** (Independent Artist-Researcher, South Africa) and **Conor Ralphs** (Independent Artist-Researcher, South Africa): "The Not-Yet Seen: Indian Ocean Aesthetics and Challenges of Representation in *Gabriel's Odyssey* Multi-Media Performance"
- Respondent: **Kay Kaufman Shelemay** (Harvard University, USA): "Towards Re-Imagining a Personal Musical Past: What Might Gabriel Have Heard?"

15-minute break

Program Schedule

Day 1

April 2, 2025

12.45pm-2.15pm **Panel III:** Communities: Performing East Africa
Chair: Ilana Webster-Kogen (SOAS, University of London, UK)

- **Zulfikar Hirji** (York University, Canada): "Sound, Silence, and Sensation in Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nasir's *Al-Inkishafi*: Toward an Acoustemology of Early Modern Swahili-Muslim Sound Worlds and Subjectivities"
- **Raphael Michaeli** (University of Bergen, Norway): "Performing Mawlid in East Africa: A Competitive Structure of Praising the Prophet"
- **Simon Mwaniki** (University of Minnesota, USA): "The Intersection of Islamic and Coastal African Practices through the Establishment of the Maulidi Festival in Lamu Town"

15-minute break

2.30pm-4.00pm **Panel IV:** Communities: Performing East Africa in the Black Indian Ocean Diaspora
Chair: Daves Soneji (University of Pennsylvania, USA)

- **Jazmin Graves Eyssallenne** (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA): "Waves of Ecstasy: Multivocality and Mediumship in the Sidi Sufi Tradition"
- **Rakesh Kumar** (International Library of African Music, South Africa): "Imagining Diasporic Histories in Indian Ocean World: Siddi Goma-Dhamal Performance in Gujarat, India"
- **Armaghan Fakhræirad** (University of Pennsylvania, USA): "Sounding the Black Indian Ocean: Dammam Drumming, Memory, and the Legacy of Slavery in Bushehr"

Program Schedule

Day 2

April 3, 2025

9.00am-10.00am Panel V: Personalities: Slavery, Ritual and Representation in the East African Diaspora
Chair: Maghan Keita (Villanova University, USA)

- **Omar Ali** (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA): "Power, Patience, and Perseverance: Malik Ambar's Practice of صَبْرٌ/*Sabr*"
- **Kenneth X. Robbins** (Independent Scholar, USA), "Janjira and Sachin"

15-minute break

10.15am-11.45am Panel VI: Materialities: Mapping the Black Indian Ocean
Chair: Omar Ali (University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA)

- **Neelima Jeychandran** (Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar), "African Saints and their Objects: Mapping Black Histories of the Indian Ocean"
- **Maya Vinai** (Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani, Hyderabad, India), "Preserving the East African Faith, Knowledge Systems, and Identity along the Pepper Highway to Diamond Mines of Golkonda in the 17 th Century: A Critical Analysis of the novel *Idris: Keeper of Lights* by Anita Nair"
- **Maghan Keita** (Villanova University, USA), "Matters Beyond the Range of Matter" — "A Whole New World": The Black Indian Ocean in *One Thousand Nights and a Night*

15-minute break

Program Schedule

Day 2

April 3, 2025

12.00pm-1.30pm **Panel VII:** Materialities: Mapping Indian Ocean World Diasporas

Chair: Neelima Jeychandran (Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar)

- **Surabhi Sharman** (Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India), "Blackness in Indian Miniatures: The Subtext in Representation"
- **Michael Gervers** (University of Toronto, Canada): "Traveling Textiles: India – Ethiopia – Egypt"
- **Erum Hadi** (Sarah Lawrence College, USA): "Common Threads of Elegance: Ethiopian Diptych Painting Illustrates the Shared Elite Dress Culture Across the Arabian Sea"

15-minute break

1.45pm-3.00pm **Panel VIII:** Subjectivities: Beyond the Black Indian Ocean World and Its Global Diasporas

Chair: Eric Rice (University of Connecticut, USA)

- **Claudio Ramírez-Urbe** (Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico), "The European Medieval Imagery around Ethiopia and Prester John in the New Spain's Villancico de Negro: *Guineo a 6 [Tantarantán]*"
- **Marcela Magalhães de Paula** (Istituto Guimaraes Rosa, Italy), "Tales of Pain and Resistance: Memory and Racial Violence in the Quilombola Community of Água Preta, Ceará, Brazil"
- Respondent: **Eric Rice** (University of Connecticut, USA)

3.00pm-3.15pm: Concluding Remarks

“Power, Patience, and Perseverance: Malik Ambar’s Practice of صَبْرٌ/Sabr”

OMAR H. ALI

(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA)

East Africans and their descendants in South Asia—variously known as Abyssinians, Habshi, Kaffir, Siddi, Sidi, and Sheedi, among other terms—came from a range of spiritual traditions and adopted and created new ones of their own. The life of the Ethiopian Malik Ambar, among the best-known African Diasporic figures of the Indian Ocean world, who was enslaved, taken to Baghdad, adopted Islam, and became a Regent Minister in the western Deccan in the early seventeenth century, offers a way of exploring the dynamics of enslavement, faith, and power in the region during the early modern period. Practicing sabr, the term used by Muslims denoting and compelling patience and perseverance in the face of adversity, he would have drawn on the soul-southing sounds of Qu’ranic recitation, a form of dhikr with its varied, shared, and unique melodies and rhythms, and whispered alhamdulillah, as Muslims do to this day. In one intriguing account by the Mughal envoy Mirza Asad Beg near the end of his life, Ambar joined his soldiers in common prayer. Might we view Ambar’s life in this framing of sabr? Might this be a way of better understanding how enslaved people drew on their faith to persist and even thrive in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds? Are we imposing a view not of Ambar’s own? Likely, since faith, like the experience of sound, like the intent or habit of alhamdulillah, is so personal, so intimate—but may also be performed publicly. The presentation will offer a brief history of Ambar’s life, the challenges he faced, and his accomplishments framed within this concept and practice of sabr.

Omar H. Ali is Professor of Comparative African Diaspora History and Dean of Lloyd International Honors College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The author of *Malik Ambar: Power and Slavery Across the Indian Ocean* and *Islam in the Indian Ocean World*, as well as a co-editor of *Afro-South Asia in the Global African Diaspora*, he wrote the essays for “The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World,” an online exhibit of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of The New York Public Library featured as part of UNESCO’s “International Decade for People of African Descent.” A graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science, he received his Ph.D. in History from Columbia University and was selected as Carnegie Foundation North Carolina Professor of the Year.

SPEAKERS

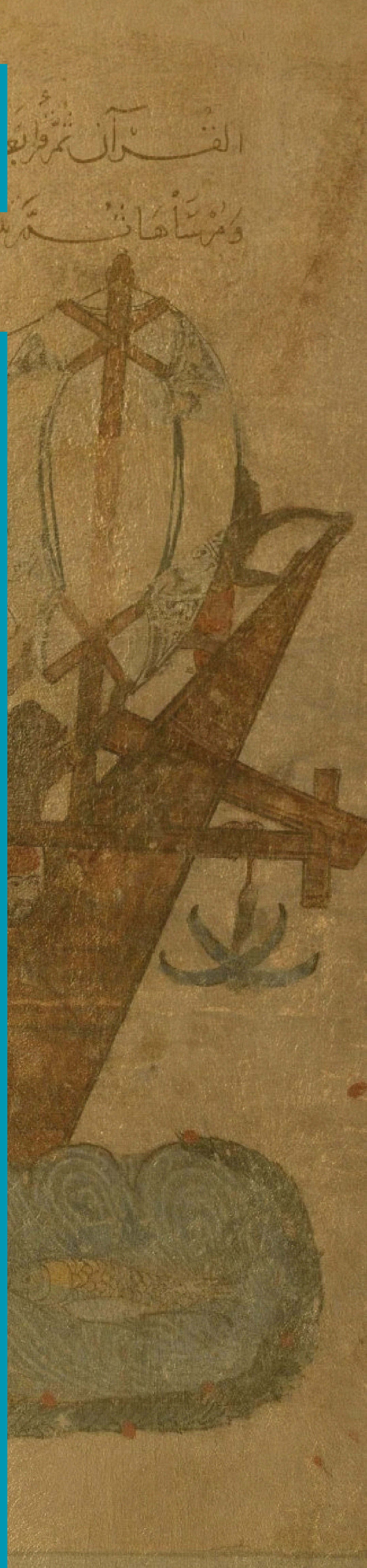
“Contextualising Gabriel in the Politics of the Deccan”

Mark Aranha

(University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)

The story of the “abexim” Gabriel that emerges from the proceedings of the Goa Inquisition in 1595 is a remarkable one – his journey spans three continents and three Abrahamic faiths. During his 13 years in the Deccan which he began as a slave, he crossed the borders of the Sultanate and the Portuguese territory multiple times, unfortunately falling victim to the colonial machine in the end. This paper attempts to critically examine the information from the testimony in Gabriel’s trial in the context of the local political and social environment. While for the Portuguese a single term, “Moors”, was often sufficient to describe all followers of the Prophet, the Deccan Sultanates were marked by a diverse set of competing elites. The mix of Dakhanis, Habshis, “Foreigners” and various locals were not easily managed by the ruling dynasties, resulting in sparks of factional violence and political instability. In reading historical studies based on local sources of the period, there appear to be intriguing alignments between the timing of Gabriel’s movements and the occurrence of periods of turbulence in the Ahmadnagar Sultanate. By examining the nature of these ruptures, the paper offers some potential motivations to Gabriel’s vacillation between Christianity and Islam and his seemingly random movements across borders.

Mark Aranha is an Indian musician and PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His ongoing research on the melodies of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar continues from his MMus (2021) work on Jewish and Mappila histories and song traditions in Kerala, studied in the context of precolonial transoceanic migrations and networks of exchange. He has presented his work at major musicology and ethnology conferences and lectured at universities in India and Taiwan. Beyond academia, Mark also has over a decade of experience working across geographic and stylistic boundaries as a composer, sideman and producer with musical artists such as Sumangala Damodaran (IN), Susmit Sen (IN), Thandeka Mfinyongo (RSA), Lindokuhle Matina (RSA), Cara Stacey (RSA), Bianca Love (USA), and many others. His research and musical practice come together in original productions such as *Ife and Bilal* (2018), *Gabriel’s Odyssey* (2021, 2025), and *Rebecca: Oru Kochini Kadhapadaal* (2022).



“The Music of Gabriel’s Odyssey: Reflecting on Collective Compositional Praxis”

In this paper, we reflect on our praxis in creating the music of the interdisciplinary artistic and research production, Gabriel’s Odyssey. As a diverse creative team, the musicians who have worked on this production come from India, South Africa, Ethiopia and Tanzania. We play a wide range of instruments and bring a variety of musical interests and approaches to this project. In this presentation, we reflect on the creative and research processes that have informed the various iterations of this work. Our work with Gabriel’s Odyssey resonates with Tim Ingold’s idea of transformational knowledge-making (2013), as well as Diana Taylor’s conception of performance as a way for us to “reimagine and restage the social rules, codes, and conventions that prove most oppressive and damaging” (2016, xiv). It is key to reflect on our aims, processes, successes and failures in creating music which supports the telling of such an extraordinary tale of survival, slavery and agency. We acknowledge this whole endeavour as emergent and ongoing. Collective and evolving composition rooted in historical research has not been addressed substantially in artistic research scholarship or elsewhere. In our work, we aim to contribute to discourse on how music can tell stories that allow for historical imagining, how the tensions between historical research and musical creativity can be productive, and how reflexive collaborative compositional praxis is important when addressing stories of historical injustice.

Mark Aranha

Mark Aranha is an Indian musician and PhD candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. His ongoing research on the melodies of the Mappila Muslims of Malabar continues from his MMus (2021) work on Jewish and Mappila histories and song traditions in Kerala, studied in the context of precolonial transoceanic migrations and networks of exchange. He has presented his work at major musicology and ethnology conferences and lectured at universities in India and Taiwan. Beyond academia, Mark also has over a decade of experience working across geographic and stylistic boundaries as a composer, sideman and producer with musical artists such as Sumangala Damodaran (IN), Susmit Sen (IN), Thandeka Mfinyongo (RSA), Lindokuhle Matina (RSA), Cara Stacey (RSA), Bianca Love (USA), and many others. His research and musical practice come together in original productions such as *Ife and Bilal* (2018), *Gabriel’s Odyssey* (2021, 2025), and *Rebecca: Oru Kochini Kadhapadaal* (2022).

Bronwen Clacherty

Bronwen Clacherty is a lecturer in African Music at the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town. Bronwen has a Bachelor of Music from the South African College of Music, University of Cape Town and a Masters in Community and Participatory Arts from Goldsmiths College, University of London. She completed her PhD in 2021 through the South African College of Music and the Re-Centring AfroAsia Project, at the University of Cape Town. Her doctoral and current research investigates Zanzibari women’s history, drawing on oral history, particularly songs and stories. Bronwen’s work also explores performance and creative work as an output for research studies. Bronwen is a performing musician, recording artist and composer and has released an album titled Uyandibiza with her ensemble, The Tholakele Project, which is available on streaming platforms. She has performed as a percussionist and soloist with orchestras such as the Cape Philharmonic Orchestra and the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra. She has performed in musical theatre productions, chamber music ensembles, performance art pieces and experimental theatre productions. Bronwen co-directs, composes, and performs with the multi-disciplinary, cross-continental Kukutana Ensemble with musicians from South Africa, Tanzania, Ethiopia, India and the US.

Tesfamichael Yayeh Hussen

Tesfamichael Yayeh Hussen is a graduate assistant at Addis Ababa University’s Performing and Visual Arts College and the Yared School of Music. He was a music teacher for six years at the Entoto Polytechnic College Music Department. He is a master musician of indigenous Ethiopian instruments and has wide performance experience working with the Ethiopian children and youth theater houses in live stage performances, trio groups, the Yared School of Music orchestra, and various traditional Ethiopian bands.

Grasella Luigi

Grasella Luigi is an Ethiopian violinist and singer. She holds a BA degree in Music and an MA in Arts in Music from Addis Ababa University’s Yared School of Music. From 2008 to 2013, she worked as a music teacher at international schools, and since 2014 she has been working as a violin player and a music director of a string orchestra at the Ethiopian National Theatre.

Cara Stacey

Cara Stacey is a South African musician, composer and musicologist based in Johannesburg. She is a pianist and plays the umrhubhe, uhadi and makhoyane musical bows. She is a lecturer in Creative Music Technologies at Wits University and a former winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist for Music Award (2021). She holds a doctorate in African music, specialising in the makhoyane musical bow from Eswatini (University of Cape Town/SOAS). Cara holds a Masters in Musicology (Edinburgh), and a MMus in Performance from SOAS (London). Cara has released various albums in recent years: ‘Things that grow’ (Kit Records, 2015), ‘Ceder’ (Kit Records, 2018), ‘Like the Grass’ (Kit Records, 2020) and ‘As in the Sun, so in the Rain’ ((self-released, 2021). She has performed across southern Africa, in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Peru, the USA and Switzerland with the likes of Shabaka Hutchings, Sarathy Korwar, Dan Leavers, Galina Juritz, Natalie Mason, Beat Keller, Matchume Zango, Jason Singh and Juliana Venter. She sits on the executive committee for the South African Society for Research in Music and is the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance country liaison officer for Eswatini.

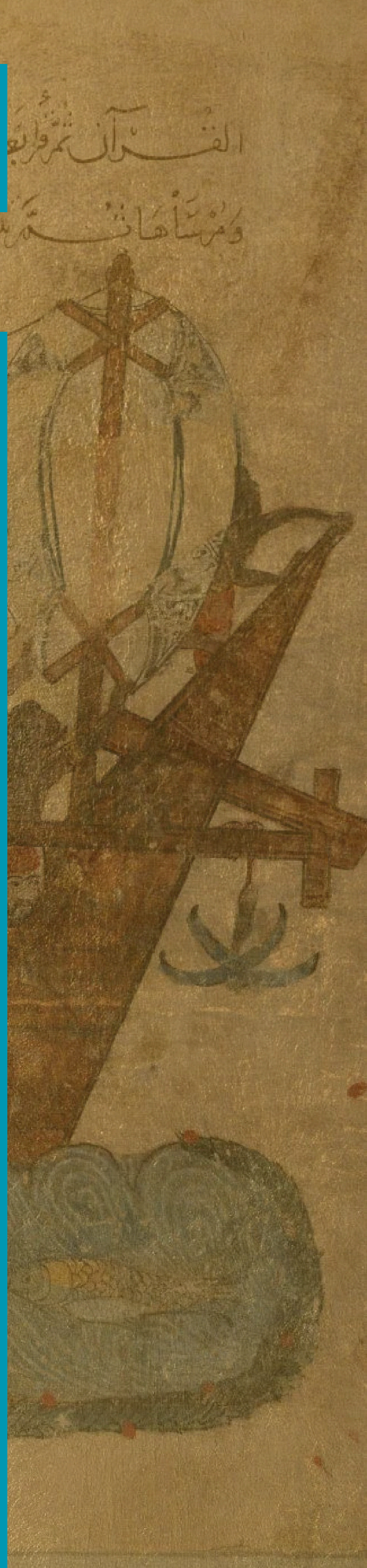


Organizer and “Introduction”

Janie Cole

(University of Connecticut, USA)

Janie Cole (PhD University of London) is Assistant Professor of Musicology at the University of Connecticut and a Research Affiliate of the Council on African Studies at Yale University. She is currently Research Officer for East Africa on the University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cape Town’s interdisciplinary project Re-Centring AfroAsia (2018-) and a Research Associate at Stanford University’s Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (2022-). In 2023/24, she was a Research Scholar at Yale University’s Institute of Sacred Music and Visiting Professor teaching at Yale’s Department of Music. Prior to this, she was a Senior Lecturer (adjunct) at the University of Cape Town’s South African College of Music for nine years (2015-23). Dr. Cole’s specialty research areas are three-fold, focusing on musical practices, instruments and thought in early modern African kingdoms and Afro-Eurasian encounters; music, poetry and spectacle in late Renaissance and early Baroque Italy and France; and music, social change and prisons in the anti-apartheid struggle in 20th-century South Africa. Her current work centers on early modern musical culture at the royal court in the Christian kingdom of Ethiopia and intertwined sonic histories of entanglement with the Latin Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean world. She is the author of two books, as well as numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters. Notable fellowships and awards include from The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies (2005-06), the Getty Foundation (2007-9), the Janet Levy Prize from the American Musicological Society (2010), the Author Grant Award from the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors Association of South Africa (2015), and the Claude V. Palisca Fellowship Award in Musicology from the Renaissance Society of America (2020). She is currently the founding Discipline Representative in Africana Studies at the Renaissance Society of America (2018-), serves on the Yale Institute of Sacred Music Fellows’ Committee (2024-), is co-founder of the International Musicological Society Study Group Early African Sound Worlds (2023-), and the founder/executive director of Music Beyond Borders.





“Sounding the Black Indian Ocean: Dammam Drumming, Memory, and the Legacy of Slavery in Bushehr”

Armaghan Fakhraeirad

(University of Pennsylvania, USA)

Southern Iran’s coastal region, stretching along the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea, has long been shaped by maritime networks spanning the Indian Ocean. These extensive routes facilitated the movement of people, goods, and ideas, leaving a lasting sonic and cultural legacy among Iran’s littoral communities. Among the most significant forces in this history was the enslavement of Africans—particularly during the nineteenth century—whose audible and visible influences continue to shape the region’s contemporary musical practices. This paper examines how the legacies of Black slavery are remembered, imagined, and interpreted through dammam drumming (Sinj-o Dammam ceremonies), the primary musical element in Shia mourning rituals dedicated to Imam Hussain in Bushehr. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2022, I explore the profound entanglements between maritime history and performance, highlighting how displacement, marginalization, and oppression—often absent from official historical narratives—are expressed in both material and immaterial aspects of this musical tradition. I argue that dammam drumming does more than merely echo the past: it actively shapes the present, providing a space where struggles over identity, belonging, and resistance unfold. Through ongoing processes of reinterpretation, these performances bridge historical trauma and contemporary social realities.

Armaghan Fakhraeirad is a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research, *“Port-Oil Encounters: Music, Memory, and Infrastructure on the Persian Gulf Coast, Iran”*, examines how evolving port and oil infrastructures in Bushehr, Abadan, and Khorramshahr shape musical traditions and sonic memories. By situating these practices within war, migration, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and the lasting impacts of Black slavery, she highlights their role as conduits for shared histories and cultural transformation across the Indian Ocean world.

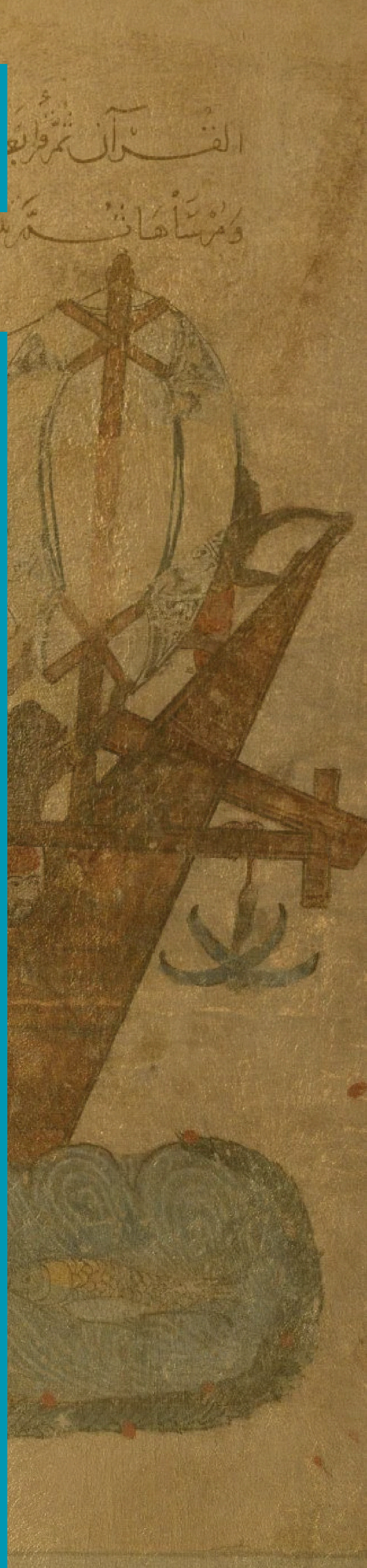
“Traveling Textiles: India – Ethiopia – Egypt”

Michael Gervers

(University of Toronto, Canada)

Textiles from the Indian subcontinent and points east have for millennia made their way westwards with the trade winds across the Indian Ocean to Africa and up the Red Sea to Egypt and the Mediterranean world. They were used everywhere for clothing and furnishings, and were only discarded when they had been reduced to rags and swatches. Despite the difficulties of ascent by donkey or camel, the highland peoples of Ethiopia, particularly members of the court, imported every kind of textile, from the most luxurious to the mundane, and used them from sanctuary hangings to the inner linings of book covers. The “Textiles in Ethiopian Manuscripts Project” at the University of Toronto has examined thousands of manuscripts and found that in about 15% of the time a textile is adhered to the inner covers of the front and back book boards. Some of these textiles have survived from as early as ca. 1400 and, taken together, serve as a unique reflection of changing tastes and Indian Ocean trade routes over the past six hundred years. This presentation focusses on the journey of a fifteenth-century mordant-dyed cotton cloth from Gujarat that made its way to Ethiopia, where part of it was eventually cut into relatively small rectangles and affixed to the inner boards of a fifteenth-century gospel book. It is a known type of celebrated Indian Chintz that has counterparts found as wraps in aristocratic homes in Indonesia to rubbish pits in Egypt. In Ethiopia, it would appear to have lived a courtly life for 300 years before spending the last 250 in the secluded monastery of Dagna in the northerly region of Tigray.

Michael Gervers is the Principal Investigator for the “Textiles in Ethiopian Manuscripts” (TEM) project (2022-27). He has been teaching History and Art History at the University of Toronto (UofT) since 1976, after three years as an Assistant Professor at New York University. He completed the AB at Princeton University, his MA at the Université de Poitiers, and his PhD at the UofT. He is a specialist in English and Ethiopian history, textile history, material culture, digital humanities, ancient art, and Mongolian archeology. He is the author or editor of 18 books and has authored over 75 articles discussing medieval history, art history, archeology, textile history, and ethnography. His books include an edition of the Cartulary of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in England (British Academy, 1982-96), *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities In Islamic Lands* (Toronto, 1990), and *Dating Undated Medieval Charters* (Boydell & Brewer, 2000). He is currently working with De Gruyter to publish *Penetrating the Ethiopian “Dark Ages”*. In collaboration with the local Ethiopian community, Dr. Gervers introduced Ethiopian Studies to the UofT at both graduate and undergraduate levels in 2017. The teaching of Ge’ez is a regular part of the program.



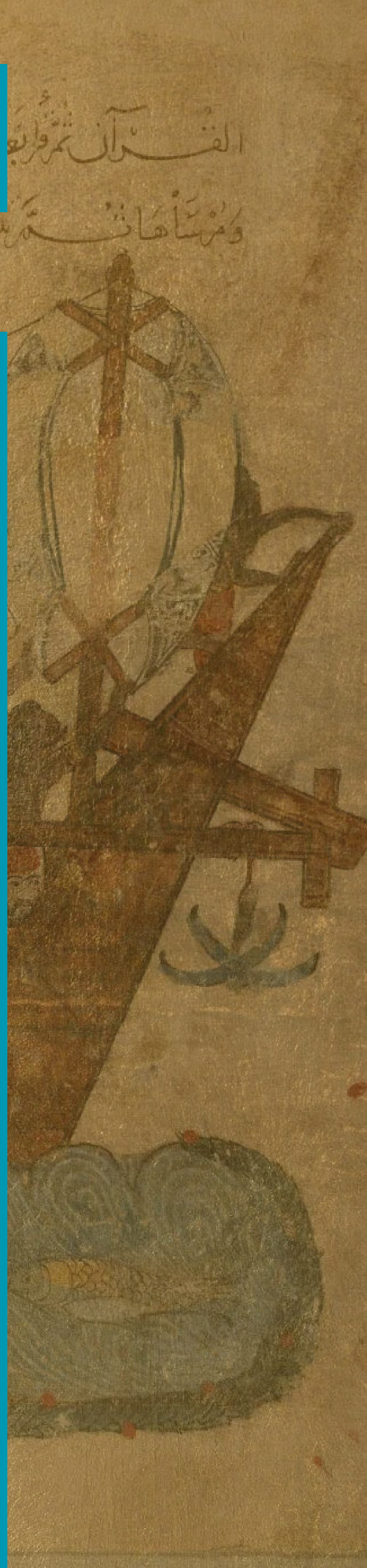
“Waves of Ecstasy: Multivocality and Mediumship in the Sidi Sufi Tradition”

Jazmin Graves Eyssallenne

(University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA)

This presentation examines the Sufi devotional tradition of Muslim Sidis, Indians of East African ancestry, observed in Gujarat and Mumbai. In the UNESCO World Heritage city of Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Sidis’ devotional practices incorporate historical military elites known as Habshis (Ethiopians enslaved in the Gujarat Sultanate during the 16th century) into the ritual culture of the pan-Gujarati Sidi Sufi tradition. Such activity not only bridges the divide between historical (Habshi) and contemporary (Sidi) waves of the African diaspora in India but reveals an African diasporic identity consciousness coloring the fabric of the tradition and animating the lives of its practitioners. This presentation draws from ethnographic research conducted throughout the Sidi saint shrine network of western India to demonstrate the multivocality of the Sidi Sufi tradition as an African diasporic, Indian Sufi tradition – that is, a tradition that grounds East African musico-ritual practices in the cultural ethos of the Indian Sufi saint shrine. In particular, Sidi women’s veneration of the African Rifai Sufi saint Mai Misra (Mother [from] Egypt) of 14th century Gujarat uniquely highlights the multivocality of this tradition, as its materiality and oral histories evoke Hindu goddess worship and mythology while its musicality and rituals of spirit mediumship preserve aspects of ngoma and zar healing traditions of East Africa. Considering the presence of the Nubian lyre and associated zar rituals among African-descended communities elsewhere in the northwestern Indian Ocean region, this presentation investigates what the presence of this lyre among Sidis reveals about the multivocality of the Sidi Sufi tradition and the African Sufi saints at its center.

Dr. Jazmin Graves Eyssallenne is Assistant Professor in the African American and African Diaspora Studies Program and Lloyd Honors College at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Jazmin received her Ph.D. from the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago in 2021. Jazmin’s research centers on the Sufi devotional tradition of Muslim Sidis, Indians of African ancestry, of Gujarat and Mumbai. Her broader research interests include Islamic, particularly Sufi, traditions and literatures of India, the African diaspora in South Asia, and African diasporic religions of the Indian Ocean and Atlantic worlds. Jazmin’s research has been published in several edited volumes and journals, including *Wonder in South Asia* (2023) and *The Routledge Handbook on Islam in Asia* (2022). Jazmin co-edited the three-volume publication, *Afro-South Asia in the Global African Diaspora* (2020). In 2018, Jazmin was named one of the MIPAD Global Top 100 Most Influential People of African Descent Under 40 for her service project, the Ahmedabad Sidi Heritage and Educational Initiative.



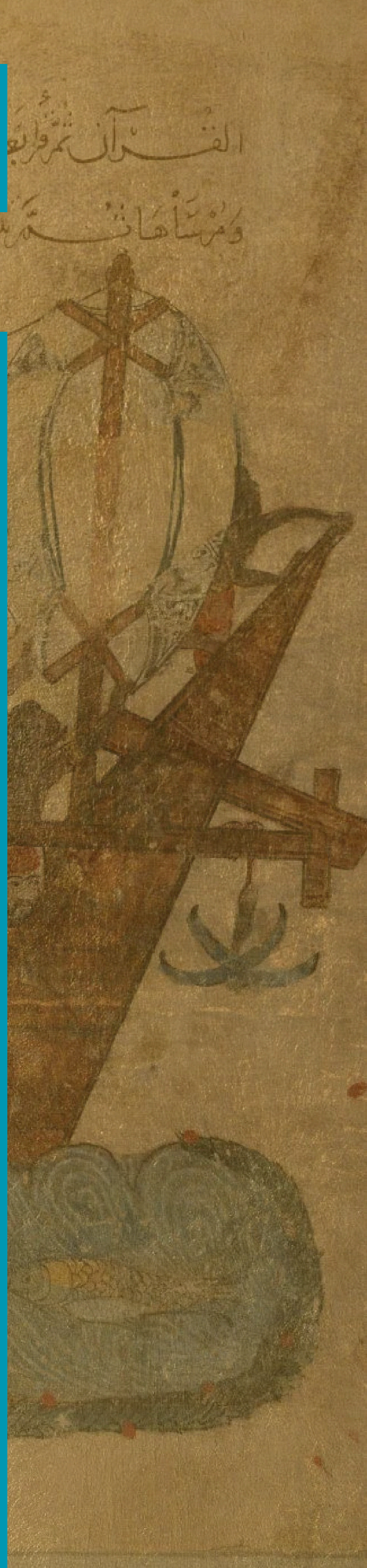
“Common Threads of Elegance: Ethiopian Diptych Painting Illustrate the Shared Elite Dress Culture Across the Arabian Sea”

Erum Hadi

(Sarah Lawrence College, USA)

The visual remnants of Northwest Indian trade connections with East Africa can be ascertained by examining ecclesiastical artwork—specifically, the religious Diptychs produced by Ethiopian Christian Kingdoms in the early modern period. Diptychs offer valuable insights into Ethiopian cultural expression, socio-economic divisions, and regional exchange. Aden was a major trading port for the Red Sea, facilitating transshipments from the broader Indian Ocean. Ethiopian ports of Zeila and Berbera received its Indian goods from Aden and the island of Socotra. Significant quantities of incense, spices, cotton, silk textiles, and enslaved people were traded in the Horn of Africa (Chojnacki 2003, 5-6). Indian textiles were predominant among the cloth imports of these Ethiopian ports, just as they were along the other regions in the Indian Ocean. The Portuguese traveler Tomes Pires commented that Abyssinia cherished coarse cloth from Cambay, whereas the churches were adorned with luxurious fabrics of silks and fine cotton from India (Pankhurst 1974, 246). Indian textiles amply depicted in Ethiopian sacred art are mainly reflected in the images of warrior saints, who are painted splendidly dressed (Chojnacki, 8). The Ethiopian rulers of the seventeenth century extensively utilized these luxurious fabrics, not only for sartorial purposes but also for architectural decoration. The art historian Stanislaw Chojnacki, among a few others, has conducted a detailed analysis of the iconography of these diptychs and concluded that the modes of dress of the saints are concrete evidence of Indian textiles of the era, but further research is needed. These textiles mirror significant Persian and Arabic elite cultural attire shared across the Arabian Sea from Arabia to India. This paper develops the idea that East African sartorial expressions exemplify their participation in the collective of privileged societies in the Western Indian Ocean, with a comparative analysis of dress culture and textile trade.

Erum Hadi is a Guest Faculty member at Sarah Lawrence College, where she teaches the history of South Asia and the Indian Ocean. She completed her dissertation, developing the early modern history of Northwest Indian people from their Indian Ocean material culture. For the past several years, as a doctoral candidate and adjunct professor of World History at St John’s University, Dr. Hadi has had the incredible privilege of engaging with the community of historians and presenting her research at numerous conferences. St. John’s University has rewarded her exemplary academic record and commitment to teaching history with several research fellowships. Dr. Hadi is continuing her research and pedagogy in the fields of the history of South Asia in the Indian Ocean.



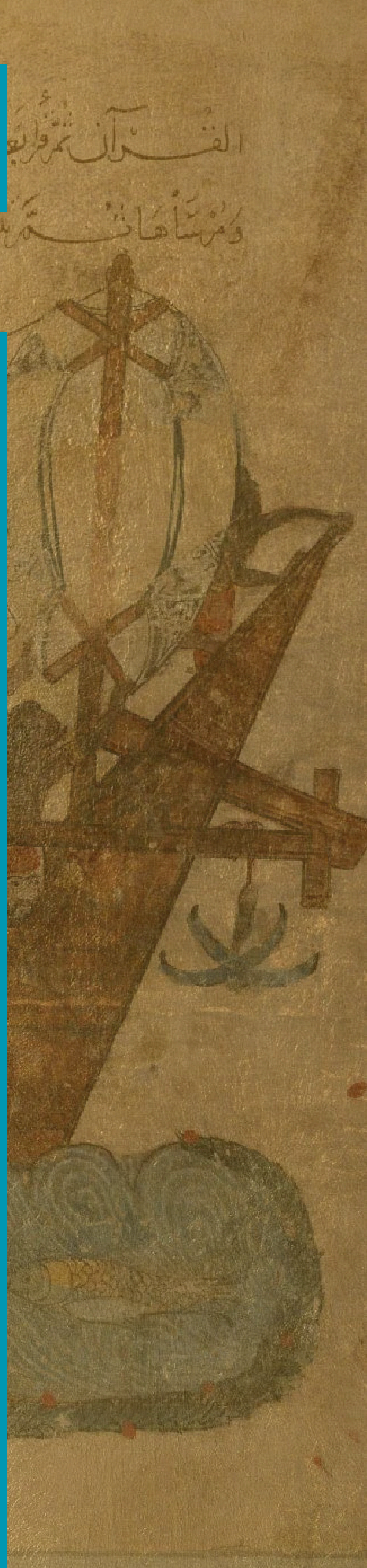
“African Experiences of Slavery in Portuguese India, 16th -18th Centuries”

Stephanie Hassell

(Clemson University, USA)

Enslaved Africans and their descendants contributed to the early modern history of the Portuguese Empire in the Indian Ocean, the Estado da Índia. Yet, their history is relatively understudied. In an empire where slavery was not defined by African origins, to what extent was there a “Black” experience of slavery? This paper explores the experiences of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries in Portuguese India with a focus on Goa, the capital of the Estado da Índia. Questions posed include the following. What social connections did enslaved Africans and their descendants build with each other? More broadly, what social connections did they possess across racial, caste, and ethnic lines? Parish records supplemented by Portuguese inquisition records create a picture of enslaved Africans’ place within the multiethnic enslaved population as well as the broader Catholic colonial population. As a Catholic empire, the Portuguese relied on the Church to collect regular population data. Parish priests regularly documented the baptisms, deaths, and marriages of the enslaved and free population. While much of this documentation was not archived over the long term, the parish of São Bartolomeu in Chorão, Goa has an unusually complete surviving set of parish records from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. In these records, a network emerges of enslaved Africans and Asians as well as free Africans, Asians, and Europeans.

Stephanie Hassell is an assistant professor of history at Clemson University. She is the author of *Slavery and Religious Conversion in Portugal’s Indian Empire, 1500-1700* (forthcoming, Spring 2025) in Ohio University Press’s Indian Ocean Studies Series. Her other work has appeared in the *Journal of Early Modern History* and *History in Africa*. She teaches courses on slavery, the Indian Ocean world, and African history.



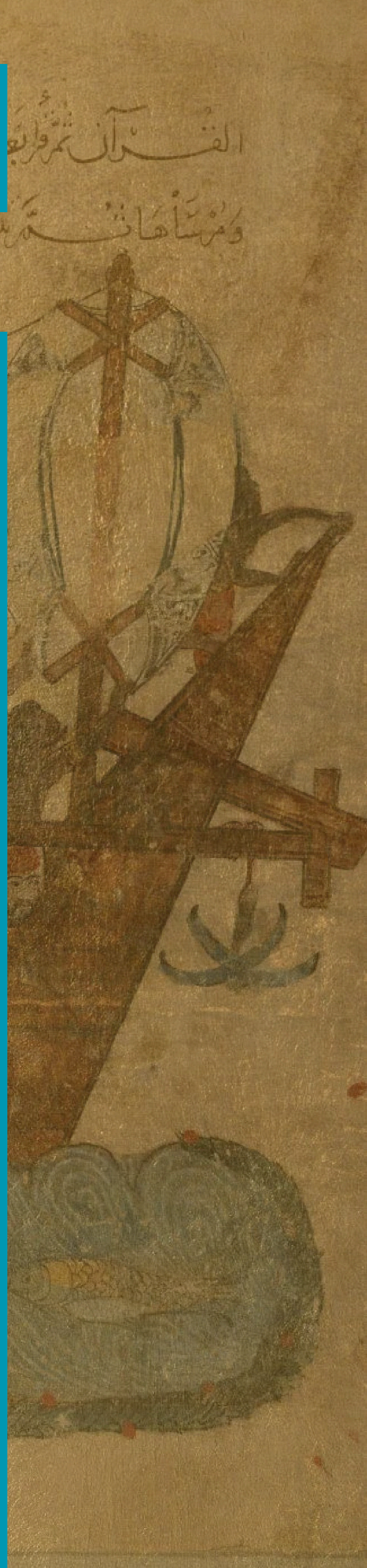
“Sound, Silence, and Sensation in Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nasir’s Al-Inkishafi: Toward an Acoustemology of Early Modern Swahili-Muslim Sound Worlds and Subjectivities”

Zulfikar Hirji

(York University, Canada)

Coastal East Africa’s Swahili-Muslim Sultanates were transformed between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries owing to the eviction of the Portuguese and the arrival of the Omani Bu Saidi Sultanate who established a capital on Zanzibar Island and set out to dismantle the region’s historic Swahili Sultanates. Located on Pate Island in modern-day Kenya’s Lamu Archipelago, the Sultanate of Pate and its capital city Pate, were a particular target. For centuries, Pate served as East Africa’s primary Indian Ocean entrepôt. The Bu Saidi’s conquest of Pate in the early 1800s was a shock to the region. The destroyed city was left to ruin, its ruler exiled, and its inhabitants forced to flee. Never to fully recover, Pate’s glory days and its ruins were eulogized in the Al-Inkishafi, a Swahili language poem composed sometime after the mid-1700s by Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nassir (d. 1820), a Pate resident and scholar of Hadhrami Arab descent. Regarded as a masterpiece of Swahili Muslim literature and amongst the earliest and most influential Swahili poems, the Al-Inkishafi provides remarkable multi-sensory references to Pate’s architecture, commodities, its residents (i.e., patricians, servants, and slaves)—in service of delineating Islamic conceptions of sovereignty, ethics, soteriology, and eschatology. While scholars have focussed on the poem’s sacred invocations and its literary merits, there has been almost no study of the poem’s sensory phraseology, including the acoustic. This paper explores the Al-Inkishafi’s sonorous evocations with the view to imagining and reconstructing premodern Swahili Muslim sound worlds and subjectivities.

Zulfikar Hirji (DPhil, Oxford) is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at York University, Toronto (Canada). His current research is on Muslim material and sensory cultures. His recent projects include the study of Africa’s Islamic manuscript cultures with a focus on a corpus of 18th-19th century illuminated Qur’ans from coastal East Africa and the historical formation of modern temporalities which examines Portuguese and British bell and clocktowers built around the Indian Ocean littoral. His recent publications include “A Corpus of Illuminated Qur’ans from Coastal East Africa” (2023), “Dispersal, Decolonization, and Dominance: African Muslim Objects from the Sultanate of Witu (1858-1923),” (2024), and “Architects of Time: Coloniality, Clocktowers, and Calendars on the East African Coast,” (2024).



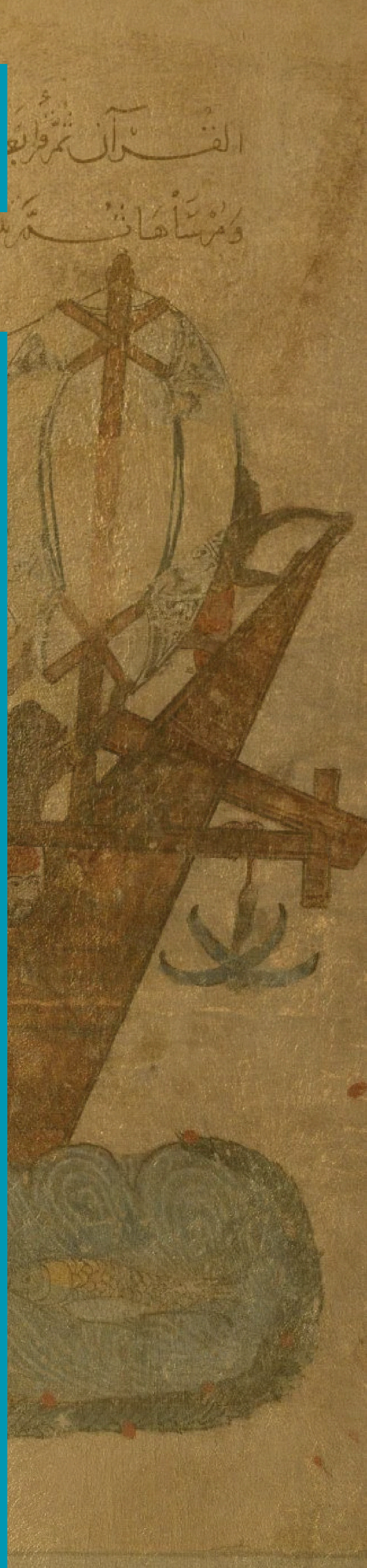
“African Saints and their Objects: Mapping Black Histories of the Indian Ocean”

Neelima Jeychandran

(Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar)

This paper aims to understand how pre-modern links that connected western India with the Horn of Africa and regions in the Sahel get reimagined and readapted by ordinary people through Black materialities and mysticisms. Looking at different examples from western India, I discuss how imagined worlds of Africa and the Indian Ocean are dislocated, misplaced, or generalized, yet are interestingly mapped onto particular objects, thus producing connections through material religions, memories, texts, and with the power of humans and non-human agencies. Building on the poetics of a place beyond place (Doreen Massey 2009), where a place indexes another place, I reflect upon the emotional geographies of the Black Indian Ocean world. In particular, I discuss how the sensemaking of African places by the communities of African descent in the Indian Ocean is shaped through affective objects and spirited terrains. In other words, I ask how places, networks, and practices born out of historical connections between Africa and the Indian Ocean get mapped onto power objects. How can these Afro-Indian materialities and emotional geographies help us reimagine the Black histories of the Indian Ocean and also the Atlantic Ocean?

Neelima Jeychandran is an Assistant Professor of African Visual Culture in the Department of Art History at Virginia Commonwealth University, Qatar. She is an ethnographer, editor, and scholar who works on oceanic circulations, trade objects, and material histories of West and East Africa and western India. She is co-editor of the book *Reimagining Indian Ocean Worlds* (Routledge, 2020) and the co-editor of the *Verge* journal issue on “Indian Ocean Studies, African-Asian Affinities” (2022), and the series co-editor of the Routledge Indian Ocean and Trans-Asia book series. She is the Co-PI of the GA: MA Lab (Global Asia: Mobilities and Arts), a research lab that aims to study cultures, arts, and people in transit in the African and Indian Ocean worlds. She has received several research grants and fellowships, including the Humanities Without Walls seed grant and the Africa Multiple Research Fellowship at the University of Bayreuth.

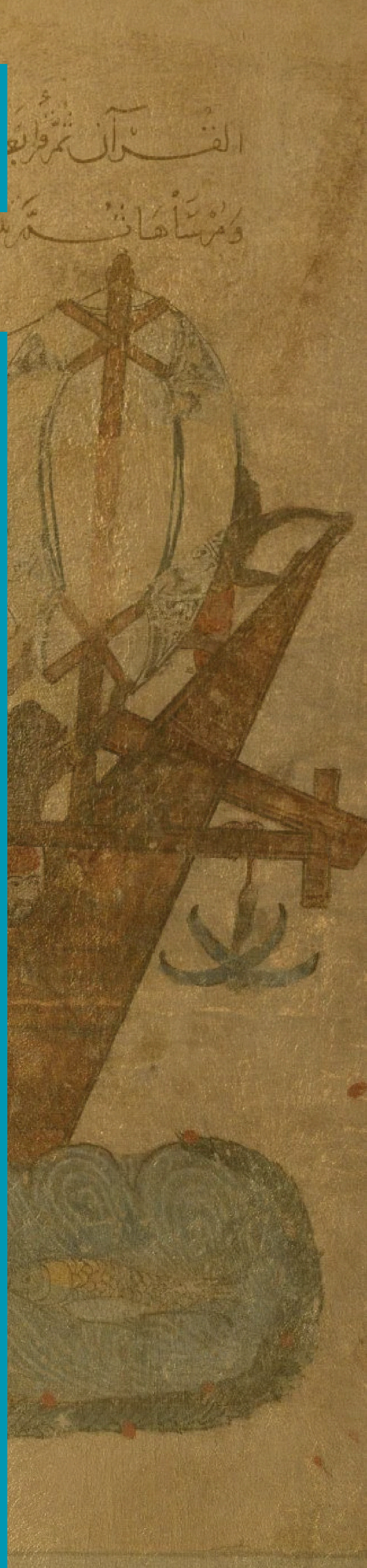


“Situating Early Modern Falasha Communities in the Wider Context of Ethiopian Culture and Slavery”

Steven Kaplan

(Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel) Respondent

Steven Kaplan is a professor of African studies and comparative religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He attended Brandeis University, where he earned a BA and an MA in Near Eastern and Judaic studies, and Harvard Divinity School, where he earned an MTS in comparative religion. He completed his PhD at the Hebrew University, where he has taught since 1984. Kaplan’s research concerns the religious and social history of traditional Ethiopia. He has written extensively on Orthodox Christianity, missions, and the dynamics of conversion. He is also a world-renowned expert on Ethiopian Jews and has written several books and numerous articles on their history in Ethiopia and adjustment in Israel.



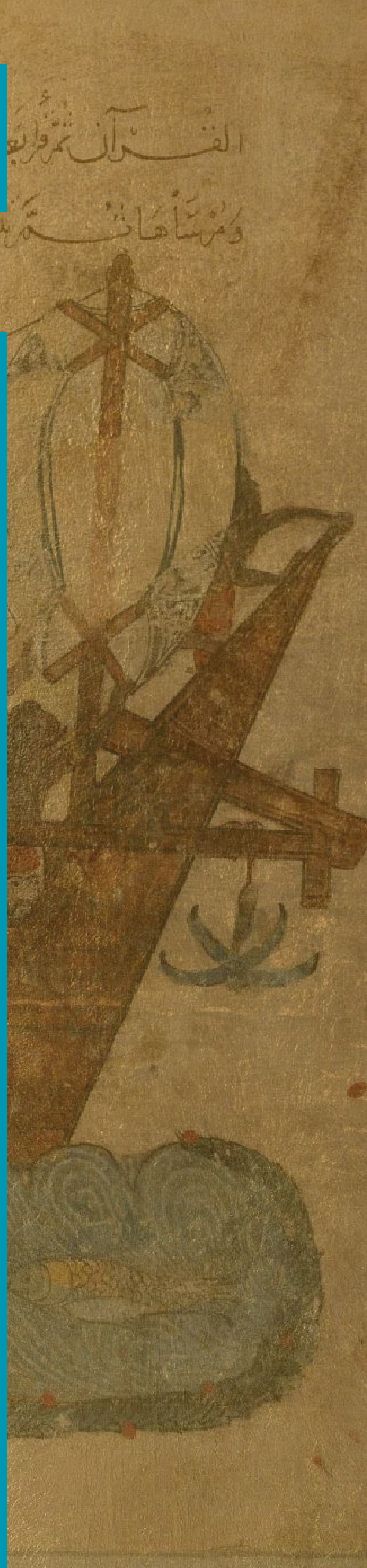
“Matters Beyond the Range of Matter”—“A Whole New World”:The Black Indian Ocean in One Thousand Nights and a Night”

Maghan Keita

(Villanova University, USA)

There are expropriations of popular culture that elide historical possibilities. In spite of the 1st-century Periplus (Cassan 1989), the 6th-century writings of Cosmas (McCrindle 1897), the 9th century revolts that threatened the Abbasid Caliphate (Al-Tabari/Waines 1992), the 13th-century depictions of the Khan’s retainers (Guangdao c.1280), or 17 th -century correspondence on the Deccan (Ali 2016), we live in a world of elision. To paraphrase Toni Morrison (1992), we read, see, and hear as we are taught. As Stuart Hall noted (1992), our intellectual and creative musings occur within contexts contrived to justify notions of the modern and rights to the privileges that abstraction bestows. As a critique of some of modernity’s elisions, this work considers ways in which popular culture of another time and space has been molded to construct an Indian Ocean devoid of blackness; an “African Sea” without Africans (Da Silva 1999). This is done through the analysis of two stories from the popular and canonical Richard Burton rendering of One Thousand Nights and a Night. Here, crossing the Indian Ocean/“African Sea,” we examine the tales of “Sindbad” and “Alaeddin” as illustrative of real and imagined African presence in the Indian Ocean.

Maghan Keita is Professor of History and Global Interdisciplinary Studies, and the founding Director of both the Institute for Global Interdisciplinary Studies and the Africana Studies Program at Villanova University. Keita’s *Race and the Writing of History: Riddling the Sphinx* (Oxford, 2000) received the 13 th Annual Cheikh Anta Diop Award for Best Scholarly Book. He is editor of *Conceptualizing/Re-conceptualizing Africa: the Construction of African Historical Identity* (Brill, 2002), and author of *A Political Economy of Health Care in Senegal* (Brill 2007). Former Chair of the Board of Trustees of the College Board, Dr. Keita also served as Editor-in-Chief for Africa for the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, and is author of a number of scholarly publications.



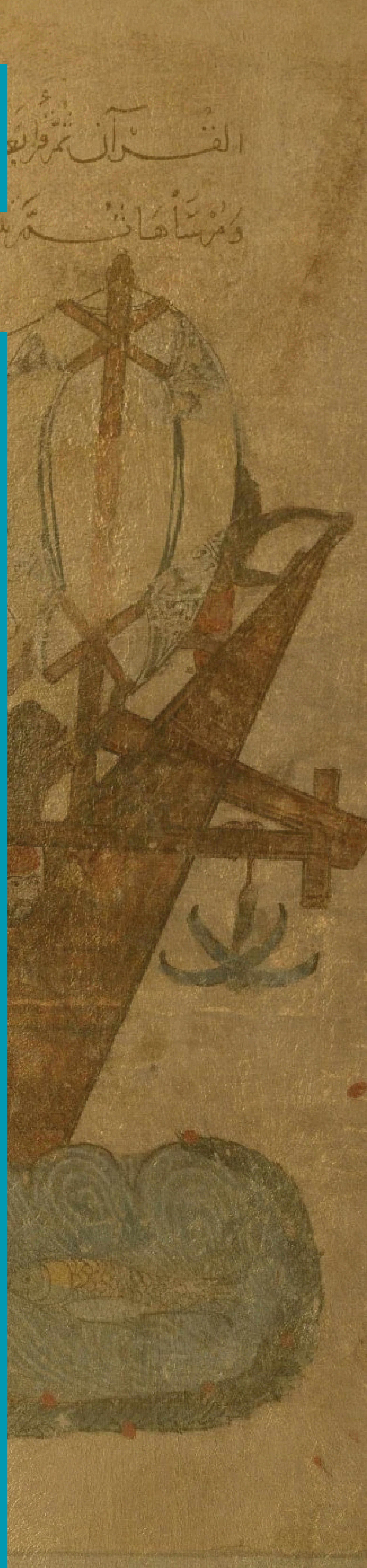
“Imagining Diasporic Histories in Indian Ocean World: Siddi Goma-Dhamal Performance in Gujarat, India”

Rakesh Kumar

(International Library of African Music, South Africa)

This paper will present the role of Goma-Dhamal performances in creating the African imaginary for the Siddi community on the west coast of India. Siddi is an Afro-Indian community that lives on the West Coast and in South India. Their history is rooted in the Indian Ocean diasporic movement beginning in the 14th century. Siddi Goma-Dhamal invokes the spiritual legacies of Siddi saints such as Bava Gor and his sister Mai Mishra. Siddi’s arrival in India is linked to the intertwined histories of slavery, trade, and migration. Goma-Dhamal performers show their courage and devotion through drumming, singing and daring acts to receive blessings from these saints. The performances exemplify how expressive cultures safeguard and reimagine diasporic heritage within the broader frameworks of faith, displacement, and resilience. The story of Bava Gor and Mai Misra parallels the odyssey of Gabriel, whose journeys across the Indian Ocean articulate themes of survival, self-fashioning, and cultural adaptation. Similarly, Goma-Dhamal operates as both a ritual of devotion and a living archive, preserving the Siddi’s Afro-Indian identity while asserting their Africanness within India’s socio-religious landscape. This paper situates Goma-Dhamal within the Black Indian Ocean, demonstrating how its performative and spiritual elements navigate the intersections of religion, migration, and artistic expression to imagined histories.

Rakesh Kumar completed his PhD at the International Library of African Music, Grahamstown, South Africa. His research focuses on the Goma-Dhamal performances of the Siddi, an African diaspora community in India. He is a trained Indian classical vocal musician and has been a lecturer in the Department of Music at Wollo University, Ethiopia, for five years. His research interests include music and musical performances in IOW, Indian classical music pedagogy, musical archives, digital humanities, Ethiopian music, and Hindustani music in the Indian diaspora.



“Tales of Pain and Resistance: Memory and Racial Violence in the Quilombola Community of Água Preta, Ceará, Brazil”

Marcela Magalhães de Paula

(Istituto Guimaraes Rosa, Italy)

This paper analyzes the narratives of memory and resistance within the quilombola community of Água Preta, located in Ceará, Brazil. Composed of descendants of enslaved people from Mozambique, the community embodies, in its cultural practices and daily life, the marks of a history of colonial and racial violence that continues to resonate in the present. Based on a postdoctoral research project focused on the recognition of racial violence, this study examines how memories of suffering inherited from the era of enslavement intersect with the contemporary dynamics of violence faced by the community today. Although the formal abolition of slavery occurred over a century ago, the community of Água Preta continues to face threats to their land rights, youth migration, and institutional neglect, reflecting the persistence of colonial structures that remain unresolved. However, beyond the experience of pain, this study highlights the vital role of active resistance within the community. This resistance is most visible in the annual festivals of culture and dance, where the memory of their Mozambican ancestors is preserved through rituals, music, and embodied practices, reinforcing their collective identity and cultural heritage. This research proposes a critical reflection on the tensions between memory, violence, and resistance within quilombola communities. It reveals how narratives of suffering and pain, expressed through oral tradition and cultural performance, become powerful instruments of resistance and a means of confronting structural racism. The study discusses how the testimonies of struggle and resilience within the Água Preta community not only expose the continuity of racial violence but also demand recognition of their territorial rights and their autonomy as a quilombola community. By exploring these dynamics, the paper highlights how cultural practices expose unresolved colonial fractures while simultaneously serving as acts of collective resistance and identity affirmation.

Marcela Magalhães works at the Guimarães Rosa Institute at the Embassy of Brazil in Rome. She holds a Ph.D. in Iberian Studies and Postcolonial Literature from the University of Bologna, a Master’s in Human Rights and Conflict Management from the Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna in Pisa, and a Master’s in Brazilian Literature from the Federal University of Ceará. She completed postdoctoral research at Unilab, focusing on socio-biodiversity in quilombola communities. Marcela has received literary and research awards from institutions in Germany, Italy, Egypt, Brazil, France, and Switzerland. Her literary works have been featured in anthologies, and she has published *De cafres e de cafajestes: fluxos e refluxos de personagens no Atlântico Sul* (2015) and the short story collection *O almanaque dos insetos* (2023, Patuá). She also contributes to *Agência de Notícias das Favelas* and other publications, including *Jacobin Brasil* and *Boitempo*.

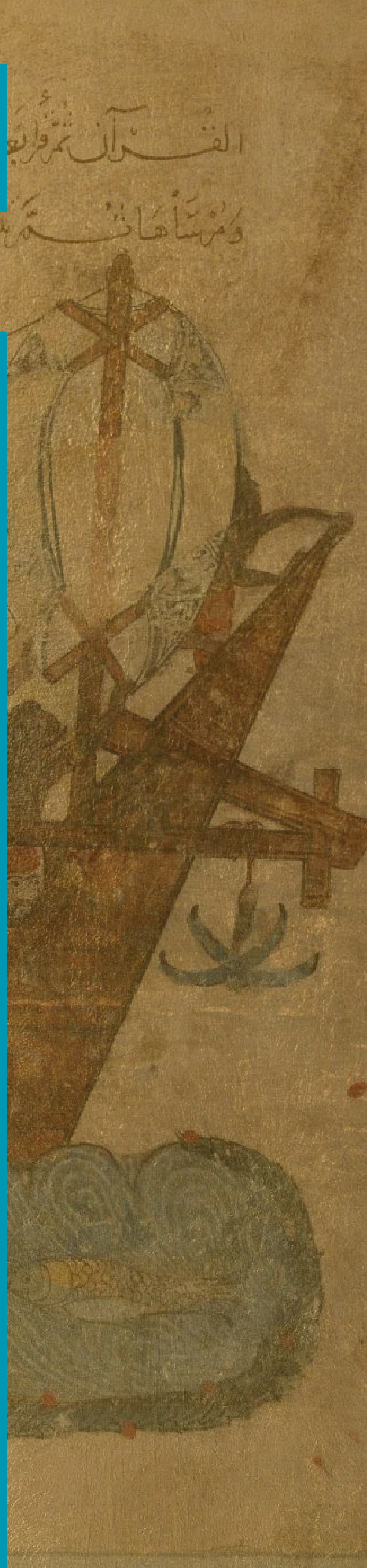
“Performing Mawlid in East Africa: A Competitive Structure of Praising the Prophet”

Raphael Michaeli

(University of Bergen, Norway)

Various mawlid texts are used, and numerous styles of mawlid performances exist in East Africa today. This paper will explore the differences in style and text, along with their relationship to historical developments and social distinctions among those who perform the readings in Lamu and Tana River, Kenya. The competitive structure characteristic of mawlid readings throughout the 19th century—and still present to some extent today—allows diverse groups from various social backgrounds to participate in praising the prophet through mawlid rituals. While the *Simṭ al-Durar* mawlid text and its performance are associated with the scholarly ‘Alawī Ṭariqa and the *Riyāḍa* mosque in Lamu, the *Barzanjī* text is used by, among other groups, the Pokomo from Tana River, and is performed very differently. As part of the aesthetics introduced to the reading by the Tana River group, stamina and self-control play an important role, as the reading is conducted throughout the night, with demanding movements performed while sitting on the knees in a prayer-like position for an extended period. The rhythm of the percussionists, along with the *qasida* verses recited between the Arabic mawlid chapters, also varies. While in the *Simṭ al-Durar* readings, the *qasida* verses are in Arabic, the Pokomo group from Tana River also employs Swahili. This paper will demonstrate how the aesthetic choices of the performance can indicate historical developments and social backgrounds.

Raphael Michaeli is a researcher enrolled in my Ph.D. as part of the MprinT project at Bergen University, Norway. My dissertation focuses on mawlid manuscripts, early prints, and oral performances in Lamu (Kenya), reflecting the entrance of print and intellectual changes in the Muslim world in the 19th and 20th centuries. In my previous research, I focused on early Sufi compilations in Arabic.



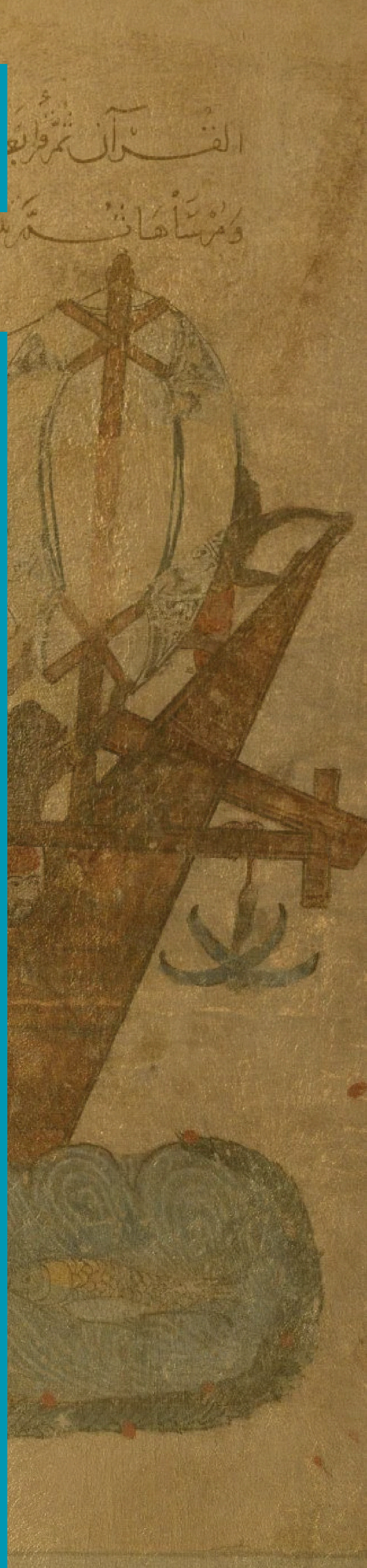
“The Intersection of Islamic and Coastal African Practices through the Establishment of the Maulidi Festival in Lamu Town”

Simon Mwaniki

(University of Minnesota, USA)

The Maulidi festival was established a little over 150 years ago by Habib Swaleh in Lamu Town, Kenya. Through Swaleh’s intimate relationship with coconut farmers and his discontent for the exclusion of coastal Africans in religious activities, he founded the Riyadh Mosque focusing on treatment of adherents as equals rather than discriminating them as propagated by elite religious leaders. Swaleh particularly aimed to meet the religious needs of those occupying the lower stratum (such as slaves, ex-slaves, fishermen, palm winemakers and farm labourers) in Lamu Town. He allowed coastal African Muslims to perform their traditional dances, under the doctrines of Sufism, which eventually became a major component of the annual Maulidi celebrations. The trances experienced in Sufi practices were analogous to trances engendered during spirit-possession dances performed by coastal Africans. These similarities were conducive resulting in the conversion of many coastal Africans at the turn of the 20th century. The amalgamation of Sufi doctrines and African traditional dances was mediated by Swahili poetry. Poetic traditions of oral composition and performance had long existed along the Swahili coast and their intersection with Arabic mores increased their functional dimension in respective societies. Therefore, the presence of Swahili poetry in coastal traditional dances and Sufi doctrines rendered the amalgamation partially legible to religious leaders in Lamu Town - through the Qur’an’s aesthetics, the use of poetic language was encouraged to give meaning to different circumstances in life. My paper will be geared towards highlighting contributions made by coastal Africans in the establishment of the Maulidi festival through their traditional practices that have become a major component of the annual celebrations. Firstly, I will consider Swahili poetry that dates back to the 17th century through oral history with inextricable Bantu origins and secondly, the traditional dances performed by coastal Africans.

Simon Mwaniki is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota. His research project focuses on the Maulidi Festival of Lamu Town which commemorates the birth of Prophet Mohammed. His project uses the festival as a case study, through ethnographic research and interdisciplinary approaches, to tease out the different ways in which Swahilis continuously negotiate, navigate and redefine their highly contested identity through performance practice in post-colonial Kenya. Swahilis’ adherence to Islam leads to a proclivity to conflate the religion as one entity devoid of nuance. Hence the project aims to demonstrate and delineate what an African Islam entails by analysing sound and body movements whilst looking at various factors— tourism, national government, UNESCO, globalisation, economic, social and political status – that play a role in the organisation, management and gradual transformation of the festival over the years.



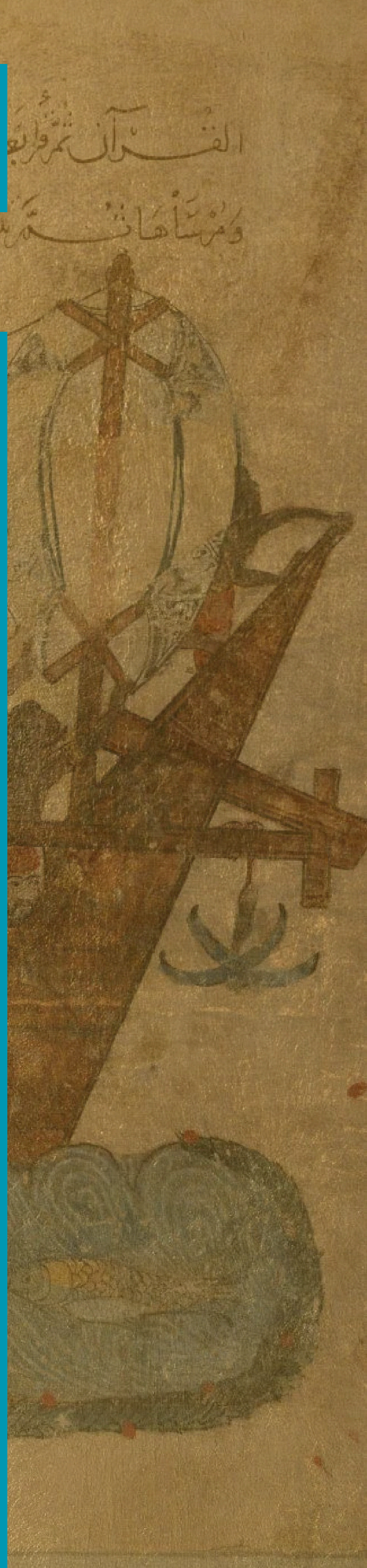
“The European Medieval Imagery around Ethiopia and Prester John in the New Spain’s Villancico de Negro: Guineo a 6 [Tantarantán]”

Claudio Ramírez-Urbe

(Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico)

The Spanish colonial agenda in the Americas used several channels for its development. One of them was music, and, as part of the poetic and musical genres, the Villancico was one of the most effective for transmitting pro-Hispanic and catholic imageries. The Villancico de negro, in particular, was the comical and stereotypical subgenre that represented the African and Afro-descendant populations as exotic and humoristic characters. For such a purpose, it’s likely that some actual elements from these cultures, such as symbols or music, were used to develop the parody. However, it’s often missed the use of this repertoire as an evangelization or propaganda tool. In this context, the Guineo a 6 [Tantarantán], composed by Gaspar Fernández in Puebla de los Ángeles (1616), recreates the European legend surrounding the mythical Christian kingdom of “Prester John.” At the same time, it tries to establish the idealization of a unified catholic world. Even still in the XVII century, it was believed, in Spain and Portugal, that this king ruled the Christian empire of Ethiopia (one example was Pedro Páez’s work *Historia de Etiopía* published in 1622), and, if any European nation might reach his territories, he was going to become a strong ally against Islam. Thus, from a critical perspective, I asses the idealization of the African(s)/Ethiopian(s) “other(s)” in colonial musical repertoires, such as Guineo a 6 [Tantarantán]. This *negrilla* is an example of the European medieval continuation as propaganda, and possible indoctrination tool, within the Villancico de negro repertoire in Puebla, one of the largest and more diverse cities in New Spain (colonial Mexico).

Claudio Ramírez-Urbe studied for a Technical Degree in Music at the Universidad de Guadalajara (Mexico) (2013). In 2018, he obtained his Bachelor’s degree in Music and Musicology at the Universidad Veracruzana (Mexico). At Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain), he gained both his Master’s degree in Spanish and Hispanic-American Music (2020) and his Ph.D. in Musicology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid Musicology Department (Spain). His research, focused on the African musical diaspora in the Americas and cultural identities in Latin America, has been published in different journals, such as *Revista Argentina de Musicología* (Argentina), *Trans Revista Transcultural de Música* (Spain), *Estudios Novohispanos* (Mexico), *Música, Cultura y Pensamiento* (Colombia), among others. He is an active member of the Renaissance Society of America (RSA), the International Council for Traditions of Music and Dance (ICTMD), as a sponsored member, and the Early African Sound Worlds study group (EASW). He was granted the PAME-UDUAL International Scholarship for field research in Colombia (2017). He is currently a faculty member at the Universidad de Guadalajara Music Department (México), teaching Musicology, Ethnomusicology, and Music in Mexico.

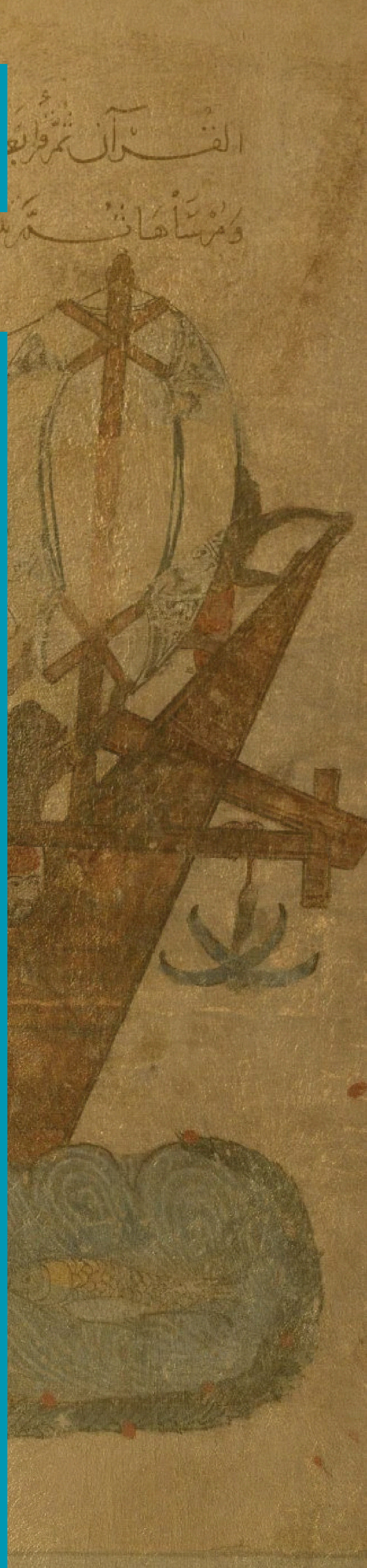


Respondent

Eric Rice

(University of Connecticut, USA)

Musicologist and conductor Eric Rice is Professor of Music at the University of Connecticut in Storrs and served as Head of the Department of Music there from 2014 to 2024. His research falls broadly into two categories: representations of cultures from outside Europe in notated music of the Western tradition and the relationship of liturgical music to architecture, politics, and secular music. He engages in multimodal projects involving performance, musicological research, and emerging technology to understand and teach the musical cultures and performance practices of medieval and Early Modern Europe and its relationship to the Global Early Modern. He directs Ensemble Origo, which engages in applied musicology by performing his reconstructions of music's original contexts, and which critics have praised for its "aesthetically...top-notch" performances that "succeed in resurrecting the past in a uniquely ear-opening way." He is the author of *Music and Ritual at Charlemagne's Marienkirche in Aachen*, co-editor of *Young Choristers, 650-1700*, and contributor to numerous musicological journals. He teaches courses in music history and early notation, and he introduces students to historically informed performance practices and unjustly neglected repertoire as director of the UConn Collegium Musicum. He has led a unique summer experiential learning program combining music history and performance in Strasbourg, France, three times, and has led or co-led numerous ensemble tours to Europe and Latin America. Rice was awarded the 2019 Thomas Binkley Award, which is given by Early Music America for excellence in performance and scholarship by the director of a university early music ensemble.



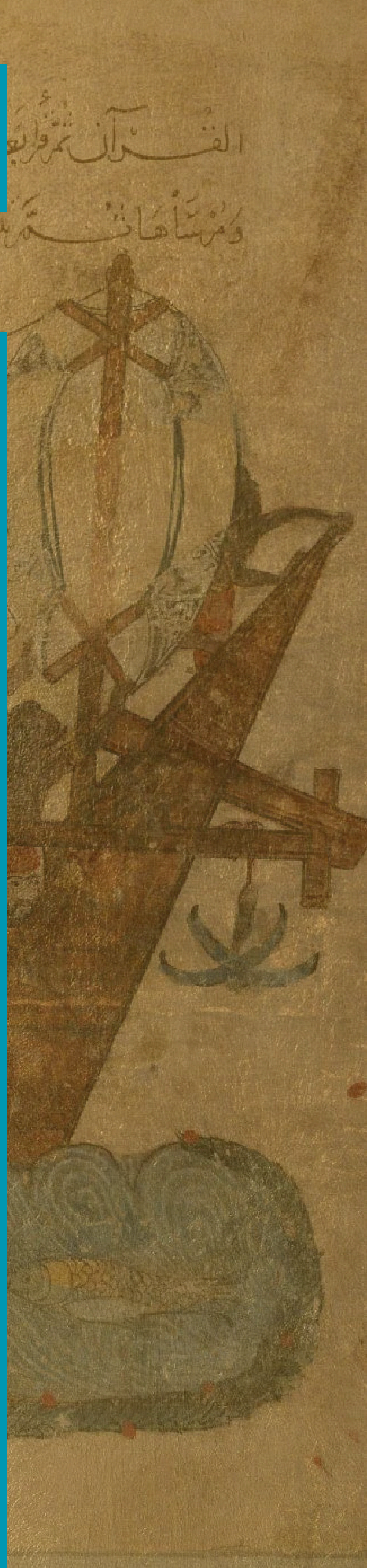
“Janjira and Sachin”

Kenneth X. Robbins

(Independent Scholar, USA)

Multiple East African rulers and strongmen attained political and military power over non-Africans in South Asia. Janjira, a state on the west coast of India near Bombay, was ruled for more than three centuries by an East African Muslim elite. They proclaimed their pride in their African heritage, identifying themselves as Muslims of African descent and as Sidis and Habshis. Yet most of Janjira’s population were Hindus. Janjira was also a homeland for India’s largest indigenous Jewish community. Janjira was a military power, which at one point controlled 22 forts. But it was mainly known for its impregnable island fort and naval forces. By the late 17 th century, Sidis were also powerful in Gujarat at what was then India’s premier Indian port and as admirals for the Mughal Empire. Later, Janjira gained additional territory [Jafrabad] in Gujarat and an African from Janjira even founded another state (Sachin) there.

Kenneth X. Robbins is a collector-archivist specializing in South Asia and international crises in Asia, Africa, and the Ottoman empire. Most of his exhibitions and publications deal with South Asia’s local and regional rulers as well as its minority groups (Jews, Africans, etc.). His studies of African elites in India utilize everything from the coins of the 15th-century Habshi Dynasty of Bengal and 17th -19th century Deccani and Gujarati paintings of Africans to 19 th -20th century photographs, paintings, stamps, and documents of the Nawabs of Janjira and Sachin. Diverse materials and sources have been used to document new topics like the history of Afro-South Asian music based on everything from Indian paintings of African instruments and Sufi dance to documentation of American jazz musicians in India. He is the co-curator of a New York Public Library Schomburg Center traveling exhibition Africans in India, which was shown worldwide at venues including the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the United Nations, and UNESCO. He is the co-editor of four volumes on Afro-South Asia which draw heavily on his collections for information and illustrations. The latest three volumes develop totally different aspects of studying Afro-South Asia in the African global diaspora: they are African Rulers and Generals in India, African Diasporan Communities across South Asia, and Black Ambassadors of Politics, Religion, and Jazz in India.



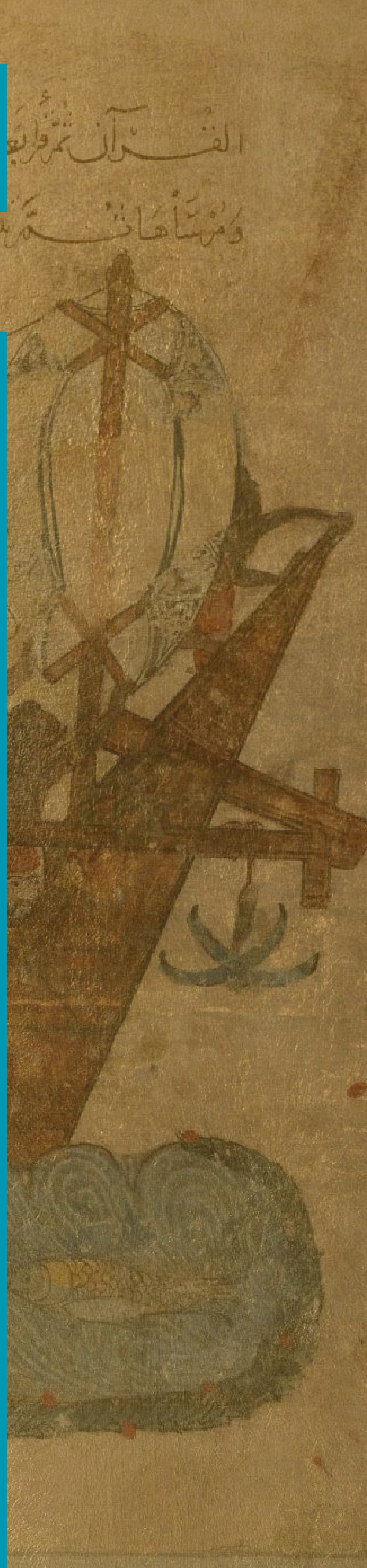
“Blackness in Indian Miniatures: The Subtext in Representation”

Surabhi Sharman

(Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India)

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate by the Mamluks or the Slave Dynasty was followed by a sudden surge of slaves that included people enslaved during dynastic expansions and imported slaves via the Indian Ocean route. From the ports of Western India, African slaves were brought into inland interior markets of the subcontinent. These slaves served in a variety of roles, from serving in the military to serving as guards of the harem. The political changes in the early medieval and medieval period were accompanied by the development of miniature painting in the subcontinent. The cosmopolitan nature of the society was often reflected in the imperial and sub-imperial arts. This paper seeks to explore how Africans were represented in the miniature paintings of the Sultanate and Mughal period. The visual representations in the Islamic ecumene range from well observed and detailed studies to stereotyped representations. While the textual accounts of the period are filled with numerous references to African slaves, in visuals, their representation is scarce. For instance, representations of female Abyssinian slaves in the Ni'matnama, a 15 th century cookbook from the Malwa Sultanate and portrait of Malik Ambar, the Ethiopian slave turned military commander and Peshwa of the Ahmadnagar, by the Mughal artist Abu'l Hasan provide an insight into how the community was perceived. It further investigates whether any popular prejudices or strategic political thought seeped into these visual representations.

Surabhi Sharman is a doctoral researcher in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India. Her work is on the provenance problem in Central Indian miniature paintings from the 17 th century. She holds two postgraduate degrees, one in History of Art from the National Museum Institute, New Delhi, and another in Arts and Cultural Management from King's College, London. Her undergraduate degree is in History from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi.

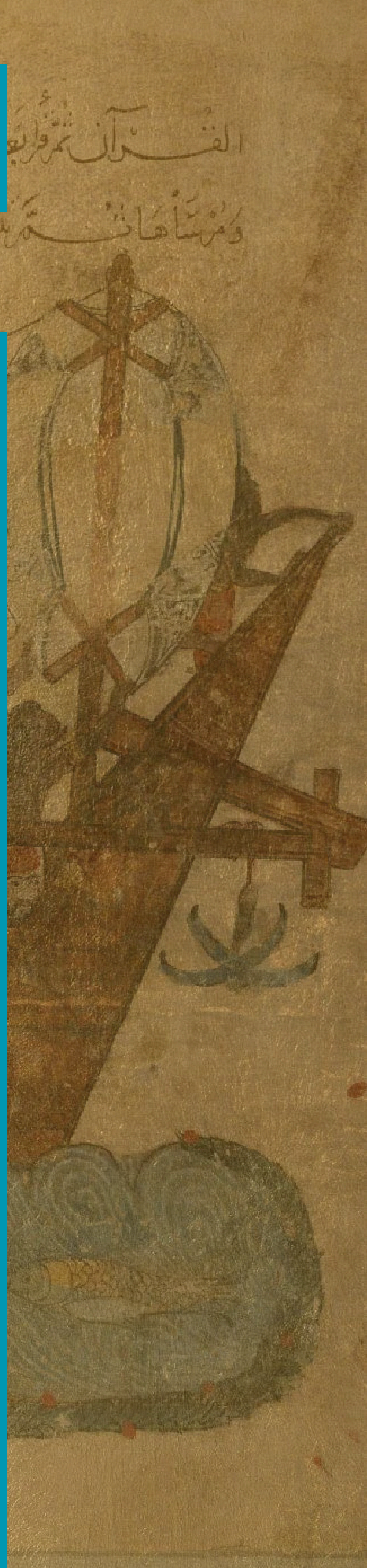


“Towards Re-Imagining a Personal Musical Past: What Might Gabriel Have Heard?”

Kay Kaufman Shelemay

(Harvard University, USA)

Kay Kaufman Shelemay is the G. Gordon Watts Research Professor of Music and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University and a former Chair of the Department of Music. An ethnomusicologist specializing in musics of the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and the urban United States, she is the author of numerous articles and reviews. Shelemay's books on African musics and their diasporas include *Music, Ritual, and Falasha History* 1986 (winner of both the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award in 1987 and the Prize of the International Musicological Society in 1988); *A Song of Longing: An Ethiopian Journey* (1991); *Ethiopian Christian Liturgical Chant: An Anthology* (3 vols., 1993-97, co-authored with Peter Jeffery); and a special 2011 double volume of the journal *Diaspora. A Journal of Transnational Studies*, titled “Creating the Ethiopian Diaspora,” co-edited with Stephen Kaplan. Her most recent book is *Sing and Sing On. Sentinel Musicians and the Making of the Ethiopian American Diaspora* (University of Chicago Press, 2022), which received Honourable Mention for the International Council for Traditional Music and Dance Best Book Prize and Honorable Mention for the Society for Ethnomusicology Bruno Nettl Prize. She has published many other books and editions, including *Let Jasmine Rain Down. Song and Remembrance among Syrian Jews* (University of Chicago Press, 1998, Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award), and the W.W. Norton textbook, *Soundscapes. Exploring Music in a Changing World*. Shelemay has been awarded numerous fellowships and residencies, including from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Stanford Humanities Center, and the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at University of Pennsylvania. A Past-President of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Shelemay in 2012 completed several terms as a Congressional Appointee and Chair of the Board of Trustees (2002-2004) of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. She has been elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2000), the American Academy of Jewish Research (2004), the American Philosophical Society (2013), and an Associate (Foreign Member) of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (2014).



“The Not-Yet Seen: Indian Ocean Aesthetics and Challenges of Representation in Gabriel’s Odyssey Multi-Media Performance”

Kristy Stone

(Independent Artist-Researcher, South Africa, Kukutana Ensemble)

This paper provides a theoretical account of the visual art developed for the Gabriel’s Odyssey multi-media performance, detailing some of the ethical challenges and the artists’ creative world-making processes against the backdrop of the Indian ocean world with its complex religio-spiritual and cultural dynamics. Aligned to emerging fields of affective research methods and “research-creation” – sometimes referred to as arts-based or practice-led research – our approach represents an encounter and co-creation with archival research and its material objects. The outputs constitute a new form of knowledge-creation as opposed to performing a documentary or representational function. On a deeper level, these methods promote an ontological consideration of materials as collaborative. While this way of working provided a generative framework for our visual exploration, some important ethical questions emerged. One consideration, drawing on Black Atlantic scholarship, is the question of who can meaningfully represent the experience of slavery and how to go about it. In our visual retelling of Gabriel’s journey we take cognisance of Saidiya Hartman’s assertion that attempts to resurrect such a past can be a voyeuristic act, potentially reinscribing trauma. With no simple solutions at hand, this paper discusses our decisions of how to represent the violence of the worlds Gabriel moved through. We explore how a Sufi aesthetic presents a powerful counterpoint to Western ocularcentrism and representationalism. Within this framework, “the sonic” is an emergent motif, offering a unique perspective for visual expression in collaboration with musicians. This paper reflects on that which arises when the methods of research-creation are diffracted with ethical questions of representation and new aesthetic possibilities drawn from Indian Ocean studies. Instead of placing these methods and scholarship in opposition to each other, we seek to read the questions through each other, emphasizing the creation of the ‘not-yet’, rather than a repetition of ‘what is’.

Kristy Stone (Independent Artist-Researcher, South Africa, Kukutana Ensemble) is a practicing artist with an academic background in Fine Art (BA Hons.), Education and Heritage Studies (MA) from the University of the Witwatersrand and a PhD in Historical Studies from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), Cape Town. Her research explores the intersections of Affect and art within museum and archival collections, with a specific focus on objects of power and alternative research methods. Recently she has worked as an artist on several collaborative projects including the live art and musical performance, Ife and Bilal, stop-frame animations for A Map of Suffering, and book illustrations for Notes on an Oratorio by Ari Sitas. She is currently one of the visual artists working on Gabriel’s Odyssey with the Kukutana Ensemble.

Conor Ralphs

(Independent Artist, South Africa, Kukutana Ensemble)

Conor Ralphs (Independent Artist, South Africa, Kukutana Ensemble) received training in Fine Arts at the Michaelis School of Art in Cape Town and Masters degree in Art History from the University of Cape Town. His work is multi-disciplinary, including painting, photography, interactive installations and research-based interventions exploring themes of migration, astronomy and related material culture. He is the cofounder of the Africa|Nosy Art Exchange (ANAE) developed in Madagascar which seeks to encourage the interaction of artists and the exchange of ideas with the islands surrounding Africa.



“Preserving the East African Faith, Knowledge Systems, and Identity along the Pepper Highway to Diamond Mines of Golkonda in the 17 th C:A Critical Analysis of the novel Idris: Keeper of Lights by Anita Nair”

Maya Vinai

(Birla Institute of Technology & Science Pilani, Hyderabad, India)

The ports along the Malabar Coastline of the Indian Ocean was one of the most coveted maritime sites for traders from multitudinous nations ranging from Rome, Portugal, Netherlands, Africa, Middle East, China, and Italy. Till the imperialistic advent of Portuguese in the late 15th C, liberal cess tax on trade, liberty to profess one’s religion, marriage with native women, hospitality and protection extended by the local rulers were the foremost factors that counted in for creating this conducive maritime environment. The African presence in the Malabar Coastline resonated two roles: one as traders and middle men and the other as slaves. Several folk tales, scholarships and literary writers have focused on the second category like (Allbeki 2017, Gordon 1989, Jeyachandran 2022) However, very few cultural productions have engaged with the notion of Africans as traders and middle men who have come as a part of voluntary migration. In the proposed paper, I am particularly interested in critically examining the novel Idris: Keeper of Light by author Anita Nair to probe into the maritime mindset, identity and ‘a feeling of oceanic consciousness’ of these African traders and middle men who traversed through lands with alien religions, ideologies and political set ups. In addition, I am also interested in critically looking at the shift of cultural patterns with a shift of coastlines i.e from the Malabar Coastline (West) to the Coromandel Coastline (East). The proposed theoretical framework that would be employed would be cross disciplinary study involving both Cultural Studies and Critical Ocean Studies.

Maya Vinai works as an Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at BITS-Pilani (Hyderabad Campus). Her research is primarily focused on Indian Ocean literary, cultural, and historical studies in relation to the Malabar Coastline. Currently she is involved as a Principal Investigator in a Major ICSSR (Indian Council of Social Science Research) funded Research Project titled Ship-building in Folklore: Orality and Memory in Tottam Pattu of Marakkalathamma

