

**MIGRATION PATTERNS AND ECONOMIC
INTERCONNECTIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN
DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

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Migration patterns and economic interconnections in the Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century

The Indian Ocean acted as a central hub, facilitating relationships between the South-Central Asian littorals, the main coasts of Oman, and the Swahili coasts of East Africa from Mogadishu to Kilwa. The focus of this paper is to reevaluate the migration patterns that shaped East African-Swahili societies during the nineteenth century. However, the available literature on this topic has been limited. Specifically, the Baloch in East Africa during the 1800s have often been viewed as a monolithic presence, associated only with defense military squadrons. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize the roles played by Asian communities in East Africa, which challenges the conventional belief that Asian groups only arrived in East Africa as military squads between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, migrations, military, East Africa, Asian communities

Padrões migratórios e interconexões económicas no Oceano Índico durante o século XIX

O Oceano Índico serviu como um ponto central, facilitando as relações entre as zonas costeiras do sul da Ásia Central, Omã, e toda a costa suaíli da África Oriental, de Mogadíscio a Kilwa. Este artigo pretende reavaliar os padrões de migração que moldaram as sociedades suaílis da África Oriental durante o século XIX, procurando contribuir para ultrapassar as limitações da literatura disponível sobre este assunto. Especificamente, os Baloch na África Oriental durante os anos 1800 foram frequentemente vistos como uma presença monolítica e associados a esquadrões militares de defesa. No entanto, é crucial reconhecer os papéis das comunidades asiáticas na África Oriental, desafiando a crença convencional de que os grupos asiáticos só chegaram à África Oriental apenas como esquadrões militares entre os séculos XVIII e XIX.

Palavras-chave: Oceano Índico, migrações, militares, África Oriental, comunidades asiáticas

Recebido: xx de xxxx de xxxx

Aceite: xx de xxxx de xxxx

The Sultanate of Oman, which has undergone a remarkable transformation from a little-known territory to a modern nation-state in just a few generations, holds a unique status as the oldest independent state in the Arab world (Bianco & Legrenzi, 2023). Its strategic geographical location presents an unparalleled opportunity to study the historical interconnections and similarities that abound in this region. The shared ecologies around the Indian Ocean, as well as the dominant monsoon system that governs this vast maritime expanse, have given rise to social and cultural similarities, leading to interconnected land and maritime societies. In recent years, there has been a growing body of research on the connections between Asia and Africa, and between Oman and East Africa in particular. Scholars have increasingly highlighted the significant role of Oman and Zanzibar in the history of the Indian Ocean, and the divergent memories that these two countries evoke. The historiography of Asian migration patterns in the Indian Ocean has evolved from written and colonial Eurocentric perspectives to incorporate oral, multidisciplinary, and global approaches to study and research, thereby enriching our understanding of this complex phenomenon. The study of Asian migration in the Indian Ocean has shed light on the historical and cultural interconnections between Oman, Zanzibar, and East Africa. The shared ecologies and maritime networks of the Indian Ocean have facilitated the movement of people, goods, and ideas between these regions for centuries. The monsoon winds, which govern the seasonal patterns of trade and migration, have shaped the historical dynamics of these societies, and fostered interconnectedness. Oman and Zanzibar have played a significant role in the history of the Indian Ocean. Oman, with its strategic location at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, has a long history of maritime trade and seafaring. Zanzibar, an island off the coast of East Africa, was a major entrepot and center of trade in the Indian Ocean, known for its cosmopolitanism and diversity. The connections between Oman and Zanzibar, through trade, migration, and political alliances, have shaped the history and culture of these regions. Consequently, the multidisciplinary approach has enriched our understanding of the complexity and diversity of Asian migration patterns and has highlighted the agency and resilience of migrant communities. The study of Asian migration in the Indian Ocean has also revealed the divergent memories and identities that Oman and East Africa evoke. Oman, with its history of maritime trade and seafaring, has been viewed as a powerful and wealthy nation in the historical narratives of the Arab world. In contrast, East Africa, with its history of slavery, colonization, and marginalization, has been often overlooked in mainstream historical narratives. However, recent research has challenged these narratives and highlighted the agency and resilience of East African communities,

including the Baloch community, which played a significant role in the history and culture of the region. Consequently, the study of Asian migration patterns in the Indian Ocean, particularly the connections between Oman, Zanzibar, and East Africa, has shed light on the historical interconnections and similarities that abound in this region. These approaches of contemporary historiography have enriched our understanding of this complex phenomenon and have revealed the divergent memories and identities that Oman and East Africa evoke. The role of Oman and Zanzibar in the history of the Indian Ocean, and the significance of the Baloch community in East Africa, represent important research areas that continue to contribute to our understanding of this dynamic and interconnected liquid region.



A rare photograph believed to be the contingent of first non-Africans to be welcomed into the royal court of the Kabaka of Buganda in the Great African Lakes region.

Image courtesy from Ethnographic Arms & Armour Forum online, <http://www.vikingsword.com/vb/showthread.php?t=23258>

Across the sea across the land

As stressed above, it is a misconception that Asian groups, such as the Baloch, sailed to East Africa between the 18th and 19th centuries primarily as defense military squadrons (Nicolini, 2018a, 2018b). In fact, the reasons and modalities of their migration were closely tied to the Makran-Balochistan territory, environment, and society, as well as the Omani society and systems of power. Once settled, the roles of Baloch migrants in East Africa diversified from the late 18th century onwards. Contrary to the belief of a monolithic and static presence linked to other groups and subdued to Arab political leaderships, Baloch ancestors gradually assimilated into the local Swahili culture and lifestyle through interactions with the local people, becoming an integral part of the cultural and social fabric of the Gulf and East Africa.¹

In this regard, many Western-oriented studies, and analyses on the role of Afro-Asian littorals and their people throughout history have overly focused on external threats, interests, and priorities, neglecting the complexity of local interactions and assimilation processes (Sarathi, 2018).

Despite Oman's significant history of hinterland and desert connections in the Arabian Peninsula, Eurocentric and 19th-century mainstream recorded histories have tended to identify Oman's history with the sea.² While Oman's maritime coastal trade and long-distance trade were indeed crucial expressions of its highly sophisticated, developed, and organized economy, which operated through both sea and land routes, the control of sea trade routes represented a crucial political and strategic element. In the past, coastal forts of the Portuguese, trading stations of the British (via the East India Company), coastal and island possessions of the Dutch (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie), and the French (Compagnie Française des Indes Orientales) all held dominance as sea powers in the Indian Ocean until the 18th century. However, a shift occurred towards establishing control over commodity sources inland (*terra firma*), such as attempting to establish indirect control over Indian and Southeast Asian kingdoms and sultanates (Clifford Pereira, The University of Hong Kong, Comments, May 2022).

Trading ports of the Indian Ocean

In the context of the multiple migration movements related to Indian Ocean trade, we are reevaluating the role of Asian groups in East African culture and

¹ Many Baloch living on the coast, as well as many fishermen living in the Mediterranean Sea, couldn't swim.

² The word Oman was used by Europeans to describe South-Eastern Arabia that lies to the east of the sands of the Rub'al Khali.

society, specifically the presence of the Baloch in the Gulf and throughout the Indian Ocean. Historically and politically, the Baloch presence in these regions has been closely linked with military activities, piracy, and measures taken by the British authorities against slave trade (Suzuki, 2013, 2021). However, Western colonial perspectives often portrayed the Baloch as a neglected group of people (Boedeker, 2013).

The coastal region of Balochistan, Makran, has historically held a strategic position as the most direct route between the Middle East and the riches of the Indian subcontinent (Ahmed & Khan, 2017). Covering an area of 15,320 acres, Makran forms the southern strip of the Balochistan province. Due to the scarcity of rain, the few villages and settlements in this region rely on spring water and wells, known as “*qanat*” in the Arab world and “*kariz*” in the Persian world (Ahmad, 2007). The coast is dotted with small fishing villages, while main ports such as Gwadar, Ormara, Jiwani, and Pasni have fishing harbors where Makrani Baloch used to trade with various maritime entities in the Indian Ocean in the past.

The port of Gwadar is located on the coastal area of Makran and its dry climate combined with natural geographic features make it a challenging environment for human habitation, resulting in sparse population (Ahmad, 2016). Makran has served as a refuge for dissidents, rebels, and fugitives throughout history. Among the first were the Omanis, who at times exerted their power over the main coastal centers.

The case of Gwadar is of particular interest, as the town, its port, and the surrounding territory were granted as a “*jagir*” (a temporary grant of land exempted from taxation) from the Khans of Kalat to the Al Bu Sa’id of Oman. From a *jagir*, Gwadar soon assumed the status of an enclave of the Sultanate of Oman (Goldsmid, 1863, 1876). The close relationship between the two countries facilitated Omani control over local trade and regional tribal power dynamics in the Makran region (Habib, 2017). The role played by the port of Gwadar in the trade between Europe and the Gulf, directed towards East Africa, was crucial. In fact, Sir Olaf Caroe (1892-1981), a British administrator who served as governor of the Northwest Frontier Province of India in 1946-47, wrote that “the strategic value of Balochistan, the desolation of the region is a resource. It offers what (Alexander) Tucker – (1861-1941), Chief Commissioner of Balochistan – called space power” (Government of India Act, 1935).

It is interesting to note that once the Baloch soldiers consolidated their military power on behalf of the Omani sultans along the Swahili coast in East Africa, some of them engaged in trading activities. They settled in the region and be-

came involved in activities related to enslavement and ivory trade, which were prominent commodities at that time. As a result, the Baloch played a significant role in shaping local societies and bringing about significant changes in their motivations and objectives. This had a profound impact on Swahili culture, society, and traditional customs.

It is worth mentioning that the Baloch activities did not necessarily make them as wealthy as described in some literature. The wealth and luxury associated with the sultans of Zanzibar and their court may have been exaggerated, possibly serving political purposes. As a result, the role of the Baloch has been poorly studied, often limited to their military and defensive role within the Omani groups (Murer, 2022). However, it is believed that Baloch groups also engaged in trading relationships in the hinterland of East Africa, beyond just the Swahili coast and the islands of Zanzibar and Pemba (Arab, 2017).

Despite this, the close connections between the Omani sultans and their Baloch soldiers and bodyguards were crucial. The loyalty of the Baloch soldiers was a prerequisite for recognition by the Omanis, and descendants of Baloch soldiers were absorbed into new political realities and played new roles within Swahili society, culture, and economy.

Asians in East African ports and hinterland

Near the coast of equatorial Africa, separated from the continent by only 31 miles, lies the island of Zanzibar (*Unguja* in kiswahili), the largest coral island of East Africa. It forms part of a coral reef that stretches from the island of Pemba in the north to the island of Mafia in the south, creating a detached coastline from the continent itself. Zanzibar is approximately 12-18 miles wide and roughly 52 miles long. The city of Zanzibar, located on the western side of the island, has one of the best ports in Africa, providing excellent anchorage for deep-sea fishing vessels.

The island of Pemba (*Kisiwa Pemba*) is approximately 28 miles long and 12 miles wide, with an area of approximately 611 square miles. It is located 34 miles from Zanzibar and consists mainly of coralline rock, making it hillier than its sister island, Zanzibar. Pemba is well-known for its cloves, which remain the main source of income to this day. Despite the extremely heterogeneous nature of its population, Pemba is inhabited by the homonymous Bantu group known as the Wapemba. The largest town on the island, Wete, located in the west, has an imposing square-plan fortress built by the Portuguese, which overlooks a bay of mangroves. In the past, Pemba lacked harbors suitable for large ships, and

its shallow waters and dense vegetation limited its reserves of drinking water. However, due to the protection provided by the reef along its coasts, Zanzibar and Pemba were the only islands with strategic predominance, thanks to two important factors: the monsoon winds and their proximity to the African continent. One of the reasons for their commercial success was that these islands offered better services compared to other cities along the East African coast. The fleets of the Omani sultans protected the merchant ships, taxes were low, and Zanzibar had a reliable source of drinking water.

The first settlers on the East African coast were the Baloch soldiers, who maintained army posts in the major centers of Mombasa, Zanzibar, and Pemba until the establishment of the Sultanate in the 1840s. These men intermarried with the local Waswahili and gradually assimilated into their culture and society. They were later followed by whole families who left Balochistan in the hope of finding a better life along the Swahili coast, which emerged as an important manufacturing center at the time and later became a hub of international maritime trade with Asia. Most of the Baloch immigrants came from Kasarkand, although their brothers later joined them from Sarbaz, Lur, and Muscat. Mombasa was the major Baloch settlement at the time, as evidenced by the presence of a Baloch Mosque. The largest concentration of Baloch in East Africa is found in old town Mombasa, where there is a famous Baloch Street and the Baloch Mosque next to the General Post Office.³ It is believed that the first non-African to venture into Maasailand was a Baloch, and similarly, the first non-African to be welcomed into the royal court of the Kabaka of Buganda was also a Baloch. As they moved inland, the Baloch founded cluster communities in Djugu and Bunia in the Congo; Soroti, Arua, and Kampala in Uganda; and Iringa, Tabora, Mbeya, and Rujewa in Tanzania. There were probably Baloch families in almost every major Swahili town. The Baloch who settled in Mombasa developed a cosmopolitan lifestyle, engaging in small-scale real estate ventures, trade, and employment with the Omanis and later, the British. Those who lived in the fertile hills of Uganda and Tanzania thrived in farming and trading industries, earning high regard for their mercantile skills and business acumen. This was also evident in the small but vibrant Nairobi community.

As Zanzibar trade expanded and political influence grew in the interior of Tanganyika, Baloch squadrons were dispatched to Tabora in central Tanzania and Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika. In 1873, around half of the Omani Sultan's 3000 troops engaged in the war in Unyanyembe against the Nyamwezi ruler Chief

³ It's worth noting that the exact number of Baloch, whether old settlers and their descendants or new arrivals, is difficult to acquire since no census in Tanzania and Kenya did consider such information.

Mirambo were “*Bulushi*” and “*Shihiri*” (Hadhrami) soldiers. Some Baloch soldiers joined trade caravans as guards and reached the Congo with the legendary slave and ivory trader Tippu Tipp (1837-1905) (Bearman et al., 2012; Campbell, 2013).

As a result of the scramble and colonization of East Africa, the former armed forces of Zanzibar were integrated into the British forces in Kenya and Zanzibar, and the German forces in Tanganyika. The British had utilized a *Bulushi* contingent on a British warship as early as 1876 to assist the third Omani Sultan Sayyid Barghash Al Bu Sa’id of Zanzibar (r. 1870-88) in quelling a rebellion in Kilwa further south on the coast caused by a decree to forbid the slave trade in the Sultan’s possessions. Since Kenya was a British Protectorate on the coast, leased from Zanzibar, and a Crown colony in the interior, Baloch soldiers mostly remained in service on the coast, concentrated in Mombasa and Zanzibar. In German Tanganyika, Baloch soldiers were relocated to Iringa and other centers after violent resistance and uprisings against German rule.

The Wabalushi, singularly known as Mbalushi in Swahili communities – many of them of Persian origin – settled in Saa-teeni, outside Zanzibar town, in Fort Jesus in Mombasa, and later in Unyanyembe. Military terms such as *jemadari* (commander), *singe* (bayonet), *bunduki* (rifle), *habedari* (attention) have been identified to have been introduced into Kiswahili from Persian Baloch (Lodhi, 2013).

Regarding the political leadership along the Swahili coast, the Omani Arab governors of the main East African trading ports often enjoyed support from the local autochthonous Swahili aristocracy, mainly merchants. They were tied to the Omani elite through mutual interests in exploiting the resources offered by the growing demand from the eastern shores of Africa. However, it has been noted that the Arab leadership did not effectively control, in the modern European sense, the East African coast from Cape Guardafui to Cabo Delgado. In this regard, the level of debts of debts (*waraqas*) between the Arab and Asian communities in East Africa has been well explained in Fahad Bishara’s studies (Bishara, 2017). An intense exchange relationship soon developed between the East African hinterland and the Swahili coast, leading to the introduction of rice cultivation in the interior areas under Arab presence and dominion, such as Tabora, Nungwe in modern-day northern Congo, and nearby Kasongo. On the coastlines of the African continent, local societies underwent significant transformations because of various demographic shifts. These changes were brought about by the massive influx of slaves from the interior regions, as well as the arrival of Arabs and Asians from foreign lands. Notably, Tabora, a pivotal site along the commercial route towards the heart of the continent, came to resemble an Arab town, with a

substantial presence of the Baloch community (Burton, 1860). As a result, gradual differences in cultural identities emerged between the coastal areas and islands on one hand, and the interior regions of the continent on the other. In the latter, the opening of caravan routes from the 1830s onwards led to a profound revolution in economic, social, and cultural aspects. The maritime ports of the Swahili coast were sustained by close interaction with the non-Muslims in their rural hinterlands, which also contributed to the composition of the coastal identity (Gooding, 2022). However, Unyanyembe, an Arab cultivated land known for its ivory trade and home to male caravan porters, was not a major source of slaves. Instead, it was a region that imported slaves. Caravans would arrive at the coast usually in September, and porters would announce their approach by blowing horns and beating drums (Rockel, 2019). The shameful and humiliating practice of enslavement in East Africa was imposed and exploited by various social groups for lucrative purposes, mainly originating from southern Arabia and Western India, with Baloch migrants being part of this framework. And Baloch people have been identified as far afield as Uganda and the upper reaches of the Congo.

African and Asian slave trade routes

During the nineteenth century, there were not just one, but numerous main slave routes. Nevertheless, in the Indian Ocean, there were two main slave routes: one from East Africa and the Red Sea to the Arabian Peninsula, Western India, and Southeast Asia, and the other in the opposite direction. As a result, especially during the nineteenth century, slaves were not only black people from Africa, but also of Asian origin. The social, political, and economic functions of slaves in both Africa and Asia were divided, according to available sources of the time, into the following categories: a) domestic - patriarchal, b) productive - agricultural (bonded labor directed into intensive wet-crop agriculture), c) military - administrative. Within the Islamic world, armies of slave-soldiers came from Central Asia, mainly Turkish peoples from the Caucasus and the steppes before their conversion to Islam, while domestic slaves mainly came from the Horn of Africa and the coastal strip of Sub-Saharan East Africa. Due to the banning of slavery on the western shores of Africa towards America, in the second half of the nineteenth century, there was an extensive and growing commerce of slaves from Ras Asir and Pemba, and many East African people were bought with cloth and dates on Zanzibar and Pemba islands, enslaved, and transported to Arabia where they were engaged in pearl fishing in the Gulf. From the available accounts of

travelers, explorers, and European officials of the time, among the Baloch tribes in East Africa, the Hot, the Rind, and the Nousherwani emerged, among others (Miles, 1984).

The Rind tribe was considered the elite group of Makran, often referred to as the “blue-bloods”.⁴ They were renowned for their wealth and prominence, as evidenced by available historical sources. However, it is important to note that other Baloch tribes were also present in the region and participated in battles. This was primarily due to the intense rivalry that existed within Balochistan, with tribes supporting Oman in the hope of receiving military assistance against their internal adversaries. As a result, many Baloch were employed on ships in Muscat, one of the main trading ports in the region, as well as in military expeditions into the deserts of Oman.

During the nineteenth century, the British started new measures to abolish the slave trade, which led to a decrease in the availability of East African slaves. As a result, alternative and lesser-known slave routes in the Indian Ocean, such as the Baloch slave trade, emerged. Baloch slave women were subjected to a dehumanizing practice of having their heads completely shaved and covered with quicklime to prevent their hair from regrowing, making them easily identifiable and preventing their return to their families or places of origin.

The main areas where Baloch traders, acting on behalf of the sultans of Oman, were active in East Africa were three interconnected trade routes, which also involved the trade of ivory and precious goods. These routes included: 1) the “southern” route from southern ports like Kilwa to Lake Nyasa and the highlands of the southwestern interior, where the Nyamwezi, who were themselves slave collectors and sellers, traded in elephant tusks and other goods; 2) the “central” route from Bagamoyo in west and northwest directions, where the caravan trade was divided between Omani Sultan’s slave traders and Indian slave merchants; and 3) the “northern” route, also known as the Masai route, from Mombasa and Malindi towards Kilimanjaro, where the Mijikenda and Kamba were involved in ivory hunting. The Saadani caravan route did not develop an Arab merchant community, while the Pangani route led to the establishment of Ujiji around 1840 and passed through the Bondei hills and along the foot of Usambara and Pare mountains, with access to water, making it a preferred route for travelers from other towns of the northern Mrima. This route eventually became the second most important after Bagamoyo, while the Taveta trading station on the northern

⁴ The “blue” colour of blood originated from silver consumption through dishes and plates that possessed anti-bacterial properties.

route never came under the dominance of coastal Muslims due to safety concerns.

Many Zanzibaris of Baloch origin lived in Saateni, Zanzibar, and were skilled in *darzing kanzu*, which is the traditional white men's attire with different designs. They often used donkeys for transportation within the town. Interestingly, the Zanzibar slave market tended to spare the local population from the worst atrocities of the slave trade for several reasons. Firstly, the slave transporters and most of their potential customers shared a common religion. Secondly, many of the slaves were subjects of the rulers of the Swahili city-states and enslaving these Swahili citizens could potentially trigger retaliation from these rulers, making sheltering and provisioning ships difficult. Finally, according to legend, the king of the Hadimu of Zanzibar had negotiated with the sultans of Oman to safeguard the interests of the local population.

The first recorded mention of a Baloch garrison in Fort Jesus dates to 1837, during the expulsion of the Mazrui (Mazaria) (Matthews, 2013). When the last Baloch left the Fort in 1895, they were granted land where they could settle.⁵

During the 19th century, Baloch jemadars or commanders were stationed in various key locations to provide security in East Africa. In 1861, when Malindi was resettled, fifty Omani settlers, accompanied by Baloch soldiers and hundreds of slaves, were sent by the Omani sultans to redevelop the area. The Baloch jemadar held a position of trust and power, known for their long hair and beards, and renowned as skilled warriors armed with matchlock rifles adorned with gold and silver decorations, with pouches of gunpowder in their belts. Their war cry before 1867 was "*kai kai, we are coming*". As Kenya was a British Protectorate on the coast, leased from Zanzibar, and a Crown colony in the interior, Baloch soldiers predominantly served on the coast, concentrated in Mombasa and Zanzibar.

Conclusion

In the Indian Ocean, millions of people of African origin may have migrated to Asian coasts, India, and the Gulf as free individuals or as slaves. More than 70% (about 1,500) of the soldiers in Oman were Africans from East Africa, and Asians were also moved to Africa and Southeast Asia as slaves or as traders and indentured laborers. While it has long been believed that Baloch people moved solely as soldiers and bodyguards to the Omani sultans, representing their mili-

⁵ There is a Balochi community living in Mombasa, primarily in the Makadara section of the town. They have their own Baloch Mosque, and the old Mbaruk Mosque was dedicated to a Baloch soldier who saved Mbaruk bin Rashid al Mazrui when he was a child.

tary and defensive force in East Africa, later they settled and engaged in various economic activities. The Baloch gradually acquired a social status in East Africa, while on the South-Central Asian coasts, they themselves were enslaved by other groups. This newfound social status led to new forms of exploitation and abuses, such as African land confiscation and slave exploitation in the cultivated lands (*mashamba*) along the Swahili coast and the Great Lake region (Alpers, 2014).

The role of Asian communities and the Baloch on the Swahili coast was intricately interconnected with the role played by the Omani sultans. This is one of the reasons why Baloch groups have often been studied as a component of Omani society rather than as a distinct entity with their own identity, culture, and customs, and only as soldiers along the Swahili coast since the 18th century. The preservation of Baloch cultural identity in East Africa was a unique characteristic of some descendants of these Asian warriors, although it was limited to a few enclaves. The migration patterns, longstanding presence, and influence of the Baloch on the maritime and hinterland economies and societies of East Africa continue to be an important and intriguing area for further research. The Indian Ocean has been a significant region for human migration and economic interactions for centuries. During the nineteenth century this region witnessed various migration patterns and economic interconnections that played a crucial role in shaping historical developments. The Indian Ocean was a hub of maritime trade, connecting various regions such as South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. Migration took place along established maritime routes, with migrants traveling on ships and boats, driven by a variety of factors including economic opportunities, political instability, social changes, and environmental factors. Economic opportunities were one of the main drivers of migration in the Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century. The growth of global trade networks and the expansion of European colonial powers created new opportunities in various parts of the Indian Ocean region. Migrants, including laborers, merchants, and professionals, moved in search of better prospects, such as employment, trade, and investment chances. Indian laborers were recruited to work in British colonial plantations in Southeast Asia and East Africa, while Indian merchants and professionals migrated to established trading centers in the Middle East and Southeast Asia to participate in trade and other economic activities. The routes taken by migrants in the Indian Ocean during the nineteenth century were diverse and shaped by a variety of factors. Established maritime routes, such as the monsoon winds that facilitated trade between South Asia and Southeast Asia, were used by migrants for their journeys. Migrants also used existing trade networks and established port cities as hubs for their migration routes. Migrants

also traveled through well-known trade routes such as the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, which connected the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean and the rest of the world. In conclusion, the Indian Ocean witnessed significant migration patterns and economic interconnections during the nineteenth century. Economic opportunities, along with other factors, were among the main drivers of migration in the region and established maritime routes and trade networks shaped the routes taken by migrants. These migrations had significant economic implications, including the development of plantation economies, the growth of trade, the transfer of capital, technology, and knowledge, and social and cultural interactions; therefore, further research on this wide and fascinating topic can provide a deeper understanding of the historical developments in the Indian Ocean region and its impact on global history.

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