

Collaborative Research on the Meteorological and Botanical History of the Indian Ocean, 1600-1900

Summary of Meeting to discuss funding options March 21st 2014 University of Sussex

Present:

Vinita Damodaran
Rob Iliffe
George Adamson
David Nash
Rob Allan
Anna Jordanous
James Hamilton

Members of the network met to discuss the continuation of network project beyond the end-date of current funding and possible sources of funding, in part in order to clarify such matters in advance of the May meeting with representatives of Indian institutions.

Focus; Archives, regions and period

In discussing the spatial focus GA, RI and DN noted the significance of island archives, particularly those held in Mauritius which cover Reunion and Madagascar as well as Mauritius itself, going back as far as 1600. Such records are complimented by mission archives for Zanzibar, also covering nearby islands which are held at the Bodleian. The general area of interest was defined as East Africa, India, Indian Ocean Islands and Indonesia. RA noted the possibility of including Australian archives. In looking to extend into SE Asia the expertise of Fiona Williamson and Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells are noted. DN stated the desirability of gaining Dutch and Norwegian partners in order to help gain access to W. Australian and other missionary archives. Groups at Freiburg and Bern are noted as useful potential partners, as is Stefan Voigt for his work on Arabic archives. Other significant developments in this region include the BL's digitisation of records from Qatar and Anna Winerbottom's forthcoming work in Oman. Jemima Schaffer's expertise in East Africa along with the up-coming regional conference in Mozambique to be attended by both VD and RA are further noted. Here DN drew attention to the masses of material in the Cape archives which reach back to 1651. RI counselled in favour of a focus on easily extractable data, valuing log-book entries above diaries. GA noted that the BL's collection of log books is un-digitised before 1870, constituting 75% of their total collection.

It was decided that the nature, availability and perhaps vulnerability of archives should dictate the temporal focus. DN suggested that the physical location of archives may be more significant than their regional focus, funding being seen as more available for saving threatened archives than for digitising material held safely in colonial centres. The masses of instrumental data collected from 1830-1850 onwards was noted as an obstacle to attaining anything approaching completeness for this period, therefore a focus on the earlier period is suggested with general agreement.

> Knowledge of what archives Indian institutions would like digitised or feel are vulnerable is noted as necessary to gaining any idea of the amount of funding to be pursued. JH to draft a letter requesting this information.

General agreement is reached that the initial focus should be on something in the region of 4-8 key archives and within these on achieving full coverage for their earliest period. In the first instance

