

Tom Hoogervorst

Southeast Asia in the Ancient Indian Ocean World. Oxford: Arcaheopress, 2013, xi + 157 pp. [BAR International Series 2580]. ISBN 9781407312033. Price: USD 77.50 (paperback).

As Tom Hoogervorst points out early in his detailed study of the oft-overlooked importance of Southeast Asian contributions to the economic and cultural history of the Indian Ocean he has combined linguistic data from both primary and secondary sources with ‘insights from archaeology, linguistics and the natural sciences’ (p. 3) in his efforts to trace the flows of spices, cultivars, maritime expertise and metallurgical techniques along the ancient maritime networks that ultimately linked points as far distant as remote Oceania and the coastline of eastern Africa.

Hoogervorst’s strengths in historical linguistics come out clearly in the second chapter of his monograph, simply titled ‘Methodology’. While acknowledging the vital role played by reconstruction of proto-forms for language families like Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) in assessing the material culture of the past, Hoogervorst shows us that we must take into account a more complex set of constraints on the adoption of new lexical material. These include phonotactic and sociolinguistic limitations on how, and to what extent, new lexical materials can be adapted in given languages, and the prestige value of the linguistic coinage that accompanied cultural movements like the spread of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

For anyone with an interest in developing a better understanding of how linguistic methodology can be used in the service of history this chapter—and indeed the entire volume—can be taken up as a detailed and dependable primer on the subject. In his account of the cultivars and technologies that spread initially through the littoral regions of the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea, Hoogervorst reveals important instances of connectivity that can be read by comparing linguistic, archaeological, phylogenetic, and archaeobotanical information. In his study of the spread of metallurgy, for example, Hoogervorst calls attention to Malay *besi*, ‘iron’ that appears to derive from Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) **vāśī* and can be aligned with archaeological evidence that suggests Indian craftsmen of the Coramandel coast played a role in the in the development of the iron-working traditions of insular Southeast Asia (pp. 20–27).

In Chapter Two, Hoogervorst looks at the often-vexed subject of ‘Indianization’ and focuses on metallurgy and metal-trading networks to provide evidence from material culture for the complex patterns of diffusion among South and Southeast Asian communities eager to learn new technologies, and often

supported by emerging urban populations with the economic wherewithal to sponsor large scale building projects as well as a thriving communities of craft and merchant communities like the Tamil merchant guilds who left their mark in the early second millennium inscriptions of Sumatra. These findings undo any notion of a particular, hegemonic source for the innovations and changes that accompanied the spread of Indian cultural influences east of the Bay of Bengal.

In Chapter Three, a focus on 'Southeast Asian influence across the Indian Ocean' gives Hoogervorst the basis for an analysis of the importance of Malay-speaking seafarers and merchants in the vast networks that included the Nicobar islands, the Coramandel and Malabar coasts of India, the busy ports of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf and the east African coast. As Hoogervorst ably takes us through this world we are introduced to reflexes of words like Malay *bakul*, 'basket' that are found in languages as far distant as Malagasy (*bakoly*, 'basket') and Swahili (*bakuli*, 'tureen') (p. 106). The discussion in this chapter might benefit from recent models of socio-economic development like Seland's recent study (2010) of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea* and the work of Indian scholars like Kesavan Veluthat (2009) on the revolutionary changes in South Indian society that began to occur ca. 700 CE when local rulers began to understand the economic advantages of a Brahmin model of society.

Chapter Five represents a richly detailed study of the 'anthropogenetic translocation of Southeast Asian plants' that includes important evidence from linguistics and the natural sciences for the spread of sandalwood, areca palm, coconut palm, citrus cultivars, as well as ginger and other rhizomes. Here we can find more than enough material in support of the complex patterns of diffusion Hoogervorst has shown are a hallmark of the maritime networks of the Indian Ocean. Through studies of words like Malay *lawang* ('cloves'), whose reflexes are found in classical Indian sources like the *Raghuvamśa* of Kālidāsa (ca. 400 CE), he demonstrates the early emergence of the spice trade and the intriguing history of the words for spices that mingled together in the vast emporia that was the trading zone of the ancient Indian Ocean world.

In Chapter Six, 'Reconstructing the spice trade', Hoogervorst looks in greater depth at the trading networks that developed early in the history of the Indian Ocean as cloves, nutmeg, and pepper, as well as oleoresins and forest products like Barus camphor became staples in the luxury markets of South Asia, the ports of the Arabian Sea, and the Greco-Roman world.

Chapter Seven traces the long, millennial history of maritime technologies in a broad nautical expanse that stretches from remote Oceania to the eastern coast of Africa. Hoogervorst details an earlier phase of diffusion of technical innovations that saw outriggers and spritsails spread from the Western

Malayo-Polynesian heartland to both remote Oceania and coastal Africa. He then shows that much of this influence has been obscured in coastal Africa by the development of innovations like lateen-rig sails and stern-mounted rudders by shipwrights of the Arabian sea.

Hoogervorst closes his study with a concluding chapter that summarizes his main findings, showing in brief 'that the introduction of Southeast Asian spices, food stuffs, maritime technology, and trade commodities has revolutionized the societies of the Indian Ocean World' (p. 104). He closes with several desiderata for further research, including a 'thorough study of the Andamanese, Nicobarese and Mokken groups [...] that represent "some of the most unique and threatened cultures in the Indian Ocean"' (p. 105). We can only hope that Hoogervorst and his fellow travellers will undertake these important directions in the study of the Indian Ocean world.

The maps and figures for the volume are eminently useful, but the font size for captions on some maps is so small it is sometimes difficult to read. The appendix on linguistic data is a superb source of information presented in a highly useful and readable form. The References section itself provides a valuable introduction to the current state of the literature on the Indian Ocean world. My one quibble with the work is that the Index seems rather thin for a work of such density and importance to the field. Perhaps it can be expanded in a future printing.

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