

INDIANS OF EASTERN AFRICA AND COLONIZATIONS*

The various articles featured in this issue seek to address the crucial questions of the original construction of social belonging identities in the experience of Indian diasporas. It focuses on the Indian communities in Mozambique, from the days of Portuguese colonialism up to the independence period. Moreover, it analyses those that settled in areas on the margins of the Portuguese territories, ruled by German, Belgium, French and British colonial powers.

Indiens d'Afrique orientale et colonisations

Quelles sont les questions cruciales de la construction initiale des identités et de l'appartenance sociale à travers les expériences des diasporas indiennes ? Ils sont consacrés principalement aux communautés indiennes du Mozambique, depuis l'époque du colonialisme portugais jusqu'à la période de l'indépendance. En outre, le dossier aborde celles qui se sont établies dans des zones situées à la périphérie des territoires portugais et gouvernées par les puissances coloniales allemande, belge, française et britannique.

Indianos de África oriental e colonizações

Quais são as questões cruciais da construção original das identidades de pertença social na experiência das diásporas indianas ? O seu destaque incide nas comunidades indianas em Moçambique, desde os tempos da colonização portuguesa até ao período da independência. Além disso, eles fazem uma análise de todas as pessoas que se estabeleceram em áreas nas fronteiras dos territórios portugueses, governadas pelos poderes coloniais alemão, belga, francês e britânico.

Many of the articles presented in this volume¹ focus in various ways on the Indian diasporas – in their Muslim (Sunni and Shia), Hindu, Goan and Parsi components – originating, or having originated, in the Portuguese-speaking African world. While certainly encompassing vastly different cultural realities, the *Portuguese-speaking world* nevertheless emerged as a political, economic and cultural project in the course of Portuguese colonization, and particularly during the period of the 'Estado Novo'. In that sense, it therefore determines the boundaries of our subject as far as Indian diasporas are concerned.

* With the exception of the article by M. Frenz, the articles featured in this issue were all originally presented at a seminar on "Contemporary Indian diasporas originating in the Portuguese-speaking world and its borders" (Lisbon, 3-5 July 2003), scientifically coordinated by CESA (Centro de estudos sobre Africa e do desenvolvimento/ISEG, Universidade técnica de Lisboa), CEA (Centre d'études africaines/EHESS, Paris), Cemaf-Paris (Centre d'études des mondes africains, CNRS/Université Paris 1) and CEAA/ICT (Centro de estudos africanos e asiáticos, Instituto de investigação científica e tropical, Lisbon).

¹ This issue would not have been possible had it not been for the interest in these contributions displayed by the editorial board of *Lusotopie* and particularly by Michel Cahen. We wish to express our warmest gratitude to them.

However, it is also clear that the very nature of our subject (“Indian diasporas”) transcends the limits of any strictly national approach, however extensive it may be – even if its scope comprehends the full length of an Empire. That is why:

First, account must be taken of the existence of both a *previous historical space* (the Indian Ocean as an area of deployment of Indian trade networks, whose memory has carried on into the present) and a *geographical space*, whose margins and borders play a relevant role either as providers of new migrants, as places of (commercial, religious and marital) exchanges or as safe havens relied upon by these diasporas in the event of threatening historical events. For instance, it was around Mozambique as a central area of settlement for Indians in Portuguese Africa that countries such as Zanzibar, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Madagascar came to be considered as relevant borders.

Later, following the independence processes, several new territories have served as anchorage in the redeployment of the diasporas originating in Mozambique. In these new areas, which have included both so-called ‘Northern’ countries (such as Portugal, the United Kingdom, France, Canada and the United States) and other Portuguese-speaking countries (such as Brazil and, more recently, Angola), these diasporas have again met those that had originated in the border areas of East and Southern Africa and Madagascar.

Finally, certain members of the Indian diasporas originating in East Africa, most especially among the Hindus, have maintained meaningful (commercial, religious and marital) ties and linkages with their ancestral homeland (especially the Gujarat region) throughout the aforementioned processes, whereas other new ties among Muslim Indians have been formed with Pakistan in a quest for cultural and religious assertion.

The various articles featured in this issue seek to address the crucial issue of *construction of identity* in the experience of these diasporas. The construction of these identities is a function, *on the one hand*, of the components of the Indian diasporas, their generational structures and characteristics in terms of gender (male/female), wealth and education; and, *on the other hand*, of the general conditions prevailing in the host societies (characteristics of political systems, effectiveness of institutions, the open character or crisis of the economic systems, maturity of their respective civil societies and characteristics of their integration policies in the social and cultural domains...). Hence the interest of a comparative approach might stimulate research based on the “divergent model” (one single diaspora “thread” scattered about several areas, as in the case of the Goans scattered throughout East Africa), the “convergent model” (several “threads” of the same diaspora converging to the same area, as in the case of the various Indian communities within each of the countries under analysis), or the “linear model” (one single diaspora “thread” in its specific trajectory, as in the case of the Hindu between the Gujarat region, Mozambique and Portugal or the Sunni and Ismaili between Mozambique and Portugal).

Like all other diasporas, Indian diasporas raise the thorny question (from the point of view of Nation-States) of *multiple belonging*: their allegiance to their host countries, to their homelands and to themselves as minorities within specific

Nation-States. Hence, can we speak of a diaspora's citizenship, or of that of a member of a diaspora? What kind of "national allegiance" are we talking about? Is there a "diaspora conscience" as such? Which segments of the Indian community or what kind of persons come to share such a conscience, from which moment onwards and in what ways? The answers to these questions, which already stood out as relevant during the days of Africa's colonisation, became even more delicate and complex at the time of independence.

This issue is in two parts. The first brings together a number of studies focusing on the Indian communities in Mozambique, from the days of Portuguese colonization up until the independence period. The second focuses on the Indian communities that settled in areas on the margins of the Portuguese territories, that were ruled by other colonial powers (Germany, Belgium, France). The vast and increasing number of studies focusing on the Indian communities in British East Africa and the considerable attention that those communities have drawn from Anglo-Saxon social scientists have led us to decide not to include them in this volume and to focus instead on the ongoing research on other less well-known or less explored segments of the Indian diasporas, such as Goans in East Africa.

Presentation of the featured contributions

Despite the specific character of each article, a number of recurrent issues can be identified throughout the texts, regardless of the specific colonial context in each case. These are issues that are made to last, since anthropological time – that of changing of mentalities, stereotypes and prejudices – does not correspond to time as defined by political scansion. Thus:

The aporias between the desire to "assimilate" and, at a later stage, to "associate", which inherently characterised all the colonial administrations, ended up forcing the colonial institutions to engage in a dialogue of mutual obligations, however cumbersome in practise or asymmetric (for as long as the colonial system remained in place) that dialogue may have been. Unlike other forms of political organisation inherently defined on the basis of equality and cultural homogeneity, empires are entities that produce and reproduce differentiation and inequality as they incorporate new populations. If we regard them as such, we will be in a better position to acknowledge the efforts undertaken by the Indians scattered throughout these empires to carve out their place within these relationships of differentiation and incorporation, *vis-à-vis* both the colonizers and African populations. The case of the Goan Indians, who circulated both inside and outside the Portuguese empire, is illustrative of this process of recruitment of intermediate bodies, which were subject to different constraints and reacted in different ways in Mozambique under the Estado Novo (Khouri/Leite)² and in other colonial contexts (Frenz).

² For technical reasons concerning the volume of the present issue, the article "La presse coloniale portugaise du Mozambique et les Indiens, 1930-1975" (N. KHOURI & J. Pereira LEITE) mentioned above, will be published in the next volume of *Lusotopie*, November 2008.

Indian communities displayed such a remarkable capacity to adapt to the arrival of the colonisers (Chrétien, Raimbault, Gandelot) that we may well wonder “who hosted whom”? The ability of these communities to adapt and innovate in the context of the dynamics of the market should also be pointed out, as well as the consequences of those dynamics upon their geographical redeployment in the colonial and post-colonial eras (Pinto Teixeira, Carvalho, Gandelot).

The articles contained herein study the mobilisation of the diasporas’ various poles in greater detail, rather than their actual forms of organisation or the precise composition of the Indian communities. The archival sources available to researchers may reflect the lack of interest of colonial administrations towards these issues, for it seems the use of broad and undifferentiated categories was usually satisfactory enough. They also made use of categories (colour, race, religion) that were a product of colonial history itself. Statistics have labelled them as “Asians”, “British Indians” and “Portuguese” or later as British, French and Portuguese citizens.

It is interesting to note that in the stereotyped point of view of the colonizers’ perceptions, which are given in the paradigms of hierarchisation of peoples, races or religions, the Indians were always regarded as distinct from the African populations. Both colonial and post-independence rulers typically interpreted the Indians’ legitimism (Mozambique, Madagascar, Tanzania) and their respective lusophilia, francophilia and anglophilia as strategies used by these communities’ elites in order to secure their access to, and command over economic resources. Curiously enough, however, some of the articles (Zamparoni, Bastos, Khouri/Leite, Raimbault) highlight the political tenacity displayed by some of these Indian communities who, in certain circumstances, rejected the apolitical image into which they have often been confined.

The Indians in Mozambique: from colonial days to the moment of independence

In the context of growing demand for oilseeds on an expanding world market, several large (Indian, Portuguese and foreign) trading companies sought to promote the extension of these crops in the Zambezi region. L. Pinto Teixeira studies the production relations that emerged and took shape, in this region – between 1870, which was the beginning of the oilseed boom and 1890, marking the end of the cycle – among the four main partners involved: the colonial administration (legislative action and changes in economic policy), the Indian communities (small-scale and import-export tradesmen), the foreign companies and the Africans who produced the commodities. These relations formed a part of two wider production systems : a traditional one, inherited from the days of the ‘prazos’ system, which remained in place in the Higher Zambezi area; and another one, in which production was driven by the strategies of modern capitalism, which emerged in the Lower and Middle Zambezi areas. The archives clearly show the important role played by Indians in these dynamics, particularly their capacity to redeploy to the region’s highlands once the decline had set in. The fact that they had mastered the commercial routes since before 1870, made their redeployment possible.

In the context of Portugal’s First Republic (1910-1926), a time when Mozambique’s colonial administration still enjoyed considerable autonomy, V. Zamparoni focuses

on two events that took place in 1913. This enables the author to assess both the influence of South Africa's "apartheid" model upon the prevalent climate in the colonial society of Lourenço Marques, particularly regarding trade legislation and the regulation of Indian population inflows, and the pugnacity with which the latter reacted. The striking statement by Omar Khan, an Indian British subject from Lourenço Marques, is well worth reading for the way in which it states, at the same time, how far the usual portrayal of Indian communities as apolitical is from reality, and the frailty of Portuguese colonialism when compared to its British counterpart.

S. Bastos analyses discursive output of the Portuguese colonial system between the late 19th century and the late 60s, from the government and representatives of the colonial administrations, as well as the clergy, armed forces, public administration and even an anthropologist. This approach is made in terms of an ambivalent representation of the Indians that is very similar to the characterization used in British colonial discourse. The interest of this approach lies in the way it brings together the categories by which the Indians are represented (in terms of gender, class and religion) and the posture of those enunciating those representations. The enunciators are systematically caught in a web of real and imaginary relationships that are associated with the nature of the historical links they built, between the ideas of the Portuguese Empire, on the one hand, and of the Nation, on the other. The famous luso-tropicalist ideology prevalent in the final days of Portuguese colonialism would eventually be interpreted as a great moment of "fraternity" among the Empire's populations – under a common matrix and the aegis of the Virgin Mary and Our Lady of Fatima as motherly figures.

Taking into account the insufficient knowledge of Indian communities that is apparent in the archival sources, the article by N. Khouri/J. Leite seeks to grasp the nature of the presence of the various Indian communities in Mozambique based on thorough readings of Lourenço Marques' newspapers from the colonial days (between 1930 and 1975). Their social-historical reading is driven by a hypothesis that has so far received little acceptance in Portuguese social sciences. It claims that the modernisation project inherent in the *Estado Novo* gave rise in this colony – for the first time in the history of the Empire – to a social context that enabled the various groups to organise themselves as differentiated actors around common objectives. In this period, the Indians engaged themselves. At this point, the main question is how, in less than a half century, were they able to switch from a situation based on juxtaposition, or even segregation, to their full incorporation into a project with both, social and national dimensions.

A. Melo's article on the departure of the Ismaili community is based on material sources from the PIDE archives, which have recently been opened to the public. It brings to the fore the thorny issue of the departure of a community that, having interiorised its African destiny, nevertheless asserted its loyalty towards the Portuguese regime. The trauma of departure and its denial, as well as the reserve displayed by a community showing resistance to its own history, open up new paths of research regarding to the crucial role played by oral history in a diaspora's distinctive way of shaping the specific relationships between memory and history.

A. Carvalho provides an account of the role played by Sunni Muslim tradesmen and entrepreneurs of Indian origin in the context of the socialist economy and

the civil war in post-independence Mozambique. By filling in the void created by the colonisers' departure and by consolidating their links with the political elite, the Indians eventually came to occupy a privileged position in the entrepreneurial sphere. This article presents and discusses a series of aspects, providing enough elements to understand the position of these historically-bound Indians at the moment of the transition to a market economy in the late 1980s.

The Indians in East and Central-East Africa: the colonial epoch

J. Kagabo sets the stage by providing an account of the Indians' place within Zanzibar's merchant empire, and by showing the important role they played as economic agents in incorporating East and Central-East Africa into the world trade system at the dawn of the colonial epoch in the 20th century.

In his article, J.C. Penrad's main concern is to render an "anatomical" account of the dispersal of Indians, and in particular Muslim Indians (Memons, Bohras, Khodjas, Agha Khanis and Duodecimal Shias), throughout East Africa and the islands of the Indian Ocean. This dispersal in time and space translates itself into multiple positioning of identity in their experience of life, and can be illustrated by the figure of the Jevanghee, caught in a game of identity negotiation between his community of origin, the demands of the host society and the diasporic dimension.

Drawing on German archives and that country's written press, F. Raimbault focuses on the dawn of the German occupation of Africa's eastern coast and addresses the paradoxical issue of the Indians who claimed an East African identity based on their specific experience as subjects of Zanzibar's Omanese Empire. The foundation of the city of Dar-es-Salaam created a series of economic opportunities that the Indian entrepreneurs were quick to seize. Their number increased, as did the diversity of their activities. Also worthy of note is the fact that, unlike the archives maintained by other colonial powers, the German archives provide a meticulous account of all the groups (by religion, region of origin and caste) that made up this diaspora, as well as their respective functions in their new setting.

By drawing on a survey of both German and Belgian archives, J.-P. Chrétien maps out, in a pioneer study, the Indian presence in Burundi (1908-1949), the process of merchant specialisation and the diversity of these communities (Hindus, Bohras, Khodjas and Goans). Once again, this article highlights the ambiguous relationship of economic utilitarianism and political suspicion in which the colonial powers maintained these communities.

L. Gandelot provides a long-run account (from the colonial days up until Madagascar's independence) of the trajectory of the Indian communities of Gujarati origin in their various religious components (Bohras, Duodecimal Khodjas and Agha Khanis). The article sheds light on the identity dynamics that emerged, then on the role accorded to minorities by the colonial authorities and on the experience of citizenship and autochthonous belonging shaped by Madagascar's own authorities. The author's original research refers mainly to the trajectory of the Duodecimal Khodjas since independence. He focuses on the tensions that existed between the roles appointed by the host society and the references of identity associated with both the diaspora's origins and its newly established diasporic religious dimension.

Seeking to lend a historical content to the concepts of “translocal”, “transnational” and “global”, M. Frenz analyses the settlement and differentiated institutionalisation of the Goans in the societies of British East Africa in the late 19th century. Shortly after the independence and construction of the African Nation-States, the Goans moved mostly to Great-Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, Brazil and Portugal. Over time, the internal links within this “white-collar” community started to grow weaker and were replaced by trajectories with stronger individual connotation. In their new host societies, the Goans have displayed a tendency to merge with the local population, and since the beginning of the 90’s, have developed a new interest in visiting Goa, their forefathers’ homeland.

Paris, July 2007

Nicole KHOURI

Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne
Centre d’études des mondes africains

Joana PEREIRA LEITE

Universidade Técnica de Lisboa
Instituto Superior de Economia e Gestão