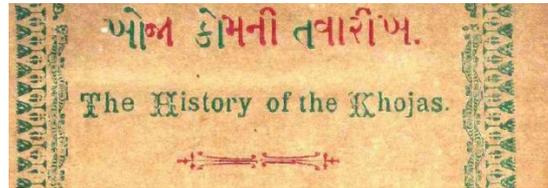


## Call for Papers

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY 3-4 MAY 2023



### **Sindh and the Making of communities in South Asia and the Indian Ocean: Between Myth and Reality**

#### **Theme**

South Asia and the Indian Ocean form a vast area which gave birth to an array of varied cultures based on the huge interactions between the shores, in terms of material as well as religious and cultural goods. In the Indian Subcontinent, there was a space that was often quoted in the narratives related to the origin of the communities: Sindh. Today a province of Pakistan, the very name of Sindh comes from the Sanskrit Sindhu, the River, which will give the words Hind in Arabic, thus Hindu, and later on India. Originally, the name of Sindh was given to the main part of the Indus Valley, and in such an arid country, the River was life, and as the Swiss scholar Gilbert Etienne says, this area was a gift from the Indus, paraphrasing Herodotus who said Egypt was a gift from the Nile.

The Third Khoja Studies Conference aims to explore how Sindh was represented in the making of the different religious communities of the region, including Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Parsi and others. Some communities were historically born in Sindh, while other were not, but for a number of reasons, they incorporated Sindh in their mythical narrative of origin. For example, the official narrative related to the birth of the Khoja community, as extracted from ginans attributed to Pir Sadr al-Din (14th C.), clearly claims that Sindh, exactly a place named Kotri on the Indus River, was the cradle of the making of the Khojas as a community. Other groups claim to be of Sindhi origin, such as the Jarejas, but were compelled to migrate to Gujarat, where they ruled Kutch and the Western part of Kathiawar for centuries. Lohanas, for instance, were arguably from Punjab, but they were 'sindhised'. Furthermore, focussing on Sindh is an innovative way to reflect on the issue of interactions between religions. The Hindu epic of Mahabharata contains mention of Sindh. Ismaili and Sufi Muslims started their proselytism in Sindh. Beyond Islam and Hinduism, Sindh was also a cradle for Buddhism, Jainism, as well as the Udasi branch of Sikhism.

The conference aims to address these questions: Was Sindh working as a matrix in the making of communities? When they refer to Sindh, is it about a mythical Sindh, and in this case, what was the benefit to refer to it? Or was it included in a process of searching for roots in a 'real' territory, as if the belonging to a soil was necessary to make a community? How did Sindh host a wide range of communities with syncretic ideologies and practices? These and similar questions will be examined by leading

scholars of different communities under study, using data ranging from devotional literature to monuments.

## Agenda

We invite scholars and researchers to submit their abstracts by the 24 October 2022. The abstracts will then be selected based on their alignment with the theme of the conference followed by an invitation to submit work-in-progress papers well ahead of the conference. These articles will be pre-circulated in order to facilitate in-depth conversation during the course of the conference. We are aiming to publish the proceeding of this conference as an edited volume and hence your full commitment and cooperation is required.

The project will provide 3-days of accommodation and meals during the course of the conference. In addition to this, conference bursaries upto \$500 are available to support participation of scholars and early career researchers.

The important dates are as follows:

- Deadline for submitting abstracts: 24 October, 2022
- Deadline for submitting work-in-progress papers: 1 March, 2023
- Conference: 3-4 May 2023

Convenors:

Michel Boivin, CEIAS-CESAH (CNRS- EHESS)  
Hasnain Walji, World Federation of KSIMC  
Iqbal Akhtar, Florida International University  
Kumail Rajani, University of Exeter

Please send your abstracts and/or any queries related to the conference to Kumail Rajani: [k.rajani@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:k.rajani@exeter.ac.uk)

