Considering movements of people between South Asia, Africa and Australia offers an opportunity to rethink Empire and more broadly to question the way we have understood the meaning of land and landscapes. In Australia, until the mid-twentieth century, history focused on the distance between the colony of Australia and that of metropolitan Britain, tracing the impact that the enormity of that distance and the duration of travel had in shaping the colony.1 More recently, historians have focused attention on the links between settler colonies and the movements of ideology, policy, popular culture and people between these colonies of America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada and even South America.2 This focal analysis

1 Geoffrey Blainey, The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia’s History (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1982).
2 Ibid.
on settler colonies and settler colonialism has often been intensely critical. Some scholars have invoked Fanon's analysis of the role of settlers themselves in the deep conflicts of colonialism. Nevertheless, the attention of such analysts, however critical, has continued to focus on settler ideologies and settler-to-settler connections. An important and complex example of the tensions involved can be seen in the range of the chapters in the edited volume *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*. Only three of the chapters deal with non-European settlers, two of them in relation to South Asia, but their focus is limited to middle class or professional travellers in western imperial nations. Patrick Wolfe has identified the problems in his essay “Islam and Indian Nationalism in Europe” where he argues that these narrow sets of limits have continued despite the fact that “transnational history... has no necessary confinement to settler societies in the west.”

One reason is that the sources for such studies have been the traditional historians’ sources of the documentary and visual archive, whether formal or informal, official or popular. The official records, the catalogues and the schedules of European colonial powers are actually the archives of imperial control. They demonstrate the ways in which metropolitan powers attempted to impose order onto “chaos” by directing the deployment of people and things around their newly acquired territories. The very existence of these records implies that such control was effective. Other records, such as those of popular culture, for example novels and images, which circulated between self-consciously defined ‘settler’ communities, display the achievement of “settler” goals. Such documents reflect hopes, desires or fantasies rather than accomplished facts.


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Unauthorized Voyagers across Two Oceans

Alternatives emerge, however, outside the European empire based focus from Melanesian and Pacific Islander viewpoints around Australasia, who understand the sea not as an empty space, but instead as a people and storied place, “a sea of islands” that connects rather than separates seafaring people (Barclay 2008; D'Arcy 2006). Such an interpretation conceives of the lines of communication across the seas and between colonies as flexible highways with infinitely variable branches rather than as sealed tubes of controlled passage. If we examine the source materials, the lists, the classifications and the catalogues against the grain, the claims of imperial control give way to the recognition of the vernacular technologies and philosophies that circulated via these pathways from colony to colony.

II

The settlement of Australia was a multi-racial process right from the beginning, at a time when race was a malleable construct, not conceptualized in terms of a binary black/white. Race was a flexible category and the signifiers of difference were uncertain. The early years of the colony involved the movement of various people of differing ethnicities circulating from colony to colony as well as between metropole and colony. Various mythologies about the Australian topography and icons such as the bushranger are not necessarily only Aboriginal or white. In her book, *Black Founders*, Cassandra Pybus writes about African-American slaves who fled from their masters to the British during the American war of independence. They were protected by the British military and sent to Canada, from where many made their way to Britain. The twelve men she writes about were subsequently convicted of various crimes in Britain and transported to the new penal colony of New South Wales. Yet Pybus admits that she gained in the end “only fleeting glimpses of how these people lived and died.” The result is that the book is in parts as much


landscape as figure, as much about the times and places in which these people lived as about their particular experiences and perceptions. What Black Founders does add is a reminder of the many connections between colonial Australian and colonial American history.

Pybus describes Black Caesar, the first Australian bushranger, probably a Creole man of the African diaspora who arrived in 1788 in New South Wales aboard one of the First Fleet transport ships, sentenced in the Kent assizes for stealing money. There is some indication that his name was a native of Madagascar and his name indicates that he may have been a former slave. He was described as a ‘savage of a darker hue and full as far removed from civilization.’ The colony almost perished of famine in the first years of settlement and hunger drove Caesar into the bush where he had an armed confrontation with the Aborigi- nal warrior Pemelwuy. He is remembered as an incorrigibly stubborn black’ who could not be cowed by floggings or punishment. At the end of 1795, Governor Hunter offered him a conditional pardon but Caesar answered that ‘he would neither come in or suffer himself to be taken alive.’ He was eventually shot by a bounty hunter in 1796.

Another black founder of the British colony in Australia is William Blue (c.1767-1834), convict, settler and ferryman, who may have been born in Jamaica, West Indies. It is also possible that he was a freed African-American slave from colonial New York as he later claimed to have served with the British army in the American War of Independence. In 1796, in England, Blue was convicted of theft and sentenced to seven years transportation. He was described in convict records as ‘a Jamaican Negro sailor’, aged 29 in 1796. Blue married a 30-year-old, English-born convict, Elizabeth Williams, and had six children. He worked as a waterman and collected and sold oysters and other items. He found favor with both government officials and the public, to whom he endeared himself with his whimsical style and banter (Pybus, 2006:153-54 and passim).

Blue was appointed harbour watchman and constable by Governor Macquarie in 1811. These titles enabled him to acquire a new home overlooking Sydney Harbor which became a local landmark known as “Billy Blue’s Cottage.” In 1817, Blue was granted a farm of eighty acres (32.4 ha) in Port Jackson, now known as Billy Blue’s Point. He quickly built up a “fleet of ferries” and was dubbed “The Old Commodore.” The location and business offered opportunities to participate in smuggling and, in October 1818, he was arrested for smuggling two casks of rum (he claimed that he had found them floating and lashed them to his boat to return them to the shore). He lost his position as harbor watchman and constable and was imprisoned for a year. Blue was described as an eccentric, loquacious character. He would board newly berthed vessels, dressed in a traverse of a naval uniform, with a top hat, as “commodore” to welcome the officers to Sydney. By 1833 he and his family were reported as keeping a ferryboat and cultivating vegetables and fruit for the Sydney market. Blue died on 7 May 1834 at his North Sydney home. Streets in North Sydney were named after him and the site of his northern ferry terminus remained known as Blues Point.

A later arrival from across the Indian Ocean, from an island off the African coast, was Thomas Shadrach James (1859-1946). Thomas was born on September 1, 1859 at Moka, Mauritius, son of Samson Peersahib, an Indian interpreter, and his wife Miriam Esther, née Thomas (d.1876). Named Shadrach James Peersahib, he boarded a boat for Australia when his mother died and his father remarried. James worked as a volunteer teacher at the Maloga Aboriginal School, New South Wales and was appointed head teacher by the Department of Public Instruction in 1883. When the Maloga residents were shifted in 1888 to the government reserve, Cumeroogunga, James reopened his school there and educated a number of Aborigines who were to become active in the early political movement, including the founders of the Australian Aborigines’ League in 1933. James also served as a Methodist lay preacher, conducted a dispensary on Cumeroogunga mission and assisted visiting doctors to perform minor operations. In 1919, when the policy of removal of Aboriginal children created conflicts and walkouts, the Protection Board, assuming that the disruption must be the work of individual “trouble makers,” tried to transfer James on the grounds that his presence “would continue the friction and strife which had been prevalent.” This decision predictably led to

10 Ibid., 127 ff.
11 Ibid., 134-135.
12 Ibid., 183.
14 Aboriginal Protection Board Minutes, meetings of May 5, 1919 and June 25, 1919.
still further conflict and more disciplinary expulsions, but the Board was successful in terminating James' employment in August 1921. The Board tried to expel James' son, Shadrack, on the grounds that "the presence of [Shadrack] James on the Station is a menace to the good government thereof" but he continued the Cameroogunya tradition and refused to comply with the order, seeking legal advice. The Board was finally forced to prosecute him for trespass.  

In addition to these movements of Africans, there was some nineteenth century regulated movement between South Asia and Australia as the work of Suzanne Rickard and Margaret Allen describes. Rickard's 'Lifelines from Calcutta' is a detailed account of the entry and migration into Australia of South Asians who arrived in the early days of the British colony. Indians and Sri Lankans arrived in Australia as servants, perhaps as cooks, ayahs or nursemaids, attending British staff and settlers who frequently came directly from Indian residence. Another group of South Asians arrived in Australia as convicts who had been transported from India to Australia in the early days. There was also an inverse flow of British convicts who escaped, many disappearing into India and other British domains via legal and illegal means. There are, also, groups of Indian entrepreneurs, some of them Sikhs, who arrived as small traders. Allen's work is oriented towards a later time period, and compares individual travellers' experiences in India and Australia, seeking out those Indian-authored accounts to give an insight into the increasing hostility within Australia to "non-white" entry around Federation. By definition, Allen's subjects are middle class and articulate subjects, who may comment on traders or workers but whose experiences are those of relatively privileged and solitary travellers.

There were as well two groups of Indians who arrived as labourers. Indentured workers came to Australia in relatively small groups in the 1830s and the 1840s as agricultural or pastoral labourers who were

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15 Ibid., Meetings of August 17, 1921, August 19, 1921, October 21, 1921 and December 7, 1921.
17 Pamela Rajkowski, in The Tracks of the Camelsmen (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1987).
ings depicting exotic but respectful images of lascars on the London docks increasingly gave way to derogatory caricatures of "Orientals."20

Jane Ewald's work 'Crossers of the Sea,' based on research in East Africa, traces the shift in Indian Ocean trade from sail to steam in the nineteenth century.21 Ewald comments on the simultaneous economies in East Africa and West India and the developing capitalist colonial networks through merchant trading. She shows that seafarers came from a range of different locations, including East Africa, the West Indies and South Asia, and from different class backgrounds: slaves, freed men and free born sailors as well. The sailing ship structure allowed a much more fluid and flexible role for these seafarers, who could be both entrepreneurs in their own right at each port, as well as being much more flexibly allocated on the ship itself. With the development of steam transport from the 1850s onwards, the distinction between engine room staff, in the much more dangerous conditions below deck, and deckhands or ordinary seamen became increasingly stark. By the later nineteenth century, the racial divisions had been cemented on the western routes and East Africans or Seedi's (a corruption of Sayeed), were relegated to the difficult and dangerous conditions below decks while the ordinary seamen or deckhands were predominantly South Asians. In contrast, on the eastern routes and in Dutch shipping lines the engine crews were largely South Asian and the deckhands Indonesian.

Ewald identifies three critical changes of colonial and corporate control in the shift from sail to steam. Firstly, tight control over time discipline became increasingly possible as the steam engines detached the schedule of the merchant ships from the regimes of wind and climate.22 Secondly, job specialization was intensified as the steam engine room demanded special skills and special control under appalling conditions of noise, heat and danger. And finally the racialization of the job order intensified so that by the turn of the twentieth century, distinctions were being made between, for example, seedi's [Africans] and lascars [South Asians] and the kind of work they were allowed to do.23

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21 Ewald, "Crossers of the Sea."
23 Ewald, "Crossers of the Sea."

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The advertising in the tourist literature and posters of the major merchant shipping lines like the P&O made explicit the racial order on the large steam ships. Posters for early twentieth century cruises on P&O, for example, show European tourist passengers with serving staff of mixed racial categories. We can see that the visible "saloon" and "deck" staff did not include Africans, but did include South Asians. The poster showed a hierarchy of privilege and power depicted in the visual flow from the fore-grounded reclining tourists through to the insignia of rank on the uniforms of the European crew and on to the humble stewards and deck cleaners standing at the end of the line. In 1886, Edwin Arnold, a tourist on one of the P&O lines traveling between England and India (significantly 'The Paramatta' which indicates its overall route to have included Australia), observed this shipping order to be one in which "that glorious British Empire of which we are here a small moving isolated fragment could be seen displayed."24

Another poster from the P&O line during the same period displays similar images of imperial technological power in the portrayal of two enormous new steamers, "The White Sisters," which dwarfed not only their small tug boats, but the frail indigenous vernacular Asian sailing craft, veering off ahead of their towering prows. The choice of the color white to badge the P&O liners in the nineteenth century, and reintroduced in the 1930s, was no accident, seeking as it did to stress the racial order of exotic travel, in which Europeans were pampered tourists while colonized and colored people either served them or looked on as amazed spectators.25 This visual representation of massive European power and technological mastery which was passively observed by exotic, primitive and appreciative natives was reproduced precisely in the posters of the Dutch steam shipping line, which alsoplied Australian waters with both cargo and passengers, the Koninklijke Paketvaart-Maatschappij line, known universally as KPM.26

Yet these images of imperial order and power obscured the fact that all the established merchant-shipping lines by the turn of the twentieth century carried major populations of colonized people as their workforce. As the colonial transport system began to gather pace in the late

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eighteenth century, the British government became concerned about the presence of large numbers of transient Asian and African seamen in the ports and they legislated for the insertion of what became known as the Asiatic Articles into the mercantile shipping acts. These acts influenced, although they did not determine, the later Australian shipping legislation which limited the wages and conditions available to Asian and African seamen and controlled the movement of seamen in the ports of Britain and other settler colonies.

Nevertheless, with the expansion of imperial trade in the nineteenth century, there was a major rise in the numbers of these seamen. In 1821 for example, lascars made up 84% of the crews of British sailing ships operating in the Eastern routes, including the Indian and Australian routes. By 1855, British merchant ships were employing 12,000 lascars, 60% of them from the sub-continent of India. By 1900, P&O employed 12,000 altogether: 59% were lascars, but they were defined in very clearly identified segments of the ships' workforce; 28% of the stewards were South Asian lascars, but 81.5% of the firemen were African seadies, while 95% of the deckhands and ordinary seamen were lascars. By 1928, 52,500 lascars were employed on all British trading vessels and 30% of all seamen were lascars. That some of these African seafarers ended up staying in Australia is evident from this account:

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28 Unauthorised Voyagers across Two Oceans

Travelling on foot across the continent in 1882, George Morrison met an old gentleman in the middle of Australia, by the name of John Smith. He described his new travelling companion as "a toothless dinkie, a native of the Gold Coast of Africa, a cook by profession and one of the kindest, most considerate men it has been my lot to meet with." As a young man, John Smith of the Gold Coast had enlisted on a Dutch man-of-war that was taking Prince Hendrik of the Netherlands around the world. Thus John Smith became the first black man ever seen in Iceland, and after his maritime travels he ended up in Australia.

Over this century and a half these African and Indian seamen were represented in Britain and Australia variously as threats or as victims. In the 1790s, the British government constructed colored sea fares (whether lascars or seadies) as a threat by the institution of the Asiatic Articles so as to limit seamen’s access and permanent settlement in England. By the 1830s, however, British philanthropists and others were depicting colored seafarers as helpless, abandoned and pitiful victims of exploitation, who needed shelter and assistance to return home. These philanthropists agitated for better welfare for coloured seamen but also encouraged their effective removal from Britain’s shores. In Australia, a major issue in a series of strikes during the 1890s against grayer employers, shipping owners and shipping lines, was the control and eventual replacement of Asian colored labor by Australian and New Zealand settler labor. The agitation escalated in Britain in the 1930s as the depression affected the job opportunities of the British. Thus, British and settler seamen endorsed their governments' attempts to stop all colored seafarers, and particularly South Asians, legally coming ashore.

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30 Cyril Pearl, Morrison of Poking (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1967), 30.
32 Balachandran, "Cultures of Protest; and Fitzpatrick and Cahill, the Seamen’s Union.
33 Tabili, British Justice.
have been mixed. Colonial Australians assumed that their colony was an irresistible attraction, but there were few good reasons for seafarers to consider abandoning their wages at the end of a voyage as well as their families and villages at home. Even so, circumstances might change at home, with deaths and family differences, which might at times make a return more difficult. Not uncommonly, the financial collapse of small ship owners left many cargoes and seamen abandoned in distant ports. Such short-term stays might become extended indefinitely as relationships developed or opportunities arose. Thinking laterally and beyond the archives or the official records such as lists of employees, short-term entry permits or permanent residency status, allows us to look instead to the resources of memory and family history within the communities on the wharves and in the slums and red light districts of the port cities with whom they interacted. In this way we can put faces to the statistics. For example, some long established Indian families in Australia trace their descent to seafarers who jumped ship in the 1860s and to circus performers who visited with a troupe in the 1890s and stayed on when the tour was over.  

While Aboriginal histories and memory are an important source for understanding the ways in which people from India and Africa came to Australia and the impact they had, it was not only those people who jumped ship or even those who formalized their residence, who shaped the past in Australia. Another story emerges through industrial union histories and the memories of working class activists and workers on the wharves. The interactions of shared work and struggle on the wharves opened up lines of personal communication between Indians, Africans and Australians. Although most Australian unions characterized “colored labor, both on ships and on land, as a threat to working conditions and wages and, indeed, the dignity of “white” labor, there was one notable group of unionists who refused to endorse Australian labor racism. They were the Wobblies, the members of the International Workers of the World (IWW), an anarcho-syndicalist movement who challenged such racial divisiveness not only in theory but also in practical strategies and in the personnel who were involved in the union. Since many Wobblies were seamen, the character of the seamen’s union in Australia was more strongly international than many others.  

The IWW was one of the few unions which supported Singhalese seamen in 1915 when they attempted to establish a local chapter of the IWW, the One Big Union, in Darwin. The IWW was destroyed by the conflicts around World War I, but the personal networks of relationships across ethnic lines on the wharves and on the boats continued. The impact of the Depression and then World War II, while heightening fears of racial competition among maritime workers, also challenged those fears by forcing new alliances in the struggles against Fascism and for decolonization and national independence. Some of the working class activists who were closest to the maritime unions, like the Australian Communist Party (CPA) in the later 1930s, began to make increasing contacts with Indonesian nationalists exiled in Australia and also with the transient Chinese and Indian seafarers who tried to use the fluid situation in wartime to challenge the racially discriminatory conditions of the international shipping trade as well as to support nationalist movements in the immediate region. These Australian activists – Sylvia Mullican, Jack Mullins, Phyllis Johnson – often but not always members of the CPA, are another rich source of personal memories. They offer important reflections about the camaraderie which developed across the lines of ethnicity and religion, and also give valuable insights into the strategies adopted by the seafarers in their interactions both with allies and with the shipping companies with whom they were in dispute.  

Charles Frederick Maynard (1879-1946), an Aboriginal activist, probably of African-French heritage, is an example of such radical influence and interaction. His grandfather, Jean Phillippe (the name

34 Gopalan Balachandran, personal communication, 2007  
35 Reg Persaud, personal communication, 2006, Devleena Ghosh.  
37 Ibid.  
40 Phyllis Johnson, informal interview May 4; formal recorded interview May 10, 2007
was Anglicized to Phillips in the next generation) was a Mauritian who arrived in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century. Charles Frederic Maynard became a wharf laborer in Sydney and an active member of the Waterside Workers’ Federation of Australia, spending much time at the Domain and other public-speaking venues. In the early 1920s he united with his countrymen from the Hunter to make a public protest against the assault on Aborigines’ rights; they spoke at local meetings and lobbied the Sydney and regional press. In 1925 Maynard launched the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association. The group protested against the revocation of north-coast farming reserves; they also demanded that children no longer be separated from their families or indentured as domestics and menial laborers. The AAPA advocated that all Aboriginal families should receive inalienable grants of farming land within their traditional country, that their children should have free entry to public schools, and that Aborigines should control any administrative body affecting their lives.41

This new Aboriginal political movement was “fighting for the preservation of rights for [A]borigines for self-determination.” The AAPA demanded that the incompetent Aboriginal Protection Board be scrapped and replaced with an all Aboriginal board of management.42 Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association played a significant part in influencing this emerging Aboriginal political ideology.43 Garvey had used black seamen around the globe as agents to spread the word of his movement. This influence was disseminated in Australia through African/American and West Indian seamen coming into contact with Aboriginal wharf laborers. John Maynard’s path-breaking research shows how these contacts gave Aboriginal people access to international black literature and political newspapers, especially Garvey’s The Negro World which had a weekly international circulation of more than 200,000 copies. For example, Garvey’s paper would have introduced Gandhi to Aboriginal activists.

Many Aboriginal political leaders had been members of the Sydney chapter of Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1920 prior to the formation of the AAPA. Thus the AAPA in Australia imitated the nationalistic platform of Gandhi and Garvey and displayed a Black nationalist agenda. The AAPA Treasurer, Tom Lacey, for example, assured Garvey and his movement the support of 10,000 Aboriginal people in NSW and 60,000 Aboriginal people nationally.44

Another war, some decades later, brought more Africans to Australian shores. By August 1942, 7,300 African-American troops were stationed in Australia, their largest overseas deployment. According to Cameron White, the wartime experience of African Americans in Australia was important in the development of new, assertive performances of African American politics, identity and style throughout this period as well as offering an important model for Indigenous Australians’ demands for civil rights. “There is enough evidence of direct exchange between African Americans and Indigenous Australians during WWII to suggest that it formed the basis of new forms of Indigenous Australian political and self-expression in the 1950s and 1960s.”45

The white civilian population welcomed these black soldiers warmly and there are numerous reports of Australians inviting African American soldiers into their homes.46 Many incidents of fraternization between white Australian women and African American soldiers are recorded47 and approximately 50 white Australian women travelled to the United States at the conclusion of the war as the wives of African American soldiers.48 White argues, however, that this positive reception of African American soldiers took place in the context of a more general enthusiastic response to the presence of American soldiers in Australia so that their American-ness transcended their skin. “That is, African Americans benefited from the prestige associated with being a member of America’s

44 Maynard, “Be the Change.”
47 White, “WWII and Race Relations,” 5.
powerful army.\textsuperscript{49} This prestige associated with American-ness has been documented in other studies on the position of African Americans within the African diaspora.\textsuperscript{50}

White's research highlights the fact that this cordial response to the African American soldiers was frowned upon by the authorities. He cites cases of white American descriptions of Australia as a 'higger heaven' and examples of descriptions of clubs where white (women) and black soldiers socialized as "disgusting" and "strange" (White, 2008:8).\textsuperscript{51} A report from the US Deputy Director of Security in 1942 voiced concerns that "the American Negroes... appear to be becoming [sic] particularly self-confident and insubordinate which may ultimately cause them to become a serious problem."\textsuperscript{52} A subsequent confidential instruction to Australian Army units warned that it was:

Undesirable that Australian troops should fraternize or drink with American colored soldiers... Australian troops have in certain instances been associating with the colored troops to an extent which would not be permitted in the case of American white troops... Action taken [to discourage fraternization] should be as tactful as possible since it is of course not desired that any offence be caused to American colored troops.\textsuperscript{53}

These attitudes finally led to the geographic segregation of African-American soldiers so that, in mid-May 1942, 3,500 African-Americans were sent to the arid region of northwest Queensland while those stationed in cities were confined to less wealthy suburbs.\textsuperscript{54} Black clubs opened by Aboriginal people in cities such as Brisbane were patronized by African Americans, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a

\textsuperscript{49} White, "WWII and Race Relations," 5.
\textsuperscript{50} H. Neprune, "Mainly Rivalries and Mopseys: Gender, Nationality and Sexuality in United States - Occupied Trinidad," Radical History Review, Transnational Black Studies 87 (2003), 78-95.
\textsuperscript{51} White, "WWII and Race Relations," 8.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} HQ Queensland L of C Area to subordinate formations cited in Robert A. Hall, the Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War (Sydney, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1989), 76.
\textsuperscript{54} White, "WWII and Race Relations," 9.
\textsuperscript{56} White, "WWII and Race Relations," 9.
\textsuperscript{57} Indian Seamen's Union in Australia Archive Deposit number: E177, 1945-1949, Noel Butlin Archive of Business & Labour [NBBL], in Archives Library of the Australian National University.
nnesia. They worked in concert with Australian maritime unions and received support from left-wing activists, including the CPA and the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council. They formed their own union, demanded back pay and decent conditions, and challenged the imperial shipping lines of the Dutch and the British with deputations and the Gandhian tactics of peaceful but tenacious sit-ins.  

In January 1946, these Indian seamen hosted a banquet for the Australians who had supported them and there is a rare instance of their voices describing their roles in the struggle and their relationship to their Australian comrades. Mohamed T. Hussain, a striking Indian crewman, opened the banquet thus:

On behalf of my brother Indians and myself I extend to you all a warm welcome...We are Indian seamen without a ship and we have not been able to do all we would of (sic) liked for you...But what is missing we hope we will make up for with the warmth of our welcome...

Those who have controlled our country for so many years, so that because we are Indians we must be slaves...There can be no new world while there are any people who are slaves of others...The winning of freedom in Indonesia will surely be followed by the freedom of India. For that reason we must do everything possible to see that the Dutch are driven out of Indonesia.  

We thus have alternative ways then to learn about the movement of Africans and South Asians to Australia. One is through the memory of Aboriginal people and non-Indian or African seamen, wharf laborers and activists that provide important insights into personal interactions and lasting impacts. They don't however give us the words or the perceptions of these informal travelers skirting the boundaries of various empires. But sometimes, in the scattered records of Aboriginal activism and in union archives, we find traces and echoes of these voices. We glimpse people who are neither threats nor victims, but rather an interacting, assertive and complex body of people, beyond the control of the imperial supervision and regulation, and supposedly so well-established and effectively policed. The search for voices of such migrants is also occurring for other parts of the world to where Africans and Indians moved or were forcibly moved, as in the study of the Western IOW and the Ottoman Empire.  

This overview into the interaction between Africans, Indians and Australians suggests a number of questions that we can ask in terms of the story of contemporary diasporas. Africans came as convicts, seafarers and soldiers and the mode of their entry changed from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. In the nineteenth century, they traversed the Indian Ocean from colonies and continents to disembark at Perth and Sydney while in the twentieth century they entered, mainly as soldiers but also as seafarers, via routes across the Pacific Ocean, mostly from the USA rather than from Africa. In contrast, in both centuries, informal Indian travellers entered at ports on Australia's eastern and western coastlines after journeys across the Indian Ocean. Both these categories of workers/travellers tended to be dispersed and isolated geographically and socially from other compatriots. Their potential for collective cultural, social or political assertiveness was greatly reduced and they often left little legacy or memory about their lives in their home countries or their relationships once they reached Australia.

But through the stories of radical politics, such as the Marcus Garvey inspired activism of the AAPA or the seamen glimpsed on the Sydney wharves in 1945, we can sense a strain of political independence and assertiveness which engaged with Aboriginal people's strategies and tactics in trying to defend families against oppressive state institutions. Were there also other processes at work, for example, in the pressure cooker environments of shipboard life, vulnerable to the power of ships' captains and masters and with increasing racialized job differentiation between seadies and lascars for example? Did relational identities develop in ports and cities where African American soldiers were stationed and seafarers disembarked so that bonds were established between working class groups and people of color that sustained an internationalism, rare

59 Indian Seamen's Union, E177/5, January 13, 1946.

within settler colonies, which contributed to a developing sense of globalization among workers persisting into the 21st century?

These are the questions which might find some answers in the stories of Australians, both Aboriginal, maritime working class and others, and in the archival traces around them. Ultimately, the partial answers found in Australia, augmented by further research in the USA, Africa and South Asia, may contribute to a deeper understanding of the lives of these mobile and transient communities at home as well as away.

**RECOMMENDED AND ADDITIONAL READING**


