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People-to-People Partnership in Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Historical and Cultural Linkages

V. Selvakumar

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Key Recommendations

- India and Southeast Asia served as an important connecting corridor between Africa and East Asia including China, as far as Japan. Therefore, these regions coming together to form the AAGC for the development of Afro-Asian regions is very much relevant.
- Archaeology, history, education, cultural heritage, arts and entertainment and cultural tourism are the areas where cooperation among Africa, India and Japan can be beneficial to all the parties concerned.
- Academic collaborations can be encouraged among African, Indian, Japanese and other Asian Universities for undertaking research in various fields, including science, engineering, management and culture, history and archaeology. The existing centers for African and Asian studies in the universities of these regions can be incorporated into the proposed network.
- The Indian Government has initiated the *Project Mausam* to trace the age-old cultural connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region, and to re-establish the old connections for developing cultural relationships. This project can be strengthened through the AAGC initiative and Cultural Heritage and Museum networks.
- The genesis of multi-dimensional connectivity--cultural, genetic and physical anthropological--between Asia and Africa lies in the very remote past. The knowledge of watercrafts or rafts that perhaps developed in the Mesolithic times, lead to coastal navigational activities and interactions in the Indian Ocean. These connections continued in the historical times.
- The knowledge on the cultural connectivity of AAGC region needs to be disseminated. It is important to incorporate the history and culture of Asia and Africa regions and cultural connectivity at various levels of education in the AAGC, without ignoring any particular sub-region.

People-to-People Partnership in Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Historical and Cultural Linkages

V. Selvakumar*

Abstract: People-to-People Partnership (PPP) is an important and inevitable mode of interactions in the sphere of international relations. In any kind of developmental, diplomatic and cultural interactions and relationships, the interests of the people are important. The AAGC is an important attempt in the area of South-South Cooperation. The conventional approaches in the study of history have focussed only on some parts of the world, while ignoring the history of Africa and many regions of Asia. For example, a survey of the history syllabi of the academic courses across many Asian regions would reveal that there is more focus on other parts of the world, mainly the Western World, while completely ignoring Africa. The historical and cultural linkages between Africa and Asia have been very old and vibrant; but these connections have been forgotten because of the limitations of perceptions and outlook. This paper briefly outlines the historical linkages in the region of Asia and Africa and offers some thoughts for positive People-to-People Partnership as part of AAGC.

Keywords: AAGC; Asian-African world; Indian Ocean Interactions; maritime history; international relations

Introduction

People-to-People Partnership (PPP), one among the four main pillars of Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), is an important mode of interactions in the sphere of international relations. Multi-dimensional interactions among the citizens are essential for forging meaningful, long-term partnerships and goodwill across the nations. People-to-People partnership covers interrelationships and exchanges in numerous areas such as arts, history, heritage, culture, tourism and

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education. Historical and cultural connections and cultural interactions form a significant constituent part of PPP. This chapter focuses on the historical and cultural linkages that existed in the Asia-Africa regions, primarily during the pre-modern period, and offers suggestions for future cooperation under PPP as part of AAGC.

In any kind of developmental, diplomatic and cultural interactions and relationships, the interests of the people constitute the central pillar. Therefore, the objectives and core philosophy of AAGC have to gain the acceptance and support of the people concerned. PPP is about “winning the hearts and minds of the people,” across the vast territories of Africa and Asia. PPP could help to create lasting bonds and relationships, and to improve the public understanding and awareness. It would facilitate an understanding of the common interests in the AAGC among the various agencies and the public. Thus, the PPP is an important pillar of AAGC.

As pointed out by the vision document, the AAGC could involve

- Tourism exchanges among the people across cultures
- Education: HRD, capacity building, training and skill development
- Knowledge Facilitation and Management: creation, sharing and dissemination of knowledge on arts, literature, culture and historical linkages
- Development and reliance on Afro-Asian knowledge Systems: from the grassroots level to higher level, for sharing of knowledge and cultural experiences.

Asia-Africa Historical Linkages

The ideas of Asia-Africa connectivity and interactions are definitely not new. Human ancestors had indeed understood the importance of migration, movement, connectivity and interactions as means of survival, adaptation as well as cultural selection to tackle various social, economical, political, cultural and environmental

pressures, right from the prehistoric period. Because of certain modern perceptions that reject the very ancient past as ‘primitive,’ and irrelevant, one may underestimate the prehistoric and ancient connections and their significance in the contemporary context. Cultural and historical connections have the potential to build humane relationships across the nations. Evidence from history provides ample instances for connectivity and interactions leading to positive growth and development, in various historical contexts. Understanding of the past connections and their implications could help to develop holistic interactions.

Japan-Africa-India: the Terminals and Centres of Connectivity

As early as the beginning of the Common Era, at least, it is certain that Africa and Asia were well connected through trade and exchange network systems, with the exchange of ideas, people and commodities within the various subsystems. These trade networks that started from Africa reached as far as Japan through India. Japan, India and Africa were in fact terminals in one sense, and centres in another, in this expansive network. One of the important commodities of exchange of this period was the glass beads, known as Indo-Pacific beads, which are found in the Indian Ocean and Asia Pacific, as far as Japan. The glass beads have been reported from East Africa and also in the Yayoi tombs of Japan, and evidence of the presence of Indian craftspersons have come from the site of Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand (Bellina and Glover, 2004; Bellina, 2006; Bellina-Pryce and Silapanth, 2006). It would not be incorrect to argue that India and Southeast Asia served as an important connecting corridor between Africa and East Asia including China, as far as Japan. Therefore, these regions coming together to form the AAGC for the development of Afro-Asian regions is very much relevant, and is not out of place and context.

Conventional Approaches and Issues

The conventional approaches to the study of global historical interactions have mainly focussed on the relations between the West and East, in a sense ignoring the interactions in the Africa-Asia

regions, and thereby fail to develop a holistic perspective. The strong notions of East-West division of the globe have ignored to a greater extent the South-South interactions. Although strong connections existed between the African coast and other parts of Asia in the Pre-Colonial period, these connections were not effectively developed or focussed, when the new independent states emerged, after the World War II, and when national concerns were prioritised, after several decades of colonization. Despite several initiatives including the Colombo Plan and the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung, the achievements on the ground were comparatively limited.

In the academic arena, the ancient interactions between Asia and Africa have always been visualized from fragmentary perspectives, as highlighted by the parable of “the five Blind Persons and an Elephant,” like the ‘Indo-Roman,’ ‘Indian Ocean,’ ‘India-Southeast Asia,’ ‘India-Africa,’ Southeast Asia-Africa’ and ‘India-West Asia’ connectivity and interactions by various agencies. However, the perspective of Indian Ocean had been developed by a few researchers (Chaudhury, 1985, 1990; Bose, 2016; Alpers, 2014) to approach the interactions holistically. Although a few historians have in the recent past focussed on the Africa-Asia connections, there is ample scope and necessity for further research and also to sensitize the academic circles on Africa-Asia interactions. A survey of the history syllabi of the academic courses across many Asian regions would reveal that there is more focus on other parts of the world, mainly the Western World, completely ignoring Africa. There appears to be certain bias in the perceptions, when the syllabi for World History are designed. It is very important that we need to move away from such lopsided perspectives and focus on researching the historical and cultural connectivity across Asia and Africa.

Another important trend related to the study of history in the colonial and post-colonial contexts is underplaying or overstressing the role of native or local communities and the foreign influences. This trend is common across the world in many contexts, e.g. in the study of

ancient Indo-Roman trade, India-Southeast Asia interactions (Kulke, 1990; Wolters, 1999) or Africa-Asia/Europe interactions (cf. Kusimba, 2017). Similarly, there have been arguments on the origin and source of specific intangible and material cultural traits in historical and archaeological investigations. A balanced, objective perspective is necessary in understanding the cross-cultural interactions and their impacts on cultural and historical developments, and many a times, it is impossible to pinpoint the specific locus of origin of a particular cultural trait. It is evident that connectedness and interrelationships among the communities are some of the important factors for the urbanization, and growth in history, besides the internal factors.

A brief survey of the historical linkages in Asia-Africa regions is presented below, from a chronological perspective, under the divisions of Prehistoric, Late Prehistoric, Early Historic, Medieval and Modern/Colonial periods.

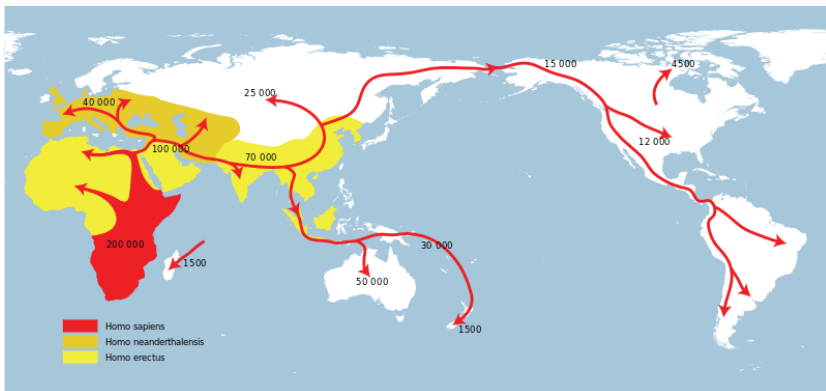
Prehistoric Interactions

The historical linkages between Asia and Africa are in fact very old and extend to the prehistoric period. The studies on human origins and migrations point out that the hominins, human ancestors, the species *Homo erectus* or its variants, are considered to have evolved in Africa and then migrated out of Africa to different parts of the world around 1.9 to 1.8 million years ago (Maslin *et al.*, 2015). The evidence of *Homo erectus* is found at many sites in Africa and in Java (Sangiran, Tirinil, Ngandong) and China (Hexian, Lantian and Zhoukodian) (Rightmire, 1988), and in India the Acheulian tools datable to ca. 1.5 myr have been found at Attirampakkam near Chennai (Pappu *et al.*, 2011). Many sites with early palaeolithic hand axes of identical style and design occur in Asia and Africa.

There are debates about the origin of modern humans across the world; the theory called ‘Out-of-Africa’ strongly points out that all human groups that occupy the world today evolved from the *Homo*

sapiens (modern humans) who migrated out of Africa and populated in different parts of the world (Fig.1). Apart from the human skeletal remains, the DNA studies that are being undertaken in various parts of the world today argue for the evolution of the modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) in Africa and then reaching out to various parts of the world including Asia (Stringer and Andrews, 1988; Johanson, 2001; Liu *et al.*, 2006). This prehistoric connection, which is perhaps the earliest linkage between Africa and Asia, is very important point for fostering relationships among the populations of Asia and Africa, and this connectivity cannot be ignored as primitive or irrelevant. The genesis of multi-dimensional connectivity--cultural, genetic and physical anthropological--between Asia and Africa lies in the very remote past. The knowledge of watercrafts or rafts perhaps developed in the Mesolithic times, leading to coastal navigational activities and interactions in the Indian Ocean.

Figure 1: Map Showing the Spread of *Homo Sapiens*



Source: Wikimedia Commons, Author: NordNordWest

Late Prehistoric/Bronze Age Interactions

After the dispersal of the modern humans and the development of cultures in various ecological zones of the world during the Mesolithic and Neolithic phases, the Asia-Africa regions were occupied by early

civilizational and cultural systems. The Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indus Valley and Chinese civilizations flourished around the fourth-third millennium BCE. Intense cultural connectivity and interactions that emerged among the various communities and cultures of Asia and Africa in this period through the overland and coastal routes indeed supported the efflorescence of civilizations and cultures. Watercrafts were well known among these civilizations and a tablet from the Indus Valley/Harappan site of Mohenjodharo has a depiction of a boat (Fig. 2) and a brick structure at the Harappan site of Lothal in Gujarat (Fig. 3) has been identified as a dockyard (Rao, 1985). Organic residue analysis of early Iron Age Phoenician clay flask suggests the interactions with South Asia in spices as early as second millennium BCE (Gilboa and Namdar, 2015). The knowledge of watercraft making was well known among various communities of Africa and Asia, and the Austronesian people are considered to have navigated long distances in the Indian Ocean (Gupta, 2004).

Figure 2: A Boat Depicted in a Moulded Tablet, Mohenjodaro



Courtesy: Harappa.com

After the advent of agriculture, communities interacted and exchanged seeds and domesticates, and according to Kusimba “antiquity of African domesticates in Asia and Asian domesticates in Africa and distribution of trade goods in Africa, Southwest and South Asia attest to this interaction as far back as 2000 BCE, if not before” (Kusimba, 2017). Evidence of plant dispersal from Africa to Asia

Figure 3: A Reconstructed Image of the Dockyard at Lothal



Courtesy: Harappa.com

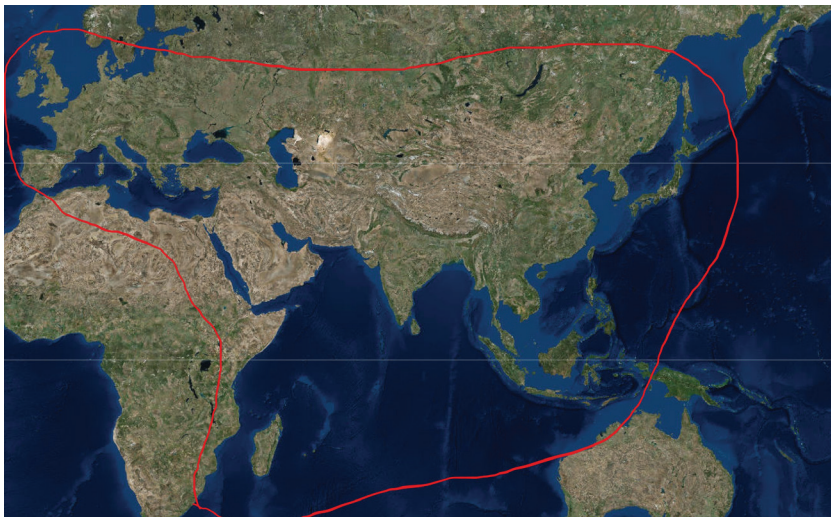
is evidenced in the form of *Vigna unguiculata* (cowpea), *Eleusine coracana* (finger millet), and *Pennisetum glaucum* (pearl millet), probably datable to the early second millennium BCE (Asouti and Fuller 2008; Fuller and Boivin, 2009; Boivin *et al.*, 2013). Likewise, the presence of Austroasiatic population in India and Southeast Asia does point to the intimate overseas and coastal connections between South Asia and Southeast Asia in the later prehistoric period. Similarly, land routes existed across Asia to China and in the eastern front and the maritime routes connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia with China and Japan (Hung and Chao, 2016). Although the artifacts and grains are the only visible, tangible traits of interactions, people must have also exchanged numerous ideas and intangible cultural traits and interacted in the prehistoric period.

Early Historic Interactions

The ancient period, around the beginning of the Common Era, witnessed the exchange of commodities, human migration, spread

of ideas and the emergence of urbanization in the coastal as well as interior areas of Africa and Asia, more particularly, in the rims of the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific (Fig.4.), and the Greco-Roman, Indian and Chinese historical sources mention about the intensive connectivity. The Greek text of the *Periplus Maris Erythraei* presents a vivid account of the maritime trade routes and, the interactions from East Africa to Southeast Asia and China, and the major ports and marts in Africa, Europe and Asia. This text adds that the coast of East Africa was known as Azania, and Raphta (an unidentified port) was the Southernmost emporium (Casson, 1989). The rise of the Roman, Mauryan and Han empires in a way supported interactions across the Indian Ocean Region. The development of urban centres in the Early Historic period along the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean was indeed supported by the Asian and African interactions and the associated economic exchanges. The interactions involved several varieties of luxury/prestige and other type of goods such as spices, especially pepper, metal, silk, cotton, horses and precious stones.

Figure 4: Core Areas of Interactions in Asia-Africa Region in the Early Historic Period



Adulis, in Eritrea; Berenike (Sidebotham 2010) and Quseir al Qadhim in Egypt (Tomber 2008); Khor Rori/Sumurram in Oman, Muciri/Pattanam (Shajan *et al.*, 2004; Cherian and Menon, 2014), Arikamedu (Wheeler *et al.*, 1946; Begley *et al.*, 1996, 2004) and Tamluk in India, Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand (Bellina, 2006), Oc Eo and Tra Kieu in Vietnam and Hepu in China were some of the important coastal centres of Africa and Asian Region. Innumerable variety of material cultural evidence is found for the interactions of the Early Historic period, and three of these are discussed below.

Pepper and Other Spices

Pepper is one of the important commodities of the spice trade of the Indian Ocean and the Malabar Coast of India was a main source of pepper. Spices from other parts of India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia were also exchanged. Black pepper of about 7.5 kg, stored in an Indian jar, was excavated at the site of Berenike in Egypt, (Tomber, 2008; Sidebotham, 2010). Organic remains Pepper is known from other sites such as Quseir al Qadhim in Egypt and Pattanam in India as well (Cherian and Menon, 2014). The early Tamil texts mention about the Roman ships coming to the port of Muziris/Pattanam with gold/metal and returning with pepper (Tomber, 2008).

Indo-Pacific Beads

The fabrication of glass beads known as the *Indo-Pacific beads* (Fig. 5), which occur from East Africa to Japan, is one of the important technological developments of this period (Francis, 1989; Dussubieux and Gratuze, 2003). *Earliest evidence of the production of these glass beads is found in India* (Francis, 1989; Kanungo, 2004a, 2004b, 2006) *and they were probably produced in several areas in the Indian Ocean region. There is a possibility of indirect connections across the Indian Ocean as far as Japan, since identical beads are found in the Yayoi Tombs of Japan* (Katsuhiko and Gupta, 2000), *and also in East Africa at a later context. The similarity of these beads in the Asia-Pacific does suggest the technology/idea transfer and interactions across the Asia and African regions.*

Figure 5: A Collection of Indo-Pacific Glass Beads from Arikamedu



Courtesy: Steven E Sidebotham

Rouletted Ware and Other Associated Fine Ceramic Wares

Rouletted Ware is a fine ceramic ware dish produced in India in the Ganga-Brahmaputra delta of Bengal in India and sherds of ceramic have been found from Quseir al Qadhim in Egypt to Tra Kieu in Vietnam (Fig.6) (Begley, 1988; Tripathi, 2002; Schenk, 2006; Selvakumar, 2016). Complete vessels of this ceramic variety were found in the Buni Complex of Indonesia as part of the burials (Walker and Santoso, 1980) and now they are in the National Museum at Jakarta (Fig. 7). The distribution of this ceramics is another pointer to the expansive network of Asia-Africa regions that existed in the Early Historic period.

Figure 6: Parts of a Rouletted Ware Dish with Decoration, Arikamedu



Photo: Steven E. Sidebotham

Figure 7: A Complete Rouletted Ware Dish in Jakarta Museum



Photo: Selvakumar

Cultural Interactions

The coastal networks and routes powered by the monsoon winds/dynamics of the Indian Ocean became very popular and numerous communities and regions participated in this trade and exchange, and tremendously benefited out of the interactions. The Indian texts, especially the *Jataka* tales mention about the interactions with Southeast Asia (Chandra, 1977; Ray, 1994). The connections between Southeast Asia and India were also strong and Southeast Asian regions were known as *Suvarnadwipa* (Cœdès, 1996).

Evidence of Indian specialist workers is seen at the site of Khao Sam Kaeo in Thailand (Bellina, 2006). Inscriptions of a goldsmith and navigator from India have been found in Thailand (Ray, 1994). Indian ceramics and inscriptions, Indian Brahmi inscriptions conveying the names of merchants, pepper and rouletted ware which have been found in various ports of in the Indian Ocean region

Figure 8. A Decoration on Potsherd from Alagankulam, India with a Female Figure Carrying an Amphora.



Photo: Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department, India

from Africa to Southeast Asia suggest the mobility of commodities and traders. The transfer of technologies and development of urban centres along the coast also appear to have been caused by the expansive network. The materials from East Africa reached South Asia and Southeast Asia (Gupta, 2016). A potsherd from Alagankulam on the east coast of India has an image of a female figure carrying an amphora and this person has the physical features of African individuals (Fig.8). The connections with China/East Asia across the overland route known as the silk route was also important, but the maritime routes offered a number of advantages over the overland trade routes. The rise of Buddhism and its spread in East Asia and Southeast Asia was another notable development in this period, and the Buddhist network and the associated cultural, intellectual and trade activities were very powerful across Asia (Ray, 1994; Sen, 2003; Holcombe, 1999). To sum up, it could be argued that the cultures and civilizations of Asia, Africa and Europe came together, around the early centuries of the Common Era to create an ancient version of what could be called globalization.

Medieval Interactions

The medieval Indian Ocean interaction dynamics have been studied by several researchers (Mukherjee, 1912; Chaudhury, 1985, 1990; Ray, 1994; Chakravarti, 2012; Mukherjee, 2011). Interactions among Africa, West Asia, India, Southeast Asia, China and Japan are well recorded in numerous sources. The Chinese ceramics are distributed across the Indian Ocean (Karashima, 2004), and the Indian ceramics are found in West Asia (Anjana Reddy, 2014) as well as East Africa (Hawkes and Wynne-Jones, 2015) and Southeast Asia. The western Indian Ocean region saw intensive interactions involving Christian, Gujarati, Hindu, Islamic and Jewish traders from Asia and Africa.

The early medieval interactions in Asia and Africa regions were multi-dimensional, and Buddhism achieved strong presence in many parts of Asia as Buddhist ideas reached Japan through China. The major centres of Buddhist learning including Nalanda attracted students and pilgrims from Asia, the notable being the Chinese

pilgrims Fahien (Faxian) and Xuanzang. Buddhist learning and ancient Indian philosophy, rituals and architectural ideas of state formation reached Southeast Asia. The epic of *Ramayana* (Singaravelu, 2004) and the *Jataka* stories reached Southeast Asia (Schober, 1997). Evidence of Jewish merchants is found on the West Coast of India. Islamic religion spread across the Indian Ocean and Islamic diaspora's presence is noticed across the Indian Ocean (Sheriff, 2010).

The establishment of a church called Terisapalli (Narayanan, 1996) on the west coast of India, construction of Siva and Vishnu temples by the Indian merchants (Karashima and Subbarayalu, 2009), and the construction of a Buddhist Vihara at Nagapattinam called Sudamanivarma Vihara by the Srivijaya king (Karashima and Subbarayalu, 2009) suggest intensive cultural and commercial interactions. The merchant guilds known as *Tisaiyairattu Ainurruvar*, *Nanadesis*, and *Pathinen Vishayas/Bhumis (eighteen territories)*, were active in the Indian Ocean (Karashima, 2002) and their inscriptions are found in Southeast Asia (Christie, 1998). The merchants had their quarters at the port of Barus famous for camphor in Indonesia (Subbarayalu, 2002). Association of merchants functioning in the 18 territories was active in the Indian Ocean region and the list of 18 territories is listed below in the Table 1, and this association does show similarity with the idea of AAGC.

Table 1: The Mercantile Landscapes: 18 *Vishayas* or *Bhumis* of the Indian Tradition

Name of the Region	Modern Name
Cinkalam	Sri Lanka
Conakam	West Asia/Arabia/Parts of Africa
Cavakam	Java, Indonesia
Cinam	China
Tuluvam	Tulu region, India
Kudakam	Kudagu, India
Konkanam	Konkan, India

Table 1 continued...

...Table 1 continued

Kannadam	Kannada, India
Kollam	Kerala, India
Telingam	Telingam Andhra
Vangam	Vangam, India
Gangam	Ganga, India
Makatam	Magata, India
Kataram	Kataram, Kedah
Kavutam	Gaud, India/Bangladesh
Kocalam	Kocala, India
Tamizhakam	Tamil Nadu, India

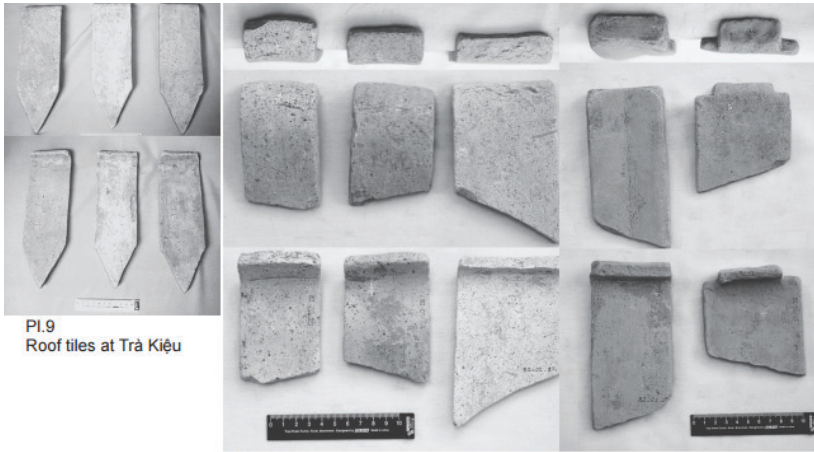
In the spheres of architecture, interactions took place in this region and parallelism is seen in the architectural forms from Japan to the Kerala coast (Fig. 9). The Medieval roof-tiles of the Chola period in South India and the roof tiles of Champa show remarkable similarity (Figs. 10-12).

Figure 9. Roof Structure from Kyoto Palace

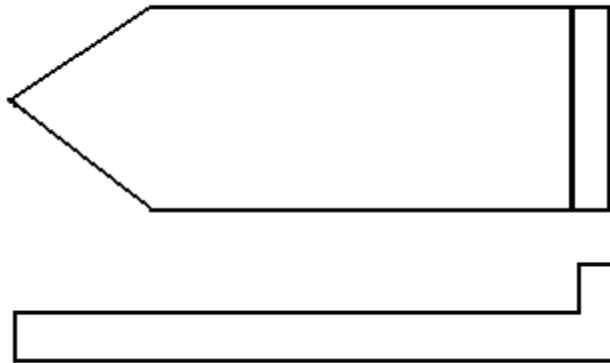


Photo: Selvakumar

**Figure 10: Roof-Tiles from Champa Period, Vietnam
(After Masanari 2010)**



**Figure 11: The Medieval Roof-tiles Commonly Found from
the time of the Cholas in South India**



Drawing: Selvakumar

Figure 12: Medieval Roof tiles of 11th Century Palace of the Cholas at Gangaikondacholapuram



Photo: Selvakumar

In the medieval period, the Gujarati merchants of the West Coast of India were well connected with the Swahili coast of East Africa (Mcmaster, 1966), and it is argued that the Indian merchants did not settle in there, and they were moving; from November to March they sailed from Western India to East Africa and returned from April to October, leaving their families in India (Oonk, 2015) using the watercrafts called *dhow*s. They acquired incense, palm oil, myrrh, gold, copper, spices, ivory, rhino horn and wild animal skins, and sold textiles, metal implements, wheat, rice, porcelain and glassware (Dubey, 2010, 2016). The Gujarati traders were well established in East Africa in the Medieval period, and it appears that the Portuguese navigator Vasco Da Gama was guided by a Gujarati merchant. The Islamic diaspora developed in South India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and Calicut was an important settlement, and African diaspora took its roots in India (Narayanan, 2006). Evidence for African Diaspora is found in India and they are called Siddhis and Zinj. Malik Amber (1549–1626) was a notable personality of African

diaspora and he was a slave, who became a regent in Deccan (Eaton, 2005). The accounts of Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta, and the Genizah documents (Goitein, 2008) attest to the intensive interactions. The cultural interactions and trade in spices, textile and other metals were in peak in the Indian Ocean, when the colonial intervention took place.

Colonial/Modern Period Interactions and the Diasporas

The colonial intervention did enormous changes in the cultural and commercial interactions in the Indian Ocean region, and many regions of Africa and Asia came under colonial dominance (Subramanyam, 1990; Mathew, 1997; Stephen, 1997; Malekandathil, 2010). Trade and commercial activities flourished and fierce competition existed among the various agencies. The Portuguese, Dutch, French and the British powers controlled this region. With the dominance of the British Empire, the historical and cultural courses underwent

Figure 13: Indian Workers in Kenya



Indian workers surveying land after laying tracks, in Kenya. 31,983 workers went from India to Kenya between August 1896 to December 1901. 2,493 died in the construction, that is, four workers died for each mile of railway line laid; more than 38 dying every month during the entire six years. A further 6,454 workers became invalid

Courtesy: indiandiaspora.nic.in

Figure 14: Makhan Singh, Image of a Trade Unionist from the Indian Diaspora at Nairobi Museum

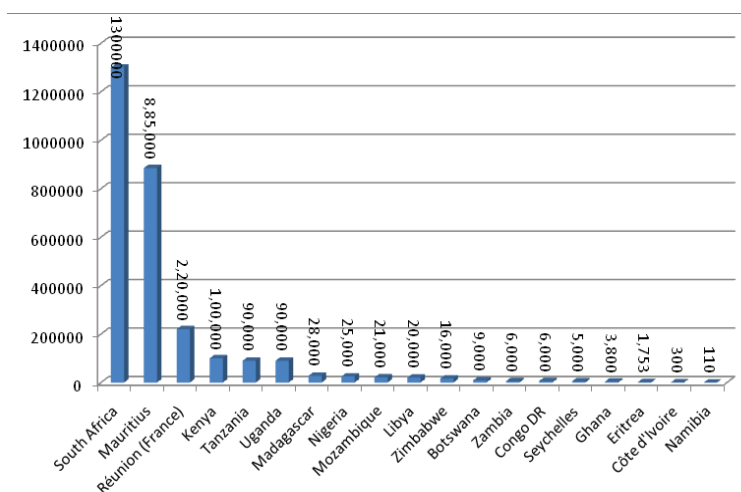


Photo: Selvakumar

tremendous change. The colonial period contributed to formation of the new diasporas and strengthening of the old diasporas. Indentured labourers moved across the regions of Africa and Asia, including Malaysia, Singapore, East Africa and South Africa and even beyond for working in the colonial projects that focussed on plantations and railway lines, which were important for the growth and sustenance of

colonial systems (Jedwab *et al.*, 2013). Indians workers, indentured labourers, were taken to East Africa for the construction of the railway work between Mombassa and Kampala (Fig. 13). Other than the workers ordinary people who migrated became businesspersons. The history of Gujarat merchants is also interesting and they seem to have settled with their families only after the Colonial period (Oonk, 2015). Indian Diaspora (Fig. 14) in Africa is considered to be around 3 Million (Fig. 15) (Dubey, 2010; Bertz, 2015; Sana Aiyar, 2015; Omenya, 2015).

Figure 15: Indian Diaspora in Africa



Source: www.nriol.com

Historical Interactions and Development

Incidentally, the four pillars of the AAGC are not new and we do have evidence for their existence in the pre-colonial past for interactions in the areas of knowledge and skill dissemination, infrastructure and institutional connectivity, trade and exchange, religion and cooperation and exchange and migration of people. There is evidence for transfer of

technologies related to the production of copper vessels, glass beads, stone beads and ornaments, and exchange of raw materials (copper), plants, commodities and ideas related to architectural traditions and biological materials in the Indian Ocean Region. Movement of people and their involvement in spreading ideas and involving activities such as digging of a tank, construction of shrines, donation of lands to institutions (Shastri, 1924), movement of belief systems, and people for learning as well as gaining knowledge, information and wealth, e.g. the visit of Chinese pilgrims to India, spread of the *Jataka* stories and the *Ramayana* traditions, the knowledge of the Asia-Africa geography in the Indian inscriptions and literature, Indian, African and West Asian diasporas, and the presence of Buddhist disciples from the Indian Ocean region at the Nalanda, the ancient and medieval centre of learning.

The continent of Africa is in fact a path-breaking corridor in the trajectory of human evolution and cultural course, and it has contributed tremendously to the global biological genetic pool; whilst Asia has worked on to develop powerful ideas and philosophies of global relevance from a very early period. Therefore, it is natural that these regions can complement each other in sustainable development partnerships.

Areas of Cooperation and Priorities

With a survey of the historical connections, we need to look forward to practical cooperation in the various areas under PPP. Archaeology, history, education, cultural heritage and cultural tourism are the areas where cooperation among Africa, India and Japan can be beneficial to all the parties concerned.

Education and Employment: Training and empowering young professionals are very important in supporting developmental activities. Support can be offered in higher education as well as in advanced research in engineering, science and technology and humanities and social sciences.

- ***Tourism:*** Tourism is another area that can contribute to the growth of economy and positive measures could be undertaken to support tourism activities in AAGC.
- ***Arts and Cultural Exchange:*** Exchanges in traditional arts and intangible cultural heritage components such as music, dance, drama, martial arts, films and cultural practices of Japan, Africa and Asia could be beneficial under AAGC
- ***Historical and Archaeological Research:*** Joint research can be undertaken in Africa and Asia for understanding the historical and cultural linkages. Initiatives for research on the historical and cultural linkages can be supported.
- ***Cultural Heritage Management and Cultural Tourism:*** Research projects on Heritage Management and Cultural Tourism can be implemented to augment the cultural heritage destinations. Some of the select sites could be developed into tourism destinations with museums and infrastructure development. The new digital technologies could also be used for enhanced exhibition of cultural heritage, across Africa and Asia.

Specific Projects and Recommendations

Asia-Africa Academic Network for Academic Collaboration

The creation of a network of the universities across Asia and Africa is very important, not only for the PPP, but also for supporting the other pillars of AAGC. Academic collaborations can be encouraged among African, Indian and Japanese Universities for undertaking research in various fields, including science, engineering, management and culture, history and archaeology. The existing universities can be incorporated into the proposed network.

Centres for Afro-Asian Studies or Asian Centres for African Studies

Constitution of Centres for Afro-Asian Studies/Asian Centres for African Studies (ACAS) in select Universities or strengthening the

existing centres in the universities could be useful for undertaking research in this area and to strengthen the PPP.

Cultural Heritage and Museum Networks

Although a few projects have been initiated in the area of cultural heritage, e.g. Project Mausam, for effective multi-lateral and multi-sectoral cooperation, a strong network and institutional architecture are essential. Therefore, it is essential that an exclusive network/system is created for cooperation in the area of cultural heritage, archaeology and museums.

Project Mausam

The Indian Government has initiated the *Project Mausam* to trace the age-old cultural connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region, and to re-establish the old connections for developing cultural relationships. This project can be strengthened through the AAGC and Cultural Heritage and Museum networks.

Public Education, Awareness and Interactions

The knowledge on the age-old connections and cultures of the Africa-Asia regions and the AAGC needs to be disseminated among the youth and the public across Africa and Asia. Dissemination of information to the public through various media is essential for promoting people-to-people partnership. Such initiatives could support tourism and economic activities.

Afro-Asian Cultural and Film Festivals

As part of the AAGC Network, cultural and film festivals could be organised in various contexts of Africa and Asia. Such festivals could help promote cultural understanding among various sections of the people. Awards may be announced for specific films and events. These events may be conducted with the help of commercial establishments and industries to make them economically viable. This may indirectly support economic development, and also help create cultural bonds.

The Way Forward

The genesis of multi-dimensional connectivity in the regions of Asia and Africa lies in the very remote past. The ideas that we have discussed so far suggest that there is ample scope and potential to develop people-to-people partnership in AAGC. Various areas of culture such as archaeology, history, education, cultural heritage, arts and entertainment and cultural tourism are suitable for undertaking collaborative initiatives, and such initiatives would greatly benefit Africa, India and Japan.

Academic collaborations can be encouraged among African, Indian and Japanese Universities for undertaking research in various fields, including science, engineering, management and culture, history and archaeology. The knowledge on the cultural connectivity of AAGC region needs to be disseminated in the regions of AAGC. It is very important to create an action-oriented plan to achieve the specified goals in the area of People-to-people partnership of the AAGC.

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