The Indian Ocean basin is one of the oldest world regions of cross-cultural exchange. Extending from the Red Sea and eastern Africa, across the Arabian Sea to the Persian/Arab Gulf, thence to western India, Sri Lanka and the Bay of Bengal, through the Strait of Melaka to the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean world encompassed many different peoples and cultures. But was the Indian Ocean a transnational space? Can there be a transnational space before the existence of nation-states? This talk explores the concept of transnationalism as it may or may not apply to the millennia-long sweep of Indian Ocean history.