

Australindia: An Environmental History of Australia in the Indian Ocean World, 1788–1901
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Environmental historians have long understood settler-colonial Australia as a part of the Anglo-World, a continent its Anglo colonists forged into a neo-Europe. In contrast to the colonies of empire, here whites drew on their connections with other settler societies to create a “new England,” as Dunlap has argued. But what of the outposts of empire that lay closer to their new home? How might our understandings of Australia’s settler environmental history change if it is framed not only as a part of the Anglo-World, but also as part of an Indian Ocean world?

From the imperial careering of colonial administrators to settler household cookery, India loomed large in colonial Australia. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many settlers and sojourners in the Australian colonies had spent significant parts of their lives in India, while many more were familiar with the subcontinent. Although India was long the jewel in the crown of the British Empire, its influence on the exploration, colonization, and development of the Australian colonies has received relatively little scholarly attention. Likewise, the place of the Cape Colony in Australia’s settler environmental history warrants further consideration. That these settler colonies might have informed some aspects of British India’s environmental history has been similarly underexplored.

Over the past decade however there has been a growing interest in the circulations of plants, peoples, and ideas across the British Indian Ocean, from the work of Beattie and Bennett on that “impressive imperialist,” the eucalypt, to the studies of Acacia by Carruthers and Robin. These scholars have joined the critique of Alfred Crosby’s *Ecological Imperialism*, illustrating that imperial transfers of biota were rather more complex than Crosby had allowed. Their work at the periphery of the British Empire also engages, at least implicitly, with the scholarship of the new imperial history and its emphasis on the horizontal linkages between colonies in the “webs of empire.” These influences are especially evident in Beattie’s recent studies of environment and empire in India and Australasia, in which he expanded on Grove’s thesis to show that the impact of imperial expansion provoked “environmental anxieties” across the Indian Ocean.

This project seeks to engage with this growing area of scholarship by developing an environmental history that examines how people, commodities, ideas, technologies, and species circulated around the Indian Ocean and how these circulations shaped environmental knowledge in Australia from the late eighteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century.