Tour and Conference on the Shared Archaeological Heritage of Oman, India, Pakistan, April 1 to 10, 2014

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As part of the Archaeology and Conservation Program India and Pakistan (ARCPIP), Indian and Pakistani participants were invited to Oman for a tour of archaeological sites and a two day conference from April 1 to 10, 2014. This unique opportunity was made possible with support from the US State Department Track II Grant to the Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin, Madison. We want to thank the US Embassy, Islamabad and the Public Affairs Office for their support and encouragement to organize the conference and tour. The travel and stay in Oman was approved and hosted by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultanate of Oman. We want to specially thank His Highness the Minister of Heritage and Culture for supporting the conference and to the Director General, Archaeology and Museums for all of his efforts to ensure that the conference was held within such a short deadline. We also want to thank Professor M. Tosi for his encouragement and help in organizing the conference and tour. The conference venue was graciously provided by the Sultan Qaboos Mosque.

This was the first time that the Indian and Pakistani participants have had a chance to travel to Oman and to meet face to face. They have been in touch over the internet and through formal communications, but this opportunity allowed them an extended period of time to discuss shared heritage issues and plan for future collaborations. This conference and tour provided them with the opportunity to interact with each other in the study of South Asia related artifacts found in Oman. They were also able to interact with the officials at the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Culture as well as with Omani archaeologists and students of history at Sultan Qaboos University. A Facebook page was set up at the end of the tour and has links to each department website.

https://www.facebook.com/ARCPIP

Prior to their trip to Oman, all participants were sent a series of articles and information about Oman and the important aspects of Omani archaeology that demonstrated the important linkages in the region. Upon arrival in Oman the team leader (Kenoyer) discussed the overall goals and itinerary of the program and received feed back from the participants about specific topics that they would like to explore during their visit. This type of discussion was repeated throughout the eight days tour and culminated in the presentations that were delivered during the two-day conference at the end of the tour.

The overall objective of the program was for the participating scholars to be able to present and discuss recent research on archaeological excavations in each region, from the Prehistoric to the Islamic period. There is clear evidence for cultural interaction between Oman and the South Asian subcontinent beginning as early as 2600-1900 BC.

This time period corresponds to the rise of urban center in the Indus Valley and Gujarat, which include the modern countries of Pakistan and India. At this time the Magan Civilization (also referred to as Umm an Nar culture) was spread throughout most of Oman and the UAE. During the subsequent Iron Age and later Islamic period, there is also considerable evidence for interaction between these regions.

The participants began their visit in Muscat where they first met with the officials in the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and saw the major museums and laboratories in Muscat. They then took a road tour of the major sites in the northern part of Oman, beginning with copper producing regions near Sohar, and concluding with the early prehistoric settlements at Ra's Al Had and Ra's Al Jinz. Upon their return to Muscat a two-day conference was held in the lecture hall at the Sultan Qaboos Mosque with a farewell luncheon hosted by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture on the final day. The conference included four scholars from Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, India, three from Hazara University, Mansehra, Pakistan, and one from Karachi, Pakistan, as well as two from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA. In addition there were presentations by Omani, Italian and French scholars (see attached program below).

The tour and conference allowed scholars to see new discoveries and get first hand information on the ways in which archaeologists in each region study and interpret their finds. The two women scholars from India and Pakistan were able to interact with Omani women professionals in the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and discuss possible collaboration in future research and exhibitions. The conference also addressed issues of how to best present the new discoveries to the general public so that they learn how to conserve and take pride in their shared cultural heritage.

As noted in their brief reports (see below) this tour allowed the Indian and Pakistani scholars to interact in a meaningful way and set the foundation for developing future collaborative research on topics of shared cultural heritage. It also allowed them to establish contact with Omani scholars and open up new areas of collaboration for the future involving Pakistani, Indian, Omani as well as scholars from the US, Italy, Germany and France.

The important areas of shared interest that have the potential for long-term collaboration are listed below. All of the participants have been encouraged to follow-up this initial meeting with specific proposals for future collaborations.

- 1. Human adaptations to changing environmental and subsistence resources in the prehistoric period, + 2 million to 4000 BC. This covers Stone Age communities of Oman, Balochistan, Sindh and Gujarat, as well as the early farming communities that emerged in these regions. Comparative studies include rock art sites in Oman, Balochistan, Northern Pakistan, and Central India. Another topic relates to the development of domesticated plants such as the date palm and the humped zebu cattle that are found in all of these regions. It is also possible that biological studies of early human populations in these regions can be compared using strontium isotope studies as well as DNA analysis of both ancient and modern DNA.
- 2. Magan and Indus Civilization interactions, beginning with the pre-urban phase around 4000 BC through to the post-urban period around 1300 BC. This topic includes the study of technological exchange, economic interaction, genetic exchange through traders and marriage alliances, symbolic traditions and ideology, as well as socio-political organization. The participants discussed the possibility of joint projects in all three

- regions, Oman, India and Pakistan, where scholars and students would be able to experience excavations and artifact studies in each region. The scientific analysis of materials is also an area of collaboration. Pottery studies can be carried out in India, and glass and metals analysis can be carried out in Pakistan. Oman also has extensive laboratories that could be used for comparative analysis.
- 3. Iron Age and Medieval Archaeology. The participants found many areas of intersection that related to the Iron Age (as early as 1400 BC) when trade networks provided important networks to link Arabia to South Asia. The rise and spread of Islam to South Asia also can be traced along these trade networks and there are many similarities in material culture between sites in Oman, Pakistan and India. Specific studies that were proposed include the study of architectural traditions, technology of iron and glass, glazed ceramics, and bead production and trade.
- 4. Museums and Public Engagement. All of the participants were interested in developing more robust mechanisms for projecting the importance of shared cultural heritage to the general public and also at the academic level in their respective countries. The possibility of a joint exhibition or traveling exhibition from each region was discussed. As part of the follow-up for this topic, the ARCPIP website and each participant website will develop sections that illustrate the important aspects of shared cultural heritage between the regions. This can be used as the first step to develop a larger traveling exhibition that could be hosted in each region.

The following scholars participated in the Conference and Tour Oman (participated in the conference)

Mr. Hassan bin Mohammed Ali Al Lawati, Director General Archaeology and Museums, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Oman

Mr. Sultan Saif Al Bakri, Director, Archaeology and Museums, Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Oman

Dr. Nasser Al-Jahwari, Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat

Dr. Mohammed Ali Al-Belushi, Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat

Dr. Khaled Douglas, Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology, Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat

India

Dr. K. Krishnan - Head and Professor, Department of Archaeology, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda - he is a ceramic specialist and was able to help in the identification of pottery from Gujarat that may have been traded to Oman. He has also studied Early Historical pottery and Islamic period sites.

Dr. Kuldeep K. Bhan, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda - he is a specialist on ancient nomadic communities and also on Harappan craft technology, particularly shell industry and bead making. He has also studied the Early Historic period sites in India and Islamic period architecture.

Dr. Ajithprasad Karoli, Professor, Department of Archaeology, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda - he focuses on Neolithic to Harappan period settlements in Gujarat,

focusing on environmental reconstructions, as well as lithics and pottery.

Dr. (Mrs) Ambika Patel, Assistant Professor, Department of Museology, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda - she is studying the copper technology of the Harappan period and is also working on developing museum displays for reaching disadvantaged visitors, and general museum outreach.

Pakistan

Dr. Abdul Samad, Chair and Professor, Hazara University, Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - he is a specialist on Gandhara period archaeology and also the study of Kalasha people of Chitral, and has experience conducting regional surveys.

Dr. Shakir Ullah, Assistant Professor, Hazara University, Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - he is a specialist on Islamic archaeology, art and architecture, as well as in museum studies.

Mr. Adbul Hameed, Lecturer, Hazara University, Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - he is a specialist on ancient civilizations, including the Harappan civilization and general field archaeology.

Dr. (Ms) Asma Ibrahim, Curator, State Bank Museum, Karachi - she is a specialist on the archaeology of Balochistan and Sindh and has extensively explored sites in both regions. She is currently excavating the site of Banbhore, Sindh, which is the site where Muhammed Bin Qasim conquered the local Hindu rulers during the initial conquest of Sindh.

US

Dr. Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, Madison – he is a specialist on the Indus Civilization and focuses on ancient technology and trade of the Indus and surrounding areas. He has recently been working in Oman to study the presence of Indus related materials at sites in Oman from 4000 to 1000 BC.

Dr. Randall Law, Archaeologist, Honorary Fellow Department of Anthropology, University of Wisconsin, Madison - he is a specialist in the study of rocks and minerals and early trade of the Indus Civilization and has worked in Oman.

Italy

Dr. Maurizio Tosi, Professor, University of Bologna, - worlds leading expert on the archaeology of Oman and neighboring regions. He has worked in Oman, Iran, Central Asia, India, Pakistan and many other regions.

Dr. Dennys Frenez, Archaeologist, University of Bologna, Italy, - is a specialist on early trade connections between Oman and the Indus Valley region. He has had experience working in both Oman and India and was able to join the group to help with travel and logistics.

France

Dr. Roland Besenval, Director of Research, Centre National de la Recerche Scientifique, Paris, - is one of the worlds leading experts on the archaeology of Balochistan and has worked extensively in Pakistan and Oman as well as other regions.

Summary of Tour and Conference

April 1 – Arrival in Muscat and introductory tour of Matrah, Muscat

The ARCPIP participants from Pakistan and India arrived at Al Seeb International Airport throughout the day and were met by J. M. Kenoyer, R. Law and D. Frenez. All participants stayed at the Platinum Hotel, Al Khuwair, Muscat and those who arrived a bit earlier in the day were taken on short tour of the city to get an idea of how the city was laid out. A dinner was held at the hotel where the group was officially welcomed by Prof. Maurizio Tosi, one of the worlds leading specialists in the archaeology of Oman and a scholar who had also worked extensively in Pakistan and India. Professor Tosi serves as special-advisor on culture to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultanate of Oman.

Three vehicles were rented for the tour and participants would sit together in different groups during each day of the tour in order to be able to get to know each other better and have discussions about what they were seeing. Additional discussion was held as a group during meals and informal gatherings at the end of each day.

April 2 – Muscat - Visits to the Department of Archaeology, the Natural History Museum, the Faisal Bin Ali Museum Storage Lab

The day began with a brief discussion of the overall goals of the tour and the specific reasons for visiting different institutions and laboratories. Dr. Kenoyer recommended that the participants take careful notes in order to incorporate new ideas and observations in the presentation that they would make at the final conference. This advice was well noted by each scholar and they all made significant updates to their presentations that included not only the new information that they obtained in Oman, but also linkages between India and Pakistan.

The day began with a visit to the Natural History Museum where they were able to see an overall picture of the geological and cultural history of Oman. This museum is located on the grounds of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and has examples of many of the types of rocks, minerals, plants and animals used throughout human history in Oman. The participants were particularly impressed with the frankincense tree growing in the garden outside the museum as this is one of the famous products of Oman that has been traded to South Asia for millennia.



Group Photo at the Natural History Museum, Muscat

The also visited the Department of Archaeology and Museums, where they were able to meet some of the Omani staff and officials who had been instrumental in arranging their visit. They also got to see the conservation laboratory and storage areas for artifacts. They were able to observe conservators from Portugal, Italy and Oman in the laboratories who were working on recently discovered bronze objects. This helped them to understand the types of facilities that are present in Oman and also compare them with what they have in their own institutions.

They visited the Publication Department and Bookstore of the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, where they were able to select a wide range of publications that would be useful for their libraries. These were purchased for them by the ARCPIP project. An extensive set of articles and journal publications in PDF format were also presented to them in DVD format so that they would have all the most important publications relating to Oman for their libraries. Additional publications were presented to them by the Omani hosts at the end of the tour.

Prof. Tosi received them in his office where he provided an overview of the ministry and its activities. Professor Tosi has been involved in collaborative research projects in Oman for over 30 years, and has also been working with collaborative projects in both India and Pakistan. He encouraged the Indian and Pakistani scholars to think about potential projects that they could develop with Omani scholars or collaboration with each other that could be undertaken in Oman.

The highlight of the morning, however, was the visit to the Faisal Bin Ali Museum Storage Lab where artifacts were being conserved and prepared for installation in the new National Museum of Oman. The group was met by Ms. Moza al Wardi, the Curatorial Director for the National Museum of Oman who is in charge of the conservation and planning for the new museum. Here they had the rare opportunity to see and study first-hand the most important and precious archaeological finds from Oman.

Of course the most exciting items for the ARCPIP participants to examine were the Harappan and Harappan-related artifacts (ceramics, seals and beads) that demonstrated the connections between South Asia and the Arabian Peninsula during the Bronze Age.



Examining Indus pottery at the Faisal Bin Ali Museum Storage Lab, Muscat

After departing the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the group accompanied Prof. Kenoyer to a private research facility that was involved in analysis of iron swords obtained from a burial at the site of Sinaw. They were able to see the results of X-ray analysis of the sword structure. Dr. Asma Ibrahim, who has also had medical training was able to provide insight into other methods of X-ray technology that she has used in her research in Pakistan.

After lunch, the group travelled to Muscat proper to visit the Bait al Zubair heritage museum. This museum has an extensive and diverse collection of Omani handicrafts and historical items related to the royal family of the Sultan. There is also a reconstruction of a traditional Omani house with domestic furniture and pottery. The participants were able to note many similarities between houses in Oman and South Asia. After leaving the museum, the group went to the Matrah area and visited the famous *souq* (market/bazaar) located there. Matrah souq is one of the oldest in the region and contains for sale a rich assortment of Omani goods as well as a wide range of items from elsewhere in Arabia and Asia. This visit allowed them to see the movement of modern trade items that link Oman to the rest of the Indian Ocean region and the world as a whole.

April 3 – Qantab boatyard, tour of traditional Oman in the Capital Area, National Museum, R'as Al Hamra, Boushar and Bait Al Maqham, Wadi Adai Rock Art

After breakfast the ARCPIP participants drove to the boatyard at Qantab – a small coastal village east of Muscat. There they were met by Dr. Tom Vosmer – a marine archaeologist who specializes in the replication of ancient boats. Vosmer, who was the director for design and construction on the Magan Boat Project, showed the group various vessels under construction and provided an overview of ancient shipbuilding techniques.



The group with a replica of a reed boat at the Maritime Center, Qantab.

The group then returned to old Muscat where the new National Museum of Oman is currently under construction. After donning hardhats, they were allowed inside the building site. Although none of the exhibits were yet in place, it was clear to all of the participants that the facility was destined to be a world-class museum.

While heading back into Muscat for lunch, the group stopped at a place overlooking the rocky cape known as Ra's Al Hamra. From this vantage point Kenoyer indicated the location on the cape of the 4th millennium BC settlement and cemetery. He explained the importance of the site and its relationship to the nearby estuary.

Following lunch the group made an excursion to Bait Al Maqham, which is a small fort estate in the suburb of Boushar. This fort had recently been restored by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture and provided an excellent model for restoration of traditional houses in Pakistan and India.

In the late afternoon the group visited a prehistoric rock art site in Wadi Adai, which was protected by the Ministry during the construction of a freeway linking two suburbs of modern Muscat. The participants were able to see the remains of structures that were halted in the process of highway construction and also the important rock art

that was preserved. They noted similarities between the rock engravings there and those found in South Asia, especially those in Pakistan's Northern Areas.



Group at Wadi Adai

That evening the group had dinner at a local Lebanese restaurant that is popular with the various archaeological teams working in Oman. They were joined by Prof. Tosi and members of the Italian archaeological mission, as well as Dr. Roland Besenval (Director of Research at the CNRS, Paris).

April 4 – Site Tours, Copper mining region of Arja and Lasail, stay overnight in Sohar, Sohar Beach Hotel

After an early departure from Muscat and breakfast on the road, the ARCPIP participants reached the copper mining region located in Wadi Jizzi in mid-morning. The next few hours were spent examining Hafit Period (ca. late 4th to early 3rd millennium BC) stone tombs that are built along the ridge tops of the area. The were able to visit an Islamic period copper working settlement that had glazed pottery similar to that found in sites in Pakistan and Gujarat. The group then moved on visit the ancient and modern copper processing sites near the village of al-Arja. Participants viewed the modern open pit mine and examined remains of Islamic medieval copper working in the form of smelting slags and furnace remnants. Evidence for an even older occupation in the area was seen at the 3rd millennium BC "ziggurat" located adjacent to al-Arja village. Recent rains had made areas of mud brick construction visible at the site. Kenoyer noted a possible parallel to Harappan mud brick.



Group photo near Hafit Tombs, Wadi Jizzi.

After a late lunch, the group checked into the Sohar Beach Hotel. That evening they visited the recently renovated Sohar souq.

April 5 – Site Tours, Hayl, Racky, Bat and Bahla site visits, stay overnight in Nizwa, Al Diyar Hotel

Early in the morning the ARCPIP participants briefly visited Sohar Fort before departing Oman's coast for its mountainous interior. As they entered *al-Hajar* (the stone mountains) the group turned off toward the village of Hayl to search for the mineral chlorite. Chlorite is a soft, black-to-grayish colored stone from which ancient Omanis carved vessels, ornaments and seals. After being instructed by Kenoyer and Law as to what to look for, the participants combed several points along the *wadis* (ephemeral streams or river valleys) of the area searching for chlorite pebbles. Some good examples were located and kept for future research purposes.

Moving further into the interior, the group came to the Iron Age copper workings at Racky. Clearly visible among the heaps of smelting slag were ancient mines shafts, crushing stones and the remains of smelting furnaces. This visit provided them with additional comparative information on the changing processes of copper smelting in Oman that can be compared with copper working in India and Pakistan.

Following lunch the group moved on to the ancient settlements and tombs that collectively make up the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bat. Their first stop was the Umm an-Nar Period (ca. 2600 to 2000 BC) settlement of Bat al-Zebah where they were met by the site's excavator Dr. Conrad Schmidt (University of Tübingen). After providing details of his excavations there, Dr. Schmidt accompanied the participants to a group of stone towers and necropolises of the same period.



Conrad Schmidt explaining the excavations and reconstructed stone tomb at Bat.

After departing Bat, the participants travelled to the city of Bahla which is another historical fort that has been restored and conserved recently as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Finally the group reached the city of Nizwa where they spent the night.

April 6 – Site Tours - Salut, Ras al Had, stay overnight in Ra's al Hadd Beach Hotel

In the morning, the ARCPIP participants visited Nizwa Souq to see the traditional crafts of copper working and pottery making. They then headed directly for the site of Bisya or Salut. At Salut they first examined the remains of a massive Umm an-Nar Period tower, which has been excavated by a team from the University of Pisa under the auspices of the office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs. This site is extremely important because it has evidence for pottery that comes from the regions of the Indus Valley, as well as an Indus style seal that was probably made by Indus craftsmen in Oman. This site also has evidence for water storage reservoirs. Many Harappan sites in the region of Gujarat have evidence for large water reservoirs and this made the visit even more interesting for the South Asian scholars. The group then explored the nearby Iron Age settlement and fort that is being excavated and conserved as a UNESCO World Heritage site. They were able to see the types of signage and conservation methods used in Oman and compare these to the techniques used in India and Pakistan.



Group at 3rd millennium stone tower at Salut.

The remainder of the day was spent travelling from the interior to the coast. Along the way the group passed the Wahiba sands (a desert area with towering sand dunes). Late that evening they arrived at Ra's Al Had and checked into the Ra's Al Hadd Beach Hotel that is located near many ancient sites.

April 7 – Site Tours, Ra's Al Had, Ra's Al Jinz, Jalan Coastal area, stay overnight in Ra's Al Hadd Beach Hotel

In Ra's Al Had, Prof. Tosi met the participants and took them on a tour of the sites in the region with the assistance Sheikh Khamis of Ra's Al Jinz who is now employed by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The day began with a brief lecture by Professor Tosi about the history of archaeological studies in the area of Ra's Al Had and the summary of the major discoveries. The group then proceeded to visit several ancient sites – ranging from the Bronze Age to the Islamic period – dispersed across the cape and estuary region known as Ra's Al Had. Artifacts visible on the site surfaces included stone tool, worked marine shell, copper fragments, ancient glass and Islamic ceramics.

The participants then moved south to Ra's Al Jinz – the cape that is the easternmost point of the Arabian Peninsula. Prof. Tosi led the group to the site where he first discovered a Harappan pot sherd in 1982 and detailed the subsequent excavations carried out there. After exploring the area and examining a large outcrop of chert (a rock that was commonly used to make stone tools), the group went to the Ra's Al Jinz Scientific and Visitors Center, which is devoted archaeology and natural history of the cape area. The beach at Ra's Al Jinz is famous as a nesting place for many species of turtles. The museum provided an overview of turtle ecology and the importance of preserving this natural resource for future generations. The museum also provided an important example of how the public could be educated and also entertained with interactive exhibits for children and adults.



Group at Ra's al Jinz

After lunch at the center, the group travelled south to as-Suwayh where there is a site that may date to the Late Harappan period and may have evidence for interaction with Sindh or Gujarat. They also visited coastal sites dating to the 4th millennium BC when fishing communities dominated the landscape. After returning to Ra's Al-Had, the participants had a chance to go to the beach and see a dead turtle that had been killed by a ship propeller. They also could observe the types of shells found locally and compare them with ones found on the beaches of Baluchistan, Sindh and Gujarat.

April 8 – Sur, Qalhat, Wadi Tiwi, return to Muscat – The Platinum Hotel, al Khuwair

After breakfast, the ARCPIP participants began travelling back towards Muscat. Before leaving Ra's Al Had they visited one additional site where there was abundant evidence of marine shell working. While passing through the coastal city of Sur the group stopped at a boatyard in the harbor where large wooden vessels were being constructed. Many of the boat builders were from Kerala or Bangladesh, and they scholars from India were able to ask them about the connections between boatbuilding in these different regions. Just to the north of Sur they stopped to look down at the site of Qalhat which was a major Islamic and historical period port city. The city was destroyed by the Portuguese and the ruins are now being excavated and conserved by the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. Stopping further along the coast they visited the canyon known as Wadi Tiwi which has fresh water flowing in a river that originates far inland in the high mountains. Here the participants were able to see examples of the unique oasis villages and the *falaj* irrigation systems that are found in wadis across Oman. They then returned to the Platinum Hotel, Muscat to prepare for the next day's workshop. That evening they were joined by Mr. Syed Azfer Iqbal, Program Management Specialist from the American Embassy in Islamabad.

April 9 - Conference/Workshop in Muscat, stay at The Platinum Hotel, al Khuwair

The workshop on the shared archaeological heritage of Oman, India and Pakistan was held in the conference center of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat. The workshop was opened by the Director General Archaeology and Museums, Mr. Hassan bin Mohammed Ali Al Lawati. Seven archaeologists – representing India, Pakistan, Oman, Italy and France – presented papers (see attached workshop program for the list of speakers, paper tiles and abstracts).



Group photo at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, Muscat

April 10th

The workshop continued with eight archaeologists – from India, Pakistan, Italy and the United States – presenting papers.

Following the workshop the Director General Archaeology and Museums, Mr. Hassan bin Mohammed Ali Al Lawati hosted a dinner for all of the participants at the Mumtaz Mahal Restaurant in the Qurm area of Muscat. This luncheon was an opportunity for everyone to discuss the important topics raised at the conference and also to informally propose future collaborations. The four areas listed at the beginning of this report outline the major areas that will be explored in the future.



Group photo of all conference participants at the conclusion of the conference.

April 11th

The ARCPIP participants returned to their home countries.