The AfroAsia Journey: Imaginaries for Research

The 2016 annual report of the Researching AfroAsia (RAA) Project begins with the following outline of a journey to be articulated in a musical performance:

... it is the journey that the performance was to trace that is a key way of reporting about the very project itself: it was to start from Mapungubwe in the 10th century where its main character (like in Zakes Mda’s novel The Sculptors of Mapungubwe) was to wander off down the Limpopo River to the Mozambican coastline.

At Sofala he would join the trading dhows of the Arabian/Indian Sea to port at Zanzibar. There he would have been raided/abducted by pirates and turned together with Ethiopian abductees into slave chattel for the markets of Baghdad. Indeed, the city which was at the epicentre of the philosophical, musicological and the intellectual activity of the time. The journey would also involve the unrequited love affair between our main character and an Ethiopian woman. Such unrequited love, exile and hardship was to be shown to be at the heart of the lament we are researching in the bairav, the heer and forms of ‘khala’ singing in Nguni traditions. The woman is sent to Andalus as a singing and composing slave, to work under the command of the larger-than-life Ziryab – the African aesthete an already manumitted slave from Baghdad and the resident musical genius of Andalus. It is their legacy that was to be chased later into North Africa, Mali and Senegal. Our main character was to be manumitted in Baghdad (still to be decided how) and join the Gujarati networks all the way down to pre-Nambodiri Kerala, the connecting hub between the known East and West. The unresolved narrative would have our main character return via Madagascar to who knows yet... home (?) or crashed out as a castaway on the Cape of Storms? The music and the narrative was to approximate the research that by now has been published by Sumangala Damodaran and Ari Sitas (2016) The Musical Journey: Re-Centring AfroAsia through a Musical Arc of Sorrow, Critical Arts, p.255-273 and the research undertaken by the entire project ... about all the destinations of our character’s main journey.

For 2017, Prof. Sitas has set the challenge of finding primary and secondary source materials that can give depth and detail to this journey – to the lives of the individual man and woman travelling these routes, and to the economic, cultural and political worlds that shape their lives along the way.

- Meeting the challenge involves finding song texts, archaeological evidence, documentary records, historical analyses and all other kinds of material relevant to aspects of their journey that can contribute to building a central knowledge archive for the RAA Project, and help to shape the imagined journey that will be the subject of the performance.

- The present document is a simple tool for
  a) separating the imagined journey into its constituent parts;
  b) suggesting some of the lines of enquiry, the questions, that might be worth investigating in relation to each part;
  c) listing some readings that could be useful starting points for further research.

- The tool itself should be enriched by further questions and research directions added to it by each researcher who takes up the challenge.

- To make this a properly shared endeavour, researchers are asked to send in materials discovered (the texts/images/audio files themselves, or bibliographic details for them) throughout the year; and to add suggestions for expanding and shaping the directions of the research relating to specific parts of the journey. Updates of this document will be distributed as often as there are new ideas and materials to share.

- All contributions to the document, and any new materials found, should be sent directly to: Tinashe Kushata (tinashe.kushata@uct.ac.za).

A note on the resources listed in this document

Reference details are given for all the resources relating to each stage of the journey. Many items will be accessible directly through library searches. Where this proves difficult, please consult the AfroAsia Project Resources Catalogue which may contain additional details such as a URL or Jstor link. PDFs of some resources are also held in the Project library – file paths for these items are given in the catalogue.

Many of the resources listed below have bibliographies that may yield further useful material relating to stages in the journey.
... the journey was to start from Mapungubwe in the 10th century where its main character was to wander off down the Limpopo River to the Mozambican coastline...

**LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW**
- What might this man’s social situation be in Mapungubwe?
- What would drive him to leave?
- What would draw him in the direction of the eastern coast?
- Would this journey be unusual, or a common route travelled by people of the region?
- How would he get to Sofala on the Mozambican coastline? Who might he meet along the way?

**SOURCES, RESOURCES: SOME STARTING POINTS**


* NOTE: All volumes of the *Unesco General History of Africa* are available in pdf form, and can be downloaded free from the following Unesco website: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/general-history-of-africa/volumes/

*to be continued...*
At Sofala ... he would join the trading dhows of the Arabian/Indian Sea to port at Zanzibar ...

LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW

- What might this Mapungubwe traveller have found in Sofala? What kind of port city was it, who lived there, what social, cultural, trading links did it have with other places in Africa and across the Indian Ocean?
- How did trade goods travel to and from Sofala? What goods were these, who were their ultimate customers? Who were the traders?
- Where would the tradings dhow have come from, what would they be seeking at Sofala?
- Would the traveller from Mapungubwe be able to board a dhow as a working crew member, a paying passenger, or in some other capacity?

Sources, Resources

  Chapters 1–3. Chapter 3 discusses the relationship between the East African port cities and the interior.
  Especially Chapters 3, 10.
  A description of the labour of collecting mangrove poles at the Rufiji River mouth, north of Sofala for transport to Arabia. Other chapters give further descriptions of trade involving Arabian dhows travelling down the east coast of Africa.

To be continued...
In Zanzibar ... he would have been raided/abducted by pirates and turned together with Ethiopian abductees into slave chattel for the markets of Baghdad...

**LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW**

- What role did Zanzibar play in the international trade in goods and slaves across the Indian Ocean?
- Where did the slaves sold in Zanzibar come from? What conditions did they encounter once captured?
- What role did 'pirates' play in the trade in slaves?
- What were the deals done with dhow nakhodas (captains) and slave traders to carry slaves from port to port?
- Where might slaves be taken from Zanzibar, to be sold?

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**Zanzibar shipping traffic today - dhows in the foreground.**

**Slave quarters near the slave market – an Anglican church was built over the site in 1874.**

Source: https://cookingintongues.com/2013/12/24/stone-town-zanzibar-tanzania/

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**Sources, resources**

  These narratives date from 1888 when a group of Oromo (Ethiopian) slaves were rescued and brought to the Eastern Cape, but their experiences of capture may be indicative of earlier slave trade realities.
  The narratives are the same as in Rowoldt (2000) above, but this version includes photos and other visual material.
  The chapter includes discussion of sources of African slaves and the operation of slave markets.

*to be continued...*
Baghdad ...the city which was at the epicentre of the philosophical, musicological and the intellectual activity of the time...

**LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW**

- What roles did African slaves play in the domestic, military, agricultural and other economies of the city?
- Where could a young man from East Africa sold as a slave in Baghdad expect to end up – what types of labour, what kind of living conditions?
- How did Africans – slaves and others of low status – interact with the political and cultural elites of the city?
- In what ways did Baghdad act as a node for cultural, intellectual and social flows from across the world to intersect and influence each other? Where were the sources of all these flows, and where did they spread from Baghdad?
- How did the successive Islamic caliphates attract, control and restrict the spread of cosmopolitan cultural forces?

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Sources, resources

* Note: The resources on Baghdad collected in the RAA Project so far tend to focus on musical activities there. The broader social and economic characteristics of Baghdadi society can be traced in the discussions of these music-centred settings, but more research is needed to collect materials that give a fuller picture of Baghdad at the time when the man from Mapungubwe would have arrived there.

  - Maps, images and description of 10th-century Baghdad.
  - The first chapters give an overview of Baghdad’s history more generally.

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An 1883 illustration of early Baghdad

The round city of Baghdad in the 10th century, the peak of the Abbasid Caliphate

Source: http://socks-studio.com/2015/10/06/the-round-city-of-baghdad/

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**to be continued...**
The journey would also involve the unrequited love affair between our main character and an Ethiopian woman...

**Lines of Enquiry, Threads to Follow**

- This Ethiopian woman was a ‘singing and composing slave’. Was this the role played by all women captured as slaves in Africa? What else can be said about their fate, once in captivity in Arabia?
- What music did the slave singers perform? Were they bringing their African musical repertoires into the new context of Baghdad, or being trained to sing a different repertoire? Or both? What musical styles shaped their compositions?
- What were the living conditions of these musician slaves? Who owned them, who trained them?
- What were the relationships between the female slave musicians/composers in the caliph’s court and the male musicians there?
- A different kind of question, to develop the narrative of this journey: who was the unrequited lover in this affair? How did the affair begin, and play itself out?

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**Sources, Resources**

- Rowoldt, Sandra C.T. 2000. ‘Narratives of the Oromo Slaves at Lovedale.’ *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* 55(2): 67–80. These narratives date from 1888 when a group of Oromo (Ethiopian) slaves were rescued and brought to the Eastern Cape, but their experiences of capture may be indicative of earlier slave trade realities.
- The narratives are the same as in Rowoldt (2000) above, but this version includes photos and other visual material.

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Women slave singers (*qiyān*) and musicians entertaining a caliph or other princely personage in Baghdad. (Image used on the front cover of Caswell 2011; no source details for it are given there.)

Source: https://si.wsj.net/public/resources/images/BN-GM140_C3_FR_20150116100019.jpg
**LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW**

- Here the enquiry must focus on the musical elements of the lament that finds different expression everywhere from West, South, East and North Africa to Spain, southern France, the Mediterranean islands, Greece, Turkey, the Roma communities across Europe, Arabia, Iran, India, and places further east – an ancient ‘blues’ music that is recognisable everywhere as an expression of heartbreak, homelessness, loss and longing.

- In musical terms, what significant similarities and differences are there between the forms of lament found in all these regions?

- Do the similarities suggest links – the music having travelled with individual singers and musicians to new places – or a ‘universal’ sound produced by people singing their sorrows?

- Can one ‘read back’ from the contemporary laments heard in recordings and performances to make assumptions about the ancient forms, textures, lyrical content of this genre? A few video resources are included in the list for this section; how careful should one be about relying on them as ‘evidence’ of a musical tradition?

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**Sources, Resources**

This is a small selection of the resources on song forms listed in the AfroAsia Project Catalogue:


Concert of Indian and Spanish music.


to be continued...
The woman is sent to Andalus…
as a singing and composing slave, to work under
the command of the larger-than-life Ziryab, the
African aesthete, an already manumitted slave from
Baghdad and the resident musical genius of
Andalus…

**Lines of enquiry, threads to follow**

- Ziryab is presented as a powerful force in the musical world of his time: what forms did this power take? To what extent did he shape the musical styles and/or performance cultures in the places where he was based? Was he an incarnation of merging musical traditions, or did he carry with him the specific musical styles of one place?
- What might have been the relationship between Ziryab’s musical powers and those of the women slaves who worked with (for, under) him?
- Was Ziryab’s biographical trajectory representative of the lives of other slaves, or was it an exceptional one?
- What might have been the fate of the Ethiopian woman slave, during and after her time with Ziryab in Andalus?

**Sources, resources**


*to be continued…*
Their legacy
...was to be chased later into North Africa, Mali and Senegal...

LINES OF ENQUIRY, THREADS TO FOLLOW

- How to track the musical links between the indigenous traditions of West and North Africa, and the infusions of lyrical, melodic, rhythmic, instrumental elements from al-Andalus?
- Should one also track the movements in the other direction – the influence of West and North African musics on what was happening in al-Andalus?
- Song lyrics and poetry of these regions are often discussed interchangeably: is it useful in any way to identify different bodies of oral poetry, song lyrics, written poetry?
- What does the verbal dimension of the music reveal about the influences, confluences, divergences of musical traditions in these regions?
- Does the idea of a ‘legacy’ imply the power of one musical style to reshape other styles? Is it a useful way to understand how individual performers and composers, and their musical works, are absorbed by and enrich other groups in other places?
- Is there a specific legacy to track with reference to the musical instruments found in North Africa, Mali, Senegal, and al-Andalus?

Sources, Resources

- Leghlid, Said. n.d. ‘Amazigh poetry between oral tradition and survival of a culture’. http://www.academia.edu/9733547/Morocco_Ama_zigh_poetry_between_oral_tradition_and_survival_of_a_culture
- Oxford Music Online. Entries for Egypt, Libya, Sudan. Starting points for further research.
- University of Cape Town Music Library. Various collections of West African music on CD.

to be continued...
Our main character was to be manumitted in Baghdad and join the Gujarati networks all the way down to pre-Namboodri Kerala, the connecting hub between the known East and West.

**Lines of Enquiry, Threads to Follow**

- To be manumitted, did a slave have to convert to Islam? What other paths to freedom were there for African slaves?
- What social roles and networks were available to African individuals who found themselves in Kerala?
- Was there knowledge of African societies and territories within the world of the Malabar coast?
- Were there African merchants, ship owners and others of high social status who travelled to India for their own purposes, or were the only Africans who did so serving the interests of Arab and Asian traders?
- Can the man from Mapungubwe be seen as a fortune seeker, an economic migrant, a rambling man, an ambitious proto-entrepreneur – or only as a slave, a servant, a low-status labourer? What range of stories could such a man, on such a journey, inhabit?
- What trails of women and children might such a man leave in his wake, as he travelled from port to port? What might be the social and historical consequences of these encounters?

**Sources, Resources**


**Current and ongoing research projects:**

“The Muziris Heritage Project, also known as the 'Pattanam excavations', that began in 2007 has found conclusive evidence of what was once a flourishing trade port on the spice route.

Before a flood in the Periyar River in the 14th century washed away the entire port, history books talk of ships laden with gold sailing across the seas looking for the one thing their lands didn't yield - spices - that only this part of the world could offer. Muziris is believed to have been that place where the oceanic cross currents brought in a particular kind of syncretism, fuelled by the spice trade to become an important centre of the now famous spice route.”


“This collaborative project between the British Museum and the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) investigates links across the Indian Ocean through the study of the rich archaeological finds from the port site of Pattanam, Kerala.

Excavations by the KCHR since 2007 at Pattanam have uncovered thousands of artefacts from the Mediterranean, West Asia and throughout India, which form the basis for investigating the relationships between these regions during Antiquity. Over the course of three years workshops on Ceramics, Personal Adornment and Maritime Technology will study the exchange of objects and technology between the 3rd century BCE and the 9th century CE. These workshops bring together international scholars to study the finds from Pattanam and related Indian Ocean port sites while training Asian students and early career scholars in material culture.

With an emphasis on technology, each workshop is paired with fieldwork observing modern craftsmen and women using traditional techniques. In this way we can better understand ancient technology and record what are frequently dying crafts. To date, the project has documented potters and goldsmiths in the vicinity of Pattanam and discussed our archaeological findings with these craftsmen and women.”

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Project 'Mausam' - Mausam/ Mawsim: Maritime Routes and Cultural Landscapes Research Programme 2014 to 2019. [http://ignca.nic.in/mausam_events.htm](http://ignca.nic.in/mausam_events.htm)

“Project ‘Mausam’ is a Ministry of Culture project with Archaeological Society of India (ASI), New Delhi as the nodal agency and Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi as its Research Unit ...

‘Mausam’ or Arabic ‘Mawsim’ refers to the season when ships could sail safely. ... The endeavour of Project ‘Mausam’ is to position itself at two levels: at the macro level it aims to re-connect and re-establish communications between countries of the Indian Ocean world, which would lead to an enhanced understanding of cultural values and concerns; while at the micro level the focus is on understanding national cultures in their regional maritime milieu.

The central themes that hold Project ‘Mausam’ together are those of cultural routes and maritime landscapes that not only linked different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral, but also connected the coastal centres to their hinterlands. More importantly shared knowledge systems and ideas spread along these routes and impacted both coastal centres, and also large parts of the environs.”

*to be continued?*