

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20145]

Proposed title of the session

Merchants, Migrants, and Slaves in the Development of a Pacific Ocean World

Abstract

In the nineteenth century, increased economic activity formed the Pacific Ocean into a more unified economic “world.” Although for millennia, Asians in the Western Pacific had traded among themselves, from the sixteenth century, Europeans entered the trade and linked the entire Pacific by exchanging American silver for East Asian silks. Whale oil, furs, ginseng, porcelains, and other commodities later expanded trade. From 1800, Indian opium became a prominent good and Europeans and Americans dispatched fleets of steamships throughout the ocean’s reaches to transport goods, troops, and missionaries.

This panel will engage the “Diversity in Development” theme by examining the role of Western traders and whalers but focus on the contributions of Asia-Pacific merchants, migrants, and slaves. Along the same lines, the panel will take up the role of less-examined trade goods, such as forest and marine products, within an emerging intra-Pacific economy over the course of the nineteenth century.

The panel will explore primarily the Western Pacific and wherever possible make links to other parts of the ocean. James Warren will examine merchants and slaves involved in sea cucumber and other marine and forest product trades in the southern Philippines. Robert Hellyer will discuss merchants and migrants in Japan and Okinawa trading kelp and other marine products. James Lewis and Seung Ho Jun will offer insights on the activities of Korean ginseng merchants, a group often left out of discussions of Pacific trade. Ginseng was the Viagra of its day, and Korean ginseng was highly prized in China and elsewhere, meeting competition from North American ginseng. Ryuto Shimada will examine independent US merchants that transacted in forest and marine products, as well as opium and a range of Western goods, throughout Southeast Asia. David Odo will consider the Western whalers and migrants who established a community on the previously unpopulated Ogasawara Islands, incorporated into Japan in the 1870s. Kaori Mizukami will examine South Asian merchants who migrated to Japan, Hong Kong and US Pacific coastal cities in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

These diverse perspectives will serve as a touchstone for a larger discussion on how trade patterns offered a foundational framework on which other actors came to play parts. The earlier centuries, primarily the silver and opium trades have been extensively examined, but the nineteenth century saw the development of the Pacific into a more, integrated economic “world.” Building on the earlier routes and flows to China of American silver and Indian opium, the panel looks closely at the nineteenth century for the routes, flows, and patterns that immediately precede our modern world. How did the trades in forest and marine products, and the related movement of migrants, merchants and slaves, intersect with whaling? Did the Pacific “world” emerge from dynamic activity first in its eastern or western half, or unfold from south to north? How did national agendas of empires and states around the Pacific Rim, notably Qing China and the United States, influence the activities and lives of independent merchants, migrants, and slaves?

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Robert Hellyer (Wake Forest University [United States of America])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Ryuto Shimada (University of Tokyo [Japan])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Ryuto Shimada (University of Tokyo [Japan])
3. James Warren (Murdoch University [Australia])
4. James Lewis (Oxford University [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland])
5. Seung Ho Jun (Academy of Korean Studies [Republic of Korea])
6. David Odo (Harvard University [United States of America])
7. Kaori Mizukami (University of Tokyo [Japan])
8. Takeshi Hamashita (Sun Yat-sen University [China])
9. Peter Perdue (Yale University [United States of America])