

Indian Transnationalisms in colonial and postcolonial Mozambique

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Abstract

The presence of Indians in Mozambique since the second half of the 19th century is closely linked with the socio-economic and political transformations of the Swahili coast, as well as with the migratory movements between India and Austral Africa which began in 1860, namely with the wave of Gujarati “passengers” who paid their own passage, first to South Africa, later also to Delagoa Bay (Lourenço Marques). Based on the family life histories of the main Indian (Hindu, Sunni and Ismaili) family businesses of Mozambique, we intend to illustrate how the consolidation of a transnational migratory culture (which re-actualised connections with the origin and/or with other diasporic nuclei throughout East Africa) had a fundamental role in the construction of the status of middleman trading minorities they received during the colonial period. This transnational culture was also vital in the management of the ambivalence displayed by the Portuguese colonial authorities that granted them protection when they may had political, economic and social benefits to offer in exchange, and used them as scapegoats in times of crisis and nationalistic exacerbation, e.g. in 1961. In post-colonial Mozambique, Indian transnationalisms acquire an additional importance: they opened new successful migration destinations, and presented new (possibly illegal) strategies of rapid wealth amassment in a Marxist-Leninist regime and the constitution of corruption elites based upon transnational connections.

The argument

As Tololyan notes “diasporas have been idealized as open, porous, circuit-based, cosmopolitan (...), deterritorialized, exemplary communities of the transnational moment, and therefore capable of offering – not of ascribing to or to imposing upon, as nation-states do to their citizen-subjects – flexible, multiple identities” (2000: 112). Attempting to criticise this idealisation, a number of scholars have emphasized the major role played by States and

¹ This paper is part of a larger research project, *From Mozambique to Portugal and other opportunities: a study of transnational ethnic minorities elites*, developed by CEMME (Centre for the Study of Migrations and Ethnic Minorities of the Universidade Nova de Lisboa) and founded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology.

inter-State relations in reinforcing diasporic mobility and porousness, and/or in stimulating processes of sedentariness and reterritorialization. In parallel, they began to analyse transnational connections and local involvements as inextricably intertwined social processes, rejecting simplistic dichotomies such as local versus diasporic, assimilation versus transnationalism², unique versus hybrid identities. (Tololyan 2000, Levitt 2001, Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004, etc.).

Without neglecting the power of states in the configuration of transmigrant options and experiences, we cannot ignore that these require that social actors mobilise certain goods, values, institutions, worldviews, etc., and that they continue to locally develop idioms, organisations and material resources essential to the success of their transnational ambitions. States and inter-State relations do not automatically produce transmigrants; neither do the subjects construct their transnational experiences alone (Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). Subject to political constraints and dependent upon multiple resources, it is not surprising that the connections linking «here» and «there» display an unequal distribution among members of diasporic «imagined communities» (Anderson 1983). Frequently, their form and intensity are recognized as distinctive markers of certain segments, auto- and hetero-defined as elites.

The present article will attempt to articulate the processes of transnational connection and of reterritorialization that the main family firms of Indo-British origin who settled in Mozambique in the late 19th century have developed over more than a hundred years³, and analyse them as the result

² The concept of immigrant transnationalism first appeared in the social sciences literature in the work «Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration» (1992) of Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc. Despite the variety of perspectives on this concept - transnationalism “as a social morphology, as a type of consciousness, as a mode of cultural reproduction, as an avenue of capital, as a site of political engagement, as a reconstruction of ‘place’ or locality”, etc. -, “most social scientists (...) agree that ‘transnationalism’ broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation-states” (Vertovec 1999: 447).

³ The present analysis is the result of a multi-sited ethnography. The in-depth interviews on which it is based were conducted in Portugal and Mozambique over the past two years. Several members of some Indo-British families (which their own communities recognise as elite families) as well as some of their employees and close friends were interviewed.

of an interaction between socio-familiar resources and colonial and postcolonial political constraints.

Transnational connections and familiar dynamics: building commercial “empires” in between the cracks of colonial empires

Between India and Africa: the “barter-based business”

Despite the influence of the East India Company in controlling Indian foreign trade, a number of trading networks had an important role in Indian foreign economy in the first half of the 19th century. Among them, a number of “merchants from the tiny princely state of Cutch, particularly the Hindu Bhatias⁴ and the Muslim Ismaili Khoja⁵, used the dominant role they played in the trade and finance of the Omani State to extend their activities along the East African coast when the Sultans of Oman transferred their seat to the island of Zanzibar in 1840” (Markovit, 2001: 4). Underscoring its commercial extension, Sir Bartle Frere wrote in 1873 “that virtually all foreign trade passed through the hands of Indian merchants, and that from Zanzibar northwards and to Mozambique and Madagascar in the South practically every shopkeeper was an Indian” (quoted in Morris 1969: 4). In 1874, the British consul in Zanzibar explained that Indian presence in East Africa was not a recent phenomenon: “the head of the principal Bhatia house” in Zanzibar, “that of Wad Bhima”, was “5th in descent from the founder of the Zanzibar firm; and several khoja can show a still longer ancestry” (quoted in Salvadori 1989: 8).

Many traders settled in Zanzibar, especially the Bhatias. They engaged in trade along the coastline, import-export to and from India, and tax collection; they also financed the slave trade during the second half of the

⁴ The Bhatias are a Hindu-Gujarati merchant caste community. In the 18th century, they began moving (from the Cutchi port of Mandvi and Jamnagar) to Bombay and participating in the Indian Ocean trade. According to Salvadori (1989), they were probably the first Hindu merchants to do business and settle with their wives in Zanzibar.

⁵ There is some evidence that it was Pir Sadardin (Sadr-al-Din) who converted many Hindu merchants of Lohana caste (from Sindh and Gujarat) to Nizari Ismailism in the 14th century. By the 19th century, Indian Ismailis (also known as the ‘Khoja’) became one of the most powerful trading communities of East Africa. It is generally accepted that their expansion and success has been the result of enterprising investment within an organized diasporic community, guided by a “present and living” Iman.

19th century. By arguing that they were subjects of the princely state of Cutch, they attempted to avoid the legislation forbidding any British subject to buy and sell slaves anywhere, inclusive in foreign countries and settlements not belonging to the British Crown (Morris 1968: 4-5). However, influenced by a *firman* to the Rao of Cutch which urged them to desist from such activities and recognising that exporting ivory could be equally profitable (thanks to their numerous contacts in Mumbai, where most exports were headed) they seem to have left the slave trade to other agents. Numerous Khojas from Zanzibar, as the Bhatia had, also began to finance the araho-Swahili, European, and American convoys that explored the interior of Africa. After his beginnings as apprentice with Jairam Sewji, a Bhatia, Taria Topam probably engaged in this trade from 1860; ten years later, Sewa Haji Paroo did not merely supply shop-owners in the interior, but also organised the convoys himself, and even sent his agents to permanent commercial outlets along their routes. In early 1890, building upon the expertise acquired as apprentice in a firm belonging to Sewa Haji in Bagamoyo, Allidina Visram established his own business network, opening and supplying numerous outlets in the interior where he bartered imported goods for ivory and pelts. Around 1909, his commercial empire already counted upon over 40 branches all over East Africa and numerous factories (Penrard 1988, Salvadori 1989).

The numerous innovations introduced by Visram - namely the increased volume of exchanges and the greater stimulus to the supply of new produce, its transformation in exportable products, the transnational dimension of his business (with branches in India, Uganda, Kenya, Congo, etc.), and the investment in the construction of factories which added value to local products (Penrard 1988) - were rapidly applied by other Indian businessmen. Ranchordas Odha, a Bhatia from Cutch, originally from Mumbai, a trader in Zanzibar and ivory exporter, was among the first to do so in the North of Mozambique in the second half of the 19th century.

He was not, however, the first Indian to invest in the territory. At the time, a network of Banyans from Diu, settled on the Ilha de Moçambique, together with Portuguese ship owners, were active in the transatlantic slave-trafficking market, which they favoured over the traditional long-distance trading to Goa, Diu, and Daman. While Vantias from Diu organised slave trafficking, first from the Ilha de Moçambique, and later from Quelimane, reinvesting the capital accumulated in the same area and in Diu,

Ranchordas Odha established his business first in Ibo and, later in Pemba, the headquarters of his firm. He subsequently multiplied its branches as *cantinas* (in Mucimboa da Praia, Ibo, Necuji, Quissanga, Porto Amélia, Mahate, etc.), where he employed members of his family and ethnic group as apprentices.

A former employee of Odha⁶, remembers that from his various *cantinas*⁷, “he received cashew nuts, peanuts, millet, calumbo roots, sesame, and wax from the Africans, in exchange for some staples and cloth”. He encouraged African farmers to increase the production and supply of produce, which was collected, distributed among his various warehouses, then exported. At the same time, he also imported goods with which he supplied his *cantinas* and other traders in the area. In the late 19th century, he already was “the largest importer and exporter of Northern Mozambique, the greatest of all, Hindus, Mohammedans, and Portuguese. The man Ranchordas built an empire. He owned all of Pemba, and then some”. As well as general trade and import/export, Ranchordas Odha is reported to have engaged in banking activities: “He himself was the bank, he financed many firms (...) of Indians and Portuguese”.

Portuguese colonial politics after 1885, in particular the transfer of certain provinces to Companies, and the direct administration of certain territories by the Portuguese State, do not seem to have harmed the activities of Indian businessmen. Their commercial expertise and local contacts with the African population were vital for the fulfilment of colonial objectives of territorial and commercial domination. The installation of the Companies even stimulated the development of new commercial strategies. In the province of Zambezia, for example, a number of Bhatias and Khojas began working as commercial middlemen between Mozambican farmers and national and foreign export firms in Quelimane. Many among them actually became relatively autonomous commercial partners (Teixeira 2001).

Such was the case of Damodar Anangy, a Bhatia from Kutch, who in 1892 signed a commercial contract with the Zambezia Company, which gave him exclusive commercial rights on various *prazos*. A few years later, he set up

⁶ Santilal Jatha, Hindu, of Khania caste, general manager, interviewed in Maputo.

⁷ The business of the *cantineiro* included the acquisition and transport of various types of produce ('peanuts, cashews, cotton, corn', etc.) harvested by the natives, to the towns. *Cantineiros* also sold *capulanas* – the traditional cloth – and other textiles, basic foodstuffs, the 'colonial wine' and other basic goods ('kerosene, pots and pans, hammers, nails, knives, etc.') provided by merchants in the cities.

Haridas Damodar Ananji and Sons in Nampula and Beira, admittedly one of the most prosperous import-export firms in Mozambique, “*whose main business always was cashew nuts*”. The prestige of the firm is still evoked by former employees and acquaintances. According to a close friend of the family⁸: “*There was an eminent family in Beira, they were the owner of the Damodar firm. Their best-known descendant, Gulapsin Gokaldas, also known as Piripiri, was a Bhatia from Kutch. (...) If you go to Beira, you just have to ask for Piripiri, everybody remembers him*”.

Pioneering firms in the import/export of cashew nuts were mainly established in the North of the territory; however, they were also active in other provinces. Such was the case of Pradhan Babool & Co. and Noormahomed Rawjee & Co., which many Khojas remember as “*the first exporters of cashew nuts, which has brought great prosperity to the country*” (Keshavjee 1945: 178). Rawjee Zainu Labedin, grandchild of the founder, offers us an excellent synthesis of the strategies and routes typical of the first Indian importers/exporters in Mozambique. firstly, the implementation of transnational practices (in particular between Mozambique and India) made possible by a strategy of familiar fragmentation which made the business less complicated; secondly, the construction of a regional chain, consisting of one or more import/export firms and warehouses in urban areas to guarantee the regular supply of imported goods to multiple *cantinas*, which had to send produce for export to the urban warehouses; thirdly, the maintenance of relations of inter-dependence between wholesalers/importers/exporters and local *cantineiros*; fourthly, the reinforcement of social and intra-community hierarchies; and lastly, the implementation of positive interactions with the Portuguese colonial administration.

“My *dada* [father’s father] came from India, from Una. His name was Rawjee Babool. I don’t know why, but unlike most Ismailis that went to Zanzibar, Mombassa, Dar-as-Salaam, he decided to settle on the Ilha de Moçambique. He must have travelled there around 1880. Among many difficulties, he began by opening a *cantina*, then a second one, until he became a warehouse owner, also importing and exporting cashew nuts. He was one of the pioneers, the first to settle in the Ilha de Moçambique and later in Delagoa Bay, where he arrived before 1910, if my calculations are correct. He always worked with his brothers. The business belonged to the five of them. Usually, two or three

⁸ Mahendra, a Hindu of Brahman caste, businessman, interviewed in Maputo.

brothers went to Mozambique, managing Pradhan Babool & Co., and Noormahomed Rawjee & Co; two others stayed in India, in Mumbai and Una, to manage other firms and take care of their parents. The firm in Mumbai was Somjee Babool and Co., and they interchanged goods. My uncles in Mozambique would send products and extend credit to the *cantineiros* inland. These exchanged the goods for cashew nuts. They sold the nuts to my uncles, who then exported them to Mumbai, to the firm managed by another one of my uncles, where they imported various goods. It was a business based on barter. (...). In the early 20th century, my grandpa had already bought 36 to 40 *cantinas* in Gaza. My father even told us that back then, before he was born, there was a great drought in Gaza and my grandfather offered a boatful of cereals that had just docked, to be distributed across Gaza. The Governor General was very grateful, and asked how could he compensate, and my grandfather and uncles said, “we don’t want anything”. Back then, there were no cars, and the Governor had a carriage to carry him around, so, when he wasn’t using it, he made it available for my grandpa and uncles to take rides.”⁹

Neither the world crisis of 1929-1934, nor the restrictive measures that, since 1926, attempted to impose new relations of economic domination between Portuguese colonies and the mainland altered the prosperity of Indian firms in the “cashew nut business”. On the one hand, because the world crisis itself conditioned and slowed down the implementation of the aforementioned measures; on the other, because the general drop in prices did not affect cashew nuts. On the contrary, an increase in demand and the growth (of around 1000%) of its quotation on foreign markets encouraged (in particular in the provinces of Nampula and Cabo Delgado) many farmers to opt for its cultivation. At the same time, the increase in supplies from the farmers to the *cantineiros* also enriched warehouse owners and exporters on the coast, thus enabling them to expand and diversify their business.

From India, Japan, China, England, Portugal and other opportunities: diversifying transnational connections

The emergence of the first great Indo-British firms in the South of Mozambique cannot be dissociated from the migratory flows between India and South Africa that began in the 1860s, namely with Gujarati

⁹ Zainu Labedin Rawjee, Ismaili, Director of the Delta Trading Corporation and majority partner of ISCTEM (Higher Institute for Science and Technology from Mozambique), interviewed in Maputo.

«passengers», who originated mainly in Khatiawar, Surat and Porbandar. The family histories we recorded show that the first Gujaratis to settle in Delagoa Bay had South Africa (where several co-ethnics were already present) as their intended destination, but do not prove conclusively why they decided to stay in Mozambique. Despite this, a number of the descendants of those who arrived after 1911 reveal that the increased hostility of European-origin colonists to the presence of Indians in South Africa, and British restrictions to their entry into this territory, as well as support networks in Mozambique (implemented by the pioneers) may have turned «Delagoa Bay» into an alternative destination (Pereira Leite 1996, 14-16; Carvalho 1999: 279).

“In Delagoa Bay, my grandfather hosted many Ismailis who arrived with the idea of settling in South Africa. Back then, at the turn of the century, it was an Eldorado, everybody went looking for the gold. They needed support, and spent some time before leaving. It wasn't uncommon for 40 to 50 people to have lunch in my *dada's* house. One of the Ismailis who received great support from my grandfather was Ibrahim Virgi Vali, from Diu. He stayed some time, 3 or 4 years, with *dada's* help, then settled in Pretoria. (...). Things became more difficult however, and many Ismailis decided to stay in Mozambique.”¹⁰

“In the house where my grandfather and uncles lived, there were many Lohana guests. Sometimes up to 30 or 40 people lived there. I still remember, they all ate together and had a Brahmin cook, which they got from India, to make their food and be their *pujari*. (...). They were fellow countrymen, recently arrived from India, they worked for the firm, *cantineiros* of our caste who came to the city to shop or to pick up goods on credit, and also some traders, especially Lohanas but also Bhatias, from the North, when they came to Lourenço Marques.”¹¹

With the exception of Vrajdas Lalchande & Calanche Irachande Co.¹², a significant percentage of the founders of the first great firms in Lourenço Marques were Indo-British Gujaratis, Hindus, Sunni and Ismailis. Their

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Tarun Laxmidas, Hindu of Lohana caste, grandchild of Popatlal Haribhai, partner in Popatlal Haribhai & Co., Lacxmi Newshy & Co., currently partner in the firm Euragel; former president of Bharat Samaj (Hindu Community) in Maputo, interviewed in Lisbon and Maputo.

¹² One of the oldest firms in Delagoa Bay, the property of two Indo-Portuguese brothers (of Vania caste) from Diu.

founders generally began by working as clerks in a number of pioneering Indian firms. Subsequently, and with the support of their former employers, they became itinerant sellers in Delagoa Bay and its environs (to the North and South). They bought goods on credit, exchanged them for produce supplied by local farmers, sold the produce to import/export firms, paid their debts, replenished their stocks, and once again returned to the bush. After some time, they established a *cantina*. The employment of family members (older and younger brothers and/or sons and nephews, who were gradually “sent for”) enabled them to multiply their *cantinas*.

Tarun Laxmidas told us how his relatives made their fortune from the barter of local products for export, and especially from the debts accumulated by thousands of Mozambican farmers who migrated to the mines of Rhodesia and South Africa.

“The first to arrive were my *dada*, Newshi Haribhai, with his broter, Karsandas Haribhai. They came from a village near Porbandar and arrived around 1895. They were witnesses to the wars between Gungunhana and the Portuguese. They were here, in Marracuene, when it happened. They had to run away upriver, to Xai-Xai. Later they also sent for their youngest brother. (...). First my *dada* found work with an Indian boss, a Banyan from Diu. Then, his boss sent him to manage a *cantina* in the bush. My grandfather carried the goods on donkey-back to the bush. (...). Some years later, together with his bothers, they set up a firm, they began by doing what was then called the *cantineiro* business. They had a number of *cantinas* in Xai-Xai, Alvor, Ressano-Garcia and in places close to the railway to South Africa. Back then, thousands of Mozambicans went there to work in the mines. So many Africans, before they left, made an agreement with the Indian *cantineiro*. They told their families to shop at that *cantina*, and when they returned they paid up. My grandfather and other Indians extended such credit, they made good money and then came to live in the street behind the Bazaar in Lourenço Marques.”¹³

Even in times of crisis, such as the world economic recession of the Thirties, which negatively influenced the number of migrants working outside Mozambique, Indian *cantineiros* were not affected, since the colonial administration attempted to negotiate a minimum number of presences in the mines. The Portuguese government and South Africa signed various agreements, which limited the permanent export of workers outside Mozambique, thus virtually eliminating the risk that Indian *cantineiros*

¹³ Tarun Laxmidas

would not be reimbursed. The system implemented from 1930 to the late 1950s encouraged this: only the sixth part of the salary was paid directly to the worker on site. The rest (minus taxes) would be paid by administrators in the districts of origin, thus encouraging the settling of debts by Mozambican farmers to Indian *cantineiros*.

Itinerant trade, the *cantinas* and the extension of credit enabled the first generation to create possibly the most prosperous Sunni firms in Lourenço Marques. However, Rafik Hajee also points out the complementary role of economic and educational pre-migration resources in determining the success of Abdool Saccor, Abdool Latif and Co.

“My great-grandfather Ayob Vakil was a lawyer in India, in the region of Kathiavar, Junagath State, Vanthali. One of his sons, Abdool Latif, was the first to come to Delagoa Bay in 1887. He had no capital, only some contacts of compatriots, I don’t really know, the elders said that he started to do some selling in the Malanga region. Then he went back to India, but came back and brought two brothers with him, Abdool Saccor Ayob, the eldest, and Abdool Rehman Ayob, the following one. He persuaded my great-grandfather that settling in Mozambique could be profitable, and my great-grandfather gave him 500 gold pounds to set up business. First, they settled in Malanga, where they acquired various *cantinas*.”¹⁴

The next step was buying a shop, first in a small town (Xai-Xai, Ressano Garcia, etc.), then in Lourenço Marques. The commercial know-how (of import-export circuits) acquired while under employment or as minority partners in pioneering firms, the combination of urban shops and *cantina* commerce outside the towns, the diversification of commercial relations, and the gratitude, admiration, cooperation and political subordination to the colonial administration all helped in the realisation of the Indo-British dream: becoming a general trader, wholesaler, importer/exporter, and government-sanctioned money exchange agent.

“Gradually, business improved and Latif opened in the Travessa da Palmeira, in Lourenço Marques. Then it began to grow, and he rented other shops in the Travessa da Palmeira and the Travessa da Porta da Linha, in the old Francisco Ferrer street. They slowly expanded, sent for their youngest brother, who arrived in 1990 or 1901. (...). In 1913, the four brothers founded Casa Coimbra,

¹⁴ Rafik Hajee, Sunni Muslim, great-grandchild of Abdool Rehman Ayob Vakil, founder of Abdool Saccor, Abdool Latif and Co; currently managing partner of Casa Coimbra, interviewed in Maputo.

belonging to Abdool Saccor, Abdool Latif and Co. (...). It was a retail sale firm that imported products from England and especially Portugal, because that's where we had most contacts. In 1938-1939, the four brothers bought land in the Avenida da República. It had belonged to a bank. They were our clients, and sold us the land. At that time, they spent 7000 *contos* [approximately £20,000] on the new premises. The new Casa Coimbra was inaugurated in 1940, in the presence of Governor General Bettencourt. But before that, our firm had been visited by the Minister for Colonies and General Carmona."¹⁵

"In 1920, my great-uncles moved to the Travessa da Boa Morte, where they founded Papatlal Haribhai and Co. Indian firms as old as their firm, here in Lourenço Marques, only Vrajdas Lalchande and Calanchande Irachande Co., Casa Coimbra, Zacaria Hagiamad and Amod Moti belonging to Muslims and also Bridlar who belonged to Europeans. Even Fafe, Marta da Cruz, of Portuguese property, or P. V. Wogal Pool, with European capital, were set up later. (...). Papatlal Haribhai and Co., in the Thirties and Forties, had up to 17 partners, all close family. Back then, many considered it an empire. (...) They were importers and also sold retail. They imported mainly cloth and ready-made clothes from India, Japan, China, England, and Portugal. Mainly from Portugal, because this was a Portuguese colony. (...) No, we weren't direct exporters, rather we worked as middlemen, we bought cashew nuts, sesame, peanuts, cotton, copra, then exported to various countries, to India and Kenya too. (...). My father's sister married into a family from Mombassa, and they worked as middlemen for our exports to Kenya. (...) We also were money exchangers, authorised by the government."¹⁶

The presence of the first large Indian-owned firms in the South of Mozambique, as in the North, was made possible by the implementation of transnational connections and exchanges (of goods, people, capital, etc.), which included the regions of origin¹⁷. However, the nuclei of co-ethnics

¹⁵ Abdool Suleman, Sunni Muslim, great grandchild of Abdool Saccor Ayob Vakil, founder of Abdool Saccor, Abdool Latif and Co; currently senior partner of Casa Coimbra, interviewed in Maputo.

¹⁶ Tarun Laxmidas.

¹⁷ Sunni and Hindu migrants not only sent remittances and maintained commercial relations; they also frequently returned (every two or three years) to "visit their family", have new children, buy land, build new houses, fulfil ritual obligations, carry out pilgrimages, prepare "the papers" to send for family members, etc. On their return, they took advantage of the stopovers of their ships to "visit and talk business" with other co-ethnics on the Eastern coast of Africa. As for the Khojas, the measures implemented by Aga Khan III to encourage their de-Indianisation and Westernisation, which included incentives to complete family reunification outside India, and the disapproval of the «one

settled in East and Austral Africa, other more profitable regions (e.g. China, Japan, or England), and in particular Portugal were gradually incorporated in the investment plans of Indian family firms. On the one hand, inter-ethnic commercial relations in the Portuguese capital (with the agents of Portuguese firms in Portugal or locally or with foreign firms) enabled them to diversify and enlarge import/export circuits. At the same time, the Indian extended family, functioning as an economic unit, the mobilisation of affinal relations (established by aunts, sisters and daughters) and lineage and caste connections, or membership in the same ethno-religious community (especially for Khojas) continued to give dynamism to connections «here» and «there». The growing importance – both in Hindu and Muslim families, and even more so among the Ismailis - of the lateral diasporic nuclei in influencing the direction, nature and intensity transnational practices allows us to validate James Clifford's insight that "transnational connections linking diasporas need not be articulated primarily through a real or symbolic homeland" (1994: 36).

Colonial constraints: reinforcing reterritorialization and transnationalism

Reacting to colonial opposition to Indo-British immigration: family reunification and sedentariness

Citing the "unemployment crisis", the Government of Mozambique established in 1932 rules limiting the employment of foreigners in the colony. According to Diploma nº352, in all firms and commercial, agricultural, and industrial companies, as well as other individual or collective enterprises, at least 70% of the non-indigenous population had to hold the Portuguese nationality.

In a period of commercial hardship, Indo-British firms could have hardly hired such a high number of Portuguese nationals. For example, an average-sized urban firm, with an owner/manager and four employees, all of them Indo-British and with less than five years of residence in Mozambique, would have either to contract 11 additional Portuguese employees (a total of 16 workers, 30% foreign and 70% Portuguese), or to dismiss part of its

foot here, one foot there» attitude, contributed to a gradual extinction of the connections with India.

British employees, and contract the required number of Portuguese nationals.

The position of the small Indian *cantineiro* was also threatened. If he employed a British Indian assistant, he would also be obliged to hire two Portuguese citizens. In view of the small size of the average Indian establishment, where it had often been the custom for one member of a family to assist another, he would be driven out of business. To make matters worse, Portuguese authorities began to issue rigid interpretations of the Decree, whereby underage apprentices who worked for member of their families and/or co-ethnics were counted as employees.

Moreover, the British Indians who left Mozambique could not return, unless they could prove that they came to resume the same employment or position held when they left the country. They were also forced to undergo complicated and costly bureaucratic procedures.

The Portuguese government answered the repeated notes of the British Embassy by reiterating that abrogation of the aforementioned measures was impossible, and insisting that these restrictions were indeed not a manifestation of a "hostile intention towards the Indo-British".¹⁸ However, a report of 1938 (subsequently censored), which the Portuguese Foreign Minister had attached to his answer to the British Embassy, reveals the hidden reasons behind the measures for the regulation of employment and mobility of foreigners. It stated that "the economic opposition to Indo-British immigration" based upon the "reduction of the advantages [resulting from "exceptional conditions of religion, adaptation and habits"] in economic competition, attempted in particular to increase expenditure and decrease profit in gold, by all legal means"¹⁹.

Since political pressure was producing no result, the Indo-British began implementing measures to circumvent the legislation. A number of the largest firms (e.g. Popatlal Haribhai and Co., Prabudas Binji and Co., and Zacarias Hagiamad and Amod Moti and Co.), included among partners in the firm not only close family members (brothers, cousins, brothers-in-law, etc.), but, with tiny percentages, their most trusted employees, usually distant family members; as foreign partners, these did not count as

¹⁸ Cf. communication sent by the Portuguese Foreign Minister to the British Ambassador, on 8th July 1938.

¹⁹ Information of the General Direction of Political and Civil Administration, 24th May 1938.

employees. This strategy, widely adopted, led in 1948 to the publication of a dispatch, which specified that all partners in a firm who had a position therein, including that of manager, were indeed to be counted as employees. Simultaneously, a number of medium-sized and large firms also employed (but never in top positions) Indians of Indo-Portuguese origin (from Diu and Daman)²⁰.

During the Second World War and until 1948, the application of legislation on the employment and mobility of foreigners was less rigorous. This, together with numerous forms of bribery to inspectors made it possible for small, medium-sized, and large Indian firms to avoid observing the prescribed percentage of Portuguese employees. However, a number of Indian firms, e.g. Casa Coimbra, property of Abdool Saccor, Abdool Latif and Co., seem to have increased their clientele, observed the prescribed percentage, and employed several dozens of Portuguese citizens, white and mixed-race (mainly women) as shop assistants.

“In the Thirties, there was a law, for each Indian employee, two Portuguese. (...). We agreed with it. We had to do good well to the country where we were gaining our daily bread. I remember that in 1940, we had 60 employees, and over 40 were Portuguese. Almost all our shop assistants were white, and some mixed-race. Many were women.”²¹

The restrictions and formalities required for entering and returning to Mozambique were more difficult to circumvent. Indo-British subjects therefore began to modify their circulation practices. The pattern of male migration (whereby wife and children remained in the sending country, and were regularly visited by the head of the family) was progressively abandoned and the number of marriages among couples born and resident in Mozambique began increasing. In the case of the main Indian firms, the presence of heirs (sons and nephews) to give continuity to the family business became paramount.

Kakoo Madhavi, owner of Kakoo Madhavi and Co., one of the large import-export Indo-British firms established in Lourenço Marques at the beginning of the century, underwent great difficulties to obtain an authorisation for

²⁰ Since the second half of the 19th century, Hindus from Diu and Sunnis from Daman began to migrate to Mozambique. Most came to work as masons in the construction of colonial infrastructures.

²¹ Abdool Suleman

the entry of his only son and heir, born and resident in India. This persuaded many traders to begin the process of family reunification and reterritorialization.

Profiting from national circumstances and from loyalty to the host country: strengthening and formation of new Indian elites

Heirs and former employees of Ranchordas Oddha & Co., Haridas Damodar Ananji & Co., and Gorbandas Vallabdas & Co. (all belonging to Bhatia families), of Damodar Manglady & Co (an important Lohana firm), and even of Gulamhusem & Co. and Tharani & Co. (two of the largest Khojas firms at the time) remember that the war interrupted some of the import/export circuits, harming “the cashew nut business” in particular. Despite this, they all strive to point out that the “crisis” had less effect on their families and employers, and even less on small *cantineiros* and Indian middlemen. According to them, the large warehouse owners and exporters of cashew nuts reacted either by restricting the number of suppliers, and/or by demanding that they pay up their debts. The suppliers, having thus lost all their savings, had no alternative but to return to paid work in the firms of co-ethnics in the largest towns.

However, the beginning of the fifties saw an increase in the demand of cashew nuts on the world market, to which an increase in prices soon followed. Simultaneously, the high prices offered by Indian exporters for cashew nuts encouraged Mozambican farmers to expand its cultivation. The resumption of the «barter-based business» between *cantineiros*, warehouse owners, and exporters enabled many British Indians to return to independent work and gradually to increase their capital.

“During the war, because of the fall in cashew nut prices, my grandfather went out of business, had to sell everything, pay up his debts, then he came from Quelimane to Lourenço Marques. (...). The bosses in Lourenço Marques, the Lohanas, were very oppressive. Some had influence in the colonial administration, and made their employees’ lives difficult. They would not let us obtain a permit to trade. On the one hand, they were slavedrivers, they paid little and for long hours; on the other, they would not let them go, free themselves. They wanted honest, cheap and hardworking employees. (...) In

1952, my father left them, but he had to enter a partnership with another Indian in Majanja da Costa, 160 km from Quelimane, to get his permit.”²²

“In the 50s, my father managed to pull himself up again, he opened Casa Tata in Inhanbane and three others in Pande, Morrubene and Massinga. He made money, a lot of money in a short time. In 58 (...), he bought a Mercedes Benz. I remember that the window closed by pushing one single button. We'd never seen that before.”²³

The firms who imported mainly from Portugal and the largest Indian money changers in Lourenço Marques profited enormously during the Second World War. The Portuguese government remained neutral, which meant that many Portuguese ships were undisturbed during the conflict. Increased demand for certain goods on the part of the warring countries and the resulting price increase, and finally the influx of foreign currencies into Mozambican ports all contributed to an improvement of the economic and status standing of some of the large pioneering family firms, and made the expansion of newer ones possible.

“Portugal was neutral, and Portuguese ships could sail undisturbed, they were free. What happened was that with the war, there was a greatly increased demand for goods in the countries at war. Dearth meant an increase in prices. (...) When a ship came in, the shelves would be filled, and then we sold everything at a large profit.”²⁴

“During the war, Portugal was neutral, so a lot of ships stopped at Lourenço Marques harbour. So there was a lot of money, and a lot of exchanging to do. I still remember the ship captains going to Casimo Bilo and then, late at night, knocking on our door, to exchange their money. (...). When there were surpluses, the administration told us to sell those currencies. Then we earned a percentage.”²⁵

²² Latichandra, Hindu, industrialist, interviewed in Maputo

²³ Dr. Ratilal, Hindu of Lohana caste, former Trade minister and former Governor of the Bank of Portugal in Mozambique, interviewed in Lisbon and Maputo

²⁴ Abdool Suleman

²⁵ Nephew of B. Kakoobhai, interviewed in Portugal. Owner of a department store and currency exchange in Lourenço Marques, Kakoobhai established COOP, a banking cooperative (whose founding members were mostly of Indian origin) which gave loans and encouraged bank savings on the part of many Hindus.

“Binji founded his own firm, and made a lot of money during the Second World War. He became a great warehouse owner and importer, especially of ready-made clothes, cloth, and *capulanas* [traditional African cloth]. He also was the largest money exchanger in Lourenço Marques for a while. He was a great ally of Salazar. He was very, very familiar with the colonial government. You had to, in order to be a government-authorized money changer.”²⁶

Immune to international tensions and to the «dishonouring» of the Portuguese empire: the combination of a transnational orientation with a national investment

The post-war period, however prosperous, saw the independence of India, Partition, and a gradual deterioration of the relations between Portugal and the Indian Union, culminating with the invasion of Portuguese India in 1961. All these events had an effect on the population of Indian origin in Mozambique, either increasing or weakening their transnational practices.

Under pressure by certain sectors of the Portuguese population, who wished to “see the internment and expulsion of all those who, independently of their nationality” were “known as «monhés»”, the then Governor General of Mozambique determined, a few days before the “attack on Goa” by the Indian Union, that “measures should be taken to avoid that the lives and assets” of Hindustani citizens “suffer any damage”. He therefore ordered their “internment”, “the closure of their commercial enterprises and private residences”, as well as the prohibition to issue any entry or exit visa to Hindustanis²⁷. Dated shortly after the invasion of Goa, Daman and Diu, a statement attributed to the Portuguese Foreign Office, gives the true reason behind the detention of Indians of Indian nationality in Mozambique – unofficially estimated to be about 12,000. Namely, the fact that Portugal planned to free them “in exchange for the liberation and repatriation of approximately 3,200 Portuguese captured in Goa by Indian occupying forces”²⁸.

Whether interpreted could be seen as a measure for the protection of Indians and of public order, a means to guarantee the liberation of the Portuguese in Goa, or as a retaliatory political measure, the detention (and

²⁶ Chagan Lala, Hindu of Fudamia caste, judicial consultant, interviewed in Maputo

²⁷ Official letter of the sub-Director of PIDE [International and National Defense Police] of 26th December 1961, sent to the General Director of the same organisation.

²⁸ Telegram from the Foreign Office to the Embassy of RAU

subsequent expulsion) particularly targeted Hindu settlers in Mozambique, among whom the Indian nationality was most widespread. Until the independence of the Indian Union, all non-Portuguese Indians were considered British subjects, and they were issued documents accordingly; when the Indian Union and Pakistan became independent, non-Portuguese Indians were encouraged to choose between obtaining documents as citizens of either State. A significant percentage of Muslims acquired the Pakistani nationality, and most Hindus choose India. However, a number of Indians, especially among the large import/export operators and the official exchange agents of the regime, kept their British nationality. Lastly, a relatively high percentage of their children, who were born in Mozambique, were registered as Portuguese independently of their parents' nationality. On the other hand, in the late Fifties and in the period immediately after the invasion of Goa, many Muslims with Indian passports accelerated the process towards Pakistani naturalisation, since this would be the only nationality that would enable them to obtain residence permits on Portuguese soil. The political alliance between Pakistan and Portugal meant that the majority of Pakistani nationals went untouched by the measures of detention, winding up of assets and expulsion. The Ismailis, in their majority not naturalised as Portuguese (despite their insistent desire to do so, in particular after Partition) and protected by the relations between their leader, Aga Khan, and the Portuguese government, were immune to any retaliatory measure.

*"In 61, the government decided to seize all our assets, the property was still in the name of our grandfather and his brothers. Some had British documents, other descendants had become Pakistanis after Partition. We had been born in Mozambique. We had to hire a lawyer to make the required applications and explain the situation. (...) With the influence of His Highness Aga Khan, most Ismailis managed to avoid the public auction of their assets."*²⁹

*"At the time of the invasion, we had no problems, because we had Pakistani documents. To avoid any confusion, we put Pakistani flags in our homes and shops, and put up posters saying, 'Pakistan is grateful for Portuguese hospitality'."*³⁰

²⁹ Zainu Labedin Rawjee

³⁰ Abdool Suleman

A significant number of Hindus were however expelled, while their elites were protected, thanks to their long-lasting relations of mutual support (economic and political) with the Portuguese authorities. Despite a number of disparaging comments expressed by smaller and medium-sized Portuguese traders, large import/export Hindu firms were therefore not closed, namely those belonging to Haridas Damodar Anandji, Dayaram Gopaldas, K. B. Kakobhai, Prabudas Binji, etc. Moreover, entry and exit visas were indeed granted, even at the most delicate of times, to these businessmen and their families³¹. Lastly, the orders for the expulsion of dozens of managers and sub-managers of firms of privileged Hindustanis (in Porto Amélia, Quelimane, Nampula, António Enes, Nacala, Lourenço Marques, Beira, etc.) were annulled, since their departure would incapacitate “the operation of firms essential to provincial interests”³².

The ambivalence of Portuguese colonial authorities towards Indians, granting them protection when they had political, economic and social advantages to offer in exchange, while using them as scapegoats in times of crisis and nationalistic exacerbation, made the importance of transnational connections even clearer. Thus many Indian elite families (despite the political protection they received) increased their transnational economic practices in the Sixties, with investments in Goa and Pakistan, neighbouring African territories (e.g. Kenya, the South African Union, Tanganyika, etc.) and Europe (namely, in the UK and Portugal, where they set up offices to facilitate imports and exports).

“The owner of the Damodar firm, in Beira, was a tycoon, a great importer/exporter and warehouse owner. (...). In the 60s, he also invested in buying, selling, and renting property. He had apartment buildings in Beira, but also in Kenya, Tanzania, and Mumbai. He was a shareholder in numerous factories, in Mozambique and outside. He even had a coal mine in Goa.”³³

The hardest-hit firms recurred once more to family dispersion strategies to reterritorialize successfully in Mozambique, British East Africa, and India. The relatives with British or Portuguese documents bought back their firms

³¹ Official letter of the sub-Director of PIDE, of 26th December 1961

³² Cf. the official letters of the Coordinating Committee on Issues Regarding Subjects of the Indian Union and Their Assets to PIDE, which suspended the order of expulsion from the province of numerous Hindustani managers and sub-managers between 1961 and 1963.

³³ Mahendra

at public auctions where they were sold (merely changing their name); alternatively, they bought at a low price other firms belonging to expelled co-ethnics, or became minority partners in the firms of close or distant family members. The expelled family members retook residence in India (especially the eldest), or in other nuclei of the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Africa (e.g. Kenya, Tanganyika, or the South African Union), where they could count on family and friends. Once the most delicate political circumstances were solved, possibly with the help of lawyers, some actually reunited their family on Mozambican soil. Others preferred to abandon Mozambique, and resettled in other British territories in East Africa, where their caste communities were present and numerous.

“After 1947, the British Embassy here began hindering the renewal of British passports to Indo-British citizens, and to exert pressure for us to obtain Indian documents. But our family, and another ten or so, managed to hold on to their British passports. The company title of Popaptal Haribhai included many partners, most of them British; some however had already returned to India, and their documents had expired. And the committee for the winding-up of Indian assets wanted to see their documents... so Popaptal Haribhai ended up being sold at public auction. We were closed for 21 days, then my father bought the firm back, because he had no problems, he was British. He just changed its name, to avoid trouble. The firm was now called Laxmidas Nenshibhai and Sons. But in 1963 they forced us to obtain the Indian nationality, and refused to renew our documents. For example, I had no passport for seven years, could not travel. Then we got a South African lawyer that fixed it all.”³⁴

The transnational connection, which Indian elites in Mozambique continued to maintain, with the support of family members and co-ethnics who gave information on the best business opportunities and acted as middlemen, partners or local foreign managers, increasingly became a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was a protection (against increased racial tension, unfavourable political conjuncture, etc.); on the other, it was always risky, especially in the context of the independence and Africanisation processes that East Africa underwent in the Sixties.

“In 61, we had a first scare. We had to face a lot of bureaucracy, but we managed not to lose our firm in Mozambique. Meanwhile, in South Africa,

³⁴ Tarun Laxmidas

where we had a large firm for the import and export of food, life wasn't easy either, with that apartheid system. And we decided to cautiously invest in other places. The brother of my mother in law was a great trader in Nairobi, and suggested we invest in Kenya. (...). Meanwhile, in 1963, Tanzania became independent. And we thought Julius Nyerere was a stable leader, thought it was good to invest in an independent country, still without much competition, we bought 18 apartments in Tanzania. We bought for a good price, and thought we could make a profit. At the time, newspapers even said that our purchase was a gesture of great political trust in the country. And shortly after we bought, nationalisation began, and we lost everything. Later, we lost even more in Kenya. And in '73, we left Mozambique."³⁵

Reacting to post-colonial constraints: transnational connections, family dynamics, and the renewal of Indian elites

The political measures which determined the Indian exodus from East Africa in the 1960s and 1970s (from Tanganyika, and later from Kenya and Uganda) harmed some of the most transnational Indian families in Mozambique, and introduced the possibility of having to opt for different migration destinies into their lives. The Ismaili leader, Aga Khan IV, thanks to his privileged political contacts with Portuguese colonial authorities, encouraged Ismailis to leave Mozambique a few years before the democratic revolution and the decolonisation process. The carefulness and discretion with which they sold their assets and transferred their capital outside the country before independence, and the international contacts of their leader enabled them to maintain their generally ascending migratory histories. These however were not the only grounds for their postcolonial success. Zainu Rawjee mentioned many crucial factors underlying his family's current prosperity. Among them, the dissemination of his extended family in various countries, the establishment of import-export firms in each new host country, a regular exchange of goods and capital, family management, the mobility of certain family members (to make import/export processes easier), the gradual diversification of business areas, and the quest for new opportunities in different countries (based upon the information of economic consultants belonging to the transnational Ismaili organisation). In addition, philanthropic investment in areas considered disadvantaged or politically desirable by the new host countries also helped. Whether this is

³⁵ Zainu Labedin Rawjee

surprising or not, his strategies and options (and those of his brothers, sons, and nephews) are very similar to the ones deployed by his grandfathers and great-uncles in the Ilha de Moçambique in the late 19th century. We would agree with Morawska, “that life worlds and diaspora politics of turn-of-the-century immigrants share many of the supposedly novel features of present day transnationalism” (2001: 178).

“In 1973, my mother and father and some of my younger brothers went to Portugal, while my wife and I and our five sons went to Pakistan; other close family members went to Canada, still others to the UK. After settling in Karachi, I came back to Mozambique to keep an eye on the rest of the business and sell as much as possible. After two years in Pakistan, we went almost around the whole world to look for opportunities. When we were in Rome, I made a request to migrate to Canada. I explained that I was a trader of frozen seafood and fish in Mozambique and South Africa. When I asked when I would be interviewed, they said, no need. His Highness Aga Khan was on good terms with the Canadian Prime Minister. (...). When I settled in Toronto, I set up an import/export business, with connections to South Africa and Portugal. Two of my brothers were in Pretoria, I was in Toronto, my father in Portugal, with my youngest brother. This is how the family business continued. Between 1976 and 1981, we also began to invest in Swaziland, in building, ground levelling, and roads, then we bought the concession for a coalmine. I left my family in Canada and went to South Africa, but the business required great quantities of capital and we suffered a loss. In 1982, I went back to Toronto and invested in some properties. In 1990, I went back to South Africa and with my brothers and my son continued the family business, import/export of frozen seafood and fish. In the early 1990s, I heard that you could do good business in Mozambique; I came to see, liked it, and in 1991 decided to invest. I set up Delta Trading, and import/export firm (...). The suggestion of investing in a private university with degrees that were not available in Mozambique came from a niece who did not have the capital. Delta Trading did most of the investment. We set up ISCTEM (Instituto Superior de Ciências e Tecnologia de Mozambique – Higher Institute for Science and Technology) in 1996.”³⁶

The option to reterritorialise the family «business» and reunify the extended family in postcolonial Portugal (the most frequent among Ismailis who were living in Mozambique) proved to be a fortunate one. After 1974, the housing needs of thousands of “retornados” (“returnees”) from former Portuguese colonies gave rise to unprecedented business opportunities in

³⁶ Idem.

hotel and residential management; these received a certain subsidy per person from social services. Many Ismaili families were able to profit from these opportunities because they arrived earlier than most former colonists, bringing with them some savings, and took advantage of the social resources built in the colonial context.

The re-establishment in Portugal, in sharp contrast with the transnational ambitions and patterns of the colonial period, became a significant resource for the development of new transnational orientations, namely in the PALOPs (Portuguese-Speaking African Countries). For example, the Azinor³⁷ group, with its head office in Lisbon and branches in Luanda and Cabinda (Angola), Johannesburg (RSA), Madrid (Spain), Milan (Italy), and New York, began as an import/export business to Angola during the civil war and in the post-war period, then multiplied and diversified their areas of investment (which now include hotel and restaurant management, real estate, the sale of furniture, interior design, etc.).

“Around 1988/89, during the war in Angola, it was then that our business grew. Back then, we mostly supplied foodstuff, combat rations. Azinor was the first firm to submit a bid, and from then on won all public bids, everybody knew they would win. On the one hand, because it had lower prices, on the other, because you gradually strengthen your relationship with influential people in Angola. And even though the war has ended, the country still needs everything. Nowadays, you name it, we export it. (...). Foodstuffs, garments and fabrics, shoes, pharmaceuticals, building materials, furniture, home appliances, raw materials, machinery, hospital equipment, vehicles, didactic material, office equipment, toys, everything. (...) A few days ago, someone called asking me for fresh milk; if we sent it by plane, the price would be quite high, if by boat, it would not arrive on time. Of course nothing came of it. (...). The credit assistance that we provide our clients is also important. We are in a position to assist them in dealing with national and international banks under advantageous conditions. (...). With the boom of exports to Angola, Azinor began buying hotels, and still does, it's almost all ours. (...). We even manage two lets for the Timorese, but theseat' aren't very lucrative right now.”³⁸

³⁷ Nazir Dasru Din (current president of the Ismaili Community in Portugal), his older brother Azim Cassam Jamal and their cousin Salimo Hacamo Jamal are the majority shareholders of Azinor enterprises. As in the past, the new transnational elites of Indian origin constitute family businesses, managed in partnership by brothers, cousins, and/or nephews.

³⁸ Personal assistant to Nazir Dasru Din, president of the Azinor group

Unlike Ismailis, most Sunni and Hindu families remained in Mozambique in the post-independence period. The following quotes testify that the transnational connections established in the colonial period were vital to overcome post-colonial political obstacles.

“With the contacts we had, in the Far East, South Africa, or in neighbouring countries like Swaziland and Malawi, and even in Portugal, we imported goods for \$20,000. We told our partners to emit an invoice for that amount. Then we agreed that they would only send \$15,000 in goods, and we would pay \$20,000. This process enabled us to set aside, outside the country, 10% or more of the value of the imported goods. This is how we managed to export our money.”³⁹

“The *candonga* began in the State-organised factories. If a factory received 1000 metres of cloth from the State, to make 500 shirts, they would make smaller shirts and produce 600, 500 of which were declared, and 100 sent to the parallel market. The managers of State factories, they were public servants, but they sold those 100 shirts clandestinely, for a higher price, to Indian warehouse owners. And kept the profit. We ourselves sold, at an even higher price, to retail shops. Retail shops had to sell everything to the public, but sometimes they didn’t. They hid their stock, and the shelf looked empty. They then sold at a different price. (...) Many of us had family and friends in South Africa, Swaziland, Malawi, and we agreed to barter some goods, the products we received from them also entered the same circuit. When one of our partners went to India, Pakistan, or Portugal, we did the same. It wasn’t bad for us. We even mad some money.”⁴⁰

Transnational connections did enable large Indian importers/exporters and wholesalers to implement strategies of sub-invoicing, which allowed them, between 1974 and 1977, to “send money abroad”. Between 1977 and 1980 however the effects of the Marxist-Leninist politics began to be felt, and illegal transactions of goods with neighbouring countries, India, Pakistan, and/or Portugal made possible by Indian transnational networks, became vital for the continuation, and in some cases improvement, of business ventures in Mozambique. Together with connections with managers of State firms and public administrators, these transactions fed into the widespread *candonga* of the early years of the planned Socialist economy in Mozambique.

³⁹ Gulam Mayet, Sunni Muslim, businessman, interviewed in Maputo

⁴⁰ Latichandra

Political persecutions, the nationalisation of factories and investment properties, as well as the spread of the civil war and the risks inherent to the *candonga* (arrest, public whipping, and even execution) led the Indian colonial elites to “leave” Mozambique permanently in the late Seventies. In numerous cases, while abandoning the country (where they were seen as «personae non gratae»), they transferred a percentage of their business interests to, or named as their manager, a member of the family or a co-ethnic. This temporary solution in some cases survived to the present day. Former employees and descendants once again confirm that existing transnational connections reinforced these family firms in Portugal and the UK, but also in the US and in India. In contrast, the concentration of investments in the same country and in a single urban area, aggravated by micro-family concentration, was repeatedly selected as one of the main causes behind the decadence of some of the great firms of the past.

“In my opinion, the mistake was that we never spread out. We all concentrated on Casa Coimbra. We did not want to leave Lourenço Marques, everything was fine, we were well settled, both the family and the firm enjoyed great prestige. (...) We did not open any branches in Quelimane, Nampula, etc. And neither did we invest in other countries, as certain others did. We even sold what we had in Pakistan. That was our mistake.”⁴¹

Many small and medium-sized Hindu and Sunni family firms recreated elite strategies by sending the brothers to neighbouring countries and Portugal (where they could enjoy the support of co-ethnics and/or family members), while one brother was asked to “sacrifice” and stay in Mozambique. The frequent trips between these countries made the clandestine import/export of many goods possible, thus making the business more profitable in both locations. Datani Vithaldas describes the profits to be gained from this strategy, and explains how Indian microfamiliar patterns may be altered in situations of crisis.

“The big ones, like Kakhoo Bhai, Binji, Kanji, Jamnadas, who had invested in property, land, industries and factories, they almost all left in 81, 82. We found another way. One brother stayed, the others left. In 1981, my oldest brother opened a small haberdashery in Portugal. (...). The other three brothers, when they came to Portugal they began selling in street markets. I had three sons,

⁴¹ Rafik Hajee

while my brothers had several daughters, so in order to avoid the girls having to go into the Army, I sacrificed myself. But we always kept in touch. The shops we have, they belong to all brothers. Even when apart, we helped each other; at times, I travelled, or sent ready-made clothes or money, other times, they did. None of this was legal. (...). A brother must not ask for help to his brother and sister-in-law. He must help them but never ask for help. But, in times of crisis, that happens. My brother-in-law Kantilal Vallabas, there were times when he gave us great help. (...). For me, the Eighties were the most difficult of times. That's why I sent my sons to Portugal, to stay with my brothers. It was so hard, but we had to. (...). In 1989, it began to get better, we could import and export, and prices were no longer fixed by the government. That's when I bought two more shops in Xipamanine. (...). My wife and I were the only ones to opt for the Mozambican nationality, so we could buy the shops."⁴²

This strategy, together with the construction of influence networks (the alliance of member of the public administration, the government and even high ranks of Frelimo), and with the first stage of economic liberalisation, enabled several small and medium-sized Indian traders to rapidly improve their economic status and to become new economic elites.

"In 1985/1986, Samora Machel carried out a study to transform the economy, to enter a first stage of liberalisation. I was interviewed by a number of inspectors and State leaders. The then Minister of Trade even visited our premises, to learn of conditions, resources, etc. Then they chose six or seven firms for the experience, ours among them. Each firm could import \$20,000 worth of goods, bought anywhere in the world. And they would authorise a travel ticket for us, no restrictions. Three of the firms invested me with the responsibility, the others chose Mr. Frank. We travelled to Durban, and bought goods for all of them. We brought back invoices, went through all the bureaucracy, filled out import forms, the Bank of Mozambique gave guarantee to the Bank of South Africa, which in turn gave guarantee to the exporters. (...) I was the first Indian to import, after independence. (...). We expanded greatly."⁴³

The late Eighties and Nineties saw the total liberalisation of the Mozambican economy, and the consequent expansion and diversification of economic and family transnational practices of Indian businessmen. On the

⁴² Datani Vithaldas, Hindu, Lohana caste, businessman, interviewed in Xipamanine

⁴³ Mahendra, Hindu, Brahmin caste, owner of a number of clothes and fabric shops, interviewed in Maputo

one hand, these practices now involved their or their ancestors' sending countries (India and Pakistan), and new and more profitable economic spaces such as Dubai and Bahrain; on the other, through family members in Portugal, they extended the import/export business to other Portuguese-speaking countries, namely Angola and Brazil.

"In the 90s, we also began to invest in Angola (...). In 1995, we extended our business to Mozambique, and in 2000 to Brazil. Our main business right now are cars: we are agents for multiple brands in these countries. My husband is the head of the firm, but the profit is split among the three brothers, they each have equal shares in the business and each has leeway to carry out their own business, within the set objectives of course. We have a very good philosophy. If there's any problem among brothers or cousins, they speak to each other and do not involve their wives. If there is any problem among us, mothers-and daughters-in-law, or sisters-in-law, we try to solve it and say nothing to our husbands. The idea is always to avoid resentments, because family unity is very important. (...). My main task is preparing my sons to continue the business their father has developed. Therefore, I have to be able to choose the schools and universities that will grant them the best and most demanding education, and to monitor their studies daily. And also to create the conditions for them to have wide and varied general knowledge. This includes teaching them various languages, to appreciate ballet and opera, but also Indian music and culture, to like reading but also practice tennis, horse riding, and fencing. We also travel widely. (...) Our project is for them to be well versed in all areas, so they may be at ease wherever they are, and always match up to the people they may meet. And when I say match up to everyone, I really do mean everyone."⁴⁴

As mentioned previously, local/national investment may become advantageous in the pursuit of new transnational ambitions and connections (namely in Angola and Brazil). This emerges clearly in Fauzia Ibrahim's statement, which also reveals two vital factors for the success of the diasporic and relocalisation processes of the Indian families in question: the intergenerational transmission of diplomatic strategies among members of consanguineal and affinal families, and the role of wives/mothers in the construction of the identity of the younger

⁴⁴ Fauzia Ibrahim, wife of the Executive Director of the Grupo Ibrahim, interviewed in Lisboa

generations⁴⁵. An identity that Fauzia describes as cultured, pluri-linguistic, multicultural, cosmopolitan, and porous, but also Indian, Muslim, and Portuguese. And, more importantly, as she emphasizes, a way of being and feeling of which her sons may feel proud in any part of the world.

Concluding Remarks

Despite recognising that transnationalism is not a new phenomenon, a significant percentage of available literature still emphasises the peculiarity of recent experiences. Developments in transportation and communication technologies, new international forms of economic activity and the changing nature of the labour markets, the independence processes of countries of origin (which increased the sense of national identification of migrants in their destinations), the implementation of multicultural policies (which legitimate the expression of different kinds of relations to home-countries), as well as the development of an international human rights framework, are frequently revisited to validate the (qualitative and quantitative) fracture between past and present transnationalisms.

The articulation of resources and activities of migrant actors with the variations of national and international constellations shaping the environments for their transnational and local investments were placed at the center of our analysis of a case study. This made a historical comparison of different temporal contexts possible. The similarities encountered in these distant historical contexts, as well as the discontinuities we encountered in shorter time spans (in the near and distant past), suggest that any comparison between an ill-defined and un-periodised “now” and “then” can only result in undue simplifications.

By refusing to dehistoricise the “present” (as well as the “past”), we also attempted to avoid certain conceptual antinomies; most notably that of assimilation versus transnationalism. Accordingly, we attempted to demonstrate how processes of reterritorialisation that apparently constitute

⁴⁵ Despite the relatively rigid distinction between “jobs”, “skills”, “memories”, etc. based on gender which numerous studies on migrant groups of Indian origin have recorded, many of the women we interviewed openly spoke of long-standing female participation in their families' local and transnational «business». In a recent article (1995b), we analysed the role of migrant women in the strengthening of the transnational connections and ambitions of their families.

a counteravailing tendency to transnationalism were, and continue to be, indispensable to the development and consolidation of (new and old) transnational immigrant elites.

We are aware that the conclusions drawn from a case study can only be of limited interest. However, we believe that the methodological option, which consisted in a comparison of processes of transnational connection and reterritorialisation based upon the analysis of the changeable characteristics of both migrants, and statal and inter-statal circumstances at various points in time, combined whenever possible with the comparative analysis of segments of the same migratory group in different national systems, could introduce a new perspective to the question, "What's new about Transnationalism?"

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