

Introduction

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SOUND, MOVEMENT, WATER, PROTECTION

The towns of Nagore and Velankanni, located just eighteen kilometers apart on the Coromandel Coast, have long anchored religious devotion in Tamil Nadu, India. Nagore is the resting place of Nagore Shahul Hamid, the sixteenth-century sheikh of the Qadiri Sufi lineage, whose *dargah* (shrine) is a major pilgrimage site. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Tamil migrants traveled across the Bay of Bengal to labor in the British colonies, they remembered Nagore's maritime travels across the Indian Ocean—west to Mecca, south to Sri Lanka and the Maldives—and built shrines for him in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia (Tschacher 2006, 231). One can imagine them disembarking and practically falling into the dockside dargah—built in Singapore in 1828 on the inlet (*teluk air* in Malay, near today's Telok Ayer MRT transit station)—with profound gratitude for safety across the sea. Velankanni boasts a Catholic church whose annual festival also celebrates a maritime founding story—a shipload of seventeenth-century Portuguese sailors, traveling from China to Colombo, were caught in a vicious storm and prayed to Mary for safety, promising to build her a chapel wherever they landed (Younger 2001, 113). Shrines to the Velankanni apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary—worshipped as Our Lady of Good Health (Arokiya Annai)—were built by Indian migrants across the breadth of the Indian Ocean, from Australia and Indonesia to South Africa. In her research site of Medan, North Sumatra, Julia found the shipwreck commemorated on a plaque at the Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni shrine (figure 0.1).

At first glance, we may be tempted to consider Nagore and Velankanni in India as belonging to two distinct Indian Ocean worlds—one central to the spread of



FIGURE 0.1. Mary rescuing Portuguese sailors, relief on the Graha Maria Annai Velangkanni Shrine, Medan, Indonesia. (Photo by Julia Byl)

Sufism across the eastern Indian Ocean, the other to the history of European colonization and missionization. But placing them in proximity tells another story, for both shrines exist in a Tamil milieu with a majority Hindu population, and both draw Catholic, Muslim, and Hindu devotees. Writing about a shrine to the Infant Jesus in the South Indian city of Bangalore, Vasudha Narayanan (2013, 21) describes a song she heard for the “Wondrous child, Yesu” that describes coming “to worship the flower feet” of the infant—a standard trope in the writings of the Vaishnava and Saiva saints who lived at the end of the first millennium CE (Narayanan 2013, 21). She notes that,

I had heard similar songs near the Basilica of Our Lady of Health in Velankanni, in the neighboring state of Tamilnadu. Velankanni is about eight miles from Nagapattinam and the site of a Marian appearance. Here, Mary is worshiped as Arogya Mata, the Mother of Health. Velankanni is a Christian site; Nagapattinam nearby has several Hindu temples; and a few miles down the road is Nagore, the home of a famous Muslim dargah, where the body of a Sufi saint, Shahul Hamid (15th century) is enshrined. Similar tea shops, similar music . . . and sometimes, the same Hindu pilgrims. (Narayanan 2013, 21)

As Narayanan’s example from the inland city of Bangalore shows, such religious syncretism in South India is not just a coastal phenomenon. It is not confined to the lower classes/castes, nor is it exclusively modern: the sixteenth-century Hindu king of Thanjavur Achuthappa Nayak (r. 1560–1614) famously summoned Shahul Hamid to combat the effects of sorcery (Tschacher 2018).¹ For South Indians who spread out as laborers across the Indian Ocean, and built shrines to Nagore and Arokiya Annai, divine power emerges through its spatial and territorial nature and may affect anyone regardless of their religion (Bastin 2012). As these laborers moved, unique regional formations developed out of new communal interactions. For instance, the Velangkanni complex in Medan is entered through a gate decorated with miniature traditional houses of nearby indigenous groups, and hosts Marian

devotional services in a building intentionally designed to resemble a Hindu temple.² And this in a city whose dominant groups are the Batak (34 percent), Javanese (33 percent), and Chinese (11 percent), with the 2019 census reporting Islam as the dominant religion (54 percent) followed by Christianity (37 percent).

Yet, we need to be forthright here: the goal of this volume is not just to catalog Indian Ocean syncretisms. We argue that a primary reason for studying Indian Ocean musical traditions is to understand how music can both constitute *and* cross communal boundaries. Musical scholarship in diverse Indian Ocean worlds, we contend, must attend to how instruments, people, genres, ideas, and sounds move and are listened to, adopted, and/or resignified—actions that may produce the syncretisms that serve as metonyms for intercommunal harmony, but may also help fortify distinct communities with well-maintained boundaries. For example, during the annual *kandoori* festival (the death anniversary of the Saint), a visitor to the Nagore dargah may hear the *nadaswaram*, a double-reed instrument more commonly associated with Tamil Hindu temples. But they are perhaps more likely to hear distinctive Tamil Muslim songs accompanied by tambourines or instruments like the harmonium and sitar, with diction, lyrical themes, and rhythms comparable to Muslim songs found elsewhere in South Asia (such as the Mappila songs of Kerala and the Qawwali of North India and Pakistan).³ Similarly, the long tradition of South Indian Catholic music, drawing on Western and local Tamil sources, builds its own soundworld—one quite different from the musical traditions that Dutch Catholics brought to Sumatra during the colonial period, or from the Batak melodic elements (Byl 2014) incorporated into the liturgy after Vatican II. The notion of multiple inheritances is useful here—inheritances that connect Indian Ocean musics to myriad elsewhere, while firmly rooting them somewhere.

A further consideration of musical interactions between Tamil Christians and Hindus in Tamil Nadu illustrates this point. Traditionally, the *parai* frame drum is performed by Dalits (formerly known as untouchables) at upper caste Hindu funerals (Sherinian 2013). Over the past few centuries, many Dalits have adopted Christianity, yet some musicians still play for Hindu rituals; the drum plays a part within some Tamil Dalit Christian funerals as well. When performed in an ensemble, the *parai* is often accompanied with maracas (which came from the Portuguese) and a big bass drum (from European marching bands). And there is at least an etymological (if not actual) relationship between another term for the *parai*—*thappu*—and a Muslim term for frame drum (emanating from Persia), *daf*. Despite these evidently syncretic aspects of its performance, however, the *parai* is an emblem of Tamil Dalit identity; given the history of discrimination against Dalits by upper-caste Hindus, its performance at Hindu funerals by some Christian Dalits can hardly be understood as an instance of interreligious harmony.

We began by dwelling on Indian Ocean networks and communal-cultural syncretisms because these are often perceived as the “stuff” of Indian Ocean studies; the last few paragraphs you’ve read have shown why we should approach such material with caution. Yet this caveat should not be taken as belittling the importance of Indian Ocean syncretisms for Indian Ocean populations themselves—many of whom lament their increasing erasure in the wake of modernizing impulses. Consider, once again, Singapore’s Nagore Dargah. Today, the building is an Indo-Muslim heritage museum, not a functioning shrine. When Julia visited in July 2019, the religious intimacy found at an operating dargah was missing; instead, the space boasted beautifully produced displays bearing the history of Singapore’s Indo-Muslim community and moving testimony from its members.⁴ In place of a sheikh was a docent who, though clearly versed in Islamic practice and local knowledge, insisted that the dargah was not a shrine for honoring one person but a place to understand history in the collective. The museum’s website specifies that the dargah contains no physical remains of the sheikh. An accordion in a glass cabinet offered mute testimony of past musical practices, yet the shrine was quiet that day. Walking around the back of the building, Julia snapped a photo of a cast metal sculpture of a migrant boat that commemorates the first touch of solid ground for Indians arriving on the bay in the nineteenth century (figure 0.2); the Chinese temples on Telok Air Street tell a similar story, but one oriented across the South China Sea. With land reclamation projects in the 1880s, 1930s, and 1970s, however, the shore was removed farther and farther away, a cement testament to Singapore’s inexorable capitalist momentum. The dargah, too, has been rebranded: no longer a site for devotion or ecstasy, it is now a storefront for well-produced knowledge, complete with opening and closing times.

For an operative Nagore dargah, one can travel 450 miles up the coast of the Malay Peninsula to the island of Penang, Malaysia. The distinctive white-and-green building is located down the street from the formidable Kapitan Keling Mosque in the Little India section of Georgetown. To continue narrating Julia’s travels (though Jim has been here, too): in 2019 she went to the shrine, stopping en route to tour the mosque. Though both buildings were built between 1800 and 1801, the mosque was now clearly influenced by the currents of normative Sunni belief that radiate from the Middle East through Malay Muslim imams to Malaysian Islamic communities. The devout South Asian man who led Julia and other visitors through the mosque stated that he would prefer to have the Nagore Dargah Sheriff demolished, since its teachings are at odds with Islam’s monotheism.⁵ The Sunni religious doctrine animating this wish was found in a rack near the exit, bearing pamphlets printed by a foundation based in Saudi Arabia. In this context, the discomfort of the Singapore museum’s docent with the word “shrine” becomes clear, as the veneration of



FIGURE 0.2. The replica of the boat behind the Nagore dargah in Singapore. (Photo by Julia Byl)

saints—and the work of Sufi teachers and musicians, often one and the same—is seen by many Sunnis as *shirk*, or idolatry.

Yet, Julia's experience of the Penang dargah provided a different picture than the pamphlets at the mosque. Arriving at midday on a busy Friday afternoon, she passed through a cluster of men and women sitting in the shade in front of the building, taking in a comic sung improvisation, in Tamil, that a man was directing at friends. Everybody was laughing in a knowing way, including a man who looked to be of Peranakan Chinese heritage, sitting comfortably within the mostly South Indian group. Entering the mosque, Julia sat down, offering the small but perfect oranges she had snuck from her hotel's buffet. The sheikh had invited her to come and sit in the dargah at will—like anybody else—but provided little information outside brief nods. She saw a well-dressed Malay woman in hijab seated beside the sheikh, a two-liter bottle of water in front of them. The lid was off, and he was reciting over the opening, sotto voce, verses from the Qur'an. Julia spoke with her afterward—she explained that she was a Sunni Muslim, but needed healing for her husband's badly injured leg and had come to Nagore for results. The woman left holding her modern handbag in one hand, the bottle of water in the other.

These stories clearly convey Indian Ocean histories of mercantilism, migratory labor and colonization, the circulation of religious teachings, and the conviviality that persists at the shrines in Singapore and Penang. Surely similar anecdotes could be told at churches for the Lady of Good Health. They also hint at the plight of Indian Ocean communities that are shaped by histories of foreign origin or mixed cultural parentage, and that appear vaguely irrelevant or explicitly threatening

to hegemonic nationalisms and ongoing international recalibrations. In many places, such forces have resulted in silencing: harmoniums behind glass, Sunni pamphlets rather than the pulse of qawwali. And yet, the Malay woman's visit to the shrine reveals a persistent alignment not explained by ethnic or religious identity, but by power and efficacy: water in an ordinary blue plastic bottle made protective through sound. Our aim in this volume is not to come down on any side of such debates—though you probably sense where our sentiments lie—but rather to understand the role of sound and music in articulating them.

SOUNDING THE INDIAN OCEAN

Providing numerous case studies ranging across the Indian Ocean—across disparate time periods and historical and ethnographic approaches—*Sounding the Indian Ocean: Musical Circulations in the Afro-Asiatic Seascape* brings together the disciplines of Indian Ocean and music studies. As glimpsed above in our discussion of Sufi and Catholic networks connecting South and Southeast Asia, the chapters in this volume explore how music helps materialize networks of connection across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and in several of its distinct locales. Our focus is not simply the well-worn tropes of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism, however, nor a definition of the IOR as a site for the harmonious mixing of populations (though some of our chapters reveal one or both of these). Rather, we show how music contributes to placemaking in distinct “Indian Ocean worlds” (Srinivas, Ng'weno, and Jeychandran 2020). Instead of defining music's value in its ability to provide *either* narratives of identity formation *or* the celebration of mixture, *Sounding the Indian Ocean* explores the role music plays in both boundary formation and boundary crossing in Indian Ocean contexts, past and present. In articulating distinct ontologies for Indian Ocean musics, their relations to the more nebulous term “sound,” and their historical development through (yet also firmly outside of) colonial and modern Western influence, this volume moves beyond the static notion of mapping the musical traditions of the region's peoples to foreground questions of networks, audiences, patrons, and performances (Feener and Blackburn 2019).

We use the term *sounding* in the double sense of sonic production and listening—and measuring oceanic depths—as a gloss for both intellectual inquiry and attention to a range of musical practices.⁶ As Jim notes in a recent article (Sykes 2021), seawater has long served as a “theory machine” (Helmreich 2011, 132) that “helps us think about liquidity, circulation, seepage, and leakage” (Ballestro 2019, 415). Perhaps because of this porosity, and the potential and threat that water and coastlines hold, water boundaries “are prone to securitization” (Fischhendler 2015)—as seen in the growing cold war between India and China in the Indian Ocean, and also in the boundary policing of the region's ethnonationalists. To us,

“sounding” the Indian Ocean means navigating the role of sound in producing possibilities for understanding the porosity of maritime cultures, including attempts to promote or eschew such cultural “seepage.”

But let there be no confusion: this is a work of music studies and not sound studies. To do the latter would require moving instruments and repertoire to the margins to engage more closely with sound reproduction technologies—a valuable project, but not what we are up to here. This being said, we argue “music” as a concept has often functioned in the modern IOR to define communities against one another, demarcating ethnic and religious difference through heritage discourses. As such, within the discourses of modernity, “music” came to stand in opposition to sound (and noise)—or, perhaps, over and above it—demarcating boundaries between nature and culture as well as the appropriate placement of religious and ethnically defined practices in the public sphere.

While we see value in contesting music’s role in the production of contemporary ethnonationalisms, our goal in this volume is more modest. We contend merely that “identity” is not always the most salient framework for registering music-making in the IOR, and that to “sound” the Indian Ocean requires denaturalizing “music” as a concept and looking instead for moments of its formation and trespassing. The essays in this volume explore contexts where “music” is constituted and circulated, moving us away from merely cataloging instruments and genres to locate music at the juncture of several kinds of encounters that constitute Indian Ocean worlds: between political regimes and diverse populations, land and sea, men and women, elite and subaltern, labor and leisure, port city and littoral, multiple religious or ethnic groups occupying the same or nearby spaces, and differently constituted ears in famously plural Indian Ocean port cities.

CROSSING INDIAN OCEAN DIVIDES: HISTORY, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND MUSIC STUDIES

By registering *music*, *sound*, and *listening* as key words in Indian Ocean studies (alongside others like relationality, placemaking, and networks of memory; Srinivas, Ng’weno, and Jeychandran 2020, 12–19), our chapters stake a claim to the importance of the Indian Ocean to music history and vice versa. Indian Ocean studies is an interdisciplinary field celebrated as “a template for thinking and writing about interculturalism, globality, and transregional movements without necessarily privileging the West” (ibid., 12). Given the ocean’s vast expanse, it is understandable that the conjoined themes of mobility and connection have long characterized the field (e.g., McPherson 1993; Simpson 2006; Sheriff 2010; Moorthy and Jamal 2012; Amrith 2013; Alpers and Goswami 2019). This emphasis has emerged particularly through studies of mercantile exchange (e.g., Subrahmanyam 1990; Machado 2014; Bishara 2017; Pearson 2015), colonialism (Anderson 2010;

Rosa 2015; Sivasundaram 2020), religious networks (Bang 2004; Green 2011), and globalization (Prestholdt 2008, 2019; Hooper 2017). Much early work in Indian Ocean studies questioned how far the ocean's influence could be felt inland and how to characterize its stability and transformations over the *longue durée* (Chaudhuri 1985).⁷ Pearson's concept of the littoral (2006, 2010) has been a generative concept, highlighting key differences between port city populations (Broeze 1989) and sedentary ones living along the coasts that likewise embody histories of Indian Ocean connections.⁸ The field's early concern with the impact of the European colonial presence in the region (Pearson 1987) has given way in recent decades to exploring the ocean before the arrival of Europeans, including diasporic populations that predated the era of the nation-state (such as the Yemeni Hadhramis; Ho 2004, 2006; Hofmeyr 2010, 723). The recent growth of anthropological studies of the region has generated fruitful comparisons of local dynamics across the IOR, such as how transnational movements like Islam come to differentiate populations in coastal Kenya (the Swahili from the Giriama; McIntosh 2009) and Malaysia (the Malays from the country's Indian and Chinese minorities; Willford 2006). Despite this growth of attention to fieldwork, Indian Ocean studies maintains an emphasis on texts (Desai 2013; Ricci 2011), though scholars are turning increasingly to the visual and architectural (Barnes 2012; Shokoorthy 2003).

Musicological scholarship on the Indian Ocean promises to expand on many of these themes and (perhaps less obviously) contribute to our understanding of Indian Ocean economies and histories of urbanization and media. Indeed, it is already doing just that and more (e.g., De Beukelaer and Eisenberg 2020; Eisenberg 2013; Rasmussen 2016; Eisenlohr 2018). What this book highlights, then, is not a lack of scholarship on music in the IOR but the lack of a scholarly frame. To date, there has not been an explicitly named "Indian Ocean" framework for registering the musics of the Indian Ocean rim or its islands—at least not since the beginnings of ethnomusicology in the 1950s and its ancestor discipline comparative musicology. This latter field, operative from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, produced lofty assumptions about the diffusion of musical instruments and practices across the Indian Ocean, whether it be marimbas from Southeast Asia to Africa or the *valiha* (tube zither) from Borneo to Madagascar. It also produced armchair comparisons of the tonal systems of various traditions (see Byl and Sykes [2020] for a longer discussion of this issue). Some of these assumptions were far-fetched, and others were not. The approach was increasingly jettisoned by ethnomusicology, a field that adopted its standard of long-term fieldwork from cultural anthropology. The notion of oceanic connections thus came to appear riddled with outdated, problematic terminology (e.g., "diffusions")—which was replaced by a land-centric, methodological nationalism that had the effect of erasing the Indian Ocean from music studies. Key islands in the IOR, from Madagascar and Zanzibar in the west, the Maldives and Sri Lanka in the center,

and Sumatra in the east, as well as huge land masses like South India and Saudi Arabia, were positioned as the ends of regions, rather than hubs of cultural connection. The transformation of the Strait of Malacca from traversable waters to a dividing line between colonies and nations finds parallels in the partitioning of Sri Lanka from South Indian, and Omani from Zanzibari music history. The Indian diaspora in the Caribbean has been more represented in ethnomusicology than the Indian diasporas in East Africa and Southeast Asia, closer to the homeland.

While there is indeed historical evidence for the movement of instruments and music theories across the IOR, the goal of this volume is not to exhume comparative musicology. Rather, we strive to bring ethnomusicology into dialogue with the currently booming (and ethnographically and historiographically well-grounded) field of Indian Ocean studies. What does naming the Indian Ocean as a site for the formation of connected music histories do to our understanding of Indian Ocean worlds that have heretofore been neglected or peripheralized in music scholarship? At this juncture, we contend, like many Indian Oceanists before us, that there is much to be gained from stepping outside the nation-state framework—and we stress that doing so does not require abandoning fine-grained studies of music in distinct Indian Ocean locales.

Music studies' oceanic purview has centered on the Atlantic (e.g., Floyd 1996; Goodman 2013, 2015; Treece 2020) with attention given to the Caribbean (Rommen and Guilbault 2019; Njoroge 2016), the Pacific (Lawrence 2001; Solis 2015), the Austronesian world (Abels 2011), and the Mediterranean Sea (Magrini 2003; Cooper and Dawe, 2005; Shannon 2015; Horowitz 2021). Studies of Indian Ocean musics in this volume resonate with, and at times challenge, key themes in the music histories of these maritime spaces, including narratives about slavery and plantation labor, long-distance migration, island cultures and imaginaries, tourism, the formation of creole identities, regional identities spanning multiple nation-states, and religious innovations, to name a few.⁹ Though ours is not a explicitly a work of intermediality and multimodal scholarship, our contributors suggest ways that music and sound might be integrated into IOR scholarship's sensory turn.¹⁰ Refusing to cordon off music into a domain marked "culture," *Sounding the Indian Ocean* hears maritime and world history, inspired by musical imaginaries and local musical concerns across the IOR.

MUSIC AS A POLITICAL ECONOMY

Paradoxically, the assumption that music lies outside of politics—and instead is an apolitical form of expression, entertainment, heritage, and/or devotion—explains its utility for many nation-building projects in the IOR. Arguing to the contrary, we suggest that it will be useful to define music as a political economy—in the Foucauldian sense of a "discourse on governing," with ordering capacities (familial,

kinship-related, hierarchical, communal)—rather than merely as a form of expression that needs to be situated *in relation to* politics and *within* an economy. The notion of an inherent link between music, heritage, and communal identity needs to be denaturalized and historicized, rather than simply adopted as the proper method or focal point of study.

As Ritu Birla notes, a conceptual separation between “economy” and “culture” was sedimented in nineteenth-century colonial India: “As law posed ‘the market’ as sovereign, *cultural* subjects emerged as ‘natural’ *and a priori*” (2009, 25; her emphasis). In colonial India, Ceylon, and the British-run Straits Settlements, we suggest, religious processions came to appear as the outward emergence of already-formed communal practices into the public sphere (Sykes 2017) rather than practices that emerged *in public* through their aural and visual encounters with Others (Lunn and Byl 2014). “The market” (gendered male) was dominated by the British colonists, yet thought to be governed by the invisible hand; “culture” (gendered female) was portrayed by anticolonial Indian nationalists as emerging from within the interiorized space of community, presumably untouched by colonialism.¹¹ This allowed for the perception of an unbroken connection between contemporary performers (particularly female singers) and the precolonial past (Weidman 2006). Through the process, certain musics—demarcated as “classical”—came to appear a “higher” occupation than ritual labor or music-for-entertainment, facilitating a felt connection to an abstract notion of cultural history and communal identity: something akin, indeed generative of, what Anderson (1983) termed an “imagined community.”¹²

While the above refers to British colonies, similar processes happened elsewhere in the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the legacy of culturalism (though easily overdetermined) greatly affects many of today’s Indian Ocean musicians. To take one example, Jim noticed during his fieldwork in Singapore that the government there invests in “ethnic music ensembles” related to the island’s three major communities—the Chinese, Indians, and Malays—that are positioned as though they display bounded, traditional musics whose differences must now be bridged through “multicultural collaborations” in the name of ethnic harmony. Yet, the Indian tabla and European-derived harmonium (prominent in India) are also core components of Malay traditional musics, and the Middle Eastern oud moved across the Indian Ocean to become the Malay *gambus*, while centuries earlier, a similar instrument (likely a precursor of the oud) moved across the Silk Road to become the Chinese pipa (see Byl et al. [2017] for a poem about instruments and identities in 1860s Singapore). Furthermore, Jim learned that in Singapore the institutional hegemony of Western classical music is then overlaid: one of his interlocutors lamented the tearing down of a multiethnic neighborhood that housed a “far Eastern music school” in which

Tamils, Chinese, and Malays had collaborated musically, in order to build the School of the Arts (SOTA)—a pretertiary school with a focus on Western classical music. These examples show how discourses linking music, heritage, ethnicity, and/or classicism obscure histories of musical encounter both across the Indian Ocean over the *longue durée* (in the first example) and between migrant communities in an Indian Ocean nation (in the second), with tangible effects on musicians' lives.

INDIAN OCEAN SOUNDWORLDS

Acknowledging that conceptualizations of “music” developed in the Indian Ocean in relation to imported intellectual processes (like liberalism and culturalism) undergirded by colonial law and reinforced by postcolonial discourses on multiculturalism and heritage is not to reduce “music” in the Indian Ocean to a colonial origin. Rather, it asks us to denaturalize (to “hear” outside of) the legacies of liberalism and culturalism that remain integral for understanding musical developments in Indian Ocean nations, but whose effects have never been totalizing.¹³ In this light, unique Indian Ocean musical ontologies—perhaps related to Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, and other religions, but also to Malay and Arab and Punjabi and Swahili ethnicities, to Urdu and Tamil and Arabic linguistic identities, to Balochi and Zanzibari networks, and so on—may appear to have the decolonizing potential to free us from the hegemony of European-derived constructions of music, personhood, and culture.

While we do not discount the legitimacy of variously construed Indian Ocean ways of hearing the world (we represent several in this volume), once again our aims are more modest. On the one hand, scholars need to recognize the ways that modern Western notions of music have limited what registers as music in the IOR. On the other hand, while distinct ontologies of music and sound are locatable in (and as) IOR traditions, an attempt to bound them this way risks reproducing notions of cultural isolation and purity—indeed, culturalism itself—that have made traditional musics amenable to ethnonationalism. Hindutva in contemporary India, the 969 movement in Burma, and Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, as well as the destruction of non-Muslim cultural heritage in the Maldives and Bangladesh, violence against the Rohingya in Burma, against Christians in Indonesia, and the postcolonial cleansing of some Indian populations in East Africa—these all testify to the destructive power of narratives linking ethnic identity, traditional practices, and territory.

Rather than playing into such narratives of division, or naively assuming that music always facilitates ethnic harmony and interaction, *Sounding the Indian Ocean* situates music and musicians as focal points for the articulation of contestations about history, memory, locality, and belonging. Although we editors of

this volume have disciplinary orientations toward the eastern Indian Ocean (Jim in Sri Lanka and Julia in Sumatra)—a bias that is surely evident in this introduction—the volume puts musicological literature from across the IOR into dialogue. Skeptical readers may question whether it is appropriate to situate (say) Balochi and Sri Lankan musics, or Swahili and Malay musics, in the same “region.” Surely Indian Ocean music history *should* be broken up into distinct regions—even down to smaller oceanic spaces like the Mozambique Channel and the Strait of Malacca—but we contend there is much to be gained from a broader perspective. Showing how multiple inheritances are under constant (re)construction via such discourses as ethnicity, religion, and nation, the volume foregrounds histories of connection while affording comparisons between disparately placed communities with similar histories.

CROSSING INDIAN OCEAN DIVIDES: CONNECTION AND COMPARISON

The Indian Ocean is an interconnected “arena” (Bose 2006) that has been dubbed an “Afro-Asiatic seascape” (Jayasuriya and Pankhurst 2003) and an “Islamic Ocean” (Chaudhuri 1985). It contains the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal and is framed by Madagascar, the horn of Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, the Southeast Asian archipelago, and Australia. It holds a fifth of the world’s seaspace, and its rim is home to a third of the world’s population (Amrith 2013, x). On the shores of the Bay of Bengal alone live an estimated 500 million people (Sheriff 2010, 18). The region also includes “island hubs” (Schnepel and Alpers 2017) of historic importance, such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives, the Andaman Islands, Mauritius, Madagascar, the Seychelles, Réunion, and Socotra as well as places like the Cocos Islands and Pulau Nias that are less well-known globally but just as significant to their inhabitants.

A core aspect of Indian Ocean music studies is that certain instruments, sounds, and genres moved widely and settled, connecting geographically dispersed areas of the IOR—the most famous being the oud that traveled from the Middle East to East Africa and the Malay world, including a variant from Hadhraumaut (Yemen) called *gambus* in the Malay world (Capwell 1995; Hilarian 2003; Lambert and Mokrani 2013; Kinzer 2017). According to Engseng Ho (2006, xix), Hadhramis sailed to the songs of mariner Bā Tāyī, who once wrote a poem for each direction visible from the southernmost tip of the Arabian Peninsula: “across the ocean seeking India and Java to the left and the coasts of East Africa, the *sawāhil*, to the right.” Like the generations of Hadhramis who traveled, settled, and married locals throughout the Indian Ocean, the poems of Bā Tāyī string “along ports like prayer beads, naming each for its patron saint” (Ho 2006, xix). Ho lists their ports of call: “coastal places like Kilwa, Lamu, Mogadishu, Aden, Mocha, Zabīd, Jedda, Cambay, Surat, Calicut, Aceh, Pattani, Melaka, Palembang, Riau, Banten,

Pontianak, Makassar, and Timor,” followed by landings (during the colonial period) “at the imperial ports of Dar es-Salaam, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Djibouti, Aden, Jedda, Bombay, Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Batavia, Surabaya” (xxii).

Over the course of Indian Ocean history, numerous populations settled across the breadth of the ocean, dispersed by slavery (people from Madagascar, Mozambique, and island Southeast Asia), plantation labor (South Indian Tamils), migration (Chinese and Sikhs), and European colonialism and missionization. Taken together, these migrations generated African-descended musical communities in South Asia and the Gulf states; the Cape Malay musical traditions of South Africa; Tamil diasporic musical networks linking Mauritius, South Africa, with Sri Lanka’s Hill Country, Malaysia, and Singapore; the formation of Gujarati and Sikh musical communities in East and South Africa; and the Portuguese-influenced musics of Sri Lanka, Goa, Melaka, and Mozambique—to name a few. *Sounding the Indian Ocean* calls music studies to center such peoples, places, and their musical traditions for the first time, noting connected histories and continued patterns of mobility, particularly as these affect the development of regional and local musical imaginaries.

Our volume also centers the oft-hybridized musics of some majority populations of the Indian Ocean littoral and island spaces. Some examples include: Swahili *taarab* musicians on the Kenyan coast whose musics incorporate elements from “*ngoma* traditions, Egyptian Arab music, Arab musics from the Arabian Peninsula, or Indian musics” (Eisenberg); the *tufo* genre performed by Swahili women in Mozambique, descended from the Muslim praise songs (*mawlid*) that were “introduced to the Swahili aristocratic communities (*waungwana*) by the Alawiyya Sufi Order from Hadramawt” (Hebden); Kuwaiti sung poetry set to the melodies of mid-twentieth-century Bollywood songs and made popular by a Yemeni musician who lived in Somalia as well as by a “Hadhrami troubadour of Punjabi descent who toured East Africa during the 1940s and 50s” (Lavin); the Portuguese- and African-influenced popular music genre *baila*, historically associated with Sri Lanka’s small African- and Portuguese-descended communities but performed today by Sri Lankans of all stripes, though particularly the island’s Sinhala Buddhist ethnic majority (Radhakrishnan); and the performance of *dakwa* (“the Indonesianized version of the Arabic term *da’wa* . . . which connotes strengthening the faith and encouraging others to do the same”) as mixed with Javanese melodies in *seni music Islam* (Islamic musical arts) in Indonesia (Rasmussen).

Michael Feener and Anne Blackburn (2019, 11) write that the attention to networks in Indian Ocean studies has moved toward the specific, “mapping the transregional movement of individuals and institutions within frameworks of particular communities and diasporas.” What has been missing, they suggest, is comparison. They approvingly cite Peter van der Veer’s statement that “comparison” should be conceived not primarily in terms of comparing societies or events, or institutional arrangements across societies . . . but as a reflection on our

conceptual framework as well as on the history of interactions that have constituted our object of study” (Feener and Blackburn 2019, 11; cited from van der Veer 2016, 28). We concur. While this volume eschews the outdated methodologies of comparative musicology, we encourage various comparisons: between the western and eastern Indian Ocean; between African diasporic populations in distinct Indian Ocean locales; between Muslims in Kuwait, Mozambique, Mauritius, and Indonesia; between Bengalis in Burma and the Andaman Islands; and between the Portuguese-influenced music of Sri Lanka and the Scottish-influenced music of the Cocos Islands—to name a few.

CROSSING INDIAN OCEAN DIVIDES: CONTINUITY AND RUPTURE

Indian Ocean trade and pilgrimage networks have always been routed by the annually shifting monsoon winds, called *msimu* in KiSwahili, *mawsim* in Arabic, *mosum* by Persians and Indians, and *musim* in Malay. The northeast monsoon blows southward from the northern rim of the ocean and northward from its south, creating an equatorial current in a loop from just north of Madagascar across to the south of Sumatra and western Australia. The southwest monsoon reverses course, blowing upward toward the Indian Subcontinent and the Horn of Africa, and sending ships westward toward Africa and north toward the Arabian peninsula and India. The East Africa to India trip could be made once a year; the Arabia to northwestern India trip, several times in the same period.

The monsoon facilitated not only movement but also *restrictions* on movement, requiring merchants to spend long periods in their places of trade before returning “home.” Many Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Sinhalese, Swahili, Arab, and Chinese traders had multiple families along the trade route and alternative “home bases” in each Indian Ocean port city. The aforementioned Hadhramis intermarried with local women, *becoming* “Swahilis, Gujaratis, Malabarais, Malays, Javanese, Filipinos. They became natives everywhere” (Ho 2004, 215–16). These men, many with wives in each port, moved through the oceanic space being “put up by relatives, who might have Arab uncles married to foreign, local aunts” (Ho 2004, 215–16). This was a world where people “socialized with foreigners as kinsmen and Muslims” (Ho 2004, 215–16), which a reduction to ethnicity does not accurately capture. At the same time, the inversion of the male merchant experience was registered at home, as in the tradition of Mappila sung poetry from India’s Malabar coast, which captured the sadness and resilience of the families left behind (Haseeb 2021).¹⁴

Numerous religious networks have traversed the Indian Ocean, predating the Muslim presence, including various sects or denominations of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Certain Indian Ocean languages, like Swahili, Arabic, English, and Malay, became lingua franca across large swaths of oceanic territory,

or in the case of languages like Urdu and Gujarati, specific migratory networks. Radically diverse in themselves, these networks did not always produce mutual understanding with Others, or even an internal uniformity. Nile Green notes that there has been an “assumption that ethnic and linguistic pluralism is inherently equivalent to positive forms of social capital and beliefs that formally celebrate such pluralism” (2018, 847).¹⁵ Examining late colonial travelogues from Muslims writing in Urdu and Persian (with some Turkish, Arabic, and Swahili writings, set in “Iran, India, Arabia, Burma, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Africa”; Green 2018, 852), he shows that these writers—many of whom were on the Hajj—experienced the Indian Ocean as a space of alterity or what he calls (following Foucault) a “heterotopia.” The shock of difference was most felt, Green suggests, in the ports of Bombay and Aden.

Andrew J. Eisenberg (2017) shows that music may create *both* a sense of difference *and* a sense of connectedness to Others when he writes about Kenyan musical life that, “Arabness *reverberates* in Swahili-space, revealing its various contours and edges, [and] Indianness *resonates*, existing as a palpable yet ungrounded presence” (Eisenberg 2017, 348, italics in original). He stresses that although “being Indian in Kenya . . . means being quintessentially non-African,” the musical recordings of many *taarab* musicians “not only produce a sense of Swahili community by revealing the Indianness of Swahili intimacy, but also “reveal the deep *familiarity* . . . between Swahili and Indians” (Eisenberg 2017, 351; see also Topp Fargion 2014).

Music also articulates hierarchical relations within Indian Ocean ethnic groups while allowing for senses of continuity and rupture across broad timespans. Consider Jim’s witnessing of a Tamil Hindu *urumi melam* (drum ensemble) that performed for an audience of South Indian laborers at a Hindu temple, located on the grounds of a Shell oil refinery off the coast of Singapore (Sykes 2015). While the performers and audience formed a homogenous group (overwhelmingly young, male, and Tamil), they were differentiated by class: the Singaporean drummers—some of whom worked for well-paying tech companies—were far better off than the working-class South Indian laborers. Both the laborers and *urumi* musicians followed in the footsteps of earlier generations of South Indians who built much of the infrastructure of colonial Singapore and Malaysia, or worked on Malayan rubber plantations that, in their production of rubber for tires, were emblematically connected to global capitalism. Between 1840 and 1940, around twenty-eight million such men (and later, women) crossed the Bay of Bengal to work as laborers for the British colonists in Burma and colonial Malaya—one of the world’s largest but least known human migrations (Amrith 2013, 2). Ritual drummers lived on these plantations and performed at their temples, as several pilgrimage routes for the annual Thaipusam festival grew across the Malay Peninsula and Singapore—which today’s *urumi* drummers play at (Lai 2016). But this continuity does not signify similarity between eras: for example, while caste shaped the kangany system that governed plantation labor in colonial Malaya—the recruiter/manager

(kangany) was usually of a higher caste than the laborers, many of whom came from the lowest rungs, including the Paraiyar (drummer) caste—such distinctions are considered unimportant to today’s Singaporean Tamil youths (Sinha 2006, 106). Drumming at Hindu festivals in Singapore is a hobby and passion for drummers, *not* a caste occupation, in contrast to the plight of many ritual musicians throughout South Indian Tamil history.

Now, consider the difference between the migration of Tamil laborers to the British colonies and an earlier period of migration during the height of Portuguese colonialism, when an Indian trading community settled in the Portuguese colony of Malacca (present-day Malaysia) and intermarried with Malays, creating a distinct mixed Tamil-Malay community called the Chitti Melaka (Sarkissian 2000; Pillai 2015). *That* era of migration could hardly be more different from the perceived golden age of the civil and military voyages of the seafaring South Indian Tamil Chola Dynasty (circa ninth to eleventh century CE), which influenced religion and statecraft across mainland and maritime Southeast Asia, a source of pride for Tamils. In sum, this Tamil example demonstrates that Indian Ocean networks may be communally enclosed yet also diverse, changing over the centuries while retaining continuity, constantly separating themselves from Others yet integrating and being forever changed by encounters. We suggest that an Indian Ocean music studies will need to look for such nuance, tacking inside and outside of networks, looking for ruptures and continuities. The chapters of *Sounding the Indian Ocean* are replete with examples.

POSTCOLONIAL FRACTURES AND CONVERGENCES

Today, Indian Ocean histories of connection are often politicized or forgotten. As Amrith puts it, while it is too easy to romanticize the “polyglot traders and cross-cultural marriages” of this Indian Ocean world “in which long-distance travel [was] a common experience . . . the narrowness of postcolonial nationalism compounded the loss of connection across the region, mourned in the late twentieth-century context of rising religious violence and bloody internecine wars across the postcolonial world” (2013, 26–27). For anticolonial and postcolonial nationalist movements that created allegiances based on ethnic membership and claims to land, the existence of mixed communities or minority groups of Indian Ocean heritage became a threat or at least an afterthought: “postcolonial nations both restricted movement and reoriented the sociopolitical imaginations of people along the rim” (Prestholt 2015, 441).

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a “reconstitution of the Indian Ocean rim in the context of a multipolar world” (Prestholt 2015, 441). Writing shortly after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York, Ho (2004 2010) noted the urgency of understanding “the history of relations between Western powers and transnational Muslim societies in the Indian Ocean,” remarking that “an anthropologically nuanced understanding of such societies as diasporas . . .

lends a useful perspective on a set of conflicts which is massively unfolding.” The connected nature of the Indian Ocean reemerged again in the wake of the 2004 tsunami (Bose 2006). Amid the destabilization caused by the Iraq War, China has engaged in numerous infrastructure and port projects over the past decade and a half to safeguard its oil exports, triggering an emerging cold war with India for hegemony in the region—greatly affecting island nations like Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Mauritius, who find themselves in debt to the Chinese. Today, “despite the disjunctures of the postcolonial era, the imagination of the Indian Ocean as a distinct region has become more, not less important” (Prestholdt 2015, 455). Although the prestige and resources of the trader has positioned some Indian Ocean communities (the Hadhramis, the Straits Chinese) to take advantage of today’s globalized world, many coastal areas, once flourishing hubs, are among the places most vulnerable to ecological disaster. Think of the coastal areas of Mozambique washed out in 2019 by Cyclone Idai, or the shores of Aceh and Sri Lanka after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami; 17 percent of Bangladesh is projected to be underwater due to climate change by 2050, while all of the Maldives may be underwater by 2100 (Ghosh 2016).

These examples may be familiar to scholars of the IOR, but less familiar to ethnomusicologists. How do “Indian Ocean musics” fit into these dynamics—these continuities and ruptures—and what can attention to sonic cultures add to IOR scholarship? The definitive (yet vague) answer is that musical expression certainly is and was present in all of the situations just described—whether in the radio waves of an early twentieth-century nationalist broadcast, in a relief concert for victims of a natural disaster, or at a religious festival in a multiethnic global city. We just need more music researchers working within an IOR frame to enlighten us with their findings.

Musicological research can benefit IOR scholarship because it relies on subtlety, whether in the close reading of a song text or drum pattern, or in the years of fieldwork needed to discern what a performer is really saying about their music, its history, or its contemporary audience. Musicological research connects well to some methodologies historically used by Indian Ocean scholars, such as archaeology and organology: tracing the lines or tone of an instrument can be solid material evidence, all the more valuable within historical periods with few written archives. Tour networks, regional pop stars, and the circulation of YouTube videos say much about contemporary cultural and economic connections between Indian Ocean nations. Music research is already demonstrating how Indian Ocean connections are downplayed in some contemporary Indian Ocean nations for nationalist reasons, such as in the rooting of authentic Arab musical expression in desert Bedouin communities in Oman (Ulaby 2012, 59). The ethnomusicologist’s goal of privileging what Indian Ocean individuals say—in their own languages—prevents us from scoping out too far or claiming too much, and inadvertently turning an individual into a subject or statistic. Paying attention to the immediacy of

music and its local meanings can emphasize the agency of Indian Ocean communities, while attention to musical evidence can tell histories in surprising ways that still sound true to a tradition's inheritors. We leave it to authors of the volume itself to *begin* to provide such musical knowledge from their own broad sites of research.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Given that we coeditors specialize in South Asia (Jim) and Southeast Asia (Julia), we have intentionally sought out scholars working elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, particularly along the East African coast and the Gulf region. Grouping chapters by theme rather than geography best suits our integrated approach to the Indian Ocean: "Listeners," "Mobilities," "Mediascapes," "Communities," and "Connections," followed by a "Conclusions." We acknowledge that many of these chapters could easily "jump ship" into a different section but contend that this grouping will allow the reader to draw comparisons between peoples, musics, and sociohistorical processes locatable in different parts of the Indian Ocean.

"Listeners" begins with a chapter by Richard Williams on Indians in colonial Burma—a labor force that developed through British colonialism, which came to form the majority in the capital Rangoon (now Yangon) by the start of World War II, when they were driven out due to the Japanese invasion of 1942, the expulsion orders of General Ne Win in 1962, and the nationalization of Burmese industries from 1964. Williams uses a Bengali source (circa 1900) to explore how a Bengali Muslim man heard Burmese musical genres and sounds. Williams argues that this Bengali listener "re-sounds" the Burmese via unique poetic interpretations that provide an "imagined geography" that is neither Burmese nor Bengali but transformed by contact. Next, Andrew Eisenberg explores the life of the female Zanzibari *taarab* singer Siti binti Saad (1880–1950)—reportedly the first woman from East Africa to record a commercial music recording. Detailing her deep engagement with Hadhrami Arab and Indian musical traditions, Eisenberg sees her "mimetic appropriations" as a critical engagement with Zanzibari sociality and lived experience.

The next section, "Mobilities," highlights the ways that musical processes and traditions are influenced by networks of human sounds and movements. Ellen Hebden explores *tuyo*, a music and dance genre performed by groups of women in Mozambique. Though this genre has its origins in Arab songs praising the prophet Muhammed and is still performed at local religious festivals, the genre has transcended these origins to engage political and social topics. Hebden approaches her chapter through the concept of "motility"—a word particularly appropriate for a dance tradition—which she describes as "as a way to tie people's social movements to their capacity to be spatially mobile." She explores strategies that *tuyo* dancers employ as they create a space for this Indian Ocean tradition within the modern nation of Mozambique. Next, Carola Lorea's chapter centers on Bengali musicians

in the Andaman Islands—located east of India and west of the Malay Peninsula—a site infamously used as a penal colony by the British colonial government. Rather than foreground mobility, Lorea notes that the Andamans emerged for Bengalis as “critical zones of confinement, disconnection, restriction of movement.” She explores how the Matua religious movement (originating in East Bengal in the early nineteenth century) fosters social equality and draws followers from marginalized groups. Lorea’s discussion of the devotional *kirtan* genre reveals dynamics of sociability, efficacy, and sensory experience and the transformation of ritual music within an Indian Ocean community whose mobility has been limited. Finally, George Murer’s chapter explores the musics of Balochistan, a geographic and cultural region spread across the boundaries between Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Murer traces diverse musical repertoires, instruments, and poetic traditions of Balochi people across today’s thriving port cities of the Gulf states (e.g., Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Muscat), a project enabled by multisited field research in Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar—itself a virtuosic display of mobility.

“Mediascapes” contains two explorations of how technologies produce localized soundscapes dependent on transnational oceanic connections. Patrick Eisenlohr, a linguistic anthropologist who has written extensively about Mauritius, shows how a “sonic atmosphere” is created by *na’t* (sung poetry) performed by Mauritius’s Indian Muslim community. This community has connections with Sufi associations on and off the island (such as in Mumbai), and their performances are mediated by the circulation of recordings across this oceanic Sufi network. A *na’t* performance shifts among several languages—Mauritian Creole, Arabic, and Urdu. Next, Gabriel Lavin’s chapter moves from the early modern networks of Hadhrami (Yemeni) musician-poets to a discussion of the increased circulation of Arabic poetic musical genres across the Indian Ocean as a result of technologies like the steam ship, and later, the sound recording. Straddling history and ethnography, his chapter provides the reader with a sense of the musical and geographical range of these older recordings as such music finds audiences on far-flung coasts.

“Communities” begins with Inderjit Kaur’s chapter on Sikh devotional music in Kenya, set within a history of Indian migration beginning after creation of British East Africa Protectorate in 1895. Although hostilities toward Indians resulted in the exodus of around 100,000 people by the 1970s, a strong Sikh community remains today. Kaur’s chapter locates home in the Sikh diaspora at the Gurdwara Makindu—a place of worship located on the rail line that Sikhs helped to build and locus of a copy of the “scriptural guru” Guru Granth Sahib. She explores how this sacred space is constituted through sound and service for Sikh and local African communities alike. Next, the chapter by Sylvia Bruinders and Valmont Layne describes the musics of the distinctive Cape Malay community in Cape Town, South Africa, whose ancestry stems from enslaved and free Muslims who moved (or were brought) to the Cape during the Dutch and British colonial

periods. The term “Cape Malay” connects to Southeast Asia but does not stop there: the community’s origins are in the Dutch transport of enslaved Javanese to the Cape, but today refers to a heterogeneous group, including those of Malagasy and Indian descent, whose ancestors used Malay as a lingua franca. In their chapter, Bruinders and Layne survey a wide array of Cape Malay musics and musicians while discussing the shifting geographical orientations of the South African coast during the colonial and postcolonial periods as it moved from a zone of trade to a “hinterland” and back again. Finally, Brian Jackson’s chapter discusses the ways that the Afro-Asian communities of Sidi (Western India) and Sheedis (Pakistan) are integrated—or not—into the broader South Asian communities that surround them. By paying attention to historical trajectories of Sufism, and contemporary performances such as the Sidi Melo festival, Jackson explores how music connects or challenges the persistent “Othering” experienced by this community, by showing the emergence of their musical subjectivities in dialogue with their minority status.

The final section, “Connections,” begins with Julia Byl’s historiographical study of the pervasive (though at times tacit) legacies of cultural influence between Southeast Asia and India. The chapter interrogates the term “Hindu-Buddhism,” used frequently by scholars of Southeast Asia not only to refer to the Indic religious legacies throughout the area but also to describe the purportedly flexible mindset that allowed these religions to be linked in the past. Although she pays particular notice to Indic legacies in Sumatra, Byl extends the discussion to refer to other religious pluralisms—including those within Christian, Muslim, and indigenous traditions—while zeroing in on what scholars mean when they gesture at religious syncretism in such a vague way. The volume continues with David Irving’s study of music within the uneven and sometimes jarring relations between the Malay inhabitants of the Cocos (Keeling) Islands (today an Australia territory) and the island’s original British overseers. The Cocos islanders, Irving argues, express a distinctly local and at times autonomous identity by juxtaposing Scottish dance and Malay poetic song. Finally, Mahesh Radhakrishnan’s chapter focuses on the Portuguese Burgher music of Sri Lanka, analyzing musical meter in the *kāfriinha*, a core component of Sri Lanka’s popular music genre called *Baila* that was influenced by Sri Lanka’s small community of African descent. Radhakrishnan posits a fruitful comparison with musics in the Seychelles, Mauritius, and the Réunion Islands, paying attention to the circulation of Afro-creole and Lusophone musical legacies throughout this area, dubbing it a “bailasphere.”

The volume concludes with two short complementary essays, the first penned by Anne Rasmussen—a scholar who has significantly moved the musicology of the IOR forward through her ethnographic, musical, and pedagogical engagements between Yemen and Indonesia (Rasmussen 2010). Rasmussen explores the Islamic concept *dakwah* (a concept related to religious teaching and piety) within

a longer discussion of cultural affinities across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. She brings forward an important perspective on the formative Bandung Conference in 1955 (in Indonesian, the “Konferensi Asia-Afrika”) by exploring how music helped to form the exchange at the second such conference, ten years later. Finally, an “Epilogue” written by the editors explores the further expansion of the Indian Ocean that occurs when recording artists from the region (including South African music icon Miriam Makeba) and performing troupes (including a Tamil musical tour to New York City) bring Indian Ocean musics, social dynamics, and connected histories to a larger audience. These closing examples urge us to renew our focus on the decolonial promise of the Indian Ocean—as articulated through song by Makeba, and famously represented by the Bandung Conference described by Rasmussen in the previous chapter—in dialogue with the recent decolonial turn of music studies.

In sum, we are delighted with the ways these chapters intermingle: Balochi musicians show up in Brian Jackson’s chapter and in George Murer’s; Javanese music is present in Gabriel Lavin’s article on Arabic media flows as well as in the papers on Southeast Asia. We welcome you to log your own connections between the chapters, as this practical activity can orient readers to the logics of the Indian Ocean as surely as our theoretical offerings. While an Anglophone, North American perspective is overrepresented in this volume—given the editors’ backgrounds and scholarly networks—the volume profiles a global range of scholars (based in Australia, Canada, Germany, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, the UAE, the United States, and the UK), and several approach their research with insights from membership in the communities they study.

We should note that we faced limitations in putting the volume together. First, not all scholars who research Indian Ocean countries orient their studies around Indian Ocean themes. To organize the volume, we canvassed our scholarly networks and then put out a public call for papers; in the end, the book’s geographic spread was contingent on the contributions we received. Our most glaring lacunae, perhaps, is absence of focused studies on Madagascar, the Maldives, Kerala, Gujarat, and Goa (though some of these places do make brief appearances in the volume). The volume would have benefited from a greater engagement with colonial port cities (we just have one, colonial Rangoon, though Singapore is discussed briefly in this introduction and our conclusion) and their touring networks (such as the Parsi theater troupes that moved from South to Southeast Asia). Finally, several contributors focus on marginal populations, so we worry our volume could paradoxically wind up reinforcing the marginal status of the Indian Ocean in music studies.

Yet, the volume, as it is, does offer new perspectives. It situates Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Singapore—each now among the world’s premier metropolises—as central to Indian Ocean music studies. Such cities emerge in the volume as key urban nodes with others of historic importance (e.g., Cape Town, Zanzibar,

Colombo, Penang). The volume foregrounds key ethnic groups that have become metonymic for the Indian Ocean—such as the Hadhramis, Swahilis, Tamils, and Malays—while displaying music’s key role in establishing historically important networks like Sufism, Indic connections in premodern Southeast Asia, Portuguese colonialism, slavery, and indentured labor. If we stipulate that each essay is merely a port of call—from which readers are encouraged to travel onward—then the volume’s greatest promise is in the future scholarship that we hope will emerge as a result of the insights of these scholars and the communities that supported their research.

NOTES

1. Nor is this sort of syncretism limited in this region to Tamil populations; consider, for instance, that Sinhala Buddhists (Sri Lanka’s ethnic majority) are known to frequent Catholic churches and Hindu temples in Sri Lanka.

2. The idea for the temple came from Friar James Bharataputra, out of his work with Tamil Christians who settled Kampung Keling in Medan (see Byl, this volume).

3. See, e.g., the songs of Nagore Hanifa (www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVdDTx_I35w). For a tambourine-driven Tamil Muslim folk song, see, www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxKTuLk4fNA.

4. <https://ndsingapore.squarespace.com/>.

5. There is a well-documented history of violence by reformist Muslims toward Sufis in eastern Sri Lanka (McGilvray 2008), where Jim witnessed the flag-raising ceremony at the local Nagore dargah in 2008.

6. Stefan Helmreich (2015, xi) lists some meanings of “sounding”—“fathoming,” “resounding,” “uttering,” “being heard,” “conveying impressions,” “suggesting analogies”—and suggests that “the mashing up of these meanings is productive.” We agree.

7. By the 1980s, Eurocentric histories of the IOR—which held that “Europe developed a unique culture that facilitated the emergence of individualism, private property and the profit motive” in contrast to societies “dominated by archaic social structures, such as caste, and by religious ideologies” (Campbell 2008, 32)—had given way to an “Asiatic” scholarship highlighting an Asian-driven trading network that, from the thirteenth century, stretched from China to India, the Persian Gulf, and Mediterranean (Abu Lughod 1989; Wink 1996, 1997). Chaudhuri famously segmented the Indian Ocean into three circuits (the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and South China Sea) by the eleventh century (1985, 37–39). Recently, Gwyn Campbell (2008) has critiqued both the Eurocentric and Asiatic writers for neglecting Africa, arguing that the concept of Indian Ocean Africa (IOA) is needed to “replace conventional geographical and political divisions” (2008, 40) and avoid the normative periodization scheme that hinges on Europe’s “Voyage of Discoveries.”

8. “We can go around the shores of an ocean, or a sea, or indeed the whole world, and identify societies that have more in common with other littoral societies than they do their inland neighbors” (Pearson 2006, 353; see Mukherjee [2017] for a recent critique).

9. Selected works that engage with Indian Ocean music studies include: Al-Harthi and Rasmussen (2012); Ulaby (2012); Askew (2002); Muller and Benjamin (2011); Emoff (2002); Considine (2013); Caitlin-Jairazhboy (2002); Jayasuriya (2020); Ul Ithisan (2021); Schofield (2023); Sykes (2018); Tan (1993); Sarkissian (2000); Byl (2014); Kartomi (2012); Emoff (2002); Field (2017, 2019, 2022); Groesbeck (2018); Haseeb (2021); Bond (2020); Chatterjee (2023); Boswell (2017); Jeffery and Rotter (2018); Parent (2020).

10. One model for future work on music/sound in the Indian Ocean is a project funded in 2019 by the Mellon Foundation's "Transregional Collaboration on the Indian Ocean" initiative, which aims "to facilitate dialogues between sound, music, photography, film, and climate mapping to study monsoonal changes and related shifts in both human and nonhuman lives" (<https://items.ssrc.org/from-our-programs/the-transregional-collaboratory-on-the-indian-ocean-announces-the-2020-planning-grant-recipients/>).

11. The classic articulation of the argument is Chatterjee (1993).

12. See Sartori (2008) for a demonstration of how the culture concept (he uses the term *culturalism*) emerged in late nineteenth-century India out of the British philosophy of political liberalism, which predated it.

13. Schofield (2016) suggests the term "paracolonial," a concept from Stephanie Newell that refers to the fact that "lineages of knowledge . . . continued, developed, and were born and died alongside and beyond the colonial."

14. Of course, not all restrictions on movement were produced by the monsoon winds. On the Andaman Islands as a site of convict labor and political prisoners during the British Raj, see Vaidik (2010). On Sri Lanka as a "concrete exilic site as well as a metaphor for imagining exile across religions, languages, space and time," see Ricci (2019).

15. He writes that historians have valorized the novels of Amitav Ghosh as displaying this seemingly inherent trait of the Indian Ocean, without noting that they rely on earlier works by historians who used colonial sources with an elite, cosmopolitan bias. Green quips that historians now tend to take Ghosh's portrayal of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism as a historical truth, thus reifying the problem (Green 2018, 847).

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