

Collaborative research on the meteorological and botanical history of the Indian Ocean, 1600-1900

Jawaharlal Nehru University, 31st August 2013

Notes of Climate History Discussion Group:

Chairs: Iyanki Murali Krishna, George Adamson

Potential Future Projects:

A potential project was discussed involving the digitisation of East India Company logs, coupled with the chartering of a Tall Ship on which to recreate historical meteorological observations and calibrate the readings in the archives. The boat would be sailed from London to India. It would also be open to parties of students or school pupils. Historians from each country visited should be invited. A documentary team should be invited; Michael Wood was suggested as presenter, who has previously approached Vinita Damodaran. The project could aim to commemorate the 400-year anniversary of the signing of the trade agreement between Akhbar and the East India Company, in 1616. Rob Allan agreed to action further on return to the UK.

A second potential project was mentioned which would comprise of a documentary reconstruction of the Indian Ocean Dipole. This would use materials from Indonesia, East Africa and the islands of the western Indian Ocean (i.e. the Maldives and Sechelles). The project would need to be in collaboration with at least one Indian institution (the French Institute Pondicherry is a possibility) and a Dutch institution. In addition to reconstructing the dipole through history, the project would also analyse social adaptation to natural disasters through history in these particularly climatically sensitive regions.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation IOR-ARC were mentioned as a potential source for involvement/funding. This is a geopolitical network.

General Points:

The importance of interdisciplinary work was discussed. It was noted that we should acknowledge the geographical bias of the network, and our own limitations. The importance of being aware of existing projects was also noted. Links were suggested with existing projects run by the Indian Ocean World Centre at McGill and the Indian Ocean Climate Initiative based in Western Australia.

Lastly, a new journal for Indian Ocean Environmental/Climate History was suggested.