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I am interested in the early anthropogenic shaping of environments hitherto seen as natural. In the past this has focused on anthropogenic forests, and currently on anthropogenic soils. Yet this interests extends to discerning anthropogenic transformations in 'natural' corals formations (as there are indigenous techniques for transplanting treasured coral). Among issues of interest in the Indian ocean context (e.g. Madagascar) might be the transport and introduction of leaches – bothersome bloodsuckers which profoundly shapes people's relationship with forests - and of termites. To my knowledge no work has been done on the history of this dimension of nature. Were there to be a 'human history' to such species that are arguably ecosystem engineers, it has the potential to profoundly reshape our understanding of the 'anthropocene'.

A second interest concerns early American voyages (sealers, whalers and traders) whose influence in the Indian ocean (c.1780 onwards) seems to be rather untold. Firstly, their ships logs offer climatic and economic information that is perhaps of wider interest to corroborate others. Secondly, their involvement not only with the slave but also the dried/salt meat trade (with connections to Eastern Africa, Madagascar) seems rather under appreciated/researched. For example, at least in the 1830s dried cattle from Madagascar was feeding not only the slaves of Mauritius and Reunion, but also of the eastern seaboard of the US, as well as the US merchant navy and the French navy. US meat traders were prospecting other dried meat sources (Namibia). What was the influence of this trade on the Madagascan cattle economy and environment?